

Mayors Play Ambidextrous Roles as—

Omaha's Neighbors Make Big Plans for 1959

By Tom Allan

Arthur (Art) Gottsch runs a locker plant, delivers eggs to Omaha, feeds 143 head of cattle and "farms a little"—when he's not busy being Mayor of Elkhorn.

In his spare time he loves to smoke cigars and jovially tweak the nose of big brother Omaha while talking shop with the boys at the local coffee emporium.

Last week, waving his cigar for emphasis, he said:

"A town has to keep up with the times. If it doesn't it is real hard to catch up. That's true of any town. Once you are up to snuff it is easy to keep going."

Mayor Art is typical of the ambidexterity of the mayors of towns surrounding Omaha. Although only part-time officials they work around the clock selling their towns with just a few hours out each day to pursue their regular jobs.

Cognizant of the benefits of living close to the big city, they jealously guard the independence of their communities and boast of their progress.

During 1958, Art and his colleagues had plenty of boasting material. Progress has been vividly evident in all their towns.

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Elkhorn

"Got our sewage disposal plant plans all ready to go," said Mayor Gottsch. "Just waiting for the final Government okay. It will take care of not only our present needs but also those for the future. We just figured last spring that we would do it before . . ."

He took a satisfied puff on his cigar and grinned.

"We'd get like Omaha—up to our necks."

The town of seven hundred has modernized its water system to care for a community of three thousand to four thousand. Most of the streets have been paved. Thirty new homes have been built and plans set for at least that many more.

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Bellevue

The town of Mayor Vernon Woodle, merchant, is living up to its boast as "Nebraska's fastest growing community."

This across-the-back-fence neighbor of Strategic Air

Command Headquarters has expanded from a town of 3,862 in 1950 to a bustling community of close to 82 hundred citizens. The city limits were stretched last year to include seven new housing projects.

Forward steps included bond issue approval for a combined city offices and fire and police quarters, a new city garage, construction of 287 new homes, progress on a 200-thousand-dollar sewage disposal plant and construction of a new swimming pool.

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Plattsmouth

Mayor Grant Robert, Union Pacific Railroad accounting department supervisor, says the year's significant development was a new industrial site on the Missouri River. A new milling industry at the site will be announced soon.

Plans for this community of close to six thousand include the letting of contracts by early February on three conservation and flood control dams. Progress on a 230-thousand-dollar sewage disposal plant is anticipated. Last year some 13 thousand feet of new sewer lines were built.

Awaited is the effect, if any, of the opening this spring of the new Highway 75 bypass which will take transient traffic away from downtown streets.

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Millard

The promising impact of the multimillion-dollar Western Electric Plant is only beginning to be felt in this town of Mayor Harry Anderson, electrical contractor.

A new Postoffice is vital. Swelling receipts have already made the present one, housed in the rear of a drug store, one of the largest in the near-Omaha area.

Construction is booming. New buildings completed or under way include a bank, church and a 750-thousand-dollar school building.

Last year 30 new homes were completed. The big push is expected this year with nearly every field surrounding the city being eyed by developers.

The city has zoned a half-mile belt outside city limits and up-dated building codes. Contracts have been let for



—World-Herald Photo.

Mayor Gottsch . . . Keep up.

gas line extension from Ralston.

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Ralston

"The city of progress and beauty" is living up to its motto while Mayor H. H. (Butch) Van Fleet keeps an eye on the fast approaching city limits of Omaha.

The year was marked with major housing developments including the transformation of most of the old golf course into the 110-lot Oak Park Development project. Potential developers of a 38-acre tract to the west of the city have extended feelers toward annexation.

Other forward steps include approval of a 175-thousand-dollar bond issue for school expansion; completion of a 500-thousand-gallon elevated water tank and water system, negotiations with Omaha on sewage disposal, construction of St. Gerald's Catholic Church and School plans for a new Lutheran Church, modernization of the shopping district, a new Ralston Recreation Association swimming pool, start of a summer recreation program and more men for the Police and Maintenance Departments.

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Valley

Steady, if un spectacular, progress was the 1958 report of Mayor Robert R. Hanson, trucker, for his town of 14 hundred.

John Peters, City Clerk and past Chamber of Commerce

president, said business has been excellent along Main Street. Construction was topped by the completion of the new Decker Fire Hall in honor of Ray C. Decker, chief 36 years prior to his death February 8.

Records were set in civic enterprises such as the annual Alluvia Days and Farmers' Night. Civic clubs are pushing a drive for a new municipal swimming pool.

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Papillion

A 210-thousand-dollar school expansion, completion of about 45 blocks of paving, a 375-thousand-dollar bowling alley and a Trinity Lutheran Church were among the 1958 landmarks in Mayor Ed Spethman's town.

The promise of the future lies in a newly-established planning commission, the impact of the new Interstate Highway and housing plans such as the new 160-acre subdivision to the north.

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Springfield

Mayor Fred McCarty expects big things from the Interstate Highway and the modernization of Highway 50.

His town got into high gear last year with the establishment of the new Turtle Creek Watershed Conservation District, new site and permanent buildings for the Sarpy County Fair, establishment of a rescue unit and a new housing development.

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Waterloo

Mayor John Love, railroadman, has two main projects for this year.

They are another try at the proposed flood protection project, temporarily shelved last year over rights-of-way problems, and expansion of the water system.

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Irvington

Little unincorporated Irvington is closest to being swallowed up by Omaha. Its school system last year merged with Omaha's.

New housing south and east of town is signalling the fast approach of the city.

Biggest boast of the town is still its crack Volunteer Fire Department and rescue unit which serves a major part of rural Douglas County.