

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The Laramie Comprehensive Plan is the outcome of a visioning and action plan adopted by the City Council on May 30, 2003, entitled The Laramie Plan - A Blueprint for the 21st Century. The Laramie Plan was developed by a citizen task force, extensive public input, countless hours of staff and volunteer time as well as tax payer dollars. The Laramie Plan describes the visions and hopes of our community as we plan for our future. The Laramie Plan outlines possible actions to help Laramie reach beyond its geographic confines to make it a center of economic, educational, and cultural excellence in our region. Laramie is more than a pleasant place to live. It is a place where business and opportunity can flourish.

The process began in 2001 with a series of visioning workshops, public forums, and meetings where residents contributed their ideas to the development of The Laramie Plan. People from throughout the City and County brought together their opinions, expertise, hopes, and dreams. They infused the planning process with a determination that we should and could become a better community. The Laramie Plan expresses our community's belief that this area is blessed with a rich heritage, a vibrant people and workforce, and a location as a crossroads for business, research, and education in Wyoming.

COMMUNITY VISION

The Laramie Plan established a Community Vision that was used as the foundation for the Laramie Comprehensive Plan. The Community Vision was built around shared values of Laramie's citizens that are critical to health and stability as the City moves into the future.

The Community Vision is:

"Laramie will be a strong, energetic, growing community bringing talent, technology, and a great "western" lifestyle together. Above all, Laramie will continue to be our hometown."

The City of Laramie will be a community with pride in its appearance.

We want a well-planned city with high quality development, clean and inviting streetscapes, parks, and neighborhoods. We want to ensure that the past is reflected in the future through the thoughtful conservation of the city's natural and historic resources.

The City of Laramie will be a city that offers convenient transportation access and mobility.

We want a safe and efficient transportation system that is well integrated with land use and offers access to goods, services, and regional destinations. We want a transportation system that recognizes that the automobile will continue to be a dominant force while recognizing the needs of pedestrians and bicycles. We want a transportation system that provides access to air, rail, bus, and interstate highways to move products and people and that offers choice and opportunity.

The City of Laramie will be a community with an abundance of parks, open space, and recreational opportunities.

We want to have access to a diverse array of pristine, undeveloped, natural areas and attractive, strategically located, well-connected parks. We want to benefit from healthy lifestyles and affordable recreation opportunities. We want access to an interconnected system of bikeways and trails with access to public lands. We want to have a variety of programs in arts, entertainment, recreation, and leisure available to explore. We want adequate sport facilities to meet the needs of our youth and adults.

The City of Laramie will have strong and continuing economic prosperity.

We want to benefit from a selective, dynamic, growing, and diverse economy that promotes new knowledge-based businesses, export-based manufacturing, and environmentally sensitive industries that are innovative and employ technology and the related businesses and services that support them. We want a community that encourages entrepreneurs and local business starts and expansion. We want a city that recruits and helps to grow businesses, which create higher incomes and wealth.

The City of Laramie will be a city with orderly, well-planned land-use and development.

We want an attractive, efficient, well-planned city with a compatible mix of uses. We want development that respects Laramie's unique character and identity. We want a community that has identified and protected the open spaces that help define who we are.

The City of Laramie will be a city of unique, attractive and vital neighborhoods.

We want to have neighborhoods with a range of housing alternatives that provide social and economic choice. We want neighborhoods that are conveniently located with access to services to meet our daily needs.

The City of Laramie will have a lively and healthy downtown.

We want to benefit from a revitalized, accessible, customer-friendly downtown that is the civic heart and soul of Laramie. We want a downtown that instills a sense of pride in our community and encourages people to want to live, work, play and invest in Laramie. We want to preserve and enhance the existing historic character of our downtown to create a unique, charming, and vibrant area.

The City of Laramie's municipal government will be innovative, proactive, and citizen-oriented.

We want a government that is the standard for local government in the Rocky Mountain region; a government that is responsive, modern, well organized, accessible, and user-friendly. We want a local government that contributes to a healthy economy. We want city and county governments that work together. We want to have meaningful ongoing opportunities to participate in government. We want to have convenient, affordable access to basic urban infrastructure and services that provide energy, communications, water, sanitation, flood protection, emergency services, safety, recreation, solid waste, and a cohesive transportation network. We want to commit to maintaining existing infrastructure as we expand our infrastructure to serve new development. We want to invest wisely in new infrastructure as a means of stimulating economic development.

THE LARAMIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

To achieve the Community Vision, the Laramie Comprehensive Plan has been adopted to coordinate decisions involving planning, land use, infrastructure and natural resources. This Comprehensive Plan is designed to be dynamic while responding to changes of the community and its environment. The legislative authority given to the City to adopt a comprehensive plan is in Wyoming Statutes Sections 15-1-501 through 15-1-512, inclusive. The Statutes authorize the City Planning Commission to prepare and adopt a master (comprehensive) plan for the physical development of the City. The City, pursuant to Wyoming Statutes, also adopted zoning and subdivision regulations as part of the Laramie Municipal Code. Together, the Comprehensive Plan and the Laramie Municipal Code are to be used during the decision making process on development in the City and its extraterritorial boundaries.

This Comprehensive Plan is divided into 12 chapters listed below. Each chapter provides background information, analyzes current conditions and projections, and provides goals and implementation strategies.

Chapter 1 - Planning Challenges This chapter explains the purpose of planning and the value that will be accrued from undertaking a comprehensive planning process in Laramie and its one-mile planning area. It also outlines the public participation program that served as a foundational element of the planning process.

Chapter 2 - Conditions and Outlook This chapter offers an in-depth introduction to Laramie and Albany County, which documents existing socioeconomic conditions and demographic characteristics pertaining to historical and current population; the age, gender, and educational attainment of its people; and the economic position of the community and its businesses. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the community has grown since its settlement, to identify its current characteristics and resources that will contribute to the envisioned future, and to analyze where the community appears to be headed in the future.

Chapter 3 - Community Character This chapter provides a vision for the future physical development of Laramie and its one-mile planning area. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance that will enable sound decision-making about the

compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments within the context of the larger community. An essential component of this chapter is the land use plan, which serves as the City's policy for directing ongoing development and managing future growth, preserving valued areas and lands, protecting neighborhoods, and realizing the envisioned community character.

Chapter 4 - Parks and Recreation The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that the City "catches up" on any deficiencies in the provision of parks and recreation areas and facilities, and then keeps pace with the facility requirements to support new development. A system plan serves as the basis of this analysis, which complements the future land use plan. The system plan also indicates the effective service areas of the existing parks, but, more importantly, identifies areas of future needs. The chapter includes an adequacy assessment of the current parks and a needs assessment determining future needs for additional land and improvements.

Chapter 5 - Housing and Neighborhoods This chapter evaluates the design of neighborhoods and the impact they have on community form, land use compatibility, and connectivity. The focus is to create livable neighborhood environments. There are direct ties to the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure provisions that allow development to occur in a manner that meets the City's expectations and is compatible to adjacent development. The underlying premise of this element is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of housing within varying price ranges so as to accommodate persons desiring to relocate within or to the community. In addition to livability, the housing element is also essential in the community's economic development program.

Chapter 6 - Public Utilities This chapter summarizes the City's water, wastewater, drainage and solid waste disposal services and conditions. This chapter is supplemented by other specific operational and capital improvement studies performed separately from this comprehensive plan.

Chapter 7 - Urban Growth The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance on future development within the city and surrounding the City, particularly within its extraterritorial areas. Urban growth policies are important to assure that land is developed in a logical pattern to prevent leap-frog and disjointed development that fiscally burdens public facilities and infrastructure. Just as important, development should be appropriately managed to preserve land for continued future expansion.

Chapter 8 - Transportation The purpose of this chapter is to address community-wide mobility needs on all levels, from sidewalks and trails, to local streets and neighborhood access, to arterial roadways and highways. This element of the plan includes a Thoroughfare Plan, which is the long-term plan for developing an overall system of roadways for the City and its planning area. This long-range transportation plan is to be used as a guide for securing rights-of-way and upgrading and extending the network of local, collector, and arterial roads and highways in an efficient manner.

Chapter 9 - Economic Development The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance about how the community can achieve its vision while being proactive about economic development. This chapter contains an economic assessment and outlines ways to support

and retain existing businesses, attract and grow new businesses, and train the community's workforce - all with a view to achieving improved livability.

Chapter 10 - Public Safety The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the provision of safety-sensitive public services, including fire and police protection, emergency medical services, and security and establish policies and provisions to ensure the maximum protection of residents.

Chapter 11 – Reserved (Conservation) This chapter has been reserved for a conservation chapter. This chapter will address issues related to the environment and natural character of the community. Other issues such as energy efficiency, green building and alternative energy sources will be addressed.

Chapter 12 - Implementation The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the different elements of the plan together in such a way as to provide a clear path for sound decision-making. It outlines the organizational structure necessary to implement the plan, including roles and responsibilities, establishes a process for annual and periodic evaluation and appraisal of the plan, and sets forth a five-year action plan.

PLANNING CHALLENGES

1

CHAPTER

The Laramie Comprehensive Plan is designed as a blueprint for the growth of the City and its one-mile planning area over the next 20 years and beyond. The plan's focus is on preserving the assets that contribute positively to a recognizable image for visitors while enhancing the western character valued by community residents. These attributes, coupled with the strong presence of the University of Wyoming, significantly enhance quality of life and the City's ability to expand existing, and attract new businesses, and offer gainful employment to residents. As stated in the introductory chapter the Vision is the preferred future derived from citizen comment. The plan's essential value is in its ability to succeed in achieving this vision through a proactive and thoughtful program of implementation.

PURPOSE

The City is settled within the highly attractive Laramie River Valley, has near access to recreational resources, and greatly benefits from having a major university, all of which enhance its attractiveness for new businesses and residents. Realizing the possibility of preserving the Western environment that has not yet become part of a sprawling metropolis, as have the front-range cities of Colorado, is a challenge. Even without nearby cities, sprawl is, nonetheless, a threat to the charm and character of Laramie. There are a myriad of challenges present, each of which threaten the ability to realize the City's potential. The City of Laramie is confronted with considerable challenges in managing its character, creating good jobs, sustaining a sound tax base, and overcoming its housing constraints in the coming years.

The purpose of this plan is not only to comply with State Statutes which require a comprehensive plan or master plan to guide a community in land use decisions (i.e. zoning) but more importantly establish a vision that residents, business and land owners, the University, and public officials prefer and will support through action over the next 20 years. The plan must go beyond general and lofty sounding goals like "provide affordable, quality housing for all residents." While everybody may agree with this statement as a goal of the community, in order to achieve it, the plan must establish the policy framework and

Planning is about implementation. The costs of implementation and the community's willingness to pay for them will be at the heart of this plan's success.

Albany County has an important role to play in the planning process. Planning and Development in the County has a direct impact on the city. Services such as parks, schools, business, trails, fire and police are affected by County development and planning.

provide guidance as to how it is to be done. The goal implicitly recognizes that there is a problem. However, for the plan to be effective the problem must be researched and analyzed, solutions and alternatives evaluated, and a realistic and feasible plan of action put in place to overcome the deficiency. The evaluation of alternatives for resolving the problem and the selection of one or more strategies that are both reasonable and acceptable are essential elements of this planning process. All the alternatives will have costs, whether they are regulations that impose costs on developers, future businesses, and homeowners or are increased taxes borne by the entire population. Once the costs associated with such strategies become clear, the community must then reach agreement through cooperation and collaboration on the best way(s) to implement the plan in a fair and equitable manner. It is possible that the process of selecting the best implementation strategy may warrant modification of the original goal to tolerate the associated costs.

Ultimately, there is no reason to create a Comprehensive Plan unless it serves as a policy framework that allows the City to achieve what is envisioned for the future. In order to achieve success, there must be not only an understanding of the City's assets and strengths, but also an honest assessment of its problems and challenges. The intended vision is to build on the assets while mitigating the liabilities.

While this is primarily a plan for the City, the plan's influence spans to land in Albany County, within one mile of the City's corporate boundaries. This is an area, where by State statute, the City may exercise its subdivision authority. Hence, it is vitally important for there to be close coordination between the City and County within this area. The importance of this has been recognized by the County with their contribution of funding for the plan. Better coordination and joint planning will be of great benefit in the future. While there is a clear political boundary, it has little real meaning from a perspective of future planning as the economy, housing needs, and environment are not influenced by this boundary.

WHY PLAN?

Development in and around Laramie is undertaken by individual landowners, the City, University of Wyoming, Laramie Community College, WyoTech, State, County and Highway Departments among others. For the City to realize its vision, a plan is needed to coordinate the activities and investments of these and other groups. If each group continues to make its own decisions without due consideration of their influences and impacts on the others, it forces each into a reactive rather than proactive mode. Can water and wastewater be provided to a site to achieve the service required by development? If the facilities are not of adequate capacity or designed to an acceptable standard, either the developer cannot build what is desired or, alternatively, the level of service may be reduced. For instance, reduced water pressure will affect new development and existing residents, as well as fire fighting capabilities. There would also be other implications such as increased insurance rates as a result of insufficient fire flows. Virtually all development depends, to some degree, on one or more services offered by the City, State, other governmental agencies, or service providers. Governments have limited financial resources, increasingly so in recent years. It is always more expensive to react to development than it is to plan and prepare for development and guide it to appropriate areas. Furthermore, government may not be able to react quickly. While adding an

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additional school bus stop is easily accomplished, extending a sewer line or upgrading road or utility capacity has a lag time of several years.

Problems or liabilities do not cease to exist on their own. Wishing that a problem or issue was corrected simply means it will persist and possibly worsen over time. Without plans, the forces that created a problem will remain. Therefore, a plan with foresight and preparedness can respond to such forces and find solutions to resolve long-standing issues. The task of attracting good, new jobs, for instance, has much support; however, aspects of the City that are unattractive to businesses provide an obstacle. These situations have appeared, not because there was intent to harm the City's economic development efforts or create problems for their neighbors, but, rather, because there was a lack of sensitivity to the impacts of their actions on the community at-large and its physical or economic attractiveness. In other cases, there are divergent interests and motivations. Only by developing a plan can local government eliminate the problems that are constraining growth from taking place in a desirable and cost-effective manner.

Main elements of the plan include:

- A **realistic vision** of the City's future; what it will be like in 20 years. This must be both textual and graphically illustrative.
- Specific **goals and actions** to be achieved during the planning period. Goals and actions are intended to be broad, while implementation is more measurable.
- Maps that illustrate the City's vision and provide guidance to **coordinate capital investments and provide adequate facilities and services**. Such exhibits must address future land use, community character, and locations of major infrastructure.
- **Establish priorities of both programmatic improvements and capital investments**. Capital programming is important, but departments must also address and allocate operational and maintenance costs.
- **Recommendations on regulations**. A significant portion of implementation will be achieved by regulations -- zoning, subdivision, building codes, and code enforcement.
- **Public-private partnership** to allow governments to work cooperatively with the private sector, often achieving objectives that neither can achieve alone. Affordable housing and redevelopment strategies are frequent examples requiring both government and private sector participants.
- **Intergovernmental cooperation** between the City, County, University, and State agencies to enable coordination of actions and, in some cases, share resources.
- **Governmental programs** of acquisition and renewal spanning a wide range of areas from acquiring land for parks to establishing redevelopment and reinvestment programs.

Historical Timeline

Below are key dates in Laramie's history. This summary provides a snapshot of historical events that have shaped the community and surrounding area.

Pre 1800 The Laramie Plains served as migratory routes for an abundance of animals as well as hunting grounds for Indian tribes such as the Shoshone, Cheyenne, Teton-Dakota and Arapahoe.

Early 1800's Jacques La Ramie, a local trapper on the North Platte & Laramie river was killed by Indians while building his cabin. His name was given to many places such as Fort Laramie, Laramie County, Laramie Peak, Laramie River and of course the Town of Laramie.

1860 First settlements near Laramie were stage stations for the Lodgepole, Cherokee and Overland trails.

1866 Fort Sanders is established to protect stage station operators, emigrants, railroad workers and Laramie due to the hostility that existed between the white man and Indians.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

1868 Union Pacific Railroad arrived in Laramie. This site was chosen due to its distance from Cheyenne (50 Miles), a major spring that produces millions of gallons of water and timber for railroad ties.

This process was initiated in 2001 and resulted in a vision statement being approved by the Planning Commission and City Council in 2003. For unforeseen and unavoidable reasons, the process slowed and was temporarily halted until it was restarted in October 2005. The City solicited proposals for professional assistance and selected the national planning firm of Kendig Keast Collaborative. A Citizen's Project Advisory Team (CPAT) who led the initial visioning efforts agreed to continue in their capacity to complete this plan. Their involvement, in addition to the number of public persons who participated throughout this process, is essential to the success of planning. The process was re-started with an intensive three-day reconnaissance and public input process where the consultants and staff met with a large number of special interest groups and toured the City to understand and appreciate the community's assets, constraints, and different community types. A Citizens' Congress was held, which offered an opportunity for approximately 65 citizens to discuss their concerns about Laramie's future. The issues and comments received during these meetings and observations of the consultant are presented in the section of this chapter entitled "Focus of the Plan." This section summarizes the results and preliminary findings from the initial input of the community.



Sound support for the plan was exemplified by the participation at the Citizens' Congress on October 13th, 2005.

Citizen involvement has continued throughout the process, offering an ongoing forum for residents to participate in forming the plan and its recommendations, to respond to concepts and ideas as solutions to the identified issues, and

1868 Along with the arrival of the Union Pacific Railroad, investors, gamblers, workers, hunters, shop and saloon keepers, prostitutes and settlers all arrived, purchasing over 400 lots within a week at prices ranging from \$25-\$260.

to remain diligent in ensuring the plan accurately reflects the values of the community and its residents. The numerous public outreach meetings held provided an opportunity for citizens to participate in planning for the City's future and having their individual concerns heard and taken into account.

1870 "Grandma" Swain, becomes the first woman, to vote in a public election.

For each of the issues, and most importantly, for the key issues, the draft plan documents were made available for public comment on the alternative methods of addressing the issues. This was an important step toward consensus-building since, in most cases, there were a number of solutions available and a range of opinions as to how best to accomplish the vision of Laramie. The meetings were used to inform citizens and officials of the consequences associated with the different options, the likely outcomes for achieving the goals, and probable impacts on individual areas of the community. This provided an opportunity for residents to discuss and debate the alternatives and seek those that best meet the goals while, at the same time, ensuring that no area solely bears the costs or undue burdens.

FOCUS OF THE PLAN

One of the most important tasks in developing a plan is to determine the issues that the community needs to address. The State of Wyoming's planning enabling legislation provides guidance as to the general elements that must be in a comprehensive plan, but only identifies topic or chapter headings. More important and relevant are the specific issues within the framework of the State guidelines that the community wants to address. Setting priorities for government action is a vital task of this process, including preserving or enhancing community assets, resolving conflicts that make decisions difficult, allocating scarce resources, and seeking new funding or revenue sources.

The reconnaissance efforts early in the process provided an extensive amount of citizen input, which resulted in the formulation of a comprehensive list of community issues and concerns for the future. Although the issues cover a wide variety of topics the implementation of these issues is key.

Key Issues

The plan's vision must address these key issues. Because government resources are limited, implementation challenges government to continue to monitor progress and set priorities to implement the plan. See pages 1-5 thru 1-13 for discussion on these key issues. The key issues are as follows:

- **Community Character:** This section includes a plan as to the future character of the community. It is particularly important that the plan respects the City's compact form, recognizes the rural nature of the landscape, and preserves its unique qualities that distinguish its identity.
- **City Center:** The purpose of this element is to protect and enhance the existing downtown as an urban pedestrian environment, restoring its role as the economic center of town, and expanding its size. Finding new anchors to bring people to downtown is essential to this effort.
- **Transportation:** A plan must address the critical crossings of the railroad, interstate and river which divide the City. All modes of transportation must be addressed, including automobiles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. In addition, other local issues such as congestion management and downtown access, circulation, and parking must be addressed.
- **Affordable Housing:** Affordable and quality housing is needed for the entire population - workers, elderly, and students among many others.
- **Growth Management:** This requires developing intergovernmental cooperation between the City, County, and University so that actions are reinforcing and conflicting policies are eliminated so as to effectively manage the community's growth.
- **Economic Development:** Provide new, well-paying jobs.
- **Infrastructure:** Provide adequate water, sewer, trash, schools, streets and other services or facilities needed by community residents.

1872 Railroad had 330 employees on its payroll and was the chief source of income in the City.

1886 University of Wyoming is established. One building, five professors and 42 students were the University.

1880's - 1890's A large amount of industrial development such as rolling mills, glass factory, tannery, brewery, stone quarries, flour mill, brick yard, cigar factory, lye producer and tie treatment plant shaped the City of Laramie.

1911 Transcontinental Highway was laid out and mapped the first automobile road across Wyoming.

1915 Laramie led all Wyoming cities in manufacturing.

1920's Laramie had the Nation's largest icing plant, large cement company and an oil refinery. Lumbering was second only to the railroad in importance to Laramie's economy.

1923 Lincoln Highway across Wyoming was graded and graveled, making automobile travel possible both east and west of Laramie. A dramatic increase in tourism was seen.

1966 WyoTech originated in a single 9,000 square foot building providing training in automotive and diesel technologies.



There is a definitive edge between the City and outlying areas, which is beginning to lose definition as rural and countryside development occurs on the community fringes.

Today Laramie continues to be a location with abundant wildlife, a western culture and a remarkable history. It has grown from a railroad town to a town with a population of 27,000. The University has grown to the largest employer with programs in Business, Engineering, Arts and Science and Law, among others.

- **Parks and Recreation:** Provide adequate parks and recreation for all segments of the population.
- **Natural Resource, Environmental and Wildlife Protection:** Protect natural resources, habitat areas, and other sensitive lands throughout all facets of Laramie's operations and development.
- **Development Review Process:** Provide a fair, thorough, and timely review process for development and redevelopment.

KEY ISSUES

Community Character

The general public and elected officials are cognizant of the need to enhance the image of the City. Residents voice a myriad of concerns about Laramie's character and appearance, including its entryways and corridors, neighborhoods, public buildings and spaces, and the peripheral areas. Laramie, like many other communities, has developed using land use and density to plan and regulate community character. *Chapter 3, Community*

Character, will demonstrate that these are not effective tools to realize an attractive and desirable character. Therefore, this plan is based on a comprehensive approach to community character.

Laramie's compact community form and its unique character provide sharp contrast between the City and surrounding rural areas. This edge distinguishes it from the front-range communities in Colorado that have a more composite or blended character. The choice as a freestanding or composite community is one aspect of character. *Chapter 3, Community Character*, sets forth a community character and land use approach that provides the design provisions and tools needed to preserve the positive characteristics of Laramie that are being threatened by sprawling development around the periphery. Cheyenne, for instance, has already experienced this occurrence, which has led to serious constraints to urban development caused by sporadic and haphazard peripheral development. This is a significant community character issue for Laramie; it also is of significance from the perspectives of growth management and intergovernmental cooperation. The western character of Laramie and Albany County is not well-served by development sprawling in an uncontrolled manner across the landscape. Among other well-documented impacts, sprawl destroys community identity and sense of place, eliminates opportunities for creating formal gateways into the City, harms natural resources and wildlife habitat and blurs the definitive edge, thereby confusing urban and rural environments.

The City character is compact in form, which is, in part, a result of the choices of community character types - urban, suburban, and rural. The current mix has enabled it to retain a sense of place. However, the City is composed of neighborhoods and areas with different character types. Making the correct choices concerning character type will be

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important in guiding future development and sustaining a sense of place. Also, the City's zoning ordinance is out-dated and is based on land use and density as a premise of managing development, neither of which are effective in addressing community character. Additionally, there are significant mismatches between uses. For instance, the University is a major feature of the City, but is zoned residential, even though most of the University land has a very different character than residential areas that have identical zoning. There is also an over zoning problem, where the permitted uses and intensities are much higher than the existing development. Mismatches between existing character and zoned character can create severe issues dealing with infill development or redevelopment. The most common indication of this is when citizens voice their concern as to a proposed use damaging the character of their neighborhood.

Community character focuses on the differences in design that distinguish urban, suburban, and rural types. Currently, there are two character types of commercial use within the City. An urban commercial character is present in downtown, whereas all other commercial areas have an auto-urban character. The residential areas range from a very dense urban character on the University campus to 35-acre rural development around the community's fringes. The plan must meet the market demands for each of these lifestyles and their respective character types. Community character and land use will be combined in a manner that permits a future community character map that achieves the allocation of land to residential, commercial, and industrial, while recognizing the University's unique situation, but additionally sets forth design elements that are essential in forming the individual character types.

Lastly, the entrances to Laramie warrant significant improvement and visual enhancement, which was clearly stated by residents through the public input process. Presently, they are rather non-descript in their identity and contain a broad assortment of strip commercial uses with an abundance of signs and minimal landscaping. Presently, there is nothing unique about the built environment at the entrances of Laramie that suggests that it is any different than most other communities across the U.S. This is the community's one and only chance to create a positive first and lasting impression on visitors, passers-by, and, perhaps most importantly, on business prospects and investors.

City Center

Downtown is an attractive urban environment. Its fringe areas, though, are a mixture of both urban and auto-urban characters, which have not shared in the economic health of downtown. The challenge from a design perspective is in bringing new businesses to the downtown area, while embracing and further emphasizing its urban character. Particularly in downtown areas, "front-door" parking offers an advantage over the big-box superstore. Parking in close proximity is considered highly important to most businesses.

Today continued In addition to the University, Laramie has become an education center with the addition of Laramie Community College – Albany County Campus and the expansion of WyoTech, which encompasses 3 campuses of over 298,000 sq/ft. The Medicine Bow National Forest, and abundant state lands provide a high quality of life sought out by many of Laramie's residents.



Development along 3rd Street reflects an auto-urban character as a result of its auto-orientation, multiple access points, parking along the street frontage, and signage.



Downtown reflects an urban character due to its enclosure of space offered by many two-story buildings built to the sidewalk line.

Surface parking is destructive of the urban character, even though it is less expensive. Therefore, creative solutions will be necessary to allow expansion of business in downtown while, at the same time, preserving its highly valued urban character.

Other than the character and design issues associated with downtown, there are also important economic development issues. For many years, the City has permitted development to occur on the edges of the community. Therefore, businesses that once anchored downtown were faced with the prospect of leaving downtown or being replaced by their competitors on the fringe. The economic focus of downtown must be firmly established. Currently, it is a specialty shopping and restaurant area. There are few, if any, anchor stores that attract customers who then routinely shop at other downtown stores. There are many questions to be answered by this plan. What types of anchors are available? What requirements

do they have for land and parking? Also of significance is if there are other land use decisions working for or against downtown. For example, several major new facilities were considered recently, including the recreation center and the conference center, neither of which were located in sufficient proximity to the City center to serve as an anchor use.

Because the land is largely developed, downtown planning will involve reuse or redevelopment. These are tasks that are much different and require strategies involving direct City intervention. Downtown will be addressed in *Chapter 3, Community Character*, and *Chapter 8, Economic Development*.

Transportation

There are a range of transportation issues in Laramie, as expressed by residents through the public input process. The most significant issue is constraint or barrier of the railroad, which physically separates West and East Laramie. The solutions for overcoming this barrier have major design issues, as well as substantial cost implications. There is also a varying range of issues associated with the different options for placement of the viaduct, such as traffic movement patterns, roadway and access spacing and personal property interests, as well as many others. The Laramie River is another barrier between West Laramie and neighborhoods east of the river. Together, the railroads, interstate and river form a formidable barrier. Currently, there are three crossing points; one is Interstate 80, which does not most serve local traffic circulation needs. The other two are the Curtis Street Bridge and Clark Street Bridge that serve all local traffic. One of the bridges is structurally sound, yet deteriorating.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) has expressed their willingness to construct one bridge, either replacing or relocating the deteriorating bridge. Many



Public Transit - Transit can greatly improve community mobility and economic opportunities for Laramie residents.

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residents expressed a desire for two new crossings to replace the single deteriorated structure. However, the costs of such a proposition are nearly prohibitive due to the length of span to cross both the railroad and river and the bridge height that is required for railroad clearance. It is not feasible for the City to individually bear the cost of paying for a bridge. This is a long-standing issue for which a final solution is warranted.

With a compact community form and large student population at the University and WyoTech, other modes of transportation, besides the automobile, need to be considered. Any number of trips that can be converted from an automobile to another mode will benefit residents with reduced congestion, increased mobility, and improved transportation choices. For downtown, there would be value gained by lessening the amount of parking needed, creating an opportunity for more buildings instead of parking lots and, hence, an enhanced urban environment. Public transit, in particular, is important because it would provide a year-round, all-weather transit choice, thereby adding value for residents without cars. Walking and bicycling provide both transportation and recreation benefits and, therefore, warrant integration and improved emphasis in the transportation element of the Laramie Comprehensive Plan. Transportation issues are addressed in sections *Chapter 3, Community Character*, *Chapter 4, Parks and Recreation* and *Chapter 8, Transportation*.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a common issue among communities of all sizes and across the nation. After a period of 15+ years of booming housing construction, the cost of housing has risen much faster than income. While Laramie and Albany County have not had a housing boom per se, they are particularly vulnerable since a large percentage of the workforce is in the government and service sectors with lower wages, thereby making much of the available housing supply unaffordable. The fact that the student population outnumbers permanent residents adds yet an additional dimension as a group of students can out-bid most working families for housing. Also, in recent years, more parents are buying houses for their student children, which are then sold after graduation. These factors contribute to a concern for the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Laramie.

The City and County are challenged to enforce housing standards due to issues of staffing and inadequate codes. As a result, there are many substandard units. The combination of a shortage of affordable housing and poor maintenance and upkeep adds to the complexity of the issue and the difficulty in addressing it. There are likely a significant number of existing occupied units that warrant replacement with new construction due to a lack of code compliance, structural deterioration, or a combination that renders rehabilitation impractical.

At the root of the affordability issue is lower incomes and inflated construction costs. Housing materials and



Many of the newer homes are larger in size making them difficult to afford for working families.

land costs have all been increasing faster than the cost of living. As a society, Americans are seeking ever larger houses. The average house in 1950 was 950 square feet in size; in 2000, it had reached 2,265 square feet, an increase of 238 percent. Laramie has many smaller, older homes, while much of the new construction is at or above the national average. The result is that new homes are beyond the reach of many, if not most, working families. The public employers, service workforce, and tourism-oriented businesses all have a significant workforce at pay levels that make it impractical to afford the down payment and mortgage of new houses. The competition between students and working families for older homes and apartments further exacerbates the problem.

This plan must address three areas; wages, affordability, and housing condition. All are difficult for local government to address and require a period of time to overcome. Wages are especially difficult, but policies and lobbying must seek to address all three areas. The lack of decent, affordable housing makes the task of recruiting new businesses more difficult. Deteriorated housing also creates an image that makes job recruitment even more difficult. Affordable housing issues are addressed in sections *Chapter 2, Conditions and Outlook*, *Chapter 3, Community Character*, *Chapter 5, Housing and Neighborhoods* and *Chapter 9, Economic Development*.

Growth Management

The City and Albany County comprise a single economic unit. While there is some commutation between Laramie, Cheyenne and Fort Collins, these two cities are independent entities with limited competition from other cities or small towns in either Albany or Laramie Counties. As independent political units, the City and County often act as if they are independent, which is not the case. In economic development, a new business provides jobs for residents of both the City and County. If a business decides to locate elsewhere due to, among other reasons, a lack of community character issues, this significantly impacts both. Inadequate and unaffordable housing are also joint problems.

Since the rate of growth is not high, managing the extension of services is not a difficult task; nevertheless, resources are scarce and extending services in the most efficient manner possible is highly desirable. More importantly, because there is a desire to grow, effectively managing growth to achieve a desirable community character that helps to attract new business is an important goal. The influence of blight, whether located in the City or County, harms the image of the area and its ability to attract new businesses and residents.

There are significant differences in the regulatory approaches for the City and County. While it is clear that large portions of the County are in agriculture, with no market-driven demand for strengthened land use, zoning, or building regulations, there are other areas where such regulations are both valid and important. This plan must identify these areas and provide workable solutions to effectively direct development to appropriate areas and of appropriate character. Substandard housing can be a threat to the health and safety of families and children. The accumulation of junk and debris on properties within public view is a great disservice to the area's economy and attractiveness. It is also important that the area near the City have a uniform vision of the future.

Blight An area characterized by deteriorating and/or abandoned buildings; inadequate or missing public or community services; and vacant land with debris, litter, trash and junk accumulation, and impacted by adverse environmental nuisances, such as noise, heavy traffic and odors.

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State statutes provide for a one-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction around the periphery of the City limits. In some areas, this distance is adequate, such as to the east where the Casper Aquifer and Medicine Bow National Forest and Mountains make development difficult. As a result of annexation, the City has control over the area to the west, extending out to the airport. One mile is probably not adequate to the south and north where the vistas extend well beyond the one-mile area, making unincorporated development quite visible, particularly to the south. The City and County need to work together to develop a comprehensive approach for managing growth that works for the betterment of the community as a whole. Growth management issues are addressed in sections *Chapter 2, Conditions and Outlook, Chapter 3, Community Character, Chapter 5, Housing and Neighborhoods, Chapter 6, Public Utilities, Chapter 7, Urban Growth and Chapter 9, Economic Development*.

Economic Development

With low-paying jobs dominating the employment of Laramie, economic development is an important goal. Simply enhancing the entries to Laramie will immediately make the community more attractive, which makes it easier to convince business prospects that the City is a good place to locate. Similarly, if new jobs are to be created, the business must be convinced that its workers can find decent housing at affordable and reasonable prices.

The area that is perhaps the most difficult is the improvement of wage levels for the full-time workforce. The Laramie Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) has set a target minimum wage for new jobs. This is important because it begins to address the high percentage of lower-wage jobs. Even though housing choices for the target wage earners are limited, increasing the level of pay will be a major contribution of the ongoing economic development efforts toward solving the housing problem.

A second reason economic development is listed as a topical issue is that the City and County, through the Laramie Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), has developed a good strategy for economic development. While the task of attracting new business remains a significant challenge, the LEDC is aware of the difficulties and has developed a sound strategy and approach. This plan will utilize the good work of the LEDC and supplement it with related strategies that, together, will serve to accomplish the overall goal. The LEDC is aware of the problems and is committed to improving the image and other constraints that make the City and County less competitive.

There are several areas where economic development needs additional effort. For instance, the City has several brownfield sites. These sites are situated within the City, which is land that should be made available for development. Reclaiming these properties is an essential first step. The reclamation would also assist in improving the west side, while removing possible threats to the quality of the Laramie River.

The One Mile Extraterritorial Jurisdictional Boundary is the distance the City of Laramie can impose regulation, based on State Statutes, upon areas within the County that are developing based on the Comprehensive Plan.



Business retention and attraction are high priorities for the community and its plan for the future.



Wildlife viewing is one of the City's attractions.

Infrastructure

Providing adequate water, wastewater, solid waste, schools, and other services and public facilities needed by community residents remains a challenge. Providing adequate infrastructure is a two-pronged effort. One task is to adequately forecast where new development will occur so as to have infrastructure in place in advance of ensuring development or prohibiting it to restrict growth. An equally important effort is the maintenance of existing infrastructure and strategic replacement of obsolescent infrastructure. A careful assessment is needed to ensure sufficient capacities as the community grows. *Chapter 6, Public Utilities*, is vital in the provision of adequate infrastructure.

Parks and Recreation

Providing adequate parks and recreation areas and facilities for all segments of the population is an important goal. The City's current system of parks appears to be well maintained and an asset to the community. The challenge of this plan is to ensure that there is an adequate distribution of parks across the planning area, thereby providing reasonable and convenient access to all persons. At the same time, there must be facilities and improvements within each park that meet the needs and demands of residents. This plan must, therefore, evaluate the inventory of parks and plan to meet or beat national standards for communities of this size. This too, is a benefit for economic development.

In some cases, parks and open space could be used to protect aquifer recharge areas, which are important, while limiting the improvements, development or usage during certain times of the year. An element that is missing is increased access to the peripheral rural areas via extended trails and linkages. The greenbelt along the Laramie River is exemplary of good use of linear greenways. There is an opportunity to extend it further to the south and north that will provide connections to the rural environment. Linear corridors like the greenbelt give access to natural areas and offer opportunities for non-motorized recreation.

Natural Resource, Environment and Wildlife Protection

Whether this is really a separate issue from parks and open space needs to be further explored. In many cases, the two will be compatible, although active recreation areas are not compatible with all natural and wildlife needs. The similarities and differences noted will be further explored in the future *Chapter 11 -Conservation*. Careful planning of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, what is now often discussed as sustainable development, has many environmental and quality of life values. Ensuring that drainage runs where nature has established floodplains and wetlands can greatly reduce the cost of storm water infrastructure. It also provides views of open space that bring a premium to the developer. Some types of wildlife may need to be actively discouraged; larger animals, for example, can create problems near roads. Environmental protection and awareness is

CHAPTER 1: PLANNING CHALLENGES

an important facet of the community that should be considered when making decisions about issues ranging from development to open space protection.

Development Review Process

One problem area cited by developers and economic development personnel was the development review process. The complaints indicated that proposals are submitted with no timeline for the review or consideration of approval. If the City desires to attract new business, it must be keenly aware that, for many potential new businesses, a rapid decision may be the difference between their location here or elsewhere. The plans and codes of the City should be written such that developers know what is expected. If a project cannot meet the required standards, the application should be promptly denied. Most developers are willing to work toward compliance. Word of such process can frustrate achievement of economic development objectives. While old and obsolete ordinances bear much of the responsibility, a sufficient level of staffing may also be an issue, especially when extensive review may be needed.

While complaints about regulations and the process are common, most applicants are willing to meet the requirements if there is an increased level of certainty that their plans will receive rapid review and approval if they are compliant. The problem for new businesses is even more acute. Most are considering several municipalities as possible locations for their business. Communities that are able to provide quick response and work diligently to gain compliance and approval are those that are more successful in their economic development programs.

CONDITIONS AND OUTLOOK



CHAPTER

This assessment of demographic and socioeconomic factors offers a brief snapshot of the past conditions and present characteristics of Laramie and Albany County. This assessment provides an understanding of their constraints and opportunities and what the future may hold. The findings of this analysis will be used for more detailed evaluations of historic trends and future planning considerations as each element of the plan is assembled. This outlook provides a basis for determining future land use requirements and demands for public facilities and services, but also allows advance planning to effectively guide future development in a desirable and fiscally responsible manner.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine how Laramie has grown since its incorporation, identify current characteristics and resources that will contribute to the community's vision for the Year 2025 and beyond, as well as identify the trends that will impact the future course of its physical and economic development. This chapter provides baseline data and analyses that underscore the issues and problems outlined in *Chapter 1, Planning Challenges*, which will guide policy development and implementation in the subsequent chapters of this plan. It is not intended as a comprehensive assessment of the City's demographics, but, rather, as a foundation from which the other elements of this plan may build upon in their more detailed analyses, policy formulation, and recommendations.

This chapter briefly assesses and compares with the county, state, and other cities both demographic and socio-economic trends, including historic, current, and projected population; ethnic and household composition; age and gender; income and poverty level; housing occupancy, tenure and value; and employment and labor force statistics. This analysis is valuable in that it allows assessment of the community in terms of where it has been in years past, where it is presently, and where it appears to be headed in the forthcoming years based upon the best available data and forecasts. The use of other communities, as well as the County and State, provides a baseline comparison to signify how Laramie is doing relative to other proximate jurisdictions. This "big-picture" view

Laramie was named one of the best locations for outdoor activities in 2005, and the State has been consistently in the top 15 most livable states, ranking 4th in 2005 behind New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Vermont. These and other livability factors are significant to the attractiveness of the community as a place to live, work, and recreate.

enables community decision-makers and residents to better understand the issues and challenges and, subsequently, develop policies and implementation strategies to proactively manage the future course of the community. Central to this plan is that there are clear connections between the identified issues and the corresponding policy response and strategic implementation plan.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

This section is intended to briefly provide regional context of the community, in terms of its geographic and natural settings. The audience of this plan extends beyond the current population to include future permanent citizens, student residents, prospective businesses and investors, tourists, and visitors. Therefore, this section provides information for all readers of this plan, including those who are not yet familiar with the qualities and values of the community.

Location

Laramie is located in southeast Wyoming, within Albany County. It is situated approximately 47 miles west of the State capital, Cheyenne, along Interstate 80. The Wyoming-Colorado State line is 26 miles south along U.S. 287, which extends southeasterly toward Fort Collins, Colorado, and continues south toward Denver, Colorado, the closest major metropolitan area.

Interstate 80 traverses the state in an east-to-west alignment, providing an interstate highway connection from Laramie east to Cheyenne and west through Rawlins, Rock Springs, Green



Laramie is located within Southeast Wyoming's Albany County, adjacent to the Medicine Bow National Forest.

River, and Evanston, Wyoming. This interstate highway provides national inter-modal access for the community, which aids in its visibility and, thus, its economic development. Laramie is also relatively close to Interstate 25, which provides north/south access from Interstate 90 in Buffalo, Wyoming, south through Wyoming and into Colorado. Both Interstates 80 and 25 give Laramie good national and international accessibility.

Within Albany County, Laramie covers an area of 11 square miles and is the most populous community, consisting of over 80 percent of the County's population since 1950. Other communities within the County have small populations, including, 235 persons in Rock River, 191 persons in Centennial, and 80 persons in Albany (2000 US Census). Within the County, the Medicine Bow National Forest occupies a significant portion of the land area, including a considerable amount to the east and west of Laramie, as well as in the

CHAPTER 2: CONDITIONS AND OUTLOOK

northern portion of the County. The City's location on the banks of the Laramie River was, in part, the reason for the City's founding as a home to early trappers and traders. This attractive resource continues to play a role today in the natural environment and urban development form.

SETTING AND ENVIRONMENT

Laramie is located on a high prairie in an environment rich in natural and scenic resources, including the meandering Laramie River, the Laramie Range framing its eastern edge, and the Snowy Range Mountains visible on the western horizons. The natural features contribute significantly to the western character of the community, which is highly valued by residents and appreciated by passers-by and visitors.

The confluence of water, mountains, and flatland vistas contributes to Laramie's quality of life and the active lifestyle of its citizens. The emphasis on the outdoors is a contributing factor to the recognition of the State and City being regarded as an enjoyable place to live and raise a family.

Figure 2.1, Laramie Floodplain



The Laramie River and Spring Creek Floodplain generally covers land between I-80 and the railroad as well as east along Spring Creek. Parts of the Floodplain are currently developed although development now is discouraged unless proper mitigation measures are taken.

Laramie River

The Laramie River flows from Rawah Mountains in northern Colorado, through Woods Landing and Laramie, and supplies Wheatland Reservoir 2, located approximately 35 miles north of Laramie. From Wheatland No. 2, the Laramie River flows east through the Laramie Range to Wheatland. Laramie, the river meanders northeasterly direction, passing beneath I-80 and continuing northward through the western part of community, generally between I-80 and the railroad. Along either side of the river areas within the 100- and 500-year floodplains, as shown in

"You can find a combination of western heritage and college-town charm in Laramie, nestled in a valley between the Snowy Range Mountains and the Laramie Range. Residents enjoy outdoor activities in nearby Medicine Bow National Forest which include skiing, snowshoeing, boating, cycling, and camping. Fishing enthusiasts will find many opportunities, ranging from lakes on the plains to mountain streams."

Source: Real Estate Department. MSN.com

Figure 2.1, Laramie Flood Plains and Map 10.3 Flood Plains. The inundation generally falls within the low-lying flatland immediately abutting the river channel, but extends into a portion of the developed areas, as well. There is also floodplain reflected along the Spring Creek Channel, although its spread is generally limited to the channel itself. The remainder of the community is outside of the floodplain and, thus, not at risk to flood inundation. Localized flooding may, however, occur on the basis of individual storm events. More issues regarding the City's storm drainage system is addressed in *Chapter 7, Urban Growth*.

A Sole or Principal Source Aquifer is defined as an aquifer that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined under the Safe Drinking Water Act to be, “the sole or principal drinking water source for an area and which, if contaminated, would create a significant hazard to public health.”

National Forests

Serving as a scenic backdrop to Laramie and a grand entryway corridor from the east, the Medicine Bow National Forest sits within the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, which together span over 2.2 million acres in Wyoming and Colorado. The two National Forests share the State border, Medicine Bow National Forest in southeast Wyoming – around Laramie - and Routt National Forest in north central Colorado. Three mountain ranges lie within Medicine Bow National Forest: Medicine Bow Mountains, Sierra Madre Mountains, and the Laramie Range. Elevations in the national forest range from 5,500 feet to as high as 12,013 feet. The mountainous region greatly contributes to the character and attractive appearance of Laramie, which may be seen on the distant horizon from virtually any point within the community. Preservation of these uninterrupted scenic views is essential to the natural and visual character of the community, which is further addressed in *Chapter 3, Community Character*.

Casper Aquifer

Within the Laramie Range there are a number of aquifers, including the smaller Chugwater, Satanka, Forelle, and the regional Casper Aquifer. Approximately 60 percent of the water supply for the City is drawn from the Casper Aquifer, which lies along the western flank of the Laramie Range, adjacent to and east of Laramie. The Casper is the only aquifer in the formation sequence that contains potable water, underscoring its importance as a source for drinking water for the City of Laramie and Albany County residents. Ground water from the Casper aquifer is obtained from four municipal well fields, including from north to south: Spur Ridge, Turner, Pope Springs, and Soldier Springs (*Map 10.4 Casper Aquifer Protection Area*). The aquifer is recharged by snow melt from the Laramie Range and by rain storm events that infiltrate the highly-permeable and fractured surface that is exposed in a north-south swath between Laramie and the range crest to the east. Due to the exposed nature of the surface of the Casper aquifer, prevention against contamination of this essential water source is of great importance to the long-term sustainability of the community.

Monolith Ranch

In 1981, the City purchased the Monolith Ranch (*Map 2.1, Monolith Ranch*) as a long-term investment for a reliable and secure water supply. This purchase included a significant portion of the Dowlin Ditch, which is the most senior priority water right in the Laramie River basin. To date, no portion of the water rights associated with the Monolith Ranch acquisition has been transferred from its original irrigation use since the City has not needed additional water supply. Nonetheless, it is available to the City should it need additional water supply in the future. The water supply of the City is highly productive and reliable into the future. Therefore, the municipal system can be expanded to meet the forecasted water demands for an increasing population for the long-term.¹ This area is not only important for its water resources but for its future open space, recreational and developmental potential.

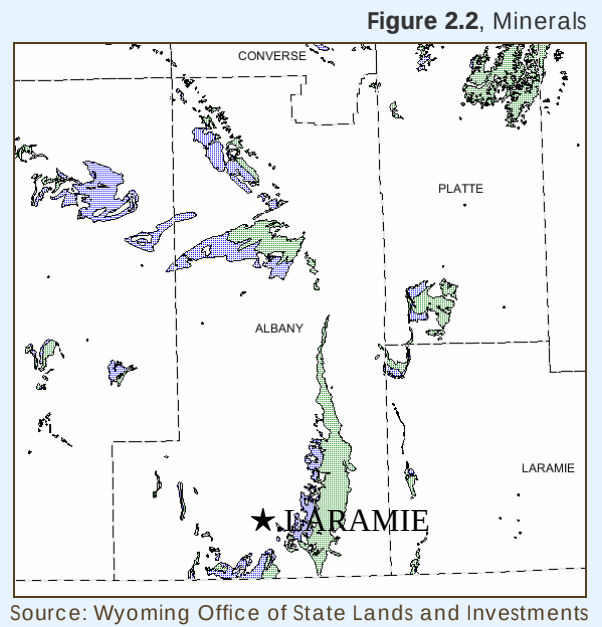
¹ Executive Summary, Management Plan for Water Rights on Monolith Ranch, May 2004

Habitat

According to the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, there are antelope and mule deer migration patterns along the Laramie Range, as well as critical habitat areas, as displayed in *Figure 2.2, Habitat Areas*. The blue and red line segments delineate the antelope and mule deer migration routes, respectively, while the shaded and cross-hatched areas represent the critical habitat crucial designation areas for these two animal species. As expected, there are protective habitat areas around the community for which sensitivity is an important future planning consideration.

Mineral Resources

As displayed in *Figure 2.2, Minerals*, there are both gypsum (purple) and limestone (green) mineral deposits along the western flank of the Laramie Range. These formations or deposits are often adjacent to or a part of the Casper aquifer and its permeable recharge areas. Sensitivity to the geologic formations is an important consideration with respect to disruption of sub-surface water flows and the vulnerability for aquifer contamination from mining operations.



DEMOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

An assessment of demographic and socio-economic characteristics is useful to understand the influencing factors and economic forces that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the composition of the community. While not necessarily a determinant of the future, historical and recent figures give an indication of past trends, allowing a sound basis from which to evaluate and forecast likely future scenarios. Together with empirical data and both known and planned occurrences, such as economic development initiatives and outcomes, student enrollment projections, and ongoing building activity, a likely future scenario may be derived with relative confidence as to its accuracy. As with all projections and forecasts, they must be regularly evaluated and periodically adjusted to account for actual and changed conditions. Therefore, the purpose of this assessment is not to predict the future, but to establish a baseline for future planning, given certain assumptions and due consideration of past occurrences and historical trends.

The approach for deriving an estimate of future population was two-fold. First, a series of projections were prepared based upon standard statistical techniques and the use of historical U.S. Census population figures and historical and recent building permit activity. These alternatives provided a range of possible scenarios from which to evaluate a probable future population estimate. Secondly, a targeted estimate of the Year 2025 population was determined. The targeted population is intended to account for local plans and initiatives, which may then be reviewed on an ongoing basis against known indicators of growth, such as new jobs, building permits, water connections, and other quantifiable factors. The targeted population is used throughout this plan to estimate future land use demands, requirements for parks and open space, infrastructure capacity needs, and future growth strategies. The understanding of population characteristics and future

requirements is essential to determine the anticipated level of development and the resulting demands on the community and its facilities and services.

Historical Population

The historical population of Laramie is shown in *Table 2.1, Historical Population*. As demonstrated, the amount of population growth over the span from 1930 to 2000 has been significant, increasing from 8,609 persons in 1930 to 27,204 persons in 2000. The highest percent change in population was between 1940 and 1950 when the City experienced a 46.60 percent increase in population. This time coincided with the era of the “baby boom,” along with a continued increase in student enrollment at the University. Other reasons for this period of growth are unconfirmed, but may be attributable to increased employment, expansion of the Union Pacific Railroad operations, and improvements to the Interstate 80 corridor. The second highest percent change in population was seen between 1960 and 1970, with a 32.10 percent increase from 17,520 persons to 23,143 persons. This growth coincides with the origination of WyoTech, which contributed to growth and economic

development of the City. Since 1970, population growth has slowed to 5.57 percent per decade, or just over one-half percent annually.

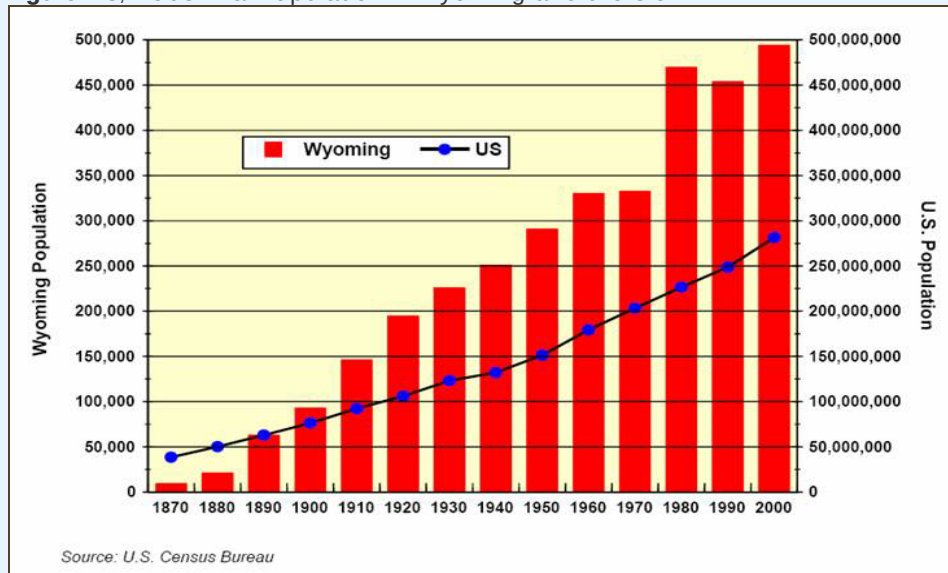
In Albany County, the 1940s was also the time of the highest percent change in population when it increased by 36.60 percent. This growth increase coincided with that of Laramie, primarily due to the City’s 81.8 percent share of the County population. The population growth of the County continues to be largely a reflection of the City since Laramie’s population accounts for roughly 85 percent of the County population, which has been generally consistent dating back to 1950. The growth in the County has maintained a higher rate over the last three decades, though, providing an indication of the amount of

Table 2.1, Historical Population

Year	Laramie			Albany County		Wyoming	
	Persons	% Change	% County	Persons	% Change	Persons	% Change
1930	8,609		71.5%	12,041		225,565	
1940	10,627	23.4%	76.2%	13,946	15.8%	250,742	11.2%
1950	15,581	46.6%	81.8%	19,055	36.6%	290,529	15.9%
1960	17,520	12.4%	82.3%	21,290	11.7%	330,066	13.6%
1970	23,143	32.1%	87.6%	26,431	24.1%	332,416	0.7%
1980	24,410	5.5%	84.0%	29,062	10.0%	469,557	41.3%
1990	26,687	9.3%	86.7%	30,797	6.0%	453,588	-3.4%
2000	27,204	1.9%	85.0%	32,014	4.0%	493,782	8.9%
2005	26,050	-4.10%	84.40%	30,857	-3.6	508,798	3.00%

Source: Demographic Trends in the 20th Century, Census 2000, Special Reports, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 2.3, Decennial Population in Wyoming and the U.S.



CHAPTER 2: CONDITIONS AND OUTLOOK

development occurring around the periphery of Laramie and, to a lesser degree, throughout the rural unincorporated areas. Rural water providers, State law exemption for 35-acre lots outside the City limits and family exempt subdivision are at least partly responsible for this recent shift. For instance, in the 1970s the growth in the County was double that in the City, as it was most recently during the 1990s.

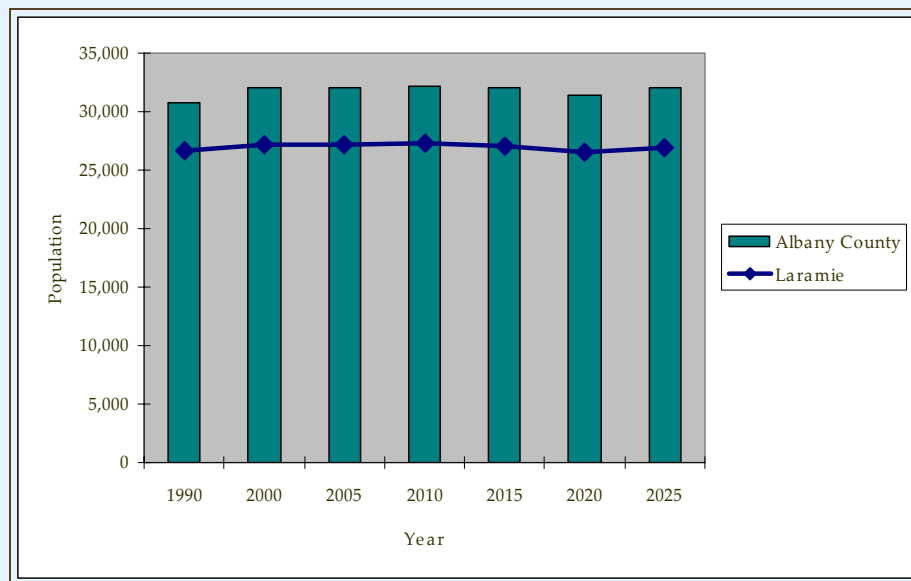
The State's population has generally increased each decade dating back to the late 1800s, as shown in *Figure 2.3, Decennial Population for Wyoming and the U.S.* The percent change has ranged from 0.7 percent in the 1960s, followed by a high of 41.3 percent between 1970 and 1980. The drastic shifts in population between decades are the result of the boom-bust energy economy.² Most recently, there was a decline in the 1980s – shown by the 1990 bar in the graph – followed by a strong rebound of 8.9 percent in the 1990s.

Projected Future Population

According to the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division, as shown in *Figure 2.4, Projected Population of Laramie*, there is a projected decrease in the population of Albany County by the Year 2020, from a Year 2000 population of 32,014 persons to a projected Year 2020 population of 31,401 persons. Since the horizon of this plan is the Year 2025, the State's Year 2020 projection was extended to the Year 2025 to maintain consistency throughout the plan document. The resulting Year 2025 population in the County reaches 32,061 persons, nearly the same as in 2000.

The State projects a 2.3 percent decline in population for Laramie from a 2000 Census population of 27,204 persons to a Year 2020 population of 26,590 persons. Similar to the projected County population, the State's estimate of Laramie's population in 2020 was projected to 26,933 persons in 2025, which is still below the 2000 Census population. The State's projection methodology resulting in a declining population is likely due, in part, to modest gains in population since 1970 and the trend of the County's population growth outpacing that of the City, as shown in *Table 2.1, Historical Population*. The State notes that the projections for 2001 to 2004 were prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau and from 2005 to 2020 were developed based on trends of demographic and economic variables. Further, the State indicates that the population forecast for Laramie was simply calculated using a population ratio of the City and County. Therefore, since they are projecting the County's

Figure 2.4, Projected Population of Laramie



Source: Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis

The alternative projection techniques include the following:

- ♦ **Linear regression**
forecasts are straight-line projections of historical population, where the same absolute number of additional persons is added to the population each period. This results in a declining rate of growth over time since the same amount is added to an ever-expanding base.
- ♦ **Exponential growth**
assumes a constant rate of growth in establishing a forecast, which results in an increasing trend over time.

² 10 Year Outlook, Wyoming Demographic and Economic Forecast, 2005 to 2014, Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division

population to decline, they are also projecting a decline in Laramie – regardless of recent building activity and local initiatives that are showing early success.

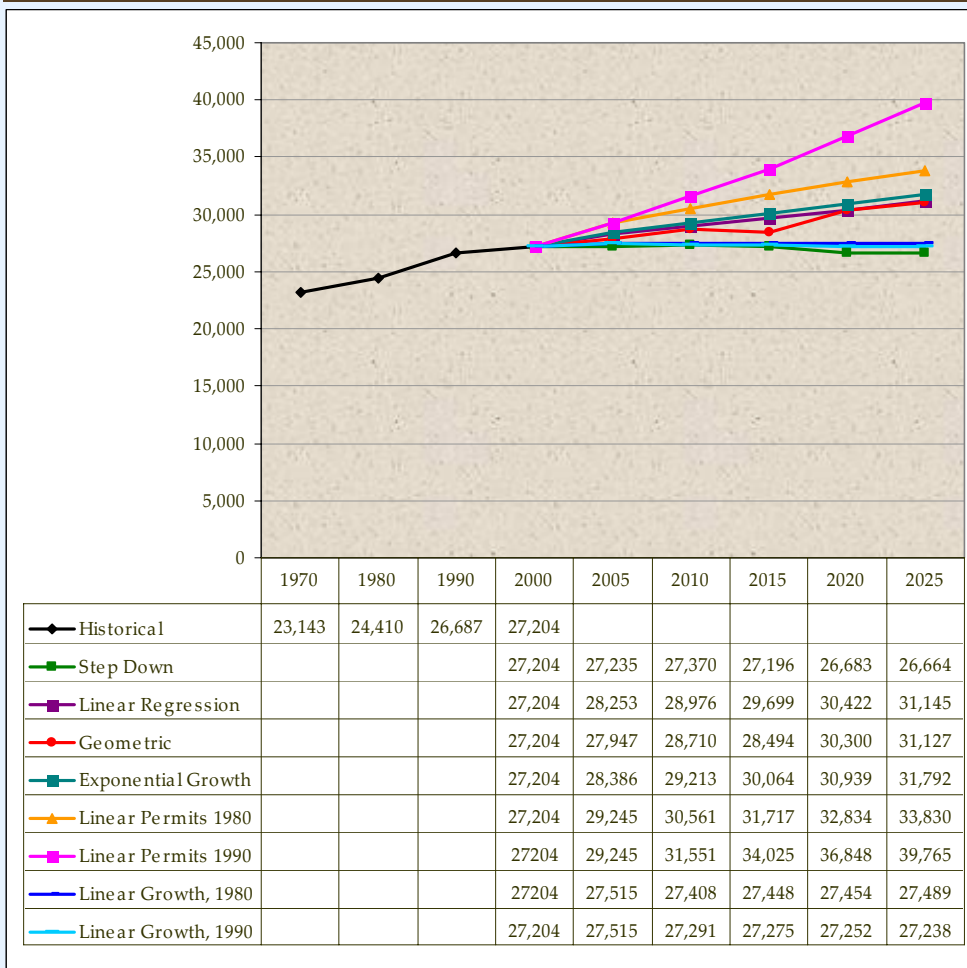
A series of population projections were used to evaluate a range of possible future population scenarios for the City. In addition to the projection prepared by the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division, four additional methods were used, each of which rely upon historical trends since 1970. Each statistical technique uses varying methodologies, including the addition of the same absolute number of additional persons each time period, assumption of a constant rate of growth, and use of an average rate of growth over a historical period and projected forward. The results are reflected in *Figure 2.5, Alternative Population Projection Scenarios*.

Conflicting Growth Trends

The above projections, however, do not account for the amount of recent building activity, the Partners in Progress initiative, the recent and ongoing development of the Turner Tract, numerous other residential subdivisions among many other issues. Therefore, four additional population scenarios were generated to reflect recent building permit activity,

dating back to 1980 and 1990. The Linear Permits (1980 and 1990) and Linear Growth (1980 and 1990) techniques extrapolate the actual growth and the rate of growth in residential building permits since 1980 and 1990, respectively. Due to the overall amount of recent permitting activity, the two linear permit scenarios reflect higher future populations. The linear permit method extrapolates the growth in residential building permits since 1980 and 1990, assuming an estimated 142 permits in 2005. The projections resulting from the linear growth method reflect two of the lowest populations due to the great variation in permit activity from year to year.

Figure 2.5, Alternative Population Projection Scenarios



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kendig Keast Collaborative

The eight projected populations for the Year 2025 range from 26,664 persons to 39,765 persons. As shown in *Figure 2.6, Alternative Population Projection Scenarios*, there is a fairly considerable separation between the highest and lowest projections. Following the historical trend line from 1970 to 2000 and extending it forward to the Year 2025, either the Exponential Growth or Linear Permits, 1980 methods appear to offer realistic scenarios, based upon a four-decade trend. These two scenarios generally mirror the trend that occurred between 1970 and 2000 when there was modest growth followed by a slow-down before, again, reflecting an increase.

It is important to understand that population projections are generated by statistical methods that are all based on past trends. As a result of the modest population gains in the City since 1970, averaging about one-half percent annually, coupled with the most recent numbers reflecting a greater percent increase in the County, each of the above methods reflect modest gain or loss in the future. Adding to the complexity and, hence, the outcomes are several additional demographic factors. For instance, the number of persons per household is decreasing, which is a national phenomenon and present in Laramie. Between 1990 and 2000, the persons per household in Laramie decreased from 2.31 to 2.19 persons. In effect, this means there are more housing units required to support the same population. Therefore, new residential building activity may not necessarily be an accurate indicator of a net increase in population.

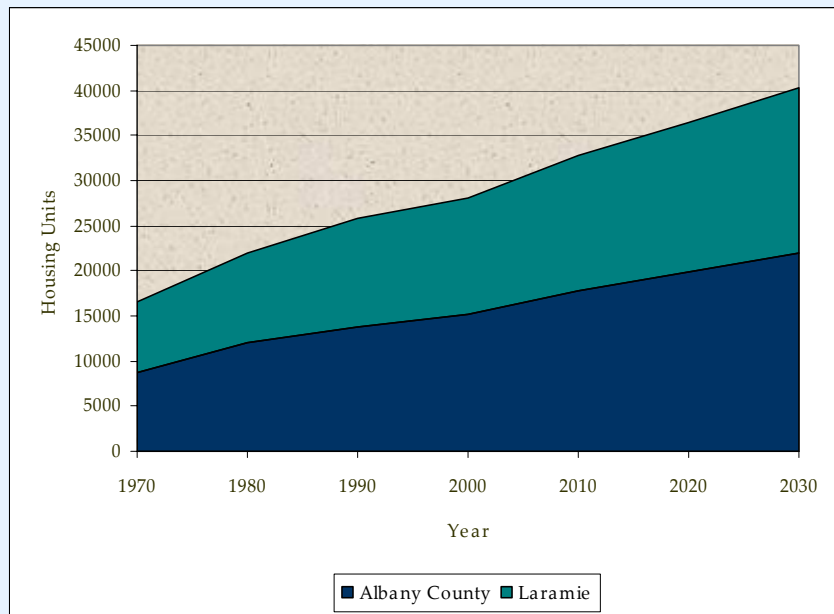
Projecting the number of dwelling units and applying the persons per household generally produces a comparable future trend. As displayed in *Figure 2.6, Laramie and Albany County Housing Units*, the total number of housing units in both the City and County is projected to increase. However, the City's proportionate share is shown to decrease over the next 20 years due to the declining percentage of the County population from 87.6 percent in 1970 to 85.0 percent in 2000. This, together with a decreasing number of persons per household, also results in a declining population. The persons per household in Albany County, 87.6 percent of which was in Laramie, was 2.91 in 1970. It decreased to 2.47 in 1980, 2.35 in 1990, and 2.23 in 2000. Extrapolating these numbers to the Year 2030, assuming a continuation of this trend, results in 1.43 persons per household in 2030. If this trend continues the population of the City and County may decrease.

Projected Versus Targeted Future Population

The Exponential Growth method reflects a relatively conservative projection of an additional 4,588 persons by the Year 2025. Based upon the input of the Citizens' Project

- ♦ The **geometric** technique projects the future using a growth factor that is the average rate of growth over a historical period of time.
- ♦ The **step-down method** was used to project the City's population based on its share of the total Albany County population, which is based on a proportionate share of the County's future population, using the forecast of the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis

Figure 2.6, Laramie and Albany County Housing Units



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kendig Keast Collaborative

Advisory Team (CPAT), considering past trends and recent development activity, this was the consensus among the alternative projections. Reflecting the optimism of the community and assuming success in the implementation of this plan and the economic development initiatives that are already under way in the community, the Linear Permits, 1980 projection of **33,830** persons in the Year 2025 is the targeted population that is used throughout this plan for the purpose of quantifying future demands. This targeted future population adds 6,626 persons by the Year 2025.

The demographic factors identified above are the reason for the use of a targeted future population estimate. While there are indications of a continued modest population growth, based upon the use of statistical projections of past trends, there are reasons for the community to be optimistic about its future, among them including:

- ♦ The creation of 84 new jobs meeting the goal of an hourly rate exceeding \$15.27 per hour since the formation of the Partners in Progress initiative;
- ♦ The success of the University of Wyoming Business Center Incubator, which has already spawned expansion of a company and their development in the business park and the success of the School of Energy Resources;
- ♦ The new airport business park, is intended to provide opportunities for air-side business, industrial development and speculative business space.
- ♦ The planned campus expansion of WyoTech and its continued growth in student enrollment;
- ♦ Expansion and good economic health of the University of Wyoming and the influence of its student population on the community as well as new scholarships such as the Hathaway Scholarship will also influence student population.
- ♦ A total of 538 residential building permits since the Year 2000, which amounts to 1,178 more residents, based upon 2.19 persons per household; and
- ♦ Ongoing development of the Turner Tract.

Furthermore student population does have an impact on these numbers. Laramie is unique in the sense that several post-secondary schools are located within the City. When it is time for a Census this population group is difficult to accurately assess. Many times errors result when students fill out residency information due to a lack of knowledge about properly classifying themselves as a resident or not. Thus, when calculating overall population for the community, there is a strong possibility that a number of students may have not been counted, creating a shortfall, thus making the projected target population even more realistic.

The targeted population of **33,830** persons amounts to an addition of 6,626 persons by the Year 2025. To ensure advanced planning of infrastructure facilities and municipal service provision, this is the estimate used throughout this plan for determining future demands. It will be important for the community to continually monitor this target to measure its progress. It is recommended for the City to estimate its population on an annual basis, with a re-evaluation of the target each five years. Revision on an annual basis will not account for the cyclical nature of the economy. A five-year review will allow sufficient time to more accurately gauge the community's growth relative to the target population.

The targeted population for 2025 that is used throughout this plan for the purpose of quantifying future demands is **33,830** persons.

Implications of Population Change

The population projections of 33,830 and associated shifts in the community's socio-economic characteristics that are identified in this chapter are used to formulate the City's growth policies. In particular, the aforementioned population scenarios will help the City better evaluate the following:

- Demands for varying housing types, sizes, and prices;
- Employment for residents of Laramie and the surrounding area;
- Changes in the median household income and the effective buying power of residents;
- Numbers of school-age children and the impact on demand for school facilities;
- Projected future traffic volumes, congestion, and demands for new roadway infrastructure and alternative modes of transportation;
- Use of local parks and recreation facilities and the demand for additional areas, facilities, and programs;
- Capacity requirements for water and wastewater service, storm drainage improvements, and the requisite capital investments; and
- Impact on the number of police, fire, and emergency medical service calls and their response times, service levels, and facility and staffing needs.

The implications of the expected future population characteristics and the physical and economic growth of Laramie and its one-mile area are reflected in other areas of this plan, such as *Chapter 3, Community Character*; *Chapter 4, Parks and Recreation*, *Chapter 5, Housing and Neighborhoods*; *Chapter 7, Urban Growth*; *Chapter 9, Economic Development*; and *Chapter 10, Public Safety*.

Age

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the median age in Laramie is 25.3 years, as shown in *Table 2.2, Median Age*. This is quite young compared to 36.2 years in the State and 35.3 years in the U.S. Compared to other communities, each have a median age over 30 years, with Sheridan having a median age of 39.3 years. This statistic is due, to a degree, on the student populations of the University of Wyoming, WyoTech, and Laramie County Community College (LCCC). While the median age is generally increasing across the U.S. as the baby boomers age, it is not expected that it will increase as dramatically in Laramie as a result of the University and its attraction to a younger population.

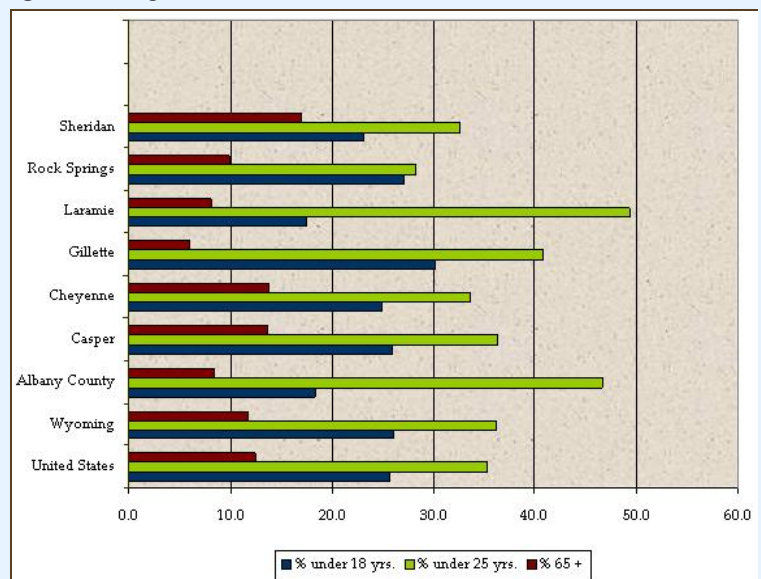
As shown in *Figure 2.7, Age Breakdown*, while only 17.5 percent of the population is below the age of 18 years, which is lower than each of the selected

Table 2.2, Median Age

Jurisdiction	Median Age
United States	35.3
Wyoming	36.2
Albany County	26.7
Casper	36.1
Cheyenne	36.6
Gillette	31.7
Laramie	25.3
Rock Springs	34.5
Sheridan	39.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2.8, Age Breakdown



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

cities, the percentage of the population under 25 years is significant. In other words, a large percentage of the population is between the ages of 18 and 25, which, again, is due to the student populations of the University, WyoTech, and LCCC. Among the U.S., State, Albany County, and five selected cities, Laramie has the highest percentage of population within this age cohort, which substantially contributes to the low median age. As the median age of students continues to increase, which is a national phenomenon, the percentage of population between the ages of 18 and 25 may slightly decrease in the future. Nonetheless, Laramie is still expected to have a larger percentage of its population below 25 years compared to other communities. As may be expected, the percentage of the population that is over 65 years is quite small at 8.1 percent. Other than Gillette, which has 6.1 percent of its population in this age cohort, Laramie has the lowest percentage of mature and retired residents.

Compared to the County, State, U.S., and other communities, Laramie has the lowest percentage of persons under the age of 18 years (17.5 percent) followed by Albany County (18.4 percent), Sheridan (23.1 percent), and Cheyenne (24.9 percent). With 30.2 percent, Gillette had the highest percentage of persons 18 years and younger. Comparatively, Laramie (49.3 percent) and Albany County (46.6 percent) had the highest percentage below the age of 25 years, as discussed above. Each of the other selected cities is well below these percentages, ranging from 28.3 percent in Rock Springs to 40.8 percent in Gillette. Sheridan had the highest percentage of persons over 65 years with 16.9 percent of its population.

This age breakdown is important due to its implications on the community's median household income, housing needs and affordability, employment, and alternative modes of transportation. For instance, the median household income of younger persons is lower because they have not yet had time to mature in their careers. Therefore, they are not yet able to afford the median or higher priced housing, thereby contributing to the high rental rate and multiple family building activities. Since such a large percentage of the population falls within this age cohort, it significantly influences the overall housing affordability of the community. Similarly, employment for recent graduates of all three institutions is essential to maintaining their residence in the community. Without ample

opportunities for well-paying employment, many choose to move elsewhere in search of a gainful position. This further emphasizes the importance of a proactive economic development program to attract employers and promote entrepreneurialism and business start-ups. The age of the population also influences the local transportation system as many students and young adults prefer a bicycle or walking as their means of transportation. Combined with the fitness and exercise needs of community residents, sidewalks and trails emerge as a priority in the community.

Housing and Household Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, households are classified as either "family" or "non-family" units. Family units are generally defined as those with a married couple or a single head of household with or without children. Non-family households include those with one person living alone. The household composition of Laramie is 49.47

Table 2.3, Persons Per Household

Jurisdiction	1990	2000
United States	2.63	2.59
Wyoming	2.63	2.48
Albany County	2.35	2.23
Casper	2.49	2.38
Cheyenne	2.44	2.33
Gillette	2.78	2.62
Laramie	2.31	2.19
Rock Springs	2.65	2.48
Sheridan	2.32	2.21

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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percent family households and 50.53 percent non-family households. The percentage of family households, as expected, is lower in Laramie due to the student populations of UW, WyoTech, and LCCC, as discussed above. The percentage of family households for the other cities ranges from 57.97 percent in Sheridan to 69.24 percent in Gillette.

As shown in *Table 2.3, Persons Per Household*, Laramie had 2.19 persons per household according to the 2000 U.S. Census. This is the lowest number of any of the other cities, which ranged from a low of 2.21 persons per household in Sheridan to a high of 2.62 persons per household in Gillette. As of the most recent Census, there were 2.48 and 2.59 persons per household in the State and nation, respectively. Considering the student populations, the ordinary assumption is that the persons per household would be higher in a college town as a result of students sharing houses and apartment units.

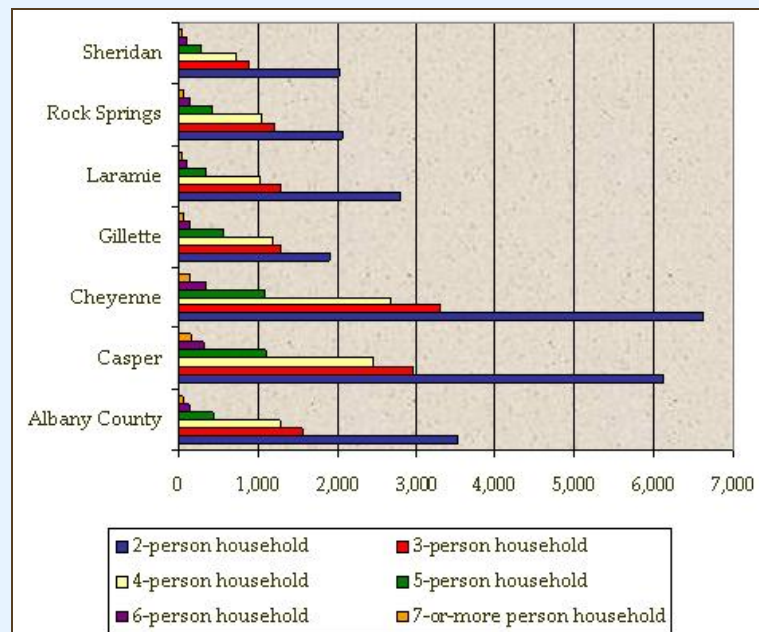
These statistics reflect on the community's current and future needs for a variety of housing types, sizes of units, pricing of units, and an overall heightened demand for housing units. When examining the change from 1990 to 2000, in all cases, the persons per household has decreased. In Laramie, it dropped from 2.31 to 2.19 persons, reflecting a decrease of 5.5 percent. This decline is not out of line with the other jurisdictions as they, too, had declines ranging from 4.6 to 6.9 percent. Therefore, there is nothing out of the ordinary in the decline in Laramie.

The distribution of family households by number of persons is illustrated in *Figure 2.8, Household Size*. The largest segments of the population in Laramie, as may be expected by the number of persons per household, are in two-person (36.9 percent) and three-person (14.7 percent) households, followed by four-person households (10.5 percent). The number of five-, six-, and seven-person households in Laramie (4.73 percent) is lower than any of the other comparable cities of the County, which range from 5.13 percent in the County to 10.35 percent in Gillette.

Housing Occupancy, Tenure and Value

Between 1990 and 2000, the average household size decreased from 2.31 to 2.19 persons per household, which created an increased demand for new housing units. This demand has presented itself in the amount of building activity occurring in the community since 2000. In fact, in the last five years, there have been building permits for 443 single-family units and 95 multiple-family units, for a total of 538 units. Also reflective of this is the

Figure 2.8, Household Size



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2.4, Housing Changes

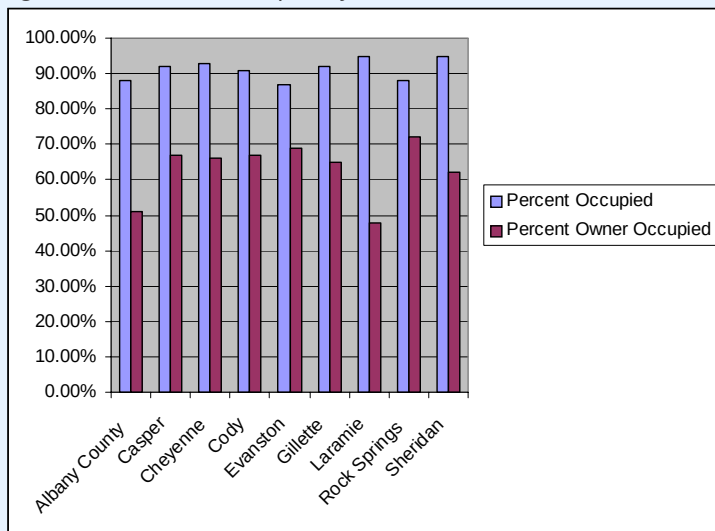
Statistic	1990	2000	Percent Increase
Households	10,400	11,336	9.0%
Housing Units	11,076	11,994	8.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Family householder is a householder living with one or more people related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption. The householder and all people in the household related to him or her are family members. A **non-family householder** is a householder living alone or with non-relatives only.

number of households increasing by nine percent and the number of housing units increasing eight percent, as shown in *Table 2.4, Housing Changes*.

Figure 2.9, Owner Occupancy



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The decrease in average household size is also reflected in the number of persons living in family and non-family households. During the 1990s, the population living in family households decreased 5.76 percent, while the number of persons living in University dormitories decreased 13.06 percent. At the same time, the City's population residing in non-family households increased 25.35 percent.

According to the 2000 Census, Laramie had the lowest vacancy rate (5.2 percent) compared to other communities and Albany County. The next closest rate of vacancy was in Cheyenne, where they

had a 7.4 percent vacancy, followed by Cody with an 8.8 percent vacancy. The City of Evanston had a vacancy rate of 18.9 percent. It is not uncommon for a University town to have such a low vacancy rate due to the student population and the amount of rental properties. However, the optimal rate of vacancy is between five and eight percent, meaning that the City is on the low end of this range. A vacancy rate below five percent suggests a saturated market that requires residential construction activity. A vacancy rate above 10 percent is highly undesirable. It is important for economic development purposes to have a sufficient supply of housing to accommodate the needs of prospective buyers, which is the reason for having up to eight percent vacant or unoccupied units. In addition to the supply, however, it is also important to have both quality and affordable housing units in attractive, safe, and stable neighborhood environments.

As depicted in *Figure 2.9, Owner Occupancy*, Laramie had the highest percentage of occupancy among the selected communities, with 94.8 percent occupied. There is not a lot of difference among the communities with respect to total occupancy as they all are between 86.9 and 94.8 percent. In addition, between 1990 and 2000, all communities witnessed an increase in their percent occupancy. In the case of Laramie, the percent occupancy increased nearly one full percentage point, from 93.9 to 94.8 percent. This represents the demand for housing as residents are choosing to occupy vacant units due to a shortage of supply.

In Laramie, 45.8 percent of the residential units were owner-occupied in 1990. By the Year 2000, 47.5 percent were owner-occupied. While the increase is a positive indicator during the last decade, the overall percentage of owner-occupied units is significantly lower than those of the other communities. This is

Table 2.5, Housing Affordability

Percent of Median Income	Household Income	Affordable Mortgage Payment
180%	\$49,174	\$1,229
150%	\$40,979	\$1,024
120%	\$32,783	\$820
100%	\$27,319	\$683
80%	\$21,855	\$546
50%	\$13,660	\$341
30%	\$8,196	\$205

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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not a surprise as a result of the student populations of the University, WyoTech, and Laramie County Community College, but is, nonetheless, of importance for the community to monitor and address. A preferred rate of owner occupancy would be 55 percent or higher. It is not reasonable to try to meet the owner occupancy rates of the other communities due to Laramie's unique circumstances; however, it is important to focus attention on increasing the rate of owner occupancy. The outcome of this effort would have spin-off benefits on local economic development, including strengthening neighborhood integrity, increasing investment and reinvestment in property, improving the appearance of homes and properties, and boosting single-family home construction.

Affordability

Affordability is typically defined as a percent of a household's income spent on housing. In other words, housing is typically considered affordable if no more than 30 percent of household income is devoted to housing costs. As depicted in *Table 2.5, Housing Affordability*, \$683 per month is an affordable mortgage payment for a median household income of \$27,319 in Laramie. For households earning 30 percent of the median income, affordable housing means a monthly mortgage payment of \$205. On the opposite end of the spectrum, households earning 180 percent of the median household income can afford \$1,229 per month on housing.

The City's Housing Study and Action Plan sheds more light on the topic of affordability, expanding upon the simplified affordability tabulation in *Table 2.5, Housing Affordability*, to show specifics as to affordability by family size for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income households. Essentially, it indicates that a median priced home in Laramie is affordable to a median income family. However, it is noted that there are significant constraints to affordability resulting from a 10 percent down payment requirement (assumed by the calculations in the Housing Study and Action Plan) and lack of new construction at the affordable price range. Policies and actions of the plan include continuing support of rental assistance, support to nonprofit organizations assisting lower income citizens, acquiring and banking land for affordable housing, and allowing single-room occupancy units in downtown. For more information, also refer to *Chapter 5, Housing and Neighborhoods*.

As shown in *Table 2.6, Housing Costs*, the median gross rent kept pace with the growth in the City's median household income during the 1990s. While the median household income increased by 39.10 percent, the median gross rent increased by 35.60 percent. Generally, this means that the increase in the median household income is only staying on par with inflation. Therefore, residents are not gaining in their wealth relative to their cost of living, which has implications in terms of their disposable income and purchasing power. The fact that the median house value increased at a much faster rate than income meant that persons trying to upgrade their housing were spending a larger percentage of their income in order to afford it. As home prices increase, so do their valuations and, hence, property taxes. Therefore, all costs related to housing – some hidden – continue to

Table 2.6, Laramie Housing Costs

Statistic	1990	2000	Percent Change
Median Household Income	\$19,642	\$27,318	39.10%
Median Gross Rent	\$343	\$465	35.60%
Median House Value	\$66,500	\$116,500	75.20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

inflate without a proportionate and offsetting increase in income. This further exacerbates the housing problems in the community.

The demand for housing that resulted from the decreased household size was, in part, responsible for the increase in the cost of housing in Laramie during the 1990s. As shown in Table 2.7, *Comparable House Values and Rents*, the median house value in 2000 of \$116,400

was higher than the State's median housing value and higher than all other selected cities. Only the resort community of Jackson had a higher house value (\$260,600) in 2000 than Laramie. The median gross rent of \$465 is also relatively high. Laramie's median gross rent is third highest among other sizeable cities in the State. Only Cheyenne and Jackson had a higher median gross rent in 2000. The median housing costs among comparable cities is graphically displayed in Figure 2.10, *Median Housing Costs*.

Estimates from the Wyoming Department of Administration

Figure 2.10, Median Housing Costs



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

and Information, Economic Analysis Division, show that housing costs in Albany County have continued to rise in the years since the last Census. In the Wyoming Cost of Living Index,³ the average rent for apartments in Albany County increased from \$454 in 2000 to \$594 in 2004, an increase of 31 percent. The average rent for houses increased from \$603 to \$849 for the same time period, an increase of 41 percent. Mobile home rent also increased from \$491 to \$541, representing a 10 percent increase over the same four years. Sales prices also continue to increase. The Wyoming Community Development Authority surveyed County Assessors' offices to develop average sales prices for each county in the State. The Albany County data show the average sales prices for existing detached single-family homes increased from \$118,196 in 2000 to \$175,320 in 2004, an increase of 48 percent. This increase is higher than the statewide increase of 32 percent. Statewide, the average sales prices

Table 2.7, Comparative House Values and Rents

Jurisdiction	House Value	Gross Rent
Casper	\$84,500	\$408
Cheyenne	\$102,400	\$470
Cody	\$107,200	\$441
Evanston	\$86,600	\$427
Gillette	\$99,800	\$453
Jackson	\$260,600	\$717
Laramie	\$116,400	\$465
Rock Springs	\$103,900	\$416
Sheridan	\$90,700	\$433
Wyoming	\$96,600	\$437

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

³ Wyoming Cost of Living Index, Table Vb, Average Rental Rates

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were \$111,437 in 2000 and \$147,588 in 2004.

The City's Housing Study and Action Plan acknowledges several important considerations relating to the issue of increased housing costs. Among them is a slower growth in wages compared to housing prices. This is a result of 75 percent of the City's economic growth over the last 20 years being in the services and retail sectors, which have annual wages of \$18,300 and \$12,250 – well below the median income needed to afford a median priced home. Therefore, it is the wage rates of community residents that are of greater influence on affordability, rather than home prices. Therefore, the economic development initiative of targeting new employers with higher minimum and average wages is both a sound and essential strategy for addressing this issue.

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

Income and Poverty

The median income of households for 1989 and 1999 are Displayed in *Table 2.8, Median Household Income*. The table indicates that Laramie had a 39.1 percent increase in its median household income between 1990 and 2000, which is in the upper tier of the selected cities. The State of Wyoming had a higher percent change of 39.8 percent. Since Laramie contains a large percentage of the Albany County population, the County's percent change is virtually the same (39.0 percent). Otherwise, the next closest percent change was in Cheyenne (38.2 percent), followed by Casper (32 percent), Gillette (30.9 percent), and Rock Springs (23.9 percent). This is a positive indicator for Laramie, which may continue to increase its median household income with the successful attraction of higher paying employers.

While the percent change is a positive indicator of what has occurred in the last decade, the amount of median household income is significantly less than the other cities. In 1990, the median household income was \$19,642, which was as much as 80.9 percent less than the median household income in Gillette, which had the highest median income. The next closest community was Sheridan with a median household income of \$23,819. By the 2000 Census, Laramie had narrowed the gap by reducing the difference to 70.3 percent less than Gillette. The average of the median household incomes in the eight other jurisdictions was \$36,243 in 2000, which is still 32.7 percent higher than that of Laramie. Therefore, initiatives to attract new business and industry in the community must focus attention on their wage rates in order to sustain the recent percent change and, ultimately, increase the median household income.

Table 2.8, Median Household Income

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income		Percent Change
	1990	2000	
Wyoming	\$27,096	\$37,892	39.8%
Albany County	\$20,715	\$28,790	39.0%
Casper	\$27,698	\$36,567	32.0%
Cheyenne	\$28,117	\$38,856	38.2%
Gillette	\$35,532	\$46,521	30.9%
Laramie	\$19,642	\$27,319	39.1%
Rock Springs	\$34,372	\$42,584	23.9%
Sheridan	\$23,819	\$31,420	31.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000

Table 2.9, Poverty Level

Jurisdiction	Rate of Poverty		Difference
	1990	2000	
Wyoming	11.9%	11.4%	-0.5%
Albany County	13.2%	21.0%	7.8%
Casper	24.2%	11.4%	-12.8%
Cheyenne	12.6%	8.8%	-3.8%
Gillette	11.4%	7.9%	-3.5%
Laramie	10.6%	22.6%	12.0%
Rock Springs	26.2%	9.4%	-16.8%
Sheridan	9.6%	11.2%	1.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000

Table 2.10, Number of Establishments

Industry	Number of Establishments		Percent Change
	1997	2002	
Retail Trade	158	156	-1.3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	98	113	15.3%
Health Care Social Care	70	101	44.3%
Accommodations, Food Service	92	85	-7.6%
Other except Public Adm.	56	85	51.8%
Real Estate, Rental Leasing	44	50	13.6%
Administration, Support and Waste Management	34	39	14.7%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	14	20	42.9%
Wholesale Trade	19	19	0.0%
Information (Communications and Data Processing)	n/a	15	100.0%
Educational Services	5	8	60.0%
Total	590	691	17.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2.11, Employment By Industry

Industry	Employees	Percent
Education Services	4,185	28.63%
Accommodations and Food Service	1,386	9.48%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,380	9.44%
Retail Trade	1,530	10.47%
Professional, Scientific and Management Services	982	6.72%
Construction	773	5.29%
Information (Communications and Data Processing)	678	4.64%
Other Service, except Public Administration	678	4.64%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (F.I.R.E.)	603	4.13%
Public Administration	577	3.95%
Manufacturing	567	3.88%
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	445	3.04%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	327	2.24%
Agriculture	256	1.75%
Wholesale Trade	206	1.41%
Mining	43	0.29%
TOTAL	14,616	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Of the total population in Laramie, 10.6 percent was considered to have poverty status, based on 1989 income levels. By contrast, the latest census identifies that Laramie experienced an increase in the number of persons below poverty level, as depicted in *Table 2.9, Poverty Level*. Of the total population, 22.6 percent had a 1999 income that was below poverty level. This poverty level is higher than all other jurisdictions, including the State of Wyoming at 11.4 percent poverty. While Laramie had a 39.1 percent increase in its median household income between 1990 and 2000, it did not keep pace with the overall cost of living. As discussed earlier, housing costs, for instance, grew at a faster rate than income, meaning that residents had to spend a larger percentage of their income on housing, leaving less for disposable spending. This is yet another indicator of the income levels in the community, which warrant near-term and ongoing attention on behalf of the City. It should be also noted that the high student population, with the University and Wyoming Technical Institute, could skew the numbers related to poverty.

Employment

As displayed in *Table 2.10, Number of Establishments*, the composition of Laramie's economy witnessed significant

growth between 1997 and 2002 (the latest for which comprehensive data is available) in the number of establishments, particularly in certain industry sectors. In fact, there was a 17.1 percent increase over the five-year period, including 15 establishments in the Information Sector where there were too few to report in 1997. The largest percent

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increase in the number of establishments occurred in Educational Services, which had a 60 percent increase. Industry, Other, except Professional Administration, had the next largest percent change with 51.8 percent, followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (44.3 percent) and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (42.9 percent). The smallest percent change was Accommodations, Food Service with a 7.6 percent decrease in the number of establishments between 1997 and 2002. However, recent development of new hotels/motels in the community will most assuredly reflect an increase when the next report is prepared in 2007.

While Educational Services contained only five establishments in 1997 and eight in 2002, this sector employed over 28 percent of the City's workers in 2000, as displayed in *Table 2.11, Employment by Industry*. This statistic is expected as a result of the school system, University, Wyoming Technical Institute trade school, and Laramie County Community College (LCCC). The industries that provide the next highest percentage of employment include Retail Trade (10.47 percent), Accommodations and Food Service (9.48 percent), and Health Care and Social Assistance (9.44 percent). Therefore, these four industries provide over one-half of all employment in Laramie.

The Wyoming Department of Employment, Research, and Planning calculated that in the 4th Quarter of 2003, the most recent date for which this information is available, private businesses employed 9,664 persons, which represented 62.8 percent of the workforce. The local, State, and Federal governments employed 5,724 persons, or 37.2 percent of the City's workers. This is not an unexpected statistic given the location of the University, WyoTech, LCCC, and City and County governments, but it, nonetheless, significantly contributes to many of the other demographic and socio-economic characteristics cited in this report.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following briefly summarizes the findings of this chapter, which are more fully addressed by way of goals and action statements in the subsequent chapters of this plan.

1. Growth is likely to occur in and around Laramie. It is essential that this plan accommodate and plan for growth. Though planning, the scenic setting, environment, character and identity, along with all the features that make Laramie, a unique community can be protected.
2. The Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division, projects a 2.3 percent loss of population in the City by the Year 2020. This is largely the result of both distant and recent historical trends witnessed in the City, County, and Statewide, as well as the student population creating a shortfall in projected population. This State projection is recognized as one of several projection scenarios considered in this plan. Since the basis of this plan is pro-active in nature on behalf of the City, a more optimistic scenario should be utilized for future planning purposes.
3. The historic population growth since 1970 has averaged approximately 0.56 percent annually, which significantly contributes to future projections of the City since all statistical methodologies rely on past trends to anticipate the future. Consideration of other factors, however, must also be considered so as to ensure the plan accurately reflects expected future conditions. For this reason, the use of a targeted population must be used to account for local activities and initiatives. It is incumbent upon the community in its commitment to long-range planning to regularly monitor the targeted population and make adjustments, as necessary. At a minimum, the

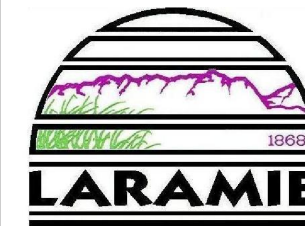
consensus projection (Linear Permits, 1980) should be updated annually, with adjustments to the plan conducted on a semi-annual basis. This will allow the City to track its progress against its targets, giving it benchmarks from which to judge its ongoing success.

4. The City's proportionate share of Albany County has remained relatively steady since 1950, increasing from 81.8 percent to 85 percent in 2000. As the major population center, Laramie serves as the employment and economic hub of the County and an expanded region extending in each direction. Since 1980, the population has increased at a faster rate outside of the City. This presents important growth policy considerations with respect to future fiscal consequences since those outside the City reap benefits from their access to municipal facilities and services, such as parks, trails, and libraries, but do not share the tax burden associated with constructing and maintaining them.
5. The amount of recent development occurring outside of the City limits - much of which appears to be around the near periphery of Laramie - threatens to blur the once definitive edge to the community. Protection of the free standing nature of the City is essential to preserving and enhancing its character. This plan must, therefore, establish the growth and development policies for the City and its one-mile planning area. This does not mean halting any development in the outlying areas, but, rather, establishing standards to ensure it is consistent and compatible with the City's future vision. This plan will, identify the strategies and actions to better manage and effectively guide development in the future.
6. With nearly 45 percent of the population below the age of 25, largely due to the student populations of the University, WyoTech, and LCCC, the community must consider economic development strategies to retain a portion of this young population after graduation. To be successful in its economic initiative, there must be an available and well-educated work force. Therefore, the work force training and degree programs must be suited for the types of employment in the community to avoid their departure elsewhere. A partnership is warranted between the City and each of its educational institutions to achieve a retention strategy.
7. Among the eight projection scenarios produced in this chapter, the Linear Permits, 1980 estimate of 33,830 persons in the Year 2025 will be the basis for estimating future service demands and facility requirements. In planning for an additional 6,626 persons in the next two decades, it is essential for there to be community dialogue about how and where to accommodate the requisite housing and business development. Considering the state of the existing infrastructure and the seemingly insurmountable reinvestment required for its rehabilitation and replacement, it draws into perspective a warrant for increased density, infill development, and redevelopment. This represents a significant shift in land use planning policy, which must be addressed as part of this comprehensive planning process.
8. Should the trend in the decline of persons per household continue as in the last three plus decades, there is reason to believe that it could drop below two persons per household in the coming years. Based upon this decreasing trend - whether or not it reaches two persons per household - there will continue to be an increase in the demand for housing. This statistic makes the effort of estimating population difficult because new housing units will not necessarily be commensurate with an increase in population unless the person per household stabilizes. Monitoring this will be an important factor in estimating the future population.
9. The median age of 25.3 years in Laramie will continue to have implications on the community's demographics. With respect to higher demands for active recreation versus passive facilities, emphasis on both primary and secondary education for the children of young adults and the young adults themselves, progressive and upwardly

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mobile employment opportunities, and alternative housing types and price ranges. These and other influences of the age characteristic will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

10. The presence of the University has had an influence on the types of industry sector growth, with the most significant increases in the service and retail sectors. While increased spending in the community is positive for the local economy – and particularly that expended from persons who reside outside of the community – the wage rates of the employees of these sectors are not positive contributors. Therefore, the City must seek ways to balance this with the growth of higher economic producing industries, such as manufacturing; wholesale trade; information (communications and data processing); finance, insurance and real estate; professional, scientific and management services; and health care. The target sectors identified by the Locational Assessment of the Wyoming Business Council also offer industries to achieve this objective.
11. The percentage of the population that is under 25 years of age will continue to affect the median household income, its housing needs and affordability, and employment. Persons who are in school or recently out of school are generally part-time or entry-level employees who do not yet have the income or financial resources to invest in home ownership. Without deliberate strategies and actions to affect change, this will perpetuate the current conditions.
12. The amount of median household income must be a focus of attention for the community as it is well below that of other communities in the State. There must be strong initiatives – backed by viable strategies – to attract new business and industry with wage rates that are much higher and on par with other communities. This is a significant economic development consideration in terms of its target industry marketing. Economic incentive programs must be structured to attract and reward businesses who contribute to the community's objectives for increasing wage rates and adding jobs with acceptable benefits. This is also applicable to existing businesses in their expansion and continued investment.
13. The increase in the rate of poverty from 10.6 percent in 1990 to 22.6 percent in 2000 is alarming. This, together with the low median household income, is a key indicator warranting immediate and corrective action. Gaining good sources of higher paying employment for local residents is a primary objective. Support of social service agencies to reintroduce residents back into the work force through counseling and job skill training is also vital. While students have some influence on the reported rate of poverty, the change between 1990 and 2000 cannot be entirely attributable to the student populations. Therefore, there remain issues of poverty to be further explored and addressed.

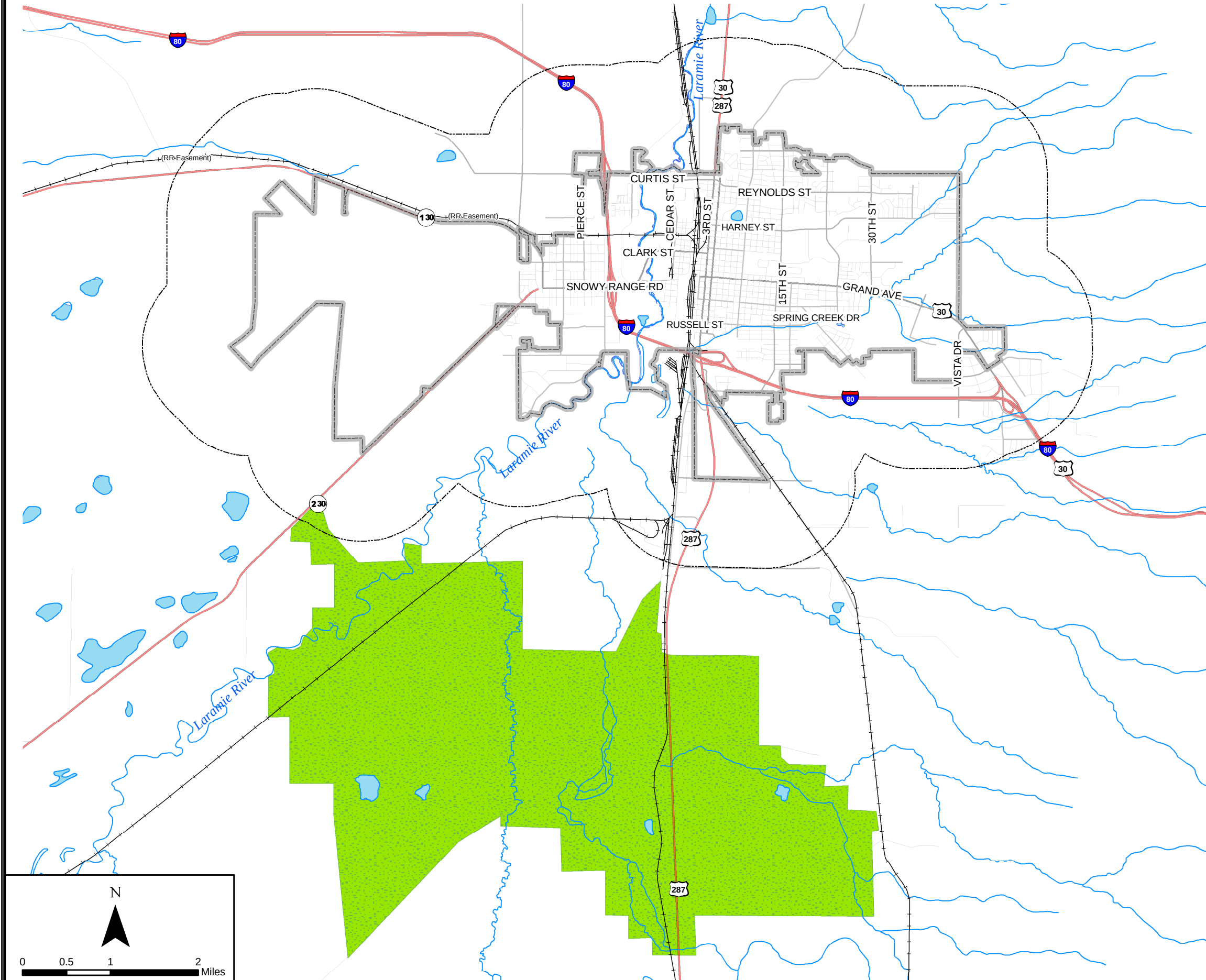
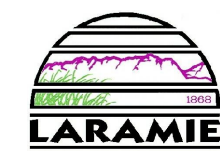


THE LARAMIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Map 2.1 Monolith Ranch

Legend

- Local Roads
- Collectors / Arterial Roads
- Interstates / Highways
- Railroad
- Rivers, Streams
- Monolith Ranch
- One Mile Jurisdiction
- City Limits



COMMUNITY CHARACTER

3

CHAPTER

The pattern of land use and its density, arrangement, and scale each contribute to the overall visual character of the community. Individual land use decisions that are made over the course of time, whether involving zone changes for proposed new development, reuse, or redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties, or major public facility and infrastructure improvements, have a role in determining the future form and character of the community. The importance of character in creating the image of the community, which contributes to its economic development and desirability as a place to live and work, warrants planning in advance as to when, where, and how the community will develop.

INTRODUCTION

Through the course of the public involvement process, residents of Laramie expressed their pride in the community and the reasons they have chosen to call it home. They cite its western character and small-town feel, views of the surrounding ridgelines and expansive prairie lands, the presence and value of the University and WyoTech, the visual attractiveness of the tree area, the local flavor and genuineness of Downtown, the array of outdoor recreation opportunities, quality parks and nature trails, valued environmental resources, and the friendliness of people as the assets that make Laramie a special place. As such, protection and preservation of these values is a high priority. At the same time, residents also expressed concern as to the future and the means for strengthening and resolving issues that present ongoing challenges to their treasured community.

Residents envision a community that has fully embraced its western character by managing growth in a manner that prevents sporadic and premature development of the surrounding rangeland. They want a definitive edge to the community that clearly distinguishes urban and rural development, thereby strengthening the identity of Laramie. They wish to protect the environment within and around the community by avoiding unnecessary encroachment of the protection area for the Casper Aquifer and its well fields, including Spur Ridge, Turner, Pope Springs, and Soldier Springs. Sensitive land use planning adjacent to the Laramie River, Spring Creek, Pioneer Canal, and their floodplain

Community character is a system for evaluating the features of individual developments that collectively contribute to the overall character of the community. The components that distinguish the quality of development include more than its use, such as the amount of preserved open space and vegetation, the amount of imperviousness, the orientation of buildings and parking areas, and the relationship of buildings (scale and bulk) to the site. Together with aesthetic enhancements such as the design of buildings, landscaping and screening, sign control, and site amenities, the community character may be significantly improved.

areas is also viewed as important in protecting water quality and preventing the effects of flooding on buildings and properties. Reclamation and reuse of brownfield sites also provides opportunity for environmental cleanup and redevelopment.

Residents seek an integrative community that allows a mixture of uses and housing types designed to be both compatible and walkable. They would like neighborhoods to bridge otherwise divisive social and economic fabrics thereby leading to community cohesiveness. This involves infill development to make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public services. The University and WyoTech campuses and Downtown would all be interwoven into a community framework that gives a heightened sense of place. The appearance of these distinct areas as well as the community entrances and corridors would all be improved with enhanced landscaping, signage, and design treatments that again, relate to the preferred community character. Lastly, residents acknowledge that they must act in the interest of the community at-large. The City's standards and regulations must be consistent with this vision and be held intact through fair and proactive enforcement.

PURPOSE

The preparation of this plan element involved examination of the community's past growth; the existing pattern and character of development; currently committed (approved) developments such as Grandview Heights and Coughlin Pole Mountain 3rd; and development constraints such as government-owned lands, flood prone areas, and the aquifer protection zone. As a result of these planning considerations, the alternatives as to the community's land use and future growth plans were evaluated and compared against the targeted future population (*Chapter 2, Conditions & Outlook*). Through a series of community dialogues, a consensus land use plan was developed, which provides a vision for the future physical development of Laramie and its one-mile fringe area.

The vision as to how Laramie will develop in the future was formed by the concerns and ideas expressed by residents during the public workshops, stakeholder interviews, and community meetings. The chapter begins by outlining the key issues relating to the community's existing and future land use and character, which is followed by exploratory

discussion and recommendations to effectively guide ongoing land use and community character decisions. An outcome of this process is the Future Land Use Plan, which visually depicts the intended pattern of use and the density and design characteristics of Laramie's future development.

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Throughout this chapter the term "community character" is used, which directly relates to the use of land but also clarifies the relationship of land use and its influence, both individually and collectively, on community character. There is an essential difference in evaluating the current development pattern from the perspective of land use, as opposed to community character. Simply conducting an inventory of uses and classifying them according to their



A series of land use planning workshops were held with small groups of residents to visualize their preferences for the pattern and character of future development.

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functional use, such as low and higher density residential, business office, commercial, industrial, and public/quasi-public uses, does not account for the widely varying characteristics of these uses as to the physical character that is portrayed. For instance, while the tree area (approximately located south of Grand Avenue, north of Steel Street, west of 15th Street and east of 7th Street) and some of the newer subdivisions are both used for single family purposes, they exhibit very different characters. The character categories reflect not only land use but the physical traits that contribute to its character. Therefore, this chapter is the generalized use of land, along with its character, which relates to such factors as density (generally determined by lot and building size), intensity (floor area or building coverage), ratios of open space and impervious cover, and the amount of vegetation or volume of landscaping.

To protect and enhance Laramie's character, this plan must articulate the land use components and development design elements that contribute to its desired "small-town" character. Once the plan establishes the overall policies and strategies, the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations of the City and County must be amended to ensure new development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the vision of this plan and, more importantly, the community.

Character Considerations

Residents of Laramie cite its small-town atmosphere, access to quality primary and local higher learning institutions, plentiful parks, open spaces, and natural amenities such as the Laramie River, Laramie Range Mountains, and Medicine Bow National Forest, and strong family values as its most valued assets. They enjoy the benefits of a small town located in a rural environment that has reasonable access to more populated areas. The expanse of open range land surrounding the community and its agrarian use contribute to its small-town community character. Residents have a strong sense of pride in their community and enjoy it as a place to live and raise a family. This Comprehensive Plan must, therefore, translate these intangible values into future development and growth strategies so that future decisions enhance these important community values.

Even with a proactive approach to land use planning and development design, there remains a natural impact to Laramie's small-town character. Growth, while a positive indicator of economic stability and desirable for sustaining the integrity of the community, may eventually shift the character of the community. Therefore, this plan must seek to sustain the traits that contribute most significantly to the valued character of Laramie.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through the plan development process, particularly including the public workshops and stakeholder input sessions, there were a number of concerns expressed as to the future growth of the community and its influence on development character. These concerns formed the basis of the following issue statements. The purpose of these statements is to

The influence that uses exert on other uses and the impacts associated with their operations, which are individually unique, have important implications on development outcome and thus, quality of life. Therefore, the character of uses have essential land use policy implications that must be handled according to their performance - in the context of their natural and built environments - to achieve the intended quality outcome.



The view of open range land with a mountainous backdrop helps to define the scenic western character of Laramie.

summarize and draw focus to this plan regarding the community's values, expectations, and priorities for land use and community character. Following the identification of the key issues, is discussion of the necessary implementation steps, specific recommended actions, and their advantages and benefits.

Environmental Consciousness, Protection and Sensitive Planning

Citizens of Laramie are keenly aware of their environment and its value on community livability. They view sustainability of quality open spaces and protection of resources as essential considerations to guide the pattern, direction, and type of future development. Among the environmental resources that are highly valued for protection are the Casper Aquifer and its four well fields, including from north to south, Spur Ridge, Turner, Pope Springs, and Soldier Springs. Protection from the encroachment of incompatible and increasing development density is critical for preserving the delineated primary and secondary recharge areas, which are located along the western foothills of the Laramie Range Mountains bordering the eastern edge of the City limits within and beyond the one-mile fringe area.

Most of the Casper Aquifer recharge area is situated outside of the City limits, which restricts the City's ability to apply its zoning authority and exact control over its primary source of drinking water. Since the County regulates land use through zoning regulations, it is within their authority to govern the use and development within the protection zone.

Excessive use of water and contamination of the wellheads are additional concerns considering that the aquifer is designated as one of two main sources of drinking water for the community and its surrounding residents, accounting for 100 percent of the drinking water for rural residents and as high as 70 percent or higher during times of drought for City residents.¹

Continuation of current development trends poses a risk to the preservation of the aquifer, including development within the City, its one-mile fringe area, and within the County beyond the City's area of planning authority. Based upon the trends experienced during the last decade, which reflected residential development within the aquifer protection area increasing at a rate of 2.5 percent annually, ² without a proactive stance for resource protection there will be a considerable amount of new development within this highly sensitive area.

While the City adopted an Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone³ providing for a prohibition of certain designated uses and their associated activities the establishment of setbacks from vulnerable features, design standards, sunset provisions for wastewater



Snow melt and rainfall collect along the Laramie Range where it is absorbed into the ground and becomes part of the City's water supply.

¹ Casper Aquifer Protection Plan, June 2002

² As many as 1,331 new residences may exist in the aquifer protection area by the Year 2020, according to the report entitled, "Aquifer Protection and CommunityViz in Albany County, Wyoming", June 2003

³ Section 17.82.030, Allowed and Prohibited Uses, Chapter 17.82, Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone

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treatment systems, procedures, on-site treatment systems and non-conforming uses, need additional regulatory provisions so further mitigation can occur.

The current standards allow conventional development to occur subject to restrictions regarding adequate setbacks from recharge features, placement of structures on suitable soils and slopes, and specifications for connection to public treatment facilities or compliance with installation standards. As an alternative, it is advisable for the City to consider requiring development clustering within the protection zone, which, in effect, shifts development to a less sensitive portion of a site while maintaining a close-to-equivalent density. Such approach maximizes the amount of preserved open space, area for recharge, greatly improves the efficiency of utility provision, minimizes impervious cover, as well as reduces contamination levels and water consumption. Such approach would require amendment of the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to meet landowner and community objectives.



LaPrele Park along Spring Creek is exemplary example of incorporating a water feature into a park while providing an amenity to the adjacent neighborhood and nearby residents.

Alternative subdivision designs, such as clustered housing, conservation (50 percent open space) and preservation (80 percent open space) development should also be considered. These alternative neighborhood environments would allow the City to maintain its small-town character while protecting its rich natural resources. Incentives should be created to allow increased density generally equivalent to the loss of units required to set aside land for open space and resource conservation. Incorporation of a site capacity calculation into the requirements will allow for adjustments of development intensity to actual site conditions. This tool allows sites that are constrained environmentally, such as that within the aquifer protection zone, to develop with a character that is consistent with other neighborhoods and the rest of the community while, at the same time, safeguarding the environment. No matter the subdivision design, clustering, conservation or preservation, annexation should be required so the city can exact control over the type, scale, pattern and density of new development.

Another step that could be taken would be to consider placing this area in a conservation easement. Such a conservation easement could be used for open space and recreational purposes as well as protecting the aquifer. It may either be voluntarily created by the property owner(s) or acquired by a government agency. The easement would be a legally binding covenant that is publicly recorded and runs with the property deed for a specified time or in perpetuity. It gives the holder the responsibility to monitor and enforce the property restrictions imposed by the easement for as long as it is designed to run. An easement does not grant ownership nor does it absolve the property owner from traditional owner responsibilities, i.e. property tax, upkeep, maintenance, or improvements.

There are other areas interspersed throughout the community and the larger fringe area that possess valuable natural resources warranting protection. Lands along the Laramie

Nitrates: Water naturally contains less than 1 milligram of nitrate-nitrogen per liter. Higher levels indicate that the water has been contaminated. Common sources of nitrate contamination include fertilizers, animal wastes, septic tanks, municipal sewage treatment systems, and decaying plant debris. The ability of nitrate to enter well water depends on the type of soil and bedrock present, and on the depth and construction of the well. State and federal laws set the maximum allowable level of nitrate-nitrogen in public drinking water at 10 milligrams per liter (10 parts per million).

River, Pioneer Canal, Spring Creek, Soldier Creek, within floodplain areas and wetlands, offer many opportunities for resource conservation and land preservation. While these areas are sensitive to urban development, they may be utilized to fulfill other community objectives, such as environmental protection and sound resource management.

The restoration of natural areas, such as wetlands, creeks, and vegetated lands within protected open spaces or parks can also serve as a catalyst for economic development. Similar to the attractiveness of the park and open space along Spring Creek, there are similar opportunities along the Laramie River and other natural features to give public focus rather than abutting the rear lots of adjacent development. With good design, resources can provide a unifying linkage throughout the community, which greatly influences land use decisions and community character.

Residents of Laramie are interested in creating a community that is both unique and attractive. Numerous comments were received regarding the desire for more green space integrated as an amenity into development. This objective may be achieved by adopting sound environmental conservation and responsible land development practices. Sensitive areas along the river and creeks and within the floodplain and wetlands may be incorporated within development as a natural amenity, while sustaining their resource function. Doing so requires a regulatory system that balances development efficiency and resource protection. Through sound land planning, resources may be preserved and effectively integrated into development without compromising private interests.

Brownfield development involves environmental clean-up of contaminated sites thereby reclaiming it for redevelopment and reuse. "Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties increases local tax bases, facilitates job growth, utilizes existing infrastructure, takes development pressure off of undeveloped, open land, and both improves and protects the environment."⁴ These sites generally include abandoned, under-utilized, or otherwise defunct industrial buildings and grounds that offers an opportunity for infill development and return to the tax rolls. Incidentally this is a valuable component of managing growth by making the most efficient use of properties within the developed area of the City that are already served by public facilities (water, wastewater and drainage infrastructure) and services (police and fire protection). Thus, redevelopment of brownfield sites does not push industrial development to the community's fringe requiring a costly extension of facilities and services. The added benefit is the removal of blight, which improves property values and enhances community character.

Throughout this section it has been demonstrated that the City of Laramie and its residents are conscious of the environment. Laramie should strive to be a "green community" and a model for other communities with respect to all aspects of the environments. Energy consumption, energy efficiency, recycling, aquifer protection, air quality, noise and light pollution, sprawl, water usage and quality, "green" business, renewable energy, wildlife, open space, and "green" technology among many other issues, are all concerns of Laramie and its residents and should be considered in the decision making processes at all levels.

⁴ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment (<http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/about.htm>)

A brownfield is "an abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized commercial or industrial property where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination and where there is an active potential for redevelopment."

Source: NRTEE, Cleaning up the Past, Building the Future: A National Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy

Open Space Preservation

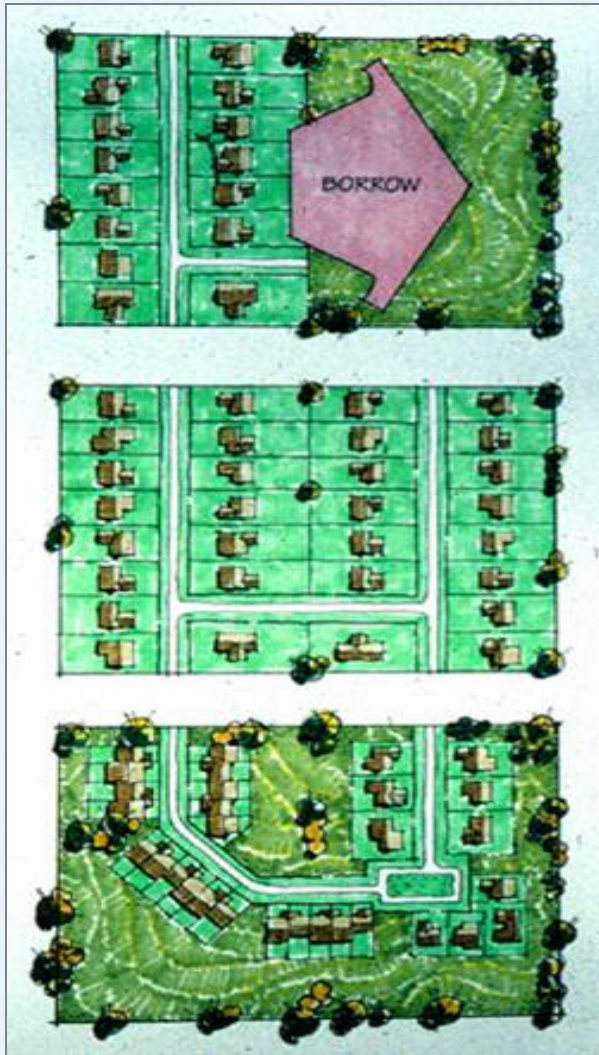
Preservation of open space is also of high value to community residents who view it both as a means to protect and enhance community character and as a way to provide for recreational opportunities or other public purposes. There is concern for the future of the expansive open spaces surrounding the community, which offer ridgeline views and contribute to the definitive edge of the City. Sporadic rural development around the City and its one-mile fringe area compromises this open space. Residents have articulated their desire to maintain a compact community form with a defined edge to the urban development. Such a stance necessitates implementation methods to contain sprawling development and thus, preserve open space. Discussion regarding the preservation of open space as a means for managing growth and achieving a compact urban form will be addressed in *Chapter 6, Urban Growth*.

The expanse of open space that contributes to the feeling of openness and the “small-town” character referred to by residents is temporary rather than permanent. The natural open space and views of the landscape are “borrowed” from the adjoining land. This land may either be an individual undeveloped parcel or, as is the case for those on the edge of town, the surrounding rural land. Consequently, as development occurs abutting these neighborhoods, the existing character will change. This leads to dissatisfaction when there are proposals to develop the adjacent land. Therefore, to maintain views and achieve the character desired by residents, the borrowed open space must be incorporated into development as permanent open space.

Currently, the residential zoning districts are defined by lists of permitted uses, with varying degrees of intensity allowed within the same district and subject to the same height and area regulations. Furthermore, due to the cumulative nature of the ordinance whereby each district permits the uses of the prior less-intensive district (e.g. all uses permitted in R2, Limited Multiple-Family are also permitted by right in R3, Multiple-Family), there are uses of drastic differences in their intensities allowed within the same district. Take for example, the R3, Multiple-Family district, which permits multiple family dwellings by right. Since this district also permits by right all uses in the LR, Limited One-Family; R1, One-Family; RR, Rural Residential; R2, Limited Multiple-Family and R2M, Limited Multiple-Family Mobile Home districts, in effect, all types of residential uses are permitted. In other words, any type of residential use can be built directly abutting another residential use without regard to its intensity or scale, and with no provision for separation or buffering. Such system results in significant incompatibilities of use character within the same zone as well as in adjacent zones. This is essential to the character of Laramie



The tree area (lower photo) exhibits a substantially different character than the most recently developed neighborhoods (upper photo) due to factors beyond their single family residential use.



Integration of permanent open space into development avoids the loss of “borrowed” space when abutting development occurs.

considering a majority of the community is zoned R2, Limited Multiple-Family and R3, Multiple-Family.

The City’s current zoning ordinance is limited as to its requirements for open space other than a minimal required landscape area (on development less than one acre in size) and a modest density bonus within planned unit developments. Based upon the input of citizens, more open space is preferred. As such, a land use system based on character versus use alone is warranted. Aside from the use of land, such factors as density, open space, and vegetation contribute to the character of the use. This is most visible in the tree area, which exhibits a much different character than other neighborhoods, particularly the more recent neighborhood development. Therefore, classifying uses according to their character will result in different outcomes with a certainty as to its appearance. Increased open space can be achieved by delineating more suburban districts (proposed to have 35 percent open space) on the land use plan as well as increasing to 20 percent the amount of required open space in the auto-urban districts (refer to Section Titled, *Community Character Types*, pages 3-17 thru 3-22). Doing so will allow land to be set aside within development, which may either be improved open space for parks and trails or unimproved space that is preserved as the native landscape. It may also be used to protect a resource feature, such as the Laramie River, Spring Creek, or any of the designated recharge areas, wellheads, or springs.

In addition to the issues addressed above, ridgeline protection was identified as an issue of concern that was brought up throughout the public input process and in

the land use planning exercise facilitated with five different groups of residents and stakeholders as well as the Citizens Project Advisory Team (CPAT). Being aware of this issue when development of a subdivision is occurring we can further the objective of Open Space Preservation. Amendments will need to be made to the zoning ordinances in order to enforce and regulate this protection. Means such as reservation of land and setback requirements should all be considered in an effort to protect this asset.

Compatible Pattern of Development

The pattern of existing development is generally well-planned, with the primary commercial areas located in Downtown and along the principal transportation arteries (U.S. 30/Grand Avenue, U.S. 287/3rd Street, and Interstate 80), industrial development is located along the railroad with good access to U.S. 287 and I-80 and generally concentrated away from incompatible lower intensity uses, and an assortment of well-established and newer residential neighborhoods nestled around the University, schools, parks, and community facilities. The compatibility of new development must continue to

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honor this pattern of land use. Current zoning regulations are limited as to their ability to ensure land use compatibility due to the fact that it is a use-based code and pyramidal in nature. Current zoning allows for many uses that do not promote compatible development. There must be development policies and ordinance provisions in place to ensure new uses that contribute positively to the character of the community and are not undesirable for existing adjacent uses.

There is a concentration of commercial retail, office, and service uses along 3rd Street, stretching the entire length of the City limits and extending further to the north and south outside of the City. There are also concentrated nodes at the intersections of I-80 and Curtis Street and Snowy Range Road/Clark Street. To serve the University there is a small campus-town environment along Grand Avenue for roughly one-half block on either side of 17th Street. The most recent commercial development is occurring along Grand Avenue approaching its intersection with I-80. Smaller convenience stores and neighborhood commercial uses are also located at intersections around the community. These areas described are distinct and valuable assets to the community. Protection of these nodes, through zoning, building placement and through other means, should be examined if and when redevelopment occurs.

There was concern expressed as to the compatibility between adjacent land uses and the resulting impacts on property values. Due to traffic patterns and volumes, properties abutting the arterial roadways have higher land values thereby almost obligating the land for more intensive non-residential development. Such condition leads to strip commercial development as is occurring along U.S. 30/Grand Avenue to the east. The effect of this land use pattern is neighborhoods abutting the commercial frontage - thereby creating issues of incompatibility and undesirable impacts on community character associated with a blurred community edge, multiple signs and driveway entrances, large expanses of paving for parking lots, and limited open space for landscaping.

An alternative to strip commercial development is concentrating it in nodes at major intersections where the infrastructure can be designed to accommodate increased traffic and buffering intensified to separate and protect adjoining properties. While the City's current ordinance provisions provide for buffering neighboring residential uses⁵ with a 15-foot bufferyard, sight-obscurer fence, and trees, there is no determination as to the scale or intensity of commercial or industrial uses. Furthermore, the minimum rear yard setback within the B1, Limited Business; B2, Business; C2, Commercial; LM, Limited Manufacturing; I1, Limited Industrial; and I2, Industrial districts is 13 feet while the minimum required front setback is 40 feet (60 feet in the I1 district). As a result, parking is placed within the front yard adjacent to the street with the building placed toward the rear of the site closest to the abutting residential use. Without buffering standards that increase according to the intensity of the abutting non-residential use and the neighborhood they

A cluster subdivision generally sites houses on smaller parcels of land, while the additional land that would have been allocated to individual lots is converted to common shared open space for the subdivision residents. Road frontage, lot size, setbacks, and other traditional subdivision regulations are redefined to permit the developer to preserve ecologically sensitive areas, historical sites, or other unique characteristics of the land being subdivided.

Source: Ohio State University Factsheet



Strip commercial development is the prevailing pattern of use along U.S. 30, which impacts the community's visual identity and character.

⁵ Section 17.43.060, Required Lot Landscaping and Bufferyards, City of Laramie Zoning Ordinance

are in, there is limited protection of neighborhoods from their associated impacts. Rather than designating the requirements according to major use categories (residential, commercial and industrial), base the requirements on an opacity factor with variable allowances for bufferyard width, density of landscaping, and the use of fences and berms. A palette of plant unit options should be developed to allow flexibility and encourage an assortment of plantings including those plants that are native to the area. This was articulated in several instances by residents noting, for instance, that the City needs regulations for light pollution and spillover onto adjacent properties.

Yet another alternative and one that emerged as a preference through the public input process is that of mixed-use neighborhoods. This differs from the current zoning approach, aside from the planned unit development. Such a land use system has led to the pattern of use existing in the community, with commercial uses lining each of the corridors and residential uses abutting them and away from the arterial roadways. A mixed-use development, on the other hand, integrates such uses in a compatible and cohesive manner through site and building design and effective buffering. The Turner Tract plan represents this approach, with a variety of residential densities and limited business and business uses buffered by expanses of open space.

The use of planned unit developments (PUD) to further the goal of compatible uses must not be understated. In addition to the extreme flexibility found in a PUD development, the short review time and improved certainty of approval make this process even more attractive. PUD's are attractive and allow this flexibility while still preserving open space, increasing mixed use development, encouraging more compatible densities and encouraging multiple housing types among many other advantages.

Downtown Success and Economic Sustainability

Downtown Laramie is a special place. After all, it represents the community's history dating back to its founding in 1866. For this and many other reasons, there is strong interest on behalf of the residents to strengthen, expand, and enhance the Downtown and

it's position within the community and the larger region. To date, there have been several studies and plans⁶ developed to give direction as to its physical enhancement and revitalization. The identification of the Downtown character, its challenges, contextual relationships with the balance of Laramie and the greater region, goals and opportunities, design and development alternatives, and recommendations remain valid and important. However, the success and sustainability of Downtown rests in its economic stability. The strategies formulated and actions taken to create an economically viable downtown will determine its ultimate success as a local and regional destination and hence, a generator of business and economic activity.

In the beginning, Downtown was the center of local commerce. It



The building form and architecture in Downtown contribute to its urban character.

⁶ Previous studies and plans for Downtown include: "Laramie Downtown Revitalization and Development Plan", February 2002; "Third Street Study", Laramie, Wyoming, 2000; and, "Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, Project Summary Report", February 1992

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was the core of business activity where everyone converged to do business and socialize. Over time, and particularly due to the advent of the automobile and its rising popularity and affordability, the community began to spread outward. In the early years, though, it remained generally compact as the original town area developed in a dense grid of streets and modest-sized homes. As years passed, the grid expanded, eventually giving way to more contemporary ways with curvilinear streets and larger homes and lots. Such development patterns formed markets elsewhere in the community, which were met by commercial development outside of the Downtown area. This progressive history has led Downtown to its current standing. While it remains vital to the local history and economy and has done well to preserve its uniqueness, it is increasingly challenging to secure its market share, particularly as development continues along the U.S. 30/Grand Avenue corridor extending toward its interchange with I-80. As development continues to occur on the edge, which contributes to the macro-economy, the micro-economy of the Downtown is affected. Therefore, the land use policies and decisions of this plan must recognize and respond to the economic objectives of the community as well as the Downtown and other areas.

Residents are quite articulate as to the preferred refinements and improvements to Downtown. They greatly value Downtown and recognize its importance and influence on community character. Among their priorities are:

- ♦ enhancing aesthetics,
- ♦ maintaining its history and architectural integrity,
- ♦ attracting retail anchors,
- ♦ preserving its local businesses,
- ♦ strengthening ties to the University and other areas of the community, and
- ♦ improving access and parking, and mixing commercial and residential uses.

The most significant challenge confronting Downtown is one of economics. In order to be successful the community must take a proactive stance and be willing to entertain bold initiatives. For instance, today there is little apparent opportunity for any substantial development or redevelopment given the existing built environment in and around Downtown. What impact though, could the recently completed recreation center or soon to be constructed University conference center have had if either had been located near Downtown? These are both examples of significant anchors that would have drawn increased traffic and potential patrons to the area, spawning additional opportunities for businesses. This proposition is admittedly of grand scale but is advanced as a possibility for economic reinvigoration of Downtown. A project of this magnitude would require public-private partnership to assemble sufficient land and finance such a significant redevelopment undertaking. Involvement of the City, County, University, Downtown business and landowners could bring a project of this - or something of similar or lesser - scale to fruition.

An overriding emphasis of this plan is community character enhancement. While the appearance of corridors and individual properties, the integrity of neighborhoods, protection of views, and preservation of valuable open space are individually and collectively essential to this vision, there is perhaps no greater opportunity to establish an identity than enhancement of the Downtown character. Care must be taken to ensure that individual improvements and new development honors the building form and

architectural unity of Downtown. Currently, this area is zoned Business as is the entire 3rd Street corridor, U.S. 30/Grand Avenue corridor from 20th Street east, Snowy Range Road corridor west of I-80, and several other areas. The uniqueness of its urban character, architecture, and opportunity for mixed uses, among other reasons, warrants a special Urban Commercial district. This district would have a different set of permitted and conditional uses including upper floor residential use, height and area requirements suitable to an urban environment, and design standards associated with the building form and architecture. Specific provisions of the district might include a required build-to-line at the front property line; zero side yard setbacks; minimum two-story building height; allowance of upper floor residential use and incentives for high-density urban living; and building form requirements and design standards relating to building bulk and scale, historic façade materials and architectural detailing, window and doorway fenestration, awnings and canopy treatments, and sign placement. District provisions must address pedestrian ways and amenities, street trees and planters, gardens and plazas, public art displays, outdoor activities and displays, and other applicable standards.

Also of significance to the future of Downtown is the means of access to, and circulation within, the immediate area, including vehicles as well as bicyclists and pedestrians. A relevant issue is the decision regarding the location of the railroad overpass. There are several alternatives but the two most considered are those on one or both Clark Street and Harney Street. Left solely to traffic movement, the best alternative appears to be overpasses on both Clark and Harney Streets, due to decreased traffic on Reynolds Street, minimal change to traffic on I-80, and the capacity for an additional 2,800 vehicles per day (VPD)⁷. Due to fiscal constraints, the final solution is likely one street or the other.

Enhanced Community Character and Appearance

The physical appearance of Laramie is perhaps, the single most evident glimpse of its economic viability, government pro-activeness, and civic pride. The initial impression of the community is formed by the quality appearance of its development, including the nature of community aesthetics, condition of municipal facilities and spaces, amount and quality of public open space, maintenance of roadways and public infrastructure, and the overall attractiveness of the community. The appearance of the community contributes to quality of life and livability for those who reside in Laramie, as well as those who may be making an investment or relocation decision.

Simply put, beauty adds value to the community. The appearance of a community is one of the foremost influences of value and hence, one of its most regarded assets. Residents take pride in their community and its attractive and interesting places. Businesses also like to locate in attractive environments, which improve their ability to recruit employees, host clients and investors, and continue to invest in their facilities.

Enhancing the character of the community and special areas requires a concerted effort on behalf of both the public and private sectors. From the perspective of the City and County, the development regulations and standards must be written to achieve the preferred outcomes. Without specific requirements for increased open space; landscaping, screening, and buffering; sign control; and standards relating to building bulk and scale, roof design,

⁷ Major Street and Highway System Report, 2004

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and placement of storage and loading areas; the appearance of individual properties and corridors are left to individual rather than collective decisions.

Character and appearance are of top priorities according to a broad cross-section of the community that participated in the public input process. Residents recognize the importance of livability in the success of their economic development and therefore, both desire and expect quality new development and redevelopment. There is a strong desire to improve the entrances to the community with distinctive gateways, enhance the roadway environs with streetscape improvements, increase the amount of green space adjacent to the rights-of-way and throughout the community, add more landscaping and screening of parking areas, control the size and location of signage, incorporate more public displays of art and community history, better manage the appearance of structures and vacant properties, and diligently enforce the City's codes.

Laramie benefits from its location along I-80, which presents an opportunity to cast a positive first impression. But the appearance of corridors is one of the issues raised most often by residents. After all, 3rd Street, Grand Avenue, Snowy Range Road/Clark Street, HWY 130 and 230 and I-80 are the most heavily traveled roadways in the community, used by those who travel them daily and those who are introduced to the community for the first time. The appearance of these corridors may be characterized first, by their wide street sections and second, by large building setbacks and expanses of parking adjacent to the street, limited provision of green space or landscaping, multiple points of ingress and egress interrupting the street frontage, a proliferation of signage (in many cases over-sized and of an unwarranted height), and widely varying building styles and use of materials. Achieving enhanced corridor environments involves policies, programs, regulations, and incentives addressing each of the contributing factors. Enhancement of a single factor will help, but will not result in a positive visual impact. Instead, each of the factors must be handled together to revitalize and re-establish a desired character and appearance. Enhanced aesthetics along the interstate corridor are warranted to relay a message as to the civic pride of the community.



The Laramie Range Mountains provide a scenic backdrop to the entrance from the east.

There are two separate yet related components involved in improving the appearance of corridors. First is the street right-of-way itself, which is owned and controlled by the City, County, or the Wyoming Department of Transportation. Within the public right-of-way, the design of the pavement surface, including whether the roadway is undivided or divided by a raised median, improved with curb and gutter, or constructed of asphalt or concrete, contributes to the appearance of the corridor. Maintenance of the pavement surface, as well as the open space within the right-of-way, is also significant to its visual appeal. The preservation of natural features, such as vegetation and wetlands, and provision of green space and landscaping helps to soften the roadway environs and enhance views. The design of structures, such as bridges and overpasses, retaining walls, and drainage improvements, are also important elements in the overall design scheme.

Each of these improvements is largely at the discretion of the City (in coordination with WYDOT for the state-owned facilities), as well as the County in the peripheral areas.

The second component involves private property, which must be either regulated or provided with incentives to achieve the desired development outcomes. Typically, regulations and standards pertaining to building appearance, signage, lighting, noise, landscaping, screening and buffering, and open space are applied city-wide or to the properties within a certain distance of specified corridors. Incentives for compliance with the standards may include expedited approval, increased density (for residential uses) or intensity (for non-residential uses), relaxed parking requirements (meeting specified conditions), reduced dimensional standards, or financial participation through grants or when done in conjunction with a public infrastructure improvement.

Trees and vegetation, or a lack thereof, contribute significantly to the appearance of the community, as seen in the tree area and several other good examples in the community. Landscaping is useful in the design of individual sites, corridors, and districts to enhance aesthetics, frame quality views, buffer adjacent uses, and screen activity areas or undesirable views, as well as to serve an important environmental function by altering the microclimate and filtering contaminants from storm runoff. People are naturally attracted to pleasant environments, whether they are well-designed neighborhoods, commercial centers, or public spaces. The value of landscaping and open space must therefore, not be overlooked.

The appearance of the community entrances from Interstate 80 and U.S. 30/Grand Avenue, U.S. 287/3rd Street, State Highway 130/Snowy Range Road/Clark Street, and Curtis Street, as well as U.S. 287 North and South and State Highway 230, are important. Residents are proud of their community and would like to portray a positive first impression on those who visit or pass through the community for the first time. The entrances offer opportunities to establish an image, communicate community values, and attract attention to local attractions and destinations. Formal points of entry or gateways also define the boundaries to distinguish it from territory outside of its jurisdiction. Gateways form the community's physical identity. Entryway enhancement to establish formal gateways include improvements to the roadway, such as a landscaped median, increased green space, preservation of natural features and vegetation, special pavement treatments, significant entry monuments, liberal open space and well-designed landscaping, upgraded lighting standards, way-finding signage, and well-maintained and attractive adjacent properties.

In addition to the gateways to the community, there are also multiple



The very first impression of the community is the gateway improvement itself, which could be further enhanced with a larger, permanent monument, a landscaped roadway median, landform contouring, and street trees.

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

opportunities for enhancement of special district portals. Examples include notable areas that distinguish themselves by way of their character, such as Downtown, the University of Wyoming, and individual neighborhoods. Portals to these districts create identity, form a sense of belonging for those who visit or live there, and create additional opportunities for aesthetic enhancement around the community.

Lastly, the City, Albany County, University of Wyoming, WyoTech, Albany County School District, and other public or semi-public entities and agencies have the opportunity to lead by example. There are several models of highly attractive and notable structures and properties that contribute to the character of the community. For instance, the new recreation center, Downtown, several campus buildings, the parks and trail system, and other individual buildings and neighborhoods are local landmarks that communicate to the public a message of community pride and heritage. These facilities must be acknowledged for their presence and contribution to the fabric of the community by continued diligence in their upkeep and preservation.

EXISTING LAND USE INVENTORY

Reflected in *Map 3.1, Existing Land Use*, is a map delineating the existing use of land within the City and the area around the fringes. A detailed description of each character type is provided in the section entitled, *Community Character Types*. The land use categories are as follows:

- ♦ Agriculture
- ♦ Countryside
- ♦ Estate Residential
- ♦ Suburban Residential
- ♦ Suburban Commercial
- ♦ Auto-Urban Single Family
- ♦ Auto-Urban Multi-Family
- ♦ Urban Residential
- ♦ Urban Commercial
- ♦ Auto-Urban Commercial
- ♦ Urban University
- ♦ Industrial
- ♦ Special Uses (such as the airport)
- ♦ Natural
- ♦ Parks/Open Space

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The essence of comprehensive planning is a recognition that the community does not have to wait to react to development. Rather, it can determine where and of what character development will be. Through active community support, this plan can ensure that new development meets certain standards and that it aids in achieving the desired community character.

As a guide for land development, the Future Land Use Plan captures and develops into policies and regulations the community's values regarding how, when, and where Laramie

will grow in the future. This is significant since the findings and recommendations contained in this plan provide the basis for decisions pertaining to the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, which are the primary tools to implement the plan.

Future Land Use Classifications Specifications and Proposed Changes

The current zoning code provides for a cumulative series of zoning districts, which do not clearly establish distinctive character. As displayed in *Map 3.2, Future Land Use Plan*, the agricultural district is for those areas that are intended to remain undeveloped, particularly through the horizon of this plan. Two districts, estate and countryside are designed to provide a rural, exurban lifestyle without compromising the freestanding character of the city. Land use defined as estate is intended to be closer to the city with some improvements in order to provide rural larger lot living or clustering subdivision. Countryside is intended to be the transition between agricultural land and estate allowing limited development in cluster scenarios or with subdivisions with the agricultural characteristics still in place. The residential uses are consolidated into the following classifications designations: suburban, auto-urban single-family, auto-urban multiple family and urban residential. These districts specify the allowable density, with an increase in open space corresponding with increased density. Bonuses would recognize the need

for higher densities near major roads and non-residential land uses, and would also be given for the provision of low and moderate income housing. The urban residential district is for portions of the existing tree area and for areas surrounding the downtown.

There are three commercial classifications, including auto-urban commercial, suburban commercial, and urban commercial, each with corresponding increases in intensity. The auto-urban commercial district is for a majority of the commercially-zoned and used areas, although the increased open space and other standards would enhance the appearance of these areas. The suburban commercial classification is the equivalent of a neighborhood commercial classification, meaning that it has standards to ensure compatibility with adjacent and nearby residential uses. The urban commercial district is reserved for Downtown, which is unique in terms of its building form and scale.

The Urban University classification is new, which is intended to increase density and intensity of uses adjacent to the campus of the University, which

could also apply to the campuses of WyoTech and Laramie County Community College (LCCC), with adequate design and performance standards to mitigate the impacts. The forethought is to increase near-campus housing to increase walking and bicycling. The classification would also encourage mixed use to provide convenient services to student residents.

TABLE 3.1
Future Land Use Classifications

Use	Existing Zoning District	Intensity (Unit/Acre)	Avg. Lot Area (acre)
Natural	O	1/1,000	n/a
Agriculture	AG	1/1,000	n/a
Countryside	LR, AG	1/40-2.5	4.0-2.5
Estate	LR	1/1	1
Suburban	LR, R1	1/7,000	7,000 sf.
Auto-Urban Single-Family	R1	1/4,000	4,000 sf.
Auto-Urban Multi-Family	R2, R2M	1/6,000	6,000 sf.
Urban Residential	R2M, R3	1/4,800	4,800 sf.
Suburban Commercial	NB, B1, C2	n/a	n/a
Auto-Urban Commercial	NB, B1, C2	n/a	n/a
Urban Commercial	NB, B1, B2, C2	n/a	Apt. over commercial
Urban University	R3	n/a	n/a
Industrial	I1, I2, LM, IP	n/a	n/a

The requisite standards for open space and densities for residential uses and the landscape surface ratio (LSR) and floor area ratios (FAR) for nonresidential districts should be further examined. Further study is warranted to refine and modify the applicable performance standards, which would be done as part of a zoning study and amendment process.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER TYPES

Laramie has identified its future vision as an economically balanced, highly attractive, family-oriented, small-town community. To implement this vision, a means of converting this statement of future intent into land use policies and development regulations must be formed. A community character analysis was used to characterize the existing development and to document the land use patterns and design elements that form the character of individual developments and the community as a whole. This approach allows the formulation of standards to achieve the desired community character and homogeneity to remain intact.

Each of the community character types described below is present in Laramie with varying degrees of significance. The more readily identifiable are the:

- Urban character in Downtown between 1st Street and 4th Street and from University Avenue to Custer Street;
- Auto-urban nature of commercial development along Grand Avenue, 3rd Street, Snowy Range Road, and segments of I-80 and, to a lesser extent, along other arterial and collector roadways;
- Industrial nature along the railroad and north and south along U.S. 287;
- Auto-urban residential areas containing manufactured home communities and apartment complexes;
- Suburban character of neighborhoods throughout the community;
- Juxtaposed suburban and urban nature of the University campus with tall buildings settled within large central open space areas;
- Sparsely developing countryside and agricultural rangelands surrounding the community; and,
- Natural areas along the Laramie River, Spring Creek, Pioneer Canal, and the Laramie Range Mountains.

The range of community character types and their functions are as follows:

Natural Character

Natural areas are constrained for development due to features such as streams and floodplains, high water table, depth of bedrock, or severe slopes. These areas are prominent around Laramie, including the Laramie Range Mountains, Laramie River, Spring Creek, Pioneer Canal, aquifer protection area, ridgelines, valued open spaces, and the spring areas. The intensity is very low with more than 1,000 acres per dwelling unit as assigned in *Table 3.1, Future Land Use Classifications*.



Natural



Agriculture



Countryside



Estate



Suburban Residential



Agriculture Character

The character of this rural area is dominated by agricultural use where homes are an accessory to agriculture. While agriculture may also be a dominant land use in the Countryside areas, which accommodate a rural residential lifestyle while allowing agricultural use to continue, in the more rural areas agriculture is intended as the sole use. The landscape is accented by farmsteads, barns, fences lining farm fields and areas for livestock, and a virtually unbroken horizon, which contribute to its rural character. This land is not to be developed within the horizon of this plan. Ranch land is likely to have more than 1,000 acres per dwelling unit and thus no density is assigned in *Table 3.1, Future Land Use Classifications*.

Countryside Character

This type of rural character includes sparse residential acreages, which are often in the outlying areas beyond the city limits where the first signs of suburbanization are present. Examples of a countryside character may be seen in the outlying areas around Laramie, particularly to the north and south, where dwellings are on larger acreages. The common fate of these areas is often an eventual conversion to a suburban estate (more dense) character as additional acreages are developed in near proximity to these rural areas. Very low intensities are needed to preserve a countryside character, which can be achieved by vegetative screening and flexibility as to locating homes where they are less visible. This character type may be sustained through stringent limits on minimum lot sizes or permanent protection of prime agricultural land and open space. Countryside should consider clustered one acre lots or less with open space, which would allow landowners increased density while maintaining rural character.

Estate Character

This type of suburban character is not common in Laramie although there are several examples around its periphery in the County. An estate character requires higher density development on larger properties (approximately one acre), with less open space than Countryside, thereby producing a visual openness. As a result of larger lot sizes, open space and vegetation are intended to be the more dominate views, while the buildings are to be apparent, yet secondary to the landscape. Dependent upon the size of the home and its percent of coverage and location on the lot, the estate character may more closely resemble a larger version of the typical suburban character. To achieve an estate character, the design of these subdivisions must actively seek to imitate more rural areas through the use of rural street sections without sidewalks, vast open space throughout the development, the use of rural fence types and/or hedgerows to divide properties, the preservation or planting of native vegetation along property boundaries, and generous building setbacks on all sides.

Suburban Character

This community character type is different from the urban and auto-urban types. Distinguishing factors of suburban character are increased open space, both on individual sites and cumulatively throughout a development, and the preservation or use of vegetation within and between developments, which helps to create a more even balance between building mass and “green mass.” Rather than creating a sense of enclosure by buildings, as in an urban environment, trees and vegetation form a very different sense of enclosure.

The physical distinction between a suburban and urban (or auto-urban) character is the level of use intensiveness or magnitude of activity affecting adjacent uses. All too often, the open space that contributed to the suburban character of a neighborhood is abutting land that is not yet developed and open views that are not yet closed thus making this “borrowed” open space. Permanent open space should be incorporated into the development to sustain its original character.

Suburban Residential

Suburban environments are sought as relief from more intensive urban settings, thereby leading to the popularity of contemporary neighborhoods denoted for their larger lots, privacy fences, and open areas. This classification would be considered your typical suburban subdivision.

Suburban Commercial

Suburban Commercial fills the needs of the immediate surrounding suburban neighborhood. Intensity is usually much less than in an automobile oriented commercial area. Suburban Commercial areas also include the same preservation or use of vegetation within and between developments as does the Suburban classification, in order to help the development blend into the primarily residential character of the neighborhood.

Auto-Urban Character

This character type is most commonly associated with an automobile-oriented commercial, residential or business strip. The primary difference in urban and auto-urban characters is the role of the automobile in its site design. Rather than buildings oriented to the street, as in an urban setting like that found in Downtown, auto-urban environments are characterized by large parking lots surrounding the buildings.

Although the development intensity of auto-urban areas is usually less than that found within an urban setting, this is commonly due to lower land values and design preference, as opposed to development regulations. Auto-urban uses require a significant amount of space for high levels of automobile dependent interaction, i.e. large surface parking lots with multiple points of



Auto-Urban Multiple Family



Auto-Urban Commercial



Urban Residential



Urban Commercial



Urban University



Industrial

ingress/egress. As a result, buildings are constructed at the back of the site nearest neighboring uses and away from their roadway frontage. Auto-urban uses also have a greater reliance on site access, thereby adding to the number of driveways and access points. The result is expansive parking areas that dominate the front setback and, thus, the character of the development.

Auto-urban uses, with very few exceptions, consume more land for streets, parking, and other vehicular use areas than is covered by buildings, which commonly exceeds a two-to-one ratio. This type of development design demands large sites and proximity to a high-

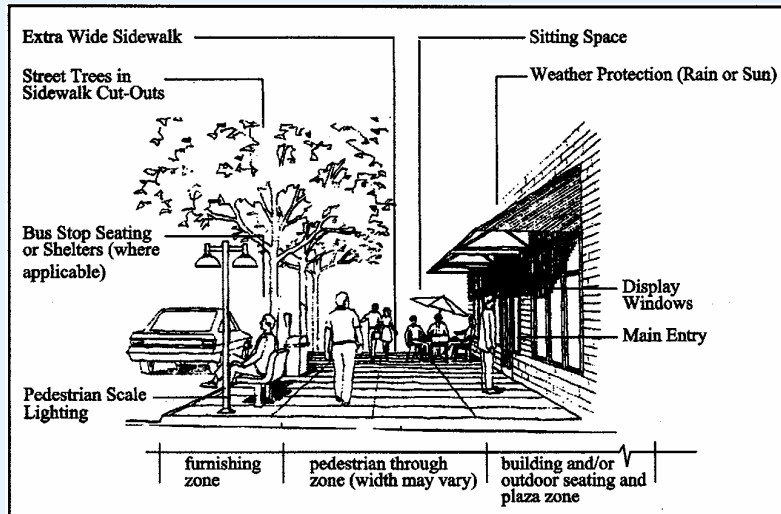
volume arterial roadway, which diminishes the importance of architecture and results in reduced open space and commonly, elimination of natural features.

Auto-Urban Single Family

Typically defined as a mix of single-family and attached housing. New development should provide parks and public open space in every new development. Access to units is from on-street driveways where their frontage is dominated by garages or parking lots.

Auto-Urban Multi-Family

This designation includes apartments and townhouse-style attached single-family units manufactured home communities, and site-built homes on small lots with open space devoted to play areas and



Creating a pedestrian-scale Downtown streetscape contributes to the enclosure of space reminiscent of an urban environment. In Laramie, two story buildings and a narrowed vehicular pathway, with parking on either side, helps to enclose space.

perimeter green space. A high relative amount of impervious surface is devoted to buildings and parking lots, and increased building enclosure.

Auto-Urban Commercial

A mixture of retail, service, and office uses where the retail is predominantly single-story and the office and service businesses are generally two-story. Fast food restaurants, gas stations, and strip shopping centers like those found along Grand Avenue and 3rd Street are the dominant commercial images of an Auto-Urban Commercial character.

Industrial

New construction will typically be within a business park development with a mixture of industry, wholesale, warehousing, and some office uses. This area is still largely dependent upon the automobile for access and has a high level of intensity when it comes to the uses allowed at these sites.

Urban Character

Urban areas are historically the center of commerce, culture, and entertainment in the community. The features that contribute to an urban character similar to that found in Downtown are the proximity of uses to the public ways, with little or no building setbacks,

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and a strong pedestrian orientation at the sidewalk level. An urban center is designed with an intensity of use to draw people into close contact, where congestion and personal encounters are both expected and essential for a vibrant community center.

The width of a downtown street in relation to height of the block face, is essential for creating an “urban” environment. This environment is formed Downtown as a result of the predominant two-story building face abutting a moderately wide pedestrian pathway (sidewalk) and a roadway narrowed by diagonal parking.

Urban Residential

Typically defined as a single-family and attached housing. New development is recommended to provide parks and public open space. This differs from Auto-urban Single-Family primarily by providing all garage access from alleys to create a pedestrian streetscape. In addition multi-floored and mixed use units can allow for apartment or condominium living.

Urban Commercial

Downtown Laramie represents an urban character as a result of its high floor-to-site area ratios (multiple stories) with zero setbacks along the street front, uses that are common of today’s downtown environments, and a mixed pedestrian and vehicular orientation.

Increased population, a residential component, infill, redevelopment, appropriately scaled streetscape improvements, kiosks, awnings or canopies, projecting business signs, public plazas and gathering areas, and employment in these areas can further enhance the Urban Commercial classification.

Urban University

The Urban University district is intended to replicate the types of physical characteristics found in the Urban Residential and Commercial areas, but not necessarily on campus. This may be accomplished with higher residential densities and an increased intensity of mixed use. To promote urban living and walking in close proximity to the campus, taller residential buildings are envisioned to have first floor retail uses, thereby offering convenient services to student residents. An urban-scaled campus-town environment could also be created, being careful not to directly compete with Downtown, but offering student hang-outs, a vending depot, study areas, a book store, campus health services, and other needed outlets and services.



Figure 3.1 Development clustering as shown in the lower example is an alternative approach for conventional subdivision development (displayed in the upper example), which allows an equivalent density while conserving natural resources, preserving open space, and protecting recharge zones.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS AND ACTION STATEMENTS

In this section the goals and action statements for each element of the plan are set forth. The goals and action statements are to be used as a starting point to achieve the overall vision of this plan.

Land Use Policies Goals and Action Statements

1. The City's land use pattern shall focus new development and significant redevelopment where adequate public services and utility capacity are already in place or projected for improvement, including streets, water, wastewater, and drainage infrastructure.
2. The area around the airport shall be reserved for appropriate noise-sensitive uses. Any development that encroaches into the defined noise area should be limited and meet standards of construction for noise reduction.
3. Development of areas along the Laramie River, Spring Creek, Pioneer Canal, and other watercourses and their riparian areas shall be sensitive to the environment. Development shall not occur within the floodplain unless there is compliance with stringent floodplain management practices to maintain adequate capacity for storage and conveyance of flood waters.
4. Development shall always reflect the relationship between the zoning of a property, the community character designation and any local neighborhood goals.
5. The aquifer protection zone, spring and wellhead areas, floodplains, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive or valuable areas shall be reserved as natural areas and "greenbelt" preserves for wildlife and recreation, whenever possible, and used as open space buffers between incompatible land uses, whenever appropriate.
6. Space shall be maintained adjacent to each natural drainage course so as to facilitate future development of walkways and trails. Any drainage structures, bridges, or other improvements shall be designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, either by allowance for adequate head room, a widened pavement section, or mitigation of barriers.
7. Each of the ridgelines, particularly those in close proximity to the community, shall be protected from encroachment of incompatible development that may be harmful to the overall community character. View shed protection standards should be in place to establish necessary setback and other dimensional requirements.
8. Development form shall be such that neighborhoods are highly walkable, meaning there is a mixture of use within convenient distance such that automobiles are not essential. Appropriate standards must be in place to ensure the compatibility and visual cohesiveness of mixed use development, with provisions for buffering and impact mitigation.
9. Neighborhoods shall be designed with a variety of housing types and sizes thereby offering affordable living options in all areas.

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10. Development shall be focused first on vacant infill areas, and planned to occur sequentially outward as adequate facilities are available.
11. Areas outside of the defined urban growth area shall maintain very limited density. In certain instances, when compliant with the land use plan, the allowable density should be clustered to preserve views and openness.
12. Development patterns shall provide for transitions and buffering between various land use intensities. Where land uses of incompatible intensities abut, there should be adequate bufferyards to separate them.
13. New development or redevelopment on “in-fill” parcels in developed areas shall maintain compatibility with existing uses and the prevailing land use pattern in the area.
14. Areas of historic value shall be maintained and enhanced in accordance with preservation guidelines and development standards.
15. Residential areas shall not be situated next to intense nonresidential uses without provisions for increased separation and bufferyards. Less intense nonresidential development may be appropriate next to residential development with performance standards to mitigate adverse impacts.
16. Multiple-family housing shall be developed at a density and scale that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and available utilities and roadway capacity. Larger multi-family developments should be located on sites with adequate space for off-street parking, accessory structures, and recreational activity, and toward the edge of single-family residential areas where higher traffic generation and taller building heights can be better accommodated.
17. Uses that commonly have moderate- to large-scale assemblies of people such as churches, funeral homes, membership organizations, and other institutions, should be appropriately located on adequate size parcels with sufficient space to accommodate the off-street parking and accessory needs. Such uses should be located so as to minimize any adverse or undue significant burden on adjacent or adjoining land uses, as well as that portion of the street network.
18. Commercial development shall be concentrated in nodes at major intersections and other appropriate locations along highway frontages and primary roadways, as opposed to scattered and/or “strip” development, to encourage more pedestrian-oriented commercial settings.
19. Smaller scale neighborhood retail and service uses shall be located at intersections of collector and arterial streets and at the edge of logical neighborhood areas – or within neighborhoods where suitable sites exist and conditions are appropriate to balance compatibility with convenience.
20. Industrial activities shall be conducted within enclosed structures, whenever possible, and outdoor activities and/or storage should be properly screened from public view.
21. Higher-quality industrial and heavy commercial development shall be encouraged in industrial park settings (e.g. lower intensity uses, enhanced exterior elevations, increased amenities, and open space).
22. Redevelopment of the brownfield sites shall consider the nature and character of the

The purpose of transferable development rights (TDR) is to protect sensitive development areas from encroaching intensive development. It allows development rights within areas that are less desirable for intensive urban development, such as the designated agricultural and rural areas, to transfer their right to development to areas that are more suitable for intensive development. In the areas designated for more intensive development, zoning allows higher densities and intensities of use.

Source: Ohio State University Factsheet

existing adjacent development, with adequate provisions and precautions so as not to cause undue impacts or burdens. Where feasible, consideration should be given for reuse as public open space.

23. Development near or at entrances to the city shall be, or enhanced through overlay zoning districts and specific development standards provisions.
24. Regulations and development standards shall be developed in conjunction with Albany County for areas located within the one mile boundary.

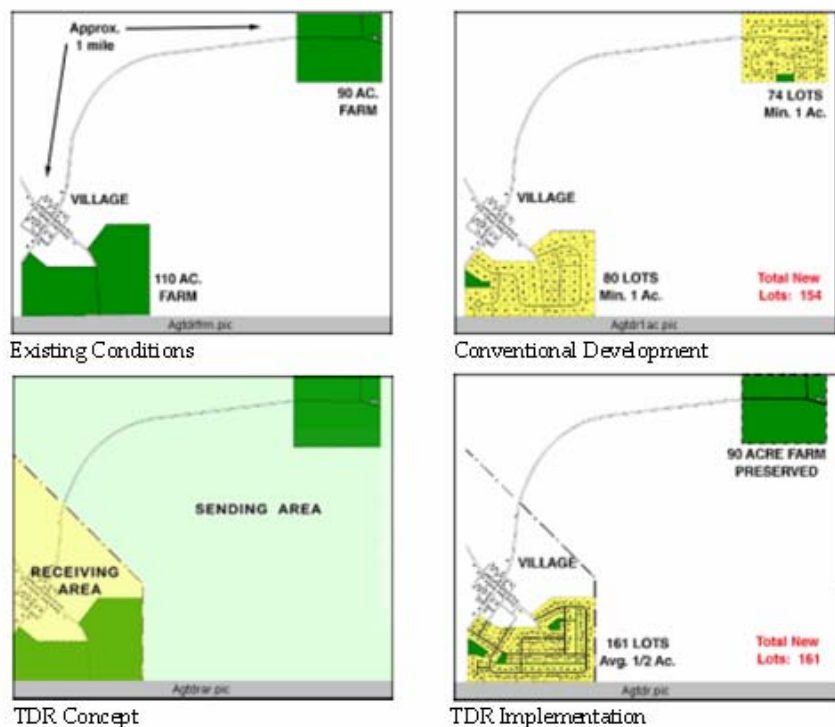
Environmental Consciousness, Protection and Sensitive Planning Goals and Action Statements

1. The City should consider annexation of a defined critical area for the Casper Aquifer that is subject to increased development pressure. The boundaries of the “critical area” must be defined, but are intended for those areas that are highly vulnerable to increased development.
2. Any development or subdivision within the aquifer protection zone contiguous to the city should be considered for annexation with the approval of development or subdivision.
3. Consider revisions to the Casper Aquifer Protection Plan in conjunction with Albany County to address concerns along with issues such as monitoring, covenants,

sensitive areas, development, protection and allowed uses.

4. Amend the zoning and subdivision regulations to encourage development clustering and alternative subdivision designs. Clustered development areas should be located in areas outside of the protection area or at a minimum, in an area of less sensitivity. Other designs such as conservation (50 percent open space) and preservation (80 percent open space) development should be allowed (Figure 3.1).

5. Examine the use of conservation easements in an effort to protect and preserve the Casper Aquifer.
6. For any development within,



Source: 1000 Friends of Minnesota

Figure 3.2 Transferable Development Rights (TDR) - The developable portions of the aquifer protection zone could be subject to TDR to transfer the allowable density to a designated “receiving zone” within the City.



Preservation of the ridgeline that frames the community's north side is essential to protect this highly valued view shed.

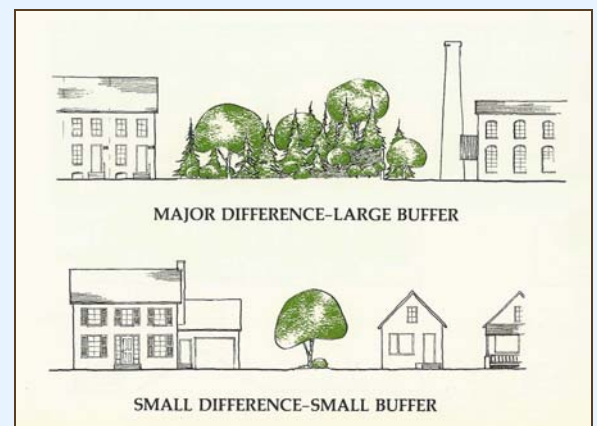
adjacent to, or having any potential impact on the aquifer protection zone, due to levels of water consumption, storm runoff, or individual use sensitivities, require as a condition of approval the placement of monitoring wells to regularly test for increased chemical and bacteriological pollutants.

7. Consider the option of establishing a permanent conservation easement over the defined aquifer protection zone.

8. Consider adoption of provisions allowing transferable development rights (TDR), for developments in protected areas (*Figure 3.2*).

Open Space Preservation Goals and Action Statements

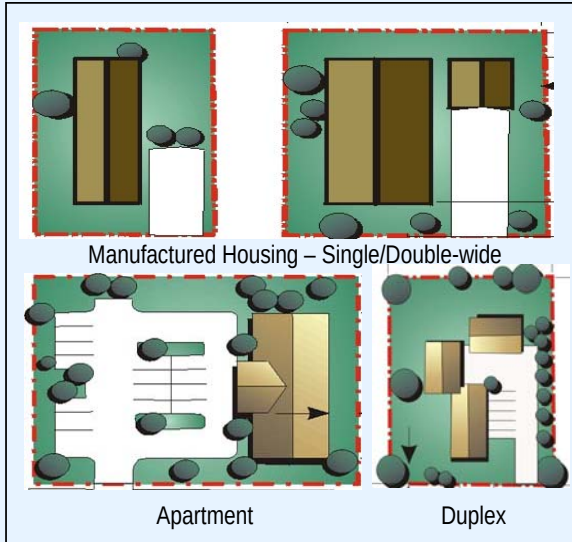
- 1) Amend the zoning ordinances to include and reflect community character issues identified in the Natural, Agriculture, Countryside, Estate, Suburban, Auto-Urban Single Family, Auto-Urban Multi-family, Auto-Urban Commercial, Urban Residential, Urban Commercial, Urban University and Industrial community character classifications.
- 2) Consider developing mixed-use zoning districts to avoid creating nonconforming situations and variances. Protection from the encroachment of incompatible uses and development types should be strived for especially within single-family neighborhoods.
- 3) Incorporate decision criteria such as use and character of adjacent and surrounding properties, for all zoning request considerations. Harmony of the neighborhood should be a key factor in the decision making process.
- 4) Amend bufferyard requirements so variations are allowed based upon the character of the subject and abutting properties, rather than designating the requirements according to major use categories (residential, commercial and industrial).
- 5) Amend zoning ordinance provisions requiring designation of permanent conservation easements for the required open space areas. Alternatively, all or a portion of these areas may be dedicated to the City to comply with



To be effective, bufferyards should vary in their width and/or intensity of screening depending on the intensity of adjacent uses, whether within the same or different zoning districts.

parkland dedication requirements (*Chapter 4, Parks and Recreation*).

- 6) Annex the land encompassing the ridgeline to the north of the community running north of the Indian Paintbrush Elementary School, Alta Vista Subdivision to the W-Hill area, to enact development control of this important community view shed.
- 7) Amend the zoning regulations to incorporate ridgeline development standards to protect the ridgeline from incompatible development that would breach the horizon and permanently alter this vista and natural asset.
- 8) Investigate the legal authority of the City and/or County to regulate public utilities, including wind generation farms. As necessary, coordinate with the state to determine what role they or the City or County may have in establishing placement criteria as it relates to the public interest. This may include annexation, zoning regulation along with other applicable rules.



A housing palette leads to more housing types and choices. The dimensional criteria ensure a consistent character.

- 9) Designate the area around the periphery of the community, particularly outside of the designated 20-year growth area (*Chapter 7, Urban Growth*), as Agriculture or Countryside development. Development clustering or no development at all should be required so as to preserve open views of the surrounding rangelands.
- 10) On the Future Land Use Plan, balance the amount of land designated as Auto-Urban Single Family and Suburban so as to increase the amount of overall open space within the community.
- 11) Develop and enforce development standards within

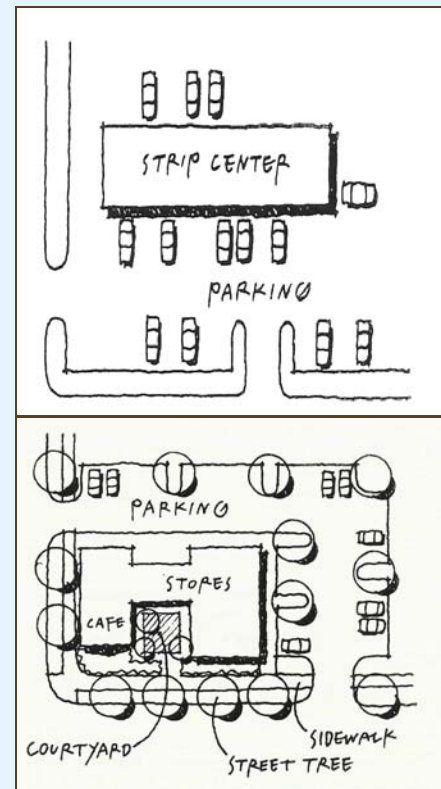
the one mile boundary.

Land Use Compatibility Goals and Action Statements

1. Based on the adopted land use plan and update of the zoning code, initiate City-wide rezoning.
2. Allow increased density along land abutting arterial roads and highways, in an effort to offset higher land and development costs.
3. Amend the zoning regulations to reduce the minimum front setback to allow up to 0-foot front setbacks.
4. Amend zoning code to address design standards relating to streetscape and property line buffering, monument signage, and standards for blank walls adjacent to street right-of-way.
5. Amend the following planned unit development (PUD) standards:
 - a) Permit the planned unit development (PUD) standard in all zoning districts, subject to the increased design and performance standards. Underlying zoning will not restrict the uses allowed in the PUD.

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

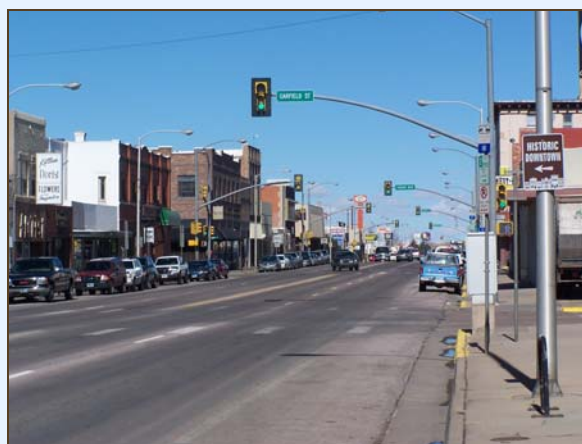
- b) Rather than a flat 20 percent open space requirement, the required ratio of open space should correspond to the increase in density, which secures the character of development.
 - c) Develop density bonus to encourage the use of a PUD and to encourage greater open space, which effectively compensates the landowner with higher development efficiency.
 - d) A minimum number of housing types should be required, each with dimensional criteria to preserve development character.
 - e) Rather than establishing the bonuses that apply should low-income or accessible housing be provided, a certain percentage should be required. Specific design standards should also be in place to manage the location, scale, and appearance of these units.
 - f) Provide different options and the ability for developers wishing to develop mixed use developments.
6. Conduct a detailed land use and zoning study to define the boundaries distinguishing proposed new neighborhood conservation districts. Distinguishing factors include lot size, street or alley access, floor area ratio, and landscape volume.
 7. Develop new zoning districts to reflect the character of downtown and the University of Wyoming.
 8. Develop design guidelines for specific existing neighborhoods to allow for protection of the character when redevelopment, teardown or infill occurs.



The use of a “build-to” line versus a large front yard setback shifts the placement of parking, thereby forging a very different corridor environment.

Downtown Success and Economic Sustainability Goals and Action Statements

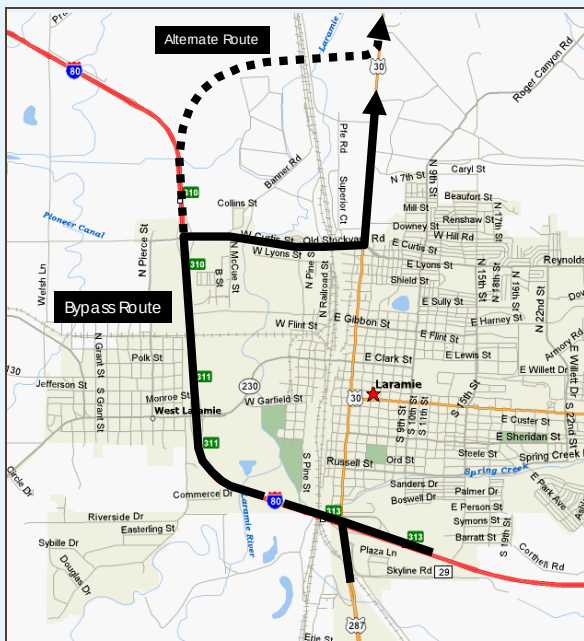
1. Develop and approve a Downtown Plan. Items to be included should involve:
 - a. Market and economic study focused on the Downtown and its immediate environs to include analysis of its current economic conditions and contributions, such as taxable values, sales and property tax collections, its relative market area, and its capture of the local economic base.
 - b. Prepare a branding and marketing plan to determine the portrayed image of the Downtown district. To be successful, Downtown must have its own character and identity, uniquely distinguished from the rest of Laramie and other communities.
 - c. Fiscal impact models to gauge the economic impact of proposed new development. Models should also be used to evaluate the effect of business located



The Downtown offers both uniqueness and intrigue, which could be heightened with a strong visual identity – something to set it apart from other areas of town and particularly, other communities.



There are significant opportunities for redevelopment on the fringes of the Downtown core, which could extend and transition the urban character while offering increased business opportunities and an expanded tax base.



A designated truck bypass route would mitigate the impacts of heavy truck traffic traveling on 3rd Street through the Downtown area.

outside the Downtown.

- d. Detailed inventory of building space, including both ground and upper floors, and its current occupancy and utilization, specifically identifying leaseable space. Other factors such as operation times, building conditions, code issues, ADA accessibility, lease rates, parking, vehicular and pedestrian access and other contributing factors should be considered.
- e. A business mix assessment should be prepared to identify the current mix of businesses and the optimum future mix of uses.
- f. Strategies and necessary incentives to attract new businesses to Downtown Laramie. However, care must be taken to attract businesses that complement the Downtown and its local flavor.
- g. Constraints analysis to identify limiting factors for development, redevelopment, and improved utilization of Downtown properties and buildings.
- h. Financing mechanisms will be essential to identify means for offering incentives, attracting redevelopment, overcoming code compliance issues, and assisting in physical enhancement efforts.
- i. Conduct a redevelopment feasibility study for areas on the north and south fringes of the Downtown core. The study should inventory existing property ownerships, buildings, and occupancies; those vacant or for sale; assess the current taxable values and revenue generated by the properties and businesses; and evaluate the market and economic potential for redevelopment. The feasibility assessment must gauge the warrant for redevelopment given expected market conditions and the likelihood to increase occupancy, values, and revenues. Various funding mechanisms, such as tax increment financing (TIF), should be evaluated as to their feasibility. The candidate areas are as follows:

- i. To the north of the Downtown core, the candidate area is between University Avenue on the south and Clark Street on the north, stretching from 1st Street to 4th Street. This area could offer a large-

scale, mixed residential/non-residential use redevelopment project, particularly if the Clark Street overpass were to be relocated to Harney Street.

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- ii. The southern area is between Custer and Sheridan Streets on the north and south, respectively, 1st Street to the west and 4th Street to the east. Given the location of the railroad depot and older buildings, this area could potentially serve as an arts district.
2. Amend the zoning ordinance to include a new Urban Commercial district, with height and area regulations suitable to retain the current urban character of Downtown.
3. Create portal entry enhancements to form a sense of arrival into Downtown along both Grand Avenue and 3rd Street. Portal entries could be located on 3rd Street and Clark Street on the north at Grand Avenue and 5th Street to the east and 3rd and Custer to the south, which would give form and demarcate entry to a “Downtown District”.
4. In coordination with WYDOT, conduct a traffic engineering and geometric design study for 3rd Street through the Downtown area. The importance of this study is to calm traffic thereby easing the movement and improving the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians crossing this major artery, which currently acts as a barrier to Downtown. The study should evaluate the feasibility and plan for rerouting heavy truck traffic from 3rd Street to I-80, exiting on Curtis Street east to U.S. 287 North, or an alternate new alignment to the north.
5. Consider temporary closure of 2nd Street between Garfield and Iverson Streets for special Downtown events and community activities. Rather than permanent closure, temporary closure could be accommodated with retractable bollards, signage, and lighting.
6. Continue support for downtown organization/programs such as DDA, DLBA and Main Street.

Community and Special Area Character Enhancement Goals and Action Statements

1. Rezone the commercial frontage of Grand Avenue, 3rd Street, Snowy Range Road, and applicable portions of I-80 as Auto-Urban Commercial. Rezoning will achieve the intended buffering effect on any size parcel, offering complete flexibility to the developer while enhancing these areas.
2. In accordance with the Land Use Plan, rezone commercial parcels in other areas as Suburban Commercial, which has a minimum landscape surface area of 35 percent. This district includes provisions to ensure improved compatibility and design cohesiveness with the adjacent and surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Incorporate into the development code a dynamic bufferyard (*Figure 3.3*) model, which establishes a set standard between, and in certain cases within, each of the character-based zoning districts. The dynamic nature of the model allows an applicant to determine their own preferred method of achieving the standard through a combination of bufferyard width, landscape material selection and density, earthen berms, and fences or walls may be used in various arrangements, each meeting the

Tax increment financing (TIF) funds are allocated to a designated project area from an increase in the tax revenue generated by the increased value of the properties located within the project area. The TIF revenue provides a cash flow to fund public improvements on a year-by-year basis, and/or amortize bonds which have been issued to capitalize development programs within the renewal area.

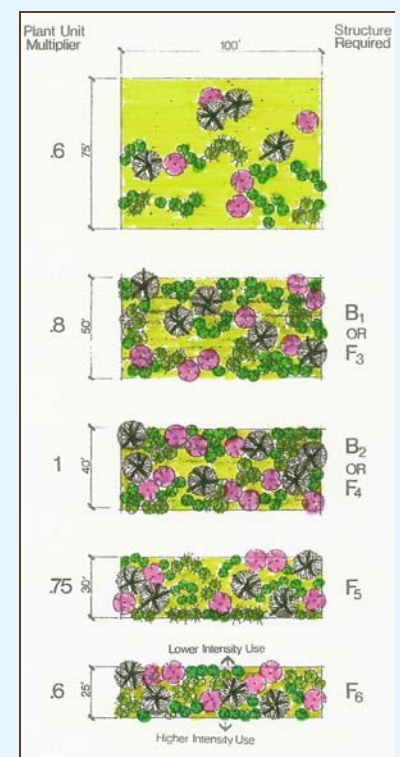
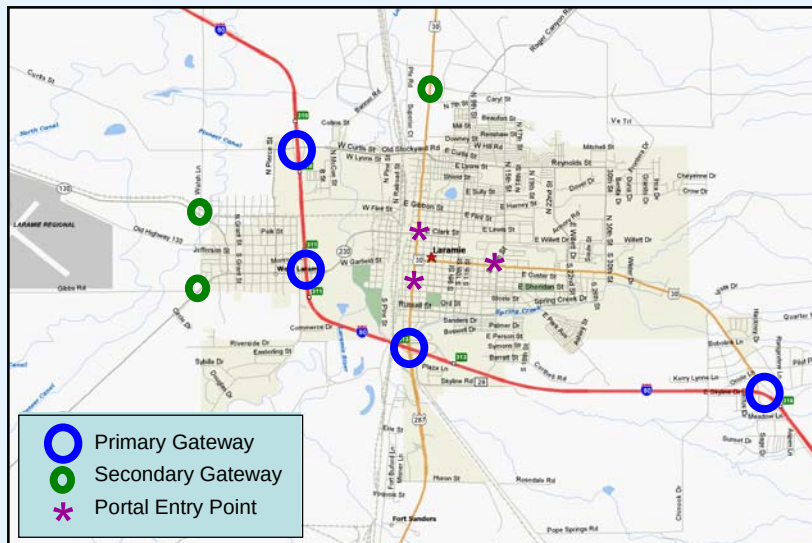


Figure 3.3 A dynamic bufferyard model establishes the prescribed opacity standards between districts, and allows a landowner to choose the means for achieving it.



The use of monument signage and added green space can have a significant visual impact on roadway environs.

4. Adopt into the development code building design standards. Use of these standards throughout the community, and particularly along each of the primary corridors and entranceways, will greatly enhance the aesthetic character of development.
5. Amend the City's current screening standards⁸ to require that structures of consistent materials and colors to the principal building be used when adjacent to or within a specified distance of an arterial or collector road or alternatively, along specified roadways.
6. Amend the City's sign regulations⁹ to identify both permitted and prohibited signs. Issues such as, the allowable size of a sign within 15 inches of the exterior walls of a building, maximum allowable size, distance from the street right-of-way, square footage bonuses, monument versus pole mount, residential signs and billboards among many other issues should be addressed.
7. Adopt fencing standards and incorporate them into the subdivision regulations. The location, type, and design of subdivision fencing should be submitted and approved concurrent with the final plat. Along arterial roadways, the fencing should have decorative columns and relief at least every 200 feet or other similar standard.
8. Coordinate with WYDOT along the I-80 corridor to establish a greenbelt corridor, which may be used for landscaping, berming, and walls to improve the "front door" appearance of the community and to act as a noise barrier.



There highest priorities for gateways are at each of the I-80 interchanges followed by the secondary gateway locations. The portal entries may be done by the Main Street group or the University, in coordination with the City.

9. Establish more significant gateways at each of the community entranceways. Gateway treatments should include large permanent monuments, extensive landscaping leading to and around the entry point, lighting, a boulevard road section (where possible), well-manicured open space, and textured or patterned pavement. Each of the overpasses and interchanges at Grand Avenue, Vista Drive, 30th Street (future), U.S. 287, State Highway 130/Snowy Range Road, State Highway 230 and Curtis Street offer opportunities for right-of-way landscaping and enhancement, in

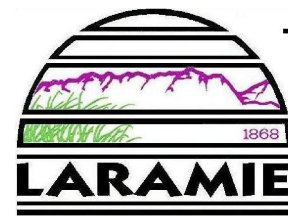
⁸ Section 17.40.050, Off-Street Utility, Dumpster, Recycling, and Trash Handling Facilities

⁹ Chapter 17.42, Signs

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coordination with the Wyoming and U.S. Departments of Transportation. The improvements at each interchange could be underwritten or sponsored by a public agency or organization.

10. Incorporate outdoor lighting and noise standards into the development regulations.
11. Prepare west Laramie revitalization plan that would address infrastructure improvements such as streets, sewer, water, parks and public services, beautification, sidewalks and economics.



THE
LARAMIE
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

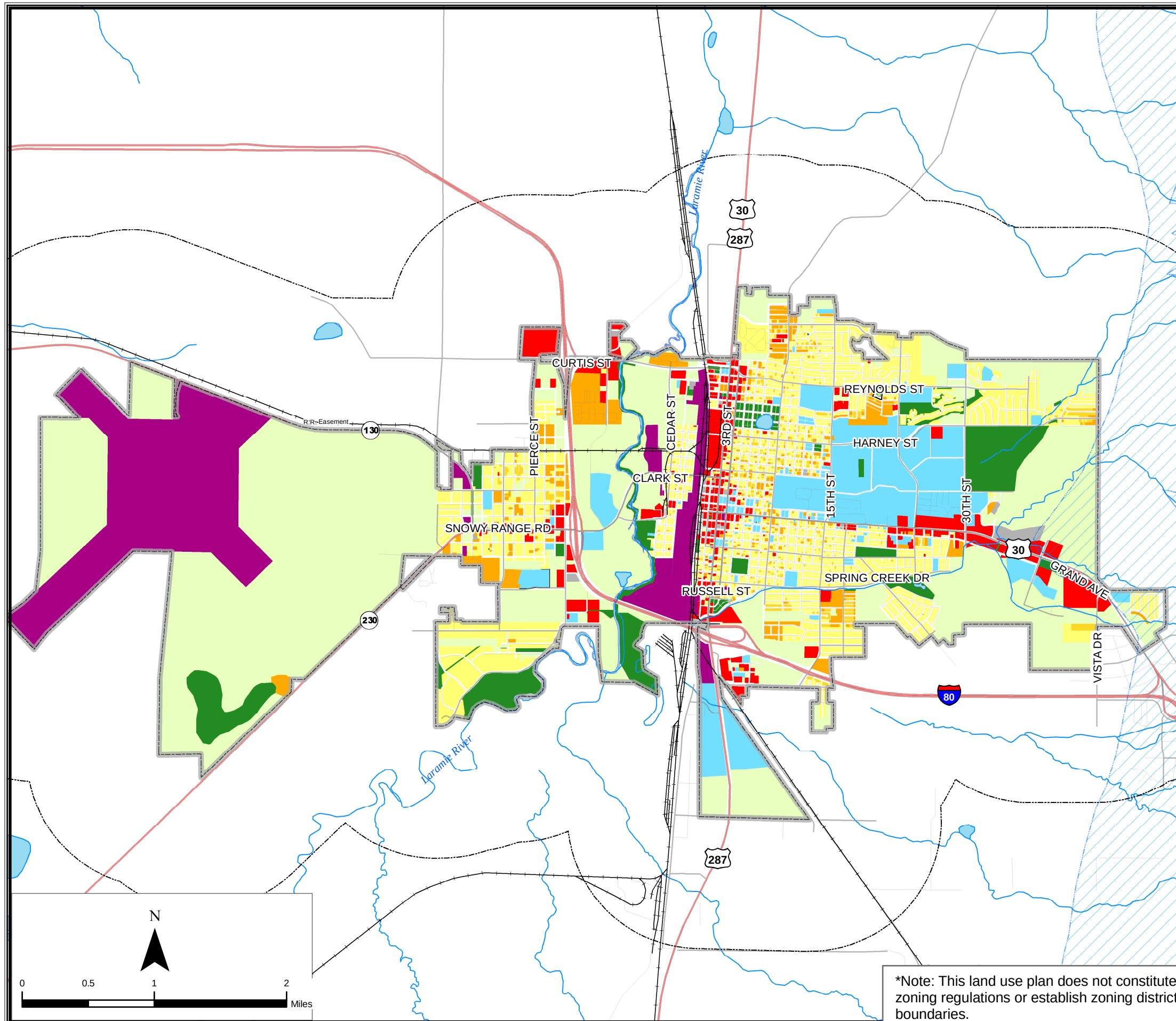
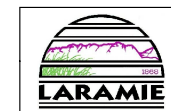
Map 3.1 Existing Land Use

Legend

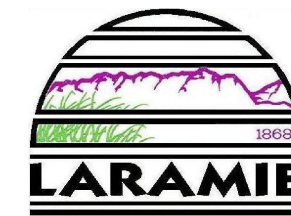
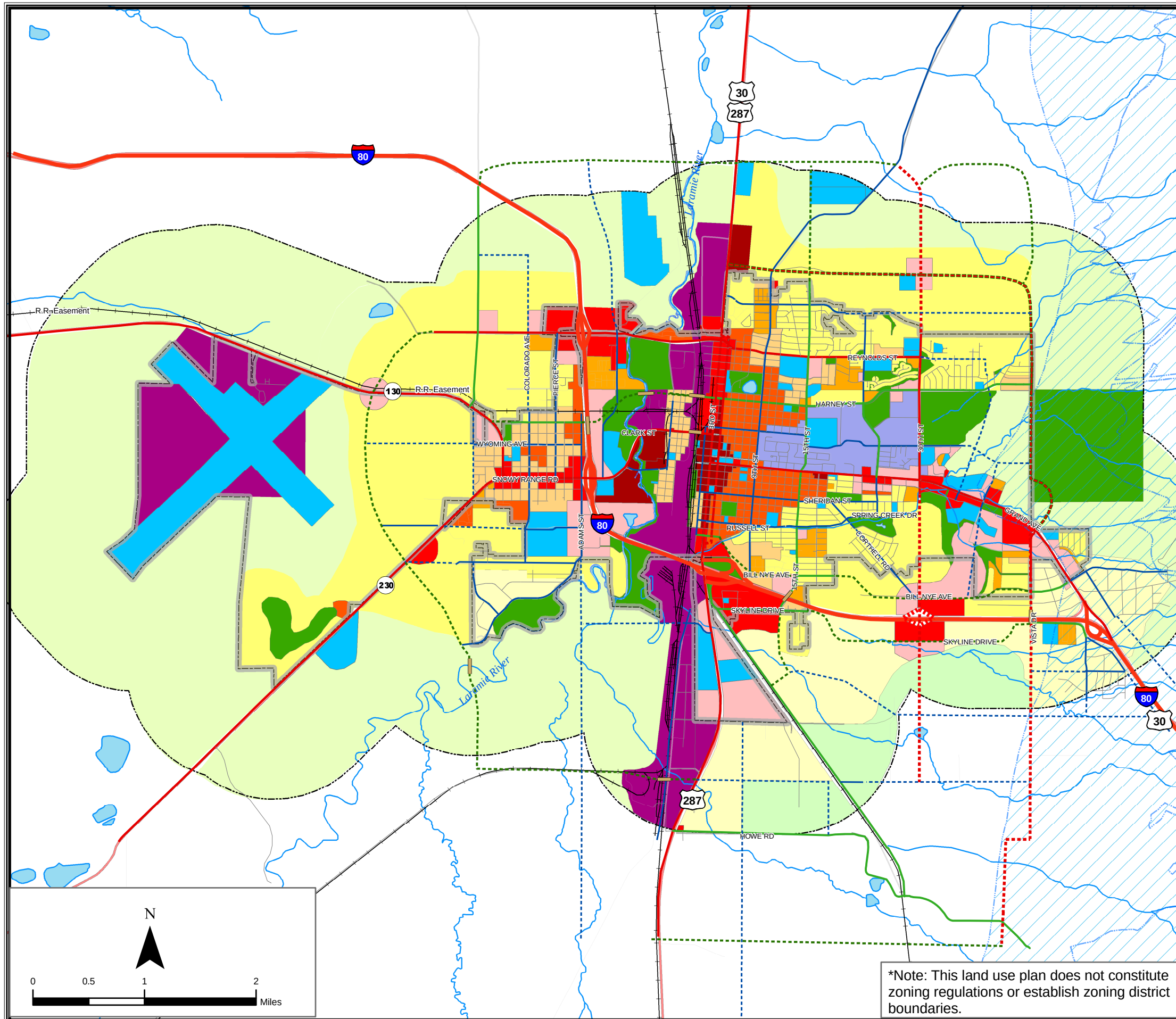
- Railroad
- Local Roads
- Collectors / Arterial Roads
- Interstates / Highways
- 1-Mile Planning Area
- City Limits
- Streams
- Casper Aquifer Protection Area

Existing Land Use

- Residential, Single-Family
- Residential, 2-Family
- Residential, Multifamily
- Commercial
- Heavy Commercial
- Public/Semipublic
- Utility
- Recreational
- Industrial
- Agriculture/Undeveloped



*Note: This land use plan does not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.



THE LARAMIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Map 3.2 Future Land Use

Legend

- Streams
- 1-Mile Planning Area
- Railroad
- City Limits
- Casper Aquifer Protection Area

Major Street Plan

Proposed Roads

- Interstate
- Parkway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Bridge/Overpass/Underpass

Existing Roads

- Local
- Interstate
- Parkway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector

Future Land Use Categories

- Agriculture
- Countryside
- Estate
- Suburban Residential
- Auto-Urban Residential
- Auto Urban Multifamily
- Urban Residential
- Suburban Commercial
- Auto-Urban Commercial
- Urban Commercial
- Urban University
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- PK/OS

*Note: This land use plan does not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.



PARKS AND RECREATION

4

CHAPTER

Parks and recreation facilities are an integral part of the public infrastructure system and are essential to Laramie's strategic goal of promoting and sustaining "active living" for all residents and presenting a positive image to visitors. Foresight and preparedness is, therefore, of utmost importance to adequately plan to satisfy the needs and desires of citizens, both now and in the future. The framework of this chapter is intended to guide the City's decisions as to the enhancement of the existing parks and trails and the ongoing development of new facilities to pace future changes in population, demographics, and development.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Parks and Recreation Chapter is to determine the community's current and future needs for improving its existing parks and providing adequate areas and facilities to meet its immediate and long-term needs. This plan element includes the policy direction of the City pertaining to the timing of park development, their placement within the City and planning area, the type of facilities, and the method by which enhancements and improvements are funded. It guides the City's planning efforts for developing a "first class" public parks and recreation system, while directing private contributions through provision of active recreation areas and open space to meet the requisite needs of new development. This chapter addresses the availability, quality, type, size, and location of leisure and recreation opportunities to meet the needs of Laramie's residents and visitors.

Parks and recreation facilities are an essential part of a healthy, quality, and sustainable community environment. They provide necessary components in human existence for events outside of the home, after work, and beyond school activities. Whether for passive or active use, park areas and recreation facilities are an important part of everyday active living. Much like streets and sidewalks, water and wastewater lines, drainage facilities, police and fire equipment, and other municipal facilities, parks and open space are integral components of the municipal infrastructure. They warrant a significant level of attention

Parks and Recreation Planning Principles:

- ♦ All residents and visitors will have unrestricted access to public park areas and recreational facilities regardless of their age, gender, race, income, cultural background, housing environment, or handicap;
- ♦ Public recreation will be highly coordinated with other organizations and programs, including Albany County, the school district, civic clubs, athletic organizations, private entities, and others to avoid duplication and encourage cooperation;
- ♦ Public recreation will incorporate other public services such as education, health and fitness, transportation, and leisure;
- ♦ Facilities will be well planned and coordinated to ensure adequate adaptability to future needs and requirements;
- ♦ There will be an established process and procedure for acquiring land for future parks and recreational areas and facilities prior to development; and
- ♦ The design of spaces and facilities will encourage the most efficient utilization of land and will consider the needs, desires, and opinions of the intended users.

and commitment of resources to be adequately acquired, constructed, operated, and maintained.

A comprehensive and interrelated system of parks and recreation opportunities that respond to the needs and values of the local residents contribute to a community's quality of life and livability. Parks and recreation opportunities contribute to the health of residents, provide a variety of recreational and educational activities for all ages, and preserve and enhance the quality and integrity of the natural environment. Parks and recreation opportunities are also important in attracting visitors to the community and, thus, contribute to local tourism and economic development.

There are several specific reasons why this chapter is important; among them are the following:

- ♦ Investment in the community's livability and quality of life, which contributes to its economic development and attractiveness as a place to live and conduct business;
- ♦ Improve the quality and appearance of the community's public spaces, which help form a positive and desirable image of Laramie to visitors and investors;
- ♦ Provide areas and facilities for community citizens of all ages, to meet their active and leisure recreation needs;
- ♦ Contribute to a healthful community life by enabling citizens to use parks and trails for sport and exercise;
- ♦ Satisfy the interests of local recreation leagues and activity groups which use these facilities for athletic events and social interaction;
- ♦ Improve the safety and utilization rate of the existing parks by making necessary improvements and desired enhancements;
- ♦ Form decision criteria for acquiring and developing new parks, including their type, design, location, spacing, and methods of financing;
- ♦ Provide adequate areas and facilities within close proximity to all persons, including a diverse range and type of parks to meet the individual needs of citizens; and
- ♦ Preserve valued open space, aquifers, and other sensitive lands for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

GENERAL PARK AND RECREATION ISSUES

In conjunction with input received from the Director of Parks and Recreation, division staff, and members of the Parks, Tree, and Recreation Advisory Board; a number of key parks and recreation issues were identified, including the following:

Resource Conservation and Preservation

There are areas interspersed throughout the community and around the larger planning area (extending one mile outside the City limits) that have valuable natural resources needing protection. Lands along and adjacent to the Laramie River that bisect the community from north to south, the Spring Creek Corridor, as well as open lands surrounding the community, offer opportunities for resource conservation, aquifer recharge, and land preservation. While these areas are vulnerable to future urban development, they may be used to fulfill other community objectives, such as environmental protection, open space preservation, protecting Laramie's image as a

CHAPTER 4: PARKS AND RECREATION

"freestanding" community, and sound resource management. In some cases, they also provide important linkages to residents for public access to Federal lands.

Residents of Laramie are interested in forging a community that is both unique and attractive. This objective may be achieved by adopting sound environmental conservation and responsible land development practices through:

- Amendments to the City's zoning and subdivision regulations.
- Public investments in land acquisition and park development.
- Implement Land donations and dedication mechanisms.

Sensitive areas along the river and within other creekside and natural areas may be incorporated into residential development projects as a natural amenity, while sustaining their resource function. Doing so requires a regulatory system and investment program that balances development efficiency and resource protection. Through innovative land planning, such as cluster development, resources may be preserved and effectively integrated into development without compromising private interests (*Chapter 3, Community Character*). Areas such as the Casper Aquifer Protection area, wildlife habitat and floodplains may be good areas to employ these principals in an effort to protecting these natural resources.

Balanced, Convenient and Accessible Parks

The key to a successful and well-utilized system of parks is an even distribution of recreation areas and public open spaces throughout the community, including newer development north of the University campus and the well-established neighborhoods in the central parts of the City. In this way, all residents may have convenient access to open spaces, thereby meeting their active and passive (less exertive leisure uses such as nature observation or walking) recreation needs. It is also important that these individual parks are located and designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods, provide safe and convenient access, and incorporate the equipment and facilities desired by their users. Depending on demographics and the availability of other facilities, some neighborhoods may be more interested in active facilities, such as basketball courts and play fields, while others desire passive activities, such as trails, nature areas, public art and picnic tables. For this reason, it is essential to include the end users in the planning and design phases of park development.

A true "system" of parks offers a wide range of public spaces, including large-scale facilities intended for persons within the larger region (generally within a one-hour driving distance), such as Medicine Bow National Forest, facilities that are used by the whole community (typically within a one-mile radius) like Washington, LaBonte, and LaPrele Parks, that are used by the surrounding neighborhood, or are used by a smaller area or individual development, such as an apartment complex. The value of an adequate park system is its ability to meet the individual needs of all persons.



The Laramie River provides many scenic and recreational opportunities.

"People, even today, want to get away from the noise and confusion of daily life and want to do so on their own. It is not enough for a parks department to offer structured recreational activities. People need to have a place where they can go to stroll or lie in the grass or bicycle whenever the mood strikes them and not just when it is a scheduled activity."

- Alexander Garvin in "Parks, Recreation, and Open Space: A Twenty-first Century Agenda"

The term "balanced" refers to a combination of indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as an adequate assortment of different types of activities (both passive and active) to meet the recreational needs of residents year-round.

Linking Parks, Schools and Neighborhoods

A system of parks and recreation areas is not complete without linear linkages between facilities and connections to neighborhoods, schools, and other public use facilities. Areas

along the Laramie River and Spring Creek are ideal for pedestrian walkways and bike trails connecting each of the City's parks, neighborhoods, schools, and other community destinations (Downtown, the University of Wyoming, the Laramie Recreation Center, etc.). The river already serves as the north-south spine of a community-wide trail system. Lateral connections to the river trail can be developed along easements in open areas and could be expanded within the unusually wide surfaced areas of many of the local streets. Use of existing public ways, as well as excess rights-of-way along the railroads, utility and drainage easements, walkways or pedestrian paths through cul-de-sacs, and wide shoulder lanes along arterial streets and rural roadways may offer safe and convenient connections between each of the parks and public areas.



Connectors within and between neighborhoods improve pedestrian mobility and provide linkage to the larger trail system.

An interconnected system of bicycle and pedestrian facilities should serve as a form of recreation and exercise and provide an added benefit as an alternative mode of transportation. In 1999, the City adopted the *Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan*, which proposed to develop an extensive network of new paths, designated routes, and street improvements that would provide dedicated bicycle lanes on existing City streets. Listings of proposed facilities from the *Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan* are included later in this chapter. *Map 4.4 Bicycles and Trails Master Plan*, *Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East* and *Map 4.3 Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas* will address future trails and maps.

Coordination, Collaboration and Funding

Aging infrastructure, changing demographics, and increased demand for recreational programs and facilities have strained the resources of Laramie, Albany County, the school district, and other public entities. Intergovernmental agreements, contracts and public-private partnerships create opportunities to use tax-dollars wisely, utilize land efficiently, and conserve precious environmental resources while improving the quality and affordability of our parks. Joint acquisition, development, and ongoing maintenance of public spaces leverage additional resources while making sure that facilities are coordinated and connected. Coordination and collaboration among agencies and all vested parties such as Albany County, the Albany County School District #1, the University of Wyoming, and other public agencies is of mutual benefit for all interests and should be

CHAPTER 4: PARKS AND RECREATION

continued. It eases the burden on public tax dollars, enhances the quality of areas and facilities, and leverages their effectiveness.

PARK CLASSIFICATION & STANDARDS

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) published the Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines to establish nationally applicable criteria for the provision of parks and recreation facilities and open space. These standards serve as a guide for parks and recreation planning, but do not replace reasonable judgment or specific local needs. The needs and desires of the citizens of Laramie will justify continued development of parks, recreation, and open space to meet the specific needs and requirements of the community.

While national standards are useful, it is important to ensure they are reasonable for the community given considerations such as participation trends, user characteristics, demographics, socioeconomics, climate, natural environment, and other considerations. Leisure and recreation values are unique to each municipality; therefore, it is important that the standards represent the interests and desires of the community.

A variety of types and sizes of parks and recreation facilities and activities are recommended to satisfy the diverse interests of the population. This will ensure adequate and equal opportunity for all persons, and, ultimately, encourage use by all population groups. The classifications of parks needed to meet the diverse needs of the community are as follows:

Community Parks

Community parks are intended to function on a large scale, serving the parks and recreation needs of an entire community. They are typically larger in size and include facilities and improvements for area-wide activities and assembly events, such as picnic areas, walking/jogging trails, athletic fields, and other larger scale activities. It is important that adequate off-street parking is provided. Where feasible, community parks should be located adjacent or connected to a greenway to provide an off-street linear linkage with other areas.

Community Park Role

In similar-sized cities as Laramie, a community park often serves as the principal focal point for civic gatherings and organized recreational programs, special events, and sports league play. Further, a community park can often become a major landmark to the community, a symbol that enhances community identity and is beloved by residents.

The size of community parks varies according to the availability of land and the ability to take advantage of acquisition opportunities over time. Many community parks in smaller cities are situated along river corridors; others were integrated into a city at the time of original settlement and platting.

The National Recreation and Parks Association believe that parks and recreation:

- ♦ Enhance the human potential by providing facilities, services and programs that meet the emotional, social and physical needs of communities.
- ♦ Articulate environmental values through ecologically responsible management and environmental education programs.
- ♦ Promote individual and community wellness that enhances the quality of life for all citizens.
- ♦ Utilize holistic approaches to promote cultural understanding, economic development, family public health and safety, by working in coalitions and partnerships with allied organizations.
- ♦ Facilitate and promote the development of grassroots, self-help initiatives in communities across the country.



Figure 4.1 Typical Community Park Layout (Note the abundance of off-street parking).

Community Park Standards

National standards recommend a minimum community park size of ten acres, assuming appropriate topography and absence of other development constraints. Many community parks, especially those with athletic field complexes for organized sports, are as large as 40 or 50 acres, as shown in *Figure 4.1, Typical Community Park Layout*. In overall acreage terms, the standard is five acres per 1,000 in population. Recommended facilities and improvements include:

- ♦ Picnic tables with covers with barbecue pits or grills
- ♦ Sidewalks and/or a natural walking trail
- ♦ Mountain biking trails with exercise stations

- ♦ Shade trees and native landscaping
- ♦ Drinking fountains
- ♦ Security lighting
- ♦ Multi-purpose open play areas
- ♦ Multi-purpose courts
- ♦ Playground equipment and playscape (up to 50 children)
- ♦ Bicycle racks
- ♦ Perimeter fencing or landscaping
- ♦ Street signs indicating "children at play"
- ♦ Benches
- ♦ Trash receptacles and enclosures
- ♦ Curb cuts and crosswalks
- ♦ Tennis courts
- ♦ Basketball courts
- ♦ Softball and little league fields with bleachers
- ♦ Soccer/football fields with goals and goal posts
- ♦ Sand volleyball courts
- ♦ Swimming pool
- ♦ Covered pavilions
- ♦ Performance stage
- ♦ Restrooms
- ♦ Fencing for ball fields and athletic courts
- ♦ Concrete surface for a general play area
- ♦ Off-street parking

Community Park Locations

Community parks should be centrally located for convenience to all residents. It should have direct access to a collector or arterial street in order to handle special event traffic while avoiding neighborhood disruption. Community parks should include adequate off-street parking. The "ideal" service radius of a community park is one mile.

A community park that is located in or near a residential area usually serves a secondary role as a neighborhood park (see next section).

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks should provide facilities and improvements that conveniently accommodate use by surrounding neighborhoods. Ease and safe access from surrounding neighborhoods, central location, and pedestrian/bicycle linkages are key considerations when developing neighborhood parks. They should be designed to accommodate the needs of all ages and, therefore, should have a blend of passive and active facilities.

Neighborhood Park Role

Neighborhood parks are intended to provide residents with ample opportunity for both passive and semi-active recreation activity. The method of determining the need for neighborhood parks is quite different from an assessment of need for community parks. Whereas community parks are designed for large-scale, area-wide events and activities, neighborhood parks are intended to meet the daily recreation needs of nearby residents. As displayed by *Figure 4.2, Typical Neighborhood Park Layout*, the level of activity is limited as a result of the size and location of these parks and the equipment and facilities available.

The size of neighborhood parks varies according to the availability of property, method and timing of acquisition, and intended use. One or two large vacant lots or several acres may both adequately serve the needs of a neighborhood if there is an even distribution of parks and sufficient facilities and equipment available. National standards recommend a minimum neighborhood park size of five acres assuming an adequate and even distribution. Although a 10-acre park may accommodate ball fields and larger recreation and open space areas, two parks that are five acres in size may equally and, perhaps better, serve the need, while providing a broader distribution of neighborhood parks.

Neighborhood Park Standards

The ideal neighborhood park should be between five and ten acres, with the provision of 1 acre per 1,000 residents. Recommended facilities and improvements include:

- ♦ Picnic tables with sheltering covers
- ♦ Barbecue pits
- ♦ Sidewalks and/or a natural walking trail
- ♦ Shade trees and landscaping
- ♦ Drinking fountain(s)
- ♦ Security lighting
- ♦ Multipurpose open play area with multipurpose play courts
- ♦ Playground equipment and/or a playscape (up to 25 children)
- ♦ Perimeter fencing or landscaping w benches
- ♦ Restrooms with on- or off-street parking
- ♦ Dog walking area (particularly when located in an urban neighborhood)
- ♦ Trash receptacles
- ♦ Curb cuts and crosswalks

It is important that a neighborhood park has toilet facilities. The lack of a restroom significantly limits the park's service radius and prevents it from accommodating organized recreation program activities or events, especially children's programs.

Neighborhood Park Locations

Neighborhood parks should be within a short walking distance (typically one-half mile or less) for the residents of one or more neighborhoods, thereby encouraging use and promoting convenience, ease of access, and walking safety for neighborhood children. Whenever possible, they should be located away from busy arterial streets and should not require any busy street crossings for access from their constituent neighborhoods. Accomplishing this has been difficult in Laramie, particularly in the more mature built-up areas having grid street patterns.



Figure 4.2 Typical Neighborhood Park Layout

Playlots

Playlots are intended for active recreational use of nearby property owners, such as within apartment complexes and residential subdivisions. There are no specific criteria to guide development of playlots, although they should have facilities and improvements available to meet the identified needs of population living in the immediate area. The notable features that distinguish a playlot from a neighborhood park are its considerably smaller size and the lack of restrooms.

Playlots Role

Playlots serve the immediate need of providing a minimum play area within minutes' walking distance of residents in the very immediate area. Unfortunately, playlots in many communities are established as to mitigate the need for a nearby neighborhood park. When this circumstance arises, the playlot often sustains heavy use and requires considerable maintenance. Facilities that are less than one-half acre in area are usually considered inefficient, as they require nearly as much time for mowing and other routine maintenance tasks as a neighborhood park. For this reason, many communities discourage the acquisition and development of truly small playlots. Playlots within the City of Laramie can still be useful and beneficial to the community. Playlots may be required within subdivisions when other parks land cannot serve the specified area. In these instances playlots will be required to be developed at the time of development and maintained by a home owners association or other entity as determined by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Playlot Standards

As mentioned before, there are no specific size or facility standards for playlots, but guidelines suggest that there should be one to three tenths acre per 1,000 residents. Recommended facilities and improvements might include:

- ♦ Picnic tables with covers
- ♦ Perimeter sidewalks
- ♦ Shade trees and native landscaping
- ♦ Drinking fountain
- ♦ Security lighting
- ♦ Multi-purpose open play area
- ♦ Playground equipment (up to 15 children)
- ♦ Perimeter fencing or landscaping
- ♦ Benches
- ♦ On-street parking
- ♦ Trash receptacles
- ♦ Curb cuts and crosswalks

Playlot Locations

The most important criterion for playlot location is that it be situated on a local, low-traffic street with sidewalk or path access to the residents it serves.

Open Space

Open space areas include reserved public lands dedicated as permanent open space. These lands are generally owned by the local government or dedicated through private instrument as a development reserve. They are typically undeveloped or limitedly developed and used for informal activities. They may also serve as flood collection areas during major storm events. Other examples of open space areas include easements for drainage basins, excess rights-of-way, greenways, and street esplanades. Areas that may be used for informal activities should be used to their maximum benefit.

Although open space is typically reserved public lands open space can also take shape in other forms. Open space can be “any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated, or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment or for the use and enjoyment of owners, occupants and their guests of land adjoining or neighboring such open space. Open space may include active recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, play equipment, ball fields, court games, and picnic tables.”¹ Open space in public or private ownership can serve the purpose that is desired by providing natural areas, recreational opportunities and vistas among many other benefits no matter the ownership. With each new development opportunity to acquire open space, the type, usage, access, character and amount of open space, park, trail or facility should be explored and defined through the development process, so the needs of the community can be met.

¹ The New Illustrated Book of Development Definitions, Moskowitz & Lindbloom

Open space is particularly important in areas such as Laramie, which have dramatic topography and abundant mountain vistas. It is important that the tops and sides of prominent ridgeline areas, scenic vistas, rivers and aquifer areas remain largely open to protect the City's most important resources. Specific recommendations on protecting open space are presented later in this chapter. Also, for additional information refer to *Chapter 3, Community Character*.

Miscellaneous Facilities

There are many additional types of park and recreational facilities that fall outside of the classifications just described. Examples include:

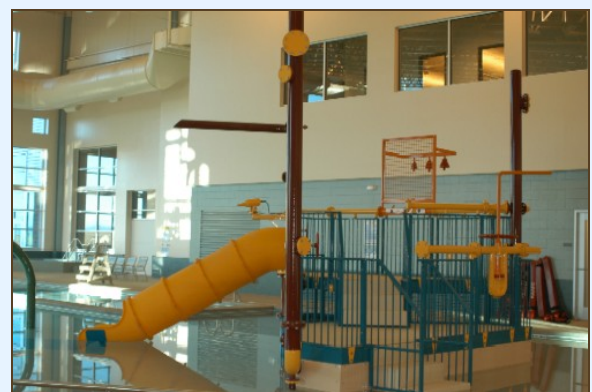
- ♦ **Athletic Field Complexes.** Within the past 25 years, many cities have developed specialized, stand-alone facilities for baseball, softball, and soccer. These include multiple fields, restrooms, refreshment stands, and an abundance of off-street parking. Usually situated on a major street, these facilities are particularly suited for organized league activities and are intensely used during summer evenings and portions of the weekend. In Laramie, the Aragon Softball Complex and the Cowboy Field Little League Complex are included in this category.
- ♦ **Recreation Centers.** Laramie's Community Recreation Center serves as an example of a facility that provides a wide range of all-season indoor activities. It has direct access to an arterial street and includes a large area for off-street parking.
- ♦ **Specialized Facilities.** Laramie's Ice Arena, adjacent to the Community Recreation Center, is an example of a specialized facility that draws heavy use for a single type of activity. Another example is Green Hill Cemetery, which is City-owned and maintained by the Parks and Recreation Division. Also included in this category is the City of Laramie's Rifle Range that is located north of town. This facility also draws heavy use for a single type of activity.
- ♦ **Pathways and Trail Systems.** These facilities provide active recreational opportunities for hikers, bicyclists, casual walkers, and cross-country skiers of all ages in addition to serving as an alternative means of transportation for workers and students. All trails and pathways continue to emphasize the importance of improving the workability and connectivity of the community. Dedicated trails usually take advantage of natural river and stream corridors, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, the bases or tops of ridges, and open areas. Often a trail system includes dedicated lanes on existing streets as linkages between components of an off-road trail system. When completed, the Laramie Greenbelt will provide an outstanding example of a trail system (*Map 4.4 Trails Master Plan*).
- ♦ **Historic Sites and Buildings.** Many communities get the opportunity to acquire, restore, and operate specific historic sites and buildings. These include old mansions, railroad passenger stations, and similar landmark buildings. Often, these sites retain only limited use, but have the opportunity to be integrated into the park and recreation center with expanded programming. Sites that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places in Laramie and environs include the Wyoming Territorial Park; Fort Sanders Center; a number of homes, and schools, and churches; and the Downtown Historic District.

CHAPTER 4: PARKS AND RECREATION

- ♦ **Facilities for Persons with Special Needs.** Many communities are developing specialized facilities that support activities for senior citizens and persons with disabilities or special needs. In most cases, these facilities and activities are located within or adjacent to an existing community park, neighborhood park, or trail system, rather than its own site.
- ♦ **Nature and Interpretive Centers.** These areas usually include facilities that are oriented toward a specific natural feature such as a natural prairie, wetland, unusual geologic features, or scenic vista. Uses are specific and of low intensity. These facilities usually do not integrate with other elements of a park system, except for the trail system or possibly interpretive signs.
- ♦ **Golf Courses.** Many cities of Laramie's size or larger own and operate full-size municipal golf courses designed for beginner- to moderate-level public play. While activities are limited only to golf, a municipal course can become a valuable contributor to "borrowed open space" (*Chapter 3, Community Character*) and can enhance the aesthetics of an entrance to the City. Many public municipal golf courses throughout the U.S. were once privately owned, either as commercial facilities or as country clubs, and were subsequently purchased by the municipality in order to enable continuation of play and as a measure to preserve valuable open space from development. Laramie has two Golf Courses, Jacoby Golf Course a public 18 hole course and The Laramie Country Club a private course.
- ♦ **Water Detention.** Laramie uses water detention as a means of controlling water runoff in developed areas. Due to the fact that these detention areas consume large areas it could be in the best interest of the city to maximize the benefit that these areas can provide. Developing these sites as parks or recreational open space though additional landscaping or other improvements can provide another area for residents to recreate. Development will be highly dependent upon the primary function of water detention but all efforts should be taken to maximize the benefits of these areas. Examples include the southwestern corner of 30th Street and Reynolds and Harney and 15th Street.

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

As parks and recreation sites are evaluated for acquisition and development, it is important for the City to have a standardized list of facilities and equipment desired for each type of park to assess the development feasibility of each site, as identified in the park classification system described in the previous section. There are important considerations in developing parks including the size, shape, and orientation of the site; pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access and parking; adjoining land use; development constraints such as grades, poor drainage, and flooding; environmental impacts; and the anticipated use of the park. In assessing the feasibility of a site, each of these considerations is important.



The Recreation Center provides indoor activities to complement the abundance of outdoor and natural area opportunities in and around the community.

Table 4.1, *Facility Development Guidelines (Part I)* and Table 4.2, *Facility Development Guidelines (Part II)*, provides guidelines for developing activity areas and improvements within a park facility. It identifies the requisite space and dimensional requirements, orientation, service radius, and generally required per capita units. Of note in this table is the current NRPA standard of one soccer field per 10,000 persons population. This appears to be too low for many communities as the popularity of organized children's soccer programs has increased significantly in recent years.

Locations

Laramie parks and other recreation or open space assets are located in *Map 4.1, Existing Park Facilities and Schools*. The map includes facilities maintained by the Albany County School District #1, University and State of Wyoming. Green Hill Cemetery is also indicated as it is owned and maintained by the City. A summary listing of these facilities located on *Map 4.1, Existing Parks, Parks Facilities and Schools* is shown in *Table 4.3, Laramie Parks and Recreation Facilities*. A comparison between *Table 4.1, Facility Development Guidelines (Part I)* and *Table 4.2, Facility Development Guidelines (Part II)* and *Table 4.3, Laramie Parks and Recreation Facilities* shows that many of the national standards are not met by many of the Laramie parks. Although there may be a deficiency according to National Standards the parks that are located around Laramie seem to serve it well.

A more detailed description of our existing parks system and how it relates to national standards is listed below.

Descriptions

Community Parks

Laramie's two community parks, while somewhat small for this classification, are ideally situated and are well used. Because they are located within generally residential areas, each also serves the role of a neighborhood park. The community parks include:

- ♦ **Washington Park.** This heavily used facility supports an exceptionally broad range of activities given its limited site of 13 acres. Facilities include four covered picnic shelters, sand volleyball court, fitness course, 12 horseshoe courts, wading pool, additional uncovered picnic tables and grills, internal walking trail, play equipment, and basketball court. Washington Park's distinguishing feature is its band shell, used for concerts and civic activities.
- ♦ **LaBonte Park.** Located in the northwest quadrant of the main core of Laramie's original development, LaBonte Park supports a wide range of activities including lighted baseball/softball fields, basketball court, playgrounds, in-line & skateboard park, picnicking with four covered shelters, and an internal walking trail with a fitness course. Its main feature is a picturesque lagoon. It is also the site of the Ft. Sanders Center building, which currently houses the Laramie Children's Museum.

**FACILITY DEVELOPMENT
GUIDELINES (Part 1)**

Activity/ Facility	Required Space	Size and Dimensions		Units per Population	Service Radius	
			Long axis north-south.	1 per 10,000 persons.		Outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings.
		195' to 225' x 330' to 360' with a minimum clearance of 10' on all sides.	Spring/Fall season -- long axis northwest to southeast. For longer periods, north to south.	1 per 10,000 persons. This standard needs to be discussed further.*		Number of units depends on popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to schools or neighborhood parks.
	Minimum of 7,200 sq. ft. for a single court. (2 acres for a complex).	36' x 78'; 12' clearance on both sides; 21' clearance on both ends.	Long axis north-south.	1 court per 2,000 persons.		Best in batteries of 2 to 4. Located in neighborhood/ community park or adjacent to a school site.
	Minimum 4,000 sq. ft.	30' x 60'. Minimum 6' clearance on all sides.	Long axis north-south.	1 court per 5,000 persons.		Same as other court activities (e.g. badminton, basketball, etc.).
		160' x 360' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Fall season -- long axis northwest to southeast. For longer periods, north to south.	1 per 20,000 persons.	15 - 30 minutes travel time.	Usually part of baseball, football, soccer complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
Multiple-Use Recreation Court (basketball, volleyball, tennis)			Long axis of courts with primary use is north-south.	1 per 10,000 persons.		In neighborhood or community parks.
	Minimum of 40 percent undeveloped per park.			5 acres per 1,000 persons.	30 minute travel time.	Within neighborhood and community parks or stand-alone.
1/4 Mile Running Track		Overall width - 276'. Length - 600.02'. Track width for 8, 4'-lanes is 32'	Long axis in sector from north to south to northwest to southeast with finish line at northerly end.	1 per 20,000 persons.	15 - 30 minute travel time.	Usually part of high school or in community park complex in combination with baseball, soccer, etc.

Table 4.2
FACILITY DEVELOPMENT
GUIDELINES (Part 2)

Activity / Facility	Required Space	Size and Dimensions		Units per Population	Service Radius	
	3.0 - 3.85 acres minimum.	Baselines -- 90'. Pitching distance -- 60-1/2'. Foul lines -- 320' min. Center field -- 400'+.	Locate home plate so the pitcher is throwing across the sun and the batter is not facing it. Line from home plate through pitcher's mound runs east-northeast.	1 per 5,000 persons.		Part of neighborhood complex. Lighted fields should be part of a community park or sports complex.
	1.2 acres minimum.	Foul lines -- 200'. Center field -- 200'-250'.		Lighted -- 1 per 30,000 persons.		
		Baselines -- 60'. Pitching distance -- 46' min.; 40' -- women. Fast pitch field radius from plate -- 225' between foul lines. Slow pitch -- 275', men; 250', women.		1 per 5,000 persons (if also used for youth baseball).		Slight difference in dimensions for 16" slow pitch. May also be used for youth baseball.
		10-40 feet in width, maximum average grade 5% not to exceed 15%. Routs may be improved to different standards and signed.		1 system per region.		Located in greenways, natural areas and parks, and along drainage ways, levees, and utility easements. Their purpose is to accommodate walkers, joggers, and bicyclists away from traffic.

TABLE 4.3
LARAMIE PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND
RECREATION FACILITIES

Facility	Acres	Agency
Community Parks		
LaBonte Park	34.5	City of Laramie
Washington Park	13	City of Laramie
Neighborhood Parks		
Depot Park	2.7	City of Laramie/Union Pacific Railroad
LaPrele Park	29.1	City of Laramie
Harbon Park	2	City of Laramie
Kiowa Park	1.5	City of Laramie
Kiwanis Park	8.4	City of Laramie
Optimist Park	4.8	City of Laramie
Scout Park	12.5	City of Laramie
Undine Park	9.6	City of Laramie
Playlots		
O'Dell Mini Park	0.2	City of Laramie
Special Facilities		
Athletic Fields	29.5	City of Laramie/University of Wyoming
Albany County Fairgrounds	60	Albany County
Green Hill Cemetery	52	City of Laramie
Jacoby Golf Course	200	City of Laramie/University of Wyoming
KOA Kampground	31.6	Private (open to the public)
Laramie Community Recreation Center	25	City of Laramie
Laramie Country Club	75	Private (open to the public)
Laramie Ice Arena	3	City of Laramie
Laramie Greenbelt	n/a	City of Laramie
Laramie Trap Club	20	Private
UW Prexy's Pasture	7.5	University of Wyoming
Wyoming Territorial Park	240	State of Wyoming

Neighborhood Parks

- ♦ **Depot Park.** The 2.7-acre strip of land, immediately south of Downtown Laramie, is the site of the original Union Pacific passenger depot. The land is maintained by the Laramie Parks and Recreation Department and supports a small picnic area, playground area, and decorative gardens. The former passenger depot is now made available by the City for private gatherings. A Depot Board has been created to manage reservations.



Washington Park's Band Shell

- ♦ **LaPrele Park.** This park is in the southeast quadrant of the City's original area of development, along the channelized portions of Spring Creek. Facilities include two covered picnic shelters, additional unsheltered picnic tables and grills, play equipment, and access to a greenbelt trail along Spring Creek. The park is also the site of the Spring Creek Disc Golf Course, which is considered to be highly challenging. LaPrele Park is also the location of Huck Finn pond a youth fishing pond that holds many types of game fish. An annual youth fishing derby is held here each year making the pond a valuable and unique asset to the community. Though LaPrele Park provides a somewhat smaller array of facilities, it is the only community or neighborhood park in the established portions of Laramie that has significant expansion opportunities on vacant

lands to the east. Although these opportunities exist it has been determined that this area is to remain natural thus making this area not suitable for a Community Park but as a Neighborhood Park.

- ♦ **Harbon Park.** This park serves neighborhood needs in the immediate area north of the University of Wyoming campus, which is intensely developed and is likely to have a higher incidence of younger families with children. Harbon Park, by neighborhood park standards, is relatively small (two acres) but does include playground equipment. Harbon Park does not have restrooms, a factor that limits its service area.
- ♦ **Kiowa Park.** This is another small neighborhood park, which is located in the far northeast sector of Laramie at the present edge of City development. It provides playground equipment and an open picnic area, but has no restrooms or off-street parking.
- ♦ **Kiwanis Park.** Kiwanis Park is located at the western edge of West Laramie and is the only park that conveniently serves the needs of neighborhoods west of Interstate 80. The eight-acre facility includes fields (baseball/softball and soccer), play equipment, one picnic shelter, additional uncovered picnic tables and grills, restrooms, and off-street parking.
- ♦ **Optimist Park.** Situated along the east bank of the Laramie River, Optimist Park serves the small neighborhood that is bounded by the Union Pacific tracks and Interstate 80. Facilities include play equipment, two sheltered picnic areas, additional picnic tables and grills, one basketball court, one soccer field, restrooms, dog run and off-street parking. One of its distinguishing characteristics is that it also provides an important community-wide "gateway" to the Laramie River Greenbelt.
- ♦ **Scout Park.** This is one of Laramie's newer parks, as it was acquired in the 1980s through funds raised by the Kiwanis Club. Facilities are currently limited only to soccer fields; however, additional improvements to the eastern 1/3 of the park are scheduled.
- ♦ **Undine Park.** Situated in the south-central part of the City, Undine Park is one of Laramie's original parks. The 9.6-acre park includes restrooms, wading pool, tennis court, three picnic shelters with barbecue pits, play equipment, sand volleyball court and a basketball court.

Playlots

- ♦ **O'Dell Mini Park.** This is a basic playlot located at the far north edge of development. It consists of one residential-size lot that was donated to the City by the subdivision's developer. Facilities include playground equipment, one picnic table, and two park benches.

Athletic Fields

Laramie's inventory of outdoor athletic facilities mainly for baseball/softball, soccer, and tennis is supplemented substantially by University of Wyoming-owned facilities that are maintained by the City and integrated into Laramie's extensive recreation programs. These sites are labeled on *Map 4.1, Existing Parks, Parks Facilities and Schools*, as "UW Athletic Fields." They include:

- ♦ **La-Ramie/Aragon Fields.** This 12-acre area east of Campus provides two soccer fields, two lighted baseball/softball fields, restrooms, and off-street parking.
- ♦ **UW Little League Complex.** An eight-acre part of the UW East Campus area accommodates four lighted fields, off street parking, and restroom facilities.
- ♦ **Cowboy Field.** The City leases the six-acre main University baseball competition field with restrooms as a part of its baseball program.

Greenbelts and Trails

The Laramie River Greenbelt is comprised of six and one-half miles of hiking and bicycle trails on both banks of the Laramie River between Curtis Street to the north and the County fairgrounds to the South, occupying approximately 100 acres of land. The trail has been developed through both the use of public lands and the acquisition of permanent easements on privately-owned parcels. In addition part of the green belt is in a Union Pacific Rail Road remediation site. The facility, which is still being expanded and developed, is a source of considerable community pride and sponsorship. It is widely used and supported by many recreational programs. Most significantly, it has provided the critical mass for a trail system that could eventually surround the City and extend to nearly all of Laramie's existing parks and neighborhoods.



Lighted ballfields east of the UW Campus.

Special Facilities

- ♦ **Albany County Fairgrounds.** The fairgrounds are owned and operated by Albany County and host annual Rodeos and a County Fair, in addition to many other community activities. The fairgrounds include an arena for occasional spectator demolition derby competitions, but no other disruptive motor sports. The Albany County Fairgrounds also serves as a main hub of activity during Jubilee Days.
- ♦ **Ft. Sanders Center.** This building is located in LaBonte Park and is currently the home of the Laramie Children's Museum.

- ♦ **Greenhill Cemetery.** The cemetery is operated and maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department. While it is not of significance from a recreational standpoint, it is recognized from an historical standpoint. Many of the persons that are part of Laramie's celebrated past are buried here, and there are regular organized tours of noted grave sites. Greenhill Cemetery is also the location of the community gardens. The cemetery will be approaching capacity in the next 10-15 years. A new location should be identified for a new cemetery site.
- ♦ **Jacoby Golf Course.** The University-owned golf course is available to Laramie residents on a fee-basis. It is currently developed with 18 holes, driving range, putting green, chipping green and a clubhouse. This is the only golf course available to the public in Laramie.
- ♦ **Laramie Ice Arena.** Located on the southeast Grand Avenue entrance to Laramie, the recently developed Ice Arena provides a variety of skating programs including instruction, organized hockey, and open skating. During the summer the facility is open for summer rental.



Jacoby Golf Course is an attraction for Laramie residents and visitors

- ♦ **Laramie Recreation Center.** Located immediately southeast of the Ice Arena, the Recreation Center provides extensive indoor facilities including large indoor-outdoor swimming pools, water slide, basketball/volleyball courts, exercise and weight training areas, inside jogging/walking track, community rooms, and lounge areas.
- ♦ **Prexy's Pasture.** Open grass commons area of the University of Wyoming Central Campus. Serves as the University focal point and is the site of many organized and informal student activities.
- ♦ **Wyoming Territorial Park.** Operated by the State, the Wyoming Territorial Park is considered to be a statewide tourist destination point. Situated on the strip

of land between I-80 and the Laramie River, the park includes the site and restored buildings of Wyoming's first territorial prison and is operated as a museum. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, further restoration of the original prison broom factory is planned. The site's 240 acres accommodates a significant part of the Laramie's current Greenbelt trail system. Much of the northern portion of the site remains undeveloped.

Joint Use of School Facilities

School playgrounds, athletic fields, and courts provide additional park and recreation areas and, if accessible to the public, will enhance the number and availability of neighborhood parks within the City. The City and School District have agreements for the use and programming of school facilities, particularly gymnasias. The sharing of these public resources enables greater efficiency and minimizes duplication.

As displayed in *Map 4.2, Park & School Service Areas*, the school sites contribute to the service area coverage of the neighborhood parks. While there is some degree of overlap with the neighborhood park facilities, they serve some areas that are not well-served by

existing neighborhood park facilities. If an expanded joint use agreement can be reached between the City and the School District, the coverage of park facilities can be expanded to better serve the area

neighborhoods. Joint use of facilities and inter-jurisdictional agreements reap benefits for all parties and may result in the establishment of park and recreation facilities in unincorporated areas.

Needs Assessment

Resources vs. Needs

A combination of a standard-based and demand-based approach is used to assess the need for additional parks and recreation areas and facilities within Laramie. The demand-based approach entails additional input from the City's Parks and Recreation Department staff, meetings with the Parks, Tree, and Recreation Advisory Board, and other public meetings directed at soliciting general citizen participation during the course of this planning process.

Using the published standards of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the acreages of parks and recreation areas currently needed in Laramie are as displayed in *Table 4.4, Recommended Area Standards*. The need for additional parks and recreation acreage is determined by applying the recommended standards to the existing (Year 2000) population of the City.

As shown in *Table 4.4, Recommended Area Standards*, which is based on a 2000 Census population of 27,204 persons, the total projected acreage needed ranges from approximately 111.5 to 225.8 acres. The recommended need (which is based on the average of the low and high columns indicated in the table above) shows a total of 169 acres of needed community parks, neighborhood parks, and playlots. Not included in these figures is the need for a new City Cemetery. The current cemetery will be at capacity in the next 10-15 years and a new site will need to be identified (*Map 4.3, Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas*).

Currently, the City maintains 118.3 acres of parks and recreation areas in the three specified categories, plus an additional 29.5 acres of athletic fields that are owned by the University of Wyoming, but are available for resident use and City programs. Since the athletic fields and other specialized recreational areas are not typically used by all persons on a daily basis, they have not been included in the total parks and recreational acreage for the purpose of this analysis.

Table 4.4 Recommended Area Standards				
Classification	Standard	Low	High	Recommended
Community Park	3 to 5 acres/1,000 persons	81.6	136.0	108.8
Neighborhood Park	1 to 3 acres/1,000 persons	27.2	81.6	54.4
Playlot	.1 to .3 acre/1,000 persons	2.7	8.2	5.4
Total		111.5	225.8	168.6
Source: <i>Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines</i> , National Recreation and Parks Association, 1995.				

Displayed in *Table 4.5, Existing Acreage vs. Future Demands*, is a tabulation of the recommended supply necessary to support the existing population and a projected future population of 33,830 (*Chapter 2, Community Profile*). Of the recommended acreages according to NRPA standards Laramie is currently deficient of park area in each of the three categories. As population increases, the need for additional park area will also increase. It should also be noted that with the continued expansion of the University of Wyoming and Wyoming Technical Institute through scholarships and new programs the increase of students may increase at a higher rate than projected or seen in the past. By the Year 2030, the City is projected to need an additional 91 acres or more, depending upon projected population, of developed park areas.

Qualitative Analysis and Commentary

From a pure statistical land area standpoint, Laramie's park system would appear deficient. There are, however, significant factors that compensate for this:

- ♦ There is an abundance of regional outdoor recreational opportunities in or near Laramie. The Medicine Bow National Forest along with multiple locations of State and

Federal lands provide outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, fishing and hunting.

- ♦ The Laramie Greenbelt enhances the effectiveness of the overall park

Table 4.5 Existing Acreage vs. Future Demands in Laramie					
Classification	Existing Supply	Acres Needed		Surplus/(Deficiency)	
		Current	Year 2030	Current	Year 2030
Community Park	76.6	108.8	135.3	(-32.2)	(-58.7)
Neighborhood Park	41.5	54.4	67.7	(-12.9)	(-26.2)
Playlot	0.2	5.4	6.8	(-6.6)	(-6.1)
Total	118.3	168.6	195.3	(-51.7)	(-91.0)

system to a degree that is more than commensurate with its acreage. In essence, the trail system functions as a community park and supports the types of contemporary, "active living" programs that are now so popular.

- ♦ The Parks and Recreation Department provides effective seasonal activity programming of all facilities.
- ♦ University of Wyoming student enrollments, which are included in the Census population, skew the statistics though it would be inappropriate to omit students from the calculations.
- ♦ Provision of indoor recreational activities compensate for some of the demand for parks, particularly for winter activities. In recent years, the community has invested heavily in facilities such as the Ice Arena and Recreation Center.

Nevertheless, the need for more park land is made apparent by the heavy utilization levels of existing parks (particularly Washington and LaBonte Parks), the high number of picnic shelter reservations, frequency of needed trash collections, demand for new soccer fields, and other measurable factors. Overstressed parks require higher maintenance and more frequent replacements of facilities.

Service Areas

The following areas appear to lack convenient access to City park facilities:

- ♦ Neighborhoods north of Reynolds Street, which are served only by O'Dell mini-park
- ♦ Residential areas in the fringes of Downtown, which are more distant from LaBonte and Undine Parks
- ♦ The Imperial Heights, Laramie Plains, Sherman Hills, and other developments in the far southeast sector where there are no parks within over one mile.
- ♦ The eastern neighborhoods of West Laramie, which are just outside the service area of Optimist Park.
- ♦ West Laramie neighborhoods south of Snowy Range Road.
- ♦ Areas located near the cottonwood estates subdivision.

Opportunities and Constraints

While the citizen satisfaction levels in Laramie's park system appear to be high, it is clear that more lands are needed and that the City should take advantage of every available opportunity to supplement the system and preserve open space. The planning process must also give realistic consideration to its limitations.

Opportunities

Current expansion opportunities include:

- ♦ Expansion of the trail system westward, using the abandoned railroad right-of-way easement with the I-80 underpass.
- ♦ Redevelopment of the vacated Tie Plant site, near the I-80 crossing of the Laramie River. Use of this land is likely to be challenging and expensive, as nearly all the topsoil on this site has been stripped. Nevertheless, further investigation is appropriate because of the site's ideal location.
- ♦ Community and Neighborhood park acquisition in conjunction any redevelopment that might possibly occur at sites around Laramie. Sites such as the former BP/Amoco



Open area near intersection of Spring Creek and 7th Street: a prime candidate for trail system improvements.

site, Turner Tract, newly annexed land near the airport and land north and south of the city limits should be identified as potential future locations for Community or Neighborhood parks. This site abuts the Laramie River at Curtis Street. Ideally, the park would connect to the Laramie Greenbelt.

- ♦ Use of the Recreation Mill as a potential funding source for the

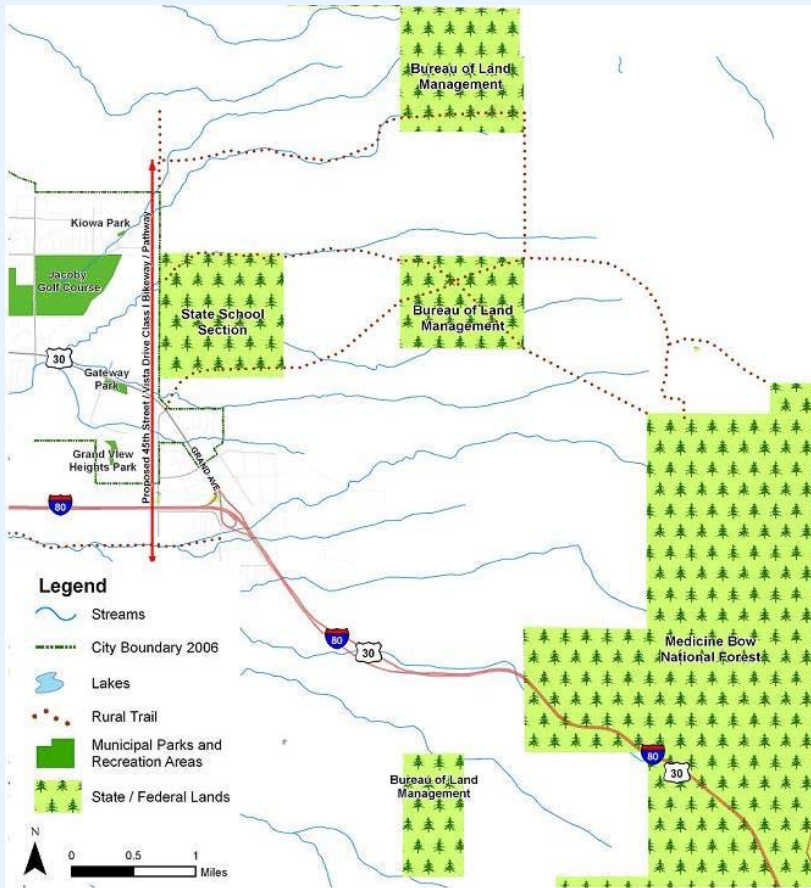


Figure 4.3 Trail development to the East could provide permanent public access to Multiple State, BLM and National Forest Properties.

purchase of parks, trails and open space.

- ♦ The 10,000-acre Monolith Ranch site, which the City acquired in 1982, presents a significant opportunity for recreational uses such as hiking, camping, larger picnic events, or nature observation. The array of suitable activities for this park may be limited, however, due to its distance from the City's residential areas. Areas of the Monolith site might also be appropriate for land swaps with owners of closer-in properties, if executed in accord with this Comprehensive Plan and in conjunction with a long-range site development plan for the property (*Map 2.2, Monolith Ranch*).
- ♦ The Turner Tract area will be developed based on the guidelines of the Turner Tract Area Plan. Within the Turner Tract Plan open space, parks and trails are

important part of the development of this area. Within the Turner Tract there may be additional locations for future parks such as the remaining property located around the Recreation Center which could be dedicated as open space or parks land.

- ♦ Pursue ways in which the City of Laramie can provide permanent access to the Laramie Mountains and all other state and public lands to the east. Development of non-motorized trails would provide for a unique way to access public lands directly from the city limits (*Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East, Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*).
- ♦ Possibility of the development of a dog park to allow for an unleashed active green space for dogs and owners to exercise together.

Constraints

The major constraints to future park development, in addition to reasonable funding limitations, include:

- ♦ In-city land costs, particularly near campus and Downtown, are relatively high.
- ♦ Lands surrounding heavily used Washington, Undine, and LaBonte parks are already developed, precluding any reasonable expectations of expansion without acquisition and demolition of adjoining residences.
- ♦ Limitations on linear expansion to the south and west are imposed by I-80, the railroad tracks, and the Laramie River. As new crossings are exceptionally costly, continuing

CHAPTER 4: PARKS AND RECREATION

attempts must be made to secure separated trail/walkway rights-of-way or easements for all current and future crossings.

- ♦ Areas in West Laramie and in developing parts of southeast Laramie have already been platted, thereby hampering any opportunity for significant acquisition.

Parks and Recreation System Goals and Action Statements

In this section the goals and action statements for each element of the plan are set forth. The goals and action statements are to be used as a starting point to achieve the overall vision of this plan.

New Parks and Facilities Goals and Action Statements

To enhance the system of neighborhood and community parks that will adequately serve the existing and projected future parks and recreational needs of the whole community, the City will need to acquire and develop parks within identified deficiency areas. Proposed parks, trail system expansions, bikeways, and open space preservation areas are shown in *Map 4.3, Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas*, *Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East* and *Map 4.4 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan*, *Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*. These improvements will help to achieve full service area coverage of community parks and an even distribution of neighborhood parks. Goals and action statements specifically include:

1. Completion of a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Within the plan the goals and action statement in the Laramie Comprehensive Plan shall be further developed. Development of this plan should not inhibit any of these goals or action statements from being developed but should further plan and aid these goals and action statements. Additional and more specific goals shall be developed with the completion of the new Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan (*Map 4.4 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan*, *Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*).
2. Establish new neighborhood parks and open space in conjunction with future developments. Parks should accommodate new residential development as well as supplementing those areas that are lacking parks service. The City of Laramie should attempt to achieve a standard equal or higher than the national standards for parkland acreage and recreational facilities.
3. Acquiring and developing new parks can be difficult. Achieving a system of neighborhood and community parks that is uniformly distributed may be accomplished in several ways, including:
4. **Pre-development acquisition.** The City should continue to identify opportunities to acquire desirable tracts that are favorably situated to accommodate expansion of the park system.
 - a. **Land donation requirements concurrent with subdivision approval.** Developers should be required to set aside five percent of an intended residential development site's area for improvement as a future park that would serve the newly established neighborhood. At the Preliminary Plat stage of the project, planning for a park should be explored by looking at location as well as other factors. Requiring the dedication of park land concurrent with a

final plat or a development site plan is a sound method to assure adequate park areas consistent with the demand and impact placed on the public parks system by new development. For overall project sites smaller than 100 acres (i.e., the resulting park site would be smaller than five acres), a fee comparable to five percent of the site's market value should be provided to an established City trust fund, and earmarked for future land acquisition in the vicinity of the proposed development.

- b. **Developer impact fees.** In addition to the land donation requirements stated above, developers should be required to pay an impact fee based on new residential units in order to fund the actual improvements of parkland. Collection of this impact fee would occur during the building permitting process, prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
 - c. **Public/private partnerships, donations, and other strategies.** Just as universities, hospitals, and cultural institutions systematically pursue individual and corporate donations, the City of Laramie should promote opportunities to receive donations and bequests of land. An excellent example of such a bequest is the "Turner Tract" property, which was donated to Laramie two generations ago. As with the Turner property, however, it is important that properties be received with "few or no strings attached" to enable flexibility in development planning and possible sale of less-favorably situated parcels.
 - d. **Development Code Updates.** Use of the new development code to establish processes to address acquisition of park land and trails.
 - e. **Funding Sources.** The City will need to rely on other funding measures for full development of a parks system. Donations, bonding, taxes and capital budgeting must be evaluated and considered in an effort to develop a parks system set out in this plan.
5. Reuse of existing brownfield sites as public open space or as some other recreational site.
 6. Develop standards that aid the City of Laramie and other entities such as Schools, Private Companies and others in an attempt at shared facilities. These standards can increase recreational opportunity without high costs.
 7. Identify a location for a new city cemetery site. Capacity at the existing site will be up in 10-15 years (*Map 4.3, Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas*). Sites identified are only possible locations. Only one location would need to be selected depending upon the size.
 8. Work with local interest groups and volunteers in helping develop, maintain, improve and extend our local Parks and Trails.

New and Extended Trails Goals and Action Statements

The Laramie Greenbelt should be extended to encompass the entire City and provide access to outlying open space resources in addition to improving the walkability and connectivity of the community. Proposed goals and action statements include:

CHAPTER 4: PARKS AND RECREATION

1. Acquire and develop trail locations shown on *Map 4.4, Bicycle and Trails Master Plan* and *Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East*, *Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*.
2. Extension of the Greenbelt eastward from the intersection of the Laramie River and Curtis Street along Reynolds and Harney Streets to the athletic fields complex.
3. Connect greenbelt and trails to adjacent neighborhoods and parks as well as provide more trailheads.
4. Extension of the Greenbelt westward from the intersection of the Laramie River and Curtis Street to Welsh Lane and Route 130.
5. Continuation of the Greenbelt along the Laramie River southwest to the Monolith Ranch river access point and further to the end of the Monolith Ranch property.
6. Extension of the Greenbelt along the river northward from Curtis to the Union Pacific rail road crossing.
7. Tie in locations for the Greenbelt to the BP Amoco site should be considered, especially if this site is developed for parks or open space land in the future.
8. Completion of the Spring Creek trail.
9. A new trail built in conjunction with the Bill Nye Avenue corridor street project. This trail will serve as a major east west pedestrian and bike route from the future Turner Tract development to 3rd Street.
10. Continued maintenance of the east-west abandoned railroad right-of-way that goes under I-80 near Van Buren. This site could provide necessary access under I-80 for Bike or trail.
11. A new trail developed south of Interstate 80, along a creek bed, linking to the existing Valley View, Country Meadows, Sherman Hills, Laramie Plains, and Imperial Heights neighborhoods at the far southwest edge of the City. Limitations on linear expansion to the south and west are imposed by I-80, the railroad tracks, and the Laramie River. As new crossings are exceptionally costly, continuing attempts must be made to secure separated trail/walkway rights-of-way or easements for all current and future crossings.
12. Maintenance/Improvement of Adams Street trail.
13. Development of trails found in *Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East*.

Bicycle Lanes and Bikeways Goals and Action Statements

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities serve not only as alternative modes of transportation, but also as important forms of recreation. Therefore, in addition to the greenbelt and trail system improvements recommended above, the City should develop a series of marked bikeways or bicycle lanes along the existing street system. These routes, are shown in *Map 4.4, Bicycle and Trails Master Plan*.

1. Completion of a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Within the plan the goals and action statement in the Laramie Comprehensive Plan shall be further developed. Development of this plan should not inhibit any of these goals or action statements

from being developed but should further plan and aid these goals and action statements.

2. Mark and stripe bike lanes throughout the city along with extra wide curb lanes on local, arterial and collector streets. Laramie's exceedingly wide residential streets present an ideal opportunity for reconfiguration and striping.
3. Routine maintenance such as repainting, snow removal and sweeping for debris must be incorporated so bike lanes and trails are safe and useable throughout the year.
4. Continued assessment of trails system should be done. The remaining components of the trail and bike network should be based on actual usage of the system.
5. The system of off-street bike and walking trails should be designed and constructed in compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Further information on pedestrian and bicycle facilities is provided in *Chapter 8, Transportation*.

Open Space Goals and Action Statements

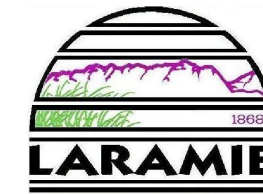
1. Portions of the BP/Amoco brownfield site near the Curtis Street crossing of the Laramie River should be evaluated for its potential for open space or as a recreational opportunity.
2. Identify if the Mountain Cement and Union Pacific sites south of Interstate 80 at the Laramie River could provide areas of open space near the Laramie River Greenbelt.
3. Undeveloped area along Spring Creek immediately east of the 3rd Street entrance to Laramie. Acquisition of this land would enhance the greenbelt along Spring Creek and would improve the appearance of this important gateway to the City.
4. Areas along and at the top and bottom of the ridge at the northern border of Laramie should be protected through easements, strategic land acquisitions, and the adoption of zoning amendments that would establish greater yard restrictions and development standards on ridgelines. This would preserve existing clear sightlines to the Laramie Mountains.
5. Areas within the one mile boundary should continue to have undeveloped open space so preservation of the rural atmosphere of this area can be preserved. Having undeveloped area within the one mile boundary should help keep the small town and independent feel of the community while discouraging sprawl.
6. Areas considered to be "sensitive" (i.e. aquifer protection area, floodplains, ridgelines, unique features, etc.) should be protected or reserved as open space when these areas are contained within developments or should be set aside before development occurs through purchase, transfer of development rights, overlay zones or through other methods.
7. Provide and Identify areas on the Monolith Ranch property for open space and recreational activities (*Map 2.1, Monolith Ranch*).

Map 4.1

Existing Parks, Park Facilities, and Schools

- Legend

 - City Limits
 - Local Roads
 - Collectors / Arterial Roads
 - Interstates / Highways
 - 1-Mile Planning Area
 - Parks and Recreation Areas
 - Schools
 - Laramie Greenbelt Trail
 - Streams
 - Railroad



Map 4.2 Park and School Service Areas

Legend

Proposed Roads

- Interstate
- Parkway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector

Existing Roads

- Local
- Interstate
- Parkway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector

Bridge/Overpass/Underpass

City Limits

1-Mile Planning Area

Parks and Recreation Areas

School

Laramie Greenbelt Trail

Streams

Railroad

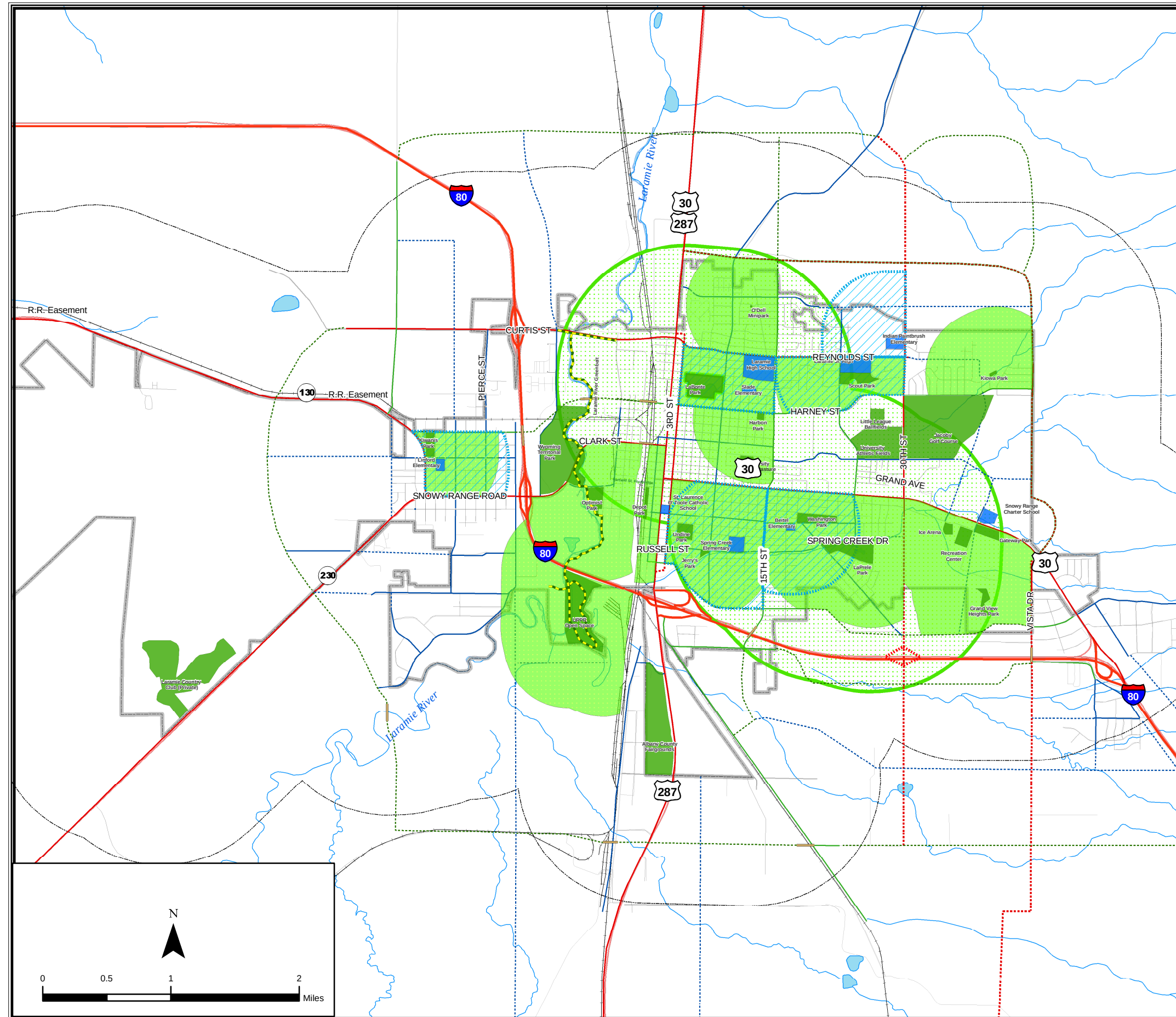
Community Park Service Area
(1 mile)

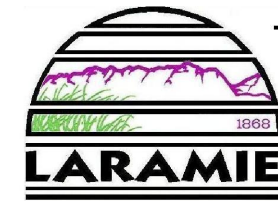
Neighborhood Park Service Area
(1/2 mile)

Elementary School Service Area
(1/2 mile)



KENDIG KEAST
COLLABORATIVE



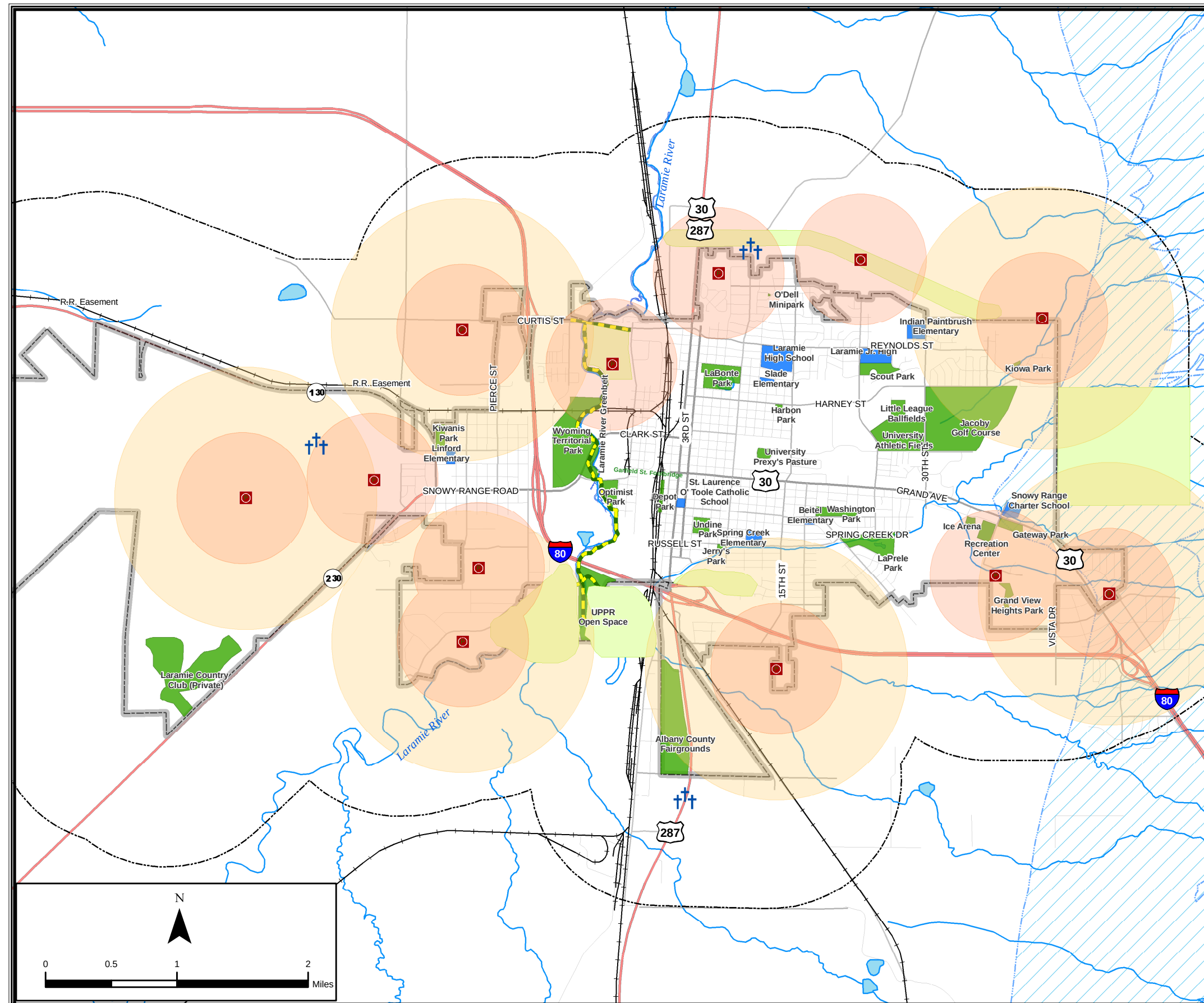


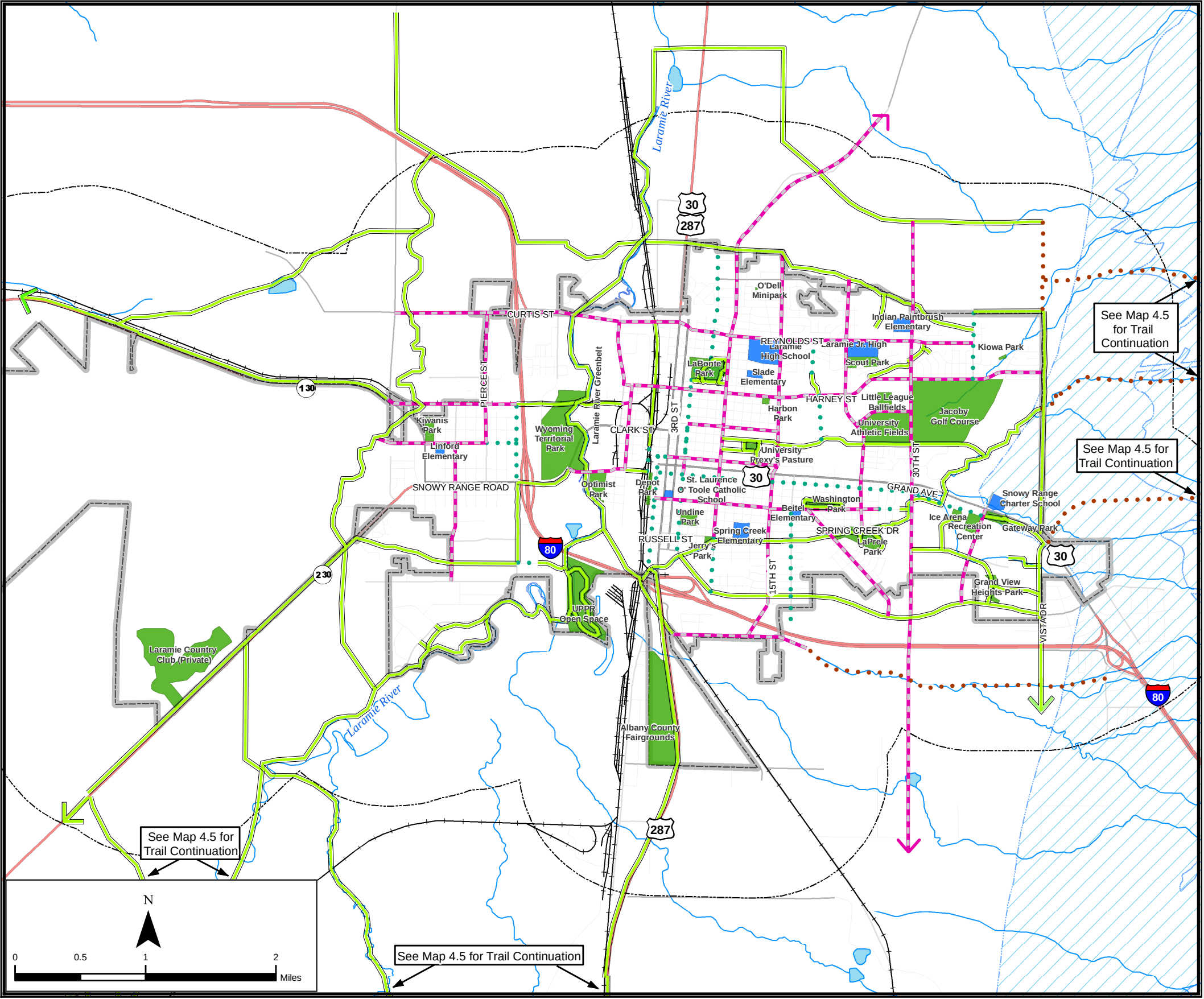
THE
LARAMIE
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

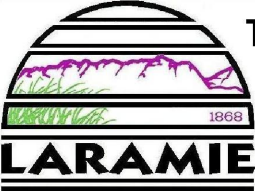
Map 4.3 Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas

Legend

- City Limits
- Local Roads
- Collectors / Arterial Roads
- Interstates / Highways
- 1-Mile Planning Area
- Parks and Recreation Areas
- School
- Laramie Greenbelt Trail
- Streams
- Railroad
- Casper Aquifer Protection Area
- Future Open Space Acquisition Areas
- Future Park Locations
- Needed Neighborhood Park Service Area (1/2 mile)
- Needed Community Park Service Area (1 mile)
- Possible Future Cemetery Locations







THE
LARAMIE
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

Map 4.4

Bicycle and Trails Master Plan

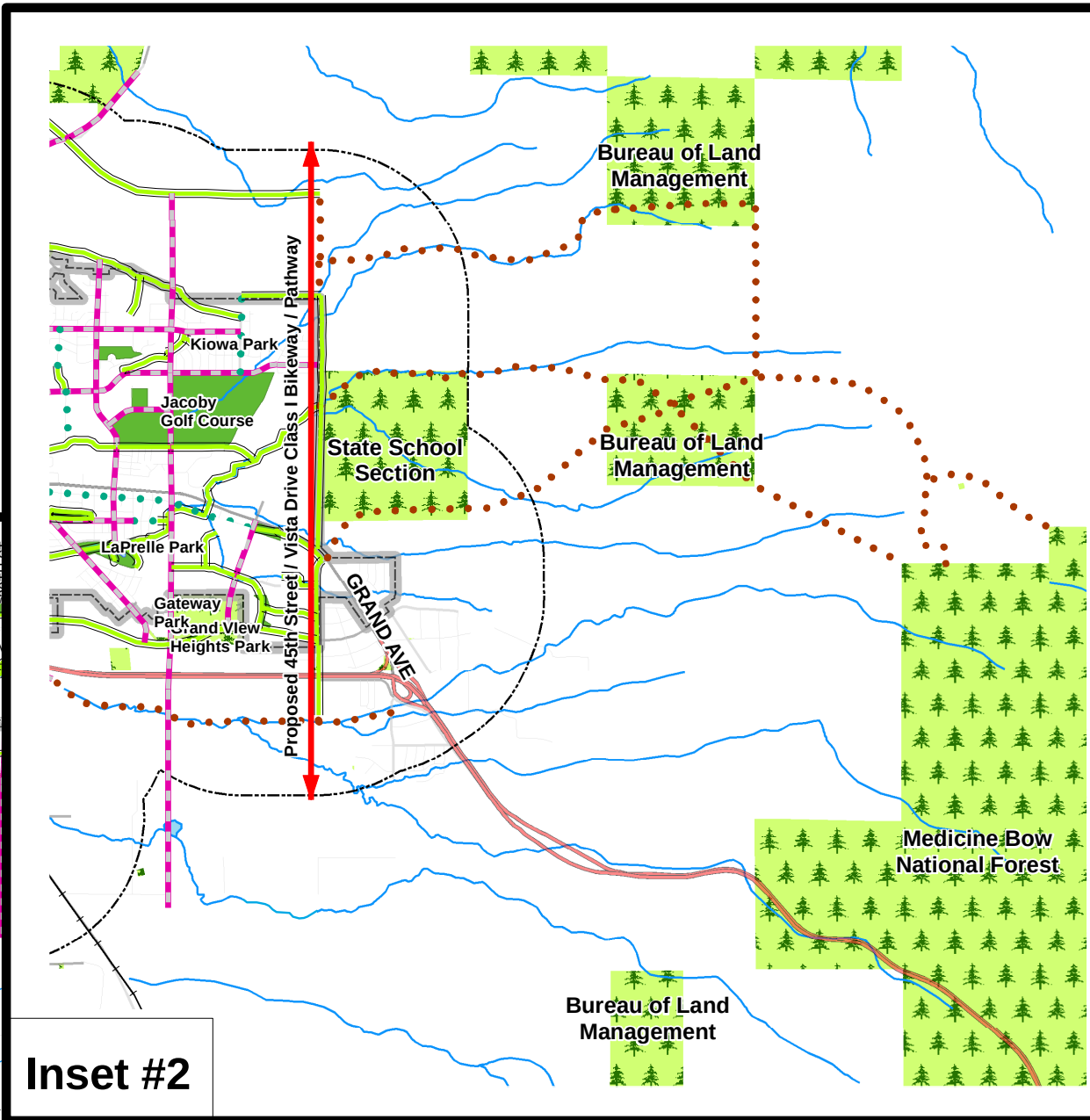
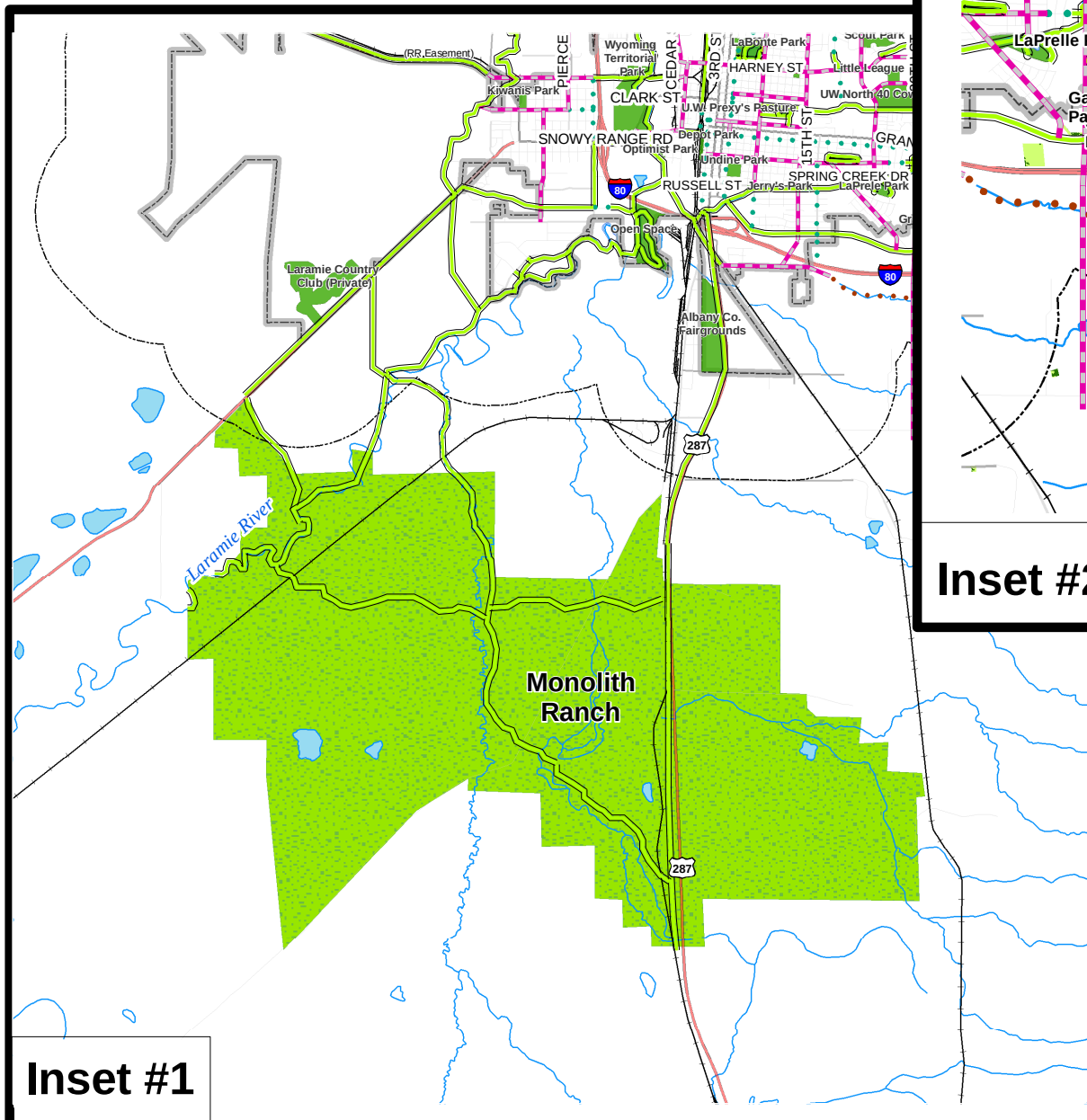
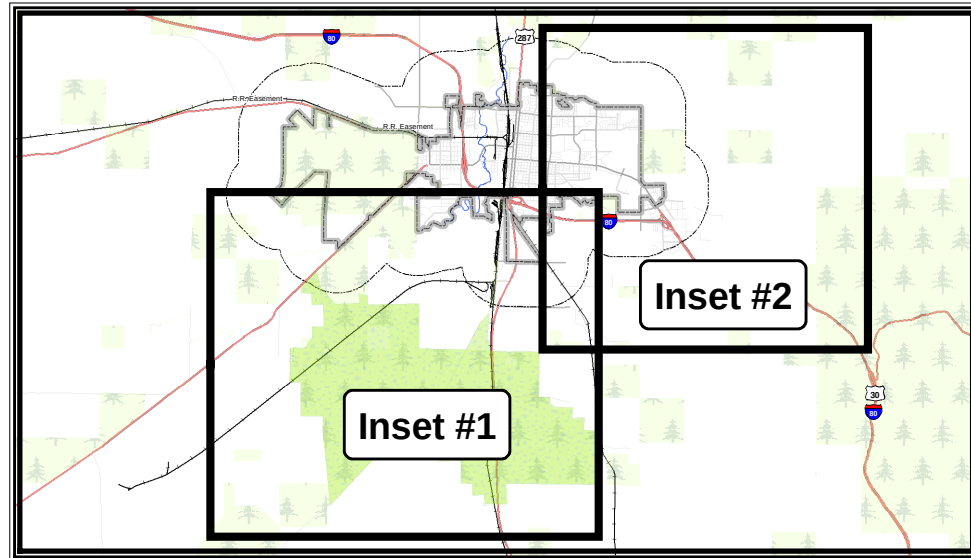
Legend

- City Limits
- Local Roads
- Collectors / Arterial Roads
- Interstates / Highways
- 1-Mile Planning Area
- Parks and Recreation Areas
- School
- Streams
- Railroad
- Casper Aquifer Protection Area

Future Trails, Paths and Bikeways

- Class 1 (Paved surface separate from any road)
- Class 2 (Marked bike lane with signage)
- Class 3 (Designated Route, signage only)
- Rural Trail (Unimproved / Improved Surface)





Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan

Legend

- City Limits
- Local Roads
- Collectors / Arterial Roads
- Interstates / Highways
- 1-Mile Planning Area
- Parks and Recreation Areas
- Streams
- Railroad
- Public Lands
- Monolith Ranch Property

Future Trails, Paths and Bikeways

- Class 1 (Paved surface separate from any road)
- Class 2 (Marked bike lane with signage)
- Class 3 (Designated Route, signage only)
- Rural Trail (Unimproved / Improved Surface)

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

5

CHAPTER

Available and affordable housing are key factors in the attractiveness of a community to new residents and businesses. For existing residents, they are essential to quality of life, as is the presence of adequate, available housing to meet the needs of very low-, low-, moderate-, middle- and upper-income households. While market conditions will determine the quantity and price of new residential units, as well as resale and rental housing, it is sometimes necessary for public agencies and nonprofit organizations to take proactive steps to encourage housing construction or rehabilitation, to assist lower-income buyers or tenants to find adequate, affordable shelter in the community. These are all important considerations in the development and sustainability of quality living environments.

INTRODUCTION

Housing should be safe and decent. A cornerstone of the quality of life in Laramie, stem from housing and stretch well beyond the basic statistics pertaining to housing supply and family income. Housing conditions affect the integrity and livability of all neighborhoods in and around the City. In turn, the presence of sustainable, diverse, attractive, and vibrant neighborhoods becomes a compelling asset for retaining and attracting economic development.

The City of Laramie faces a challenge of having some of the highest cost housing and lowest incomes in the state. Two educational institutions, the University of Wyoming and Wyoming Technical Institute (WyoTech), bring significant contributions to the community in terms of resources and economic development; however, they also affect many residents by impacting neighborhood living conditions and influencing the local housing market.

As Laramie officials try to understand the local housing market, it continually changes as new development is approved and additional units are introduced to the housing stock. There has been a recent surge in housing construction during the last four years, and its reverberations throughout the market are not yet fully recognizable.

Beyond livability and economic development concerns, local government also has an interest in the sustainability of new residential construction and the condition of the

existing housing stock since market and assessed values directly impact the tax base and resulting revenue potential. Neighborhoods that are in need of revitalization and redevelopment should be the target of public and private investment and assistance efforts to preserve existing neighborhoods and prevent future decay and deterioration.

SUMMARY OF KEY HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

Laramie residents wish to enjoy the privileges of quality housing and the positive impact that well-designed neighborhoods can have on the image and attitude of the community. Issues voiced by citizens, organizations, and officials indicate that addressing housing needs and demands is a primary component to a successful future. Stakeholder input resulted in the assembly of seven key issues relative to housing in the planning area.

Quality, Affordable Housing

Construction of new homes is well underway in the Laramie area; however, many are not affordable to the majority of Laramie residents. Residents have expressed concerns that housing at a price below \$150,000 is neither available, nor being constructed.

While affordability is a relative term, it is an increasingly common issue for households at all levels of income. But, it is an issue that is dependent upon variables such as interest rates, the rate of unemployment, local standards and requirements, and national economic shifts that go beyond the desire of a builder to make a profit.

Neighborhood Revitalization

Established neighborhoods often lack the luster, size, design, and amenities of new housing. However, many communities are beginning to understand that, in return, older neighborhoods offer intangibles such as history, culture, proximity, and a stronger sense of community.

In Laramie, some older communities have been well maintained, while others require infill development, infrastructure improvements, and further revitalization efforts. While the impacts of history, neglect due to poverty, conversions to student-rental use, and inappropriate surrounding land uses may make recovery difficult for some neighborhoods, most offer an opportunity for renewal and long-term sustainability.

Appearance

Housing impacts neighborhood appearance and creates an impression. Housing that appears to need upkeep can be an indication of a community in a state of disrepair and decline. Freshly painted and well-maintained homes are indicative of a positive community with a promising future. Appearance is also correlated to community pride and ownership, perception, area property value, maintenance costs, and quality of life, where each of these factors can be influenced positively or negatively.

Comments by Laramie residents at public meetings indicated concerns about the appearance of the housing stock and area neighborhoods. Some suggested the need for stricter regulations or better enforcement of existing requirements. Others emphasized the need to improve basic cleanliness and property maintenance.

"We take stock of a city like we take stock of a man. The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge."

- Mark Twain

Efficient Growth

The manner in which an urban area grows impacts construction cost, maintenance cost, and ability to provide public amenities, access to services, transportation options, overall quality of life, and sense of community. The automobile has enabled people to live farther from the urbanized area – in suburbs and beyond into rural areas. While many argue that this has resulted in increased personal quality of life, it has come with significant individual and community expense.

Some (but not all) areas of newer development in the Laramie planning area can be characterized by the “leap frog” pattern that has become indicative of modern subdivision development. While sprawl has not been noted as a major concern, issues were raised that are symptomatic of sprawl. Examples include high housing cost, lack of accessible parks, lack of sidewalks and street lighting, inadequate collector streets, stresses on water and sewer infrastructure, lack of different housing types, and risks associated with surrounding, conflicting development.

Building New Neighborhoods

A distinct difference exists between subdivisions and neighborhoods. While one is focused upon the provision of quality housing and infrastructure, the other additionally focuses on the provision of an appealing, interconnected community. Good neighborhoods share a number of key traits, including a pedestrian-friendly environment, community focal points, access to services without the need to travel by car (although the option is certainly available), mixed housing that caters to different socioeconomic classes, distinguishable community character, narrow residential streets, and community-oriented architecture.

Several comments by Laramie residents indicate a desire to improve their quality of life through better neighborhood design, some of which has been initiated in the Turner Tract area of southeast Laramie. Such design corresponds to efficient growth and improved safety.

Life Cycle Housing

As time passes, household needs change. For example, a single person may get married, have children, and then watch those children leave the nest to begin life on their own. Each major shift in lifestyle may impact housing needs. A household with two children certainly requires more and different space than a home for mature adults whose children have grown and moved out of the home. Life-cycle housing anticipates the differing needs of households in transition by offering varied choices of housing within the same neighborhood. In this manner, a person can age in the same neighborhood or community without the need to move away to meet revised housing needs.

Urban or Rural Character

The Laramie planning area encompasses the City and a one-mile fringe area in the jurisdiction of Albany County. The area offers residents a broad mix of lifestyle opportunities—the chance to live within an urban area and enjoy the urban character or the chance to live in a more suburban or semi-rural setting. Housing and neighborhood

Case Study Example for Life Cycle Housing:

The Five City area of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, Waite Park and St. Joseph, MN have joined together to ensure that at least 15% of all new residential construction within each city will provide affordable housing for families. Through a Lifecycle Housing Units program A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) was signed, which is a formal voluntary commitment between the five cities that each will work with developers to target 15% of residential construction as affordable. Re-sale restrictions attached to the sales will allow the affordable homes to serve other homebuyers as the homes are recycled. Home standards for units that qualify include:

- ♦ 2 Bedrooms - While there may be some demand for smaller homes, it is not the purpose of the JPA to address this market.
- ♦ 1 Bathroom, with space for expansion, but to minimize cost, only one bath needs to be completed.
- ♦ Basic appliance package of refrigerator, stove/oven, and range hood.
- ♦ 2-Stall Garage
- ♦ Sodded front lawn

Source:
http://www.sartellmn.com/lifecycle_housing.htm

development generally reflect the surrounding character so that urban housing areas typically include sidewalks, street lights, curbs, and an underground storm drainage system. Rural housing areas typically have fewer, if any, of these amenities, including streets, sewer, water and parks.



Rural housing at the edge of Laramie contributes to sprawl.

New development that occurs in Albany County outside of the incorporated City poses a dilemma for those attempting to accommodate area character, but also prepare for future growth. New development may want to respect and take advantage of the surrounding rural character. At the same time, this area will only remain rural for a limited time before it becomes part of the urban fabric. Installation of appropriate urban features “up front” would mean less cost for “retrofitting” improvements in the future.

RELATED STUDIES AND REGULATIONS

Previously available plans and documents that took a more focused approach toward housing and neighborhood quality for the planning area were reviewed and considered in the development of this plan. Ordinances relevant to housing development and neighborhood protection were also considered. The relevant plans and ordinances included:

- ♦ **Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan.** In early 2001, the City received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to assist with the development of an in-depth analysis of housing conditions with recommendations for action. The two-year study involved a 24-member citizen Housing Review Group (HRG) that identified critical housing issues facing Laramie, obstacles facing improvement strategies, 38 policy statements, a series of specific action recommendations, and an implementation strategy. The report completed in 2003 addressed items such as:
 - Housing trends and forecasts.
 - Market conditions.
 - Assessment of buildable land for residential development.
 - Factors affecting residential location decisions.
 - Recommended housing policies and strategies for the next 20 years.
 - Government programs are available to assist in solving housing issues, particularly for low-income families.

Many observations and recommendations contained in this document are normally found in a comprehensive plan documents such as this. The study was so comprehensive and detailed that even a summary of its findings and proposals would occupy a significant part of this chapter. For this reason, this chapter will expand upon, not repeat, the initiatives of this significant study; emphasis will be on findings and recommendations related to local neighborhood conservation, land use, infrastructure, and development management.

A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federal entitlement program administered by HUD's Community Planning and Development Office. The purpose of CDBG funds is to improve communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities—principally for persons with low and moderate incomes. Since the program began in 1974, more than \$55 billion has been appropriated.

Source:
www.senioraffordablehousing.org/development/glossary.htm

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

- ♦ **Subdivision Regulations.** The Subdivision Regulations govern the division of property and required public improvements, primarily for residential purposes within the planning area and 1 mile boundary area.
- ♦ **Zoning Ordinances.** Both the City of Laramie and Albany County have adopted zoning ordinances that regulate the uses, bulk, height, parking requirements, and other aspects of all development. Significant revisions to both the Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinance will follow this comprehensive planning effort.
- ♦ **Albany County Comprehensive Plan 2007.** Albany County is currently creating a new comprehensive plan. This plan should further delineate how Albany County will regulate and develop Albany County in the future.

CURRENT HOUSING OUTLOOK

Housing Costs

Laramie has some of the most expensive housing in the state, despite the relatively low incomes of its residents. The 2000 Census reported that the median house cost was \$116,400 higher than all comparable cities in the state and 120 percent of the state-wide median value. The median gross rent of \$465 was second highest among the comparable cities, exceeded only by the rent in Cheyenne (\$470). The median gross rent in Laramie was 106 percent of the state-wide median.

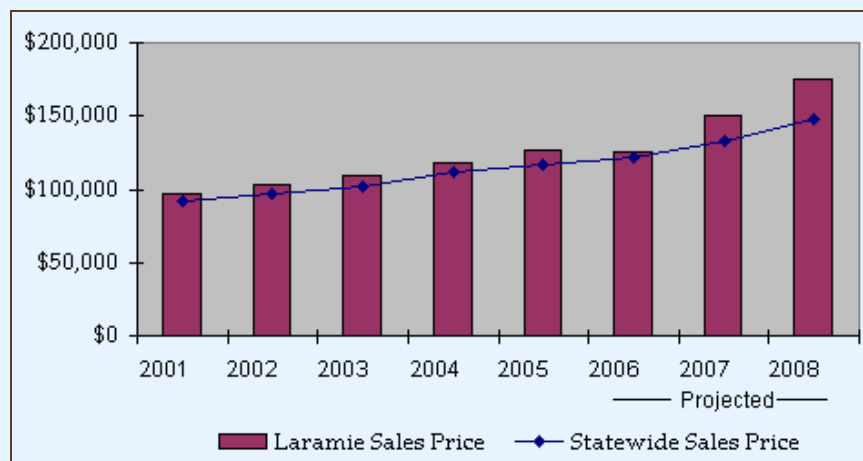
The Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) also tracks housing costs and reports that, over the past eight years, housing costs have increased significantly and have grown faster than state-wide averages. Between 1990 and 2000, according to the WCDA, the average sales price of existing detached, single-family houses increased from \$65,500 to \$118,437 an increase of 80.8 percent. WCDA further reports that between 2000 and 2004 average house costs increased to \$175,320 – an increase of 48 percent. The State-wide average increased 32 percent between 2000 and 2004, from \$111,437 to \$147,588.

Illustrated in *Figure 5.1, Average and Projected Sales Prices of Existing Homes*, is a graph that shows that the average Laramie sales price was slightly higher, but approximated the state-wide average until 2003, after which the Laramie cost increased significantly more than the state average.

Sales prices have increased considerably in 2004 and 2005 because there continues to be limited availability of housing choices for families to purchase. Laramie does not have many developers willing to take the risk that is involved in developing housing. Laramie typically has developers developing land, selling to builders and then builders selling to potential home owners. Another prohibiting factor is that there are limited opportunities

The **Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA)** was created by state statute as a body corporate operating as an instrumentality of the state and receives no state funding. WCDA raises capital for the mortgages it provides by selling mortgage revenue bonds to investors. Since the interest paid to bond holders is generally exempt from federal income tax, investors accept a lower rate. The WCDA passes these savings on to homebuyers by providing mortgages at below-market interest rates. The homebuyers' mortgage payments repay the bonds.

Figure 5.1, Average and Projected Sales Prices of Existing Homes in Laramie & Across the State



Source: Wyoming Community Development Authority

Table 5.1, Annualized Percent Rent Increases in Albany County

Unit Type	Annualized Increase
Apartments	3.76%
Single-family Detached Houses	4.88%
Mobile Home with Lot	4.08%
Mobile Home	3.27%

Source: Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Divisions

to buy land for development purposes. In addition, these factors further contribute to the lack of developers willing to develop low income housing.

The strong demand for rental housing also results in single-family houses being removed from the ownership market and placed into the rental pool. Only 47.5 percent of the housing units in Laramie are owner-occupied despite the fact that 54.4 percent of the units are single-family detached houses.

The short supply of developers and sites for development, and the erosion of the single-family housing stock for rental purposes, drive up the cost of the housing that is available for purchase.

Rents have been increasing, as well, and are displayed in *Table 5.1, Annualized Percent Rent Increases*. The Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division, reports in the Wyoming Cost of Living Index that the average rent for apartments in Albany County increased from \$454 to \$594, or 31 percent between 2000 and 2004. During the same period, the average rent for houses increased 41 percent from \$603 to \$849, and mobile homes increased 10 percent. The Wyoming DOA reports the annualized increases in rents between 1986 and 2004 were substantial and outpaced the growth in incomes.

Affordability

Affordability is a constant issue of debate. For many, the question is, “Affordable to whom?” The household earning \$30,000 will define “affordable” quite differently from the household that earns \$120,000 a year. Nevertheless, each is looking for housing that is affordable. While a more in-depth discussion of housing affordability is presented in the *2003 Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan*, parts of that discussion are included here because it is such an important issue confronting the City.

A significant sector of Laramie’s population faces housing affordability issues, especially among the lower income residents. Families earning the median income historically have been able to afford housing if it were available, but the recent increases in housing costs have exceeded the affordable reach of these families. This increase has affected persons in all income brackets, resulting in residents purchasing smaller, less expensive homes that they would ordinarily buy to stay within their personal spending limits.

Housing affordability is generally defined in two ways. A widely used standard developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states that a family or household is able to afford to spend 30 percent of its income on housing. This percentage leaves a sufficient amount of income for other essential household needs. Households who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are described as “cost burdened.” The second affordability measure compares median incomes with median

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housing costs and employs the standard that a household can afford to purchase a house priced at three times its annual income.

According to the 2000 Census,

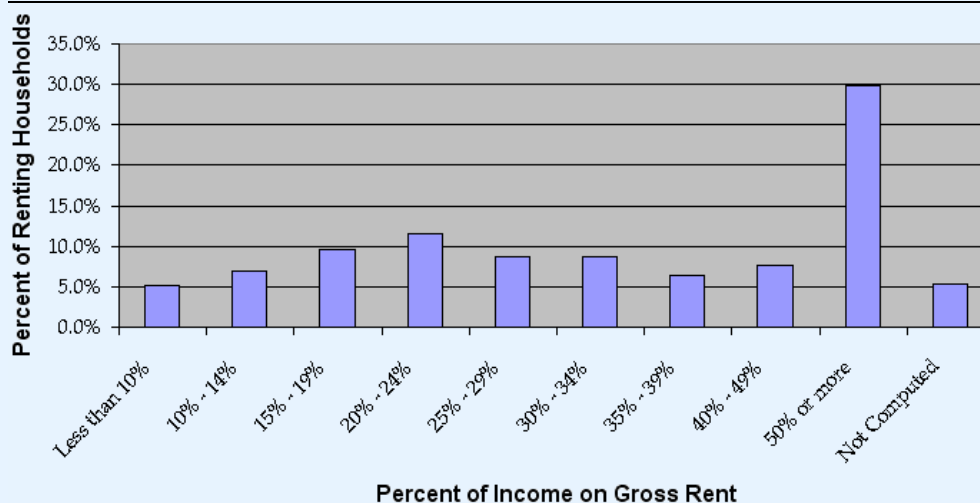
approximately 53 percent of renting households paid more than 30 percent of their income for rent, and over 30 percent of the households who rented paid more than 50 percent of their monthly income for rent (Figure 5.2, *Percentage of Income on Rental Housing*). The Laramie Area Tenant Survey conducted in 2001 also concluded

that over 50 percent of renters paid more than 30 percent of their income on housing. In terms of owner-occupied housing, the 2001 survey conducted by the Housing Review Group reported that 13.7 percent of owners expended more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

In the Laramie area, the median household income in 2000 was \$43,395. For housing to be considered affordable to a family earning the median household income, housing costs could not exceed \$1,085 in a month regardless of the type or terms of the mortgage. Based on this, a family earning 180 percent of the median could pay slightly more than \$1,950 per month and still consider housing costs to be affordable. On the other hand, families earning only 30 percent of the median household income can afford only \$326 in monthly housing-related expenses.

More significant than the actual ratios is the trend reflected in the data in *Table 5.2, Changes in Median Income and Housing Costs*. The median house value increased 80.8 percent during the 1990s while the median income increased 42.9 percent. More recent data show this trend continuing. The 2004 average sales price for single-family detached units reported by WCDA is 3.2 times the 2004 median family income reported by HUD. This ratio surpasses the affordable price for family households. This 2004 ratio compares an average sales price and a median income and should be considered an approximation. However, the average sales price reported by WCDA and the median sales prices reported by the Census in 2000 were very close. The average price that year was only

Figure 5.2, Percentage of Income on Rental Housing in Laramie



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Table 5.2, Changes in Median Income and Housing Costs in Laramie

	1990	2000	% Change
Median Non-family Income	\$19,642	\$27,318	39.10%
Median Family Income	\$30,340	\$43,349	42.90%
Median House Value	\$66,500	\$116,500	75.20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

\$2,000 higher than the median value.

While Laramie faces a range of housing needs, the issue of housing affordability for the low- and very low-income households may be the most severe. Significant portions of Laramie's population are cost burdened and unable to afford housing. These populations spending more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing have inadequate amounts for other necessary expenses, such as health care and education. Families earning the median income have been able to afford housing in the past, but with the recent increases in housing cost, these families are now beginning to encounter affordability issues.

A number of additional factors impact housing affordability, including:

- ♦ **Student Housing.** As previously mentioned, the University of Wyoming and WyoTech contribute much to the economic success and quality of life in Laramie, but their student populations also impact the community by creating an “external demand” for housing. This additional demand for housing drives up prices, affecting the residents seeking housing in the rental and lower cost ownership markets.
- ♦ **High Costs of Construction or Renovation.** Housing price is largely based upon the cost of labor and materials necessary to construct or renovate a housing unit. People are seeking larger homes that require more space, more time to build, and more materials. The price of materials and labor also impacts cost. If lumber prices increase, the cost is passed on to the potential buyer. Likewise, the cost of housing increases as the number of amenities increases. Units that once included only two bedrooms are now expected to include three or four bedrooms and at least one additional bathroom. Garage size has increased to accommodate two (or even more) vehicles instead of one.
- ♦ **Shortage of Home Builders and Developers.** Shortages of contractors, developers, and building trade persons limits the supply of new home construction and remodeling resources, thereby driving up prices. Further, it generally reduces the breadth of housing type choices as contractors often specialize in a narrow range of products. A common complaint in many smaller cities such as Laramie is that the lack of competition among builders has allowed them to “corner the market” and provides no incentive for financial risk taking or product design creativity.
- ♦ **Market Conditions.** Standard procedure for home builders is to construct homes in a price range that can optimize per-unit margins and the volume of homes that can be sold. Housing units can be built for more or less than this “comfort range,” but the builder increases risks. For instance, if a home builder chooses to construct custom homes for high-income residents, the profit margin will increase, but the number of units requested will decrease. (Additionally, if the economy sours, high-end housing is generally the first to slow.) On the other hand, housing constructed below the optimum market provides reduced profit and does not always guarantee a high volume as compensation. Thus, the builder that chooses to construct housing below the balance will likely earn less profit without added incentives.
- ♦ **Availability of Land.** Realtors and real estate investors often say that the value of land is primarily based upon three items; location, location, and location. The same applies in consideration of housing affordability. Land in some areas will be more cost prohibitive than in other areas. For example, land in urban areas tends to be more expensive than land in rural areas. Land in declining areas may be cheaper to acquire, but costly to assemble and harder to sell. Many newer subdivisions are constructed

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beyond the edge of a city because the purchase cost of land is cheaper. A portion of that reduction in cost is generally passed on to the buyer. On the other hand, a common complaint of residents that live outside the urban area is lack of amenities within walking distance such as parks, open space, community facilities, day care facilities, or schools. Once additional land is acquired to provide for these elements, the costs of development may well meet or exceed the cost associated with urban development.

A related factor affecting land costs, one often cited by developers themselves, is that the minimum lot size restrictions found in zoning ordinances increases the cost of land. Land affordability is further hampered by “excessive” land development standards and improvements prescribed by subdivision regulations. These factors are addressed later in this chapter.

- ♦ **Financing.** Development of housing requires significant investment. Like most investment ventures, capital is most accessible when the product proposed follows conventional market practices. Because affordable housing projects have a tendency to provide less profit and fewer margins for error, they are sometimes considered to be “risky” by lenders. While this may not keep a project from being funded, it may result in increased rates of interest, shorter loan life, or added requirements. In each case, the cost is passed on to the buyer.
- ♦ **Incentives.** Market forces can often add to the cost of housing. For instance, an increase in interest rates affects the amount individuals can afford, which may result in builders increases their unit prices or, alternatively, having to adjust their housing product to accommodate the change. In these cases, government and nonprofit organizations can introduce incentives that make development of affordable housing a more viable option. Incentives come in a number of forms and are truly limited only by regulation and innovation of local organizations. Typical incentives can include acquisition and assembly of land, streamlined development review processes, reduced fee or bond requirements, provision of infrastructure, “buy-down” programs that utilize local funds to cover an amount of construction costs, loan guarantee, rental assistance, and down-payment assistance for home buyers.
- ♦ **Community Amenities.** As previously discussed, housing demands today are substantially different than in past decades. Residents have come to realize that amenities play a very large role in the quality of life they can expect to experience in a community. Parks, recreation areas, open spaces, community centers, swimming pools, tennis courts, and connecting sidewalks are features that should be common. Each of these, plus other amenities comes with a price tag and diminishes affordability. Ironically, individuals that live in manufactured housing communities, apartment complexes, and other types of affordable housing tend to have fewer amenities, but these are the areas with the most need.
- ♦ **Building Codes.** Building regulations are designed to increase safety or ensure that other objectives of the community are met. However, added regulation often equates to added cost of construction, either through direct costs or delays (“time is money”). Building Codes and regulations should be developed to allow for flexibility, which in turn may reduce costs or allow for alternative design.

An example of a “buy-down” program may be the use of local funds to lower the interest rate on a construction loan. This term may be used generally to refer to any such instrument that lessens the amount of risk due to a developer of less-than-market-value housing, also known as affordable housing.

- ♦ **Fees and Dues.** Fees are commonplace in housing. Utility service generally requires a service fee. Financial institutions often add processing fees to the mortgage preparation process. Homeowners' associations assess dues to cover expenses of managing the neighborhood. While many of these fees are fairly minimal compared to other housing costs, each detracts from affordability.



Some of the University housing is reaching or has reached its useful life, which offers an opportunity for reuse and redevelopment.

Housing Conditions

Much of Laramie's housing stock is old and in need of maintenance or rehabilitation. Typically, housing needs significant repairs after 20 years; over 7,075 units in the City are older than 26 years. The late 1970s saw a significant expansion of the residential housing stock with 1,278 units constructed. Multi-family units totaled 46 percent of the new units at that time and have provided a substantial portion of the rental pool over the recent decades. In addition to the age of the units, many of them served as student housing, which typically increases the need for repairs and maintenance.

Until the recent expansion of the multi-family supply, owners of rental property had a

steady pool of student renters and did not have to upgrade their units to successfully rent them. The construction of new multi-family housing will change this dynamic and will likely require an upgrade of the older units in order for them to remain competitive.

The University of Wyoming faces similar issues with an aging housing stock. Many of the University's units were built 40 years ago and suffer from deferred maintenance, as well.

According to participants in the planning process, there are units being occupied that are in very poor condition. As the community's housing stock ages and with the continued reliance on rental housing to serve the low-income residents, some form of enforcement mechanism may be warranted to upgrade and maintain the quality of the housing stock.

Compounding this troubling situation in the City are the unsightly housing conditions found at the southern edges of the planning area, in Albany County south of the Fairgrounds. The high incidence of occupied substandard mobile homes, dilapidated dwellings, and makeshift structures is made worse by the presence of unpaved (i.e., earthen) streets, abandoned vehicles, nearby conflicting land uses, junk storage, and the frequent presence of farm animals. The City and County need to work together to address this difficult situation.

The City of Laramie and other organizations should look into funding sources that can aid in improving the conditions of existing housing. The Wyoming Housing Network is a new state-wide nonprofit corporation created in 2004 to promote the rehabilitation of housing

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around the state. This agency receives funds from the Federal HOME Partnership Program that are passed through WCDA and used to establish ongoing, low interest loan programs for housing rehabilitation. Interest on the loans range from one to five percent, depending on the incomes of the occupants; in some instances, the interest could be deferred. Funds received from the loan repayments stay in the same community to fund subsequent loans. This program can even be adapted to work with absentee landlords. Funding such as this can make updates and improvements affordable for all income levels.

Changing Demand for Housing

Laramie's population has grown slowly over recent years, but the demand for housing has grown more rapidly due to the shift from family to non-family households. This trend has significant impacts on the future demand for housing as non-family households are both smaller and have lower incomes.

As noted in *Table 5.3, Population in Living Units*, the number of persons living in family households decreased between 1990 and 2000 from 16,868 to 15,896 – a 5.76 percent decrease. By contrast, the number of persons living in non-family households increased by 25.35 percent from 6,845 to 8,580. The number of persons living in University dormitories decreased by over 13 percent from 2,481 to 2,157; the dormitory population has further decreased to 1,900 in 2005.

Table 5.3. Population in Living Units, Laramie

	1990	2000	% Change
Population in Family Households	16,868	15,896	-5.76%
Population in Non-family Households	6,845	8,580	25.36%
Population in University Dorms	2,243	1,875	-16.40%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. UW Dorm data provided by the University of Wyoming.

Between 1990 and 2000, Laramie's population grew 1.9 percent; however, due to the decreasing household size and the shift from families to non-family households, the actual number of households grew 9 percent (see *Table 5.4, Changes in Households and Housing Units*). In 1980, the average household size was 2.78 persons per household. This average decreased to 2.31 persons per household in 1990 and to 2.19 persons per household in 2000. This decrease is important because it increases the demand for housing beyond the increase in population. This trend is occurring nation-wide as people wait longer to marry, have fewer children, and more frequently live in non-traditional family living units. To keep pace, the housing stock grew by 8 percent.

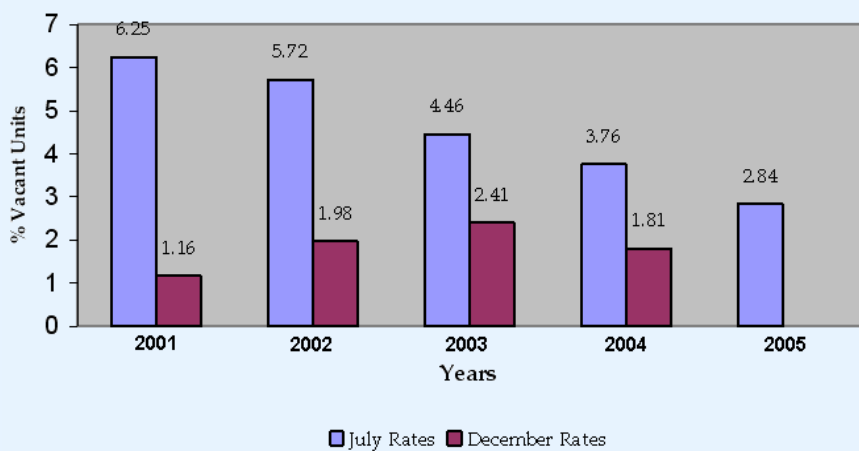
Table 5.4. Changes in Households and Housing Units in Laramie

	1990	2000	% Change
Total Households	10,400	11,336	9%
Total Housing Units	11,076	11,994	8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Vacancy rates also reflect the shift to smaller, non-family households as the vacancy rates have steadily declined along with the declining household size. The WCDA collects data on vacancy rates for rental properties in July and December of each year. Shown in *Figure 5.3, Albany County Vacancy Rates*, is the seasonality of vacancy rates in Albany County over the past five years as the student population fills units during the school year, but vacates them for the summer. However, the declining household size has resulted in a tightening of the housing market as the summer vacancy rates have dropped below 3 percent.

Figure 5.3, Albany County Vacancy Rates



Source: Wyoming Community Development Authority

As indicated in *Figure 5.3, Albany County Vacancy Rates*, December vacancy rates rose slightly in 2002 and 2003, but declined again in 2004 to 1.81 percent. July vacancy rates have been declining steadily since 2001, from a rate of 6.25 to 2.84 in 2005. This data have not yet begun to reflect the recent expansion in residential units that has seen 833 new units permitted for construction in 2004 and 2005, which will be reflected in later reports of the WCDA.

A vacancy rate of five percent is considered the minimum desirable rate to allow sufficient mobility within the market. The vacancy rates during the school year have been significantly below this standard; the July rates have declined below this standard, as well, indicating a shortage of housing supply.

Recent Construction

As displayed in *Table 5.5, Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Laramie*, the Laramie housing market is responding to several years of an extreme shortage of rental units. In the last five years, there has been a significant increase in multi-family units; 833 units have been permitted by the City since 2001 – a 37 percent increase in the

Table 5.5, Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Laramie

	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Total
2000 Census	6,164	2,231	11,336
2000	46	4	50
2001	59	149	208
2002	81	10	94
2003	115	78	193
2004	130	194	324
2005	109	402	511
2006	77	145	222
Total permitted	617	982	1,602

Source: 2000 U.S. Census; Laramie Building Department

number of multi-family units that were reported in the 2000 Census. The number of single-family units permitted since 2000 totals 540, which represents an 8.7 percent increase in the single-family housing stock. The total number of housing units permitted since 2000 is 1,380, a 12 percent increase in housing units in six years. This percentage increase compares to a nine percent increase for the entire decade of the 1990s. Not since 1976 to 1979, when 1,278 units were added, has Laramie seen a comparable amount of residential construction.

These recent increases in housing supply will create positive impacts on several issues. There will be relief in the extremely low vacancy rate, and owners of the older units will likely need to upgrade them to remain competitive in the rental market. The additional supply also should slow the increases in rents.

Development Review, Permitting Process and Zoning Regulations

Several agency representatives and citizens spoke about the lack of coordination among reviewing agencies, the length of time necessary for standard plans to be reviewed, and the lack of a system in which everyone knows the rules and procedures. Some comments suggested that many costly requirements were added to approvals that made the project infeasible or less desirable for the developer.

Although improvements are occurring, the zoning ordinance does not prescribe a review process that establishes a clear sequence of steps to review a development application. A clear and consistent review process that identifies the required information for an application, the sequence of steps in a review process, and time deadlines for performing reviews would add predictability to the approval and permitting process and aid developers seeking approval of affordable housing projects.

The City's zoning ordinance contains six residential zoning districts, but only the R3, Multiple Family district provides a high enough density to produce affordable housing, as shown in *Table 5.6, Summary of Zoning Districts*. Furthermore, the "pyramid" form of the City's ordinance allows single-family units in all districts. Thus, low-density development frequently is constructed on land zoned for higher density, multi-family units, displacing opportunities for more affordable housing.

Table 5.6, Summary of Zoning Densities in Laramie

District	Use	Minimum Lot Area (sq. ft)	Density (DUs per gross acre)
LR	SF	9,000	5
R1	SF	7,000	6
RR	SF, MH	16,000	3
R2	MF 4du	6,000/bldg. 3,500/DU	12
R2	w/ MH	4,800/bldg. 3,500/DU	12
R3	SF, MF	6,000/bldg. 1,000/DU	44

Source: Laramie Zoning Ordinance

Several commercial zoning districts (B1, Limited Business; B2, Business; and C2, Commercial) allow a Planned Unit Development (PUD) in which density is allowed to be increased to 44 dwellings per gross acre in return for the provision of affordable housing. The affordable housing required for the density bonus must be priced for households with incomes that are 80 percent or less of the Albany County median income. However, there are no provisions that ensure that the lower-cost housing will remain affordable over time, especially after the resale of the property. Also, this development option is seldom used due to the difficulty of gaining approval of the higher density and the length of time spent in the approval process.

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU), a possible housing type that can be affordable, is allowed only for housing of employees working on the site of the accessory unit. Beyond this limited allowance for ADUs, the zoning ordinance is not explicit about the allowance of mixed-use buildings. An emerging trend in cities is to permit a second small residence to be constructed on an existing single-family residential lot. Under certain circumstances, these units (often referred to as "granny flats") provide low-cost housing opportunities for family members that are elderly or have other special needs in a time where average life spans are rapidly increasing.

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Buildings with commercial or offices on lower levels and residential units on upper levels can provide affordable housing opportunities. Older buildings in Downtown provide opportunities for mixed-use development and can be a source of housing. The City has removed the residential parking requirement, which had been an obstacle to providing housing in the Downtown area. Code should be developed to aid downtown building owners the ability to develop properties for residential use.

The zoning ordinance also requires an existing vacant lot to be 4,000 square feet in area and at least 40 feet wide to be built upon, a rather generous standard. Unsubdivided tracts of land can be developed, provided each building is supported by 14,000 square feet of land and the tract is at least 120 feet wide. These requirements prevent any substantial density without first subdividing the property into lots. These restrictions, arguably, prevent creative infill opportunities that can provide affordable housing.

Other examples of obstacles or avoidable costs that could be changed with a subdivision code rewrite include street standards that may over-design street widths in residential areas and the inability to develop mixed-use buildings. Incentives can also be provided that included include shared parking for residential units and on-site commercial uses, exemption of floor area devoted to affordable housing from the maximum floor area limitations, density bonuses and reduced, waived or deferred fees.

Just because incentives are offered this does not mean affordable housing will become available. Inclusionary zoning and housing can apply to subdivisions and multi-family projects as well as applicable zones, which can set aside lots for affordable housing. In addition to creating affordable housing, another advantage to inclusionary zoning and housing is the dispersal of affordable units throughout the community.

A revamping of the zoning ordinance to preserve higher density residential zones for multi-family housing will preserve opportunities for affordable housing. A systematic review of the zoning ordinance for the purpose of removing impediments to affordable housing is needed.

Future Housing Advocacy

While housing issues are critical to Laramie's future, there is currently no permanent local organization or entity to work toward housing solutions. Many state and federal programs and resources are available to assist with housing issues, but results come slowly and a sustained effort is necessary to make headway in addressing



Downtown second-story apartments.

The Section 8 program is designed to increase the housing choices available to very low-income households by making privately-owned rental housing affordable to them. It provides rent subsidies, either rental certificates or vouchers, on behalf of eligible tenants. These subsidies usually equal the difference between 30 percent of the household's adjusted income and the HUD-approved fair market rent (for certificates) or the PHA-approved payment standard (for vouchers).

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

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these difficult problems. An individual, board or group should be in a leadership position to advocate for housing. The ability to create and maintain needed organizational and staff resources is hampered by Laramie's non-metropolitan status, which limits the availability of Federal funds.

The Cheyenne Housing Authority (CHA) currently administers public housing and rental assistance programs in Laramie, and discussions have addressed the need for a Laramie housing authority several times. Furthermore, CHA provides access to Section 8 rental assistance funds. Much work yet remains, however, for a single organization to handle. The need for a new local housing organization with paid staff is further described in the *2003 Laramie Housing Study and Action Plan*. Until this occurs, CHA should be retained in order to keep a needed partner and to not overburden newly attempted local efforts with the immediate responsibilities of administering on-going programs. The focus should be on adding resources, rather than replacing them in the near-term.

Several funding sources are available to local residents for grants and loans, each with different and complex application processes and criteria. Many local citizens can benefit from available programs, but lack the experience or time to navigate complicated application procedures. A housing organization can provide needed technical assistance to citizens seeking the available resources. Educational information and outreach can also increase accessibility to existing resources for local residents.

Opportunities exist such as the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and New Directions program. The COPC program can provide start-up services to a nonprofit to build community capacity to address issues of housing affordability and rehabilitation. This program also can provide outreach to help residents' access existing housing resources that are available through a variety of State and Federal housing programs, as well as labor force development and training for economic development purposes. Since 1994, HUD has awarded grants to help colleges and universities establish and operate Community Outreach Partnership Centers to implement outreach and applied research activities that will address community problems and issues. The program also seeks to encourage structural changes, both within a university and in the way the institution relates to its neighborhood. New COPC grants are awarded to applicants who have never received a COPC grant and can be used to address distinct community problems, including affordable housing. New Directions grants are awarded to applicants who have previously received a COPC grant and can be used to implement new eligible activities in a current COPC community.

Another opportunity available to Laramie residents is the Laramie Main Street Low Interest Revolving Loan. This loan, which is provided to Laramie residents wishing to remodel or build residential units in the downtown district, is provided through the Wyoming Main Street Program. This loan can make a remodel or development in the downtown a more feasible option.

A housing organization also can pursue public and private funding sources and coordinate with existing housing agencies and organizations in the state. The role of an ombudsman to assist affordable housing projects through the review and permitting process is also a potential role. A permanent housing organization, with full-time staffing, is needed as a



Laramie offers a variety of attractive neighborhood environments in a variety of settings.

long-term solution to develop and then sustain a focus on local housing needs and coordinate the various programs and resources available.

CURRENT NEIGHBORHOOD OUTLOOK

Characteristics that make Laramie a unique community include the neighborhoods that make up the City. Laramie is comprised of a series of distinct, unique neighborhoods – from the tree area, to West Laramie, to Indian Hills, Alta Vista, and Sherman Hills. Each of these neighborhoods has a unique character. When taken in total, they are the foundation of a great community.

Although there is no formal neighborhood structure, each of the neighborhoods varies greatly. They differ in the era in which they were

developed, the architectural style of the housing, density, and neighborhood character. For example, the neighborhood south of the campus known as the tree area is characterized by an old housing stock, with many distinct homes. The old, large cottonwood trees are a significant factor in determining the character of this neighborhood. On the other hand, the neighborhoods of Indian Hills and Alta Vista are characterized by single-family, detached housing on large lots with less mature landscaping.

Physical Threats to Neighborhood Character

Many of these neighborhoods, particularly the older ones, are under threat. Their integrity and attractiveness are being influenced by many of the destructive housing trends described earlier in this chapter. As the quality of even a small number of dwellings deteriorates, so goes the neighborhood. Physical factors contributing to neighborhood blight include:

- ♦ High incidences of single-family rental units occupied by students, each owning one or more motor vehicles.
- ♦ High levels of on-street parking in residential areas at all hours of the day. This problem is deemed by many jurisdictions to be so disruptive to a neighborhood that they ban 24-hour on-street parking.
- ♦ Excessively wide streets, conducive to vehicle storage, but incompatible with the proportions of lots, sidewalks, parkways, and tree canopies. This condition creates the illusion of an unsafe situation, particularly when sidewalks are located



Large, new dwellings located in an existing neighborhood of older, smaller structures can have a significant effect on neighborhood character.

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directly adjacent to curbs.

- ♦ Storage of commercial vehicles, RVs, utility trailers, and boats on residential streets.
- ♦ Parking of vehicles in the front yard on unpaved surfaces.
- ♦ Excessive speed by drivers on residential streets.
- ♦ Unkempt yards and uncontrolled weeds.
- ♦ Keeping of livestock.
- ♦ Inordinate number of vacant lots, creating gaps between residences.
- ♦ Designated zoning more intense than the built out neighborhood.

Many of these challenges can be addressed through adoption and enforcement of regulations directed toward maintaining neighborhoods and early prevention of blighting influences.



There are attractive alternatives for street closure in the interest of CPTED design principles, while also acting to calm traffic.

Appropriately Sized Residences

Since the construction of “tract homes” in the 1940s and early 1950s, the average size of the American house has steadily increased. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the typical home of previous generations is no longer regarded as adequate for many affluent families. Yet, many residents wish to remain in one of Laramie’s more attractive and valuable urban neighborhoods. An obvious solution, assuming that funds are available, is for the owner to build an addition to the existing structure. Another solution is to build a new home on a nearby vacant lot. In fully built-out neighborhoods, the final option is to entirely replace the structure (“teardowns”).

It is important that new infill or teardown structures and additions to existing dwellings be designed to fit in with other homes in the neighborhood. Once a neighborhood is identified as being at risk for significant upgrading, the first objective should be to work out reasonable expansion plans that will permit modernization and reasonable enlargement without destroying neighborhood character.

Ideally, zoning regulations should allow normal upgrading of neighborhoods to retain its attractiveness without permitting the too-big house, which turns the neighborhood over to another economic class. Later sections of this Comprehensive Plan will include a careful examination of zoning requirements for setbacks, building coverage, floor area ratios, height, and landscaping requirements to promote the blending-in of neighborhood improvements with nearby dwellings.

Creating a Sense of Security

The physical design of neighborhoods, including their layout and orientation of structures, can affect the levels of crime and fear in neighborhoods. Researchers have identified basic design principles that reduce fear and prevent crime in neighborhood communities. The basic principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) include natural surveillance, natural access control, and territorial/defensible spaces.

Case Study Example:

The City of Boston created a “Fast Track” program designed to assist people who wish to build new housing with the permitting process. It is comprised of zoning clinics and seminars specifically designed to educate applicants on the permitting process. Features of the program include:

- 1) Residential color coded permits - Created to track the progress of the application throughout the various stages of the permitting process. Plan examiners identify the color-coded applications as a priority. The examiners immediately contact the developers if additional information is required. This significantly reduces the turnaround time when additional information is needed.
- 2) Caseworkers - Caseworkers are assigned to facilitate the review process. Caseworkers communicate with the developers, the Department of Inspectional Services, and various agencies in order to expedite the process.
- 3) Expedited Design Review - This expedites the process as a majority of design work is reviewed before the Board of Appeals reaches a final decision on the zoning issue.

- ♦ **Natural Surveillance.** Humans feel safer in places where they can see what is going on around them. Law-abiding citizens also feel safer in settings where they are visible to other law-abiding people who they believe would help in situations of danger. Perpetrators of crime, in contrast, prefer settings that are not visible to law-abiding people who might assist their victims. Therefore, the more the physical environment of a neighborhood enables people to survey their surroundings and to be visible to other people, the safer a neighborhood will feel and be. A few examples of design features that promote natural surveillance include:
 - o Good lighting of streets, alleys, and parking areas;
 - o Landscaping that does not provide hiding places for perpetrators. Hedges and shrubs should be no higher than three feet and tree canopies no lower than eight feet;
 - o See-through types of fences;
 - o Windows that look out on streets and alleys, particularly bay windows; and
 - o Non-recessed doorways.
- ♦ **Natural Access Control.** Perpetrators desire settings that allow them to enter and exit without being noticed. They do not prefer places with limited points of entry and exit; multiple access points allow more options for escape following a crime. Therefore, by limiting the number of entrances and exits to a community, it reduces the attractiveness of the neighborhood as a place for crime. Many communities that are planned on the grid system are beginning to close streets to limit access to their community and create identifiable neighborhood boundaries and points of entrance and exit. Contemporary neighborhoods that are planned with a curvilinear street system have generally applied this principle in the subdivision layout and design.
- ♦ **Territoriality/Defensible Spaces.** A basic principle of CPTED is for citizens to show that they own their territory, which helps to deter crime in a neighborhood. A neighborhood that portrays a strong physical image is less likely to attract perpetrators than those that appear less defensible. Subdivision perimeter fencing commonly used in contemporary subdivision design and master planned communities is a method utilized to establish identifiable boundaries. Also, simple property enhancements such as flowers in planters on balconies and in business districts, vegetable and flower gardens, seasonal decorations, and outdoor holiday displays contribute to the portrayal of strong community images, which symbolize a sense of togetherness as a community. These design principles help to minimize crime incidents in neighborhoods. Many communities throughout the United States have incorporated the CPTED design principles into their zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, design standards, and neighborhood planning programs. Generally, the incidence of crime in neighborhoods can be significantly reduced through development and implementation of environmental design principles. Laramie may want to consider utilization of these techniques in a neighborhood planning program or consider their incorporation in neighborhood development standards.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS AND ACTION STATEMENTS

In this section the goals and action statements for each element of the plan are set forth. The goals and action statements are to be used as a starting point to achieve the overall vision of this plan.

Housing Goals and Action Statements

1. Improve and maintain the quality of the existing housing stock.
2. Provide adequate sites, through zoning and infrastructure improvements, to meet projected housing demand.
3. Establish a local housing organization to advocate and pursue sustained efforts for affordable housing solutions.
4. Conduct a systematic review of the City's ordinances and review procedures to remove unnecessary constraints.
 - a) The City zoning and subdivision ordinances should be rewritten to identify and remove/modify requirements that impede or add avoidable costs to all housing projects. Concurrently with removing obstacles, the review should seek to add incentives designed to promote affordable housing.
 - b) Revise the zoning code to allow existing lots of less than 4,000 square feet to be developed (in neighborhoods that are not experiencing on-street parking problems) and to review the desirability of allowing unsubdivided tracts to be developed more intensely.
 - c) Search for sources of funding to help with code revisions to aid affordable housing. The WCDA has a grant program to fund the review and amendment of ordinances for the purpose of promoting affordable housing. The Wyoming Business Council also provides grants to review and amend local ordinances to promote both housing and economic development.
 - d) Incorporate into the zoning ordinance a housing palette that establishes the dimensional criteria for a wide variety of housing types, including single-family detached and attached units, lot-line and village houses, twin houses and duplexes, patio and atrium houses, townhouses, duplex townhouses, multiplexes and apartments, and manufactured homes to prevent a single type from consuming a disproportionate amount of land. The housing types would be allowed by right in planned residential developments subject to the provisions of the palette, which controls density, setbacks, height, and bulk. See *Chapter 3, Community Character* and the current Turner Tract Area plan which is a good example of multiple housing types and sizes within a cohesive development.
 - e) Create incentives that promote new concepts that achieve different housing stock at different affordability levels. This including mixed use developments, industrial and commercial housing construction.
 - f) Develop regulations aimed at improving and maintaining the quality of the existing housing stock.
 - g) Reduce street pavement width standards for new residential areas. When existing residential streets eventually require reconstruction, implement a redesigned narrower cross section (*Chapter 7, Transportation*).
5. Streamline the application review process to avoid undue impediment to affordable housing projects.

Community Outreach Partnerships Centers (COPC) grants help colleges and universities apply their human, intellectual, and institutional resources to the challenge of revitalizing distressed communities. COPC grants must be used in urban areas. Each COPC grantee addresses at least three of the following issues in the targeted community: local housing, infrastructure, economic development, neighborhood revitalization, health care, crime, or planning. Grantees contribute to resolving issues like urban problems, coordinating outreach efforts with neighborhood groups and residents, acting as a local information exchange, galvanizing support for neighborhood revitalization, developing public service projects and instructional programs, and collaborating with other partnership centers. Examples of COPC's include: 1) Job training and counseling to reduce unemployment. 2) Resident-backed strategies to spur economic growth and reduce crime. 3) Local initiative to combat housing discrimination and homelessness. 4) Mentoring programs for neighborhood youth. 5) Financial and technical assistance for new businesses.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) is the largest Federal block grant to State and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. The program provides grants to States and localities that communities use, often in partnership with local nonprofit groups, to fund a wide range of activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds may be used development activities including, but not limited to:

- 1) acquisition of property for public purposes;
- 2) construction or reconstruction of streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works;
- 3) demolition;
- 4) rehabilitation of public and private buildings;
- 5) public services;
- 6) planning activities;
- 7) assistance to nonprofit entities for community development activities; and,
- 8) assistance to private, for profit entities to carry out economic development activities (including assistance to micro-enterprises).

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

- a) Amend the zoning and subdivision ordinance provisions to provide clear and predictable administrative review procedures that, at a minimum, define the specific materials to be submitted in applications, define the sequential steps in the review of applications, assign responsibilities for City agencies, Planning Commission and City Council, and establish time lines for completing the review at each step of the process.
- b) Consider establishing a rapid review committee consisting of the relevant local staff, called a Green Light Committee, which can provide an expedited review of affordable housing projects, as well as critical economic development projects, when time/costs are crucial to the project. Criteria must be established to determine which projects qualify and which do not.
- c) Establish administrative departmental policies that assign a project manager for each application to be reviewed and define the responsibility and authority of the staff involved in the review.
 - i. Implement the goals and recommendations noted in the 2001 Housing Study and Action Plan.
 - ii. Create a local housing organization to work as a “permanent housing advocate” and provide adequate resources to address housing issues.
- a) Establish a private, nonprofit 501c3 corporation or form a partnership with the Wyoming Housing Network, which is an existing State-wide nonprofit corporation, to address housing issues.
- b) Establish and sustain partnerships among the University, WyoTech, LCCC, City, County, nonprofit agencies, developers, and State and Federal agencies.
- c) Develop a working relationship with the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation to access funding for operating assistance and for training of board members and community leaders of a local housing entity.
- d) Work with the University to seek HUD funding under the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and New Directions program to help launch a housing advocacy nonprofit corporation.
- e) In addition to the HUD program, the WCDA has funding for the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) that can provide funds for operating costs and capacity building. CHDOs can apply annually for these funds prior to September 1 of each year. WCDA also provides funds to CHDOs for project specific technical assistance.
 - i. Establish an ongoing housing rehabilitation and maintenance program.
- a) Identify sources of funding to help improve the quality of housing stock in Laramie. Groups such as The Wyoming Housing Network which receives funds from the Federal HOME Partnership Program that are passed through WCDA promote the rehabilitation of housing around the state.
- b) Pursue funds from the HUD Community Development Block Grant program to upgrade streets and infrastructure in targeted, low-income neighborhoods. These

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funds also can be used to finance rehabilitation of housing units throughout a neighborhood, provided the residents of the targeted neighborhood meet low-income criteria.

- c) Assist owners of affordable rental properties and low-income homeowners in maintaining and improving residential properties through a variety of housing rehabilitation assistance programs.
 - d) Develop and enforce minimum housing standards and maintenance codes so housing can be affordably maintained. The standards should be flexible to allow for “as safe as” or “equal to” conditions when affordable housing development or rehabilitation is involved.
6. Establish an inclusionary housing program. An inclusionary housing program is a mandatory requirement placed on future housing developments and subdivisions and has been shown to be one of the most effective approaches to creating affordable housing without direct government financial subsidies.
 7. Promote residential growth in the downtown through regulation flexibility and the use of the Laramie Main Street Low Interest Revolving Loan. This loan can be used for residential dwelling units located in the downtown district.
 8. Establish inclusionary zoning that requires a certain percentage of the built units or subdivided lots to be set aside for affordable housing.
 9. Provide density bonuses to offset the affordable housing requirement to avoid significantly affecting the feasibility of the residential development. The risk to do this should be reduced as much as possible to promote this concept.
 10. Support the WCDA proposal to the Wyoming Legislature to promote work force housing. WCDA is proposing a work force housing program to the State Legislature that would provide infrastructure funding to developers of residential subdivisions in return for a certain amount of the housing in the new subdivision being affordable to the local work force. This program, if authorized, could help upgrade or install new infrastructure to critical housing locations.
 11. Coordinate housing issues with economic development issues by working with Laramie Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) to identify the profile of workers in the targeted industries in order to provide appropriate housing choices.
 12. Work with local lenders to form a pool of available loan funds to help finance affordable housing projects and to the assist first time home buyers. Any ways to reduce costs related to loans should be examined.
 13. Promote the construction of new housing units in all price ranges in all areas of the city.
 14. Develop an inventory of undeveloped and underdeveloped sites that provide desirable housing locations with practical levels of residential density. Include in the inventory sites that are most suitable for special needs housing due to their proximity to services typically needed by the elderly, disabled, and other citizens of special needs. These sites may include those adjacent to Downtown, possibly within one of the two candidate redevelopment areas (*Chapter 3, Community Character*).

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15. Promote the use and development of high-standard, manufactured housing and modular housing sites and parks in selected areas of the City and surrounding planning area developed with site design standards similar in nature to regular subdivision standards.
16. Coordinate with Albany County officials to provide uniform development standards for all types of housing stock.



Contemporary modular housing units may be compatible with adjacent and nearby single family homes, subject to quality development standards.

17. Develop site design standards for manufactured housing communities that are similar in nature to subdivision requirements, including street and sidewalk requirements, setbacks, lot configuration, minimum yards, landscaping, parking, and other variables.
18. Develop partnerships with local academic institutions to jointly address student housing issues.
19. Consider and develop housing for the special needs population. Inclusion of units for the handicapped or elderly, in all new construction should be considered.

20. Devote grant-writing personnel to seek financial support to nonprofit organizations assisting lower- and moderate-income families, seniors, disabled, and other residents in finding affordable housing through home sharing and other activities, as appropriate.
21. Encourage development of energy efficient housing or LEED certified housing in the community. Similar methods of “fast tracking” done for affordable housing should be considered for energy efficient housing.
22. Pursue the development of a homeless shelter and transitional housing.
23. Provide educational and outreach materials to enhance citizen access to existing income assistance and housing programs.
24. Consider allowing accessory dwelling units on lots such as granny flats and apartments in an attempt to provide affordable housing units.

Neighborhoods Goals and Action Statements

1. Establish City policies that promote neighborhood identity and stimulate resident involvement in neighborhood improvement.
 - a) Promote and support block parties and other events by permitting temporary, once-per-year street closures, display of emergency vehicles, and provision of street cleaning.
 - b) Promote seasonal “clean up, fix up” and beautification events.
 - c) Provide annual, free “amnesty pickup” of large refuse items.

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- d) Adopt policies that discourage prevalent student rental housing in converted single-family residences.
 - e) Enforce existing parking regulations and speed limits in residential areas.
 - f) Consider adopting restrictions on overnight parking on residential streets. Establish a parking permitting program (with a two-vehicle exemption for each residence), with revenues earmarked for neighborhood enhancement.
2. Promote investment and infill in established residential neighborhoods. Items such as improving the availability and access to local parks, schools, and other public facilities as well as maintaining and improving neighborhood amenities such as sidewalks and street lighting
3. Enforce provisions that reduce blighting influences on neighborhoods. Code and regulation are in place that gives these provisions related to blighting enforceability.
- a) Prohibit on-street storage of commercial vehicles, RVs, utility trailers, boats, and similar vehicles.
 - b) Enforce City and County provisions for the removal of junk, abandoned vehicles, and other derelict items from residential yards.
 - c) Amend City and County zoning provisions to prohibit the construction of single-family residences in nonresidential districts.
 - d) Prohibit the keeping of livestock and use of barbed wire fencing in residential areas.
 - e) Review and, if needed, tighten accessory building size and setback standards.
 - f) Enforce standards for minimum housing conditions. Establish a semi-annual inspection program for all converted single-family residences used for rental.
4. Pursue strategies with the University of Wyoming and WyoTech that will ultimately reduce student rental housing in converted single-family residences located in established neighborhoods.
- a) Promote favorable land use policies that will encourage the development of innovative student housing configurations with convenient access to campuses.
 - b) Expedite the permitting process for renovation/reconfiguration of traditional dormitories and replacement of aging and obsolete on-campus student apartments.
5. Amend the zoning ordinance to include major and minor waivers of setback and other dimensional requirements to allow and encourage expansion and reinvestment of older, smaller homes. Establish performance standards (size, height, and setbacks) for residential additions and new construction to prevent construction of oversized dwellings in established neighborhoods. Allowing accessory structures like “granny flats” can help in reinvestment of older, smaller homes.
6. Encourage Neighborhood plans to allow control over teardowns and redevelopment in established neighborhood in order to maintain character.

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7. Pursue growth management strategies that avoid overextension of the City infrastructure and ensure the availability of adequate public facilities to developing neighborhoods.
8. Identify strategies that promote developments that have a wide range of socioeconomic classes all contained within one neighborhood.