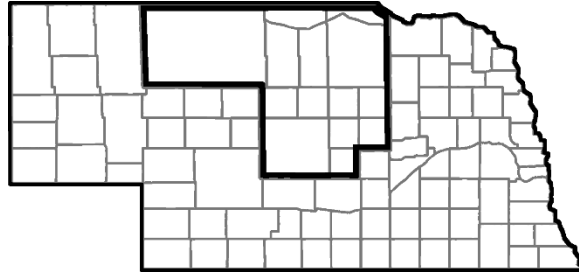


Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD)

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

2026



Blaine * Boyd * Brown * Cherry * Custer * Garfield * Greeley * Holt *
Keya Paha * Loup * Rock * Sherman * Valley * Wheeler

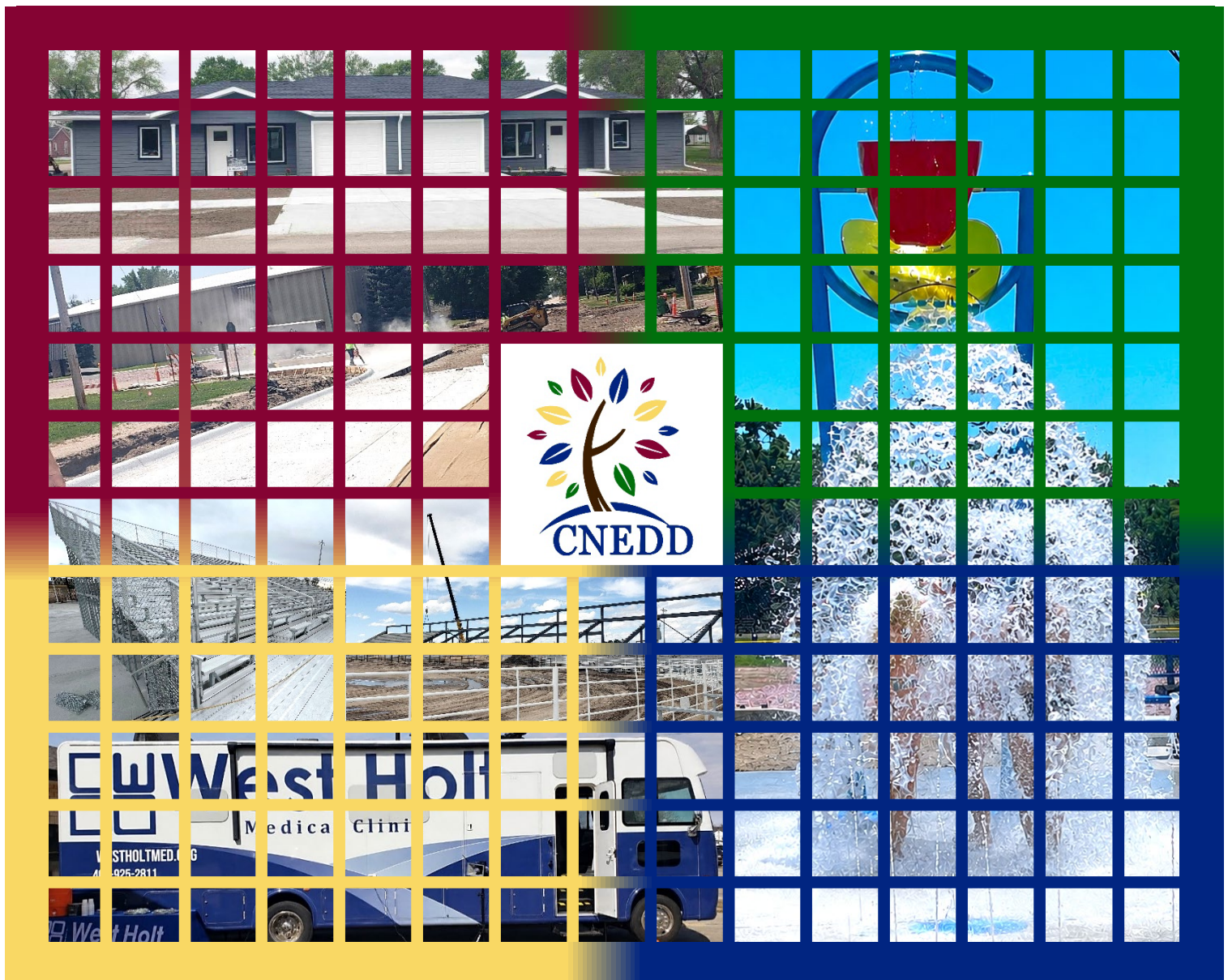


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On the cover: Clockwise from top left corner –

- Village of Ewing Rental Duplex Construction
- Village of Wolbach Splash Pad and Playground Installation
- West Holt Medical Services (Atkinson, Nebraska) Mobile Clinic
- Garfield County Big Rodeo Grandstand Construction
- Village of Bartlett Street Improvement

CNEDD-supported projects inspired by the goals and strategies outlined in the 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Photographs by Deanna Tomjack

Executive Summary

The Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD) serves fourteen counties in north central Nebraska: Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Holt, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Sherman, Valley, and Wheeler. CNEDD's mission is to enhance quality of life through community and business development, and its current regional service platform includes business assistance, housing development, broadband support, community planning, and education-related initiatives. The CNEDD region is characterized by strong agricultural production, natural resources, outdoor recreation assets, and deep civic commitment, but it also faces persistent challenges related to workforce shortages, aging and limited housing supply, childcare availability, infrastructure needs, out-migration, economic shocks affecting agriculture and small businesses, and access to healthcare and broadband in rural areas.

Stakeholder input for this CEDS was informed by the 2026 CNEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Survey and the Wealth Creation Asset Inventory conducted in conjunction with CNEDD's Annual Conference in November 2025. Respondents represented local governments, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, education partners, libraries, nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and other community stakeholders from across the district. Survey responses consistently identified housing, workforce, childcare, infrastructure, and business vitality as the region's most pressing development issues. Reported project activity already underway in communities includes workforce housing, housing rehabilitation, downtown redevelopment, utility and wastewater improvements, street and sidewalk projects, recreation investments, and business expansion. Based on this input and current regional conditions, this CEDS advances six strategic priorities:

Housing Expansion and Rehabilitation

- Expand the supply, diversity, and quality of housing through rehabilitation, infill development, rental production, upper-story conversion, blight removal, and site readiness.

Workforce Recruitment, Retention and Development

- Strengthen workforce pipelines by aligning employers, education, the skilled trades, apprenticeship pathways, childcare, housing, and community amenities.

Infrastructure Modernization

- Modernize infrastructure that supports economic opportunity, public safety, housing, business growth, and long-term resilience.

Entrepreneurship and Business Succession

- Strengthen local economies through business retention, expansion, redevelopment, entrepreneurship support, and succession planning.

Placemaking and Quality of Life

- Use placemaking and amenity investment to improve resident satisfaction, attract families and visitors, and reinforce community identity.

Resilience through Collaboration and Preparedness

- Integrate resilience into economic development by improving preparedness, continuity, diversification, and regional coordination.

Regional Overview and Planning Process

What is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a locally based, regionally driven strategy that establishes priorities for economic resilience, private-sector growth, workforce development, housing, infrastructure, and quality-of-life investment. It is intended to satisfy U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) planning expectations and to guide CNEDD and its partners in aligning projects, funding resources, and implementation activities over the 2026–2030 period.

The CEDS framework is rooted in federal economic development policy and implemented through regional planning entities such as Economic Development Districts.

Congress enacted the Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) in 1965 to address conditions of substantial and persistent unemployment and underemployment in economically distressed areas and regions. The Act established the federal framework for public works, economic adjustment, and planning investments intended to strengthen private-sector growth, expand employment opportunity, and improve long-term regional resilience. Within this framework, locally developed regional strategies play a central role in identifying priorities, coordinating implementation partners, and positioning communities for investment through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other state and federal programs.

What is an Economic Development District (EDD)?

Economic Development Districts are multi-jurisdictional entities that lead a locally based, regionally driven economic development planning process. In practice, an EDD convenes public, private, nonprofit, and institutional partners to assess regional conditions, establish shared priorities, and maintain a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that guides collaboration, project development, and capital investment across the region.

Within that national framework, CNEDD serves as the designated regional entity responsible for convening partners and maintaining this strategy for the district.

What is Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD)?

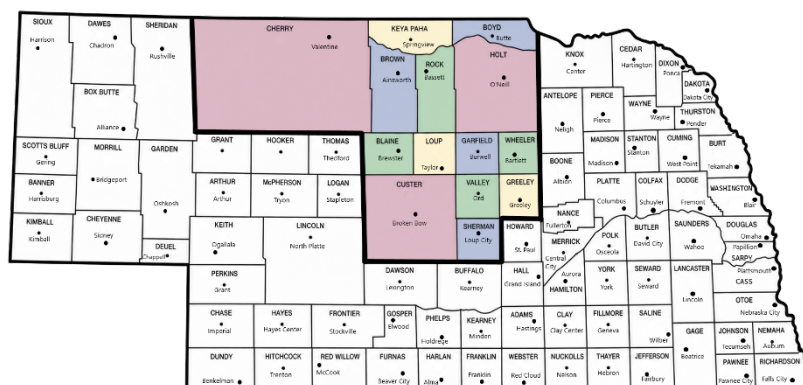
CNEDD was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 2003. The current EDA-recognized district includes fourteen counties in Central and Northern Nebraska: Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Holt, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Sherman,

Valley, and Wheeler. Together, these 14 counties and 61 communities cover nearly one-quarter of Nebraska's land and water area, yet account for less than 3 percent of the state's population. The region's largest communities are O'Neill (3,581), Broken Bow (3,506), Valentine (2,633), and Ord (2,113), reflecting a large, sparsely populated service area. CNEDD's three northernmost counties border South Dakota, and the district includes three of Nebraska's four largest counties: Cherry, Custer, and Holt. This geography creates long distances between communities and services, making regional coordination, infrastructure investment, workforce availability, housing, healthcare, childcare, broadband, and emergency response capacity central to the region's economic competitiveness and long-term development opportunity.

To carry out that role effectively, CNEDD relies on a governance structure and planning process designed to ensure regional representation and ongoing stakeholder engagement.

Governance of the District is carried out through the CNEDD Council of Officials and the CNEDD Board of Directors. Each participating county and community appoints a representative to the Council of Officials, which includes elected officials, public agencies, business interests, and private citizens and meets twice annually to establish and adopt District policies, goals, and objectives. From this broader regional body, the Council selects the CNEDD Board of Directors, which provides direct organizational oversight and meets regularly to guide program delivery, regional initiatives, and implementation decisions.

This CEDS reflects a continuing planning process grounded in stakeholder engagement, local project development, and regional coordination, consistent with EDA guidance that the strategy be developed through broad-based public and private sector participation and maintained as an implementation guide for regional priorities. CNEDD gathered input through a district-wide survey and a Wealth Creation Asset Inventory conducted as part of the 2026 CEDS update process. Survey questions addressed ongoing projects, regional strengths and constraints, opportunities and threats, infrastructure and housing conditions, business and workforce issues, and resilience-related considerations. The resulting strategy integrates stakeholder input, CNEDD's mission and service priorities, and current federal CEDS content expectations into a framework for implementation, evaluation, and annual update.



Summary Background: Economic Conditions of the Region

The CNEDD region operates within a Nebraska economy that continues to demonstrate relatively low unemployment and strong labor force participation by national standards, while also experiencing intense competition for workers. Nebraska's unemployment rate remained near 3.0 percent in 2025 and 2026, and statewide labor force levels reached record highs, indicating a tight labor market in which workforce shortages remain a structural challenge rather than a short-term condition. For rural communities, this means that business expansion, service continuity, healthcare access, and local government capacity are constrained less by a lack of ideas than by limited labor supply, aging population trends, and the difficulty of attracting and housing workers. These conditions reinforce the region's priorities around workforce recruitment and retention, housing expansion, and long-term community vitality.

Survey feedback strongly suggests that the region's most pressing development constraint is housing. Respondents identified aging and dilapidated housing, lack of entry-level and affordable homes, limited rental options, and the need to remove blighted structures as major weaknesses. Across the region, communities are already pursuing workforce housing revolving funds, rehabilitation projects, infill development, duplex construction, and subdivision planning. These local efforts align with a broader Nebraska housing context in which housing costs have continued to rise and communities increasingly rely on local revolving funds, trust fund resources, public-private partnerships, and redevelopment tools to create workforce-ready housing supply. Housing conditions therefore remain central to the region's ability to attract workers, support employers, and sustain long-term population stability.

The region's economic base remains anchored by agriculture, agricultural processing, manufacturing, healthcare, education, small business activity, and natural-resource-based recreation and tourism. Stakeholders rated the agricultural sector, natural resources, quality of life, and cost of living among the region's most meaningful strengths. At the same time, respondents highlighted over-reliance on agriculture and manufacturing, low wages, and limited access to startup capital as weaknesses that reduce diversification and inhibit long-term resilience. Communities also reported active investment in downtown buildings, commercial renovations, business transitions, and new small business facilities, demonstrating that entrepreneurship, succession planning, and placemaking remain important pathways to rural economic vitality and local quality of life.

Infrastructure conditions remain a defining issue in the region. Communities identified streets, roads, bridges, sidewalks, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, electric systems, recreation

facilities, and emergency services among their top needs. Survey respondents also described major wastewater, lagoon, drainage, and electric system projects that are underway or being planned. Broadband remains both a challenge and an opportunity across the region, affecting households, businesses, farms and ranches, healthcare providers, schools, local governments, emergency services, and community anchor institutions. Expanded and more reliable broadband can support remote work, telehealth, distance learning, business operations, public safety communications, access to services, and agricultural technologies, including precision agriculture. State broadband programs continue to identify unserved and underserved locations in rural Nebraska, and CNEDD communities are positioned to benefit from continued broadband mapping, grant programs, provider coordination, and local planning to improve access, reliability, affordability, and adoption. Together, these infrastructure needs underscore the importance of modernization, connectivity, and resilience in the region's long-term development strategy.

Unemployment in CNEDD vs. Nebraska

	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
Blaine	230	224	6	2.6%
Boyd	849	828	21	2.5%
Brown	1,581	1,545	36	2.3%
Cherry	3,109	3,050	59	1.9%
Custer	5,267	5,141	126	2.4%
Garfield	885	859	26	2.9%
Greeley	943	917	26	2.8%
Holt	5,546	5,435	111	2.0%
Keya Paha	345	333	12	3.5%
Loup	281	269	12	4.3%
Rock	659	645	14	2.1%
Sherman	1,403	1,362	41	2.9%
Valley	2,162	2,114	48	2.2%
Wheeler	367	359	8	2.2%
CNEDD Region	23,627	23,081	546	2.8%
Nebraska	1,101,499	1,068,594	32,905	3.0%

Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistic Program, May 2026

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Agriculture

- o The Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD) expands across approximately 22% of the State. In the 14-county region CNEDD covers, the leading industry is agriculture. The agriculture sector is expansive and diverse, with an abundance of natural resources. The landscape varies from large pastures containing feeding cattle, to miles of rolling hills bursting with a wide variety of crops, and everything in-between. Farms and ranches in the CNEDD region have been handed down from generation to generation, and families still serve as the hub of the region's number one industry, agriculture. Known for hard-work ethics and a strong set of values, these families continue to produce the highest quality food products that help to feed the world. All Nebraskans seem to be connected to agriculture in some way or another. If not from a farm background, they are probably related to someone who is. Or they could contribute by working in the industry in a supporting role. After all, one (1) in four (4) jobs in the state is agriculture related. Beyond being a steward of the actual land and livestock, there is a wide span of agricultural jobs in the CNEDD region, including careers in: insurance, equipment sales and repair, technology, irrigation, engineering, and many more. Agri-business is vital to the State's economy, and having a ready and willing workforce has helped those businesses thrive. The CNEDD region also has the infrastructure needed to transport grain, livestock, and all types of agricultural products to their intended destination. Railroads, semis, trucks, and other vehicles have the necessary pathways to move from east to west and north to south throughout the State. With monikers like "Cornhuskers" and "The Beef State," it doesn't take long to figure out corn and cattle are two (2) of the top commodities produced in Nebraska. The CNEDD region produces approximately 23% of the State's cattle, and 13% of the corn. Nebraska has been among the top national producers in each category for many years. The accessible supply of corn and grassland as feed for cattle results in producing premium-quality meat products, which



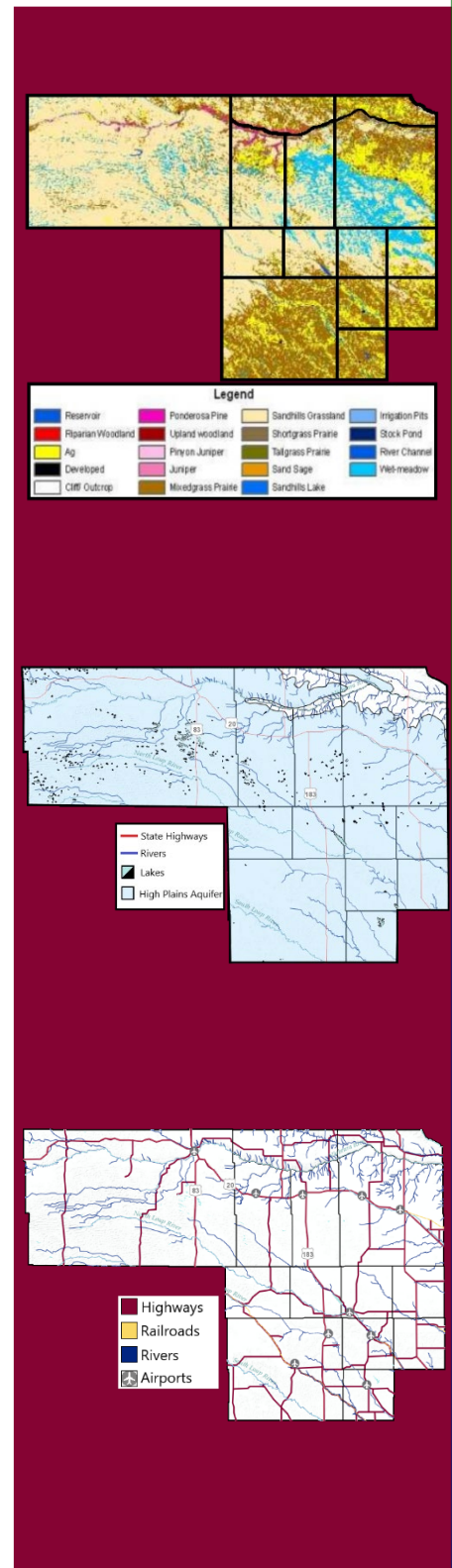
are sought by consumers throughout the world. Nebraska also leads the way in production of many other crops and livestock, including soybeans, oats, and swine production, which are also produced in the CNEDD region.

- **Natural resources**

- o Nebraska, and the CNEDD district, is blessed to be home to some very unique and valuable natural resources; these resources help especially support farming and ranching operations.
 - Sandhills: a biodiverse ecoregion of mixed-grass prairie, which stabilizes the sand dunes below. Much of the Sandhills is natural habitat and has never been plowed; livestock commonly graze these areas.
 - High Plains aquifer: one of the largest aquifers in the world and covers the majority of the state of Nebraska. Farmers and ranchers depend on this water source to help nourish both crops and livestock.
 - Wild and scenic rivers: although Nebraska is landlocked, it does have more miles of rivers than most other states, which provides another water source for irrigating crops and recreational activities. One of the most popular rivers that bears this designation is the Niobrara River, which spans 76 miles through Brown, Cherry, Keya Paha, and Rock counties. The river has become a recreational refuge for outdoor enthusiasts looking for a fun float or winsome wildlife watching.

- **Highways/Centrally Located**

- o Transportation access is critical to CNEDD's economic competitiveness because it supports agriculture, freight movement, tourism, business operations, emergency response, and access to regional services. Although Interstate 80 is Nebraska's primary east-west route, it does not pass through any CNEDD counties, making U.S. Highway 20, U.S. Highways 281 and 83, Nebraska Highway 183, and Highway 2 essential corridors for moving people, products, and services across the region. Rail service is more limited than in other parts of the state, but Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, Nebraska Central Railroad, and Nebraska Northeastern Railroad provide important freight connections in portions of the



U.S. Geological Survey 2020; State of Nebraska AGOL 2019, 2024, 2025; US Fish & Wildlife Service 2011

district. The region's 10 municipal airports further support business travel, medical transport, agricultural operations, tourism, and emergency response. Maintaining and improving these transportation assets helps reduce isolation, strengthen supply chains, support employers, and connect rural communities to broader markets.

- Quality of Life

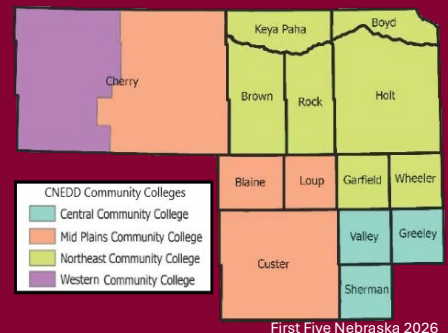
- o Rural quality of life is one of the region's strongest assets. Communities offer access to outdoor recreation, smaller schools, local events, civic participation, lower traffic levels, and strong personal connections. These assets support resident satisfaction, workforce attraction, family retention, tourism, and community identity. Continued investments in amenities, leadership development, volunteer engagement, housing, childcare, and community welcome efforts can help translate quality-of-life into measurable population, workforce, and economic outcomes.

WEAKNESSES

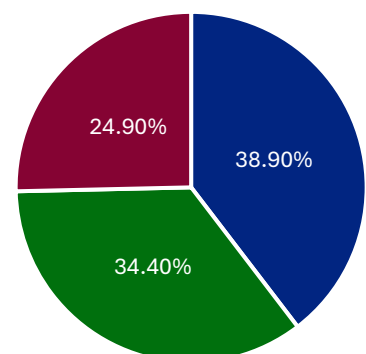
- Low Wages/Job Opportunities

- o Traditionally, households in the central Nebraska region experience lower wages than the rest of the State. This can be partly attributed to wages paid in seasonal and agriculture-related work, limited diversity in available job opportunities, and long hours in some employment sectors. In smaller labor markets, workers may also experience limited advancement pathways when leadership positions are held for long periods or filled through long-standing family or employee networks. The wage depression experienced in this region will perpetuate the lower-income status of the workforce if programs and activities are not developed to increase business diversity, expand skilled workforce pathways, and support career progression.

County	K – 12 Schools
Blaine	Sandhills Public Schools
Boyd	Boyd County Schools
Brown	Ainsworth Community Schools
Cherry	Cody-Kilgore Public Schools Valentine Community Schools Zion Lutheran Elementary School
Custer	Anselmo-Merna Public Schools Ansley Public Schools Arnold Public Schools Broken Bow Public Schools Callaway Public Schools Sargent Public Schools
Garfield	Burwell Public Schools
Greeley	Central Valley Public Schools Spalding Academy
Holt	Chambers Public Schools O'Neill Public Schools St. Joseph's Elementary School St. Mary's Schools Stuart Public Schools Summerland Public Schools West Holt Public Schools
Keya Paha	Keya Paha County Schools
Loup	Loup County Public Schools
Rock	Rock County Public Schools
Sherman	Loup City Public Schools Litchfield Public Schools
Valley	Arcadia Public Schools Ord Public Schools St. Mary's Elementary School
Wheeler	Wheeler Central Schools



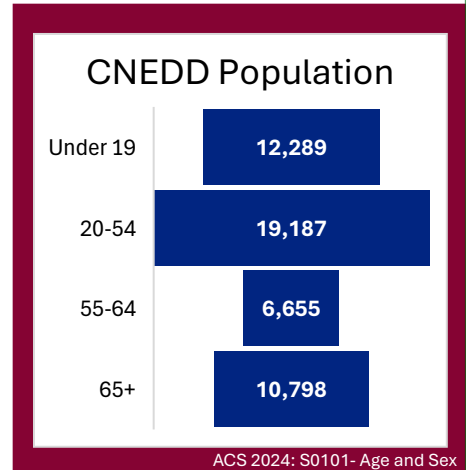
Regional Income Percentage



- \$0 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000+

- Population Decline/Aging Population/Loss of Talent

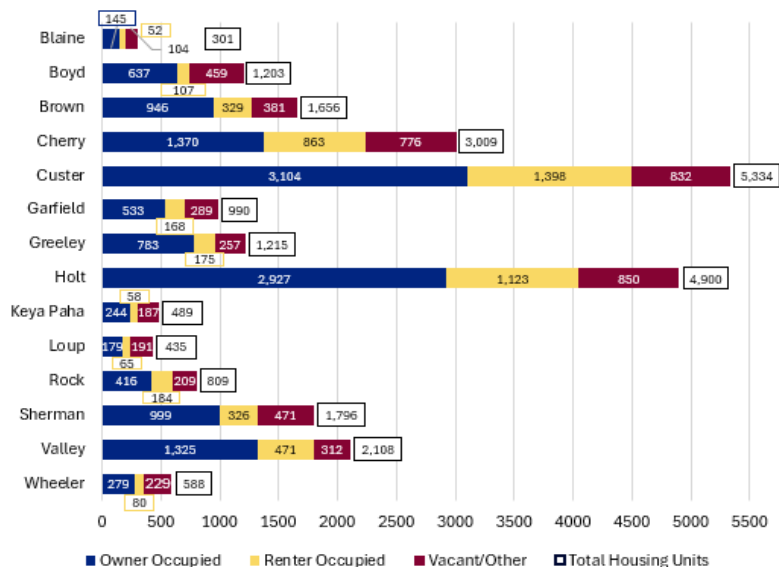
- o Central Nebraska has steadily been losing population since the 1960s with the migration of people to urban centers; the population of this area is also older than the State averages. Even though population decline has been a past trend for the CNEDD region, in more recent years, it has experienced a resurgence of young people 20-24 and 25-34 years of age returning to live, work, and raise their families in central Nebraska communities. This gives communities the incentive to continue to enhance workforce and housing opportunities, improve amenities, and attract people back to the region. The loss of skilled workforce and talent in area youth is prompting educational institutions and community and regional decision-makers to create leadership programs and expand educational opportunities that serve to retain our youth and attract young families seeking these amenities for their children.



- Availability of Quality Housing

- o As central Nebraska communities work to recruit and retain families, the lack of available quality housing is consistently a concern. At the present time, 71.4% of central Nebraska homes were built before 1979, and approximately one-half of those homes were built before 1939. Many of the homes built before 1939 are dilapidated and substandard; some simply need to be demolished. The median value of homes in the central Nebraska region is \$140,586, as compared to the State's median value of \$263,100. While some might suggest this means that housing in the area is more affordable, it correlates more to the age and condition of homes in the region, which reduces the value of the home. Today's families desire housing that fulfills their needs, which is typically 3-bedroom, 2-bath, and 2-car garage. When a home with these specs becomes available, it is quickly spoken for, sometimes before it even hits the market.

Central Nebraska does have some historic older homes; however, the homes that are more readily available often sit on very small lots with too-small bedrooms, 1-bath, and a detached 1-car garage. The region has not replaced dilapidated and substandard housing with new construction at a rate that equates to maintaining the existing population, let alone growing it.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Agriculture-Related Business

- o Because agriculture is the primary industry in the region, there are opportunities for the creation or expansion of agriculture-related businesses. Industry Quotients, as reported by the Nebraska Department of Labor, show that the region is deficient in “Other Services” jobs, which include automotive repair and maintenance, commercial and industrial machinery and equipment repair, and electronic and precision equipment repair. The creation of these businesses that support agriculture would strengthen the region’s economy.

Throughout CNEDD Region	Employees by Industry	# of Establishments
Accommodation & Food Services	896	133
Administration & Waste Services	0	43
Ag, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	1,861	281
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	120	24
Construction	570	211
Educational Services	0	3
Finance & Insurance	605	144
Health Care & Social Assistance	952	148
Information	99	31
Management of Companies/Enterprises	0	7
Manufacturing	272	55
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil/Gas Extraction	24	8
Other Services (ex. Public Administration)	281	141
Professional & Technical Services	298	127
Real Estate & Rental/Leasing	63	36
Retail Trade	2,165	267
Transportation & Warehousing	173	123
Utilities	13	10
Wholesale Trade	1,098	129

*Some confidential data not included - DOL INDUSTRY PROFILE, Q4 2025 , May 2026

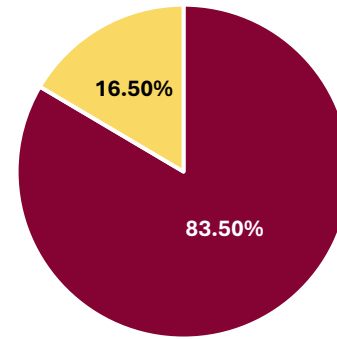
- Retail/Professionals/Entrepreneurs

- o In addition to the industry categories listed above, the central Nebraska region possesses a tremendous opportunity to diversify its business and workforce opportunities in the areas of Information, Real Estate and Rental Leasing, Professional and Technical Services, Administrative and Waste Services, Arts/Entertainment/ Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services, Daycare, and Personal Care Services. To increase the availability of these types of businesses, the region will need to identify gaps in services in each category and develop plans to attract these services to the region.

- Trades

- o Businesses and jobs in the area of Trades (construction, electrician, plumbers, etc.) are greatly needed in the central Nebraska region to construct new housing units and rehabilitate existing homes. There are tremendous opportunities for entrepreneurs and workforce in the Trades category for housing and commercial development.

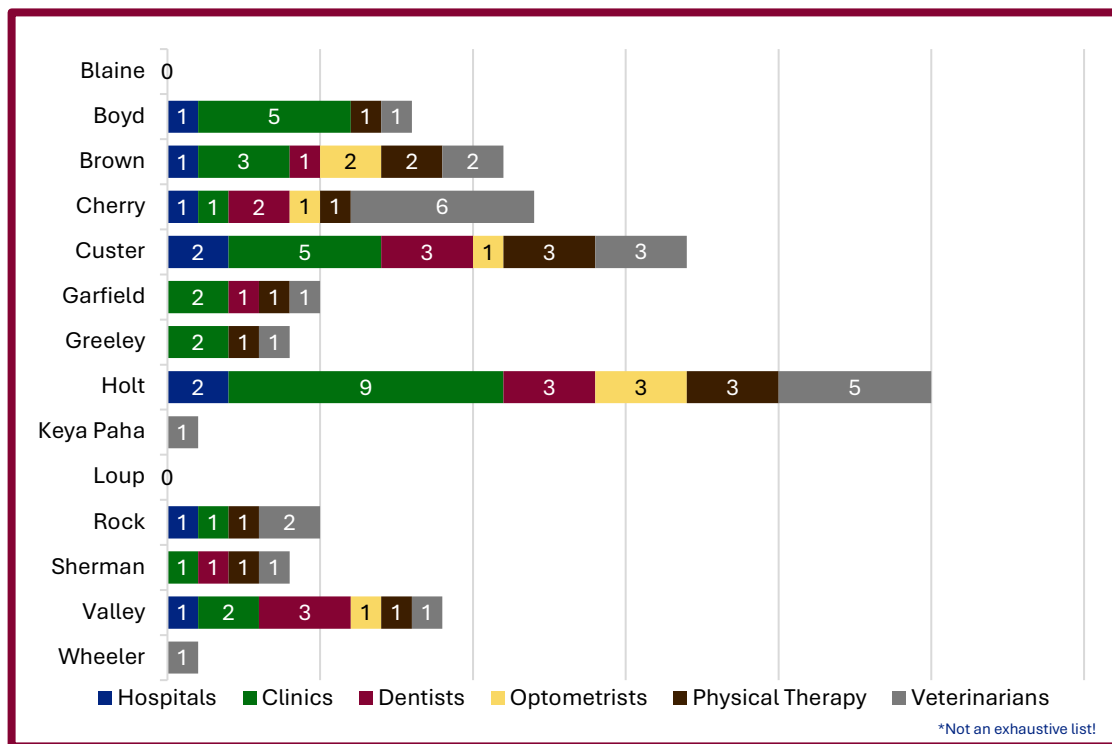
Commuters Throughout CNEDD



■ Work in their Home County ■ Work in a Different County
ACS 2024: S0802 – Means of Transportation to Work 5-Year Estimates

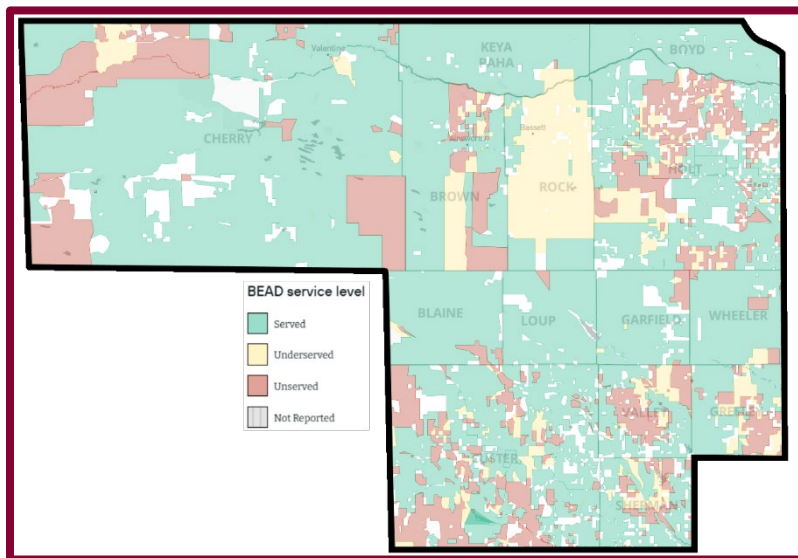
- Medical Services

- o The central Nebraska region provides medical services to its citizens through hospitals, clinics, and satellite offices. The medical providers are frequently looking for the chance to expand services that help their citizens receive the best medical care as close to home as possible. Opportunities for potential medical services expansion include but are not limited to dentistry, family practice, psychiatry and mental health, and OB/GYN.



- Broadband Access and Adoption

- o Expanded broadband and cellular connectivity create opportunities to support residents, businesses, schools, healthcare providers, public services, remote workers, entrepreneurs, agricultural producers, and visitors. Reliable fixed and mobile service can improve telehealth, distance learning, online business activity, public safety communications, emergency alerts, access to markets, farm and ranch technologies such as remote monitoring, equipment connectivity, and precision agriculture, and day-to-day connectivity in homes, businesses, community facilities, and rural travel corridors. Continued coordination with broadband and cellular providers, state programs, local governments, community anchor institutions, emergency service providers, and agricultural partners can help identify service gaps and connect rural communities with infrastructure, adoption, and technology resources.



Center on Rural Innovation – Broadband Data Collection, 2023

THREATS

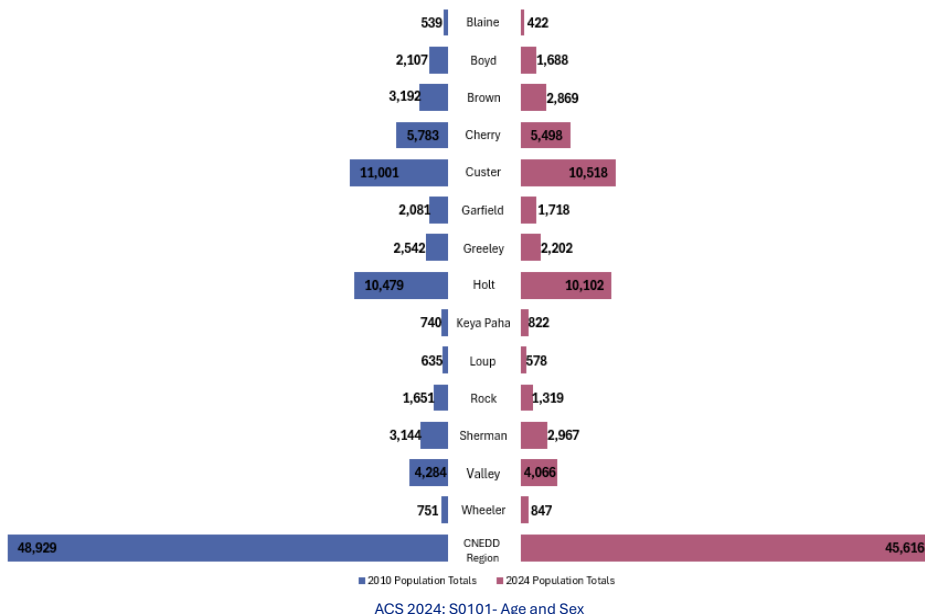
- Absentee Landowners

- o All rural communities are facing the negative impacts of absentee landowners with respect to housing, community reinvestment, and local economic circulation. When a family member passes away, it is common that remaining family members with an emotional tie to the property are unwilling to sell or rent, oftentimes simply leaving the home abandoned and falling into disrepair. Investor-owned agricultural land and residential properties can also reduce local reinvestment when ownership, rental income, and decision-making are located outside the community. This can further limit the flow of dollars through local businesses, tax bases, and civic efforts. Neglected

properties create nuisance conditions, reduce neighboring property values, and remove potential housing from productive use. Rehabilitation, redevelopment, code enforcement support, tax-delinquency resolution, or reuse of these properties would support the community's tax base and provide quality housing or productive land use for families and businesses desiring to establish roots.

- Population Decline/Aging Population

- o While population decline has slowed in recent years, it will be vital for the region's economic success to address any population trends proactively to ensure our schools and communities remain viable, and adequate services are provided to all citizens regardless of age.



- Agricultural Vulnerability

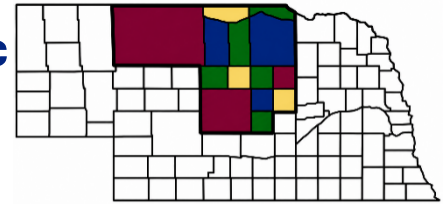
- o Agriculture is a defining strength of the CNEDD region, but its importance also creates exposure to drought, wildfire, commodity price volatility, trade disruptions, animal health concerns, zoonotic disease risks, input cost changes, and other market or environmental shocks. When agriculture thrives, related businesses, local governments, and households often benefit; when agriculture struggles, impacts can ripple through equipment dealers, lenders, service businesses, schools, housing markets, and community finances. Economic diversification, producer support, broadband and technology adoption, emergency preparedness, and strong local supply chains can help reduce the regional impact of agricultural disruptions.

- Lack of Business Succession

- o The Central Nebraska region is home to many very successful small businesses that have served their community and region for a number of years. Continuation of these businesses well into the future is vital for the success of our communities, but many existing business owners have not planned for the future of their businesses upon retirement, and the threat is that these businesses will close with no one to take over the business. The economic and cultural impact of losing a business in a small town is sometimes not considered until it's too late.



Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD)



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **2.47**

Median Age: **47**

1,978,707
Pop/Mi²: 25.5
Median: 37

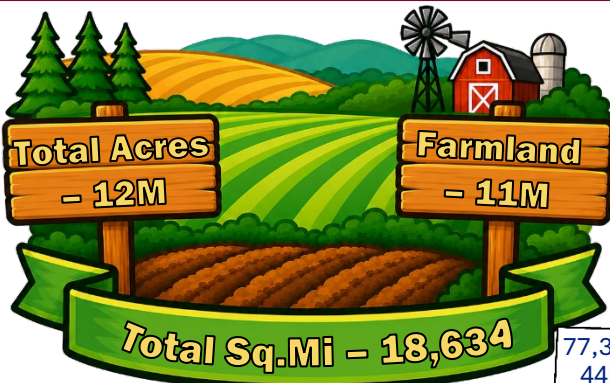
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



\$113,530

ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months



77,358 sq.mi
44M Farm
50M Acres

Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Land

Working Labor Force



68.7%

ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

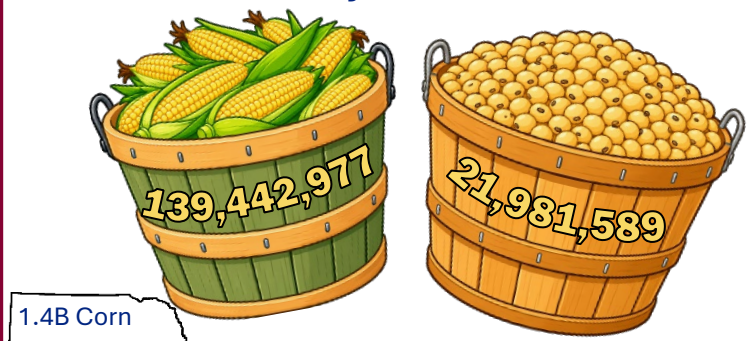


6.3
million

Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Cattle

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



1.4B Corn
265M Soy

Census of Agriculture 2022:
County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



92.6%

ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980

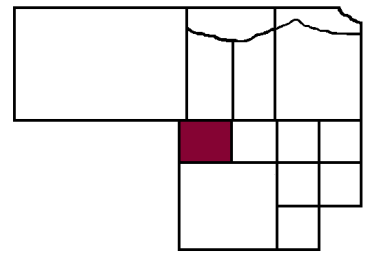


880,521
491,576

ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Blaine County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 0.6
Median Age: 53

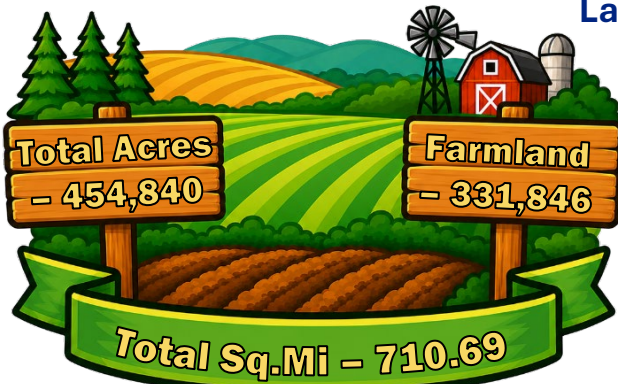
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



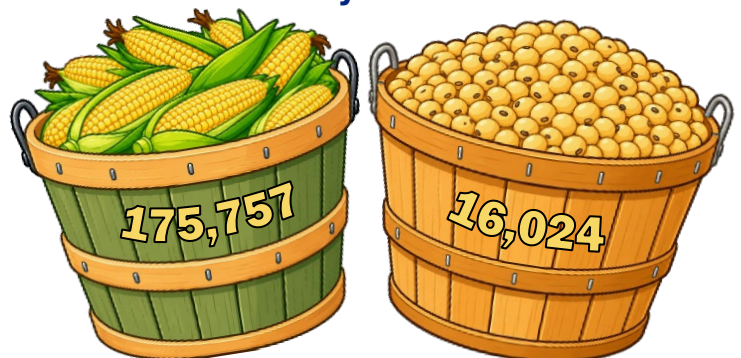
ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

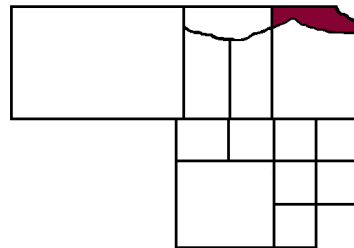
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Boyd County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **3.4**

Median Age: **52**

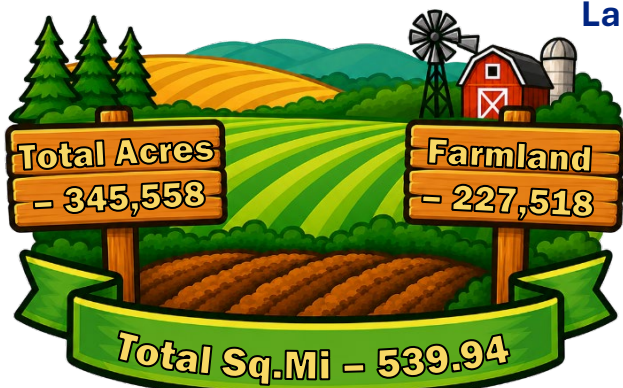
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



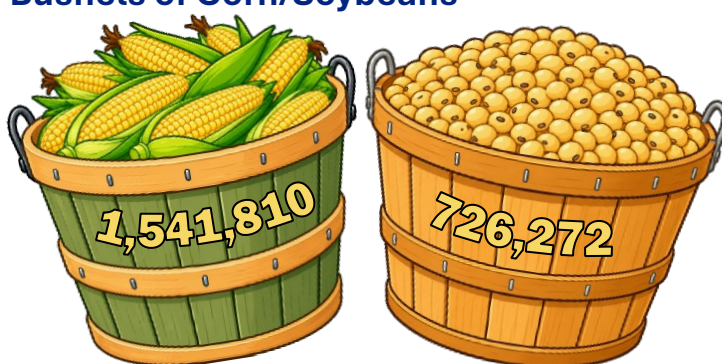
ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

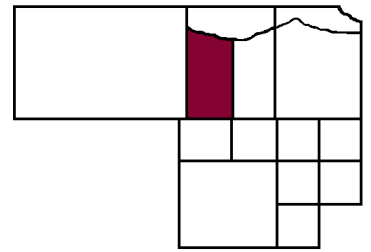
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Brown County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **2.4**
Median Age: **46**

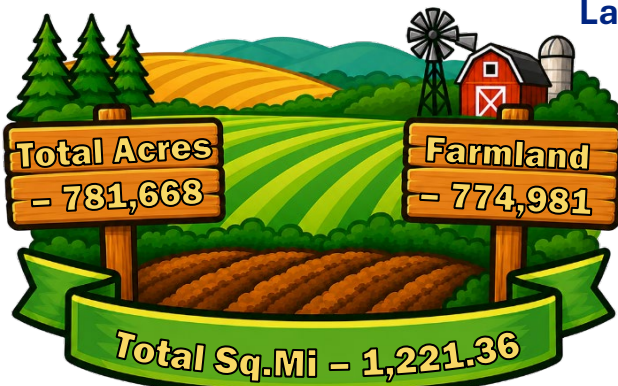
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



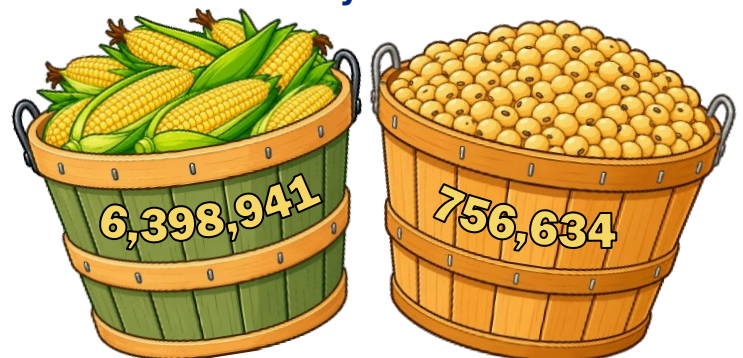
ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

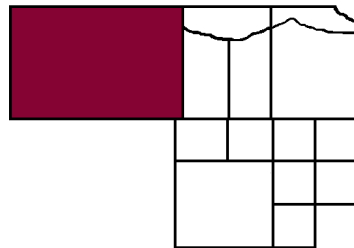
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Cherry County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 0.9
Median Age: 41

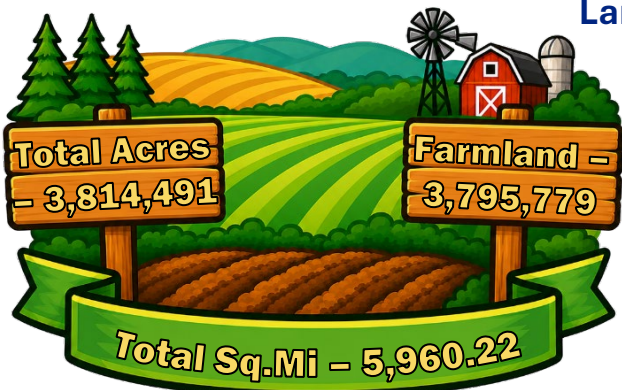
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



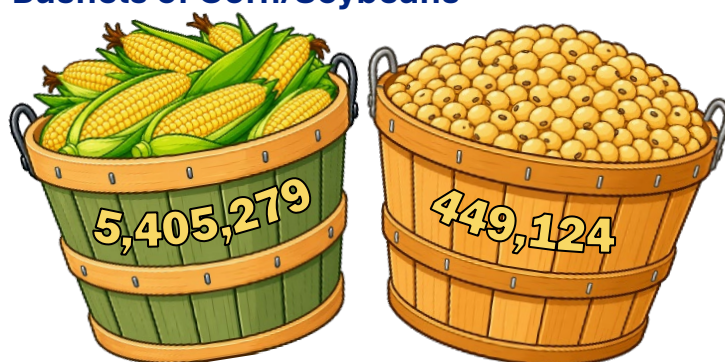
ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

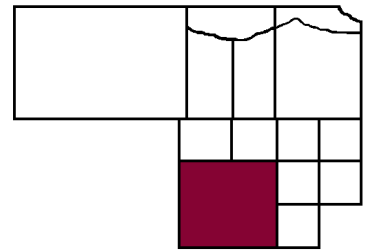
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Custer County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 4.1
Median Age: 42

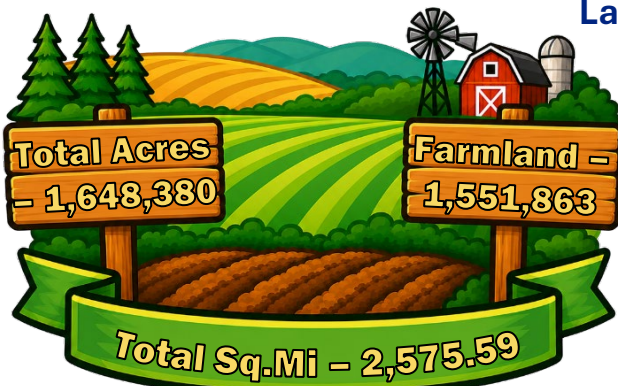
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

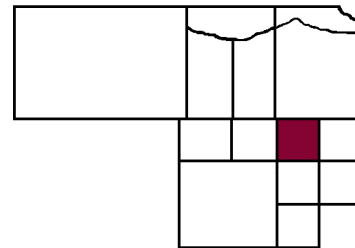
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Garfield County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 3.2
Median Age: 48

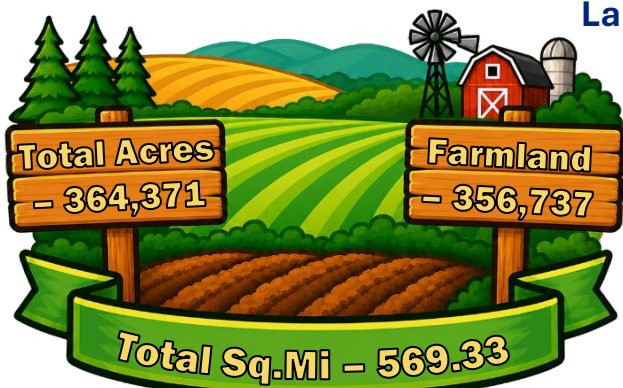
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

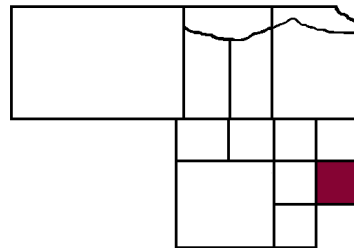
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Greeley County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **3.8**

Median Age: **44**

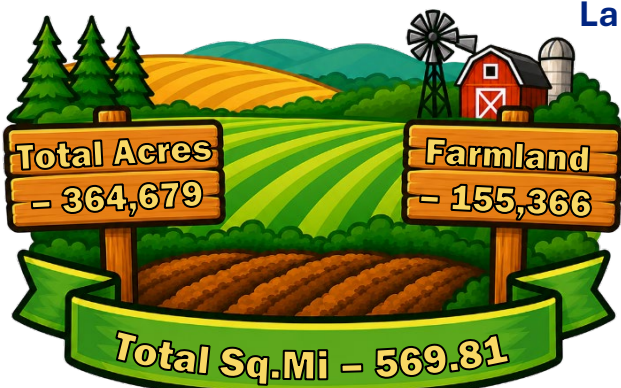
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

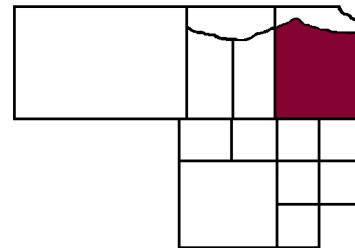
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Holt County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 4.2

Median Age: 42

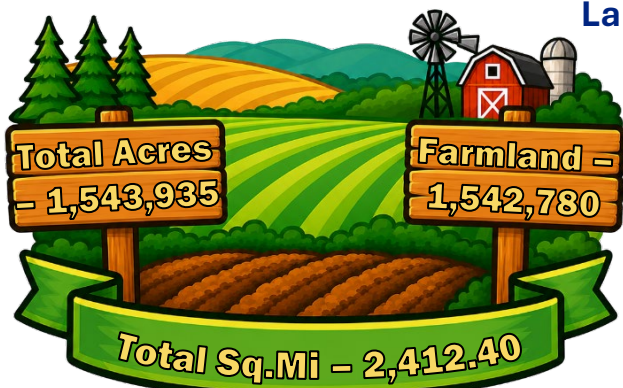
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

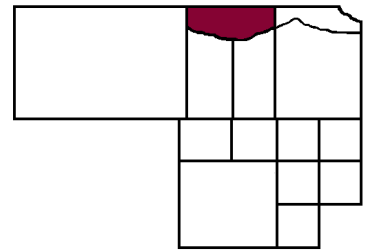
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Keya Paha County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 1.0

Median Age: 49

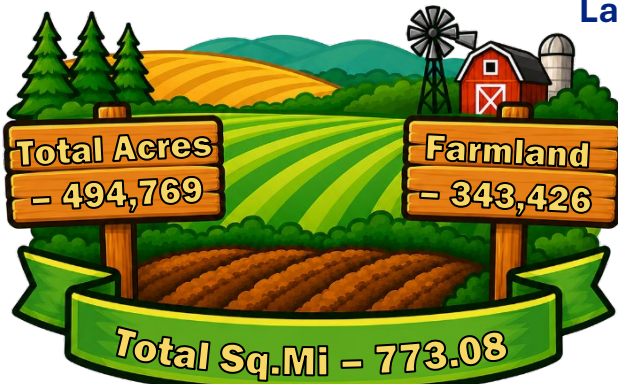
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

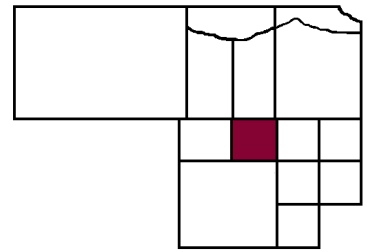
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Loup County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **1.1**
Median Age: **44**

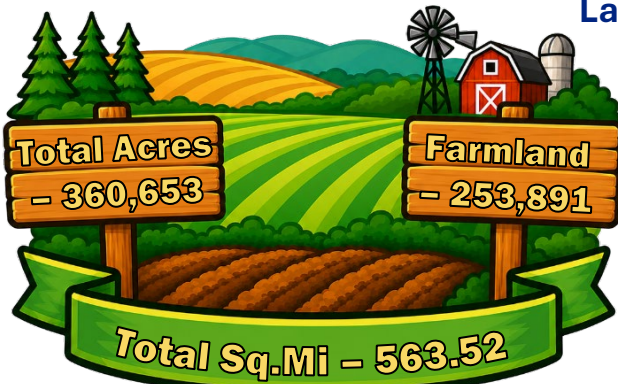
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



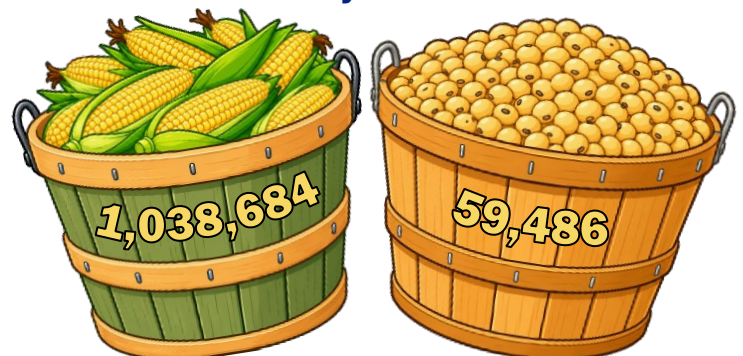
ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

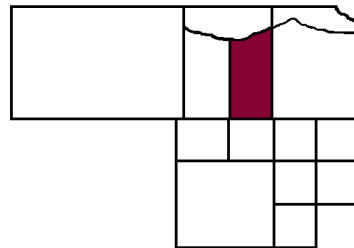
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Rock County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **1.3**

Median Age: **49**

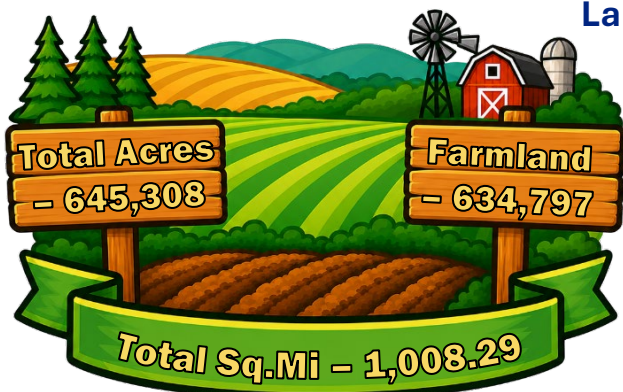
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

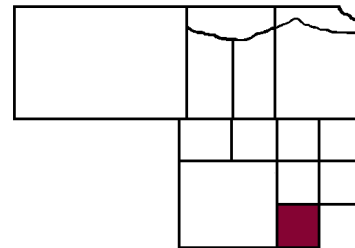
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Sherman County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **5.2**

Median Age: **47**

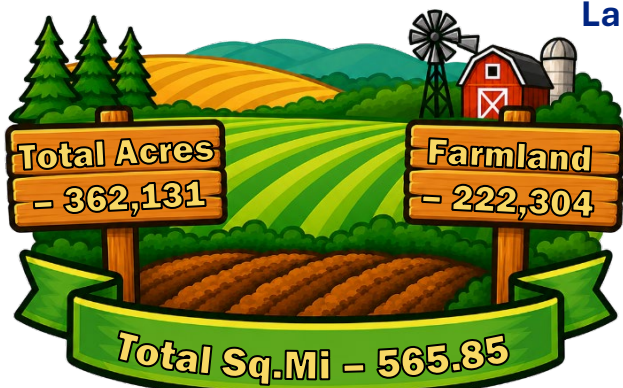
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

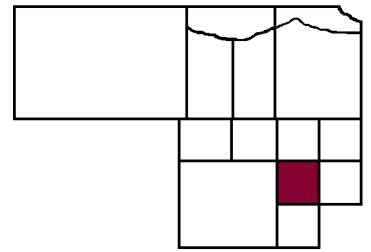
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Valley County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: 7.1
Median Age: 46

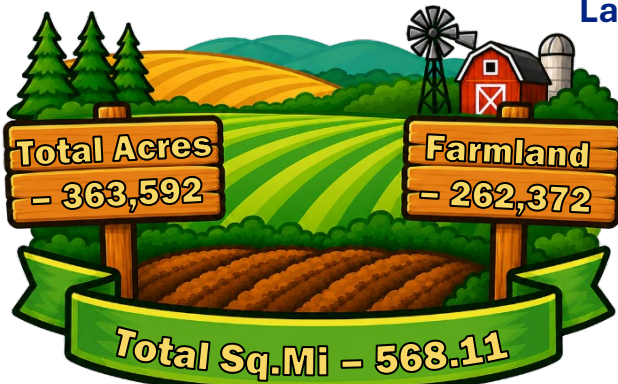
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

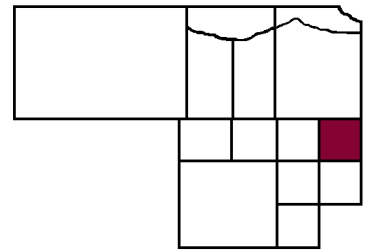
Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built



Wheeler County, Nebraska



Population



Pop/Sq.Mi: **1.3**
Median Age: **54**

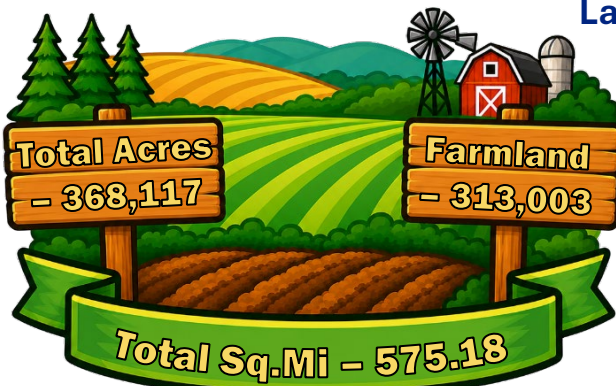
ACS 2024: S0101 Age and Sex: 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income



ACS 2024: S1901 | Income in the Past 12 Months

Land



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Working Labor Force



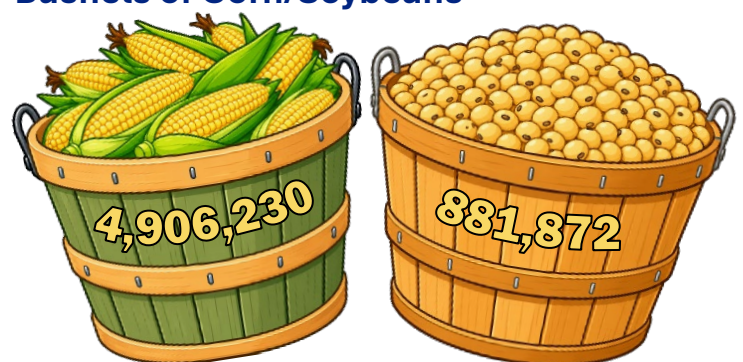
ACS 2024: DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

Cattle



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights

Bushels of Corn/Soybeans



Census of Agriculture 2022: County Summary Highlights & Selected Crops Harvested

High School Education and Higher



ACS 2024: S1501 | Educational Attainment

Total Housing Stock/Units Built Pre-1980



ACS 2024: B25001 | Housing Units & B25034 | Year Structure Built

Strategic Direction

Regional Vision

By 2030, the CNEDD region will be a more resilient, connected, and opportunity-rich rural region where communities have the housing, workforce, infrastructure, leadership, and quality-of-life assets needed to support employers, attract families, sustain essential services, and adapt to changing economic conditions.

Goals, Strategies, Activities, and Measurable Objectives

CNEDD's role in implementation will vary by community need and partner capacity. In communities with active local economic development campaigns, CNEDD can complement local efforts by providing regional coordination, grant development assistance, data support, technical assistance, project development, funding navigation, and connections to state, federal, nonprofit, engineering, planning, housing, broadband, and private-sector partners. In communities without formal economic development capacity, CNEDD may provide more direct support with project identification, planning, applications, partner convening, and implementation readiness. In practice, words such as support, advance, and partner may include activities such as preparing grant narratives, identifying match sources, helping scope engineering or planning needs, connecting communities to housing or infrastructure programs, facilitating discussions among local governments and nonprofits, sharing model ordinances or policies, supporting land reuse or redevelopment conversations, and helping communities move projects from idea to funding-ready status.

Because the region faces a broad scale of challenges and opportunities, implementation will require prioritization. CNEDD will focus first on activities where it can add regional value, leverage external resources, strengthen local capacity, and support projects that address shared priorities such as housing, workforce, infrastructure, childcare, business vitality, and resilience. The strategy is intended to support both communities that already have strong local efforts underway and communities that need additional capacity to begin or advance development initiatives.

Goal 1

Increase the supply, quality, attainability, and readiness of housing needed to support workforce availability, household stability, and community growth.

1. **STRATEGY:** Expand the supply, diversity, and quality of housing through rehabilitation, infill development, rental production, upper-story conversion, blight removal, and site readiness.
 - a) **ACTIVITY:** Capitalize workforce housing funds
 - b) **ACTIVITY:** Support speculative homes and duplex development
 - c) **ACTIVITY:** Administer owner-occupied rehabilitation and down payment programs
 - d) **ACTIVITY:** Conduct housing studies
 - e) **ACTIVITY:** Prepare development-ready sites
 - f) **ACTIVITY:** Advance nuisance abatement and redevelopment efforts
 - g) **ACTIVITY:** Support municipalities that choose to adopt and administer vacant property registration ordinances consistent with Nebraska's Vacant Property Registration Act.

Goal 2

Support and promote regional workforce participation, talent development, and workforce attraction efforts that help employers, households, and communities remain competitive.

1. **STRATEGY:** Convene, support, and promote partnerships among employers, education providers, workforce organizations, childcare providers, housing partners, and community leaders to strengthen regional talent pipelines.
 - a) **ACTIVITY:** Support partner-led childcare capacity efforts.
 - b) **ACTIVITY:** Promote career awareness, skilled trades exposure, registered apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities.
 - c) **ACTIVITY:** Assist with workforce attraction and retention messaging.
 - d) **ACTIVITY:** Encourage leadership development, community welcome efforts, and entrepreneurship.

Measurable Objectives

- Increase the number of housing units constructed, rehabilitated, or returned to service.
- Expand the number of build-ready sites and redevelopment-ready properties.
- Increase the number of communities evaluating or implementing vacant property registries to identify vacant residential or commercial buildings, support rehabilitation planning, and encourage occupancy.
- Increase the amount of local, state, federal, and private funding deployed for housing activities.

Measurable Objectives

- Track and support increases in partner-led workforce initiatives, childcare capacity efforts, employer engagement, training or apprenticeship participation, workforce attraction and retention activities, and leadership or welcome initiatives across the region.

Goal 3

Improve the capacity, reliability, and resilience of infrastructure systems that enable economic activity, service delivery, and community investment.

1. **STRATEGY:** Modernize infrastructure that supports economic opportunity, public safety, housing, business growth, and long-term resilience.

- a) **ACTIVITY:** Advance water and wastewater upgrades, roads and bridges, sidewalks, drainage, electric system improvements, recreation facilities, emergency services infrastructure, broadband and cellular coordination, broadband adoption support, agricultural technology connectivity where appropriate, grant development, engineering planning, and local match strategies.

Measurable Objectives

- Increase the number of infrastructure projects planned, funded, or completed.
- Improve utility, transportation, broadband, cellular, public facility, and agricultural technology connectivity capacity or reliability where appropriate.
- Increase the amount of external funding leveraged for infrastructure investment.

Goal 4

Support business vitality and economic diversification through entrepreneurship assistance, business retention and expansion support, redevelopment partnerships, and succession planning.

1. **STRATEGY:** Strengthen local economies by supporting business retention, expansion, redevelopment, entrepreneurship, access to capital, and succession planning partnerships.

- a) **ACTIVITY:** Connect entrepreneurs and existing businesses with technical assistance, startup and gap financing resources, business modernization support, redevelopment opportunities, service gap information, and succession planning partners to help retain jobs and services locally.

Measurable Objectives

- Track and support increases in businesses assisted, startups and expansions supported, downtown or commercial properties reactivated through partner efforts, succession transitions advanced, jobs created or retained, and capital or other resources leveraged through CNEDD-supported activities.

Goal 5

Strengthen placemaking, tourism, and quality-of-life assets that improve resident experience, support attraction and retention, and reinforce community identity.

1. **STRATEGY:** Use placemaking and amenity investment to improve resident satisfaction, attract families and visitors, and reinforce community identity.
 - a) **ACTIVITY:** Support downtown revitalization, parks, pools, trails, community centers, façade improvements, tourism promotion, events, leadership development, volunteer engagement, and civic participation initiatives.

Measurable Objectives

- Increase the number of placemaking and community amenity projects advanced.
- Expand tourism, downtown, recreation, and façade improvement activities.
- Conduct community surveys to assess resident priorities, satisfaction, and quality-of-life needs.
- Strengthen community participation, leadership development, and volunteer engagement outcomes.

Goal 6

Support regional economic resilience through preparedness, continuity planning, diversification, and coordinated response capacity.

1. **STRATEGY:** Strengthen resilience by supporting preparedness, continuity, diversification, and regional coordination efforts.
 - a) **ACTIVITY:** Support and coordinate with partners on emergency response and recovery planning, hazard mitigation, infrastructure redundancy, business continuity, wildfire preparedness, fuel-load reduction coordination, backup power and communications planning, evacuation access improvements, and service continuity partnerships.
 - b) **ACTIVITY:** Promote career awareness, skilled trades exposure, registered apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities.
 - c) **ACTIVITY:** Assist with workforce attraction and retention messaging.
 - d) **ACTIVITY:** Encourage leadership development, community welcome efforts, and entrepreneurship.

Measurable Objectives

- Track and support increases in communities updating preparedness, mitigation, recovery, or continuity plans.
- resilience-related infrastructure and coordination efforts advanced through partner collaboration.
- regional readiness activities that improve disruption response and recovery capacity.

Economic Resilience

Economic resilience in the CNEDD region depends on the ability of communities, businesses, service providers, producers, and regional partners to prepare for, withstand, adapt to, and recover from disruptions affecting housing, infrastructure, workforce availability, major employers, public services, agriculture, and natural-resource-based sectors. The region's long-term vulnerabilities include population decline and workforce shortages, limited residential development, aging homes, dependence on agriculture and commodity markets, business succession challenges among locally owned businesses, childcare shortages affecting workforce participation, broadband and infrastructure limitations, and natural hazards such as drought and wildfire. Agricultural disruptions can also result from commodity price volatility, trade disruptions, animal disease risks, zoonotic conditions, and input cost changes, with ripple effects on equipment dealers, lenders, service businesses, schools, housing markets, local governments, and household finances. In a large rural region with 61 communities, long travel distances, low population density, and service areas that span two time zones, resilience requires both ongoing coordination and the ability to support partner-led response, recovery, and continuity efforts when disruptions occur. This CEDS addresses these risks by supporting preparedness, continuity planning, economic diversification, entrepreneurship, housing investment, workforce development, childcare capacity, infrastructure modernization, broadband and cellular access and adoption, business retention and succession planning, wildfire preparedness, and stronger regional partnerships. CNEDD's role is to help convene partners, connect communities, producers, and businesses with information and resources, support project development, and align resilience-related activities with local hazard mitigation, recovery, infrastructure, housing, broadband, cellular, agriculture, and community planning efforts. Through this coordinated approach, regional investments can strengthen both day-to-day competitiveness and long-term adaptive capacity while recognizing that many resilience outcomes are achieved through shared implementation by local governments, businesses, producers, nonprofit organizations, emergency management partners, and other public and private stakeholders.

Evaluation Framework

CNEDD will review progress on this CEDS on an ongoing basis and at least annually through its regular planning, reporting, and partner coordination activities. Performance measures are intended to track CNEDD-supported outputs, partner-led activities, leveraged resources, and broader regional outcomes where data are available. Some metrics will be collected through CNEDD project files and partner reporting, while others will be monitored using state and federal data sources. Because many outcomes depend on shared implementation by local governments, businesses, nonprofit organizations, education and workforce partners, emergency management partners, and other stakeholders, the evaluation framework should be updated as projects advance, partnerships mature, and better local baseline data becomes available.

Goal Area	Illustrative Performance Measures
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Housing	Housing units constructed, rehabilitated, or returned to service; build-ready sites or redevelopment-ready properties advanced; dilapidated structures removed; infill, rental, or upper-story units supported; communities evaluating or implementing vacant property registries, land bank tools, nuisance abatement strategies, tax-delinquency resolution, or sheriff sale pathways where appropriate; local, state, federal, or private funding secured or deployed for CNEDD-supported housing activities
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Workforce	Partner-led workforce initiatives supported; childcare capacity efforts advanced; employers engaged in workforce partnerships; participants connected to career awareness, skilled trades exposure, work-based learning, or apprenticeship opportunities; workforce attraction, retention, leadership, welcome, or entrepreneurship efforts supported
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Infrastructure	Infrastructure projects planned, funded, or completed; grant development, engineering, or local match strategies supported; dollars leveraged;
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broadband and cellular coordination and adoption efforts advanced; agricultural technology connectivity supported where appropriate; utility, transportation, public facility, recreation, emergency services, broadband, or cellular capacity and reliability improvements supported

Business

Businesses assisted; startups and expansions supported; entrepreneurs or existing businesses connected with technical assistance, startup or gap financing resources, modernization support, redevelopment opportunities, service gap information, or succession planning partners; downtown or commercial properties reactivated through partner efforts; jobs created or retained; capital or other resources leveraged through CNEDD-supported activities

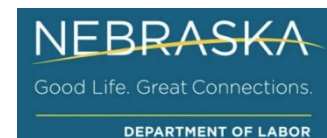
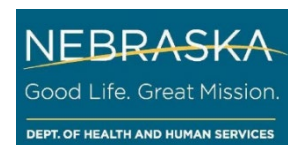
Quality of Life

Placemaking, downtown, recreation, tourism, façade, or community amenity projects advanced; community plans or surveys completed; community survey response rates and resident satisfaction trends tracked; leadership development, volunteer engagement, civic participation, or local identity efforts supported

Resilience

Communities updating emergency, mitigation, recovery, or continuity plans; resilience-related infrastructure, public facility, coordination, or continuity efforts advanced through partner collaboration; diversified funding sources or resources leveraged; regional economic vulnerability indicators monitored; agriculture-related risk awareness and response activities supported; regional readiness activities supported; wildfire preparedness, fuel-load reduction coordination, backup power and communications planning, evacuation access, service continuity, or recovery coordination efforts advanced

Partners





Acknowledgements

Board Composition

Government Representatives

<u>Name</u>	<u>Entity</u>	<u>Position</u>
Ed Brown, Chair	City of Long Pine	Mayor
Kristine Beard, Treasurer	City of Bassett	City Clerk
Anne Gibbons	Custer County	County Supervisor
Deborah Ritz	Village of Comstock	Village Clerk
Melissa Wenger	Village of Springview	Village Board of Trustee

Non-Government Representatives

<u>Name</u>	<u>Entity</u>	<u>Position</u>
Alvin Johnson	Village of Arcadia	Private Business Owner
Kellee Rasmussen	Wheeler County	Private Business Owner

Stakeholder Organization Representatives

<u>Name</u>	<u>Entity</u>	<u>Position</u>
Cheryl Carson, Vice Chair	Village of Arnold	Economic Development Director

One seat is currently vacant.

CEDS Strategy Committee

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Position</u>
Dr. Leah Barrett	Northeast Community College	President
Kristine Beard	City of Bassett	City Clerk
Paul Deaver	Greeley County	County Sheriff
Barry DeKay	Nebraska Legislature	State Senator District 40
Melissa Dush	Sherman County Economic Dev.	Executive Director
Sarah Joy	Village of Bristow	Village Board Trustee
Emily Kaelin	TEAM Physical Therapy	Physical Therapist
Shawn Kaskie	Rural Prosperity Nebraska	Extension Educator
Don Linquist	Linquist Technology	Private Business Owner
Caleb Pollard	Valley County Economic Dev.	Executive Director
Denise Wilkinson	6 Regions, One Nebraska	Northeast Region Navigator

Staff

Carla Kimball, Executive Director	
Tish Tielke, Finance Manager	LaNae Maxson, Community Development Specialist
Deanna Tomjack, Marketing Specialist	Chrystal Curtis, Community Development Specialist