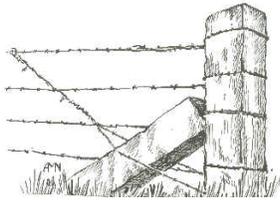


INTRODUCTION 1



The land use patterns of Albany County are the result of many different forces that influence the type, direction, and pace of development. Whether it is an individual wishing to build a house or a business, or a developer wishing to create a subdivision, each person’s decision potentially affects the properties and quality of life of others, and some-

times many others (through traffic, land values, views, etc.). While each land owner has inalienable property rights, if individual decisions are not coordinated, at least at a basic level, they can lead to a variety of negative impacts that affect other’s use of their properties. These impacts may include incompatible uses next to each other, inefficient layouts of roads and utilities (often maintained at public expense), and increased public costs for services (such as fire and police protection and school bus service). Thus, the pattern of development influences quality of life; health, safety, and welfare; and cost to the public, in the present and the future.

In the end, lack of coordination not only impacts existing residents and businesses, it also brings about a lack of predictability about the future, which discourages new businesses and residents from choosing to locate here (since they aren’t sure what will happen near to them). Planning allows us to anticipate problems and be proactive rather than reactive. The result is an intentional future for our children, residents, and visitors.

Therefore, there are many reasons to plan for Albany County, including:

- ✧ To arrive at a future of our own (collective) choosing, a shared vision, based on community values,
- ✧ To maximize the benefits of growth while minimizing the undesired consequences,
- ✧ To protect quality of life,
- ✧ To protect Albany County’s unique identity: our sense of place,
- ✧ To create opportunities for the growth of our economy by keeping Albany County attractive to citizens, businesses, and visitors,
- ✧ To focus financial resources by determining where and when to make public improvements,
- ✧ To maintain high quality services by not spreading development so far that it is

Fences are an important part of western ranches. At the end of the open range era in the West, fences were found to be essential to avoid disputes. Originally, fences were required to “fence out” undesired uses (such as cattle from sheep pastures). Eventually, fences were used both to “fence in” and “fence out” uses.

The “cornerpost” is the symbol of the Albany County Comprehensive Plan. In fencing, a cornerpost has to be strong to withstand forces pulling in different directions. The Comprehensive Plan serves the same function in land use decision-making.

difficult to serve,

- * To convey the vision to current and future residents, so we can all make good, coordinated decisions.

1.1 WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

IT IS A FOUNDATION

The Comprehensive Plan is the County’s guide for making land use, community development, and capital improvement decisions. It is a guide to the physical development of the county. The plan describes the community vision and recommends where growth, and various land uses, should take place, in order to achieve the community vision. Land use decisions guided by the Comprehensive Plan will improve how the county functions and develops over time. Over the long term, well-functioning communities and regions do not happen by chance. Planning helps achieve a more efficient uses of resources. The Comprehensive Plan is an official document of the County—it has been adopted by the County Planning and Zoning Commission and the County Commissioners. The plan is an advisory document required by Wyoming State Statutes (see Section 1.2 below) because it is important for health, safety, and welfare.

The Comprehensive Plan is used as a guide for other actions and regulations, such as zoning and subdivision regulations. It also sets the stage for other County plans (such as a County transportation plan, for example). The Comprehensive Plan establishes the locations and projects the amount of future growth, so that roads can be properly sized and houses set back the proper distance from future roads. The Comprehensive Plan is also used by other agencies, such as water districts and school districts, to plan for their future facilities.

Most importantly, the Comprehensive Plan is the reflection of the community’s values and the community’s united vision. The roots of Albany County’s Comprehensive Plan are based in extensive public input, which identified community goals and then ways to achieve those goals through land uses, policies, and actions.

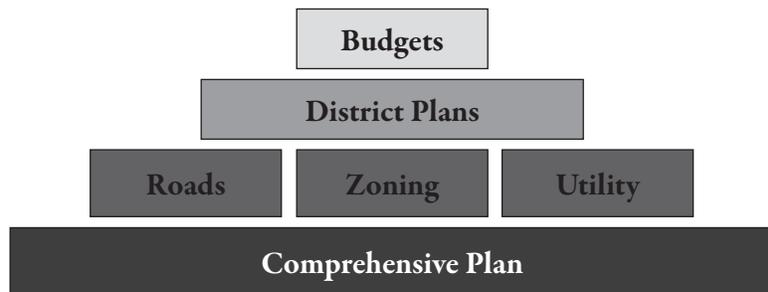
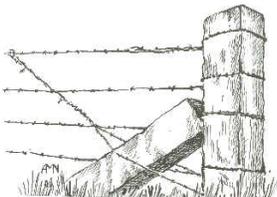


Figure 1.1:

The Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for other plans and policies.



1.2 LEGAL AUTHORITY AND REQUIREMENTS

Wyoming Statute (W.S.) 18-5-202 grants that (bold added):

*(b) 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**, and certify the plan to the board of county commissioners.*

The statutes do not specifically express what must be included in a comprehensive plan but W.S. 9-8-301 (Development of Plans) indicates that:

(a) All local governments shall develop a local land use plan within their jurisdiction. The plans shall be consistent with established state guidelines and be subject to review and approval by the commission.¹

(b) All incorporated cities and towns shall have the option to develop a land use plan in accordance with the requirements of W.S. 9-8-302(a), or cooperate with the county to develop such a plan under W.S. 9-8-302(b).

(c) All counties shall develop a county-wide land use plan which shall incorporate the land use plans of all incorporated cities and towns within the county.

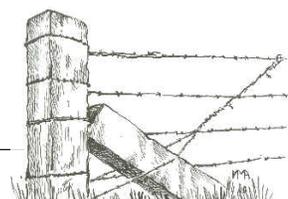
1.3 CONSISTENCY

To be and remain effective, the County's land management strategies (zoning and subdivision regulations, building permits, and capital improvement programs) must be consistent with the direction of the Comprehensive Plan. This means that if there is an inconsistency between the plan and the regulations, one or both need to be modified to make them consistent.

1.4 HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

This Comprehensive Plan is the product of public effort lasting more than a year. Participants (see Acknowledgements) included a consultant team, two departments at the University of Wyoming, a Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) comprised of citizens representing diverse interests and various geographic areas of the county, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) including experts from various government branches and businesses, and most importantly the public. Over the course of the planning process, the CAC and TAC combined into one advisory group.

¹ This refers to the state Land Use Commission, a board responsible for guiding land use planning throughout the state of Wyoming. According to state statutes, the commission is supposed to review local land use plans. However, this Commission currently does not exist.



Community values were gathered through a series of public meetings held at multiple locations throughout the county, stakeholder interviews, and work sessions with the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, all under the guidance of the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) and County departments. The input from these meetings was strengthened by research and data analysis, as well as a telephone survey of 500 Albany County households.

For a detailed explanation of the process used to develop the plan, refer to Appendix 1.

1.5 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

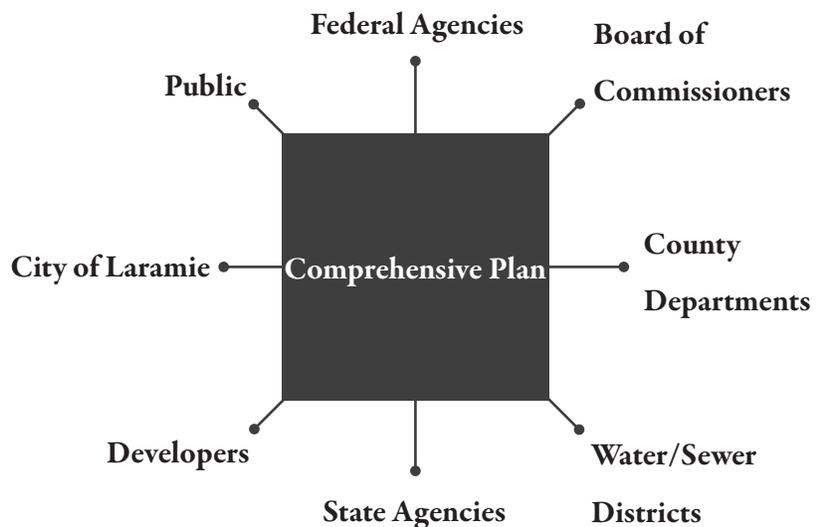
The Comprehensive Plan is to be used by the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, County staff, developers, and residents.

For County staff, the plan will be used to analyze development proposals, zoning changes, and subdivision requests. It will be used as a guide for making changes to land management strategies and for the initiation of new plans or projects. It is also used to plan for capital improvements and can be a basis for grant applications.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioners will refer to the plan when making land use decisions. Following the Comprehensive Plan will help ensure that decisions are defensible. Knowing that County officials follow the plan provides developers and citizens with a predictable process and reliable guide for their own decisions regarding change for their properties or those adjacent to their properties.

Directions in the form of written goals, objectives, and implementation actions are supplemented by the Comprehensive Plan maps. When referring to the Comprehensive Plan, users should consider the written directions as well as the maps. **Disclaimer: Maps are for reference only, more specific maps can be obtained from local government agencies.**

Additional background information and a glossary is contained in the appendices.



1.6 FUTURE UPDATES TO THE PLAN

It is important that this Comprehensive Plan continue to reflect the community's values and vision over time. To do so, it must change as the community changes. Periodic reviews, refinements, and updates will be necessary.

Major updates of the Albany County Comprehensive Plan should be done within five years (2013), or more frequently if necessary, to reflect changes in community goals and needs.

Minor changes to the Comprehensive Plan (such as clarifications and changes that do not alter the intent of the plan), may be requested more frequently than major updates by a citizen, property owner, or County official. For efficiency, such requests should be consolidated for review by the Planning and Zoning Commission at specified times of the year. It is important that the County regularly dedicate funds for future plan updates.

1.7 MONITORING PROGRESS

The County Planning Director will present an annual monitoring and evaluation report to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners on the progress of implementing the plan. The report should detail the accomplishments of the previous year as related to the implementation priorities outlined in Appendix 2. The report should include an evaluation of whether or not the plan's objectives are being met. If objectives are not being met, implementation actions may need to be reconsidered.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THIS PLAN

Chapter 2: Directions, Vision, and Goals presents the vision of the plan and our goals and objectives for realizing our vision.

Chapter 3: Long Range Growth Plan and Land Use identifies the priority growth areas for future development, identifies land uses, and includes the Future Land Use Map.

Chapter 4: Intergovernmental Relations follows with a discussion on the County's relations with other jurisdictions within the county. These jurisdictions include the City of Laramie, Town of Rock River, the University of Wyoming, various water and sewer districts, etc.

Chapters 5-12: General Elements to the Plan. Each chapter discusses how specific elements are affected by land use decisions and County policy. Each chapter then conveys the goals associated with these topics and lists the specific objectives and implementation actions. The Legacy Program (Economic Development) and the Natural Resource Framework (Natural and Environmental Resources) are located in these chapters.

- * Chapter 5: Agriculture
- * Chapter 6: Natural and Environmental Resources
- * Chapter 7: Open Space and Public Lands



- * Chapter 8: Cultural Resources
- * Chapter 9: Economic Development
- * Chapter 10: Transportation
- * Chapter 11: Housing
- * Chapter 12: Community Services

Appendices: The appendices contain the history, background, and process for this plan, as well as other technical documents and a glossary.

