

CERESCO, NEBRASKA



STRATEGIC PLAN OCTOBER 9, 2026

VILLAGE OF CERESCO 2026 STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

On October 9, 2026, the Village of Ceresco elected officials, Clerk/Treasurer, and select employees met in Ceresco, Nebraska and completed its first-ever strategic plan. Al Vacanti of Vacanti Municipal Consulting Services, LLC, assisted by former City Clerk Rosie Russell, facilitated the meeting.

The following persons participated in the session:

Village of Ceresco Board Chair Scott Peterson, Village Board members Dave Burklund and Sophia Custer, Village Clerk/Treasurer Joan Lindgren, Planning Commission Chair Arnie Lowell, Water and Wastewater Supervisor/Operator Brian Roland, and Parks and Streets Supervisor Dustin Gushard.

Al Vacanti opened the meeting with a short overview of the process. He then stated to those present that the need for such a planning session was to help elected and appointed officials develop a mission statement, vision statement, identify issues to resolve and projects to complete over the next 2 years to move Ceresco closer to its vision. He emphasized that, if used properly, the strategic plan can be a valuable management resource.

Mission Statement:

Mr. Vacanti gave a brief explanation of a mission statement and its importance to any organization, describing it as the “why” an organization exists. He provided examples from four other Nebraska communities for the participants to examine and use as a starting point in the process of developing the Mission Statement for Ceresco. The participants then developed the following mission statement for the Village of Ceresco:

Ceresco is dedicated to providing a safe, clean, vibrant community to raise families.

Vision Statement:

Mr. Vacanti then addressed the participants about a vision statement for the organization, stating that it will serve as a guide to the courses of action taken to reach goals leading to a successful attainment of the vision. Mr. Vacanti explained that it is beneficial to develop the vision prior to the SWOT analysis, the setting of goals and strategies, the timelines, and the delegation of duties with respect to strategies.

The participants were also encouraged to focus the vision on a 2-year period, stating that strategic plans are expected to be dynamic, regularly referenced, and reviewed every 1 or 2 years. The inability to predict the future requires that it is better to focus on what can be done in a shorter period of time, and to have realistic means to measure the success of the strategies and attainment of goals in the pursuit of the vision.

A vision statement was then developed which reads:

Ceresco wants to be a city that identifies, addresses and communicates the needs of its community and prioritizes projects according to funding opportunities and the level of necessity.

SWOT Analysis:

The process then moved to what is known as SWOT (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats) analysis. This part of the session requires candor and an honest introspection of the qualities of the organization, and the participants handled this task effectively and respectfully. The results are listed below by category, in no particular order of importance.

Strengths:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ➤ Internet Quality | Amazing Volunteers |
| ➤ Roads/Transportation Improvements | Schools (K-2) |
| ➤ Parks and youth recreation programs | Businesses and Churches |
| ➤ Local and nearby employment opportunities | Library and its programs |
| ➤ Self-reliance and support of neighbors | |
| ➤ Great volunteer fire and rescue department | |
| ➤ Quality housing – and can use more | |
| ➤ Proximity to Lincoln and Omaha for quality healthcare, sports, entertainment | |

Weaknesses:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| ➤ Proximity to Lincoln and Omaha | No grocery store |
| ➤ Lack of businesses | Water infrastructure |
| ➤ Lack of funding for projects | Mosquitoes |
| ➤ Walkability – aggressive dogs | Lack of trails |
| ➤ Consistency of communication (social media) | Some neglected properties |
| ➤ Local employment opportunities | K-2 School |
| ➤ Outdated comprehensive plan | |

Opportunities:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| ➤ Water & sewer infrastructure improvement and expansion | |
| ➤ New Fire Hall | New Village Offices |
| ➤ Continue Downtown beautification | Continue tree planting |
| ➤ Housing and Business Development | Attracting new businesses |
| ➤ Bring Highway 66 back through Ceresco | Development of trails |

Threats:

- Cost of Water and Sewer Infrastructure Expansion
- Losing the K-2 School
- Cost of Engineering Study – What it will show in terms of scope and costs
- Dog attacks around town

Goals and Strategies:

After completing the SWOT analysis, the members took a few minutes to review each of the SWOT categories before turning their attention to setting goals for the organization. With a focus on the next 1-2 years, the participants identified and prioritized the following as goals to accomplish:

- Infrastructure – water/sewer
 - Replace old water mains
 - Improvements to existing sewer infrastructure
- Engineering studies
 - Mapping for Sewer and Water systems
 - Determine current and future needs
- New Fire Hall
 - Exploring location/s and potential funding sources
- Improving communication with the community.
 - Address misinformation and rumors.
 - Improve website, Facebook and other social media.
 - Explore other effective communication options, like newsletters.

After identifying the goals, set out above, the participants then focused on prioritizing the goals and developing the strategies to attain them. With a focus on what can realistically be accomplished and/or begun over the next 1-2 years, the participants determined the following to be the focus of their efforts during this time frame:

Priority #1 – Updating and Expanding Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Water main upgrades

Water/Sewer system expansions for improved capacity and to facilitate anticipated growth, as identified in review and updates of engineering studies.

Priority #2 – New Fire Hall

Continue to explore possible locations for a new or updated fire hall.

Continue to explore possible funding sources for the fire hall.
Grant funding, Bonding, Property Taxes, Donations.

Priority #3 –Improve Communication to the Community

Develop consistent communication through different platforms
Website/Facebook

Water – Information about system and its updates

Sewer – Information about system and its updates

Engineering Studies – Inform the community about current and future needs of water and sewer utilities

Responsibilities & Timelines:

After setting the top priority areas, the participants will begin the task of delegating responsibilities for achieving the goals set out in each priority and setting timelines or deadlines for either beginning or completing work in each area, such as the following:

Priority #1 – Updating and Expanding Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Water/Sewer

The Village Board and Brian Roland will determine the scope of the project to replace water mains throughout Ceresco. The Village Clerk will contact the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment (DWEE) to determine what program/s the village might qualify for in terms of funding, interest rates and debt forgiveness. Engineering services are likely to be required for this project.

This should be addressed starting during the months of January and June, 2027.

Priority #2 – New or Expanded Fire Hall

Fire Hall

The Village Board will meet with VFD leaders for ongoing discussions regarding needs for either an expanded or new fire hall for Ceresco. Discussions would focus on needs of the Ceresco VFD, the feasibility of expanding the current location, potential locations for a new structure, a preliminary scope of the project, and estimated present and future costs.

Discussions will then need to be held to discuss potential funding sources, including bond funding, donations, property tax revenues, and grant funding.

These conversations may be held after Priority #1, above, is being put into action. A projected timeline would have an earliest starting date around July, 2027 and continue into 2028.

Priority #3 – Improve Communication to the Community

Website/Facebook

The Village Clerk/Treasurer will research ways to update and improve the website, Facebook page and other social media. A monthly newsletter is in place to combat

misleading or false posts about Village operations.

This should be addressed beginning in November, 2026 and continue to February, 2027. This is an ongoing process thereafter.

Follow-Up:

The participants are committed to a follow-up review and update in 2 years, and to use this report to remain as a management guide to help them remain focused on the goals that have been set for the near future (1-2 years). A formal strategic plan review and update should be set for October 9, 2028 or earlier if circumstances require.

**Respectfully Submitted,
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