

# Planning community, county not a project — it's a process

Planning a city or a county is not a project — it's a process!

This process not only establishes a common understanding of where the city or county is, but also creates a vision of how a community wants its city to be seen in five, 10 or 15 years.

City or county planning is a process of thinking through scenarios to find the outcome that best suits the city or county and its residents.

Two weeks ago, approximately 20 Sheridan residents and I attended a two-day conference sponsored by Gov. Dave Freudenthal in Casper.

We were among 400 people, representing communities throughout the state, gathered to discuss planning in Wyoming.

There was a diversity of towns, cities, and counties represented at the conference, from large cities to towns with fewer than 1,000 people.

The conference was great — experts in city planning, county planning, and regional planning introduced new ideas and facilitated interesting discussion.

However, there has to be follow-up to this initial conference. The ideas must now be implemented locally.

The city and county of Sheridan are doing just that. The citizens of the city and county are lucky to have elected officials and economic development organizations that are working to plan our communities.

During the past few years, the city's elected officials and staff have been working on a master plan for water, sewer, and other infrastructure needs that are fundamental in planning for growth.

The county has embarked on a comprehensive planning process that is much needed — the last comprehensive plan was completed in the early 1980s.

We should congratulate the city and county for agreeing to use the same consulting firm, ensuring that the county's

comprehensive plan includes the areas adjacent to the city.

This shows cooperation between the city and the county for the future of our communities.

During Forward Sheridan's nine-month strategic planning process, over 400 citizens voiced their desire for comprehensive planning within both the city and the county, requesting "One Vision, Two Plans."

In answer to our citizens' and business owners' concerns about sprawl, spot zoning and limited design standards for both commercial and residential planning, Forward Sheridan is happy to say Sheridan is definitely a community in the throes of planning for the future.

However, we are not yet where we need to be in the planning stages.

Planning a city, as many people assume, is not just deciding where the infrastructure should be or determining land use. There are many other planning components that create a complete, overall planning process for the next 10 to 15 years.

One of those processes, which these same citizens (and many organizations) desire, is to see a design planning process that complements the infrastructure and zoning process.

A design plan would, following neighborhood meetings in the downtown area and affected neighborhoods, lay out the physical look of the city of Sheridan, including architectural design, entryway design standards, and design guidelines for those areas immediately adjoining city limits.

These standards will be created,

## A Community Affair

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*Planning for Sheridan's economic development*



based on input from the community, to manage city commercial and residential "look and feel" in a manner desired by the residents.

At Forward Sheridan, we feel grateful that the citizens are now speaking up about what kind of city

they would like Sheridan to be.

Having an overall design master plan, representing the citizens' understanding of the future Sheridan, will help ensure that the Sheridan we are envisioning now becomes the reality.

In the five-year Strategic Plan, the need for design planning is outlined, with strategies and implementation timelines. One of the strategies is to bring an urban design group to Sheridan to assist the city in planning the design and growth of the area.

Forward Sheridan, citizens, and numerous organizations are working with the city to make this community desire a community reality.

In the future, job opportunities and employment availability will no longer be the deciding factors for where people will move and settle; rather, a well-designed community with appealing amenities will be the priority.

At the end of the conference last week, one county commissioner from a small county asked Gov. Freudenthal how he could help the communities.

My reaction to that question is that only we can act within our communities — the state cannot be expected to act on a county level.

Many communities do not have the knowledge to initiate a planning process; nor do they have an organization that can

guide and implement the process for them.

Fortunately, Sheridan County and the city of Sheridan are ahead of most communities in Wyoming. I am convinced, in the next several years, we will serve as a model for the rest of the state.

Our citizens understand that by participating in the planning processes for the recently completed five-year Economic Development Strategic Plan, they realize they have a voice in the future of their community.

With citizens' experience as part of implementable planning processes, and with the elected officials listening to their concerns and desires, the city and county of Sheridan have an incredible opportunity to plan the future.

But it must be now, within the next two years — not 10 years from now.

Design planning means making some hard decisions. You can have good ideas and good plans, but only those communities with officials who are able and willing to make tough decisions are successful.

On a daily basis, I see this happening here in Sheridan.

I'm pleased that Wyoming is looking at these issues and discussing them. I am more pleased that the city and county of Sheridan are enacting change.

We can only succeed with continued involvement from our citizens and businesses.

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*"A Community Affair" is a weekly column from citizens who support Forward Sheridan, a professional business organization of invested partners whose purpose is to develop and maintain a sound economy in Sheridan County.*