# Central Nebraska
# Economic Development District

# 2021

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Serving Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Holt, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Sherman, Valley, and Wheeler counties.

## Agriculture

## Business

## Community

## Housing

## Tourism and Recreation

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# Chapter 1

# Executive Summary

## *HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL NEBRASKA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT*

*In 1965, Congress enacted the Public Works and Economic Development Act for the purpose of restoring the economic health of areas burdened with high unemployment and low family income. Bolstering the living conditions of an economically distressed area must be achieved by helping to nourish the conditions needed for industrial growth. New and growing industry means more jobs, larger payrolls, and better community services. To be eligible for assistance under the Public Works and Economic Development Act, a potential project must be located within a redevelopment area or an Economic Development District.*

*The Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD) is a 14-county regional development agency that serves as the bridge between local government officials, community-based organizations, and the private sector. The District provides the link between federal and state programs at the local level where development occurs.*

*CNEDD attained recognition as an official Economic Development District by the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) (per Title IV of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965) in 2003. The current EDA-recognized area consists of 14 counties in Central Nebraska: Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Holt, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Sherman, Valley and Wheeler. CNEDD is the largest economic development district with the lowest population density per square mile in Nebraska.*

*Each of the 14 counties and 61 communities located in the CNEDD service area who are dues-paying members appoint a representative to serve on the CNEDD Council of Officials. Appointed officials can comprise a variety of interests, including elected officials, public agencies, business, and private citizens. The Council of Officials meet two times per year to establish and adopt policies, goals and objectives for the overall operations of the district. These Council of Official members also represent local, general and special purpose units of governments, boards, agencies, commissions, authorities and public agencies in deliberations of the District.*

*The Council of Officials nominates 9 appointed representatives to serve on the CNEDD Board of Directors, and which provides direct oversight for the District, meeting approximately six times per year.*

## *COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PROCESS*

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the economic growth of an area. The CEDS process will help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry concerned with economic development.

The CEDS process, completed every five years, analyzes local conditions, identifies problems and opportunities, defines the vision and goals of the region, designs strategies to accomplish these goals,

coordinates activities to implement these strategies, and evaluates and updates the process. A successful CEDS process should lead to the formulation and implementation of a program that creates higher-skill, higher-wage jobs; raises incomes levels; diversifies the economy; and improves the quality of life, while protecting the environment. The process adopts a logical approach to long-range development while identifying and implementing short-term problem solutions to achieve early results, and maintain momentum and public support. There will be a continuing program of communication and outreach that encourages broad-based public participation and commitment of partners. The general public, government decision makers, and business investors will be able to use it as a guide to understanding the regional economy and to take action to improve it. The strategy will take into account and, where appropriate, incorporate other planning efforts in the region.

***The first step in the CEDS process*** was to appoint a CEDS Strategy Committee and develop a timeline for public input. CNEDD's CEDS Strategy Committee met in June 2020 to begin the process, determine a timeline and address survey activities.

***Following the establishment of the CEDS information gathering process,*** a comprehensive survey of the public in the region was conducted to identify existing conditions affecting the area. A survey link was electronically emailed to all County, City, and Village Clerks, Lenders, Emergency Managers, Chambers of Commerce, Schools and ESU's, Economic Development Directors, County Visitor Bureaus, CEDS Committee Members, and CNEDD Council of Officials and Staff in September with responses recorded through November using Survey Monkey software. Additionally, ten hard copies of the survey were mailed to every County, City, and Village Clerk with responses inputted into Survey Monkey. A total of 225 survey responses were received.

***The final 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Report*** is the result of identifying the region's current economic conditions, and developing goals and objectives that address the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in the Central Nebraska region.

# Chapter 2

# Regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## *STRENGTHS*

### Agriculture Industry

The Central Nebraska Economic Development District covers 14 counties whose primary industry is Agriculture. The CNEDD region covers approximately 22% of the State. The region's agriculture industry is expansive and diverse with an abundance of natural resources. The landscape varies from large pastures dotted with 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 a hard-work ethic and a strong set of values, these families continue to produce the highest quality food products that help feed the world. All Nebraskans seem to be connected to agriculture in one way or another. If they didn't come from a farm background, they are probably related to someone who did. Or they could very well work in the industry in a supporting role. After all, one in four jobs in the state is agriculture-related.

There is a wide span of agricultural jobs in the CNEDD region, including careers in the areas of 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 of the top commodities produced in Nebraska.

The CNEDD region produces approximately 23% of the state's cattle, and 13% of the state's corn. Nebraska has been among the leading producers in each category nationally for many years. The ready supply of corn 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.

# *STRENGTHS (continued)*

## Schools –

***Public and Non-Public School Systems*** **-** The CNEDD region is home to 31 public and non-public school systems that provide K-12 education to students in the region. The Nebraska Department of Education's Strategic Plan unifies and strengthens positive outcomes for each and every Nebraskan through bold and achievable goals. The Vision and Direction not only outlines the critical needs and strengths within our education system, but also reflects innovative approaches to ensure each Nebraskan has equitable access to opportunities and are ready for success in postsecondary, career, and civic life. In 2011 the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted "Nebraska Standards for Career Readiness" to educate and prepare students to meet the needs of today's workforce.

***Career Readiness – Taking It a Step Further*** The Nebraska Department of Education launched its "reVISION" program in 2012, with eight (8) communities in the CNEDD region having participated in the program in some way since that time. reVISION is a strategic, data-driven approach that provides Nebraska schools with the opportunity to analyze and transform their current Career & Technical Education System in order to improve their ability to educate a qualified workforce that meets industry needs within an ever-changing economy. The Nebraska Departments of Labor and Economic Development, postsecondary education, and regional workforce and economic development leaders all work in collaboration to promote career readiness. reVISION engages career educators, school administrators, school counselors, community stakeholders, and industry professionals as full partners in the development of education, workforce, and economic development strategies vital to sustaining and growing the local and state economies. reVISION participants end a year-long process with a 3-5 year plan of action to be implemented.

**Early Childhood Education Programs -** The number of Early Childhood Education programs has been increasing, and there are currently 19 Early Childhood Education programs serving primarily children ages 3-4 years of age in the CNEDD region.

***Secondary Education*** **-** The CNEDD region is home to five (5) community college locations provided by four (4) community college systems: Mid-Plains Community College in Broken Bow (Custer County) and Valentine (Cherry County); Northeast Community College in O'Neill (Holt County); and Central Community College in Ord (Valley County); and Western Nebraska Community College (Cherry County).

# *STRENGTHS (continued)*

## People/Work Ethic

Rural communities possess some of the nicest, most helpful people in the world. It all stems back to the days when farmers and ranchers helped each other with planting and harvesting, and caring for their livestock. Neighbors are there to lend a helping hand, because working together is what it takes for them and their communities to survive.

## Quality of Life

There is no denying that residing in a rural community offers a unique quality of life. So what is it about the quality of life that we so enjoy? Could it be that we don't have to deal with the hustle and bustle of traffic in the city? Is it the peace and quiet? How about the clean air or close access to outdoor recreation? Maybe it is the individual attention offered by our smaller schools with opportunities for every student? Some feel that friends and family have closer relationships in rural areas.

Studies are showing that there is an increase in the number of 30-45 year olds who are moving back to smaller rural communities. The question we've been asking ourselves is—could we attract more of these young families if we really tried?

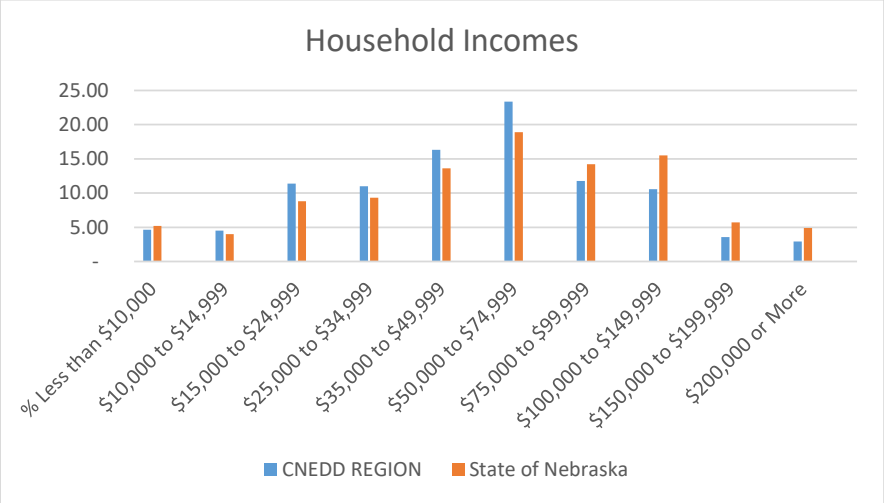
The quality of life amenities provided by a community can include good schools, recreational opportunities, social activities and events, a feeling of belonging, and the opportunity to play a role in the future of that community.

## Highways/Centrally Located

The Central Nebraska Economic Development District is located within the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills. While this region does not possess any Interstate highways running through the region, it is located between four Interstate systems located in Nebraska, Colorado, South Dakota and Iowa. Connecting all of these Interstate highways is a system of State highways running through this Sandhills region which provides transportation opportunities for tourism and the delivery of goods and services. These State highways include Highway 281 which runs north and south all the way from Mexico to Canada, Highway 2 which runs northwest from southcentral Nebraska, and Highway 20 which runs east to west throughout the northern section of Nebraska.

# WEAKNESSES

Figure 1: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015-2019

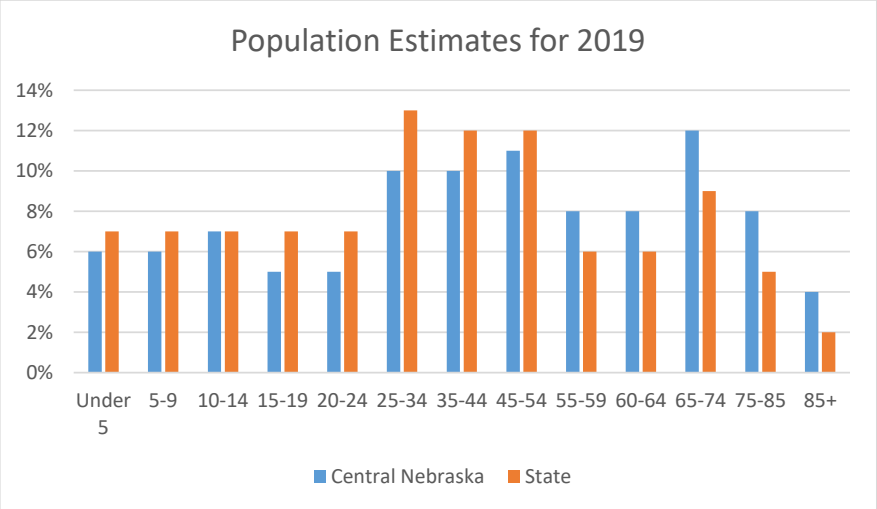



**Low Wages/Job Opportunities**

Traditionally, households in the Central Nebraska region experience lower wages than the rest of the State. Much of this can be attributed to the wages paid to employees working the Agriculture industry, and the lack of diversity in businesses and job opportunities available in the region.

The continued wage depression experienced in this region will perpetuate the lower-income status of the workforce in the region if programs and activities are not developed to increase business diversity and expand the skilled workforce in the region.

Figure 2: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015-2019




**Population Decline/Aging Population/Loss of Talent**

The Central Nebraska region has steadily been losing population since the 1960's, with the migration of people to urban centers. Figure 2 to the left shows that Central Nebraska's population is older than the State averages.

Between the years 2000 to 2010, the region's population declined 8% overall. However, in recent years the region has seen 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 resurgence has slowed the decline of population in the region, and gives communities the incentive to continue to enhance workforce opportunities, improve community amenities, and attract people back to the region.

The loss of skilled workforce and talent in our youth is leading educational institutions, 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.

# WEAKNESSES (continued)

### Availability of Quality Housing

As Central Nebraska communities work to retain and recruit families, the lack of available quality housing is consistently a concern. At the present time, 75.6% of Central Nebraska homes were built before 1979, and approximately half of those homes were built before 1939. Many of the homes built before 1939 are dilapidated and substandard, and some simply need to be demolished.

The Median Value of homes in the Central Nebraska region is $94,864, as compared to the State's Median Value of $155,800. While some might suggest this to mean housing in Central Nebraska is simply more affordable, it really 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 meets their needs— 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 2-car garage. If a home that fits this description comes up on the market it is quickly snatched before it even hits the market. Central Nebraska does have some lovely older homes in rural communities; however, the homes that are more readily available are often older homes sitting on very small lots with too-small bedrooms, 1-bath, and a detached 1-car garage.

The Central Nebraska region simply has not replaced dilapidated and substandard housing with new construction at a rate that equates to maintaining the existing population, let alone growing our population.

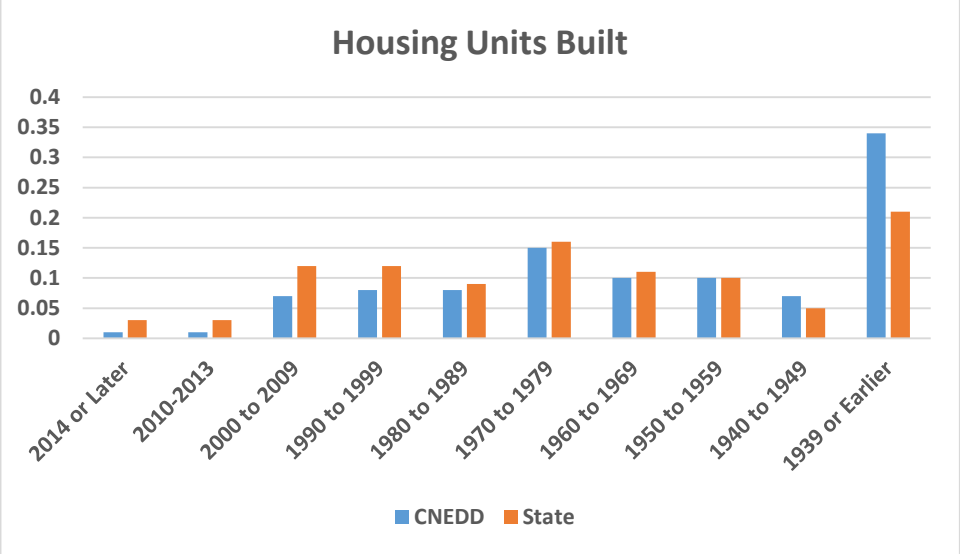



Figure 3. U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015-2019

# OPPORTUNITIES

### Ag-Related Business

Because Agriculture is the primary industry in the region, this creates opportunities for the creation or expansion of ag-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.

### Manufacturing

Central Nebraska is home to approximately 61 manufacturing businesses, ranging from 1-5 employees, to 400 employees. Many of these manufacturing businesses report that they chose to locate in Central Nebraska because of a love of the area and being close to family. CNEDD future plans are to meet with these manufacturers to learn what their barriers are to expanding their businesses or creating secondary supporting businesses, in order to create more business growth opportunities in Central Nebraska.

### Retail/Professionals/Entrepreneurs

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

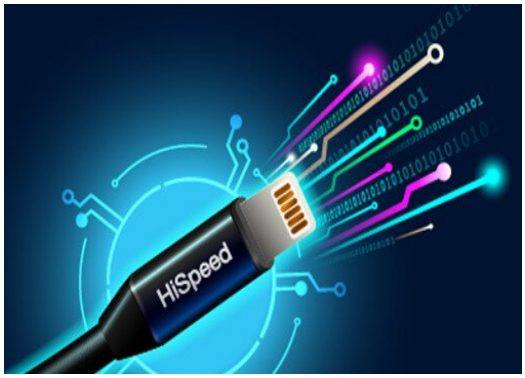
Businesses and jobs in the area of Trades (construction, electrician, plumbers, etc) are sorely needed in the Central Nebraska region to construct new housing units and rehabilitation of existing housing units. There are tremendous opportunities for entrepreneurs and workforce in the Trades category for housing and commercial development.

### Medical Services

The Central Nebraska region provides medical services to its citizens through hospitals and clinics located in the region. These medical providers are constantly looking 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.

# OPPORTUNITIES (continued)

## Broadband




In an effort to better understand the State's broadband capacity, CNEDD is partnering with other development districts across the state to launch a statewide broadband speed mapping initiative. Information gathered will support future broadband expansion grants and projects across the State benefitting all citizens.

## Young Leaders

Leadership opportunities abound in the region through local, regional and state leadership programs and opportunities. Local leadership programs include: Holt County Leadership Program, Custer County Leadership Training Program and CAPABLE Program, North Central Development Biz Kids Camp, and Valley County SynoVation Valley Leadership Academy. The Rural Futures Student Serviceship Program connects communities to college students, and students to rural communities, leaders and mentors, by providing internship opportunities for university students to live and serve a small community. To date, four communities in Central Nebraska have sponsored students through this program. Connecting Young Nebraskans, another program sponsored by the Rural Futures Institute, is a state-wide network designed to connect, empower and retain young leaders in the rural areas of the state. Other leadership programs such as the Community Catalyst Program have been offered to leaders in the region through the Sherwood Foundation. Lastly, the Nebraska LEAD Program is an agriculture leader program that has been developing agriculture leaders for 36 years.

## Tourism

With the natural beauty of the region and the availability of state and regional recreational opportunities, the Central Nebraska region could certainly capitalize on Tourism opportunities to bolster the economy. While lower wages are traditionally tied to tourism jobs, an increase in Tourism will translate into a greater quality of life, which in turn attracts young professionals and families to the Central Nebraska region. Communities need to continue to promote and develop local tourism attractions.

## Renewable Energy

With the region's strong agricultural economy, renewable energy opportunities exist through Ethanol and Wind Energy production. Any State and Federal incentives that are available for these and other renewable energy programs will need to be pursued to enhance the viability of these opportunities for the region.

# *THREATS*

**Lack of Business Succession**

The Central Nebraska region is home to a number of 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 after they are gone, and the threat is that these businesses will close with no one to take over the business for the future.

**Limited and Unskilled Workforce**

With the migration of youth to urban communities to live and raise families, the Central Nebraska region has experienced a loss of talent. The percentage of citizens who live in Central Nebraska who possess a Bachelor's Degree in Education or Higher is over 10% lower than the State. CNEDD, in partnership with primary and secondary schools, must develop programs that enhance the skills of our students and retain them in our communities. Additionally, the region must increase its marketing of workforce and entrepreneurial opportunities to recruit college students and young families to live and work in Central Nebraska.

**Population Decline/Aging Population**

While we are seeing a slow-down in the decline of population in Central Nebraska in the past six years, it will be vital for the region's economic success to address this population decline and aging population to ensure our schools and communities remain viable, and adequate services are provided to all citizens regardless of their age.

**Big Box Shopping/Online Shopping**

The internet has created convenient shopping right from your home, which is a threat to the viability of small business owners in the Central Nebraska region. These small business owners will need to enhance marketing of their products and show the benefits of shopping locally to remain viable in their community.

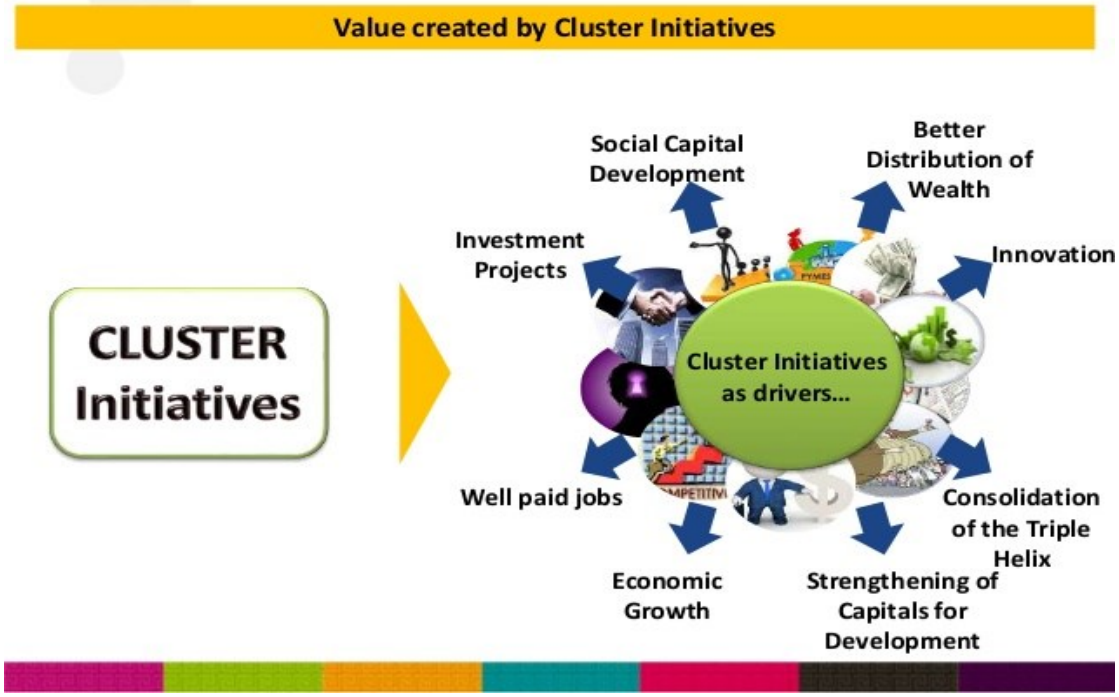
**Absentee Landowners**

All rural communities are facing the negative impacts of absentee landowners with respect to housing. When a family member passes away, some remaining family members have an emotional tie to the property and are unwilling to sell or rent the property, oftentimes simply leaving the home abandoned and falling into disrepair. This has created a nuisance situation in some communities where the properties have not been cared for, attracting pests and providing a place for students to participate in unhealthy activities. The value of these properties are greatly reduced, and the taxes paid on them do not support the community. In addition, dilapidated properties devalue neighboring properties and are not available to serve families who wish to move into the community. The rehabilitation or redevelopment of these properties would support the community's tax base and provide quality housing for a family for years to come.

# ECONOMIC CLUSTERS IN THE REGION

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development, in collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Labor, selected the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice (TPP) to conduct the *Growing Jobs, Industries, and Talent: A Competitive Advantage Assessment and Strategy for Nebraska*—a strategic plan of action with concrete action steps. The assessment offers a detailed, fact-based analysis of Nebraska's industry performance, technology drivers and talent base. Nebraska has a diverse set of twelve industry clusters that are driving the state's economy:

- **Agriculture Machinery**
- **Biosciences**
- **Financial Services**
- **Hospitality & Tourism**
- **Renewable Energy**
- **Software & Computer Services**
- **Agriulture & Food Processing**
- **Business Management & Administrative Services**
- **Health Services**
- **Precision Metals Manufacturing**
- **Research, Development & Engineering Services**
- **Transportation, Warehousing, Distribution, Logistics**




Through the CEDS Stragety Committee meetings and extensive survey input from the CNEDD region, it was determined the region has the following growth sectors/clusters. These growth sectors/clusters are consistent with the results of the Battelle Study and in line with the state's industry clusters. CNEDD will continue to assist and facilitate economic development and job creation/retention throughout Central Nebraska by providing technical planning assistance in community development activities such as:

- **Agriculture**
- **Small and Large Manufacturing**
- **Health and Medical Services**
- **Ag-Related Businesses**
- **Tourism/Recreation**
- **Trades**

# Chapter 3

## Strategic Direction - Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

*VISION:* *To see that Central Nebraska becomes a strong, viable economy for our future generations.*

*MISSION:* *To enhance the quality of life in Central Nebraska through community and business development.*

### *Goal 1—Business and Industry/Workforce Development—Increase the net number of businesses in the CNEDD region to meet the needs of the community and workforce by 2026.*

*Objective 1—Develop entrepreneurial support systems where business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs can seek assistance in developing and growing their business.*

*Objective 2—Enhance the economic resilience.*

*Objective 3—Retention/recruitment of talent.*

*Objective 4—Expand the diversity of businesses to meet and enhance services to citizens.*

### *Goal 2—Community Development/Housing Development—Improve the quality of life and sustainability of Central Nebraska communities by 2026.*

*Objective 1—Assist communities in providing safe, affordable, quality housing.*

*Objective 2—Provide technical planning assistance in community development and infrastructure activities.*

*Objective 3—Promote leadership programs for people of all ages.*

*Objective 4—Increase and market quality of life amenities to citizens, students, and visitors.*

### *Goal 3—Talent Retention and Attraction/Education—Retain and attract more young people to Central Nebraska communities by 2026.*

*Objective 1—Develop partnerships with primary and secondary education providers that positively impact the availability of skilled workforce.*

*Objective 2—Partner with communities to increase the number of early childhood education programs.*

### *Goal 4—Tourism/Recreation Development—Improve and promote tourism and recreational opportunities in the region by 2026.*

*Objective 1—Partner with communities to enhance tourism activities and recreational programs that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.*

# Chapter 4

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

***Goal 1—Business and Industry/Workforce Development—Increase the net number of businesses in the CNEDD region to meet the needs of the community and workforce by 2026.***

Objective 1—Develop entrepreneurial support systems where business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs can seek assistance in developing and growing their business.

Action Item 1—Promote business technical advisors and business loan programs to existing and aspiring business owners for future business success.

Action Item 2—Deliver business training throughout the region.

Action Item 3—Promote entrepreneurial and business trainings being offered by other entities.

Action Item 4—Promote chambers of commerce as a source for a directory of existing business connections.

Objective 2— Enhance the economic resilience.

Action Item 1—Partner with counties, communities and area emergency managers to play a role in disaster recovery activities.

Action Item 2—Promote and market business resilience and succession planning practices and programs.

Objective 3—Retention/recruitment of talent.

Action Item 1—Partner with communities and organizations to develop talent retention/recruitment programs.

Action Item 2—Promote professional and business opportunities and community amenities to high school graduates, alumni, and graduating students at community colleges and universities.

Objective 4—Expand the diversity of businesses to meet and enhance services to citizens.

Action Item 1—Assist communities in expanding retail, service, and professional services in their communities by promoting available business loan resources.

Action Item 2—Assist communities and counties in expanding agriculture-related businesses in the area that enhance agricultural diversification.

Action Item 3—Partner with manufacturers to identify barriers to growth and expansion, and develop programs with resource providers to address those barriers.

# Chapter 4 (continued)

## Action Plan/Performance Measures

### *Goal 2—Community Development/Housing Development—Improve the quality of life and sustainability of Central Nebraska communities by 2026.*

Objective 1—Assist communities in providing safe, affordable, quality housing.

Action Item 1—Assist member jurisdictions in identifying the housing needs in their community through housing studies and surveys.

Action Item 2—Assist member jurisdictions by providing housing development guidance for home buyer and rental housing opportunities.

Action Item 3—Assist communities in the rehabilitation of existing housing, and provide home buyer and home owner education.

Action Item 4—Identify federal, state, local, and private resources to fund community housing programs.

Objective 2— Provide technical planning assistance in community development and infrastructure activities.

Action Item 1—Partner with entities to develop public works infrastructure improvements for municipalities, and identify federal, state, local and private resources for those improvements.

Action Item 2—Partner with counties and communities to expand high speed broadband coverage.

Action Item 3—Assist communities in bolstering private funding resources through local investment clubs or community foundations that enhance housing, business, and community development activities.

Action Item 4—Assist communities in developing short-term goals through needs assessments, attitude surveys, and through the implementation and evaluation of strategic plans.

Action Item 5—Assist jurisdictions in the development of long-range plans, including comprehensive planning and zoning, housing needs assessments, blight studies and redevelopment plans.

Objective 3—Promote leadership programs for people of all ages.

Action Item 1—Partner with local, regional and state leadership programs to expand leadership opportunities.

Objective 4—Increase and market quality of life amenities to citizens, students and visitors.

Action Item 1—Partner with communities to enhance community appearance, recreational activities, and youth activities that enhance the quality of life for youth, families and senior citizens.

Action Item 2—Market quality of life amenities to families, workforce, and visitors.

# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

***Goal 3—Talent Retention and Attraction/Education—Retain and attract more young people to Central Nebraska communities by 2026.***

Objective 1—Develop partnerships with primary and secondary education providers that positively impact the availability of skilled workforce.

Action Item 1—Partner with K-12 schools through Career Readiness Standards and reVISION programs to enhance skilled workforce educational opportunities for students.

Action Item 2—Partner with businesses and small manufacturers to identify skilled workforce needs and develop educational programs to meet those needs.

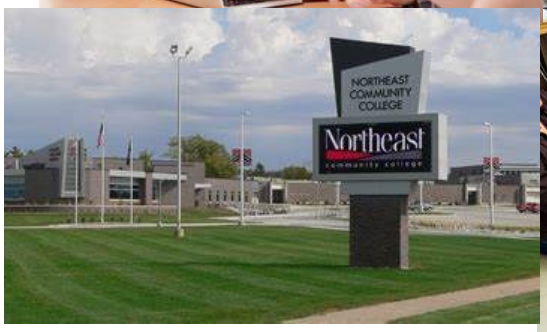
Action Item 3—Identify federal, state, local, and private resources to fund educational programs.

Action Item 4—Partner with community colleges to identify skilled workforce needs and develop programs that meet those needs.

Objective 2— Partner with communities to increase the number of early childhood education programs.

Action Item 1—Partner with the Nebraska Department of Education to identify existing early childhood education programs and pursue opportunities to expand these programs.

Action Item 2—Identify federal, state, local, and private resources to fund early childhood education programs.



# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

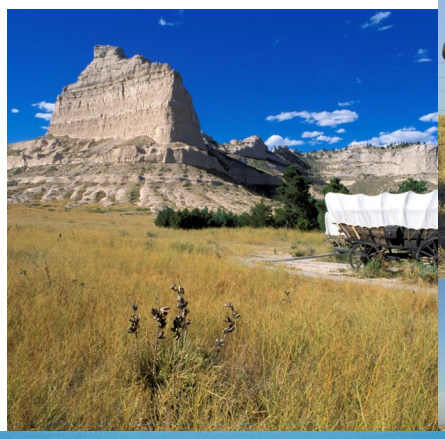
***Goal 4—Tourism/Recreation Development—Improve and promote tourism and recreational opportunities in the region by 2026.***

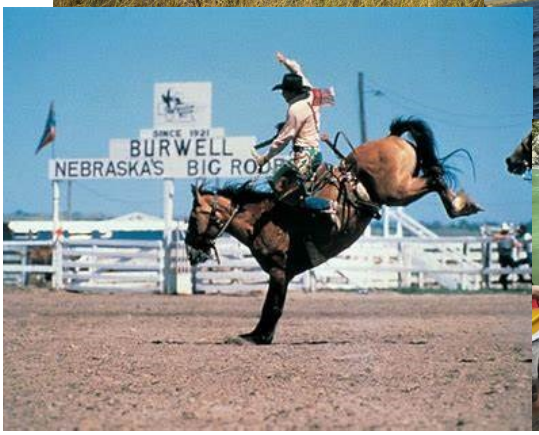
Objective 1—Partner with communities to enhance tourism activities and recreational programs that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Action Item 1—Promote community and regional tourism and recreational opportunities to all graduating students and future workforce.

Action Item 2—Identify federal, state, local, and private resources to fund community and regional tourism and recreational programs.

Action Item 3—Offer customer service training for tourism, lodging and food service businesses.





# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Business Development—Develop entrepreneurial support systems where business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs can seek assistance in developing and growing their business.** | | |
| Promote business technical advisors and business loan programs to existing and aspiring business owners for future business success. | Number of referrals and/or assistance provided for potential business owners. | Public, County and City Officials, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Local Investment Clubs, USDA, NDED, NBDC, CFRA |
| Deliver business training throughout the region. | Number of individuals participating in business training programs. | Public, County and City Officials, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Local Investment Clubs, USDA, CFRA |
| Promote other entrepreneurial and business trainings being offered by other entities. | Number of participants in other business trainings. Number of marketing pieces delivered to promote training. | Public, County and City Officials, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Local Investment Clubs, NBDC, CFRA |
| Promote Chambers of Commerce in the region as a source for existing business connections. | Number of Chambers of Commerce promoted. | Counties, Communities, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Schools |
| **Business Development—Enhance the Economic Resilience.** | | |
| Partner with counties, communities and area emergency managers to play a role in disaster recovery activities. | Number of county and community Local Emergency Operation Plans include CNEDD as a Disaster Recovery partner. Number of meetings or events involving Disaster Planning. | Counties, Communities, Local Emergency Managers |
| Promote and market business resilience and succession planning practices and programs. | Number of participants receiving business resilience and succession planning guidance. | County and City Officials, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders |

# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Business Development—Retention/recruitment of talent.** | | |
| Partner with communities and organizations to develop talent retention/recruitment programs. | Number of communities who have developed a talent retention/ recruitment program. Number of youth retention activities delivered. Number of people recruited. | Counties, Communities, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Schools, USDA |
| Promote professional and business opportunities, and community amenities to school graduates, alumni, graduating students at community colleges and universities. | Number of college students who receive marketing materials regarding job opportunities and quality of life in Central Nebraska. Number of events this information is shared at and potential coverage. | Colleges, Universities, County Fairs |
| **Business Development—Expand the diversity of businesses to meet and enhance services to citizens.** | | |
| Assist communities in expanding retail, service and professional businesses in their communities by promoting available business loan resources. | Number of small business loans provided. Number of diverse businesses operating in the region. | Counties, Communities, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, NBDC, NDED, Local Business Loan Programs, Nebraska Department of Labor, USDA, Great Plains Communication, CFRA |
| Assist communities and counties in expanding agriculture-related businesses that enhance agriculture sustainability. | Number of new or expanded ag-related businesses. | Counties, Communities, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, NBDC, Local Business Loan Programs, Nebraska Department of Labor, USDA, CFRA |
| Partner with manufacturers in the region to identify barriers to growth and expansion, and develop programs with resource providers to address barriers. | Number of meetings held with manufacturers, and number of participants to identify barriers and develop solutions. | Manufacturers, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Schools, Universities, Colleges, USDA, NDED |

# Chapter 4 (continued)
# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Community Development/Housing Development—Assist communities in providing safe, affordable, quality housing.** | | |
| Assist member jurisdictions in identifying the housing needs in their community through housing studies and surveys. | Number of housing studies and surveys conducted. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Realtors, Chambers of Commerce, Insurance Agents, JHEDI Group |
| Assist member jurisdictions by providing housing development guidance for home buyer and rental housing opportunities. | Number of communities assisted with housing development activities. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Realtors, Chambers of Commerce, NDED |
| Assist communities in the rehabilitation of existing housing, and provide home buyer and home owner education. | Amount of grant funds received and number of households served. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Realtors, NDED, NHDA, E-Home America |
| Identify federal, state, local and private resources to fund community housing programs. | Amount of grant funds or private funds generated. Number of households served. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, NDED, USDA, LB840 Funds, Local Investment Clubs |

# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Community Development/Housing Development—Provide technical planning assistance in community development and infrastructure activities.** | | |
| Partner with entities to develop public works infrastructure improvements for municipalities and identify federal, state, local and private resources for these improvements. | Number of communities improving infrastructure. Dollar amount invested in infrastructure improvements. | Counties, Communities, NDED, USDA, Engineers, Local Investment Clubs |
| Partner with counties and communities to expand high speed broadband coverage throughout the region. | Amount of increased bandwidth available to all persons in the region. | Counties, Communities, Chambers of Commerce, Schools, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Broadband Providers |
| Assist communities in bolstering private funding resources through local investment clubs or community foundations that enhance housing, business and community development activities. | Amount of private funding invested in the region. | Counties, Communities, Local Investment Clubs, Community Foundations, Economic Development Directors, Civic Groups, Schools |
| Assist communities in developing short-term goals through needs assessments, attitude surveys, and strategic plans, their implementation and their evaluation. | Number of community assessments, surveys or strategic plans developed. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, Schools, Community Clubs |
| Assist jurisdictions in the development of long-range plans, including comprehensive planning and zoning, housing needs assessments, blight studies and redevelopment plans. | Number of communities how have adopted long-range plans. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, Community Planners, NIFA, NDED |

# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Community Development/Housing Development—Promote Leadership Programs for People of All Ages.** | | |
| Partner with local, regional and state leadership programs to expand leadership opportunities in the region. | Number of individuals involved in leadership programs. | Young Leaders, Counties, Communities, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Businesses, Schools |
| **Community Development/Housing Development—Increase and Market Quality of Life Amenities to Citizens, Students, and Visitors.** | | |
| Partner with communities to enhance community appearance, recreational activities, and youth activities that enhance the quality of life for youth, families and senior citizens. | Number of new programs and activities developed by communities. Number of communities involved in nuisance code enforcement. | Counties, Communities, Schools, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Civic Groups, Community Foundations |
| Market quality of life amenities in the region to families, workforce, and visitors. | Number of students and visitors receiving marketing materials. Number of social media, newsletters and news releases distributed. | Students, Visitors, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Communities, Businesses, Schools |

# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Talent Development—Develop partnerships with primary and secondary education providers that positively impact the availability of skilled workforce.** | | |
| Partner with K-12 schools through Career Readiness Standards and reVISION programs to enhance skilled workforce educational opportunities for students. | Number of high school graduates. Number of students participating in expanded Career Readiness programs. | Counties, Communities, Schools, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Businesses, Lenders |
| Partner with businesses and small manufacturers to identify skilled workforce needs and develop educational programs to meet needs. | Number of additional skilled workforce education programs delivered. | Businesses, Schools, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders, Young Leaders |
| Identify federal, state, local and private resources to fund educational programs. | Dollars received for skilled workforce educational programs. | NDED, USDA, Local Investment Clubs, Community Foundations, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders |
| Partner with area community colleges in the region to identify workforce needs and develop programs that meet those needs. | Number of students enrolled. Number of dual-credit students enrolled. Number and diversity of programs offered. | Colleges, Schools, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, Lenders |
| **Talent Development—Partner with communities to increase the number of Pre-School programs.** | | |
| Partner with the Nebraska Department of Education to identify existing early childhood education programs and opportunities to expand programs in the region. | Number of new or expanded early childhood education programs. Number of students. | Schools, Nebraska Department of Education, Communities, Economic Development Directors, Chambers of Commerce |
| Identify federal, state, local and private resources to fund early childhood educational programs and day care programs. | Dollars received for early childhood education programs. | Nebraska Dept. of Education, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services, Schools, Local Business Programs, NBDC |

# Chapter 4 (continued)

# Action Plan/Performance Measures

| Action Item | Measurable Goals | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|
| **Tourism Development—Partner with communities to enhance tourism activities and recreational programs that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.** | | |
| Promote community and regional tourism and recreational opportunities to all graduating students and future workforce. | Number of new families and workforce attracted to the region. | Students, Colleges, Universities, Visitors, Economic Development Directors, Communities, Counties, NDED, Nebraska Game & Parks, Nebraska Tourism |
| Identify federal, state, local and private resources to fund community and regional tourism and recreational programs. | Funding received to enhance or develop tourism activities/ recreational programs. | Counties, Communities, Economic Development Directors, NDED, Nebraska Tourism, Nebraska Game & Parks, Community Foundations, Local Investment Clubs, Chambers of Commerce |
| Offer customer service training for tourism, lodging and food service businesses in the region. | Number of trainings delivered and number of participants in training. | Colleges, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors |

# Chapter 5
# Economic Resilience

A strong economy is vital for the success of CNEDD's counties and communities. In addition to development of programs and services that enhance economic opportunities for business, community and housing, CNEDD is committed to partnering and communicating with communities and stakeholders to develop resilient programs that will bolster the economic viability of the region. Economic development and economic recovery increase the resiliency of the local economies. Increasing resiliency strengthens performance and products.

The Central Nebraska region knows all too well that in order to withstand a storm, you must be ready to face the storm. Agriculture's highs and lows have taught us this, which has led to the conservative nature of the region. Some say we should tighten our belts when times are tough, others say the best time to invest in the future is when you have the least resources available.

While aging population, land value fluctuations, housing value fluctuations, lower wages, loss of talent and weather events are all economic disasters that Central Nebraska has experienced over the past few decades, the Central Nebraska region has responded over the past 20 years by focusing more in the last decade on ensuring the region is resilient through expanded economic development programs and initiatives.

The State of Nebraska, including CNEDD's 14-county region, has experienced two separate disaster events over the past two years – the March 2019 Floods, and the March 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic.

The March 2019 bomb cyclone storm, roughly equivalent in power to a Category 2 hurricane, led to record-breaking flooding through the spring and summer. This resulted in breached levees, damaged roads, destroyed crops, and entire communities inundated. Tragically, three lives were lost with hundreds more requiring emergency rescue (one within our district). The State of Nebraska has made great progress in recovering from the disasters. Despite numerous challenges, Nebraskans remain resilient and have been active participants in the rebuilding process. Volunteers have activated statewide, contributing their time, materials, and services to support recovery efforts. We are "Nebraska Strong," and to date, disrupted water systems have been restored, hundreds of miles of roads have been repaired, debris has been removed from agricultural fields, many homes have been repaired, and businesses re-opened (NEMA Baseline Conditions and Impact Assessment Report).

The economic impact of the 2019 storms is estimated to be $1.2 Billion (Nebraska Long-Term Recovery and Resiliency Plan).

The March 2020 Pandemic has impacted the health of our citizens, and the economic success of our small and large businesses, including agriculture. The financial impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic is ongoing, with no financial dollars reported at this time.

The Central Nebraska Economic Development District recognizes that we need to proactively address future shock events to protect lives, property and livelihoods.

Recovery and Resiliency Plans

Disasters destroy property, disrupt commerce and supply chains, displace workers and interrupt markets for goods and services. The goal of economic recovery is to return economic and business activity – including agriculture – to a healthier state and develop new economic opportunities that can fuel an economically sustainable community.

A key component to a Recovery and Resiliency Plan is the need for coordinated action, collaboration between government, local communities, businesses, and other key stakeholders, and communication to the public. To achieve our resiliency vision, we draw attention to five priorities: infrastructure, housing, business/workforce, health and social services, and natural resources.

**Infrastructure (I)—**

- Establish partnerships with local Emergency Managers, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, and local Health Departments to prepare for and recover from natural and man-made disasters.
- Identify potential key infrastructure needs, with an eye towards long-range planning that will promote resilience in the community. Infrastructure includes, but is not limited to: streets, highways, water, sewer, electricity, gas, broadband.
- Conduct public surveys to support the development of public infrastructure projects.
- Identify Federal, State or Local funding resources to address infrastructure needs. Share best practices of identifying and selecting hazard mitigation projects that align with funding resources.
- Develop a list of projects needed for hazard mitigation to prevent future damage.
- Develop a strategy for prioritizing projects.

**Infrastructure (I)—Continued**

- Assist communities in applying for funding resources.
- Provide general administration services to oversee grant-funded projects.

**Housing (H)—**

- Develop a priority listing of housing activities that best meet the community's needs.
- Develop programs and policies that help rehabilitate and build new housing to address housing needs.
- Assess the condition of all housing in a community to determine how the housing stock serves the community and its workforce.
- Create a listing of housing units located in high-hazard areas (i.e., floodplain), to educate communities about potential buyout programs.
- Identify Federal, State, Local funding resources to meet the housing needs.
- Assists communities in applying for funding resources.
- Provide general administration services to oversee grant-funded projects.
- Market tenant and landlord financial assistance programs that are available following disaster and pandemic events.
- Develop a listing of housing stock that is vacant, blighted, or inhabitable, to support acquisition, demolition and removal of this housing for the safety of the community and create future development opportunities.
- Share case studies showing how others across the State have addressed their housing mitigation projects.

**Business/Workforce (BW)—**

- Improve private-sector hazard preparedness and support economic resilience-building.
- Conduct outreach to business owners to help increase awareness of hazard vulnerability and risk-reduction activities.
- Expand statewide flood, cyber, and business interruption insurance outreach and education programs for businesses.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and startups intended to address known community needs or leverage identified regional or local growth opportunities.
- Develop or disseminate guidance on low-cost hazard mitigation techniques tailored to small businesses that can improve their capacity to withstand disruptions from all hazards/shocks.
- Support targeted investments supporting small business expansion in desired areas of growth.
- Educate businesses about adopting business resiliency practices.
- Developing succession opportunities to retain businesses that serve the community.

**Business/Workforce (BW)—Continued**

- Attracting young professionals to live and work in Central Nebraska communities.
- Work with the Nebraska Business Development Center to conduct cash flow analyses and provide support to small business owners regarding best practices to preserve cash during and following disaster events.
- Increase awareness of or enrollment in the Service Corps of Retired Executives program to pair executives from established large employers with small rural businesses.
- Work with the Chambers of Commerce to disseminate information about funding opportunities, technical assistance, and other programs and resources available to businesses.
- Emphasize entrepreneurial education and outreach opportunities in our rural communities.
- Market the availability of recovery funding available for all businesses, including agriculture.
- Support development and strengthening of business infrastructure (i.e., broadband access, human resources) necessary for development of new businesses.
- Offer support by promoting awareness of new training and skill-building opportunities through Facebook and newsletters.
- Identify opportunities for marketing local agricultural products, to expand local markets and create workforce opportunities.
- Provide business training that encourages the creation of new businesses and expands marketing opportunities outside of local communities.
- Increase awareness of and encourage participation in the Nebraska Department of Labor pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and any other relevant apprenticeship programs that already exist within the State.
- Develop a strategy to engage individuals that are underemployed, through marketing, online surveys, or in-person events.
- Coordinate with community colleges and other professional development entities to increase availability of trainings building skills in impacted industries.
- Target recruitment of students and workers with areas of expertise relevant to business sectors prioritized for growth in local and regional economic development plans.
- Develop a list of businesses in the floodplain and others at risk due to hazards or pandemics.
- Coordinate with agencies to conduct risk assessments and outreach to small businesses, focusing on business preparedness and resiliency plan, and recovery needs.
- Explore incentive program subsidizing student loan payments, housing costs, or other costs of living to encourage the return and retention of college- and trade-educated individuals to rural communities.
- Identify business service gaps (i.e., healthcare, construction, electrical, plumbing, technology) in rural communities and target these gaps for business growth.
- Identify industries or areas where Nebraskans are underemployed.

**Health and Social Services (HSS)—**

- Provide communities with contact information for Nebraska Legal Aid, as well as Nebraska Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, to educate citizens about available services and programs.
- Provide communities with information for health care providers, mental health providers, socials service providers, legal aid providers, and voluntary organizations, to be contacted in times of disaster and recovery.
- Share contact information with non-profits, agricultural groups, and community organizations.
- Provide information about telehealth services at existing internet access points (i.e., public libraries) for those who do not have smartphones or computers.
- Identify health professional shortage areas to incentivize professionals to move to underserved areas.
- Partner with health and medical professionals to determine personal protective equipment and safety protocols needed during a pandemic, to assist in determining inventory and marketing needs to protect the public.
- Establish partnerships with local Health Departments and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, to prepare for and recover from health-related disasters.
- Develop a list of all health care providers, mental health providers, and social service providers, summarizing the purpose, providing examples of potential engagement, explaining benefits to citizens, and provide contact information.

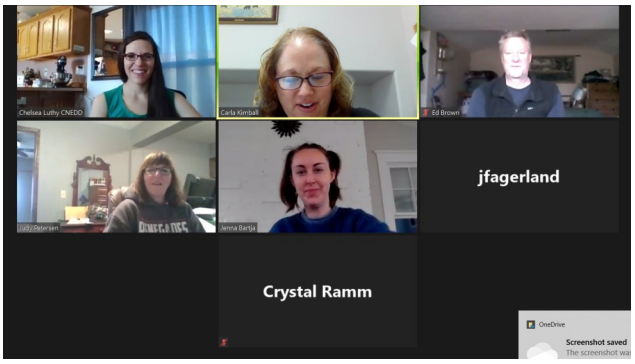
**Natural Resources (NR)—**

- Increase community-based understanding of the potential benefits of floodplain, stream, or wetland restoration projects.
- Leverage public-private partnerships to incorporate artistic, cultural, landscaping and other community-identified value-adding components to infrastructure projects.
- Support property acquisitions (including traditional structure buyout, demolition and removal projects as well as grazing land purchases) to reduce risk in flood-prone areas and designate land for perpetual use as parks, open spaces, or for seasonal recreational use.
- Provide technical assistance to support sub-applicants in developing mitigation project proposals to reduce the long-term risk to state- and community-owned resources and historical markers through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program.
- Identify project areas where potential floodplain, stream, or wetland restoration is feasible.

The ability of a local economy to rebound after a disaster dictates the success of the community's long-term recovery. Economic recovery paired with economic development increases the resiliency of the local economy. The Central Nebraska region has prioritized five areas; infrastructure, housing, business/workforce, health and social services, and natural resources; to achieve our resiliency vision for the future of our region.

# Chapter 6
# CEDS Strategy Committee

The success and completion of the 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) would not have been accomplished if not for the leadership of the CEDS Strategy Committee.




Members of the CNEDD CEDS Strategy include:

Crystal Ramm, Central Community College in Ord

Brittny Bolte, Agriculture Sector in Bassett

Jenna Bartja, Nebraska Tourism in Lincoln

Ed Brown, Mayor of City of Long Pine

Jerome Fagerland, Nebraska Department of Transportation in Atkinson

Becky Maggart, Nebraska Department of Labor in Norfolk

Randy Kissinger, Nebraska Department of Labor in Grand Island

Robin Stevens, Nebraska Department of Education in Gothenburg

Andrew Ambriz, Economic Development Director in Custer County

Darby Paxton, Economic Development Director in Holt County

Timeline of CEDS Strategy Committee Activities:

June 2020—CEDS Draft Timeline and Potential CEDS Committee Members Shared with Council of Officials and Board of Directors

September 2020—CEDS Strategy Committee Determines Process Timeline and Activities

September-November 2020—Surveys Distributed Throughout Region (Paper, On-line)

December-March 2021—Draft 2021 CEDS Compiled

May 2021—Draft 2021 CEDS Submitted to CEDS Strategy Committee for Review

May 2021—Draft 2021 CEDS Presented to CNEDD Board of Directors for Consideration

June 2021—Public Comment Period Begins for Finalized CEDS

August 2021—Finalized CEDS Submitted to Economic Development Administration (EDA)

# Chapter 7
# Partners and Resource Providers

***Local and Regional Partners—Specific Contacts Included***

City, Village and County Government Officials-clerks, mayors, chairpersons

Local Economic Developers -

-Atkinson Economic Development
-Burwell Area Economic Development
-Custer County Economic Development
-North Central Development Center
-Valley County Economic Development
-Bassett Area Economic Development
-Cherry County Economic Development
-Holt County Economic Development
-Sherman County Economic Development

Public and Non-Public Primary School Systems-Superintendents
Educational Service Units-Directors
Community Colleges-Campus Directors
Community/Local/State Foundations-Organization Representatives
Local Banks and Financial Institutions-Loan Officers
Local Investment Clubs-Presidents/Chairpersons
Nebraska Community Foundation Communities-NCF Representatives
Chambers of Commerce-Presidents
Local/Regional/State Media-Managers
Housing Authorities-Managers
County Emergency Managers-Managers
Community LB840 Sales Tax ED Programs-Local Economic Development Directors
Small Business Loan/Technical Assistance Programs-Organization Representatives
Conservation and Development Organizations-Representatives
Civic and Social Organizations, and Churches-Volunteers

# Chapter 7 (continued)
# Partners and Resource Providers

***State Partners—Program Representatives***

Nebraska Department of Economic Development-Dan Curran, Deputy Director
Nebraska Department of Education-Brian Halstead, Deputy Commissioner
Nebraska Department of Labor-Randy Kissinger, Regional Manager
Nebraska Department of Agriculture-Amelia Breinig, Deputy Director
Nebraska Department of Transportation-Moe Jamshidi, Deputy Director
Nebraska Broadband Initiative-Cullen Robbins, Director of Communications
Nebraska Emergency Management Agency-Bryan Tuma, Assistant Director
Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy-Dennis Burling, Deputy Director
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services-Tamara Gavin, Deputy Director
University of Nebraska-Don Macke, Community Vitality Initiative Team Leader
Nebraska Regional Officials Council-Tom Bliss, Vice-Chair
Nebraska Investment Finance Authority-Shannon Harner, Executive Director
Nebraska Housing Developers Association-Courtney Lyons, Executive Director
Nebraska Community Foundation-Carrie Malek-Madani, Director of Marketing and Communications
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission-Tim McCoy, Deputy Director
Nebraska State Tourism- Jenna Bartja, Adventure Travel Specialist
Nebraska League of Municipalities-Lynn Rex, Executive Director

***Federal Partners—Program Representatives***

U.S. Department of Commerce—Economic Development Administration-
Caroline Plante, Economic Development Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture-Jewel Bronaugh, Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Julie Shaffer, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of Environmental Protection-Alice Gilliand, Deputy Director

***National Organizations—Program Representatives***

National Association of Development Organization-Laurie Thompson, Deputy Executive Director

# Chapter 7
# Partners and Resource Providers

## ***Nebraska Statewide Plans***

Nebraska Department of Economic Development—Consolidated Plan 2015-2019
https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Nebraska_Consolidated-Plan_20-24__20200730_HUD.pdf

Nebraska Department of Labor: Innovation and Opportunity Act, Combined State Plan
July 1, 2020—June 30, 2024
https://dol.nebraska.gov/ReemploymentServices/Training/WIOA/ManualsPlansReports

Nebraska's Surface Transportation Program Book, 2021-2026
https://dot.nebraska.gov/projects/publications/program-book

Nebraska Department of Education Strategic Direction
https://nebraskaeducationvision.com/strategic-direction

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Operations Plan, October 2018
https://nema.nebraska.gov/preparedness/state-emergency-operations-plan

State Broadband Plan, 2019
https://broadband.nebraska.gov/documents/State%20Broadband%20Plan%2012-2014.pdf

Statewide Technology Plan, 2015-2016
http://govdocs.nebraska.gov/epubs/A2600/B006-201516.pdf

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Business Plan July 2019-June 2020
https://dhhs.ne.gov/Reports/Business%20Plan%20-%202019-2020.pdf#search=nebraska%202020%20state%20plan%20business

# Chapter 8
# The Area and its Economy

## Section 1—General Description of the Area/ Geography

The CNEDD region includes 14 counties and 61 communities. These municipalities represent sixteen and thirteen percent, respectively, of all counties and towns in the State of Nebraska. In square miles, however, CNEDD covers nearly a quarter of the total land and water area of Nebraska, but has less than 3 percent of the state's population. The largest community in the CNEDD region is O'Neill with approximately 3,615 residents, followed by Broken Bow with an estimated 3,517 residents, Valentine with approximately 2,760 residents, and Ord with approximately 2,310 residents. CNEDD's region is therefore a large, sparsely populated geographic area.

The fourteen counties in the CNEDD region are located in Central and Northern Nebraska. The three northern most counties border South Dakota. The District includes three of the four largest counties in Nebraska—Cherry County with 6,009 square miles, Custer County with 2,576 square miles, and Holt County with 2,417 square miles.

## Section 2— Population/ Demographics

The Central Nebraska region is excited to see a slowdown in population declines in the region. Total population change estimates for 2010 to 2018 are predicted to be a 2% decline over an 8-year period, versus a population decline of 8% that was experienced between 2000-2010, a 10-year period. Thirteen of the region's 14 counties are predicted to have zero to 12% decline in population, and one county (Cherry, 1%) experiencing an increase in population between 2010 and 2018.

**Table 1: Population Trends 2000 to 2018***

| | 2000 | 2010 | Change 2000-2010 | % Change over 10 years | 2018* | Change 2010-2018 | % Change Predicted over 8 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 583 | 478 | -105 | -18% | 480 | 2 | 0% |
| Boyd | 2,438 | 2,099 | -339 | -14% | 2,042 | -57 | -3% |
| Brown | 3,525 | 3,145 | -380 | -11% | 2,988 | -157 | -5% |
| Cherry | 6,148 | 5,713 | -435 | -7% | 5,790 | 77 | 1% |
| Custer | 11,793 | 10,939 | -854 | -7% | 10,830 | -109 | -1% |
| Garfield | 1,902 | 2,049 | 147 | 8% | 1,975 | -74 | -4% |
| Greeley | 2,714 | 2,538 | -176 | -6% | 2,410 | -128 | -5% |
| Holt | 11,551 | 10,435 | -1,116 | -10% | 10,245 | -190 | -2% |
| Keya Paha | 983 | 824 | -159 | -16% | 792 | -32 | -4% |
| Loup | 712 | 632 | -80 | -11% | 585 | -47 | -7% |
| Rock | 1,756 | 1,526 | -230 | -13% | 1,350 | -176 | -12% |
| Sherman | 3,318 | 3,152 | -166 | -5% | 3,042 | -110 | -3% |
| Valley | 4,647 | 4,260 | -387 | -8% | 4,224 | -36 | -1% |
| Wheeler | 886 | 818 | -68 | -8% | 822 | 4 | 0% |
| **Central Nebraska** | **52,956** | **48,608** | **-4,348** | **-8%** | **47,575** | **-1,033** | **-2%** |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010, American Community Survey 2014-2018

| Table 2: Population Increase Trends - Central Nebraska | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 20 to 24 Years | | 25 to 34 Years | | 60 to 64 Years | | 65 to 74 Years | |
| | 2010 | 2018* | 2010 | 2018* | 2010 | 2018* | 2010 | 2018* |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Blaine | 6 | 19 | 41 | 47 | 36 | 46 | 59 | 66 |
| Boyd | 73 | 67 | 157 | 165 | 158 | 161 | 256 | 313 |
| Brown | 109 | 107 | 282 | 281 | 209 | 270 | 359 | 375 |
| Cherry | 228 | 256 | 592 | 671 | 352 | 462 | 593 | 597 |
| Custer | 404 | 610 | 1,057 | 1,106 | 706 | 756 | 1,093 | 1,204 |
| Garfield | 56 | 120 | 158 | 201 | 128 | 210 | 279 | 274 |
| Greeley | 108 | 99 | 247 | 223 | 150 | 185 | 271 | 277 |
| Holt | 378 | 488 | 978 | 1,000 | 663 | 817 | 975 | 1,102 |
| Keya Paha | 12 | 51 | 69 | 57 | 69 | 39 | 115 | 96 |
| Loup | 29 | 34 | 43 | 68 | 54 | 64 | 81 | 104 |
| Rock | 48 | 103 | 160 | 112 | 112 | 133 | 154 | 179 |
| Sherman | 110 | 135 | 238 | 244 | 227 | 242 | 351 | 397 |
| Valley | 154 | 212 | 408 | 426 | 293 | 299 | 463 | 537 |
| Wheeler | 34 | 28 | 77 | 78 | 65 | 70 | 91 | 99 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **1,749** | **2,329** | **4,507** | **4,679** | **3,222** | **3,754** | **5,140** | **5,620** |
| Source: U.S. Census 2010 and American Community Survey 2014-2018 | | | | | | | | |

The region is estimated to have experienced population increases in four age clusters—ages 20-24, 25-34, 60-64, and 65-74 (see Table 2, above).

Young families desire to live in rural communities for the quality of life amenities that rural communities provide. Retiring seniors are moving to smaller communities for a slower pace of life than they experienced while in the urban workforce.

Tables 3 and 4 - The Median Age of the Central Nebraska region is 48.3 years. In the Under 20 Years of age category, 8 of the 14 counties experienced an increase in the Median Age category – Blaine, Boyd, Cherry, Custer, Greeley, Holt, Keya Paha and Valley. In the 65 Years and Older category, 6 counties experienced a decline in the 65 Years and Older category – Cherry, Custer, Holt, Keya Paha, Valley and Wheeler.

Table 4 shows the county Percent Over 65 Years of Age by Sex. For the region, the Percent Over 65 Years of Age is 25.1% with males 45.6% and 54.4%.

Loup County has the highest Median Age (56.9 years), and Holt and Custer Counties have the lowest Median Age (43.2 years).

Greeley County has the highest Percent Under 20 Years of Age (26.3%), and Loup County has the lowest Percent Under 20 Years of Age (15.3%).

Loup County has the highest Percent Over 65 Years of Age (28.9%), and Cherry County has the lowest Percent Over 65 Years of Age (21.1%).

**Table 3: Median Age, Percent Under 20, and Percent Over 65 Years of Age by County**

| County | Median Age | % Under 20 Years of Age | % 65 Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 46.6 | 22.7 | 25.6 |
| Boyd | 52.3 | 22.9 | 28.1 |
| Brown | 51.1 | 21.1 | 26.5 |
| Cherry | 43.6 | 23.6 | 21.1 |
| Custer | 43.2 | 25.0 | 21.6 |
| Garfield | 51.4 | 21.1 | 28.3 |
| Greeley | 45.7 | 26.3 | 25.1 |
| Holt | 43.2 | 26.1 | 21.3 |
| Keya Paha | 45.4 | 24.0 | 23.2 |
| Loup | 56.9 | 15.3 | 28.9 |
| Rock | 50.9 | 19.4 | 27.2 |
| Sherman | 49.9 | 22.2 | 26.2 |
| Valley | 45.5 | 24.3 | 24.4 |
| Wheeler | 49.8 | 18.5 | 23.6 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **48.3** | **22.3** | **25.1** |

**U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018**

U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018

**Table 4: Percent Over 65 Years of Age by Sex**

| County | % 65 Years and Over | % Male | % Female |
|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 25.6 | 47.2 | 52.8 |
| Boyd | 28.1 | 51.5 | 48.5 |
| Brown | 26.5 | 45.6 | 54.4 |
| Cherry | 21.1 | 44.9 | 55.1 |
| Custer | 21.6 | 45.4 | 54.6 |
| Garfield | 28.3 | 46.1 | 53.9 |
| Greeley | 25.1 | 47.1 | 52.9 |
| Holt | 21.3 | 45.2 | 54.8 |
| Keya Paha | 23.2 | 45.7 | 54.3 |
| Loup | 28.9 | 46.2 | 53.8 |
| Rock | 27.2 | 38.7 | 61.3 |
| Sherman | 26.2 | 45.4 | 54.6 |
| Valley | 24.4 | 46.8 | 53.2 |
| Wheeler | 23.6 | 42.8 | 57.2 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **25.1** | **45.6** | **54.4** |
| **Nebraska** | **15.0** | **44.6** | **55.4** |

| Table 5: Percent 18 Years and Over of Age by Sex | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **% 18 Years and Over** | **% Male** | **% Female** | **Median Age** |
| Blaine | 78.1 | 54.7 | 45.3 | 46.6 |
| Boyd | 77.7 | 50.2 | 49.8 | 52.3 |
| Brown | 80.0 | 48.1 | 51.9 | 51.1 |
| Cherry | 78.4 | 48.3 | 51.7 | 43.6 |
| Custer | 76.5 | 49.5 | 50.5 | 43.2 |
| Garfield | 79.5 | 49.0 | 51.0 | 51.4 |
| Greeley | 76.3 | 49.2 | 50.8 | 45.7 |
| Holt | 75.8 | 49.6 | 50.4 | 43.2 |
| Keya Paha | 77.5 | 52.0 | 48.0 | 45.4 |
| Loup | 85.0 | 49.5 | 50.5 | 56.9 |
| Rock | 83.3 | 49.2 | 50.8 | 50.9 |
| Sherman | 79.5 | 49.8 | 50.2 | 49.9 |
| Valley | 77.4 | 48.6 | 51.4 | 45.5 |
| Wheeler | 81.8 | 52.4 | 47.6 | 49.8 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **79.1** | **50.0** | **50.0** | **48.3** |
| **Nebraska** | **75.2** | **49.4** | **50.6** | **36.5** |
| **U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018** | | | | |

Table 5 shows the county Percent 18 Years and Over by Sex. For the region, the Percent 18 Years and Over is 79.1%, with males 50.0% and with females 50.0%.

Loup County has the highest Percent 18 Years and Over (85.0%), and Holt County has the lowest Percent 18 Years and Over (75.8%).

Loup County has the highest Median Age (56.9 years), and Holt and Custer Counties have the lowest Median Age (43.2 years). The lower the median age in the region, the younger the population. Central Nebraska wants a lower median age as it works to attract and keep young people.

As Table 6 demonstrates, Central Nebraska is predominantly White (non-Hispanic) - 94.6%, a 2.3% decrease from 96.9% in 2010. The Hispanic population comprises the second largest racial/ethnic group in Central Nebraska in 2018, while Asian and African Americans have both the lowest numbers (306 and 214 respectively), and the lowest percentage (less than 1% of the total population in the Central region.

| Table 6: Central Nebraska Population by Race/Ethnic Background by County | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **Hispanic** | | **White** | | **African American** | | **Native American** | | **Asian** | |
| | **2010** | **2018** | **2010** | **2018** | **2010** | **2018** | **2010** | **2018** | **2010** | **2018** |
| Blaine | 0 | 0 | 474 | 480 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Boyd | 33 | 15 | 2,035 | 1,987 | 1 | 13 | 12 | 42 | 17 | 31 |
| Brown | 29 | 42 | 3,088 | 2,970 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 53 | 7 | 19 |
| Cherry | 95 | 182 | 5,180 | 5,543 | 13 | 25 | 335 | 405 | 20 | 55 |
| Custer | 216 | 328 | 10,663 | 10,638 | 28 | 53 | 35 | 117 | 15 | 86 |
| Garfield | 15 | 39 | 2,033 | 1,955 | 3 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| Greeley | 51 | 50 | 2,478 | 2,364 | 16 | 21 | 5 | 15 | 2 | 10 |
| Holt | 305 | 464 | 10,132 | 10,048 | 16 | 26 | 29 | 80 | 18 | 67 |
| Keya Paha | 4 | 8 | 817 | 791 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Loup | 13 | 10 | 625 | 583 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Rock | 2 | 17 | 1,503 | 1,332 | 1 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 0 |
| Sherman | 31 | 66 | 3,122 | 3,002 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 20 | 9 | 19 |
| Valley | 79 | 132 | 4,152 | 4,182 | 6 | 39 | 5 | 27 | 13 | 10 |
| Wheeler | 6 | 5 | 894 | 812 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **879** | **1,358** | **47,196** | **46,687** | **90** | **214** | **449** | **775** | **115** | **306** |
| **U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018** | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 7, below, shows the Central Nebraska region consistently has a smaller percentage of people ages Birth to 9 years, and 15 to 44 years than the State, and consistently a larger percentage of people ages 55 and Older than the State. Ages 10 to 14 and 45 to 54 are the same compared to the State.

However, as presented in Table 2 on page 34, the Central Region is experiencing a trend in the 20-24 and 25-34 age clusters which will lead to an increase in youth in the region.

**Table 7: Population Estimates for 2018**

| | Under 5 | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-74 | 75-85 | 85+ | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 28 | 22 | 42 | 17 | 19 | 47 | 44 | 63 | 29 | 46 | 66 | 41 | 16 | 480 |
| Boyd | 103 | 114 | 142 | 108 | 67 | 165 | 190 | 212 | 205 | 161 | 313 | 162 | 100 | 2,042 |
| Brown | 137 | 212 | 167 | 113 | 107 | 281 | 308 | 370 | 231 | 270 | 375 | 258 | 159 | 2,988 |
| Cherry | 407 | 329 | 338 | 295 | 256 | 671 | 740 | 645 | 423 | 462 | 597 | 463 | 164 | 5,790 |
| Custer | 677 | 575 | 878 | 573 | 610 | 1,106 | 1,190 | 1,331 | 791 | 756 | 1,204 | 813 | 326 | 10,830 |
| Garfield | 95 | 109 | 107 | 107 | 120 | 201 | 141 | 193 | 134 | 210 | 274 | 209 | 75 | 1,975 |
| Greeley | 144 | 161 | 163 | 163 | 99 | 223 | 231 | 277 | 161 | 185 | 277 | 204 | 122 | 2,410 |
| Holt | 673 | 691 | 740 | 574 | 488 | 1,000 | 1,034 | 1,242 | 813 | 817 | 1,102 | 624 | 447 | 10,245 |
| Keya Paha | 50 | 27 | 48 | 65 | 51 | 57 | 89 | 97 | 85 | 39 | 96 | 65 | 23 | 792 |
| Loup | 30 | 23 | 16 | 21 | 34 | 68 | 30 | 59 | 71 | 64 | 104 | 52 | 13 | 585 |
| Rock | 73 | 55 | 67 | 66 | 103 | 112 | 121 | 147 | 106 | 133 | 179 | 99 | 89 | 1,350 |
| Sherman | 142 | 168 | 205 | 161 | 135 | 244 | 301 | 369 | 280 | 242 | 397 | 304 | 94 | 3,042 |
| Valley | 268 | 264 | 259 | 236 | 212 | 426 | 425 | 506 | 298 | 299 | 537 | 336 | 158 | 4,224 |
| Wheeler | 44 | 46 | 32 | 30 | 28 | 78 | 101 | 126 | 73 | 70 | 99 | 81 | 14 | 822 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **2,871** | **2,796** | **3,204** | **2,529** | **2,329** | **4,679** | **4,945** | **5,637** | **3,700** | **3,754** | **5,620** | **3,711** | **1,800** | **47,575** |
| **Percent** | **6%** | **6%** | **7%** | **5%** | **5%** | **10%** | **10%** | **12%** | **8%** | **8%** | **12%** | **8%** | **4%** | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Nebraska** | **131,812** | **132,290** | **131,959** | **129,350** | **136,886** | **254,377** | **232,659** | **229,048** | **125,370** | **114,929** | **159,053** | **85,697** | **41,330** | **1,904,760** |
| **Percent** | **7%** | **7%** | **7%** | **7%** | **7%** | **13%** | **12%** | **12%** | **7%** | **6%** | **8%** | **5%** | **2%** | |

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey) 2014-2018**

# Section 3—Economy and Employment

## 3.1 – Household Incomes

Table 8 shows that from 2014-2018 more households in Central Nebraska earned an income between $50,000 and 74,999 (22.54%) than any other household income category. The income category in which the least amount of household incomes fall are the Less than $10,000 category (4.74%) and $10,000-$14,999 category (5.44%). This is important because economic development and the standard of living in Central Nebraska depends in part on its citizens earning higher incomes.

**Table 8: Percentage of Household Incomes by County**

| | Less than $10,000 | $10,000-$14,999 | $15,000-$24,999 | $25,000-$34,999 | $35,000-$49,999 | $50,000-$74,999 | $75,000-$99,999 | $100,000-$149,999 | $150,000-$199,999 | $200,000+ | Median Income | Mean Income |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 1.80 | 6.90 | 8.70 | 10.10 | 18.80 | 30.30 | 9.20 | 6.40 | 5.00 | 2.80 | 50,870 | 61,209 |
| Boyd | 7.10 | 7.40 | 11.40 | 10.50 | 13.20 | 21.30 | 13.00 | 10.70 | 3.50 | 1.90 | 50,729 | 63,804 |
| Brown | 5.80 | 8.00 | 15.30 | 13.40 | 15.60 | 17.10 | 13.20 | 7.00 | 3.10 | 1.50 | 41,550 | 60,443 |
| Cherry | 4.10 | 3.60 | 11.50 | 13.00 | 15.90 | 27.80 | 12.50 | 7.50 | 1.50 | 2.70 | 53,684 | 62,766 |
| Custer | 5.70 | 4.5 | 10.10 | 12.60 | 17.20 | 20.80 | 13.90 | 8.10 | 3.10 | 3.90 | 49,891 | 74,937 |
| Garfield | 5.1 | 8.50 | 9.60 | 8.70 | 21.80 | 20.50 | 10.80 | 7.90 | 5.20 | 1.90 | 48,545 | 59,320 |
| Greeley | 7.40 | 4.50 | 10.50 | 10.50 | 19.10 | 21.40 | 9.30 | 11.30 | 4.30 | 1.60 | 47,128 | 60,121 |
| Holt | 4.10 | 5.70 | 10.40 | 9.50 | 12.60 | 24.00 | 15.90 | 12.50 | 3.20 | 2.20 | 57,468 | 69,863 |
| Keya Paha | 3.40 | 2.80 | 7.70 | 19.00 | 17.80 | 16.90 | 11.70 | 10.70 | 4.60 | 5.50 | 49,688 | 72,793 |
| Loup | 1.80 | 5.00 | 19.70 | 12.90 | 10.00 | 23.30 | 10.40 | 11.80 | 4.30 | 0.70 | 53,125 | 61,984 |
| Rock | 3.50 | 2.40 | 10.10 | 9.10 | 23.20 | 19.00 | 12.30 | 11.00 | 2.90 | 6.50 | 52,604 | 73,915 |
| Sherman | 5.20 | 4.10 | 12.10 | 11.70 | 15.80 | 23.40 | 14.90 | 9.10 | 2.70 | 1.00 | 51,172 | 61,276 |
| Valley | 4.30 | 8.20 | 12.80 | 7.90 | 13.90 | 20.30 | 15.00 | 11.50 | 1.80 | 4.40 | 55,170 | 67,776 |
| Wheeler | 7.00 | 4.50 | 5.90 | 11.50 | 19.00 | 29.40 | 9.00 | 10.60 | 0.60 | 2.50 | 52,083 | 59,446 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **4.74** | **5.44** | **11.13** | **11.46** | **16.71** | **22.54** | **12.22** | **9.72** | **3.27** | **2.79** | **50,979** | **64,975** |
| **Nebraska** | **5.40** | **4.20** | **9.20** | **9.80** | **13.80** | **19.30** | **13.70** | **15.10** | **5.10** | **4.50** | **59,116** | **77,278** |

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey), 2014-2018**

**Table 9: Percentage of Persons in Central Nebraska in Poverty by Age**

| County | % in Poverty Under Age 5 | % in Poverty Age 5-17 | % in Poverty Age 18-64 | % in Poverty Age 65+ | Average % Below Poverty |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 28.6 | 16.9 | 13.5 | 4.1 | 15.8 |
| Boyd | 4.1 | 6.2 | 9.0 | 16.8 | 9.0 |
| Brown | 34.8 | 17.5 | 16.8 | 7.2 | 19.1 |
| Cherry | 6.6 | 9.4 | 9.2 | 16.0 | 10.3 |
| Custer | 13.7 | 16.0 | 9.3 | 11.7 | 12.7 |
| Garfield | 10.5 | 7.9 | 5.6 | 10.4 | 8.6 |
| Greeley | 21.5 | 9.9 | 7.5 | 10.5 | 12.4 |
| Holt | 8.9 | 7.0 | 8.7 | 8.1 | 8.2 |
| Keya Paha | 18.0 | 7.0 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 8.7 |
| Loup | 0.0 | 8.6 | 8.8 | 8.3 | 6.4 |
| Rock | 15.1 | 3.9 | 8.3 | 5.4 | 8.2 |
| Sherman | 14.8 | 14.2 | 9.2 | 12.9 | 12.8 |
| Valley | 9.7 | 5.7 | 12.5 | 9.4 | 9.3 |
| Wheeler | 22.7 | 12.5 | 6.1 | 11.3 | 13.2 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **14.9** | **10.2** | **9.2** | **9.8** | **11.0** |

Table 9 shows a summary of persons in poverty in Central Nebraska. Of the Percentage of Persons in Central Nebraska in Poverty by Age, 14.9% were Under Age 5 and 9.8% were age 65+. The largest percentage of residents living in poverty are the Under Age 5 age group (14.9%) and the smallest percentage are the Age 18-64 group (9.2%).

Brown County had the highest Average Percentage Below Poverty (19.1%). Loup County had the lowest Average Percentage Below Poverty (6.4%).

U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018

# 3.2 – Agriculture

Agriculture is the primary industry in the Central Nebraska region. When agriculture is doing well, so does the entire region. When agriculture experiences a decline, the entire region feels the negative impact.

Table 10 shows the 2017 Census of Agriculture figures for the Central Nebraska region. Agricultural strengths of the area are livestock production (primarily cattle and hogs), and crop production (primarily corn and soybeans). The Central Nebraska region covers 22% of the entire State with 24% of the region's acres devoted to agricultural farms.

**Table 10: 2017 Census of Agriculture - By CNEDD Counties**

| | Blaine | Boyd | Brown | Cherry | Custer | Garfield | Greeley | Holt |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Acres/County | 454,840 | 345,558 | 781,668 | 3,814,491 | 1,648,380 | 364,371 | 364,679 | 1,543,935 |
| Acres in Farms | 366,649 | 322,956 | 614,967 | 3,562,961 | 1,505,139 | 342,498 | 339,287 | 1,393,478 |
| Acres in Cropland | 28,818 | 135,575 | 108,102 | 383,698 | 481,876 | 66,383 | 156,471 | 607,954 |
| Market Value of Ag Products Sold/per $1,000 | $32,055 | $104,269 | $290,746 | $230,927 | $781,155 | $54,720 | $193,340 | $453,539 |
| Cattle/Calves Inventory | 43,246 | 62,778 | 136,854 | 284,602 | 329,990 | 51,974 | 69,586 | 220,729 |
| Hogs/Pigs Inventory | (D) | 1,070 | (D) | 100 | (D) | 33 | (D) | (D) |
| Corn For Grain - Bushels | 351,057 | 6,028,137 | 5,238,142 | 4,680,660 | 39,201,814 | 2,260,276 | 13,186,152 | 36,863,693 |
| Soybeans For Beans - Bushels | 18,000 | 1,631,687 | 482,748 | 222,004 | 3,977,498 | 170,137 | 2,171,376 | 5,926,625 |

Census of Agriculture - 2017

**2017 Census of Agriculture - By CNEDD Counties**

| | Keya Paha | Loup | Rock | Sherman | Valley | Wheeler | Total | % of State | Nebraska |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Acres/County | 494,769 | 360,653 | 645,308 | 362,131 | 363,592 | 368,117 | 11,912,492 | 0.24 | 49,163,591 |
| Acres in Farms | 422,909 | 279,800 | 583,993 | 310,819 | 350,834 | 357,279 | 10,753,569 | 0.24 | 44,986,821 |
| Acres in Cropland | 95,619 | 24,049 | 121,374 | 158,959 | 172,629 | 87,779 | 2,629,286 | 0.12 | 22,242,599 |
| Market Value of Ag Products Sold/per $1,000 | $52,332 | $30,804 | $108,100 | $139,348 | $223,891 | $283,148 | $2,978,374 | 0.14 | $21,983,430 |
| Cattle/Calves Inventory | 54,091 | 28,924 | 79,783 | 65,196 | 103,629 | 131,572 | 1,662,954 | 0.25 | 6,759,945 |
| Hogs/Pigs Inventory | (D) | (D) | (D) | 623 | | (D) | 2,880 | 0.00 | |
| Corn For Grain - Bushels | 3,068,853 | 694,162 | 3,769,698 | 14,825,273 | 14,670,117 | 4,180,305 | 149,018,339 | 0.09 | 1,694,898,568 |
| Soybeans For Beans - Bushels | 249,335 | 40,953 | 748,558 | 2,554,581 | 2,475,374 | 576,519 | 21,245,395 | 0.07 | 316,275,827 |

Census of Agriculture - 2017

Marking the third consecutive year of value decline from the record high of 2014, the all-land category across Nebraska for the third year ending February 1, 2017 averaged about 9 percent lower than the prior year.

The Central Nebraska Economic Development District covers two separate reporting areas for agricultural land values (see Figure 4, and Tables 10 a&b below). Land values in the North region have increased by 4% since 2014, and the Central region has experienced smaller increases in land values during this same time period of 3%.

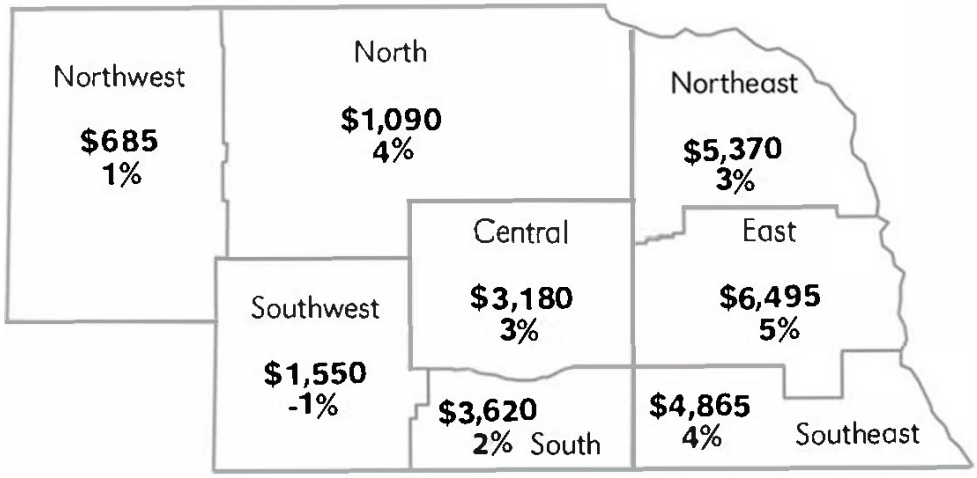



Figure 4: 2017 Nebraska Farm Real Estate Report

**Table 10a:**

**North Region - Agriculture Statistics** Counties of Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Garfield, Holt, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Wheeler

| Land Type | $/Acre | % Change |
|---|---|---|
| All Land Average | 1,090 | 4 |
| Center Pivot Irrigated Cropland | 3,950 | 1 |
| Gravity Irrigated | 3,645 | 2 |
| Dryland Cropland (Irrigated Potential) | 1,975 | 3 |
| Dryland Cropland (No Irrigation Potential) | 1,515 | 1 |
| Grazing Land (Tillable) | 1,105 | 6 |
| Grazing Land (Nontillable) | 660 | 6 |
| Hayland | 1,170 | 3 |

**Table 10b:**

**Central Region - Agriculture Statistics** Counties of Custer, Greeley, Sherman, Valley

| Land Type | $/Acre | % Change |
|---|---|---|
| All Land Average | 3,180 | 3 |
| Center Pivot Irrigated Cropland | 6,675 | 4 |
| Gravity Irrigated | 5,805 | -1 |
| Dryland Cropland (Irrigated Potential) | 3,210 | 5 |
| Dryland Cropland (No Irrigation Potential) | 2,845 | 3 |
| Grazing Land (Tillable) | 1,875 | 7 |
| Grazing Land (Nontillable) | 1,460 | 4 |
| Hayland | 1,925 | 2 |

**2020 Nebraska Farm Real Estate Report**

# 3.3 – Retail and Labor Industry

Retail sales (Table 12) in Central Nebraska were led by Holt County with $111.3 million as of 2017. Custer County was second with $98.9 million in retail sales. Holt and Custer Counties are the number one and two growth centers in the region. Blaine County had the least amount of retail sales at $624,310.

In terms of retail sales per capita, Table 12 shows that Brown County was the highest at $12,854. Blaine County had the lowest retail sales per capita at only $1,319. Having such a low retail sales per capita figure could indicate the need for small businesses. Increasing the number of small businesses could increase the counties *pull factors* (the relative market share of retailing captured by a county over time) and the county's *trade capture* (the ability to bring more dollars from outside into the county.) Brown and Cherry Counties are the number one and two in the region with the highest pull factors.

**Table 12: Central Nebraska Retail Sales/Retail Sales Per Capita by County in 2015**

| County | Retail Sales ($) | Retail Sales Per Capita ($) | Pull Factor |
|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 624,310 | 1,319 | 0.11 |
| Boyd | 11,533,168 | 5,749 | 0.47 |
| Brown | 37,867,454 | 12,854 | 1.05 |
| Cherry | 73,322,291 | 12,538 | 1.03 |
| Custer | 98,875,022 | 9,150 | 0.75 |
| Garfield | 20,473,515 | 10,095 | 0.83 |
| Greeley | 10,349,314 | 4,261 | 0.35 |
| Holt | 111,324,119 | 10,795 | 0.88 |
| Keya Paha | 2,655,059 | 3,302 | 0.27 |
| Loup | 1,208,771 | 2,066 | 0.17 |
| Rock | 7,501,792 | 5,432 | 0.45 |
| Sherman | 10,414,575 | 3,369 | 0.28 |
| Valley | 40,426,614 | 9,732 | 0.80 |
| Wheeler | 3,852,827 | 5,137 | 0.42 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **430,428,831** | **95,799** | **0.56** |

Source: Retail Sales Patterns and Trends Across Nebraska Counties and Localities—UNL Extension January 2017

| Table 13: Central Nebraska Labor Force Summary by County | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **Labor Force** | **Employment** | **Unemployment** | **Unemployment Rate%** |
| Blaine | 254 | 246 | 8 | 3.1 |
| Boyd | 1,048 | 1,030 | 18 | 1.7 |
| Brown | 1,356 | 1,328 | 28 | 2.1 |
| Cherry | 3,251 | 3,201 | 50 | 1.5 |
| Custer | 6,194 | 6,097 | 97 | 1.6 |
| Garfield | 1,115 | 1,103 | 12 | 1.1 |
| Greeley | 1,220 | 1,201 | 19 | 1.6 |
| Holt | 5,725 | 5,635 | 90 | 1.6 |
| Keya Paha | 603 | 599 | 4 | 0.7 |
| Loup | 398 | 391 | 7 | 1.8 |
| Rock | 865 | 855 | 10 | 1.2 |
| Sherman | 1,635 | 1,601 | 34 | 2.1 |
| Valley | 2,079 | 2,045 | 34 | 1.6 |
| Wheeler | 574 | 567 | 7 | 1.2 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **26,317** | **25,899** | **418** | **1.6** |
| **Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, December 2020** | | | | |

Table 13 reports the Central Nebraska labor force summary. In the Central region, the total rate of unemployment was 1.6 or 418 persons as of 2020. Central Nebraska's entire labor force is comprised of 26,317 individuals, with 25,899 of them employed.

Custer (97) and Holt (90) Counties have the highest number of unemployed persons, but are still the same, 1.6% and 1.6% respectively, compared to the 1.6 unemployment range for the region. Keya Paha (0.7%), Garfield (1.1%), and Rock and Wheeler (each 1.2%) Counties have the lowest rates of unemployment in Central Nebraska. One could consider this a positive sign for economic development in Central Nebraska that only 5 of 14 counties showed unemployment rates higher than the region rate.

The Nebraska Department of Labor—4th Quarter 2019 data on Employment by Industry, Table 14a this page and 14b next page, reports the top industries in the Central Nebraska region to be: Health Care and Social Assistance (3,066), Retail Trade (2,109), Agriculture (1,858) and Public Administration (1,592).

**Table 14a: Employment by Industry for Central Nebraska by County**

| | Blaine | Boyd | Brown | Cherry | Custer | Garfield | Greeley | Holt |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total, All Industries | 124 | 596 | 1,238 | 2,290 | 4,505 | 806 | 615 | 4,436 |
| Accommodation and Food Services | | 30 | 57 | 281 | 381 | 71 | 13 | 324 |
| Administrative and Waste Services | 0 | | | 12 | 38 | 0 | | 38 |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting | 32 | 52 | 107 | 220 | 488 | 36 | 68 | 469 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 0 | 0 | | 68 | 9 | | | 28 |
| Construction | | 15 | 67 | 135 | 215 | 26 | 28 | 160 |
| Educational Services | 33 | 82 | 131 | 200 | | 74 | 129 | |
| Finance and Insurance | | 33 | 45 | 48 | 189 | 20 | 34 | 166 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | | 127 | 183 | 347 | 655 | 135 | 70 | 914 |
| Information | 0 | | | | 56 | | 5 | 58 |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 0 | 0 | | | | 0 | 0 | |
| Manufacturing | 0 | 16 | 62 | 59 | 698 | 115 | 24 | 164 |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 26 |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Administration | 0 | | 35 | 54 | 62 | 40 | 11 | 103 |
| Professional and Technical Services | 0 | | 22 | 85 | 123 | 20 | | 74 |
| Public Administration | 43 | 78 | 126 | 213 | 304 | 84 | 76 | 282 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 0 | 1 | | 23 | 16 | | 0 | 14 |
| Retail Trade | | 44 | 187 | 310 | 514 | 89 | 53 | 541 |
| Transportation and Warehousing | | 46 | 36 | 61 | 97 | 27 | | 254 |
| Utilities | 0 | 0 | | | | 0 | 0 | |
| Wholesale Trade | | 40 | 96 | 132 | 187 | 39 | 83 | 376 |

**NOTE: Not all numbers available due to confidentiality of data.**

**Nebraska Department of Labor - 2019**

| Table 14b: Employment by Industry for Central Nebraska by County | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Keya Paha | Loup | Rock | Sherman | Valley | Wheeler | Total Region |
| Total, All Industries | 136 | 121 | 460 | 776 | 1,824 | 302 | 18,229 |
| Accommodation and Food Services | | | | 63 | 64 | 11 | 1,295 |
| Administrative and Waste Services | | 0 | 0 | 8 | | | 96 |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting | 32 | | 24 | 47 | 145 | 138 | 1,858 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 0 | 0 | | | | 0 | 105 |
| Construction | | 0 | | 33 | 97 | 5 | 781 |
| Educational Services | 33 | 43 | 60 | 113 | | 43 | 941 |
| Finance and Insurance | 0 | | 16 | 31 | 63 | | 645 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | | | 123 | 140 | 372 | 0 | 3,066 |
| Information | | 0 | 0 | | | | 119 |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Manufacturing | | 0 | | | 106 | | 1,244 |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 26 |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Administration | | | 8 | 10 | 65 | 0 | 388 |
| Professional and Technical Services | | 0 | | 12 | 68 | | 404 |
| Public Administration | 29 | 23 | 59 | 89 | 160 | 26 | 1,592 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 54 |
| Retail Trade | | | 38 | 89 | 244 | | 2,109 |
| Transportation and Warehousing | | | 17 | 26 | 64 | | 628 |
| Utilities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| Wholesale Trade | | 0 | 68 | 73 | 122 | | 1,216 |

**NOTE: Not all numbers available due to confidentiality of data**

**Nebraska Department of Labor - 2019**

Table 15 shows the highest Average Weekly Wage by Industry in Central Nebraska is Transportation and Warehousing at $936. The second highest Average Weekly Wage for Central Nebraska is Finance and Insurance at $833. Management of Companies and Enterprises has the lowest Average Weekly Wage in Central Nebraska at $0. *Note: Some Confidential Data Not Included. Overall, the Nebraska Department of Labor's Quarter 4 2019 data shows an overall increase of 906 jobs in All Industries between 2009 and 2019.

**Table 15: Industry Trends - Central Nebraska**

| Industry Title | Establishments | *Average Employment | *Average Employment Per Establishment | *Total Wage | *Average Weekly Wage | Change in Employment 2009-2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total, All Industries | 2,433 | 18,229 | 7.49 | $655,198,176 | $656 | 906 |
| Accommodation and Food Service | 135 | 1,295 | 9.59 | $15,943,727 | $217 | 39 |
| Administrative and Waste Services | 46 | 96 | 2.09 | $2,755,803 | $239 | (67) |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting | 288 | 1,858 | 6.45 | $77,732,848 | $758 | 365 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 28 | 105 | 3.75 | $3,020,052 | $161 | 24 |
| Construction | 209 | 781 | 3.74 | $30,780,268 | $616 | 211 |
| Educational Services | 71 | 941 | 13.25 | $36,844,880 | $742 | (435) |
| Finance and Insurance | 129 | 645 | 5.00 | $31,710,202 | $833 | 48 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 295 | 3,066 | 10.39 | $116,680,208 | $597 | 146 |
| Information | 42 | 119 | 2.83 | $3,453,987 | $309 | (41) |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 7 | 0 | 0.00 | $0 | $0 | 0 |
| Manufacturing | 73 | 1,244 | 17.04 | $59,792,356 | $575 | 736 |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | 9 | 26 | 2.89 | $975,050 | $65 | 11 |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Admin | 131 | 388 | 2.96 | $11,321,004 | $442 | (63) |
| Professional and Technical Services | 124 | 404 | 3.26 | $15,876,136 | $563 | 86 |
| Public Administration | 182 | 1,592 | 8.75 | $51,942,275 | $600 | 52 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 36 | 54 | 1.50 | $1,861,071 | $220 | (14) |
| Retail Trade | 274 | 2,109 | 7.70 | $48,873,308 | $429 | (188) |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 193 | 628 | 3.25 | $30,568,732 | $936 | 43 |
| Utilities | 22 | 0 | 0.00 | $50,152 | $93 | (85) |
| Wholesale Trade | 138 | 1,216 | 8.81 | $49,038,703 | $681 | (67) |
| *Some Confidential Data Not Included | | | | | | |

Nebraska Department of Labor - 2019

Table 16a on this page and 16b on the next page shows comparisons of industries in Central Nebraska in comparison to the State. If an industry Quotient is equal to the State, the result will be a score of 1.00.

**Table 16a: Location Quotient - Comparison of Central Nebraska region to Nebraska Statewide**

| | Blaine | Boyd | Brown | Cherry | Custer | Garfield | Greeley | Holt |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total, All Industries | | | | | | | | |
| Accommodation and Food Services | | 0.60 | 0.79 | 1.60 | 1.04 | 0.94 | 0.20 | 0.97 |
| Administrative and Waste Services | | | 0.15 | 0.15 | 0.23 | | | 0.21 |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting | 16.61 | 3.24 | 6.00 | 6.40 | 7.26 | 1.61 | 6.50 | 7.51 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | | | | 1.48 | 0.18 | | | 0.44 |
| Construction | | 0.33 | 0.83 | 0.98 | 0.84 | 0.62 | 0.75 | 0.56 |
| Educational Services | 1.30 | 0.77 | 0.57 | 0.96 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 2.19 | 0.45 |
| Finance and Insurance | | 1.09 | 0.52 | 0.36 | 0.68 | 0.21 | 0.91 | 0.67 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | | 1.41 | 1.03 | 1.08 | 1.11 | 1.07 | 1.04 | 1.41 |
| Information | | | | 0.29 | 0.69 | | 0.21 | 0.71 |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | | | | | | | | |
| Manufacturing | | 0.35 | 0.35 | 0.26 | 0.81 | 1.10 | 0.45 | 0.42 |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | | | | | | | | 4.57 |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Administration | | | 1.24 | 0.87 | 0.55 | 1.88 | 0.65 | 1.07 |
| Professional and Technical Services | | | 0.32 | 0.71 | 0.51 | 0.50 | | 0.30 |
| Public Administration | 5.79 | 2.46 | 1.86 | 1.62 | 1.32 | 1.94 | 2.52 | 1.15 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | | 0.08 | | 1.06 | 0.38 | | | 0.25 |
| Retail Trade | | 0.78 | 1.45 | 1.39 | 1.07 | 1.13 | 0.76 | 1.18 |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 0.53 | 1.61 | 0.61 | 0.56 | 0.44 | 0.61 | 0.36 | 1.02 |
| Utilities | | | | | | | | 0.46 |
| Wholesale Trade | | 1.55 | 1.79 | 1.31 | 1.05 | 2.37 | 2.82 | 1.88 |

**Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, 2019**

In Table 16b, continued on this page, The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting Industry category figures prove that the Central Nebraska region has 8.5 times more jobs as compared to the State. Categories with an Average under 1.00 indicate which industries Central Nebraska lags behind with respect to the State. It is important to note that not all data is available for all categories due to confidentiality of information when there are only one or two businesses that exist in the respective county.

**Table 16b: Location Quotient - Comparison of Central Nebraska region to Nebraska Statewide**

| | Keya Paha | Loup | Rock | Sherman | Valley | Wheeler | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total, All Industries | | | | | | | |
| Accommodation and Food Services | | | 0.28 | 0.85 | 0.57 | 0.23 | 0.58 |
| Administrative and Waste Services | | | | 0.20 | | | 0.07 |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting | 16.24 | | 4.96 | 3.31 | 4.38 | 34.71 | 8.48 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | | | | | | | 0.15 |
| Construction | | | 0.19 | 0.62 | 0.97 | 0.15 | 0.49 |
| Educational Services | 1.34 | 2.18 | 0.71 | 1.54 | 0.54 | 0.75 | 1.02 |
| Finance and Insurance | | | 0.30 | 0.76 | 0.67 | | 0.44 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | | | 0.94 | 1.30 | 1.48 | | 0.85 |
| Information | | | | | 0.41 | | 0.17 |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | | | | | | | 0.00 |
| Manufacturing | | | | | 0.52 | | 0.30 |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | | | | | | | 0.33 |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Administration | | | 0.95 | 0.47 | 1.45 | | 0.65 |
| Professional and Technical Services | | | | 0.27 | 0.78 | | 0.24 |
| Public Administration | 4.19 | 3.93 | 2.52 | 1.98 | 1.64 | 1.64 | 2.47 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | | | | | 0.40 | | 0.16 |
| Retail Trade | | | 0.84 | 1.05 | 1.18 | | 0.77 |
| Transportation and Warehousing | | | 0.39 | 1.31 | 0.71 | 0.27 | 0.60 |
| Utilities | | | | | 1.48 | | 0.14 |
| Wholesale Trade | | | 3.36 | 2.60 | 1.32 | 2.02 | 1.58 |

Nebraska Department of Labor, 2019

| Table 17: Place of Employment for CNEDD Region | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Total Jobs in Region** | **% of Total Jobs** |
| Blaine | (x)* | (x)* |
| Boyd | 439 | 2.6% |
| Brown | 948 | 5.7% |
| Cherry | 1,797 | 10.8% |
| Custer | 3,178 | 19.0% |
| Garfield | 484 | 2.9% |
| Greeley | 381 | 2.3% |
| Holt | 1,652 | 9.9% |
| Keya Paha | 178 | 1.1% |
| Loup | 135 | 0.8% |
| Rock | 443 | 2.7% |
| Sherman | 568 | 3.4% |
| Valley | 1,257 | 7.5% |
| Wheeler | 180 | 1.1% |
| **CNEDD Region** | **11,640** | **69.8%** |
| **Outside Region** | **5,048** | **30.2%** |

Table 17 reports the employment location for Central Nebraska's employed persons over 16 years of age and shows an overwhelming majority working within their own County with 69.8% of workers. This number far exceeds those employees working outside their County of Residence, with only 30.2% of workers. The higher percentages of employees working outside their county are in Loup County (0.8%), Keya Paha and Wheeler Counties (both 1.1%).

Due to this area having a minimal public transportation network, driving alone is clearly the dominant means of transportation for persons working in Central Nebraska, at 76.8% (Table 18). So, it is understandable that the majority of employees choose traveling to work via their own automobiles. Table 18 also shows that an average of 15.6% of employees Worked at Home, versus the State at 4.4%, pointing to the strong agricultural industry in the region where farmers and ranchers reportedly work from home.

Source for Table 17: Department of Labor, 2018

*Note: According to the Department of Labor, the (x) means there are too few jobs in this location to be shown in this data.

Source for Table 18: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2018

| Table 18: Percentage of Means of Transportation to Work by County | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **Car/Truck/Van** | **Public Transportation** | **Walked** | **Other Means** | **Worked at Home** |
| Blaine | 70.6% | 0.4% | 7.8% | 1.6% | 19.6% |
| Boyd | 70.8% | 0.0% | 7.4% | 1.0% | 21.0% |
| Brown | 84.2% | 0.0% | 7.8% | 1.3% | 6.7% |
| Cherry | 74.9% | 0.6% | 7.3% | 1.1% | 16.1% |
| Custer | 84.8% | 0.0% | 4.9% | 2.0% | 8.2% |
| Garfield | 79.8% | 0.0% | 9.3% | 1.0% | 9.8% |
| Greeley | 73.7% | 0.9% | 6.0% | 0.5% | 19.0% |
| Holt | 81.9% | 0.4% | 3.9% | 1.0% | 12.8% |
| Keya Paha | 63.4% | 0.0% | 12.1% | 2.2% | 22.4% |
| Loup | 61.5% | 0.0% | 4.4% | 0.7% | 33.5% |
| Rock | 78.3% | 0.0% | 7.0% | 0.5% | 14.1% |
| Sherman | 90.0% | 0.0% | 4.1% | 1.6% | 4.3% |
| Valley | 87.3% | 0.0% | 4.5% | 0.2% | 7.9% |
| Wheeler | 73.6% | 0.0% | 3.8% | 0.2% | 22.4% |
| **Central Nebraska** | **76.8%** | **0.2%** | **6.5%** | **1.1%** | **15.6%** |
| **Nebraska** | **90.9%** | **0.7%** | **2.7%** | **1.3%** | **4.4%** |

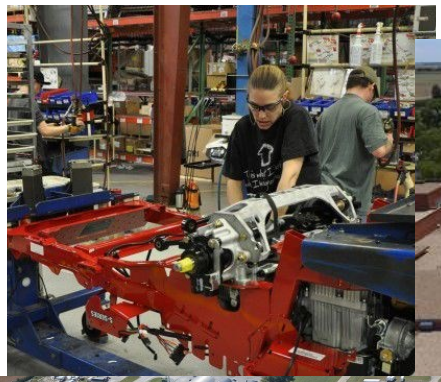
# 3.4 – Manufacturing

The Central Nebraska region boasts approximately 61 small to large manufacturing businesses. The largest manufacturer in the region is located in Broken Bow, and employs approximately 400 people. The smallest manufacturers report staff numbers of 1-5 employees.

The primary industry that these manufacturers serve is agriculture, however, Broken Bow's largest manufacturer serves the medical industry.

Below is a listing of the number of manufacturing businesses located in the Central Nebraska region, per the 2012 Harris Directory of Nebraska businesses.

- Atkinson—7 manufacturers
- Bartlett—1 manufacturer
- Broken Bow—10 manufacturers
- Burwell—4 manufacturers
- Butte—1 manufacturer
- Callaway—2 manufacturers
- Chambers—1 manufacturer
- Emmet—1 manufacturer
- Ewing—3 manufacturers
- Long Pine—1 manufacturer
- Loup City—2 manufacturers
- North Loup—2 manufacturers
- O'Neill—10 manufacturers
- Ord—2 manufacturers
- Page—1 manufacturer
- Sargent—1 manufacturer
- Spencer—4 manufacturers
- Valentine—7 manufacturers
- Kilgore—1 manufacturer



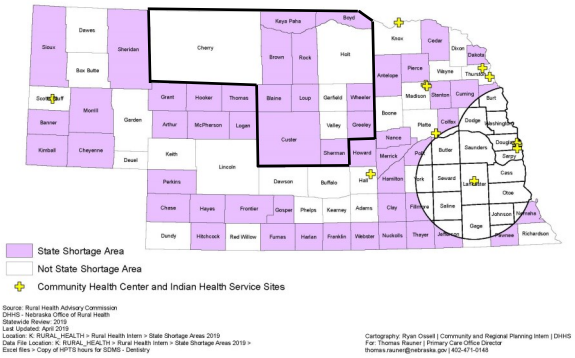
# 3.5 – Medical Services

The provision of medical care for a community and its visitors is a key component to a community's retention and attraction of its citizens.

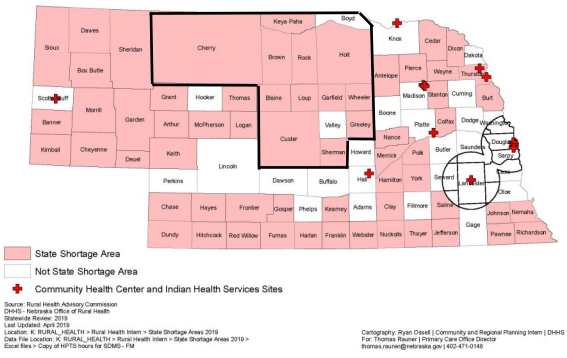
Central Nebraska is blessed to deliver medical services through nine hospital systems, and numerous medical clinics. The following hospitals are located in Central Nebraska:

- Avera St. Anthony Hospital—O'Neill (Holt County)
- Brown County Hospital—Ainsworth (Brown County)
- Callaway District Hosital—Callaway (Custer County)
- Cherry County Hospital—Valentine (Cherry County)
- Jennie M. Melham Memorial Medical Center—Broken Bow (Custer County)
- Niobrara Valley Hospital—Lynch (Boyd County)
- Rock County Hospital—Bassett (Rock County)
- Valley County Health Systems—Ord (Valley County)
- West Holt Medical Services—Atkinson (Holt County)

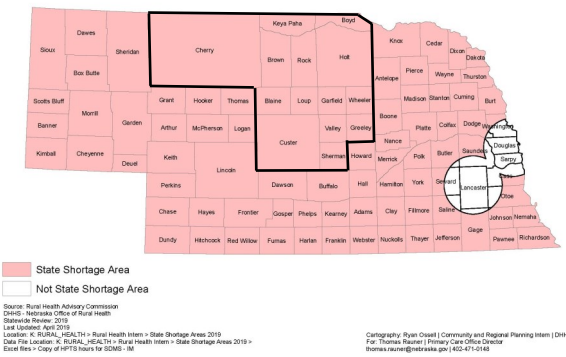
**State-Designated Shortage Areas**
**General Dentistry**



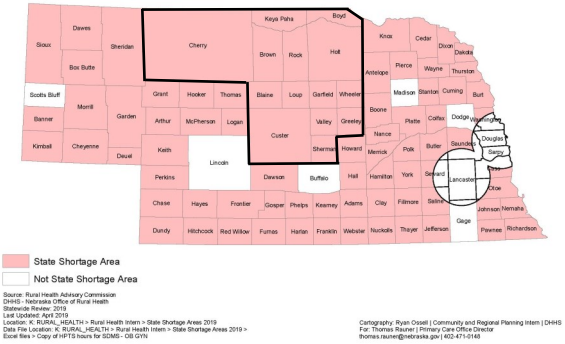

**State-Designated Shortage Areas**
**Family Practice**




**State-Designated Shortage Areas**
**Psychiatry and Mental Health**




**State-Designated Shortage Areas**
**OB/GYN**



# 3.6 – Broadband

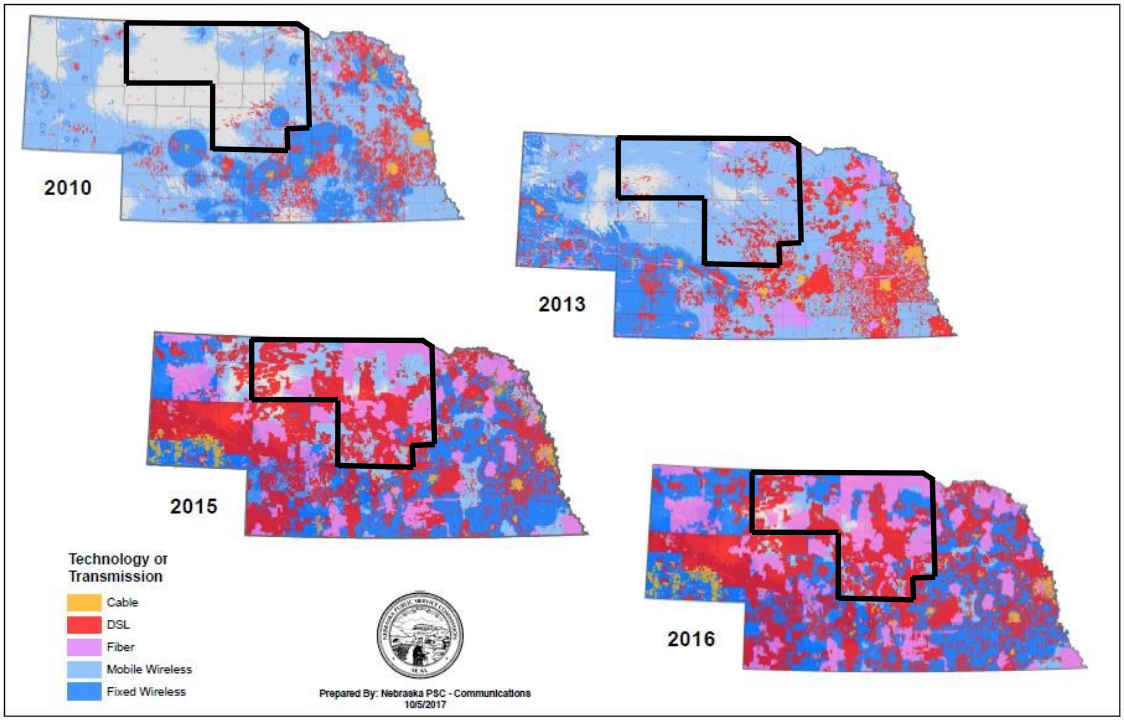



Figure 5. Nebraska Broadband Initiative—Historical Coverage Maps

Once considered a luxury, broadband and telecommunications are now a necessary infrastructure that impacts every facet of our lives. From business and workforce to financial management, from medicine to education, from social communication to entertainment and fitness—Broadband is integral to Nebraska's capacity to improve its economic future and quality of life.

Nebraska's Statewide Broadband Vision Plan Goals are to achieve the following as of 2020, and are still the most current available information at this time:

- Increase household adoption of broadband—1) Over 90% of households statewide will subscribe to broadband by 2020, and 2) 85% of households in rural Nebraska will subscribe to broadband by 2020.
- Increase broadband availability—1) Broadband service of 25 Mbps down will be available to 90% of households by 2020, and 2) Broadband service of 1 gbps down available to 25% of households by 2020.

At the present time, broadband coverage is reported by census tract, which makes one perceive that rural Nebraska has tremendous coverage. However, in rural regions the census tract oftentimes covers an entire county and not a specific community.

There are few communities in the CNEDD 14-county region that offer broadband speeds of 25Mbps down. The most common speeds are 10-20 Mbps, and these speeds are only available to residents who live within a 1-4 mile radius of a community. Most often, citizens who reside outside of the community boundaries experience much slower broadband speeds—anywhere from less than 1 Mbps to less than 10 Mbps.

This lack of broadband availability and speed is a barrier to economic growth for rural businesses, and especially for students who live in the country and must make alternative plans to complete their studies required to be done via computer.

# 3.7 – Renewable Energy

***ETHANOL*—**The State of Nebraska is the second largest ethanol producing state in the country. Just one Nebraska ethanol plant in 1985 has grown to 25 ethanol plants today. These ethanol plants represent more than $5 billion in capital investment in the state and provide direct full-time employment to 1,500 Nebraskans.

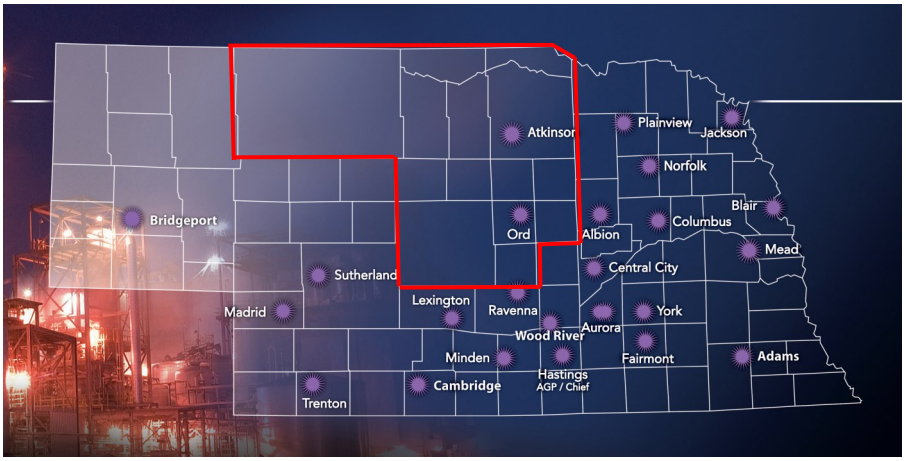



**Figure 6. Nebraska Ethanol Board Map**

Nebraska's ethanol production serves the western United States, and also produces distillers grains, a high protein feed ingredient used for cattle.

The Central Nebraska region is home to two ethanol plants—Atkinson (Holt County) and Ord (Valley County). Combined, they grind 37 million bushels of corn per year, and employ 88 Nebraskans.

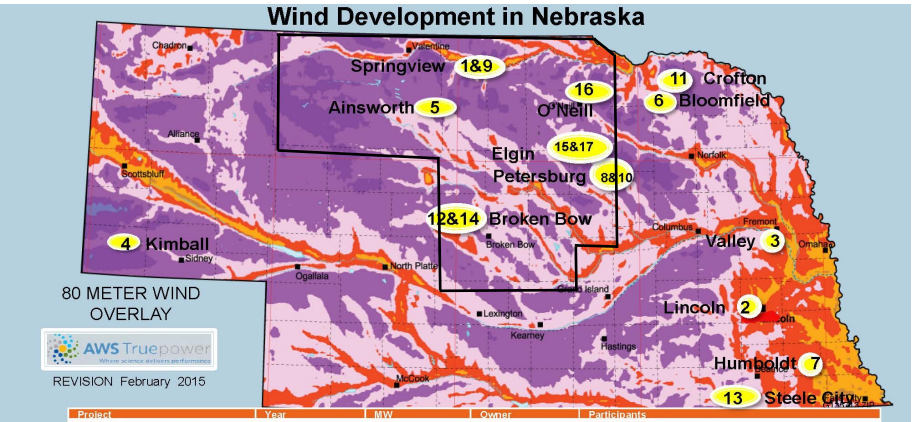
**Green Plains Atkinson, LLC | Atkinson**

P.O. Box 391
Atkinson, NE 68713
Gerod Camp | 402-925-5570
Opened: June 2008
Mill Process: Dry
Feedstock: Corn
Grind: 16 MBY
Permanent Employees: 44

**Green Plains Renewable Energy | Ord**

48167 Val-E Road
Ord, NE 68862
Les Glinsmann | 308-496-4800
Opened: May 2007
Mill Process: Dry
Feedstock: Corn
Grind: 21 MBY
Permanent Employees: 44

***WIND ENERGY—***




| Project | Year | MW | Owner | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Springview Wind Energy | 1998 | Retired | NPPD | NPPD, LES MEAN, GI, KBR, Auburn |
| 2) Salt Valley | 1998 and 1999 | 1.32 | LES | LES |
| 3) Valley | 2001 | .66 | OPPD | OPPD, Valmont |
| 4) Kimball | 2002 | 10.5 | MEAN | MEAN |
| 5) Ainsworth Wind Energy | 2005 | 59.4 | NPPD | NPPD, OPPD, MEAN, GI, JEA* *Financial Participant for RECs |
| 6) Elkhorn Ridge Wind, LLC | 2009 | 80 | NRG Energy | NPPD, OPPD, MEAN, LES, GI |
| 7) Flat Water Wind Farm, LLC | 2010 | 60 | Gestamp Wind N.A. | OPPD |
| 8) Laredo Ridge Wind Farm | 2011 | 80 | NRG Energy | NPPD, LES, MEAN, GI |
| 9) Springview II/Bluestem, LLC | 2011 | 3 | Bluestem, LLC | NPPD, OPPD**, LES**, GI**, **will receive direct drive knowledge and RECs |
| 10) TPW Petersburg, LLC | 2011 | 40.5 | Gestamp Wind N.A. | OPPD |
| 11) Crofton Bluffs Wind Farm | 2012 | 42 | NRG Energy | NPPD, OPPD, LES, MEAN |
| 12) Broken Bow Wind, LLC | 2012 | 80 | NRG Energy | NPPD, OPPD, LES, GI |
| 13) Steele Flats Wind | 2013 | 74.8 | NextEra | NPPD |
| 14) Broken Bow II | 2014 | 75 | Sempra | NPPD, OPPD |
| 15) Prairie Breeze | 2014 | 200 | Invenergy | OPPD |
| 16) Grande Prairie | 2016 | 400 | Geronimo | OPPD |
| 17) Prairie Breeze II | 2015 | 73.6 | Invenergy | LES |
| | | ~1280.6 Total MW | | |

Figure 7. Nebraska Energy Office

Nebraska has joined the nation in production of wind energy, with the majority of the wind farms located in North and Central Nebraska.

Statewide Economic Impacts—A technical report was published by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in June 2009, titled "Economic Development Benefits from Wind Power in Nebraska: A Report for the Nebraska Energy Office." The technical report stated: Assuming development and operations over a 40-year period, the average employment impact from building 7,800 MW in Nebraska is 1,600 to 2,925 full-time jobs annually from construction-related activities between 2011 and 2030. An additional annual economic contribution of $250 million to $442 million is estimated from operating 7,800 MW of wind capacity.

Annual land-lease payments to Nebraska landowners during operations of 7,800 MW are estimated to range from $27 million to $32 million, and annual property tax payments by wind farms are expected to be on the order of $29 million. Economic development impacts from constructing 1,000 MW of wind power in Nebraska are estimated to be approximately 2,300 to 4,200 construction-period jobs.

Total lifetime economic output to Nebraska is estimated to be $7.8 billion to $14.1 billion when assuming a 20-year operations life for all wind facilities. Operations period jobs are long-term jobs that last for the life of the wind facility; typically this is 20 years, with a total construction related economic output of $260 million to $514 million. Operating 1,000 MW of wind power is estimated to support 264 to 515 full-time jobs over the operations-period (20 years) and contributes $30 million to $57 million annually in economic activity. Land-lease payments are estimated to be $3.5 million to $4.1 million annually, and local property tax revenues are estimated to be $3.7 million annually.

# Section 4—Housing

Shown in Table 19, between 2010 and 2019, the total number of housing units in Central Nebraska increased slightly from 26,687 to 26,972 (285 total housing units) - an increase of 1.1%. Simultaneously, the number of occupied housing units has declined from 21,287 in 2010 to an estimated 21,093 in 2019—a decrease of 194 or 1%. In 2010, 73.3% of all housing units were occupied, as compared to an estimated 78.2% occupied in 2019.

With such an overall steady number of housing units, we look to the changes in percentage of occupancy in each of the counties.

Five (5) counties experienced an increase in occupancy—Blaine, Custer, Holt, Loup, and Wheeler. Nine (9) counties experienced a decrease in occupancy—Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Garfield, Greeley, Keya Paha, Rock, Sherman and Valley.

The increase in the number of housing units in this region is a reassurance to political officials and others wishing to attract business to Central Nebraska. In order to attract new businesses and industries to the region, it is necessary that adequate infrastructure, including adequate office buildings and warehouses, be in place before businesses are able to move to or operate in Central Nebraska.

**Table 19: Total and Occupied Housing Units by County for Central Nebraska: 2010-2019**

| | 2010 | | | 2019 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County | All Housing Units | Occupied Units | Occupied Units (%) | All Housing Units | Occupied Units | Occupied Units (%) |
| Blaine | 326 | 196 | 60.1 | 322 | 213 | 66.1 |
| Boyd | 1,390 | 942 | 67.8 | 1,395 | 904 | 64.8 |
| Brown | 1,865 | 1,449 | 77.7 | 1,893 | 1,387 | 73.3 |
| Cherry | 3,157 | 2,530 | 80.1 | 3,252 | 2,537 | 78.0 |
| Custer | 5,579 | 4,714 | 84.5 | 5,655 | 4,862 | 86.0 |
| Garfield | 1,178 | 935 | 79.4 | 1,230 | 884 | 71.9 |
| Greeley | 1,300 | 1,069 | 82.2 | 1,302 | 1,019 | 78.3 |
| Holt | 5,215 | 4,447 | 85.3 | 5,252 | 4,487 | 85.4 |
| Keya Paha | 549 | 381 | 69.4 | 505 | 304 | 60.2 |
| Loup | 426 | 275 | 64.6 | 447 | 294 | 65.8 |
| Rock | 912 | 685 | 75.1 | 903 | 623 | 69.0 |
| Sherman | 1,941 | 1,392 | 71.7 | 1,952 | 1,368 | 70.1 |
| Valley | 2,273 | 1,922 | 84.6 | 2,303 | 1,865 | 81.0 |
| Wheeler | 576 | 350 | 60.8 | 561 | 346 | 61.7 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **26,687** | **21,287** | **73.3** | **26,972** | **21,093** | **78.2** |

Adequate housing for employees of a new business is also important. If a larger company were to set up a new plant/processing facility in the region, it has the potential to attract or bring with it hundreds of new employees to a particular area.

However, without a sufficient number of homes to house new employees, companies may resist bringing their business to Central Nebraska—this is clearly an inhibitor of economic development in Central Nebraska.

U.S. Census 2010 and American Community Survey 2015-2019

U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015-2019

| Table 20: Central Nebraska Housing by Year Structure Built | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **1939 and Earlier** | **1940-1949** | **1950-1959** | **1960-1969** | **1970-1979** | **1980-1989** | **1990-1999** | **2000-2009** | **2010-2013** | **2014 or Later** | **Total** |
| Blaine | 123 | 36 | 26 | 24 | 42 | 17 | 18 | 25 | 2 | 9 | 322 |
| Boyd | 534 | 100 | 120 | 217 | 92 | 74 | 166 | 83 | 6 | 3 | 1,395 |
| Brown | 578 | 85 | 194 | 233 | 413 | 141 | 143 | 94 | 12 | 0 | 1,893 |
| Cherry | 935 | 150 | 441 | 407 | 390 | 319 | 302 | 260 | 18 | 30 | 3,252 |
| Custer | 2,337 | 498 | 488 | 535 | 676 | 375 | 345 | 297 | 45 | 59 | 5,655 |
| Garfield | 480 | 43 | 148 | 70 | 176 | 114 | 66 | 90 | 13 | 30 | 1,230 |
| Greeley | 565 | 69 | 92 | 146 | 144 | 63 | 96 | 85 | 12 | 30 | 1,302 |
| Holt | 1,225 | 374 | 528 | 518 | 1,123 | 509 | 494 | 323 | 100 | 58 | 5,252 |
| Keya Paha | 213 | 26 | 57 | 38 | 40 | 40 | 38 | 48 | 0 | 5 | 505 |
| Loup | 82 | 25 | 39 | 19 | 62 | 45 | 43 | 83 | 39 | 10 | 447 |
| Rock | 180 | 103 | 153 | 90 | 157 | 94 | 57 | 56 | 10 | 3 | 903 |
| Sherman | 803 | 150 | 134 | 171 | 230 | 133 | 136 | 159 | 14 | 22 | 1,952 |
| Valley | 949 | 162 | 208 | 204 | 347 | 154 | 84 | 107 | 73 | 15 | 2,303 |
| Wheeler | 144 | 73 | 33 | 74 | 53 | 16 | 78 | 76 | 3 | 11 | 561 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **9,148** | **1,894** | **2,661** | **2,746** | **3,945** | **2,094** | **2,066** | **1,786** | **347** | **285** | **26,972** |
| **% of Region** | **34%** | **7%** | **10%** | **10%** | **15%** | **8%** | **8%** | **7%** | **1%** | **1%** | |
| **Nebraska** | **172,435** | **39,671** | **80,014** | **92,694** | **134,117** | **78,492** | **97,642** | **96,315** | **24,368** | **21,728** | **837,476** |
| **% of State** | **21%** | **5%** | **10%** | **11%** | **16%** | **9%** | **12%** | **12%** | **3%** | **3%** | |

According to Table 20, 76% of Central Nebraska homes were built before 1979. As revealed in this table, there is a significant decrease in the number of newer homes built after 1979. Between 1970 and 1979 (over a 10-year period), there were 3,945 homes (15%) built. Since that time, between 1980 and 1999 (a 20-year period), 4,160 houses were built (8% from 1980-1989, and 8% from 1990-1999).

The majority of homes, 92% in Central Nebraska, are at least 25 years of age, indicating that a strong and widespread housing rehabilitation program is necessary if the existing housing stock is to be maintained.

Since a significant portion of houses in Central Nebraska have been built before 1939, it will become increasingly necessary to construct replacement housing. The decade of the 1970's experienced a large building growth (15%), but the rate of construction of new housing units started to decline after that in the 1980's. The decline of the 2010's was the worst in the region's history.

| Table 21: Housing Occupancy Statistics | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County | Total Housing Units | Owner Occupied Housing | Renter Occupied Housing | Vacant Housing Units | Homeowner Vacancy Rate | Rental Vacancy Rate |
| Blaine | 322 | 195 | 18 | 109 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Boyd | 1,395 | 807 | 97 | 491 | 0.8 | 6.7 |
| Brown | 1,893 | 1,139 | 248 | 506 | 0.9 | 6.1 |
| Cherry | 3,252 | 1,931 | 606 | 715 | 0.8 | 0.2 |
| Custer | 5,655 | 3,667 | 1,195 | 793 | 2.5 | 6.2 |
| Garfield | 1,230 | 725 | 159 | 346 | 1.3 | 2.5 |
| Greeley | 1,302 | 862 | 157 | 283 | 1.3 | 12.1 |
| Holt | 5,252 | 3,376 | 1,111 | 765 | 1.5 | 8.3 |
| Keya Paha | 505 | 248 | 56 | 201 | 3.1 | 4.5 |
| Loup | 447 | 282 | 12 | 153 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Rock | 903 | 539 | 84 | 280 | 0.0 | 10.0 |
| Sherman | 1,952 | 1,147 | 221 | 584 | 2.0 | 7.5 |
| Valley | 2,303 | 1,480 | 385 | 438 | 2.0 | 17.0 |
| Wheeler | 561 | 290 | 56 | 215 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **26,972** | **16,688** | **4,405** | **5,879** | **1.4** | **5.8** |
| **State** | **837,476** | **516,560** | **242,616** | **78,300** | **1.0** | **5.6** |
| **U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015-2019** | | | | | | |

Table 21, provides a breakdown of the number of total housing units in each county, the number of owner occupied housing, the number of rental occupied housing, and the number of vacant housing units.

Overall, Central Nebraska's Homeowner Vacancy Rate is 1.4, as compared to the State at 1.0. Central Nebraska's Rental Vacancy Rate is 5.8, which is more in line with the State at 5.6.

| Table 22: Housing - Owner-Occupied Values | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Less than $50,000 | $50,000-$99,999 | $100,000-$149,999 | $150,000-$199,999 | $200,000-$299,999 | $300,000-$499,999 | $500,000-$999,999 | $1 Million+ | Total Housing Units | Median $ |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Blaine | 50 | 51 | 28 | 8 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 157 | $ 75,700 |
| Boyd | 252 | 209 | 127 | 42 | 32 | 44 | 22 | 9 | 737 | $ 73,000 |
| Brown | 344 | 336 | 208 | 50 | 80 | 18 | 10 | 0 | 1,046 | $ 79,700 |
| Cherry | 211 | 465 | 275 | 247 | 216 | 92 | 16 | 32 | 1,554 | $ 116,000 |
| Custer | 638 | 952 | 488 | 428 | 476 | 276 | 74 | 50 | 3,382 | $ 108,100 |
| Garfield | 76 | 257 | 108 | 79 | 67 | 82 | 19 | 0 | 688 | $ 105,100 |
| Greeley | 290 | 231 | 121 | 57 | 74 | 33 | 17 | 2 | 825 | $ 72,700 |
| Holt | 470 | 933 | 566 | 495 | 402 | 287 | 47 | 38 | 3,238 | $ 114,100 |
| Keya Paha | 80 | 48 | 23 | 23 | 18 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 221 | $ 78,100 |
| Loup | 58 | 43 | 23 | 15 | 26 | 29 | 26 | 5 | 225 | $ 112,500 |
| Rock | 106 | 158 | 71 | 66 | 65 | 26 | 5 | 0 | 497 | $ 96,200 |
| Sherman | 280 | 301 | 114 | 165 | 82 | 48 | 57 | 9 | 1,056 | $ 88,700 |
| Valley | 275 | 347 | 251 | 190 | 182 | 85 | 55 | 0 | 1,385 | $ 110,400 |
| Wheeler | 60 | 58 | 33 | 28 | 39 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 232 | $ 97,800 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **3,190** | **4,389** | **2,436** | **1,893** | **1,779** | **1,051** | **360** | **145** | **15,243** | **$ 94,864** |
| **% Central** | **0.209** | **0.288** | **0.160** | **0.124** | **0.117** | **0.069** | **0.024** | **0.010** | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Nebraska** | **41,514** | **84,474** | **111,382** | **95,984** | **95,242** | **55,133** | **14,509** | **3,441** | **501,679** | **$155,800** |
| **% State** | **0.083** | **0.168** | **0.222** | **0.191** | **0.190** | **0.110** | **0.029** | **0.007** | | |
| **U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015-2019** | | | | | | | | | | |

As Table 22 shows, the Median Value of a home in Central Nebraska in 2015-2019 was $94,864. The three counties with the highest median housing unit values are Cherry ($116,000), Holt ($114,100), and Loup ($112,500). The three counties with the lowest median housing unit values are Greeley ($72,700), Boyd ($73,000) and Blaine ($75,700).

Overall, Central Nebraska's average Median Value of Owner Occupied homes is $94,864, which is 60.9% lower than the State of Nebraska's average Median Value of $155,800.

Table 23 data documents Gross Rents reported for each county and how the rents compare to the region and the State. Central Nebraska's average monthly rents (87.5%) are $999 or less, compared to the State's average monthly rents (69.1%) at $999 or less.

The Central Nebraska region's housing stock is primarily older, and when coupled with lower household incomes, the result is monthly rents that are traditionally lower than the rest of the State.

Garfield County reports the lowest Median Rent Dollars paid per month ($443), and Keya Paha County reports the highest Median Rent Dollars paid per month ($725).

Two counties, Custer and Holt, report the largest number of Total Rental Units Paying Rent (1,195 and 1,111, respectively). Custer and Holt are two of the largest growth centers in the region. Loup County reports the least number of Total Rental Units Paying Rent (12).

It is important to explain the existence of No Rent Paid housing in Central Nebraska. Many agricultural workers do not own or pay rent for their housing. In these situations housing is provided by the employer as a condition of the job to be located close by enabling the employee to respond to the needs of the operation as required.

**Table 23: Housing - Renter-Occupied - Gross Rents Reported**

| | Less than $500 | $500-$999 | $1,000-$1,499 | $1,500-$1,999 | $2,000-$2,499 | $2,500-$2,999 | $3,000+ | Total Paying Rent | Median$ | No Rent Paid |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 8 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 567 | 38 |
| Boyd | 47 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 97 | 508 | 70 |
| Brown | 100 | 144 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 248 | 529 | 93 |
| Cherry | 137 | 324 | 104 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 606 | 712 | 377 |
| Custer | 239 | 768 | 133 | 35 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 1,195 | 666 | 285 |
| Garfield | 89 | 68 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 159 | 443 | 37 |
| Greeley | 72 | 73 | 3 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 157 | 536 | 37 |
| Holt | 261 | 743 | 58 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 1,111 | 642 | 138 |
| Keya Paha | 4 | 45 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 725 | 27 |
| Loup | 4 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 533 | 57 |
| Rock | 45 | 32 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 84 | 488 | 42 |
| Sherman | 77 | 131 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 221 | 534 | 91 |
| Valley | 154 | 168 | 10 | 19 | 20 | 0 | 14 | 385 | 579 | 95 |
| Wheeler | 27 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 508 | 58 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **1,264** | **2,590** | **322** | **86** | **52** | **12** | **79** | **4,405** | **$7,970** | **1,445** |
| **% Central Average** | **28.7%** | **58.8%** | **7.3%** | **2.0%** | **1.2%** | **0.3%** | **1.8%** | | **$ 569** | |
| **Nebraska** | **30,688** | **137,093** | **57,014** | **12,628** | **2,429** | **752** | **2,012** | **242,616** | **$ 833** | **14,881** |
| **% State** | **12.6%** | **56.5%** | **23.5%** | **5.2%** | **1.0%** | **0.3%** | **0.8%** | | | |

**U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015-2019**

# Section 5—Education

Table 24 shows that Central Nebraska has a relatively high percentage of its population that has attained a high school diploma.

The Nebraska average is 91.4%, while Central Nebraska is higher with 94.9% of its population that has attained a high school diploma. In terms of post-secondary/higher education, the region's figures are lower with 22.1% of Central Nebraskans having attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher, versus 31.9% for the State of Nebraska.

**Table 24: Educational Attainment by County**

| County | % of Population-High School Graduate or Higher | 25 Years & Older-Bachelor's Degree of Higher (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Blaine | 95.0 | 23.0 |
| Boyd | 96.0 | 16.7 |
| Brown | 95.1 | 20.7 |
| Cherry | 95.0 | 22.9 |
| Custer | 93.4 | 24.0 |
| Garfield | 96.3 | 25.5 |
| Greeley | 93.9 | 16.3 |
| Holt | 93.5 | 22.4 |
| Keya Paha | 95.1 | 25.0 |
| Loup | 98.1 | 25.3 |
| Rock | 96.7 | 23.2 |
| Sherman | 93.0 | 20.2 |
| Valley | 92.3 | 24.2 |
| Wheeler | 95.6 | 19.4 |
| **Central Nebraska** | **94.9** | **22.1** |
| **Nebraska** | **91.4** | **31.9** |

U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015-2019

Loup County has the highest education attained with 98.1% of the population with a High School degree and Garfield County has the highest education attained with 25.5% with a Bachelor's degree or higher. Valley (92.3%) has the lowest number of High School degrees and Greeley (16.3%) has the lowest number of Bachelor's degree or higher.

The relatively low numbers for the district in the "Bachelor's Degree or Higher" category in Table 24 indicate that Central Nebraskans have not attained post-secondary degrees at the same level as the State of Nebraska as a whole.

While the table above does not include educational attainment figures for vocational and/or 2-year technical colleges, it is fair to say that Central Nebraska is still suffering from a shortage of more skilled and more educated members of its labor force.

Table 25, below, is a listing of all primary schools located in the Central Nebraska region. The two counties with the highest reported student populations are Holt (1,916) and Custer (1,869). The county with the smallest reported student population is Loup (74).

While nearly all counties are reported to provide some Pre-K educational services, there are opportunities for expansion of Pre-K throughout the region. One county, Blaine, had no reported Pre-K students for the 2020-2021 school year.

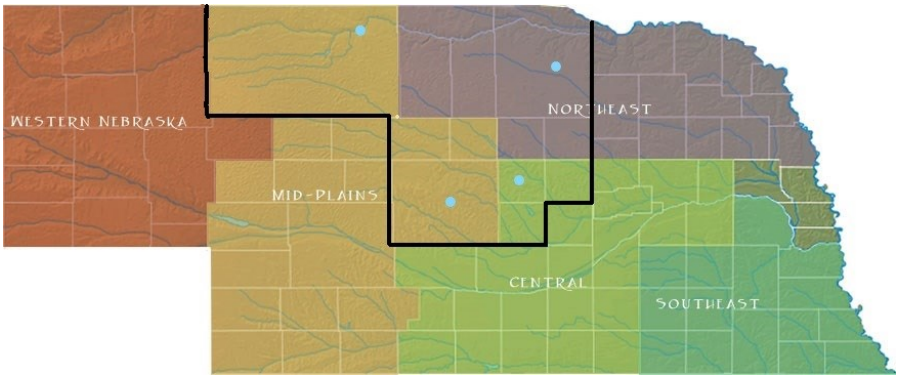
**Table 25: Central Nebraska Schools - 2020-2021 School Year**

| County | Name | Approved/ Accredited | Class | # of Students | # of Pre-K Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blaine | Sandhills Public Schools | Accredited | III | 90 | 0 |
| Boyd | Boyd County Schools | Accredited | III | 364 | 36 |
| Brown | Ainsworth Community Schools | Accredited | III | 415 | 29 |
| Cherry | Cody-Kilgore Public Schools | Accredited | II | 163 | 9 |
| | Valentine Community Schools | Accredited | III | 632 | 8 |
| | Zion Lutheran Elementary School | Approved | Non-Public | 34 | 11 |
| Custer | Anselmo-Merna Public Schools | Accredited | III | 255 | 13 |
| | Ansley Public Schools | Accredited | III | 193 | 15 |
| | Arnold Public Schools | Accredited | III | 177 | 3 |
| | Broken Bow Public Schools | Accredited | III | 892 | 106 |
| | Callaway Public Schools | Accredited | III | 186 | 23 |
| | Sargent Public Schools | Accredited | III | 166 | 18 |
| Garfield | Burwell Public Schools | Accredited | III | 318 | 32 |
| Greeley | Central Valley Public Schools | Accredited | III | 298 | 34 |
| | Spalding Academy | Approved | Non-Public | 76 | 8 |
| Holt | Chambers Public Schools | Accredited | II | 135 | 2 |
| | Ewing Public Schools | Accredited | II | 135 | 14 |
| | O'Neill Public Schools | Accredited | III | 780 | 46 |
| | St. Joseph's Elementary School | Accredited | Non-Public | 56 | 13 |
| | St. Mary's Schools | Accredited | Non-Public | 192 | 0 |
| | Stuart Public Schools | Accredited | III | 178 | 18 |
| | West Holt Public Schools | Accredited | III | 440 | 44 |
| Keya Paha | Keya Paha County Schools | Accredited | II | 97 | 1 |
| Loup | Loup County Public Schools | Accredited | II | 74 | 9 |
| Rock | Rock County Public Schools | Accredited | III | 249 | 29 |
| Sherman | Loup City Public Schools | Accredited | III | 328 | 53 |
| | Litchfield Public Schools | Accredited | II | 92 | 24 |
| Valley | Arcadia Public Schools | Accredited | II | 124 | 12 |
| | Ord Public Schools | Accredited | III | 571 | 38 |
| | St. Mary's Elementary School | Approved | Non-Public | 31 | 0 |
| Wheeler | Wheeler Central Schools | Accredited | III | 106 | 21 |
| **Central Nebraska** | | | | **7,847** | **669** |

**Nebraska Department of Education - 2021**

# Secondary Schools

There are four community college systems that serve the Central Nebraska region through extended campus locations in four counties—Custer, Cherry, Holt and Valley, plus one college located outside the region.




**Mid-Plains Community College—Broken Bow Extended Campus (Custer County)** provides:

- A gateway to a degree
- On-site transferable courses
- On-line and distance learning
- Adult short courses
- Training in general and specialized computer skills
- CAN, MA, LPN, CPR, EMT and health care training
- Proctoring of MPCC on-line & DL courses
- Customized business training

**Mid-Plains Community College—Valentine Extended Campus (eastern edge of Cherry County)** provides:

- Programs Available
  - Licensed Practical Nurse
  - Business Administration
  - Information Technology
  - Associate of Arts
  - Associate of Science
- High School Dual Credit
- Test Proctoring
- Community Education Courses (non-credit)
- Health Care Training (CAN, LPN, CPR, EMT)
- ACCUPLACER Testing
- Adult Education & GED

**Northeast Community College—O'Neill Extended Campus (Holt County)** provides:

- Associates of Arts
  - Academic Transfer
  - Accounting/Business Admin
  - Agriculture
  - Behavioral Science
  - Criminal Justice
  - Early Childhood Education
  - Nursing (Pre-Professional)
  - Social Science
- Business & Industry Training
  - Business and Professional
  - Environmental
  - Safety, Security
- Diplomas/Certificates/Courses
  - Office Management
  - Business—Entrepreneurship
  - Basic Nurse Aide (C.N.A.)
  - Medication Aide
  - CPR, First Aid
  - Welding
  - Truck Driving
  - Leadership Development
  - Technology & Computer Applications
  - Irrigation
  - Health & Wellness

**Central Community College—Ord Extended Campus (Valley County)** - Offers more than 30 career and technical education programs that can lead to a great career after just two years of full-time study, or students can complete two years of study and transfer to a four-year college or university to complete a bachelor's degree.

**Western Nebraska Community College—Alliance Extended Campus (serves western Cherry County) -** Offers 50 career and technical education programs that can lead to great careers, as well as their CollegeNOW program for high school students who want to get a jump start on their college education.

# Section 6—Transportation

The Central Nebraska region relies mostly on road and rail transportation to move people, supplies and deliver good and services.

The major interstate highway in Nebraska is Interstate 80, which runs east to west bisecting the state north and south. It passes through or by the state's largest metropolitan areas, Omaha and Lincoln, but not through any CNEDD counties. The major roads in the Central Nebraska region are U.S. Highway 20, which runs east to west across the northern counties, and U.S. Highways 281 and 83, which run north and south through Nebraska. Nebraska Highway 183 runs north and south through the central part of the region, and Highway 2 runs diagonally southeast to northwest.

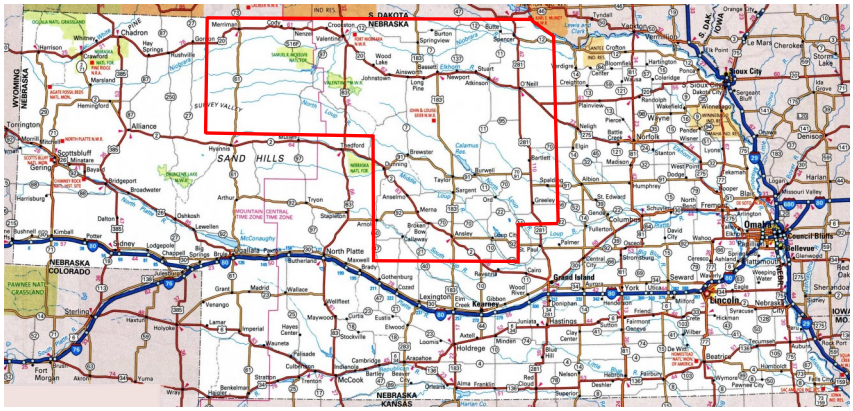



Figure 8. Nebraska Highway Map

The railroad system that runs through Central Nebraska's 14-county region is not as extensive as the remainder of the State. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad runs from southwest to northeast through three of the CNEDD region's counties—Blaine, Custer and Sherman Counties. The Nebraska Central Railroad Company enters the region in southwest Greeley County and runs northeast and ends in Valley County. The Nebraska Northeastern Railroad Company enters Holt County from the east and ends in the City of O'Neill.

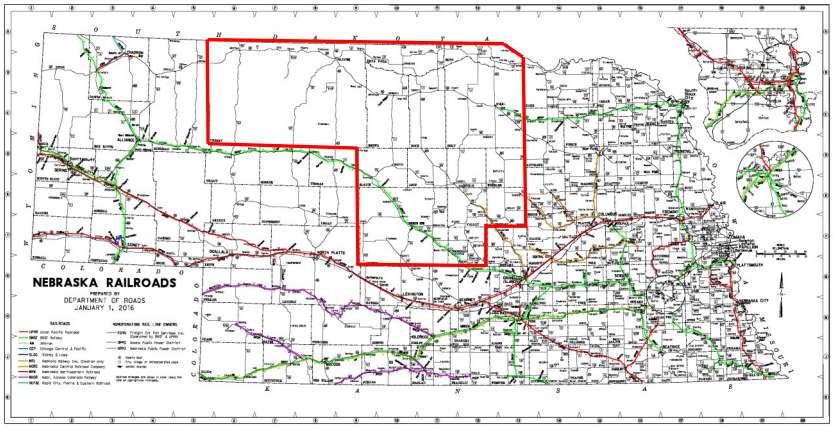



Figure 9. Nebraska Railroad Map

# Section 7—Tourism/Recreation

Central Nebraska is home to some of the most beautiful scenery, with tourism an important component to the region's economy and quality of life. Tourists can get away from big city lights and witness a sky with millions of stars not seen in the city, or a gorgeous sunset uninhibited by buildings and structures. Central Nebraska residents live close to these and other opportunities for recreation as well.

**State Parks and State Recreation Areas (SRA)—**There is one State Park and eight State Recreation Areas located in this Central Nebraska region, as follows:

- Smith Falls State Park, Valentine
- Calamus SRA, Burwell*
- Conestoga SRA, Merriman*
- Merritt Reservoir SRA, Valentine
- Sherman Reservoir SRA, Loup City*
- Keller Park SRA, Ainsworth
- Long Lake SRA, Bassett
- Long Pine SRA, Long Pine
- Victoria Springs SRA, Anselmo

*SRA's with snowmobile trails.

**Public Hunting and Fishing—**There are thousands of acres of land and water for hunting and fishing enthusiasts in Central Nebraska. Much of this land is public land, but opportunities also abound on privately–owned property as well.

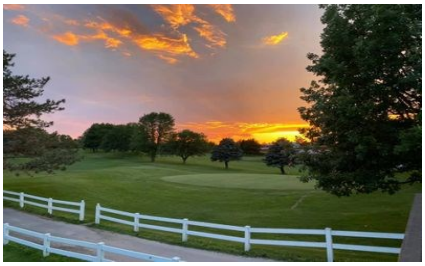
**Trails—**Beginning in Norfolk and spanning 321 miles west to Chadron, the Cowboy Trail will be the largest Rails-to-Trails project in the United States once complete. 192 miles of the trail between Norfolk and Valentine is improved limestone surface and the 3rd longest trail in the nation, with 208 miles running through the Central Nebraska region. CNEDD is exploring opportunities to extend the Cowboy Trail further west of Kilgore.

**Golf—**Central Nebraska offers 14 public golf courses and 2 public/private courses for visiting and local golfers.

Courses are located in:

- **Ainsworth**
- **Arnold**
- **Atkinson**
- **Bassett**
- **Broken Bow**
- **Burwell**
- **Butte**
- **Callaway**
- **Ewing**
- **Loup City**
- **O'Neill**
- **Ord**
- **Sargent**
- **Springview**
- **Valentine (2 courses)**

Prairie Club, Valentine



Broken Bow Country Club

Ainsworth Golf Club

# Section 8—Resources and Environment

The CNEDD region is largely an agricultural area, as such, its principal resources are land, water, and, to a greater extent than in many agricultural areas, because of its rangeland cattle-raising orientation, its natural vegetation. The principal soils of the region are sandy (see map below), thus, the inclusion of most of the region in the Nebraska Sandhills. Most of those sandy soils are on sloping terrain, making wind erosion a concern. The southern part of the region has silty soils that allow some row crop agriculture.

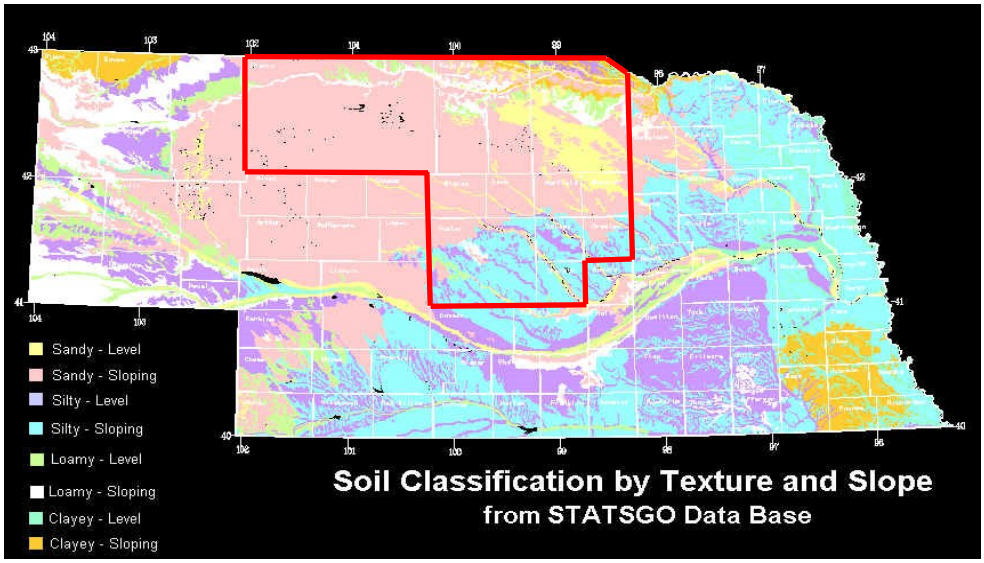



Figure 10. Soil Classification by Texture and Slope

**Air Quality**

The following information about the air quality in Nebraska and the CNEDD region was obtained by "AIRNow" (www.airnow.gov). As you can see by the subsequent maps, the air quality in the entire State of Nebraska is qualified as "good". A "good" listing is defined as "air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk".

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is an index for reporting daily air quality. It tells you how clean or polluted your outdoor air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for you. The AQI focuses on health effects you may experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air. EPA calculates the AQI for five major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act: ground-level ozone, particle pollution (also known as particulate matter), carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. For each of these pollutants, EPA has established national air quality standards to protect public health.

The U.S. EPA, NOAA, NPS, tribal, state, and local agencies developed the AIRNow website to provide the public with easy access to national air quality information. The website offers daily AQI forecasts as well as real-time AQI conditions for over 300 cities across the US, and provides links to more detailed State and local air quality websites.

Air Quality Forecasts – Nationwide daily air quality forecasts provided by State and local Air Agencies for over 300 major U.S. cities. Air Quality Conditions – Nationwide and regional real-time ozone air quality maps covering 46 US States and parts of Canada. These maps are updated daily every hour.

The air quality data used in these maps and to generate forecasts are collected using either federal reference or equivalent monitoring techniques or techniques approved by the state, local or tribal monitoring agencies. Since the information needed to make maps must be as "real-time" as possible, the data are displayed as soon as practical after the end of each hour. Although some preliminary data quality assessments are performed, the data as such are not fully verified and validated through the quality assurance procedures monitoring organizations use to officially submit and certify data on the EPA AQS(Air Quality System). Therefore, data are used on the AIRNow Web site only for the purpose of reporting the AQI. Information on the AIRNow web site is not used to formulate or support regulation, guidance or any other Agency decision or position.

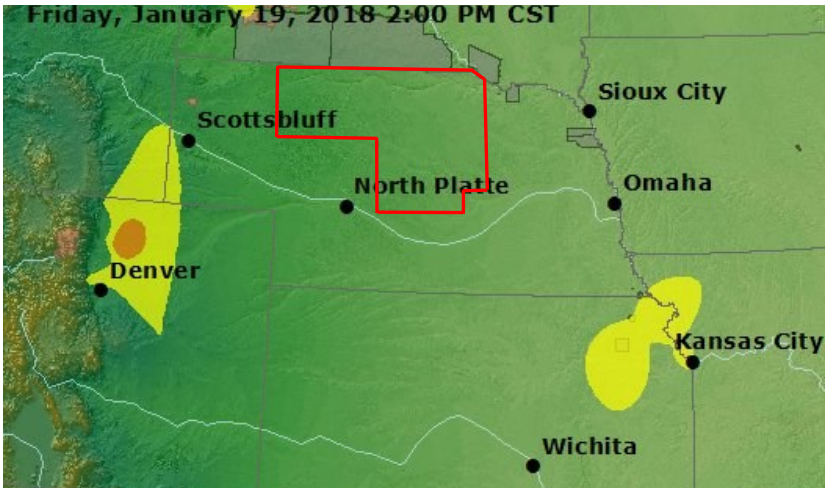



Figure 11. Air Quality Map from AirNow.Gov

Air Quality Index (AQI) colors: EPA has assigned a specific color to each AQI category to make it easier for people to understand quickly whether air pollution is reaching unhealthy levels in their communities. For example, the color orange means that conditions are "unhealthy for sensitive groups," while red means that conditions may be "unhealthy for everyone," and so on.

| Air Quality Index (AQI) Values | Levels of Health Concern | Colors |
|---|---|---|
| *When the AQI is in this range:* | *..air quality conditions are:* | *...as symbolized by this color:* |
| 0 to 50 | Good | Green |
| 51 to 100 | Moderate | Yellow |
| 101 to 150 | Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups | Orange |
| 151 to 200 | Unhealthy | Red |
| 201 to 300 | Very Unhealthy | Purple |
| 301 to 500 | Hazardous | Maroon |

Figure 12. Air Quality Index/Levels

**Topography**

Most of Nebraska is prairie; more than two-thirds of the state lies within the Great Plains proper. The elevation slopes upward gradually from east to west, from a low of 840 ft (256 m) in the southeast to 5,424 ft (1,654 m) in Kimball County. Rolling alluvial lowlands in the eastern portion of the state give way to the flat, treeless plain of central Nebraska, which in turn rises to a tableland in the west. The Sand Hills of the north-central plain is an unusual region of sand dunes anchored by grasses that cover about 18,000 sq mi (47,000 sq km).

The Sand Hills region is dotted with small natural lakes; in the rest of the state, the main lakes are artificial. The Missouri River—which, with its tributaries, drains the entire state—forms the eastern part of the northern boundary of Nebraska. Three rivers cross the state from west to east: the wide, shallow Platte River flows through the heart of the state for 310 mi (499 km); the Niobrara River traverses the state's northern region; and the Republican River flows through southern Nebraska.

**Climate**

Nebraska has a continental climate, with highly variable temperatures from season to season and year to year. The central region has an average annual normal temperature of 50°F (10°C), with a normal monthly maximum of 76°F (24°C) in July and a normal monthly minimum of 22°F (–6°C) in January.

Nebraska is part of the High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC), which is a great resource for CNEDD to utilize as they assist communities with community and economic development activities. The information below is directly from the HPRCC website http://www.hprcc.unl.edu/about.php.

The mission of the High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCCC) is to increase the use and availability of climate data in the High Plains region.

HPRCC personnel work closely with scientists from other regional and federal climate centers on climate services and programs and provide a regional structure for climate applications. The long-term objectives of the HPRCC are to carry out applied climate studies, develop improved climate information products, and provide climate services in the High Plains region.

HPRCC has helped organize and cosponsor workshops in regard to the climate change issue and possible impacts in the region. Cooperation with federal climate centers has included sponsoring (together with the National Climate Data Center) data base management systems and corresponding training in the region and participation in the Centennial Program to recognize community contributions to weather data collection. In addition, the HPRCC worked with the Climate Prediction Center to develop a joint program to identify climate impacts in the High Plains region in a timely fashion. The use of graduate students in HPRCC studies contributes to education by providing training opportunities. HPRCC staff are called on to prepare and present information at educational workshops and conferences throughout the region.

Climate information is necessary to address many requests from users whose work touches soil and water conservation, sustainable agriculture systems, agricultural competitiveness and profitability, and natural resources and environmental management. To serve the public in such areas the HPRCC has offered telephone consultation, web-based services, and a monthly climate impacts newsletter. More than 600 climate requests are answered each year by HPRCC staff. Data from over 200 automated weather stations (collecting hourly and daily measurements), plus data from all National Weather Service daily reporting stations, is used to support the HPRCC Online Service, a web-based system accessible with any HTML 1.1 compliant browser. The Online System provides access to most of the data resources of the HPRCC, and averages nearly 100,000 accesses per month. In addition to the weather observations the Online System includes crop water use and crop performance for major crops, pest development, livestock conditions, soil water, and heat indices.

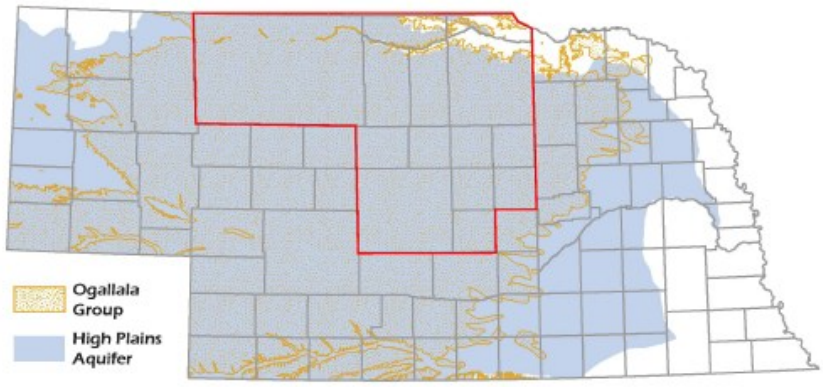



**Figure 4.** Map of the High Plains aquifer identifying the Ogallala Group. (Source: University of NE, Conservation and Survey Division, 2013)

**Water Resources (Sole Source Aquifers, Surface Water, Ground Water)**

Groundwater: Prepared Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-1304(LB329 – 2001) Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality Water Quality Assessment Section Groundwater Unit December 2013.

The High Plains Aquifer is a conglomeration of many separate groundwater bearing formations such as the Brule, Arikaree, Ogallala, Broadwater, and many more recent unnamed deposits (including the Sand Hills). Many of the unnamed deposits are found mainly within the stream valleys (recent or ancient) and are a common source of groundwater. No single formation completely covers the entire state. However, when these numerous formations and deposits are combined, they form the High Plains Aquifer, covering almost 90% of Nebraska. There are parts of eastern Nebraska where the High Plains Aquifer is not present. These areas rely heavily on groundwater from buried ancient river channels, recent alluvial valleys (Missouri, Platte, and Nemaha Rivers) or surface water intakes from the Missouri River.

The 2001 Nebraska Legislature passed LB329 (Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-1304) which, in part, directed the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) to report on groundwater quality monitoring in Nebraska. Reports have been issued annually since December 2001. The text of the statute applicable to this report follows: "The Department of Environmental Quality shall prepare a report outlining the extent of ground water quality monitoring conducted by natural resources districts during the preceding calendar year. The department shall analyze the data collected for the purpose of determining whether or not ground water quality is degrading or improving and shall present the results to the Natural Resources Committee of the Legislature beginning December 1, 2001, and each year thereafter. The districts shall submit in a timely manner all ground water quality monitoring data collected to the department or its designee. The department shall use the data submitted by the districts in conjunction with all other readily available and compatible data for the purpose of the annual ground water quality trend analysis." The section following the statute quoted above (§ 46-1305), requires the State's Natural Resources Districts to submit an annual report to the legislature with information on their water quality programs, including financial data. That report has been prepared by the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts and is being issued concurrently with this groundwater quality report.

Groundwater can be defined as water that occurs in the open spaces below the surface of the earth. In Nebraska useable groundwater occurs in voids or pore spaces in various layers of geologic material such as sand, gravel, silt, sandstone, and limestone. These layers are referred to as aquifers where such geologic units yield sufficient water for human use. In parts of the state, groundwater may be encountered just a few feet below the surface, while in other areas; it may be a few hundred feet underground. This underground water "surface" is usually referred to as the water table, while water which soaks downward through overlying rocks and sediment to the water table is called recharge. The amount of water that can be obtained from a given aquifer may range from a few gallons per minute (which is just enough to supply a typical household) to many hundreds or even thousands of gallons per minute (which is the yield of large irrigation, industrial or public water supply wells).

**Land Use**

The CNEDD area is primarily covered by prairie land with a few small amounts of agricultural fields on the east and southern portions of the region.

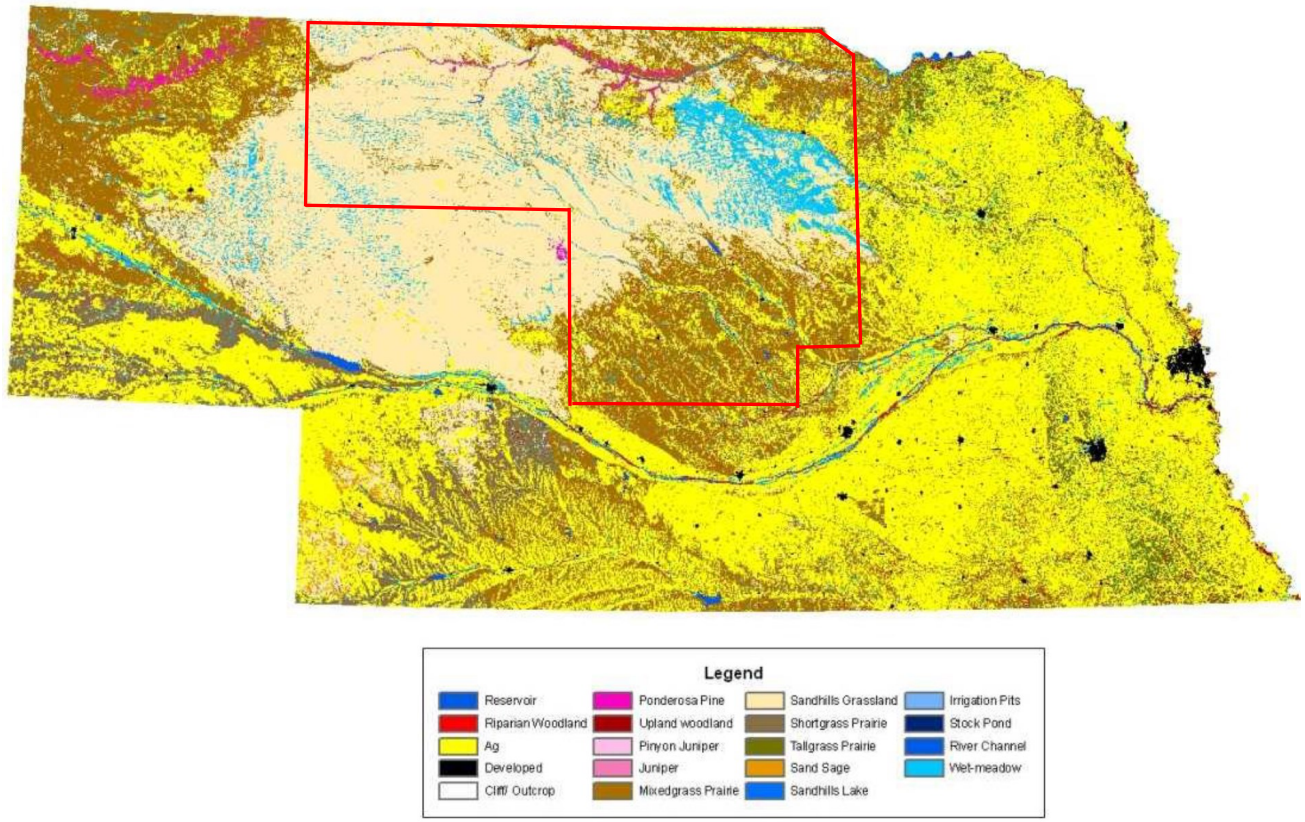



Figure 13. Land Cover of Nebraska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife—2011

Hazardous and Toxic Substances (Superfund sites, Brownfields)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports there are 17 Superfund National Priority list sites in Nebraska of which none are in the CNEDD region. EPA maintains an inventory at the following link:

www.epa.gov/superfund/national-priorities-list-npl-sites-state#NE

**Historical Resources**

All projects that utilize state and/or federal funding are required to undertake an environmental review to ensure compliance of a project relative to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and its related laws. As such, the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) is contacted prior to the beginning of construction.

**Vegetation and Wildlife**

The CNEDD service area is mostly made up of sand hills mixed-grass prairie, and borders mixed-grass prairie with a few areas of Loess Mixed-grass prairie.

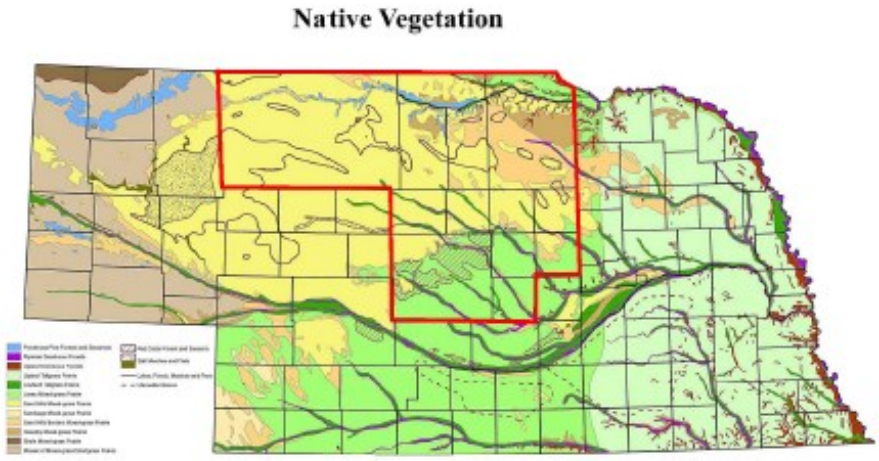



Figure 14. Native Vegetation

**Wildlife Species**

Nebraska is blessed with abundant, diverse wildlife and habitat. Nebraska is a biological crossroads of North America where prairie meets ponderosa pine forests, where wetlands speckle the landscape and over 23,000 miles of rivers and streams ribbon through the landscape. The vast grasslands of the Sandhills stretches the imagination to pioneer days while the pine ridge escarpments tower over the landscape. Nebraska is the place where plant and wildlife communities of different regions meet, giving the state a rich diversity of wildlife viewing opportunities.

Nebraska is blessed with abundant wildlife. The Nebraska Game and Parks website (https://birds.outdoornebraska.gov) provides a variety of information on common wildlife you will encounter while exploring Nebraska's wildlife areas, parks or just driving down a rural road.

**Floodplains**

Flooding continues to be the main source of property and monetary losses from natural disasters. A significant amount of the CNEDD area is located in a 100-Year Floodplain, which has affected the ability of communities to grow. Currently, 8 of CNEDD's 14 counties are mapped (Boyd, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Loup, Sherman, Valley, Wheeler).

**Prime and Unique Farmlands**

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) was passed by Congress as part of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (Public law 97-98). The FPPA is intended to minimize the impact Federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. For the purpose of FPPA, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance.

Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. It may include lands currently used to produce livestock and/or timber.

Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, as determined by the Secretary. Examples of such crops include citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, fruits, and vegetables.

Farmland that is of statewide or local importance other than prime or unique farmland is used for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, or oilseed crops, as determined by the appropriate State or unit of local government agency or agencies, with the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

**Environmental Justice**

All projects that utilize state and/or federal funding are required to undertake an environmental review to ensure compliance of a project relative to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and its related laws. As such, each project will be evaluated as it relates to the fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income. Environmental Justice data and information can be accessed at the following website: www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/

# Acknowledgements

The Central Nebraska Economic Development District and the Central Nebraska Housing and Economic Developers would like to thank all of the counties, communities and partner organizations for their assistance in distributing survey information.

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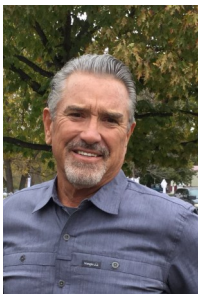

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Central Nebraska Economic Development District
CNEDD

We strive to deliver quality, meaningful programs that make a difference in your community. If you would like to learn more about the District, or have ideas for programs and services that would enhance our rural region, please give us a call or send us an email.

CNHED
Central Nebraska Housing and Economic Developers

**CNEDD Website: www.cnedd.org**