

city of  
**Atkinson**  
**Nebraska**

Energize Atkinson

Comprehensive Plan  
2016-2026

Office Locations

Kearney  
McCook  
Holdrege  
Grand Island  
Colby, KS

Prepared By:

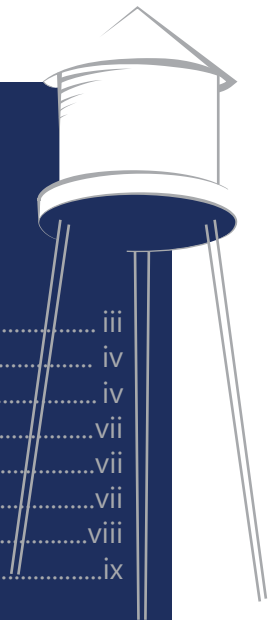


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## **Acknowledgements**

The City of Atkinson would like to thank all of the residents, property owners, and business owners who participated in the development of Atkinson's Comprehensive Plan! The City would also like to acknowledge Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) for partially funding the update to this Comprehensive Plan. Without the support and effort from NIFA, the community, and its residents, this plan would not have become a reality.

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\*A special thanks is also extended to Gilmore and Associates, Inc. for supplying the plat map that serves as the base layer for all of the maps within this document.

## **Vision for Atkinson**

Atkinson's residents and business owners are enormous assets to the community and their participation was essential to the planning process. The planning process for Energize Atkinson, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Atkinson, included many public participation meetings and a community-wide survey which, in turn, gave stakeholders the opportunity to frame the goals and directions of the plan. This Plan presents a vision for the community, from the community.

The plan for Atkinson is to have continuing community input of goals and ambitions for the City. The idea is to promote and grow a diverse economic base while emphasizing overall community development, including a proactive approach for attracting new residents. The City has been experiencing recent commercial development, but would like to focus efforts on revitalizing the Downtown District, providing shovel-ready lots for highway commercial development, and encouraging housing rehabilitation and new home construction. Other goals include the desire to create a variety of job options, agricultural and non-agricultural, while also maintaining infrastructure such as roads, water, and public buildings/services. The creation of this Plan and the continual reference back to it and any other planning efforts, will benefit the City on its road to reach the goals laid out in this Comprehensive Plan.

## **Introduction**

The Atkinson Comprehensive Plan, 2016-2026 is an outline of the goals for the community and by the community. This Comprehensive Plan is a blueprint for the City's future, a blueprint to develop the kind of community for tomorrow. It provides guidance on where and how the City will invest and change over the next ten years. It contains maps, visions and goals for the future, and policies to address topics ranging from land use and demographics to transportation and community services. The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide long-range guidance to property owners, residents, elected and appointed officials, City staff, and others to inform, provide options, and stimulate community discussion on issues such as where and what type of future developments should occur.

---

## Compliance with State & Local Requirements

### Governmental & Jurisdictional Organization

The governmental functions of Atkinson, Nebraska are provided and coordinated by the Mayor and City Council of Atkinson, comprised of seven elected officials.

The planning and zoning jurisdiction for the City of Atkinson includes a one-mile radius extending beyond the City's corporate limits boundary pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §17-1002.

#### Nebraska Revised Statute §17-1002.

Designation of jurisdiction; suburban development; subdivision; platting; consent required; review by County planning commission; when required.

*(1) Except as provided in section 13-327, any city of the second class or Village may designate by ordinance the portion of the territory located within one mile of the corporate limits of such city or Village and outside of any other organized city or Village within which the designating city or Village will exercise the powers and duties granted by this section and section 17-1003 or section 19-2402.*

*(2) No owner of any real property located within the area designated by a city or Village pursuant to subsection (1) of this section may subdivide, plat, or lay out such real property in building lots, streets, or other portions of the same intended to be dedicated for public use or for the use of the purchasers or owner of lots fronting thereon or adjacent thereto without first having obtained the approval of the city council or board of trustees of such municipality or its agent designated pursuant to section 19-916 and, when applicable, having complied with sections 39-1311 to 39-1311.05. The fact that such real property is located in a different County or counties than some or all portions of the municipality shall not be construed as affecting the necessity of obtaining the approval of the city council or board of trustees of such municipality or its designated agent.*

*(3) No plat of such real property shall be recorded or have any force or effect unless approved by the city council or board of trustees of such municipality or its designated agent.*

*(4) In counties that have adopted a comprehensive development plan which meets the requirements of section 23-114.02 and are enforcing subdivision regulations, the County planning commission shall be provided with all available materials on any proposed subdivision plat, contemplating public streets or improvements, which is filed with a municipality in that County, when such proposed plat lies partially or totally within the extraterritorial subdivision jurisdiction being exercised by that municipality in such County. The commission shall be given four weeks to officially comment on the appropriateness of the design and improvements proposed in the plat. The review period for the commission shall run concurrently with subdivision review activities of the municipality after the commission receives all available material for a proposed subdivision plat.*

The planning and zoning jurisdiction of City of Atkinson is governed by Neb. Rev. Stat. §17-1004. As Atkinson continues to grow and annex land into their corporate limits, their extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJ) may extend further into Holt County.

#### Nebraska Revised Statute §17-1004

An ordinance of a City of the second class or Village designating its jurisdiction over territory outside of the corporate limits of the City or Village under section 17-1001 or 17-1002 shall describe such territory by metes and bounds or by reference to an official map.

## Introduction

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The Plan has been prepared in accordance with state statutes and requirements.

Nebraska Revised Statute §19-903

Comprehensive development plan; requirements; regulations and restrictions made in accordance with plan; considerations.

The regulations and restrictions authorized by sections 19-901 to 19-915 shall be in accordance with a comprehensive development plan which shall consist of both graphic and textual material and shall be designed to accommodate anticipated long-range future growth which shall be based upon documented population and economic projections. The comprehensive development plan shall, among other possible elements, include:

*(1) A land-use element which designates the proposed general distributions, general location, and extent of the uses of land for agriculture, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, education, public buildings and lands, and other categories of public and private use of land;*

*(2) The general location, character, and extent of existing and proposed major roads, streets, and highways, and air and other transportation routes and facilities;*

*(3) The general location, type, capacity, and area served of present and projected or needed community facilities including recreation facilities, schools, libraries, other public buildings, and public utilities and services;*

*(4) When a new Comprehensive Plan or a full update to an existing Comprehensive Plan is developed on or after July 15, 2010, but not later than January 1, 2015, an energy element which: Assesses energy infrastructure and energy use by sector, including residential, commercial, and industrial sectors; evaluates utilization of renewable energy sources; and promotes energy conservation measures that benefit the community. This subdivision shall not apply to Villages; and*

*(5)(a) When next amended after January 1, 1995, an identification of sanitary and improvement districts, subdivisions, industrial tracts, commercial tracts, and other discrete developed areas which are or in the future may be appropriate subjects for annexation and (b) a general review of the standards and qualifications that should be met to enable the municipality to undertake annexation of such areas. Failure of the plan to identify subjects for annexation or to set out standards or qualifications for annexation shall not serve as the basis for any challenge to the validity of an annexation ordinance.*

*Regulations shall be designed to lessen congestion in the streets; to secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers; to promote health and the general welfare; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to secure safety from flood; to avoid undue concentration of population; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to protect property against blight and depreciation; to protect the tax base; to secure economy in governmental expenditures; and to preserve, protect, and enhance historic buildings, places, and districts.*

*Such regulations shall be made with reasonable consideration, among other things, for the character of the district and its peculiar suitability for particular uses and with a view to conserving the value of buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout such municipality.*

It is the duty of the City Council to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality. The master plan of a community shall be an advisory document to guide land development decisions.

The Planning Commission, after a public hearing, shall make its recommendation to the City Council. The City Council, after a public hearing, shall adopt and approve the Comprehensive Plan, by Resolution.

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## Why a Comprehensive Plan?

This document is the community's long-term Comprehensive Plan and establishes vision and direction for the future (to the year 2026). Its objectives are to confirm the community's vision for the future, and to set the policy framework to help guide future decisions related to development and investment. It will help the City thoughtfully address future needs for economic development, transportation, housing, services, parks and open space, and other community benefits. It will also help to ensure a sustainable and fiscally responsible future, by setting the desired direction for future development regulations, policy decisions, and community programs.

## Goals for Atkinson's Comprehensive Plan 2016-2026

While this Plan embodies many ideas, goals, and policies that are parallel with other communities' goals in this region, there are some noteworthy new directions and slight changes in course presented in this plan. These new directions resulted from community feedback, reaction to current trends and conditions, and policy direction from elected and appointed officials. These directions include the following list of goals:

- Improve the Existing Housing Market
- Improve Public Infrastructure
- Promote Commercial Development
- Further Enhance Amenities/Promote Tourism
- Develop Marketing Campaign
- Enhance Highway Corridors & Community Beautification

## Data Sources

### 2010 Census (short form)

This is the form that every household should have received in 2010. It has basic gender, age, and race population but there is not enough data reported to elaborate on Atkinson's demographic or economic standings.

### American Community Survey (ACS)

This survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in replacement of the Decennial Census Long Form. The ACS provides a lot of different data such as household income, commute time to work, year of household, etc. The survey is spread over five years (2009-2013) and it uses a much smaller sample population than the Decennial Census Long Form did. Every year a small portion of surveys are sent out to people; the Census Bureau then makes estimates based on those numbers that were gathered over the five-year time span. The ACS reports the data as an estimate with a margin of error. The ACS states there is a 90 percent chance of accuracy within the margin of error reported on either side of the original estimate (i.e. If the ACS estimate is  $25 \pm 5$ , there is a 90 percent chance the correct number falls within the margin of error, including all numbers between 20 and 30).

### Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI)

ESRI reports data on Nebraska's Location One Information System (LOIS) website. ESRI reports data similar to the Census Bureau's data, and LOIS allows each community to enter additional information regarding commercial properties, including vacant lots and buildings, to market and promote economic development in each community and for the State of Nebraska.



## **Building on Previous Planning Efforts**

The City of Atkinson has a good record of community participation and planning for the future. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan is a guide to 2026 for future growth and development which builds on previous planning efforts. The Comprehensive Plan update included review of these previous efforts and documents. Many of the goals, policies, and ideas for the future represented in the previous planning efforts are still relevant, and are carried forth in this Plan. There are also some new ideas for development that were discussed during our public input sessions. Some examples of overarching themes in this Plan that are carried forth from previous planning efforts include:

### Goals from the 2001-2011 Comprehensive Plan (RDG Crose Gardner Shukert Inc.)

Goals from Atkinson's 2001 Comprehensive Plan focus on Economic Development, Quality of Life, Housing, and Transportation/Infrastructure. A few of the goals are detailed below:

- Restore sidewalks
- Create a technical resource center at the Library
- Beautification of Main Street
- Construct a new assisted living facility
- Establish development strategies
- Local trail network
- Maintain good leadership in the community
- Promote rural living

### Other Planning Efforts

Atkinson has completed other previous planning efforts including several Blight and Substandard Studies. The City also completed a Housing Study, Community Needs Assessment Survey, Capital Improvement Plan, and Strategic Plan in conjunction with this 2016-2026 Comprehensive Plan.

## **Planning Period**

The planning period for Atkinson's Comprehensive Plan, is from 2016-2026. This Plan should be reviewed in 2017, 2021, and a complete update should be done in 2026, if City officials decide the community has had enough change to warrant a new plan or they determine the process and goal-setting would be beneficial for the City at that time. It is important to continually refer to and update this plan throughout the planning period.

Establishing an annual review process of the Comprehensive Plan will be important to the success of this Plan and to the City of Atkinson. This process should include public hearings to discuss whether the Plan is still valid or whether updates need to be made. Community members and stakeholders need to Actual documentation of these meetings is pertinent in providing proof of the public's continued input on this plan.



# Community Profile

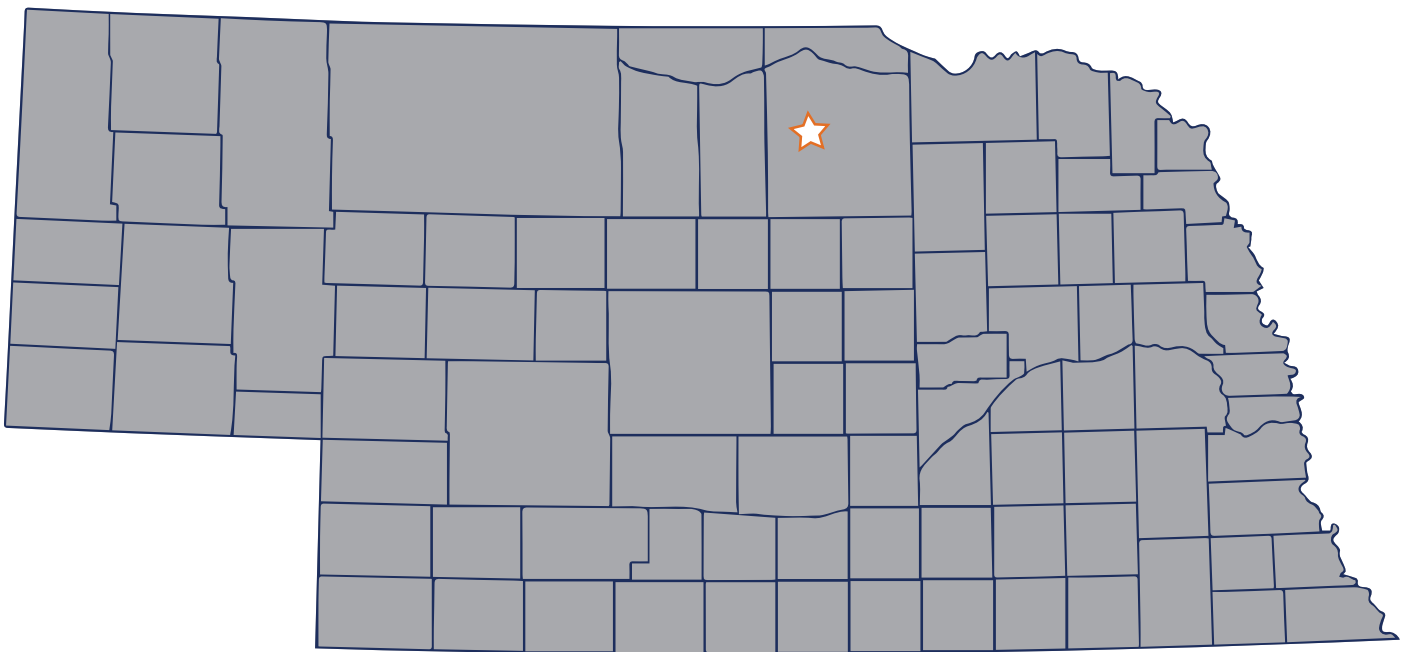
The Community Profile Chapter considers current characteristics of the community that will form the foundation for planning in Atkinson for the next ten years. It provides the community with a basic understanding of the City's history and existing conditions. This profile is a compilation of information that is derived through outside research, conversations with local residents and officials, on-site assessments, and data analysis. This Community Profile Chapter will consist of the following components:

- Description
- History
- Population
- Housing
- Economy & Capital Improvement

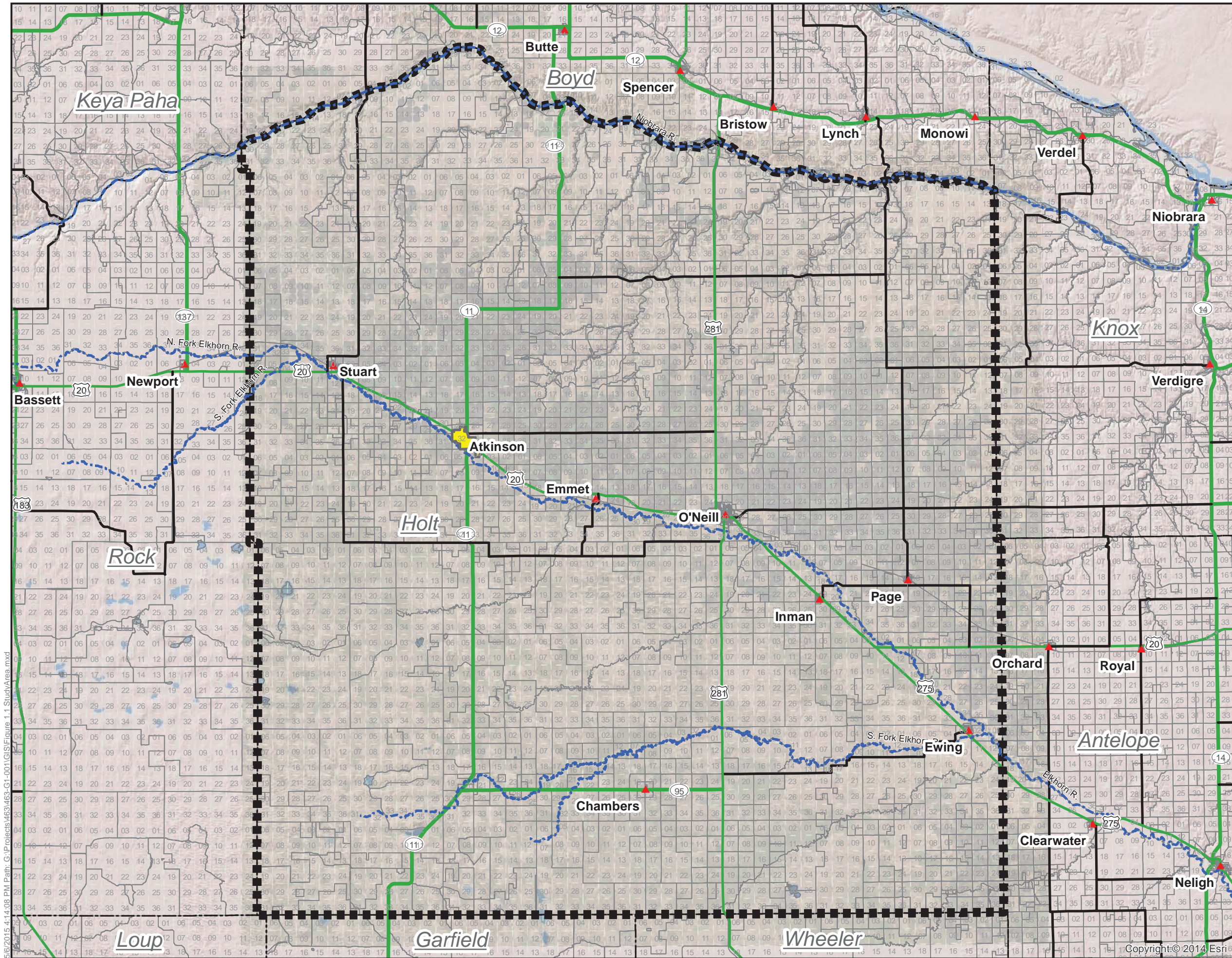
# Description

The City of Atkinson, which is approximately 1.63 square miles, is situated in central Holt County on United States Highway 20 and Nebraska Highway 11. Other communities located in Holt County include O’Neill which is the County Seat, Chambers, Emmet, Ewing, Inman, Page, and Stuart. Holt County borders the following Counties: Boyd, Knox, Antelope, Wheeler, Garfield, and Rock. According to the 2010 Census, Atkinson’s population was 1,245. Atkinson is a rural community with several different industries, a wonderful school district, healthcare options, senior housing and services, and enjoyable recreational facilities.

**Figure 1.1** shows Atkinson’s location in Holt County. This map acts as a Study Area Map for the Comprehensive Plan.







**Legend**  
 Atkinson Corporate Limits

5/6/2015 4:14:08 PM Path: G:\Projects\463\463-G1-001\GIS\Figure 1.1 StudyArea.mxd

**Figure 1.1**  
**Study Area Map**  
 Holt County, Nebraska

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# History

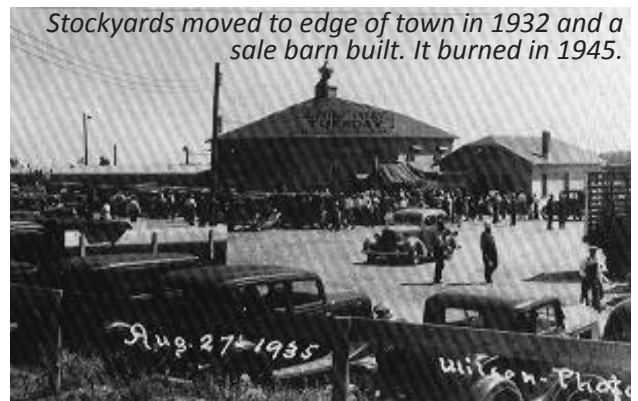
The following account of Atkinson's history was written by Maralee Gilg, Lawrence Kramer, and Alben Kramer. This article and the following historic images of the community can be found on the University of Nebraska - Lincoln's "Virtual Nebraska" website at [www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/Holt/Atkinson/](http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/Holt/Atkinson/).

The first few attempts to start a town at this location were unsuccessful. Father Fanning and Colonel John Atkinson both platted towns on the south side of the Elkhorn River, but before any buildings were in place, rains turned the area into a marshland.



East State Street, early 1880s.

Frank Bitney, who came to northeastern Nebraska with one of General O'Neill's colonies, saw the need of a way-station at this location. He knew that freighters, using oxen, could travel only about eight to ten miles a day, so he chose a site on slightly higher ground, north of the river.



Stockyards moved to edge of town in 1932 and a sale barn built. It burned in 1945.

John Crimmins built the first house, a soddy, at what is now First and Main Street. When attempting to dig a well, however, he was unable to get beyond 19 feet without the gravel caving. Disgusted, he abandoned the site, selling the land to Bitney, who built a frame structure for a store. When a post office was granted in 1878, Bitney named it "Atkinson" for his friend, the colonel.

By this time the nucleus of a town had begun. John Carberry donated land to the west of Bitney's store, and Neeley, Duffy, Kimball, Blair, and Wixon also contributed land for a town site that was registered on August 7, 1880.

The Atkinson depot, built in the Emmet in 1879-80 and moved to Atkinson when the rails reached the "new town" in 1881.



General O'Neill arrived with his fourth colony, this time German immigrants. Bitney gave them land on which to settle, about a mile north of his store. He was successful in persuading the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad to run its line through Atkinson in 1881. By 1883 the town covered nearly two quarters of land with a population of 800. Many German families moved closer to the railroad, building shops and homes.

## Chapter 1: Community Profile

As early as 1878, priests from O'Neill held Mass in homes. A mission church was built in 1882. The Methodists organized in 1881, and Presbyterians in 1882, building a church the following year. A Lutheran Church was organized in 1888. A prairie fire destroyed that church and records in the 1920s, with a new church constructed in 1927. Additional churches include: St. John's Lutheran in 1900, the Gospel Chapel (Faith Wesleyan) in 1934, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1957, and the Assembly of God in 1985.



*Heavily laden poles are victims of May, blizzard.*

Ellen Hovey taught a three-month term of school in Frank Bitney's living room in 1878. A schoolhouse was built and the school year gradually increased to the traditional nine months. Atkinson boasts of a fine school system today.

Pioneers were good at entertaining themselves. Frank Bitney built a roller skating rink which was used for community gatherings until 1927. At the turn of the century the Opera House was opened, which booked both traveling shows and local talent.

It also had silent movies, with someone reading the script. The Crystal Ballroom, largest hall in town, was originally built to store hay by Fred Jungman in 1926. Many famous bands, including Lawrence Welk's, played there. The mill pond, about a five-minute walk from downtown, was a great place to swim and go fishing. Atkinson, of course, had its baseball team, and sportsmen had their choice of game to hunt. Barn dances were also popular, as were families and neighbors just gathering to visit, play cards, or sing.

People from the rural area around Atkinson have always been supportive of the town. In turn the town provides machinery sales and services to help lessen the farmer's workload. Since 1940, businesses have sponsored a free barbecue in conjunction with "Hay Days."



*The city square during the first Hay days celebration.*

Atkinson has been fortunate to have at least one doctor since the early 1880s. Except for a time during the 1930-40s, when midwives and nurses cared for people in their homes, there has also been a hospital.

Rural people and citizens of Atkinson are actively involved in Chamber of Commerce activities, sponsoring the Atkinson High School Rodeo, and the annual community play. Many people from the community help by donating time, money, and their expertise to help provide funds for West Holt Medical Service Foundation.

The town of Atkinson and Stuart work together to provide an outstanding hospital, a good nine-hole golf course with grass greens, and an airport with paved runways.

We are proud of our town of Atkinson.



*Atkinson, 1988, looking south.*

*Parade in Atkinson, about 1900.*





---

# Population

*The residents of Atkinson are the lifeblood of the community. The people that live, work, and visit Atkinson everyday are what make the community “tick”. Understanding the population is just as important as understanding the wants and needs of that population. Demographic analysis becomes the basis for prioritizing future growth through the Comprehensive Plan. All other plan elements depend on an assessment of existing and changing population characteristics and the needs of future population. In order to accurately plan for the growth of Atkinson, we first must consider the past and current populations before we can make projections for the future. Population projections are significant because they provide communities with a vision for where they will be in five, ten, and even fifteen years. That will in turn help decision-makers plan for social, economic, and physical infrastructure with the purpose of meeting the community’s future needs and demands.*



*Residents of Atkinson join in celebration at the annual Parade of Lights. Photo courtesy of the City of Atkinson.*

The 2010 Census data, which was released during the first few months of 2011, shows Atkinson’s population was almost constant between 2000 and 2010; there was an increase of only one person in the ten-year span. The City’s 2000 population was 1,244 and the 2010 population was 1,245. Atkinson’s population is 98.8 percent White and 0.5 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino of any race and 0.6 percent of the population is American Indian and Alaska Native. The 2010 Census reported that there are six persons living in Atkinson that are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and seven persons who are American Indian and Alaska Native which are the two largest minority groups in Atkinson. The Hispanic or Latino population has declined since the 2000 Census, when the 11 persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity comprised almost one percent of Atkinson’s total population. This is somewhat unique as most communities are experiencing an increase, although small, of Hispanic or Latino population.

**Table 1.1** shows a comparison of Atkinson’s population changes between 2000 and 2010 with surrounding communities that have similar characteristics to Atkinson. Of the six communities, four of them experienced a decrease in population, while Burwell was the only community to see an increase in population and Atkinson’s population remained constant. These communities have many of the same challenges that Atkinson faces with growth, development, and trying to attract residents to their communities. Three of the communities, Stuart, Ainsworth, and Spencer, show large decreases in population with all of them having more than a five percent decrease over the ten-year span. O’Neill’s population was relatively constant with a 0.67 percent decrease. This data shows City leaders that regardless of a community’s size and specific location, they are still liable to population loss; proving that Cities must continually work to retain the existing population and attract new residents. In fact, rural communities must work even harder than larger Cities to maintain a sustainable population base.

Table 1.1 Comparable Population Changes, Atkinson, 2000-2010				
Community	2000	2010	Difference	% of Change
Atkinson	1,244	1,245	1	Constant
Stuart	625	590	-35	-5.60%
O’Neill	3,733	3,705	-25	-0.67%
Burwell	1,130	1,210	80	7.00%
Ainsworth	1,862	1,728	-134	-7.20%
Spencer	541	455	-86	-15.90%

Source: 2010 Census

**Table 1.2** shows the history of Atkinson’s population which has fluctuated between each decennial census; however, Atkinson has seen an increase in population when comparing the City’s 1930 population with the most recent Census data. This is not typical for many small, rural communities in Nebraska because many have experienced fluctuation between each decennial Census but have an overall decline between 1930 and 2010. Between 1930 and 2010, Atkinson experienced almost a nine percent increase in total population, with the City’s largest population in 1980 at 1,521. Since 1980, the overall population has declined, until 2010 where the City experienced a constant population. Most rural communities in Nebraska are experiencing an overall decline in population, and the previous table shows many communities near Atkinson are experiencing large declines. Atkinson has fluctuated in total over the past eight decades, making projecting future populations more complicated because of the variability when using a historical analysis method. In order to maintain the population and enact ways to grow the community, City leaders will need to continually improve the housing market and overall quality of life.



**Table 1.2 Population History, Atkinson, 1930-2010**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1940</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
Population	1,144	1,350	1,372	1,324	1,406	1,521	1,380	1,244	1,245

Source: Nebraska Department of Economic Development, 2010 Census

Age and Gender are other facets to consider when analyzing the population. Over 53 percent of Atkinson’s population is female and over 46 percent of the population is male. The median age for women is 48.1 years-old which is higher than the male median age of 44.5. The median age for all of Atkinson’s residents is 46.1. This is the same as the County’s median age of 46.1 and both numbers are higher than the State’s median age of 36.2. Atkinson’s median age in 2000 was 43.8 which was slightly higher than Holt County’s 2000 median age of 40.5.

Age and gender differences can affect housing, recreation, community services, and businesses that will be desired in Atkinson because of the differences in wants and expectations for amenities between men and women as well as between the differing ages. Therefore, it is important to monitor and understand the changes in the community and how the overall needs for the future of the City are affected.





The Census Bureau divides the total population into four-year age groups called “cohorts”. A cohort is a set of individuals, grouped together based on experiencing the same event within the same time interval. Each decennial Census presents population data in cohorts. These cohorts range from under five years of age to the last cohort which is 85 years and over. **Table 1.3** shows all 18 cohorts, from the 2010 Census, and the corresponding percentages of the total population for each cohort.

Table 1.3 Population Composition in Atkinson, 2000-2010								
Cohort	2000				2010			
	Male	Female	Total	% of Total	Male	Female	Total	% of Total
<b>Under 5 years</b>	32	31	63	5.1	39	48	87	7.0
<b>5 to 9 years</b>	30	46	76	6.1	37	39	76	6.1
<b>10 to 14 years</b>	47	49	96	7.7	43	29	72	5.8
<b>15 to 19 years</b>	37	34	71	5.7	28	51	79	6.3
<b>20 to 24 years</b>	28	19	47	3.8	17	17	34	2.7
<b>25 to 29 years</b>	31	35	66	5.3	27	28	55	4.4
<b>30 to 34 years</b>	34	34	68	5.5	39	32	71	5.7
<b>35 to 39 years</b>	36	40	76	6.1	28	31	59	4.7
<b>40 to 44 years</b>	39	42	81	6.5	38	36	74	5.9
<b>45 to 49 years</b>	46	46	92	7.4	39	40	79	6.3
<b>50 to 54 years</b>	32	39	71	5.7	46	40	86	6.9
<b>55 to 59 years</b>	32	34	66	5.3	40	45	85	6.8
<b>60 to 64 years</b>	27	27	54	4.3	41	44	85	6.8
<b>65 to 69 years</b>	22	30	52	4.2	34	39	73	5.9
<b>70 to 74 years</b>	27	38	65	5.2	22	34	56	4.5
<b>75 to 79 years</b>	22	26	48	3.9	25	32	57	4.6
<b>80 to 84 years</b>	21	47	68	5.5	20	33	53	4.3
<b>85 years and over</b>	29	55	84	6.7	17	47	64	5.1
<b>Total Population</b>	572	672	1244	100.0%	580	665	1245	100.0%
<b>Median Age</b>	41.9	45.5	43.8		44.5	48.1	46.1	

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 & 2010

The largest cohort for Atkinson are children under five years-old making up seven percent of the total population. There are six other cohorts that comprise a large percentage of the community’s total population including 5-9, 15-19, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, and 60-64. These six cohorts each represent more than six percent of the total population. The 20-24 year-olds comprise 2.7 percent of the total population and although that is not a large part of the total residents in Atkinson it is not uncommon. This cohort is the typical age for college students and young professionals just entering the workforce; therefore, it is common to see a lower population percentage in smaller communities for this particular cohort.

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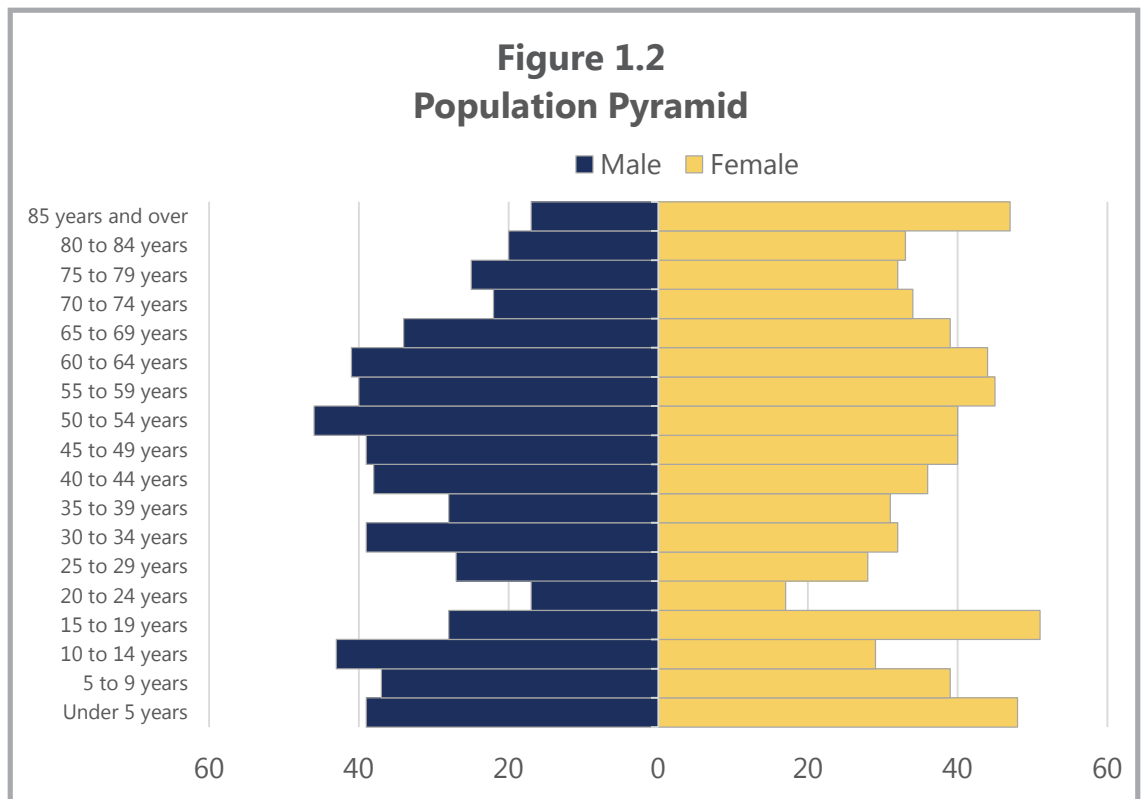
The 25-29 year olds made-up 4.4 percent of the total population. This cohort also falls into the young professional category which is an important cohort to attract to the community. Although, it is common to have a smaller percentage of college-aged people living in Atkinson, it is important for the community to attract those potential residents and young professionals when they have graduated from school. Attracting young professionals and families is challenging in a smaller community; however, the Great Plains region has been experiencing a legacy migration trend that could positively affect Atkinson in the coming years. This trend has been termed “legacy migration” because it involves many citizens moving back to the places where they grew-up, returning to their legacy. Many people hope to raise their children in a familiar location, which has created a trend for people to look for employment opportunities in their hometown. Once a home is established, these residents are very likely to stay in a community, plant roots, and grow their family – all added benefits to the community.

When comparing each cohort between the 2000 and 2010 Census surveys, it is important to remember that people age and will move two cohorts over a ten-year span. This cohort movement was compared for the 2000 and 2010 Census data to show in-migration and out-migration statistics for Atkinson. Comparing the number of persons in a particular cohort in 2000 with same group of persons in the corresponding age cohort for 2010 permits a detailed analysis of the cohorts showing movement trends, called migration. Positive change between cohorts indicates in-migration and negative change reflects out-migration.

Atkinson’s population comparison for percentage of the entire population, shows in-migration trends for 11 of the 18 cohorts for 2000-2010. The under five years and five to nine years cohorts will always show growth when comparing the adjusted 2000 cohort figures because the persons in those cohorts were not born when the previous Census was taken. Therefore, those two cohorts were not included in the 11 cohorts reflecting positive in-migration in Atkinson. Based on the adjusted cohort analysis, in-migration is shown in several cohorts including 10-19, 30-34, 40-54, 60-79, and 85 and over. In-migration for several of these cohorts implies that several families with children as well as retirees, empty-nesters, and senior citizens moved to Atkinson between 2000 and 2010. It is important for the City to maintain the trend of attracting young families to the community by providing more opportunities to move to Atkinson for jobs, lifestyle, the public school systems, etc.

The cohorts that showed out-migration trends include 20-29, 55-59, and 80-84 with the 20-24 year olds showing the largest out-migration trend. This is not uncommon because many residents that fall within this cohort move to different communities for college, job training, or early career opportunities. Although it is important for residents within this cohort to advance their training and education the City can find ways to attract some of these citizens back to the community. Also Atkinson should look for opportunities to retain the other cohorts to minimize out-migration. Age-appropriate housing, activities, and amenities are some of the important factors to consider when finding ways to improve the quality of life for residents. Finding ways to improve the quality of life is essential when trying to maintain the existing population as well as attract new residents to the community.

Reported by the 2010 Census, approximately 23 percent of the population was under 18 years-old. Of the City's 1,245 residents, 24.3 percent, or 303 people, were 65 or older in 2010; this number is important because 65 is the common age of retirement, although recent trends show the retirement age is rising. **Figure 1.2** shows a population pyramid for Atkinson's 2010 Census population based on age and gender. A population pyramid is a series of bar charts set on a vertical axis. The 18 bars represent each of the 18 cohorts with the male population represented on the left side of the chart and the female population numbers represented on the right side of the chart. A population pyramid showing a healthy viable population will have a large base of children and young adults and a much smaller number of elderly persons, creating the shape of a pyramid and indicating a self-sustaining population base for the community. A population pyramid uses two assumptions, with the first assuming that the community exists to meet the need of its residents. The government and other quasi-governmental agencies provide public/quasi-public uses including schools, Churches, medical facilities, emergency services, and public infrastructure to meet the needs of the public. The second assumption is that people have needs and expectations that change with age.



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The population pyramid for Atkinson shows a large female population, especially for the 15-19 and 85 years or over cohorts. The pyramid also depicts a large section of middle-aged cohorts for the community. Atkinson's population pyramid shows a stationary population because it is relatively even through the entire pyramid; however, the City's pyramid base (school-aged children) is larger than a majority of the cohorts which shows trends leaning towards a self-sustaining population. In order for Atkinson to continue to grow into a self-sustaining community, the community will have to continue to rely on in-migration to attract new families. This creates a dependence on new and existing families to continue to expand the base of the pyramid. Most rural towns in Nebraska have an aging community with a population pyramid showing a stationary population, similar to Atkinson, or one that looks like an upside-down pyramid showing a decline in population. The City will need to rely on in-migration to help create a self-sustaining population; however, the City can also focus efforts on maintaining the existing population to prevent continued out-migration.

Availability of employment is the main "pull factor" for people moving into a community; the availability of jobs in Atkinson will bring more residents to the community. Job diversity and availability is crucial for communities working to attract new residents. It is also important to provide amenities and adequate housing for new and potential residents. Attracting and keeping the young 'creative class' generation is imperative to growing a self-sustaining population base. The 'creative class' is a socioeconomic class of workers that bring new ideas, art, science, and technology together to positively impact the community. Being able to draw these people in and to retain them as residents is critical in growing Atkinson. Creating activities or a social group to help new community members get involved with current residents is a way for the community to reach out to new residents. A Young Professionals group or even an annual community dinner recognizing new community members would be beneficial for Atkinson's new residents. Another way to encourage young people to stay in the community or move back after furthering their education is to create a program for high school students or recent high school graduates that provides job training opportunities specifically relating to businesses located in the community.

Knowing the demographics, such as age, sex, racial break-up, and its history helps steer decision-makers in the right direction when planning for community infrastructure. This data can be used in several different ways. For example, a community could have the City Council members vote to either financially support the expansion of a local nursing home or the expansion of a local elementary school. Analyzing this data for population trends based on age groups, will help decision-makers make informed decisions on what is best for the community. If population trends show an aging population, then supporting the nursing home would benefit those citizens; and, if an influx of families with young children moving into town was discovered, then supporting the elementary school expansion would be more beneficial for residents. Of course there are many other factors that need to be taken into consideration, but understanding the breakdown of population has proven to be very helpful for decision-makers.

The history and apparent trends in Atkinson’s history are important aspects in making projections for the community’s future population. Projecting Atkinson’s population is key to understanding the future demographic character of the community. These projections help to determine the City’s future land use and community service needs and policies. **Table 1.4** shows the different population growth scenarios for Atkinson until 2025.

<b>Table 1.4 Population Projections, Atkinson, 2010-2025</b>				
<b>Annual Growth Rate Percentages</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
Trend 1 (-1.0%)	1,245	1,184	1,126	1,071
Trend 2 (0.8%)	1,245	1,296	1,348	1,403
Trend 3 (0.11%)	1,245	1,252	1,259	1,266
Trend 4 (0.50%)	1,245	1,276	1,309	1,342

Source: US Census Bureau, M&A

The first three trends are annual growth rate percentages coming from historic trends depicted by historic decennial Census data. Trend 1 is the difference in population between 1990 and 2000, which was a ten percent decrease over the decade. This annual trend of a one percent decrease was projected for future populations at the years 2015, 2020, and 2025. Trend 2 is the historic trend difference between 1970 and 1980, an eight percent increase over the ten-year period, that was forecasted to the same three time periods of 2015, 2020, and 2025. This scenario shows a steady increase in population over the projected years to a total population of 1,403 residents in 2025. Trend 3 shows the increase of population Atkinson experienced over the past eight decades and what the City’s population would look like in 2015, 2020, and 2025 if they experienced the same growth that occurred from 1930 to 2010. If the community was going to experience the overall rate of population change that it experienced over the past eight decades then Trend 3 would be the approximate population figures for Atkinson in the future.

Trend 4 is not based on historic trends; however, it could be considered relative to some historic trends that have occurred. This growth rate percentage was determined by community members during a public input session to be a goal for the City to work to achieve an annual one-half percent growth rate. This is a feasible growth rate for the City to work to achieve, and several initiatives outlined in this Comprehensive Plan will provide community stakeholders with strategies to attract people to Atkinson as well as retain the existing population base. Of course, populations do not change at a constant rate every year; however, these population projection figures provide an example of what the population could look like at the three different projected time intervals.

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There are differences in the four population projection trends shown in **Table 1.4**. This table helps show City leaders how Atkinson's population could change by 2025 if the historic trends accurately project the community's future. There are a couple of things that could completely change the scene of Atkinson. A major local industry or employer closing its doors or a new manufacturing business moving into town would drastically change the population of Atkinson. This historic population fluctuation is typical for many communities, especially small rural communities like Atkinson. Therefore, it is important for City leaders to be prepared for a multitude of scenarios and to understand the necessity of continually working to improve the community. City leaders need to stay vigilant in the growth, success, and sustainability of the community in order to progress forward. Land availability for both residential and commercial/industrial growth, incentivizing development, establishing a successful business retention program, and having a willingness to make public investments which create opportunities for private investment are a few ways for City leaders to encourage growth in Atkinson.

Families are an important to the viability of any community, including Atkinson. A family, whether it is a one- or two-parent household, would add at least one worker to the local workforce, children into the school system, a home that would be rented or owned, an additional family to purchase groceries in town, another vehicle to fill with gas, etc. New families moving to the community creates another group of residents that have a vested interest in the welfare of the community. Families make up approximately 58.7 percent, or 322, of all occupied households in Atkinson. There are 254 owner-occupied family households and 68 renter-occupied family households. A household is considered to be a "family household" when at least one member of the household is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. "Non-family households," those consisting of people living alone and households who do not have any members related to the householder, make up 41.3 percent of all occupied housing units in Atkinson. Of the non-family households in Atkinson, 119 live in owner-occupied housing units and 108 live in renter-occupied housing units. Based on the 2010 Census, 49.7 percent, or 273 of all family households are husband-wife households, 14 homes have a male householder with no wife present, and 35 homes have a female householder with no husband present. There are 140 households in Atkinson that have children under the age of 18 living at home.



Educational attainment is yet another component to analyze in order to better understand your community's population base. As seen in **Table 1.5**, the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS) reported 868 ( $\pm 107$ ) people that are 25 years-old or older living in Atkinson. The ACS also reported 13.1 ( $\pm 5.0$ ) percent of the 25 and older population has an Associate's degree and 14.7 ( $\pm 5.4$ ) percent of Atkinson's 25 and older population has a bachelor's degree. Approximately 4.3 ( $\pm 3.6$ ) percent of the population has also received their graduate or professional degree. Atkinson's educational attainment is comparable to Holt County's reported data for associate's and bachelor's degrees of 12.9 ( $\pm 1.7$ ) percent and 13.5 ( $\pm 1.8$ ) percent, respectively. Atkinson's percentage of residents with a graduate or professional degree is slightly lower at 4.3 percent than Holt County's percentage of 5.5 ( $\pm 1.4$ ). Both the City of Atkinson and Holt County have a lower percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree than the State of Nebraska's 19.3 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) percent of residents with a bachelor's degree. Approximately 9.2 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) percent of Nebraska's residents have a graduate or professional degree. Educational attainment levels should continue to grow over the next decade due to the growing demand for American's to receive a college education. This societal change can be seen all around the country, but smaller communities are having a harder time trying to attract and retain persons with bachelors, graduate, or professional degrees.

Table 1.5 Educational Attainment, Atkinson, 2013		
Educational Attainment	Estimate	Percentage
Population 25 years and over	868 ( $\pm 107$ )	868
Less than 9th grade	19 ( $\pm 25$ )	2.2% ( $\pm 2.8$ )
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	45 ( $\pm 25$ )	5.2% ( $\pm 2.8$ )
High school graduate (Includes equivalency)	329 ( $\pm 62$ )	37.9% ( $\pm 6.2$ )
Some college, no degree	196 ( $\pm 66$ )	22.6% ( $\pm 7.0$ )
Associate's degree	114 ( $\pm 48$ )	13.1% ( $\pm 5.0$ )
Bachelor's degree	128 ( $\pm 50$ )	14.7% ( $\pm 5.4$ )
Graduate or professional degree	37 ( $\pm 31$ )	4.3% ( $\pm 3.6$ )
Source: ACS 2009-2013		

Throughout its history, Atkinson has experienced population fluctuation, but most recently has remained stationary in total population numbers. Overall, the City has grown since 1930, but has decreased since the largest population in 1980. For the region, Atkinson is one of the few communities that did not experience a large loss in population between 2000 and 2010. The stationary population trend should be viewed as a positive attribute for the community, especially in comparison with similar-sized communities in the region that all experienced large decreases in population for the same time period.

Between 2000 and 2010, there were several cohorts that experienced in-migration and several others that were affected by out-migration trends. There has been an overall increase in school-aged children, 30-34 year olds, and many other cohorts living in Atkinson. Development of community services and amenities coupled with suitable housing and employment opportunities are key ways to encourage more families to move to Atkinson. Capitalizing on the recent in-migration of young families will help improve the community's sustainability without having to depend on future in-migration of residents because young families have a tendency to place roots in the community that is best suited for their family. In essence, young families lead to a larger percentage of young people (under 18 years old) that will help support the future of the City.

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Over 23 percent of Atkinson's population is under the age of 18 which is a group of cohorts that likes to be active both indoors and outdoors. Community members, of all ages, seem to be large supporters of the West Holt Huskies and community's student population in general. Providing amenities for this age group is also essential to providing a good quality of life for families as well as successfully attracting these former students back to the community when they start their own families. Things such as summer sports leagues and public and private recreational facilities are a great place for the 18 and under crowd to congregate.

Another population sector that experienced changes between 2000 and 2010 were the empty-nesters, or those over 60 years old. A majority of the six cohorts that comprise this population sector experienced an increase in population including five cohorts that showed in-migration trends. Because of the nature of life, the people in these cohorts will continue to grow older and could possibly retire in Atkinson, if they have not already. These six cohorts, including empty-nesters, retirees, grandparents, and senior citizens tend to lead a different lifestyle than when they were younger and had children living at home. Empty-nesters like to dine out or go for walks around the community; they like to enjoy the freedom of being on their own schedule again. Atkinson's Downtown District, Library, eateries, and some of the existing recreational facilities are all excellent amenities that many empty-nesters, retirees, and senior citizens love to take advantage of in their community. Almost 28 percent of Atkinson's population is 62 years and older. Community services such as an active Senior Center and ease of pedestrian traffic, through sidewalk connectivity and/or hike/bike trails, can promote a healthy quality of life for this population sector. It is important to provide amenities and services that will create a balance for all residents of the community, both young and old; this will in turn help the community retain residents as well as attract new residents to the community.

Population projections are meant to help decision-makers understand where the community is headed. The scenarios presented in this Comprehensive Plan are provided as a guide to decision-makers in order to have a better understanding of what the future may hold for Atkinson. Population projection figures will help City leaders determine what types of public facilities, services, and amenities will be needed in the future. In order to prepare for future population changes, leaders need to continually gather and analyze population data. Every year, leaders should review school attendance data, talk with local professionals, and be cognizant of building permit totals and home sales to analyze current population changes and trends. Waiting ten years for reported decennial Census data is not as beneficial for the community as staying up-to-date with the ever-changing information. Utilizing other data sources, revisiting the Comprehensive Plan or other community plans, and continually working with stakeholder groups will encourage City leaders to stay active and up-to-date on the ever changing society that is present today as well as provide City leaders with an opportunity to market the community.

# Housing

*A Housing Study was completed during the same time period as this Comprehensive Plan. The Housing Study is a separate document but fully relates, in whole, to this Comprehensive Plan. All of the data analysis and outlined housing goals and objectives can be found in the Housing Study, this is the executive summary from the report highlighting the key findings within the Study.*

Housing is a crucial piece to the prosperity of Atkinson. Whether it is identifying needs for new market-rate housing or ways to encourage development of affordable housing options, Atkinson must work to constantly assess and improve its housing market. In order to attract more people to the community, there has to be a supply of well-maintained, available, affordable, and safe housing. Projecting for future demand is an important, but sometimes difficult task when trying to promote growth in any community. Addressing the issues of aging housing stock that does not meet the needs of today's renters and buyers is also another challenge that City leaders face. Community growth and revitalization can be made possible through the identification of housing needs. When considered in conjunction with population data, housing analysis will enable Atkinson to identify residential developments that are most appropriate for its success.

The City of Atkinson has experienced a constant population between the two most recent decennial Census results. Residents have shared their thoughts on increases of recent in-migration of young families. It will be important for City officials to continue to monitor changes in the annual report of the American Community Survey data to determine if this in-migration trend is showing true through data reports.

Like most rural communities, a large majority of Atkinson's housing stock was constructed prior to 1940; however, the City has experienced an increase in residential construction with 19 building permits issued for new home construction between 2010 and May of 2015, and many more issued for home remodels and additions. Atkinson has been experiencing a healthy construction market. One building permit for new home construction has been issued, as of May 2015. The City will most likely continue to experience new home construction and should work to continually ensure the availability of suitable lots for new construction.

The overall condition of the housing stock was rated 'good' at 3.94 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. This rating was based on an exterior analysis of the City's existing housing stock. It is noted within the Housing Study that a recent hail storm, during the summer of 2014, affected many homes in Atkinson and resulted in several new roofs, siding, and some windows. Because two of the six ranking criteria include roofs and siding, the exterior analysis rankings were higher than what would be expected for the age of the housing stock in Atkinson. Updates to existing housing stock is important to maintain homes in the community and it is crucial for damaged homes to complete updates to mitigate the potential for blighted and substandard conditions.



Approximately 68 percent of all occupied homes are owner-occupied and 32 percent of all occupied homes are renter-occupied. Atkinson needs to continue future housing development to fit the same 68/32 ratio for potential homebuyers and renters.

Housing professionals shared that buyers are looking for move-in ready homes valued between \$100,000 and \$150,000. The median home value in Atkinson is \$84,000 ( $\pm$ \$5,008) based on 2009-2013 ACS data. This is close to Holt County's median home value of \$90,500 ( $\pm$ \$5,760); however, it is higher than what is typically seen in small rural communities in Nebraska.

The housing affordability analysis, which compares household income with housing values in Atkinson, shows there is a surplus of homes valued between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and a shortage of homes valued over \$100,000 as well as a small shortage of homes valued less than \$50,000. This analysis was only completed for owner-occupied units that are existing within the City.

The median rent for units in Atkinson is \$587 ( $\pm$ \$93) based on 2009-2013 ACS data. Maximum rent for a one-bedroom apartment at Elkhorn Meadows is \$445. According to residents and housing stakeholders there is a drastic shortage of suitable rental units; this determination is not represented in the 2010 Census data. The more recent, stakeholder input shows what is currently happening with the housing market in Atkinson; therefore, based on their input it is determined that there is a need to update and construct new rental units in order to meet the needs of Atkinson's residents and potential residents.



It is estimated that the City has approximately 48 existing structures that are deteriorated and not suitable for residence. These homes should be demolished to minimize blighted conditions, safety hazards, and eye sores. It is also assumed that approximately one percent of all housing structures will "fall off the market" each year due to aging structures and conditions, this equates to an additional 60 units falling off the market by 2015. The City must not only work on constructing new housing units but also demolishing and replacing the structures that "fall off the market".



After all of the data analysis was completed, it was determined that the City will need to construct 48 additional housing units (33 for purchase and 15 for rent) by the year 2025 in order to provide housing stock for existing and potential residents. That number was based on a 0.01 annual growth rate percentage matching the historic trend of population growth between 2000 and 2010. If the City grows at their desired target rate of one-half percent each year, then 92 housing units (63 for purchase and 29 for rent) by the year 2025 would need to be constructed.





## Chapter 1: Community Profile

By the year 2025, new homes will need to be constructed, regardless of population growth, in order to replace the number of vacant, dilapidated structures.

Increasing the number and variety of housing units as well as improving the current housing stock through encouraged rehabilitation is essential to the growth of Atkinson. Infill development should be encouraged, unless private development or population growth warrants the need for new residential or multi-use subdivisions.

The City should follow these outlined objectives to improve the housing market in Atkinson: clean-up vacant lots and uninhabitable properties; work with local businesses to determine housing needs for employees; promote infill development; continually encourage private development to assist with improvements to the housing market; create City-funded home-owner rehabilitation revolving loan fund program; encourage property upkeep through nuisance abatement and City-wide clean-up programs; and, locate areas for future residential or multi-use development.





*The ability for Atkinson to predict future land use needs relies heavily on economic trends. A description and analysis of local economic factors is a crucial component of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Economic development is a major goal for community planning efforts. It is not a "once-and-done" event but rather a continual process that requires on-going efforts to make advancements. Communities differ greatly and no one economic development strategy fits all communities. In fact, economic development in rural communities is truly community development focusing on improving all areas of the community. It requires active engagement of the community, its leadership, its organizations, its institutions, and its businesses. The keys to greater productivity are innovation, creativity, new technologies, and public and private investment. The private sector is the primary source of economic activity, but the public sector plays an important, and ideally, complementary role. Which is why it is essential that both the public and private sectors be analyzed and included in the goal and strategy development for economic development in Atkinson.*

# Economy & Capital Improvement



A strong labor force is extremely important to a City of any size and small rural communities face different challenges than larger urban Cities. It is vital for communities to create jobs in order to attract new residents and expand the tax base. Analyzing the labor force requires employment figures, income levels, and an understanding of the economic base. Residents 16 years and older are considered to be of working age; therefore, in order to study the workforce population we only consider those that are 16 and older. The 2009-2013 ACS reported 912 ( $\pm 111$ ) people are 16 or older and 620 ( $\pm 99$ ) persons are in the labor force. The other 292 ( $\pm 70$ ) people are not considered to be a part of the labor force because they are neither employed nor officially classified as unemployed. This classification includes a variety of reasons such as full-time students, retired persons, volunteers, stay-at-home parents, persons unable to work due to a disability, etc.

As stated above, the ACS estimated 620 ( $\pm 99$ ) of Atkinson's residents are in the labor force. The ACS also reported a very low unemployment rate of 0.3 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) percent. The 2009-2013 ACS data indicated 617 ( $\pm 98$ ) were employed while 3 ( $\pm 4$ ) people were unemployed. Atkinson's reported unemployment rate is starkly different than the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2013 national unemployment rate of 7.3 percent. Unemployment data is not readily available for smaller communities which means we have to follow larger trends and rely on national data services like the estimates provided by ACS. County unemployment data is tracked more frequently and Holt County had an unemployment rate of 2.3 percent in March 2015 which is one percent lower than the March 2013 rate of 3.3 percent. With such a low unemployment rate in the City and the County it is very challenging for businesses to find qualified employees. During the Employer Housing Survey, employers were asked about employment needs and all five employers stated the need for more employees. This can be a challenging task for employers, to attract employees to the community. The City should work with businesses to help consolidate services to prevent duplicated efforts between different employers. The availability of quality workforce is critical to the success of the community's employers.



There are several different job opportunities in the City of Atkinson including the medical and educational systems, retail and service sector businesses, and many different types of agricultural, manufacturing, and warehousing businesses. Although there are many job opportunities in Atkinson, some residents commute to work in other communities. It is fairly typical for some residents in smaller communities across the United States to commute for work. Commuting patterns for Atkinson’s residents include a mean travel time to work of 10.0 (±1.9) minutes. Approximately 448 (±80) people drive to work alone while 36 (±20) or 6.2 percent of Atkinson’s residents carpool. Approximately 60 (±34) residents work from home which comprises 10.4 (±5.4) percent of the employment total in Atkinson. Based on 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 761 people commute into Atkinson for work while 186 of Atkinson’s residents commute to areas outside of the corporate limits for work. Based on the same 2011 data source, there are 928 total employees employed in the City of Atkinson with 167 of those employees also being residents of Atkinson. Based on the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, a majority of Atkinson’s residents commute to the east and southeast and a smaller portion of commuters travel northwest from Atkinson for work.

**Table 1.6** shows the household income for Atkinson in 2010. Household income is defined by the Census Bureau as the following:

*“Any sum of money income received in the calendar year by all household members 15 years old and over, including household members not related to the householder, people living alone, and other nonfamily household members. Included in the total are amounts reported separately for wage or salary income; net self-employment income; interest, dividends, or net rental or royalty income or income from estates and trusts; Social Security or Railroad Retirement income; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); public assistance or welfare payments; retirement, survivor, or disability pensions; and all other income.”*

**Table 1.6 Household Income, Atkinson, 2013**

Household Income	# of Households	
	ACS	ESRI
<b>Less than \$15,000</b>	66 (±36)	70
<b>\$15,000-\$24,999</b>	88 (±33)	67
<b>\$25,000-\$34,999</b>	38 (±21)	57
<b>\$35,000-\$49,999</b>	102 (±39)	99
<b>\$50,000-\$74,999</b>	103 (±35)	121
<b>\$75,000-\$99,999</b>	50 (±26)	79
<b>\$100,000-\$149,999</b>	34 (±19)	46
<b>\$150,000-\$199,999</b>	30 (±22)	6
<b>\$200,000 or more</b>	0 (±9)	17
<b>Median Household Income (dollars)</b>	\$41,563 (±8,801)	\$47,577

Source: ACS 2009-2013 Estimates, ESRI 2014 Estimates

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Household income data is displayed in ranges showing different income amounts. The associated number of households with an annual income that falls into the income range is shown in the second and third columns. ACS reported Atkinson's median household income to be \$41,563 ( $\pm$ \$8,801). The ACS estimated Holt County's median household income to be \$44,427 ( $\pm$ \$4,609) which is slightly higher than the City of Atkinson's median household income. The ACS 2009-2013 estimates for the State of Nebraska's median household income are \$51,672 ( $\pm$ \$325) which is higher than Atkinson and Holt County's median household income. ESRI reported 2014 estimates for Atkinson's median household income of \$47,577, with the majority of household's falling into the \$50,000-\$74,999 income range.

It is expected for the median household income to increase overtime due, if only, to inflation; however, based on comparisons between the increase in median household incomes for Atkinson, Holt County, and Nebraska from 2000 to 2013, Atkinson's median household income increased by 46 percent while Holt County and Nebraska's median household incomes increased by 44 and 95 percent, respectively. Atkinson and Holt County both experienced large increases in median household incomes but the State of Nebraska's median household income increased more than double what Atkinson and Holt County experienced.

Approximately 10.2 ( $\pm$ 8.0) percent, as reported by ACS, of families and 12.0 ( $\pm$ 7.7) percent of all people in Atkinson live below the poverty level, based on annual income. Approximately 193 ( $\pm$ 44) households in Atkinson receive Social Security and the mean Social Security income is \$14,234 ( $\pm$ \$1,410). It is reported that 48 ( $\pm$ 21) residents receive retirement income with an average retirement income of \$11,165 ( $\pm$ \$3,692). Two ( $\pm$ 5) households receive supplemental security income with an average of \$9,700 ( $\pm$ \$69) and 23 ( $\pm$ 17) households receive Food Stamp/ SNAP benefits. The City of Atkinson's low-to-moderate income (LMI) percentage is 42.92, meaning that almost 43 percent of Atkinson's residents are classified as low-to-moderate income households as outlined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Low income levels impact residents' amount of extra spending money and it affects their ability to save money for large expenses, emergencies, down-payments, household updates, etc.

For owner-occupied housing units, approximately 9.5 ( $\pm$ 8.1) percent of households spend 35 percent or more of their income on monthly household costs. Based on ACS data, 50.5 ( $\pm$ 12.0) percent of households spend less than 20 percent of their income on monthly household costs and 26.4 ( $\pm$ 9.8) percent of households spend between 20 and 25 percent of their income on monthly household costs. For renter-occupied units, 18.8 ( $\pm$ 13.1) percent of households spend 20 to 25 percent of their income on their monthly rent, while 25.6 ( $\pm$ 15.5) percent spend less than 15 percent of their income on their monthly rent. Over 27.4 ( $\pm$ 15.3) percent of households spend 35 percent or more and another 12.0 ( $\pm$ 13.7) percent spend between 30 and 35 percent of their income on their monthly rent. Households, whether owner- or renter-occupied, that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs are considered to be house-poor because the balance of their income and life necessities is too tight creating a strapped household because of the large housing costs.



## Chapter 1: Community Profile

During our public input sessions, residents discussed the need to draw even more people into the community and to capitalize on residents moving into the community. One way to do both of these things, with additional bonuses, is to market the community and what it has to offer. Several residents, during public input sessions, and through the Community Needs Assessment Survey discussed their desire to promote tourism and expand the businesses existing in the community. In order to attract people to the community to live or to visit, outside marketing must be done. Marketing Atkinson with a brand will help make visitors aware of the City and what it has to offer. It is also important to have internal marketing to encourage residents to shop locally and support local businesses and services, but it is vital in today's society to market the community as a commodity to visitors.

The Downtown District is the main hub for retail and service sector businesses; however, the Highway 20 corridor is also extremely important to the community's tax base and economic draw. There are major differences in land use characteristics between the Downtown District and the Highway corridors, especially economic development on the fringe of the community. In order for the Downtown District to keep its distinct appeal, the City must focus on updates and improvements that are pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing in order to maintain the neighborhood feel that is essential for Downtown Districts. That neighborhood 'appeal' is what helps attract people to shop in a Downtown area. Residents also discussed their desire to improve the Downtown District and create additional spaces for retail and service industry businesses within the Downtown District. Several of the existing buildings within Atkinson's Downtown are being used for storage, which unfortunately, is not the best use of space for buildings in the Downtown District. Community Needs Assessment survey respondents rated aesthetics/beautification, pedestrian accessibility, and lighting/signage in Atkinson's Downtown District as 2.85, 2.86, and 2.95, respectively, on a scale of 1 to 4. Restaurant variety and retail store variety were rated slightly lower at 2.06 and 2.50, respectively. Many times public investment leads to increased private investment and entrepreneurship which is why it is important for the City to continue to improve the Downtown District.





The Highway 20 corridor is best suited for businesses that require large areas of land, high visibility, and easy access from the Highway. Land availability is essential for economic growth; although each company has specific location needs before they can consider developing a new business and those needs cannot be assumed. There are a few vacant areas of land available along the highway corridors; however, there is minimal land available in the existing corporate limits for larger economic developments requiring access and visibility from the highway. The businesses existing along the Highway corridors are successful, in part, because of the high traffic volume, visibility, and easy access. Businesses along Highway corridors should have off-street parking, larger setbacks, more green space, and even more signage than what is necessary for Downtown businesses. The Downtown District should focus improvements on aesthetic continuity, pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, zero off-street parking requirements, smaller lot sizes, and zero setbacks to promote development that is seamless with existing businesses and further enhances the neighborhood appeal within the Downtown District.

It will be important for City leaders to understand the difference between the two commercial areas and encourage economic development to fit the unique identity of each area. The Downtown District is best suited for retail, entertainment, and personal service type businesses. These businesses encourage busy sidewalks which promote safety and accessibility as well as window shopping and higher foot traffic for retail stores. Businesses with large traffic volumes, a need for space, and are agricultural or manufacturing in nature are best suited along Highway 20 and Highway 11; therefore, development of those businesses should be encouraged along the highway corridors but in close proximity to the corporate limits so the land could be annexed, if necessary for public infrastructure expansions.

Atkinson is already home to several businesses, both large and small, that provide the community with basic needs and services as well as a variety of other businesses that provide a mixture of job opportunities for residents. In fact, the City has two stores for several retail sectors even within the Downtown District providing residents with options and competitive pricing on many everyday items. This is very unique for communities the size of Atkinson. Job variety is important to attract new residents to move to Atkinson as well as maintain existing residents. It is important to consider how businesses will succeed in the community. City leaders should focus on attracting businesses that can co-exist and/or support existing businesses and industries in Atkinson in order to promote a self-sustaining economy. There should be an ongoing effort to develop local talent, retain jobs, and foster an environment that supports job creation, local businesses, and entrepreneurs. Economic growth should be sustainable over time and ought to provide young people with an opportunity to stay and work in the community or return after college to find a quality job. These goals will require career options, affordable housing, supportive community and public services such as access to healthcare, along with continuing education and training and cultural and recreational possibilities.



Atkinson's economy draws in outside citizens to shop/do business in the community; however, not all personal/family needs can be met with businesses in Atkinson. Small, rural communities must be able to provide for many aspects of a person or family's needs in order to retain them as long-term residents of the community. It truly has to be a comprehensive approach to promote growth and economic development must also include the analysis and development of other community needs like housing and recreational amenities. In the 1960s, economic development meant industrial recruitment, especially centered on the railroad. This industrial recruitment is better known as "smokestack chasing." However, over the past 40 years, manufacturing has declined in its contribution to the overall economy. Today, services and government jobs provide more than five out of every six jobs in America. Communities, like Atkinson, must now focus their economic development efforts on self-help and self-promotion, local business creation and expansion, and strategic planning. Economic development is necessary for community growth and for the City to maintain its quality of life.

Retail Market Power (RMP) - Opportunity Gap analysis is as beneficial as it is interesting for communities to review. It is an analysis that shows a comparison of retail and eating establishment supply and demand to determine potential sources of revenue growth. An opportunity gap appears when household spending levels for a specific geography are higher than the corresponding retail sales estimates. This difference signifies that resident households are utilizing the available supply and supplementing their additional demand by going outside of the community. The opposite is true in the event of an opportunity surplus. That is, when the levels of household demand/expenditures are lower than the retail sales estimates. In this case, local retailers are attracting residents from other areas outside of the community into their stores. Businesses are placed in each economic sector by their primary type of economic activity. This is dependent upon the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and how they classify each business. Retail sectors represented in this table are solely based on NAICS classifications.



**Table 1.7** shows an the RMP Opportunity/Gap analysis for Atkinson based on 2014 ESRI estimates. The first column shows a list of retail store categories. The second column shows resident demand by estimating consumer spending habits for each category in 2014. The third column shows the total retail sales in 2014, by each retail market, of stores found within Atkinson. The fourth, and last column, shows an opportunity gap or surplus that exists for each retail sector. In the fourth column, if the number is red, it means there is a surplus of supply in Atkinson for the associated retail sector. In this case, a surplus is not bad; it means that businesses within that retail sector in Atkinson are meeting the needs of residents as well as attracting customers who live outside of Atkinson. For example, many people travel to Atkinson from the surrounding rural area or community in order to fill some of their needs through businesses in Atkinson creating a higher supply than the comparative demand for only Atkinson’s residents. The numbers in black, in the fourth column, show a gap or an opportunity for that particular retail sector. These numbers show a demand for the associated economic sectors in Atkinson; however, there may not be stores to fulfill the consumers’ needs. Therefore, they are leaving the City of Atkinson to spend their money elsewhere. These black numbers should be viewed as an opportunity; they are associated with retail sectors that have potential for growth within the City.

<b>Table 1.7 RMP - Opportunity Gap Analysis, Atkinson, 2014</b>			
<b>Retail Stores</b>	<b>2014 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)</b>	<b>2014 Supply (Retail Sales)</b>	<b>Opportunity Gap/Surplus</b>
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$15,977,041	\$7,788,246	\$8,188,795
Total Retail Trade	\$14,699,453	\$6,879,553	\$7,819,900
Total Food & Drink	\$1,277,588	\$908,693	\$368,895
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	\$3,040,347	\$302,020	\$2,738,327
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	\$221,645	\$0.00	\$221,645
Electronics and Appliance Stores	\$407,723	\$189,555	\$218,168
Building Material, Garden Equipment Stores	\$569,053	\$532,375	\$36,678
Food and Beverage Stores	\$2,025,760	\$3,389,697	<b>-\$1,363,937</b>
Health and Personal Care Stores	\$4,464,461	\$1,249,291	\$3,215,170
Gasoline Stations	\$1,595,311	\$366,984	\$1,228,327
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	\$518,933	\$0.00	\$518,933
Sporting Good, Hobby, Book, Music Stores	\$278,479	\$88,568	\$189,911
General Merchandise Stores	\$2,056,271	\$1,274,504	\$781,767
Miscellaneous Retailers	\$267,618	\$140,600	\$127,018
Non-Store Retailers	\$2,469,022	\$254,162	\$2,214,860
Food Services and Drinking Places	\$1,277,588	\$908,693	\$368,895
Source: ESRI 2014 Estimates			

**Table 1.7** shows a summary of Atkinson’s RMP analysis. This analysis estimates over 7.7 million dollars were spent in Atkinson in 2014 at retail trade stores and eating and drinking establishments. ESRI reported estimates of 15.9 million dollars of consumer demand for Atkinson’s residents at retail stores and eating and drinking places, not taking into account location of purchases. The analysis of this tables shows an 8.1 million dollar gap in supply versus consumer demand for Atkinson.





There are only a few retail sectors that do not have businesses located in Atkinson; however, it is important to realize that Atkinson would not be able to viably support all retail sectors due to its size, the total population of the region, low demand, and the City's proximity to larger markets like O'Neill and Norfolk. The two retail sectors not represented in Atkinson as reported by ESRI's 2014 estimates include furniture and home furnishings and clothing and clothing accessory stores. Competing with larger Cities that can easily support a variety of "big box" stores such as Wal-Mart, Target, Sears, and Menards is not easy for any community. However, these "big box" stores attract many shoppers making it challenging for smaller communities to retain local shoppers.

This analysis does not indicate that existing retail operations in Atkinson are bad businesses or that they are lacking in any way. It simply shows an opportunity to improve for the City as a whole. Expanding existing businesses and adding new inventory are a few ways that existing retail stores could progress to meet more needs of Atkinson's residents. The few missing business categories displayed in the RMP analysis table would not be self-sustainable businesses in Atkinson. Furniture and home furnishings and standalone clothing stores may not be able to attract the foot traffic necessary to support those retail establishments; therefore, it may be best for appropriate existing businesses to add inventory that may fill these needs. Also, the demand for these two specific retail sectors may not be large enough to warrant the need for additional inventory in town. It is more important for the City to focus efforts on encouraging residents to support local businesses. Business expansion may also entice local shoppers because existing businesses could find way to continually meet the needs of residents.

It is not recommended to add "big box" retailers, unless the store would act as an anchor to attract people to the community and support the existing businesses located in Atkinson. Otherwise there is fear that a "big box" store would detract from the Downtown District and the small businesses in town. Locally-owned businesses would struggle to compete with certain "big box" store names; therefore, it is important to attract businesses that will complement existing business entities in Atkinson. Entrepreneurism, business retention and expansion, and succession planning should be the main areas of focus for economic development efforts in Atkinson. While "big box" stores, like Wal-Mart, may not be the answer, it is important for Atkinson to take advantage of its location on a highway which provides opportunities that many other communities do not have. During the Community Needs Assessment Survey, respondents expressed their number one economic development priority to be supporting existing businesses. This is an essential part of economic development in small town Nebraska and residents understand the importance of supporting local businesses.



Having an established retail base is difficult, but Atkinson and its entrepreneurs/business owners have been working hard to maintain and expand the retail base in the community. The Chamber of Commerce and City of Atkinson should create an internal community marketing plan to encourage shopping locally to support local businesses which, in many cases, includes supporting neighbors, family members, and friends. A few examples of ways to encourage residents to support local businesses is to develop placemats in local restaurants or yard signs saying "Support your neighbors, shop locally" to act as the extra reminder residents need to support Atkinson's businesses. Other ideas for a "shop local" campaign in Atkinson could include establishing a Thankful Thursday event each week to encourage residents to show support and thanks for the local businesses and business-owners in the community by shopping at their stores or encouraging business owners to stay open later in the evening one night a week to encourage downtown shopping. Holding events in the Downtown District is another way to draw people from the community and from outside of the community to spend time in Downtown Atkinson.

Not all industry sectors would be self-sustainable businesses in Atkinson. It is important for Atkinson to take advantage of its location on the two highways, especially with the high average daily traffic volumes Highway 20 experiences, which provides many commercial opportunities for the community. Therefore, having shovel ready sites to market to potential businesses along the highway is important for large scale economic development opportunities. But the community cannot forget to encourage entrepreneurship and provide incentives and areas for business growth for small businesses that are typically best suited in the Downtown District.

**Table 1.8** shows employment by industry percentages for Atkinson based on 2009-2013 ACS data. The largest employment industry in Atkinson is educational services, health care, and social assistance with retail trade being the second largest employment industry; these two industries comprise almost 40 percent of the total employment in Atkinson. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining as well as other services, except public administration make up an additional 20 percent of the City's employment totals.

<b>Table 1.8 Employed Population by Industry, Atkinson, 2013</b>	
	ACS
<b>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining</b>	10.2% (±4.0%)
<b>Construction</b>	5.0% (±2.4%)
<b>Manufacturing</b>	7.9% (±3.9%)
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	1.8% (±1.6%)
<b>Retail trade</b>	19.6% (±6.3%)
<b>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</b>	2.4% (±1.7%)
<b>Information</b>	1.5% (±1.7%)
<b>Finance and insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing</b>	7.0% (±4.3%)
<b>Professional, scientific, management, and administrative and waste management services</b>	3.6% (±2.7%)
<b>Educational services, health care, and social assistance</b>	20.7% (±6.4%)
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services</b>	8.1% (±5.1%)
<b>Other services, except public administration</b>	10.5% (±4.7%)
<b>Public administration</b>	1.6% (±1.7%)
Source: ACS 2009-2013 Estimates	

## Chapter 1: Community Profile

Basic sector (or nonlocal) businesses are companies that produce goods/services for export, which, in turn, brings new money into the community from outside sources. These industries rely heavily on external factors and they usually export their goods and can be considered the “engine” of the local economy because this sector helps to strengthen and grow the economy. Non-basic sector (or local) businesses are companies that directly serve its community’s residents. Atkinson is home to many non-basic sector companies and although they are important to the quality of life for Atkinson’s residents, they are not viewed to be as important to the local economic base because they do not bring in as many outside dollars as basic sector businesses. Non-basic sector businesses are important for communities because they support residents’ needs. They also help draw potential residents to the community though the increased quality of life these non-basic sector businesses provide for residents.



Some of the non-basic sector industries include information; construction; finance and real estate; professional, scientific, and management; and educational services and health/social care assistance. These industries serve the local economy and local residents; although, these sectors are also key employment sectors and amenities that help attract people to Atkinson from surrounding communities because these industries relate to the quality of life for residents. There are a few industries that are always

considered to be non-basic sector regardless of the comparison calculations. A few of these sectors are construction, retail trade, and educational services because the purpose of these industries is to serve the local economy. However, Atkinson’s retail trade industry has a much higher percentage of employees in comparison to the State’s retail trade employment. Even though Atkinson has a higher percentage of employment in the retail trade sector, this business sector directly supports the local economy and is still considered to be non-basic; however, some of the employment within the retail trade sector can be considered basic because some of Atkinson’s retail businesses help to bring in revenue from outside the community.

In order to establish which industries have basic sector businesses within the local economy a simple comparison calculation is done to determine an industry’s impact over the local economy versus that same industry’s impact in the regional area. The calculations were computed based on 2009-2013 ACS data for Atkinson and the State of Nebraska. The industries that are considered basic sectors for Atkinson are agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining and other services except public administration. Manufacturing, wholesale trade, and transportation, warehousing, and utilities are always assumed to be base-sector industries because manufacturers typically export the goods they manufacture, transportation and warehousing is specifically for the use of transporting goods in and out, and wholesale trade businesses typically sell their goods to locations outside of the local community.

Through this economic base analysis technique, it is assumed that the local economy will grow and prosper primarily from basic sector as it exports goods and services and brings in additional money. Some of this money remains in the local economy, increasing the demand for goods and services provided by the non-basic sector businesses. That money then stimulates both non-basic and additional basic economic activity as it cycles through the economy. Because of the important role basic sector businesses play on the local economy it also stimulates job creation for non-basic sector businesses within the local economy.



**Table 1.9** shows Atkinson’s largest employers. If any of these companies were to downsize or leave Atkinson, it would greatly affect the community and its economic status. The community’s large employers include West Holt Medical Services, Olson’s Manufacturing, Inc., West Holt Public Schools, and Green Plains Atkinson, LLC. As seen in the table, these four companies each employ a minimum of 50 people making up a large percentage of the City’s overall employment; however, there are many other businesses in Atkinson that still have an effect on the local economy. Communities need all types of businesses in order to be successful, whether they are large or small. Although not all businesses can staff a large number of employees, every business is important to the betterment of the community. The City should implement programs to promote a good environment for entrepreneurship. Getting the “big fish,” although beneficial, is not where all of the focus should be put for economic development efforts. Fostering an environment for small businesses that add to the character of the community will continue to benefit Atkinson. When residents support the local businesses within the community, the City will benefit long term from a self-sustaining economic business climate.

Table 1.9 Major Employers in Atkinson, 2014		
Company Name	Service Sector	Employees
West Holt Medical Services	Education & Health Services	90
Olson’s Manufacturing Inc.	Manufacturing	70
West Holt Public Schools	Education & Health Services	69
Green Plains Atkinson, LLC	Agricultural/Manufacturing	50

Source: City of Atkinson





The Chamber of Commerce and City of Atkinson continually work hard to provide assistance to existing and potential businesses. Holt County Economic Development and Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD) are also great local resource for businesses in Atkinson and the surrounding region. Between the four groups, there are many local and regional resources available to businesses in Atkinson. CNEDD offers many services within the 15-County region. A few of the assistance programs they offer include business loan, business formation, business resiliency, business/entrepreneurial training, and small business advice and marketing tips. CNEDD's community services include grant writing, community clean-up, disaster recovery, and nuisance code enforcement. More information about CNEDD expansive services can be found by going to their website at [www.cnedd.org](http://www.cnedd.org). Holt County Economic Development also provides many resources and services to the communities within the County. Their services include community development, youth retention efforts, business retention and expansion, entrepreneurship promotion, etc. More information about Holt County Economic Development can be found on their website at [holtcountynebraska.com](http://holtcountynebraska.com). The following is list of other current programs available within Atkinson:

### REAP Business Loans (Rural Enterprise Assistance Microenterprise Program)

The Rural Enterprise Assistance Microenterprise Program was created by the Center for Rural Affairs as a rural microenterprise lending organization. REAP provides counseling, technical assistance, and training for small business owners as well as offers low interest loans to small businesses with five employees or less.

### Nebraska Advantage

The Nebraska Advantage was designed to create a business climate that makes Nebraska the preferred location for starting and growing businesses. In this progressive, pro-business tax climate, corporate income and sales taxes are reduced or virtually eliminated. More details can be found on Nebraska Advantage's website.

### LB840 (Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act)

The Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB840) was approved by Atkinson voters for a portion of sales tax to be utilized for economic development. This provides the City with a financing tool to fund existing business needs, the development of new business start-ups, and economic development site improvements.

### Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

TIF is primarily designed to finance the public costs associated with private development projects. Property tax increases resulting from a new development are targeted to repay the public investment required by the project. The City of Atkinson has completed multiple blight and substandard analysis studies and is able to utilize TIF in those redevelopment areas for various public improvement projects.

These programs and partnerships should continually be supported by the City and its residents, because it is a fundamental way to support local businesses while trying to expand the economy. It is also important to maintain the Region-County-City relationship so that all resources can be utilized and most importantly so the region is truly helping itself grow as opposed to a "one-man-for-himself" type of strategy with economic development. These relationships are essential for small communities because there are several individuals with the knowledge and experience to assist communities with economic development efforts. Based on responses from the Community Needs Assessment Survey, respondents would like local economic development efforts to be focused on supporting existing businesses, developing housing stock, youth retention, and new retail. It is important for the community to focus economic development efforts on those four areas to provide for existing residents and businesses as well as to attract new of both, residents and businesses.

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Economic growth is a challenging task, but it is a fundamental task in order to maintain the vitality of Atkinson. Atkinson is taking the right steps forward, but there is always room for improvement. Additional items that need to be addressed in Atkinson includes business retention and expansion, workforce training and development, succession planning for many of the existing businesses, and youth retention because they are all important economic development efforts for the community. This is something that must be discussed for the successful sustainability of Atkinson's economic base. A succession plan will help owners plan for the longevity of their businesses and ensure that residents will maintain the quality of life they have become accustomed to in Atkinson. Leaders in Atkinson must be able to help change the culture of traditional economic development and re-focus everyone's efforts and energy to new ways to develop and grow. Focusing all of the City's attention and landing the "big fish" means that the City would miss multiple opportunities to collect many other fish that would still add value to the community. Business retention and expansion allows the existing business owners to know the City. The City's regional partnership groups are there for guidance and assistance when needed. It also is a way for the City to be made aware of issues or needs of the existing businesses so they can find solutions to assist businesses. Focusing efforts on education and involvement for community and economic development from the community's youth will help to pave the way for the future of the City by ensuring the community's youth are aware of the opportunities available in Atkinson. Workforce development and training is important to provide unilateral opportunities for growth and improvement for the region's employees. This is beneficial for the employees themselves, but also for the local employers. As job requirements continue to change, training and education is key to a strong, qualified workforce.

It will be crucial for community leaders and Economic Development personnel to stay up-to-date with the ever-changing economic world. The State of Nebraska offers many resources including Community Development Block Grants and educational sessions on community development, housing, and economic development which the City of Atkinson may be able to utilize. The City of Atkinson and other stakeholder entities have done a fantastic job of being proactive for the community as well as providing funding assistance for residents and business owners in Atkinson. This shows support for the local economy, and is an important way to retain and attract businesses and residents alike.

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