



Thrive Laramie: A Community and Economic Development Action Strategy for the Next 10 Years

Executive Summary

January, 2020







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Thrive Laramie

In 2020, Laramie, Wyoming, is at an inflection point. Bolstered by success in the arts, history and culture, diversity, recreation, and tech, Laramie has lived up to its moniker as the Gem City of the Plains. Its charm and ruggedness attracts people from all over who enjoy outdoor pursuits such as fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and snowmobiling, in the vast natural reserves that surround the town, from Vedauwoo and Happy Jack, to the Snowy Range and Medicine Bow National Forest. The University of Wyoming (UW) is a huge community asset, preparing students from around the country and state to become the next generation of leaders. A remarkable education system from the Albany County School District (ACSD) to the Albany County Campus of the Laramie County Community College (LCCC) means Albany County, Wyoming residents are some of the most well-educated and skilled talent one might find anywhere in the country.

Still, Laramie can do more to prevent losing young people to other cities and towns that are able to offer better economic opportunities. Albany County residents earn the lowest median wages of all surrounding counties, especially among people aged 25-44. Compounded by high housing costs, people at the beginning of their careers are leaving the Gem City to make a living elsewhere.

At the same time, Laramie is in a unique position to attract and grow the types of companies that are powering our future while paying good wages to skilled employees. Local ventures have demonstrated that successful growth in Laramie is possible: Trihydro is an environmental engineering leader that has grown from its founding in Laramie in 1984 to twenty offices nationwide; UL, a global safety science company, acquired a local firm (IDES) and has been growing its presence in Laramie since

2012; Plenty, formerly Bright Agrotech, grew its operations from a garage to the University of Wyoming incubator system, and now has its R&D arm in Laramie and its marketing and operations in Silicon Valley; Coffey Engineering and Surveying is a family-owned, multi-generational firm specializing in land and building development and energy transmission and delivery. Becoming a leader in industries like boutique and machine manufacturing, telecommunications, data hosting and processing, and financial activities, as well as in the professional, scientific, and technical fields which include architectural, engineering, and design services, computer systems design, management and technical consulting, and scientific research and development is well within Laramie's reach given its experience, resources, and professional capacity in these areas.

In addition, there is a growing interest in entrepreneurship in Laramie, sparked by cutting edge research and development in areas like drones and supercomputing coming out of the university; courses and degree programs in innovative fields like brew science and "food-preneurship" at the community college; and a robust support system for startups and small businesses like that which is offered through the university-affiliated Business Resource Network. This interest should be nurtured and strengthened, as entrepreneurship is a crucial ingredient in economic development. Entrepreneurs who are carving their own path, taking risks and creating livelihoods for themselves and others, truly embody Cowboy Ethics and Code of the West.

None of these efforts are possible, though, without a strong business-ready infrastructure, the most fundamental of which is access to comprehensive high-speed broadband. Albany County is rural and at some times isolated, which is a draw but also a barrier for founders, freelancers, and remote workers, who depend on reliable and robust internet connectivity.

A second foundational barrier to business readiness is housing that is of high quality and quantity – a requirement of all people that is in short supply in Laramie. With home prices that look more like booming Fort Collins, Colorado, than like nearby Cheyenne or Casper in Wyoming, Laramie is facing a true housing shortage for middle-income working people. A number of factors contribute to this, including a short construction season, a lack of developers, builders, and skilled contractors, and transient college students putting pressure on the available stock. The strategies for overcoming these challenges that are outlined in this plan will be critical to support Laramie's growth. Increasing the availability of workforce housing will give employers confidence that they can invest in Laramie and support their employees.

Finally, the City of Laramie must seek stronger relationships with the University of Wyoming and other educational and training institutions that will prepare the region's workforce for the next wave of economic opportunity. Laramie should be recognized as a hub for educational and intellectual capital by employers and visitors alike. Beyond this, Laramie must realize its potential as a university town – enhancing Laramie as a campus community, where “town” and “gown” work together to integrate their physical presence as well as social activities to raise the quality of life and sense of place for residents, students, workers, and visitors.

As Laramie seeks to welcome new people and industry to enact its vision and goals, it should capitalize on and widely broadcast its strengths through coordinated marketing by key stakeholders: a highly educated workforce; quality educational institutions training workers in growing target industries; a destination for recreation, culture, arts, and tourism amenities; and a small but growing entrepreneurship scene. Laramie should also continue to nurture its strong commitment to diversity and inclusion – as the first city in Wyoming to pass an LGBT non-discrimination ordinance in 2015, and home of the first woman in the United States to cast a legal general election vote in 1870, courage and inclusion are baked into its history.

Because of all of this, Laramie is poised to be an engine of growth for the state, but first it must overcome its barrier of high housing costs; reduce its dependency on the currently dominant handful of non-traded and low-paying industries, diversifying its economy to increase wages; better connect its town and gown to enhance the experience of residents and visitors; better advertise Laramie's world-class amenities to draw new people in; and continue to invest in startups and small business support to grow the next generation of employers.

The recommendations in this plan were designed to do just that – to enact a future vision of Laramie as a welcoming cultural capital, education hub, and center for economic opportunity for all current and future residents. Stakeholders in Laramie are charged with working together to realize this vision, to allow Laramie to Thrive in the next 10 years and beyond.

Catalysts for Growth



Throughout conversations associated with the 10-year community and economic development strategy planning effort, three general recommendations emerged that cross topic areas. These three areas will catalyze a thriving and prosperous community.

Strategy 1. Population Growth to 50,000 to Support Economic Opportunity and Enhance Quality of Life

Laramie and Albany County's population growth over the past 50 years can be characterized as slow but steady; it has allowed for a continued expansion of the amenities and labor force needed to thrive. Throughout Laramie's history, the only spikes in population have resulted from the University of Wyoming's expansions. Today, one in three jobs are in the education sector, which demonstrates the benefits of the University as an employer but also the risk of having so many residents dependent on one sector. In communities throughout the country, there is a trend of population growth driving job growth. As more people identify a place they want to live, they either find or create their employment opportunity. With the explosive growth of the Fort Collins region, it can be expected that Laramie will begin to see spillover growth.



The Laramie community, if it can grow to a population of 50,000, would realize new opportunities and enhance the overall quality of life for its residents. Current population modeling shows a natural growth projection of 4,000 residents – to 42,000 people in 2030. This plan would seek to realize an additional 8,000 residents above what current population models indicate during that time period. While this would demonstrate a significant increase in the annual growth rate, it is certainly possible based on what is seen in other growing communities. Laramie can proactively manage its growth in order to minimize any potential negative impacts.

Recommendation

Ensure that this economic development strategy and other plans, including the comprehensive plan, identify what is needed to effectively host an additional 12,000 residents by 2030.

Strategy 2. Consistent and Cohesive Laramie Messaging



Laramie residents know and treasure how special their community is, but that sentiment is not shared among people outside of the community who simply aren't aware of Laramie's many amazing attributes. One of the most important keys to attracting visitors and future residents is messaging around what makes the community so beloved by its residents. There are many (and often varied) ways of discussing the awesomeness of Laramie. Communication

efforts have not been coordinated in the past, which has limited the effectiveness of the message and investments, as well as the positive impacts that could be realized from tourists, visitors, and existing residents. Consistent messaging would allow Laramie's organizations to build a suite of complementary statements about the best attributes of various components of the community.

Recommendation

Bring together stakeholders to develop a cohesive set of messages that can be adopted across platforms, as well as a common evaluation framework for those efforts, and then work collaboratively to implement targeted marketing campaigns.

Strategy 3. Revenue Enhancements to Support Plan Implementation



Existing reliance on sales tax due to the absence of property and income taxes limits the ability for Laramie, Albany County, and partners to invest in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth. Laramie needs to identify near-term resources to support the investment needs identified in this plan.

In the long term, the community should develop an approach to reduce dependence on state funding and create mechanisms to increase reliability/predictability and mitigate the boom-bust cycles experienced due to the state's tax structure. The Laramie community will support state revenue enhancement legislation, and will identify coordinated co-investment opportunities in mutually beneficial projects with strategic partners. In addition, the city needs to increase the frequency with which it pursues grant funding to support the recommendations that follow.

Recommendation

New revenues must be identified to reduce dependence on state funding, allow the community to thrive, and support investments in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth.

Strategies and Recommendations

The following make up the recommendations for the Thrive Laramie Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan.

Industry Diversification and Increasing Wages



Median wages across all age groups in Albany County are lower than in neighboring communities and the country as a whole, contributing to the perception of limited opportunity in the region for job seekers. In recent years, Laramie has been able to attract and grow companies such as HiViz, UL, and MillaporeSigma. Still, the Laramie community struggles with talent retention, due in part to the lack of competitive wages and industry mix. Laramie has an opportunity to make an impact through purposeful, targeted growth and diversification.

Strategy 1. Increase Regional Collaboration for Business Retention, Attraction, and Recruitment Efforts



To encourage the introduction and growth of new businesses and industry sectors that pay competitive wages, work should be done to address regulatory and other barriers that may exist, such as restrictive code related to building aesthetics and a lack of infrastructure to support new build and business expansion.

Opportunity

Target industries that bring high-paying, skilled, primary labor market jobs for attraction and retention to diversify the region’s industry mix, drive economic growth, and increase wages.

Recommendation

Work collaboratively to enhance the “business brand” of Laramie and the region.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Develop strategy for target industries					
Host local business roundtables to address business friendliness					
Develop and launch a marketing strategy for the region					
Build a talent-engagement portal					
Develop physical space in identified development areas					

Strategy 2. Support Increased Revenue and Wages for Existing Businesses



Opportunity

Bring partners together to collaborate on solutions to reduce the cost of employment, increase revenues, and allow for employment and wage growth.

Recommendation

Create the Revenue Catalyst - a resource initiative for employers to reduce costs and increase revenues.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Build an educational and peer-networking platform to encourage cultural change within existing businesses					
Enhance employer toolkits as a central place for businesses to find resources					
Work with the industry consortium (strategy 4) to connect employers with student talent and develop multi-business talent recruitment					
Work with employers to reduce individual costs					

Town-Gown and Industry-Workforce Alignment



The presence of the University of Wyoming (“gown”), a land-grant university and a leading institution of learning, is a significant asset for the City of Laramie (“town”) as it considers growth over the next decade. The resources that the University provides, like workforce training, business incubation, shuttle services, and arts, sports and other cultural events, can help the city achieve its goals related to the workforce, cultural tourism, economic development, and overall quality of life.

Strategy 3. Enhance Laramie as a “Campus Community”



To improve the impressions of first time visitors and enhance the quality of life for residents, there is a need to focus on city beautification and continuity between campus and the rest of the city. This includes gateway improvements, enhancing bike and pedestrian safety, and the development of more public art, green infrastructure, parks, and indoor community spaces for programs and events.

Opportunity

Strengthen Laramie as a campus community by collaboratively and cooperatively improving the physical connectivity of “town” to “gown” community assets (gateways, corridors, dorms, transportation) as well as the social integration of the campus population and community through sports, the arts, and co-sponsored or co-organized programs, projects, and services. This may take the form of a committee structure as a mechanism for effective partnerships and a way to build trusted relationships.

Recommendation

Establish and strengthen effective mechanisms for coordinated Town-Gown co-investment that has buy-in from decision makers.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Determine 3-5 key issues/action items to pursue					
Highlight package of mutually beneficial amenities					
Quantify contributions toward achieving shared goals					
Publicize Town-Gown work and collect public perception through regular sentiment surveys					

Strategy 4. Strengthen Connections Between Educational/Training Providers and State and Regional Employers



Improved industry-workforce alignment is needed to keep workers in the region, by ensuring they can pursue family-sustaining job opportunities and that they have the skills needed to fulfill employer requirements. The region is positioned to drive economic transformation in the state due to the innovative initiatives, research, and development happening at the postsecondary level. Educational institutions must work collaboratively and cooperatively to ensure that the next generation gains the skills needed to take advantage of these opportunities.

Opportunity

Strengthen collaborations between training providers, educational institutions – including high school, technical training, community college, and university – and private employers to enhance workforce and industry alignment and support talent retention.

Recommendation

Create an industry consortium for talent enhancement and promote Laramie as a destination for education and intellectual capital.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Convene business and industry leaders and education and training institutions					
Create curricula, apprenticeship, and internship programs in high-demand, high-growth sectors					
Establish an employer relations team to coordinate among educational and training institutions					
Create incentives to reduce the costs of taking on interns, apprentices					
Create a policy advocacy platform for workforce development programs, initiatives, and funding					

Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship



While attracting new business and industry from outside of the region is an exciting prospect that would certainly create new economic opportunity, fostering home-grown business development by encouraging technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship has added benefits, and has the potential to make even more scalable impacts.

Strategy 5. Develop and Expand Tools and Programs for Laramie's Entrepreneurs, Startups, and Small Businesses



Though there are a number of resources and programs to support local innovators and help launch new ventures, more can be done to provide entrepreneurs across all sectors, including small business owners, with access to the tools they need to thrive.

Opportunity

There are numerous high-quality programs that serve entrepreneurs in the community – however, they are decentralized and not all are accessible through a single information source. Entrepreneurs that seek out these resources will find them – but it would help if they were packaged in a way that gives the user a clear understanding of what exists, how they relate, and how effective they are. This improvement will also help stakeholders better understand how they can work collaboratively to deliver non-duplicative services, fill gaps that are missing, and scale existing (or develop new) programs and tools to ensure that all innovators, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and startups have what they need to thrive.

Recommendation

Develop an Entrepreneurial Partnership that coordinates and helps promote the primary organizations that are serving entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Identify an entity to serve as a neutral organizer. Submit all services and resources that serve entrepreneurs to the organizer					
Convene to map resources, identify redundancies, define roles, and create tools to better market resources					
Pilot new/unique sources of assistance to entrepreneurs (1-2 each year)					
Explore developing a business census or registration system to create an accurate business listing and more effectively deliver resources to local companies					
Identify additional funding sources to support entrepreneurs					

Strategy 6. Fostering an Entrepreneurial Culture



The absence of a strong and thriving entrepreneurial culture limits the number of business births that a region experiences. A strong entrepreneurial culture that encourages peer learning, celebrates small wins, and minimizes the stigma of failing can help potential entrepreneurs unlearn aversions to risk, failure, and sharing with others.

Opportunity

Create and/or enhance a culture of entrepreneurship in Laramie to encourage greater rates of new business startups and also support current entrepreneurs and small businesses so that they can thrive. Entrepreneurship, innovation, and startups are important ingredients for economic growth. Despite the rugged individual cowboy culture that exists in Wyoming, the region is relatively risk averse when it comes to starting new businesses. In order to inspire more entrepreneurship, it is important to encourage risk and failure by increasing exposure to entrepreneurship at all levels: both in incorporating more entrepreneurial, technology, and innovation opportunities inside of “traditional” K-12 and higher education, as well as encouraging and supporting those who have already started on the entrepreneurial path with needed tools and services.

Recommendation

Create a strategic marketing and recruiting plan that highlights Laramie’s existing entrepreneurial culture by celebrating successes and acknowledges the growth opportunities borne from failure; supports new and existing entrepreneurs through targeted education; and encourages seasoned entrepreneurs to relocate to the region.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Convene entrepreneurial leaders to document their experiences. Build a narrative of the positive aspects of entrepreneurship					
Replicate, scale, or promote entrepreneurial events to create more connections between new and seasoned entrepreneurs					
Identify strengths of other entrepreneurial communities. Create a shared definition of targeted growth goals in terms of types of firms, numbers of technologies licensed, etc.					
Highlight the region’s entrepreneurial amenities to target populations					
Expand tools, resources, and support for freelancing and entrepreneurship to reduce the risk					
Incorporate entrepreneurial training into primary, secondary, and post-secondary education					

Art, Recreation, Culture, and Tourism



Art, recreational, and cultural tourism are significant engines of economic growth and prosperity for cities and regions across the country – creating jobs, increasing business revenue, and strengthening and supporting inclusive communities. Laramie, in particular, is quite dependent on tourism due in part to the state’s structural reliance on sales and lodging taxes. As Laramie works to diversify its economy, tourism provides an immediate growth opportunity that can generate additional revenues coming into the city via visitor spending on things like retail, dining, entertainment, and recreation.

Strategy 7. Maximize Tourist Attraction and Expenditure Capture



Laramie is historic, vibrant, active, and lively, which is a draw for visitors and a perk for residents. However, efforts to draw people in and market Laramie’s assets, while successful, have historically been disjointed, and as a result visitors are not necessarily aware of or experiencing the full range of attractions that are available to them. Cross-promotion of Laramie’s assets, coordination of admission/use fee structures, and enhancing each visitors’ overall experience can help increase tourism expenditures and sales tax revenues.

Opportunity

Enable the capture of additional arts-oriented, cultural (including sports and history), and recreation-related tourism expenditures, and, where possible, fees, to generate additional tax revenue and further develop the tourism-related ecosystem. It is important that the region maximizes the amount of tourist dollars it is able to capture by improving programming, communication, and marketing, and making sure tourists, whether in Laramie for sporting events, outdoor pursuits, arts and culture, or historic tourism, are connected to multiple assets in Laramie beyond the “main attraction” or their original reason to visit.

Recommendation

Build the tourism economy around existing ecosystem assets. Connect, communicate, and leverage efforts across entities.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Develop a series of information pathways with cohesive messaging for various amenities					
Evaluate current marketing techniques and scale these into an integrated tourism marketing campaign					
Co-sponsor and organize more events and programs to bring people in					
Develop a process to measure quality of experience, via visitor surveys or a rating system					
Improve the on-the-ground experience across the city and county. Enhance entry points into the community, creating attractive entry corridors					
Support and advocate for additional education and training in key areas that support these industries					

Strategy 8. Promote Laramie as the Culture Capital of Wyoming



Albany County is home to a number of arts and culture businesses and organizations, and recent initiatives like the Laramie Mural Project have contributed to Laramie’s quality of life and resulted in public art pieces from dozens of artists. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the area’s music, art, and street festivals, and local arts and culture activity generates \$103 million in revenue annually. The arts are in a position to put an amplified focus on diversity, to reflect the fabric that makes up the community and ensure Laramie is even more welcoming and inclusive.

Opportunity

Develop a funding strategy that can be used to cover the administrative aspects of arts and culture organizations in order to support more diverse, inclusive arts and culture in Laramie, making the area even more inclusive and welcoming to recruit more people to live, work, and visit.

Recommendation

Develop a mini-grant fund for equitable and inclusive arts and culture initiatives that is earmarked for project administration and management.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Draw lessons learned from successful programs locally and elsewhere					
Identify available funding sources – both existing and future fund options – and create a budget for funding the program					
Establish a Board of Advisors that is accountable to and recruited from the community, to detail the program's purpose, objectives, and goals					
Seek input from the community and launch initial application and grant cycle					
Establish professional development and mentorship opportunities for smaller, disadvantaged, and underrepresented organizations					
Work to support local artist advancement and visibility. Explore bringing in major collectors and national and international artists					

Strategy 9. Sustainably Grow the Opportunity for and Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation and Related Tourism



Marketing and promoting Laramie's natural surroundings and world-class outdoor recreation amenities to locals and visitors more widely can bring enormous economic benefits to the community. Doing it in a sustainable way can ensure those benefits are maximized without putting unnecessary or harmful strain on Laramie's infrastructure.

Opportunity

Maximize the usage and economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry in Laramie. More can be done to capitalize on the opportunity that outdoor recreation presents, from encouraging more outdoor events and programs, to marketing and amplifying existing recreational attractions, to supporting outdoor recreation entrepreneurship ventures (bike rental/repair shops, tour guides, etc.). These should all be marketed to bring more people to the area to live, work, visit, and play, but without exploiting them or putting unnecessary pressure on Laramie's infrastructure. Manageable, sustainable growth should be the goal.

Recommendation

Create an Outdoor Recreation Coalition that works to increase coordination and leverage resources to boost the use and economic impact of outdoor recreational assets.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Recruit organizations to join the coalition, form a board, and appoint an entity to spearhead it					
Conduct a SWOT analysis or a resource inventory of all available outdoor recreation amenities					
Amplify messaging to attract additional visitors, residents, and businesses to the region that value outdoor recreation					
Support the prioritization and implementation of projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Improve street, park, and community infrastructure in key corridors.					
Develop a Trail Etiquette program to help sustainably manage growth by guiding behavior on regional trails to ensure net economic benefit					

Infrastructure



Infrastructure can either support or limit economic competitiveness depending on how much focus and planning is performed to map future opportunities and risks. A proactive approach to utility infrastructure improvements requires asset management, ongoing maintenance, and proper planning to understand what impacts are limiting potential or that may cause degradation in the future. Proactive infrastructure investment demonstrates a focus on economic competitiveness and overall quality of place.

Strategy 10. Increase Broadband-Related Infrastructure Investments



Opportunity

Make Laramie the state leader in connectivity, prioritizing investment in proactive broadband infrastructure upgrades to help attract and retain people and businesses to the region.

Recommendation

Form the Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition: A public-private partnership.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Convene partners to form the Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition					
Create a broadband master plan to set goals, evaluate the current system, and map desired infrastructure that accounts for future economic growth					
Creatively finance the system, and explore establishing a Broadband Utility					
Build a user base through market building and education					
Build capacity to support current end users and plan for expanded use with projected economic growth					

Strategy 11. Prioritize Municipal Infrastructure Improvements to Increase Economic Competitiveness



Today much of Laramie's infrastructure, from roads to sewer to gas lines, is aging or at capacity, which limits growth and the development of new housing and businesses. As private developers look to develop commercial and residential properties at the edges of the city and beyond, extending the required infrastructure is a huge barrier.

Opportunity

Identify areas for investment in proactive and managed municipal infrastructure upgrades to help attract and retain people and businesses to the region.

Recommendation

Plan for proactive road, stormwater, sanitary sewer, and water utility expansion and improvement in targeted growth areas.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Review current infrastructure capital plans as well as progress updates to identify potential priorities and partnerships. Define growth areas as well as geographic limits to growth					
Prioritize infrastructure expansion and improvement projects in targeted infrastructure improvement areas					
Establish joint planning to coordinate timelines and maximize investment efficiencies					
Identify funding sources for road and stormwater improvements, and in the case of new housing, commercial, or industrial development, determine which entities bear what portion of the cost burden					
Create a City-County-State Asset Management Inventory system					
Educate the public about ongoing and upcoming infrastructure improvement initiatives					

Strategy 12. Prioritize Infrastructure Planning for Energy Resilience and Carbon Reduction



Competition from natural gas and renewables is lowering the country’s demand for Wyoming coal, which has made it less profitable to mine and threatens the state’s reliance on coal-related tax revenue. As Wyoming and the region look at next-generation sources of energy, Laramie can position itself at the forefront of initiatives like microgrids, solar, and wind farms, taking advantage of available land and resources at the University of Wyoming, community and technical colleges, the city and county, and at private enterprises.

Opportunity

Increase energy resiliency and reliability by making needed infrastructure improvements, lessening dependence on one type of energy, and proactively preparing for and attracting the future of jobs and industry

Recommendation

Improve energy infrastructure and diversify energy portfolio to increase economic competitiveness and develop Laramie as a leader in this area.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Complete the energy audit at the city level. Support city-wide enterprise resource planning to improve efficiencies and lay the groundwork for enhanced grid and smart technology					
Form a Joint Task Force among leaders to communicate and share resources, and determine future of energy					
Explore opportunities for renewable power distribution to the city and county through Rocky Mountain Power’s wind turbines					
Work with the University of Wyoming on wind and solar energy research and collaborate on sustainability goals					
Attract green technology companies and those interested in integrating renewables into their energy mix. Market energy diversity to recruit residents and businesses					
Identify pilot renewable energy projects					
Explore becoming carbon neutral, as well as legislation to encourage renewable energy and increase net metering					

Housing



The current lack of affordable, quality housing in Laramie has negative economic impacts on the community. The 2015 Housing Study conducted for the City of Laramie noted, “Future population and household growth in Laramie will be driven by new and expanded housing and economic development and public service activities. The most critical housing issues in the City include promoting the development of housing for the local workforce, college students and young professionals, affordable to all salary income levels.”

Strategy 13. Work to Expand the Quality and Quantity of Housing Options Available



Opportunity

Increase the volume of construction, as well as enhance the existing quality and diversity of housing stock in strategic locations to contribute to a more livable Laramie.

Recommendations

To alleviate the negative consequences of the existing housing environment in Laramie the following objectives can be pursued:

- 1. Enhance the role that the city is playing with respect to code development and enforcement and the planning and policy environment related to housing development/redevelopment.**

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Implement recommendations from the code audit. Empower city staff to have latitude in working with developers, and to learn from peer cities					
Identify a city/county liaison for developers and property owners. Engage an outside code review officer to assist in mediating inconsistencies					
Launch a “Did You Know” campaign that covers existing regulations to increase understanding, and promotes defined housing demands and opportunities to inspire developers to build more in the city					
Advocate for code to enable “missing middle” housing typologies including ADUs to support increased density					

2. Increase the financing options available through public-private partnering opportunities.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Work with the Cheyenne Housing Authority to evaluate their capacity to expand beyond low income housing and identify opportunities for mixed-use development and expansion of workforce housing options					
Seek to partner with financial institutions to capitalize new/ expanding developers					
Create deed-restricted housing that allows for the preservation of affordability through the use of initial subsidies or other development/ redevelopment cost reductions					
Develop housing rehabilitation funding programs that can support residents aging in place and making needed home improvements and new market entrants who want to enhance housing quality					
Work with the Wyoming Community Development Authority to offer additional first time homebuyer access as new properties are built in Laramie					

3. Increase the pipeline of developers and laborers interested in working in Laramie.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Recruit developers in partnership with other regional partners					
Create a building supply warehouse to buy bulk materials for local developers or form a collective purchasing group to reduce the cost of materials					
Work with educational institutions to increase training – both skills and entrepreneurial – to increase the number of available developers, contracting companies, and laborers					

4. Identify opportunities for infill development in strategic locations to prove the market.

At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Identify resources and partners to overcome the risks around land acquisition, funding, permitting and variances, or technical skills					
Identify infill opportunities to increase housing diversity within the core area of the city					
Explore tax incentives, fee waivers, and easing the permitting and approval process to encourage housing by lowering barriers of entry					
Secure land through conventional purchasing, land trusts, trades, or development authorities to incentivize housing growth					
Invest in infrastructure: improved streets, bike facilities, sidewalks and landscaping					
Explore the development of a Rental Registry and Inspection Program to reduce blighted properties. Develop/expand existing renter-education programs					
Consider growth opportunities in north and west Laramie and what type of development should occur to attract investment					

Implementing the Plan

To ensure the success of the Thrive Laramie 10-Year Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan, an Implementation Committee will be formed from existing Steering Committee members who will initiate a “recommit” process, affirming their interest in continuing to engage. Implementation Committee members will provide guidance, direction, and accountability as they serve as lead advocates, doers, and fundraisers for the plan.

The Implementation Committee will be supported by a number of working groups and action committees associated with each of the plan’s focus area. Convening partners have been identified to lead each working group. They are charged with recruiting working group participants, inviting community organizations with a stake in a given strategy area to be a part of its implementation.







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