

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Lexington, one of the more diverse communities in the State of Nebraska, has shown a pattern of growth and was Nebraska's sixth fastest growing city in the 2000 Census. While growth is necessary and a sign of prosperity for a city, it is also a challenge to manage that growth. Cities that take the time to plan for and manage growth typically see a longer growth period and maintain their status as a desirable place to live. With the development of this new Comprehensive Plan, referred to as "The Lex-Plan 2012," the City of Lexington continues to enhance their status as one of the best cities to live and work in Nebraska.

Location

Lexington is located in south central Nebraska on Interstate 80 about 40 miles west of Kearney, Nebraska situated next to the Platte River. Residents have easy access to some of the Nebraska's best outdoor recreation, such as Johnson Lake about 10 miles south. Lexington is the county seat of Dawson County and is located south central part of the county. The community is connected with the major transportation corridors of the region, including U.S. Highways 283 and 30 and Nebraska State Highway 21. The Interchange of 283 and I-80 provides a direct link to major trading centers in the Midwest and points beyond. Omaha is located 222 miles to the northeast and Denver is 313 miles southwest of Lexington.

Geography

Lexington is located at 40°46'46"N 99°44'38"W 40.77944°N 99.74389°W (40.779434, -99.743854). According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 4.51 square miles (11.69 km²), of which, 4.5 square miles (11.65 km²) of it is land and 0.01 square miles (0.03 km²) is water.

Climate

The temperature for Lexington and Dawson County is varied, ranging from an average low of 12.2 degrees during the month of January to an average high of 88 during the month of July. The average annual precipitation is 22 inches. The average snowfall in a year is 19 inches. The number of days with any measurable precipitation is 58 days and there is an average of 227 sunny days in Lexington.

Topography and Soils

The terrain in the current corporate limits is mostly flat lying in close proximity to the Platte River with the city's average elevation of 2,404 feet. The land to the north becomes level to gently rolling outside the corporate limits. Throughout Dawson County the terrain is quite diverse, ranging from level to hilly. The soils in and around the area of Lexington are classified into four soil groups. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service has identified the four soil groups, or associations, as Coxad-Hord Association, Gosper-Cozad-Silver Creek Association, Lex-Lawet-Gibbon Association, and the Gothenburg-Platte Association. Nearly the entire area within the Lexington city limits, as well as the central third of the two-mile planning jurisdiction, is included in the Gosper-Cozad-Silver Creek Association in which soils are described as "deep, nearly level, somewhat poorly drained to well drained, silty and loamy soils on stream terraces."

History

The location of Lexington is directly related to the Platte River where original settlers were attracted to and found potable water and suitable transportation corridors. The Union Pacific Railroad arrived in the area in 1866, but it was not until 1871 that Dawson County was formed.

Called Plum Creek by the original settlers, Lexington has a colorful and lively history. Lexington began as an early frontier trading post in 1860 when the Daniel Freeman family settled along the Oregon Trail near the Platte River. The trading post was prosperous, but not without problems. The Plum Creek Massacre took place August 7, 1864, in the bluffs near town. These bluffs were regarded as one of the most dangerous areas on the way west. The Freemans were forced to flee to Fort Kearney and the trading post was destroyed. Fort Plum Creek was established near the ruins of the trading post later that same year. A cemetery is all that remains near the historic site today.

It is estimated that during those early years, more than half a million Americans followed the nearby Oregon Trail until the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad. When the tracks had been laid, the Freeman's moved north to the river and named the town Plum Creek, which was incorporated in 1874 and designated the county seat of Dawson County. With the railroad established, many new settlers arrived in the area -- including railroad workers and homesteaders who came to farm the free land. Many large ranches were established along the Platte River and thousands of cattle roamed the free range.

A population boom between 1880 and 1885 increased by over a thousand people. Some of the residents decided that a new name might help shake the town's

rough-and-tumble reputation, and enhance community development. The town's name was changed to Lexington in 1889. It's not clear why, but it may be partly in commemoration of the Battle of Lexington during the Revolutionary War. The Union Pacific Railroad, the arrival of a group of settlers known as the Pennsylvania Colony, and construction of a bridge across the Platte River, stimulated more growth and made Lexington the center of activity in the area.

The Purpose of Comprehensive Planning

The Lexington Comprehensive Development Plan is designed to promote orderly growth and development for the City, provide policy guidelines, and enable citizens and elected officials to make informed decisions about the future of the City. The Plan acts as a tool to “Develop a road map or blueprint that guides the community through change as it occurs tomorrow and ten to twenty years from now.”

The Comprehensive Development Plan will provide a guideline for the location of any future developments within the planning jurisdiction of Lexington. The Lexington Comprehensive Plan is intended to encourage a strong economic base so the goals of the city are achieved.

“The Lex-Plan 2012” will assist the community in evaluating the impacts of development, including economic, social, fiscal, and service, and encourage appropriate land uses throughout the jurisdictional area of Lexington. The Plan assists the city in balancing the physical, social, economic, and aesthetic features as it responds to private sector interests. Planned growth will make Lexington more effective in serving residents, more efficient in using resources, and able to meet the standard of living and quality of life every individual desires.

Mission Statement

The mission statement for Lexington is based upon various meetings and interactions throughout the planning process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. Such mission statement and a series of guiding principles lays the framework for the goals, objectives, and polices; and the development of the Future Land Use Plan.

“Lexington is a diverse and family oriented community bound together by shared values and a commitment to excellence where citizens, businesses and civic leaders are partners in building a quality environment to live, learn, and work.”

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Comprehensive planning begins with the data collection phase including demographic information from the 2010 Census, information obtained from city staff, public input, and field data collection. Data are collected that provide a snapshot of the past and present conditions of Lexington. Analysis of data provides the basis for developing forecasts for future land-use demands in the city.

The second phase of the planning process is the development of general goals and objectives or policies, based upon the issues facing the City prioritized by the community through public input. These are practical guidelines for improving existing conditions and guiding future growth. The Comprehensive Plan is a vision presented in text, graphics, and tables that represent the desires of the city for the future.

“The Lex-Plan 2012” represents a blueprint designed to identify, assess, and develop actions and policies in the areas of population, land use, transportation, housing, economic development, community facilities, and utilities. The Comprehensive Plan contains recommendations that, when implemented, will be of value to the City of Lexington and its residents.

Implementation is the final phase of the process. A broad range of development policies and programs are required to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The Lex-Plan 2012 identifies the tools, programs, and methods necessary to fulfill the recommendations. Nevertheless, the implementation of the development policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan is dependent upon the adoption of the plan by the governing body, and the leadership exercised by the present and future elected and appointed officials of the city.

“The Lex-Plan 2012” was prepared under the direction of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The steering committee was composed of members of City staff and the Planning Commission. Review and recommendations by the Lexington Planning Commission were completed prior to adoption of *“The Lex-Plan 2012”* by the Lexington City Council. The planning time period for achieving goals, objectives, programs, and developments identified in the Lexington Comprehensive Plan is up to 20 years. However, the city should review the plan annually or bi-annually and update the document completely every ten to fifteen

years, or when a pressing need is identified. Updating the Comprehensive Plan will allow the city to incorporate ideas and developments that were not known at the time of the present comprehensive planning process.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPONENTS

Nebraska State Statutes require the inclusion of certain elements in a Comprehensive Plan. A “Comprehensive Development Plan,” as defined in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 19-903 (Reissue 1997), “shall consist of both graphic and textual material and shall be designed to accommodate anticipated long-range future growth.”

“*The Lex-Plan 2012*” provides an emphasis on land use and transportation and is comprised of the following components:

- Profile Lexington
- Envision Lexington
- Achieve Lexington
- Implement Lexington

Analyzing past and existing demographic, housing, economic, and social trends permits the projection of likely conditions in the future. Projections and forecasts are useful tools in planning for the future; however, these tools are not always accurate and may change due to unforeseen factors. Past trends may also be skewed or inaccurate, creating a distorted picture of past conditions. Therefore, it is important for Lexington to closely monitor population, housing and economic conditions that may impact the city. Through periodic monitoring, the city can adapt and adjust to changes at the local level. Having the ability to adapt to socio-economic change allows the city to maintain an effective Comprehensive Plan for the future, to enhance the quality of life, and to raise the standard of living for all residents in Lexington and its jurisdiction.

“*The Lex-Plan 2012*” records where Lexington has been, where it is now, and where it will likely be in the future. This is an information and management tool for city leaders to use in their decision-making process when considering future developments. The Comprehensive Plan is not a static document; it should evolve as changes in the land-use, population, or local economy occur during the planning period. This information is the basis for Lexington’s evolution as it achieves its physical, social, and economic goals.

GOVERNMENTAL AND JURISDICTIONAL ORGANIZATION

The planning jurisdiction of the City of Lexington includes the area within two miles of the corporate limits as authorized under the authority of Section 17-001, Nebraska Revised Statutes, 1943 (amended). The City may enforce zoning and subdivision regulations including building, electrical, plumbing, and property maintenance codes within its planning jurisdiction.

The Lexington City Council, which is a board of elected officials including the Mayor, performs the governmental functions for the city. The planning and zoning jurisdiction of Lexington, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 19-901 through 19-933 (Reissue 1997), includes all of the incorporated portions of the city, including an established extraterritorial jurisdiction of two miles.