



2025 Blair, Nebraska Strategic Plan

"We Put Community First" or "We are better together" or "Community First: Better Together" or "Community First: Stronger Together"

Blair, Nebraska

Blair is a vibrant community with a population of 8,000, situated along the Missouri River in eastern Nebraska. Blair is a city in and the county seat of Washington County, Nebraska, United States. As the county seat of Washington County, population 22,000, Blair is strategically located just 20 miles north of Omaha, offering residents the perfect blend of small-town charm and easy access to metropolitan amenities. Blair is a part of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area, operating under the Mayor-Council form of government and serving as a vital transportation hub and center for business, agriculture, and industry in eastern Nebraska and Western Iowa. The community features a variety of established and newly developed residential areas and locally owned businesses, all while remaining attractive on the global business stage. Blair operates a publicly owned water production facility that provides safe drinking water to the community and surrounding areas of Washington County. Blair was platted in 1869 and incorporated in 1872 when the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad was extended to the area. Named after John Insley Blair, who was credited with bringing the railroad to town, the town was designated the Washington County seat within its first year. Surrounded by the rolling hills of the Missouri River Valley, Blair exemplifies a community where people live, learn, and work together to create an exceptional quality of life.

According to the United States Census Bureau, Blair's total area is 5.51 square miles, with 5.49 square miles of land and .02 square miles of water. According to the 2023 annual estimate of the resident population, Blair consists of 96.1 % White, 1.1% African American, .3% Asian, .5% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and 2.1% Hispanic or Latino. 27.6% of the population was under the age of 18, 8.0% from 18 to 24, 23.6% from 25 to 44, 23.7% from 45 to 64, and 17.6% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 39.2 years. For every 100 females, the population had 91.4 males. For every 100 females ages 18 and older, there were 83.3 males.

The 2022 5-year American Community Survey estimates show 3,084 households with a median household income of \$74,058. Males had a median income of \$51,769 versus \$29,811 for females. The median income for those above 16 years old was \$39,382. Approximately 11.6% of families and 13.6% of the population were below the poverty line, including 18.7% of those under 18 and 7.9% of those ages 65 or over.

The City of Blair operates under the mayor-council form of government. Eight council members represent four city wards and are elected by their ward on a staggered basis for a four-year term. The entire community elects a mayor for a four-year term. All ballots are nonpartisan. The Mayor and City Council work together to establish goals and objectives for the City and then formulate policies to achieve those goals and objectives. The mayor presides over official meetings and supervises all the officers and affairs of the city. The mayor votes only when their vote is the deciding vote. The mayor has the power to veto any ordinance or resolution. A two-thirds majority, or six votes of the Council, is required to override the mayor's veto.

The City of Blair is a full-service municipal government organization consisting of the following departments:

- City Administration
 - Community Development
 - Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery
 - Finance and Utility Billing
 - Fire and Rescue
 - Human Resources
 - Library
 - Police
 - Public Works
 - Blair Executive Airport
-

Core Purpose

The core purpose of the city of Blair is to provide high-quality public services to the community and region, ensuring a safe and well-functioning community that addresses the needs of those we serve.

Core Ideology

“We specialize in public service. All city operations are carried out with this in mind.”

We endeavor to accomplish this through:

- Collaboration
- Dedication
- Resiliency
- Leadership
- Strategic growth

Mission Statement

The city of Blair aims to enhance the quality of life in our community by providing a sustainable level of municipal services that balance physical, economic, and social quality.

Vision Statement

To maintain a vibrant city guided by history, governed by contemporary opportunities, and shaped by small-town ideals and a sense of community.

Core Values

- Community:** Provides belonging, support, and identity
- Quality:** A standard of excellence
- Respect:** A high level of understanding, empathy, and a sense of dignity
- Service:** Taking action to create value for the public
- Transparency:** Building trust through promoting accountability

“We put community first!” or “We are better together.”

or

“Community First: Better Together” or “Community First: Stronger Together”

SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Strengths

- Small or Hometown feel
- Forward thinking
- Location
- City Services
- Safe Community
- Community relations
- Professionalism
- School system
- Location in the metro area
- Industry and jobs
- Adequate volunteer base
- Parks and Recreation
- Water Plant
- Healthcare
- Community Cohesion
- Good pay and benefits
- Citizens are allowed to have a voice
- Camaraderie among staff
- Community willing to step up when called upon
- Recruiting factory/industrial businesses

Weaknesses

- Communication
- Topography
- Micro-Management
- Lack of transparency
- No defined purpose
- Low morale
- Convoluted hiring process
- Main St.
- Overpopulated with entry-level workers
- Staying focused on one thing at a time
- Delegation
- Employee engagement
- Struggle to move forward due to not having the proper number of employees with the right mindset
- Lack of staffing to provide the level of service that is expected
- Housing options
- Lack of recognition/department heads treated differently

Opportunities

- Community in Transition
- Small town feel with big town opportunities
- Community growth
- Organizational growth
- Recent and future employee turnover
- Growth from small to mid-sized community
- New perspectives and opinions (new city leadership)
- Community development
- Marketing of Blair (Internal and external promotion)
- Washington County Seat
- Create an identity separate from Omaha
- Improve quality of life issues
- Take advantage of social media opportunities
- Changing trajectory after several years of status quo
- Turnover in city leadership

Threats

- Unstructured growth
- Recruitment and retention
- Community resistance to growth and change
- Budget constraints
- Decades of status quo
- Being satisfied with the status quo (organization at a standstill)
- Resistance to change
- Highways in Blair
- Hiring the wrong people for upcoming city leadership positions
- Quality of life issues ignored
- Identity crisis (small town vs. growing town or rural vs. urban)
- Lack of appealing factors for families

- Budget restrictions for departments
- Lack of overall vision
- Moving too fast, too soon
- Passively hoping that change will happen
- Staff overworked and stressed
- Becoming stagnant
- Turnover in city leadership
- Brain drain in key leadership positions
- Lack of focus or involvement in city problems or issues
- Employees feeling disconnected from the city
- No clear direction to move forward

TOWS Analysis (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Strengths)

Strengths/Opportunities (leveraging internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities)

- Small/hometown feel with the potential for bigger town opportunities
- Community in transition with the potential to grow from a small to a mid-sized community
- Forward-thinking organization with new perspectives and opinions
- Marketing Blair's quality of life opportunities (city services, Washington County seat, safe community, public school system, location in the metro, parks and recreation, water plant, health care opportunities)

Weakness/Opportunities (leveraging external opportunities to address internal weaknesses)

- Communication (internal and external) and growth (social media and technology advances)
- Lack of transparency and community development (housing, marketing, quality of life issues, Main St.)
- No defined purpose and changing trajectory after several years of status quo
- Employee quality of employee issues (no defined purpose, low morale, convoluted HR processes, delegation, employee engagement, employee mindset, lack of proper staffing levels, micro-management of departments, lack of recognition, and department heads treated differently) and turnover in city leadership with a new leadership mindset

Strengths/Threats (using the organization's strengths to minimize the impact of threats)

- Location vs. Highways
- Forward thinking vs. Unstructured growth
- Community cohesion vs. community resistance to growth and change
- Recruiting business vs. lack of overall vision, moving too fast, too soon, with no clear direction to move forward
- City services vs. staff overworked and stressed, budget restrictions, becoming stagnant due to employees feeling disconnected

Weakness/Threats (focus on handling both outside dangers and internal shortcomings)

- Housing options vs. lack of appealing factors for families
- Community resistance to growth and change vs. struggle to move forward with purpose
- Budget restraints vs. providing the levels of service that are expected
- Micro-management vs. internal resistance to change (overcoming several decades of status quo)

Challenges (obstacles that have the potential to hinder success)

- Traffic
- Housing
- Topography
- Culture/Transparency
- Community Identity
- Internal communication
- Infrastructure issues (internal and external)
- Hiring leadership positions
- Funding
- Internal Development opportunities
- Morale
- Highways in town (traffic flow)
- City planning (Industrial vs. Residential)
- Tax Increment Financing
- Zoning challenges
- Changing demographics
- Adequate facilities
- Communication to the citizens
- Stagnant organizational history
- Resistance to growth (culturally)
- Departments feel isolated from one another
- Unnecessary number of meetings
- Focus on what we do best...???
- Need to entice families and young adults before the city stalls out

Strategic Initiatives/Pillars (action-oriented concepts used to drive the organization's long-term goals)

- **Quality of life:** ensuring the overall well-being and satisfaction of the community and region
- **Family friendly:** a community that prioritizes the needs and well-being of families by providing the necessary resources
- **Safety and security:** embracing the diversity of differing groups and individuals, while providing an environment free from fear.
- **Sustainability:** integrating economic considerations into current decision making, designed to ensure long-term organizational health
- **Leadership:** Focus on developing leadership skills and capabilities within the organization and its existing workforce
- **Quality vs. Quantity:** Prioritizing excellence or worth vs. the amount or number of

Targets: short-term goals (2025):

- Focus on short-term growth
- Staffing and succession planning (in line with strategy)
- Increase affordable housing
- Establish and utilize city social media platforms
- Employee training and development
- Manager/supervisor leadership development to enhance the organization's mission and vision
- Challenge the status quo
- Live within physical limitations (balanced growth driven by strategic thought)

Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAG): long-term goals (2030)

- North bypass
- Measurable and Sustainable growth
- Long-term Organizational Improvement
- Streamline hiring process
- Overcome the status quo
- Strategic professional growth for all staff
- Balance between industry and community
- Economic balance (high, middle, and entry-level jobs)
- Decrease commuters/increase people who live and work in Blair
- Positive atmosphere for families/middle class, and retirees
- Increase staffing levels to meet community expectations
- Develop a plan for city facilities and volunteer services

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Measurable values that demonstrate how effectively an individual, team, or organization is achieving a specific objective.

1. Community satisfaction
2. Quality of life factors critical to the organization
3. Employee recruitment and retention
4. Economic accountability: (budget and tax revenue)
5. Employee development and growth
6. Leadership development and mentoring
7. Business retention and strategic business recruitment (shopping, restaurants, retail, etc.)
8. Quality vs. Quantity

References:

Blair, NE - Official website, Official website. (2001). <https://www.blairnebraska.org/>

Cubit Planning. [2024 Population Projections](#). September 2024

United States Census Bureau. [2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#). December 2018

United States Census Bureau. [2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#). 7 December 2023

United States Census Bureau. [Annual Estimates of the Resident Population](#): April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023. Population Division. May 2024

United States Census Bureau. [Annual Estimates of the Resident Population](#): April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019. Population Division. May 2021

United States Census Bureau. [P2 Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race](#). 2020 Census State Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File. August 2021

Wikipedia (2024). *Blair, Nebraska*. Wikipedia.[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blair, Nebraska](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blair,_Nebraska)