

EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

An evaluation of the land uses that presently exist within York County, Nebraska is critical to the formulation of this Comprehensive Development Plan. It is the type and location of the existing land uses which provides the starting point for formulating a plan for the future physical development of the County and the basis for the formulation of workable zoning regulations to protect existing uses and promote desired future uses.

PHYSICAL CHARACTER

In order to properly understand the impact of the existing land uses within the County and the overall trends in the location and extent of the existing land uses it is important to review to physical character of the County. This type of examination unveils why certain land uses exist and what land use trends have occurred and, in turn, details limitations of why development has not occurred in other areas. The following is a brief synopsis of the physical character of York County.

York County is located in the southeastern portion of the State of Nebraska and has a total land area of 369,280 acres. Urban development within the County occurred in somewhat evenly distributed geographic locations due to limitations in modes of travel and thus travel

distances during the original settlement of the County.

Distribution resulted in ten urban settlements in the County being located approximately 5 to 6 miles apart. Nine the ten original urban settlements still exist. The settlement of Arborville in the northwestern portion of the County has since ceased to exist as an urban area.

Historically, the goods and services provided and produced in York County revolved around the industry of agriculture. Even today, some 347,000 acres or 94% of the land area in the County is utilized for agricultural production. Of this total, 91% is utilized for cultivated crop production, 6.5% is pastureland and 2.5% is used as farmstead and residential uses.

The approximately 22,000 acres in the County not used for agricultural production, some 6% of the land area in the County, is comprised of non-agricultural commercial and industrial uses, urban areas, local roads and highways, cemeteries, public wildlife management and other public and semi-public facilities.

The major transportation routes within the County have impacted the existing land use patterns in the County and will continue to

influence future land use development within the County. Aside from the fact that these major highways provide intra-county access to the urban areas, as well as, provide further access to larger regional and national transportation routes and urban areas outside of the County, they provide ideal locations for commercial business and industry within the County. Existing commercial and industrial development has been primarily located in close proximity to the major highways and railroads within the County generally in or near an urban area within the County. This trend will continue to occur throughout the planning period and will be significantly influenced by any improvements made to the major transportation routes within the County. The major highways within York County include U.S. Highways 81 and 34 and Interstate Highway 80.

Understanding these physical characteristics of the County provides a better understanding of why land uses have developed in the way they exist now and provides insight into which trends should be continued and what planning policies should be utilized in the future. Such planning should continue upon the land use trends that have been positive in nature and avoid away past and present land use trends that have had a negative impact in the County and on its citizens and taxpayers.

In order to more fully understanding land use

development within York County a depiction of land use development within the rural portions of the County is indicated on Figure 2:

An evaluation of the detailed land uses that presently exist within the County is critical to the formulation of its Comprehensive Development Plan.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

As of April, 2013, there were a total of 1,163 occupied and unoccupied residential structures in the unincorporated areas of York County. Given that in 2013 there are fewer than 550 farms in the County, it becomes readily apparent that there are an increasing number of non-farm residential uses located in the rural areas of the County. Even assuming that 1/3 of the farms have multiple family members owning and residing on the farms in separate dwellings, the number of non-farm residential structures is estimated to be over 430, representing nearly 40% of the residential uses in the rural areas of the County.

Many of these now non-farm residential structures are former farm residences which have been rented or sold-off to non-farm occupants. There are also several rural residential subdivision which have been developed, mostly since the mid-1970's. Notable multiple lot subdivisions in the County include Lockridge Acres, Sacks Lake, Spring

Lake Estates, Quail Cove Estates, Blue Crappie Resort, The Cedars, Karashow Ridge, Deer Haven and the Wessels Subdivision.

Although rural residential uses occur on 532 of the 576 sections of land in the County, there is a discernible pattern of residential density. The highest residential densities occur nearer to the urban communities in the County. The areas of the County with the lowest residential densities are in areas which are farthest from any of the urban communities.

Overall, rural residential densities result in an average of 2.1 residential dwellings per section, which, based upon the overall median household size of 3.1 persons per household, results in an average of 6.5 persons per square mile in the rural areas of the County.

RURAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial and industrial land uses in the rural areas of the County have changed notably during the last 20 years. During this period the County witnessed the development of five sites used for seed production and seed research in addition to the development of an ethanol production facility. With one exception, all of these facilities are located along U. S. Highway 34 east of the City of York, the exception being the Mycogen Seed Production plant now located along U. S. Highway 81 on the west side of York. Other notable commercial developments

include a fuel and fertilizer distribution facility at the intersection of U. S. Highway 34 and the realigned U. S. Highway 81 and the development of a race car track just west of the Village of McCool Junction.

Another category of commercial land use which has seen considerable expansion in the rural areas of the County over the last decade is that of communication towers. At the present time there are 18 towers of various types and heights located in the County. The majority of these towers are located along or near the Interstate 80 corridor.

There have been only limited additional commercial developments at the Interstate 80 interchanges with the majority of such expanded commercial developments occurring at the York Interchange.

The rural commercial and industrial land use locations have created a definite pattern. Virtually all recent commercial and industrial uses in the County have been located on sites adjoining the two highways serving the County and at the Interstate 80 interchange areas. Any future commercial and industrial development in the rural areas of York County will likely follow this same pattern and future planning for such uses should recognize this pattern.

CONFINED LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

In addition to a number of smaller livestock production uses, most of which have ceased operation, there are over 20 larger scale confined livestock uses located in York County.

Interestingly, the majority of these larger scale livestock production operations are located in the northern and southern thirds of the County. The reason or reasons for this pattern is difficult to determine. The most recent confined livestock developments have not followed this pattern. The newest livestock facilities have been located in the east-central portion of the County. The reasons for the location of at least one of these more recent livestock facilities included availability of the land and reasonable separation distances from neighboring residential uses.

As noted previously in the Economic Analysis component of the Comprehensive Plan, expanding livestock production in the County could be one method of enhancing the local economy, tax base and employment levels. An analysis of the overall existing land uses, particularly rural residential uses, indicates that there are already very severe limitations for locating additional livestock production facilities that would set back from such residential uses by distances sufficient to minimize odor and other impacts of such livestock production uses.

If the development of additional livestock production is determined to be an integral part of a local economic development program, there will be a need to address methods of minimizing the introduction of additional land uses, particularly residential uses, in the relatively few areas of the County where adequate separation distances between livestock production uses and neighboring residential uses is still possible.

PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT

A variety of public and semi-public uses including local churches, cemeteries, wildlife management areas, municipal well fields, lakes and recreation areas and various types of governmental facilities exist in the rural areas of the County.

An examination of the location of these public, semi-public uses indicates that, with the exception of the rural churches, cemeteries and wildlife management areas, these uses are for the most part situated near the urban communities within the County, particularly the City of York.

The various public uses, which range from the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women west of York to various state and county road maintenance shops and facilities and to the City of York's recently developed well field occupy just over 939 acres of land in the County. In

addition, the Nebraska Department of Game and Parks maintains nearly 1,292 acres of land used primarily as wild life management areas.

Recreational facilities within the rural areas of the County are quite limited and include the Recharge Lake area west of York which is maintained by the Upper Big Blue Natural Resource District, the eastern portion of the Cornerstone Sports Complex to the north of the City of York, the Junction Motor Speedway in the western portion of the Village of McCool Junction, the Sandy Meadows golf course at the Waco Interstate 80 interchange and a skeet shooting range located south of the Village of Waco.

PUBLIC ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

Public road rights-of-way for Interstate 80, the federal and state highways in the County and County roads occupy nearly 10,000 acres of land in the County. The use of nearly 15.5 square miles of land for roads in the County makes roads and highways the second largest land use in the County, second only to agricultural crop land.

The Interstate 80 and the Highway 34 and 81 corridors are situated in the north-south and east-west central portions of the County. The County roadways are relatively evenly distributed throughout the County and have little difference

in location relative to land uses and land use densities in the County.

LAND USE TRENDS AND OBSERVATIONS

The land use pattern in York County has undergone several notable changes during the last two decades. The most notable changes include:

- The number of small scale livestock production operations which were typically associated with rural farmsteads have all but disappeared. In addition, the number of larger scale confined livestock production facilities has stabilized in number and location.

- A number of commercial and industrial land uses have been developed in the rural areas of the County, primarily along U. S. Highway 34 and the railroad. Given the fact that there are very limited quantities of undeveloped land along the highways and the railroad within the urban areas of the County, any future commercial or industrial development will likely prefer locations in the rural areas of the County along the highways and/or the railroad. This likelihood should be reflected in the zoning districts applied to land along the highways and railroad.

- There have been an increasing number of rural residential subdivisions developed in the rural areas of the County. The majority of these subdivisions are located on land with higher degrees of slope and thus do not represent a loss of prime farm land. In addition to these residential subdivisions, an increasing number of existing rural residential dwellings are being occupied by persons who have no connection with farming operations. This trend has had and will continue to increase the number and level of land use conflicts between these residential uses and adjoining and nearby agricultural land uses, particularly livestock production uses.

- Land included within the corporate limits of the municipalities has continued to increase. Today, the urban land uses included within these incorporated municipalities occupy slightly more than 8 square miles of land in the County, making urban land uses the third largest land use category in the County. Given that the majority of the urban communities in the County have experienced population declines over the last few decades, the inclusion of additional land within the corporate

areas of the municipalities in the County is expected to be limited through the planning period.

The overall existing land use pattern in York County is one of decreasing residential density in the rural areas of the County, but increasing density in commercial and industrial uses, particularly near the highways and railroad which extend through the County.

A primary objective of the Future Land Use Plan and zoning regulations should be to assure that new land uses, which may be developed, be located and constructed in a manner which is compatible, not only with adjoining land uses, but with the environmental capacity, particularly water availability.