

2024 Visitor's Guide

GOTHENBURG

Nebraska



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Road 769 **21**
 Road 768 **20**



POINTS OF INTEREST

1. Midway Pony Express Station
(2 mi. south of I-80, 1 mi. east)
2. Lincoln Highway Marker
3. Sod House Museum
4. Hotels
5. Municipal Airport
6. City Office
7. Sun Theatre
8. Public Library
9. Post Office
10. Schools, Community Building
11. Swimming Pool, Legion Ball Park, Tennis Courts
12. Ehmen Park, Pony Express Station Museum
13. Gothenburg Historical Museum
14. E.G. West Park & Splash Pad
15. Gothenburg Health & YMCA
16. Senior Center
17. Lake Helen Recreation Area
War Memorial, Walking Trail, Covered Bridge
18. Lafayette Park Campground & Pavilion
19. Rodeo Grounds
20. Wild Horse Golf Club
(1 mile north, 1.5 miles west)
21. Swedish Crosses
(2 miles north, 2 miles west)

5 GOTHENBURG MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

GOTHENBURG
Nebraska

Welcome to Gothenburg!

We're glad you've picked up this publication that is designed to showcase everything special about this city. Our history, our people and the attractions that make up the fabric of our area will unfold on these pages. It is our hope you will be captivated by our city's charm and the progressive spirit that makes Gothenburg stand out.

For additional information, please contact the Gothenburg Area Chamber of Commerce.
308-537-3505 • 800-482-5520 • chamber@gothenburgdelivers.com • www.gothenburgdelivers.com



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On The Cover

Home to two Pony Express Stations, Gothenburg continues to celebrate its 1992 designation by the Nebraska Legislature as Pony Express Capital of Nebraska. Many businesses and organizations use Pony Express in their titles, keeping alive the spirit of the tenacious horseback mail delivery system that ran April 1860 to October 1861. Our cover photo by local artist Brock Massin shows a horse and rider making their way through our world-famous Wild Horse Golf Club.



The people of Gothenburg honor their legacy with a strong work ethic and a collective pride.



There's no place like **GOTHENBURG**

A rich heritage and friendly people await Gothenburg visitors, business prospects and future residents.

Gothenburg's roots run deep in agriculture and livestock production. We support a diversified business and industry base as well, and we are committed to progress through cooperative work between all main entities to provide a solid community infrastructure, winning economic development incentives and superior quality-of-life features.

Being located along Interstate 80, U.S. Highway 30 and Union Pacific Railroad makes Gothenburg an ideal area for growth and development. Although agriculture is now and always will be the economic mainstay, industrial growth has continued through the recruiting of Fortune 500 companies such as Frito-Lay/PepsiCo and Bayer. Those big names work side-by-side with our home-grown companies such as Country Partners Cooperative, Wearparts

Tillage Tools and Fresh Seasons Market. Together, the business community employs more than 500.

Gothenburg has a consistent population at just about 3,500 residents. It is a charming city with tree-lined streets, lovely homes, green parks and a quality of life desired by many. Opportunities for businesses, families, adults, children and the elderly are abundant, providing a perfect home for those who dream of the benefits of living, working and playing in a small town.

Residents here have a noticeable ambition to provide new opportunities for existing residents or newcomers. We worked collectively to bring a new YMCA in 2018 and look forward to opening our latest project — the Impact Center — in 2024.

Whether you're planning a short visit or looking for a spot to put down roots, we're sure you'll find Gothenburg's charm and hospitality are unmatched.

PONY EXPRESS

Capital of Nebraska

Gothenburg is home to two Pony Express Stations.

The Midway Station, on its original ranch site south of Gothenburg, is open to the public upon request during the summer.

The Sam Machette Station, located in Ehmen Park at 15th Street and Lake Avenue, was originally erected in 1854 on the Oregon Trail west of Gothenburg near Fort McPherson. At that time, it was used as a fur trading post and ranch house. Later, from 1860 to 1861, the structure was used as a Pony Express Station.

In 1931, the building was dismantled log by log and moved from its original site. It was

rebuilt in the park to preserve it for future generations to enjoy.

The Pony Express Station & Museum became a public gift shop and museum in 1954 and has welcomed thousands of visitors annually ever since. A guide shares the story of the brave riders who carried mail 2,000 miles between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, between April 1860 and October 1861. During the off-season, visitors can listen to the story via a 24/7 FM radio broadcast outside the station.

In August 1992, the Nebraska Legislature voted to officially name Gothenburg the Pony Express Capital of Nebraska. The Pony Express continues to be a consistent theme throughout the community.



Approximately 25,000 people visit inside the Pony Express Station & Museum every year. Another 10,000 to 15,000 stop during the off season or after hours.

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The main north-south street and business district of Gothenburg was originally called Winchell Street, named after one of the first families to settle here. It was renamed Lake Avenue in 1920.

Businesses were plenty in 1910 and covered a variety of products, including the Gem Theatre, Colloms Cafe and Jennings Hardware.



Union Pacific accepted the section of railroad through Gothenburg in November 1866. The town was platted by UP in 1882.



There were so many people in the business district along Winchell Street (now Lake Avenue) there must have been a special event.



RICH HISTORY

In the latter part of 1882, a worker with the Union Pacific Railroad named Olof Bergstrom conceived the idea that a town was needed where Gothenburg now stands. The town is situated in the Platte River Valley, which is one of the greatest agricultural valleys in the world.

Bergstrom chose farm ground north of the town site and traveled back to Sweden to convince his fellow countrymen to migrate to the United States — to Nebraska — to build a new town in the West. He was persuasive and by July 8, 1885, Gothenburg was incorporated as a town with a population of 300.

Ancestors' tradition of vision & hope continue

Swedes and Germans settled the area, as is evidenced by the name Gothenburg. The town was named after Göteborg, Sweden, but was given a German spelling by railroad officials.

The digging of a 12-mile canal off the Platte River and construction of the first man-made lake designed to generate electricity encouraged several industries and factories to locate in Gothenburg. Companies included shirt and overall factories, brick kilns, bathtub and ironworks factories, flour mills, vinegar and pickle works, a cigar manufacturer and a barbed wire factory.

The boom days came early in the 1890s. Then, when the money panic of 1893 hit hard, the boom quickly turned to bust and many of the industries disappeared. Despite the loss of business, the canal provided the first irrigation system and served approximately 17,000 acres east of the lake. Agriculture quickly settled in as the main industry for the growing community, and agriculture continues to drive our prosperity today.

The man-made lake spurred industrial, community and agricultural growth, a hallmark of Gothenburg's success throughout its history. Most Gothenburg residents had electricity by 1892, the first connected community in western Nebraska.

Community volunteers cleared land, planted trees and erected buildings to develop a park area adjacent to the lake in the early 1900s, calling it Lafayette Park. With the help of many

organizations and residents, the lake and park represent the ingenuity and tenacity of our city's volunteers.

Lake Helen's impact on Gothenburg's early industrial history and on its

agricultural and recreational development over more than a century ago helped Gothenburg earn the Nebraska Community Improvement Program's Community of the Century in 2000. Lake Helen received the acclaim of Project of the Century that same

year. In more recent years, Lake Helen got another face lift that included draining, dredging and an all-out overhaul thanks to a variety of grants and city funds. Officials continue to improve the area.

Gothenburg's founder literally led Swedish immigrants to his proposed town site and asked them to make his vision a reality. Community leaders continue to have a vision for the future, working to make Gothenburg a place where people feel comfortable raising their families and settling in for retirement.



Olof Bergstrom, right, poses with Vollrad Carlson in 1883. Bergstrom is recognized as the founding father of Gothenburg and Carlson is said to be Gothenburg's first doctor.



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IF WALLS COULD TALK

Majestic old homes welcome new construction

Well preserved Victorians, compact bungalows, contemporary ranch-style homes and stately two-story estates are graciously blended throughout Gothenburg's residential areas.

Most homes close to the downtown district and along Lake Avenue — one of the most beautiful “main streets” in America — are 80+ years old. The Chamber of Commerce offers a walking tour of the historic homes, guided by a brochure or the QR code here. The growth in Gothenburg has been mainly to the north and northeast, in addition to the new houses built around Wild Horse Golf Club north and west of town.

Home prices range from \$80,000 to \$500,000, although most are priced \$150,000 to \$300,000. They vary in age from brand new to century-



old treasures that hold a place on the National Historic Register.

A few vacant lots interspersed throughout town are available to build on with land for new construction still available around Wild Horse Golf Club.

The northeast part of town is the latest to be developed. A concerted effort began with the construction of several spec homes in 2015 that were all sold prior to completion. Six more were done in 2020. City leaders continue to work diligently to provide more housing units so Gothenburg can keep growing.

The most recent project — driven by Rural Workforce Housing Funds — includes nearly 20 single-family homes built in three separate subdivisions. Three semi-custom homes have also been built in the northeast part of town, serving as the anchor to a large new subdivision that will allow for further growth and development.

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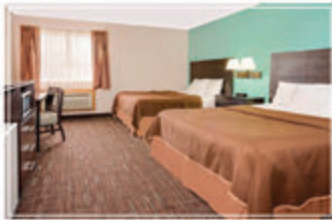
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In education conversations across the state, Gothenburg Public Schools consistently comes up as one of the best mid-sized districts. The student-teacher ratio averages 13:1 across all grades pre-K through 12. Small class sizes enhance the education of all students, contributing to a 90% graduation rate with ACT test scores consistently above both state and national averages. More than 75% of our graduates go on to college.

Gothenburg teachers are

dedicated professionals who encourage, lead, stimulate and influence their students. The majority have earned advanced degrees.

About two-thirds of the GHS students in grades 7-12 participate in at least one extra-curricular activity. Our young people excel in many areas beyond sports such as speech, drama, vocal and instrumental music and art.

The Gothenburg FFA program

is one of the most successful in the state and it has been recognized nationally. FFA equips future leaders in agriculture while also emphasizing vocational skills needed for careers in various trades. The chapter has over 200 active members.

The district is proud of its facilities and continuously works to provide the best, most up-to-date learning and athletic competition environments.



The school district's campus brings all students under one roof, encouraging interaction and collaboration among all grade levels.

WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Whether you are visiting for an afternoon or plan to spend the rest of your life, there's plenty to occupy your spare time in Gothenburg.

Those with an active lifestyle can enjoy a variety of sports and outdoor leisure activities as recreation opportunities abound. Whether it's a mountain bike ride in the hills, a round of disc golf in the park or reeling in a big fish, we've got you covered.

Lake Helen was created in the early 1890s when a 12-mile canal was dug to allow water from the Platte River to fill a dammed canyon and create a reservoir. Originally, the lake was used to generate electricity that brought industry to the area. Now it provides a scenic recreation area that is excellent for fishing and it also features a 2.5-mile exercise trail and disc golf course.

Across the covered bridge to the north of Lake Helen, Lafayette Park provides a well-shaded camping area with pads for campers and primitive spots for tents. The horseshoe pits offer the perfect setting for a friendly competition.

Besides tubing and canoeing on the Platte River, other water sports are popular at close-by reservoirs. Jeffrey, Midway and Johnson Lakes — each about 20 minutes from Gothenburg — provide the perfect setting to fill summer days with fun with sailing, power boating, water skiing and fishing.



It's a small town but that doesn't mean there's nothing to do



Some of the best mountain bike trails in Nebraska can be found near Jeffrey Lake. Potter's Pasture consists of close to 100 miles of trails through 1,200 acres of hills and canyons. The area is privately owned but free and open to the public, including the campgrounds.



If you're headed west to Jeffrey Lake or Potter's Pasture, don't miss out on the fabulous wine and pizza at the Old Depot Vineyard and Winery just 12 miles west on Banner Road. Winery owners moved the old Gothenburg depot that was set for demolition and re-purposed it. Inside, you can still feel the dip in the floor where many boots stood at the ticket window.



History buffs can take a peek into Gothenburg's past inside the Pony Express Station & Museum and our Gothenburg Historical Museum. The Pony Express Station & Museum sits in the middle of Ehmen Park, which is an affiliate of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. There are 111 trees representing 62 varieties in the park. Across the street, the Gothenburg Historical Museum offers displays of the country's expansion westward as German and Swedish settlers brought businesses and families to live in this fledgling community. The museum is open May through September.



More history is on display in the Swedish Crosses Cemetery north of town, where three markers have stood for over a century. These artistic crosses, wrought in Swedish steel by a loving grandfather, mark the graves of three children who died on their prairie homestead.

The Sod House Museum was built as a memorial to the first settlers of the area. The grounds feature a barn, sod house replica, windmill and life-sized barbed wire sculptures. The museum is open when weather permits.



Discover adventure at **SMILIN' RANCH**

Just south of I-80 in rural Gothenburg, nestled in the heart of the Platte River valley, sits a ranch that harkens back to the old west. Along the Oregon Trail and Pony Express routes, Smilin' Ranch Adventures offers tourists and locals a taste of the true western lifestyle, complete with horseback riding, cattle drives, ranch camps and more. Here, you can press pause on the fast pace of modern life and experience a trip back to yesteryear on a real working ranch.

Follow along with hosts Ty and Mallore Barnes on a typical day-in-the-life of a cowboy. Immerse yourself in feeding the animals, helping with ranch chores, exploring gorgeous pastureland, horse riding, wagon rides, campfires and caring for a cattle herd.

Don't have time for a full adventure? Stop by the Pony Express Station in town for a horse-



drawn wagon ride and learn about the history of some of Gothenburg's oldest homes and town founders.

Or, swing out to the ranch to visit the Milk House, a raw milk dairy featuring milking tours, raw milk products and educational opportunities. You could even try your hand at milking as you learn about the health benefits of unpasteurized, non-homogenized, natural milk.

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From city services and health care to recreation and early childhood learning, joining forces is what we do in Gothenburg. It is our all-means-all attitude that led to Gothenburg receiving national recognition as an All-America City — twice. And it is citywide teamwork that keeps our proud and progressive community pushing forward.

The city is led by an elected mayor and four city council members. A city administrator manages the day-to-day operations and guides projects such as adding a solar array to reduce electric rates, renovating city parks, applying for grant funds and improving streets and sidewalks.

Some of the city's excellent facilities include the public library, senior center, swimming

pool and four-plex ball fields. Two new park playgrounds and a splash pad will become operational in 2024.

The city also boasts an outstanding fire department. The 44-person squad of all-volunteer firemen manage a six-bay facility. More than half of the volunteers are EMTs, and the average response time is 2.3 minutes.

The city works closely with Gothenburg Improvement Company, a nonprofit established in 1961. GIC plays a vital role in securing the city's future, and the primary goal of this volunteer organization is to improve and preserve a great quality of life through economic development.

The YMCA at Gothenburg Health is one of the latest examples of GIC's collaborative work to better our city. The expanded wellness center began as a shared vision that included community, education, recreation and



wellness. Through cooperation between many Gothenburg entities, the city was able to secure a partnership with the YMCA of the Prairie and our YMCA opened in 2018.

That medically integrated YMCA facility would not have been possible without collaboration from Gothenburg Health, which provides critical access services to our region. The hospital has expanded to become a leader among smaller hospitals in the state. It includes a physician clinic, advanced imaging department, patient wing, emergency department and state-of-the-art surgical suite. The hospital and clinic offer family practitioners, mid-level providers and multiple visiting specialists.

In addition to Gothenburg Health, the community also supports three dentists, three chiropractors, a cash-based medical clinic and one optometrist.

A current collaborative effort will result in the Impact Center, set to open in the fall of 2024. The Impact Center is an integrated facility that will have four elements: an early learning center, a healthy families center, a sports training center and an event center. Grant funds and local financial support are bringing to life this game-changer for our community.

And we would be remiss if we didn't count Wild Horse Golf Club among our city's world-

class offerings. Amateur or pro, you'll want to play our nationally ranked 18-hole public course.

Each year, the course receives high acclaim from golf reviewers and enthusiasts from around the world. Most recently, Wild Horse was rated the No. 3 best public course in Nebraska by



Golf Digest and *Golf Week*, as well as the No. 5 best course you can play in the U.S for under \$150 by *Golf.com*.

Wild Horse Golf Club includes a clubhouse with snack bar and pro shop, practice area with driving range and chipping green, and a staff that promises an exceptional experience. There are two cabins on site with four bedrooms each, private baths, kitchenette and fabulous patio so you can stay-and-play.

There is so much we could brag about in Gothenburg. These examples are just a small part of the "Gothenburg Way" that sets our city apart.

GHS student produces

HISTORICAL AUDIO TOUR

Gothenburg Historical Audio Tour began about three years ago when Gothenburg High School student Avery Salomon was in eighth grade. With her freshmen year fast approaching, she says she had no idea what she was going to do for her FFA project.

Since most ag-related activities were foreign to Avery, she knew she wanted to do something different than her classmates, something that involved the community.

Avery's mother, Niki, suggested that she could educate visitors about historical and agricultural locations in Gothenburg. Avery says honestly, she wasn't exactly open to the idea at first but eventually came around.

Currently, the audio tour features seven episodes, with more to be added in the summer of 2024. Each video can be found on the YouTube channel and Facebook page, both titled "Gothenburg Historical Audio Tour"



Signage at each location provides a QR code for easy access.

On the social media pages, visitors can find all seven episodes, each featuring a different historical topic or location along with audio from Gothenburg native and history enthusiast Mark Peyton.



"Mr. Peyton has been an instrumental part of the project since the beginning, and I am so grateful for his help in voicing this podcast and researching information," Avery says.

Completed episodes feature: Frito Lay, Gothenburg Public Library, Lake Helen, the Sod House Museum, the Pony Express Station, the Swedish Crosses Cemetery and the naming of Gothenburg.

"We are hoping to increase our number of episodes to eleven by the end of next summer, so be on the lookout for more episodes coming soon," Avery says.

Scan the QR code to access all current episodes.

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Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District

Devin Brundage
320 Avenue D
Gothenburg, NE 69138
308-537-5382

Dawson Public Power District

Gwen Kautz
75191 Road 433/PO Box 777
Lexington, NE 68850
308-24-2386

Nebraska Public Power District

Chris Hegert
PO Box 2170
Kearney, NE 68848
308-293-6359

Schaben Sanitation

Bruce Schaben
915 Fourth St./PO Box 4121
Gothenburg, NE 69138
308-537-3840

Special-T Boxes

Travis Houchin
3401 Lake Avenue
Gothenburg, NE 69138
308-529-0035

VETERINARIANS

Eastside Animal Center

Randy Burge, Ryan O'Hare
& Aaron Colwell, DVMs
805 Avenue I
Gothenburg, NE 69138
308-537-7549

Production Animal Consultation

Shane Terrell, DVM
1011 21st Street
Gothenburg, NE 69138
308-430-1617

**Titanium, Platinum & Gold
level Chamber investors
are listed in all bold.**



Always working to build

A BETTER TOMORROW

Lake Helen gave Gothenburg its early lifeblood with the construction of a powerhouse and water wheel for electricity and irrigation, as well as many industries that followed. That lifeline has branched out into value-added agricultural and other businesses that have flourished.

Two Fortune 500 companies have footprints here: Frito-Lay/PepsiCo and Bayer Crop Science. They anchor our business and industry sector. The recruitment of the Frito-Lay corn processing facility in 1995 and the Bayer (formerly Monsanto) Water Utilization Learning Center and Seed Research Center in 2008 created a mini industrial boom period. With fellow manufacturers Parker Tech Seals (a division of Parker-Hannifin) and Curbtender Inc., these large industries contribute to the community in numerous ways, not the least of which is attracting other businesses.

Gothenburg is, however, extremely loyal to our homegrown success stories. Four generations of the Peterson family have owned and operated a grocery

store downtown for almost 50 years. In 2021, the supermarket moved to a vacant department store building and became Fresh Seasons Market.

Headquartered in Gothenburg, Country Partners Cooperative is a full-service ag cooperative specializing in agronomy, seed, energy, feed and grain. Serving the community since 1904, the co-op now spans a trade territory of 22 communities and 3.3 million acres.

Pony Express Chevrolet Buick recently celebrated 30 years of selling vehicles in Gothenburg. The auto dealer contributes an extraordinary amount of sales tax to the city's budget.

Another longtime family-owned operation is Gothenburg Feed Products, an alfalfa dehydrating business over 75 years in production. The plant provides alfalfa feed pellets across the country.

Community leaders are constantly looking to build a better tomorrow by helping the next partner business or industry fit into the Gothenburg landscape.

PONY EXPRESS

CAPITAL OF NEBRASKA

GOTHENBURG DELIVERS ...

- **WORLD-CLASS GOLF**

Wild Horse Golf Club is rated among the best public courses in the nation.

- **PONY EXPRESS HISTORY**

The city has been designated the Pony Express Capital of Nebraska.

- **SWEDISH HERITAGE**

Settled by Swedes in the late 1800s, the humble culture remains.



- **UNMATCHED CHARM**

Stay for a day, for a week or as long as you like.



Gothenburg Area Chamber of Commerce

1001 Lake Ave. • Gothenburg, NE 69138

308-537-3505 • 800-482-5520



www.gothenburgdelivers.com • chamber@gothenburgdelivers.com