

City of Imperial

2023 Housing Self-Assessment

Enclosed with this application please find the Housing portion of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Imperial. While that Comprehensive Plan is nearly ten years old, much of the information is still applicable to the housing needs and goals for the Imperial community. In the winter of 2022/2023, the City of Imperial undertook a self-assessment to update this data and to reflect on our current housing stock and needs of our community. This self-assessment was conducted by surveying households, employers, employees, realtors, and owners of rental properties in the community.

The City of Imperial's Housing Survey for Households provided 191 responses, or approximately 24% of our total occupied households according to the 2021 ACS estimates. Of those surveys, 98 household responses indicated their residences were in excellent condition and contributed positively to the community's housing stock. Eighty-five responded their residence was structurally sound but may need minor repairs. Four respondents indicated their residences have one major issue, while just two households responded their residence was in overall unsatisfactory condition.

Table 1.1 Year Housing Unit Build, Imperial, 2021	
Total housing units	802
2020 or Later	0 (±10)
2010-2019	69 (±52)
2000-2009	25 (±29)
1980-1999	134 (±47)
1960-1979	305 (±70)
1940-1959	110 (±53)
1939 or earlier	159 (±56)
<u>Source: 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates - Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units</u>	

Data taken from the 2021 American Community Survey is represented in Table 1.1, and provides the overall age for owner-occupied units in Imperial.

The 2020 United States Census indicates Imperial's new population is 2,068, down just three residents from a total of 2,071 in the 2010 Census and well within the Census' margin of error. Since our 2014 Comprehensive Plan, Imperial has been active in housing development. In the past ten years, Imperial has added 20 homes in our Cornerstone/Heather Estates Development neighborhoods, which provides a nice mixture of market-rate single-family homes as well as single-family affordable housing all within two blocks of Schroeder Park and Baseball/Softball Fields.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the significant increase in the cost and shortage of building materials, as well as record-low unemployment

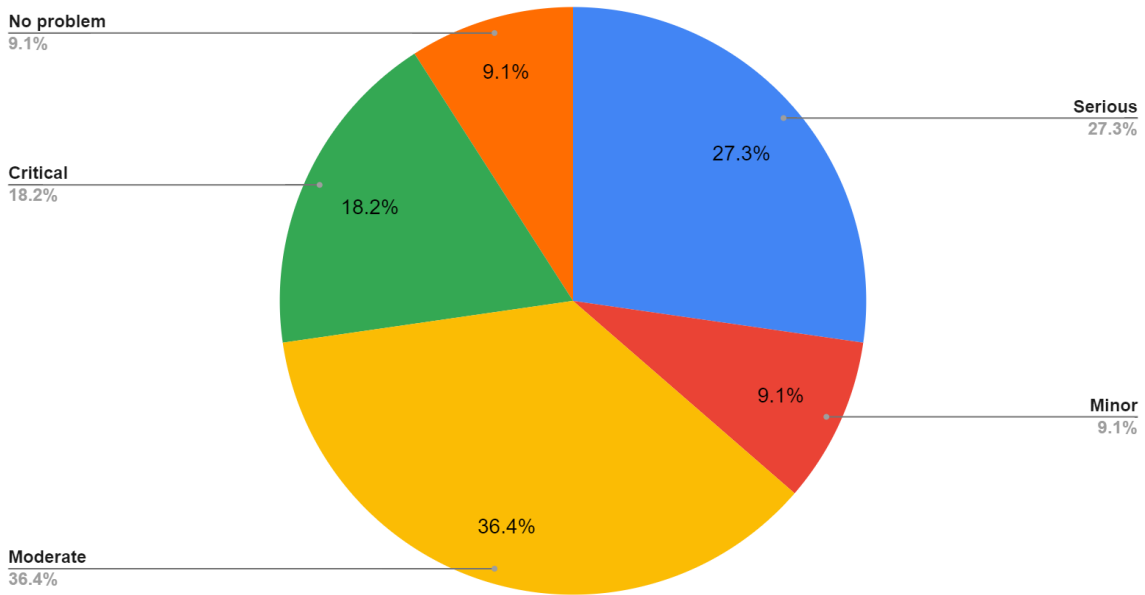
numbers in the State of Nebraska have contributed to the slowing of housing development in Imperial in recent years. However, in the past two years, a new spec home was constructed and

a modular home brought into the Wesley Addition, providing an additional owner-occupied home in the community. Likewise, development continues of higher-priced luxury homes in our Sage Addition, with five homes built since 2014 and one single-family home currently under construction. Two additional infill homes were constructed in Imperial since 2014. In recent years, four modular homes were moved into our Adams Addition to provide additional rental housing.

Despite this exciting housing activity for a community Imperial's size, our housing survey results indicate those efforts simply have not been enough to keep up with the high demand of people who desire to live in Imperial. The high demand for housing is due to a number of factors, including the low unemployment rate, the high quality of life residents enjoy here, an excellent K-12 school and a newly renovated and expanded Mid-Plains Community College extended campus. The widespread availability of affordable gigabit fiber Internet across the community allows for an unprecedented opportunity for remote working and learning right here in Imperial, allowing newcomers to bring their jobs with them. Founded and headquartered in Imperial, Allo Communications has substantially expanded the variety of employment opportunities in a predominantly agricultural community, providing IT, marketing, accounting, and customer service opportunities. Imperial continues to act as the regional economic and social hub for the counties surrounding Chase County, providing necessary recreational, business, and social opportunities to our neighboring communities.

This demand has caused a significant increase in the cost of housing in the community, making it difficult for much of our community to find housing affordable to them. Additionally, this housing shortage and low unemployment rate have caused a worker shortage across nearly all industries in Imperial, forcing some restaurants and other businesses to drastically reduce their hours. On our employer surveys, 45% of the respondents indicated a serious or critical problem with availability of housing with regard to maintaining or expanding their workforce needs. Another 36% noted a moderate effect. Interviews with Chase County Schools, Chase County Community Hospital, and Frenchman Valley Coop officials all indicated multiple occasions where a potential employee had to decline a job offer due to the housing shortage in Imperial.

Figure 1.3 - Employer Survey: How big of a problem is housing as you work to recruit employees or consider expansion of your business?



Both realtors who primarily service the Imperial community responded to our Housing Survey for Realtors. These realtors responded there is a short supply of available homes in every category of homes, including homes that cost less than \$100,000 to homes valued at more than \$350,000. One realtor indicated 21-30% of their clients in the past 12 months were relocating to the Imperial community, while the other realtor responded that over 30% of their clients during that same period were people looking to relocate to the community. This is a clear indicator Imperial’s population is primed for growth from people new to the community, the only thing holding back this growth is the lack of availability of housing of all types.

The City of Imperial currently owns 11 shovel-ready residential lots in the Heather Estates Addition, which are available for reasonable prices. Additionally, a local developer has undertaken the project of activating the space formerly used as the high school track and football field into a residential development named Wellpark. This developer intends to build 14 single-family homes targeted toward retirees, which are within easy walking distance of two restaurants, a grocery store, and our community center and a short drive to our hospital, school, and downtown business district. City officials hope the transition for these retirees to this housing development will open up their older, larger homes to new families with potentially two or more workers to help strengthen our workforce.

The City’s goal is to build the remaining 11 Heather Estates lots while continuing to explore and encourage other housing development opportunities in the community. We hope developers will continue expanding the mixed-income nature of the current Heather Estates development to provide housing opportunities for all community members. Additionally, it is the hope of the City of Imperial that construction of new homes will entice some homeowners to

upgrade to a new home, opening up their existing, older home to provide additional opportunities for more affordable housing in the community.

A total of 53 households indicated on our housing survey they are considering changing their residence in the community, either to upgrade or to downsize. Of those responses, nearly 89 percent of households (47 responses) indicated the lack of availability of housing in Imperial is the number one reason in their ability to rent or buy a different home in the community. Additional named barriers include lack of a down payment and the high cost of housing in the Imperial market.

Of our 191 housing survey responses, only 17 responses stated they were in the market for homes valued at more than \$350,000, while the overwhelming majority of responses indicated they were in the market for homes that would be eligible to be built using funds from the Rural Workforce Housing Fund.

Likewise, our workforce continues to struggle to find homes to rent in Imperial. Landlords responding to our Rental Property Owners survey indicated they receive 5-10 calls per month from families looking for rental properties. Eighty-three percent of landlords identified availability of suitable housing for rental properties as being a real problem for the community. All landlords indicated they have no difficulty finding tenants for their rentals, and many stated they maintain an ongoing waiting list for their properties.

In summary, the housing shortage indicated in our 2014 Comprehensive Plan has not only continued, but has become an increasingly dire situation considering the number of people that would like to move to Imperial and the number of open positions in businesses of all industries. While the situation may seem bleak, Imperial recognizes its opportunity to grow with the number of available residential lots that are ready for new homes. Our community has accepted the challenge. We are looking to aggressively develop additional housing to capture the number of newcomers looking to live in Imperial, as well as make housing more affordable for all. The City of Imperial strongly believes the addition of new homes in the community will not just continue Imperial's decade after decade of a sustained population, but rather, provide sustainable growth to our community.