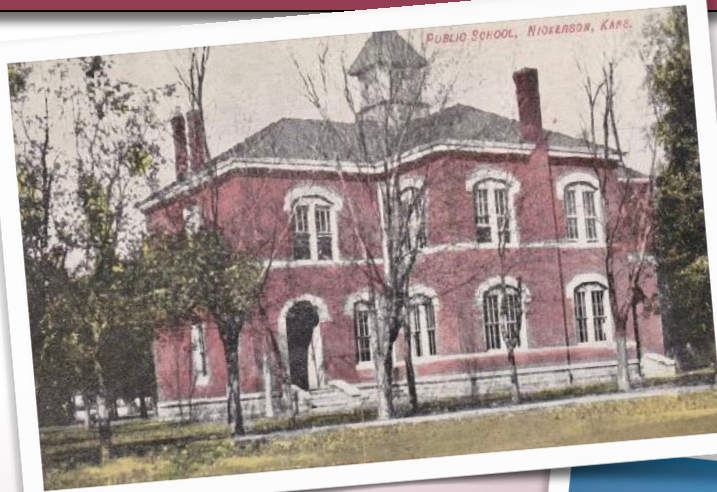


Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045



DRAFT
7/24/26

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

adopted by the
Nickerson City Planning Commission
on August 31, 2026

approved by the
Nickerson Governing Body
on September 21, 2026

technical assistance by



and

Nickerson City Staff

OFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN APPROVAL

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

is an official Plan of the City of Nickerson, Kansas, for the Planning Period 2023-2045.

The Planning Area comprises the City of Nickerson plus a certain surrounding area
in Reno County, Kansas, which is all within 3 miles of the City.

In accordance with K.S.A. 12-747, an officially advertised public hearing was held on **August 31, 2026**,
and this document was adopted by **Resolution _____** of the Nickerson City Planning Commission
on **August 31, 2026**.

A certified copy of the *Comprehensive Plan*,
together with a copy of the adoption Resolution and a summary of the hearing,
were then submitted to the Nickerson Governing Body.

ATTEST

/s/ _____

Gordon Roth
Chair, Nickerson City Planning Commission

/s/ _____

Michael Runyon
Secretary, Nickerson City Planning Commission

APPROVED by the Nickerson Governing Body on **September 21, 2026** by **Ordinance _____**,
which was published on **_____, 2026**, in the *The Bulletin*.

ATTEST

/s/ _____

Peggy Ruebke, Mayor

/s/ _____

April Beshears, City Clerk

Acknowledgments

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared under the supervision
and with the aid of the Nickerson City Planning Commission and City staff,
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CHAPTER 1. Planning— Process, Parameters, & Principles

There are many good reasons to have a comprehensive plan. If a city wants to have subdivision regulations, State statutes require that a Comprehensive Plan be adopted first. The land use component of a Plan ensures efficient, balanced, and compatible land development, and provides a legal foundation for the judicial review of zoning cases. A Plan is often a prerequisite for grant applications, to win outside funding for City projects.

But the most important purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is this: **it is a leadership tool, intended to guide public policy decisions in directions that will accomplish long-term community planning goals.**

This document provides a foundation of background data, including an overview of City facilities and systems. It offers a review of regulatory tools and other resources available to support the Plan's implementation. But the core of this Plan is the **community goals**, which incorporate fundamental planning principles, express Nickerson's community values, and provide both current and future City leaders with a vision of Nickerson's future that should inform and help shape their policy-making decisions.

Planning Process

By State statute, the City Planning Commission is responsible for preparing, adopting and maintaining a city's Comprehensive Plan. When a Plan is completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission members, the Planning Commission must hold a **public hearing**, and formally **adopt** the Plan by resolution. They then send the Plan to the Governing Body, with a recommendation that the City Council **approve** the Plan by ordinance.

When this Plan is adopted and approved, it will become the official comprehensive development plan for Nickerson, Kansas, and its Planning Area, for the Planning Period from 2023 through 2045. It will replace any previous Comprehensive Plans prepared for the City of Nickerson.

After the Plan is approved, Planning Commission members, the Mayor and City Council members, and City staff are responsible for understanding the approved Plan in detail, and for determining the best methods to implement policies and procedures to achieve the community goals expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

Plan Parameters

This Comprehensive Plan addresses planning issues within a specific span of time (the *Planning Period*), and within a specific geographic area (the *Planning Area*).

Planning Period The Planning Period for this Plan is the twenty-two year time span from 2023 through 2045. For this type of plan, twenty years or so is typically the practical limit for useful forecasting of local needs and resources.

PLANNING AREA

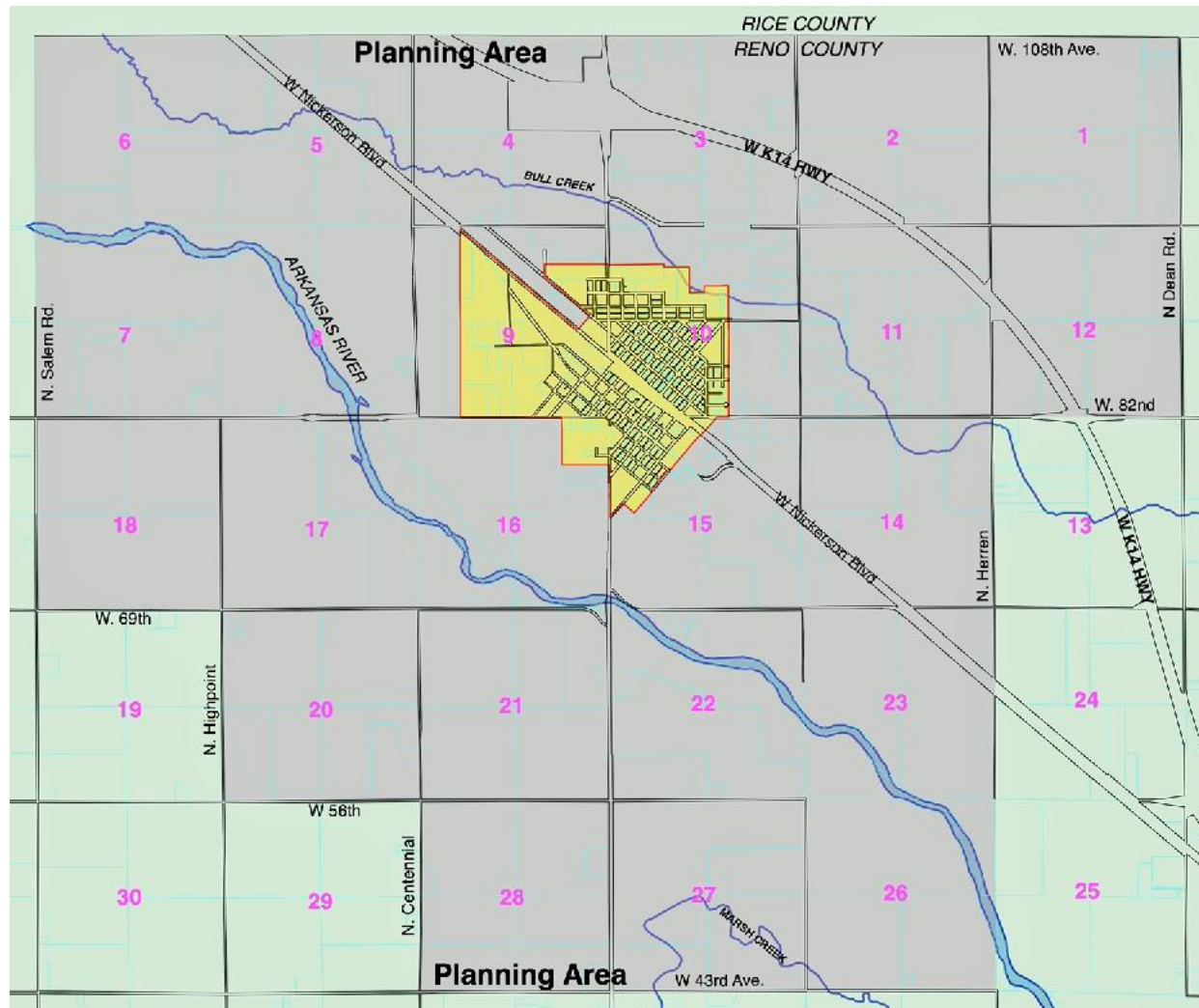
The designation of a Planning Area recognizes that the City's activities both affect and are affected by the surrounding region. Delineating a Planning Area **does not create a regulatory boundary** as such, but instead identifies an area which has an influence on the planning and development of the City, and which therefore should be studied as part of what State statutes refer to as the "total community of which the City is a part".

By statute, any **extraterritorial jurisdiction** for Subdivision Regulations or Zoning Regulations around a city cannot exceed its delineated Planning Area—nor extend more than three miles from the city limits, nor extend more than one half the distance to another city, nor extend into another county.

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

Shown on the following map, Nickerson's Planning Area covers about 24 square miles, extending a maximum of five miles north-to-south and six miles east-to-west. It encompasses areas of existing and likely future development near Nickerson.

It extends less than halfway between the current city limits of Nickerson and the current city limits of either Sterling or Willowbrook—the two nearest cities to Nickerson.



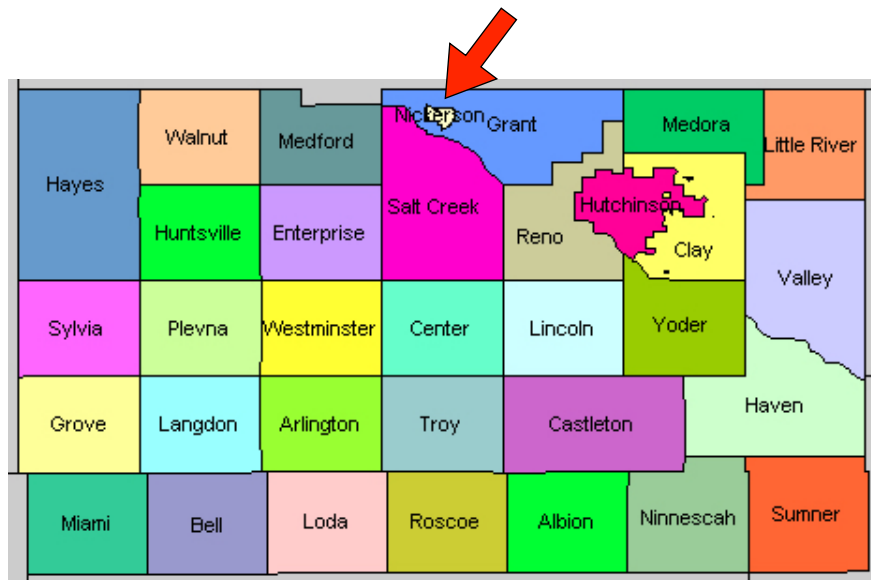
Nickerson Planning Area

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

As defined for this Plan, and shown on the previous page, the Nickerson Planning Area is composed of the following land in Grant and Salt Creek Townships (T26S, R3E), in Reno County, Kansas:

- Sections 1 through 12
- Sections 14 through 18
- Sections 20 through 23
- Sections 26 through 28

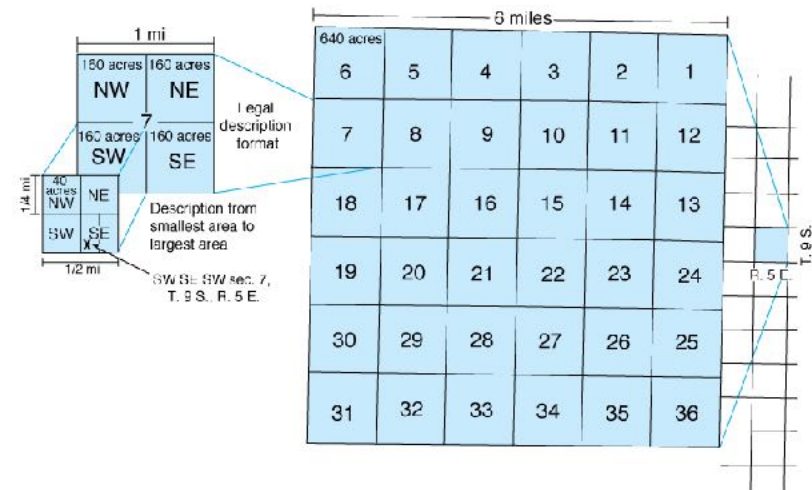
In Township 26 South/Range 3 East, sections and portions of sections which are northeast of the Arkansas River are in Grant Township; sections and portions of sections which are southwest of the Arkansas River are in Salt Creek Township.



Map – Townships of Reno County

This may seem a little confusing, but that is because there are multiple meanings of the word "township" in American English. In the Nickerson area, it happens that the local *survey township* (T26S, R3E) does not match up with the local *civil townships* (Grant Township and Salt Creek Township).

A **survey township** is used to establish boundaries for land ownership. The federal *Public Land Survey System* was established in 1785, to provide a systematic way to legally describe parcels of land in the United States. In general, land was surveyed in a grid of **sections**, each a square-mile in size. Each six by six square of sections (36 square miles) was called a **township**, which was individually identified by a numbering system based on its Township and Range. Township numbers were counted off from an east-to-west baseline (in Kansas, the Nebraska border), and Range numbers were counted off from a north-to-south meridian line (in Kansas, the principal meridian running through Wichita).



In Kansas, **civil townships** provide a level of local government more expansive than a city but less expansive than a county. Township governments are often responsible for services like rural road and ditch maintenance, and sometimes for rural cemeteries.

Civil township boundaries are often contiguous with the local survey township, but not always—especially when a major geographic barrier like a river divides the survey township. This is the case in Grant and Salt Creek Townships, where geographic reality trumped the survey lines.

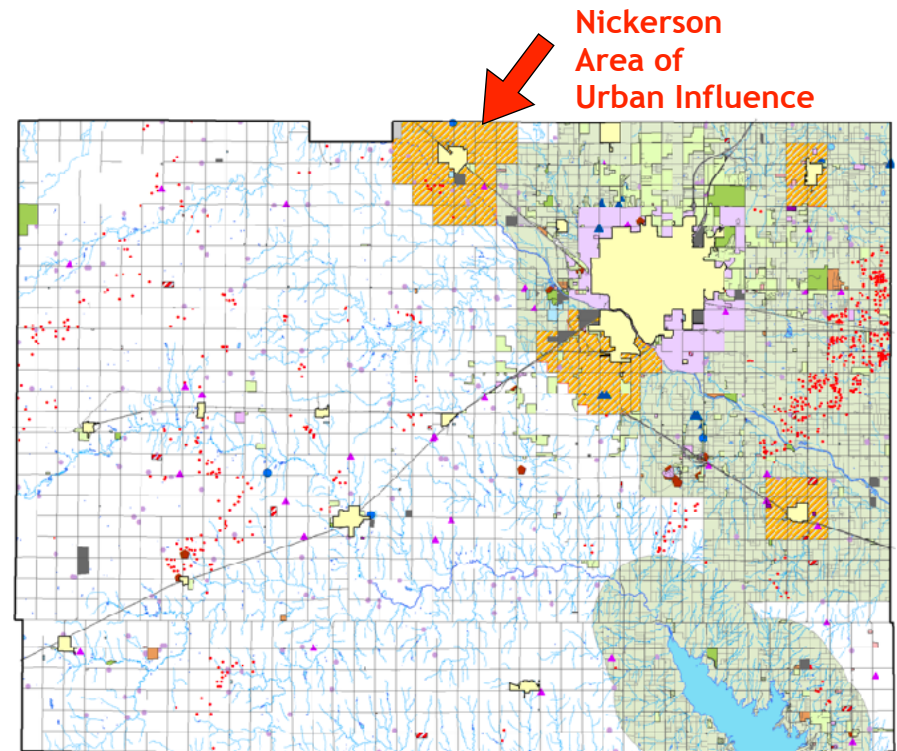
AREA OF URBAN INFLUENCE

Development which takes place on unincorporated land close to a city's boundaries is likely to eventually require City services, and should then be annexed into the City in order to support those services with the owners' tax dollars. City and county governments generally cooperate in order to make sure that such development will meet city standards when it eventually does link up with a city's roads and utilities. County governments in Kansas support this concept by defining an **Area of Urban Influence** for each incorporated city within the county.

The *2018-2040 Comprehensive Plan for Reno County* shows an Area of Urban Influence for Nickerson which matches the Nickerson Planning Area. The County Plan expresses Reno County's intent to coordinate with cities when regulating land uses near city jurisdictions, and to encourage commercial, industrial and suburban residential development that utilizes infrastructure in cities' Areas of Urban Influence.

The Reno County Comprehensive Plan also evaluated the growth potential of cities within the County, based on estimates of their future populations. South Hutchinson had a projected growth of 9.3%, and The Highlands had a projected growth of 13.3%. Every other city, and the unincorporated areas of the County, were expected to lose significant percentages of their population. Nickerson was projected to lose 22.5% of its population between 2017 and 2040.

The County Plan recommends that any future growth beyond existing city limits should be focused toward highway frontage areas. Each application for a future project will be evaluated on its own merits, based on new County zoning regulations which use Conditional Use Permits for all non-residential developments.



*Reno County Existing Land Use Map (Figure 31)
from the 2018-2040 Comprehensive Plan for Reno County*

Planning Principles

Good planning is a way to correct the mistakes of the past, preserve the best of the present, and deal with the challenges of the future. Effective planning should be farsighted, realistic in terms of existing resources and potential capabilities, and adaptable to changing community needs and opportunities.

Three fundamental guiding principles provide a framework to support and guide all such planning decisions—**quality of life**, **community health**, and **sustainability**. In addition, planners must always be aware of fundamental **demographic trends**.

Quality of Life

Every city competing for economic advantage understands that good public infrastructure, a trained labor force, tax rates that provide good value for the money, and available land are all necessary to attract economic activity—so most viable competitors already have those assets in place. According to the American Economic Development Commission, **it is quality of life that makes a community a *successful* economic competitor.**

In this highly mobile era, an excellent quality of life is essential both for retaining current residents, and for attracting new residents and new businesses to a community. But what does "quality of life" actually mean? And how do planning decisions affect this nebulous but essential community characteristic?

Definitions of the term "quality of life" vary by perspective and incorporate a wide variety of factors, including housing, neighborhood, schools, physical and mental health, family life, safety and security, the built environment, education, leisure time, recreational options, culture, values, social belonging, spirituality, employment, job satisfaction, and financial security—among others. In short, "quality of life" is a highly subjective way of describing the overall happiness and well-being of a person or a community.

The fact that quality of life is subjective and difficult to measure makes it no less important. Even without a precise definition, most people readily recognize the importance of the idea, and have a strong opinion about whether their personal quality of life is good or not.

Planning decisions affect housing, the local economy, safety, transportation, parks, health, and many other factors, which in turn profoundly affect the community's long-term quality of life. Maintaining and enhancing Nickerson's quality of life should be a primary focus of the community's planning goals. **Investments in quality of life should be regarded as investments in Nickerson's future.**



Community Health

One of the most important factors in quality of life is health. Public planning policies and decisions impact both personal and community health.

In the last few generations, unintended consequences of planning decisions have had a dire effect on American health. Starting in the 1950s, the availability of cars and the development of interstate highways seemed to offer people the benefits of cheap land out in the country, privacy from close neighbors, wide open spaces, and personally controlled transportation. However, unintended side effects include suburban sprawl, social isolation, long commutes and their associated air pollution, and car-dependence—which are now considered major contributing factors to the current obesity epidemic in America.

In 1950, approximately 10% of American adults were obese, with a body mass index (BMI) equal to or greater than 30. By 2020, that number was more than four times higher, at 42%. In Kansas in 2021, 36% of adults were obese—a rate better than the national average, but still far too high.

Obesity is not simply a harmless expression of human diversity. It is a significant public and personal health problem, related to a number of serious chronic diseases—including diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, and a variety of cancers.

Building physical activity back into people's daily routines is one of the best ways to combat obesity, and all its associated health risks. Levels of activity are strongly influenced by the design of the neighborhoods in which people live, work, learn, and play.

Planning policies and decisions shape our neighborhoods and our community, and should always be made with an eye toward **crafting places that encourage physical activity, nurture social connections, and promote good health**—not just for children, but for all ages.

Aim to increase opportunities for residents to engage in healthy lifestyle options. Possibilities include:

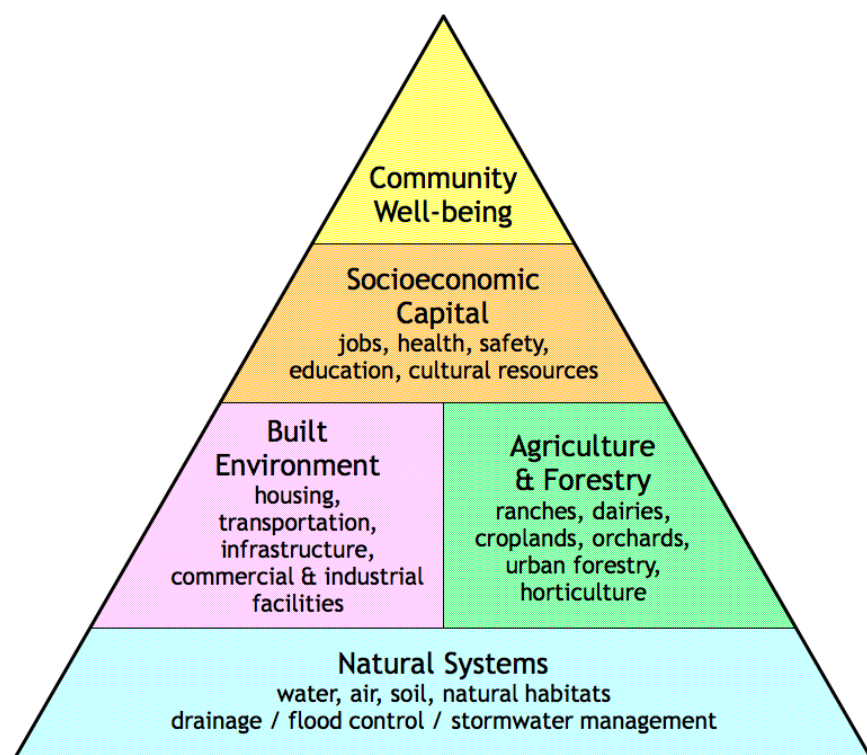
- Provide options for **walking and biking**, by supporting a community-wide network of well-maintained sidewalks, and bicycle paths, lanes, and routes. Connect residential neighborhoods with workplaces, the schools, retail, Weber Park, and other destinations.
- Design any new developments to **capitalize on the City's traditional neighborhood design, maximizing walkability**. In general, encourage traditional gridiron street networks, and discourage disconnected and car-dependent cul-de-sac development. Any cul-de-sacs that are developed should retain a pedestrian right-of-way or easement.
- **Strive to activate downtown as a walkable destination**, with shared on-street public parking, good lighting, bike racks, public art, street trees, and creative signage. Work toward developing a balance of workplaces, restaurants, services and retail.
- **Develop public gathering spaces** flexible enough to support community events and celebrations, which strengthen community ties.
- Develop park facilities that offer **opportunities for on-demand exercise**, such as walking paths, outdoor exercise zones or dog parks, which encourage frequent use and enhance social connections.

Resources

- Urban Land Institute — [*Building Healthy Places Toolkit*](#)
- [*Healthy Places By Design*](#)
- National Association of County and City Health Officials — [*Healthy Community Design*](#)
- American Public Health Association — [*Healthy Community Design*](#)

Sustainability

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets a community's present needs—environmental, social and economic—without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Development that is *not* sustainable forecloses a community's future.



This diagram shows some of the key elements of sustainable planning, with each layer providing a foundation for the layers above.

Environmental sustainability for a community starts with leadership decisions that preserve clean air and water, protect the soil that supports agriculture, safeguard natural habitats and wildlife to maintain ecological diversity, and manage stormwater runoff to control flooding.

Social sustainability requires leadership decisions that recognize the relationship between planning and quality of life. Everyday choices made by Planning Commission and City Council members accumulate over time to have a profound affect on how the people of Nickerson can live their lives.

A community that is socially sustainable has high-quality **housing** options at a range of price points, a variety of types of **neighborhoods** (including ones that are **walkable**), and a **transportation** system that serves everyone (including people who don't drive). It has an **education** system that prepares the community's young people for a responsible and successful future, and access to a **health care system** that meets the needs of residents of all ages. It provides opportunities for people to **celebrate and enjoy life** in Nickerson.

Economic sustainability is also essential, supporting social and environmental resources which in turn support the local economy. Cooperative **economic development** efforts, both public and private, contribute to economic success.

- Foster cooperation between the City and County, in the pursuit of local **economic development** that will develop and sustain long-term economic success in the area.

Over the twenty-year span of this Plan, a sustainable supply of reasonably low-cost **energy** and high-speed, high-capacity **communications infrastructure** will become more and more important for economic success.

Demographic Trends

Certain nationwide demographic trends have significant impacts on a host of planning decisions. Over the course of this Plan's twenty-year Planning Period, expect the population to become **older**, to live in **smaller households** or **multi-generation households**, and to have continually rising expectations for **community amenities**.

American family and **household sizes** have been trending smaller for decades. A growing majority of U.S. households have only one or two people. Young adults often postpone marriage and child-bearing. More and more people choose to remain single their whole lives. Many find themselves single after divorce.

The exception to the shift toward smaller households is the increasing number of **multi-generation family households**, often supported by an **accessory dwelling unit** on the same lot as a single-family home. Common historically, the percentage of multi-generation households in the U.S. started to decline in the 1950s, bottomed out in the 1980s, and has since—driven by both social trends and economic pressure—continued to rise.

People are living longer. Healthy seniors are likely to live **long active lives after traditional retirement age**, and want access to flexible employment opportunities, and to services that will help them age in place close to family and friends.

More and more people, of all age groups, want to live in **walkable neighborhoods**, close to restaurants, shops and entertainment amenities.

Increasingly, **remote workers** have the option to choose a home based not on where they are employed, but on where they want to live. A small town can successfully compete for residents even without a large employment sector, as long as it has **good internet service** and a desirable quality of life.

Together, these trends signal a need for **down-sized and accessible housing options**, **housing options designed for multiple independent adults in one household**, **walkable neighborhoods near a vibrant downtown core**, **opportunities for part-time and flex-time employment**, **excellent internet service**, **access to good local health care services**, and **transportation options that don't require driving**.

History

Prior to 1870, the Nickerson area was traversed primarily by soldiers, explorers, trappers, traders, and merchants following the nearby Santa Fe Trail toward the southwest. Several land bills were passed by Congress following the Civil War, and Kansas was then flooded by a wide assortment of people seeking free land or business opportunities. By the 1870's the central plains had experienced a rapid buildup of settlers.

As with so many cities in Kansas, Nickerson was founded around the railroad. The name 'Nickerson' was in honor of Thomas Nickerson, president of the A.T. & S. F. Railway. It originally applied to a place about a mile east of the present town site, where the Santa Fe Railroad Company had established a depot in 1872, and platted a town site in 1875.

The *Nickerson Argosy* newspaper was published weekly starting in 1878, and continued providing local news until 1980. The first schoolhouse had been established in Old Nickerson in 1874, and was moved to the new town site in 1879. Nickerson College was chartered in 1898 and merged with Nickerson High School.

Nickerson was incorporated as a city of the third class on June 7, 1879. The following historical map shows that by 1887 Nickerson had already expanded, with several additions to its original town plat.



Chapter 2 History & Environment

Over the decades, Nickerson has continued to develop public facilities and support local social connections. Currently, the community hosts an Elementary School and High School, an EMS Station and a County Fire Department. It has an excellent local park, a Library, a Recreation Commission, a Post Office, a Senior Center, and an active Chamber of Commerce. There is a local grocery, a gas station, a hardware store, churches, and local restaurants.

Nickerson continues to be a resource for local agricultural businesses, but it has become primarily a rural residential community, centered around its excellent schools.

While Nickerson is itself a minor employment center, most of its residents commute to work elsewhere, primarily in Hutchinson. More than six times as many residents commute to jobs outside the city, as compared to the number of people working within Nickerson.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Planning for any community should include appreciation of its historical places. Often the best way to preserve such buildings is to adapt them to an updated use. No buildings in Nickerson are currently listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places, but Nickerson should consider pursuing efforts to recognize and preserve local buildings which may qualify for recognition.

HIGHWAY K-96 / K-14

Kansas State **Highway K-96** has had a major impact on Nickerson, providing a direct high-speed route to Hutchinson and Wichita to the city's southeast, and to Sterling, Lyons and Great Bend to the northwest. Originally stretching across the state from Colorado to Missouri, parts of it have been realigned and superseded by other highways over the years.

KDOT plans to realign K-96 and K-14 from northwest of Hutchinson to north of Sterling, bypassing Nickerson and Sterling in the process, have been completed. The new highway is a super two, built on a four-lane right-of-way to allow for future expansion. **The 15-mile, \$81.7 million realignment project started construction in the spring of 2021, and was opened June 14th, 2023.**

This project is part of a plan to build a diagonal corridor from Wichita northwest through Hutchinson and Great Bend to I-70 in Hays. The new highway section is built to freeway standards, with no at-grade intersections, and a 65 mile-per-hour speed limit.

Access to the new highway segment is limited to just three interchanges—one at 56th Avenue near Hutchinson, one at Nickerson Boulevard, and one at Broadway Avenue near Sterling. The Nickerson interchange is a diamond ramp interchange just north of the City.

This change offers opportunities to make Nickerson's future better. The new interchange offers possibilities for new development north of the City. Without highway traffic, downtown can now become a walkable pedestrian environment that can improve the community's quality of life.

Climate

Climate significantly affects agricultural, economic, and construction activities. Nickerson's Planning Area has a continental climate, characterized by frequent and abrupt weather changes, with wide daily and annual temperature variations, a great deal of sunshine, occasional high winds, and abundant spring rainfall.

While Nickerson's climate is notably variable, it is generally beneficial. The long growing season offers temperatures and sunshine conducive to agricultural production. Total precipitation is adequate for principal crops, though in some years its timing and distribution can cause problems. High winds or hail may occasionally damage crops or structures, sometimes catastrophically.

The typically mild winters mean that various outdoor recreational activities can be sustained almost all year round. Only during the coldest weeks of the year is construction restricted, or construction methods constrained. However, recurring abrupt temperature swings, and frequent, often daily, freeze-thaw cycles in winter profoundly affect the durability of road surfaces and some other building materials.

Nickerson's summers are typically hot, humid, and sunny, while winters are cold, dry, windy, and sometimes overcast. Fahrenheit temperatures over the course of a year typically range between 24 and 94 degrees, rarely falling below 10 or rising above 103.

Specific climate data for Nickerson is available online. Other internet sources offer climate information for nearby Hutchinson.

- [WeatherSpark.com](https://www.weatherSpark.com)
- [USClimateData.com](https://climate.usclimate.org)
- [WeatherBase.com](https://www.weatherbase.com)

Geography

Land use patterns within a community are influenced by its location, and the natural resources, physical features, and regional destinations in its vicinity. Both natural and man-made features may positively support particular land uses, or they may restrict development possibilities and limit the directions available for urban growth.

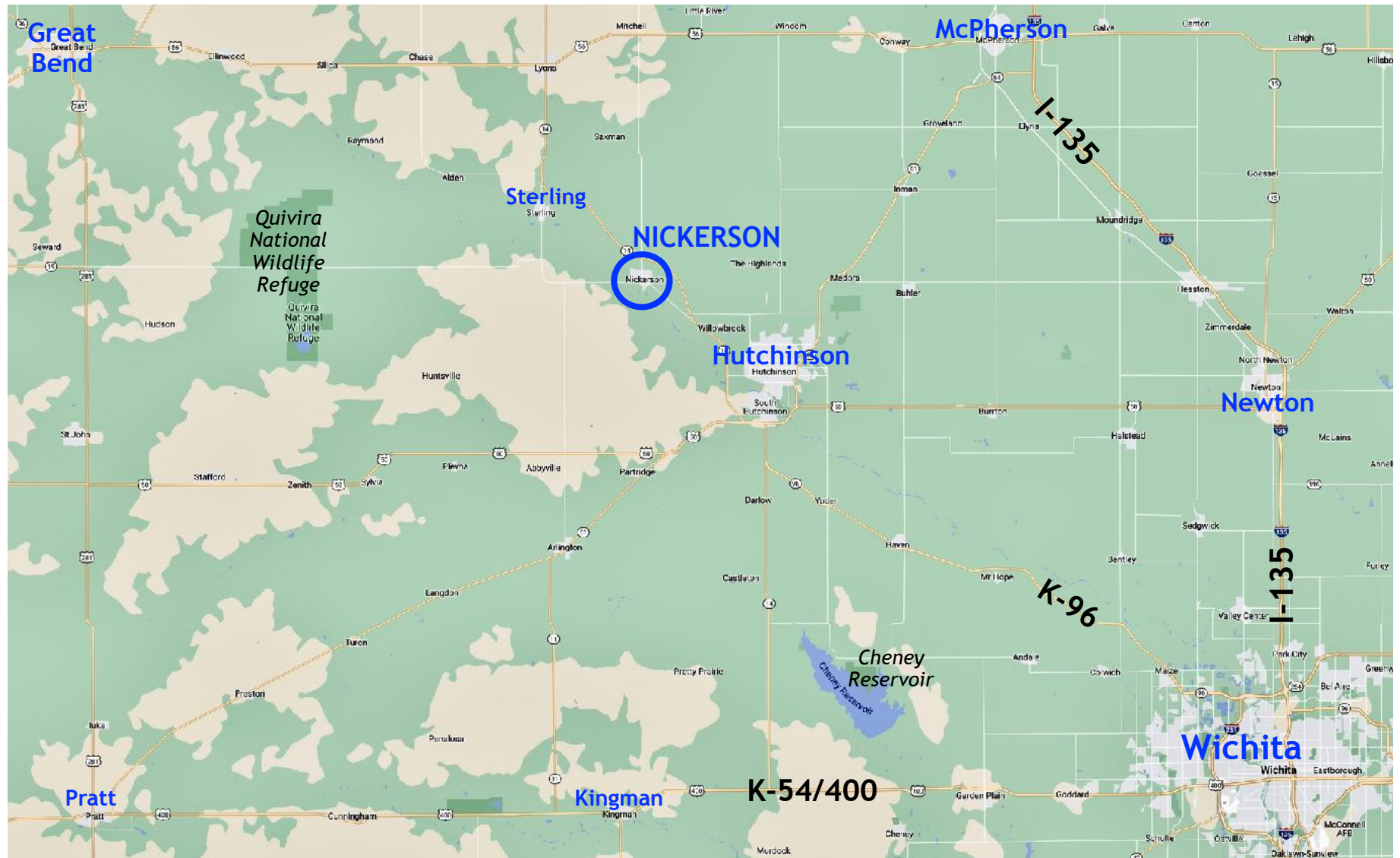
Strive to establish development policies which maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of a planning area's location and physical characteristics, guiding development that is both economically efficient and esthetically pleasing.

Reno County is in south-central Kansas, and is the home of Hutchinson and South Hutchinson, its two biggest cities. The City of Nickerson is in Reno County's Grant Township, just a mile south of the Rice County border. The Nickerson Planning Area is contained within Grant and Salt Creek Townships.

Nickerson is a rural community, sited in the valley of the Arkansas River, which runs roughly northwest to southeast less than a mile from the City's southwestern boundaries. Nickerson is not directly bordered by any other cities. However, it is within a 20-minute drive of Hutchinson, South Hutchinson and Sterling, within a 40-minute drive of McPherson, and within an hour's drive of Great Bend, Newton and Wichita. This increases options for both employers and employees in the Nickerson area, as well as making services and amenities available, that otherwise could not be supported by Nickerson's population alone.

Newly renovated state highway K-96 runs southeast to northwest, just north of Nickerson. The Nickerson interchange is less than a mile north of the current city limits. The community has easy access to the state highway system, and is about a 45-minute drive from access to I-135 and the interstate highway system.

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045



Geographic Location of Nickerson, Kansas

Soils

Soil is a valuable resource, which should be protected. Some soil types are suitable for certain land uses, but not for others; when an inappropriate land use is imposed on an unsuitable soil type, both the land use and the soil are compromised.

Official soil survey information, which is fundamental to many planning decisions, is provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on their website *Web Soil Survey*. Maps of soil types in any selected area are provided, as well as information on the characteristics of the soils themselves, including their suitability for various uses.

Using the *Web Soil Survey* (WSS)

The *Web Soil Survey* is available at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>
Click on the green "Start WSS" button to begin.

Area of Interest (AOI) Simply zoom in on the aerial map until you find the property you are looking for, and draw your "Area of Interest" with the AOI tool. After you have drawn your AOI, you can save the web page as a link in your web browser, so you can easily return to it.

Map & Data After your AOI is defined, click on the "Soil Map" tab to see a soils map and a table showing the percentages of all the soil types in your area of interest.

Click on the "Soil Data Explorer" tab to find information related to your soils, in hundreds of categories—from soil chemistry, erosion factors, or depth of the water table, to its suitability for building basements or a septic field, to its probable yield of corn silage when irrigated.

Soils in the Nickerson Planning Area are typically fine sandy loams. In general, Nickerson's soils are well suited to both agriculture and urban development.

Topography & Drainage

The topography of local landforms, and the drainage patterns which result, have a significant impact on potential land uses. The location and design of some facilities—such as cell towers, water towers, sewage treatment plants, stormwater management structures, and wind turbines—are strongly influenced by relative land elevations.

Nickerson is sited in the Arkansas River valley, on generally flat terrain. The city itself is located on relatively high ground between the Arkansas River, which runs roughly northwest to southeast less than a mile from the City's southwestern boundaries, and Bull Creek, which runs roughly northwest to southeast through the City's northeastern boundaries.

Drainage in Nickerson runs to the River and the Creek, then generally flows to the southeast. Bull Creek eventually drains into the Arkansas River, which drains into the Mississippi, which drains into the Gulf of Mexico.

Within the city limits, elevations range from lows of about 1590 feet above mean sea level (MSL) on the north, south and southeast, to highs of about 1,600 MSL on the west and northwest, for an overall fall of only about 10 feet. Across the Arkansas River toward the southwest, the uplands reach highs of more than 1660 MSL, or over 70 feet above the valley floor, while terrain to the north remains relatively flat well into Rice County.

Unconsolidated deposits of sand and gravel beneath the Arkansas River Valley support water wells with flows ranging from a few gallons per minute to over 2,000 gallons per minute.

Topographic maps from the U.S. Geological Survey are available for viewing or download from the TopoQuest website at www.topoquest.com/places.php.

Floodplains

Historically, people were attracted to relatively flat land near waterways as a place to settle and build. While such land typically has rich soils and easy access to water, it is also prone to high-water flooding, making it potentially dangerous for both people and structures.

In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for mapping floodplains. The **Flood Insurance Rate Maps** produced and updated by FEMA classify floodplains into various Special Flood Hazard Areas, based on degree of risk. The three broadest categories of floodplain designation are floodway, 1% annual chance floodplain, and moderate flood hazard areas.

- **Floodway:** The channel of a river or stream.
- **1% Annual Chance Floodplain:** Areas that will be inundated by a flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also referred to as the base flood area or **100-year floodplain**.
- **Moderate Flood Hazard Area:** Areas between the limits of the 1% annual chance floodplain and the area that will be inundated by a flood event having a 0.2-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also referred to as the **500-year floodplain**.

Floodplain information for the Nickerson Planning Area is from these Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):

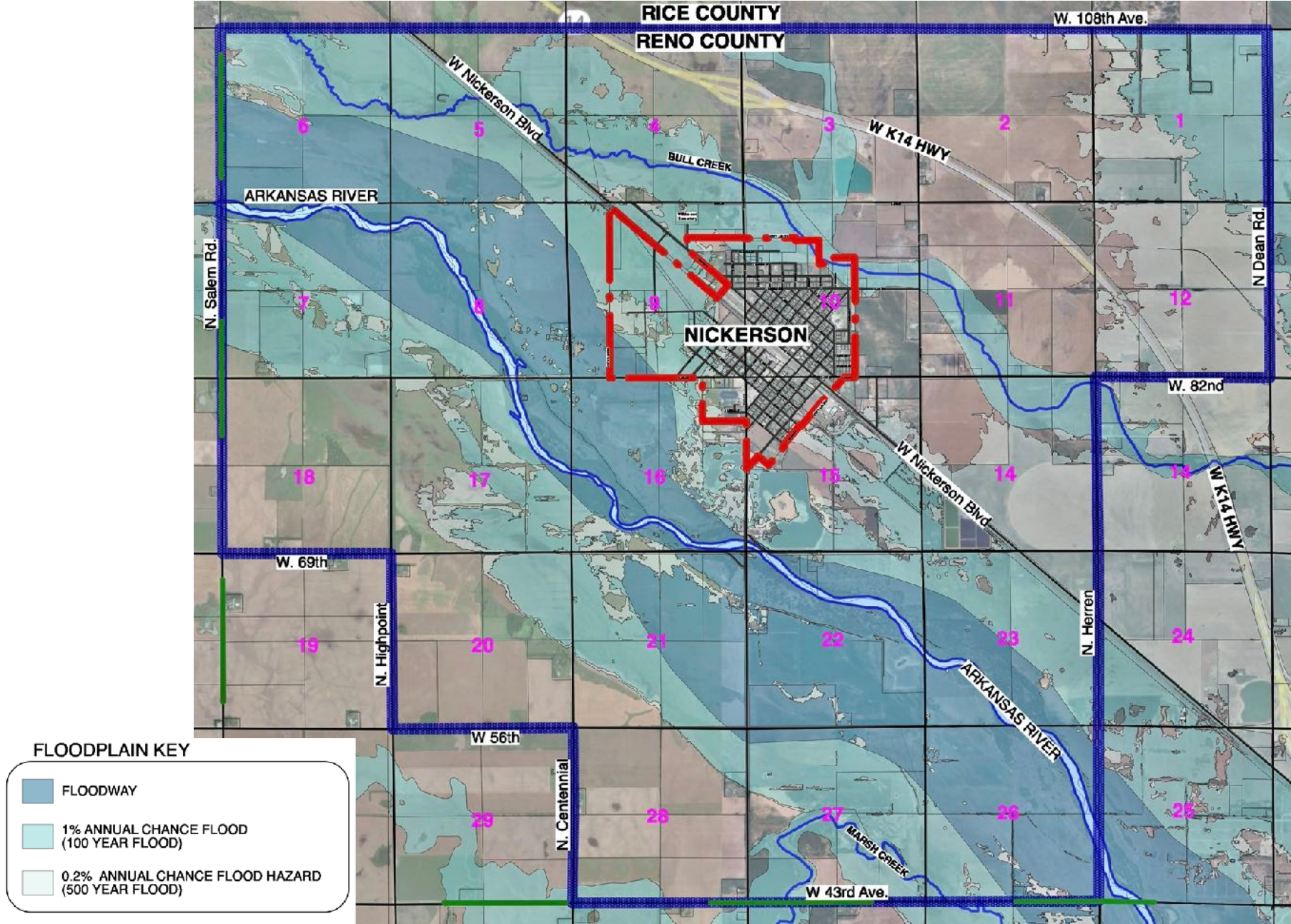
- **20155C0090G**, effective January 29, 2021 — covers the City of Nickerson
- **20155C0095G**, effective January 29, 2021 — covers the area east of the City of Nickerson
- **20155C0260G**, effective January 29, 2021 — covers the area southeast of the City of Nickerson
- **20155C0255G**, effective January 29, 2021 — covers the area south of the City of Nickerson
- **20155C0250G**, effective January 6, 2010 — covers the area southwest of the City of Nickerson
- **20155C0070G**, effective January 29, 2021 — covers the area west of the City of Nickerson

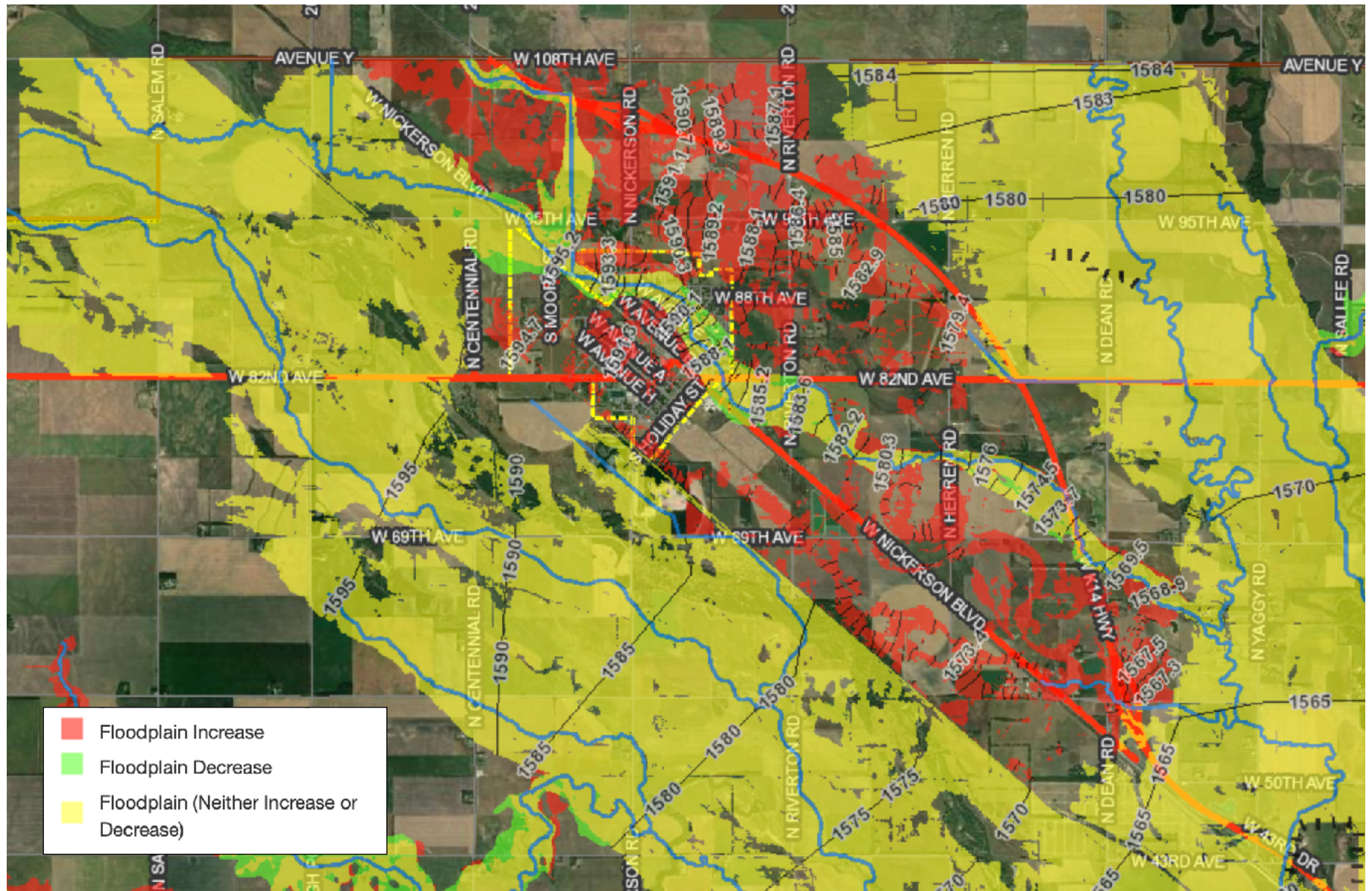
More information is available from the FEMA Flood Map Service Center at <http://msc.fema.gov/portal>.

As shown on the map on the following page, the northern edge and much of the western third of the City of Nickerson are within designated Flood Hazard Areas. However, Nickerson's historic downtown and almost all of its residential neighborhoods are out of the floodplain.

Following the 2010/2021 floodplain map is a 2025 updated plan showing areas of floodplain increase. A final FIRM map from FEMA will be provided to the City once completed.

Nearby land which is not in floodplains, sufficient in area to meet the City's potential development needs over the next twenty years, lies to Nickerson's southeast and northeast beyond the floodplain and towards the K/14 Highway bypass.





Proposed changes to FEMA floodplain designations in the area of Nickerson, Kansas – August 2025

Flood Insurance

Historically, private insurers were generally unwilling to provide insurance for structures in floodplains, so in 1968 Congress created the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**, to help floodplain property owners protect themselves financially against property losses due to flooding. Communities participating in the NFIP agreed to adopt and enforce ordinances which meet or exceed FEMA requirements, to reduce the risk of flooding. In return, the NFIP subsidized flood insurance to local landowners, with rates based on degree of risk, as determined by the Flood Hazard Area in which their property is located.

One of the inadvertent side-effects of this law was to facilitate construction in floodplains, increasing the number and value of structures at risk. Over the ensuing decades, numerous major floods across the nation resulted in extraordinarily high costs to federal taxpayers.

Various revisions of the NFIP resulted, in attempts to bring insurance rates into alignment with actual risk, and to more strongly discourage people from building in floodplains. These revisions included the Flood Insurance Protection Act of 1973, the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2004, the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, and the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014.

As climate change continues to drive a higher rate of extreme weather events, additional revisions to flood insurance legislation are likely to result, making flood insurance for structures in floodplains more difficult to acquire and more expensive.

Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program is required by various federal grant programs, and is required in order to be eligible for mortgages backed by federal guarantees, such as VA and FHA loans.

The City of Nickerson has participated in the *National Flood Insurance Program* since 1974. Floodplain requirements for the City are administered by the City of Nickerson Floodplain Manager, operating out of City Hall. Nickerson's Floodplain Management Regulations are available at City Hall.

Reno County has participated in the NFIP since 1977. Floodplain requirements for unincorporated areas of Reno County, including all of Nickerson's Planning Area outside of the City, are administered by the County's Floodplain Administrator, working out of the County Planning and Zoning Division in the Reno County Public Works building in South Hutchinson. [Reno County Floodplain Management Regulations](#) are available on the County's website.

Woodlands

When individual trees in yards, in parks, and along streets are considered collectively, they form an **urban forest**. The benefits of urban trees are well documented, and include providing shade, reducing noise levels, decreasing air and water pollution, sequestering carbon, diminishing summertime energy use, furnishing wildlife habitat, screening undesirable views, serving as buffers between land uses, and raising property values. A well-maintained and well-planned urban forest enhances the community's livability, its character, and its quality of life.

Under Kansas statute K.S.A. 12-3201 et seq., cities are authorized to regulate the planting, maintenance, treatment, and removal of trees and shrubbery on all street and alley rights-of-way. Nickerson does so in its Municipal Code, [Chapter 13, Article 3](#).

Abutting property owners hold "title to and property in" any trees and shrubbery in the planting strip between the property line (which is typically along the back edge of the sidewalk) and the back-of-curb line. Property owners can recover damages to such trees, and initiate actions to prevent their destruction. Cities can designate allowable street trees in the planting strip. Some cities conduct periodic stump removal programs.

Cities in Kansas have the option to require new developments to include trees, through their Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

Many of Nickerson's street trees are mature and over-mature, and likely to remain so during the 20-year span of this Plan. Some are in need of restorative pruning or removal.

Nevertheless, the City should plant some new street trees each year, to maintain a healthy age spread in Nickerson's urban forest. The goal is to make sure that in future, there will never be a neighborhood where *all* the street trees reach senescence and have to be removed simultaneously, leaving no mature trees behind.

Trees in Kansas come under extraordinary stress, from ice storms, drought, severe hot and cold spells, and insect and disease outbreaks—in recent years, diseases affecting pines and ash trees. Also, many of the wonderful mature trees that were planted along streets and in parks during the early years of development in Kansas cities are now nearing the ends of their lives.

Maintaining a healthy community forest over the long-term requires expertise and ongoing efforts by City staff, a commitment by City officials to dedicate necessary resources to the task, and broad public support and understanding of the value of trees to the community's quality of life.

For information on helpful organizations, and on funding programs that can help improve your community forest, see the [Kansas Forest Service](#) website. Also, consider becoming a "Tree City USA" through the Arbor Day Foundation's [Tree City USA program](#). It provides communities with a four-step framework to maintain and celebrate their urban forest.

Shelter belts are an essential safeguard for farming on the prairie, yet throughout Kansas they are showing a decline in vigor due to the advanced average age of the trees.

Riparian woodlands, along the banks of rivers and streams, are critical parts the prairie's freshwater ecosystems.

Trees' roots forestall erosion, and their summer shade helps keep water temperatures within a range that supports aquatic life.

Shelter belts and riparian woodlands in Nickerson's Planning Area cover a relatively small acreage, but they are very important to the long-term health of the soil and water on which much of the Nickerson area economy depends. Every effort should be made to sustain and enhance these woodlands, and to **reinvigorate riparian woodlands and shelter belts**.

The Kansas Forest Service website includes information on government [conservation programs that can help landowners both plan and pay for woodlands renovation](#).

CHAPTER 3. Background Data

Data in this chapter is from the *2020 Census* and either the *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (ACS)*, or the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. In some instances, data for Nickerson was not available yet from the 2021 ACS, so the 2020 ACS data was used instead. Within any given table, all comparative data is from the same Survey.

The ACS has replaced the Census long form. Also administered by the Census Bureau, it provides more detailed and more current information than the decennial census. However, since the ACS is based on a smaller sample size, if at any point there is a discrepancy between the two sources, information from the Census is regarded as the official data.

Demographic, social, housing and economic information is available in more detail from the [U.S. Census Bureau Data Profiles](#) website. Select the most recent year of data available; select "Place", then select the name of your city in the pop-up menus; then click on "Get Data Profile Links" to bring up an overview of available data sets for your community.

More detailed Kansas information, including historical demographic data, is available from the [University of Kansas Institute for Policy & Social Research](#).

Census Definitions Certain terms used in this chapter are defined precisely by the Census Bureau, with differences from standard usage which have significant implications for correctly understanding the data.

Housing Unit: A house, apartment, mobile home, a group of rooms, a single room occupied as a separate living quarter, or vacant units intended for occupancy.

Family: A family consists of two or more people who are related by blood or marriage residing in the same housing unit.

Household: A household consists of all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship, and may refer to a person living alone.

Median / Mean: A *median* is the middle number in a distribution of numbers, such that there is an equal probability of being above it or below it. A *mean* is generally understood as the "average" of a set of numbers, calculated by adding all the numbers in a set and then dividing by the total number of numbers. While a mean may be skewed by a single out-of-the-norm number in the set, a median typically gives a fairly accurate picture of "normal".

Demographics

This section includes information on national demographic trends, as well as on Nickerson's demographic and social characteristics.

Understanding the characteristics of people in Nickerson helps community leaders develop policies to effectively meet residents' current and future needs.

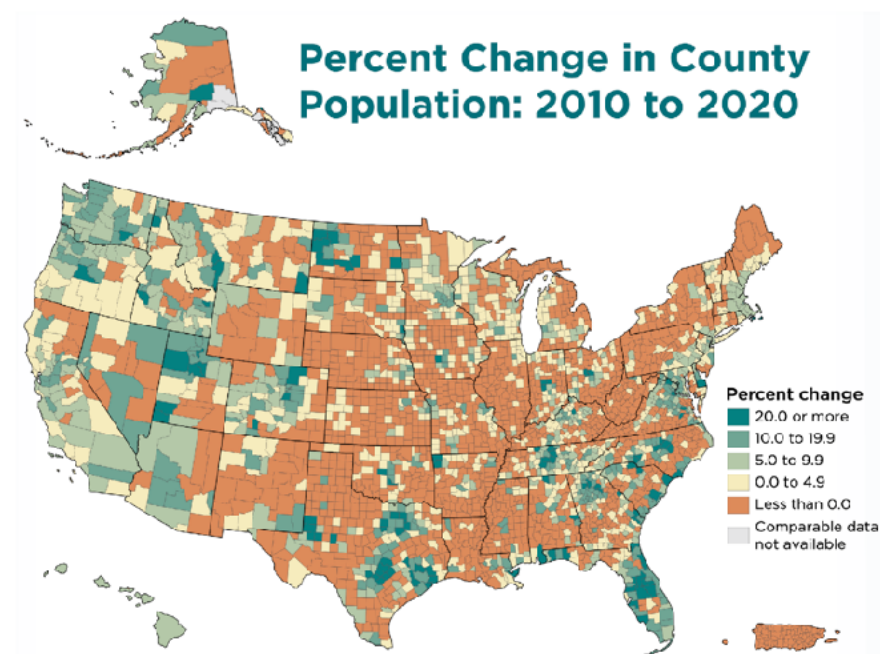
Population Trends

As detailed in the following table of U.S. Census data, the population of the United States grew during the fifty year period leading up to 2020 by an average of about 8.8% per decade, while Kansas grew by only about 4.9% per decade—a little over half the national rate. During that same time frame, Reno County's population increased by an average of just 0.5% per decade—barely managing to remain stable.

	U.S.		Kansas		Reno County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1970	203,211,926	—	2,246,578	—	60,765	—
1980	226,545,805	11.5%	2,363,679	5.2%	64,983	6.9%
1990	248,709,873	9.8%	2,477,574	4.8%	62,389	-4.0%
2000	281,421,906	13.2%	2,688,418	8.5%	64,790	3.8%
2010	308,745,538	9.7%	2,853,118	6.1%	64,511	-0.4%
2020	331,449,281	7.4%	2,937,880	3.0%	61,898	-4.1%
AVG	—	8.8%	—	4.9%	—	0.5%

National Population Trends Recent national population trends show people moving from rural areas to cities, and from the northeastern and central parts of the nation to the south and west. The Great Plains region in particular is losing population to other parts of the country.

The following map shows the percentage of population change between 2010 and 2020, for each county in the country. Green shades indicate growth; the darker the green, the greater the growth rate. Tan indicates stability or slow growth, and orange indicates population loss.



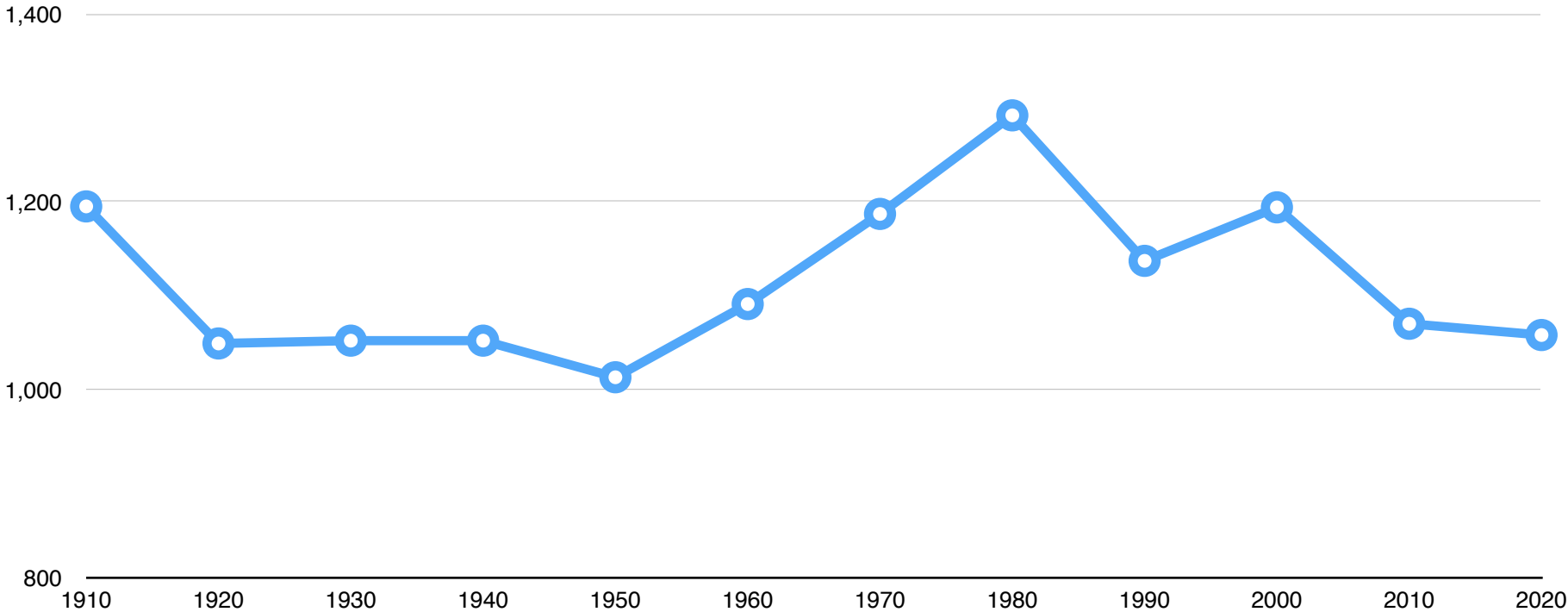
Kansas Population Trends Looking closely at Kansas on this map shows that most population growth in the last decade has taken place around Wichita, and in the northeastern part of the state—in the Kansas City suburbs, and around the university town of Manhattan.

Reno County, like much of the nation's heartland, shows the orange color indicating population loss during the decade leading up to 2020.

Nickerson's Population History

Nickerson saw population growth during the thirty years from 1950 through the 1970s, but its population has been trending down since then. During the fifty year period leading up to 2020, Nickerson's population has declined by an average of nearly 2% per decade.

Nickerson				
Census	Population	Census	Population	% Change
1900	—	1970	1,187	—
1910	1,195	1980	1,292	8.8%
1920	1,049	1990	1,137	-12.0%
1930	1,052	2000	1,194	5.0%
1940	1,052	2010	1,070	-10.4%
1950	1,013	2020	1,058	-1.1%
1960	1,091	Average per decade		-1.9%



Future Population

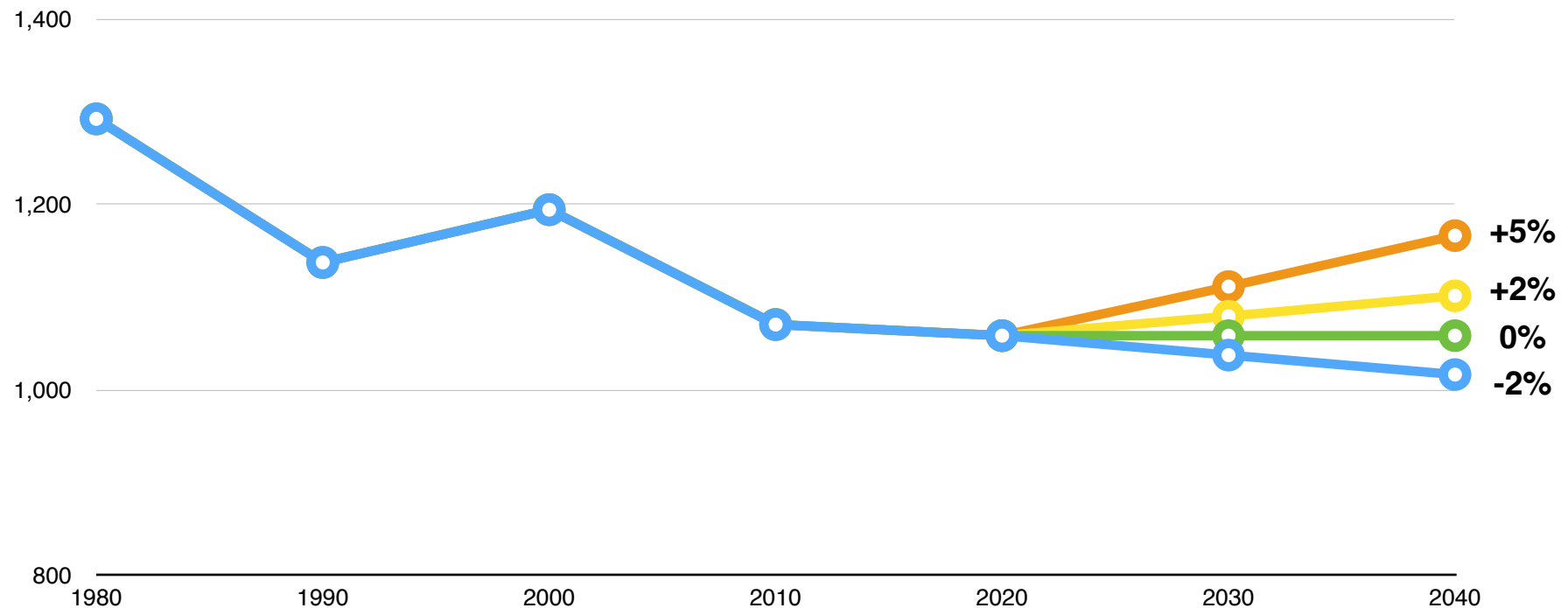
Many social and economic variables can affect the patterns of change over time in a community's population. Nevertheless, a reasonably accurate idea of a community's future population is an essential foundation for making planning decisions, because changes in population affect requirements for everything from police services to housing construction to sewage treatment capacity.

Making an accurate estimate for the future population of a small city is especially difficult, since a small change in absolute numbers can represent a substantial percentage of population change.

The following table and graph show what Nickerson's 2040 population would be under various potential rates of population change—a loss of 2% per decade, no change, or gains of 2% or 5% per decade.

If Nickerson continues to lose population for the next two decades at approximately the same 2% per decade rate of its last 50 years, it will have a population of about 1,016 people by 2040. At a growth rate of 5% per decade, Nickerson would have 1,166 people in 2040—an increase of 108 individuals.

Future Population at Various Rates of Change				
Year	-2%	0%	+2%	+5%
2020	—	1,058	—	—
2030	1,037	1,058	1,079	1,111
2040	1,016	1,058	1,101	1,166



Increasing the City's population over this Plan's 20-year period will be a challenging goal, given the recent history of declining population in both Reno County and the City of Nickerson. To achieve it, community leaders will need to understand the changing dynamics that result from regional population shifts in south-central Kansas.

A city has three basic strategic options for maintaining and increasing its population, all of which should be pursued as appropriate: **retain existing residents, attract new residents, and annex additional residents** as the city grows geographically.

Important factors that allow a community to attract and retain residents include good-quality housing at a variety of price points and in a variety of types, reliable utilities services, good schools, and community amenities that enhance quality of life—especially good schools, good parks, sufficient child-care options, business creation opportunities, and employment opportunities.

Demographic Characteristics

Much of the information shown in this section is useful primarily when viewed in comparison to the same data from other geographic areas. For instance, compared to the state and the nation, Nickerson has an unusually high percentage of people with disabilities, and unusually low racial and ethnic diversity.

- **Disability** Of the total civilian non-institutionalized population in Nickerson (833 individuals), 157 people have a disability. Of those 157 disabled people, 26 (16.6%) are under 18 years of age, 101 (64.3%) are between 18 and 64 years in age, and 30 (19.1%) are 65 years of age or older.

Disability and age/household/family size data is from the 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

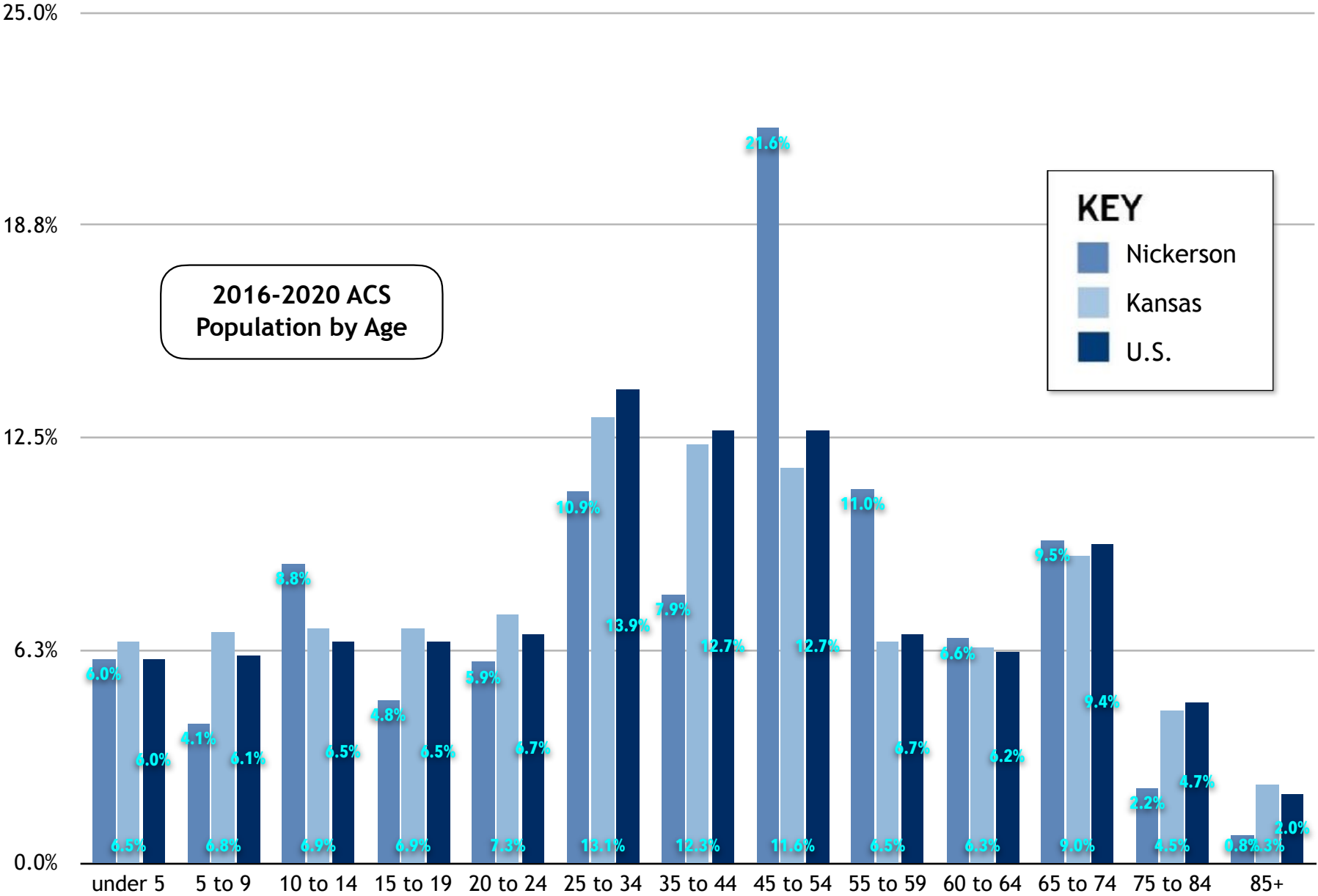
	Nickerson	Kansas	U.S.
Median Age (in years)	48.0	37.0	38.4
Average Household Size	2.31	2.51	2.60
Average Family Size	2.94	3.12	3.20
Households with 1 or more people under 18 years	29.1%	30.8%	30.6%
Households with 1 or more people 65 years and over	27.7%	28.9%	30.2%
% White	98.4%	87.5%	75.1%
% Hispanic or Latino	4.3%	12.1%	18.2%
% Disabled (civilian, non-institutionalized)	18.8%	13.2%	12.6%

Population by Age / Age Distribution The chart on the following page shows the percentage of each age category for Nickerson residents, compared to figures for Kansas and the United States.

Nickerson's population is heavily skewed toward people in the 45 to 59 year age brackets. The percent of young adults is low, and seniors over the age of 75 are apparently moving elsewhere to find needed housing options and health services.

Age distribution data is from the 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045



Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

Households & Families in Nickerson		
Family Households	215	60%
<i>Married couple without children</i>	103	29%
<i>Married couple with children under 18 years</i>	55	15%
<i>Cohabiting couple without children</i>	9	2%
<i>Cohabiting couple with children under 18</i>	25	7%
<i>Male householder with no spouse/partner present, with children under 18 years</i>	11	3%
<i>Female householder with no spouse/partner present, with children under 18 years</i>	12	3%
Non-Family Households	146	40%
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	361	100%

- **Children / Seniors** Out of 361 households in Nickerson, 105 (29.1%) had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household; 100 (27.7%) had at least one person 65 years of age or older in the household; and 156 (43.2%) had neither.
- **Parents** Out of 103 family households where adults are living with their own children under 18 years of age, 55 households (53.4%) are married couples, 25 (24.3%) are cohabiting couples, 12 (11.6%) are female single parents, and 11 (10.7%) are male single parents.
Nearly a quarter of Nickerson's households with young children are headed by single parents.

Data on this page is from the
2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Single Person Households in Nickerson		
<i>Male householder living alone, under 65 years</i>	30	25%
<i>Male householder living alone, 65 years or over</i>	24	20%
<i>Female householder living alone, under 65 years</i>	17	14%
<i>Female householder living alone, 65 years or over</i>	49	41%
TOTAL SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS	120	100%

These figures have significant planning implications for both housing needs and social services in Nickerson.

Nickerson Educational Attainment (25 years old and over)		
Less than 9th grade	6	1.0%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	56	9.1%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	219	35.4%
Some college, no degree	203	32.8%
Associate's degree	42	6.8%
Bachelor's degree	48	7.8%
Graduate or professional degree	44	7.1%
Total	618	100.0%

- Of people in Nickerson 25 years old or older, 90.0% had a high school degree or higher, compared to 91.6% in Kansas, and 88.9% nationally.
- Of people in Nickerson 25 years old or older, 14.9% had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34.4% in Kansas, and 33.7% nationally.

Housing

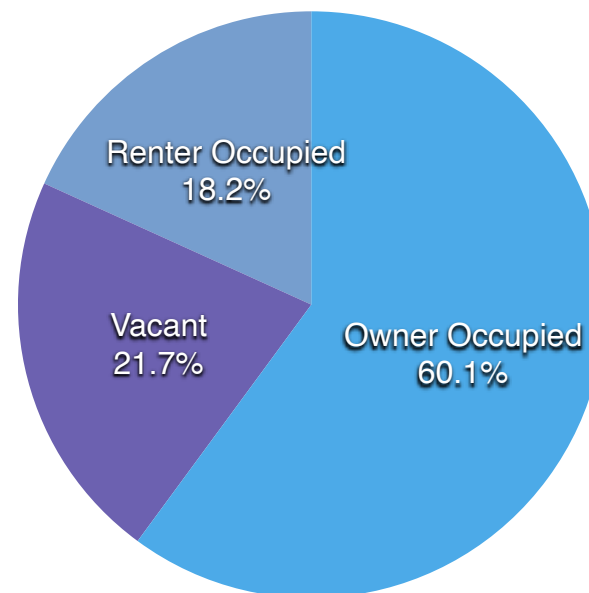
The variety and quality of housing options available in Nickerson impact both the community's quality of life, and whether or not homeowners choose to move to or remain in the city. Residential properties are a major source for the City's tax revenues, and a healthy housing market benefits many businesses as well. A sufficient, diverse, and high-quality housing supply also reinforces opportunities to attract new businesses and their employees.

A house is usually the largest single investment for a family or individual, and a home and its neighborhood are a source of great influence on household satisfaction. While a nice house does not guarantee a happy home life, a house which is unsuitable or which does not function properly for its residents can certainly increase chronic stress levels. Houses that are difficult to maintain can generate financial concerns and physical discomfort.

Young adults, families with children, singles, couples, empty nesters and retirees all need housing suited to their particular requirements—and if it is not available locally, they will often consider moving to another community to find it.

This section gives an overall picture of the housing situation in the City of Nickerson, based primarily on Information from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Housing information from the 2020 Census is also included; though very limited, it is the official data on the few points of information which were counted.

Definition of Housing Units: The Census count of housing units includes both occupied and vacant residential buildings. Recreational vehicles and the like are included only if they are occupied as someone's usual place of residence. Vacant mobile homes are included provided they are intended for occupancy on the site where they stand, but if they are on sales lots or in storage yards they are not counted as housing units.



- **Occupancy** Out of 461 housing units in Nickerson, 361 (78.3%) were occupied and 100 (21.7%) were vacant. Of the 361 occupied units, 277 (76.7%) were owner-occupied, and 84 (23.3%) were renter-occupied.
- **Household Size** The average household size of owner-occupied units was 2.27 persons. The average household size of renter-occupied units was 2.43 persons.

Data on this page is from the
2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Housing Types	Number	Percentage
Single, detached	422	91.5%
Mobile/Manufactured Home	39	8.5%
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	461	100.0%

Housing Types The majority (91.5%) of Nickerson's housing stock is single-family detached homes, and the balance (8.5%) is Mobile or Manufactured Homes. Nickerson has no townhomes or other single-family attached housing, and no duplexes, triplexes, quad homes or apartment buildings. There may be an unmet demand in Nickerson for a wider array of other housing type options.

Bedrooms per Housing Unit	number	percent
0	0	0.0%
1	48	10.4%
2	126	27.3%
3	219	47.5%
4	43	9.3%
5 or more	25	5.4%
TOTALS	461	100%

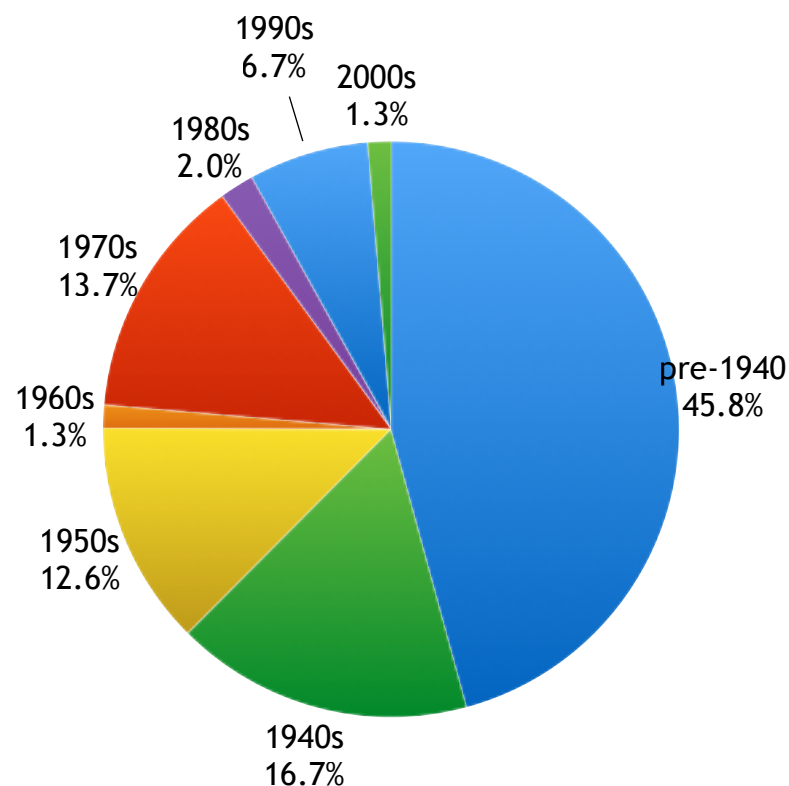
Bedrooms For many years, the real estate industry has used the number of bedrooms per house as a key factor in marketing homes. A 3-bedroom house has been considered the standard starter home for a typical family; nearly half of Nickerson's housing stock falls into this category.

However, as household sizes trend smaller, and one- or two-person households become the norm, smaller houses are becoming more and more marketable, especially in walkable neighborhoods.

Data on this page is from the
2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Age of Housing Units No homes were constructed in Nickerson in the 2010s, or early 2020s. Three quarters of Nickerson's housing was constructed before 1960, and are at least 60 years old. Over 90% of Nickerson's housing units are over 40 years old.

When they are well maintained, older homes can help give a community continuity and character, but if they are allowed to fall into disrepair, they can become a source of blight.



**Age of Housing Units
in Nickerson**

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

Value of Owner-occupied Housing Units	Number	Percentage
Less than \$50,000	85	30.7%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	126	45.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	47	17.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2	0.7%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	7	2.5%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0	0.0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	10	3.6%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%
TOTAL OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	277	100.0%

Value Over three quarters of Nickerson's owner-occupied housing units are less than \$100,000 in value.

- **Median Value** The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Nickerson was \$68,800.

Note, much of this data on housing values and costs was collected before the notable rise in housing values that occurred in the years immediately following the advent of the Covid pandemic.

Selected Monthly Owner Costs – Housing Units WITH a Mortgage		
	number	percent
Less than \$500	0	0.0%
\$500 to \$999	58	55.2%
\$1000 to \$1499	33	31.4%
\$1500 to \$1999	14	13.3%
\$2000 to \$2499	0	0.0%
\$2500 to \$2999	0	0.0%
\$3000 or more	0	0.0%
TOTALS	105	100%

Selected Monthly Owner Costs – Housing Units WITHOUT a Mortgage		
	number	percent
Less than \$250	42	24.4%
\$250 to \$399	45	26.2%
\$400 to \$599	53	30.8%
\$600 to \$799	18	10.5%
\$800 to \$999	14	8.1%
\$1000 or more	0	0.0%
TOTALS	172	100%

Housing Costs The cost of owning a house varies significantly between those paying a mortgage, and those who do not have a mortgage to pay.

- **Mortgages** Out of the 277 owner-occupied housing units in Nickerson, 105 (37.9%) had a mortgage, and 172 (62.1%) did not.
- **Monthly Cost** The median monthly owner cost for housing units with a mortgage was \$971, and for housing units without a mortgage was \$397.

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045

Housing Costs as a Percent of Income People paying a very high percentage of their income in housing costs are often people with a very low household income, such as students, or elderly people on a fixed income.

Selected Monthly Owner Costs				
Percentage of Income	Housing Units WITH a Mortgage		Housing Units WITHOUT a Mortgage	
	number	percent	number	percent
less than 10%	—	—	92	53.5%
10 to 14.9%	—	—	26	15.1%
15 to 19.9%	—	—	10	5.8%
less than 20%	46	43.8%	—	—
20% to 24.9%	29	27.6%	10	5.8%
25% to 29.9%	2	1.9%	20	11.6%
30% to 34.9%	6	5.7%	0	0.0%
35% or more	22	21.0%	14	8.1%
Not computed	0	—	0	—
TOTALS	105	100%	172	100%

The following tables show information on rent in occupied rental units in which rent was paid. (No rent was being paid on 11 of the occupied rental units in Nickerson.)

Gross Rent in Occupied Units	Number	Percentage
Less than \$500	0	0.0%
\$500 to \$999	50	68.5%
\$1000 to \$1499	23	31.5%
\$1500 or more	0	0.0%
TOTAL OCCUPIED RENTAL UNITS IN WHICH RENT WAS PAID	73	100.0%

- **Median Rent** The median rental rate of Nickerson's occupied rental units was \$737 per month.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income		
Percentage of Income	Households	
	number	percent
less than 15%	0	0.0%
15% to 19.9%	36	49.3%
20% to 24.9%	3	4.1%
25% to 29.9%	0	0.0%
30% to 34.9%	8	11.0%
35% or more	26	35.6%
TOTALS	73	100%

Rental Costs as a Percent of Income Over half of renters in Nickerson paid less than 25% of their household income per month in housing costs. The 36% of Nickerson tenants that are paying more than 35% of their income on rent are likely people with a very low household income, such as elderly people on a fixed income.

Housing Condition Survey

A Housing Condition Survey was carried out in Nickerson by Planning Consultant John Riggs in 2016. He assessed the physical condition of each dwelling by a visual inspection of its exterior, and rated each dwelling as either "Sound", "Deteriorated" or "Dilapidated".

- **Sound** – Appears to need little or no maintenance; can be maintained in good condition by normal conservation measures.
- **Deteriorated** – Shows exterior indications of neglect, such as loose siding, or windows, roofs or doors in need of repair; can economically be restored to a sound condition.
- **Dilapidated** – Exhibits major structural damage such as crumbling foundations, sagging roof lines, walls out of plumb, and steps, siding, or porches rotted and falling; not economical to repair, and unfit for human habitation. Should be demolished.

Dwelling Unit Condition – 2016	Units	%
Conventional Housing	—	—
Sound	339	77.9%
Deteriorated	31	7.1%
Dilapidated	0	0.0%
SUBTOTAL	370	85.1%
Manufactured Housing	—	—
Sound	56	12.9%
Deteriorated	9	2.1%
Dilapidated	0	0.0%
SUBTOTAL	65	14.9%
TOTAL	435	100.0%

Economy

Census information in this section applies only to people living *inside* the city limits of Nickerson, and does not include data on those living in the Nickerson Planning Area. Therefore, the extensive agricultural component of the local economy may not appear proportionately in the data shown for the City, but may be inferred from data for Reno County.

Annual Per Capita Income

"Income" includes not just earnings, but also income from other sources, such as investments, Social Security or Supplemental Security, retirement accounts, or public assistance.

The per capita income figure is a mean, derived by dividing the total income of every person 16 years old and over in a geographic area by the total population in that area. This figure is most useful when compared to the same datum for other places, and should not be construed as an accurate representation of actual income for a typical Nickerson wage or salary earner.

Annual Per Capita Income	
United States	\$35,384
Kansas	\$32,798
Reno County	\$27,613
Nickerson	\$24,109

The annual per capita income for the City of Nickerson is notably lower than comparable figures for the county, state and nation.

Data on per capita income is from the
2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Median Earnings

	Median Earnings					
	(full-time, year-round workers)				(also part-time)	
	Male Workers		Female Workers		All Workers	
	amount	% of US	amount	% of US	amount	% of US
USA	\$54,323	—	\$44,220	—	\$36,280	—
Kansas	\$51,978	95.7%	\$40,776	92.2%	\$34,481	95.0%
Reno County	\$46,572	85.7%	\$33,042	74.7%	\$30,015	82.7%
Nickerson	\$45,750	84.2%	\$35,586	80.5%	\$33,810	93.2%

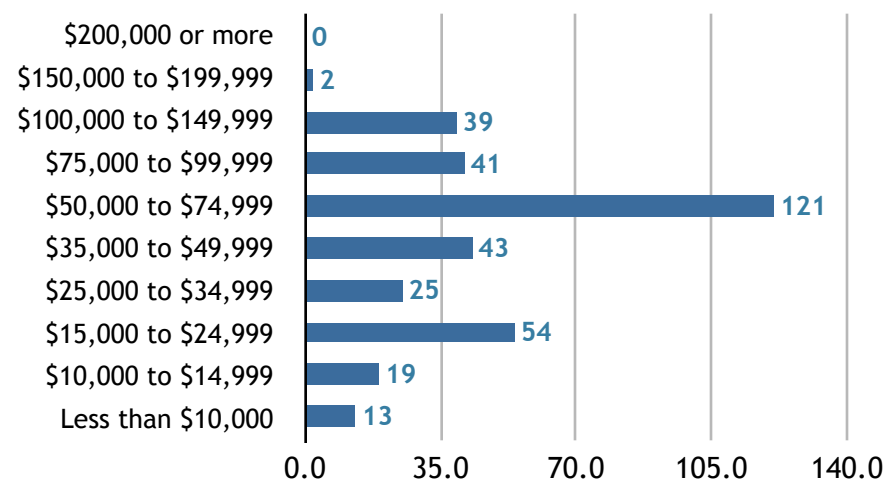
Earnings in Nickerson are also quite low—about 84% of the national average for full-time men, and 80% of the national average for full-time women.

Annual Household Income & Benefits

Non-family households include persons living alone, while family households often have more than one income earner.

	Median Household Income		
	Family	Non-family	All Households
United States	\$80,069	\$39,027	\$64,994
Kansas	\$77,620	\$34,826	\$61,091
Reno County	\$64,108	\$31,430	\$51,520
Nickerson	\$54,250	\$21,583	\$53,224

Out of 357 households in Nickerson, annual household income and benefits were distributed as shown in the graph below. The bars indicate the number of households in each income range, with incomes shown in 2020 inflation-adjusted dollars.



Data on this page is from the
2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Types of Employment

The 2016-2020 ACS estimates that out of 692 people who were 16 years of age and older in Nickerson, 472 were in the labor force (68.2%), including 446 (64.5%) employed civilians, and 26 (3.8%) who were unemployed. No members of the armed forces lived in Nickerson.

The following three tables show data for Nickerson's 446 employed civilians 16 years of age and older—by occupational category, by the class of worker, and by the industry in which they were employed.

Occupational Category	Persons	%
Management, business, science, and arts	166	37.2%
Sales and office	85	19.1%
Service	84	18.8%
Production, transportation, & material moving	66	14.8%
Natural resources, construction, & maintenance	45	10.1%

Class of Worker	Persons	%
Private wage, salary, and commission	338	75.8%
Government workers (working for federal, foreign, international, tribal, state or local government)	94	21.1%
Self-employed (in own not-incorporated business)	10	2.2%
Unpaid family workers	4	0.9%

Industry in which Employed	Persons	%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	131	29.4%
Manufacturing	63	14.1%
Retail trade	61	13.7%
Wholesale trade	38	8.5%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	30	6.7%
Construction	27	6.1%
Other services, except public administration	19	4.3%
Information	17	3.8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	16	3.6%
Public administration	15	3.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	11	2.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	11	2.5%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	7	1.6%

Data on this page is from the
2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Unemployment

The Census defines the **labor force** as those civilians, 16 years old or older, who are employed or seeking employment. The **unemployment rate** is the percent of people *in the labor force* who are unemployed—a ratio which only includes those working or *actively looking* for work; it excludes retirees, full-time homemakers, and full-time students, among others.

Unemployment Rate (2016-2020 ACS)			
United States	5.4%	Reno County	4.4%
Kansas	4.1%	Nickerson	5.5%

Nickerson's unemployment rate is higher than that for Kansas or Reno County as a whole, but close to the national average.

The percentages of "unemployed civilians" shown in the table below include people who are *not* actively looking for work, such as students, homemakers and retirees.

Employment	Nickerson		Reno County		Kansas	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Population 16 years of age and over	692	100.0%	49,945	100.0%	2,285,921	100.0%
• Civilian labor force	472	68.2%	30,243	60.6%	1,505,433	65.9%
<i>Employed / civilian</i>	446	64.5%	28,927	57.9%	1,444,074	63.2%
<i>Unemployed civilians</i>	26	3.8%	1,316	2.6%	61,359	2.7%
• Military labor force	0	0.00%	38	0.08%	17,916	0.78%
• Not in labor force	220	31.8%	19,664	39.4%	762,572	33.4%

Out of the 692 people in the City of Nickerson who were 16 years old or older, **31.8% were not in the labor force**, compared to **33.4% in Kansas**. People in this category are typically retired, disabled, full-time students, or full-time homemakers.

Poverty

The Census uses federal poverty guidelines to determine poverty levels. Other indicators often used to estimate the degree of poverty in a community include rates of health insurance coverage, and the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches at school. As with many such indicators, the numbers are most useful when compared to similar data for other geographic areas.

The following table shows percentages of people whose income in the previous 12 months was below the federal poverty level, as well as rates of health insurance coverage for the civilian non-institutionalized population.

	Poverty Rates		Health Insurance Coverage (% of civilian non-institutionalized population)		
	All Families	All People	With Public Coverage	With Private Insurance	Without Insurance
United States	9.1%	12.8%	35.3%	68.1%	8.7%
Kansas	7.6%	11.4%	29.3%	75.0%	8.7%
Reno County	8.1%	12.4%	35.6%	72.1%	9.7%
Nickerson	6.3%	7.4%	33.4%	65.2%	13.8%

Nickerson's poverty rates are lower than those for the nation, state, or county. People living outside a family support structure typically endure higher rates of poverty than people living within a family, which is the case in Nickerson.

The percentage of Nickerson's population that has **no health insurance coverage** is notably higher than that for the nation, state, or county.

Commuting

The 446 workers living in Nickerson, 16 years old or older, commuted to work as shown in the following table. The **mean travel time to work** for them was **21.9 minutes**.

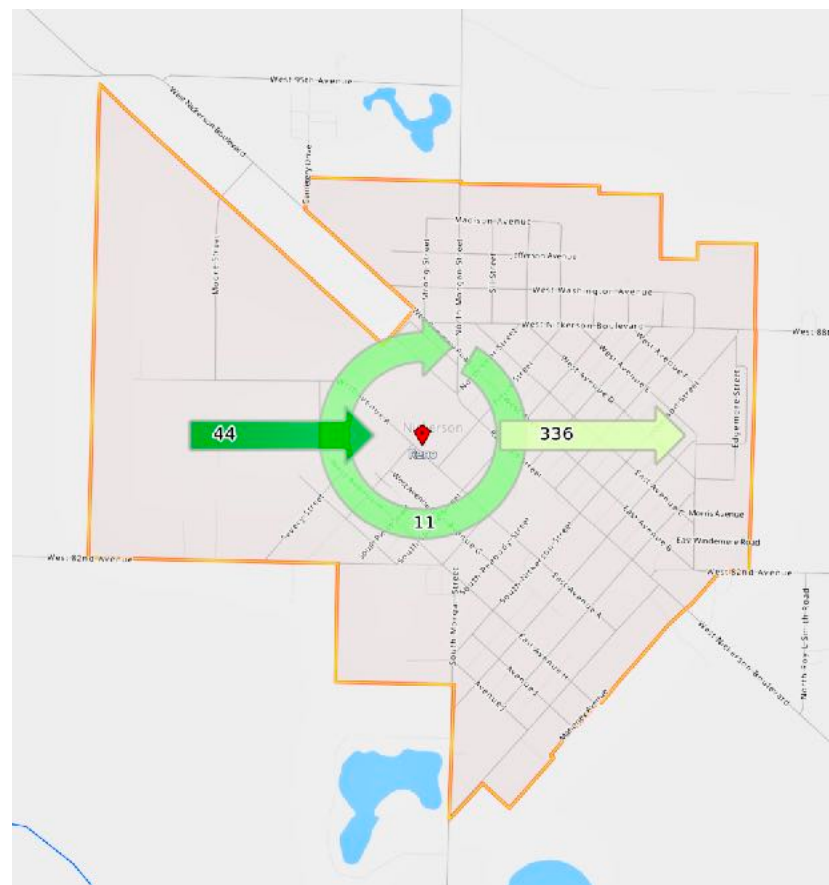
Commuting	Persons	%
Drove in car, truck or van—alone	409	91.7%
Drove in car, truck or van—carpooled	25	5.6%
Worked from home	7	1.6%
Walked	5	1.1%
Other means	0	0.0%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0	0.0%

As is typical for rural Kansas communities, most people commute by vehicle, alone.

Note, this information was collected over the five years between 2016 and 2020, then averaged. The Covid pandemic lockdown began in March of 2020, which may have skewed the results toward an increase in people working from home.

Data on commuting is from the
2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Inflow / Outflow Job Counts Based on 2020 Census data on primary jobs, 55 people were employed within the city limits of Nickerson. Of those, 11 people both live and work in the City, and 44 commute into the City from elsewhere. Out of the 347 *employed* people *living* in Nickerson, 336 (96.8%) commute out of the City to work elsewhere.



This pattern reflects Nickerson's status as a rural city which functions in only a minor degree as a local employment center, but primarily as a bedroom community for the larger regional economy, including the nearby Hutchinson metropolitan area.

Local Tax Levies

Property tax rates are expressed in mills, or tax dollars due per one thousand dollars of the assessed valuation of property. Assessed value is substantially lower than market value.

In Reno County, taxpayers pay personal property taxes assessed in one year in two installments, with the first half due in December of that year and the second half due the following May.

The amount of taxes paid should always be judged against the value received.

- The property tax levy to the **State** pays for educational and institutional building funds.
- **Reno County** taxes pay for county government and facilities, courts, road and bridge maintenance and bridge construction, public safety (sheriff and jail), emergency medical services, health services, youth services, senior citizen services, mental health services, disability services, economic development, and noxious weed control, among other purposes.
- **City of Nickerson** property taxes pay for city government and facilities, municipal utilities (water and sewer), the Library, animal control, and maintenance of city streets, the park, the city burn site and the cemetery.

The 2022 total property tax levy in Nickerson was 185.446 mills, which included taxes paid to the State of Kansas, Reno County, USD 309, and County Fire District #3. The 2022 City of Nickerson tax levy of 74.545 was almost two mills lower than the 2021 rate of 76.535.

Information on official ad valorem tax levies for property owners in the City of Nickerson is available on the [Reno County Mill Levies](#) website.

Tax Rate Compared to Other Cities

In Kansas, cities with a population of less than 2,000 are Cities of the Third Class, cities with a population of at least 2,000 but less than 15,000 are Cities of the Second Class, and cities with a population of 15,000 or more are Cities of the First Class.

Hutchinson is a City of the First Class, and the other fourteen cities in Reno County are all Cities of the Third Class.

In the chart below, cities are listed in order of the size of their population, from largest to smallest (*shown in blue*).

Cities in Reno County	2020 Census Population	2022 Total Assessed Valuation	2022 City Levy in mills
Hutchinson	40,006	\$341,154,855	41.555
South Hutchinson	2,521	\$25,935,288	43.499
Buhler	1,325	\$7,625,215	45.406
Haven	1,170	\$8,067,946	60.834
Nickerson	1,058	\$4,392,625	74.545
Pretty Prairie	660	\$2,729,352	96.413
Arlington	435	\$2,214,644	54.042
The Highlands	349	\$4,982,499	18.799
Turon	309	\$1,110,703	133.249
Sylvia	215	\$734,440	57.563
Partridge	209	\$1,203,893	47.000
Plevna	85	\$282,697	71.617
Abbyville	83	\$810,688	20.352
Willowbrook	71	\$1,749,963	59.157
Langdon	39	\$180,562	33.484

Compared to other Cities of the Third Class in Reno County, Nickerson had the 4th highest 2020 population, the 5th highest 2022 Total Assessed Valuation, and the 3rd highest mill levy.

CHAPTER 4. Transportation & Utilities

This chapter provides an overview of transportation options and utility services in Nickerson.

Transportation

A good transportation system impacts other community goals, including economic vitality and overall quality of life. A transportation system should serve community facilities, respond to both existing and future land use patterns, and support desired development.

STREETS—FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

The roads in the Nickerson Planning Area are part of a nationwide system of federal street classifications, which are reviewed periodically, and revised as necessary to reflect changing conditions. Changes in federal classification must be approved by the local County Commission.

Federal street classifications affect funding for road improvements. A street must be in the approved federally classified roadway system before projects on that roadway can receive federal transportation funding.

Streets are classified into a function-based hierarchy depending on how they balance traffic volume and speed against access to adjacent land uses. **Freeways and Expressways** are dedicated to high-speed traffic, typically providing no access at all to adjacent properties. **Arterials** maximize traffic flow and speed, but provide limited access to adjacent properties. **Collectors** balance traffic with access, and **Local Roads** reduce speed and traffic volume in order to maximize access.

As of May 2023, the Federal Highway Administration's 5- to 10-year future functional classifications map for Reno County includes streets with the following federal classifications, listed in order from most speed and traffic to least:

- Interstate, Other Freeway/Expressway,
Other Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial,
Major Collector, Minor Collector, Local Road

Within the Nickerson Planning Area, Nickerson Road, with a jog through downtown on Nickerson Street and Railroad Avenue, is classified as north-south **Major Collector** RS560. West 82nd Avenue, east from downtown, is classified as **Major Collector** RS673. The old route of K-96/K-14 is still classified as an **Other Principal Arterial**, but its classification will likely change, now that the bypass is complete. All other streets are considered **local streets**.



Excerpt from KDOT's 2023 Reno County Functional Classification Map

Maps showing federal functional street classifications for each county in Kansas are maintained by the state Department of Transportation (KDOT), available on the web at KDOT's [County Roadway Functional Classification Maps](#).

More information on the federal functional street classifications can be found in the 2013 Federal Highway Administration report [Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures](#).

*"The role of streets is to build communities,
not the other way around."*

Gary Toth – Project for Public Spaces

STREET SURFACES IN NICKERSON (2017)

An analysis of street surface types in Nickerson was carried out by Planning Consultant John Riggs in 2017.

Street Surface Types (2017)	Estimated Miles	%
Streets WITH Curb & Gutter	—	—
Brick	0.4	2.4%
Concrete	0.1	0.6%
Asphalt	3.7	22.2%
Gravel	0.2	1.2%
SUBTOTAL	4.4	26.3%
Streets WITHOUT Curb & Gutter	—	—
Asphalt	1.9	11.4%
Gravel	10.4	62.3%
SUBTOTAL	12.3	73.7%
TOTAL	16.7	100.0%

COMPLETE STREETS

Nickerson's rural location means its people will always be primarily dependent on vehicular transportation. Nevertheless, the city itself should still offer residents at least some neighborhoods that also support other means of transport.

Such neighborhoods have streets based on the principles of complete streets – a design philosophy which calls for utilizing the public rights-of-way to support safe and comfortable travel by all users, of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

Complete streets include sidewalks with curb ramps, and good crosswalks. In downtown areas, streets may also have curb extensions, crosswalk medians for pedestrian refuge, and shared on-street parking. Amenities might include shade and benches for pedestrians, and bike racks. Where appropriate, streets may include bike lanes or bike routes.

For more information on complete streets, see:

- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#).
- USDOT's [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#), for links to more resources on complete streets, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, e-scooters, e-bikes, and bike share programs.

Whenever the design or renovation of a right-of-way is part of a planning project, Planning Commission and City Council members have the opportunity to incorporate complete streets principles. Each small project may allow only an incremental change in the City's overall transportation network—but over time, such incremental changes can accumulate, and have a profound effect on Nickerson's quality of life.

PARKING

A vehicular circulation system must accommodate vehicles not only when they are traveling, but also when they are parked. Census data from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* indicates that, for a population of 833 people, there are currently **at least 681 vehicles based in Nickerson**—an average of more than four vehicles for every five people.

- **Vehicles** Of the 361 occupied housing units in Nickerson, 20 (5.5%) had no vehicles available; 114 (31.6%) had one vehicle available; 114 (31.6%) had two; and 113 (31.3%) had three or more.

In older neighborhoods, streets were expected to support both traffic flow and shared on-street parking. Modern suburban developments often require off-street parking, and so devote less land to paved streets but more to driveways and garages.

Commercial Parking It is important to have adequate parking to support local businesses, but it is also important not to *overbuild* parking facilities. Parking spaces and their associated aisles are surprisingly expensive to construct, and they generate runoff which adds significant load to stormwater management systems. Requiring every business to have its own dedicated parking spaces can exacerbate these costs, while shared public parking reduces them.

American small town main streets were traditionally designed to support shared on-street public parking. Though out of fashion in recent decades, this parking solution is now being recognized again as a valuable and cost-effective parking strategy.

Nickerson's downtown is served by diagonal on-street parking. There are some spaces designated for handicap access, but they often do not meet ADA criteria. The rest of the community is generally served by off-street parking.

WALKABILITY

Walkability is an important asset for enhancing quality of life and improving community health. Nickerson has the size, compactness, and grid-type street layout that give it great potential as a very walkable community.

Pedestrian pathway systems are most successful as a viable transportation option when they **connect residential neighborhoods to community destinations**, including schools, parks, churches, and downtown businesses.

Urban residential streets can be categorized as either gridiron or subdivision types. The type of street impacts the character of the neighborhood, the efficiency of traffic patterns, the provision of utilities, and how people live.

Gridiron streets form a grid of 90-degree intersections, creating rectilinear blocks, with **alleys** for utility and garage access.

Subdivision streets usually occur in neighborhoods platted in the 1950s or later. They typically incorporate a maze of curvilinear streets, T-intersections, and cul-de-sacs. Rather than public alleys, they use a system of **easements** across private property to allow utility access. This street pattern creates neighborhoods that are extremely car-dependent, and are now becoming less desirable as more and more Americans recognize the value of walkable neighborhoods.

Nickerson has a gridiron street pattern. Should any cul-de-sac streets be platted in future in Nickerson, consider requiring them to provide easements or right-of-way that will allow for direct pedestrian and bicycle connections linking the cul-de-sacs to each other, and to the street grid.

SIDEWALKS

Nickerson has some sidewalks, but they have limited utility because they do not currently form a network that allows pedestrians to reliably get from one place to another in town.

Vehicle traffic in Nickerson is usually light enough that most people are comfortable walking in the roadways, at least in residential neighborhoods.

Cultural changes are making walkable neighborhoods more and more desirable, increasing the potential value of both residential and commercial properties in such areas. Investment in sidewalks should be regarded as an investment in Nickerson's quality of life, and its future.

Sidewalk Policies A good sidewalk policy should stipulate an ongoing program to properly maintain existing sidewalks, provide a means to retrofit new sidewalks into existing neighborhoods where they were never built, and address sidewalk construction in new development and remodeling projects. It should also define funding methods that can sustain ongoing construction and maintenance needs.

Sidewalk Funding There is no national standard for how sidewalk installation and repair projects are paid for. While public streets and parking areas are regularly funded with tax dollars, sidewalk funding is a patchwork of solutions that varies from city to city. Often, cities use either full municipal funding, or a cost split program between the city and adjacent landowners.

For more information, see the Federal Highway Administration's [Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety Research Report](#), which includes an overview of funding options.

BICYCLING FACILITIES

Nickerson currently has no dedicated bicycle paths, lanes, or routes. Bicyclists generally share the roads with motor vehicles.

A **bike path**, typically used by both pedestrians and bicyclists, may be from 8 to 10 feet wide, is paved, and is separated from the street but built within a right-of-way or along a drainage route.

A **bike lane** is typically 5 feet wide, and located on a street or its shoulder, between a motor vehicle traffic lane and the gutter or road edge.

A **bike route** is designated with signs and pavement markings, on a street specifically intended for simultaneous use by both motor vehicles and bicycles.



Bike Path



Bike Lane



Bike Route Signs

Bicycle racks should be available at local destinations, particularly at schools, the park, and downtown.

Select a **bike rack design** that meets functional requirements for proper two-point bicycle support, is lockable, and is constructed of low maintenance materials. Avoid ribbon racks, spiral racks and schoolyard racks, which do not provide effective support. Racks located along a sidewalk usually need a crossbar in order to be compliant with ADA vertical-element requirements.

The simplest rack design which meets these functional criteria is the inverted "U" type, with or without a crossbar. There are endless variations on the theme, and they can easily be customized to be unique to Nickerson.



Visit the [Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals](#) website to find more information about bicycle rack design and installation.

While every single street does not need to provide for every type of user, Nickerson's street *system* should serve the needs of all its citizens.

As a first step, consider **enhancing the pedestrian experience downtown**— improving ADA parking, completing sidewalks, adding curb extensions to shorten crosswalks at intersections, and installing ornamental lighting. The curb extensions could be landscaped with street trees, benches and bike racks.

Even if Nickerson chooses not to make any immediate plans to implement a sidewalk system or a bicycle network, **make sure that planning decisions made now do not foreclose the possibility of their future development.**

RAILROAD, AIR TRAVEL & PUBLIC TRANSIT

Train Service Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad tracks run from Hutchinson through Nickerson to Great Bend, connecting the city to the national rail network, and providing access to **freight rail service** for local industry in Nickerson. The nearest **passenger rail service** for Nickerson is available at the AMTRAK station in Hutchinson, about a 20 minute drive southeast.

Airline Travel Nickerson residents have good access to national and international air travel. The Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport is a one-hour drive away, on the southwest side of Wichita. It hosts seven airlines.

General Aviation There are a number of general aviation airports within an hour's drive of Nickerson, including the Lyons-Rice County Municipal Airport, McPherson Airport, Hutchinson Regional Airport, and Newton City-County Airport

Public Transit There is no public transit system in Nickerson. However, *Reno County Area Transit (RCAT)* operates a low-cost, demand response bus service, in wheelchair accessible vehicles.

There is no **taxi service** located in Nickerson, although **rideshare** services such as Uber or Lyft may be available.

The nearest access to **intercity bus service** is in Hutchinson, through Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Utilities

A community's long-term success depends very much on the caliber of its infrastructure and utilities. Dependable and cost-effective utility services are essential, both to maintain a high quality of life for current residents, and to support future growth.

The City of Nickerson provides **water distribution**, as well as **wastewater collection and treatment** services as municipal utilities. Electricity, natural gas, trash disposal and recycling, and communications services are available from private providers.

City staff administers billing services for municipal utilities.

WATER SUPPLY & DISTRIBUTION

The City of Nickerson's water supply originates in the Arkansas River aquifer, where three City groundwater wells are capable of drawing approximately 400 gallons per minute. The water is treated with liquid chlorine and polyphosphate, to meet the requirements of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Nickerson City staff monitor the City water supply daily, to assure that it meets all safety standards.

Treated water is then pumped up to one of two elevated municipal storage tanks (water towers), which together can hold a total of 175,000 gallons. The older water tower is located at South Nickerson Street & East Avenue G, and the new water tower is at Nickerson Boulevard & Avenue E.



Old
Nickerson
Water Tower



New
Nickerson
Water Tower

The height of the towers provides the water pressure to distribute water via gravity flow throughout the community, on demand, by main lines which vary in size from 2 to 8 inches in diameter.

A City-owned and maintained network of distribution pipes carries water from the tower to individual homes and businesses. The water distribution system also supports all the City's fire hydrants, which are flushed and tested annually.

Some of the community's water distribution pipes are fairly new, but others are many decades old. As pipes age, they may experience cracking and intrusion by tree roots. Ideally, an annual budget item should be dedicated for ongoing maintenance of the water distribution system, as well as replacement of a portion of the oldest pipes in the system each year.

None of the **Nickerson Planning Area** is within any of Reno County's Rural Water Districts. Rural residents in the Planning Area typically maintain private water wells, which are regulated by the Reno County Environmental Division.

WASTEWATER COLLECTION & TREATMENT

The City of Nickerson provides wastewater collection and treatment as a municipal service.

A gravity flow sewer system conveys wastewater by gravity, through pipes installed with sufficient slope to keep the suspended solids moving through the system. Where local topography limits the option of gravity flow, a lift station must be employed to pump the sewage from the low point in the system up to another gravity line. Lift stations are expensive to construct and maintain, so when possible, development within the system's existing gravity flow limits is preferable to development which requires a new lift station.

As sewer lines wear out, cracks allow tree roots to grow into the pipes, causing blockages. Waste may leak out and contaminate groundwater. Stormwater infiltration into the system also occurs, which increases the volume of influent the Wastewater Treatment facility must treat, and therefore its operational costs.

Nickerson's network of **sewage collection pipes** vary in age. During the 20-year span of this Plan, the City may need to fund and develop an ongoing program to replace the oldest parts of the system, as segments reach the point where it is more cost-effective to replace them than to maintain them.

Once, replacing a sewer line involved digging a trench along the entire length of the existing pipe, then replacing the deficient pipe piece by piece, or building a new sewer pipe parallel to the old one in order to maintain service. Modern **trenchless sewer rehabilitation** techniques use the existing pipe as a host for a new pipe or liner, and can correct deficiencies with much less disturbance and environmental disruption.

Nickerson's **Wastewater Treatment Facility** is a five-cell lagoon system, located on 41 acres of City owned property southeast of town, on West Nickerson Boulevard just north of West 69th Avenue.



Aerial of Nickerson's Wastewater Treatment Facility

Once wastewater reaches the lagoons, it undergoes treatment through aeration, bacteria and settling. Sewage must be treated to the point that effluent from the lagoons meets or exceeds strict permit requirements prescribed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Nickerson's wastewater treatment system is monitored daily by maintenance staff for compliance.

Nickerson's 2020 population was 1,058 people. By the end of the 20-year Planning Period, the City's population is likely to be no more than 1,200 people. However, **students and teachers** in the schools need to be accounted for, as well as use by local **businesses and industries**.

Recently expanded from three lagoons to five, there is still ample space on the existing site for an additional two or three lagoons. If necessary, the levels in the lagoons could be raised to allow for longer detention time of the wastewater in the lagoons, also raising the capacity.

Such relatively straightforward improvements to the existing wastewater treatment system are likely be able to handle Nickerson's wastewater treatment needs for the next twenty years.

Rural Sewage Disposal Many properties in the Planning Area are beyond the reach of the municipal sanitary sewer system, and must deal with sewage disposal on their own sites, utilizing septic tanks, leach fields, or private sewage lagoons. Private residential sewage disposal systems in the Planning Area outside the City are regulated by the Reno County Environmental Division.

ELECTRICITY & NATURAL GAS

Currently, in the City and in the Planning Area, **electrical power** is provided and the distribution system is maintained by the public utility company Evergy. Electricity for Nickerson comes from a substation located in Hutchinson, about 15 miles away, to a smaller 5-megavolt-amp substation located at East Avenue G and Paine Street in Nickerson.



Nickerson Substation aerial



Nickerson Electrical Substation

In the City and in the Planning Area, **natural gas** is provided and the distribution system is maintained by the public utility company Black Hills Energy. Gas lines are currently in good condition.

All public utility companies are regulated by the Kansas Corporation Commission.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Stutzman Refuse Disposal, Inc., headquartered in South Hutchinson, provides solid waste collection and disposal services in Nickerson. Recyclable materials are collected separately and sorted for disposition at the company's recycling center in South Hutchinson. Other disposable materials are taken to the Reno County landfill.

The City of Nickerson also maintains a municipal burn site, where only grass, limbs and brush are accepted.

COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Publicly regulated private companies provide communications services in Nickerson, including both hardwired and wireless phone service, cable TV service, and internet service. Such companies normally maintain continuing short and long-range facility planning programs.

Cell phone service in the Nickerson area is available from a variety of carriers. **Internet and cable television** in the Nickerson area is also available from a variety of providers, including Cox, AT&T and Ideatek.

POLICIES

Standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities should be regularly reviewed, and updated as necessary—to reflect both changes in technology, and changes in public expectations for environmental responsiveness.

Policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in **utility and drainage easements** should be reviewed and amended, and rigorously enforced.

Overhead Lines There is growing public awareness of the visual impact and sometimes noise made by utility equipment, and an increasing public expectation that electric, telephone and TV cable lines should be installed underground. Though underground utilities are more costly to install, they are far less prone to service outages during inclement weather, and can reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Maps Good maps of municipal utility systems are an essential tool for efficient coordination of maintenance activities, and an indispensable asset in long-term planning.

Agreement to Not Protest Annexation Cities often have a policy which requires that any landowner who wants to have property outside the city limits served by municipal utilities must first agree in writing that they will not protest if the City chooses to annex the property. This is generally described as an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*, or a *No Protest Agreement*.

Without such a policy in place, a city may end up providing municipal services to properties outside the city limits, even though the landowners there do not pay city taxes. While utilities *operations* are often funded by user fees, those fees do not typically support construction or capital improvement costs.

The City of Nickerson intends to annex any properties located outside of city limits that are currently receiving city utilities.

Stormwater Management

When precipitation occurs too rapidly to be absorbed by plants and soil, water runs off the surface of the land and flows down to streams, rivers, or lakes. While this is a natural process, development creates large expanses of impervious surfaces (roofs, streets, parking lots...) which may generate far more runoff than natural systems can handle.

Excess runoff can cause localized flooding. It can collect trash and other pollutants and transport them into natural waterways. It can erode river banks and scour stream beds, depositing so much sediment in ponds and lakes that they have to be dredged.

Stormwater management systems prevent excess runoff from accumulating in low areas to the point where it causes localized flooding, and potential water damage to homes, roads, and other structures. Areas prone to such flooding are constrained in their development potential, create traffic safety problems, and may contribute to blighted conditions.

In urban areas, runoff is typically guided by streetside curbs and gutters into underground storm sewers, while in rural areas runoff is usually transported by open roadside drainage ditches.

Changing Strategies Traditional stormwater management strategies simply moved the problem downstream, diverting stormwater away from developed areas, and channeling it as quickly as possible into a natural drainage system such as a stream or river.

Stormwater management strategies have evolved to recognize the advantages of reducing runoff in the first place by reducing impervious surfaces, and increasing opportunities for precipitation to be absorbed as close to the point where it falls as possible.

Utilizing **green infrastructure** techniques—from residential raingardens to urban bioswales to permeable parking lots—can often help **manage stormwater more effectively and less expensively than traditional methods**.

More information on green infrastructure is available from the [Environmental Protection Agency](#).

Stormwater Management in Nickerson

Most of Nickerson is located on relatively high ground, between Bull Creek drainage to the northeast, and Arkansas River drainage to the southwest. Most of the community is drained via shallow roadside ditches, with culverts that allow driveway access across them.

All new developments in Nickerson should have curbs and gutters, unless waived by the Planning Commission for valid reasons.

If localized flooding does occur, consider using green infrastructure solutions to solve the problem.

CHAPTER 5. Facilities & Services

A community's quality of life depends very much on the caliber of its public services and facilities. Today, public expectations for municipal services extend beyond basic fire and police protection, and include a high demand for community facilities related to education, health, and leisure time activities.

Nickerson's existing public facilities are generally in good condition. Most essential public services in the community are supported by public funds, and maintained under public control.

It is vitally important to provide adequate staff and budgetary support for *maintenance* of public facilities. **A good maintenance plan is the most cost-effective investment a City can make in preserving the quality of its community facilities.**

When planning for any future community facilities, it is important to determine their optimum location, to maximize efficiency and economy in serving the public. **Identify and acquire suitable sites for community facilities in advance of need.** Otherwise, ideal sites may be preempted for other purposes. The need for land acquisitions for public facilities should be a consideration in the review of any subdivision plats and rezoning applications.

City Facilities & Services

This section describes public facilities and services which are owned and directly operated by the City of Nickerson:

- Nickerson City Hall
- Nickerson Community Center
- City Maintenance Shop
- City Garage
- City Park Shop
- Weber Park
- Richardson Ball Park
- Wildmead Cemetery

Municipal facilities are evaluated on **their ability to continue to serve through the Planning Period to 2045.**

Nickerson City Hall

Nickerson City Hall is located at 15 North Nickerson Street, on the northwest side of the street, between Avenue B and Railroad Avenue. The 1,550 square foot building is among the original downtown structures, dating from about 1900, although the facade has been updated with an ashlar stone veneer and commercial-style entry doors.



Nickerson City Hall

City Hall hosts the office of the City Clerk, as well as the municipal court and council chambers. The primary multi-use room is 378 square feet in size, and provides seating for 25.

City Hall sits on a 3,500 square foot urban lot, with street access in front and alley access at the rear. There is diagonal on-street parking available along Nickerson Street.

Due to small site size, parking is limited to two curbside stalls in front, and two spaces at the rear which are accessible from the alley, and is reported to be in good condition.

City Hall has been well maintained and is in good condition. It will likely be able to continue serving the City's needs throughout the 20-year Planning Period.

Nickerson Community Center

Located at 11 North Nickerson Street, adjacent to and just southwest of the City Hall building, the Community Center was built in 2015. It is a 3,423 square foot, single story wood frame building with a facade of stucco and ashlar stone veneer. The building sits on a 14,000 square foot site, which has a 20-space parking lot behind the building. There is also diagonal on-street parking available along Nickerson Street.

The Community Center has restrooms, a storage closet for chairs and tables, a 186 square foot kitchen, a 496 square foot carpeted meeting room which can accommodate 27 people, and a large 1,902 square foot community room which can accommodate 133 people. The building can be rented for private use, for a nominal fee.



Nickerson Community Center

The Community Center is in excellent condition, and with routine maintenance should serve the City's needs throughout the 20-year Planning Period.

City Maintenance Shop

Located at 6 West Railroad Avenue, on the east corner of Nickerson and Peabody Streets, the City Maintenance Shop is conveniently located on the same downtown block as City Hall and the Community Center.

The Shop is a 4,000 square foot metal building with a steel frame. Built in 1970, it has five parking bays for City equipment. The building has a space heater, but no central heat or air conditioning. The 7,000 square foot site has three off-street parking stalls, plus a large concrete access apron in front of its array of massive garage doors.

Though more than 50 years old, the building appears to have been well-maintained, and is in good condition. It is a basic structure doing a basic job, and will likely be able to continue serving the City's needs throughout the 20-year Planning Period, assuming maintenance and updates as needed.



Nickerson Maintenance Building

City Garage

Located at 204 South Holiday Street, between Avenues G and H, this 4,320 square foot metal building was constructed in 1974 on its 2.98 acre lot.



Nickerson City Garage

City Park Shop

Located at 201 South Speare Street, just south of Weber Park and the Ball Park, this 3,816 square foot metal building was constructed in 1964 on its 17,500 square foot lot.



Nickerson Park Shop

Weber Park / Richardson Ball Park

The City of Nickerson has two adjacent public parks, which function as one centralized recreational space. They occupy three city blocks between West Avenue A and West Avenue G, between Burr and Kent Streets. Each block, excluding rights-of-way, is about 2 acres in size.

A 0.63 mile concrete **walking path** meanders around the perimeter of all three blocks.



Weber Park & Richardson Ball Park in Nickerson – aerial view

The Parks have no dedicated parking areas, with the exception of the Speare Street right-of-way. It and adjacent neighborhood streets serve to provide informal parking for the Parks.

Richardson Ball Park, between Speare and Kent Streets, includes the street right-of-way of Pierce Street. It hosts two lighted baseball diamonds with scoreboards, one to the southeast and one to the northwest.

The southeastern area includes a 360 square foot restroom that was constructed in 1990, and a 300 square foot storage building/concession stand that was added in 1997.



Restroom



Storage Building/Concession Stand



Southeastern Ball Diamond



Northwestern Ball Diamond

The northwestern diamond was constructed in 2005. The area includes a prefabricated storage shed that was added in 2012.

Facilities in Richardson Ball Park have been well maintained, and updated as needed.

Weber Park, between Burr and Speare Streets, hosts a variety of traditional park facilities, including picnic shelters and grills, playground equipment, a basketball court, and a small splashpad.

The restroom building in Weber Park was constructed in 1990. Two new lighted pickleball courts were added in the summer of 2023, replacing the underutilized sand volleyball courts.



Weber Park – aerial view



Weber Park



Picnic Shelter / Restrooms



Basketball Court



New Pickleball Courts (2023)

Facilities in Weber Park have been very well maintained, and updated as needed. Insufficient handicap access is the major shortfall in Nickerson's Park facilities, which do not currently meet **ADA standards** for parking, accessible routes, or accessible equipment.

Wildmead Cemetery

Wildmead Cemetery is located northwest of town, on the south side of West 95th Avenue, about a third of a mile west of Nickerson Road. Access is from the south, via Cemetery Road.

The 10.1 acre site has two small buildings on it. The Cemetery is operated, managed and financed by the City of Nickerson.

Wildmead Cemetery is well maintained, and while it contains many graves, it is still active.

The site has trees that are a variety of ages, which will help to maintain an ongoing tree canopy in the Cemetery. As aging trees reach senescence and need to be removed, continue to plant new trees to replace them.



Wildmead Cemetery - aerial

Nickerson Cemetery appears to have enough available space to serve the needs of the people of Nickerson for the 20-year Planning Period. However, consider the rate at which this facility is reaching capacity, and if necessary pursue purchase of additional land for an expansion to the cemetery at some point during the next 20 years.

Community Partners

A variety of important public services for local residents are provided by governmental entities other than the City of Nickerson, but are still supported by local property taxes. Private businesses and non-profit organizations provide other needed services, sometimes in partnership with the City.

- The **Nickerson Public Library** is a cooperative effort between the Public Library Association and the City of Nickerson.
- Fire protection in Nickerson is provided by **Reno County Fire District #3**, a volunteer fire department that covers about 134 square miles in northern Reno County. Headquartered in Nickerson, they have approximately 25 volunteers, all of whom are at least CPR certified.
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are coordinated by **Reno County EMS**, a department of Hutchinson Regional Medical Center. They coordinate with local first responder teams and EMS-certified volunteers to provide immediate initial response, with paramedic teams offering advanced medical care and transport to an appropriate hospital.
- Nickerson's schools, a vitally important part of the community's public services, are owned and operated by the **Nickerson/South Hutchinson Unified School District (USD 309)**.

Nickerson Public Library

Located at 23 North Nickerson Street, on the west corner of Avenue B and Nickerson Street, the Nickerson Public Library is conveniently on the same downtown block as City Hall and the Community Center. The building is owned by the Public Library Association, but operating funds are provided by the City of Nickerson.

Built in 1994, the 3,306 square foot structure was constructed of concrete block with a brick veneer, and has a standing seam metal roof. The building has been well maintained and is in good condition; it should be able to serve the community's needs for the length of the 20-year planning period.

The building nearly covers its 3500 square foot urban lot. Adjacent on-street parking is available along Avenue B near the Library's entrance, including eight standard spaces, one regular ADA space, and one ADA Van space.



Nickerson Public Library

The Nickerson Library was founded in 1916, and has been providing library services to the community for over a century. As of 2023, the Nickerson Public Library collection contained 6,071 volumes, circulating about 4,296 items each year.

The Nickerson Public Library is a member of the **South Central Kansas Library System (SCKLS)**, which is a regional system of cooperating libraries from twelve counties, based in Hutchinson. An elected Executive Committee, composed of one member from each county, establishes policy and provides financial oversight of the SCKLS. Membership is voluntary, and each member library retains its local self-government and independence. Among other services, SCKLS provides a bookmobile service, workshops, and technology and grantsmanship training for Library staff. More information on the SCKLS is available at www.sckls.info.

Fire Protection

In 2026, Reno County merged most of its separate rural fire districts into a single countywide district. Former individual fire districts now operate as coordinated stations under the unified Reno County Fire District 1.

A new Nickerson Fire Station was constructed in 2025 and began operations in early 2026. Located at 108 West Avenue H on a 0.96-acre lot, it houses six engine bays, as well as support facilities for firefighters.



Reno County Fire Station 31 in Nickerson

Now designated Reno County Station 31, the new facility in Nickerson serves Nickerson and the Highlands area. It provides fire protection and emergency response services to an area of about 134 square miles, including the City of Nickerson and The Highlands in northern Reno County. It also responds to mutual aid requests from Fire Stations in other small cities in Reno County, from the City of Hutchinson, and at need from Stations in Rice County and McPherson County.

The Nickerson Fire Department is staffed by 25 volunteers. All personnel are CPR certified or have higher certification. They deal with fires, medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, rescue calls, and hazardous materials incidents, responding to an average of 100 calls per year.

Nickerson/South Hutchinson USD 309

Schools are not City-owned facilities, but their quality is a critical factor in securing any community's future.

Nickerson/South Hutchinson Unified School District 309 includes both Nickerson and parts of South Hutchinson, extending 23 miles east-to-west, and more than 18 miles north-to-south. (See map on following page.)

USD 309 is financed with a mill levy on property owners within the school district boundaries. The District's administrative headquarters is in Hutchinson. Additional information regarding Nickerson's School District is available at www.usd309ks.org.

USD 309 is served by two elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, and an on-line academy. Nickerson hosts one of the Elementary Schools and the High School. Nickerson's 7th and 8th graders attend Reno Valley Middle School in Hutchinson, about a 10 minute drive away.

- **Nickerson Elementary School** is located at 400 North Nickerson Street in Nickerson.
- **South Hutchinson Elementary** is located at 405 South Poplar in South Hutchinson.
- **Reno Valley Middle School** is located at 1616 North Wilshire Drive in Hutchinson.
- **Nickerson High School** is located at 305 South Nickerson Street in Nickerson.
- **Central State Academy** operates out of Nickerson High School.

The **USD 309 Maintenance Shop** is also located in Nickerson, at 112 North Nickerson Street.

According to data for the 2021-2022 school year from the National Center for Education Statistics, USD 309 had 1,118 students, and 85 full-time-equivalent teachers, with a 13:1 student/teacher ratio.

Bond Issue In May of 2023, a nine-year, \$7.6 million school bond issue was approved by voters in USD 309. It will pay for new roofs and security upgrades at all District schools.

In addition, at Nickerson High School, science rooms and prep areas will be renovated, and the Auditorium (including the Lobby, the Stage and adjacent Restrooms) will be renovated to meet modern technological and ADA standards.

At Nickerson Elementary School, restrooms for pre-K and Kindergarten students would be renovated to meet ADA standards.

Chapter 5 Facilities & Services



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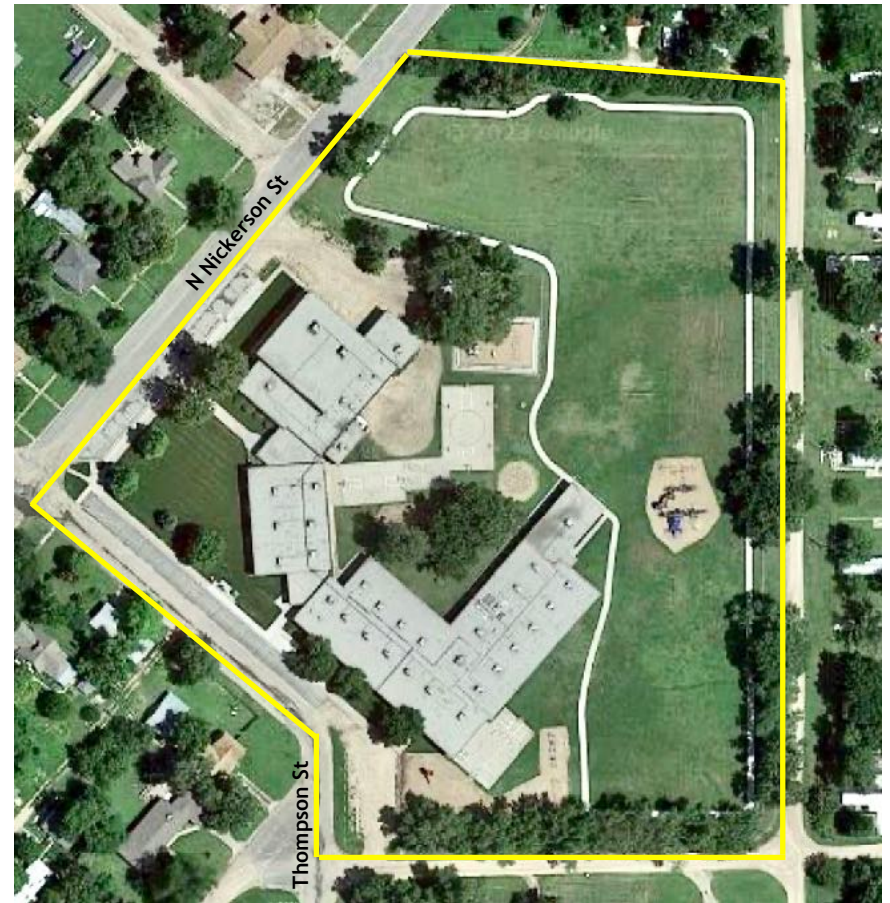
NICKERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

According to data for the 2023-2024 school year from the National Center for Education Statistics, Nickerson Elementary School had 188 students, in grades from pre-kindergarten through 6th grade. There were 18.2 full-time-equivalent teachers, with a 10:3 student/teacher ratio.



Nickerson Elementary School

Nickerson Elementary School is a 50,110 square foot one story concrete block building with brick veneer and constructed in 1955.



Nickerson Elementary School – aerial

NICKERSON HIGH SCHOOL

According to data for the 2023-2024 school year from the National Center for Education Statistics, Nickerson High School had 293 students, in 9th through 12th grade. There were 20.6 full-time-equivalent teachers, with a 14:2 student/teacher ratio.

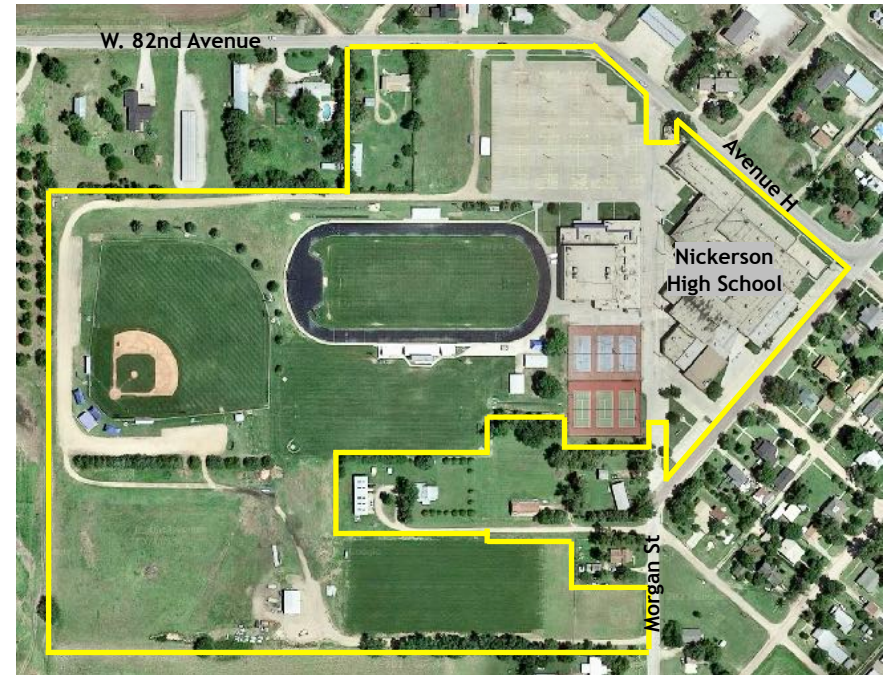


Nickerson High School

Nickerson High School was originally a 58,585 square foot building, constructed in 1955 on a 3.45 acre site east of Morgan Street. A major addition in 1980 added 10,150 square feet, and another in 1985 added an additional 19,025 square feet— for a total of 87,760 square feet.

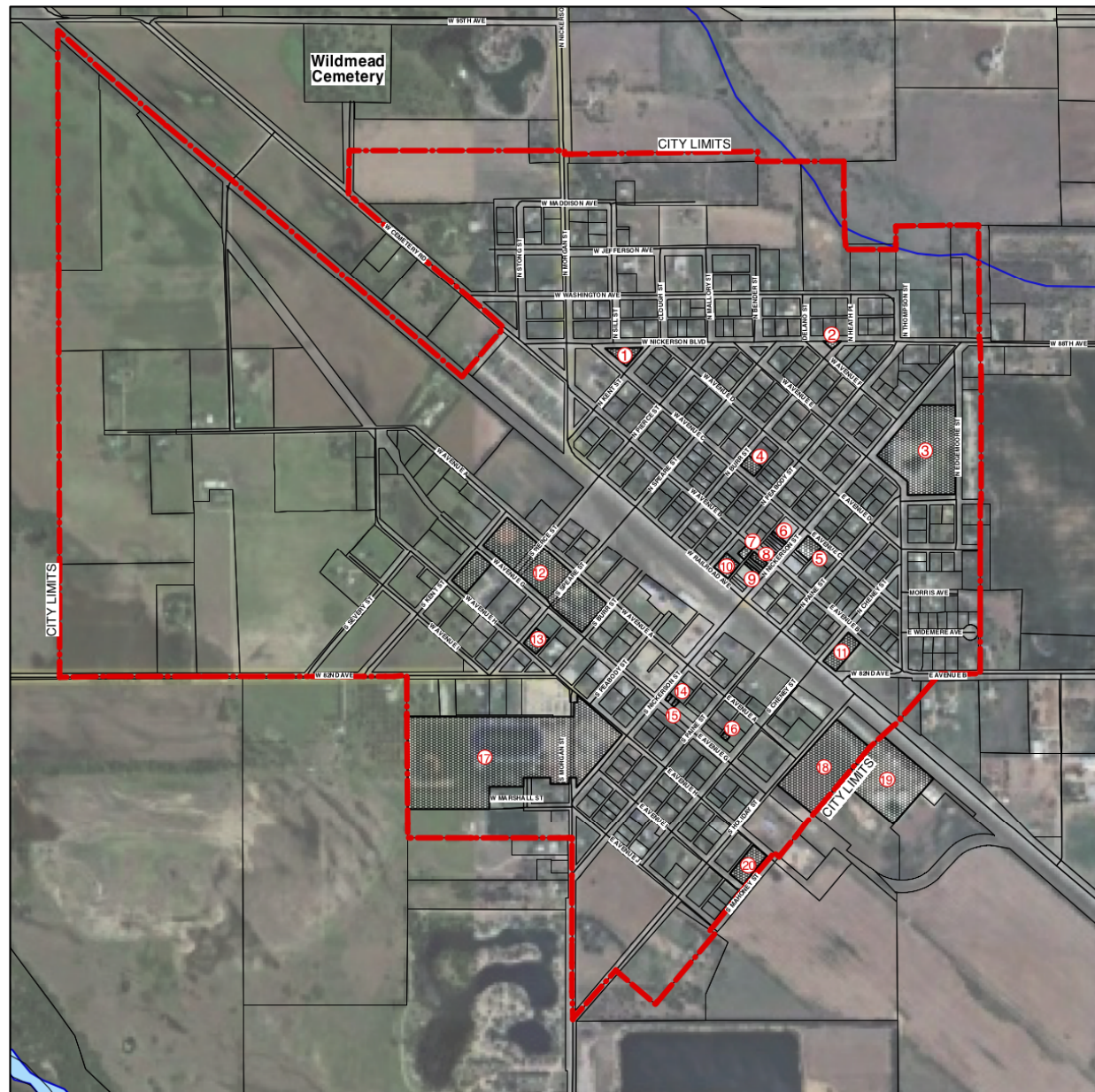
A major portion of the High School campus lies west of Morgan Street on a 28.96 acre site which houses:

- An 1,120 square foot Shop constructed in 1985
- A 1,104 square foot Restroom Building built in 1995
- A 28,889 square foot gymnasium built in 2000
- A variety of sports facilities, including a football stadium with track, a baseball diamond, six tennis courts, and two soccer/practice fields
- A large parking lot.



Nickerson High School – aerial

Nickerson Comprehensive Plan 2023-2045



COMMUNITY FACILITIES



CHAPTER 6. Land Use Plan

Analysis of existing land use patterns is a basic component of comprehensive planning, affecting planning decisions regarding everything from new community facilities to transportation system improvements. It is the essential first step in order to determine desired future land use patterns, a determination which in turn impacts municipal policies and programs.

The use of any given parcel of land may change over time, but it is typically a slow process. Therefore, existing land use patterns are generally accepted as the basis for a realistic projection of future land use patterns.

A Land Use Plan describes existing patterns and future goals for various categories of land use—such as residential, commercial, and industrial. Types and amounts of future land use categories should be designed to accommodate the estimated future population of the City by the end of the Planning Period.

A Land Use Plan must **coordinate** future land uses with the patterns of existing land use, **minimize incompatible adjacent land uses**, strive for **harmony** between land uses and existing physical conditions such as floodplains, and maintain an appropriate **balance** among the various types of land uses within a community.

This Land Use Plan addresses the distribution and interrelationships of existing land uses in the City of Nickerson and its surrounding Planning Area. It also evaluates the potential for future development in the area, and will help to guide that development as it occurs.

MAPS

Included within this chapter are diagrammatic maps showing existing land use patterns for both the City and the Planning Area, as well as maps showing proposed future land use patterns and growth areas for the City.

Although zoning and land use are interrelated, an Existing Land Use Map is **not** a Zoning District Map. An **Existing Land Use Map** is a snapshot of what types of use a parcel of land was being used for, at the time the map was created—irrespective of that parcel's zoning.

An analysis of how actual land uses intersect with existing zoning districts can help to inform any potential adjustments that may be needed to zoning district boundaries on the City's Official Zoning District Map.

A **Future Land Use Map** is a projection of proposed future land use patterns. A Future Land Use Map in a legally adopted and valid Comprehensive Plan provides a **legal foundation** for both the judicial review of zoning cases, and for the adoption of Subdivision Regulations.

Existing Land Use

Existing land use in the Nickerson Planning Area was evaluated in the fall of 2023. Land uses were determined using a review of the use designations available from the [Reno County GIS website](#), coordinated with an examination of aerial photos and street views.

Each parcel of land was classified by its current type of use, according to the following land use definitions:

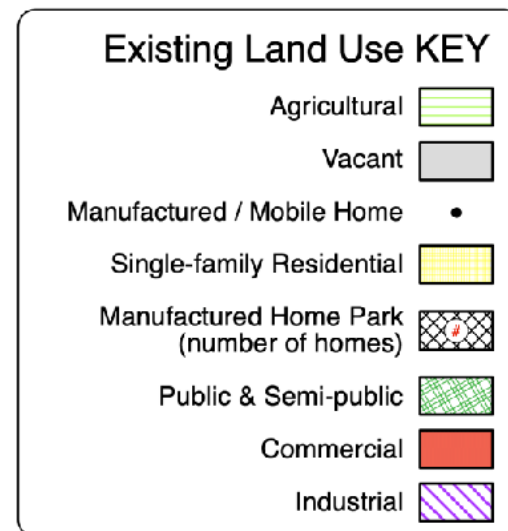
- **Agricultural** – Land which is used for agricultural purposes, such as growing crops or raising livestock, or retained as natural open space.
- **Vacant** – Land which is not used for agricultural purposes, and is also not built upon, such as vacant lots.
- **Single-family Residential** – Land devoted to residences occupied by one household. Individual manufactured/mobile homes, outside of mobile home parks, were identified separately from site-built housing.

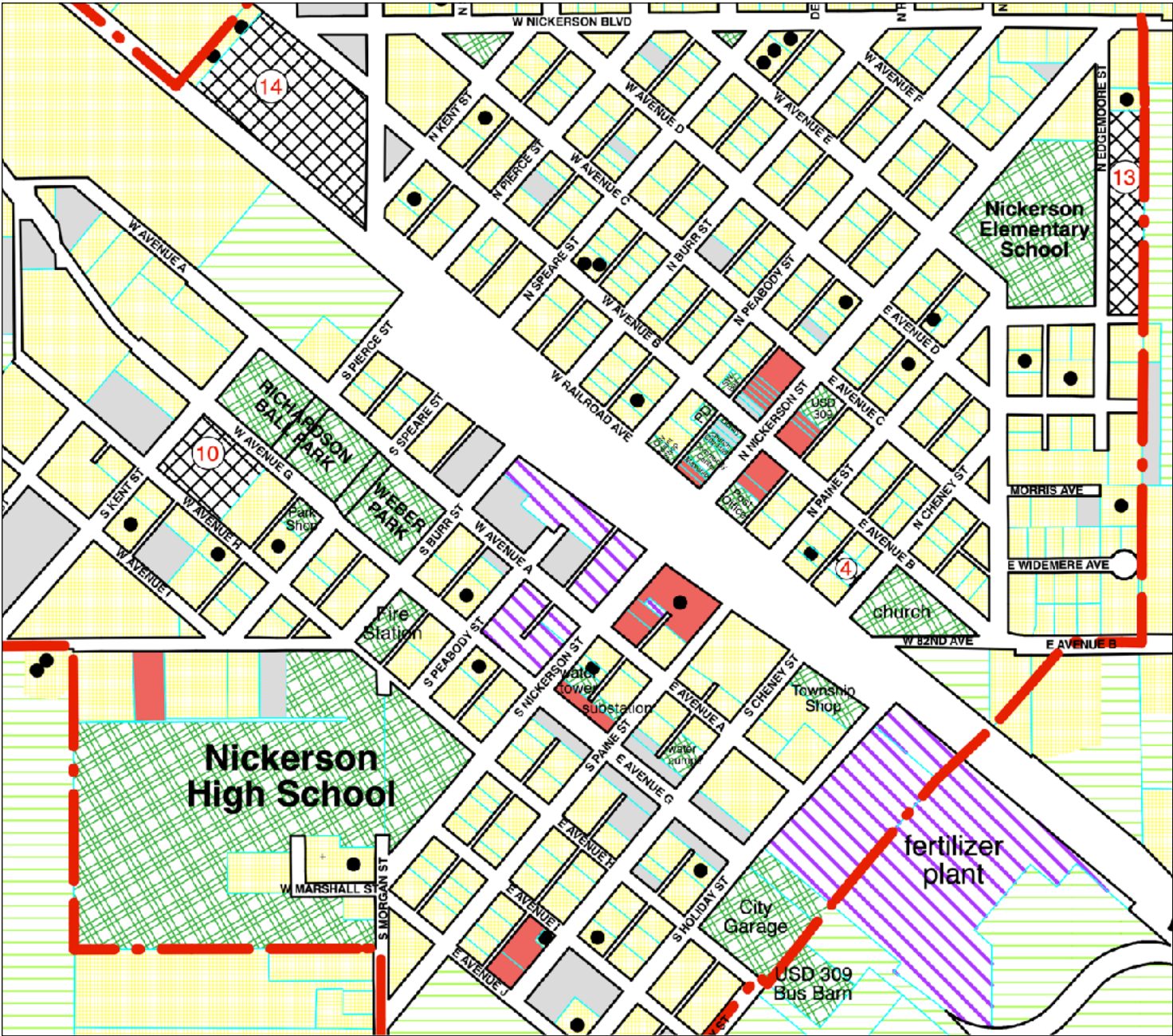
Note: Nickerson has no **Multifamily Residential** land use (land devoted to multiple occupancy dwellings containing two or more individual residential units, such as duplexes or apartment buildings).

- **Manufactured Home Park** – Land under single ownership, on which there are at least three manufactured or mobile homes in which people reside. (Land used for just one or two individual mobile homes or manufactured homes was counted as single-household residential land use, not as part of a mobile home park.)

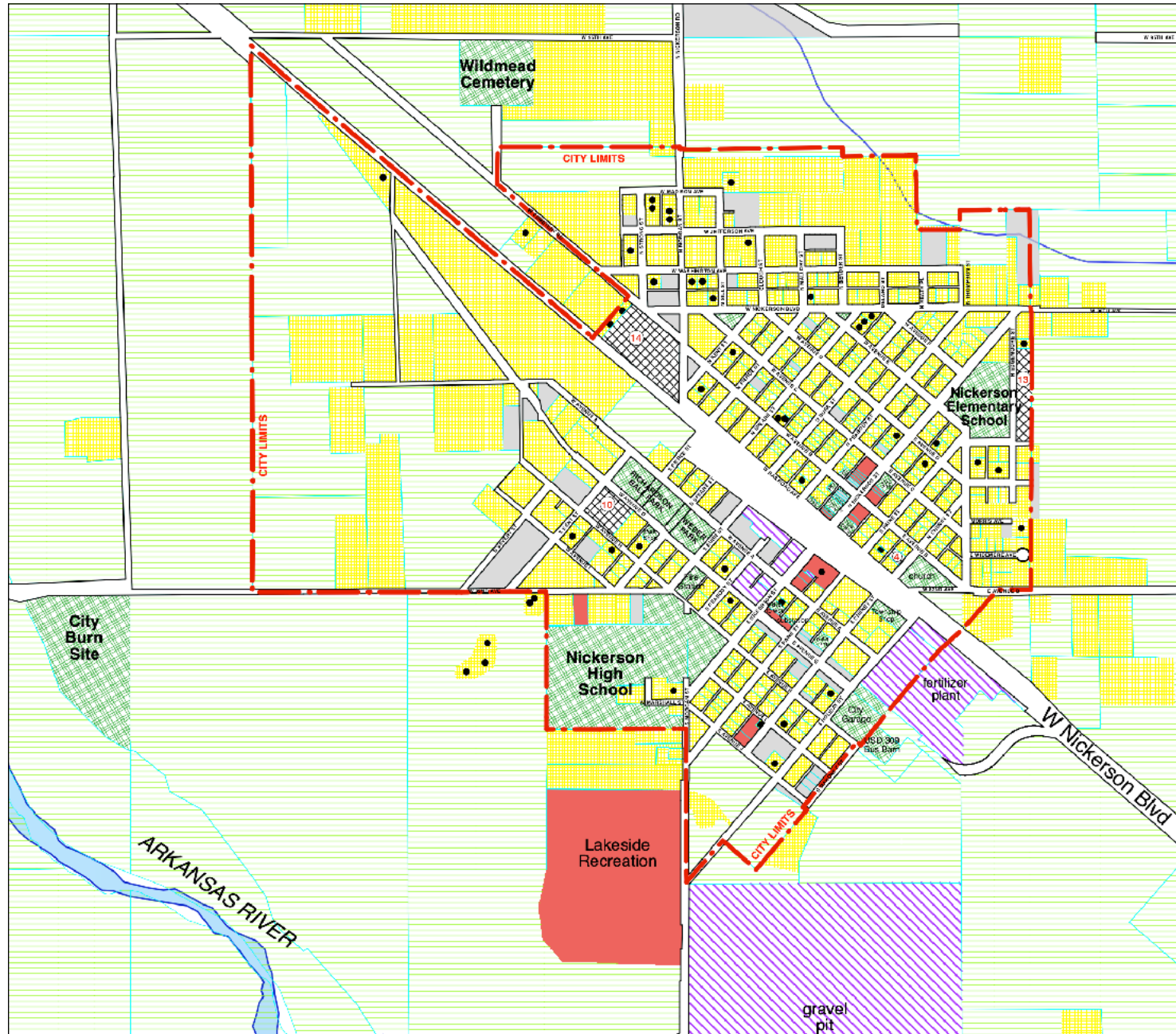
- **Public and Semi-public** – Land devoted to city, township, county, or state-owned buildings, parks, schools and other governmental activities, including special uses regulated by government, such as utilities and cemeteries. Also includes institutional uses of land for public purposes, such as churches, or social organizations.
- **Commercial** – Land and buildings where merchandising, service oriented, or professional activities are conducted.
- **Industrial** – Land and buildings used for manufacturing or heavy construction purposes, or their associated storage. Includes grain elevators and salvage yards.
- **Transportation** – Public land used for transportation right-of-way or other transportation related purposes. Includes streets, alleys, highways and railroads; does not include driveways, garages, or parking lots.

On the following pages, maps show patterns of existing land use for the land in the Nickerson urban area, for the city as a whole, and for the Nickerson Planning Area.

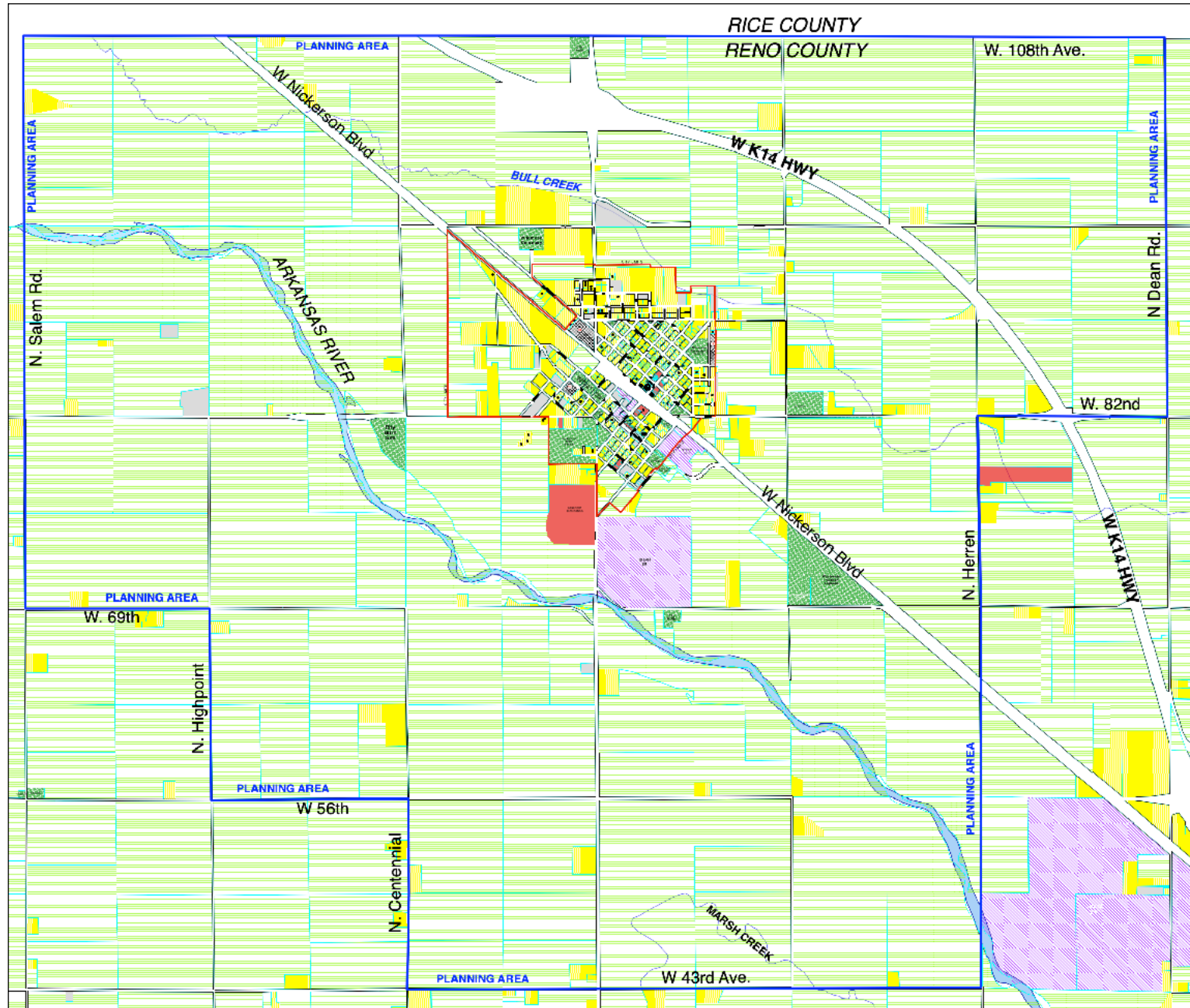




Map:
Existing Land Use –
Nickerson Urban Area



Map:
Existing Land Use –
City of Nickerson



Map:
Existing Land Use,
Nickerson
Planning Area

GENERAL CITY LAND USE PATTERN – EXISTING

The City of Nickerson incorporates 829 acres, or 1.3 square miles. Land use patterns within the city limits are generally cohesive. The following table shows the percentages of various land use categories in the City.

Existing Land Use in the City of Nickerson			
Land Use	Total acres	% of developed area	% of total area
Residential (total)	380.7	62.5%	45.9%
<i>Single Family</i>	367.0	60.3%	44.3%
<i>Manufactured Home Park</i>	13.7	2.2%	1.7%
Commercial	6.1	1.0%	0.7%
Industrial	12.0	2.0%	1.4%
Public & Semi-public	59.1	9.7%	7.1%
Transportation ROW	151.0	24.8%	18.2%
Total Developed Area	608.9	100.0%	73.5%
+ Agricultural & Undeveloped Land	219.7	—	26.5%
= Total Area	828.6	—	100.0%

Developed land represents 74% of all the land in the city, and totals about 609 acres. The remaining 26% of the land is categorized as **undeveloped or agricultural**, and is vacant or in use for agricultural purposes. Some of the undeveloped land is in scattered smaller-scale lots platted for residential or commercial use, but most is in large parcels in the floodplain area on the city's west side.

Nickerson originally developed around the intersection of the railroad and Nickerson Street, and the majority of the city's developed land is still within a quarter-mile of that spot. Nickerson's corporate limits are compact and contiguous, with no geographically separated island annexations.

RESIDENTIAL – EXISTING

Residential land use covers 381 acres within the city limits, accounting for 63% of developed land. It is the single largest category of land use in Nickerson. Of the land in residential use, about 367 acres are used for single-family homes (including parcels occupied by one or two manufactured homes), while 14 acres are used for mobile home parks.

Nickerson has a range of **single-family home styles**, from 19th and early 20th Century bungalows, to farmhouses, foursquares, and ranch-style homes.

Nickerson has no **multi-family housing**, such as duplexes or apartment buildings.

There are four **manufactured home parks** in Nickerson. Back Country, north of Railroad Avenue on the west side of Morgan Street, currently hosts 14 units. Eastview Village, just east of the Elementary School, currently hosts 13 units. Sunview Mobile Home Park, southeast of Kent Street, between Avenues G and H, currently hosts 10 units. An unnamed parcel on the west side of Cheney Street, between Railroad Avenue and Avenue B, currently hosts 4 units.

There are currently 43 other manufactured homes within the city limits, scattered about Nickerson's residential neighborhoods. Some blend in quite well with neighboring stick-built houses, while others clash with the character of the neighborhood.



Typical residential properties in Nickerson

COMMERCIAL— EXISTING

Nickerson has 6 acres of land in commercial use within the city limits, comprising just 1.0% of the developed area. This is the smallest category of land use inside the city.

Commercial land uses in Nickerson are located primarily downtown, along Nickerson Street between Avenues A and C, with a couple of additional commercial parcels in the southern part of the city.

- Downtown businesses include a grocery store, a bank, a carwash, a convenience store/gas station, a restaurant, and an auto repair shop.



Typical commercial properties in Nickerson

INDUSTRIAL— EXISTING

There are 12 acres of industrial land inside Nickerson, comprising 2.0% of the developed area. It is the City's second-smallest category of land use.

There are two industrial areas within Nickerson, both located southwest of the railroad tracks, and generally adjacent to them.

- The largest single industrial land use in the Nickerson area is the MacroSource fertilizer plant, although the majority of the site is outside the city limits. It is located southeast of the intersection of Holiday Street and Railroad Avenue.



MacroSource fertilizer plant

- The other industrial land use in Nickerson is the Nickerson-Central Prairie Co-op. It is located southwest of the railroad tracks, between Nickerson and Burr Streets.



Nickerson-Central Prairie Co-op

PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC — EXISTING

The 59 acres of public and semi-public land use in Nickerson represent 10% of the developed area within the city limits. It is the City's third-largest category of land use, after residential and transportation right-of-way.

Nickerson's two schools are the largest single public land use in the city, together using 40 acres. Park and Ball Fields use 7.3 acres.

Smaller public land uses include City Hall, the Fire Station, the Community Center, the Post Office, the City Maintenance Shop, the Police Station, the City Garage, the USD 309 Warehouse, the Grant Township Shop, and a Southwestern Bell facility, as well as the two water towers, an electrical substation, and other City utility facilities. Semi-public land uses include churches and the Masonic Temple fellowship hall.



Southwestern Bell facility, Church, and USD 309 Warehouse

TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY — EXISTING

Within the the city limits, 151 acres are incorporated in platted rights-of-way for streets, alleys and the railroad. This land use comprises about 25% of the developed area, and 18% of the City's total area. Transportation is Nickerson's second-largest category of land use.

LAND USE OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS — EXISTING

The Planning Area, excluding the 829 acres within the city limits, encompasses 14,586 acres, or 22.8 square miles. About 89% of that land is in **agricultural** use, though residential, public, commercial and industrial uses also occur.

Existing Land Use in the Planning Area, excluding the City of Nickerson		
Land Use	Total acres	% of Planning Area outside of city limits
Single Family Residential	415.4	2.8%
Commercial	48.9	0.3%
Industrial	160.4	1.1%
Public & Semi-public	133.7	0.9%
Undeveloped	35.5	0.2%
Agricultural	13,025.5	89.3%
Transportation ROW	766.2	5.3%
Planning Area, outside of City Limits	14,585.6	100.0%

About 415 acres of land in the Planning Area is in **residential** use, often for farm homesites. There are no large-lot platted rural subdivisions in the Nickerson Planning Area.

The single **commercial** land use in the Planning Area is Lakeside Recreation, just south of town on the west side of Morgan Street. This business rents spaces around the lake shore for recreational vehicles and a few manufactured homes to be sited. Some renters visit occasionally for recreation, while others live there permanently.

Industrial land uses in the Planning Area consist of the gravel pit which is south of town on the east side of Morgan Street, and the portion of the MacroSource fertilizer plant site which is outside the city limits.

Public and semi-public land uses in the Planning Area include the City Sewage Treatment facility, the City Burn Site, Wildmead Cemetery, and a large church.

There are about 35 acres of land in the Planning Area which are platted for development, but currently **vacant**.

About 766 acres of land in the Planning Area are devoted to **transportation** right-of-way.

The largest Planning Area land use by far, appropriately, is **agriculture**, utilizing 13,026 acres.

Future Land Use

A future land use plan is intended to encourage efficient, balanced, and compatible land use patterns in the City and its immediate area. The **Future Land Use Map** shown in this chapter exhibits a desired pattern of land use, and is intended to guide land use planning decisions during the Planning Period.

However, flexibility is also essential in the implementation of a future land use plan, and it is expected that the Planning Commission may occasionally need to make reasonable adjustments. When a specific area in the city is about to be developed, policy decisions on its development should remain in keeping with the overall land use concepts expressed in the Future Land Use Map, but must also respond to current data.

When an area is designated for a particular future land use, that designation should be considered as an indication of preferred land use character and predominant type, rather than an absolute requirement that the area be developed exclusively for the noted land use. For example, a church or park could be considered a compatible use in an area designated for future residential development. Appropriately scaled and designed multi-family residential development can be compatible in single-family residential neighborhoods.

A number of factors must be considered when projecting future land use—including community attitudes and goals, existing physical features, existing land use patterns, potential utility service areas, future population goals and housing needs, and proposed development projects.

In general, it is considered desirable for **residential** land use patterns within a city to be separated from commercial or industrial uses. The exception to this guideline is in **mixed-use neighborhoods, such as Nickerson's downtown, where the proximity of residences to commercial and public areas promotes walkability.**

Some **public** land uses are compatible with residential areas (such as neighborhood parks or small churches), and some are more appropriate to commercial areas (City Hall or the Post Office, for example). Modern schools tend to be larger and generate more traffic and noise than schools in earlier times, but ideally should still be located close enough to residential neighborhoods to allow at least some children the option to walk or bike to school.

Commercial land uses are typically clustered together to create economic synergy. Businesses that are dependent on vehicle traffic tend to cluster near highway intersections, while businesses that cater to pedestrians prefer a walkable downtown location. By preference, both retail destinations and workplaces should be within walking distance of at least some residential neighborhoods.

Industrial land uses, particularly for heavy industry, often require heavy-duty utility services, generate lots of truck traffic, and may produce dust and other air pollutants, as well as considerable noise. Therefore they are often consolidated in a few areas with appropriate utility services, typically near highways and railroads, and away from and preferably downwind of residential neighborhoods.

Light industrial uses are often indistinguishable from light commercial uses in their impact on the character of a neighborhood. They typically have no retail component, and so do not attract heavy customer traffic.

GENERAL CITY PATTERN — FUTURE

It is crucial for cities to maintain a compact development pattern, because it maximizes the efficiency and minimizes the cost of providing public services, from utilities to police patrols—not only in short-term operating costs, but in long-term maintenance costs.

Since the development of the interstate highway system began in the 1950s, the United States has been on a 70-year building spree of sprawl. Only recently have we begun to face the fact that we cannot possibly afford to *maintain* the sprawling infrastructure that we have built.

- For more information on the costs of America's deferred infrastructure maintenance needs, see the American Society of Civil Engineers' [2025 Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#).
- For more information on alternative strategies for making your city fiscally strong and resilient in the long term, see [Strong Towns](#).

Compact and contiguous development is not only an economical strategy, it is also a pragmatic one. Kansas statutes [K.S.A. 12-520 et.seq.](#) make new island annexations very difficult for Kansas cities to implement, while it is relatively easy for cities to annex land that is adjacent to existing corporate limits.

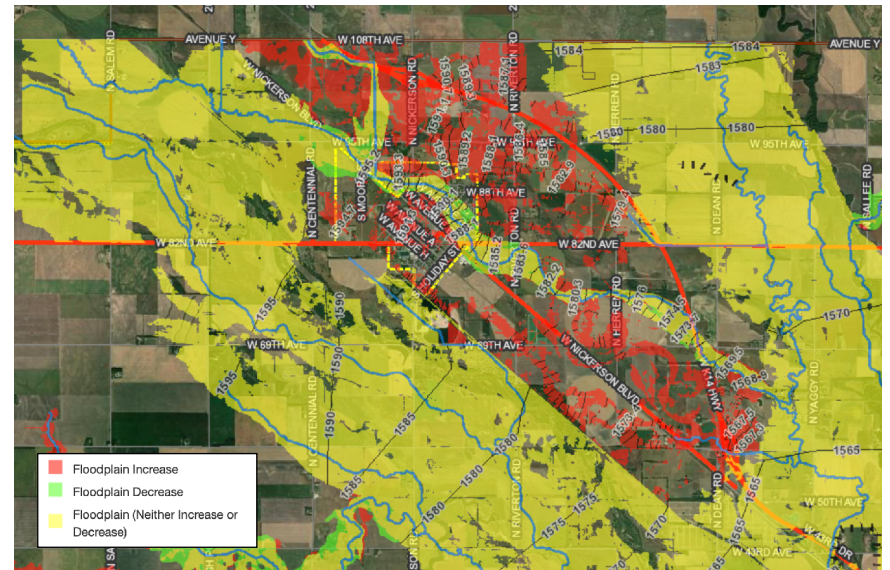
- An overview of the detailed requirements for various types of annexation processes is available in the [2015 Kansas Legislator Briefing Book on Annexation](#).

Nickerson is basically compact, and ideally should continue its pattern of contiguous development. Encourage development of additional urban-style neighborhoods similar to what Nickerson already has, as opposed to large-lot suburban developments.

DIRECTION OF GROWTH

Located as it is between Bull Creek and the Arkansas River, Nickerson's potential options for direction of growth are constrained by the many floodplains that surround so much of the city.

Updates to the FEMA floodplain maps are currently underway, and are likely to conclude with the designation of even more of the land in and around the city as floodplain. The following map shows changes to designated floodplains in the Nickerson area, proposed as of August 2025. Red areas indicate land likely to be newly designated by FEMA as floodplain.



In spite of these constraints, the City of Nickerson does have several options for growth, which together should be sufficient to accommodate the community's needs for new development, at least over the next twenty years.

Infill Nickerson has vacant land within its existing city limits that is sufficient to support much of the growth that is expected in the city over the next twenty years. As of 2023, Nickerson had enough platted infill lots available to support approximately 24 additional housing units.

New infill development on currently vacant or agricultural parcels, which are *not* in floodplains, and that are already serviced by existing municipal roads and utilities, should always be considered the first option for developing new homes and businesses.

Development on **land which *is* in floodplains** is also possible, though more challenging. Building in a floodplain isn't inherently unsafe if done correctly, but it significantly increases flood risk and requires extra planning, investment, and adherence to complex rules to make it safe and insurable.

Structures in floodplains can only be insured through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and must meet strict FEMA guidelines in order to qualify. Among other things, such development requires:

- Detailed plans that comply with Reno County's Floodplain Management Resolution. Plans must be submitted in order to acquire a special **floodplain permit** for development in a floodplain.
- The building's lowest floor must be constructed above the Base Flood Elevation, sometimes by raising the grade beneath the entire structure, sometimes by elevating the structure on piers, posts, or piles.
- Structures must be designed to withstand floodwaters—they must be constructed of flood-resistant materials, with flood-resistant foundations, and have critical utilities like electrical panels elevated.

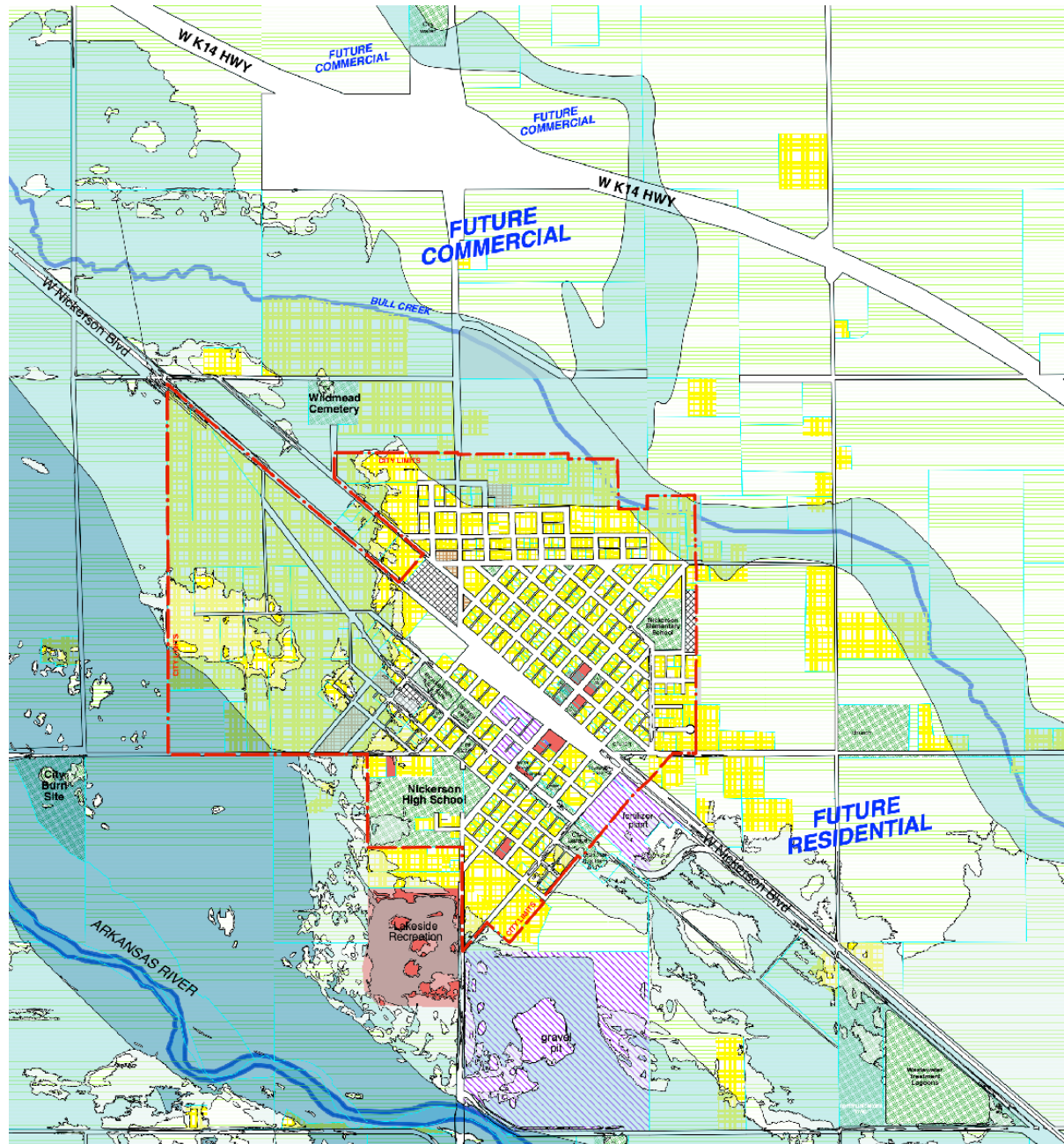
Expansion Additional land, beyond current city limits, may also be needed during the Planning Period, to provide sites suitable for specific uses in desired locations. In particular, there are some areas to the south and east of Nickerson's current city limits that are not in floodplains—especially in the area east of the city and north of Nickerson Boulevard. Though not expansive, these areas are already adjacent to existing municipal roads and utilities, making them suitable for new development.

K-14 Interchange Besides floodplains, the other major influence on the city's future growth pattern is the recent construction of the K-14 Highway bypass. It includes an interchange at Nickerson Road, about three quarters of a mile north of the City's current northern boundary. Completed in 2023, the interchange will inevitably stimulate future commercial growth in that direction.

In order to maintain autonomy over its own future, the City of Nickerson should take steps to have meaningful influence over any development of land around the Nickerson interchange. The most effective way to achieve this goal is to annex the land around the new K-14 interchange, though negotiating with Reno County for Extraterritorial Jurisdiction over the area may be an appropriate interim step.

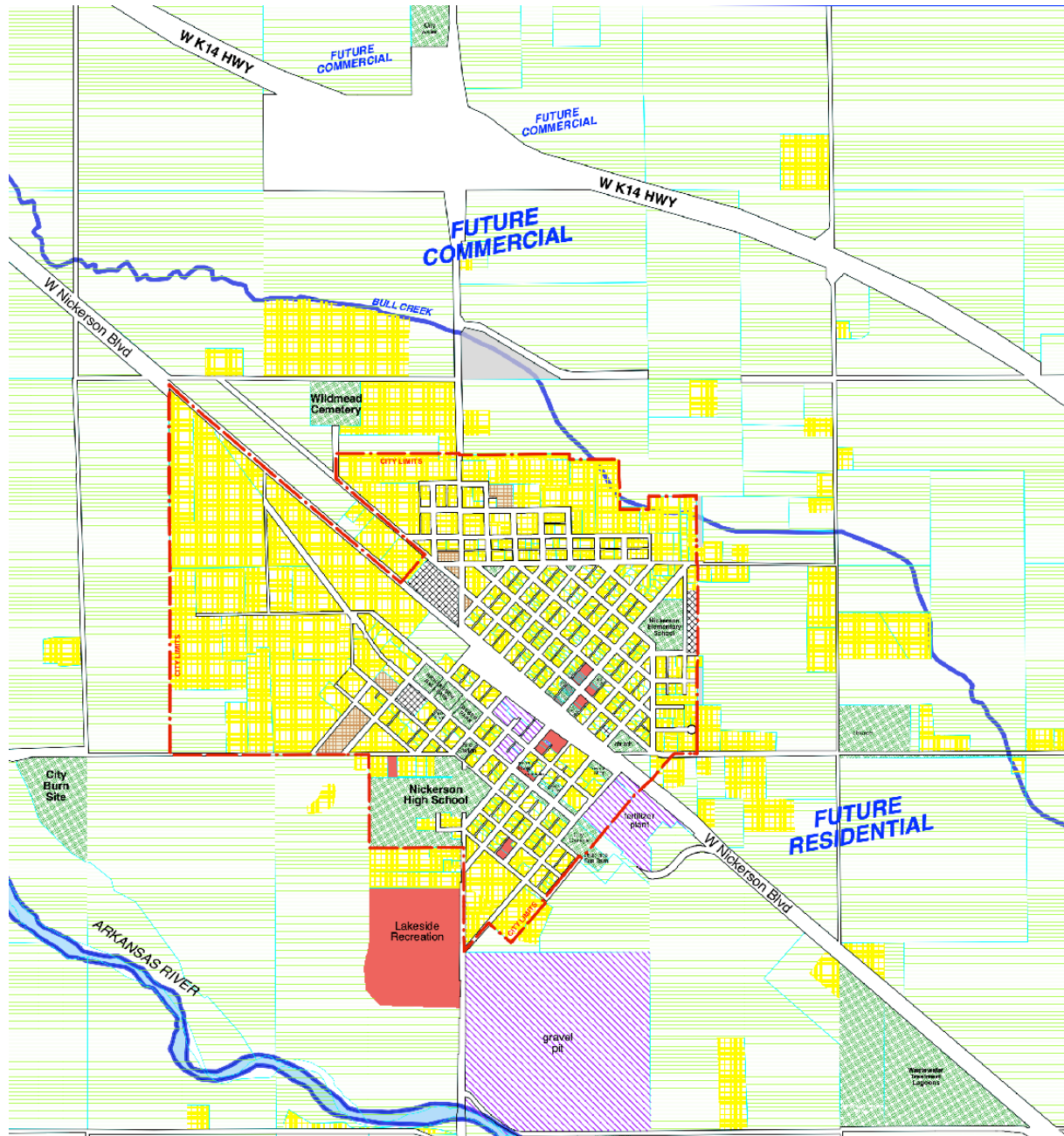
This interchange is now the **primary gateway to Nickerson**, and ideally the community should be able to exert some zoning control over how it is developed. The **vehicle oriented commercial development** that is eventually likely to occur there should meet standards of quality compatible with community expectations.

However, K.S.A. 12-520b requires a city to have a **plan for providing utilities and services** to annexed land. Nickerson would have to extend City utilities north of Bull Creek across a broad area of 100-year floodplain. Balancing the costs of such a utilities expansion against the benefits of a new commercial tax base for the City will require a real-time cost-benefit analysis.



Future Land Use Map
including
FEMA floodplains
current as of 2023

The Future Land Use Map
on the following page
focusses solely on land use
categories; floodplains are not
shown, in order to enhance land
use clarity.



Future Land Use Map
without
FEMA floodplains

RESIDENTIAL — FUTURE

Before the development of interstate highways in the 1950s, it was common for American neighborhoods to have a mix of single family and multifamily homes, including garage or upstairs apartments, duplexes, and even small 3- or 4-unit apartment buildings. These neighborhoods worked well, supporting diverse multi-generational communities with housing at a range of price points.

In the last half of the 20th Century, however, it became standard practice to isolate single-family housing in large and homogeneous developments of similar houses. On the occasions when multifamily housing was built, it tended to be in the form of big apartment complexes or whole neighborhoods of duplexes, completely separated from single-family neighborhoods.

Now, in the 21st Century, the social and economic advantages of traditional mixed neighborhoods are appreciated again. Such neighborhoods offer the option for multiple generations of a family to find appropriate housing without having to move far away. Higher density allows more people to be supported with less infrastructure, and improves options for walkability and the social connections that walkability encourages.

Many small rural cities have insufficient low-cost and rental housing to meet local demand, and therefore lose young residents who cannot yet afford to own a home, as well as older residents who may be looking for a lower-maintenance lifestyle.

There is often a tendency to think that all single-family homes are owner-occupied, and all multifamily homes are rentals, but this is not the case. Twin homes and condominiums of various configurations allow individual ownership of homes within a multifamily structure, and single-family detached houses may be rented.

Nickerson currently has no multifamily housing of any kind, yet about 18% of its dwelling units are rentals. The demand for lower cost local housing is met almost entirely with manufactured homes.

While there is clearly an ongoing demand for **large, single-family suburban homes**, there is also a national trend toward **smaller homes in walkable, urban-style neighborhoods**, which, ideally, should supply both owner-occupied and rental options.

Encourage development in Nickerson that offers **a mix of both single-family and appropriately-scaled multifamily housing**. Such housing might include townhomes, patio homes, duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings, or accessory apartments.

Smaller types of multifamily housing can often be accommodated in single-family neighborhoods, so long as they are designed to fit in with the character of the neighborhood, and parking requirements are handled sensitively. Only when apartment complexes are large enough to generate significant amounts of traffic are they incompatible with single-family neighborhoods.

Zoning regulations sometimes need revisions in order to allow development of neighborhoods with a mix of compatible multifamily housing scattered among single-family homes.

At some point in the future, the **gravel pit** south of town will complete its mining operations, leaving potential lakefront property behind. Though floodplains would present some constraints, this location may offer some potential for upscale suburban-style residential development. Alternatively, it may be a good place for a future park.

Maintaining an array of **diverse housing options at a range of price points** should be a primary goal of future development in Nickerson, including economical units for young adults and accessible units for seniors. Continue to encourage development of single-family homes, as well as high-quality, accessible, and low-maintenance multifamily housing.

PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC — FUTURE

The City should have an adequate amount of City-owned land to allow for necessary expansion or relocation of municipal support facilities during the 20-year Planning Periods.

COMMERCIAL — FUTURE

Over the next 20 years, new development in the vicinity of the K-14 interchange, especially along Nickerson Road, will likely result in two primary commercial areas in Nickerson — one vehicle oriented district near the interchange, and a more pedestrian oriented business district downtown. Ideally, businesses in each area should serve different commercial needs, complementing each other, rather than unduly competing.

The business district that develops north of town along Nickerson Road should be focussed on larger-lot commercial development that depends on vehicle traffic and ample parking lots for success. Downtown's commercial development will be addressed in more detail in its section at the end of this chapter.

INDUSTRIAL — FUTURE

Future industrial development in Nickerson could be located near the existing fertilizer plant, adjacent to the railroad tracks. Alternatively, depending on the type of industry, locations closer to the K-14 interchange might be more suitable.

To attract additional light industry to Nickerson, consider encouraging the development of **pad-ready sites**, ideally in a location with easy access to the K-14 interchange. Such sites are graded, with utilities stubbed, and with road access already developed—in short, ready to be built on.

TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY — FUTURE

From a land use perspective, Nickerson has an adequate right-of-way network to sustain expected growth. However, the large percentage of unpaved dirt and gravel roads in those rights-of-way is an ongoing disadvantage to the community. Such roads are actually more costly to maintain than paved roads, and do nothing to help attract and retain residents and businesses.

If new subdivisions are developed on currently vacant land, their streets should be platted with enough width to accommodate paved roadways suitable for expected traffic loads, as well as adequate drainage facilities, utilities, sidewalks, and street trees.

Street patterns should be designed to coordinate with both existing streets, and with potential future expansion of the street network.

LAND USE OUTSIDE THE CITY — FUTURE

Portions of the Planning Area near Nickerson have already been developed for residential use. In general, however, the Planning Area outside the City should continue to be used mainly for **agriculture**, which should be regarded as the highest and best use for such productive soils.

Work with Reno County to make sure that potential growth areas for the City are not closed to future urban-scale development by **large-lot residential development**. Once platted with the large lots required for on-site sewage treatment, municipal utilities can rarely be extended to such parcels cost-effectively, and they become a permanent barrier to a city's expansion.

Nickerson should consider implementing a policy of annexation, or at least requiring an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*, for any property outside the city limits that may ever wish to connect to municipal utilities.

Downtown

Ideally, a city's downtown is a concentration of commercial, cultural, and civic activities. No matter how large or small the city, having a vibrant downtown is critical to both its quality of life and its economic success.

Its downtown is not only a small town's major economic driver, it is "everybody's neighborhood", a cultural center where people from the entire area congregate. When people think of a particular small city, its downtown is usually the first image that comes to mind, so the character and attractiveness of a community is often judged by the character and attractiveness of its downtown.

DOWNTOWN – EXISTING

Nickerson's historic downtown comprises two blocks along Nickerson Street, stretching northeast from Railroad Avenue to Avenue C. Another block, southwest of Railroad Avenue, is somewhat disconnected, separated from the rest of downtown by the block-long expanse of the railroad right-of-way.

With City Hall, the Post Office, the Community Center, the Library, the gas station, the bank and the grocery store all downtown, Nickerson already has the kind of focus of pedestrian activity that can contribute considerably to the success of downtown businesses. Every effort should be made to keep all these destinations downtown permanently.



Looking northeast from Railroad Avenue at Nickerson Street

DOWNTOWN – FUTURE

It will take work to create a public space that will attract more businesses and more people downtown. Focus on attracting businesses which thrive in the synergy of a walkable neighborhood, such as restaurants, small retail shops, service businesses, or professional offices.

Consider pursuing improvements to downtown's streetscape. Efforts can be led by City government or by a coalition of local volunteers.

- Add curb extensions at primary intersections along Nickerson Street, at Railroad Avenue, and at Avenues B and C. Extensions could be landscaped with street trees, benches and bike racks.
- Improve the streetscape between the extensions. Consider including better sidewalks and ornamental lighting, as well as improved ADA accessible parking.
- Consider establishing a volunteer coalition to fix up business facades downtown that need it. Even some paint could make a big difference.

Continue to support existing Nickerson celebrations, and institute additional community events that attract people downtown. Anything from coordinated sales events by downtown businesses, to car shows, to holiday celebrations, can work to bring people together.

Coordinate with the local Chamber of Commerce or some similar organization to promote special events, implement holiday lighting and displays, and coordinate group advertising. Kansas state statutes allow for the creation of a **Business Improvement District** by the City, with taxing authority to fund such efforts. (K.S.A. 12-1781 et seq.)

It is essential that community leaders balance the development of a new interchange area with support of the City's existing downtown. Even while the City's focus is temporarily but necessarily diverted to development of the area between the new interchange and existing neighborhoods, Nickerson's historic downtown should be preserved and enhanced.

One of the City's major policy goals must be to strive to coordinate and balance the development of the interchange area so that it complements downtown Nickerson, rather than competing with established businesses.

An **Interchange District Plan** could establish policies and procedures to encourage residential and commercial development of the area between the K-14 interchange and the existing neighborhoods of Nickerson, and to pursue annexation as appropriate. The document could include guidelines for beautification of the corridor, and creation of a gateway feature for the City.

Information on Walkability

These are links to two 2013 TED Talks by architect and urban planner Jeff Speck:

- [The Walkable City](#) offers economic, health and environmental reasons for building walkable communities.
- [Four Ways to Make a City More Walkable](#) discusses the four things a City needs to do to make people prefer walking over driving: a reason to walk, a safe place to walk, comfortable conditions to walk in, and things that make a walk interesting.

Ideas for Renovating Small Town Downtowns

Consider the following resources to inspire ideas for improving Nickerson's downtown:

- From 1985 to 2012, [Main Street Kansas](#) programs operated successfully in 25 Kansas communities, helping to revitalize and preserve downtown districts. The Kansas program was reestablished in 2020, and once again offers resources and tools to breathe new life into historic commercial districts.
- USDA's [Downtown Revitalization](#) webpage includes case studies and a list of [funding resources](#).
- [What businesses would work in a small town? Filling empty buildings](#), an article on the webpage of *Small Biz Survival: The Small Town and Rural Business Resource*.
- [Creative Uses for Downtown Buildings in Small Towns](#), a 2017 study from Wisconsin that offers 23 examples of creative uses that brought activity back to small town downtowns.
- [50 Best Small Town Downtowns in America](#) is a 2015 article in *Best Choice Reviews*.
- HGTV's [Home Town Takeover](#) is a television series available for viewing online. The 8-episodes of Season 1 feature 12 renovations designed to revitalize the small town of Wetumpka, Alabama. Episode 8 is a retrospective highlighting the logic behind selecting renovation projects that will have the biggest impact on the whole community.

CHAPTER 7. Regulatory Tools

A community's planning goals are implemented in a variety of ways, including the use of regulatory tools. This chapter provides an overview of such tools—Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, Construction and Environmental Codes, Annexation, Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, and Site Plan Review.

Nickerson currently utilizes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations as regulatory tools. Planning Commissioners and other City leaders should be familiar with all of their potential regulatory resources.

By statute, a city's Planning Commission is directly involved with the development and administration of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, can recommend other local codes, and makes recommendations to the City Council on annexation decisions.

Zoning Regulations

The goal of zoning should be to ensure high standards for development, without unduly restricting private initiative or causing excessive development costs.

Zoning regulations protect property values by ensuring that residential, commercial and industrial land uses are located in compatible arrangements which prevent conflicts. **Zoning seeks to *prevent* conflicts between adjacent land uses, and is the major tool for resolving conflicts which do occur.**

Zoning can help maintain the rate of development at a pace which can be sustained by the community's infrastructure of public and private facilities and utilities.

Zoning regulations establish residential densities, by specifying standards for building setbacks from property boundaries, as well as requirements for maximum building height and maximum lot coverage. They establish standards for required parking spaces, and for the size and location of signs. They regulate accessory structures and uses, and home occupations.

Zoning regulations in Kansas are **not retroactive** and, therefore, they are not effective in cleaning up past mistakes—except over very long periods of time, by the gradual demise of lawful nonconforming uses (grandfathered-in land uses). This is why it is **important to adopt and enforce appropriate zoning before problems occur.**

Legislative Capacity and Quasi-judicial Actions: When a city adopts new zoning regulations or makes revisions to existing regulations, it is acting in a **legislative** capacity. Since a 1978 court case, cities in Kansas have been required to act in a **quasi-judicial** manner when holding a hearing and deliberating on an application for rezoning of a specific parcel of land.

To act in a quasi-judicial manner, the **Planning Commission is required to make its recommendations based on findings of evidence and an issue oriented analysis, in order to prevent arbitrary and capricious zoning decisions. The Governing Body is held to the same standards.**

If the Governing Body chooses to differ with or amend the recommendation of the Planning Commission, it may not do so arbitrarily. It **must support its decision by determining its own findings and analysis**, and either override the Planning Commission's recommendation by a two-thirds majority vote, or by a simple majority vote return the recommendation to the Planning Commission to be reconsidered.

Reasonableness: The Governing Body must establish specific **factors** on which zoning decisions and special use cases are to be determined. According to K.S.A. 12-757(a), the governing body *"...shall establish in its zoning regulations the matters to be considered when approving or disapproving a zoning request..."*.

Court tests of zoning cases are based upon the "reasonableness" of the City's decision. Any zoning amendment (for instance, to change a zoning district classification or boundary), is legally **presumed to be reasonable if it is in accordance with a land use plan or the land use element of a comprehensive plan.** Having a good land use plan within this Comprehensive Plan is a key component of the City's defense, should one of its zoning decisions ever be challenged in court.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS (BZA)

Any city which enacts zoning regulations must create a Board of Zoning Appeals. Under K.S.A. 12-759, cities may establish boards of three to seven members who serve staggered three-year or four-year terms. When a city exercises zoning only inside the city limits, all members must reside inside the city limits. For a city with extraterritorial zoning, at least one member of the BZA must reside outside the city.

Kansas statutes permit the members of a Planning Commission to be concurrently designated as the Board of Zoning Appeals, and Nickerson Municipal Code 16-105 does so. Nickerson's BZA must adopt Bylaws for its operation, including hearing procedures, which must be approved by the governing body.

An appeal from a decision of the BZA can be made only to the County District Court, and must be made within 30 days.

Any appeal of a determination by the Zoning Administrator is decided by the BZA. The BZA also has the authority to grant variances to the zoning regulations. Variances can permit modifications in such standards as the maximum height of a structure, in building setbacks, or in minimum lot sizes.

ZONING REGULATIONS IN NICKERSON

Nickerson's Zoning Regulations are established in [Chapter 16, Article 2](#) of the Nickerson Municipal Code, through Ordinance No. 2001-14 entitled "Zoning Regulations of the City of Nickerson, Kansas."

These Zoning Regulations date back to 2001, and are in need of updating. New zoning regulations for the City should be sure to:

- Reflect the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* decision that disallows the **regulation of signs** based on their content.
- Allow the Planning Commission hear special use cases, instead of the Board of Zoning Appeals.
- Support and encourage development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), such as garage apartments or granny flats. ADUs allow both a primary and a secondary but independent home on one residential parcel, and are becoming increasingly popular as more and more families become multi-generational.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are another important method of controlling the development of land. As required by K.S.A. 12-749(a), a city must have adopted a comprehensive plan *before* it can adopt subdivision regulations.

Subdivision Regulations specify the standards and conditions under which a tract of land can be subdivided. They set standards for the arrangement and design of streets, utility easements, lots, block sizes, open space, installation of public improvements, and proper drainage.

Subdivision Regulations may stipulate requirements for street lighting, sidewalks, and water supply and sewage disposal systems, among other things. They may encourage the dedication or acquisition of land for schools, parks, open space, or other community facilities within the new subdivision.

Subdivision Regulations also provide a framework to establish a working arrangement between the City and developers—to accept **dedications** of land within a development for future public facilities, to guarantee to the City the installation of necessary **public improvements** such as streets or sidewalks, and to allow for the use of **impact fees** to mitigate the City's costs of providing public utilities and services for the new development and other nearby areas which are benefited.

According to K.S.A. 12-749(a), a city may extend its **Subdivision Regulations extraterritorially**. This arrangement recognizes that cities are the main providers of urban utilities in most counties, and logically should be able to administer the initial design and construction of utility services, even outside current city limits. Extraterritorial enforcement of Subdivision Regulations also increases a city's ability to ensure that new streets tie properly into the existing urban street system.

When a standard in the Subdivision Regulations is less restrictive than a standard in other applicable regulations or codes, the most restrictive requirement applies. However, in rural areas, **interim standards** on water supply, sewage disposal, and future easements may be applied temporarily, until urbanization is a reality.

Subdivision Regulations are established for Nickerson in Chapter 16, Article 4 of the Nickerson Municipal Code, through Ordinance No. 2001-10.

Construction & Environmental Codes

Various construction and environmental codes are the tools used to maintain minimum construction standards, to remedy substandard housing, and to deal with sanitary and nuisance conditions. Codes also establish the process for permit approval for construction projects, determine standards for licensing contractors, and create enforcement procedures for inspections and appeals.

Codes are generally administered and enforced by trained municipal staff specifically assigned those duties, typically a Code Enforcement Officer.

City Extraterritorial Codes If a city has extraterritorial jurisdiction for their subdivision or zoning regulations, they have authority to enforce city building codes outside the city limits (see K.S.A. 12-751(b)). A petition procedure permits 20% of the electorate to require an election to be held to decide whether the adopted extraterritorial building codes should be retained. If building codes are removed by such a vote, they cannot be reestablished for at least four years.

County Codes A county can adopt construction and environmental codes for all its unincorporated area, or for a defined area around a city. Counties may also adopt a city's codes by reference for an area around the city, or a city may adopt its county's codes by reference. Either the city or county may perform the administrative functions needed, as may be jointly agreed. **Reno County does not enforce or implement construction building codes.**

Building and Construction codes for Nickerson are established in Chapter 4 of the Nickerson Municipal Code.

TYPES OF CODES

A variety of building, construction, and environmental codes play a role in protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public and their property. **Codes establish minimum standards** which, over time, help to upgrade and maintain the quality of the community's building inventory, in turn improving the quality of life and the city's tax revenue base.

Model Codes Typically, national or international model codes are adopted by reference, sometimes with specific amendments to address unusual local conditions. Model codes are developed by independent standards organizations, which regularly update their codes to deal with the latest in building materials and techniques.

It is generally far more cost-effective to adopt a model code, than to invest municipal resources in writing and regularly updating a local code. Also, contractors are already familiar with most model codes, but may be reluctant to work in a community with its own idiosyncratic requirements.

Building Codes govern the construction requirements for all types of buildings, by regulating their design, methods of construction, quality of materials, types of use, degree of occupancy, site location factors, and certain equipment required for their construction and operation. **Energy-efficiency** requirements and **historic preservation standards** may also be incorporated in building codes.



example: Building Code violation



example:
Plumbing Code
violation



example:
Electrical Code
violation



example:
Sanitation
Code violation

Plumbing Codes are responsible for regulating both potable water carrying systems and sanitary sewers.

Electrical Codes safeguard persons, buildings, and their contents from hazards arising from the use of electricity in new and remodeled structures.

Mechanical Codes serve to protect individuals and property by controlling the design, construction, installation, quality of materials, location, operation and maintenance of heating, ventilating, cooling, and refrigeration systems, as well as incinerators and other heat-producing equipment.

Fire Prevention Codes prescribe regulations for safeguarding life and property from the hazards of fire and explosion. They set safety standards and attempt to prevent fires from starting and spreading. They are a factor in fire insurance ratings.

Sanitation Codes regulate a wide range of health concerns including sewage disposal, water supply, abandoned and inoperable vehicles, pest and animal control, and environmental features in and around buildings, such as outside storage, that often lead to health hazards and blighting conditions.

Dangerous Structures Ordinances require the repair or removal of dangerous and unsafe structures by the owner or the City.

Housing Codes prevent overcrowding, and maintain minimum health and safety features in dwellings. They are concerned with the quality of the residential environment, and affect the upkeep and maintenance of existing dwellings. They can be enforced as a response to regular house-to-house inspections, or complaints, or be triggered by a change in ownership or renter.

Weed Mowing Ordinances establish a maximum standard for the height of vegetation outside of planting beds. Typically, if the owner does not keep vegetation within required limits, the City will mow, and then assess the cost to the owner.

City Beautiful Ordinances are a method of removing or causing the repair of unsightly and blighted structures in order to promote beautification. They can apply to both principal and accessory structures. Such ordinances are often combined with housing code minimum standards.

Manufactured Home Park Codes cover such items as water supply, sewage disposal, drainage, and street and parking facilities in manufactured home parks, density, open spaces and recreational areas, refuse disposal methods, and utility connections. Manufactured Home Park Codes may also be written to include **recreational vehicle campgrounds**.

Manufactured Home Park Codes cannot control the actual location of manufactured home parks, or the locations of individual manufactured homes scattered in a community, since this can only be accomplished by zoning regulations. However, since Manufactured Home Park Codes are adopted as health and safety codes, they are not limited by the grandfather clause inherent in the administration of zoning regulations, and so can be used to upgrade existing parks.



example:
Dangerous
Structure
violation

MANUFACTURED, MODULAR, & PREFAB HOUSING

Manufactured, modular, and prefab homes are all forms of housing constructed in factories. A manufactured home may cost about half the per square foot cost of a site-built dwelling. Provided they meet local construction codes, modular and prefabricated units are usually permitted by zoning regulations anywhere that site-built housing can be constructed.

HUD Code In 1974, the U.S. Congress changed the name "mobile home" to "manufactured housing". A **nationwide certification process was initiated in 1976** by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which set standards for all such housing under the federal Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act, otherwise known as the **HUD Code**.

Homes which do not meet the HUD national standards, almost all of which were built prior to June 15, 1976, are still referred to as "mobile homes".

Manufactured homes which are certified under the HUD Code override any local construction codes, except for the manner in which they are installed—that is, hooked up to utilities, skirted, placed on a permanent foundation, or anchored.

Kansas Standards The Kansas Legislature passed the extensive Kansas Manufactured Housing Act in 1991 as K.S.A. 58-4201, et seq. Kansas also has statutes requiring the state architect to establish tie-down design standards under K.S.A. 75-1226, et seq. The state does not enforce tie-down standards locally, but instead regulates their design at the manufacturer.

Residential-design Manufactured Homes In K.S.A. 12-742 and 763, effective January 1, 1992, the Kansas Legislature adopted mandatory provisions for a "residential-design manufactured home". Such homes must meet the minimum standards of the HUD Code, be at least 22 feet in width, have a pitched roof, have siding and roofing materials customarily used on site-built houses, and be placed on a permanent foundation. These statutes do not preempt or supersede valid **restrictive covenants** running with the land.

Additional architectural and esthetic standards may be adopted in local zoning regulations to ensure the compatibility of residential-design manufactured homes with site-built housing. However, **zoning regulations which exclude residential-design manufactured homes from single-family residential districts solely because they are manufactured homes cannot be adopted or enforced in Kansas.**

Because of the similarity of lot sizes needed, **multiple-wide manufactured homes** are sometime accommodated in neighborhoods of site-built homes. Their shorter length permits them to be oriented parallel to the street.

However, the longer 70' to 90' **single-wide manufactured homes** pose a problem in neighborhoods of site-built homes. If placed parallel to the street, they create a wide frontage which significantly increases the cost of utilities and streets. If placed perpendicular to the street and intermixed with site-built houses, the extension of the manufactured home into the rear yard tends to reduce the open space and privacy of adjacent neighbors. In practice, single-wide homes are usually angled on the lot in order to permit more windows on one side to have some view of the street. The effect is to further cause some disorientation in the relationship of two dissimilar types of structures. In general, the intermixing of single-wide manufactured homes with site-built houses tends to depreciate the value of the site-built houses.

Annexation

Annexation is the process by which a city expands its boundaries, in order to manage its physical growth in a sensible, predictable, and fiscally responsible manner.

Annexation brings property which has been under the jurisdiction of a county into the jurisdiction of a city. It is generally applied to land that is developed or about to be developed, and which uses or will use the city's utilities or other services.

Annexation allows a city government to exercise the regulatory authority necessary to protect public health and safety in peripheral urbanizing areas. It also ensures that residents and businesses who benefit from access to a city's facilities and services share fairly in the tax burden associated with constructing and maintaining those facilities and services.

Ideally, annexation occurs with the consent of the property owners involved. Unilateral annexation by a city is also an option, though it is more time consuming and complex than a consent annexation.

ANNEXATION IN KANSAS

State statutes governing annexation in Kansas were revised in 2005, making the process more complex and very detailed. K.S.A. 12-520 through 12-520(c) stipulate a variety of conditions that must be met before a city can annex land, mostly having to do with public ownership, agricultural use, fire districts, and with how contiguous the proposed annexation is to existing city boundaries.

Platted areas of any size which adjoin a city are the most eligible for annexation. Limitations exist on unplatted land over 21 acres in size. Unplatted agricultural land of 21 acres or more must have the consent of the landowner.

When property which does not adjoin city limits is annexed, it is termed an **island annexation**. In Kansas, such property may be annexed without a formal hearing by the county, but only if the property is *city owned*. For such property that is *not* owned by the city, even if the landowner consents, annexation must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

Whether a proposed annexation does or does not meet any of K.S.A. 12-520's conditions for annexation, **a city has the right to petition** their Board of County Commissioners to consider an annexation. Under K.S.A. 12-521, the Board of County Commissioners must consider the matter at a **quasi-judicial hearing**, where the Board is required to make its findings based on a preponderance of evidence.

PETITION OR CONSENT ANNEXATION

A property owner may petition a city to have their property annexed, or may consent to annexation when approached by the city. Annexation is generally a straightforward process under either of these circumstances.

Cooperation often occurs as a result of an **Agreement to Not Protest Annexation**, also known as a *No Protest Agreement* or *Waiver of Annexation*. Most cities require a landowner to sign such an agreement before allowing municipal utilities to be extended to serve property outside the city limits. In an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*, the property owner agrees not to oppose current or future annexation, as a condition of receiving municipal utilities or other city services. Without such agreements, annexing land after development takes place can be very difficult and costly for a city.

UNILATERAL ANNEXATION

A city can unilaterally annex land, without the cooperation of all affected property owners, but the process is long and difficult.

For a unilateral annexation in Kansas, K.S.A. 12-520a requires extensive notification to public agencies in the area, including any city, county or regional planning commissions with jurisdiction. In the case of Nickerson, this would involve both the City and the County Planning Commissions, which would each be required to review the proposed annexation and make a finding of its compatibility or incompatibility with any adopted comprehensive plans or other land use plans.

K.S.A. 12-520b requires the City to have a **plan for providing appropriate public facilities and services** to annexed properties. The plan must describe the extent of public improvements, their financing, and provide a time-table to ensure that facilities and services will be available when needed. The plan must be in *"sufficient detail to provide a reasonable person with a full and complete understanding of the intentions of the city for each major municipal service"*.

K.S.A. 12-531 and 532 establish a procedure for **deannexation** of unilaterally annexed land. Three years after a unilateral annexation, county commissioners are required to hold a hearing to determine if city services have been provided as required. If services have not been provided within two and one-half years following the hearing, the county may order the city to deannex the land.

Resource: *Annexation in Kansas: A Manual Concerning the Annexation Powers and Duties of Cities* (2015 Edition) is published by the League of Kansas Municipalities (LKM). Among other things, it provides samples of plans for extensions of municipal services, and various procedural forms. It is available through the LKM website at LKM.org. It is due to be updated in late 2023.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

Kansas statutes (K.S.A. 12-715b et seq.) allow a city to extend regulatory control beyond its boundaries, through zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, building codes, and floodplain regulations, within three miles of its city limits—but only if the county does not choose to assume the responsibility,

A city's extraterritorial jurisdiction is the area of land beyond the city limits, in which the city's zoning or subdivision authority is exercised. **Reno County has not prohibited extraterritorial jurisdictions in the County**, and is apparently open to negotiating ETJs for Cities within the County.

There is an **exemption for agricultural uses and related agricultural structures**. Cities are not authorized to adopt regulations outside the city which apply to or affect "...any land in excess of three acres under one ownership which is used only for agricultural purposes". This exception, however, does not apply to floodplain regulations in areas designated by FEMA as floodplain.

If a City administers Zoning or Subdivision Regulations in an extraterritorial jurisdiction, **at least two members of the City Planning Commission must reside outside of the city** but within three miles of the city limits. (See K.S.A. 12-744.)

In general, a city's extraterritorial jurisdiction may extend for a maximum of three miles outside the city limits, but not more than one-half the distance to another city, nor into another county, nor beyond the City's Planning Area as designated in its approved Comprehensive Plan.

EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONING REQUIREMENTS

Before a City can implement extraterritorial zoning, its Zoning Regulations must authorize it, and incorporate provisions to apply it.

A city must notify the board of county commissioners of its intention to adopt extraterritorial zoning regulations, in writing, 60 days before initiating such regulations by ordinance.

Joint Planning Option A rarely used alternative to accomplish extraterritorial zoning is to establish a joint, metropolitan or regional planning commission that includes both the city and the county. In such a case, the land proposed for extraterritorial zoning has to have been included in a comprehensive plan which was recommended by one of those two planning commissions, and which was then approved by either the city governing body or the board of county commissioners.

EXTRATERRITORIAL SUBDIVISION REQUIREMENTS

According to K.S.A. 12-749, a city planning commission may apply subdivision regulations to land outside of but within three miles of the city limits, provided such land is in the same county, and does not extend more than half the distance toward another city which has adopted subdivision regulations. A county may establish subdivision regulations for all or for parts of the unincorporated areas of the county.

If both a city and county want simultaneous subdivision jurisdiction in the same area, a joint city-county subdivision committee may be formed. According to K.S.A. 12-750(a), such a committee must be composed of at least three planning commission members from both entities, who then adopt and administer mutually agreed upon regulations. This is generally considered to be an extremely cumbersome method of subdivision regulation, and is rarely used in Kansas.

Site Plan Review & Approval

A Site Plan is a detailed drawing that shows how a parcel of land will be developed. Site Plan Review is the process of reviewing site plans to ensure that the proposed land use meets the community's specified design standards. Site Plan Approval is typically required for all new development, except for single-family dwellings and certain duplexes.

Authority State statute K.S.A. 12-755(a)(4) allows for Site Plan Approval to be authorized in a community's Zoning Regulations, in order to "*control the aesthetics of redevelopment or new development*".

Site Plan Review (SPR) is intended to maintain and enhance the quality of a city's built environment. SPR can help improve the livability of neighborhoods, express community identity, preserve a sense of place, and contribute to a positive community image. Properly applied SPR standards can enhance the appearance of commercial areas, screen undesirable views, and improve relationships among non-compatible land uses. Over time, the Site Plan Approval process can increase property values and improve quality of life for the entire community.

Applicability SPR typically applies to all new development except single-family dwellings or duplexes which are not contained in a courtyard setting. SPR also applies to extensive alterations of existing sites and structures. SPR Criteria generally apply only to those parts of a development project which can be seen from public rights-of-way, such as building exteriors, accessory structures, parking areas, outdoor lighting, and landscaping.

Design Criteria: Written and illustrated Design Criteria may be adopted, to establish the aesthetic standards utilized during the Site Plan Review process. Design Criteria can include both streetscape criteria which address improvements in the public rights-of-way, and other criteria which address design elements that may be used on private property.

Design Criteria are **not** intended to impose inflexible rules of style, size, material, or color on private and public spaces. Rather, design choices must be based on sound fundamental principles of successful planning, and then adapted to the specific needs of Nickerson.

Site Plan Review Committee: The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and making final decisions on all site plans submitted for approval. However, the review process can be facilitated by use of a Site Plan Review Committee, tasked with making recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Committee usually includes members of the Planning Commission, as well as a selection of local residents with backgrounds in design or construction.

Plans for a proposed project, whether new construction or significant renovation, are reviewed from the perspective of how the exterior of the building and the design of its site visually impact the community, as well as how it accommodates vehicle and pedestrian traffic, parking, utilities, drainage, trash services, emergency vehicle access, and other features.

Site Plan Approval often **helps makes development possible**. By clearly specifying the required conditions for a project, it ensures that new development is compatible with the character of the community, and will contribute to Nickerson's future quality of life.

Currently, Nickerson has not adopted any Site Plan Review standards, and has no Site Plan Approval process in place. City leaders should nevertheless be aware of the option.

CHAPTER 8. Resources

In order to implement the goals of this Comprehensive Plan over the next twenty years, Nickerson's Planning Commission members and Governing Body will need to be aware of available resources of information and funding.

Though resources change over time—existing programs may be ended or defunded, and new programs may begin—this chapter will provide an overview of some of the state, regional, and national programs that are often useful in helping Kansas communities achieve their planning goals. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather to demonstrate the range of available possibilities.

Background on existing programs, information resources, and potential funding options are organized within this chapter under the following general headings:

- Seeking Grants
- Regional Cooperation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs

Seeking Grants

Grants are available from both public and private sources. Public funding may include local capital improvement funds, bond referendums, or state and federal grant programs. Federal and state grants are often matching grant programs, and require partial local funding of each project. Private funding sources may include grants from foundations, land acquisition with the help of land trusts, or corporate sponsorships of specific projects or special events.

Some grants are available only to governmental entities, and some only to private nonprofits—so having a strong and active partnership between the City and local nonprofit organizations offers access to the greatest range of funding opportunities.

Competition for grant funding is fierce. The advantages of procuring outside funding should always be weighed against the sometimes substantial costs of grant research, selection, preparation, submittal, and administration.

To successfully compete for grant funding, carefully select projects that are well matched to the specific criteria of each grant. Be prepared to budget funds for either staff time for grant proposal preparation, or to employ a professional grant writer.

Ideally, funds for the City's portion of matching grants should be pre-approved by the Governing Body, so they are readily available when needed. If a City is willing to raise their percentage of matching funds even a little beyond a grant's required minimum, the likelihood of winning the grant may increase substantially.

To help grant seekers navigate the hundreds of thousands of potential grants available in the U.S. in any given year, there are any number of online grants search websites available, most of them basing their data on Form 990s filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Some are free, but most require a monthly fee.

Two websites that offer more than Form 990 data are Candid and GrantStation. FoundationSearch offers grant information through a map interface. Other options include Grants.gov, Kansas GrantWatch, the Rural Health Information Hub, and GrantFinder. Training in grant writing is available from organizations such as The Grantsmanship Center.

The National League of Cities also provides grant information to its members.

Regional Cooperation

Some factors impacting a community's economic development extend beyond planning area boundaries into a regional context. In particular, communication systems and transportation systems must be considered from a larger perspective. Environmental issues are also usually regional in nature—including air quality, water quantity and quality, and drainage and flooding.

Rather than having communities undercut each other as they compete for economic opportunities, **economic development** is most successfully achieved through cooperation on a regional level—with other governmental entities, with regional agencies, and with private organizations. Such **joint undertakings** can reduce the cost of providing a facility or service individually, improve its quality, and often make a project or program possible which would not be economically feasible if supported only by a single city. Regional cooperation is also sometimes an eligibility requirement of various state and federal grant programs, or may qualify grant recipients for added financial incentives.

The City of Nickerson is indirectly represented in many regional organizations by the Reno County Board of Commissioners, whose members often serve on the boards of such organizations.

In order to effectively manage regional issues, many state and federal agencies operate by regional divisions. In addition, cities and counties often cooperate across political boundaries by utilizing **intergovernmental agreements**.

The **Interlocal Cooperation Act**, *K.S.A. 12-2901 et seq.*, is the principal statute which authorizes cooperation between public agencies and private groups for specific public improvements and services. Such interlocal agreements require the approval of the State Attorney General, and must be filed with the Secretary of State and recorded with the County Register of Deeds.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Community Foundations are 501(c)3 philanthropic nonprofit corporations that provide a legal vehicle for local residents to make charitable gifts back to their communities. They offer a variety of grant opportunities.

For smaller communities, it may be more cost-effective to set up a local fund with a larger community foundation, which then handles administrative responsibilities.

- Kansas Rural Communities Foundation
- Hutchinson Community Foundation [Fund for Reno County](#)

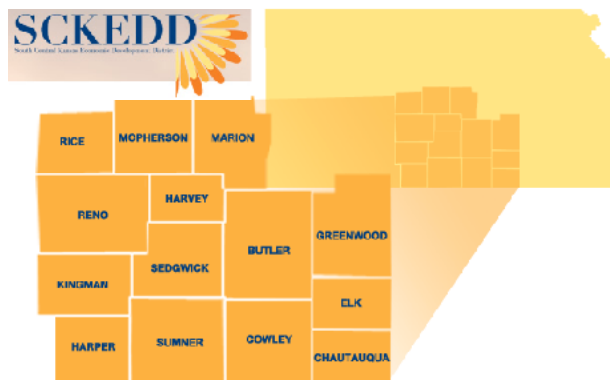
Reno County Research & Extension Office The extension service is a partnership between Kansas State University and federal, state, and county governments, with offices in every Kansas county. The Reno County Extension office is located in South Hutchinson.

The Extension Service does not write applications or provide grants, but does provide many **training programs for officials and civic leaders on the "how to" of community development**. They offer classes and technical information that can enhance economic viability and quality of life.

KSU Extension also administers the **First Impressions** program, which helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of a first-time visitor. Trained volunteers from a comparable community visit unannounced, and evaluate appearances, access to services; friendliness, and other community attributes. They follow standardized review procedures to document their visit and report on their findings. The City of Nickerson recently participated in the First Impressions program.

South Central Kansas Economic Development District (SCKEDD)

Established in 1972, with headquarters in Bel Aire, SCKEDD is a nonprofit membership organization. It partners with communities in 14 south central Kansas counties, including Reno County, to support efforts to improve economic vitality, community infrastructure, and housing quality.



SCKEDD services include **loan programs** that provide access to various Small Business or Rural Business Development Loans, as well as direct loans, to help provide startup capital to new innovative companies, and expansion capital for established companies.

SCKEDD has **grant specialists** available to help communities find and apply for grants to attract new businesses, accelerate job growth, and encourage new private development. SCKEDD **community grants** and **rural development grants** help fund improvements to community facilities, water and sewer systems, and housing rehabilitation.

SCKEDD has **housing specialists** that work with communities to renovate existing housing—to attract new residents, a skilled workforce, private investment and economic growth. It also conducts a **weatherization program** that helps eligible low-income households improve their home's energy efficiency.

Housing

Over the course of the next twenty years, Nickerson must both begin to improve its older housing and develop new high-quality housing of various types.

There are a number of resources available that could aid the City in pursuit of these goals.

- The federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program provides federal grants to state and local governments to create affordable housing. The program can assist with rehabilitation, rental housing, new construction, and home ownership targeted to low and moderate income families.

In Kansas, HOME funds are distributed through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation. Their First Time Home Buyer Program provides forgivable loans to Income-eligible households that have not owned a home in the past three years.

Programs to help provide affordable mortgages for low and moderate income people are typically administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) of the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**, or the **Rural Development (RD)** office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. RD also helps rural residents make health and safety repairs to their homes.

- Information on various types of **HUD loans** is available at www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/ins.
- Information on **RD Single Family Housing programs** is available at www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/single-family-housing-programs
- Information on **RD Multifamily Housing programs** is available at www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/multifamily-housing-programs

Economic Development

Cities have a vital interest in promoting economic development. Although economic development is not typically a responsibility of the Planning Commission, many planning decisions have a profound impact on the local economy. From housing options, to infrastructure upgrades, to downtown streetscaping—planning decisions affect quality of life, which is fundamental to successful economic development.

GOVERNMENTAL TOOLS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) These bonds are a potentially useful tool to encourage economic development and job creation. IRBs are issued by a government, but at the request of and on behalf of a private business, in order to support a specific project, such as the construction or expansion of a new manufacturing plant.

Since the bonds are issued by a government entity, they are tax exempt, and therefore the private business receives a lower interest rate on funds for startup. The business is responsible for repaying the IRB. The sponsoring government holds title to the collateral until the bonds are paid in full.

There are federal limits on the amount of IRBs that can be issued, and the uses to which the funds can be put.

- **Small Issue IRBs** are restricted to the construction, expansion, or renovation of manufacturing facilities. They are generally limited to \$1 million, but under certain circumstances that amount can go up to \$10 million.
- **Exempt Facility IRBs** have no size limits, but they can be used only for specific types of projects, such as water and sewer facilities, electricity and natural gas facilities, and certain types of rental housing.

Property Tax Exemptions Under various federal, state, and local programs, property taxes for certain property owners may be either eliminated or reduced. For instance, religious organizations and governments do not pay property taxes at all.

Other property owners may not be completely exempt, but may have their property taxes reduced by a specific percentage. For instance, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces qualify for a partial exemption on taxes for their homes. Exemptions are often made for people over 65 years of age, for people with disabilities, and for agricultural properties.

Property Tax Funding for Recruiting Industry & Manufacturing Under K.S.A. 12-1617(h), cities are authorized to annually levy a property tax "...for the purpose of creating a fund to be used in securing industries or manufacturing institutions for such city or near its environs...".

The proposed levy must be initially approved by the voters at a referendum, may not exceed one mill, and is not subject to the property tax lid. Monies may also be expended from the general fund; however, they would be subject to the tax lid.

Such funding should be used judiciously and strategically, but occasionally may be necessary for a successful business recruitment effort.

FEDERAL & STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Some federal economic development programs are administered by state agencies. State economic development initiatives may create state programs, or simply enable local programs. In the 2010s, many state programs in Kansas were discontinued, or had their budgets severely cut or entirely defunded.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program:

This program distributes federal funds to Kansas cities and counties via the Kansas Department of Commerce. To receive funds, a project must meet at least one of three federally mandated criteria:

- Benefit low- and moderate-income individuals
- Remove or prevent slum or blight conditions
- Eliminate an urgent need created by a disaster, when local funds are unavailable

The State of Kansas receives an annual allocation for CDBG grants, which are distributed in four categories—Annual Competitive Grants, Economic Development Grants, Commercial Rehabilitation Grants, and Urgent Need Grants.

- **Annual Competitive Grants** Awarded annually, these grants apply to projects such as improvements to water, sewer, natural gas or electrical systems, fire protection, housing rehabilitation, demolition, bridges, community and senior centers, streets, architectural barrier removal, and public service activities.
- **Economic Development Grants** Business finance grants awarded to cities or counties are loaned in turn to private businesses that create or retain permanent jobs. Funding is also available for infrastructure improvements that directly create or retain permanent jobs. At least 51% of the jobs created or retained must meet HUD's low- and moderate-income standard.

- **Commercial Rehabilitation Grants** This is a relatively new CDBG program, designed to assist private business owners in rehabilitating downtown commercial buildings to stem the tide of decay. The buildings must house viable businesses that will carry on for-profit business activity.
- **Urgent Need Grants** Provided on an as-needed basis, these grants assist a local government to meet community needs created by a severe natural or other disaster that poses an immediate threat to community health or welfare, when no other financial resources are available.

Workforce Development Programs Federal funding under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act supports state workforce development programs, which are available to employers at no cost. Workforce Center services may include job listings, applicant pre-screening, assessment testing, interview scheduling, veteran services, and current labor market data.

Rural Development Kansas Programs The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a number of programs through its Rural Development offices in each state, offering loans, grants and loan guarantees to support essential services such as housing, economic development, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure. They also promote economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks, credit unions, and community-managed lending pools.

- A summary of all major RD programs is available at www.rd.usda.gov/files/RD_ProgramMatrix.pdf

BONDS

Kansas Development Finance Authority (KDFA): KDFA is authorized to issue tax-exempt or taxable bonds for public and private educational facilities, healthcare facilities, and to finance affordable multifamily housing. It operates the **Beginning Farmer program** to provide start-up funding for agricultural businesses.

KDFA can also issue obligations for qualifying private activities, including energy and electric generation and transmission projects and facilities; education facilities; energy conservation improvements; manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution facilities; communication facilities; research facilities; transportation; corporate and management offices; and computer services.

KDFA works in partnership with other state departments to implement various low-interest tax exempt bond programs for municipalities, through five state revolving loan funds.

- *Kansas Clean Water Supply Revolving Loan Fund Program* for municipal and rural waste water systems (with KDHE)
- *Public Water Supply Revolving Loan Fund Program* which targets public drinking water systems (with KDHE)
- *Transportation Revolving Loan Fund* to provide financing for local road and bridge infrastructure improvements (with KDOT)
- *Communications Revolving Loan Fund Program* to upgrade communications equipment (with KDOT)
- *Investments in Major Projects and Comprehensive Training Program (IMPACT)* to issue bonds which provides funds for job training, and for major project investments for companies which are locating or expanding their business in Kansas (with Kansas Department of Commerce)

TAX INCENTIVES

The State of Kansas provides a variety of tax incentives for business development, through income tax credits or deductions, property tax exemptions or abatements, and sales tax exemptions.

RESOURCES

- Information on state economic development programs is available on the Kansas Department of Commerce Programs & Services web page.
- Information on economic development tools for Kansas communities is available from the *League of Kansas Municipalities*, in a 2013 publication called Economic Development Tools for Kansas Municipalities. An updated version will be published in late 2023.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs

Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG) Previous federal funding programs that supported development of the bulk of the nation's bike paths and pedestrian trails have now all been replaced with a **Transportation Alternatives (TA)** set-aside of STBG program funding.

In Kansas, federal STBG/TA set-aside funds are administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation. TA projects are selected through a statewide competitive process. For each fiscal year, KDOT allocates about half of its TA funds to projects in smaller Kansas communities.

Only entities with taxing authority, such as local governments or school districts, are eligible to apply for TA funds, although nonprofits can and often do partner with cities on TA projects. The TA program provides no money upfront but rather is a **cost reimbursement program**. TA funds may pay for up to 80% of eligible expenses, but local matching funds are required to pay for at least 20% of project costs.

Transportation Alternatives program projects can include on-road and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, the conversion of abandoned rail corridors to railtrails, construction of scenic overlooks, and the preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.

Certain **environmental projects** are also eligible for TA funding, including erosion control and stormwater mitigation activities, invasive species prevention, the construction of wildlife corridors, and billboard inventories and removal of illegal and non-conforming billboards.

For more information, see the [KDOT Transportation Alternatives Program Guide 2020](#).

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) This is a federal program intended to make it safer for more children to walk and bike to school, thereby reducing childhood obesity, as well as the traffic accidents, wasted fuel, and air pollution that result from traffic congestion near schools. More information on Safe Routes to School is available at www.saferoutesinfo.org, and on the KDOT website at www.ksdot.org/burTrafficEng/sztoolbox/default.asp.

A city or a school district can apply for 100% SRTS funding to plan, design, and build projects that improve the ability of students to walk and bike to school, for projects within about two miles of a school.

Eligible projects include sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bike parking, and traffic diversion improvements

SRTS also funds activities that encourage walking and bicycling to school, including public awareness and outreach campaigns, traffic education and enforcement near schools, and student training programs on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

School Zone Program The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) funds a School Zone Program that can help towns with a population of fewer than 20,000 people improve their school zones with pavement striping, school zone signs, and reduced speed assemblies. For more information, see www.ksdot.org/burTrafficEng/sztoolbox/School_Zone_Program.asp.

Walking School Bus Consider implementing a Walking School Bus program, which arranges for children to walk in groups, with adults along to supervise. The program can be as informal as a couple of families taking turns walking their kids to school—or as structured as a defined route with meeting points, a timetable, and a schedule of trained volunteers. For more information, see the website at www.walkingschoolbus.org.

CHAPTER 9. Plan Implementation

This chapter reviews methods for implementing this Comprehensive Plan, and provides an **overview of Planning Commissioners' statutory responsibilities**.

City planning can be defined as a decision-making process which is expressed in the form of a plan. A plan typically **defines community goals** (physical, social and economic), and includes project proposals and policy statements, all aimed at the **broad objective of improving a community's quality of life**.

Policies are established principles and guidelines, intended to ensure that every important decision is made with long-term goals in mind.

- **Policy Resource:** The League of Kansas Municipalities provides sample policy statements on a variety of subjects, available to members on their website.

Leadership and organization are the keys to successful implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

It takes a coordinated effort to successfully achieve community goals, so a good working relationship among governmental agencies, private organizations, potential developers and citizens is essential. Assigning specific responsibility for specific proposals is also crucially important—because in community-wide endeavors, "everybody's business" can easily become "nobody's business", and proposals can be forgotten.

FUNCTIONS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan provides direction on both short-term and long range planning objectives, so it is specific in some matters and general in others. As individual planning situations are addressed over the course of the 20-year Planning Period, each will need to be considered based on conditions current at the time. Nevertheless, every decision should be rooted in the overall planning goals expressed in this Plan.

A basic purpose of planning is to **help guide land use** in an orderly manner, minimizing conflicts between various users of land. Planning also allows **community services** to be provided efficiently and economically. Compromise in the location of a community facility affects its efficiency, and therefore its long-term costs to local taxpayers. To prevent such compromises, the process of planning is a means of **making better short-range decisions by relating them to long-range goals**.

Among other functions, this Comprehensive Plan:

- Compiles information helpful to City officials when they establish policies and make planning decisions.
- Assists potential developers to understand long-range community intentions.
- Serves as a planning rationale for administering City Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, providing a basis for making decisions that are "reasonable" under the law and therefore defensible in court, and for reviewing plats in terms of their fit with City growth policies and the capacity of existing community facilities and infrastructure.
- Is often a prerequisite for applications to state and federal grant programs which could benefit the City and the Planning Area.
- Helps to coordinate planning efforts among the City of Nickerson, USD 309, Reno County, the State of Kansas, and the federal government.

LEGAL BASIS

According to State statute K.S.A. 12-747, a planning commission is authorized to make a comprehensive plan for the development of a city, as well as any unincorporated territory outside the city which the planning commission believes is a constituent of the "total community of which the city is a part".

By statute, a comprehensive plan in Kansas must include information on existing conditions and trends related to land use, population, public facilities, transportation, economic conditions and natural resources, and must also include the commission's recommendations for development within the planning area. Statutes also allow for the inclusion of "any other element deemed necessary to the comprehensive plan".

Adoption & Approval Process

Adoption by the Planning Commission For a completed comprehensive plan to become effective, it must be formally adopted as a whole or in parts by a **resolution** of the Planning Commission, after a **Public Hearing** which has been properly advertised beforehand. Adoption must be based on a **majority vote of the total membership** of the Planning Commission. A certified copy of the adopted plan or part, together with a written summary of the Hearing, must then be submitted to the City's Governing Body with a recommendation for approval.

Approval by the Governing Body After receiving the certified copy of the plan or part of the plan, and a written summary of the Hearing (which can be unapproved Minutes of the Hearing), the Governing Body may choose one of three actions.

- The Governing Body may choose to **approve** the comprehensive plan as recommended by the Planning Commission, by publishing an **ordinance** of approval.
- By at least a 2/3 majority vote, the Governing Body may **override** the Planning Commission's recommendations.
- The Governing Body may **return** the Plan to the Planning Commission for further consideration, along with a statement specifying the basis for the Governing Body's failure to approve or disapprove.

After considering the returned Plan, the Planning Commission may provide its reasons and resubmit its original recommendations, or submit an amended recommendation. The Planning Commission must deliver its recommendations to the Governing Body following the Commission's next regular meeting after receipt of the Governing Body's report, or else the Governing Body must consider the Commission's inaction as a resubmission of the original recommendations and proceed accordingly.

When the Governing Body receives a resubmitted Plan, it may, by a simple majority, either adopt the Plan, or revise and adopt the Plan, or it may choose to take no action.

Copies of the Plan An attested copy of an adopted and approved Comprehensive Plan, and any amendments to it, must be sent to all other taxing subdivisions in the Planning Area which request a copy of the Plan.

Annual Review & Amendments

In order to maintain the viability of the Plan under State statutes, **at least once each year the Planning Commission must review** or reconsider the Plan or any of its parts, and may propose amendments, extensions or additions to it. Amendments to the plan are made by the same procedures as required for the original adoption process, including a public hearing.

By statute, an approved plan or part of the plan "*... shall constitute the basis or guide for public action to insure a coordinated and harmonious development or redevelopment which will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as a wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.*"

Although the Kansas Supreme Court views the adoption and annual review of a comprehensive plan as a "legislative function", note that a plan is still a "guide", and **actual implementation must take place within the democratic processes of local government and other agencies.**

On a nationwide scale, comprehensive plans are assuming **an increasingly important role in land use litigation.**

A comprehensive plan must be consistent with the regulatory tools for its implementation, especially zoning and subdivision regulations. That consistence, or its lack, is often the crux of land use lawsuit decisions.

Planning Commission Responsibilities

According to Nickerson's Municipal Code 16-101, the City's Planning Commission should have between five and fifteen members. If there are fewer than nine members, then two must reside outside of but within 3 miles of the city limits. If there are nine or more members, then three must reside outside of but within 3 miles of the city limits. Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, with the consent of the City Council.

Planning Commission members serve three-year staggered terms. The Commission must adopt Bylaws for the transaction of business and to establish hearing procedures.

As the authorized agency under State statutes, the Planning Commission's major responsibility is to **prepare, adopt and maintain the Comprehensive Plan**. The Commission should also undertake various responsibilities in implementing the Plan, including:

- **Review the Comprehensive Plan annually, as required by State statute**, and report its status to the Governing Body. Such annual reviews often result in only minor changes to the Plan, but it is recommended that a major review should be conducted at least once every five years, to update and revise goals and priorities. [K.S.A. 12-747(d)]
- As required by K.S.A. 12-748, review public improvement, facility and utility projects to determine their **conformance to the Comprehensive Plan**.
- Prepare, adopt and maintain **Zoning Regulations** and **Subdivision Regulations** for the City, by holding public hearings and making recommendations to the Governing Body.

- Hold hearings on proposed **vacations** of rights-of-way and easements, and make recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Make recommendations to the Governing Body for approval or disapproval of **conditional uses** to the zoning regulations. Each type of Zoning District permits some land uses by right, and other uses which may only be allowed after individual review by the Planning Commission. Such uses must be **specifically listed** in the Zoning Regulations as a potential conditional use in each specific Zoning District, and often have conditions attached in order to be granted.
- Review proposed **annexations**, and make recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Undertake development of **neighborhood or project plans**, to provide more detailed plans to develop new neighborhoods or rehabilitate older neighborhoods, or for special projects in the Planning Area.
- Assist the Governing Body on **special planning projects**, including economic development efforts, capital improvement planning, and grant applications.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Public engagement in the planning process—not only by officials, but by individuals and groups of citizens, civic organizations and potential developers—is essential for a successful outcome.

Public participation should go beyond simply informing the public of planning activities. **Encourage feedback** from the public, so people can readily communicate their ideas about the kind of community they want to live in, and actively participate in the development and review of planning proposals.

Since plans and their implementation affect people and their property, it is extremely important that the planning process be conducted within an open democratic framework. To successfully implement Comprehensive Plan goals, pursue a variety of strategies to encourage public engagement, including:

- Conduct business and hearings in **open meetings**.
Give adequate notice, and provide agendas.
Encourage the public to voice their opinions and contribute their ideas. Take minutes, and make them available to the public.
- When preparing plans and considering regulatory decisions, specifically **involve affected individuals**, including residents and business owners.
- Make planning proposals, plans, reports, maps and regulations available on the City website. For people without internet access, printed planning documents should be available for review at City Hall.

NEIGHBORHOOD & PROJECT PLANS

Due to their large scale and long-range perspective, comprehensive plans are necessarily generalized. As specific areas approach the point of active development, the Planning Commission may require individualized neighborhood and project plans based on more current and specific information.

Neighborhood and project plans may serve simply as policy guidelines for future decisions, or they may be formally adopted and approved as an element of the Comprehensive Plan.

A **neighborhood plan** typically analyzes in detail the land use, transportation, and public facility needs of a part of the Planning Area which poses unusual, difficult or new conditions. A neighborhood plan might deal with an area as small as a block or as large as a major segment of the Planning Area. They are often the first step taken in efforts to rehabilitate older neighborhoods.

Neighborhood plans can aid in making decisions on current and future land use proposals, capital improvement projects, and applications for zoning, subdivision plats, and annexations. They can also help facilitate a good working relationship between developers and area residents.

A **project plan** is a detailed description of the proposed development of a specific site for a particular purpose, such as a park, recreation area, public building, or industrial tract. They are often prepared as part of a grant application or bond issue, or as a result of funding becoming available from such sources.

Neighborhood and project plans often focus on a community's historic downtown, on specific business districts or residential neighborhoods, or on areas being considered for annexation. In their simplest form, they may consist of simply a drawing and a short explanatory report. More complex issues or areas, however, may require a more complex plan.

Property owners and potential developers who may be affected by such plans should always be invited to participate in their preparation.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (CIP)

Financing and constructing public improvement projects is a complex process. A Capital Improvement Plan is a long-range fiscal management tool which is used to establish the priority, timing, cost estimates and funding sources for public physical improvements, typically covering a period of four to six years.

A CIP does not deal with annually recurring **operating expenses**, except to note the effect which a new facility or improvement may have on future operating budgets. The current year of a CIP is the most detailed, and is often adopted as the City's capital improvements budget along with the City's annual operating budget.

A CIP is an essential tool for coordinating the sequence of financing and construction for any project involving joint funding, including public-private partnerships. Projects which incorporate funding from county, state or federal sources may require **scheduling at least several years in advance**.

A CIP is also an effective way to guide the direction and timing of **subdivision development**. This is particularly important in areas that have been unilaterally annexed by the City, where there are **stringent legal requirements for the timing of the installation of public improvements**.

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PROJECT REVIEW

Once a Comprehensive Plan has been approved by the Governing Body, and its effectuating ordinance is published, K.S.A. 12-748 establishes a procedure for Planning Commission review of any public projects proposed in the Plan.

Any public improvement, public facility or public utility project recommended in the Plan **must be submitted to the Planning Commission for review**. Before the Governing Body may proceed with construction of the project, the Planning Commission must determine that the proposed project **conforms with the Comprehensive Plan**. The Commission must make a determination **within 60 days**, or the project is automatically deemed to have been approved.

In the event the Planning Commission finds that the proposed project **does not conform** to the Plan, the Planning Commission is required to submit their findings in writing to the Governing Body. The Governing Body may, by a majority vote, choose to override the findings of the Planning Commission and proceed with the project. In this event, the statute states that the Comprehensive Plan *"...for the area concerned shall be deemed to have been amended"*. The Planning Commission should then proceed to revise and **formally amend the Comprehensive Plan**, so that the Plan conforms with the approved project.

Zoning cases and plats should be reviewed by the Planning Commission to determine their conformance to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, as should **projects in a city's capital improvement plan**. K.S.A. 12-748(b) provides that if a project in a capital improvement plan is reviewed by the Planning Commission and found to be in conformance to the Comprehensive Plan, then no further Planning Commission review is necessary, except as may be required by zoning and subdivision regulations.

The Planning Commission's recommendations on zoning cases, plats and public projects are intended to enable the Governing Body to make **decisions that support long-range planning goals**, while retaining their final decision-making authority.

STATUTORY DEBT LIMITATION

Typically, under Kansas law, the bonded debt limitation for a city may be calculated by taking 30% of the total of a city's tangible assessed valuation, including its motor vehicle valuations. The combination of a city's general obligation and its special assessment debt may not exceed this number. Bonds issued for general sewer and water work, and revenue bonds, are not included in the debt limitation.

Good municipal management maintains a continuing effort to keep public facilities up-to-date, while not allowing the mill levy for indebtedness to fluctuate too greatly. Prudent financial planning will enhance Nickerson's ability to reach the goals established in this Comprehensive Plan.

Taking Action

Community leaders should **regularly review goals and priorities, and revise them as necessary**, based on their urgency and the availability of resources. This process is often incorporated into the Planning Commission's required annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, and the Governing Body's annual budgeting process.

As each goal is addressed, an action program will need to be developed for its implementation. An **action program** is a way to make sure that goals turn into reality, by describing specific tasks that must be achieved in order to reach each goal. To be effective, an action program must include clear-cut implementation information for each goal:

- **Define the tasks** necessary to achieve the goal
- Determine **who is responsible** for making sure each task is achieved
- Set a **schedule** and a **deadline**
- Assign **resources** (funding, staff, etc.) sufficient to achieve each task
- Establish **communication** hierarchies (Who needs to know what, how soon?)

For significant public projects, be willing to **spend time and effort on the early stages of the planning process**—it will pay off later in community satisfaction with the overall success of the final project. Making good decisions at each step in a logical process of design helps prevent costly revisions later, during construction. Engaging the services of design professionals to help throughout the planning process, as opposed to waiting until you are ready for construction drawings, is recommended.

CHAPTER 10. Nickerson's Planning Goals

This chapter provides an overview of Nickerson's comprehensive planning goals. It is intended as an aid to the City leaders and municipal staff who will be primarily responsible for seeing that these goals are implemented.

Planning goals must take into account the physical, social, economic and governmental needs of a community. Goals which are reasonable and well grounded, yet also purposeful and ambitious, can **help frame policies and focus decision-making**.

Meaningful goals will help Nickerson hone its unique identity, which in turn will distinguish it from other communities, and enhance its ability to compete for residents, resources, and economic development.

PLANNING GOALS — Quality of Life & Sustainability	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Investments in quality of life should be regarded as investments in Nickerson's future.	☐			
Support environmental sustainability with leadership decisions that preserve clean air and water, protect the soil that supports agriculture, safeguard natural habitats and wildlife to maintain ecological diversity, and manage stormwater runoff to control flooding.	☐			
Support social sustainability with leadership decisions that encourage high-quality housing options at a range of price points, walkable neighborhoods, a transportation system that serves everyone including people who don't drive, an education system that prepares the community's young people for a responsible and successful future, access to a health care system that meets the needs of residents of all ages, and provides opportunities for people to celebrate and enjoy life in Nickerson.	☐			
Support economic sustainability with cooperative economic development efforts, both public and private. Focus on providing a sustainable supply of reasonably low-cost energy and high-speed, high-capacity communications infrastructure.	☐			

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PLANNING GOALS — Plans, Policies & Regulations	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Develop a plan to pave the community's unpaved dirt and gravel roads.				☐
To attract additional light industry to Nickerson, consider encouraging the development of pad-ready sites , graded, and with utilities stubbed, and developed road access.				☐
Update Nickerson's 2001 Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations.		☐		

PLANNING GOALS — Community Facilities	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Identify and acquire suitable sites for any proposed community facilities in advance of need.	☐			
Begin planning to pursue purchase of additional land for an eventual expansion to Nickerson Cemetery .				☐

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PLANNING GOALS — Parks & Neighborhoods	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Develop park facilities that offer opportunities for on-demand exercise , such as walking paths, outdoor exercise zones or dog parks, to encourage frequent use and enhance social			☐	
Plan neighborhoods that encourage physical activity, nurture social connections, and promote good health. Provide options for walking and biking, by supporting a community-wide network of well-maintained sidewalks, and bicycle paths, lanes, and routes. Connect residential neighborhoods with workplaces, the schools, retail, Weber Park, and other destinations.	☐			
Plan any new developments to capitalize on the City's traditional neighborhood design , maximizing walkability. Encourage traditional gridiron street networks.	☐			

PLANNING GOALS — K-14 Interchange	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Estimate the cost of extending municipal utilities to the K-14 interchange.		☐		
Take steps to have meaningful influence over any development of land around the Nickerson K-14 interchange, either by negotiating with Reno County for Extraterritorial Jurisdiction over the area, or by annexing the area.		☐		
Consider establishing an Interchange District Plan to encourage residential and commercial development of the area between the K-14 interchange and the existing neighborhoods of Nickerson. Include guidelines for beautification of the corridor , and creation of a gateway feature for the City.		☐		
Coordinate and balance the development of the K-14 interchange area so that it complements downtown Nickerson, rather than competing with established businesses.	☐			

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PLANNING GOALS – DOWNTOWN	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Activate downtown as a walkable destination. Work toward developing a balance of workplaces, restaurants, services and retail.	☐			
Consider pursuing improvements to the downtown streetscape . Add landscaped curb extensions at primary intersections along Nickerson Street, at Railroad Avenue, and at Avenues B and C. Include better sidewalks, shared on-street public parking including improved ADA accessible parking, good lighting, street trees, bike racks, public art, and creative signage.			☐	
Consider establishing a volunteer coalition to encourage improvements to downtown business facades .		☐		
Develop public gathering spaces downtown that are flexible enough to support community events and celebrations.			☐	
Continue to support existing Nickerson celebrations , and institute additional community events that attract people downtown—anything from coordinated sales events by downtown businesses, to car shows, to holiday celebrations.	☐			
Coordinate with the local Chamber of Commerce or some similar organization to promote special events, implement holiday lighting and displays, and coordinate group advertising downtown.	☐			
Consider establishing a downtown Business Improvement District .				☐

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PLANNING GOALS – Utilities	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Adopt and enforce a policy to require a No Protest Agreement from any landowner who wants property outside the city limits to be served by municipal utilities.		☐		
Maintain good maps of municipal utility systems .	☐			
Review policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in utility and drainage easements , and amend them as necessary. Rigorously enforce such policies.				
Regularly review standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities, and update them as necessary to reflect both changes in technology, and changes in public expectations for environmental responsiveness.	☐			
Replace older sewage collection pipes as they reach the point where it is more cost-effective to replace them than to maintain them.	☐			

PLANNING GOALS – Trees	Priority (years)			
	Ongoing	<5	5-10	10-20
Make efforts to sustain and enhance riparian woodlands and shelter belts .	☐			
Plant some new street trees in Nickerson each year, to maintain a healthy age spread in the City's urban forest.	☐			
As aging trees at Wildmead Cemetery reach senescence and need to be removed, continue to plant new trees to replace them.	☐			