

OUR COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

An action focused strategic plan for
Thermopolis and Hot Springs County



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VISION STATEMENT

The residents of Hot Springs County will have a safe quality of life, and Hot Springs County will be a great place to live, work, and play.

MISSION STATEMENT

We will enable all of our community resources and entities to work together, with open communication, collaboration, and shared resources.

PILLARS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTH

Based on the community feedback we received during our community wide survey, our action plan has been broken up into six key areas:

Economic Development and Employment Opportunities
Housing and Commercial Real Estate Development
Education and Workforce Development
Childcare
Cultural and Recreational Opportunities
Public Services and Infrastructure

PILLAR ONE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Having adequate employment opportunities is a vital need in any community. When we surveyed residents in fall of 2024, their feedback showed that this was one of the most pressing needs in Hot Springs County, thus we need to further “develop our economy”. This pillar has been broken out into three sections: Enhancing existing businesses, recruiting new businesses, and enhancing the tourist experience. Each section deals with one component and has its own action items.

1) Enhancing Existing Businesses

Action Item One: Ask businesses: What do you need and how can we help?

Thrive Thermopolis, our economic development entity, will lead an initiative to foster existing relationships, and forge new relationships, with business owners in our community, in order to find out, in each unique case, what their greatest need is. We have some thriving businesses, and some struggling businesses. In each case, we need their services, and the jobs they have created, in our community. Thrive will work with other organizations to develop a list of questions, and enlist a group of volunteers to go around to the businesses and ask them the list of questions. Once we have their feedback, and have researched how we could help in that unique case, we will work with the businesses to develop a plan forward together, to address their unique needs. We understand that some businesses will need more help than others, but all businesses are valuable. We will support them as much or as little as they choose.

Action Item Two: Connect with Funding Sources

In our initial and follow-up meetings with business leaders, we will encourage businesses and local residents to invest the money they have available to further enhance the businesses in our community. We will also connect them with local funding sources, if desired. Thrive Thermopolis will lead the initiative to connect themselves and the existing businesses to potential outside funding sources. The priority will be to connect our existing businesses with interested private investors, people who could bring outside funding sources to help grow and revitalize our existing businesses.

Action Item Three: Encourage Residents to Shop Local First

We will continue and enhance our “Shop Local” campaigns. The Chamber will lead the initiative to encourage locals to see what inventory is available at the local businesses before they go out of town or shop online for that item, and to prioritize shopping local. There will be an education campaign component to show locals what is available at our local shops. We will continue to work with the American Express Shop Small campaign to do a promotion to encourage holiday shopping at local stores in November and December. We will run campaigns throughout the year to remind locals to shop in the unique small businesses we have here first, before buying online or in stores out of town.

2) Recruiting New Businesses

Action Item One: Research Best Practices and Implement a Program

We don't currently have a program or system for active business recruitment. Thrive Thermopolis will take the lead on developing a new, culturally relevant, program for business recruitment. They will study and learn best practices, take workshops and classes, and connect with others around the state who are running these programs in other communities. Thrive will interview these community leaders to see what is working and what is not. Thrive will then use this knowledge to develop and implement a program that will focus on actively connecting with and recruiting potential businesses. This program will be targeted to the Identified Needs List. The initial list was created from community member input during the strategic planning process (see "Attachment One"). Any incentives offered will be in partnership with the Town, County, and other partners.

3) Enhancing the Tourist Experience

Action Item One: Do a Tourist Experience Map Exercise

In collaboration with Thrive, Hot Springs Travel and Tourism, Chamber and Hot Springs State Park, we will participate in an exercise that will follow along with a few different types of tourist as they experience Thermopolis. This exercise will follow that tourist from the time that they find out about Thermopolis and begin to plan their trip through to when they have completed their visit and leave our community. This exercise will identify what parts of that experience are already great, what the tourist needs are, potential points of friction, and identify unmet potential. We will develop a plan for making this experience even better and addressing the issues that are brought forward. We will work to address these issues and periodically revisit the "experience map" to review our progress.

Action Item Two: Enhance Current Amenities and Encourage New Ones

As Thrive interviews and works with businesses (See 1. Enhancing Existing Businesses- Action Item One), they will include currently operating tourism amenities: hotels, RV Parks, tent camping, vacation rentals, attractions, bars and restaurants. These businesses will be given the opportunity to identify their unique needs and work with Thrive to develop a plan to grow and enhance their offerings to tourists. However, we recognize that there may be more demand from tourists than we are currently meeting. During the "experience mapping" exercise, we will identify the needs we have from tourists, and in what quantity. Once we have this data, we can work to either expand existing businesses, or recruit new businesses to meet this demand. As this plan unfolds, we will document how, when and who is in charge of further developing this unique industry.

Action Item Three: Enhance Outdoor Recreational Tourism

(See also Pillar Five-2.1) Outdoor Recreational Opportunities)

We have seen great growth in our outdoor recreational tourism in the past few years. We have existing groups that have focused on developing new and enhancing old infrastructure, such as trails and paths. We will support their efforts, and continue to help them find funds for these important projects. We have a vast amount of potential, as our

community is located within a naturally beautiful area. We need to further capitalize on our hot mineral spring water, the Big Horn River, Boysen Reservoir, new and existing hiking and mountain biking trails, off-road and ATV roads and parks, beautiful local state and town parks, to name just a few.

PILLAR TWO: HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Having adequate housing and commercial real estate available for our residents and businesses is a vital need in our community. Our community survey revealed a great many residents worried about housing. In reviewing data from the Housing Needs Assessment from Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) (see Attachment Five), we lack available housing in various sectors. We also heard residents express that commercial real estate is lacking quality and availability, and in some cases has become a public nuisance. This pillar has been broken out into two main sections: Residential Housing, and Commercial Real Estate.

1) Residential Housing

1.1) Low Income Housing:

We have reviewed the attached studies of housing across Wyoming. These studies show that Hot Springs County has a lack of available housing, especially for low income residents. This is especially pressing for our interests, as the growth of our tourism sector will bring more service industry workers to our community. We can address these issues in a few actionable ways.

Action Item One: Explore a “Housing Authority”

One barrier we are facing is that we don't have an entity that is addressing our housing needs. This issue has gone unaddressed, as the free market continues to drive prices higher and conditions in existing facilities have gotten worse over time in some cases. Another problem is that these projects often are not profitable for a business, or don't turn a profit quickly. In order to apply for, and manage, federal and state grants and loans for low-income housing projects, we need a nonprofit, or government subsidiary, who will facilitate these projects. We will begin the process to form such an entity. This entity will be tasked with developing housing projects, with a focus on the low-income sector. This entity will ensure that federal vouchers for low-income housing are accepted at the facilities they own, work to provide education and training for existing facilities in how to accept these payment vouchers, and provide assistance and training to local residents about how to apply for these assistance programs.

Action Item Two: Convert Existing Buildings to Housing

We have a large number of hotels and other buildings that are no longer utilized, or are underutilized, in their current state. At this time, several of these properties are listed for sale. We will work with the Housing Authority to assess the potential of these facilities to be converted into apartments. If a property is a good fit, we will work with the Housing

Authority to acquire the funds to purchase and convert these existing buildings to housing. We will use some of these as unfurnished, more long term apartments, and some of them will be furnished, more short term apartments for temporary workers.

Action Item Three: Build New Facilities as Needed

Once the Housing Authority has converted all of the existing buildings they can into usable residential spaces, we will re-assess whether we need more low-income housing. If we determine that we do, we will work to build new facilities. There are several spaces around town that are currently zoned and prepared for multi-family residential. These locations will be given top priority for these new facilities. We will also study the market to determine if we need to build new mobile home parks, condos, senior living facilities, etc.

1.2) Housing for Senior Residents

The attached studies, and our community survey, have shown that we have a need for places for seniors and older adults to live. Demographically, our community is older, and the trend of older residents moving here has only exacerbated the need for more residential spaces for these residents. We will begin to take action toward addressing this problem.

Action Item One: Further identify the Problem

The studies are not very specific about housing for older residents. We need to study what the need is first. We have heard that this is an issue from our residents, but we don't have any quantifiable data. We will task the Housing Authority formed above with studying this issue, and finding out if there is a need, and what kind of housing would fit that need best.

Action Item Two: Recruit Private Developers and Investors

Once we have data around the problem, the Housing Authority can recruit private investors to develop the housing that will fit the identified needs. Because the Housing Authority will be a not-for-profit organization or a government entity, they will need to recruit and work with developers and private investors, preferably from Hot Springs County, to either repurpose existing structures, or build new structures for this purpose.

1.3) Housing for New and Existing Workforce

Action Item One: Develop a Plan to Address Worker Housing Shortages

As Thrive Thermopolis is interviewing businesses, one of the questions they will ask business leaders is the need for housing for workers. This will be in an effort to put data around an issue we have heard we have- worker housing shortages. We have heard that there are businesses in our community that are having a hard time recruiting workers because of a lack of adequate housing. Some of these businesses are recruiting high income workers, some need middle to low income workers, and some need workers who are only working in Thermopolis for a short time. We will work to quantify how many

homes or residential units are needed in each section, and then work with the Housing Authority to figure out if we have enough land available for development. We will then develop a plan for building new residences, or transitioning existing buildings into the appropriate kind of housing.

Action Item Two: Connect with Developers, Investors, and Contractors

Once we have a plan in place and we know how many of each kind of unit we need, and how much land we have available for development, we will recruit developers, investors and contractors to build or remodel these residential units. The barriers will be lack of available land for development, lack of private money available and lack of contractors to do this work. We will task the Housing Authority with connecting with potential investors and recruiting developers and contractors for this purpose. We will give preference to Hot Springs County owned businesses in this endeavor, but will recruit from outside the county, if needed.

2) Commercial Real Estate

One of the barriers we face is that a lot of our commercial buildings are older, and in poor repair. This serves as an obstacle for potential businesses, and is acting as a deterrent. While each building is unique and has its own story, we need to address some of the overall and systemic issues in order to revitalize these spaces, making economic development easier.

Action Item One: Create a Task Force

We will create a task force of local residents, in conjunction with Thrive Thermopolis, Main Street Thermopolis, and the Chamber. This Task Force will be tasked with completing the building inventory, educating and connecting with existing, and potential, building owners, and realtors, to develop a plan for each building.

Action Item Two: Develop a Building Inventory

The Task Force will create a comprehensive list of commercial buildings in town. We will prioritize and rank these buildings, based on current state of repair, current occupancy, owner status, and visibility.

Action Item Three: Connect with Existing Owners to Develop a Plan and Execute

After they have a prioritized list of buildings, the Task Force will reach out to existing building owners to see what they have planned for each building. They can connect existing owners to Thrive for further help in developing a business, get help in securing financing to do a remodel or revitalize the space, and/or get connected to a realtor to rent or sell the space. We will encourage action in these conversations, and will follow-up with owners to ensure that action is being taken.

Action Item Four: Work with Thrive to Recruit Businesses to Fill Buildings

Once we know what the plan is for each building, we can begin to work with owners to sell or rent their revitalized spaces. This will be in conjunction with the work Thrive is doing to bring in businesses from the “Identified Local Needs” list.

PILLAR THREE: EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In our survey of residents, one priority that emerged was educating our youth and further developing our workforce. We heard from business owners that they need employees who have certain skills, and we heard from residents that they want educational opportunities in Hot Springs County, both for youth and students, and for adults. This pillar is divided into education (for those under 18 years old), and workforce development (for those over 18 years old).

1) Education for Students Under 18 years:

An important part of our community is ensuring that our children have access to an education that will enable them to fulfill their goals in life, whatever those may be. We strive to be a community where students of all abilities excel.

1.1) Early Childhood Education:

Studies have shown that access to early childhood education sets students up for success throughout their academic journey. While we currently have several facilities providing great services to early childhood students, our survey results showed that we may need more facilities, and more classes for students.

Action Item One: Assess Current Needs

We have assembled a committee of volunteers who will visit and assess the current facilities. We will work with the state and schools to get demographic data to show how many students we have in the community that need these services. We will use these visits and data to assess how many slots we have versus how many slots we need. They will also assess the quantity and quality of these positions, and ascertain the need we have. For example, we have a facility that provides twice a week early childhood education to students with disabilities, but are they meeting this need, or are there more students that need these services? We have a facility that provides early childhood educational services to children under the federal poverty level, but do they have adequate space to provide services to all children who would qualify?

Action Item Two: Develop a Plan to Expand Current Facilities or Add New Facilities

Once we have data around how many students we are currently serving, and how many potential students we have, we will know what sector of early childhood education is underserved. First, this committee will work with existing facilities to see if we can expand their offerings. If we still have needs, we will work with local partners to develop a new facility to meet those needs.

1.2) Hot Springs County School District:

Our school district has an award-winning record of student academic and athletic success. The school has been working diligently to provide a great quality of education to Hot Springs County students. Recently, the perception in our community is that they are inadequate in a few ways, so there is still work to do.

Action Item One: Room for Improvement

We will work with Hot Springs County School District administration and school board members to develop a list of action items that they see the school needs to improve upon. We will make an effort to connect the school more with the community, trying to help get the word out about the good things that happen there, and what they are doing to improve. We will offer assistance to the school district as a community once a plan is in place.

Action Item Two: Post High School Opportunities for Students Under 18

One area we have excelled at as a community is the availability and quality of higher education offerings for students in our school district. Our high school offers a variety of classes to students, free of charge to that student and their families. This enables students to start their adult life ahead of the curve, and sets them up for success academically at a higher education institution. The Education Committee will visit with the school about what the current offerings are, and assess how many students are taking advantage of these classes. There were concerns within the community about vocational training classes being available to students, and that concern will be raised to the school district. We can then work with the school to ensure that the students, and their parents, know about these classes and how to enroll.

1.3) Non-Traditional Education for Students under 18:

For various personal reasons, there are parents in our community who choose to homeschool their children, or enroll them in an alternative school. Some students choose to leave the school entirely, and choose to participate in High School Equivalency Testing instead.

Action Item One: Assess the Alternative Options, Interview Students and Parents

We know that we have groups in our community that are able to provide education outside of the school district. Some groups are doing so for religious reasons, some are dissatisfied with traditional education, and various other reasons. Whatever the reason, it seems that we have an increase of alternative education choices in our community. We understand that the success of these programs will mean that these students are able to be meaningful contributors to our community in the future. The committee will assess what other options are being utilized and how successful each program is. We will then use that data to connect with these providers, to see what support they need from our community.

Action Item Two: Develop the Learning Center

One of the groups that we know is providing alternative education options for students of all ages is the Learning Center. Recently acquired by the Hot Springs County

Commissioners, the Learning Center is located at 122 North Fifth Street. The Learning Center is in the process of forming a nonprofit board of directors, in order to formalize their offerings. We will work with the Learning Center to support their efforts to provide High School Equivalency Testing, workforce development initiatives, alternative methods of High School, and ancillary services to students so that they can stay in school and get the level of education they need to achieve the goals they set for themselves.

1.4) Outside of School Educational Opportunities:

One of the needs that was identified by our community survey was the need to further provide outside of school education opportunities for children and young adults. While we have some groups filling this need, the survey made it apparent that we need to do more in this area as a community.

Action Item One: Develop a Program to Provide Educational After School Care

We used to have a program through the School District that provided after school care in an educational environment for students. The School District funded this program through a grant, but stopped providing the program a few years ago due to capacity and staffing issues. The grant is still available. The Education Committee will work with the School District, parents and other stakeholders to assess the need for this program, or a similar program, to return to our community. We will begin in discussion with stakeholders. The committee will work to develop this program, if it is deemed necessary, and find a hosting organization, location, funding and staff.

Action Item Two: Work to Enhance and Promote Current Offerings

We have groups that are already offering educational and recreational classes to children and young adults, such as 4-H, FFA, Hot Springs Dance, Rec Center, Library, Museum, Kids Dig in Summer at Dino Center, and others. The Education Committee will work to assess these offerings, surveying the available classes and potential students, to see if the community has the classes that the students want to attend. We will work with the school and non-traditional education organizations to connect potential students to the offerings that they might be interested in. If there are sectors of interest for students, we will work with the entities to see if we can get classes in those areas of interest.

2) Workforce Development for Adults:

Our survey results indicated that we have a lack of educational, trades, and workforce development opportunities for adult learners. These opportunities are essential to further our economy and produce workers who are able to meet our growing community's demands. We need to capitalize on current opportunities to expand these offerings.

2.1) Opportunities for Higher Education As An Adult:

One area of need in our community, as identified in our survey, is the lack of higher education opportunities. Currently, adult learners must either leave our community to attend a higher educational institution in person, drive daily to and from those classes out of town, or attend online classes. There are already initiatives in our community to address this issue, and we will support those initiatives.

Action Item One: Get a Community College Presence in our County

The Hot Springs County Commissioners and the Learning Center are already in negotiations with Central Wyoming College to provide classes, staffing and ancillary services at the Learning Center location downtown. Preliminarily, we believe that this negotiation will produce classes in person in our community. We will support these entities in this effort, and encourage them to pursue this. Once the college has a presence, we will assess the class offerings, and help to connect the college to other community resources to utilize other buildings, as needed, for classroom and lab space. Our entities can also serve as a connection to community members, to hear from them what kind of classes are most desired, and what skills they have that could be shared.

Action Item Two: More University Presence in our County

While we do have a University of Wyoming Extension Office in the County, the community underutilizes this resource. Once we have a community college presence, we will assess the need to develop more of a University of Wyoming presence. We will work with the University of Wyoming to assess what services they could offer, what class offerings other small towns have, and how our community can better connect with this vital institution. The Education Committee will work with the Learning Center, CWC, and the UW Extension Office to develop a plan to further this connection.

Action Item Three: More Trades Training in our County

Our survey identified a lack of trained tradespeople in our community. We understand that most of our trained laborers are currently learning those skills on the job. There are programs around the state that are already doing training programs to provide this training. We will work to connect potential tradespeople to these programs, and educate the community about these programs. Depending on need, we will work towards developing more programs for training.

2.2) Workforce Development- Training the Workers We Need:

In our survey, we heard that the community members need more and better paying jobs, and that the businesses need employees that are better trained and equipped for their needs. In order to grow our economy, we need to bridge the gap that exists currently between employers and their potential workforce.

Action Item One: Closing The Loop between employers and Workforce

The Education Committee will work with Thrive to ask businesses, during the initial interview, what specific training they need workers to have, and how much demand they have for workers with that skill set. We will then work to identify potential employees, through the school district, Learning Center, Wyoming Workforce Services and Thrive Thermopolis. We will then work with the businesses to train these individuals with the needed skill set, and get them hired to that business. We will work to publicize other workforce training opportunities, such as Job Corps, Volunteers of America, Peace Corps, etc.

Action Item Two: Training Existing Workers

We have gotten feedback from existing businesses that they have needs for further training of existing employees. Thrive will add this question to their initial business surveys. We will tackle these trainings in a two pronged approach. First, some of these are skills that are needed by a large number of employers. The Education Committee will work with the Chamber of Commerce to offer classes, bringing in an expert that trains existing workers in these skill areas. Second, some of these skills are needed by only one or two employers. As these are identified, Thrive will connect these employers to a government entity, college or university, or other outside training service, that can begin to address this training issue. Thrive will ensure that these training service providers work with the business, and help advocate to get the business the services they need.

2.3) Adult Enrichment Classes

While the primary focus of the Education Committee, and this Action Plan is to further our economy and develop our community, we also received feedback about the needs of adults to have access to enrichment classes. These classes are vital, especially for active seniors, and serve to make our community a place where we value life long learning.

Action Item One: Connect Existing Classes with Potential Attendees

We have a lot of enrichment educational offerings currently through various entities. The Education Committee will assess what classes are currently offered and what their current attendance rates are. If they still have spaces available, or have the capacity to expand those offerings, we will work with entities that provide other services to potential attendees, to see how we can connect these individuals with the classes. We will work with these groups to assess whether or not the classes we are currently offering are sufficient, or if there are interests in the community for classes beyond what is currently offered. We will ensure that these classes are listed on the new Community Calendar (*see Pillar 5, 1.2*).

PILLAR FOUR: CHILDCARE

Caring for a community's children and working to ensure that children are well adjusted and have every opportunity possible to succeed in the future. Having an inadequate supply of childcare providers for parents in the workforce is a community need that was brought forward in our survey.

1) Childcare

Our survey results indicate a severe childcare shortage in our community. Parents who want to be in the workforce find it difficult to find a place for their preschool aged children. Some parents cannot afford the rates nor meet the stringent requirements of some daycare providers. Parents are unable to find a provider for suboptimal shifts (nights, evenings, weekends, and holidays).

Action Item One: Find out how many we have versus how many we need

Our committee will find out from DFS, and other means how many providers we have and how many children are currently in their care. We will analyze data to deduce how many children would normally be in care in Hot Springs County.

Action Item Two: Figure out what the barriers are.

Our committee will visit or interview current providers to ask what the barriers are to expanding or having more providers. We will ask them: How much space do they have? What are their hours of operation? Can they expand? Are they willing? Do they accept federal or state assistance vouchers for payment? If not, why not? Are the rules at the state and local level acceptable? How much demand do they see in the market? What are the barriers to state licensing? Would they be in support of starting a nonprofit daycare center? Would they be willing to mentor potential providers who are interested in starting a daycare?

Action Item Three: Help Expand Existing and Mentor Potential Daycare Providers

Our first priority in solving the problem will be to help those in our community who are currently, or are interested in, doing this professionally to expand or start their businesses. We will work with Thrive and the Department of Family Services to make this process as simple as possible. We will encourage this first, before we explore starting a nonprofit daycare, and only after this option has been fully explored will we start a nonprofit daycare center.

Action Item Four: Investigate nonprofit daycare structure and grant opportunities

We will work with the state and other partners to find out how other communities in Wyoming are running their nonprofit daycare centers. We will work to find out what funding models they are using for those centers. We will use this data to determine the best structure and governance of a new nonprofit daycare center.

Action Item Five: Work with Partners to Begin a Nonprofit Daycare Center

After we help to expand or start new daycare centers, we will reassess if there is still a need. Once we know more about our current environment, and what will work best to remedy the situation, we will work with local and statewide partners to begin the process of forming a nonprofit daycare center. We will investigate working this center into after school educational care, and early childhood education. We will work with those committees to see if the programs could co-exist in one space. *(See Pillar One- 1.1 and 1.4, Action Item 1)*

PILLAR FIVE: CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Our survey indicated that one thing that our residents truly enjoy is our great quality of life. People enjoy the unique cultural and recreational opportunities that we have available, and expressed their support of furthering these offerings while continuing to improve upon what we already have available.

1) Cultural Opportunities

Through our survey, community members expressed gratitude for the culture and history of our community. They expressed what they appreciate about existing efforts to preserve and celebrate our heritage and culture, while encouraging us to do more toward these endeavors. (See Attachment One: Identified Needs)

1.1) Cultural Events

Cultural Events are held regularly in our small town. Some are highlighting our unique history, and celebrating our heritage and traditions. Some events celebrate our current creators through demonstrations and celebrations of arts, dance, or other creative pursuits. Some events bring in outside performers and artists to share their creative expressions with our community. All of these are valuable contributions.

Action Item One: Celebrate Our Traditions and Heritage Through Events

Each year, Hot Springs County has a great many events that celebrate our traditions and heritage, with many event organizers and fundraisers going in to make those a success. Discovery Days committee, the Hot Springs County Museum, Cowboy Rendezvous PRCA Rodeo Committee, and other organizations currently work to bring these events to reality. The residents of Hot Springs County will continue to encourage community participation in these events, by joining the committees and supporting the fundraisers that make them possible. Hot Springs County residents recognize the importance of these events in celebrating our heritage and educating future generations about Hot Springs County traditions.

Action Item Two: Recognize current artists and support their events

Hot Springs County has a great many artists in our community, and has several events throughout the year where these artists display and sell their wares, perform or otherwise share their creativity with our community. These events are important in our community, as they help foster creative endeavors for the future, and build a culture of appreciation for the arts. Our community will continue to support these events, and the programs that help to put them on.

Action Item Three: Bring in Outside Artists to Expand Our Understanding

One area of cultural events that is lacking currently in our community is bringing in outside artists to expand our understanding of outside or foreign cultures, or “high arts”. It is important to expose our adult and youth communities to these arts, having performances and educational components in our community. We don’t currently have a group actively bringing in outside performances of traditional arts, although we often see outside contemporary musicians perform locally. The Cultural and Recreational Opportunities Committee will work with interested individuals to see what we can do to revitalize that effort.

1.2) Cultural Organizations

We have several organizations in our community that are dedicated to preserving culture and history. We also have organizations that exist to teach a form of the arts, both to children and adults.

Action Item One: Work to Build a Community Calendar of Opportunities

Some survey respondents expressed a desire for further cultural opportunities, but in some cases those opportunities already exist in the community. The Cultural and Recreational Opportunities Committee will work with all entities organizing these cultural and recreational opportunities to create one community wide calendar, on a website hosted by the Chamber, so that people can see what opportunities are available from a variety of locations in one place.

Action Item Two: Develop More Cultural Opportunities

Once there is one central place for information, the committee will need to assess whether or not the needs are being met. The committee will take a poll of residents who participate in cultural activities to see what other ideas they have, and will take those ideas and connections to the organizations that are responsible for the cultural programming.

2) Recreational Opportunities

One area of celebration is our abundance of recreational opportunities locally available. As has already been established, Hot Spring County has a great number of successes and opportunities in this space. While there are a lot of tourist attractions, Hot Springs County needs to continue to maximize recreational opportunities.

2.1) Outdoor Recreational Opportunities

(see also Pillar One-3-Action Item Three: Enhance Outdoor Recreational Tourism)

One area of interest locally is expanding our outdoor recreational amenities. There are currently initiatives underway to expand the infrastructure of these outdoor spaces.

Action Item One: Support the Wagonhound Off-Road Park

The Wagonhound Off Road Park is a great asset in our community. It is still fairly new, being established in 2020. The Central Wyoming 4x4 Association will continue to maintain and improve this facility each year, in addition to holding events that bring visitors from all over the United States.

Action Item Two: Support the Hot City Outdoor Alliance initiative to expand trails

Hot City Outdoor Alliance's trails initiative has been ongoing since 2019. They have already built several trails since their inception, and have many more planned. (See the attached 2019 Thermopolis Community Trail Plan.)

Action Item Three: Designate Parking Areas for Recreational Travelers

As already discussed, we have an inadequate number of hotel rooms for our tourism demand. We have a flowthrough traffic of outdoor recreation travelers, as they pass through from Ten Sleep to Lander for rock climbing or other areas around the state for mountain biking, most of them have their own RV or van for sleeping, but they won't pay

for a space at an RV Park because they feel that they won't need to use the amenities. Instead, they choose to park in a parking lot or along a road. This is becoming a challenge, and will continue to be more so as we expand our outdoor recreation industry. The committee will seek out advice from Lander or Ten Sleep that have experience dealing with this issue. The committee will work with Hot City Outdoor Alliance to locate a parking area that could be used for this purpose. A location close to downtown or the State Park is preferred, to encourage patronage of restaurants, bars and other tourist amenities. (See Attachment One: Identified Needs List)

2.2) Structured Recreational Opportunities

One piece of feedback we received from the community was the need for furthering our offerings of structured recreational opportunities, for people of all ages. While we already have a number of organizations that are offering classes and other recreational opportunities, it was clear that residents wanted to have more robust programs.

Action Item One: Develop a Community Center

One thing that we lack is a large enough facility to accommodate the current demand for recreational programs, so more programming is out of the question. There is a current initiative, led by the Recreation District, in partnership with the Fair Board and State Park, and with support of the School District, County and City. The proposed facility will greatly expand our facility size, thereby allowing more programming for athletics, arts and culture, and other subjects of interest to the community.

Action Item Two: Survey Residents for Interests

As the plan for the Community Center is developed, the Community Center will complete a feasibility study to see what size of facility is needed and what the community needs are. Residents will be surveyed periodically once the center is going, so the Community Center can evolve to meet changing demands.

Action Item Three: Partner with Existing Organizations to Promote Programming

(See also Pillar 5, 1.2- Action Item One: Work to Build a Community Calendar of Opportunities)

There are already a great number of recreational opportunities for residents, but sometimes it can be a challenge for residents to know where to find this information. We will work to put these items and class schedules on the community wide calendar of opportunities, as previously discussed.

PILLAR SIX: INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Our community faces the same inadequate infrastructure with increasing demands that so many Wyoming communities are facing. While our government has tried to be diligent with their limited funds, there is not enough money to adequately keep up with the maintenance of these systems, let alone major improvements or updates. As a community, we have had to prioritize what gets fixed and what gets pushed off, often based on urgency. In the current economy and tax forecasting, we don't expect this situation to improve, and it may continue to get worse. We

will continue to have to prioritize and get creative with finding money to solve these pressing issues. We have divided this pillar into each government provided service.

1) WATER SYSTEMS

Among the many important functions of government, maintaining a safe and abundant water supply ranks very high. In Hot Springs County, most residents depend on our town operated water treatment facility to produce this water. County residents (outside of town limits) often use one of the water districts to serve their needs, with the water districts working with the town to purchase the water. The County formed the Hot Springs County Rural Water Joint Powers Board (HSCRWJPB) to unite the Town and the water districts in a study aimed at investigating water options for the future. Supporting the work of this joint powers board and encouraging their continued work forges the best path forward for all residents.

1.1) Hot Springs County Rural Water Joint Powers Board (HSCRWJPB)

One of the tasks undertaken by Hot Springs County Rural Water Joint Powers Board (HSCRWJPB) was to commission a study to see what path is the most economical. The study looked at the many water source options, and presented multiple paths.

Action Item One: Choose Which Path Is Right

The members of HSCRWJPB are currently weighing out the options following the level two study's presentation of facts. The members of HSCRWJPB will use several metrics to determine the best path forward, including cost and sustainability. Once a decision is made, they will put forward information to the community- through public meetings, newspaper articles and posting on social media. This will give the community an opportunity to comment, and have their voices heard, while educating the public about this important decision.

Action Item Two: Pursue Funding and Implement the Plan

Once a decision has been made about which option is best, the HSCRWJPB will pursue funding for this option as soon as possible, from either the United States Department of Agriculture or the Wyoming Water Development Commission, or additional potential grants. The HSCRWJPB will work diligently to implement the recommended and approved plan.

Action Item Three: Keep Overall Costs Down as Much as Possible

Because any of the options available to us will raise the overall price of water in our community, HSCRWJPB has been tasked with keeping the overall costs down as much as possible, in order to minimize the increase of monthly water bills in the community.

It is necessary and unavoidable, as doing nothing is not an option. The HSCRWJPB will work on messaging and tempering expectations in the community, so residents are prepared for the increase to come, and understand why this is necessary. (One idea to reduce overall cost is adding access to raw and/or geothermal water, see 1.2 below)

1.2) Town Maintained Water Piping Systems

Even with a new water source or updated treatment plant, our town's water system still needs improvement. Some areas have old piping, which can also lead to water quality issues. The Town of Thermopolis does not have adequate funding available for major improvements to the town's water infrastructure. They can afford some ongoing maintenance, but even struggle with large maintenance projects, as they are more expensive than our small town budget can accommodate.

Action Item One: Seek Outside Funding for Water System Improvements

Town of Thermopolis council members and employees are continuously seeking outside funding sources to work on some of the largest and most pressing water infrastructure needs in the community. Town Council, the Mayor and their employees have collaborated to build a prioritized project list, and will work their way through these water system improvements as outside funding (grants and federal programs, etc.) become available and are awarded. They have developed a system to monitor and connect with these funding sources. The goal is to have as many large, ongoing projects as they can reasonably provide matching funds for, manage and guarantee.

Action Item Two: Develop a System Maintenance Schedule and Funding Model

Town employees are currently working to develop a system that will allow them to track water infrastructure depreciation. This will allow them to develop a maintenance schedule and forecast their budget needs. This will allow for greater anticipation of needs, further out, and will make budget management and grant applications more manageable and less pressing. Each year, as the Town plans these improvement projects, they evaluate depreciation costs and maintenance needs, and the Town Council assesses the monthly water bills in order to cover these costs.

Action Item Three: Investigate geothermal and raw water options

One future goal of the community is to investigate the potential of a raw water system and/or a geothermal water system. The advantage of raw and geothermal water would be a potential overall reduction in water and utility costs for individuals and businesses, but we have yet to find out how much that cost savings would be compared to the overall infrastructure improvement cost.

2) Sewer Systems

A similar plan is underway to assess the town owned and maintained sewer systems.

Action Item One: Seek Outside Funding for Sewer System Improvements

See the plan above, for water systems. A similar plan is underway to fund major renovations and maintenance of the sewer system.

Action Item Two: Develop a System Maintenance Schedule and Funding Model

See the plan above, for water systems. A similar plan is underway to plan for and fund both depreciation and routine system maintenance of the sewer system.

3) Trash Removal: Transitioning to a new Transfer Station

Due to Environmental Protection Agency and Wyoming Department of Environment Quality rules, our longtime landfill will not be permitted for further expansion as a regular

landfill. Our current landfill was only designed to last for 30 years, and is at year 29 of that usage plan. Thus, our community is having to transition away from using our landfill and will be building a transfer station. They have purchased the land and are working to develop the plans.

Action Item One: Build a Transfer Station

The Town of Thermopolis already owns the land and is currently working with DEQ to develop plans based on available funding for a new transfer station.

Action Item Two: Maintaining Current Landfill for Construction Debris

Because the town will be trucking the trash to another landfill, it will be expensive to take large loads of debris. Because of the nature and non-pollutant status of construction debris, it is possible for the town to maintain the existing open cells of the existing landfill for this use. Once the new transfer station is operable, the town will focus on the future of the current landfill. They will work with the EPA/DEQ to transition away from an active landfill and towards only construction and demolition debris. The town has a fee schedule for bulk loads dropped at the existing landfill location.

Action Item Three: Investigate Composting, Recycling and Reduction Efforts

Once the transition is made to the new transfer station, the town will need to investigate composting, recycling and reduction efforts. Because of the increased cost in transporting the trash out of the community, it will be fiscally responsible to reduce the bulk as much as possible. Cardboard has been discussed as the first target of this initiative, as it makes up about 40% of our current trash load. Yard waste has also been discussed as a friction point, and possible options for composting will be discussed. Town Council will need to discuss these options, with citizen input, weighing pros and cons, with the understanding that there would be an increased cost for this, before a decision is made about what efforts toward recycling and reduction will be prioritized, if any. It has also been discussed that it could be possible for a private business or nonprofit entity to begin to charge interested citizens for recycling pickup and work with other communities in the area to take our recycled products to them for processing.

4) Town of Thermopolis Streets, Curbs and Gutters

As has been stated, the Town of Thermopolis has done as much as they can with the limited finances available to them, however, the survey results show that residents generally find some improvements are needed.

Action Item One: Locate and Secure Funding for Major Projects

The barrier often faced in trying to remedy ongoing street and road needs is the lack of funding. The Town Council, Mayor and employees will work with state and federal partners to seek out and apply for funding for major projects toward fixing town streets, curbs and gutters. The goal is to have as many large, ongoing projects as they can reasonably provide matching funds for, manage and guarantee.

Action Item Two: Prioritize and Implement Repairs on Major Projects

The Town has worked to develop a prioritized major projects list. The list includes major projects and renovations that are needed to bring town streets into good repair. For more details, please visit with Town of Thermopolis staff members.

Action Item Three: Tie Street Repairs to Water and Sewer System Replacement

The Town will continue to replace old water and sewer lines during the same construction phase when undertaking road replacement efforts throughout town. The Town will further educate residents about this effort, as it is often confusing. While this makes street projects much more expensive and time consuming upfront, it does save time and money in the long run.

Action Item Four: Develop Routine Maintenance Plan and Project Funding Needs

Town employees are currently working to develop a system that will allow them to track what condition each part of the street, curb and gutter infrastructure is in. This will allow them to develop a maintenance schedule and forecast their budget needs. This will allow for greater anticipation of needs, further out, and will make budget management and grant applications more manageable and less pressing.

5) Town of Thermopolis Parks

a) Glade Edward Park- new equipment

In November 2024, the Town of Thermopolis installed new playground equipment in the Glade Edwards Park at 2nd and Fremont Streets.

b) Family Park- new playground equipment and new concrete

In the Fall of 2023, the Town of Thermopolis installed new playground equipment at the Family Park (Broadway and 12th Streets). In the Fall of 2024, the town replaced the asphalt for concrete for the basketball court.

c) Candy Jack Park rejuvenation

The next park that the town would like to rejuvenate is Candy Jack Park. The Town has not yet determined what the course of action will be for this, but this park is their next priority for funding parks.

6) Hot Springs County Roads and Bridges

a) Black Mountain Road repaving

The County Road and Bridge is working with the Wyoming Department of Transportation to repave the last 7 miles of Black Mountain Road. Work will begin Spring 2025.

b) Plow Truck

One large investment that needs to be made is a new plow truck for this department, as theirs are getting worn down. The County is working to make this a funding priority before it becomes urgent.

c) Additional County Road Improvements

Asphalt and gravel road repairs are a priority, as the County works to extend the life of many county roads.

7) **Citizen Advisory Committee**

a) **Safety and Security Citizen Advisors**

The Town of Thermopolis has hired a legal firm to update Standard Operating Procedures. Part of that process will be to develop a panel of citizen advisors that will work with the law firm to help address concerns, and provide input regarding potential changes to the policies and procedures. They will seek input from citizens throughout different realms of the community. These changes to policy will affect both town policy and law enforcement. If there are concerns about policing, contact the Chief of Police.

b) **Emergency Preparedness and Self Sufficiency**

There are currently groups working on emergency preparedness and self sufficiency issues in our community. The Local Emergency Planning Committee works on emergency preparedness and response. It is run by the Hot Springs County Emergency Management Coordinator, with a variety of stakeholding entities. Another entity is "Wyoming Are you Ready"? It is run by Maecile Brown Massie. Interested participants should reach out to Maecile, with contacts listed on their website. Their focus is on education. They promote self reliance and individuals being prepared for emergencies.

c) **Beautification committee**

The Town will help organize a committee to aid in the beautification of our community. This committee will help organize volunteers to work in public spaces, and with homeowners and others that need help with maintenance issues.

d) **Other committees as needed**

There are a variety of other areas that are not addressed here. Hot Springs County has many citizens that have skills and are willing to donate their time to working on these issues. If there is interest in another topic, individuals are encouraged to reach out to the Chamber to discuss the idea and make connections to others who might be working in that area.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of this plan is due to collaboration between these community entities:

Hot Springs County
Town of Thermopolis
Hot Springs State Park
Thermopolis- Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce
Thrive Thermopolis

We thank the members of the committee who made this possible:

Paul Galovich, Hot Springs County Commissioner
Jim Jeunehomme, Town of Thermopolis Codes Administration, Assistant to the Mayor
Chris Delay, Hot Springs State Park Superintendent
Meri Ann Dorman, Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, Chief Executive Officer
Kim Bartlett, Thrive Thermopolis Founding Board Secretary
Shurie Scheel, Thrive Thermopolis, Founding Board President

We also thank every member of our community who took the time to fill out the community survey, come to a community meeting, and join a sub-committee. There were a many fantastic volunteers who gave their time on a sub-committee. We want to especially thank these sub-committee members:

Kim Bartlett
Demity Baughman
Shelly Burrows
John Christensen
Catherine Crumpler
Chris Delay
Meri Ann Dorman
Paul Galovich
Jim Jeunehomme
Jessica Lippincott
Wade Lippincott
Cindy Toth
Phillip Scheel
Shurie Scheel
Sarah Slagle
Kelly Strampe
Roger Wever

ATTACHMENT ONE: IDENTIFIED NEEDS LIST

This is a list of businesses and other community assets that need to be actively recruited or built. These needs were identified in our community survey. This is not a complete list, and will be periodically revised as priorities and businesses change.

POTENTIAL BUSINESSES TO RECRUIT FOR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT:

Agricultural Feed Store
Lumber Yard
Grocery Store
Clothing Store
Shoe Store
Big Box Retailer (Larger Department Store)
Recycling Pickup and Processing
General Construction Contractor
Contracting Specialists (Electricians, Plumbers, HVAC, masonry, concrete, drywall, etc.)
Developers
Agricultural Specialty Finished Products (dairy, greenhouses, etc.)

POTENTIAL BUSINESSES TO RECRUIT FOR JOB CREATION:

Manufacturing
Industrial Businesses
Technology Businesses
Traditional Energy Industry
New Technique Traditional Energy Sector
Renewable Energy Industry
Agricultural Production
Agricultural Product Manufacturing

POTENTIAL BUSINESSES TO RECRUIT FOR TOURISM:

Hotel
Spa and/or Relaxation Retreat
“Pay-only-for-service” Parking for RV’s and Vans
Outdoor Stores (Bike Shop, hiking equipment, sporting goods, etc.)
Restaurants
Electric Charging Station

OTHER IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY ASSETS:

Bike paths around town

Arcade or game shop
More wintertime recreational opportunities

ATTACHMENT TWO: KEY PARTNERSHIPS

In order to better facilitate our planning, we have connected with the following organizations, at different points throughout this process, or will connect with them soon to ensure continuity and integration:

- Hot Springs County Commissioners
- Town of Thermopolis
- Thermopolis Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce
- Thrive Thermopolis
- Hot Springs State Park and Friends of Hot Springs State Park
- Hot Springs County School District #1
- Hot City Outdoor Alliance
- Hot Springs Travel and Tourism Board
- Main Street Thermopolis
- Thermopolis Investment Corp
- Hot Springs County Recreation District
- The Learning Center
- Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center Joint Powers Board
- Hot Springs County Water Joint Powers Board
- Hot Springs Heritage Foundation- Discovery Days Committee
- People 4 People
- Senior Center
- Meals on Wheels
- Youth Alternatives Program Coordinator
- Hot Springs Health
- Red Dirt Master Gardeners
- FFA and FFA Alumni
- 4-H program, UW and County Extension offices
- Hot Springs County Prevention Coalition
- Hot Springs County Fair Board
- Phillip's Help Center
- Thermopolis Rotary Club
- Pioneer Home