

# **Washington County Businesses & Employment Trends**

By  
Gateway Development Corporation

Produced with assistance from  
UtiliCorp United, Inc.

Compiled by the  
Applied Information Management Institute



## Executive Summary

Washington County is one of Nebraska's fastest growing counties. Blair, the county seat, has a projected growth rate that exceeds the country. The growth in both Blair and the county is attributed to the strong growth of Washington County companies and participation in the growth of Greater Omaha's economy.

These conditions have had very favorable impact on both Blair and the county. Cargill's continued plant growth, plus other new firms related to this facility have been an engine of growth for the area. Several new retail businesses moved to the city. Some existing businesses have built new facilities while others expanded operations. Real estate markets have been active, single family and multiple family construction is strong, school attendance has increased, a new middle school is under construction, and expectations are high for continued long-term growth.

With growth, however, comes some stress and "opportunities." Real estate values have risen for new family starts and new residents, real estate assessed values have increased, job growth has exceeded labor supply, serious shortages of skilled labor exists, traffic volume and road location are a challenge, etc.

The Gateway Development Corporation and the Blair Chamber of Commerce commissioned a study to focus on labor availability and associated company growth issues. This study, completed by the Applied Information Management Institute, was designed to document the employment market and needs of area employers. The results are instructional for public policy makers, educators, employers, and others as they respond to market forces faced individually and collectively.

### **Study Methodology**

A questionnaire designed to document current and projected employment plus labor market characteristics (Appendix I) was mailed to most Blair and Washington county employers. Forty firms, with a total of 1,781 employees, responded (Appendix II is a list of respondents). The 1994 census indicates there are 4,260 employees in Washington County. The 1,781 employees represented in the study are nearly 42% of all employees in the county as reported in the 1994 census.

The following analysis will summarize information for all firms, plus detail larger firms (11 employers with 40 or more employees) and smaller businesses (29 firms with less than 40 employees.) Generally, the larger firms provide community-wide services and/or manufacturing with regional/national markets. The smaller companies were predominately retail trade or provide other consumer-type goods and services. For firms with operations outside Washington County, only Washington county employment was listed.

## Findings

Total Washington County employment reported by the 40 respondents was 1,781, of which 1,337 were full-time and 444 were part-time. Table 1 shows that over one-third of all employees at the 29 smaller firms worked part-time. Slightly less than one-fourth of all employees at the 11 larger companies worked part-time.

**Table 1**  
**Current Number of Employees at Washington County Locations**

Employment Status	Firms with Employment of	
	40 or more	Less than 40
Full-time	1,230	107
Part-time	381	63
Total	1,611	170

Washington County was “home” for the majority of all employees. Table 2 documents, however, that the larger employers have attracted more workers from other areas.

**Table 2**  
**Place of Residence of Employees Working for Washington County Firms**

	Firms with Employment of		Total
	40 or more	Less than 40	
Washington County	57.8%	80.8%	60.0%
Douglas County	13.2%	2.9%	12.2%
Other Adjacent Nebraska Counties	15.7%	8.1%	14.9%
Harrison/Pottawattamie County, Iowa	9.7%	7.0%	9.4%
Other Iowa Counties	3.2%	0.0%	2.9%
Other Areas	.5%	1.2%	.6%

### Employment Growth

Employment is projected to grow significantly by the year 2000. Growth rates are higher for small firms than for the larger employers. Incomplete reporting by some respondents suggest that the data shown in Table 3 probably understates the expected growth for area employers - particularly for the five year period between 2000 and 2005.

For all reporting firms, employment is expected to increase 8.9% by the year 2000. Annually, this would be a growth rate of nearly 3%. For the ten-year period between 1980 and 1990,

population growth for both Blair and Washington County were well below 1% annually. The annual population growth rate between 1990 and 1995 was higher - Blair 1.65% and Washington County 1.3%. The projected 3% annual growth in employment greatly exceeds historical population growth in Blair and the county. Continuation of these trends suggest relatively tight local labor markets for the next few years.

Blair and Washington County employment growth must also be reviewed in the larger context of Greater Omaha employment. These same conditions of employment demand exceeding population growth exist in adjacent counties. In addition, very low unemployment rates, booming demand for information technology specialists, strong demand for skilled craftsmen, etc. suggest a Greater Omaha Metropolitan demand for labor will also continue to be very competitive.

Table 3 shows the “mix” of employment in Washington County. These data show production/general labor - 524 - is the largest employment class for the largest firms.

<b>Table 3 Current Employment by Job Categories</b>						
<b>Job Categories</b>	11 Firms		29 Firms		All 40 Firms	
	40 or more Number	Employees Percent	Less than 40 Number	Employees Percent	Total Number	Percent
Clerical/Administrative	192	11.9%	27	15.9%	219	12.3%
Production/General Labor	524	32.5%	23	13.5%	547	30.7%
Technical/Medical/Analyst	239	14.8%	31	18.2%	270	15.2%
Professional/Management	280	17.4%	45	26.5%	325	18.2%
Sales/Service	370	23.3%	52	30.6%	428	24.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,605</b>		<b>178</b>		<b>1,789</b>	

Sales/Service is the largest employment class for small firms and is the second largest employment class for the largest companies. As firms projected employment for the year 2000, they anticipated more employees, but nearly an identical employee mix between these five major job categories as shown in Table 3. Definitions of the five job categories are shown in Appendix I.

### **Computer Skills Relevant**

The most significant new skills (in the last 10 years) workers need for success are computer skills. The ability to use computers is frequently required to supplement other job skills. Table 4 documents Washington County employers’ requirements for computer capabilities. It is likely

the demand for these skills will grow more rapidly than projected growth for total employment. It is also noteworthy that both large and small firms require on computer knowledge. Production/General Labor is the job category least likely to require computer skills.

**Table 4  
Percent Employees Requiring Computer Skills**

<b>Job Categories</b>	<b>11 Firms 40 or more Employees</b>	<b>29 Firms Less than 40 Employees</b>	<b>All 40 Firms Total</b>
Clerical/Administrative	91.1%	89.9%	90.9%
Production/General Labor	22.1%	43.5%	23.0%
Technical/Medical/Analyst	97.1%	29.0%	89.3%
Professional/Management	46.4%	95.6%	53.2%
Sales/Service	96.6%	76.9%	91.6%

### **Recruiting New Employees**

Firms were asked to record how difficult it is to recruit new employees. The smaller firms indicated the most difficulty in attracting new employees in all job categories. For example, recruitment of clerical/administrative was viewed as very difficult or difficult by 12 small firms, while only 4 viewed recruitment as competitive. For the clerical/administrative position, only 2 of the larger firms viewed recruitment as difficult, while 8 considered the market competitive.

**Table 5  
Recruiting Difficulties for Large and Small Firms**

<b>Job Categories</b>	<b>Large Firms</b>			<b>Small Firms</b>		
	<b>Very Difficult</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Competitive</b>	<b>Very Difficult</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Competitive</b>
Clerical/Administrative	0	2	8	1	11	4
Production/General Labor	2	3	4	1	4	2
Technical/Medical/Analyst	1	4	3	5	3	1
Professional/Management	1	6	3	4	0	2
Sales/Service	0	3	5	4	8	1

The technical/medical/analyst job category was difficult for both groups of firms. All types of information technology professionals are difficult to recruit in Washington County, Greater Omaha, and nationally. This very tight market for these knowledge workers is evident from these data. Appendix I contains definitions.

For small companies, Washington County was the most likely source of new recruits for all job categories. The larger firms were more likely to use a broader recruiting geography that included adjoining counties and “outside the area.” This pattern was reflected in the response to the question, “In the last year have you paid relocation expenses to move employees to the area?” The 11 large companies had moved a total of 13 employees to the area. Collectively, the 29 small firms had paid to relocate 1 employee. While the study did not track salary, benefits, company name recognition, and other employee considerations, it is likely that some of these factors might also help explain why smaller firms find recruitment more difficult.

**The Market**

Washington County firms have a local, regional, national, and international reach. Table 6 documents the scope of their market.

<b>Table 6 Primary Geographic Market for Goods and Services Sold Percent of Sales</b>		
<b>Job Categories</b>	<b>Large Firms 10 reporting</b>	<b>Small Firms 25 reporting</b>
Washington County	19.6%	79.8%
Greater Omaha Metro Area	9.1%	14.8%
Midwest	33.9%	4.0%
Rest of the USA	34.6%	1.4%
Global	2.8%	0.0%

The substantial Midwest/national/international market for the large firms (71.3% of goods and services sold) is a significant economic “boost” to the county. These sales beyond the county boundaries (exports) bring income and jobs to the community and are a great “engine of growth.”

Meanwhile, the primary geographic source of the supplies/service/materials (except labor) purchased for manufacture/resale is local. Table 7 shows that the large companies acquired 75.4%, while small firms acquired 77.6% of their materials and supplies from Washington County/Greater Omaha/Midwest suppliers. This pattern keeps these “cost” dollars close to home - also supporting local economic development.

**Table 7**  
**Primary Geographic Source of Supplies/Service/Materials**  
**Purchase for Manufacture/Resale**

<b>Job Categories</b>	<b>Large Firms 10 reporting</b>	<b>Small Firms 25 reporting</b>
Washington County	12.9%	24.2%
Greater Omaha Metro Area	35.9%	32.9%
Midwest	26.6%	20.5%
Rest of the USA	12.4%	21.8%
Global	12.2%	0.5%

### **Firms Optimistic**

Overall, both large and small firms are optimistic about the future of their companies. Between 1997 and the year 2000, small firms projected a 12.8% annual growth in revenue, while the large companies expect an 11.2% annual growth. The combined revenue growth for all 40 firms is projected at 12.7%. Success in achieving this growth bodes well for the Blair and Washington County economy. To achieve this growth, however, firms must attract employees.

Each employer was asked to identify “What jobs are most difficult to recruit?” A complete list of responses is recorded in Appendix III. As expected, there were some very consistent and predicted responses by firms. For example, Blair Community Schools were the only employer reporting difficulty hiring school bus drivers. While the data reflect a shortage at all skill levels, information technology professionals (computer network technicians, programmers/analysts, data base analysts, and computer services) are in general demand for several employers. These results reflect the pervasive use of computers in business and commerce and the general scarcity of such professionals in the region and nationally.

Somewhat unique to the Blair community is the demand for welders. Blair has spawned several firms that require metalworking and welding skills, but has not created an education and training culture “creating” potential employees for these firms.

### **Educational Programs**

When asked, “What educational programs would you like to see implemented?” the responses fell into four broad categories.

- Computer Related
- Technical Training
- Business focused with business content, work ethic, interpersonal skills, entrepreneurial views desired by employers
- Specific Courses (i.e., BS/MS chemistry)

These responses tend to map closely with national trends that suggest employers are looking for “job ready” employees with skills that can be applied in the work place. The fact that they appear on the list suggests the schools are educating students that frequently are not as “job ready” as expected.

Finally, the respondents were asked, “What are the two most important things the community, Washington County or Nebraska could do to foster the growth of your business?” Once again, the responses were diverse. Appendix III contains the complete list. There were several themes, however, with some variation between large and small employers. Major themes included:

- More (affordable) housing -Large Firms
- Maintain/promote a pro-economic development climate - Small and Large Firms
- Buy Blair/Washington County - Small Firms
- Reduce tax (Bus., RE., Personal) - Small and Large Firms
- Downtown renewal/parking/roads/growth - Small Firms

## Conclusions

Employers in Blair and Washington County are projecting annual revenue growth of 12.7% and employment growth at 2.9% between now and the year 2000. This greatly exceeds the population growth that was below 1% between 1980 and 1990. Between 1990 and 1995, the annual population growth rate was 1.65% for Blair and 1.3% for Washington County. These data clearly suggest that Washington County will continue to face very tight labor markets. County employers will increasingly be forced to recruit in adjacent counties and outside the area to fill job vacancies.

There was an “optimistic tone/feel” when reading the surveys. As we worked with the data, responses to the open ended questions that began with “What should...” were generally positive and reflected high expectations. Comments were constructive. This presents a favorable climate for progress and solutions to the community’s problems prompted by growth.

## Recommendations

1. Public officials may wish to evaluate statutes, regulations, policies, and practices that discourage building or make residential construction difficult or more costly.
2. Blair, in particular, has a unique industry mix. Con-E-Co, Kelly Ryan, and Ag Bag have created a very strong local demand for welders and other skilled craftsman. These skills will also be in demand as expansion continues at Cargill. None of the local educational institutions provide courses or academic programs in these and related fields. Also, there are no local private training programs available (other than on-the-job training) from the employers. A well-focused high school course, perhaps using local company facilities would create excellent career paths for young adults that have chosen to enter the metal fabrication or construction trades.

Area firms, perhaps through the Gateway Development Corporation, should meet with area public schools to review needs and opportunities. Specifically, the need for certain skilled trades - particularly welders - may create an opportunity for an academic/business partnership that meets mutual needs of both parties. Exploratory meetings to document needs and opportunities should be planned and scheduled.

3. Nearly two-thirds of all jobs at Washington County employers now require computer skills. Educational institutions at all levels should provide relevant and focused IT curricula. There are two essential student focuses: users of technology, and information technology professionals that develop and maintain applications and systems.

Computer and communication technologies could be incorporated as learning technology for all upper high school and college courses and programs (i.e., term papers and other school work should be prepared using word processing, graphic and spreadsheet software. Internet research is expected.) Use of these technologies build the proficiencies that will serve the students well if they enter the job market or go on to college. These are the general computer skills that will be (are) expected of new job entrants.

In addition, programs in county high schools, Dana, and community colleges should be designed for the student that wishes to be an IT professional - not just a user. These programs would include courses and curricula in programming, system analyses, web development, network management and support, customer service, etc. There will continue to be excellent employment opportunities for students with these skills at all of the county's large employers and many of the smaller companies.

Area firms should also meet with the area’s public schools, Dana, and Metropolitan Community College to document needs and opportunities. An initial meeting might document academic offerings and opportunities while firms delineate needs and opportunities. IT disciplines are increasingly being accepted as an important area of academic study. Relevant and current curriculum is important for students, educators, and community employers/entrepreneurs.

4. Research in other studies document that both high school and college students are frequently uninformed of career options and opportunities. Student internships provide an excellent vehicle for students to discover jobs and careers. Area employers should create a culture that budgets and plans for student internships – these could be both during the summer or the school year – particularly for college students. Firms should work with area schools to provide student intern opportunities, plus other “job or career experiences” for students such as field trips, mentors, speakers, work-study, faculty internships, etc. Such a program would support public school school-to-work programs.
5. Taxes are a challenge to all growing communities/counties that have a relatively small population. Demands for governmental service and public infrastructure grow more rapidly than the tax base, creating a growing tax burden. Solutions usually include:
  - reengineering of public service delivery to provide greater service at a reduced cost
  - expand the population and employment.

Ways to provide both more government services for less, while expanding the population base, should be aggressively and creatively pursued.

6. In the United States, about one-third of all college students are “nontraditional” students. Many of these students are seeking enhanced career opportunities through education. Presently, the educational infrastructure in Washington County does not effectively address adult training/education. Area firms may wish to foster such retraining by hosting such classes (welding, computer, etc.) to encourage employee participation and recruiting non-employees to take training. Training services could be provided by schools, private training companies, or potential employers.

# Washington County Employer Questionnaire

Name of business \_\_\_\_\_

## Employment and trends

### Current Number of Employees:

at your Washington County location \_\_\_\_\_  
 full time \_\_\_\_\_  
 part time \_\_\_\_\_

Employment outside Washington County \_\_\_\_\_

### Please estimate the percent of your employees that live in:

Washington County \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Douglas County \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Other adjacent Nebraska Counties \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Harrison County, Pottawattamie County \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Other Iowa Counties \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ %

### Please estimate the rate of growth in your Washington County

#### Employment:

	Current Employment	Projected Annual Growth in Employment (% change per year)	
		2000	2005
Clerical/Administrative			
Production/General Labor			
Technical/Medical/Analyst			
Professional/Management			
Sales/Services			

### What percent of your employees require computer skills?

#### % Employees Requiring Computer Skills

	Now	In 5 years
Clerical/Administrative	%	%
Production/General Labor	%	%
Technical/Medical/Analyst	%	%
Professional/Management	%	%
Sales/Service	%	%

**Recruitment Issues**

Show recruiting difficulty and likely source of new employees

	Recruiting Difficulties	Most likely source of new employees
	1. Very difficult 2. Difficult 3. Competitive	1-Washington County 2-Adjoining Counties 3-Outside area (must move to work)
Clerical/Administrative		
Production/General Labor		
Technical/Medical/Analyst		
Professional/Management		
Sales/Service		

What 3 specific jobs are most difficult to fill.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

In the last 12 months have you paid relocation expenses to move employees to area?  YES  NO if yes, number of employees \_\_\_\_.

**Your Market**

Where is the primary geographic market for the goods and services you sell?

	% of 1996 Sales
Washington County	%
Greater Omaha Metro area	%
Mid West	%
Rest of the USA	%
Global	%
	100%

What is the primary geographic source of supplies/services/materials (except labor) you purchase for manufacture/resale?

	% 1996 of purchases
Washington County	%
Greater Omaha Metro area	%
Mid West	%
Rest of the US	%
Global	%
	100%

**Corporate Revenue Growth**

**Based upon 1996 revenues, project your average annual revenue growth rate for following periods:**

1997-2000	% per year
2001-2005	% per year

**Needs/Opportunities**

**What educational programs would you like to see implemented by the following to support future growth of Washington County business:**

Washington County High Schools

Dana College

Area Community College

Other

Private (non-academic) training companies

**What are the 2 most important things the community, Washington County, or Nebraska could do to foster growth of your business.**

1.

2.

2. Difficult - Qualified applicants may be available, but requirements high.

3. Competitive - Many qualified applicants at competitive wage levels.

## Appendix II

### Washington County Respondents

Blair Community Schools	245
Memorial Community Hospital	234
Cargill, Inc. -Blair Corn Milling	209
Con-E-Co	202
Dakota Direct - Huntel	193
Mid America Computer Corp.	150
Huntel	120
Woodhouse Ford/Chrysler	110
Washington County Bank	53
Kelly Ryan Equipment Company	51
Ag Bag Corp	44
McDonald's	30
No Name Given	14
Blair Pharmacy/Blair Medical Supply	13
Arps Red-E-Mix	10
Heartland Family Dentistry	9
Nielsen Oil and Propane	9
No Name Given	8
PFI	8
Wolfe Jewelers	6
Blair Engineering and Surveying Co., Inc.	6
No Name Given	5
Carefree Travel	5
Herbert C. Coulter, D.D.S.	4
American Family Insurance	4
No Name Given	4
Bunten Agency, Inc.	4
Blair Golf Club	4
Bohling, Inc.	4
People's Natural Gas	4
Blair Insurance Agency	4
Howard D. Thompson Agency	3
No Name Given	3
Blair Book & Supply	3
Enterprise Rent-A-Car	2
Vaughn Christian Specialty Advertising, Inc.	1
At Your Service Marketing, Inc.	1
Krogh Insurance	1
Olsen Auto Service	1
No Name Given	0

## Appendix III

### Replies to the Open-ended Questions in the Washington County Respondents

#### What specific jobs are most difficult to fill?

All of our Servile Related Positions	QA Chemists
Bus Drivers	Sales
Clerical	Sales Associates Representatives (those who make contact with newcomers)
Clerical Sales	Sales Support
Clerical/Administrative	Salesperson
Computer Network Technicians	Secretaries/Clerical
Computer Programmer/Analyst	Service Technicians (trained and experienced)
Computer Services Service	Survey Crew/Technicians
Database Analyst	Tankwagon Driver
Dental Hygiene	Technical, Management, Sales
Engineer	Technical/Medical/Analyst
General Labor	Technicians Qualified in Auto Repair
Graphic Artist	Tellers
IT Professionals	Tow Truck Driver
Line Apprentice	Travel Agent
Line Summer Help	Truck Drivers
Line Technicians	Vehicle Detailers
Management Trainees	Welders
Mechanic	Welders Finish and Final Assembly
Occupational Therapist	Welders Production Technicians
Officer Trainees	
Physical Therapist	
Physician	

#### What educational programs would you like to see implemented by the following to support future growth of Washington County business ?

##### Washington County High Schools

- More technical and production training
- Assist all students [in becoming] computer literate
- Computer Skills
- Career Day

Technical training, School to Work

[Implement] programs regarding computer skills, Administration or business skills.

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

English, grammar, spelling.

Wide range of programming courses

Computer Skills

Preparation of men/women with office skills and business work ethic to enter work force.

Doing a great job

Offer some technical classes.

A move back to trades and automotive shop in school.

More qualified instructors for technical people -(mechanical skills) example - Tekamah

#### Dana College

Computer Technical Support

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

Wide range of programming courses

Mechanical Skills

Emphasis on business and finance to prepare student for trainee positions within financial industry; partner with local businesses in procuring jobs for students graduating with applicable degrees and keep them in the local job market.

Doing a great job

#### Area Community College

Technical Training

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

Wide range of programming courses

Chemistry BS/MS

Doing a great job

All of our area kids that have gone on to higher technical learning came through Tekamah. Our school is very lacking in a good teacher(s) in this field

#### Other

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

Wide range of programming courses

Chemical Engineering at University

#### Private

Team Building, Interpersonal Skills

**What could the community, Washington County, or Nebraska do to foster the growth of the business?**

Economical housing

Buy in Blair first, if possible

Layout a master plan of the geographical direction you want Blair to grow. For example, future should locate to the east, residential growth to the north and retail growth in what direction?

Continue providing a quality of life atmosphere

Encourage people to shop at home. Blair business cannot survive without the support of the people of Blair and Washington County.

Recruit new industry, not react to inquiries

Lower Taxes

Give high school students knowledge of self-employment opportunities. It is normally aimed at big business

People or growth of population

Low income housing to increase labor supply/affordable housing

Provide training technical skills.

Continue to attract new industry.

Need the City of Blair's Administration's willingness to promote and or participate in rural water.

Give specific incentives to develop and expand business

No Comment.

Referring people and letting them know what services we provide.

Shop at home

Continue strong growth

Truck Bypass

Bring back motor vehicle inspection.

Affordable housing

Buy more locally.

More daycare

Become active in providing programs/assistance in entry/starter level housing. Use of infill lots in Blair - enforcement of life/safety building codes in sub-standard rental housing.

New constitution will take care of most growth

Good, abundant, low cost, cor, gas, electricity, transportation

Buy within the community (vehicles)

The county and community must continue to promote economic development allowing the community to grow which will in turn foster business growth.

Receive services here vs. Omaha

Maintain the fine job of bringing profitable industries to Blair

New industries

Redo downtown Blair

Stay proactive on business

The businesses need to figure out how to tell the Blair people that are good customers

“Thank you” every day and let them know we do not take them for granted.

Promote retail, vertical growth to areas outside of Blair.

Maintain positive business environment, i.e., taxes, regulation, financial incentives.

Need to have a Blair sales tax for use on infrastructure maintenance and future construction.

Provide technical assistance geared to Micro-business development.

Aim at higher professional employees.

Grants for City improvement - Downtown improvement, bike/walk paths connecting city.

Reasonable tax assessment.

De-regulation of energy (gas-electric) will fuel growth and competition.

Develop high achieving students at Blair HS, Dana College and others.

Allow new business growth.

Maintain fine caliber of area schools.

Housing

Reduce State Road Taxes to match or be more in line with Iowa road taxes to help promote interstate business by being able to match or beat prices.

Washington County could try to develop incentive for feed lots instead of driving people away by over regulating ag. and high taxes.

Promote Agriculture

Parking/Downtown Improvement

Emphasize the benefits of being centrally located in the U.S.

Reduce Taxes

Benefits of shopping locally

Keep the mayor and city council we have now and continue to pursue quality of life. Make this city very pretty along the major highways. No weeds, etc.

Companies with 40 or More Employees  
**Replies to the Open-ended Questions in the  
Washington County Respondents**

**What specific jobs are most difficult to fill?**

Bus Drivers	Physician
Clerical	Production Technicians
Computer Network Technicians	QA Chemists
Computer Services	Secretaries/Clerical
Database Analyst	Service
Finish and Final Assembly	Technicians Qualified in Auto Repair
IT Professionals	Tellers
Occupational Therapist	Welders
Officer Trainees	Welders
Physical Therapist	Welders

**What educational programs would you like to see implemented by the following to support future growth of Washington County business?**

Washington County High Schools

Technical training, School to Work  
Wide range of programming courses  
Computer Skills  
Preparation of men/women with office skills and business work ethic to enter work force.  
More qualified instructors for technical people - (mechanical skills) example - Tekamah

Dana College

Wide range of programming courses  
Mechanical Skills  
Emphasis on business and finance to prepare student for trainee positions within financial industry; partner with local businesses in procuring jobs for students graduating with applicable degrees and keep them in the local job market.

Area Community College

Technical Training  
Wide range of programming courses  
Chemistry BS/MS  
All of our area kids that have gone on to higher technical learning came through Tekamah. Our school is very lacking in a good teacher(s) in this field

Other

Wide range of programming courses  
Chemical Engineering at University

Private

Team Building, Interpersonal Skills

**What could the community, Washington County, or Nebraska do to foster the growth of the business?**

Economical housing

Continue providing a quality of life atmosphere

Low income housing to increase labor supply/affordable housing

Affordable housing

More daycare

Good, abundant, low cost, cor, gas, electricity, transportation

The county and community must continue to promote economic development allowing the community to grow which will in turn foster business growth.

Receive services here vs. Omaha

Promote Agriculture

Keep the mayor and city council we have now and continue to pursue quality of life. Make this city very pretty along the major highways. No weeds, etc.

Stay proactive on business

Maintain positive business environment, i.e. taxes, regulation, financial incentives.

Reasonable tax assessment.

Develop high achieving students at Blair HS, Dana College and others.

Allow new business growth.

Companies with Less than 40 Employees  
**Replies to the Open-ended Questions in the  
Washington County Respondents**

**What specific jobs are most difficult to fill?**

All of our Servile Related Positions	Sales Associates Representatives (those who make contact with newcomers)
Clerical	Sales Support
Clerical	Salesperson
Clerical/Administrative	Service Technicians (trained and experienced)
Dental Hygiene	Survey Crew/Technicians
Engineer	Tankwagon Driver
General Labor	Technical, Management, Sales
Graphic Artist	Technical/Medical/Analyst
Line Apprentice	Tow Truck Driver
Line Summer Help	Travel Agent
Line Technicians	Truck Drivers
Management Trainees	Vehicle Detailers
Mechanic	
Sales	
Sales	

**What educational programs would you like to see implemented by the following to support future growth of Washington County business?**

Washington County High Schools

More technical and production training  
Assist all students [in becoming] computer literate  
Computer Skills  
Career Day  
[Implement] programs regarding computer skills, Administration or business skills.  
Develop good clerical/administrative people.  
English, grammar, spelling.  
Computer Skills  
Doing a great job  
Offer some technical classes.  
A move back to trades and automotive shop in school.

Dana College

Computer Technical Support

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

Doing a great job

Area Community College

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

Doing a great job

Other

Develop good clerical/administrative people.

**What could the community, Washington County, or Nebraska do to foster the growth of the business?**

Buy in Blair first, if possible

Layout a master plan of the geographical direction you want Blair to grow. For example, future should locate to the east, residential growth to the north and retail growth in what direction?

Encourage people to shop at home. Blair business cannot survive without the support of the people of Blair and Washington County.

Recruit new industry, not react to inquiries

Lower Taxes

Give high school students knowledge of self-employment opportunities. It is normally aimed at big business

People or growth of population

Continue to attract new industry.

Need the City of Blair's Administration's willingness to promote and or participate in rural water.

Give specific incentives to develop and expand business

No Comment.

Referring people and letting them know what services we provide.

Shop at home

Continue strong growth

Truck Bypass

Bring back motor vehicle inspection.

Buy more locally.

Become active in providing programs/assistance in entry/starter level housing. Use of infill lots in Blair - enforcement of life/safety building codes in sub-standard rental housing.

New constitution will take care of most growth

Buy within the community (vehicles)

Maintain the fine job of bringing profitable industries to Blair

New industries

Redo downtown Blair

The businesses need to figure out how to tell the Blair people that are good customers

“Thank you” every day and let them know we do not take them for granted.

Promote retail, vertical growth to areas outside of Blair.

Need to have a Blair sales tax for use on infrastructure maintenance and future construction.

Provide technical assistance geared to Micro-business development.

Aim at higher professional employees.

Grants for City improvement - Downtown improvement, bike/walk paths connecting city.

De-regulation of energy (gas-electric) will fuel growth and competition.

Maintain fine caliber of area schools.

Housing

Reduce State Road Taxes to match or be more in line with Iowa road taxes to help promote interstate business by being able to match or beat prices.

Washington County could try to develop incentive for feed lots instead of driving people away by over regulating ag. and high taxes.

Parking/Downtown Improvement

Emphasize the benefits of being centrally located in the U.S.

Reduce Taxes

Benefits of shopping locally