

2.1 MISSION STATEMENT

Protect, preserve and develop important physical, cultural, economic, recreational, scenic, agricultural, environmental and other resources of Johnson County for current and future generations. Preserve or improve the quality of life of Johnson County residents through innovative and resourceful planning. Preserve the rural character of Johnson County. Balance individual rights with responsibilities, land use needs for long-term community development, as well as long-term goals of the Land Use Plan.

2.2 GOALS OF THE JOHNSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

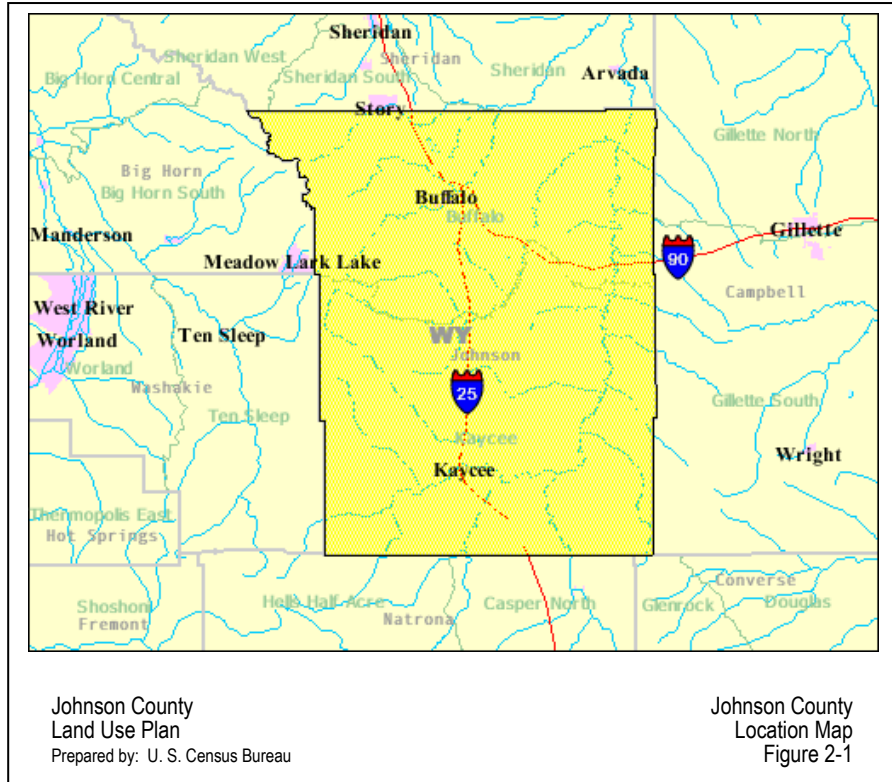
- Adopt a comprehensive Land Use Plan that, under federal and state law, will require recognition and consideration by state and federal agencies when formulating policies or plans that affect Johnson County.
- Protect or preserve the integrity of the county's natural and other resources, including agriculture, water resources, wildlife habitat and open space.
- Conserve the customs, culture and rural character of Johnson County.
- Ensure that there is planned and responsible growth within Johnson County.
- Minimize the cost for providing services and infrastructure necessary to support future growth.
- Balance rights of property owners with responsibilities for protecting property values and the county's quality of life.
- Enable future land use expansion that will sustain economic growth and provide greater stability to the county economy.
- Plan for future services and amenities for county residents.

2.3 PLANNING OBJECTIVE

The Johnson County Land Use Plan is intended to provide a vision for future land use development in Johnson County (Figure 2-1). Land use proposals and recommended land use policies that are contained in the Johnson County Land Use Plan promote a general development concept for Johnson County.

This document provides a variety of information and land use recommendations that will serve as a guide for:

- future land use decisions;
- future infrastructure investments;
- future economic development efforts;
- other community development projects in Buffalo, Kaycee, and the unincorporated area of Johnson County; and,
- coordination of planning with state and federal agencies.



The Johnson County Land Use Plan represents an update of the existing Joint Comprehensive Plan that was prepared by Worthington, Lenhart and Carpenter, Inc. for Johnson County and the City of Buffalo. Subsequently, the Johnson County Commissioners adopted the Joint Comprehensive Plan via Resolutions 238 and 240 on August 21 and September 4, 2001.

Revisions of this plan will occur as conditions and culture of Johnson County warrant.

2.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RELEVANT PLANS

There are other existing resource management plans, or plans in preparation, that will impact future land use in Johnson County. Where appropriate, some recommendations in the Johnson County Land Use Plan attempt to provide some linkage to policies that were previously adopted by other organizations, e.g., state conservation districts, within Johnson County.

Information and recommendations in the Johnson County Land Use Plan can also be used by the City of Buffalo and the Town of Kaycee to facilitate future community planning efforts by each of these communities. The development of municipal master plans, or community development plans, can incorporate and expand upon recommendations presented in the Johnson County Land Use Plan to develop more specific strategies for each community.

Similarly, the Johnson County Land Use Plan is also provided to help guide future policies of the State of Wyoming that may influence future land uses in Johnson County. The Land Use

Plan provides a starting point for various State agencies that are helping facilitate future economic development in Johnson County, or reviewing larger commercial or industrial projects that are proposed for one or more locations in Johnson County.

Since a significant portion of the land in Johnson County is owned and administered by the U.S. Government (Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Division of Economic Analysis, 1996), the Johnson County Land Use Plan also provides recommendations concerning the future use and management of federal public lands in Johnson County. These recommendations are primarily directed to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service that manage the use of most federal lands in Johnson County. Under the Federal Land Policy Management Act, these and other federal agencies are required to consider the plans of local government.

2.5 AUTHORITY

Wyoming Statutes 18-5-202(b) authorizes the preparation of county land use plans. The Johnson County Land Use Plan is not a zoning document or a land use regulation. However, land use management issues are addressed as part of the Land Use Plan.

2.6 SCOPE

The Johnson County Land Use Plan examines various local, regional, and national issues that are expected to influence future land use in Johnson County. Ever-changing trends associated with community demographics, the economy, land use, and the environment will continue to influence the type, location, and extent of future land use development in Johnson County. The evaluation of these issues was made to provide a technical basis for various land use recommendations.

The future demand for residential, commercial, industrial, public and community facilities, as well as recreation and conservation areas, was quantified to the extent possible. This evaluation was made to facilitate a greater understanding of the amount of land area that will be needed to support anticipated land use demands.

Land and resource management issues were also evaluated to help identify potential barriers to future land use development. Recommendations are provided to help establish a more structured approach to Johnson County's land use management activities and facilitate future working relationships with state and federal agencies that administer public lands within Johnson County.

2.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The Johnson County Land Use Plan comprises five essential components:

- 1) an evaluation of demographic and economic trends influencing future land use development;
- 2) an assessment of environmental and resource management issues that are relevant to future land use development;
- 3) an evaluation of land use trends, issues, and opportunities for land use expansion;

- 4) a recommended vision for the type and location of future land uses in Johnson County, as well as recommended transportation corridors to support future land uses; and,
- 5) recommended improvements to the land management process of Johnson County.

The Johnson County Land Use Plan comprises 14 chapters. The general scope of each chapter is described more fully in the following paragraphs.

Chapter One is an executive summary of the primary conclusions and recommendations that are contained in the remaining chapters of the Johnson County Land Use Plan.

Chapter Two describes the purpose and scope of the Johnson County Land Use Plan, general methodologies and process used to develop the plan, as well as the agencies and organizations consulted during the preparation of the Land Use Plan. Reference is also made to appendices that contain a summary of community issues and recommendations made by Johnson County residents at public meetings held in Buffalo and Kaycee.

Chapter Three examines significant demographic and economic factors that will influence future land use in Johnson County. This study evaluates regional labor force, employment and income trends, reviews potential growth in the primary economic sectors of the regional economy, and forecasts an anticipated resident population for the 2003-2012 period.

Chapter Four provides an overview of Johnson County's natural resources and environmental issues that will also influence future land use. The issues are identified from the review and correlation of spatial information, as well as the review and assessment of resource management evaluations that were developed by various state and federal agencies.

Chapters Five through Eleven comprise an evaluation of all land uses in Johnson County. This evaluation examines existing and ongoing land use trends for residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, community facilities, recreation and conservation. Land use issues and anticipated land use demands for the 2003-2012 period are presented for each general type of land use. Opportunities for land use expansion for each general type of land use are also identified.

Chapter Twelve analyzes existing trends and issues associated with transportation in Johnson County. This assessment focuses primarily upon vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation within Johnson County. This aspect of the land use plan recommends general transportation corridors that are envisioned to support future land uses.

Chapter Thirteen presents a recommended vision for the location and type of land uses in Johnson County. This vision includes a general land use map that describes:

- the general location and type of recommended land uses;
- supporting narrative describing the rationale of a general land use plan map; and,
- recommended land use development policies and related development criteria.

Chapter Fourteen evaluates existing land use management activities of Johnson County and future land use management needs. This analysis considers potential options for future land use management such as county-wide zoning, building permits, and revision of subdivision regulations. The application of a new geographical information system (GIS) for Johnson County and other planning tools are discussed to help facilitate the use of relevant criteria in future land use decisions by Johnson County. The working relationship of Johnson County with various state and federal agencies in the context of future land use planning is also discussed. Recommendations aimed at improving these working relationships are also provided.

2.8 METHODOLOGY AND PLAN PROCESS

2.8.1 Use of a Consultant for Preparation of the Land Use Plan

In February 2002, the Johnson County Board of Commissioners and the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission retained the services of Pedersen Planning Consultants (PPC) to prepare a land use assessment of all land uses in Johnson County.

An assessment of housing needs in Kaycee was included as part of the county land use assessment. PPC completed a Buffalo Housing Assessment for the City of Buffalo in July 2002. Johnson County desired to build upon the recent work of PPC to make a more efficient use of planning funds intended to support the preparation of a county land use plan update. The Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission intended to incorporate the findings of the overall land use assessment into the update of the existing county land use plan.

Subsequently, PPC was retained in August 2002 to complete various additional tasks that would enable the preparation of an overall land use plan update. These additional tasks generally included PPC's continued development of a county-wide land use data base, the incorporation of additional spatial and tabular information within a new GIS developed for Johnson County, an evaluation of natural resource issues, the facilitation of community meetings in Buffalo and Kaycee, a review of county land use management issues, processes and related planning tools, and the completion of draft and final land use plan reports.

PPC completed an initial land use assessment in July 2002 that was subsequently reviewed by the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission. The initial land use assessment was subsequently incorporated into a larger draft Johnson County Land Use Plan that was completed by PPC in May 2003. The draft Land Use Plan document was reviewed by the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission prior to its general distribution for public review.

2.8.2 Community Participation and Plan Approval Process

The Johnson County Planner and the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission organized and held two public meetings in 2002. A public meeting on October 22, 2002 was held in Buffalo at the Johnson County Fairgrounds. A second public meeting at the high school in Kaycee was held on October 23, 2002.

At each of these meetings, the Johnson County Planner and PPC representatives generally described the planning process that would be used to prepare the land use plan update. Representatives of the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners were also present to listen and evaluate the issues of Johnson County residents.

In addition, PPC representatives facilitated a discussion of land use issues and recommendations that could be used by the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission and PPC during the preparation of a draft Johnson County Land Use Plan. These facilitated discussions identified resident issues and recommendations concerning residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, community facilities, and agricultural land uses. The information gained from these public meetings was documented and summarized in Appendix A.

Forms were also provided during the public meetings to encourage participants to forward written comments to the Johnson County Planner and/or Pedersen Planning Consultants. A few written comments were received following both meetings and are provided in Appendix A.

A few residents also contacted Pedersen Planning Consultants by telephone or e-mail to express concerns and recommendations for the Land Use Plan update. In some cases, residents generously provided copies of selected information that provided useful references during preparation of the plan.

Upon completion of its review of the draft Land Use Plan update, the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission made copies of the draft Land Use Plan report available for public review. Written comments were requested from the general public and other state and federal agencies. Subsequently, the Johnson County Planner and Planning and Zoning Commission held a second round of public hearings in Buffalo and Kaycee that included a presentation of conclusions and recommendations.

Following the review period, PPC revised the draft Land Use Plan report in consideration of comments from Johnson County residents, and representatives of various public agencies and community organizations. The final Land Use Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioner's will subsequently receive public comments via a public hearing. Following the hearing and the Board's review, the final Johnson County Land Use Plan report may be adopted. Following adoption, the Johnson County will make the final Land Use Plan report available for public review and use.

2.8.3 Development and Application of a Geographical Information System

Pedersen Planning Consultants developed a new geographical information system for Johnson County to support the analyses made for the land use assessment and the Land Use Plan update. The new Johnson County GIS, which was developed using ArcView GIS 3.2 software, was intended to help support future land use decisions of Johnson County.

In its development of the GIS, PPC collected available information from various sources. Grizzly Engineering in Buffalo provided available AutoCAD files containing a wide variety of spatial information for Buffalo and Johnson County. JLM Engineering in Buffalo provided digital files that contained new addresses for lots and land parcels in Buffalo. R.G. Stuckert & Associates, a land surveying firm in Buffalo, supplied digital files that included various features for the Town of Kaycee. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Buffalo Field Office, furnished various types of resource data and other spatial information for the unincorporated areas of Johnson County.

The Johnson County GIS brings together a considerable amount of spatial and tabular information. An essential part of the Johnson County GIS is a land use database that contains valuable land use information for most land parcels in Johnson County, as well as the City of Buffalo and the Town of Kaycee. The Johnson County Assessor's Office provided land use information for every lot or land parcel in Johnson County, and made clarifications of available data. Pedersen Planning Consultants subsequently input this information into a land use database contained within the geographical information system (GIS) for Johnson County.

Other important data was obtained from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, as well as Wyoming's Geographical Information Science Center. These spatial data sets were particularly useful to facilitate the correlation of natural resource data and evaluate natural resource issues.

2.8.4 Evaluation of Demographic and Economic Trends

The evaluation of demographic and economic trends focused upon regional and community characteristics that are expected to influence future land use development. This analysis initially examined regional labor force, employment and income trends. This information was primarily obtained from available public information.

Primary sectors of the Johnson County economy were evaluated to identify important trends, planned or potential industry expansions, and opportunities for new employment. Public information was obtained and, in some cases, supplemented by information from representatives of private industry and government. In sectors where opportunities for new employment were anticipated, calculations were made based upon reliable information and assumptions provided by private industry, e.g., coal bed methane, and governmental agencies.

The demographic analysis relied, in part, upon April 2000 Census information, as well as Bureau of the Census estimates for 2002. The forecasts of future population, as well as regional population distribution, were based upon examination of natural growth, as well as anticipated in and out-migration. Fertility, mortality and migration data, industry employment assumptions, and other relevant information were obtained for this analysis. PPC subsequently developed a statistical model to facilitate the calculation of anticipated resident population and population distribution. The model primarily involved an economic-based forecast methodology to develop population forecasts for the 2003-2012 period.

2.8.5 Evaluation of Land Use Trends and Issues

This assessment identified existing land uses, examined land use issues, and identified potential land use expansion areas for residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, community facilities, as well as recreation and conservation areas. The evaluation was based upon information from a variety of public agencies and private organizations. Information was supplemented with more specific data and insights that were gained through informal discussions with the Johnson County Commissioners, the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission, the Johnson County Planner, selected representatives of the City of Buffalo and Town of Kaycee, community leaders, bankers, real estate brokers, real estate developers, small business representatives, regional coal bed methane companies, power generation, transmission, and distribution company representatives, selected public agencies, and other sources.

2.8.6 Preparation of Land Use Demand Forecasts

The calculation of future land use demands was largely derived from anticipated new employment in Johnson County, and expected changes in demographic characteristics, during the 2003-2012 period.

The evaluation and forecast of future housing demands in Johnson County integrates information developed by PPC for the Buffalo Housing Assessment (completed in July 2002) that presents potential housing demands for several market groups. This information is supplemented with forecasts of future housing demands for Kaycee and the unincorporated area of Johnson County. These forecasts were based on assumptions related to anticipated employment and migration.

Commercial demands are derived from a retail trade analysis made in Chapter Two. This evaluation also considers the potential sources of future in-migration to Johnson County, and perceived commercial needs identified by community leaders.

Industrial demands were evaluated in the context of anticipated regional employment and needs identified by small business and public agency representatives, and local real estate brokers.

The forecast of future demands for public and community facilities, as well as recreation/conservation areas, primarily reflect facility needs that were identified by community leaders, the County Commissioners, and the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission.

2.8.7 Development of a Recommended Land Use Pattern

Preparation of the recommended land use pattern included an examination of potential land use expansion opportunities and the ultimate preparation of a general land use map for Johnson County. The initial identification of potential land use expansion areas and sites were largely based upon interviews with community leaders and small business representatives.

Preparation of the general land use concept for Johnson County involved the correlation and analysis of selected spatial data such as the location of paved roads, precipitation, soils, surface drainage areas, the depth and production yields of groundwater wells, the location of existing croplands, wildlife habitat ranges, the location of significant historical resources, and the proximity of each land use type to the primary community centers of Buffalo and Kaycee. Pedersen Planning Consultants subsequently examined each potential area by analyzing existing land use patterns, land use relationships, the proximity of potential sites to anticipated land use demands, the location of commercial areas and community services, and the availability of supporting roads and utility systems.

The concerns, issues and opportunities raised by Johnson County residents during public meetings greatly facilitated the definition of various land use combinations that formed the basis of a recommended land use pattern for Johnson County. Resident comments also provided valuable insights to the type of land uses desired in various parts of Johnson County.

2.9 CONSULTATION

Pedersen Planning Consultants consulted representatives of various private and public organizations during its preparation of the Johnson County Land Use Plan. This consultation was largely made through the completion of individual or small group interviews. In some cases, telephone interviews were made when the scheduling of individual interviews was not feasible. The representatives contacted by PPC included the following:

Johnson County

Board of County Commissioners
Marilyn Connolly
Gerald Fink
Don Hall
Jim Mader
Tracy Rhodes
Robert Thompson

Johnson County Planner and Project Manager
Rob Yingling

Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission
Harvey Crowe
Wayne Graves
Kelly Lawrence
Michael McKinley
Paul Millhouse
Robert Ruby
Kim Schwirian
Margaret Smith
Priscilla Welles

Johnson County Assessor's Office
Dorothy Elsom, County Assessor

Johnson County Clerk's Office
Linda Barnhart, County Clerk

Johnson County Treasurer's Office
Sharon Wagner, County Treasurer

Johnson County Sanitarian's Office
Rick Durfee, County Sanitarian, and National Floodplain Insurance Program Administrator

Johnson County Health Center
Sandy Ward, Administrator

City of Buffalo
Bruce Hepp, Mayor
Nels Lofgren, former Mayor
Ken Gross, Administrative Assistant

Town of Kaycee
Gordon Herring, Mayor
Joan Buckingham, Council Member
Tye Curuchet, Council Member
Tom Knapp, Council Member
Diana Cornthwaite, Town Clerk
Robert Thompson, former Mayor

Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Kevin Fredrick, Groundwater Pollution Control Supervisor, Water Quality Division, Cheyenne

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Al Conder, Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Casper Office
Bob McDowell, Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Sheridan Office

Wyoming State Engineer's Office
Tom Quinn, Cheyenne

U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
Phil Gonzalez, District Conservationist, Buffalo
Steven Jelden, Soil Scientist, Casper

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Richard Zander, Director, Buffalo Field Office
Andrew Ambrose, Cartographic Technician, Buffalo
Steve Hannan, Range Management Specialist, Buffalo
Kay Medders, Range Management Specialist, Buffalo

Energy Development Companies

John Kennedy, President, Kennedy Oil, Gillette
Craig Goodrich, Superintendent, Devon Energy, Gillette
Theodore Stegman, Northwest Energy, LLC, Buffalo
Paul Stroud, Production Supervisor, J.M. Huber Company, Gillette

Power Generation, Transmission and Electrical Distribution Companies

Vern Schild, Director of Power Generation, Black Hills Power and Light Company, Gillette
Mike Blenkush, Vice President, Corporate Communications and External Relations,
Powder River Energy, Sheridan
Jim Miller, Manager, Environmental Services, Basin Electric Power Cooperative,
Rapid City, SD

Buffalo Chamber of Commerce

Nadine Gross, Executive Director

Real Estate Agencies

Robert "Butch" Buell, Broker Associate, Coldwell Banker, the Smith Brokerage, Buffalo
Theo Hirshfeld, real estate appraiser and agricultural land broker, Buffalo
Greg Smith, Responsible Broker, Coldwell Banker, the Smith Brokerage, Buffalo
Bob Snowden, Broker Associate and Sales Manager, Coldwell Banker,
The Smith Brokerage, Buffalo

Residential Developers

Jacob Hatch, Diamond Point Construction, Buffalo
John Jenkins, Sand Creek, The Ranch Preservation Company, Buffalo
Kelly Lawrence, Mill Iron Partners, Buffalo

Civil Engineering Firms

Keith Neustel, P.E., Civil Engineer, Grizzly Engineering, Buffalo
Jack Morey, Jr., P.E., Civil Engineer, JLM Engineering, Buffalo
Robert Stuckert, R. G. Stuckert and Associates, Buffalo
Mike Cole, P.E., HKM Engineering, Inc., Sheridan

Financial Institutions

Lynne Michelena, President, First Interstate Bank, Buffalo
Stacy Hall, Loan Officer, First Interstate Bank, Buffalo

Well Drilling Companies

Sue Ruby, Ruby Drilling Company, Inc., Gillette

Other Community Organizations

Bj. Kristiansen, Assistant Coordinator, CBM Coalition, Buffalo

2.10 FUTURE PLAN REVISIONS

The Johnson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a living document. It was written based upon conditions, realities, forecasts and assumptions that were evident at the time it was prepared. Future amendments to or revisions of the Plan should be guided by recommendations from the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Commission, County employees and officials, and the general public, when it becomes evident that conditions, realities, forecasts and assumptions on which the document was based, appear to be no longer valid or are in need of revision.