

# The Nebraska Planner

A joint publication of APA Nebraska and NPZA

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NEBRASKA PLANNING CONFERENCE SAVE THE DATE & CALL FOR SESSIONS!

The 2024 Nebraska Planning Conference will take place on March 6-8 at the Younes Conference Center North in Kearney, NE. Add the dates to your calendar and consider submitting a session proposal to present at the conference. Proposals are due December 1, 2023. For more information and to submit a proposal, please visit [NPZA's website here](#).



### CALL FOR PRESENTERS! Nebraska Planning Conference

March 6-8, 2024

Younes Conference Center North, Kearney  
Visit [NPZA.org/Conference](https://www.npza.org/Conference) for more details

### APA NE 2023 ELECTION RESULTS

The APA elections for the 2024-2025 cycle are now closed. We want to congratulate our new and returning board members that will take office on January 1, 2024:

- Stephanie Rouse, AICP: President
- Cale Brodersen, AICP: Vice President
- Kristen Ohnoutka, AICP Candidate: Secretary
- Jesse Poore, AICP: Treasurer

And congratulations to Chad Nabity, AICP for his election to Division Council Chair at the National level.

### COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP DRIVE

Last year, Gordon Scholz, AICP, professor emeritus and former director of the MCRP program, made a generous leadership pledge of \$15,000 to start a scholarship endowment fund for the Community and Regional Planning Program at the University of Nebraska Foundation. Fundraising efforts have begun to raise an additional \$15,000 so that the scholarship can be permanently endowed, with an annual distribution awarded as a scholarship to a graduate student enrolled in the MCRP program at UNL. Please help us reach this goal! To learn more about the scholarship and how to make a donation, see page 11.



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# PRESIDENTS' UPDATES

Fall is well underway, and on October 13th 2023 the NPZA Board held the annual fall virtual workshop. With over 321 registrants, it was a very successful workshop! Sessions offered this year explored topics such as housing, rural Nebraska's niche, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and of course planning fundamentals, finding of fact, and new issues in planning. As always, I believe everyone learned something new to add to their planning tool box.

Planning efforts never cease for the annual spring Nebraska Planning Conference. We hope the wide variety of sessions that the Joint Conference Committee and the NPZA and APA NE Boards will pack into the conference program covers subjects that will pique your interest. Remember to SAVE THE DATE for March 6-8, 2023 at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney, Nebraska.

As the holidays grow near, remember to spend time with family and friends and make the upcoming celebrations ones to remember.

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now" – Alan Lakein



Judy Clark, MPA - NPZA President



This is my last President Letter to all of you. It has been a challenging four years with the COVID pandemic but also a very fulfilling time as well. As a chapter, we persevered by maintaining membership, conducting successful trainings, creating a sustainable revenue source by formally partnering with NPZA for the Annual Planning Conference, making a \$15,000 contribution to endow a scholarship with UNL Foundation for planning students, growing our corporate sponsorships, creating a podcast, book club and mentoring program. That is considerable progress and I owe a huge thank you to the Executive Team and you, the membership, helping us accomplish so much.

As I transition to Past President, I am excited for the direction Nebraska APA is headed. The new leadership team has all been executing their roles and beyond to accomplish the successes listed above. This is also the time for all members to continue to raise the bar and build a better professional planning environment. There are opportunities to lead and serve and I challenge you step forward.

Thank you for your support and allowing me to serve you.



Jeff Ray, AICP - APA-NE President



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# REMEMBERING CAROL SWAYNE

**BY: CHRISTOPHER SOLBERG, AICP**

The planning and zoning community in Nebraska is mourning the loss of Carol Lynne Swayne. She passed away on September 8, 2023, in Bellevue, NE.

Carol had a long and distinguished involvement in the planning and zoning field. She was a member of the Bellevue Planning Commission for 30 years and had a passion for city planning.

In her lifetime, Carol was awarded two Jewel of Bellevue Awards bestowed by the Mayors of Bellevue. She also was the recipient of four awards from the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association, including the first recipient of the Loretta Ludemann Excellence in Planning by a Nebraska Woman Award in 1999.

Swayne is a past president of NPZA and broke a mold when she became the first non-professional planner to serve on the board of directors of the American Planning Association. Her contributions to planning and zoning in Nebraska were so impactful that NPZA created the Carol Swayne Planning Commissioner Award, which awards excellence by a planning commissioner in Nebraska.

At the height of her involvement with NPZA, Carol and her colleagues from Bellevue created the Zoning Jeopardy session for the conference. She was a strong supporter of the joint conference with NE APA and NPZA using her contacts with APA National to bring in speakers like Sue Schwartz, Greg Dale, Eric Damien Kelly, and Jim Segedy. Those speakers have returned to Nebraska many times since the initial invitations from Carol on behalf of the conference committee. The Nebraska Planning Conference would not be the dynamic event that always feels like spending a few days with your favorite family members without her influence.



*Photo of Carol Lynne Swayne from her Obituary*

Carol's impact wasn't just felt in relation to the Nebraska Planning Conference, she was often seen in neighboring states conducting the Ethics Session at their conferences. She took ethics personally and insisted that not only practicing planners follow a code but planning commissioners as well.

Carol Swayne's dedication to good planning in her years of service to the City of Bellevue and the NPZA serves as an inspiration to others involved in planning throughout the state.

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# ANTELOPE VALLEY PARKWAY AND TELEGRAPH DISTRICT WORKSHOP

**BY: STEPHANIE ROUSE, AICP**

Just over 40 Nebraska planners met at the Assurity Building in Lincoln last month for the APA Nebraska annual fall workshop. The full day workshop gave attendees the opportunity to get out and see the projects being discussed during the presentations through a series of walking tours in the neighborhood. The workshop dove into the many disciplines of urban planning as they relate to redevelopment including transportation, housing, environmental and resiliency planning, economic development, landscape architecture, and urban design.

Wynn Hjernstad, AICP and Roger Figard, PE started the day off with a history of the Antelope Valley Redevelopment project which dates to the early 1990s when conversations began around how to fix the major transportation and stormwater issues present in the neighborhood just east of Downtown Lincoln. The box culvert installed in the early 1900s was far undersized for storm events seen today and the arterials of 16th and 17th Streets running through campus were becoming increasingly more congested as time went on. Wynn, a longtime planner with Lincoln's Urban Development Department, and Roger, retired City Engineer for Lincoln Transportation and Utilities, were the perfect combination to discuss the project beginnings and how it evolved over time.

Once attendees had a good grasp of the history of the project, Wynn and Roger led a walking tour north along the Billy Wolff Trail and then back down Antelope Valley Parkway. Along the way they pointed out new development projects on the UNL campus that would not have been possible without the Antelope Valley Parkway project. The realigned roadway and stormwater infrastructure took almost six blocks of land out of the floodplain allowing the University to build housing, office, and classroom space where once the best use of land in the floodplain was parking.



Workshop attendees approaching the Telegraph District as part of one of the walking tours.

Back at the Assurity Building, landscape architect Eric Casper, who assisted in the landscape design for the Union Plaza, Hub Café area, and Assurity Building site, discussed the elements of each project and the intentionality to create an integrated landscape along the project corridor. The Assurity Building has three separate green roofs, one home to nesting geese each year. The design for each was uniquely engineered as a south facing roof requires plantings more tolerant to excessive heat while a north facing roof needs to accommodate more shade. Existing pipes were retrofitted and given new life as the irrigation system for the property which also stores rainwater in an underground tank.

The Assurity Building, the adjacent trail corridor, and Union Park Plaza all have a wealth of native plantings that reduce the amount of irrigation needed.

After lunch, planners stretched their legs with another walk south to the wier. Many attendees learned the difference between a dam and a wier which have very similar functions. The difference being that a wier is a zig zag wall that allows for far more water retention than a dam which has a straight, more traditional wall. The wier, located just south of N Street at the Billy Wolff Trail, is a large component of the stormwater project that was built out for Antelope Valley.

As mentioned before, the box culvert of the early 1900s was far undersized for the storm events seen in Lincoln. While still in place just to the east of the wier, the new infrastructure handles the excess water the original infrastructure could no longer contain.

The last portion of the workshop was a final walking tour around the Telegraph District, a newly revitalized area just east of Downtown Lincoln. [The Telegraph District](#) was master planned by a local firm, Speedway, which has been investing in Lincoln for decades. The district is a combination of historic building rehabilitations and new construction, with three new apartment complexes completed in the last few years on N Street. The catalyst project was a rehabilitation of the Roberts Dairy building into office space for a start up internet company. The building is now home to a coffee shop, ice cream parlor, and burger joint with the internet company expanding operations into adjacent buildings. The district is also home to the first off-leash dog bar in Lincoln, and in early 2024 will be the new location of the local coop grocery store.

What is particularly interesting that attendees were able to see firsthand is the variety of housing units offered. While the development includes only apartments with no options for ownership, the buildings are home to some of Lincoln's only live-work units. These first-floor spaces are flexible in design, with kitchen/bathroom and larger open space with roll up garage doors on the first floor and sleeping space up in the loft above.

The Pandemic, however, has really changed living preferences and the leasing company found that these units became highly valued for their potential as home office space, rather than a more traditional live-work unit.

As always, the event wrapped up at Code Beer Company just a few blocks from the end of the walking tour for a Pints with Planners happy hour event. Many attendees joined for a pint to discuss everything they saw and heard at the workshop as well as to catch up with colleagues from other cities.



Workshop attendees learning from Wynn Hjermsstad, AICP and Roger Figard, PE

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# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

We are delighted to introduce Jaime Lopez as our newest assistant professor in the Community and Regional Planning (CRP) program for the upcoming Fall 2023 semester. His research focuses on amplifying the voices and experiences of marginalized residents through the effective utilization of media tools. His research interests encompass a wide spectrum of subjects, including community engagement, participatory planning, environmental justice and planning, sustainability, local politics, land use, and the creation of impactful media and film documentaries. His impressive expertise in social equity planning, environmental justice, planning processes, and the successful implementation of planning strategies positions him as a highly valuable addition to our academic community. His presence enriches the fabric of our academic environment, promising fresh perspectives and innovative insights that are sure to enhance the quality of our community and regional planning education.

During the current fall semester, the CRP program is making substantial progress in its mission to advance education, research, and service. These accomplishments are the product of collaborative efforts involving students, faculty, staff, alumni, and our valued partners. Below is a brief overview of the program's advancements in development, teaching, curriculum activities, faculty research, and community service. Additionally, it's worth mentioning that the MCRP program is scheduled for its next accreditation review process from September 16 to 18, 2024.

## **Student Development**

In May 2023, the Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) program celebrated a significant number with the graduation of 11 students, representing a commendable achievement in our ongoing dedication to student success.

Among these graduates was the first student to earn the Urban Design graduate certificate, underscoring our commitment to fostering specialization within our programs. Additionally, we are delighted to announce the joint submission of a proposal for an accelerated program in collaboration with Landscape Architecture and the MCRP Program for approval by the Office of Graduate Studies. This initiative signifies a positive step towards broadening educational opportunities within our department.

## **Outreach & Impact**

The outreach and impact contributions of the CRP students and faculty team have garnered frequent coverage across various local and state media outlets. Here are a couple of notable examples. An article titled "University Making Strides Toward N2025 Engagement Aim," published in Nebraska Today news on July 26, 2023, highlighted the collaborative efforts with city leadership:

*"In collaboration with city leadership, students in the Community and Regional Planning Studio Course helped develop a citywide economic development plan to facilitate downtown and city economic growth to communities throughout Nebraska. The project entailed extensive fieldwork by students, including physical conditions documentation and analyses, one-on-one interviews with residents, and data analysis, all leading to identifying issues and developing preliminary recommendations for city economic development."*

In another instance, on June 6, 2023, an article by Nebraska Public Media reported on Winslow, NE, where flood-damaged homes were a pressing concern. The article noted that:

*"A study prepared by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln students concluded that the village's only other options were to move any remaining residents to higher ground or disperse and level the remaining buildings".*

Over the past years, the work of the CRP students and faculty team has had a tangible and positive impact on communities in Nebraska, particularly in Beatrice, Syracuse, David City, and Peru, NE. These impacts have spanned various domains, including community economic development, hazard mitigation, food security, and environmental sustainability.



CRP faculty and students tour the community of Bennet, NE.

Abigail Cochran accomplished a community economic development project by successfully completing the downtown revitalization plan for Peru, NE, during the spring semester. During the summertime, she published a peer-reviewed article in healthy planning and transportation planning field. Additionally, during her academic year at UNL, she participated in several collaborative research initiatives with teams from UNL, UNO, and UNMC. She is guiding a project focused on analyzing housing supply and demand in the York region, with the goal of identifying strategies for both housing and economic development in the area.

Yunwoo Nam played a pivotal role in an interdisciplinary project in 2023, collaborating with Civil Engineering and the state transportation agency to address travel safety concerns in Nebraska. His dedication extends to the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO), an organization representing all 93 county governments in the state.

Nam has been actively engaged in an interdisciplinary team effort, involving UNO, UNK, and UNL, in the development of an online education program tailored for elected and appointed officials.

Zhenghong Tang has achieved significant recognition through the publication of two important research papers in the Journal of the American Water Resources Association and The ASCE's Journal of Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste. His research findings have made a considerable impact and have been widely utilized by esteemed organizations such as the US Department of Agriculture, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, among others. Tang has also partnered with the College of Engineering and Rural Prosperity Nebraska, as well as the Nebraska Extension office, to promote regional tourism planning in Knox County, Nebraska. Through collaborative efforts, two of his projects have secured funding under the Nebraska Grand Challenges program, furthering the cause of sustainable agriculture and community equity. He is spearheading a student project aimed at establishing a downtown area for Bennet, NE, and formulating strategies to promote economic development in this locality.

### Impactful Collaborations

On August 15, 2023, the CRP faculty engaged in a collaborative meeting with the leadership team of the Nebraska Chapter of APA to explore opportunities for collaboration in various domains, including curriculum development, student learning, professional networking, community engagement, and support for scholarly endeavors within the CRP program. A significant development worth highlighting is the generous donation of \$15,000 by Gordon Scholz, AICP, professor emeritus, and former director of the MCRP program. This generous contribution has facilitated the establishment of the Community and Regional Planning Alumni and Friends Graduate Student Scholarship Fund. This fund will be administered by UNL's Community and Regional Planning program to provide scholarships to deserving UNL students who are pursuing an MCRP degree.

Supporting scholarships is a central and shared priority for both the College of Architecture and the Community and Regional Planning program. Scholarships play a crucial role in bolstering student recruitment and retention, particularly among individuals from diverse backgrounds. The initiation of the “Community and Regional Planning Alumni and Friends Graduate Student Scholarship Fund” has received positive feedback and enthusiastic support from alumni, partners, stakeholders, and professional organizations, underscoring the widespread commitment to this important initiative.

### **Philosophy of Design Informed by Technology & Data**

Yunwoo Nam integrates GIS technologies and data into CRP teaching and research. Zhenghong Tang has pioneered the development of advanced artificial intelligence tools for conservation planning and mapping. Cochran’s planning method and analysis class have played a pivotal role in promoting data-driven planning and design practices. Notably, these data and technology applications have proven highly effective in Southeast Nebraska food planning and economic development planning initiatives in Peru, NE.

### **Global experiences & opportunities**

The program is actively engaged in recruiting international students to foster a more diverse learning environment. A majority of the MCRP applicants are now international students. Yunwoo Nam has contributed his expertise by serving on the NSF (National Science Foundation) Review Panel for the Smart and Connected Communities Program. Furthermore, Nam has played an active role in both the ACSP Global Planning Education Committee and the ACSP/Kauffman Award Committee. Zhenghong Tang’s research has had a significant global impact, particularly in the fields of conservation planning, geospatial tools, and climate policies. Tang’s publications garnered more than 1,256 citations worldwide during the one-year period from 2022 to 2023.

Abigail Cochran’s research has addressed critical non-emergency transportation gaps during the global pandemic, meeting crucial needs. Cochran’s research tackled critical global needs.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the dedicated faculty, staff, and students for their hard work during this spring semester. The CRP team eagerly anticipates a productive academic year ahead, filled with meaningful contributions in teaching, research, and community service.



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# BOOK REVIEW: “SITTING PRETTY: THE VIEW FROM MY ORDINARY RESILIENT DISABLED BODY” BY REBEKAH TAUSSIG

BY: EAVAN MOORE, AICP

Rebekah Taussig’s theory-informed but very personal book tells stories from her life as a disabled woman. Each chapter touches on a different theme: the way ableism warped her expectations of love, teaching the social model of disability to high schoolers, media representation, work life, feminism, self-serving notions of kindness, and accessibility.

The central idea in the book is ableism, a term for which Taussig offers a nuanced and helpful definition. For Taussig, “ableism is the process of favoring, fetishizing, and building the world around a mostly imagined, idealized body while discriminating against those bodies perceived to move, see, hear, process, operate, look, or need differently from that vision.”

This definition is critical, because it allows Taussig to discuss how ableism punishes everyone – for example, through unrealistic beauty standards and harsh, productivity-based work cultures that ignore our bodily needs. It also allows her to discuss the social model of disability, in which people are disabled only insofar as our needs are not recognized and met. Stairs introduce barriers for wheelchair users, flat walkways and ramps do not. Spectacles remove what would otherwise be a disability.

This resonated with the planners at July’s chapter book club meeting, which focused on *Sitting Pretty*. The group agreed with Taussig that there is no perfect body and that eventually – if we live long enough – all of us will be disabled; it is better to design for disability than to design for a nonexistent average person.

The need for systemic solutions is key. Taussig, a wheelchair user, describes the time when she waited half an hour as a pair of fellow shoppers used the only large fitting room to model clothes for each other.

The store manager was sympathetic, but offered only to make the fitting room available for Taussig on request the next time she shopped there – not considering the exhausting cumulative impact on someone expected to make special requests every time she needs something. This is relevant to any planner, as so many events and outreach materials are made accessible by request and not by default. While the profession has made progress on ensuring that public meeting venues are wheelchair-accessible, other accommodations continue to require special requests made well in advance.

The scarcity of accessible housing also resonated with the book club. Taussig describes a harrowing search for Kansas City housing that was both affordable and accessible; running out of time, she was forced to move back in with her parents while she continued to search. During the discussion, a city planner told the group about a TIF-funded residential rehabilitation program that asked applicants about planned ADA accessibility. None of the properties were, or were planned to be, ADA-accessible.

In an early chapter, Taussig describes the arc her sense of self followed in childhood: for the first few years after cancer left her partially paralyzed at age three, she moved confidently through her home and neighborhood, scarcely thinking about how her body differed from others. “I’d figured out how to do all the things I wanted,” she writes, “and I didn’t see my methods as strange or sad.” By around age eight, however, Taussig had learned by example – without ever being bullied or verbally demeaned – to devalue herself and to see her existence as a burden for others. *Sitting Pretty* helps the reader unlearn this along with her. It makes the case for valuing ourselves and others more completely, and for building a world “where we are all free to be, to move, to exist in our bodies without shame.”



# WETLANDS OF NEBRASKA OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROJECT: PRODUCTS RELEASED

BY: TED LAGRANGE, WETLAND PROGRAM COORDINATOR, NE GAME & PARKS COMMISSION

After several years of development, the final products from the “Wetlands of Nebraska Outreach and Education project” were recently released. All of the products are available on the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s wetlands page ([www.NebraskaWetlands.com](http://www.NebraskaWetlands.com)).

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission coordinated this project with the Platte Basin Timelapse group at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at UNL, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Ducks Unlimited.

The final, expanded products include:

- Five feature films about Nebraska’s wetlands and the wildlife and people that depend on them. The five wetland films are: Sandhills, Playas, Saline, Riverine, and Urban. The films were produced by the talented Platte Basin Timelapse team at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and will take you on a journey across Nebraska. You will meet some interesting characters and will get a chance to see some scenes and wildlife that few people get to experience.
- A Wetlands of Nebraska overview film.
- Five ESRI StoryMaps--- Sandhills, Playas, Saline, Riverine, and Urban.
- An updated Guide to Nebraska’s Wetlands and their Conservation Needs publication.
- A new booklet for kids entitled Wetlandology.
- Two educational videos about plant adaptations and animal engineers that were developed specifically for classroom use.

- An educator guide to the products and paired lesson plans for the educational videos are nearing completion and will be shared soon.

For more information, please contact Ted LaGrange, Wetland Program Coordinator, at (402) 471-5436 or [ted.lagrange@nebraska.gov](mailto:ted.lagrange@nebraska.gov).



Pictured: Sample of the products released as art of the Wetlands of Nebraska Outreach and Education Project, which can be found at [www.NebraskaWetlands.com](http://www.NebraskaWetlands.com)

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# COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING ALUMNI & FRIENDS GRADUATE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

A new scholarship for graduate students pursuing the Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) degree at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln is on the horizon.

Last year, Gordon Scholz, AICP, professor emeritus and former director of the MCRP program, made a generous leadership pledge of \$15,000 to start a scholarship endowment fund for the Community and Regional Planning Program at the University of Nebraska Foundation.

The launch of this scholarship fund coincides with the 50th anniversary of approval, in 1974, of the MCRP degree program by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

The fund has been named the Community and Regional Planning Alumni and Friends Graduate Student Scholarship Fund, with hopes that it will encourage the entire planning community to support UNL's MCRP program.

The goal is to secure an additional \$15,000 from other interested donors before December 31, 2024. Once the fund reaches the required minimum of \$30,000, it will become permanently endowed, meaning the principal amount will be invested, and a distribution will be generated each year for the CRP program to award as a scholarship. After hitting the initial goal, donors hopefully will continue to support the fund over time, thereby growing the principal endowment size and resulting in larger distributions each year.

Note that after the fund reaches the initial minimum endowment level of \$30,000, twelve months will be required for the endowment to earn adequate interest to fund the first full distribution needed to award the first scholarship.

The scholarship will be awarded to students who are pursuing the MCRP degree and have a minimum GPA of 3.0. Scholarship recipients will be selected annually by the Community and Regional Planning faculty.

All donors in 2023-2024 will be designated Inaugural Donors, and those donating or pledging \$1,000 or more during 2023-2024 will be given special recognition. The current plan is to ask the University of Nebraska Foundation to compile a list of the 2023-2024 Inaugural Donors, without revealing specific amounts donated. This commemorative donor list would be given to each scholarship recipient as an expression of the donors' support of the recipient, but also to recognize those who participated in initially funding the scholarship endowment. The list will not show specific amounts donated by donors, but will give special recognition to those who have donated \$1,000 or more (again, without listing specific amounts). Any donor not desiring their name to appear on the list may choose to be listed as "Anonymous."

Scholarship support is a top priority for the College of Architecture and the Community and Regional Planning Program, as it helps the program recruit and retain students from many different backgrounds. Student access and success are top priorities within the current campaign, Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for our University's Future. Support of the Community and Regional Planning Alumni and Friends Graduate Student Scholarship Fund will help support the overall campaign goals.

The scholarship fund is now established. If you are interested, you may make a gift today:

### **Giving Online with Credit or Debit Card**

You can give online with this link: <https://nufoundation.org/fund/01161320/>

A gift receipt will be sent via email almost instantly confirming the transaction is complete. Please also note that if a gift is made as a direct debit, it is not processed as instantly as a gift made with a credit card, and the receipt could be delayed 3-7 days.

### **Gifts by Check**

Please make your check out to the University of Nebraska Foundation and mail it to:

University of Nebraska Foundation  
PO Box 82555  
Lincoln, NE 68501-2555

In the memo line of the check please write either fund # 01161320 or the full name of the fund.

### **Other**

There are other methods of giving available, as well, so feel free to contact Cameron Andreesen, Director of Development for the College of Architecture at the University of Nebraska Foundation. He can provide more details.

We're grateful for the leadership of Gordon and others who have pledged to the fund thus far. We'll look forward to hearing from you.

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# GIS QUARTERLY: A COLUMN OF THE NEBRASKA PLANNER

BY: KURT ELDER, AICP/GISP

Well, folks the data analysis fire is starting to burn! Thank you to those that reached out after the last quarterly column. The comments I received in general were, 'show us more what we can do with data, and GIS'. Lets explore a great example of the use of GIS in our community:

Recently I interviewed Lori Seibel from the Community Health Endowment of Lincoln to discuss their Place Matters 5.0 - 2023 initiative to explore poverty, healthcare accessibility, and other health outcomes through GIS and place-based mapping. You can listen to that [interview here](#). This initiative was further explored by the Lincoln Journal Star, see their article below:

## ***Place Matters maps give indication that poverty remains a problem in Lincoln***

**Reprinted from the [Lincoln Journal Star](#); September 20, 2023, by Pat Sangimino**

Poverty is on the rise in Lancaster County, current U.S. Census data shows. The latest iteration of a mapping project known as [Place Matters 5.0](#) indicates that poverty has risen to 12% — up from 8.6% in 1980 when Lincoln was a much smaller place to live.

On Tuesday Sept 9th, the series of maps — used as the guideline for how to make Lincoln a healthier city — were unveiled to the public at the Community Health Endowment of Lincoln. "This is our roadmap," said Lori Seibel, president and CEO of the Health Endowment. "We use this to set our funding priorities and we'll say, 'OK, based on what we see here, where do we need to focus?'"

The maps focus on any number of issues — from primary medical care to minority populations to poverty to healthy food access — and provide a snapshot of areas of concern for the city.

"These maps are great," said Deb Byrne, a geographic information system specialist with the city of Lincoln who has been involved in all five Place Matters iterations. "They take the data and put it in a visualization you can't see otherwise."

The colorful changes in districts and neighborhoods show the disparities that exist in Lincoln, depending on information like income and food security. "It helps you to pinpoint where some of the problems are," Byrne said. And poverty was one of the primary concerns. Of the 77 census tracts mapped, 27, or more than 35%, exceeded a 12% poverty rate.

The average life expectancy of the seven tracts with the highest poverty rate (more than 30%) is 70.7 years — nearly 11 years less than the 20 census tracts with the lowest poverty (below 5%).

Poverty is, in its essence, the cause of causes, Seibel said. "It's what causes so many other things to go wrong," she said. "And it is a key factor in determining if we will be a healthier community." Byrne said it's not her job to interpret the maps she makes, but there are some reasons that do jump out. "There are a lot of things that could lead to the increase in poverty," she said.

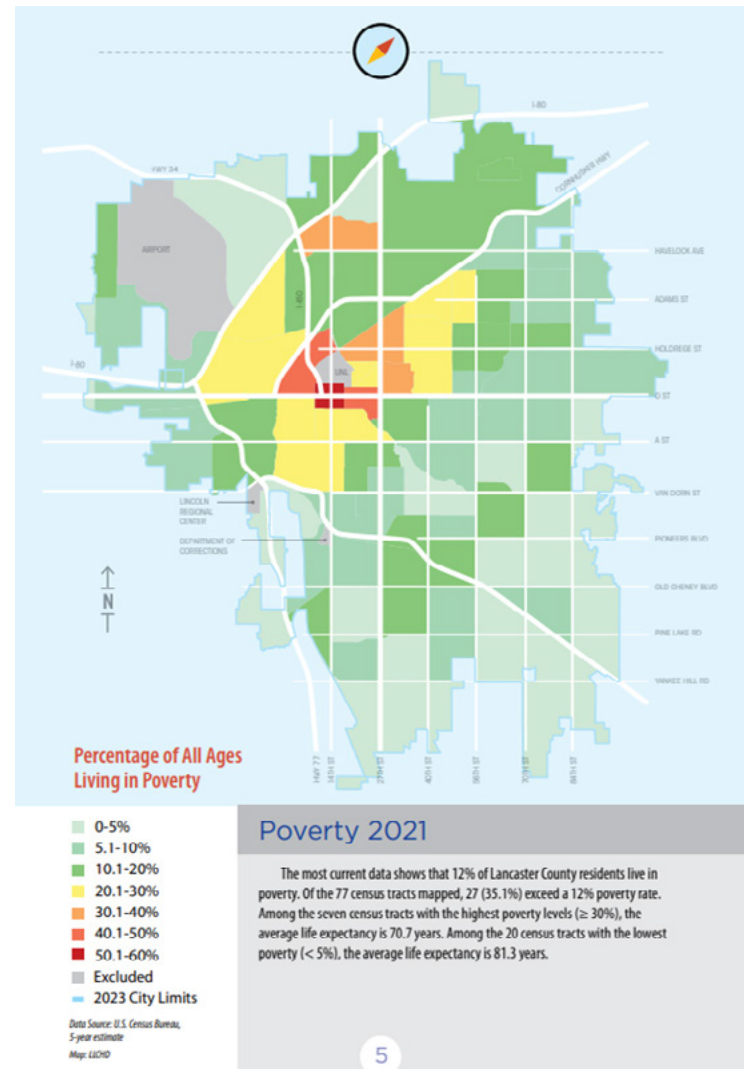
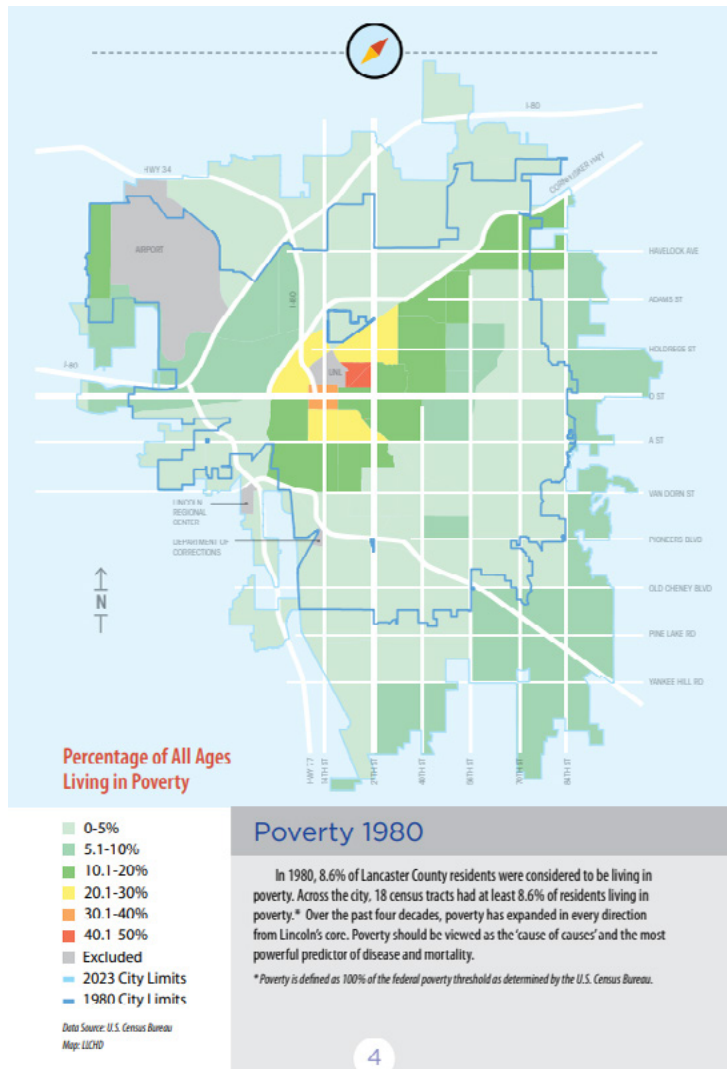
The rise in housing costs in recent years might have something to do with the jump in poverty numbers, with costs having outpaced the increase in wages. "We have housing burdens," she said. "So a lot of these areas that you're seeing here has everything to do with increases in rents. This also ties back to salaries and wages."

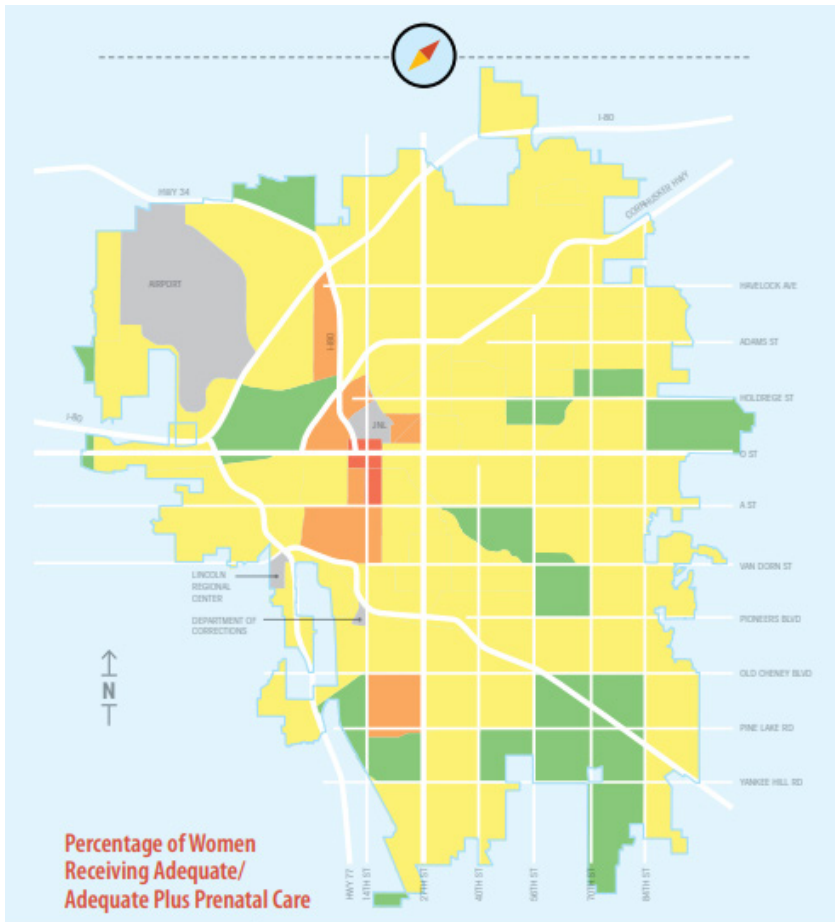
The Place Matters maps — a partnership between the Health Endowment and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department — debuted in 2015 and are released biennially, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department and other city departments.

The maps showing those in poverty and neighborhoods with high minority populations — roughly west and north Lincoln — are practically the same. They're a way for community organizations and public officials to drive policy and target investments in places that need them, Seibel said.

“We see all the time the impact of people doing really good work,” Seibel said. “We focused prenatal care coverage suddenly that changes over time. So yeah, I think you see it all the time in little ways and big ways. And good ways and bad. It’s always shifting and changing.”

To the right, and on the following pages are some of the maps included in the Place Matters 5.0 publication discussed in the interview and the Journal Star article.





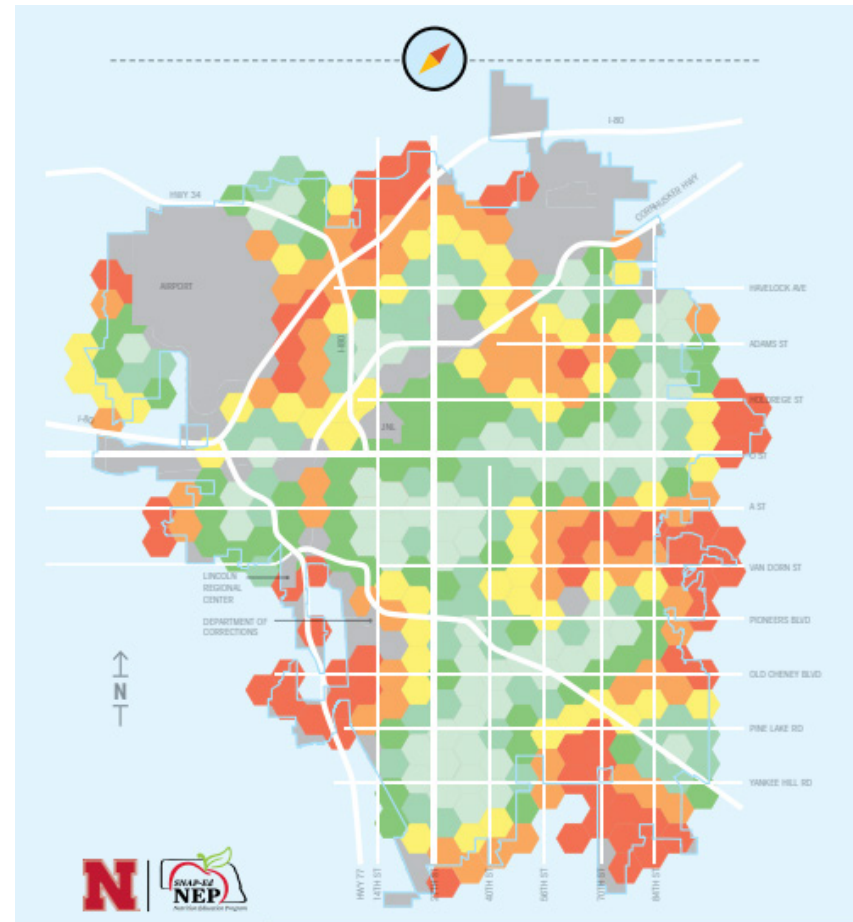
**Percentage of Women Receiving Adequate/Adequate Plus Prenatal Care**

- 80.1-90%
- 70.1-80%
- 60.1-70%
- 50.1-60%
- Excluded
- 2023 City Limits

Data Source: Lancaster County Vital Records  
Map: LCHD

### Prenatal Care 2019-2021

Lincoln-Lancaster County's goal is that 80.5% of pregnant women receive "adequate/adequate plus" prenatal care which is defined as the percentage of women who received care prior to the fifth month and more than 80% of the appropriate number of visits for gestational age. The current percentage is 75.6%, with only 19.5% of all census tracts meeting that goal. The census tracts in red and orange represent the lowest percentages of prenatal care. Of these, the majority have a higher than average percentage of births covered by Medicaid.



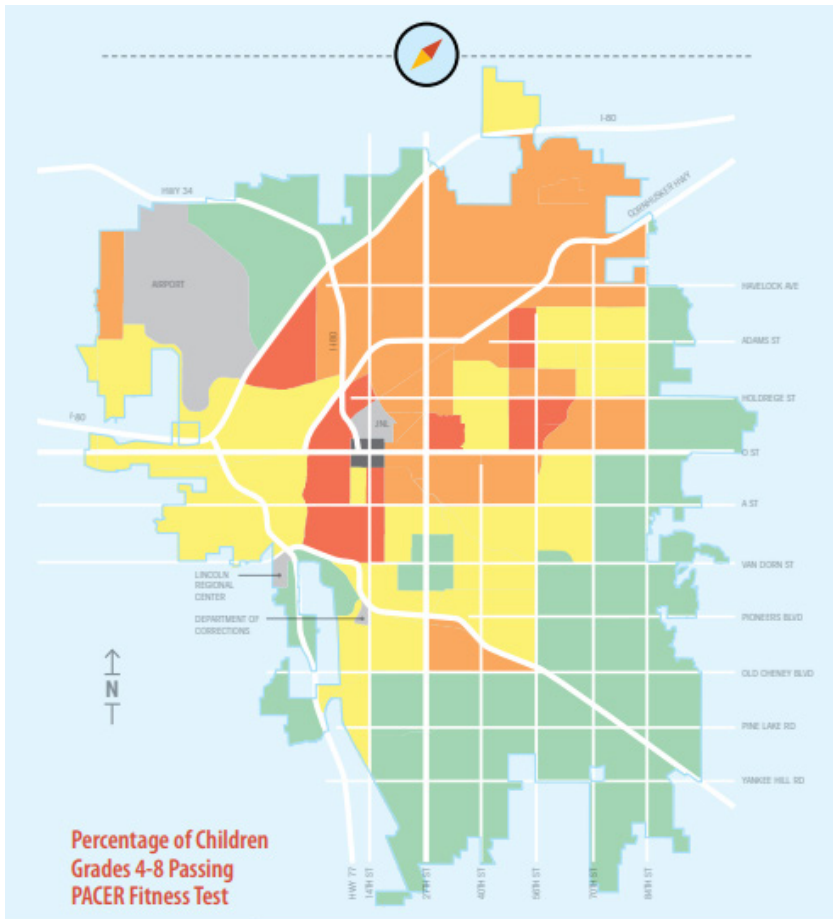
- Highest
- 
- 
- 
- Lowest
- Excluded (including parks, floodways, and select zoning districts)
- 2023 City Limits

Data Source: Nebraska Extension  
Map: Urban Development Department, City of Lincoln

### Healthy Food Access 2023

In 2023, Nebraska Extension (NE) completed a follow-up to their 2017, 2019, and 2021 NEBNEMS\* survey of Lincoln food stores. This point-in-time survey recorded the availability of healthy food options (fruits with no added sugar, vegetables with no added sauce, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and whole grains) in 221 stores. This map shows (in red and orange) the neighborhoods where fewer options exist to access healthy food. In recent years, this information has been used for targeted geographic interventions, such as Lincoln Fresh mobile distributions, school markets, and NE programming to address healthy food disparities.

\* Nebraska Nutrition Environment Measures Survey



**Percentage of Children Grades 4-8 Passing PACER Fitness Test**

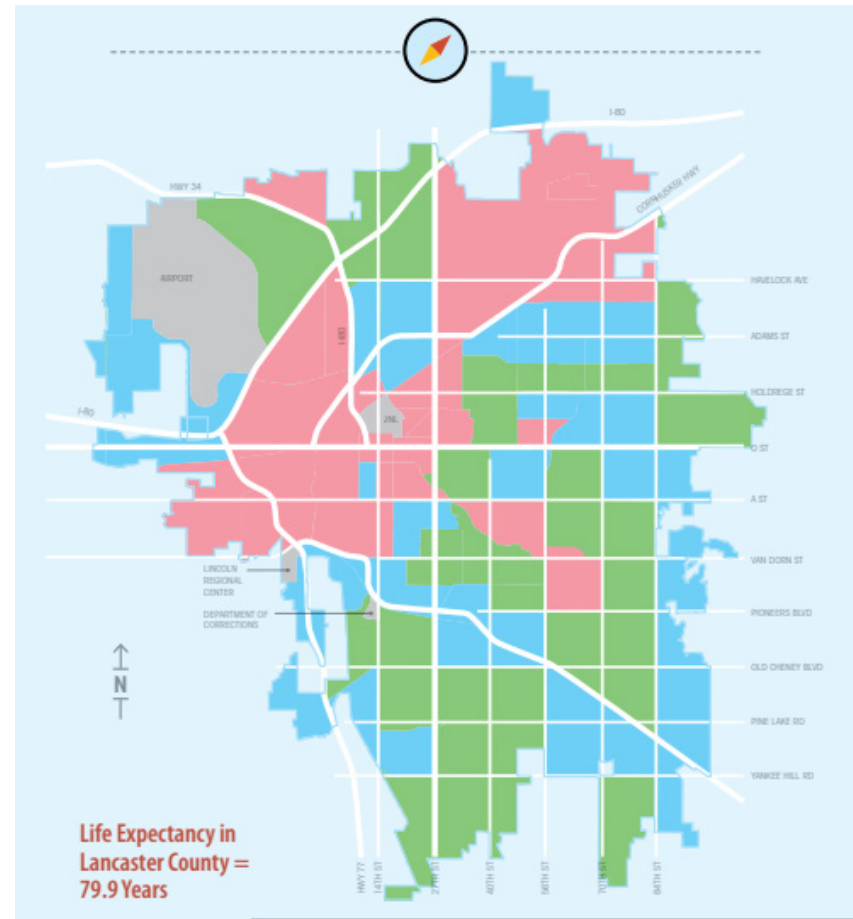
- 80.1-100%
- 70.1-80%
- 60.1-70%
- 50.1-60%
- Below 50%
- Insufficient Data
- Excluded
- 2023 City Limits

Data Source: Lincoln Public Schools  
Map: LLCHD

### Youth Fitness 2018-19

Cardiorespiratory fitness is a powerful predictor of illness/mortality, and influences academic performance, i.e. the better a student's aerobic fitness, the better their academic performance. In Lincoln Public Schools (LPS), aerobic fitness is measured using the Fitnessgram PACER, a multistage aerobic capacity test. Lincoln's goal is that 80% of LPS students pass\* the PACER. In 2018-19, only 19 (27.1%) census tracts achieved that goal.

\* Achieving the standardized, grade level aerobic capacity score.



**Life Expectancy in Lancaster County = 79.9 Years**

- ≥ 79.9 Years
- Up to 5 Years Lower Than Average
- 5+ Years Lower Than Average
- Excluded
- 2023 City Limits

Data Source: Lancaster County Vital Records  
Map: LLCHD

### Life Expectancy 2017-2021

Life expectancy is the statistically probable length of time an individual born today can be expected to live. In this map, life expectancy is based on mortality patterns of the population in a specific census tract given the risk factors in that location. The average life expectancy in Lancaster County has remained relatively static in recent years. This map shows where life expectancy values are at or above average (green), up to 5 years lower than average (blue), and 5+ years lower than the average life expectancy (pink).

\* Calculated using Reed-Merrill and Greville methods.



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The Nebraska Chapter of the APA would like to thank our annual sponsors for supporting our chapter and professional development programs. These sponsorships support Emerging Planners Group events, our Mentor Match Program, and allow us to provide a quality Spring Workshop and other educational and professional development opportunities throughout the year. If you are interested in learning more or to become a sponsor today, please email Stephanie at [rouseplanning@gmail.com](mailto:rouseplanning@gmail.com).

## PLATINUM

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CONFLUENCE



## GOLD

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## SILVER

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Looking to hire? Visit <https://nebraska.planning.org/career-center/job-announcements/> to post your job description , or find job openings today.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### OHIO CHAPTER WEBINAR SERIES

1. November 3, 2023 with Guest Hosts APA Illinois: [New Developments in Planning Case Law](#) at 12:00 PM CT
2. November 17, 2023 with guest host APA Virginia: [Climate Resilience in Housing: Collaborating for Success](#) at 12:00 PM CT
3. December 8, 2023 with guest host APA Technology Division: [Unlocking Civic Data: Shaping Future Cities through Information](#) at 12:00 PM CT

### NEBRASKA PLANNING CONFERENCE

- March 6-8, 2024
- Younes Conference Center North, Kearney, NE
- Details on registration coming soon!

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## SUBMIT YOUR CONTENT!

The NE Planner welcomes readers and associates to submit articles for publication within the newsletter. We are happy to include RFP/RFQ's, new job postings, and upcoming events. For your content to be included in the next newsletter, please email [cbrodersen@cityoflavista.org](mailto:cbrodersen@cityoflavista.org).

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