

EXISTING LAND USE

This section of the Plan explains the current development patterns and land use types found in the Lexington planning area. In order for a community to plan for future land uses and land use changes, knowledge of existing land uses must be established. The purpose of this section of the Plan is to establish an inventory and evaluation of the existing land uses found within the planning area. Existing land uses are defined by how a specific parcel of land is being utilized, and does not take into account future land use or land ownership.

Land use categories that will be used later to plan for future development areas are general statements about how the underlying property is being used, and include broad labels such as residential, commercial, and industrial, as well as an identification of vacant or open spaces being used for cropland, recreational areas, and any under- or non-developed land. However, the land uses used here to identify the existing conditions will have more detailed statements in order to fully explain the variety of uses currently found.

Land uses and properties do not have to be arranged in a 1:1 ratio with one land use per parcel. Uses are often mingled within a development, and can be stacked on each other, such as in a Downtown building that is used for residential uses on upper floors and commercial uses on the ground floor. The number and type of land uses found in a vibrant community is constantly changing to meet the needs and desires of residents, which can produce a number of impacts that either benefit or detract from the overall sense of community and quality of life. Because of this, the success and sustainability of a community is directly influenced by the manner in which available resources are utilized given the constraints the city faces during the course of the planning period.

Typically, older Midwest communities are characterized by a fixed pattern of land use influenced by the consistency of their rural settings relaxed pace. However, Lexington is experiencing increasing levels of growth and development pressures, and has seen its surroundings transform from the more common rural setting found throughout Nebraska to an urbanizing extension. The proximity to I-80 and Highway 30, as well as its location along Highway 21, provide Lexington with many more opportunities than would be found in a typical town of the same size. The opportunities that result from such external forces create impacts upon the community and its residents, which can drastically affect the land use in and around the Lexington area and will significantly impact how and where Lexington grows in the future.

EXISTING LAND USE CATEGORIES

Land uses are generally best described in terms of specific categories that provide broad descriptions into which numerous businesses, institutions, and structures are grouped. Lexington's existing land use categories are more specific to allow for a more detailed evaluation of each use. For the purposes of The Lex-Plan, the following land use classifications are used:

- **Agriculture / Open Space** – A parcel of land that is not intended for development and is currently used for low intensity agriculture uses, such as pasturing, or contains open spaces such as woodlands or flood plain.
- **Developing Residential** – A parcel of land that is currently undeveloped and not proposed for development, or may be subdivided and under preparations for residential development. This land is generally found to be open and minimally maintained.
- **Single-Family Residential** – A parcel of land with a residential structure occupied by one family, such as a traditional home on its own lot, surrounded by yards on all sides.
- **Multi-Family Residential** – A parcel of land containing a structure being utilized by three or more families within a same structure.
- **Residential Mobile Home** – A parcel of land containing a factory-built, single-family structure. These uses are Single-Family Residential in nature, but identified separately.
- **Commercial** – A parcel of land containing a commercial use which may sell a good, but mostly provides a service, such as automotive repair, hair salon, and includes the Downtown.
- **Industrial** – A parcel of land containing a commercial use involved in manufacturing or packing, storage, or assembly of products, which does not have a major external effect on surrounding properties or uses.
- **Parks and Recreation** – A parcel of land containing public or private land available for recreational, educational, cultural, or aesthetic use.
- **Public/Quasi-Public** – A parcel of land owned or maintained by a federal, state, or a local governmental entity and open for enjoyment by public, or a parcel of land containing a use that is generally under the control of a private, religious, or non-profit entity, that provides social benefit to the community as a whole.

EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

An evaluation of land uses was tabulated for the City of Lexington showing the quantity of uses found within the corporate limits as well as within the entire planning jurisdiction. The data was arranged using total acres of each classification, and is displayed below in Table X. Table X has been divided into four columns of information including the total acres, percent of developed area, percentage of total area, and acres per 100 persons based upon the 2010 US Census population of 10,230 persons. The persons per acre establishes a baseline from which land use numbers can be compared between communities, as well as to project future land use needs due to projected population changes.

Not surprisingly, the majority of developed land within Lexington is used for single family residential purposes. In 2012, nearly one-half of all developed property in Lexington was used for single-family dwellings. In terms of total acres, single-family uses in 2012 accounted for 600.1 acres. The remaining components of residential uses represented much smaller portions of the land use picture. Residential uses with two or more units accounted for 2.6 percent of all developed land within Lexington in 2012. There are a number of contiguous residential developments surrounding Lexington which give the community the potential to alter the residential land use figures if these areas were to be annexed in the future.

Overall, commercial uses in 2012 covered just over 194.9 acres, or nearly 12 percent of all developed land. Total acres put to industrial uses nearly equaled those put to commercial use, and accounted for 10.3 percent of all developed land in 2012.

Public and quasi-public land uses accounted for nearly 30 percent of all developed land in 2012, second only to single-family residential. Parks and recreation acres accounted for the third smallest acreage, covering just over 112 acres in 2012.

Transportation uses, which include rights-of-way, railroads, and roadway systems, accounted for 18.6 acres of undeveloped land and 0.8 percent of total acreage in 2012. Undeveloped land, including transportation, agricultural uses, open space, and developing residential property accounted for 30.3 percent of all land within Lexington, compared to 69.7 percent for developed land.

TABLE X: EXISTING LAND USE WITHIN LEXINGTON CORPORATE BOUNDARY, 2012

LAND USE	ACRES W/IN LEXINGTON	PERCENT STATUS AREA	PERCENT TOTAL AREA	ACRES PER 100 PERSONS
RESIDENTIAL	692.5	41.5%	28.9%	6.8
Single Family	600.1	36.0%	25.1%	5.9
Multi-Family	42.6	2.6%	1.8%	0.4
Mobile Home	49.8	3.0%	2.1%	0.5
COMMERCIAL	194.9	11.7%	8.1%	1.9
INDUSTRIAL	172.4	10.3%	7.2%	1.7
PUBLIC/QUASI PUBLIC	494.8	29.7%	20.7%	4.9
PARKS AND RECREATION	112.9	6.8%	4.7%	1.1
DEVELOPED LAND	1,667.5	100.0%	69.7%	16.3
Developing Residential	137.5	18.9%	5.7%	1.3
AGRICULTURE/OPEN SPACE	570.2	78.5%	23.8%	5.6
TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR	18.6	2.6%	0.8%	0.2
UNDEVELOPED LAND	726.3	100.0%	30.3%	7.1
TOTAL AREA	2,393.8	--	100.0%	23.5

Source: 2012 Comprehensive Development Plan, JEO Consulting Group, Inc.

Note: Acres per 100 is based upon the 2010 US Census population estimate of 10,230

Lexington currently exercises its statutory authority to enforce planning jurisdiction within two mile of the corporate boundary. An evaluation of land uses within this extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) is important for future development and planning activities. The land uses found outside of the corporate limits are mostly agriculture, agricultural residential, and single-family residential, especially to the east of the community. Due to external and internal development pressures, as

well as the proximity of major transportation routes, the percentage of residential uses found within the Lexington ETJ is higher than would be typical for a Midwestern community of this size.

In addition, all land uses that are found within Lexington are also found within the ETJ. This pattern is also influenced by the urban nature of the area, as well as the land use policies Lexington has held over time. The presence of all the same land use types in the ETJ will encourage greater development activity, which in turn can influence Lexington's ability to annex and grow at an increased rate over communities located in more rural settings.

TABLE X: EXISTING LAND USE WITHIN LEXINGTON ETJ, 2012

To be completed

Source: 2012 Comprehensive Development Plan, JEO Consulting Group, Inc.

Note: Acres per 100 is based upon the 2010 US Census population estimate of 10,230

FIGURE X: EXISTING LAND USE MAP

To be Inserted

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

In order to formulate a truly valid and “comprehensive” plan for the future of Lexington, it is necessary to evaluate the natural conditions that currently exist and discuss how these conditions can either promote or hinder future development. An assessment of environmental conditions allows the community to determine the impacts these factors may have on limiting the locations where various future land uses may be located within the planning jurisdiction of the city.

WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS

Since 2004, every community within the State of Nebraska has a delineated wellhead protection area. Lexington has several wellhead protection areas within their corporate limits as well as designated growth areas. While these areas do not severely impact the types of land use that can be allowed in them care should be taken to ensure the protection of the wells from possible contamination due to development. These areas are depicted on the Environmental Conditions Map.

100YEAR FLOODPLAIN

There is significant floodplain in Lexington’s future growth area to the north-northeast side of the city and south-southwest as you go towards the Platte River. Development within a floodplain is generally discouraged due to the difficulty of ensuring safety and the potential damage a development can have on that natural environment. Floodplain areas are generally reserved for less intensive uses such as agriculture, and recreation/open space.