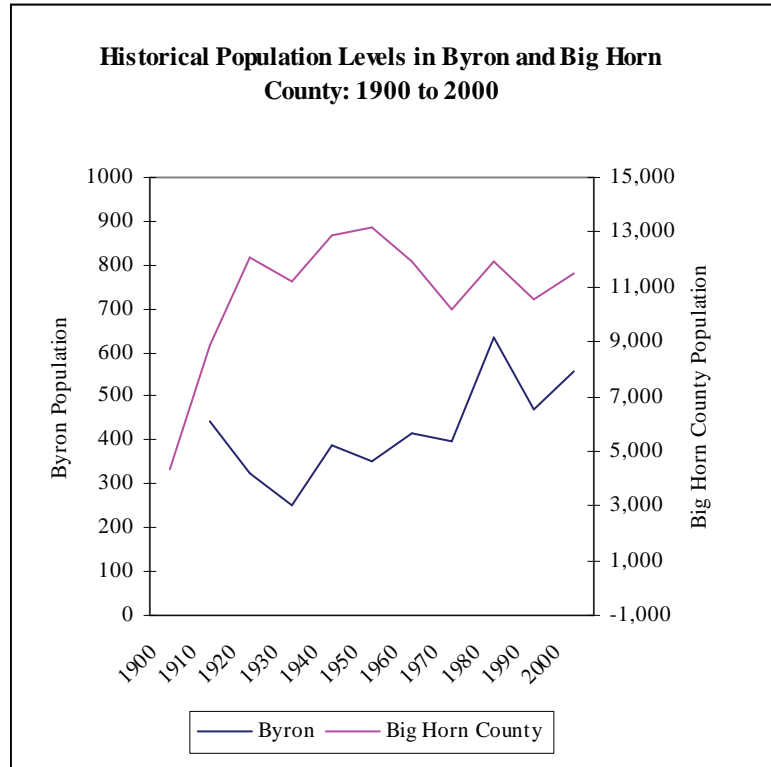


CHAPTER 3: POPULATION TRENDS

Historic Population Levels

From the historical perspective, Byron's population level has risen and fallen in the last century:

- ▶ From 1910 to 1930, the population declined to an all time low of 250 people.
- ▶ From 1940 to 1970, the town's population was very stable, holding at about 400 people for three decades.
- ▶ In 1980 Census, Byron's population hit its all time high of 633, probably a consequence of the energy boom.
- ▶ The 1990 Census found a big drop in population. As the energy boom played out the population fell to 470 persons.
- ▶ By 2000, the town's population had rebounded to its second highest level ever at 557 persons.



Future Population Growth

Looking to the future, Byron's population is expected to grow. At question is how much growth is likely to occur.

At the state level, at least three different population projection have been published. The moderate growth projection predicts that Wyoming's population will reach about 556,000 people by the year 2020. That is about 45,000 people more than the current population of 509,000. In contrast is the "strong growth" forecast, which predicts the state's 2020 population will be over 618,000 people. Of still greater difference is the "very strong growth" projection that puts the state population at over 675,000 people in the year 2020.

Similar projections scenarios (moderate, strong and very strong growth) are available at the county level. For Big Horn County, the moderate projection predicts a very mild increase in county population by the year 2020, increasing by only 307 people in 20 years. In contrast, the very strong growth projection anticipates that Big Horn County's population will reach 13,019 persons, an increase of 1,558 by the year 2020.

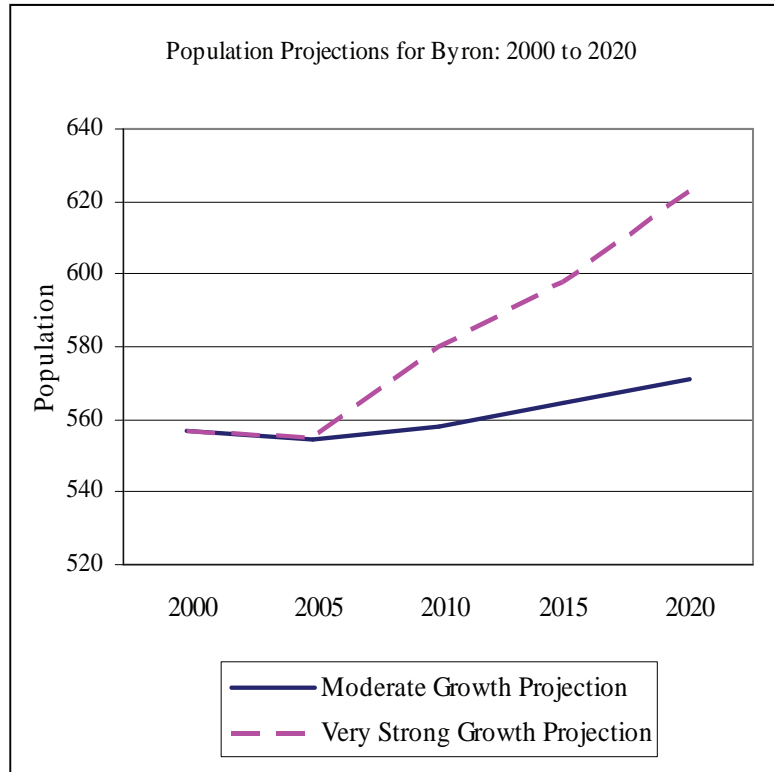
The State publishes a population projections for Byron that is "stepped-down" from the county projection. This means that the predictions of Byron's growth or decline are a scaled-down duplication of the

county-level predictions; for example, if the county’s population is forecast to increase 10%, then Byron’s is assumed to grow a similar amount. The state projection estimates that Byron will gain fewer than 20 people by 2020.

However, one can use a similar “step-down” approach but instead based on the “very strong growth” projection for the county. In this case, Byron’s population would increase by almost 70 people, rising to a total of 623 in the year 2020.

This is a big increase percentage-wise, but is still lower than Byron’s 1980 population of 633.

The relative size of the age groups in town can be as important as total population. The U.S. Census of 2000 shows that Byron has a younger population than that of Big Horn County. The median age of people in Byron, at 34.3 years is lower than median age for Big Horn County (38.7 years), Wyoming (36.2 years) and the U.S. (35.3 years). In the future, Big Horn County’s population is predicted to be older overall, with increases in the number of people 60 years old and older. All age groups under age 30 are expected to decline. To some degree, these changes are likely occur in Byron as well.



Population Recommendations

The Town should plan on being able to accommodate as many as 70 new residents by the year 2020. The Town should ensure that municipal services and zoning regulations will facilitate this amount of population growth. While it is possible that Byron may not grow that much, it is probable that the town will grow. Increasing housing prices in the Big Horn Basin, particularly in Park County, will push people to Byron in search of more affordable housing.

When considering how to accommodate future growth, the Town should keep in mind that the future population of the town will likely be an older population and therefore may have different needs than the present, younger population. There may be more need for services that assist retired and elderly residents. More variety of housing units may be needed as older residents may prefer smaller homes with low or no maintenance. Condominiums, assisted living housing, and other multifamily housing arrangements may be more in demand in the future. Zoning rules should allow these types of housing.