2 The Community

This chapter introduces the reader to the community of Lincoln and Lancaster County: their history, place in the larger region, people, employment and general urban and rural form.

History

The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County lie within the Platte River Valley in southeastern Nebraska. A little more than 50 miles west of the Missouri River, the county's natural features are characterized by uplands, stream terraces, and bottom lands. The region was historically covered by native tallgrass prairie that served as home to buffalo, antelope, grassland birds, and many other smaller species of plants and animals.

The county's 846 square miles are situated mostly within the Salt Valley Basin. Native Americans and early settlers were attracted to the area by the natural forming salt flats. One of the region's earliest European settlers was Captain W.T. Donovan of the Crescent Salt Company. He named the settlement Lancaster after his home in Pennsylvania. "Lancaster" was later used to name both the county and the county seat in 1859.

When Nebraska became a State in 1867, one of the first tasks for the new government was to establish a capital city. A three member Capital Commission selected the hamlet of Lancaster as the new Nebraska capital on August 14, 1867. In a last minute effort to move the capital to

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a location north of the Platte River, a State Senator from Omaha substituted the name "Lincoln" for "Capital City" in the final legislation. His hope was that by naming the new city after President Abraham Lincoln, post-Civil War bitterness might dissuade some Senators from voting for the site. The gambit failed and the name stuck.

Native Americans and early settlers were attracted to the area by the natural forming salt flats.

The Region

The City of Lincoln today serves as both the capital for the State of Nebraska and the seat of government for Lancaster County. The County's 285,407 residents comprise the second largest metropolitan area in the State. The Lincoln Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Lancaster and Seward counties and 302,157 people. The broad southeastern Nebraska region is home to over one million people, including the greater Omaha urban area to the east.

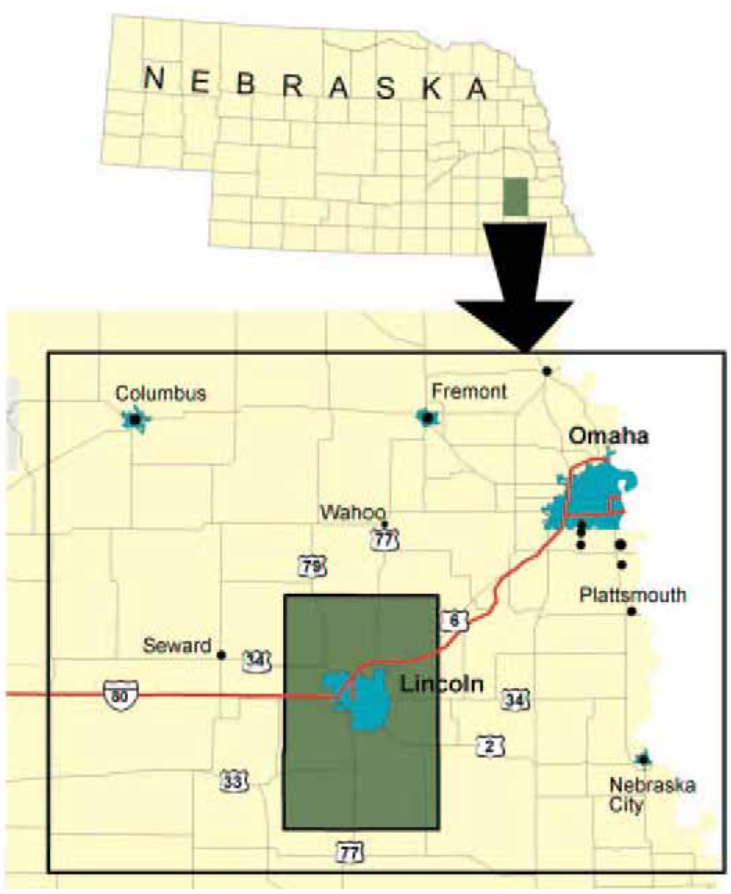

Figure 2.1: Lancaster County's Location in Nebraska

Southeastern Nebraska is experiencing a growing sense of social, cultural, and economic interdependence. The Interstate 80 corridor in particular offers a major link between the State's two largest urban areas and the region as a whole. Strengthening ties between the two cities and the surrounding rural communities is integral to the region's future success in providing employment, recreational, and other opportunities. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development established the Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission (NIZC), to advocate and recommend programs that encourage regional cooperation and foster community sustainability and economic development initiatives along the I-80 Corridor. The commission included 19 representatives from cities and counties, Natural Resource Districts (including Lincoln and Lancaster County) and educational institutions in the region. The commission began meeting in 2005 and finalized the *Phase I Study NIZC Regional Comprehensive Plan* in 2008 and the *NIZC Model Design Standards* in 2009. The NIZC plan does not envision wall-to-wall urbanization of the I-80 corridor between Lincoln and Omaha; instead it emphasizes the reinforcement of existing urban areas and preservation of the rural landscape character. The Phase I Study included a regional inventory, the identification of opportunities, principles to guide the region, and recommended development patterns. The Model Design Standards were developed based upon the principles identified in Phase I. They were intended as best management practices in the form of model standards that local governments could use to promote quality design, preserve natural features, and promote economic development along the I-80 corridor.

The Model Design Standards represented just one of a series of "next steps" envisioned by the Phase I study. As recognized by the NIZC, the achievement of the goals of the NIZC plan will require thoughtful

coordination. The NIZC plan is a good first step in this process. Planning and growth issues will need to be approached with care and respect individual jurisdictions. The communities involved need to reach a common understanding of the value to be placed on the region's natural, cultural, economic, and historic resources. Time will be needed to faithfully craft a long-term vision for regional planning and development along this corridor.

The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County are committed to further examining regional planning issues for southeastern Nebraska. Much public dialogue about the future of the region is needed if core planning issues and potential solutions are to be fully explored.

The People

LPlan 2040 embraces a growing, changing community. The Plan energetically recognizes the long term growth potential of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County, and opportunities presented by the fundamental demographic changes in the community.

From a humble settlement with little more than 150 people in 1860, the County's population has prospered through good times and bad. The most recent decade witnessed a continuation of this pattern as the County gained over 35,000 new residents — from 250,291 in 2000 to 285,407 in 2010. This annualized growth rate of 1.3 percent during the 2000's was a slower pace than the 1990s, but still faster than the average decade of the past 100 years.

Lancaster County's population is assumed to reach over 412,000 persons by the year 2040 — that's almost 126,000 more people than the County's year 2010 population base of 285,407 persons. By the year 2060, the County's population is projected to reach 512,000 people, or almost 226,000 more people than reside in the county today. This growth is based on an assumed rate of 1.2 percent per year over the fifty year period, an assumption which is supported by three independent researchers.

Within this expanding population base, changes are also envisioned to occur in the community's demographic mix. Although no specific projections have been made, it is assumed that the city and county's future population will mirror several recent local and national trends.

The Krull house was built in the 1860s in Lancaster County between Roca and Sprague.

For example, within the planning period the community will witness further growth among existing racial and ethnic minority groups. Lincoln and Lancaster County have historically been home to a relatively small minority population. From less than 25,000 people in 2000, the number of minority residents in the County surged to almost 45,000 persons in the year 2010 Census. This increase was witnessed across all segments of the minority community – with notable growth occurring among Black/African Americans, Asians, "Other" racial groups, and persons of Hispanic origin. Immigration over the past two decades has also increased the number of eastern European and middle-eastern persons, groups that are more difficult to track because they are classified by the Census Bureau as white, non-Hispanic. Increases within the minority community — both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the area's overall population – are anticipated to continue into the future. This trend is embraced by the LPlan 2040 Vision and is to be considered as the Plan's policies and programs are implemented.

From less than 25,000 people in 2000, the number of minority residents in the County surged to almost 45,000 persons in the year 2010 Census.

Lincoln's ethnic diversity is evident in several commercial districts in Lincoln. Most of these

commercial areas are small and serve the immediate neighborhood, providing a comfortable, familiar setting for new residents. North 27th Street is an example of a larger commercial district with many North African, Asian, Arabic and Hispanic businesses such as restaurants, clothing stores, groceries, auto sales and repair, and many other goods and services. The entire community benefits from the wide variety of cultural experiences provided by these centers.

A second demographic trend of significance is the continuing growth in the area's senior population. The number of people in Lancaster County aged 65 and older is projected to increase by about 44,000 to reach about 75,000 in 2040. This represents a projected annual growth rate of 2.96 percent, the highest among all age sectors. Issues relating to an aging population will increase in importance as more and more individuals reach the age of 65 and above. Housing preferences, discussed later in this section, may open a new market for high quality smaller homes, condos, accessory dwelling units and apartments. Communities such as Madison, Wisconsin, have also found a niche for older adults in their cultural and educational communities, with many seniors choosing to spend time experiencing the arts and expanding their knowledge through partnerships with the local colleges and university. Premium health care will continue to be a major attractor for this age group. New assisted living and nursing facilities will likely be needed as Baby Boomers move into their later years. Limited mobility may mean increased need for transit and other transportation alternatives. These issues and others are discussed in the *Living and Working in 2040* report developed in 2010.

Urban, Rural, and Village Growth

Since the 1960s, the City of Lincoln has made up about 90% of the County population, with the remaining population being divided between other towns in the County and the rural and unincorporated areas. This 10% of the County population has seen a shift over the years from about 2% in the incorporated towns and 8% on acreages and farms, to a current split of about 3% in towns and 7% in the unincorporated area. This plan assumes the shift will continue and that 4% of people will live in incorporate villages and cities by 2040, with the remaining 6% on acreages, farms and in the unincorporated villages in the County.

Population Density

Since about 1970, Lincoln's population density has remained relatively consistent at around 3,000 persons per square mile. Certainly within the urban fabric there are variations from this norm. Areas of residential concentration near the Downtown and many of Lincoln's older neighborhoods have levels of density greater than this average. Conversely, there are locations on the urban fringe with newer neighborhoods having population densities below this level.

Several factors may contribute to overall density that is greater than what is currently seen in the city. Demographic shifts may result in a change in future population densities. While many single families with children will likely desire suburban development similar to what is seen today, there are indications that other segments of the population may have different housing needs. The large increase in households with a head of household over the age of 65 may create a demand for smaller dwellings with smaller yards, multi-family units such as apartments, condos and townhouses, or assisted living facilities. Generation Y, the children of the Baby Boomers (those born between 1977 and 1994) also express a desire for a more urban setting that includes access to transit, proximity

to amenities such as shopping and dining, and smaller dwellings that don't require a great deal of time spent on maintenance. Studies of these two major population groups indicate future housing markets might call for more compact growth than what is seen in Lincoln today.

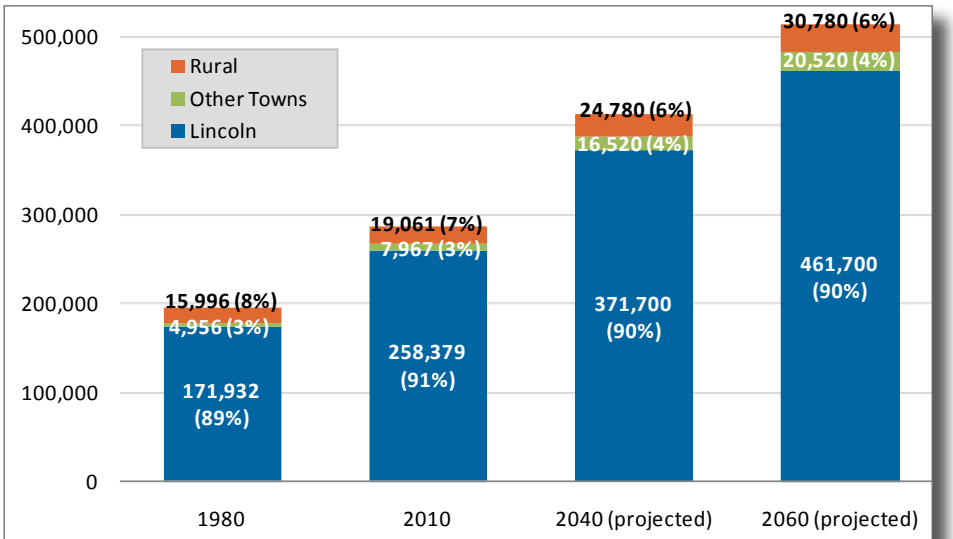

Figure 2.2: Lancaster County Population: Number & Percent of Total

An additional trend that has been observed and is anticipated to continue is a decrease in average household size. Since the 1940s household size in Lancaster County has been steadily falling, from over 3 persons per household in the 1940s, '50s and '60s to an estimated 2.40 in 2010. Projections indicate this trend will continue over the next 30 years, although household sizes will fall at a much more moderate pace to 2.35 in the year 2040. The decrease in household size may also indicate an inclination toward smaller houses and more multi-family housing.

A third trend which may have an impact, although probably smaller than the others already mentioned, is the increasingly diverse racial and ethnic mix experienced in the community. It is unclear what effect an increasing racial and ethnic diversity will have on the housing patterns of the community, but there may be new markets for housing products not currently familiar. Immigrants from all over the world may bring a desire for community form that more closely resembles their former homeland.

In addition, increased socioeconomic challenges may cause a desire for more affordable housing with greater access to alternative transportation and services closer at hand. The recent downturn in the economy has brought with it changes in home mortgage and bank lending practices, higher levels of unemployment, and diminished access to credit. Each of these factors may contribute to shifts in housing demand.

Due to the changes suggested by these trends, LPlan 2040 assumes an increase in the amount of infill and redevelopment, as well as the proportion of dwellings that will be multi-family (apartments, townhouses, condominiums, etc…) Sixteen and one half percent of future dwelling units are expected to be built within the existing built environment, as opposed to 4% as shown in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Of the total new dwelling units, 40% are expected to be multi-family and 60% single family (including duplexes).

The City of Lincoln and the University of Nebraska have undertaken several major efforts in the West Haymarket, Antelope Valley and Innovation Campus areas over the past decade that include and encourage the development of residential infill and redevelopment projects. An increase in redevelopment of underperforming or failing commercial areas is also encouraged in the Plan. These areas present opportunities for mixed use redevelopment to include retail, office, service and residential uses located near transit, trails and major arterials. A smaller amount of infill is anticipated in the neighborhoods on vacant lots and through accessory dwelling units. For further discussion, see the *"Neighborhoods & Housing"* chapter.

Sixteen and one half percent of future dwelling units are expected to be built within the existing built environment.

Employment

The quality of a community's future rests firmly with its ability to maintain and expand its economic foundation. In 2008, 207,845 people were employed in Lancaster County according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. About 36,659 of these were self employed and/or employing other people. Lancaster County has added more than 11,000 jobs since 2000 at an average rate of 0.93 percent per year. In 2009, Lincoln had one of the lowest unemployment rates among metropolitan cities in the U.S.

Employment is divided into four major sectors: Business and Commerce, Government, Industrial, and Agricultural. The Business and Commerce sector has shown the most robust growth over the past decade, followed by the stable Government sector, and a declining Industrial sector. Agriculture is still a major factor in Lancaster County's economy with about 78% of the land area of the county being used for agricultural production. Niche farms have seen strong growth over the past decade and are expected to continue to grow as more local food is demanded by the growing population. For detailed information on past economic trends, please refer to the Annual *Community Indicators Report*.

The total employment in Lancaster County is projected to increase by 108,713 jobs to reach a total of 317,836 jobs in 2040. This reflects an average annual rate of growth of 1.41 percent. This rate of growth is higher than the current 1.26 percent per year. The projected rate of growth of employment is higher than the projected rate of growth of population due to individuals holding more than one job and the Lincoln metropolitan area attracting workers who live in other counties.

The Industrial sector, which showed a decline in the last decade, is projected to increase by about 0.98 percent per year. In this sector, employment in construction, manufacturing, trade, warehousing and transportation is expected to increase at more than 1 percent annually.

Industries	Jobs		Percent of Total		Growth Rate
	2010	2040	2010	2040	2040
Industrial	65,561	87,832	31.4%	27.6%	0.98%
Commerce	108,070	181,855	51.7%	57.2%	1.75%
Government	35,494	48,148	17.0%	15.1%	1.02%

Table 1.1: Lancaster County Jobs by Industry

The Government sector employment is projected to grow at 1.02 percent annually, similar to the projected population growth rate. This sector's share of the total employment will decrease from about 17 percent in 2010 to 15 percent in 2040.

The Business and Commerce sector is projected to be the fastest growing sector with an annual increase of 1.75 percent. This sector's share of total employment increases from about 53 percent in 2010 to 57 percent in 2040. Administrative and waste services, health care, social assistance, and accommodation and food services all show a growth rate of more than two percent annually.

Further details on employment projections are available in the *Living and Working in 2040* report.

Community Form

There is currently a very well defined community form in Lancaster County. The main land use in Lancaster County is agricultural. Of the approximately 846 square miles in the County, the Lincoln city limits cover only 92 square miles or just under 11% of the land, despite having 90 percent of the County population. The urban area has expanded in a contiguous pattern with well defined

edges between Lincoln and agricultural uses. The "leap-frog" development which is a common and dominating force in other metropolitan areas is absent here, and most urban development takes place in Lincoln or in the incorporated towns.

Guiding Principles for Community Form

The following guiding principles for the development of the rural and urban environment are further expanded upon within the various sections of the plan.

The Rural Environment

- Acknowledge the fundamental "Right to Farm." Preserve areas throughout the county for agricultural production by designating areas for rural residential development — thus limiting potential conflicts between farms and acreages.
- Ensure that acreage and rural development preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas, and maximize the preservation of our nonrenewable resources, such as land and fossil fuels.
- Preserve areas for the future growth of incorporated towns in the county, including areas outside of the current one mile zoning jurisdiction of certain towns.
- Support new commercial, residential, and industrial development within the incorporated towns in the county.
- Provide for about four percent of the total population in the County in other incorporated towns, and six percent on acreages, farms, and unincorporated villages.

The Urban Environment

- Lincoln's future urban growth should generally occur in multiple directions around the existing city. Lincoln will continue to have managed and contiguous growth, including strengthening our Downtown core. Lincoln's sense of community has been based on incremental, compact growth built on the foundations of established neighborhoods. Future growth will continue this traditional pattern and be linked to both the level of demand in the market and to the orderly extension of public improvements and services. Lincoln will continue to contain approximately 90 percent of the County's population.
- The community's present infrastructure investment should be maximized by planning for well-designed and appropriately-placed residential and commercial development in areas with available capacity. This can be accomplished in many ways including encouraging appropriate new development on unused land in existing neighborhoods, redevelopment of underperforming commercial areas into mixed use redevelopment areas that include residential, retail, office and entertainment uses, and encouraging a greater amount of commercial space per acre and more dwelling units per acre in new neighborhoods.

- Develop sustainable practices such as those for building and site design to maximize the preservation of our nonrenewable resources, including land and fossil fuels.
- Near and long term growth areas for the City of Lincoln should be preserved in order to facilitate future urban development. Acreages will be directed to areas outside of the future urban growth areas, or designed to easily accommodate future "build-through" of urban services and densification, in order to minimize conflicts between urban and acreage uses and

so that the City may provide urban services as efficiently as possible.

- Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes is encouraged. Development and redevelopment should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries in towns, cities and existing neighborhoods.
- Natural and environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved within and between neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods. The natural topography and features of the land should be preserved by new development to maintain the natural drainageways and minimize land disturbance.
- Mixed use redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and well-designed and appropriately-placed infill development, including residential, commercial and retail uses, are encouraged. These uses may develop along transit routes, at major nodes, and near employment centers to provide residential opportunities for persons who do not want to or cannot drive an automobile.

Figure 2.3: Community Form Diagram

The accompanying image displays how these multiple development principles can be integrated. It includes principles such as:

1. Mix of office, retail and service uses
2. Floodplain preserved as open space, ballfields, trails, conservation areas
3. Natural and environmentally sensitive areas preserved, such as existing wetlands preserved & integrated into the development
4. Connected green space; encourage linear connected green spaces as much as possible
5. Transit stops integrated into commercial center, near arterial and near area of greater population
6. Mix of housing types — single family, townhomes, apartments, elderly housing — all within one area
7. Pedestrian orientation with parking at rear, multiple pedestrian routes, and buildings and uses close to each other
8. Transition of uses; less intense office uses near residential areas
9. Multiple vehicular connections between residential neighborhood and commercial center and multiple access points in and out of area
10. Public uses (such as elementary schools) serve as centers of neighborhood

2040 and Beyond

While couples will continue to marry, families will continue to grow and thrive, and newcomers will continue to seek opportunities, the population is expected to have a high percentage of elderly in the 20 years beyond 2040. During the same period that our school system is expected to serve twice the children that it does today, the two largest present-day generations will be older than the traditional retirement age. People will be living longer. Baby Boomers will be centenarians and Generation Y will be reaching their 70's and 80's by 2060. Largely due to the advancing age of these two key generations, we will likely see a continued increase in single person households, and increased pressure for special needs housing and a specialized service industry to cater to their needs in the 2040-2060 time frame.

Much of the housing stock that exists today will continue to serve future needs, and the preservation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of this housing stock should be a primary focus, but new options should be facilitated to meet the expected needs driven by the changing demographics of a county with over a half million people. A full range of housing options should be available for rental or ownership: single-family homes in new and older neighborhoods, single-family homes on small lots, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, townhomes, rowhouses, live/work units, apartments, condominiums, special needs housing, mixed use buildings, and downtown mid-rises. Within the existing city, vacant lots should be pursued for infill and existing apartment complexes encouraged to add more dwelling units if their sites allow. Greater Downtown should attract thousands of new residents, while "greyfields" — older commercial and industrial areas reaching obsolescence — should be converted to residential and mixed use.

More compact, dense development clusters allow for savings in public infrastructure cost and improved accessibility to jobs, goods and services. Denser mixed use nodes and corridors, designed for walkability and coupled with improved transit service, can improve the livability of the surrounding community as well.

The projections in this Plan for inward growth may prove to be conservative, if appropriate supports are set in place and successful models are demonstrated early in the planning period. Transit enhancements can both lead and follow redevelopment projects, forming a virtuous circle that can accelerate investments in both areas. Transit enhancements

will begin with increased level of service such as shorter wait times or longer hours in key corridors. Identifying specific routes for express service is another likely strategy. As development intensifies along major corridors, such as O Street, perhaps in the next 30 years and perhaps later, bus rapid transit that interconnects with other routes could be introduced.

Figure 2.4: Present Day Photo, Looking West along P Street at about 68th Street

Figure 2.5: An architect's depiction of the Mixed Use Redevelopment Nodes and Corridors Concept, Looking West along P Street at about 68th Street