

Bacon honored for many years of leadership

Every once in a while, something happens that changes the future course of a community. In Gothenburg, that happened in the spring of 1980 when Mike and Deb Bacon moved to Gothenburg from Lexington. Mike moved to join Steve Potter in the practice of law. We did not know it at the time, but Gothenburg's future would be changed forever.

Mike moved to Gothenburg during a very interesting and challenging time. The 1970s was a decade full of inflation and rapid expansion of agriculture. This cycle came to an abrupt end with the beginning of the "farm crisis," high interest rates and falling land values. This put Gothenburg and rural Nebraska into a tailspin. As a community, we had a choice to make. We could sit back and let the events shape our future, or we could decide to be proactive and build our own future.

A small group of community leaders decided we needed to be in charge of building the Gothenburg that would last through difficult times and thrive when the economic cycle changed. Mike Bacon was part of that group and he began the journey of giving his full commitment to growing Gothenburg.

The leadership of this group recruited more supporters and helped build the vision for the creation of Dawson Area Development. To grow our community, we knew we needed to be successful in recruiting more jobs to the area to replace the jobs lost from agriculture. With no money and only a dream, Mike Bacon led a charge forward to pass an economic development sales tax. DAD supported the efforts of Gothenburg, Cozad, and Lexington to pass the special sales tax. At the end of the day, the vote failed in Cozad and Lexington, but passed by a slim margin in Gothenburg.

During this same period, the Gothenburg Improvement Company was reorganized. GIC was first organized in the 1960s and was successful in growing our community. With the commitment of new business leaders and money in the bank, GIC became a force in the recruitment space. Many volunteer leaders played significant roles in our efforts. The first major success came in 1985 with the announcement that Baldwin Filters would build a new facility in Gothenburg. From that point on GIC — coupled with great support from the city, county and state — has been abundantly successful in growing our community.

Our success as a community has been the result of many dedicated and tireless volunteers. Gothenburg is clearly a special place. Mike Bacon, through his dedication and commitment, has been instrumental in leading much of this volunteer effort. Mike taught us to never accept no for an answer; keep digging and find a solution so that every recruit had no excuse for not saying YES to Gothenburg. Mike also became the "expert" at using incentive tools such as Nebraska Advantage and Tax Increment Financing. This gave our community a leg up on all our competition, even if their community was larger than Gothenburg.

Building a strong and successful community does not happen because of one person. But no one has contributed more to building the "Gothenburg Way" than Mike Bacon. I'm very proud of our community and I'm proud to represent Gothenburg in the Nebraska Legislature. I'm also very proud to call Mike Bacon my friend. Thanks, Mike, for all you have contributed to our success. I believe that Gothenburg has been forever changed because of your consistent commitment to excellence.



Mike Bacon was honored during the Community Development Office for his leadership of GIC. Mike has stepped down as president but remains an integral part of the GIC board.

Matt Williams
District 36 Senator

Housing issues remain on the GIC forefront

The Gothenburg Improvement Company works hard to recruit businesses to our community. One factor we continually deal with is the shortage of housing. This shortage causes a major issue when prospective businesses are looking to move to Gothenburg or when a local business is attempting to recruit new employees. The GIC housing committee has been dealing with the housing shortage for the past decade and efforts paid off with 10 new homes built in the past three years.

"It has been great that the Gothenburg Improvement Company's housing committee has been able to assist in bringing new housing options to Gothenburg, but even with all the work that has been done, we are just keeping our head above water. Every time a trailer park is removed or a home in Gothenburg has a fire or a home is purchased and demolished for land development, we have lost ground not gained ground on this issue. Even though we have had much success in the past several years, the net affect is a negative number. We need to keep new home construction and existing home rehab projects on the front burner in Gothenburg if we want to be able to continue to grow our community."

Rick Zarek

Past GIC housing committee chairman

How will the GIC housing committee continue to move forward?

"The GIC housing committee is working with the Gothenburg Redevelopment Authority to immediately begin construction on seven new homes in Gothenburg. Six of the new houses will be built in the new cul-de-sac just off the recently paved Avenue J. (The newly paved road connects 27th Street and 23rd Street.) The seventh home will be constructed just north of the cul-de-sac. Construction of these new homes is planned to begin this spring by two different contractors. The GIC housing committee is also pursuing other options to improve our housing shortage in Gothenburg, such as home rehab programs for existing homes and/or filling in vacant lots throughout the city. GIC enjoys working to improve housing in Gothenburg and we are committed to our community's future success."

Verlin Janssen

Current GIC housing committee chairman



**New cul-de-sac at
24th and Avenue J**

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GIC takes leadership role during LB 840 election

On February 13, 2018, the mail-in votes of a special election to approve the City of Gothenburg's economic development program, commonly referred to as an LB 840 program, were tallied. After almost a 40% voter turnout, the measure passed by a nearly 7-to-1 margin.

The Gothenburg Improvement Company played an integral role in the process of developing the LB 840 plan and promoting the election. *"With the announcement that the Baldwin plant in town would be closing, we decided it was time to level the playing field with other Nebraska communities and get this measure approved," said Nate Wyatt, President of GIC. "The turnout and margin of approval that we had really say a lot about the emphasis this community places on economic development."*



Andrea McClintic, executive director of Dawson Area Development, said, "We typically advise communities that are planning to hold an election on LB 840 to take about 12-18 months for the entire process from planning to promotion to successfully passing the ballot issue. Gothenburg saw the need and really came together by passing it in three months with such a large margin!"

The city's existing 0.5% sales tax for economic development, which was approved by voters in 1991, will be used to fund the program. The city may use the funds to construct new buildings, loan or grant working capital to certain businesses, construct workforce housing and housing for low- to moderate-income individuals, and fund workforce training programs. The Redevelopment Authority will administer the program with final approval resting with the City Council. A new factor, the Citizen Advisory Review Committee, will oversee the program and update the City Council during public hearings every six months. The advisory committee will consist of five registered voters of the city. Applications for eligible economic activities, as well as additional background on the program, will be available on the city's website in the coming months.

Colten Venteicher
GIC Vice President

Williams joins Frito-Lay as plant manager

Frito-Lay Inc. has been a part of Gothenburg for the past 23 years and has provided local farmers a market for food-grade yellow and white corn. Gothenburg Improvement Company began working on the recruitment of Frito-Lay in 1993, dedicating more than three years and \$80,000 to the effort. Mike Bacon, a board member of GIC at the time of the recruitment, helped paved the way for a successful recruitment and provided the game plan for future business recruitments.

"There has been a lot of wonderful things that came from the Frito-Lay Inc. recruitment, but it was infrastructure and the paved road that came over from Highway 47 that really opened the door for future business recruitment. Right away, after Frito-Lay came to town, GIC was able to work with two corn research companies to locate to Gothenburg. One of those facilities liked Gothenburg so much that they later invested in what is now known as the Monsanto Water Utilization Learning Center," Mike Bacon said.

The corn accepted at Frito-Lay is a high quality food-grade corn that generates a favorable bonus for the farmers who deliver to the facility. There are up to 12 million bushels of corn accepted each year at Frito-Lay and the additional bonuses paid to farmers totals about \$5 million per year. It is the job of the plant manager to make sure this operation runs smoothly, and since the day it opened there have been only three plant managers. Pat Trotter was the first manager in Gothenburg and his leadership was critical in the facility's startup and early success. After Pat retired in 2007, a local resident and 1991 Gothenburg High School Graduate, Scott Bartels, was hired to manage the facility. Scott worked as the plant manager for 10 years before accepting a position with DuPont Pioneer in April 2017.

"I have been blessed to have had wonderful career opportunities in Gothenburg, and I would not have wanted to raise my family anywhere else. Frito-Lay was a great company to work for and a great partner with the community of Gothenburg. During my time at Frito-Lay, I really enjoyed working with all of the local farmers, who I consider to be among the best and most knowledgeable food corn producers in the world," Scott Bartels said.

Today there is a new person taking the local Frito-Lay leadership role. Travis Williams and his wife, Sydney, moved to Gothenburg when Travis was selected for the job. Travis has 24 years of experience in the human and pet food manufacturing industries. Travis graduated from Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in feed science (KSU Grain Science College) and a bachelor's in agricultural economics.

Prior to moving to Gothenburg, Travis worked in a large pasta manufacturing plant in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, and lived in Kansas City. Prior to that, he spent five years at a large food manufacturing plant in Minnesota. Being a farm boy himself, Travis feels right at home in Gothenburg.

"I grew up on a small farm between Stockton and Plainville, Kansas, where we raised wheat, sorghum and different types of livestock. My hometown was Stockton and my wife's was Plainville. In my career, we've relocated numerous times and are impressed with Gothenburg and the people who live here. We're both looking forward to being part of the community for a long time," Travis said.



Sydney and Travis Williams enjoy spending time with their three grandchildren. Travis is the plant manager at Frito-Lay.

This is the third time Travis and Sydney have lived in Nebraska. *"My first job out of college was in Lincoln. Years later I worked in Omaha and now Gothenburg."*

Travis enjoys reading books and he has raised quarter horses for the past 40 years. Travis and Sydney stay busy keeping up with their three kids and three grandkids who live in and around Plainville, Kansas. *"The things that bring me the most joy are my granddaughters, and also our dogs, which are my wife and I's at-home children right now," Travis said.*

As a Gothenburg Improvement Company board member, it is our goal to continually seek out opportunities for Gothenburg, but the time we take to make new members to our community feel welcome is equally important. If you see Travis and Sydney around town, make sure to introduce yourself and make them feel welcome to Gothenburg.

Luke Rickertsen
GIC Board Member

Rick Zarek retires from GIC board

When did your term on the GIC Board begin?

Right at the start of 2002. That was when I was getting off the school board. We had a going-away party at the house and my wife, Pat, remembers Gary Fritch saying, "Well, I won't be seeing Rick on the school board, but I still get to serve with him on the GIC board." Pat's response was, "What?"



Rick Zarek was honored for his years of service on the GIC board during the CDO banquet.

What was your perception of GIC at that time? Follow up question: Is your perception of GIC different now?

We had already gotten Baldwin by that time and Frito-Lay. I pretty much saw them as a recruitment tool. My perception has changed some. I see GIC as involved in all aspects of moving Gothenburg forward. As an example, I was on the school board and I was president for the last four years I served. We were struggling to pass a school bond. We ran it twice and failed twice. Then GIC got involved on No. 3. Gary Fritch was a really big part of passing the school bond, but so was GIC. It is an organization that moves the town forward. It brings the people of the different organizations together to have a common goal: City council, school administration, school board, hospital administration, hospital board, etc. What is good for one group is not necessarily the best for the other. It kind of has everybody listening to everybody else and figuring out what is best for the town. It really keeps communication open all through the town.

You've been very involved in housing development. Talk about what's been done in regard getting more housing in Gothenburg?

This started, I think, in about 2007. Dawson Area Development was doing a housing study and DAD had a housing committee. The way I remember it, GIC was having a retreat and I spoke up saying that maybe we need to have a housing committee. I think the response was, "OK, do it." I've been doing it ever since. We've certainly had some successes. I am very proud of what we've done. I was especially proud of the people who stepped up and guaranteed the loan for the six spec houses. I thought that was pretty impressive for people to put their money where their mouth was. I'm sure there were a few significant others that were saying, "Why are you risking \$10,000?"

Is it safe to assume that you will be available and willing to help in the future if called upon?

Oh yeah.

Closing thoughts?

There are a lot of things in this town that make this town special, that probably wouldn't be here without GIC. I've heard over and over again how GIC is elitist and a bunch of people pulling strings in a smoke-filled back room. That's just not true. Unfortunately, GIC can't have open meetings and still be effective. All of the people I've seen who have worked on the GIC board have done it for the good of the community. They spend a lot of time and effort and expertise.

2018 ASSESSMENTS

Many thanks to stockholders who have paid their 2018 annual assessments. It is with your continued financial support that we can put our best effort into recruiting and retaining viable businesses and industry in this community.

If you have not yet sent payment for 2018, we encourage you to do so to remain an active part of Gothenburg Improvement Company.

GIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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