



*DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS &
MODEL COMMUNITIES FOR:*

**NEBRASKA'S RED CLOUD AND
WEBSTER COUNTY**

Submitted to the

Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

Presented by Hargrove International, Inc.

Red Cloud and Webster County, Nebraska Development Options & Model Communities



I. Overview of Heritage Tourism

An overview of Heritage Tourism begins with a definition of this industry segment and how it differs from other forms of tourism and heritage-based programs. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines (cultural) heritage tourism as:

Traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural attractions.

Heritage Tourism differs from mass market or manufactured tourism by focusing on existing assets (human as well as built and natural) and their connection to “place.” By preserving, protecting and promoting these assets, heritage tourism finds the fit between community and visitors. It also seeks strategies to showcase the stories from the past as relevant lessons and insights for today. The five principles set forth by the National Trust more than two decades ago still resonate with planners and marketers as viable and instructive:

- 1) Focus on Authenticity and Quality;
- 2) Preserve and Protect Resources;
- 3) Make Sites and Programs Come Alive;
- 4) Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism;
- 5) Collaborate.

These principles provide guidance for establishing, maintaining and enhancing appropriate heritage tourism programs to benefit the resident, the local economy/resources and visitors. Heritage tourism success and sustainability, though, begins with understanding the primary customer’s profile, wants and needs. Without travelers, there is no heritage tourism. Fortunately, in an increasingly homogenized world, travelers are seeking out unique and distinctive, authentic experiences. According to a 2013 study by Mandala Research, LLC, almost eight in 10 leisure travelers participated in cultural and heritage activities in 2012. This represents a population of approximately 129.6 million.¹

The 2013 Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report further states, these cultural and heritage travelers spent \$171 billion during their travels. This amount reflects a decline from the 2009 report findings, due primarily to a decrease in number of leisure trips taken by this group – 5+ trips in 2009 down to 3.6 per year. The 2013 Report reports “average trip spending by cultural and heritage travelers is \$1,319, an increase from 2009 where the average spending was \$994” and higher than general leisure travelers whose average spending was \$1,198. This finding further validates the cultural heritage traveler profile established in the early 1990s as individuals “spending more and staying longer than other types of leisure travelers.”²

¹ Source: *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report of Findings, 2013 Edition*, Mandala Research, LLC.

The demographic profile of the heritage traveler has shifted slightly, with Gen X representing now one third of all U.S. leisure travelers engaging in cultural heritage activities.³ Key motivators for cultural heritage travelers are: 1) creating lasting memories; 2) relaxing and relieving stress; and 3) trying new experiences. More than half of all leisure travelers (56%) want their travel to be educational.⁴

In addition to the more traditional cultural heritage activities, this market engages in a variety of activities including shopping, nature/recreation, exercise, and dining. The diversity of cultural heritage activities has dispersed visitation from more traditional engagement (visiting historic sites or attending cultural/heritage festival) although these activities still rank high on the list of activities for travelers. Relevant for the Red Cloud region, the top cultural heritage activities engaged on a leisure trip within the past three years include:

Top Cultural Heritage Activities of U.S. Leisure Travelers	
Visited heritage buildings/historical buildings	42%
Visited historic sites	40%
Attended cultural and/or heritage fair or festival	40%
Visited Native American sites	39%
Visited history museums/centers	38%
Participated in an organized tour of local history or culture	37%
Researched family history	32%
Shopped for items made by local artisans and craftspeople	31%
Sampled traditional artisan products eg cheese, candies	25%
Visited farms and ranches	25%
Explored small towns	24%
Attended the theatre, play/opera live performance	23%
Experienced local/regional cuisine for a unique, memorable experience	23%
Shopped at museum stores	18%
Took a scenic drive	16%

Destinations engage in heritage tourism for a variety of reasons, but two are paramount: 1) to preserve, protect and showcase the authentic assets that make “place” special – for residents as well as visitors; and 2) to attract spending from outside the town, community, county, region, state, country – introducing “new money” into the local economy. Without this economic outcome, “tourism” may cost a destination.

For Red Cloud, Webster County and south central Nebraska, this report and development recommendations focus on three key strategies: 1) how to utilize existing assets for products, programs and experiences that will attract visitors and their spending; 2) identify the most appropriate markets to visit and spend money in the destination; and 3) determining additional development activities or resources to grow heritage tourism (jobs, economy) for optimum local impact.

³ Source: *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report of Findings, 2013 Edition*, Mandala Research, LLC.

⁴ Source: *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report of Findings, 2013 Edition*, Mandala Research, LLC.



2. Current Heritage Tourism Assets

Hargrove International, Inc. (HII) reviewed a collection of documents and online materials to better understand the assets and experiences available in Red Cloud, Webster County and south central Nebraska. HII also researched the regional history to identify potential themes relative to the state's heritage tourism initiatives, scenic byway growth and travel trends. A photo essay was also provided as a visual overview of the destination experience.

Willa Cather: A major attractor and focus of current visitation for Red Cloud is association with Willa Cather. As the Pulitzer prize winning author's childhood home, adult retreat and inspiration for six books, Red Cloud leverages assets connected to Cather for writer's workshops, local tours, and programming. Several historic buildings and sites interpret the life and works of Willa Cather, provide information about the author or sell books and memorabilia. The Willa Cather State Historic Site, maintained by the Nebraska State Historical Society, makes Cather's collection of writings and notes available to researchers. It is also included as one of 80 attractions – one of eight literary sites – included in the 2013 Nebraska Passport and "Turn the Page" Literary Tour.

A total of 26 sites included on the self-guided Walking Tour of Red Cloud feature an association with Cather:

1. Harling House, in the Seward Historic District, was described in *My Antonia*.
2. Garber Grove, NRHP listed site and setting for *A Lost Lady*
3. George Cather Farmstead, NRHP listed site and setting for *One of Ours*
4. Pavelka Farmstead (Antonia Farmstead), NRHP listed site significant to *My Antonia* and the short story "Neighbor Rosicky."
5. Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, NRHP listed site of nearly 600 acres referenced in both *My Antonia* and *O Pioneers!*
6. Crossroads Grave Site, NRHP listed site known as "suicide corner" and considered a basis for *My Antonia*
7. William Cather Homestead, a NRHP listed site described in *My Antonia*
8. Main Street Historic District, a NRHP listed district evoking scenes in *Lucy Gayheart* and *My Antonia*. "Two Friends" is also set in the business district
9. Seward Street Historic District, a NRHP listed district, inspired Sylvester Street in *The Song of the Lark* and Quality Street in *Lucy Gayheart*
10. Elm Street Historic District, a NRHP listed district, was described in *Song of the Lark*
11. Railroad Addition Historic District, a NRHP listed district, includes the depot which influenced *The Song of the Lark*
12. Jackson's Reserve, a NRHP listed site with a former grove of cottonwood trees described in *The Song of the Lark*
13. Burlington Depot, a NRHP listed site, inspired Cather's writings.
14. St. Juliana Falconieri Catholic Church, a NRHP listed site, is where "Antonia" was married.
15. Miner House, a NRHP listed site, is home to Cather's long-time friends, Carrie, whom she dedicated *My Antonio*

16. Perkins-Wiener House, a NRHP listed site, is described in the short story “Old Mrs. Harris”
 17. Willa Cather House, a NRHP listed site where the author lived from 1884 to 1890, is prominently featured in *The Song of the Lark*, *The Best Years* and short story “Old Mrs. Harris.” The Nebraska Historical Preservation Office considers this the most important building in the state associated with her literary career.⁵
 18. Moon Block, a NRHP listed site, housed a commercial office for one of Cather’s adult friends, described as an alias in *The Song of the Lark*
 19. The City Pharmacy, a NRHP listed site, where Cather worked in high school
 20. Farmer’s and Merchant’s Bank Building, a NRHP listed site, used in *Lucy Gayheart*
 21. First Baptist Church, a NRHP listed site, where the Cathers attended services
 22. William Ducker House, a NRHP listed site, where Cather spent time reading
 23. Dr. Gilbert E. McKeeby House, a NRHP listed site, whose owner was an inspiration for Dr. Archie in *The Song of the Lark*
 24. Grace Protestant Episcopal Church, a NRHP listed site, where the author became a member in 1922
 25. Webster County Courthouse, a NRHP listed site, is the setting for the trials in *One of Ours*.
- Guests can also stay at “Cather’s Retreat,” an historic home (Warner-Cather House) turned bed and breakfast, where the author vacationed when she returned home to Red Cloud for family visits. The Willa Cather Historic District includes many places featured in the author’s books, and is the largest district on the National Register of Historic Places dedicated to an author in the United States.

A major partner for preserving, developing and offering Willa Cather-related sites and programs is the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation. Their investment in various preservation efforts, operation of the town welcome center at the Opera House, and development of an interactive website – <http://www.willacather.org> – demonstrates a dedication to quality and authenticity. The Foundation is also significant as restorer and now manager of eight historic sites associated with Cather, in collaboration with the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Red Cloud, Webster County and south central Nebraska offer other assets and stories that are currently marketed or have development potential for heritage travelers. The Red Cloud and Guide Rock website, <http://www.redcloudnebraska.com>, is an excellent resource for information about the communities with attractive images and content presented in a user-friendly format.

History/Heritage:

- **Genealogy:** Webster County Historical Museum is located six blocks west of downtown. The county museum is open April 1 – October 30, but available year-round for genealogy research. With Red Cloud’s immigrant settlements – particularly Scandanavian and Bohemian – and railroad heritage linking he region to the world, genealogy offers an opportunity to expand visitation for on-site research.
- **Historic Architecture:** Historic brick streets in downtown Red Cloud serve as the foundation for original buildings and restored 1912 I.O.O.F Hall and Opera House, listed on the National

⁵ Source: Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, <http://nebraskahistory.org/histpres/nebraska/webster.htm>

Register of Historic Places. Other sites or buildings individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places include Hill Farm Site (Pike-Pawnee Village), Stark Round Barn, St. Stephenie Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Red Cloud Bridge for its continuous truss engineering and unique vehicular spans, architecturally significant Main Street and Seward Street Historic Districts, Miner Brothers' Store, Auld Public Library, and Red Cloud United States Post Office (notable for its interior mural.)

- Native American influence: Red Cloud was named for the Oglala Sioux Chief. His granddaughter, Princess Blue Cloud, is buried on a bluff south of Red Cloud, overlooking the Republican River. Chief Red Cloud became known in the 1870s for his negotiations on behalf of the Sioux Nation.
- Baseball greats: Baseball pitcher Clarence Arthur “Dazzy” Vance started his professional career with the Red Cloud Indians in 1912 before joining the Dodgers franchise. Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1955, Vance led the National League in strikeouts for seven straight years in the 1930s⁶. Clarence Mitchell also played with Red Rock before joining the Dodgers’ team. Denton T. “Cy” Young pitched for the Red Cloud team prior to his fame with Cleveland, St. Louis and Boston.
- Broadway and film star Lea Penman was born in Red Cloud. Film credits include “Fancy Pants” with Bob Hope and Lucille Ball, “Stella” with Victor Mature and Ann Sheridan. She starred in several Broadway productions from 1917-1949 including *Annie Get Your Gun*. Each October, Red Cloud and Guide Rock host a festival to commemorate the star.
- Silas Garber, one of the Red Cloud’s founders, served two terms as governor of Nebraska (beginning 1874.) He also served on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. Garber is buried at Red Cloud Cemetery.
- Red Cloud has four featured stops (out of 42) on the Heritage Highway, a state designated byway spanning the southern part of Nebraska along U.S. Highway 136. Guide Rock is also indicated on the byway map.
- Webster County was named for Daniel Webster, a prominent American statesman. Connecting his legacy with other Webster sites may be a way to expand visitation thematically.

Agritourism:

- Predominately agricultural, Webster County and south central Nebraska are poised to bolster its agritourism, especially with the state’s emphasis on this niche market.
- Starke Round Barn is Nebraska’s largest, built in 1902-1903. It is the site of the annual Barnfest celebration.
- Focusing on consumer trends favoring locally-sourced foods and Made in the USA products, Red Cloud and Webster County could look to revitalize some of its former industry (creameries, brick tile works, cheese plant, brewery, broom factory and cigar factory) as a way to produce specialty items and foods for sale to visitors (and residents.)

Recreation:

- The natural beauty and rural landscape is a great complement to the heritage found in Red Cloud. The Republican River is a notable asset, not only for its scenic beauty but also for the

⁶ Source: Willa Cather Historical Center; Sports and Film History in Red Cloud & Guide Rock, <http://www.redcloudnebraska.com/community/history/sports-and-film-history>

- recreational activities available year-round: canoeing, tubing, swimming, hunting, fishing
- The Willa Cather Memorial Prairie certainly has significance for its prominent references in the author’s books but also provides a bucolic setting for outdoor enjoyment, whether picnicking or hiking. As Nebraskans value outdoors, especially for picnics, cultivating ways to combine the appeal for recreation-motivated travelers as well as providing a heritage experience. The key for all experiences is to make it easy to purchase and consistently available to customers.
- Guide Rock and Chalk Cliffs are two assets worth exploring for their natural and historic importance.
- Recognizing the relationship between outdoor recreation and heritage is important to build a critical mass of evergreen activities for visitors. For instance, *Nebraska’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* identified “picnicking” as the top outdoor recreation activity participated in by Nebraskans (77.4%) followed by driving for pleasure, sightseeing, walking without pet, and observing or photographing nature. More than half the population (57.4%) visited Historical Sites in 2009⁷
- The natural resources allow further opportunities to attract visitors for unique outdoor recreation and sports, to expand tourism into a year-round activity.

The viability of these themes and other heritage tourism development strategies must be explored from the perspective of compatibility, return on investment, resident benefit and resource sustainability.



3. Heritage Tourism Products, Programs, Services and Experiences

Literary tourism, as a subset to heritage or cultural tourism, is recognized as an important element in the development of tourism and behavior of tourists (Saunders, 2010). In the February 2012 *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, literary tourism in Western Australia was investigated as a strategy for diversifying rural economies. Authors Yiannakis and Davies report that some destinations internationally have successfully developed literary tourism: Prince Edward Island, where three percent of annual visitation comes specifically to experience sites associated with *Anne of Green Gables*; Hannibal, Missouri and Mississippi River towns associated with Mark Twain; Savannah, Georgia’s “Mystery and Manners” tour featuring Flannery O’Conner’s birthplace is offered along with the popular “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil” tour.

David Herbert, author of *Literary Places, Tourism and The Heritage Experience*⁸, cites several reasons people want to visit literary places: 1) to visit places connected to the lives of writers; 2) to see places that form the settings for novels; and 3) to obtain a broader and deeper emotional bond beyond the specific connections to a writer, such as nostalgic moments from when or where or with whom they first read a particular book. For example, several visitors to Cumbria expressed sentimentality about

⁷ Source: State Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2010, Nebraska Game & Parks, http://OutdoorNebraska.ne.gov/Parks/programs/scorp/2011_plan_Data.asp

⁸ Source: Herbert, D. *Annals of Tourism Research*, (2001) Vol. 28, No.2, pp 312-331

childhood when touring a Beatrice Potter home. Herbert recognizes that literary places are often points on a larger itinerary, and with Red Cloud's remote location, linking the Cather sites to urban hubs or other literary locations may be necessary to attract greater, more consistent number of visitors.

Understanding what other successful literary sites offer as visitor experiences is also important analysis.

- For instance, about.com lists the **Top Literary Attractions in America** as Mark Twain's homes, Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum, F. Scott Fitzgerald Museum, Jack Kerouac Sites, Margaret Mitchell House, and John Steinbeck's National Steinbeck Center. Willa Cather is not included in this list. <http://usatravel.about.com/od/Top-Attractions/tp/Top-Literary-Attractions-In-The-USA.htm>
- Flavorwire listed Willa Cather's childhood home as one of "**50 Places Every Literary Fan Should Visit**" (Jason Diamond, July 15, 2013, <http://flavorwire.com/403319/50-places-every-literary-fan-should-visit/view-all>)
- Iowa City, Iowa was named a **UNESCO City of Literature**, the only one in the U.S. (others include Edinburgh, Dublin, Melbourne, Norwich, and Reykjavik.)
- Expanding the consistent offering of festival workshops and programs as more focused evergreen activities may be a preferable alternative for rural destinations with limited capacity. While large scale events – such as Festival of the Book (Oxford, MS) and the Tennessee Williams Festival attract international publicity and visitation, significant (human, financial and physical) resources are required to host and grow these functions.

However, many destinations have not been able to grow literary tourism in part because "globalization of the literary marketplace diminishes (local writers') status: overseas celebrity writers get star billing in bookshop displays and festival programs. In rural areas, many natural attractions do not have varied interpretation to share the writer's stories and inspiration for visitors exploring on their own."⁹

Identifying ways to increase awareness about Willa Cather, especially with Nebraskan school groups and literary travelers, may be the most appropriate short-term marketing strategy. For instance, encouraging Chautauqua Literary & Scientific Circle (the nation's oldest) to include Willa Cather on their annual reading list can bring new national focus to the Pulitzer-prize winning author.

While Red Cloud has several places that describe the important connections to Willa Cather, expanding the linkages between contributing sites into a seamless experience (similar to a string of pearls) integrated with dining and shopping activities that enhance the Cather connection may increase the length of stay for visitors (and hopefully their spending) in the region. The Red Cloud Website (<http://www.redcloudnebraska.com>) lists 18 places to eat in its Community Directory. Unfortunately, the menus available for these restaurants and diners do not offer distinctive food selections. Culinary tourism is a rising trend for a reason; eating and shopping extend the time spent in a destination and also get cash registers ringing, often at locally owned establishments. However, to cultivate heritage travelers, the fare must be as memorable as the attractions visited. This may be an opportunity for local entrepreneurs (ex: Prairie [hot] Dogs, Prairie Picnics.)

⁹ Source: Yiannakis and Davies (2012), Journal of Heritage Tourism

Distinctive retail is also an area for growth, especially in small towns. Identifying the most valued and profitable products and services is an important step to opening a new business. Ensuring valuable street front real estate is reserved for high traffic usage is considered an essential ingredient to a successful Main Street approach. Understanding the wants and needs – particularly of current and future tourists – is vital, and some of this research is provided in the next section.

4. Heritage Tourism Marketing

Technology has certainly changed how visitors receive information and therefore had a major impact on trip planning. The Internet is now the number one tool for investigating travel options. A trending area of growth for travel research and trip planning is user-generated sites (Trip Advisor, Facebook, Pinterest, Flickr) and peer-to-peer sites (peoplefirsttravel, airbnb.) Traditional marketing organizations – such as tourist bureaus – are recognizing the need for distribution channels to be more customer-centric and to focus on relationship building rather than just information sharing and sales.

Trip Planning Process

“The majority of cultural/heritage travelers (60%) report they started with a desired destination in mind when planning their most recent trip. One in four (25%) started by considering specific events they wanted to do, and another one in four started with a certain type of travel experience in mind. Less than 10% report they start their search by looking for packaged deals.”

– *Cultural Heritage Traveler Report, 2013 Edition, Mandala Research, LLC pp 30*

The Nebraska Tourism Commission is a natural partner for marketing Red Cloud and its regional assets, including the Willa Cather collection. The Willa Cather Foundation has received grant funding from the Commission in past, and the Willa Cather site – as previously mentioned – is currently included on the state’s Literary Trail as well as part of the Passport program. According to the *Nebraska Tourism Commission 2012 Annual Report*, “more than 19,976 households participated in the 2012 Passport program – 290 tours were completed, six people visited all 80 stops.”

The report also shares that in 2012, the state:

- Launched a new Group Tour website and renewed engagement with Group Tour operators
- Continued commitment to emerging trends and developments in Agri/Eco-Tourism
- Expanded the Nebraska Passport program to ignite passion among travelers and residents
- Intense exposure to national media and travel writers
- Set Goals: establish key performance indicators, such as visitor impact formulas to calculate return on investment, and change national perception of Nebraska.

Nebraska Tourism has also expanded its social media community building to include 3,281 Facebook followers (consumers); 4,284 Twitter followers; 252 Pinterest followers with 763 repins as of August

2012, 84 Google+ members, and 102 subscribers to YouTube. Recognizing how Red Cloud, the Willa Cather Foundation and South Central Nebraska partners can work closely with the state tourism commission to realize its goals and grow heritage tourism in the Red Cloud region is worth exploring.

According to the *Nebraska Heritage Tourism Plan* prepared in September 2011 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and UNL Bureau of Business Research for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Nebraska State Historical Society, the Willa Cather State Historic Site was selected as one of the 27 core heritage attractions (from a list of 220) in Nebraska.

The *Nebraska Heritage Tourism Plan* provides some interesting statistics for comparison and consideration:

- Average visitation to the Core 27 attractions in 2010 was 51,882 (a high standard deviation may be in fact because the Cather site reports only an average of 10,000 visitors annually. An average visitation for all heritage attractions responding to the survey was 13,863 (although standard deviation was 30,423 indicating a large variance in attendance.)
- Key ways the “Core 27” market includes: Nebraska Travel Guide, 70% paid advertising, partnering with other sites, 90% have a website; 85% use social media, 85% engage in some type of public relations; brochures on I-80 stops, local visitors’ guide. More than a third (36.7%) use Barter Advertising.
- Almost half of the visitors to core attractions are baby boomers, affluent (more than 40% with household income of \$70,000 or more).

Top States Requesting Nebraska Tourism Information		
1	California	9,995
2	Texas	8,152
3	Florida	6,670
4	Illinois	6,393
5	Nebraska	5,908
6	New York	5,260
7	Ohio	4,846
8	Michigan	4,760
9	Missouri	4,680
10	Pennsylvania	4,622
Source: 2012 Nebraska Tourism Commission Report		

A “Survey of Heritage Visitors,” conducted as part of the planning process, yielded a list of visitor interests, including:

Visitor Interest in Various Historical Topics	
Natural history	70%
Places that interpret land and landscape	67.3%
First Nebraskans/Ancient Nebraskans/America Expands West/Trails	67.3%
Settlement/Town Building/Industry/Ranching and Farming	65.5%
Native Americans, Europeans and American Cultures	64.5%
Cultural Diversity	64.5%
Civil War/Armed Services	64.5%
Notable Nebraskans	60.9%
Not interested in Nebraska’s history	2.7%
Source: Nebraska Heritage Tourism Plan, Table 22, 2011	

The Nebraska Heritage Tourism Plan also recommends several strategies to enhance development and marketing of heritage sites and experiences:

- Four free ways to promote heritage site include 1) free tourism listings in guidebooks and on websites; 2) convert a brochure to a screen optimized PDF and submit to the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism for inclusion as a free download at www.VisitNebraska.gov website; 3) create a rights-free photo gallery of seasonal images to allow media access and promotional usage; 4) register with Dun & Bradstreet and InfoUSA to ensure travelers using a GPS device.
- Create a Heritage Attractions School Program Directory for use by Nebraska teachers, posting for download on the Durham Museum's website, for distribution at Durham Teacher's Night each October and available at the Nebraska Institute Summer training program for history teachers (currently serving Omaha and Lincoln schools.)

Determining if these strategies have been implemented will inform priorities for Red Cloud, especially regarding heritage education/tours and marketing to literary tourists.



5. Assessment of Heritage Tourism Development Opportunities

When considering the appropriate types of heritage tourism development for the Red Cloud region, the motivation for target markets to visit must be considered. The *2013 Cultural Heritage Tourism Report* by Mandala Research LLC states that more than three quarters (76%) of all U.S. leisure travelers “prefer taking trips that are a combination of a wide variety of activities such as culture/ shopping/ nature/ exercise.” This primary motivation is followed closely by a preference by 73% of leisure travelers whom “like to bring back local/regional memorabilia from the places I visit and share them with my friends and family.” Some other notable behaviors that factor in heritage tourism development:

- 63% seek travel experiences where the destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historic character
- 43% spend more money on cultural and/or heritage activities while on a trip
- 40% would pay more for lodging that reflects the cultural and/or heritage destination

For a destination to realize and sustain its full heritage tourism potential, four circumstances must exist:

- 1) The area must offer activities, attractions and experiences of interest to visitors
- 2) The area must provide the necessary services to host visitors
- 3) Visitors must spend money to provide an economic impact
- 4) The area must create and constantly refresh experiences to give visitors a reason to return.

Seasonality may be an issue for some destinations, although heritage tourism – when developed and marketed properly – can be an “evergreen” economic development strategy. Several other factors impact the growth and sustainability of heritage tourism, including the:

- Visual appeal, upkeep and beautification of the area (for favorable “first impressions”)
- Appropriate size and scale of development (compatible with the history, culture and area)

landscape)

- Hospitality of residents, especially directed to visitors
- Quality and diversity of heritage products available, and consistency of the offering.

In heritage tourism, development may mean bricks and mortar or physical enhancements to upgrade attractions. Development may also include bundling current activities into formal packages to encourage advance sales and scheduling by certain groups. Finally, development may mean entirely new products and services to expand the critical mass of experiences for visitors – frequently, this includes evening entertainment, specialty shopping and dining, “back stage” tours and bicycle rentals.



6. Specific Development Options for Red Cloud and Webster County

These development options are based on a visual essay provided by the Willa Cather Foundation, independent research conducted on the region and guidelines for sustainable tourism focusing on community heritage.

Opportunities for Entrepreneurs – Cultivate growth of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to expand the availability of products and services related to Willa Cather in the form of formalized guide services, retail souvenirs, expanded specialty food service and lodging options. Locally made and locally sourced are key motivators for heritage tourist spending.

- a. Support the Nebraska Tourism’s proposed legislation (patterned after North Dakota) to limit liability on businesses involved in providing hands-on experiences to visitors.¹⁰
- b. Support expansion of the Buy Nebraska program to allow bed and breakfast operators to sell Nebraska-made products.

Development Option I: Expand the critical mass of activities and products available for purchase

While it is not known how current retail and restaurants are performing in terms of sales and customer satisfaction, the limited information available on these visitor services indicates an opportunity for growth. For Main Streets, the availability of distinctive shopping and dining extends the time (and often amount) spent in a destination. Antiques and booksellers have been mentioned as potential retail to recruit for Red Cloud; these businesses can be a great addition to the existing Cather Books & Gifts, Pine Tree Antiques, and Antiques & Other. What visitors want is shops they can’t find at home or locally made items.

Exploring the talents of local residents could identify a unique business opportunity that appeals to both residents and visitors. Similarly, the success of the Food Network show “Diners, Drive-ins and Dives” demonstrates the appeal of local-sourced foods presented in interesting venues. With the area’s

¹⁰ Source: 2012 Strategic Plan for the Nebraska Tourism Industry, page viii

agricultural history, a store or diner that sources local products could be fruitful. Upgrading or expanding the existing establishments (ie Palace Lounge, South Bar Grill) – both the décor as well as the quality, diversity of the menu – could entice visitors to linger longer and spend more.

The potential for additional guest houses or B&Bs in Red Cloud is quite exciting, and will certainly enhance the opportunities available to host heritage travelers year-round. This philosophy of using existing resources – indeed the essence of heritage tourism – can be taken one step further with a new trend of peer-to-peer hospitality.

As demonstrated in this image, more customers (especially younger or budget-conscious) are bypassing traditional online travel agencies or hotel chains and seeking out other options. In its annual trend report, JWT (the global media marketing company) sees peer-powered travel as one of the growth areas for the next decade.

PEER-POWERED TRAVEL

MANIFESTATIONS: P2P hospitality

Peer-to-peer lodging companies are challenging traditional hotels by offering a wider variety of accommodations—from a couch to a room to full homes—at generally lower prices. Couchsurfing, initially run as a nonprofit, launched the idea of strangers hosting travelers nearly a decade ago.

 <p>Claims to be the European leader in private short-term rentals, having recently acquired Airbnb rival iStopOver.</p>	 <p>Connects travelers looking for accommodations with people who have rooms, apartments or homes (and houseboats and treehouses) to rent.</p>	 <p>Enables people to rent their backyards as what it calls “micro-campsites.”</p>
 <p>The Craigslist of travel connects hosts with travelers looking for a free bed or couch.</p>		 <p>An Airbnb imitator and one of the largest European players in this space.</p>

J W T

Source: JWT April 2013 Trend Report – Travel Changing Course
www.jwt.com/blog/consumer-insights/april-trend-report-travel-changing-course-examines-macro-trend-impact-on-travel-category/#more07818

This practice extends beyond accommodations to other types of travel including tour guides and car hire. An example is “People-First Tourism” where adventurous and socially conscious tourists are paired with charismatic micro-entrepreneurs (<http://www.peoplefirsttourism.com>). Travelers interested in supporting local economies and wanting meaningful experiences register on the PIT site and search providers geographically. Cell phone access and web-to-cell technology facilitates client-to-entrepreneur communications and bookings.

Agritourism: Farmer’s Markets, U-pick it, canned and pickled fruits and vegetables, homemade jams and jellies, Corn Maze and nurseries are the retail opportunities for agritourism. Helping visitors understand the workings of a farm or specialty crop is the experience that grows traveler education. For instance, an alpaca farm in Pennsylvania hosts workshops for visitors to make a hat using the wool sheared and spun from the animals in the pen: you pet it and then wear it!

While some farmers are reluctant to engage in agritourism due to insurance costs or liability risks, others – predominately small independent or specialty farmers – use agritourism as an opportunity for education and community outreach.

While these ideas are designed as short-term strategies to enhance the local Red Cloud and regional heritage tourism impact, additional development strategies should be considered to foster long-term growth and sustainability. Central to this development is adequate human and financial resources, leadership and vision, sound market research and business planning, and identified local benefits which can be monitored and measured year-over-year.

Recreation: Expanding recreational opportunities – bike lanes to encourage bicyclists, hiking trails along the Republican River (if they do not already exist); hunting, fishing permits and blinds, guides (outfitters, suppliers); winter sports (such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling) – can extend the regional draw to Webster County. Increasing nature-based activities, such as birding and wildflower interpretive trails, helps evergreen visitation.

(Note: a community pool was included as a recreational asset, although this is typically only used by residents and visiting friends/relatives. The library was also suggested as a recreational asset; it is considered more of a resource for genealogy or possibly children’s programs – such as summer reading and after-school.)

Attractions: Red Cloud is fortunate to have a quality and historic Opera House, providing a robust schedule of entertainment and evening activities for residents and visitors. Along with bowling, these are the primary “after hours” activities for visitors. Depending on the target market, expanding the quantity and diversity of activities – especially for families and children – is important. Have residents identified desired activities (i.e. movie theatre, miniature golf) to patronize? This would be a starting point to determine feasibility of adding new attractions to expand Webster County’s critical mass.

Opportunities for Enhanced Experiences – Visitors want immersive experiences, where they can get to know more about a particular subject or to become more connected with local residents. While historic sites may be a motivator for visitation, it is important for the destination to develop compatible activities – cultural, recreation, nature-based, or special interest (genealogy, literary) – to offer the diversity and critical mass required to extend stay and foster repeat customers. These activities are designed to engage and connect visitors, preferably interactive “doing” rather more passive experiences.

Development Option 2: Create and market Willa Cather “Book Club” Packages

The Foundation already sponsors a Willa Cather Book Club and organizes Thursday readings. Given the limited accommodation available in Red Cloud, the destination is best suited to design and market multi-day tour packages for small groups of 4-10 people. Two key benefits of selling packages are advance booking (to help manage capacity) and also pre-payment (or at least partial payment) of accommodations and tours. By focusing on book clubs, Red Cloud can build upon the appeal of Willa Cather and eventually connect with other (Nebraska) authors on the state literary trail or in the region.

For packages to be an experience, the purchase price needs to include added value: a memento, a special tour or guest lecture. As the Willa Cather Foundation already has an ecommerce site established (for sale of tickets and workshops), the addition of packages should be easily included.

These packages can be designed to attract the following markets:

- Weekend book club getaways for groups based in Lincoln and Omaha
- Retired “elder hostel” trips
- Parents homeschooling children, and traveling to learn more about the heritage of the area
- International visitors marketed through Brand USA – the Great Plains “Book a Trip” package can include a suggested reading list for visitors in advance of their trip to the region.

Development Option 3: Monetize Willa Cather Tours to include “upselling” options

Making travel experiences easy to purchase and easy to enjoy is one of the key challenges for destinations today. Many marketers encourage attractions to provide a menu of ticketed options for visitors to expand revenue generation. The Willa Cather Foundation currently offers three different priced guided tours to accommodate different levels of interest. Taking this strategy to the next level of selling requires identifying unique experiences that are valued – worthy of visitors’ time and money. As visitors will make special plans for distinctive or “one of a kind” memories, the potential to generate revenue from themed or timed programs increases. For instance, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum sells a separate ticket for its Historic RCA Studio B tour. Because the tour is only offered at certain times of the day and has limited capacity, guests often end up extending their stay at the museum –shopping in the retail store or eating at the café.

Until such time Red Cloud can increase its visitation, the “upselling” options can be offered on a pre-order/purchase basis. These optional activities also provide a reason for visitors to return. Some ways to increase revenue and also engage other businesses in the tourism offer are:

- Picnic basket prepared by Sister’s Café and ticket for “Concert on the Prairie” (this is an extremely popular event in the Flint Hills, where the Kansas City Symphony plays outdoors to a sell-out crowd each year)
- Guided tour by candlelight, with traditional dinner prepared using heirloom Cather recipes (or period meal) at the Red Cloud B&B or Cather Second Home
- Be part of a “Big Read” – NEA sponsored community-wide reading event, with dignitaries and/or celebrities.

Messages must be relevant to today’s traveler. Interpretation needs to be dynamic and provide a reason to visit; with the detailed site information on the website, how does an on-site visit bring the story to life? Fans of Willa Cather obviously want to see places of influence; for other heritage travelers, helping contemporary customers understand significant architecture styles, the Native American influences and impacts of early settlers, as well as the cultural landscape.

Defining creative ways to present information – such as historical photos framed as art at local restaurants, famous phrases carved into area benches, or reenactments and oral histories – is a central

goal for all heritage destinations. Maintaining authenticity and integrity of message, without commodification of culture, is vital to sustaining community character and good stewardship.

Opportunities for Life-long Learning Experiences – The SAVE market that may be appropriate for Red Cloud and Webster County. This niche market focuses on providing opportunities for Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational groups to visit an area for a specific life-long learning experience. More will be shared with this target market in future reports.

Development Option 4: Target university faculty, Elder Hostel, Roads Scholar and other educational groups to recruit for day visits, multi-day visits and extended stay customers (as researchers in residence) for intensive learning on the prairie, Willa Cather, and other study topics. Also identify a collection of fieldwork to use in service learning projects.

Opportunities for Enhanced Marketing – Does Webster County assess a lodging tax for use in visitor promotion? (According to the state tourism office’s strategic plan, various taxes apply to the sale of lodging room nights: one percent state tax, two percent county visitor improvement tax and a two percent county visitor promotion tax; “nearly all counties assess the promotion tax, 43 counties assess the full 2% visitor improvement tax.”pp xiii)

The Opera House serves as local visitor center and the Willa Cather Foundation has created a dynamic website for visitors. Another great information source is the Red Cloud/Guide Rock site (<http://www.redcloudnebraska.com>); making sure these sites are synced is important to ensure continuity of message.

Development Option 5: Expand one of the existing websites – preferably the Red Cloud or Willa Cather sites – to include more detailed trip planning information for the county. This information is different from the packages for purchase; trip planning provides the content for visitors to determine how to get to Webster County, suggested activities and how to move around from place to place, the amount of time to spend at each location, background information such as climate, maps, hours of operation, etc.

Hosting visitors once they get to Webster County and Red Cloud is a community-wide responsibility. Ensuring residents are knowledgeable, hospitable, and helpful is a key ingredient of any successful tourism program. As Red Cloud increases its tourism, a destination marketing organization (DMO) may need to be identified to help unify messages and outreach, coordinate promotions and events as well as maintain website content and build an online community through an integrated social media campaign. This DMO will also be responsible for conducting research and maintaining database of visitors to understand the impact of tourism as well as evaluate customer satisfaction against community benefits. These functions should be considered as part of the investment required, along with physical product development, to build a sustainable tourism program.

Opportunities for Gateway Branding – What do the entryways to Red Cloud convey? Is there

distinctive signage, “connectivity” to Willa Cather? As Mark Twain said, “we take stock of a city like we take stock of a man, by the clothes he wears” (New York, 1900). What is a visitor’s first impression of Red Cloud? How does it compare to other small towns, both in Nebraska and the Midwest? Destinations now must look at the visitor’s experience holistically, from the time they arrive through activity engagement and ultimate departure. Introduce the promise of the desired experience with distinctive gateways landscaped and interpreted to demonstrate the “essence” of place, showcase signature assets and welcome visitors with directional information of how to navigate the destination.

Development Option 6: Expand (Willa Cather) Signage and Infrastructure

Currently, Red Cloud is attracting visitors from around the world. Gateways (access points for visitors coming into a community by car, foot, bicycle, boat, etc.) are the front window of the destination, and currently the wooden “welcome” signs do not take full advantage of the association with Willa Cather. There is not even a “Home of Willa Cather” mention on the entryway signs, which is a lost opportunity as currently this association is the selling point for the community.

Wayfinding in general can be enhanced, especially to cross the Republican River and connect to other sites around the county. Signing the sites associated with Willa Cather can help visitors interested in exploring on self-driving tours. This wayfinding may be built upon signage for the Lincoln Historic Byway, if proposed, but should feature good directional and informational signage along major thoroughfares and access points to major attractions. Is there a statue of Willa Cather in town? If not, this inclusion could be the beginning of a public art trail in the county to help interpret the various eras of history and accomplishments of significant persons.

Visitor Services: In addition to physical products, visitors also need basic services such as public restrooms, adequate parking, and an information center. These may be currently available, but should be planned for appropriate growth.

7. Model Communities

Several criteria were used to research model communities: 1) similar population; 2) similar assets (either notable authors, opera house, historic building stock or Main Street as foundation for heritage tourism); and 3) similar terrain (rural, preferably agricultural, not resort/coastal.) While Nebraska towns were considered, the search expanded nationwide to understand best practices and lessons learned. Midwestern towns were favored over other regions of the country, because of markets and access.

Five communities were identified as models, each for a specific reason. All have received some sort of recognition or award from a national organization or media. Each community has a distinguished heritage; it is their development that is different. Where some focused on their traditional architecture and Main Street, others ventured out with a more creative approach.

Other communities worthy of consideration as best practices include:

- Woodstock, Illinois (historic opera house)
- Walla Walla, Washington (local sourced food)
- Emporia, Kansas (Great American Main Street Award Winner, and \$2.6 million renovation of the historic Granada Theatre into a multi-use facility)
- Cottonwood Falls, Kansas (luxury Grand Hotel on Main Street plus live music and country cooking at Emma Chase Cafe)
- Oxford, Mississippi (Rowan Oak, Faulkner's Home; Square Books, Square Books Café, Square Books Junior [kids], Off Square Books [outlet]; Center for Study of Southern Culture; Shop and Dine Sundays; Conference for the Book; etc.) and
- Spruce Pine, NC (home of the "Perfect Christmas Tree" made famous by the book.

Galena, Illinois

<http://www.visitgalena.org>

This northwest Illinois town (population 3,400) has more than 85% of its 19th Century buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of these have been converted to upscale B&Bs and historic inns; others house hip restaurants and breweries. Galena's mining heritage is preserved and promoted, along with the town's association with President Ulysses S. Grant. Carriage tours, hot air



balloon rides, and spa treatments complement the abundant shops selling antiques, art, home décor and apparel. Galena's consistently valued experiences land it routinely on "best of" lists including National Trust Dozen Distinctive Destinations, Rand McNally Best of the Road, and Smithsonian's 10 Best Small Towns (2007 and 2013.)

Note: Several years ago when I visited, the bed and breakfast association in tandem with the CVB made

a targeted marketing decision to position the community as a weekend, romantic, couples or adult getaway as many of the inns were not furnished to accommodate families.

Kewanee, Illinois

<http://visithenrycounty.com/communities/kewanee/>

This town of almost 13,000 residents is located near the Hennepin Canal in Western Illinois. Kewanee boasts a vibrant historic district, due in part to Good's Furniture House (a complex of 12 restored buildings which began more than a 100 years ago and has expanded to include various showrooms, a wine cellar, and Bed and Breakfast Suites). The store now serves as an anchor to other home décor and furniture galleries, interior design, furniture repair and



fixture showrooms. Recent AMTRAK service from Chicago has helped urbanites find this Illinois gem, just named “friendliest” small town by Rand McNally in their “Best of the Road” competition. A “Walldogs” event earlier this year created another mural to visually interpret the town’s heritage.

Lucas, Kansas

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/towns/Lucas/>



This town, located at the end of the Post Rock Scenic Byway in central Kansas, has 400 residents, no traffic light, and a history of uniqueness. Designated by Governor Graves in 1996 as the “Grassroots Art Capital of Kansas,” Lucas welcomes all kinds of artists. Some of the town’s notable attractions include Brant’s Meat Market, the Flying Pig Studio & Gallery, Florence Deeble’s Rock Garden, S. P. Dinsmoor’s Garden of Eden, the Garden of Isis, the Grassroots Art Center, and the World’s Largest

Collection of the World’s Smallest Versions of the World’s Largest Things Traveling Roadside Attraction and Museum. Lucas relies on volunteers to keep attractions open and operating. The town recently built a public “Fork Art” Garden. Lucas is a favorite stop for tour groups, is a recipient of “Eight Wonders of Kansas” award and was nominated by Rand McNally and USA Today for the 2012 Best of the Road.

Marfa, Texas

www.visitmarfa.com

This quirky art town with 2,100 residents was established in West Texas in 1883. A favorite location for film directors, Marfa was built on railroad, ranching and farming. Today, its more about art and architecture (thanks to artist Donald Judd), with recognition from notable media such as *Vanity Fair* (June 2012), Smithsonian’s 20 Best Small Towns (2012) and *60 Minutes*. Hailed as the Glider Capital of the World, Marfa only has a handful of accommodations – an historic hotel downtown, three RV parks and campgrounds, and one golf resort and spa (located outside of town.) What makes this place unique is the focus on individuality, as evidenced in the eclectic shops and galleries and eateries. Even their website and presentation of history is informative with a twist. <http://www.marfacc.com/about/history.php>
http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2012/06/photos-artists-marfa-texas_slideshow_item7_8



West Jefferson, North Carolina

<http://www.visitwestjefferson.org>

A recipient of the Small Towns Initiative from HandMade in America, this rural community (population 1,293) in western North Carolina dates back to 1779. Built as an early 1900s railroad town, West Jefferson has cultivated a vibrant downtown with specialty shops (including the Ashe County Cheese



Store, featuring natural cheeses and cheese products made locally), arts district, bowling alley and locally-owned theatre. A recent streetscape improvement project helped enhance the downtown district's visual appeal. While lure may be the area's

natural beauty , the attractions, events, shopping and dining provide plenty of spending options for visitors.

Conclusion

Red Cloud and Webster County have an opportunity to advance heritage tourism by showcasing its existing assets – most importantly, the connection to Willa Cather. However, the development must be innovative, have integrity and be relevant in order to compete for today's traveler. Expanding the opportunities for cash registers to ring year-round is the ultimate goal for growing tourism. For heritage tourism to thrive, the emphasis must be on a triple bottom line approach to include not only a positive economic impact but also stewardship of resources and benefit the community. Rather than replicating other communities, Red Cloud and Webster County have an opportunity to uniquely develop its own signature products, cater business opportunities for residents, and attract valued customers that will purchase desired experiences.

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Bibliography and Description of Resources

Red Cloud and Guide Rock website (<http://www.redcloudnebraska.com>): Using the tag line “Vibrant Community, peaceful life” these two communities share the website. The homepage includes an opportunity to subscribe, an event calendar (showcasing both upcoming events and recent events with links to the detailed description), introductory information about Living, Working and Visiting Red Cloud and Guide Rock. It has an electronic guestbook (14 listings since September 2009, with the most recent August 2011).

Webster County Website (<http://www.co.webster.ne.us/>): “Webster” tab includes “History” and “Historical Information” with information about Bladen, Blue Hill, Cowles, Guide Rock, Inavale, and Red Cloud; also includes Virtual Nebraska Educational Modules featuring Image Archive (although not typical tourist or historic photo archive); Agri-sensing, agricultural, History of a Town, modules (although not focused entirely on Webster County.) The site also includes a calendar, but visitors would have to scroll through every month to get a listing of events or festivals. The site links to the City of Red Cloud and City of Blue Hill community sites; other relevant links include Willa Cather Country, Travel & Weather Information, and two Genealogy Sites: Webster County NENGenWeb Project and current Webster County listings on <http://genealogylinks.net/usa/Nebraska/Webster.htm>

Tour Guide Notes - provided by Willa Cather Foundation – detailed, professionally cited and presented information for use by local guides. Includes considerable narrative and notes from Cather novels, short stories. Assorted brochures also provided for reference, along with menus from local restaurants.

Willa Cather Second Home Guest Book Comments – provided by Willa Cather Foundation. Include both local residents, other places in Nebraska (Lincoln, Omaha, Fremont) and visitors from 25 states (Colorado, Wyoming, Virginia, New York, Kansas, Missouri, New Jersey, California, Iowa, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Montana, Washington, Indiana, Oregon, Minnesota, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, and Wisconsin) and five countries (Japan, Australia, Taiwan, France, and Brazil) recorded in 2012 through early September 2013. Comments are favorable, with some entries quite long and inspirational about impact the serene place has had on the visitors. Connection to Cather and opportunity to be “at this place” is significant for most visitors.

Nebraska Tourism Commission, 2012 Annual Report

John N. Yiannakis, Amanda Davies (2012), **Diversifying rural economies through rural tourism**, *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 7:1, 33-44

Guarding Authenticity at Literary Tourism Sites (2001), Clare Fawcett, Patricia Cormack, St. Francis Xavier University, Canada

Literary Places, Tourism and The Heritage Experience (2001) David Herbert, University of Wales, Swansea, UK

Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 203 Edition, *Report of Findings*, Mandala Research LLC

State Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2010, Nebraska Game & Parks, Nebraska Game and Parks Department. Report provides exceptional statistics, customer profile data, and other relevant information for the region to reference in

Hargrove International, Inc. – Red Cloud Development/ Model Communities Report – October 2013, Page 21 of 21

developing programs, activities and business opportunities.
http://OutdoorNebraska.ne.gov/Parks/programs/scorp/2011_plan_Data.asp

Economic Development Plan and Assessment – Community of Red Cloud, Nebraska (April 2003) by Ryan Sherwood. P10: Business Transfers and Incubators (aging business owner population); P11: Suggested business ventures, ie horseback trail from Red Cloud to Amboy to Guide Rock, also outfitters to commoditize recreation opportunities (bicycling, hunting/fishing, camping, canoeing, etc.)

The Red Cloud Plan – The Comprehensive Development Plan for Red Cloud, Nebraska (February 1999) by RDG Crose Gardner Shukert. P19: Economic Development: expand Red tourism industry by complimenting the history surrounding Willa Cather with active recreation that incorporates the Republican River. This could include activities such as water sports, golf, bicycling, hunting, and fishing. Develop an internet web site that promotes Red Cloud and its tourism opportunities. P24: Its historic town center, stately civic buildings, and the aura surrounding Willa Cather and her writings, all communicate a sense of history, excitement, and opportunity. P24: With national interest surging in outdoor related activities and in historical people and events...A favorable location along the Republican River for outdoor enthusiasts, combined with a town full of structures and memorabilia related to Willa Cather and her writings. P27: According to local tradition, Chief Red Cloud held a War Council on what is now the town site. The town was platted on November 12, 1872 by Captain Silas, its first settler and Nebraska's third Governor. P28: Red Cloud was the childhood home of the renowned Pulitzer Prize winning author Willa Sibert Cather. Born in 1873 in Virginia, she spent the years between 1884 and 1890 in Red Cloud. Her experiences in this city were deeply etched in her mind and are vividly reflected in her writing. She extensively incorporated its places and people in her work and left the community a lasting legacy. P29: Crooked Creek is a major feature not only in Red Cloud's landscape, but was also one of Cather's favorite playgrounds. P30: The Willa Cather Walk – Numerous historic structures, many of which are associated with Willa Cather, help make Red Cloud a living museum. By physically linking these sites with an interpretive walk, the community can create a contextual link to the past and utilize its unique history to promote tourism and economic development. P32: Red Cloud should provide visitor information at these sites: Pike Pawnee Village, Guide Rock; Starke Round Bard; Pavelka Farmstead; IOOF Hall & Opera Hall, Bladen. Red Cloud might benefit from the barn's relocation to the city's jurisdiction. P40: Some of the street corners along the boundaries of the four historic districts – An informational display about the historical significance of the districts and its sites, commentary on its architectural style, and its context in Cather's writing would be appropriate. The addition of benches and flowers would make a more friendly pedestrian environment. P42: Strength – well established Visitors' Center P66: Willa Cather Walk, link many of the community's historic and cultural amenities with pedestrian friendly routes; proposed greenway system to the Willa Cather Walk.

Dining Directory:

- Bad Larry's Barbeque
- Casey's
- Casey's General Store
- CJ's Eatery and Bar
- Country Corner
- Farmer's Cooperative Grocery
- Kiley's Kookies & Crème
- Knock 'em Over Alley Bowling Bar & Grill
- Lighthouse Bakery
- Olson Sinclair

- Rose Bowl Playhouse
- Schwans
- Sister's Café
- South Bar & Grill
- Stock Aid Liquor
- Subway
- The Palace Steakhouse & Lounge
- The Rock