



LEPSL: 550 DATA FLUENCY AND ANALYSIS FINAL REPORT

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Professor Bernie Colon
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University of San Diego

Lisa Citta

Change and the decisions that go along with it can be difficult. Especially when that change affects an entire community; change that comes in the form of growth but leaves some with reservations about the positive impact it could have. When community leaders decide on bringing new controversial industries to the area, they must do their research and review the available data to determine if the new industry is a benefit to the area.

Sustainable Beef LLC is a new beef packing plant that would like to build on the east side of North Platte. Sustainable Beef has reported it will employ 875 people with an average annual salary of \$50,000 (Jordan), bringing much-needed higher-paying jobs to the area. Not only will this plant employ several hundred area residents, but it will generate much-needed revenue for the local economy. Revenue will be generated from employees living and working in the area, supporting local businesses. Revenue will also be generated from the truck drivers who will be transporting the approximately 40,000 head of cattle annually into the plant.

Concerns have been raised the packing plant will bring minority, particularly Hispanic, workers into the area which in turn will raise crime rates. Crime rates are not the only thing to consider when discussing the proposed project. In addition to looking at crime trends of other cities, similar in size, that have packing plants, it's also important to consider the potential economic boost for the region, increase in sales in the housing market, and an increase in attendance in local schools which leads to an increase in state aid.

This paper will research the above factors paying closest attention to crime and ethnicity in comparison to other Nebraska cities. North Platte will be compared to Lexington, Hastings, and Fremont. Lexington is the closest town to North Platte and the town opponents

to the project compare North Platte to most often. As will be shown later, Lexington is approximately half the size of North Platte.

There were some challenges in researching the information and trends. Some of the plants in these towns were built several decades ago, one as far back as 1947 and a couple in the 1990s. Locating data from 30+ years ago was not possible in all areas as much of the data available online does not go back that far, therefore showing before and after construction information did not provide the result I had planned. I also reached out to our local chamber of commerce for information regarding the proposed economic impact this plant would have not only on the local economy but also on unemployment rates. I was provided a few limited numbers but told the official report that was completed by an economist would not be finalized and available until late August.

Population Data:

This section contains two tables. Table 1.1 is each city's overall population, the total number of workers employed at each city's plant, and the percentage of residents working at each plant. Hastings and Lexington each have just one plant in their city, Fremont has three. The total number of employees at all three Fremont plants is reflected in this table. North Platte's numbers were recorded as the proposed number of employees.

Table 1.2 contains the percentages of the ethnicities of each city's residents. Opponents to the plant in North Platte believe this plant will bring minority workers, particularly Hispanic workers that will cause crime to rise. For this report, I only included white, black, and Hispanic origin in this table as those are the top three highest reported races/ethnicities from each city.

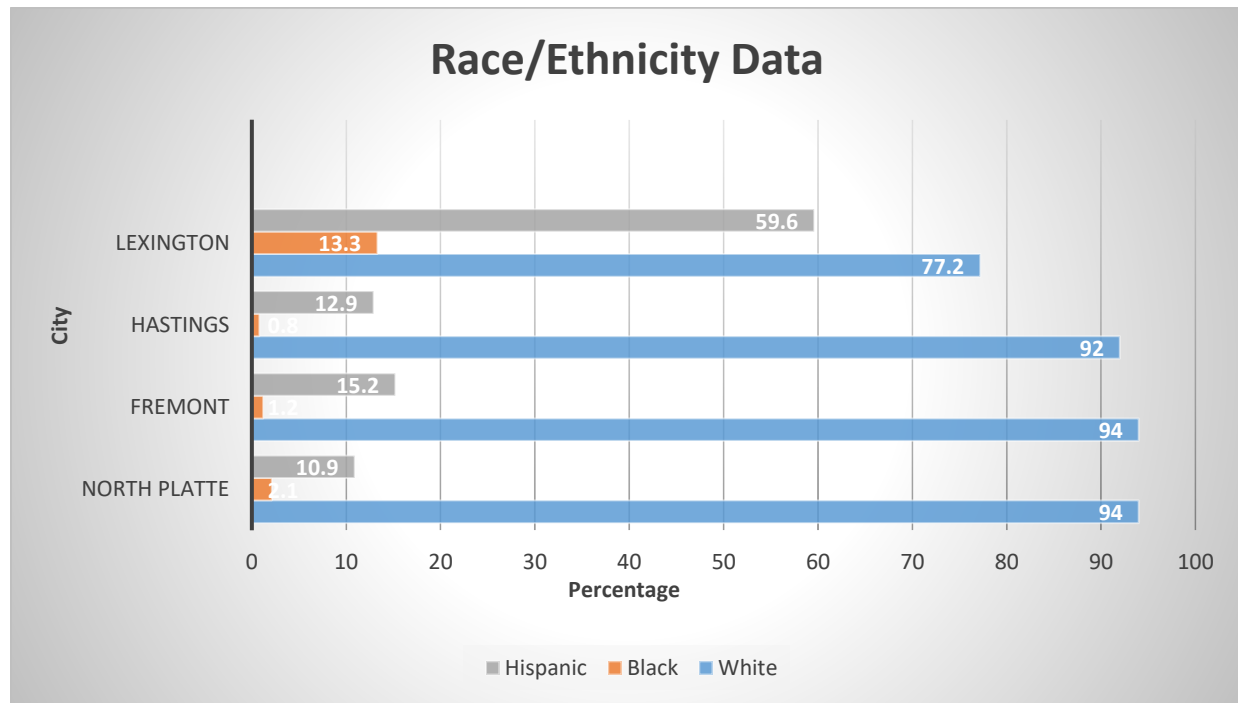
All population data was gathered from the United States Census Bureau. Employment numbers were found on each plant’s website or news articles that listed the total number of employees.

Table 1.1

City	Total City Population	# of Employees (approx.)	% of residents working at plant
North Platte	23,892	850 (proposed)	3.5 %
Fremont	26,437	2511	9.5%
Hastings	24,906	400	1.6%
Lexington	10,097	2700	26.7%

*Based on 2019 US Census Data <https://www.census.gov/>

Table 1.2



*Based on 2019 US Census Data <https://www.census.gov/>

Packing Plant Information:

Locating employee information for each packing plant was difficult for most of the plants. As previously mentioned, several of these plants have been in existence since the early 1990s or even longer. Tyson Foods in Lexington was built in 1990. Based on the high percentage of the total number of Lexington residents that work at the plant and the high percentage of those that identified on the Census data as Hispanic, a high percentage of workers at Tyson Foods may be Hispanic.

Fremont has three packing plants. Hormel Foods was built in 1947. Hormel was purchased by Wholestone Farms LLC in 2018 and employs approximately 1361 employees. Fremont Beef Company, which employees approximately 350 employees was built in 1990. Lincoln Premium Poultry was built in 2016 and employs 800 workers.

Hastings plant, WR Reserve, began operating in 2011. Initially, this plant employed 100-150 workers however expanded to 350 in the last 18 months.

Economic Impact:

As of June 2021, the total unemployment rate for Nebraska was 2.5% (US Bureau of Labor). Each town with a packing plant holds an unemployment rate comparable to the statewide average. The cost-of-living index, as reported by BestPlaces, was very similar in all four cities. The current property tax rate for North Platte is slightly higher than that of the three other cities. Table 2.1 will compare each category. Without the packing plant, North Platte currently already compares in all categories to the other three cities.

Table 2.1

<u>City</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>	<u>Cost of Living Index</u>	<u>Property Tax Rate</u>
North Platte	2.3%	83.2	\$20
Fremont	2.5%	84.4	\$17.41
Hastings	2.6%	79.4	\$18.92
Lexington	2.3%	77.6	\$18.23

*Based on data from Best Places <https://www.bestplaces.net>

Police Departments:

When I began research into each police department, I found only one department produces an annual report, Fremont Police Department. The only annual reports I could find for FPD were 2014-2018. To gather the most current data, I called each police department and requested their overall calls for service numbers. Hastings Police Department reported they recently moved to a new computer system, and they didn't have access to any numbers further back than 2020. Only having access to all department's 2020 numbers, those will be the only numbers compared in this report.

One of Fremont's plants was built in 2016 and employs 800 people. I reviewed the data from the annual reports for Fremont PD and found the calls for service remained relatively unchanged for all five years. Fremont's population also saw little change in that same timeframe. This led me to believe the building of the new chicken plant did not bring new people to town but rather employed current Fremont residents or drew residents from neighboring communities.

Table 3.1 is an overview of each police department and their overall calls for service in 2020. This table is designed to give an overall picture of how many overall calls each department responds to in their city and not look solely at the UCR/NIBRS reported crimes. The rate of calls for service per 1,000 residents was figured to compare the volume of calls each department is responding to.

Table 3.2 displays the total number of NIBRS reportable offenses for 2020 for each department and gives an overall offense rate per 1,000 residents.

Table 3.1

<u>City</u>	<u>Number of Officers</u>	<u>2020 Calls for Service</u>	<u>Rate of CFS/1,000</u>
North Platte	38	22,569	944
Fremont	32	21,286	805
Hastings	34	24,562	929
Lexington	20	5,902	584

Table 3.2

<u>City</u>	<u>2020 # of Offenses</u>	<u>Offense Rate/ 1,000</u>
North Platte	1,196	50.84
Fremont	1,160	43.97
Hastings	920	37.34
Lexington	280	27.71

*Based on data from Nebraska Crime Commission <https://crimestats.ne.gov>

Nebraska uses NIBRS (Nebraska Incident Based Reporting System) to report and track crime data in the state. All agencies in this study reported 12 months of data in 2020 except Hastings who reported 8 months. NIBRS tracks data in two groups, Group A Offenses and Group B Offenses. Group A offenses are crimes against persons (i.e. murders, assaults, sexual assaults, kidnapping), crimes against property (arsons, thefts, criminal mischief, etc), and crimes against society (weapons violations, drug offenses, prostitution, etc). Group B offenses are liquor violations, trespassing, family offenses (nonviolent), and all other offenses. Of all the agencies studied, North Platte reported the highest number of Group A offenses which could be considered the most serious of the two groups.

Table 3.3

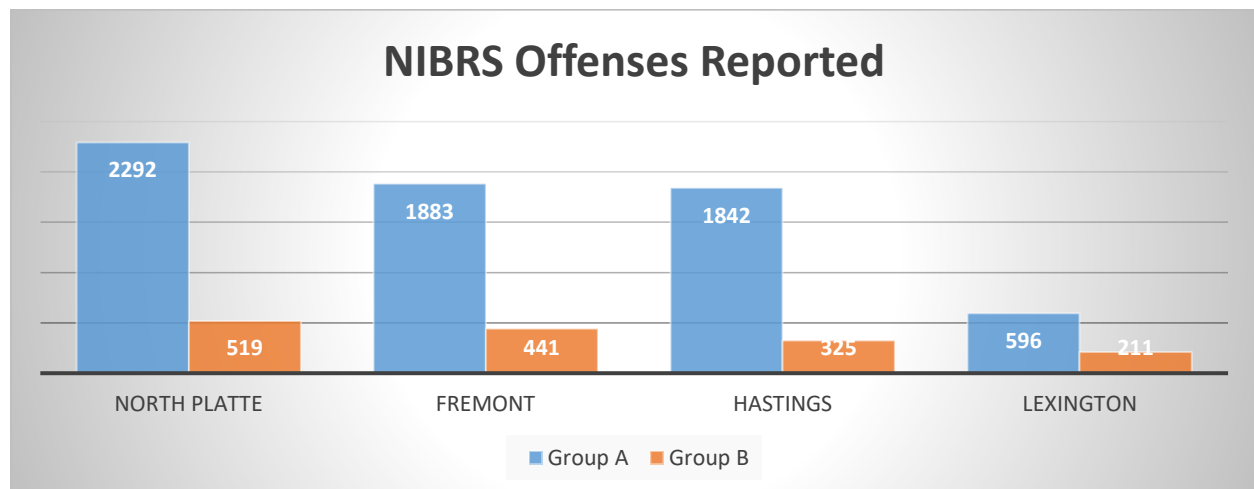
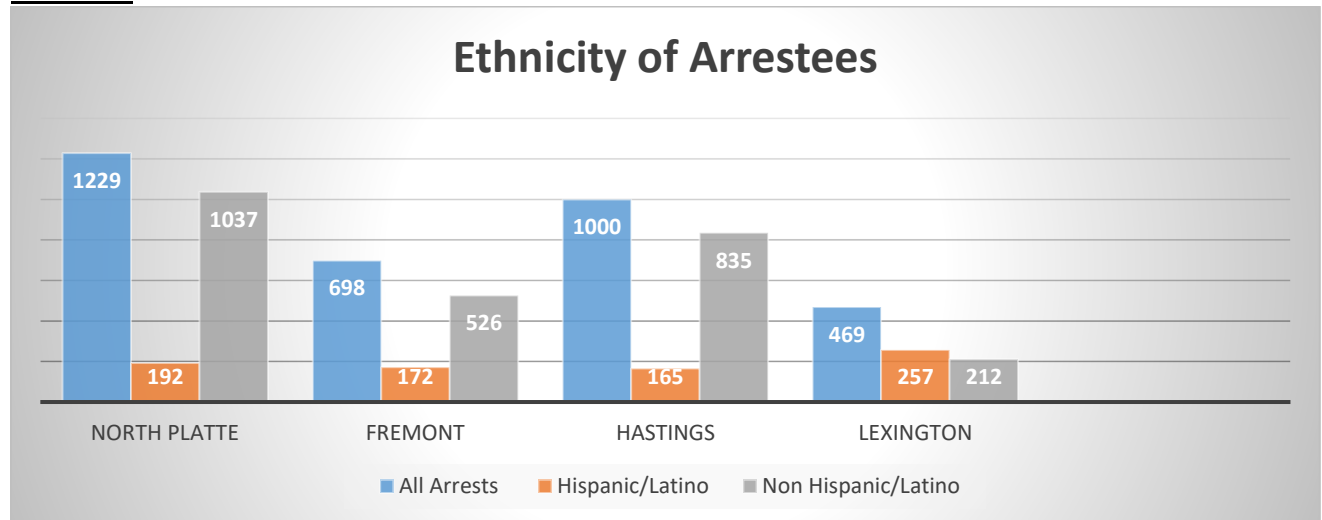


Table 3.4 provides arrest information regarding the ethnicity of arrests made in 2020. The number in blue represents all total arrests made by each agency. Besides Lexington, which has a high Hispanic population, the other three agencies' arrests are overwhelmingly made by non-Hispanic offenders.

Table 3.4



Conclusion:

Fremont, Hastings, and North Platte are the most comparable in population and department size. North Platte has no packing plant however has the most officers and annually responds to calls at a higher rate than the other cities. North Platte currently has a higher offense rate and calls for service rate, both nearly twice that of Lexington who North Platte has been compared to often throughout the journey of approving the North Platte packing plant.

Besides Lexington, data provided does not support the claim that Hispanics are committing crimes at a higher rate than other ethnicities. Lexington’s Hispanic arrest rate would make is explainable given their high Hispanic population. Even with their high population, the data does not support they have a higher crime rate than North Platte.

Without being able to locate crime data prior to construction of most of the plants, I was unable to determine if there was a spike in crime. The data does however show North Platte currently has a slightly higher crime rate than the other three communities with existing packing plants.

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Lisa Citta 8/12/2021

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