

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Albany County Comprehensive Plan has been adopted pursuant to Wyoming State Statutes 18-5-202(b), which states that “the planning and zoning commission may prepare and amend a comprehensive plan including zoning for promoting the public health, safety, morals and general welfare of the unincorporated areas of the county.”

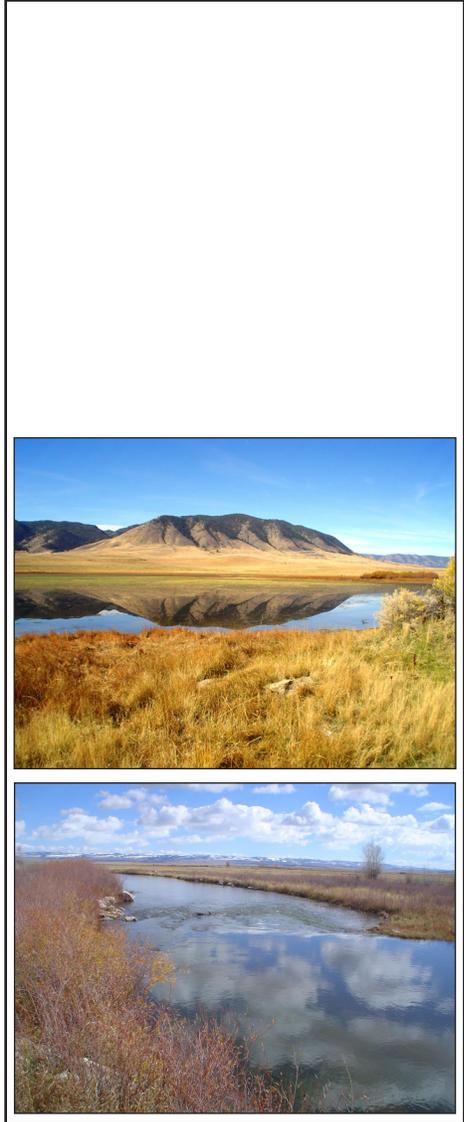
This Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for future land use and development in Albany County. It is advisory rather than regulatory in nature, but is the foundation for land management documents such as zoning and subdivision regulations as well as all other decisions made by the County.

OUR COMMUNITY

Albany County, located in southeastern Wyoming, encompasses over 2.7 million acres (See Map E.1, Overview). The county is comprised of four basic landscape character areas: incorporated and unincorporated communities, rural residential development, agriculture, and natural areas. The City of Laramie is the county seat and the only major population center. Rock River is the only other municipality in the county. Several unincorporated communities exist in the county, including Centennial, Woods Landing, Albany, Tie Siding, and Harmony. Rural residential development, on acreages generally less than 40 acres in size, continues to spread throughout the county. Such development can create inefficient demands on County services. Private agricultural lands dominate the county, providing an economic base as well as supporting diverse natural resources. Approximately one-third of the county is publicly-owned natural landscape as diverse as open range, foothills, and forested mountains. The Medicine Bow National Forest is a major recreational area and a valuable natural resource.

COMMUNITY VISION

The foundation of the Comprehensive Plan was built over several months with the assistance of hundreds of participants and included community workshops, a series of charrettes where residents created alternative scenarios for future development, a community survey, and numerous focus group discussions. In general, many of the Albany County ‘growth issues’ identified at these meetings were not as much about ‘how fast we grow’ but rather ‘how we grow’ (efficiency/quality). Development patterns in the county have begun to shift, and increased development in rural areas is changing the traditional landscape.



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Overall, Albany County residents were concerned about major issues encompassed by three themes:

- ✧ Quality of life,
- ✧ Health, safety, and welfare,
- ✧ Cost of services.

The implementation strategies at the end of each chapter of this plan relate back to these three themes. The related theme(s) is noted in parentheses after each strategy: (1) quality of life; (2) health, safety, and welfare; and (3) cost of services.

The main directions for this Comprehensive Plan update emerged from the vision statement developed by the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

From this vision statement can be extracted the primary public goals:

1. Protect natural and environmental resources,
2. Promote economic development,
3. Encourage growth efficiency,
4. Develop sustainable energy sources,
5. Conserve agricultural land,
6. Enhance county identity, and
7. Provide recreation opportunities.

Two major tools were developed to achieve these goals:

- ✧ *The Long Range Growth Plan* is a planned growth pattern for future development. Priority Growth Areas (PGAs) are generally identified throughout the county to encourage various types and intensities of development in areas where it is cost-effective to provide appropriate infrastructure and services without placing a financial burden on the general public. The locations of the PGAs were identified using community values. The Long Range Growth Plan also conserves natural and environmental resources and productive agricultural lands.
- ✧ *The Natural Resource Framework* is a compilation of sensitive lands that should be considered as development occurs, including flood plains, wildlife habitat and corridors, aquifer recharge areas, river and creek corridors, etc. In reviewing future development applications, the County will take into account the potential impact (positive or negative) on the Natural Resource Framework.

There are 10 chapters of the Comprehensive Plan relating to specific land use considerations. These Comprehensive Plan elements include:



- ✧ Long Range Growth Plan and land use,
- ✧ Intergovernmental relations,
- ✧ Agriculture,
- ✧ Natural and environmental resources,
- ✧ Open space and public lands,
- ✧ Cultural resources,
- ✧ Economic development,
- ✧ Transportation,
- ✧ Housing, and
- ✧ Community services.

Each element includes a discussion of related issues, objectives, and implementation actions (specific to achieving the objectives of that element).

KEY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Among the many recommended actions, there are several that are most important to achieving the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan. They are:

1. Adjusting the County land development regulations to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Coordinating the County’s capital improvements program (CIP) with the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Requiring a fiscal impact analysis to make sure that major new developments do not financially burden existing taxpayers (See Chapter 12, Community Services).
4. Enhancing county identity and retaining our character while still allowing growth, and providing recreation and economic development opportunities (The Legacy Program, Chapter 9).
5. Coordinating between Albany County, the City of Laramie and other water and sewer providers to efficiently use the existing infrastructure and facilities, while avoiding duplication or conflicting decisions.
6. Ongoing planning to address in more detail topics such as protection of the Casper Aquifer, plans for major roads, a sub-area plan for area immediately around Laramie, an economic development plan, an open space and trails plan, and a plan to implement the gateway concepts.

Experience has demonstrated that when a Comprehensive Plan guides the form of development, community goals will be more fully achieved. If future development is allowed to ignore the Comprehensive Plan, it is likely that our goals and objectives will not be achieved.



The success of the Comprehensive Plan, reaching its vision, depends upon the will of public officials, the development community, County staff, and the general citizenry to follow through with its implementation actions. The future of our county, and the communities within it, can be better-shaped to meet desired goals and objectives as the Comprehensive Plan becomes a part of every land-use decision in the county.

