

CHAPTER 2: OUR LIFESTYLE

OVERVIEW

Casper is a community with a wealth of assets on which to capitalize, such as; the infrastructure and economic diversity of a great Downtown and momentum of the Old Yellowstone District, situated along one of the most nationally known fishing rivers in the country, and home to the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center. The cyclical Wyoming economy and changing demographics are altering the dynamics of the community, requiring an updated understanding of local needs.

This section presents a series of “existing conditions snapshots” that provides an overview of baseline conditions per topic area and defines how these conditions influence the development of principles,

goals, and strategies for the comprehensive plan. Trends and existing data aided the public in updating Casper’s vision; identifying major opportunities; and developing a strategic, forward-thinking land use plan. This chapter sets a framework for Chapters 3-5, where conclusions and actions to guide the future are drawn.

The Citizens' Perspective section of each theme highlights the community’s values and desires. Over 1,700 community members, staff and stakeholders shared their input through an online visioning questionnaire, public listening sessions, the visioning kickoff event at the Central Wyoming Fair, stakeholder interviews, and numerous other community events.

Using the best available data from the City of Casper, Natrona County, the Casper Area MPO, the State of Wyoming, the census and other sources, data and trends were researched and synthesized into five planning themes:

- Neighborhoods & Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Natural Assets & Recreation
- Arts & Culture



NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING

WHY IT MATTERS

Casper's unique context (scenic/recreational amenities + abundant energy resources + historic Western heritage & culture) creates the need for creative planning and policy approaches to housing. Maintaining an attractive and diverse housing stock is vital to ensuring that the City of Casper remains an appealing community for all types and ages of people, as well as attaining its economic development goals. Available homes must be suitable for all life stages and lifestyles in order to attract and keep a sustainable workforce. The cyclical Wyoming economy and changing demographics are altering the dynamics of the local housing market, requiring an updated understanding of local housing needs. The housing element of the plan includes a current depiction of the demographic and economic characteristics that impact housing affordability and preferences.

KEY POINTS + ASSUMPTIONS

Net migration, a function of local employment prospects, is the key driver of Casper housing needs.

Employment prospects in Casper have historically been volatile – rising and falling in response to both national business cycles and energy sector supply/demand forces.

Based on the natural increase rates, Casper has the potential for additional (but hard to predict) growth in housing needs.

Broader demographic forces--namely, growth in Baby Boomer and Millennial age cohorts-- will push higher-than-usual demand for smaller, low-maintenance housing and entry-level single-family housing, respectively.

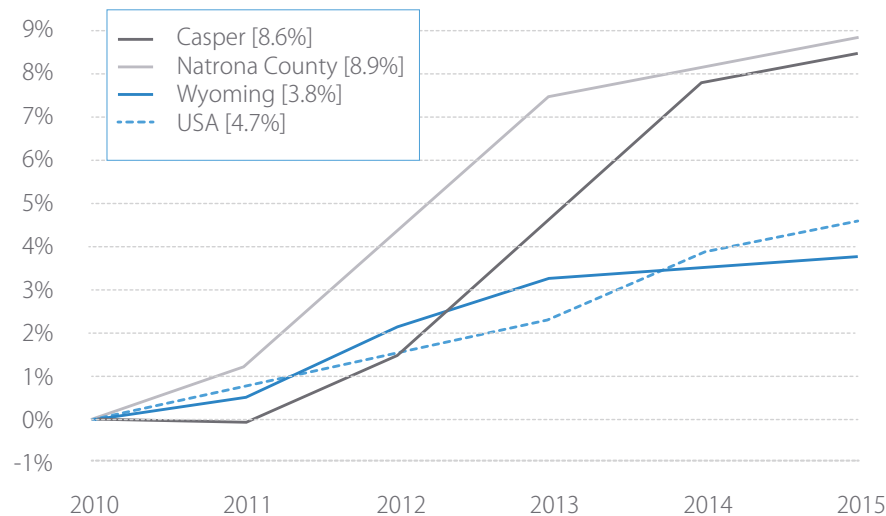
Opportunities for infill to satisfy housing needs are prominent.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

Wyoming is prototypical Great American West – extremely low density, self-sufficient, individualistic and outdoors-oriented—occasionally converging in a handful of larger urban centers, like Casper, where commerce, industry, culture, government and education come together. Here, a key housing policy question is “how to accommodate these strong Western values with quality and efficiently designed urban form?”

FIGURE 2-1. POPULATION GROWTH, 2010-2015

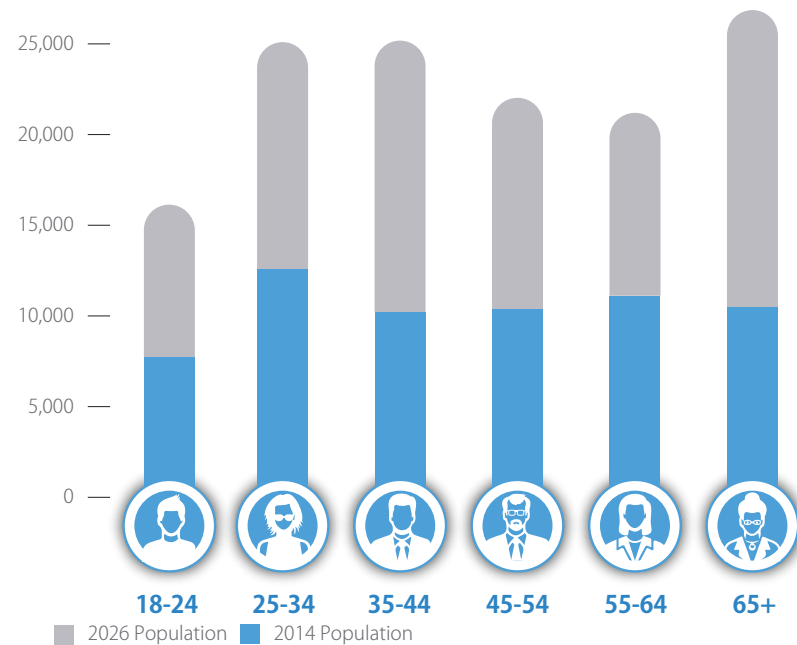


Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2010, Esri Forecasts for 2016 and 2021

Population

Casper’s total population is estimated to be just over 60,000 residents, increasing from 55,000 in 2010 (**Figure 2-1**). The population growth in Casper over the next 5 years is expected to be around 1.5% annually. The recent economic downturn may reduce those projections; however, recent school enrollment figures do not show a decrease in students. This suggests some resiliency since the last downturn. As elsewhere, Natrona County’s growth in the next decade will be dominated by increases in the senior (age 65+) population and in the 35-44 category (**Figure 2-2**), driven by aging across the two largest generational populations, Baby Boomers and Millennials, respectively.

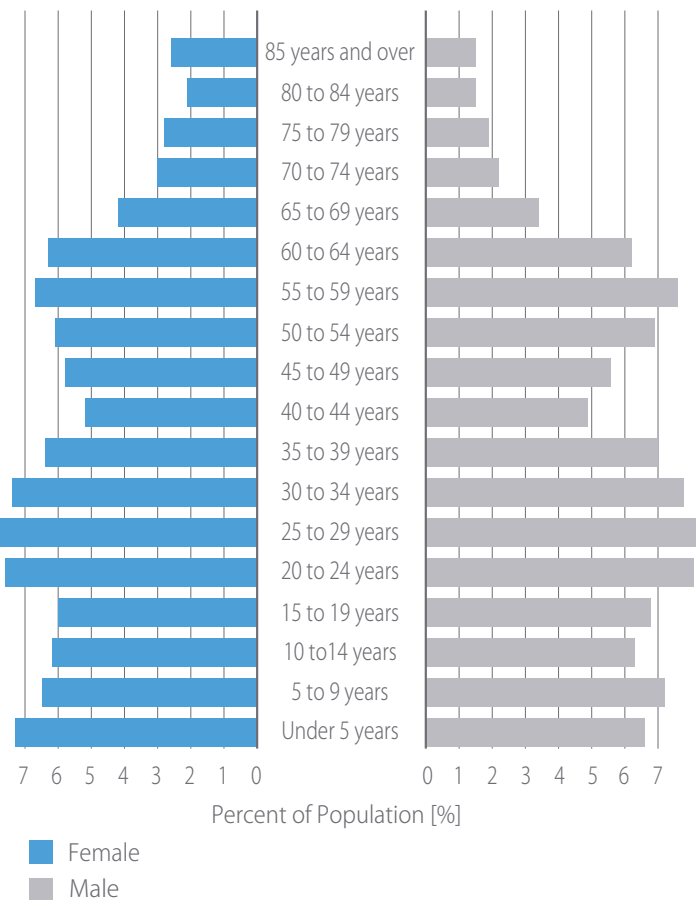
FIGURE 2-2. NATRONA COUNTY PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP



■ 2026 Population ■ 2014 Population

Source: Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division (<http://eadiv.state.wy.us>)

FIGURE 2-3. CASPER POPULATION PYRAMID 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

As indicated in **Figure 2-3**, the Millennials (currently aged 20 to 34) are the second largest percentage of the population within the City of Casper. Boomers are the largest percentage of the population (currently spanning ages 52 to 70).

Boomers, at least nationally, should generally spur demand for smaller, lower-maintenance housing, along with more units geared towards seniors needing targeted amenities or even professional on-site care. In urban Wyoming, it remains to be seen how retirement living needs will translate into Western tastes: with some opting for low-density “mini-spreads” versus more typical smaller-footprint senior living arrangements. While Wyoming’s dry, sunny climate appeals to many retirees, the often harsh winters will lead other seniors to opt for more forgiving climates.

Boomers have been changing the urban landscape by spurring the completion of “Boomer Studies,” which have provided municipalities the opportunity to assess infrastructure and services throughout the community. Ultimately, what is being recommended (health care, workforce development, housing, accessible transportation, and community design) are best practices for community planning and services.

Millennials have recently helped fuel an upsurge in nationwide apartment demand as they pass through their twenties and early thirties. While that rental segment will remain large over the near term, its rate of growth will level off, replaced by greater need for starter homes for the next generation and their growing families.

The next generation, Generation Z, will continue to transform economics, urban form, and infrastructure. They were born with technology at their finger tips, becoming the most social, entrepreneurial, educated, and globally aware generation.

"Families are the future; to thrive you need to appeal to all groups from single adults to young families, to growing families, empty nesters and retirement. The small town feel is important because it shows we care for each other, we look out for each other." - Public Comment

Net migration (**Figure 2-4**), one of the functions of local employment prospects, is a key driver of Casper housing needs. Population growth in the Casper area has historically been driven by major swings in net migration, depending on oil, gas and even coal industry hiring needs. That volatility is still being seen today, although perhaps not to the extent seen in the 1970s and 1980s. With data through 2014 only, **Figure 2-4** is missing the ongoing downswing being experienced with the latest downswing in petroleum commodity pricing.

Since the mid-1990s, rates of natural increase, due to rates of births and deaths, has settled into a reasonably steady average net gain of just over 400 new county residents annually. Casper has the potential for additional (but hard to predict) growth in housing needs.

Casper is considerably less ethnically diverse than the nation. Its only major minority group, Hispanics, represent 9.3% of the population (**Figure 2-5**), up from 7.4% just six years ago. That share is considerably lower than the nationwide figure of nearly 18%.

FIGURE 2-4. ANNUAL NET MIGRATION, NATRONA COUNTY

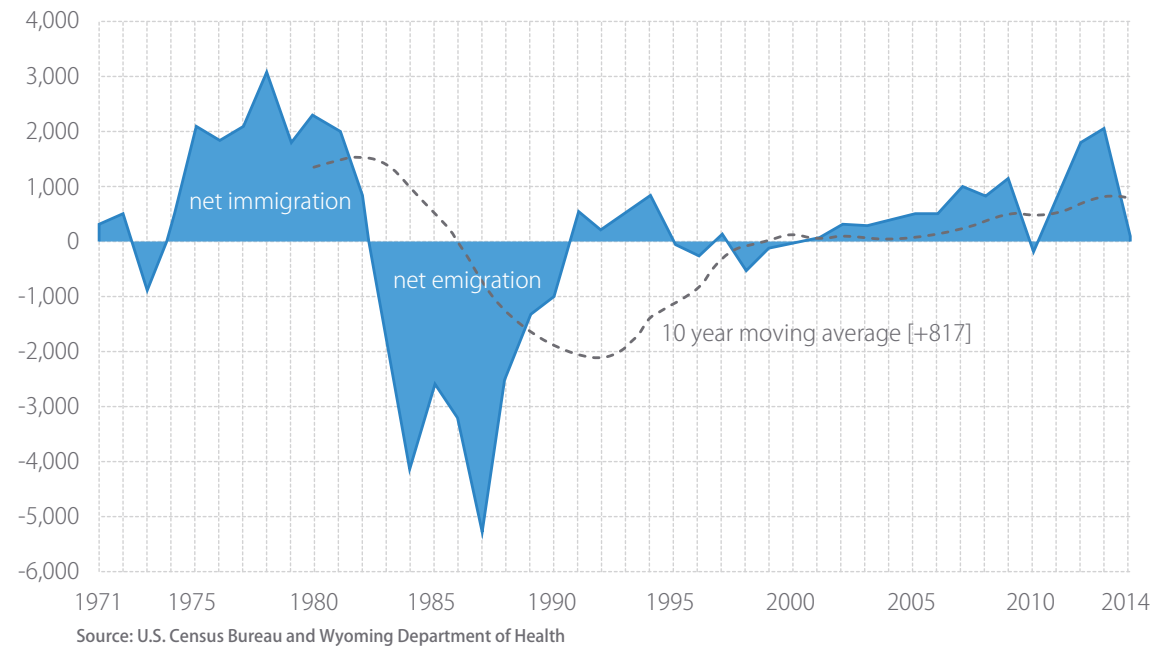
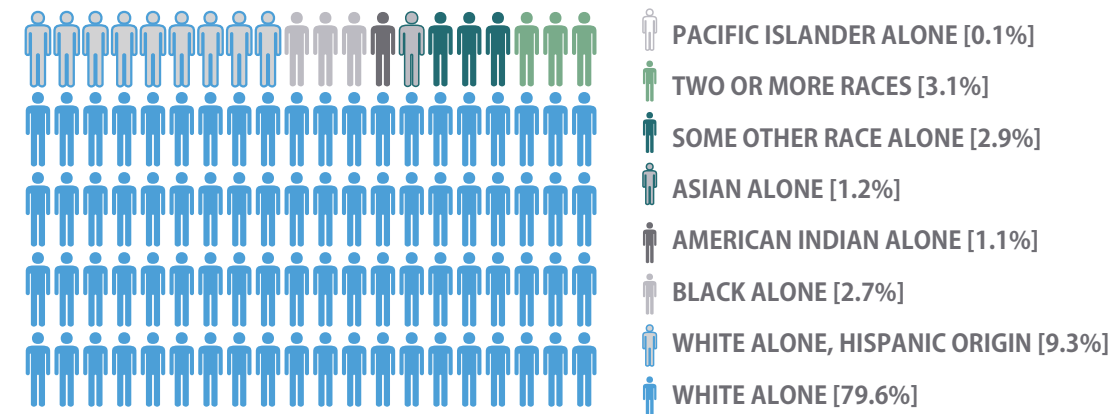


FIGURE 2-5. CASPER POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2016

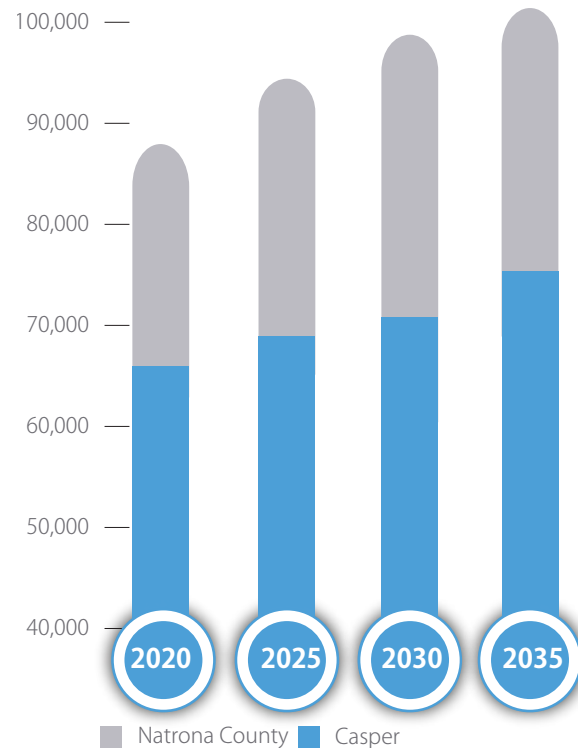


Source: ESRI, estimates based U.S. Census Bureau/ACS data

Population Forecasts

The future population forecast is expected to be between 1-2% according to the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division. Within the planning horizon of this Plan of 10-20 years, Casper is expected to grow to about 70,000 to 75,000 people (**Figure 2-6**).

FIGURE 2-6. POPULATION FORECASTS



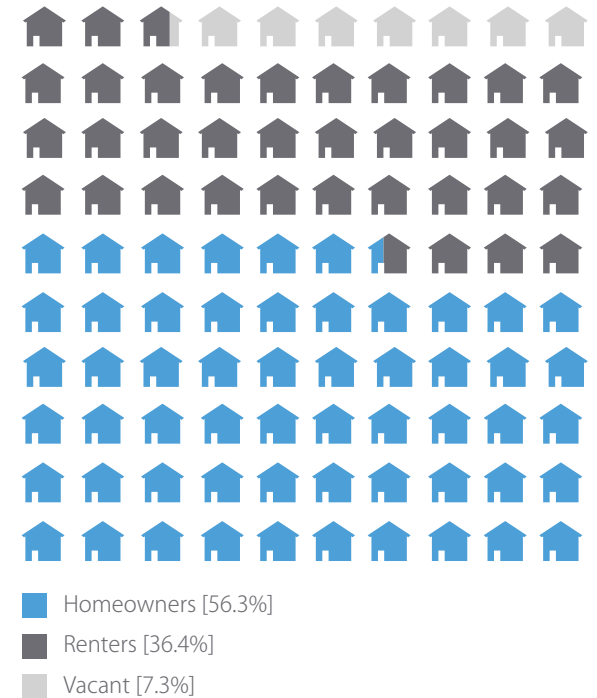
Source: Wyoming Department of Administration & Information, Economic Analysis Division, 2015

Household Characteristics

As of 2016, the City of Casper had approximately 25,000 households residing in approximately 27,000 housing units, for a vacancy rate of 7.3%, compared to 11.3% nationally. Household ownership rates are just below that for the nation, with Casper having just over 36% renters (as a share of all occupied units). On average, there are 2.40 people in each Casper household, somewhat smaller than the national average of 2.59. In Casper, 28.5% of households have just one member, versus 26.7% nationally (**Figure 2-7**).

Casper has significantly more divorced residents, per capita, compared to the nation (16.5% versus 11.0%) – a phenomenon that can lead to greater need for flexible, more temporary housing arrangements (such as apartments) that would otherwise be suggested by age profiles alone.

FIGURE 2-7. CASPER HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS, 2016



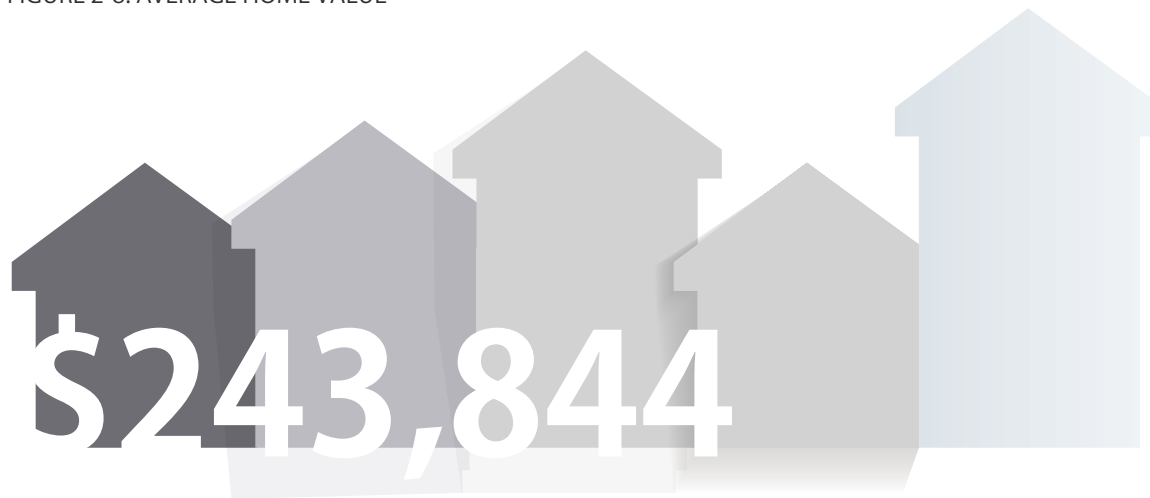
Source: ESRI estimates, based on U.S. Census data

The majority (70.2%) of housing units in Casper are single-family detached homes, with another 2.5% attached. Multi-family units make up 23% of the housing units. The average home value is \$243,844 (**Figure 2-8**). Casper's average per capita income of \$31,979 (discussed further in the next section) creates a gap, although not significant, in affordability.

There is currently a mix of historic and some new building stock in the urban center which are primarily three to four stories. There is the ability to go vertical without obstructing mountain views. New residential rooftops would add “eyes on the street” for safety and boost spending density in support of retail.

Outside of central Casper, there will always be demand for lower density homes with large private yards, even for the rental market. Rather than ignore this ingrained Western preference, planning can focus on ways to make such patterns more efficient.

FIGURE 2-8. AVERAGE HOME VALUE



Source: ESRI estimates, based on U.S. Census data

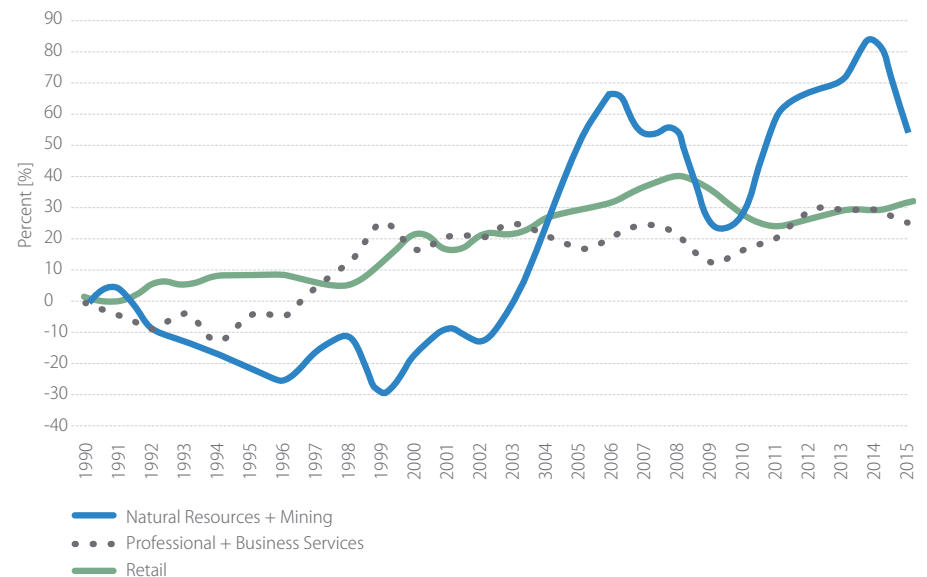
Population Workforce

While Casper has fewer college grads (25.4% have a baccalaureate degree, versus 30.5% nationally), it actually has more adult residents that have attended “at least some college” when compared to the US overall (69.3% versus 59.6%). Casper has 26% of its population working in so-called “blue collar” occupations versus 21% nationally. In boom times, the draw of relatively high-paying jobs in skilled trades can outweigh the perceived benefits of a lengthier university stay. It remains to be seen whether the current downturn will lead towards re-enrollment for some college students whose degree paths were interrupted by ready employment.

Figure 2-9 reflects the relative volatility in traditional energy-sector industries, relative to more stable sectors such as professional services and retail, which tend to flourish in evenly-growing diversified economies.

Figure 2-10 illustrates the major industry groups in which Wyoming residents are employed. Even though this graph does not reflect job losses occurring since the recent oil and gas downturn, it shows both retail and health/education services sectors as being a larger employer than mining/extraction. This understates the relative importance of oil and gas in the local economy. Mineral extraction is a so-called “basic-sector” industry – meaning that each job directly involved in oil/gas tends to indirectly increase employment in other sectors especially transportation, construction, wholesaling, lodging, and dining as money flows into the local economy from outside.

FIGURE 2-9. WYOMING EMPLOYMENT, GROWTH SINCE 1990

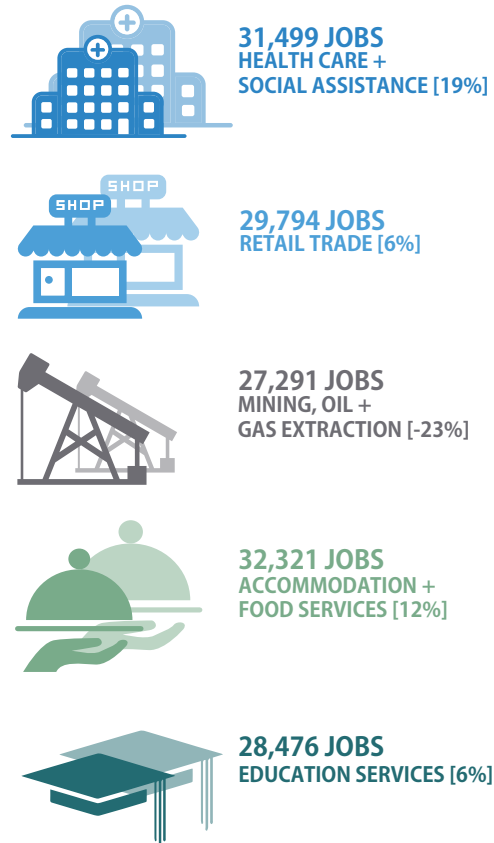


Source: Wyoming Department of Workforce Services (using BLS data)

While energy extraction can greatly benefit the local economy during boom times, the lack of economic diversity puts housing policy in reactive mode by chasing new construction when energy jobs boom and solving vacancy and affordable housing needs during decline periods. **Map 2-1** shows dots representing where workers live (by census block) in the Casper area.

Dots are sized proportionally by the number of worker residents and shaded to indicate their wage levels, with green shading indicating higher wage brackets (and more prevalent in south Casper). Brown-shaded dots are lower wage brackets, and are especially concentrated in north-central Casper. This shows a division in wealthier and lower-income neighborhoods.

FIGURE 2-10. 2014 TOP 5 WYOMING INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT AND 2024 GROWTH PROJECTIONS (%)



Source: Bullard, D. (2016). Wyoming Long-Term Industry Projections, 2014-2024. Research & Planning, Wyoming Department of Workforce Services. Retrieved from <http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/projections.htm>Source:

CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

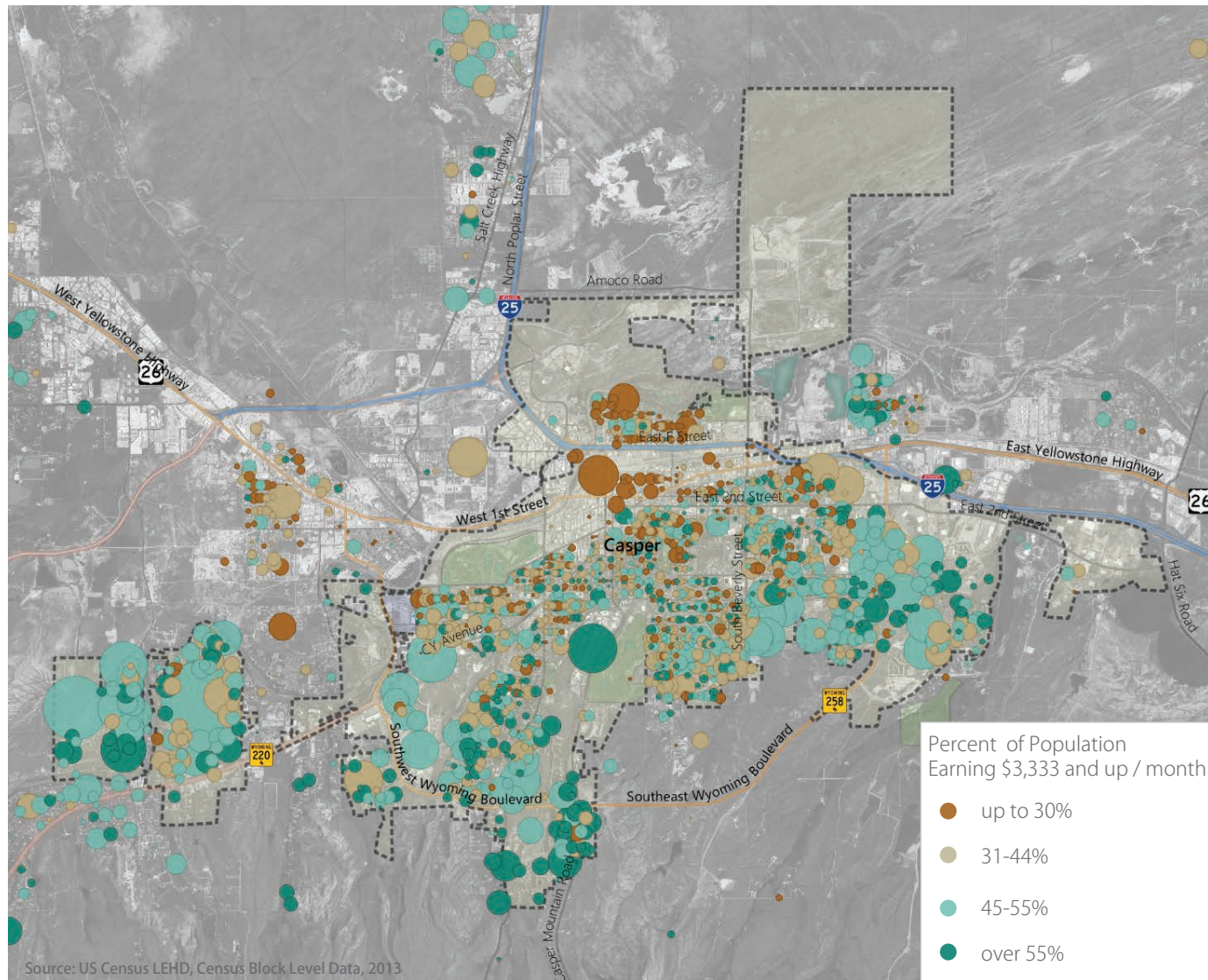
Consensus amongst Casperites is that there is a need for more types of housing stock in the urban center. More market-rate housing targeting young professionals is desired, along with housing for seniors and families, to supplement the existing affordable and assistance-based housing.

From a housing standpoint, Downtown Casper represents an underutilized asset. A large desire exists to add smaller format rental and ownership choices within a walkable urban environment with the potential to leverage and add to cultural/retail/dining amenities. These amenities will be harder to support without additional housing within the urban center.

Residents want more public places in each neighborhood, through neighborhood parks, community gardens, and corner shops or cafes, which contribute to preserving the small-town characteristics that Casperites love. Residents want more mixed-use development in residential neighborhoods that would provide a few amenities within walking distance from home.

The community values connected, safe, and friendly neighborhoods, and wants to see those characters preserved as Casper grows. This goes hand-in-hand with the small-town feel that is so appreciated amongst Casperites. As Casper grows and further develops the urban center, the public wants the City to preserve the small-town feel, especially in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

MAP 2-1. CASPER WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION AND WAGE RATES



A key economic development policy question is “how do we provide a range of opportunities in a stable community, while being fiscally responsible?”



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHY IT MATTERS

The City of Casper and surrounding region has long benefitted, and at times suffered, from a robust mining and gas/oil industry. Since the late 1800s Casper's economy has been rooted in the oil and gas industry. The Casper region has also provided support services for the coal mining industry in the Powder River Basin. The oil, gas and mining industries and related services are collectively referred to as the energy industry. The Casper area is currently suffering from a significant decrease in oil prices and demand, which is translating into an increase in unemployment and reduced employment base. Current reports by the State indicated that this trend will not reverse in the near term.

“Given the failure to identify a point in time when supply and demand drive oil prices upward, an abundance of natural gas, and changing utility strategies relating to electricity supply, it is clearly not certain that employment in mining will return to 2014 levels within the next few years. Rather, the commodities market strongly suggests that the demand for labor will decline further during the period in the mining industry and consequently in other industries.”

Wyoming Labor Force Trends, Wyoming Department of Workforce Services and Workforce Development Council, April 2016.

It is clear that the City of Casper desires an economic base diversified beyond the energy industry in order to stabilize revenues and impacts on the community. To do this, it is important to understand the local existing trends as well as the national trends that are shaping the future economy.

KEY POINTS + ASSUMPTIONS

The national economy is becoming increasingly more talent/knowledge-based than resource-based.

Retaining and employing local skilled young adults will be key to future economic stability. A skilled workforce is a key driver of the future economy.

Quality of life and sense of place will play a role in future economic development.

Natrona County had one of the highest unemployment rates from June 2015 – June 2016, significantly higher than the US average.

Health care has been a growing industry in the US and Casper over the past 10 years.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

The State of Wyoming unemployment rate was 5.7% in June 2016, which was significantly higher than its June 2015 level of 4.2%, and significantly higher than the current U.S. unemployment rate of 4.9%. From June 2015 to June 2016, unemployment rates increased in almost every county. Natrona County (up from 5.1% to 7.8%) had one of the largest increases **Figure 2-11**.

In addition to the increasing unemployment rate, there is general concern for the Casper area's ability to retain and employ the local skilled youth population. Positively, Natrona County has one of the highest retention rates of Wyoming high-school graduates in the state. According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, 72% of 2010 graduates from Natrona County are in the workforce.

FIGURE 2-11. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN UNEMPLOYMENT (JUNE 2015 - JUNE 2016)

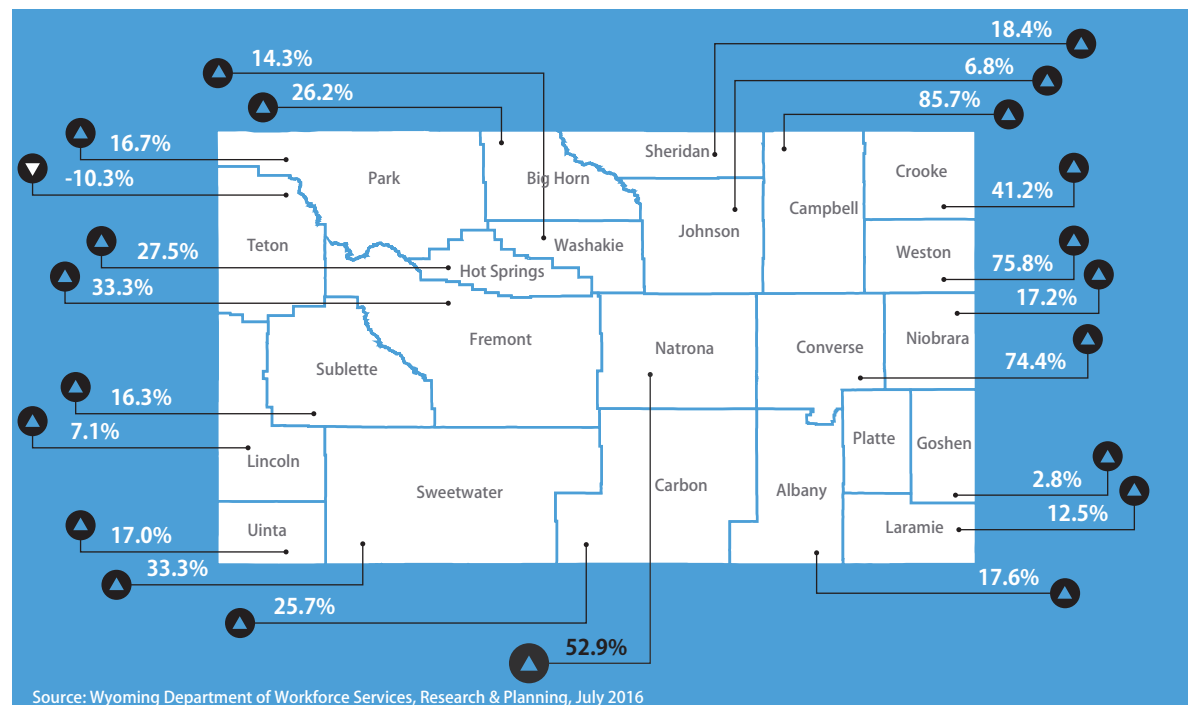
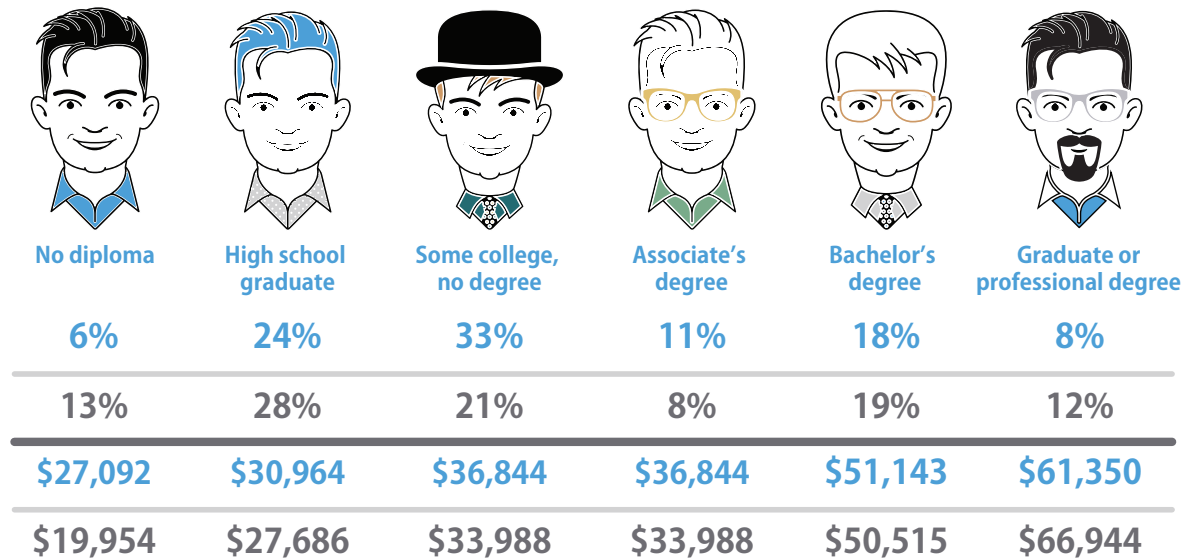


FIGURE 2-12. CITY OF CASPER VERSUS US: EDUCATION RATE/AVERAGE WAGES



Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

— Casper — US

Skilled Workforce

When planning for a future economy it is important to understand that all industries are dependent on a talented workforce that has technical skills and/or a higher education. A future economy in Casper will need a skilled workforce with training in career and technical education (CTE) and higher-education science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

Higher Education

The City of Casper has a strong high school graduation rate at 93.5% compared to the national average of 87.2% (Figure 2-12). Furthermore, Casper has an average per capita income \$31,979 compared to the US average of \$29,472 (ESRI, US Census). While this is commendable and an asset to the community, it is important for the City to retain and attract an educated and technically proficient workforce. Globally, positions requiring substantial independent judgment and decision making are now in

high demand (Brookings Institute, 2014). Increasingly employers are demanding a workforce that has technical skills, including manufacturing jobs that involve the operation of sophisticated machinery requiring some advanced training beyond high school. STEM workers are increasingly in demand and in short supply especially in the private sector where software developers, data scientists, and those in skilled trades are needed.

Career Technical Education (CTE) Training

CTE training is targeted toward middle-skill jobs, which require education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree. These jobs are a significant part of the economy. Of the 55 million job openings created by 2020, 30% will require some college or a two-year associate degree (Association for Career and Technical Training, 2016). Casper has developed a workforce culture through the oil industry that aligns with this important and in-demand sector of the talent base. It is important to foster partnerships with Casper College and local high-schools to encourage youth to consider this career path. By engaging youth early, they may be more likely to attend Casper College and apply their critical skills with local companies in Casper.



Talent

The national economy is becoming increasingly more talent/knowledge-based than resource-based meaning people over raw materials are the most important asset to a company's value and prospects for growth (Martin Prosperity Institute, University of Toronto). This applies to all industries including manufacturing, professional services and technology, and defines the shift in market assessment for the world's most valuable companies. As illustrated in **Figure 2-13**, ten years ago the most valuable companies consisted largely of natural resource extraction and now they are largely technology companies with values based upon people generating innovative ideas and processes. This is not to suggest that Casper needs to focus its industrial base on technology companies, but it does need to understand that the modern economy thrives more on skilled people than natural resource extraction.

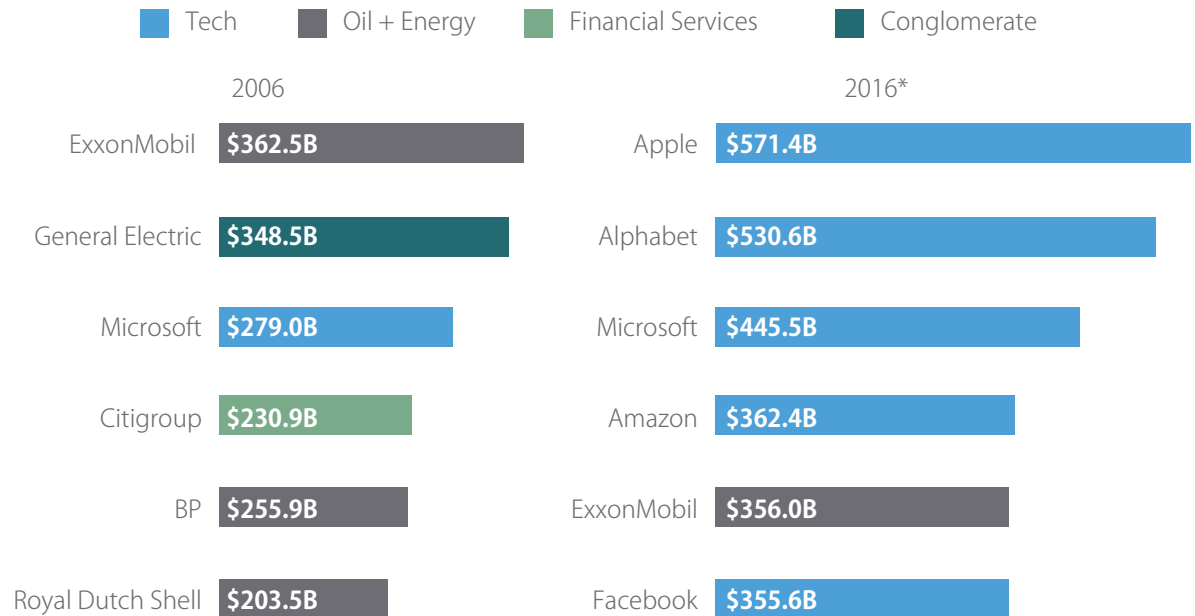
A significant cohort of the talent in demand consists of the "Millennial" generation made up of approximately 76 million people – the largest demographic group the US has seen. As this generation grows and shapes the talent-based economy, it is important to understand what motivates them and what communities choose. The new economy is based in a highly mobile environment.

The following elements are influencing the choices of the next generation:

- Job Base. Talent moving to a new community wants to know that there are other opportunities if the job that brought them there does not work out.

- **Simple Commute.** Many Millennials are not defined by the automobile, and do not want to drive if they don't have to. As reported in Urban Land Institute (ULI) Emerging Trends 2016, miles traveled by car for those people 34 years old or younger are down 23% nationally. Locally, the average miles travelled by any mode – walking, driving, biking, or taking transit – is the lowest for the next generation.
- **Urban Lifestyle.** They tend to prefer density with alternative transportation modes and retail nearby, which provides alternatives to owning a car. This urban lifestyle does not mean the entire community must conform to urban densities. What is important is that some element of an urban lifestyle through either a healthy Main Street in a traditional downtown or denser urban centers in suburbs is provided.
- **Entertainment.** The next generation is looking for ample amenities, especially restaurants and access to outdoor recreation.
- **Open Culture.** They embrace social or ethical causes and communities that are more diverse, accepting, and willing to change are more attractive to this group. Millennials value the ability to change and see this as a key principle behind US success.

FIGURE 2-13. THE AGE OF TECH: MARKET CAPITALIZATION OF THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE PUBLIC COMPANIES



* as of August 1, 2016

Sources: Statista Charts, Yahoo! Finance, Forbes

Additionally, the growing Baby Boomer population will change how talent is viewed. Financial stability, may require this independent generation to retire later or not at all; seeking new or different challenges. Seniors are more active, have higher incomes and a greater ability to move. Retaining this talent in Casper will foster a greater sense of community and harbour institutional knowledge. The creation of satisfying, flexible schedule jobs, and volunteer positions for older adults.

Place

Communities that are thriving today are those that develop, retain, and attract talent. In order to do that a community must recognize what makes it distinct and build on those genuine qualities. Casper is fortunate to possess two important factors for the Millennial generation: an urban environment within the community and access to outdoors.

Urban Center

Employers in all industries are striving to attract and retain talent. A vibrant urban center is important as a younger workforce and seniors want to live and work near good active transportation (including pedestrian and bikeway systems), restaurants, and entertainment. At the same time, employees with families, perhaps not living in the urban core, still desire a unique environment for entertainment on the weekends and a vibrant environment during the week.



This demand heavily influences the kinds of investment cities make in their urban core. One important way to do this is through “placemaking” – making places where people and employers want to be.

Through placemaking efforts, the City can create more vibrant areas, connect employment opportunities to residential communities, and leverage natural and cultural assets to attract and retain both employers and talent. This ultimately contributes to the success of the area’s economy.

"Take a section of Downtown Casper, close off the streets in that section, open up the bars, bring in music talent from traveling bands to local bands...so that people can enjoy music, food, beverages, and dancing. Once it happens, the mom and pop stores downtown will get free advertising and it will boost the local economy." - Public Comment



Jobs Housing Balance

Jobs-housing balance is the distribution of employment opportunities and workforce population across a geographic area. It is measured by the ratio of jobs (employees) to households. In the City of Casper the jobs-housing balance is 1.12 (28,000 jobs/25,000 households), indicating a weak employment base and/or an over abundance in housing. This means that for every household there is barely more than 1 job.

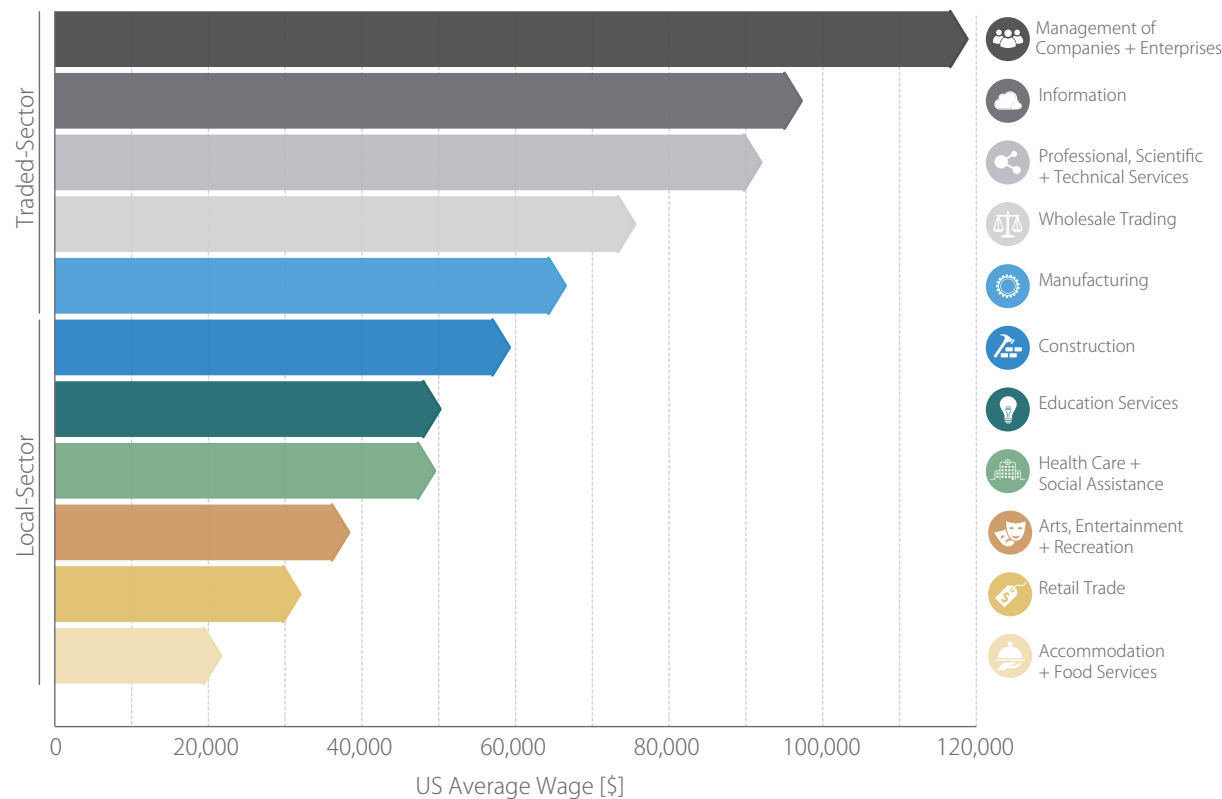
However, many employers are located in the surrounding communities of Evansville and Mills. There are 40,000 jobs and 32,000 households in the Metropolitan Statistical Area for Casper for a 1.25 jobs/housing balance. Housing growth should match economic development.

Outdoors

The small town feel and access to the outdoors are major assets to attracting new employees and retaining them. The Casper area has great access to outdoor adventure, with everything from skiing, rafting, kayaking, cycling, rock climbing, camping, hiking, fishing, hunting and other sports. An additional quality of life measure that is important to the local economy is keeping Casper family-friendly through public recreational facilities.

Over the next two decades, the South Platte river corridor, another tributary through the Denver Metro, is expected to generate 19,200 permanent jobs and produce \$4.3 million annually in new revenue for the city through completed by the Greenway Foundation. In Pittsburgh, the \$130 million invested in the 13-mile long Three Rivers Park leveraged \$2.6 billion in development over the last 15 years. Property values have skyrocketed 60% along the river compared to 32% elsewhere in Pittsburgh, according to the Pittsburgh PostGazette. (Casper River Project highlights confluence of economy and ecology, Wyoming Business Council, 2015)

FIGURE 2-14. TRADED-SECTOR AND LOCAL-SECTOR, US AVERAGE WAGES



Source: NAICS

Traded-Sector versus Local-Sector Jobs

It is important to distinguish between traded sector and local sector jobs because they have very different needs in terms of workforce and business location. In addition, each sector requires different types of support and investments. These sectors are distinguished for clarification of future recommendations.

Traded-sector businesses include industries and employers that produce goods and services consumed outside the region where they are made and, therefore, bring new income to the area (e.g., medical equipment, food, drilling services). Workers in the traded sector tend to be better educated, work more hours, and earn higher average wages than local sector business. As the traded sector increases employment and wages, it enables entrepreneurs to develop skills and resources to foster innovation and start new businesses. Furthermore, certain traded-sector companies foster a supply-chain effect that creates the need for additional companies to supply components of a manufactured product.

"I'm actually quite disappointed in the lack of new industries. Taking ideas from other cities, where the natural resources were a big part of founding the city, to the new innovations they created for themselves... would increase jobs, bring in more population, in turn creating more income for the city." - Public Comment

Local sector business consists of industries and firms that produce goods and services that are consumed locally in the region where they were made, and therefore circulate existing income in the area (e.g., professional services, health care, retail). These businesses are important as they make a community distinct and provide amenities to attract young professionals and families that drive the new economy.

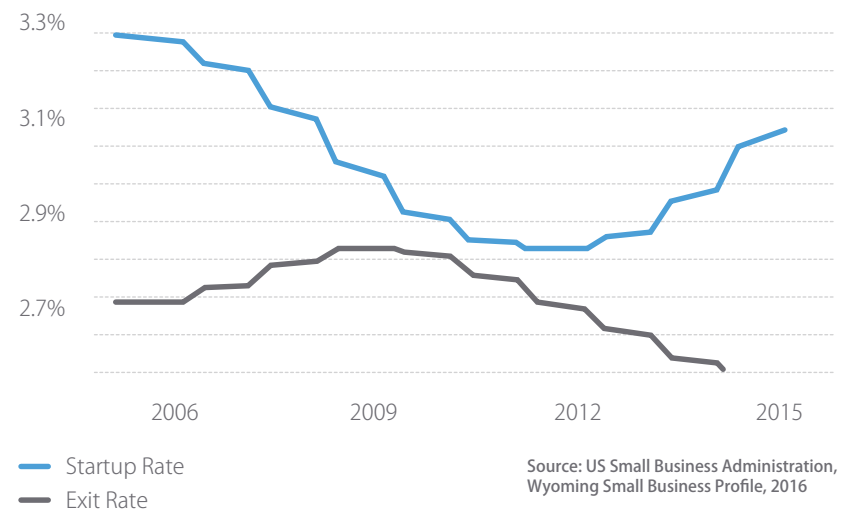
Figure 2-14 highlights the US average wage difference between traded sector jobs and local sector jobs. The local sector industry exceptions regarding typical lower wages are health care and construction industries. These industries are beneficial to the economic base by generating large numbers of high-wage jobs that have less significant education requirements. However, these industries do not generate a significant supply-chain effect or foster an environment for innovative new companies to emerge that grow the economic base.

Start-Up Business

In fostering the traded-sector economy, it will be important for Casper to focus on supporting a start-up culture. New businesses account for nearly all net new job creation and almost 20% of gross job creation. Start-ups have been on the rise in Wyoming in recent years (**Figure 2-15**). The exit rate, the rate at which start-ups divest in their capital infrastructure, has been falling.

Companies less than one year old have created an average of 1.5 million jobs per year over the past three decades. People generally start businesses in the places they are already located, and many of the resources they access are at the local or regional level (Kaufman Foundation, 2015).

FIGURE 2-15. WYOMING PRIVATE START-UP AND START-UP EXIT RATES



As rural communities often struggle with a limited labor pool and retaining young talent, recruiting new companies to the area is often a challenge. To offset this challenge, fostering an environment that encourages companies to grow from the ground up is a critical strategy to implement. An entrepreneurial culture not only serves to create new jobs, it also provides an environment that supports “trailing spouses”: a person who follows his or her life partner to another city because of a work assignment. For hospitals or schools in rural areas, this is often an important subject in recruiting new talent. Providing a supportive outlet for the trailing spouse can serve as one way to offset this concern. One way to do this is through the support of co-working spaces, which could be an office or other working environment used by people who are self-employed or working for different employers, typically so as to share equipment, ideas, and knowledge.

Economic Base

A city's economic base is founded on traded (primary)-sector companies that offer higher-wage jobs, innovation, and bring new wealth into the community. The City's economic development partner, Casper Area Economic Development Alliance (CAEDA), is focused on tactically engaging the private sector to grow the following Industry Focus Areas.

- Energy – building off the machining capabilities that serve the energy industry, this focus area will work to define additional industry opportunities. For example, some machines serving the energy industry rely on advanced sensor technology, which can be enhanced and leverage for new opportunities.
- Medical – building off the strength of the three major hospitals in the Casper area, this area is focused on increasing professional positions as well as exploring opportunities for medical devices pending further research and development (R&D) support from higher-education.
- Advanced Manufacturing – building off the existing workforce and small businesses, this focus area will work to grow this base tied to the region's unique assets. One example may be outdoor recreation, which leverages the outdoor culture and inspires new gear or apparel design. In addition, Casper has a robust metals craft manufacturing community that defines the city's unique creative culture and could be supported with an innovative maker space opportunity.
- Finance/Insurance – as a regional hub, Casper is home to several finance and insurance companies. Focusing on this area will inform opportunities and needs to grow this sector.

In keeping with national trends identified earlier, these Focus Areas will incorporate technology and advanced skills in their operations, which requires a more skilled workforce. Innovation is derivative of these industries and integrating technology will be an important strategy to success. For example, expanding the energy industries' focus on advanced sensor technology or medical services could include the development of medical devices.

To grow these Focus Areas, CAEDA will first work to expand existing businesses in the community. With an understanding of the operational needs for these businesses, there can be a strategic effort to recruit companies that fill supply-chain gaps and help the existing companies thrive. To recruit these companies, it important to be able to show that there is a viable workforce and that Casper is a quality place for a business to grow and thrive.

The city's role is to focus on making Casper a great place so that businesses can easily retain and attract the talent it needs. This is accomplished through the completion of such projects of David Street Station, or building partnership opportunities with the private sector to seed a coding school to produce needed technology talent locally.



EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

Wyoming has been fortunate to provide a high quality of life for its residents while claiming some of the nation's lowest tax rates. In addition to having relatively low property and sales tax, the State of Wyoming has no corporate or income taxes. This has been possible due to extractive mineral and energy industries contributing a substantial amount of money to state and municipal budgets. In fact, roughly 65 to 70 percent of state revenue comes from extractive industries, more specifically from severance taxes and royalty payments.

Talk of economic diversity is nothing new in Wyoming. But a recent call for greater economic diversity in the midst of an economic downturn due to a slump in the energy industry has led Wyoming state and municipal leaders to think about what this means for government budgets. Economic diversity may not be financially beneficial to government entities because the current tax structure is focused solely on extractive industries. The inconvenient fact is that if non-energy businesses are to grow, the state and municipalities need to decide how to fund government services with shrinking contributions from extractive related severance taxes and royalty payments.

To put it simply, a new economy may require a new government funding model.

CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

In creating a stronger economy, one of the pieces of feedback most often heard is the desire to diversify Casper's economy. Residents want to attract new industries to Casper, along with a young and educated workforce. They want to supplement the large professional employers, like Casper College and Wyoming Medical Center, by attracting new employers.

Along with a diversified economy, strengthening Casper College's curriculum, or possibly having it transform into a state university, would be helpful in attracting local talent to contribute to the Casper economy. A more diverse economy would ideally include jobs aimed at high school students. Residents have told us that providing jobs for Casper teenagers could help to foster the types of connections that encourage youth to stay in Casper as they grow up.

The consensus amongst residents is that Casper needs to move away from being dependent on the oil, gas, and mining industries. The boom-and-bust cycle that is intrinsic to these energy industries is seen as not only preventing Casper from realizing its potential, but consistently hurting Casperites through the loss of jobs, income, and diminished property



values that come along with every bust. A variety of jobs would provide opportunities for the families of energy industry staff interested in other fields of work, and could potentially decrease the economic volatility. Some residents have said that they would like to see Casper invest in the renewable energies of wind and solar, as the energy industry job base and infrastructure already exists in Casper. Other residents would like to see Casper move away from the energy economy entirely, as it is not viewed as a dependable

market. Regardless of the differing opinion on means, Casperites want to see their city become economically self-sustaining.

Stakeholders believe that Casper needs to take tangible steps to be more supportive of local-sector small businesses and encourage their development. Stakeholders would love a city department, or individual, focused on providing assistance to Casperites as they navigate the regulations and requirements to becoming new business owners. For

Stakeholders believe that Casper needs to take tangible steps to be more "supportive of local-sector small businesses and encourage their development."



residents, easing the path to establishment includes loosening or eliminating the regulations and infrastructure that make it hard for new businesses to get started and be successful. And where the lack of regulation acts as an impediment, implement a policy to create change. One such issue is with the law that controls Casper's allotted liquor licenses. Residents and business owners have shared how difficult it is to obtain a liquor license, especially for businesses in the urban center. This in turn makes it difficult

for new restaurants to be successful, as a significant portion of sales are often attributed to alcohol. Related to small businesses, although stakeholders want to focus on urban development, there is also public demand for more restaurants in West Casper.

Community members emphasized the importance of talent retention, and the need for Casper to focus on keeping its youth population and attracting young professionals. Suggestions for talent retention programs included entrepreneurship competitions

and job incubators. Less specific suggestions included creating a more social aspect through more youth oriented businesses, including restaurants, bars, breweries, coffee shops, and music venues. Residents expressed that another way to provide the amenities and lifestyle that the next generation tends to prefer is through designing a mix of market-rate housing for young professionals in Casper's urban center.

The community suggested that public-private partnerships between businesses and the City of Casper can help improve Casper's economy and increase the quality of life as well. Ideas for such public-private partnerships included public events Downtown with longer store hours, to promote local businesses, and organized infrastructure improvements and maintenance.

A modernized city, with city-wide wi-fi, or fiber to provide increased internet speeds, has been cited by residents as a way to contribute to attracting businesses and a younger workforce to Casper. Additionally, the public feels that promoting Casper as an outdoor city, and capitalizing on its natural features through marketing and tourism is a way to increase recognition and ultimately positively impact Casper's economy.



TRANSPORTATION

WHY IT MATTERS

Transportation is intertwined with all aspects of community life. People use transportation to get to work, school, shopping, medical facilities, recreation, and community and social activities. The availability and convenience of transportation can have a profound influence on quality of life, economic development, housing options, and health and human services. A transportation system that serves all users well can help a community achieve desired land use patterns and other goals, and allow residents and visitors of Casper travel choices, public safety, and freedom of personal mobility.

KEY POINTS + ASSUMPTIONS

The automobile is the predominant means of transportation.

Land use and transportation are mutually dependent on each other. If one is not well planned, the other suffers.

There is a desire for increased biking and walking transportation through better trails, bike lanes, more frequent transit service, and other infrastructure improvements.

The Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC), contracted by the City of Casper, provides “The Bus” for fixed route deviation and CATC buses for demand-responsive transit service. Not all of the metro area is served by “The Bus” on all days of the week.

Freight corridors passing through the Casper area include: the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) Railways, I-25, US 20/26, and SH 220.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Travel Patterns

The Casper Metropolitan Area is relatively isolated from other communities in the state, meaning the vast majority of people live and work in the area. Almost all commuting is to and from the neighboring communities of Bar Nunn, Mills and Evansville and the most common form of transportation is driving alone (82%), while 11% carpool (Figure 2-16). According the Center for Economic Studies, US Census Bureau, each day, over 15,100 people live and work within the City of Casper limits. Over 11,100 people live in Casper but work in the neighboring communities, or outside the metro area. Almost 9,900 people live outside of Casper but commute daily to work in Casper. Just over half (51.5%) of residents have less than a 15 minute commute to work, 38.4% have a 15 - 29 minute commute, and 10% commute more than 30 minutes. The average commute time is 17.8 minutes (Figure 2-17).

Approximately 46% of Casper residents pay 46% of their household income to cover the cost of their transportation (22%) and housing (24%) (Figure 2-18). The Center for Neighborhood Technology's (CNT) research indicates that these costs should remain below 45% to be affordable.

Functional Classification

The functional classification of a roadway describes its primary purpose, such as moving traffic efficiently, providing local or regional connections, or providing land parcel access. Functional classification is based on traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, length of typical trips, spacing between similar roads, and state/regional significance. Each functional classification has a corresponding set of design criteria, such as access spacing, design speed, and typical cross sections. The primary functional classifications that exist in Casper and their primary purpose are outlined in Table 2-1. Table 2-2 summarizes the typical characteristics of each Functional Classification.

Streets generally serve two important functions: mobility and land access. These two functions conflict with each other – more land access generally leads to reduced mobility and traffic carrying capacity, and vice versa. Each roadway type is specifically designed to operate with certain characteristics based on the adjoining land uses, level of continuity, and proximity/connections to other facilities.

FIGURE 2-16. TRAVEL MODE

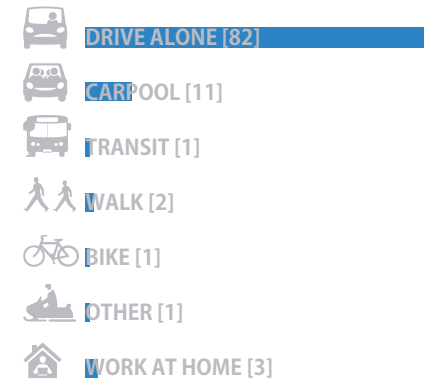


FIGURE 2-17. AVERAGE COMMUTE TIME

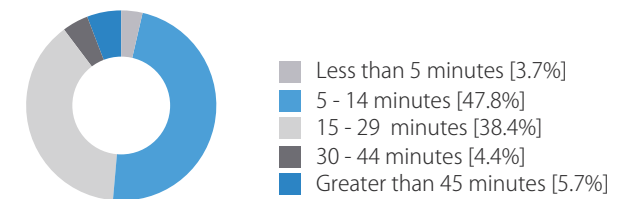
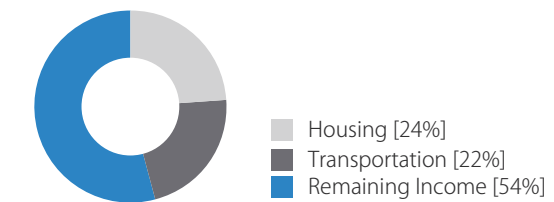


FIGURE 2-18. DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: US Census

TABLE 2-1. FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION	PRIMARY PURPOSE
Highway	Highways serve long distance trips within and across states, generally have limited access via interchanges, and carry high traffic volumes at high speeds. Their primary purpose is to move traffic quickly and efficiently.
Principal Arterial	Principal arterials serve travel between cities and other activity centers. Typically, these roadways have high traffic volumes and are frequently the route of choice for intercity buses and trucks. Principal arterials play a unique role in providing a high degree of mobility and carrying a high proportion of travel for long distance trips. Wyoming Boulevard and CY Avenue are examples of Principal arterials in Casper.
Minor Arterial	Minor arterials serve longer trips within and between urban and suburban areas. They are typically designed with limited locations at which vehicles can enter or exit the roadway. Minor arterials typically have higher posted speed limits, and typically account for more than half of the daily vehicle-miles of travel. Casper Mountain Road, Twelfth Street, Collins Drive, and Beverly Street are classified as minor arterials.
Collector Road	Collector roads connect local roads and arterial roadways, and are typically shorter and narrower than arterial routes but longer and wider than local roads. Collectors often provide traffic circulation between neighborhoods as well as commercial, industrial, or civic districts, and have a higher number of access points to parcels. Collectors account for the next largest percentage of travel, accounting for 5% to 15% in urban areas. College Drive, Fifteen Street, and McKinley Street are classified as Collector Roads.
Local Road	Local roads provide direct access to properties. In contrast to other classifications, local roads are lined with access points in the form of driveways, intersecting roadways, crosswalks, and transfer points for buses and other modes. Speed limits are kept low to promote safety and neighborhood quality of life. The urban local road network serves denser land uses and therefore accounts for a larger proportion of travel than its rural counterpart. Beech Street, Farnum Street, and Scoffman Avenue are classified as Local Roads.

TABLE 2-2. TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

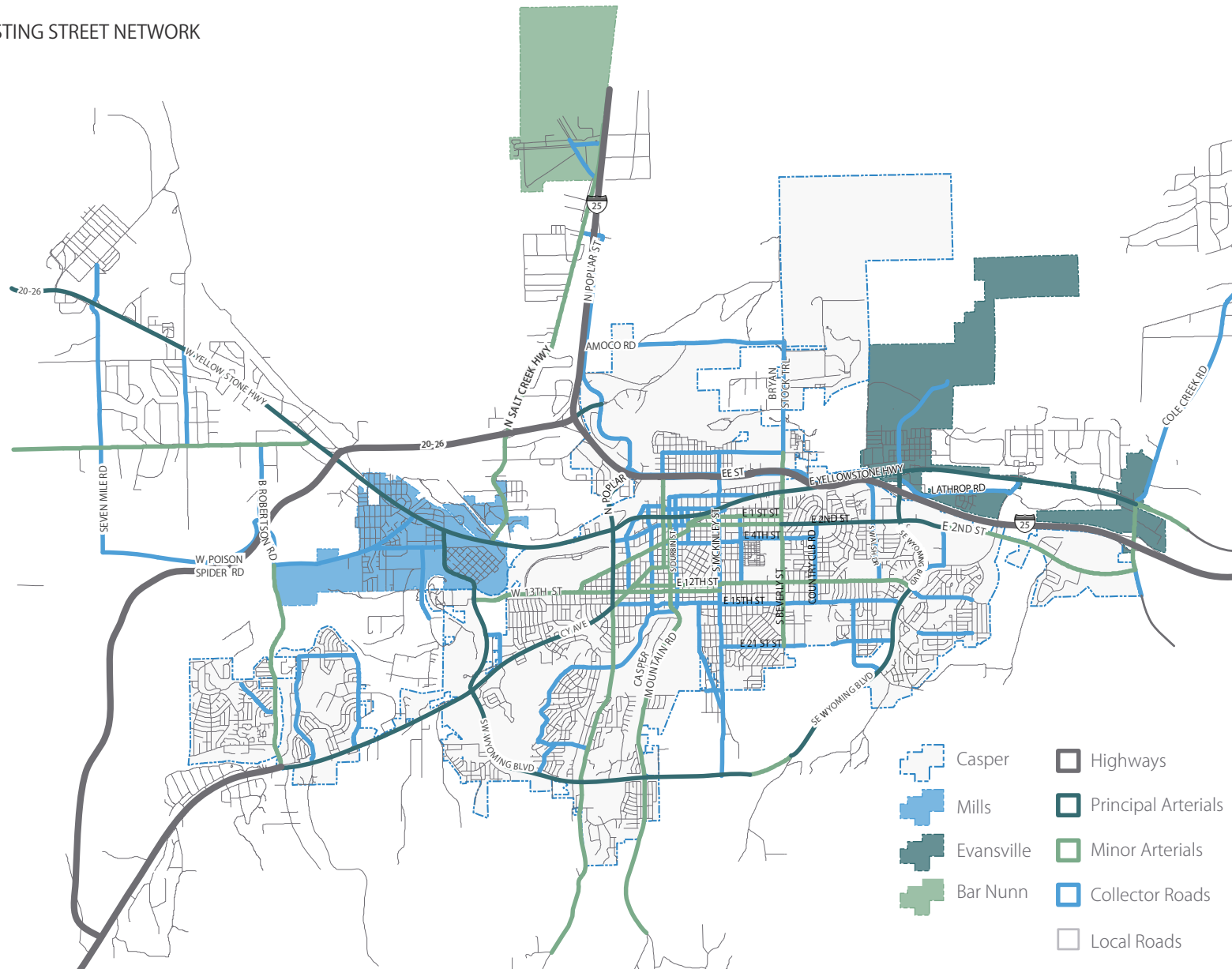
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION	TRIP LENGTH/ ROAD LENGTH	INTERSECTIONS	SPEED LIMIT	DISTANCE BETWEEN SIMILAR ROADS	TRAFFIC	SIGNIFICANCE	NUMBER OF TRAVEL LANES
Highway	Long	Few (all with grade separation)	High	Long	High	National/ Statewide	High
Principal Arterial	Long	Few, some at-grade	Medium-High	Long	High	Statewide	High
Minor Arterial	Medium	Few to medium, most at-grade	Medium-High	Long to Medium	High	Regional	High
Collector Road	Medium/ Short	Medium	Medium	Medium to Short	Medium	Local/ Regional	Medium
Local Road	Short	Many	Low	Short	Low	Local	Low

A street's functional classification describes these characteristics. Arterial roads focus more on mobility, local streets on accessibility, and collector roads somewhere in between. I-25 and the US and State highways are owned by WYDOT.

The street network in Casper includes approximately 3,300 miles of local streets that provide direct access to residences, I-25 (national interstate facility) and arterial roads US 20/26, CY Avenue and Popular Street (SH 220), Wyoming Boulevard (SH 258) and the West Belt Loop (SH 257). Local streets account for 96% of the street network, and arterial roads and collectors each consist of about 2% (**Map 2-2**).

The Casper Area Long Range Transportation Plan indicates that almost all roads within Casper operate at level of service (LOS) D or better, indicating acceptable traffic flow with relatively minimal congestion. Based on 2040 traffic projections, however, a number of arterial and collector roadways in Casper are forecast to drop to unacceptable LOS below D. Congestion is anticipated to increase appreciably. This is likely to be due to increased traffic volumes, and a lack of adequately spaced arterial and collector roads in some parts of town.

MAP 2-2. EXISTING STREET NETWORK





day. When compared to the volume of about 8,000 vehicles per day on I-25 in that area, it is easy to understand the congestion at that intersection.

There is a lack of arterial/collector street connectivity, and proper arterial/collector street spacing. There are no east-west arterial roads that traverse the entire City of Casper. If heading east on Highway 26 to First Street, one must head south one block to Second Street to stay on an arterial road. The same occurs on Twelfth Street/Thirteenth Street. In the north/south directions, only Poplar Street and SE Wyoming Boulevard traverse the city. Center Street traffic must move to Wolcott Street. Traffic on McKinley Street and Beverly Street has no adjacent arterial roads which to transfer. Neither street fully extends through the city. This leads to congestion at

In addition, land uses, lack of connectivity between adjacent developments, and lack of a grid street system can all contribute to congestion on arterial and collector road intersections. People must use the major roads for travel that might otherwise be accommodated on interior local or connector roads. Constructing a grid block configuration has been shown to decrease trip lengths by over 40%, while reducing congestion and air pollution.

This is particularly evident in East Casper and West Casper. As an example, near the intersection of SE Wyoming Boulevard and Second Street, Second Street currently experiences over 24,000 vehicles per day, while SE Wyoming Boulevard handles over 23,000 vehicles per

the “transfer point” intersections, higher traffic volumes on collector and local streets, and safety concerns.

Roadway spacing is a concern in some of the newer parts of Casper. In the established neighborhoods, optimal one mile spacing for arterial roads, and $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile spacing for collector streets is reasonably provided. In East and West Casper, spacing between arterial roads is usually much greater than one mile, as few arterial roads currently exist in those areas. As development continues to occur without these high-functioning roads, congestion and safety will likely be significant problems in those areas.

There is a lack of consistent street cross sections throughout Casper (See **Figure 2-19**). The number of lanes; lane widths; provisions for parking, pedestrians, bicycles and transit and their offsets from the travel lanes; presence of a median and other access management techniques; lighting; and other street cross section elements all contribute to how a street functions, how safe it is and feels, and how it supports the character of the community. Having medians, bike lanes and sidewalks appear and disappear, lanes widths vary from 12 feet to as low as 9 feet, and other variables set inconsistent expectations amongst the travelers, leading to confusion, conflicts, and safety concerns. For example, if a highway with two 12-foot lanes per direction with a raised median suddenly narrows to two 10-foot lanes with no median and on-street parking, the tendency is to keep driving just as fast as before and not pay attention to cross traffic, the opening of doors of parked cars, and pedestrians. Not having continuous and consistent pedestrian and bicycle facilities can lead to the same concerns, as walkers and bicyclists may have to share the road with vehicular traffic where they were separate before.

When funding is tight, street maintenance can often suffer. If regular maintenance is not completed, it can lead to crashes, and much higher costs to reconstruct streets in the future. Several streets were noted as needing maintenance during tours of the Casper area.

Residential street speed is a perennial problem in all urban and suburban cities. As congestion increases on arterial and collector streets, motorists often use local roads to bypass the delays. Where not enough arterial and collector streets are provided, traffic often has no choice but to use local roads for regional travel. Finally, local streets tend to be wide open pavement. There is usually no striping, and if no cars are parked on the curbs, they can be inviting to higher speeds.

Major Barriers to Transportation

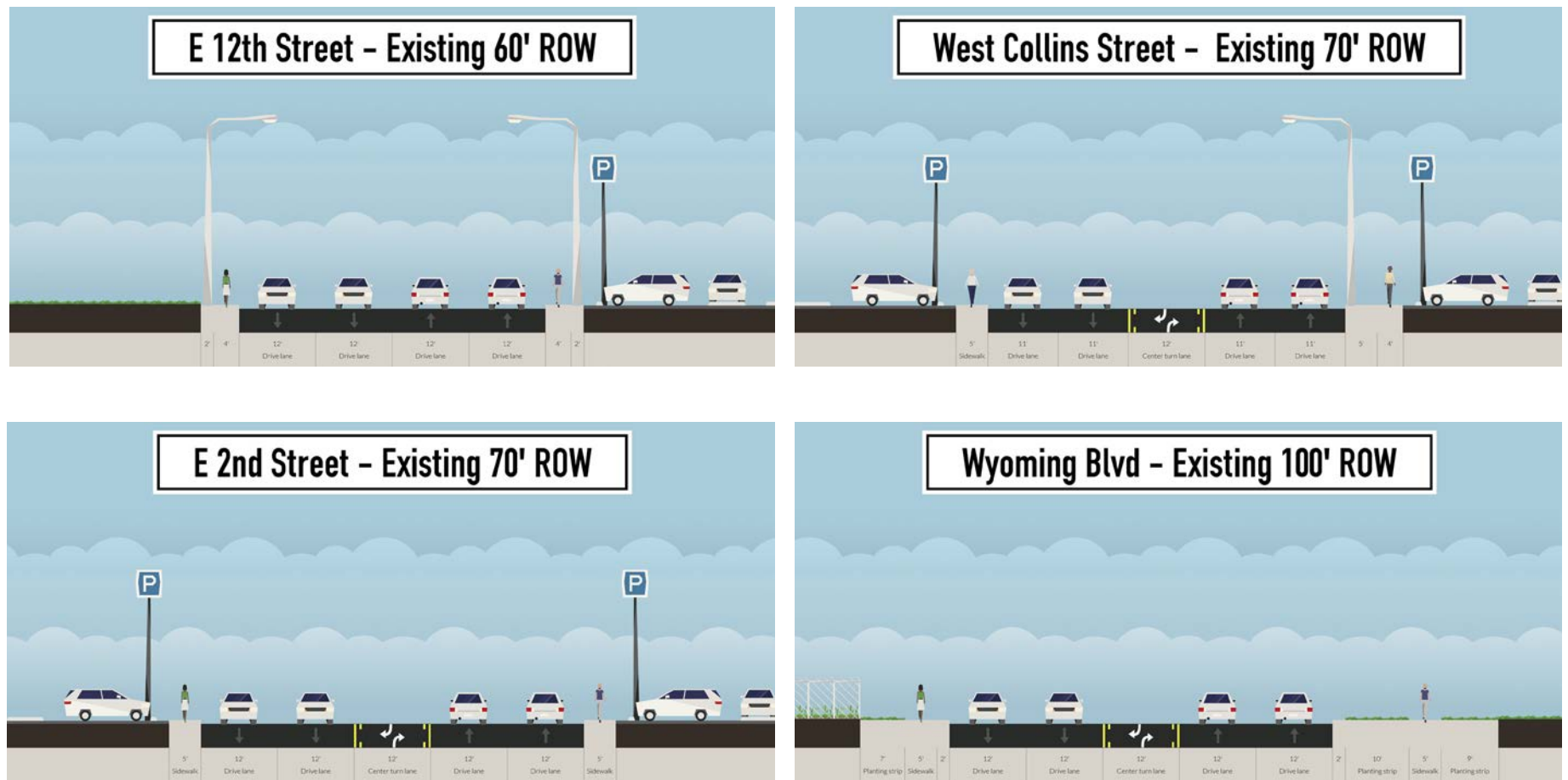
Within Casper, there are a number of features which act as barriers and largely impact the future transportation network. These include existing highways, such as I-25, US 20/26 and the West Belt Loop; railroads; the North Platte River and associated drainages; green space such as parks and golf courses; bodies of water like Soda Lake; and hilly terrain. These barriers are illustrated on **Map 2-3**.

Connectivity

In addition to the barriers listed above, the connectivity of major roads and individual parcels of land with the resulting block sizes impact how well the transportation system functions.

Urban planners use a concept of transect zones to determine the appropriate density and form for a given area. These transects go from very low density rural development to very high density urban development. Within Casper, the development density varies from suburban to low density urban development transects. In these transects, block perimeters, or the measurement of a block size, should be between 2,000 to 3,000 feet to reduce the distance a pedestrian must travel and to allow for a distribution of traffic throughout the city. Larger blocks result in fewer roads and options for vehicles to travel, which leads to wider roads and larger intersections. Wide roads and large intersections become increasingly more difficult and less desirable for pedestrians. In short, larger block perimeters lead to reduced connectivity.

FIGURE 2-19. EXAMPLE OF EXISTING CROSS SECTIONS



In the suburban areas of Casper, 3,000 foot block perimeters are acceptable, but block perimeters in more urban areas, such as the urban center, should not exceed 2,000 feet.

An assessment of the existing roadway network and developed land within the city limits shows quite a few blocks that exceed this block perimeter recommendation. More specifically, block sizes adjacent to highways, the railroad, and around natural amenities and parks tend to be quite large. These larger blocks create north/south and east/west barriers to the transportation network. Accounting for pedestrian trails and pathways, some of these blocks may be less of a barrier for bikes and pedestrians, while still forcing vehicles to traverse them. Many of these blocks are of certain uses that are not anticipated to experience redevelopment during the planning horizon. Some of those uses include cemeteries, golf courses, schools, and parks/preserve land.

Connectivity of the local roadway network and connectivity between individual parcels of land can help to reduce traffic on major roadways and at major intersections by allowing users alternate ways in and out of the site. In some cases, a patron wants to go into more than one non-residential use along a block, but without interconnects, the number of opportunities for vehicle and/or pedestrian conflicts increases as vehicles exit one site and enter another from the arterial. The City requires connectivity between residential uses, but connectivity between non-residential uses is lacking.

Legend

- Railroads
- Waterbodies
- Parks_Preserves

Roadways

- Interstate Highway
- US Highway
- State Highway
- Major Road
- Arterials
- Collector
- Residential

Connectivity (Low to High)

- >6,000
- >5,000 to 6,000
- >4,000 to 5,000
- >3,000 to 4,000

The map displays the city of Lincoln, Nebraska, with streets color-coded according to their connectivity. The highest connectivity areas (pink) are concentrated in the central urban core, particularly around the downtown area and along major corridors like I-80 and I-680. Connectivity decreases as one moves towards the outskirts (yellow). The map also shows various landmarks such as parks (green), water bodies (blue), and railroads (black lines).

Rail and Freight

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway one-track Casper line traverses east-west on the north side of the City of Casper, carrying an average of eight trains per day. There is a rail yard and some short spur lines to serve customers. There are four at-grade railroad crossings (including two minor access crossings) in Casper, the most notable being across Bryan Stock Trail. The trains are generally slow moving and long, often blocking the at-grade crossing locations for long periods of time.

The last rail accidents in the Casper area occurred in 2003, although at-grade crossings are inherently dangerous for injury and fatality crashes. In 2009 WYDOT conducted the Wyoming Quiet Zone Study which produced

recommendations for Casper. The Study examined the two major public crossings in Casper: Bryan Stock Trail and Hereford Lane and found a feasible quiet zone with the installation of medians or the installation of wayside horns at both crossings. A wayside horn is used in place of the locomotive's horn in quiet zones to reduce ambient noise.

Three of Wyoming's freight corridors (as identified in the Statewide Freight Plan) travel through Casper – I-25, US 20/26 and SH 220. Some roads in Casper such as Poplar Street (SH 220), SE Wyoming Boulevard (SH 258), and Bryan Stock Trail/Beverly Street are heavily impacted by overweight industrial trucks, resulting in considerable damage, deterioration, and shortened life expectancy for the pavement.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Casper is slowly transitioning into a more walkable city. Walking conditions along arterial roadways vary throughout Casper. In the older parts of Casper, sidewalks are generally present on both sides of the street. The same can be said of most newer areas of the city, however there are notable gaps with sidewalks not present on one or both sides of the roadway. On-street parking or landscaping typically buffers pedestrians from the traffic movements in Casper's urban core area. Elsewhere, sidewalks are often attached to travel lanes decreasing safety and desire to travel along these routes. Curb ramps exist at many intersections. Pedestrian crossings are generally marked near schools and other higher pedestrian activity areas, including signalized intersections.

On collector roadways walking condition also varies. Attached sidewalks are more numerous in many areas outside of Downtown Casper. Walking conditions on local roadways are usually better, with sidewalks on one or both sides of the street in most areas. On-street parking typically provides a buffer.



Cycling is often challenging and stressful on arterial roads. While some bike lane and off-road facilities are provided on a few arterials, most cyclists must mingle with traffic. The same occurs at most intersections. Traffic signal detection for bicyclists is lacking. Collector roadways can be better for cyclists, except where they widen to four lanes with higher speed vehicles. There are bike lanes on several collector roads such as Blackmore Road, Centennial Village Drive, and Centennial Boulevard, but observations show little use. Most local roadways are better for cycling due to low volumes and speeds.

Casper has a regional path/trail system that can meet recreational needs for much of Casper. The approximately ten-mile long Platte River Parkway runs mostly east-west along the North Platte River from the North Casper Soccer Complex to Paradise Valley Park.



The Casper Rail Trail runs from Downtown Casper to Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park along the abandoned Chicago and Northwestern Rail line. There are also several local trails, some of which connect to the two regional trail facilities, but many areas of the metro area are not served by any trails. In general, there is a lack of connectivity between the trails and desired destinations. See the Natural Assets and Recreation section for more information.

Maintenance is often a challenge with an off-street pedestrian and bicycle network. While use logically goes down during cold and snow months, some people may still prefer to use it as a commuting and recreational route. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities often come near the bottom of the maintenance priority lists; therefore, keeping them in good shape is a challenge.

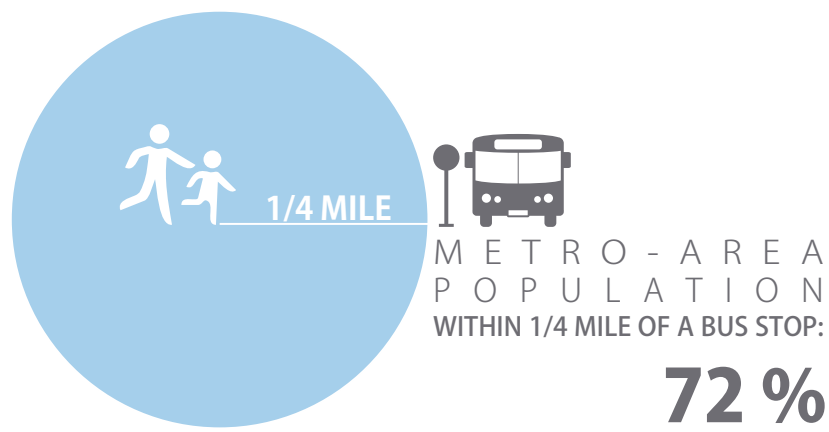
Transit

There are two primary transit services in Casper, both managed by the City of Casper and operated by the Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC). The first is a demand responsive service that CATC designed primarily for transportation-challenged individuals.

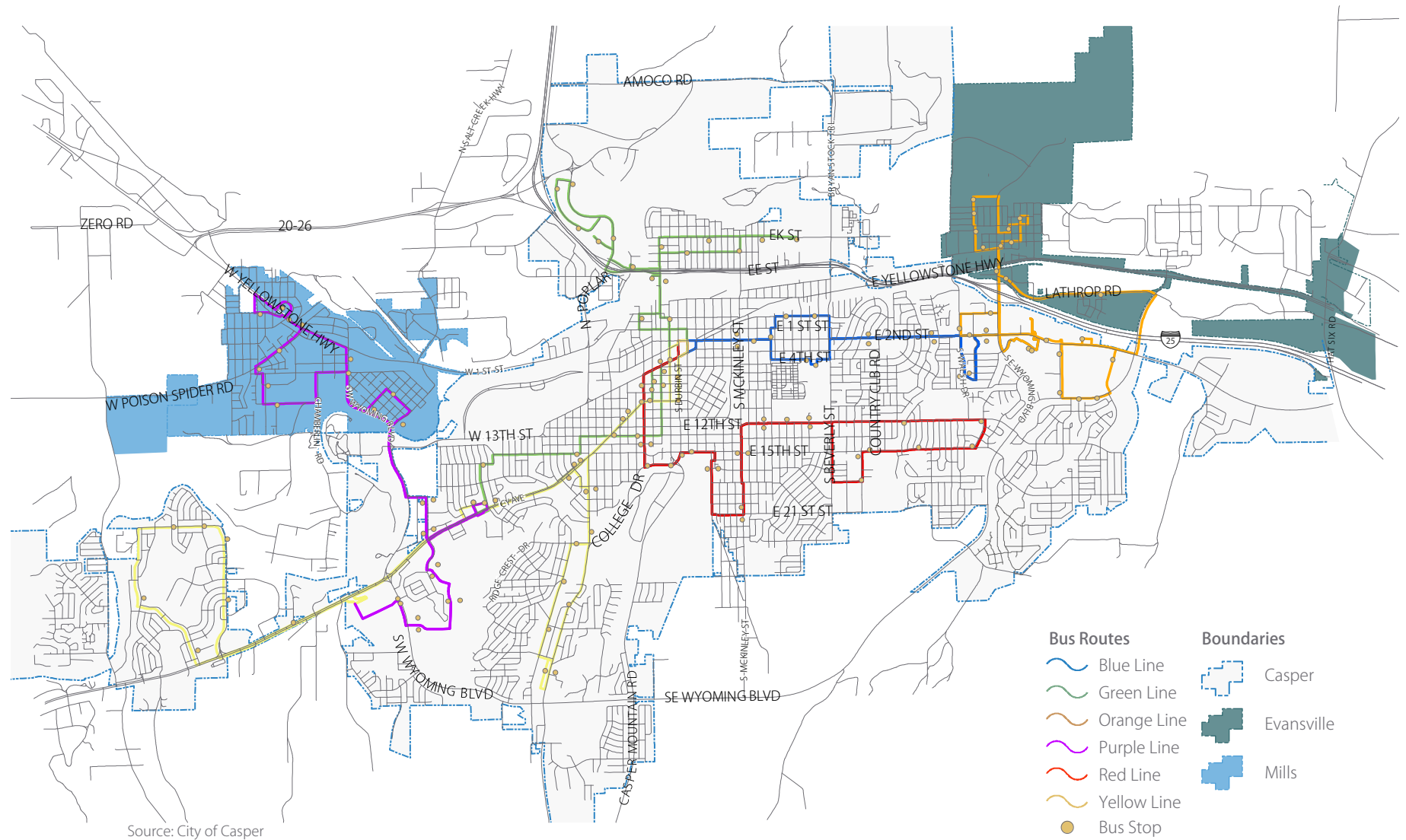
The second, called The Bus, is a fixed route/route deviation service. There are currently six routes that serve much of the Casper metropolitan area. Four of the routes intersect at a transfer point along Beech Street just south of Second Street. The other two routes serve primarily Mills and Evansville. Buses are allowed to deviate from their fixed route to be a bit more demand-responsive, as long as their schedules are maintained. Buses are equipped with bike racks. There is now weekend service for "The Bus."

An examination of the existing bus routes illustrates that some areas are not served by a close enough route, and other parts of the Casper metro area are not served at all (**Map 2-4**). However, 72% of the metro-area's population is within a quarter mile to a bus stop (**Figure 2-20**). In addition, it was noted through survey input that service is not available on all days and during all needed hours. As with all transit systems, shorter headways will help to increase ridership, but at a cost. Amenities are generally lacking at bus stops. Having to stand in the snow and rain does not attract additional riders.

FIGURE 2-20. PROXIMITY TO BUS STOPS



MAP 2-4. BUS ROUTES



Safety

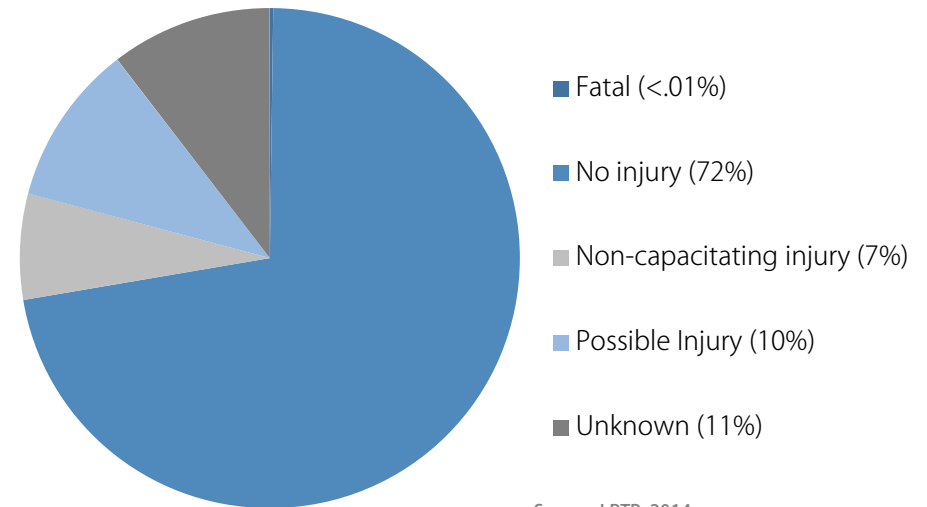
From 2011 – 2014, 5,683 crashes occurred in Casper. While 71% of those crashed resulted in property damage only, 953 crashes resulted in injury, and 12 involved fatalities (**Figure 2-21**). Pedestrians (1%) and bicyclists (0.7%) were involved in a relatively low percentage of crashes, and there have been no train crashes since 2003.

The intersections of CY Avenue with Wyoming Boulevard and South Poplar Street experience the highest number of crashes (54 and 50, respectively). While the intersection of E First Street and Center Street was noted to experience 18 crashes, it was interesting to note that 416 crashes (7.4% of the total), plus 18 (32%) of pedestrian-involved crashes and 5 (13%) of bike-involved crashes occurred at or within 2000 feet of that intersection. 14 other pedestrian-involved crashes occurred on Second Street, and 50% of pedestrian-involved crashes occurred between the hours of 3 pm and 8 pm on weekdays.

As for bike-involved crashes, seven occurred in the vicinity of the Wyoming/Second Street intersection, seven occurred along Twelfth Street, and five occurred around the intersection of CY/Poplar. Forty-seven percent of bike-involved crashes occurred between 3 pm and 6 pm on weekdays.

The report states that 73.5% of pedestrian fatalities in Wyoming were on roads with a speed limit of 40 mph or higher, compared to 8.2% on streets with a speed limit of 30 mph or under. The data show that street design matters. When the needs of all users—all ages, all abilities and all modes of travel—are properly balanced, our streets are safer and easier to navigate for everyone.

FIGURE 2-21. VEHICLE CRASH INJURIES



Source: LRTP, 2014

CODE REVIEW

The requirements for a Traffic Study are listed in the Code of Ordinances, Section 16.20.080. Following are overall observations, or noted sections that are missing/could be revised to assist the City in achieving its transportation vision. Recommendations addressing these observations are presented in Chapter 5:

- Define how the “adjacent street system” is to be defined as it related to the assessment of potential transportation impacts.
- Pedestrian Study. This section does not specify how to determine impacts to pedestrians, nor does it include anything on connectivity measurement or mitigation.
- No assessment of bicycle or transit service/facilities is included.
- Traffic counts do not require counting of pedestrians, bicyclists, or bus riders.
- There is no requirement to study adjacent side interconnectivity or apply access management principles.

According to the 2016 Casper Signal Timing Study, 50% of traffic lights are prematurely constructed. Casper and the MPO should strive not only for greater accuracy in traffic studies, but also appropriate application of their results as related to code.

CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

Input indicates that changes in city codes to implement an effective long-term transportation network are needed.

The necessary transit improvements most often mentioned by residents ultimately address the need to make public transportation more convenient. These improvements include increasing the frequency of buses, the number of bus stops, and the number of routes. A resident suggested special event shuttles that offer another mode of transportation to large public events, such as fairs and concerts, as a way to provide residents a convenient opportunity to take public transportation.

An important part of a good transportation service, as expressed by Casper residents, is making sure the bus stops provide shelter, and are ADA accessible year-round. Maintaining these bus stops is especially important for Casper’s handicapped population. In the winter, snow removal in the right-of-way between the bus and the shelter is essential.

The community wants Casper to be bike-friendly. Stakeholders have reported that installing bicycle lanes on common routes and main corridors is an important step in encouraging more people to bike. These routes are seen as a way to provide an efficient way to get to Casper’s large employment sectors, entertainment venues, and popular commercial corridors and destinations.

Making Casper more walkable is a priority amongst community members. They want Casper to have improved walkability through fixing broken sidewalks, downtown streetscape transformations to widen sidewalks, and connecting Casper’s existing trails.

Within Casper, some road rights-of-way are narrow, thereby limiting the elements that can be accommodated within the available right-of-way. It is also preferred that bike lanes be provided on slower, less busy streets, and street trees should be given enough space to grow without the roots damaging the adjacent sidewalk. Of the other components, residents did not feel that lighting was very important in the non-residential areas, nor was there much support for dedicated travel lanes for transit.



NATURAL ASSETS & RECREATION

WHY IT MATTERS

Wyoming's economy is disproportionately dependent on extractive industries, which creates low economic diversification. This dependency results in a cyclical economy; therefore, Wyoming's tourism and recreation industries are increasingly important to the economic stability of the state. Recreational opportunities and the natural environment contribute to a community's quality of life and can help counteract decreasing health trends. These amenities not only attract visitors to an area but are often key factors in determining where to live or locate a business. Also, the City needs to be proactive to make land use decisions that support healthy lifestyles. In turn, contributing to lower health care costs, reducing childhood obesity and attention disorders, and increasing social connections. This section includes a review of the parks, trails and other natural assets, and recreational tourism attractions that could boost the economic vitality of the region.

KEY POINTS + ASSUMPTIONS

Fishing is a major recreational attraction. Blue ribbon trout fishing is available in the city and, in some cases, a few steps from your door.

The North Platte River is the "centerpiece" of recreation in Casper. Fishing, trails, water recreation, and parks are available along the River.

Approximately 45 miles of trails are found throughout the City of Casper.

Casper Mountain, with its associated trail network, and Hogadon Ski Area, provides a scenic backdrop as well as a recreational amenity.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Wildlife

The City of Casper resides in the midst of some of the most important fish and wildlife habitats in North America. More pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra Americana*) exist within a one hundred mile radius of Casper than anywhere else in the world. Within the city limits, it is not uncommon to view a variety of small to large mammals. The city boasts many parks, where a visitor may spot small mammals such as prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), cottontail rabbits (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), coyotes (*Canis latrans*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) a variety of bat species, or skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*). Near riparian areas one may spy beavers (*Castor Canadensis*), muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*), raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), or mink (*Neovison vison*). Many larger mammals call Casper and its environs home. Larger mammals present within or close to Casper include mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), elk (*Cervus elaphus*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), and pronghorn antelope.



Due to the diversity of landscapes, numerous bird species can be viewed in or near Casper. Horned Larks, Lark Buntings, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, multiple sparrows, and finches are among the smaller birds that call Casper home. In riparian areas, Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer, Yellow Warblers, Double-crested Cormorants, American White Pelicans, Common Mergansers, Canada geese, Wood Ducks, and Mallards can be found. Occasionally, Sandhill Cranes passing over or feeding in nearby agricultural fields

may be seen. Casper and surroundings also has a vibrant population of Wild Turkey. Bald and Golden Eagles, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Great-Horned Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Northern Saw-whet Owl are among some of the raptors who live in the area.



Supplementing this list of bird species is a number of sensitive and non-sensitive species known to inhabit the area. The iconic Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) performs its spring mating rituals at many leks close to town. The piping plover (threatened) is a species listed under the Endangered Species Act that may use the Platte River Corridor during migration. The North Platte River is one of the largest migratory corridors between the Rocky Mountains and the Missouri River! Activities in this area may affect these and other threatened or endangered species.

The North Platte River, its tributaries and reservoirs provide the region with diverse aquatic habitats supporting a large number of game and nongame fish. The North Platte River is a blue ribbon trout water managed for wild trout. Anglers from all over the world come to Casper to enjoy this world-class fishery. Wild rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout are common game fish. Natural spawning and nursery habitat for spring-spawning rainbow trout and fall-spawning brown trout are present in the North Platte River drainage. Reservoirs are actively managed to provide both trout and walleye fisheries. The aquatic habitats also support a diverse assemblage of native nongame fish and amphibian species.

Recreation

Over 2,000 acres of parks and open space are available within the city. These parks range from undeveloped lands and/or natural areas to formal parks and developed recreation areas (such as athletic complexes, skate parks, a shooting complex, pools, etc.). Compared to similar communities across the nation, Casper boasts more than double the acres of parks per 1,000 residents (**Figure 2-22**). Parks are generally dispersed throughout the city, though some gaps have been identified in the Casper Park and Open Space Improvement Plan (**Map 2-5**).

Park acreages:

- Athletic parks: 120 acres
- Developed/formal parks: 235 acres (includes city parks, rail trails, fairgrounds, public plazas, etc.)
- Natural parks: 435 acres
- Specialty parks: 510 acres
- Undeveloped land: 775 acres

Casper offers a full recreation center, four outdoor pools, an aquatic center, four golf courses (both private and public) and an events center.

FIGURE 2-22. PARKS AND TRAILS COMPARED TO SIMILAR CITIES



Level of service for parks and trails is commonly expressed in the number of acres or miles, respectively, per 1,000 residents."

Atop Casper Mountain, just south of city limits, exists an abundance of recreational opportunities from a biathlon course and training center, to cross country trails, mountain biking, and festivals. Hogadon Ski Area is owned and operated by the City of Casper. The City also owns Rotary Park, Casper Mountain Park, the biathlon course, and Beartrap Meadow. These parks are managed by Natrona County and offer hiking, camping, picnicking, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and Nordic skiing opportunities. The County owns and operates Ponderosa Park and Crimson Dawn on Casper Mountain.

Casper offers many other recreational activities and serves as a staging area for activities in the region such Air Modelers Facility, shooting ranges, BMX track, Motocross track, car racing, and rockhounding (the Jade State), snowmobiling, and much more.

Hunting opportunities are another major draw for tourists and residents alike. Pronghorn, elk, mule deer, pheasant, and duck hunting are also common game for hunters.

Not only does the North Platte River offer exceptional fishing opportunities, but is also claimed to be the "scenic centerpiece of Casper." Approximately ten miles of trails follow the river, along with multiple parks and other recreational opportunities. The Casper Whitewater Park, located just west of Poplar Street on the North Platte River, provides unique opportunities for whitewater kayaking and urban river play sports.

Due to the abundance of game and fish, hunting and fishing are two high-quality – and highly touted – recreational opportunities in Casper. The fishing opportunities within and surrounding Casper are praised for their trophy-sized rainbow and brown trout. While the internationally known Miracle Mile is located just 30 miles from Casper, there is great fishing in the urban core. Dubbed “urban fly fishing,” sections of the North Platte River that cut through town offer an estimated 2,200 trout per mile (or approximately 2,400 pounds per mile), providing blue ribbon

quality fishing close enough for one’s lunch break. Catching 20-30 inch trout is not a rare occurrence within town, making this river a unique and influential recreational opportunity. Several fly shops and 60 to 70 guides rely on high quality fishing to make a living, and the North Platte’s reputation draws anglers from outside Wyoming’s borders. About 35% of the fishing licenses in Natrona County are sold to out of state residents (Casper River Project Highlights Confluence of Economy and Ecology, Wyoming Business Council, 2015).

Trails

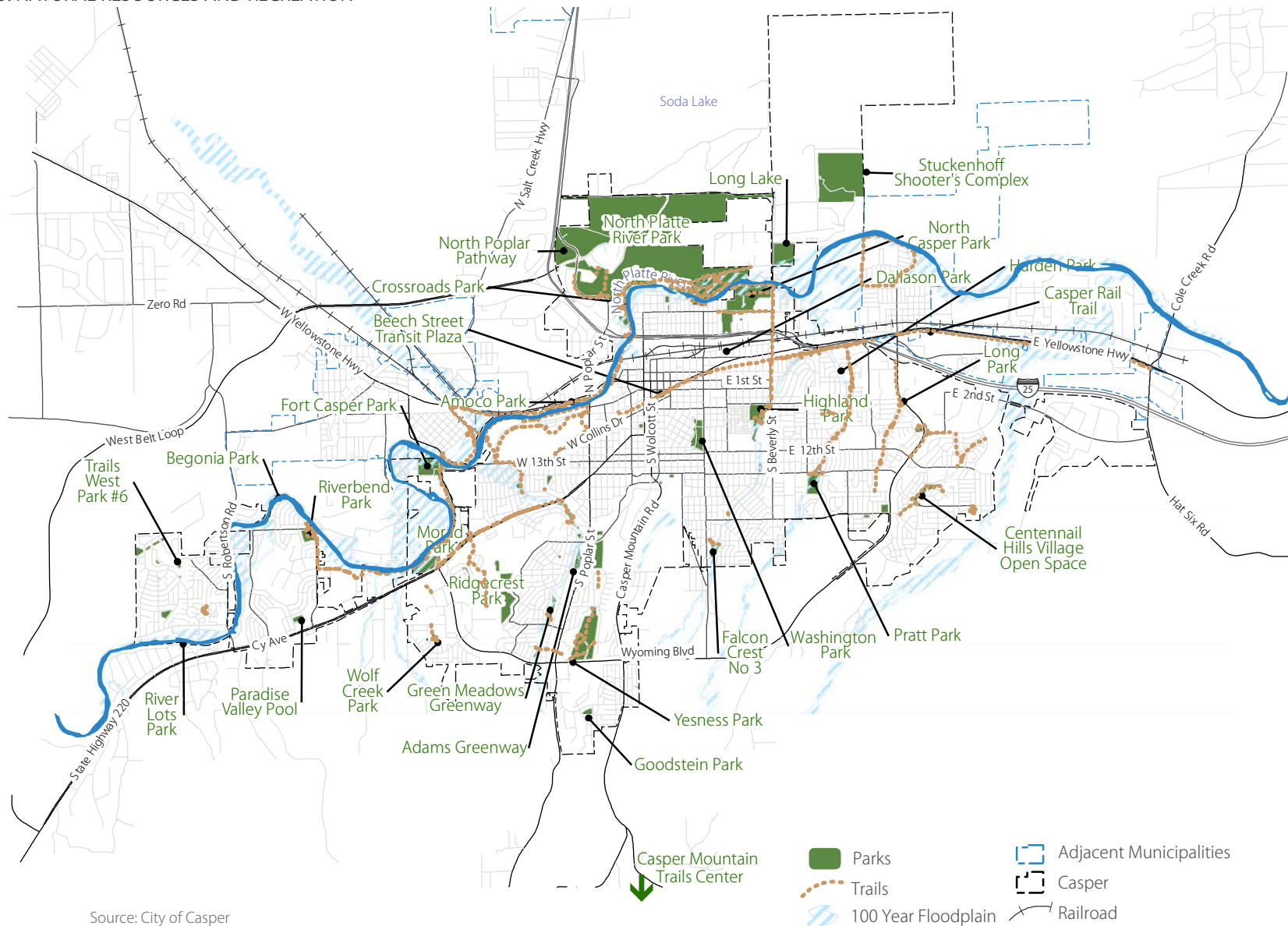
A total of approximately 45 miles of trails are found throughout the City of Casper, with a total 64 miles of bicycle facilities (bike lanes, paved shoulders, and pathways) throughout Casper. The Casper Rail Trail is a multi-use, paved trail built upon the abandoned Chicago and Northwest Rail line. Apparent gaps in the trail network include:

- North-south connections in Downtown (river as north boundary, Beverly Street as east boundary, Poplar Street as west boundary, and continuing south); as well as east-west connections in this area.
- South of 220 and generally west of Poplar Street.
- Between 220 and river, west of the BLM regional headquarters.

The Platte River Trails Trust is a citizen-led non-profit organization with a mission to develop a river pathway system. In addition to connecting to Casper Mountain, their most recent work is to add to the river oriented parks, the existing trail system, and the overall pedestrian infrastructure.



MAP 2-5. NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION



Source: City of Casper

CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

Casper residents expressed that they think the City should prioritize completing and connecting local trails in Casper, such as connecting the Rail Trail to the River Trail. Residents have also told us that they would like to see more local trails and more programming along trails in general, such as an aerobic or interactive and educational component.

Stakeholders are interested in seeing the City embark on a transformation of the North Platte riverfront. Residents feel that redeveloping and improving the river will help Casper become a great outdoor recreation destination. And, as young professionals continue to gravitate to urban environments with great public places and natural features, a well-designed river front can help Casper become the Millennial-friendly city that stakeholders envision. Residents want to see the Hogadon Ski Area redeveloped into a modern winter resort and a great summer recreation destination as well. A more modernized local ski resort is a much desired amenity for Casperites and regional residents alike, which residents believe could increase tourism and brand Casper as a great destination year round.

Community members expressed a desire for more neighborhood-sized parks throughout Casper, with a focus on making each park unique, either through its design or its programming. Residents feel the parks need to be better maintained to make them more welcoming and enjoyable. When asked what residents want for Casper in 10 to 20 years, many residents express a vision for Casper to be a great outdoor lifestyle city. Community members feel that preserving the city's surrounding natural areas and open space, and increasing outdoor recreation options will help promote this "outdoor lifestyle" form of tourism. Regarding other forms of recreation, Casperites agree that there is a demand for more pools. Some residents need a pool for competitive swimming, and others want more recreational pools. Additionally, younger children and their parents wish there were more youth-oriented year-round activities in Casper. These requests included indoor activities, more entertainment venues, amusements parks, and water parks.



ARTS & CULTURE

WHY IT MATTERS

Arts and culture are known to enhance a person's quality of life. They offer personal enrichment and growth, and opportunities to make new connections and be more involved in a community. Casper has a rich and unique history full of historic neighborhoods, monuments, trails and historic places. In the case of a city, arts and culture add to its value and appeal, and can contribute to community and economic development. Arts can be an effective tool to deliver health care, education or social services and help achieve better outcomes such as improved early learning, higher educational achievement and enhance business performance.

"Several researchers have argued that people are increasingly first choosing where they want to live and then seeking employment there. In today's economy, the ability to attract and retain creative human talent is the key to economic growth. In fact, the cities that are most successful in attracting workers are the ones that have exciting art and cultural offerings. The arts and culture sector is an integral part of the new economy."

- Michigan State University, Impact of the Arts.

The "Creative Class," a workforce group involved in innovative and creative processes, are a key driving force for economic development. A community must have "talent, tolerance, and technology" to attract this group (*Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida). As Casper aims to diversify its economy through attracting new talent and job sectors to its city, it will be important to focus on developing the city's arts and cultural identity. Creating an appealing environment and cultural scene will help attract people that are considering relocating to Casper.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Casper's arts and culture contributes to the quality of life of the city, and offers a diverse assortment of opportunities for a city of its size. Fort Caspar and National Historic Trails Interpretive Center offer great exhibits on the history of Casper and the West, while The Nicolaysen Art Museum (The Nic) is one of best contemporary art museums in the Rockies.

The Wyoming Community Development Authority, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), City of Casper, Keep Casper Beautiful, and local service clubs are all contributing to growing the arts in Casper through public art installations, designing public spaces, and engaging the community in participating in art and culture opportunities. The WyoCity™ Public Art Project is helping to explain the new City Brand through art.

Throughout Casper, bronze sculptures can be seen, with many paying homage to Casper's natural resources, and their important place amongst the history of the West and settlement of the American frontier. More recently, street art and murals have been commissioned to add to the art scene around the urban center. The Nic is a popular Downtown art museum that, in addition to its exhibitions,



KEY POINTS + ASSUMPTIONS

Casper boasts one of the best contemporary art museums in the Rockies, The Nicolaysen Art Museum.

Citizens' increasingly acknowledge the importance and role of arts and culture in the community.

A unique culture can add to the community's economic development and quality of life.

Young adults often select where to live first based on quality of life and amenities versus making their locational decisions on employment.

hosts and sponsors community events. The Science Zone is a science museum in Casper that focuses on providing innovative ways to engage youth in arts and science. Art321 is a nonprofit organization that hosts art exhibitions and community workshops, and the monthly Art Walk (**Map 2-6**). Along with these art and museum venues, art and music events are emerging in parks and small

plazas such as Movie in the Park, Food Truck Fridays, Art Walks and other festivals. Venues for these local community events are limited but include the Tate Pumphouse, Yellowstone Garage, The Nic in Downtown, and regional parks. The developing David Street Station is currently under construction in Downtown, which will offer a unique venue for the community.

"The film industry brings lots of money, is temporary on its impact and helps advertise our community. Let's put an effort to have more of this type of business. Let's also work on a vibrant maker space where our youth can invent and create things." - Public Comment



Casper Ice Arena is home to the Casper Coyotes Hockey Team, and among other events the Center offers public workshops, high school sports competitions, Broadway plays, rodeos, themed entertainment and educational exhibits, shows, and expositions. Casper has played host to the College National Rodeo Finals every year since 2001.

Casper has a rich and vibrant history and offers many opportunities to explore this community. Fort Caspar Museum is a museum that tells the history of Casper's settlement. The National Historic Trails Interpretive Center is a must-see destination in Casper with exhibits that share the history of the West while Downtown Casper and the Old Yellowstone District showcases unique historic architecture.



CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

While it is clear that there is a local art/cultural district budding in the urban center, residents feel that the City needs more year-round public events, city-wide activities, entertainment options, and entertainment venues. They want the City to invest more in the arts and cultural opportunities. Stakeholders would also like the City to invest in programs to attract more artists to Casper. Residents have expressed how The Nic is an important part of the community, and they'd like to see more events, alleyway murals and improvements sponsored by the art museum.

Casper residents have stated that the city is lacking an identity and a unique "vibe" or feel to the urban center. They feel that strengthening the city's arts and culture can help nurture a Casper identity. Residents want more events that are unique to Casper, and event series that they feel will help create a unique vibe. Stakeholders also expressed that supporting the urban core and local businesses will help Casper's identity.



Residents want to keep the small-town feel that so many people love about Casper. The community wants to focus on maintaining that small-town perception in the neighborhoods around the urban center to help preserve the friendly, safe, familiar and connected characteristics that Casperites love. The public sees fixing and maintaining existing local roads and sidewalks as a necessity in improving neighborhood character and appearances.

Downtown, Casperites overwhelmingly support the DDA's vision for a public plaza that can serve a diverse community, through entertainment for children, teenagers, and adults. The community's vision for a public plaza would include a gathering place for informal and formal events that could act as a landmark and anchor. Residents believe that a popular, well-designed and -maintained public place such as this would greatly contribute to creating a city that is capable of

attracting new residents and supporting new and existing businesses.

Stakeholders want to see design guidelines and sign standards for commercial properties throughout the urban center to help unify the district, preserve historical landmarks and architectural features, and insure that new development compliments the existing built form. The community wants Casper's urban center to become a destination with a unique character.

MAP 2-6. CASPER'S CREATIVE ASSETS

