



*America's  
Most Famous  
Small Town*

**Red  
Cloud**



# Crafting Red Cloud's Story

Comprehensive Development Plan

City of Red Cloud, Nebraska

2018-2038

Ordinance No. 642

Adopted March 5, 2018



# Acknowledgments

Without the vital participation from City staff and stakeholders, this Comprehensive Plan would not be an accurate guide toward future prosperity.

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# Contents

It is what is on the inside that counts.

<i>Why Plan?</i>	4
<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Red Cloud Profile</i>	7
Geography	7
History	7
Population	8
Economy	11
Housing	17
Community Facilities	19
Environmental Conditions	28
Existing Land Use and Transportation	30
Energy	36
<i>Community Participation</i>	39
Public Input	39
Future Land Use and Annexation	40
Goals and Objectives	42
<i>Maintain Red Cloud</i>	44

## List of Figures

1. Population change
2. Population to other entities
3. Population to other towns
4. Age of head-of-household
5. Average weekly wage
6. Jobs by sector
7. Economic development staff
8. Focus of economic efforts
9. Utilize businesses
10. Housing unit summary
11. Year structure was built
12. Owner occupied units
13. Condition of residence
14. Age of householder
15. Median home value
16. Brick street public input
17. Energy consumption by user
18. Energy consumption by fuel
19. Monthly average electric costs

## List of Tables

1. Red Cloud's population
2. Unemployment rates
3. Radio stations available
4. Broadcast stations available
5. School enrollment
6. NWEA assessment scores
7. Post-secondary education
8. Existing land use: inventory
9. Existing land use: acres

## List of Maps

1. Historic Districts
2. Park Walkability
3. Water Infrastructure
4. Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure
5. Electrical Infrastructure
6. Floodplain
7. Existing Land Use
8. Subdivisions
9. Future Land Use

# Why Plan?

Planning for future growth ensures your community will maintain a trajectory of success.

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

- A comprehensive plan is a GUIDE that helps a community decide what they want their community to look like and how (and if) they want their town to grow. The FUTURE LAND USE MAP is a key document produced by the comprehensive planning process.

## What is a Zoning Ordinance?

- While the comprehensive plan is a guide, the zoning ordinance is the LAW that governs how/if a town will develop/grow.
- The FUTURE LAND USE MAP adopted by the comprehensive plan becomes the ZONING MAP, which becomes the ZONING ORDINANCE, a legal and enforceable document.

## How do we get from the Comprehensive Plan to the Zoning Ordinance?

- Key inputs are gathered and considered that enable leaders and residents to make decisions and agree upon a plan for the future of their town. The process of making decisions and planning for the future is called VISIONING.
- Key inputs are assembled into a preliminary document commonly called the COMMUNITY PROFILE:
  - + Public Survey
  - + Focus Groups: school administrators/educators, elementary and high school students, ministerial association, chamber/community club
  - + Stakeholder Interviews: City Council, Planning Commission, Housing Authority, library, local newspaper, local realtor, grocery store owner, Fire Chief, School Board President, business owners as needed
  - + Existing Land Use Map
  - + Demographic, Housing, and Economic Data
- The COMMUNITY PROFILE becomes an informational piece that helps us draw the FUTURE LAND USE MAP.
- By studying the COMMUNITY PROFILE, and deciding how the FUTURE LAND USE MAP looks, we are conducting visioning and intentionally considering and planning for the future of Red Cloud.

## Key points about planning and zoning

- In the State of Nebraska, a community IS NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE a comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance. The choice to have zoning belongs to you; the responsibility to enforce your zoning ordinance also belongs to you.
- A community cannot have a zoning ordinance without a comprehensive plan.
- In order to participate in some economic development activities (bonds, loans, grants), a community will need to have a current comprehensive plan (examples: Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Downtown Revitalization, USDA programs).

## Why is planning important to our current and potential businesses?

- Businesses have three important desires—ongoing planning can help a community ensure that they are meeting these needs:
  - + Accessibility: to capital and markets;
  - + Capability: quality workforce
  - + Stability: predictable regulations and community development
- Change is inevitable; the type, pace, and amount of change can be determined by you.
- Remember: the cost of engaging in planning and development is high, but not as high as the cost of doing nothing.

# Introduction

Creating a comprehensive plan requires both qualitative and quantitative data collection.

## The Comprehensive Planning Process

Crafting Red Cloud's Story creates a twenty (20) year projection geared toward identifying, assessing, and developing actions and policies that will steer population, land use, transportation, housing, economic development, community facilities, utilities, and energy. Its goals are to promote smart economic and community growth while preserving the unique atmosphere of the community. This plan will guide the community in thoughtfully crafting policy that creates a sustainable and vibrant future.

The first step in comprehensive planning is creating a profile of Red Cloud through data collection, both quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative data includes public input (provided through the Community Needs Assessment and town hall meetings) and information from City staff. Quantitative data includes demographic information from the U.S. Census, Esri and field data collected throughout the process. This data provides Red Cloud with a snapshot of where it has been and what it looks like today. Analysis of this data will provide a vision for the future land-use and economic needs of the community.

The second step is the creation of overall goals the community wants to attain. The priority of these goals is determined through the public input provided in the initial step. Crafting Red Cloud's Story presents action steps for enhancing current conditions and controlling future development. These steps are presented in narrative and graphic form. These projections and forecasts are helpful planning tools, but are only predictions of what might occur. It is, therefore, vital that Red Cloud periodically review their population, housing, and economic conditions.

The final step in the process is implementation of these recommendations. The governing body adopts these recommendations but it is up to the elected and appointed officials, both present and future, to ensure that progress is continually made. This is not meant to be a static document. Though the planning period represented in this document is twenty (20) years, it should be reviewed annually or biannually and completely updated every ten (10) years. As changes occur within Red Cloud, the comprehensive plan should be updated to reflect them.

## Governmental and Jurisdictional Organization of Red Cloud

The Red Cloud City Council, which is composed of elected officials including the Mayor, performs all necessary governmental functions for the City. It has planning and zoning powers, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §19-901-903 (Reissue 1997). This power encompasses all of the incorporated areas of the city, as well as the established extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) extending one (1) mile from corporate limits. The Council may enforce such zoning and subdivision regulations as are necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. These include, but are not limited to, building, electrical, plumbing, and property maintenance codes.

## Authority to Plan

This Comprehensive Plan for the City of Red Cloud is prepared under the Authority of Neb. Rev. Stat. § 19-924-929 (1943) (Reissue 1997). These statutes require that a comprehensive plan have at least five elements — population, land use, annexation, transportation, and energy for communities of the second class or higher. It must also consist of both graphic and textual material which is designed to accommodate anticipated long-range future growth. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 19-903 (Reissue 1997).

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# Community Profile

Where Red Cloud has been and where it is currently.

Before a community can plan for the future, they must first understand where they have been and where they are currently. The Community Profile provides a snapshot of past and current trends in Geography, History, Demographics, Economy, Housing, Energy Consumption, Community Facilities, and Existing Land Use. Red Cloud completed a Community Needs Assessment (CNAS) in March 2014, which included residents within the city limits and surrounding area. The survey produced 413 respondents from the Red Cloud area. The results of this survey will be used throughout this Comprehensive Plan.

## Geography

Red Cloud is located in Webster County, six (6) miles from the Kansas/Nebraska boarder. U.S. Highway 136, a designated Heritage Highway, runs east/west through Red Cloud. It is intersected by north/south U.S. Highway 281, which runs from the Mexican to the Canadian boarder and is the longest continuous three-digit U.S. Route. Red Cloud is located at 40°5'18"N 98°31'22"W. It has an elevation of 1,716 feet. According to the United States Census Bureau, the City has a total area of 1.02 square miles of land. Red Cloud is located near the Republican River; three of its boundaries abut a floodplain. The area surrounding Red Cloud is composed of dissected plains with hills that have moderate to steep slopes and the remnants of old, eroded plains.

The City of Red Cloud is near the center of a large landmass: thus, the climate is typically considered continental. This produces a relatively dry climate with very hot summers and very cold winters. Large temperature fluctuations are normal in this region. The average temperature ranges from twelve degrees (12°) Fahrenheit in the month of January to ninety degrees (90°) Fahrenheit in July. On average, Red Cloud receives twenty six (26) inches of rainfall per year, below the national average of thirty-nine (39) inches per year. Nearly eighty percent (80%) of the annual precipitation falls from the month of April through the month of September. The average snowfall is twenty (20) inches, below the national average of twenty-six (26) inches per year.

## History

Red Cloud was founded in the early part of 1871. The naming of the city was meant to honor the chief of the Oglala tribe of the Teton-Lakota Sioux, though there is no evidence that the Sioux ever lived in the area. For centuries, the area was home to the Kitkehahki band of the Pawnee tribe. Smallpox and other diseases decimated the tribe and the survivors joined with another Pawnee band in a different part of the state.

In 1879, the mainline of the Burlington and Missouri River Railway came to town, bringing with it a major settlement boom. It was around this time that the famed author Willa Cather arrived in Red Cloud with her extended family. Descriptions of this time period can be found throughout her literary work. Red Cloud served as a division center for the railroad during the 1880's, which brought prosperity to the town. The City had all the trappings of a modern society of the time, a horse-drawn street system, an ornate hotel, two-story brick downtown buildings, and even an opera house.

Today, Red Cloud still serves as a hub for agribusiness in the area. The City has blended the needs of modern day with the preservation of their unique history.



Image from the University of Nebraska Archives and Special Collections.



## Population

Past and present population trends are necessary to predict the future of Red Cloud. This information provides the residents with a better understanding of their past and current population trends and changes. Population trends can help plan for future growth and assist in deciding when it is best to maintain or invest in infrastructure. The long-term population trends of the community are the driving force behind its housing, local employment, economic, and fiscal stability. Current residents' needs must be fulfilled while the future needs of new residents must also be considered. Red Cloud had a population of 948 in 2016.

The population of Red Cloud peaked at 1,856 in 1920 while Webster County experienced its peak earlier at 12,008 in 1910. Overall, both Webster County and Red Cloud have experienced declining populations, though Red Cloud has seen upticks throughout its history. The most dramatic increases in population occurred between 1880 and 1890 for both the City and the County. The loss of population in the 1980s was common throughout agricultural counties and communities in Nebraska because of the agricultural crisis that occurred throughout the decade. Both Red Cloud and Webster County have struggled to increase their population since then.

### Population Change, Red Cloud and Webster County

*(Nebraska Department of Economic Development, 2016)*

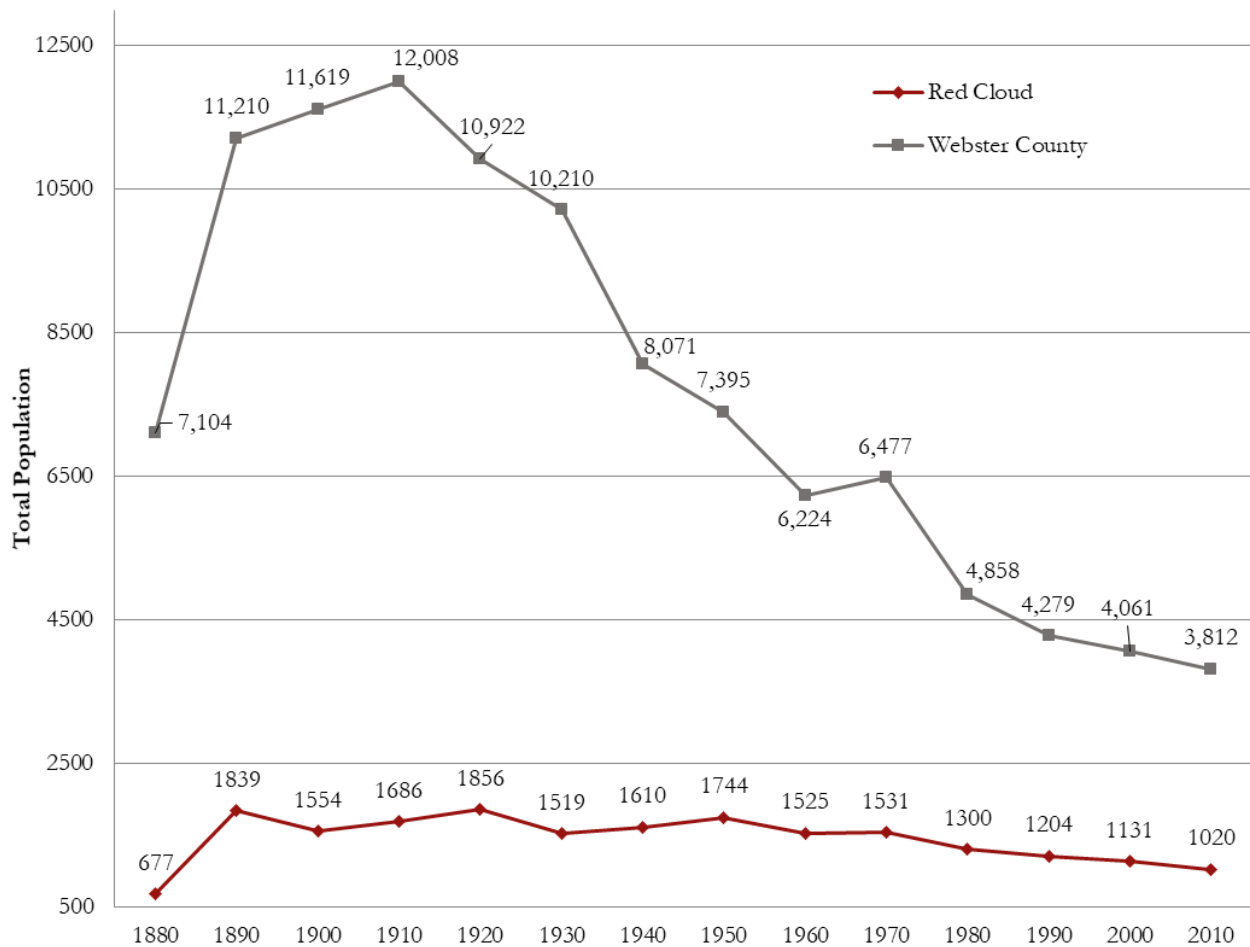


Figure 1

Nearby cities with similar population counts can be compared to Red Cloud to help understand regional population trends and how Red Cloud fits in with those trends. Alma, Franklin, and Red Cloud have similar population counts and are all county seats in the southern, agriculturally driven, portion of Nebraska.

Red Cloud’s Population Compared to Other Regional Entities

Place	Total Population				Population Change			Percent Change		
	1980	1990	2000	2010	80-89	90-99	00-09	80-89	90-99	00-09
Alma	1369	1226	1214	1133	-143	-12	-81	-10.45	-0.98	-6.67
Franklin	1137	1112	1026	1000	-25	-86	-26	-2.20	-7.73	-2.53
Red Cloud	1300	1204	1131	1020	-96	-73	-111	-7.38	-6.06	-9.81
Webster Co.	4,858	4,279	4,061	3,812	-579	-218	-249	-11.92	-5.09	-6.13
Webster Co. (excluding Red Cloud)	2,878	3,075	2,930	2,792		-145	-138	-6.85	-4.72	-4.71

U.S. Census Bureau, 2016

Table 2

Red Cloud's Population Compared to Similar Towns

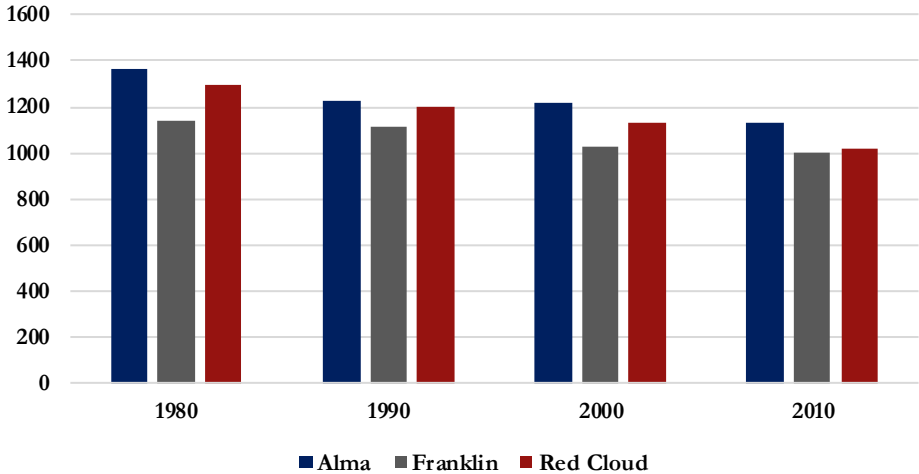


Figure 3

Over the past four (4) decades, all three communities have experienced decline in their population. Overall, Red Cloud has seen the highest population decline. This is on par to other locations in southern Nebraska. Because technology has allowed for fewer people to farm larger sections of land, this agriculturally based area is experiencing population decline overall.

### Composition of Red Cloud's Population

Age	2000		2010		Change	% Change	Annual Growth Rate
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total	Over 10 Years	Over 10 Years
<b>Total population</b>	1,131	100	1,020	100	-111	-10%	-1%
<b>Under 5 years</b>	59	5	52	5.1	-7	-12%	-1%
<b>5 to 9 years</b>	67	6	48	4.7	-19	-28%	-3%
<b>10 to 14 years</b>	80	7	67	6.6	-13	-16%	-2%
<b>15 to 19 years</b>	54	5	56	5.5	2	4%	0%
<b>20 to 24 years</b>	35	3	48	4.7	13	37%	4%
<b>25 to 29 years</b>	37	3	37	3.6	0	0%	0%
<b>30 to 34 years</b>	47	4	35	3.4	-12	-26%	-3%
<b>35 to 39 years</b>	76	7	42	4.1	-34	-45%	-4%
<b>40 to 44 years</b>	77	7	42	4.1	-35	-45%	-5%
<b>45 to 49 years</b>	64	6	75	7.4	11	17%	2%
<b>50 to 54 years</b>	64	6	74	7.3	10	16%	2%
<b>55 to 59 years</b>	63	6	59	5.8	-4	-6%	-1%
<b>60 to 64 years</b>	64	6	67	6.6	3	5%	0%
<b>65 to 69 years</b>	66	6	61	6	-5	-8%	-1%
<b>70 to 74 years</b>	64	6	60	5.9	-4	-6%	-1%
<b>75 to 79 years</b>	70	6	56	5.5	-14	-20%	-2%
<b>80 to 84 years</b>	65	6	55	5.4	-10	-15%	-2%
<b>85 to 89 years</b>	51	5	51	5	0	0%	0%
<b>90 years and over</b>	28	3	35	3.4	7	25%	3%
<b>Median age (years)</b>	47		50.9	<i>U.S. Census Bureau, 2010</i>			

Table 1

The composition of Red Cloud's population will affect future population dynamics. The median age of residents increased from 47 to 50.9 years. The largest groups were 45-49 year olds and 50-54 year olds. Within 10-20 years, these groups will be reaching retirement ages. Currently, they are in the late stages of working life and child rearing years. The most significant loss of population occurred in 30-44 year olds and adolescent cohorts. Young adults and extremely aged senior citizens saw growth or stability over the past 10 years.

What is the age of your head-of-household?

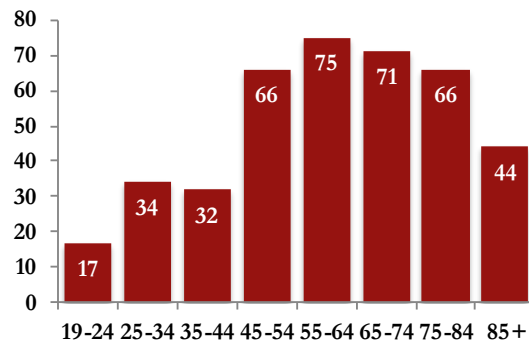


Figure 4

Source: SCEDD CNAS, 2014

A significant increase was 49-54 year olds and those ninety (90) years and older. This “graying population” represents a portion of the Baby Boomer Generation, those individuals who are 50-70 years in age. This group is currently in the last stages of or have left the workforce and are no longer within traditional child rearing years. The Boomers currently represent approximately twenty percent (20%) of the City’s population. As these individuals continue to age, their employment, housing, and lifestyle needs will continue to change. It is vital that Red Cloud invest in this community as many may want to age in place.

The City of Red Cloud should strive to work toward creating a more livable environment within their community for their aging population. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has created a Livability Index, using eight categories to calculate the overall livability of a community as its population ages.

- ◆ The housing category scores a community’s provision of housing opportunities for all ages, incomes, and abilities, which allows everyone to live in a quality neighborhood.
- ◆ Compact neighborhoods that provide easy and convenient access to life necessities, work, and recreation opportunities.
- ◆ Transportation options should be safe and reliable. Communities should provide access to and maintain a clean environment for their residents.
- ◆ Good communities must protect and maintain a clean, healthy environment for their residents.
- ◆ Because the health of its residents is so tied to the health of a community, exercise opportunities should be available as well as access to high-quality health care.
- ◆ Communities should work toward creating strong regional economies and fiscally healthy local governments.
- ◆ Residents should be able to engage in social and civic opportunities within the community.
- ◆ Residents must feel a sense of inclusion and possibility in their community.

Engaging in all of these will create a vibrant community that is welcoming, not just to the aging population, but to everyone.

### Economy

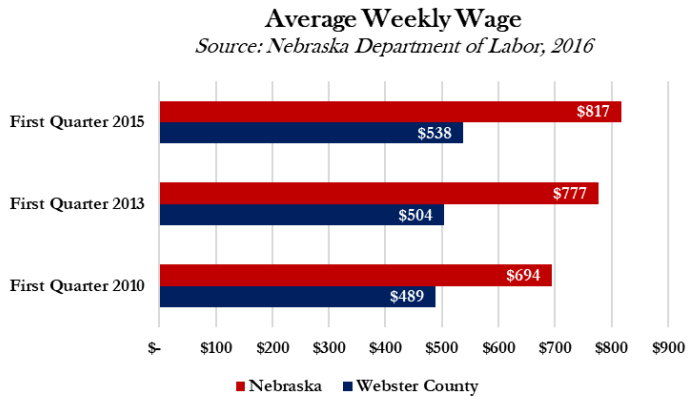
Economic trends are used in the comprehensive planning process to indicate the health of the community’s employment base. The most recent information for Nebraska and Webster County was obtained from the Nebraska Department of Labor. These figures are only available at the state and county levels. The most recent information regarding the United States unemployment rates were gathered from the Federal Reserve Database. Unemployment rates in Webster County have remained well below the national average. In 2000 and 2005 they were lower than Nebraska’s average. In 2010 and 2015, Webster County’s unemployment rates were higher than those of the State. In both Nebraska and Webster County, the relatively low unemployment rate reflects the fact that most people who want to work are employed. Red Cloud does have a significant portion of the population who will be aging out of the workforce in the coming years. Those jobs will need to be filled by an incoming workforce. The unemployment rate of a community is also used as a signaling device to companies looking for a place to locate their business. A too-low unemployment rate indicates that there is not a workforce available to fill the new job opportunities. Both Nebraska and Webster County’s unemployment rates indicate a healthy employment market with a large enough workforce available for new economic opportunities.

Unemployment Rates				
	2000	2005	2010	2015
<b>United States</b>	4	5.1	9.6	5.3
<b>Nebraska</b>	2.8	3.8	4.6	3
<b>Webster County</b>	2.8	3.6	4.8	3.6

CP Table 2

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017

## Community Profile



The average weekly wage in Webster County is far below that of the average weekly wage of the entire state. Average wages across the state are increasing more rapidly than those in Webster County. On average, wages across Nebraska increased nearly eighteen percent (18%) between 2010 and 2015. During that same time period in Webster County, wages only increased ten percent (10%).

Figure 5

Webster County has a variety of job sectors to offer the residents of Red Cloud. The total amount of jobs in Webster County has decreased between 2013 and 2015. The jobs by sector chart does not include workers that list farming as their primary occupation. Overall, most of the jobs saw a decrease in availability. However, educational services and retail trade have increased. The United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Services listed Webster County as a Nonmetro Farming Dependent county. Farming Dependent counties are those where twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the county's average annual jobs were in farming, as measured by the 2010-2012 Bureau of Economic Analysis, Local Area Personal Income and Employment data. This means that Webster County's local economy is heavily reliant on agriculture.

Seventy percent (70%) of workers remain in Webster County to work. A majority of those who commute out of Webster County work in Adams County. This can be attributed to the City of Hastings, which is a regional economic hub. Only eight percent (8%) work in other counties such as Clay, Franklin, Nuckolls, and other surrounding counties. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 110 workers live and work in Red Cloud, while 371 workers live in Red Cloud but leave to work in other areas. 282 people come into Red Cloud but do not live there.

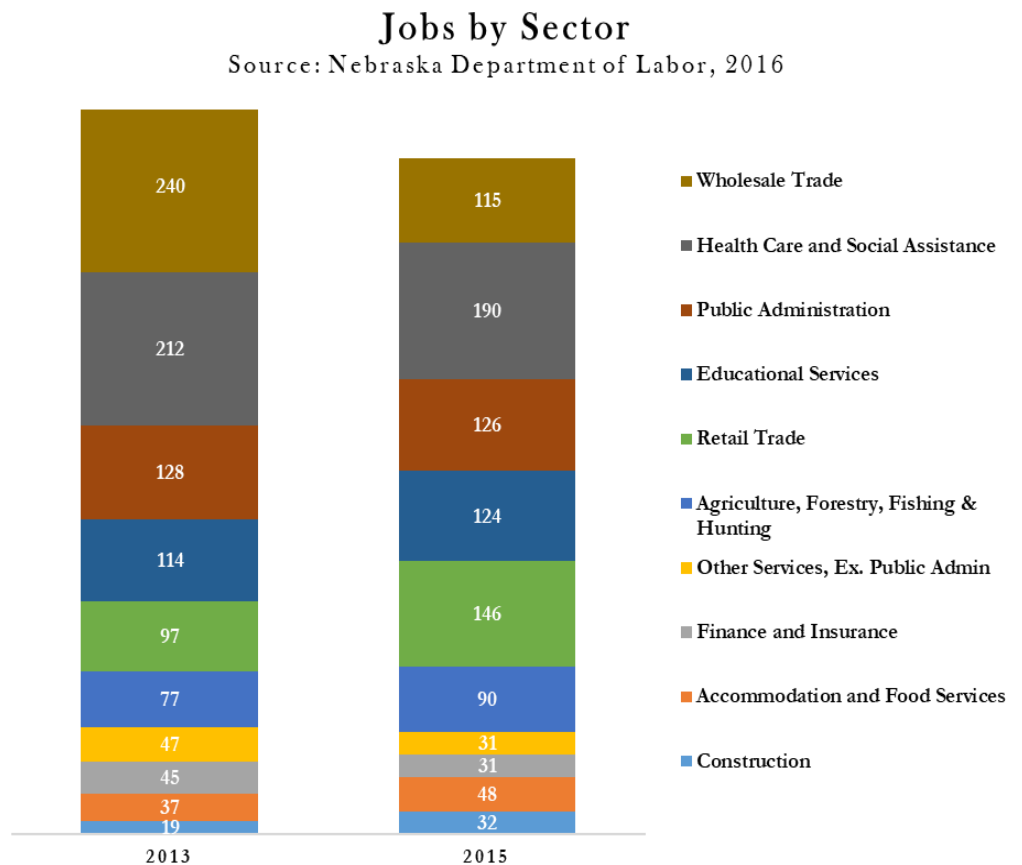
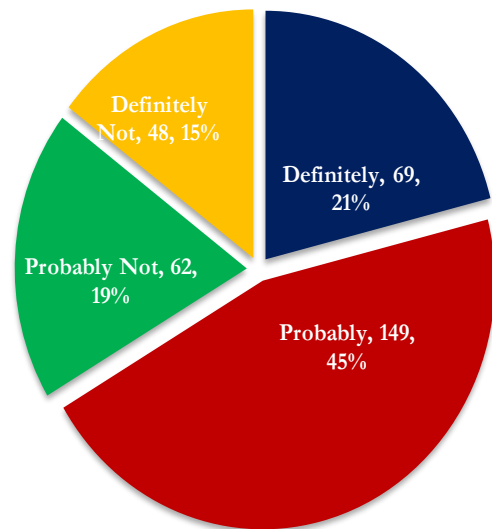


Figure 6

Of those 110 workers who remain in Red Cloud, over half (55%) have less than a ten (10) minute commute. Approximately thirteen percent (13%) drive forty-five (45) to fifty-nine (59) minutes. The primary means of transportation to work is by driving alone in a car, truck, or van. No commuters in Red Cloud use public transportation (excluding taxicabs) to commute to work. Approximately eight percent (8%) of commuters walk to work. No one rides their bike to commute. Approximately five percent (5%) work from home.

When asked, Red Cloud residents felt that the focus of economic development efforts should be on recruiting new businesses, creating new businesses, and retaining and/or expanding existing businesses. The most supported new business options were a thrift store, appliance/repair store, optometrist, handyman service, and an auto body shop. Residents strongly felt that Red Cloud should provide funding for economic development staff. When asked, twenty-one (21%) of respondents said definitely and forty-five percent (45%) said probably.

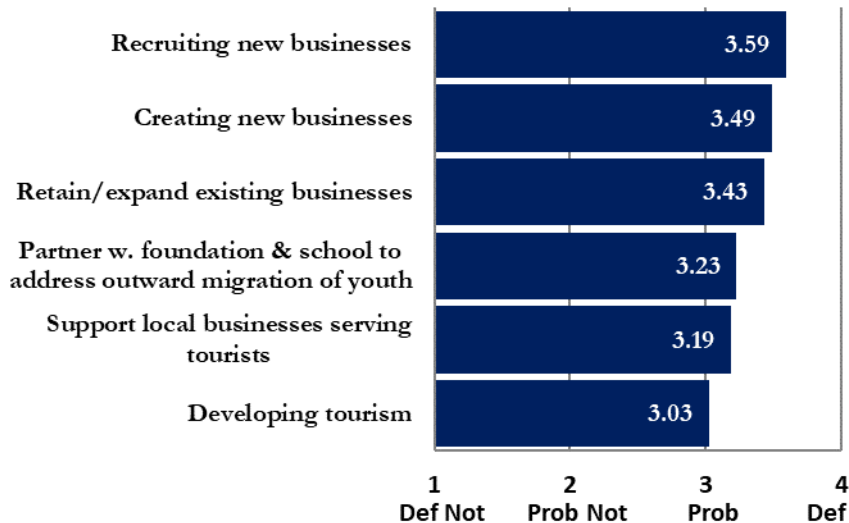
**Provide Funding for Economic Development Staff**



CP Figure 7

Source: SCEDD CNAS, 2014

**Focus of Economic Development Efforts:**



CP Figure 8

Source: SCEDD CNAS, 2014



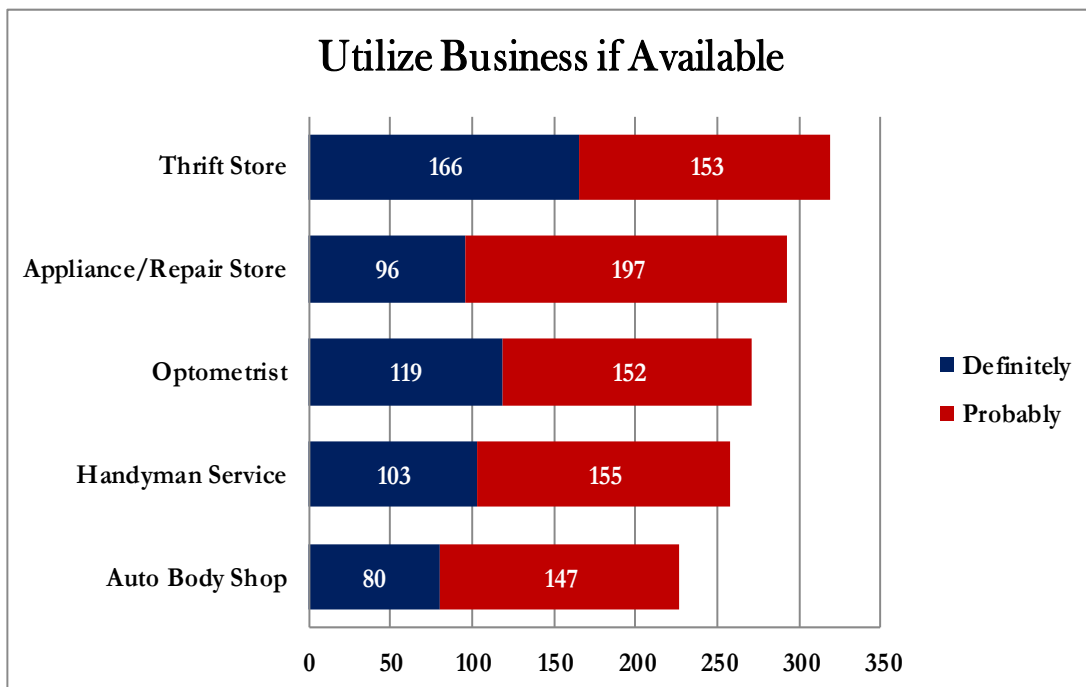


Figure 9

Source: SCEDD CNAS, 2014

## Historic Preservation

Every community has a sense of place, sometimes vibrantly apparent, other times a subtle undercurrent, that makes it distinctive. The emphasis on historic preservation, and the cultivation of its past, provides present day Red Cloud with a distinctive, nostalgic setting.

Heritage tourism is a driving economic force for the City of Red Cloud and Webster County. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past” and includes “cultural, historic, and natural resources.” Red Cloud has a storied past and is able to invoke that sense of authenticity in its visitors. It is the home of Willa Cather and is featured prominently in some of her writings. The City also has deep connections to Baseball Hall of Famers Cy Young and Dazzy Vance. The City’s first settler, Silas Garber, was Nebraska’s third Governor.

The City of Red Cloud has worked tirelessly to preserve its unique history. When many other communities were replacing their courthouse, Webster County preserved their 1914 “County Citadel” type courthouse with Second Renaissance Revival architectural characteristics. In partnership with the Willa Cather Foundation, the City has preserved nearly fifty (50) sites associated with the author, including her childhood home. Just south of town, the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie offers visitors a trip back in time to a land returned to its 19th century topography. The Moon Block Restoration Project was completed in 2017. This project included the renovation of the National Willa Cather Center and the creation of three (3) downtown apartments and three (3) retail bays.

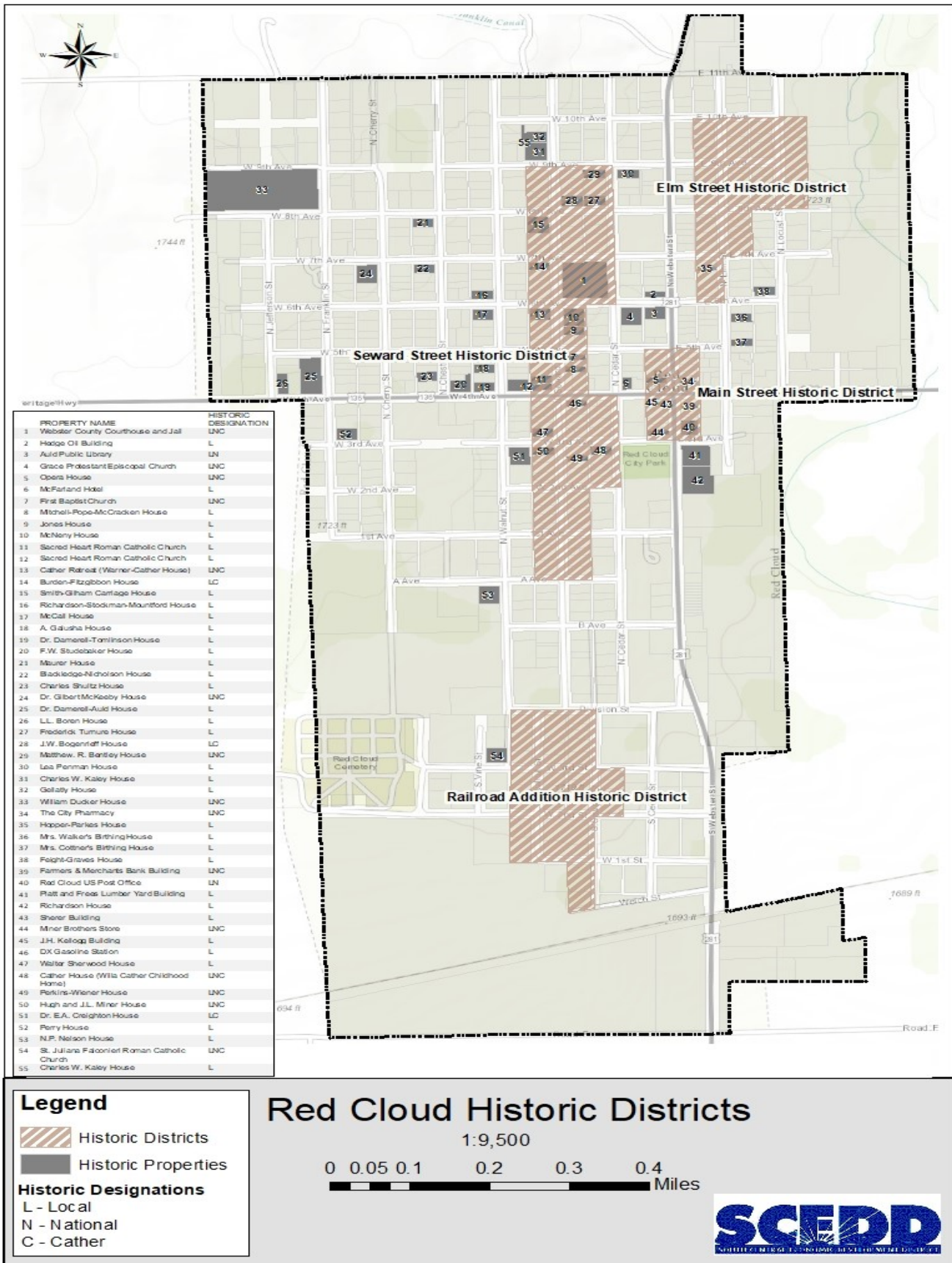
Investment in this type of historic preservation is vital to the success of Red Cloud. Each year, approximately 8,000 to 10,000 visitors come to experience the living history provided by these historic places. These visitors eat in local restaurants, sleep in local accommodations, and shop in local stores. This is out of town revenue that would not otherwise be available in the City.

In April of 2016, the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship conducted an Impact Analysis on Heritage Tourism Development in Red Cloud and Webster County. It concluded that Heritage Tourism has already had a significant impact on the City. With the increase in lodging created in 2012 with the Cather Second Home Guest House renovation and 2014 opening of the Kaley House Bed and Breakfast, lodging sales increased from \$139,000 in 2011 to a high of \$273,000 in 2015— a ninety-six percent (96%) increase. The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship estimates that the total visitor spending will more than triple between 2015 and 2024 if Red Cloud continues to invest in Heritage Tourism activities.

Since 2015, new, tourism related business have opened, primarily in the restaurant industry. Two of these businesses, Prairie Plum Coffee (a pour over coffee shop that sources its beans from an Omaha company) and On the Brix (a wine tasting room that also features Nebraska craft beer and high end cocktails), are outstanding examples. They occupy two (2) of the newly created retail bays in the National Willa Cather Center and bring a different type of product to the community. They were created in part to appeal to the more affluent visitors Red Cloud hopes to attract.

The Cather Center experienced a forty-nine percent (49%) increase in visitors in 2017, a thirty-five percent (35%) increase in tours and a sixty-one percent (61%) increase in seven building tours, which is the most profitable and time consuming tour. The Cather Bookstore experienced a forty-five percent (45%) increase in sales, a majority of which came after the grand opening of the Cather Center in June, 2017. Finally, the Starke Round Barn has seen an eighty-nine percent (89%) increase in visitation from 2016-2017.

Currently, the largest challenge the City faces in regard to tourism is the lack of quality lodging in the City. There are plans underway to address this by developing the Brenda’s Shoppe building on the southeast corner of Fourth Avenue and Webster Street into a Boutique Hotel. Red Cloud should continue investing in viable historic projects.



Map 1

## Housing

An understanding of the housing trends creates a picture of housing availability and affordability in the City of Red Cloud. According to the U.S. Census, there are approximately 644 housing units available in Red Cloud. Approximately fifty-three percent (53%) of those units are owner occupied, twenty-three percent (23%) are renter occupied, and twenty-four percent (24%) sit vacant. Planning standards have determined that a vacancy rate of five percent to seven percent (5-7%) is a healthy rate. This allows space for new families to move in and provides enough options within the housing market. Anything smaller limits the housing market. A larger vacancy rate will be difficult to fill. Too few houses will sell and those left on the market will fall into a dilapidated state. Red Cloud's vacancy is much higher than the recommended range.

**Housing Unit Summary**  
Source: American Fact Finder, 2016

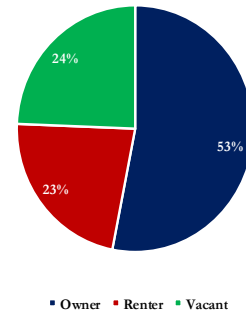


Figure 10

**Year Structure Was Built**  
Source: American Fact Finder, 2016

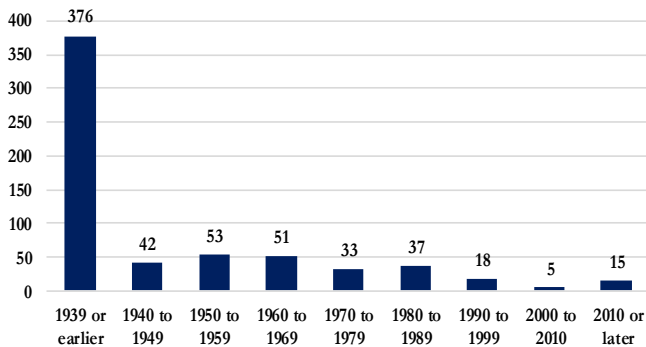


Figure 11

Historically, the development of housing stock in Red Cloud has reflected that of its population growth. The vast majority of houses in the community were built prior to 1939. As the Baby Boomers entered the workforce in the 1950's and 1960's, there was another peak in development. That development tapered off in the 1990's. There were few houses built from 2000-2010. The 2008 housing crisis did not impact Red Cloud as severely as it did other communities. From 2010 to present, Red Cloud added approximately fifteen (15) houses to its stock.

The value of the home is correlated to its age and upkeep. The largest period of construction occurred prior to 1939. This is reflected in the overall value of the housing stock within Red Cloud. The majority of the house are valued under \$100,000.

**Owner Occupied Units by Value**  
Source: American Fact Finder

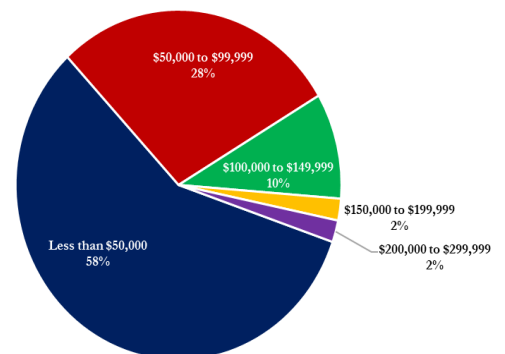


Figure 12

## Community Profile

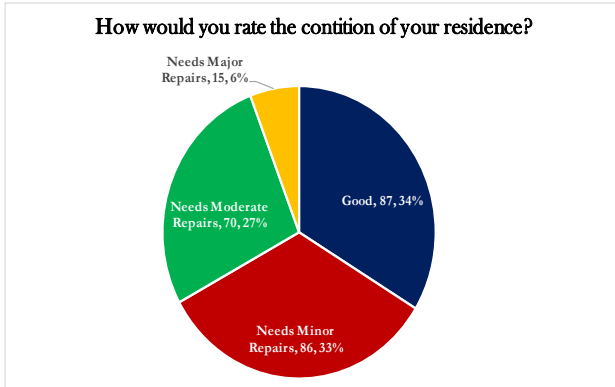


Figure 13 Source: SCEDD CNAS, 2014

Overall, the condition of the housing in Red Cloud was viewed favorably. In a self-certification conducted in the 2014 CNAS, residents considered their residence as “good” or “needs minor repairs.”

The housing stock currently available will continue to age. If the downward construction trend continues and no new stock is built to replace the aging stock, home values in the area will follow the downward trend. This will reduce taxes available to the City government. In the past seven (7) years, Red Cloud has seen an increase in new houses being built.

A majority of the occupied housing units are held by individuals above the age of forty-five (45). As these individuals age out of the market, a number of units will come available. It is vital to ensure that these houses meet the needs of the following generations. Houses that fail to meet these requirements should be remodeled or cleared to make room for new stock.

### Occupied Housing Units by Age of Householder

Source: U.S. Census 2010

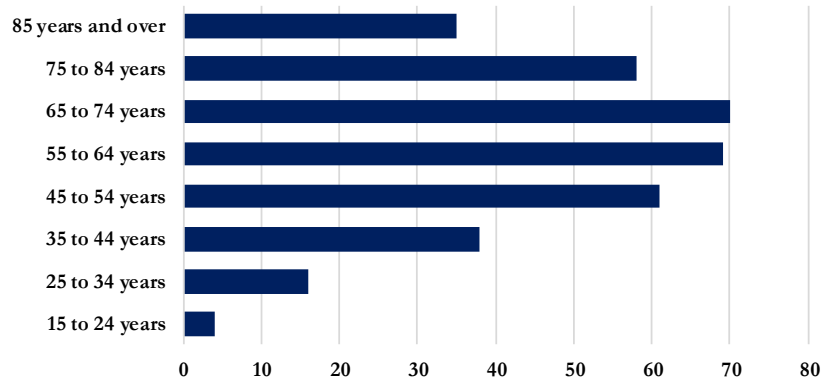


Figure 14

### Median Home Value for Red Cloud and Similar Communities

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

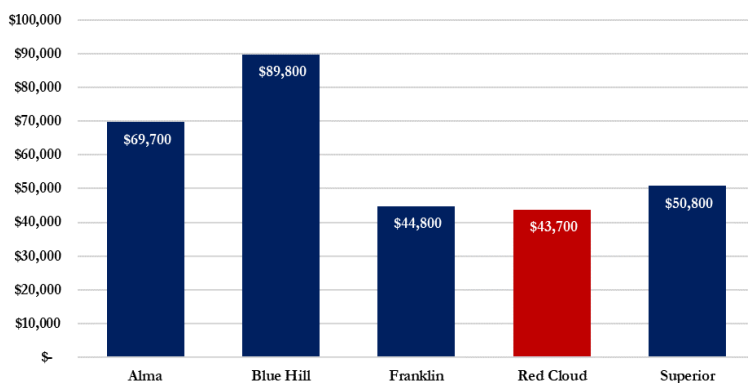


Figure 15

Red Cloud has the lowest median home value when compared to other communities in the area. Lower housing costs can be a driver for population growth as long as the housing stock is in good condition. Even with the lower value, Red Cloud is still missing middle housing, which refers to a range of smaller, multi-unit or cluster housing types necessary for robust traditional housing stock.



## Present and Projected Community Facilities

Public facilities encompasses buildings, services, and utilities that are provided and maintained by the City. These are provided to ensure residents' safety, enjoyment, and overall well being. These services and facilities are made available by the City of Red Cloud to provide citizens with the opportunity to engage in civic, social, educational, recreational, and cultural activities. These facilities also encompass fire protection, law enforcement, and utility operations. This section will review Parks and Recreational Facilities, City Buildings, Fire and Police Protection, Libraries, Educational Facilities, Public Utilities, Health Facilities, and Communication Facilities.

### Parks and Recreational Facilities

It is vital that a community provide a place for residents to exercise, connect with nature, and be with other members of their community. The City has three (3) parks: City Park, Scout Lodge (formerly known as Hardwick Park), and the Harry Obitz Park and Wildlife Habitat. The majority of residents live within one-half (1/2) mile of a park with no major barriers hindering accessibility. Parkland encompasses approximately five (5) acres of space. According to the American Planning Association, two (2) acres of parkland should be dedicated for every 100 people in the community. This means Red Cloud should have eighteen (18) acres of parkland. In order to reach the average, the City would need to add thirteen (13) acres of park space. Should the City decide to add park space, developing away from the downtown area would balance access to park space. It should be noted that Red Cloud Public Schools is located in the northeastern portion of the City and offers open space and playground equipment to the public. The Red Cloud Golf Course offers residents active green space. The Webster County Museum provides green space as well. However, these are not City owned facilities and therefore are not included in park space calculations.

Red Cloud City Park is located in the downtown district. It includes playground equipment, basketball courts, and the city pool. The large, open space is ideal for picnics and gatherings. The Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce hosts its Easter Egg Hunt here and the majority of Street Car Days' activities also take place in this space.



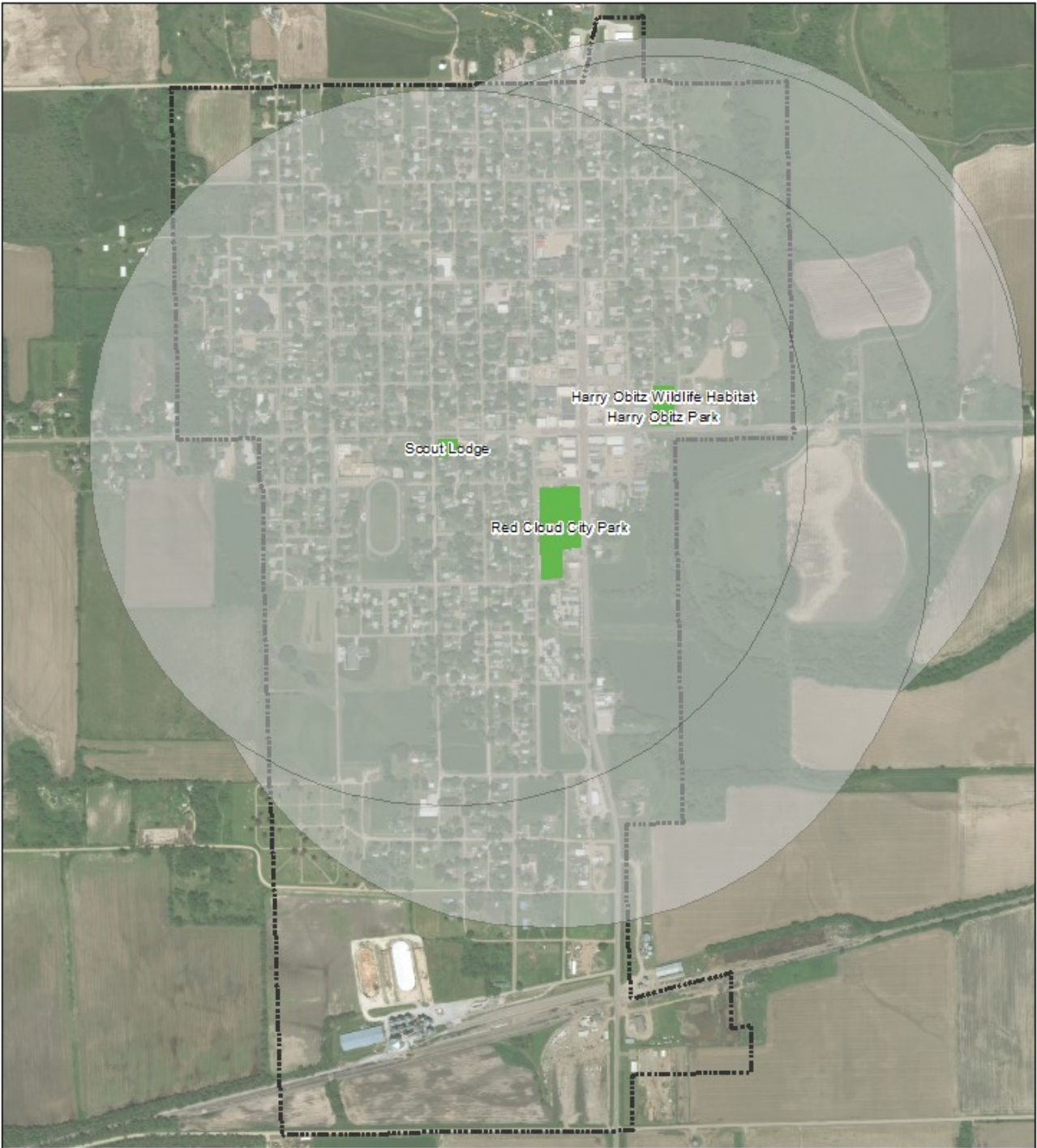
Harry Obitz Park and Wildlife Habitat is located on the eastern edge of the City. This little park is perfect for picnics, the wildlife habitat is located directly north of the park. Scout Park, formerly known as Hardwick Park, served as a memorial to those who served in World War One. In the 1950's the Scout Lodge was constructed on the site.

Red Cloud Golf Course is a nine (9) hole public golf course that has been ranked third (3rd) best in Nebraska and was designed by PGA tour pro Harry Obitz. It offers a driving range, putting green, cart rental, and a full clubhouse bar.



Webster County Museum is housed in a 1909 classic revival style brick mansion in the western part of town. It contains artifacts of the earlier settlers in the area, accounts of the "Great Storm of Red Cloud," and wondrous fossil discoveries in Webster County.





**City of Red Cloud, NE**  
**Park Walkability Map**  
1:12,500

**Legend**  
■ Parks  
■ 1/2 Mile Buffer  
⊞ City Boundary

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source Layer Credits: Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

A north arrow is located to the right of the title. Below it is the logo for SCEDD (South Central Economic Development District), which includes the text "SCEDD" in large blue letters and "SOUTH CENTRAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT" in smaller text below it.



Illian Fields consists of baseball and softball diamonds for all ages. League ball ranges from t-ball to fast pitch baseball and softball. Red Cloud has an illustrious baseball past and has hosted baseball greats such as Cy Young, Dazzy Vance, and Clarence Mitchell. The City hosted one year of professional minor league baseball.



The City Offices are located at 540 North Webster St. The offices house the Clerk/Treasurer's office and the Utilities Superintendent's office. This building consists of two adjoining structures, the old fire hall to the north and a building housing offices, shop space, and storage on the south. It was built in 1959.



The Red Cloud Volunteer Fire Department serves a total of 182 square miles. There are twenty-five (25) members who serve on the volunteer squad. Each year, members of the department attend fire school, enabling them to improve their knowledge and skills. Police protection is provided by the Webster County Sheriff's Department.



Auld Public Library is located at 537 North Webster Street. It was constructed between 1917 and 1918 and has undergone extensive remodeling in recent years. The library holds over 10,000 books, movies, audio books, and magazines. It offers wireless internet to its patrons as well.



Red Cloud Community Center is located at 142 West 3rd Street. It features a full kitchen, meeting room, exercise room, gymnasium, and multi-purpose room. This facility is a crowning project for the City. It was envisioned in their 1999 comprehensive plan and is now a shining success. Residents also have access to the Scout Lodge/Youth Center, located at 346th West 4th Avenue for meeting spaces and events.



### Public Utilities

This section focuses on the public and private utilities the residents of Red Cloud need to sustain a comfortable lifestyle. The location, quality, capacity, and improvements of these utilities will influence future development.

### Water System

The City of Red Cloud owns and operates their public water system. The system consists of two (2) wells, located four (4) miles north of town, which are both around 200 feet deep. The City also has a 250,000 gallon water tower that was built in 1987. The water is not treated. However, to ensure water safety and quality, the City conducts monthly water quality testing and meets all Federal and State standards.

Current water rates in Red Cloud are forty dollars (\$40.00) a quarter— thirteen dollars and thirty-three cents (\$13.33) per month— plus a usage rate of one dollar (\$1.00) per 1,000 gallons of water.

### Sewer Collection and Treatment

Red Cloud owns and operates a gravity flow wastewater system that runs south of town about a mile to the lift station at the sewer plant. From there, the wastewater is pumped into a three cell lagoon system.

### Solid Waste Collection

Red Cloud's solid waste collection is conducted by R&M Disposal, LLC. out of Red Cloud, Nebraska. R&M Disposal, LLC. utilizes the Hastings Solid Waste Landfill/Wood Waste Facility, located in Hastings, Nebraska. Their rate is fifteen dollars (\$15.00) a month per residential dwelling.

The City provides a Compost Site located at 763 Highway 281. Adjacent to the Compost Site is a newly constructed Construction and Demolition Landfill. The first cell of this project was completed in 2017. Once the first cell has been filled, a second cell will be constructed.

### Electric

The City of Red Cloud purchases its power from Nebraska Municipal Power Pool (NMPP). Additionally, power is sourced from Western Area Power Association (WAPA). The electricity is delivered into town on a sixty-nine (69) KV line owned by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD).

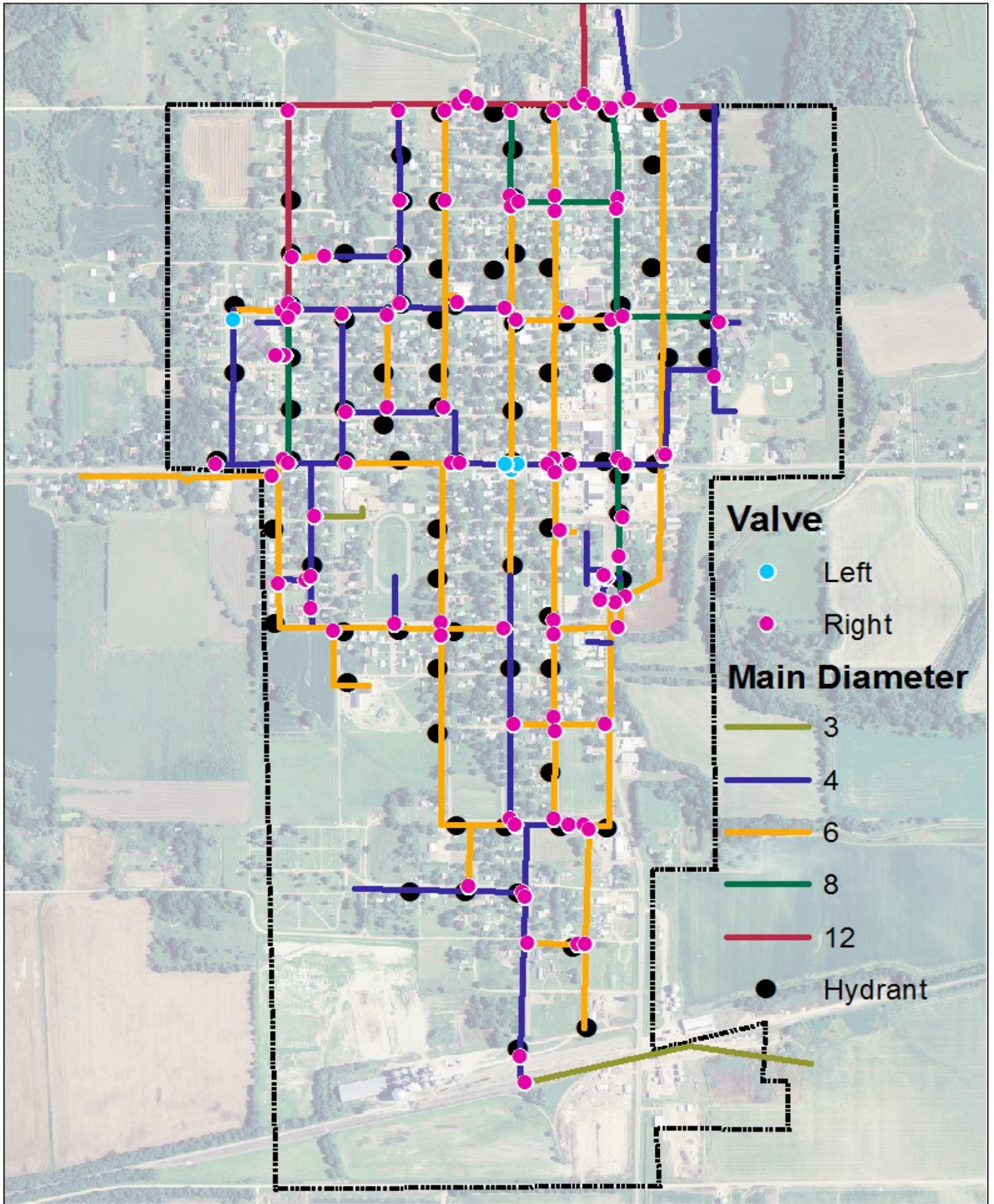
The City owns a generating facility that is capable of producing over four (4) megawatts of electricity. The power plant consists of four (4) Fairbanks-Morse opposing piston engines that run on diesel fuel or natural gas.

Currently, the base electric rate for residential dwellings is twenty-three dollars (\$23.00) per billing period. In addition to the base rate, there is a charge of \$.1283 per kilowatt-hour for the first 700 kilowatt-hours used per month. During the winter, there is an additional charge of \$.0953 per kilowatt-hour for any usage over the first 700 kilowatt-hours.

### Natural Gas

Red Cloud's natural gas provider is Black Hills Energy. The base rate customer charge for a single family home with one (1) meter is fifteen dollars and two cents (\$15.02) per month. There is a safety and integrity charge of four dollars and ninety-two cents (\$4.92) per month. Black Hills Energy also has a distribution charge calculated at \$.4675 for the first twenty (20) therms and \$.1338 per therm for any exceeding the first twenty (20) therms.

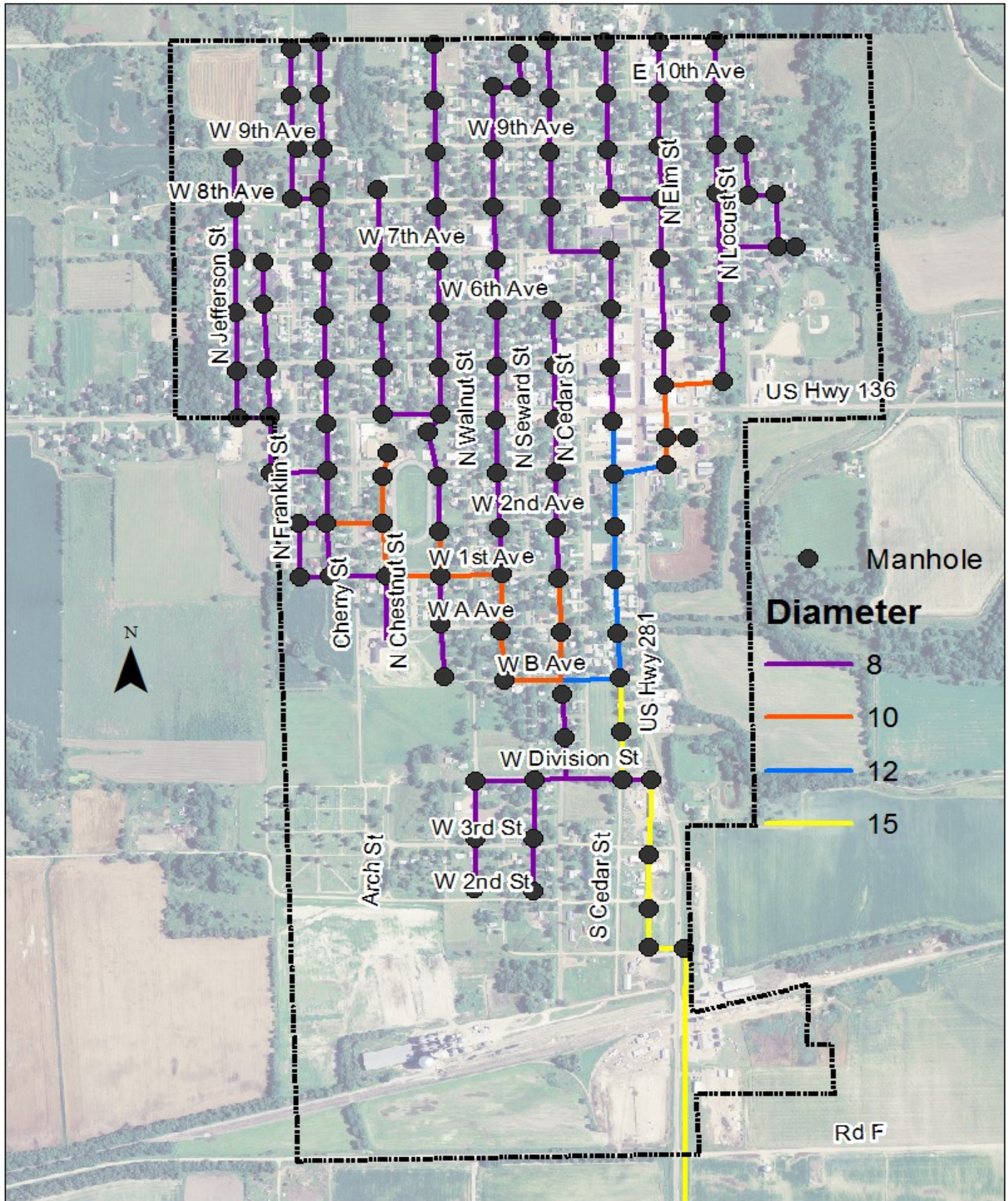
### Water Infrastructure Map



Map 3



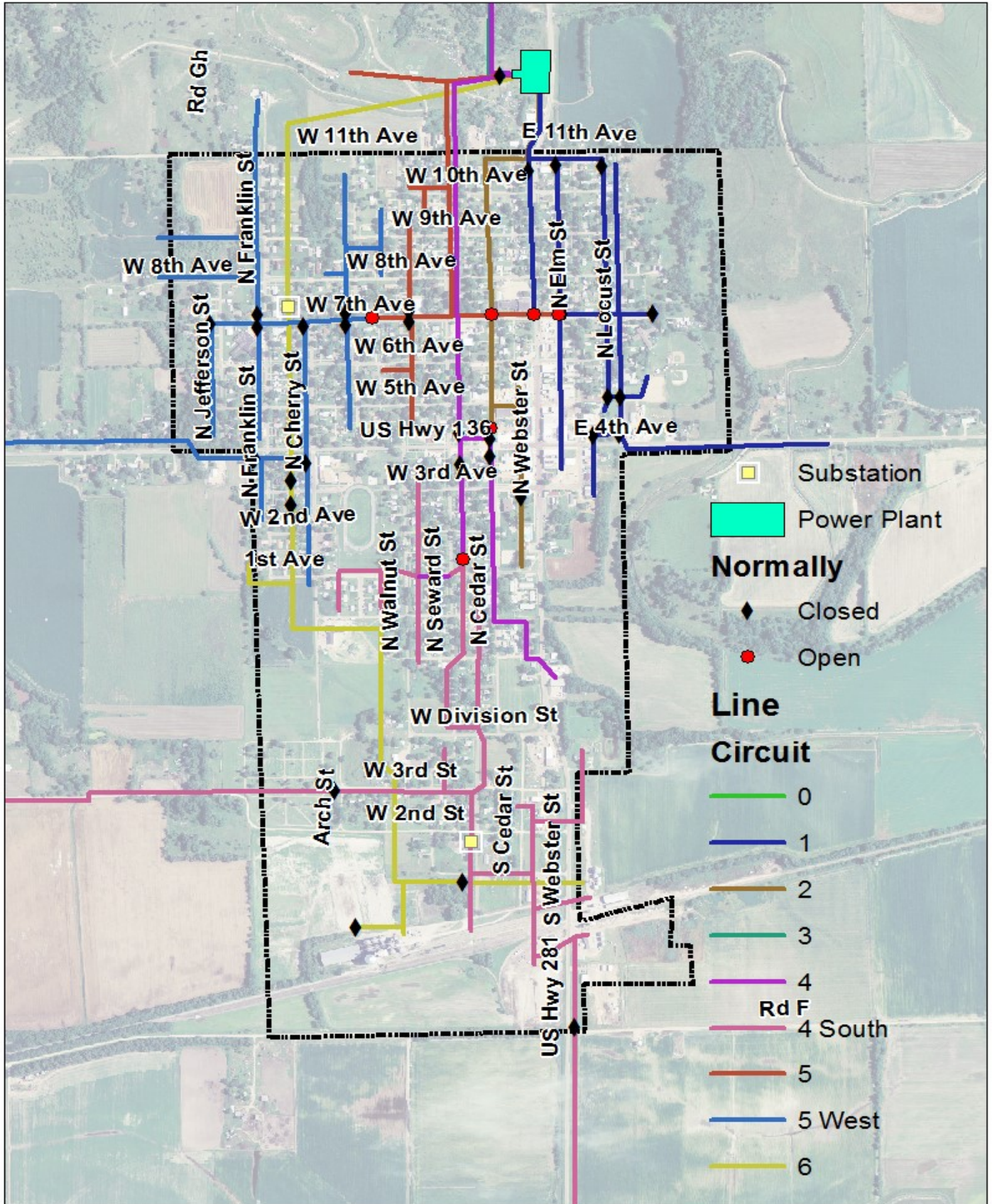
### Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Map



Map 4



### Electrical Infrastructure Map



Map 5



**Health Care**

Quality healthcare is necessary for a healthy population. Webster County Community Hospital and the Webster County Clinic are located at 621 North Franklin Street in Red Cloud. The hospital is a thirteen (13) bed critical access hospital. It provides general medical and surgical care for inpatients and outpatients. Emergency room services are available twenty-four (24) hours a day. There is one medical provider on staff for both the clinic and emergency room setting. Patients are offered a variety of outpatient services from specialty physicians across Nebraska, including orthopedics, infectious disease, and oncology.

Red Cloud residents also have access to the Main Street Clinic, managed by Franklin County Memorial Hospital. It is staffed by an APRN with a physician medical director. There are also two (2) regional hospitals in Kearney and one (1) regional hospital in Grand Island.

Landgren and Uden Family Denistry, located at 109 West 4th Avenue, provides dental procedures in Red Cloud.

**Assisted Living Centers**

Cherry Corner Estates is a retirement living residence, managed by the City, that offers service, security, and independence. Private apartments are available. Meals, laundry, housekeeping, medication administration, activities, and whirlpool bathing are provided.

**Communication**

All major cellular providers are available in Red Cloud. Home telephone service is provided by Great Plains Communication and Frontier Communications.

**Newspapers** available in Red Cloud are:

- Omaha World Herald (daily)
- Lincoln Journal Star (daily)
- Hastings Tribune (daily)
- The Red Cloud Chief (weekly)

**Internet** providers in Red Cloud are:

- Great Plains Communications
- Glenwood Communications

**Radio Stations Available in Red Cloud**

<b>Strongest AM FM Stations</b>			
88.7 KLNE– FM	97.7 KMTY– FM	550 KFRM– AM	880 KRVN– AM
89.1 KHNE– FM	98.9 KKPR– FM	580 WIBW– AM	1020 KMMQ– AM
92.5 KQMA– FM	101.5 KROR– FM	590 KXSP– AM	1110 KFAB– AM
94.5 KLIQ– FM	102.3 KRNY– FM	750 KMMJ– AM	1190 KVSU– AM
95.7 KMTY– FM	103.1 KKJK– FM	790 KXXX– AM	1230 KHAS– AM

Table 3

**Broadcast Television Stations Available in Red Cloud**

<b>Strongest Broadcast Stations</b>				
Ch. 3 KLNE (PBS)	Ch. 4 KFXL (FOX)	Ch. 5 KSNB (NBC)	Ch. 11 KGIN (CBS)	Ch. 13 KHGI (ABC)

Table 4

**Educational Facilities**

Red Cloud Public Schools is a critical community and economic development asset for the Red Cloud community. Provision of education is one of a community’s greatest expenses, but also its most precious investment. Though the school is not controlled by the City Council, decisions made by the School Board will impact land use patterns and infrastructure needs within the City of Red Cloud.

**Early Childhood Development Programs**

The Valley Child Development Center (TVCDC), newly opened in 2018, is designed to offer high-quality child care to the children of Red Cloud and surrounding communities. The TVCDC serves children ages six (6) weeks to twelve (12) years old. There is also a private day care in Red Cloud, Rachel Beitler Day Care, which focuses on preparing children to appreciate the richness of life experiences. Red Cloud Public Schools also offers an Early Learning Center housed within the Elementary School facilities.

**Public Schools**

The Red Cloud Public Schools are broken down into the Lincoln Elementary School, which houses kindergarten through sixth grade, and the Red Cloud Washington High School, which houses seventh through twelfth grade. For the 2015-2016 academic year, the school had a valuation of \$383,342,168. They received \$307,956 in state aid during that year. Their mission statement is “Believe–Achieve–Succeed.” There are were 205 students enrolled in the 2016-2017 academic year. Red Cloud Public Schools consistently has a higher graduation rate than the state average.

School	Enrollment
Lincoln Elementary (Grades K-6)	127
Washington High School (Grades 7-12)	78
Total	205

Table 5

2015-2016 NWEA Assessment Average Score	
Reading	67%
Math	66%

Table 6

**Post Secondary Education**

Nebraska offers multiple opportunities for higher education, most of which are located in the Omaha and Lincoln area. Below are some institutions with higher enrollment levels close to Red Cloud. The nearest university is the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Facility	Location	Enrollment	Miles for Red Cloud
Hastings College	Hastings, NE	1,200	48
University of Nebraska– Kearney	Kearney, NE	6,047	53
Central Community College	Grand Island, NE	4,159	56
Fort Hays State College	Hays, KS	8,728	95
University of Nebraska– Lincoln	Lincoln, NE	20,817	109

Table 7

Source: city-data.com

### Environmental Conditions

As Red Cloud begins to develop and potentially extend its boundaries, environmental and natural resource conditions must be considered. The City should understand how future development will affect these sensitive areas and strive to protect them whenever possible.

#### Agriculture

Nebraska relies heavily on the continued existence of agricultural land. Increasing population and expanding urban landscape is the biggest threat to agricultural production in the state. The lands surrounding Red Cloud have maintained a productive agricultural based economy, due in large part to the continued success of dryland farming and the rotation of crops in the area. The community should protect this resource by focusing on infill development first, leaving greenfields for agricultural purposes.

#### Floodplain

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identifies flood hazards and assesses flood risks by utilizing their Flood Hazard Mapping Program (FHMP) and Risk Mapping Assessment and Planning (MAP) programs. They work with states and communities to create mitigation plans.

A floodplain consists of three parts: the floodway, a one percent (1%) annual chance of flooding event (known as the 100-year flood plain), and a point two percent (.2%) annual chance of flooding event (known as the 500-year floodplain).

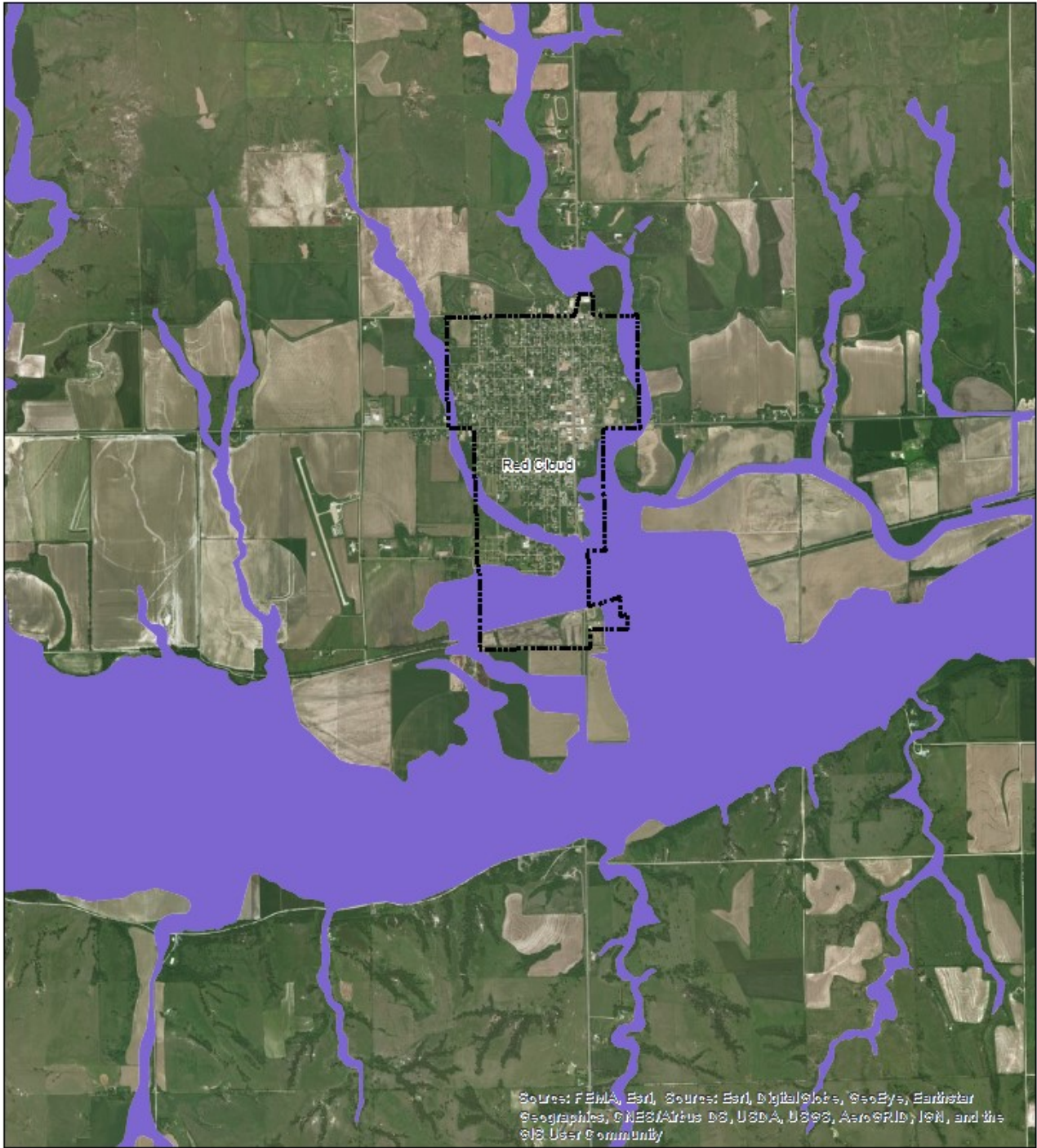
According to FEMA, the floodway is both the existing water channel and also “other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevations more than a designated height. Communities must regulate development in these floodways to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations.” The 100-year floodplain describes an area where there is a one percent (1%) chance that flooding may occur annually within the boundary. The 500-year floodplain describes an area where there is a two-tenths of one percent chance of annual flooding.

The City of Red Cloud falls under the floodplain created by the Republican River and Crooked Creek, which is a tributary of the Republican River.

#### Wellhead Protection Areas

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) uses a variety of programs to regulate groundwater quality and quantity in the state. One such program is the Nebraska Wellhead Protection (WHP) program. The Nebraska Legislature passed LB 1161 (Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-1509– 1509) in 1998, authorizing the Wellhead Protection Areas Act. This Act provides a process for communities to implement a local Wellhead Protection Area, which includes identifying the land surrounding public water wells that need protection, identifying potential sources of groundwater contamination within the area, and managing the potential contaminant sources.

Red Cloud currently does not have a Wellhead Protection Plan in place.



**City of Red Cloud, NE**  
**Floodplain Map**  
1:40,000

**Legend**

- Boundary
- 100- Year Floodplain

0 0.150.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Miles

Map 6



### Existing Land Use and Transportation

In order to grow into the future, the City of Red Cloud must first understand where it currently is. This allows for orderly growth management to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

#### Existing Land Use Inventory

The existing land use inventory identifies the current development patterns and land use types found within the City and evaluates those uses. This is an inventory of current use, and therefore does not take into account future land use or ownership. That information can be found later in this comprehensive plan. The type and quantity of land uses found within Red Cloud should fit the needs of the local residents as well as the regional economy. Red Cloud's current land use patterns reflect its origins as a rural community. Red Cloud exercises its statutory authority to enforce its planning and zoning jurisdiction within the one (1) mile radius of its corporate boundary. Currently, this land is used for agriculture and agricultural residential purposes.

#### Existing Land Use Categories

##### AGRICULTURAL

A parcel of land that is currently used as for either high or low density agricultural uses, such as crop productions, pasturing, or animal production. This designation also pertains to open, undeveloped land that is not prime for development, such as woodlands or floodplain. Red Cloud is bounded on all sides by agricultural designation.

##### RESIDENTIAL

A parcel of land that contains a residential dwelling and accessory uses. It is the primary use in Red Cloud.

##### COMMERCIAL

A parcel of land that has a commercial use, generally a mix of goods and services, such as retail or banking. This use is primarily located in the downtown area and along the downtown corridors in Red Cloud.

##### INDUSTRIAL

A parcel of land which contains a commercial use that is geared toward manufacturing, packing, storage, or an assembly of goods, which does not create significant externalities on the surrounding properties or uses. Red Cloud's industrial land primarily runs along the railroad corridor, with pockets of it also along U.S. Highway 136.

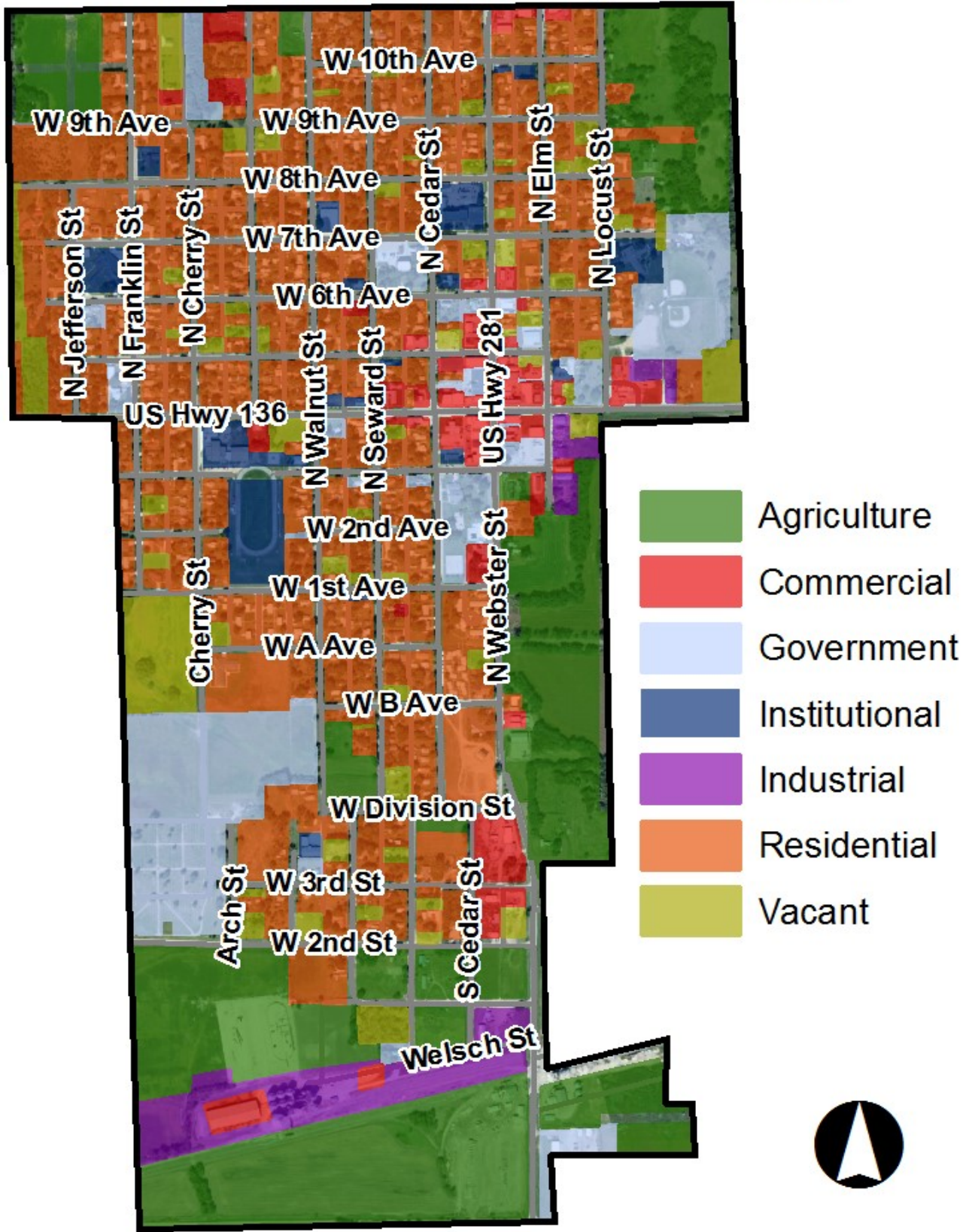
##### GOVERNMENT

A parcel of land that is owned by a federal, state, or local governmental entity that is open for public use and enjoyment or a parcel of land that is controlled by a private, religious, or nonprofit entity that opens the property to the public. This includes park and recreational property. This use is represented throughout Red Cloud.

##### VACANT

A parcel of land that is undeveloped within the corporate boundaries of the community. This designation is provided on the Existing Land Use Map to indicate potential development opportunities within Red Cloud.

# Red Cloud Existing Land Use



Map 7



## Community Profile

Parcels represent ownership of land and the manner in which property tax burdens are distributed. Acres of land represent the amount that is classified as a particular use. Red Cloud encompasses 491.91 total acres. Residential use accounts for approximately thirty-seven percent (37%) of the acres and is the primary use in Red Cloud. The second largest classification is agriculture at approximately twenty-nine percent (29%) of all acres. The next largest use is government at approximately thirteen percent (13%), which is 7.86 acres. Vacant lots cover approximately eight percent (8%) of the land in Red Cloud. Assuming all of the land is developable, these vacant lots could be transformed into approximately thirty-one (31) single-family homes. This assumption is based on the planning standard estimation that one quarter (1/4) acre is enough land for a single-family residential lot. Engaging in infill development will help boost the housing stock and the tax base of the community.

City of Red Cloud, 2016 Land Use				
Land Use	Parcels	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Agriculture	51	6.62	144.19	29.31
Commercial	72	9.35	21.22	4.31
Government	30	3.90	64.86	13.19
Institutional	17	2.21	19.44	3.95
Industrial	8	1.04	22.69	4.61
Residential	513	66.62	180.84	36.76
Vacant Lots	79	10.26	38.67	7.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>770.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>491.91</b>	<b>100.00</b>

CP Table 8

### Red Cloud, 2016 Existing Land Use: Acres

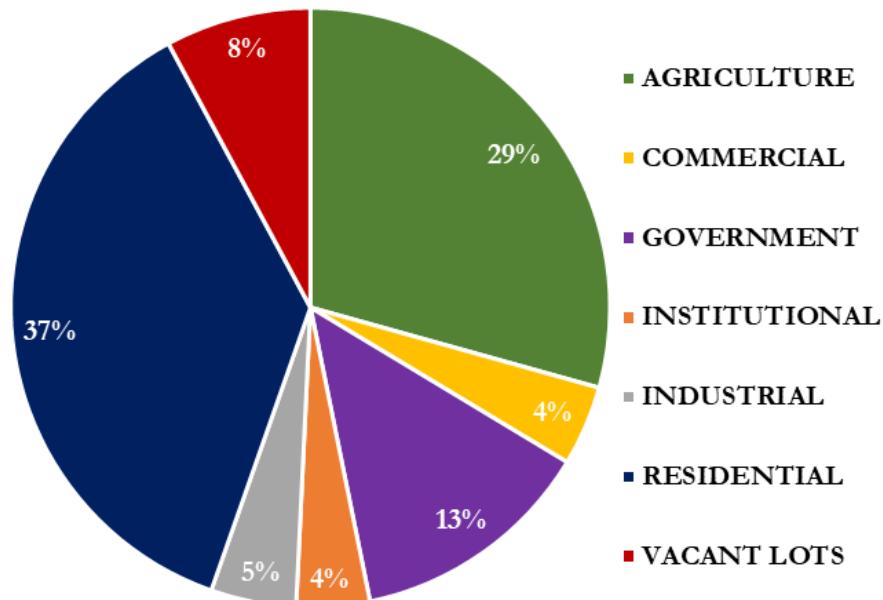
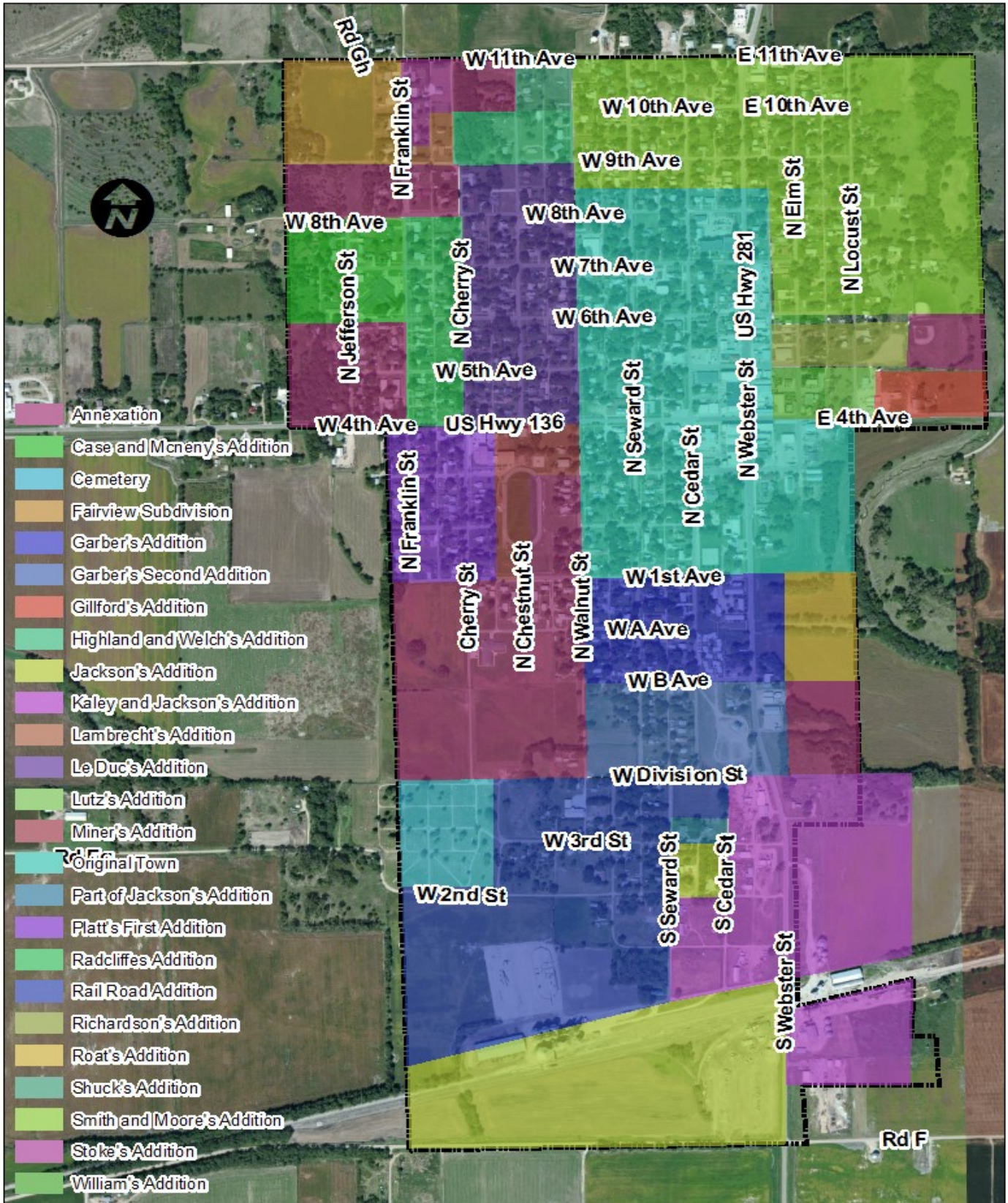


Figure 9

### Red Cloud Subdivisions Map





## Community Profile

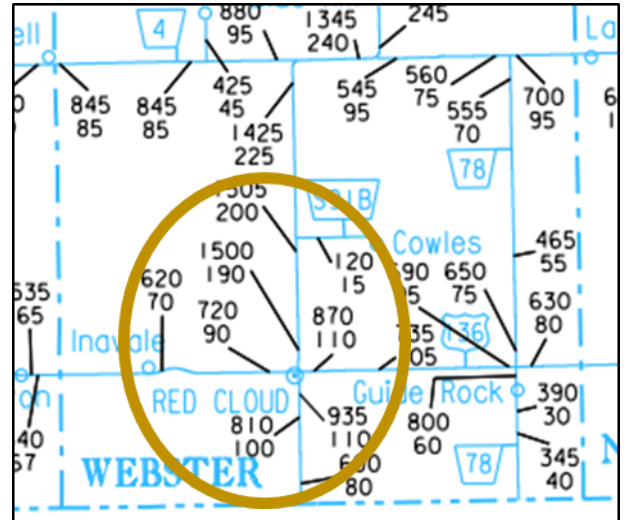
### Transportation

#### Character of the Roads

The City of Red Cloud is intersected by U.S. Highway 136 running east-west and U.S. Highway 281 running north-south. These are the two arterial streets in town, linking Red Cloud to regional centers. According to the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), between 900 and 1,500 vehicles pass through Red Cloud on U.S. Highway 281 and approximately 700 vehicles pass through on U.S. Highway 136 per day.

In addition, Red Cloud has approximately 12,000 feet of local and collector streets. Local streets provide access to private property while collector streets move traffic from local streets to arterials. Delivering people to private residences is a secondary function of collector streets. Besides the major arterial streets, Red Cloud has one (1) north-south collector street and one (1) east-west collector. The remaining streets are local streets.

Red Cloud has three (3) main types of streets— paved, brick, and gravel. Gravel streets are limited to the least densely populated, southern portion of town. The brick streets are found at the intersection of U.S. Highways 281 and 136. These bricks were constructed in 1917. One hundred (100) years of weather and traffic have compromised the structural integrity of the bricks. Alternative options must be considered to preserve the historic value of the downtown area while still providing safe transportation through the City. Such alternatives include replacing the old brick with new brick, using a brick stamp on concrete to create a brick look, and using traditional materials. Any viable original brick should be incorporated into cityscapes in other ways to preserve their historic value.



#### Regarding the highways through the downtown, should Red Cloud:

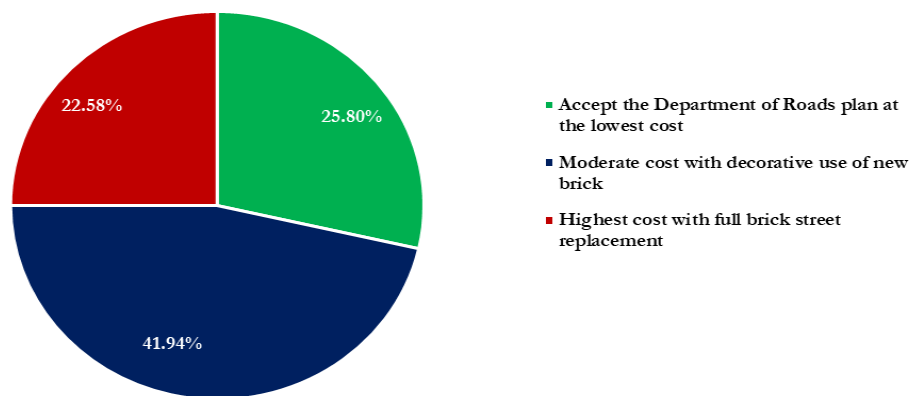


Figure 16

The City of Red Cloud is responsible for maintaining all streets within their corporate limits. The arterial streets within the City's corporate limits are maintained by NDOT and the City pays NDOT for their services. The City works with JEO Consulting, Inc. to annually update and maintain their "One and Six Year Program for Street Improvement," which enables the City to plan and budget for street maintenance and repair projects.

**Character of the Sidewalks**

Sidewalks provide pedestrians with a safe route to schools, shopping, parks, and other areas of town. To encourage active lifestyles, Red Cloud must provide accessible sidewalks to its residents. Sidewalks are most notably missing from the southern end of town, around the cemetery, and near the ballfields. When sidewalks are built or reconstructed, they should be built with durable materials, meet current design standards, and be American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.

**Public Transportation**

Webster County Transportation is available for residents in Webster County. Rates vary depending on destination.

**Railroads**

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad has a rail line that runs through Red Cloud. There is no passenger access within Red Cloud. The nearest Amtrak station is in Hastings.

**Airports**

There is one (1) airport that services Red Cloud, the Red Cloud Municipal Airport. This airport can accommodate small private planes. It has a 3,700 foot paved, lighted runway with three (3) hangers, one (1) storage building, and one (1) terminal building. Private aircraft storage and a car service are available. It is located one (1) mile west of Red Cloud.

The Central Nebraska Regional Airport is located in Grand Island, seventy (70) miles north of Red Cloud. This airport contracts with Allegiant, American Eagle, and Charter Flights airlines.

The Kearney Regional Airport is located in Kearney, seventy-two (72) miles north of Red Cloud. This airport contracts with Skywest Airlines to provide flights to Denver International Airport twelve (12) times a week.

**Trails**

The Walk Red Cloud Historical Walking Tour provides participants with a glimpse back into Red Cloud's past. The path is marked with identification signs equipped with QR codes that can be scanned with a smart device.

The 1999 Red Cloud Town Plan, created by RDG Crose Gardner Shukert proposed The Willa Cather Walk, which would begin at the Willa Cather Museum and would link together the four main historic districts with Cather sites, Cather era sites, sites compatible with the Cather era, and modern or substantially altered sites. The City of Red Cloud should work with the Willa Cather Foundation to create this walking route.

Given Red Cloud's proximity to the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area, and the Republican River, the City should consider developing a trail that connects residents with these three natural recreational sites.

## Energy

Energy use is vital in modern society. We use energy in almost every part of our life. Currently, the primary source of energy comes from nonrenewable fossil fuels. This is ultimately unsustainable but by planning for future energy use Red Cloud can protect the environment, promote a flexible economy, and be better prepared for changing energy markets. In 2010, Nebraska Legislators passed LB 997, requiring comprehensive plans for all communities except villages to include an energy element. Energy elements are required to have three components: energy infrastructure and energy use by sector, utilization of renewable energy sources, and energy conservation measures that benefit the community. The following is included to fulfil this energy requirement.

**Energy Infrastructure and Use by Sector**  
According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), the largest consumer of energy is the industrial sector. The EIA attributes this use to the large agricultural and food production portions of the industry sector.

Net energy consumption is defined by the Nebraska Department of Energy (NEDOE) as the amount of energy used minus electrical systems losses. Electrical system losses are defined as the amount of energy needed to generate, transmit, and distribute electricity. Electrical system losses are subtracted out in order to indicate the amount of energy actually consumed by sector.

### Nebraska Energy Consumption by End-Use Sector, 2014

Source: Energy Information Administration

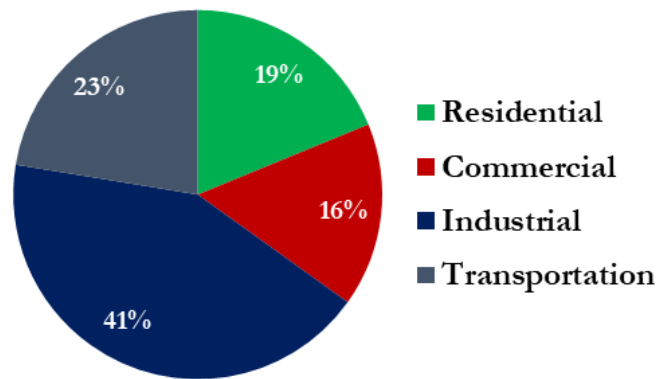


Figure 17

### Net Energy Consumption by Fuel Type, Nebraska Households, 2012

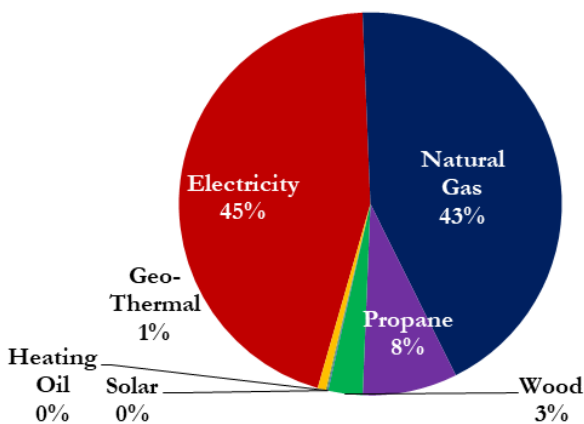


Figure 18

In Nebraska, most households are primarily powered by natural gas or electricity. Due to the availability of data, energy consumption in Red Cloud will be based upon electricity.

The City of Red Cloud has approximately 380 accounts that purchase power from the public utility.

According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), the average electric bill for all sectors (residential, industrial, and commercial) in 2015, was **\$106.65**; therefore, the majority of customers in Red Cloud are paying around or above the state average for electricity.

Regionally, the cost of electricity is lower for the City of Red Cloud as the City had the 114<sup>th</sup> highest cost of public power out of 158 public power providers in Nebraska. The City of Nelson ranked 65<sup>th</sup> while Blue Hill ranked 147 out of 158. The EIA lists the average price of electricity for the residential sector as 9.14 cents per kWh. Therefore, the residents of the City of Red Cloud are paying below the average price per kWh for electricity.

### Monthly Average Electric Costs

*Community Needs Assessment Survey, 2015*

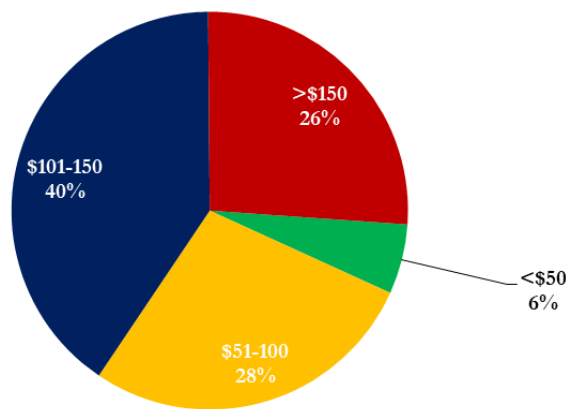


Figure 19

#### Renewable Energy

While renewable sources of energy in Nebraska are increasing, coal remains the main source of energy in Nebraska, per the Energy Information Administration. Coal is a fossil fuel that is considered to be non-renewable due to the fact that it cannot re-generate itself within a human timeframe. Coal remains the most efficient form of power; however, factors such as supply and demand and regulations will continue to put pressure on the price of coal. The City of Red Cloud will need to look for renewable sources of energy to supplement the electricity that is currently purchased and sold to residents. Webster County has already begun this process by approving a wind farm near Red Cloud.

#### Energy Conservation

In order to emphasize the importance of energy conservation, The Nebraska State Legislature adopted the Nebraska Energy Code, which is based upon the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code. The Code requires new construction, additions, and renovations to be completed in a manner that ensures energy conservation.

Private contractors are expected to complete projects in conformance with the Nebraska Energy Code. The City of Red Cloud does not have a local code authority; however, work completed by contractors working within the City of Red Cloud is expected to conform to the code. The City of Red Cloud may utilize the Nebraska Energy Office to inspect work when necessary.



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# Community Participation

Moving a community forward requires input from all of its residents.

## Public Input

The creation of a comprehensive plan is an ongoing process of setting goals and solving problems. To be successful in this, a comprehensive plan must involve community participation. This allows the plan to represent the actual needs and vision of the community. A well crafted community participation plan utilizes multiple dates and methods, allowing a full range of participation options for those who wish to take part. Key components of the public participation for Crafting Red Cloud's Story included a Community Needs Assessment (CNAS) conducted in 2014, Red Cloud Comprehensive Plan Public Input Survey Conducted in 2017, and a Community Engagement Institute and Community Conversations/Deliberative Dialogue conducted by Global Horizons, LLC in 2017.

## Community Needs Assessment

The City of Red Cloud worked with South Central Economic Development District, Inc. (SCEDD) to conduct the CNAS in March of 2014. The questionnaire was divided into seven areas of interest: demographics, city services/projects, community/lifestyle, business and economic development, education, child care, and housing. Volunteers, who were trained by SCEDD staff, hand delivered and picked up the surveys during the week of November 13 through 20, 2013. An envelope was provided for each household to seal their survey to ensure confidentiality. For rural households, SCEDD mailed the surveys to each household with a return envelope addressed to SCEDD. The community displayed a strong turnout— 369 households returned surveys. The response rate was seventy five percent (75%) for the City of Red Cloud.

## Red Cloud Comprehensive Plan Public Input

As part of the planning process, SCEDD created a survey geared entirely toward the planning process. These questions focused on community and infrastructure needs, housing and neighborhoods, child care, and demographics. There were thirty-one (31) responses to this survey. The response rate was .03% of the Red Cloud population.

## Community Engagement Institute and Community Conversations/Deliberative Dialogue

The City of Red Cloud worked with Global Horizons, LLC and SCEDD to conduct a deliberative dialogue focusing on the participants' current feelings of Red Cloud and their hopes for its future. The focus was on community culture, welcome to newcomers, and how decisions are made. There were four (4) sessions held at different times:

Friday, March 31, 2015, 5:30 to 8:30pm— no one attended

Saturday, April 1, 8:30 to 11:30am— no one attended

Thursday, April 6, 1:30 to 4:30pm— twenty (20) people attended

Friday, April 7, 5:30 to 8:30pm— eight (8) people attended

A total of twenty-eight (28) adults who participated in these dialogs, a response rate of .03%. There were three bonus sessions held with the Washington High School students— 7th and 8th graders, 9th and 10th graders, and 11th and 12th graders. A total of fifty-eight (58) middle and high school students attended these meetings.

It should be noted that immediately before this planning period, residents had a strong attendance rate at Marketing Hometown America and Community Action Planning/Hometown Competitiveness civic engagement meetings. This could indicate a public involvement "burnout" by the time the planning process began.

### **Future Land Use and Annexation**

The Future Land Use component focuses on the development of Red Cloud as the community grows and expands beyond its corporate limits. The Future Land Use Map (Map 9) is meant to be the foundation upon which this growth should occur. Movement toward the City's development goals will create movement from the Existing Land Use Map (Map 7) to the Future Land Use Map. The future land use component of the comprehensive plan is often considered the central element because it forms the basis for the community's zoning ordinance.

There are five (5) land use categories used within the Future Land Use Map to define different use types and characteristics. These categories are intended to be general descriptions. They form the basis for zoning districts but they are not the same as zoning districts. Multiple zoning districts may fall within a single land use category.

### **Future Land Use Categories**

#### **AGRICULTURE**

This designation is intended to include agriculturally based uses while still allowing for low density residential acreages.

#### **RESIDENTIAL**

This designation is intended to include low to medium density residential dwellings and included accessory uses that are compatible with neighborhood development.

#### **COMMERCIAL**

Commercial uses may vary widely in their uses, from low intensity such as offices or specialty shops to high intensity such as a gas station or automobile shop.

#### **GOVERNMENT/INSTITUTIONAL**

This designation is intended to provide easy, convenient access to the common activities exhibited in daily life.

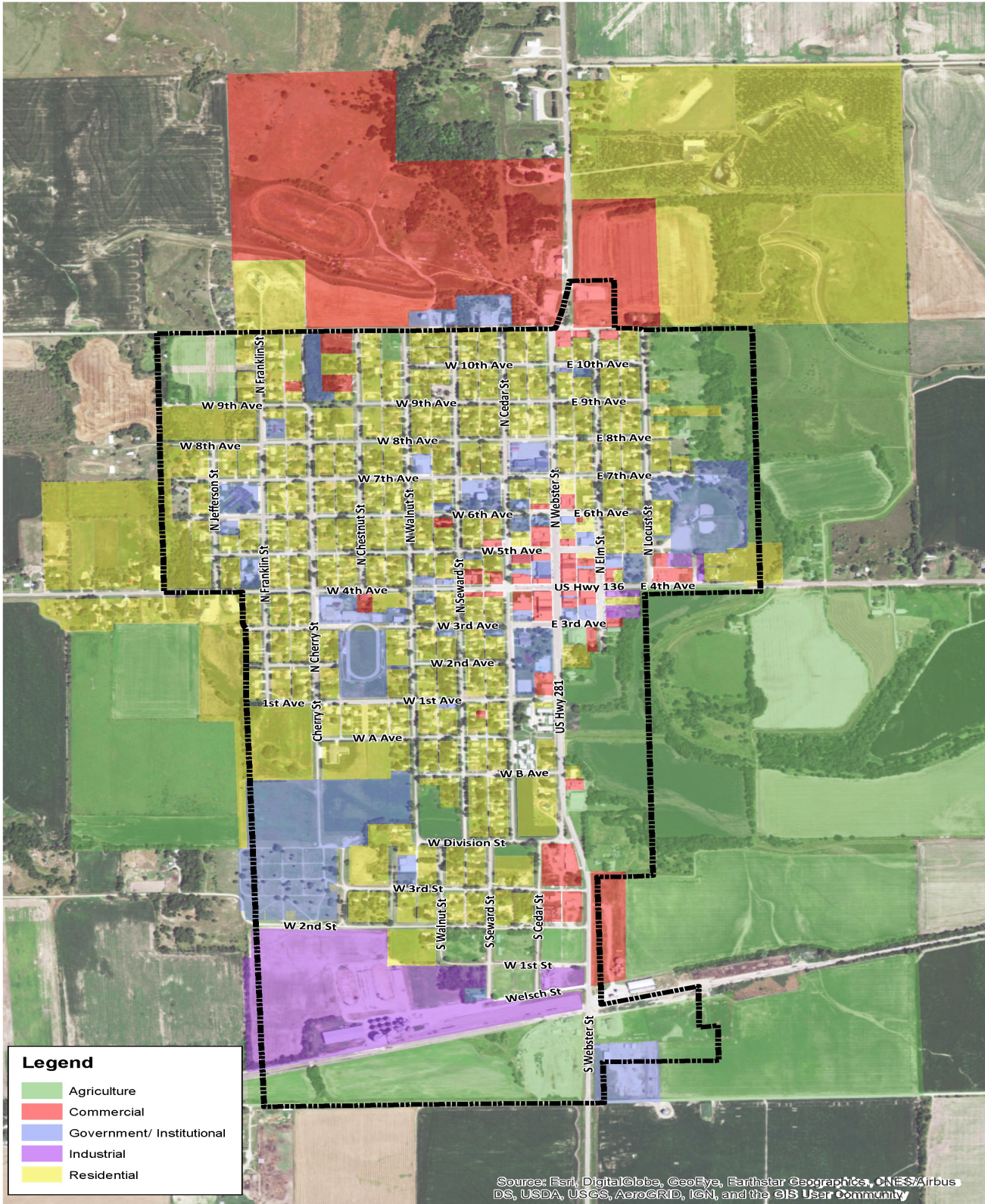
#### **INDUSTRIAL**

This designation focuses on the light to heavy industrial uses within the City.

### **Annexation**

Red Cloud should focus on infill before it considers annexation of land. However, eventually Red Cloud will need to expand its boundary. The City should concentrate on the adjacent areas southeast and southwest of the corporate limits. Future annexation policy should focus on all urban development as it becomes adjacent and contiguous to the corporate limits.



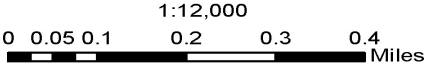


Red Cloud Future Land Use

**Legend**

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Government/ Institutional
- Industrial
- Residential

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



## Community Participation

### Goals

This section takes the public response and turns it into actionable steps over the next twenty (20) years. Given the responses to the public participation sessions, some of Red Cloud's significant strengths include:

- ◆ The heritage and tourism potential created by Red Cloud's association with Willa Cather
- ◆ Recreational opportunities within Red Cloud and within easy access in the surrounding area
- ◆ Its position as the county seat and governmental hub
- ◆ Healthy and historic downtown district

Significant weaknesses include:

- ◆ Limited current economic opportunities
- ◆ The future of the school system
- ◆ Lack of affordable housing for residents

### Community Facilities Goals for Growth and Preservation

Community facilities are necessary for a vibrant community. The following goals should be considered:

1. Create or update a capital improvement plan, which would allow the City to systematically invest in and maintain its public facilities.
2. Establish a utility improvement program that updates old utility lines as each substandard street is rebuilt.
3. Consider developing green spaces along drainage areas, Crooked Creek, and underutilized lots. These will contribute to the City's park land.

### Transportation Goals for Growth and Preservation

Transportation is a basic asset that must be strong in order to grow and preserve a community. The street system should be constantly improved with special attention paid to the following areas:

1. Maintenance
  - ◆ The maintenance of the street system is now and always will be a major expenditure for the City. The City's 1 & 6 Year Street Plan is already required by state law and serves as a planning/budgeting tool that will assist the City in the efficient and effective maintenance of its street system.
  - ◆ Outside sources of funding, such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Works and maintenance funds from the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), will be an important contributor to the City's street budget.
2. Safety
  - ◆ In areas where sidewalks are not present, the local street is also the local sidewalk system. The width of streets and low level of traffic activity makes "sharing the road" feasible.
  - ◆ Instead of installing sidewalks within an established neighborhood, the City could stripe the pavement to create a lane and raise motorist awareness of bicyclists and pedestrians.
3. New Development
  - ◆ As streets and sidewalks are installed and upgraded, the City should require high quality development, which will be more costly upfront, but will ultimately save valuable maintenance dollars.
  - ◆ Going forward, the City subdivision regulations should ensure that new developments meet the following basic requirements:
    - a. Streets should be installed with concrete
    - b. New streets must have curbs and gutters, or some basic storm water disposal system
    - c. All new developments must have (minimum) five foot (5') wide sidewalks.



### Energy Goals for Growth and Preservation

The ability of the City of Red Cloud to maintain its community will depend on its ability to address energy issues. The City should start with the following goals:

1. Diversify sources of energy by exploring and accommodating sources of renewable energy to power City facilities as well as serve residential, commercial, and industrial customers.
2. Promote energy conservation by providing financial incentives and programs to residential and commercial customers. Programs could include the re-introduction of Owner-Occupied-Rehabilitation for income qualified households and/or the use of LB 840 funds to assist businesses with making energy saving improvements.
  - ◆ Increase energy efficiency of buildings
  - ◆ Increase citizen education and continue to study the use of energy
  - ◆ Encourage recycling
  - ◆ Increase local jobs to decrease commuter energy consumption and promote alternative modes of transportation for commuters

### Future Land Use Goals for Preservation and Growth

The Future Land Use Map provides a representation of the City's goals as well as information that should be consulted when making local land use decisions. Those goals are summarized below:

1. Housing
  - ◆ Vacant lots and houses throughout the City present the best potential for affordable housing, empty houses should be redeveloped into habitable homes.
  - ◆ The most seriously deteriorated should be rehabilitated or demolished to make room for new affordable housing.
  - ◆ New housing should be a mixture of different styles and homes.
  - ◆ Attention should be paid to creating workforce housing within the City.
2. Downtown Development
  - ◆ The downtown should continue to serve as the main district and expand to increase retail space for potential business owners.
3. Annexation
  - ◆ The City has abundant undeveloped or vacant land within the city limits. These areas should be redeveloped first. These lots already have infrastructure and will provide infill housing in already established neighborhoods.
  - ◆ Areas with existing commercial, industrial, and residential uses should be considered for annexation. Annexing these will extend the City's zoning jurisdiction, which will promote safe and healthy growth.

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# Plan Maintenance

This is a living document that must be updated as the community evolves.

Change is inevitable. This comprehensive plan is meant to be a living, breathing document that reflects the goals and desires for the City of Red Cloud and must be monitored for relevancy. By doing this, the timeline for the planning will extend as well, continually advancing into the future as the currency and relevancy of the plan is maintained by the cycle of updates and amendments.

## **Annual Review of the Plan**

The process of maintaining this plan and keeping it up to date is critical to the planning process. To maintain confidence in the accuracy of the information, evaluate the effectiveness of the planning activities, and, most importantly, to make mid-plan corrections when necessary, the plan must reflect current standards. An annual review should include members of the Planning Commission, City Council, residents, and staff.

## **Five Year Update**

Every five (5) years, the Comprehensive Plan should undergo a major update. Five (5) years is the recommended timeframe for several reasons. Any more frequent updates create a burden on residents and staff members. Federal census data is updated every decade— the five (5) year timeline provides a logical mid-point update. Finally, any longer and the plan can become out-of-date. The common elements of a five (5) year update include reviewing growth projections and community goals and analyzing amendments.

## **Public Education**

Broad Public support and involvement is vital to the development and implementation of any policy or program. To develop this support, it is necessary for the Village to create a permanent public education program. This program should help people understand the need of the community to have the ambition to stimulate interest and understanding required to assure action is taken.