

Key Issues and Opportunities—July 2008 Draft

Introduction

The City of Riverton is updating its Master Plan – the document that defines the long term vision, goals, and policies for the City to implement over the next 20 years. This Plan is an opportunity for the community to define clear goals and strategies to address the ideas and concerns that were raised through the *Community Assessment Report* work completed by the Wyoming Rural Development Council in November 2007. Over 500 Riverton residents participated in the many public meetings held as part of the Community Assessment process! The Master Plan process will build on the results of this effort and will also involve significant public outreach.

What are the “Key Issues?”

Riverton residents identified a number of “issues and opportunities” as part of the Community Assessment process and meetings with committees. These ideas are summarized here as a starting point for discussion. As the Master Plan process gets underway, this list will be expanded and revised based on feedback from the community. This summary uses the following five categories to organize and discuss those key issues and opportunities (not necessarily in order of importance):

1. Community Image
2. Economic Sustainability
3. Community Health and People
4. Housing Options
5. Quality of Life

Are these the “right” issues and opportunities? Are any missing? Should any be removed?

This list represents a starting point. Over the next few months, the planning team will talk to the public, stakeholder groups, elected and appointed officials, and staff – in addition to the Citizen Advisory Committee – to make sure we get the plan off on the right foot.

1. Community Image

Issues

- ♦ **Vision:** The Riverton community has not established a common vision or plan for its future.
- ♦ **Marketable Community Image:** The community would like to establish a unified image for Riverton.
- ♦ **Year-round Attractions:** Riverton residents would like to build upon the summer events and attractions, including the 1838 Mountain Man Rendezvous and the Hot-Air Balloon Rally, to increase the amount and duration of tourism and highlight the city as a destination rather than a stopping point.
- ♦ **Gateways and Corridors:** Residents take great pride in Riverton’s natural beauty and small-town character—yet its gateways and corridors do not always reflect the beauty that is elsewhere in the community. The plan needs to address the mix of development patterns and signage, and fragmented ownership at the south end of town. The northern gateway is attractive because of the state land and agricultural and open lands.
- ♦ **River Access:** The Wind River is one of Riverton’s most distinguishing natural features; however, access to the river and the recreational opportunities that it provides are limited. The concept of developing a RiverWalk—with trails and other recreational opportunities—has been discussed many times over the years, but has never been implemented.

Opportunities

- ♦ Early in the planning process, the community will work to define a common vision for the future. This vision statement will reflect values and be the basis for developing goals and policies to pursue.
- ♦ The community has an attractive and comfortable main street style downtown, a scenic natural setting, and a rich history to build on. This plan can help define opportunities to enhance Riverton’s appeal as a destination.
- ♦ This planning process can help the community strategize options for additional tourism and economic activity.
- ♦ Enhancement of gateways will require coordination with the Tribes and Fremont County. The city recently adopted a new signage ordinance to help improve the appearance of these highly visible areas. This plan should address additional opportunities for gateway enhancement.

- ♦ Explore the RiverWalk concept further as part of this planning process.

2. Economic Sustainability

Issues

- ♦ **Business Mix:** Residents have expressed a desire to bring a better variety of businesses to Riverton to reduce the need for out-of-town shopping trips and to help keep local dollars in the community.
- ♦ **Commercial Corridors:** Recent investment into downtown streetscape improvements along Main Street has greatly improved its appearance and appeal; however, the Federal Corridor is also in need of revitalization in many locations. (See also, Community Image.)
- ♦ **Local Business Development:** Local businesses are the heart of the community; however, there is currently limited organized assistance to help local businesses start or expand.
- ♦ **Employment Opportunities:** Residents have noted that many of Riverton’s college graduates move out of state to seek employment due to limited local opportunities, creating a “gap” in the community’s up and coming leadership pool.

Opportunities

- ♦ The planning team will work with community leaders, business owners, and residents to hear ideas and develop goals and policies related to economic sustainability.
- ♦ The plan should explore opportunities to revitalize portions of Federal Boulevard as growth occurs, such as adaptive reuse of existing vacant structures, façade enhancements, and infill and redevelopment.
- ♦ Economic growth opportunities for Riverton will be explored as part of the planning process to help the community focus future recruitment and business development efforts.

3. Community Health and People

Issues

- ♦ **Community Capacity:** Many community programs and events are, and will continue to be, volunteer/community-driven, yet the number of volunteers is limited.
- ♦ **Partnerships:** The community needs to identify ways to build partnerships to accomplish its goals.
- ♦ **Substance Abuse and Addiction:** The community struggles with substance abuse and addiction problems—notably methamphetamine and alcohol—but lacks adequate education, treatment, and prevention programs and facilities. The recent addition of the city’s detox center has been a positive step; however, the issue remains a challenge for the community.
- ♦ **Cultural Diversity:** Riverton leaders, businesses, residents, and the Tribes would like to work together to foster communication and cooperation between the entities to help define the common goals, enhance the community image, and create numerous social, cultural, and economic benefits.

Opportunities

- ♦ The plan will define goals and then strategies to help achieve the goals. This will likely include suggesting different partnerships and programs for community groups to implement together.
- ♦ The community can work, through this plan, to identify plans, strategies, and partnerships for addressing and preventing substance abuse problems.
- ♦ The greater Riverton community can engage in a dialogue during the planning process about shared issues and goals to identify and collaborate to create a more unified community.

4. Housing Options

Issues

- ♦ **Workforce Housing:** Riverton lacks adequate amounts of attainable workforce housing to meet its current and future needs. The JobCorps project will create new housing demand and opportunities by 2011, and the current energy boom has put pressure on the city’s hotels, many of which are being used as short-term rentals for workers.

- ♦ **Infill and Redevelopment:** The city has limited room to expand outward; therefore infill and redevelopment may be necessary to accommodate some new housing.
- ♦ **Housing Variety:** Housing choices in Riverton have long been limited to primarily detached single-family homes. As the community grows, the incorporation of a broader variety of housing types—such as additional townhomes, multi-family, senior, and small lot single family should be explored.

Opportunities

- ♦ This plan will include a land use plan that will identify future land use patterns, including additional locations for different types and densities of housing to meet future housing needs.
- ♦ This plan will identify opportunities for infill and redevelopment and include policies to ensure compatibility with established neighborhoods.
- ♦ This plan will include goals and policies to address housing and neighborhoods, which could include priorities for meeting workforce housing needs, and the partnerships and funding needed.

5. Quality of Life

Issues

- ♦ **Recreation and Entertainment:** Residents of all ages desire more social and recreational opportunities. Specifically, many residents expressed the need for a central recreation center that would meet many of these needs year-round. As the community grows, it will also be important to ensure the city’s parks and trails system grows with it. Provisions for parks in new neighborhoods should be established.
- ♦ **Lifelong Learning:** Riverton is fortunate to have a strong K-12 school system. In particular, the Central Wyoming College provides opportunities for post high school professional and technical training. Residents value the programs and would like to see them continue to expand.
- ♦ **Arts and Culture:** Central Wyoming College hosts numerous art exhibits, theatre performances, and other cultural events throughout the year that benefit the community and the region. The city should explore opportunities to work with the college, Chamber of Commerce, and other groups to promote these events as Riverton’s overall image. (See also, Community Image.)
- ♦ **Transportation Options:** Riverton’s options for multi-modal transportation have been improving and could be even better. The city supports a shuttle bus program, but transit stops need safety improvements—they lack shelters and adequate signage in some cases. Riverton also has a trail system and has been continuing to expand the system,. The city is gradually replacing streets and adding sidewalks and bike lanes, but some pedestrian and bike trails are incomplete or in disrepair. Finally, the city continues to work on developing future connected network of local streets (particularly east-west connectors) to alleviate traffic on the main arterials.

Opportunities

- ♦ The plan will help set goals and priorities for improving the recreation options for the community, including whether and how to pursue a possible multi-use recreation center.
- ♦ The plan can look at ways the community can improve job training to allow younger residents to stay and work in the community. (Job options are also tied to Employment Opportunities, see #3.)
- ♦ The plan will look at ways to improve the city’s multi-modal transportation options—including long- and short-term objectives.