

Vision Statement, Primary Goals, and Planning Strategies

This chapter presents the Vision Statement, Primary Goals, and Planning Strategies of the Big Horn County land use plan. The Vision Statement is the shortest, most concise statement of what the plan is all about and what the county hopes to be in the future. The Vision Statement is:

In the year 2030, Big Horn County will be a rural county of productive farms and ranches, unobstructed pastoral and mountain scenery, clean air and water, abundant open space, and well planned communities where people can live and work enjoying small town living.

The land use plan is intended to help the County achieve this ideal.

The land use plan is based on Primary Goals and Planning Strategies which are more specific expressions of the vision statement. The goals provide a basic mandate for the direction of the plan and what it is supposed to achieve. The Strategies are intended to summarize the main themes of action the County should undertake to achieve the Primary Goals.¹

The Primary Goals and Strategies are grounded in several concepts that are common to all the goals and strategies of this plan. These are:

- The land use plan is not a regulatory document, but a guide. Any ordinances or regulations to implement the land use plan will be adopted following legal procedures and allowing for consideration of public comment prior to adoption.
- The land use plan recognizes the importance of agriculture to the overall well-being of the county. The plan seeks to "do no harm" to the county's agricultural operations and practices. Should any question arise, the plan should be interpreted and construed in the way that is most positive and beneficial for agriculture.

¹ At a later date, the consultants will provide a detailed list of potential actions corresponding to each strategy. The consultants will help the committee decide which of the potential actions are appropriate for Big Horn County. Potential actions will include new regulations, revised regulations, non-regulatory programs, and the "no-action" option.

- The recommended actions and projects of the land use plan are contingent on the County's ability to pay for them. Big Horn County has a modest tax base and large increases in public spending to implement the plan are not envisioned.
- The location of future development is a matter of County concern for several reasons: First, the County and other public entities can provide services more efficiently when development concentrated rather than dispersed. Secondly, the incorporated towns will be more prosperous when growth occurs in and near them. Finally, when rural areas are not disrupted by development, scenic views, wildlife habitat, and agriculture benefit.

Primary Land Use Goals and Strategies

(The Primary Goals are in all-capitals and the Strategies are the statements listed under the goals.)

A. RETAIN FARMING AND RANCHING AS THE PREFERRED LAND USES IN RURAL AREAS.

1. Minimize non-agricultural development on the most productive agricultural land, particularly irrigated land.
2. Locate rural residential development on marginal agricultural areas.
3. Mitigate conflicts between established agricultural operations and any new non-agricultural land uses

B. SUSTAIN SCENIC AREAS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, RECREATIONAL AREAS, AND OTHER IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES.

1. Keep existing wildlife migration corridors open and sustain critical wildlife habitat areas.
2. Encourage development designs that compliment or blend in with recreational areas and scenic resources.
3. Encourage clustered subdivision development to protect resource areas.

4. Maintain accesses to public lands.

C. ENSURE THAT DEVELOPMENT PROTECTS WATER RESOURCE CAPABILITIES FOR ESTABLISHED AND FUTURE USERS.

1. Balance future water demand with available supply.
2. Ensure that new developments does not add costs, diminish the available water, or otherwise cause harm to existing agricultural irrigation and drainage systems.
3. Direct higher density residential developments to areas that can be served by central wastewater treatment systems, such as the municipal systems.
4. Limit the density of septic systems in areas that are highly susceptible to groundwater pollution.

D. ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT THAT IS WELL PLANNED WITH RESPECT TO ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS AND RESOURCE LIMITATIONS AND IS COMPATIBLE WITH ESTABLISHED AND FUTURE LAND USES.

1. Protect riparian areas, floodplains, and wetlands in the design and construction of development projects.
2. Consider wildfire, potential for flash flooding, soil capacity for proposed development, and geologic hazards in the development review process.
3. Review new developments for compatibility with existing land uses.

E. ENSURE THAT DEVELOPMENT IS FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE AND HAS ADEQUATE ROADS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE.

1. Review new developments for adequacy of infrastructure needed to serve such new developments.
2. Require developers to fund and construct all necessary infrastructure improvements needed for their development projects.

3. Establish standards for long-term maintenance of subdivision roads and other infrastructure (e.g., bridges, culverts, drainage system, and fire protection system).
4. Limit the density of development in remote areas far from public services.

F. ENCOURAGE RESIDENTIAL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TO LOCATE CLOSE TO TOWNS AND OTHER DEVELOPED AREAS.

1. Locate higher density residential development and intense commercial development in defined growth areas in or near the incorporated towns.
2. Support infrastructure improvements that enable the towns to grow.
3. Support a variety of housing types in and near towns to accommodate the need for affordable housing.
4. Improve the appearance of entrance ways to towns.

G. SUPPORT THE LOGICAL EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE COUNTY'S TOWNS TO HELP MAKE THE TOWNS MORE ATTRACTIVE TO NEW RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.

1. Enhance the planning capabilities of the incorporated towns.
2. Increase County-town coordination on planning near incorporated towns.
3. Support community improvement projects in the towns.

H. ENCOURAGE MINING AND OTHER INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AT APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS CONSISTENT WITH OTHER LAND USE GOALS BUT NOT NECESSARILY NEAR TOWNS AND OTHER DEVELOPED AREAS.

1. Develop performance and location standards for heavy industrial land uses.
2. Coordinate with federal agencies in the review of proposed heavy industrial land uses on federal lands.

I. MAINTAIN THE EXISTING BALANCE BETWEEN PUBLIC LANDS AND PRIVATE LANDS WHILE PROMOTING TARGETED CONVERSION OF PUBLIC LANDS TO PRIVATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP WHEN SUCH CONVERSION WOULD BENEFIT THE ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING COMMUNITIES.

1. Pursue alternative uses of state or federal lands within defined growth areas or potential growth areas around towns that supports logical expansion, such as roads and other infrastructure and new development.

J. PROMOTE LAND USES THAT SUPPORT THE TOURISM ECONOMY INCLUDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RECREATIONAL AREAS AND TOURIST FACILITIES.

1. Encourage development that is compatible with adjacent or nearby recreational uses and tourist facilities.
2. Identify existing and proposed recreational areas and tourist facilities.
3. Plan for a county-wide non-motorized trail system linking recreational areas and tourist facilities.

K. REDUCE IMPACTS TO PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND RURAL SCENIC VALUES FROM JUNKYARDS AND OTHER NUISANCE LAND USES.

1. Enforce existing laws concerning junkyards.
2. Enact specific local laws or regulations governing nuisance land uses, such as strip clubs near schools or churches or uses with excessive noise, odor, or bright lights at night.

L. ENCOURAGE REHABILITATION OR REPLACEMENT OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING AND/OR STRUCTURES AND ENSURE THAT ALL NEW HOUSING MEETS HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS.

1. Prevent the proliferation of substandard mobile homes in the County.
2. Encourage compliance with existing construction code requirements such as the State electrical code and the County's wastewater treatment program.