

August 27, 2013

Ms. Kaleena Fong
Executive Director
Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau
100 North Shore Drive
Hastings, NE 68901

Dear Ms. Fong:

Per the Contract for Consulting Services, VenuWorks, Inc. has completed the Feasibility Study with regard to a potential conference center to be located in Hastings. The attached Study presents our methodology, research, analysis and recommendations. The Study and Pro Forma Budget are intended to assist stakeholders in discussions and decision making related to the feasibility, design, operation and anticipated financial performance of a conference center. As with any project, the opinions rendered must be tied to a certain point in time in the development of the final report. The findings presented herein are based on analysis of the conditions that were present in the Hastings market on the date of the initial report draft, June 14, 2013.

The data presented in this Study is based upon on-site interviews, electronic and phone surveys, extensive research related to the Hastings market and analysis of comparable venues combined with VenuWorks' industry experience. To achieve the results projected in the Pro Forma Budget, it is anticipated that the conference center would be operated in an effective manner consistent with public assembly facility industry standards. Final decisions related to actual venue design, governance and operation may affect the key projections and the conclusions represented.

VenuWorks has appreciated the time, information and assistance provided by you, potential project stakeholders, community members and industry peers in the development of this Study. Thank you for the opportunity to assist the community in this research process.

Sincerely,



Steven L. Peters
VenuWorks President



Sharon M. Cummins
VenuWorks Lead Consultant

CONFERENCE CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY

Hastings, Nebraska

Final Report

August 27, 2013



Prepared for
The Adams County
Convention and Visitors Bureau

In partnership with
Hastings Community Redevelopment Authority
Hastings Economic Development Authority
City of Hastings
Cooperative Producers, Inc.
Hastings College
Mary Lanning Healthcare
Central Community College Foundation

Presented by
VenuWorks Consulting

A division of
VenuWorks, Inc.

4611 Mortensen Road, Suite 111, Ames, Iowa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The venues in Hastings have served the community well over the years. However, key community stakeholders have become increasingly aware that Hastings is losing its market share of statewide professional association meetings due to the lack of meeting space in the community that meets the demands of today's meeting planners. Not only is it proving difficult to attract new business but current meeting planners who expressed frustration over the lack of suitable space for hosting their events have chosen not to return to Hastings. Other communities in central Nebraska have identified the need within their own communities and have found the financial resources to construct and maintain venues which will further increase the competition for regional and statewide meeting and conference business. Locally, businesses and organizations continue to find it challenging to have meeting and banquet space that has the capacity and amenities to meet their needs. One citizen stated, "There is a cost to inaction", as Hastings will continue to lose business it may never recapture. Based on these impressions, it was determined that a feasibility study should be undertaken to formally assess the potential need for a new conference center in Hastings.

The Adams County Convention & Visitor's Bureau in partnership with Hastings Community Redevelopment Authority, Hastings Economic Development Authority, the City of Hastings, Cooperative Producers, Inc., Hastings College, Mary Lanning Healthcare and Central Community College Foundation contracted with VenuWorks, Inc. to conduct a feasibility study. VenuWorks provides management, consulting and event services for arenas, performing arts centers and convention centers throughout the United States. This experience provides our clients with a realistic assessment of their projects from an operator's perspective. In Hastings, the Project Team received input from nearly 400 individuals through personal interviews, focus group meetings, electronic surveys and follow up calls to gather insight for this study. This combination of industry experience and extensive research led to the development of the findings and recommendations contained in this report.

Original discussions by stakeholders focused on the need for a new convention center but it became apparent to the Project Team that a conference center model might be a better fit for the community. A true convention center has the ability to not only host large meetings and conferences but it also has dedicated, non-carpeted, exposition space designed to host industry trade shows and large exhibit shows. After touring the Adams County Fairgrounds and seeing how well the facilities were being maintained and operated, the Project Team felt the community need for larger exhibition space was already being met.

Typically, a conference center is a more upscale venue whose programming mission is mainly focused on meetings, conferences and seminars. Venue design usually includes a main ballroom space with the ability to be divided into smaller spaces, additional breakout meeting rooms, an executive conference room (board room) and impressive lobbies and pre-function spaces. The finishes often include coffered, high ceilings with multiple lighting options, attractive wall and carpet treatments and the latest technical amenities. The core events at a conference center often times include other associated elements such as receptions, banquets and smaller exhibit components, all of which are suitable for presentation on a carpeted, flat floor space. Since food and beverage services are significant revenue generators for the venue, control of these income streams is usually managed internally by the conference center. One major element needed for a truly successful conference center is its proximity to a quality hotel, either attached or adjacent to the venue.

While there are currently several locations within Hastings to host a meeting, banquet or conference, survey respondents and community members all indicated that Hastings is lacking in adequate, first-class space to meet the demand. A significant part of the demand focused on the need for a venue suitable for hosting business training and recruitment events as well as professional development seminars for medical and educational clients. Local businesses and organizations indicated that they are limited in the growth and number of events they can host due to venue limitations. Local event producers expressed frustration that due to the lack of available space their fundraisers cannot grow. Managers of existing Hastings venues also indicated they are routinely turning away event business due to the lack of available open dates and that meeting planners and community members have become “creative” in finding space to host their events.

KEY FINDINGS

- Today’s clients require multiple spaces to host concurrent meetings, exhibitions and banquets as functions of their overall event.
 - To operate the venue at peak efficiency, the venue must have the capacity to host multiple simultaneous events. Meeting planner survey respondents indicated that in addition to their primary meeting room needs, meal functions, small trade shows and breakout sessions were also a part of their events.
 - A venue designed to accommodate more than one client at a time utilizing different portions of the venue not only drives more business into the venue it also creates efficiencies with regard to labor, utilities and services.

- There is a demand in the market for the following spaces:
 - 13,000 square foot ballroom that can accommodate a maximum of 800-900 attendees at banquet style seating.
 - There is a significant demand for wedding reception and banquet space to accommodate 200-400 attendees. If the ballroom can be divided into five-six smaller rooms of various sizes, using intersecting retractable portable walls, this need can be met.
 - Six smaller breakout rooms sufficient to accommodate 50-70 people banquet style seating, 40-50 people for classroom seating and 80-100 people in theater style seating.
- Industry-wide meeting planners have the expectation that the meeting location will have an attached or adjacent hotel. Focus group attendees and those individuals personally interviewed also felt that for a venue to be successful in the Hastings market it would need to have a hotel component. As VenuWorks does not conduct hotel feasibility studies, it is recommended in this study that Hastings undertake a hotel study to determine the need for an additional hotel property in the community and how this may complement a new conference center.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pro Forma Budget has been developed based on the following assumptions and recommendations. Deviations from these assumptions may impact the following key projections:

- The conference center would have the capacities as defined above.
- The conference center will be operated as a year-round venue with an aggressive General Manager focused on securing a wide variety of events and activities.
- The conference center will have a dedicated full time staff responsible for the programming, marketing and operation of the venue.
- The conference center will operate all food and beverage services as an in-house function thus controlling expenses, maximizing revenues and providing clients with a one-stop, full service experience.
- The conference center debt service, if applicable, is not an expense to the annual operating budget.

Other operational assumptions and recommendations such as governance, design elements, venue equipment, programming, marketing and staffing levels are listed in the study.

KEY PROJECTIONS

- The conference center will host a variety of events and activities including meetings, banquets, conferences and community events. During the first year of full operation the conference center is projected to host 169 event days and welcome 32,900 attendees.
- Budget projections for the first full year of operation reflect revenues of \$363,173 and operating expenses (including cost of goods sold and capital replacement) totaling \$500,413 resulting in a year-end net operating loss of (\$137,241).
- By year five, revenues are projected to grow to \$503,113 and operating expenses (including cost of goods sold and capital replacement) are estimated at \$605,324 resulting in a year-end net operating loss of (\$102,211).

CONCLUSION

Based on the market research, it is projected that a new venue in Hastings will benefit from a strong core of local events that will fill the calendar on an annual basis. As the reputation of a new venue becomes known, it is anticipated that Hastings will have the ability to regain lost ground in attracting regional and statewide association business. However, there are known competitive disadvantages that will always be present as Hastings evaluates the need for additional conference space. While the north side of Hastings is only 14 miles south of the interstate, it is perceived by some planners to be “too far away”. Additionally, communities located along the Interstate and elsewhere continue to develop and improve their community venues and are establishing themselves as “destinations” to planners. An aggressive marketing plan highlighting the new meeting opportunities in Hastings will be essential for attracting and maintaining this regional and statewide activity.

Meeting planners, whether local, regional or statewide, focus on four key aspects when evaluating where to host their events:

- Location of the venue and other community amenities
- Venue size and amenities
- Cost to use the venue
- Venue staff’s ability to meet the client’s expectations

There is generally no particular order as to which aspect is most important to any particular planner and it is incumbent on the local sales staff to work with each client individually to be successful in securing their business.

Keeping this in mind, future discussions in Hastings must include how the venue and community can compete in the central Nebraska market. Community leaders have capitalized on the positive aspects of living and working in Hastings and the continued growth and diversity of business is proof that Hastings can excel in a competitive environment. To ensure success of the new conference center, the venue must be designed to attract a wide variety of market segments, be visually appealing, offer an exceptional experience to the meeting planner and attendee, and be a source of pride for the community.

While success in any venture is never guaranteed, the research conducted indicates that Hastings could benefit from the development of a new conference center in the community. The continued strength of the Hastings business climate could provide a solid foundation for the conference center. The development of the conference center should have a positive economic impact for the entire community. Patrons attending events at public assembly venues typically pump millions of dollars into the local economy. This influx of dollars is most visible in areas such as:

- Increased sales in restaurants, bars, and attractions
- Increased retail sales in neighboring areas bordering the venue
- Increased hotel occupancy
- The venue becomes a catalyst for other economic development

It is estimated that the economic impact to the Hastings community from events and activities hosted at the conference center will be \$1,742,063 (without multipliers) from the first year of activity. By year five it is estimated that the annual economic impact to the Hastings community from events and activities hosted at the conference center will be \$2,335,051.

This Feasibility Study reflects strategies for managing the conference center's fiscal responsibility to all its' stakeholders while detailing methodology for providing exceptional service that will create reliable results for the center's clients and attendees. Based on the research conducted, the Feasibility Study that has been developed for the operation of the conference center is projected to produce realistic and achievable results.

The operational pro-forma was completed based on the best information available and a basic understanding of the project. However, there is no guarantee that the expense and revenue projections outlined above will be met as there are many variables that affect such estimates that either cannot be accurately measured or are not consistent in their influence on the budgetary process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In December of 2012 VenuWorks was contacted by Dave Rippe, Executive Director of the Hastings Economic Development Corporation and Kaleena Fong, Executive Director of the Adams County Convention and Visitors Bureau to discuss the potential for conducting a feasibility study related to the need for a conference center in the City of Hastings, NE. Mr. Rippe and Ms. Fong explained that Hastings is increasingly losing its market share of statewide professional association meetings due to the lack of meeting space in the community that meets the demands of today's meeting planners. Additionally, local business and organizations have found it challenging to find meeting and banquet space that has the capacity and amenities to meet their needs. For several years, key community leaders and stakeholders had engaged in discussions of how to retain, grow and develop meeting, banquet and conference business in Hastings. It was determined that a feasibility study should be undertaken to formally assess the need for a potential new conference center in Hastings.

In January 2013, the VenuWorks Project Team held preliminary meetings in Hastings to further discuss the community needs and identify the scope of services. In February 2013, VenuWorks was retained to develop a Feasibility Study and Pro Forma Budget for a potential conference center in the City of Hastings.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

VenuWorks was first incorporated in the fall of 1996 to serve the unique management and operational challenges of public assembly facilities in midsize and smaller markets. Since its inception, VenuWorks has become well known for its success in providing management, consulting and event services for arenas, performing arts theaters and convention centers throughout the United States. The VenuWorks Project Team assigned to the Hastings project has performed numerous feasibility studies, market demand assessments, developed business plans and advised on the organizational structure and governance for many types of venues, including conference centers.

The scope of services included:

- Conducting a prospective stakeholder analysis – Who might use the facility, for what and how much can they reasonably expect to pay.
- Analyzing the competitive environment, including strengths and weaknesses of the market and facilities and identify potential new business of a proposed center.

- Evaluating the potential for dedicated revenues to be used to offset expenses.
- Providing an overview of governance, management and staffing models.
- Assessing potential facility size and amenities based on user group research.
- Identifying models for public/private financing of the project.
- Preparing a financial model for operation including economic impact.

METHODOLOGY

In the facilities that VenuWorks manages, the core philosophy is centered on events. Events are the lifeblood of a successful public assembly facility as defined in the VenuWorks mission statement.

“It is the mission of VenuWorks and its subsidiaries to maximize the presentation of successful events in client facilities for the cultural, recreational, educational, and economic benefit of the communities we serve.”

Because VenuWorks manages buildings day in and day out, it blends this core philosophy into the consulting work it does. By focusing on the events, the emphasis of its studies is based on solutions that are practical, cost effective and workable. Every community has unique qualities that must be considered when developing an event matrix for a successful venue. Only a limited amount of information can be gathered through comparisons to similar facilities in similar markets. By combining the experience and resources of VenuWorks with onsite research, a realistic and credible Feasibility Study and Pro Forma Budget can be developed specifically for the Hastings community.

As part of the research for this project, VenuWorks toured Hastings, the surrounding area and several regional facilities as outlined in the Market Analysis section of this study. The Project Team also conducted site visits in Hastings that included one on one interviews and focus group meetings. In addition to the interviews and meetings, surveys were also distributed to gather input.

FIRST SITE VISIT

On January 15 and 16, 2013 the VenuWorks Project Team of Sharon and Ron Cummins traveled to Hastings to discuss a potential consulting project which would involve conducting a Feasibility Study to determine the need for a conference center in the City of Hastings. Prior

to our travel, we reviewed initial project materials provided by Dave Rippe and Kaleena Fong regarding the current meeting and conference business in the Hastings area.

In Hastings, the Project Team initially met with Dave Rippe, Kaleena Fong and Randal Chick to discuss the study elements and scope of services that would be applicable to identify the information needed. During this visit the Project Team also met with several stakeholders and community leaders, including but not limited to:

- Clark Bauer, T-L Irrigation
- Dennis Trotter, Hastings College
- Hauli Sabatka, Hastings College
- Lisa Smith, ESU9
- Randy Ruhter, Ruhter Auction
- Scott Shardelow, Lochland Country Club
- Travis Augustin, Ruhter Auction
- Harry Dworak, Comfort Inn

The Project Team toured the City of Hastings with Mr. Rippe and Ms. Fong to gain a better understanding of development in the Hastings area and completed site visits of the following areas and venues:

- Adams County Fairgrounds
- Central Community College
- Hastings Airport
- Hastings City Auditorium
- Hastings College
- Hastings Hotel and Convention Center
- Hastings Industrial Park
- Imperial Mall
- Lochland Country Club
- Motorsport Park Hastings
- Prairie Loft grounds
- Several downtown businesses
- Site of The Lark

On January 16th the Project Team met with members of the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Hastings Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) and Community Redevelopment Association (CRA) to discuss initial impressions of the community, the potential project scope

and provided the members with an overview of the tasks the study would cover. Following this site visit, the Project Team had the opportunity to observe the site for the new venue proposed for York, NE and tour the Nielsen Community Center in West Point, NE with the Center's Manager. When the York facility is completed, it will be very similar to the venue in West Point as they are variations of the same floor plan.

SURVEY WORK

Surveys - VenuWorks utilized a variety of survey methods to gather feedback from potential venue clients and community members. (Copies of the Invitation Letter and Survey Templates are contained in the Appendices.)

- Potential Client Survey – Developed through SurveyMonkey
 - Ms. Fong distributed via e-mail the survey link to 116 potential Nebraska organizations that had been identified by Ms. Fong as either having previously held a meeting in Hastings, expressed an interest in Hastings or had the potential to host a meeting in Hastings. Ms. Fong also sent letters to the organizations explaining the importance of their feedback on the surveys. VenuWorks conducted follow up phone calls to 89 of the State Associations to conduct specific inquiries and to encourage them to complete the survey.
 - Surveys were also distributed to 55 local organizations that would potentially have a need for meeting and conference spaces asking them to either complete the survey or attend one of the focus group meetings being held in March. 14 of those organizations were represented at the Focus Group meetings.
 - 33 organizations completed the on-line survey. Information was collected from an additional 43 local, regional and statewide organizations with their information manually input into the Interview Survey responses contained in this report.
- Community Survey – Developed through SurveyMonkey
 - Surveys were distributed via e-mail to community members through the CVB and Chamber of Commerce. 139 community members completed this survey.

SECOND SITE VISIT, FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Regional Venues - The VenuWorks Project Team toured/researched the following venues prior to the second site visit in Hastings and meeting with Focus Group attendees:

- Divots Conference Center – Norfolk, NE
- Holiday Inn Conference Center – Grand Island, NE

- Quality Inn Conference Center – Grand Island, NE
- Younes Conference Center – Kearney , NE

Focus Group Meetings – VenuWorks hosted seven focus group meetings inviting meeting/event planners, hoteliers, caterers, decorators, attractions, restaurants, retailers, schools, colleges, health industry, non-profit service organizations, service clubs, City, County, Chamber, CVB and HEDC representatives to meet with the Project Team. 55 people attended the series of meetings which were held March 13-14, 2013 at the Holiday Inn Express meeting room and provided valuable information related to the need for meeting/conference space in Hastings. (List of Focus Group Attendees is contained in the Appendices.)

Individual Meetings – During the second site visit to Hastings, the Project Team had one-on-one meetings with the following:

- Danielle Wagoner, Lochland Country Club
- Don Jackson, Hastings College
- Gary Johnson, Hastings College
- Hauli Sabatka, Hastings College
- Joe Patterson, City Administrator, City of Hastings
- Kim Bui, Hastings Convention Center
- Paul Younes, Younes Conference Center
- Sandy Himmelberg, Adams County Fairgrounds
- Scott Shardelow, Lochland Country Club

Follow Up Contact – The following organizations were contacted via telephone and/or e-mail to gather additional data throughout the study process:

- Adams County Assessor's Office
- Adams County Clerk of Court
- Charles Neumann, Adams County Board of Supervisors
- Chris Kreikemeier, Nielsen Community Center, West Point, NE
- Clark Bauer, T-L Irrigation Company
- Darren Burgess, West Monroe Convention Center, West Monroe, LA
- Dave Rippe, Hastings Economic Development Corporation
- Betty Kort, Hastings Public School Foundation
- Jeff Hassenstab, Director of Parks & Recreation
- Joe Patterson, Hastings City Administrator
- Kraig Lofquist, ESU9

- Mark Evans, Hastings Building Inspector
- Rick Keller, Gering Community Center, Gering, NE
- Rod Strong, Bullseye Sports Bar & Grille
- Terry Connick, Doniphan Economic Development Corporation, Community Center
- Todd Kirshenbaum, York NE Chamber of Commerce, Holthus Convention Center
- Zachary Zoul, Hospitality Advisors Group (Hastings Hotel)

Numerous documents were gathered during these visits to assist the Project Team in the study. These documents and the information gathered through the meetings, surveys, focus groups and VenuWorks general observations will be referenced throughout this Feasibility Study.

Information has been gathered from four convention/meeting centers that will be referenced in several areas of this study to provide benchmarks to support the event activity and Pro Forma Budget information. These centers are focused on meetings, conventions and social functions. These venues are located in communities that have populations either equal to or smaller than Hastings. The venues include:

- Aransas Pass Civic Center, Aransas Pass, TX
- Nielsen Community Center, West Point, NE
- Gering Civic Center, Gering, NE
- West Monroe Convention Center, West Monroe, LA

Sharon Cummins was the Lead Consultant on this project on behalf of VenuWorks. The following VenuWorks staff provided information and insight for this study:

- Curtis Webb, Sanford Center, Bemidji, MN
- Mike Piehl, VenuWorks Corporate Accountant
- Randy Baumeister, VenuWorks National Director of Operations and Productions
- Ron Cummins, VenuWorks National Director of Safety and Security
- Russ Ferguson, VenuWorks Vice President of Food and Beverage Services
- Scott Hallgren, Executive Director, Clay County Regional Events Center
- Steve Peters, President, VenuWorks
- Tim Sullivan, VenuWorks CFO & Vice President of Finance

The findings and recommendations cited in this study are based upon the input garnered from stakeholder interviews, survey results, extensive project research and VenuWorks' knowledge and experience related to the operation of public assembly venues.

2. MARKET ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

Founded in 1872 with a rich history in railroad operations, Hastings is the county seat of Adams County and is also the primary city in the Hastings Micropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that includes the counties of Adams and Clay. The combined population of the two counties was listed at 37,906 in the 2010 U.S. Census.

Hastings, with a 2010 population of 24,907, is one of three communities that combine to form the Central Nebraska “Tri Cities” consisting of Hastings, Grand Island and Kearney. These three cities serve as the economic drivers for the seven surrounding counties of Adams, Buffalo, Clay, Hall, Howard, Kearney and Merrick with a combined 2010 population of 163,223 residents. Data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and processed by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources¹ estimated the combined population of the Tri-Cities MSA’s to be 175,290 residents as of July 1, 2012, a projected increase of over 12,000 people.

Over 20,400,000 people live in the seven state region surrounding the Tri Cities. Interstate 80 and US Highway 281 provide the area with convenient intersecting access to major markets in all areas of the country. The east-west route of I-80 connects Kearney, Grand Island and Hastings (via 281) with major U.S. cities as far away as either coast. US-281, known as the Main Street of North America, runs north and south through Hastings and Grand Island, traversing six states in the heart of the country located between the borders with Canada and Mexico. Hwy 281 also intersects ten separate interstate highway systems along the length of the route further enhancing accessibility to the Tri Cities region for commerce and tourism. In Hastings, mainline rail transportation needs are serviced by the Union Pacific and the Burlington Northern with Amtrak’s California Zephyr providing daily passenger rail service to locations between Chicago and San Francisco out of the Hastings terminal.

CLIMATE

According to the National Weather Service², the Hastings climate “is truly four seasonal”. The area is subject to weather patterns that are typical for other Midwest plains states. The average climate in the region is somewhat dryer as noted by the presence of two suppliers of irrigated agriculture equipment companies that are located in Hastings. In Hastings, the

¹ Nebraska Department of Resources. Population Estimates Percentage of Change. Accessed June 2, 2013 www.dnr.ne.gov/databank/census

² National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office. Hastings Nebraska Community Profile. February 24, 2010. www.crh.noaa.gov

average rainfall is recorded at 27 inches with a growing season of 163 days and 226 days of sunshine. July is typically the hottest month with high temperatures averaging 89 degrees. Some summer days can exceed 100 degrees. Winters are also typical of the Midwest with an average annual snowfall of 30 inches and temperatures that can range from 12 degrees to 34 degrees in January.

DEMOGRAPHY/AREA ECONOMICS

Information gathered through the U.S. Census Bureau³ provides the following statistical data:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Hastings</u>	<u>Nebraska</u>
• Population, 2010 (April 1) estimates base	24,907	1,826,341
• Persons under 5 years, percent, 2010	7.0%	7.2%
• Persons under 18 years, percent, 2010	23.9%	25.1%
• Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2010	15.8%	13.5%
• Female persons, percent, 2010	50.6%	50.4%
• High school grad or higher, % age 25+, 2007-2011	88.1%	90.3%
• Bachelor's degree or higher, % age 25+, 2007-2011	21.5%	27.8%
• Mean travel time to work (in minutes), age 16+	13.6	18.0
• Housing units, 2010	10,847	796,793
• Homeownership rate, 2007-2011	67.4%	68.3%
• Housing units (%multi-unit structures), 2007-2011	19.9%	19.5%
• Median value owner-occupied housing units, 07-11	\$92,100	\$125,400
• Households, 2007-2011	10,051	715,703
• Persons per household, 2007-2011	2.34	2.46
• Per capita income (2011 dollars), 2007-2011	\$23,859	\$26,113
• Median household income, 2007-2011	\$43,436	\$50,695
• Persons below poverty level, percent, 2007-2011	15.0%	12.0%
• Land area in square miles, 2010	13.48	76,824.17
• Persons per square mile, 2010	1,847.7	23.8
• Cost Of Living Index, 2010 (US Average = 100)	93.4	N/A

³ U.S. Census Bureau. Hastings QuickFacts. January 10, 2013. www.quickfacts.census.gov

TRI CITIES MSA POPULATION AND INCOME

The following Tri Cities MSA income and population totals were derived from the 2010 United States Census Data and the 2009-2011 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates⁴:

- Hastings MSA – Consisting of Adams and Clay counties with a combined 2010 population of 37,906 residents and 15,115 total households.

Hastings MSA	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	2010 Resident Population	2010 Number Of Households
Adams	\$23,607	\$46,201	\$61,011	31,364	12,466
Clay	\$22,456	\$45,509	\$55,614	6,542	2,649
MSA Average	\$23,031	\$45,855	\$58,312		

- Kearney MSA – Consisting of Buffalo and Kearney counties with a combined 2010 population of 52,591 residents and 20,718 total households.

Kearney MSA	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	2010 Resident Population	2010 Number Of Households
Kearney	\$27,444	\$54,611	\$63,563	6,489	2,681
Buffalo	\$23,780	\$49,851	\$64,633	46,102	18,037
MSA Average	\$25,612	\$52,231	\$64,098		

- Grand Island MSA – Consisting of Hall, Howard and Merrick counties with a combined 2010 population of 72,726 residents and 27,972 total households.

Grand Island MSA	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	2010 Resident Population	2010 Number Of Households
Hall	\$23,468	\$47,469	\$57,237	58,607	22,196
Howard	\$22,983	\$46,358	\$56,774	6,274	2,625
Merrick	\$22,972	\$49,262	\$56,380	7,845	3,151
MSA Average	\$23,141	\$47,696	\$56,797		

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Revised May 9, 2013. www.census.gov/acs

- The combined MSA population of the Tri Cities is 163,223 residents (2010) with 63,805 total households.

Tri Cities Combined MSA's	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	2010 Resident Population	2010 Number Of Households
Hastings MSA Average	\$23,032	\$45,855	\$58,313	37,906	15,115
Kearney MSA Average	\$25,612	\$52,231	\$64,098	52,591	20,718
Grand Island MSA Average	\$23,141	\$47,696	\$56,797	72,726	27,972
Tri Cities MSA Combined Data	Tri Cities MSA Averages			Tri Cities MSA Totals	
	\$23,089	\$46,799	\$57,105	163,223	63,805

Adams County wages, with the exception of 2008, have historically been better than the average for the Tri Cities MSA region. A CA34 Wage and Salary⁵ summary prepared by the Nebraska Bureau of Economic Analysis shows the five year average wage trends for the State of Nebraska and every Nebraska County. The following chart is a summary of the average wages for the seven counties in the Tri Cities MSA from 2007-2011:

TRI CITIES 5 YEAR WAGE AND SALARY SUMMARY					
Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Adams Co.	\$31,773	\$31,910	\$32,550	\$33,384	\$34,157
Clay Co.	\$31,762	\$33,598	\$33,773	\$34,192	\$35,541
Buffalo Co.	\$32,071	\$33,661	\$32,823	\$34,639	\$34,883
Kearney Co.	\$29,284	\$30,836	\$31,559	\$31,204	\$32,139
Hall Co.	\$32,430	\$33,183	\$33,223	\$34,477	\$35,088
Howard Co.	\$25,552	\$26,688	\$26,784	\$27,683	\$28,022
Merrick Co.	\$28,840	\$29,465	\$29,798	\$30,205	\$32,002
Tri Cities MSA Average	\$31,063	\$32,160	\$32,333	\$33,071	\$33,963
Nebraska Average	\$36,789	\$37,942	\$38,153	\$38,782	\$39,869

⁵ Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). CA34 Wage and Salary Summary. Updated December 18, 2012. www.bea.gov

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

A Nebraska Department of Labor (NDL) News Release dated April 19, 2013⁶ indicated unemployment rates nationally, regionally and locally have been slowly improving. A quote attributed to Nebraska Commissioner of Labor, Catherine D. Lang stated *"In addition to the state having a consistently low unemployment rate, the Nebraska labor force continues to grow and the number of unemployed Nebraskans within the labor force continues to shrink."*

The following is a summary of the report's findings:

- The national unemployment rate was listed at 7.6%, down from 8.2% a year ago.
- The State's unemployment rate was listed at 3.8% down from 4.0% a year ago.
- The Hastings MSA was listed at 3.7%, down from 3.9% the previous month.
- The Grand Island MSA was listed at 3.6%, down from 3.9% the previous month.
- The Kearney MSA was listed at 3.1%, down from 3.3% the previous month.

The April report also stated Non-farm employment increased by nearly 4,000 jobs over the previous month with the top three private sector industries listed as Leisure and Hospitality, Mining and Construction, and Professional and Business Services.

In a previous NDL News Release dated March 29, 2013⁷ manufacturing was listed as *"one of the bright spots in Nebraska's recovery from the recession"*, adding 5,000 jobs since the February 2010 low point. The March, 2013 Adams County civilian labor force was listed at 17,455 workers with a county unemployment rate of 3.6%. According to the Hastings Economic Development Corporation, the local level of manufacturing employment is nearly twice that of the national average. The labor pool is estimated to exceed 100,000 people within a 50 mile radius of Hastings.

Research indicates the unemployment rate for the Tri Cities averages about half that of the national rate. One community stakeholder interviewed for this study stated the Hastings job market is well balanced and typically avoids the peaks and valleys associated with national trends.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Hastings benefits from a diverse core of community minded businesses with several employers having an impressive history of expanding their operations in Hastings. This commitment has

⁶ Nebraska Department of Labor. [Nebraska Monthly Unemployment Rate Remains 3.8 Percent](#). Grace Johnson. April 19, 2013.

⁷ Nebraska Department of Labor. [Nebraska Monthly Unemployment Rate Unchanged](#). Grace Johnson. March 29, 2013.

not gone unnoticed by the community. In January, 2012 the City of Hastings, Hastings Utilities, and the Hastings Economic Development Corporation implemented a new \$5 million incentive and growth program designed to assist local companies.

The VenuWorks Project Team toured Hastings with HEDC Executive Director, Dave Rippe in January, 2013 and noted several impressive industrial parks that would be the pride of any city wanting to attract new businesses. With a cost of living rating 6.6 points lower than the national average, employers and employees both benefit from making Hastings their home. The HEDC also notes "*other favorable factors*" including a central location, powerful business incentives, productivity, loyalty, low absenteeism, a skilled work force, low taxes, profitability and an excellent quality of life as reasons to do business in Hastings.

The following is a list of major employers in Hastings and their approximate number of employees based on the 2011 HEDC Annual Wage & Benefit Survey⁸:

• Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital	917
• Hastings Public Schools	495
• Good Samaritan Village	383
• Dutton Lainson	280
• Thermo King	280
• Nebraska Prime	264
• T-L Irrigation	252
• US Meat Animal Research	250
• Hastings College	210
• Hastings Utilities	203
• Ag Processing	175
• Paperworks	171
• City of Hastings	162
• Flowserve Inc.	157
• Adams County	155
• Central Community College	149
• Bimbo Bakeries USA	148
• Centennial Plastics	109
• A1 Fiberglass	90
• Hastings Irrigation Pipe	80

⁸ Hastings Economic Development Corporation. Labor Stats. Accessed March 28, 2013. www.hastingsedc.com

Approximately 23% of the Hastings workforce is employed in Manufacturing, 19% in Education and Health Services, 17% in Wholesale & Retail Trade, 15% in Government and 9% in Leisure & Hospitality. Mr. Rippe believes the 2013 estimates for the number of employees per business would be within 10% of those listed for 2011. He also predicted Hastings would continue to grow at the same 3-5% rate over the next ten years, just as they have over the last couple of census sets.

EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL FACILITIES

Hastings has excellent K-12 schools with the high school graduating class averaging 200-300 students every year. The 2010 US Census indicates that 88% of Hastings residents age 25 and older have at least a high school diploma or better with another 21.5% age 25 and older having a Bachelor's degree, or higher. Hastings also has an impressive choice of advanced vocational and technical training courses available through the Creighton University School of Nursing, Mary Lanning Radiologic College and Joseph's College of Beauty.

Central Community College, offering over 30 career education programs is located two miles east of Hastings on 640 acres of ground along US Hwy 6. The site formerly served as a military base and includes an 18-hole golf course. Several base facilities have been successfully adapted for academic endeavors. Annual enrollment averages 3,000 students.

Hastings College, nationally recognized as one of the best private, liberal-arts colleges, formed its roots in the community over 125 years ago and typically has an enrollment exceeding 1,100 students. The campus encompasses 109 acres of land on the east side of Hastings and has added several impressive facilities in the last decade.

Mary Lanning Memorial Healthcare is an accredited, nonprofit acute care facility. The hospital services include specialty care in cardiac services, oncology, women's health, pediatrics and behavioral health. Additionally, services include outpatient, home health and wellness services. Hastings is a primary medical center with more than 55 doctors who care for patients across Nebraska and northern Kansas.

TAXES

The Hastings sales tax is 7.0% when combining the 5.5% Nebraska state sales tax and the 1.5% Hastings local sales tax. The average yearly property tax paid by Adams County residents is equal to approximately 3.2% of their yearly income and the state average is 3.6%. The Adams County median property tax is \$1,814 per year for a home with a median

value of \$95,000. Adams County collects an average of 1.9% of a property's estimated fair market value as property tax which is slightly higher than the state average of 1.76%.

Hastings currently has a 3% lodging tax and 3% occupation tax. The lodging tax is a percentage of the room rate and is levied on every hotel room in addition to sales tax. The lodging tax is collected by the Nebraska Department of Revenue and returned to the counties for tourism marketing and development.

In Nebraska, the occupation tax is a "privilege or license tax" on certain business and paid directly to the cities. The tax rate and type of businesses affected is determined by the individual city imposing the tax. The most common types of businesses affected are hotels, car rental companies, telecommunications providers, restaurants, and bars. In Hastings, the occupation tax is currently applicable only to hotels. There is also a second state-imposed occupation tax on certain corporations doing business in Nebraska which is administered separately by the Nebraska Secretary of State.

AREA ATTRACTIONS

As the saying goes, *"always play to your strengths"*. National event planners may not consider Hastings to be a "destination city" but like many well-grounded, safe, family oriented Midwestern cities, Hastings has much to offer residents and visitors. As described in greater detail later in this study, conference and meeting attendees typically have a significant economic impact on the communities they visit as they frequent area hotels, restaurants, lounges, retail outlets and local attractions. Creating a positive experience for these attendees can have a significant return on investment for the community as attendees consider where they will book their next event and spend their dollars.

Conference attendees visiting Hastings have a variety of local attractions and activities from which to choose when they look to add value and uniqueness to their meeting needs. One common pastime for certain attendees is browsing local shops. Even though the aging shopping mall on the edge of town appears to have seen its best days long ago, it was encouraging, as first time visitors, to see an active, diverse business core in the downtown area with many storefronts occupied or in the process of being remodeled. The VenuWorks Project Team was impressed with the friendly, welcoming community members we met during our visits to several downtown businesses.

Hastings is home to several events and attractions that conference attendees can experience on their own or as part of an organized group activity. Whether designed as a team building exercise or simply a social activity, visits to the following attractions and community activities can enhance almost any conference event:

- Motorsport Park Hastings
- Hastings Aquacourt Waterpark
- Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History
- Children's Museum of Central Nebraska
- World War II Ammunition Depot
- Oregon Trail Historical Marker
- Chatauqua Pavilion
- Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor & Agriculture Learning
- Adams County Fairfest
- Cottonwood Market Days
- Kool-Aid Days
- Downtown Celebration of Lights
- Bill Smith Softball Complex
- Chautauqua Pavilion
- Duncan Field
- Hastings College Athletic Events
- Pioneer Spirit Trail
- Whooper's & Hooper's Basketball Tournament
- Lake Hastings
- Hastings Elks Lodge & Golf Club
- Lochland County Club
- Southern Hills Golf Course
- Brickyard Park Amphitheater
- Hastings Community Theater
- Hastings Symphony Orchestra

Hastings is also well known by bird watchers from around the world who travel to the area to view the annual migration of cranes and waterfowl along the Platte River. Sportsmen also come to the Hastings area to take advantage of excellent deer hunting and upland game bird hunting opportunities.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel, tourism, meetings and conferences are all good business for Adams County. According to the CVB, due to its *"strong educational, industrial, manufacturing and medical communities, Hastings continues to be a hub for business travel"*. Industry wide, the economic benefit of typical CVB related activities is well documented.

Public assembly facilities are an integral part of the cultural, social, and economic fabric of a community. Facilities such as the proposed Hastings conference center can be a catalyst for community development. As previously mentioned, from an economic standpoint, these facilities are financial magnets drawing in attendees who frequently come from distances that require overnight stays. Conference and meeting attendees will be in the community for multiple days and will use local attractions and festivities to plan weekend activities, or even week long vacations. Patrons drawn to these events require entertainment related support services and amenities as part of their visit. The money they spend in the community has a positive impact on the facility and the community as well. Restaurants, hotels and other local attractions can all benefit from a modern, strong and vibrant conference center in Hastings.

According to a February, 2011 report by the Convention Industry Council⁹ nearly 1.8 million meetings occurred in the United States in 2009 drawing an estimated 205 million attendees. 52% of attendance was attributed to corporate/business meetings, 25% (over 51 million attendees) to meetings/conferences/congresses, 12% to trade shows and the remaining 11% to other types of meetings. Direct spending resulting from these meetings was estimated to have exceeded \$263 billion in 2009. The total direct spending from travel and tourism during this same period was estimated at \$708 billion. The national meeting business also added over \$106 billion to the nation's GDP while employing 1,650,000 people in either full-time or part-time positions.

Travel spending on the national level has improved since 2000 according to the 150 Runyan Associates report dated May 2012 for the Oregon Tourism Commission entitled "Oregon Travel Impacts 1991-2011". The report stated there was an 8.2% increase in Annual Direct Travel Spending from 2000 through 2011 on the national level with real travel spending increasing every quarter since the third quarter of 2009¹⁰.

⁹ Convention Industry Council. *The Economic Significance of Meetings to the US Economy*. February 2011
http://www.conventionindustry.org/Libraries/ESS/CIC_Final_Report_Executive_Summary.sflb.ashx

¹⁰ "Oregon Travel Impacts 1991-2011p". *Prepared for the Oregon Tourism Commission, Salem, OR*. Dean Runyan Associates. May 2012.

Travel and tourism has contributed significantly to the Central Nebraska economy according to a May 2009 report to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Division of Travel and Tourism by Dean Runyan Associates entitled Nebraska Travel Impacts 2003-2008¹¹. The purpose of the study was to document the economic significance of the travel industry in Nebraska's and its counties. The following is a summary of the findings for the State:

- Total direct travel spending in Nebraska in 2008 was \$2.3 billion
 - A 5.8 percent increase over the preceding year
 - Travel spending grew by 0.5 percent from 2007 to 2008
 - Room rates and gasoline prices were responsible for a substantial share of travel spending inflation
- Visitors that stayed overnight in lodging establishments accounted for one-half of all visitor spending in 2008
- 56% of all spending by visitors was related to leisure and hospitality services
 - 18% was retail spending including food and beverage
 - 26% was transportation related including fuel
- 36,000 Nebraska jobs were generated from direct travel spending
 - Earnings from these jobs was \$556 million
 - Four out of five of the jobs were in leisure and hospitality
- \$266 million in federal, state and local tax revenues were generated from direct travel spending
 - 3.8% in income taxes and sales
- Other areas of the state are more dependent on the travel industry in generating earnings, employment and tax revenues for their local economies than are Lincoln and Omaha.

For Adams County travel impacts showed improvement every year from 2003-2008. The 2008 travel impacts indicated the following increases over those achieved in 2007:

- Spending- \$24.9 million up from \$23.1 million
- Earnings- \$6.3 million up from \$5.9 million
- Jobs- 500 up from 480
- Local Taxes- \$472,000 up from \$393,000
- State Taxes- \$1.48 million up from \$1.40 million

¹¹ Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism. [Nebraska Travel Impacts 2003-2008P](http://industry.visitnebraska.org/pdfs/industry/NEImp08.pdf). Dean Runyan Associates. May 2009. <http://industry.visitnebraska.org/pdfs/industry/NEImp08.pdf>

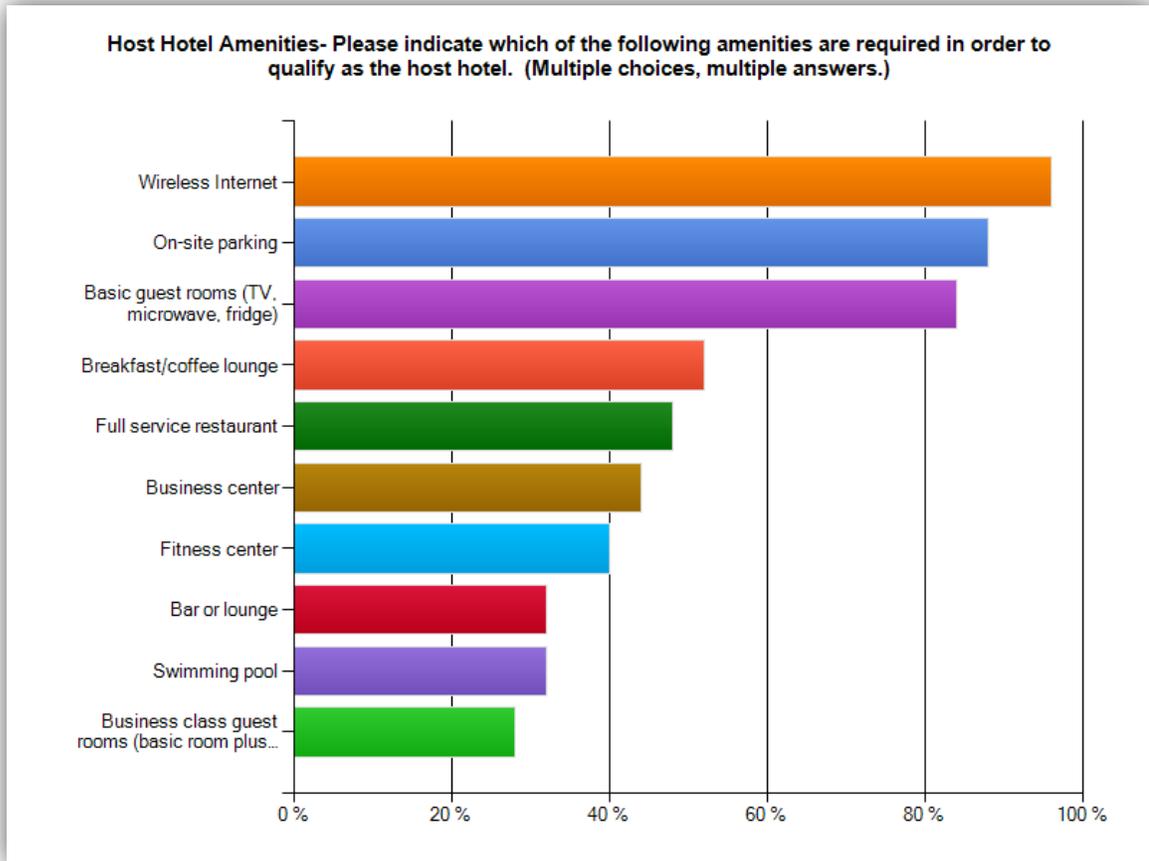
HOTELS

According to the Adams County CVB, Hastings has 540 sleeping rooms in the community. 304 of those rooms were in properties listed as “brand name”. Another 236 rooms were listed as “independent locally owned” properties. The following is a list of Hastings properties with their attributed number of sleeping rooms:

- Comfort Inn 61
- Grand Motel 17
- Holiday Inn Express 90
- Midlands Lodge 47
- Hastings Hotel 101
- Super 8 Motel 50
- Rodeway Inn 62
- Quality Inn 40
- Hastings Express Motel (X-L) 41
- Rainbow Motel 31

The Holiday Inn Express is the newest property in Hastings and commands rates that are typically twice that of its local competitors. To monitor the occupancy rates within the community, the CVB subscribes to the STAR Report which is a hotel industry reporting service. Hoteliers voluntarily submit their information and then can produce reports showing how their occupancy rates compare with similar properties in their region. In Hastings, only a few hoteliers participate in the STAR program. Therefore, community-wide occupancy rates are unknown. According to the CVB, lodging tax collections were reported as steady over the last two years amounting to \$8,000 per month, on average.

Overall, most event planners want modern, clean and safe sleeping rooms with a variety of current amenities for housing their attendees. Anything less cedes the competitive edge to other communities when trying to attract meeting and conference events to Hastings. Responses to a survey of potential meeting and conference clients indicate their preferences as shown in the following chart.



According to the Hastings CVB, some attendees visiting Hastings for popular events actually choose to book hotels in neighboring Grand Island and drive the 30-40 mile round trip each day since Grand Island has a much larger inventory of name brand hotels, restaurants and attractions. This trend has a negative economic impact on the Hastings market in terms of lost opportunities for bringing new dollars into the community.

RESTAURANTS

Hastings has several locally owned and operated restaurants but stakeholders stated the community is lacking in the number of sit-down, national chain restaurants. For years, Hastings area meeting and conference attendees have become accustomed to the convenience of having their meeting space, sleeping rooms, restaurant and lounge all under one roof. This model makes good business sense for the operators of the venue as it captures more revenue from event attendees but it does come at a cost to other area providers of the similar

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services. Another model of operation for consideration consolidates the meeting space and the hotel under one roof with limited food and alcohol service. This model drives a significant amount of attendee free-time business to area restaurants and lounges as attendees seek out their personal choices for these services.

MEETING AND CONFERENCE VENUES

The VenuWorks Project Team toured several local and regional meeting and conference venues during the research phase of the study. A list of those venues can be found in the Methodology section of this study. The Analysis of Need section of the study addresses the capabilities, limitations and expansion plans for several of these venues.

AIRPORTS

Hastings has a municipal airport but does not have any scheduled passenger service. The closest airport large enough to accommodate commercial flights is the Central Nebraska Regional Airport located 30 away on the north side of Grand Island.

CONCLUSION

It is anticipated that a new conference center in Hastings will attract attendees from throughout south central Nebraska and north central Kansas on a regular basis and from greater distances for certain events. Predicting potential meeting and conference bookings is certainly not an exact science. Venue appeal and availability, availability of quality hotel rooms, competition from other events and venues, community attractions, weather conditions, and economic conditions will all impact actual bookings. VenuWorks considered the area demographics, survey results and historical attendance figures for comparable venues hosting the event types listed in the Pro-Forma to predict event activity. The statistical information in this section of the study was also assessed in developing potential attendance estimates, event days, event revenues, workforce availability and staff wage estimates.

3. ANALYSIS OF NEED

INTRODUCTION

As defined in the Market Analysis section of this Feasibility Study, Hastings has several locations within the community that can accommodate a variety of events. However, consistently through personal interviews and survey work the Project Team was told that in addition to what is currently available in Hastings, there is a need for upscale, first-class meeting and banquet space that can accommodate multiple, simultaneous activities. Even conversations with managers of the existing venues concurred that there is a need for additional conference space. As detailed in the Methodology Section of this Study, VenuWorks undertook a series of steps to define this need.

Meeting and conference business is an ever changing industry. A Meeting Planners International publication entitled FutureWatch 2011 Executive Summary¹² provides a look inside the functions of meetings and assesses expected growth in the number, size and budget for meetings along with internal trends impacting planners. After the significant decrease in meeting business in 2008 and 2009, planners are expecting the increase they experienced in 2010 and 2011 to continue. FutureWatch states that, *"The failing economy caused meeting suppliers and planners to collaborate in new and different ways, creating strong intra-industry relationships that will last for years to come."* A recent article in USA Today entitled, Businesses Ready to Send Employees on the Road Again¹³, states that business travel spending is projected to grow 1.8% in 2012; 5.1% in 2013 and 7% in 2014. From its lowest point in 2009, business travel and spending are beginning to slowly start picking up. Eric Eden, Vice President of marketing for Cvent, a meeting and event management technology company states, *"We're seeing meetings with higher numbers of attendees per event and we're also seeing that events are being planned further in advance, which is generally a sign that people are more optimistic."*

This same upswing in meetings and events is also applicable to the businesses in Hastings. Companies responding to VenuWorks surveys indicated that their future plans include continuing with their current meetings and looking for a venue that can accommodate their anticipated growth in the type of events they are hosting and the number of people attending the events.

¹² Meeting Professionals International. FutureWatch 2011: Executive Summary. 2011. www.mpiweb.org

¹³ USA Today. Businesses Ready to Send Employees On the Road Again. April 10, 2013. Nancy Trejos.

The venues in Hastings have served the community well over the years. However, today's meeting planners have an increased expectation of the fit, finishes and amenities they demand to consider a community and location for their meetings. Over the last few years the community has begun to lose its competitive edge in attracting and maintaining conference and meeting business. Meanwhile, other regional communities have ramped up their competitive amenities. Several communities have developed new properties or are in the process of doing so. These new and upgraded venues will continue to provide increased competition for Hastings.

LOST BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau Mission Statement

The role of the CVB is to orchestrate community vitality, thereby inspiring internal audiences to participate in community events and creating a new level of community solidarity, as well as attracting external audiences to seek Hastings as a destination. The CVB is a catalyst, planner and implementer of community events and activities. Furthermore, as proactive leader among community organizations, the CVB identifies and creates the community's marketable assets, packages such assets and use them to engage target audiences.

In fulfillment of their Mission Statement, the Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau works in partnership with local hoteliers, meeting planners and businesses to aggressively pursue all opportunities to bring groups and attendees to the Adams County area. While for many events their efforts are successful and they can "make the current space within the community work", often times meeting and conference planners are not willing to consider a location that does not specifically meet their needs. It can be difficult to quantify meeting and conference business that the Hastings community is losing, but research indicated that generally the loss comes from three distinct areas:

- Business that was once held in Hastings but due to changes in the organization's mission or membership, they are no longer holding their meetings in Hastings.
- Business that was once held in Hastings but due to the lack of suitable meeting and hotel space, they will not consider returning to the community.
- Business that is not currently pursued by the CVB and/or local hoteliers due to the known existing lack of adequate meeting and/or hotel space to accommodate the event requirements.

In addition to the above, feedback from statewide meeting planners revealed their following concerns as to why they do not currently consider Hastings during their site selection process:

- Only meet in a specific city (i.e. Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, etc.)
- No membership in Hastings
- Current condition of Hastings Hotel & Convention Center
- Need interstate access.

Focus group attendees were asked if they would consider working to bring the own association meetings to Hastings. Several attendees indicated they would not due to the current condition of the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center and the lack of a suitable alternative. Responses from a sampling of former clients that once held their events in Hastings indicated that until the community has a convention center with the amenities and capacities necessary for rebooking their events, they will not consider returning to Hastings. The CVB anticipates the failure to regain just this segment of lost business will result in an annual economic impact loss to the community of approximately \$100,000.

COMMUNITY VENUES

To assess existing meeting and conference capabilities in Hastings the Project Team adopted a dual approach to this research. First, the Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau provided the following chart related to the meeting rooms and facilities in Hastings. Secondly, research was also conducted separately that expanded upon the content of the chart.

	The Lark (Open Fall 2013)	Hastings City Auditorium	Adams County Fairgrounds
Location	Downtown	Downtown	South West
Event Space/ Capacity	180-350	1700	2400
Sound Equipment/ Lighting	Professional Sound & Lights	General PA	General PA
Food / Catering	Outside	Outside	Outside
Bar	Yes	Outside	Outside
Liquor License	Yes	No	No
Style of Decor	Urban Contemporary	Retro	Industrial
Banquet Tables/ Chairs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Break Out Space	Yes	No	Yes
Small Conference Room/ Capacity	15/40	N/A	All Sizes
ADA Compliant	Main floor	Not Balcony or Restrooms	Yes
In-house Sound	Yes	General PA	General PA
Set up/ Tear down services	Yes	Yes	No
Other amenities	LCD projectors, kitchen, wireless internet	Warming Kitchen	
		Weekends booked through 2013	Weekends booked through 2013
	Barrett Alumni Center	Prairie Loft	Holiday Inn Express
Location	East	Outside Hastings West	North
Event Space/ Capacity	80	300	80
Sound Equipment/ Lighting	No	No	No
Food / Catering	Outside	Outside	Outside
Bar	Outside	Outside	Outside
Liquor License	Yes	No	No
Style of Decor	Generic	Rustic/Agrarian	Contemporary
Banquet Tables/ Chairs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Break Out Space	Yes	Yes	No
Small Conference Room/ Capacity	15	40	20
ADA Compliant	Yes	? Ground floor, no ramps, Bathroom	Yes
In-house Sound	No	No	No
Set up/ Tear down services	No	No	Yes
Other amenities	Kitchen	1 temperature controlled room for 40	Projector, Wireless Internet
		Weekends booked through 2013	

Source: Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau

The VenuWorks Project Team conducted interviews with representatives of the following venues to discuss their current and anticipated event trends, and to gather information regarding any future building expansions:

- Adams County Fairgrounds
- Barrett Alumni Center – Hastings College
- City Auditorium
- Hastings Convention Center
- Lochland Golf Course
- Prairie Loft.

The information gathered is listed by venue on the following pages.

ADAMS COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS



VenuWorks Photo

In addition to the activities during fair time, the Adams County Fairgrounds has established itself as the location for meetings, receptions, banquets, exhibit and trade shows, concerts and sporting events. The concrete floor, wide loading doors, open floor plan and ample parking make the Fairgrounds an excellent location for exhibit and trade shows. The venue is designed to successfully host multiple, simultaneous events. Focus group attendees were complimentary of the level of service and room capacities provided at the Adams County Fairgrounds. However, other comments related to attracting meeting and conference business, included:

- Acoustics at Fairgrounds not very good when multiple simultaneous events are occurring.
- Lack of hotels in the area of the Fairgrounds.
- Lack of available dates as events are booked multiple years out.
- Fairgrounds can accommodate large groups, but doesn't have the ambience of a conference center ballroom.
- Dirt parking lot challenging for guests of formal events.

The following information was provided by Sandy Himmelberg, General Manager of the Adams County Fairgrounds.

Year Opened:	1955
Banquet Capacity:	Activities Center: Center Section & East End combined – 1000 banquet style; West and North End – 500 each Community Services Bldg.: 150 banquet style

General Session Capacity:	Activities Center: 300-350 per section; East & Center Section 750-800
Breakout Rooms:	Three in the Activities Center
Annual Event Days:	268 events over a 12 month time frame from November 2011 through October 2012. Annually average 223 – 317.
Annual Attendance:	210,000 (including fair attendance)
Annual Revenues:	Unavailable
Annual Expenses:	Unavailable
Average Annual Subsidy:	Unavailable
Full Time Staff:	Six – two in office; four in maintenance
Catering:	Outside caterers, no percentage paid to venue
Alcohol service:	Outside vendors, no percentage paid to venue
Planned Improvements:	In early summer 2013 the Fairgrounds will begin construction on a new 32,000 square foot venue to be located to the south of the existing main building. The main purpose of this venue is for an indoor show arena for livestock. The venue will have a 28’ ceiling, a concrete floor and a 620 square foot conference room that can be divided. For the first couple of years the venue will not have air or heat and will only be partially enclosed. Additionally, the Fairgrounds three-year capital plan includes covering 200-250 parking spaces north of the Community Services Building with a concrete surface.

BARRETT ALUMNI CENTER – HASTINGS COLLEGE



Photo courtesy of Adams County CVB

The Barrett Alumni Center serves as the welcome center to the Hastings College campus. The Ringland Room of the Barrett Alumni Center can accommodate 80-100 people for a banquet. While college-related functions have priority booking of the Ringland Room, several community groups also use this space for meetings and banquets. The demand for this space from the community is significant and on one particular weekend in May 2013 over 20 requests to rent the space had to be declined due to previous bookings. Hastings College does hold a liquor license that enables alcohol to be served at functions at the Barrett Center. Alcohol service is not permitted on any other part of the campus. As this is a private venue, information related to event days, attendance and financial performance is not available.

A priority for Hastings College is the overall improvement of resident and student life for their 1,200 students. Additionally, the College is defining how to enhance their career services and Alumni Association. The Project Team had the opportunity to talk with President Don Jackson, Gary Freeman (Chief Development Officer and Vice President of the Foundation) and Hauli Sabatka, Senior Director of Alumni Relations. In addition to the discussions regarding the needs Hastings College may have with regard to meetings and events, there were also discussions about partnerships. Throughout the Project Team's research a common statement was that most likely no one entity in the community has the financial resources to build a conference center on their own. Mr. Freeman reiterated that Hastings College was very interested in being a part of any discussions occurring regarding development of what could be a very important community asset and evaluating what opportunities may exist for the College to meet their long-term vision in partnership with a community vision.

CITY AUDITORIUM



Photo courtesy of Adams County CVB

City Auditorium is utilized by many organizations within the Hastings community for a wide variety of events including concerts, community events, meetings and banquets. Comments from surveys and focus groups indicate that members of the community frequently use the main floor of the Auditorium for banquets and community events as this is one of the larger venues in Hastings. Planners stated it is very labor intensive to decorate the main floor to create the ambience they are looking for as a part of their event. The size of the Auditorium main floor works well for general session meetings but there are no breakout rooms to accommodate additional space needs of these events. Jeff Hassenstab, Director of Parks and Recreation, indicated that there is such a need for meeting and banquet space in Hastings that he did not feel a new venue would have much of an effect on the event load at City Auditorium. Mr. Hassenstab provided the following information.

Year Opened:	1924
Banquet Capacity:	400
General Session Capacity:	1700
Breakout Rooms:	None
Annual Event Days:	180
Annual Attendance:	Unknown
Full Time Staff:	1 (5 Part Time Employees)
Catering:	Outside caterers, no percentage paid to venue
Alcohol service:	Outside vendors, no percentage paid to venue
Planned Improvements:	Replacement of the Auditorium's HVAC system did not receive approval in the City's 2014 capital projects list. Project will remain on the list for future funding.

HASTINGS COMMUNITY CENTER



Photo courtesy of Adams County CVB

In March of 2013 the Parks and Recreation Department moved their offices to the recently renovated Armory and renamed the complex the Hastings Community Center. Mr. Hassenstab provided the following information. The Community Center amenities will include a large meeting space that can accommodate approximately 60 people. The primary event space is the existing gymnasium. This space will be available for rent in the Fall of 2013 and will accommodate approximately 200 people in a banquet style configuration on the gym floor. Currently the meeting room is air conditioned and in October 2013 the gym will also be air conditioned. Alcohol service will not be permitted at the Community Center.

HASTINGS HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER



Venuworks Photo

Today's meeting planners and event attendees expect that the host hotel for their events will be attached to or in close proximity to the meeting facilities they choose. Throughout the United States, new venues are being constructed with this amenity and older venues are working with hotel partners to meet this demand.

In Hastings, this need was met for years by the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center. The original facility was built in 1975 as a Holiday Inn Holidome with 101 guest rooms, an indoor pool, lounge and restaurant. The convention center component was added in 1994 using Tax Incremental Financing. The convention center can accommodate 350 for banquets and has four meeting rooms. The Adams County Assessor's Real Property Information report shows the Total Market Land Area for the Hastings Hotel is 4.4 acres.

Originally, the venue was a prominent fixture on the north side of Hastings with Hwy 281 bringing visitors past the front door on their way into town. Since then, Hwy 281 was relocated with the new route passing behind the property. Other businesses behind the property now partially obscure view of the hotel from 281.

The hotel has changed hands and hotel brands several times over the course of its history. The current owners bought the property in 2000 and in the past few years the convention business has faded away due to the limitations of the hotel. The restaurant, lounge and convention center at the Hastings Hotel were leased by the hotel management to the operator of the attached Garden Cafe. At the time of the Project Team's site visit in March 2013, both the restaurant and lounge were closed due to a dispute between the owners of the hotel and the operator. The Project Team met with Kim Bui, owner of the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center in March 2013. At that time Ms. Bui indicated that she was working to reopen both the restaurant and the lounge with her staff. Her short term goal was to put new carpet in the meeting rooms and clean the ceilings and tiles. She indicated that 90 of the hotel rooms were in service at that time and by the end of the week all 101 rooms would be in service. The pool had been drained and was being prepared for painting. She further stated that she was planning to replace the hotel carpet and update the spaces.

During focus group meetings, several attendees expressed concern that Ms. Bui was not honoring the contract terms negotiated with the Garden and the attendees events were cancelled at the convention center. This left many groups scrambling to find new locations to hold their events and many of them ended up having to take the business out of Hastings to find suitable accommodations. Comments received through the on-line surveys, focus group meetings and personal interviews consistently reflected the community and meeting planners' frustrations about the current physical condition and management of the hotel and convention center.

Organizations who have used this venue for years now comment that the deteriorating conditions are making it challenging to recommend the venue for events. With the high level of competition in the region from newer and renovated venues, meeting planners are reluctant to include Hastings in their rotation of events. When deciding which events to attend and how to spend their limited financial resources, event attendees are looking for a clean, safe, inviting environment for their lodging and food choices.

In April 2013 Zoul Hospitality announced that they had opened the 281 Sports Bar and Nebraska Bottle Market in the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center¹⁴. In addition to the sports bar, Zoul Hospitality would also operate the convention center providing full-service beverage and entertainment services. In a discussion the Project Team had with Mr. Zoul in May 2013 he indicated that Ms. Bui had entered into a consulting agreement with his company, Hospitality Advisors Group, to provide consulting services on a major overhaul of the existing Hastings Hotel & Convention Center and evaluate expansion and redevelopment of the convention space. At the time of the discussion the hotel had hired an Executive Chef and the restaurant had been reopened. Mr. Zoul indicated that there would be some refurbishment and carpet work on the convention center this summer. He stated the pool renovations had been completed. The lounge had also reopened and Mr. Zoul had invested over \$25,000 on improvements to the lounge. The hotel had also rehired a previous Sales Manager and Mr. Zoul felt the Sales Manager and Chef made a very good team.

Mr. Zoul indicated that he optimistic about the future of the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center complex. As this is a private venue, information related to event days, attendance and financial performance is not available.

LOCHLAND COUNTRY CLUB

The Lochland Country Club Clubhouse was rebuilt in 2001. The venue provides a variety of spaces for meetings, events, banquets and receptions. The Project Team met with Scott Shardelow and Danielle Wagoner to learn more about their current venue and to discuss potential expansion plans. The Mission Statement for Lochland provided by Mr. Schardlow states, "*Lochland offers extraordinary experiences for families through premier service, outstanding facilities and a passionate commitment to quality.*" While the Clubhouse is available for rent to non-members, Lochland members have priority booking of the venue spaces. As such, Lochland reserves the right within 12 months of a non-member event to move the event should a Club member request the space for their usage. Lochland works

¹⁴ theindependent.com. Expanding & branding: Zoul Hospitality opens new stores. April 27, 2013. Robert Pore. www.theindependent.com

closely with the CVB, the Comfort Inn and the Holiday Inn Express in providing the opportunity for non-members to use the golf course.

Lochland is currently undertaking, as a part of their strategic planning exercise, the exploration of opportunities that would increase revenues through their food service and meeting capabilities. Mr. Schardlow stated that the Chef has the skill and current kitchen has the capacity to provide the quality and type of food many planners are wanting for their events. Therefore, Lochland has taken that expertise and expanded to taking on outside catering services. Additionally, Lochland is evaluating current meeting facilities in the community and assessing if there is a need that could be met at Lochland through the expansion of their venues. At the time of this study, no public announcements of expanded venues had been made by Lochland.

PRAIRIE LOFT CENTER FOR OUTDOOR AND AGRICULTURAL LEARNING



Photo courtesy of Adams County CVB

Prairie Loft's primary mission is to teach agricultural appreciation, outdoor education, cultural traditions and the wise use of natural resources. According to Amy Sandeen, Executive Director, not long after the venue opened it became apparent that there was a demand for additional meeting and banquet space in the Hastings area. Brides and meeting planners are willing to rent unconditioned space in the middle of summer just to have a place that would accommodate their event needs. In addition to its core mission, Prairie Loft has now become a venue of choice for meetings, activities, weddings, birthday parties and other group events.

The rustic space provides a unique location for events and can accommodate up to 250 attendees. Ms. Sandeen agrees with other focus group attendees that there is a significant need for additional meeting space in Hastings as Prairie Loft also turns away business due to

lack of available open dates. Ms. Sandeen believes that a new venue would actually complement the events that are hosted at Prairie Loft. Providing the opportunity to bring additional events to Hastings increases the opportunities for Prairie Loft to partner with meeting planners to provide an “experience” to event attendees through off-site meetings and activities.

THE LARK

Located in the heart of downtown Hastings, the Lark is expected to open in the Fall of 2013. The organization, now known as the Listening Room, currently hosts events at various Hastings venues. Project organizers are converting a historic downtown building into a state-of-the-art performance and arts center that will be known as The Lark. In August 2012 the project received a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant award through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Executive Director Robin Harrell stated in an August 10, 2012 Hastings Tribune news article¹⁵, “*The grant is just a huge step closer to their goal and will get the project going.*” The space will feature a concert space with a maximum seating capacity of 300, a full-service bar and a catering kitchen. The first floor will be able to accommodate 160 guests in banquet style seating.

HASTINGS MUSEUM



Photo courtesy of Adams County CVB

The Hastings Museum has a variety of spaces available for groups to use for meetings, banquets and social activities. The venue can accommodate 600 guests for a reception. For a seated dinner the Museum can accommodate up to 300 guests. The Hastings Museum works closely with the Adams County CVB to attract events to the community and the Museum. The venue provides a unique off-site location for event attendees. Some focus group attendees

¹⁵ Hastings Tribune. [Lark Lands \\$300,000 Grant](#). August 10, 2012. Amy Palsler.

felt that a new venue should be built next to Museum as this would entice people to go to the museum which would be beneficial to both organizations.

OTHER COMMUNITY VENUES

Venues in addition to those listed above that have small meeting spaces for rent include, but are not limited to, WineStyles, Central Community College, Hastings Police Station and Public Library, Comfort Inn, Holiday Inn Express, restaurants and social/fraternal organizations.

During focus group meetings there were three other potential new venues discussed.

- Good Samaritan is researching a new venue on their current site. The primary focus for this venue will be for the village residents and will have limited outside rental capability.
- The Motorsport Park Hastings is researching the development of a hotel and a small meeting space. The primary usage of this hotel and meeting area will be focused on the racers and other motor sport event participants.
- ESU #9 has been evaluating the long term goals of their current buildings. As ESU #9 has a significant need for meeting and conference space, adding a meeting venue had been a part of their discussions. While ESU has the need for a state of the art venue with wireless technology and video conferencing capability, they do not have any funding available to pursue a venue of their own. In discussions with Mr. Lofquist he indicated that as discussions continue within the community regarding a new conference center, ESU would welcome the opportunity to be a part of those discussions.

REGIONAL VENUES

The following chart compiled by the Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau provides a snapshot of regional venues that currently compete for many of the same regional and statewide meetings as does Hastings.

	Location	Total Sq Feet	Ballroom (s)	Ballroom Divisions
Divots Conference Center	Norfolk	26,250	15,750	80, 120, 200, 240
Nielsen Community Center	West Point	44,000	13,000	5 areas
Gering Convention Center	Gering	25,500	7696	7 areas
Younes Conference Center	Kearney	37,000	16092 and 12,798	10 and 4 areas
Holiday Inn Hotel and Convention Center	Kearney	23,000	6966 and 6222 and 3240 and 3360	2,2,3,3 areas
Grand Island Quality Inn and Conference Center	Interstate Hwy 281		4200	
Hastings' Hotel & Convention Center	Hastings	14,000	3726	4 areas
	Seating	Break-out Rooms	Weekend Rental	Onsite Hotel
Divots Conference Center	up to 400	6	\$2000 (Fri.) \$3000 (Sat)	yes
Nielsen Community Center	1000 (Banquet)	2	\$900 (Entire Facility)	No
Gering Convention Center		8		yes
Younes Conference Center	1,200 (Banquet)	21		yes
Holiday Inn Hotel and Convention Center	750 (Banquet)	10		yes
Grand Island Quality Inn and Conference Center	460 (Banquet)	8		yes
Hastings' Hotel & Convention Center	325 (Banquet)	4		yes
	On site Restaurant	Onsite Bar	Adjacent to	Ownership
Divots Conference Center	Full service catering	yes	Golf Course, Sand Volleyball Court, Concert Venue	Private
Nielsen Community Center	No	No	Northeast Community College	Municipal
Gering Convention Center	Full service catering	yes	Downtown Gering	Municipal
Younes Conference Center	yes	yes	several hotels; direct Interstate Access	Private
Holiday Inn Hotel and Convention Center	yes	yes	several hotels; direct Interstate Access	Private
Grand Island Quality Inn and Conference Center	Full service catering	yes	Direct Interstate Access	Private
Hastings' Hotel & Convention Center	yes	yes	Another hotel, fast food, hike/bike trail	Private

Source: Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau; VenuWorks

The VenuWorks Project Team gathered data from representatives of the Nielsen Community Center in West Point, NE and Gering Convention Center in Gering, NE. Their information related to the venue size and services is detailed below. Information related to their annual financial performance is located in the Budget Pro Forma section of this Study. As private entities, financial and performance information is not available for the Divots Conference Center in Norfolk, NE; Younes Conference Center in Kearney, NE; Holiday Inn Hotel and Convention Center in Kearney, NE or the Grand Island Quality Inn and Conference Center.

The Project Team had the opportunity to speak with Paul Younes at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney regarding a potential new conference center in Hastings. Mr. Younes also owns the Holiday Inn Express in Hastings along with numerous hotel properties throughout Nebraska. In Kearney, the Younes Conference Center is surrounded by five hotel properties. Mr. Younes has reportedly lamented that he should have built his conference center in Kearney even larger due to the demand. Mr. Younes stated to the Project Team that all Hastings needed to do was to update the current Hastings Hotel & Convention Center. He further stated he was not interested in expanding his property in Hastings to include a conference center because he utilizes his personnel in his other holdings throughout the state to drive meeting and convention business to his Kearney location. While Mr. Younes' work ethic and opinions are very well respected in the industry, other Nebraska communities including West Point, York and Doniphan have chosen to proceed with their plans for their own meeting and conference facilities to meet the local and regional demands.

GERING CIVIC CENTER - GERING, NE



Source: City of Gering Website

Located in Western Nebraska the Gering Civic Center is a 25,000 square foot multi-function conference and event venue. The 12,000 square foot ballroom can accommodate 550 attendees for banquets. Rick Keller, Manager of the Gering Civic Center, provided the following information.

Year Opened:	1993
Construction Funding Source:	Private builder – Lease to own for City
Cost of Construction:	No response
Annual Event Days:	365
Annual Attendance:	Approximately 55,000
Full Time Staff:	No response
Catering:	Exclusive - 18% paid to venue
Alcohol service:	Exclusive - 18% paid to venue
Next Fiscal Year's Business:	Expects business to increase due to experience of venue operators.

NIELSEN COMMUNITY CENTER - WEST POINT, NE



Courtesy of Chris Kreikemeier, Nielsen Community Center

Located in Northern Nebraska, the Nielsen Community Center is a 44,000 square foot multi-function venue that includes classroom space for the Community College. The Community Center is 36,000 square feet including a 13,000 square foot ballroom that can be divided into five spaces. There are two additional meeting rooms available. The ballroom can accommodate 900 attendees for banquets at rounds and 13,000 theater style. The venue has a spacious lobby that can be used for meeting registration and vendor areas. Chris Kreikemeier, Building Manager, provided the following information.

Year Opened:	2008
Construction Funding Source:	Pledges through a Foundation; City took out 10-year bond
Construction Cost:	\$5.4 million
Annual Event Days:	300
Annual Attendance:	Approximately 80,000
Full Time Staff:	1 (2 Part Time Employees)
Catering:	Open catering – no percentage paid to venue (kitchen fee assessed)
Alcohol service:	Open – no percentage paid to venue
Next Fiscal Year’s Business:	Expects business to continue to increase due to word of mouth and exceptional venue and service.

NEW AND/OR RENOVATED REGIONAL VENUES

NEW WORLD INN – COLUMBUS, NE

A recent article in the Columbus, NE Telegram entitled, Local group buys New World Inn,¹⁶ indicates local investors purchased the New World Inn & Conference Center. The investor group, NBC Capital, LLC is looking at making big changes for the venue and finalizing efforts to convert the venue to a Ramada franchise. Plans include renovations of every room include the Legends and the conference center. NBC Capital decided to purchase the hotel because they feel it plays a significant role in the local economy and the local owners feel they will offer better stewardship of the hotel because the group has the expertise and connections to renew the hotel in a big way. The New World Inn Hotel and Conference Center can accommodate groups up to 700. There are nine meeting rooms, a ballroom and indoor and outdoor courtyards.

HOLTHUS CONVENTION CENTER – YORK, NE



Courtesy of Todd Kirshenbaum, York Area Chamber of Commerce

A May 4, 2013 story in the Lincoln Journal Star entitled, York Moving Ahead on Convention Center Plans¹⁷, announced a \$250,000 award from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development as the latest contribution toward the construction of the Holthus Convention Center. The Project Team spoke with Todd Kirshenbaum of the York Area Chamber of Commerce regarding the details of the Center. Mr. Kirshenbaum provided the following information.

¹⁶ Columbus, NE Telegram. Local Group Buys New World Inn. March 17, 2013. Jesus Lopez-Gomez.

¹⁷ Lincoln Star Journal. York Moving Ahead on Convention Center Plans. May 4, 2013. Art Hovey.

Groundbreaking:	May 13, 2013
Construction Schedule:	13 months – planning tentative events for July/August 2014; full schedule of events already taking dates in December 2014 and January 2015
Construction Cost:	\$7.5 million
Funding Sources:	To date the project has raised \$5.5 million through community giving and the State award. Confident they will raise the remaining funds.
Facility Amenities:	40,000 square foot venue; Banquet capacity 600; Eight (8) breakout rooms; stage
Catering:	Outside caterers will provide food service, no percentage paid to venue; fee to use the kitchen
Alcohol Service:	City of York will hold the liquor license and all alcohol sales must go through venue and be serviced by venue staff
Full Time Staff:	Three (3) – Building Manager, Sales Coordinator and Beverage Coordinator; One (1) dedicated part time technical staff member
Operating Budget:	Installing geothermal to contain utility costs; anticipate six (6) years before the venue breaks even financially; any annual shortfall will be covered by the City; venue will be operated as a City department
Variation from West Point:	Through discussions with the people in West Point, NE the design team for the Holthus Convention Center have added extra restrooms on each side of the venue and added two sets of large meeting rooms that can accommodate a maximum of 56 attendees each in banquet style seating.
Proximity to Hotels:	A new Holiday Inn Express will be two blocks away. Within five blocks of the venue there will be approximately 700 hotel rooms.

DONIPHAN COMMUNITY CENTER – DONIPHAN, NE



Photo by VenuWorks March 2013 during construction.

The Village of Doniphan is in the construction phase of a new Community Center that is slated to open in September of 2014. The Project Team spoke with Terry Connick, President of the Economic Development Corporation for Doniphan. Mr. Connick provided the following information.

- Construction Cost: \$1.9 million
- Funding Sources: In 2009 the Village citizens approved a 1% sales tax. This sales tax will sunset in 17 years and is generating approximately \$150,000 per year. Additionally, community fundraising is ongoing to support the construction of the Community Center.
- Facility Amenities: 13,000 square foot venue that will include:
- Clerk's Office
 - Board room with a capacity for approximately 50
 - Senior's Meals on Wheels room with capacity for approximately 50
 - There is a retractable wall between these two rooms that can be opened to provide a capacity for 100
 - Main Hall of 6,800 square feet that will accommodate approximately 450 in banquet configuration (as estimated by VenuWorks)

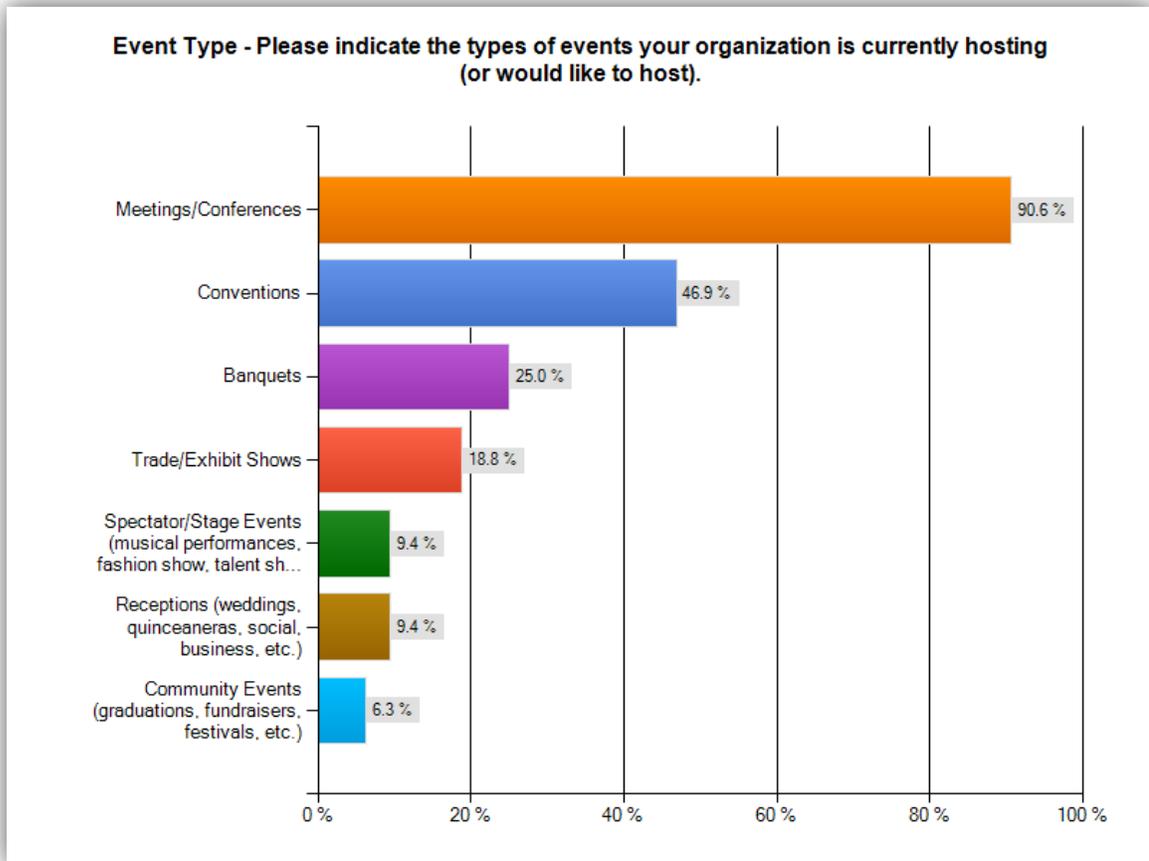
- Catering/Alcohol Service: Outside caterers will provide food and beverage service, no percentage paid to venue; there is a small warming kitchen included at no cost
- Full Time Staff: City Clerk will handle the operation of the Community Center. As demand for the space grows, an Event Coordinator may be hired.
- Operating Budget: It is anticipated that the Community Center will be self-supporting without any governmental subsidy.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Two informal surveys were distributed to determine the demand for a new conference venue in the City of Hastings. The Hastings Conference Center Potential Client Survey was designed to provide a sampling of what local, regional and state event planners require for hosting their events. The Hastings Conference Center Community Survey was designed to gather input from the residents of Hastings and the surrounding area. The following charts provide an overview of the responses.

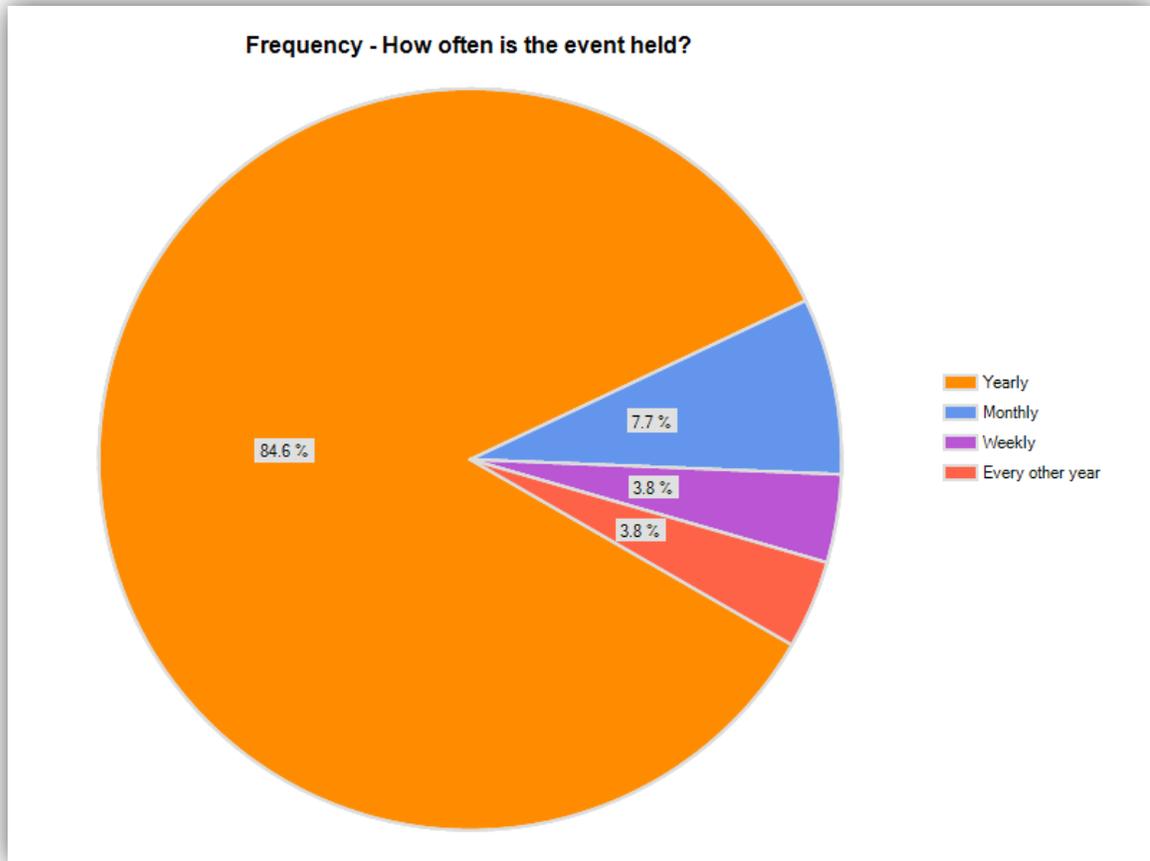
MEETING/CONVENTION PLANNERS SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents were asked to describe their event. They were allowed the option of selecting more than one choice as some events have several components (i.e. a conference may include meetings and a banquet). When choosing more than one answer to the question, 90.6% of the responses indicated meeting/conference to describe their event; 46.9% indicated convention and 25% indicated banquets.

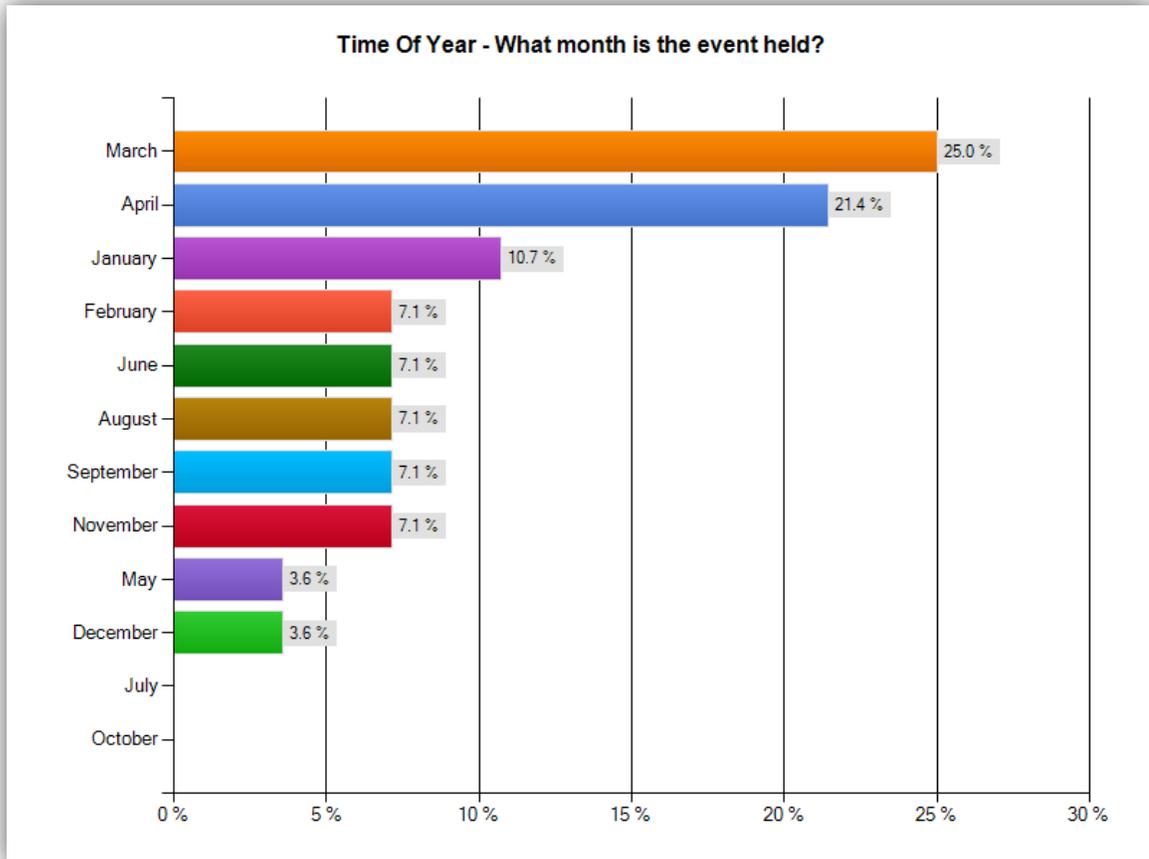


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84.6% of the survey Respondents indicated that they meet every year.



When respondents were asked what time of year their events are held many indicated that they hold events several times a year, 46.4% indicated March and April as the dates of preference. 10.7% of the meetings are held in January.

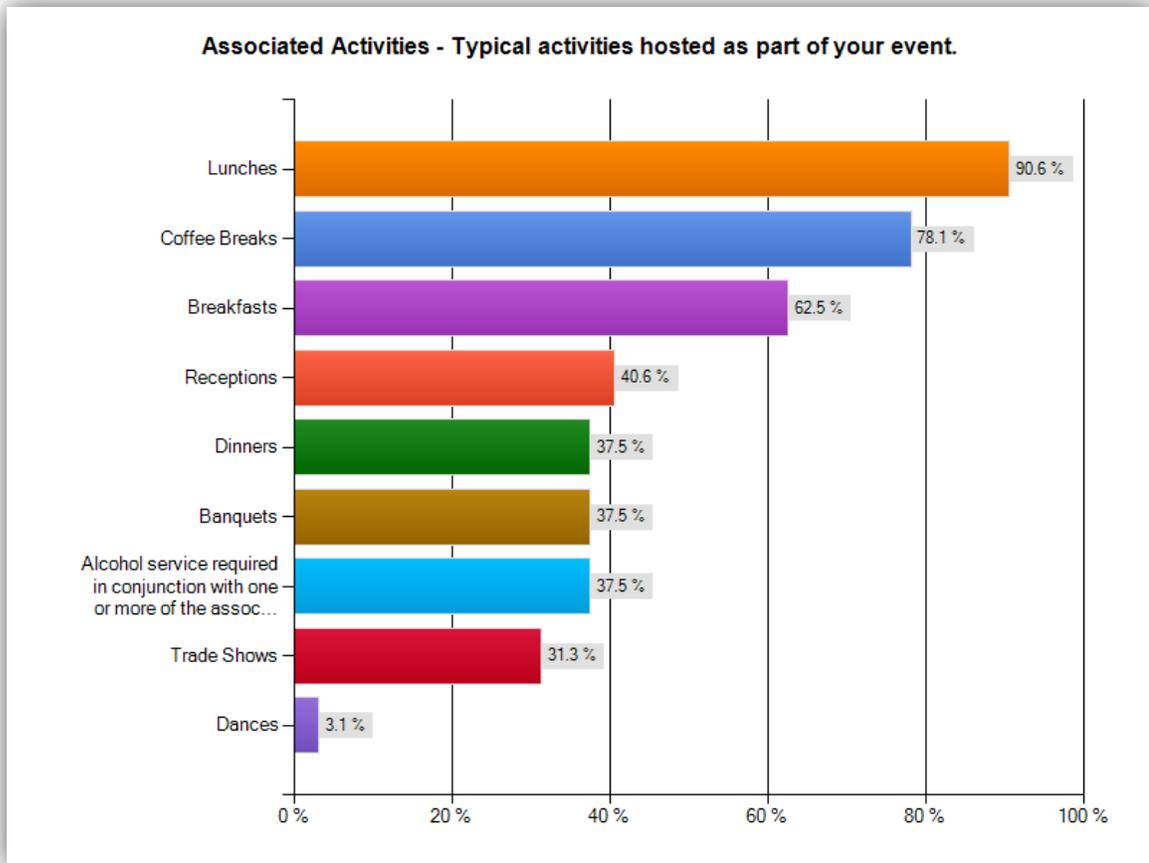


Survey respondents were asked how large the primary meeting room (ballroom) needed to be as well as how many additional breakout rooms would be necessary to host their events. A summary of the responses indicate the following:

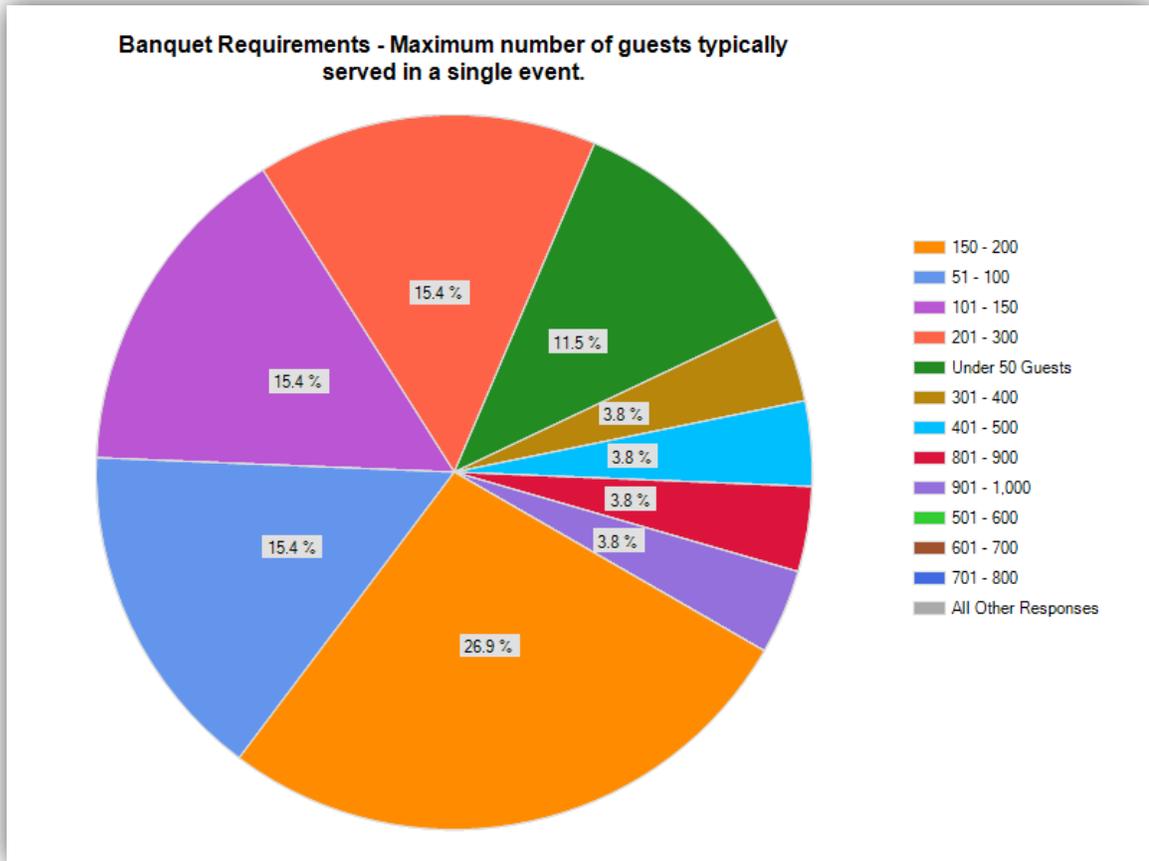
- Ballroom – 13,000 square feet to accommodate a maximum of 800-900 attendees at a banquet
- There is a significant demand for wedding reception space to accommodate 200-400 attendees. If the ballroom can be divided into 5-6 smaller rooms of various sizes using intersecting, retractable portable walls, this need can be met.

- Breakout Rooms – six smaller rooms with the capacity to accommodate 50-70 people banquet seating; 40-50 people for classroom seating and 80-100 people in theater style seating.

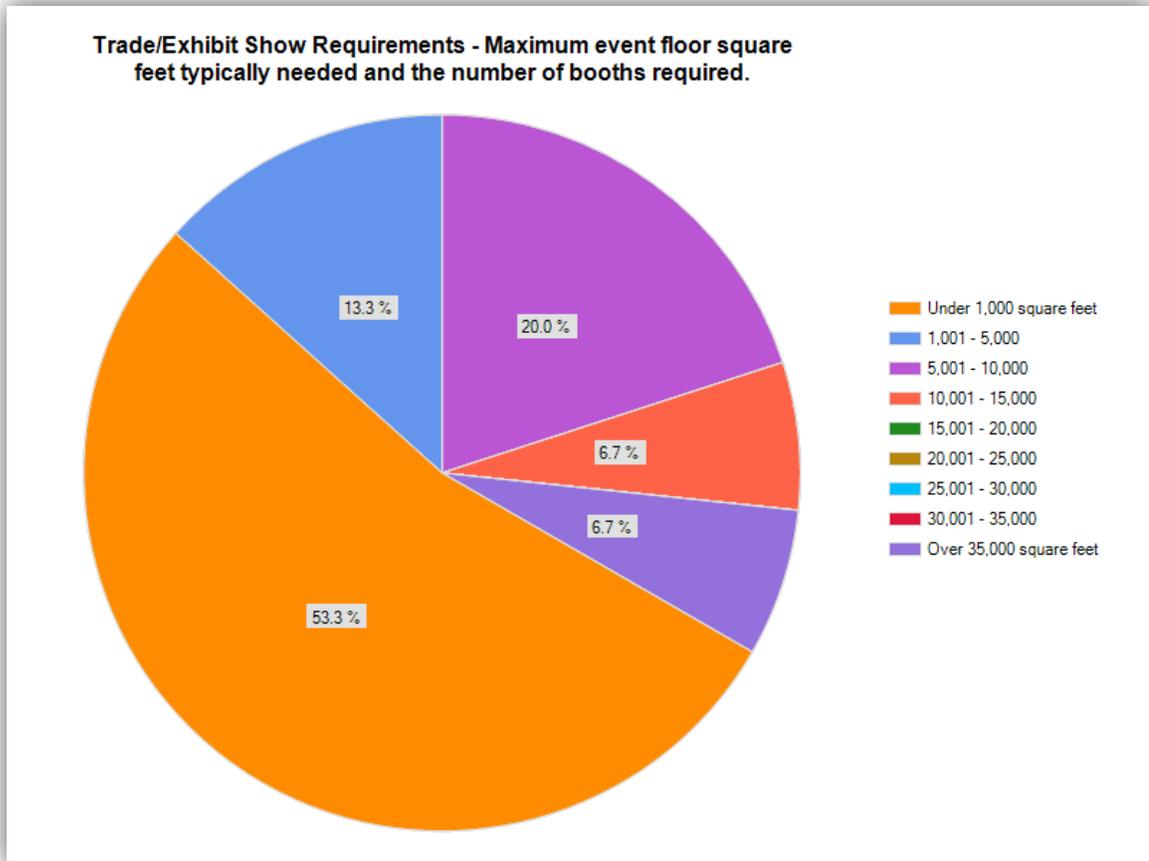
When asked about typical activities that are hosted as a part of the event, 90.6% responded that lunches were a part of their event (more than one response allowed), 78.1% included coffee breaks and 62.5% provided breakfast to their attendees. 37.5% - 40.6% of respondents included receptions, dinners and banquets are a part of their events. Over one-third (37.5%) of the events require alcohol service.



For events requiring banquets, 26.9% need to accommodate up to 200 guests. Over 45% of the respondents (15.4% in each group) required capacities of 51-100; 101-150 and 201-300. One respondent required banquet capacity for 800-900 attendees.

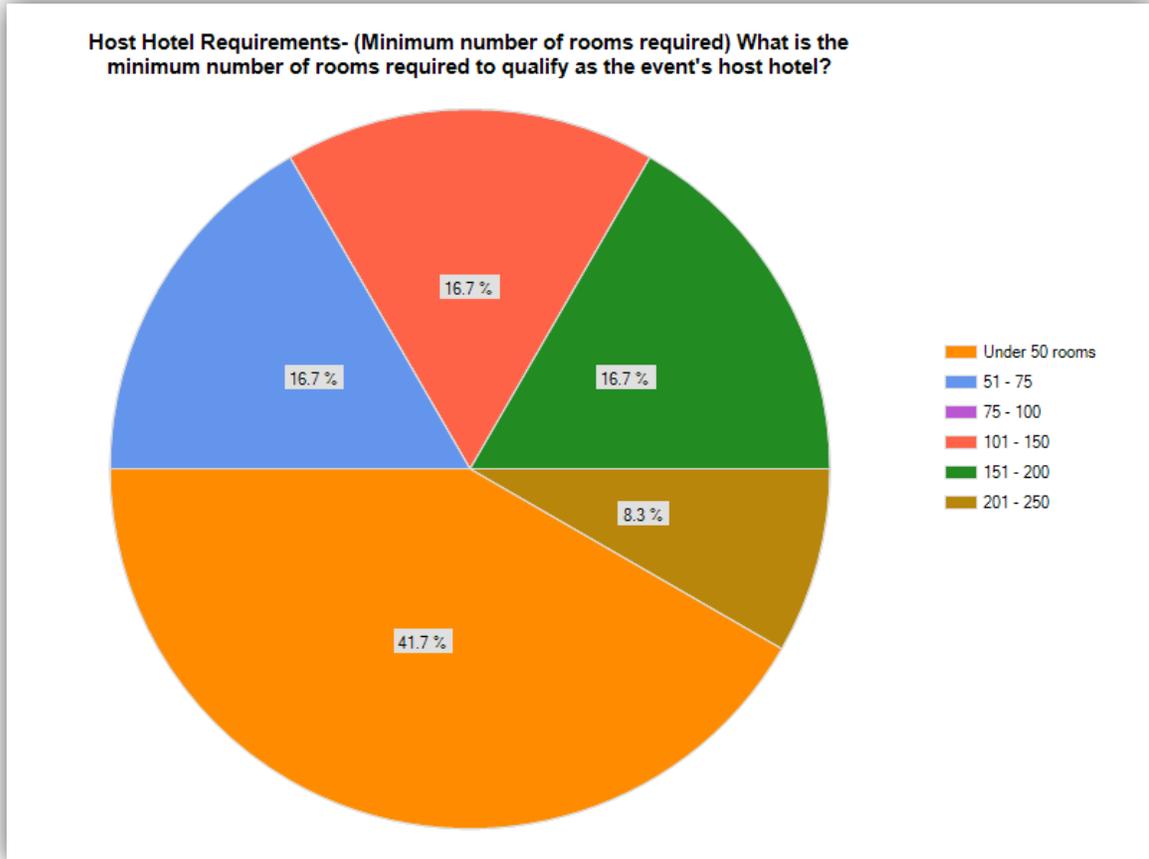


Of the 15 respondents that listed a trade show as a component of their event, over half (53.3%) required under 1,000 square feet of space; 20% needed between 5,000-10,000 square feet and 13.3% required between 1,001-5,000 square feet of exhibit space. Typically, one 10'x10' exhibit booth consumes 185 square feet of total space when factoring in the size of the booth and circulation space.



Previous VenuWorks studies concluded that today’s meeting and conference planners typically prefer that the host hotel be either attached or within close proximity of the conference center. The Hastings study produced similar results with 50% of the respondents indicating the host hotel must be attached and another 36.7% indicating the hotel must be within walking distance.

Over half of the respondents needed more than 50 rooms to accommodate their attendees with 8.3% needing over 200 rooms, as indicated in the following chart.



When meeting planners were asked if they are currently hosting events in Hastings, 75% indicated that are not currently bringing their events to Hastings. In another question Respondents were asked to list any challenges they would have in using a new venue in Hastings. 16% indicated they would not consider Hastings. The following were listed as challenges:

- Lack of major airport
- Limited number of hotel rooms
- Lack of a quality hotel
- Transportation for elderly
- Lack of restaurants and shopping to entice attendees

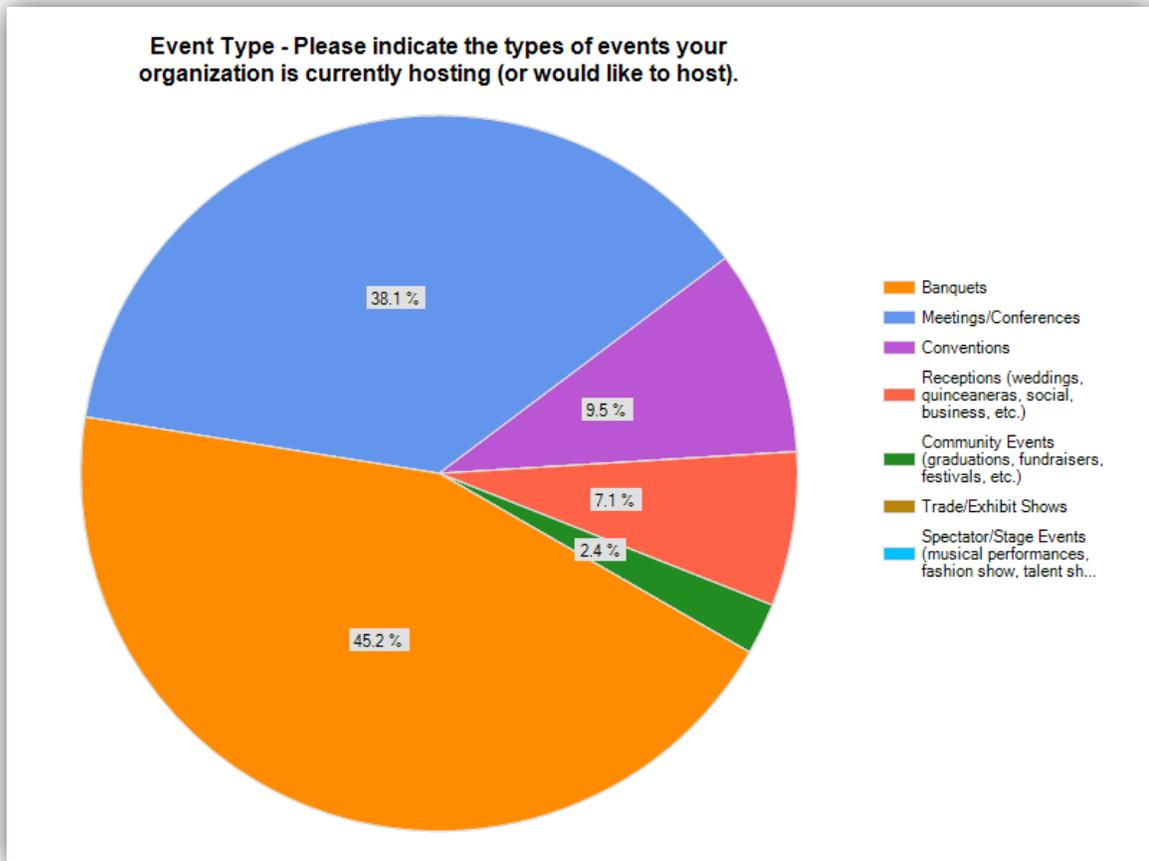
The following is a list of venues where Respondents are currently hosting events:

- Columbus, NE
 - New World Inn
- Gering, NE
 - Gering Civic Center
- Grand Island, NE
 - Holiday Inn
 - Holiday Inn Midtown
 - Howard Johnson Inn
 - Quality Inn
- Kearney, NE
 - Holiday Inn
 - Younes Conference Center
 - Ramada Inn
 - Buffalo County Extension Building
- LaVista, NE
 - Embassy Suites
- Lincoln, NE
 - Cornhusker Hotel – Marriott
 - Embassy Suites
 - Holiday Inn Downtown
- Norfolk, NE
 - Divots Conference Center
- North Platte, NE
 - Sandhills Convention Center
- Omaha, NE
 - Century Link
 - Hilton
 - Comfort Inn
 - Embassy Suites
 - Marriott Hotel
 - Ramada Plaza Hotel & Convention Center
- South Sioux City, NE
 - Marina Inn
- West Point, NE
 - Nielsen Center

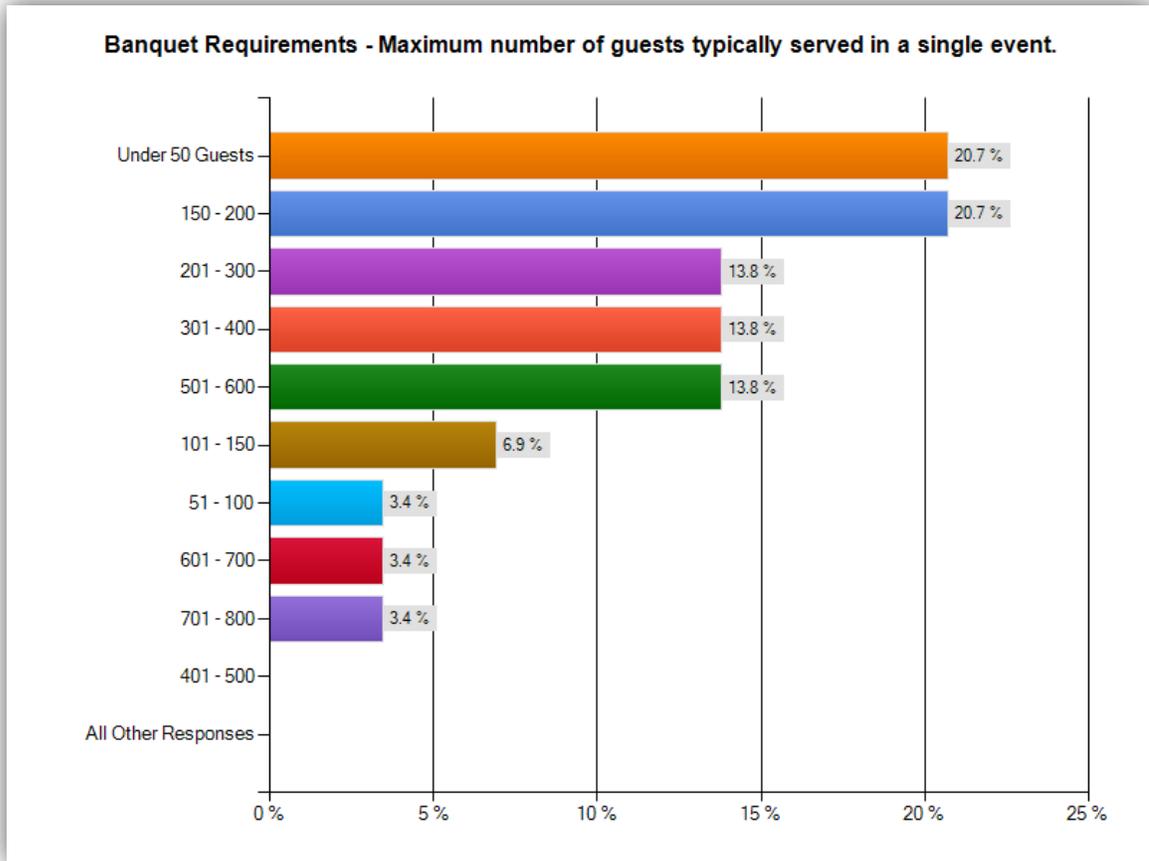
INTERVIEW RESULTS

The Project Team conducted a series of personal interviews and telephone interviews with 43 local, regional and state meeting planners that had not completed the on-line surveys. Much of the information gathered through this abbreviated format replicated portions of the data collected through the on-line survey.

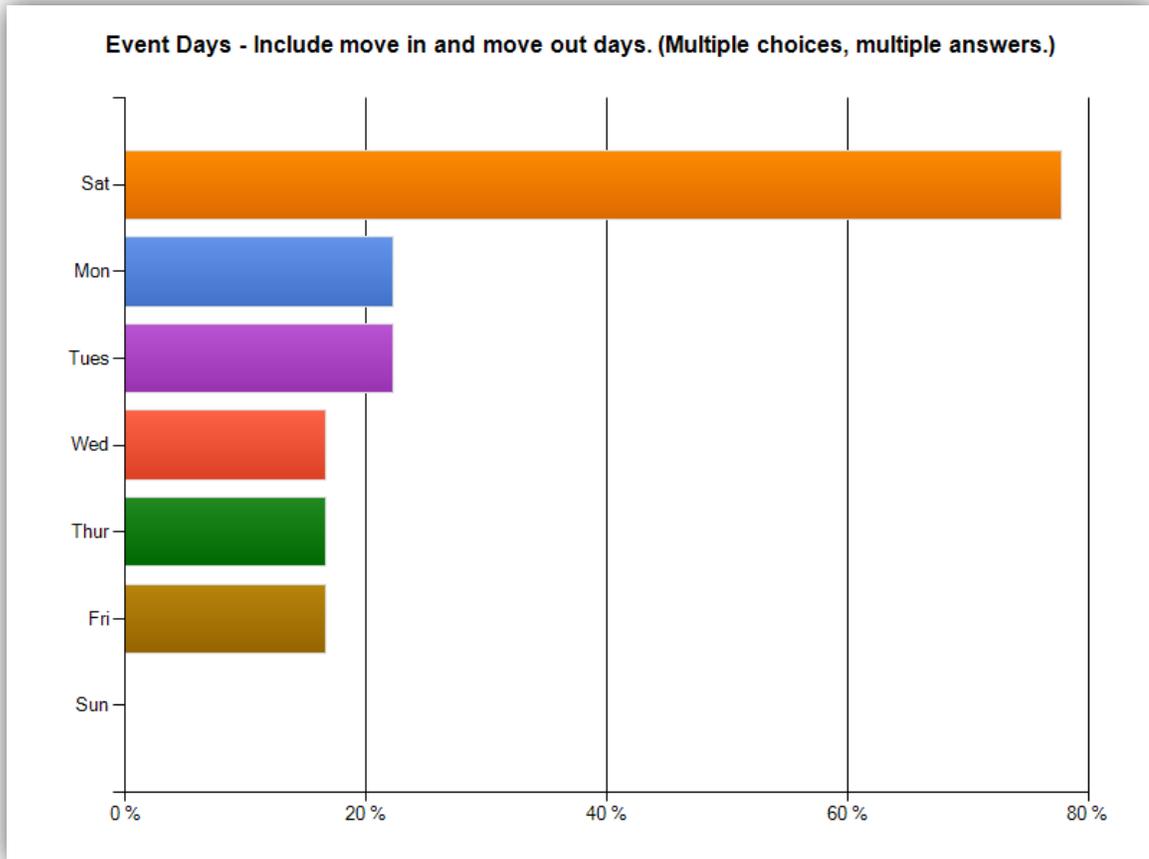
Over 80% of the event activity hosted by the interviewees consisted of annual banquets and meetings/conferences. None of these responses listed trade/exhibit show or spectator stage events as a part of their events.



Event capacities for banquets indicated the need for a variety of room sizes as depicted in the chart below. Many of the interviewees indicated that with improved and expanded facilities in Hastings, they believe they can grow their events in the community.

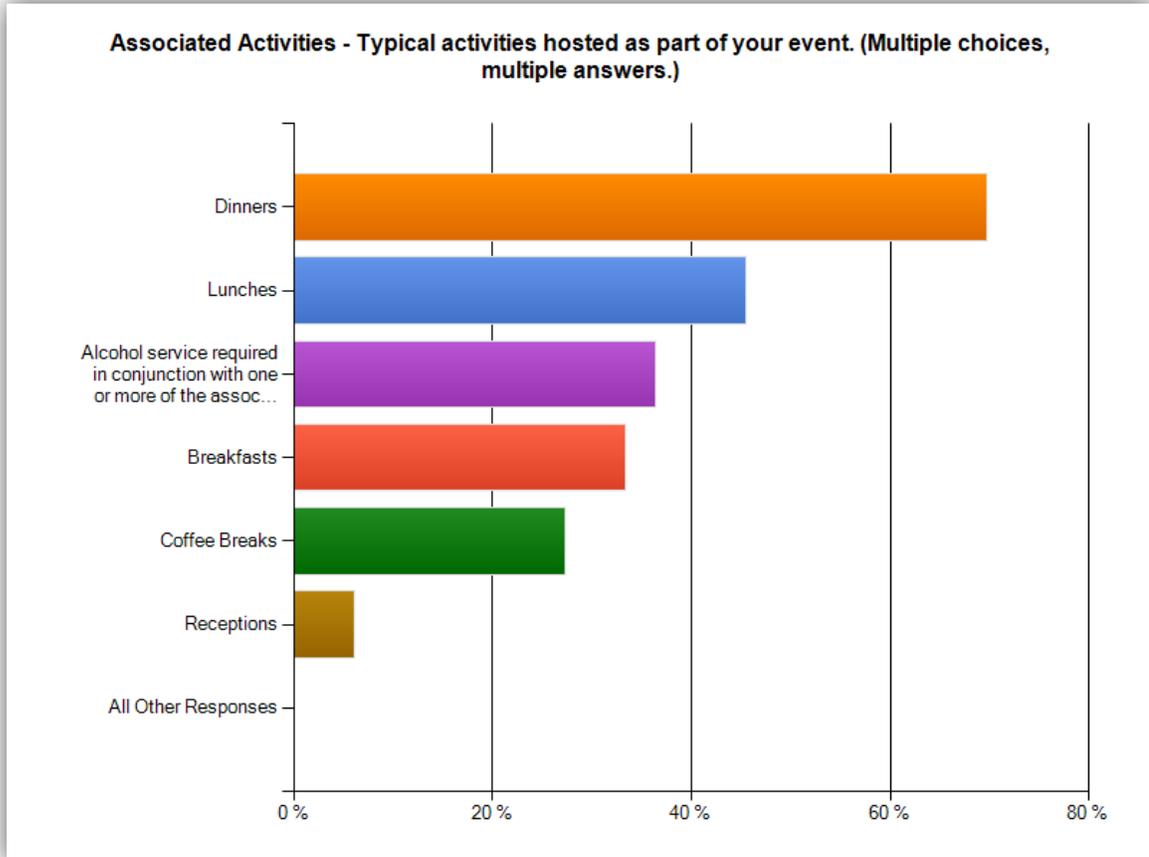


Having the ability to host multiple, simultaneous events is reinforced by the data indicated in the chart below. When asked to indicate what day (or days) of the week they needed to host their events, respondents listed an overwhelming preference for Saturday as an event day.



The primary meeting room (ballroom) and breakout room capacities identified through on-line survey results would be sufficient to meet the demand identified through telephone interviews.

When asked to indicate what associated activities were part of their events, respondents listed meals and alcohol service as their top four choices.



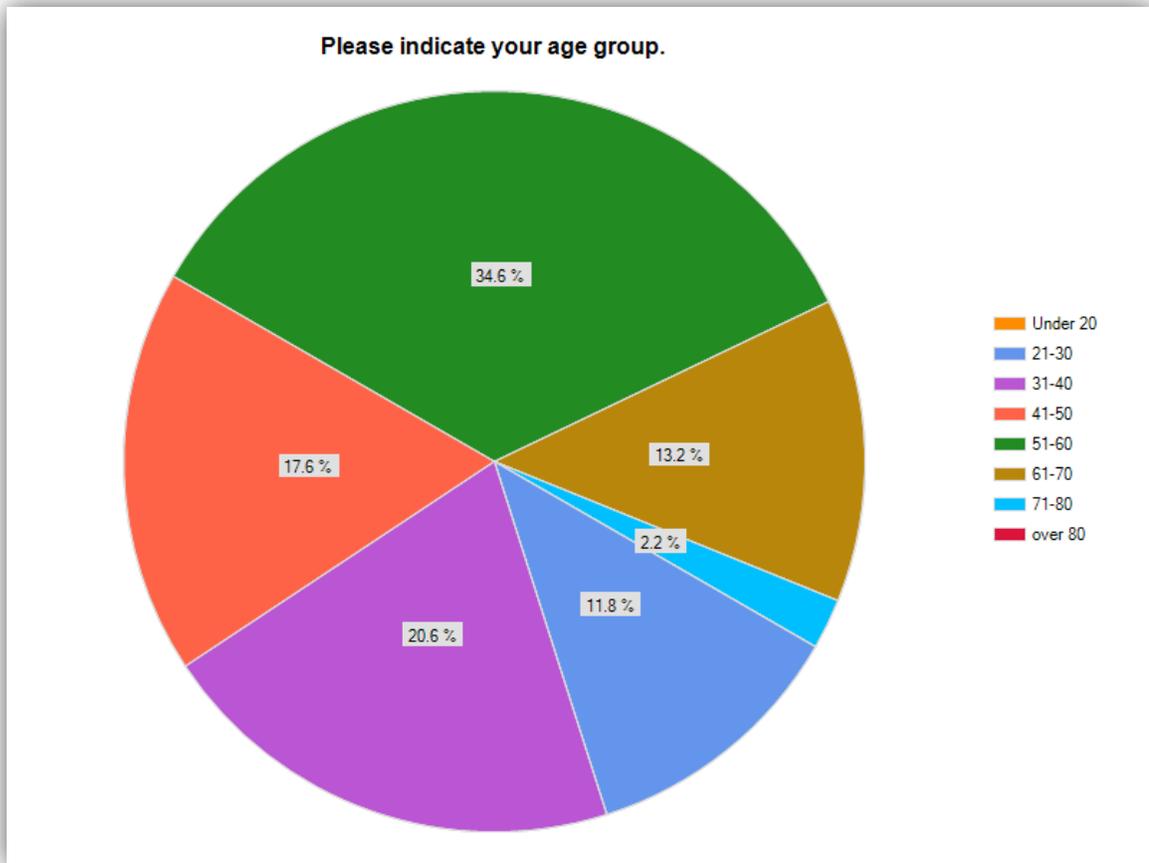
HASTINGS MAJOR EMPLOYER NEEDS

As indicated in the Market Analysis Section of this study, Hastings has a solid workforce with major employers in both the manufacturing and non-manufacturing sector. The Project Team had the opportunity to speak with many of the major employers regarding their meeting and conference events. Consistently, these employers indicated a need for a venue that could be divided to host meetings, small trade shows, meal functions and breakout sessions all in one location. State of the art technology is extremely important to these employers as they strive to expand their training and services to a larger group with their limited financial resources. Focus group attendees indicated that if Hastings had a nicer venue to host events, these companies and others would be motivated to bring more events into Hastings rather than going elsewhere.

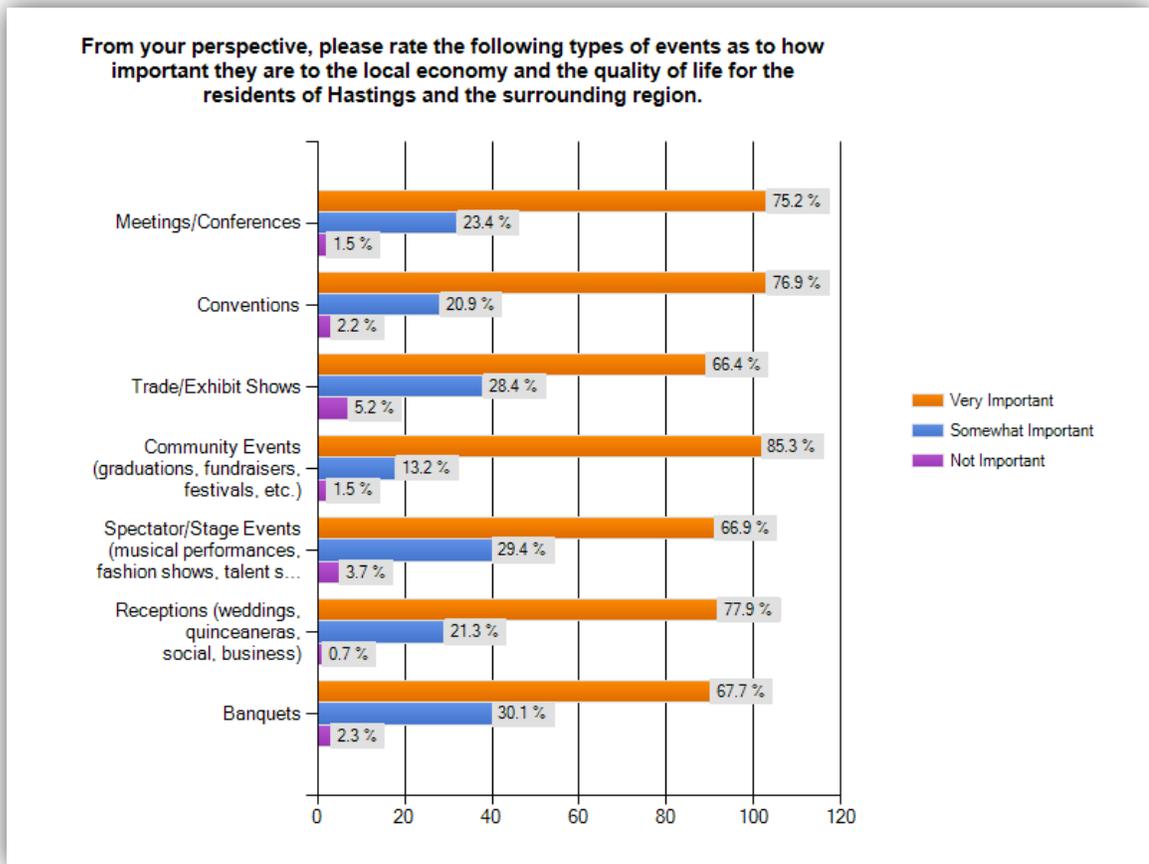
The size and the amenities of the facility required by local business would be compatible with those requirements stipulated by other survey respondents. Employers were asked about the importance of an attached or adjacent hotel to the meeting venue. While not all of their events require a hotel, it was felt that a hotel, lounge and restaurant needed to be attached or in very close proximity.

HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

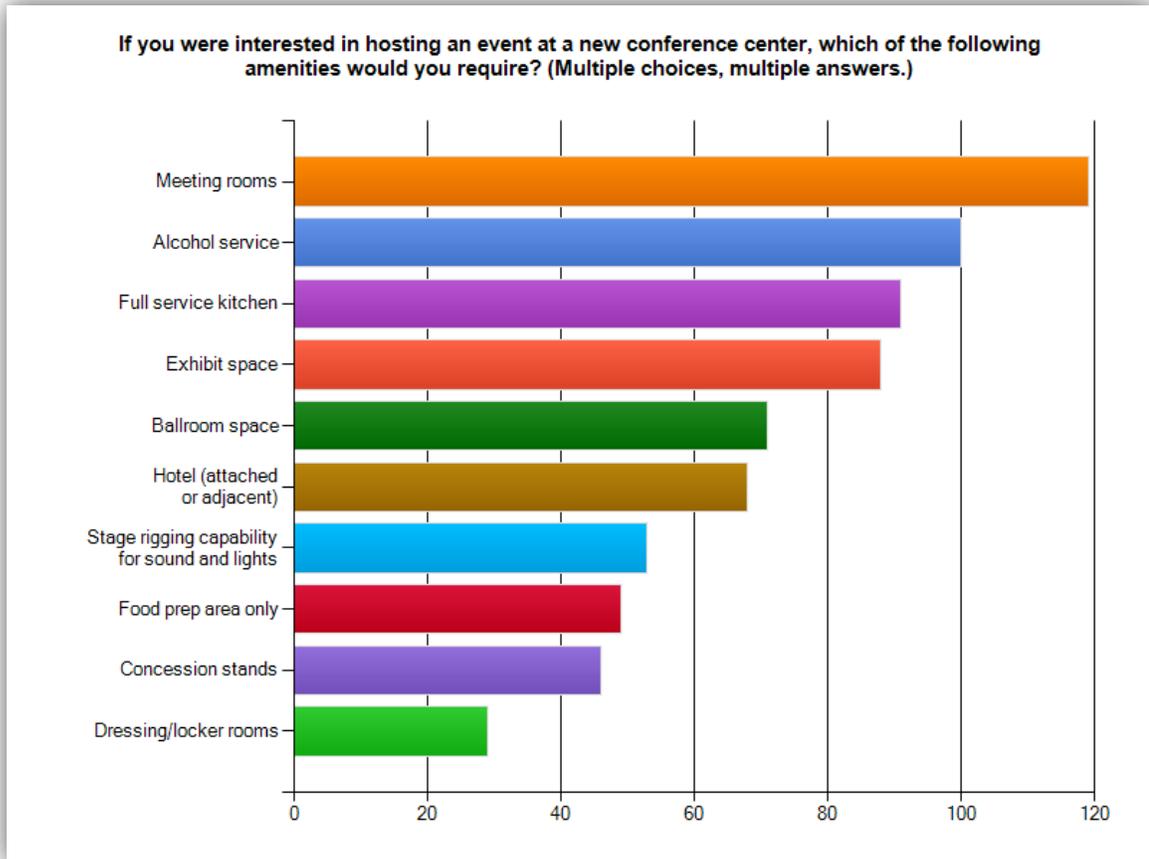
The Community Survey was designed to gather input from the residents of Hastings and the surrounding area to gauge the level of demand for a new venue in Hastings. There were 139 responses from ten different Nebraska communities including Pierce, Chapman, Doniphan, Kearney, Hastings, Blue Hill, Glenvil, Juniata, Sutton and Trumbull. A good cross-section of ages was represented with 34.6% of the respondents between the ages of 51-60; 20.6% between the ages of 31-40 and 17.6% in the 41-50 range.



When asked what types of events the respondents felt were important to the local economy and quality of life for the residents of Hastings and the surrounding region, 85.3% indicated community events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.) as the most important. The next three top priorities ranged very close in rating with 77.9% indicating receptions (weddings, quinceañeras, social and business events); 76.9% conventions and 75.2% meetings and conferences.



When asked what amenities a new conference would need to have for respondents to consider hosting an event at the venue, meeting rooms, alcohol service, full service kitchen, a ballroom and hotel (attached or adjacent) ranked in the top six out of ten choices.



The respondents were asked to indicate how many times a year they currently attended events at a venue in Hastings. The following table is a summary of their answers listed by event type.

CURRENT RESPONDENT ATTENDANCE IN HASTINGS							
	Meetings & Conferences	Conventions	Trade & Exhibit Shows	Community Events	Spectator Stage Events	Receptions	Banquets
Attended 1-2 times per year	37.0%	45.0%	57.3%	28.0%	47.0%	36.6%	45.5%
Attended more than 3 times per year	53.3%	10.7%	13.8%	70.4%	38.8%	58.3%	43.9%
Don't Attend	9.6%	44.3%	29.0%	1.5%	14.2%	5.2%	10.6%

Graphics by VenuWorks

The respondents were asked to indicate how many times a year they currently attended events at a venue outside of Hastings. The following table is a summary of their answers listed by event type.

CURRENT RESPONDENT ATTENDANCE OUTSIDE OF HASTINGS							
	Meetings & Conferences	Conventions	Trade & Exhibit Shows	Community Events	Spectator Stage Events	Receptions	Banquets
Attended 1-2 times per year	45.2%	60.4%	52.3%	54.5%	56.7%	60.4%	58.9%
Attended more than 3 times per year	48.1%	26.1%	23.1%	28.1%	32.1%	33.5%	17.8%
Don't Attend	6.7%	13.4%	24.6%	17.4%	11.2%	6.0%	23.3%

Graphics by VenuWorks

The respondents were asked to indicate how many times a year they thought they would attend events at a new venue in Hastings. The following is a summary of their answers listed by event type.

PROJECTED RESPONDENT ATTENDANCE AT A NEW HASTINGS VENUE							
	Meetings & Conferences	Conventions	Trade & Exhibit Shows	Community Events	Spectator Stage Events	Receptions	Banquets
1-2 times per year	33.3%	51.9%	45.4%	35.9%	35.9%	32.6%	42.7%
More than 3 times per year	60.6%	39.6%	41.5%	61.9%	58.8%	65.1%	49.7%
Probably wouldn't attend	6.1%	8.4%	13.1%	2.3%	5.3%	2.3%	7.6%

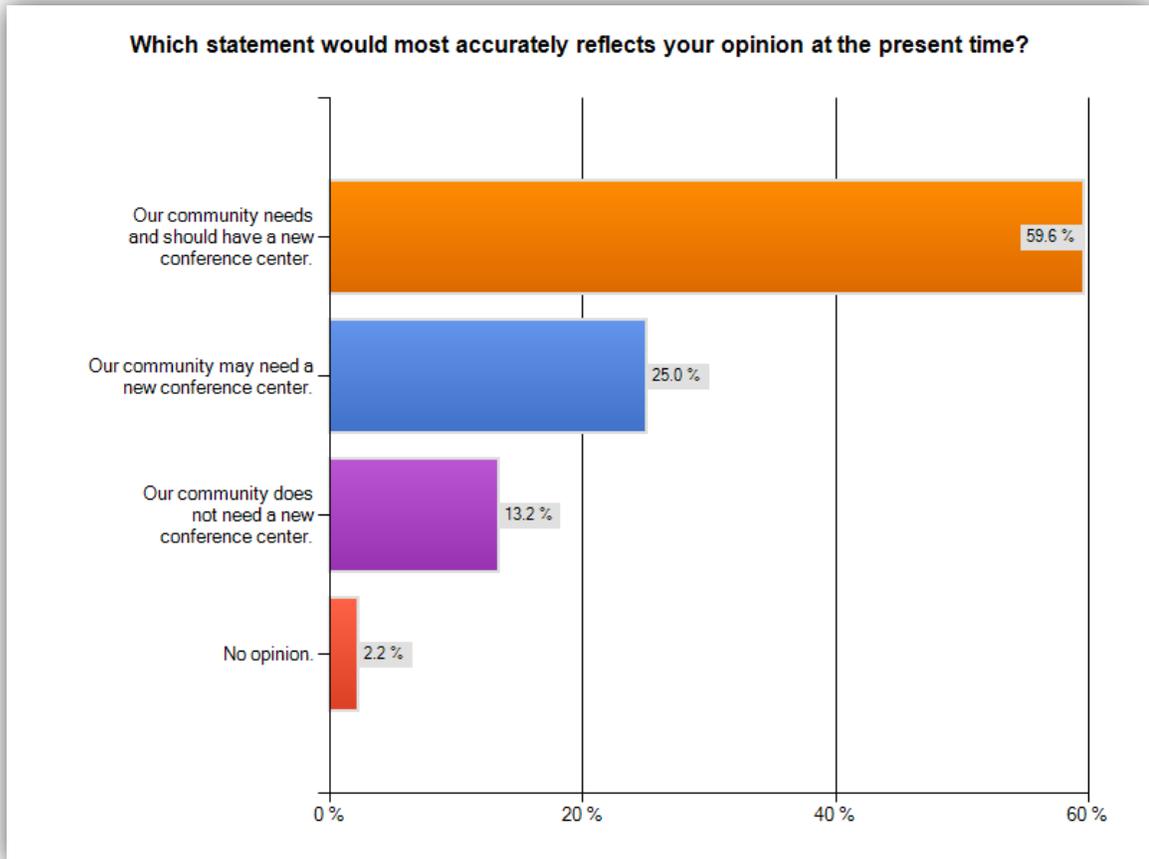
Graphics by VenuWorks

The following table shows how the combined attendance estimates increase when the same events are proposed for a new conference center in Hastings.

COMPARISON OF RESPONDENT ATTENDANCE BY EVENT TYPE							
Event Type	Meetings & Conferences	Conventions	Trade & Exhibit Shows	Community Events	Spectator Stage Events	Receptions	Banquets
Currently attend in Hastings	90.3%	55.7%	71.1%	98.4%	85.8%	94.9%	89.4%
Currently attend out of Hastings	93.3%	86.5%	75.4%	82.6%	88.8%	93.9%	76.7%
Would attend at new Hastings venue	93.9%	91.5%	86.9%	97.8%	94.7%	97.7%	92.4%

Graphics by VenuWorks

When asked to render an opinion about the need for a new conference center in Hastings, 84.6% of the respondents agreed that the community needs or may need a new conference center.



For those that answered that the local community should or may need a new conference center they were then asked what sources or combination of sources should be used to fund the construction. 53.5% of the respondents felt the funding should be a combination of private and public sources; 20.3% felt it should be privately funded; 14.5% indicated a preference for public funding only. The remaining 11.6% indicated they didn't know how the center should be funded.

CONCLUSION

As noted throughout this section, Hastings is very fortunate to have a variety of venues that can accommodate the needs of many of the events to be held within the community. Owners and operators of those venues are strong community partners and work closely with the meeting planners to bring their events to reality. Ms. Bui's plans to remodel and upgrade the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center would further expand the available meeting and conference spaces. However, consistently, the Project Team was told by meeting planners, community members and operators of meeting and conference space in Hastings that there is a definite need for additional space. Current events are unable to grow their attendance, new events cannot find available dates and regional meeting and state planners are unwilling to "make do" without the spaces and amenities they can receive in other communities.

Competition for regional and state association business will continue to increase as communities throughout central Nebraska and elsewhere build new venues or upgrade their existing properties. That being said, there appears to still be a strong business base to support a new conference center in Hastings. As would be expected, as a new venue would become a reality, certain events would move from their current Hastings venue to the new venue. This in turn, provides the opportunity for other events to fill those open dates in the existing venues. Attractions in Hastings already work collaboratively to create an "experience" for event attendees. Increased meeting and conference business has the potential to also boost attendance at area attractions.

As described in the Methodology section of this study the Project Team conducted tours of several Hastings meeting venues and other complementary facilities in the community. It was determined early on that an upscale meeting and conference center venue was needed in Hastings. Original discussions by stakeholders focused on the need for a new convention center but it became apparent to the Project Team that a conference center would be a better fit for the community. A true convention center has the ability to not only host large meetings and conferences but it also has dedicated, non-carpeted, exposition space designed to host industry trade shows and large exhibit shows. After touring the Adams County Fairgrounds and seeing how well the facilities were being maintained and operated, the Project Team felt the community need for larger exhibition space was already being met. Fair management also shared their plans for expansion which further reinforced this opinion. Additionally, project research indicated a new conference center would actually complement the Fair's current and planned offerings.

Based on the defined need identified through the research phase of this feasibility study, the remainder of this study will focus on the characteristics that should become the foundation of a well-run public assembly facility, including:

- Facility Characteristics
- Governance and Operation
- Pro Forma Budget
- Funding
- Economic Impact.

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4. FACILITY CHARACTERISTICS

CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

Not all conference centers are alike nor can they be designed to meet every need of the various clients and attendees who use them. As such, there is no one-size fits all design scenario that will satisfy the needs of every community. However, a well-designed, modern facility, with state-of-the-art equipment and technical capabilities can be successfully adapted for most client uses.

In the past few years VenuWorks has been involved in the design, construction, opening and management of several new venues throughout the United States. A common theme for all of these projects has been an endeavor to create memorable experiences for both clients and attendees. Clients are looking for ways to maximize the time the attendees spend at the event. They evaluate how efficiently rooms can be re-set for various event functions, how far attendees have to walk from one meeting space to another and what amenities are available within the various spaces to engage the attendee. Clients also have an expectation of first-class acoustical treatments, dependable technological amenities and a comfortable inviting atmosphere. Several communities look for building sites that provide an iconic view in order to create a sense of place thereby enhancing the attendee experience. Over the last few years an increasing demand has evolved where clients also expect venues to operate in a green environment and to have active recycling programs that complement their own initiatives.

Today's meeting and conference venues often include high end amenities and an environment that attempts to set the venue apart from their competitors. These amenities include:

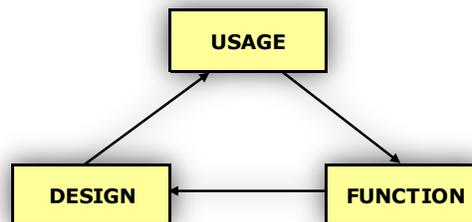
- Upscale ballrooms with column-free event spaces, carpeting, chandeliers, comfortable chairs and a neutral color scheme that easily complements event decorations
- State-of-the-art technical capabilities for lights, sound and communications
- Versatile, open and well-lit pre-function spaces
- Common areas with comfortable furnishings for casual gatherings, coffee breaks and socializing with other attendees
- Adequate number of restrooms with upscale finishes
- Landscaped outdoor patios or courtyards

In addition to the above, meeting planners often evaluate potential locations for their business by the venue's ability to provide the following:

- A total experience surrounding the event that includes nearby restaurants, bars, shopping and other entertainment venues
- Clean and safe environment in and around the venue
- Adequate number of quality hotel rooms near, or attached to the venue
- Convenient parking
- Ease of venue ingress and egress

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

It takes a thorough understanding of market needs to best accommodate the planned operations and provide a marketable facility. The evolution of a public assembly facility arises out of interrelated components encompassing usage, function, and design, as illustrated in the following diagram:



Graphics by VenuWorks

Layout and design decisions affect operational capabilities. Operational capabilities affect service capabilities and service capabilities affect the ability of the facility to serve a diverse group of potential users. The ability to sell the facility directly impacts the operating bottom line. Decisions made as early as the design and development stage of a project can have a profound effect on the level of success the facility ultimately achieves.

VenuWorks believes for any public assembly venue to be a successful venture, design criteria must be based on the following characteristics:

- The form and function must arise out of the activities of the groups that will use it.
- It must attract new business to the community in the form of conferences, meetings and banquets that infuse new dollars from outside the local community.
- It may provide the city and the region with reasonably priced space for non-profit, charitable and community activities.
- It must attract promoters and/or self-promote entertainment, cultural, religious, business, tourist and other special events for the community's benefit.

- It must expand current capabilities for conferences, banquets, receptions and meetings in order to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Meeting and conference venues, at their essence, are a big box – a box that has attributes that are essentially much the same from building to building. To be successful, the venue must be able to host multiple, simultaneous events. The building should be designed around this central theme, always being mindful that an efficient layout and design impacts the long term viability of the venue.

Although in different proportions and in differing degrees, the following spaces or elements would be a part of any modern, efficient conference center:

- Acoustical treatments designed to enhance music and the spoken word
- Ballroom
- Break Out Rooms
- Concession and Alcohol Service Areas
- Food Preparation/Kitchen Facilities
- Load-in and Access
- Lobby/Pre-function Spaces
- Offices
- Restrooms
- Storage and Marshaling Areas
- Ventilation capacity for a broad range of events

Similarly, the venue should ultimately have an inventory of equipment items that is appropriate for the intended usage of the facility. The following is a list of the most basic items:

- Comfortable, durable chairs
- Exhibitor pipe and drape
- Extensive internet capability
- Modern communications and data equipment
- Portable concessions stands
- Portable dance floor
- Portable stage and riser sections
- Power distribution system
- Signage – permanent and movable
- Sound/lighting equipment
- Tables - both banquet rounds and classroom rectangle

The critical part of the discovery process is to find the proper proportion of each of these spaces and equipment elements – one to the other – to meet the needs of the people who will sponsor and attend events, and those who will provide governance and management for the venue.

VenuWorks developed the following table to serve as an example of the size of spaces needed to accommodate the three basic styles of attendee seating, typical exhibit booths and total venue occupancy based on averages derived from the numerous venues that we manage and from ongoing research. Final design parameters and local building code requirements will dictate actual results.

SPACES AND CAPACITIES GUIDELINES			
Theater Style Seating (Rows of chairs on flat floor plus circulation space)	10 square feet per person	5,000 sf for 500 people	10,000 sf for 1,000 people
Auditorium Style Seating (Tiered rows of chairs/seats plus circulation space)	12 square feet per person	6,000 sf for 500 people	12,000 sf for 1,000 people
Banquet Style Seating (10 chairs at 6' round tables plus circulation space)	15 square feet per person	7,500 sf for 500 people	15,000 sf for 1,000 people
Classroom Style Seating (Rows of rectangle tables with seating on one side plus circulation space)	20 square feet per person	10,000 sf for 500 people	20,000 sf for 1,000 people
Exhibit Booths (10' x 10' booths plus circulation space)	185 square feet per booth	9,250 sf for 50 booths	18,500 sf for 100 booths
NFPA Occupancy Loads	Facilities under 10,000 square feet- No more than 1 person for every 5 square feet based on facility design and local fire codes		
	Facilities over 10,000 square feet- No more than 1 person for every 7 square feet based on facility design and local fire codes		
Graphics by VenuWorks			

VALUE ENGINEERING

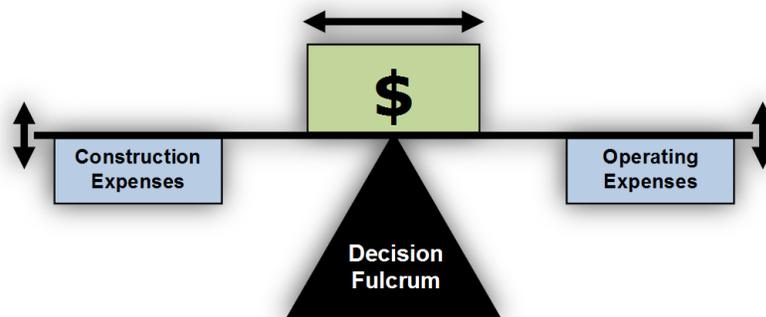
Decisions made throughout the design process typically impact construction expenses, operating expenses or both. A flawed facility design plan can dramatically impact the venue’s reputation, its ability to host events and may increase operational costs. Inevitably, the wish-list for most projects will suffer some cuts or “Value Engineering” to the project budget but

Fulfilling promises. Creating success.

how these decisions are made, and to what extent, can dramatically impact the success of the venue.

Value Engineering (VE) is defined as “an organized approach to the identification and elimination of unnecessary cost”. When this practice is applied to the design, construction and operation of public assembly venues it typically means the elimination of an amenity, fixture, finish or piece of equipment from the overall venue design plan. Conversely, over-designing and equipping the venue can unnecessarily drive up the overall cost of construction. Thorough consideration must be given to the FFE (furniture, fixture and equipment) during the initial phases of planning the project. FFE components must be carefully selected to ensure they are designed and constructed in a manner consistent with the long term goals of the venue.

The following diagram illustrates how cutting construction cost by eliminating certain design and FF&E features may drive up the venue’s operational costs over the life of the facility.



Graphics by VenuWorks

Having a design team with contributors who are experienced in operating public assembly venues involved with these decisions can provide the balance necessary to achieve the construction and operational financial success envisioned by venue stakeholders.

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

The Hastings area has a history of adapting structures in the community to be reused for purposes different than what was originally intended when these buildings were constructed. Examples include the Hastings Police Department that is currently housed in a 1912 era elementary school building; the Central Community College who adapted several buildings at the former Naval Ammunition Depot for academic purposes; the 1914 Clarke Hotel which is now the Kensington home for senior citizens; the 1940 Spencer Park housing complex that is

now the Good Samaritan Retirement Village and most recently, the old Armory building that was converted into the Hastings Community Center. Adaptive reuse of certain structures is a noble, and often times popular, endeavor as communities try to preserve their history but this practice may not be the best solution for locating a new conference center.

The question for the conference center becomes, “*What does it take to be competitive in the market?*” Modern conference centers are typically designed so they can compete for the same business currently drawn to other well designed, upscale facilities in the region. As described previously in this study, the meeting rooms and ballroom must be designed with open, column- free rooms that can be easily set, serviced and converted for multiple, simultaneous events. The optimum design avoids longer, narrow, event spaces in favor of wider spaces suitable for events that involve an audience for a speaker or presentation. This relatively square room design brings the audience closer to the stage or podium and improves site lines. A venue without clear site lines, efficient operational capabilities and upscale amenities will be at a disadvantage in attracting and retaining a diverse core of clients.

The location of the center also plays a significant role in its ability to attract business. First impressions of the venue should be planned so as to impress the clients and their attendees. Attractive building finishes and landscaping are the norm for new venues. Neighboring properties should be evaluated early on to ensure their current and potential uses are compatible with the mission of the new center.

LEED CERTIFICATION

LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system administered through the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED provides building owners a concise framework for identifying and implementing practical applications in the areas of green building design, construction, operations and maintenance. LEED certifications focus on sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality and innovation in design.¹⁸ Information contained on the USGBC website indicates that green buildings do not cost more to construct than other facilities. It further states that depending on your green strategy and the level of certification your project is targeting, there may be mid- and long-term return on investment associated with additional green features that merit an initial investment. Further research should be done with regard to green building costs, potential funding sources and long term payback.

¹⁸ “Intro – What Leed Is”, U.S. Green Building Council. 2009. www.usgbc.org

COST TO BUILD

Without an architectural plan, defining the cost to build the conference center can only be estimated. Current construction cost in the region for this type of venue would typically average about \$150 - \$200 a square foot. For a 40,000 square foot building with the fit and finishes anticipated for the proposed conference center, the estimated cost would be between \$6 million and \$8 million. As an example, the Nielsen Center in West Point at 44,000 square feet cost \$5 million to build in 2008, not including in-kind contributions. A similar venue being built in York will be approximately 40,000 square feet and is projected to cost \$7.5 million. In Hastings, additional costs may include land acquisition and site development expenses.

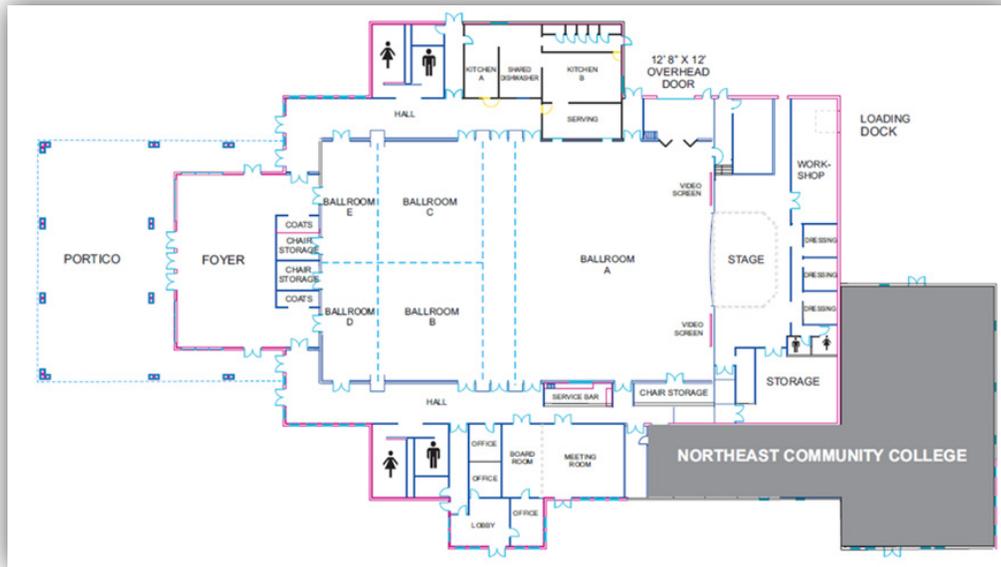
FACILITY DESIGN AND AMENITIES

After determining a conference center was the appropriate type of venue for Hastings, the research focused on determining the size, capacities and amenities the venue should have to be competitive in securing meeting and conference business. VenuWorks market research, both locally and regionally, and industry experience indicated the Hastings conference center should be designed with the following specific characteristics:

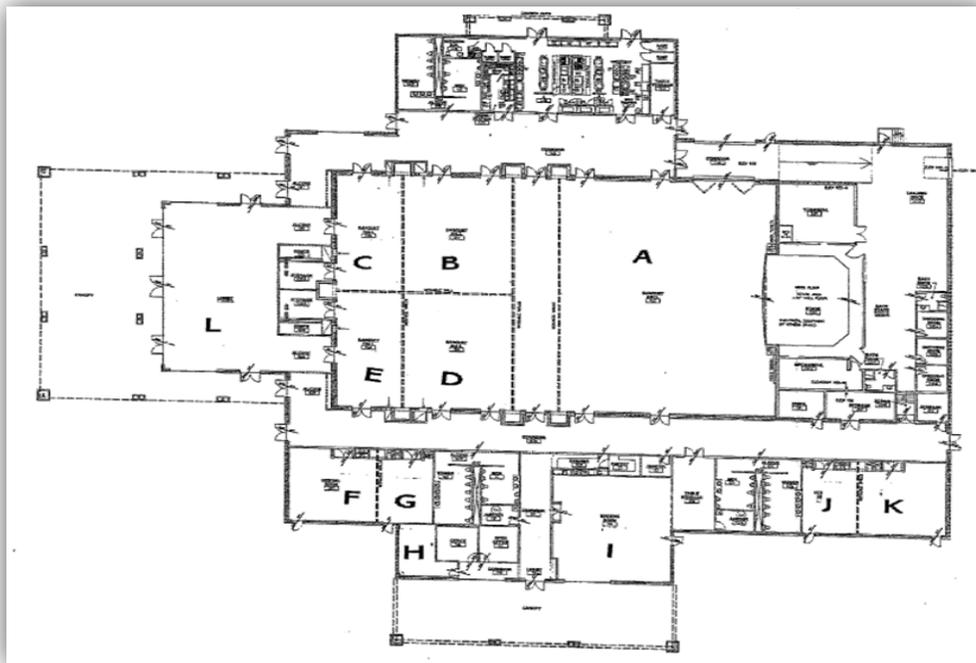
- Ballroom Space –
 - One 13,000 square foot, carpeted, ballroom with 18'-20' ceilings that can be divided into 5-6 smaller rooms of various sizes using intersecting, retractable, portable walls. The Nielsen Community Center in West Point, NE and the planned Holthus Convention Center in York, NE serve as examples for the size and scope of the conference center project recommended for Hastings with some exceptions.
 - The venues at West Point and York each include a permanent stage for use by presenters, bands and wedding parties. The Nielsen Center stage is not designed for full scale theatrical performances as it only has minimal rigging. The stage is 35' wide x 35' deep with 16' x 9' retractable projection screens located on either side of the stage. A 14' x 13.6' overhead door is located to the right of the stage that allows for easy direct access to the front of the stage and a loading dock is also available for back-of-house access. While a permanent stage may be an attractive amenity for some meeting planners, it does limit the versatility of the space by committing to a fixed floor plan. Also, since the Hastings City Auditorium has a stage, it may not be necessary to include that into the design of the new conference center.

However, portable staging equipment that can be located anywhere in the venue would still be required for certain events.

- Both venues have, or will have, 24' ceilings with uncarpeted concrete floors designed to be used as exhibit space for large equipment. It may not be necessary for the Hastings Conference Center to duplicate this amenity either, since these features are already offered at the Adams County Fairgrounds.
- The floor plan for these two buildings is generally based on the same 36,000-40,000 gross square foot size with some variations in the number of meeting rooms and restrooms. A floor plan for each venue is located on the following page. Neither venue has an attached hotel or restaurant.
 - Holthus Convention Center will be 40,000 square feet
 - The Nielsen Community Center is listed at 44,000 gross square feet but the net is 36,000 square feet after the community college classroom space is deducted.



Source: Courtesy of the Nielsen Community Center West Point, NE

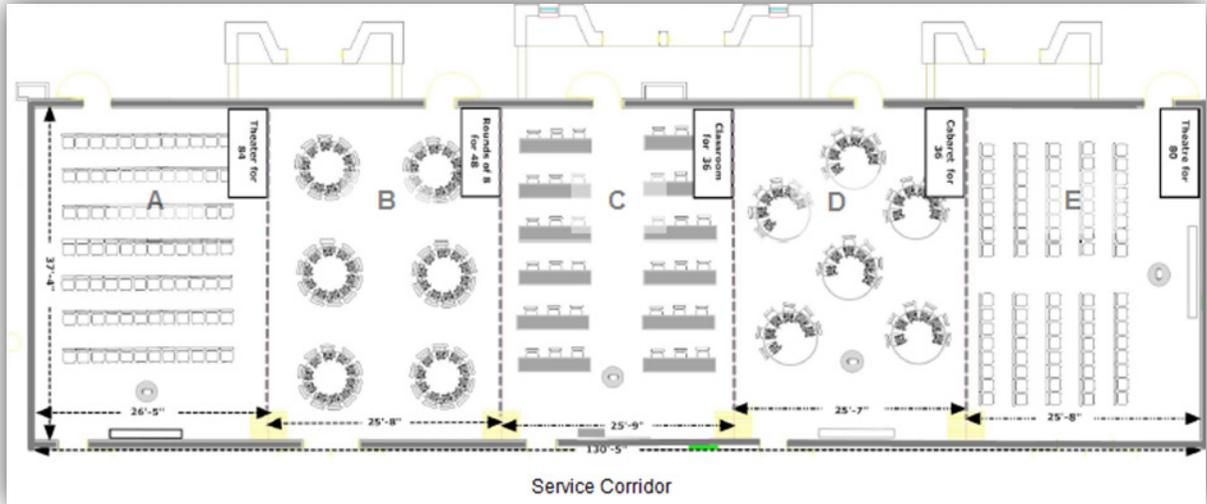


Source: Courtesy of the Holthus Convention Center York, NE

- Depending on final design, 13,000 sf (as a single room) can typically accommodate the following:
 - 1,300 seated theater style (10 sf per person)
 - 866 for banquets (15 sf per person) – 10 seats at 6’ round tables
 - 650 seated classroom style (20 sf per person)
 - 70 10’ x10’ trade show/exhibit booths (185 sf per booth)
- All capacities include typical circulation space requirements
 - Adding dance floors, portable bars and serving tables further reduces capacities.
 - Reducing circulation space increases capacities but all local and national fire codes must be adhered to.
 - Deploying portable walls to divide larger spaces doesn’t necessarily equate to an equally divided ratio of space per person, as circulation space requirements may further reduce capacities in smaller spaces.
- Research indicated a significant demand for ballroom banquet space for groups ranging in size from 200 to 800 for meeting and conference attendees. There is also a significant local demand for wedding reception space to accommodate 200-400 people on weekends.
 - Having the capability to divide the main ballroom into several smaller spaces with a variety of room capacities will allow the venue to host multiple, simultaneous, unrelated events.
 - For conference events, these same ballroom characteristics will provide venue staff with the ability to set a portion of the ballroom for classroom or theater seating used in a general session, at the same time they set another portion of the ballroom for a banquet or small trade show related to the main function.
 - Depending on final design, positioning a double set of retractable walls near the center of the ballroom space provides a service corridor necessary to avoid transporting food, services items and dirty dishes through attendee spaces and public corridors. The venues in Spencer, West Point and York all utilize this feature as shown in their plans.
 - Caution should be used when considering how small to size the ballroom sections due to the ceiling height of the space. Creating a small room with a high ceiling may skew the occupant’s perspective making the room feel much smaller and confining than it actually is.

- Ballroom amenities should include:
 - Retractable projection screens and projectors
 - High capacity wireless internet connectivity
 - Convenient room lighting controls
 - Room blackout capability for slide/video presentations (windows are not recommended)
 - Mix of round and rectangle tables (for banquets, classroom, food service and booths)
 - Adequate number of durable, comfortable chairs (either folding or stackable)
 - Portable dance floor
 - Portable bars for alcohol service
 - Portable stage and risers for presenters
 - Piano
 - Podium/sound system for speakers
 - American flag
 - Overhead door to facilitate load-in and load-out functions
 - Walk-through doors wide enough to accommodate the movement of large groups of attendees and service equipment
- Meeting Rooms/Breakout Rooms
 - Six smaller meeting/breakout rooms each ranging in size from 800-1,000 square feet with 12'-16' ceilings.
 - Seating ranging up to:
 - 40-50 people for classroom seating
 - 50-70 people for banquet seating
 - 80-100 people in theater seating
 - These rooms would be used in conjunction with the smaller subdivided ballroom spaces, when available.
 - Rooms designed in a cluster formation that uses retractable walls to subdivide the larger meeting room spaces into smaller segments.
 - As shown in the following partial floor plans of two venues managed by VenuWorks, the cluster design allows for all the meeting rooms to be opened into one larger space that can be used as a secondary ballroom for certain events. Cluster options include:

- One 6,000-7,000 sf linear (or row) configuration divided by retractable walls into five separate rooms.



Row of five meeting rooms at the Bridge View Center in Ottumwa, IA, each room with a different seating option.

- One 6,000-7,000 sf non-linear (or box) configuration divided by retractable walls into six separate rooms arranged in a relatively square pattern.



Ballroom divided into six meeting rooms arranged in a box configuration at the Clay County Regional Events Center, Spencer, IA.

- Designing six meeting rooms can also be achieved by creating three groups of two rooms each, separated by a retractable wall. The Holthus Center Floor plan shows how they designed two double meeting rooms and two single meeting rooms into their facility design.
- Dividing clustered meeting rooms into unequal sized spaces, 25% - 75% ratio as opposed to 50% - 50% divisions, can provide more versatility when addressing client needs. (See preceding Clay County Regional Events Center floor plan.)
- Meeting/Breakout Room amenities would be the same as the ballroom.
- Boardroom



VenuWorks photo- Boardroom at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, WA

- One finely appointed boardroom suitable for executive business meetings
 - Approximately 600-700 sf in size with a 10'-11' ceiling.
 - Capacity for 20-25 attendees seated comfortably around a conference table.
 - The boardroom is the only meeting or ballroom space, other than the lobby, that could be designed with exterior windows.
- Décor and amenities suitable for executive meeting and multimedia presentations
 - A single, fixed positioned conference table
 - High-back, leather, executive chairs
 - Speakerphone and electrical connections for laptop computers
 - Sound system (via laptop connection)
 - Retractable projection screen and projector
 - High capacity wireless internet connectivity

- Video conferencing capability
- Large (60") built-in LCD monitor
- Convenient room lighting controls
- Whiteboard
- Room blackout capability for slide/video presentations
- Refreshment service center including sink, counter and cupboards
- Lobby/Pre-Function Spaces



VenuWorks photo- The Bridge View Center in Ottumwa, IA

- The lobby space of the center should not only provide the “Wow Factor” for greeting attendees but it should also be designed as a space to host pre and post event functions including registrations, parties and receptions.
 - It should provide direct access to the ballroom, meeting rooms, boardroom, coat check and administrative offices.
 - The size of the lobby recommended for the Hastings conference center should be within the range of 2,000-3,000 square feet with the capability to host 300-400 people for a reception or 100-200 people for a banquet.
 - Pre-function spaces should have easy access to storage for tables and chairs and also to catering amenities in order to expedite food and alcohol service.

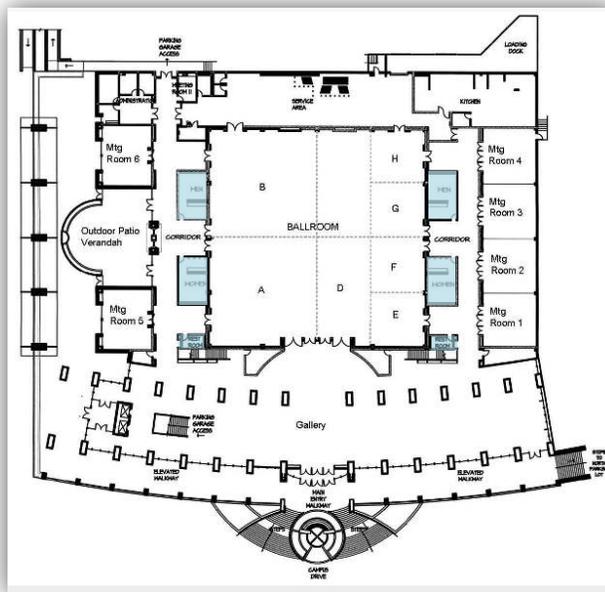
- Patios and Courtyards



VenuWorks photo- Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, WA

- Outdoor, covered patios or courtyards are becoming increasingly popular for facility users and can be another source of revenue for the venue.
- These spaces can be used for breaks between sessions or for receptions prior to or following events.
- Décor and amenities could include:
 - Arbors and/or pergolas
 - Privacy walls or seating walls
 - Small fountain or water feature
 - Enclosed gas fireplace (open pit fire fixtures not recommended)
 - Concrete or tile floor (avoid materials like patio blocks with gaps large enough to create trip and fall hazards for certain types of footwear)
 - Landscaping - flowers, shrubs, hanging baskets, etc.
 - Comfortable patio furniture including bistro tables for receptions
 - Portable, overhead radiant heaters
- Food Service/Kitchen Spaces
 - Since food and beverage services are significant revenue generators for the venue, the center should be equipped with a full-service kitchen. The kitchen should be large enough to serve up to 800 guests at one time and be equipped with a walk-in cooler and sufficient space to accommodate portable service equipment.

- 4-6 portable bars will be needed for beer and alcohol service. Even if the facility design includes a permanent bar, several portables will be needed to adequately service simultaneous events. Facility design will have to include sufficient space large enough to facilitate storing, cleaning, stocking and servicing of this equipment.
- Restrooms
 - The venue must have a sufficient number restrooms and they must be conveniently located so as to accommodate large groups of people in a short amount of time. The Hurst Conference Center floor plan shown below depicts such an arrangement with a three sets of restrooms (men, women and family/companion) located on either side of the ballroom.
 - The Uniform Plumbing Code cites the required number of fixtures for both men’s and women’s restrooms based on building capacities. These requirements should be considered as the minimum standard.
 - Having attendees waiting in long lines for these facilities during meeting breaks will most assuredly generate complaints from clients.
 - The restrooms must be inspected frequently during events, cleaned and restocked with supplies as needed.
 - They must also be maintained to the highest standards of cleanliness.



VenuWorks photo: Main floor of the Hurst Conference Center Hurst, TX.

- Storage
 - It seems like there is never enough storage space in public assembly venues. Lack of available storage causes the venue staff to store items in unoccupied event spaces, corridors and hallways. As inadequate storage also increases staff labor expense to continually move items from one room to the other and may create safety concerns, the conference center should be designed with ample, secure, climate-controlled storage to accommodate the following:
 - Banquet tables and chairs
 - Meeting room tables and chairs
 - Technical and production equipment (microphones, cords, lights, speakers)
 - Portable risers, chairs and staging equipment
 - Piano
 - Facility maintenance equipment (ladders, lifts, mowers, snow removal equipment and supplies)
 - Office supplies
 - Kitchen supplies
 - Concession inventory and cleaning supplies
 - Janitorial equipment and supplies
 - Tables and chairs are usually stored and transported within the venue using dedicated carts. These carts and other portable equipment will be frequently moved from one space to another increasing the opportunity for damage to doorways and building finishes. It is important that these pieces of equipment be properly padded and handled in order to mitigate damage.
- Offices
 - The administrative offices should be located near the main entrance of the venue and clearly marked as such.
 - A receptionist area should be designated and appropriately staffed in order to respond to the needs of walk-in clients and guests.
- Parking
 - To estimate the number of parking spaces required for the conference center, the occupancy load of the venue must first be determined because the Hastings City Code, like most communities, bases the requirement for the number of parking spaces upon the occupancy load of the building.
 - The Hastings City Code requires one parking space per each 3 seats (maximum capacity) for public assembly venues such as auditoriums,

- stadiums and churches which would include the proposed conference center.
- If a hotel and restaurant were attached to the conference center they would have to meet their own parking requirements as separate entities. Some exceptions may be applicable for combining uses and sharing parking depending on final designs.
 - Many factors drive the actual occupancy load for any public assembly facility. Local fire codes, building design, room layout, seating configurations and fire detection and suppression capabilities are just a few. An architectural plan would have to be developed in order to determine the actual number of parking spaces that would be required but certain estimates can be made using some preliminary calculations.
 - Using the estimated 40,000 gross square feet for the conference center, approximately 22,000 square feet would be net event space. The remaining 18,000 sf would be dedicated to corridors/hallways, kitchen related spaces, restrooms, offices, storage and mechanical areas.
 - Dividing 22,000 sf by 15 sf per person equals 1,466 people for the event space occupancy load.
 - Dividing the 1,466 occupancy load by the 1:3 parking ratio equals 488 parking spaces for attendees.
 - It is doubtful that every event space would be used at the same time on the same day. It is more likely that a conference of 400-500 attendees would utilize half of the ballroom for classrooms seating, multiple meeting rooms for separate breakout sessions and reserve the other half of the ballroom for a banquet. In this scenario several event spaces are being utilized by one client but at different times of the day and only by 400-500 people, total.
 - When factoring in the remaining 18,000 square feet of non-event space and the estimated number of employees needed to service certain events, an additional 40-50 spaces could be required bringing the total to just under 540 parking spaces for the conference center.
 - The amount of land required to accommodate parking lots varies for every project but certain estimates can be made.

- Typically, an acre of ground can accommodate approximately 134 parking stalls depending on stall size, aisle width, walkways and landscape islands. The City of Hastings has specific requirements for parking lot designs which may impact this estimate depending on actual design.
- Dividing the 540 spaces by 134 stalls per acre would require about 4 acres of ground to accommodate the parking requirements for the conference center.
 - The paved lot across from City Auditorium serves as a local example. The block consumes 1.6 acres of ground, curb to curb, and accommodates approximately 143 vehicles. When deducting the space occupied by the existing restroom facility and the required setbacks, the remaining capacity would be similar equal to the average 134 stalls per acre estimate.
- Some communities use a 1:6 parking ratio specifically for convention and conference centers which would reduce the Hastings requirement by half.
 - The current Hastings Hotel and Convention Center including the restaurant, lounge and parking lot sits on a total of 4.4 acres of ground according to the Adams County Assessor's office.
- Vertical parking structures would accommodate more parking spaces on a smaller footprint. However, the construction cost can be about three times that of surface parking.
- Egress/Ingress
 - The construction of a new venue automatically increases the traffic flow to the area. Ease of ingress and egress are crucial to the overall attendee experience. Effective traffic control devices and signage are essential for efficiently moving venue related traffic before and after events. Consideration must be given to:
 - The roadway design in the area so those streets leading into and out of the venue can accommodate passenger cars, buses, semis, delivery trucks and service vehicles.
 - Major thoroughfare traffic control devices.
 - Multiple access points to the site so as not to gridlock traffic.
 - Time of day/peak traffic flow from surrounding businesses.
 - Rail traffic that intersects thoroughfares near the facility.
 - Pedestrian traffic and assess to parking.

- The lack of an effective traffic control plan built into the design of the venue can lead to long-term problems for the venue's reputation and public perception. This in turn may impact the venue's ability to secure new business and meet the needs of existing clients and attendees.
- Venue Appearance
 - The appearance of the venue plays a key role in attracting and keeping an active client list and a dedicated attendee base. It is anticipated that a diverse audience will attend a variety of events at the conference center at all times of the year. As guests of the facility, attendees must feel welcome, safe, comfortable, and, ultimately, happy they chose to come to the conference center to attend their special event. Both attendees and event planners have choices of where to conduct their activities and the impression created by the conference center must be appropriate for the events that it is expected to attract. The conference center should provide architectural elements that reinforce that sense of welcome, comfort, and attractiveness and allow the center to compete on equal terms with other facilities in the region.
 - With Hastings having a rich history in brick manufacturing, this design element could be a prominent component of the building design, in both interior and exterior finishes. Attractive landscaping and exterior lighting would also be beneficial in developing the overall sense of place.

ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL BUILDING SITES

The cost of adding or improving infrastructure can have a dramatic impact on the cost of constructing a new venue. Equally important is the capacity of current systems to handle the increased loads generated by the new venue. As the conference center project evolves, careful consideration must be given to the type of future development that may occur in the surrounding area.

- What will be the visual appeal of the buildings and surrounding area?
- Will this development complement the activities of the center or detract from its visibility and attractiveness?
- Will existing traffic patterns be positively or negatively impacted?
- Will accessibility (ease of ingress and egress) be positively or negatively impacted?
- Will convenient parking be available?
- Will the area provide a safe environment for attendees and visitors?
- Will there be enough quality restaurants, bars and hotels near the conference center to support its activities?

The VenuWorks Project Team toured several potential building sites in Hastings that stakeholders and interviewees suggested as possible locations for the proposed conference center. Those sites included:

- Downtown Hastings (several locations in the central business core)
- Hwy 281 corridor north of Lake Hastings (several locations on either side of Hwy 281)
- Near the existing Hastings Hotel
- Near or on the grounds of Lochland Country Club
- Near or on the grounds of Hastings College
- Near or on the grounds of Imperial Mall
- Near or on the Adams County Fairgrounds
- Near Motorsport Park Hastings

It was determined that identifying specific sites in this study could hamper future negotiations regarding property acquisition and could possibly adversely affect the potential for private sector development. However, it did become apparent to the Project Team that two general areas of the community provided the best options for locating the venue; the Hwy 281 corridor on the north side of Hastings and the downtown central business district. Each location presents its own set of advantages and challenges as described on the following pages.

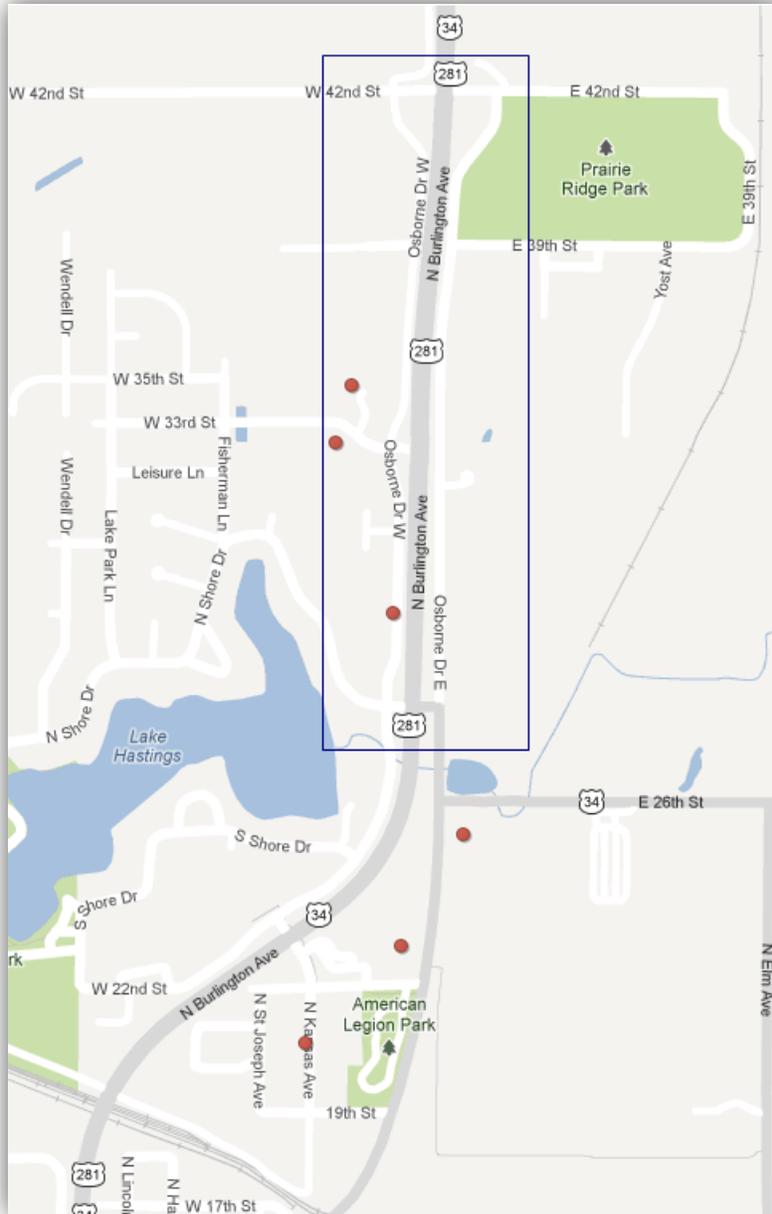
Hwy 281 Corridor

The Hwy 281 corridor north of Lake Hastings between East 26th Street and East 42nd Street is an appealing area due the proximity of three existing hotels; the Holiday Inn Express, Comfort Inn and Quality Inn with a combined total 191 sleeping rooms. Arriving from the north, this area also presents itself as the gateway to the community and provides Hastings with a positive first impression for new visitors. This first impression is consistent with the image the conference center should seek to achieve as a key community asset and economic driver for Adams County.

Located in a relatively newer area of town and away from industrial facilities, the corridor has become the center of commercial development with Wal-Mart, Menards, Ace Hardware and Tractor Supply, car dealerships and other retail outlets, all locating in the area. It has an abundance of land available for future development including the conference center and a hotel, either as combined venues or stand-alone facilities.

Three additional lodging properties are located along the corridor south of East 26th Street; the Roadway Inn, the Hastings Hotel and the Super 8 Motel with a total of an additional 213

sleeping rooms. The following map shows the approximate location of all six lodging properties along the Hwy 281 corridor indicated by the red dots.



Source: Google Hotel Finder

The four-lane, divided highway with a system of frontage roads and abundant traffic control devices could easily accommodate the increased traffic load created by the conference center.

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All other areas of Hastings are within a 10-15 minute drive time. Selecting a site within clear view from Hwy 281 would provide the visibility needed to keep the conference center top-of-mind with local residents and provide visitors with convenient access to the venue. The addition of a scrolling/changing electronic message sign is allowed in this area as long as it meets city zoning standards and should be a primary project component. This type of prominent signage not only serves as a key component of venue way-finding, which is very important to visitors; it also keeps residents and visitors informed about upcoming events and activities.

There are a few challenges of locating a conference center in the Hwy 281 corridor. The area is not pedestrian friendly as there are few sidewalks connecting businesses, including the three closest hotel properties, and crossing a four lane divided highway on foot could pose significant challenges for attendees. The corridor also has a limited choice of restaurants and lounges within walking distance. It is likely that a new center built in the area would attract more of these businesses but, for now, attendees would be forced to drive to and from other hotels and restaurants.

Since there are no commercial flights into Hastings, it is anticipated nearly every event hosted at the conference center will be attended by patrons driving into the area. Hence, having to drive to other area attractions should not be a major inconvenience and could promote visitor spending throughout the community.

Downtown Hastings

Downtown Hastings has undergone a surge of redevelopment in recent years and is experiencing significant growth. The VenuWorks Project Team toured the downtown and observed it to be an active center for commerce with most of the stores either occupied or undergoing renovation. The City recently hired Alley-Poyner-Macchietto Architecture of Omaha, Nebraska to develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan¹⁹ that would build upon this success.

The Plan was completed February 25, 2013 and their research indicated, for the most part, that downtown development in Hastings was on the right track. However, the Plan did include several recommendations for improvement, some of which are particularly relevant to this conference center feasibility study. It was noted that downtown districts “serve as the civic, social and entertainment” hubs for their communities and that Hastings was lacking the

¹⁹ Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture. [City of Hastings Downtown Revitalization Plan](#). February 25, 2013.

economic driver a downtown hotel and convention center could provide. The Revitalization Plan further stated the downtown would be an ideal location for such a project. "Downtown offers close proximity to retail, restaurants and services while presenting visitors with easy access to the cultural and civic core of the city. Downtown would benefit from the increased number of visitors and their use of the district after business hours. The construction of such a project would be mutually beneficial to both the convention center and the district."

VenuWorks independently evaluated several locations in the downtown district and also believes this area should be considered as one of the primary options for locating a new conference center, albeit with a few caveats.



Source: Adams County GIS

Ideally, the conference center should be located within 4-5 blocks of shops, restaurants and attractions. If the new conference was built in close proximity to the City Auditorium, it is conceivable they could be operated as one entity providing potential clients with many options for choice of spaces, decor, price points and availability. Certain economies of scale could also be achieved by utilizing the same management and operations teams for both venues. Depending on location, the two structures could be physically joined by a skywalk or other

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method to increase attendee convenience and accessibility without having to permanently close streets to create building space.

Most of the city blocks in the immediate vicinity of City Auditorium measure 264' x 264' equaling 69,696 square feet or 1.6 acres. This size of space, even with deducting the required 12'-15' setbacks on all sides, could easily accommodate a 40,000 sf conference center such as the venue described in this study. A hotel could either be constructed on the same footprint as a component of the conference center or added later as a nearby, stand-alone facility. Creating available parking for the hotel and the conference center could be achieved by incorporating parking structures into the design of the conference center and the hotel or by building a separate parking ramp.

As with City Auditorium, the conference center, hotel and parking ramp could be connected via a system of skywalks if they were developed as stand-alone facilities. Cedar Rapids, Iowa and St. Cloud, Minnesota serve as examples of how their venues, hotels and parking facilities are joined by skywalks in their downtown districts.



VenuWorks photos of a new Cedar Rapids skywalk under construction at the U.S. Cellular Center and an existing downtown Cedar Rapids skywalk after landscaping.



VenuWorks photo of a skywalk in St. Cloud connecting the River's Edge Convention Center to a hotel and parking ramp across the street.

Parking ramps don't have to be stark and unappealing facilities. In Rapid City, SD., the ground floor of their downtown parking ramp serves as the anchor for their weekly farmers market and also as a location for upscale, public restrooms for the adjacent Main Street Square. The parking ramp was originally designed with attractive brick inlays incorporated into the concrete structure in order to soften the look. These brick design elements are compatible with the architecture of the older brick buildings in the area. Colorful awnings were later added over the outside of the market stalls to increase the appeal of the area for visitors and shoppers.



Artist's renderings of Rapids City's Main Street Square showing the parking ramp as an integrated element (green awnings attached).
Courtesy of Destination Rapid City

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VenuWorks photo of the parking ramp at Main Street Square located behind the outdoor stage (awnings retracted).

In Hastings, the one-way streets and noise from nearby trains were distractions noted by the VenuWorks Project Team. One-way streets typically are not conducive to creating a pedestrian-friendly environment and they can prove to be challenging to visitors as they attempt to navigate the downtown district. Previous Hastings studies have addressed this issue and consideration should be given to converting these streets back to two-way traffic patterns. The slower pace would be more appealing to visitors wanting to linger and enjoy the local offerings of downtown merchants.

For conference centers and hotels, the sound of the warning horns being activated as train traffic routinely moves through the downtown could present a challenge in attracting and maintaining business clientele. Previous studies commissioned by the city have suggested creating quiet zones in the downtown district. While we recognize the historical and economic significance of railroad operations in Hastings, we also agree that measures should be taken to implement the quiet zone recommendations, especially if the downtown district is selected as the ultimate location for the conference center.

Since Burlington Avenue (Hwy 281) is the major arterial street carrying traffic north and south through the west edge of the downtown district, we agree with the Redevelopment Plan recommendation that "*gateway designators and way-finding signage*" should be installed as a method for encouraging motorists to explore the downtown. It will be very important to the

success of the conference center to have prominent signage along Burlington Avenue directing clients and attendees to the center.

CONCLUSION

No matter where the conference center is eventually located, the site must be appealing to visitors and residents, alike. It should also contribute to the economic well-being of the community and be easily accessible to all. An attached or adjacent hotel will increase the venues competitive ability and as such, the conference center site should include enough land to accommodate a hotel either built in conjunction with the center or at a later time.

5. MODEL OF OPERATION

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

It is anticipated that the conference center staff will work with both community and professional entities in the fulfillment of its mission. Therefore, it is imperative that the venue has clear, consistent and firm operating policies. Missteps in the scheduling, technical services, marketing or administration of the conference center can cause the venue to earn the reputation of being difficult to use and negatively impact the level and quality of programming. The conference center should strive to:

- Spur economic development in the City of Hastings and Adams County
- Be a catalyst for growth in the City of Hastings and Adams County by creating activities that foster new business and increased sales for existing businesses
- Provide an attractive and consistent site for community events
- As a host, be responsible for the safety and well-being of a large number of guests each year
- As a property manager, be a responsible guardian for the operation, maintenance, upkeep and staffing of the venue
- Operate in a fiscally responsible manner
- Provide a positive economic impact to the community and county.

The governance of facilities across the country is almost always tied to the entity that bears the bottom line responsibility for the facility's day-to-day operations. The responsible operating entity is not always the entity that founded the creation of the facility. For example, in West Point and York, a not-for-profit foundation funded the capital construction and the venues were then turned over to the City for ownership and management. In Gering, NE a private builder constructed the venue and structured a lease to own agreement with the City. For municipally-owned venues, many cities and counties will create a board of publicly appointed members to govern the facilities they operate.

Hastings experience with the construction and operation of its current convention center has been through private development, private ownership and private operation. However, a public/private partnership was developed to provide for the construction of the convention center. Randy Chick, Director of the Business Improvement District, Community Redevelopment Authority, indicated that in 1994 the Community Redevelopment Authority entered into a Redevelopment Contract with the Hastings Hotel Corporation (previous owners of the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center). The contract provided a \$505,000 2% interest

loan to build the current convention center. Simultaneously, the owners of the Hastings Hotel Corporation remodeled the hotel and built the adjacent Super 8 Motel. The loan was paid in full when the Hastings Hotel was sold in 2000. The CRA's involvement with this project was limited to just this financial incentive. There were no maintenance requirements as a part of the contract to ensure that the convention center remained a viable entity for attracting and preserving meeting and convention events. During interviews with Ms. Bui and Mr. Zoul each acknowledged that the Hastings Hotel and Convention Center needs significant upgrades and improvements. Regardless of whether the event is occurring now or five years from now, meeting and event planners must rely upon the Hastings Hotel & Convention Center ownership and local staff to ensure that the property is maintained and that the services, equipment and amenities promised to the client are available, in working order and the client and attendee experience will meet their expectations.

There would be several development and operational models that could be effective for a new conference center in Hastings:

- Private development, ownership and operation
- Private development, municipal ownership and operation
- Municipal development, ownership and operation
- Municipal development and ownership with private management

If public dollars were used to build a new conference center, one way to ensure this valuable community asset remains financially viable is to have the public entity responsible for the funding also be responsible for the oversight of the venue operations. The City of Hastings currently operates the City Auditorium as well as the new Hastings Community Center under the leadership of the Parks & Recreation Department. Although a portion of the County's property tax assessment is dedicated to the operation of the Adams County Fairgrounds, the County does not own or operate that complex. The operation and financial performance of the Fairgrounds is the responsibility of the Adams County Ag Society.

For purposes of the development of the Pro Forma Budget, it is projected that the center would be operated by the City with the staff reporting to the City Administrator. Should the City choose to establish a Board or Commission to provide oversight and guidance to the conference center, it is recommended that all funding partners and key community stakeholders have representation on the Board. While this governance model may provide the most cost-effective operation, it may not offer the focus and flexibility needed to ensure that the proposed conference center is successful in meeting its mission and is a viable and

sustainable venue. To achieve the operational and financial success the conference center must have a staff dedicated to the marketing, programming and operations of the facility. The demands of the clients and attendees requires the staff to evaluate each specific situation and while working within the defined venue operating procedures adapt to meet the needs of the venue user groups.

Another form of management stakeholders may wish to consider is private management to oversee the day to day operations of the center. The private management company is typically an independent contract to the owner or governing body of the venue. Advantages of private management may include:

- Experienced staff with expertise in best policies and practices for public assembly venues in the areas of programming, marketing, operations, food and beverage and financial reporting.
- Transparency of operation and financial management in that these firms are required to submit annual budgets and report monthly on actual financial outcomes compared to budget.
- Ability of staff to work with individual clients to create a “financial package” that meets both the client’s and venue’s budget expectations.
- Expertise in working with and developing clients and events.
- Liability transfer as the management company takes on dram shop, employee liability, theft liability and general liability for claims from attendees and users of the venue.
- Private management companies can also bring their operational expertise to the design phase of project development. The company’s industry-wide experience in construction and acquisition of furniture, fixtures and equipment can provide as an invaluable resource when making decisions related to completing the project on time and on budget.

Private management companies typically charge an annual fee for their services that is part of the venue’s annual operating budget. No fees have been included in the Pro Forma Budget for these services.

There are several variations that may be explored as a part of the governance model and the final model may change as the project progresses. Adjustments may be made to the Pro Forma Budget to align the financial projections with the chosen governance model.

ADMINISTRATION/STAFFING

An active venue provides the staff of the conference center with both an exciting and challenging job. It is anticipated that the center will be operated in such a manner that any time an event is occurring in the building either a full time staff member or their part time staff designee is present in the venue. This staff presence is essential to service the clients, ensure that the conference center's policies and procedures are adhered to and that the center's equipment and property are protected. Thus, the staff will frequently work nights and weekends when activities in the conference center will be in high demand. They will also be expected to keep regular office hours during the week taking care of the day to day business of scheduling, coordinating, marketing and billing. Recognizing this, in order to ensure a well-run operation, cross-training of staff members is critical in meeting the event demand and allowing for staff members to rotate nights and weekends off.

Staffing levels should be balanced to ensure operational functionality with budget viability. For purposes of development of the Pro Forma Budget, it has been projected that the conference center would initially have three full time staff positions including General Manager, Operations & Technical Coordinator and Food and Beverage Coordinator. One part time position of Administrative Assistant has also been factored into the first-year budget. As business opportunities expand, it may be necessary to add an additional three positions, either full time or part time, that are typical for conference center operations. Those positions would include an Event Coordinator, Ticket Office Coordinator and Business Manager. The actual staffing levels for the conference center will be determined based upon the defined organizational structure, event load and reporting structure.

The following job descriptions were developed based on the responsibilities typically required for the various staff positions of venues comparable with the proposed conference center described in this report.

General Manager

It will be imperative that the General Manager have the following attributes:

- Experience in public assembly facility management
- Ability to work with local, regional and national event planners
- Ability to create "home grown" events in-house to meet community need
- Ability to manage multiple simultaneous events

The General Manager will be responsible for all aspects of the administration and operation of the facility with the following key tasks:

- Works in conjunction with the governing organization and any Advisory Board.
- Responsible for pursuing and/or developing effective event programming to ensure the fiscal success of the conference center.
- Works in partnership with the Convention & Visitors Bureau and local hoteliers to identify and pursue State and Regional events.
- Works in partnership with the City Administrator to prepare and monitor the annual operating budget.
- Provides information to promoters/agencies/clients regarding usage of the facilities.
- Work closely with clients utilizing the conference center to ensure there is a clear understanding of how the center spaces and equipment will be used for the event.
- Leads the development of special events at the facility.
- Oversees, motivates and directs all staff members to encourage innovative ideas and strong customer service values.
- Negotiates building contracts.
- Prepares and presents building policies for approval and executes approved policies.
- Works in partnership with the Director to develop and update the 5-year capital plan.
- Administers annual capital budget.
- Oversees the selection, placement, evaluation, promotion and disciplinary actions of conference center employees.
- Maintains strong working relationship with other City departments.
- Identifies and establishes potential event sponsors.
- Pursues new marketing opportunities to ensure the success of events at the facility.
- Conducts facility tours.
- Develops and maintains working relationship with media representatives and disseminates information to media through press releases.
- Creates event settlements and billing information.
- Conducts market research on an ongoing basis.
- Acts as Manager on Duty when scheduled and provides "front line" support as needed on site at conference center events and in all areas of the center operations.

Operations & Technical Coordinator

Responsible for all aspects of the operations and technical aspects of the conference center and works closely with conference center clients in the set up and operation of conference center equipment. Key responsibilities and tasks include:

- Reports directly to the conference center General Manager.
- Assists in the development of the annual and capital budgeting process and in the monitoring of the current fiscal year budget developing plans to manage the conference center's operational costs.
- Acts as the liaison between the client and conference center staff during event set up, move in, hours of operation and move out.
- Responsible for coordinating, scheduling and oversight of part time event, operations and technical staff.
- Disseminates timely and accurate pre-event information to all staff regarding the essential aspects of each conference center event.
- Works with local City/County staff, police and fire personnel to ensure event compliance with Code provisions.
- Takes responsibility for managing the risk factors of the conference center including review of all attendee incident reports.
- Supervises the conversions and changeovers from event to event.
- Supervises the purchase of equipment and supplies.
- Assists in the planning and set up of various event activities at the conference center in coordination with the General Manager.
- Develops and performs preventative maintenance programs on conference center systems and equipment.
- Maintains facility website.
- Coordinates all aspects of the conference center's technical, audio visual and internet services ensuring that the services and equipment are functioning at the level necessary to meet client's needs.
- Knowledgeable of operational aspects of the conference center systems, equipment, production technical equipment, internet systems, planning and design methods, set-up techniques including change outs, electrical hookups, sound and lighting applications.
- Maintains inventory of all equipment assigned to the operations and technical departments and takes necessary steps to ensure that equipment is not removed from the facility.
- Acts as Manager on Duty when assigned and provides "front line" support as needed on site at conference center events.

Food & Beverage Coordinator

Responsible for all aspects of food and beverage operations for conference center activities.

Key responsibilities and tasks include:

- Reports directly to the conference center General Manager.
- Works with clients to establish menus and to coordinate all event related food and beverage requirements.
- Works closely with conference center Operations and Technical Coordinator and General Manager in the planning and coordination of event setup and ensures that the food and beverage event requirements are well communicated with all staff.
- Ensures that the conference center kitchen is properly maintained in accordance with the Department of Health guidelines and that all equipment is in working order.
- Orders, assures timely delivery and maintains inventory of all beverage needs of the facility; maximizes product availability, minimizes waste to control costs to achieve and improve upon budgeting guidelines.
- Responsible for scheduling and oversight of food and beverage servers including training and licensing per industry standards and City, County and State of Nebraska guidelines.
- Supervises and coordinates activities of the food and beverage staff on a per shift basis counseling and enforcing work procedures and service standards.
- Inspects all stands to ensure all equipment is set up properly and operating efficiently and accurately.
- Ensures all beverage staff follows established cash handling procedures, adheres to and enforces inventory and labor control measures.
- Assists food and beverage staff in serving guests as business levels demand.

In addition to the above listed full time positions, the following key part time position of Administrative Assistant should be considered. The salary for this position has been factored into the Pro Forma Budget in the Part Time Non Event Labor line item. The wages were projected at a 25 hour week/\$7.25 per hour totaling \$9,500 annually.

Administrative Assistant

- Provides information as appropriate to attendees/promoters/clients regarding usage of the facility and events.
- Performs basic administrative duties including greeting all visitors, answering phones, receiving and routing mail, monitors conference center website and responds to requests received via the "Contact Us" link.

- Composes correspondence, completes data entry and outgoing mail handling.
- Answers questions about organization and provides callers with address, directions, and other information.
- Welcomes on-site visitors, determines nature of business, and announces visitors to appropriate personnel.
- Prepares collateral marketing pieces for perspective building users.
- Issues building contracts and follows through ensuring signed contracts and necessary insurance is in place as per booking policies.

As noted above, the following positions may be added at a later time.

- Event Coordinator - Based on the event load of the venue, it may be advantageous to add an Event Coordinator to the staff as soon as the budget allows. The typical responsibilities of this position have been divided in the job descriptions listed above for the General Manager and the Operations & Technical Coordinator. As event activity increases, it will be critical to the venue's success that clients receive prompt attention and their event details are handled efficiently and accurately. A full time staff that is spread too thin may have a negative impact on the client experience and ultimately the venue's reputation and financial performance.
- Ticket Office Coordinator – It is anticipated that there will be tickets sales for certain events. Typically for these events the event promoters would sell their own tickets and retain the revenue from those ticket sales. Therefore, a ticket office manager is not factored into the staff allocation.
- Business Manager - As a City managed venue, the City Finance Department may be able to handle the financial matters for the center including budgeting, bill paying and event settlement with the current City staff. Additionally, the City Human Resources Department may handle the employee payroll and benefits as well as other aspects of personnel management including hiring, training, evaluation and discipline. Should the workload generated by the conference center be more than what can be incorporated into the current City staff workload, it may be necessary to add a full or part time finance person to the conference center staffing allocation.

Additional Facility Staffing

A pool of part-time staff needs to be developed locally that would augment the full time staff. This trained staff should be capable of performing all of the responsibilities necessary to service events, meet the needs of clients and attendees and maintain the venue. These responsibilities include:

- Event conversions (set up / tear down)
- Event technical production
- Food and beverage service
- Security
- Custodial services
- Grounds keeping

These functions are event driven, often requiring large crews for short periods and may occur in time periods beyond the normal workday. Also, these functions are closely inter-related and require precise coordination to meet the time demands of the conference center activities. Thus, experience shows that a small full-time staff supplemented by a large pool of on-call workers is the most economical and efficient staffing arrangement.

PROGRAMMING

The vision of the conference center should be to complement and provide opportunities to grow existing events occurring in the community, create new events, and to become a catalyst for growth in the Hastings area. Consistency in event programming will be necessary to establish the conference center as an “event destination”. While this consistency may be the same type of event occurring at the same time each week, month or year, it will also be a diverse lineup of large and small events occurring throughout each season attracting regular and new clients and attendees to the conference center.

Event Recruitment

It is anticipated that the primary focus of the conference center will be the host location for the following types of events:

- Meetings and conferences
- Banquets
- Receptions (wedding, quinceañeras, recognition)
- Educational and training sessions
- Professional development seminars
- Reunions
- Conventions
- Community events

As there are other venues in Hastings which can accommodate concerts, comedians and other types of spectator/stage entertainment, the Pro Forma Budget does not reflect this type of

activity being hosted at the conference center. However, as the General Manager works to build the actual event matrix for the conference center, there may be a segment of this type of programming identified that works well in the conference center setting.

While a certain level of business will be achieved simply because the venue is new, to achieve the financial results projected, the General Manager will need to take a proactive approach in securing and maintaining events for the venue. Certain conditions must be present in the facility’s operating policy as well. Among those conditions are:

- Flexible scheduling policies that allow groups who need to schedule their events far in advance to do so without closing out the building calendar to other planners whose events schedule on short notice.
- A strong working relationship with clients that provides open communication in discussions related to maximizing event activity, shared usage dates and/or rearranging event usage dates.

With a tool box of policies like those mentioned above, the management staff of a facility has the ability to bring events to their facility that otherwise might never come to life.

Event Days and Attendance

For the first year of full operation, the Pro Forma Budget reflects the following usage and attendance figures:

EVENT DAYS AND ATTENDANCE FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION	
Event Days	169
Attendance	32,900
<small>Graphics by VenuWorks</small>	

MARKETING

In marketing any venue, it is necessary to position the facility in the marketplace to generate programming, revenues and most importantly an identity. The conference center is no exception to this principle. There are known competitive disadvantages that will always be present for marketing a conference center in Hastings. One concern cited by survey respondents was while the north side of Hastings is only 14 miles off of Interstate 80, it is

perceived by some planners to be “too far away”. When comparing the actual mileage for attendees coming from Omaha and Lincoln, it is actually closer to drive the 14 miles south to Hastings on Hwy 281, which is also a four lane divided road, than to continue driving another 40 miles west to Kearney on I-80. An aggressive marketing effort, can-do staff attitude and exceptional customer service will be necessary to connect with local, regional and state meeting planners making them aware of the new venue and amenities that will set Hastings apart from its competitors.

As the conference center would have a small complement of full time staff, the General Manager should handle as much of the marketing functions as possible including: advertising, public relations, direct mail, promotions, sponsorships, media releases and direct sales. To build awareness on the local and regional level the conference center General Manager should work with the Adams County CVB, local businesses and organizations to collaborate and maximize each organization’s marketing budget in creating awareness of the venue, its activities and the community amenities that support the conference center events.

Model Marketing Plan

- Create Detailed Marketing / Sales Materials:
 - Detailed sales brochure / booklet, with detailed information sheets that can be added / subtracted to match the interests of the prospective client; available in both print and electronic format
 - Website design and superior search engine placement
 - Supplement these facility materials with community information promoting local market and local amenities
- Direct Sales:
 - Target local, regional and, in some select cases, even national promoters and event planners
- Direct Mail:
 - Use mail to deliver message to the local and regional event planners and promoters
 - Send printed materials
 - Follow-up all mailings with phone calls

Advertising

Advertising should be placed very sparingly and precisely. It will build awareness but it will not, by itself, create bookings. Advertising should be used in tandem with direct sales and

direct mail efforts, as a reinforcement of the sales message, targeted specifically toward the audience whether targeting clients or attendees.

- Ads should be placed in publications that are read by probable event planners and attendees of the facility
- Placement of ads should be timed to appear in publications that are current with direct sales / direct mail efforts or publications that have an extended shelf life (CVB Guide, Chamber Directory, facility directories, etc.)

OPERATIONS

Introduction

The condition of the facility sets the tone for the guest's experiences. As such, it is necessary to maintain operating procedures for the venue that result in a clean, well-maintained and welcoming atmosphere for the clients and attendees who are so important to the success of any public assembly facility. Regardless of the type of event, each guest is owed a best effort to meet their needs, solve their problems, and make them want to return again.

Guest Services

Based on the type of event activity that will be hosted at the conference center the venue will need to recruit, hire and train the staff necessary to facilitate a well-run, safe environment during each event. This staffing may include the areas of event staff, security, house managers, technical and maintenance employees, most of whom will be part-time, on-call, workers. Training in each of these areas needs to be rigorous and ongoing based on effective policies and procedures for handling crowd situations, ADA orientation and emergency evacuation. Uniforms should be provided for all staff that regularly meets the public.

Custodial Services

Cleaning is on-going while guests are in the venue to ensure that the environment is attractive, healthy, and inviting. Sufficient part time staff must be available to clean after events to rapidly cover the entire building before the public returns the next day. Workers must be hired and trained in using appropriate equipment, materials and methods. Services include routine custodial cleaning, recycling and trash collection, room set up and conversions, and related work needed to keep the facility in a safe and like new condition. The highest standards for facility cleanliness should be observed. Trash must be removed frequently to ensure a clean appearance and allow for maximized recycling of waste materials. For the efficiency of the operation, equipment must be cleaned, checked for deficiencies and properly stored following each usage.

Facility Equipment

It is recommended that only conference center staff be authorized to facilitate event set ups and tear downs. As envisioned in this study, the conference center will have a significant investment in facility equipment and finishes. Moving event-related equipment throughout the venue comes at some risk of injury to those using the equipment and potential damage to the equipment and to the building. In order to maximize the useful life cycle of the building and its amenities it is not recommended that the clients routinely utilize venue equipment to set up for their events.

Grounds and Maintenance

Maintenance must be conducted in a manner and frequency suitable to guarantee a safe, clean site to include the areas immediately around the facility and any adjacent areas being used for event parking. The exterior of the venue must be cleaned on a regular basis and all outdoor lighting operating in working order. All grass areas should be mowed on a regular basis and all plantings properly pruned and weeded. During winter months, all drives and sidewalks must be cleared of snow and ice to provide a safe pathway for clients and attendees.

Stage Work

For safety and liability purposes, any rigging done in the venue (i.e. sound systems, lighting trusses, special effects, etc.) should be done by qualified part time staff that has been properly trained to the specifics of the conference center rigging capabilities.

Patron Safety & Security

It is recommended that the venue adhere to the Best Practices developed by the International Association of Venue Managers for crowd management and event security. Key practices include:

- An Emergency Manual must be developed for the venue detailing evacuation procedures
- Ongoing safety and security training must be conducted for all staff personnel
- Sufficient staffing levels will be necessary to address the type of event activity and the number of attendees to be present
- Coordination with local law enforcement agencies and emergency services

Due to the large amount of people that could be in attendance at any one event or during multiple, simultaneous events, it will be necessary for a staff person to walk the building prior

to every event to ensure that all exits are clear of obstructions and function as intended and that there are no boxes, packages or objects that appear suspicious in nature.

Ticketing

It is not anticipated that the conference center will host a sufficient number of seated events that would dictate the need for an on-site advance sale ticketing system. In general, the availability of tickets over a wide area and by a variety of methods is a primary concern of professional spectator/stage promoters. Community groups will sell their tickets through a variety of methods as the tickets are purchased predominantly by community residents. For those events that require tickets sold on site prior to the event, this need could be accommodated utilizing the administrative office during regular business hours or simply utilizing tables in the lobby area of the venue just prior to the start of the event. Therefore, it is not recommended that a ticketing system be purchased by the venue. However, for ticketed events, it will be imperative to have facility staff monitor the number of attendees to ensure compliance with capacity requirements.

Workplace Safety

On the job safety begins with employee training. Training programs should be provided for all staff, some of which can be delivered on site and some off site. When an accident does occur, clear procedures must be established, first to properly deal with the accident, and later to conduct an investigation into the cause of the mishap and prevention of future incidents. An Employee Safety Manual should be drafted in compliance with OSHA standards and facility staff should conduct regular risk assessments with the assistance of the facility's insurance carrier and the City's risk management department.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

There are a variety of options available to accommodate the food and beverage needs of a venue such as the conference center:

- In-house operation of all food and beverage services
- Establishing a "preferred list" of caterers; handling beverage services in-house
- Establishing a "preferred list" of caterers and allowing the caterers to handle the beverage services as well
- Sub-contracting with a third party to handle all food and beverage services

All of these methods have their pros and cons and should be evaluated carefully. However, due to the significant revenues generated through food and beverage services, it is

recommended that the conference center handle all aspects of food and beverage service “in house” utilizing conference center staff. In-house food and beverage service offers venue management total control of the food service operation including; food quality, liability, menu creation, product pricing, service levels and financial profitability. Additionally, in-house food service offers the General Manager the opportunity to negotiate an “all inclusive” package for the client that includes room rental, equipment and staffing fees along with the catering considerations.

During the research phase of this study, comments from potential clients varied as to the type of food and beverage services they would prefer in a new venue. Some clients wanted the flexibility to bring in their own local caterer while others felt the venue should provide these services. Most importantly, clients wanted the feel of a “one stop shop” when it came to planning the food service aspects of their events. They did not want to have to work with a variety of sources to coordinate their event needs and wanted the food service to be seamless. Keeping the food and beverage services in house would provide this “one stop shop” preference.

As discussed in the Facility Characteristics section of this study, the kitchen must be designed to maximize efficiency of servicing multiple simultaneous events. The equipment must be of the proper size and capacity to accommodate the service of large groups of people in a short period of time.

Beverage Sales

Beverage services include both soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. The Food & Beverage Coordinator would have the responsibility of working closely with event planners to maximize revenues and minimize expenses. A small part time staff can effectively manage concession and beverage operations for most events.

In the governance model proposed in this study, the City would hold both the liquor license and liability insurance covering this service. Understandably, there is generally a concern from municipalities related to the liability of handling this operational aspect in-house. However, an in-house operation will provide conference center clients and attendees with consistent service and maximize the beverage revenues. With properly trained staff working under the supervision of an experienced Food & Beverage Coordinator, it is expected that the conference center can successfully provide these services. Other venues in Hastings generally allow the caterers or another source to provide the alcohol sales for events hosted in their venues.

Typically, no percentage is charged to the client for this service. Therefore, if the conference center governing entity should choose to outsource beverage sales, the Pro Forma Budget would need to be adjusted to reflect the reduction in this revenue source. If the governing entity wanted to consider applying a percentage of sales as a fee to the caterer, industry standards range from 8-10% of gross sales.

It is anticipated that through a sponsorship agreement an exclusive vendor will be selected to provide the non-alcoholic beverage service to the conference center. Negotiation of the terms of this agreement should include a competitive product price that allows the conference center to offer beverages at a reasonable price. Consideration must be given to how soft drink and alcoholic beverage product would be stored, refrigerated and distributed. Soft drink vending machines strategically located at the venue are encouraged as they will provide a source of revenue to the conference center during times when other methods of sale are not available.

Catering Sales

Catering for the conference center will include wedding receptions, quinceañeras, banquets, conferences and meetings. With the proper oversight, the conference center should realize a 40-45% financial return on catering sales. Based on the event matrix projected in the Pro Forma Budget, the conference center is forecasted to net \$149,266 in the first year of operation from catering sales.

If the catering operation were to be outsourced to either a third-party caterer or preferred caterer, the return may only be in the range of 8-10% which will result in significantly less revenue to the conference center. Based on the same revenue projections during the first year of operation if the conference center outsourced the catering at a 10% fee, the net to the conference center would be \$24,873. With a third-party caterer, the conference center would not employ a full time Food & Beverage Coordinator. However, there would still be a need to employ a part time Food & Beverage Coordinator to handle beverage sales and kitchen oversight. While the pay rate would be less than a Food & Beverage Coordinator, this savings is not significant enough to make up the loss of revenue. Based on a third-party caterer, it is projected that the bottom line loss for the conference center in the first year of operation would increase from (\$137,241) to (\$211,344).

If the governing entity chooses to utilize third-party or preferred caterers, kitchen access will need to be addressed. With only one kitchen, at times when multiple, simultaneous events are occurring at the conference center, coordination of who has access to the kitchen and

when could prove problematic and may impact food quality and customer service. The Nielsen Community Center in West Point addressed this concern by building two kitchens into their facility. While this method may resolve some issues, it comes at considerable cost. Depending on the design and equipment, one full service kitchen could cost between \$750,000 and \$1 million.

During VenuWorks research, interviewees indicated that clients are very cost conscious when looking at local venues and catering options. Clients want low cost options and some expressed the desire to choose their own caterer. Currently, there are several venues in the Hastings market that can provide those options to clients. Some clients referenced the fact that they prefer locations where they can bring in their own food prepared by themselves, family, friends or volunteers and not prepared through a caterer. Due to potential liability issues related to food preparation, transportation and serving, VenuWorks strongly encourages the conference center to establish a policy that prohibits this practice within the venue.

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6. PRO FORMA BUDGET

ASSUMPTIONS

The funding of a venue does not end when the resources are found for its construction. The venue's operating budget most likely will require an annual subsidy and the venue will continue to require capital improvements, general maintenance and upkeep to continue to operate up to applicable industry standards and the competitive environment. While operating income can offset a good portion of this funding, it can't be counted on solely.

In developing the Pro Forma Budget for the conference center certain assumptions were made:

- The conference center will be owned by a governmental entity.
- The conference center staff will report to the Hastings City Administrator.
- The conference center will have its own corps of full time and part time employees dedicated to, and focused on, the programming, marketing and operations aspects of the conference center.
- The pro forma is based on a full year of operation after the facility has implemented the appropriate rental rate charges, policy and management recommendations, as well as developed an event schedule based on several years of marketing and sales initiatives.

FINANCIAL BENCHMARKS

To assist in evaluating future performance of the conference center following its first full year of operation, VenuWorks typically looks to comparative venues and its experience in operating public assembly venues to provide data related to event days, attendance, and overall financial performance. Many factors impact a venue's success and challenges including economic conditions, venue size and amenities and competition in the market and region. As noted in the Analysis of Need section of this study, VenuWorks collected this information from the following Nebraska venues:

- Nielsen Community Center, West Point, NE
 - Annual Revenues: \$120,000 (Preferred caterers/outsourced beverage)
 - Annual Expenses: \$170,000 (venue equipped with geothermal - annual utility costs only \$20,000)
 - Average Annual Subsidy: (\$50,000) funded by City

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- Gering Civic Center, Gering, NE
 - Annual Revenues: \$663,000 (Third party catering and beverage Service (exclusive) with 18% paid to venue)
 - Annual Expenses: \$767,000
 - Average Annual Subsidy: (\$104,000) funded by Downtown Redevelopment Tax

- Hastings City Auditorium, Hastings, NE
 - Annual Revenues: \$30,000 (Open catering/outsourced beverage)
 - Annual Expenses: \$115,000
 - Average Annual Subsidy: \$(70,000) funded by City

For further comparative data, VenuWorks also collected this same information from two comparable venues located outside of Nebraska:

- West Monroe Convention Center, West Monroe, LA (population 13, 172)
 - Annual Revenues: \$800,000 (In-house catering and beverage services)
 - Annual Expenses: \$600,000
 - Average Annual Subsidy: Manager stated the catering and beverage revenues are the reason they do not have a subsidy.

- Aransas Pass Civic Center, Aransas Pass, TX (population 8,202)
 - Annual Revenues: \$350,000 (In-house catering and beverage services)
 - Annual Expenses: \$700,00*
 - Average Annual Subsidy: \$(350,000) funded by City

*The venue in Aransas Pass provided comparable line item expenses that were utilized in the development of the Pro Forma Budget.

Although specific correlations to these venues cannot be made, their data provides another piece of the financial puzzle from which reasonable assumptions for this Pro Forma can be made. Funding sources in addition to event revenues for these venues include a variety of resources; sponsorships, subsidies from City or County general fund and allocations of hotel/motel tax revenues. Similarly, the conference center will need a dedicated funding source to offset annual budget deficits.

RENTAL RATES

In order to establish the rental rates for the conference center, a review of local and regional venues rental rates was conducted. The rates included for comparison are the “published” rates for each of the venues. The pursuit of events is a very competitive business. Venue staff wants every opportunity to personally interact with a potential client. Securing a variety of events may include negotiating on some aspects of the rental costs. Through discussion with the client, venue staff can work with the client to adjust the venue’s rental costs to meet their specific event needs. Incentive rate policies may be adopted as the rate sheet is fine-tuned. These incentives can reduce the overall cost of the venue to the client through provisions for multi-day discounts, reduced rates for setup and tear-down days, an “all in” rate for specific types of events such as wedding receptions and quinceañeras. As shown in the following chart, some venues charge higher rental rates for the more sought-after weekend dates.

The rates for the following venues were analyzed to ensure that the conference center rates would be competitive both locally and regionally.

- Hastings City Auditorium - Hastings, NE
- Prairie Loft – Hastings, NE
- Barrett Alumni Center – Hastings, NE
- Adams County Fairgrounds – Hastings, NE
- Nielsen Community Center – West Point, NE
- Holthus Convention Center – York, NE
- Doniphan Community Center, Doniphan, NE

COMMUNITY AND COMPARABLE VENUE RENTAL RATES			
	Classification	Daily Rental Rate	Discounted Rental Rate (where applicable)
City Auditorium	Non Commercial Sunday - Thursday	\$175	
City Auditorium	Non Commercial Friday and Saturday	\$350	
City Auditorium	Commercial (All Days)	\$450	
Prairie Loft (Barn)	Full day Friday - Sunday	\$800	
Prairie Loft (Barn)	Full Day Monday - Thursday	\$500	
Prairie Loft (Barn)	1/2 day Friday - Sunday	\$500	
Prairie Loft (Barn)	1/2 day Monday - Thursday	\$300	
Prairie Loft (Pavilion)	Up to 8 hours	\$300	
Prairie Loft (Pavilion)	Up to 3 hours	\$100	
Prairie Loft (Pavilion)	With full day Barn Rental	\$100	
Adams County Fairgrounds	Community Building	\$200 or \$250 w/alcohol	Friday setup N/C
	Activities Center	\$350 or \$400 w/alcohol	Friday setup N/C
	North Conf Room	\$125	
	Smaller Conf Rooms	\$50	
Nielsen Center	Events/Receptions/Meetings		
	Entire facility	\$900	
	North half facility (w/stage)	\$500	
	South half facility no stage	\$450	
	1/4 of facility	\$225	
	Ballrooms B or C only	\$175	
	Ballrooms D or E	\$125	
	Meeting room (large)	\$65	
	Meeting room (small)	\$50	
	Meeting room (both)	\$115	
	Foyer only	\$200	
	Kitchen A with south half	\$100	
	Kitchen B with north half	\$150	
	Commercial/Business		
	Entire facility	\$1,200	
	North half facility (w/stage)	\$700	
	South half facility no stage	\$600	
	1/4 of facility	\$325	
	Ballrooms B or C only	\$250	
	Ballrooms D or E	\$175	
	Meeting room (large)	\$65	
	Meeting room (small)	\$50	
	Meeting room (both)	\$115	
	Foyer only	\$275	
	Kitchen A with south half	\$100	
	Kitchen B with north half	\$150	
Barrett Alumni Center	Full facility (non college related)	\$400	
	Full facility (college related)	\$100	average
	Weddings	\$250	
Holthus Convention Center	Events/Receptions/Meetings		
	Full facility	\$900	\$700 Mon-Wed
	Ballroom A (w/stage)	\$500	\$400 Mon-Wed
	Ballrooms B-E	\$450	\$350 Mon-Wed
	Ballrooms B or D	\$225	\$125 Mon-Wed
	Ballrooms C or E	\$175	\$100 Mon-Wed
	Meeting Rooms F, I or K	\$65	\$50 Mon-Wed
	Meeting Rooms G, H or J	\$50	\$50 Mon-Wed
	Lobby only	\$100	\$75 Mon-Wed
	Large Kitchen	\$150	\$100 Mon-Wed
	Small Kitchen	\$100	\$75 Mon-Wed
	Both kitchens	\$200	\$125 Mon-Wed
	Commercial (Profit)		
	Full facility	\$1,200	\$1,000 Mon-Wed
	Ballroom A (w/stage)	\$700	\$500 Mon-Wed
	Ballrooms B-E	\$600	\$400 Mon-Wed
	Ballrooms B or D	\$325	\$225 Mon-Wed
	Ballrooms C or E	\$250	\$175 Mon-Wed
	Meeting Rooms F, I or K	\$65	\$50 Mon-Wed
	Meeting Rooms G, H or J	\$50	\$50 Mon-Wed
	Lobby only	\$150	\$100 Mon-Wed
	Large Kitchen	\$150	\$100 Mon-Wed
	Small Kitchen	\$100	\$75 Mon-Wed
	Both kitchens	\$200	\$125 Mon-Wed
Doniphan Community Center	Main Hall (Doniphan/Trumbull School District Resident)	\$350	
	Main Hall - Non-Resident	\$500	
	Board Room	\$100	
	Senior's Room	\$100	
	Board Room (Resident/Community Event)	\$25	

Many of the venues in the Hastings area offer “all inclusive” rates. These rates cover the costs of maintenance, set up, tear down and most facility equipment. The venue’s tables, chairs and some technical equipment may be charged separately depending on the event. Security staff (when alcohol is present) is generally the only staff time that is charged to a client. Based on this information, the Pro Forma Budget was built with the assumption that the rental rates for the conference center would be (at a minimum) based on the following rental rate schedule.

Without having an architectural plan for a specific building, the proposed rental rates are based on room capacities of a floor plan similar to that of the Nielsen Community Center and the Holthus Convention Center.

HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER RENTAL RATES (Based on Banquet Seating Capacity)			
Spaces	Capacity	Daily Commercial Rate	Daily Non-Profit Rate
Entire Ballroom	800-900	\$1,200	\$900
Section A	450-500	\$700	\$500
Section B - E	350-400	\$600	\$450
Section B and D	175-200	\$325	\$225
Section C and E	175-200	\$325	\$225
Section B or C	100-125	\$250	\$175
Section D or E	60-65	\$175	\$125
Meeting Room (6 total)	50-70	\$75	\$50
Board Room	25	\$50	\$25

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An “all inclusive” rate was not established for the conference center at this time. For budgeting purposes a flat fee has been set for each event in the areas of reimbursed equipment and labor. By setting a flat a fee for each event, as the actual event matrix fluctuates, the impact on the budget can be readily identified.

REVENUE AND EXPENSE PROJECTIONS

The Pro Forma Budget represents a relatively conservative approach to estimating expenses. Expenditures have been formulated for line items that VenuWorks deemed to be applicable to the operating budget for the facility. The actual expenses may be less based on the venue

design, operational philosophy and programming considerations adopted by the staff. The Pro Forma Budget for the conference center consists of four distinct parts:

- Five-Year Projection
- First Full Year of Operation Event Matrix Revenue Projection
- Expense Line Item Explanation
- Full Time Staff Projections

The event matrix consists of likely events for the conference center along with potential revenue sources for each event. By filling in the revenue grid for each event type, a venue usage model can then be created for budget projections. Anticipating that a significant number of events will qualify for the non-profit rate or that rates for commercial events may be negotiated down to the non-profit rate to secure the business for Hastings, the Pro Forma Budget is calculated using the non-profit rates and not the commercial rates. Events that add into the event mix at the commercial rate will have a positive impact on the projected event related revenues.

An expense budget was established taking into consideration VenuWorks venue management experience and opinions gathered from interviews with potential venue users. Because the process of estimating the operating costs of a venue such as the conference center is not a perfect science, detailed information is provided in the line item descriptions indicating what each budget line includes and how the budget figure was derived. By knowing the premise behind each budget line, the accuracy of each line item can be evaluated, and future planning sessions can adjust the calculations as needed to meet changes that occur as the venue moves closer to opening.

DEBT SERVICE

Without knowing the land costs, site development costs and actual building costs, determining the debt service of the conference center at this point in the process is an unknown. Until these variables are defined, it is not possible to calculate if there will be debt service that must be a part of the annual operating expenses or if construction fundraising would pay for the venue in part or in whole. Therefore, no debt service has been included in the annual operating budget pro forma.

CAPITAL REPLACEMENT FUND

Capital needs will be minimal during the first year of operation since most of the equipment and operating systems will be under warranty. VenuWorks strongly recommends that a capital replacement fund be established with a goal to build adequate reserves that meet future capital needs. The Pro Forma Budget reflects an annual allocation of \$25,000 into the capital replacement fund.

PRE-OPENING EXPENSE PRO FORMA

As groundbreaking and construction begin on the site, the conference center will incur certain expenses prior to the venue opening for business and generating revenue. Many regional and state organizations book their events several years in advance. Therefore, staff will need to be hired at least two years prior to the opening to ensure that the booking calendar is full when the venue opens. A Pre-Opening Expense Pro Forma should be developed as a part of the approval of this project. Expenses related to the following items should be factored in:

- Full time staff wages - typically the General Manager would be hired immediately and the remainder of the full time staff hired four to six months prior to opening to begin servicing clients and preparing for the opening.
- Communications – telephone, cell phones, internet, etc.
- Travel/Conferences – as a part of the sales process, a representative of the conference center should attend appropriate conferences and client sales calls.
- Supplies – office supplies, computer, printer, copy machine.
- Marketing materials – collateral pieces will need to be developed highlighting the new venue to be available for distribution through a variety of opportunities; speaking engagements, mail and via e-mail.
- Advertising/Promotions – ads will need to be placed in publications and promotional items may be needed to further highlight the new venue to prospective clients and community members who will be attending events.
- Website development – to create excitement for the new venue within the community, the website should be developed as soon as possible highlighting construction updates and booked events.
- Construction webcam – to keep the community informed of the construction progress and to raise awareness of the venue, a construction webcam should be installed overlooking the site.

PROJECTED FINANCIAL RESULTS - FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION

The following chart reflects a summary of the projected financial results budgeted for the conference center for the first full year of operation. The detailed first full year of operation is included in the five-year budget worksheet on the following page.

PROJECTED ANNUAL FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR A FULL OPERATING YEAR	
<u>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE</u>	\$363,173
Operating Expenses	
Salaries & Benefits	\$218,899
Materials, Supplies, Production & Services	\$256,515
<u>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE</u>	(\$475,413)
Capital Replacement Fund	(\$25,000)
<u>NET OPERATING SURPLUS (LOSS)</u>	(\$137,241)

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FIVE YEAR PROJECTION

The following chart reflects a summary of the projected financial results budgeted for the conference center for over five years of operation. Conference center revenues are projected to increase at a rate of 10% in year two, 10% in year three and 7% in years four and five. Expenses are expected to increase at a 3.5% rate for years two through five. After the first five years, there are so many variables to the operation of the conference center that predictions are purely speculative. Factors certain to affect annual performance include:

- Ebb and flow of event activity
- Peaks and valleys in the number of event attendees
- Level of activity among community groups
- Local and regional economic conditions

HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER PRO-FORMA BUDGET (DRAFT 6/14/13) FIVE YEAR OPERATING BUDGET PROJECTION					
	1st Year Budget	10% 2nd Year Budget	10% 3rd Year Budget	7% 4th Year Budget	7% 5th Year Budget
Operating Revenues					
Venue Rent	45,000	49,500	54,450	58,262	62,340
Reimbursed Expenses	18,625	20,488	22,536	24,114	25,802
Reimbursed Wages	20,125	22,138	24,351	26,056	27,880
Gross Concessions	495	545	599	641	686
Gross Beverages	30,203	33,223	36,545	39,103	41,840
Gross Catering	248,725	273,598	300,957	322,024	344,566
Subtotal	363,173	399,490	439,439	470,199	503,113
Other Revenues					
Interest Income	-	-	-	-	-
Sponsorships/Naming Rights	-	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal	-	-	-	-	-
Total Operating Revenues	363,173	399,490	439,439	470,199	503,113
Operating Expenses					
Payroll & Benefits		3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%
Full-Time	120,000	124,200	128,547	133,046	137,703
Part-Time Event	17,106	17,705	18,325	18,966	19,630
Part-Time Non-Event	11,500	11,903	12,319	12,750	13,197
Taxes & Benefits	42,350	43,840	45,370	46,960	48,600
Part-Time Food & Beverage (w/taxes & benefits)	27,942	30,736	33,810	36,177	38,709
Subtotal	218,899	228,384	238,371	247,899	257,838
General & Administrative					
Postage & Shipping	500	518	536	554	574
Office Supplies	2,000	2,070	2,142	2,217	2,295
Printing & Copiers	1,000	1,035	1,071	1,109	1,148
Dues & Subscriptions	1,500	1,553	1,607	1,663	1,721
Licenses & Permits	1,500	1,553	1,607	1,663	1,721
Employee Training/Recognition	1,000	1,035	1,071	1,109	1,148
Professional fees	2,000	2,070	2,142	2,217	2,295
Uniforms	1,000	1,035	1,071	1,109	1,148
Advertising & Marketing	7,500	7,763	8,034	8,315	8,606
Travel Expenses	5,000	5,175	5,356	5,544	5,738
Banking Fees	300	311	321	333	344
Miscellaneous	500	518	536	554	574
Subtotal	23,800	24,633	25,495	26,387	27,311
Occupancy					
Tools & Small Equipment	500	518	536	554	574
Telephone, cell phones, radios	7,500	7,763	8,034	8,315	8,606
Utilities (Gas/Electricity/Water/Garbage)	75,000	77,625	80,342	83,154	86,064
Service Agreements	2,500	2,588	2,678	2,772	2,869
Rental Equipment	1,000	1,035	1,071	1,109	1,148
Supplies & Equipment	5,000	5,175	5,356	5,544	5,738
Repairs & Maintenance (Increase year 2 then 3.5% subsequent years)	1,500	5,000	5,175	5,356	5,544
Security & Fire Alarm System	1,500	1,553	1,607	1,663	1,721
Insurance (Property, General Liability, Dram Shop)	30,000	31,050	32,137	33,262	34,426
Equipment Maintenance	5,000	5,175	5,356	5,544	5,738
Subtotal	129,500	137,480	142,292	147,272	152,427
Event Expenses					
Cost of Goods Sold (Concessions/Beverages/Catering)	102,215	112,436	123,680	132,337	141,601
Contracted Labor	-	-	-	-	-
Outside Services	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies	1,000	1,035	1,071	1,109	1,148
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal	103,215	113,471	124,751	133,446	142,748
Total Operating Expenses	475,413	503,968	530,909	555,005	580,324
Capital Reserve Fund	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
CONFERENCE CENTER ANNUAL SURPLUS/(LOSS)	(137,241)	(129,478)	(116,470)	(109,805)	(102,211)

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It is important to note, that should the conference center outsource the food and beverage operation and only receive a 10% fee, by year five the annual loss is projected to increase to (\$215,553) rather than decrease to (\$102,211).

For prudent fiscal operation and responsibility, the conference center staff must play a key role in the detailed management of the facility's financials. Annual budgets will be prepared for approval by the governing entity by the conference center staff. Monthly financial reports must be prepared to indicate how actual performance is measuring up to budget, with the capability of reviewing the current month's financial performance against budget and against previous years.

The following provides the staffing and event matrix detail that is part of the Pro-Forma Budget.

HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER PRO-FORMA BUDGET (DRAFT 6/14/13) FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION - FULL TIME STAFF PROJECTIONS		
Staff Positions	Number of Positions	Total Annual Wages
General Manager	1	\$50,000
Event Coordinator	TBD	\$0
Operations/Technical Coordinator	1	\$35,000
Food & Beverage Coordinator	1	\$35,000
Total Salaries	3	\$120,000
Employee Benefits at 28.5%		\$34,200
TOTAL FULL TIME COMPENSATION		\$154,200

Graphics by VenuWorks

**HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER
PRO-FORMA BUDGET (DRAFT 6/14/13)
FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION - EVENT MATRIX REVENUE PROJECTION**

Grey shaded areas not included in calculations

EVENTS	NUMBER OF DAYS	TYPE	EVENT	PER DAY ATTENDANCE	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	PER DAY RENT	TOTAL RENT	NET REIMB EXP	PER DAY WAGES	GROSS REIMB WAGES	PER DAY CONCESSIONS	GROSS CONCESSIONS	PER DAY BEVERAGE	GROSS BEVERAGE	PER DAY CATERING	GROSS CATERING	PER HEAD REV.
2	2	Banquets	Banquets - Ballroom (All sections)	600	1,200	900	1,800	250	125	250	125	N/A	2,400	2,400	2,000	18,000	15.00
3	3	Banquets	Banquets - Ballroom (Section A)	400	1,200	500	1,500	375	125	375	125	N/A	2,100	2,100	2,000	18,000	15.00
3	3	Banquets	Banquets - Ballroom (Section B-E)	350	1,050	450	1,350	125	125	375	125	N/A	1,750	1,750	2,000	15,750	15.00
5	5	Banquets	Banquets - Ballroom (Section B&D or C&E)	175	875	225	1,125	625	125	625	125	N/A	1,000	1,000	2,000	5,000	10.00
5	5	Banquets	Banquets - Ballroom (Section B or C)	100	500	175	625	625	125	625	125	N/A	600	600	2,000	3,000	10.00
5	5	Banquets	Banquets - Ballroom (Section D or E)	60	300	125	625	625	125	625	125	N/A	500	500	2,000	2,500	10.00
5	5	Banquets	Banquets - Meeting Rooms	50	250	50	250	125	125	625	125	N/A	1,200	1,200	2,000	6,000	10.00
1	1	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Ballroom (All sections)	600	600	900	900	125	125	125	125	N/A	900	900	2,000	9,000	10.00
1	1	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Ballroom (Section A)	400	400	300	300	125	125	125	125	N/A	350	350	2,000	3,500	10.00
1	1	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Ballroom (Section B-E)	370	370	375	375	125	125	125	125	N/A	350	350	2,000	3,750	10.00
1	1	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Ballroom (Section B&D or C&E)	175	175	225	225	125	125	125	125	N/A	200	200	2,000	1,700	10.00
1	1	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Ballroom (Section B or C)	100	100	175	175	125	125	125	125	N/A	120	120	2,000	1,000	10.00
1	1	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Ballroom (Section D or E)	60	60	125	125	125	125	125	125	N/A	120	120	2,000	1,600	10.00
2	2	Banquets	Quinceaneras - Meeting Rooms	50	100	50	100	250	125	250	125	N/A	200	200	2,000	1,000	10.00
2	2	Banquets	Wedding - Ballroom (All sections)	600	1,200	900	1,800	250	125	250	125	N/A	2,400	2,400	2,000	12,000	10.00
2	2	Banquets	Wedding - Ballroom (Section A)	400	800	500	1,000	250	125	250	125	N/A	1,600	1,600	2,000	8,000	10.00
3	3	Banquets	Wedding - Ballroom (Section B-E)	350	1,050	450	1,350	375	125	375	125	N/A	2,100	2,100	2,000	15,750	10.00
5	5	Banquets	Wedding - Ballroom (Section B&D or C&E)	175	875	225	1,125	625	125	625	125	N/A	1,750	1,750	2,000	8,750	10.00
5	5	Banquets	Wedding - Ballroom (Section B or C)	100	500	175	875	625	125	625	125	N/A	1,000	1,000	2,000	5,000	10.00
5	5	Banquets	Wedding - Ballroom (Section D or E)	60	300	125	625	625	125	625	125	N/A	600	600	2,000	3,000	10.00
2	2	Banquets	Wedding - Meeting Rooms	50	100	50	100	250	125	250	125	N/A	200	200	2,000	1,000	10.00
2	2	Community	Community Event - Ballroom (All sections)	600	1,200	900	1,800	750	125	750	125	120	600	600	0	0	0.00
2	2	Community	Community Event - Ballroom (Section A)	450	2,700	500	3,000	750	125	1,500	250	270	1,350	1,350	0	0	0.00
3	6	Community	Community Event - Ballroom (Section B&D or C&E)	175	1,050	225	6,150	1,750	125	3,250	125	495	525	525	0	0	0.00
1	3	Meeting	Convention - Ballroom (All sections)	600	1,800	900	2,700	375	125	375	125	N/A	900	900	0.50	18,000	10.00
2	6	Meeting	Convention - Ballroom (Section A)	450	2,700	500	3,000	750	125	1,500	250	N/A	1,350	1,350	0.50	21,600	8.00
2	4	Meeting	Convention - Ballroom (Section B-E)	350	1,400	450	1,800	500	125	500	125	N/A	700	700	0.50	11,200	8.00
2	6	Meeting	Convention - Ballroom (Section B&D or C&E)	175	1,050	225	1,350	750	125	750	125	N/A	525	525	0.50	10,500	10.00
2	6	Meeting	Convention - Ballroom (Section B or C)	100	600	175	1,050	750	125	750	125	N/A	300	300	0.50	3,000	5.00
4	4	Meeting	Convention - Ballroom (Section D or E)	60	240	125	500	500	125	500	125	N/A	120	120	0.50	1,200	5.00
10	10	Meeting	Convention - Meeting Rooms	50	500	50	500	1,250	125	1,250	125	N/A	250	250	0.50	4,000	8.00
3	3	Meeting	Meeting - Ballroom (All sections)	600	1,800	900	2,700	375	125	375	125	N/A	180	180	0.10	9,000	5.00
3	3	Meeting	Meeting - Ballroom (Section A)	450	1,350	500	1,500	375	125	375	125	N/A	135	135	0.10	6,750	5.00
5	5	Meeting	Meeting - Ballroom (Section B-E)	350	1,750	450	2,250	625	125	625	125	N/A	175	175	0.10	8,750	5.00
5	5	Meeting	Meeting - Ballroom (Section B&D or C&E)	175	875	225	1,125	625	125	625	125	N/A	88	88	0.10	4,375	5.00
10	10	Meeting	Meeting - Ballroom (Section B or C)	100	1,000	175	1,750	1,250	125	1,250	125	N/A	100	100	0.10	5,000	5.00
10	10	Meeting	Meeting - Ballroom (Section D or E)	60	600	125	1,250	1,250	125	1,250	125	N/A	60	60	0.10	3,000	5.00
20	20	Meeting	Meeting - Board Room	15	300	25	219,75	0	0	937.5	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	106,37.5	0.00
147	169		GRAND TOTAL		32,900	13,725	45,000	18,625	20,125	20,125	495	30,203	495	248,725			

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PRO FORMA LINE ITEM COMMENTARY

REVENUE

- VENUE RENT: Category represents solely those monies collected from daily rentals of the facility.
- REIMBURSED EXPENSES: Rental of equipment such as sound systems, tables, chairs, and/or any building-owned items not included in the base rental fee.
- REIMBURSED WAGES REVENUE: This item is shown as revenue because it represents the proceeds from reimbursed labor plus a 15% upcharge added to all labor costs that are charged back to clients.
- GROSS CONCESSIONS REVENUE: This revenue category represents the gross revenues from food sales (not catering).
- GROSS BEVERAGES REVENUE: This revenue category represents the gross revenues from beverage sales.
- GROSS CATERING REVENUE: This revenue category represents the gross revenues from catering sales.

EXPENSES

- FULL TIME STAFF LABOR: Full time staff salaries.
- PART-TIME EVENT LABOR: Line item to cover part-time labor charged to an event.
- PART-TIME NON-EVENT LABOR: Represents payroll for all part-time staff that cannot be billed back to an event.
- TAXES & BENEFITS: Taxes and benefits that include FICA, FUTA, SUTA, and Workman's Comp, health, dental, disability, 401K, and payroll processing cost.
- PART-TIME FOOD & BEVERAGE LABOR: Line item to cover part-time food and beverage labor, offset through food and beverage revenues.
- POSTAGE / SHIPPING: Expenses for United States Postal mail, overnight and two-day delivery services, common carrier shipping and postage meter expenses.
- OFFICE SUPPLIES: Expenses related to repair of office machines and the purchase of office supplies.
- PRINTING / COPIERS: Lease expense on copy and fax machines; out-sourced printing for business cards, stationery, envelopes, labels, forms, and other large copy projects.
- DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS: Industry trade magazines, journals or publications as well as local, regional, and national newspapers and periodicals. Also participation in professional organizations and associations.
- LICENSES/PERMITS: Relates to various licenses and permits such as a liquor license.

- **EMPLOYEE TRAINING:** Expenses related to tuition, registration, enrollment fees for industry-related and safety continuing education training of staff members.
- **PROFESSIONAL SERVICES-LEGAL / AUDIT:** Audit fees, payroll processing, attorney's fees, legal retainers, data processing, ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, and other annualized contract services provided to the facility.
- **UNIFORMS:** Cost of purchasing uniforms for full-time, part-time staff, and/or contract labor.
- **ADVERTISING / MARKETING:** Annual awareness and marketing campaign for the facility.
- **TRAVEL:** Costs of business-related travel to professional meetings, expenses related to travel and incidental expenses to solicit events or promote the facility at industry events and client visits.
- **BANKING FEES:** A normal cost of doing business.
- **TOOLS & SMALL EQUIPMENT:** Tools and small equipment needed in the operations/technical areas.
- **TELEPHONE, CELL PHONES, RADIOS:** Regular (land based) and cellular (mobile) telephone, long distance and related services, internet and server fees.
- **UTILITIES:** Projected expenses for gas, electric, water and garbage service.
- **SERVICE AGREEMENTS:** Service agreements for regular monitoring and maintenance of venue equipment and systems.
- **RENTAL EQUIPMENT:** For facility use only - not charged to any client or event.
- **SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT:** Non-administrative or office related consumable supplies used throughout the facility; i.e. toilet paper, paper towels, filters, rags, light bulbs, duct tape, extension cords, wax, stripper, cleaning supplies, disinfectants, degreaser and general sanitizing solutions, etc.
- **BUILDING REPAIR & MAINTENANCE:** Expenses for repair to the facility or permanent fixtures of the facility such as overhead doors, exit doors, windows, railings, seating, drywall, concrete block, plumbing, electrical, etc. Minimal expense budgeted for year one (1) due to equipment warranties. Increases budgeted for years two – five (2-5).
- **SECURITY & FIRE ALARM SYSTEM:** Fees associated with monthly monitoring of the security and fire alarm systems.
- **INSURANCE (Property, General Liability and Dram Shop):** Annual premium. (In some locations the venue owner covers the property insurance and it is not a chargeback to the venue.)

- **EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE:** Expenses for building equipment such as tables, chairs, two-way radio repair, sound system, microphones, forklift, scrubber, pest control, fire extinguishers, battery backup, security and fire alarms, lock service, etc.
- **EVENT EXPENSES:** This category relates to expenses incurred in the production of an event.
- **COST OF GOODS SOLD:** Expenses related to the sale of concessions, beverages and catering.
- **RESERVES:** A fund dedicated to future capital projects and other approved uses.

PRO FORMA QUALIFICATION

This Pro Forma Budget is intended to provide a method to determine the feasibility of the proposed revenues and expenses related to events and activities of the conference center. There is no guarantee that the expense and revenue projections outlined in the operations analysis will be met as there are many variables that affect such estimates that either cannot be accurately measured or are subject to change during the actual budgetary process or changes made that impact the final design and function of the venue. As conditions in the marketplace change or the characteristics of the venue are altered from the assumptions in this Pro Forma Budget, the financial outcome of the proposed venue will be impacted.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

With the information derived from the operating budget, an Economic Impact Statement has been compiled. As the Adams County CVB utilizes the Dean Runyan 2008 spending calculations in their materials, the economic impact statements contained in this report also utilize those calculations. (Completed charts are contained in the Appendices.) The total attendance for the conference center is projected at 32,900 for the first year of operation. The Economic Impact Statement is built based on the following assumptions:

- The conference center will draw a mix of local and out of town attendees. Therefore only 50% of the attendees are calculated into the daily average spending of \$41.
- Although the hotel rates in Hastings vary greatly based on the event activity in the community, for purposes of this calculation, the Dean Runyan Overnight Daily Average of \$72 per night has been used. While many interviewees had an opinion about the proximity of the hotel to the conference center, actual usage numbers were not consistently available. Without a hotel study to quantify actual overnight stays, it has been projected based on proposed event activity that 25% of the attendees would utilize a hotel room over the course of the year. As the reputation and awareness of

the conference center increases, the ability to attract clients from greater distances who would require more overnight stays would be enhanced.

It is estimated that for the first full year of operation the economic impact from the events and activities hosted at the conference center will conservatively be \$1,742,063 to the Hastings community. By year five, the economic impact from the events and activities at the conference center is projected at \$2,335,051.

It is important to note that these figures do not include any multipliers that would reflect the repetitive circulation of each dollar in the community through the payment of wages and the purchase of goods and services. If the circulation of these dollars was included in the calculation, the end result of the economic impact would be even more impressive by increasing the total exponentially.

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7. FUNDING

INTRODUCTION

As always, funding is one of the biggest hurdles to clear in building a new facility. Very few conference centers of the type described in this study make money. In most cases, annual earned revenues are less than annual operating expenses. It matters little whether the facility is an arena, conference center, or theater; in the vast majority of markets, its operation will most likely require an ongoing subsidy from some dedicated funding source or sources.

The financial challenge in developing a conference center is two-fold:

- Identify or create a source of funding that can be sustained for a long period – perhaps 20 years – to pay down the financing on the facility.
- Identify or create a source of funding sufficient to cover any annual operating subsidy and ongoing maintenance expenses for the facility.

Community survey responses to the question of what sources or combination of sources should be used to fund a new conference center included:

- 53.6% indicated that construction should be a combination of public/private resources
- 20.3% indicated that it should be a private endeavor
- 14.5% indicated it should be a public endeavor
- 11.6% indicated they did not know how it should be funded.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

The City of Hastings Downtown Revitalization Plan provides an overview of several funding methods that may be available to assist with the redevelopment of downtown buildings. In researching the appropriate location for the new conference center, the funding methods outlined in the Revitalization Plan may provide specific funding sources based on specific sites in the downtown business district. (See Revitalization Plan for specific details.)

There are several methods of financing used throughout the United States for the construction and ongoing operational subsidy of conference centers. Set out below are descriptions of various funding methods that have been used in other communities as sources of revenue for the construction and/or operation of their conference centers. Information specific to the City of Hastings, Adams County and the State of Nebraska is also included for review. As the community discussions regarding a new conference center evolve, additional funding sources and methods of collaboration may be identified.

General Obligation Bonds

Bonds whose payments are unconditionally promised by a government unit that has the power to levy taxes. These bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the issuing governments. Revenue sources for repayment may include property tax.

Project Revenue Bonds

Bond principal and interest repaid from the revenues of an income generating project. Revenues sources for repayment may include conference center revenues, parking and facility fees, contractually obligated revenue streams from naming rights, pour rights, advertising/event partnerships and sponsorships.

Private Donations

Funds donated to the project by private businesses or individuals. Contributions must be made to a tax exempt organization. Depending on the project scope, a fundraising campaign may be developed to secure donations from local, regional and national contributors. This process is defined in greater detail later in this section.

Lodging Tax

Administered by the Nebraska Department of Revenue, the Nebraska Visitors Development Act 81-1245²⁰ provides for a lodging tax on hotels. Hotels are defined as any facility in which the public may, for a consideration, obtain sleeping accommodations. The term includes hotels, motels, tourist homes, campgrounds, courts, lodging houses, inns, state-operated hotels and nonprofit hotels. The Development Act allows a maximum rate of 4%. In January 2012 the Adams County lodging tax rate was raised from 2% to 3%. A review of the Nebraska Department of Revenue records for regional communities indicates:

- Kearney - 4% effective January 2008
- Grand Island – 4% effective October 2005
- York - 4% effective October 2005
- Gering – 4% effective April 2004
- West Point - 2% effective January 2008.

In Adams County the revenue from lodging tax is dedicated to the County Promotion Fund and to the County Improvement Fund. The purpose of the improvement fund is to provide funding for the improvement of existing or creation of new visitors attractions and facilities in Adams County. By law, these funds may not be used for general operating expenses. Consideration

²⁰ Nebraska Department of Revenue. Lodging Tax. www.revenue.ne.gov

may be given to applying to the County Improvement Fund for construction funding of a new conference center. Implemented in January 2011, on an annual basis the fund revenues total approximately \$50,000. There have been two award periods, September 2012 and February 2013. To date, the amounts awarded ranged from \$1,000 to \$25,000. Grants are awarded based on the vote of the grants committee, the Adams County CVB and the Adams County Board of Supervisors.

Information provided by the CVB reflects that lodging tax collections have remained steady since 2002 with slight variations in 2006 and 2011. Lodging tax revenues from 2002 – 2012 are listed below. Revenues listed were calculated at the 2% rate.

2012 - \$115,349.52
2011 - \$100,513.53
2010 - \$109,756.77
2009 - \$101,853.18
2008 - \$91,057.65
2007 - \$84,473.09
2006 - \$65,667.39
2005 - \$73,072.72
2004 - \$69,494.86
2003 - \$64,466.31
2002 - \$64,893.83

When evaluating if Adams County should increase the lodging tax to the maximum 4%, an assessment would need to be conducted as to what level of funding would be necessary to build and maintain the conference center, how much revenue could be generated through the additional 1% tax and how that increase in lodging tax would affect the ability of the Hastings hoteliers to remain competitively priced in the region. To increase the lodging tax the remaining 1% allowable in the State of Nebraska, the CVB Board would need to make a recommendation to the Adams County Board of Supervisors. Upon approval by the Board of Supervisors, the rate may be increased. Currently, the Adams County lodging and occupation tax combined equal the rates charged in Kearney and Grand Island. Evaluation would need to be undertaken to determine if raising the lodging tax could have a negative impact on Hastings overall hotel occupancy rates.

Occupation Tax

The Nebraska Department of Revenue provides a description of an occupation tax²¹ as a tax that a city may adopt on a variety of business activities. The tax is intended to generate revenue on an occupation or business within the city's boundaries. The tax must be applied uniformly and fairly to the types of businesses on which it is imposed. However, the rate may vary from within a city based on the type of occupation or business activity on which the tax will be imposed. This may result in multiple rates on different activities in the same city at the same time. Statewide, the most common types of businesses on which the occupation tax is imposed are hotel operators, car rental companies, telecommunications providers, restaurants and bars. There is not a cap on the number of occupation taxes a city may impose nor is there a cap on the amount of each tax.

The City of Hastings has applied a 3% occupation tax to all lodging when the guest length of stay is less than 30 consecutive days. Approximately \$150,000 annually is collected through this tax. The Adams County CVB receives 1.5% of the tax collections of which 0.5% is directed to general marketing and promotions and the remaining 1% is utilized as a funding source to entice events to Hastings. A grant program has been developed for the disbursement of these funds to events. The additional 1.5% is attributed to the operation of the Hastings Museum.

Both Kearney and Grand Island have a 2% occupation tax on their lodging. In addition, Grand Island has a 1.5% occupation tax on food service and drinking establishments. Kearney applies their food and beverage occupation taxes to the businesses application fees and not on sales. Both communities have other types of non-meeting/conference type businesses on which the occupation tax is imposed either as a flat fee or percentage. To implement an additional occupation tax in the City of Hastings would require a public vote in which a majority of the municipality's voters would need to approve the imposition of the occupation tax.

Tax Incremental Financing District

TIF Districts are designed to encourage new investment and are considered by many as an economic development tool. In a designated TIF district, existing property taxes continue to be distributed to the same taxing authorities. New property tax revenues generated from development in the district would be directed to a TIF fund for improvements within the

²¹ Nebraska Department of Revenue. Occupation Tax. www.revenue.ne.gov/info/occupation

district. The revenues in this TIF fund may be used by the local government to retire debt incurred for the infrastructure improvements needed to support the new investment. According to the Hastings Community Redevelopment Authority²², there are eight “Redevelopment Areas” within the Hastings community where TIF can be utilized as an incentive. Under Nebraska law, TIF can only be used in redeveloping substandard and blighted areas within a community. TIF projects may be commercial, residential, industrial, or mixed use. Generally, TIF funds can be used for land acquisition, public improvements and amenities, infrastructure, and utilities. Every TIF project evaluation must include a cost-benefit analysis. As locations for the new conference center are assessed, TIF may be a viable construction funding source.

City Sales Tax

The City of Hastings currently has a local sales tax rate of 1.5%. Of that amount, 0.5% is dedicated to streets, Duncan Field improvements and the Hastings Public Library. Enacted in April 2011, this 0.5 percentage will sunset in March 2018 and is expected to raise over \$10 million in revenues. To reactivate this 0.5% for a different project would require a vote of the citizens.

Adams County

The Project Team had the opportunity to speak with Charles Neumann, Chairman of the Adams County Board of Supervisors regarding funding options that may be available through Adams County. Mr. Neumann stated that the County is currently committed to two major projects and in the immediate future there would not be any funds available to assist in the construction of a conference center. He indicated that the funding for the two projects is committed for at least the next five years.

State of Nebraska Civic and Community Center Financing Fund

In 1999 legislation was passed in the State of Nebraska creating the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund²³ through the Department of Economic Development. The Fund’s purpose is to provide municipalities support in the development of civic and community centers throughout Nebraska and to support projects that foster maintenance or growth of communities. The fund may be used for construction of a new civic center or the renovation or expansion of an existing civic or community center. A civic center is defined as a facility

²² Downtown Hastings. www.hastingsdowntown.com

²³ Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Civic and Community Center Financing Fund. www.neded.org/community

that is primarily used to host conventions, meetings and cultural events and/or a library. The grant applications are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Attraction impact
- Socioeconomic impact
- Financial support
- Readiness
- Project location
- Project planning

No grant amount can be more than 50% of the total cost of construction, renovation or expansion. The minimum amount for a grant request is \$10,000. The maximum amount is based on the municipality's population as reflected in the 2010 Census. For Hastings, the maximum award amount would be \$500,000. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development has a very streamlined grant submission and approval process. Applications are due February 15th, final application is due by March 29th and announcements of grants occurs no later than April 30th.

In 2005 the Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History was awarded \$120,000. However, the Hastings Park and Recreation Department has applied twice requesting funding for the upgrade of the HVAC system at City Auditorium and neither application was successful in receiving funding. Many other Nebraska communities have received this type of state funding. Specifically, two communities which have been previously mentioned in this report received funding for projects similar in scope to the proposed conference center in Hastings:

- Grand Island - \$500,000 for the Heartland Event Center
- Gering - \$200,000 for the Civic Center

Community Partnerships

As noted in several areas of this Feasibility Study, there are other organizations within Hastings that have a need for additional and/or improved meeting space. As discussions within the community progress regarding the need for a new conference center in Hastings, exploring potential partnerships with these other valuable community entities may create a funding and operational model that ensures that the new center is a success for the entire community. Funding sources available through one entity may not be available through another and cumulatively the resources may be found to make the project a reality.

Hotel Developer

A common form of partnership in the development of conference centers involves a governmental entity entering into a long term agreement with a hotel developer to either own or operate the completed project. These relationships can be modeled in many different partnership arrangements. Some common examples include:

- Government entity retains ownership of land and enters into an agreement with a hotel developer to build and manage the hotel and conference center. Depending on the terms of the agreement, the government entity may have financial obligations related to the cost of construction and/or ongoing operating support.
 - Government entity retains ownership of the land and finances the construction of the conference center and contracts for operational services.
 - Government entity enters into an agreement with a private management firm to manage the conference center. Private management companies are experts in managing public assembly facilities and have the resources necessary to attract a wide variety of events while maintaining the regional and local base of activities. This provides for a diverse mix of events.
 - Government entity enters into an agreement with a hotel developer in which the developer builds, manages and owns the hotel. Hotel may be exempt from paying property taxes if located on government owned property.
- Hotel developer works with the government entity through economic incentives to build and manage the hotel and conference center. Hotelier would own the land and facilities and based on the terms of the agreement, government entity may not have any financial risk or authority under this option.

The Project Team had a preliminary conversation regarding the potential need for an additional hotel in Hastings which may include conference space with representatives of Marriott International, Tye Truman (Senior Vice President, Lodging Development Western Region) and Ron Stewart (Area Vice President, Lodging Development Western Region). In discussing the responses to the meeting planner survey regarding the need for an attached or adjacent hotel to the potential new conference center, Mr. Truman and Mr. Stewart recommended that the City of Hastings undertake a hotel feasibility study. The study, which would be conducted by a third party, could be used to validate the need for an additional hotel property and identify the size and amenities that may be appropriate for the market. It was felt that based on the findings of the Hotel Feasibility Study, should a need be identified, potential developers could be approached to discuss the Hastings community. Mr. Stewart

would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and provide the City with qualified entities that could assist with the RFQ process.

When a municipality invests in an enterprise and retains some ownership rights and then partners with a private entity to operate the venue, it is imperative that a partnership agreement be in place clearly defining who is responsible for maintenance (ongoing and capital), booking and financial performance. Additionally, the agreement should contain language outlining the steps that will be taken to cure any breach of the agreement by the private entity. Event contracts may be entered into several years in advance of the event and the community is making a commitment to the meeting planner that the venue will meet the planner's expectation at the time of their event. The municipality must have some control over ensuring that these contractual obligations are met.

Contractually Obligated Incomes

Additional revenue streams can come from "contractually obligated incomes". COI's represent fees paid to the facility for varying rights, such as:

- Naming Rights
- Pour Rights
- Advertising Sales
- Event sponsorships

The development of each of these income streams requires careful research, patience, and a determined effort to find the best fit for both the facility and the sponsor. These revenue streams may be considered to offset construction and/or operating costs. How to apply these revenue sources to the project must be carefully considered. While it may be initially beneficial to allocate these revenues toward construction financing, this decision may preclude these resources from being applied to the annual budget to reduce the operating deficit.

Naming Rights - The benefits realized by a facility from a naming sponsorship are many and varied. First, of course, there is the financial benefit. Naming sponsorships involve cash payments from the sponsor to the facility. For many facilities, the greatest benefit of a naming sponsorship comes from the marketing partnership that develops with the sponsor. For a naming sponsorship to be truly effective, the sponsor should have the same marketing and community interests as the facility. The opportunities for collaboration are endless when the facility and the naming sponsor share similar goals.

Pour Rights - An additional form of private sector support for the facility can be found in pour rights – the solicitation of vendors to be the exclusive provider of non-alcoholic beverages for the facility.

Partnerships, Sponsorships and Advertising Sales - Finding sponsors and advertisers for a facility is much like the process for finding a naming sponsor. For conference centers these opportunities may include partnership and sponsorships of events the facility is self-producing such as a health fair or community event. The best potential sponsors and advertisers are those who are seeking to position themselves with the likely attendees of the facility.

The facility marquee may also provide a revenue stream through signage and advertising panels located on the structure. A prominent location with high visibility is key in making the marquee a valuable resource for the events occurring at the facility and for selling panels to potential advertisers.

Private Fundraising and 501(c)(3) Designation

One source of revenue which has been very successful in other Nebraska communities, including West Point and York, is the creation of community venues through private donations and fundraising. To experience this success requires the right community/corporate leadership, an organized plan and extensive work.

As part of a fundraising campaign, the fundraising organization or the operating entity can be designated as a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit charitable organization whereas any donations received are tax deductible. This aspect of revenue generation will take a major public relations campaign and will need to be headed by a group, private entity, or organization to champion the cause. The elements of a campaign usually include:

- Successful Fundraising Program Basics:
 - Compelling case – confidence by donor that their funds will be well spent and the project will be successful
 - Strong leadership and willing/capable volunteers
 - Adequate and skilled staff (follow through is imperative to continued success)
 - Organized effort
- What Prompts Donors to Give – *Being asked at the right time, for the right amount by the right person for the right project.*
 - Being asked to give by someone they know well
 - Reading or hearing a compelling news story

- Receiving a letter asking to give
- Community buzz
- Belief they want to be a part of a positive community initiative
- Potential Contributors:
 - Major corporations
 - Grants (local, state, national)
 - Individuals
 - Business match programs
 - In Kind contributions (advertising, marketing materials, etc.)
- Managing The Process:
 - Identifying potential donors and their funding level capability
 - Assigning who will make the call, close “the ask”
 - Follow up with donor
 - Keeping committed donors up to date on the progress of the project
- Establishing Marketing Campaign:
 - Host lunch sessions for specific groups to provide information and then follow up individually with attendees
 - Reach out to potential user groups for their mailing lists
- Community Involvement Fundraising:
 - Host a fundraising event – raise awareness

CONCLUSION

The most effective model is not one single source of funding, but rather a combination that generates the most revenue with the least long-term debt service as possible. Any version of financing will take specific research and a major public relations campaign to come to fruition.

8. CONCLUSION

Today's economy makes the discussions regarding the development and funding of a conference center more challenging than ever. As cities and counties see decreasing revenues and are facing severe budget cuts, why would a community like Hastings even bring this idea forward at this time? The answer lies in the return the community can see from the financial investment in this type of project which can be substantial – increased community activity, economic stimulus and increased civic pride. The quality of life of local residents is enhanced by the opportunity to host and attend a variety of events. Local planners have a first class venue to host their functions and are provided the opportunity to grow and increase the number of their events. Local businesses have the opportunity to increase the value of their business to their customers through training and exposure to the main plant and/or office. Local attractions, hoteliers and businesses have the opportunity to bring in new customers throughout the year increasing their sales and providing continuity to their labor force. Without a new venue, many of these opportunities might not materialize.

In addition to the economic impact of the completed project, there is also a positive impact from the construction. Job creation from construction through ongoing operations can be a boost for local and regional employees

As operators of facilities located all across the United States, and based on research compiled through our consulting services, it is the opinion of VenuWorks that the City of Hastings and Adams County could benefit from the development of a new conference center. Hastings has a strong business and economic base that can provide a solid foundation of events that demand the type of meeting and conference space that could be developed through this project. Historically, Hastings has been successful in securing regional and statewide conferences and meetings and with an aggressive marketing campaign combined with a first class venue and first class service can re-establish their community as a location for these events.

To further this process the stakeholders may wish to consider two key next steps:

- Develop an architectural plan that would identify a potential building footprint providing interior and exterior square footage needed to meet the demand. Once the architectural concepts are in place, construction costs, funding sources and potential partnerships can be further defined.

- Conduct a feasibility study related to the demand for an additional hotel. Based on the outcome of the hotel feasibility study, additional partners may be identified that may provide funding and operational support.

VenuWorks sincerely thanks all of the individuals who shared valuable local, regional and national information in the preparation of this feasibility study. We appreciate the opportunity provided to us to present this study for your consideration.

9. APPENDICES

- Letter of Invitation to Focus Group Meetings
 - Regional and Statewide Planners
 - Local organizations
- Handout for Focus Group Attendees with survey link information
- Focus Group Attendees List
- Economic Impact Worksheet – Year One of Operation
- Economic Impact Worksheet – Year Two of Operation
- Hastings Conference Center Potential Client Survey
- Hastings Community Survey

February 28, 2013

Dear Stakeholder:

Over the course of the last several years the need for professional meeting space in Hastings has become increasingly apparent. The Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau and community leaders believe a modern state of the art facility is needed to be competitive in recapturing a variety of statewide and professional association meetings, increase the community's ability to attract new meeting and convention business and to better serve Hastings residents and employers.

In February of 2013, the Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau in partnership with several key community stakeholders entered into a consulting agreement with VenuWorks for the purpose of conducting a Feasibility Study related to the need for a new conference center in Hastings. The Feasibility Study will define the need for additional meeting space for local, regional and national events; analyze private and public sector involvement in the project; detail governance models and evaluate potential venue designs and site locations.

As a part of the study process, VenuWorks is scheduling a series of focus group meetings on March 13 and 14, 2013 to gather input from stakeholders that may have an interest in the development of a new venue in Hastings. The groups have been organized into general interest areas to facilitate these discussions. A successful venue is measured by the quantity and quality of the events hosted at the facility and the positive economic impact these events have in the community. Therefore, the purpose of these meetings is to discuss types of events that could be attracted to the community and to define the facility size and amenities that would be needed to host these events.

As someone who has been identified as an interested party in this process, we are asking you and other key representatives of your organization to participate in one of the focus group meetings. A schedule of meeting dates and times is included for your convenience. If you cannot attend the session closest to your interest area, we will be happy to schedule you into one of the other sessions. Please contact Kaleena Fong at the Convention & Visitors Bureau (402)461-2370 or kaleena@visithastingsnebraska.com to schedule a time to participate and let us know how many people from your group plan on attending. We would like to keep the size of each focus group to no more than 20 people to assure that all who attend will have the time to fully contribute. All focus group sessions will be held at the Holiday Inn Express Meeting Room, 3605 Cimarron Plaza, Hastings, NE.

If you or another representative of your organization are not available to attend these sessions, we would welcome your feedback through the completion of a Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients. Please follow this link to complete the survey and submit your comments <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/hastingsconferencecenterevents>. We also encourage you to forward this survey link to other community stakeholders whose input you feel would be beneficial to this process. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this important information gathering process.

Sincerely,



Sharon Cummins
VenuWorks National Director of Planning & Development

Fulfilling promises. Creating success.

**HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER
FEASIBILITY STUDY
Focus Group Meetings
March 13-14, 2013**

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Meeting/Event Planners
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Hoteliers/Caterers/Decorators
5:00 – 6:30 p.m.	Attractions/Restaurants/Retailers

Thursday, March 14, 2013

8:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Meeting/Event Planners
10:30 – Noon	Schools/Colleges/Health Industry
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.	Non-Profit Service Organizations/Service Clubs
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.	City/County/Chamber/CVB/HEDC

All of the above meetings will be held in the first floor meeting room at the Holiday Inn Express Meeting Room, 3605 Cimarron Plaza, Hastings, NE.

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Dear Stakeholder:

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If you or another representative of your organization are not available to attend these sessions, we would welcome your feedback through the completion of a Hastings Conference Center Community Survey. Please follow this link to complete the survey and submit your comments <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/hastingsconfcentercommunity>. We also encourage you to forward this survey link to other community stakeholders whose input you feel would be beneficial to this process. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this important information gathering process.

Sincerely,



Sharon Cummins
VenuWorks National Director of Planning & Development

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All of the above meetings will be held in the first floor meeting room at the Holiday Inn Express Meeting Room, 3605 Cimarron Plaza, Hastings, NE.

FOCUS GROUP HANDOUT

Hastings Conference Center Feasibility Study

When developing an event matrix for any venue, it is important to research current events being hosted in the area and potential events that could be hosted at a new facility. We have developed two surveys requesting specific information about potential events that could be hosted at a new venue in Hastings.

EVENT & MEETING PLANNER SURVEY

The first link listed below will direct you to the Event & Meeting Planner Survey. If you or someone you know plans or arranges meetings or other events, please complete this survey indicating your specific needs related to venue spaces and amenities.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/hastingsconferencecenterevents

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The second link will direct you to the Community Survey. This survey has been designed to gather input from the residents of Hastings and the surrounding area to gauge the level of demand for a new venue.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/hastingsconfcentercommunity

Please pass these links on to others who may be interested in sharing their opinion about this exciting community endeavor. The deadline for completing the surveys is March 29, 2013.

Thank you for participating in this important information gathering process.



Sharon Cummins (319) 389-7897
National Director of Planning & Development
scummins@venuworks.com

**HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER
FOCUS GROUP MEETING ATTENDEES**

March 11-14, 2013

1. Amy Sandeen, Prairie Loft Center
2. Eldon Orthmann, Adams County Board of Supervisors
3. George Anderson, Motorsport Park
4. Tammy Orthmann, Bath Bliss Gifts
5. Bob Murphy, Murphy's Wagon Wheel
6. Harry Dworak, Comfort Inn
7. Nishan Patel, Quality Inn
8. Stephanie Hagemeyer, Holiday Inn Express
9. Donna Hogan, Pastime Lanes/Illusion's Lounge
10. Donna Hastings, Cottonwood Festival
11. Robin Harrell, The Lark/Listening Room
12. Lynn Jasnoch, Heartland Pet Connection
13. Katie Kulhanek, Heartland Pet Connection
14. Wanda Cloet, Central Community College
15. Jean Korth, Mary Lanning Healthcare
16. Timothy Waldron, Narcotics Anonymous
17. Richard Mayo, Narcotics Anonymous
18. Travis Augustin, Ruhter Auction & Realty
19. Darin Clark, Nebraska Hazardous Materials Association/Hastings Fire & Rescue
20. Jessica Soucie, Hastings College
21. Hauli Sabatka, Hastings College
22. Sherri Patterson, Cottonwood Festival/Chamber
23. Scott Stemper, Area Substance & Alcohol Abuse Prevention
24. Kraig Lofquist, Educational Service Unit #9
25. Jenny Korte, Hastings Museum
26. Lisa Dirks, Mary Lanning Healthcare
27. Dale Curtis, Adams County Board of Supervisors
28. Michael Krings, YMCA/City Council
29. Chuck Neumann, Adams County Board of Supervisors
30. Lee Saathoff, Adams County Board of Supervisors
31. Ron Seymour, UNL Extension
32. Jody Jacobi, Kool Aid Days Downtown Center
33. Mike Weeks, Adams County Board of Supervisors
34. Joe Patterson, City Administrator
35. Tom Hastings, Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce
36. Becky Matticks, Hastings Museum
37. Becky Sullivan, Mary Lanning Healthcare
38. Dave Rippe, Hastings Economic Development
39. Jeff Hassenstab, City of Hastings Director of Parks & Rec
40. Kathy Peterson, City Council
41. Everett Goebel, City Council
42. Randy Chick, CRA/BID

43. Sherrie Hollister, Mary Lanning Foundation
44. Bruce Rockey, Travelers Protection Association
45. Nancy Brown, Catholic Daughters
46. Wanda Kumke, Catholic Daughters
47. Dawn Conart, Big Brothers, Big Sisters
48. Darci Meyer, Big Brothers, Big Sisters
49. Delores Gib, Hastings Lions Club?
50. Phil Odom, City Council
51. Ray Getz, United Commercial Lines
52. Mary Plock, Mary Lanning Healthcare Foundation
53. Karen Doerr, Good Samaritan Society
54. Megan Schawang, Big Brothers Big Sisters
55. Charles Trutna, Cooperative Producers, Inc.

ECONOMIC IMPACT WORKSHEETS

HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION	
Total Attendance	32,900
Daily Average Spending in Nebraska for food, beverage, retail purchases, entertainment, supplies* (calculated at 50% of attendance):	
16,450 x \$41 =	\$674,450
Overnight Daily Average spending for overnight stays*:	
25% of Total Yearly Attendance	
8225 Room Nights x \$72 per room =	\$592,200
Wages- Full time and part time	\$218,899
Contracted Services, Equipment Repair, Maintenance and Supplies	\$256,515
ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT (without multipliers) \$1,742,063	
*Based on Dean Runyan Associates Report Dated May 2009 entitled "Nebraska Travel Impact 2003-2008p"	

Graphics by VenuWorks

HASTINGS CONFERENCE CENTER ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT YEAR FIVE OF OPERATION	
Total Attendance	45,577
Daily Average Spending in Nebraska for food, beverage, retail purchases, entertainment, supplies* (calculated at 50% of attendance):	
22,789 x \$41 =	\$934,335
Overnight Daily Average spending for overnight stays*:	
25% of Total Yearly Attendance	
11,394 Room Nights x \$72 per room =	\$820,392
Wages- Full time and part time	\$257,838
Contracted Services, Equipment Repair, Maintenance and Supplies	\$322,486
ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT (without multipliers) \$2,335,051	
*Based on Dean Runyan Associates Report Dated May 2009 entitled "Nebraska Travel Impact 2003-2008p"	

Graphics by VenuWorks

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Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

VenuWorks has been asked by the Adams County CVB to conduct a feasibility study to assess the need for a new conference center in Hastings. The size and amenities of the proposed venue will be determined based on the event needs identified through this research.

When developing an event matrix for any venue it is important to research current events being hosted in the area and potential events that could be hosted at a new facility. If you currently host events in the Hastings area or would be interested in doing so, please answer the following questions with regard to the space requirements and venue amenities that would be necessary to secure your event(s) at a new conference center in Hastings.

The survey has a total of 22 questions but not all questions are applicable for every event type. For your convenience most questions have been designed with a menu of options from which to choose. A "Comments" field has been included if you wish to provide additional event details.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions that best describe your event needs and remember to click the "Done" button at the end of the survey to submit your responses. Also, please feel free to forward the survey link to others you know who may have an interest in hosting events at a new conference center in Hastings.

Your responses will be used only for the purposes of this study and we are not seeking any commitment from you for specific events. At this time we are only attempting to establish the need for a center and define the required facility parameters.

The deadline for submitting responses is March 29, 2013. Your participation in the this exciting project is greatly appreciated.

Sharon Cummins
National Director of Planning & Development
VenuWorks, Inc.
319-389-7897

*** 1. Event Information - We will not share your contact information you unless you wish to be contacted by the CVB in the future about hosting events in Hastings. (Please see last question.)**

Event Name:	<input type="text"/>
Organization Name:	<input type="text"/>
Contact Person:	<input type="text"/>
Mailing Address:	<input type="text"/>
City:	<input type="text"/>
State:	<input type="text"/>
ZIP:	<input type="text"/>
Email Address:	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number:	<input type="text"/>

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

2. Event Type - Please indicate the types of events your organization is currently hosting (or would like to host).

- Banquets
- Community Events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.)
- Conventions
- Meetings/Conferences
- Receptions (weddings, quinceaneras, social, business, etc.)
- Spectator/Stage Events (musical performances, fashion show, talent show, etc.)
- Trade/Exhibit Shows

Other/Comments

3. Current Host Location - Where are you currently hosting your event(s)?

Venue (facility name)
and Location
(city/state)

4. Rental Rate - What is the current daily rental rate you are being charged by the venue?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> <\$100 | <input type="radio"/> \$401 - \$650 | <input type="radio"/> \$1,001 - \$1,200 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$101-\$250 | <input type="radio"/> \$651 - \$800 | <input type="radio"/> \$1,201 - \$1,400 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$251 - \$400 | <input type="radio"/> \$801 - \$1,000 | <input type="radio"/> Over \$1,400 |

If over \$1,400, please specify.

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

5. Event Access - Please indicate the method of admission to your event.

Ticketed Registration fee

Free Private or by invitation

Other (please specify)

6. Frequency - How often is the event held?

Weekly Yearly

Monthly Every other year

Other (please specify)

7. Time Of Year - What month is the event held?

January May September

February June October

March July November

April August December

Comments

8. Event Days - Include move in and move out days.

Mon Tues Wed Thur Fri Sat Sun

Comments

9. Attendance - Typical number of participants.

Attendees/Patrons

Exhibitors

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

10. Meeting/Conference Requirements - First indicate the maximum size (capacity) of the Primary Meeting Room you typically require and then indicate the maximum size (capacity) of each additional Breakout Room needed.

	Primary Meeting Room	Breakout Room 1	Breakout Room 2	Breakout Room 3	Breakout Room 4	Breakout Room 5	Breakout Room 6
Room Size (Capacity) - Under 25 attendees	<input type="checkbox"/>						
26 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/>						
51 - 75	<input type="checkbox"/>						
76 - 100	<input type="checkbox"/>						
100 - 200	<input type="checkbox"/>						
201 - 400	<input type="checkbox"/>						
401 - 600	<input type="checkbox"/>						
601 - 800	<input type="checkbox"/>						
801 - 1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>						
1,001 - 1,500	<input type="checkbox"/>						
1,501 - 2,000	<input type="checkbox"/>						
2,001 - 2,500	<input type="checkbox"/>						
2,501 - 3,000	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Over 3,000 Attendees	<input type="checkbox"/>						

(1) If over 3,000, please specify. (2) Please indicate your preferred seating style (Classroom Style- chairs on one side of narrow rectangle tables), (Theater Style- rows of chairs on flat floor), (Discussion Group Style- round tables with seating for eight to ten)

11. Spectator/Stage Event Requirements - Event floor square feet needed.

Under 1,000 square feet
 10,001 - 15,000
 25,001 - 30,000
 1,001 - 5,000
 15,001 - 20,000
 30,001 - 35,000
 5,001 - 10,000
 20,001 - 25,000
 Over 35,000 square feet

(1) If over 35,000 square feet, please specify. (2) Please list any major event related equipment that would typically be supplied by the venue in order to host this event.

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

12. Spectator/Stage Event Requirements - Maximum audience seating capacity typically needed.

<input type="radio"/> Under 500	<input type="radio"/> 1,501 - 2,000	<input type="radio"/> 3,001 - 3,500
<input type="radio"/> 501 - 1,000	<input type="radio"/> 2,001 - 2,500	<input type="radio"/> 3,501 - 4,000
<input type="radio"/> 1,001 - 1,500	<input type="radio"/> 2,501 - 3,000	<input type="radio"/> Over 4,000

If over 4,000, please specify.

13. Trade/Exhibit Show Requirements - Maximum event floor square feet typically needed and the number of booths required.

<input type="radio"/> Under 1,000 square feet	<input type="radio"/> 10,001 - 15,000	<input type="radio"/> 25,001 - 30,000
<input type="radio"/> 1,001 - 5,000	<input type="radio"/> 15,001 - 20,000	<input type="radio"/> 30,001 - 35,000
<input type="radio"/> 5,001 - 10,000	<input type="radio"/> 20,001 - 25,000	<input type="radio"/> Over 35,000 square feet

(1) If over 35,000 square feet, please specify. (2) Please list number of 10x10 exhibit booths needed for your event.

14. Banquet Requirements - Maximum number of guests typically served in a single event.

<input type="radio"/> Under 50 Guests	<input type="radio"/> 401 - 500	<input type="radio"/> 1,001 - 1,200
<input type="radio"/> 51 - 100	<input type="radio"/> 501 - 600	<input type="radio"/> 1,201 - 1,500
<input type="radio"/> 101 - 150	<input type="radio"/> 601 - 700	<input type="radio"/> 1,501 - 1,800
<input type="radio"/> 150 - 200	<input type="radio"/> 701 - 800	<input type="radio"/> 1,801 - 2,000
<input type="radio"/> 201 - 300	<input type="radio"/> 801 - 900	<input type="radio"/> 2,001 - 2,500
<input type="radio"/> 301 - 400	<input type="radio"/> 901 - 1,000	<input type="radio"/> Over 2,500 Guests

(1) If over 2,500, please specify. (2) Please indicate if the banquet space, exhibit space and the large meeting room are needed on the same day. (3) Typical banquet seating is accommodated at 6' or 8' round tables unless otherwise indicated by your comments.

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

15. Associated Activities - Typical activities hosted as part of your event.

<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfasts	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinners	<input type="checkbox"/> Dances
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee Breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> Banquets	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Shows
<input type="checkbox"/> Lunches	<input type="checkbox"/> Receptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol service required in conjunction with one or more of the associated activities.

Other (please specify)

16. Hotel Room Requirements - (Total Number of Room-Nights) If your event includes overnight stays, what is the typical number of total Room-Nights your attendees would require from combined area hotels over the entire run of the event? (Example 120 total rooms x 3 nights = 360 Room Nights)

<input type="radio"/> Under 25	<input type="radio"/> 101 - 150	<input type="radio"/> 301 - 350
<input type="radio"/> 26 - 50	<input type="radio"/> 151 - 200	<input type="radio"/> 351 - 400
<input type="radio"/> 51 - 75	<input type="radio"/> 201 - 250	<input type="radio"/> 401 - 450
<input type="radio"/> 76 - 100	<input type="radio"/> 251 - 300	<input type="radio"/> 451 - 500

If over 500, please specify.

17. Hotel Room Requirements - (Peak-night Number Of Rooms) What is the typical number of rooms your attendees would require from combined area hotels for the single busiest night of the event?

<input type="radio"/> Under 25	<input type="radio"/> 101 - 150	<input type="radio"/> 301 - 350
<input type="radio"/> 26 - 50	<input type="radio"/> 151 - 200	<input type="radio"/> 351 - 400
<input type="radio"/> 51 - 75	<input type="radio"/> 201 - 250	<input type="radio"/> 401 - 450
<input type="radio"/> 76 - 100	<input type="radio"/> 251 - 300	<input type="radio"/> 451 - 500

If over 500, please specify.

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

18. Host Hotel Requirements- (Minimum number of rooms required) What is the minimum number of rooms required to qualify as the event's host hotel?

Under 50 rooms 75 - 100 151 - 200
 51 - 75 101 - 150 201 - 250

If over 250, please specify.

19. Host Hotel Amenities- Please indicate which of the following amenities are required in order to qualify as the host hotel.

<input type="checkbox"/> Basic guest rooms (TV, microwave, fridge)	<input type="checkbox"/> Nightly "manager's reception"	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool
<input type="checkbox"/> Business class guest rooms (basic room plus work area w/ table/desk)	<input type="checkbox"/> Room service	<input type="checkbox"/> Fitness center
<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-room guest suites (business class plus separate sleeping area and kitchenette)	<input type="checkbox"/> Concierge service	<input type="checkbox"/> Court yard or patio
<input type="checkbox"/> Full service restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/> On-site parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Wireless Internet
<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast/coffee lounge	<input type="checkbox"/> Parking valet for off-site parking	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bar or lounge	<input type="checkbox"/> Business center	

Other (please specify), list any preference for a particular hotel brand.

20. Hotel Requirement - Host hotel proximity to Event Center.

Host Hotel must be attached
 Host Hotel must be within walking distance
 Host Hotel must be within a 10 minute drive time
 Host Hotel proximity is not typically a limiting factor

Other (please specify)

Hastings Conference Center Survey of Potential Clients

21. In planning your event, aside from meeting your basic event needs, do you foresee any challenges that would prohibit your organization from using a new venue in Hastings?

22. Additional Comments - Please indicate if you would like to be contacted at a later time by the Adams County CVB in regards to hosting your event in the future.

Hastings Conference Center Community Survey

Over the course of the last several years the need for professional meeting space in Hastings has become increasingly apparent. The Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau and community leaders believe a modern, state of the art facility is needed to be competitive in recapturing a variety of statewide and professional association meetings, increase the community's ability to attract new meeting and convention business, and to better serve Hastings' residents and employers.

In February of 2013, the Adams County Convention & Visitors Bureau in partnership with several key community stakeholders entered into a consulting agreement with VenuWorks for the purpose of conducting a Feasibility Study to assess the need for a new conference center in Hastings. The Feasibility Study will define the need for additional meeting space for local, regional and national events; analyze private and public sector involvement in the project; detail governance models and evaluate potential venue designs and site locations.

This Community Survey has been designed to gather input from the residents of Hastings and the surrounding area to gauge the level of demand for a new venue in Hastings. A second survey is being distributed to meeting planners and various associations to gather their input. Your participation in answering the following ten questions is greatly appreciated. Please click "DONE" at the end of the survey to submit your responses.

Thank you and please feel free to share the survey link with others you believe would be interested in sharing their opinion about this exciting community endeavor. The survey deadline is March 29, 2013.

Sharon Cummins
National Director of Planning & Development
VenuWorks, Inc.
319-389-7897

1. Please indicate your age group.

Under
20

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

71-80

over 80

2. Please list your home Zip Code.

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3. From your perspective, please rate the following types of events as to how important they are to the local economy and the quality of life for the residents of Hastings and the surrounding region.			
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Meetings/Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conventions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade/Exhibit Shows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spectator/Stage Events (musical performances, fashion shows, talent shows, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Receptions (weddings, quinceaneras, social, business)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banquets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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4. How many times a year do you currently attend these events at a venue in Hastings?

	Don't Attend	1-2 times per year	3-4 times per year	More than 4 times a year
Meetings/Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conventions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade/Exhibit Shows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spectator/Stage Events (musical performances, fashion shows, talent shows, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Receptions (weddings, quinceaneras, social, business)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banquets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please list the venue name and location where you have attended the type of events listed above.

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5. How far would you travel to attend these events?						
	Only in Hastings	Up to 30 minutes	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Over 3 hours
Meetings/Conferences	<input type="radio"/>					
Conventions	<input type="radio"/>					
Trade/Exhibit Shows	<input type="radio"/>					
Community Events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
Spectator/Stage Events (musical performances, fashion shows, talent shows, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
Receptions (weddings, quinceaneras, social, business)	<input type="radio"/>					
Banquets	<input type="radio"/>					

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6. How many times a year do you attend these events at venues outside of Hastings?

	Don't Attend	1-2 times per year	3-4 times per year	More than 4 times a year
Meetings/Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conventions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade/Exhibit Shows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spectator/Stage Events (musical performances, fashion shows, talent shows, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Receptions (weddings, quinceaneras, social, business)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banquets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please list the venue name and location where you have attended the type of events listed above.

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7. How many times a year would you anticipate attending these events if they could be hosted at a new venue in Hastings?

	Probably wouldn't attend	Possibly 1-2 times per year	Possibly 3-4 times per year	Possibly More than 4 times a year
Meetings/Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conventions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade/Exhibit Shows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Events (graduations, fundraisers, festivals, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spectator/Stage Events (musical performances, fashion shows, talent shows, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Receptions (weddings, quinceaneras, social, business)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banquets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. If you were interested in hosting an event at a new conference center, which of the following amenities would you require?

<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting rooms	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage rigging capability for sound and lights	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol service
<input type="checkbox"/> Ballroom space	<input type="checkbox"/> Full service kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel (attached or adjacent)
<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit space	<input type="checkbox"/> Food prep area only	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dressing/locker rooms	<input type="checkbox"/> Concession stands	

Other (please specify)

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9. Which statement would most accurately reflect your opinion at the present time?

- Our community needs and should have a new conference center.
- Our community does not need a new conference center.
- Our community may need a new conference center.
- No opinion.

Other (please specify)

10. If your opinion is that the local community should have a new conference center, what sources or combination of sources, should be used to fund its construction?

11. Comments: