

# Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Regulations 2014

*Investing in Imperial's Tomorrow*

City of Imperial, Nebraska

**Office Locations**

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Grand Island  
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Prepared By:



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**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
2014-2024**

**CITY OF IMPERIAL, NEBRASKA**  
Project No. 159-G1-018

Prepared By:



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### **City Council**

Mayor - Dwight Coleman

City Clerk/Administrator/Treasurer - Jo Leyland

Council President - John Arterburn

Chad Yaw

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## Vision for Imperial

Imperial's residents and business owners are enormous assets to the community and their participation was essential to the planning process. The planning process for Investing in Imperial's Tomorrow, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Imperial, included many public participation meetings which, in turn, gave stakeholders the opportunity to frame the goals and directions of the plan. This plan presents a vision for the community, from the community.

The blueprint for Imperial is to have continuing community input of goals and ambitions for the City. The idea is to promote and grow a diverse economic base while emphasizing overall community development, including a proactive approach for attracting new residents. Commercial and housing development is currently an issue that needs to be addressed in order to attract and maintain residents. There are areas for development; however, these areas need to be marketed in order to attract a developer. Gateway corridors along Highways 6 and 61 were major discussion points during the public input sessions. Residents would really love to see these areas beautified in order to give a grand "first impression" to visitors. Other goals for Imperial are to create a variety of job options, agricultural and non-agricultural, while also maintaining infrastructure such as roads, water, and public buildings/services. The creation of this plan and the continual reference back to it and any other planning efforts, will benefit the City on its road to reach the goals laid out in this Comprehensive Plan.

## Introduction

Investing in Imperial's Tomorrow 2014-2024 is an outline of the goals for the community and by the community. This Comprehensive Plan is a blueprint for the City's future, a blueprint to develop the kind of community for tomorrow. It provides guidance on where and how the City will invest and change over the next ten years. It contains maps, visions and goals for the future, and policies to address topics ranging from land use and demographics to transportation and community services. The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide long-range guidance to property owners, residents, elected and appointed officials, City staff, and others to inform, provide options, and stimulate community discussion on issues such as where and what type of future developments should occur.

## Compliance with State & Local Requirements Governmental & Jurisdictional Organization

The governmental functions of Imperial, Nebraska are provided and coordinated by the City Council, comprised of five elected officials.

The planning and zoning jurisdiction for the City of Imperial includes an area within one-mile of their corporate limits, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 17-1002,

### Nebraska Revised Statute § 17-1002.

Designation of jurisdiction; suburban development; subdivision; platting; consent required; review by County planning commission; when required.

*(1) Except as provided in section 13-327, any city of the second class or Village may designate by ordinance the portion of the territory located within one mile of the corporate limits of such city or Village and outside of any other organized city or Village within which the designating city or Village will exercise the powers and duties granted by this section and section 17-1003 or section 19-2402.*

*(2) No owner of any real property located within the area designated by a city or Village pursuant to subsection (1) of this section may subdivide, plat, or lay out such real property in building lots, streets, or other portions of the same intended to be dedicated for public use or for the use of the purchasers or owner of lots fronting thereon or adjacent thereto without first having obtained the approval of the city council or board of trustees of such municipality or its agent designated pursuant to section 19-916 and, when applicable, having complied with sections 39-1311 to 39-1311.05. The fact that such real property is located in a different County or counties than some or all portions of the municipality shall not be construed as affecting the necessity of obtaining the approval of the city council or board of trustees of such municipality or its designated agent.*

*(3) No plat of such real property shall be recorded or have any force or effect unless approved by the city council or board of trustees of such municipality or its designated agent.*

*(4) In counties that have adopted a comprehensive development plan which meets the requirements of section 23-114.02 and are enforcing subdivision regulations, the County planning commission shall be provided with all available materials on any proposed subdivision plat, contemplating public streets or improvements, which is filed with a municipality in that County, when such proposed plat lies partially or totally within the extraterritorial subdivision jurisdiction being exercised by that municipality in such County. The commission shall be given four weeks to officially comment on the appropriateness of the design and improvements proposed in the plat. The review period for the commission shall run concurrently with subdivision review activities of the municipality after the commission receives all available material for a proposed subdivision plat.*

The planning and zoning jurisdiction of City of Imperial is governed by Neb. Rev. Stat. §17-1004. As Imperial continues to grow and annex land into their corporate limits, their extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJ) may extend further into Chase County. The City of Imperial has chosen, at this time, to extend their jurisdiction the full one-mile.

#### Nebraska Revised Statute § 17-1004

An ordinance of a city of the second class or Village designating its jurisdiction over territory outside of the corporate limits of the city or Village under section 17-1001 or 17-1002 shall describe such territory by metes and bounds or by reference to an official map.

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with state statutes and requirements.

#### Nebraska Revised Statute § 19-903

#### **Comprehensive development plan; requirements; regulations and restrictions made in accordance with plan; considerations.**

The regulations and restrictions authorized by sections 19-901 to 19-915 shall be in accordance with a comprehensive development plan which shall consist of both graphic and textual material and shall be designed to accommodate anticipated long-range future growth which shall be based upon documented population and economic projections. The comprehensive development plan shall, among other possible elements, include:

*(1) A land-use element which designates the proposed general distributions, general location, and extent of the uses of land for agriculture, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, education, public buildings and lands, and other categories of public and private use of land;*

*(2) The general location, character, and extent of existing and proposed major roads, streets, and highways, and air and other transportation routes and facilities;*

*(3) The general location, type, capacity, and area served of present and projected or needed community facilities including recreation facilities, schools, libraries, other public buildings, and public utilities and services;*

*(4) When a new Comprehensive Plan or a full update to an existing Comprehensive Plan is developed on or after July 15, 2010, but not later than January 1, 2015, an energy element which: Assesses energy infrastructure and energy use by sector, including residential, commercial, and industrial sectors; evaluates utilization of renewable energy sources; and promotes energy conservation measures that benefit the community. This subdivision shall not apply to Villages; and*

*(5)(a) When next amended after January 1, 1995, an identification of sanitary and improvement districts, subdivisions, industrial tracts, commercial tracts, and other discrete developed areas which are or in the future may be appropriate subjects for annexation and (b) a general review of the standards and qualifications that should be met to enable the municipality to undertake annexation of such areas. Failure of the plan to identify subjects for annexation or to set out standards or qualifications for annexation shall not serve as the basis for any challenge to the validity of an annexation ordinance.*

*Regulations shall be designed to lessen congestion in the streets; to secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers; to promote health and the general welfare; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to secure safety from flood; to avoid undue concentration of population; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to protect property against blight and depreciation; to protect the tax base; to secure economy in governmental expenditures; and to preserve, protect, and enhance historic buildings, places, and districts.*

*Such regulations shall be made with reasonable consideration, among other things, for the character of the district and its peculiar suitability for particular uses and with a view to conserving the value of buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout such municipality.*

It is the duty of the City Council to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality. The master plan of a community shall be an advisory document to guide land development decisions.

The Planning Commission, after a public hearing, shall make its recommendation to the City Council. The City Council, after a public hearing, shall adopt and approve the Comprehensive Plan.

## Why a Comprehensive Plan?

This document is the community's long-term Comprehensive Plan that establishes vision and direction for the future (to the year 2024). Its objectives are to confirm the community's vision for the future, and to set the policy framework to help guide future decisions related to development and investment. It will help the City thoughtfully address future needs for economic development, transportation, housing, services, parks and open space, and other community benefits. It will also help to ensure a sustainable and fiscally responsible future, by setting the desired direction for future development regulations, policy decisions, and community programs.

## Goals for Imperial's Comprehensive Plan 2014-2024

While this plan embodies many ideas, goals, and policies that are parallel with other communities' goals in this region, there are some noteworthy new directions and slight changes in course presented in this plan. These new directions resulted from community feedback, reaction to current trends and conditions, and policy direction from elected and appointed officials. These directions include the following list of goals:

- Improve Public Infrastructure
- Promote Commercial Development
- Improve the Existing Housing Market
- Expand Recreational Attractions & Community Amenities
- Enhance Gateway Entrances & Community Beautification
- Develop Marketing Campaign

## Data Sources

### 2010 Census (short form)

This is the form that every household should have received in 2010. It has basic gender, age, and race population but there is not enough data reported to elaborate on Imperial's demographic or economic standings.

### American Community Survey (ACS)

This survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in replacement of the Decennial Census Long Form. The ACS provides a lot of different data such as household income, commute time to work, year of household, etc. The survey is spread over five years (2008-2012) and it uses a much smaller sample population than the Decennial Census Long Form did. Every year a small portion of surveys are sent out to people; the Census Bureau then makes estimates based on those numbers that were gathered over the five-year time span. The ACS reports the data as an estimate with a margin of error. The ACS states there is a 90 percent chance of accuracy within the margin of error reported on either side of the original estimate.

### Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI)

ESRI reports data on Nebraska's Location One Information System (LOIS) website. ESRI reports data similar to the Census Bureau's data, and LOIS allows each community to enter additional information regarding commercial properties, including vacant lots and buildings, to market and promote economic development in each community and for the State of Nebraska.

## **Building on Previous Planning Efforts**

The City of Imperial has a solid record of community participation and planning for the future. The 2014 Comprehensive Plan is a blueprint to 2024 which builds on previous planning efforts. The Comprehensive Plan update included review of these previous efforts and documents. Many of the goals, policies, and ideas for the future represented in the previous planning efforts are still relevant, and are carried forth in this plan. There are also some new ideas for development that were discussed during our public input sessions. Some examples of overarching themes in this plan that are carried forth from previous planning efforts include:

### Goals from the 2001-2011 Comprehensive Plan (Hanna:Keelan):

- Foster of value of family in Imperial. Encourage the development of local action to preserve and strengthen families.
- Implement appropriate community and economic developments to achieve an increase in the population of Imperial by an estimated 0.71 percent per year for the next 10 years, or 146 people/76 households by 2010.
- Provide all residents with access to a variety of safe, decent, sanitary housing types, including elderly households and persons with disabilities.
- Stabilize and broaden the economic base in Imperial to create and expand employment opportunities.
- Preserve and improve the physical appearance and character of Imperial, including the Downtown and both Highway 6 and 61 corridors.
- Produce and maintain a community land use plan and zoning/subdivision regulations.

### Other Planning Efforts:

Two Blight and Substandard Studies have been completed for Imperial. The first one was completed in 2004 creating Redevelopment Areas 1, 2 and 3 and the second one was completed in 2007 creating Redevelopment Area 4.

A Housing Study was completed in 2008 for the City of Imperial.

## **Planning Period**

The planning period for Imperial’s Comprehensive Plan, is from 2014-2024. This plan should be reviewed in 2015, 2019, and a complete update should be done in 2024 if City officials decide the community has had enough change to warrant a new plan or they determine the process and goal-setting would be beneficial for the City at that time. However, it is still important to continually refer to and update this plan throughout the planning period.

Establishing an annual review process of the Comprehensive Plan will be important to the success of this plan and to the City of Imperial. This process should include public hearings to discuss whether the plan is still valid or whether updates need to be made. Actual documentation of these meetings is pertinent in providing proof of the public’s continued input on this plan.

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# Chapter 1: Community Profile

The Community Profile Chapter considers current characteristics of the community that will form the foundation for planning in Imperial for the next ten years. This profile is a compilation of information that is derived through outside research, conversations with local residents and officials, on-site assessments, and data analysis. This Community Profile Chapter will consist of the following components:

- Description
- History
- Population
- Housing
- Economy & Capital Improvement



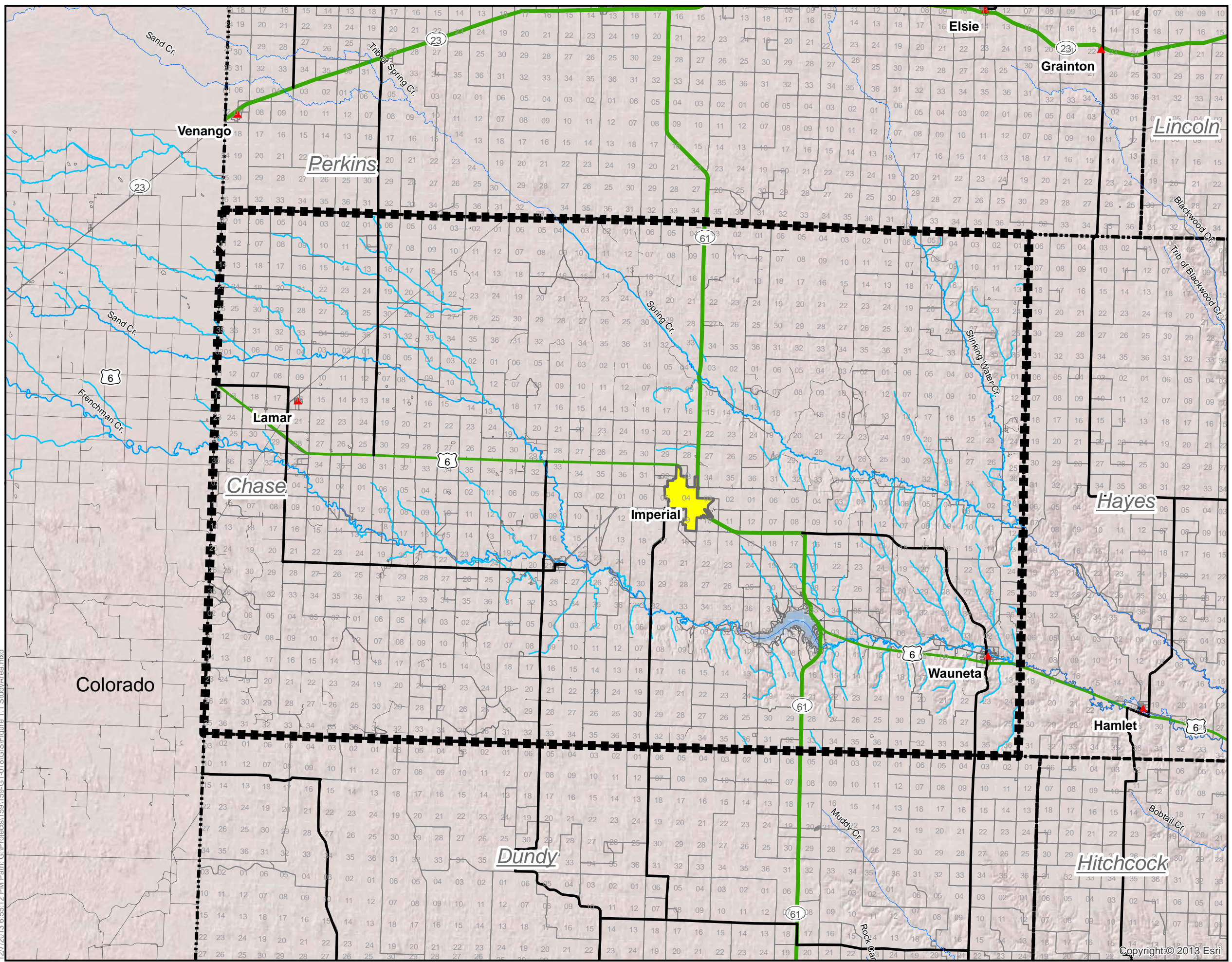
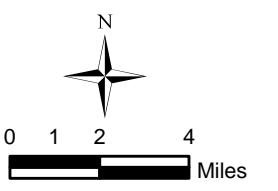
# Description

The City of Imperial, which is approximately 2.95 square miles, is situated in central Chase County on Highway 6 and along Highway 61.

Other communities in Chase County include Lamar and Wauneta and two unincorporated communities of Champion and Enders. Imperial is the County Seat of Chase County. According to the 2010 Census, Imperial's population was 2,071. Imperial is home to several different industries, a wonderful school district, great healthcare options, senior housing and services, restaurants, stores, enjoyable recreational facilities, and the annual Chase County Fair held every summer. With a new multi-use subdivision, Cornerstone Development, and several other notable projects completed in recent years, the City is working on capitalizing on the growing population by increasing the quality of life for residents and creating a lucrative community for business owners. **Figure 1.1** shows Imperial's location in Chase County. This map acts as a Study Area Map for the Comprehensive Plan. Chase County borders the State of Colorado touching Phillips County and Yuma County, Colorado as well as three Counties in Nebraska including Perkins County, Dundy County and Hayes County.







**Legend**

- Imperial Corporate Boundary

**Figure 1.1**  
**Study Area MAP**

Chase County, Nebraska

12/7/2013 6:55:12 PM Path: G:\Projects\159159-G1-018\GIS\Figure 1.1 StudyArea.mxd



# History

*The following account of Imperial's history was written by Anoma Hoffmeister in cooperation with the Chase County Historical Society, and it can be found on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's "Virtual Nebraska" website. This article and historic images of the community can be found by going to <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/Chase/Imperial/>.*

Legend has it that Thomas Mercier, the founder of Imperial, was walking west from McCook when he met two cow-punchers on the brow of a hill over-looking a broad valley east of what is now our town. In passing the time of day, Mercier told them he was going "to build a town." One of them said, and the other agreed, "If I were going to start a town, I would do it in the middle of that big valley down there." Mercier did just that. His grandson said he was often told how Grandpa laid out the streets of Imperial with a hatchet, level, and stakes.



*Imperial, Nebraska 1910*

Mercier arrived early in 1885 and the "Imperial" post office was established in December of that year, named either for his home in Canada or the British imperial government. The city celebrated its centennial in 1985. One of the first problems encountered by putting a town on the level plain was that they had to haul water from Frenchman River several miles south until a well could be dug.

The town was platted on land claimed by Mercier and Melville J. Goodrich. Twelfth Street is the dividing line between the two homesteads. In the summer of 1886, after three elections, Imperial was named the Chase County seat.

In order to get things started, Goodrich and Mercier gave a lot to anyone who would put up a building. On one corner was a bank, on another corner, a two-story double building. C.N. Cottrell had his hardware store in one side of the building and Otto Fliesbach had general merchandise on the other. The families lived upstairs over the stores. Cottrell's Hardware remained in the family for 100 years, his grandson, Willard Rouze, retiring in May 1986.

On the other corners were two more general stores, Brittell's and Mercier's. There was also a lumber yard owned by H.H. Whitman, a drug store, a livery stable owned by Smith Brothers, and the important blacksmith shop. For some time there was no church, but Sunday School was held regularly in Fliesbach's store.



*Imperial, 1988, serving the citizens of Chase County and southwest Nebraska*



*West Side of Main Street, Imperial, Nebraska*

They were quick in establishing newspapers. “The Chronicle” with D.G.Hines as editor, was the first newspaper. It was noted the temporary county board met in the Chronicle office April 4, 1886. By July 1887 it was reported that Imperial was to have another paper, “The Imperial Republican,” and by September 1887, a third paper, the “Chase County Reporter,” was established.

The most important news of 1887 was that the railroad construction work was to begin May 1, 1887. As the year went by no track was laid. This was a long, agonizing delay for the settlers who had to freight all their supplies in from Benkelman, a distance of 40 miles.

The railroad grade went through in 1888. As soon as this happened, the Lincoln Land Company, a subsidiary of the railroad company, gave lots to those who would move their buildings to “Railroad Addition.” Their property began at the courthouse and extended south to the railroad grade. Nearly all of the buildings moved southward that May, hoping for an ideal location when the trains came, but again, no tracks were laid.

Imperial’s first courthouse, a gift of the Lincoln Land Company, was built in 1889. It was a two-story, white-frame building on the land where the present brick courthouse is located. The courthouse was not only the place where people paid taxes and sat on the jury, but also where they played and prayed. It was used for all kinds of social events, entertainments, and church services.

It was not until August 15, 1892, seven years after the town was established, that the first train steamed into Imperial. At last the dream of Thomas Mercier was realized. He had built a town that was “here to stay.” After the turn of the century, brick structures began to enhance the main street. In 1910, two brick banks were built and one hotel. During the Depression in the thirties, the main street of Imperial was paved using WPA labor, and the park was begun. [WPA stood for Works Progress Administration originally, and changed to Work Projects Administration in 1939.]

# Population

*The residents of Imperial are the lifeblood of the community. The people that live, work, and visit Imperial everyday are what make the community “tick”. Understanding the population is just as important as understanding the wants and needs in the community. Analyzing demographics is important to the Comprehensive Plan because it becomes the basis for prioritizing future growth. In order to accurately plan for the growth of Imperial, we first must consider the past and current populations before we can make projections for the future. Population projections are significant because they assist communities with a vision for where they will be in five, ten, and even fifteen years. That will in turn help decision-makers plan for social, economic, and physical infrastructure with the purpose of meeting the community’s future needs and demands.*

The 2010 Census data, which was released during the first few months of 2011, showed the City of Imperial had 74 percent return rate for mail-in surveys. This was in-line with both the State and National averages of 77 percent and 74 percent, respectively. Having a high participation rate leads to higher accuracy levels for data reported by the Census Bureau as opposed to having a low rate of Census participation which causes the Census Bureau to make estimates from the minimal data provided. Imperial saw a four and a half percent increase in population from 2000 to 2010, or a total of 89 persons from the 2000 population of 1,982 to 2,071 in 2010. Imperial’s population is 84.6 percent White and 15.4 percent Hispanic or Latino. The 2010 Census reported that there are 318 persons living in Imperial that are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity which is the largest population sector other than White-alone. Mexican is the race a majority, or 304 persons, of Imperial’s Hispanic or Latino population declared. The Hispanic or Latino population sector has significantly grown since the 2000 Census, when there were 102 persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity living in Imperial which was only five percent of the total population.

**Table 1.1** shows a comparison of Imperial’s population changes between 2000 and 2010 with surrounding communities that have similar characteristics to Imperial. Of the six communities half saw a decrease in population and half showed an increase in total population in the region. All of these communities have many of the same challenges that face Imperial with growth, development, and trying to attract residents to their communities. As seen in the table, Imperial is the only community in Nebraska out of the four that saw a population increase between 2000 and 2010 because the only two other communities that experienced an increase were Holyoke and Wray, Colorado. This data shows City leaders that regardless of a community’s size and location, they are still liable to population loss; proving that cities must continually work to retain the existing population and attract new residents.

<b>Table 1.1 Comparable Population Changes, Imperial, 2000-2010</b>				
<b>Community</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>% of Change</b>
Imperial	1,982	2,071	89	4.5%
Wauneta	625	577	-48	-7.7%
Grant	1,225	1,165	-60	-4.9%
Holyoke, CO	2,261	2,313	52	2.3%
Ogallala	4,930	4,737	-193	-3.9%
Wray, CO	2,187	2,342	155	7.1%
Source: US Census Bureau				



Gender is another facet to consider when analyzing the population. Over 51 percent of Imperial’s population is female and 49 percent of the population is male. The median age for women is 42.9 years-old, and that number is only slightly higher than the male median age of 38.3. The median age for all of Imperial’s residents is 41. This falls between the County and the State’s median ages of 43.6 and 36.2, respectively. These age and gender differences can affect housing, recreation, community services, and businesses that will be desired in Imperial because of the differences in wants and expectations for amenities between men and women as well as between the differing ages.

**Table 1.2** shows the history of Imperial’s population which has increased greatly over the past eight decades with a 119 percent increase in population from 1930 to 2010. While most rural communities have experienced a gradual decrease in population since the 1930’s and 1940’s, Imperial saw its largest increase in population between 1940 and 1950. More recently, Imperial has experienced fluctuation in total population reported during the decennial census. This can make projecting future populations more complicated when using a historical analysis method because of the variability. Imperial is a progressive community with proactive City leaders and community stakeholders. The City has a lot to offer to residents including a variety of job opportunities and housing options currently existing within the City’s limits. It is important for Imperial to stay ahead of the curve as a progressive, proactive community in order to continually attract new people and families to town.

**Table 1.2 Population History, Imperial, 1930-2010**

Year	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Population	946	1,195	1,563	1,423	1,589	1,941	2,007	1,982	2,071

Source: Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Census Bureau

The Census Bureau divides the total population into four-year groups called “cohorts”. A cohort is a set of individuals, grouped together based on experiencing the same event within the same time interval. Each decennial Census presents population data in cohorts. These cohorts range from under five years of age to the last cohort which is 85 years and over. Table 1.3 shows all of the 18 cohorts, from the 2010 Census, and the corresponding percentages of the total population for each cohort.



Reported by the 2010 Census, 25 percent of the population was under 18 years-old. Also, according to the Census, 19.2 percent or 398 people were 65 or older in 2010; this number is important because 65 is the common age of retirement, although trends now show the retirement age is starting to rise. **Figure 1.2** shows a population pyramid for Imperial's 2010 Census population based on age and gender. A population pyramid is a series of bar charts set on a horizontal axis. The 18 bars represent each of the 18 cohorts with the male population being represented on the left side of the chart and the female population numbers being represented on the right side of the chart. A population pyramid that shows a healthy viable population has a large based on children and young adults and a much smaller number of elderly persons. A population pyramid uses two assumptions, with the first assuming that the community exists to meet the need of its residents. The government and other quasi-governmental agencies provide public/quasi-public uses including schools, Churches, medical facilities, emergency services, and public infrastructure to meet the needs of the public. The second assumption is that people have needs and expectations that change with age. A self-sustaining community is home to a larger number of children than elderly persons. The population pyramid for Imperial shows two large age ranges, middle-aged and the younger cohorts. In order for Imperial to grow, based on the 2010 population pyramid, the community will have to rely on in-migration to attract new families and depend on new and existing families to expand the base of the pyramid. Most rural communities in Nebraska have an aging population with a population pyramid that looks like an upside-down pyramid. Imperial's pyramid has a larger base than a top, but the base of the population or the younger cohorts needs to continue to expand in order to truly create a pyramid showing community growth.

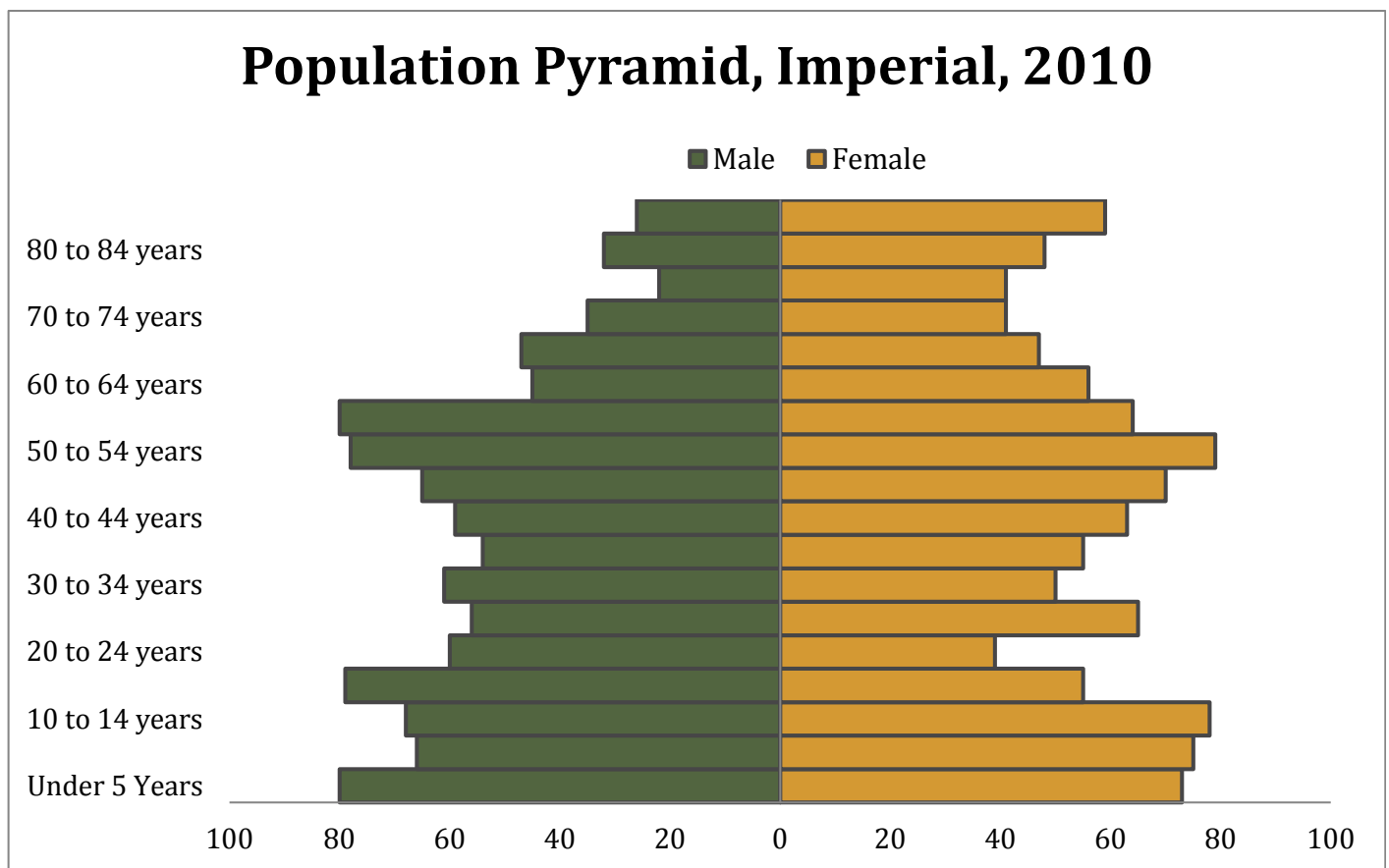


Figure 1.2 Population Pyramid - Imperial, 2010



It is clear from the population pyramid and **Table 1.3**; many of the cohorts make up the same general percentage of the total population. However, there are a few cohorts that are drastically different than the majority, including the four cohorts that comprise the 70 year-olds and older because those cohorts only average less than four percent of the total population. The largest cohort of population is 50-54 year-olds which makes up 7.6 percent of the population. The 20-24 year-olds make up 4.8 percent of the population and although that is not a large part of the total residents in Imperial it is not all that uncommon. This cohort is the typical age for college students and young professionals; therefore, it is common to have a lower population percentage for this particular cohort. The important fact about this cohort in Imperial is that the community experienced a slight growth of approximately ten persons in this age group from 2000 to 2010. Although, it is common to have a smaller percentage of college-aged people living in

<b>Table 1.3 Population by Age Cohorts, Imperial, 2010</b>		
<b>Age Cohort</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	2,071	100
<b>Under 5 years</b>	153	7.4
<b>5-9 years</b>	141	6.8
<b>10-14 Years</b>	146	7
<b>15-19 years</b>	134	6.5
<b>20-24 years</b>	99	4.8
<b>25-29 years</b>	121	5.8
<b>30-34 years</b>	111	5.4
<b>35-39 years</b>	109	5.3
<b>40-44 years</b>	122	5.9
<b>45-49 years</b>	135	6.5
<b>50-54 years</b>	157	7.6
<b>55-59 years</b>	144	7
<b>60-64 years</b>	101	4.9
<b>65-69 years</b>	94	4.5
<b>70-74 years</b>	76	3.7
<b>75-79 years</b>	63	3
<b>80-84 years</b>	80	3.9
<b>85 years and over</b>	85	4.1
<b>Median Age</b>	41.0	
Source: U.S. Census 2010		

Imperial it is important for the community to attract those potential residents and young professionals when they have graduated from school. Attracting young professionals and families is challenging in a smaller community; however, recent new businesses in the community have been able to entice young professionals to move to or return to Imperial for job opportunities.

Job creation is the main “pull factor” for people moving into a community. If the City of Imperial and its businesses can continue to create more job opportunities, people will come to fill those jobs. It is also important to provide amenities and adequate housing for potential new residents. Attracting and keeping the young “creative class” generation is imperative. The “creative class” is a socioeconomic class of workers that bring new ideas, art, science, and technology together. Being able to draw these people in and to retain them as residents is critical in growing Imperial. Creating activities or a social group to help new community members get involved with current residents is a way for the community to reach out to new residents. A Young Professionals group or even an annual community dinner recognizing new community members would be beneficial for Imperial’s new residents. Another way to encourage young people to stay in the community or move back after furthering their education is to create a program that would provide job training opportunities specifically relating to businesses located in the community.

Knowing the demographics, such as age, sex, racial break-up, and its history helps steer decision-makers in the right direction when planning for community infrastructure. This data can be used in several different ways. For example, a community could have the City Council members vote to either financially support an expansion of a local nursing home or an expansion of a local elementary school. By analyzing population trends based on age groups, this data could help decision-makers make an informed conclusion on what is best for the community. If population trends show an aging population, then supporting the nursing home would benefit those citizens, and if there were an influx of families with young children moving into town, then supporting the elementary school expansion would be more beneficial for residents. Of course there are many other factors that need to be taken into consideration, but understanding the breakdown of population has proven to be very helpful when decision-makers are trying to come to a conclusion.

The history and apparent trends in Imperial’s history are important aspects in making projections for the community’s future population. Projecting Imperial’s population is key to understanding the future demographic character of the community. These projections help to determine the City’s future land use and community service needs and policies. **Table 1.4** shows the different population growth scenarios for Imperial until 2025.

<b>Table 1.4 Population Projections, Imperial, 2010-2025</b>				
<b>Annual Growth Rate Percentages</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>Trend 1: 0.45%</b>	2,071	2,117	2,164	2,210
<b>Trend 2: -0.12%</b>	2,071	2,058	2,045	2,033
<b>Trend 3: 0.34%</b>	2,071	2,106	2,141	2,176
Source: Census Bureau, M&A				

Trend 1 is an annual growth rate percentage coming from historic trends depicted by decennial Census data. This historic trend from the population difference between 2010 and 2000, which was a 4.5 percent increase over the ten-year period, was projected for future populations at the years 2015, 2020, and 2025. If the community was going to continue growing at the rate it did between the last two decennial census years then Trend 1 would be the approximate population figures for Imperial in the future. Trend 2 is the historic trend difference between 1990 and 2000, a one percent decrease over the ten-year period, that was forecasted to the same three time periods of 2015, 2020, and 2025. This scenario shows a steady decline in population over the projected years. Trend 3 is the annual rate of increased population between 1980 and 1990 also showing an increase in population over the projected time periods. Although Trend 3 also shows an increase in population it is at a slightly smaller rate than Trend 1. Of course, populations do not change at a constant rate every year; however, these numbers give an example of what the population could look like at the three different projected time intervals.

There are slight differences in the three population projection trends. This table helps to show City leaders what the population could look like over the next 5-15 years if the historic trends stay true for the community’s future. There are a couple of things that could completely change the scene of Imperial. A major local industry or employer closing its doors or a new manufacturing business moving to town or into the region would drastically change the population of Imperial. In any community, this historic population fluctuation is typical, especially in a community the size of Imperial. Therefore, it is important for City leaders to be prepared for a multitude of scenarios and to understand that doing nothing for the community is not an option. City leaders need to stay vigilant in the growth, success, and sustainability of the community in order to progress and move forward. A few ways for City leaders to encourage growth are to have land available for both residential and commercial/industrial growth, to incentivize development encouraging more opportunities, to establish a successful business and retention program, and to be willing to get involved and make opportunities happen. Cornerstone Development is a prime example of the community planning for future development with the above processes.

Families are an important to the viability of any community, including Imperial. A family, whether it is a one or two parent household, would add at least one worker to the local workforce, children into the school system, a place that is now rented or owned, more people to buy groceries in town, another vehicle to fill with gas, etc. It adds one more set of persons that have a vested interest in the welfare of the community. Families make up approximately 64.3 percent, or 553, of all occupied households in Imperial. Approximately 445 “family households”, live in owner-occupied homes while 108 families live in renter-occupied households. A household is considered to be a “family household” when at least one member of the household is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. “Non-family households,” those consisting of people living alone and households who do not have any members related to the householder make up 35.7 percent of all occupied housing units in Imperial with 171 and 136 non-families living in owner-occupied and renter-occupied units, respectively.

Educational attainment is yet another component to analyze in order to better understand your community’s population base. As seen in **Table 1.5**, the 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) shows there were 1,452 ( $\pm 126$ ) people 25 years-old and older living in Imperial. The ACS also reported 10.5 ( $\pm 4.7$ ) percent of the 25 and older population has an Associate’s degree and 15.2 ( $\pm 5.2$ ) percent of Imperial’s 25 and older population has a bachelor’s degree. Approximately 2.4 ( $\pm 1.6$ ) percent of the population has also received their graduate or professional degree. These educational attainment figures are higher than Chase County’s averages for a bachelor’s degree and graduate or professional degree of 12.4 ( $\pm 3.0$ ) percent and 1.7 ( $\pm 0.9$ ) percent, respectively. Although Imperial has a larger percentage of residents with a Bachelor’s, Graduate, or Professional degree than Chase County they fall slightly below the State averages of 19.0 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) percent for residents with a Bachelor’s degree and 9.1 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) percent for a Graduate or Professional degree. Educational attainment levels should continue to grow over the next decade due to the growing demand for American’s to get a college education. This societal change can be seen all around the country, but smaller communities are having a harder time trying to attract and retain persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Table 1.5 Educational Attainment, Imperial, 2012**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	1,452 ( $\pm 126$ )	100%
<b>Less than 9th grade</b>	120 ( $\pm 65$ )	8.3% ( $\pm 4.3$ )
<b>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</b>	74 ( $\pm 48$ )	5.1% ( $\pm 3.4$ )
<b>High school graduate (Includes equivalency)</b>	558 ( $\pm 114$ )	38.4% ( $\pm 6.4$ )
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	291 ( $\pm 82$ )	20.0% ( $\pm 5.6$ )
<b>Associate's degree</b>	153 ( $\pm 71$ )	10.5% ( $\pm 4.7$ )
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	221 ( $\pm 74$ )	15.2% ( $\pm 5.2$ )
<b>Graduate or professional degree</b>	35 ( $\pm 23$ )	2.4% ( $\pm 1.6$ )

Source: ACS 2008-2012

Throughout its history, Imperial has seen population changes, even in the past ten years. There has been an increase in children under the age of ten from 2000 to 2010. There has also been an increase in young professionals between the ages of 20 and 35 living in Imperial. Development of community services and amenities couple with housing development and job creation are the only ways to encourage more families to move to Imperial.

Between 2000 and 2010 the 50-69 year-old cohorts saw a large increase in population. Because of the nature of life, the people in these cohorts will continue to grow older and could possibly retire in Imperial, if they have not already. These cohorts, which include empty-nesters tend to lead a different lifestyle than when they had young children at home. Empty-nesters like to dine out or go for walks around the community; they like to enjoy the freedom of being on their own schedule again. Imperial's Downtown district, Library, eateries, and some of the existing recreational facilities are all excellent amenities that many empty-nesters love to take advantage of in their community. As previously stated, almost 20 percent of Imperial's population is 65 years and older. Not only are these people empty-nesters, most likely they are retired or at least thinking about retirement in their near future. Community services such as an active Senior Center and ease of pedestrian traffic through sidewalk connectivity and/or hike/bike trails can promote a healthy quality of life for this cohort. It is important to provide amenities and services that will attract young families as well as provide a high quality of life for retirees in order to keep them in Imperial.

Twenty-five percent of Imperial's population is under the age of 18 which is another group of cohorts that likes to be active both indoors and outdoors. Community members, of all ages, seem to be large supporters of the Chase County Longhorns and this age group in general. Providing amenities for this age group is also essential to provide a good quality of life for families as well as to successfully attract these students back to the community when they start their families. Things such as summer sports leagues and public and private recreational facilities are a great place for the 18 and under crowd to congregate.

Population projections are meant to help decision-makers understand where the community is headed. The scenarios presented in this Comprehensive Plan are provided as a guide to decision-makers in order to know what to plan for and what types of public facilities will be needed. In order to prepare for future population changes, leaders need to continually gather and analyze population data. Every year leaders should review school attendance data, talk with local professionals, and be aware of building permits or home sales in comparison with previous years' totals. Waiting every ten years for Census data to be presented is not as beneficial for the community as staying up-to-date with the ever changing information. Utilizing other sources, revisiting the Comprehensive Plan or other community plans, and continually working with stakeholder groups will encourage leaders to stay active and up-to-date on the ever changing society that is present today as well as provide City leaders with an opportunity to market the community.





Housing is a crucial piece to the prosperity of Imperial. Whether it is identifying needs for new market-rate housing or ways to encourage development of affordable housing options, Imperial must work to constantly assess and improve its housing market. In order to attract more people to the community, there has to be a supply of well-maintained, available, affordable, and safe housing. Projecting for future demand is an important, but sometimes difficult task when trying to promote growth in any community. Addressing the issues of old housing stock that does not meet the needs of today's renters and buyers is also another challenge that faces City leaders. Community growth and revitalization can be made possible through the identification of housing needs in Imperial. When considered in conjunction with population data, housing information analysis will enable Imperial to identify housing developments that are most appropriate for its success.

# Housing

Data taken from the American Community Survey is represented in **Table 1.6** and provides the overall age for owner-occupied units in Imperial. Imperial has a relatively young housing stock if compared to most other rural communities in Nebraska. Although there are still many homes existing in the community that were constructed in 1939 or earlier there were also a few housing construction booms in the 1950s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. When compared to historic population trends it is easy to understand why there were so many homes constructed in those time periods because each of those decades also saw a large increase in population. It is common in many communities to have an aging housing stock and it can create challenges in the housing market because today's buyers are looking for specific items such as a two-three car attached garage with three-four bedrooms and two bathrooms set on a large lot. Homes constructed 40+ years ago were typically constructed on 50 foot wide lots that were platted throughout the community. Today's buyers have different standards which typically include more space and 50 foot wide lots do not easily fit the mold for what buyers want.

**Table 1.6 Year Housing Unit Built, Imperial, 2012**

<b>Total housing units</b>	945 (±86)
<b>2010 or Later</b>	0 (±10)
<b>2000-2009</b>	68 (±38)
<b>1990-1999</b>	104 (±39)
<b>1980-1989</b>	101 (±53)
<b>1970-1979</b>	192 (±70)
<b>1960-1969</b>	81 (±53)
<b>1950-1959</b>	143 (±60)
<b>1940-1949</b>	76 (±39)
<b>1939 or Earlier</b>	180 (±60)

Source: ACS 2008-2012 Estimates



From the 2010 Census, Imperial had 948 housing units which include all single-family homes, duplexes, and apartment complexes. There was a 9.3 percent vacancy rate, or approximately 88 vacant housing units and 860 occupied housing units in Imperial. As seen in **Table 1.7**, of the 88 vacant properties, there were twelve properties for rent and ten for sale. There were four homes that were sold but not occupied and 33 homes were listed as “other vacant” which could include homes that are uninhabitable, stuck in litigation, being remodeled, or several other possibilities a Census investigator may quantify. There were 29 homes marked as for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use which makes up slightly more than three percent of the total vacancy rate. Imperial’s “other vacant” percentage of 3.5 is slightly lower than Chase County’s at 6.6 percent and just above the State’s 3.0 percent “other vacant” rating.

It is important to have a portion of homes that are “for sale” or “for rent,” because a percentage of housing units should always be on the market in order to attract new residents and also create an atmosphere for a healthy housing market. Adequate housing is essential in supporting economic growth. It is important to have available housing in order to attract new businesses because the community needs to be able to house new workers. As mentioned above, Imperial’s total vacancy rate is 9.3 percent. The City’s homeowner vacancy rate is only 1.6 percent and the rental vacancy rate is 4.7 percent. A homeowner vacancy rate less than three percent and a rental vacancy rate less than five means there are very tight housing market conditions. Imperial has less than two percent vacancy for owner-occupied homes and slightly less than five percent rental vacancy rate meaning the market has no flexibility and minimal availability for any person or family looking to purchase or rent. A tight housing market can also drive-up housing prices making it challenging for people to purchase a home in the community. If no homes are available or are too expensive in Imperial when a family is looking to move to the community then they will be forced to look in surrounding towns where homes are available, especially if there are minimal rental units available. The main goal is to ensure that available homes also fit the needs and wants of the buyers.

<b>Table 1.7 Vacancy Status, Imperial, 2010</b>	
<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	9.3%
<b>Total</b>	88
<b>For rent</b>	12
<b>Rented, not occupied</b>	0
<b>For sale only</b>	10
<b>Sold, not occupied</b>	4
<b>For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use</b>	29
<b>Other vacant</b>	33
Source: 2010 Census	





When analyzing vacant housing units in the community it is important to determine whether the units are still habitable. Uninhabitable structures should be removed to provide vacant lots for new construction and infill development, as well as to rid the neighborhoods of fire and safety hazards. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can provide the City of Imperial and the Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) with a tool to eliminate some of the vacant, blighted safety hazards. TIF funds can be used for a variety of projects following Legislative Bill 729 in the Redevelopment Area including the demolition on vacant, unsafe residential homes.

Housing Rehabilitation Programs, whether through the City or a third party group, such as West Central Nebraska Development District or Southwest Nebraska Community betterment, could be an essential tool in helping residents pay for housing repairs, energy efficiency improvements, or major maintenance issues. There are grant programs available to utilize in the creation of a revolving loan fund that can be used to offer zero or low interest loans for qualifying households in Imperial to make home improvements. Promoting home maintenance and improvements throughout the community could help to prevent more homes from becoming dilapidated. Community leaders should continually look at ways to incorporate these programs into Imperial.

The population that lives in occupied housing units in Imperial is 2,036. There is a discrepancy between the population that occupies the 860 total housing units and the overall population, 2,071, in Imperial due to the 35 persons living in group quarters. Residents who live in group quarters are not counted as part of the population that lives in occupied households because the Census separates group quarters and housing units. There are two types of group quarters, institutionalized and non-institutionalized. Non-institutionalized facilities include college/university student housing and military quarters; no one resides in non-institutionalized facilities in Imperial. During the 2010 Census, 35 people lived in institutionalized facilities which include nursing homes, juvenile homes, and adult correctional facilities. All 35 of those reported to live in an institutionalized facility lived in a nursing home at the time of the 2010 Census, with 34 of the 35 reported residents being 65 years and older. Approximately eight and one half percent of the total population of 65 and older residents in Imperial lived in a nursing home during the 2010 Census.

Although we know there are 860 occupied housing units in Imperial, we need to evaluate the characteristics of those units. The 2010 Census reported that 616 housing units are owned equating to 71.6 percent of all occupied housing units owned versus rented. A total of 224, or 28.4 percent, of the occupied housing units in Imperial are rented. In Imperial, the average household size of an owner-occupied unit is 2.46 people and slightly less for renter-occupied at 2.17. The overall average household size in Imperial is 2.37, while the average family size is 2.97. This difference can be explained by the number of people in Imperial living alone.

**Table 1.8** shows persons per household in the 616 owner-occupied and 244 renter-occupied housing units. There are 270 persons in Imperial living alone which is over 31 percent of the total occupied housing units. Of the 270 persons living alone in Imperial, 51 percent, or 138 persons, are 65 years old or over. That statistic is very distinct, and can help community leaders make informed decisions that will benefit the majority of Imperial’s citizens. As a note, none of the 270 people living alone were living in an institutionalized facility at the time of the 2010 Census. For example, community leaders could focus on finding developers that would be interested in developing condominiums or apartments for elderly residents or empty-nesters to rent or purchase. Another amenity that would be attractive, especially for elderly residents or persons living alone, would be the presence of an association that would, for a fee, take care of maintenance for the homeowners if a private developer cannot be attracting for constructing senior housing.

<b>Table 1.8 Persons per Household, Imperial, 2010</b>	
<b>Owner-Occupied persons per Household</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	616
<b>1-person</b>	148
<b>2-person</b>	265
<b>3-person</b>	72
<b>4-person</b>	74
<b>5-person</b>	37
<b>6-person</b>	12
<b>7 or more-persons</b>	8
<b>Average household size</b>	2.44
<b>Renter-Occupied persons per Household</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	244
<b>1 person</b>	122
<b>2 person</b>	41
<b>3 person</b>	33
<b>4 person</b>	21
<b>5 person</b>	20
<b>6 person</b>	6
<b>7 or more-persons</b>	1
<b>Average household size</b>	2.17
Source: 2010 Census	

Another point to consider when looking at persons per household and the large number of residents living alone in Imperial is the fact that these 270 residents living alone do not all live in single-bedroom housing units. Local realtors commented on the need for larger homes for families which would typically include housing units with at least three or four bedrooms. There is a good possibility that some of the people who live on their own live in three or four bedroom homes. These individuals would maybe be willing to move to a smaller, up-to-date, and low maintenance home, if there were some available. If there were smaller homes, whether for purchase or rent, and some of the 270 one-person households were to move, it would add larger homes to the housing market for families to move into.



**Table 1.9** shows a variety of sources for Imperial’s housing values in order to compare different sources. One thing to remember is the ACS column provides an estimate with a margin-of-error for each housing value. All of the columns are for owner-occupied housing units only. The median household value is approximately \$87,000. A local realtor shared information about the existing Imperial housing market stating that the majority of people are looking to purchase homes in Imperial as opposed to renting. These people are looking to purchase homes in a variety of different price ranges with the most emphasis put on move-in ready. The majority of homes in Imperial are in the \$50,000-\$100,000 value range. Some homes in that value range may be considered move-in ready with many having modern amenities; however, not all of these homes are decent, safe structures that meet the needs of today’s buyers including attached garages, updated kitchens, two bathrooms, and three or four bedrooms. Although the majority of Imperial’s homes are valued between \$50,000 and \$100,000, there are still well over 100 homes in Imperial that are valued between \$100,000 and \$150,000 and several more homes valued up to \$300,000. For a rural, agricultural community those housing values are quite high. Imperial’s median household value of \$87,000, based on the ACS, is even higher than the County’s median household income of \$83,000. The State’s median household value is approximately \$127,000 which is substantially higher than the City’s median household value for owner-occupied housing units.

<b>Table 1.9 Housing Values-Owner Units, Imperial, 2012</b>			
<b>Value</b>	<b>ACS</b>	<b>ESRI</b>	<b>USA.com</b>
<b>&lt; \$50,000</b>	120 (±64)	136	106
<b>\$50,000 to \$99,999</b>	274 (±76)	254	235
<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	119 (±45)	143	129
<b>\$150,000 to \$199,999</b>	61 (±33)	36	34
<b>\$200,000 to \$299,999</b>	65 (±34)	22	102
<b>\$300,000 to \$499,999</b>	9 (±11)	6	10
<b>\$500,000 to \$999,999</b>	0 (±74)	2	0
<b>≥ \$1,000,000</b>	0 (±74)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	648 (±99)	599	616
<b>Median Value</b>	\$87,100 (±5,567)	\$82,083	\$89,200
<b>Chase County Median Value</b>	\$83,200 (±\$4,416)	\$73,533	\$82,600
<b>Nebraska Median Value</b>	\$126,700 (±\$681)	\$127,600	\$123,900

Source: ACS 2008-2012 Estimates, ESRI Estimates, USA.com

*The information in the box below was provided by a local realtor who works with the Imperial housing market on a daily basis. Information from local professionals cannot be found through the Census or any other source online. Decision-makers need to continually engage in conversations with local professionals in order to determine what people are looking for when they are interested in moving to Imperial.*

Local Professional Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential market is as strong as ever seen</li> <li>• Houses are not on the market for a long time</li> <li>• Agricultural economy is driving the local real estate market</li> <li>• People are looking for 3-bedroom, 2-bath homes</li> <li>• Very few people are looking for rentals currently</li> <li>• Most new home buyers are utilizing FHA and other similar loan programs</li> <li>• Mobile home redevelopment should be a priority in the City</li> <li>• Not much of a need for lots at this time, supply of lots is adequate at this time</li> </ul>
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**Table 1.10** shows a housing affordability analysis based strictly on the numbers. This table shows the comparison of the household income range and the value of housing units that are currently present in Imperial. Housing values are only presented for owner-occupied units while the household income data is presented for all housing units in Imperial. Therefore, all household income values in **Table 1.9** are approximate values representing 71 percent of all housing units which is the percentage of owner-occupied housing units in Imperial. The rule-of-thumb when purchasing a home is to multiply the annual household income by two; homes in that price range are typically what can be afforded by the buyers. Using this assumption, the table shows where there are gaps and where there is a surplus of housing units present in Imperial based on value. The following is a breakdown of the process:

- Column 1 - Household income range for residents in Imperial
- Column 2 - ESRI household income data from **Table 1.11** (modified to relate to owner-occupied)
- Column 3 - Column 1 multiplied by 2 (i.e. \$25,000 x 2 = \$50,000)
- Column 4 - ESRI data from **Table 1.9** that shows the number of owner-occupied units in Imperial, based on value
- Column 5 - Column 2 subtracted from Column 4 (i.e. 136 - 74 = 62)

<b>Table 1.10 Housing Affordability Analysis, Owner Units, Imperial, 2012</b>				
<b>Household Income Range</b>	<b># of Households (Units Needed)</b>	<b>Affordable Range for Housing Units</b>	<b># of Existing Owner Units</b>	<b>Gap/Surplus of Housing Units</b>
\$15,000-\$24,999	74	<\$50,000	136	62
\$25,000-\$34,999	90	\$50,000-\$70,000	254	57
\$35,000-\$49,999	107	\$70,000-\$100,000		
\$50,000-\$74,999	129	\$100,000-\$150,000	143	14
\$75,000-\$99,999	70	\$150,000-\$200,000	36	-34
\$100,000-\$149,999	57	\$200,000-\$300,000	22	-35
\$150,000-\$199,999	21	\$300,000-\$400,000	8	-13

Source: ESRI, M&A

In the range of \$150,000-\$400,000 there is a gap of 82 homes. There is a surplus of 133 homes valued under \$150,000. This analysis is based solely on numbers for owner-occupied units in Imperial; therefore, it does not take into account people that live above or below their means, units available for rent, the market-rate price of homes, and the fact that several people live in their home until they are retired which would significantly lower the annual household income. As a note, because of the way housing values are reported, the \$25,000-\$34,999 and \$35,000-\$49,999 housing income ranges had to be consolidated in order to correctly correspond with the number of houses present at that specific value range.

Community leaders can use this formula in the future to determine where there are shortfalls in Imperial’s housing supply. Quality and availability of decent housing is a major factor for individuals and families when they are considering moving to a community. Imperial should take steps to improve their current housing situation; the development of Cornerstone Development Subdivision and Sage Addition Subdivision is important to the improvement of the community’s housing market. With a homeowner vacancy rate of 1.6 percent, a supply of affordable housing needs to be created and that will only happen with the construction of new housing units. A shortage of up-to-date, sizable rentals continues to exist in Imperial although it may not be as important to the housing market as homes for purchase. There is also a low supply of market rate, move-in ready homes available for sale for Imperial. In order to maintain as well as grow and diversify the population base, Imperial’s officials must investigate feasible options for housing development in the community. It may be important for Imperial’s leaders to consider what other communities are successfully implementing to help with housing development as well as programs that have been created to help raze uninhabitable homes in encourage infill development.

There truly is a need for additional housing units in Imperial not even taking into account the need for replacing uninhabitable homes that currently exist in Imperial. An important point to consider is the new development of multiple housing units in Cornerstone Development. These homes are currently under construction and will fill or meet some of the housing need in order to lessen the tension on the currently tight housing market. The City has successfully attracted a private developer who is able to construct multiple low income and market rate homes for sale and for rent. Most communities of Imperial's size are not able to attract a private developer and must assume all of the risk on their own as a City or as private citizens or they are not able to construct new housing units.

It is important to remember that many homes will "fall off the market" every year because they are uninhabitable due to age, lack of maintenance, and the sheer fact that homes do not last forever. It can be assumed that approximately one percent of all homes will fall off the market each year. Knowing and understanding the need to replace those homes with market-rate housing is important for City leaders. Actions need to be taken in order to replace the homes that are no longer habitable. It also becomes challenging because uninhabitable homes do not disappear on their own; therefore, steps also need to be taken to remove vacant, uninhabitable structures to provide lots for infill development.

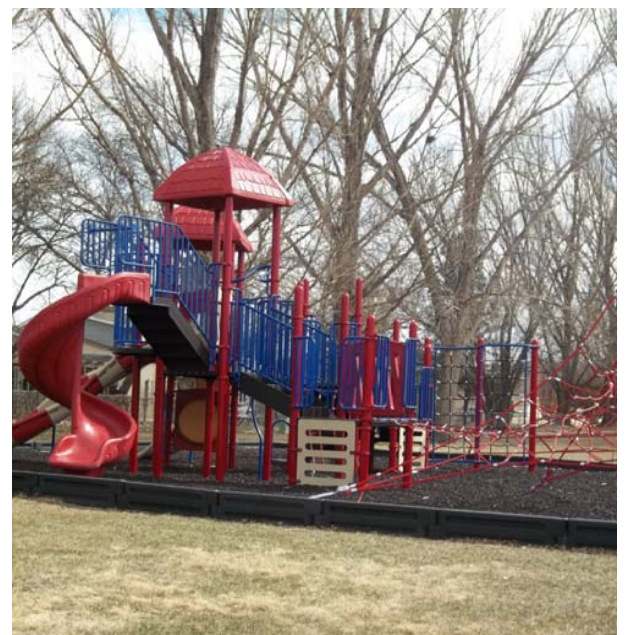
Several different businesses in the community were provided with an Employee or an Employer Housing Survey depending on their position with their company. The idea was the gauge the impact of the existing housing market in Imperial on local businesses. Approximately 41 percent of survey respondents from the Employee Housing Survey do not live within the corporate limits of Imperial with 72 percent of those respondents subsequently stating that they live in a different community other than Imperial. Many of the reasons for why they live in a different community other than Imperial are the lack of rental units, overpriced housing, lack of housing options, and high taxes in Imperial. Some of the other reasons include lifestyle choices including where they own land and where their spouse works. Survey respondents were then asked if they live outside of the City, would they like to move to Imperial with approximately one-fourth of the survey respondents answering yes. They would like to lessen their commute, be more available for their job in the community, and have better access to utilities, internet, and school for their children.

Employers in Imperial also see the importance of housing and how it affects the community including their businesses. Several different employers in the City offered their input through the housing survey as well as through the variety of public input sessions held over the past year. Five of the six businesses that responded to the survey said they are looking to expand and hire additional employees. Employers also expressed their concern with the current housing market in Imperial and how it has been an issue or concern for potential employees. One survey respondent also discussed the fact that they were going to lose two employees due to lack of housing in the community. Suitable, market-rate rentals was number one priority for the majority of employers. This survey, along with the Employee Housing Survey, was conducted prior to the residential construction in Cornerstone Development. Although, the new surge in construction will greatly benefit the housing market including these employers there will still be a need for housing in Imperial.

In summary, Imperial has a housing shortage especially with homes valued over \$150,000. There are a few lots available for infill development including lots in Sage Addition and Cornerstone Development subdivisions as well as a few vacant uninhabitable homes that could be cleared and made ready for infill housing development. The City has known there is a shortage of decent homes that fit the needs of today's buyers which is why Cornerstone Development Subdivision was designed. There is a high potential for several existing residents in Imperial to construct a home at Sage Addition or Cornerstone Development. This, in turn, puts another affordable house on the market. Many young couples or families just starting out do not have the means to construct a new home which is why they will need to buy something completed. By offering some incentive program such as lower interest rates, down-payment assistance, and/or free or low-cost lots to any person willing to build at either subdivision it encourages new development that will benefit the entire housing market in Imperial. As previously stated, Imperial is lucky to have been able to attract a private developer to invest in rental and market-rate spec homes. This will greatly improve the housing market and provide desirable homes and rentals for persons looking in Imperial.

There is also a shortage of sizable, up-to-date units in the rental market in Imperial as local input shows there is a need for three and four bedroom housing units. Both the employees and employers offered their input on the need for larger rentals including three and four bedrooms during the Housing Surveys. This was important for employers in order to provide adequate housing for their employees and it was important to employees for finding a place to live in Imperial. Rental housing can fill the need for so many different persons including transitional housing for someone not wanting to maintain a single-family home but not ready to live in assisted living, someone living alone not wanting a single-family home, someone who cannot afford to purchase a home, someone needing a temporary place to stay while constructing a new home or finding a place to purchase, etc. There is a rental need in Imperial, although they must be larger units some standalone single-family homes while others could be duplexes, triplexes, or four-plexes.

Many of the issues for the housing market, both rental units and owner-occupied, is the condition and size of the homes available as well as the lack of modern amenities needed by renters and buyers. There is potential for existing occupied homes to enter the market for purchase if there are other options for single-persons to move to in the community. Exterior maintenance, adequate square footage options, and modern features would be amenities that may attract several single persons, empty-nesters, young couples, seniors, and person in need of transitional housing. There are few vacant lots available throughout the community without both subdivisions. These lots were originally platted roughly 50 feet wide making it challenging to build a home of today's needs/wants. Both Sage Addition and Cornerstone Development subdivisions provide an option for existing and potential residents that many other communities in the region similar to Imperial are not able to offer at this time.



# Economy & Capital Improvement

*The ability for Imperial to predict development needs and future land uses relies heavily on economic trends.*

*Therefore, a description and analysis of local economic factors is a crucial component of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Another important aspect to a City's economy is annual fiscal management tool called a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This fiscal plan should use a 5-6 year time horizon to schedule capital improvement projects for the City. The CIP is used to coordinate location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period. Goals determined in a Comprehensive Plan should help to facilitate the CIP development process.*

A strong labor force is extremely important to a City of any size, especially during these trying economic times. Although Nebraska was not hit as hard through the 2007-08 economic crisis as other states were, it is vital for communities to create jobs in order to attract new residents and grow the tax base. Analyzing a labor force requires employment figures, income levels, and an understanding of the economic base. Residents 16 and older are considered to be of working age; therefore, in order to study the workforce population we only consider those that are 16 and older. The 2008-2012 ACS reported 1,628 ( $\pm 144$ ) people are 16 or older and 1,127 ( $\pm 131$ ) persons are in the labor force. The other 501 ( $\pm 93$ ) people are not considered to be a part of the labor force because they are neither employed nor officially classified as unemployed. This classification could be a variety of reasons such as full-time students, retired persons, volunteers, stay-at-home parents, persons unable to work due to a disability, etc.

As stated above, the ACS estimated 1,127 ( $\pm 131$ ) of Imperial's residents to be in the labor force. The ACS also reported of that 1,127 people in the labor force, 1,120 ( $\pm 131$ ) were employed while 7 ( $\pm 10$ ) people were unemployed. Based on the ACS, only 0.6 ( $\pm 0.9$ ) percent of Imperial's residents were unemployed which is starkly different than the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2012 national unemployment rate of 7.9 percent. Unemployment data is not as readily available for smaller communities which means we have to follow larger trends. Nebraska has weathered the recent economic downturn better than a majority of the nation, so luckily for Nebraska's communities they share in the same goodwill. With such a low unemployment rate in the City is it very challenging for businesses to find qualified employees.

There are several different job opportunities in the City of Imperial including the medical and educational systems, retail and service sector businesses, and many different types of agricultural businesses including the Frenchman Valley Co-op which is the second largest co-op in the State of Nebraska and multiple implement dealers. Although there are many job opportunities in Imperial for their residents, some of them commute to work in other communities. This is fairly typical in the smaller communities across the United States including Imperial. Based on the Employee Housing Survey many employees also commute to Imperial for work. Commuting patterns for Imperial's residents include a mean travel time to work of only 7.1 ( $\pm 1.2$ ) minutes. Approximately 923 ( $\pm 124$ ) people drive to work alone while 35 ( $\pm 27$ ) or three percent of Imperial's resident carpool. Approximately 42 ( $\pm 34$ ) of Imperial's total workforce, works from home. Based on 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 746 people commute into the City of Imperial for work while 381 of Imperial's residents commute outside of the corporate limits for work. Based on the 2011 Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies division, there are 1,053 total employees employed in the City of Imperial.



**Table 1.11** shows the household income for Imperial in 2010. Household income is defined by the Census Bureau as the following:

“Any sum of money income received in the calendar year by all household members 15 years old and over, including household members not related to the householder, people living alone, and other nonfamily household members. Included in the total are amounts reported separately for wage or salary income; net self-employment income; interest, dividends, or net rental or royalty income or income from estates and trusts; Social Security or Railroad Retirement income; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); public assistance or welfare payments; retirement, survivor, or disability pensions; and all other income.”

<b>Table 1.11 Household Income, Imperial, 2012</b>		
<b>Household Income</b>	<b># of Households</b>	
	<b>ACS</b>	<b>ESRI</b>
<b>Less than \$15,000</b>	101 (±69)	65
<b>\$15,000-\$24,999</b>	125 (±48)	104
<b>\$25,000-\$34,999</b>	88 (±40)	127
<b>\$35,000-\$49,999</b>	206 (±73)	150
<b>\$50,000-\$74,999</b>	201 (±74)	181
<b>\$75,000-\$99,999</b>	116 (±44)	98
<b>\$100,000-\$149,999</b>	61 (±27)	80
<b>\$150,000-\$199,999</b>	12 (±12)	29
<b>\$200,000 or more</b>	0 (±10)	29
<b>Median household income (dollars)</b>	\$47,943 (±3,905)	\$48,055

Source: ACS 2008-2012 Estimates, ESRI

Household income data is displayed in ranges based on dollar amounts and the related number of households with an annual income that falls into the associated range. The ACS data that was reported has high margin of error values; therefore, in order to make a more solid determination another set of values was used to compare with the ACS data. The second source of data is from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI) which reports data on Nebraska’s Location One Information System (LOIS) website. ACS reported Imperial’s median household income to be \$47,943 (±\$3,905). ESRI estimated Imperial’s 2013 median household income to be \$48,055. ESRI estimated Chase County’s 2013 median household income to be \$43,832 which is lower than the City of Imperial’s median household income. The ACS 2008-2012 estimates for the State of Nebraska’s median household income are \$51,381 which is only slightly higher than Imperial’s median household income.

Imperial has a strong existing economy which is already drawing outside citizens to shop/do business in the community. However, there is always room for improvement. During our public input sessions, residents discussed the need to draw even more people into the community and to capitalize on people moving in to the community. One way to do both of these things, with additional bonuses, is to market the community and what it has to offer. Several residents discussed, during public input sessions, their desire to become an arts and cultural center for the region by offering plays, concerts, and museums. In order to attract people to the community to live or to visit, outside marketing must be done. Although internal marketing to encourage shopping locally and supporting local businesses and services is important it will be vital to the success of the community as a regional hub for arts and cultural experiences to market to outsiders. Marketing Imperial as a “Destination Place” will help to attract visitors to come to Imperial or stop in the community as they are passing through.

The Downtown District is the main hub for retail and service sector businesses; however the Highway corridors are also very important to the community's tax base. Although the Downtown District sits on a Highway corridor, there are major differences in the way land is used between the Downtown District and the rest of the Highway corridors especially on the fringe of the community. In order for the Downtown District to keep its distinct appeal, is to keep the area pedestrian friendly and focus business efforts on retail and service sector companies. The neighborhood feel is important for a Downtown District, and that 'appeal' is what helps attract people to shop in a Downtown area.

The Highway 61 corridor and the Highway 6 corridor on the southeast side of Imperial are best for businesses that require large areas of land, high visibility, and easy access from the Highway. Fortunately for Imperial, the community is facing one of the better economic development challenges possible, there is minimal land available along the Highway in the existing Corporate Limits. The businesses existing on the Highway are successful businesses because of the high traffic volume, visibility, and easy access. But this area looks and feels much different than Broadway Street through the community, and rightfully so. Businesses along the Highway corridor should have off-street parking, larger setbacks, more green space, larger buildings, and even more signage than what is necessary for Downtown businesses. It will be important for City leaders to understand the difference between the two commercial areas and encourage economic development to fit the unique identity of each area.

Another point that was discussed during the public input sessions was the need for more job opportunities from a variety of industries. Imperial is already home to several businesses both large and small that would be considered to be of mixed variety. But a variety of job opportunities is important to attract new residents to move to Imperial. However, it is also important to consider how businesses will exceed in the community. City leaders should focus on attracting businesses that can co-exist and/or support existing businesses and industry in Imperial.

Although some retail sectors are missing from the streets of Imperial, it allows the City for improvement. Also, there are some retail businesses that Imperial would not be able to viably support due to its close proximity to larger markets like McCook and North Platte and even some larger communities in Colorado. ESRI reported 2011 retail market potential data to provide communities with an idea for how they meet or exceed the needs of the existing residents and citizens from outside of the community. Some of the retail markets, reported by ESRI, that are not currently filling the entire need for residents in Imperial includes furniture and home furnishings; electronics and appliances; clothing and clothing accessories; general merchandise; and building material and garden equipment. Competing with larger towns that can easily support a variety of "big box" stores such as Wal-Mart, Sears, and Menards is not easy for any community.

The community as a whole is already attracting people from outside of the City limits to purchase a variety of items in Imperial. The 2011 consumer demand based on Imperial's residents was approximately \$16,300,000. Total retail sales for Imperial's businesses in 2011 were approximately \$19,600,000 meaning over \$3,000,000 was spent in Imperial by citizens that do not live in the community. It is essential for Cities to provide residents with basic necessities but it is progressive and promising when a City can bring in money from outside sources. For the industry sectors listed above that were not filling the entire need of Imperial's residents it does not mean the retail operations that are present in Imperial are bad businesses or that they are lacking in any way. It simply means there is opportunity to improve. Business expansion or adding new inventory is a few ways that businesses could progress. Not all industry sectors would be self-sustainable businesses in Imperial. It is important for Imperial to take advantage of its location on the two highways which provides many commercial opportunities for the community that many other communities do not have. Cornerstone Development has lots available for commercial and/or light industrial development. This subdivision sits on Highway 61 and is in close proximity, with easy access, to Highway 6. This is truly a beneficial area for the community to be promoting for economic growth.





Having an established retail base is difficult, but Imperial and its entrepreneurs/business owners have been working hard to maintain and expand the retail base in the community. Several businesses are expanding and several new businesses have come to the community in recent years. It is challenging for small communities to attract consumers. The Chamber of Commerce does a fantastic job encouraging residents to shopping locally and support local business. Local community groups work hard to retain and expand local businesses however; there is always room for improvement. Placemats in local restaurants or yard signs saying “Support your neighbors, shop locally” are the extra reminder residents need to support Imperial. Other ideas for a “shop local” campaign in Imperial could include establishing a Thankful Thursday event each week to encourage residents to show support and thanks for the local businesses and business-owners in the community by shopping at their stores or by encouraging business owners to stay open later in the evening one night a week to encourage downtown shopping. Holding events in the Downtown District is another way to draw people from the community and from outside of the community to be in Downtown Imperial.

The economic base analysis is a great technique to use when describing any local economy. Basic sectors are companies that produce goods/services for export, which, in turn, brings money into the community from outside sources. These industries rely heavily on external factors and they usually export their goods. Non-basic sectors are companies that directly serve its community’s residents. Imperial is home to many non-basic sector companies and although they are important to the quality of life for Imperial’s residents, they are not viewed to be as important to the local economic base because they do not bring in as many outside dollars. Non-basic sector businesses are important for communities because they support residents’ needs and they help to draw potential residents to the community.

Some of the non-basic sector industries include retail trade; information; finance and real estate; arts, entertainment, recreational, and accommodation services; and educational services and health/social care assistance. These industries serve the local economy and local residents; although, they will also help to bring people to Imperial from surrounding communities. There are a few industries that are always considered to be non-basic sector regardless of the comparison calculations. A few of these sectors are construction, retail trade, and educational services because the purpose of these industries is to serve the local economy.

In order to establish which industries are base sectors of the local economy a simple comparison calculation is done to determine an industry’s impact over the local economy versus that same industry’s impact in the regional area. The calculations were computed based on 2008-2012 ACS data for Imperial and the State of Nebraska. The industries that are considered basic sectors for Imperial are agriculture and wholesale trade. Many communities also have the manufacturing sector as a base-sector industry in their economy. Imperial does not have a disproportionate ratio of large manufacturing businesses in the community that export a majority of goods/services to outside sources as compared to the State of Nebraska therefore they are not a base sector industry for Imperial. This sector, especially with Highway and railroad access, may be an industry sector to consider when attracting new businesses to the community because the addition of a manufacturing business typically brings a large number of jobs and also would export its goods to outside sources bringing money into the community from those outside sources.



Another aspect to consider when comparing the basic and non-basic sectors of Imperial’s economy is the job creation ratio. The analysis concluded, for Imperial, every basic sector job that is created, an additional two non-basic sector jobs will also be created. This relationship shows the impact of creating basic jobs in a local economy. An example situation, for every job created at basic sector business such as Frenchman Valley Co-op, a job could be created in a non-basic sector company to support the additional employment at the basic sector business. Perhaps a job in personal services such as a restaurant, grocery store, or a local retail shop may also be created in order to better serve the other jobs that were created. Now these jobs are not directly tied to that one specific basic sector job. If the basic sector job were phased out one day the two other jobs would still exist the next day. This comparison and analysis is used to show how different companies/businesses impact the local economy. Ultimately, base sector employment is a major factor in the success of the local economy and the community.



**Table 1.12** shows employment by industry percentages for Imperial based on 2008-2012 ACS data. The largest employment industry in Imperial is retail trade with educational services, health care, and social assistance being the second largest employment industry. Both wholesale trade and construction are the third and fourth largest employment industries, respectively.

<b>Table 1.12 Employed Population by Industry, Imperial, 2012</b>	
<b>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining</b>	7.5% (±4.0%)
<b>Construction</b>	9.2% (±4.7%)
<b>Manufacturing</b>	6.2% (±3.6)
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	8.3% (±6.0%)
<b>Retail trade</b>	23.2% (±6.9%)
<b>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</b>	5.4% (±3.4%)
<b>Information</b>	1.6% (±1.3%)
<b>Finance and insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing</b>	6.4% (±3.5%)
<b>Professional, scientific, management, and administrative and waste management services</b>	4.7% (±3.2%)
<b>Educational services, health care, and social assistance</b>	12.7% (±5.1%)
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services</b>	4.2% (±3.4%)
<b>Other services, except public administration</b>	6.3% (±4.5%)
<b>Public administration</b>	4.3% (±2.6%)
Source: ACS 2008-2012 Estimates	

Communities, whether they are large or small, need all types of businesses in order to be successful. Economic growth is a challenging task, but becomes extremely important in order to maintain the vitality of the community. Imperial is taking the right steps forward, but as previously stated there is always room for improvement. Two items that need to be addressed in Imperial is business retention and expansion coupled with succession planning for many of the existing businesses. This is something that must be discussed for the successful sustainability of Imperial's economic base. A succession plan will help owners plan for the longevity of their businesses and ensure that residents will maintain the quality of life they have become accustomed to in Imperial.

Another economic development tool the City of Imperial can take advantage of is Tax Increment Financing (TIF). It is primarily designed to finance the public costs associated with private development projects. Property tax increases resulting from a new development are targeted to repay the public investment required by the project. Imperial has successfully implemented TIF projects over the past several years. The City of Imperial currently maintains updated blight and substandard areas so TIF may be offered as a development incentive.

It will be crucial for community leaders and Economic Development personnel to stay up-to-date with the ever-changing economic world. The State of Nebraska offers many resources including Community Development Grants and educational sessions on community, housing, and economic development which the City of Imperial may be able to utilize. The City of Imperial and other stakeholder entities have done a fantastic job of being proactive for the community as well as providing funding assistance for residents and business owners in Imperial. This shows true support for the local economy, and is an important way to retain and attract businesses and residents alike.



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# Chapter 2: Facilities & Infrastructure

The Facilities & Infrastructure section acts as an inventory of current amenities available to the public because of the City. This is a good section to review and hopefully add upon in the future with growing facilities and a growing population. This section is also helpful for others to read to see what the community has to offer. This Facilities & Infrastructure section will cover the following components:

- Recreational Facilities
- Education System
- Transportation
- Community Services
- Utilities

# Recreational Facilities

*Imperial is home to several different parks and recreational opportunities from ball fields and playground equipment to a swimming pool and*

*local reservoirs. It is remarkable for a town the size of Imperial to have multiple unique parks spread throughout the community. Imperials recreational attributes were a 'strength' and amenity discussed several times during the public input sessions. Imperial's list of recreational amenities includes the following:*

## Campbell Park

Campbell Park, Imperial's main city park, is located at 800 West 6th Street offers a ball field, lighted tennis and basketball courts, great playground equipment, public restrooms and a sheltered picnic area. Pitching machines and batting cages are available for use by youth throughout the summer.

## Max Addition Park

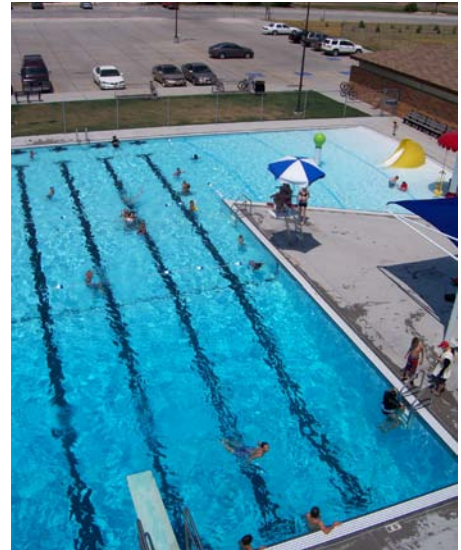
Max Addition Park is located on the west side of town, off of West 11th Street and in the Center of Max Drive. In 2012, Max Addition Park underwent a much needed upgrade, replacing 20 year old equipment with a new ADA accessible large piece of equipment with an additional climbing apparatus to serve toddlers to early teens. A basketball court and covered picnic shelter are also available.

## Schroeder Park

Schroeder Park is located at the intersection of Holland and East 3rd Streets offers three lighted ball fields, playground equipment and public restrooms.

## Municipal Swimming Pool

The new \$2.1 Million swimming pool was built in cooperation with Chase County Schools opened in 2009 and is located on East 9th Street. The facility consists of a 5,218 square foot bathhouse and 5,441 square foot pool surface area. Features include zero-depth entry with an aquawave water slide and a Baby Bungee, a 1-meter diving board, and a drop slide, that was relocated from the existing swimming pool. The heated pool is open from Memorial Day through mid-August. Offerings of the 6 lane 25 meter swimming pool include a swim team which hosts meets during the summer months, swim lessons, lap swimming, water aerobics, and night swimming. The bathhouse is used as both a bathhouse during swimming season and as a concession stand/locker room facility during school outdoor events such as football games and track meets.



## Youth/Adult Programs

The summer Baseball/Softball Program is sponsored by the city and the Imperial Baseball/Softball Association. Beginning at age 6, children can register for T-Ball teams, moving up through the levels to Legion Baseball for older boys and Senior Girls League. For adults, there are a number of mixed leagues and men's and women's teams that organize and participate on their own schedules.

Youth League Basketball starts at the 4th grade level, boy's and girl's teams begin learning the fundamentals of the game and enjoying the team effort.

Youth soccer was incorporated into the city's recreation program in 2006. Signups for all youth begin in February and the season concludes in May.

Federation Wrestling is organized privately, volunteers work with youth introducing them to the sport and teaching fundamentals.



### Bowling

The Imperial Lanes at 134 West 5th is a six lane house with synthetic lanes. The bowling alley offers youth, men's, women's and couples leagues. Open bowling is offered several nights a week.

### Golf

The Imperial Country Club is a beautiful nine-hole, par 35 course located on the west side of Campbell Park at 810 West 7th Street. Enjoy lush green fairways and challenging greens at reasonable rates. Club house and cart rentals are available.

Enders Lake Golf Course is located on the north side of Highway 6 across from Enders Reservoir. This course features a long nine-hole, par 36 course with wide fairways and prairie views. Reasonable rates, club house, driving range and cart rental are available.



### Recreation Areas

Champion Mill & Lake Recreation Area, located 7.5 miles southwest of Imperial, was established in 1888, Champion Mill is the last functional water-powered mill in Nebraska. It stands as a symbol of the settlement and development of Nebraska and the West. Primitive campsites are available for those at one with nature. This recreation area also offers picnicking and fishing.

Enders Reservoir State Recreation Area is located 10 miles southeast of Imperial on Highway 6 and offers water-based recreation for fishing, boating, water skiing, hunting and winter sports. Amenities include picnic tables, grills, shelters, modern restrooms, coin-operated showers, dump station, fish cleaning station, 32 (30-amp) hookups, and 200 non-pad sites.

### Wanamaker State Wildlife Management Area

Wanamaker State Wildlife Management Area is located just 3 miles north of Imperial. This area includes sandsage and shortgrass prairie, Frenchman Creek riparian wooded habitats, lowland grasslands with some marsh, and a small reservoir with a marshy upper end. This is a good place to see migrating and breeding passerines, waterfouls, some shorebirds and other waterbirds, as well as grassland songbird species.

### Area Hunting

Chase County has approximately 17,000 acres of public land with walk-in access. There are populations of pheasant, quail, dove, turkey and deer throughout the county. Enders Reservoir is home to many species of ducks as well as Canadian geese.

### Chase County Fair & Expo

Known as "Western Nebraska's State Fair" the Chase County Fair & Expo is a week-long event filled with activity and brings thousands of people from several states to the community. Best known for top name entertainment, past performers include Lonestar, Ted Nugent, Alice Cooper, Gretchen Wilson, Montgomery Gentry and Trace Adkins.

# Education System

*A great school system is becoming more than an amenity for communities in the Midwest. Imperial has a strong educational system as well as a strong tradition for their extracurricular activities. Community members seem to continually be supporters of the great school district, and City leaders should continue to promote a strong relationship between the community and the school. Great school districts are one of the leading factors when looking at population growth; families want to live in a community where their children can attend school and receive a good, quality education. The following section explores Chase County School District and its existing presence in the community.*

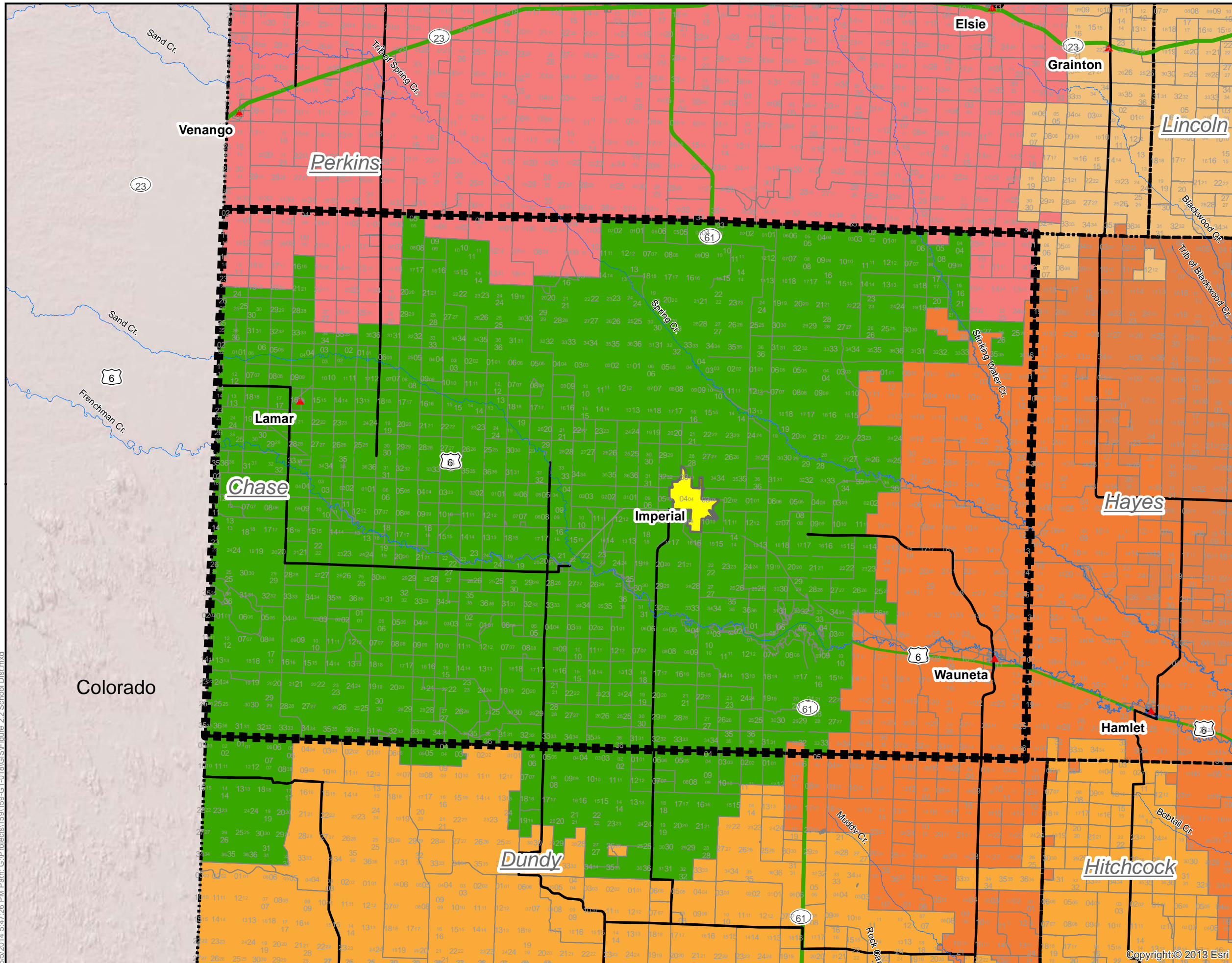
Many rural Nebraska communities and counties put a high value on maintaining and protecting their local schools, because they are vital in preserving community pride as well as supporting local residents and businesses. The following section analyzes Chase County School District. Nebraska State Statutes group schools into six different classifications.

These classifications are defined by the following law:  
2009 Nebraska Code, Chapter 79 SCHOOLS - § 79-102.

- (1) Class I includes any school district that maintains only elementary grades under the direction of a single school board;
- (2) Class II includes any school district embracing territory having a population of one thousand inhabitants or less that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board;
- (3) Class III includes any school district embracing territory having a population of more than one thousand and less than one hundred fifty thousand inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board;
- (4) Class IV includes any school district embracing territory having a population of one hundred thousand or more inhabitants with a city of the primary class within the territory of the district that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board;
- (5) Class V includes any school district whose employees participate in a retirement system established pursuant to the Class V School Employees Retirement Act and which embraces territory having a city of the metropolitan class within the territory of the district that maintains both elementary grades and high school grades under the direction of a single school board and any school district with territory in a city of the metropolitan class created pursuant to the Learning Community Reorganization Act and designated as a Class V school district in the reorganization plan; and
- (6) Class VI includes any school district in this state that maintains only a high school, or a high school and grades seven and eight or six through eight as provided in section 79-411, under the direction of a single school board.

Chase County School District (15-0010-000) is classified as a Class III School because it maintains both elementary and high school grades, and because the school district territory has a population of more than 1,000 and less than 150,000. **Figure 2.1** shows Chase County School District's boundaries. The District boundary includes a majority of Chase County and part of northern Dundy County. Chase County School District is a part of the Educational Service Unit 15 (ESU 15). The ESU 15 main office is located at 334 Main Street, P.O. Box 398, Trenton 69044-0398 and covers the counties of Dundy, Chase, Hayes, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Frontier, Lincoln, and Furnas. ESU 15 is one of 39 sites in the Southwest Nebraska Distance Education Network, which is a two-way interactive fiber optic teaching and learning network that covers over 20,000 square miles in rural western Nebraska. This allows students in the rural areas a chance to interact and view learning from a new experience.





**Legend**

- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- School Districts**
- Chase County Schools
- Dundy County Public Schools
- Hayes Center Public Schools
- Perkins County Schools
- Wallace Public School District 65 R
- Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools

**Figure 2.1**  
**School District**  
**Boundaries**

Chase County, Nebraska

Pre-K - 12 Schools

Rainbow Promise Preschool is a Christian Preschool hosted by First United Methodist Church at 420 Holland Street. Class times for preschool students are two days a week, for three hour time blocks. There are also advanced classes on Fridays.

The current Chase County School, located at 520 East 9th Street in Imperial, is a K-12 school building opened in the fall of 1991. It features large classrooms, well equipped areas for music, drama, and art, a 350-seat auditorium, a large media center, and exceptional athletic facilities for the Chase County Longhorns. Chase County students have access to a variety of enriching activities including the 9th Street Singers and college classes in the distance learning lab. Students in grades 9-12 are also provided one-to-one laptops. The student-to-teacher ratio is 11:1 even though the School District has experienced an increase of approximately 40 students in the past several years.

**Table 2.1** shows the size of each class from Kindergarten to 12th grade. This data goes back to the 2000-2001 school year. There was a large increase in school enrollment between the 2004-2005 school year and the 2005-2006 school year because the 2005-2006 school year was the first year for the consolidated Chase County Elementary School. The 2012-2013 school year saw the largest total enrollment for the school district in the past 13 years. Increasing school enrollment figures is very important for any community and Imperial has seen stable numbers or increases for six school years. The average graduating class for Chase County is 48 students. In recent years, the number of graduating seniors has experienced a decrease. However, the 2012-2013 school year had the largest Kindergarten class at 66 students. The Chase County School District is vital to the sustainability of Imperial and the surrounding area. It is important for communities to have a quality, productive school district within its corporate limits; therefore, this continual support will be necessary for the success of the school and the community.

Table 2.1 School Enrollment, Chase County Public Schools, Imperial 2000-2013														
School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total Enrollment
2000-2001	31	23	35	31	49	43	41	53	53	62	50	70	41	223
2001-2002	47	31	30	35	36	46	48	46	55	58	61	48	68	235
2002-2003	46	48	29	33	38	35	47	50	45	58	57	60	49	224
2003-2004	32	39	46	29	32	41	34	51	47	46	55	57	59	217
2004-2005	56	32	45	52	31	31	42	34	51	53	48	55	58	214
2005-2006*	43	51	32	42	53	34	29	41	35	56	52	51	58	577
2006-2007	34	38	49	28	39	55	36	28	49	33	53	51	53	546
2007-2008	50	31	40	45	27	38	53	38	28	45	35	45	53	528
2008-2009	46	47	38	46	47	30	42	56	37	28	46	30	44	543
2009-2010	43	41	48	38	50	48	32	45	60	36	29	44	34	550
2010-2011	50	41	41	45	35	48	47	33	45	62	35	29	51	565
2011-2012	47	44	47	39	52	32	48	51	33	44	60	33	30	560
2012-2013	66	43	42	43	40	48	35	50	52	31	42	56	34	582
* First Year for Chase County Elementary School														
Source: Nebraska Department of Education														

School districts provide many qualities in a community that are unable to be measured. However, it is important to know and understand school districts are evaluated on several different levels including test scores, graduation rates, and how their formula student population affects the amount of resources the district will receive as well as the operating expenditures per formula student.

**Table 2.2** depicts the adjusted general fund operating expenditures per formula student during the 2012-2013 school year. Formula students are based on the 2011-2012 average daily attendance and the 2011-2012 contracted students. The table highlights Chase County School District and other districts in surrounding counties. Chase County’s formula students for 2012-2013 were 555.53; the total expenditure cost per student was approximately \$9,600.70 for the 2012-2013 school year. As seen in the table, Chase County Public School’s adjusted general fund operating cost per formula student is lower than all of the other school districts in the surrounding counties. Typically the larger the school is, the lower the operating costs are per student. Many students, parents, and teachers prefer a smaller student-to-teacher ratio for the attention and assistance each student receives. Chase County seems to have the best of both worlds with a lower adjusted general fund operating expenditures per formula student and a low student to teacher ratio. They are a larger district than many of the surrounding schools yet they can offer smaller class sizes to ensure students can receive more attention from the teachers.

<b>Table 2.2 TEEOSA Formula Students, Chase County Schools, 2012-2013</b>					
<b>Nebraska Department of Education School Finance and Organization Services, Model LB235</b>					
<b>County</b>	<b>County / District Number</b>	<b>District / System Name</b>	<b>Formula Students</b>	<b>Adjusted General Fund Operation Expenditures</b>	<b>Adjusted General Fund Operating Expenditures per Formula Student</b>
HAYES	43-0079-000	HAYES CENTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	137.46	\$2,215,002.09	\$16,113.22
CHASE	15-0536-000	WAUNETA-PALISADE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	188.31	\$2,931,049.86	\$15,564.78
PERKINS	68-0020-000	PERKINS COUNTY SCHOOLS	365.31	\$5,294,228.54	\$14,492.28
DUNDY	29-0117-000	DUNDY CO STRATTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	397.68	\$3,867,766.82	\$9,725.94
HITCHCOCK	44-0070-000	HITCHCOCK CO SCHOOL SYSTEM	252.65	\$2,439,003.58	\$9,653.76
<b>CHASE</b>	<b>15-0010-000</b>	<b>CHASE COUNTY SCHOOLS</b>	<b>555.53</b>	<b>\$5,333,465.74</b>	<b>\$9,600.70</b>

Source: Nebraska Department of Education

It is important to capitalize on the growth the school district is experiencing. One way to do that is to ensure there is a healthy connection between the community and the school while promoting the community itself to attract new families to move to Imperial. With the addition of new families to the community, there is potential of adding additional students to the total enrollment. Increasing community population and student enrollment will work hand-in-hand. This relationship inevitably ties back to employment and job availability in the community. Families are attracted to communities with quality school systems which in turn will help draw residents to Imperial. One of the strengths discussed during a public input session was the fact that the community rotates around the school. Most towns thrive because of their school systems, which also seems to be the case for Imperial.





### Post-Secondary Education

An option for post-secondary education in Imperial includes the Imperial Extended Campus for Mid-Plains Community College which is located at 1324 Broadway Street. This campus provides professional opportunities to Chase County and the surrounding areas. While the main campuses are located in McCook and North Platte, students seeking a two-year Associates of Arts, Associates of Science, and/or Associate of Applied Science degrees can benefit from the Extended Campus's onsite classes with area instructors. They may also use distance learning and online classes to limit travel to the main campuses. Area residents also have access to bachelor and master degree programs through agreements with Fort Hayes State and Bellevue University.

The Imperial Extended Campus also coordinates with area businesses to provide customized training courses pertinent to their workplace needs. The Career Academy, a 5th year of high school program, was implemented in the fall of 2008, by Chase County Schools in cooperation with Mid-Plains Community College to provide students the opportunity to obtain an associate's degree in conjunction with their high school diploma. In March 2011, Mid-Plains Community College and Chase County Schools unveiled a technology track specific to the needs of one of Imperial's key employers.

*Transportation systems control interactions, or lack of interactions, between two places. Local roads, streets, and sidewalks should provide safe, reliable access to work, schools, shopping, parks, and back home. Transportation networks to the outside world are important to the economic growth of Imperial. These networks provide access to markets and to goods and services not found in the community. Transportation also provides a means by which employees commute to Imperial for work, businesses succeed because of increased exporting opportunities, and Imperial becomes more than just a “drive-through” community. An adequate system of streets, roads, and sidewalks provides a variety of options for accessibility to all parts of the community and beyond.*

## Transportation

Imperial’s transportation system creates many opportunities for growth because of the proximity and connectivity to the larger transportation network. U.S. Highway 6 runs north/south through the heart of Imperial and also at a diagonal southeast to northwest along the southeast side of Imperial. Nebraska Highway 61 runs north/south on the east edge of the City connect Imperial to Interstate-80. These two highways connect many surrounding communities to Imperial. The highway corridors create important access points for the community also creating gateways for all travelers going to and from Imperial. These gateway entrances act as a “first impression” for visitors. It is important, when talking about community corridors and connections, to understand how highway corridors provide areas that can become important features for the City.

The Nebraska Kansas Colorado Railway (NKCR) also runs along the south side of the community cutting northwest following Highway 6. This transportation system provides many economic development opportunities while also creating a few development constraints for the community. Imperial has a municipal airport located on the eastern side of the community north of Highway 6 and east of Highway 61. The airport has a 100-foot wide, 5,000-foot long lighted concrete runway and serves medical specialists, air ambulance services and a number of corporate administrative personnel. Airport facilities include 18 hangars that are available for rent and a terminal building with fueling capabilities. The airport has an automated surface observation system and non-directional beacon equipment. The Denver International Airport is located 200 miles away from Imperial and is the most accessible passenger service airport for Imperial’s residents.

There are a few options for bus and public transportation services in and near Imperial. The nearest bus service is provided by Greyhound in Ogallala which is 50 miles north of Imperial. The Handy Bus is a public transportation service provided by the Chase County Government for a nominal fee and can be contacted to schedule services. The Handy Bus will take travelers to Ogallala to reach the Greyhound Bus Station. The Dashabout Shuttle Company/Roadrunner Express is the final public transportation option in Imperial. They strive to provide safe, convenient, and reliable transportation to the rural communities. Transportation is offered to and from major cities, local markets, medical, educational, and entertainment centers as well as towns en route.

The final form of transportation in Imperial is pedestrian foot traffic. There is sidewalk circulation throughout the community; however, some locations in town are lacking sidewalks. Also, some of the sidewalks are in need of repair and/or replacement just based on age and condition. The transportation section of a Comprehensive Plan is important because it is necessary to address the condition of both local road and street networks that tie the community together and the types of transportation that link Imperial with the outside world.



## Railroad

As mentioned above, the Nebraska Kansas Colorado Railway (NKCR) runs through Imperial and provides several opportunities as well as development constraints for the community. This railroad follows Highway 6 from Palisade through Hamlet, Wauneta and then to the end of the line in Imperial. This railway's northern edge ends in Imperial, but the southern end connects to a different railroad in Culbertson and then connects to a NKCR interchange station in McCook. The NKCR is a shortline partner with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). The BNSF operates in 28 states and has seven (7) short line partners, including the NKCR. The NKCR operates approximately 559 miles of track through the three (3) states carrying wheat, corn, coal, and fertilizer.

The railroad offers great commerce opportunities to Imperial that would not be available without the presence of this form of transportation. There are six at-grade railroad crossings in Imperial. The agricultural industry in Imperial and Chase County benefit greatly from the presence of the NKCR and its connection to the larger railroad system.

## Roads

As previously mentioned, transportation systems are vital to the sustainability of the community; especially in the automobile dependent society we live in today. There are three different categories of roads in Imperial: local, collector, and arterial streets. Highways 6 and 61 are the main arterial roads carrying traffic into and out of town acting as the gateway to Imperial. Development along arterial roads says a lot about the overall appearance and priorities of the community. During our public input sessions, many residents discussed the desire to beautify these highway corridors in order to enhance the general appearance of the entire City. Highways 6 and 61, along with the availability of rail access, will influence the potential for economic growth for Imperial. A number of trucking companies utilize the U.S. and State Highway systems to service southwest Nebraska including Con-way, Inc., Nebraska Transport Company, American Truck Company, and Brown Transfer Company. There are also a number of independently owned semi-trucks and trailers available for hire in the area.

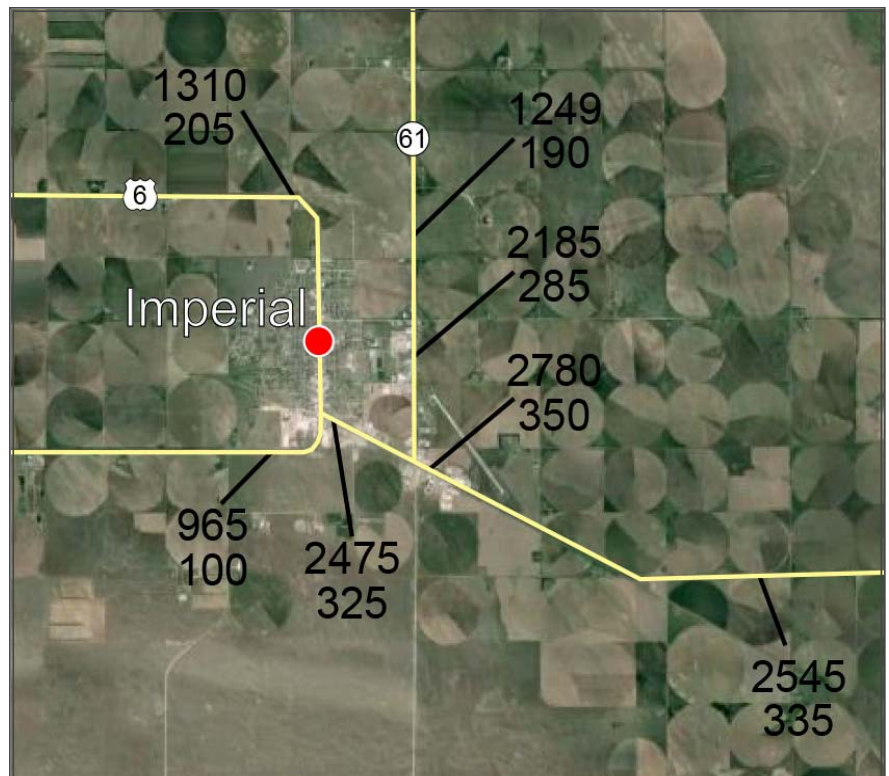
The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) annually reports surface aggregates for all of the roads in Imperial. Updated in 2014 road types include concrete, asphalt, bituminous, gravel, and earth surfaces. The Lane-Mile Report for Imperial detailed the following figures, 1.72 miles of concrete, 18.63 miles of asphalt, 1.92 miles of bituminous surfacing, 6.64 miles of gravel, and 0.16 miles of earthen roads in Imperial. Successful street networks are dependent on the availability and condition of the roads throughout the community. Imperial has a safe, efficient transportation system. However, this type of public infrastructure, like all others, requires continual maintenance and updates in order to maintain the high level of effectiveness.





NDOR also conducts traffic counts biannually; 2012 traffic counts are the most recent numbers available through the State. **Figure 2.2** shows traffic counts for the Highways 6 and 61 near Imperial. The top number represents the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) for all vehicles; the bottom number characterizes the number of heavy commercial vehicles. Highways 6 and 61 are the primary accesses for residents and visitors of Imperial to utilize. When new commercial businesses are looking at locating in any community, they look at traffic counts because commercial businesses want locations with high visibility, good connectivity, and access to the larger transportation network. Both Highways provide the community with a link to the outside world which is an economic asset for the City. It is ideal for commercial development to happen along the Highway corridor because of the large number of vehicles that utilize both highways each day. Although some businesses are currently located along this highway corridor, there is still a large amount of land undeveloped, mainly on the outskirts and adjacent to corporate limits.

Imperial also completed its 1 & 6 Year Road Plan in January of 2014. This plan is in place to help guide achievable transportation development for the first year and development goals for the remaining five years. As seen in **Figure 2.3**, the plan has two projects listed for Imperial's one-year road plan, and eight projects for the six-year plan. The one-year road plan projects include paving two roads in Imperial that are currently platted but not constructed in Cornerstone Development. The projects listed for Imperial's six-year plan include grading, lighting, and aggregate surfacing on Orsa Street from 2nd Street to US Highway 6; drainage structures and erosion control on 3rd Street from Adams Road to Holland Street; grading, drainage structures and utility adjustments on 17th Street from Wesley Drive to Grant Street and Grant Street from 17th Street north 1,000 feet to correct drainage problems; grading, drainage structures, erosion control, curb and gutter, and concrete on Holland Street between 4th Street and Cape Street; grading, curb and gutter, and aggregate on Road 7225 from Railroad to the south Corporate Limits line; asphalt and utility adjustments on Longhorn Street from 5th Street to 9th Street; and grading on South Street from Broadway east to Highway 6. The total estimated cost for the one-year projects is approximately \$665,000.



**Figure 2.2**  
**2012 NDOR Traffic Counts**  
 Imperial, Nebraska





## Sidewalks

Sidewalks are a way to walk to the neighbor's house, allow kids to ride their bikes and walk to school, and for families to walk to the park. Imperial's community is also linked by sidewalks with approximately 33 percent of the community having existing sidewalk infrastructure; however, several of the existing sidewalks are in need of repair and/or replacement which will need to be addressed in the future. Sidewalks promote foot traffic and provide a safe place for children, students, families, and senior citizens to travel. Many people believe that busy sidewalks also lead to a safer community because when more people out and about it inherently deters crime and lowers the opportunity for criminal activity. With a chance of being seen by someone walking their dog or shopping downtown most criminals would be discouraged from attempting an unlawful activity.

Although sidewalks are an essential amenity in communities, they are also another form of public infrastructure that requires maintenance, ADA compliance, updates, and sometimes complete replacement. Areas of broken or cracked sidewalks coupled with incomplete connections make sidewalks challenging to use. Completing a sidewalk inventory and conditions analysis including ADA-compliance review would assist City leaders with planning for sidewalk improvements. Approximately 67 percent of the developed community is lacking sidewalk infrastructure of any kind. The majority of the inconsistent sidewalk network exists in the north part of the community. Improving existing sidewalks is important as the City moves forward, but it is also important for decision-makers to determine if new sidewalks need to be constructed in order to close some of the existing gaps to improve pedestrian transportation, safety, and connectivity. A matching program could be established by the City to encourage residents to construct new sidewalks and/or repair existing sidewalks in order to improve accessibility throughout the entire community. The most recent ADA design guidelines should be followed when any new sidewalk project is undertaken.





# Community Services

*Imperial offers many community services and events to its residents. These services add to the quality of life citizens have come to enjoy living in Imperial. The following is a list of services and events available in Imperial.*

## Library

The Lied Imperial Public Library is located at 703 Broadway Street, in Imperial Nebraska and currently serves around 2,500 registered users. The library boasts a collection of nearly 45,000 books, with over 24,000 volumes in annual circulation. Videotapes, DVDs, E-Books, audiobooks, and magazines are available in addition to the book collection. Additional equipment available at the library includes a carousel with tray, color copy machine, color printer, scanner, fax machine, laminator, computers, computer for the hearing and visually impaired, typewriter, overhead projector, and Wi-Fi. The Lied Imperial Public Library catalogs and stores the history of the community, while also developing new community involvement through the following programs – book group, little readers, story hour, and a summer reading program.



Monday:	10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Tuesday:	10:00 am - 7:00 pm
Wednesday:	10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Thursday:	10:00 am - 7:00 pm
Friday:	11:00 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday:	10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Sunday:	Closed

For more information about the Imperial Lied Public Library or a list of upcoming events, please visit their website at [libraries.ne.gov/Imperial/](http://libraries.ne.gov/Imperial/).



## Churches

The City of Imperial is home to eleven different churches including Berean Fundamental Church, Christian Faith Outreach Church, Church of Christ, Crossroads Wesleyan Church, Imperial Bible Church, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witness, Lighthouse Fellowship, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, United Methodist Church, Westside Church of Christ, and Zion Lutheran Church. Please visit the City of Imperial's website for a listing of the addresses and contact person for each Church.



### Post Office

The United States Post Office is located at 523 Wellington Street in Imperial. Retail hours are Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and from 9:00 am to 11:00 am on Saturday. The Post Office is closed on Sundays. For more information on the services offered at this USPS location, please visit the website at <http://www.uspspostoffices.com/ne/imperial/>.

### Newspaper

The Imperial Republican is located at 622 Broadway Street. The newspaper is published once a week on Thursdays. An e-edition is available or the Imperial Republican can also be accessed and read online at <http://www.imperialrepublican.com/>.

### Public Safety

The Imperial Volunteer Fire Department is funded through the city's budget and is located at 637 Broadway Street. Local bi-weekly training is practiced by all 35 volunteers as well as an annual attendance of fire school. The City and Rural departments both own equipment for their separate areas, but are staffed by the same firemen. The department also runs a very strong fire safety program in conjunction with the elementary school, called the Junior Fire Patrol.

Four full-time police officers provide law enforcement for the City of Imperial. The rural areas are provided a sheriff and three deputies from Chase County. Dispatching services for the county are housed in the Chase County Court House, located at 921 Broadway Street. To make dispatching services as efficient as possible, the County has implemented an Enhanced 911 system, providing the dispatch center with an address as well as any medical information the caller chooses to include. The State Patrol also has two patrolmen stationed in Imperial to serve a nine-county area.



Imperial EMS has approximately 20 certified volunteer EMT's and 5 ambulance drivers. Chase County has four ambulances. Two of which are located in Imperial.

The Code Red automated calling system is used to notify enrolled residents of dangerous weather conditions and emergencies for the Chase County area.



### City Offices

The Imperial City Offices are located at 740 Court Street and houses offices for the City Administrator, Clerk, and Treasurer; the Deputy Clerk and Treasurer; the Utility Clerk; the Public Works Director; and the Community Development Director. The City Offices building also houses the city council chambers, where the City Council meets twice, regularly, each month. The council may also meet at such a time that the Mayor or any three Council members call for a special meeting. For information regarding meeting agendas please contact the City Administrator at 308-882-4368 or by email at [jol@imperial-ne.com](mailto:jol@imperial-ne.com).



Chamber of Commerce

The purpose of the Imperial Chamber of Commerce is: Working hard to make our community a better place through agricultural development, business promotion, and new industry. The Chamber supports various business in the Imperial community by getting people involved in voting on decisions impacting local businesses, helping business owners attract more business, increasing business exposure through the local directory, and sponsoring a Chamber Bucks Program to encourage shopping at local businesses. Membership at the Chamber of Commerce is relative to the size of the business joining. For more information, please visit the Chamber’s website at <http://imperialchamber.com/>.

Cemetery

The Mount Hope Cemetery is located northwest of Imperial at 738 ‘A’ Rd. Records of burials can be found online at <http://nebraskagravestones.org/>.

Healthcare

The Chase County Community Hospital and Clinic is located at 600 ‘W’ 12th Street in Imperial. The Chase County Community Hospital is a 24 bed Critical Access Hospital which provides outpatient, inpatient, specialty clinic, operating room, emergency care, obstetrics, and many other areas of healthcare services. The hospital designates specialty rooms for coronary and intensive care and families needing to stay close to loved ones. The Chase County Community Clinic is committed to providing the highest quality of clinical care, while exceeding customer service expectations and offering the lowest possible administrative costs. The Imperial Branch’s hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, and Saturday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The Clinic is staffed with Family Practice Physicians, Physician Assistants, and a Nurse Practitioner.



The Chase County Community Hospital is not supported by tax dollars, but is a self-sustaining non-profit organization. The Hospital Foundation supports the hospital in monetary means as well as supports the community in recruiting medical personnel when needed. Through the efforts of the hospital foundation, the hospital has continued to grow and is continually updating its equipment and services.





### Specialty Healthcare

Additional medical services in Imperial include the Prairie Dental Clinic, SW Nebraska Dental Clinic, First Insight Eyecare, Koch Chiropractic Clinic, and Mathews Family Chiropractic. These offices are located primarily downtown or near the Chase County Community Hospital.

### Pharmacy

Adams Drug Inc. is a pharmacy and gift shop located at 513 Broadway Street. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 6:00 pm and Saturday, 8:00 am – 3:00 pm. The pharmacy houses two licensed pharmacists.



### Community Center

The Imperial Community Center provides senior services for Chase County and is located at 900 Wellington Street. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 2:00 pm. The Center offers hot meals five days a week for those age 60 and over. According to the West Central Nebraska Agency on Aging, the senior service center’s goal is to be: A community focal point where older persons can meet together, access a variety of service and participate in activities that will enhance dignity, support independence and encourage involvement in the community.



### Imperial Housing Authority

The Imperial Housing Agency oversees three housing complexes built for low-to-moderate income households – Pine Grove Senior Living, Sunrise Housing, and Sunset Housing. The board continually assesses the housing needs in Imperial and actively pursues leads for housing development.

The Agency has achieved a smoke-free designation for a majority of its buildings. This provides a higher quality low income housing option for residents.

### Lodging

The Balcony House is a bed and breakfast located at 1006 Court Street. The building includes five luxury rooms, all with private baths. A full gourmet breakfast and wireless internet are available to all guests.

The Imperial Inn, located at 788 East 12th Street, offers high speed internet access and complimentary breakfast for guests. Hunting guests also have access to heated individual kennels, game cleaning stations, and secure truck parking with electric hook-ups.

The Northside Motel is also a great location for hunters. Located at 1627 Broadway Street, this motel offers clean, pet-friendly rooms at budget prices. Guided hunts, game cleaning stations, and weekly rates are also available.

### Movie Theater



The Imperial Theatre is owned and operated by the City of Imperial. In 2011, the theatre upgraded to digital projection, surround sound, and installed a new screen. Other than the projectionist, the theatre is operated by community volunteers. Movies are shown Friday through Sunday.

### Senior Living

The Imperial Manor Nursing Home and Parkview-Heights Retirement Center, located at 933 Grant Street, jointly provide a continuum of care ranging from Independent and Assisted to Intermediate and Skilled Care. These facilities are city owned and provide an array of activities on and off site as well as onsite hairdressing and barber services.

The Imperial Manor is a 53 bed long-term care facility, provides 24-hour nursing care including Day Care, Hospice Care, Respite Care, Intermediate Care, and Skilled Care. Personal items as well as visits from family and friends are highly encouraged at this facility. The Manor strives to achieve the highest quality of life and comfort for its older adults, while providing privacy, security, and independence. A child care center was added to the facility in March 2011 to meet the community's growing need for daycare.

In conjunction with the Imperial Manor, Parkview-Heights provides independent living with individual services or the option of Assisted Living care at two levels. There are 36 units ranging from studios, to one and two bedroom apartments. Some units also include a patio space. All apartments have a 24-hour call system operated by on-duty staff.



# Utilities

## Water

The City of Imperial currently maintains Nebraska Public Water Supply No. NE3102902. The current system supplies water to its residents and business with five active groundwater wells, a 250,000 gallon elevated storage facility, 942 metered services and several miles of distribution main. Average daily water use is estimated at 650,000 gallons per day with at peak use of 2.5 million gallons per day. **Figure 2.4** shows the water infrastructure for the City of Imperial.

Recent work on the system has included water main extensions to the Sage Addition and Cornerstone Development Subdivisions and paint restoration to the elevated storage facility in 2007.

Future improvement projects that have been identified are a future well field and transmission main, water extension from Shorthorn Street to Highway 61, further replacement of existing two-inch and four-inch water mains and installation of a generator for backup power at the Claney Wellsite.

## Sanitary Sewer

The City owns and operates the collection system, two lift stations, and a complete retention lagoon. The majority of the sewer lines vary from eight to fifteen inches. The City operates a municipal wastewater lagoon pond, which provides primary and secondary wastewater treatment. The lagoons have an average daily load of 150,000 gallons with a total capacity of 200,000 gallons per day. **Figure 2.5** shows the wastewater infrastructure for the City.

The collection system has 110,657 feet, or 21.03 miles, of collection piping and with the help of the two lift stations; pump all of the City's wastewater to the lagoon for treatment. Records indicated that the south lift station, which is responsible for pumping wastewater to the lagoon, was replaced in 2007. In 2009, the north lift station was replaced as well.

Future wastewater improvements include a possible lagoon expansion with land application, to serve increased flows in the future and extension to the Cornerstone Development Subdivision.

## Stormwater Drainage

Storm sewers are located in an approximately 50 percent of the City at this time. The remainder of the City's surface drainage is curb and gutters for the City of Imperial. The City of Imperial has experienced recurring drainage problems in various parts of the City for many years, due primarily to the relatively flat topography of the entire City. Certain improvements within the City have been made to address certain sections of the community. These areas include the Sage subdivision area and Cornerstone subdivision area and have retention/detention structures to assist with drainage in these areas of town. In the western portion of town, several retention cells are able to collect runoff from precipitation events. In the instances of overflow, these structures are designed to overflow to another structure downstream through structures in the City Parks and conveyed south to a large detention structure, west of Broadway and north of South Street.

For the eastern portion of the City, less stormwater drainage infrastructure is in place to assist in retaining or detaining surface water runoff. Current drainage infrastructure is collected in inlets and conveyed through pipes from Broadway Street and eastward. This network collects runoff from the High School and Chase County Fairgrounds areas and conveys it east along 5th Street to Highway 61. From there it is carried along the ditches of the Highway to natural depression, south of the airport.

Drainage infrastructure and associated projects will continue to a point of discussion for City leaders moving forward. It would seem that future development within the City one mile (ETJ), should focus on detaining its stormwater impact, to minimize the development's impact on downstream property owners. This is even more critical in areas that have an existing drainage problem or in areas where sizeable development projects could occur in the future.

### Electrical and Natural Gas

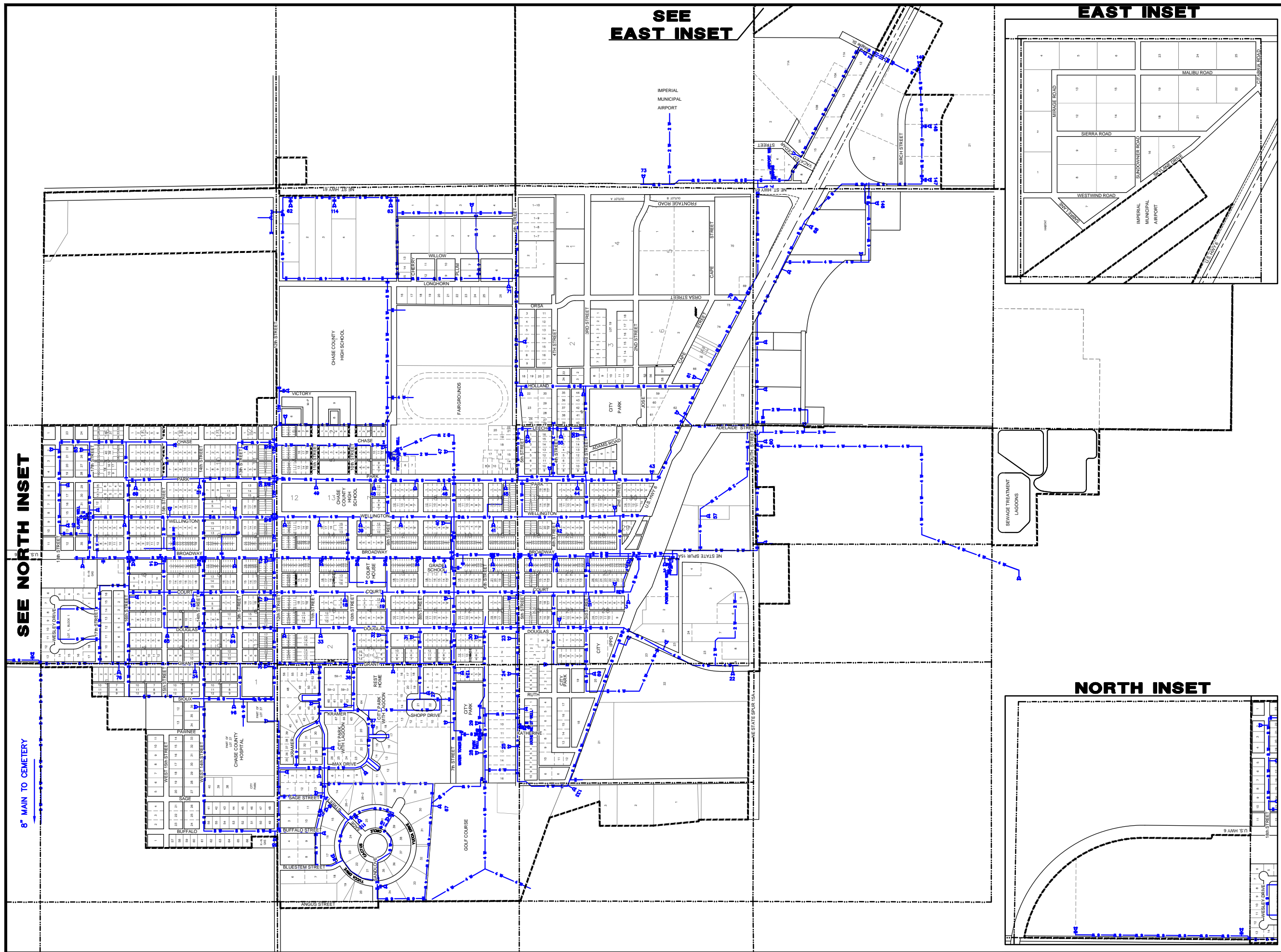
The City of Imperial purchases electricity from the Imperial Public Power District (IPPD). The City owns and operates a 4,160 wye distribution system with eight feeder circuits. The current substation has a capacity of 12,500 kva. To ensure reliability and minimal disruption of electrical service IPPD has two backup electrical feeds. One backup feed is from Highline Electric Association in Holyoke, Colorado which is serviced by Tri-State Electric. The second backup feed is from Southwest Public Power District (SWPPD) in Palisade, Nebraska. SWPPD is serviced by the Nebraska Public Power District. Due to Imperial Public Power District's switching capabilities the City of Imperial enjoys reliable electrical service with minimal disruptions.

Source Gas, LLC supplies natural gas to the City of Imperial through a four-inch transmission pipeline, which has an operational pressure of approximately 850 to 950 pounds per square inch. Source Gas provides natural gas to approximately 1,000 residential and commercial customers within the Imperial community. Source Gas operates an open access pipeline enabling customers to purchase their own gas supplies and transport them on the Source Gas system.

### Telecommunications

Great Plains Communications provides telephone, internet, and digital high definition cable service to Imperial. Residential customers have access internet speeds up to ten by three MB. Business offerings include multiple T-1 lines, dedicated Ethernet services up to 100 MB and linear internet speeds. Great Plains provides its own private upgradeable OC-192 fiber optic network into the community spanning from McCook through Imperial to the home office in Blair connecting into Omaha. Installation and maintenance personal are located in the community. Wireless internet service is also provided by Chase 3000, a locally owned internet company.





**SEE EAST INSET**

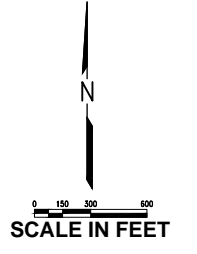
**EAST INSET**

**SEE NORTH INSET**

**NORTH INSET**

8" MAIN TO CEMETERY

Prepared by:  
**M&A**  
 Miller & Associates  
 CONSULTING ENGINEERS, P.C.  
 Kearney, NE - (308)236-6456



LEGEND	
1" MAIN	
2" MAIN	
3" MAIN	
4" MAIN	
6" MAIN	
8" MAIN	
GATE VALVE	
FIRE HYDRANT	

**Figure 2.4**  
**Water Map**

Imperial, Nebraska





SCALE IN FEET  
0 150 300 600

LEGEND

MANHOLE	●
8" SANITARY SEWER	8"
10" SANITARY SEWER	10"
12" SANITARY SEWER	12"
15" SANITARY SEWER	15"
18" SANITARY SEWER	18"
8" FORCE MAIN	8" (dashed)

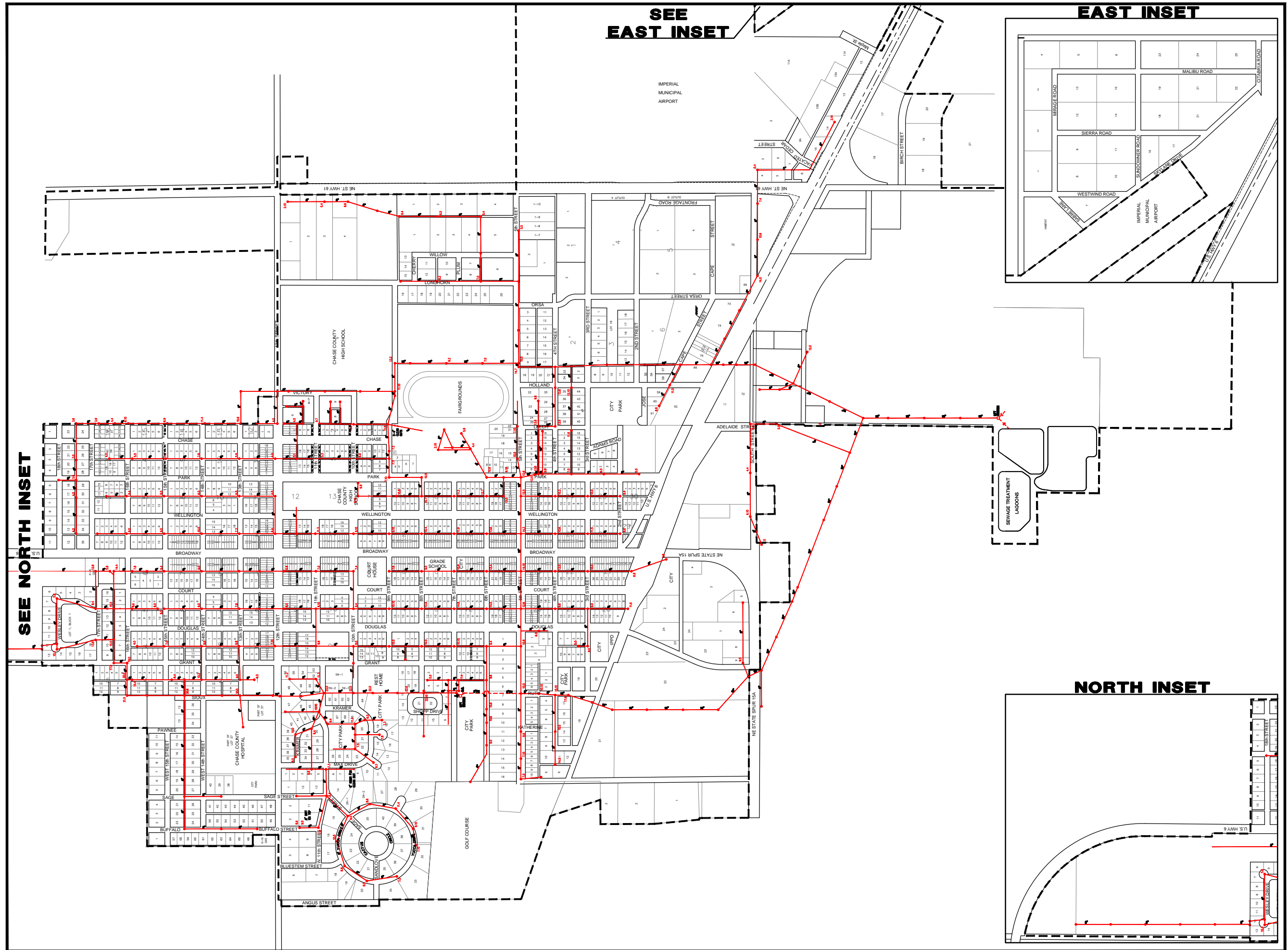


Figure 2.5  
Sanitary Sewer

Imperial, Nebraska

# Chapter 3: Energy & Natural Resources

Formulating a truly “comprehensive” plan for Imperial requires research and analysis for the community’s natural resources and energy options. Looking at land, soil, and water specifications will assist decision-makers when planning for future development and infrastructure. In order for any type of built environment to be developed, there must be an understanding of the natural resources existing and available in the area, how the development will impact the natural environment, and the development constraints existing on the site because of the natural environment. This Energy & Natural Resources section has the following components:

- Energy
- Land
- Soils
- Water

# Energy

*One important update for this Comprehensive Plan was to include an Energy section. In April 2010, Legislative Bill (LB 997) was signed into law by Governor Heineman and requires all Nebraska Cities and Counties to include an energy element in their new Comprehensive Plan by January 1, 2015. The energy element should assess current energy consumption and evaluate and promote utilization of renewable energy sources and energy conservation measures that benefit the community.*

## 1. Energy infrastructure and energy use by sector, including residential, commercial, and industrial sectors:

The Nebraska Energy Office compiles statistics on energy consumption in the state by sector. The latest statistics are from 2007.

**Residential:** In 2007, 47.5% of the residential sector’s energy usage was from natural gas. 40.2% of the energy consumed in the residential sector was electricity, 7.7% were petroleum products, 4.9% was renewable energy (wood 4.38%, geothermal 0.22%, and solar 0.04%), and less than 1% was coal. [Source: Nebraska Energy Office, “Energy Consumption in Nebraska’s Residential Sector,” [www.neo.gov/statsht-ml/09/html](http://www.neo.gov/statsht-ml/09/html)]

**Commercial:** In 2007, 48.06% of the commercial sector’s energy usage was from electricity and 45.88% from natural gas. Petroleum products made up 4.1% of the energy consumed in the commercial sector (diesel fuel 1.65%, propane 1.58%, motor gasoline 0.88%, kerosene 0.01%), 1.8% was renewable energy (geothermal 0.92%, wood 0.85%, and ethanol 0.02%), and less than 1% was coal. [Source: Nebraska Energy Office, “Energy Consumption in Nebraska’s Commercial Sector,” [www.neo.gov/statsht-ml/12/html](http://www.neo.gov/statsht-ml/12/html)]

**Industrial:** In 2007, 38.13% of the industrial sector energy usage was from natural gas, 22.66% from diesel fuel, and 19.77% from electricity. Petroleum product other than diesel fuel were asphalt and road oil (3.8%), propane (3.51%), motor gasoline (2.33%), residual fuel (0.19%), lubricants (0.14%), kerosene (0.01%), and other petroleum (0.88%). 5.13% of the energy consumed in the industrial sector was coal and 3.44% was renewable energy (wood and wood waste 3.38% and ethanol 0.06%). [Source: Nebraska Energy Office, “Energy Consumption in Nebraska’s Industrial Sector,” [www.neo.gov/statshtml/15/html](http://www.neo.gov/statshtml/15/html)]

Energy infrastructure and energy use statistics by sector are not available for the City of Imperial. Specifics about the City of Imperial’s electric system can be found in the previous section of this Comprehensive Plan. Electric consumption in Imperial for 2012 and 2013 is shown in **Table 3.1** below. This data was provided by the City of Imperial. There are a total of 18 irrigation wells that are in the City’s electric jurisdiction which is why there is a separate irrigation category in **Table 3.1**. There was a total decrease of 1,095,060 kWh in electrical use between 2012 and 2013.

**Table 3.1 Electric Consumption Totals, Imperial, 2012-2013**

Year	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Irrigation
<b>2012</b>	11,721,040 kWh	3,008,029 kWh	15,540,442 kWh	1,878,320 kWh
<b>2013</b>	12,424,949 kWh	3,152,540 kWh	15,502,380 kWh	1,380,720 kWh
<b>Difference</b>	-703,909 kWh	144,511 kWh	-38,062 kWh	-497,600 kWh

Source: The City of Imperial

## 2. Utilization of renewable energy sources:

The Nebraska Energy Office reports that in 2007, 3% of Nebraska’s energy consumption was from renewable energy sources. The sources of energy for Nebraska in 2007 were petroleum (33%), coal (31%), natural gas (21%), nuclear power (17%) and renewable energy (3%). The renewable sources were biomass (1.48%), conventional hydroelectric power (0.496%), ethanol (0.379%), wind (0.309%), geothermal energy (0.115%), and solar (0.005%). [Source: Nebraska Energy Office, “Nebraska’s Renewable Energy Consumption,” [www.neo.ne.gov/statshtml/92.htm](http://www.neo.ne.gov/statshtml/92.htm)]



The nation as a whole used a higher percentage of renewable energy than Nebraska. In 2008, 7% of the energy consumption in the United States was from renewable sources. That year the sources of energy for the nation were petroleum (37%), natural gas (24%), coal (23%), nuclear electric power (8%), and renewable energy (7%). The sources of renewable energy were solar (0.07%), geothermal (0.35%), wind (0.49%), hydropower (2.38%), and biomass (3.71%). [Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Renewable Energy Trends in Consumption and Electricity," [www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/solar.renewables/page/trends/rentrends.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/solar.renewables/page/trends/rentrends.html)]

Renewable energy source statistics are not available for the City of Imperial. **Figure 3.1** shows the rating of the State of Nebraska for 50M wind power. Imperial and Chase County have fair ratings for wind power which is equal to the majority of the State of Nebraska's wind potential with some areas in the State having a slightly better possibility for wind generation. Because Nebraska uses public power districts and has fairly cheap energy costs it makes the large up-front costs of Wind Energy Systems (WES) not seem as feasible.

### 3. Energy conservation measures that benefit the community:

a. Energy Codes – Under §§81-1608 to 81-1616, the State of Nebraska has adopted the International Energy Conservation Code as the Nebraska Energy Code. Any city may adopt and enforce the Nebraska Energy Code or an equivalent energy code. If a city does not adopt an energy code, the Nebraska Energy Office will enforce the Nebraska Energy Code in the jurisdiction.

The purpose of the code, under §81-1608, is to ensure that newly built houses or buildings meet uniform energy efficiency standards. The statute finds:

*that there is a need to adopt the...International Energy Conservation Code in order (1) to ensure that a minimum energy efficiency standard is maintained throughout the state, (2) to harmonize and clarify energy building code statutory references, (3) to ensure compliance with the National Energy Policy Act of 1992, (4) to increase energy savings for all Nebraska consumers, especially low-income Nebraskans, (5) to reduce the cost of the state programs that provide assistance to low-income Nebraskans, (6) to reduce the amount of money expended to import energy, (7) to reduce the growth of energy consumption, (8) to lessen the need for new power plants, and (9) to provide training for local code officials and residential and commercial builders who implement the...International Energy Conservation Code.*

The Code applies to all new buildings, or renovations of or additions to any existing buildings. Only those renovations that will cost more than 50 percent of the replacement cost of the building must comply with the code. The City of Imperial has not adopted an energy code. If a City of County does not adopt an energy code, the Nebraska Energy Office will enforce the Nebraska Energy Code in the jurisdiction.

b. Energy Efficiency Programs – The City will work with utility companies that supply energy to the residents and businesses of the City to promote and implement energy efficiency programs that can be utilized by these customers to improve conservation and utilization of electricity, natural gas, and other energy sources.

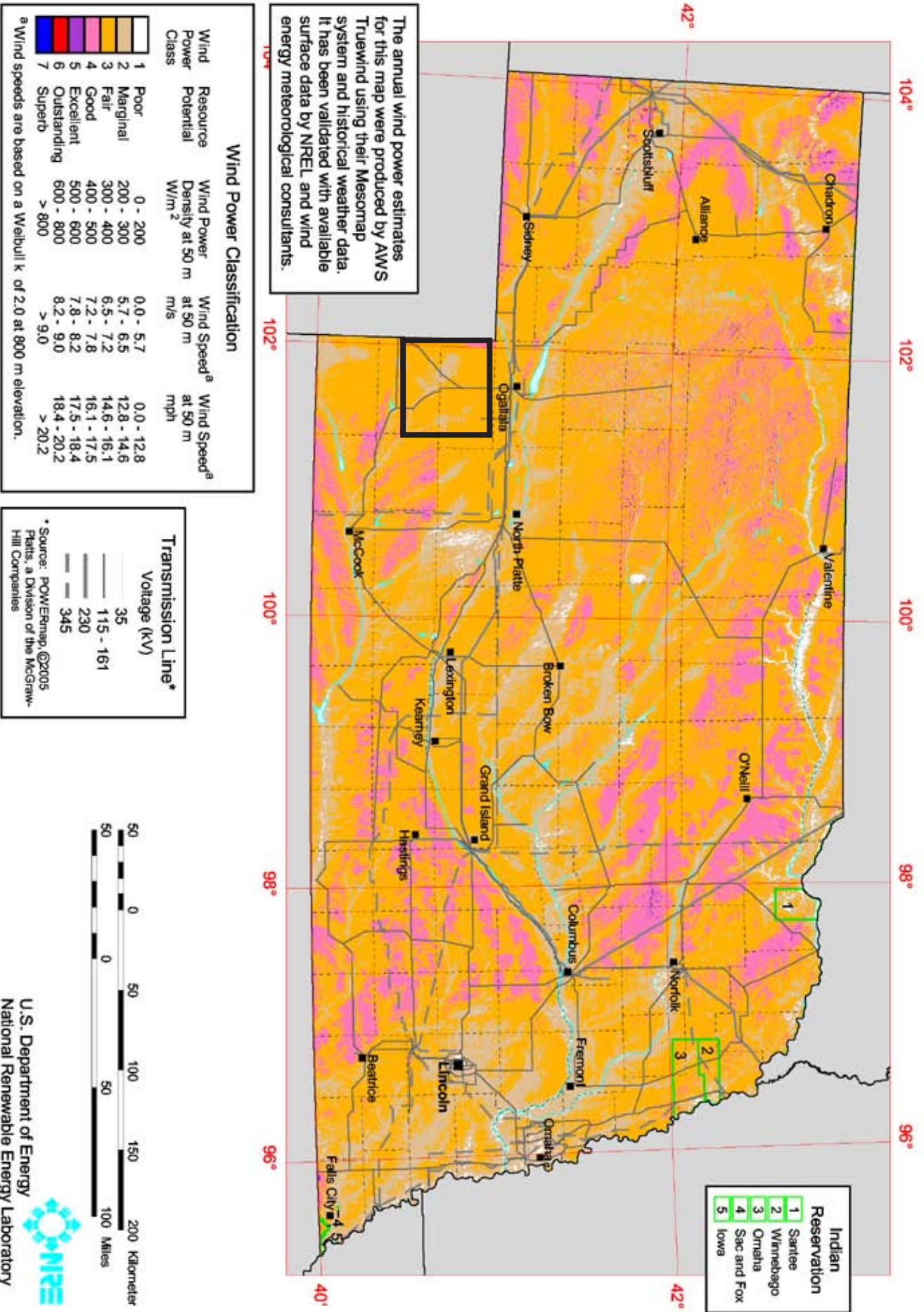
Residents and businesses are encouraged to work with utility companies and take advantage of the companies' energy efficiency programs to improve conservation and use of electricity, natural gas, and other energy sources.

c. "Energy Saving Tips" – The Nebraska Energy Office has listed ways to save money on energy bills for the home, farm, business, or vehicle. Options for energy savings are listed on the Office's web site at <http://www.neo.ne.gov/tips/tips.htm>. The City and residents and businesses in the City are encouraged to take advantage of the conservation measures.

d. The City may add other conservation measures. One suggestion is to include planting trees by communities. Cities that have been designated Tree City USA cities are providing energy efficiency/conservation options by planting trees.



# Nebraska - 50 m Wind Power



**Figure 3.1**  
**Nebraska 50M Wind Power Map**  
 Imperial, Nebraska

# Land

Based on the Conservation and Survey Division at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, there are four different types of topographic regions in Chase County. They are plains, valleys, sand hills, and dissected plains. Plains can be categorized as flat-lying land that lies above the valley. The materials of the plains are sandstone or stream-deposited silt, clay, sand and gravel overlain by wind-deposited silt (called loess). The valleys are flat-lying land that lies along major streams. The materials of the valleys are stream-deposited silt, clay, sand, and gravel. The sand hills are hilly land composed of low to high dunes of sand stabilized by a grass cover. The sand dunes mantle stream-deposited silt, sand and gravel, and sandstone. The dissected plains are also hilly land but the dissected plains have moderate to steep slopes, sharp ridge crests and remnants of the old, nearly level plain. They are old plains eroded by water and wind. Imperial is at an elevation of approximately 3,285 feet. The climate of Chase County is semiarid, characterized by light rainfall, cold winters, warm summers, high winds, and frequent changes in weather conditions. Because the climate is fairly uniform through the County, differences in the soils and topography are the result of the interrelationship of the climate and other soil-forming factors. Climate influences the rate at which parent material is weathered and reworked by rain, temperature, and wind.

Understanding the topography of Imperial and Chase County is important to determine the community's best areas for potential development as well as understanding that proper land use practices can protect the natural resources and be a complement to the built environment. The natural topography of the community provides both opportunities and constraints for existing and future development. In Imperial, like most communities, the major development constraints and opportunities are associated with the topography and condition of existing soils.

# Soils

The soils in and around Imperial are classified into soil groups, or associations, and have a broad range of characteristics. The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service conducted the field soils survey and determined the boundaries of the soil types found in the region. The planning jurisdiction of Imperial, including the corporate limits and the one-mile extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) outside of the corporate limits, is comprised of one generalized soil association, the Valent-Woodly-Jayem Association. The Valent-Woodly-Jayem Association considered to be deep, nearly level to moderately steep, well to excessively drained, and sandy and loamy soils formed in eolian material on uplands.

Information and knowledge on soils is an important factor when discussing future development options. The built environment is dependent upon the natural environment and proper development practices must be followed in order to protect the natural environment. There are several different types of soils present in the planning jurisdiction of Imperial; these can all be broken down into many classifications based on slope, percentage of soil type, major and minor types of soil, and degree of drainage. In order to make land use recommendations, decision-makers need to understand how different soil types and slopes can affect future land uses, the environment, current residents, and farming practices. Soils data and classifications used in the following maps were gathered by the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service. The following maps in this section depict slope, soil suitability, and dryland capability by soil associations for the planning jurisdiction of this Comprehensive Plan.

Slope by Soil Association Map (**Figure 3.2**)

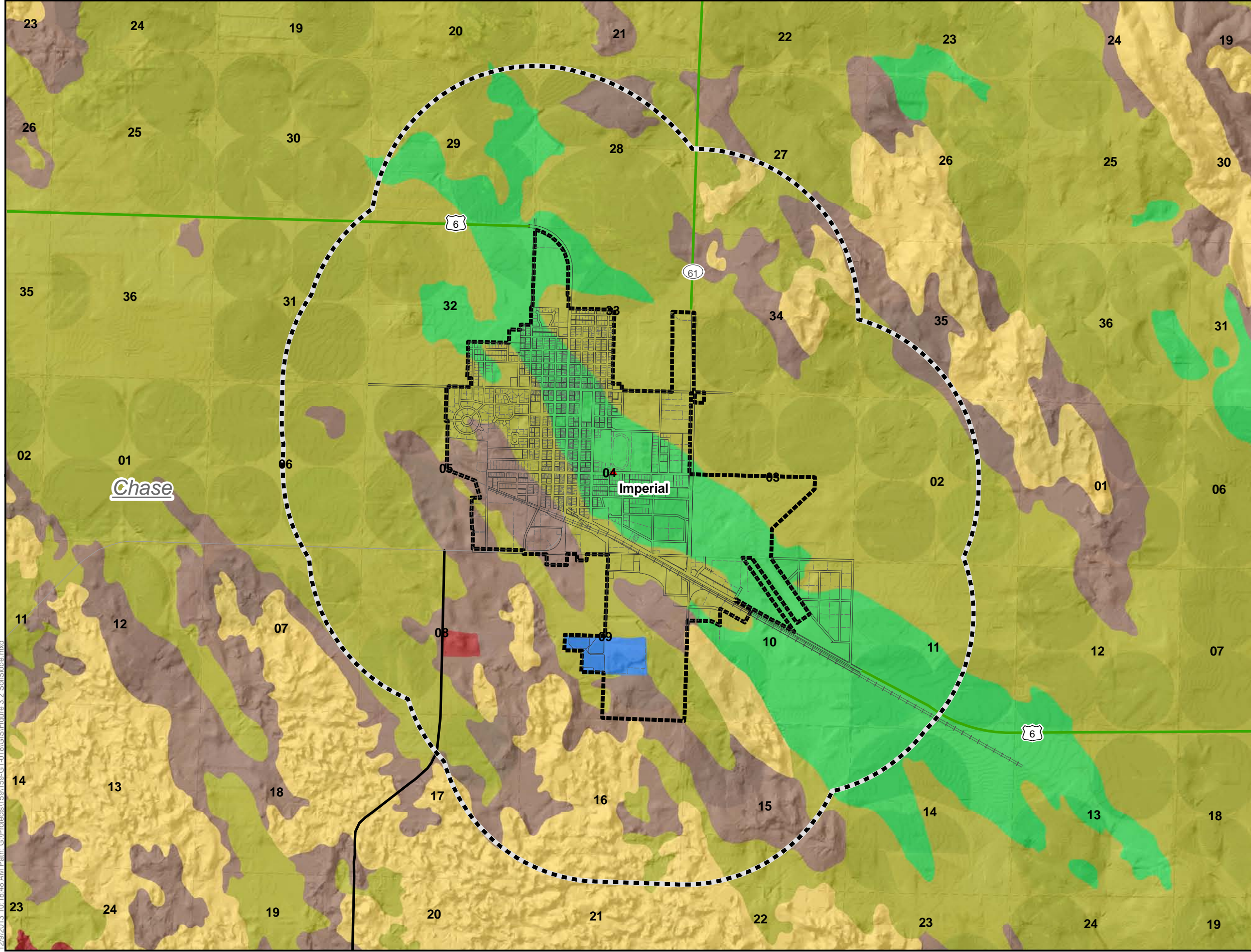
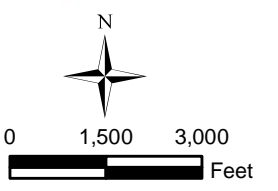
Soil Suitability for Septic Tanks (**Figure 3.3**)

Soil Suitability for Sewage Lagoons (**Figure 3.4**)

Dryland Capability Classification (**Figure 3.5**)

Soil Suitability for Prime Farmland (**Figure 3.6**)





**Legend**

- ETJ
- Imperial Corporate Boundary

**Soil Slope Association**

- Level to nearly Level (0-2 Percent)
- Gently Sloping (1-6 Percent)
- Moderately Sloping (6-11 Percent)
- Strongly Sloping (9-30 Percent)
- Very Steep (30-60 Percent)
- Water/Misc./Sewage Lagoons

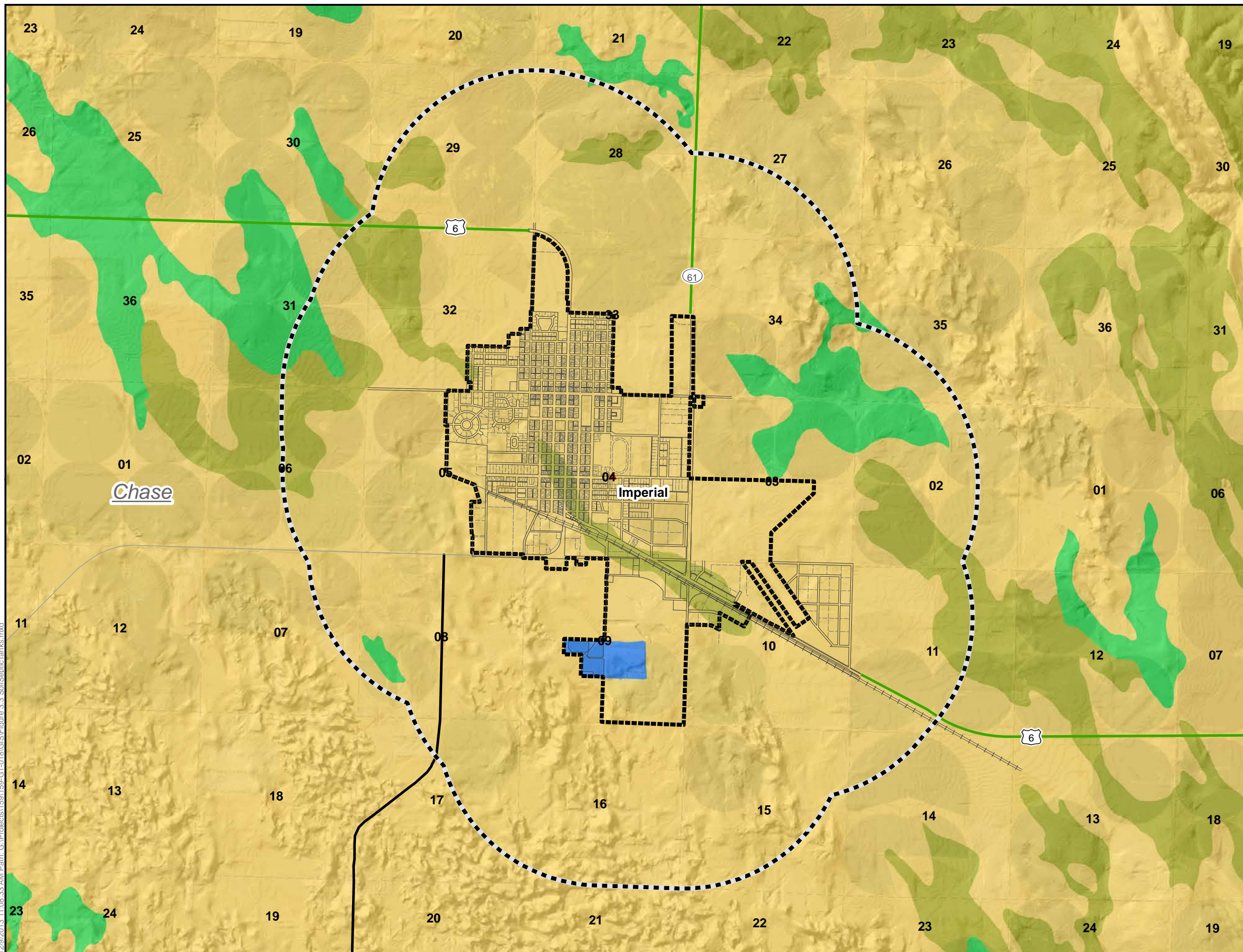
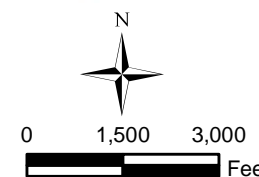
Source:  
 Data Provided By: The U.S. Department of  
 Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation  
 Service 7-30-2012, M&A

**Figure 3.2**  
**Slope By**  
**Soil Association**

Imperial, Nebraska

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**Legend**

- ETJ
- Imperial Corporate Boundary

**Soil Suitability**

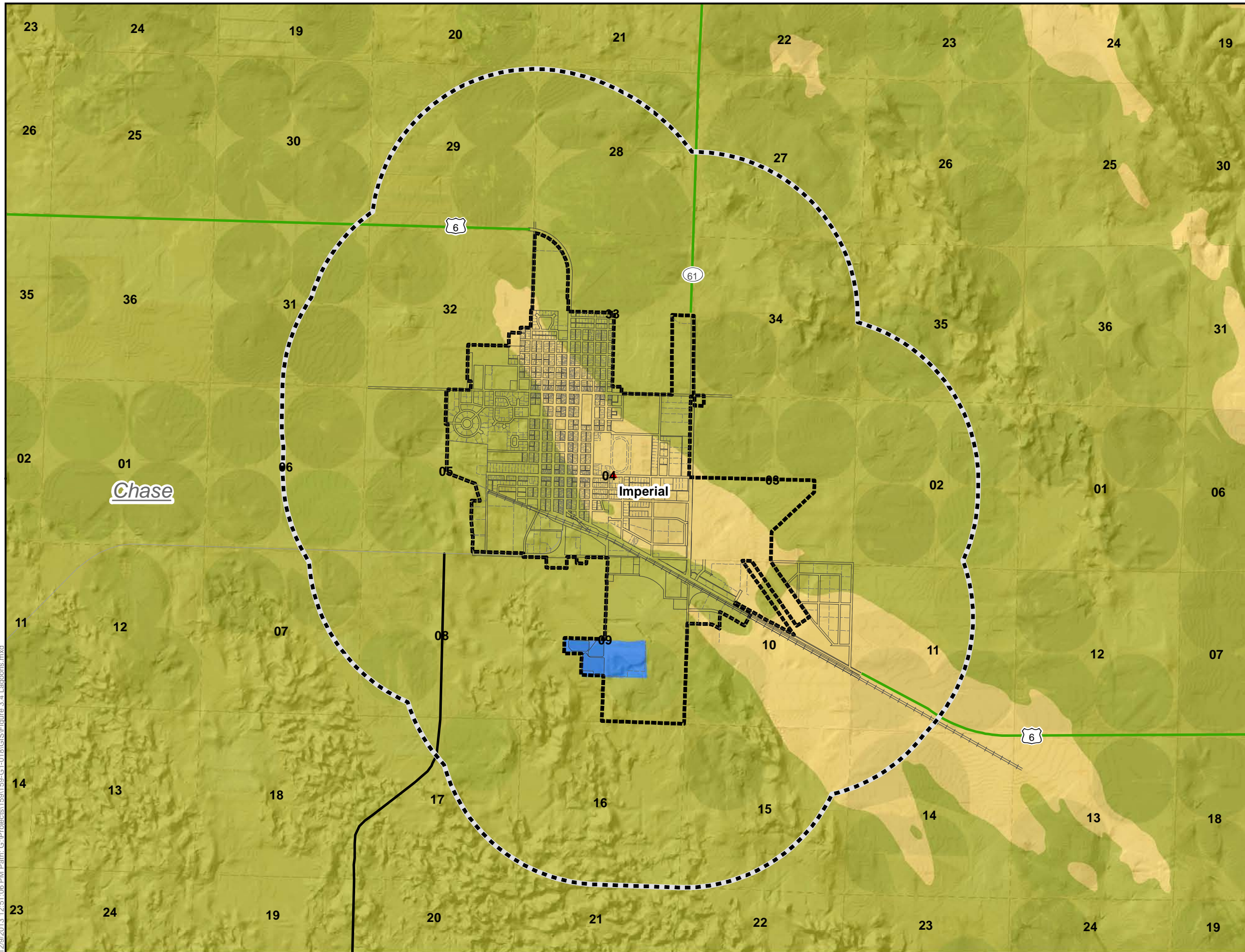
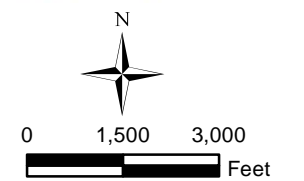
- No Limitations
- Moderate Limitations
- Severe Limitations
- Water/Misc./Sewage Lagoons

Source:  
 Data Provided By: The U.S. Department of  
 Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation  
 Service 7-30-2012, M&A

**Figure 3.3**  
**Soil Suitability For**  
**Septic Tanks**  
**By Soil Association**

Imperial, Nebraska





**Legend**

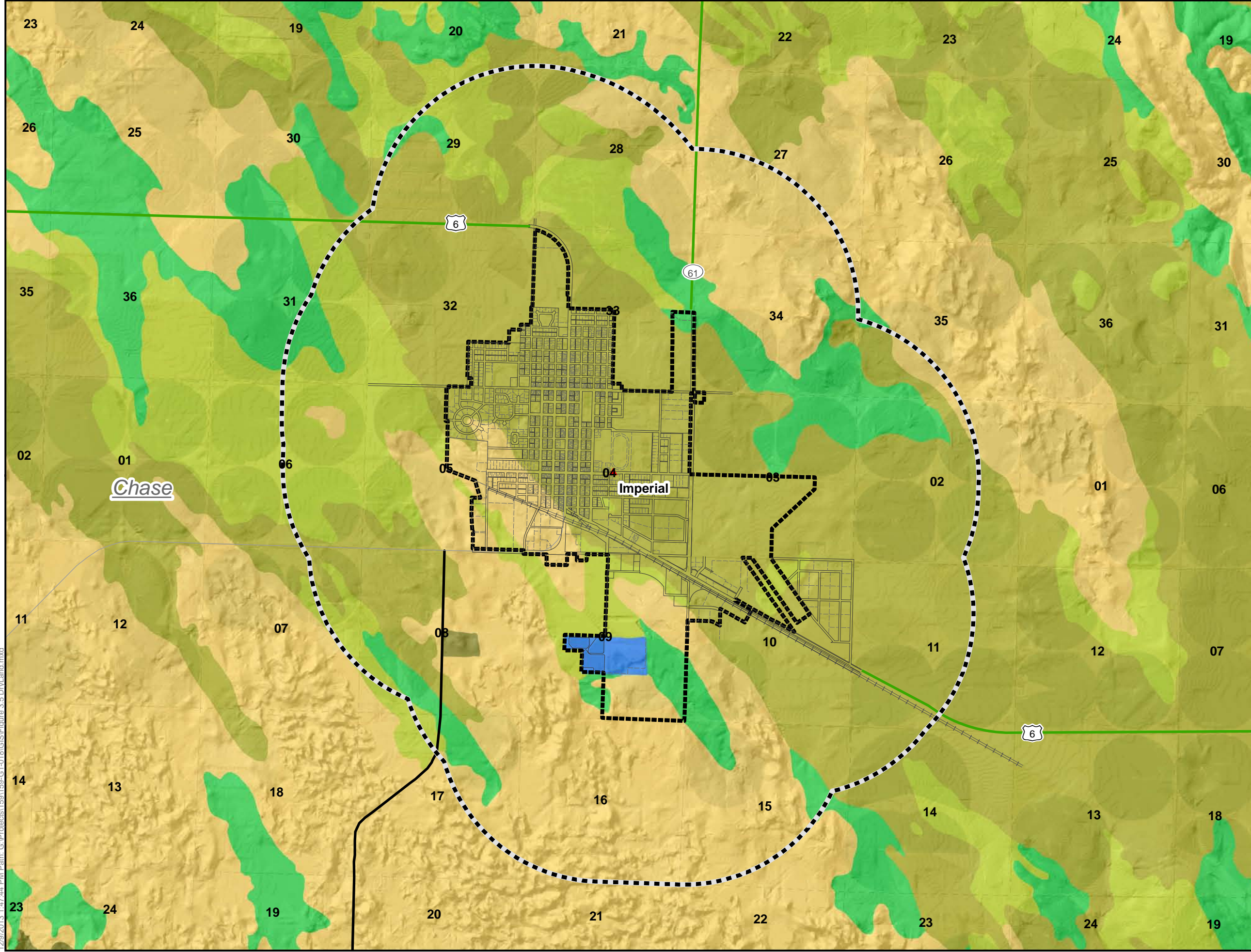
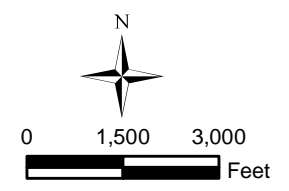
- ETJ
- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- Soil Suitability**
- Severe Limitations
- Moderate Limitations
- Water/Misc./Sewage Lagoons

Source:  
 Data Provided By: The U.S. Department of  
 Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation  
 Service 7-30-2012, M&A

**Figure 3.4**  
**Soil Suitability For**  
**Lagoons**  
**By Soil Association**

Imperial, Nebraska





**Class Description**

- Class 1 Soils have few limitations that restrict their use.
- Class 2 Soils have some limitations that reduce the choice of plants or require moderate conservation practices.
- Class 3 Soils have some limitations that reduce the choice of plants or require moderate conservation practices or both.
- Class 4 Soils have very severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both.
- Class 5 Soils have little or no erosion hazard, but have other limitations impractical to remove that limit their use.
- Class 6 Soils have very severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, etc.
- Class 7 Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use to grazing, etc.
- Class 8 Soils/landforms have limitations that preclude their use for commercial plant production and restrict their use.

**Legend**

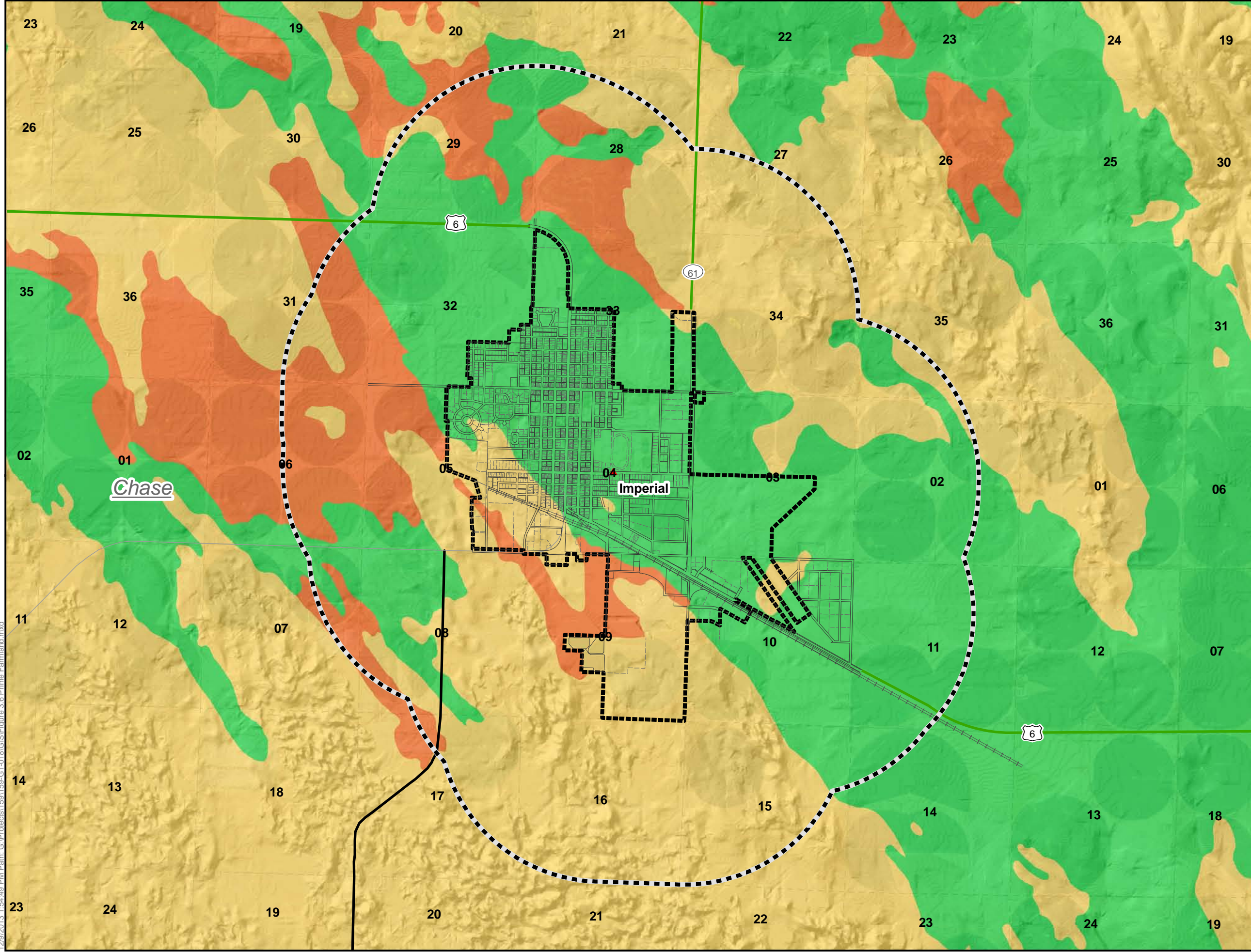
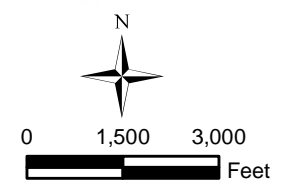
- ETJ
- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- Soil Suitability**
- Class 1
- Class 2
- Class 3
- Class 4
- Class 5
- Class 6
- Class 7
- Water/Misc./Sewage Lagoons

Source:  
Data Provided By: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service 7-30-2012, M&A

**Figure 3.5**  
**Dryland Capability**  
**Classification By**  
**Soil Association**

Imperial, Nebraska





**Legend**

- ETJ
- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- Soil Suitability**
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Prime farmland if irrigated
- Not prime farmland

Source:  
 Data Provided By: The U.S. Department of  
 Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation  
 Service 7-30-2012, M&A

**Figure 3.6**  
**Soil Suitability For**  
**Prime Farmland**  
**By Soil Association**

Imperial, Nebraska

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# Water

Nebraska, including Chase County, has an abundance of groundwater supply from the Ogallala Aquifer. Residents within Chase County get their drinking and agricultural water from wells utilizing the bed of porous rocks that form the Ogallala Aquifer. It is a great natural resource for the State of Nebraska and in turn, for Chase County and Imperial, but conservation and potential contamination need to be constantly analyzed.

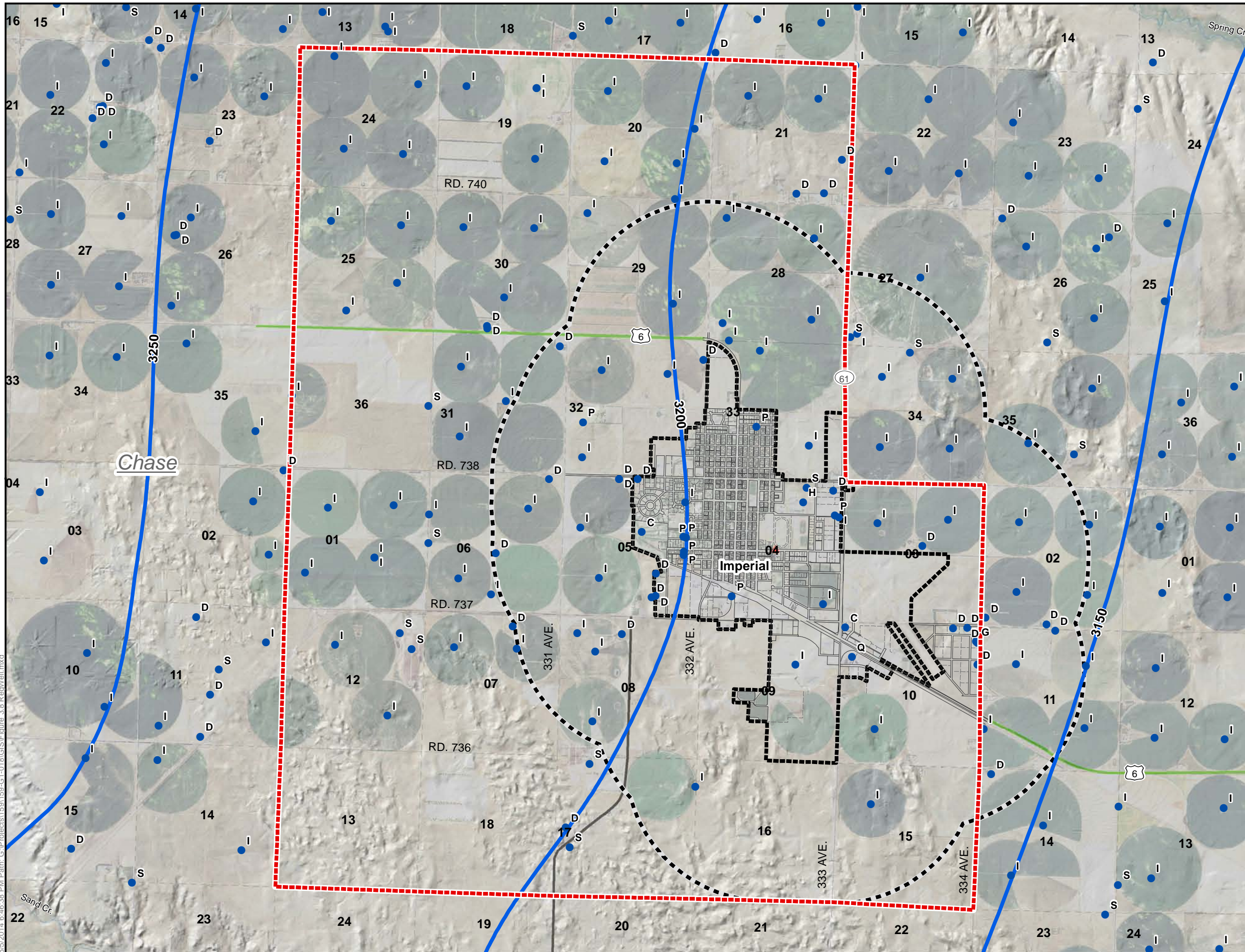
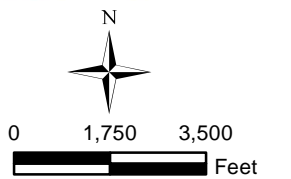
Imperial is unique in the fact that it was not developed near a body or stream of water. Although there are no floodplain concerns, stormwater drainage issues have plagued and continue to plague the community because of the flat landscape. More information about Imperial's stormwater drainage infrastructure can be found in the previous Chapter in the Utilities Section.

**Figure 3.7** shows all of the registered wells in and around Imperial. The Ogallala Aquifer is the source of water for many irrigation systems and registered wells around Imperial in order to supply water to residents, crop and pasturelands, and livestock. The State of Nebraska receives about 80 percent of its public drinking water and nearly 100 percent of its private water supply from groundwater sources. The agricultural process for which most of Nebraska's communities are dependent upon is directly tied to these aforementioned water sources, which is why contamination is a major concern. Due to the dependence on groundwater supply, the cost of contamination runs high. The State of Nebraska understands the vital importance of the groundwater supply, which is one of the reasons for the Natural Resources Districts (NRD). The Upper Republican NRD plays an important role in protecting this natural resource for Imperial and the surrounding areas. It is also part of Imperial's responsibility to protect the quality and availability of drinking water for the region. **Figure 3.7** also shows Imperial's Wellhead Protection Area as covering Imperial's entire corporate limits boundary and a majority of their one-mile jurisdiction plus it covers a few square miles outside of the City's one-mile jurisdiction. The goal of the Wellhead Protection Area is to protect the land and groundwater surrounding the public drinking water supply wells from contamination. Any endangerment to the supply threatens the public's health as well as the vital farming economy of the region.



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**Legend**

- Wellhead Protection Area Boundary
- ETJ
- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- Groundwater Contours
- Reg. Well (Use Type)
  - "C" = Commercial/Industrial
  - "D" = Domestic
  - "G" = Ground Heat Exchanger
  - "I" = Irrigation
  - "H" = Heat Pump (Ground Water Source)
  - "P" = Public Water Supply w/Spacing
  - "Q" = Monitoring (Ground Water Quality)
  - "S" = Livestock

**Notes:**

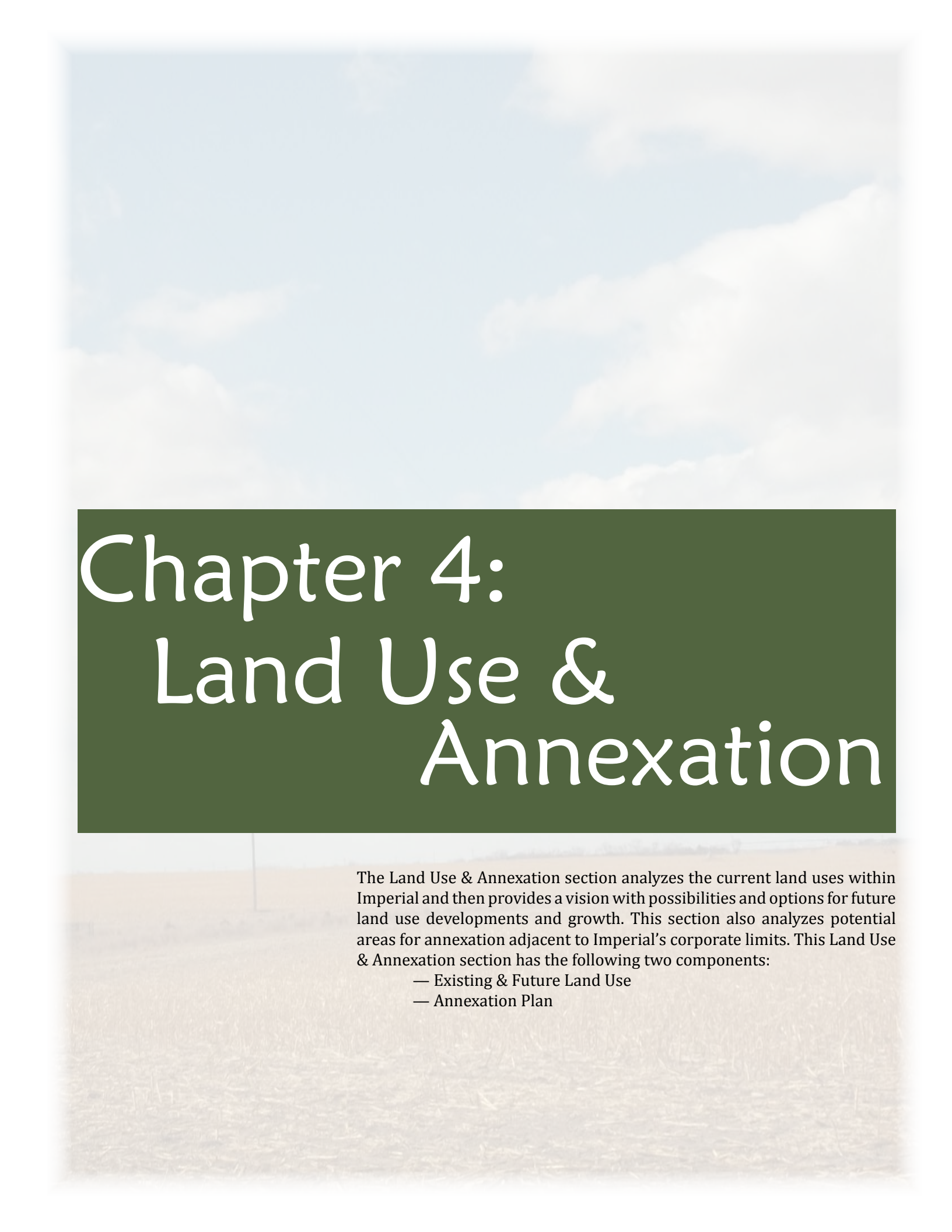
1. 1995 groundwater contours were digitized by the Conservation and Survey Division, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, from Maps developed by the U.S. Geological Survey.
2. Registered well information provided by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, September, 2013.
3. Registered well locations are positioned from well registration forms. Some errors may exist due to data input and inaccuracies within registration records.
4. Wellhead Protection Area Boundary Provided by: Nebraska Dep. of Environmental Quality, Wellhead Protection Program, September 2004.

\* Public wells are not depicted on this map for safety purposes.

**Figure 3.7**  
**Registered Well & Wellhead Protection Area Map**

Imperial, Nebraska





# Chapter 4: Land Use & Annexation

The Land Use & Annexation section analyzes the current land uses within Imperial and then provides a vision with possibilities and options for future land use developments and growth. This section also analyzes potential areas for annexation adjacent to Imperial's corporate limits. This Land Use & Annexation section has the following two components:

- Existing & Future Land Use
- Annexation Plan

# Land Use

*Land use is an important aspect in the Comprehensive Plan allowing community members to visualize existing land uses as well as to stimulate discussion and direction for how and where the community could and should grow. How the land is being used creates relationships between the physical, built environment and the social world. Land use planning is an important process because it involves the systematic assessment of physical, social, and economic factors in a way that should mitigate the potential for conflict. This section will give decision-makers options on how the community can grow.*

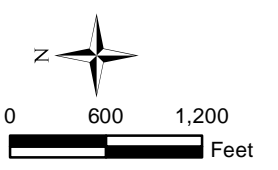
## Existing Land Use

The land use section of the Comprehensive Plan consists of two separate but related parts. The existing land use section is where the community studies and evaluates the pros and cons of Imperial's existing mix of land uses and development patterns. **Figure 4.1a**, the Existing Land Use Map, shows the current land uses in Imperial. **Figure 4.1b** shows the existing land uses in Imperial in perspective of the entire planning jurisdiction which incorporates the City's one-mile ETJ. Imperial has nine different land use classifications including single-family residential, multi-family residential, large lot residential, commercial, light industrial, public/quasi-public, agricultural/greenspace, recreational, and vacant parcels. Commercial land uses are found along the Highway 6 and 61 corridors which also include the retail and service sector businesses in the Downtown District. Commercial properties in any community are typically located in those two areas because of the visibility and access it provides for each business. Companies located along the highway corridors typically require easier access, more parking, or larger space/square footage. Larger economic ventures such as manufacturing, bulk storage, or distribution facilities typically fall into the light industrial category. Highway/railroad and downtown commercial developments tend to attract different types of businesses and they also tend to look and feel dramatically different from one another.

Many communities have separate zoning regulations for the highway corridor commercial district and the central/downtown commercial district. Separate districts are necessary because of the different setbacks, lot sizes, height restrictions, parking needs, and aesthetic desires for each of the areas. Downtown economic development should be catered towards retail, service, and/or hospitality businesses. It is important to protect the look and feel of the Downtown District because it is the heart of the community. Larger economic ventures are important to the economy because of the revenue and job opportunities they provide for the City; however, these developments should take place along the outskirts of town near Highway 6 and 61 and/or the railroad. Zoning Regulations are important to steer commercial development into proper zoning districts to ensure the mix of adjacent land uses is conducive to the new business. Imperial has appropriate Zoning Districts to encourage commercial and light industrial development in the right places in the community; however, it is up to City staff and officials to ensure those regulations are followed.

The primary land use in Imperial is residential. Structures of this nature can be found throughout the community. As obvious as it seems, it is important when planning for any future development to maintain or enhance the existing feel of the neighborhood. This is especially true in residential areas of the community; any new structures that are built in those neighborhoods should be residential in nature. The existing residential land uses include both single-family and multi-family developments with mixes of duplexes, apartments; although the majority of the residential land uses are single-family homes. The majority of low-density, single-family residential development is on the east side of Highway 81, north east of the Downtown District. There are a few multi-family or medium density developments with the majority of these units located in the north-central part of the community. Some residential development has occurred adjacent to the corporate limits of Imperial. This development has included spacious homes setback on large lots that could be up to a couple of acres. This residential development can be very enticing and attractive for several residents and it has been delineated as a separate land use district and is planned for in the future land use plan as well.

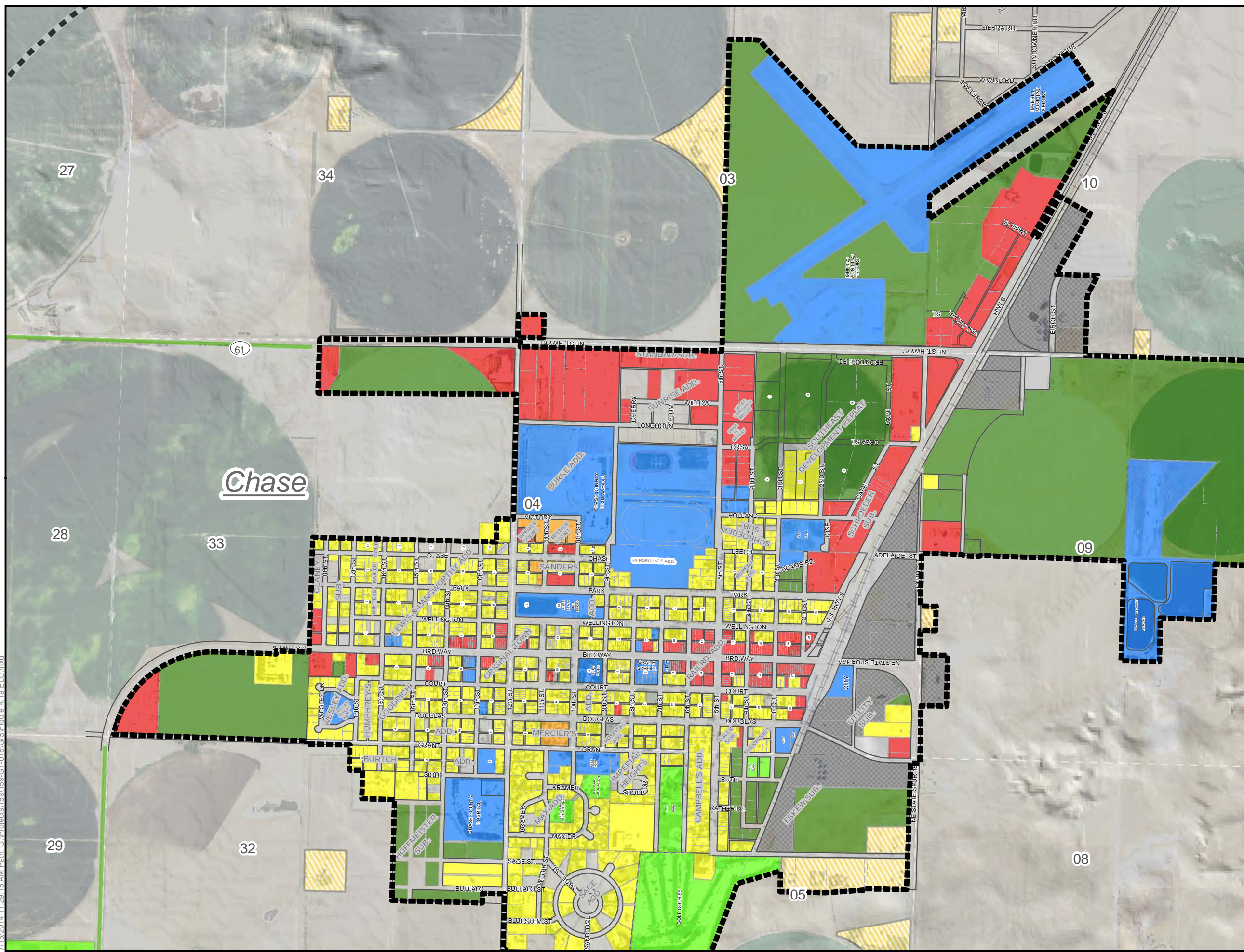




**Legend**

- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- Existing Land Use**
- Single-Family Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Recreational
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Agricultural/Greenspace
- Vacant

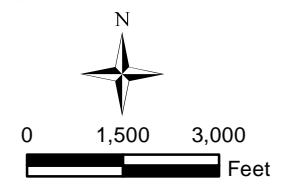
**Note:**  
 All areas outside of the Corporate Limits that have not been classified as a particular land use may be classified as Agricultural/Greenspace.



**Figure 4.1a**  
**Existing Land Use**

Imperial, Nebraska





**Legend**

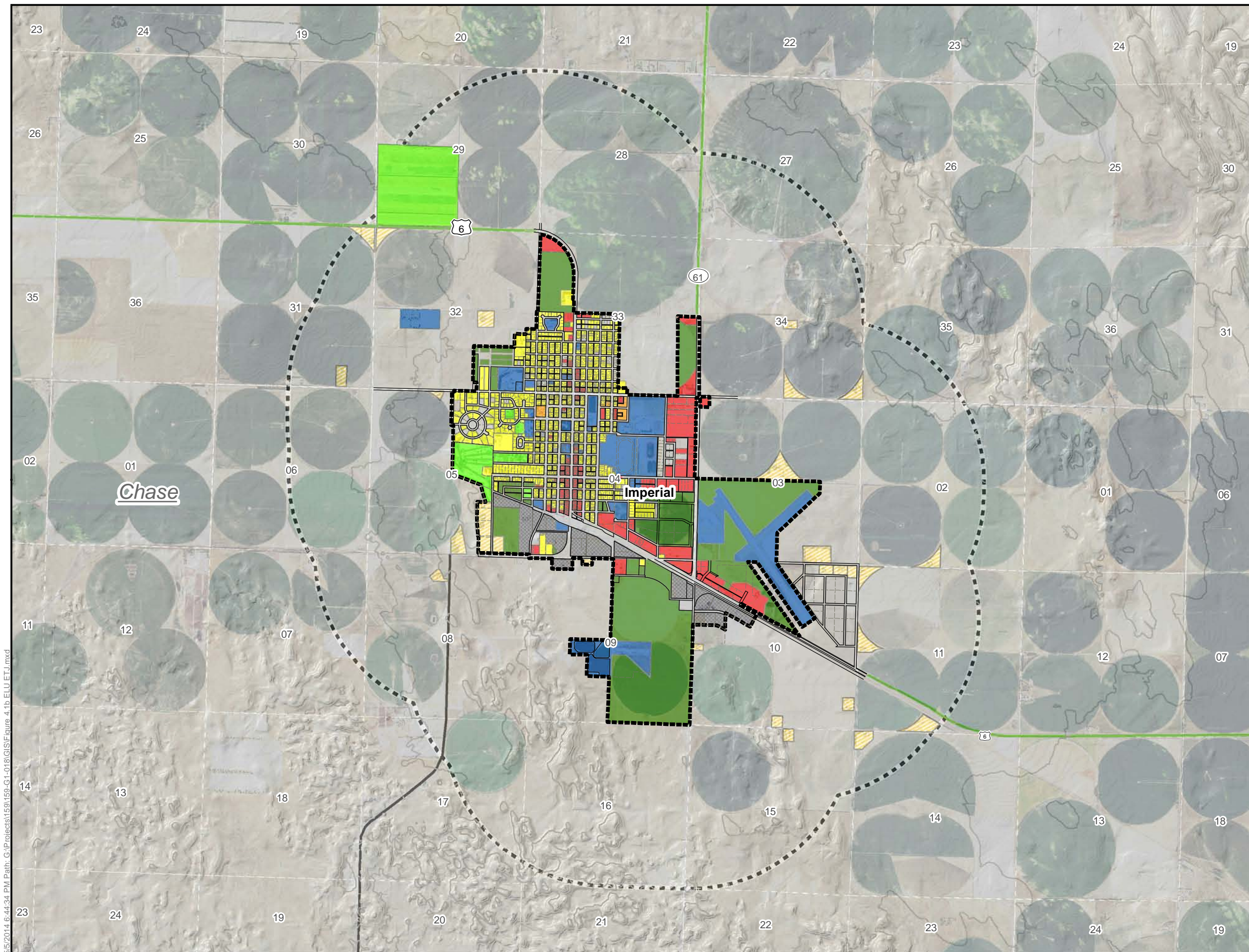
- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- ETJ

**Existing Land Use**

- Single-Family Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Recreational
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Agricultural/Greenspace
- Vacant

**Note:**

All areas outside of the Corporate Limits that have not been classified as a particular land use may be classified as Agricultural/Greenspace.



**Figure 4.1b**  
**Existing Land Use**

Imperial, Nebraska



There are several recreational areas throughout the community including the municipal swimming pool, Chase County Fairgrounds, golf course, several ball fields, and several areas with playground equipment including Max Addition Park which received a make-over in 2012. Recreational opportunities can provide amenities for a wide age range of residents in a community. Availability of a variety of recreational services and parks is important to maintain a high quality of life for all residents in Imperial, not just the children. The existing recreational districts are somewhat spread throughout the community offering residents a close park, within walking distance, regardless of what part of town they live in. As more land continues to develop and more residents and families move into the community it will be important to assess the need for improved and additional recreational amenities.

Public/quasi-public land uses include churches, municipal properties, school buildings, healthcare facilities, community buildings, etc. These existing land uses are spread throughout Imperial, and rightfully so. Public land uses need to be available and accessible by every resident in Imperial, not just concentrated in specific areas that could segregate neighborhoods based on available amenities.

A majority of the land that is deemed agricultural/greenspace is around the edge of the corporate limits. Some of this land is farmed, and should continue to be until it is necessary to subdivide and develop for the benefit the community. Other areas are also considered to be agricultural/greenspace although they may not be farmed. Farming in these areas is not possible for several reasons including topographic challenges that have hindered development for those properties. Even though those areas of land may be too challenging to develop they lend themselves to additional greenspace and/or buffers between the heart of the community and what lies outside of the corporate limits.

There are also a few vacant parcels of land dispersed throughout the community; these platted parcels of land may or may not have ever hosted a structure. The lots are desirable for infill development because of their vicinity to existing public infrastructure; however, the current lot sizes and conditions may not be attractive to potential builders. When developing vacant, infill parcels, it is important to maintain a balance between the surrounding land uses and the potential development. Most of the vacant lots in Imperial are within residential neighborhoods; however, as previously mentioned, the original platted lots may not meet current development standards. To meet these standards, adjacent vacant parcels in the community can be combined.

It is also important for the City to have other residential lots available because there is a limited amount of existing vacant platted lots. Without the existence of Sage Addition or Cornerstone Development subdivision and the readiness of the community to offer lots for residential development there is only a small amount of vacancies in the areas desirable for development. **Table 4.1** shows the approximate percentage of each land use as it compares to the community as a whole. These percentages are only for existing land uses inside the corporate limits boundary.

<b>Table 4.1 Existing Land Use Percentages, Imperial, 2014</b>	
<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Residential</b>	21%
<b>Public/Quasi-Public</b>	18%
<b>Commercial</b>	11%
<b>Light Industrial</b>	6%
<b>Recreational</b>	3%
<b>Agricultural/Greenspace</b>	37%
<b>Vacant</b>	4%
Source: M&A	

## Future Land Use

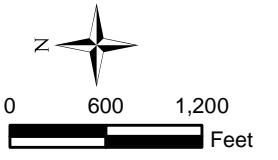
Planning and preparing for future land use options is a vital part of Imperial's Comprehensive Plan. Whether a community is growing or shrinking, there will still be changes in land use patterns; therefore, the purpose of this section is to provide a general guide for future development patterns. The idea is to avoid or minimize conflicts between land uses and the environment. The future land use plan must reflect existing land uses and options for changing land use needs. This plan should be flexible in nature in order to change as the community changes. Also, this plan should be molded to fit the needs, desires, and limitations of Imperial and its residents. Part of the preparation for the Comprehensive Plan was to hold a series of steering group/public input meetings. The input from those meetings was imperative to planning for future land uses. Having an understanding of what residents want and need within the community is important for gaining support and assistance in bettering Imperial. A summary of the input from the steering group meetings can be found in the following chapter. Information gathered at those meetings as well as existing land uses and data from primary and secondary sources was used to develop the future land use plan. A future land use plan should be a vision of what you want the community to look like; a vision of goals with different land uses to encourage 'smart' growth in your community. This vision should be an outlook and a guide for the next ten years.

In order to prepare and plan for the future of Imperial, decision-makers need to have ambitions and goals. Realistically, what is the future of Imperial going to look like, or what do you want it to look like? The main focus should be on keeping the strong community ties and progressive drive while diversifying amenities and the tax base in order to provide a high quality of life for residents. The types of land uses should vary within the community from single and multi-family homes, commercial ventures of different sizes, public areas including recreational amenities and public services, and some vacant land and greenspace for aesthetics and screening/buffering purposes. Homes should also vary, based on location, size, and price in order to attract a variety of residents. Having compatible housing is important when trying to appeal to new faces in the community. The housing stock versus household income analysis is an important way to determine the type of housing stock needed to best suit the needs and desires of residents. Improving the commercial sector should involve diversifying what is available to Imperial's residents. Commercial development should be promoted and developed depending on available resources. However, commercial ventures not only add to the tax base for the City but they also create job opportunities for residents or potential residents of Imperial. Envisioning goals as realities is important for the success of Imperial and ideas need to become actions in order to turn them into realities. City leaders are the ones ultimately responsible for making the final decisions for the betterment of the community; however, it is up to the residents to hold City leaders accountable to ensure the short- and long-term goals of the community are being met.

During the steering group/public input meetings many future development ideas were discussed. Attendees were asked to ignore their knowledge of current property owners and to "dream big" for Imperial. Exploring every possible option during the planning phase is important in order to be prepared and ensure that any community growth is following the goals outlined in this Plan or any other Plan the City has created. **Figure 4.2a**, showing the corporate limits boundary, and **Figure 4.2b**, showing the full one-mile jurisdiction of the City, outlines potential areas of new development in and around Imperial. These areas will be discussed in detail throughout this section.

Imperial currently has a housing shortage, especially for market-rate homes valued over \$150,000. There are vacant lots throughout town that could be used for infill development; however, those lots, which were originally platted when most people did not even have a garage, may be too small to build a home of today's standards. In order to utilize these vacant lots, adjacent properties would need to be combined before there is enough square footage to build a home of today's standards. When the town was originally platted, the largest lots would have been 50-foot wide. Today's standards for homes include three-four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a two-three car attached garage which is nearly impossible to construct on a 50-foot wide lot. By combining multiple, adjacent lots the builder has more land to work with. However, not all vacant lots have an adjacent vacant lot next to it which makes it difficult to utilize all infill lots. Imperial does have a few options for platted vacant lots that are suitable for infill development. But it is essential to the development and essential growth that Imperial has developed Cornerstone Development Subdivision for residential construction improved housing market conditions in the community. With the progressive attitude of many community stakeholders; this subdivision is now a shovel ready site, suited for multi-use development.





**Legend**

- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- Gateway Entrance Development

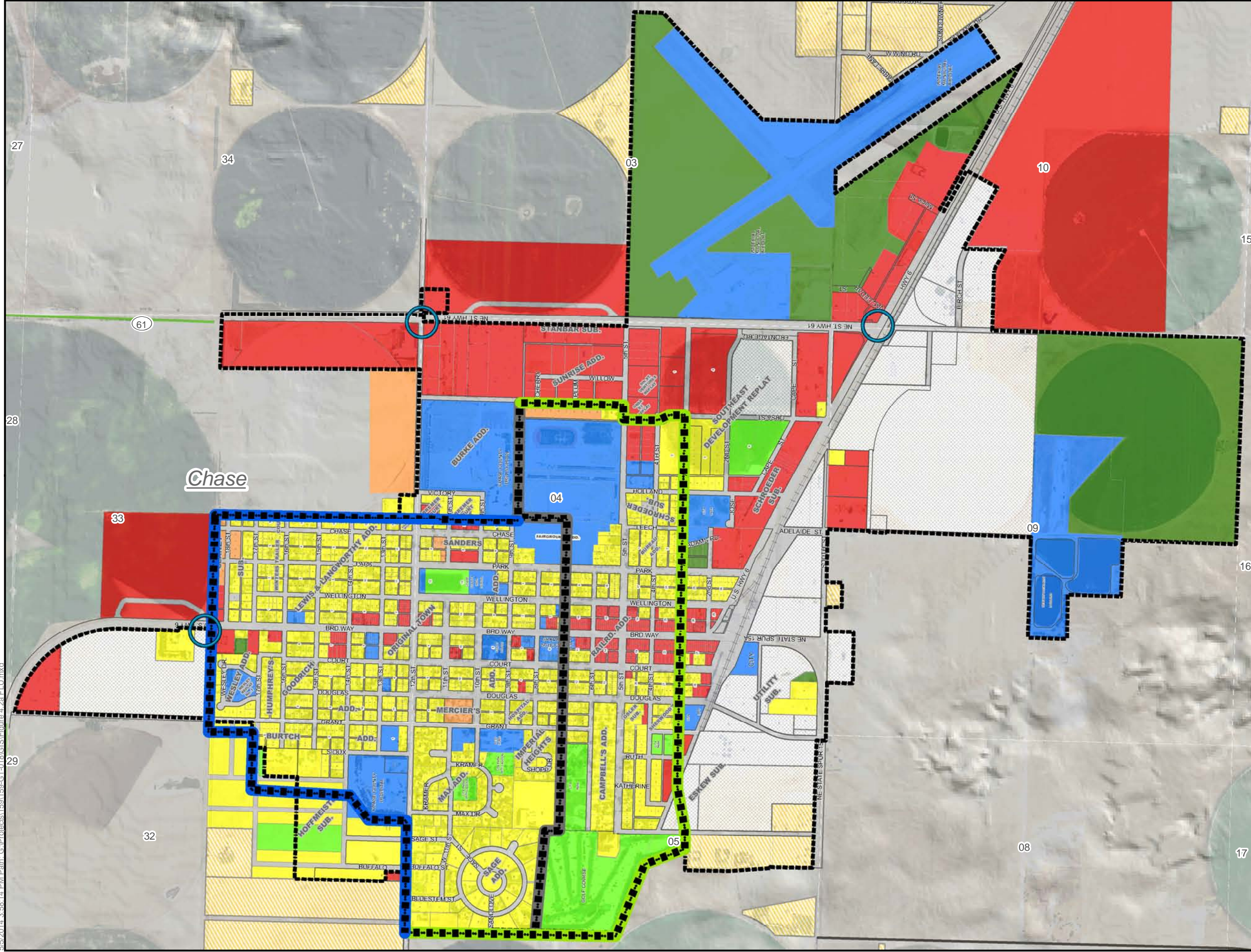
**Future Trails**

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3

**Future Land Use**

- Single-Family Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Recreational/Parks
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Agricultural/Greenspace

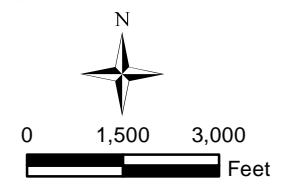
**Note:**  
 All areas outside of the Corporate Limits that have not been classified as a particular land use may be classified as Agricultural/Greenspace.



**Figure 4.2a**  
**Future Land Use**

Imperial, Nebraska





**Legend**

- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- ETJ

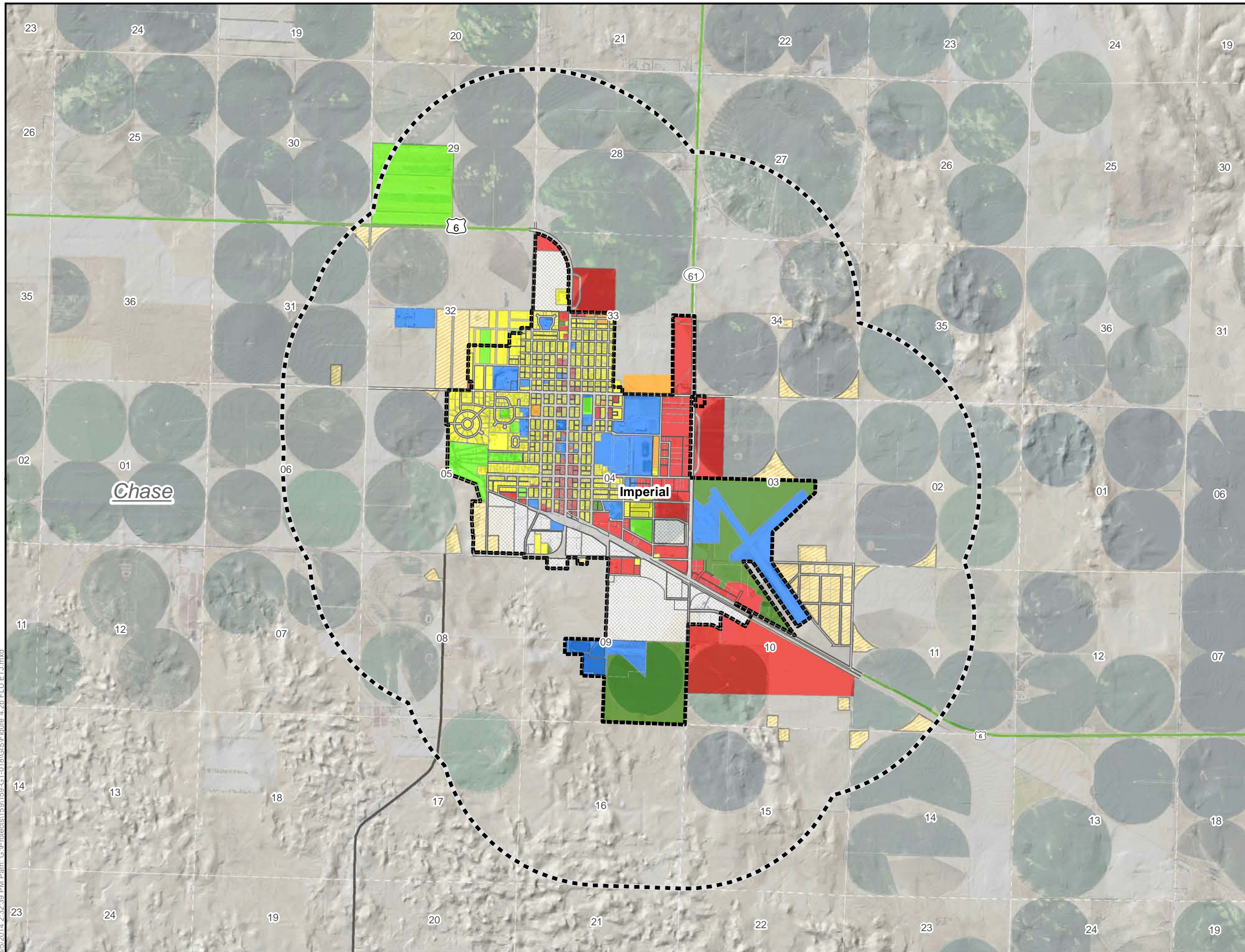
**FLU**

**Future Land Use**

- Single-Family Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Recreational/Parks
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Agricultural/Greenspace

**Note:**

All areas outside of the Corporate Limits that have not been classified as a particular land use may be classified as Agricultural/Greenspace.



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**Figure 4.2b**  
**Future Land Use**

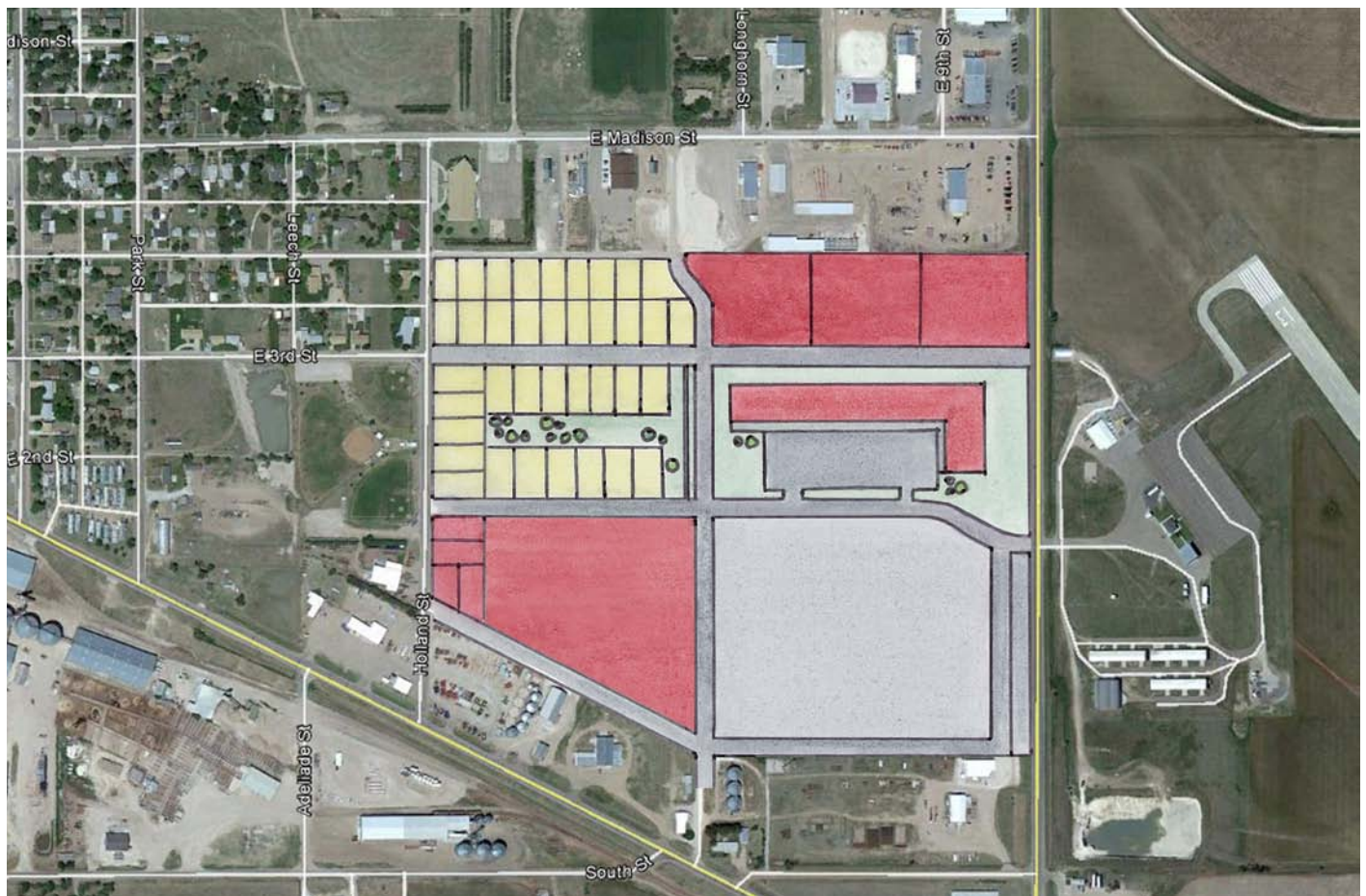
Imperial, Nebraska



Cornerstone Development Subdivision was an investment, made by the City of Imperial, for the future of the community, because of the need for both residential homes and property for commercial and/or light industrial development. As previously discussed, most rural communities are not able to attract a private residential developer and run into the issue of a housing need with no one capable of filling that need. The City of Imperial, however, has attracted a private developer to expand the existing residential market in Imperial. Without the due diligence and ability for the City to offer discounted lots, the private developer may not have been able to make the project cash-flow and would have had to turn down the idea. But with a new subdivision to stimulate and promote new development the City is moving forward at a time that most communities cannot.

The image below shows possible development options for the future of Cornerstone Development Subdivision including single-family homes, commercial lots, a possible commercial strip development, recreational fields, and a location in the southeast corner of the property for light industrial or commercial. This subdivision seamlessly ties into the existing community and provides lots for many types of development that were not currently available in Imperial. Much of the land along the Highway corridors is already developed or being farmed; therefore, there were not many options for commercial and/or light industrial development inside the City limits.

Areas for single-family residential development, including infill development and other feasible areas for new residential lot development can be seen in yellow in the future land use maps. There are also residential areas, shown in orange, representative of feasible areas for potential multi-family development. These lots are already platted and are adjacent to existing infrastructure which can help lessen the cost of development. Medium density housing can include a variety of options such as duplexes, townhomes, condominiums, and apartment complexes. These styles of housing can also be considered transitional housing and fill a large need in the community catering to young families, single persons, senior citizens, etc. Many of the vacant platted lots on the north part of Imperial are conducive to multi-family development because of the amount of vacant land adjacent to existing infrastructure and because of its location near Highway 61 between a developed single-family home and commercial location.





Because of the rapid residential development in Cornerstone Development Subdivision other areas in or adjacent to Imperial were discussed for residential development. There is an area adjacent to the Imperial Municipal Airport on the southeast side of the community that has been platted and started to develop for large lot residential homes. There are still lots for development at this location and it is very feasible for rural residential living.

Another location that was discussed for residential development was the northwest part of the community, north of Sage Addition, and northwest of the Chase County Memorial Hospital. The image below shows a possible layout for a residential subdivision that would include both large lots between two and three acres and then single-family homes with lot widths of 100 to 150 feet. There are stormwater drainage concerns with developing this area of the community; however, infrastructure could be designed to capture stormwater run-off and tie it into the existing infrastructure near Sage Addition. This subdivision also has a possibility for a park or some greenspace in the center but could be platted with another street and include approximately 14 more residential lots. This area also provides the possibility for good circulation through the subdivision connecting to several existing roads in Imperial including 738 A Rd, West 12th Street, and 17th Street. This land is adjacent to two sides of Imperial's corporate limits and could also be connected into the City's water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. For a future residential subdivision including a mixture of lot sizes, this area could be a good possibility for development.



Hike/bike trails were a point of discussion during several of the steering group/public input sessions in Imperial. Residents discussed the desire to have a hike/bike trail in or near the community with the possibility of it connecting to Enders Reservoir several miles southeast of the community. Hike/bike trails can easily be constructed in phases which make this recreational feature more attractive and easier to develop. All ages of residents and visitors can utilize a hike/bike trail by walking, running, biking, and skating. Also hike/bike trails can help connect several points of interest in the community. Hike/bike trails work the best when there is an avoidance of crossing intersections and driveways. This provides trail users with a safer experience because they are not constantly watching for vehicles.

There are three proposed route options shown in **Figure 4.2a** for a hike/bike trail in Imperial. All three of the trail options or phases would connect the Golf Course and Sage Addition to the Chase County School, Imperial Municipal Swimming Pool, and the Chase County Fairgrounds. Trail Phase 1 highlighted in grey runs through the heart of the community and would be challenging due to the number of intersections and personal property that would have to be crossed. Trail Phase 2 is the southern trail option in highlighted in green and it too would cross several intersections and driveways but it would run along the back side of the golf course offering a scenic uninterrupted space for trail users. Phase 3 is highlighted in blue and would also tie into the proposed residential subdivision on the northwest corner of the community and Chase County Memorial Hospital. This option runs along the back side of most properties and would therefore be less cumbersome for trail users because there would not be as many intersections and driveways to cross. The phases shown on the map could be developed as an individual entity or could be developed to include two or even all three phases. Constructing two of the three phases shown would provide connectivity and a loop for trail users to be able to get on and off at the same spot without have to turn around. As previously mentioned, hike/bike trails can easily be constructed in phases. Developing this amenity would improve both recreational features in Imperial and pedestrian connectivity for main interest points.

Below is a list of goals for other potential recreational improvements or enhancements. The items listed below do not cover all of the recreational improvements that may be needed or desired in the future, but at this time these are goals or ideas that were discussed by residents at the several public input sessions held during the planning process of this Comprehensive Plan.

Imperial has a variety of playground and picnic equipment to suit families and children of all ages. Existing park equipment should be periodically monitored to determine times for improvement or replacement to ensure all parks are a safe environment for children to play. In the future it may also be a goal for the City to add additional playground equipment or create an additional “neighborhood” park in the community this could be done at Cornerstone Development or the proposed subdivision on the northwest side of town. Neighborhood parks allow the surrounding residents to utilize recreational amenities that are close to their homes which will increase their quality of life. Anytime more land is annexed or developed, the City should assess if additional recreational space is needed to meet the needs of the growing community.

Another amenity that is becoming more popular in Nebraska’s communities is a splash pad. A splash pad would be a great addition to Imperial’s long list of amenities. Splash pads can attract children at a variety of ages. They should be designed to have special areas that best suit each age group. These specified bay areas allow for a safe play environment for everyone. Splash pads are a way to provide community enhancement as well as a healthy way for families to play safely. A few positive, functional attributes to a splash pad are that they do not require lifeguards, it can be another free recreational feature in the community, and they are designed to have automatic scheduling in order to control the hours of use. Possible locations for a splash pad were discussed during our steering group/public input sessions and they included Cornerstone Development Subdivision, near the Imperial Municipal Swimming Pool, and at Campbell Park on West 6th Street.

Another option for an added recreational amenity would be the creation of a dog park. This area should be fenced in to provide a space where dogs can be let off their leashes to run around. A dog park is an amenity that does not require much except open ground and an installed fence. This amenity is not only beneficial for Imperial’s citizens, but also for all of the four-legged residents in town.

All of the recreational fields and courts in Imperial are used quite often in the spring, summer, and fall. Residents discussed the potential need for more recreational ball fields in the future or developing new ball fields to better meet the needs of residents and visitors. Lighting and accessibility should be key features to any new ball field or basketball courts. Additional soccer fields were discussed heavily during our public input sessions. Cornerstone Development was a possible location discussed for new soccer fields. All recreational and fields require a decent amount of flat land; therefore master planning is important for recreational developments.

All public restroom facilities should comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure accessibility for all of Imperial's residents and visitors. An ADA evaluation and plan should be put into effect in order for the City to effectively budget and plan for the improvement and removal of any physical barriers in public places including recreational facilities. Such updates require planning to ensure funds are available to complete the tasks and guarantee compliance with ADA design guidelines and regulations. The City is aware of these regulations and is working hard to solve any issues.

Vibrant, colorful landscaping helps draw people to an area, and creates a positive first impression. All three parks currently have extensive landscaping; however, the City may decide to include new landscaping or add landscaping throughout Imperial to add to the aesthetic appeal of the community. Not only does landscaping add beauty to the parks, but it is also an opportunity for residents to volunteer their time and talent in order to keep the parks and the community beautiful.

Desires for downtown improvements were discussed by several residents. Completing a Downtown Revitalization Plan for Imperial would address concerns for downtown development and would provide the City with a plan for further revitalization. A Downtown Revitalization Plan will help residents and decision-makers envision an overall look and feel to physically emulate in the Downtown District. The plan will provide images and ideas for aesthetic improvements including facades, awnings, signage, and streetscapes as well as provide ideas for improving the economic climate in the downtown district. During our public input sessions residents and the Community Development Director discussed the need for more retail space downtown because almost all but one or two of the current store fronts were full. There is only so much real estate space available along Broadway Street/Highway 6 so planning for future commercial development for the Downtown District will ensure space is used wisely to continue to encourage downtown businesses to grow.

Commercial development in Imperial is a work in progress. There are a few existing businesses in Imperial looking at expanding. Without the lots available for commercial and/or light industrial development in Cornerstone Development Subdivision, the City would have to look at annexing in order to provide commercial lots for development inside the corporate limits. Commercial lots should border the highway corridor in order to attract businesses. Imperial's location and connection to the larger transportation system allows for many opportunities that other communities do not have. With mainstreet, Broadway, situated on Highway 6 and direct access to Interstate-80 via Highway 61, Imperial can and has capitalized on these two connections. Not only is the City of Imperial the County seat it is also a commercial hub for surrounding communities. Because of Imperial's location it has had to be a self-sufficient community not only providing jobs for its residents but also community services, amenities, and basic necessities in order to continue to grow and develop as a viable City.

Other areas for commercial development include the north, east, and southeast sides of Imperial, as they border Highways 6 and 61. The two Highways are an uncontrollable resource Imperial should always try to take advantage of because it provides many opportunities for commercial growth. The railroad, although it does not have a continual track through Imperial, provides the City with the same uncontrollable resource to market to potential businesses. Access, visibility, and land availability along the two Highway corridors shaded in red and grey on the Future Land Use Map are highly feasible areas for commercial and/or light industrial developments such as a manufacturing company, Shopko, bulk grain storage, etc. The City and the Chamber of Commerce should work with potential small business ventures in the retail/trade sector to open a business downtown whereas the large tracts of ground should be left until a larger business looking to develop inquires. In order to capture sales and property taxes from potential businesses along the Highway corridor and to be able to provide development incentives to potential businesses, Imperial will need to consider annexing land into the City. Annexing the land would require an infrastructure expansion plan and possibly having to actually develop new infrastructure to serve the annexed areas. This would require a site survey and engineering design before the full cost-benefit analysis can be completed; however, it would mean tax base growth for the community and it also opens the door for a few development incentives to offer potential businesses. Developing along a highway does come with a few constraints including obtaining permits from NDOR to be able to have access onto the highway. NDOR would like to limit the amount of access points for safety purposes because of the high rates of speed people travel on a highway. Frontage roads and cul-de-sacs may need to be constructed in order to best utilize all of the land available while limiting the amount of access points onto Highways 6 and 61.



A final option for land use development is to create gateway entrances into town. **Figure 4.2a** shows three potential areas for gateway entrance development, they are marked with blue circles on Highways near the edges of the community. Gateway entrances can be something simple such as signage which includes wayfinding and landscaping and that can make a statement to travelers passing by on the Highway. Wayfinding signage is dual purpose; it directs and informs people while also being aesthetically pleasing and attention grabbing. Based on traffic counts, roughly 2,500 vehicles pass through Imperial on Highway 6 every day. Of course, some of those travelers are residents of Imperial commuting to and from work; however some of those vehicles are visitors to Imperial and the gateway entrance is the City's opportunity to make a good first impression. Also, by beautifying the entrances into town it would add to the aesthetic appeal of the whole community. A beautified gateway entrance helps make a memorable statement to a visitor which is why it is important for Imperial to make a lasting positive memory. This is a "first impression" and beautifying the gateway entrances may also give residents more of a reason to help keep all of Imperial beautiful. Landscaping can be used for aesthetics and screening unwanted sites from vehicles. Land along highway corridors tends to be unsightly in many communities. Screening these land uses from highway travelers can really make a big impact. Zoning regulations are one way to help ensure land along highways and major arterials and connector streets are screened to create an appealing view for travelers. Throughout this year long process, the City of Imperial had developed a gateway entrance sign for Highway 6 on the southeast side of the community. This new development could then be carried to the other two gateway entrances into the community, but it was smart for stakeholders to develop this one first because this area of the community gets the most traffic and makes the biggest 'bang for the buck' because it will be seen by many people.

All of the proposed new developments that are not currently in Imperial's corporate limits should be annexed into the community prior to any construction. This will allow the City to expand its physical size, population, and tax base while also providing potential benefits to the new developments. The following section discusses in more detail about Imperial's annexation plan. All of these ideas discussed in the future land use plan are goals to work towards over the next ten years. This plan is to be used as a guide, and to help develop and steer ideas for future development. When planning for future growth it is important to consider any potential issues that could arise in order to protect the City and its current residents. The goal for any community should be to continually move forward with population and development growth while mitigating the impact on existing residents and property owners. It is important to have ideas and plans in place to steer growth in the right direction.

# Annexation Plan

*Imperial's annexation plan should create opportunities for new development as well as help facilitate the goals of the future land use plan set forth in this document. In order to create opportunities for new development, Imperial needs to have a plan in place to reserve the land that is necessary to carry out the goals of the community. In order to do this, the City may need to consider annexing adjacent territory and expand its jurisdiction, including its one-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). This annexation plan, like the future land use plan, is a guide or a tool the City can utilize when discussing future growth and development options. This annexation plan is not law; annexation should take place in a manner that will follow State Statutes and best suit the City's goals and development needs at that time also taking into consideration any future goals. The City's annexation plan should do the following:*

## Protect and Enhance the City's Tax Base

Annexation allows each community to protect and enhance the City's tax base for several reasons. Land along the Highway corridors and along the railroad are prime real estate options for commercial and light industrial development. In order for the City to capture property and sales taxes, those companies need to be within the City limits of Imperial. Many new business developments want some incentives to build a new facility in a community. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an incentive communities can offer to a potential business. In order for a business to utilize TIF, the development must be located within the City limits. In another facet of annexation, there are residents and businesses that are located in the fringe of the community yet not in the City limits. Although, these residents and businesses still benefit from the City's parks, streets, utilities, and other facilities and programs without having to contribute to the tax base. By annexing this population into the community, they would then be paying taxes for multiple amenities and services they most likely already utilize.

## Increase Population and Size

By increasing the City's physical size and population, Imperial could also increase its level of political influence and attractiveness to commercial and light industrial developments. Annexation has a way of encouraging new development, which, in turn, can help increase the City's tax base and job opportunities.

## Avoid Jurisdictional Confusion

Having a plan in place will ease the confusion of jurisdictions between the City and the County and will help Imperial plan for future services by establishing an orderly and logical boundary and understand how that growth will affect public infrastructure needs. This process would be very beneficial for both the City and Chase County, especially because changing boundaries between two different jurisdictions can be cumbersome.

## Control Fringe Development

Planning for the growth of Imperial is important for the community as well as the land adjacent to the corporate limits. Finding a balance between development and existing land uses requires time and planning. Infill development should be promoted until larger parcels of land are needed for growth. This will help avoid sprawling development and protect the agricultural land around the community. Any new annexed land should be for the benefit of residential and commercial development, and public service needs should be assessed as the population of Imperial continues to change. Through annexation, Imperial can extend its zoning jurisdiction to adjacent areas and thus guide development in a direction that will provide a safe and healthy environment.

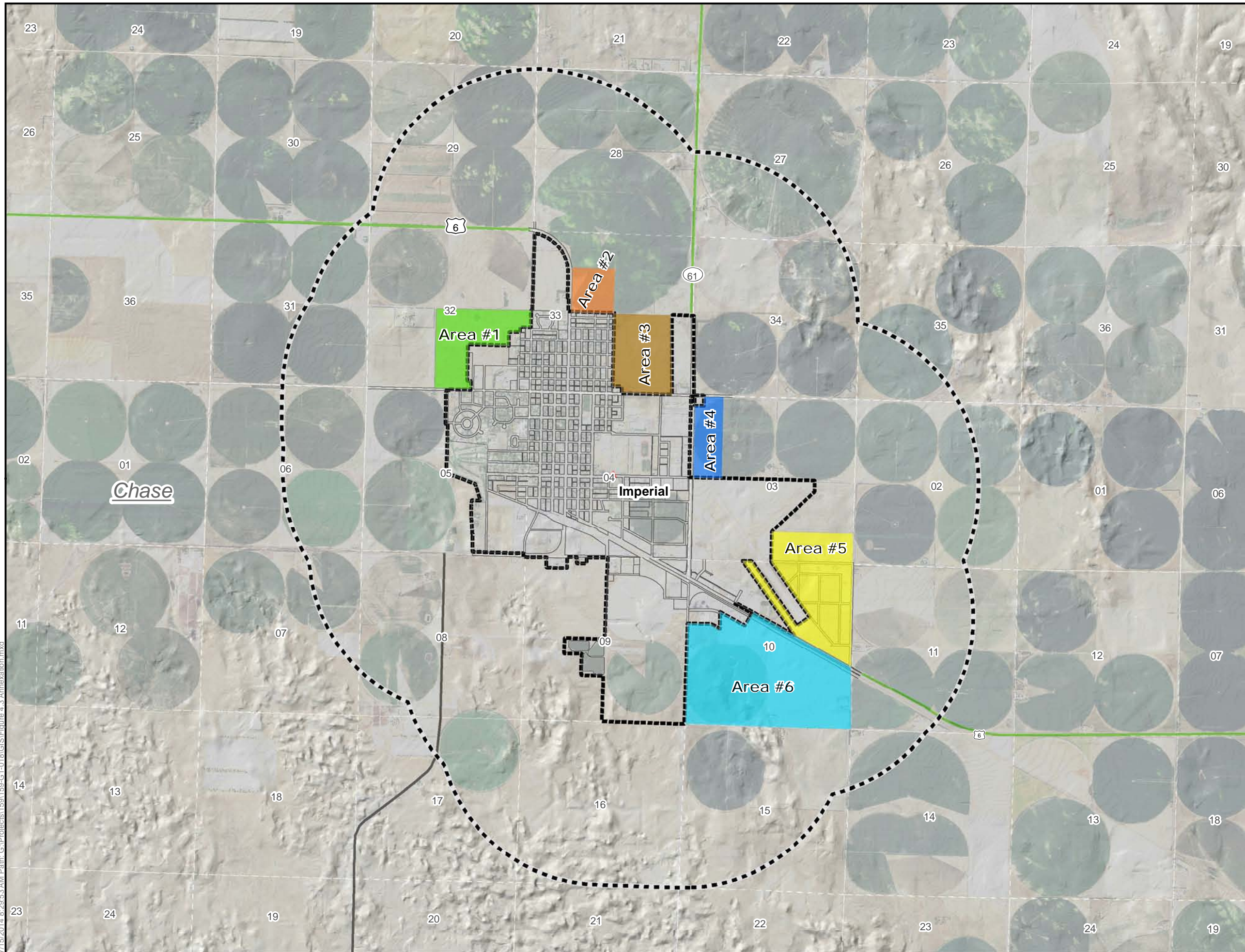
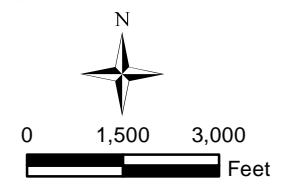
Annexation should follow the guidelines set forth through Nebraska State Statute 19-3052. As seen in **Figure 4.3** the proposed areas for the annexation plan are the following:

1. Area 1 is northwest side of Imperial. This annexation would include existing single-family homes and undeveloped farm ground that could be developed into a residential subdivision. This property is adjacent to existing public infrastructure lessening the cost of development and it closely borders the existing corporate limits boundary of Imperial. This land also lends itself nicely to tying into the existing grid system for transportation access. Lots developed on the east side of the proposed annexation area could follow a typical single-family, low density pattern of development while lots on the west side of the proposed annexation area could tie into the existing homes with large lot development including multiple acres per lot.
2. Area 2 is located on the north side of Imperial adjacent to Highway 6 and existing commercial and light development. The annexation of Area 2 would include vacant/agricultural land. This Highway 6 corridor provides many economic development opportunities for the City. Because of the access, visibility, and connection to the larger transportation network, this land has great potential for attracting a commercial and/or light industrial business. Across the highway corridor, on the west side of Highway 6, there is existing commercial development including an implement dealer. With existing businesses in close proximity, this land is very attractive for additional commercial development.
3. Area 3 is also located on the north side of town, directly north of Chase County Schools, along 12<sup>th</sup> Street. This proposed annexation includes vacant, agricultural land and is bordered on three sides by the existing corporate limits of Imperial. Because of the location and close proximity to the school, this may be a nice development option for additional ball fields, soccer fields, or other recreational development options because the existing parks in Imperial do not have enough vacant space for larger recreational amenities. Along the 12<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, land could be developed as commercial or residential. The location of this land lends itself to attract a variety of development types. Because of the amount of land, a mixed-use development could also be considered with commercial development along the 12th Street corridor, followed by medium density residential development north of the commercial properties, and low density residential development further north of the medium density residential development.
4. Area 4 is located on the east side of Imperial along Highway 61. This annexation area would include a vacant, agricultural land along the Highway corridor. This area is along the gateway corridor into the community with heavy commercial development existing on the west side of Highway 61. This property is near the airport; therefore, it would be important to take Airport Zoning Regulations and building height restrictions into consideration. Development of this land could very likely replicate existing development on the west side of Highway 61. This land is in close proximity to existing public infrastructure. Because of the access, visibility, and connection to the larger transportation network, this land has great potential for attracting a commercial and/or light industrial business. With the ability to be subdivided into a variety of commercial parcel sizes which could significantly increase the community's tax base.
5. Area 5 is located on the southeast side of town, adjacent to the east entrance into Imperial along Highway 6. This proposed area of annexation could include several existing single-family homes that have been developed on large lots. It is likely that more large lot residential development could happen in this area and it has already been platted to attract more residential development. These residents are not currently provided with City water or sanitary sewer infrastructure; however residents from this subdivision would use and benefit from existing City amenities and services located within the corporate limits.
6. Area 6 is also located on the southeast side of the community, directly south of Area 5, along the Highway 6 corridor into Imperial. This area is extremely attractive for commercial and/or light industrial development because of its proximity to the larger transportation network including highway and rail transportation. This land is visible and accessible from Highway 6 and has the ability to be platted in a variety of ways making it valuable for commercial and/or light industrial development.



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**Legend**

- Area #1
- Area #2
- Area #3
- Area #4
- Area #5
- Area #6
- Imperial Corporate Boundary
- ETJ

**Figure 4.3**  
**Annexation Plan Map**  
Imperial, Nebraska

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# Chapter 5: Public Input & Goals

This section of Imperial's Comprehensive Plan is the action section. It is here to help plan goals, guidelines, regulations, and future practices based on the needs and wants of the public. The goal of this action section is to help decision-makers implement the visions and actions presented by the plan through a realistic process that is in step with the resources of the community. This Public Input & Goals section will cover the following components:

- Public Input
- Goals



These questions were asked during the first public input sessions during the planning stages of the Comprehensive Plan. Residents had the chance to openly discuss some of their responses. This analysis is called SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Strengths are viewed as assets to the community; areas they want to retain and continue to improve. The weaknesses are seen as areas that need improvement for community members. Opportunities are viewed a potential areas of gain in the future, and threats are seen as aspects that may hinder the growth and development of Imperial.

# Public Input

## Strengths (NOW/INTERNAL-advantages, things that are unique to Imperial)

- Clean
- Prosperous Main Street Vibrancy
- Progressiveness
- Diversity of Businesses
- Small Town Safety
- Community Pride
- Volunteerism
- Younger Demographic
- Wide Streets
- Locally Owned Businesses
- School System
- Parks
- Full Downtown Storefronts
- Chamber Of Commerce
- City Sales Tax
- Volunteer Fire Department/EMT's
- Chase County Fair
- Science Camp

## Weaknesses (NOW/INTERNAL-limitations, where could Imperial improve, what should we avoid)

- Housing (Ownership, Rehab, Rental, Availability, Affordability)
- Highway 6 Gateway Entrances
- Lack of Clothing/Footwear Store
- Lack of Restaurants
- Medical Facility Update



Horse Show. Photo Courtesy of Imperial Republican and City of Imperial



Talbot Brothers Concert. Photo Courtesy of Imperial Republican and City of Imperial

Opportunities (FUTURE- opportunities for Imperial to improve, grow, attract new people/business)

- Plumber
- Telecommuting
- Restaurant That Serves Breakfast, Restaurants Need Consistent Hours
- Men's Store for Clothing and Footwear
- Athletic Store
- Fitness/Nutrition Counselor
- Stock Broker/Financial Planner
- Dance Instructor
- Youth Volunteerism
- Soccer Field
- Trails
- Splash Pad
- Reception Hall
- Fine Arts Opportunities
- Housing Development, Home in the \$50,000-75,000 Range
- Community Foundation Education and Growth
- Children's Theatre

Threats (FUTURE-what obstacles does Imperial face, what are other communities doing)

- Location
- Health of Ag. Economy
- Transportation
- Healthcare/Eldercare
- Quantity of Water (Primarily Ag.)
- Burnout of Regular Community Contributors



*High School Athletics, Photos Courtesy of Imperial Republican and City of Imperial*



*Chase County Fair Fun Run, Photo Courtesy of Imperial Republican and City of Imperial*

# Goals

*This section is in place to give ideas, summaries, and guidelines for development and growth opportunities for Imperial to work towards over the next ten years. These goals are a combination of information gathered from the public input sessions, research, and data analysis. The importance of these goals is that they are realistic in nature, but allow the community to continually have goals to strive towards.*

- Improve Public Infrastructure
- Promote Commercial Development
- Improve the Existing Housing Market
- Expand Recreational Attractions & Amenities
- Enhance Gateway Entrances & Community Beautification
- Develop Marketing Campaign

## **Improve Public Infrastructure**

Public infrastructure needs and improvements are listed below according to each infrastructure system.

### *Stormwater Drainage*

The City of Imperial has experienced recurring flooding problems in various parts of the City for many years. Some of these problems are due to a channel that follows the north side of the Burlington Northern – Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad through town. This channel drains a large area of agricultural land west of the City, as well as receiving runoff from within the City limits. Approximately 300 acres drain to the channel from west of the City. Of this area, approximately 80% is agricultural ground. The flow capacity of the channel is small in comparison to the runoff from frequently occurring storms. When the channel fills, it causes water to backup into the town along other storm sewer systems that empty into the channel.

The City has been working with engineers to create a plan to mitigate the flooding potential. The proposed project includes construction of a channel near the west end of the existing channel to divert water south to the Republican River. One potential route is shown on City’s 1 & 6 Year Road Plan Map. The proposed project would divert the majority of the runoff from the agricultural lands before it would enter the City. This would reduce the amount of water in the existing channel to the east. The improvements would consist of jacking and boring culvert pipes under the BNSF Railroad, and constructing a channel to the south. The channel would follow Frenchman-Imperial Irrigation canal waterway to the River.

### *Sidewalks/ADA Compliance*

Based on the public input sessions, Imperial’s residents discussed their issues and concerns with the condition and lack of sidewalks in the community. Improving the sidewalks and following ADA compliance guidelines is an important goal for the community. A sidewalk inventory should be used to analyze areas in need of sidewalks and existing sidewalks in need of repair. We know approximately 67 percent of the community is lacking sidewalk infrastructure; however, the other 33 percent of the community that does have existing infrastructure may also need improvements. The sidewalk inventory would analyze each sidewalk and ramp (or lack thereof) to determine the overall needs for the community. At that time the City could formulate a plan for improvements including construction of new sidewalks and improving existing. Again, these improvements require funding as well as support from the residents of Imperial. An idea for implementing a program feasible for the City to utilize would be to create a cost-share program between the City and the property owner to split costs for the new improvements. Some financial assistance may entice residents to put forth some of their funds to assist in the development of ADA accessible sidewalks. The City could budget a set amount each year and residents could apply for funds out of that budgeted amount to assist in making these improvements throughout the City.



Pedestrian accessibility throughout the community is important for residents especially between key features in the City such as the swimming pool/school, the downtown district, medical facilities, public parks, Library, etc. To improve accessibility for all pedestrians the City must continually work to make these improvements a priority.

Federal ADA compliance regulations were updated in 2010. City leaders are aware of the goals that they need to accomplish. They are working towards making Imperial an ADA compliant community, but like every other item on the list, it requires time, funds, and community support. The City will continually work to resolve this matter making it a goal to accomplish accessibility for all residents and visitors.

#### *Water*

The City of Imperial has recently completed water main extensions to Cornerstone Development and Sage Addition Subdivisions. Future improvement projects for the City include a well field and transmission main, water extension from Shorthorn Street to Highway 61, future replacement of existing two-inch and four-inch water mains, and installation of a generator for backup power at the Claney Wellsite. These future improvements are important for the fire safety and protection as well as the quality of life for residents in the community.

#### *Sanitary Sewer*

As described in the Utilities section of Chapter Two in this plan, the City has a need to expand the existing lagoon system to accommodate future growth and development. Based upon information provided by City staff, the City's sanitary sewer collection system currently functions adequately. Recent improvements to the City's sanitary sewer system, including replacement of the north lift station in 2009, lessen the need for any immediate improvements to the system. However, it will be important for the City to make necessary updates to the lagoons in order to allow growth in the City to happen.

#### *Paving*

The City's 1 & 6 Year Road Plan can be found in the Transportation section of Chapter Two in this plan. This map shows road improvements that the City is planning for in 2014 and within the next five years. There were two projects planned for 2014 which affect growth and development in the community. The six year plan includes future projects and improvements of existing roads. There are no major paving issues or needs at this point in time; however, continual maintenance will be important to maintain a satisfactory level of vehicular transportation throughout the community.

Improving and expanding public infrastructure is an on-going task. Although there have been recent improvements made, more work needs to be done. As stated above, these projects require planning, time, and funding. Updates will continually need to be made in order to provide the best quality of life for all of Imperial's residents. Community support will entrust decision-makers with the tasks of accomplishing these goals in a timely manner; however, funds must be available in order to begin construction on any one of these projects. Besides the City's annual budget, a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) should be completed. The CIP will be a way for decision-makers to plan for capital improvement needs for the next six years. This will outline potential needs, costs, and a timeline for improvements. It will be important to annually update this plan in order to maintain and accomplish the goals that are outlined. Imperial's officials are taking the necessary steps in order to resolve some of the on-going issues with public infrastructure. They have been working with Engineers for assessments, looking into funding options, working hard to balance the community's budget. The most important step is to prioritize the tasks required for updating and improving public infrastructure. Once priorities have been set, the City can then begin to plan and budget for necessary repairs, updates, and improvements.

## **Promote Commercial Development**

Imperial has a thriving Downtown District which is situated on Highway 6. The Square is home to many existing retail and service industry businesses including the offices, restaurants, and retail shops. Ideas for creating a distinct appeal for the Downtown District would come from a Downtown Revitalization Plan. This plan would give the City ideas on aesthetic improvements, traffic and pedestrian flow, parking, and business opportunities. The City of Imperial already holds the designation of Certified City through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development which allows the City to apply for grant funds to assist with Downtown Revitalization planning and improvement projects. Just as any other planning process including the one for this Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Revitalization planning process should include several opportunities for public input from building and business owners downtown, City officials, and other community stakeholders. The plan would be a guide for development in the Downtown District. The positive side of following NDED's guidelines for Downtown Revitalization and seeking grant funding for the planning process through the State includes the opportunity to apply for Phase II funds which historically has been for \$350,000 for physical improvements to the Downtown Square that were outlined in the Downtown Revitalization Plan.

Because commercial development is so heavily hinged on attracting private investors/business owners it is essential for the community to constantly work on attracting new businesses in order to grow the tax base. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an important card to hold when private developers are interested in commercial developments. New commercial development will create more job opportunities which in turn attracts new people to Imperial, increases the City's tax base, and potentially provides residents with a new amenity or place to shop or eat. Having relationships and resources, such as TIF and the Chamber of Commerce in place is beneficial for private developers and existing businesses. Promoting and marketing Imperial's assets, needs, location, funding sources/incentives, and land availability will be key to attracting private investment. One statewide source the City can utilize to share land and building availability information as well as a community profile for possibly attracting new businesses to the community is Location One Information Systems (LOIS). LOIS is an online database that the State of Nebraska, as well as many other states, utilizes to share current information with potential businesses. For example, an owner wanting to expand his manufacturing business could look at LOIS's website and search for the specific requirements necessary for his business including location, land availability based on size, availability of public utilities, etc.

Recruitment of new businesses should be based on the feasibility of the business being successful in the region as well as how it will complement the existing industries, such as agriculture sector which is vital to the progress and growth of Imperial. Businesses in the agricultural sector currently exist in Imperial, but expanding this sector with complementary businesses could not only benefit the City but also help existing agricultural businesses and possibly lead to necessary expansions for those existing businesses.

The City of Imperial has been compiling a long list of success stories for attracting new businesses and helping existing businesses succeed showing how the City is successful with implementing projects from an idea to an actual business that helps support the community. When potential commercial companies start looking at Imperial, the City should consider how these developments might impact existing businesses within town. To ensure existing businesses have the opportunity to expand, new businesses will need to complement the existing economic industries in Imperial.

Because of the limited space available in the downtown district, vacancies should be filled by retail and/or basic service sector businesses. Larger companies or service businesses that provide a unique service may best fit along the Highway 6 and 61 corridors. In order to have a distinct Downtown District appeal, the sidewalks need to be filled, store fronts need to be decorated, and businesses need to be open. Some businesses, even in the service sector, do not fulfill all of those needs for the downtown district; therefore, the limited retail space should be left to retail oriented businesses which encourage pedestrian traffic throughout the day, evenings, and weekends.

Developing along Highways 6 and 61 as well as the railroad can be viewed as daunting because it is a challenge to encourage development of commercial space while keeping an aesthetically pleasing corridor. Possible businesses could include a car dealership, strip mall to provide space for the service sector businesses, manufacturing or light industrial businesses, grain storage, and possibly could lead to existing businesses expanding because of the land availability. Having both the Highways and the railroad present in Imperial does provide many opportunities for commercial and light industrial development that other communities do not have. Knowing the land is valuable and promoting or marketing that to companies is important; companies need to feel like the land was meant for their business. When doing any engineering design it is important to understand if the area can be served with utilities and how those utilities will get there, but it is also important to leave some of the land development open for change therefore it can best fit the needs of the business or developer.

As mentioned above, it is important to promote and market the City of Imperial as well as to promote and market within the City of Imperial. It is the best way to inform potential residents and investors about all of the positive aspects of the community and a way to remind local residents what it takes to be a self-sustainable community. Promotion and marketing is an important step for officials and local committees or groups to take in order to stimulate commercial development. Some of the other steps for City leaders to take would include partnership development and creation of relationships that support funding resources available in the area including regional, state, and federal agencies that may be useful. The future land use plan and map gives developers and City decision-makers a plan to follow. It allows leaders to make informed decisions and to ensure everyone is working towards the same goals.



In order to promote commercial development the City should work to meet the following objectives:

*Target areas for prime commercial development;*

The City should work to target areas of land for prime commercial development. This land should have access to the larger transportation network including Highways 6 and 61 as well as the railroad. Visibility and land availability are important aspects for commercial business ventures; therefore, those should also be important factors when locating prime commercial real estate. This land should be close to the existing corporate limits and public infrastructure and adjacent to existing commercial and/or light industrial businesses. Once areas have been targeted for commercial development, the pros and cons of allowing other types of development on that property should be heavily weighed in order to prevent unnecessary urban sprawl.

*Market prime commercial real estate to potential businesses and developers;*

After prime commercial real estate has been targeted, the City can work to market land availability to potential developers and businesses. It is important to utilize all marketing sources available especially including online sources. The City should not only market each individual site, but also what the City has to offer to the businesses including development incentives and what the community has to offer to potential residents that would help attract employees to the new business.

*Develop annexation plan of prime commercial real estate;*

Any land targeted for prime commercial development that does not fall within the existing corporate limits boundary should be analyzed for possible annexation. Having commercial property within the corporate limits is important to help expand the tax base for the City as well as to be able to offer certain development incentives such as Tax Increment Financing to the potential businesses. Also if the new business wants to utilize public infrastructure it is essential then, that the business is located within the corporate limits.

*Complete Blight & Substandard Analysis of prime commercial real estate; and*

Completing the Blight and Substandard analysis is important for the City if they want to be able to offer Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as an incentive tool for new commercial development. It is imperative to complete the Blight and Substandard Study prior to any commercial development taking place and it can be an encouragement to a potential business; therefore, the City should consider meeting this objective prior to marketing the prime commercial real estate.

*Align development incentives from local, regional, and state sources.*

Aligning development incentives for all sources including local, regional, and state could help attract a potential business to locate in Imperial. When marketing any real estate, the City should also show what development incentives are offered in the area. When developers are looking to locate a new commercial business venture they also consider how development incentives can entice them to select a certain location. Having all development incentives labeled easily and readily available for businesses to analyze and utilize will be helpful when encouraging development in Imperial.

### **Improve the Existing Housing Market**

As discussed earlier in this plan, there is a housing shortage in Imperial for both rental and owner-occupied units. In order to solve this issue a few things can be done. The obvious answer is to develop more housing, but in order for that goal to be accomplished private developers or local investors will need to be willing to participate otherwise residential development will only happen when a person/family constructs their own private residence. Typically in communities there are lots available to develop however those lots are not in a desirable location or large enough to construct the type of home a buyer is wanting. But with Sage Addition and Cornerstone Development Subdivisions, Imperial has taken big steps to help correct the housing shortage dilemma. It is evident in Heather Estates which is located in Cornerstone Development Subdivision with the multiple housing units under construction. The City was able to attract a private developer to construct low-income and market rate homes for purchase and rent in the community. Because not everyone is financially able or interested in building their own home, this private developer's ability to increase the supply of homes available in Imperial is crucial to the growth of the City.

Developing new housing will help to attract new residents to Imperial working as a chain reaction, with new homes available, families could move to town and enroll their children in Chase County School District, keeping Imperial a viable community. With more families in the community, it may also open more jobs which in turn can employ the new residents. Also, if jobs are available in Imperial, employees may want to live in the community and send their children to Chase County Schools. Decent, attractive, and affordable homes and shovel ready lots need to be available in order to ensure that those new employees will live in Imperial instead of a nearby community. Through the Employer/Employee Housing Survey it was evident that the housing market plays a key role in the economic forecast of businesses in Imperial and their ability to grow and expand. All employers that were surveyed believed the lack of suitable, available housing in Imperial affects their ability to hire new employees as well as maintain the employees they currently have. With a close correlation between the housing market and economic climate for businesses it is even more crucial that housing market improvements are taken seriously and made a top priority.

A few new housing options that residents discussed included transitional housing and large lot residential development. Residents see the need to expand transitional housing options in the community for potential new residents, residents who do not want to maintain the exterior of their property, residents who are not wanting a large home but are not ready for assisted or convalescent care living, or any other person(s) looking for a two-to-four bedroom housing unit with a garage and decent-sized living space available. Transitional housing could include duplexes, tri-plexes, townhomes, etc. The most important need with transitional housing, as discussed by residents of Imperial, is to offer exterior home maintenance and care services for residents of the units.

The City can be involved in housing improvements in a few different ways. Cleaning up lots and uninhabitable homes in Imperial is an on-going task; however, it will create more lots for new infill development as well as rid the neighborhood of eye sores that are also safety hazards. Improving the condition of the existing housing stock will also help attract new residents to the community because the condition of the homes available would be more appealing to buyers. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can be used to carry out plans for the demolition of structures in a redevelopment area that they determine to be unsafe or unfit for human occupancy. This is new to the Community Development Law with LB 729 which was passed in a legislative round, and Imperial should look into this option to see how it could benefit the community. Imperial can also access funds for demolition through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The one stipulation for this grant is that a new housing structure has to be constructed on the newly vacant lot, and it will only be available to those residents that are low-to-moderate income (LMI). This is a way to rid the community of an unsafe, unsightly dwelling and replace it with a new home however, the new home may not be available to citizens who are looking. Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) through CDBG has offered owner-occupied housing rehabilitation funds which are a resource Imperial could also utilize for housing improvements. However, funding is diminishing due to Federal and State budget cuts. The City could also work to create incentives for home-owners and people wishing to purchase homes such as down-payment assistance, first-time home-buyers credits, and a home-ownership rehabilitation program to encourage improvements to the housing market. Imperial's officials should look into each of these avenues to determine what resources may be feasible and beneficial for the community.

The public-private partnerships will be key as the City tries to accomplish this goal of housing market improvements. If private developers are not able to relieve all of the pressure on the housing market in Imperial, then local investors or a local group or committee may need to implement a plan for home development. Some communities have a group of residents that contribute money to begin the process. Funds contributed would be used to build a spec home, also employing a local contractor. The home is then sold and the money is used to build another spec home, and the process continues. Other communities have proven this to be successful, and Stromsburg has the ability and potential resources to do so as well. Imperial has been taking all of the right steps to ensure the housing market is capable of expanding to support an increasing population and stimulate growth. The community has been doing what it can to provide resources for developers and providing shovel ready lots for residential development.



In order to make housing market improvements the City should work to meet the following objectives:

*Clean-up vacant out lots and uninhabitable properties;*

All vacant, lots and vacant, uninhabitable homes are properties that could be utilized for infill residential development. The City should access different avenues available to them to assist with the clean-up of vacant lots and uninhabitable properties. There is not a large amount of lots available for infill development; therefore, efforts should be made to create more availability. Also, by cleaning up vacant lots and uninhabitable homes the City will be able to rid the community of unnecessary eye sores and safety and health hazards.

*Promote infill development;*

Infill development, by its nature, is less expensive because there is no need to extend public utility services. Infill development utilizes existing public infrastructure, filling in vacant properties with residences. By promoting infill development, the City can save funds by avoiding sprawl and the need to extend public infrastructure to new developments on the out-skirts of the community. However, once infill development is maxed-out, it will be necessary for the City to develop property adjacent to the existing corporate limits in order to allow for growth to continue in Imperial.

*Further develop Cornerstone Development Subdivision including Heather Estates;*

With a lack of infill development lots readily available throughout the community, Imperial should work to complete future phases of Heather Estates in Cornerstone Development Subdivision in order to create more lots for residential development. Because this development includes paving new roads in the community, it is not something that can happen overnight; therefore, the City must plan and budget for future phases of the subdivision in order to accommodate growth.

*Create home-owner rehabilitation revolving loan fund;*

The City could create their own loan program for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation setting guidelines and regulations based on the needs of the City. This option may be attractive to the City and its residents because the City could help middle-income residents while also boosting the existing housing conditions in the community. There are grants available to create this same type of program; however, they are only available to low-income families in the community that own their own homes/ If the City creates their own revolving loan fund, they have the ability to set their own guidelines, income-restrictions, interest rates, pay-back regulations, etc. The City could create their own program to fit the needs of their community.

*Encourage property upkeep; and,*

The City should work to incentivize as well as continually follow-through with nuisance abatement throughout the community to encourage residents to maintain their properties. A clean community is attractive to visitors, potential residents, and potential new businesses. A "Yard of the Month" program or some type of incentive could be created to encourage residents to maintain their properties and take pride in the way the community looks.

*Locates areas for future residential development.*

While the community has a few lots available for residential development, this development is happening quickly; therefore, leaving the City with few options for additional residential lots. The City should use the Future Land Use Plan and work to establish target areas for all types of residential development including large lots, single-family homes, transitional housing, and other types of medium density rental housing in order to fill all of the need within the community. Although the City may not need to develop additional residential subdivisions at this time, it is important to target areas that are attractive for residential development in order to plan for growth and development in Imperial.

## **Expand Recreational Attractions & Community Amenities**

Imperial has many amenities to offer to its residents and visitors; however, residents and community stakeholders realize the value additional amenities can add to the quality of life in the community. During several public input sessions, residents discussed their desire to create a hike/bike trail and add additional ball fields, soccer fields, and a splash pad for residents and visitors to utilize. Amenities that were discussed can be found in the list below in no particular order:

### *Splash Pad*

A splash pad would be a great addition to Imperial's long list of amenities. Splash pads can attract children at a variety of ages. They should be designed to have special areas that best suit each age group. These specified bay areas allow for a safe play environment for everyone. Splash pads are a way to provide community enhancement as well as a healthy way for families to play safely. A few positive, functional attributes to a splash pad are that they do not require lifeguards, it can be another free recreational feature in the community, and they are designed to have automatically scheduling in order to control the hours of use.

### *Soccer Fields*

Established soccer fields with appropriate lighting is a goal for the City to accomplish. The City utilizes the old high school football field for soccer practices and games; however, the City's goal is to have a soccer facility developed to meet the needs of residents. Lighting and accessibility should be key features to any new soccer field.

### *Ball Fields*

Residents discussed the potential need for more recreational ball fields in the future in Imperial. Lighting and accessibility should be key features to any new ball field. Development of a two- or four-plex of fields that could share the same restroom and concession facilities would be a nice addition to the City.

### *Hike/Bike Trail*

The development of a hike/bike trail in Imperial would be beneficial for all residents and visitors. An obvious attraction to hike/bike trails is the ease of access and use for all ages. Hike/bike trails provide a safe environment for exercising including walking, running, biking, and skating as well as a safer way for pedestrians to reach key amenities in the community. Hike/bike trails can be constructed in phases, this adds to the appeal of developing an amenity that can continue to grow and expand for residents.

### *Skate Park*

A skate park is an amenity that may interest younger residents in Imperial more than others in the community. It could provide a place for skaters and skateboarders to safely congregate and skate as opposed to skating in areas that may be unsafe because of its proximity to vehicular traffic. A possible location for the Skate Park could be in Campbell Park.

### *Fishing Pond*

A fishing pond would provide a new type of recreational amenity to residents of Imperial and the surrounding area. A fishing pond could provide a safe place for non-motorized boats to enjoy fishing as well as serve as an aesthetic place to gather with friends or relatives for socialization. The fishing pond could be stocked with a variety of fish and could be located close to the City; however, it would have to be outside of the current corporate limits because there is not enough adequate space within the limits to provide for a fishing pond.

### *Community Garden*

Establishing a community garden has been discussed for the new residential homes in Heather Estates. Community gardens are extremely beneficial to residents who utilize the space. The garden can serve as an educational center for children or adults wanting to learn about growing produce or flowers, can provide locally-grown nutritious fruits and vegetables for residents, and can provide a social gathering place for residents.

### *Fire Hall*

The City of Imperial, its residents, and its Volunteer Fire Department members have discussed the idea of a new fire hall for the community. The current fire hall does not meet the needs of the Fire Department. The current location of the fire hall restricts the ability for an expansion; therefore, the community has begun thinking of possible locations for a new fire hall that would be large enough to house modern equipment and trucks to effectively serve and protect residents within the Imperial fire district. When discussing possible locations for a new fire hall, citizens believed it was important for safety reasons to keep the fire hall in a nonresidential neighborhood and somewhere that is easily accessible for the Volunteer Fire Department members. Having two points of access also seemed to be important for accessibility, safety, and quick response times.

### *Storm Shelter*

Residents and City leaders discussed the desire to have a public storm shelter constructed in order to provide citizens with a safe place to be during storms. This would be especially beneficial for residents who do not have basements or personal underground storm shelters. Creating a shared use building could also be a possibility for a new storm shelter in order to utilize the space for multiple reasons.

### *Recycling Center*

The City currently has a recycling center that it utilizes; however, the City has examined the possibility of constructing a new center or rehabilitating the existing one to better serve the needs of the City and its residents. Determining the exact needs of a new facility will be important to the pre-development of a new or renewed Recycling Center.

### *Cultural Center*

There is a heavy emphasis on arts, dance, and theater in the Imperial community. Residents have a true love for the arts and a center established for and focused on the arts was important to many residents as we discussed possible improvements in the community during the public input sessions. Developing a facility that could serve as a possible museum and cultural center to provide a space devoted to the arts including theater, dance, and history, cultures, and art itself is a goal for many residents in Imperial. Because of the large focus on arts and the important role it plays in the lives of many residents in Imperial, it would be well utilized if a center were developed in the community.

### *Hospital/Medical Services*

The City of Imperial is home to the Chase County Community Hospital on the west side of the community. More detailed information regarding the hospital can be found in the Community Services section in Chapter Two of this Comprehensive Plan. The hospital is a wonderful asset to the community providing much needed access to healthcare for residents of Imperial and the surrounding area. Maintaining this access to healthcare will be important in retaining residents in Imperial because it affects the quality of life in the community. The hospital has discussed the desire for a renovation and/or expansion in the past and it may be necessary in order to bring the hospital up-to-date with all of the new possibilities for technology in healthcare. An updated facility would better serve the needs of all hospital employees as well as patients and families of citizens who utilize the hospital's services.



In order to expand community amenities in Imperial, the City should work to meet the following objectives:

*Establish locations for each amenity;*

With a long list of goals for additional amenities in the City, residents should devise a plan for a location for each amenity. Proximity to other community amenities, the general public, and access/visibility for visitors should all be taken into consideration when planning for locations of community amenities. Once each goal has a proposed location it will be simpler to establish a plan for development.

*Prioritize projects;*

Because the City has many goals for additional recreation and service areas, the City should work to prioritize the list of goals. Once priorities have been set, the City can work with community groups to establish a plan for implementation. It is very important that the City establish their priority projects in order to be effective with implementation of the goals outlined in this Plan.

*Set group(s) to be in charge for each project; and*

It should not be the entire responsibility of the City to complete all of the goals outlined in this Plan; therefore, the City should work with community groups to determine which groups will be in charge of which projects. Once groups are set with their associated goals they can begin to implement based on the timeline determined by the City and community groups.

*Formulate timeline/funding options.*

Because so many groups will be involved in the development of the community amenities, a timeline should be created based on priority projects and funding availability. This timeline should be followed by the City and all community groups involved. Funding options, including grant opportunities should also be determined. Typically grant applications can only be submitted by one community for one project; therefore, it is necessary to determine which goals meet the grant application requirements and determine how each goal will be funded. Currently, there are a few grant opportunities available for different community amenities; however, these grants are highly competitive and are not available for all types of projects. It is important for the City to have other sources of funding for amenity development because grant funds may not be available or accessible.

## **Enhance Gateway Entrances & Community Beautification**

Gateway entrances and overall community beautification were discussed heavily during the public input sessions held for the Comprehensive Plan. Not only were the issues discussed, but ideas were developed to improve the aesthetics of the area. Unappealing gateway entrances will continue to be an issue until someone or a group decides makes some improvements. After an individual has lived in a community for several years, one starts to overlook the negative aspects or the visually unappealing areas. However, a gateway entrance is Imperial's first impression to visitors. In order to improve the gateways into town, adjacent property owners will need to be supportive and understanding of the overall goal that Imperial is trying to achieve. Ideas and visuals for this goal can be seen in previous sections of this Comprehensive Plan. Residents have discussed their dislikes of the current entrances, and some improvement ideas have been suggested. One community group has even planned for a gateway entrance sign on the southeast side of Imperial along Highway 6.

There are many different ways to create beautiful entrances. Typically landscaping, lighting, signage, and screening are the main projects involved. A Gateway Improvement Authority could be created or an existing community group could help drive these projects or an existing group or board could volunteer their efforts for beautifying the highway corridor entrances into Imperial. It is important to note the three main entrances into Imperial when discussing new gateway entrances. Based on traffic counts, the Highway 6 entrance to the southeast sees slightly more average daily traffic than the entrances to the north. For this reason, entrance beautification could easily be completed in phases. It will be important to achieve continuity in the aesthetic of each entrance improvement. Having a plan or visuals in place before making any changes will be important to stimulate public support and a cohesive look for both entrances. Improvements to the entrance on the Highway 6 on the southeast side into Imperial will be seen by more travelers, based solely on traffic counts, than improvements on the north and could be completed in a first phase. There is no right or wrong answer to how this process will unfold, and it will be up to the community to determine the best method. The goal is to have these improvements be seen the most by travelers which will allow for the biggest "bang for your buck" type of project.

It will be up to the City and their citizens to make final decisions for the vision of their community; however, this vision should encompass the entire community for all beautification projects as opposed to having a mixture of several different "looks" or products used. Beautification is important throughout the entire community not just the entrances, so any of ideas or themes could be carried into the downtown district, public parks, or any residential neighborhood. If the City works to beautify the community and its entrances, it may spark the desire in residents to keep their properties clean. A partnership could also be created with adjacent property owners to ensure everyone is on the same page aesthetically, and hopefully with the support of property owners this goal could be accomplished. As previously mentioned, one group or several groups could work to make this goal become a reality. The most important part is to have an overall plan and vision created before any projects are started; that way there will be a cohesive look throughout the community and every group will know what needs to be done to achieve the community's vision.

Screening will make the most noticeable improvement due to some unsightly land uses located on both sides of the highway corridors. Screening could also be beneficial for property owners because the screening can act as a sound buffer from the highway traffic. Signage should not only be informational, but also attractive. A cohesive look starting from one entrance sign and carrying through the community to the opposite end creates a distinct appeal or 'brand' for Imperial. Creating a cohesive, aesthetic plan; forming a group to spearhead the project; balancing partnerships with adjacent property owners, City officials, and other community beautification groups; and aligning funding will be the keys steps in beautifying Imperial's gateways.

### **Develop Marketing Campaign**

Creating a community brand and marketing that brand to existing and potential residents and visitors is important when trying to develop an image. With all that Imperial has to offer its residents, from amenities to local retail businesses, the community truly is a destination place and does attract visitors. However, the city needs to develop a marketing campaign to promote existing businesses as well as capitalize on its ability to grow.

The City and/or local Chamber of Commerce should also focus on marketing to its own residents. A “shop local” campaign could involve many different marketing strategies to reach various community members. Marketing the City to existing residents is sometimes just as important as marketing to potential visitors. A shop local campaign could consist of yard signs, placement reminders at restaurants, or participation in “Thankful Thursdays” when residents are encouraged to show their support and thanks to local businesses.

Social media marketing is one way to share information with existing residents while also marketing the community to potential residents and visitors. Online marketing is a quick and almost instant way to share information. It is also accessible almost anywhere for most people. In today’s society, people want instant information and one way to provide that is to have a strong web presence promoting the City and all that it has to offer including both public places and private businesses.

Marketing the City should be an on-going effort made in part by the City of Imperial as well as the local Chamber of Commerce with the assistance of local businesses. The idea is to inform the surrounding area, as well as visitors passing through, of the wonderful amenities the community has to offer. The goal is to let people know that Stromsburg is a community with multiple things to do throughout the day for a variety of age groups. Imperial truly does have a lot to offer to its residents and visitors; however, sharing that information is the only way the City will be able to capitalize on all it has to offer. Social media and other internet sources, regional or State-wide visitor’s guides or magazines, and marketing brochures and materials are just a few of the ways the community can get the word out about Imperial.



In order to develop a marketing campaign for Imperial, the City should work to meet the following objectives:

*Develop a brand;*

By developing a brand for the City to use to market itself, it has an image that can be identified by residents and non-residents alike. Branding and marketing a community is becoming more and more important with today's society. The brand needs to be instantly recognizable and be representative of the entire community. Developing branding could include a logo, slogan, color schemes, and themes to represent the community.

*Establish responsible roles for marketing;*

As with community amenity development, not all of the marketing should be left to the City. Other community groups such as a Chamber of Commerce should also be instrumental in marketing for Imperial. These groups, along with the City, should work to establish roles for marketing.

*Create marketing pieces;*

Using the brand developed for the City, marketing pieces should be created that can be utilized online as well as for posters, videos, brochures, etc. Thinking comprehensively to hit all target areas is important when creating marketing pieces. It is also important to continually update the marketing pieces to ensure current information is being utilized and the pieces look modern and up-to-date.

*Maintain updated social media and other online marketing materials;  
and*

Social media can be thought of as a way to get information to large amount of people in a short amount of time. Also, social media sources such as Facebook and Twitter are free resources to use for marketing and most likely a majority of the community's residents and visitors use some form of social media on their own. The City could work to market upcoming events, big happenings in the City, and amenities or services it offers to residents and visitors. Other online marketing tools should also be considered in order to effectively reach potential developers or business owners to show what the City has to offer.

*Market within Imperial.*

Marketing within the City itself is also important. Developing a "shop local" campaign to market to residents and encourage them to support local businesses is important to the success of businesses in the community. Signs, such as a shopping mall directory, could also be placed at key points of interest in the community to display other amenities or businesses in Imperial. It would serve as a map showing other possible areas to visit or things to do in the community.

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