



## GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

Working Together to  
Grow a Vibrant Phelps  
County Economy



Stacy Pafford

## Pafford Selected For Priceless Pick Award

Each year at the PCDC Annual Meeting, the board president chooses someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in economic development.

This year, President Doug Stevenson chose PCDC Director of Administrative Services Stacy Pafford.

"This person always does her job," Doug said. "She gets it done, and she gets it done professional, and she always does it with a smile. When she comes into contact with people, those people go away feeling needed, wanted and appreciated."

## 2018 ANNUAL MEETING GREEN PROMISES SUPPORT FOR AG

UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green spoke to a packed crowd of 132 local residents at the 2018 Phelps County Development Corporation Annual Meeting on March 22 at the Taste of Texas in Holdrege.

Green complimented Phelps County leaders for their progressive spirit, shared statistics about the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and talked about the future of agriculture.

Prior to Green's speech, PCDC Board President Doug Stevenson shared PCDC and community accomplishments in 2017, including:

- BD's investment of \$300 million in the local plant since 2010,
- Briggs & Stratton's addition of new employees (140 staff now) and their plans for an upcoming expansion,
- PCDC's commitment of \$1 million into a new baseball/softball complex,
- Housing solutions including a housing study, the construction of the Washington Square apartments, five new homes purchased through the down-payment assistance program and the partnership between PCDC and the HDC for a \$1 million housing project,
- Formation of a local builder's bureau to create more opportunities for local contractors,
- PCDC's gift of seven \$1,000 First Impression Grants to local businesses,
- Eight high-demand jobs scholarships awarded to students who plan to return to work in Phelps County,
- A contract with Buxton Co. to encourage and support retail growth,
- A gap-financing loan to support



UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green (left) spoke at PCDC's Annual Meeting on March 22. He is pictured with PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery.

the opening of a new business, Lost Way Brewery,

● A publicity campaign to raise awareness of Phelps County as a great place to do business,

● Distributing the Phelps County Business Journal to every household in the county so all residents can be aware of economic development activities and opportunities.

"You should be proud of what you are doing," Green said. "I can tell you that it's not like this everywhere I go. The spirit's different here. I can feel it. You should relish that and be proud of it. The attitude here is that you want to grow, that you want to change and you want to be progressive. And, I just want to tell you that I could feel that here tonight."

Green, who was raised on a livestock and grain farm in southwestern Virginia, has served as UNL chancellor for two years. He said the university is growing, and he is looking forward to celebrating

its 150th anniversary on Feb. 15, 2019.

Current enrollment at UNL is 26,079 students with 82 students from Phelps County, and Green said he expects that number to grow by 1,000 students next fall.

Green, who has a strong background in agriculture, said the university is committed to preserving the future of ag in Nebraska and talked about opportunities for growth in agriculture, especially in Phelps County.

He talked about the "golden triangle" of ag production that includes crops, livestock and value-added products, such as ethanol or food.

"When you look at the production zone, and you think of what is ideal for that kind of production system – you sit in it – you sit in a zone that is very ideal for those kinds of enterprises," he said.

He encouraged Phelps County leaders to continue to discuss value-added ag opportunities.

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# WESTCOTT FOLLOWS FAMILY LEGACY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORK

Shane Westcott is carrying on a family legacy as he begins his term on the board of the Phelps County Development Corporation.

Shane's dad, Marvin, served on the Holdrege Industrial Development Council (HIDC) before he died in 2009 and was passionate about helping Phelps County grow and thrive.

Generations of Shane's family have lived and worked in Phelps County, and Shane also believes it's important to preserve it for future generations.

"Our family is here, and we enjoy raising our kids in a smaller family environment," Shane said. "It's important for our town to be here in the future for everybody."

Shane was appointed to the PCDC board in February to fill the position that was left open after the death of longtime PCDC board member Tim Anderson in October 2017.

"When they approached me to replace Tim, I looked at that as an honor," Shane said. "He did a lot for the town and the area and even the state. He was a family friend. Plus, economic development is big for our town. It's important to keep our community growing and thriving."

Tim and Shane's dad worked together on the



Shane Westcott

HIDC and economic development in the county.

"Community was important to my dad, my grandfather and Tim," Shane said. "It's nice to be able to continue on some of the work they started."

Shane graduated from HHS in 1996 and then earned a bachelor's degree in agribusiness in 2000 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After graduation, he didn't hesitate to return to Phelps County.

"I always knew I wanted to farm," he said.

He started farming in Phelps County after he graduated from college with "two quarters and an 80" and now continues to grow corn and soybeans in the area.

He will be a voice for agriculture while serving on the PCDC board.

"It's important for economic development groups like PCDC to have an influence in agriculture," Shane said. "It's the biggest industry in our entire state. It's good to have some agricultural businessmen/farmers on the board to make sure their voices are heard."

Shane and his wife, Lacie, have two children: Addison, 8; and Gavin, 5. Shane's past community involvement includes serving on the board of the Holdrege Country Club and Pheasants Forever and being involved in the Future Fund at the Phelps County Community Foundation.

Outside of work and family activities, Shane enjoys hunting, golfing, traveling and watching Husker football.

# PCDC HONORS ANDERSON WITH MEMORIALS

PCDC will honor former long-time board member Tim Anderson by contributing toward a park bench at the hiking trail at Johnson Lake and by planting a flowering Japanese Lilac tree in Holdrege's North Park.

Tim, who died in October 2017, loved nature and cherished his time at Johnson Lake and Plum Creek Canyon. He was also known for giving flowers to PCDC staff on their birthdays and other special occasions, and he always made sure every female senator in the Nebraska Legislature had flowers on opening day.

"We just wanted to continue Tim's tradition of always providing beautiful flowers," said Carley Bruning, PCDC's Director of Business Services.

Tim had served on the PCDC board since 2008.



Tim Anderson



# BRIDAL ISLE KNOWN AROUND NEBRASKA

## Loomis Retailer Chosen as PCDC Business of the Year

With many formal wear stores across the state, what would prompt brides to leave their big city homes and drive for hours to a tiny town in the middle of Nebraska to shop for the perfect wedding dress?

Maybe, it's that personal touch when they see a sign welcoming them by name to the store. Maybe it's the friendly and welcoming staff who have a passion for their work. Maybe it's the surprise of stepping out of their vehicle in small town Nebraska and entering into a store that looks like it's in New York City. Maybe it's the large selection of dresses available in all price ranges. Or, maybe it's the thank-you gift of homemade wedding cookies for all the brides who purchase a dress.

It's probably a combination of all of these factors that brings brides from across the state and region to the Bridal Isle in downtown Loomis. The full-service formal wear store, which was started by Marie Thorell in 1984, sells gowns for the entire wedding party, prom dresses sizes 0-26, accessories such as shoes and jewelry, and offers tuxedo rentals and alterations. The Bridal Isle serves brides from the moment they purchase



The Bridal Isle's personal service is one of the factors that attracts brides from across the state and region to shop for wedding dresses in Loomis. Owner Karla Axtell is pictured in the center.

the dress, including alterations and steaming.

The Phelps County Development Corporation honored the Bridal Isle as a 2018 Business of the Year because of its long-term success and recent growth in attracting new customers from a broad regional market to South Central Nebraska.

Selection committee members noted the frequently heard stories about the best selection of wedding dresses and accessories in the tiniest

town, such as this recent Google review:

*"I live in Lincoln, but this little shop was still worth the drive for me. The staff is professional, personal, and makes you feel welcome and special. There's a huge assortment of gowns for every body type and price range. Very impressed!"*

Owner Karla Axtell said she is humbled and honored by the recognition.

# PMHC ONE OF TOP CRITICAL CARE HOSPITALS IN NATION

## PCDC Honors Phelps Memorial as a 2018 Business of the Year

Access to a nearby hospital in a rural community is sometimes rare.

But, in Phelps County, hospital care is not a worry. Residents receive quality care at one of the top 100 critical care hospitals in the nation at Phelps Memorial Health Center.

PCDC has chosen Phelps Memorial Health Center as one of its 2018 businesses of the year. The selection committee noted Phelps Memorial's stellar performance among its peers not only in Nebraska but also across the nation as shown by its recent selection as a Top 100 Critical Access Hospital. Phelps Memorial is also recognized for its sustained regional impact, its continued growth and investment and its positive economic contributions to Phelps County.



Pictured are many of the hospital's 270 employees.

The healthcare center employs 270 people, serves patients from surrounding rural counties and beyond and continues to partner with others to bring the best quality healthcare possible to Phelps County. The hospital completed an expansion project in 2012 and is now in the planning stages for another project to improve

care even more.

PCDC Selection Committee Member Doug Stevenson said Phelps Memorial staff members have been active participants in finding solutions to community workforce housing shortages.

"They are continually working with PCDC and the community on the housing side," Doug said. "Any housing meeting we have, they attend. They are just not sitting there watching this. They want to help make things better. They are a huge key to the success of our community."

Phelps Memorial CEO Mark Harrel said it is an honor to be selected as PCDC's Business of the Year, and he credits the entire PMHC team for the hospital's success.

"Our team's mission is to provide exceptional quality and compassionate care to the families we serve," Harrel said. "Quality of care is top priority every day."

# EDGREN PURCHASES PRO BUILDING SUPPLY

## Langenberg Retires From Lifetime in Lumberyards

After a lifetime in the lumberyard business, Don Langenberg retired in February.

Although he is 65, Don had planned work a few more years until health issues and an interested buyer prompted him to make the move.

Several years ago, local contractor Steve Edgren planted a seed for thought in Don's mind by letting him know that if he was ever interested in selling Pro Building Supply (615 3rd Ave.) that he would be interested in buying.

"When you have a business like this, and you find a buyer, you probably better let go," Don said.

Don had kept his "ducks in a row" and had several years of profit and loss statements to show to a prospective buyer. Last fall, he took advantage of a PCDC offer to work with the Nebraska Business Development Center to have a business valuation completed.

Steve Edgren celebrated 20 years as owner of Edgren Building in April 2017. But, a recent diagnosis of MS prompted him to consider a different career.

He had recalled mentioning to Don his interest in purchasing the lumberyard several years ago, so he wasn't too surprised when Don called him in November and said he was ready to sell.

The two businessmen worked out the details, and Steve officially took over as owner of Pro Building Supply on Feb. 1.

As a longtime business owner, Steve has a wealth of knowledge in operating a business. But, Steve said he does have a learning curve in transitioning from a service business to a retail business. He is thankful that Pro Building Supply's longtime employees, Carolyn Sievers and Brad Fahrenbruch and several others, who will stay on board.

No major changes are planned in the lumberyard at this time. It will continue to provide anything needed to remodel or build homes, such as hard woods, plywood, shingles, steel roofing and siding, paint, windows, doors and much more. The hours will continue to remain the same, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.

Steve's business partner of 12 years, Wendell



Don Langenberg, left, has sold Pro Building Supply to Steve Edgren, right. Edgren is the former owner of Edgren Building, which will continue under the new name of WenConn Building under the leadership of Steve's former business partner, Wendell Connell.

Connell, has taken over Edgren Building and has changed the name to WenConn Building. Steve said having a qualified business partner to continue to serve Edgren Building clients made it easier for him to let go of his former business.

Steve has lived in Phelps County for most of his life. He and his wife, Brandy, an art teacher at Holdrege Middle School, have six children. Three of their children have already graduated from high

school, and one son, Colter, received a Phelps County High demand jobs scholarship and has returned to Phelps County to work.

Steve began his construction career in high school working for Jim Brown Construction.

Don said Steve's experience as a contractor makes him a great fit for Pro Building Supply.

"I think he will do a great job," Don said.

## Want to Be A Business Owner? Longtime Phelps County Business for Sale

Purchasing an established business has many benefits, and two great opportunities exists in Phelps County for potential entrepreneurs.

Terry and Darlene Clinch, owners of **My Favorite Party Shoppe & Clinch Enterprises** announced in February that they plan to sell Clinch Enterprises (open since 1970) and My Favorite Party Shoppe (open since 1988). The businesses are located at 417 Burlington, one of the busiest intersections in Holdrege. For information, please contact Terry or Darlene at (308) 995-4800.

Pat Landrigan, owner of the **Cozy Inn Cafe**, said he hopes to retire and sell the longtime cafe on the busy Highway 6 & 34. He has operated the Holdrege cafe since 2006 and has been in the restaurant business for more than 30 years. For more information, contact Pat at (308) 830-5874

PCDC can help connect interested entrepreneurs with the resources they need to become a business owner. Contact Carley at (308) 995-4148 or [carley@phelpscountyne.com](mailto:carley@phelpscountyne.com) for more information. Or visit the website at [www.phelpscountyne.com/phelps/business-support](http://www.phelpscountyne.com/phelps/business-support).



# DODGING HIGHWAY DETOURS & ROADBLOCKS

## Group Offers Solutions During Highway 6 & 34 Construction

The reconstruction of Highway 6 & 34 will limit access to many Holdrege businesses this spring and summer and will surely cause residents and travelers to wonder how to get to the front door of a local restaurant or store.

But, a local group is hoping that with some pre-planning and teamwork, business traffic won't be interrupted, and residents and visitors can easily navigate road closings and detours.



Concrete Solutions

(#ConcreteSolutions2018) is the name chosen for a group whose members will work to assist businesses and residents during the highway project. It is led by staff and volunteers from the Phelps County Development Corporation and the Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce and area business owners.

The group will help the affected businesses remain successful during the project, which began March 26 and will involve reconstructing Fourth Avenue (Highway 6 & 34) from Garfield to Nobes Street.

The group organized a "Highway Groundbreaking" on March 27 as a kick-off event to help bring publicity to the project.

Allison Fritsche, past chamber president and sales engineer at Glenwood, said the highway construction project in 2015 was an eye-opening experience as traffic counts and sales slowed at many businesses. Communication to customers about how to access businesses was sometimes difficult.

"From the chamber point of view, we need to be a little more proactive this time around," Allison said. "One of our main goals is better community advocacy."

Concrete Solutions 2018 has three main goals:

- To advocate for businesses along the route through pre-planning and education and to share marketing, event or sales ideas to keep customers shopping during the project.
- To keep an open line of communication between local businesses and the state officials



**Holdrege Mayor Doug Young "breaks the ground" on the Highway 6 & 34 project on March 27. The road reconstruction and detours are expected to continue through October.**

working on the project so that everyone knows the agenda.

- To encourage business owners and customers to remain optimistic, realistic and positive through the construction process.

The initial Concrete Solutions team has been communicating with state highway officials since August 2017 to stay informed on the upcoming project. The first public meeting in February attracted about 100 business owners and residents.

Allison said one challenge the Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce will face is organizing people and traffic during Swedish Days and the Central Plains Rib Fest, which will occur in mid-June during the midst of the construction project.

Concrete Solutions members are already planning for better signs and communication to travelers entering Holdrege from both the east and west. Signs will state that Highway 6 & 34 is closed, but that businesses can still be accessed.

The committee is also planning other special communication, such as "Highway High Fives" to give the public updates on the project and a weekly "Word on the Street" from the chamber to help businesses share their news during the

construction.

For more information: Carley Bruning at PCDC at (308) 995-4148, [carley@phelpscountyne.com](mailto:carley@phelpscountyne.com), or Allison Fritsche at (308) 995-2121.

## Highway Project Details

- Construction began March 26 and will continue through October.
- The construction route will be between Garfield and Nobes Streets on Fourth Avenue.
- Follow the Facebook page Concrete Solutions 2018-Holdrege Highway Project to find detour maps and information about business specials.
- Either Grant or Tilden streets will always be open to north and south traffic during the entire project.
- Local and out-of-town traffic will be encouraged to access downtown businesses via 7th Avenue.
- Through traffic will be detoured to Airport Road, 18th Avenue and Burlington.

## New Attorney Joins DeWald, Deaver Law Firm

John A. Sauder has joined the law firm of DeWald Deaver, P.C., L.L.O. as an associate attorney.

John graduated from Creighton University School of Law in May of 2017. Prior to graduation, he clerked for a litigation firm in Omaha.



**John Sauder**

He will maintain a general legal practice with an emphasis in representing clients in civil litigation (trials and appeals), criminal defense and juvenile law matters.

John is a native of Puerto Rico and is fluent in Spanish, which will help the firm serve the area's growing Spanish-speaking population.

John is married and has two children. He enjoys playing sports, hiking and spending time with his family. Please stop by the office and welcome John to our community.

Sauder joins Nate DeWald, Luke Deaver, Taylor L'Heureux and William Tringe at the firm.

For more information regarding DeWald Deaver Law Firm, please visit [www.holdregelaw.com](http://www.holdregelaw.com) or contact them at (308) 995-8848.

## Panter Investments Rentals Offers Local Vehicle Rentals

A vehicle rental service is available in Phelps County offered by Steve and Joel Panter of Panter Investments Rentals.

The company's seven-passenger vans are available to rent short or long term. The rental service helps customers who need transportation while their vehicles are repaired (they will match insurance companies daily rental allotment) or customers who want to rent vehicles with more passenger room for long trips.

The business started in May 2015 and now offers a fleet of seven roomy Chrysler mini vans. The Panter's purchased the rental business from Black Motor when Janssen Motor Co. bought Black Motor.

For more information or to rent a vehicle, contact the business at (308) 240-1569. Visit the website at [panterinvestment.com](http://panterinvestment.com) or the Facebook page at [panterinvestmentscarrentals](http://panterinvestmentscarrentals).

## McDonald's Remodel to be Complete in Mid-May

Construction began Feb. 26 on a major remodeling project at the McDonald's in Holdrege at 410 West Fourth Ave.

General Manager Nicole Thomas said the restaurant's interior and exterior will be updated to match McDonald's new modern look at restaurants across the nation. The local remodel also includes remodeling and enlarging the restrooms.

Thomas said the all-glass room, which had leaked when it rained, will be remodeled into an actual room so that it won't have to be closed each time it rains.

Other additions will include new soda machines, a new refrigerator and cooler, a Frappe & Smoothie machine and a kiosk at the front counter for customers who want to order without speaking to an employee.

Thomas said the McDonald's drive-through will remain open during the entire renovation, and the dining area will be open except for a three-week span starting March 26. The project is expected to be complete by mid-May.



## Sweeney Wealth Management Opens in Downtown Holdrege

A Loomis graduate and his wife, who run a successful wealth management practice in Boston, have opened an office in downtown Holdrege.



**Eric & Beth Sweeney**

Eric Sweeney, a 1999 Loomis graduate and former UNL football player, and his wife, Beth, have worked in the financial planning business for more than 23 years.

Sweeney Wealth Management Group will now

offer their services in Phelps County from their new location at 718 4th Avenue. The couple, who have five children, will continue to live in the Boston area and will travel to the Phelps County location monthly to meet with clients.

"I love Holdrege, and I love Phelps County," Eric said. "I want to give back to the community

and the people who helped raise me and get me out into the world. I want to help them with their financial lives."

The Advisors of Sweeney Wealth Management Group offer financial planning and investing for clients around the world, including business owners, farmers, ranchers and individuals. They help clients create customized financial plans to help them reach their life's financial goals. Eric has a passion for working with business transitions and succession planning.

The Sweeneys also offer 401K plans for businesses, and they sell life insurance. Their practice is affiliated with Steward Partners Global Advisory, which uses Raymond James Financial Services as their custodian and platform provider.

The Sweeneys' staff also includes long-time Assistant Patricia Stefanou, who has been in the business for more than 35 years.

The Sweeneys purchased their downtown Holdrege office, refurbished the interior and spruced up the building's exterior in preparation for their business opening.

For more information, contact the Sweeneys at (617) 377-4413 or (308) 995-1400.





From left: Drew Carbaugh, Amber Otto, Barb Malm, Janet Boehler and Kelly Morten

## NAS Realty Moves to New Fourth Avenue Location

NAS Realty has a new location at 1223 4th Ave. in Holdrege. Owner Barb Malm purchased the building from Batie and Thorell Insurance and moved her business to the location in January.

Barb has been a Realtor since 2010. NAS Realty opened in 2015 and has recently added a team of Realtors to its staff, including:

Janet Boehler, who is a lifelong Phelps County resident. She has worked in human resources for more than 15 years and also works full-time as a business manager,

Kelly Morten, who has lived in Holdrege since 1982 and also works in the ag irrigation industry,

Amber Otto, who has lived in Phelps County since 1997 and enjoys spending time with her husband and two children outside of work,

Drew Carbaugh, who recently moved to McCook and is serving as an NAS Realtor in southwest Nebraska.

The office assistant is Rebecca Colbert, who works at NAS from 8 a.m. to Noon.

## Rehnberg Opens New Edward Jones Office

Kayla Rehnberg is opening a second Holdrege Edward Jones location at 608 Fourth Ave. The office is expected to open in mid-April.

Kayla became an Edward Jones Financial Advisor in 2017 and has been working out of Steve Allen's Edward Jones office for the past year. Kayla said the Edward Jones model requires that only one advisor be located in each office.



Kayla Rehnberg

She is leasing the former 7-Eleven store and has hired contractors to gut the interior of the building to create offices and a conference room. She is in the process of hiring a Branch Office Administrator and may hire another administrator later as she grows her client list.

Prior to her position at Edward Jones, Kayla worked as an accountant for Dana F. Cole & Co. in Minden for 10 years.

In her role at Edward Jones, she helps clients plan for and reach their long-term financial goals, including retirement planning, college savings and even saving for a dream, such as a lake house.

Kayla is planning an open house at the new location in May.

Kayla and her husband, Jonathan, live in Holdrege and have two daughters, Addison and Kennedy.

## First Impression Grants

The Phelps County Development Corporation will continue to offer \$1,000 First Impression Grants in 2018. The grants are intended to help businesses with funding for exterior updates, such as new paint, signs, windows or doors.

Businesses are reminded to get their applications in early as grants will be awarded on a first-come first-served basis.

For more information about the grants or to apply, please call Carley at PCDC at (308) 995-4148 or download and application on the website at [www.phelpscountyne.com](http://www.phelpscountyne.com).

## YMCA Hires Pelster as Sports Program Director

A sports-loving Ogallala native has joined the team at the Don Sjogren Community YMCA as the Sports Director.



Joel Pelster

"Holdrege always beat my teams in basketball when I was in Ogallala," Joel Pelster said. "So, if you can't beat them, join them!"

Joel began his work at the YMCA in mid-January. He will be responsible for organizing the youth and adult sports programs at the Y, including determining what programs and leagues to offer, finding coaches and volunteers and ensuring the programs are well organized and on time.

Joel said he has always loved sports, so this job is the perfect fit for him.

Joel earned a major in Sports & Business Administration. While at UNK, he worked at Campus Recreation.

For the past three years, Joel has worked at his family's business, Kildare Lumber. His family recently sold the business to Mead Lumber.

## Planning a Construction Project? PCDC Can Help Find Contractors With Builder's Bureau

Is your business planning a remodel or new construction?

PCDC can help you find qualified local contractors with our new Builder's Bureau.

The Builder's Bureau was formed in 2017 as a way to help local contractors and subcontractors stay informed about construction opportunities. The Builder's Bureau now includes a list of 32 members with accurate contact information for each one. In the past seven months, PCDC has sent out notification of bid requests 21 times to Builder's Bureau members.

Any contractors or vendors who have not yet joined the Bureau (it's just \$50 annually or free for PCDC investors) are encouraged to do so by contacting Ron Tillery at PCDC at [ron@phelpscountyne.com](mailto:ron@phelpscountyne.com).

Also, any businesses owners who are searching for contractors for an upcoming project are encouraged to seek bids through the Builder's Bureau by also contacting PCDC.



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# GO news

## TAKE A LOOK INSIDE

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## Growing Local Retail FREE DATA & MARKETING TOOLS

Are you looking for statistics on consumers and shopping patterns in Phelps County? PCDC can help you find the answers. Our organization has contracted with Buxton Co. to provide retail statistics to Phelps County businesses at no cost.

After an initial study, Buxton has showed that Phelps County and the surrounding 20-mile area largely consists of four types of buyers: True Grit Americans, Diapers and Debit Cards, Settled and Sensible, Stockcars and State Parks. These groups are described as people who live within their means, spend modestly or are bargain hunters. This type of information and more is now available at no cost to local retailers or those considering opening a business by contacting PCDC.

Traffic counts at various locations in town are also available through these reports. Buxton reported the following average daily traffic counts for Holdrege locations:

10,195 - Fourth & Grant	10,072 - Fourth & Broadway
10,020 - Fourth & East Ave.	9,194 - 11th & Burlington

