

MCCOOK CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

**Monday, February 9, 2026
5:15 PM - City Council Chambers**

Call to Order and Roll Call.

Open Meetings Act Announcement.

Items

1. Approve the minutes of the February 2, 2026 special Planning Commission meeting.
2. Public Hearings and Regular Agenda.
 - A. Public Hearing - Regarding the adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission and making a recommendation to the McCook City Council for their approval and adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan.
 1. Adjourn the Public Hearing.
 - B. Approve Resolution No. PC 2026-01 providing for the adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission and making the recommendation to the McCook City Council for their approval and adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan.
 - C. Review and discuss the proposed Supplemental District Chapter of the zoning update.

Adjournment.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT
FEBRUARY 9, 2026 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

ITEM: 1.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the minutes of the February 2, 2026 special McCook Planning Commission meeting.

BACKGROUND:

Receive and approve the minutes.

**FISCAL
IMPACT:** None.

APPROVALS:



Lea Ann Doak, City Clerk

February 5, 2026

McCook Planning Commission
February 2, 2026
12:00 P.M. Central

A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MCCOOK, NEBRASKA convened in open, special, and public session at 12:00 o'clock P.M. in the City Council Chambers.

Present: Chair Chad Lyons; Vice Chair Tammie Hilker; Commissioners Camy Bradley, Kelly Hammerlun, Bruce McDowell, Jamie Mockry, Jesse Stevens, Kurt Vosburg.

Absent: Commissioners Matt Davidson, Bobby Gaulke.

City Officials present: City Manager Nate Schneider, Assistant City Manager Tera Koetter, City Attorney Nate Mustion, City Clerk Lea Ann Doak, Building Official Barry Mooney.

Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in the McCook Daily Gazette on January 29, 2026, the designated method of giving notice, a copy of the proof of publication being attached to these minutes. Advance notice of the meeting was also given to all members of the Planning Commission. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the advance notice. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Chair Lyons announced that a copy of the Open Meetings Act was posted by the entrance to the Council Chambers and available for public review.

1. Approve the minutes of the December 8, 2025 regular Planning Commission meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2025 regular Planning Commission meeting. This motion, made by Lyons and seconded by Vosburg, passed.

Bradley: YEA, Davidson: ABSENT, Gaulke: ABSENT, Hammerlun: YEA, Hilker: YEA, Lyons: YEA, McDowell: YEA, Mockry: YEA, Stevens: YEA, Vosburg: YEA
YEA: 8, NAY: 0, ABSENT: 2

2. Public Hearings and Regular Agenda.

- 2.A. Public Hearing - Regarding a request to modify McCook Zoning Ordinance No. 2016-2929, Article 21 - Supplemental Regulations, Section 2112 - Sign Regulations, Subsection 6.A. (Sign Size Regulations), altering the commercial use, single or double freestanding tenant sign requirements, to (1) increase the total sign area in the Highway Commercial District from 80 square feet to 140 square feet, and to (2) increase the maximum sign height in the Highway Commercial District from 20 feet to 32 feet.

Motion to recess as a Planning Commission and convene a public hearing for the purpose of receiving public comment regarding proposed modifications to McCook Zoning Ordinance No. 2016-2929, Article 21 - Supplemental Regulations, Section 2112 - Sign Regulations,

Subsection 6.A. (Sign Size Regulations), altering the commercial use, single or double freestanding tenant sign requirements, to (1) increase the total sign area in the Highway Commercial District from 80 square feet to 140 square feet, and to (2) increase the maximum sign height in the Highway Commercial District from 20 feet to 32 feet, with the City Attorney to act as hearing officer. This motion, made by Lyons and seconded by Stevens, passed.

Bradley: YEA, Davidson: ABSENT, Gaulke: ABSENT, Hammerlun: YEA, Hilker: YEA, Lyons: YEA, McDowell: YEA, Mockry: YEA, Stevens: YEA, Vosburg: YEA
YEA: 8, NAY: 0, ABSENT: 2

The City Attorney received into evidence Exhibit #1 - City Manager's Report prepared for the February 2, 2026 Planning Commission meeting (1 page), Exhibit #2 - Notice of Hearing published (1 page); Exhibit #3 - Proposed Ordinance No. 2026-3114 (7 pages); and Exhibit #4 - Site Plan indicating location of the proposed signs and their distances from Highway 83 (2 pages).

City Manager Schneider reviewed the information presented in Exhibit #1.

Building Inspector Mooney reviewed the proposed ordinance changes and answered questions from the Commission.

Neil Oglesby, Crossland Construction Company, who serves as the lead contractor for the new dealership project was present to address the request and answer questions from the Commission.

With no one else present to comment, motion to adjourn the public hearing and to reconvene as a Planning Commission. This motion, made by Chad Lyons and seconded by Kurt Vosburg, passed.
Bradley: YEA, Davidson: ABSENT, Gaulke: ABSENT, Hammerlun: YEA, Hilker: YEA, Lyons: YEA, McDowell: YEA, Mockry: YEA, Stevens: YEA, Vosburg: YEA
YEA: 8, NAY: 0, ABSENT: 2

2.B. Recommend to the McCook City Council the approval of the modifications to McCook Zoning Ordinance No. 2016-2929, Article 21, Section 2112, Subsection 6.A., altering the commercial use, single or double freestanding tenant sign requirements, to (1) increase the total sign area in the Highway Commercial district from 80 square feet to 140 square feet, and to (2) increase the maximum sign height in the Highway Commercial District from 20 feet to 32 feet.

Motion to recommend to the McCook City Council the approval of the modifications to McCook Zoning Ordinance No. 2016-2929, Article 21, Section 2112, Subsection 6.A., altering the commercial use, single or double freestanding tenant sign requirements, to (1) increase the total sign area in the Highway Commercial district from 80 square feet to 140 square feet, and to (2) increase the maximum sign height in the Highway Commercial District from 20 feet to 32 feet. This motion, made by Lyons and seconded by Mockry, passed.

Bradley: YEA, Davidson: ABSENT, Gaulke: ABSENT, Hammerlun: YEA, Hilker: YEA, Lyons: YEA, McDowell: YEA, Mockry: YEA, Stevens: YEA, Vosburg: YEA
YEA: 8, NAY: 0, ABSENT: 2

Adjournment.

With no further business, Chair Lyons declared the Planning Commission meeting adjourned at 12:39 P.M.

Lea Ann Doak, City Clerk-Treasurer
and Recording Secretary

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT
FEBRUARY 9, 2026 MCCOOK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

2.A.

ITEM NO. ___ Public Hearing - Regarding the adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission and making a recommendation to the McCook City Council for their approval and adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan.

2.B.

ITEM NO. ___ Approve Resolution No. PC 2026- 01 providing for the adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission and making the recommendation to the McCook City Council for their approval and adoption of the City of McCook Comprehensive Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Miller & Associates was selected by the City of McCook through a competitive process to assist with the development of McCook's new ten-year comprehensive plan. Numerous information gathering meetings have been held in order to prepare the newest version of McCook's comprehensive plan. As a reminder, the comprehensive plan serves as the guidepost for McCook's future development. Numerous entities rely on the comprehensive plan when determining grant funding or economic development opportunities. Our new comprehensive plan up for consideration does a good job of painting a clear picture of what McCook envisions itself to be over the next ten years and beyond.

Jason Combs of Miller & Associates will be present at the Planning Commission meeting to lead us through the contents of the document. The public is encouraged to attend and learn more about its contents.

APPROVALS:



Nathan A. Schneider, City Manager

February 5, 2026



Lea Ann Doak, City Clerk

February 5, 2026



Tera Koetter, Assistant City Manager

February 5, 2026

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
MCCOOK, NEBRASKA

Notice is hereby given that the duly appointed Planning Commission of the City of McCook, Nebraska, will hold a public hearing at 5:15 P.M. on the 9th day of February, 2026 and the City Council of the City of McCook, Nebraska, will hold a public hearing at 5:30 P.M. on the 16th day of February, 2026, in the City of McCook Municipal Center - Council Chambers, 505 West "C" Street, McCook, Nebraska.

Said hearing is for the purpose of presenting a proposed community comprehensive plan, including, among other elements, a future land use plan, a community facilities plan, a transportation plan, an energy element, and a plan for future annexation. The purpose is to hear all persons with written or oral comments for or against said proposals. Any party may appear in person or be represented by agent or attorney.

Copies of said community comprehensive plan are on file with the City Clerk, McCook Municipal Center, 505 West "C" Street, McCook, Nebraska; the McCook Public Library, 802 Norris Avenue, McCook, Nebraska; and on the City of McCook's website at cityofmccook.com.

This notice given in pursuance to and under the authority of Nebraska State Statutes.

-s- Lea Ann Doak, City Clerk

Publish: January 30 and February 6, 2026.

EXHIBIT #2

PAGE(S) - 1

MCCOOK PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. PC2026-01

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION AND RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS, the duly appointed Planning Commission of the City of McCook, Nebraska, with the assistance of its consultant, Miller & Associates, P.C. of Kearney, Nebraska, has prepared a Comprehensive Plan for the City of McCook, Nebraska; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has given public notice as required by the Nebraska State Statutes, of a hearing to be held on the 9th day of February, 2026, at 5:15 P.M. at the McCook Municipal Center on the proposed Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the public hearing has been held pursuant to said notice and all statements received at the hearing have been duly considered by the Planning Commission;

BE IT NOW AND THE SAME IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MCCOOK, NEBRASKA, THAT

1. The Comprehensive Plan as prepared by the Planning Commission and Miller & Associates, P.C. of Kearney, Nebraska, be adopted by the Commission as the official comprehensive plan for the City of McCook, Nebraska.
2. The Comprehensive Plan be recommended to the City Council for their approval and adoption as the official Comprehensive Plan for the City of McCook, Nebraska.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the McCook Planning and Zoning Commission this 9th day of February, 2026.

MCCOOK PLANNING COMMISSION

Chad Lyons, Chair

ATTEST:

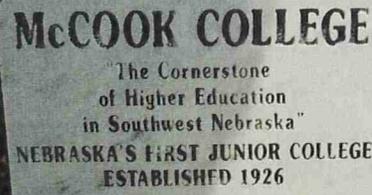
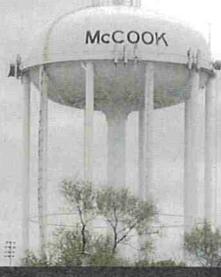
Camy Bradley, Secretary

EXHIBIT #3

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Welcome to
McCOOK
Established 1882



McCOOK COLLEGE
"The Cornerstone
of Higher Education
in Southwest Nebraska"
NEBRASKA'S FIRST JUNIOR COLLEGE
ESTABLISHED 1926
CORNERSTONE DEDICATED SEPT. 21, 1996



Schert
Bakery



City of McCook

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2025 - 2035



Miller & Associates
CONSULTING ENGINEERS, P.C.

1111 Central Ave. Kearney, NE 68847-6833

(T) 308-234-6456 (F) 308-234-1146

www.miller-engineers.com

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of McCook extends its heartfelt gratitude to all the residents, property owners, and business owners who actively participated in the development of McCook's Comprehensive Plan. Your support and involvement were instrumental in bringing this plan to fruition. Thank you for your commitment to our community's future.

City Council

Linda Taylor, Mayor
Jerry Calvin, Vice President
Jared Muehlenkamp
Darcy Rambali
Gene Weedin

City Staff

Nate Schneider, City Manager	Lilia Dimas, Human Resource Coordinator
Lea Ann Doak, City Clerk/Treasurer	Deborah Thorpe, Public Works Administrative Assistant
Tera Koetter, Assistant City Manager	Barry Mooney, Building Inspector and Code Compliance Officer
Tracy Burkey, Deputy City Clerk	Pat Fawver, Utilities Director
Konnie Larson, Administrative Assistant	Nathaniel Mustion, City Attorney
Kyle Pothoff, Public Works Director	
Jessica Koch, Utilities Administrative Assistant	

Planning Commission

Chad Lyons, Chairperson	Matt Davidson
Ron Friehe	Kurt Vosburg
Camy Bradley	Jesse Stevens
Tammie Hilker	Jamie Mockry
Bruce McDowell	Mark Currier, Alternate

Steering Committee

Troy Bruntz	Charlie McPherson
Kent Craw	Molly Sharp
Matt Davidson	Molly Smith
Amanda Engell	Linda Taylor
Melanie Goodenberger	Kurt Vosburg
Jason Herron	Tom Wiemers
Jade Lesko	Greg Wolford

Consulting Team

H. Jason Combs, M.S., Ph.D., Craig Bennett,
David Blau, P.E., Chris Miller, M.S., P.E., Megan
Shada, and Aubrie Lawrence


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VISION FOR MCCOOK

McCook residents and business owners are valuable community assets. Their participation was, and is, essential to the process. The comprehensive plan presents a futuristic vision created by the community. The planning process for McCook's Comprehensive Plan included public meetings, stakeholder meetings, and workshops which allowed community members to consider directions and goals for the plan.

McCook's vision is to promote and grow a diverse economic base while emphasizing overall community growth and development. This requires a proactive approach to attract new investments, additional residents, and gathering input from existing residents.

Housing is an ongoing issue that will be addressed to attract and maintain population. Gateway corridors into town and the traditional downtown were major discussion points during public input sessions. Residents expressed support for aesthetics and improvements in those areas, in addition to employment initiatives while maintaining infrastructure is also a priority.

While the comprehensive plan captures many ideas, goals, and policies, there are some noteworthy directions and changes presented in this plan. These new directions are a result of community feedback, reactions to current trends and conditions, and policy direction from elected and appointed community officials.

INTRODUCTION

The comprehensive plan is a toolkit for McCook's future development, providing long-range guidance on how and where the community will invest and change over the next decade. The plan contains goals for the future and addresses topics from land use planning and demographics to transportation and community services. McCook's plan also guides the community as it addresses future needs for economic development, transportation, housing, parks and open spaces, and other community assets. It encourages a sustainable and fiscally responsible future by setting the desired direction for future development regulations, policy decisions, and community programs.

Compliance with State & Local Requirements

The governmental functions of McCook, Nebraska are provided and coordinated by the City Council. McCook's City Council is comprised of five members elected at large. McCook's planning and zoning jurisdiction includes an area within two miles of the City's corporate limits, pursuant to *Nebraska Revised Statute 17-1002*. McCook's planning and zoning jurisdiction is governed by *Nebraska Revised Statute 17-1004*. As McCook continues to grow and annex land, the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) may extend further into Red Willow, County.

Nebraska Revised Statute §16-101

All cities having more than five thousand and not more than one hundred thousand inhabitants as determined by the most recent federal decennial census or the most recent revised certified count by the United States Bureau of the Census shall be known as cities of the first class. The population of a city of the first class shall consist of the people residing within the territorial boundaries of such city and the residents of any territory duly and properly annexed to such city.

Nebraska Revised Statute §16-117

(1) Except as provided in sections 13-1111 to 13-1120 and 16-130 and subject to this section, the mayor and city council of a city of the first class may by ordinance at any time include within the corporate limits of such city any contiguous or adjacent lands, lots, tracts, streets, or highways as are urban or suburban in character and in such direction as may be deemed proper. Such grant of power shall not be construed as conferring power upon the mayor and city council to extend the limits of a city of the first class over any agricultural lands which are rural in character.

Nebraska Revised Statute §16-119

Any extraterritorial zoning regulations, property use regulations, or other laws, codes, rules, or regulations imposed upon any annexed lands by a city of the first class before such annexation shall continue in full force and effect until otherwise changed.

Nebraska Revised Statute §16-201

Each city of the first class shall be a body corporate and politic and shall have power (1) to sue and be sued, (2) to purchase, lease, lease with option to buy, or acquire by gift or devise and to hold real and personal property within or without the limits of the city and real estate sold for taxes for the use of the city in such manner and upon such terms and conditions as may be deemed in the best interests of the city, (3) to sell and convey, exchange, or lease any real or personal property owned by the city, including park land, in such manner and upon such terms and conditions as may be deemed in the best interests of the city, except that real estate owned by the city may be conveyed without consideration to the State of Nebraska for state veterans' cemetery sites or state armory

McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

sites or, if acquired for state armory sites, shall be conveyed in the manner strictly as provided in sections 18-1001 to 18-1006, (4) to make all contracts and do all other acts in relation to the property and concerns of the city necessary to the exercise of its corporate powers, and (5) to exercise such other and further powers as may be conferred by law.

Nebraska Revised Statute §16-905

An ordinance of any city of the first class designating the extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction of the city under section 16-901 or 16-902 shall describe such territory by metes and bounds or by reference to an official map.

The comprehensive plan has been prepared in accordance with state statutes and requirements. The city council's duty is to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality. The community's master plan shall be an advisory document to guide land development decisions. After a public hearing, the planning commission shall make its recommendation to the city council. Following another public meeting, the city council shall adopt and approve the comprehensive plan by resolution.

Nebraska Revised Statute §19-903

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Data Sources

The following paragraphs highlight key data sources utilized in the analysis. A portion of the data was accessed through mySidewalk.com—an online data vendor—which brings together multiple data sources allowing for comparisons and strategic analysis.

Decennial Census

Beginning in 1790, the United States Census has tabulated each resident of the country based on where they reside on April 1 during years ending in zero. The mandatory survey determines the number of congressional seats for each state. Over time, the census has become more robust capturing data well beyond the original intent.



American Community Survey (ACS)

Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, the ACS supplements the decennial census. This ongoing survey supplies data about the nation on an annual basis. In contrast to the universal decennial census, the ACS is sent to a sample of addresses—approximately 3.5 million in all fifty states along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.



For the 2020 5-Year Estimates, Nebraska’s response rate was 90.6 percent. The ACS attempts to capture topics beyond those included in the decennial census and includes education, employment, internet access, and transportation data.

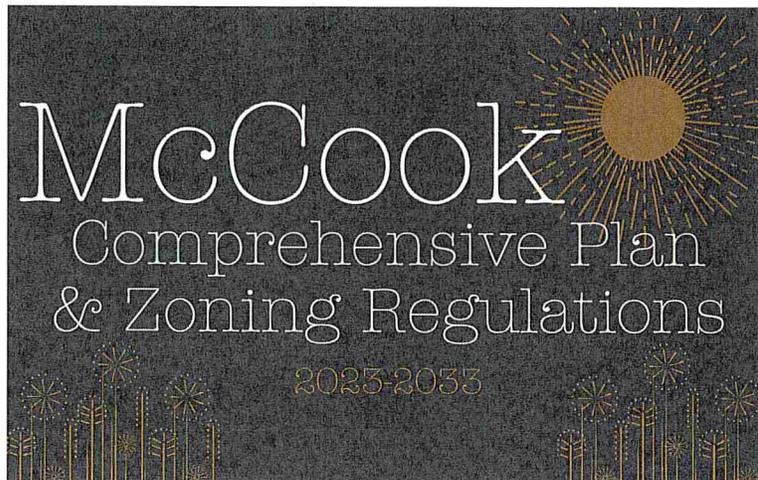
Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)

ESRI data is similar to census data but allows communities to enter additional information regarding commercial properties, including vacant lots and buildings. This helps communities and the State of Nebraska market and promote economic development opportunities. ESRI data is reported as estimates utilizing the most recent census data and marketing forecasts for the associated year.



What is a Comprehensive Plan?

This document is McCook's long-term comprehensive plan and establishes vision and direction for the future. Its objectives are to set the policy framework to help guide future decisions related to development and investment. The comprehensive plan will help the city thoughtfully address future needs, for economic development, transportation, housing, services, parks and open space, and other community assets. It will also help to ensure a sustainable and fiscally responsible future by setting the desired direction for future development regulations, policy decisions, and community programs.



Previous Planning Efforts

McCook, Nebraska has a record of community participation and planning, and this comprehensive plan builds on previous efforts. In addition to previous comprehensive plans (1999 & 2013), McCook has conducted a Downtown Revitalization Study (2013), a recent Housing Study (2022), and multiple Blight and Substandard Studies (the most recent completed in 2025) to encourage redevelopment. The current comprehensive plan includes both major and minor changes to the community's vision as developed in previous plans. Revisions include statistical updates and graphic redesign to make the document more readable and user-friendly. An energy component has been added, as required by state statutes. This comprehensive plan addresses various aspects of community and economic development, providing specific guidelines to improve existing conditions and manage future expansion. Based on previous studies, several themes have carried forward including:

- Improve Public Infrastructure
- Enhance Gateway Entrances
- Promote Commercial Development
- Promote Housing Initiatives

Planning Period

The planning period for McCook's Comprehensive Plan is 2025-2035 and should be reviewed frequently to guarantee its relevance to the community it serves. A formal review process should be undertaken in 2027 and 2030 which will be important to the comprehensive plan's overall success.

Goals for McCook's Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

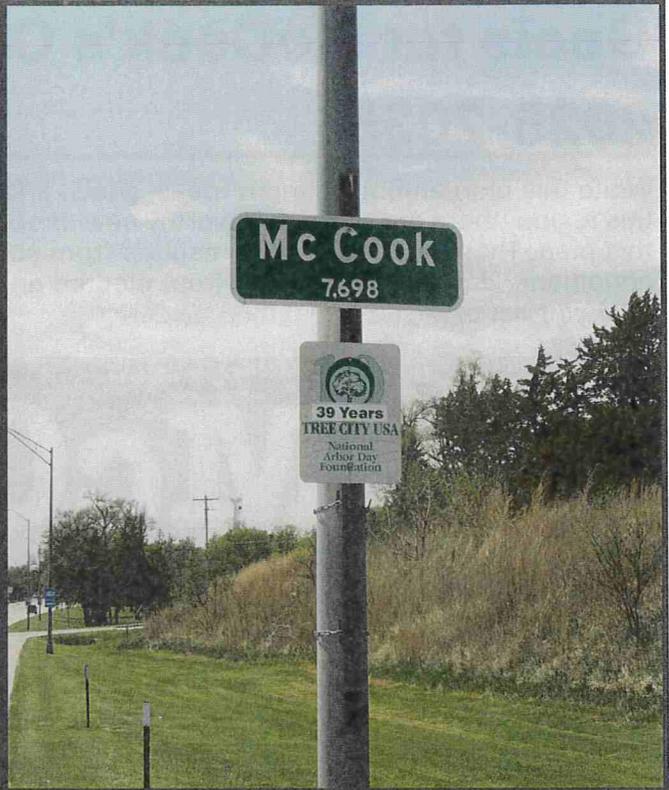
While this plan embodies many ideas, goals, and policies parallel with other communities' goals in this region, there are some noteworthy new directions and slight changes in the course presented in this plan. These new directions resulted from community feedback, reaction to current trends and conditions,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



CHAPTER

1

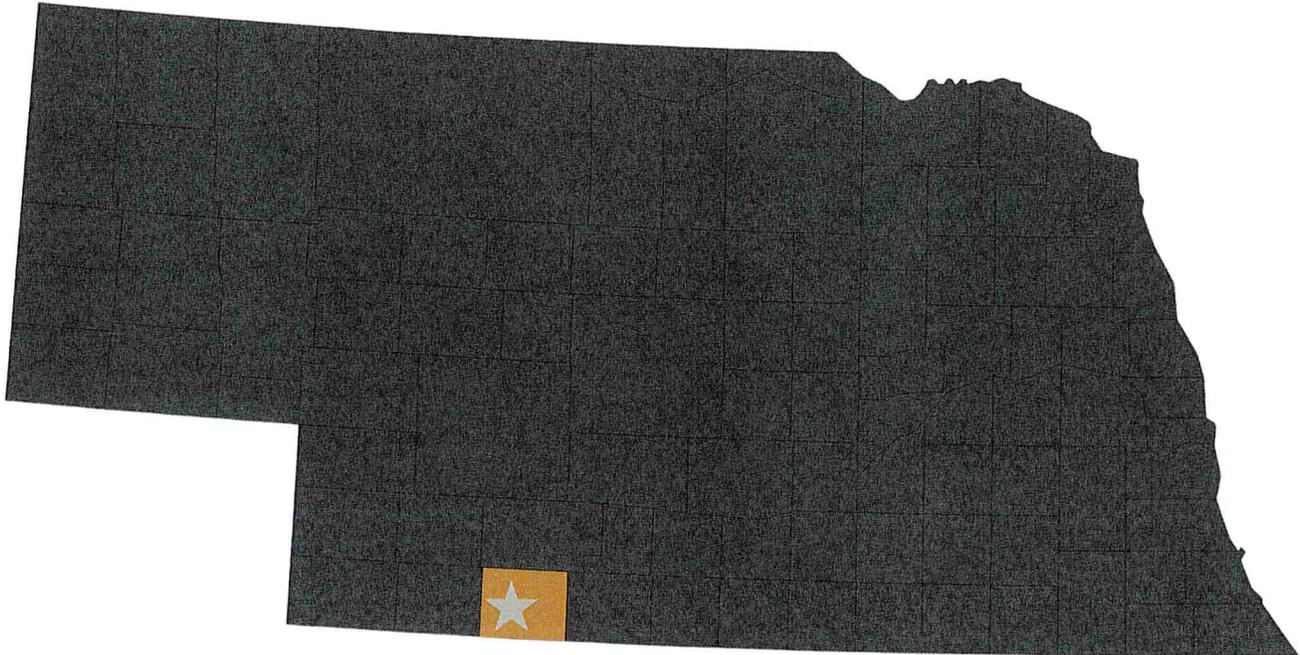
COMMUNITY PROFILE



The Community Profile chapter provides a snapshot of current conditions in McCook and forms the foundation for planning for the next ten years. This profile compiles information derived from outside sources, conversations with stakeholders, on-site assessments, and data analysis. The Community Profile chapter includes the following components:

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





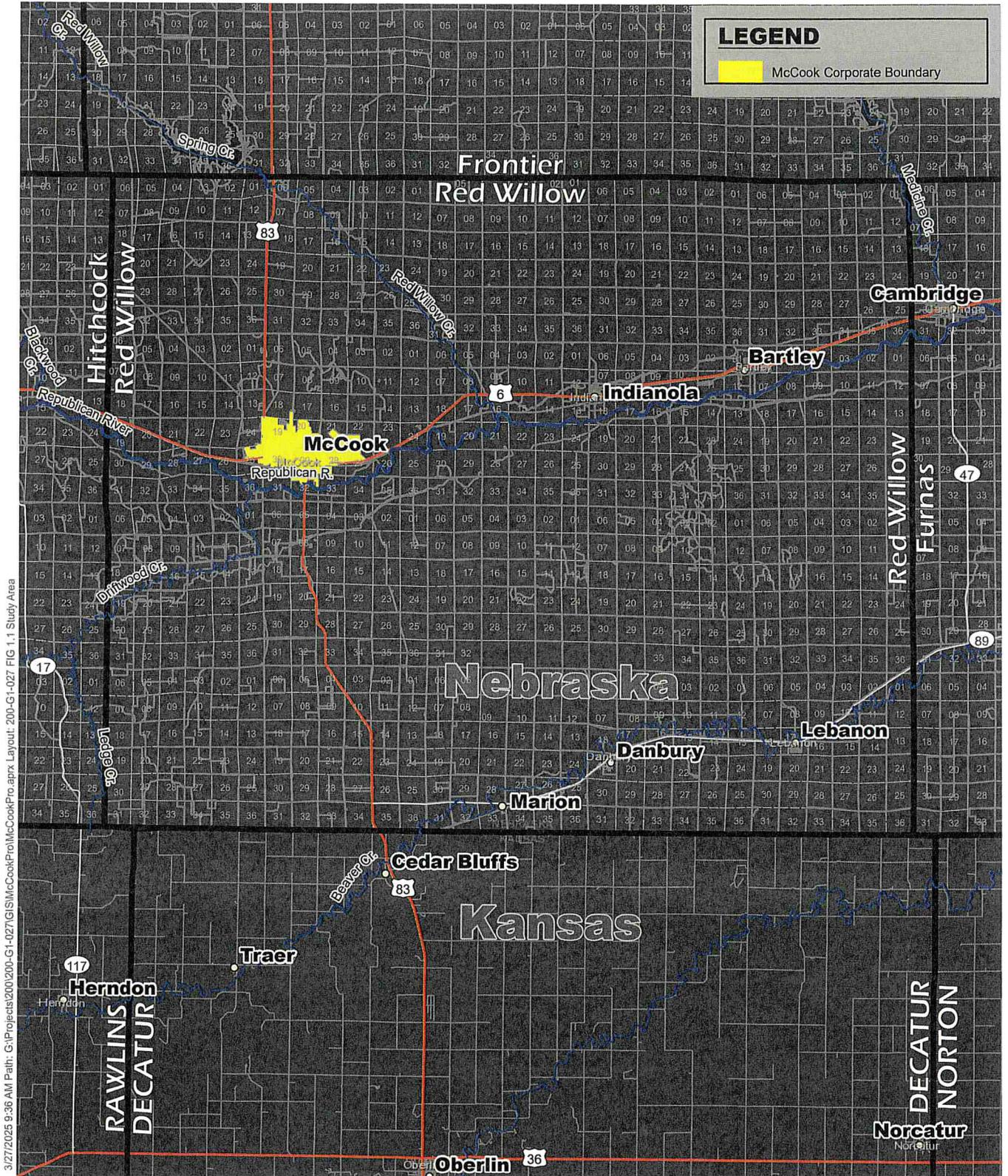
Description

The 2020 Census reported McCook’s population at 7,446 residents, slightly down from the 2010 count of 7,698. McCook’s corporate limits cover approximately 5.46 square miles and it serves as the county seat for Red Willow County. Other communities in Red Willow County include the City of Indianola, the Villages of Bartley, Danbury, and Lebanon, and the unincorporated communities of Marion, Perry, and Shippee. Red Willow County is adjacent to Furnas County to the east, Frontier County to the north, Hitchcock County to the west, and the state of Kansas to the south.

McCook is one of thirty “first class” cities in Nebraska and a true hub for much of southwest Nebraska (Table 1.1). The community is served by Highways 6/34 which runs east-west along with Highway 83 which runs north-south. Additionally, McCook has a Burlington Northern rail line and an Amtrak station.

Table 1.1: State Population Classification

Metropolitan Class	More than 300,000	Omaha Only
Primary Class	More than 100,000; less than 300,00	Lincoln Only
First Class	More than 5,000; less than 100,000	30
Second Class	More than 800; less than 5,000	115
Village	More than 100; less than 800	385
Total number of municipalities in Nebraska: 532		
Source: Nebraska State Statute § 14-101, § 15-101, § 16-101, § 17-101, § 17-201		



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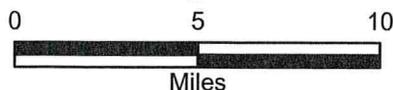
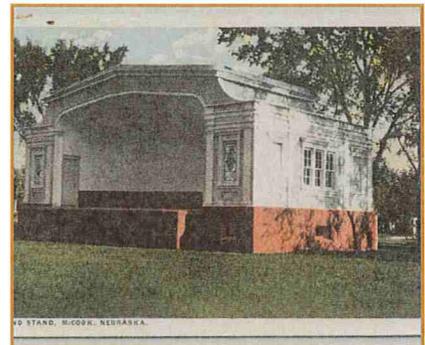
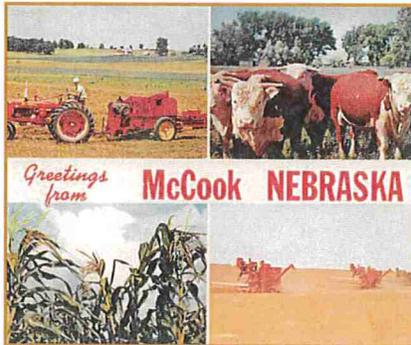
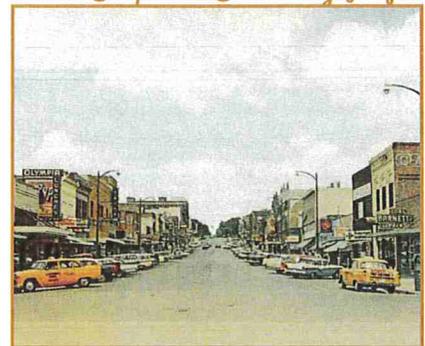


Figure 1.1
Study Area Map
Red Willow County, Nebraska

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History

McCook has an interesting and noteworthy history, with several local landmarks that not only deserve recognition but are foundational elements for boosterism and tourism efforts (Andreas 1882). McCook, Nebraska was named in honor of Alexander McDowell McCook who was a general in the Union Army during the Civil War (Figures 1.1) (Perkey 1982). Originally platted by the Lincoln Land Company on the north side of the Republican River approximately halfway between Denver, Colorado to the west and the Missouri River to the east, McCook was organized in 1883 and at the first census in 1890 tallied 2,346 residents (Perkey 1982). McCook became a second-class city in 1886 and a first-class city on December 21, 1933.

The community has a strong political background, four Nebraska governors have made their home in McCook—including Ralph Brooks (29th governor), Frank Morrison (31st Governor), Ben Nelson (37th Governor), and Dave Heineman (39th Governor). In addition to four Governors, McCook's most well-known politician is George Norris who served in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate from 1903 to 1944. Norris was instrumental in establishing Nebraska's Unicameral system and in the Senate played a key role in establishing the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Rural Electrification Act.

Beyond noted politicians, McCook has a variety of noteworthy architecture and historical achievements. One is the Harvey Sutton House at 602 Norris Avenue. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1905-1907 and constructed in 1907-1908, the Prairie Style home is the only known example in Nebraska (Murphy 1978). Wright designed just nineteen houses in the Great Plains and of that number, only about half were completed—the Sutton House was the first. Stramel (2004, 101) notes that the Sutton House "is a fine example of the evolving Prairie style and anchors Wright's work in the Great Plains."

McCook was also home to a professional baseball team—the McCook Braves—who played in the Nebraska State League from 1956 to 1959. Hall of Fame pitcher Phil Niekro played for McCook in 1959 and Pat Jordan who later became a writer for *Sporting News* pitched for the team.

Finally, the *McCook Daily Gazette* was founded in 1911 by Harry Strunk and Burris Stewart as the *Red Willow Gazette*—the name changed in the 1920s—and became the first daily newspaper delivered via airplane in the nation. In the early 1900s, delivering daily papers was difficult especially in areas like McCook where road conditions were challenging. The solution was to go with air delivery. Watts

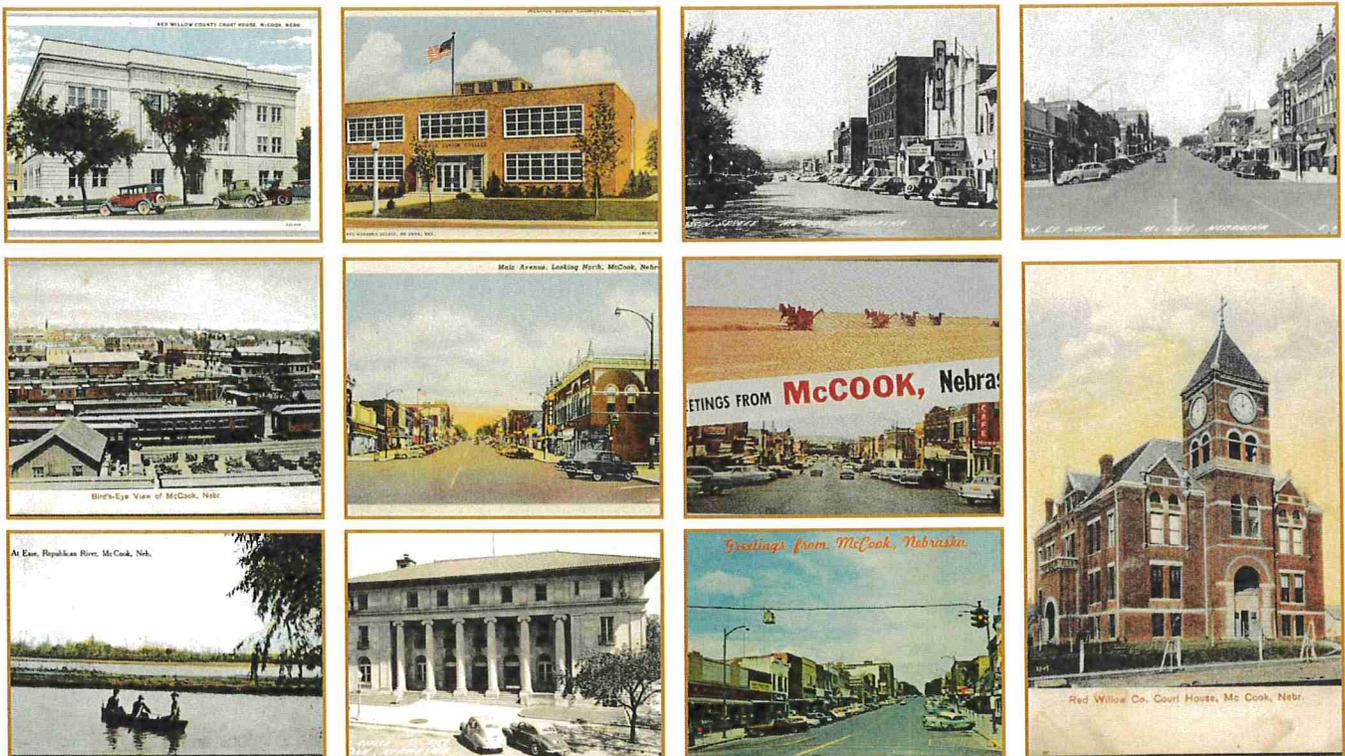
McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

(2005, 134) notes that as the “plane roared into the air before a crowd estimated at five to six thousand, McCook’s superintendent of schools asserted, ‘there goes the first newspaper delivery flight known to the American press world!’” Other newspapers—*The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Daily News*, and *The Boston Transcript*—had been delivered via air, however, *McCook’s Daily Gazette* was the first newspaper delivered by air on a regular basis. McCook was the smallest city in Nebraska to have a daily newspaper and the air delivery service operated from August 1929 to July 1930 (Watts 2005).

In 1929, Harry Strunk paid \$8,000 for a Curtiss Robin C1 monoplane which was named the *Newsboy*. The daily routine covered nearly 400 miles and Steve Tuttle, the first pilot, along with his brother dropped papers from 500 feet in the air to 30-40 Nebraska and Kansas communities in less than four hours, much faster than standard truck delivery. Did it work? It did. In 1928, circulation for the *Gazette* was 2,800 and a year later subscriptions increased by 360, and another 1,340 subscriptions were counted in 1930 for a total of 4,500 (Watts 2005). As an added bonus, the paper offered a ride to anyone who had a two-year subscription. The stunt, although short-lived, proved successful as circulation dramatically increased. The *Newsboy* was ultimately taken out of service and in 1972 placed on display at the Museum of Flight in Seattle (Discoe 2008).

Not only did the newspaper benefit from this short-lived stunt. The chamber of commerce encouraged businesses to stay open during McCook’s air show events where thousands came to town—the local Montgomery Ward manager reported 18,000 to 20,000 customers during the show (Watts 2005). A violent windstorm put an end to early air delivery in McCook, at least for a while. A second *Newsboy* airplane began delivery in 1950 which continued for the next four years. With continual road improvements, newspaper trucks—all named *Newsboy*—replaced air delivery.

McCook is fortunate to have a history filled with achievements and innovations, a spirit that continues today. For additional McCook and Red Willow County insights contact the High Plains Historical Society and Museum, McCook Army Air Base Historical Society, and Senator George Norris State Historic Site located in McCook, Nebraska. The Heritage Highway 136 is also a tremendous resource (<https://heritagehighway136.com/red-willow/>). The McCook/Red Willow County Visitors Bureau also provides resources related to the promotion of place (bird watching in addition to hunting and fishing opportunities, for example) and activities throughout the year (<https://visitmccook.com>).



Population

Understanding a population's composition guides community development. Demographics are the basis for prioritizing future goals, all other plan elements depend on an assessment of existing population characteristics and future projections. This data creates a vision for the next five, ten, and fifteen years and helps decision-makers plan for social, economic, and physical infrastructure to meet McCook's needs and objectives.

Population Change

After registering an initial population of 2,346 in the 1890 census, McCook as a key transportation hub in southwest Nebraska climbed to 6,688 in 1930 (Table 1.2) (Condra *et al.* 1951). The Dust Bowl years impacted communities across the Great Plains, McCook was no different and its population slightly declined to 6,212 in 1940. McCook's population jumped to 7,678 in 1950 and gradually rose to 8,404 in 1980. Since that time its population has steadily declined to 7,446 in 2020.

Red Willow County—founded in 1873—has experienced a similar trend in population (Table 1.2). After counting 3,044 residents in 1880, the county's population surged over the next decades to 13,859 in 1930. During the depression in the 1930s, Red Willow County's population dipped to 11,951 in 1940. Since 1940, the county's total population has ranged from 12,977 in 1950 to 10,702 in 2020.

1880	-	3,044
1890	2,346	8,837
1900	2,445	9,604
1910	3,765	11,056
1920	4,303	11,434
1930	6,688	13,859
1940	6,212	11,951
1950	7,678	12,977
1960	8,301	12,940
1970	8,285	12,191
1980	8,404	12,615
1990	8,112	11,705
2000	7,996	11,450
2010	7,698	11,055
2020	7,446	10,702

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System.

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Peer Communities

Communities with similar characteristics make for a nice comparison to understand trends across the state—these communities were selected based on the 2020 census. Of the peer communities, only Alliance peaked at the same time as McCook in 1980. Three communities—Crete, Gering, and Seward—recorded their highest populations in 2020 (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Peer Community Population Change

Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Alliance	9,920	9,765	8,959	8,491	8,151
Blair	6,418	6,860	7,512	7,990	7,790
Crete	4,872	4,841	6,028	6,960	7,099
Gering	7,760	7,946	7,751	8,500	8,564
Nebraska City	7,127	6,547	7,228	7,289	7,222
Seward	5,713	5,641	6,319	6,964	7,643
York	7,723	7,940	8,081	7,766	8,066
McCook	8,404	8,112	7,996	7,698	7,446

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System

In addition to population comparisons, Table 1.4 reveals trends related to median age, household size, and median household income. Of the peer communities, McCook has the second highest median age at 40.7 years, the lowest average household size at 2.26, and the second lowest median household income at \$51,711.

Median Household Income

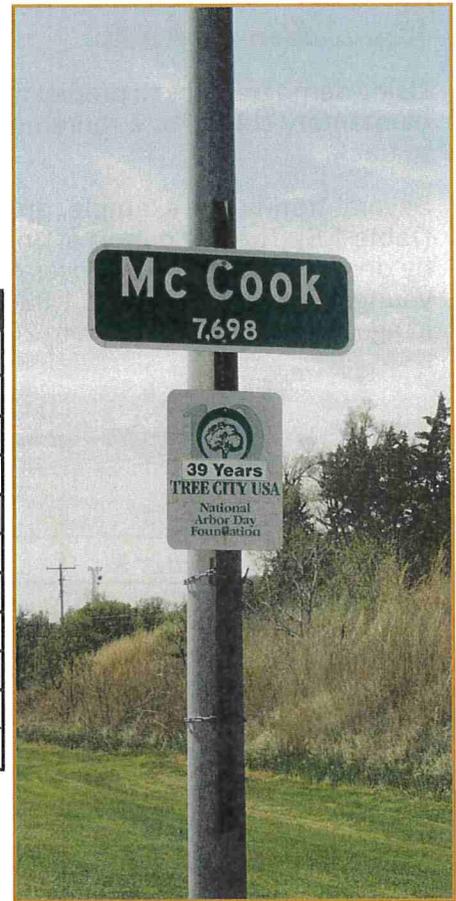
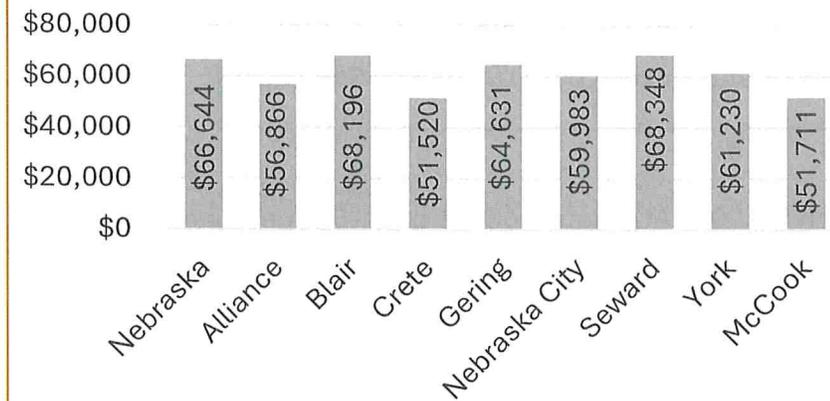


Table 1.4: Peer Community Comparisons

Community	Median Age	Average Household Size
Nebraska	36.7	2.48
Alliance	38.5	2.32
Blair	39.2	2.49
Crete	31.5	2.7
Gering	35.9	2.49
Nebraska City	38.1	2.51
Seward	30.6	2.52
York	40.8	2.27
McCook	40.7	2.26

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System

Population Cohorts

Using demographics to predict community change is critical. Planning for future needs, possibly a new elementary school or a retirement facility, based on population trends is important for a community to track.

Several trends, for example, appear for McCook based on population estimates for 2010 and 2020 (Table 1.5). The age cohort of under 19 years of age, for example, points to a positive trend in McCook by demonstrating a slight overall increase in the four categories representing those who are 19 and younger (1,872 in 2010 and 1,938 in 2020). Additionally, the three categories that represent those 65+ in age slightly decreased from 2010 to 2020 (1,623 to 1,527).

Table 1.5: Population Based on *Estimated* 2010 and 2020 Census Data

Age	Number (2010)	Percent (2010)	Number (2020)	Percent (2020)
Under 5	528	6.8	413	5.5
5 to 9	390	5	393	5.2
10 to 14	440	5.7	487	6.4
15 to 19	514	6.7	645	8.5
20 to 24	525	6.8	536	7.1
25 to 34	828	10.7	803	10.6
35 to 44	809	10.5	858	11.4
45 to 54	1,147	14.8	845	11.2
55 to 59	552	7.1	389	5.1
60 to 64	373	4.8	609	8.1
65 to 74	705	9.1	742	9.8
75 to 84	546	7.1	426	5.6
85 and older	372	4.8	409	5.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System.

Interesting to note as well, that based on the 2021 ACS data McCook has 1,504 people over the age of 65 and dividing that based on gender there are 637 males and 867 females which is a typical scenario across the Great Plains and Midwest in general. Finally, the median age decreased from 43.0 to 40.7 from 2010 to 2020.

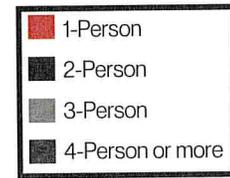
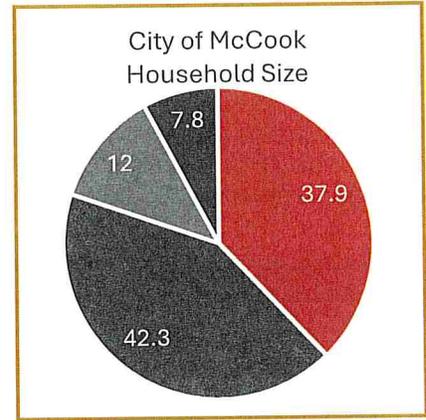
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Family Dynamics

Families are a fundamental structure for any community, including McCook. Family is defined as a group of one or more parents and their children living together as a unit. Providing opportunities to all members of the community is critical and the City of McCook is able to make decisions based on family data. In addition to defining family, a household is considered a “family household” when at least one member of the household is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

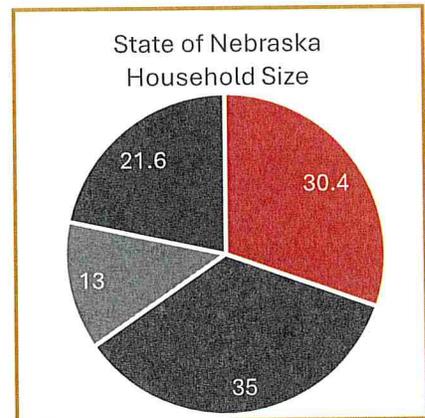
According to census data, there are 3,184 total households (or housing units) in McCook and a total of 1,776 families (55.8 percent) and 1,408 non-family households (44.2 percent). For the entire State of Nebraska, those numbers are 785,982 total households, 495,142 (63.0 percent) families, and 290,840 (37.0 percent) non-family households.

In regard to household size, McCook has 1,206 one-person households, 1,348 two-person households, 383 three-person households, and 247 four-or-more households. These numbers significantly vary in comparison to the State of Nebraska (Table 1.6).

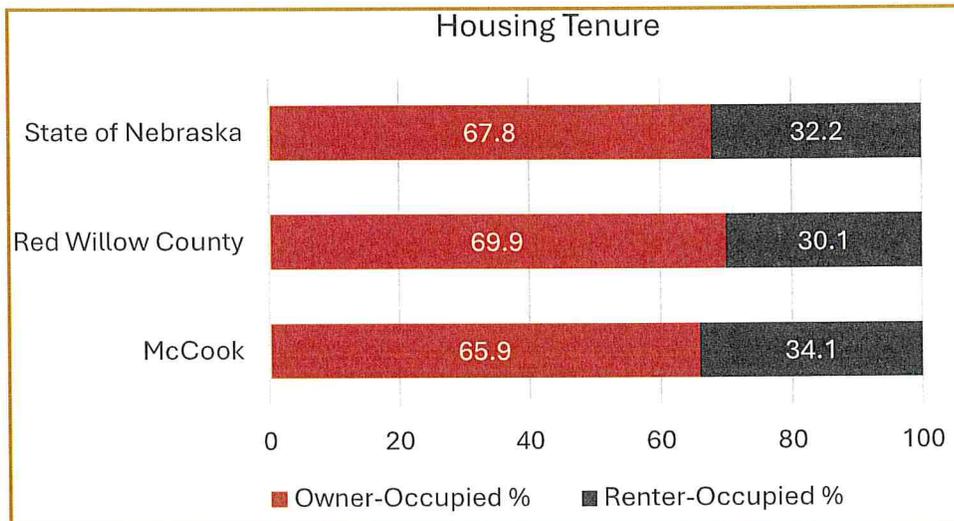


Household Size	City of McCook	State of Nebraska
1-Person	1,206	238,923
2-Person	1,348	275,089
3-Person	383	101,844
4-Person or more	247	170,126
Total Households	3,184	785,982

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).



Finally, it is important to note that 65.9 percent of the housing units is owner-occupied while 34.1 percent is renter-occupied in McCook—data for the State of Nebraska are similar at 67.8 percent owner-occupied and 32.2 percent renter-occupied.



Race/Ethnicity

Race and/or ethnicity is another way to analyze population. McCook in 2020 registered a total population of 7,446. Of that number, 6,544 (87.9 percent) were listed as Caucasian in McCook, followed by 572 (7.7 percent) Hispanic/Latino, 39 (0.5 percent) African-American, and 21 (0.3 percent) Native American (Table 1.7). In comparison, the State of Nebraska with a total population of 1,961,504 in 2020, was 75.7 percent (1,484,687) Caucasian, 12.0 percent (234,715) Hispanic, 4.8 percent (94,405) African-American, 2.7 percent (52,359) Asian, and 0.8 percent (15,051) Native American (Table 1.7).

Ethnicity	City of McCook		State of Nebraska	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Caucasian	6,544	87.9	1,484,687	75.7
Hispanic/Latino	572	7.7	234,715	12
African-American	39	0.5	94,405	4.8
Native American	21	0.3	15,051	0.8
Asian	0	0	52,359	2.7

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

People with Disabilities

Accessibility concerns are also considerations for the City of McCook. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 56.7 million adults in the United States live with a disability. These concerns relate to community design, development, and maintenance of community assets. A number of McCook’s residents live with a disability, many are 65+ in age (ACS 2021). For example, 417 McCook residents (263 over 65+) listed a hearing difficulty, 100 have vision difficulty (34 over 65+), 508 have cognitive concerns (111 over 65+), 439 listed ambulatory issues (249 over 65+), and 277 stated independent living difficulty (184 over 65+) (Tables 1.8 and 1.9).

Public spaces, community amenities, and community events should accommodate individuals with disabilities when possible. ADA-compliant ramps and amenities are simple design standards that address accessibility.

Disability	People
Hearing	417
Vision	100
Cognitive	508
Ambulatory	439
Independent Living	277

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

Age Group	People
Age Under 5	0
Age 5 to 17	31
Age 18 to 64	766
Over Age 65	512

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

Population Projections

Population composition and trends are important considerations when determining projections for a community’s future population. Projections help determine a city’s future land use and community service needs and policies. The various scenarios presented in this comprehensive plan present different outcomes—decline or growth—which guide decision-makers in the planning process. Revisiting the comprehensive plan regularly is important and will encourage community leaders to stay active and aware of community needs.

Since the community’s peak in population in 1980, McCook has lost 958 residents or -11.4 percent of its population. Table 1.10 presents McCook’s population change by decade since 1980, with declines ranging from -3.7 percent to -1.4 percent. Table 1.11 looks ahead and presents four different scenarios based on population estimates ranging from -3.0 percent to +3.0 percent from 2020 to 2050 by decade. Over the course of multiple decades, even a slight change by percent equals a significant population change—growth or decline.

Table 1.10: Population Change 1980-2020

Year	Population	Percent Change
1980	8,404	-
1990	8,112	-3.5
2000	7,996	-1.4
2010	7,698	-3.7
2020	7,446	-3.3

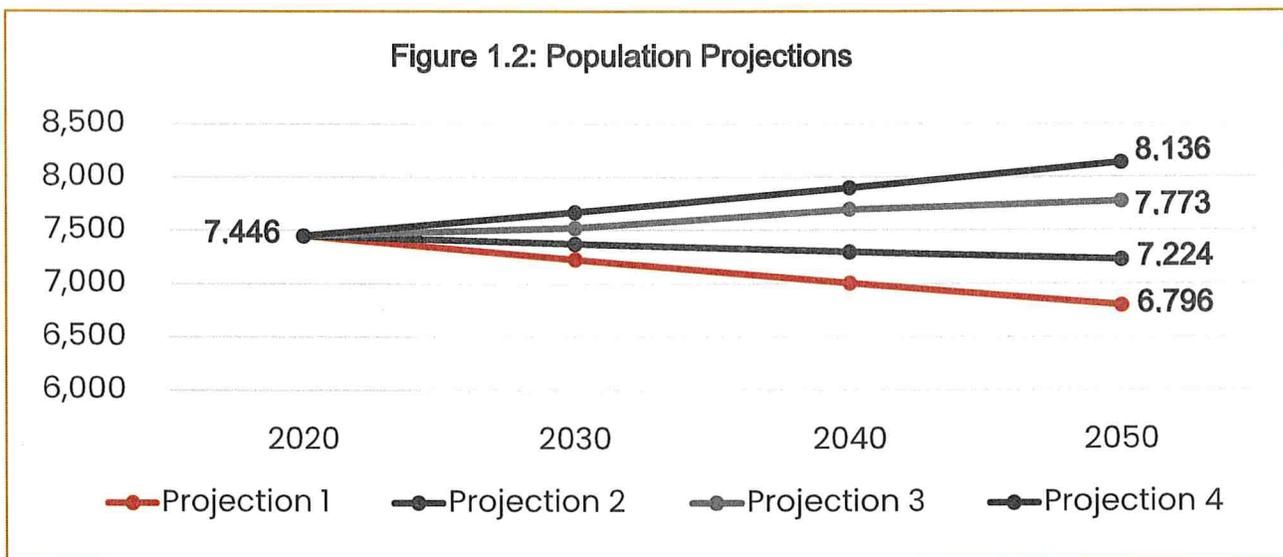
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System.

While the loss or creation of a major employer or local industry can have a tremendous impact on a community like McCook, in general the numbers demonstrate a need to market and promote the community. McCook has numerous positive and significant resources, selling “place” should be a priority and is key for its future.

Table 1.11: Population Projections and Estimates 2020-2050
2020 Population: 7,446

Projections	2030		2040		2050	
	Population	Change	Population	Change	Population	Change
-3%	7,223	-223	7,006	-217	6,796	-210
-1%	7,371	-75	7,297	-74	7,224	-73
1%	7,521	75	7,696	75	7,773	77
3%	7,669	223	7,899	230	8,136	237

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System.



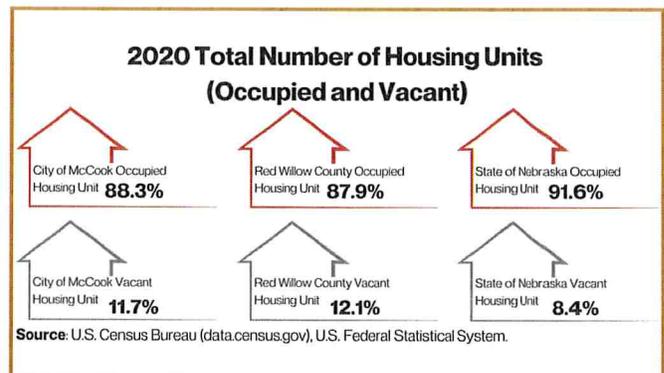


Housing

Housing is a critical piece to McCook’s prosperity. The city must seek ways to assess and improve housing options by identifying housing priorities and ways to encourage development of housing options. Inviting, well-maintained housing attracts potential residents and predicting future demand is a priority. Issues related to aging housing stock are concerns if older homes no longer address the needs of today’s buyers. Housing in conjunction with demographics will assist City leaders to find appropriate market improvements for community success.

Occupancy Characteristics

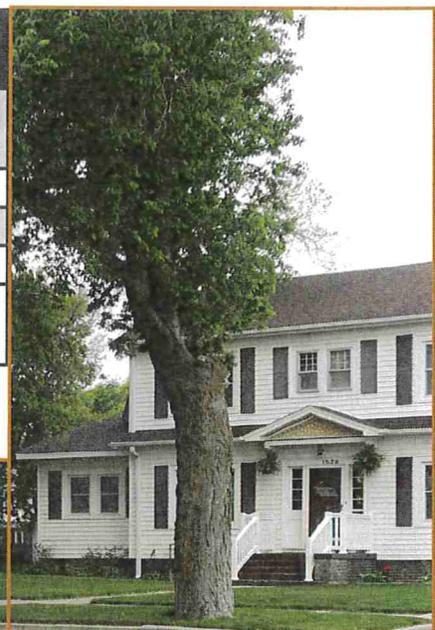
Tables 1.12, 1.13, and 1.14 reflect housing data, including total number of units, occupied housing data, housing tenure, and year structure built for McCook, Red Willow County, and the State of Nebraska for comparison. McCook and Red Willow County are similar in most categories, occupied and vacant rates are no exceptions with the State of Nebraska having a slightly lower rate of vacant housing (Table 1.13).



**Table 1.12: 2020 Total Number of Housing Units
(Occupied and Vacant)**

Location	Total Housing Units	Occupied	Vacant
City of McCook	3,688	3,258	430
Red Willow County	5,157	4,532	625
State of Nebraska	844,278	773,312	70,966

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System.

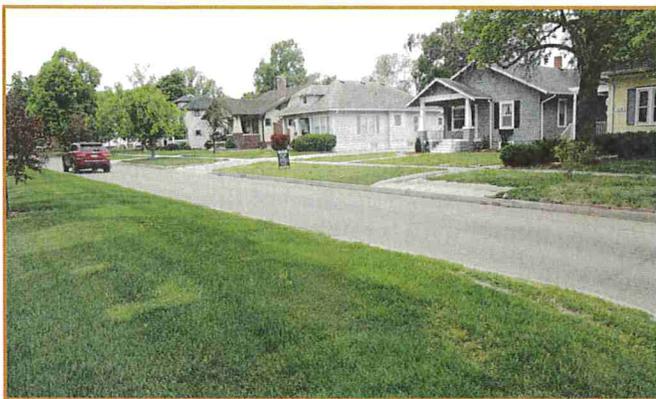


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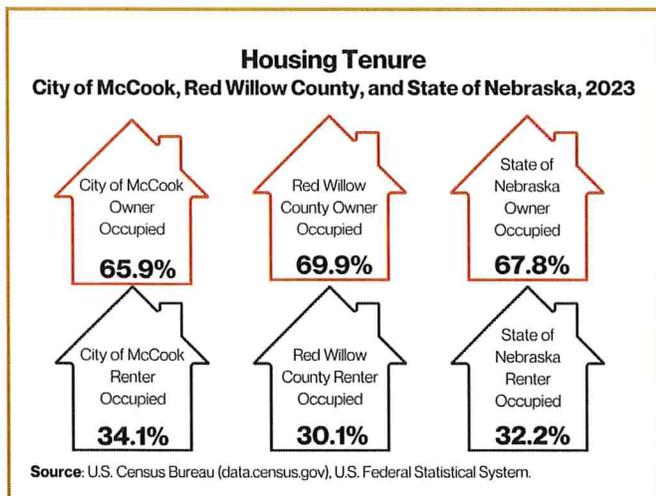
A similar situation is found in occupied housing units with McCook and Red Willow County having higher percentages of 1-person and 2-person households and the State of Nebraska having higher rates in 3-person and 4-person households (Table 1.13).

Location	Total	1-Person		2-Person		3-Person		4-Person	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City of McCook	3,184	1,206	37.9	1,348	42.3	383	12.0	247	7.8
Red Willow County	4,328	1,562	36.1	1,820	42.1	480	11.1	466	10.8
State of Nebraska	785,982	238,923	30.4	275,089	35.0	275,089	13.0	170,126	21.6

Source: ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com.

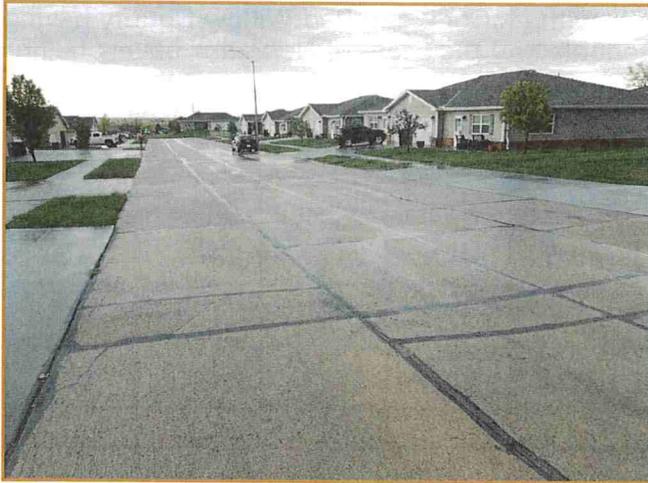


Evaluating average household size indicates that McCook is slightly below the county and state (Table 1.14). Examining housing tenure demonstrates little variance between the three, while year built dramatically varies with McCook and Red Willow County having a higher percentage of older homes (Table 1.15).



Location	2020
City of McCook	2.26
Red Willow County	2.39
State of Nebraska	2.44

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).



Age of Housing Stock

Age of housing stock is reflected in McCook’s population data. Aging or dated housing impacts the community’s ability to recruit new residents, which is an important variable to consider. Both McCook and Red Willow County are similar in that well over half of the houses were constructed prior to 1960, in comparison the State of Nebraska which registered just over 31 percent in that age category (Table 1.15). Moreover, McCook and Red Willow County both have well over 75 percent of their housing stock built before 1980. In comparison, the State of Nebraska is at just over 57 percent.

Older properties are not liabilities simply based on age, but older homes do require continual upkeep and maintenance. Additionally, many older homes were constructed on smaller lots (often fifty feet in width) and contain smaller bedrooms than what the market demands today.

Table 1.15: Year Structure Built (Number and By Percent)

Year Built	City of McCook	Percent	Red Willow County	Percent	State of Nebraska	Percent
2020 or later	0	0.0	0	0.0	5,012	0.6
2010 to 2019	17	0.5	94	2.2	76,078	9.7
2000 to 2009	136	4.3	245	5.7	94,225	12.0
1980 to 1999	510	16.0	692	16.0	158,511	20.2
1960 to 1979	710	22.3	970	22.4	204,612	26.0
1940 to 1959	896	28.1	1,039	24.0	106,315	13.5
1939 or older	915	28.7	1,288	29.8	141,229	18.0

Source: ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com.

Institutionalized Living

The American Community Survey states that McCook has 131 residents in institutionalized living situations. Additionally, it is important to note that 118 of the 131 residents are 65+ years in age.

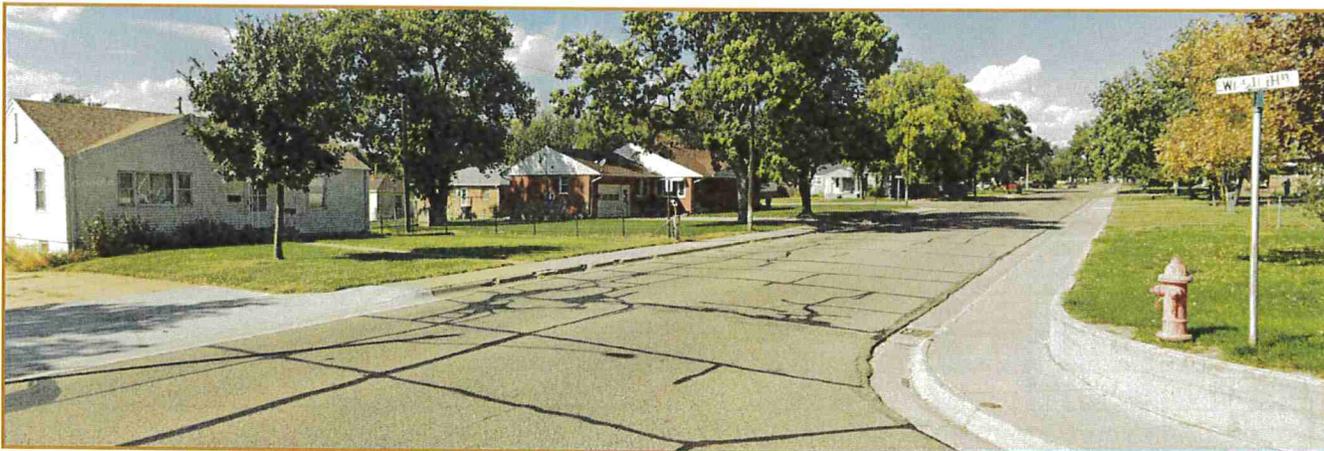
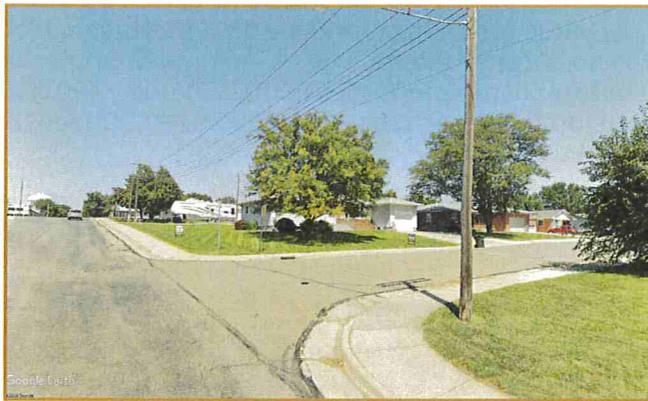


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Vacancy Rates

A healthy vacancy rate typically varies between 2 and 7 percent. High vacancy rates tend to reduce the value of nearby properties, create fire and safety hazards, and impose costs for the local government. In McCook's case, the current vacancy rate is 11.7 percent—in comparison Red Willow County is 12.1 percent, and the State of Nebraska is at 8.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau (data.census.gov), U.S. Federal Statistical System).

Adequate housing is essential to support economic growth. A small percentage of vacant properties is necessary to attract new residents and create an atmosphere of a healthy housing market tied to job creation and recruitment efforts. A tight housing market, for example, can increase housing prices and make it more challenging for employers to recruit additional employees. In 2023 a quick search on realtor.com found that McCook had forty-six listings—thirty-five single-family homes, two multi-family homes, two mobile homes, and seven residential lots available for development. In early 2025 realtor.com was once again searched and McCook currently has forty-six single-family homes for sale, one multi-family property, four condo properties, and twenty-two vacant lots ready for development.



Housing Value

The median value for owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage is \$131,500, slightly lower than Red Willow County and considerably less than the State of Nebraska. For properties without a mortgage, McCook's median value is \$124,000 which is just over Red Willow County and approximately \$50,000 less than the State of Nebraska.

By value for the properties with a mortgage, McCook and Red Willow County are quite similar which is no surprise (Table 1.16). A majority of properties are in the \$100,000 - \$299,000 range, with another quarter of the properties in the \$50,000 - \$99,999 category. The State of Nebraska is similar in that the majority is also in the \$100,000 - \$299,999 range but the state has more properties in the higher value sectors.

Value	City of McCook	Percent	Red Willow County	Percent	State of Nebraska	Percent
Less than \$50,000	103	10	133	9.8	11,257	3.5
\$50,000 - \$99,999	259	25	304	22.4	22,635	7.1
\$100,000 - \$299,999	621	60	818	60.4	193,435	60.9
\$300,000 - \$499,999	37	3.6	85	6.2	68,791	21.6
\$500,000 - \$749,999	0	0	0	0	15,548	4.9
\$750,000 - \$999,999	15	1.4	15	1.1	3,669	1.2
\$1,000,000+	0	0	0	0	2,415	0.8

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

For properties without a mortgage, similar trends were found (Table 1.17). By percent, all three entities have the highest percent in the \$100,000 - \$199,000 category. Overall, the State of Nebraska has fewer properties in the lower rankings by value and more at the higher end in comparison to McCook and Red Willow County.

In 2022, McCook issued 186 building permits. Of that total, 74.2 percent (138) were residential permits and the remaining 25.8 percent (48) were for commercial structures. Based on dollar amount, residential permits totaled \$3,766,857 and commercial permits totaled \$7,173,507.

Value	City of McCook	Percent	Red Willow County	Percent	State of Nebraska	Percent
Less than \$50,000	200	18.8	339	20.3	25,714	12
\$50,000 - \$99,999	260	24.4	377	22.6	31,170	14.5
\$100,000 - \$199,000	459	43.2	669	40	64,460	30
\$200,000 - \$299,000	100	9.4	206	12.3	47,537	22.1
\$300,000 - \$499,999	43	4	71	4.2	32,746	15.2
\$500,000 - \$749,999	0	0	9	0.5	7,702	3.6
\$750,000 - \$999,999	0	0	0	0	2,691	1.3
\$1,000,000+	0	0	0	0	2,212	1
Median Value	\$124,000		\$121,200		\$174,500	

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

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Substandard Housing Conditions

When evaluating housing units, it is necessary to examine overall condition. Uninhabitable properties should be addressed with removal as a viable option to create infill opportunities. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines, a housing unit is substandard if it lacks complete plumbing or if it qualifies as overcrowded. HUD defines adequate plumbing as a property with hot and cold piped water, a bathtub or shower, along with a flush toilet. Overcrowding is more than one person per room.

According to census data, substandard housing in McCook does not appear to be a serious concern. All 3,184 occupied housing units have plumbing facilities, 3,104 have complete kitchen facilities, and only 69 do not have telephone service. Additionally, all 3,184 properties have 1.0 or less occupants per room (ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com).

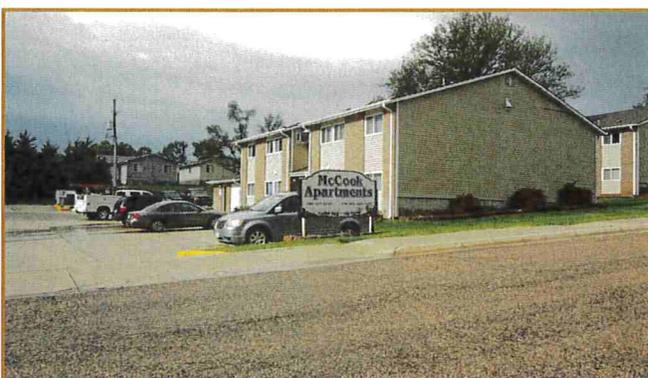
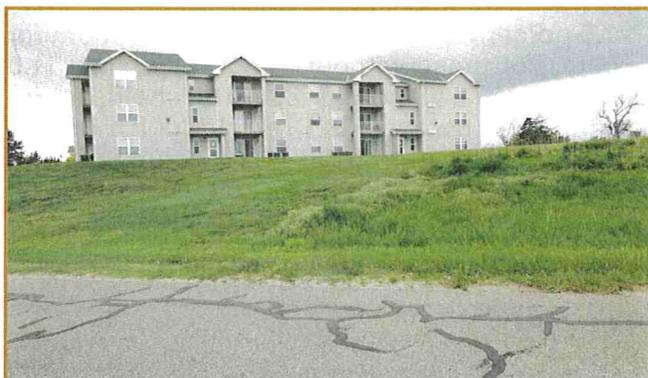
Affordable Housing Options

The McCook Housing Authority provided data regarding affordable housing. The housing authority currently has sixty-six one-bedroom units, six two-bedroom units, six three-bedroom units, and a total of eighty-six total subsidized units. The authority also has eighty Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) and is currently utilizing approximately forty-five based on available funding. HCV is where a tenant lives in a private rental and the authority subsidizes the rent.

The McCook Housing Authority covers an area from Beaver City to Stratton and north to Curtis with a majority of vouchers being utilized in McCook. In addition to the McCook Housing Authority, the McCook Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has partnered with Mesner Development to construct Clary Village and Quillan Courts.

Clary Village consists of eight duplexes (twelve two-bedroom units and four three-bedroom units) while Quillan Courts contains four single family five-bedroom units, eight four-bedroom units, and four three-bedroom units.

Beyond that there is the Southwest Nebraska Community Betterment Corporation (SWNCBC) that looks to create funding opportunities to improve housing and economic development. Finally, Southwest Nebraska Habitat for Humanity also helps families and potential homeowners build and improve housing stock.



Housing Affordability Analysis

The 28/36 Rule states that a person should not spend more than 28 percent of their gross monthly income on housing-related costs and less than 36 percent should be spent on total debts. For owner-occupied households with a mortgage, in McCook roughly 12.3 percent of households with a mortgage spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing related costs (Table 1.18). For households without a mortgage, 14.5 percent of households were in that range (Table 1.19). In comparison, for the State of Nebraska for households with a mortgage some 21.8 percent are in the 30.0 percent or more for costs. For those without a mortgage, only 11.5 percent were above the 30.0 threshold. As for value, 60.0 percent (621) of McCook’s homes range in value from \$100,000 to \$299,999 with another 103 homes less than \$50,000 and fifteen that are greater than \$750,000 (Table 1.20).

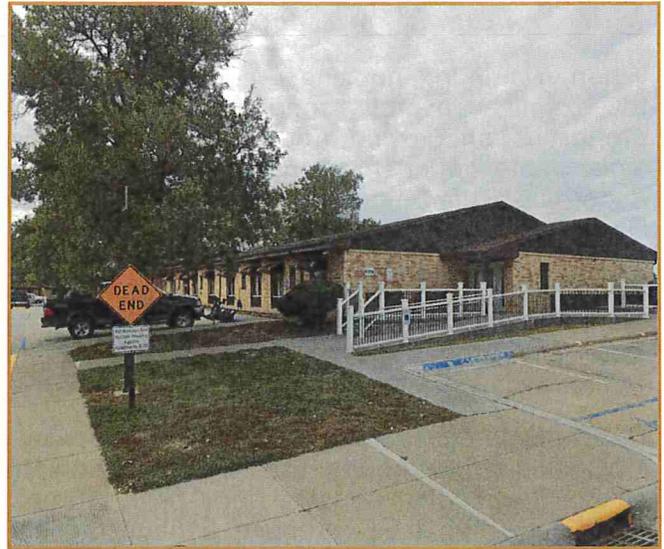


Table 1.18: Selected Monthly Owner Cost (With Mortgage)

Categories by %	With Mortgage (1,035 Units)	Percent
20.0 or Less	747	72.2
20.0 – 24.9	115	11.1
25.0 – 29.9	45	4.3
30.0 – 34.9	16	1.5
35.0+	112	10.8

Source: American Community Survey 2021; mysidewalk.com.

Table 1.19: Selected Monthly Owner Cost (Without Mortgage)

Categories by %	Without Mortgage (1,052 Units)	Percent
10.0 or Less	380	36.1
10.0 – 14.9	171	16.3
15.0 – 19.9	149	14.2
20 – 24.9	177	16.8
25.0 – 29.9	22	2.1
30.0 – 34.9	101	9.6
35.0 or more	52	4.9

Source: American Community Survey 2021; mysidewalk.com.



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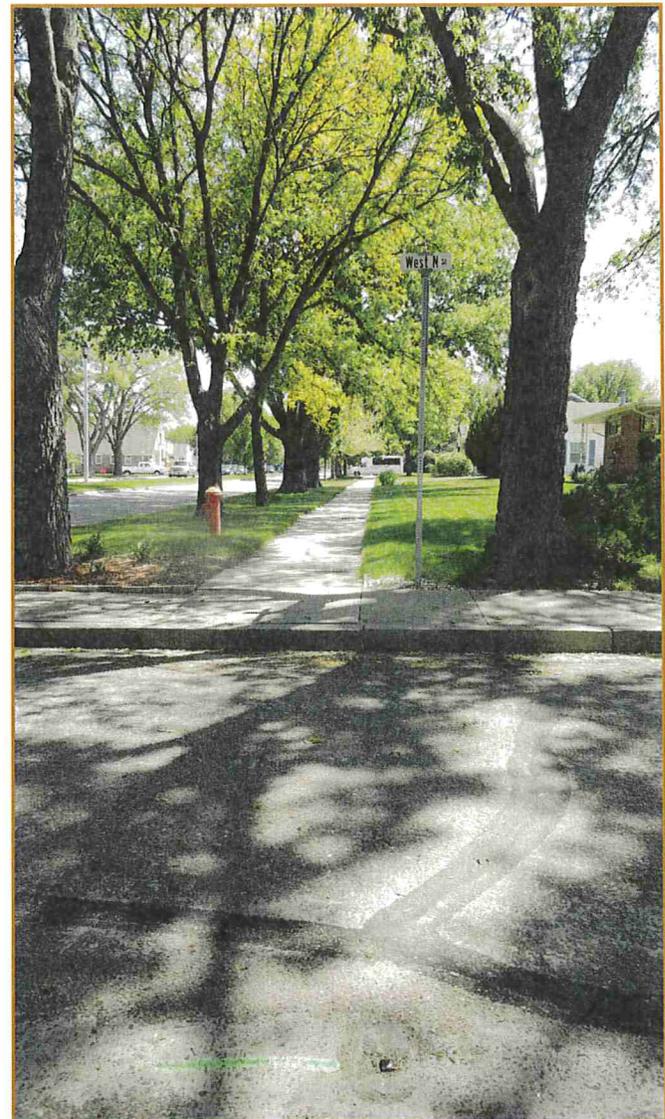
Table 1.20: Owner Occupied Housing Units with a Mortgage	
Value	Number of Homes
\$50,000 or Less	103
\$50,000 – \$99,999	259
\$100,000 – \$299,999	621
\$300,000 – \$499,999	37
\$500,000 – \$749,999	0
\$750,000 – \$999,999	15
\$1,000,000+	0
Median: \$131,500	
Source: American Community Survey 2021; mysidewalk.com.	

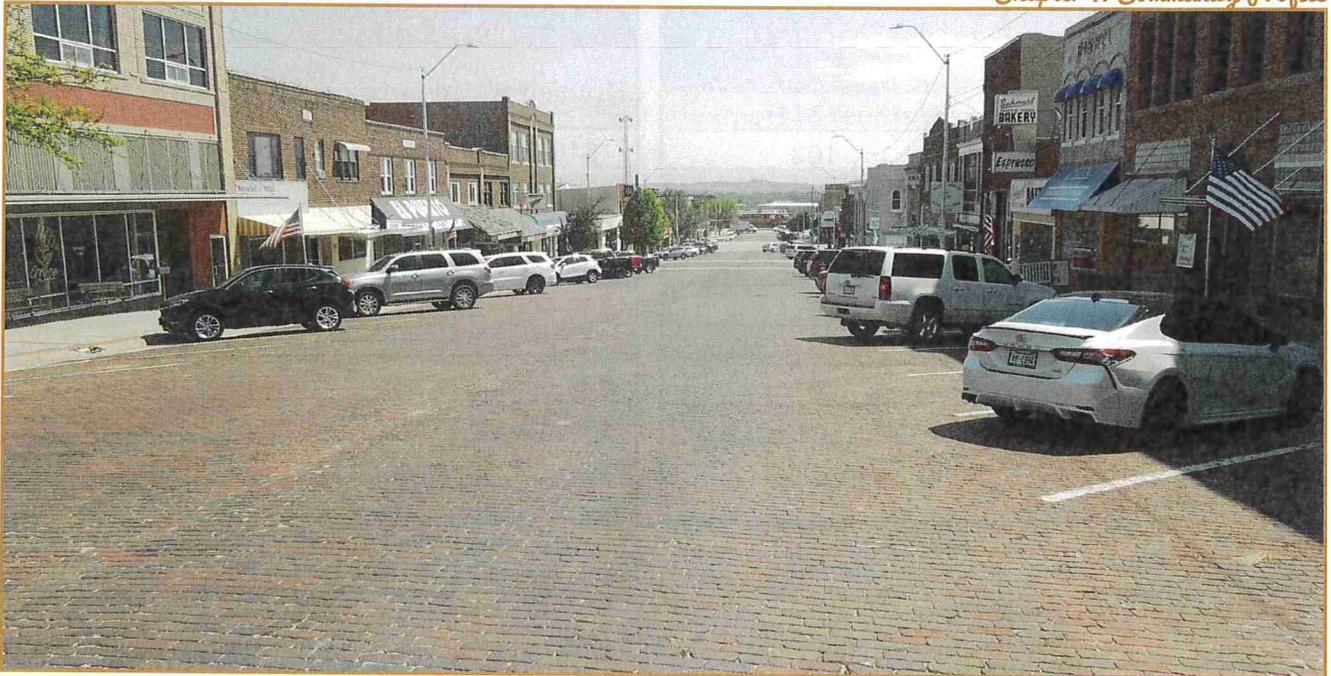
Table 1.21: Household Income		
Household Income	Number of Units Needed	Percent
\$10,000 or Less	127	4
\$10,000 – \$14,999	245	7.7
\$15,000 – \$24,999	363	11.4
\$25,000 – \$34,999	373	11.7
\$35,000 – \$49,999	471	14.8
\$50,000 – \$74,999	541	17
\$75,000 – \$99,999	443	13.9
\$100,000 – \$149,999	267	8.4
\$150,000 – \$199,999	252	7.9
\$200,000+	101	3.2
Source: American Community Survey 2021; mysidewalk.com.		

Household Income

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

McCook has the greatest number of households (541) in the \$50,000 – \$74,999 income category, closely followed by the two categories above and below that mark (Table 1.21). Over 100 households are found in the two rankings at the extremes, both high and low.





Economy

The ability to predict development needs and future land uses relies heavily on economic trends and an analysis of local economic factors is a critical component of a comprehensive plan. Although no one development strategy fits all communities, economic development is a major goal of planning efforts. This does, however, require active engagement by the community, its leadership, organizations, institutions, and the business community as well. The private sector is the primary economic engine, but the public sector plays an essential role.

Labor Force

Labor force is a critical consideration for any community. Playing a part in job creation, attracting new residents, and growing the tax base are fundamental issues for a community. An examination of workforce only includes residents who are sixteen years or older.

Moreover, of that eligible number 3,919 (94.2 percent) are employed and 241 (5.8 percent) are unemployed (ACS 2021). According to census data, 6,143 people are 16+ years of age in McCook and of that number 4,160 are eligible to be counted in the labor force. In McCook of the total population 16+ years of age, just over half (50.7 percent) are females, with 1,948 in the labor force (ACS 2021). The Federal Reserve Economic Data has a much lower number, noting that Red Willow County's current unemployment rate is 1.7 percent and the Nebraska Department of Labor has it even lower at 1.5 percent (<https://fred.stlouisfed.org>; <https://dol.nebraska.gov>). In comparison, the Federal Reserve has Nebraska's current unemployment rate at 2.1 percent.

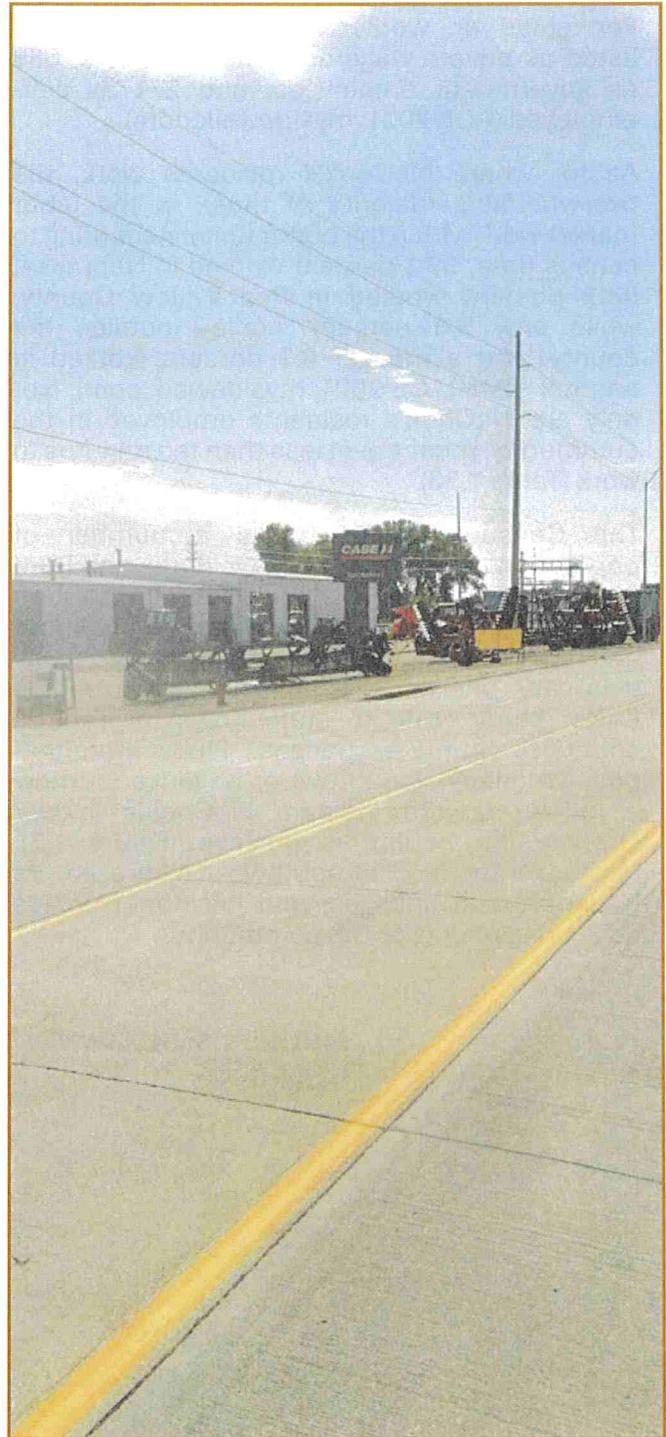
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For labor participation rate, McCook registered 63.8 percent and Red Willow County was at 62.2 percent. In comparison, the State of Nebraska stood at 66.4 percent in 2021 (ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com). Additionally, of those actively engaged in the labor force, 3,818 commute to work—3,414 drove alone, 151 carpoled, 108 walked, and 144 work from home—and the mean travel time in McCook is 13.2 minutes. McCook’s employed residents fill a variety of occupations, with Education Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance (909), Retail Trade (579), and Manufacturing (440) occupying the top three spots (Table 1.22).

Table 1.22: McCook’s Labor Force by Occupation

Occupation	Number
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing/ Hunting, Mining	95
Construction	246
Manufacturing	440
Wholesale Trade	140
Retail Trade	579
Transportation Warehousing, and Utilities	339
Information	42
Finance and Insurance, Real Estate	150
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative	224
Education Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	909
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	288
Other Services, Except Public Administration	194
Public Administration	273

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).



For class or worker segment, 2,959 were listed as private wage and salary workers, 689 as government employees, and 271 as self-employed (ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com).

As for where McCook’s residents work, the overwhelming majority of those in the labor market work within the community. According to census data, 99.1 percent worked in Nebraska, 93.2 percent worked in Red Willow County, while only 5.8 percent worked outside the county, and a meager 0.9 percent worked in another state (ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com). Not only are McCook’s residents employed in the community, most travel less than ten minutes to work (Table 1.23)

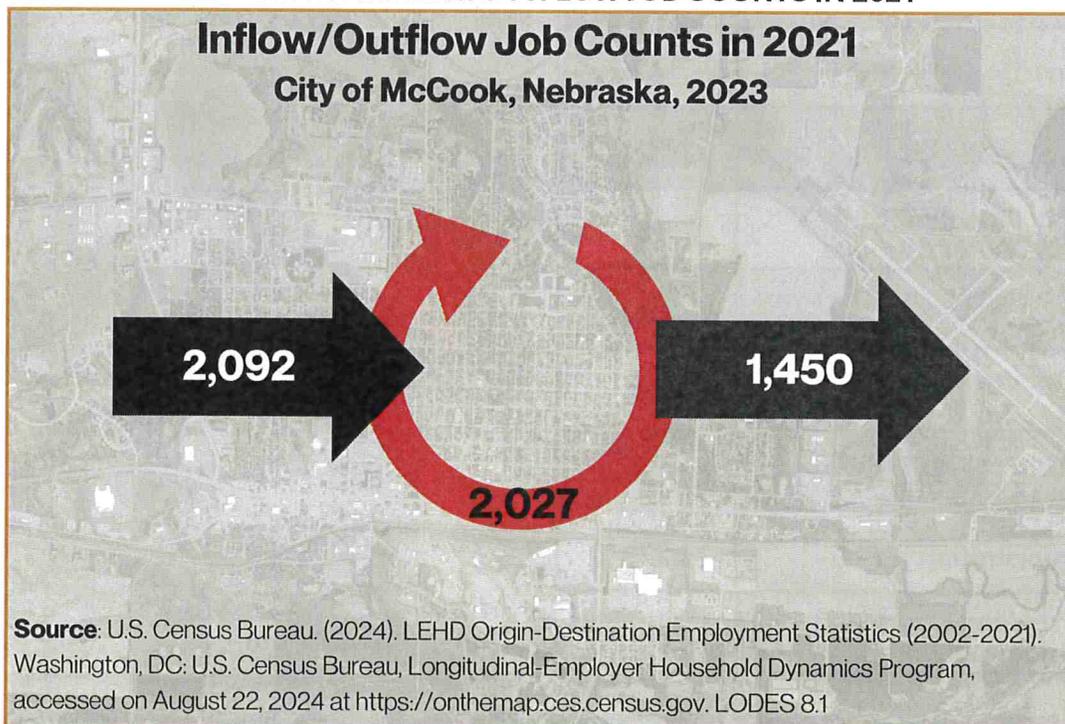
Table 1.23: Travel Time to Work in Minutes

Minutes	Percent
10 or Less	59.3
10 – 14	19
15 – 19	5.8
20 – 24	3.6
25 – 29	2.3
30 – 34	1.3
35 – 44	0.3
45 – 59	1.3
60+	7.1

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

The Census Bureau tracks a number of population movements or flows (Ihrke and Burd 2014). An obvious example is overall migration patterns, others might examine employment and labor trend flows. The scale of analysis may also vary, one could examine region to region flows, study state to state flows, or explore county to county exchanges. Flows are either positive (inflow > outflow) or negative (outflow > inflow). Data indicate McCook’s Inflow/Outflow job counts is positive (Figure 1.3). McCook’s location in southwest Nebraska, its transportation linkages, and job opportunities daily bring people to the community.

FIGURE 1.3: INFLOW/OUTFLOW JOB COUNTS IN 2021



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Educational Attainment

In a rapidly changing economy, skill requirements for employment are constantly changing. Workforce training and education programs must keep pace with changing requirements to prepare students and workers for jobs in the short-term and careers in the long-term. Community leaders often look for ways to close skill gaps and address mismatches that exist between supply of and demand for workers.

Obtaining additional education typically, although not always, provides the ability to earn a higher income over a lifetime. In comparison to the State of Nebraska, McCook does show slight variations in educational attainment for those ages 18-24 and 25+ in population (Table 1.24). For the younger category, McCook had a much lower level of “some college” in contrast to the state. For those ages 25+ it is interesting to note that the State of Nebraska had a higher percentage at both ends of the spectrum but similar with the remaining categories.

Table 1.24: Educational Attainment, Ages 18-24 and 25+				
Ages 18-24	City of McCook	Percent	State of Nebraska	Percent
Less Than High School	34	4.5	22,296	1.5
High School Graduate	278	3.7	56,117	3.9
Some College	299	40	82,348	56.6
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	137	18.3	28,193	19.4
Ages 25+	City of McCook	Percent	State of Nebraska	Percent
Less Than 9 th Grade	71	1.4	48,334	3.7
9 th – 12 th Grade	265	5.2	52,981	4.1
High School Graduate	1,559	30.8	325,200	25.1
Some College	1,257	24.9	281,018	21.7
Associate’s Degree	598	11.8	139,742	10.8
Bachelor’s Degree	937	18.5	286,510	22.1
Graduate or Professional	371	7.3	159,751	12.3

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).



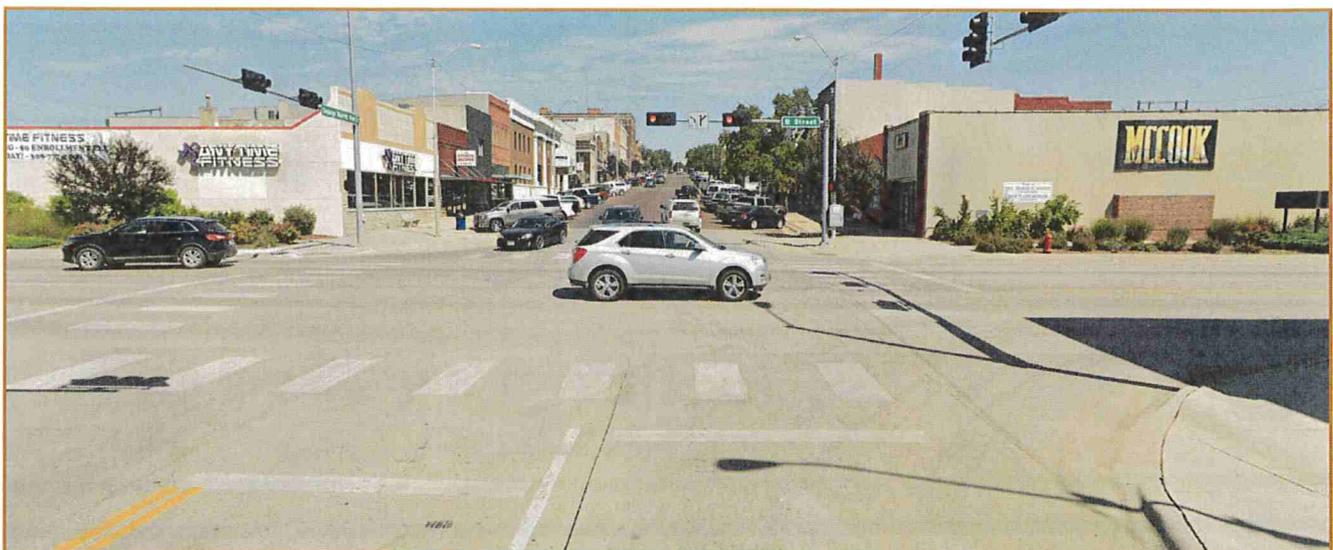
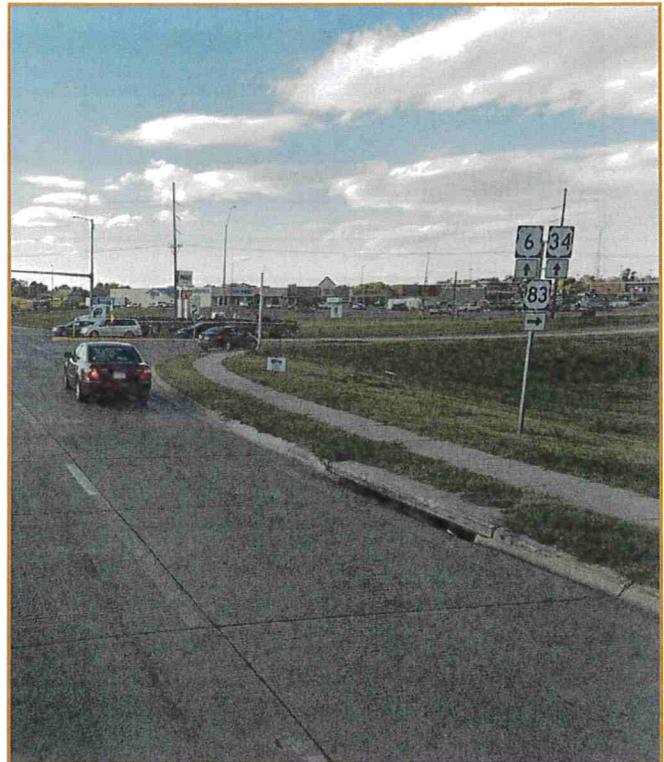
Poverty Levels

As reported by the ACS, 371 households in McCook are below the poverty threshold which totals 11.7 percent of all households in the community. In comparison, for the State of Nebraska the number is 10.8 percent. Additionally, seventy-six households received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and another 207 received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or public assistance) benefits, which combined equals 8.9 percent of households in McCook (ACS 2021; mysidewalk.com). “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” (SNAP) is income-based assistance that offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. The Food and Nutrition Service works with state agencies, nutrition educators, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about applying for the program and can access benefits.

Commercial Hubs

It is important that McCook capitalize on its location and transportation linkages. The community has a number of both residential and commercial opportunities, and fostering marketing campaigns, tourism, and commercial developments will only strengthen the community’s tax base.

Running north-south through the heart of the community, Norris Avenue offers a variety of traditional retail opportunities based on several transportation options—including pedestrian activity. Highways 6/34 run somewhat parallel to the rail line on the community’s south side and Highway 83 is found on the community’s west side. Both corridors offer several commercial opportunities with easy access. Whether a more traditional commercial endeavor along Norris Avenue or ventures that require more space along one of the highways, McCook should promote and encourage commercial activity and economic growth which is ultimately a quality of life issue for the entire community.



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Local Industry

Census data reports industry by type and Table 1.25 reveals McCook’s breakdown into five major categories—Management, Business, Science, and Arts; Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance; Production, Transportation, and Material Moving; Sales and Office; and Service. Those five employment categories are further subdivided with random examples of employment.

Table 1.26 highlights the diverse educational accomplishments found in McCook’s residents which has an obvious connection to employment. Of those with bachelor’s degrees, Science and Engineering (326) leads the way, followed by Science and Engineering Related Fields (264), Education (255), Business (240), and Arts, Humanities (223).

Table 1.25: Full-Time Civil Employment Population 16+, with Random Examples of Employment

Employment Category	Number	%
Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	929	36.3
Management, Business, Financial	321	
Computer, Engineering, Science	125	
Education, Legal, Community Service	255	
Healthcare Practitioners	228	
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	235	9.2
Construction and Extraction	117	
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	649	25.3
Transportation	213	
Material Moving	128	
Sales and Office Occupations	499	19.5
Service Occupations	250	9.8
Protective Services (Law Enforcement)	23	
Total	3972	

Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

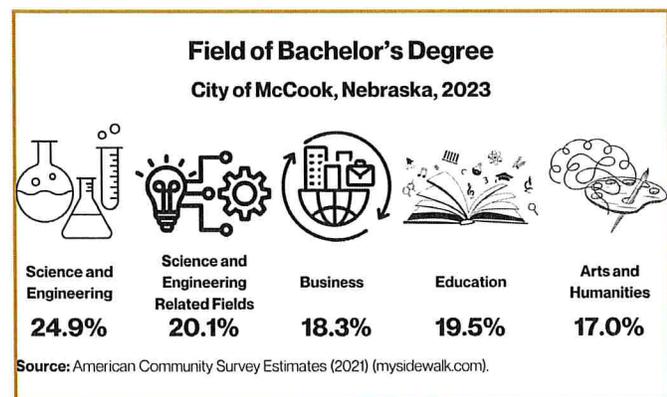


Table 1.26: Field of Bachelor’s Degree

Major/Degree	Number
Science and Engineering	326
Science and Engineering Related Fields	264
Business	240
Education	255
Arts, Humanities	223

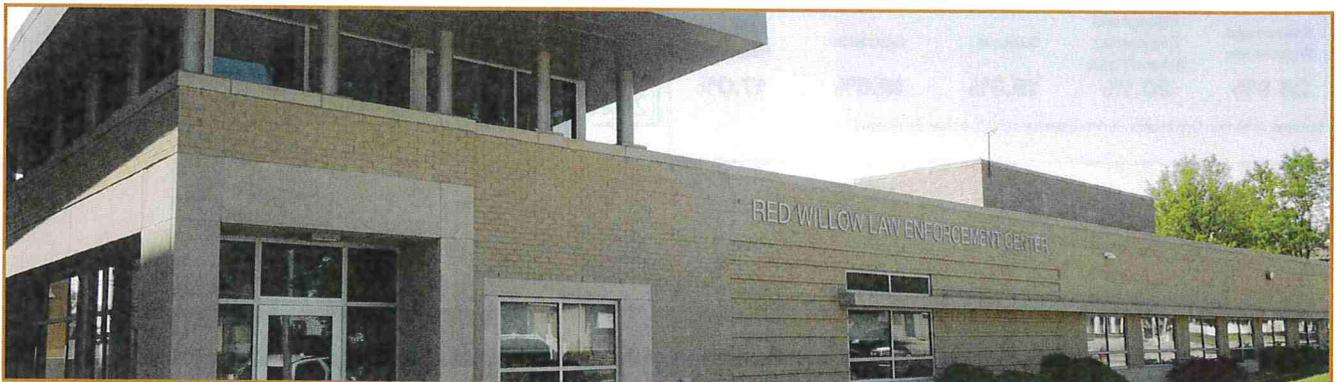
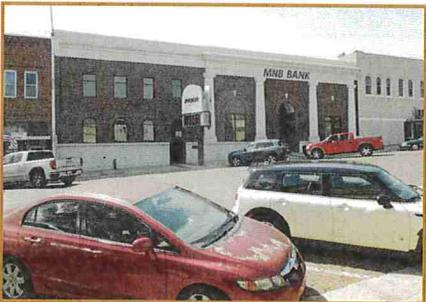
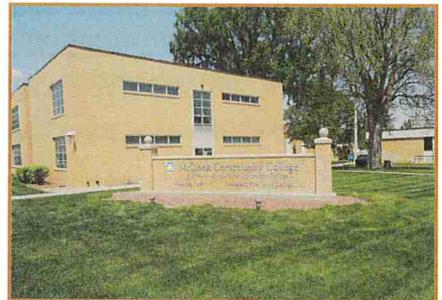
Source: American Community Survey Estimates (2021) (mysidewalk.com).

McCook has a broad employment base and the largest employers are found in Table 1.27. Public entities stand out—public schools and the community college—as do several private companies—Wal-Mart and MNB Financial Services.



Table 1.27: Largest Employers	
Employer	Employees
McCook Community Hospital	330
Wal-Mart	240
Parker-Hannafin	231
Valmont	219
McCook Public Schools	200
McCook Community College	167
Hillcrest Nursing Home	100
NDCS Work Ethic Camp	98
City of McCook	80
MNB Financial Services	76
McCook Community Clinic	65

Source: McCook Economic Development Corporation and McCook Chamber of Commerce.



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Shop Local Initiatives

McCook continues to nurture quality relationships with state and regional resources for economic development, including the West Central Nebraska Development District. Several options exist to support local and state development incentives.

Nebraska Rural Advantage

Nebraska Rural Advantage was designed to create a business climate that makes Nebraska the preferred location for starting and growing a business. Nebraska Rural Advantage offers Levels One and Two. With an investment comes refundable credits and wage credits. View the Nebraska Economic Development Department website for more information on the Nebraska Rural Advantage.

Nebraska Advantage Microenterprise Tax Credit Act

Nebraska Advantage Microenterprise Tax Credit Act provides a 20 percent refundable investment tax credit to micro businesses on new investment in targeted communities. The credit is geared to companies with five or fewer employees, including start-ups. View the Nebraska Department of Revenue website for more information on the Microenterprise Tax Credit Act.

Rural Enterprise Assistance Program (REAP) Business Loans

The Rural Enterprise Assistance Program provides counseling, technical assistance, and training for small business owners as well as low interest loans to small businesses with five employees or less.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is primarily designed to finance the public costs associated with a private development project. Property tax increases resulting from a new development are targeted to repay the public investment required by a project. TIF projects may be commercial, residential, industrial, or mixed use. Generally speaking, TIF funds can be used for land acquisition, public improvements and amenities, infrastructure, and utilities. View the Nebraska's Department of Economic Development website for more information (<https://opportunity.nebraska.gov>).

Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB840)

McCook is able to tap into several programs offered by the State of Nebraska to encourage development. One is the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB840, 1991). This authorizes incorporated cities and villages—if approved by voters—to collect and appropriate local tax dollars (including sales and/or property tax) for economic development purposes. All Nebraska cities and villages are eligible to seek local voter approval of and participate in LB840. Any project or program that provides direct or indirect financial assistance to a qualifying business is an eligible activity for local funds to be collected. Programs, for instance, could include direct loans or grants to qualifying businesses, loan guarantees for qualifying businesses, grants for public work improvements, grants or loans for job training, purchase of real estate, relocation assistance for new residents, construction or rehabilitation for sale or lease of housing for low-income residents or housing projects that a part of a Workforce Housing Plan.

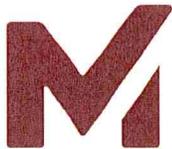
McCook Economic Development Corporation



McCook, Nebraska is a progressive community with several development/funding initiatives. The McCook Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is a privately and publicly funded organization formed by community leaders who

are dedicated to building and maintaining a vibrant business atmosphere in McCook. Formed in 1985, the McCook Economic Development Council's mission is clear—to facilitate the formation, retention, attraction, and expansion of businesses in McCook and the surrounding area. The governing board includes nineteen members in addition to four staff members. The development corporation offers financing opportunities—including LB840 Gap Loan Program and the MEDC Micro-Enterprise Loan Program from \$1,000-\$50,000—in addition to information and assistance related to the Center for Rural Affairs and the Nebraska Enterprise Fund. The McCook Economic Development Corporation is located at 402 Norris Avenue in the Keystone Business Center which is a premier downtown focal point for the community. Renovations completed in 2010, the former Keystone Hotel is an exceptional example of public-private partnership working for the community.

McCook Chamber of Commerce



**MCCOOK CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**

The McCook Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1921, and currently has 226 members, and sponsors several events throughout the year. For example, Bash on the Hills (June), Heritage Days (October), and Noel on Norris (December) are designed to bring people to the community. Crazy Days (June), Back to School (August), Heritage Days (October), and Winter Wonderland

(December) are all meant to promote retailers and restaurants in McCook.

The chamber also hosts quarterly networking events to engage members and demonstrate the chamber's vitality. In addition to quarterly meetings, there is an annual meeting typically in March/April to recognize outstanding members and service awards. McCook's Chamber of Commerce also recognizes new members and businesses throughout the year and offers a variety of marketing support to community members. It is important to note that the chamber also plays a vital political role with updates from unicameral members to members of both the state and national chamber of commerce. Additionally, it is important to note that the McCook Chamber Foundation was formed in 2020 to promote and execute charitable, educational, and scientific projects important to the chamber of commerce.

McCook / Red Willow County Visitors Bureau

McCook/Red Willow County Visitors Bureau (<https://visitmccook.com>) supports a wide variety of entertainment and recreation opportunities. Beyond supporting dining options and lodging choices in McCook and Red Willow County, the bureau highlights specific sites and events—Kiplinger Arena, Heritage Days, and the Southwest Nebraska Kids Rodeo—as well as rodeo events, hunting and fishing options, along with camping sites—Enders State Recreation Area, Swanson State Recreation Area, Medicine Creek State Recreation Area, Red Willow State Recreation Area, and Karrer Park. Another special attraction is world class bird watching, highlighted by Prairie Chicken Dance Tours (www.prairiechickendancetours.com).

Conclusion

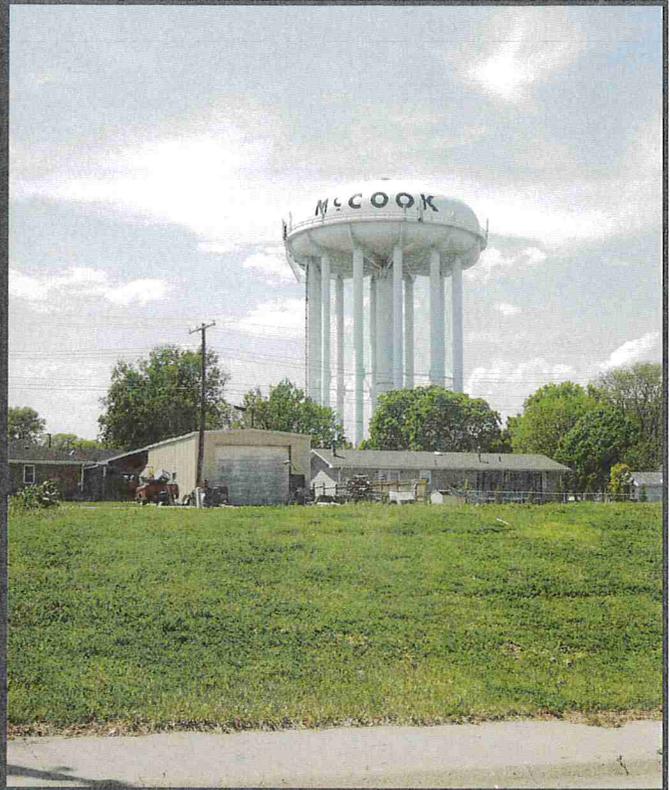
Economic growth is challenging, but an important task for a community. McCook has several options and resources to address business retention and expansion, workforce training, succession planning, and youth retention. McCook is fortunate to possess both large and small ventures that provide various job opportunities, and mutually beneficial opportunities exist for the city and businesses. Marketing and promotional efforts by the city ultimately result in win-win situations for the entire community.

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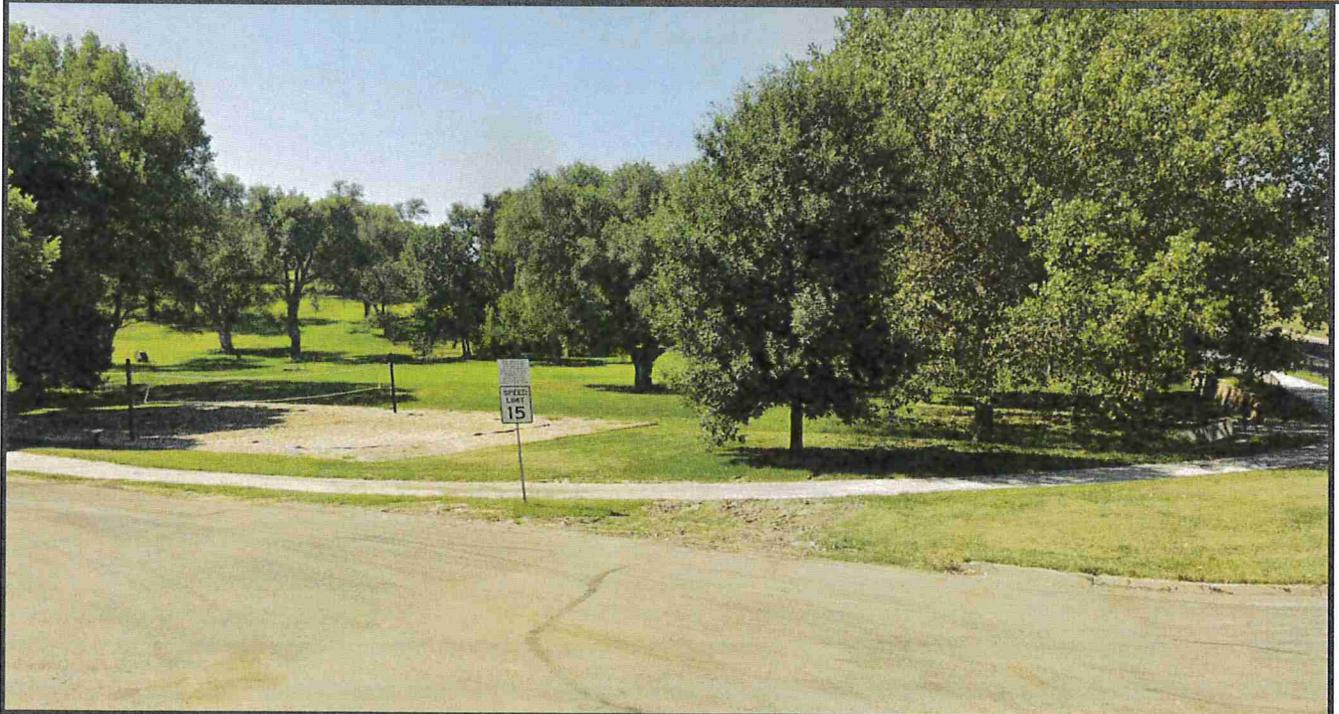
CHAPTER

2

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



- Education
- Transportation
- Community Amenities
- Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Wellness Services
- Utilities



Educational System

A quality educational system is a tremendous asset for any community, in this case for McCook. In many situations, local education opportunities reflect the community's priorities and serve to attract families to the community.

School Classification

Many Nebraska communities and counties place a high value on maintaining and protecting local schools, pride in place is a common mindset. Nebraska State Statutes group schools into six different classifications which are defined by the following law:

Nebraska Code, Chapter 79 Schools, §79-102.

(1) Class I includes any school district that maintains only elementary grades under the direction of a single school board;

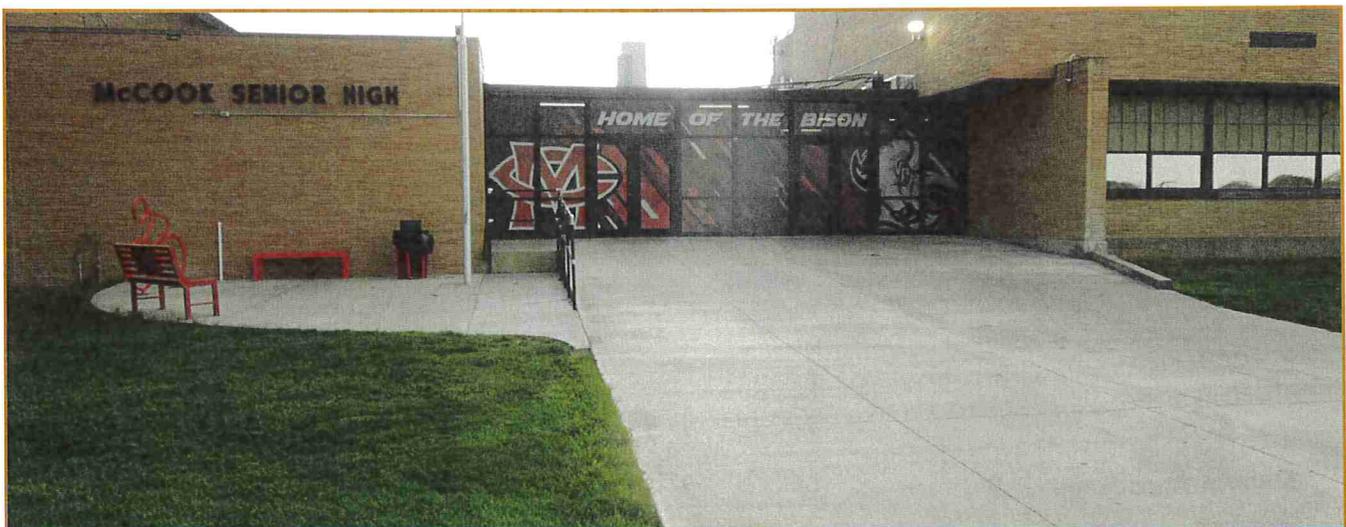
(2) Class II includes any school district embracing territory having a population of one thousand inhabitants or less that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board;

(3) Class III includes any school district embracing territory having a population of more than one thousand and less than one hundred fifty thousand inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board;

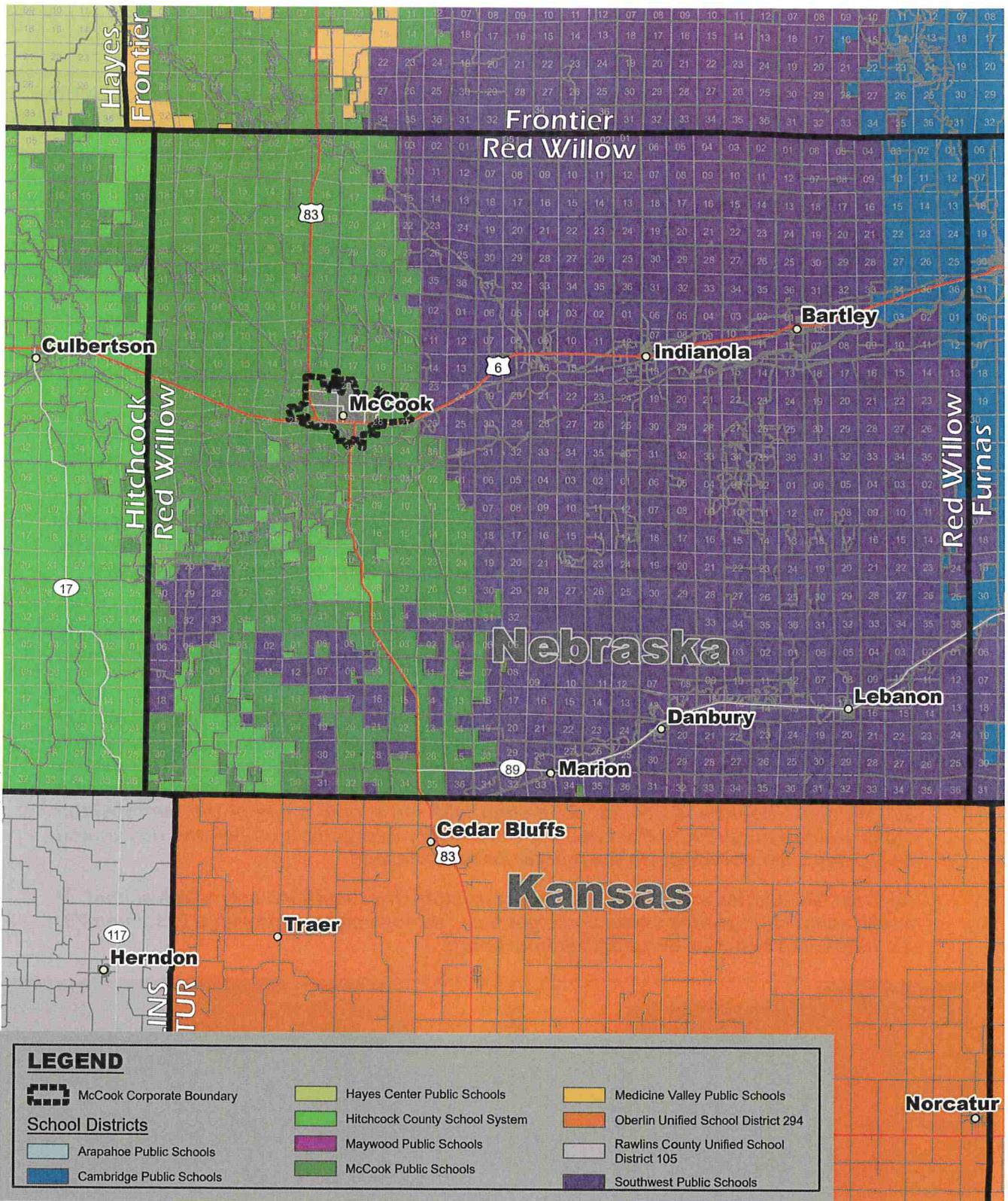
(4) Class IV includes any school district embracing territory having a population of one hundred thousand or more inhabitants with a city of the primary class within the territory of the district that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board;

(5) Class V includes any school district whose employees participate in a retirement system established pursuant to the Class V School Employees Retirement Act and which embraces territory having a city of the metropolitan class within the territory of the district that maintains both elementary grades and high school grades under the direction of a single school board and any school district with territory in a city of the metropolitan class created pursuant to the Learning Community Reorganization Act and designated as a Class V school district in the reorganization plan; and

(6) Class VI includes any school district in this state that maintains only a high school, or a high school and grades seven and eight or six through eight as provided in section 79-411, under the direction of a single school board.



3/27/2025 9:36 AM Path: C:\Projects\200\200-C1-027\GIS\McCook\Pro\McCookPro.aprx Layout: 200-G1-027 FIG 2.1 School District



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Prepared By:

M&A
Miller & Associates
 CONSULTING ENGINEERS, P.C.
 Kearney, NE – (308) 234-6456

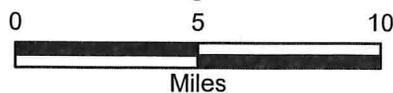


Figure 2.1 Unified School District Boundary

Red Willow County, Nebraska

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McCook Public Schools

The McCook Public School District is classified as a Class III school as it maintains both elementary and high school grades and McCook’s school district population is more than 1,000 but less than 100,000. Figure 2.1 demonstrates McCook Public School boundaries. For 2023-2024 the McCook Public School District was responsible for 1,386 students with 197 employees, ninety-five of which are teachers. Enrollment has remained steady over the previous decade, with a slight decline in the last few years (Table 2.1). The district maintains five different campuses in McCook—Central Elementary, McCook Alternative Education, McCook Elementary School, McCook Junior High School, and McCook Senior High School.

Table 2.1: McCook Public Schools Enrollment 2013-2014 through 2023-2024

School Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total Enrollment
2013 - 2014	46	115	71	90	110	103	103	94	106	111	135	104	124	125	1,437
2014 - 2015	54	84	117	78	92	109	104	105	99	111	132	129	102	121	1,437
2015 - 2016	54	100	80	118	83	95	107	103	96	94	125	129	123	100	1,407
2016 - 2017	38	112	97	82	118	83	94	109	110	100	107	122	126	117	1,415
2017 - 2018	40	91	107	97	88	116	88	98	110	113	128	107	109	132	1,424
2018 - 2019	47	92	93	108	99	87	127	89	102	110	126	118	115	112	1,425
2019 - 2020	34	74	102	93	110	108	92	123	91	104	128	130	121	116	1,426
2020 - 2021	42	89	73	91	87	110	107	89	114	87	108	121	128	128	1,374
2021 - 2022	50	97	90	76	98	92	107	107	95	122	95	99	121	138	1,387
2022 - 2023	44	93	94	98	79	101	96	104	107	96	128	105	101	130	1,376
2023 - 2024	44	110	91	98	95	83	105	90	112	108	111	129	107	103	1,386

Sources: Nebraska Department of Education, Statistics & Facts About Nebraska Schools, 2013-2024, Retrieved from education.ne.gov, 2023; McCook Public Schools.



Operation Costs

Education is often the largest public expense in a community. Since the school board controls the budget, coordination between the school board and the city council is essential for effective management of growth, annual budgets, and the delivery of educational services. Active participation from both sides of the relationship fosters a sustainable system in McCook, which is critical to the community’s long-term success.

Table 2.2 shares McCook’s general fund operating expenditures per formula student in comparison to other regional districts. McCook Public Schools at \$16,284 is at the low end of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding compared to nearby school districts but just above the statewide per pupil cost in 2021-2022 of \$15,113.01.

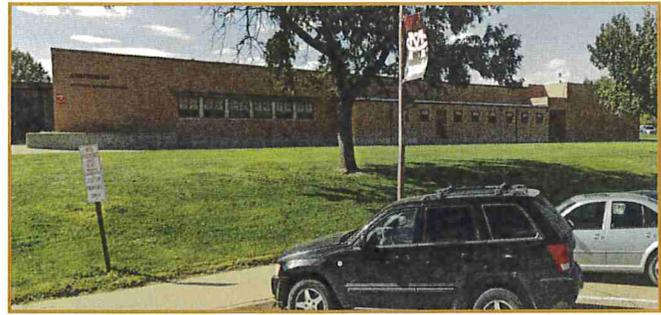


Table 2.2: Cost Per Pupil by Average Daily Attendance 2021-2022

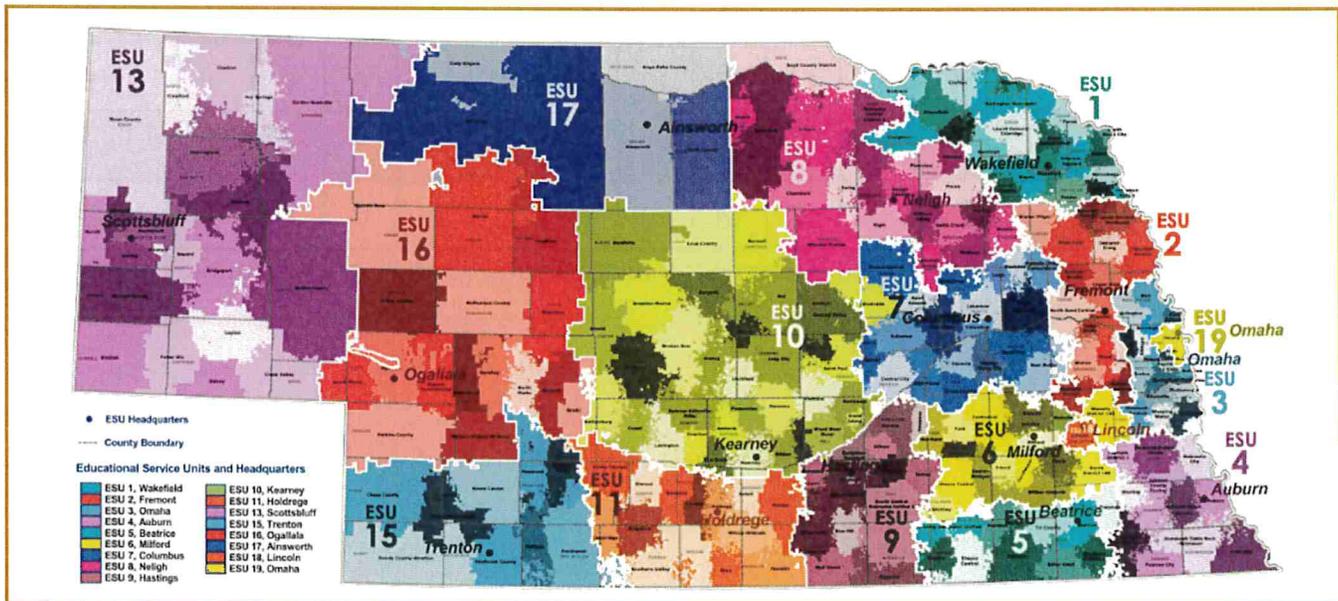
District	\$-ADA
<i>Nebraska</i>	\$ 15,113.01
Arapahoe Public Schools	\$ 17,170.00
Cambridge Public Schools	\$ 21,285.00
Chase County Schools	\$ 18,208.00
Dundy County Stratton Public Schools	\$ 28,838.00
Elwood Public Schools	\$ 24,318.00
Hayes Center Public Schools	\$ 29,193.00
Hitchcock County School System	\$ 20,205.00
McCook Public Schools	\$ 16,284.00
Southwest Public Schools	\$ 26,893.00
Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools	\$ 26,248.00

Source: Nebraska Department of Education.

Educational Service Unit

Nebraska is divided into nineteen Educational Service Units (ESU), which provide districts across the state with support and training. Figure 2.2 demonstrates coverage areas for each unit. McCook Public Schools is part of ESU 15 which has a “home base” in Trenton, Nebraska and serves Chase County Schools, Dundy County-Stratton Schools, Hayes Center Schools, Hitchcock County Schools, Maywood Public Schools, McCook Public Schools, Medicine Valley Public Schools, Southwest Public Schools, St. Patrick Elementary in McCook, and Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools.

Figure 2.2: Nebraska’s Educational Service Units



St. Patrick's Elementary School

St. Patrick's Elementary School is located at 401 East F Street in McCook. For 2023-2024 the St. Patrick's Elementary School was responsible for 125 students, with another 33 in preschool. St. Patrick's Elementary School has fourteen faculty with three administrators. The school offers volleyball, basketball, and track & field (<https://www.stpatrickmccook.com>). In addition, the student council offers a number of stewardship projects, which include, but are not limited to Box of Joy at Christmas campaign, Veterans Day program, and various missionary endeavors. Enrollment has remained steady over the previous decade, with a slight decline in the last few years (Table 2.3).

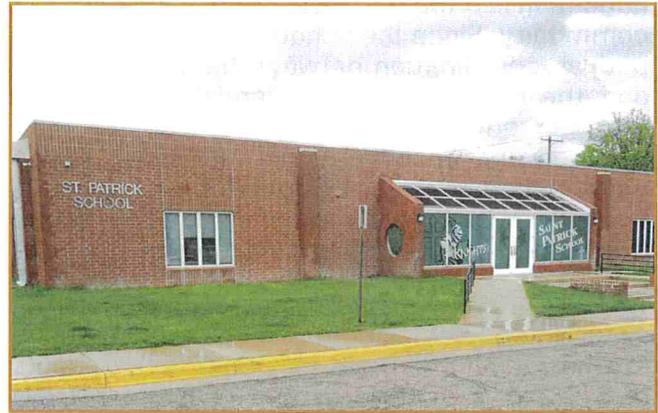


Table 2.3: St. Patrick's Elementary School Enrollment 2013-2014 through 2023-2024

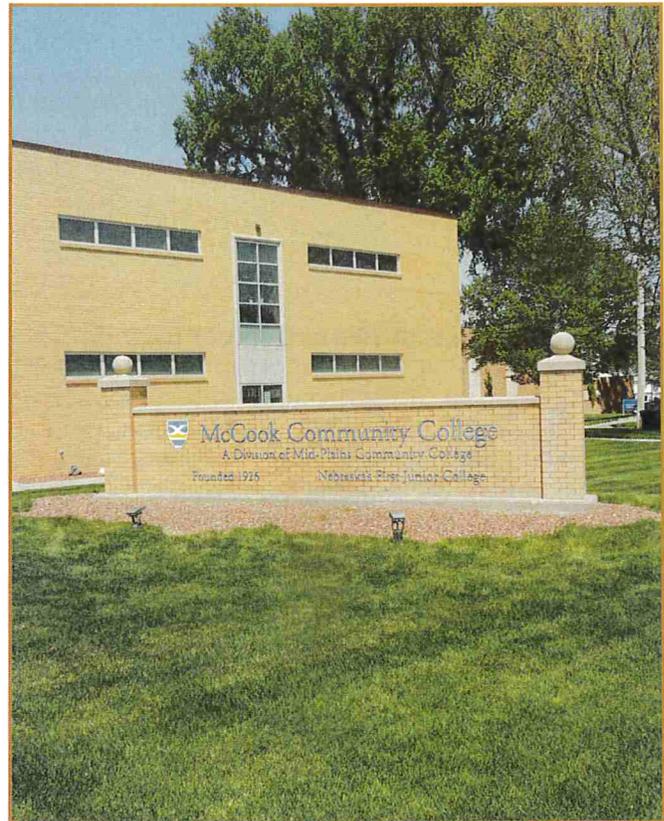
School Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total Enrollment
2013 - 2014	31	18	20	10	17	20	20	18	9	13	0	0	0	0	176
2014 - 2015	38	22	15	21	9	16	20	17	15	9	0	0	0	0	182
2015 - 2016	36	21	25	15	18	10	16	19	19	16	0	0	0	0	195
2016 - 2017	20	14	17	22	14	15	9	15	17	19	0	0	0	0	162
2017 - 2018	15	11	13	17	18	13	15	8	16	17	0	0	0	0	143
2018 - 2019	18	15	13	14	17	19	13	15	7	16	0	0	0	0	147
2019 - 2020	11	14	17	13	16	16	18	14	14	6	0	0	0	0	139
2020 - 2021	22	19	17	17	11	16	15	18	14	12	0	0	0	0	161
2021 - 2022	26	15	21	16	18	12	15	15	18	13	0	0	0	0	169
2022 - 2023	30	20	14	18	15	18	9	16	15	18	0	0	0	0	173
2023 - 2024	19	15	19	14	17	15	16	10	12	13	0	0	0	0	150

Sources: Nebraska Department of Education, Statistics & Facts About Nebraska Schools, 2013-2024. Retrieved from education.ne.gov, 2023.

McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

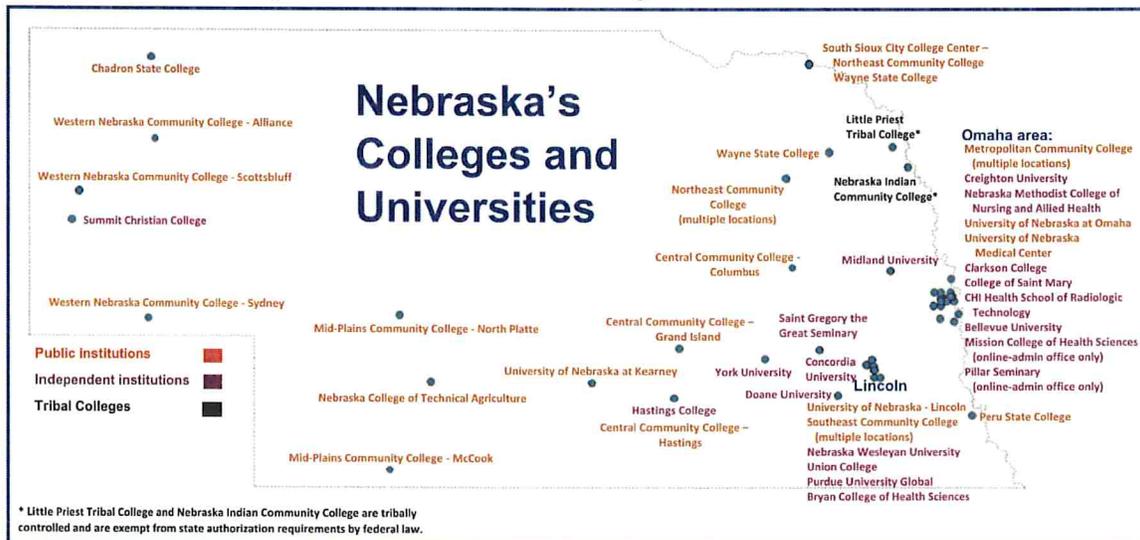
Post-Secondary

McCook is home to Nebraska’s oldest two-year junior college along with numerous post-secondary options in the region. Founded in 1926, the name eventually changed from the McCook Community College to the Mid-Plains Area Community College (Mid-Plains has satellite campuses in Broken Bow, Imperial, Ogallala, North Platte, and Valentine) (Ford *et al.* 2008). Accepted by the Higher Learning Commission, Mid-Plains with a 79.3 percent Student Success Rate is currently ranked in the Top 10 of Best Community Colleges in America by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (www.mpcc.edu). With a total headcount of 3,095, a graduation rate of 87 percent, and 76 percent of graduates employed within the eighteen-county service area (96 percent are employed within Nebraska), Mid-Plains is fulfilling its mission. Mid-Plains offers degree programs in a wide array of disciplines, from accounting, agriculture, and art to construction technology, criminal justice, and information technology to sociology, theater, and welding. Mid-Plains is fueling growth not only in McCook but in southwestern/western Nebraska as well.



Additionally, Western Nebraska Community College in Scottsbluff, Northeastern Junior College in Sterling, Colorado, and the Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming are other regional options. Beyond community colleges, Fort Hays State in Hays, Kansas and the University of Nebraska-Kearney are both Division II schools within a few hours of McCook. Quality education options are selling points for a community and its tax base. McCook Public Schools and Mid-Plains Community College are both positives that tie directly to making McCook an attractive destination for families and students.

Figure 2.3: Nebraska’s Colleges and Universities



Transportation

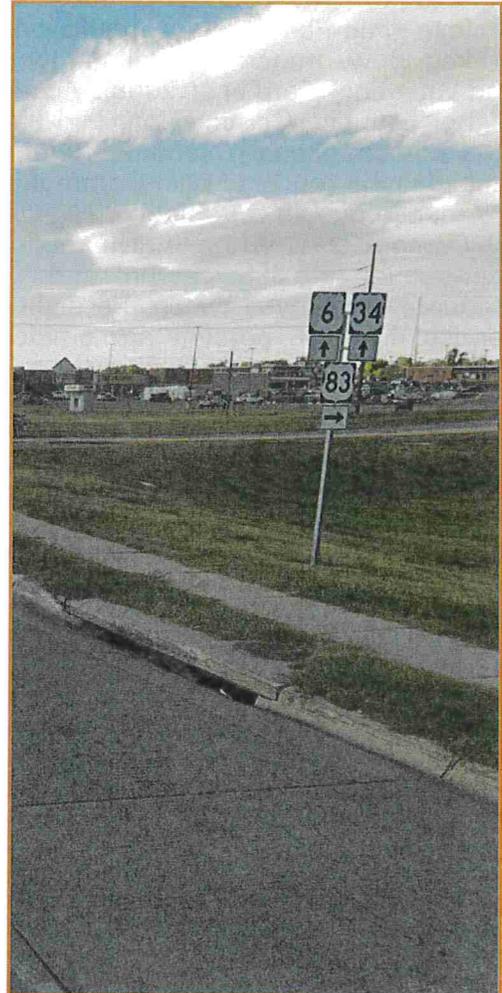
Transportation is a fundamental consideration for any community. Transportation is a criterion often viewed from a local standpoint or regional perspective. Networks within the community and those outside McCook allow for the movement of goods, services, and people, in addition to continual economic development.

Roads

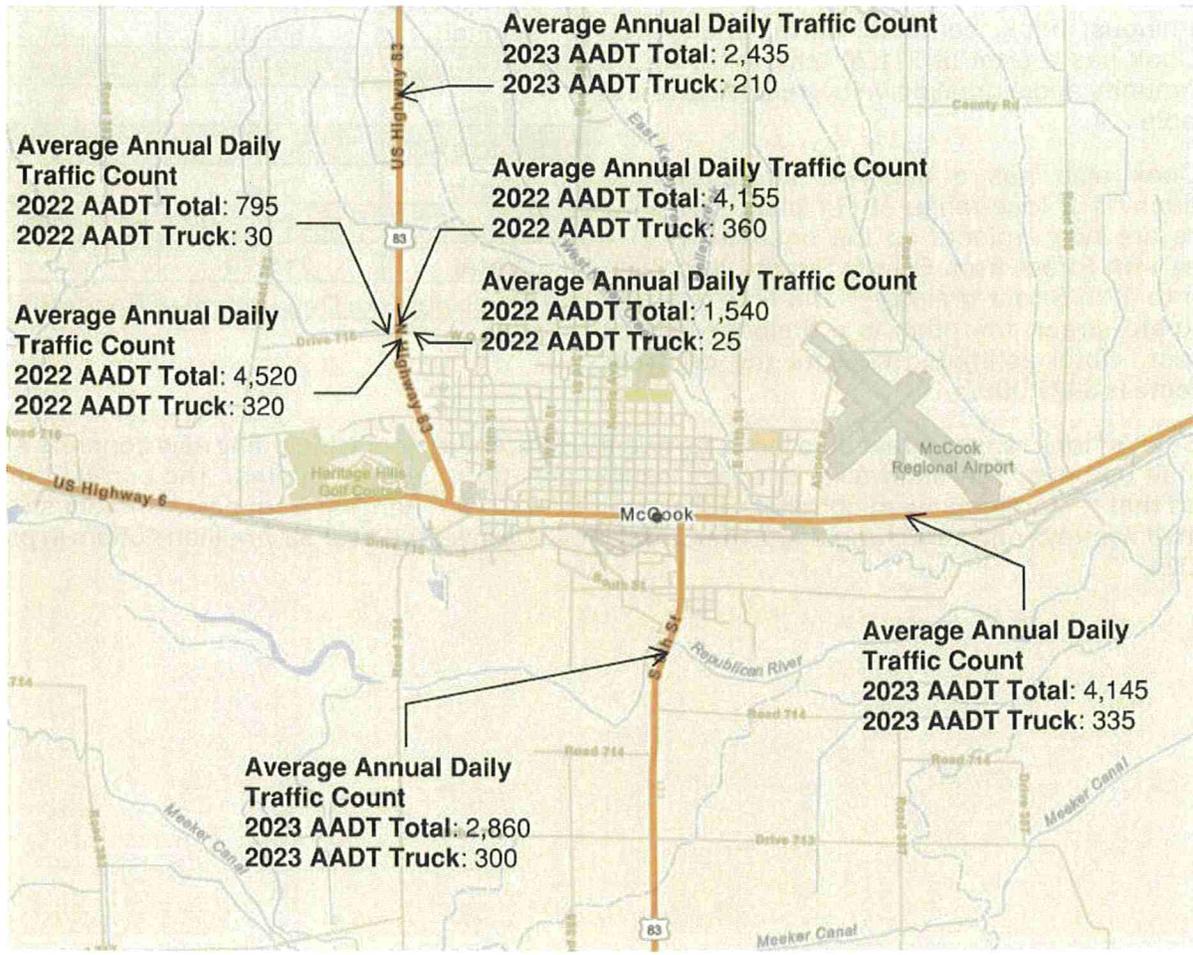
McCook's connectivity to a larger transportation network creates many growth opportunities. McCook is located at the juncture of Highway 83 and Highways 6/34—these two highways split west of McCook near Culbertson with Highway 6 continuing northwest toward Imperial and Highway 34 running southwest toward Benkelman. Highways 6, 34, and 83 are all U.S. numbered routes and major arterial roads moving traffic in and out of the community which presents opportunities for community leaders to showcase McCook with prominent gateway entrances providing a positive “first impression.”

Along with noting major highways that serve McCook, traffic data collected by the Nebraska Department of Transportation is an important consideration. Accessibility is a key factor for all commercial/industrial enterprises and this data is one way to assess market viability and pinpoint properties for development (Burger and Combs 2011; Burger *et al.* 2015).

Traffic counts are an important consideration and the Nebraska Department of Transportation provided traffic flow data for major highways and streets in McCook (Figure 2.4) (Nebraska Department of Transportation). In 2021, just west of the intersection of Highways 6/34 and Highway 83 the average annual daily traffic (AADT) count was 10,225 plus an additional 450 trucks. Further west on the same highway, the numbers dipped to 5,065 AADT and 405 trucks. On Highway 83 just south of the J Street intersection, the AADT stood at 7,495 along with 395 trucks per day. Further north on the same highway just south of the intersection with Q Street in 2022, the numbers were 4,520 AADT and 320 trucks per day.



**Figure 2.4
Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts
City of McCook, Nebraska, 2023**



2022 - 2023 AADT = Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts

Just north of McCook on Highway 83 just south of Road 718, the annual average daily traffic (AADT) count indicated 2,435 AADT vehicles and 210 trucks per day (NDOT 2023). On McCook’s east side just south of McCook’s regional airport on Highway 6, the total count was 4,145 AADT along with 335 trucks per day (NDOT 2023). South of McCook on Highway 83 near the Republican River, 2,860 AADT was found in addition to 300 trucks per day (NDOT 2023).

Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). Annual Average Daily Traffic. <https://gis.ne.gov/>

Street Improvement Plan

The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) annually reports surface aggregates for all roads in McCook. Road types include asphalt, bituminous, brick, concrete, earth, and gravel. McCook has a total of 211.70 lane miles in the community and a breakdown by percent is found in Table 2.4.

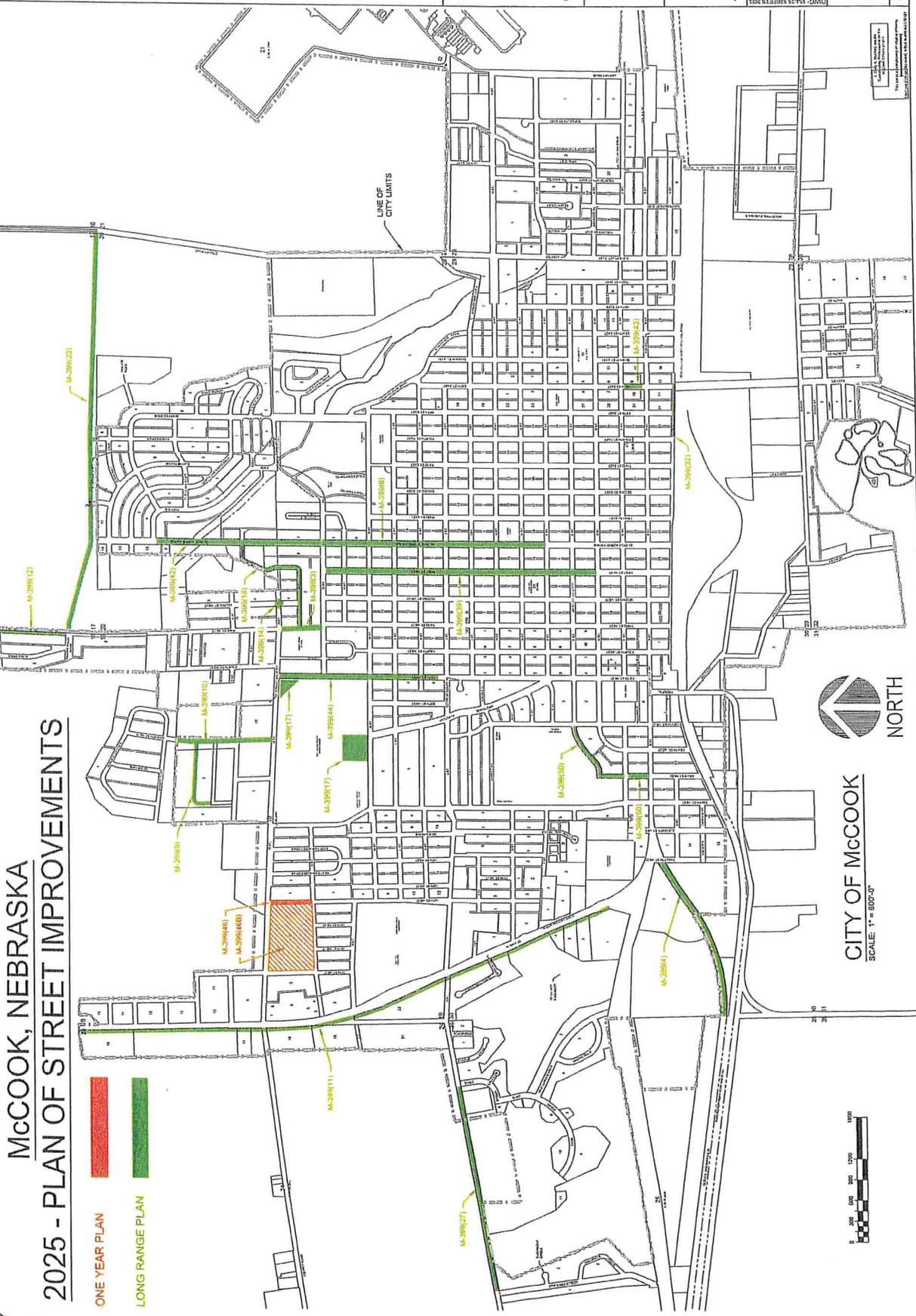
McCook also has a one-year street plan in addition to a long-range street plan. Currently there are two projects on the one-year plan—West 14th Street from O to Q Streets and West 14th to 17th Street drainage. The first is a new concrete street, the other is a drainage district project. Total estimated cost for the one-year projects is \$477,000.

Table 2.4: Lane Mile Report		
Surface	Miles	Percent
Asphalt	98.10	46.3
Bituminous	17.89	8.5
Brick	8.10	3.8
Concrete	80.52	38
Earth	0.05	0.0002
Gravel	7.04	3.3
Total	211.70	

Source: Nebraska Department of Roads 2023.

McCook’s “long range” street plan includes twenty different projects, including new concrete streets, asphalt updates, new sidewalks, drainage issues, and storm sewer updates. The current plan also notes that ten projects were completed last year in McCook. Ranging from new concrete streets to asphalt overlays and sewer upgrades, the City of McCook invested over \$3.7 million dollars in projects in 2024.

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McCOK, NEBRASKA
 2025 - PLAN OF STREET IMPROVEMENTS

ONE YEAR PLAN
 LONG RANGE PLAN



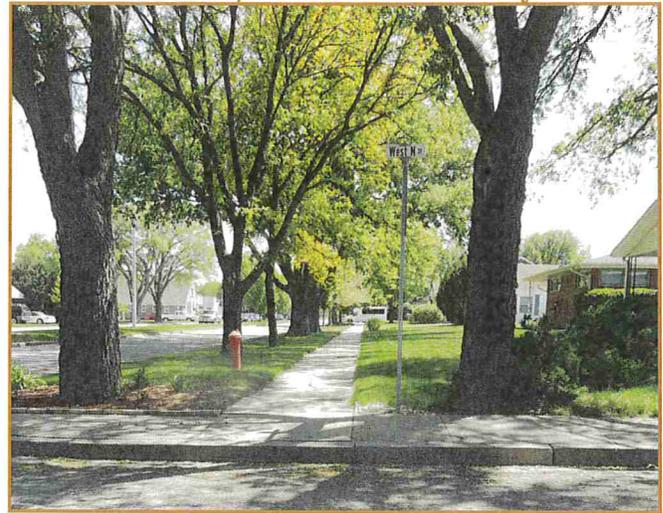
CITY OF McCOOK
 SCALE: 1" = 600'-0"



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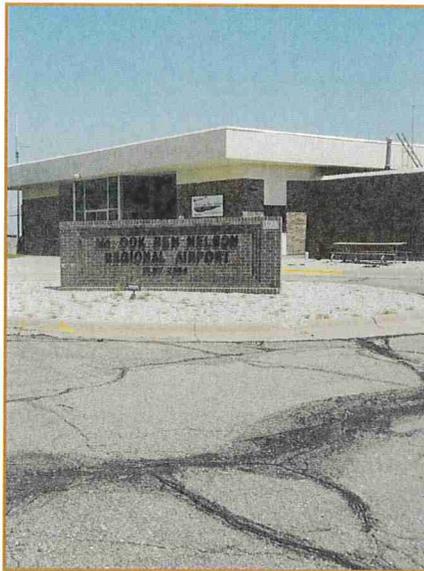
Sidewalks

Pedestrian activity is critical for a community’s livability and research has shown that sidewalk traffic leads to safer communities (Duany *et al.* 2000; Jacobsen 2003). A positive for the entire community, sidewalks are key for two vulnerable populations—young children and elderly adults. Approximately 92 percent of McCook’s streets have curbs and 98 percent have sidewalks. In much of the older portions of the city, sidewalks are found in a traditional sense with separation from the roadway. In comparison, sidewalks in McCook’s more modern stretches on the city’s northern and western sides are often extended from the curb with no separation from the roadway.



Sidewalks are an essential amenity in communities, they are also public infrastructure and require maintenance, ADA compliance, and on occasion complete replacement. Disrepair coupled with non-compliant connections make sidewalks a hazard. Completing a comprehensive sidewalk inventory would assist city leaders with a strategic sidewalk plan, locating problem areas and connectivity.

Airport



The McCook Ben Nelson Regional Airport serves McCook and much of southwest Nebraska and northwest Kansas. The airport has two paved runways (6,450 feet and 4,000 feet) and a turf runway (1,350 feet) as well. It is served by Denver Air which offers service to three communities in Nebraska, one of which is McCook. The number of enplanements has dramatically varied over the last decade on an annual basis (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Enplanements at Ben Nelson Regional Airport

Year	Enplanements	Percent Change
2022	1,130	-42.76
2021	1,974	53.1
2020	1,289	-40.82
2019	2,178	-7.63
2018	2,358	-12.76
2017	2,703	66.13
2016	1,627	388.59
2015	333	-20.7
2014	402	-79.68
2013	1,978	***

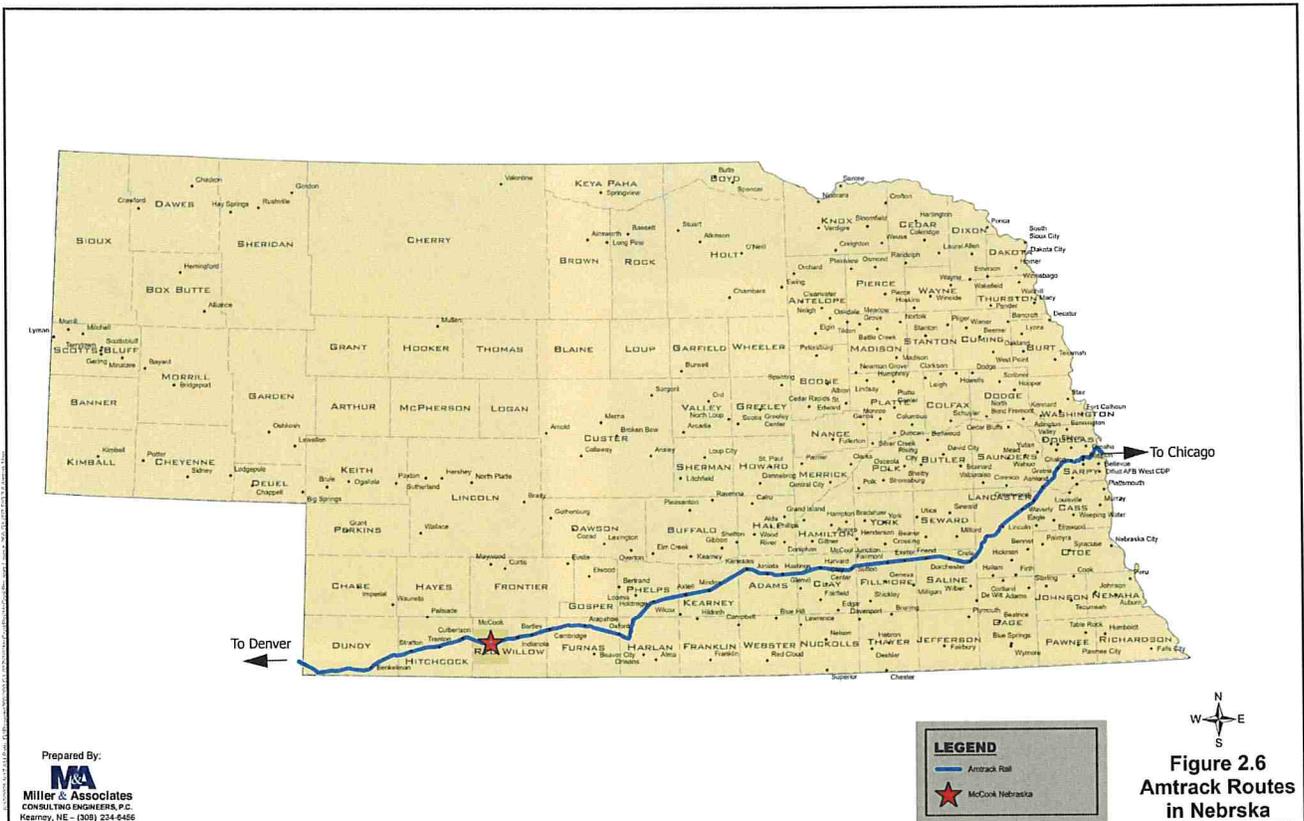
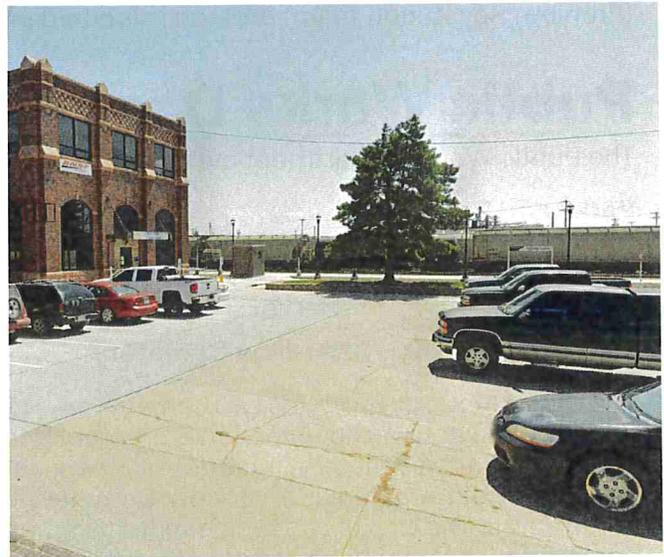
Source: City of McCook, Public Works Department.

Other Transportation Options

Public transportation is one available option for McCook. The City operates McCook Public Transit with a dial-a-ride system and anyone is eligible to ride.

Passenger Train

Nebraska has a single Amtrak service—the California Zephyr—which links Chicago to San Francisco (Figure 2.6). The passenger line runs through the southern portion of Nebraska, providing daily access to Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, Reno, and the San Francisco area. The number of McCook passengers (arrivals and departures) has dipped in recent years—going from over 3,000 in 2018 and 2019 to 2,211 in 2020 and 1,321 in 2021 (www.railpassengers.org). The California Zephyr provides direct service to twenty-seven cities and a majority of McCook’s passengers travel 200-299 miles each trip.



Code Enforcement

Code enforcement is responsible for conducting inspections on construction sites, informing—and enforcing when necessary—citizens of city codes and issuing building permits. The code enforcement (Problem Resolution Team) division is located in the Municipal Building.

Public Works Department

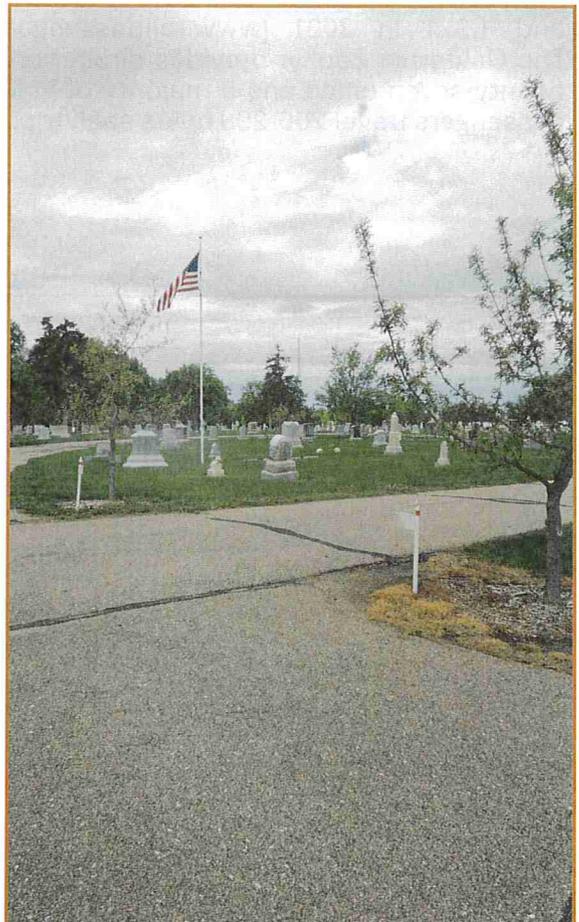
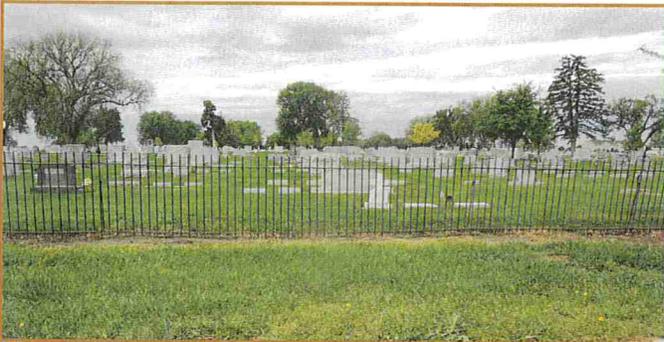
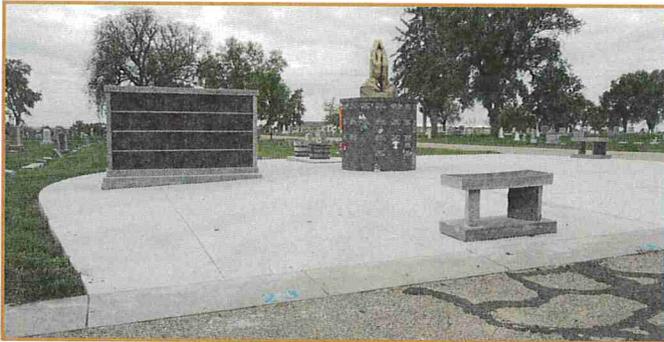
The Public Works Department oversees a variety of community service programs in McCook.

Parks and Recreation

For McCook, the Public Works department oversees cemeteries as well as the swimming pool, ballfields, and skatepark.

Memorial Park and Riverview Cemetery

The City of McCook oversees two cemeteries—Memorial Park (sixteen acres) and Riverview Cemetery (ten acres). Memorial Park Cemetery includes sixteen acres and sixty-four columbariums. Riverview Cemetery consists of ten acres. The City of McCook maintains maps of both cemeteries that can be found at (cityofmccook.com).



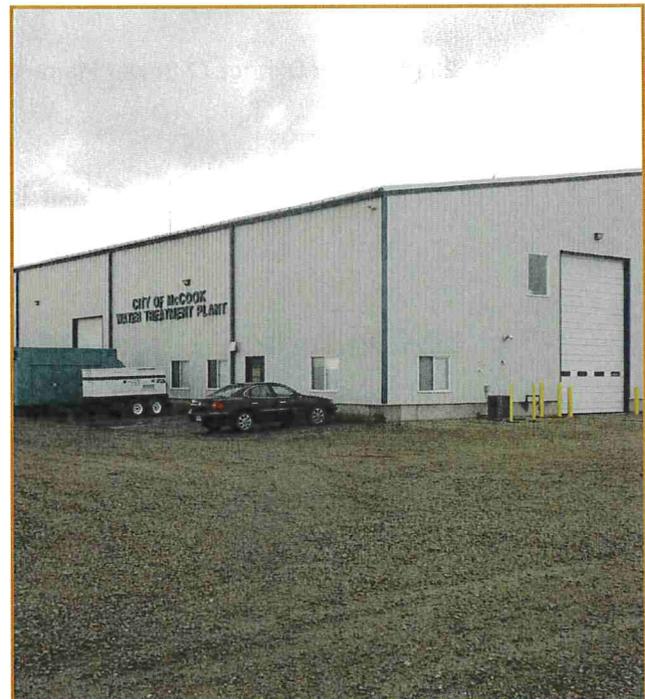
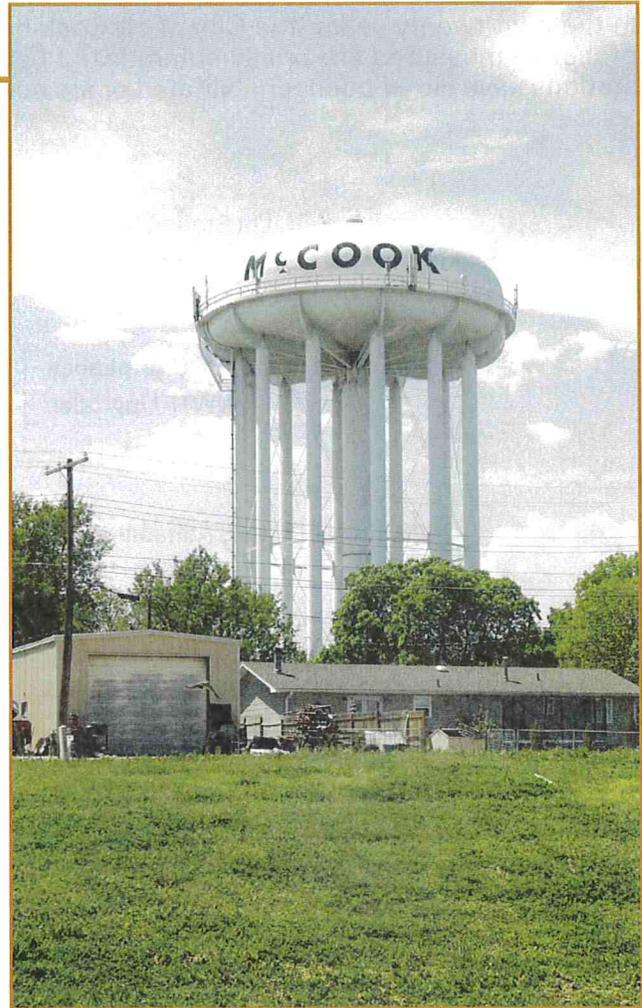
Utilities

The City of McCook supports water, sewer, trash, and recycling efforts in the community. The McCook Public Water System (NE3114504) captures water from a series of nine wells located in the Republican River valley. In 2021, McCook produced 785,620,000 gallons of drinking water—some 2.1 million gallons per day.

The City of McCook Wastewater Department maintains fifty miles of collection mains ranging in size from four inches to thirty-six inches. Using both gravity and force mains, waste is sent to the treatment facility southeast of the city. The plant currently handles approximately 0.7 million gallons per day on average.

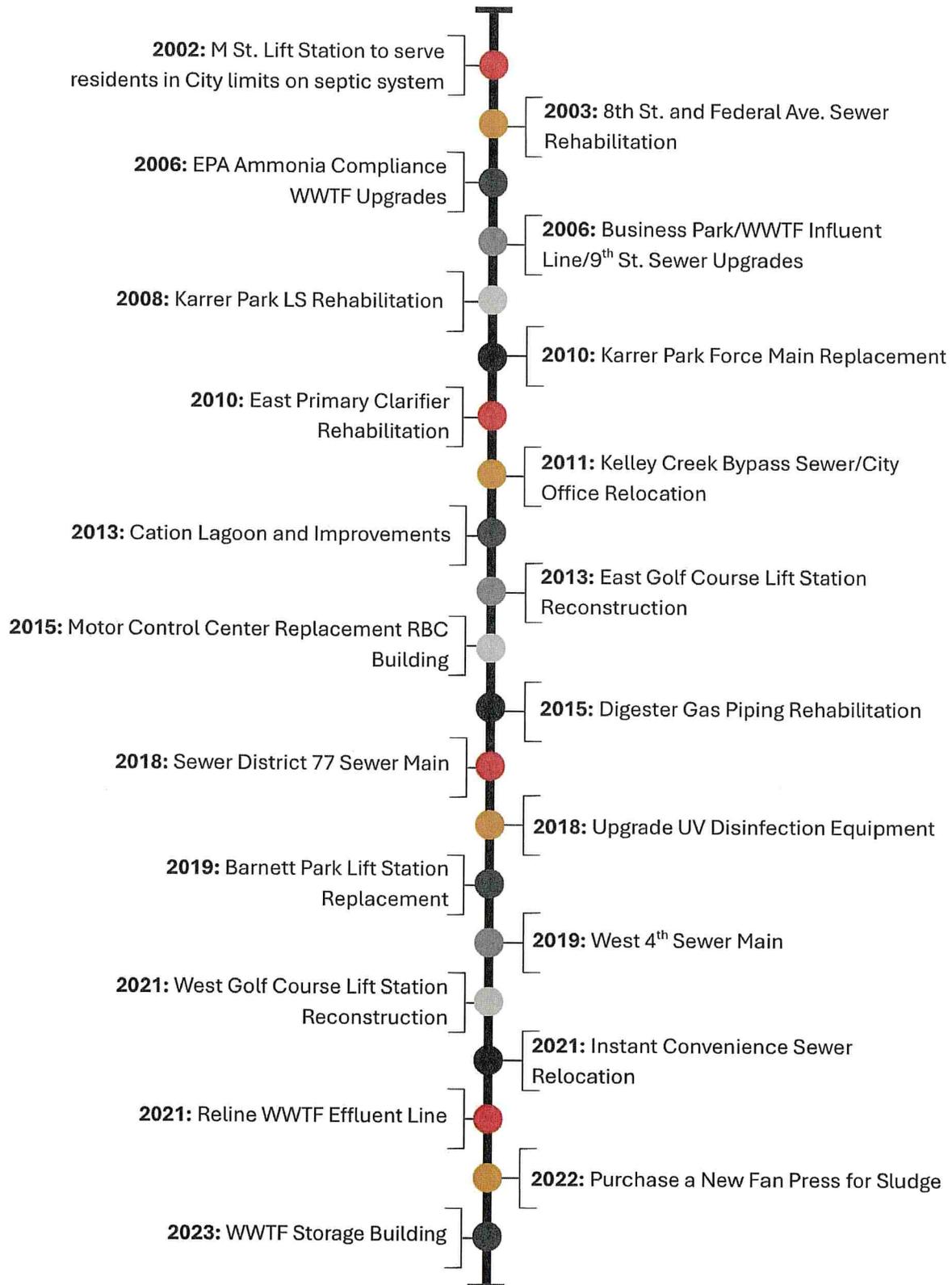
Domestic, commercial, and industrial wastewater is processed at the city's wastewater treatment facility located in the southeast portion of McCook. The facility has been treating waste from an expanding service area since the 1960s and two significant industries discharge water to the treatment facility—Parker Hannafin which currently manufactures automotive belts and hoses along with Valmont Industries which is a metal finisher. In addition to the wastewater facility, the city has five lift stations located throughout the collection system—Karrer Park Lift Station, Barnett Lift Station, East and West Golf Course Lift Stations, and the M Street Lift Station.

All the domestic, commercial, and industrial wastewater generated in the service area currently flows by gravity or is pumped to the wastewater facility where it flows through a headworks facility for preliminary treatment. Preliminary treatment includes a Channel Monster comminutor, manual bar screen, and aerated grit removal with cyclone dewatering. Primary treatment is provided by two primary clarifiers and Rotating Biological Contactors (RBCs) provide secondary treatment, in addition to two final clarifiers and a four-cell biological aerated filter (BAF) facility. Disinfection is provided by an ultraviolet system (UV) and disinfected effluent is discharged from the UV channels to a cascade system, which provides aeration to the effluent prior to discharge to Outfall 001 to the Republican River and its basin.



Chapter 2: Facilities and Infrastructure

In the past twenty years, the City of McCook has completed several sewer-related projects. These proactive measures are briefly summarized below. It is important to note that all of McCook's lift stations have either been rehabilitated or are new in the last two decades.



McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

It is important to note that the City of McCook is currently working with Nebraska’s Department of Environment and Energy to complete an application for the Combined Clean Water and Drinking Water State Fiscal Year 2025 Needs Survey State Revolving Fund. One project list estimated at just over \$19,000,000 includes a new “headworks building with grit and screening, installation of fan press for solids processing, installation of new sequencing batch reactor treatment units, eliminating anaerobic digestion and installing aerobic digestion.” The remaining updates include sewer line extensions in several locations along with lift station upgrades waste lagoon extensions. The second project list is estimated at just above \$22,000,000 and includes a variety of upgrades and extensions including replacing water mains in several locations, extending service the to the proposed sports complex, and rehabilitating several wells (manganese removal from Wells 1, 2, 8, and 10, for instance).

The City of McCook has a refuse collection system supported by a \$22.50 monthly fee. Additionally, yard waste collection sites are located at various spots throughout the community. Over the last decade, total waste collection has remained somewhat steady (Table 2.6). Along with waste collection is recycled material. Adjacent to McCook’s transfer station is a recycling center that collected 55.5 tons of material from January 2017 through May of 2023—recycled materials included aluminum, cardboard, newspaper, plastic, scrap metal, and tin cans. Recycling has a two-fold benefit to McCook in that it avoids landfill fees and the recycled materials can be sold as well.

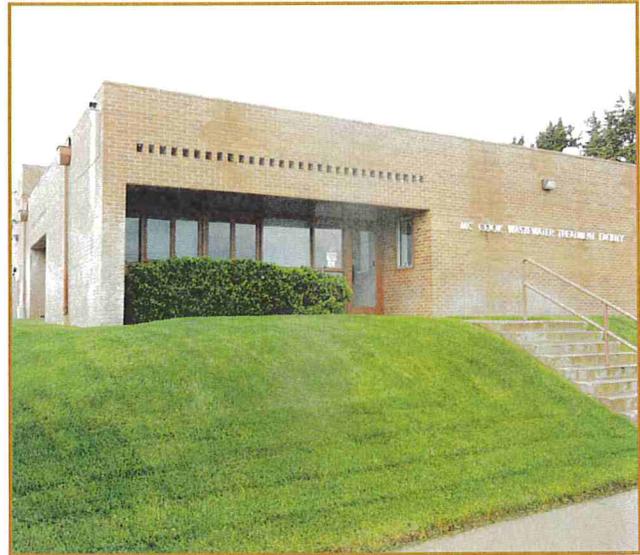
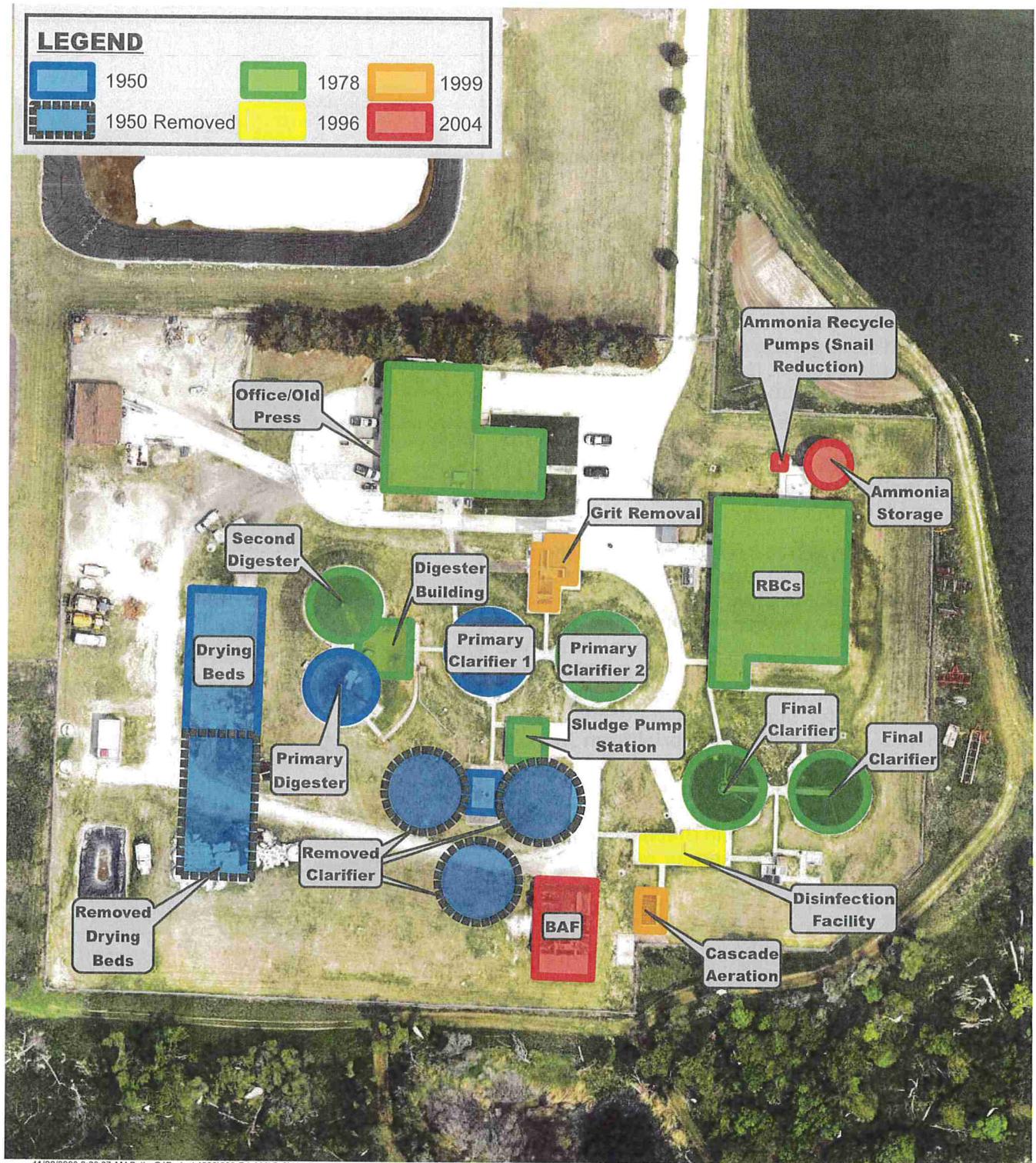


Table 2.6: Transfer Station Solid Waste Tonnage

Year	Solid Waste (Tonnage)
2022	17,690.04
2021	17,831.22
2020	17,782.68
2019	17,155.29
2018	16,435.62
2017	16,082.17
2016	16,829.89
2015	17,915.02
2014	16,603.64
2013	14,510.36

Source: City of McCook, Nebraska Transfer Station Tonnage.





Note:

1. Aerial Photography acquired from:
M&A Drone Flight May 2023

11/22/2023
Prepared By:

M&A
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CONSULTING ENGINEERS, P.C.
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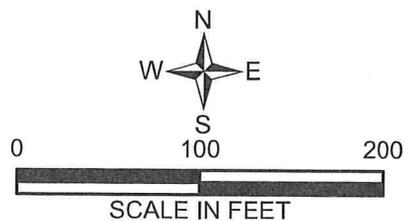


Figure 2.7
Age of System

*Figure 3-4 from Project
200-D1-027 McCook
Facility Plan

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LEGEND

Option A

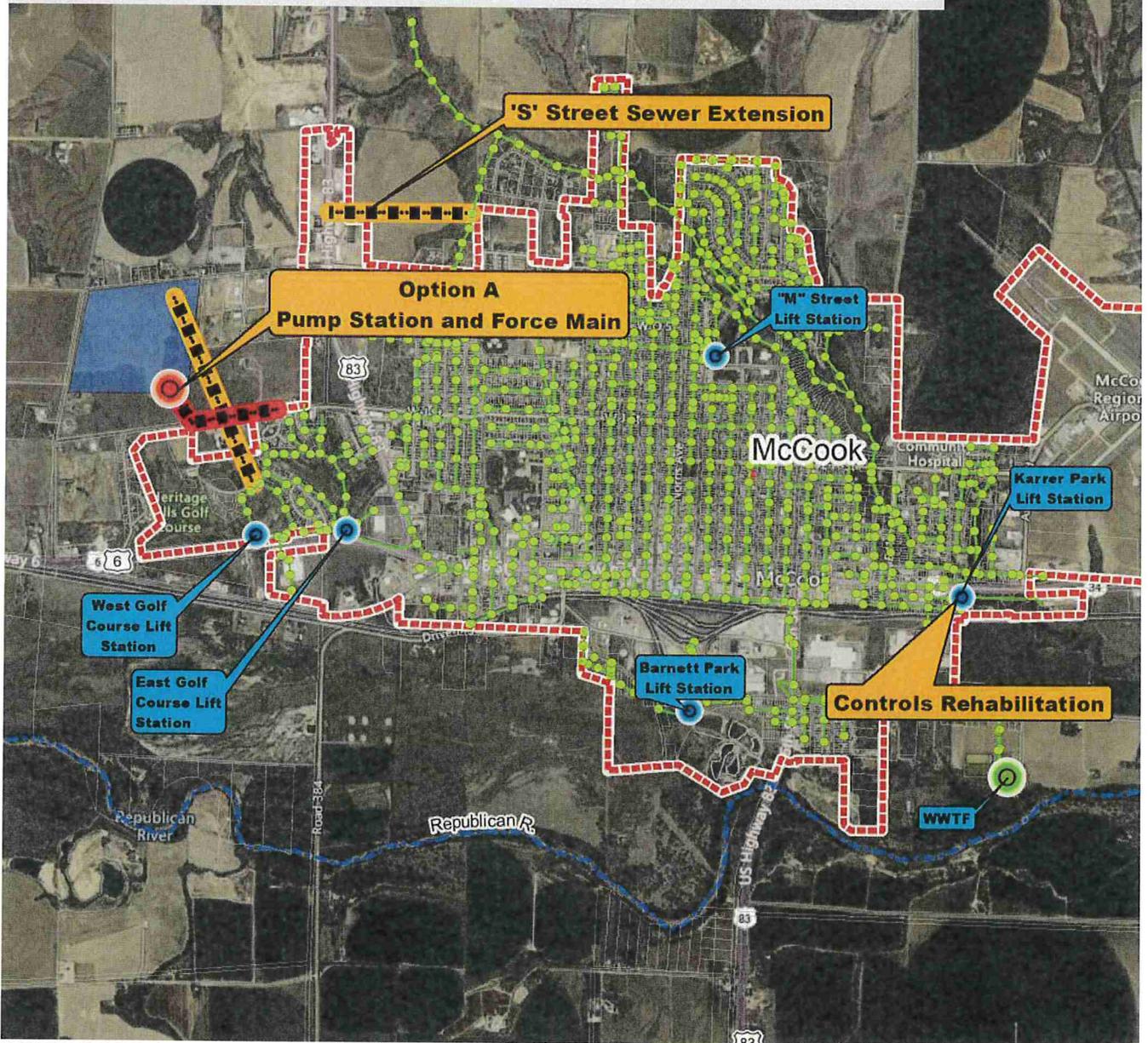
- Proposed Pump Station
- Force Main
- Gravity Main

Existing Sewer Infrastructure

- Existing Lift Station
- WWTF
- Manhole
- Gravity Main

Service Area

Proposed Sports Complex

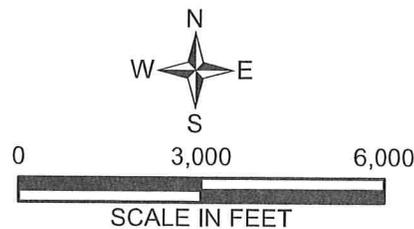


11/22/2023 9:36:11 AM Path: G:\Projects\200\200-D1-029\GIS\200 -D1-029 FIG 7.9 Proposed Collection System Improvements.mxd

Figure 2.8
2023 Priority 1
Proposed Collection
System Improvements

11/22/2023
 Prepared By:

Miller & Associates
 CONSULTING ENGINEERS, P.C.
 Kearney, NE - (308) 234-6456



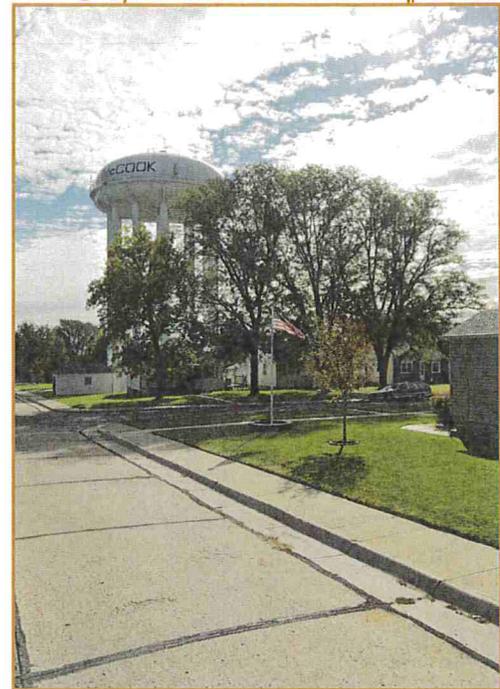
*Figure 7-9 from Project 200-D1-027
 McCook Facility Plan

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Table 2.7: Water Consumption

Month	2021 Consumption	2022 Consumption	2023 Consumption
January	4,476,208	3,211,956	2,756,109
February	3,954,241	2,866,767	2,900,494
March	2,952,981	3,362,689	2,987,250
April	2,506,267	3,000,202	2,474,654
May	4,235,553	3,661,190	3,430,699
June	6,113,296	7,453,672	6,534,291
July	7,224,147	9,554,685	5,382,309
August	9,998,508	12,351,368	7,470,844
September	11,617,365	12,769,417	8,805,407
October	10,799,713	11,488,837	10,000,272
November	8,866,671	8,787,389	7,102,591
December	4,156,873	5,843,878	3,657,576

Source: City of McCook, Nebraska.



Water Consumption 2021 to 2023
City of McCook, 2023

	2021 Average Number Billed	2022 Average Number Billed	2023 Average Number Billed
 Residential	3,108	3,123	3,103
 Commercial	494.40	476.83	480.25

Source: City of McCook, Nebraska

Sewer Discharge 2021 to 2023
City of McCook, 2023

	2021 Average Number Billed	2022 Average Number Billed	2023 Average Number Billed
 Residential	2,930	2,935	2,925
 Commercial	420.50	418.50	423.50

Source: City of McCook, Nebraska

Table 2.8: Sewer Discharge

Month	2021 Discharge	2022 Discharge	2023 Discharge
January	2,577,507	3,457,682	2,475,840
February	2,558,603	3,452,958	2,466,330
March	2,344,459	2,373,960	2,463,561
April	2,554,286	2,264,241	2,445,027
May	3,495,226	2,485,722	2,548,158
June	3,496,593	2,535,412	2,403,726
July	3,485,896	2,493,860	2,328,858
August	3,473,241	2,460,427	2,349,113
September	3,463,581	2,462,647	2,342,149
October	3,460,160	2,466,229	3,094,254
November	3,452,678	2,481,947	2,335,030
December	1,343,097	2,441,890	2,310,460

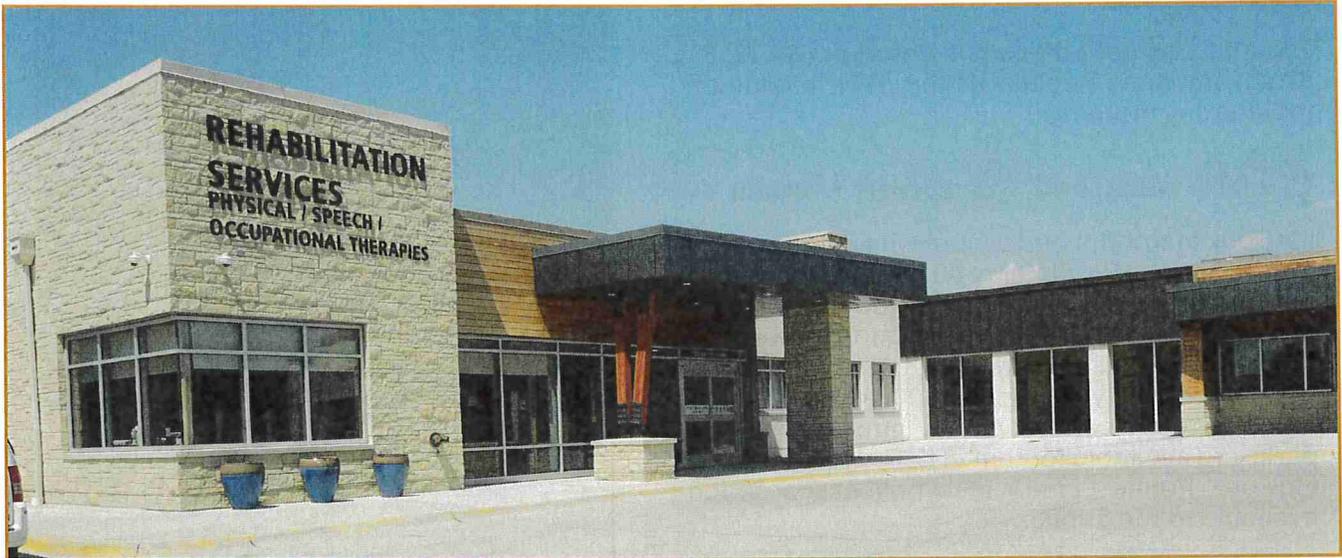
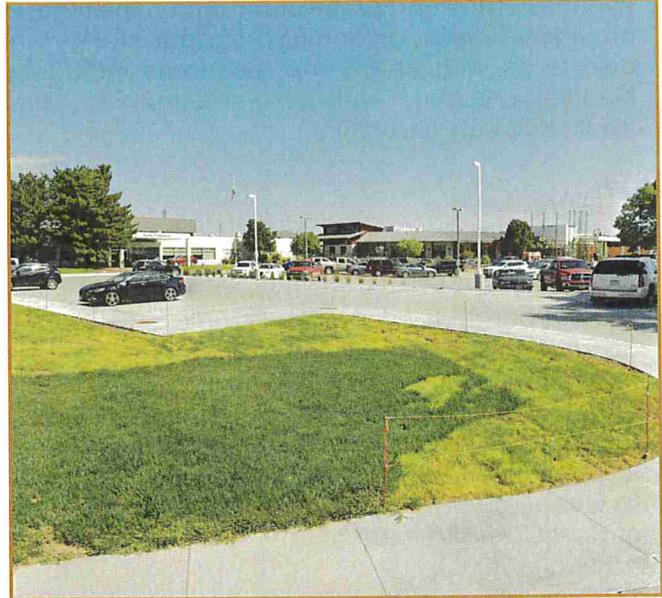
Source: City of McCook, Nebraska.

Community Services

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

Healthcare

The Community Hospital Association was formed on September 4, 1970 with the intent to acquire the St. Catherine of Sienna Hospital and construct McCook's new facility. Community members partnered with charitable foundations to build a new facility. McCook's Community Hospital opened on July 1, 1974 and has since been awarded several distinguished recognitions—Quest for Excellence Award (2011), Top 100 Critical Access Hospital (2017), and Top 20 Critical Access Hospital (2018), for instance. A 25-bed facility, the regional hospital serves more than 30,000 people who live in their referral area. In addition to some thirty medical specialists, the Community Hospital also provides rural health clinics in Trenton and Curtis, Nebraska.



Red Willow County Extension Service

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension office in Red Willow County is located in McCook at 1400 West 5th Street. The office provides research-centric information related to agriculture and natural resources, consumer and family economics, community and economic development, and 4-H and youth programs.

Library

The McCook Public Library aims to promote lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, recreation, and solutions. Located at 802 Norris Avenue in the heart of the community, the library provides a variety of reading programs along with on-site as well as on-line resources including NebraskaAccess, Nebraska Memories, One Book, and One Nebraska.

Newspaper

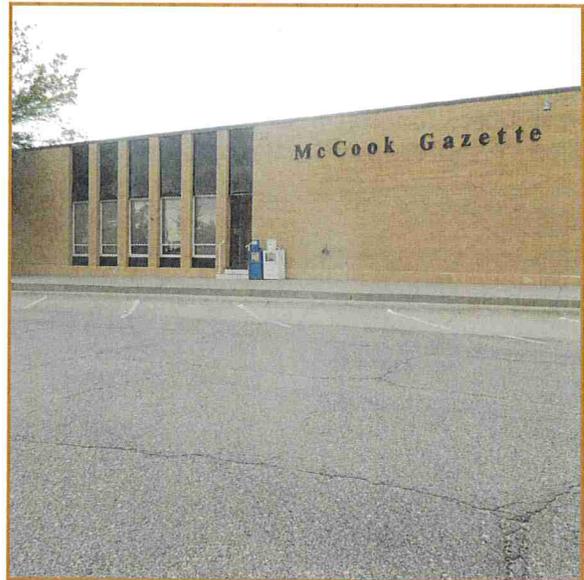
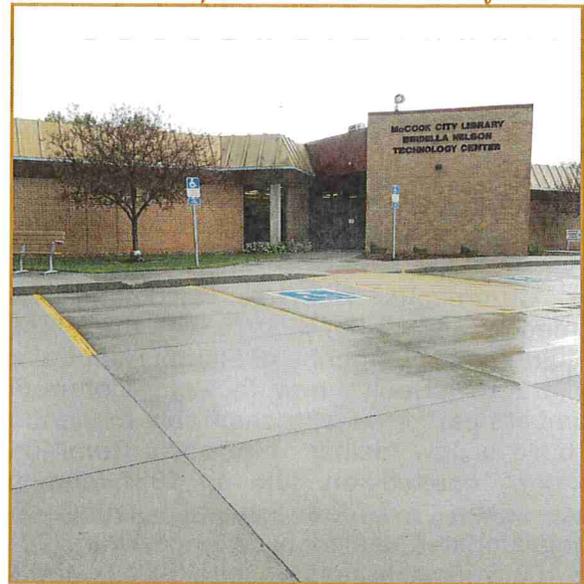
The *McCook Gazette* has been serving southwest Nebraska-northwest Kansas since 1911. Founded by Harry Strunk and Burriss Stewart as the *Red Willow County Gazette*, the paper began as a weekly and evolved into a daily paper in 1924. Harry Strunk's son Allen returned to McCook after college and managed the paper as publisher. In 1986, the family sold the *Gazette* to Gozia-Driver Media and in 1997 became part of Rust Communications.

Post Office

The McCook post office is located at 411 W. 3rd Street and open throughout the week in addition to Saturday mornings.

Auditoriums and Reception Venues

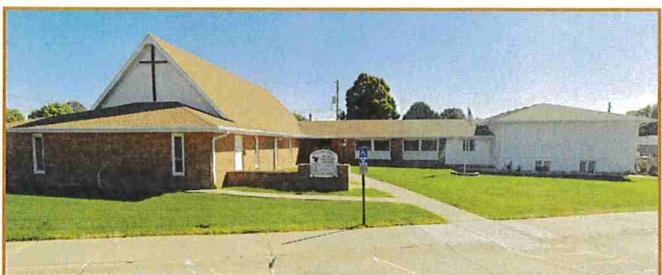
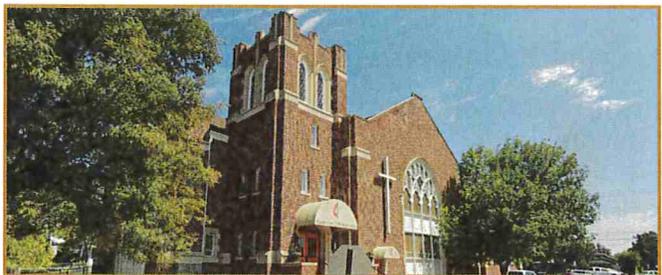
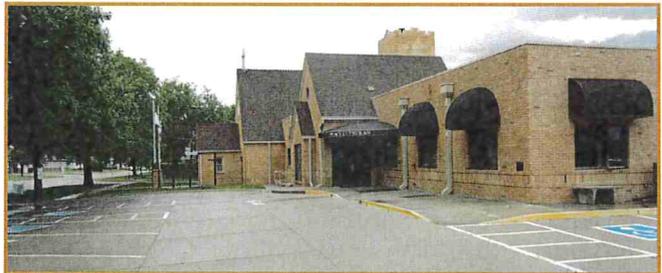
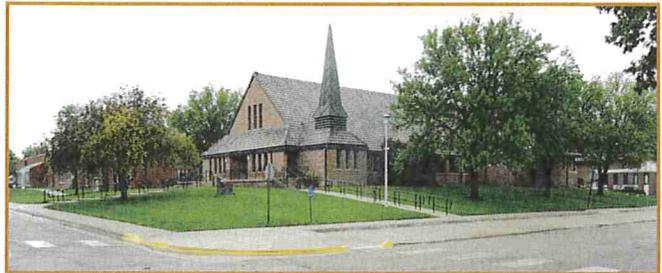
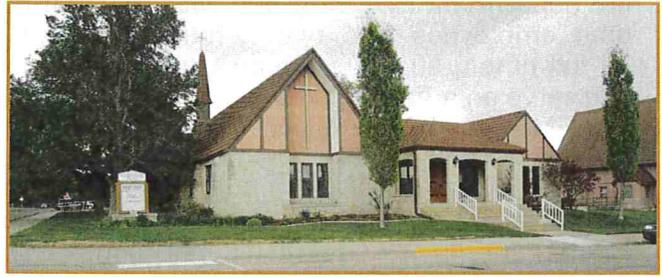
McCook Memorial Auditorium was completed in 1939. The local landmark still retains city offices and serves as an entertainment venue for events in McCook. The City of McCook's Heritage Senior Center also is available to rent for events—the dining facility can house 300 guests and the meeting room can serve fifty guests. Shelter parks are available for rent in Kelley Park and the McCook Public Library also possesses space available to the public.



Places of Worship

The community offers a wide range of religions and denominations—the following is a list of those institutions.

- McCook Baptist Church, 329 N. Cherokee Road
- Grace Baptist Church, 1010 E. 6th Street
- St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 509 W. 1st Street
- Church of Christ, 711 E. G Street
- McCook Christian Church, 507 W. B Street
- Cornerstone Fellowship, 402 W. 5th Street
- St. John's Lutheran Church, RR 3
- United Methodist Church, 105 E. E Street
- Indianola Christian Church, 419 E. E Street
- St. Patrick's Church, 409 E. F Street
- Peace Lutheran Church, 411 E. 6th Street
- St. Patrick Lutheran Church, 612 E. 4th Street
- Trinity Lutheran Church, 1619 W. 3rd Street
- Lutheran Church Our Savior's , 312 Seminole Drive
- St. John Lutheran Church, 39097 Road 712
- First Congregational Church, 212 E. E Street
- Christian Science Reading Room, 601 W. 1st Street
- First Assembly of God Church, 811 E. C Street
- Norris Avenue Chapel, 1211 Norris Avenue
- Jehovah's Witnesses, 2010 W. J Street
- Evangelical Free Church, 602 E. 14th Street
- Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 212 W. 7th Street
- Nazarene Church of McCook, 801 W. 1st Street
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 411 Elizabeth Lane
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church, N. Highway 83



Public Safety

The City of McCook maintains a combination fire department (505 C Street) with eleven full-time employees and twenty-four volunteers. All full-time firefighters are paramedics as well and serve an area within McCook's City's limits. The EMS response area covers approximately 320 square miles. The fire department's ISO (Insurance Services Office) rating is a 3—on a scale from 0 to 10—with lower scores reflecting a better staffed and equipped department.



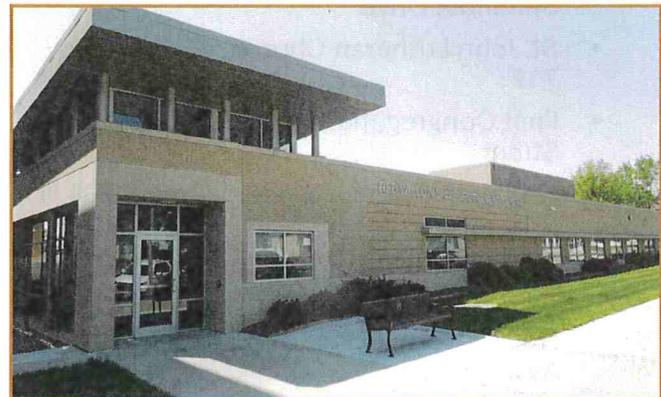
Police Department

The McCook Police Department (505 C Street) law enforcement division includes one chief, four patrol sergeants, two detectives, eight patrol officers, and one school resource officer. Staff assistants handle 911 duties and surrounding law enforcement agencies include the Red Willow County Sheriff's Office and the Nebraska State Patrol.



Red Willow County Sheriff's Office

Offices are located at 516 Norris Avenue for the Red Willow County Sheriff's Office. Staff includes a sheriff and deputy sheriff along with support staff. The Red Willow County jail is located at the same address.



Senior Center

The McCook Heritage Senior Center is located at 1312 West 5th Street in McCook and provides activities—home delivered meals, for instance—for those sixty years and older. The center is directed and maintained by the City of McCook and the West Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging.

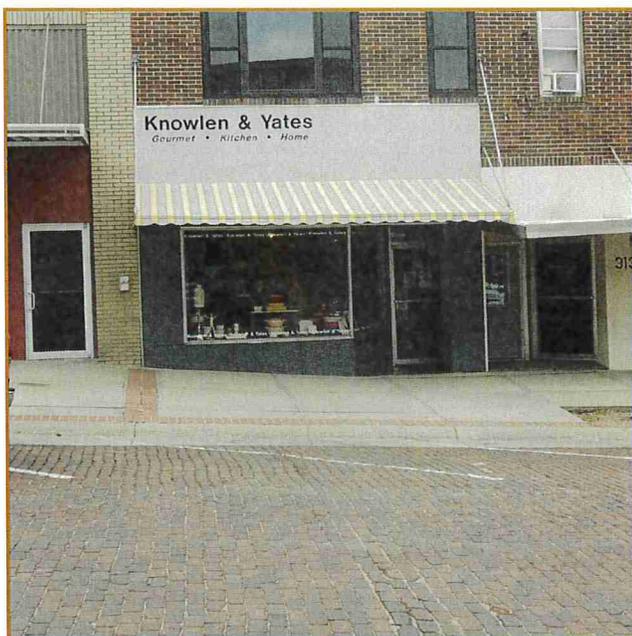


Tourism—McCook and Red Willow County

The Nebraska Department of Tourism does not track data related to an individual community but does compile data at the county-level. McCook/Red Willow County are blessed with both cultural events and natural amenities to attract visitors and examining a ten-year dataset reveals positive trends (Table 2.9). In 2021, Red Willow County witnessed a ten-year high in tourism spending—\$14.8 million—with many visitors staying in hotels, some in private homes, others at campgrounds, along with day travelers. Tourism dollars in the county impacted several sectors of the local economy, including accommodations (hotels, motels, Airbnb, and Vrbo), food service, food stores, transportation and fuel, arts, entertainment, and recreation, retail sales, and air travel (Table 2.10).

Year	Direct Spending (Millions)
2012	13
2013	12.7
2014	13.4
2015	12
2016	11.1
2017	12.2
2018	12.2
2019	12.3
2020	10.5
2021	14.8

Source: Nebraska Department of Tourism.

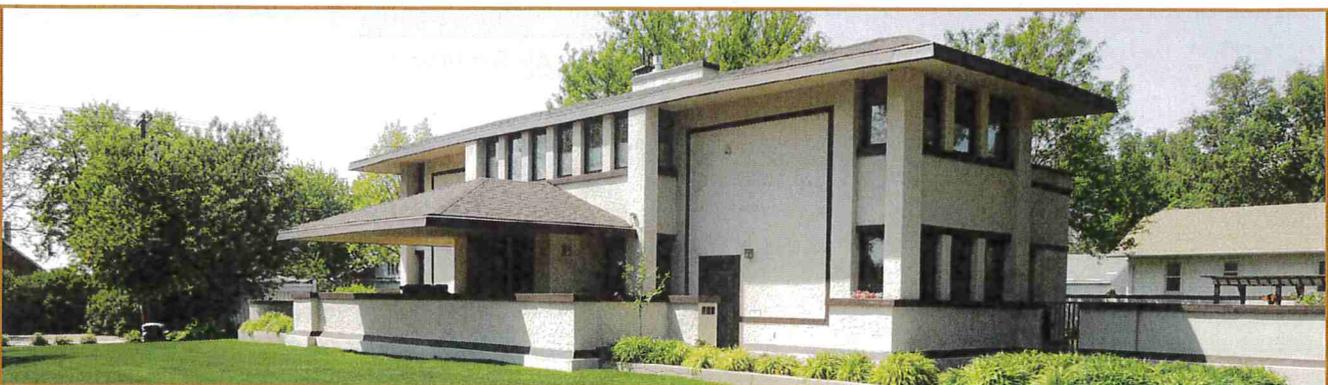
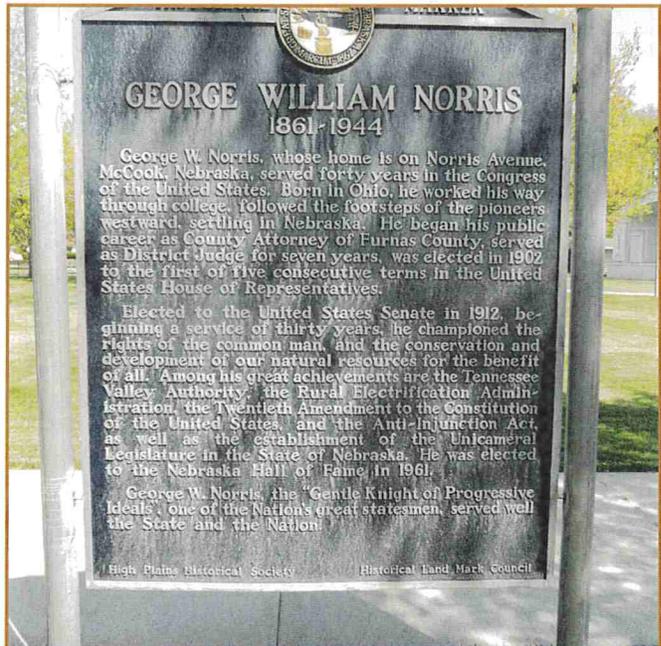
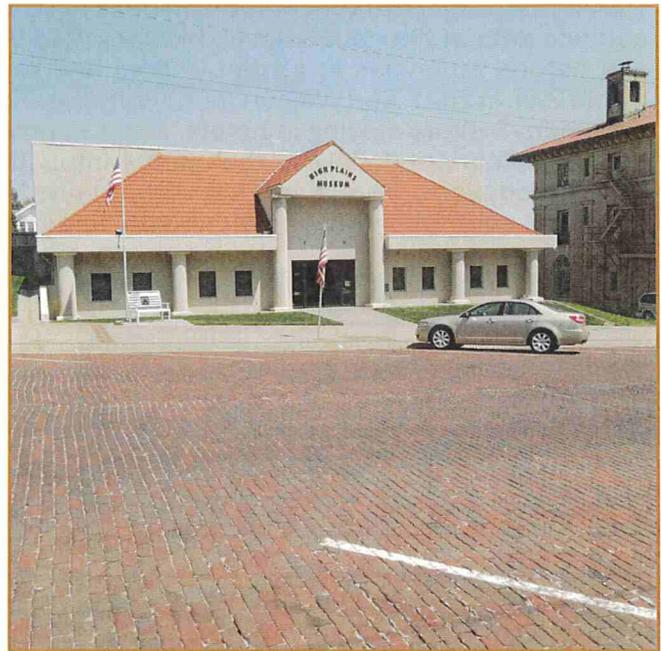


Commodity Purchased	Spending (Millions)
Accommodations	4.4
Food Service	5.7
Food Stores	0.8
Transportation and Fuel	0.9
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.3
Retail Sales	1.5
Air Transportation	0.2

Source: Nebraska Department of Tourism.

Museums/Historical Markers

The Museum of the High Plains is located at 421 Norris Avenue in McCook. Exhibits range from a WWII air base and German POW camp displays to the 1907 Carnegie Library, along with antique cars and general store items, maps of the west, Native American displays, and political items. The museum is also home to a reference/research room which serves the community and researchers interested in McCook/Red Willow County history.



McCook Parks

A community should provide places for residents to play, socialize, and relax. McCook does that with several parks and recreational facilities. Regarding ballparks, McCook is home to five lighted ball diamonds. Felling Field (E. 6th Street and D Street) has two ball fields and the Jaycees Complex (W. 10th Street and M Street) is home to four fields. McCook is also home to six parks—Barnett, Elks, Karrer, Kelley, Norris, and Russell—which cover 126 acres.

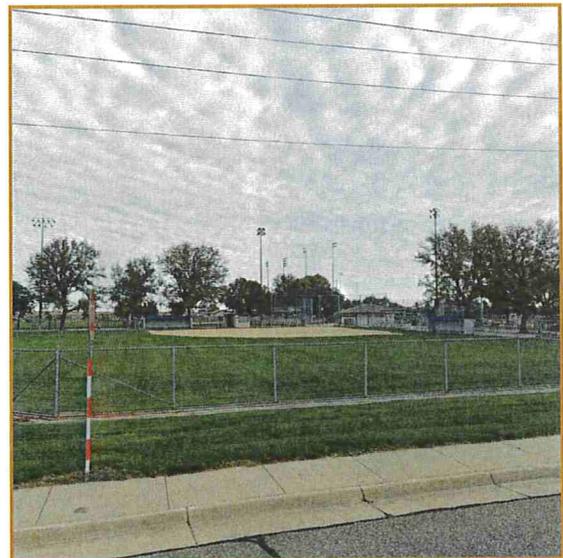
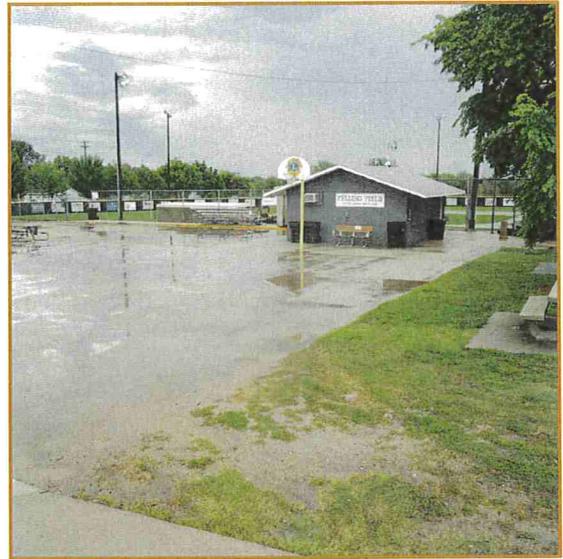
Barnett Park just off Highway 83 on McCook’s south side, possesses forty-five acres that adjoins the Republican River and offers sand volleyball courts, fishing, and open space. Elks Park at West 5th and E Street has playground and tennis courts. Karrer Park is home to the city’s RV and camping facilities and found on McCook’s eastern edge adjacent to Highways 6/34.

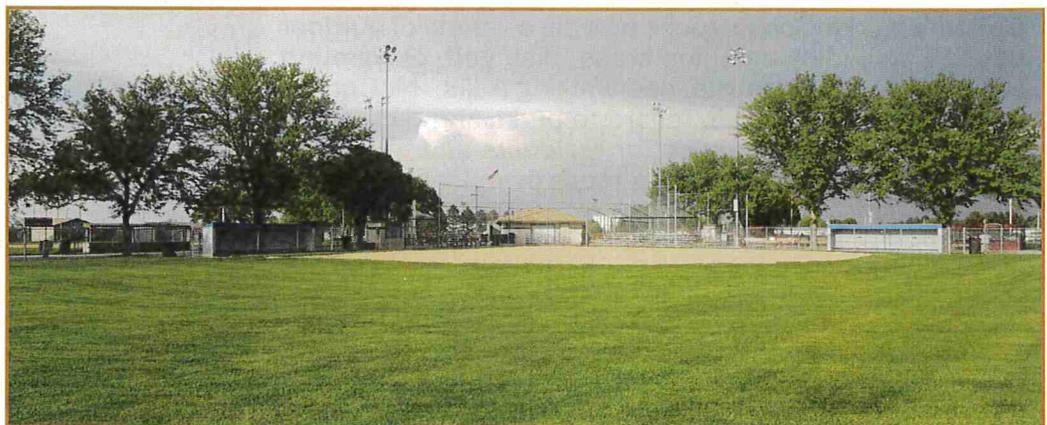
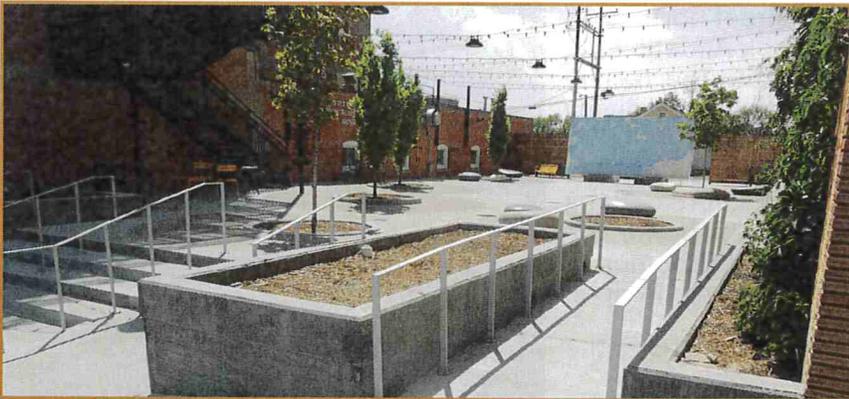
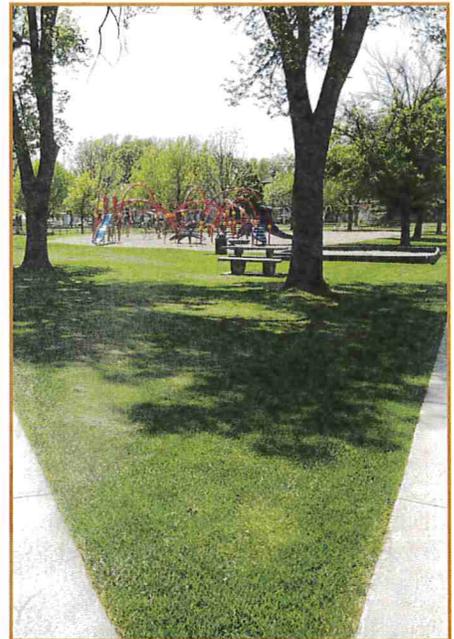
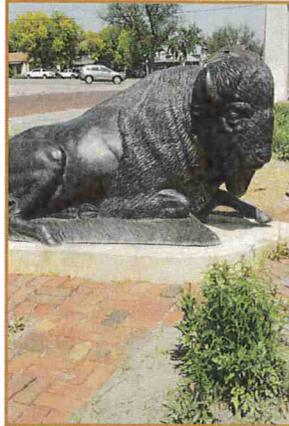
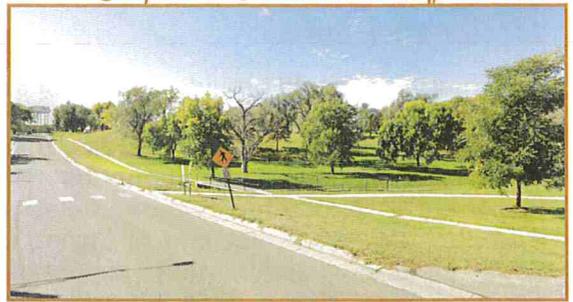
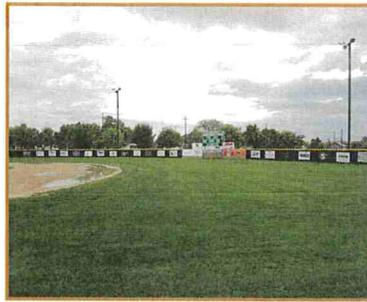
Kelley Park—McCook’s largest City park—at East 3rd and M Street is home to shelter houses, disc golf, playground equipment, and the community’s public swimming pool. Kelley Park also has the Kelley Creek Walking Trail that is 1.5 miles in length and connects to Karrer Park. Next to Mid-Plains Community College and Kelley Park is Bolles Canyon Skatepark that opened in 2015. Catering to bicycle and skateboard enthusiasts, it is a nice example of private-public funding which was also supported by the Tony Hawk Foundation.

The McCook Aquatic Park is located at 500 East M Street, just east of Kelley Park and across the street north from McCook Community College. The McCook Aquatic Park held their grand opening on July 17, 2024. The facility features a lazy river, a zero depth entry pool, diving boards, basketball hoops, a family water slide, a flume slide, and a speed slide. In addition, the facility offers users a lily pad walk, and multiple spray features. Along with the passage of the City’s \$6.7 million bond, the city secured grant funds from the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF) and the Masonic Temple.

Norris Park at Norris Avenue and G Street maintains the community bandshell and playground equipment.

Collectively, McCook’s parks provide a variety of outdoor options, including camping areas, disc golf, playground equipment, tennis courts, and walking trails. McCook is in a fortunate position in regard to parks and recreation. Parks provide public space for residents and visitors to enjoy and enhance the community’s overall appearance.





Heritage Hills Golf Course

The Heritage Hills Golf Course was designated one of the Best 75 Golf Courses in the United States by Golf Digest in 1984. The Phelps-Benz design was revitalized in 2013 with major renovations. Located at 6000 Clubhouse Drive in McCook, the club hosts multiple events and offers travel packages as well.

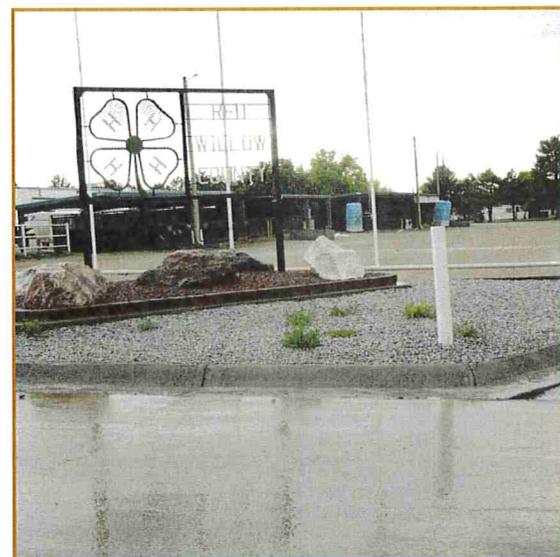


Camping/Outdoor Recreation

The Red Willow Reservoir State Park is not far from McCook and offers a number of activities, including archery, boating, camping, fishing, hunting, and swimming. The 4,320-acre park contains a 1,628-acre lake and is found in northwest Red Willow County. Red Willow Reservoir State Park includes forty-eight camping pads with access to utilities. Additionally, on McCook's eastern edge is another campground along Highways 6/34. Karrer Park is owned by the City of McCook and offers free camp sites along with access to the Kelley Creek Walking Trail.

Red Willow County Fairgrounds

Home to the Red Willow County Fair on McCook's north side, facilities are available for rental throughout the year. Larger venues include the Community Building, Kiplinger Arena, 4-H Building, Trudy Stall Barn, Merchant Building, open air stalls as well as numerous smaller buildings (the largest indoor venue is Kiplinger Arena with 470 permanent seats and up to 330 portable seats). Also located at the fairgrounds is Garrett Nokes Memorial Arena, a traditional outdoor grandstand that hosts rodeos and concerts.

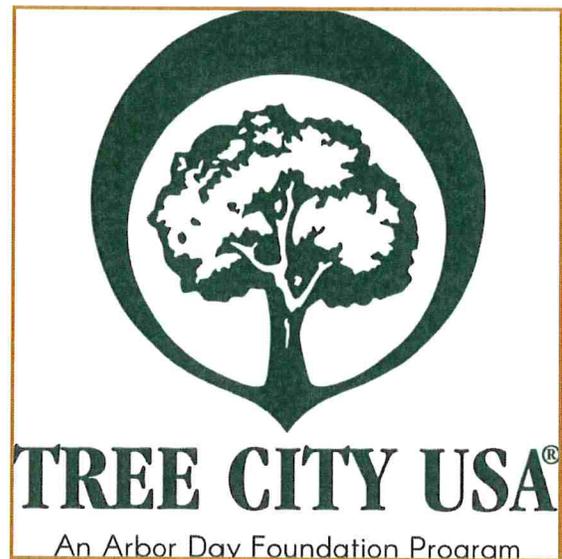
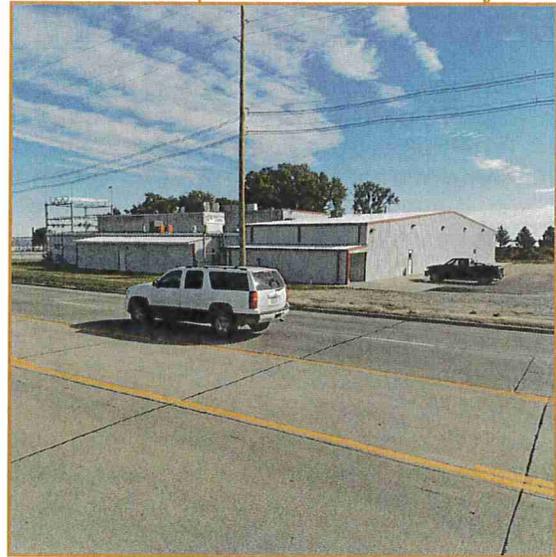


Bowling

TJ's Family Fun Center is located at 1511 N. Highway 83 in McCook and offers arcade games, pool, and food in addition to bowling.

Tree Program

Today many communities and neighborhoods are the recipients of past forestry efforts, which continue with initiatives like the Arbor Day Foundation's *Tree City USA* program and the "tiny forest" movement. McCook is one of ninety-one communities in Nebraska part of the *Tree City USA* program for more than forty years and offers a tree rebate program for residents. Developed by the McCook Tree Advisory Board, trees must be planted within city limits and purchased from McCook businesses. Beautification efforts are essential for communities, the McCook rebate program is a prime example of a forward-thinking design and planning initiative.

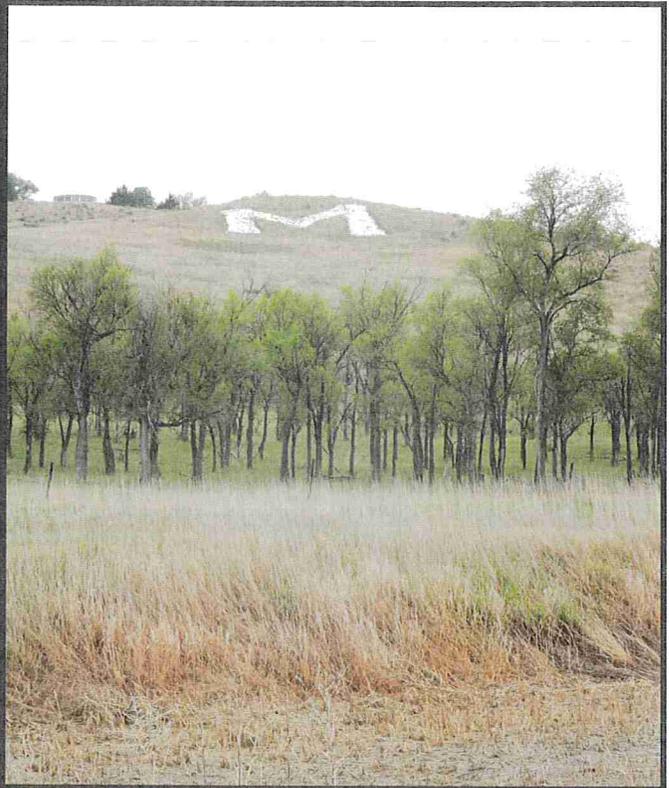


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CHAPTER

3

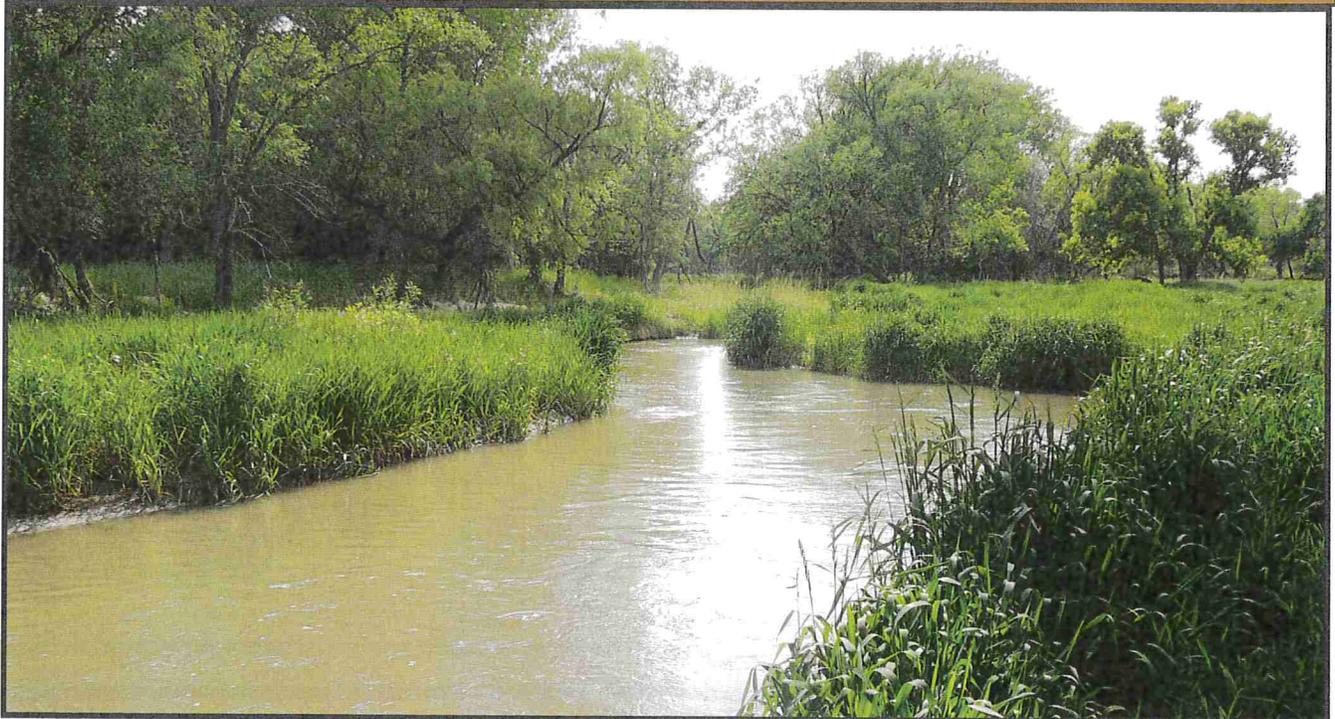
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES



Evaluating natural resources—land, soil, and water—is necessary for community leaders to consider when planning for development and infrastructure. Development requires an understanding of natural features and potential impacts. Proper land use practices can protect an area’s natural resources while complementing the built environment, hence it is important to acknowledge and understand McCook’s

climate and topography. Conservation can, and should, complement development and progress. With that in mind, this section focuses on the following components

- Energy
- Land
- Soil
- Water



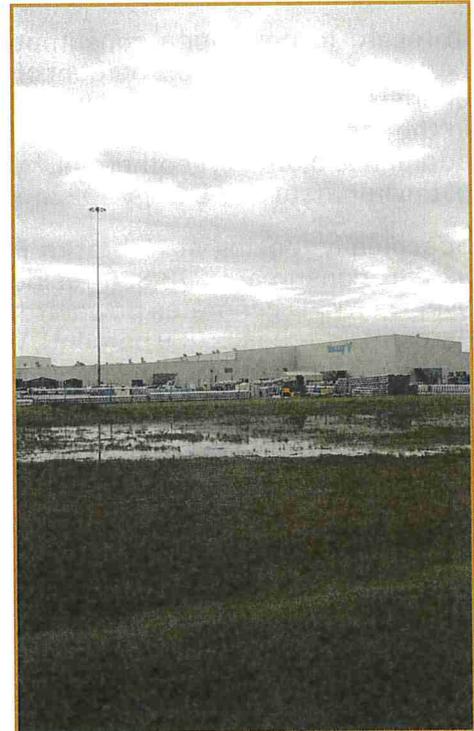
Land, Climate, and Setting

McCook is located in Red Willow County in southwestern Nebraska. The Republican River valley and terrace extend west to east across the southern portion of the county. Topographic elevations for Red Willow County range from 2,267 feet to 2,930 feet, with an average of 2,562. McCook and the nearby vicinity, broadly speaking, is 2,500 to 2,600 feet in elevation. McCook’s continental climate is typical for the Great Plains, characterized by extremes—cold winters and warm summers, high winds, and dramatic changes in weather conditions (Table 3.1). Average daily maximum temperatures range from a high of 90 in July to a low in January of 14 degrees Fahrenheit. Extremes for McCook range from a high of 114 degrees on July 20, 1932 to a record low of -30 on January 12, 1912. Annual precipitation is just over twenty inches per year but has the potential to dramatically vary year to year as history demonstrates.

Table 3.1: Average Highs-Lows and Precipitation

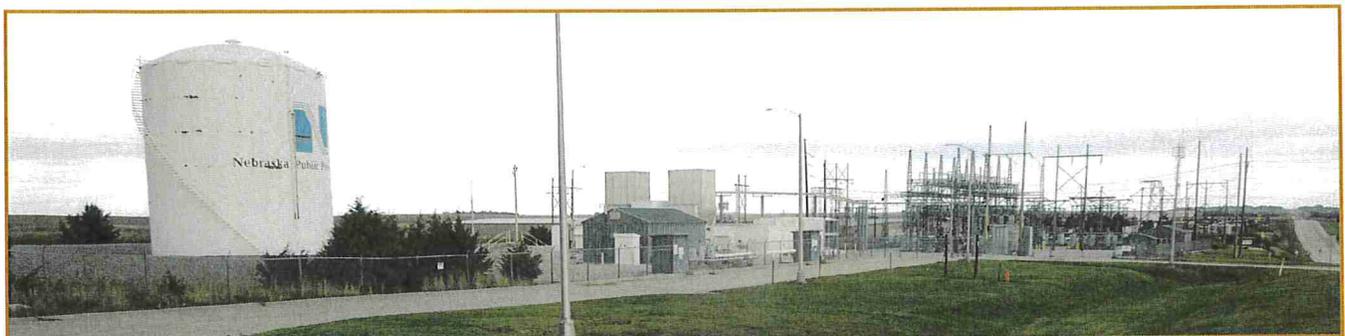
Month	Average High	Average Low	Precipitation
January	39	14	0.51
February	45	19	0.63
March	54	26	1.42
April	65	36	2.2
May	73	48	3.27
June	85	58	3.23
July	90	63	3.31
August	87	62	2.8
September	79	51	1.38
October	67	38	1.3
November	51	25	1.1
December	41	17	0.51
Total Precipitation			21.66

Source: www.usclimatedata.com.



Energy

Nebraska legislators passed LB997 in 2010 that requires cities and counties to adopt an energy element in comprehensive plans. The energy element is required to include infrastructure and use by sector, utilization of renewable energy sources, and energy conservation measures that benefit the community.



Nebraska Energy Use by Sector

In 2020, Nebraska was 19th lowest in energy consumption in the United States. The state consumed 863.7 trillion British thermal units (Btu) of energy, less than one percent of the (0.93 percent) of the nation's total. In comparison, Texas was highest at 13,480.8 trillion (15 percent of the nation's total) and Vermont was lowest with 125.7 trillion Btu (Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy 2022).

In 2020, the industrial sector consumed nearly half (43 percent) of Nebraska's total. Of the remainder, the transportation sector consumed 22 percent, the residential sector 19 percent, and the commercial sector 16 percent. Between 2019 and 2020, all sectors witnessed a decrease in consumption—transportation -8.4 percent, commercial -7.7 percent, residential -5.5, and industrial -1.4 percent (Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy 2022).

In regard to per capita consumption, Nebraska was ninth highest in the nation. In that respect, petroleum provided 25.3 percent of the state's energy needs, followed by coal 23.7 percent, renewable energy 22.5 percent, natural gas 21.4 percent, and nuclear power at 7.2 percent. Of the 22.5 percent in the renewable category, wind energy dominates with a wide majority of energy in this sector, in addition to biofuels, geothermal, hydroelectric, solar, and wood/waste energy (Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy 2022).

Specifically looking at Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) for 2022, the district had a total of 93,485 consumers—73,826 residential users, 19,599 commercial users, and 60 industrial users (NPPD). NPPD generates power from several sources, they include Coal (47.5 percent), Nuclear (30.1 percent), Purchases (8.9 percent), Wind (6.2 percent), Hydro (4.7 percent), Gas & Oil (2.4 percent), and Solar (0.2 percent).

For McCook, electricity consumption data provided by NPPD may be divided into three categories—commercial, industrial, and residential (Tables 3.2). Stability is witnessed in all three categories, with little variance over the last three years related to number of consumers and total amount billed.

	2023	2022	2021
Commercial	\$3,553,989	\$3,656,981	\$3,563,189
Industrial	\$1,678,747	\$1,766,428	\$1,822,163
Residential	\$4,950,021	\$5,080,639	\$4,933,150

Source: NPPD 2024.

McCook's Energy Options

McCook's residents are served by a variety of utility companies in several sectors. Natural gas, for instance, is distributed by SourceGas and telephone service is provided by CenturyLink, Great Plains Communications, and Pinpoint. Internet providers include CenturyLink, Great Plains Communications, Verizon, and Veaero.

Within the city limits, electricity is distributed by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) while in the two-mile planning jurisdiction it is supplied by the McCook Public Power District (MPPD). MPPD purchases its power from NPPD and distributes it to parts of six counties in southwest Nebraska including Red Willow County.

Renewable Options

There are currently three viable renewable energy options to consider—solar, water, and wind.

Solar Energy

Solar energy is a renewable energy source that involves harnessing light from the sun and converting it to electricity. In the process, sunlight is captured using either photovoltaic (PV) collectors or flat plate collectors. Sparsely populated Red Willow County does have 224 sunlit days each year (the U.S. average is 205 days) so there is potential for solar power.

Water Energy

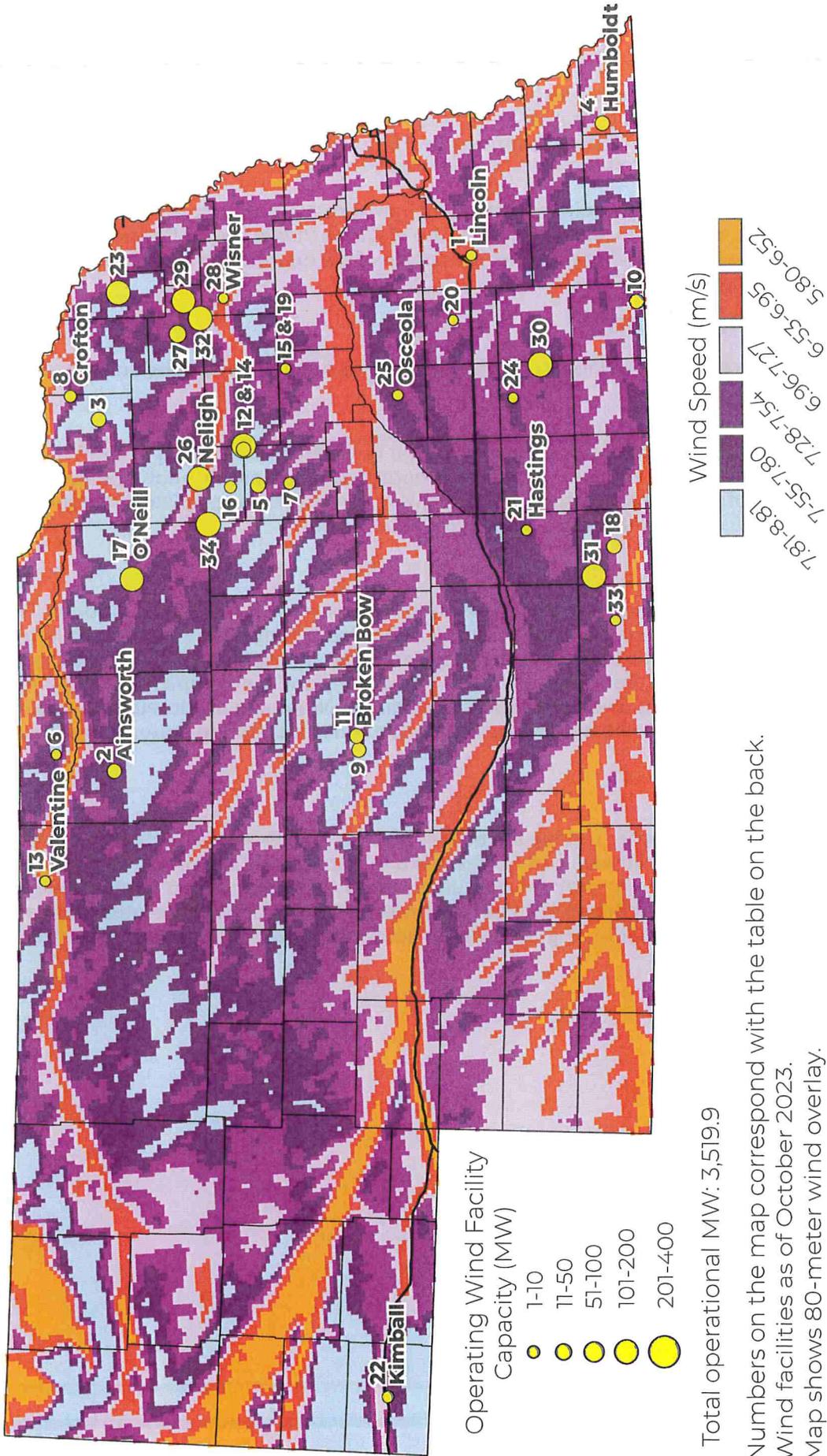
Nebraska has an abundance of groundwater, much from the Ogallala Aquifer. Red Willow County residents acquire drinking and agricultural water from wells that utilize porous rocks that form the Ogallala Aquifer. This critical resource requires constant monitoring to ensure quality and supply are maintained. In many situations—based on topography and landscape elements—hydroelectric power generation is an option, even in certain locations in Nebraska. Hydroelectric power, however, at this time does not appear to be a viable option throughout much of the state, in particular for McCook and Red Willow County.

Wind Energy

Wind power is yet another renewable energy source, one that has become more common not only in the Great Plains and Midwest but in Nebraska in particular. Capturing wind to produce power is not new, the idea has been in play for centuries. Wind turbines convert kinetic energy into mechanical power or wind power. At the end of 2021, Nebraska was one of twenty states that generated over 1,000 megawatts of wind capacity. Figure 3.1 graphically demonstrates current wind production sites in the state.

Wind Development in Nebraska

Operating Facilities



For questions or comments on this map, contact neo.energy@nebraska.gov.
For more information, visit: <https://neo.ne.gov/programs/stats/inf/89.htm>

Sources: Base map provided by National Renewable Energy Laboratory for U.S. Department of Energy (2017).
Facility locations provided by the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (2023).

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Geographical Extent and Soils

Red Willow County is located along Nebraska's southern border with elevations that range from approximately 2,300 feet on the eastern side of the county to more than 2,800 in the northwest and southwest corners of the county. The Rocky Mountains to the west essentially "cut off" moisture (rain shadow effect) from the west and with no barriers to the north or south the county realizes sharp changes in temperature associated with wind patterns. Red Willow County's total land area is 458,240 acres, or 716 square miles, and the Republican River and Red Willow Creek and Beaver Creek are the primary streams in the county.

Red Willow County is in the "western part of the Loess Plains, a part of the Great Plains. It consists of nearly level to gently sloping tablelands, the fringes of which are dissected by the valleys of the Republican River and by those of Driftwood, Red Willow, and Beaver Creeks and a few smaller streams" (Huber *et al.* 1967, 46). The Republican River valley is "2 to 2-1/2 miles wide. The bottom land lies only 5 to 10 feet above the normal water level. Bordering the river are extensive alluvial terraces" (Huber *et al.* 1967, 46).

There are four primary soil associations—that can be further divided into different series—in Red Willow County and almost "half of the county consists of moderately sloping loess plains in the uplands and of sloping to steep canyons. The rest consists of loamy soils on stream terraces, bottom lands, and foot slopes in the uplands, of sandy and loamy soils along the Republican River, and of silty soils on steep loess hills and in canyons" (Huber *et al.* 1967, 2).

The first soil type is the Holdrege-Keith Association which is found on "nearly level to moderately sloping loess plains in the uplands and in sloping to steep canyons. The area of this association is 263,600, or about 58 percent of the county" (Huber *et al.* 1967, 2). While productive, the Holdrege-Keith Association in Red Willow County is subject to flooding. The Hord, Terrace-McCook-Bridgeport Association is the second soil type to consider. On nearly level to gently sloping stream terraces, bottom lands, and foot slopes, there are 56,050 acres in this category, some 12 percent of the county. A portion of the land south of McCook is of this type and due to slow permeability and the possibility of flooding, does not make this area appropriate for lagoons and septic tanks. The third type—Sandy Alluvial Land-Las-Glenburg Association—is found on low flood plains along the Republican River and covers 13,590 acres or about 3 percent of the county. As a result of the high water table associated with this soil type in the Republican Valley limits the use of septic tanks and there is a potential for flooding. The Colby Association soils are found on "steep loess hills and in canyons that form the valley slopes of most drainageways in the county. The total area is 125,000, or more than 27 percent of the county" (Huber *et al.* 1967, 4). Steepness of the areas associated with this soil type just north of McCook's City limits impacts development potential which also limits cultivation.

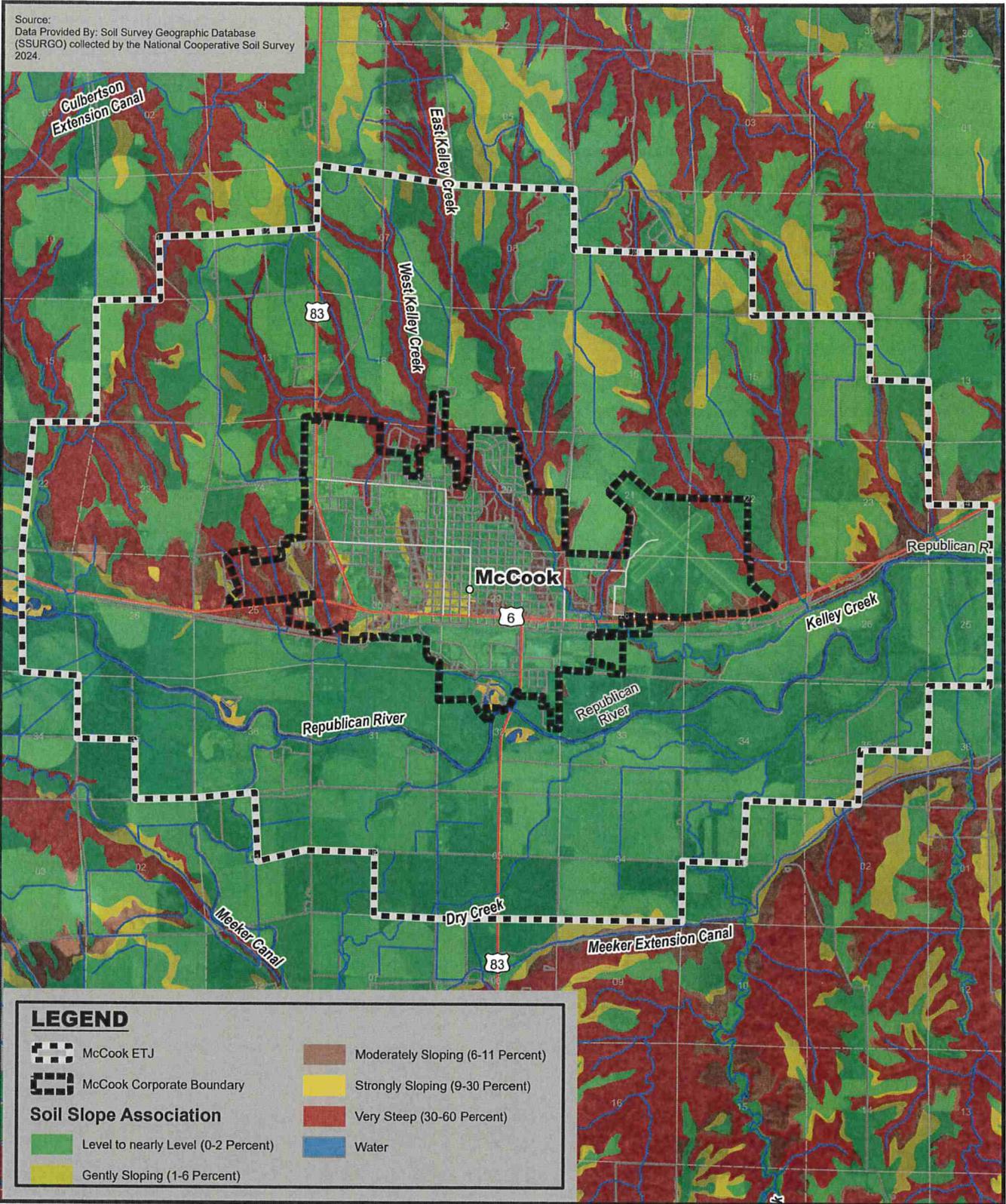
Having even a limited knowledge of soil type is important for land use and management practices. For instance, soil properties are of "special interest to engineers because they affect construction and maintenance of highways, roads, airports, pipelines, foundations of buildings, and facilities for storing water, controlling erosion, irrigating and draining soils, disposing of sewage, and conserving soil and water" (Huber *et al.* 1967, 26).

The following maps in this section depict slope, soil suitability, and dryland or irrigated capability by soil associations for the planning jurisdiction of this comprehensive plan; soils data and classifications were gathered by the NRCS.

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Source:
Data Provided By: Soil Survey Geographic Database
(SSURGO) collected by the National Cooperative Soil Survey
2024.

3/27/2025 9:36 AM Path: G:\Projects\200\200-G1-027\GIS\McCook\Pro\McCookPro.aprx Layout: 200-G1-027.FIG 3.2 SOIL SLOPE



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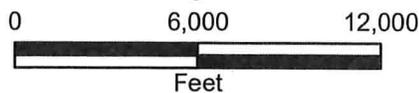
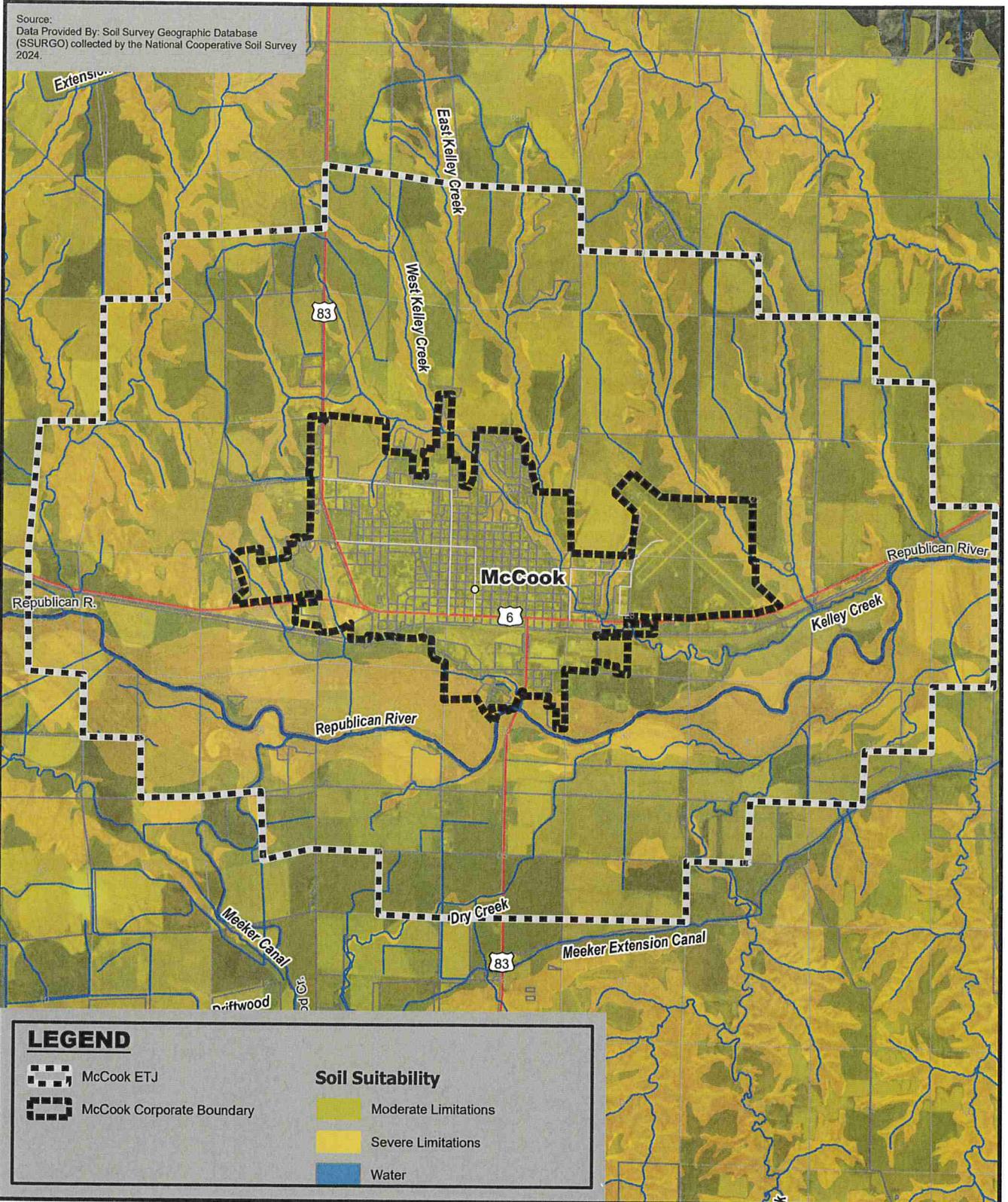


Figure 3.2
Slope
McCook, Nebraska

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Source:
Data Provided By: Soil Survey Geographic Database
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LEGEND	
	McCook ETJ
	McCook Corporate Boundary
Soil Suitability	
	Moderate Limitations
	Severe Limitations
	Water

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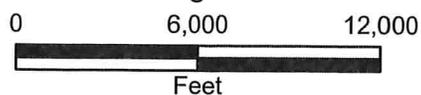
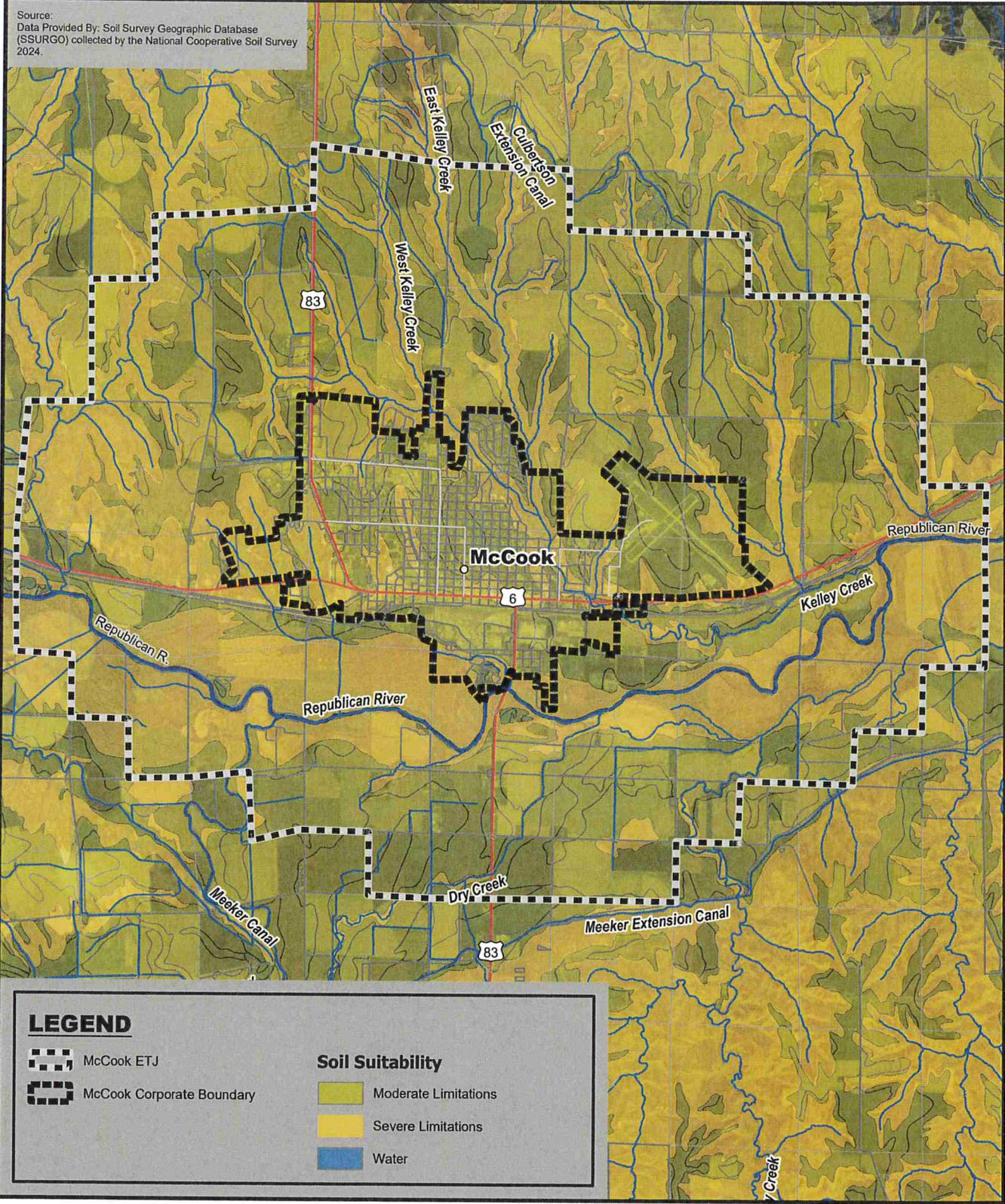


Figure 3.3
Soil Suitability For
Septic Tanks
McCook, Nebraska

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Source:
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 (SSURGO) collected by the National Cooperative Soil Survey
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3/27/2025 9:36 AM Path: G:\Projects\200\200-G1-027\GIS\McCook\Proj\McCook\Pro.aprx Layout: 200-G1-027 FIG. 3.4 SOIL Sewage Lagoons



LEGEND

	McCook ETJ	Soil Suitability
	McCook Corporate Boundary	 Moderate Limitations
		 Severe Limitations
		 Water

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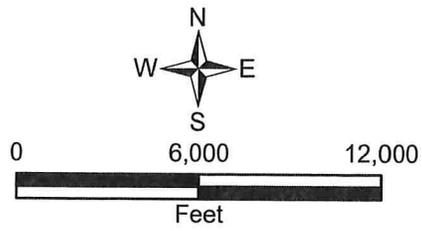
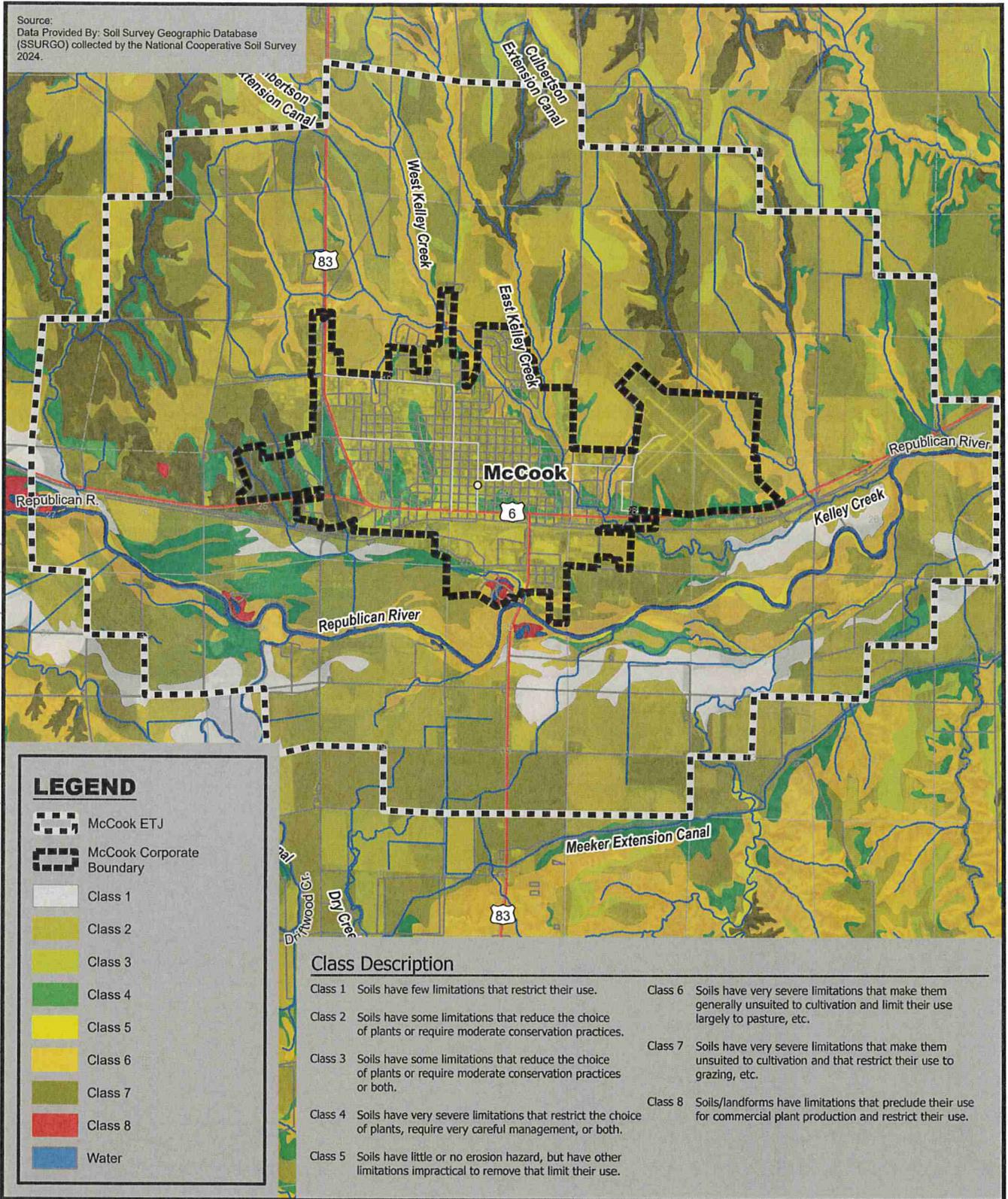


Figure 3.4
Soil Suitability For
Sewage Lagoons
McCook, Nebraska

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Source:
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(SSURGO) collected by the National Cooperative Soil Survey
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3/27/2025 9:38 AM Path: G:\Projects\200-G1-027\GIS\McCook\Pro\atrx Layout: 200-G1-027 FIG 3.5 SOIL Dryland Capability



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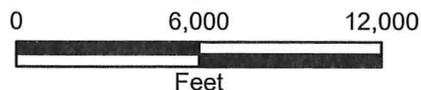
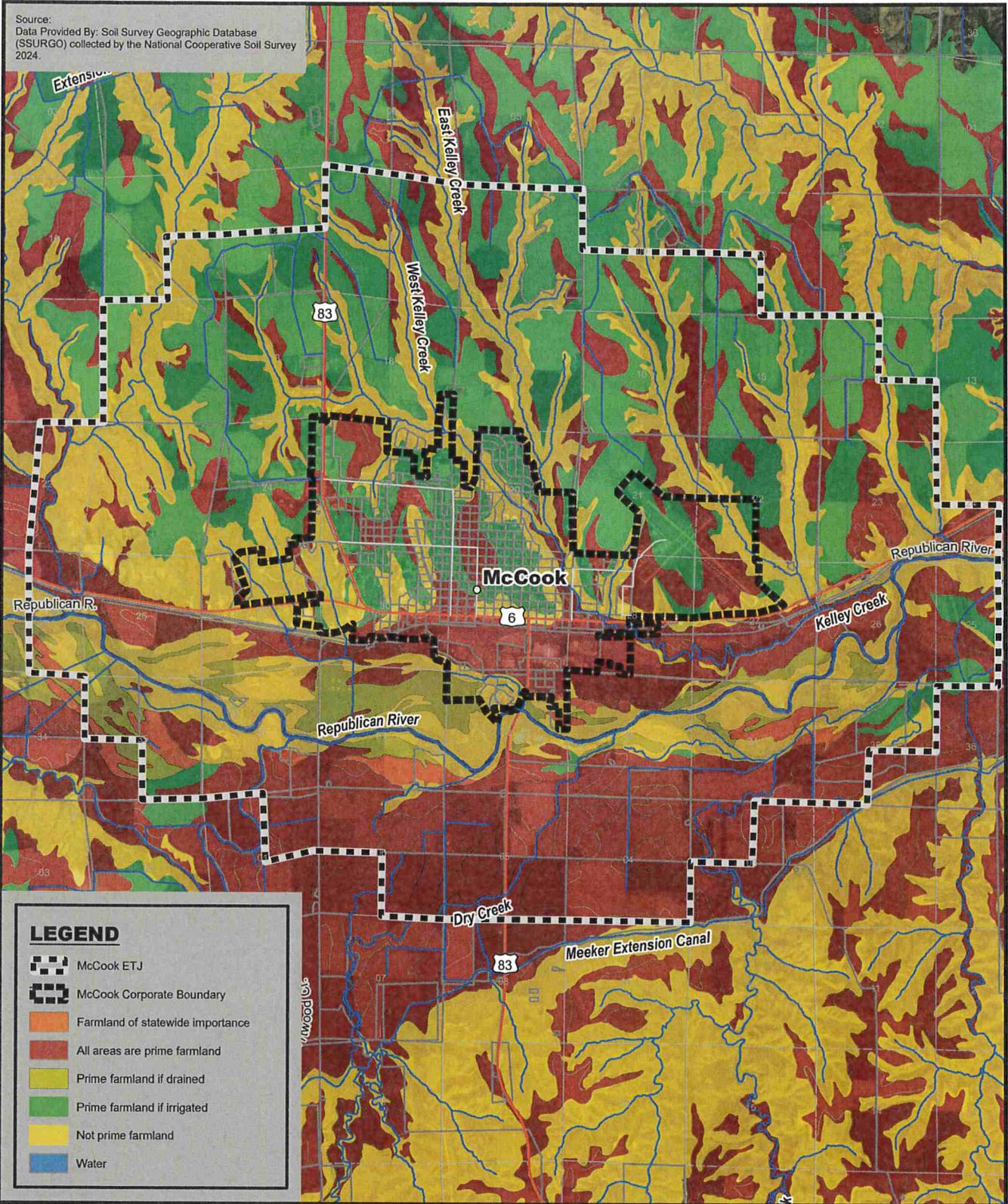


Figure 3.5
Dryland Capability
Classification
McCook, Nebraska

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Source:
Data Provided By: Soil Survey Geographic Database
(SSURGO) collected by the National Cooperative Soil Survey
2024.

3/27/2025 9:36 AM Path: G:\Projects\200\200-G1-027\GIS\McCook\Pro\McCookPro.aprx Layout: 200-G1-027 FIG 3.6 SOIL Prime Farmland



LEGEND

- McCook ETJ
- McCook Corporate Boundary
- Farmland of statewide importance
- All areas are prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained
- Prime farmland if irrigated
- Not prime farmland
- Water

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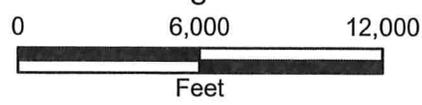


Figure 3.6
Soil Suitability For
Prime Farmland
McCook, Nebraska

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Water

Nebraska has an abundant groundwater supply, much of it related to the Ogallala Aquifer—one of the largest known aquifers in the world. Conservation measures need to be consistently assessed to protect this critical resource.

The Ogallala Aquifer provides water for irrigation near McCook, supplying water to residents, cropland, and livestock. The State of Nebraska receives approximately 80 percent of its public drinking water and nearly 100 percent of its private water supply from groundwater sources. The agriculture economy, which is fundamental to the entire state economy, is directly tied to these natural sources as well. The State of Nebraska understands the vital importance of natural resources and has developed Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) to protect and oversee resources, in this case water resources. McCook is located in the Middle Republican NRD, with offices in Curtis, Nebraska.

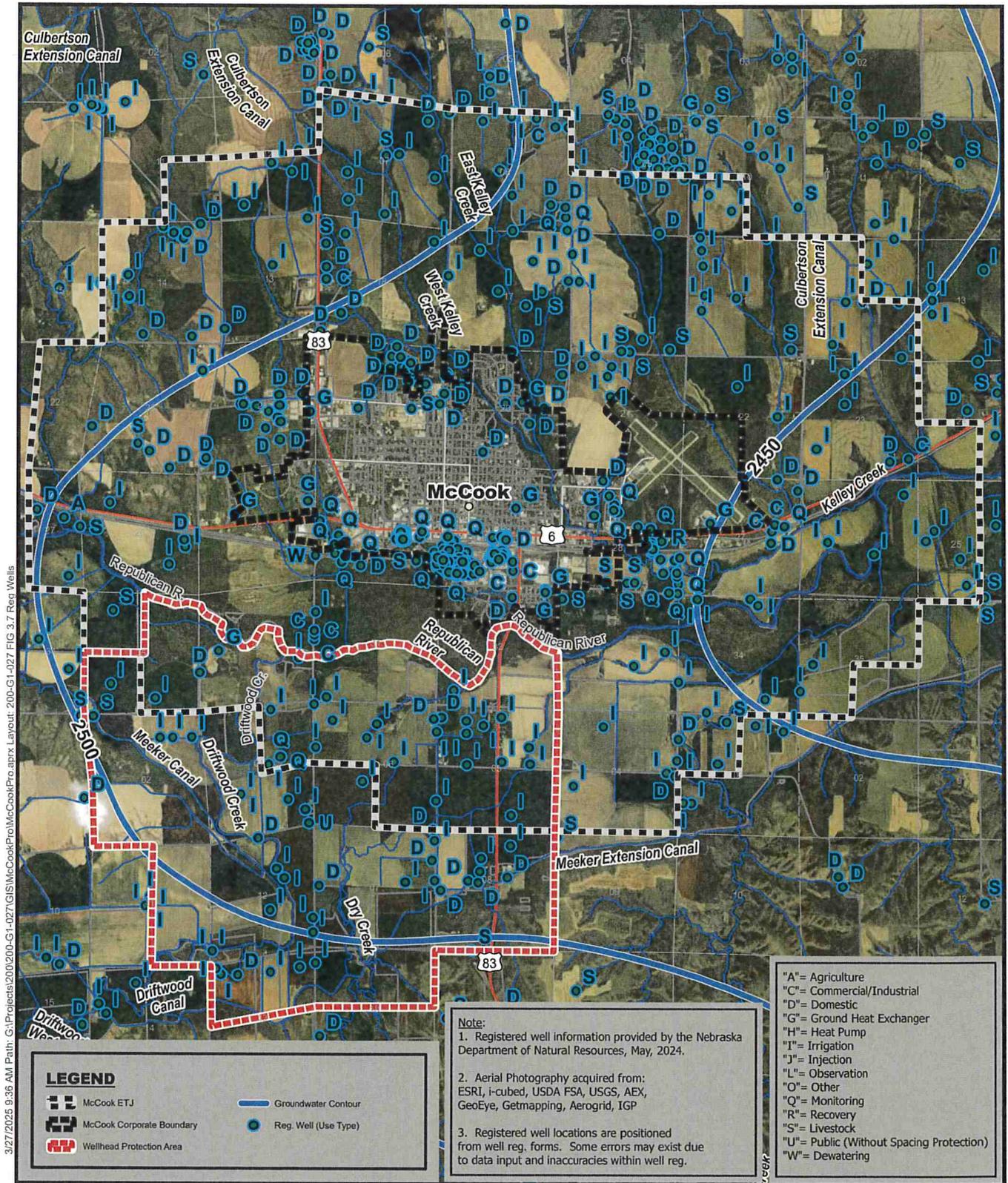
Red Willow County residents can typically find water 100 to 300 feet below the surface, with many wells in the 140 to 160 feet range (Huber *et al.* 1967). This resource is protected by the Wellhead Protection Program that provides the following information on federal regulation compliance:

- Outlines duties of the governmental entities and utility districts.
- Determines protection area.
- Identifies contamination sources.
- Develops a containment source management program.
- Develops an alternative drinking water plan.
- Reviews contaminated sources in future wellhead areas.
- Encourages public participation and involvement.

The Nebraska Wellhead Protection Program aims to regulate ground water quality and quantity. Nebraska's Wellhead Protection Program also intends to protect municipal drinking water supplies by focusing on several goals.

- Prevent new contamination sources in Wellhead Protection Areas through planning.
- Minimize the hazard of existing contamination sources through management.
- Provide early warning of existing contamination through groundwater monitoring.

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3/27/2025 9:35 AM Path: G:\Projects\200\200-G-1-027\GIS\McCookPro\McCookPro.aprx Layout: 200-G-1-027 FIG. 3.7 Reg. Wells

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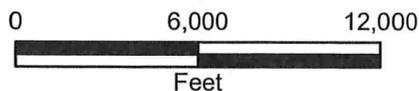


Figure 3.7
Registered Well & Wellhead Protection Area Map
McCook, Nebraska

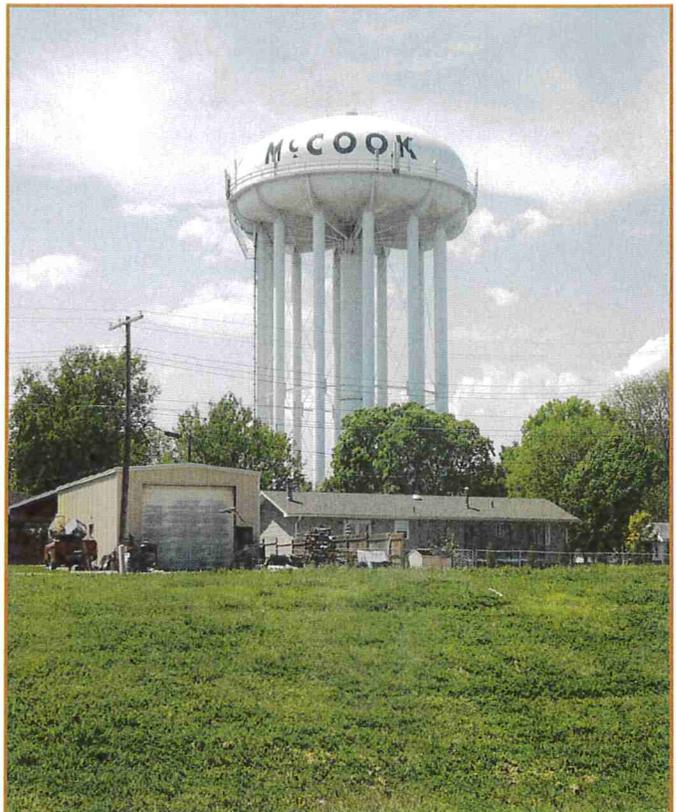
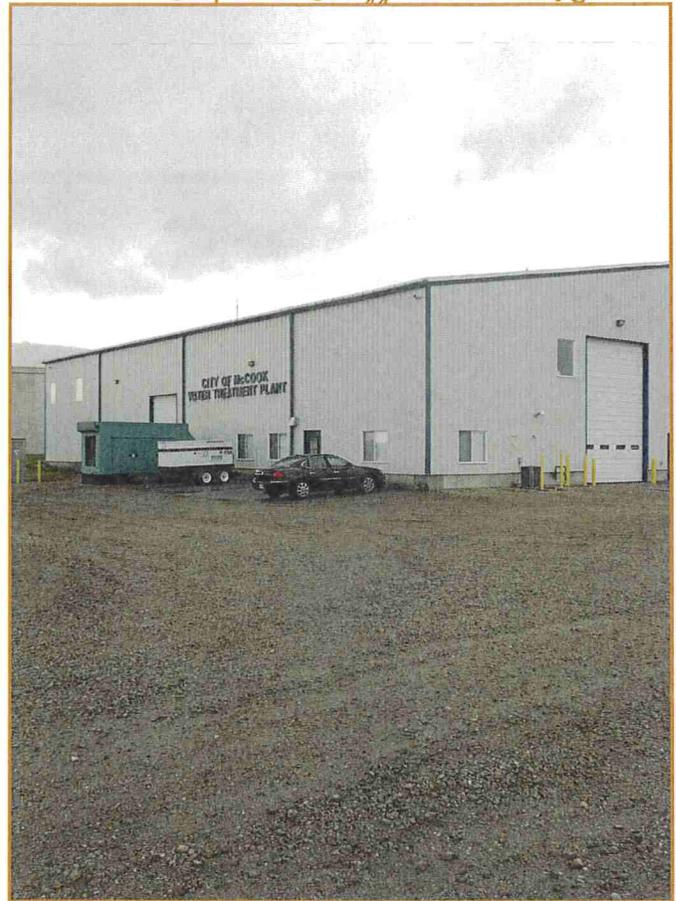
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City Water Supplies

The City of McCook operates nine (ten total—one was abandoned in 2006) active wells, none of which utilize surface water. McCook's current water treatment facility was constructed to reduce concentrations of nitrate, arsenic, and uranium. Contamination primarily comes from agricultural chemicals within the recharge area for wells and the City of McCook is attempting to acquire land adjacent to the wells to better control environmental concerns. Water supply wells are separated enough that should contamination take place, wells can be individually isolated protecting the total water supply. Along with that, Nebraska Public Power is the primary power source but reserve generators are in place to maintain water service if necessary.

Should McCook need additional water, potential supplies could be obtained by drilling additional wells west of the current well field or north of the community in the Ogallala aquifer. Another option would be capturing surface water from the Republican River or Red Willow Lake.

McCook currently has three water storage facilities. The McCook water treatment facility has four million gallons of capacity, while the east storage tank and west storage tank are both elevated structures with one million gallons of capacity. Concerning distribution, McCook's system comprises fifty-one miles of pipes ranging in size from three inches to twenty-four inches in diameter. According to the Public Water Systems Emergency Response Plan document the "average daily demand is the system's average daily usage based upon operational records maintained during the past several years. Maximum daily demand is typically the highest daily demand experienced in recent years based on operational records. System capacity is the maximum daily amount of water that a system is capable of treating or producing and distributing. Peak water demand is the maximum hourly demand that the system can sustain provided by storage or by production capability plus storage." McCook's average daily demand is 2.34 million gallons, the maximum daily demand is 4.77, and the system capacity is 6.5 million gallons. Peak sustainable demand is calculated to be 250,000 gallons per hour.



Floodplain-Floodway

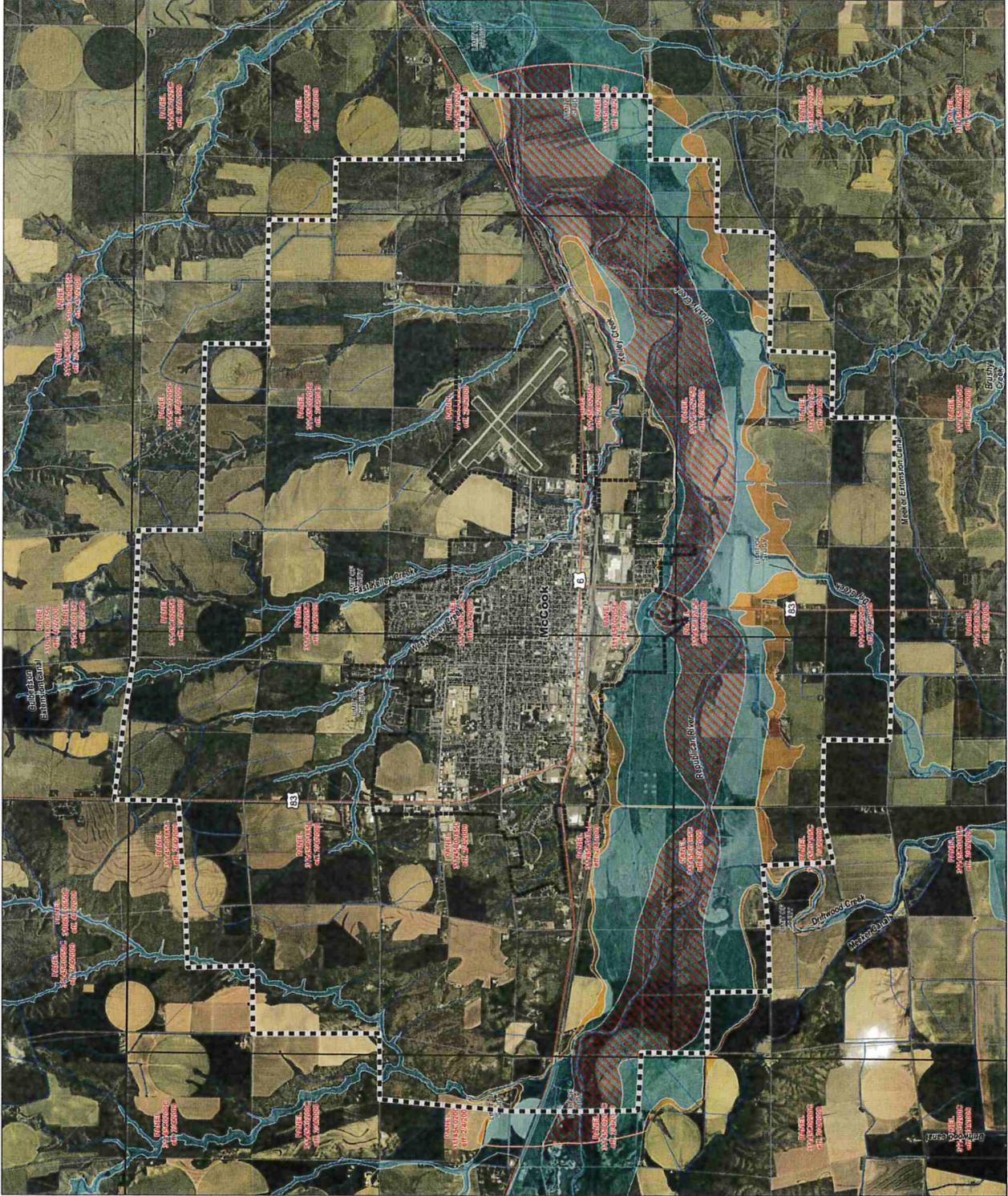
The Republican River is the major drainage system for much of southwest Nebraska. Starting in Colorado, the river flows through extreme northwest Kansas before it enters Nebraska and ultimately returns to Kansas—in total some 453 miles in length. In Nebraska, the Republican flows through eight counties—west to east they are Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Furnas, Harlan, Franklin, Webster, and Nuckolls—before it turns south into Kansas. In Red Willow County, the Republican flows across the county’s entire west to east extent roughly through the north-south middle of the county.

Located in close proximity to the Republican River, flooding has been and is a concern for McCook. Figure 3.8 indicate that Kelley Creek on the city’s east side and the Republican River to the south do pose flood concerns for the community. These concerns are issues to consider with future growth and development plans.

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LEGEND

- McCook ETJ
- McCook Corporate Boundary
- FIRM Panels
- Flood Hazard Boundaries
- Limit Lines
- NP
- SFHA / Flood Zone Boundary
- Flowage Easement Boundary
- Flood Hazard Zones
 - 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
 - Regulatory Floodway
 - Special Floodway
 - Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard
 - 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
 - Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
 - Area with Reduced Risk Due to Levee
 - Area with Risk Due to Levee

Figure 3.8
Floodplain Map
McCook, Nebraska

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1 Percent Annual Chance of Flooding

Commonly known as the 100-year floodplain, the 1 percent chance of annual flooding defines an area where there is a 1 percent chance of flooding to annually occur within the boundary.

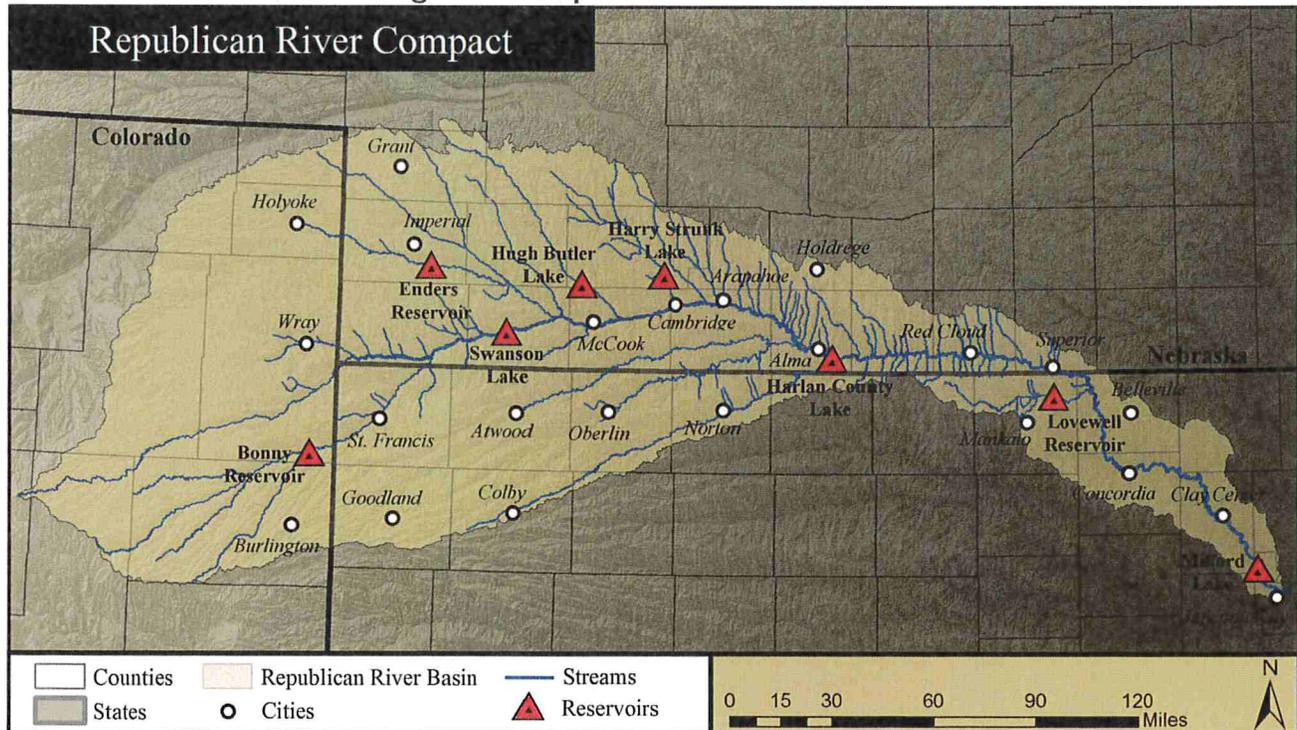
2 Percent Annual Chance of Flooding

The 2 percent chance of annual flooding is commonly known as the 500-year floodplain. There is a 2 percent chance of annual flooding in these areas but was not mapped by FEMA.

History of Flooding

McCook is adjacent to the Republican River—part of the Kansas River drainage system—which flows west to east across Red Willow County. Much of Red Willow County is non-irrigated grazing land but the Republican River valley utilizes water for agricultural endeavors. The Republican River basin begins in the plains of eastern Colorado and flows through northwest Kansas and southern Nebraska, ultimately returning to Kansas (Figure 3.9). The Republican River Compact was negotiated during the early 1940s with participation by the states of Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska along with a representative of the President of the United States. The compact was formally signed in 1942 and its purposes are to provide for equitable division of such waters, remove all causes of controversy, promote interstate comity, promote joint action by the states and the United States in the efficient use of water the control of destructive floods, and provide for the most efficient use of waters in the Republican River basin. The distribution established in the 1940s set the following allocations: Nebraska 49 percent, Kansas 40 percent, and Colorado 11 percent. Since that time the states involved have continually contested consumption rates as water is critical for agriculture, recreation, and urban needs in the high plains of Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Figure 3.9: Republican River Watershed



Source: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Republican River Compact.

McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

Ironically, in the middle of the Dust Bowl one of the greatest flood events to strike Nebraska occurred along the Republican River in May of 1935. Toward the end of May torrential rains fell in eastern Colorado and southwestern Nebraska and by May 31 the river was running “bluff to bluff” (Figure 3.10). When the flood subsided, approximately 100 people had perished and devastation ran into the millions of dollars (Borchers 1983; Wilmot 1995).

Flooding to this extreme is indeed a rare event, yet flooding to a lesser degree is not a rare occurrence in southwest Nebraska and community leaders should be cognizant of this hazard. In May of 2023, for instance, McCook along with several other southwestern Nebraska communities experienced massive flooding following six to seven inches of rain in a short time (Olberding 2023). More recently, in September of 2025 over a six-hour span McCook received more than five inches of rain along with destructive hail that resulted in widespread flooding and storm damage (Larington 2025).

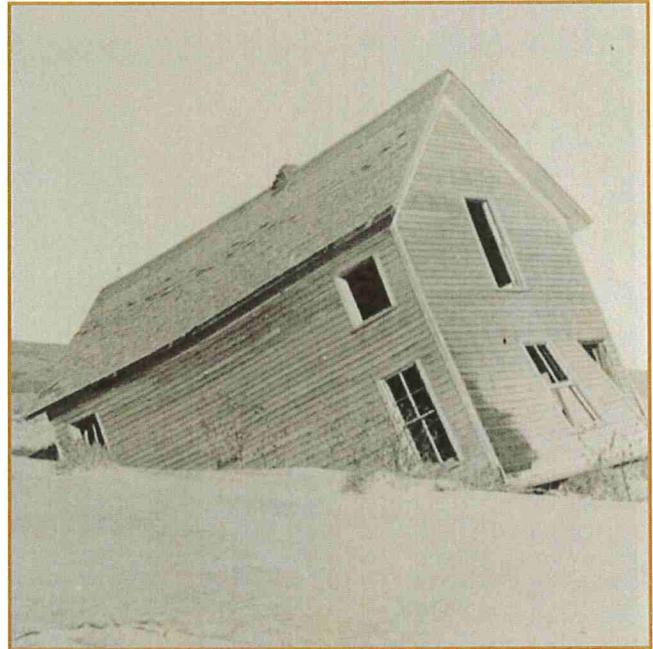


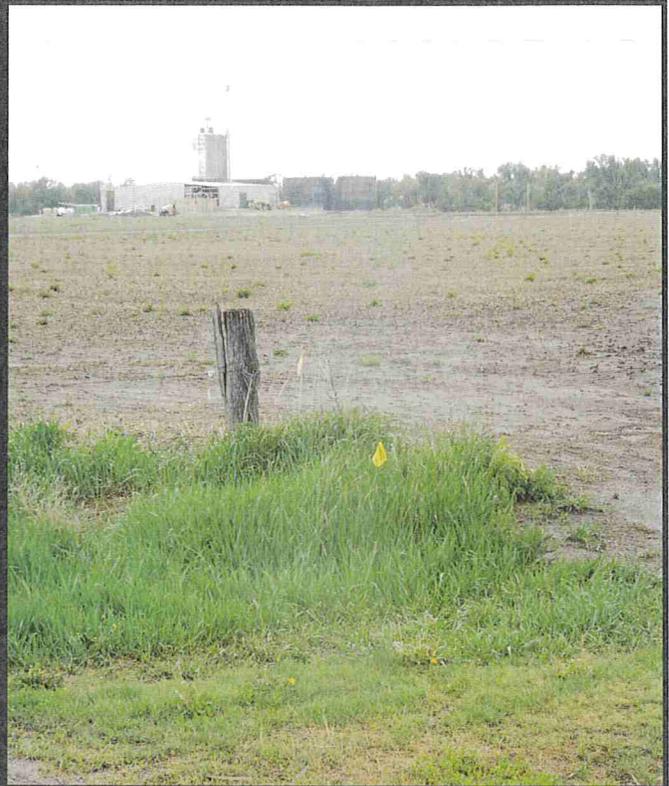
Figure 3.10: The Republican River Flood of May 31, 1935 washed this house about a quarter-mile downstream (Stubbs 2016).



CHAPTER

4

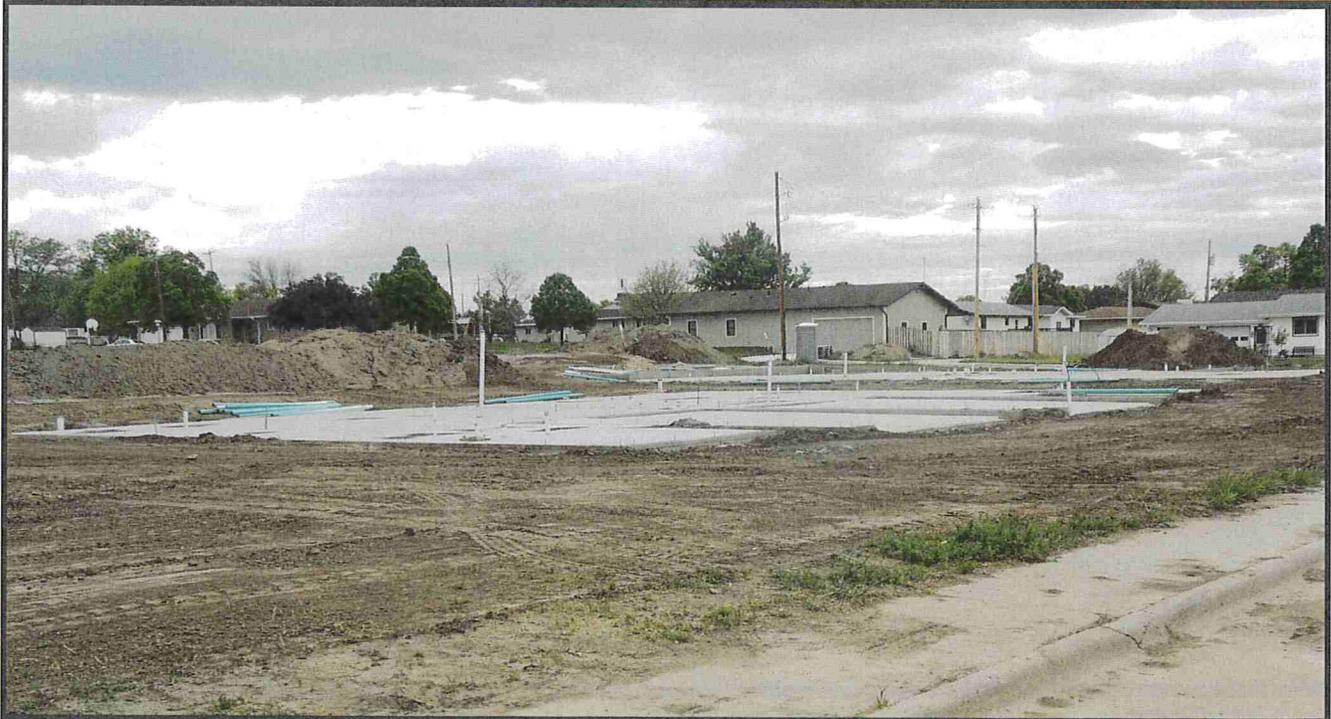
LAND USE AND ANNEXATION



This section examines McCook's land uses and provides a vision with possibilities and options for future development and growth. Discussions of existing and future land use plans are a good barometer of the community's overall health. This section also evaluates McCook's existing and future land use plans along with annexation plans.

With that in mind, this section focuses on the following components

- Land Use
- Annexation





Land Use

Land use is a critical aspect in the comprehensive plan process which allows community members an opportunity to visualize existing land uses and discuss how and where McCook might grow and should grow. Land use planning is an important process that allows community leaders and residents to assess physical, social, and economic factors in a way to not only discuss growth opportunities but to also mitigate potential pitfalls moving forward.

- If a housing development takes place in this area, how does that impact traffic patterns?
- Are there environmental concerns associated with new development?
- Possibly public safety concerns?

Those questions highlight the importance of planning and developing a comprehensive plan that guides and shapes projects which is imperative to balance activities in a community.

Existing Land Use

The land use portion of the comprehensive plan consists of two separate but related sections. The existing land use section evaluates pros and cons of McCook's existing land uses and development patterns (Figure 4.1a). McCook has several primary land uses—commercial, agricultural/vacant, public/quasi-public, and residential—dictated to some degree by transportation options and zoning regulations.

Many commercial properties are adjacent to Highways 6/34 and Highway 83 as well as the downtown district, much in part to visibility and accessibility. Communities typically have zoning regulations for a Highway Corridor Commercial District and the Central Commercial District. Similar to other communities, McCook has these districts within its current zoning regulations. Different setback and parking requirements, height restrictions, and aesthetic concerns typically necessitate the need for different commercial districts.

The primary land use in McCook is residential which can be found throughout the community. New residential properties in McCook are vital but should complement existing land uses. Single-family residential is the most common, however, there are multi-family units as well. McCook's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) also has residential structures—farm homes and/or single-family structures on large lots—which are attractive and provide easy access to McCook's amenities.

Recreational space in McCook includes the municipal swimming pool, ball fields, basketball and tennis courts, playground equipment, and picnic shelters (Figure 4.1a). These opportunities provide amenities for a wide range of the community's residents and provide an important quality of life aspect to McCook's landscape.

Public/quasi-public land uses in McCook include churches, municipal properties, school buildings, healthcare facilities, museums, and community buildings (Figure 4.1a). These dispersed public areas provide a foundational land use for the community. Moving forward public land is imperative as McCook considers the role of public space and its connection to quality of life issues.

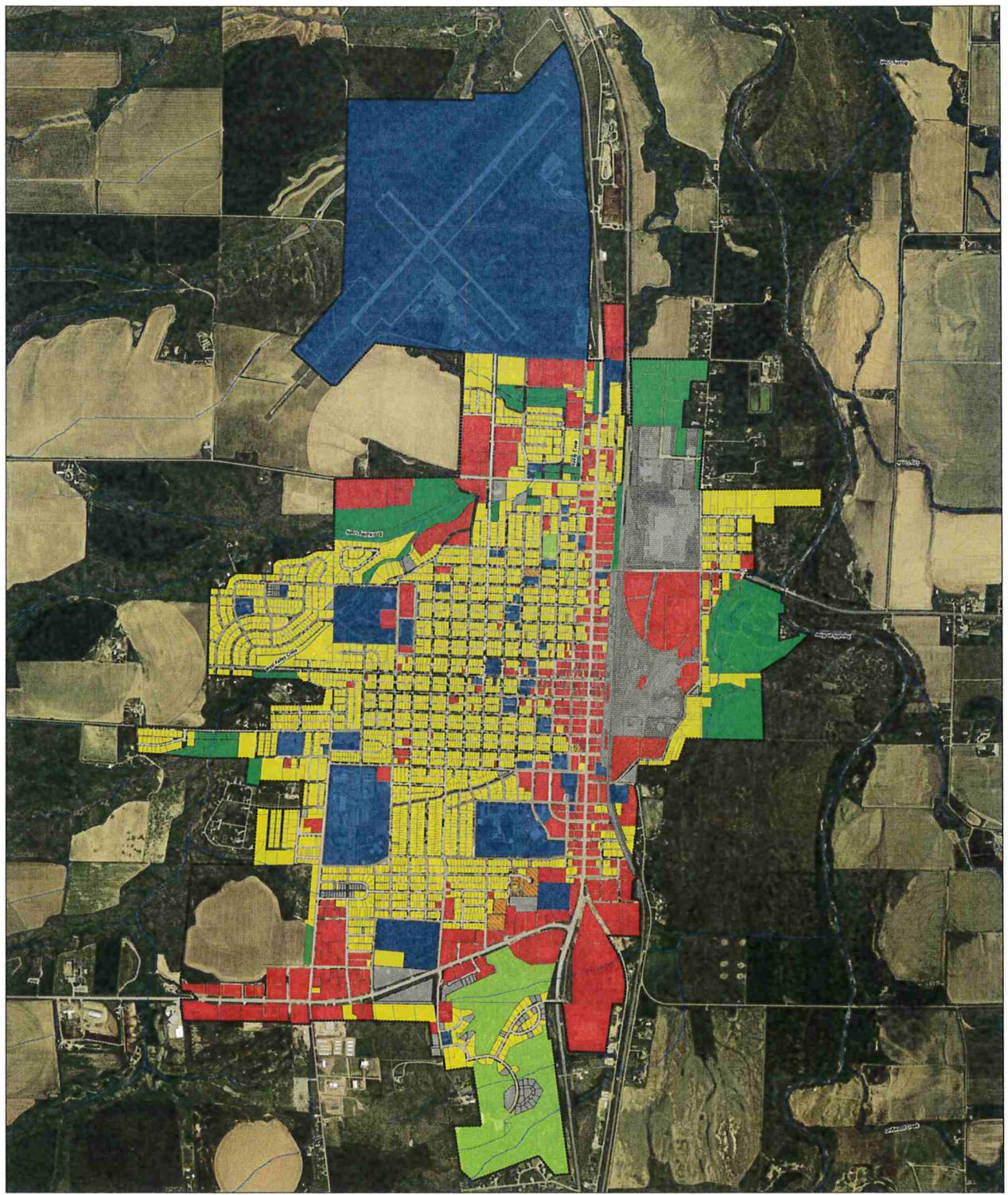
McCook's developed territory is surrounded by agricultural/vacant land, some in the corporate limits other tracts in the ETJ (Figure 4.1b). Several of the tracts would be difficult to develop due to physical science issues but should be considered greenspace or buffer tracts between the community and activities outside the corporate limits. These areas also provide buffer zones between competing land uses—commercial and residential, for instance.

Existing land uses have been analyzed and it is important to note that McCook is growing, with pockets of development throughout the community. Proactive city leaders over the years utilized the planning process to push the community forward, those in leadership positions should do the same and lean on the comprehensive plan to provide a broad roadmap to the future.

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LEGEND

- McCook Corporate Boundary
- Existing Land Use**
- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Agricultural/Greenspace
- Recreational
- Vacant

Figure 4.1a
Existing Land Use
McCook, Nebraska

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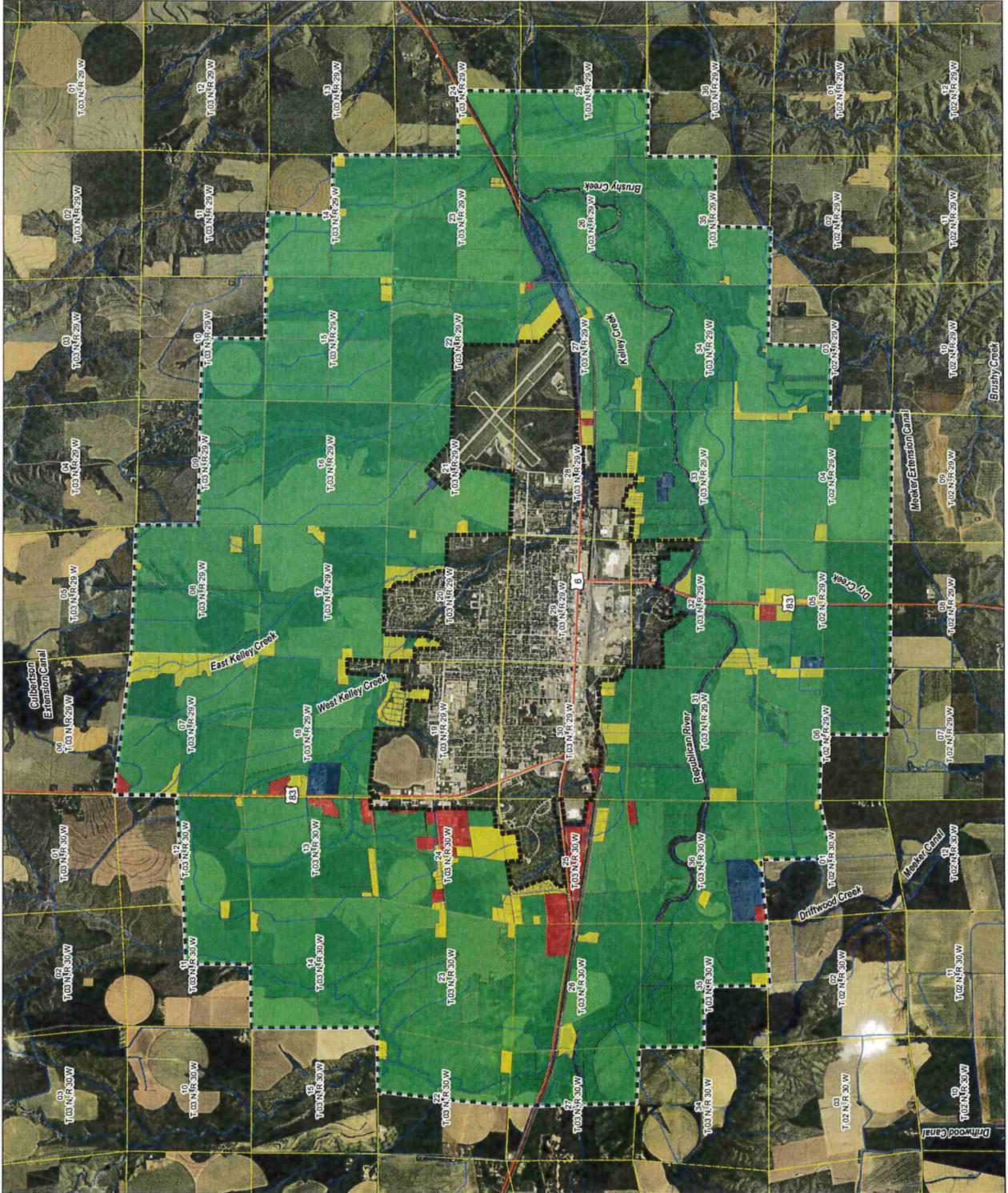
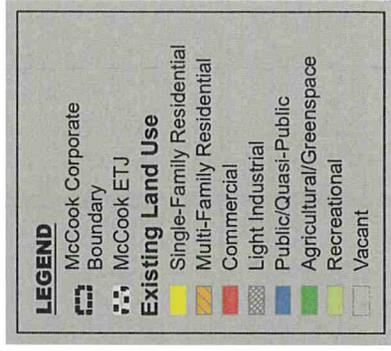


Figure 4.1b
Existing Land Use ETJ
McCook, Nebraska

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Future Land Use and Planning

Planning for future land use options is an essential step in McCook's Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this section is to provide a general guide for future changes in development patterns with the underlying goal of avoiding or minimizing conflicts between land use and the environment. The future land use plan must reflect existing land uses while being flexible to adapt as the community changes as it moves forward.

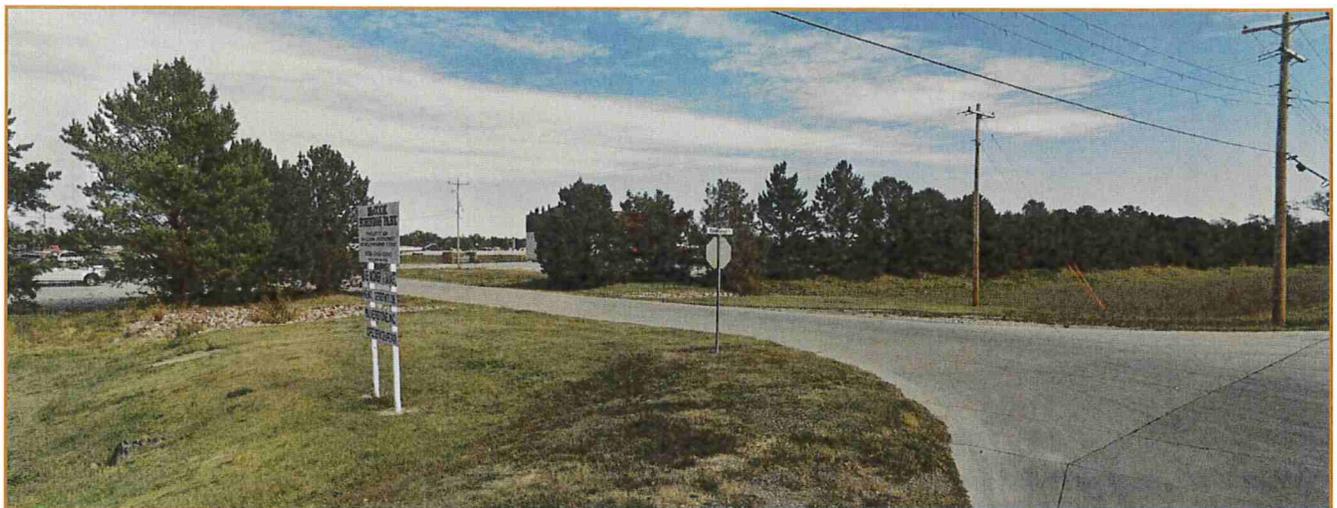
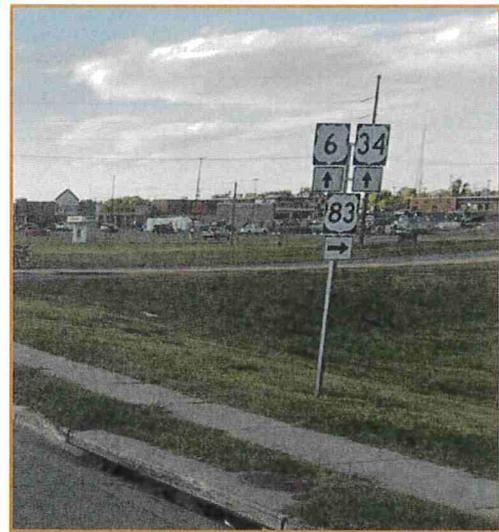
As a component of the planning process, a series of public input meetings was held and a public input survey was shared with residents. Community involvement was, and is, essential to capture the public's input and plan for future land use. The future land use plan gathered information from the public as well as existing land use and data from primary and secondary sources.

A Future Land Use Plan is a vision of how residents see the community moving forward. This vision is a model, providing guidance and continually evolving. To prepare and plan, McCook's decision-makers and community leaders need to be ambitious yet remain realistic. Types of land use vary within the community incorporating a balance of activities—residential, commercial, and public space. With that, housing options also vary based on location, size, and price and serve to attract a wide range of constituents. Commercial development should be encouraged which will attract new residents and retain McCook's current population all while strengthening the tax base.

During public input sessions and community surveys, when future development ideas were discussed participants were encouraged to “think outside the box” and “dream big” when considering future growth and development in McCook. From the discussions several themes appeared (Figure 4.2a).

Commercial and Industrial Development

Future commercial development along Highway 83 to the north is reasonable as well as commercial development along Highway 6 in southwest McCook. As noted one prime area near the junction of Highway 6 and Highway 83 is the former McCook landfill which hampers future development. On McCook's east side commercial development is somewhat limited due to the presence of the airport and Karrer Park adjacent to Highways 6/34. Most agree that continued industrial expansion in southeast McCook along Ravenswood Road is a priority. With highway and rail spur expansion possible, continued or future industrial development—often supported by TIF funding—is logical.



Residential Development

Residential comprises the largest land use in McCook, yet the creation of new housing is critical—both single-family residential and multiple family units. During public input sessions and community surveys, housing was identified as a critical issue for McCook to address. Despite some tracts being confronted with floodplain and/or steep terrain, McCook does fortunately have several areas adjacent to developed sections that lend themselves to residential growth. North of McCook’s Community Hospital (east of 11th Street and north of East J Street) is a tract, for example, ready to develop as well as areas north of the existing corporate limits between Road 385 and Road 386 (Figures 4.2b). The continuation of residential developments on McCook’s north/northwest side (north of Q street) and along West 3rd Street that utilize existing infrastructure—or have access for the extension of utilities—makes sense as well.

These areas were identified during public input sessions and along with utilities allow for easy connections to the existing street pattern in McCook. Community leaders also pointed to an area north of West Q Street adjacent to commercial properties along Highway 83 as an area to potentially develop as residential as well as an area west of commercial development along north Highway 83 as potential residential growth. Land south of the Republican River was also identified as an area to possibly develop as residential-although floodplain issues are concerns.

Infill lots throughout McCook are a viable option, providing easy access to utilities along with the potential to rejuvenate traditional neighborhoods. Independent of where, either single-family or multiple-family units must be accessible. Promoting accessibility and incorporating greenspace into developments creates a sense of place and space that is important for long-term sustainable growth.



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LEGEND

- McCook ETJ
- McCook Corporate Boundary
- Future Land Use**
- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Agricultural/Greenspace
- Recreational
- Vacant
- Potential Hike Bike Trail

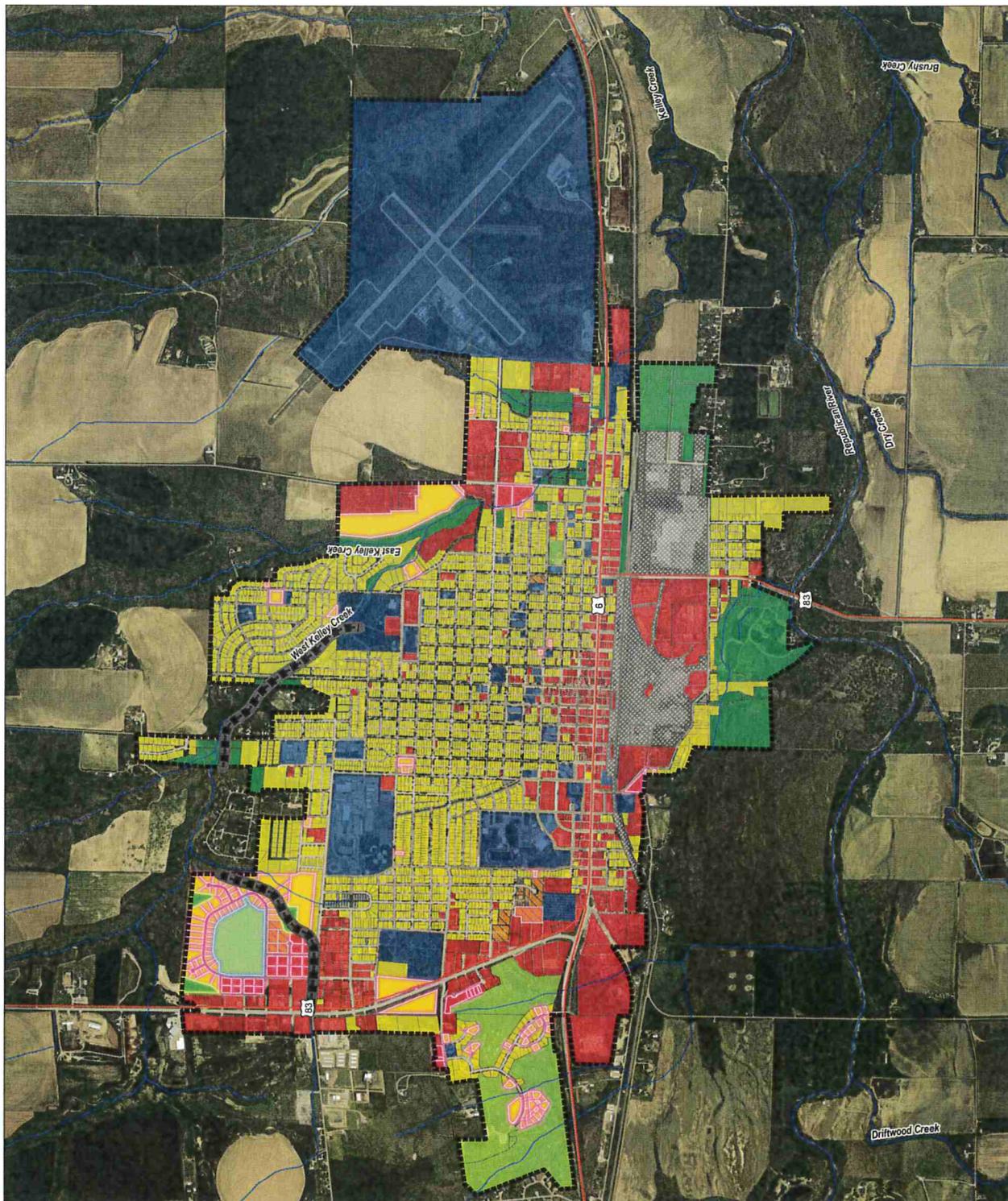


Figure 4.2a
Future Land Use
McCook, Nebraska

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LEGEND

- McCook Corporate Boundary
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- Single-Family Residential
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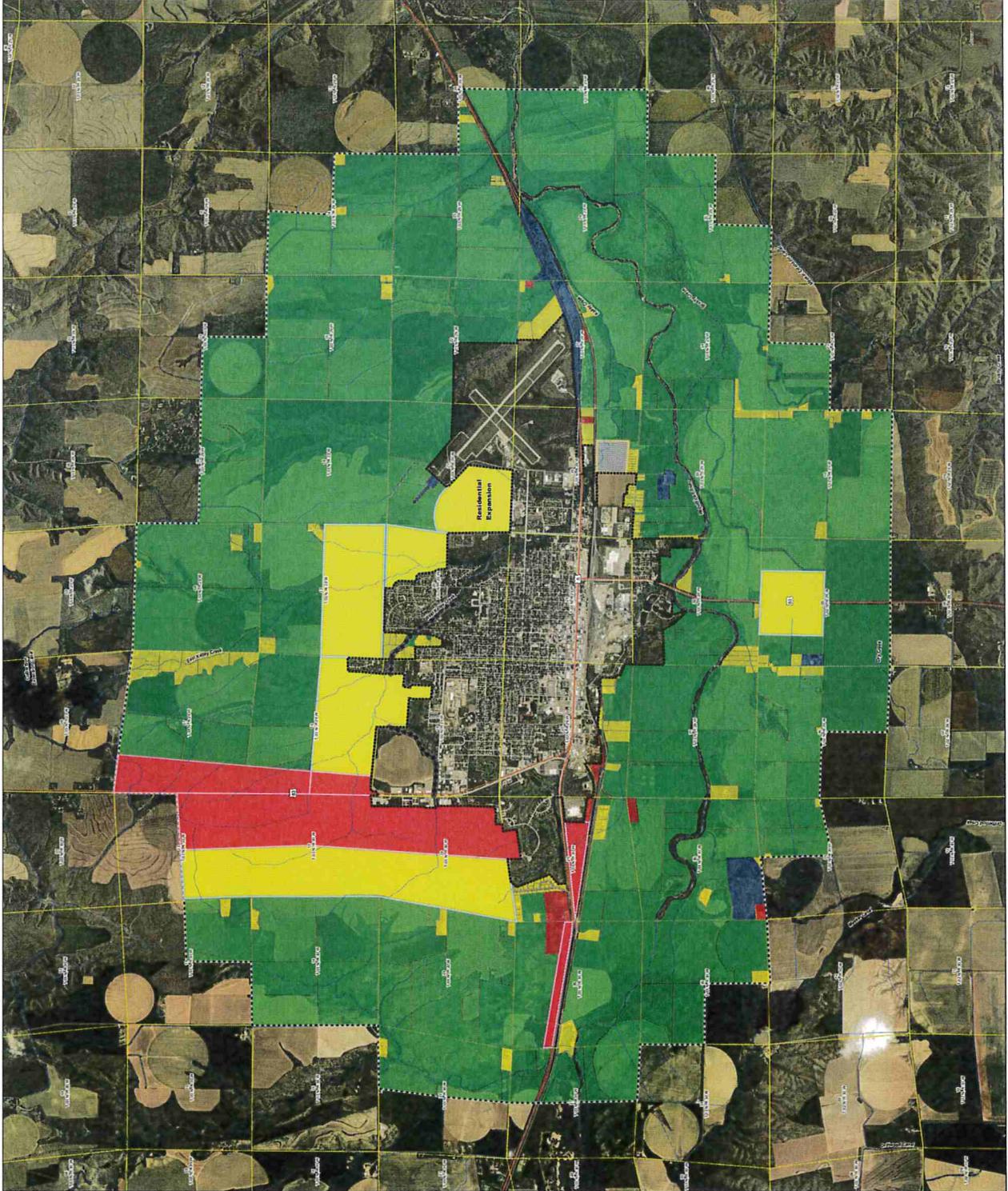


Figure 4.2b
Future Land Use ETJ
McCook, Nebraska

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Community Development Law

In regard to development, Nebraska communities have a number of tools at their disposal. One of which is tax increment financing, or TIF. To utilize TIF, blight and substandard areas must be confirmed and designated within a community, and the *Nebraska Community Development Law* provides legal parameters to follow. Under the law, a first class city (more than 5,000 residents and fewer than 100,000) may designate up to 35 percent of its area as blighted. A second class city may designate up to 50 percent of its area as blighted and substandard and a Village may “blight” its entire area within the corporate limits.

A blighted area is defined (*Nebraska Revised Statute §18-2103 (3)*) as having one or more of the following criteria: the presence of a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures; existence of defective or inadequate street layout; faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness; unsanitary or unsafe conditions; deterioration of site or other improvements; diversity of ownership; tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land; defective or unusual conditions of title; improper subdivision or obsolete platting; existence of conditions which endanger life or property, by fire and other causes; or any combination of such factors. These blighted criteria may substantially impair or arrest the sound growth of the community, slow the provision of housing accommodations, or constitute an economic or social liability, and be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare.

Conditions that reflect these criteria are the average age of the residential or commercial units in the area is at least forty years; more than half of the platted and subdivided property in an area is unimproved land that has been within the city for forty years and has remained unimproved during that time; the per capita income of the study or designated blighted area is lower than the average per capita income of the city in which the area is designated, or the area had a stable or declining population based on the last two decennial censuses. A blight and substandard evaluation include an exterior survey of structures and parcels/lots within the study area, a land use inventory, a field investigation, and analysis of pertinent documents and data, which potentially validate the existence of blight conditions.

As defined in *Nebraska Revised Statute §18-2103 (31)* a substandard area has a predominance of deteriorated or dilapidated buildings or improvements, whether nonresidential or residential in character, as a result of age or obsolescence; inadequate provision for ventilation, light, air, sanitation, or open spaces; and high density of population and overcrowding. As a result, the substandard area is conducive to ill health, the transmission of disease, infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, crime, and detrimental to public health, safety, morals, and/or welfare.

The presence of one or more of these blighted and substandard conditions may make it fitting to declare an area substandard or blighted under State Statute. As part of the *Nebraska Community Development Law, Nebraska Revised Statute §§18-2101 to 18-2155* a determination shall be made that the conditions existing in any such blighted and substandard area are beyond remedy and control solely by the regulatory process in the exercise of police power and cannot be dealt with effectively by ordinary operations of private enterprises without aid provided under the *Nebraska Community Development Law*. This analysis was conducted because additional public intervention, over and above the exercise of police power, is needed to overcome the existing conditions in the Blighted and Substandard Study Area.

McCook, Nebraska, is a first class city and, as such, may designate up to 35 percent of its corporate boundaries as blighted and substandard. McCook currently has 29.1 percent of the area within its corporate boundaries designated as blighted (McCook’s total area is 3,672.65 acres, and the blighted area within those limits is 1,067.40) (Figure 4.3). Blighted and substandard conditions indicate that McCook, Nebraska can and should encourage long-term improvements via TIF. Improvements and conditions can also be accomplished through applications of zoning regulations, nuisance abatement, infrastructure improvements, pedestrian accessibility improvements, dilapidated building demolition, rehabilitation, and debris removal. Increasing taxes or assessments, however, to achieve these goals might be problematic for area residents.

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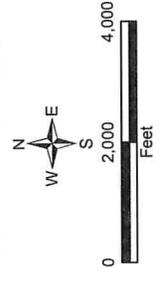
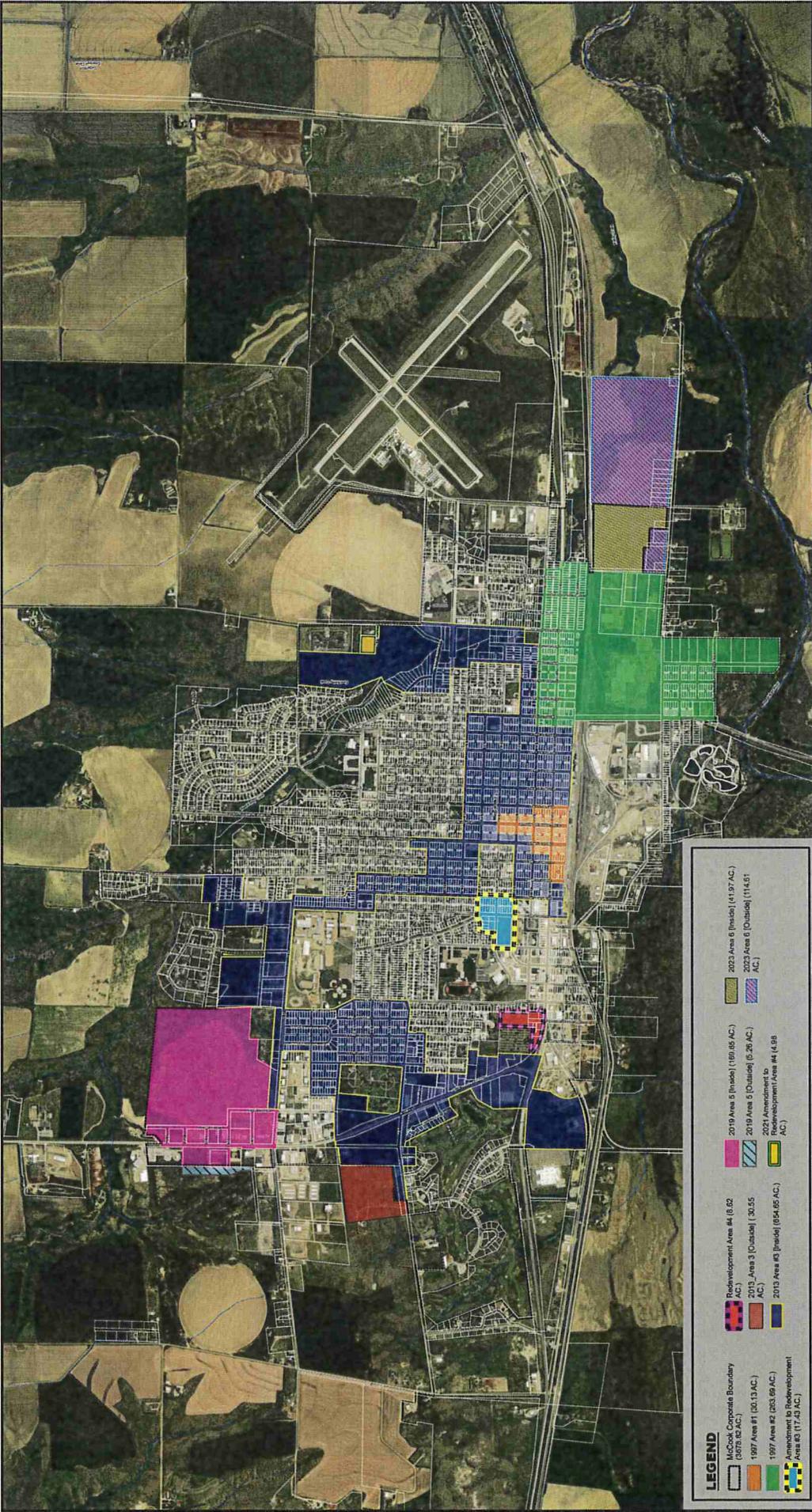


Figure 4.3
Overall Blight Map
 McCook, Nebraska

LEGEND

McCook Corporate Boundary (3078.82 AC.)	2019 Area 2 (Includes) [101.06 AC.]	2022 Area 6 (Includes) [41.97 AC.]
1997 Area #1 (20.13 AC.)	2019 Area 3 (Outside) [30.55 AC.]	2022 Area 6 (Outside) [114.51 AC.]
1997 Area #2 (203.69 AC.)	2024 Amendment to Redevelopment Area #4 (4.98 AC.)	
Amendment to Redevelopment Area #5 (17.43 AC.)	2013 Area #3 (Inside) [8.62 AC.]	
	2013 Area #3 (Outside) [30.55 AC.]	
	2013 Area #4 (Inside) [8.64 AC.]	
	2013 Area #4 (Outside) [8.64 AC.]	

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Annexation Plan

In simple terms annexation is the addition of territory to a unit of government, usually in terms of a city adding adjacent land to accommodate expansion (Pacione 2009). Why do this, why annex additional land? Political reach is a consideration as a community extends control over a larger area as is increasing the tax base (Kaplan *et al.* 2004). Done correctly, an annexation plan should create opportunities for new development and help facilitate future land use plans outlined in this document.

To create opportunities for new development, there needs to be a plan in place to reserve land necessary to accomplish the community's goals. This plan—similar to the future land use plan—is a guide or tool for the city to utilize when discussing future growth and development opportunities. This annexation plan is not law, annexation should follow local regulations and state statutes while at the same time follow McCook's development needs and goals.

Benefits of Annexation

Annexation is beneficial in that it allows a community to consider future growth and development opportunities. Land along the highway corridor, for instance, is prime real estate for commercial and industrial development. Many proposals look for incentives and forward-thinking communities offer packages that often include tax increment financing as an incentive, but the development must be within the community's corporate limits. Another facet of annexation is considering those who live adjacent to the community and utilize public services yet they do not contribute to the tax base that supports the community's parks, streets, public facilities, programs, and utilities. Planning for annexation also eases the potential confusion between the community and county. Establishing an orderly and logical expansion plan is essential and allows community leaders to plan for future public infrastructure needs.

Planning for growth is important for the community as well as the land adjacent to the corporate limits. Finding a balance between development and existing land use requires time and planning. Infill development, where appropriate, should be promoted which addresses "sprawl" concerns and protects surrounding agricultural and vacant land. Through annexation, McCook can extend its zoning jurisdiction and guide development to provide a safe and healthy environment for all residents and businesses throughout the community.

Having a plan in place allows for planning directives to logically work through development which requires infrastructure and benefits both McCook and Red Willow County. Finding a balance between development and existing land use requires both time and planning. Where appropriate, infill development—which takes advantage of existing infrastructure in many cases—should be promoted.

Annexation Phases

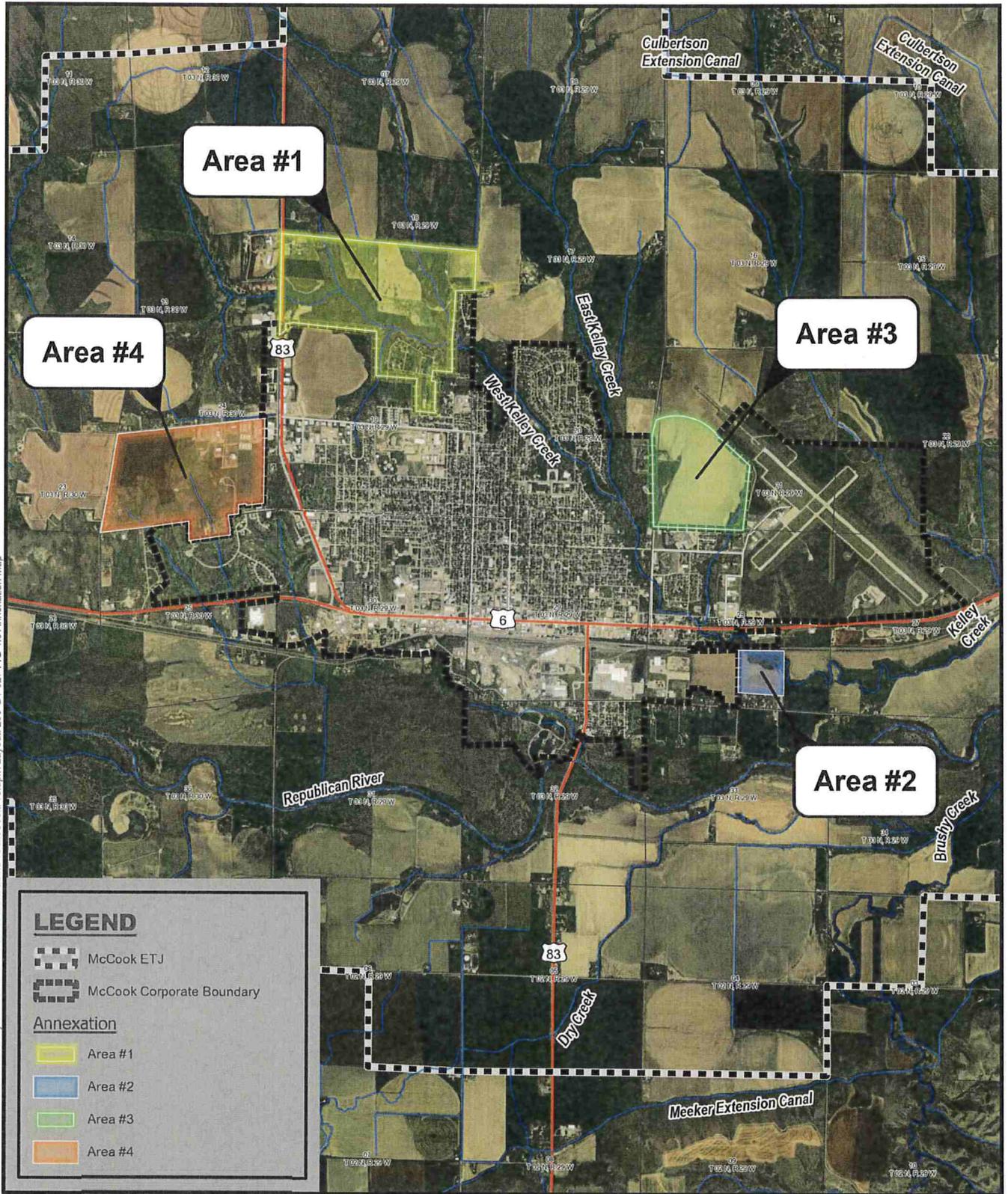
Annexation should follow the guidelines set forth by Nebraska State Statutes §19-3052. McCook has a number of options considering proposed annexation, ranging in land use from commercial and recreational to residential. All four areas are north of Highways 6/34—parcels on McCook’s south side pose annexation/development challenges as they sit adjacent to the Republican River floodplain (Figure 4.4). One obvious area (two quarter sections) of interest is north of Q Street, just east of Highway 83. In recent years, McCook has justifiably been growing in that direction. Connections to transportation options are obvious as extending several existing streets to the north (W. 17th Street, W. 10th Street, and Missouri Avenue, for instance), east to west (W. R Street), and having linkages to Highway 83 provides access to these parcels. Utility infrastructure is already developed (sanitary sewer, for example) and efficient gravity flow to the south/southeast is already in place. This expanse presents commercial opportunities, residential opportunities, and recreational opportunities.

The next annexation consideration is just east of McCook’s Business Park and adjacent to the rail line. McCook is currently developing Business Park Phase II along Ravenswood Road and Industrial Park Drive which is adjacent to the Burlington Northern Railroad. Much of the necessary infrastructure is either in place or could be easily extended that makes this area an excellent option for future annexation and industrial development.

The third annexation area to consider is between E. 11th Street and Drive 387 just west of the airport. The area is north of J Street and has access to existing water and sewer lines that could be easily extended to provide basic services. Adjacent to McCook’s Community Hospital, the area would accommodate residential development and/or a mix of residential and commercial growth (medical clinics and facilities, for instance). All three of these areas have development potential that taps into existing or easily extended infrastructure and McCook’s existing street patterns.

The fourth and final area to consider is just north of West J Street, west of Highway 83. Development of the area just north of the Heritage Hills Golf Course is a logical area to develop. Further improvements to J Street and Road 383 to the west, would provide better access to this area.

G:\Projects\200-0-0-027\GIS\McCook\Pro\McCook\Pro.aprx Layout: 201-G1-027 FIG 4.3 Annexation Map 3/27/2025 2:47 PM Path: G:\Projects\200-0-0-027\GIS\McCook\Pro\McCook\Pro.aprx



LEGEND

- McCook ETJ
- McCook Corporate Boundary
- Annexation**
- Area #1
- Area #2
- Area #3
- Area #4

3/27/2025
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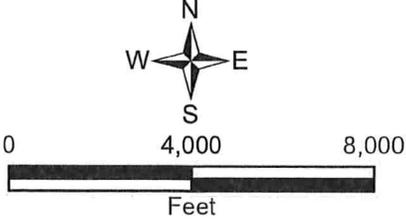


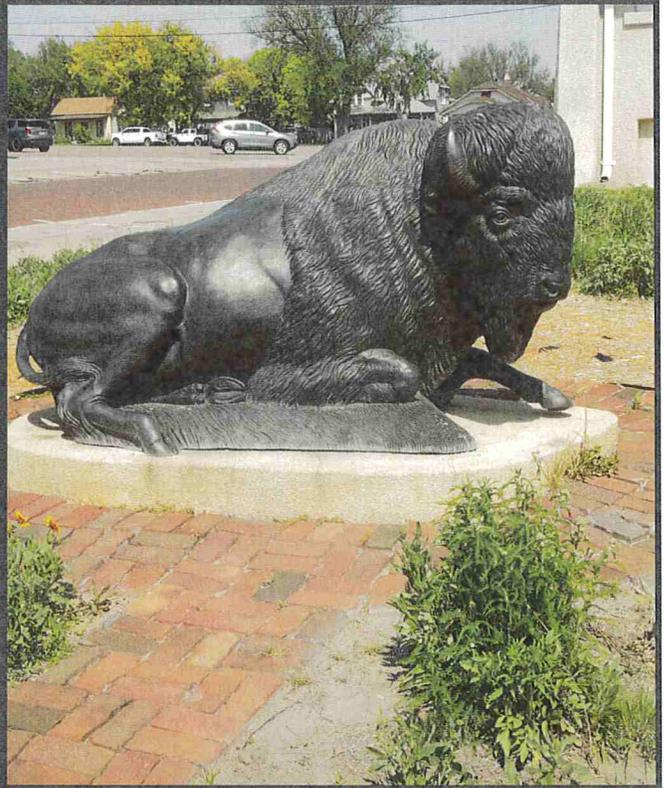
Figure 4.4
Annexation Map
 McCook, Nebraska

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CHAPTER

5

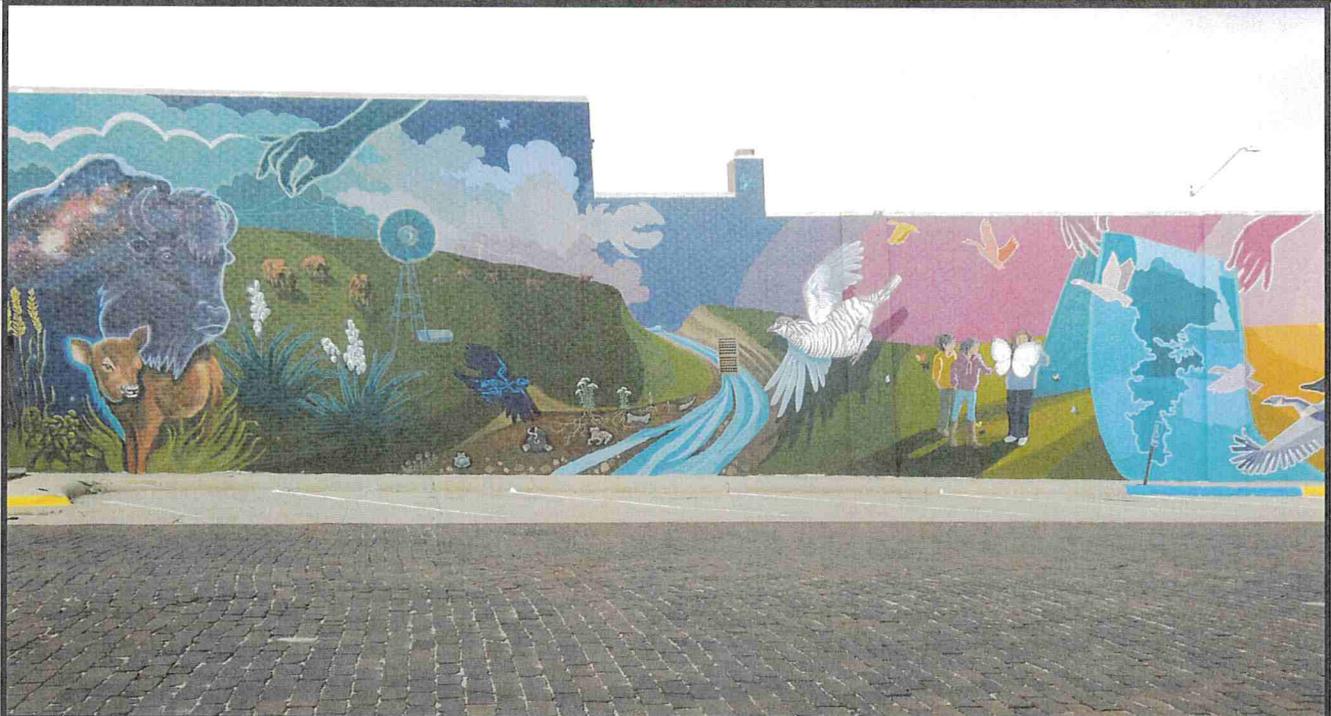
PUBLIC INPUT AND GOALS



This is the “action” section of McCook’s Comprehensive Plan. This section outlines the guidelines, regulations, and future practices with the purpose of helping decision-makers implement the actions and visions presented in this plan that align with the community’s goals.

This section covers the following components:

- Public Input
- Goals



Public Input

Public input is the backbone of any successful comprehensive plan. It provides residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to share their hopes and concerns as they consider what is next. This section is the place to share ideas and possible guidelines for development and growth in McCook. These goals are a combination of information gathered from the public input sessions and data analysis and are realistic but do allow the community to develop new initiatives as they look to the future.

Public Input Sessions

The City of McCook hosted a series of public input sessions. The Kick-Off meeting (June 27, 2023) included a discussion of the overall comprehensive plan project along with the presentation of McCook’s demographic profile. The second meeting held November 7, 2023 examined public survey results and explained the SWOT analysis. The third public input meeting took place on February 20, 2024 and evaluated results from the SWOT analysis in addition to providing a discussion of both existing land use and future land use along with zoning regulations. McCook’s final public input meeting was held on February 27, 2025.



Public Input Survey

Perhaps it is best to start by answering the question, what is a survey? Simply put, a survey is one way to gather data and information to capture the public's thoughts and goals (Clegg 1983; Secor 2010). Montello and Sutton (2006, 82) contend that "surveys require respondents to answer questions about their opinions, attitudes, or preferences. They can also ask questions about activities or demographics." Secor (2010, 196) adds that surveys "allow researchers to gather information about a population" and answer "questions about the distribution of characteristics within a population and across particular sites or population subgroups."

Decades ago face-to-face surveys were more commonplace, now with advancements in technology more options exist. Even though more survey techniques are now available, response rates have declined in recent decades (Tourangeau and Plewes 2013). For many, one primary concern is distrust (other factors that often lead to low response rates are areas with large numbers of "single-parent households, families with young children, workers with long commutes, and high crime rates" (Tourangeau and Plewes 2013, 7).

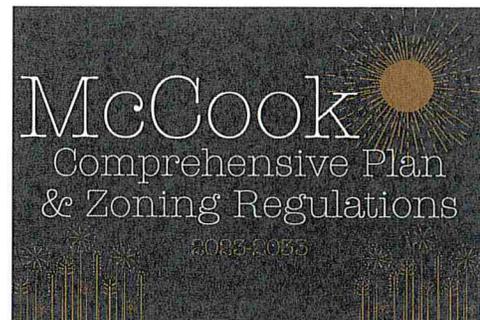
McCook Public Input Survey

To create more trust in the process, the McCook Steering Committee felt it was important that the survey was supported by community leaders. Community leaders were then charged with promoting the survey, both in person and on social media—the Community Hospital in McCook as well as the public schools also promoted the survey. The City of McCook also included a postcard flier advertising the community survey in monthly utility bills. Surveys were then available in traditional paper format (which normally generates different responses in comparison to telephone or face-to-face surveys) at all city locations open to the public as well as an online option (direct mail surveys tend to have extremely low response rates and are expensive to conduct). The on-line option was managed by Miller & Associates as part of the larger comprehensive plan project.

The "McCook" survey may be labeled as a random survey, in that every member of the entire community had an equal chance of completing the survey (it also eliminates the potential bias of cluster area sampling) (Leisher 2014). Most questions allowed participants to "rank or order" choices, others were "open ended" meaning that choices were not provided on the survey which encouraged respondents to provide answers. Confidentiality was, and is, also a survey concern. In this case no personal information (names or addresses) was captured. Finally, survey length was also a consideration. There is an inverse relationship associated with survey length. Surveys with fewer questions tend to have higher response rates and as response rates increase so does accuracy (Tourangeau and Plewes 2013).

The McCook survey was made public from August 21, 2023 to September 30, 2023 and had a total of 529 responses. The survey itself contains thirty questions, divided into eight sections.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



The City of McCook is seeking residents' feedback about the community and visions for future development. As part of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the information gathered will help decision-makers prioritize improvements in the community for the next ten years.

Your answers are confidential. The survey results will be available only as a community-wide percentage. Hard copies of the survey are also available at the McCook City Hall.

<https://shout.com/s/nhgvqpr2>



Please complete the survey by September 30th, 2023.

McCook Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035

The first section contains six questions that have several secondary questions. These general questions focused on McCook's community facilities, connectivity, the downtown district, economy, housing, and infrastructure. The second section focuses on the economy with four more questions, three of which are more open-ended. Section 3 deals with housing and contains two questions, one of which is open-ended. The fourth section pertains to childcare with three questions. Telecommunications occupies the fifth section with two questions. Section 6 deals with education and has five questions. The penultimate section relates to tourism with four questions and the final section captures basic demographic information about those who provided responses to the survey.

Section 1 contains six questions, which all have sub-questions to provide further insights. Overall responses to Question 1 demonstrated that a majority of respondents were either "Satisfied" (43.8 percent) or "Very Satisfied" (33.5 percent) with McCook's community facilities and services. "City Government" received high ranks as did "Fire Protection" and "Healthcare." Several did express concerns about "City Government" as well as "Parks & Recreation."

For Question 2, the overall majority were "Satisfied" (52.9 percent) and another 16.4 percent selected "Very Satisfied" with McCook's connectivity. "Vehicular Accessibility" and "Wayfinding to Landmarks" both captured several "Very Satisfied" responses for connectivity. Of those who were "Unsatisfied," "Hike/Bike Trails" and "Gateway Entrances" were the two top choices in that category.

Question 3 related to the downtown district, just over 60 percent selected "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied," with "Aesthetics/Beautification" and "Lighting/Signage" receiving high remarks. It is important to note that just shy of 40 percent were either "Unsatisfied" or "Very Unsatisfied" with McCook's downtown district, pointing to a lack of restaurant, retail store, and entertainment options.

Question 4 regarding McCook's economy revealed a split in the responses—53.5 percent on the satisfied side in contrast to 46.6 percent on the unsatisfied side. For those "Satisfied," many pointed to the overall economy along with "Business Support & Retention." In the "Unsatisfied" camp, a large number indicated concerns related to "Job Opportunities" and "Youth Retention."

McCook's housing market (Question 5) appears to be one of the biggest areas of concern. Just 28.8 percent of respondents selected "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" while 71.2 percent selected either "Unsatisfied" or "Very Unsatisfied." Examining the extremes paints a more bleak picture—only 4.4 percent responded "Very Satisfied" to McCook's housing market while 32.0 percent were in the "Very Unsatisfied" column. Many who are not satisfied pointed to a lack of housing to either rent or purchase. The final broad question (Question 6) dealt with McCook's infrastructure and again a nearly even split was found—52.5 percent were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with 47.6 percent in the "Unsatisfied" or "Very Unsatisfied" categories. Those who were satisfied pointed to "Stormwater Drainage" and "Sanitary Sewer" as positives, while those unsatisfied expressed concerns about "Water Quality" and "Streets."

Section 2 focused on the economy and had four questions. Question 7 asked respondents what stores they regularly visited in McCook and the responses can be divided into two categories and reflect an interesting mix of retail establishments. For chain stores, Wal-Mart (419) led the way by far, followed by Ace Hardware (140), Dollar General (80), Tractor Supply (50), and Bomgaar's (28). In comparison, consider the local retailers most frequently visited. At the top of the list is Gary Super Foods (160), The Sports Shoppe (45), Farrell Pharmacy (38), Knowlen & Yates (37), and Sehnert's Bakery (24). The next survey question asked what retail stores McCook's residents patronize in other communities (Kearney, Lincoln, North Platte, and Omaha were all common locations listed in the responses). Menards (172) led the way, followed by Target (162), Hy-Vee (102), Hobby Lobby (89), and Scheels (33). Others on the list included Cabela's, Famous Footwear, and Five Below. Question 9 asks how city leaders can address local economic development efforts. A range of choices was provided, with "Housing Development" (21.0 percent) leading the way, followed by "Youth Retention" (15.4 percent), "Incentives for Retail Stores" (14.8 percent), "Incentives for New Industries" (12.0 percent), and "Existing Business Support" (11.3 percent). The final question in this section allowed respondents to provide business types they would like to see in McCook—most responses listed a generic type of business (grocery store), while others were more specific (Hy-Vee). A wide range of responses was tallied, with restaurant leading the way with well over 100 responses that included generic comments such as "café," "Chinese restaurant," "pizzeria," "sit down restaurant," and "sports bar," to specific chains including "Amigos," "Chick-fil-A," "Panda Express," "Perkins," and "Taco Bell." Next on the list was "clothing" (107) including "women's clothing," in addition to "craft store," "home improvement," and "grocery store."

Section 3 has two more housing questions, with the first focused on condition. A slight majority of the respondents (55.9 percent) are in the first two categories—"No Repairs Needed" or "Needs Minor Repairs, Under \$3,000." Important to note, 11.4 percent are in the "Needs Major Repairs, Over \$15,000" category.

Section 4 dealt specifically with childcare. Of those who responded, a vast majority (82.9 percent) do not participate in childcare outside of their home. Of those who do utilize childcare, 9.7 percent have "In-Home Care," 8.4 percent attend a "Childcare Center," and roughly 2.0 percent attend an "After School Program."

Section 5 related to telecommunications. Regarding type of internet connection in McCook, there is a mix of "Cable Internet" (26.2 percent), "Fiber Internet" (39.7 percent), and "Wireless/Cellular Network" (34.1 percent). Questioning satisfaction for price, reliability, and speed of the service, found that most respondents (73.1 percent) were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" and just 7.6 percent were "Very Unsatisfied."

Six questions comprised the education portion of the survey (Section 6). Safe routes to school were, and are, an extremely important planning issue and 73.7 percent of respondents indicated that McCook does have sufficient and safe routes to school. An even higher percent (86.3) responded that McCook Public School plays an active role in the community as does McCook Community College (78.3 percent).

The seventh survey category involves tourism. Just over 72 percent of respondents indicated that tourism is a key component to McCook's economic future and 81.6 percent indicated that they would support further development of tourism opportunities. For their favorite event in McCook, Heritage Days (126) led the way, followed by the Red Willow County Fair (42), Freedom Fest (24) and Buffalo Commons (12). Other responses included "Parks," "Theater Events," and "High School Sports."

The final section provided a demographic snapshot of those who completed the survey. Of survey participants, most have lived in the community for more than twenty years (55.9 percent) and another 18.9 percent have lived in McCook between eleven and twenty years. In terms of why reside in McCook, 44.6 percent have family connections to the community, 36.0 percent reside in the community because of employment opportunities, and 14.3 percent are attracted to the community due to its "Small Town Atmosphere." Respondents were offered four age selections, with 42.5 percent in the forty to fifty-nine age bracket, followed by 31.5 percent in the twenty to thirty-nine range, and 25.6 percent in the sixty plus category—less than 1 percent of the respondents were nineteen or younger.

Strengths / Weaknesses / Opportunities / Threats

SWOT analysis is conducted by an organization to identify its internal strengths and weaknesses along with its external opportunities and threats (Ghazinoory and Memariani 2007; Helms and Nixon 2010). Developed in the late 1950s and into the 1960s primarily for private companies, the “tool” has expanded to include charitable organizations along with municipalities to consider competitive advantages (Puyt *et al.* 2020; Sarsby 2016). Strengths (advantage over others), weaknesses (disadvantage over others), opportunities (elements to exploit to its advantage), and threats (elements that cause concerns) (SWOT) are characteristics to evaluate competitive positioning and consider both short-term and long-term goals and objectives. One research article summarized SWOT as safeguarding satisfactory operations, opening the door to opportunities, fixing faults, and averting threats (Puyt *et al.* 2020).

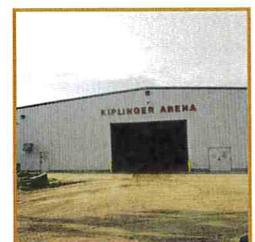
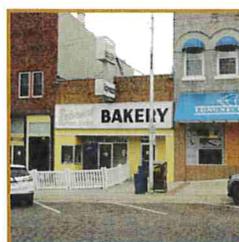
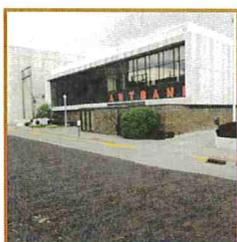
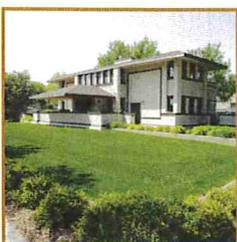
Strengths, for instance, are internal characteristics and for McCook might include customer service or tourism events. Weaknesses are also internal and examples are the lack of parks or hike/bike trails. Opportunities are external factors that provide promise for future successes, examples are greater transportation improvements and technology advancements. Threats are external and typically cannot be controlled—greater market trends or state/federal regulations, for example. SWOT analysis is versatile and has demonstrated meaningful results for numerous Fortune 500 companies (Home Depot and McDonald’s) and non-profit organizations (United Way).

For McCook, the SWOT analysis took place on November 7, 2023. In the discussion several strengths were revealed.

Strengths

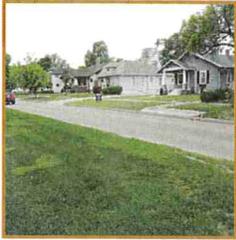
Three “strength” comments were tallied for both culture/tourism and the downtown district. Culture/tourism “strength” comments included the High Plains Museum, the George Norris home, the Frank Lloyd Wright home, and the McCook Art Guild along with community events throughout the year (Sehnert’s Bakery was also listed as a landmark destination). Positive remarks for downtown McCook recognized its aesthetic appeal and “unique feel.” Nine responses were captured for commercial or economic strengths. Respondents pointed to industries in McCook and a supportive business environment. Others highlighted McCook’s role in southwest Nebraska as a regional hub and friendly service. Of all the strengths, education received the highest number—eleven—for both the public school system and the McCook Community College. Seven “healthcare” strengths were recorded, including access and quality care. Public service garnered six “strengths,” including safety or “safe environment” along with progressive leadership and public services. For strengths, recreation received the second highest number—ten—of responses including Heritage Hills golf course, the Kiplinger arena, in addition to community parks and nearby lakes. For the next “strength,” transportation was recognized as a community asset. Responses pointed to commercial and passenger rail service along with the McCook Ben Nelson Regional Airport. Finally, a smattering of “strength” responses pointed to an “inviting atmosphere,” “small town atmosphere and values,” a “welcoming community,” and “community support.”

	HELPFUL to positive development	HARMFUL to positive development
INTERNAL ORIGIN characteristics of the community	Strengths	Weaknesses
EXTERNAL ORIGIN characteristics of the community	Opportunities	Threats



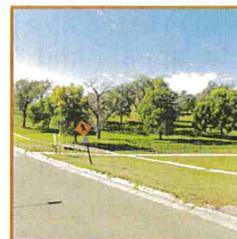
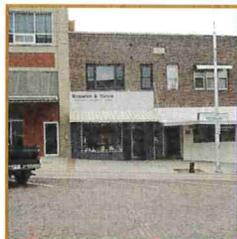
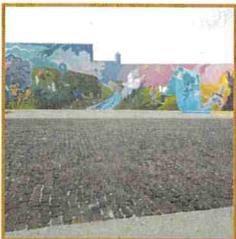
Weaknesses

The second category in the SWOT analysis examined “weakness.” The dominant response was “economy” with twenty-one responses that ranged from lack of entertainment options to a lack of retail options, youth retention, low paying jobs, not enough available employees and workforce shortages along with being too reliant on agriculture. Another common response for “weakness” was “housing” and the responses were direct. “Housing options” and “housing shortage” were noted but several simply replied “housing.” As a weakness, housing often permeates into other areas—employee recruitment, for instance. Another weakness response category can be labeled as “location” as many noted McCook’s isolated location and distance to Denver, Lincoln, or Omaha. Other “weakness” comments included “aging population” and a lack of greenspace.



Opportunities

The third SWOT category—opportunities—solicited several responses as well. Nine responses highlighted opportunities related to art district(s) and additional tourism opportunities, including outdoor recreation and the Kiplinger facility. Nine more opportunities point to small business and retail development, youth organizations and retention, and job opportunities. Six “opportunity” responses indicated that housing is an opportunity, with a number of vacant houses, open lots ready for development, and potential for transitional housing. Even though several (four) see “location” as a weakness, others see it as an opportunity. Many view McCook as a hub for southwest Nebraska, with strategic transportation linkages. Seven more respondents noted “recreation” is an opportunity for McCook—new ballpark, various recreational projects, and trail developments, for instance. Other “opportunity” responses are industrial park, small town atmosphere, and entertainment options. Other opportunities mentioned the promotion of place and simply doing a better job of “selling” what McCook already possesses.



Threats

Threat is the final category in the SWOT analysis. Eight of the “threat” responses relate to McCook’s economy. Many comments noted the lack of economic diversity and the over-reliance on only a handful of major employers, state and federal legislative policies that might negatively impact McCook, as well as inflation and the agricultural economy. The most common threat listed relates to population, specifically “aging population” and a “declining population.” Four listed “workforce” as a threat, citing lack of job opportunities and workforce shortages as concerns. Other threats include “isolation,” “housing,” and “aging infrastructure.”



For City staff and community leaders in McCook, SWOT analysis offers an opportunity to consider the strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats. From this analysis, realistic community goals and plans should be implemented to provide direction for community leaders to capitalize on strengths (education, healthcare, and transportation) and opportunities (arts, recreation, tourism), as well as addressing weaknesses (workforce shortages and housing) and threats (declining population and job opportunities).

Priorities, Goals, and Action Steps

This section provides ideas, summaries, and guidelines for development. These goals are a combination of information gathered from public input sessions and data analysis. Realistic in nature, they allow community members to creatively consider future land uses and development needs.



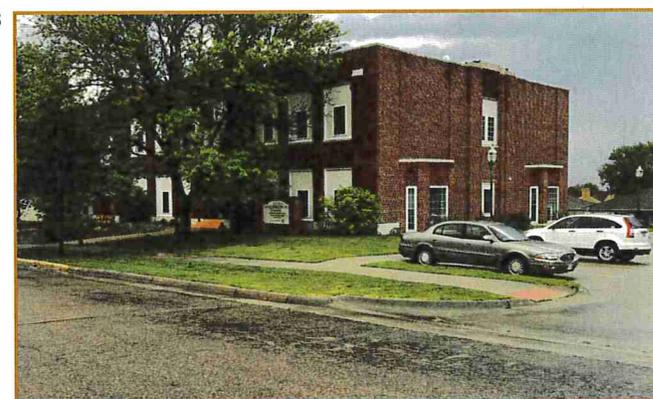
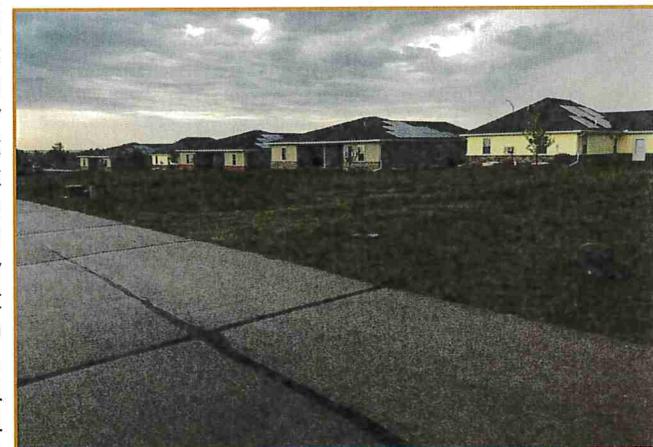
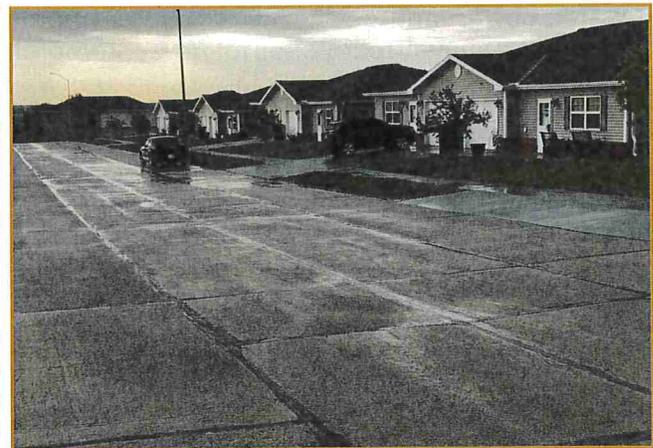
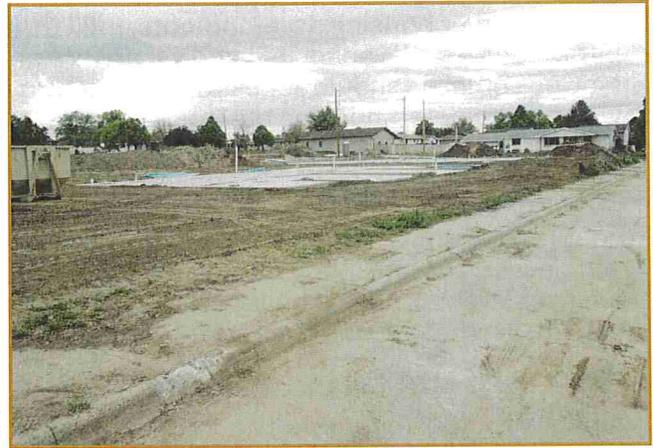
Goals & Action Steps

McCook's goals broadly fall into four categories—housing, commercial development, industrial development, and arts and recreation. Housing shortages are nearly universal across the state. To address this, the obvious answer is to develop more housing. To accomplish this, community leaders, private developers and investors, and the business community must be willing to discuss options and invest.

Housing

Developing new housing has the potential to attract new residents creating a chain reaction of positive events. More families and more jobs are often based on affordable housing, the city plays an instrumental role in facilitating housing stock growth in the future. Part of the housing discussion includes community and city leaders constructing new homes, improving existing homes, and considering a demolition plan for dilapidated properties. Furthermore, considering middle- and lower-income housing as well as rental properties is a priority.

One example of addressing this issue is the McCook Economic Development Corporation's announcement in December 2023 that the community would be adding three duplexes made possible by Rural Workforce Housing Funds. The six new housing units are all zero entry and serve all ages in the community. Another recent announcement addressing housing in McCook is the North Pointe Addition. Approved by the city council in 2022, the twenty-seven new home project is currently under construction. The McCook Economic Development Corporation played a part in this project as well, adding funds toward the down payment on the 16.36 acre property (Sugroue 2022). A more recent update notes that the MEDC collaborated with the City of McCook to annex, rezone, and plat the North Pointe addition. Lots in the development come with access to all utilities along with fiber internet. Local financial institutions are involved and there are incentives that encourage timely development to address McCook's housing shortage (LaBay 2024a).



Beyond larger housing developments, infill development is an option that takes advantage of existing infrastructure. All vacant lots and vacant unhabitable homes are potential sites for infill development. McCook officials should access different approaches for development including grants and TIF funding. Often dilapidated housing creates a “broken window theory” that spills over to adjacent properties, addressing these properties is a priority. One mechanism to do this is nuisance abatement. Whether conducted by the city, legal counsel, or a third-party nuisance abatement is important to encourage property upkeep and provide ways to encourage renovation or demolition. Another way to publicly counter dilapidated properties is to promote “yard of the month” programs to acknowledge residents who invest and take pride in their neighborhood. One consideration is the creation and promotion of an investment group to build housing in McCook. The formation of a group tends to limit individual liability and has proven successful in many communities across the state.

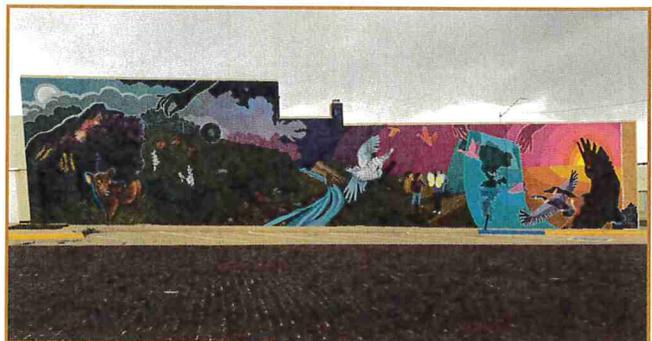
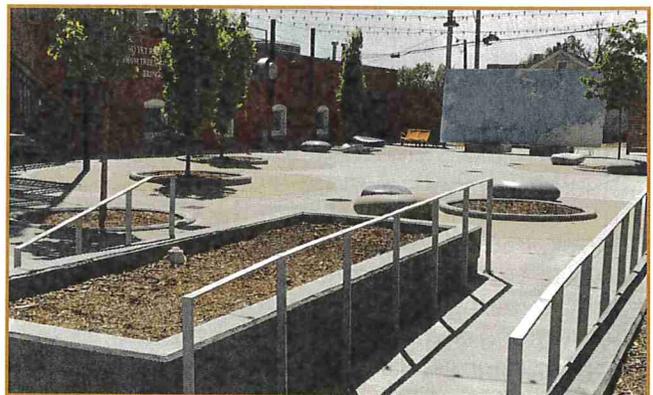
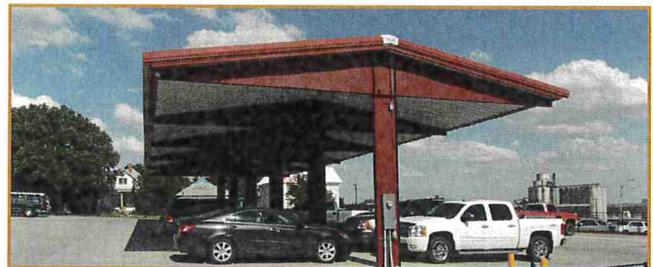
Commercial Development

Along with housing, there is a continued push for commercial development. City and community leaders understand that commercial development requires significant investment. Infrastructure—water, sewer, and paving—is expensive, but essential. Commercial goals include developing and marketing shovel-ready sites for new commercial development, creating incubator spaces to promote local entrepreneurs, and business start-ups whether in downtown or along highway commercial space. As noted previously, the MEDC Micro-Enterprise Program’s goal is to encourage and support business ventures via innovation and technology in McCook and Red Willow County. One such example is the current development of McCook Business Park – Phase II in the southeast portion of McCook. The MEDC played a pivotal role in the project along with city staff and the first tenant—Performance Plus Liquids—is ready to occupy their new facility. In addition to the business park in southeast McCook, properties along Highways 6/34 and Highway 83 provide excellent visibility and provide easy access to primary transportation routes.

Downtown commercial development is also a consideration for community leaders. Vacant spaces are a concern, as are sidewalks and parking areas. Having a mix of retail and entertainment encourages investment and pedestrian activity. Historic preservation serves as a draw and allows the community to take pride in place, preserving the past while preparing for the future at the same time. In that regard, McCook has several properties downtown—Red Willow County Courthouse, the Keystone Building, the former post office, for instance—that are “cornerstone” properties with real opportunities to capitalize on its historic built environment. Based on transportation patterns and the availability of space, it is most likely that the downtown core will continue to focus on retail, service, and entertainment. Along with the local community, McCook is in a position to capture tourism dollars associated with its downtown core—maintaining its historic appearance is key.

Industrial Development

Along with housing and commercial development, there is industrial development—McCook’s third goal. Industrial expansion continues along Ravenswood Road in southeast McCook, in part the result of the city leveraging tax increment financing (TIF) to support development. The possibility of a new viaduct south from Airport Road to the industrial park only adds to the excitement already existing in this area.



Arts & Recreation

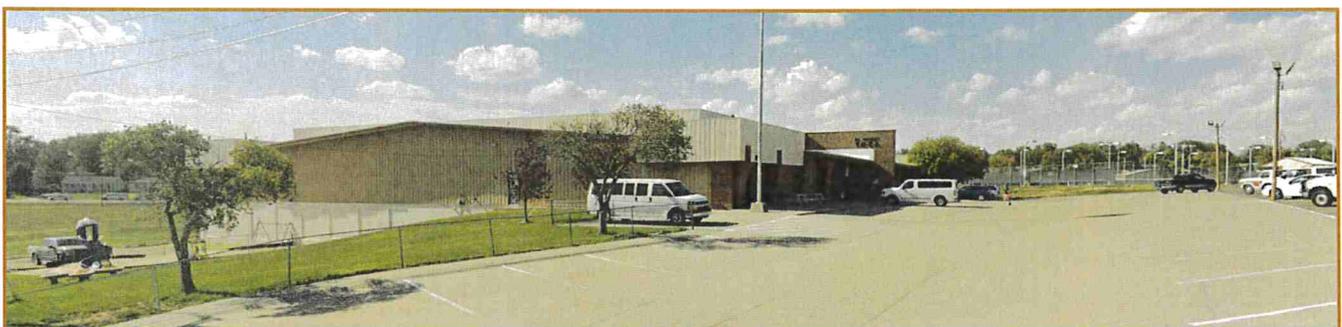
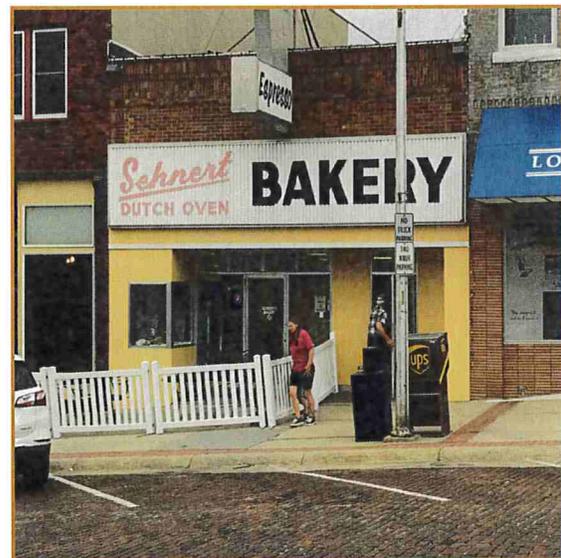
Arts and recreation amenities are essential quality of life concerns for communities and represent the fourth goal for McCook.

One consideration is the “arts” district in downtown McCook. Relying on historic properties and outstanding local artists, McCook has an opportunity to draw people to its downtown core. The State of Nebraska’s Historic Preservation Office provides support for communities to invest in historic properties and tax incentive programs as does the Location One Information System (LOIS) supported by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (<https://history.nebraska.gov/historic-preservation/>; <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov>).

McCook was recently named as one of America’s Best Small Food + Culture Town by Travel + Leisure. Capturing “runner up” in this category, McCook was noted for its “culinary and cultural scene that far outpunches its weight class.” Along with food is McCook’s Creative Arts District, highlighted by the 6th Floor Project atop the Keystone Business Center along Norris Avenue. In addition to the 6th Floor Project is the ArtBank—also an arts center—located in the former Wells Fargo building. Along with these “inside” art opportunities, is the McCook Mural Project developed by lead artists and supported by nearly 100 community members the mural depicts McCook’s history and future. McCook clearly has a “strength” regarding travel and tourism, one based on art, entertainment, and place.

Beyond the “art” scene, there is the new McCook aquatic center with a “lazy” river and zero entry option. The facility replaces McCook’s 1937 swimming pool and is a symbol of progress in the community. Not just a symbol of progress, investing in the new aquatic center—at 500 East M Street—is a positive sign and highlights the community’s commitment to the future (Graff 2023).

In addition to the new aquatic center, McCook’s Ed Thomas YMCA is also undergoing major renovations as well. Offering indoor and outdoor activities, McCook’s YMCA serves the community throughout the year with programs that have potential to strengthen the entire population.



Beyond existing recreation amenities, the City of McCook is currently developing a sports complex on the “Walters” property in northwest McCook. A complex that has the potential to be a “game changer” for the local economy.

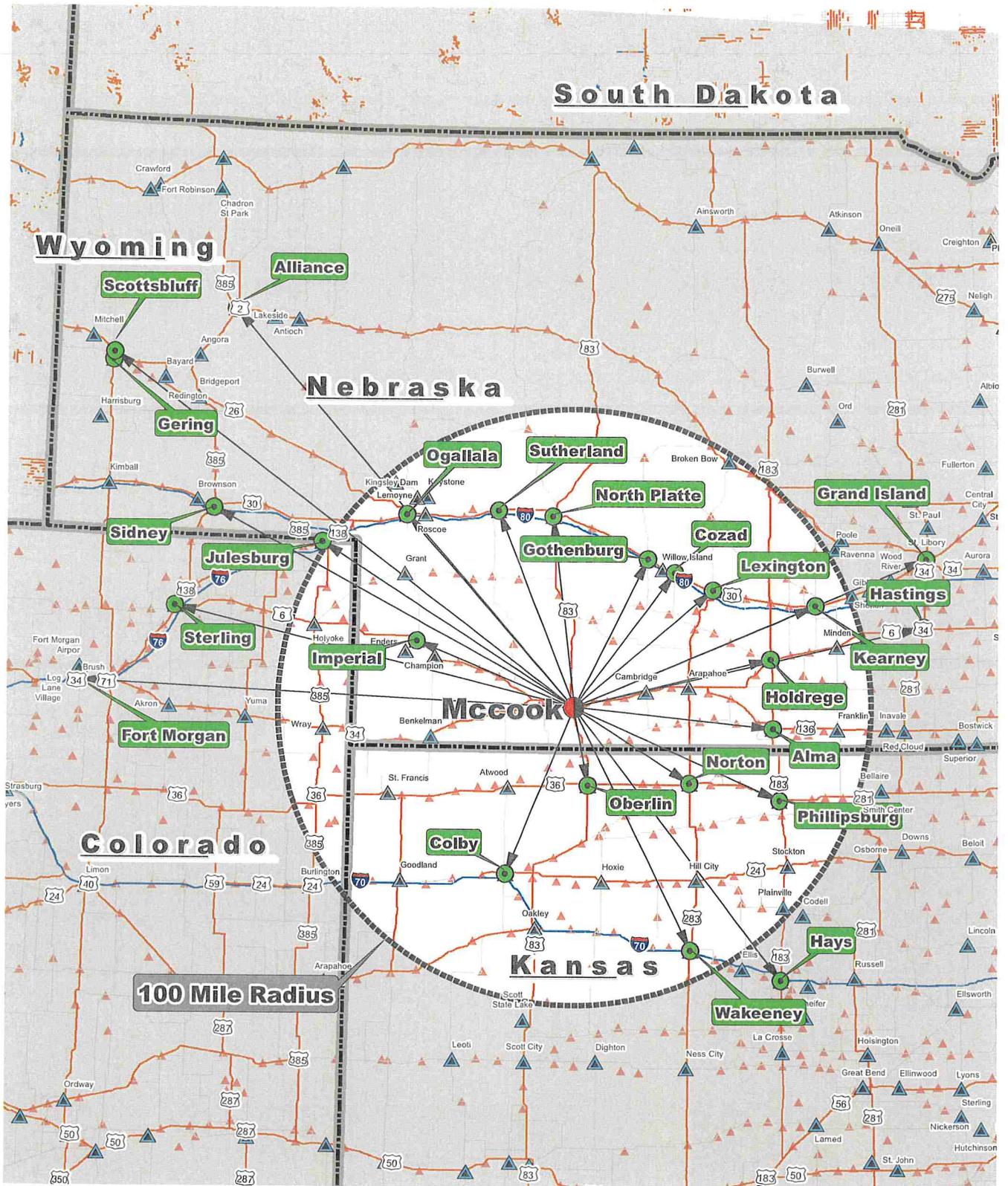
Recent literature found that smaller communities greatly benefit by investing in sports complexes that tap into “sports tourism” that often have a much wider impact on the community (hotel/motel, convenience store, and restaurant sales and taxes, for instance) (Chapin 2004; Davies 2016; Kim 2021; Rosentraub *et al.* 1994; Siegfried and Zimbalist 2000; Silva 2022).

There is a clear opportunity for McCook to develop a complex and capitalize on hosting events, but it is key to promote events that bring in teams from other communities—Walo *et al.* (1996) describe this as an essential “injection” of funds from outside the area. To accomplish this, McCook would seem to have a distinct geospatial advantage regarding the possibility of a multiple sports complex. McCook’s location and the existing highway network would allow communities not only in Nebraska but surrounding states to easily visit and compete in events held in McCook (Figure 5.1). Not all inclusive, but consider the following potential Nebraska communities—Alliance, Alma, Cozad, Gering, Gothenburg, Grand Island, Hastings, Holdrege, Imperial, Kearney, Lexington, North Platte, Ogallala, Scottsbluff, Sidney, and Sutherland. In Kansas, communities that would most likely contribute teams are Colby, Hays, Norton, Oberlin, Phillipsburg, and WaKeeney and to the west potential Colorado communities include Fort Morgan, Julesburg, and Sterling. These communities are within McCook’s “participation realm” and most already possess a number of “travel” teams. In McCook’s case, relying on a facility that caters to multiple sports only enhances opportunities. McCook residents recently approved a recreational sales tax to support a community “ballpark” project (Labay 2024b).

The “Walters” property in northwest McCook along Highway 83 has existing infrastructure (roads, sanitary sewer, sidewalks, and water) that lessens the input costs for a sports complex project (Silva 2022). This site harmonizes with existing sidewalk/street patterns not only linking the community together and providing safe access, but foster health/wellness initiatives via pedestrian activity (Frumkin *et al.* 2004).

The project, however, is not simply an economic development issue. A sports complex provides recreational opportunities for McCook’s existing population and also serves as an amenity to attract new residents. Extending and expanding the Kelley Creek trail system throughout McCook to include the new sports complex provides a benefit to the entire community.

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8/26/2024
Prepared By:

MA
Miller & Associates
CONSULTING ENGINEERS, P.C.
Kearney, NE – (308) 234-6456



LEGEND

▲ Cities greater than 1,000 pop.

Figure 5.1
Market Area

Project 200-G1-027
McCook, Nebraska

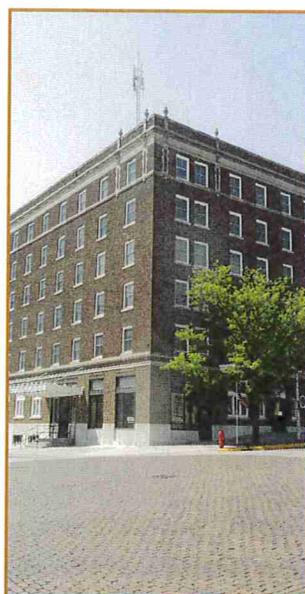
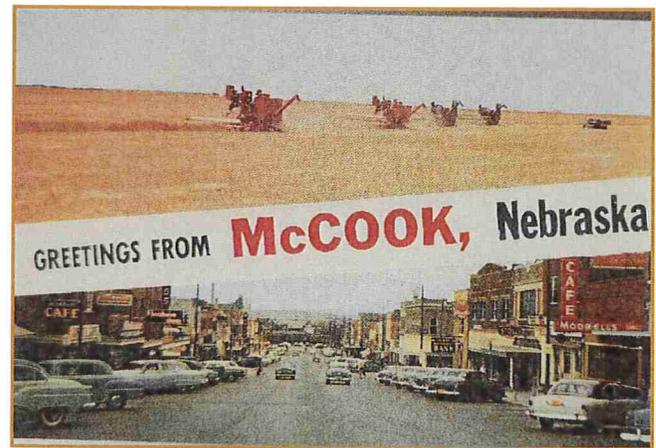
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Further Enhancements, Tourism, and Branding

- Community Aesthetics
- Establish Gateway Entrances
- Install Wayfinding Signage
- Develop a Sports Complex

Not an exhaustive list, but McCook does have several opportunities when considering community enhancements, tourism, and branding. Community aesthetics should not be overlooked, they are essential concerns for the community. McCook's Creative District, for example, serves not only to provide exhibit space for local and regional artists but rehabilitate and bring "life" to historic structures in the downtown core. The creative district contains the historic Fox Theater, the Keystone Business Center, and Norris Alley along with museums and art galleries.

Gateway entrances and attractive signage—or wayfinding signage—throughout town are key in promoting place. Gateway entrances, for instance, allow for a community to make a tremendous first impression—landscaping, lighting, and signage are all components of attractive entrances. Once in the community, wayfinding signs act to direct traffic to local landmarks and key locations—parks, library, or the downtown district, for instance. Consider traffic count data found earlier in this document to determine where sign placement would be most efficient.



Develop Marketing Campaign

Creating and marketing a community brand to existing and potential residents, developers, and business owners are important. By promoting existing businesses and “selling” its quality of life aspects, McCook has great potential to capitalize on its strengths. To develop a new marketing campaign or update an existing strategy, the City should consider the following objectives. Community leaders should identify an easily recognizable image to market and recruit residents and non-residents alike. A brand could include a logo, slogan, color scheme, and/or theme with represents the community. Once determined, a brand can be utilized to promote the community via posters, brochures, and letterhead in addition to an on-line campaign. Social media sources like Facebook and Twitter are free marketing platforms that can easily reach large audiences.

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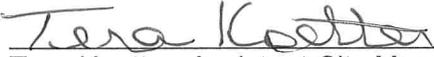
**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT
FEBRUARY 9, 2026 MCCOOK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

ITEM: 2.C Review and discuss the proposed Supplemental District Chapter of the zoning update.

BACKGROUND:

Staff has reviewed the first portion of the Supplemental District of the zoning update and would like to discuss the initial sections with the Planning Commission.

APPROVALS:

 _____ Lea Ann Doak, City Clerk	February 5, 2026
 _____ Nathan A. Schneider, City Manager	February 5, 2026
 _____ Tera Koetter, Assistant City Manager	February 5, 2026
 _____ Barry Mooney, Building Inspector	February 5, 2026

ARTICLE 21

SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS

Article 21 - Supplementary Regulations

Section 2101. Purpose.

The Supplemental Regulations set forth additional standards for certain uses located within the various zoning districts. These regulations recognize that certain use types have characteristics that require additional control in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

Section 2102. Visibility at Intersections.

- A. On a corner lot in all districts except the Central Business District (C-1), nothing shall be erected, placed, planted or allowed to grow in such a manner as materially to impede vision between a height of three (3) and ten (10) feet above the center line grades of the intersecting streets in the area bounded by the street intersections of such corner lots and a line joining points along said street intersections fifty (50) feet from the point of the intersection. In case of alleys, nothing shall be erected, placed, planted or allowed to grow in such a manner as to materially impede vision between a height of three (3) and ten (10) feet above the center line grades of the intersecting street and alley in the area bounded by the street intersection, alley line, and a line joining points along said lines twenty (20) feet from the point of the intersection.
- B. Exceptions. The provisions of paragraph (A) above shall not apply to: public utilities poles; equipment required for traffic control; trees, the limbs of which are always kept trimmed of limbs and sucker growth on the trunk to a height of at least ten (10) feet; plant species not planted in the form of a hedge, which are always so planted and trimmed as to leave a clear and unobstructed cross view with a maximum height of three (3) feet; official warning signs or signals; places where the contour of the ground is such that there can be no cross visibility or signs mounted ten (10) feet or more above the ground whose supports do not constitute an obstruction by exceeding the three (3) feet maximum; and temporary and noncommercial signs installed parallel with the base line which, in the opinion of the police department or the Building Inspector, do not obstruct the clear sight zone. All heights herein mentioned shall be measured from the gutter grade the apex of the clear sight zone triangle.
- C. Preexisting violations not excepted. No obstruction to cross visibility shall be determined to be an exception from the application of this section because of its being in existence prior to the adoption of this Ordinance, unless expressly exempted by the terms of this section.
- D. Notice, removal by property owner. When in the opinion of the police department or the Building Inspector an obstruction to visibility exists as prohibited herein, then the police department or the Building Inspector shall give notice in writing to the property owner or owners specifying in what manner a traffic hazard is alleged to exist. Such notice shall direct the removal by the property owner or owners of such structures, trees or other obstructions which constitute said traffic hazard. Such property owner or owners shall be allowed ten (10) days in which to comply with the order, except obstructions of a temporary nature which shall be removed on notice.
- E. Removal by city. If within ten (10) days after the service of such notice, either by mailing or by personal delivery, the owner or owners of the lot or parcel of land have failed, refused, or

neglected to remove such obstructions, then the city shall cause to be removed such obstructions on the lot or pieces of land of said owner, and the cost of such removal shall be assessed and charged against the lot or parcel of ground on which the obstruction was located.

Section 2103. Permitted Obstructions in Required Yards.

The following shall not be considered obstructions when located in a required yard:

A. All Yards:

1. Steps and accessibility ramps used for wheelchair and other assisting devices which are thirty- six (36) inches or less above grade which are necessary for access to a permitted building or for access to a lot from a street or alley.
2. Awnings and canopies subject to applicable setback restrictions;

B. Front Yards:

1. Bay windows projecting three (3) feet or less into the yard are permitted;
2. Open or screened porches, including a permanently roofed-over terrace or porch provided they do not extend or project eight (8) feet or more.

C. Rear and Side Yards:

1. Open off-street parking spaces;
2. Balconies subject to applicable setback restrictions;
3. Outside elements of central air conditioning systems;
4. Recreational and laundry-drying equipment;
5. Accessory uses permitted by this article; and open space and enclosed fences not exceeding six (6) feet in height;

Section 2104. Fences, Walls, Hedges.

At the rear of lots abutting on alleys and on the lot line between two (2) lots, solid fences, walls or hedges may be erected to a maximum height of six (6) feet, provided, that the total height of that portion of such fence between the front yard setback line and the street property/right-of-way line shall not exceed four (4) feet. The use of barbed wire is prohibited in all districts, except, Agricultural (A-1), Limited Industrial (I-1), General Industrial (I-2) and Floodway Overlay (FW). The use of electrically charged fences is prohibited in all districts, except, Agricultural (A-1) and Agricultural/ Residential (A-2). Permitted types of fences shall include picket, split rail, chain link, wood, vinyl, wrought iron, masonry, and woven wire. Pallet and wooden spool fences are not permitted. If a hedge is planted to serve as a privacy barrier between two (2) properties and rests on a property line, a fence permit shall be required.

- A. In no instance shall a fence, wall or hedge be constructed or planted outside a property line into the public right-of-way. Such violation shall be punishable under the provisions of Section 2515 of these regulations.

Additionally:

1. No fence erected in a required front yard shall materially obstruct public view. No component of a front yard fence shall exceed four (4) feet in height.
 2. No fence shall be constructed which will constitute a traffic hazard as identified in the site triangle of a corner lot (see Section 2102, above).
 3. No fence shall be constructed within the Corporate Limits of McCook in such a manner or be of such design as to be hazardous or dangerous to persons or animals by intent of its construction or by inadequate maintenance. (Example: Used pallets, barbed wire, electrically charged, etc.)
 4. No component of a fence within residential districts, except fences erected upon public or parochial school grounds or in public parks and in public playgrounds, shall be constructed to a height greater than six (6) feet, except for the provisions of item number "9", below.
 5. All fences shall conform to the construction standards of the building code and other applicable ordinances and resolutions.
 6. In commercial and industrial districts, maximum height of fences shall be eight (8) feet. When industry standards for certain types of businesses require fences of greater heights, the Zoning Administrator at his direction may allow greater heights.
 7. All fences constructed in the City of McCook shall comply with the provisions of this section and obtain a fence permit. Existing fences that conform with Section 2104 and only require maintenance or replacement shall be exempt from a fence permit.
 8. Wood privacy fences shall not show any framing or bracing members from the outside of the property.
 9. If a fence is constructed on the top of a retaining wall, the height of the fence is measured from the ground on the low side of the retaining wall.
 10. All outdoor swimming pools containing water more than twenty-four (24) inches in depth shall be completely surrounded by a fence or barrier not less than four (4) feet in height, but not more than six (6) feet in height for residential and eight (8) feet in height for all other zoned districts. Gates and doors shall be self-closing and self-latching.
- B. Construction of a new fence, wall or planting of a hedge as outlined above shall require a fence permit to be issued by the Building Inspector or designated representative. Such permit shall not be issued unless and until a sketch plan of the property involved showing the location of said fence, wall, or hedge in relation to said property lines is submitted to the Building Inspector. The sketch plan shall be dimensioned to fully illustrate the location of said fence, wall or hedge and within five (5) days after receipt of such sketch plan, the Building Inspector shall approve construction or planting of the fence, wall, or hedge by issuing the fence permit or shall disapprove the construction or planting and indicate on the sketch plan in writing the reasons for denial. The applicant may then resubmit the sketch plan incorporating the changes suggested by the Building Inspector. Said fence, wall or hedge shall then be constructed or planted consistent with the approved sketch plan.

- C. Any fence, or part thereof, shall not be erected within that part of any lot, block, or other tract of land which is subject to an easement for the construction, maintenance, operation, or replacement of any water, sanitary or storm sewer or gas line, electric power, telephone, or other utility poles, cables, or lines.
- D. If an existing fence, wall or hedge violates the public right-of-way and the City deems it necessary to remove the fence for reasons of street and utility work, said fence, wall, or hedge shall be removed at the property owner's expense. Said fence, wall or hedge shall not be allowed to be reconstructed or replanted in the former position. The property owner must then follow the procedures for a fence permit. Failure to comply with these regulations shall subject the property owner to the penalties set forth in Section 2515.
- E. The city shall have the discretion to issue a Grant of License for a fence upon a showing by the property owner that the Grant of License will not negatively impact the public right-of-way.

Section 2105. Accessory Uses.

Buildings and structures may be erected and may be used for purposes which are clearly incidental to, and customarily and commonly associated with the main permitted use of the premises. Such accessory buildings and uses shall be so constructed, maintained and conducted as to not produce noise, vibration, concussion, dust, dirt, fly ash, odor, noxious gases, heat or glare which is injurious, damaging, unhealthful or disturbing to adjacent property, or the users thereof, and shall be on the same parcel of the main use.

- A. *Permitted uses.* Permitted accessory uses include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1. A storage building or structure incidental to a permitted use or a detached garage or carport provided that no such structure that is accessory to a residential dwelling shall exceed twenty-five (25) feet in height or the height of the dwelling, whichever is less, and shall be compatible with the residential dwelling in terms of design, appearance and materials.
 - 2. An attached garage or carport provided that such structure is physically attached to a residential dwelling by a common wall. An attached garage shall not exceed the square footage of the ground floor of the dwelling it is attached to. Attached garages shall be compatible with the dwelling in terms of design, appearance and materials. Attached garages shall be subject to same setback requirements as the principal structure on the lot.
 - 3. Any accessory building shall have a minimum setback of six (6) feet on interior lots and one-half (1/2) of the front yard setback on corner lots and all garage/carport entrances must have a minimum ten (10) feet long drive when garage/carport opening is perpendicular to the access alley or twenty (20) feet perpendicular to the access street but must meet the front yard setback if more restrictive. Garages/carports can be located three (3) feet from the rear property line when the garage doors do not open onto the alley. No accessory building shall be erected within five (5) feet of any other building.
 - 4. A private swimming pool and bathhouse, provided that no part of such structure or use is located in the front yard setback.
 - 5. In residential districts only, a guest house (without kitchen facilities) or rooms for guests in an accessory building provided such facilities are used for the occasional housing of

guests of the occupants of the principal building (and not as rental units), for permanent occupancy as housekeeping units, and provided that no part of such structure is located in the front yard setback.

6. Fallout shelters, if they shall not be used for any principal or accessory use not permitted in the zoning district and provided that no part of such structure is located in the front yard setback.

B. *Bulk regulations.* Accessory structures and uses shall comply with the bulk regulations applicable in the zoning district, in which they are located, and:

1. Shall be set back at least three (3) feet from the rear lot line when no alley exists and ten (10) feet when an alley exists where vehicular access to a garage is facing the alley line.
2. Shall maintain a six (6) foot side yard, except that no part of any accessory building shall be located closer than five (5) feet to any principal structure, either on the same lot or an adjacent lot, unless it is attached to, or forms a part of, such principal structure.
3. Shall, on corner lots, be set back from the side street a distance not less than that required for the principal structure.
4. In no event shall an accessory building or structure be allowed which is larger in size or area than the principal building, structure or use it serves.
5. Accessory buildings may be built in a side or rear yard.
6. Accessory buildings are subject to the same setback lines as the primary structure.
7. Accessory buildings shall not encroach on any required utility easements.
8. No accessory building shall be constructed upon a parcel until the construction of the primary structure has been commenced, and no accessory building shall be used for dwelling purposes.
9. Accessory buildings over two hundred (200) sq. ft. must have siding and roofing materials that are customarily used on residential homes, in the same zoning district.
10. No accessory use building shall be constructed from materials or equipment originally designed for another use such as but not limited to packing crates, cargo containers or of a motor vehicle or trailer, regardless if wheels, axles, etc., have been removed.
11. Accessory buildings can only be built on the same parcel as the primary structure.
12. Accessory use buildings are to be for domestic use only. Any home occupations are to use restrictions found in Section 2106.
13. All accessory buildings not on a permanent foundation are to be anchored.
14. Accessory structures and uses shall comply with the use regulations applicable in the zoning district in which they are located.

Section 2106. Home Occupations.

A home occupation may be a permitted accessory use in all residential districts if the following conditions are met:

A. *Restrictions and limitations:*

1. No more than one (1) other person in addition to members of the family, residing on the premises, shall be engaged in such occupation.
2. The home occupation shall be conducted entirely within the principal residential building, except as provided by these regulations, and such use must be clearly incidental and secondary to the residential use of the building.
3. No more than thirty (30%) percent of the gross floor area of a dwelling unit shall be devoted to the home occupation.
4. No alteration of the principal residential building shall be made that changes the character of that building as a residence.
5. No display or storage of equipment or material outside of a building or structure shall be permitted.
6. No mechanical or electrical equipment other than normal domestic or household equipment shall be used and the home business must not involve the use of hazardous chemicals or flammable liquids.
7. The home occupation must be operated by a resident of the dwelling.
8. Only one (1) non-illuminated wall sign, not more than four (4) square feet in sign area, may be used to advertise the home occupation.
9. The home occupation shall not project any obnoxious noise, smoke, dust, odor or glare to create a nuisance or adverse condition upon adjoining properties or dwelling units.
10. The home occupation shall not generate traffic in a volume that would create a need for parking greater than that which can be accommodated on the premises or which is inconsistent with the normal parking usage of the residential district.
11. No home occupation shall be conducted in any accessory building.

B. *Permitted home occupations.* Permitted home occupations include, but are not limited to, the following list of home occupations; provided, however, that each listed occupation is subject to the restrictions and limitations above:

1. Home teaching or instruction, including music and dance, provided no more than three (3) students are taught at any one (1) time and no more than twelve (12) students per day.
2. Daycare homes for children, when properly registered with the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services (NDHHS), provided such homes shall have yard areas enclosed that are devoted to such use.

3. Artists, sculptors, authors, composers, and photographers.
4. Barber and beauty shops; provided, that only two (2) chairs and one (1) operator shall be permitted.
5. Dressmaker, seamstress, and tailor.
6. Office space for realtors, insurance agents, brokers, sales representatives and manufacturing representatives when no exchange of tangible goods is made on the premises.
7. Home crafts, baking, and food preparation done in compliance with all Federal, State, and local laws.

Section 2107. Setbacks.

All setbacks, as delineated by front, rear and side yard requirements, shall be measured from the nearest property line to the outside face of the vertical wall of the structure. No vertical wall of said structure, including carports, porches and the like, shall be located outside of said setback lines.

Section 2108. Lot Size Requirements and Bulk Regulations for Public Utility Facilities.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these regulations, none of the following public utility or public service uses shall be required to comply with the lot size requirements and bulk regulations of the zoning district in which they are located:

1. Cable TV poles;
2. Electric and telephone substations and distribution systems;
3. Gas regulator stations;
4. Poles, wires, cables, conduits, vaults, laterals, pipes, mains, valves, or other similar equipment for the transmission of electricity, gas or water;
5. Pumping stations;
6. Radio, television and microwave transmitting or relay stations and towers;
7. Transformer stations;
8. Water towers or standpipes;
9. Any other similar public utility use.

Section 2109. Easements.

- A. No building or structure, nor any addition thereto, shall be constructed or placed within any platted or recorded public easement, unless expressly authorized by the City Council. Prior to granting such authorization, the city shall consult with public utilities whose lines may be affected. In granting such authorization, the City Council may impose conditions necessary to protect any existing utilities.
- B. No property owner may construct, maintain or allow any natural or non-natural structures or

vegetative barriers (including but not limited to trees, shrubbery, berms, fences, walls or pole signs) within any drainage easement dedicated, purchased or otherwise granted to the public which the Building Inspector or Public Works Director finds obstructs, impedes, or otherwise interferes with the drainage of storm water. Drainage easements shall not be filled or otherwise physically altered without the written approval of a licensed engineer.

Section 2110. Landscaping Regulations.

Landscaping regulations are as follows:

A. *Minimum requirements.*

1. The open, unpaved areas of each property shall be graded to provide for the adequate drainage of all storm water and shall be free of hazards, nuisances, or unsanitary conditions.
2. Open, unpaved areas shall be appropriately landscaped to provide an attractive appearance to enhance the character of the neighborhood. All set-back areas in the I-1 and I-2 Zoned Districts shall be landscaped with an effective combination of trees, ground covers, and shrubs.
3. No vegetation shall overhang a public street below a height of sixteen (16) feet or sidewalk below a height of eight (8) feet or obstruct views of pedestrian and vehicular movements.

B. *Maintenance.* The maintenance requirements for all landscaping areas shall be as follows:

1. The landowner is responsible for the maintenance of all landscaped areas and shall keep them in a proper, neat and orderly appearance and free from litter and debris at all times.
2. Maintenance shall include mowing, trimming, weeding, mulching, restaking, pruning, fertilizing, disease and insect control and other necessary operations.
3. All landscaped areas shall be provided with a permanent water supply. Irrigation systems shall be designed and operated to avoid watering impervious surfaces and streets. Landscape designers and property owners are encouraged to utilize xeriscaping and take advantage of its water saving principles and practices.

Section 2111. Elevation.

Unless otherwise directed by the Building Inspector, the first-floor elevation of a building or group of buildings shall be at least eighteen (18) inches above the grade of the center of the abutting street or roadway.

Section 2112. Erection of More than One Principal Structure on a Lot.

In any district where a lot is used for a multi-family dwelling, business or industrial purpose, more than one (1) principal structure may be located upon the lot, but only when each principal structure complies with all subdivision yard and other requirements herein as though it were on an individual lot.

Section 2113. Structures to Have Access.

Every principal building hereafter erected or moved shall be located on a lot adjacent to a public

street and all structures shall be so located on lots to provide safe and convenient access from the adjacent public street to said lot for servicing, fire protection and required off-street parking.

Section 2114. Parking, Storage or Use of Major Recreational Equipment and Enclosed Trailers.

For purposes of these regulations, major recreational equipment and enclosed trailers is defined as including boats and boat trailers, travel trailers, pickup campers or coaches designed to be mounted on automotive vehicles, motorized dwellings, tent trailers and the like, and cases or boxes used for transporting recreational equipment and enclosed trailers, whether occupied by such equipment or not. No major recreational equipment or enclosed trailers shall be stored except in a carport or enclosed building or behind the front setback line or in the side yard of the zoning district in which it is located. On a corner lot such equipment shall be kept back so as to not violate the sight triangle requirements. No such equipment shall be used for living, sleeping or housekeeping purposes when parked or stored on a residential lot, or in any location not approved for such use, provided, however, that such equipment may be parked or used for living, sleeping, loading or housekeeping purposes on the residential premises for a period not to exceed seventy-two (72) hours.

Section 2115. Cargo Containers.

A. Storage on Residential Use Properties.

1. Cargo containers, railroad cars, truck vans, converted mobile homes, travel trailers, recreational vehicles, bus bodies, vehicles, and similar prefabricated items and structures originally built for purposes other than the storage of goods and materials are not permitted to be used as an accessory storage building on property zoned residential or on property where the primary use of which is residential.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions set forth in subsection (1) of this section, the temporary placement of cargo containers and/or portable site storage containers on residentially zoned properties, or on properties where the primary use of which are residential, for the limited purpose of loading and unloading household contents shall be permitted for a period not exceeding fifteen (15) days in any one (1) calendar year.
3. Notwithstanding the provisions set forth in subsection (1) of this section, licensed contractors may use cargo containers for the temporary location of an office, equipment, and/or materials during construction which is taking place on the property where the cargo container is located, if the use of the cargo container is authorized pursuant to a city building permit.

B. Cargo containers - Permitted locations.

1. The placement of a cargo container as an accessory storage use is limited to the following zoning districts:
 - (a) Agricultural (A-1)
 - (b) Business Commercial (C-2)
 - (c) Highway Commercial (C-3)
 - (d) Limited Industrial (I-1)