

**City of Kimball**  
**Comprehensive Plan**

June, 2002

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## **Kimball Planning Commission:**

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# Introduction

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## Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The primary purpose for the development of a comprehensive plan is to provide basic guidelines and policies for use by public officials and the private sector whose decisions may affect existing and/or future uses of the land and resources within the planning area. This document is a continuation of previous planning efforts and is intended to promote orderly growth and development within the City of Kimball, as well as to provide guidelines for directing physical growth and change.

## Scope of the Comprehensive Plan

The intended scope of the plan is to provide a general analysis of the needs of the City of Kimball and its residents, particularly as they relate to existing and future uses of the land. In doing so, the plan evaluates past trends in several subject areas and attempts to project in what manner changes will occur several years into the future. Primary emphasis is placed upon how these trends might impact physical growth and development within the city and the identification of policies needed to direct that change.

Although this study is a comprehensive plan for the incorporated areas of the City of Kimball, it recognizes that both existing and future activities within the remainder of Kimball County may directly, or indirectly, cause change to occur within the City. The conclusions drawn in this study attempt to incorporate these potential impacts and reflect the need for intergovernmental cooperation.

## The Legal Role

Nebraska communities are required to adopt a comprehensive plan if they intend to utilize zoning or subdivision regulations to control physical development within the community. This requirement is based upon the premise that land use decisions should not be arbitrary, but follow a planned land development concept.

At a minimum this land development concept, according to state statutes, must include:

- A land use element which designates the proposed general distributions and location for uses of land for agriculture, housing commerce, industry, recreation, education, and public buildings and land.
- The general location, character and extent of existing and proposed major roads, streets, highways, and air and other transportation facilities.
- The general location, type, capacity and area of present and projected or needed community facilities including recreation facilities, schools, libraries, other public buildings, and public utilities and services.

The future land development concept must be based upon documented population and economic projections.

# Introduction

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## The Planning Approach

The City of Kimball contracted with the Panhandle Area Development District to update the city's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance.

The planning process included:

- \* a review of historical planning documents
- \* land use and housing inventories
- \* demographic and economic research
- \* a community needs survey prepared by the Panhandle Area Development District and distributed by the local Boy Scouts. A copy of the survey summary is attached as Appendix 1.
- \* a visioning session conducted with the Kimball Planning Commission and general public present at the meeting
- \* interviews of city staff to collect information on public facilities and utilities
- \* the use of aerial photography and GIS to prepare land use and future development plan maps
- \* numerous meetings with the Planning Commission to review date, goals, policy and community input.

# History

## Historical Development

The westward expansion of the United States by homesteaders, the railroads and free land were key factors contributing to the establishment of Kimball. The land occupied by Kimball was originally a portion of Cheyenne County. In 1867 the Union Pacific Railroad reached the site of present day Kimball and established a station called Antelope. A settlement called Antelope sprang up beside it. For many years the only activity in the area included railroad crews stopping for food and rest and activities of the Bay State Livestock Company. In 1877, the first post office was established and in 1881 the first school was started through the efforts of May Lynch, wife of section foreman for the railroad.

The Union Pacific Railroad began selling its land in 1884 opening the way for settlement. By the close of 1885, the town had a hotel, two professional offices, a newspaper, several retail shops and had been renamed Kimball. The name Kimball originated from Thomas L. Kimball, an official of the Union Pacific Railroad who later became vice-president and general manager of the railroad.

The 1862 Homestead Act allocated 160 acres of land to settlers who were required to work the land for specified period of time. The Kincaid Act, approved by Congress in 1904, allowed a claim of 640 acres of land which further encouraged settlers to locate in the arid Sandhills. Farming became the primary source of employment and improved dramatically with the development of irrigation. As agriculture prospered so also did the community. Notable landmarks of Kimball's early prosperity include the "old stone store", the Corner Bar building, built in 1894, and the Fraternal Hall, built in 1904. Both buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. During this same time period, Kimball's first manufacturing plant began operations. The plant produced irrigation flumes designed to

carry water across ravines. The flume was designed and patented by Kimball blacksmith Pat Maginnis.

In 1911, the Oliver Reservoir dam was built. Oliver Reservoir provided irrigation water to Lodgepole Valley farmers until 1976 when the dam became unsafe and the lake was drained. A massive local effort in combination with state funding allowed the dam to be rebuilt in 1979. The 280 acre lake was reconstructed as recreation, wildlife conservation and flood control facility.

Transportation has played a critical role in Kimball's development. Although rail passenger service was discontinued in 1971, the railroad continues to remain important to the area as shipping resource for the agricultural community. The Lincoln Memorial Highway, U.S. Highway #30, was constructed in the early 1900's. Interstate 80 was constructed in the area from 1969 to 1973 and became one of the heaviest traveled trucking routes in the western United States. In 1987 the Kimball Airport's a new primary runway was constructed and lengthened to accommodate large aircraft.

Kimball's economic history has experienced several boom & bust cycles. Early economic influences, such as the railroad and agriculture, were overshadowed by the discovery of oil in the 1950's. Kimball earned the title, "Oil Capitol of Nebraska", and the population more than doubled during the 1950's spurring a great deal of new development. Immediately following this boom came another distinction as, "Missile Center - USA". An Atlas missile site was constructed south of town in 1961 followed by a vast complex of Minuteman missile silo's in 1962. This construction effort resulted in additional employment and business growth.

# History

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In 1966, George Risk Industries, Inc. moved to Kimball from Columbus, Nebraska following the sale of \$150,000 of its stock to Forward Kimball Industries, Inc. The company manufactures high-technology products, ranging from keyboards and switches to security systems. Additional industries attracted to Kimball include Accessory Sales, Inc. in 1967, Rite-A-Way Industries, Inc. in 1968, Poly-Pipe, Castronics, Inc., and Clean Harbors, a hazardous waste disposal plant. Although the substantial growth rates experienced during the 1950's and 1960's have not been able to be maintained, Kimball continues to serve the surrounding area as a retail, service and employment trade center.

## Previous Planning Efforts

### Comprehensive Planning:

The City of Kimball has prepared comprehensive plans in previous years to assist local decision makers with the creation of public policy to guide physical growth and change. The most recent comprehensive plan was completed in May, 1995. This plan, entitled Kimball Nebraska - economic and community development plan, contained a strong emphasis on economic development. Community goals in the plan included:

- \* The expansion of existing, and attraction of new, industry.
- \* Re-establishing Kimball's role as a trade center.
- \* Creating a sense of place.
- \* Develop Kimball as a regional activity center with quality recreational, entertainment and community events.
- \* Maintain Kimball's quality of life.
- \* Maintain and expand community services.

Future land use patterns identified in the plan suggested

- \* commercial growth along south Chestnut toward the interstate
- \* development of the Interstate 80/Highway 71 intersection as commercial
- \* development of the Interstate 80/Highway 30 intersection as a travel and tourism entrance.
- \* expanding industrial development to the north and along the railroad corridor
- \* residential expansion to the south
- \* transitional development north of 3rd Street on either side of the Central Business District

The plan also suggested improvements along the primary entrance corridors to present a positive first image.

### Housing Development:

In April, 1997 a document entitled The South Panhandle Housing Plan was completed by RDG Crose, Gardner, Shukert which discussed existing housing conditions and future housing needs in communities along Interstate 80, including the City of Kimball. Housing issues identified in the plan included:

- \* a lack of rental housing
- \* a need for affordable housing
- \* future development of retirement housing
- \* preservation of existing housing stock

# History

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## Economic Development

In December, 2000 a document entitled Southern Panhandle: Cluster Industry Study was completed by the Panhandle Area Development District for communities along the Interstate 80 corridor. This plan evaluated recent changes in the area economy, provided a demographic overview, discussed "cluster" industry performance and opportunities, and presented data on Front Range business & employment patterns, and Colorado/United States projected employment patterns. Primary development strategies contained in the plan included:

- \* Retention & expansion of existing export base industries
- \* Improving the attractiveness of the area as a satellite location in Front Range industry cluster value chain.

Sub-strategies under these two primary goals involved the development of industrial parks, speculative buildings, labor force skills training, communications infrastructure investment and improving the image of the study area as a quality location for future business and population relocation.

In the mid 1990's the University of Nebraska/Lincoln assisted Kimball with the preparation of an Integrated Economic Development Plan. This document highlights the following development goals and objectives:

- \* Improve Kimball's external image to entrepreneurs.
- \* Build quality jobs for the current population
- \* Achieve economic stability
- \* Build and expand infrastructure for businesses and industrial recruitment.

## Miscellaneous Planning Processes

The City of Kimball prepares a One & Six Year Street Improvement Plan to guide transportation investments in the community. In addition, a number of informal planning processes are frequently conducted to address improvements to community facilities and infrastructure.

# The Environment

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## Introduction

The relationship of the natural environment to land use and future development is an important factor to consider while making decisions concerning potential uses of the land. As an understanding has grown about the complexity of relationships between the human settlement and the natural environment, conflicts between social and economic forces and the capability of the environment to support development have become more apparent. As a preliminary step in addressing these conflicts and to provide guidance for future decision making, this section of the plan provides a brief overview of the City's natural environment.

## Geographic Location

Kimball, the county seat of Kimball County, is located in western Nebraska in what is generally referred to as the Panhandle. The city is located on a major line of the Union Pacific Railroad and is the intersection point of State Highway #71 and Interstate 80. Bushnell and Dix are the only other incorporated places in the county and lie approximately 12 miles to the west and 8 miles to the east of Kimball, respectively.

Denver, the nearest large metropolitan area, is located approximately 155 miles to the southwest. Lincoln and Omaha are 381 and 437 miles to the east, respectively. Rapid City, South Dakota is located approximately 230 miles to the north.

Map 1: Location



## Climate

The climate of Kimball is of a continental type with wide variations on in temperature from season to season. Humidity and precipitation are low with most of the rainfall coming during the summer months. Mean temperatures range from a low of 26.8 degrees in February to 71.8 degrees in July. Due to Kimball's high elevation, approximately 4,800 feet, temperatures can also vary widely from day to night. The average first killing frost occurs in late September and the average last killing frost occurs in mid May.

Average precipitation ranges from 2.49 inches in June to just 0.41 inches in January. Average annual rainfall and snowfall are 16.51 inches and 40.1 inches, respectively. About ten percent of area thunderstorms are accompanied by hail.

# The Environment

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## Physiography, Drainage and Vegetation

The City of Kimball lies on moderately rolling plains immediately adjacent and to the south of Lodgepole Creek, which bisects Kimball County. The City of Kimball is located in a constructional plain that was built up by deposits of rock debris, which washed from the Rocky Mountains to the west. Lodgepole Creek is the only principal drainage channel in the county. Drainage from the City flows to Lodgepole Creek.

Kimball is located in an area consisting primarily of short grass prairie. Trees native to the area include cottonwood, boxelder, ash and willow located along streams and draws; and juniper, and stunted pine located on the rougher and broken land adjacent to streams and draws.

## Floodplains

Floodplains in and around the community are restricted to land adjacent to Lodgepole Creek and a small drainage area adjacent to the south central portion of the community.

## Soils

The City of Kimball lies primarily in the Bridgeport - Tripp soil association which is comprised of nearly level to gently sloping loamy soils. The majority of the city soils consist of Parshall sandy loam with 5 - 9 percent slopes. A portion of the community is underlain by Tripp soils which extend from the northwest corner of the community (north of 3rd Street to the railroad) though the Central Business District and curve to the south for approximately two blocks. These soils are classified as having good to poor

bearing strength depending upon density. The water table is not a development problem for either soil type.

## Planning Issues

Few development issues are presented by the area environment. The most notable findings include the following:

- \* The semi-arid climate and moderate winters generally associated with the area present a marketing opportunity for the encouragement of future growth and development.
- \* Soils in the planning area present few problems for future growth. However, it has been noted that some areas to the south-west of the city are somewhat rocky.
- \* Future development to the north is restricted by the Lodgepole Creek floodplain.
- \* Future development adjacent to the south-central area of the city is somewhat limited due to the presence of a drainage area and flood control structure.