

TOWN OF THERMOPOLIS, WYOMING

MASTER PLAN



OCTOBER 2010

(Insert Planning Commission Resolution here)

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Thermopolis Town Council

William H. Malloy, Mayor

Toni Casciato, Al Braaten, Dick Hall, Tom Linnan

Thermopolis Planning Commission

John Dorman, Chairman, Ann Hardesty, Ellen Roden, Dave Voorhees, Kathy Wallingford

Thermopolis Master Plan Committee Members

Thermopolis Planning Commission, Fred Crosby, William H. Malloy, James Michel, Ron Vanderpool

Consulting Planners

Ken Markert, AICP & Anne Cossitt

Funding Assistance from

The Wyoming Business Council

The Town with the Classic Name

A rendezvous Fate cannot miss
Is the place where steam and hiss
Hot Springs, where lambent sunbeams kiss
The wonder town, Thermopolis

The Nature and the man's artifice
Meet Infantile Paralysis
Proclaim "Sic Semper Tyrannis"
Defeat it at Thermopolis

In water boiled from Earth's abyss
And run to pool and edifice
To love each pore and interstice
There's healing at Thermopolis

Oh, when these scenes of avarice
Pall, and I'm senile, shorn of bliss
Ill, forlorn, ship me out of this
And mark my tag "Thermopolis".

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

❖ PREFACE ❖

PURPOSE OF PLANNING AND THE MASTER PLAN

This Master Plan has been prepared with several purposes in mind. The plan will serve as:

- ◆ A general blue-print for community development. The plan gives direction to public agencies and private interest about how the town should develop. The plan provides guidance on the location and character of future development. The plan contains goals and strategies as well as specific recommendations regarding the features of future development. All community development proposals should be evaluated with respect to the Master Plan.
 - ◆ A guide for Town decision making on development issues. On a regular basis, the town officials and boards make decisions that affect the growth and development of the town. These include decisions on zoning, infrastructure, subdivisions, and other development-related matters. The Master Plan is intended as a general guide to help make such decisions in the best interest of Thermopolis.
 - ◆ A foundation for land use regulations. The municipal zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, and other land use regulations need to be focused on specific purposes. The Master Plan sets out those purposes and shows what the land use regulations are supposed to achieve. The result is improved land use regulations that more closely match the needs of the community.
 - ◆ A tool for infrastructure planning. Infrastructure improvements, including new streets and extensions of water and sewer lines, must be based on expected need for such improvements. The Master Plan defines the location, intensity, and types of future development. With this information, infrastructure can be provided or improved in a more timely and cost-efficient manner.
- ◆ A policy for annexation. By addressing the probable expansion of the municipality, the Master Plan specifies how and where the town should expand. Unplanned annexation can be avoided and a more orderly and efficient development can be established by adhering to the Master Plan's recommendations on annexation.
 - ◆ A means for involving citizens in the future of their community. The planning process includes several opportunities for a large cross-section of the community to be involved in determining the future of the town. The Master Plan serves as a record of community preferences as expressed through the planning process.
 - ◆ A way of promoting the quality of life unique to Thermopolis. A basic purpose of this Master Plan is to help Thermopolis better manage inevitable changes in the community. In small towns across the nation, change can be perceived as threatening. In Thermopolis, the quality of life is widely seen as an asset worth protecting. Change is inevitable, but how a community manages that change makes a big difference in the quality of life. The Master Plan provides recommendations on how to maintain and improve the quality of life in Thermopolis.

CENTRAL THEME OF THE THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

There is one main theme throughout the plan. Rather than continue the current trends of slow but persistent population and economic decline, Thermopolis can have a different future. This plan recommends that Thermopolis revise its approach to community development to make the town more walkable, livable, and attractive.

Protecting and improving the quality of the living environment is one of the most important building blocks in community economic development. The quality of life is what makes a community worth living in. Along with infrastructure and workforce development, a commu-

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

nity's quality of life is one of the strongest determinants of economic development success. It is also the area that Thermopolis need to most improve on to grow and prosper in the future.

The Master Plan strives to make this happen by:

- ◆ Improving the ability of the town to increase its population base and economic vitality;
- ◆ Capitalizing on Thermopolis's unique history and resources that make the town a center for health and recreation; and
- ◆ Strengthening the core of town including the downtown and existing residential neighborhoods.

In this way, the Master Plan is designed for growing the town by promoting quality of life through more carefully thought-out development patterns.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MASTER PLAN

The master plan is organized in five main parts:

1. **Plan Background:** This provides the general context for the plan, including summaries of town geography, town history, past town and county planning, the process used to produce this Master Plan, and state planning statutes.
2. **Community Issues Identification:** This is a review of all the efforts that have been undertaken in the past to identify the planning and community development issues that are important to Thermopolis. This part also provides detailed results of the Town's 2010 Planning Survey, which is an important foundation of this Master Plan.
3. **Future Land Use Plan:** This part introduces the Town's vision statement and planning goals, which describe what Thermopolis should strive to be in the future. Supplementing these goals are detailed "planning strategies" that outline specific policies to

adopt and actions to undertake to accomplish the goals. In addition, a future land use plan provides a geographic perspective of the desired future of the town. This part concludes with a priority action plan that lists specific actions the Town should take to carry out the plan.

4. **Thermopolis Profile:** This part is an inventory of existing conditions and trends in Thermopolis necessary to plan preparation. A comprehensive range community development topics are reviewed including the following:

- ◆ Economy
- ◆ Population Trends
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Public Services
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Parks and Open Space
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ Regulatory Framework
- ◆ Land Use and Development Trends

5. **Appendices:** This part consists of several sections that are referenced in the Master Plan:

- ◆ Maps including a sample of maps that were prepared as part of the planning process and the future land use maps.
- ◆ A graphic entitled "Town Maker's Guide" from the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute which illustrates how Thermopolis can improve the physical form of development in the future.
- ◆ A review of the current Thermopolis zoning and subdivision regulations.
- ◆ Sources used for obtaining data used in the plan.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1 -- PLAN BACKGROUND	1
PART 2 -- COMMUNITY ISSUES IDENTIFICATION	5
PART 3 -- PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE	12
PART 4 -- THERMOPOLIS PROFILE	31
PART 5 -- APPENDICIES	68

❖ **PART 1: PLAN BACKGROUND** ❖

Part 1 provides the general context for the plan, including summaries of town geography, town history, past town and county planning, the process used to produce this Master Plan, and state planning statutes.

Geographic Setting 2
Settlement History 2
1978 Thermopolis Plan 2
2002 Hot Springs County Plan 3
Planning Process 4
State Planning Statutes 4
Time Horizon 4

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

❖ PART 1 — PLAN BACKGROUND ❖

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

The Town of Thermopolis encompasses 1,595 acres or about 2.5 square miles at an elevation of 4,135 feet above sea level. The town straddles the Big Horn River and the renown mineral hot springs. Thermopolis is the county seat of Hot Springs County, Wyoming. Thermopolis is centrally located in Wyoming but is also somewhat remote from larger cities.

Riverton, WY	55 miles
Cody, WY	84 miles
Casper, WY	131 miles
Billings, MT	193 miles
Cheyenne, WY	308 miles
Salt Lake City, UT	368 miles
Denver, CO	408 miles

SETTLEMENT HISTORY

The original town of Thermopolis was located several miles north of the town’s present location. People were attracted to the area because of the mineral hot springs. Without modern cures for many diseases, the hot springs were seen as the remedy for many serious ailments.

The hot springs were located on the Indian Reservation and nearby lands were off-limits for white settlement. That changed with the Treaty of 1896, in which the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arap-

aho tribes ceded 100 square miles around the hot springs. In the next few years following the Treaty, the town was relocated to its present site, lots were platted, the state park was established, and the town was incorporated. By 1920, Thermopolis had a population of over 2,000 persons.

The majority of the present town was platted between 1897 and

1880s - 90s	First non-native settlement of area
1894	Thermopolis named
1896	Treaty of 1896
1897	Thermopolis relocated and new town site platted
1899	Thermopolis incorporates
1901	Steel bridge over Big Horn River
1902	First electric power and first telephone service furnished to town
1905	First automobile in Thermopolis
1909	First Town waterworks constructed
1910	Railroad completed to Thermopolis
1913	Hot Springs County formed
1922	Natural gas service comes to Thermopolis
1962	Town garbage collection started
1960s	Street paving largely finished

Source: Milek, 1975 and 1986

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

1909. East Thermopolis was platted in 1918. The town continued to grow, reaching a population of 3,935 in 1960, about 1,000 more than the current population.

1978 THERMOPOLIS PLAN

In 1975, the Wyoming Legislature required all communities to develop master plans. Hot Springs County, Thermopolis, East Thermopolis, and Kirby jointly produced a plan in 1978. The Thermopolis section of the plan consists of ten pages of text and six maps.

The Thermopolis plan includes overall goals and policies for community development, many of which are still valid such as:

- ◆ The downtown area should be the major retail area of Thermopolis.
- ◆ Community facilities, such as the town hall, library, and schools, should be centrally located.
- ◆ Residential neighborhoods within walking distance of community facilities and shopping areas should be preserved.
- ◆ The choice of housing in Thermopolis should be expanded, both in terms of type and price.
- ◆ Strip development, for both commercial and residential land uses, should be discouraged.
- ◆ New developments should be within areas adjacent to the Town of Thermopolis in areas where public water and sewer can be economically provided.

The 1978 Thermopolis Plan states that the Town will implement its goals and policies through several specific steps:

- ◆ Adopting a new zoning ordinance.
- ◆ Revising of the Town's subdivision regulations.

- ◆ Creating a capital improvements program to determine what the town needs in terms of streets, water, sewer, municipal buildings, etc.
- ◆ Enforcement of the Uniform Building Code and the Town's mobile home ordinance.

The Hot Springs County part of the plan states that the County and Towns of Thermopolis should cooperate in developing a program such as a joint planning commission, which would promote orderly development of the fringe areas of the towns.

In summary, the 1978 Plan contained many sound ideas. However, the plan lacked detail, such as a future land use map, and is now no longer serving its stated purpose of guiding future development.

2002 HOT SPRINGS COUNTY PLAN

The Hot Springs County Land Use Plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in 2002. The plan is actually a combined development regulation and policy plan. The policy plan (Chapter 5) contains policies that are intended to guide future land use and development and serve as a comprehensive plan. There are two types of policies in the plan—absolute policies that must be followed and relative policies that make up a point system. Development project must conform with all absolute policies and with enough relative policies to earn enough points for approval.

There are few absolute policies that might significantly influence the form or location of new development, such as the one that requires a minimum of five acres for house lots using a well and septic system and another that discourages commercial development from creating nuisances. However, most of the policies are relative and thus non-binding. Such non-binding policies include:

- ◆ Discouraging “concentrated development” outside areas near the towns.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

- ◆ Discouraging strip development along U.S. 20 and Wyoming Highway 120.
- ◆ Conversion of Class II, II, and IV irrigated agricultural land to other uses is discouraged.
- ◆ Development that would limit the viability of neighboring farms or ranches is discouraged.

PLANNING PROCESS

The current master plan process was initiated in 2009 when the Town of Thermopolis applied for and was awarded a Wyoming Business Council planning grant. Later in 2009, the Town hired city planning consultants to prepare the new master plan. In January 2010, the consultants began holding monthly planning meetings with the Town of Thermopolis Planning Commission to prepare the plan.

In the course of preparing the plan, several steps were taken to involve the general public:

- ◆ The Citizen Survey which gathered the views of over 330 town citizens on planning and community issues.
- ◆ Midway through the process, the Planning Commission hosted a public open house meeting where a preliminary version of the master plan was presented for public review and comment.
- ◆ At the conclusion of the process and in accordance with state law, the Planning Commission conducted a formal public hearing on the master plan.

STATE PLANNING STATUTES

The state laws of Wyoming specify how a town prepares the plan, what the plan should contain, how the town adopts its plan, and the effect of the plan once it is adopted. These laws are City and Town

Planning statute (Wyoming Statutes § 15-1-501 to 512) and the Land Use Planning Act (Wyoming Statutes § 9-8-101 to 302).

This Master Plan for the Town of Thermopolis conforms with those laws and is intended as a policy statement and roadmap for the future development of the town. This plan is not regulatory and does not have the force and effect of law. However, the Town's zoning must be consistent with the plan.

TIME HORIZON

This Master Plan is intended as a framework for growth and development of the town over the next 20 years. This means that the goals, strategies, and future land use recommendations of the plan are intended to direct and accommodate the foreseeable growth and development that Thermopolis is likely to experience between now and 2030.

While it is expected that the plan will remain valid for the next 20 years, periodic review of the plan will be necessary. Conditions will change and the plan should be reviewed and updated every five years.

❖ **PART 2: COMMUNITY ISSUES IDENTIFICATION** ❖

This Part is a review of all the efforts that have been undertaken in the past to identify the planning and community development issues that are important to Thermopolis. This part also provides detailed results of the Town’s 2010 Planning Survey, which is an important foundation of this Master Plan.

Introduction 6
2010 Master Plan Survey 6
Numerical Results Charts 8

❖ PART 2 — COMMUNITY ISSUES IDENTIFICATION ❖

INTRODUCTION

This section is about the issues, concerns, and priorities of Thermopolis residents, which are the foundation of the master plan. In recent year, several steps have been taken to understand the views of Thermopolis resident including:

- ◆ 2010 Master Plan Survey — This survey was conducted as part of the master plan process and the results are presented later in this section.
- ◆ 2010 Master Plan Open House Meeting — This meeting was hosted by the Town Planning Commission as part of the master plan process. The meeting was attended by about 25 interested citizens. The input they gave was considered in the finalizing of the plan.
- ◆ 2010 Town Officials Survey — This was a survey of Thermopolis Town Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Appeals Board, and select staff. It focused on planning issues and was conducted at the beginning of the master plan process
- ◆ 2008 Community Assessment — The Wyoming Rural Development Council conducted this wide ranging process to listen to community concerns and provide observations and suggestions from volunteer community development professionals. This was a follow-up to the 2003 assessment.
- ◆ 2007 Community Planning Survey — The Town Planning Commission conducted this survey on planning issues.
- ◆ 2003 Community Assessment — This was the first Thermopolis assessment conducted by the Wyoming Rural Development Council.

All of these surveys and assessments were reviewed in the preparation of this master plan. Those conducted prior to 2010 provided general direction to the 2010 master plan process. The steps conducted in 2010 were all part of the master plan process. Of those, the Master Plan Survey is the most important and has the greatest impact on the plan—it is discussed in detail below.

2010 MASTER PLAN SURVEY

The 2010 Master Plan Survey was intended to gather opinions of Thermopolis citizens about community development concerns in Thermopolis and about specific issues in the town. The purpose of the survey was to get a sense of what the town's people think about Thermopolis's infrastructure and services. In addition, the survey was intended to understand opinions towards growth, economic development, and needs in the community. The results of the survey were used to develop goals and policies for the master plan.

Survey Methods

The survey was a sample survey. The names of 562 registered voters was drawn from the voter rolls for the Town of Thermopolis—this was about 40% of all voters. The survey questionnaire was sent to the sample voters on Monday May 22, 2010. In less than three weeks, 339 surveys were completed and returned. This equates to a response rate of 60.3%.

The survey was designed to achieve an accuracy level of 5%. This means that the results from the sample of voters have a 95% probability of being within 5% of the answers that all voters would give. For example, if 65% of the sample voters said "yes" as the answer to a question then it is highly probable (95% chance) that between 60% and 70% (+ or - 5%) of all voters would have also answered "yes".

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

The survey questionnaire contained three major questions plus room for written comments. 132 survey respondents added written comments which were included in a separate report of survey results. The results of the three main questions are presented and interpreted below.

Question #1

Most people (more than 50%) felt that emergency services, condition of town parks, hospital services, law enforcement, and public schools are good (the highest rating choice).

A plurality of people (the largest group but not a majority) rated the water supply and quality and activities for children as good.

Most people felt that the retail items available in town, and the condition of housing, streets, and sidewalks were fair, the middle rating choice.

For some items, the most popular rating (although less than 50%) was fair. These include: appearance of the town, attitude toward new business, Thermopolis airport, communication between citizens and town government, adult education and job training, and economic development efforts.

No item was listed by the majority of people as poor (the lowest rating choice). However, a plurality (largest group but not a majority) felt the following were poor: an adequate number of retail stores, public transportation, and availability of affordable housing.

Some items had relatively high proportions of no response. The survey asked people to not respond if they were unsure or didn't know the answer. Drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, Thermopolis airport, public transportation including bus service between communities, and adult education and job training all had high rates of no response. This may be because not so many people uses these services and thus not many are familiar with them.

Question #2

Most people (50% or more) felt that Thermopolis needs more of the following items:

- ◆ Employment opportunities
- ◆ Clean up of junk and weeds
- ◆ Retail development
- ◆ Industrial development
- ◆ Population growth
- ◆ Promotion of Thermopolis tourism
- ◆ Housing designed for senior citizens
- ◆ Promotion of the local health care industry
- ◆ Improved water and sewer systems
- ◆ Newer housing

Results for more tourism facilities (convention center, visitor center, etc.) were mixed with a nearly equal split between people choosing needed and not needed.

Annexation of more land into the town was deemed not needed by a plurality but don't know was the next most popular choice.

Most people felt more traffic control devices (stop signs, traffic lights, etc.) are not needed.

Question #3

Most people (50% or more) agreed with the following positions:

- ◆ Maintaining and enhancing the attraction of the State Park is important to the future of Thermopolis.
- ◆ Thermopolis's police force adequate for our needs.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

- ◆ Sidewalks should be installed around most blocks in town.
- ◆ Thermopolis's long term goal should be to encourage growth.
- ◆ The Town should make sure that new subdivisions do not worsen traffic conditions.
- ◆ The downtown should remain the town's main business district.
- ◆ The golf course is beneficial to the Thermopolis economy.
- ◆ The old refinery site should be reused for new development.
- ◆ Subdivision development would be more beneficial in town than in rural parts of the county.

Results were mixed, with roughly equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing and a relatively high rate with no opinion on the statement, "The town government is responding adequately to the challenges of growth and development."

Most people disagreed with the statements, "Traffic congestion is a problem in Thermopolis" and "Thermopolis needs to control growth to help maintain a 'small town atmosphere'."

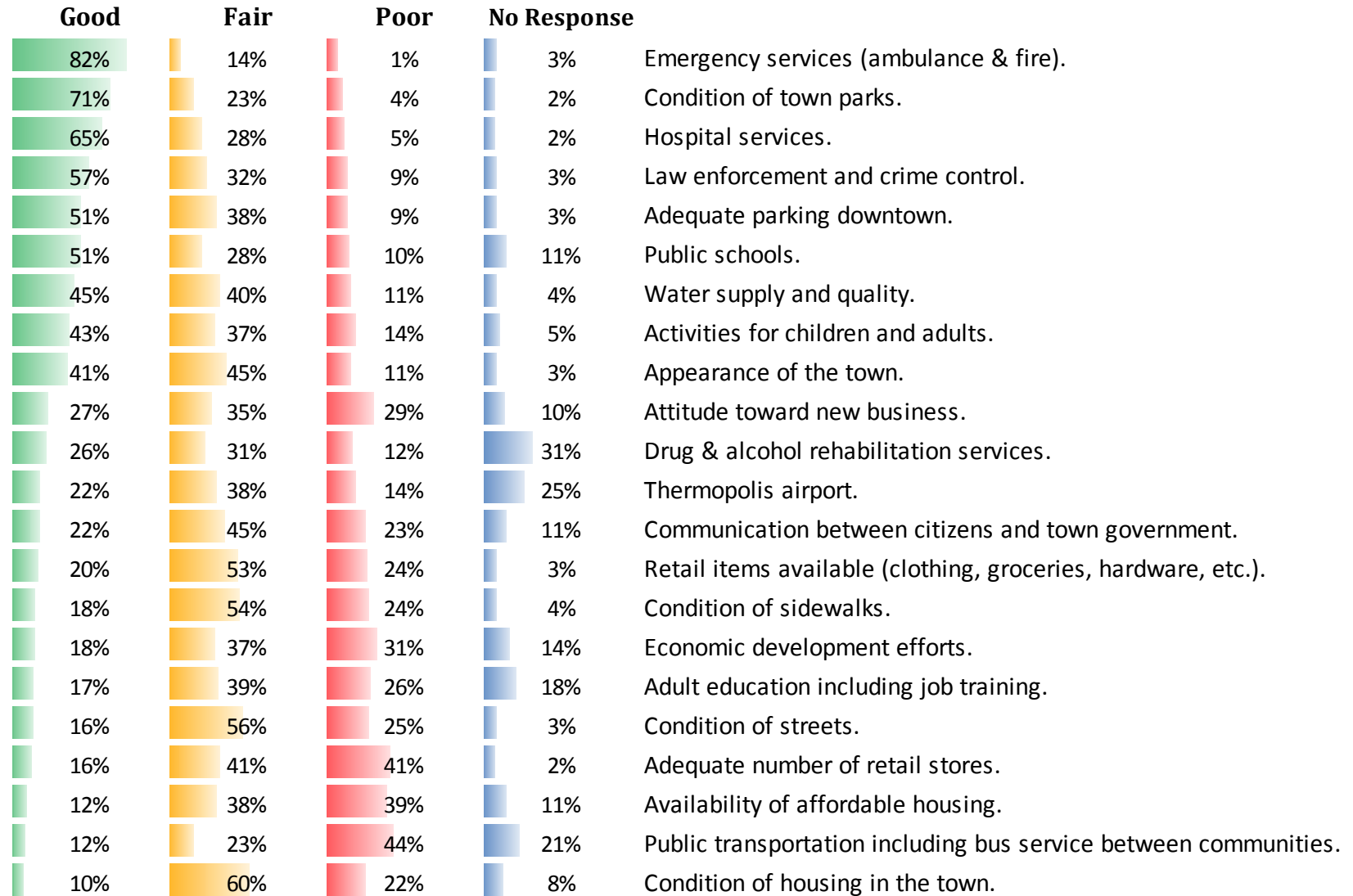
NUMERICAL RESULTS CHARTS

The complete results to questions 1, 2, and 3 are presented in graphical form on the next three pages. The results are presented as percentages of the 339 surveys received.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

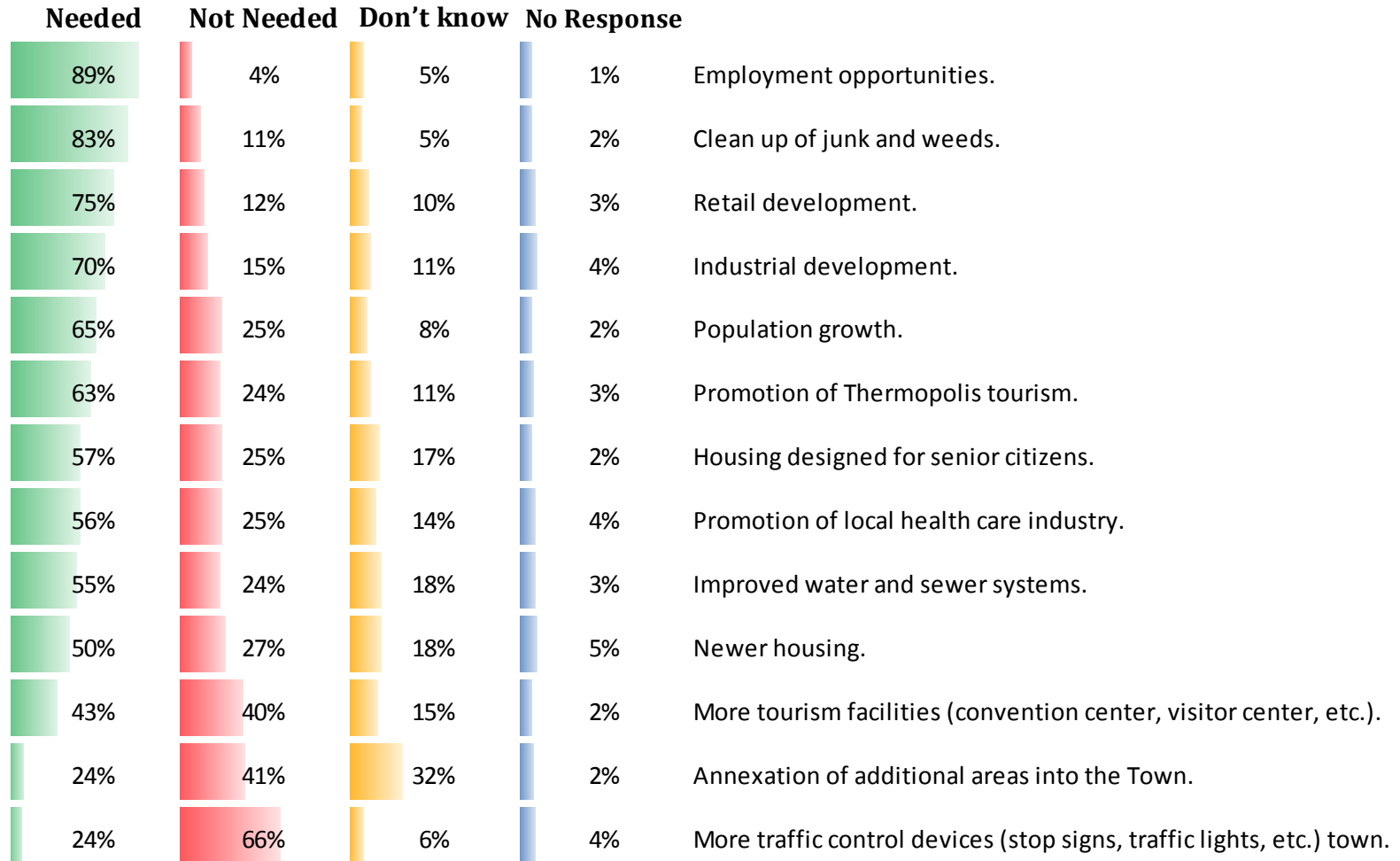
Survey Results—Question #1

How do you rate Thermopolis on the following items?



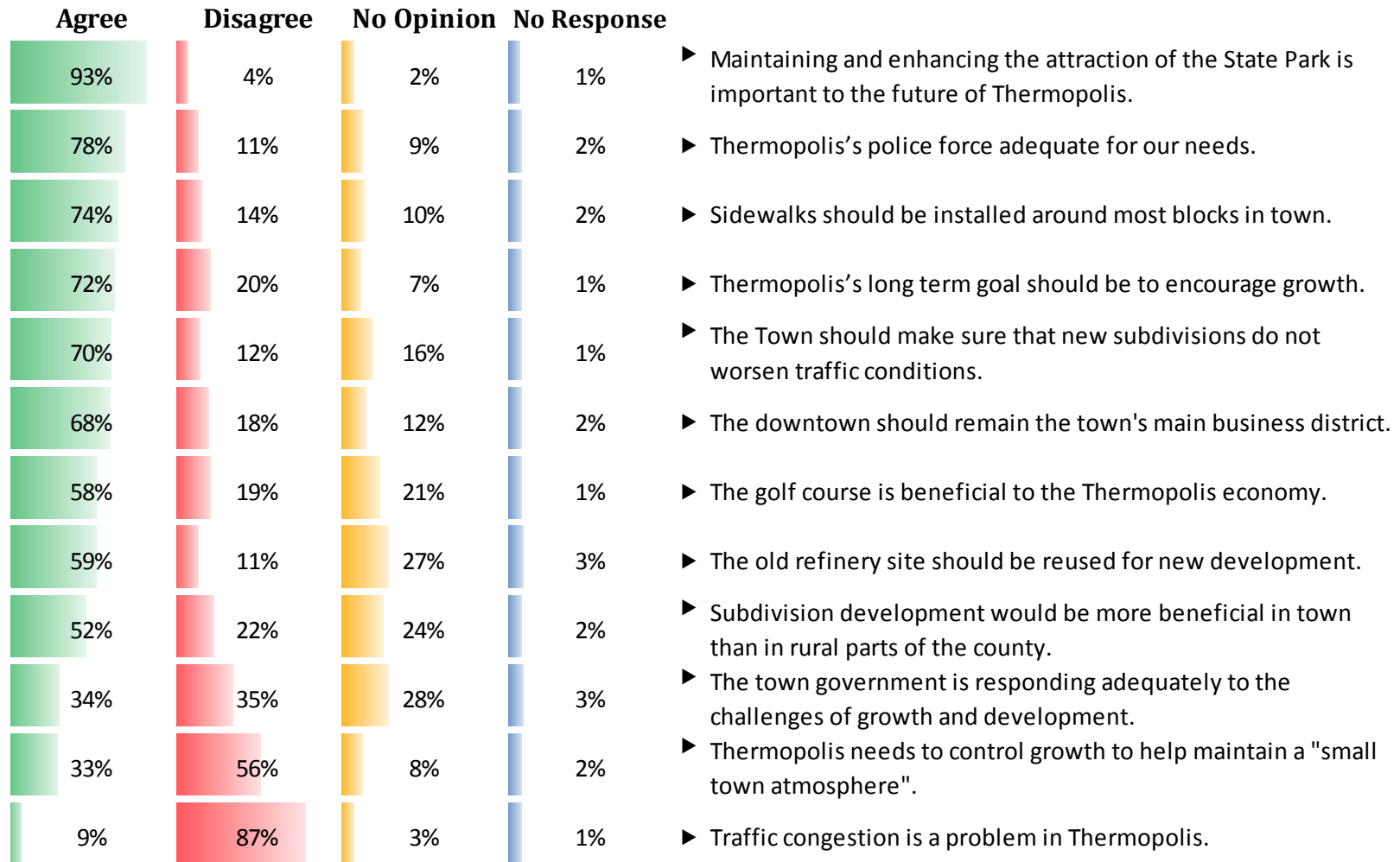
Survey Results—Question #2

In your opinion, does Thermopolis need or not need more of the following?



Survey Results—Question #3

Regarding the following statements about Thermopolis, do you agree, disagree or have no opinion?



❖ **PART 3: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE** ❖

This Part introduces the Town’s vision statement and planning goals, which describe what Thermopolis should strive to be in the future. Supplementing these goals are detailed “planning strategies” that outline specific policies to adopt and actions to undertake to accomplish the goals. In addition, a future land use plan provides a geographic perspective of the desired future of the town. This part concludes with a priority action plan that lists specific actions the Town should take to carry out the plan.

Vision Statement and Primary Goals 13
Planning Strategies 15
Future Land Use Plan 23
Priority Action Plan 28

❖ SECTION 3.1 — VISION STATEMENT AND PRIMARY GOALS ❖

The vision statement and primary goals of the Town Master Plan are statements of what the plan intends to achieve. These statements of purpose are critical in preparing a plan that meets the particular needs of the community. The vision statement and goals of the plan provide citizens with a basis for understanding the plan. The best community plans are those that make their vision and goals explicit and finalize them after thorough public review and discussion.

In Thermopolis, the vision statement and primary goals were prepared following two steps that were undertaken to understand and summarize the values, needs, and priorities of Thermopolis and its citizens. The first step was to ask each member of the Master Plan Committee and other town officials to complete a questionnaire concerning assets, needs, issues and priorities in Thermopolis. The second step was to conduct the Thermopolis planning survey, through which over 300 town citizens expressed their views on town planning issues. These two steps have yielded important information about what Thermopolis desires for its future.

THERMOPOLIS VISION STATEMENT

In creating a vision statement to summarize the overall purpose of the Town Master Plan, one need look no further than to the Town Hall where a mission statement for the Town government is posted. This mission statement is pertinent to the Master Plan because it addresses what the town wants to be and what it values. Therefore, the mission statement is adopted as the vision statement for the plan.

PRIMARY GOALS

The Primary Goals are the basic goals that form the foundation of the Master Plan. The Primary Goals are intended to be concise, general

VISION STATEMENT

Thermopolis -- A viable progressive community with an unsurpassed quality of life.

The Town of Thermopolis shall advance and foster:

- ◆ A caring and compassionate citizenry
- ◆ Orderly growth
- ◆ A safe and healthy environment
- ◆ Medical services
- ◆ A clean and attractive appearance
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Intergovernmental cooperation
- ◆ Tourism
- ◆ Economic stability

statements on land use issues that can be supported by most people in the town.

The overall themes of these goals are to:

- ◆ Improve the ability of the town to increase its population base and economic vitality;
- ◆ Capitalize on Thermopolis's unique history and resources that make the town a center for health and recreation; and
- ◆ Strengthen the core of town including the downtown and existing residential neighborhoods.

The Master Plan is based on the following nine primary goals, Goals A

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

through I. It should be noted that these goals overlap and interrelate with each other. These goals should be considered within the overall context. Consequently, the following goals are co-equal and have not have not been assigned any priority order.

GOAL A: DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Focus development efforts within and close to the existing town to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and retain rural landscapes.

GOAL B: ECONOMY

Improve the community's economic competitiveness and expand employment opportunities.

GOAL C: NEIGHBORHOODS

Foster healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods and protect them from incompatible land uses.

GOAL D: HOUSING

Expand housing choices for people of all ages and incomes.

GOAL E: TOWN APPEARANCE

Intensify beautification efforts to increase the town's desirability as a tourist destination and as a place to live, work, and play.

GOAL F: PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Retain and improve the natural resources and park lands, especially Hot Springs State Park, that define Thermopolis as a unique, beautiful, and attractive community.

GOAL G: TRANSPORTATION

Provide safe, reliable, convenient, and economical facilities for all modes of transportation.

GOAL H: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Promote efficiency in public services and infrastructure improvements.

GOAL I: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Coordinate and cooperate with Hot Springs County, East Thermopolis, the water and sewer districts, and other governmental entities to encourage planned development of the town and surrounding areas.

These goals are explained in more detail in the next section.

❖ SECTION 3.2 — PLANNING STRATEGIES ❖

INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING STRATEGIES

This Master Plan is a comprehensive, long-range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community. The Vision Statement (on page 13) is a brief declaration of the overall goal or purpose of the plan and of what the town should strive to be. The Primary Goals (pages 13—14) further define what the Master Plan is attempting to achieve. However, the goals are still fairly general and more specific strategies are needed to explain how the Town can achieve the goals and vision of the Master Plan. The Planning Strategies of this section (pages 15 – 22) provide that additional detail.

The Planning Strategies together with the Future Land Use Plan are the heart of the Master Plan. The Planning Strategies are intended to summarize the main themes of action and policy the Town should undertake to achieve the goals of this Master Plan.

For each of the Primary Goals, there are several associated Planning Strategies. Each goal is stated, followed by the context or rationale for the goal which explains why the goal is appropriate for Thermopolis. Following that, the Planning Strategies are listed under each goal.

Note that the strategies make reference to the "Designated Urban Growth Area." This area is shown on the Future Land Use Map (See Appendix #3) and designates the geographic limits for future urban growth in the Thermopolis area. Urban growth refers to residential, commercial, industrial and public land uses that require city services and are developed at greater density or intensity than is appropriate for rural areas.

Certain other planning terminology here is defined at the end of this chapter. Such defined terms are [highlighted](#) to indicate that their definition is provided at the end of this section.

USING THE PLANNING STRATEGIES

Many of the Planning Strategies are policies that recommend how the Town should address particular situations. Other Planning Strategies are actions that the Town needs to pro-actively take. These specific policies and actions are intended to guide community development in Thermopolis. These Planning Strategies should be referenced whenever the Town needs to make a decision regarding development proposals, infrastructure plans, and other community development decisions. Such proposals should be evaluated in light of these Planning Strategies to help determine if the proposal complies with the Master Plan. Conscientious use of this practice will help ensure that the Town advances towards its vision and goals for the future.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

GOAL A: Focus development efforts within and close to the existing town to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and retain rural landscapes.

CONTEXT

For several reasons, the existing town is the best location for future development and for investments in infrastructure that supports development:

- ◆ The town will be more prosperous when growth occurs in and near it instead of in remote locations.
- ◆ The Town and other public entities can provide many public services more efficiently and at lower cost when development geographically concentrated rather than dispersed.
- ◆ When rural areas are not disrupted by development, the county's scenic views, wildlife habitats, and agricultural lands can be retained.

Consistent with this, the citizen planning survey found that most town citizens (68%) felt that the downtown should remain the town's main business district. In addition, most citizens (52%) also said that new subdivisions would be more beneficial if located in town rather than in rural parts of the county. Furthermore, nearly three-quarters of town citizens (72%) agreed that Thermopolis's long term goal should be to encourage growth. The survey revealed little support for annexation of additional land to the town. Together, these results show support for further growth and development in and very near town. Such a development pattern would be the most efficient and beneficial way for Thermopolis to grow.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy A-1: Encourage [infill](#) and [redevelopment](#) within the city's designated [urban growth area](#).

Strategy A-2: Create regulatory, financial, and infrastructure incentives for developing in town.

Strategy A-3: Avoid creating regulatory, financial, or infrastructure advantages for building outside the designated urban growth area.

Strategy A-4: Coordinate with Hot Springs County to develop specifications for rural development in unincorporated areas of Hot Springs County near Thermopolis beyond the designated urban growth area.

Strategy A-5: Focus public investment in the ongoing maintenance, upgrading, and expansion of the city's urban services within the designated urban growth area.

Strategy A-6: Support public and private efforts to retain agricultural land use outside the designated urban growth area.

Strategy A-7: Evaluate the potential for re-use of the old refinery site for new development.

Strategy A-8: Work with Hot Springs County to reserve land within the Public Use Reserve (see Future Land Use Map) until there is proven need and feasibility for new uses of the land.

Strategy A-9: When making land use decisions, use the Future Land Use Plan of this Master Plan as the main guide concerning the location and features of new development and [redevelopment](#).

ECONOMY

GOAL B: Improve the community's economic competitiveness and expand employment opportunities.

CONTEXT

In the citizen planning survey, the greatest need identified by the town citizens is more employment opportunities. The survey also shows that there is widespread support in Thermopolis for further development of the retail, industrial, tourism, and health care sectors of the local economy.

The diminishing local economy is a prime factor in Thermopolis's loss of population since the 1980s. It is difficult to reverse these trends in the short term. However, if Thermopolis has a consistent, long-range view towards increasing competitiveness and employment opportunities, the prospects for success will be greater.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy B-1: Focus economic development efforts on clean, non-polluting businesses and industries whose products are not affected by Thermopolis's geographic distance from major consumer markets.

Strategy B-2: Retain and expand Thermopolis's health care sector.

Strategy B-3: Promote tourism and recreation to bring more outside dollars into Thermopolis.

Strategy B-4: Reduce [retail leakage](#) and keep more Thermopolis dollars at home by offering more local shopping diversity.

Strategy B-5: Improve the economic vitality Thermopolis's downtown business district.

Strategy B-6: Encourage development of the Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center.

Strategy B-7: Foster the relocation of retirees to Thermopolis.

Strategy B-8: Improve the livability and attractiveness of the town.

NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL C: Foster healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods and protect them from incompatible land uses.

CONTEXT

One of the most basic aspects of economic competitiveness is having a desirable and attractive community. This includes having desirable residential neighborhoods where people will want to live and raise families. Protecting and enhancing the existing residential neighborhoods is an important part of this.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy C-1: Promote compatible [infill](#), [redevelopment](#), and improvements to existing homes that strengthens and improves established neighborhoods.

Strategy C-2: Protect residential neighborhoods from conflicting land uses.

Strategy C-3: Ensure that new neighborhoods include a variety of housing types and include quality of life features, such as parks and pedestrian connections to surrounding areas.

Strategy C-4: Provide sidewalks and pathways for bicycles and pedestrians in all residential areas.

HOUSING

GOAL D: Expand housing choices for people of all ages and incomes.

CONTEXT

Variety in housing is important in retaining existing town residents and for attracting new people to the area. The citizen planning survey revealed that most citizens believe there is a need for additional senior citizen housing and newer housing in general. The availability of affordable housing received low marks in the survey. To be able to support a growing economy, Thermopolis needs a greater variety of housing choices.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy D-1: Promote the construction of a wide range of housing types, sizes, and costs.

Strategy D-2: Support [mixed-use developments](#) so that housing units may be incorporated into plans for commercial development, such as using upper floors for apartments or condominiums and the lower floor for commercial purposes.

Strategy D-3: Adopt and apply a definition of affordable housing as part of any new affordable housing initiatives.

Strategy D-4: Participate in Wyoming's housing rehabilitation program.

Strategy D-5: Continue supporting the efforts of non-profit housing organizations to improve the quality and affordability of housing in town.

TOWN APPEARANCE

GOAL E: Intensify beautification efforts to increase the town's desirability as a tourist destination and as a place to live, work, and play.

CONTEXT

Thermopolis is situated in a particularly beautiful location, surrounded by red hills and high mountains, with a clear river running through town, and with Wyoming's most visited state park located within the town. This setting is a strong advantage that Thermopolis has and that the town should build upon for the future.

Most citizens felt the appearance of the town was fair (45%) or good (41%). However, the clean-up of junk and weeds was one of the greatest needs reported in the citizen planning survey--83% of the citizens felt more needs to be done in this area.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy E-1: Strengthen the enforcement of existing town codes on unsightly conditions (weeds, junk vehicles, and etc).

Strategy E-2: Improve the appearance of the main entry routes into Thermopolis.

Strategy E-3: Improve the appearance of town and county facilities (storage yards, road maintenance shops, and etc).

Strategy E-4: Discourage visually obtrusive development (communication towers, major electric transmission lines, large signs, etc.) on mountain tops and ridge lines.

Strategy E-5: Encourage design improvements to existing commercial corridors so they are more economically successful and attractive.

Strategy E-6: Develop [design guidelines](#) or standards to achieve new development that enhances the appearance of the town.

Strategy E-7: Encourage new building designs that are consistent with traditional building styles in Thermopolis.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL F: Retain and improve the natural resources and park lands, especially Hot Springs State Park, that define Thermopolis as a unique, beautiful, and attractive community.

CONTEXT

Parks and recreation opportunities are important to existing and prospective town residents. In the citizen planning survey, most citizens (71%) felt town parks are in good condition. Another 58% agreed that the town-owned Legion Golf Course is important to the Thermopolis economy. Thermopolis is unique in that over one-quarter of the town is park land, primarily Hot Springs State Park. Most town citizens (93%) strongly agree that the future success of the town is dependent on the existence of the state park. Retaining and improving these assets is clearly important to maintaining Thermopolis's unique character as well as to creating a more prosperous future.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy F-1: Improve pedestrian connections and vehicular access to state park.

Strategy F-2: Connect and extend recreation paths and trails in and around the town.

Strategy F-3: Ensure that new residential developments include access to [neighborhood parks](#).

Strategy F-4: Work cooperatively with Hot Springs State Park to improve the park and resolve problems.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL G: Provide safe, reliable, convenient, and economical facilities for all modes of transportation.

CONTEXT

Thermopolis is relatively free of traffic problems. However, improving existing streets and providing better and more complete facilities for pedestrians will strengthen Thermopolis as a desirable place to live. Most town citizens (74%) agreed with the idea that sidewalks should be installed around most blocks in town. Most people feel that streets and sidewalks are only of fair condition. Surely, there is room for improvement and improved streets and sidewalks will enhance the image of Thermopolis and make the town a more desirable place.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy G-1: Progressively improve existing town streets.

Strategy G-2: Complete installation of sidewalks and walkways for all developed blocks in town.

Strategy G-3: Ensure that all new developments have streets and sidewalks constructed to town standards.

Strategy G-4: Design streets for all users including vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Strategy G-5: Use modern street design standards, including narrower streets and [traffic calming](#) for new and reconstructed streets.

Strategy G-6: Support the enhancement of inter-community public transportation within the Big Horn Basin.

Strategy G-7: Ensure the continuation of community's existing public and institutional transportation services.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

GOAL H: Promote efficiency in public services and infrastructure improvements.

CONTEXT

It is critical for Thermopolis to prioritize its public works investments to ensure that the most "bang for the buck" is achieved. Most town citizens (55%) feel Thermopolis needs improved water and sewer systems. In addition, most citizens believe town streets and sidewalks need improvement. With the never-ending demands for infrastructure improvements and limited funds available for these purposes, it will be increasingly important for the town to prioritize its efforts.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy H-1: Give highest priority to improving in-town infrastructure.

Strategy H-2: Prioritize the expansion of utilities and services for development that is located within the designated urban growth area.

Strategy H-3: Use infrastructure incentives to attract development to target areas.

Strategy H-4: Annex developing areas into the town when extending of town water and sewer service to such areas.

Strategy H-5: Avoid further extension public services and infrastructure to distant areas.

Strategy H-6: Develop a multi-year [Capital Improvements Program](#) and update it annually.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

GOAL I: Coordinate and cooperate with Hot Springs County, East Thermopolis, the water and sewer districts, and other governmental entities to encourage planned development of the town and surrounding areas.

CONTEXT

Most residents of Hot Springs County live in Thermopolis and the town provides governmental services, most notably water service, to many of those who do not live in town. Yet development outside the town boundaries is managed by other entities. The Town and County and other entities can coordinate and cooperate to fulfill a common vision of how the area should grow and develop. Such efforts can lead to greater efficiencies in public investments and more effective improvement of the town and surrounding areas.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy I-1: Work with Hot Springs County and the Town of East Thermopolis to create a joint towns-and-county zoning and review board.

Strategy I-2: Work jointly with Hot Springs County to improve the appearance of main entry routes into Thermopolis.

Strategy I-3: Seek County Planning Commission support for and approval of the Thermopolis Master Plan.

Strategy I-4: Develop joint Town-County agreement regarding review of developments in the county near Thermopolis.

Strategy I-5: Involve water and sewer districts in planning for future development of area near Thermopolis.

PLANNING TERMINOLOGY

Capital improvements: An acquisition of real property, major construction projects, or acquisition of expensive equipments expected to last a long time. Capital improvements are usually large, non-recurring items.

Capital Improvements Program: A timetable or schedule of all future capital improvements to be carried out during a specific period and listed in order of priority, together with cost estimates and the anticipated means of financing each project.

Design guidelines: A set of guidelines defining parameters to be followed in site and/or building design and development; typically address architectural appearance of a building and other related features such as building setbacks, landscaping, outdoor lighting, parking areas, and signs; can be regulatory or advisory.

Designated Urban Growth Area: The area where urban growth is encouraged and urban services may be provided. Urban growth is development that is of high enough density or intensity at urban services are needed. Urban services include town water, sewer, police protection, garbage collection, and parks. The urban growth area is designated on the Future Land Use Map of the Master Plan.

Infill: The development of new housing or other buildings on scattered vacant sites within a built-up area.

Mixed-use development: The development of a tract of land or building with a variety of complementary and integrated uses, such as but not limited to, residential, office, manufacturing, retail, public, or entertainment, in a compact urban form.

Neighborhood parks: A small park of one-acre or less serving people living within one-half to one-quarter mile of the park

Redevelopment: To demolish existing buildings or expand and exist-

ing building on a property to create a newer and larger building.

Retail leakage: Retail sales lost by a community to a competitive market, indicating the need for more retail development in an area.

Traffic calming: Street design techniques concerned with reducing the adverse impact of motor vehicles on built-up areas; usually involves reducing vehicle speeds and providing more space and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

❖ SECTION 3.3 — FUTURE LAND USE PLAN ❖

INTRODUCTION

The Future Land Use Plan section of the Master Plan provides a general view of future land use for Thermopolis over the next 20 years. The Future Land Use Plan organizes all the expected future growth, development, and redevelopment into a pattern that is consistent with the Town's Vision Statement and Goals. The plan represents how Thermopolis should develop over the next 20 years by showing the locations and characteristics of major land use types, such as downtown, highway commercial, residential, and so forth.

It should be noted that the Future Land Use Plan is intended to be fairly general. The boundaries between different types areas are not distinct and the specifications for development in each area is general as well. The Future Land Use Map will provide guidance for zoning decisions but it is not as precise as a zoning ordinance. Many details about land uses characteristics in each type of area and the exact boundaries of areas will be worked out when revising the zoning ordinance.

The Future Land Use Plan consists of the Future Land Use map and the Future Land Use Designations. This section contains the Future Land Use Designations which describes the future land use areas depicted on the Future Land Use Map (See Appendix 3). Each area depicted on the map is individually discussed and development specifications for each area are also presented. The concept of "floor-area ratio" (FAR) is also introduced; this concept is defined at the end of the section.

The Town should use the Future Land Use Plan as a guide for all land use decisions including all zoning decisions. The Future Land Use Plan should also be consulted in the planning of public improvements. In addition, the private-sector is encouraged to follow the

Future Land Use Plan in the planning of real estate developments.

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Downtown: This area is the old downtown of Thermopolis including the historic district. The area consists of commercial and public buildings including the courthouse, post office, and town hall. It is intended that this area would retain much of its present physical character, which is predominantly historic buildings. Restoration and adaptive reuse of historic buildings would be encouraged.

- ◆ **Uses:** Mixed uses: commercial, office, public uses, and residential on upper floors.
- ◆ **Housing:** High density housing types such as apartments.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** Following historic pattern, no setbacks would be required.
- ◆ **FAR:** Highest floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Highest building heights allowed - four stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** No on-site parking required; as need arises, community parking lot at margins of the area should be considered.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** Highest level of pedestrian accommodation -- wide sidewalks, curb extensions, cross walks, street furniture and landscaping.

Transitional Area - North of Downtown: This area, immediately north of the downtown, is a small area of older residences, many with historic character. The areas also has light commercial and public uses and is surrounded by commercial and public use areas. These areas should be allowed to become further commercialized

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

while retaining, restoring and reusing the remaining homes. New structures built in the areas should be carefully designed to complement the historic architecture of the older structures. Eventually, these areas can be commercial extensions of the downtown extending the historic ambiance of downtown toward Park Street.

- ◆ **Uses:** Mixed uses: commercial, office, public, and residential uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** A wide variety of housing types is appropriate from single family units to apartments.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** Minimal setbacks.
- ◆ **FAR:** High floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Highest building heights allowed - four stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** No on-site parking required; as need arises, community parking lot at margins of the area should be considered.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** Highest level of pedestrian accommodation -- wide sidewalks, curb extensions, cross walks, street furniture and landscaping.

Transitional Area - Old Refinery Area: This area, in the southeast corner of town, is largely undeveloped but does include some industrial and heavy commercial uses. Redevelopment of the area would be contingent on resolving environmental issues associated with the refinery that was once located here. Because of its location, the area could have tremendous potential for a wide variety of future uses once the environmental issues are understood and resolved. The long-term plan for this area should be determined by master planning the site in conjunction with resolution of the environmental issues.

Transitional Area - West Broadway: This area along Broadway, west

of 7th Street, is zoned for highway business but is predominantly single family residences. To avoid creating a strip commercial area, new commercial development here should retain the residential character of the area. New higher-density residential usage is also appropriate here.

- ◆ **Uses:** Mixed uses: commercial, office, public, and residential uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** A wide variety of housing types is appropriate from single family units to apartments.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** For non-residential uses, setbacks should conform to those of residential buildings in the area.
- ◆ **FAR:** Moderate floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Residential-style building heights -up to two stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** On-site parking necessary; parking lots should not be located in front yards and should be located to the side or rear areas and screened from neighboring properties.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** High level of pedestrian accommodation - most sidewalks are provided by WYDOT; elsewhere sidewalks, curb extensions, and cross walks are necessary.

Highway Commercial Area - North: The Highway Commercial area north of the downtown extends along 6th and Park Streets towards the main State Park entrance and effectively connects the downtown to the park and other major centers including the Fairgrounds and the High School. The area is fairly small but because of this linkage role the area is important.

- ◆ **Uses:** Mixed uses: commercial, office, public, and residential uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** A wide variety of housing types is appropriate from single family units to apartments.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

- ◆ **Setbacks:** For non-residential uses, setbacks should conform to those of residential buildings in the area.
- ◆ **FAR:** Moderate floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Residential-style building heights -up to two stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** On-site parking necessary; parking lots should not be located in front yards and should be located to the side or rear areas and screened from neighboring properties.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** High level of pedestrian accommodation - most sidewalks are provided by WYDOT; elsewhere sidewalks, curb extensions, and cross walks are necessary.

Highway Commercial Area - South: The south Highway Commercial area includes a variety of uses including convenience stores, fast-food restaurants, automobile-related businesses, small shops, a church, a fraternal club, a motel, a lumber store, a bar, and scattered single family residences and vacant lots. The area extends from the south boundary of town to the downtown. This area will remain predominantly commercial. New development and redevelopment should serve to enhance the appearance of the area through building and site designs that soften the automobile emphasis of this area--this means locating new buildings closer to the street, landscaping and screening parking lots, and improving pedestrian safety and access.

- ◆ **Uses:** Mixed uses: commercial, light industrial, office, public, and residential uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** A wide variety of housing types is appropriate from single family units to apartments.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** Setbacks need not be large and should be small enough in front to facilitate pedestrian traffic while directing vehicle traffic and parking to side and rear areas.
- ◆ **FAR:** Moderate floor-area ratio.

- ◆ **Height:** Building heights up to two stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** Most parking must be accommodated on site; smaller, multiple parking lots that are landscaped are preferable to large paved areas.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** High level of pedestrian accommodation - most sidewalks are provided by WYDOT; elsewhere sidewalks, curb extensions, and cross walks are necessary.

South Entry Corridor: This area is located outside the town limits but has town water and sewer service. The area extends south along the state highway to the Red Rocks Business Park. These are areas that are or will be predominantly commercial but with very limited pedestrian access. These areas are primarily accessed by motor vehicle and tend to have large parking areas.

- ◆ **Uses:** Highway commercial uses, light industrial, offices, public uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** Very low density housing - single family units.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** Large setbacks to retain semi-rural character of the area; setbacks from highway to be based on building size with larger buildings set further back such as 100 feet or more.
- ◆ **FAR:** Low to moderate floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Low building heights - one story for larger buildings
- ◆ **Parking:** All parking must be accommodated on site; smaller, multiple parking lots that are landscaped are preferable to large paved areas.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** Minimal or no pedestrian accommodation.

Residential: Residential areas on the Future Land Use Map are largely areas that are currently dominated by residential use or are zoned for residential use. In general, it will be beneficial to increase the density of existing residential areas, often through infill and rede-

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

velopment.

All residential areas are suitable for a range of housing types, from single-family units to multi-family units (town houses, condominiums, and apartments). Small multi-family buildings of four or fewer units can be successfully interspersed with single family units in all areas. Larger buildings should be located on select sites based on access, adjacent land uses, and lot size.

Manufactured housing can be allowed in all areas especially if basic design standards (covering such things as roof pitch, eaves, siding, etc.) are enacted. However, in residential areas predominated by historic homes, manufactured housing may be precluded.

- ◆ **Uses:** Residential uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** A wide variety of housing types is appropriate from single family units to apartments.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** Setbacks can vary depending on building type and lot size but generally similar to current zoning setbacks.
- ◆ **FAR:** Low to moderate floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Residential-style building heights -up to two stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** Most parking will be on-site; parking lots should not be located in front yards and should be located to the side or rear areas and screened from neighboring properties.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** High level of pedestrian accommodation.

State Park: The State Park includes a variety of public uses and tourist-related commercial facilities. Such uses are highly appropriate for the park in the future including the future Big Horn Basin Discovery and Interpretive Center. All new buildings and facilities in the park should be carefully designed to further enhance the appearance and function of the park as a major tourist destination.

Conservation Reserve: This area is primarily steep slope areas south of Round Top Mountain. Under the current town zoning, develop-

ment of this area is limited to very low density housing because of the steep slope conditions. In addition, access to this area very limited. Open space and very low density housing should continue as the prescription for this area.

East Thermopolis: The Town of East Thermopolis is an area that can accommodate additional development. A variety of residential housing types, neighborhood commercial uses, public uses, institutional uses, and expansion of the Wyoming Dinosaur Center are all potential. Provision of utilities and public services through coordination of the two towns.

Growth Reserves: Growth Reserve areas are undeveloped areas outside the town limits where future development and annexation can take place. Development in these areas will be necessary to the extent that urban development cannot occur within the current town limits. These areas should be annexed as development occurs.

It should be noted that the boundaries of these areas are intended to be fairly general and not distinct. The development criteria for each area is general as well. Details about which land uses should be allowed in each area and the exact boundaries of areas will be worked out in the zoning ordinance.

Growth Reserve - South: This Growth Reserve is south of the town limits along Highway 20. The area has both town water and sewer service. The area will be primarily for commercial uses but other uses are also appropriate. The area will have a low density development pattern and is most suitable for uses that require extensive land areas, such as car dealerships.

- ◆ **Uses:** Highway commercial uses, offices, public, and residential uses.
- ◆ **Housing:** Moderate density housing.
- ◆ **Setbacks:** Large setbacks to retain semi-rural character of the area; setbacks from highway to be based on building size

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

with larger buildings set further back such as 110 feet or more.

- ◆ **FAR:** Low floor-area ratio.
- ◆ **Height:** Building heights up to two stories.
- ◆ **Parking:** All parking must be accommodated on site; smaller, multiple parking lots that are landscaped are preferable to large paved areas.
- ◆ **Pedestrians:** Minimal or no pedestrian accommodation.

Growth Reserves - West: The Growth Reserves on the west end of town will be suitable for residential development with specifications the same as for residential areas.

Municipal: This area is the present Town water plant and sewage lagoons. These uses are expected to continue as the predominant uses of this land area.

Public Use Reserve: This area is high above most of the town and includes the Monument Hill Cemetery, the county airport, the Freudenthal Park, and town golf course. The airport is due to be replaced with a new airport 10 miles from town. The only access to the area is Airport Road, which is a long, steep, dead-end road. Land uses in this area should remain as they are, except for the airport lands. When the airport is decommissioned, future use of the land should be determined after careful study of the feasibility of new uses of the land. One scenarios that should be considered is trading the airport land for the Riverside Cemetery expansion area on the south end of town, an area that is more suitable for urban development than the airport site.

Agricultural & Rural: This area is outside the designated urban growth areas and should have rural development and continued agricultural use in the future. The Hot Springs County Land Use Plan

seeks to direct development to town and leave agricultural land, and especially irrigated land, intact. Consistent with the County's plan, residential development in this area will be very low density with lots generally 35 acres or larger in size. In areas where the County's plan would allow more intense development, subdivisions should still be at low densities with lot sizes averaging no less than five acres. Commercial, industrial, and other non-residential uses should be strictly limited to those that absolutely cannot be located within the Town's designated urban growth area. (The designated urban growth area has the same meaning as a designated concentrated development area, the term used in the County plan.) Town sewer service should not be extended to new development in this area.

By law, the Town has approval authority over subdivisions in the county that are within one-mile of the Thermopolis town limits. Conformance with the Town Master Plan is necessary for Town approval of such rural subdivisions .

FLOOR-AREA RATIOS

Floor-area ratio (FAR): The total floor area of all buildings or structures on a lot divided by the area of the lot. Floor-area ratio was developed as a more refined and adaptable measure of intensity than lot or building coverage.

For Thermopolis, the highest floor-area ratio, such as might occur downtown, would be 4.0. This represents a four-story building covering entirely covering its lot.

Recommended floor-area ratios for Thermopolis are as follows:

- ◆ Highest: 2.0 to 4.0
- ◆ High: 1.0 to 2.0
- ◆ Moderate: 0.5 to 1.0
- ◆ Low: 0.2 to 0.5
- ◆ Very Low: 0.1 or less

❖ SECTION 3.4 — PRIORITY ACTION PLAN ❖

The Priority Action Plan (PAP) is a list of the highest-priority actions that the Town of Thermopolis will undertake to carry out the Master Plan. The PAP was prepared by having the Master Plan Committee review and prioritize all the possible actions that are discussed elsewhere in the Master Plan. The PAP consists of the highest priority actions as identified by the Committee while lower priority actions are not included in the PAP.

The PAP is more than is list because it also identifies a “lead agency” that is the primary entity responsible for seeing that the action gets done. Furthermore, the PAP includes an approximate time schedule for when actions will be accomplished.

There are eight priority actions included in the PAP. These actions constitute the most important steps the Town should take to carry out this Master Plan. The plan is all about growing the town by promoting quality of life through better development. It is absolutely necessary to put the plan into action by carrying out the follow actions.

The eight actions included in the PAP are listed in order of priority. This order of priority indicates which actions should be tackled first. All the priority actions should be accomplished as soon as possible. However, given the complexity of many of the actions, it is likely to take as much as five years to complete all the priority actions.

While it may take five years to complete of all of these tasks, the Town is constantly working on most of these action items; the review of utility fees, annual planning for infrastructure improvements, and other actions are on-going. In addition, these actions will really never be complete as these things are always being revised. However the key accomplishment will be making refinements that effectively carry out the intent of the Master Plan.

The priority actions, with the highest priority action listed first, are as follows:

1. Review means of improving enforcement of existing town codes on unsightly conditions (weeds, junk vehicles, and etc). This will involve the effort of Town staff, Town attorneys, and Town Council to develop action plan for enhanced enforcement. Work on this action can start immediately. The Mayor should be the lead agency and convene work meetings with the appropriate town officials and staff.

2. Revise zoning regulations to:

- ◆ Promote infill to encourage infill and redevelopment within the city’s designated urban growth area.
- ◆ Better protect existing neighborhoods from conflicting land uses.
- ◆ Allow more variety of housing types in each residential zone.
- ◆ Update performance standards on appearance issues (landscaping, lighting, signs, & etc.) so that new development enhances the appearance of the town.
- ◆ Create regulatory incentives that promote desired development.
- ◆ Address additional items specified in the Review of Thermopolis Zoning and Subdivision Regulation (Appendix 3).

This action is important for promoting better development within town. This work would typically be accomplished by a specialized consultants with small town zoning code experience. The lead agency will be the Town Planning Commission who

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

would manage the project. Funding will need to be arranged through the Town Council's budgetary process. This action will include budgeting the requisite funds and selecting a consultant. Once a consultant is on-board, it will take some time to prepare a new zoning code and allow for public input and review. Ultimately, the revised code will require Planning Commission and Town Council approval.

3. Revise subdivision regulations to:

- ◆ Update and specify street construction standards that facilitate infill development.
- ◆ Reduce the width of new residential subdivision streets in order to decrease construction and maintenance costs and to reduce speeding.
- ◆ Create standards for subdivisions proposed for areas in the county within one-mile of the town.
- ◆ Address additional items specified in the Review of Thermopolis Zoning and Subdivision Regulation (Appendix 3).

Thermopolis needs to improve its handling of subdivisions and this need will become more apparent when additional subdivision development occurs. This action could be accomplished at the same time as the revision of the Town's zoning using a similar approach. The Town Planning Commission will be the lead agency and will need assistance of the Codes Administrator, Town Engineers, Town Attorney, and possibly a planning consultant. Any required funding must be arranged with the Town Council. The Town Council will need to approve any new subdivision regulations.

4. Work with Hot Springs County to:

- ◆ Request County Commissioners support and approval of the

Thermopolis Master Plan.

- ◆ Develop specifications for rural development in unincorporated areas of Hot Springs County near Thermopolis beyond the designated urban growth area.
- ◆ Develop a joint Town-County agreement regarding review of developments in the county near Thermopolis.

This action actually consists of three separate but related actions (those listed immediately above). The Planning Commission should be the lead agency for this action, although approval of any intergovernmental agreement and changes to regulations will require Town Council involvement and approval. Requesting County approval of the new Master Plan can begin now. Other parts of this undertaking will require more time and should be coordinated with the revision of the Town zoning and subdivision regulations.

5. Work with East Thermopolis and Hot Springs County to create a joint towns-and-county zoning and review board. This action overlaps with the last part of Action #6 and could possibly be addressed at the same time. Again, the Town Planning Commission should be the lead agency and Town Council involvement and approval are ultimately required.

6. Create a 5-year capital improvements program to:

- ◆ Focus public investment in the ongoing maintenance, upgrading, and expansion of the city's urban services within the designated urban growth area.
- ◆ Progressively improve existing town streets.
- ◆ Complete installation of sidewalks and walkways for all developed blocks in town.
- ◆ Update the capital improvements program every year.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

This action should be coordinated with the Town’s annual budget preparation process. The Mayor is the lead agency, although most of the planning work will be conducted by the Town’s public works staff. Ultimately, the Town Council must approve a capital facilities plan as part of the annual budget process.

7. Review utility fees to create incentives for developing in town.

This action involves trying to create cost incentives for in-town development. The Town utility fees, including connection fees, should be reviewed to identify potential incentives. The Mayor will be the lead agency and will rely heavily on Town public works, legal, and financial

staff in the course of the review. Town Council approval of fee schedules will be required.

8. Develop a cooperative (cost-sharing) sidewalk replacement and installation program.

The lead agency for this action will be the Codes Administrator with support from the Town engineers and legal staff. A variety of potential program concepts must be reviewed, including improvement districts, individual cost sharing, and approaches used by other communities. Once a program concept is developed for Thermopolis, Town Council approval will be necessary to make it a reality.

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTION PLAN		
ACTION	LEAD AGENCY	PRIORITY
Improve Enforcement	Mayor	1
Revise Town Zoning	Town Planning Commission	2
Revise Subdivision Regulations	Town Planning Commission	3
Planning with County	Town Planning Commission	4
Towns/County Review Board	Town Planning Commission	5
Capital Improvements Program	Mayor	6
Review Utility Fees	Mayor	7
Develop Sidewalk Program	Codes Administrator	8

❖ **PART 4: THERMOPOLIS PROFILE** ❖

This part is an inventory is existing conditions and trends in Thermopolis that are necessary to plan preparation. A comprehensive range community development topics are reviewed.

Economy 32
Population Trends 38
Housing 41
Public Services 45
Infrastructure 50
Parks and Open Space 54
Transportation 56
Environment 58
Regulatory Framework 61
Land Use and Development Trends 64

❖ SECTION 4.1 — ECONOMY ❖

INTRODUCTION

This section provides a general overview of the Thermopolis economy and considers factors related to the county’s economic future. Economic data sources such as the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis provide information at the county level and for major metropolitan areas but not for towns the size of Thermopolis. Consequently, much of the information that follows is for the county rather than the town.

PERSONAL INCOME AND EARNINGS

Per Capita Personal Income

Hot Springs County’s per capital personal income (PCPI) ranks in the lowest third of all Wyoming counties (17th out of 23 counties in 2007 and in 1997). Per capita income is total personal income divided by the total population. PCPI has been generally rising in Hot Springs County since 2000. The average annual growth rate of PCPI (not adjusted for inflation) from 1997-2007 was 6.7 percent for Hot Springs County, 7.2 percent for Wyoming, and 4.3 percent for the nation. In 2007, Hot Springs County PCPI was one percent higher than the national PCPI. (U.S. BEA: Bearfacts)

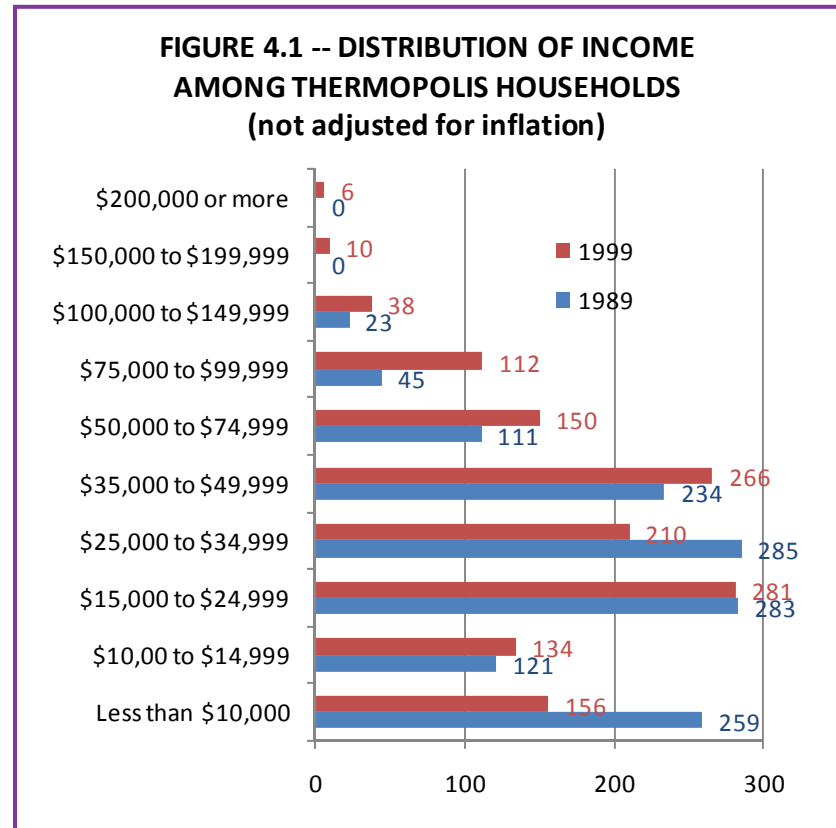
Distribution of Income –Household Income – Family Income

Household income is the income from all persons living in a housing unit. Household income has been rising in Hot Springs County, but it falls behind the nation, the state, and other counties in the Big Horn Basin.

2009 median household income in Hot Springs County was estimated at \$41,543, up 17 percent since 2000. Median income is the mid-point of total household income—half of all households have income

less than median household income and half have income more than median household income. In 2009, median household income was \$51,981 in Wyoming and \$57,486 nationally. Big Horn County was at \$41,925 and Washakie County at \$47,294. (Wadley-Donovan)

In Thermopolis, fewer households were in the lowest income brackets in 1999 than in 1989 (See Figure 4.1). The number of households

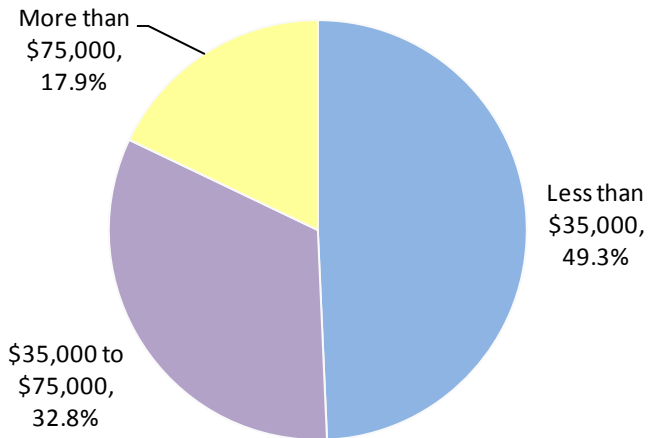


Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000

with less than \$10,000 dropped from 259 in 1989 to 156 in 1999. The county (and likely Thermopolis as well) continues to have a significant number of lower income households. In 2004, nearly half (49.3%) of all county households had income less than \$35,000 (See Figure 4.2).

Median family income in 1999 was \$38,448 in Thermopolis and \$39,364 in Hot Springs County. In 2009, it was estimated at \$55,100 for the county. Median family income is important because it is used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a measure for determining eligibility for housing assistance. To qualify, a family must meet the low income threshold of not more than

FIGURE 4.2 -- HOT SPRINGS COUNTY HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 2004



Source: Wadley-Donovan Group, 2005

80% of median family income. (HUD) Approximately one-third of all families had incomes less than 80% of the median in Thermopolis in 1999. (U.S. Census 2000 Table DP-3) Hot Springs County has a greater disparity between the richest households and the poorest households than the nation. In 2000, for every household in Hot Springs County with income over \$100,000 there were nearly 12 households with less than \$30,000. Nationally, there were nine. (U.S. Census Bureau and Headwaters Economics)

Components of Personal Income

Compared to Wyoming and the nation, Hot Springs County has a much higher dependence on government payments as a source of income. Income from labor earnings is also significantly less in Hot Springs County than in Wyoming or the United States as a whole.

Personal income comes from earnings (either as wages or as business income) or “Non-Labor” income sources. “Non-Labor” income includes:

- ◆ Dividends, interest, and rent (e.g., investment income)
- ◆ Transfer payments (primarily government payments such as Medicare, Social Security, unemployment compensation, disability insurance payments, and welfare)

In Hot Springs County in 2007, income from earnings was 51% of all personal income (compared to 60% for Wyoming and 68% for the nation); dividends, interest and rent were 27% (compared to 29% for Wyoming and 18% for the nation), and transfer payments were 22% (compared to 11% for Wyoming and 15% for the nation). (U.S. BEA: Bearfacts)

Poverty

Poverty rates in Hot Springs County are higher than for the state but less than the nation. In 2008, the 12.2% of all persons in Hot Springs

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

County was at the poverty level, ranking it fifth highest among all Wyoming Counties. On a state-wide basis, 9.5% of the population was in poverty. Nationally, 13.2% of the entire population was living in poverty. (U.S. Census Bureau: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates)

EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Prior to the global recession that began in 2008, Wyoming was a bright spot in the national economy. Although affected by the recession, Wyoming has had lower unemployment than the nation.

The United States is recovering slowly from the global recession that began in 2008. Wyoming was dragged into the recession nearly a year after the national recession began. The downturn in energy exploration resulted in a dramatically weakened labor market in Wyoming, particularly in mining and construction industries. Mining jobs decreased by 17 percent and construction jobs by 15 percent in 2009. Compared to the third quarter of 2008, total employment in all sectors decreased by 3.6 percent, the worst performance since 1987 (when the oil boom burst). Job growth did occur in some sectors in Wyoming. Education and health services increased by 2.4% between 2008 and 2009, and government jobs grew by 2.6%. (Economic Analysis Division: Dec. 2009)

Labor Availability - Employment

Labor force participation in Hot Springs County has been high. In 2000, 62% of working-age residents were actively participating in the labor force, only slightly below the 67% statewide and 64% nationally. In 2003 the county's 3.4% unemployment was well below the nation at 6%.

The numbers of workers in the labor force has been declining (and may account for some of the low unemployment rates). The county lost 6.3% of the labor force in the five years between 1998 and 2003.

In part this is a factor of overall declining population. The labor force decline is exacerbated with a growing older population, and a relatively high percentage of new residents who are retirees.

Hot Springs County and Big Horn County were the only counties that experienced decrease in employment between 2001 and 2007, when the rest of the state was seeing some significant growth rates. Counties with energy development, such as coal bed methane in Sublette County, saw significant growth during that period. In Hot Springs County, retail trade lost the most jobs—a loss of 22% (85 jobs). (Wyoming Employment, Income, and Gross Domestic Product Report.)

According to a survey conducted for the Wyoming Business Council's "Location Assessment Report," employers reported difficulties recruiting technical and professional personnel to the eastern Big Horn

TABLE 4.1 — LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

	Hot Springs County	Wyo.	U.S.
Labor Force 2003	2,251	278,367	146,510,000
% Change 1998 - 2003	-6.3%	7.9%	6.4%
Unemployment Rate 2003	3.4%	4.4%	6.0%
Unemployment Rate Dec 2009	6.6%	7.6%	9.7%
Labor Participation 2000	62.2%	67.2%	63.7%

Sources: Wadley-Donovan. Locational Assessment Wyoming Zone 3 for all except 2009 unemployment rate; 2009 Unemployment rate: Wyoming Department of Employment, Research and Planning

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

Basin area (Big Horn, Hot Springs, and Washakie Counties). A lack of technical and professional job opportunities presents a problem for “following spouses.” The survey found that job candidates from outside the area perceived quality of life to be less than desirable, but once they are recruited, many like the area and tend to stay.

Businesses and Industry

Nearly all of the workplaces in Hot Springs County are clustered in or near Thermopolis. The five biggest employer sectors in the county are health care, energy development (oil and gas), education (schools), service industries, and retail trade.

Average annual wage per job in Hot Springs County in 2007 was third lowest in the state at \$28,286. Average annual wage per job was \$38,901 statewide and \$43,889 for the United States. (Wyoming Economic Analysis Division) Highest wages were in the mining sector (\$58,781 in 2006) and lowest wages were in leisure and hospitality (\$9,930 in 2006).

Proprietor income is not included in the average annual wage per job. Average income from non-farm proprietors (business owners and self-employed persons) is the bright spot in earnings. Average non-farm proprietor income increased from \$12,091 in 2000 to \$28,745 in 2007, an increase of 96%, not adjusted for inflation. During this same time, average wage per job increased from \$20,332 to \$28,286, an increase of 39%, not adjusted for inflation. While wage and salary jobs decreased between 2000 and 2007 (to 2,228 jobs in 2007), numbers of non-farm proprietors grew by about 4% to 827. (Wyoming Economic Analysis, “Regional Economic Profiles”)

Business Trends – Economic Development

In the last decade, limited economic expansion of existing or new businesses has occurred. The community has been working to attract new businesses, but there is no current overall economic devel-

opment plan for the town or county. The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce is active with 220-230 members and a well-developed website providing information to businesses and prospective tourists. (Wallingford) The Thermopolis Economic Development

TABLE 4.2 — MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN HOT SPRINGS COUNTY

Company	Employees	Product/Service
Hot Springs County School District	150	Education
Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital	79	Health Care
Big Horn Enterprises	60	Social Assistance – services to disabled individuals
State of Wyoming	54	State government
Hot Springs County Government	53	County Government
Canyon Hill Manor	42	Health care
R&S Well Service	40	Services oil wells
Northwest BOCES	38	Education
Town of Thermopolis	36	Local Government
Holiday Inn	30	Hospitality
Merit Energy Company	21	Energy
Gottsche Rehabilitation Center	20	Long term care and rehabilitation

Source: Wyoming Business Council. Hot Springs County Wyoming, County Profile

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

Council provides assistance to start-up business and has taken a lead role on economic projects such as the Red Rocks Business Park south of Thermopolis. (Smith)

In the past five years downtown has improved with new businesses in formerly vacant retail spaces. In 2006, CAPTEL, a professional fundraising and communications firm, set up offices in downtown starting with ten employees and continuing to expand.

Businesses are also tending to locate along the highway on the south edge of town. In 2006, the Red Rocks Business Park was approved and has since been developed with infrastructure, but to date no businesses have established there.

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

In its report to the Wyoming Business Council, Wadley-Donovan Group identified key factors for economic development in the Big Horn Basin region, which includes Big Horn, Hot Springs, and Washakie Counties. These are outlined in the following table (See Table 4.3).

Based on their research, the Wadley-Donovan group recommended the following targets for regional economic development:

- ◆ Lone Eagles and knowledge-based entrepreneurs (Lone eagles are individuals who look to operate as self-employed individuals or in free-lance capacities using advance telecommunications technology and a commercial airport to remain linked with the outside world. Examples include writers, consultants, software programmers, investors, financial analysts, traders, brokers, and manufacturing representatives. Knowledge based operations include software development, advertising, management consulting, writing and journalism, and public relations.)
- ◆ Western art and home furnishings
- ◆ Outdoor recreational products.

The Wadley-Donovan group recommended call centers and back offices for neighboring Fremont County. The telephone call center industry consists of customer support and service centers, which refers to inbound call centers designed to provide ready access to customer support for products and services. Administrative Service Centers, often called "back offices", are facilities where administrative workers engage in corporate office support operations, such as processing orders, billings, claims, accounts receivable and payable, and similar tasks. Since 2005, when the Wadley-Donovan report was written, the call center and back office businesses have increased in the Big Horn Basin, with CAPTEL in Thermopolis, Eleutian Technology in Ten Sleep and Cody, and others. The target industry list for Thermopolis should be updated to include call centers and back offices.

CONCLUSIONS

Thermopolis has many unique features that have sustained the local economy for decades and those features and others could possibly be used to expand the economy as well. Tourism, health care, and natural resource extraction have been staples of the local economy. The 2008 global recession has resulted in reduce demand for energy, but slowly it appears that the economy may be rebounding. Health care has remained relatively strong as an economic sector in Wyoming during this recession. The aging population and attractiveness of Thermopolis to that age group could be a future source of economic development. The area's low wages are also a positive for businesses to looking to locate or expand in the area. Without a careful approach, using this as an economic incentive could result in an even higher proportion of low-income wage earners needing assistance with housing costs and day care. In general, it is important to consider long-range goals of economic development in relation to cost of extending services, downtown development, and labor force needs and wages within an overall community context.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

TABLE 4.3 — ASSETS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE BIG HORN BASIN REGION OF WYOMING (BIG HORN, HOT SPRINGS, AND WASHAKIE COUNTIES) Source: Wadley-Donovan 2005

Factor	Assets	Challenges
Accessibility/Area Orientation		Lack of Interstate and four-lane highways Limited airline passenger service
Labor Availability		Lack of qualified applicants Need for new families to move to the area Declining size of labor force Low unemployment rates
Labor Quality	Low ratio of high school dropouts	Productivity and work ethic
Labor Costs	Wage levels	
Training and Education		Local training resources
Quality of Life	Lack of traffic congestion Health care Condition of downtowns Low crime rates K-12 public education Outdoor recreation venues Climate Lack of personal income tax	Housing availability Local shopping
Business and Operating Environment	Business tax policy Electric rates and reliability Broadband internet service Availability of good quality water Sales tax exemption for new production machinery and equipment	Although property taxes apply to most forms of business with few exemptions, and works in progress are not exempt, the tax rates are low. Relocating outside talent Air freight service and cost Truck service Rail costs Sewage treatment capacity Lack of vacant industrial and business sites Lack of vacant industrial buildings

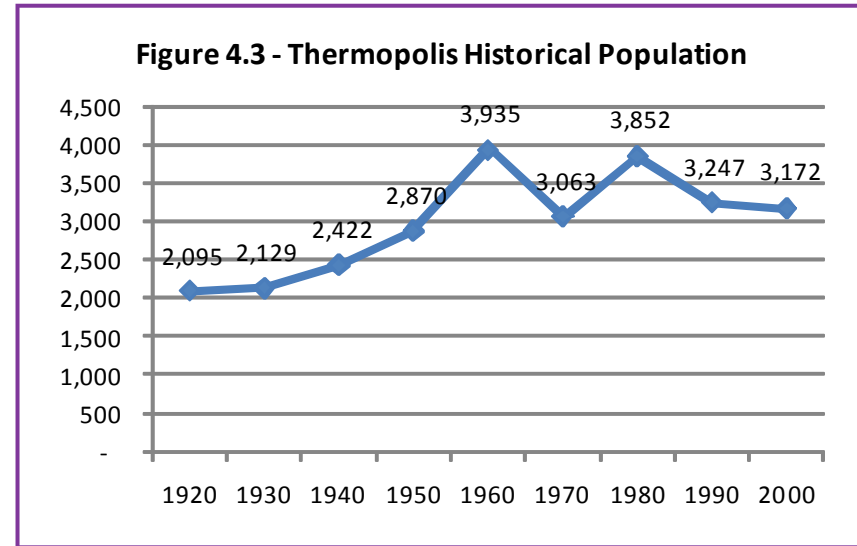
❖ SECTION 4.2 — POPULATION TRENDS ❖

INTRODUCTION

Planning for the future depends on the composition of the population and the potential for population change that comes as the result of net migration and changes to population characteristics such as age. Anticipating changes in population numbers and composition is essential to planning for future needs.

POPULATION NUMBERS

The population of Thermopolis in 2008 was estimated at 2,971, approximately 64% of the total population in Hot Springs County. Population has generally been declining since the 1980s. Thermopolis population declined by an estimated six percent from 2000 to 2008, while overall population in the state of Wyoming increased by



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

approximately eight percent. Population decline in Hot Springs County is a combined result of natural decrease (more deaths than births) and net outmigration (more residents leaving the county than new residents moving in).

Looking at the longer-term history (Figure 4.3), Thermopolis grew steadily from the town’s founding until 1960. Now the town’s population is in decline having dropped slowly but steadily since 1980. When compared to the population of Hot Springs County (Figure 4.5), Thermopolis is declining while the County population has been holding steady or increasing very slightly.

TABLE 4.4 — THERMOPOLIS POPULATION 2000 TO 2008

Place	Census April 2000 Population	July 1, 2008	% Change April, 2000 to July, 2008
Wyoming	493,782	532,668	7.9
Hot Springs County	4,882	4,622	-5.3
E. Thermopolis	274	264	-3.6
Kirby	57	55	-3.5
Thermopolis	3,172	2,971	-6.3
Balance of County	1,379	1,332	-3.4

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

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Hot Springs County has the highest median age of any county in Wyoming. In 2000, median age in the county was 44.2 years. In Thermopolis, it was slightly lower at 43.5, but in neighboring East Thermopolis the median age was 55 years. Median age for the nation as a whole in 2000 was 35.3 years.

The population nationwide is aging, and based on 2008 census estimates, the median age in Hot Springs County had risen to 49.0 years and a similar increase is likely for Thermopolis (however census does not release median age estimates for towns).

TABLE 4.5 — POPULATION 65 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER IN 2000		
	Number	% of Total
Thermopolis	667	21.0%
East Thermopolis	89	32.5%
Wyoming	57,693	11.7%

Source: Table DP-1 2000, US Census Bureau, Census 2000

Thermopolis and East Thermopolis each also have a much higher percentage of persons aged 65 years and older than does the state or the nation as a whole.

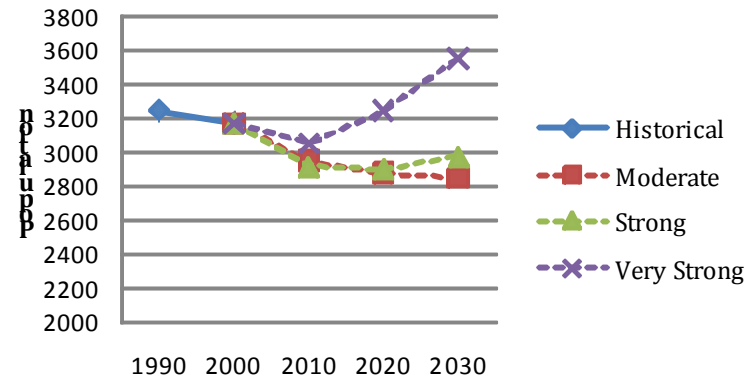
The proportion of persons with disabilities is generally much higher in Thermopolis and East Thermopolis than in the state or nation. In Thermopolis the percentage of non-institutionalized persons 65 years and older is lower than that of Wyoming or the nation. This is likely attributed to the fact that proportionately more individuals are in institutional settings in Thermopolis (4.2% for Thermopolis compared to 1.6% for Wyoming and 1.4% for the nation).

Population in Thermopolis in 2000 was predominately White (96%) and considerably less diverse than the nation (with White population at 69.1%).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

According to projections from the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, the 2030 population of Thermopolis will decline by approximately 300 persons compared to the 2000 census count. The projections are based on historic trends and economic variables. The State develops forecasts for each county and the rates of change are applied to the municipalities. Therefore, the projection for Thermopolis is not specific to the town but simply mirrors that of Hot Springs County, which will also see some population decline.

Figure 4.4 -- Thermopolis Population - Historical (1990 and 2000) and Projected (2010 to 2030)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Wyoming Housing Database Partnership

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

Other population projections have been published for Thermopolis by the Wyoming Housing Database Partnership (Figure 4.4). Two of the three projections predict Thermopolis will have fewer people in 2030 than the town has today. The third projection, aptly named the Very Strong projection, predicts Thermopolis with over 3,500 people in 2030 and the state population increasing from the present 523,000 to 857,000. This third projection would seem a very unlikely scenario.

CONCLUSIONS

New residents are moving into Thermopolis, but overall population has declined in recent decades. Thermopolis and East Thermopolis have a much higher proportion of elderly and disabled individuals

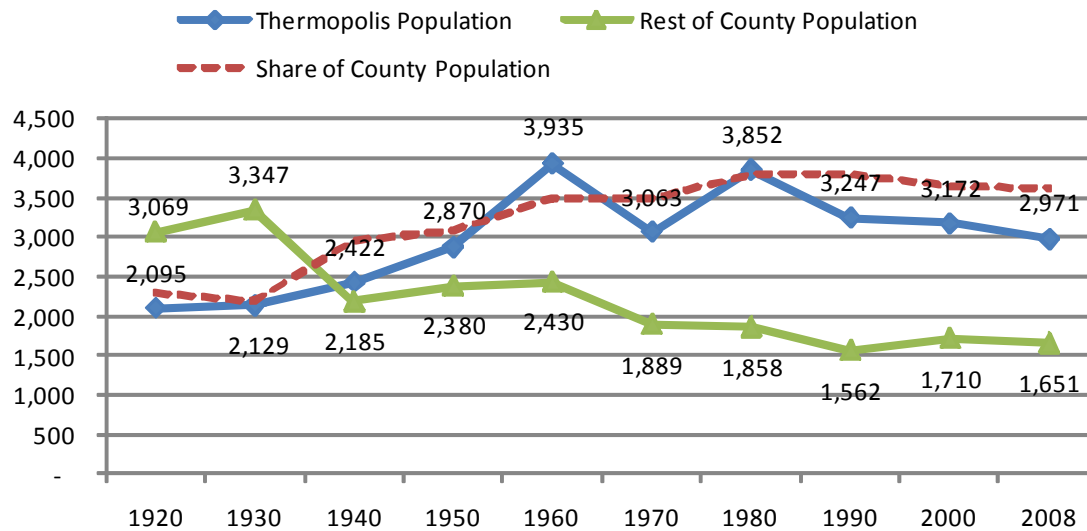
compared to state and national rates.

The population is aging nationwide and Wyoming is predicted to be in the top 6 states in the nation with highest percentages of older residents by 2030. The senior population in Thermopolis will also increase and become proportionately larger in relation to the town's total population.

It is important in community planning to identify population projections and to understand their limitations. The State of Wyoming makes its forecasts using the best available information on population and economic trends. Still, despite best efforts and most current technology, not all future events can be predicted. Therefore, local government should monitor growth and be able to make adjustments to plans if change occurs at much different rates than anticipated.

Moreover, a prediction is not necessarily one's destiny. Thermopolis can alter the course of its future and reverse population decline. Predictions of declining population are useful only to the extent everything about the town stays the same in the future. Thermopolis can take action improve the town and make it a favored location for new residents and businesses and thereby create a climate that fosters population growth.

Figure 4.5 -- Thermopolis Share of County Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

❖ SECTION 4.3 — HOUSING ❖

INTRODUCTION

How much and what kind of housing is available in Thermopolis? What are the existing and future housing needs? When planning future land uses, these questions need to be considered.

In 2006, the Town of Thermopolis hired Pedersen Planning Consultants to prepare a detailed analysis of housing in Thermopolis, East Thermopolis, Kirby, and the rest of Hot Springs County. The Hot Springs County Housing Assessment, completed in December 2006, examined existing and future housing and included recommended action strategies to address anticipated housing needs over a ten year period through 2016.

The following discussion of the Thermopolis housing situation summarizes key findings of the Hot Springs County Housing Assessment and supplements those findings with additional research and analysis.

EXISTING HOUSING

Households and Group Quarters

The U.S. Census Bureau has two general categories for housing type--households or group quarters. The census defines households as a person or group of people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. The number of households equals the number of occupied housing units in a census. Group quarters include non-institutionalized and institutionalized settings. Non-institutionalized quarters include group homes and homeless shelters. People in institutionalized group quarters are under formally authorized, supervised care, or custody.

Thermopolis and East Thermopolis have a much higher proportion of persons in institutionalized quarters than the state or the nation. A total of 145 persons were reported in institutional care in 2000 (133 in Thermopolis and 12 in East Thermopolis).

	Total Population	% in Households	% in Institutional Group Quarters	% in Non-Institutional Group Quarters
United States	281 million	97.2	1.4	1
Wyoming	493,782	97.1	1.6	1.3
Thermopolis	3,172	95.8	4.2	-
East Thermopolis	274	95.6	4.4	-

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Table DP-1.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

HOUSING NUMBERS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Pedersen Associated conducted a windshield survey of every street and alleyway in Thermopolis in July 2006. By this count there were 1,756 housing units in Thermopolis in July 2006, including 192 units in the Pioneer Home and Canyon Village Manor.

In April 2000, 68% of all occupied housing stock in Thermopolis was occupied by persons who owned the home; the remaining 32.3% was occupied by renters. A total of 226 housing units were vacant (US Census 2000). Of these about 22% were vacant because they were for sale, another 17% were vacant because they have part-time or seasonal use. (Pedersen 2006) The vacancy rate for rentals was 12% (US Census 2000). The remaining vacant housing units may be vacant for a variety of reasons, including absent landowner, lack of demand, or substandard conditions that make the unit either undesirable or uninhabitable. Although age is not always an indicator of housing condition, most homes (53%) in Thermopolis were built prior to 1960, so in 2010 are now over 50 years old. (US Census 2000) The Pedersen Study did not include detailed analysis of existing condition of housing stock, but the study did address need for replacement housing in its recommendations.

In July 2006, the Pedersen survey counted 186 housing units in East Thermopolis. Of these 43 were single family detached, 66 were manufactured housing, and 77 were apartment units (with 61 units

at Canyon Village Apartments. (Pederson 2006) East Thermopolis has a very high rental rate, measured at 51 percent of total occupied housing stock in the 2000 census. By comparison, renter occupied units accounted for 34% of all housing nationally and 32% for the state of Wyoming. (US Census 2000)

FUTURE HOUSING

Future housing needs will be affected by various demand factors such as population change, specialized need components (families, seniors, persons with disabilities), cost/affordability; and also by supply factors such as mix of single family, multi-unit, and care facilities, suitability of existing housing stock, and potential for new housing construction.

Future Housing Demand

The Hot Springs County Housing Assessment's future housing demand is based on population projections generated by Pedersen Planning Consultants. These projections are higher than those of the U.S. Census Bureau estimates, the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division's projections (as released in 2008), and the "Very Strong Growth Scenario" of the 2008 Wyoming Housing Needs Forecast (prepared for the Wyoming Housing Database Partnership). Pedersen projected Thermopolis's population in 2016 at 3,576. The Wyoming Economic Analysis Division estimated the 2016 population at 2,897, a

TABLE 4.7 — HOUSING UNIT COUNT FROM THE 2006 HOT SPRINGS COUNTY HOUSING ASSESSMENT

HOUSING STOCK BY NUMBER AND TYPE OF HOUSING UNITS TOWN OF THERMOPOLIS 2006

Stick-Built Single Family Detached	Single Family Manufactured Housing	Single Family Attached*	Apartment Units	Total
1,177	200	83	296	1,756

*Note: Single family attached units include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and townhomes. Source: Pedersen Planning Consultants, 2006

difference of approximately 679 persons.

Based on Pedersen Planning Consultants' population projections and formulas for determining need for additional housing units, 96 new housing units would be needed in Thermopolis by 2016. These would be additional to the 1,756 units of the 2006 baseline survey. In addition to the 96 new units, the model assumes that approximately 16-18 existing houses per year would be significantly rehabilitated or be replaced with a new residence on the same property.

Pedersen Planning Consultants also projected special needs demands. An additional 21 independent living units, 30 additional assisted living units, and 58 additional nursing home units would be needed by 2016. Pedersen indicated there would be 1,078 residents with disabilities in Hot Springs County by 2016, an increase of 122 persons compared to the 2000 Census.

The Hot Springs County Housing Assessment examined housing affordability. Based on average residential sales price of \$88,653 in Thermopolis during 2004 and 2005, the study indicates that the average priced home would be affordable to a two-income household, assuming no debt/credit problems and sufficient savings for a down payment.

Since the time the Housing Assessment was conducted, it may have become more difficult for the workforce and lower income households to afford housing. Information from the 2009 Profile of Wyoming Demographics, Economics, and Housing indicates that housing prices rose sharply in Hot Springs County after 2005. Average housing price in the county in 2006 was \$122,544, up nearly 26% from the 2005 average price of \$97,453. Prices rose more slowly in 2007 (2.5%) and 2008 (6%) to an average housing price of \$133,421.

Information from the 2000 census also indicates that roughly one in six households spent 30% or more of total household income on housing. A housing cost burden is defined as spending 30 to 50% of household income on housing. A severe cost burden is experienced

if more than 50% of income is spent on housing. In 1999, 17% of all homeowners and 28% of all renters in Thermopolis had a cost burden or severe cost burden. In East Thermopolis, 42% of all homeowners and 15% of all renters had cost burdens. (US Census 2000, Table DP-4)

Future Housing Supply

The 2006 Hot Spring County Housing Assessment identified residential expansion areas in Thermopolis and East Thermopolis. In Thermopolis, the identified expansion areas totaled 34 acres and could potentially accommodate 100 new housing units. It was noted however that some of the expansion areas may not be attractive to residential development because of utility easement restrictions, electric power lines, and in some cases soil characteristics undesirable for structural foundations. The expansion area in East Thermopolis was almost 30 acres (east of the Wyoming Dinosaur Center and south of the platted portion of the community). The most likely expansion area for the unincorporated area of the county was identified as the area south of Thermopolis (refer to Figure 4-6 excerpted from the Housing Assessment).

The Housing Assessment also indicated need for significant rehabilitation or replacement of approximately 10 percent of the total housing stock.

PROGRESS TOWARD STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2006 Hot Springs County Housing Assessment included recommended strategies for senior housing, residential expansion areas, housing considerations for persons with disabilities, replacement and rehabilitation of sub-standard housing, and lower income and affordable housing. The Thermopolis Housing Committee has identified affordable rental housing the number one priority and is working with the Wyoming Housing Network to that end. (Strausborger)

CONCLUSIONS

Thermopolis is unique in many respects—but the mineral hot springs and relatively mild and very dry climate make it stand out and likely account for the higher than average senior population and resultant senior housing needs. Thermopolis’s unusually high proportion of residents living in care facilities is a unique housing consideration as is the very large ratio of persons with disabilities in the community.

These factors and overall demand for housing were considered in the 2006 Hot Springs County Housing Assessment. Projected housing demand in the Assessment is higher than projections made in 2008 by the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division and Wyoming Database Partnership, including the Very Strong projection. The housing demand predicted by the 2006 Assessment seem highly unlikely to materialize. However, the Assessment’s recommended strategies make sense for a range of future housing demands. Even without increased population and overall increased housing demand, shifts in demographics (e.g., more senior residents, greater proportion of lower income workforce residents) as well as aging and deteriorating housing stock will create new housing needs. The strategies for addressing housing rehabilitation, lower income affordable housing, and considering needs of seniors and disabled populations will likely be needed in any future housing scenario.

❖ SECTION 4.4 — PUBLIC SERVICES ❖

INTRODUCTION

Public Services in Thermopolis include general government, law enforcement, fire prevention and suppression, medical and health services, senior services, recreation, other social services, education, and public library.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Thermopolis is the Hot Springs County seat. There are also some state and federal offices in Thermopolis.

Thermopolis Town Government

Town offices are located at 420 Broadway. Thermopolis has a Mayor-Council form of government. There are four council members. The mayor also serves as Chief Executive Officer (Town Administrator). The Assistant to the Mayor helps with day-to-day administrative affairs of the Town and is responsible to the Mayor and Council for making sure their directives are carried out. The Town maintains an active website with general information, contacts, city code, and links to other cities.

Departments and Services

- Public Works
- Clerk/Treasurer
- Police
- Codes Administration
- Engineering
- Economic Development
- Legal (Town Attorney/Municipal Court)

Hot Springs County

Hot Springs County offices are located at 415 Arapahoe, Thermopolis. The county has a Commissioner form of government with three County Commissioners. The county has a website with general information, contacts, planning documents, and links to other websites.

Departments and Services

- Agricultural Extension Service
- Airport
- Assessor
- County Attorney
- Circuit court
- Clerk
- Clerk of Court
- District Judge
- Emergency management
- Fairgrounds
- Family Services
- Fire District
- Library
- Museum and Cultural Center
- Planning
- Public Health
- Roads and Bridges
- Sheriff
- Treasurer

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

State

The State of Wyoming's presence in Thermopolis is primarily tied to the State Park (with employees involved in Park Management) and the Wyoming Pioneer Home. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has a game warden's residence in Thermopolis.

Federal

Federal offices in Thermopolis include the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Post Office.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Thermopolis Police Department serves Thermopolis and East Thermopolis. The department has eight professional sworn officers and six civilian employees. The Thermopolis Police Department is located at the Joint Law Enforcement Center, which is shared with Hot Springs County Sheriff's Department. (Town of Thermopolis website)

Thermopolis had 74 index crime offenses in 2008. According to the "Crime in Wyoming Annual Report," index crimes include violent crimes (murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault) or serious property crimes (burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft). The index crime rate per 10,000 inhabitants in Thermopolis was 231.6, compared to 299.1 statewide. (State of Wyoming, Office of Attorney General)

FIRE PROTECTION

The Hot Springs County Rural Fire Protection District is a taxing district and funding entity, with three elected board members. The Rural Fire Protection District has a 75 year contract with Thermopolis (with 72 years remaining in the contract at the time of this report) and contracts annually with East Thermopolis and Kirby. (Anderson) The Thermopolis Volunteer Fire Department is funded through the

Rural Fire Protection District and provides fire protection throughout the entire county.

The Thermopolis Volunteer Fire Department is headquartered at 400 South 14th Street in a building constructed in the last two years. The Department consists of 25 all-volunteer fire fighters, 13 of whom are fully trained and equipped as the state's Region 6 hazardous materials response team.

Although the department was down to a low of 18 volunteers three years ago, new residents have come to volunteer and most of the rookies have considerable previous fire-fighting experience. Personal fire protection and hazardous materials gear is new, not more than two years old. The Fire Department has mostly new equipment and has no current needs. (Collins)

HEALTH CARE

Thermopolis is the health care center for the county. The town has a

TABLE 4.8 -- THERMOPOLIS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT CALLS: 2009

10 – 50 (Motor vehicle accident)	27
False alarm	20
Vehicle fire	5
Structure	7
Grass (510 acres burned)	27
Good intent/Service	14
Hazardous Materials	7
Dumpster	2
Downed power lines	2
River/lake rescue	1
Total calls	112
Calls within Thermopolis	58

Source: Collins

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

hospital, nursing home and assisted living facilities, counseling services, and a chiropractic clinic. There are six local doctors and three dentists. (Thermopolis EDC)

Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital

Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital is a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital. The hospital provides a number of services including the following:

- Emergency Services
- Inpatient Care
- Outpatient Care
- Imaging
- Chemotherapy Services
- Laboratory Services
- Obstetrics
- Diabetic Education
- Physician Specialty Clinics
- Hot Springs Bone and Joint Center
- Cardiopulmonary Services
- General Surgery/Ambulatory Services
- Sleep Diagnostics Lab
- Pain Management Solutions

(Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital)

Gottsche Rehabilitation and Wellness Center

The Gottsche Rehabilitation and Wellness Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to treating crippling conditions. Now run by a 25 member board of citizens throughout Wyoming, the center began in 1954 with donations from William H. and Carrie Gottsche. The Gottsche's daughter was stricken with polio and they believed she benefitted most from her treatments at the Hot Springs. The Center

offers physical, occupational, speech, psychological, and massage therapies. The Wellness Center began in 2002 as a small department for post therapy patients, but has grown into a community wide fitness and wellness center. (Gottsche Rehabilitation)

Assisted Living and Nursing Home Care

The Wyoming Pioneer Home provides assisted living licensed by the state of Wyoming. (Wyoming Department of Health) In order to qualify, individuals must be 55 years of age or older, able to ambulate themselves to and from the restroom, as well as dress on their own, only needing minimal help with buttons, socks or shoes. Assistance with some Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) is provided. (Wyoming Pioneer Home)

Canyon Hills Manor is an 80-bed nursing home. (Town of Thermopolis)

Emergency/Ambulance Services

Ambulance services are provided by a private company (Collins). The Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital provides emergency medical care.

Mental Health Care

Hot Springs County Counseling Services was incorporated as a non-profit entity in 1979. They provide mental health, substance abuse and prevention services. Adult services include individual and group therapy, medication management, psychiatric consultation, vocational rehabilitation, case management, and consultation and referral services. Children and family services include many of the same interventions as adult services and also include family-based assessments, therapeutic foster care, and play therapy. They have therapists that specialize in treating children and their families. (Hot Springs County Counseling)

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

Big Horn Enterprises, Inc. provides services, employment, and residential facilities to individuals with developmental disabilities. (Town of Thermopolis)

SENIOR SERVICES

The Hot Springs County Senior Center is located at 206 Senior Avenue in Thermopolis. The Center provides meals, in-home services including homemaking and personal care, transportation, senior companions, info and assistance, shopping, letter writing and reading, recreational activities, social security and insurance assistance. (Wyoming Department of Health – Aging Division)

RECREATION

(The following is excerpted from the Hot Springs County Recreation District website.)

Hot Springs County Recreation District was established in 1986 by the Board of Trustees of Hot Springs County School District #1 to provide a system of public recreation for the residents of Hot Springs County and the surrounding area.

The Recreation District offers programs and activities for youth and adults. Youth programs include: soccer, arts & crafts, t-ball, baseball, golf lessons and tournaments, tennis lessons, volleyball, football, and basketball. The Recreation District teams up with the high school coaching staffs to offer volleyball, basketball, and football camps during the summer months. Special youth events include the Junior Olympic Skills Competition and the Aquafina Pitch, Hit & Run Competition.

Adult programs include: watercize classes (held at the Star Plunge), coed softball league, coed volleyball leagues

(competitive and recreation), golf lessons and clinics, adult basketball league, Together In Art, and flag football league.

EDUCATION

Hot Springs County Public School District

Public schools in Thermopolis are in the Hot Springs County Public School District #1. There are three schools:

- ◆ Ralph Witters Elementary (215 Springview Street). Kindergarten through 4th grade; 305 students; 12:1 student/teacher ratio.
- ◆ Thermopolis Middle School (1450 Valleyview Dr.). Grades 5-8; 150 students; 9:1 student/teacher ratio.
- ◆ Thermopolis High School (231 Park St). Grades 9-12; 185 students, 9:1 student/teacher ratio.

(Hot Springs County School District)

Big Horn Basin Children's Center

The Big Horn Basin Children's Center provides educational and residential services to emotionally disturbed and behavior-disordered students (ages 6-14) and to youth with developmental disabilities, medically fragile, traumatic brain injuries and/or multiple disabilities (ages 6-21). (Big Horn Basin Children's Center)

Post-Secondary Education

Central Wyoming College, a two-year community college located in Riverton, has an off-campus site in Thermopolis. (Central Wyoming College) Central Wyoming College is one of the seven community colleges in the Wyoming system. (Wyoming Community Colleges)

LIBRARY

The Hot Springs County Library is located at 344 Arapahoe with cata-

log information available on the internet (Hot Springs County Library). The County library had the following rankings among Wyoming's 23 counties in 2008 (the most recent year for which information is available):

- 2nd books per capita
- 3rd program attendance (children)
- 3rd program attendance per capita (all ages)
- 6th per capital circulation (children's)
- 13th per capita circulation (all ages)
- 17th operating expenditures per capita

(Wyoming State Library)

CONCLUSIONS

Thermopolis has a considerable amount of public services for a town with a population of approximately 3,000 people. Some of these resources are linked to the fact that Thermopolis is the county seat, the school district headquarters, and medical facilities interlinked to some extent with the mineral hot springs. The town's public schools have a very favorable student/teacher ratio. The town has considerable organized recreation through the Hot Springs County Recreation District

Thermopolis has significant public services, particularly health care, education, senior services, and recreation. These are desirable factors for newcomers with children as well as for seniors looking for quality retirement lifestyle.

❖ SECTION 4.5 — INFRASTRUCTURE ❖

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews Thermopolis's infrastructure in terms of the capability to support growth and development of the town. Infrastructure, including the water system, wastewater treatment, drainage, electrical power, natural gas, telecommunications, and solid waste management are the backbone of the town. (Transportation infrastructure is discussed in the separate Transportation Chapter.) The condition of infrastructure usually controls what can happen in any given community. New infrastructure, when it is well planned in terms of the design, cost, and timing, will have a strong influence on proper development of the town.

TREATED WATER SYSTEM

Thermopolis's water system is generally capable of supporting additional growth and development. However, a number of improvements to the system are necessary to maintain the system and prepare it for future growth.

The water system has been extensively studied by the Town's engineers. Most of the information presented here to describe the water system is from the 255-page report, *Thermopolis Storage and Raw Water: Level 2 Study Project Notebook* prepared by Engineering Associates in 2006. Unless otherwise noted, this report is the information source for the following discussion.

Water System Components

Thermopolis has a complex water system for a town of its size. This is due to the terrain, which has necessitated the use of seven different water tanks at different locations and three different pump stations. Water systems for similar-sized communities are usually much

less complex and are easier to operate and maintain. The Town presently charges \$3.05 per 1,000 gallons of water in-town and \$3.78 out-of-town.

Thermopolis's treated water source is the Big Horn River. The water intakes are located on the south end of town at the water plant. The town also uses shallow wells located at the water plant as a supplementary source during high-usage periods (irrigation season). The source waters are filtered and treated at the water plant then pumped to several storage tanks located at higher elevations in the town. The Town has seven storage tanks with a total capacity of 2.1 million gallons. One large storage tank (Old Arapahoe Tank) is about to be replaced at the west end of town.

On an average day, the water system provides 904,000 gallons (628 gallons per minute). The water plant is rated capable of producing 5 million gallons per day (although the poor condition of some existing water mains does reduce this amount by 20-30). The system experiences dramatic increases in water consumption during the summer associated with an influx of tourists and demands for landscape irrigation. Daily usage of 2.9 million gallons per day have occasionally been experienced in recent years.

The water distribution system includes storage tanks and water mains. The Town has adequate storage capacity although there are areas of Town (particularly in the northwest) with fairly low water pressure. The majority of the water pressures in town are good, ranging from 40 -90 pounds per square inch. However, there are areas where pressures for firefighting purposes are inadequate.

The Town's engineers have recommended replacement of all the older asbestos-concrete water mains, which have become brittle and narrowed internally with age. In 2006, the system included over

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

55,000 lineal feet of asbestos-concrete pipe.

Water Rights

The Town has four adjudicated water right permits to divert from the Big Horn River at the water treatment plant with priority dates ranging from 1898 to 1908. The largest permit allows the treatment plant to divert 538 gallons per minute while the other three permits allow a combined diversion of another 543 gallons per minute from April 1 to August 15 each year. The Town maintains 200 acre-feet of operating storage and 1,000 acre-feet of standby storage in Boysen Reservoir. In recent years, the most of the operational storage that was used was 49.1 acre feet in 2004. The Town also holds water rights to divert from the river for the Legion Pipeline used for irrigation at the golf course. Thermopolis water rights coupled with water storage contracts at Boysen Reservoir can exceed the 5 million gallons per day capacity of the water treatment plant. According to the Town's engineers, the Town has ample water rights available to meet current and future needs.

Irrigation

Treated water is used for landscaping irrigation in Thermopolis because the town does not have a separate raw water system. The only exceptions are Riverside Cemetery and the Legion Golf Course, which have separate raw water systems. The town's engineers have investigated the idea of expanding the golf course raw water irrigation system to irrigate large lawn areas in town such as the high school football field and Monument Hill Cemetery. Expansion of the raw water system to irrigate areas currently irrigated with treated water would reduce the demand for treated water (by an estimated 11%) and thereby relieve stress on the water treatment plant. The raw water expansion project was estimated to cost \$2.9 million in 2007.

The Town's engineers have estimated the seasonal variation in

treated water usage. On the average summer day, the town uses 1.24 million gallons while in the winter the daily average is only 0.57 million gallons. By attributing some of the difference to tourist usage, engineers have estimated that irrigation usage of treated water is 0.53 million gallons per day. The engineers also note the importance of maintaining the existing raw water irrigation systems--the treated water system is not capable of producing enough water to substitute for the existing raw water usage. Upkeep and improvement of the existing raw water systems is important to avoid reverting to treated water for irrigating the golf course and Riverside Cemetery.

Out-of-Town Service

Besides serving the in-town population of about 3,000 people (equivalent to 1,880 water services), the town provides water to areas outside the town limits.

The out-of-town water users, who generally do not use the water for landscape irrigation, accounted for 11 percent of the average daily water demand (2003-2005).

TABLE 4.9 -- OUT-OF-TOWN WATER SYSTEM

Service Area	Households Served
Town of East Thermopolis	123
Town of Kirby	37
Lucerne Water & Sewer District	117
Red Lane Domestic Water, Inc.	48
South Thermopolis Water & Sewer District	111
TOTAL	436

Planned Projects

The Town's engineers have evaluated the current water system for its ability to serve a town population of 4,024 people in the year

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

2035 (this is over 1,000 more people than the current population). This has resulted in a number of recommended improvements:

Water Tanks:

- ◆ Replace its existing 1920s-era 500,000 gallon storage tank (Old Arapahoe St. Tank) with a new 500,000 gallon tank at the location of the existing "Airport Tank" on Airport Road.
- ◆ Add two 250,000-gallon tanks west of Round Top Mountain, which will increase usable storage, correct several deficiencies in the water system on the north side of Thermopolis, and facilitate development near the airport. This project is expected to be completed in 2011.
- ◆ Add a small (20,000 gallon) tank next to the existing 50,000 gallon tank for the Cedar Ridge area.

Water Line Replacements:

- ◆ Replace existing water lines in the 14th Street and Meadowlark Lane to improve fire flows
- ◆ New water lines connecting the new Round Top tanks to the existing system.

In addition, there are three out-of-town projects proposed which would impact the Thermopolis water system:

- ◆ Owl Creek: Property owners in the Owl Creek area have formed a new water district with the intention of providing rural water service to the area. The project will extend water service from Thermopolis to 31 households at a cost of \$4.7 million. (Independent Record) The project will be capable of serving future growth in the Owl Creek area ultimately serving about 200 residences.
- ◆ South Thermopolis: The South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District is planning on expanding water service within its dis-

trict. A new water storage tank and water mains will serve homes in the district that presently do not have service or are having water supply problems. The project will potentially provide service to 48 additional homes at a cost of \$4.8 million. (Overfield) The project is designed to ultimately allow the district to double the population it presently serves.

- ◆ Regional Water System: The Big Horn Regional Water System is a multi-county water system that ties together the water systems of communities from Greybull to Kirby and Worland. Thermopolis opted out of the system during the planning stage in 2006. Because the Kirby and Lucerne water systems will be served from the Regional system within the next two years, Thermopolis will no longer provide water to the 154 services in those districts. (Overfield)

WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM

Wastewater in Thermopolis is collected is collected by a network of sewer lines and then is treated at the Town's wastewater treatment plan. Over three-quarters of town sewer lines (97,000 lineal feet) are old "vitrified clay" pipe which need repair or replacement. Newer plastic pipe comprises about one-quarter of the sewer lines (29,000 lineal feet) and these are primarily located along the major highways. The older vitrified clay sewer lines are located in most residential areas and in much of the downtown.

The Town has begun replacing the vitrified clay lines. An on-going project to replace 10,000 feet of clay line was begun last year (2009) and is expected to be completed this [year](#) .

The sewer lines all flow by gravity alone to the old sewage treatment plant location on North Second Street. From there untreated sewage is pumped uphill to the new treatment plant.

The town's wastewater treatment plant was relocated in 2006 to a peninsula on the east side of the Big Horn River. The plant is a la-

goon-type system. The plant was designed and constructed to accommodate a substantial amount of growth--one percent increase per year for 30 years. Plant capacity is more than adequate for any growth that Thermopolis is likely to experience.

STORMWATER DRAINAGE

Thermopolis, with average annual precipitation of about 12 inches, does not have a town-wide stormwater drainage system. Storm sewers are in place along the major highways. Storm sewers are also found in the downtown area along Arapahoe, Broadway, and Warren Streets.

The town has several natural drainage channels that carry stormwater off the surrounding hills. These are zoned as open space where all development including filling, grading, and excavation are regulated. In the Candy Jack draw, about 4,000 feet of 108" diameter pipe from 14th Street to the river was laid and covered over after floods in 1967 and 1973 damaged over 100 homes. (Milek) There are open drainage channels south of Amoretti and Richards Streets as well as two leading south and east off Round Top Mountain.

ELECTRICAL POWER

The electric power company Rocky Mountain Power, a subsidiary of PacifiCorp, provides electrical service in Thermopolis.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

RT Communications of Worland and Bresnan Communications provides broadband telecommunication services to Thermopolis. These services include telephone, television, and high-speed Internet connection services.

NATURAL GAS

Wyoming Gas Company provides natural gas service in Thermopolis.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Town of Thermopolis owns and operates the Thermopolis Landfill located north of the Town of Thermopolis. The landfill is an unlined trench and area fill operation. Under existing conditions, it is estimated that the entire site has a remaining life of approximately 16 years. Solid waste collection services are provided by the Town. Limited recycling services are provided by the Town at the landfill and the public works shop, and by Big Horn Enterprises, a local non-profit organization. (Thermopolis Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan)

❖ SECTION 4.6 — PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ❖

INTRODUCTION

Physical activity and outside recreation is part of an overall healthy lifestyle. As the number of seniors increases and negative health effects of sedentary lifestyle are increasingly understood at a national level, more people are looking for safe and scenic places to walk, bike and recreate outdoors.

HOT SPRINGS STATE PARK

Hot Springs State Park is an integral part of Thermopolis. A large portion of the state park comprises approximately one-fifth of the entire municipal zoned area. The mineral hot spring waters surface in the park and flow over colorful mineralized terraces into the Big Horn River at the rate of 8,000 gallons per day. (Hot Springs State Park and Thermopolis Zoning Map)

The park has many uses, some of which are directly tied to the mineral hot springs. Hot Springs is a day-use park. These include two hotels, two hot springs-water park concessions, state bath house, hiking trails, boat docks, fishing access, gardens and picnic facilities. Other uses include Thermopolis County fairgrounds, Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital/Gottsche Rehabilitation Center, Wyoming Pioneer Home, and Thermopolis High School and Elementary School. (Hot Springs County Real Estate Guide). Gottsche Rehabilitation Center and the County hospital, and the Wyoming Pioneer Home, were built in the state park to take advantage of the hot mineral springs water (Hot Springs County Natural Resources Plan, p 22). The park also is the home of the Wyoming State Parks bison herd. (Hot Springs State Park).

The Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources collects visitor use statistics at 34 sites in Wyoming. Hot Springs State Park is the

giant in terms of visitation among these sites. With 1.2 million visitors counted in 2009, Hot Springs accounted for 45% of total visitation at all 34 sites. (Division of State Parks) Visitor numbers in Hot Springs State Park are tracked with traffic counters placed in the central area of the Park. Counts may thus include some persons traveling to/from the hospital. Visitors who drive directly to the two hotels in the park would not be included in the counts. The fairgrounds, public schools, and other facilities on the west side of the Park are not close to the traffic counters and do not likely affect the total count. (Skates)

A random sample survey of 652 Hot Springs State Park visitors in May-October 2009 indicated that this was the first-time visit for 63% of all visitors. The other 37% indicated they visit the park on average six times per year. It was the main destination for 28% of the visitors. Forty-one percent of all visitors include an overnight stop as part of their visit. (Wyoming State Parks)

THERMOPOLIS MUNICIPAL PARKS

The town of Thermopolis has four municipal parks. Bicentennial Park is located in the downtown retail area. Candy Jack Park is located on the west end of the town near the Thermopolis Middle School. Both have picnic areas and Candy Jack has new tennis courts. Family Park on Broadway and N. 12th and _____ Park on Fremont Street on the east side of town are small neighborhood parks.

The town owns the nine-hole golf course at the north end of town, but leases operations to the Legion Town and Country Club, Inc. The ten year operating agreement expires in May 2010. (Stansill)

OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL SYSTEMS

In the southwestern portion of the town, there are five different areas zoned as open space. These non-contiguous parcels fall within drainages that carry stormwater. There are similar open space areas on the south side of Round Top Mountain and generally surrounded by agricultural zoned area.

Louis Freudenthal County Park includes Round Top Mountain just north of Thermopolis. The 2002 Hot Springs County land use plan identifies Round Top Mountain as well-used hiking area and recommends it continue to be used as such and that surrounding lands remain agricultural and open rather than developed as residential. (Hot Springs County Land Use Plan)

The trail system in Hot Springs State Park extends along the east side of the Big Horn River into East Thermopolis. Currently there are no municipal plans to develop or extend trail systems in Thermopolis. (Stansill)

The Hot Springs County Natural Resources Plan addresses non-motorized trails in two different goals - one promoting hiking trails on public lands to improve overall health of residents and visitors and another recommending bicycle-pedestrian trails along state highways and county roads. (Hot Springs County Natural Resources Plan)

CONCLUSIONS

Thermopolis includes the mineral hot springs area of Hot Springs State Park, which provides unique opportunities for health-related outdoor recreation, as well as manicured lawn and flower gardens that rival those of parks in large metropolitan areas. The State Park is a significant and large tract of land with many trails, but trails along the Big Horn River extend only a short way outside of the park south along the eastern side into East Thermopolis. The County has goals for promoting/developing trail systems. The town has linear areas

designated as open space that might have potential for incorporation into larger trail systems, but at this time there is no comprehensive municipal trails plan to coordinate trail efforts in and outside of Thermopolis.

It is interesting to note that over 25% of the Town of Thermopolis is park land (this is counting the part of the State Park that is within the Town limits). Most area towns have less park land. Even towns with large municipal parks have proportionately less park land — Cody has about 18% of its land in parks and Buffalo has 15%. Great cities have lots of parkland with the prime example of Paris, France, which is one-third parkland.

Thermopolis has not needed to have extensive town parks because of the presence of the State Park. However, Thermopolis should strive to maintain its high amount of parkland. To help ensure this happens, the Town should be sure new developments, especially if located away from existing parks, include land reservations for new parks.

❖ SECTION 4.7 — TRANSPORTATION ❖

This section describes Thermopolis’s transportation facilities—the town’s street system, sidewalks, and the local airport. Each of these is important to the future growth and development of Thermopolis.

TOWN STREET SYSTEM

The street system in Thermopolis consists of town-maintained streets and state-maintained highways. U.S. Highway 20 runs north-south through town mostly in a four-lane configuration, although it is five-lanes west of 8th Street. Wyoming Highway 120 enters town from the west as a five-lane street before it joins with U.S. 20.

Town-maintained streets are typically have a 100-foot wide right-of-way. Most of the streets in Thermopolis are paved. Most town streets two 12-foot driving lanes, two 8-foot or 10-foot parking lanes, curb and gutter, and sidewalk on one or both sides. These streets are typically 44-48 feet wide, from the back of the curb on one side to the back of the curb on the other. Broadway Street, east of 6th Street is a wider town-maintained street with a 150-foot right-of-way and paved width of about 110 feet.

In terms of a maintenance program, the Town works to patch potholes and other deteriorated areas throughout the summer and fall each year with their own equipment and manpower. When funding is available, the Town also tries to have some crack sealing completed each fall and some micro-surfacing done each summer.

The Town has completed crack sealing and micro-surfacing projects in three out of the last four years. Each project consisted of 15-20 blocks each. The Town does not have a long-term maintenance plan. Each time the Town finds funding to complete a project, Town engineers and the Town Public Works Department coordinate to determine the most critical locations for street improvement. This decision

is based on the conditions of the streets, the amount of funding available, and the Town’s ability to complete patching work prior to resurfacing.

STREET MASTER PLAN

The 1978 Thermopolis Plan contained a street master plan. The designated three types of streets—arterials, collectors, and minor streets.

- ◆ U.S. 20 and Wyoming Highway 120 were designated as arterials.
- ◆ Streets designated as major collectors were Chevy Chase Circle, Arapahoe, 2nd, Parkview, Senior, 7th north of Park, 8th between Shoshone and Broadway, 12th between Amoretti and Broadway Streets.
- ◆ Streets designated as minor collector streets were 14th, Amoretti, Broadway, and Park Streets.
- ◆ All other town streets were local streets

SUBDIVISION STREETS

The Town also has the responsibility of setting street construction standards for new subdivision within the town as well as for those within one-mile of the town.

The Town’s subdivision regulations specify that subdivision streets shall be of adequate width and have surfacing to carry their anticipated traffic load. Specific standards for widths, grades, and surfacing shall be set by the Town Council for each street based on its function within the subdivision and the town. A utilities right of way of seven feet shall be provided behind the curb line on all streets and

roads.

When reviewing subdivisions, the Town should consider allowing streets that are not as wide as existing town streets. Wide streets have some advantages including ability to handle relatively high traffic volumes at relatively high speeds and plenty of space for parking. Wide streets have significant disadvantages including: higher construction cost (which can get passed on to lot buyers), higher maintenance costs, less land in private ownership, and encouraging speeding in residential areas. Subdivision streets can be narrower without sacrificing their function as local streets. Recommended widths range from 22 to 36 feet depending on the anticipated traffic volume.

SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks line most streets in Thermopolis. Sidewalks are an important part in creating a walkable and livable community. Thermopolis has done well over time to be sure the town has an adequate sidewalk system.

Deficiencies in the sidewalk system are being addressed through the Safe Routes to School program. The Wyoming Department of Transportation has recently approved the Town's Safe Routes to School plan, which puts the Town in position to obtain grant funding for sidewalk improvements. The Town should also ensure that new developments provide sidewalks.

THERMOPOLIS AIRPORT

The Hot Springs County—Thermopolis Municipal Airport is located just outside the town limits on Airport Road. The airport has a 100' by 4,800' asphalt runway, which is 118' higher on its south end. The entire facility will soon be replaced by a new airport to be located about 10 miles northwest of town.

RAILROAD

The BNSF (Burlington Northern and Santa Fe) Railway north-south line runs from Casper through Thermopolis and on to Billings, Montana. The BNSF is a class 1 railway, meaning it is the largest class of railway in terms of company operating revenues (Surface Transportation Board, 2010).

❖ SECTION 4.8 — ENVIRONMENT ❖

This section concern the resources that constitute the environment of Thermopolis and have bearing on the future growth and development of the town. These include the natural resources that constrain the town’s development pattern—the hot springs, flood plains, steep slopes, and scenic resources. This section also discusses a man-made resource that is a significant part of the environment of Thermopolis—its historic buildings.

HOT SPRINGS

Thermopolis is blessed with great natural resources, resources that profoundly affect the character of the town. First among these are the mineral hot springs. The mineral hot springs produce 3.5 million gallons per day of mineral-rich water at a temperature of 127 degrees F. Investigations into possible declining water production did not find any evidence of declining flows and that the perceived decline in flow is actually due to increased seepage losses at surface ponds rather than declining spring flow. (Lidstone)

FLOOD PLAINS

Floodplains in Thermopolis have been mapped as part of the National Flood Insurance Program. The flood plain is divided into various flood zone each with different levels of flood risk.

- ◆ Zone AE is the 100-year flood hazard area—this is the area that having a 1-percent chance of being inundated by flood event in any given year. There are 28 acres in Zone AE in Thermopolis.
- ◆ Floodway is the means the channel of a river or other water-course and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the flood waters. There are 134 acres in

the floodway in Thermopolis including nearly all of the water treatment plant and waste water treatment lagoons site.

- ◆ Zone X is the 500-year flood hazard areas; and areas in the 100-year flood plain with average flood water depths of less than one foot; and areas protected by levees from 100-year floods. There are 153 acres in Zone X in Thermopolis.

No floodplain mapping is available for areas outside the town limits. Unmapped floodplains exist in other areas as well including drainage draws like Odde Draw and Candy Jack Draw.

The Town of Thermopolis participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. The program makes reduced-cost flood insurance available for properties in Thermopolis provide the Town adopts and enforces a local floodplain management program that meets federal guidelines. Thermopolis’s program applies to new buildings or substantial modifications of existing building located within the mapped floodplain. Any such construction project must be “flood-proofed” using specific construction techniques or be elevated to minimize the potential for flood damage.

STEEP SLOPES

There are significant areas of steep slopes in and around Thermopolis. The slopes in this map are characterized as low, moderate or steep based on percent of slope. Low slope is 10% or less; moderate is more than 10% but less than 25%; and steep slope is over 25%.

These slope categories relate to development potential. Low slopes (10% or less) are the best suited for development. Moderate slopes can present significant problems for construction of roads and larger building foundations. Steep slopes (over 25%) are even more difficult to develop and many communities restrict development on

these slopes or require special mitigation measures.

SCENIC RESOURCES

The hills around Thermopolis provide a special scenic backdrop for the man-made parts of town. Round Top Mountain, T Hill, and Monument Hill are prominent at close range. Mountains forming the mid-range backdrop include Stagner Mountain and Cooper Mountain. And in some parts of town, in the far distance the southern Big Horns over 40 miles away are plainly visible.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts recognized by the National Park Service for their importance to local, state, and national history. Properties may be recognized for their outstanding architectural, archaeological, and cultural qualities. The National Register was created to encourage public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect significant historic and archaeological resources.

Thermopolis has several individual buildings on the national register as well as one district:

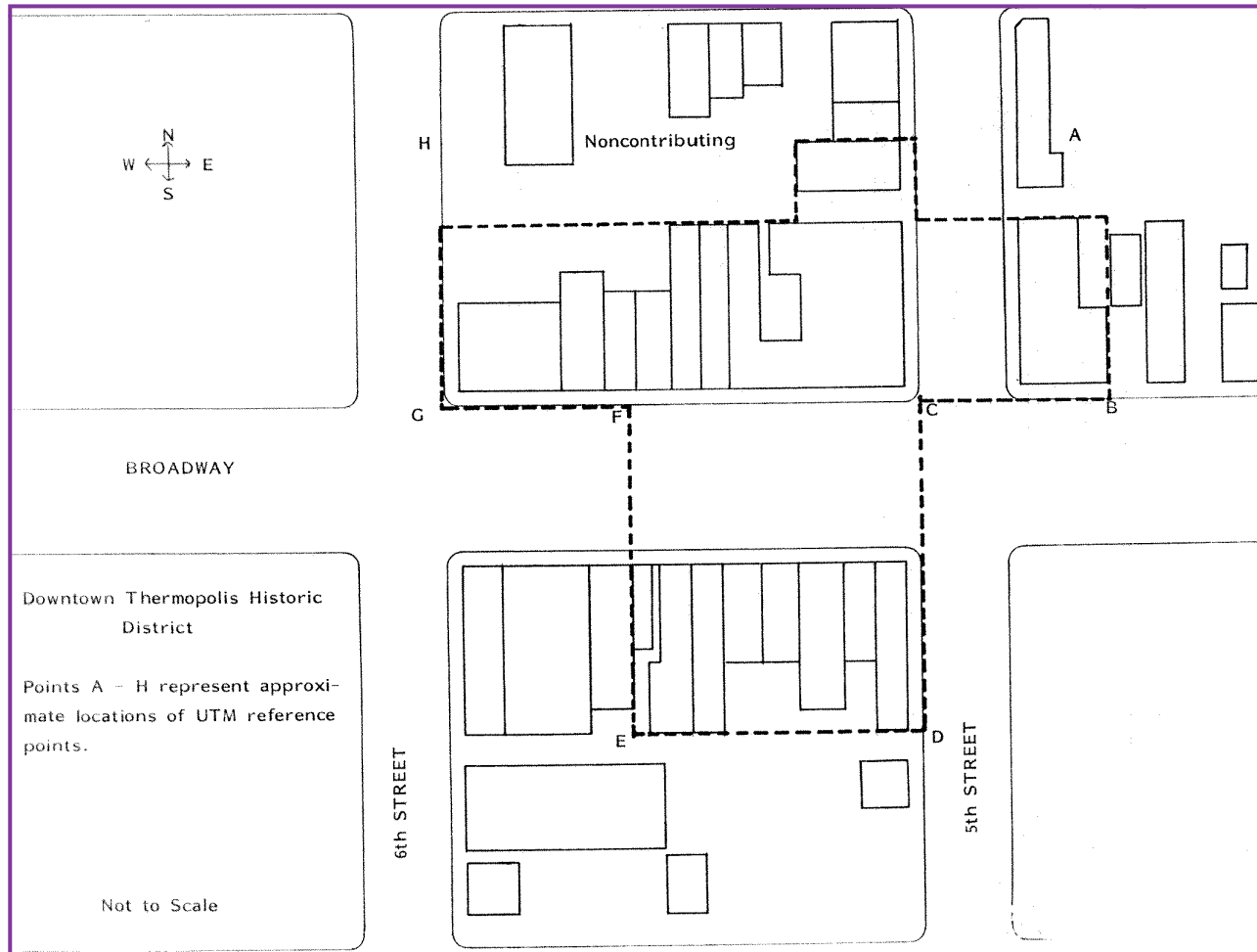
- ◆ Alex Halone House
- ◆ Callaghan (Plaza) Apartments and Hotel
- ◆ Thermopolis Main Post Office
- ◆ Thermopolis Downtown Historical District (see district map, next page)

The Federal Government offers a program of tax incentives to support the rehabilitation of historic and non-historic buildings for income-producing purposes. Tax credits are available to property owners. A 20 percent Federal Tax Credit, is available for substantial reha-

bilitation of a certified historic structure whose end use is income-producing.

Any property listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places is considered historic. Federal law requires that every federal agency "take into account" how each of its undertakings could affect historic properties. This applies to any project, activity, or program funded in whole or in part under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a federal agency.

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN



Source: National Register of Historic Places, Inventory—Nomination Form, Thermopolis Historic District, on file at Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Cheyenne, WY.

❖ SECTION 4.9 — REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ❖

INTRODUCTION

The regulatory framework refers to the local laws and regulations that are intended to influence land and building usage and development in the Thermopolis area. This regulatory framework is an important consideration in local planning. Thermopolis has codified ordinances passed by the Town Council. These are incorporated into a single document entitled “The Code of the Town of Thermopolis.” A large portion of Hot Springs State Park, comprised of state lands, lies within the town boundaries and is generally guided by a different set of rules and guidelines. Outside of the town boundaries, the rules and policies of adjoining East Thermopolis and Hot Springs County are in effect.

THERMOPOLIS

Thermopolis Town Code is dated July 14, 2008 and includes ordinances passed through April 15, 2008. The entire code is available on the town’s website.

The Code has 15 different chapters:

- ◆ General Provisions
- ◆ Administration
- ◆ Alcoholic Beverages
- ◆ Animal and Fowl
- ◆ Building Regulations
- ◆ Courts, Fines, Imprisonment, and Police
- ◆ Engineering Requirements
- ◆ Fire Prevention and Protection
- ◆ Licenses and Franchises
- ◆ Motor Vehicles and Traffic
- ◆ Offense – Miscellaneous

- ◆ Peddlers and Transient Merchants
- ◆ Subdivisions
- ◆ Water, Sewer and Sanitation
- ◆ Zoning

There is no time schedule for incorporating new ordinances into the code. Until such time as ordinances are codified, they are kept in a separate file (Crosby).

Of particular interest for land use are the chapters on building regulations; engineering requirements; subdivisions; water, sewer and sanitation; and zoning.

Building Regulations

A town permit is needed for any proposed project to build, construct, alter, move, improve, remove, repair, convert, demolish or locate any building or structure or appurtenances. Building regulations address fire code, mechanical code, plumbing code, building conservation, dangerous buildings, mobile homes, flood damage protection, and above-ground storage tanks. Generally, the codes incorporate the International Building Code (IBC), and in cases of conflict between the Town code and IBC, the more restrictive applies. Codes are administered and enforced by the Town Code Administrator. The flood damage protection section is essentially the town’s floodplain ordinance incorporated into code.

Engineering Requirements

This chapter of the code establishes the office of Town Engineer and Surveyor, which is responsible for supervising and superintending the construction of municipal works, sidewalks, sewers, paving, grading, water works, electrical works and other municipal works. This chap-

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

ter sets standards for excavations; sanitary sewers and water mains; other utilities; streets, curbs, sidewalks, gutters, and alleys.

Subdivision Regulations

A subdivision is defined by the code as, “The division of a tract or parcel of land into three or more parts for the purpose, whether immediate or future, of sale or of building development.” This chapter describes the process for subdividing property within the Town and establishes standards (such as for utilities, streets, water and sewage, etc.). The Planning and Zoning Commission review subdivision applications and make a recommendation to the Town Council, which then makes the final decision.

The first article of this chapter is entitled “Utilities, Extensions and Annexation Policies.” This section clarifies that no Town water and sewer services shall extend beyond the corporate limits, except where there is a joint powers agreement or other agreement acceptable to the Council. Annexation is not specified as a condition of approval for extension of utilities. Annexation is referenced once later in the chapter as follows:

13.308. “...The subdivider shall dedicate all surface water rights appurtenant to the property subdivided as well as shares in canals and ditches to the Town before annexation.”

The only other specific reference to annexation is in the chapter on zoning, which states in section 15.105 that, “Petitions for annexation shall be accompanied by a written request for a zoning designation for the proposed addition.”

Zoning

The Town is divided into 11 zoning districts:

- ◆ Low Density Residential
- ◆ Medium Density Residential
- ◆ General Residential

- ◆ Redevelopment (Currently there is no Redevelopment District. This is a special purpose district that will be mapped to facilitate the public or private redevelopment of a blighted area where housing quality and values are continually deteriorating or to facilitate a planned unit development (PUD) of unimproved land.)
- ◆ Central Business
- ◆ Highway Business
- ◆ Industrial
- ◆ Agricultural
- ◆ Open Space
- ◆ Residential Estate
- ◆ State Park (This district basically allows for all uses approved by the Wyoming Recreation Commission.)

The zoning regulations define allowable “uses-by-right” and conditional uses for each district. The regulations also set performance standards for such things as building height, lighting, accessory buildings, parking/loading, signage, home occupations, riverfront development, fencing, mobile home parks, and carports.

Zoning regulations set process and standards for splitting lots into two parcels (which by definition is not addressed by the subdivision regulations).

Of particular interest to the update of the master plan is that the zoning regulations include a master plan policy checklist.

EAST THERMOPOLIS

East Thermopolis has zoning code, zoning map, and building codes. Subdivisions are required to follow state law. (Free)

HOT SPRINGS COUNTY

Outside of the boundaries of the Town of Thermopolis and adjoining East Thermopolis, Hot Springs County regulations and policies are in

effect. The Town does have joint approval of subdivisions within one mile of the town boundary.

Hot Springs County's 2002 Land Use Plan includes a development permit system and subdivision regulations into one document. Chapter Four of the Land Use Plan is entitled "Permits" and indicates permits are required for the following:

- ◆ Land Use Change Permits — Required for any type of land use change; agricultural to residential, industrial or commercial, residential to industrial or commercial, etc.)
- ◆ In Home Occupation Permit — Required for all in home occupations/businesses.)
- ◆ Subdivision Permits — Required for all subdivision projects
- ◆ Solar Access Permits — Such permits are not required, but are recorded to protect solar property rights

Other chapters address road and bridge standards, carrying capacity (density) standards, mobile home park design, subdivision plat requirements, and variances.

Hot Springs amended the Land Use Plan in 2005 with the Natural Resources Plan for State and Federal Lands.

The county also issues septic system permits.

HOT SPRINGS STATE PARK

Land uses in Hot Springs State Park are reviewed and approved by the Wyoming Department of State Parks. All of the non-state uses on the park (which includes most developments with the exception of Park Headquarters and the State Bath House) are on leased lands. The duration and terms of the lease vary. The Department is currently working to standardize leasing procedures and terms. (Skates)

CONCLUSIONS

Town code is detailed and well-written. There is, however, little guidance in either the Town's code or Hot Springs County planning documents for how the two governments will coordinate on matters of joint interest such as annexation. The town code provides limited specific requirements related to annexation, but does not identify the criteria by which a proposed annexation would be considered or approved. The town code provides only limited criteria for approving extension of utilities to areas outside of the municipal boundaries.

As part of the Master Plan preparation process, the Town's planning consultant has prepared a review of the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. This review is appended to the Master Plan in Appendix #2.

❖ SECTION 4.10 — LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS ❖

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of current land use patterns and recent development activity within the Town of Thermopolis.

CURRENT LAND USE

The Town of Thermopolis encompasses 1,595 acres or about 2.5 square miles. About 404 acres of Hot Springs State Park lies within the town limits (with another 638 acres in the County). About 26 percent of the town (413 acres) is used for residential purposes, mostly single family homes in neighborhoods and subdivisions.

The Town of Thermopolis owns 76 acres in town and most of that is for the water plant and sewage lagoons (63 acres). The Town also owns the Legion Golf Course (119 acres) just outside the town limits.

Other tax exempt land in town includes land owned by schools, churches, the post office, the county, utility companies, and the like.

Commercial areas, which include businesses and apartment buildings, cover 107 acres in Thermopolis or 6.7 percent of the town. Only three properties in Thermopolis are classified as industrial and are all located in the southeast part of town; together these comprise only 8 acres. Some tax-exempt properties including the Town's sewage lagoons and the Western Power Administration's electric power substation could also be considered as industrial uses.

Residential Neighborhoods

According to the 2006 Hot Springs County Housing Assessment there are 1,460 single family housing units (including site-built, manufactured, townhouses, and condominium units) and 296 apartment units in Thermopolis. Most single family homes in Thermopolis are situated on properties of 8,000 to 10,000 square feet made up from more than one original city lot (original city lots are typically 4,200 square feet).

There are several residential areas of town that could be considered as small, separate neighborhoods:

- ◆ Lying west of the Big Horn River and east of the railroad tracks between Amoretti and Arapahoe Streets is the area plated as McManigal's 2nd and 3rd Additions. A portion of this area is in the 100-year flood plain while almost all of the area is in "flood zone X" which has a minimal chance of flooding and in which flood insurance is not necessary. Half of the homes here are site-built and another third are manufactured homes.
- ◆ Another residential neighborhood, all of town north of

TABLE 4.10 -- LAND USE SUMMARY TABLE

Land Use Category	Acres	Percent
Residential	413	26.0%
State Park	404	25.3%
Rights-of-way (streets and alleys)	290	18.2%
Vacant	212	13.3%
Commercial	107	6.7%
Town Land	76	4.8%
Other Tax Exempt (schools, churches, etc.)	49	3.1%
Big Horn River	32	2.0%
Industrial	8	0.5%
Multi-Use	4	0.2%
TOTAL	1,595	100.1%

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

Broadway and west of the railroad tracks, has many historic homes in the Craftsman architectural style. Over 80 percent of the homes in this neighborhood are site-built and very few manufactured homes. About one-fifth of the housing here is in the form of apartments.

- ◆ A neighborhood in the South Central part of town (everything east of 8th Street, west of the railroad, and south of Broadway) is also an older area dominated by site-built homes with few manufactured homes.
- ◆ The neighborhood around Candy Jack Park (east of 14th Street, west of 8th Street, and south of Broadway to include the home on Amoretti, Richards, and Washakie Streets) has a range of housing including the Candy Jack Mobile Home Court and the higher-priced Realing Addition (O'Dell and Johnson Avenues). Over 80 percent of the homes here are site-built and there are no apartments in the neighborhood.
- ◆ The residential areas west of 14th Street, including the Cedar Ridge, Candy Hills, and Meadowlark subdivisions is almost exclusively site-built, single-family housing.
- ◆ The neighborhood around Canyon Hills Road (east of 14th Street, including Waldorf Acres and Belvedere subdivisions and south to include Grandview Court) contains the least site-built, single-family housing of any neighborhood (35 percent of the housing unit). In this neighborhood, manufactured homes are one-quarter of the housing and apartments account for another one-third.

Business Districts

Downtown Thermopolis is the town's central business district. The downtown is roughly a four-block by four-block area centered on the intersection of Broadway and Fifth Street. The downtown includes the Town Hall, the Hot Springs County Courthouse and new Annex,

the U.S. Post Office, as well as numerous business offices and retail stores. The downtown includes an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thermopolis also as a commercial strip area along U.S. Highway 20 (Park, 6th, and Shoshoni Streets). A smaller highway commercial area extends from the main State Park entrance to the downtown. A larger highway commercial area extends south from the downtown about one mile to the town limits at the south end of town on U.S. 20.

Hot Springs State Park

In terms of land use, Hot Springs State Park has many more variety of land uses than ordinary state parks. Some of the noteworthy land uses on state park land (and their approximate locations) include the following:

- ◆ North of Park Street and west of the Big Horn River: Fairgrounds, County maintenance shop, County Recreation ball fields, National Guard Armory, State Park office, Chamber of Commerce office, and a possible future site of the Nature and Discovery Center.
- ◆ South of Park Street and west of the river: high school, elementary school, County Library, and a County office building.
- ◆ South of Park Street and east of the River: Days Inn, Wyoming Pioneer Home, Hot Springs Memorial Hospital, two medical offices, and the Gottsche Rehabilitation Center.
- ◆ North of Park Street and east of the River: Plaza Hotel, Teepee Pools, State Bath House, and Star Plunge.

Vacant Land

Superficially, there is a fairly substantial amount of vacant lots and land in Thermopolis. Vacant lots and land make up about 13.3 per-

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

cent of the town. There are about 204 vacant residential parcels, as categorized by the County Assessor. Some larger tracts are included in this count. However, when parcels larger than one acre are excluded, there is only 27 acres of vacant residential land in 194 lots, most of which are already subdivided or platted. 134 of these are typical original town lots of 1/10th of an acre in size (4,200 square feet) and about 13 acres all together. Most are in the areas north of

TABLE 4.11 — VACANT LAND		
	Acres	Parcels
Commercial Vacant	11.0	92
Industrial Vacant	0.3	1
Residential Vacant	200.3	204
Total Vacant	211.6	297
Substantially Vacant	198.8	20

Arapahoe Street or west of 14th Street. In actuality, there are few opportunities for infill development on these parcels.

There are 20 large parcels in town that are substantially vacant--only a relatively small part of the parcel is occupied by a residence or business and the vacant remainder could possibly be subdivided for new building sites. These 20 parcels amount to 198 acres. However, much of this land area has limitation that might preclude extensive development:

- ◆ In the southeast part of town, the 30-acre former refinery site (south of Amoretti Street and east of the railroad tracks) has issues with contamination from when the refinery was in operation. The site includes some 100-year floodplain; however most of the site is above the floodplain.

- ◆ At the north end of town, about 250 acres in several properties from Round Top Drive down slope about one-half mile to the drainage channel are quite steep and are not suitable for development.
- ◆ South of the drainage channel and north of the platted areas of town, there is another 50 acres of land that is steep in parts but has potential for development.
- ◆ On the western edge of town, there are a few smaller tracts with development potential. These include: two acres owned by the State Highway Department where the old highway meets the new Highway 120; six acres owned by the school district behind the middle school; and seven acres between Kinney's 2nd Addition and Waldorf Acres Subdivision.

These larger sites offer few opportunities for additional development within the current town limits.

The limited inventory of vacant, developable land within the Town limits has undoubtedly contributed to the recent development along U.S. Highway 20 south of town. New stores and a motel have been constructed south of town and the Red Rocks Business Park has been developed.

Issues and options for accommodating additional growth and development in and around Thermopolis will be examined in a subsequent chapter on Future Land Use.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

In recent year, building construction activity has been fairly modest in Thermopolis. In terms of residential construction, only 28 housing units were constructed in the town from 2000 to 2009. Due to a similar number of demolitions, there has probably been little or no net increase in housing stock. (Crosby) In terms of subdivision devel-

THERMOPOLIS MASTER PLAN

opment in Thermopolis, only four subdivisions totaling 35 lots have been created from 2000 to 2009.

TABLE 4.12 -- RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION 2000 - 2009

Item	Buildings	Units	Construction cost
Single Family	28	28	\$ 4,782,704
Two Family	2	4	\$ 497,824
Three and Four Family	0	0	\$ -
Five or More Family	0	0	\$ -
Total	30	32	\$ 5,280,528

Source: U.S. Census and Town of Thermopolis

TABLE 4.13 -- THERMOPOLIS SUBDIVISIONS 2000 - 2009

Subdivision Name	Year	Lots
Buffalo Ridge	2009	15 lots
Canyon Hills	2001	7 lots
Parkview	2007	8 lots
Spring View Estates	2001	5 lots

Source: Hot Springs County Clerk