



City building permits top \$4.1 million mark

By Russ Pankonin

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Strong commodity prices, coupled with a near record corn harvest, kept the economy in Imperial and Chase County region robust during 2012.

Mother Nature threw a curve back at farmers, though, this year. After three years of precipitation exceeding 26 inches, Imperial has recorded just 12.5 inches of moisture so far this year.

While that forced farmers to pump more water in 2012, the hot temperatures proved wonders for this year's irrigated corn crop.

The same can't be said for the dryland corn crop, much of which burned up in the summer heat.

Despite the loss of dryland acres, Ryan Schultz, grain manager at Frenchman Valley Coop, said their receipts for corn this year topped their five-year average by 20 percent.

Commodity prices stood strong throughout the year with corn hitting nearly \$8 per bushel and wheat exceeding \$8 per bushel.

In turn, that has driven the price of land up, with the first \$1 million-plus price being paid in Chase County this fall for an irrigated quarter of ground.

Building permits eclipse \$4 million

Bolstered by the strong ag economy, the overall economy in Chase County remained steady, as evidenced by building permits in Imperial and throughout Chase County.

In 2011, city building permits in Imperial hit a seven-year high of \$4.67 million.

The permits almost kept pace in 2012, with a total of \$4.177 million filed. That total represents permits filed during the 2012 calendar year. Construction may still be underway on some permitted projects into 2013.

The strong ag economy can also be seen in the building permits filed with the county. For 2012, that total amounted to \$3.579 million.

Permit projects included additions and improvements, new homes, new storage buildings and new grain storage.

Business activity in 2012

Contrary to previous years, only one new business opened in Imperial in 2012—The Beverage Barn.

The business at 821 Hwy. 61 formerly housed the Krausnick veterinarian clinic.

Holiday Farms, LLC, comprised of the Randy Vlasin family, renovated the building into a new liquor store.

Holiday Farms also relocated their greenhouse to the same property, just south of the store.

A number of businesses completed improvements to their facilities during the past year.

Jeff Olsen, CPA, built a new office for his firm at 181 East 4th Street.

The Auto Shop added new shop bays and an office at the corner of 5th and Broadway. Prairie States Communications on Hwy. 61 added a new building with two service bays. Veterinary Services added a new building to the south of their existing clinic building on Hwy. 61 and are adding a building to the west still under construction.

Imperial Auto Renewal, located on the Champion Highway, added an addition for shop and office space.

Harchelroad Motors added an addition to the west side of their Broadway St. building to accommodate a new dynamometer.

5th Street Storage added six 20-by 40-foot storage units to their location on East 5th Street.

KarMar LLC, owned by John Engbrecht and Jeff Wallin, added a new 50- by 140-foot building that includes seven new storage units at their location just north of Enders.

In terms of new services, Brickstone Grille & Sports Bar added keno to their operation. It is the only location offering keno in Imperial.

Ownership, location changes

Two major businesses in Imperial changed hands during 2012.

Curly Olneys, Inc, the local Case IH dealer with locations in Imperial and McCook, was acquired by Titan Machinery in July. Titan is headquartered in Fargo, N.D.

Adams Lumber in Imperial and Grant has new owners. Chad and Amy Leibbrandt purchased the business from the Kent/Frerichs family in late August.

AgWest relocated their offices to 101 Holland. The building formerly housed Southside Liquor, which closed in late 2011.

The Nebraska HHS office in Imperial relocated to the extension office building at 135 West 5th.

DSK Irrigation relocated from the Broadway Professional Plaza to 1413 Broadway. The building formerly housed the USDA Farm Services offices.

The USDA relocated to a new building on East 5th Street which was completed this spring.

Troxell's Heating and Appliance moved from 613 Broadway to 533 Broadway, which formerly housed Carman's Appliance.

Mud Buckets relocated to the Broadway Professional Plaza from 509 Broadway.

KADL radio in Imperial is now known as JACKFM.

Other changes underway

A number of businesses have changes or improvements underway that won't be completed until 2013.

Harchelroad Motors started construction on a new collision and restoration center at 700 East Hwy. 6, just west of the Alco building.

Kip and Jan Bremer own the former JJ's on Broadway and plan to reopen the drive-in in 2013.

Smokin' Leroy's restaurant has been sold and will become a Mexican food restaurant in 2013 under new ownership.

Tiffany Reeves and Jacci Brown purchased the building at 509 Broadway and will open a new business, 509 Broadway, in 2013.

Construction began this year on the Broken Arrow Cellars wine distillery located at 73892 332 Avenue, just west of Titan Machinery.

Catholic Social Services, which operates St. Isidore's Gift and Thrift, purchased the building at 527 Broadway and will relocate the store there.

Chase County was scheduled to take possession of the Champion Mill and Lake recreation area in 2012. However, additional legislation must be passed in the 2013 Legislature to complete the transfer.

Carman's Appliance closed their business in 2012 and the building was sold to Troxell's Heating and Appliance.

New homes in 2012

A total of eight new houses and one rental duplex were built in Imperial and rural areas in 2012.

Four of the new homes were located in rural Chase County. Owners of the new homes include Josh and Cara Keating north of Imperial, Joel Grosbach southeast of Imperial, Dan and Stacy Liebhart southeast of Imperial and Jeff and Kim Bubak, southwest of Imperial.

Sid and Carol Harchelroad built a new home at 122 Yucca Drive.

Jeff and Marilee Wallin have a new home at 850 West 12th.

Roxie Davison's new home is located at 1115 Max Drive.

Phil and Betty Lou Harris have a new home at 1731 Wesley Drive.

Russ and Lori Pankonin have a new rental duplex at 321-323 West 13th.

Four other homes, one in Imperial and three in rural areas, remain under construction.

Wauneta business changes

The Maxfield family, who started the Wauneta Roller Mills, sold the facility to Rogan and Ashley Einspahr in early 2012.

The Village of Wauneta purchased Heritage of Wauneta rest home in 2012 after the owner, Vetter Health, announced it would close the facility. The community raised more than \$250,000 to help finalize the purchase.

Mercy Meals opened a permanent location in Wauneta in 2012. The Lutheran-based mission packages meals for delivery to children in Third World countries.