

Similarly, where new industrial streets are being constructed, designing to meet this policy should be considered. When modifications are made to existing roads in Gering, streetscapes should be evaluated to identify those that will have the greatest impact on users, while presenting a high-quality impression of the community.

Modifying the requirements in your code to specify which areas require higher standards is a key next step. Creating a matrix which identifies basic minimums and quality additions will help set the foundation of requirements for streetscape like sidewalk, street trees, and lighting. Additional options could be presented in a handbook format to help demonstrate the value of these items to property owners.

Policy 4.1.C: Create opportunities for people to use alternate modes of transportation to reach destinations.

What this policy means for Gering: Improving transportation requires a wholistic view of considering the mobility needs of different modes. Putting yourself in the shoes of a cyclist, a walker, a transit-user can be a great way to understand the needs of these community stakeholders.

Consider holding a mobility workshop with each of the alternative modes of transportation. Walk to school with students, join a cyclist on their morning ride to work, hop on the Roadrunner to purchase your weekly groceries. This type of insight can help identify the small (and probably large) elements that are missing from the system.

For cyclists, are there:

- bike racks at key destinations to safely secure their bike?
- repair stations along pathways to fix a flat?
- bike lanes and signs on designated streets to elevate awareness and safety?

For pedestrians, are there:

- direct connections to destinations, connecting public sidewalks with business entrances?
- detached sidewalks with trees to help buffer walkers from traffic, while also providing shade?
- benches at regular intervals offering a place to rest?

For transit users, are there:

- clearly designated stops, with benches, windbreaks, and lighting?
- maps available, clearly defining the route?

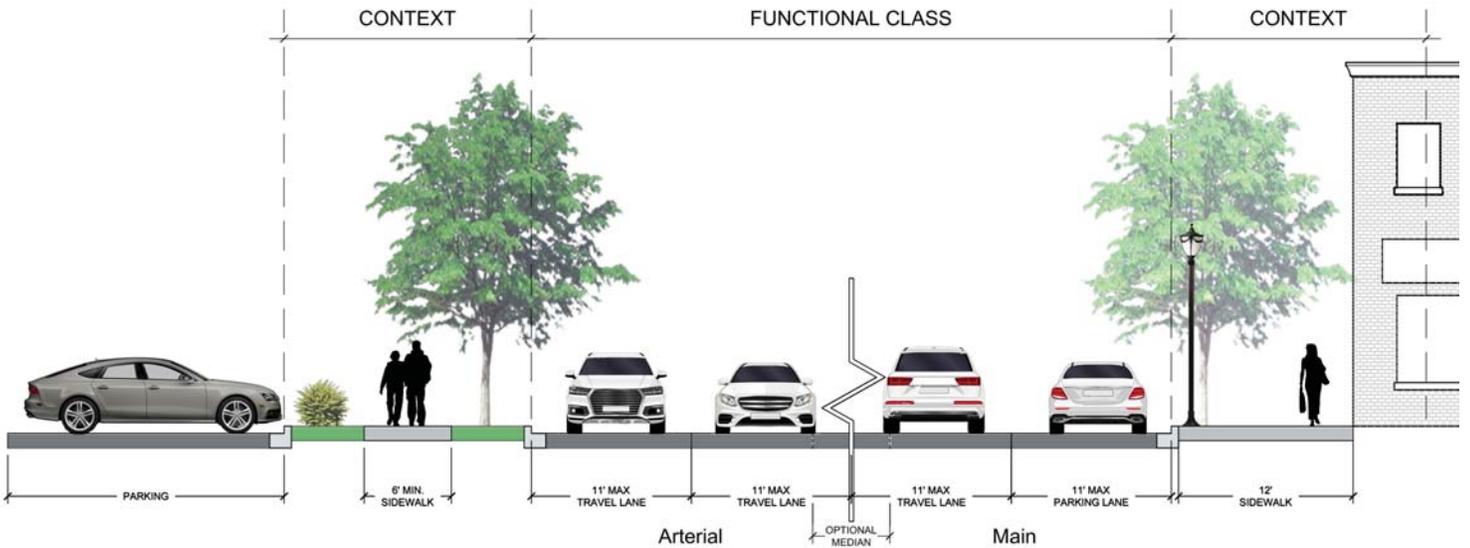
Using this policy during the design process for road projects can help to identify missing elements that will help to make the entire system more efficient for all users.

Mobility Framework

While Gering's slow but steady growth won't likely require the construction of many new roads over the life-cycle of this comprehensive plan, there will be some new roads constructed. The following Mobility Framework provides options for Gering to consider in constructing new streets, while also providing considerations for smaller repairs and modifications that may take place over time.

Traditionally, transportation planning uses a Functional Classification System to characterize the intended function of various roadway in the street network. Typical parameters for roadway design within this system include access management practice, number of lanes, mode(s) of transportation, along with the type, speed and volume of traffic to be served. This system is based upon the categorization of the roadways as Arterial, Collector, and/or Local streets. The approach doesn't however consider the context of the street - the land use and development adjacent to the street - as it may change from block-to-block or area to area.

While Functional Classification is used to define what's going on in the street – number of lanes, volumes and to some extent, speeds, this plan introduces the concept of a Context Classification to better address the unique conditions of adjacent development and what happens behind the curb. At times, the dynamics of the land use / development context and roadway function create undesirable impacts in a specific location or segment of the system. Ultimately, meshing context and function will help to ensure that a one-size-fits-all designation doesn't adversely impact Gering's existing and future neighborhoods. This approach can also help in managing roads that change character as they pass through the community. 10th Street is an example of a road that changes from Industrial Arterial, to Main Street Arterial over the course of a few miles. Using context considerations can also enhance desirable character areas – such as the Central Business District - in a manner that balances community priorities and values with efficient operation of the mobility system throughout Gering.



Functional Classification	Context Classification
Pertains To: Speed, Width, Volume	Pertains To: Site Development, Setbacks, Access
ARTERIAL	Thoroughfare
	Main Street
	Gateway
	Industrial
	Residential
COLLECTOR	Industrial
	Neighborhood
LOCAL	Industrial
	Neighborhood

Providing this approach enabling both consideration of Functional and Context Classifications will enable the Gering Zoning Code to better respond to the unique conditions of each specific site. Different elements, or exceptions, may be keyed to different Context Classifications within the code. In this way, the plan and subsequent code can better address more flexibility in the regulatory approach, which is a key goal of this plan expressed in Policy 2.4.C – (Clarify and streamline City processes.)

The following pages include the Functional Classification Map. Use this map to help identify the overall function of the street, anticipated widths, speeds and volumes. Next is the Context Classification Map, which can be used to help identify tailoring of site development standards, setbacks and other elements further described in the zoning code.

Additionally, several cross-sections examples have been provided for representative types, illustrating the blend between Functional and Context Classifications. Each provides a description of the Context along with primary elements and how they can be tailored to that specific Context. Watch for elements that vary between Contexts and Function on the following transportation elements:

Movement: Vehicles, Pedestrian, Bicycle, Public Transit

Parking: On-Street, Off-Street

Amenities: Streetscape, Lighting, Character Enhancements

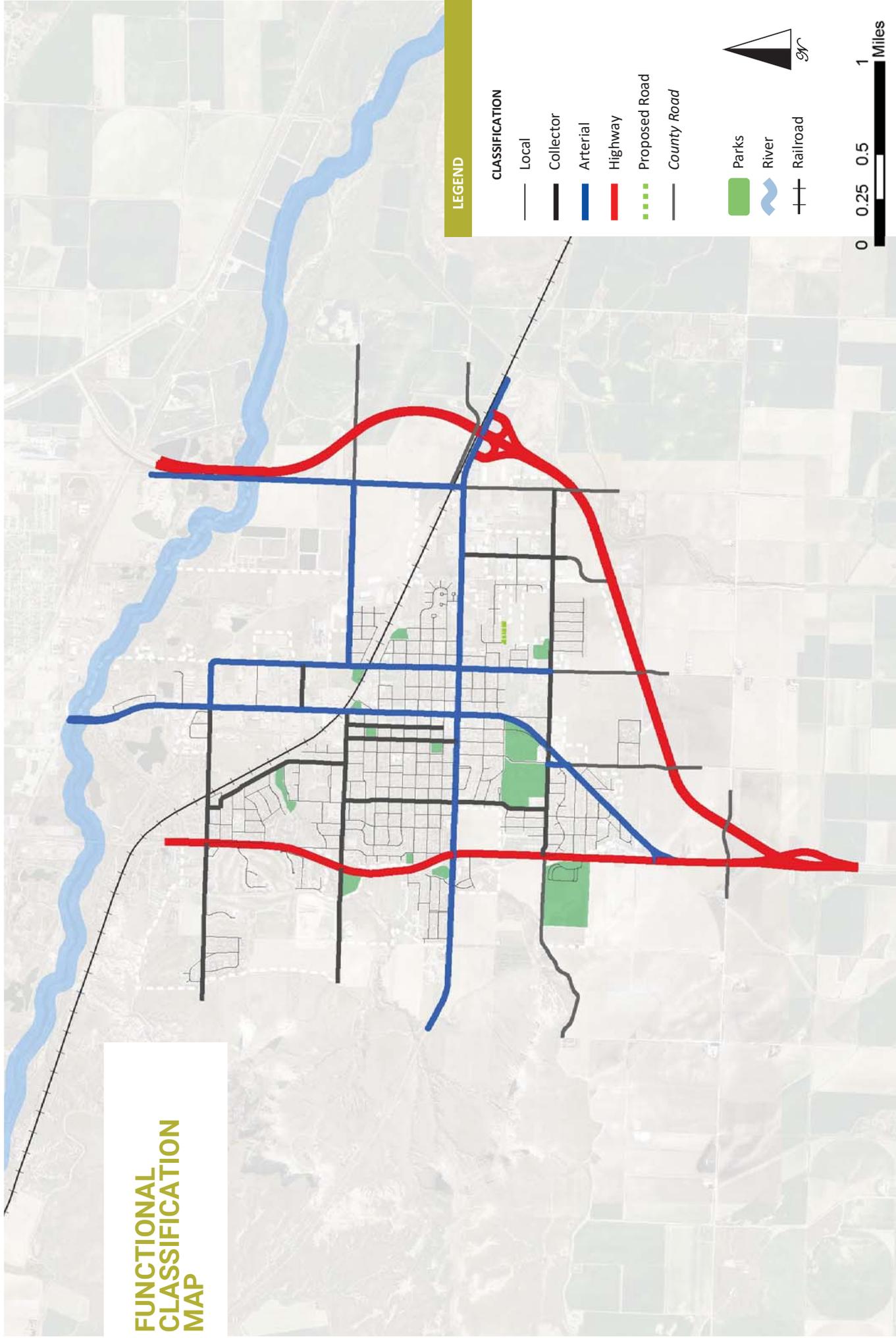
Development Interface: Setbacks

Use these descriptions to help in guiding the creation of a street environment that reflects the individual qualities of a district, while maintaining critical function of the transportation network.

Street Typology

The mobility framework map depicts 4 primary types of streets. In the case of commerce and residential streets a differentiation is made between the traditional main street / grid block context and the more automobile oriented arterial / suburban context that exists in Gering. Descriptive and dimensional guidance is provided in the following narrative, but the application of such design guidelines is subject to adjustments based upon the district and context in which the street is located.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION MAP



LEGEND

CLASSIFICATION

- Local
- Collector
- Arterial
- Highway
- Proposed Road
- County Road

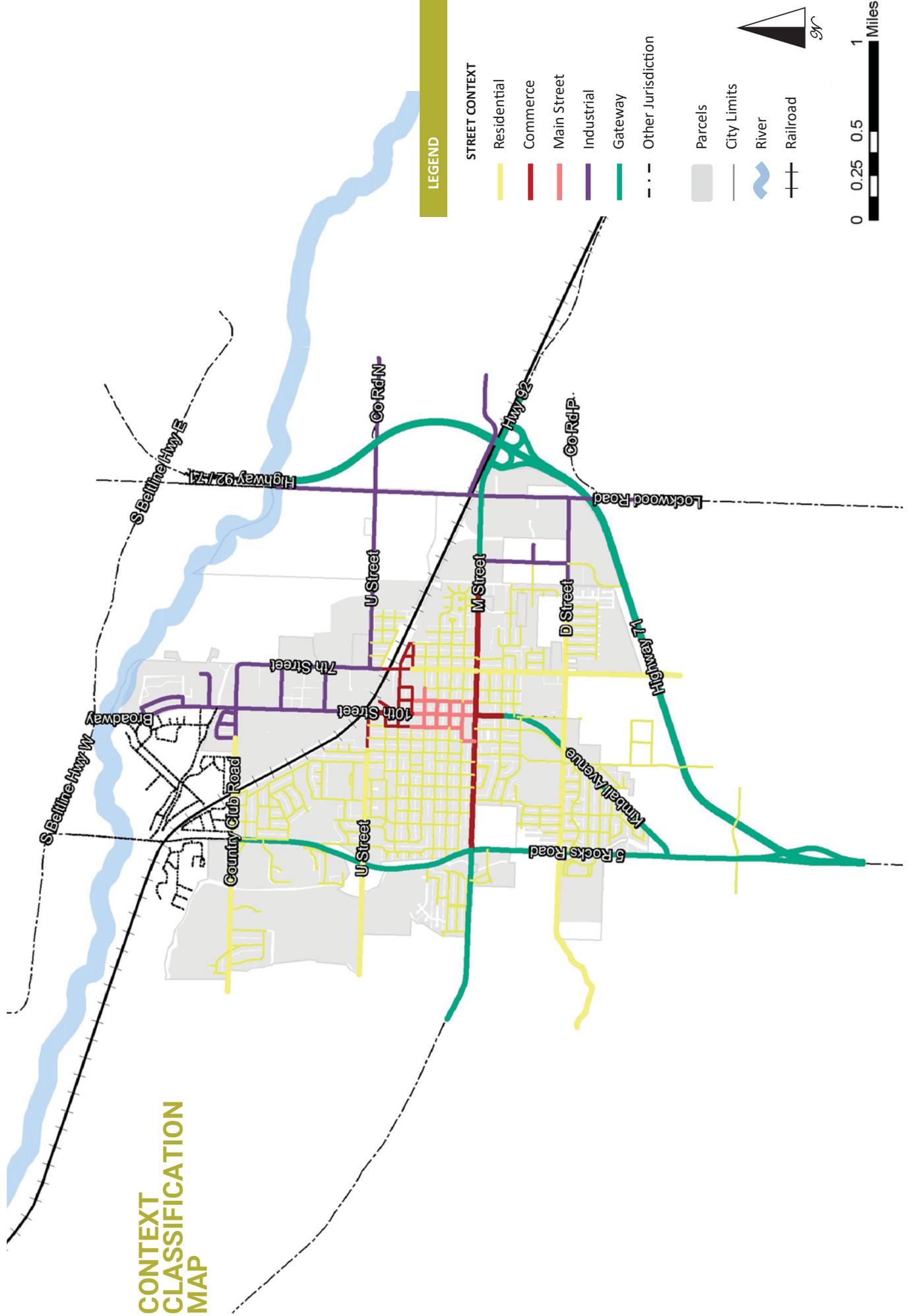
Parks

River

Railroad



CONTEXT CLASSIFICATION MAP

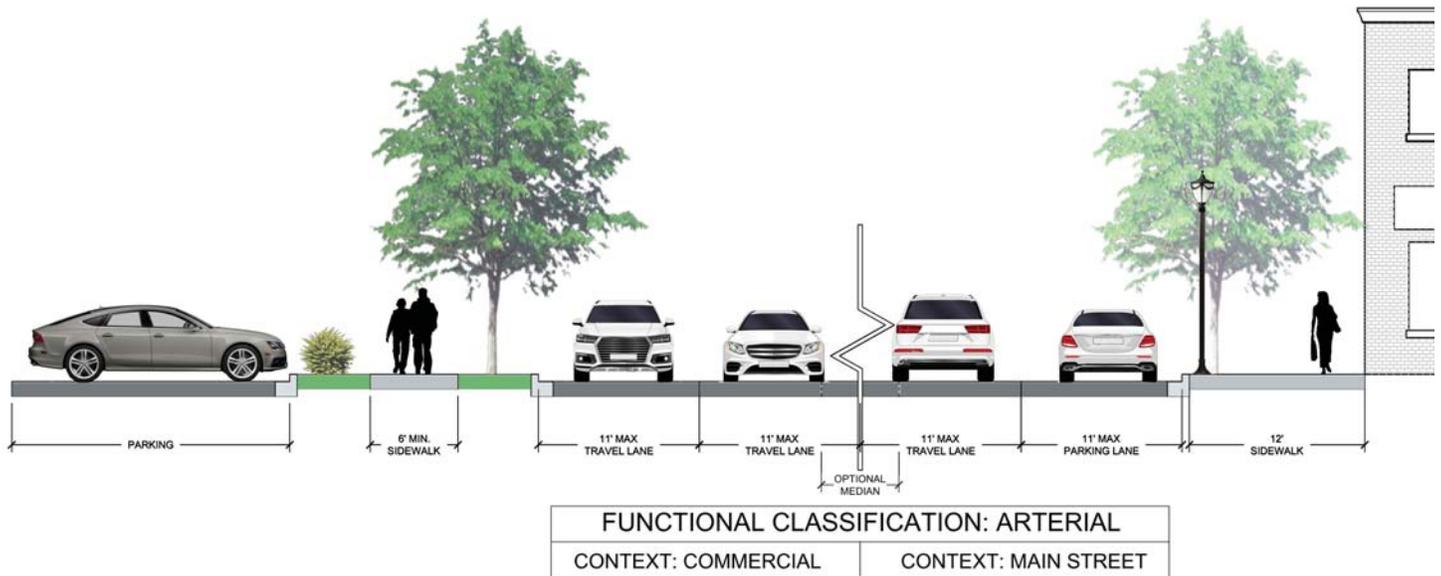


LEGEND

- STREET CONTEXT**
- Residential
 - Commerce
 - Main Street
 - Industrial
 - Gateway
 - Other Jurisdiction

- Parcels
- City Limits
- River
- Railroad





Commerce Streets

Commerce streets serve as primary commercial business corridors. Commercial activities may stretch all along the corridor or be concentrated at nodes where major streets intersect with the commerce street. In Gering there are two contexts in which this type of street may occur.

Arterial

This type of commerce street is characterized as an automobile-oriented roadway serving typical commercial development. The primary purpose is to get people and goods from one place to another via vehicular means (automobile, public transit, truck) while accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians. Commercial development along the arterial commerce street generally provides off-street parking and access from the road / sidewalk to the uses adjacent to the street while minimizing the number of access points.

Main

The main street context must accommodate a greater level of pedestrian movement and activity along the street as well as on-street parking. Through traffic, as well as circulating local traffic, is accommodated but slower moving within a commercial development framework in which buildings are closer to the street. These streets should have wider sidewalks and convenient crossings to serve pedestrians, as well as provide a higher amenity level. In this context a safe and enjoyable pedestrian experience is a high priority.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** up to two (2) lanes on each side of the street, with each lane a maximum of eleven (11) feet wide. In the main street context one (1) travel lane in each direction may be desirable. Medians may serve as access management tools in the arterial context to allow for left turns onto streets at intersections, and limit left turn access to private property. Medians should be well defined and if used as turn lanes should be eleven (11) feet wide.
- **Pedestrian:** sidewalks intended for pedestrian travel and direct access into businesses should occur on both sides of the street and be a minimum of six (6) feet wide (along commerce arterials) and could expand up to twelve (12) feet wide in the main street context. Note: All sidewalk widths and crossings should meet ADA standards. Additionally, crossings at street intersections and private drives should be designed with pedestrian safety in mind – smaller turning radii to slow vehicle turning movement and the proper placement of landscape materials and signage so as not to block sight lines is important.
- **Bicycle:** bike lanes when provided along commerce streets should be six (6) feet wide, located on both sides of the street if possible, and should include a two (2) foot wide strip that separates the bike lane from the adjacent travel lane.
- **Public Transit:** stops should be accommodated within the width of the right-of-way without creating traffic flow interference when possible.

Parking

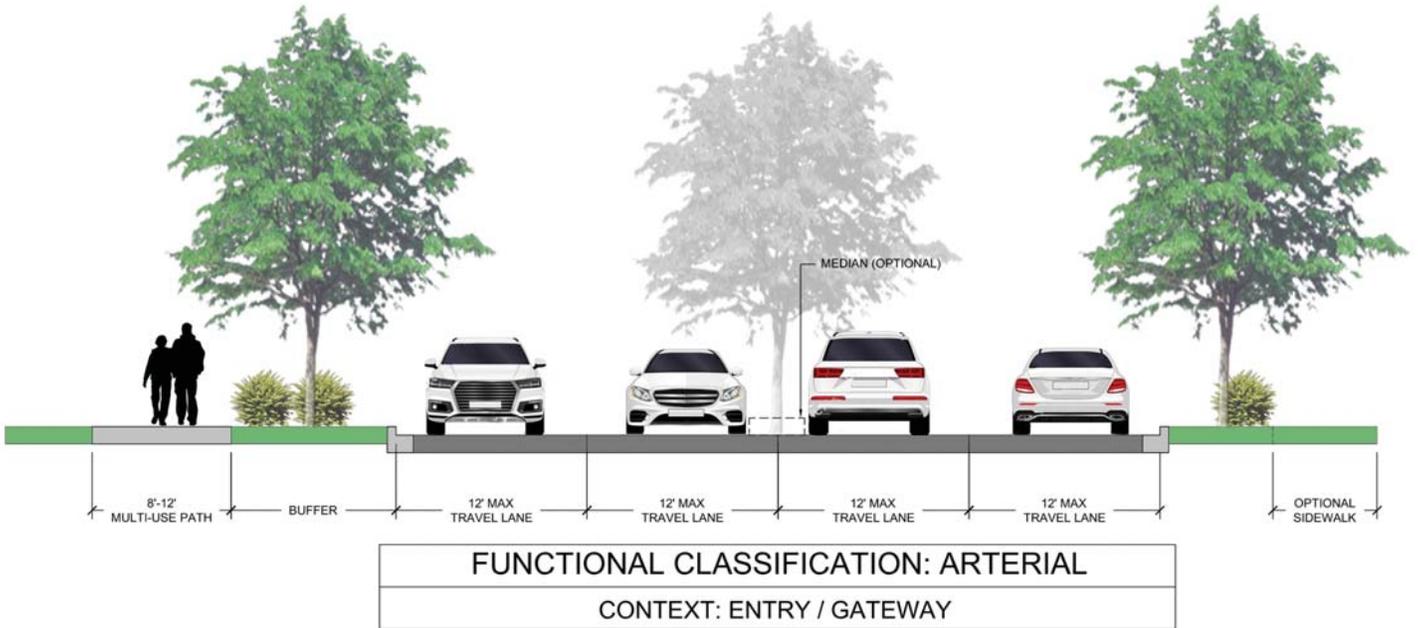
- **On-street:** would not be found along arterial commerce streets. Within the main street context on-street parking may be provided in a variety of formats – angled (to the side or in the middle between travel lanes) spaces may be designed to back-in or back-out. Parallel parking spaces may be more likely along cross streets within one or two blocks of the main street context.
- **Off-street:** in the main street context off-street parking should have minimum frontage along the street with the parking area being behind or to the side of buildings and a wall / fence / landscape feature between the sidewalk and the parking area which extends the dominant building setback. Drive access should be from cross streets or alleys in this context. In the commerce arterial context off-street parking may be located in the front of properties along the sidewalk with a landscape buffer defining the public and private space, and minimal direct drive access points off of the arterial.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** promoting consistent street character adds to the visual appeal and definition of place in areas of commerce. Trees should be protected and the use of tree grates along sidewalks (especially in main street commerce areas) may be option depending on tree species and streetscape design. Low maintenance trees and vegetation that are drought resistant, and adaptable and tolerant of the commerce environment are preferred. Median areas and extended corners at intersections may also provide opportunities for enhanced streetscape elements, pedestrian refuge areas at intersections, and enhanced character utilizing accent materials. Medians should have a design width that best suits the purpose and desired design character along the street.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** intended to provide a well-lit and safe environment along public rights-of-way may be provided through typical street lighting standards on arterial commerce streets. But in areas where an enhanced character is desired, such as the main street context, independent pedestrian light poles; tree lighting; architectural feature lighting; and display window lighting should be utilized.
- **Character Enhancements:** may include public art; educational / interpretive components; benches / bike racks; planter areas / boxes; banner systems; wayfinding elements; bike racks; newsstands / information kiosks; street vendor stands; outdoor eating areas; and/or other amenities.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** The character of building edges and the presence of direct building entrances located along or connected to sidewalks will influence pedestrian activity. Main street areas have minimal building setbacks of zero (0) to five (5) or ten (10) feet and outdoor sales display or sitting / eating areas are encouraged. Typical commerce arterials reflect greater building setbacks allowing for off-street parking and landscape buffering between the public sidewalk and the building.



Gateway Streets

Gateway streets operate as primary entryways into Gering but may also serve a through or around town function. This street type has a parkway feel in that there are minimal access points or intersections along these streets. Additionally, enhanced visual elements provide an inviting experience. Adjacent but separated wide sidewalks and/or trails encourage and support bicycle and pedestrian activity. Enhanced streetscape elements as well as green infrastructure elements provided along this street type serve to reinforce the natural physical context of, as well as beautification efforts in Gering.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** one (1) or two (2) travel lanes in each direction are a maximum of twelve (12) feet wide. Access management practices minimize the number of private access points and intersections along these streets.
- **Pedestrian / Bicycle:** an enhanced sidewalk / multi-use trail is provided on one or both sides of these streets. The width is eight (8) to twelve (12) feet with a significant separation distance between the path and vehicle travel lanes. Intersection crossings are enhanced to ensure compliance with ADA standards and provision of up-to-date ramps, crosswalks, and signal control that accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Public Transit:** likely to be express oriented service with no stops or minimal stops being accommodated at major intersections only in a manner that does not interfere with traffic flow.

Parking

- **On-street:** no on-street parking.
- **Off-street:** access management practices eliminate entry / exit access points so there is no direct access to off-street parking areas or adjacent property.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** shade trees and landscape enhancements are provided in the ample open space associated with this street type. Landscaping may be incorporated in medians or along the sides of the roadway giving a parkway or boulevard feel. Shade provision along the associated sidewalk / trail is important. The open space area (median and adjacent) may include low maintenance native vegetation that also serves as a “green infrastructure element for gathering, filtering and conveying storm water run-off.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** intended to provide a well-lit and safe environment along the multi-use sidewalk / trail independent pedestrian lighting is provided.
- **Character Enhancements:** may include public art; educational / interpretive components; entry monuments / fountains; benches; banner systems; wayfinding elements; and/or other amenities.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** generally, the side or back of private property will be adjacent to these streets. It is critical that appropriate visual buffering through the use of plant materials, berms and fencing be visually appealing.



Industrial Streets

A significant and important part of Gering is the industrial activity that provides employment opportunities. Such activity generates truck traffic with specific needs for the efficient movement of goods and products. Accommodation of public transit, pedestrians and bicycles is necessary for getting people from where they live to where they work. Wide sidewalks serving as multi-use paths are encouraged to provide alternative means of transportation separate from vehicular traffic. Landscape amenities are provided on private property as buffers between the public corridor and industrial uses. Pedestrian crossings are enhanced to provide greater pedestrian safety.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** should include one (1) or more travel lanes on each side of the street, with each lane a maximum of twelve (12) feet wide. Larger corner radii are desired at intersections and access points to accommodate industrial oriented traffic.
- **Pedestrian:** sidewalks intended for pedestrian travel should occur on both sides of the street (designated arterials) and be a minimum of eight (8) feet wide. On local or collector streets in the industrial context sidewalks may be reduced in width (six (6) feet). Sidewalks should be separated from the vehicle lanes for safety purposes utilizing low maintenance methods and materials. Note: all widths and crossings should meet ADA standards.
- **Bicycle:** bicycle use is primarily intended as an alternate means of transportation (not recreational purposes) in industrial areas, thus wider sidewalks are provided to separate bicycle use from vehicle use and intersections should be appropriately signed or signalized for safety purposes.
- **Public Transit:** industrial streets should be adaptable / designed in a manner that can easily accommodate public transit as an alternative means of transportation.

Parking

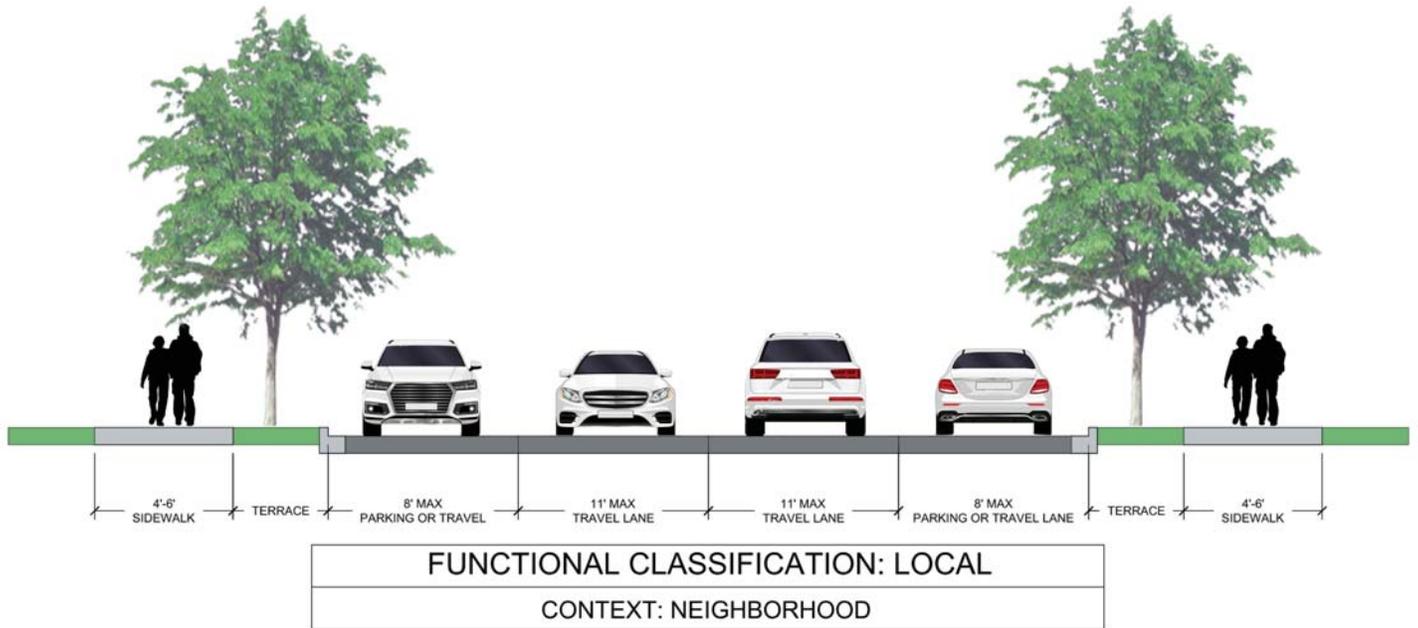
- **On-street:** may be accommodated when it does not interfere with primary traffic movement.
- **Off-street:** lots / structures adjacent to buildings with landscape buffers between the parking areas and public sidewalks. Convenient pedestrian / bicycle connections should be provided from the public sidewalk to the building entry. Landscape buffers may serve as storm water features and incorporate low maintenance native plantings.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** trees and other plant materials are generally placed on the landscape buffers between parking areas / buildings and the public sidewalk. The area between the public sidewalk and vehicle lanes may include low maintenance native vegetation that also serves as a green infrastructure element for gathering, filtering and conveying storm water run-off.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** is provide via standard street lighting.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** development setbacks will vary depending on the type, intensity and building form of the various industrial uses and settings.



Residential Streets

Residential streets connect Gering’s residential neighborhoods to other parts of the community. These streets influence the perceived quality of the neighborhood and serve local bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The users of these streets range from very young children to the elderly as they go to and from community activities / events, places of employment and shopping areas, as well as other destinations in and around Gering.

Residential streets exist in two contexts: a grid and a suburban framework. In either context the residential street serves as a place for neighborhood interaction. These streets also connect neighborhoods and link different parts of the same neighborhood. Such streets should be designed to minimize through traffic and speed while also providing safe and inviting places to move and interact.

Movement

- **Vehicle:** two (2) travel lanes maximum each a maximum of eleven (11) feet wide.
- **Pedestrian:** sidewalks intended for pedestrian travel should occur on both sides of the street and be a minimum of four (4) to five (5) feet wide. In the suburban context sidewalks should be six (6) feet wide on both sides of the street. Note: all widths and crossings should meet ADA standards. Wider widths are intended for designated trails that may exist in the neighborhood context as described in other parts of the comprehensive plan.
- **Bicycle:** bicycle traffic may take place on the sidewalk (in the case of young families or individuals) and/or roadway (older children and adults for recreational and alternate means of transportation). In the residential context sharing the road is an expectation. Designated trails or bicycle routes with intentionally designed wider widths may exist within a neighborhood to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in and coming through the area.
- **Public Transit:** designated collector streets within the grid or suburban residential context should be designed in a manner that can easily accommodate the provision of public transit.

Parking

- **On-street:** creates a buffer between pedestrians and traffic lanes. On-street parking should consist of a minimum of eight (8) foot lanes on each side of the street.
- **Off-street:** is provided via private residential driveways and in the case of higher density residential development parking areas with landscape buffers between the parking areas and sidewalks.

Amenities

- **Streetscape:** intended to provide shade and promote a consistent street character. Species should be selected that are native to the area; drought tolerant; adaptable to the street environment; and have minimal maintenance requirements. Placement can be determined based on species type and be either in the street right-of-way or on private property along the sidewalk.
- **Pedestrian Lighting:** intended to provide a well-lit and safe environment along public rights-of-way throughout residential areas. Increased levels of pedestrian lighting may be required along sidewalks and pathways that are primary connectors between neighborhoods and other community destinations.

Development Interface

- **Setbacks:** are intended to provide desired separation between the public right-of-way and private development. In areas where the street grid is prevalent setbacks are likely to be smaller (zero to 20 feet) than suburban areas (25 or more feet).

Gateways and Wayfinding

Although Gering is a small community by population standards there are many activities, events and destinations that draw visitors to and through Gering. For visitors the first and most lasting impression of the community they visit or pass through is formulated based on the perceived quality of the travel experience. Many times, this perception is based in the visual aspects of the route and by the ease / convenience of getting from point A to point B.

Wayfinding components such as thematic entry gateways and directional signage have a positive influence on the perceptions formed by visitors. While a much progress has already been made on wayfinding efforts, the community should continue to build upon previous efforts and determine a thematic for the design of a unified wayfinding system that lends direction in regard to the community's vision statement – Pioneers Welcome!

Gateway areas can provide an opportunity to leverage the unique context and history of Gering by creating highly visible arrival points that define the community and leveraging unique features in and around Gering. gateways are intended to reflect the character and vision of Gering and can be a community asset for citizens and visitors to experience by:

- Promoting a sense arrival and anticipation.
- Establishing landscaping, artwork, signage, and other sculptural elements that reflect local history and culture, tell the story of commerce in the area, compliment and highlight the natural landscape, as well as define community boundaries.
- Featuring views to landmarks, focal points and significant community features big and small.



4.3

Parks & Open Space Framework

Public parks, open space and pathway corridors can define and enhance the quality of community life in Gering. Residents have access to many recreational experiences provided via a number of public entities. Whether interacting with neighbors in a local park or walking a trail in a national monument these places are integral to life in Gering.

The framework of public spaces is utilized for both passive and active recreation, as well as organized and self-directed participation. No matter the activity these spaces offer the potential for unique and memorable experiences for all parts of the community. Trails can be planned as pathways and links to a system of public open spaces, schools, commercial and employment areas, and entertainment locations. By creating a system of diverse public open spaces / parks connected by multi-use pathway corridors Gering will benefit by enhancing community health / wellness and promoting positive social interaction.

The Principles and Policies in Section 3 – Community Vision include a broad list of items that impact the Parks & Open Space Framework, indicating how important these items are to the community. The vision even included one of the four primary foundations – Nature Close at Hand – to highlight many of the policies associated with Parks & Open Space. For a full description of each principle and policy, please reference Section 3.

Many of these policies could be handled through more specific and tactical investigation over the years. However, several are interrelated with the broader vision of the plan and should be carefully considered to ensure they don't get lost in the shuffle. Additionally, many of the most critical issues are regional in nature and will require broad collaboration between local, regional, state and even federal government, along with community and non-profit partners.

Specifically, the following Principles embody the strategic differentiation that Gering can use to leverage natural assets to promote growth and economic investment:

Principle 1.1 – Our community will embrace the river.

What this principle means for Gering: The river is a defining asset for the community, yet the leveraging of its impact is currently limited. As economies shift from resourced-based geographic limitations, quality of life is becoming a predominant factor influencing business site selection. Approaching this issue through an economic development lens will help add strategic focus as well as horsepower to the initiative.

Due to the regional impact of the North Platte River Corridor on the tri-town area, a collaborative approach to planning and enhancement should be considered. Gering can take a leadership role to ensure that this initiative doesn't get caught up in red tape. To help advance this principle, a logical next step would include diving deeper into what it means to the local communities to Embrace the River. Exploring specific action steps of how the policies in this comprehensive plan could be carried out would help define funding needs and specific policy changes to pursue. Additionally, creating a master vision for the River could help in securing funding.

Principle 1.2 – Our community will preserve Monumental Views.

What this principle means for Gering: Views of the rock formations provide a geographic exclamation point to the Gering area. Visitors, prospective residents and business owners, and locals appreciate this diversity in landform, viewing the formations as a key amenity to the area. Preserving views of the Monument will require several different action steps. First, identifying the most important locations that views should be preserved from is essential. While changes over time and new construction may impede views from individual properties, key public locations should be identified where the views are non-negotiable. Once you've agreed upon these key locations, a series of guidelines should be created to help future decision-makers evaluate proposals. Specific locations to consider views from may include public buildings and parks.

Additional consideration should be given to the protection of land leading up to the bluffs. Creation of a buffer area around the base of the Monument and other areas can help to preserve the dramatic quality and function of these areas as public recreation amenities. In addition to purchasing lands, consider exploring a variety of tools, including conservation easements, to help minimize development nearby these landforms.

Principle 1.5 – Our community parks will serve all populations.

What this principle means for Gering: Parks are a beloved asset to the people of Gering. The superior quality of life has resulted in families choosing to establish roots in Gering over other area communities. In order to maintain this competitive advantage, Gering should carefully monitor the types of facilities and experiences its parks offer to ensure that it continues to meet local needs.

To help Gering address the principle to serve all populations, a Parks Master Plan is recommended to aid in reviewing your current assets as well as liabilities. In several instances, there may be too many or too few fields, courts or parks. Considering changing trends is also important to prioritize popular emerging activities – like pickleball – to ensure Gering is meeting the needs of its population.

Additional considerations in a master plan include maintenance. Merging stormwater control facilities can be an effective way to utilize open lands while also reducing the amount of area that needs to be maintained. Adding naturalized landscapes to parks can reduce irrigation requirements as well as mowing operations. Exploring these options in greater detail will help to ensure that your team can manage the assets in an efficient manner.

Parks & Open Space Framework

With many different assets and elements to work with, the Parks & Open Space Framework includes corridors, natural areas, various types of parks, and specialty areas. The following categorization system helps to create a shared classification system to help ensure everyone is using the same language to describe the types of facilities. These include:

Parks & Open Space Classification	
Functional Classification	Context
PATHWAY CORRIDORS	Trails Bike Lanes
NATURAL AREAS	
PARKS	Community
	Neighborhood
	Pocket Park
	Plaza Specialty Areas

Pathway Corridors

Objective: Provide safe access to and connectivity between neighborhoods and community destinations throughout Gering while enhancing opportunities for recreation, interaction, health and wellness, and alternative means of transportation.

Pathway corridors serve as links between areas and places in Gering. Such corridors are based in providing the opportunity to walk, run, bike for recreational, health / wellness, or alternate means of transportation purposes. Two types of pathway corridors have been identified.

Trails

Trails are intended to promote social interaction as people move about the community for recreation, health, and transportation purposes. These links and paths may serve multiple type of users and uses – e.g. green storm water infrastructure, wildlife habitat, walking / hiking, cycling, etc. – may all coexist in the trail corridor.

Bike Lanes / Routes

Bicycling is an affordable and popular mode of transportation that provides physical activity and produces no pollution. The lane / route network must integrate with and complement the functions of the various street types and trails. In a community like Gering virtually every street may see bicycle traffic but identifying the best location for bicycle facilities e.g. designated lanes or routes, requires detailed planning with safety as a top priority.

Natural Areas

Objective: Provide nature-based recreation and environmental education opportunities while protecting and preserving valuable or unique natural resources and open space.

Natural areas serve as places where people can escape the built environment of the community to enjoy natural landscape features and amenities. The area may serve a number of natural functions such as storm water management, wildlife habitat, flood control. The size and shape of the area is dependent upon the functions, purpose and uses that are associated with the area. Such areas while protecting or conserving natural resources or features also allow public access and support outdoor recreation opportunities that may be unique to the area – trail related activities; bird and wildlife viewing; and environmental education / interpretation.

These areas and corridors can be based upon streams and rivers, areas of dense vegetation, abandoned rail lines or even transportation or utility line right-of-way.

Trail heads, variations of trail materials, interpretive / informational signage, fishing or water access points, viewpoints mark the types of low-impact facilities that may be present in natural areas. These areas are easily connected to other community destinations by the overall trail system and mobility network.

Community Parks

Objective: Provide opportunities for multiple types of recreation and community gathering that requires larger open spaces capable of supporting organized activities and events in addition to day-to-day use.

Community parks are usually 15 or more acres of area serving residents from throughout the community. People may come to the park via personal vehicles, walking, biking or even public transit, which ties to the importance of such parks being located on collector or arterial streets and pedestrian / bicycle trail systems as people may be coming to the park for communitywide activities. These types of parks will support active and passive forms of recreation that appeal to a wide range of user groups. Amenities may include group picnic areas / shelters, sport fields / courts, children's play areas, gardens, trail or pathway systems, community festival or event space and green space or natural areas. Additional support facilities such as indoor recreation facilities, off-street parking and restrooms may also be present in these types of parks.

Neighborhood Parks

Objective: Provide green space and recreational opportunities within the neighborhood at the individual, family and small group level for all ages.

Neighborhood parks are typically less than 10 acres in size and serve residents within a ½ mile walking distance of the park but may attract users from further away. Such parks may be associated with school facilities. These close to home recreational opportunities typically include amenities such as playground equipment; outdoor sports courts and fields; picnic facilities; walking paths and open space areas. Users of these parks may be from a wide age range and most activities are non-supervised / non-organized activities. Walkers and bicyclists will frequent these parks so connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood and the larger trail system is important.

Pocket Parks / Plazas

Objective: Provide easily accessible and comfortable green space and/or basic recreation opportunities while contributing to neighborhood, district and community identity.

These smaller spaces are intimately tied to their immediate surroundings. Generally, such facilities are less than 3 acres in size and meet basic recreational needs or take advantage of a unique context. These parks and plazas are small lots with limited amenities – playground, seating and tables, landscape / public art – which fit the context and primary user needs. Such parks / plazas will make use of vacant land or other unused space and will foster community interaction and civic pride.

Specialty Areas

Objective: Provide regional or citywide opportunities for specialized recreation, social and cultural activities and contribute to community identity and civic pride.

The size of these areas is determined by the type of use. The special use area usually has a single dominant use / purpose such as a sports complex, field or stadium; dog areas; skate park; boat or water-oriented facility; swimming pool; community center; fair grounds; community entertainment / event venues; etc. Because of the specific nature of the facility or area design consideration must take into account the provision of adequate and appropriate support facilities on the site, as well as access to mobility networks utilized by the user group(s) coming to the specialty area.

The Service Area Map provides an overview of accessibility to parks and pathways to help identify areas of Gering that may be underserved. A quarter-mile buffer is illustrate around each park (in green) and pathway (in blue). While it is preferable for the majority of residents to be proximate to a park facility, access to a pathway which connects to a park is a beneficial alternative. The map illustrates that a majority of Gering’s residential neighborhoods do have reasonable access to parks facilities with a few gaps to consider addressing.

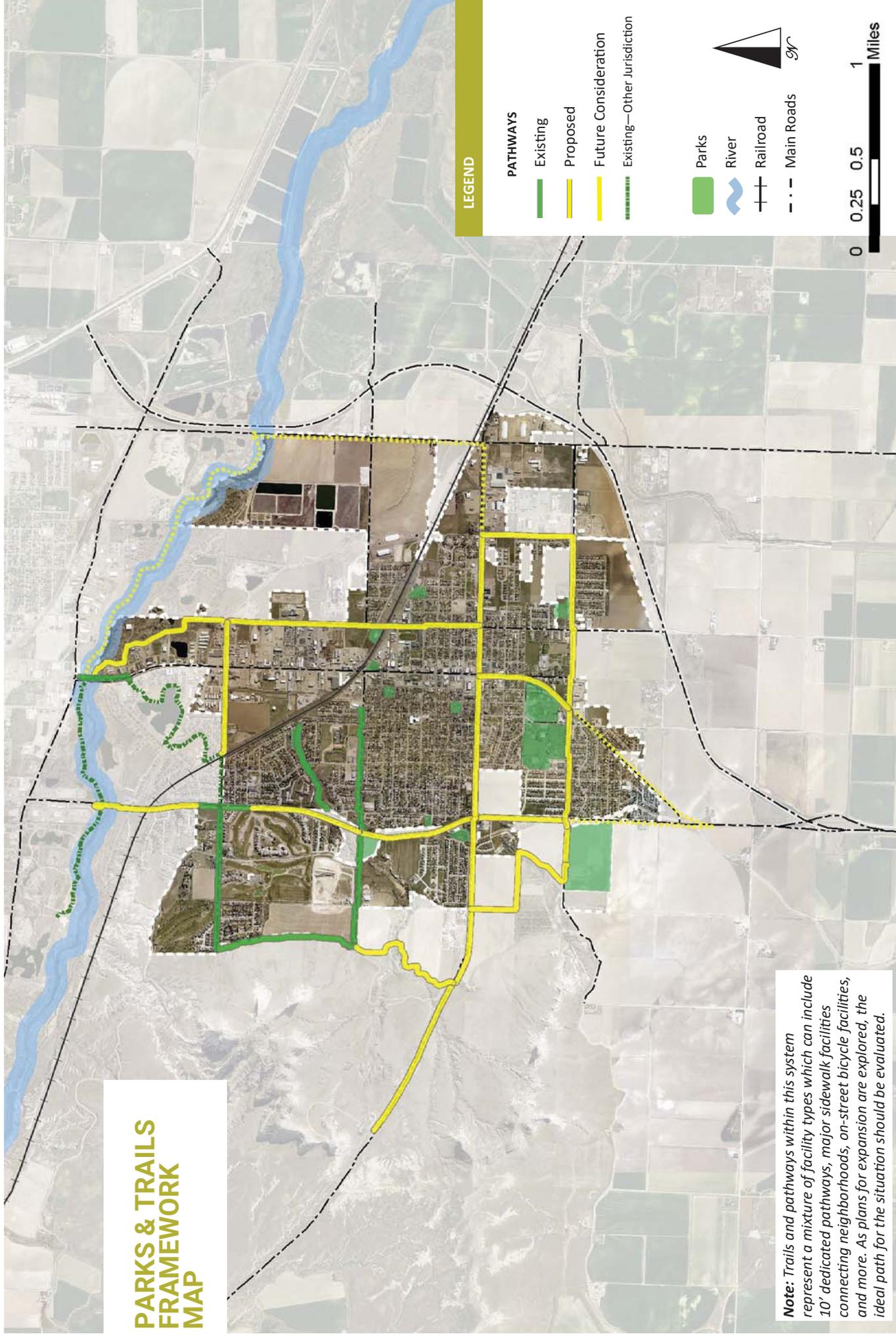
As residential growth occurs, planning for additional parks and pathways should take place in advance of neighborhood buildout to ensure that new gaps are not being created. Phased park development can help to address the timing and balancing capital investments. The first critical step is identifying the location of future parks. Second, property acquisition ensures that a public facility can be built in the future. A third and possibly much later step is the actual development of the park, which should take place when the demand is present for the facility.

Specific consideration should be given to identifying a property in Gering’s south growth area (District 3) north of the bypass and southeast of Kimball Avenue.

Understanding pathway connections are also important to ensuring that both non-motorized transportation and recreation needs are addressed in Gering. The Pathways Map depicts the location of existing pathways (both on-street bike lanes and trail connections) and parks. Proposed pathways identify primary locations for new facilities to be considered in the near-term for Gering. The indication of a Proposed Pathway does not specifically define how that facility might be installed. In some areas, a separated trail may be feasible, providing a separated facility that offers a more recreational experience. In other areas, on-street bike lanes may be necessary due to existing conditions and building adjacent to the street. In any instance, additional design plans will be needed to formalize the approach to construction of these pathway facilities.

The Pathways Map also identifies Future Pathways for consideration over time. These routes are located in areas that could possibly be considered, but are not as high a priority to serve the community in the near term. As road projects and development of properties along these routes emerge over time, consideration should be give to ensure that the option to install a pathway facility is not eliminated. Preservation of right-of-way is one tool that can help in addressing these segments.

PARKS & TRAILS FRAMEWORK MAP



LEGEND

PATHWAYS

- Existing
- Proposed
- Future Consideration
- Existing—Other Jurisdiction

Parks

River

Railroad

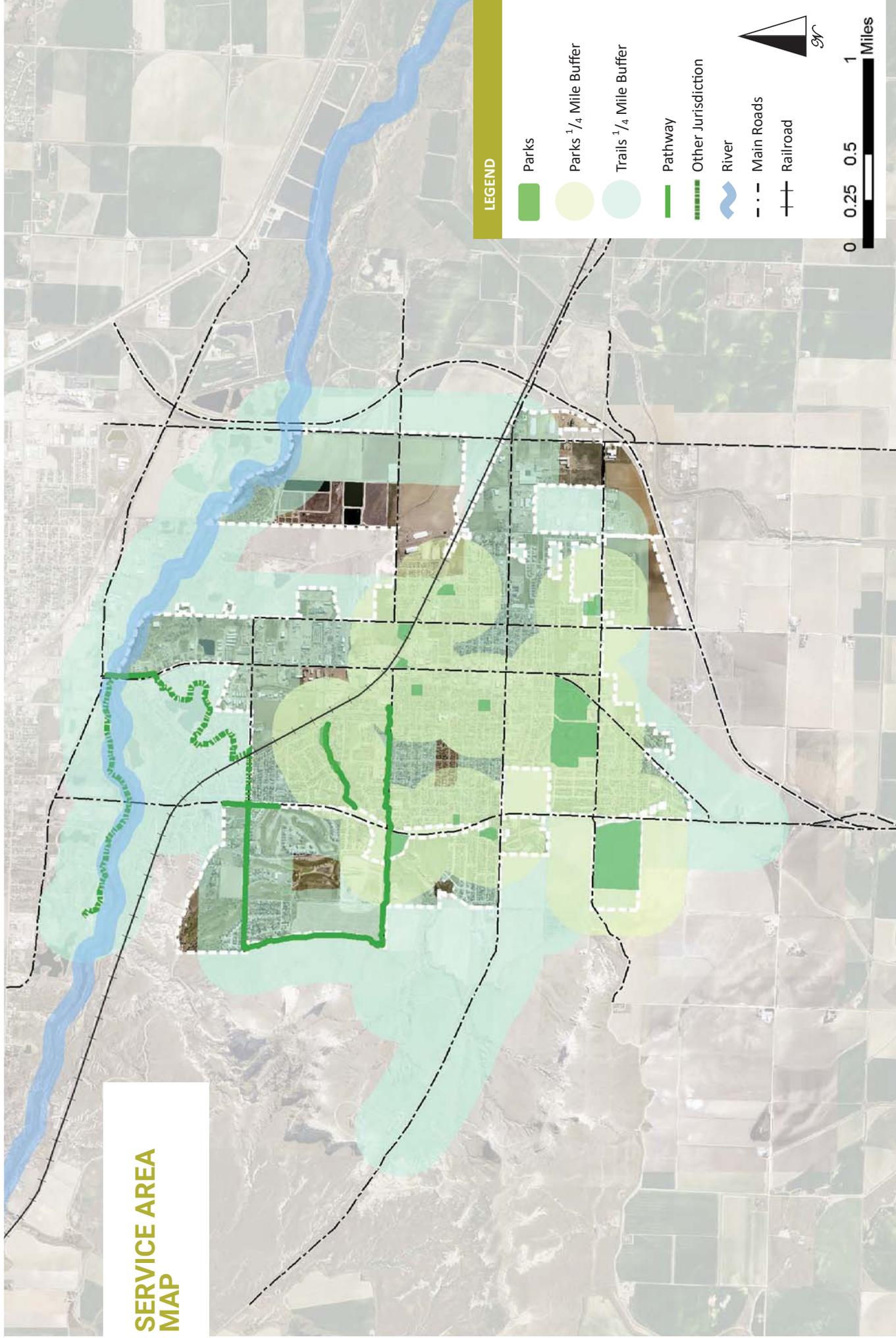
Main Roads



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Note: Trails and pathways within this system represent a mixture of facility types which can include 10' dedicated pathways, major sidewalk facilities connecting neighborhoods, on-street bicycle facilities, and more. As plans for expansion are explored, the ideal path for the situation should be evaluated.

SERVICE AREA MAP



4.4 Energy

Everyday life in Gering is dependent upon the availability of reliable energy to support mobility, employment, education, commerce and agriculture in and around the community. Gering's future growth and development will impact energy sources and systems and the need for affordable energy provision will grow as well. Through proper planning and policy implementation it is possible for the community to save money, promote a resilient economy, conserve resources, and have a prosperous future. The energy framework for the Gering Comprehensive Plan consists of a summary of Nebraska Energy Policy, a profile of Gering's existing energy use by sector (Residential, Commercial, Industrial, and Transportation), and an overview of renewable energy sources, as well as strategies and actions for Gering.

Recent Energy Policy in Nebraska

The State of Nebraska passed Legislative Bill 997 in 2010 that requires all cities and counties in Nebraska (with the exception of villages) to incorporate an energy element into any new or updated comprehensive plan. Such element must address energy utilization and use by sector, utilization of renewable energy sources and energy conservation measures that benefit the community. This section has been prepared in accordance with Nebraska State Statute 19-903(4).

Additionally, the state has developed an energy plan and adopted an energy code. The 2011 Nebraska Energy Plan identifies 3 objectives with 14 supporting strategies. The primary objective are as follows:

- Ensure access to affordable and reliable energy for Nebraskans to use responsibly.
- Advance implementation and innovation of renewable energy in the state.
- Reduce petroleum consumption in Nebraska's transportation sector.

By adopting the International Energy Conservation Code (IEEC), effective August 2011, as the Nebraska Energy Code, the State of Nebraska allows all cities and counties to adopt codes that differ from the Nebraska Energy Code, but state law requires that such codes be equivalent to the Nebraska Energy Code. State Statute Sections 81-1608 to 81-1616 outlines the provisions of the Energy Code that are intended to see that new structures and significant renovation of existing structures meet uniform efficiency standards. As stated in the State Statutes:

there is a need to adopt the International Energy Conservation Code in order (1) to ensure that a minimum energy efficiency standard is maintained throughout the state, (2) to harmonize and clarify energy building code statutory references, (3) to ensure compliance with the National Energy Policy Act of 1992, (4) to increase energy savings for all Nebraska consumers, especially low-income Nebraskans, (5) to reduce the cost of state programs that provide assistance to low-income Nebraskans, (6) to reduce the amount of money expended to import energy, (7) to reduce the growth of energy consumption, (8) to lessen the need for new power plants, and (9) to provide training for local code officials and residential and commercial builders who implement the International Energy Conservation Code.

Additional information regarding the Nebraska Energy Code can be found at the Nebraska Energy Office website (http://www.neo.ne.gov/home_const/iecc/counties/gage.htm).

Another piece of impactful energy related State Legislation is LB 436 which allows for net metering. Through net metering citizens can generate their own energy and send the excess energy they produce back onto the grid. The practice of net metering has many benefits related to the diversifying the use of energy resources, promoting growth in the economy, and providing affordable and reliable energy relate service. The citizen / customer is encouraged to employ renewable energy sources with the utility purchasing the excess energy produced through a credit system.

In addition to net metering legislation, the State of Nebraska has also incorporated easement provisions allowing property owners to create binding solar and wind easements to protect and maintain access to sunlight and wind for energy related purposes. Local jurisdictions may also develop plans and regulations to protect solar and wind access, as well as grant variances under certain parameters to solar and wind energy systems that would be restricted under current local regulations. Additional information regarding programs, incentives and policies related to energy are summarized on the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website: <http://www.dsireusa.org/>

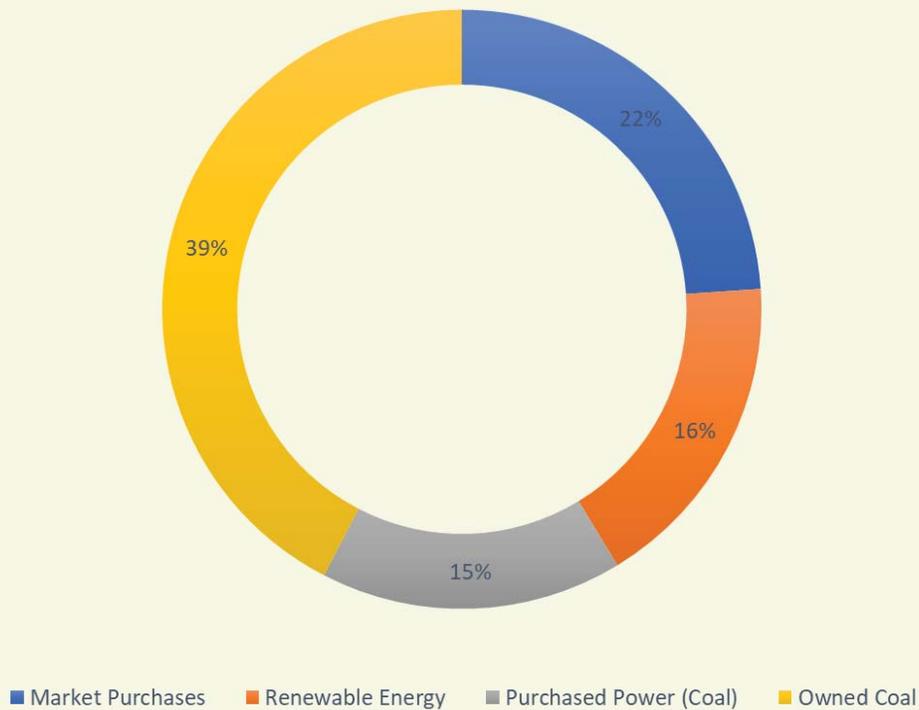
Gering's Energy Infrastructure & Consumption

Energy provision in Gering is primarily provided through the local electrical and natural gas infrastructure systems.

Electricity

In Gering the electrical system is owned and operated by the City. The purchases wholesale electricity from MEAN (Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska). MEAN uses a variety of traditional and renewable energy sources to generate electricity.

MEAN Sources of Energy



Source: MEAN 2017-2018 Annual Report

Natural Gas

Black Hills Energy is a private utility provider of natural gas in Gering. The natural gas infrastructure system consists of a network of service lines of various sizes and ages. The primary feeder main into the city is a main. The system P.S.I is # pounds.

Heating Fuel Sources in Gering

	Occupied Housing Units	Percent
Utility Gas	2,623	81.2%
Bottled/ tank or LP gas	56	1.7%
Electricity	515	15.9%
Other Fuel	30	0.9%

Source: American Community Survey 2017 estimates

Potential Renewable Energy Sources

Nebraska is a unique state in that it is the only state in which power is provided by public providers only. This has resulted in some of the lowest electricity costs in the nation. Low cost energy provision through traditional means of production has also served as a stumbling block to implementing renewable energy projects in Nebraska at a time when much of the nation is looking to non-traditional renewable energy sources. Yet several renewable energy sources may serve as options for Gering in the future.

Biomass

The use of biological materials (e.g. living or recently living organisms) as an energy source is most recognized or associated with the production of ethanol, biodiesel and methane gas. Indirect energy generation from biomass sources through the fermentation or degradation of agricultural, natural, and municipal wastes, residues or by-products may create a number of fuels. These fuels can be used to produce heat and electricity.

Geothermal

Geothermal energy can be cost effective and environmentally friendly but may be limited in application in the Gering area. The most likely application of geothermal energy would be the use of individual heat pump systems consisting of closed loop piping filled with fluid which circulates underground at a depth where the temperature is constant. In the winter heat is extracted from the ground and in the summer waste heat is discharged into the ground. Geothermal systems use less energy to operate than traditional heating / cooling systems.

Solar

Solar power generation may occur at the individual site / user level or as a part of a larger power generating system / arrays for a number of users. Solar power generation also consists of passive and active capture methods. Passive solar methods maximize the use of the sun for lighting and heating purposes related to individual buildings through site planning, building orientation, use of glazing and other building materials in a manner which intentionally lights and heats interior space. Active solar methods utilize solar collector systems that convert sunlight into electricity. Such systems may include the use of photovoltaic or concentrated solar power technology. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory ranks Nebraska as 13th in regard to potential solar energy.

Wind

As with solar, wind power generation consists of both individual site / user applications and larger power generating system (utility scale) applications. Small / individual (less than 100 kilowatts) are generally associated with home, farm or small businesses while utility systems are larger than 100 kilowatts and are associated with electric utility providers.

Nebraska is considered as one of the best wind power generating locations in the nation. Since 2008 Nebraska has increased its amount of wind energy generation which appears to be a trend that will continue. It is estimated that wind power is capable of meeting approximately 120 times the amount of Nebraska's electricity needs.

Gering Energy Education & Savings Efforts

The City of Gering is undertaking several projects to reduce overall energy usage. Currently the City is in the process of converting their system from a 2400 volt system to a 7200 volt system. This will significantly reduce the amount on line loss, meaning the City should be able to use less than half the amount of wholesale electricity in order to deliver the same amount of retail electricity to consumers. Other energy savings measures include converting all street lights to LEDs which saves a considerable amount of power compared to traditional lighting.

Education Sources

The identification and effective use of proper renewable energy sources and systems depends on educating the public and employing the best methods and systems for the geographic area. Such education can ensure that the dollars spent to employ and maintain such methods and systems at both the individual and community scale are maximized.

In addition to local education provided through the City of Gering and the various websites and agencies identified in this element of the comprehensive plan a variety of energy saving tips can be found at (http://www.nppd.com/save-energy/homeenergy_suite/). This resource provides analysis tools for understanding the energy efficiency of a home through a comparison of costs associated with heating, irrigation, lighting, etc. Additional locations for energy savings tips include: <http://www.neo.ne.gov/tips/tips.htm> and http://energy.gov/sites/pro/files/2014/05/f16/Energy_Saver_Guide_PhaseI_Final.pdf

Funding Sources

A variety of funding sources are available to encourage energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy applications. These sources range from tax credits, to loans to grants from both public and private sources. A summary of the various programs and resources in Nebraska can be found at the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website <http://www.dsireusa.org/>.

Grants may come from a variety of State, Federal and non-profit, as well as corporate entities. One such program is the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program which has provided grants to a number of Nebraska communities. Additionally, energy and weatherization assistance programs are available to assist residents needing help paying their utility bills (<http://nebraskaenergyassistance.com/assistance/>) and for lower income citizens that desire to lower their utility bills by making their home more energy efficient (<http://www.neo.ne.gov/wx/wxindex.htm>)

Below is a brief overview of several programs with corresponding links that can be used to obtain further information on several programs in Nebraska.

Dollar and Energy Savings Loans

Created in 1990 the Nebraska Dollar and Energy Savings Loan program was created uses oil overcharge funds and makes low-interest loans available for residential and commercial energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects.

A project may be eligible if it is included in a list of prequalified improvements or with the submission of an energy audit that verifies a reasonable payback period for the project / improvement. Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.neo.ne.gov/loan/> or <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/214>

Local Option – Property-Assessed Clean Energy Financing

The Property Assessed Clean Energy Act of 2016 allows communities to create clean energy assessment districts. Through the district cities enter into contracts with qualifying property owners and potentially third-party financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Assessments added to the owner's property taxes are used to paid back project costs. Additional information can be obtained from <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/5869>

Property Tax Exemption for Renewable Energy Generation Facilities

In 2010, Nebraska created a nameplate capacity tax that replaced the Nebraska Department of Revenue's central assessment and taxation of depreciable tangible personal property associated with wind energy generation facilities (see L.B. 1048). In 2015, eligibility was extended to solar, biomass, and landfill gas (see L.B. 424). Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.revenue.state.ne.us/> or <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/4946>

Renewable Energy Tax Credit (Corporate)

This tax credit provides an opportunity for corporations to reduce their Nebraska income tax liability or state sales and use taxes paid by the corporate entity (via refund) that implements an eligible renewable technology (e.g. solar, landfill gas, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal electric, fuel cells, anaerobic digestion, and fuel cells using renewable fuels). Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.revenue.ne.gov/>

Renewable Energy Tax Credit (Personal)

This tax credit is similar to the Corporate tax credit but is for citizens who implement an eligible renewable technology. Additional information can be obtained from <http://www.revenue.ne.gov/>

Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Renewable Energy Property

With a minimum investment of \$20 million Nebraska provides the opportunity for sales / use taxes paid as part of an eligible renewable energy system used to produce electricity for sale. The first 1.5% of sales tax charged by a municipality is exempt from this refund program. Additional information can be obtained from <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/5427>

04

Vision to Action



5.1

Strategies & Action Plan

Plan Gering includes a strong vision for action. Implementation of the Plan will require time, financial and human resources, as well as coordination between public and private entities. This section is meant to be a pragmatic, action-oriented approach that focuses efforts and limited resources into several strategies to achieve success. The strategies and action plan are organized around the four community values.

The following Action Plan identifies strategies to implement Plan Gering over a period of years. Each strategy or action item is associated with a desired time frame: short-term for the first one to two years, intermediate for years three to five, long-term for years five to 20, and ongoing for implementing actions periodically throughout the planning period. Three categories of actions are identified in the “Type” column. They include: Code Reform, which is a recommendation to change an ordinance; Policy Decision, which will guide day-to-day decisions by staff, Planning Commission, and City Council; and, Program, which is a recommendation for a new program to carry out the goals of this Plan. The “Responsible Party” column lists the partners or groups responsible for implementation.

City staff and planning officials will need to update the Action Plan periodically to keep the actions and responsibilities current.

Nature Close at Hand

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
				Encourage buildings to orient toward the river edge. This means locating entrances, patios, outdoor seating areas to open toward the river.	Code Reform	City
				New development located adjacent the river should be designed to permit public access to the river. An example would be a path connecting a public street to the river through the development.	Code Reform	City
				Encourage development to minimize impacts along the river and on the natural environment. This could mean identifying development standards and management practices such as Low-impact design features.	Code Reform	City
				Encourage development to preserve and enhance visual connections to the river. This could include preserving public viewsheds whenever feasible or designing outdoor spaces to maximize views.	Code Reform	City
				Develop a long-range plan for uses along the river.	Program	
				Promote recreational uses and programming along the river's edge.	Program	
				Create informational displays along the river highlighting the geology and ecology of the river.	Program	
				Encourage site and building design to conform to the natural setting with as little disturbance as possible.	Code Reform	City
				Create an Overlay based on visual impacts and identify viewsheds to which the Overlay will apply.	Code Reform	City
				Identify and establish a funding source to purchase lands adjacent the monuments or acquire easements for areas with significant environmental and/ or historical value.	Policy Decision	City
				Develop incentives and requirements to ensure development near natural features minimize adverse impacts.	Code Reform	City
				Promote the use of reclaimed water for large-scale irrigation.	Policy Decision	
				Incentivize low water consumptive vegetation for landscaping.	Code Reform	City
				Encourage open spaces to offer low maintenance green space.	Code Reform	City
				Plan for parks to include natural areas.	Policy Decision	
				Minimize light pollution by evaluating and amending lighting standards based on dark skies best practices.	Code Reform	City
				Design for safety by encouraging park design to include natural surveillance. This can be accomplished by eliminating hiding places and increasing human presence.	Code Reform	City
				Continue to acquire neighborhood park spaces within ½ mile of all residents.	Policy Decision	City

		Identify possible connective pathways between parks and open space and pursue opportunities for purchase of land, easements, or other agreements for connectivity.	Policy Decision	City
		Ensure park programming for all ages and abilities of residents.	Policy Decision	City
		Provide incentives to increase residential tree canopy.	Policy Decision	City
		Create a strategy to diversify funding sources for maintenance, operation and development of parks.	Policy Decision	City
		Develop a tree preservation ordinance that defines situations where preservation of trees is mandatory versus optional.	Code Reform	City

Champions of Commerce

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
			■	Develop incentive programs to support the growth and creation of local businesses. This could include resources for small businesses such as tax increment financing or other financial tools.	Program	
■				Reduce zoning barriers for home businesses.	Code Reform	City
	■			Explore an organizational structure to lead economic development efforts Downtown. This could include Main Street, Downtown Development Authorities, and Urban Renewal Authorities.	Program	City
	■			Brand the Downtown as a recognizable identity.	Program	
	■			Create a “buy local” campaign that leverages Downtown’s brand for collective advertising.	Program	
			■	Investigate how local permitting and regulatory processes affect business activity and address any bottlenecks.	Code Reform	City
	■			Inventory and map property available for redevelopment and market opportunities.	Program	
			■	Communicate funding opportunities to small business owners.	Program	
			■	Promote local recreation venues, e.g., hiking, rock climbing, fishing, biking, and associated services.	Program	
			■	Use a varied marking approach to advertise tourism opportunities.	Program	
			■	List and promote available sites in industrial parks.	Program	
			■	Continue to strengthen partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, PADD, and other economic development agencies to attract and retain businesses.	Program	City
			■	Support schools in improving student performance.	Policy Decision	
		■		Develop a brand and identity for the city that promotes the community’s assets. This would include an overhaul of the City’s logo.	Program	City
			■	Increase tourism and the city’s profile as a vacation destination by publicizing its quality of life, recreational assets, and tourism opportunities.	Program	

Establishing Roots

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
■				Develop guidelines that encourage design solutions for transitioning between varying intensities of building types and land uses.	Code Reform	City
■				Revise the zoning code to allow for the integration of various residential densities, building types, and styles.	Code Reform	City
			■	Provide incentives to encourage a mix of compatible housing types that meet the diverse economic needs of the community.	Policy Decision	City
	■			Develop tools to create and preserve rental and owner-occupied affordable housing.	Program	
	■			Create an investment strategy that leverages local, regional, state and federal affordable housing resources.	Program	
		■		Create public/private partnerships to expand workforce housing options and availability.	Program	
		■		Create and expand rehabilitation programs to stabilize neighborhoods.	Program	
			■	Coordinate public infrastructure projects with community revitalization.	Policy Decision	City
		■		Develop and implement a community wide historic preservation plan that seeks to identify, retain, preserve, and revitalize the city's historic, cultural, and architectural resources.	Program	City
	■			Create a consistent process for the review of projects that involve a historic property.	Program	City
	■			Develop a system and procedures for code enforcement.	Program	
■				Increase landscaping and design requirements in parking areas.	Code Reform	City
			■	Partner with community organizations to develop initiatives or events focused on cleaning up the community and reducing litter.	Program	City
■				Revise or update zoning code to reduce the impact of sign clutter through amortization of signs that do not conform to requirements.	Code Reform	City
■				Revise zoning code to promote mixed-use development.	Code Reform	City
■				Amend zoning code to require commercial buildings to be built to the street rather than behind a parking lot, or to incorporate screening for large-scale commercial with parking in the front.	Code Reform	City
			■	Promote the re-use, redevelopment, and revitalization of underperforming buildings and sites by employing financial tools and creating expediated review processes.	Code Reform/ Program	City
			■	Develop design guidelines for industrial development that address placement of building, screening, landscaping, and buffering treatments.	Code Reform	City



Develop a list of preferred and discouraged building materials for all zoning districts.

Code Reform

City



Require large sections of blank walls adjacent to public streets to be broken up using architectural design standards.

Code Reform

City

Meaningful Connections

Short Term (1-2 years)	Intermediate (3-5 years)	Long Term (5-20 years)	Ongoing	Action	Type	Responsible Party
				Develop a streetscape framework that guides landscaping, trees, street furnishings, street lighting and other public real improvements.	Code Reform	City
				Require adequately sized sidewalks on both sides of streets where significant pedestrian activity occurs or is expected.	Code Reform	City
				Protect pedestrians from traffic with street trees and other landscaping elements.	Code Reform	City
				Encourage frequent bus service and weekend bus service serving significant destinations in Gering.	Program	City
				Establish programs with funding sources to provide landscaping enhancements along targeted corridors.	Program	City
				Improve pedestrian safety by building missing links in the sidewalk system and replacing sidewalks in poor condition.	Program	City
				Establish clear funding and responsibilities for sidewalk maintenance and replacement.	Code Reform	City
				Create a network of bicycle lanes, trails and routes that connect people to places.	Program	City
				Improve existing trail connections to streets and destinations.	Program	City
				Maintain traditional grid block patterns with frequent intersection, through-streets, and alleys.	Code Reform	City
				Support daily bike travel with ample bicycle facilities that are safe for all users.	Program	City
				Improve pedestrian safety in activity centers using frequent and comfortable pedestrian crossings that can include raised intersections, pedestrian activated signals, curb extensions and refuges.	Code Reform/ Program	City
				Provide bicycle parking and storage facilities near public gathering places.	Program	City
				Require bicycle parking and storage facilities near building entrances for new multi-family and commercial development.	Code Reform	City
				Increase bike lanes by adding lanes to streets with sufficient capacity and including lanes in future road widening or reconstruction projects.	Program	City
				Establish regulations that require pedestrian connections between new commercial development and adjoining residential areas.	Code Reform	City

5.2

Monitoring & Review

Plan Gering includes several strategies and actions to implement the community's vision. A key component to implementing Plan Gering is regular monitoring. In order for the plan to be successful, the City must establish a method to measure progress. Ongoing monitoring will shed light on strategies in the plan that are working and items that need improvement. The City will also need to solicit the help of its partners to measure whether the strategies laid out in the plan are achieving desired results.

It is recommended the City document any progress made with individual action items in an Annual Report. The Annual Report should include a status indicator of each action item and a work program for the following year. In addition, it should identify any new issues that have come up over the year that are in need of consideration by City Council. Along with the Annual Report, the City should implement a longer term performance monitoring report where it looks to assess whether the actions items implemented have had a positive result. Indicators should be identified shortly after the adoption of this plan to make this assessment manageable. As a result of the monitoring program, changes to Plan Gering may need to occur. Any changes to Plan Gering shall be addressed through a public amendment process by the City Council.

An update of Plan Gering should take place every ten years, unless otherwise directed by City Council. The purpose of the update will be to refresh and reexamine the vision, values, policies and strategies, and develop any new policies if necessary.

