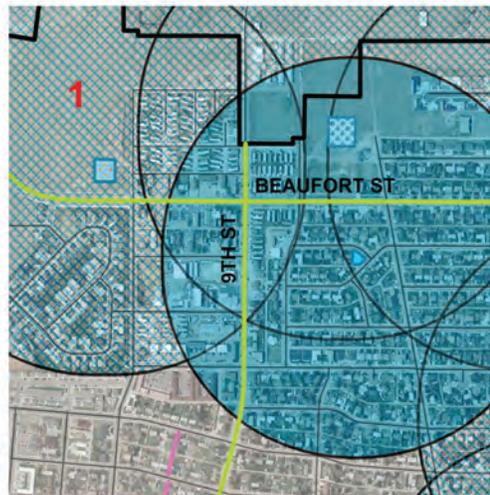




# City of Laramie Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Adopted February 22, 2016  
Certified March 1, 2016





**CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION NO: 2016-22**

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF LARAMIE, WYOMING CERTIFYING THE 2016 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN IN ITS ENTIRETY AND REPLACING THE 1982 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE: A PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN.**

**WHEREAS**, Wyoming Statutes (W.S.) §15-1-503 authorizes cities to adopt a master plan for the physical development of the city,

**WHEREAS**, the City of Laramie, Wyoming (City) approved and adopted the first Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space in June of 1982 which set forth a system wide plan improving Laramie's parks, recreation and open space resources,

**WHEREAS**, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998 the City approved and adopted the Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan to promote and encourage the increased use of bicycles as an alternative form for recreation and connectivity between residential areas, UW, schools, parks and other recreational facilities, and connection points to bicycle routes outside the city,

**WHEREAS**, on August 21, 2007 the City approved and adopted the Laramie Comprehensive Plan which called for the completion of a new Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, the City approved \$100,000 in the FY11 budget and \$103,000 in the FY12 budget for the completion of a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan for the City and City owned properties,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council developed their goals for 2011 & 2012 on January 29, 2011 that included the completion of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, City of Laramie Resolution 2011-46 appointed eleven individuals to the citizen Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the City of Laramie, Wyoming to assist with the completion of a Parks, Trails, and Recreation Master Plan:

- Two (2) current members from the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board
- One (1) current member from the Ad Hoc Ranch Advisory Committee
- One (1) current member of the Laramie Planning Commission
- One (1) current member of the Laramie City Council
- One (1) representative from the Laramie Bicycling Network
- Five (5) at large citizen/community members

**WHEREAS**, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee met 81 times between July of 2011 and April of 2015 to discuss, draft, and amend the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, on July 24, 2012 the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee presented the City Council an update on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, in August 2012 the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee commissioned a random survey of City and County residents on Parks and Recreation perceptions, preferences, and attitudes with a response rate of 29%,

**WHEREAS**, on February 27 and 28, 2013, four public meetings on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan were held at the Lincoln Community Center, Fire Station #2, and the Recreation Center,

**WHEREAS**, during the week of April 16 through 14, 2013 individual stakeholder group meetings were held to gather input from involved groups,

**WHEREAS**, the Albany County Planning and Zoning Commission received a presentation on October 9, 2013 on the progress of the Plan,

**WHEREAS**, the Laramie Traffic Commission met on May 9, 2013 and July 10, 2014 and received a presentation on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board held a special meeting on July 10, 2014 to hear a presentation of the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, five public meetings were held on July 14, 2014, July 16, 2014, and July 17, 2014 to present the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan to the public and receive comment,

**WHEREAS**, the Monolith Ranch Advisory Committee received a presentation on July 17, 2014 on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, City of Laramie City Council held a work session on July 22, 2014 to hear a presentation on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, the Beautification Committee received a presentation on July 24, 2014 on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, City of Laramie Planning Commission received a presentation on July 28, 2014 on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, Laramie Main Street Alliance received a presentation on August 4, 2014 on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, the Environmental Advisory Committee received a presentation on August 7, 2014 on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, the Traffic Commission received a presentation on August 14, 2014 on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, on April 8, 2015 the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee recommended the approval and adoption of the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, City of Laramie City Council held a work session on July 14, 2015 to hear a presentation on the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, on August 12, 2015 the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board recommended adoption of the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, on August 24, 2015 the Laramie Planning Commission remanded the draft Master Plan back to the Ad Hoc Committee with the general recommendations to remove all of the future extraterritorial needs and text boxes on the map and in the text,

**WHEREAS**, on September 30, 2015 the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee generally recommended approval of the Planning Commission's August 24, 2015 recommendations, where Service Areas were retained as placeholders within the document with only general background information remaining, and that the City and County should work together to develop future Parks and Recreation needs in these Service Areas, and that the only elements left in the plan located outside of City Limits were on City owned properties,

**WHEREAS**, on February 10, 2016 the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board recommended approval of the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**WHEREAS**, on February 22, 2016 the Laramie Planning Commission approved the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**NOW THEREFORE THE CITY COUNCIL RESOLVES:**

**Section 1.** That foregoing all recitals are incorporated in and made part of this resolution by this reference.

**Section 2.** That the City Council hereby certifies the Laramie Planning Commission's approval of the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**Section 3.** That the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan replaces the 1982 Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED the 1st day of March, 2016.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
David A. Paulekas  
Mayor and President of the City Council

ATTEST:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Angie Johnson  
City Clerk

**PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO: PC 2016-02**

**RESOLUTION OF THE LARAMIE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF LARAMIE, WYOMING ADOPTING THE 2016 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN IN ITS ENTIRETY AND REPLACING THE 1982 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE: A PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN.**

**WHEREAS**, Wyoming Statutes (W.S.) §15-1-503 authorizes cities to adopt a master plan for the physical development of the city,

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**WHEREAS**, the City approved \$100,000 in the FY11 budget and \$103,000 in the FY12 budget for the completion of a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan for the City and City owned properties,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council developed their goals for 2011 & 2012 on January 29, 2011 that included the completion of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan,

**WHEREAS**, City of Laramie Resolution 2011-46 appointed eleven individuals to the citizen Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the City of Laramie, Wyoming to assist with the completion of a Parks, Trails, and Recreation Master Plan:

- Two (2) current members from the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board
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- Five (5) at large citizen/community members

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WHEREAS, on August 24, 2015 the Laramie Planning Commission remanded the draft Master Plan back to the Ad Hoc Committee with the general recommendations to remove all of the future extraterritorial needs and text boxes on the map and in the text,

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2015 the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee generally recommended approval of the Planning Commission's August 24, 2015 recommendations, where Service Areas were retained as placeholders within the document with only general background information remaining, that the City and County work together to develop future Parks and Recreation needs in these Service Areas, and that the only elements left in the plan located outside of City Limits were on City owned properties,

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2016 the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board recommended approval of the Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**NOW THEREFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLVES:**

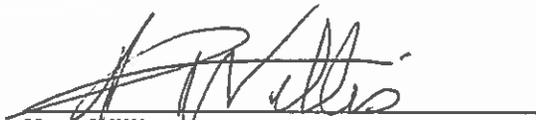
**Section 1.** That foregoing all recitals are incorporated in and made part of this resolution by this reference.

**Section 2.** That the Planning Commission hereby adopts the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

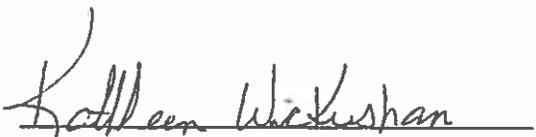
**Section 3.** That the City Council hereby certifies the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**Section 4.** That the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan replaces the 1982 Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED the 22nd day of February, 2016.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kaye Willis  
Chairman of the Laramie Planning Commission

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathleen Wickersham, Administrative Assistant  
Laramie Planning Commission Secretary and Clerk

**PARKS, TREE AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD RESOLUTION NO: AB 2016-03**

**RESOLUTION OF THE PARKS, TREE AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD FOR THE CITY OF LARAMIE, WYOMING ADOPTING THE 2016 PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN IN ITS ENTIRETY AND REPLACING THE 1982 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE: A PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN.**

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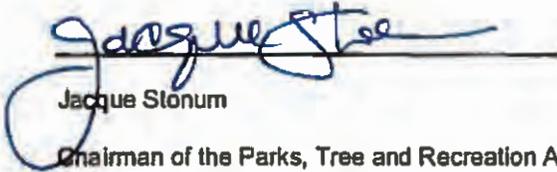
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**NOW THEREFORE THE PARKS, TREE AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD RESOLVES:**

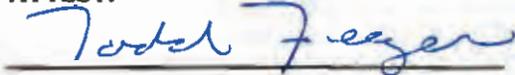
**Section 1.** That the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board hereby recommends the adoption the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**Section 2.** That the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan replaces the 1982 Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED the 10<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016.**

  
Jacquie Stonum  
Chairman of the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board

ATTEST:

  
Todd Feezer

Todd Feezer, Director, Parks & Recreation Department

Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary and Clerk



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# Executive Summary

Laramie, which is located in Albany County at an elevation of 7,200 feet and home to the State's only four-year higher-education institution, the University of Wyoming, is a quintessential western community blended with a progressive and modern outlook. With a population of 30,816 people, Laramie is expected to grow by approximately 10,000 people by 2050, bringing Laramie's total population to 40,000. When examining the community more closely, a younger population, over half of the total, is between the ages of 15-34 years old with denser populations of people living around or in close proximity to the University of Wyoming campus.

The City of Laramie has a solid and rooted history in parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. With the creation of Undine Park in the 1880's, the Laramie River Greenbelt corridor, and the recent Laramie Community Recreation Center, it is clear that the City and community have committed to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas as a high priority. The rich history of Laramie's parks and recreation system demonstrates this commitment, further solidifying the importance of this plan for Laramie. A more detailed history is provided in Chapter 3.

## *The Vision*

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan has been developed in order to achieve Laramie's vision for Parks and Recreation in the community. Based on the public comments, background information, other plans/codes and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee's experience and expertise, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee developed a vision for the plan. The vision is intended to provide the inspiration and framework for the plan, which includes generalized goals and direction.

The following vision was approved by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee:

1. Provide equitable parks and recreation services and opportunities to all areas and people of the community.
2. Develop a parks, trails, recreation and natural areas system that is specific to Laramie and the surrounding community.
3. Establish new parks in conjunction with proposed development or in areas of park deficiency; parks should be considered no different than other vital infrastructure, such as streets, sidewalks and utilities.
4. Improve the visual appearance of our community through beautification of City-owned areas by improving their recreational and natural area qualities.
5. Provide for the future needs of the community in relation to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas through sound planning and visionary foresight.
6. Establish a funding mechanism that provides for parks, recreation, trails and natural areas that adequately serves the population, based on population growth and development pressures.
7. Provide for a continuous mobility loop around (and throughout) the community for off-street bike and pedestrian paths that allow users to access parks, recreation and natural areas.
8. City and Albany County should work together to secure permanent access east of the City to ensure preservation of the natural areas, and

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at a minimum access to the National Forest.

With the City of Laramie's Parks and Recreation Master Plan being developed from a community vision that believed parks, recreation, trails and natural areas components of our community are important and require the long range planning vision that only a comprehensive plan could provide developing a plan is a must. For many communities, parks, recreation, trails and natural areas are an afterthought; Laramie is not one of those communities and does not want to be one of those communities. With the development of the 1982 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and many of the plans that followed it, one common theme was present: parks, recreation, trails and natural areas are the number one priority for community residents. This plan is necessary for the community and its leaders to work towards achieving the high expectations, visions, goals and standards established and outlined by the community through this process.

Although a community's desire may differ as to why a plan should be developed, all well-developed plans have inherent benefits to the community. The most apparent benefit a parks master plan can provide is the long term, community-wide planning needed to provide facilities for the entire community in relation to parks and recreation.

Aside from good general planning practice, one of the specific benefits of a plan is to help aid in budgeting. In any budgeting situation, especially in a government setting, short term budgeting often leads to inefficient expenditures. Albany County and Laramie do not receive large revenues from the State or other sources such as mining, thus development of these facilities must come from the general budget, typically over a longer period of time. Although the community has traditionally shown a commitment to these facilities, Laramie is not alone in feeling the difficulties of budget cuts. Long term planning make this plan an essential component of good stewardship. Managing the year-to-year budget keeps the long term vision within grasp. This long term approach also allows for small budget increases over a series of years to accomplish and implement objectives identified in the plan, instead of one-time, large increases that are difficult to obtain.

Across the country, parks and recreation amenities are now considered essential services to cities, and in fact, act as an economic generator to the community by increasing property values, aiding in business retention and attracting new business to the community. These quality of life improvements create a sense of place, preserve the environment and generate tourism dollars. No matter the reason, parks and recreation facilities provide widespread benefits to the community, making this plan even more important not only for the development of parks and recreation in Laramie but also for the general betterment of the community.

Wyoming Statutes gives the City the authority to make plans for the physical development of the City, including parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. Two distinct areas are addressed by this plan; areas inside City Limits and city owned property outside City limits. For areas inside City limits the full applicability and enforceability of the plan apply. Long range planning for the Laramie community remains of paramount importance; particularly as the City continues to grow by likely annexing new areas into the City. Once annexed, these areas will fall under the jurisdiction of the City and this plan.

For this plan, public participation was expected and was the driving force behind the development of the document. Opportunities for the public to participate included public meetings, stakeholder groups, a community survey, as well as unsolicited phone conversations and letters to the City, just to name a few. Public meetings like the biweekly Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and City Council, plus many other board and commission meetings were opportunities for these boards and the public to comment and provide input on the plan. Additionally, a more focused approach was taken to collect public comments through stakeholder groups. These stakeholder meetings provided a focused look at specific issues related to specific interests and goals of each stakeholder group in relation to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas.

Another major public participation initiative was a community wide survey (Laramie residents and County residents within the one-mile boundary) completed by Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center

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(WYSAC). The survey was developed by City of Laramie Staff, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and WYSAC personnel to assess preferences and attitudes about various parks and recreation related issues. The high response rate was invaluable in surveying the public's opinion on these matters. Finally, less formal and more modern methods such as a web site for the plan's development, newspaper ads, Facebook and Twitter were used to disseminate information such as meeting times, agendas and general information, providing an opportunity to comment through mail, phone or email and complete a survey if they were not mailed one. (See Appendix B, C and D for more information)

Updates and amendments to the plan are essential to keeping a plan relevant to the desires of a community. Every five years minor updates should be completed such as; general editing and map updates to reflect completed improvements, updates to goals and action statements. Other changes may reflect new codes or regulations which change how the plan is used. Every ten years major updates should be implemented including; new park plans or updates to the existing plans, revision of goals, updates to public comments/issues, Service Area modifications, updates to action statements as well as any other necessary updates. All updates shall follow the process as established by State Statutes and Laramie Municipal Code for updates to a master plan.

The goals and recommendations for parks, recreation, trails and natural areas have been outlined in many previous plans adopted by Laramie and its surrounding communities over the years. Because of the direction provided in these plans, City staff, the Ad Hoc Committee and the public looked to these recommendations for providing direction related to the development of this plan. This plan considered the following documents; Laramie Bikeway Study, Comprehensive Plan: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, Land Use Element, Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan, Laramie Comprehensive Plan, Casper Aquifer Protection Plan & Ordinance, Albany County Comprehensive Plan, Unified Development Code, University of Wyoming Long Range Development Plan, A Downtown Development Plan for Laramie Wyoming, Management Plan for Water Rights on the Monolith Ranch & Monolith Ranch Agricultural Management Plan, Medicine Bow National Forest

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Wyoming Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan and Cirrus Sky Technology Park Master Plan. More information related to these plans can be found in Chapter 2.

### *Parks and Recreation Standards*

A successful Parks and Recreation Master Plan requires a set of classifications and standards that provide a framework for the physical development and redevelopment of any community facility. Not only do these standards set an expected baseline for a community's size, type, location and amenities of its parks and recreation facilities, it establishes a community wide standard that can be used by the City, more specifically, the Parks and Recreation Department. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) published the Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines (2009) to establish nationally applicable criteria for the provision of natural areas, parks and recreation facilities. These standards serve as a guide for parks and recreation planning and this plan, but do not replace reasonable judgment or specific local needs. The National Standards have been modified to specifically fit Laramie's needs and unique characteristics. For this plan four main groups of standards were generated: Parks, Trails, Recreation and Natural Areas.

For Parks, standards were developed that provide guidance related to the size, services, location and amenities that should be standard in each of the three main park types: Community, Neighborhood and Playlot Parks.

Recreation facilities and amenities standards were also developed that provided specifics for each of the facilities of note, but lacked the general standards like those developed for the parks, due to the specifics needed for each. Standards for the Recreation Center, Ice and Event Center, sports complexes, dog friendly off-leash areas, splash parks, playgrounds, skatepark, cemetery and Jacoby Golf Course were developed that provided background, location, size, funding and future issues.

Standards for Natural Areas were also developed, which provide direction to the community in relationship to areas that are set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, open space, unique topography,

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visual aesthetics or some other resource that has been determined of value to the community. Two different types of Natural Areas were standardized; Open Space and Preserve. Open Space allows different levels of improvements and access, while Preserves limit or restrict improvements as well as the access to the areas. Proposed standards are provided in relationship to private versus public Natural Areas.

Trail standards were also developed for four main types; Bicycle Lanes, Shared-Use Paths, Rural Trails and Other. Generally, all bicycle lanes, shared-use paths and any other pedestrian routes noted in this plan or constructed in Laramie should conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) 2009, as well as other standards such as AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities 2012, Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 (as amended) and City of Laramie Engineering Standards. In addition to the general standards outlined in these documents, detailed standards such as location, width and painting/signage needs, as well as many other standards are addressed in Chapter 4.

In addition to some of the more commonly associated parks and recreation amenities, other standards were developed for: Recreation and Programming, Laramie Beautification Areas, University of Wyoming campus and Detention Areas. Standards varied between the different amenities and were tailored to meet the needs of each amenity and the community. Standards that were developed ranged from: how to accommodate different user groups, such as youth or seniors in recreation programming, how to improve gateways into the community through beautification areas and maximizing the potential of a detention area not only for stormwater management but also for recreation and beautification.

### *Parks and Recreation Analysis*

With the importance of parks and recreation planning, developing standards for amenities, and programming and other key areas of this plan, the final component of this plan is the physical planning of the community. The physical development of the community was presented in two different ways: by Service Area (SA) and by each existing Park or major Facility. As noted above and throughout the plan, the community was divided

into Service Areas, which are based on area geography, major barriers to travel and other physical features. By dividing up the community in this manner, a more manageable approach to providing parks and recreation services for delineated areas of the community could be undertaken. Based on each Service Area, existing and future population was analyzed. Based on this analysis, the number, acreage and spatial needs for the SA in relationship to Parks (Community, Neighborhood and Playlot Parks) was given. Finally, a detailed analysis, goals and summary for each Service Area are then provided showing how the SA is currently serving the SA's needs and what is desirable for the future.

In addition to the analysis provided for each Service Area, each existing Park and major facility was also examined. Each analysis provided details related to existing and proposed needs for each park or facility. For many of the parks, existing amenities and future needs were similar, especially for parks in similar categories such as Community, Neighborhood or Playlot Parks. However, depending upon the size, population, location, and existing amenities, among other factors, the needs for each park varied. For instance, additional dog friendly off-leash parks, sand volleyball courts or a BMX/Cyclo-Cross course were all desired amenities by the public; however every park does not need all of these amenities. Based on public comment and input from the Ad Hoc Committee and staff amenities were distributed throughout these parks to accommodate needs of the area or community as a whole.

Similar to the study completed for each park, an analysis related to major facilities, such as the Recreation Center, Ice and Events Center and Cemetery, among others, was also completed. For the analysis completed for each of these facilities, the needs varied. For some facilities, future expansion, additional amenities and improvements were the common needs and desires, while other facilities such as the Cemetery, identified the need for a completely new site, due to the limited capacity of the existing facility.

This analysis is important in providing the community, staff and elected officials a plan as to how these facilities will need to develop in the future. As stated in the vision and throughout the plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the City is considered highly

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important to the community. Parks and recreation amenities, Natural Areas, and Trails should no longer be considered secondary needs in Laramie, but instead should be considered a high priority within the goals of our community. Not only do these proposed features provide common benefits to a community such as places to play and recreate, but also benefit the community in other countless ways including the economy. This plan is a well thought out and all encompassing representation of what the Laramie community desires in relationship to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas.

*The specific locations of any RECOMMENDED Parks, Trails and Facilities within this document are HYPOTHETICAL in nature and they are not intended for public use. Locations may change as development occurs.*

*The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, including all text, maps, figures and appendices as well as additional information such as public comments and survey results can be found on the City of Laramie's website at the following web address:*

**[www.cityoflaramie.org/masterplan](http://www.cityoflaramie.org/masterplan)**



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# Acknowledgments

The Laramie Parks and Recreation Master Plan was generated through the hard and dedicated work of various groups, citizens and staff. This plan is dedicated to those groups as well the countless citizens who have made the Parks and Recreation Master Plan a top priority for Laramie and the surrounding area. Without citizen support and input the development of this document would not have been possible.

Specific thanks go to the Parks, Trails and Recreation Ad Hoc Committee. This committee has spent countless hours of their own time generating, developing, learning, gathering and participating in the development of this document. They have provided staff with a perspective that makes this document what it is.

## *Parks, Trails and Recreation Ad Hoc Committee*

**Dave Hammond (Chair)**  
**Joe Lord**  
**Amy K. Williamson**  
**Dan McCoy**  
**Peggy McCrackin**  
**Bill Gribb**  
**Mike Moeller**  
**Evan O'Toole**  
**Amber Travsky**  
**Scott Mullner**  
**Vicki Henry**  
**Nadia Kaliszewski**

Additional thanks go to...

## *City Council*

Dave Paulekas (Mayor)  
Joe Shumway  
Klaus Hanson  
Lee Kempert  
Joe Vitale  
Vicki Henry  
Paul Weaver  
Andrea "Andi" Summerville  
Jayne Pearce  
Scott Mullner  
Roger McKinley  
Erik Molvar  
Karl McCracken  
Bryan Shuster

## *Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board*

Jacque Stonum (Chair)  
Dave Bluemel  
Larry Foianini  
Dave Hammond  
Phyllis Herdendorf  
Jamie Le Jambre  
Steve Ropp  
Amy Williamson  
John Ysebaert  
Marius Favret  
Chris Dixon

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## *Planning Commission*

Kay Willis (Chair)  
Jon Gardzelewski  
Vicki Henry  
Jim McGrath  
Tim Sowecke  
John Hester (In Memory of)  
Randy Vickers  
Paul Weaver  
Nadia Kaliszewski  
Tony Mendoza  
Angela Dewolf King  
Bob Boysen  
Brian Le Jambre  
Kathe Carlton

Special thanks to John Hester, who passed unexpectedly during start of the development of this document. As a long time Planning Commission member, Downtown business owner and Laramie resident his passion for development of a Parks and Recreation Plan, as well as trails to and from downtown and to the east were an inspiration and we hope to capture that inspiration in this document.

## *City Staff*

Janine Jordan, MPA, City Manager  
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Derek Teini, AICP, Senior Planner  
Charles Bloom, AICP, Senior Planner  
Cody Jennings, Assistant Planner  
Audem Gonzales, Assistant Planner  
Mel Owen, Parks & Recreation Administrative Assistant  
Mike Zook, Parks Manager  
Michael Peters, Recreation Manager  
David Schott, Parks Manger  
Jodi Guerin, Recreation Manager  
Matthew Cox, Planning Intern

...and the countless other members of staff who have participated in the development of this document.

## *Albany County*

David Gertsch, Albany County Planning Office

## *Albany County Planning and Zoning*

## *Albany County Commissioners*

## *The Public*

...And finally the over 20 stakeholder groups, 400 survey takers and countless citizen participants who have given their time and insight to the development and adoption of this Plan.

## *Further Acknowledgments:*

Unless otherwise noted all photography for the plan was taken by Matthew Idler of Matthew Idler Photography.

Survey data found in appendix C was compiled by Michael Dorssom, W. Trent Holder, Brian Harnisch, and Tyler Hopkins of the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

Laramie has developed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in order to implement and achieve the desired long range vision of the community. Additionally, the passage of the plan demonstrates the commitment of the Laramie community to the goals, ideas, and benefits of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The legislative authority given to the City to adopt a comprehensive plan is in Wyoming Statutes Sections 15-1-501 through 15-1-512, authorizing the City to prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the City. For this plan, the City has chosen to exhibit areas inside the City limits and only plan for areas within the City limits and City owned property.

Two distinct areas exist within the Plan: areas inside City limits and areas outside of City limits but within the one-mile boundary from City limits. Based on the planning legislation provided by the State, any planning done outside of the City limits requires the concurrence of the county, if the Plan is to be applicable and enforceable in the areas outside of the City limits. As the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee developed the draft plan and received comments from the Albany County Planning and Zoning Commission and the Albany County Commissioners on the proposed extraterritorial needs outside the City limits but within the one-mile boundary, the Ad Hoc Committee removed all of the Plan elements shown outside of City limits and not on City owned property at the encouragement of Albany County appointed and elected officials. The Ad Hoc Committee has recommended within this Plan that Albany County follow the guidance in their own adopted Albany County Comprehensive Plan related to Parks and Recreation issues. Throughout the Albany County Comprehensive Plan multiple recommendations are given, including two of six key Implementation Actions referencing



*A family at play in Harbon Park*

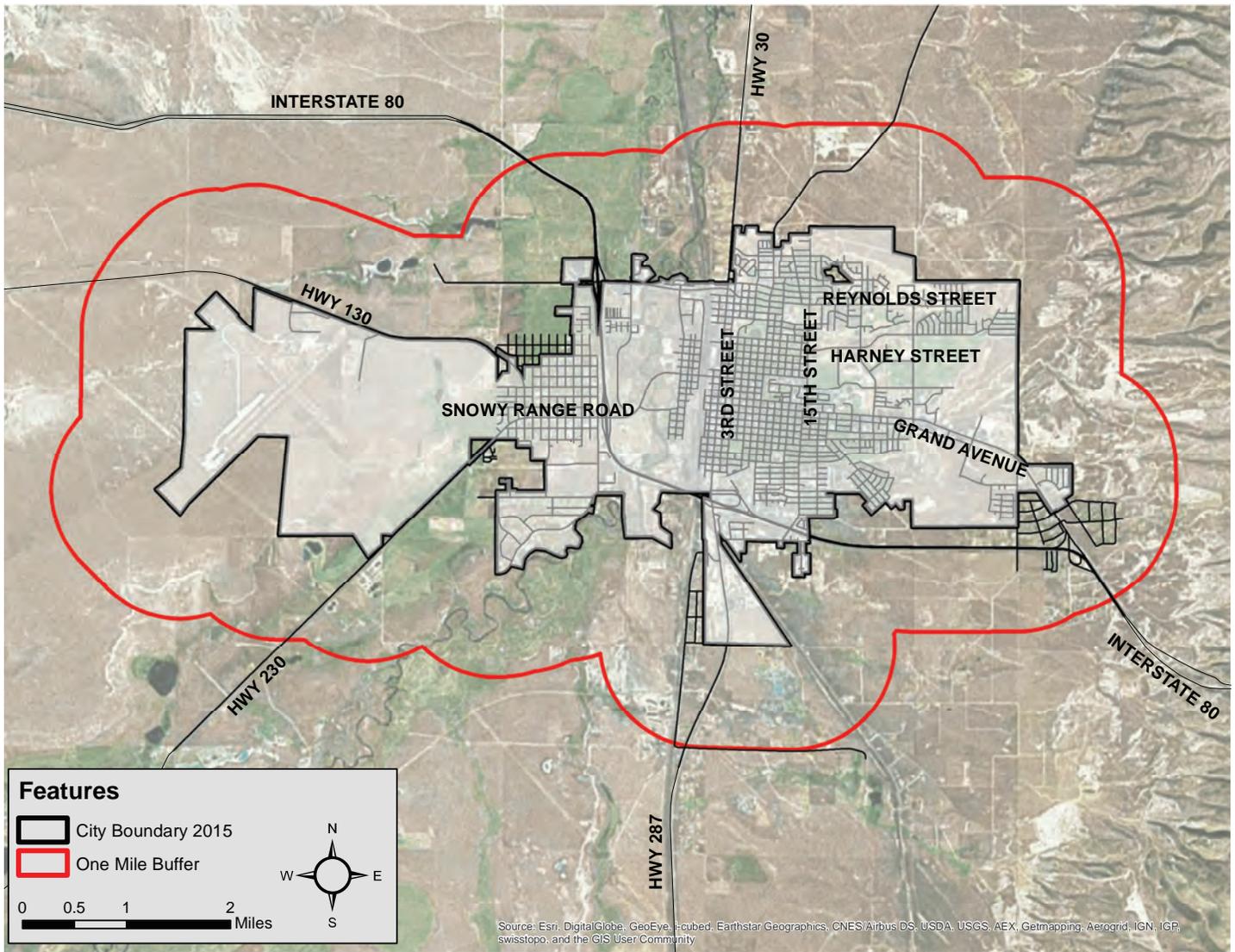
recreation opportunities and development of an open space and trails plan. Other implementation action items such as providing for recreational opportunities, open space and trails, and that plans be developed to support these initiatives are also found in the document.

It is recommended that Albany County follow these already adopted recommendations and goals related to the development of parks and recreation amenities in Albany County. The County should also consider development of a County Parks Plan, which if developed, the City's Plan should consider the County Plan in a 5 or 10 year update to its own plan or in conjunction with an update.

Although this Plan does not show any parks and recreation elements outside of City limits except for city owned property; long range planning for the Laramie community remains of paramount importance; particularly as the City continues to grow it will likely annex new areas into the City. Once annexed, these areas will fall under the jurisdiction of the City and

this plan. A long range plan, forty years, will allow for a well thought out and future-driven recreation system for Park, Trails, Bike Lanes, Shared Use Paths and all other facilities to develop over time. Without this long term vision in place, there will be little guidance for property owners, developers and the City on matters involving the park and recreation system that will serve future populations. Furthermore, a detailed plan should be in place for City owned properties outside of City limits, such as the Monolith Ranch. This plan provides important planning guidance for these properties as well.

Generally acquisition of Parks and amenities, such as trail or sporting fields, will rely on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for guidance as to the location, importance



City of Laramie Boundary and one mile buffer, 2015

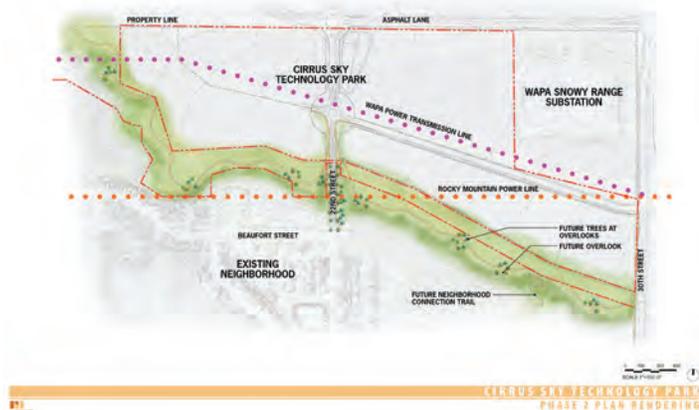


Monolith Ranch, public access area, just south of Laramie, WY and need within the community. When it comes time for acquiring these amenities many different methods may be used to acquire the needed properties or complete the needed improvements. One of the most common ways in Laramie is the requirement that residential development provide these parks or improvements based on the Park Dedication and In-lieu fees requirements adopted by the City and found in code. In conjunction with this requirement and with cooperation of the landowner, other common methods such as straight out purchase, trade/swap, donation or the establishment of easements may be used to accommodate the needed parks and amenities.

Not a new concept in Laramie, this long term planning approach and land acquisition process is common place and has been successful throughout Laramie’s history. Two examples of this successful long range planning are; the Cirrus Sky Ridgeline Trail and the Monolith Ranch. In regards to the Monolith Ranch, a major long range planning initiative securing water rights for future use by the City, was accomplished through the purchase and continued operation of the Monolith Ranch in 1982. This forward thinking, long range planning (going on 30 plus years) shows the importance of long range planning outside of City limits, ultimately resulting in sustained longevity of the community. In conjunction with this goal, and more specifically related to the Parks and Recreation goals, access to the Laramie River for fishing and recreation was secured in 1983. Although this is the most immediate benefit to Parks and Recreation now, as water rights are transferred to municipal use, the availability of the Ranch for additional recreational opportunities is highly likely. In the end this major planning effort has seen it’s first results within the first 30 years and with more results to be seen in the next 40 to 50 years and beyond.



30th and Plains Viewshed, Laramie, WY



Conceptual rendering of the future Cirrus Sky Trail

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## General Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas Issues and Visions

As with any plan, public input plays a substantial role in how a plan captures the vision of the community. Some of the main public comments received during the development of the 2007 Laramie Comprehensive Plan centered on parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. Because of the amount of comments received during that process, it was recognized that the community's involvement would play a major role in the development of this plan. In addition to the comments received during the development of the Laramie Comprehensive Plan, parks and recreation related comments are often the most discussed during other long range planning processes such as the Turner Tract Area Plan 2013 and the Cirrus Sky Technology Park Master Plan. This topic is also discussed at length in other current planning items such as plats and code development. Because of the continuing interest in the topic of parks and recreation, development of this plan became paramount.

In order to capture the public's vision for the plan, the Laramie City Council created an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee made up of citizens from Laramie and the surrounding area in an effort to help staff work on the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. One of the main directives given to the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee was to capture the vision of the community. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee acts as a sounding board not only for

the public, but for staff as well. By incorporating public comments into the process, a more unified community park and recreation vision was captured.

### Public Process

An essential component of any planning document is the ability of the public to participate in the creation of the plan through the public process. For this plan, public participation was encouraged in a range of different opportunities which included public meetings, stakeholder groups, a community survey as well as unsolicited phone conversations and letters to the City, just to name a few. No matter the type of public meeting, any public comment received was considered by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and integrated into the planning process. In the following section, major methods of citizen participation are described; along with any information received and compiled that was used in helping shape the development of the plan.

### Public Meetings

Public meetings are typically one of the primary ways in which the public is given an opportunity to comment on a plan. During the development of this plan, the public meeting process took many different forms. The most traditional form used was a public open house. Throughout the plan development process, four public open house meetings were held. At each meeting a short presentation was given that provided background information on the current status of parks and recreation

areas and the needs for future development. Maps were then reviewed by the public after the presentation. Following the presentation, the public was given an opportunity to interact with City staff and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee members. They were also encouraged to discuss any topic or concerns and provide written comments, fill out surveys and/or comment on a series of maps that were made available which contained all existing and proposed parks, trails, recreation areas and natural areas. These meetings were held on the 27th and 28th of February 2013, at the Laramie Recreation Center, Fire Station #2 and the Lincoln Community Center. Noon and evening meeting times were scheduled on these two days for the convenience of the public.



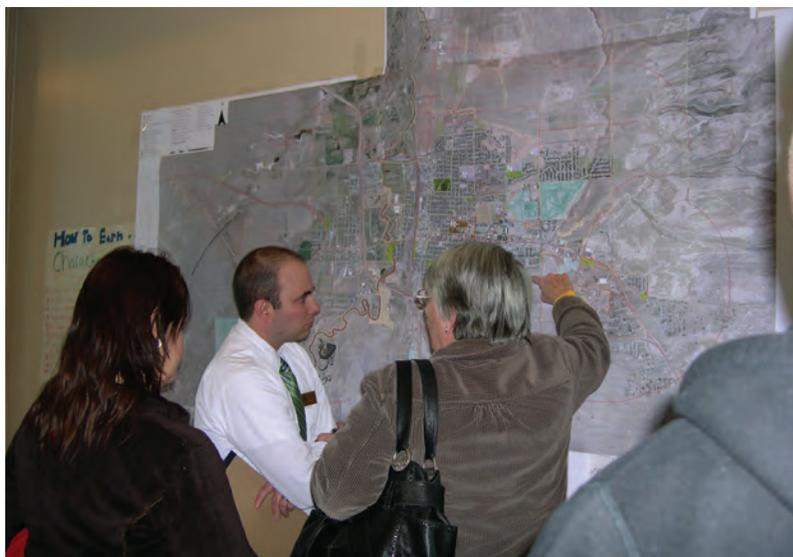
*Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Meeting*

Another type of public meeting which was used to garner public participation was through official governing bodies, committees or commissions. Although much more formal of a setting, participation in these meetings allowed Staff to present information directly to a group and receive official feedback as well as a position related to the plan. At these meetings the public was also allowed to comment and provide feedback to the governing body, committee or commission. Some of the different public groups included: the Parks, Trees and Recreation Advisory Board, the City of Laramie Planning Commission, the Laramie City Council, the Albany County Planning & Zoning Board, the Albany County Commissioners, the Laramie Traffic Commission, the Parks, Tree and Recreation Advisory Board, the Albany County Ranch Advisory Committee, the Environment Advisory Committee and the Laramie Beautification Committee.

Finally, one of the most consistent ways in which the public had the opportunity to comment was through participation in the biweekly or sometimes weekly Ad Hoc Advisory Committee meetings. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee meetings were a consistent way in which the public could get involved. The meetings, held every other Wednesday of the month, some off Wednesdays, as well as some weekends, always included a public comment agenda item that allowed any member of the public in attendance to listen, participate or comment on scheduled agenda items or a topic of their choice. A summary of public comments can be found in Appendix C of this plan.

### **Stakeholder Groups**

Based on previous planning processes completed within the Laramie community, Stakeholder Groups have been identified as a highly effective way to capture public comment. In past planning processes the comments received during these meetings provided valuable information. In contrast to comments heard during public meetings, through surveys or general public comments, Stakeholder Groups can help provide a focused look at specific issues related to specific interests and goals, in this case parks, recreation, trails and natural areas.



*Public Meetings during the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan*

On March 23, 2012, Stakeholder Group letters and emails were sent out to eighty groups requesting their input on issues specific to their group in relation to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. Each Stakeholder Group was given the opportunity to sign up for a 20 minute time slot (many of which ran longer than 20 minutes), during the week of April 16-20, 2012. During this time the Stakeholder Group was asked to answer six questions provided prior to the meeting and speak to any issues the questions did not address. The Stakeholder Groups were also given the opportunity to respond in writing if attendance was not desired or if the group was unable to attend. The outreach letter, stakeholder questions and responses can be found in Appendix E.

A total of 21 groups responded to the City's stakeholder questionnaire, with 15 groups attending an in-person meeting. Additional groups that participated provided a written response or set up meetings at a later date to discuss the questions. Overall, participation was considered good, however not as many groups participated as expected, despite follow-up calls and reminders sent by staff in an attempt to improve participation. No specific reason was identified that explained why some groups did not participate.

The Stakeholder Groups who did attend provided invaluable information that would have been difficult to attain otherwise. The participants who attended ranged from local bike groups, sports clubs and leagues, local

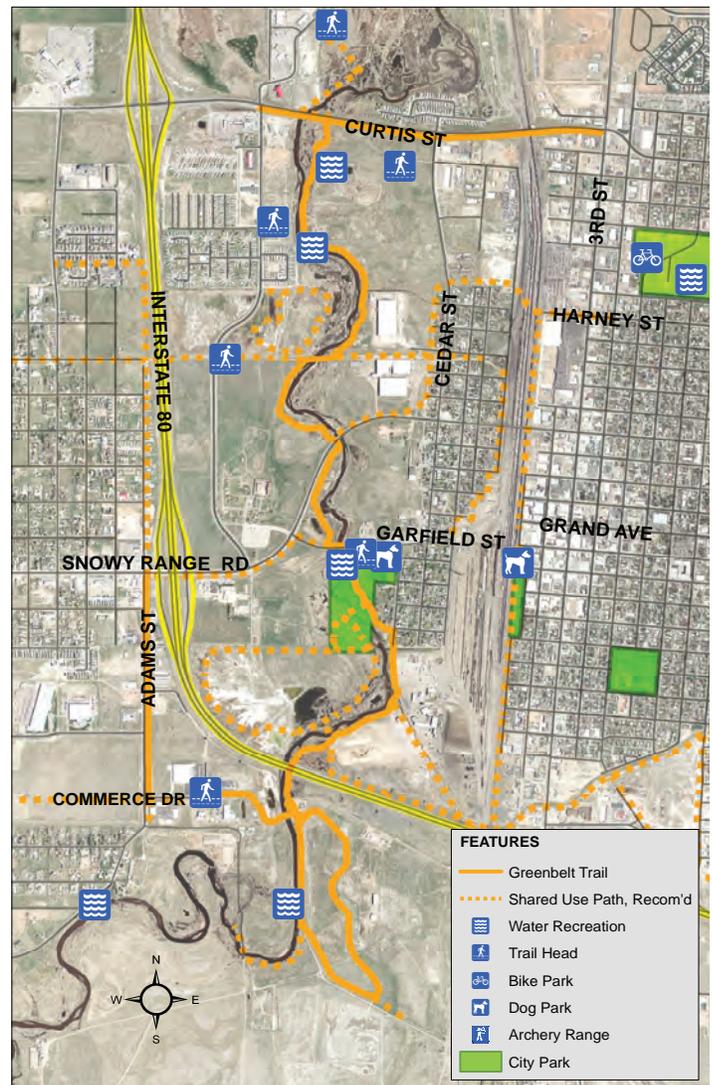
food growing clubs, state agencies, and members of the development community. A list of Stakeholder Groups and their comments can be found in Appendix D.

Comments varied widely from the groups who participated. Because of the different interests that each group represented, very specific comments were provided based on the stakeholder group's interests. However, through the diversity of interest groups, many common themes were noted:

- Access to the National Forest east of town is extremely important to the community. In addition to access, preservation of this area for recreation, wildlife, aquifer protection and improved livability in our community is desired. When access was discussed, the idea of access took many different forms; ranging from an all out purchase and unfettered access, to conservation areas with possible limited access, to the creation of easements that would allow connection to the National Forest.
- Cleaning up and putting to use the former BP Amoco refinery site located at Cedar and Curtis Street is highly desired. The use of the site as a future Community Park, greenbelt access, fishing area and sporting complex are all options that should be pursued. All of these uses are highly desired and advantageous due to its central location for the West Laramie community. Typically these facilities are located on the outskirts of town due to lack of space. Laramie has a unique opportunity to capitalize on its central location.
- Trails that connect Laramie to culturally important places are also desired. Access to locations such as the Wyoming State Park Territorial Prison or Depot Park as well as places located outside of town such as the old Railroad beds or the Plains Lakes, are important to preserve. The “Rails-to-Trails” concept was extremely valued by many different groups.
- The Greenbelt concept, a green space loop around the community that incorporates the existing Laramie River Greenbelt and the Spring Creek Channel Greenbelt, was highly desired. The Greenbelt would also include routes north and south of town that would provide a continuous

loop “around” and through the City. This concept would be instrumental in providing connectivity across the community. The walking and bicycle routes would provide access to Parks, recreation facilities and Natural Areas for those who do not have cars, those who can't afford cars or those who choose not to use motorized transportation to access the variety of recreational uses.

- Provide accessible and walkable (within one-quarter mile or four blocks) Parks, Natural Areas, Trails and recreational opportunities for residents. Recreational opportunities should be close to development, be easily accessible, have parking and include way-finding signage. Proposed and existing sites should attempt to provide



Current Greenbelt Trail

user-friendly access by improving intersections, adding crosswalks, installing shared use paths and bike lanes. It is also of great importance to improve access through integrating the parks with the public transportation system. Stops on the Albany County Transit Authority bus route should be at or near proposed parks, recreation, natural areas and trail facilities.



*Community Garden in LaBonte Park, Laramie*

- Riparian areas in and around Laramie should be protected and accessible to the community through shared use paths. Specifically, the Laramie River and the Spring Creek Channel should be preserved and protected as important wildlife and storm water management areas and be accessible to the public.
- Laramie’s parks and natural areas should provide educational opportunities when available. Opportunities such as preserved natural areas, rivers and streams, ponds, etc., can provide a myriad of educational locations for educators or the public to use. Additionally, community gardens, xeriscaping demonstration gardens, or edible landscape areas can provide more opportunities for someone to learn or simply grow their own food for a nutritious diet.
- Largely undeveloped Natural Areas were deemed important to the community. Having areas near the community remain undeveloped and left “as is” is desired. Natural and undeveloped areas provide opportunities for more passive recreational activities, for example, wildlife and bird watching, photographic expression, or landscape art.
- Providing locations within Parks, Natural Areas or any other place for community gardens was identified as very important.
- Many specialized groups expressed the desire to have a “place” in our parks system for specific facilities. Specialized groups such as the Barnstormers, BMX, Cyclo-cross, bocce ball and The Laramie Colts baseball club are just a few examples of the groups

requesting inclusion in the parks system with more access to facilities or improving their existing access.

- Improving the health of Laramie residents through access to Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas is a goal of many groups. General exercise in parks, walking/bicycling/jogging to and within parks, as well as opportunities for community gardens, contribute to an overall improvement in the health and nutrition of the community. Most developers believe that providing for parks is beneficial to their development, but reducing the cost to the developer providing the land or fee is important in achieving the balance between community and business. Any change in the development approval process that can make it easier for developers is important in the effectiveness of the requirements, this would include; donations, improvements and payments in lieu of dedications. It is also important that any fees, payments or lands contributed stay within the Service Areas for use by those within the Service Area or nearby. A “build and dedicate” option should also be considered for fulfilling parks requirements.

In addition to the common themes presented by Stakeholder Groups, many specific comments were provided that have been considered or incorporated into the plan:

- A common signage plan should be considered

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for historic sites in and around Laramie such as the Overland Trail, Ft. Sanders site or the Railroad Wye on the west side.

- Help improve the public’s understanding of which Parks, Trails, Recreation and Natural Areas are available through the use of maps and informational publications. Water conservation and xeriscaping should be considered for all parks and facilities. Additionally, non-potable water sources/grey water for irrigation should be considered.
- Flood control through Parks and Natural Areas should be considered in the development of any of these areas.
- The City should consider a large production garden/farm, at least 5 acres in size for production of food for individuals, businesses or local organizations. For instance, the pivot sprinkler system at the Monolith Ranch should be considered as a future garden/farm location when water rights are transferred.
- More off-street parking should be provided at parks; specifically Community and Neighborhood parks.
- The creation of “park volunteer groups” similar to the group “Friends of Undine Park” should be considered for all parks as a way to maintain, provide feedback to City staff and give a sense of ownership to nearby residents or community members for each park.
- Issues surrounding dogs, such as those that are off leash, leaving dog poop and other problems need to be addressed, e.g., reduced or eliminated through enforcement.
- Access between the University of Wyoming campus and the Downtown needs to be improved for pedestrians and bicyclists. Use of Ivinson Street as the main route is preferred.
- Depot Park should remain largely open on the north side with the railroad centric portion of the park remaining on the south side.
- The use of alternative energy should be considered in all our parks. Use of solar or wind power to generate the needed electricity, pump water or light the park at night should be evaluated with new parks or when updates are made to existing parks.



*Xeriscape Garden in LaBonte Park*

- More soccer fields and general recreation fields are needed across the community.
- Education for the public is needed regarding trespassing on private property to access public recreation areas and facilities.
- Continue cooperation with the Wyoming Territorial Prison State Park regarding trails, access and education opportunities associated with the site. The proximity of the Prison in relation to the greenbelt and nearby parks creates a unique opportunity for the City and the State.



*Laramie River Greenbelt Trail, adjacent to the Wyoming Territorial Prison State Park*

Based on the above comments, it is apparent that common themes as well as many specific ideas were provided by the stakeholder groups for consideration. Although many issues were noted, not all issues raised were listed above, however, the major issues brought up were addressed or incorporated into this document by staff and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. In addition, staff and Ad Hoc Advisory Committee did have access to all comments which were considered in drafting the plan in one form or another.

### **Surveys**

A community-wide survey was another way in which both staff and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee felt it was necessary to engage the public. In the spring of 2012 the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC) was hired to conduct a survey of Laramie and county residents within one-mile of City limits regarding Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas. The survey was developed by City of Laramie Staff, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and WYSAC personnel to assess preferences and attitudes about various Parks and Recreation related issues. The survey process was completed during July and August of 2012 and a final report was provided in October of 2012.

Overall, the survey data collected was helpful in understanding how area residents felt about Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas. In some cases new information was gathered through the survey, such as low satisfaction with on-street bike lanes, a lower priority for Natural Areas (except for east of town) compared to other

amenities such as Parks, Trails and Recreation facilities and that people would like more parks in Service Area 6.

In other cases presently known issues, conditions, attitudes and the direction of our Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Natural Areas were reaffirmed such as the need for more restroom facilities/being opened all year around, usage of our parks (times and specific parks) and desired amenities citizens wish to see such as trails, dog parks and shelters.

A summary of the survey and results, as well as any other information related to the survey such as response numbers, process and write-in answers can be found in Appendix B. The full survey and results can be obtained from the City.

### **Other**

Aside from the traditional means such as the Stakeholder Groups, public meetings or surveys other methods were employed to gather comments and encourage participation. Many times these methods were less formal (i.e. not a meeting), but provided a way to acquire information from the public.

A web site was specifically set up for the development of the plan, which provided, agendas, maps and other information related to the process. Additionally, the website served as a way for draft documents to be made available to the public for review and comment throughout the process. Through information provided

on this site, mailed and emailed comments were provided by citizens as well as in person inquiries and phone calls. Many of these comments may not have been generated through traditional means. Other social networking techniques, such as Facebook and Twitter were used to disseminate information such as meeting times, agendas and information.

Staff also made available the questionnaire survey on the web site. Those who responded to the survey through the web-site were not counted in the WYSAC statistical analysis; however, the responses, 321 received, were reviewed and recorded as overall responses and were considered extremely valuable. These surveys have been incorporated into the overall public comments we have received on this project.

Newspaper ads were also used throughout the process to inform community members of events, meetings and new information. In this day and age the internet

plays an increasing role in informing the public, however, in an effort to be as inclusive as possible, it was recognized that not everyone uses or has access to the internet so reaching these groups through the newspaper remained key.

Appendix B, C and D contains the individual public comments, survey results, stakeholder responses and other background on the public process that helped provide the essential elements and visions for the plan.

## Updates & Amendments to the Plan

With the development of any plan, making sure the plan remains current and reflects the desires of the community is essential to keeping a plan relevant. This need is no different for this plan, and regular updates must be implemented in order to achieve this goal. A regular update schedule should be established. Every 5 years minor updates should be completed. Minor updates would typically include; general editing needs, map updates to reflect completed improvements, noting completed goals and action statements and other changes that reflect new codes or regulations that may affect the Plan. Every 10 years major updates should be completed. Major updates would include any typical minor update as described above, but would also include new park plans or updates to the existing plans, revision of goals, Service Areas and action statements as well as any other update to the plan that is needed. During all major updates, a public involvement process shall be established in an effort to provide the public an opportunity to input on updates to the plan. This opportunity will help staff, the public and elected officials gauge the desires of the community and if the plan still reflects those desires.

Although updates to the plan should be scheduled regularly, it is likely that unknown issues or requests to update or make changes to the plan will come at times that are not every 5 and 10 years. Updates and amendments to the plan, whether or not they are on the 5 to 10 year schedule, shall follow the process as established by State Statutes and Laramie Municipal Code for updates to a Master Plan. All Parks and Recreation Master Plan updates should include Albany County participation and inclusion.

## Visions for the Plan

Based on the public comments, background information, other plans/codes and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee's expertise, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee developed a vision for the Plan. The vision is intended to provide the inspiration and framework for the Plan, which includes generalized goals and direction. The following vision was approved by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee:

1. To provide equitable Parks and

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

*Have an idea for a park or natural area?*

*Do you want a new park or trail in your neighborhood?*

*Do you have suggestions for new or existing recreation programs?*

*What Parks & Recreation opportunities would you like to see for your kids?*

We are inviting everyone to take a survey that will be used in the development of a new Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The Parks, Trails and Recreation Ad Hoc Committee is currently working on a long range plan for parks and recreation services and are soliciting public opinions and suggestions as part of this process. Please consider taking a brief online survey to help us plan for the future.

**The survey can be found online at the Parks & Recreation homepage or through the following direct link: <http://tinyurl.com/8jtsx6v>**

*Thank you in advance for your time.*

**A Place For All!**  
City of Laramie Parks & Recreation  
920 Boulder Drive • 721-5269 • [www.cityoflaramie.org](http://www.cityoflaramie.org)

Advertisement from the Boomerang Newspaper



*Playground with shade structure at LaBonte Park*

Recreation Services and opportunities to all areas and people of the community.

2. Develop a Parks, Trails, Recreation and Natural Areas system that is specific to Laramie and the surrounding community.
3. Establish new parks in conjunction with future development or in areas of park deficiency; parks should be considered no different than other vital infrastructure, such as streets, sidewalks and utilities.
4. To improve the visual appearance of our community through beautification of areas owned by the City by improving their Recreational and Natural Area qualities.
5. To provide for the future needs of the community in relation to Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas through sound planning and visionary foresight.
6. Establish a funding mechanism that provides

for Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas that adequately serves the population, based on population growth and development pressures.

7. Provide for a continuous loop around (and throughout) the community for off street bike and pedestrian paths that allow users to access Parks, Recreation and Natural Areas.
8. The City and Albany County should work together to secure permanent access east of town to ensure preservation of the Natural Areas, and at a minimum access to the National Forest.



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# Chapter Two

## Planning Principles

**W**hy have a Parks and Recreation Master Plan? The City of Laramie's Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed from a community vision that believed Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Area components of our community are important and require the long range planning vision that only a comprehensive plan could provide.

Throughout the adoption and development of the 1982 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the 1995 Land Use Element (Laramie's first master plan), and the 2007 Laramie Comprehensive Plan one common theme was present: Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas are the number one priority for community residents.

All three of these important planning documents present consistent recommendations, visions and goals that relate to further development of parks and recreation resources. The support of the community, as exemplified in the development of the plans noted above, was the impetus for the development of a long term master plan for Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas. The development of this document is simply the first step in achieving the high, but warranted, community expectations for Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas.

Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas are an afterthought for some communities; while these amenities are desired by the community they are unfortunately not a high priority. However, Laramie is different and is not willing to consider this need as an afterthought. Laramie is a community that is willing to commit to a Parks and Recreation Master Plan so



*Freedom Has A Birthday Event, Washington Park*

that these opportunities are at the forefront of decision making. This Plan is necessary for the community and its leaders to work towards achieving the high expectations, visions, goals and standards established and outlined by the community through this process.

### Benefits of a Plan

Although a community's desire may differ as to why a plan should be developed, almost all well-developed plans have inherent benefits to the community. The most apparent benefit a parks master plan can provide is the long term, community-wide, planning needed to provide facilities for the entire community. In this case, the Laramie Parks and Recreation Master Plan has examined the community needs for the next 40 years. Although this timetable may seem daunting, this long term approach will help ensure that the overall goals and vision of the community are attainable. A

long term approach aids in planning, budgeting and acquisition of Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas as well as many other benefits that reach beyond providing for just parks and recreation facilities.

Aside from good general planning practice, one of the specific benefits of a plan is to help aid in budgeting. In any budgeting situation, especially in a government setting, short-term budgeting often leads to inefficiencies in the way a budget is expended; such as duplication and fiscal inefficiencies of funds. Although the community has traditionally shown a commitment to these facilities, Laramie is not alone in feeling the difficulties of budget cuts. Many times when budgetary cuts are being made parks and recreation facilities are targeted first since they are seen as “non-essential”. Long-term planning and the benefits it provides makes this plan an essential component of good stewardship. Managing the budget received year-to-year keeps the long term vision within grasp.

Another benefit of the Plan is the economic impact of a well-developed Park, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas system to a community. The perception that parks are “non-essential” amenities within a community is no longer a reality. Across the country these “amenities” are now essential services and, in fact, act as an economic generator to the community. Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas have all been shown to increase

property values in all types of neighborhoods, including commercial and residential areas (See Bibliography: Crompton, John L., Enger, Susan C., Sherer, Paul M., Parks and Recreation Magazine, National Recreation and Park Association, McCormick, Dave and Manchester, Rick). However, for a community to capture these benefits financial resources must be budgeted and the Park, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas must be viewed as essential and no different than other general services such as streets, water and sewer.

*“The real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for a property located close to parks and open space areas than for a home that does not offer this amenity.” Paul M. Sherer*

Continuing on the topic of economics, numerous studies have shown that these facilities are now a key factor related to economic development in a community (See Bibliography: Crompton, John L., Enger, Susan C., Sherer, Paul M., Parks and Recreation Magazine, National Recreation and Park Association, McCormick, Dave and Manchester, Rick). Companies looking to locate/relocate or those deciding if they should remain in a community are making decisions to stay or go based on the local amenities and the quality of life the community can provide to their employees. Companies that consider these factors typically employ well-educated individuals, with higher paying jobs, that ultimately create a higher tax base within a community.

By having a long-term parks and recreation plan substantial economic benefit can be realized that is far beyond the amount of money budgeted to create and maintain these facilities. In addition to bolstering the local economy, Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas have become a significant tourism opportunity especially for those communities who make their facilities a high priority and create unique visitor experiences.



Farmers' Market in Undine Park



*Washington Park Wading Pool*

Ultimately, all of these economic considerations result in one conclusion: a higher tax base for the community and increased visitor dollars, which in current difficult economic times, is highly desired and sought after.

Similar to the reasons why businesses are looking to communities with a well planned Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas system, residents look at these same amenities as creating a “community” or “place” that is a desirable place to live, raise a family and retire. Good parks, recreation, trails and natural areas play an important social role as a gathering place for leisure, recreational opportunities or community events. Parks and recreation amenities help to create community and they are often cited as a reason to put down roots. Although these amenities do not stop attrition, they do slow it and the benefits gained from long-term residents staying in a community is invaluable.

Beyond just providing places to play and recreate, better physical and mental health is also cited as an additional benefit to having parks and an integrated path system. As communities become more urban fewer areas are available and easily accessible for play and recreation. Because of this situation parks are playing an increasing role in providing locations for general physical activity. National trends indicate a lack of physical activity as a

major health issue across the nation. The lack of physical activity is attributed to premature death, heart disease and most notably, obesity. This lack of physical activity is often attributed to having minimal recreation opportunities. However, communities who provide accessible parks and recreation areas see increased physical activity and a lowering of these life-shortening conditions.

Another significant benefit, especially for Laramie and the surrounding area, is general environmental stewardship. Parks and recreation initiatives and programs promote the urban and surrounding rural environment by providing improvements that might not otherwise be accomplished by a community on their own. From the Laramie River Rehabilitation project (which Laramie recently completed), the improvements to the Spring Creek Channel, to the Casper Aquifer, the general environment has been improved in a way that contributes to the overall health and betterment of our parks and recreation system as well as our community as a whole.

The benefits of a Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas plan are widespread, thus it is important for the citizens and leaders of the community to understand the essential components of the Plan. A well planned and maintained park, recreation, trails and natural areas system provides a wide range of benefits to a community. These benefits include physical improvements to the community, efficient utilization of fiscal resources, improved physical and mental health and a possible



*Enjoying the in-park path and fitness station within LaBonte Park*

expanded economic base. In addition, parks are important in creating better places to live, work and recreate for the city and surrounding community as they provide free recreation opportunities for citizens at all income levels. Laramie will receive these benefits through the implementation of this Plan.

### **Relationship to Other Plans and Codes**

Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas goals, actions and recommendations have been outlined in many previous plans adopted by Laramie and its surrounding community over the years. One of the most referenced and relevant plans related to the development of this Plan have been the Laramie Comprehensive Plan, specifically Chapter 4: Parks and Recreation. The plans, goals, visions, action statements, and recommendations of those plans have been summarized below and more specifically in Appendix A. *Laramie Bikeway Study (December 1978)*

The Laramie Bikeway Study provides the citizens of Laramie and the surrounding community with a comprehensive framework for the on-going planning and implementation of a community bikeway system. The system is meant to provide Laramie with an

urban transportation alternative to be integrated with pedestrian, automobile, and public transit systems. Ultimately, it should significantly increase bicycle rider usage and reduce reliance on the automobile.

### ***Comprehensive Plan: Parks, Recreation and Open Space (June 1982)***

Developed as a policy guide for providing leisure services and parks to the citizens of Laramie, the Plan was based on the needs and practical ability of the City to deliver those services. Reasonable levels of service for parks, leisure and recreational services were identified and planned throughout the community. The ultimate goal was a “complete system” of parks for current users as well as the future needs of the growing community. This plan was the first comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan adopted by the City of Laramie and provided the guidance and vision of the park system the City has today.

### ***Land Use Element (February 7, 1995)***

Laramie’s first comprehensive community development plan was adopted on February 7, 1995. The Plan analyzed existing conditions of the community and identified land use trends and factors anticipated to affect future land



*Bicyclists along Ivinson Avenue*

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use. Typical of most comprehensive plans, a forecast for lands to be developed was given and management policies developed for those areas possibly affected by growth. Furthermore, specific guidelines were recommended that adequate park and open space be provided as development occurs and the community grows.

#### ***Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan (May 28, 1998)***

Recognizing the need to develop alternative forms of transportation, the City of Laramie developed and adopted the Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan. The Plan's main vision, was to "...accommodate current bicycle use and promote and encourage the increase use of the bicycle as an alternative form of transportation and for recreation, within the fiscal constraints of the City of Laramie." By providing transportation routes connecting key places in the community and identifying further and existing system needs, a complete bicycle system plan can be provided.

#### ***Laramie Comprehensive Plan (August 21, 2007)***

The City of Laramie Comprehensive Plan was adopted on August 21, 2007. Developed over an approximate two year process that involved over 60 stakeholder groups, hundreds of citizen participants and countless hours of community involvement, the plan was adopted. The Laramie Comprehensive Plan was adopted to coordinate decisions involving planning, land use, infrastructure and natural resources throughout the community. The plan is designed to be dynamic and responsive to changes of the community and its environment. Specific to the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a wide variety of goals, visions and action statements were identified specific to the development of parks, recreation, trails and open space. Furthermore, the most common comments received during the development of the Plan related to parks, recreation, trails and open space and the development of a Master Plan for these facilities. These public comments and the goals, visions and action statements have been a significant contributing factor in the development of this plan. The importance of the Comprehensive Plan should not be underestimated. A full list of all goals, vision and action statements within the plan can be found in Appendix A.

#### ***Casper Aquifer Protection Plan & Ordinance (June 3, 2008)***

Adopted June 3, 2008, the Casper Aquifer Protection Plan provided a needed update to an adopted 2002 plan. The plan added enhanced protection of the aquifer and its recharge area through recommendations of increasing the protection area, updated information, protection measures and specific regulations for development. In conjunction with the Plan, the City adopted regulation that required development within the Aquifer Protection Area to complete a process called a Site Specific Investigation (SSI). The SSI details the specific impacts a development may have on the aquifer in relationship to the Aquifer Protection Plan. The Casper Aquifer Protection Plan and Ordinance exemplifies protection of sensitive areas, which is noted as a goal of this plan.

#### ***Albany County Comprehensive Plan (August 2008)***

In 2008, Albany County adopted their first master planning document which serves as a guide for future land development in Albany County. As a foundation for land management in the County, one of the six "Goals from the Vision" in the plan was to provide for recreational opportunities in the County. Furthermore, natural and environmental resources, cultural resources and open space and public lands were also noted as one of six "Key Implementation Actions". The County Comprehensive Plan provides the County's vision for Parks and Recreation needs now and in the future. Because this was adopted by the County Commissioners, their plan has been relied on by the City for areas located near Laramie, specifically within the area outside city limits but within one-mile of city limits.

#### ***Unified Development Code (March 2, 2010; effective July 1, 2010)***

A long awaited update to the City of Laramie's Municipal Code occurred in 2010. The Code, which regulates all forms of development, included many provisions which apply to the current Park and Recreation Master Plan. Most significantly, the adopted code requires new residential development to provide parks, trails or open space as part of the development proposal or the option for the City to consider in-lieu fees in exchange for land.

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This provision is the first time the City of Laramie has required development to do this and it is the first time the Parks and Recreation Department has had a funding mechanism to reasonably provide for parks in the City.

#### ***University of Wyoming Long Range Development Plan (January 2010)***

The University of Wyoming created the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) as an update to the 1991 Master Plan and the 2002-2007 Campus Facilities Plan. The Plan is a guide for campus growth that integrates policy and land use. The Plan "...identifies the physical development, principles, guidelines and processes needed to support the academic goals of the University." Because the University provides recreational opportunities not only to their students, but to the community as well, their plan, goals and vision play an important role in how the community plans for its parks, recreation, trails and open space needs.

#### ***A Downtown Development Plan for Laramie Wyoming (February 19, 2012)***

Although parks are not typically a major focus for downtown plans, the Laramie community has noted that parks and recreation needs should be addressed in our downtown. The Plan not only identifies the importance of existing parks such as Depot Park and the newly completed 1st Street Plaza Park, but also notes the importance of new areas for recreation and leisure through the establishment of plazas and green areas. In addition, the Plan emphasizes the importance of solidifying/creating/improving key connections to our bicycle pathway network.

#### ***Management Plan for Water Rights on Monolith Ranch & Monolith Ranch Agricultural Management Plan (May 2004)***

Because the Monolith Ranch is one of the largest and richest City land holdings, in terms of size and resources, review of the property in the context of parks and recreation is significantly important. However, special consideration must be given to the primary role the Monolith Ranch plays; a future source of water for the City of Laramie, based on water surface and groundwater

water rights associated with the ranch. Although the current role of the ranch is related to water rights, future consideration following transfer of the rights to municipal uses, must be given to how the ranch will integrate into the parks and recreational needs of the community. Intermediate steps in using the ranch for parks and recreation should be explored, keeping in mind that these uses must not jeopardize water rights.

#### ***Medicine Bow National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (December 29, 2003)***

Because of the recreational importance of the Medicine Bow National Forest, especially to the east of Laramie, information is provided in this plan related to forest management and the anticipated future of the forest. Although much of the information may be beyond the scope of this plan, the information can provide valuable insight into the National Forest's goals and how they can align with Laramie's goals.

#### ***Wyoming Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2009-2013***

In addition to reviewing local planning documents, regional planning documents such as the Wyoming Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan play a role in understanding, coordinating and complementing statewide goals. Many times, local and state goals and resources can be combined to create an overall better product when it comes to providing for the recreational needs of the community and state.

#### ***Cirrus Sky Technology Park Master Plan (2012)***

The City of Laramie has many assets and strengths that make it attractive to data center and technology-driven companies. These assets were recently realized in an area north of the City. With the development of the Cirrus Sky Technology Park Master Plan not only were land use changes made that maximized this potential, significant land use aspects related to the parks and recreation system as a whole were incorporated. The inclusion of Parks, Trails/Shared Use Paths, Bike Lanes, Sports Complexes and a Cemetery were all considered and relevant to the development of this plan.