

CITY OF COLUMBUS
2016 - 2017 BUDGET
PROFILE CHARACTERISTICS

Founding of Columbus
Population
New Construction
Utilities
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Local Government

PROFILE CHARACTERISTICS

When plans for building a transcontinental railway were announced in the 1850's, a 16-member group, who called themselves the "Columbus Town Company" formulated plans to establish a new settlement somewhere along its route. Some of this group from Columbus, Ohio (for which the city was named), arrived on the evening of May 29, 1856, from Omaha by ox team. They decided to locate the town at the confluence of the Loup and Platte Rivers. The particular location of the town site had a two-fold purpose: the region promised excellent land for raising crops and the site selected was convenient for establishing a ferry across the fast moving Loup River.

In the Territorial Council, on October 8, 1858, the fifth session of the legislature, a bill to incorporate Columbus was read for the first time. It was read the second time on October 9, 1858, and referred to the appropriate committee. Nine years after its founding, Columbus was first incorporated as the "Town of Columbus," by a special act of the legislature of the Territory of Nebraska and was approved February 11, 1865. At that time Columbus was also made the county seat for Platte County. Columbus grew to a city of the second class on February 7, 1877, and made the transition to a city of the first class (population exceeding 5,000) on September 25, 1907. Columbus celebrated its 150th birthday with Sesquicentennial activities throughout 2006. An artistic mural depicting the community during the past 150 years was unveiled during the Sesquicentennial celebration. Arches, echoing a legendary Columbus landmark, are located in Pawnee Park, along Highway 30 east of Columbus near Behlen Mfg. and along Highway 81 near Cornhusker Public Power at the west entrance of the city.



Columbus Mural

Designed and painted by David Reiser

The ferry across the Loup River, which the city founders had envisioned, became a reality in the 1870's. This ferry moved a seemingly endless stream of immigrant wagons across the Loup River on their trip to the Northwest and helped make Columbus a major outfitting post for the pioneers.

Construction of the Union Pacific Transcontinental Railroad through Columbus only served to strengthen the city's role as an important outfitting station for wagon trains, a major business in Columbus well into the 1880s. As the era of wagon trains passed, railroads continued to play an important part in the early development of the community.



Baldwin Locomotive Works No. 561 built in 1904 for the Oregon Short Line, reassigned to duty in Nebraska in the 1950's, and retired in 1955. Placed in Pawnee Park for display November 16, 1955 and dedicated on November 28, 1955.

Dreams of harnessing the Loup River for power and irrigation can be traced back as early as 1874. The first concerted effort of the people to utilize the water of the Loup River was led by Henry Ernest Babcock in 1894 when a stock company, known as the Columbus Power & Irrigation Company, was organized and in operation for approximately one year.

Loup River Public Power District, the first public power district in the state, was formed by a group of Columbus businessmen, who, during the Depression in the early 1930s, saw an opportunity to use federal funds to create jobs for the area by reviving the shelved plan conceived by Babcock. Construction of the 35-mile canal between Genoa and Columbus began in 1934; peak employment during the construction period was more than 1,300 men. In 1963 Loup Power District opened Lake North, four miles north of Columbus. The lake has 2,083 acre-feet of water and covers approximately 200 acres.

In 1943 the American Brass Company of Connecticut, a subsidiary of Anaconda Copper, began looking for a location to build an aluminum extrusion plant in the Midwest to help support the national war effort. In a short time, it became obvious to American Brass Company officials that Columbus was the best choice for the plant. In short order the government purchased the land, brought in the railroad siding, and began building a brick garage. However, by early spring, the tide of the war was turning; in 1944 the project was scrapped. This experience was the first time Columbus officials had marketed the community in this way and it opened the eyes of everyone that Columbus was well positioned for economic industrial development.

Columbus developed the first publicly owned industrial park in the nation in 1946. Due to aggressive economic development, Columbus is recognized today as the “most industrialized city per capita” in Nebraska. Columbus was once known as the “crossroads of the nation” because of its location on U. S. Highway 30, originally known as the Lincoln Memorial Highway, and U. S. Highway 81, formerly known as the North-South Meridian Highway.



Quincentenary Belltower

Today visitors can travel through history at the Platte County Museum or visit the Quincentenary Belltower built in 1992 as the community’s celebration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ first voyage to the new world. Locals and tourists alike will visit the Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial, built to honor Columbus native, Andrew Jackson Higgins, the designer of a ramp-fronted landing craft that helped win World War II, and the many veterans who fought for freedom of our great country. The Higgins Memorial is also home to the “Freedom Memorial”, a touching monument containing the largest amount of steel in the United States that was recovered from the World Trade Center. In 2015, a replica of the Andrew Jackson Higgins boat and

statues of WW II veterans were placed on Omaha Beach in France. From the original group of 16 with dreams, visions, and courage, Columbus has grown to a city of approximately 23,000 residents. Today, Columbus is the hub of public power in Nebraska with the headquarters of Cornhusker Public Power District, Loup Power District, Nebraska Public Power District, and Nebraska Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative, Inc. Columbus was recently named in the “Top 100 Best Small Towns to Live in the USA” according to CNN/Money Magazine and has also received third best place to find employment in the U.S. Part of the reason for this praise is the quality of life enjoyed by our citizens. This results from great community amenities, effective educational institutions, and outstanding health care and friendly neighbors. Our schools rank among the top schools in Nebraska. Our high school graduates outperform other schools at successfully completing their first year of college. Approximately 25 percent of school age children attend parochial schools. Central Community College offers two- and four-year programs in Columbus with both day and evening courses. A \$49.9 million school bond was passed in May of 2014 for the construction of a new high school in northwest Columbus, with plans to open in the spring of 2017.

Columbus is home to many growing companies. With a low unemployment rate, Columbus continues to offer several hundred job openings at all skill levels. More than 80 manufacturers in Columbus support metal fabrication, electronics, health care, and related products. BD Medical (a world leader) employs 1,600 in Columbus and many other Fortune 500 companies have operations here.



Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial

Other economic activities in the county seat of Columbus include government, farming, livestock feeding, retail and wholesale sales, tourism, conventions, and railroading. Columbus is known as the headquarters of public power in Nebraska. New to the community in recent years are Sidumper Trailer, Hobby Lobby, CVS Pharmacy, and Brookestone Acres. East Central District Health Department opened their new facility in February 2015. The Columbus Community Hospital, in conjunction with the YMCA, has built a new Wellness Center which opened in October of 2015. Ramada has completed renovation of the former New World Inn. In the past 3 years, there have been 23 new businesses constructed at a total cost of \$51,037,278.

POPULATION

POPULATION OF COLUMBUS (Actual City Limits)

<i>Year</i>	<i>City Population</i>
2014	22,381
2010	22,111
2000	20,971
1990	19,480
1980	17,328
1970	15,471
1960	12,476
1950	8,884



First Columbus Home

HOUSING

New Construction

In the past three years 210 new residences were constructed in Columbus and it is estimated 75 will be built in 2016. The cost for new home construction averaged \$160 per square foot during the past three years. Building permits for new construction totaled \$14,172,131 in 2015.

NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska is helping to meet the housing needs in the Columbus area by providing homebuyer education, housing rehabilitation, and real estate development programs. The company, providing these programs since 1995, established an office in Columbus in 2007. Education classes are provided monthly in English and Spanish. More than 147 single-family housing units have been rehabilitated and sold in the Columbus area. They have completed a 43-housing unit subdivision in Bradshaw Place and have partnered with Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District to complete 18 lots in Centennial Park 6th Addition. Habitat for Humanity has built three new homes in the New Hope Addition in west Columbus.

UTILITIES

ELECTRICITY

Loup Power District, a wholesale power customer of Nebraska Public Power District, provides electric service to 21 communities in the four-county area of Boone, Colfax, Nance, and Platte. Loup Power provides wholesale service to the communities of Leigh, and Schuyler. Loup Power District, Nebraska Public Power District and Cornhusker Public Power District are headquartered in Columbus. Current rates for the base, single phase and three-phase class customers can be found at www.loup.com/customersvc/rates.asp.

NATURAL GAS SERVICE

Black Hills Energy is the retail supplier of natural gas in Columbus. The transmission provider is Northern Natural. Black Hills Energy is a full-service natural gas distribution company with Nebraska headquarters in Lincoln.

Columbus is served by three different lines. The lines are 4-inch (68 psi), 4-inch (80 psi), and 10-inch (68 psi) steel pipe. Natural gas, with an average value of 1,000 Btu per cubic foot, is available for residential, commercial, and industrial customers for base and peak use on a firm basis. Interruptible service is available for customers with alternate fuel capability. Annual curtailment of interruptible customers varies with the type of service selected by the customer. Rates vary slightly due to seasonal and commodity price fluctuation. Current rates for the commercial/light industrial class customer, as well as one year's history for the Nebraska Area 3, can be found at www.blackhillsenergy.com.

WATER

The city of Columbus obtains its water from the Ogallala aquifer beneath the city. The aquifer has an effective saturated thickness of approximately 150 feet in the Columbus area and the water table is within a few feet of the surface. Eleven active wells, with an average depth of 125 feet, draw water from the aquifer and pump it to the water production facilities. The system, serving the entire city, has a combined pumping capacity of 15.9 million gallons per day, and an overhead storage capacity of 5.1 million gallons and 0.8 million gallons below ground. The average daily demand is 5.2 million gallons, and the historic peak daily demand is 14.2 million gallons. The system has a maximum capacity of 18,000 gallons per minute. The static pressure is 55 pounds per square inch and residual pressure is 40 pounds per square inch.

SEWERAGE

Columbus has a municipal sanitary sewerage system and a separate storm sewer system. The Wastewater Treatment facility was updated in 2003 and is again expanding in several phases which will extend over the next four to six years. It has a daily capacity of 6,000,000 gallons and an average daily flow of 3,580,000 gallons.

SOLID WASTE

Privately owned solid waste removal services are available in Columbus. Solid wastes are transported to the Northeast Nebraska Solid Waste Coalition Landfill in Clarkson, NE. The city, along with the 24 other cities and counties, is a member of this coalition that owns and operates the landfill. A new solid waste transfer station for Columbus was constructed during 2014 for about \$4 million.

YARD WASTE

The Transfer Station provides free drop service for yard waste and lawn clippings to the residents of Columbus. Wood waste and brush are ground into mulch and provided to the public free of charge.

For information on rates for city water, sewer, and solid waste, please see Section "10" in your budget book on "Fees".

CITY WEBSITE

The City of Columbus updated website gives detailed information on each department within the City. Please visit it at your convenience to keep informed about all the departments. (<http://www.columbusne.us>)



Memorial Day Ceremony – Frankfort Square - Downtown Columbus

PLATTE COUNTY RETAIL SALES

The primary retail trade area extends 23 miles north, 23 miles east, 18 miles southeast, and 26 miles southwest and contains an estimated 53,000 people. The Village Centre, the mall on the eastern edge of Columbus, opened in early 2003 and new stores are continually being added.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Taxable Retail Sales</i>	<i>Auto Sales</i>
2015	\$393,926,007	\$77,324,126
2014	\$380,404,970	\$75,834,231

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County Government

Platte County has 18 townships and is governed by a seven-member Board of Supervisors, elected by district for four-year terms. The county belongs to the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development district with 16 other counties. Platte County is not zoned. Their 2015-16 budget is \$37,928,858.

Municipal Government

Columbus, a city of the first class, has a mayor-council form of government with a full-time city administrator. The 2015-2016 actual budget is \$76,931,730 and the proposed budget for 2016-2017 is \$99,929,335. Tax Structure and schedule of local bond indebtedness follows.



TAX STRUCTURE

Values for Tax Levy Purposes – City of Columbus

All real property is subject to tax at market value. Agricultural land is valued at approximately 73 percent of its actual value. Personal property that is used in a trade or business and is depreciable is subject to tax at its “net book value.” All other personal property is exempt from taxation.

Actual Valuation			
	2013	2014	2015
Real Estate	\$ 1,209,967,460	\$ 1,257,632,490	\$ 1,315,168,067
Personal Property	\$ 42,645,433	\$ 35,698,676	\$ 35,068,436
Special (railroad & utilities)	\$ 12,516,983	\$ 13,443,942	\$ 17,324,810
TOTAL	\$ 1,265,129,876	\$ 1,306,775,108	\$ 1,367,561,313

TAX RATE (Dollars and cents per \$100 of actual value)

	2013	2014	2015
City	\$0.325186	\$ 0.325186	\$ 0.325186
County	0.243643	0.216862	0.204490
School District	1.211945	1.254476	1.254391
Community College	0.112616	0.110459	0.097228
Educational Service Unit	0.015000	0.015000	0.015000
Natural Resource District	0.029755	0.024184	0.033193
Agricultural Society	0.011758	0.011407	0.010029
TOTAL	\$1.949903	\$1.957574	\$ 1.939517

City Sales Tax

The City of Columbus has received voter approval nine times since 1995 for a 1 percent or ½ percent city sales tax for various projects. Currently the local sales tax rate is 1.5 percent. Through March 2017, the 1 percent sales tax is allocated 90 percent to capital improvements, including street improvements and drainage projects, and 10 percent to economic development under the LB840 Economic Development Plan, not to exceed \$300,000 per year. At the May 10, 2016, election the 1 percent sales tax was renewed for ten years, starting on April 1, 2017. The renewed sales tax will be applied to drainage, street and capital improvements of the city, indebtedness incurred for these types of capital projects, and the annual operating costs of the city's aquatic facilities.

The ½ percent sales tax was also renewed at the May 10, 2016, election. This sales tax will be used as a funding mechanism for a Library/Cultural Arts Center, and Police and Fire facilities, remaining in effect until bonds issued for these projects have been paid. Should Columbus voters reject the bonds that will be used to construct these projects, the tax will cease.

CITY BONDED INDEBTEDNESS

City – Bonds (as of 9/30/15)		\$38,810,000			
Type	Date Issued	Original Amount	Unpaid Balance as of 9/30/15	Interest Rate (%)	Date Due
Combined Revenue Refunding	2005	\$6,915,000	\$2,800,000	3.00 – 4.00	2023
Combined Revenue	2011	\$8,235,000	\$6,490,000	.65 – 3.38	2023
Combined Revenue	2011	\$1,580,000	\$1,580,000	1.45 – 3.80	2026
Combined Revenue Refunding	2012	\$5,785,000	\$4,265,000	.30 – 3.10	2027
Combined Revenue Refunding	2015	\$4,030,000	\$4,030,000	2.00 – 3.30	2030
Combined Revenue Refunding	2015	\$9,800,000	\$9,800,000	3.00 – 3.55	2035
Various Purpose	2009	\$1,070,000	\$ 565,000	1.40 – 4.00	2019
Various Purpose	2011	\$ 840,000	\$ 465,000	.85 – 3.45	2021
Various Purpose	2012	\$ 570,000	\$ 230,000	.40 – 1.00	2017
Flood Control	2013	\$4,750,000	\$4,150,000	.40 – 3.10	2023
Sales Tax Revenue - Water Park	2013	\$2,850,000	\$2,150,000	.75 – 2.00	2018
Certificates of Participation	2014	\$2,470,000	\$2,285,000	.45 – 3.40	2026