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Chapter 1: Introduction

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

This Comprehensive Plan outlines Sheridan County’s vision and goals for the future and provides guidance for staff and elected and appointed officials to determine directions and make choices about short- and long-range needs.

This Plan builds on the direction of Sheridan County’s most current comprehensive plan (1982) and the Vision 2020 (Growth Management Plan (2001), jointly prepared with the City of Sheridan, and is a product of discussions and values of participants and citizens in the planning process. It reflects what the public values for the future of Sheridan County.

The written policy recommendations (e.g., vision, goals and policies) and recommended actions, should be used in combination with the Future Land Use Plan when making decisions affecting growth, the use and development of land, land conservation, and the provision of public facilities and services. One major emphasis of this plan is to provide long-range guidance to property owners, citizens, and decision makers on land use issues, such as where and how residential, commercial, and industrial development should occur in the future. It also includes policies to protect and conserve resources, such as riparian areas and agricultural lands.

Sheridan County should periodically review and revise this Plan as conditions change, State and Federal laws change, when new implementation tools are available, and as funding sources are available or change. In addition, the county should monitor the effectiveness of policies and the effects of past decisions and changes in values—the vision for the future, to determine if the plan should be amended.
OBJECTIVES

This Comprehensive Plan:

- Identifies a unified vision (building on the 1982 Plan, Vision 2020 effort, and citizen input) and includes specific goals and actions to implement the vision.
- Contains strong, clear recommendations, but provides flexibility to adapt to changing conditions or unforeseen needs.
- Will lead to consistent zoning regulations, to help implement it.
- Identifies other programs and actions to be undertaken to implement the vision of the plan.
- Will be regularly updated (every five years).
- Aims to be user-friendly and straightforward, reflecting the community’s values and contemporary planning strategies.

ABOUT SHERIDAN COUNTY

Sheridan County, located in Northern Central Wyoming, is an area of approximately 2,516 square miles. The county is traversed north-south by Interstate 90 and east-west by Hwy.14/16. These highways connect the county to several regional destinations (within a three hour drive time) including: Billings in Montana to the north and Casper in Wyoming to the south. The Big Horn National Forest, a major recreation destination, is part of the county and accessible nearby to the west. The county contains four incorporated cities and towns: Sheridan, Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont, and several unincorporated places, including Big Horn, Story, Lieter, and Arvada. This plan does not address the incorporated areas.
INCLUDE COUNTY BASE MAP – Figure 1
Wyoming Statutory Authorization

This Plan complies with Wyoming Statutes Section 18-5-202, Planning and Zoning Commission/Preparation of a Comprehensive Plan. This statute sets forth criteria for preparing and amending a comprehensive plan. The plan may promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the unincorporated areas of the county. According to state law, the Planning and Zoning Commission is required to certify the plan to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), and the BOCC it is responsible for adopting and implementing it. Otherwise, Wyoming statutes are not specific about what components or elements the plan must address. This plan addresses a variety of comprehensive topics, including land use, public safety and health, natural resources, transportation, services, history, among other topics.

Key Issues This Plan Addresses

Early in the planning process, the public, committees, elected and appointed officials, staff, and consultants, helped identify issues (or opportunities and constraints) this Plan needed to address to be successful. This Plan addresses all the issues identified (to some degree), as described below.

Issue 1: Planning for Growth

Planning for and managing fluctuating and sometimes rapid rates of growth in Sheridan County is a major driving issue for this Plan, as it was when the county first developed a Comprehensive Plan in the late 1970s. Adopting a Future Land Use Plan with clear direction will help the county refine its zoning districts and accommodate growth. This Plan provides policies to help plan for growth, as follows:

- Refine residential districts located in areas possessing exceptional natural qualities or sensitive areas, such as critical winter range.
- Address residential development of the Agricultural district (currently at one dwelling unit per 35 acre density), particularly on highly productive irrigated lands.
- Identify and plan industrial districts for future jobs and industry.
- Identify and plan commercial nodes or rural centers for future retail and services.

Issues This Plan Addresses

The issues (in no order of priority) are:

1. Planning for growth and fiscal responsibility,
2. Provision of utilities, services, adequate water and fiscal responsibility,
3. Property rights,
4. Workforce housing,
5. Agriculture,
6. Open lands,
7. Planning for commercial and business locations,
8. Transportation planning, and
Enact site development standards (e.g., road cuts and grading, landscaping, lighting pollution, and scenic protection).

Address lack of an Open Space Design (clustering) process for new development, and

Clearly define urban/rural and agricultural edges and identify needs for unincorporated communities.

This Plan will enable the county to protect its assets and values as new development occurs and consider the impacts on roads, schools, emergency services, other fiscal ability to provide services and possible infrastructure constraints.

**ISSUE 2: UTILITIES, SERVICES, AND ADEQUATE WATER**

Water and wastewater are important considerations for this Plan, including the need to:

- Identify existing municipal or other systems that have capacity to accommodate new growth.
- Identify existing water and/or sewer systems in need of upgrades.
- Identify and plan for rural septic systems that are creating water quality and environmental problems or potential development constraints.
- Ensure an adequate water supply for current and future generations of residents and businesses.
- Understand capacity of rural fire districts’ ability to provide service, adequate fire flows and plan for adequate ingress and egress for subdivisions.

The plan identifies areas with constraints for continued rural residential growth that rely on septic systems and wells. It also addresses the relationship of development and healthy streams and watersheds. Finally, it includes policies for long-term planning and triggers for adequate water and wastewater treatment.

**ISSUE 3: PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Part of the purpose of this Plan is to maintain the quality of life for current and future generations, while respecting individual rights. As a community, we must look at broader goals and aims to address health, safety, and welfare. This Plan (as an update to the 1982 Plan) is not a major philosophical shift from the plan that has been in place for decades. It strengthens and clarifies some positions that were in the 1982 Plan and proposes specific strategies to implement the plan.
This Plan continues to respect rights of private property owners to use their land and identify the limits of takings that can be related to county actions, while balancing community interests and responsibilities to protect health, safety, and welfare.

**ISSUE 4: WORKFORCE HOUSING**

The cost of housing in Sheridan County has been increasing and outpacing wages at the time of this Plan and the county has seen increased pressure for affordable and workforce housing. This Plan suggests that the needs and potential solutions primarily reside in the communities of the county—near jobs, services, and transportation (e.g. Sheridan, Dayton, Ranchester).

**ISSUE 5: AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture and ranching has been one of the traditional economic mainstays of Sheridan County, and is a primary source of the highly valued visual quality of the county. As with many rural areas, farmers and ranchers are experiencing pressure to sell or develop agricultural lands. This Plan addresses ways to work with the farming and ranching community to help sustain working farms and ranches, particularly areas with irrigated agriculture.

**ISSUE 6: OPEN LANDS**

Citizens value open lands and access to public lands for recreation. Private land trusts, such as the Nature Conservancy, Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust, and the Sheridan Community Land Trust have accomplished a great deal of land conservation (for both open lands and agriculture, especially along the Bighorn Foothills). This Plan helps identify additional priorities and tools to achieve open lands conservation for recreation, scenic quality, resource protection, and other objectives.

**ISSUE 7: COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

At the time of this Plan preparation, Sheridan County economy has been strong—in part due to energy resource development and construction and development. While it is not Sheridan County’s responsibility to promote job growth, because it is primarily the role of Forward Sheridan and the Sheridan Chamber and other economic organizations, this Plan can seek ways to assist and encourage a long-term stable economy. It addresses how to balance business and industry-friendly development with other community values, such as “small town” qualities, a unique environment for residents and tourists, and clean industry. It also identifies appropriate locations for business and industry development.
ISSUE 8: TRANSPORTATION
The lack of a plan for the preservation and protection of future rights-of-way currently results in a disjointed, inefficient roadway network. Additionally, the county has little in the way of an analysis of road system expansion and management needs that identifies existing and projected traffic circulation levels of service. This Plan addresses coordinating transportation planning and the road system with the communities in the county, and outlying rural areas. Coordination with the City of Sheridan on a regional trails (pathways) system as well as potential transit is an issue for the plan.

ISSUE 9: HISTORIC PRESERVATION
While many of the historic structures of the county are located in the City of Sheridan, the county has some identified historic sites and areas that are important as well, such as the Connor Battlefield, a State Historic Site. Not all sites have been identified or are managed. This Plan identifies ways to preserve historic areas and corridors and how to treat other cultural or archaeological resources.

PLANNING PROCESS
Broad community involvement has been critical for the development of this Plan. The county sought to engage all residents and stakeholders of the county from diverse locations and backgrounds and allowed them to provide meaningful input throughout the process. The objectives were:

1. Broad-Based Outreach (Building broad-based and diverse support by providing information and seeking input on plan choices),
2. Cost-Effective Outreach (Using cost effective ways to reach a lot of people),
3. Information Sharing and Education (Providing information and educating the community with technical information and best practices to aid in decision-making),
4. Community Capacity Building (Building community-capacity or on-going support to implement the plan and participate in on-going planning and volunteerism), and
5. Legal Requirement Met (Meeting statutory and local requirements).

The planning team used multiple ways to engage citizens, including:

- A website that contained current information and polls throughout the process.
- Public meetings (in November, February, March, July).
- A Citizen Advisory Committee that met seven times in different locations of the county.
- A Technical Advisory Committee that met five times.
- Planning & Zoning Commission workshops (including jointly with the City of Sheridan Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners).
- Board of County Commission workshops (including jointly with the Sheridan City Council and with the Planning and Zoning Commission).
- Meetings with the mayors of Dayton and Ranchester.
- Direct outreach to Eastern County residents.
- Media advertisements in summer months to announce the plan.
- Posters and flyers.
- Other presentations to focus groups and radio talk shows.

**PLAN IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT WILL IT TAKE?**

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

The Plan is a general policy document to guide the physical development of the county. It does not have the force of law as a regulation or ordinance. Sheridan County primarily uses the zoning map and resolutions to regulate and enforce many of the land use goals and policies of this Plan. Capital improvement strategies can be a powerful tool in implementation as well. The county will also use the Plan as evidence of vision and intent as described in this Plan.

An Implementation Strategy and Action Plan is included in Chapter 12 to provide a “roadmap” as to how the county should implement the goals and policies through regulatory and incentive-based means, and also funding, programs and regional coordination.

**ZONING UPDATE CONSISTENCY**

Sheridan County’s Zoning resolution consists of both a zoning map and a written ordinance that divides the county into zoning districts, including various agricultural, residential, and non-residential zoning districts. The zoning regulations describe what type of land use and specific activities are permitted in each district, and also regulate how buildings, signs, parking, and other construction may be placed on a parcel of land. The Plan provides a guide for the future development of the property, while the zoning map and zoning regulations provide the property with “entitlements” for development. The Future Land Use Plan should guide future rezoning and development decisions, so that when changing the
zoning of a particular property, it must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use Plan.

Comprehensive plans are advisory in nature, serving to incorporate the thinking of the community at a policy level and to guide future development decisions. In many instances, land use category designations on a land use plan map may not directly correspond to a property’s underlying zoning. Unless a community chooses to pro-actively re-zone properties that are not consistent with the Future Land Use Plan map, the property owner will be required to request re-zoning of the property as part of the development process to bring it into compliance with the comprehensive plan. The county and public reviewed and considered underlying zoning throughout the development of this Plan to ensure that consistency between planned land uses and zoning could be maintained to the maximum extent feasible.

**PLAN CONTENTS AND ORGANIZATION**

This Plan contains the following sections, organized as chapters:

**Chapter 1, Introduction**, includes information on the issues of this plan, brief overview of the process to develop the plan, Wyoming requirements, and plan organization.

**Chapter 2, Vision**, provides the overall direction for the Plan.

**Chapter 3, Future Land Use Plan**, contains the land use plan “big ideas,” Future Land Use Plan map, a description of the land use categories, development/ design principles, and land use goals and policies.

**Chapter 4, Natural and Scenic Resources and Environment**, provides the natural resource maps and the goals and policies related to providing a balanced land use pattern.

**Chapter 5, Economic Opportunities and Jobs**, contains the goals and policies related to supporting economic opportunities and jobs for livable communities.

**Chapter 6, Services and Facilities**, contains the goals and policies related to providing services and facilities in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner and in a way that helps to implement the desired development patterns shown in the Future Land Use Plan.

**Chapter 7, Transportation System**, contains the County Road Network map and the County Trails map and also the goals and policies related to developing and maintaining a connected, safe transportation system with multiple modes.
Chapter 8, Distinct Communities, contains the goals and policies related to maintaining the distinct communities, values, and traditions of the county’s communities.

Chapter 9, Regional Cooperation, contains the goals and policies related to addressing regional issues cooperatively.

Chapter 10, Communities in Focus, addresses the specific community focus areas, including incorporated towns (Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont), unincorporated places, and rural centers.

Chapter 11, Sheridan Joint Planning Area, addresses the Sheridan Planning Area and directions for land uses and growth within the joint planning area.

Chapter 12, Conservation Areas in Focus, addresses the Agricultural/Resource area, specifics on clustering development, and the Big Horn Foothills area.

Chapter 13, Implementation Strategy, provides a description of the general and specific actions required to implement this Plan (including the Action Plan matrix).

Appendices:

Appendix A contains a summary of Existing Conditions.

Appendix B contains inventory maps.

Appendix C includes the engineering summary of water and wastewater conditions.

Appendix D summarizes the public participation steps taken to prepare this Plan.

Appendix E includes a summary of current plans and policies.

Appendix F contains the land use capacity information.

Appendix G contains definitions for terms used in this Plan.
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INTRODUCTION

The Vision Themes represent the broad values and ideas for the county and are the organizing element for this Plan, under which the goals and policies are structured. The vision themes are statements of values to maintain and enhance the qualities that make Sheridan County a great place in which to live, work, play and enjoy the natural and community amenities. A vision cannot stand on its own—it needs detailed goals, policies, and strategies to back it up—but a vision is helpful to describe Sheridan County’s overall intent.

Goals and Policies (that follow in chapters 3 through 9) provide statements about what the county aims to achieve over the next 20 years, or over the life of the Comprehensive Plan – assuming the county will update this Plan periodically. Goals will generally direct decision-makers and citizens about the county’s intentions. The policies provide more definite courses to guide decisions and implement the plan and guide capital investments.

SEVEN THEMES FOR SHERIDAN COUNTY’S VISION

The vision for Sheridan County is comprised of seven themes, in no particular order of priority. These themes form the backbone of the plan, and are represented in the chapters that follow.

Theme 1: Maintain a balanced land use pattern
(See Chapter 3)

Theme 2: Sustain natural and scenic resources and environmental quality
(See Chapter 4)
Theme 3: Support economic opportunities and jobs for livable communities (See Chapter 5)

Theme 4: Provide services and facilities in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner (See Chapter 6)

Theme 5: Develop a connected, safe and mobile transportation system (See Chapter 7)

Theme 6: Maintain distinct communities, values, and traditions (See Chapter 8)

Theme 7: Address regional issues cooperatively (See Chapter 9)
Chapter 3: Land Use

THEME: MAINTAIN A BALANCED LAND USE PATTERN

WHY IS THIS THEME IMPORTANT?

A balanced land use pattern provides for a variety of lifestyles and choices, reflects the county’s diverse communities and western heritage; provides an ample supply of land for jobs and housing; and also maintains ample open space, agriculture, and scenic resources.

Sheridan County traditionally has had a development pattern that focuses urban growth in communities, with resource and rural land uses in outlying areas. By directing growth to well-defined contiguous areas, the county and communities can efficiently use land while conserving agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, and natural resources. In addition, it is possible to provide a variety of housing with workforce and senior housing located in neighborhoods so people can be near jobs, transportation, shopping, and community services and facilities. Part of providing a balanced land use pattern is to ensure that communities have a mix of housing types in communities. A range of housing types enhances a community’s ability to attract or retain a diverse mix of generations of families, workers, and retirees. This pattern of centralized and focused development not only makes communities more livable, it also sustains energy resources, allowing the county to provide services and facilities efficiently.

This Plan continues to express the county’s traditional values about land use and growth. The Plan’s intent is to guide location and type of future development to provide a balanced mix of jobs, housing, and other community activities. Urban housing with good access to commercial services will continue to occur in communities. Adequate land for industrial development will be located away from residential areas or residential growth.
Finally, important natural and scenic resources will be conserved as much as possible, while respecting rights of landowners to use land.

**Summary of This Theme’s Topics**

This theme addresses the following topics:

- Compact development pattern in communities;
- Distinctions between communities, low-density county residential areas, and rural and agricultural areas;
- Appropriate mix and balance of land uses;
- Mix of housing to meet needs — located in neighborhoods;
- Commercial uses in communities and centers;
- Industrial development in appropriate locations;
- Open space, agriculture, and scenic resources as part of a balanced pattern; and
- Property rights.

**CHAPTER CONTENTS**

1. Land Use “Big Ideas”
2. Future Land Use Plan Map
3. Land Use Categories
4. Land Use Goals and Policies
LAND USE: “BIG IDEAS”

This section describes the major land use ideas illustrated by the Future Land Use Plan, which identifies the future pattern of development and conservation. The plan map illustrates the distribution of future housing (urban and rural), jobs and industrial areas, agricultural areas, commercial uses, and public and civic spaces.

1. Plan for well-designed compact urban growth in communities

In general, it is the policy of this Plan that commercial and urban residential uses be located in towns and in the City of Sheridan, where services and infrastructure needed to support higher-intensity uses can be supported. The county, with the Future Land Use Plan will:

- Designate an Urban Service Area around the City of Sheridan for future urban development (residential, commercial, and business and industry).
- Plan for urban neighborhoods and commercial “centers” in an efficient compact pattern, to prevent linear extensive commercial development and provide a variety of housing in neighborhoods. New commercial uses will blend well with surrounding uses.
- Designate where development will efficiently be served with municipal water and sewer.
- Designate some low density rural residential development at the edge of Sheridan.
- In addition, encourage “infill” development, revitalization, and development of walkable, healthy living neighborhoods.

See Town and Urban Categories (page 31-35). For compact development policies, see page 35-36. The Future Land Use Plan maps on page 23 and 25 show proposed urban and town land uses within the defined growth areas and Sheridan Joint Planning Area. For more information about the Sheridan Joint Planning Area, see Chapter 11.

2. Retain the distinct and autonomous towns in the county

Retain the compact patterns of the distinct and self-governing communities of Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont by designating planning and growth areas. The county will:

- Coordinate planning/growth areas and future land uses with the towns of Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont.
Minimize the extent of dispersed residential development in the county outside of towns and their designated growth areas—to avoid encroachment of rural uses on and demand for services in the towns.

For related policies, see Chapter 3, page 36; Chapter 8, Distinct Communities, page 76; and, Chapter 9, Regional Cooperation, page 80. For more information about the incorporated towns and unincorporated places, see Chapter 10, Communities in Focus.

3. Retain the agricultural/rural areas of the county

Establish an Agricultural/Resource area outside of cities, towns, and their growth areas where the county will:

- Encourage farming and ranching and very low density residential as the primary use of land.
- Direct most development away from agricultural areas and limit residential development in remote areas.
- Allow clustered development to replicate traditional farmstead or ranch patterns and to conserve agricultural lands and resources.
- Discourage development of prime agricultural land (including irrigated lands and prime farm land based on soils classifications) outside of growth areas.
- Support activities that preserve rural historical/cultural features.

See Land Use Categories (page 26-27) and Future Land Use Plan maps on pages 23 and 25. For related policies, see page 36; and Chapter 4, Natural and Scenic Resources, page 48. For more information about conservation and clustering, see Chapter 12, page 91.

4. Encourage clustered development patterns

Establish a Clustering/Conservation Development Area. This area will apply to designated locations in the county (generally within two miles of Dayton and Ranchester and within six miles of Sheridan). Property owners will be eligible to cluster developments and conserve open space or resources and receive higher density bonuses than in more remote locations of the county.

See Land Use Categories (pages 26-29). For description and related policies, see pages 22 and 36. For more information about clustering, see Chapter 12, page 92-94.
5. Conserve the Big Horn foothills

Continue the Big Horn Foothills Resource Conservation Area (established in 1982) to protect the unique foothills visual quality and tourism resource, maintain traditional agricultural uses, protect wildlife habitat, and allow aquifer recharge to occur. In order to accomplish this, future development in the area should:

- Be consistent with the agricultural uses or very low density residential development.
- Minimize adverse effects on wildlife habitat and aesthetic resources.
- Avoid wildlife migration routes and crucial winter ranges.

See Future Land Use Plan map on page 23 and the Resource Conservation map on page 43. See description on page 40. For related policies, see Chapter 4, Natural and Scenic Resources, page 48. For more information about the conservation area, see Chapter 12, page 95.

6. Allow continued limited rural residential patterns in the Big and Little Goose Creeks

Retain rural residential patterns in Big and Little Goose Creeks. The areas will remain as mostly rural with some limited expansion of the County Low Density Residential pattern in areas where it already exists and where impacts to vulnerable groundwater areas are mitigated.

See Land Use Category, pages 28-30. For groundwater policies, see Chapter 4, Natural and Scenic Resources, pages 41 and 47. For more information about clustering, see Chapter 12, page 92-94.

7. Provide stewardship of our natural resources

This Plan promotes stewardship of natural resources, including recommendations to:

- Work with agricultural landowners to conserve lands;
- Protect streams and rivers and their riparian areas from negative impacts of development;
- Maintain groundwater quality by limiting expansion of activities that create pollution (i.e., poorly performing septic systems and dense residential development without adequate wastewater treatment);
- Protect crucial winter wildlife habitat from negative impacts of development; and
- Avoid development that would preclude the extraction of mineral resources in rich zones, including coal, gravel, and other resources.

For more information, see Chapter 4, Natural and Scenic Resources.
8. Identify suitable locations and standards for heavy industry

The plan identifies areas for future industry in towns and the county to provide job opportunities. This chapter recommends standards to address impacts such as noise, lights, truck traffic, water pollutants, and odors.

See Land Use Categories and criteria on page 34, Future Land Use Plan page 23, and policies on page 38.

9. Provide community planning where it is needed in unincorporated places

The Future Land Use Plan does not designate detailed land uses for the unincorporated communities. This Plan recommends the county work with the unincorporated communities (Story, Big Horn, and possibly Arvada) to:

- Develop community plans to address the specific needs for water, wastewater, and other services before extensive development occurs.
- Address how future development, including some commercial services, should locate and be compatible with existing communities.

See policies in Chapter 10, Communities in Focus.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The Future Land Use Plan maps for the county and for the Sheridan Joint Planning Area provide a framework for future development and conservation in Sheridan County.

The maps and land use categories will help the communities in Sheridan County to remain distinctive, diverse places—by designating where different types of urban and town-level development and compatible activities can occur in communities and growth areas.

Outside of communities and growth areas, the Future Land Use Plan identifies locations where low density residential is appropriate and where agriculture/resource areas and important resource conservation areas will continue to be the predominant pattern.
The Future Land Use Plan map on page 23 is the countywide map that shows future land use categories for the whole county. The Sheridan Joint Planning Area Land Use map is on page 25.

**Future Land Use Plan Boundaries**

**Sheridan Urban Service Area**

The proposed Urban Service Area boundary (roughly based on the 201 sewer service boundary) is the area within which the City of Sheridan will provide municipal water and sewer service and within which lands are appropriate to develop as urban neighborhoods and commercial centers and business parks.

**Sheridan Joint Planning Area**

The Sheridan Joint Planning Area is the study boundary within which the city and county are jointly planning for future growth and conservation.

**Incorporated Community Growth Areas**

The Incorporated Community Growth Areas are proposed planning and growth areas for the communities of Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont.

**Unincorporated Community Planning Areas**

The Unincorporated Community Planning Areas are planning boundaries for future community planning efforts for Big Horn and Story.

**Future Land Use Plan Natural Resource Designations**

**100-Year Floodplain**

The 100-Year floodplain is mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is characterized as an area subject to a one percent probability of a flood occurring in any year.

**The Big Horn Foothills Resource Conservation Area**

The Big Horn Foothills Resource Conservation Area is proposed for greater conservation and protection due to scenic, natural resource, and wildlife values. The boundary illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan is generally based on the work conducted for the 1982 Plan. (See description in Chapter 4 and Figure 4: Resource Conservation map.)
Class 5 Groundwater Vulnerability Area

The Class 5 Groundwater Vulnerability Area (identified by the Wyoming Water Resources Center, University of Wyoming, and the Wyoming Geological Survey, 1988) is intended for greater management of potential groundwater contamination sources (including septic systems and stormwater runoff) and development density. (See description in Chapter 4 and Figure 4, Resource Conservation map.)

Clustering/Conservation Development Areas

The intent for the Clustering/Conservation Development Areas is to designate locations within the county near urban areas where property owners are eligible to cluster developments and conserve open space or resources and for a higher density bonus than in more remote locations of the county. The Clustering/Conservation Development Areas are shown on the Future Land Use Plan generally in several locations:

1. Within two miles or less of Dayton and Ranchester.
2. Surrounding the Sheridan Urban Service Area, within six miles of the city for parcels with access to paved roads and eight miles along Big Goose Creek.
3. Excluding large public lands parcels northwest of Sheridan.

Future Land Uses

The maps identify uses that are suitable for future development or conservation of private lands, as designated on the Future Land Use Plan map. Full descriptions of land use categories start on page 26.
Insert Future Land Use Plan (Figure 2) (fold out 11x17)
insert JPA plan (figure 3) (8.5 x 11)
LAND USE CATEGORIES

This section describes the land use categories illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan, including:

- Agriculture/Resource Area,
- County Residential Categories,
- Town and Urban Categories,
- Special Planning Area, and
- Other categories.

The intent of the plan is not to predetermine all specific land uses for individual parcels, but to provide a general framework for future development and neighborhoods and centers of commercial development and provide some flexibility for a mix of uses.

Commercial Centers are designated on the plan with symbols—not parcel-specific designations. Commercial center, will ideally develop with a mix of commercial and other compatible uses. Urban Residential areas will also develop with a mix of housing types—with more dense uses near commercial centers and community facilities.

Zoning amendments for land uses should be consistent with the categories and designations on the Future Land Use Plan.

AGRICULTURE/RESOURCE AREA

Agriculture/Resource

Uses:

This category primarily allows agriculture and ranching with some very low intensity residential uses to support agriculture. Resource extraction, recreation and wildlife-based activities may also occur.

Characteristics/Location:

The Agricultural/Resource category occurs throughout the county outside of communities and their growth areas.

Development Density:

The intent is for lands designated as Agriculture/Resource to remain agricultural with very low densities of development. 1 unit per 80 acres will be the base density with large lot development, but net development density (down to 1 unit per 40 acres) can occur if development is clustered, as shown in table XX below.
## Table 3-1: Agriculture/Resource Clustering Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>INSIDE Clustering/ Conservation Development Areas</th>
<th>OUTSIDE Clustering/ Conservation Development Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dimensions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dimensions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base density</td>
<td>1 unit per 80 acres</td>
<td>1 unit per 80 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net density (with cluster bonus)</td>
<td>1 unit per 40 acres</td>
<td>1 unit per 40 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum original parcel size for clustered subdivision</td>
<td>70 acres</td>
<td>105 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum common open space or conservation lot</td>
<td>70% (can include one buildable site up to 10 acres)</td>
<td>70% (can include one buildable site up to 10 acres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum lot size in clusters</td>
<td>5 acres if on septic</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of lots in clusters</td>
<td>8 lots</td>
<td>4 lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum distance between clusters</td>
<td>1,200 feet</td>
<td>2,600 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example of development parcels that are clustering to conserve agricultural land on 360-acres.**

For more information and examples of clustering, see Chapter 12, Conservation Areas and Clustering, page 92.
CHAPTER 3: LAND USE | FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

DESIGN FOR RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

If development occurs on properties outside cities and growth areas, it should:

- Minimize cut and fill for roads and building grading;
- Protect natural and geological features such as rock outcroppings and riparian forest habitat;
- Restore and use native and non-invasive plants;
- Complement existing and adjacent agriculture through the use of appropriate fencing, setbacks, and placement of structures;
- Design buildings that mimic the profiles of the natural landscapes, ideally at the toe of slopes and at edges of meadows, to allow for natural windbreaks and shelter;
- Provide minimal lighting that is downcast and shielded; and
- Limit buildings that would dominate ridgelines visible from public rights-of-way.

COUNTY RESIDENTIAL CATEGORIES

County Low Density Residential

Uses:

This category primarily allows low density, single family residential with some agricultural uses interspersed.

Characteristics/Location:

This category applies to areas designated as County Low Density Residential on the Future Land Use Plan that are generally zoned as “Rural Residential.” The intent is to provide some opportunities for this low density residential type to occur, without encouraging proliferation or spreading of residential into remote rural areas and areas with groundwater vulnerability.

Development Density:

Density and minimum lot size varies for County Low Density Residential, depending on location and availability of central water/wastewater treatment, groundwater vulnerability, and clustering, as shown in the tables 3-2 and 3-3 on the next page.

Example of clustered low density residential.

For more information and examples of clustering, see Chapter 12, Conservation Areas and Clustering, page 92.
Table 3-2: No Central Water/Wastewater Treatment—Conventional Lots; No Clustering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSIDE</th>
<th>OUTSIDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base density</td>
<td>1 unit per 5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum lot size</td>
<td>5 acre minimum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-3: With Central Water/Wastewater Treatment—Clustered Development Lots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSIDE</th>
<th>OUTSIDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base density</td>
<td>1 unit per 5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net density (with cluster bonus)</td>
<td>1 unit per 3.5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum parcel size to be eligible for clustering</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum common open space or conservation lot</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum lot size in clusters</td>
<td>No minimum with central water/wastewater treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of lots in clusters</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum distance between clusters</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>Must include important resources, including riparian areas, ridgelines, irrigated agriculture, as conservation area or open space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Uses:
A Planned Unit Development (PUD) is a subdivision with a mix of uses and activities, including a mix of residential types, some neighborhood commercial, community uses, and open space. Powder Horn is an example of a master planned PUD with varying lot sizes and types of homes.

Characteristics/Location:
Planned unit developments (PUDs) are intended to provide a greater degree of flexibility for a mix of uses and residential types than underlying zoning but also provide more guidance to the development community to provide cohesive, master planned subdivisions or communities that contain common open space and community facilities and amenities. The county will consider new PUDs in the Clustering/Conservation Development Areas. Additional PUDs in rural and remote areas would be out of step with county policies that suggest distinguishing between urban, county low density residential, and rural areas and providing predictability in the development and provision of services. So the county will not favor PUDs in remote areas.

The county will provide criteria to ensure that large scale developments cover their associated costs for services and provide adequate amenities and resource protection. The county will also make the PUD review process more predictable and streamlined for developers.

Development Density:
Density will vary within a PUD.
**Town and Urban Categories**

**Community Core**

*Uses:*
This category allows a mix of small scale commercial, offices, and residential in keeping with traditional community core areas of Big Horn, Story, and Arvada.

*Characteristics/Location:*
This category is designated in Big Horn, Story, and Arvada cores.  
(Note: These areas will be refined through community plans.)

*Development Density:*
Density will vary, depending on community context.

**Urban Residential**

*Uses:*
This category primarily allows residential in neighborhoods near commercial services, transportation, parks, and civic facilities and services.

*Characteristics/Location:*
This category is shown in areas near Sheridan, the incorporated communities of Dayton and Ranchester, and around Big Horn.  The intent is for a town or city to annex properties if eligible (excepting Big Horn) that are designated as Urban Residential prior to development and that such future development be served by municipal water and sewer.  The county will only approve urban densities and urban residential development where it is designated on the Future Land Use Plan.

*Development Density:*
Density will vary, depending on underlying zoning and location.

A. Generally density will be 1 unit per 2 acres and higher intensity.
B. With central water/sewer adjacent to Big Horn town site, minimum lot size: 3,000 square feet.
DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR LIVABLE URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

New urban neighborhoods should be designed according to the following principles:

- Contain grid-like connected streets and sidewalks to allow people to walk.
- Have blocks no longer than 600 feet and provide locations for pedestrians to pass-through between streets.
- Include a mix of lot sizes and housing types and uses.
- Contain a focal point that provides neighborhood commercial or civic services, or incorporate a public gathering space (e.g., such as a park, open space, or recreation amenity.)
- Include a variety of buildings and architectural styles.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR COMMERCIAL CENTERS AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Commercial development and mixed-use development should be designed according to the following principles:

- Incorporate a mix of land uses that is either “vertical” (where components are mixed within a single building or block such as homes on top floors with retail on bottom), or “horizontal” (where different activities on the site are in separate buildings, but linked through a cohesive design).
- Provide internal connected streets and sidewalks that allow safe and direct access between buildings, and accommodate pedestrians in a safe manner.
- Locate and orient higher density residential development around a central public space, such as a plaza or park, and near retail and commercial services.
**Commercial (and Commercial Centers)**

**Uses:**
This category primarily allows services and retail such as professional offices, retail and commercial businesses, grocery stores, auto sales (Note: Generally uses allowed in C-1 and C-2 zone districts.)

**Characteristics/Location:**
Community-oriented commercial is larger and more auto-oriented—serving several neighborhoods, and should occur only within communities or their growth areas with water and sewer, not in isolated locations in the county. Future commercial development should occur in centers, as shown on the Future Land Use Plan, not in a linear pattern along roadways. The development should be accessible to a highway, arterial, or collector road.

Commercial centers should include a mix of uses and activities and be designed for pedestrians with sidewalks, landscaping and signs and access control. Commercial developments should be accessible to pedestrians from nearby neighborhoods.

**Development Density/Intensity:**
Density and size will vary.

**Neighborhood Commercial**

**Uses:**
This category primarily allows services and retail, such as professional offices, retail and commercial businesses, small grocery stores, convenience stores. (Note: generally the uses allowed in C-2 and C-3 zone districts.)

**Characteristics/Location:**
The Future Land Use Plan designates Neighborhood Commercial only in a few locations where it is currently zoned. The intent is for future commercial development in the county to occur as part of a community core or future planned unit development (PUD) with centralized water and sewer, not in isolated locations. It should be accessible to an arterial or collector road or county road.

**Development Density/Intensity:**
Density and size will vary, depending on location and underlying zone district.
LOCATIONAL CRITERIA FOR FUTURE HEAVY INDUSTRIAL USES

The following criteria address where additional heavy industry locations can occur and how such future industry should be sited. It should be:

a) Away from developed communities and residential areas, such that noise, vibrations, and visual impacts will not disturb existing or future uses.

b) With access to major transportation facilities and utilities—railroad or interstate roads and necessary water. Industry will pay costs associated with improving county roads.

c) Must consider topography, groundwater vulnerability, and other environmental factors (i.e., Class 5 Groundwater Vulnerable Areas and riparian corridors).

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR HEAVY INDUSTRY

New industry will mitigate its impacts on adjacent lands. Performance standards will address noise, odors, water and air quality, light, vibration, and outdoor storage.

Light Industry/Business Park

Uses:

This category encompasses warehousing, distribution, and offices, and consists of employment activities such as offices and low impact manufacturing.

Characteristics/Location:

Light industry will occur in and near communities, because it has lower impacts than heavy industry, and will provide greater attention to detail in high visibility locations (such as along interstates and major roads). It will screen service areas and outdoor storage to the extent possible and will provide attractive fencing, low level lighting, and pedestrian access.

Development Density:

Density will vary depending on the site and underlying zoning.

Heavy Industry

Uses:

This category allows manufacturing and more intensive processing and manufacturing facilities with more outdoor storage with less restrictive standards on storage.

Characteristics/Location:

The Future Land Use Plan designates heavy industry in the following places:

- Within the Joint Planning Area of Sheridan on the east edge of the Urban Service Area where it is not visible from 1-90.
- Near Acme (to be balanced with possible recreational objectives for the area and proximity to the Tongue River).
- Other locations may be feasible, if they meet the criteria to the left.

Development Density:

Density will vary, depending on use and location.
**Special Planning Area**

The Special Planning Area designation on the Future Land Use Plan indicates an area that is under consideration for annexation by the city (application pending). It is recognized as an area where future development may occur but where land use designations will not be specified until the ongoing annexation review process has concluded. A Special Planning Area designation requires development proposals within the area to be reviewed in a comprehensive manner, based on a set of policies and criteria to address planning issues specific to the area, such as: land use compatibility, city gateway character and design, circulation and access, parks and open space, and facilities and services.

**Other Categories**

**Airport**

Land uses on the Airport property will be governed by the Airport Master Plan and ordinances. The county will ensure that future development around the airport is compatible, through adherence to the existing resolutions for the airport influence area, height limitation, and airport noise.

**Public Lands**

The Future Land Use Plan shows lands owned and managed by public agencies, including local, county, state, and federal. Activities on these lands will vary—for recreation, grazing, mineral extraction, and other activities.

**Land Use Goals and Policies**

**Goal 1.1:** The county will maintain a compact development pattern within or near communities.

**Policy 1.1 a: Locate urban growth in defined areas**

Urban growth will be located in defined areas around incorporated towns and cities and unincorporated places, based on existing community expansion patterns and the ability of municipal systems to accommodate future development.

**Policy 1.1 b: Establish an Urban Service Area around the City of Sheridan**

The defined Urban Service Area around the City of Sheridan will be used to determine appropriate areas for various types of urban development and to plan for needed infrastructure and services. (See also Theme 5; Provide services and facilities in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.)
Policy 1.1 c: Establish cooperative planning/growth areas with the incorporated communities of Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont

The county will work with the incorporated communities of Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont to further refine and coordinate land use patterns in unincorporated areas around the communities’ incorporated boundaries.

Policy 1.1 d: Coordinate future land use patterns with utility service areas

Development patterns in defined growth areas as provided for in policies 1.1 a-c will be complimented and encouraged by the location of existing and planned services and facilities, especially central water and sewer.

Goal 1.2: The county will maintain a clear distinction between rural, agricultural areas, and communities to conserve resources, maintain unique community identities, and provide services efficiently.

Policy 1.2 a: Locate rural development in designated County Low Density Residential areas

Land use patterns in outlying areas, outside of communities and their designated growth areas, will remain primarily rural and agricultural in character. The county will consider the cost of services, roads, utilities, sheriff/fire protection, and schools when considering proposals for the expansion of rural residential uses. The county will also consider potential impacts on groundwater quality.

Policy 1.2 b: Allow clustered subdivisions

The county will allow and encourage clustered development patterns as a means of encouraging best practices in site development, providing options to landowners, and conserving open space, natural resources, and agricultural resources in rural areas. The county will encourage clustered subdivisions in the Clustering/Conservation Development Area and Low Density Residential areas through incentives. (See Chapter 12 for more information).

Policy 1.2 c: Use rural design guidelines for new development in Agricultural/Resource area

The county and landowners will use guidelines for rural design to limit impacts of development on agricultural lands, natural and scenic resources, and increase efficiency of roads and utilities on sites.

Policy 1.2 d: Support and encourage land conservation efforts

The county will continue to support and work with non-governmental organizations that are involved in conservation of open space and agricultural resources.
**Policy 1.2 e: Focus planned unit developments (PUDs) near urban areas**
The county will allow planned unit developments inside the defined Clustering/Conservation Development Areas where they are close to towns and the City of Sheridan. The county will not allow PUDs in remote locations.

**Goal 1.3: The county will provide for a diverse mix of housing, primarily in urban neighborhoods and communities with adequate services.**

**Policy 1.3 a: Support a range of housing types to meet the region’s housing needs**
The county will work with the private sector to promote the construction of a wide range of housing types, sizes, and costs within communities, growth areas, neighborhoods, and downtown areas. Housing for the region’s workforce and groups not easily served by the market is essential to the strength of the region to allow multiple generations to live, work, and settle. Workforce housing should be dispersed throughout the county’s communities, not concentrated in one community, one area, or in remote, rural areas.

**Policy 1.3 b: Locate urban residential development where designated**
New urban residential development will occur only in communities and their growth areas as designated on the Future Land Use Plan. The county will avoid dispersed urban housing patterns and subdivisions that disrupt the county’s natural and scenic resources and that are inefficient to serve. A variety of housing types in urban areas, ranging from apartments to single family homes, will help meet the region’s housing needs and provide for healthy neighborhoods.

**Policy 1.3 c: Locate rural residential development where designated**
New rural residential (County Low Density Residential) will occur where it is designated on the Future Land Use Plan only.

**Goal 1.4: The county’s commercial uses will be located in communities and in designated centers.**

**Policy 1.4 a: Locate commercial development in communities**
New commercial development will occur in communities and their growth areas. Commercial development located outside of communities will be limited to small-scale agricultural, home occupations, resource extraction, and recreational activities.

**Policy 1.4 b: Locate commercial development in centers**
Future commercial development will occur in planned commercial centers, as identified on the Future Land Use Plan, or in small centers to serve neighborhoods. Future commercial development in extended linear strips along roadways will not occur.
Goal 1.5: Future industry will be built in suitable locations where it will not negatively impact communities.

**Policy 1.5 a: Locate industry in suitable, concentrated areas.**
To provide opportunities for jobs and economic growth, light and heavy industry will be located in areas identified on the Future Land Use Plan that have suitable access, utilities, and geology, or in other areas that meet locational criteria on page 34 of this chapter. Heavy industrial uses will be located only in areas where they will not have negative impacts on community gateways, image of major corridors, sustainable economic development, community health, adjacent residential areas, and air and water quality.

**Policy 1.5 b: Mitigate impacts resulting from industrial uses**
The county will work closely with appropriate regulatory agencies to ensure that new heavy industry development and resource extraction will address its impacts, such as noise, lights, traffic, vibration, and impacts to air and water.

Goal 1.6: The county will retain open space as part of a balanced land use pattern.

**Policy 1.6 a: Plan for open space and natural and scenic resources**
Open space, natural and scenic resources, and agricultural and other resource lands are an important part of the county’s overall land use balance. The county will continue to coordinate with other agencies and organizations to plan and conserve resources. (See also Chapter 4, Natural and Scenic Resources.)

**Policy 1.6 b: Establish open space that conserves natural resources**
New residential subdivisions will provide open space that conserves sensitive and unique natural features of the land. This Plan promotes cluster development patterns as an option allowing landowners to keep open space intact. (See also Policy 1.2 b.)

Goal 1.7: The county will respect individual rights, balanced with community health, safety, and welfare.

**Policy 1.7 a: Balance property rights with community objectives**
Private property rights will be balanced with community planning, public health, and safety needs within the accepted confines of national, state, and local laws.

**Policy 1.7 b: Avoid unconstitutional takings of property**
County land use actions, decisions, and regulations will be administered in a manner that does not cause an unconstitutional physical taking of private property, and does not effectively eliminate all economic value of private property.