

# Butte County Comprehensive Plan

A Working Twenty  
Year Plan

For the Continued Growth  
and Development of

Butte County  
South Dakota

July 2002

# INTRODUCTION

## WHY IS IT NEEDED?

Planning, simply stated, is a process for determining appropriate future actions through the application of intelligent forethought and coordination. It is a rational process of analysis intended to clarify policy approaches and project alternatives so decision-makers can make informed judgements on various matters. While the above statement may shed light on the importance of planning, what good is any planning effort if an approach that is consistent does not propel the effort? Of greater importance, the effort must meet the most minimal of needs as identified by the county. This comprehensive plan provides Butte County such an approach.

## THE PLAN - BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

Sound planning must be concerned with the use of the land, improvement of overall appearance and with the provision for facilities and services. Proper planning will leave the county with a positive sense of direction. Proper planning will exert a positive influence. Rather than just promulgating regulations and restrictions to keep undesirable development from happening, this plan has been designed to be a vehicle for converting citizens' goals and aspirations to reality.

## THE "COMPREHENSIVE" PORTION OF THE PLAN

In order for Butte County to meet the challenge of planning "comprehensively," this comprehensive plan does not focus on land use planning as an isolated functional element and disregard the related purpose to achieve unified social and economic development. Rather, it approaches land use decisions with consideration for all social elements found within the county. Decisions rendered by this plan also are equally sensitive to the issues of equality, justice, education, jobs and human values. Through this process, many benefits transpired, some of which are outlined as follows.

### Protection of Property Values

This comprehensive plan lends itself to the establishment of proper application of sound land use controls and proper code enforcement. Once in place, it is essential the county leaders provide the necessary leadership to ensure proper use of those controls. By enforcing the basic guidelines provided through this plan, the county will help to ensure that the value of all types of property is protected and enhanced.

## Citizen Participation at the Local Level

The county leaders should understand that, once the plan is adopted, the county can expect to benefit from the ideas and thinking that come out of a good exchange of ideas with the public. A willingness by the county commission to work with the public provides another *link* between the county and its residents.

## Economic Development

Economic development officials in South Dakota have found that industries are placing increased emphasis on county attributes in seeking prospective locations. It is not simply a question of finding a suitable site for the construction of an industrial building. Industry also looks for the county that offers a stimulating atmosphere for its operations and is a desirable place for employees to live. Whether employees move with the new business or are recruited from the local labor market, good living conditions attract better qualified employees. This comprehensive plan addresses possible economic development opportunities and how best the county can attract such opportunities in a manner that will not negatively impact the county's agricultural base.

## Quality of Life

Take all of the other items listed above, add a concern for aesthetics, and you have the essence of what planning is supposed to accomplish. Concern over the social, economic and environmental well-being of people requires planning, and without it, quality of life in Butte County will suffer.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - WHERE DID IT START?

The development of this comprehensive plan consisted of eight steps or tasks which were completed. As illustrated below, these steps include:

1. preparations for planning
2. making analysis and projections, and defining problems
3. setting goals and objectives
4. formulating alternative ways to reach objectives;
5. choosing among alternatives;
6. carrying out decisions;
7. experiencing outcomes
8. evaluating outcomes and updating goals and/or methods.

The third step in the planning process, setting goals and objectives, is a very important one and was initiated during the preplanning activities. It was not a matter of how the committee planned, but what and whom it is planning for.

## ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This comprehensive plan consists of several elements—all of which are interrelated to an extent that each must be considered from a standpoint of the county as a whole and the effect of one element upon another must be recognized. While geographic limitations can provide for less than desirable situations under certain circumstances, the comprehensive plan considered some of the following elements;

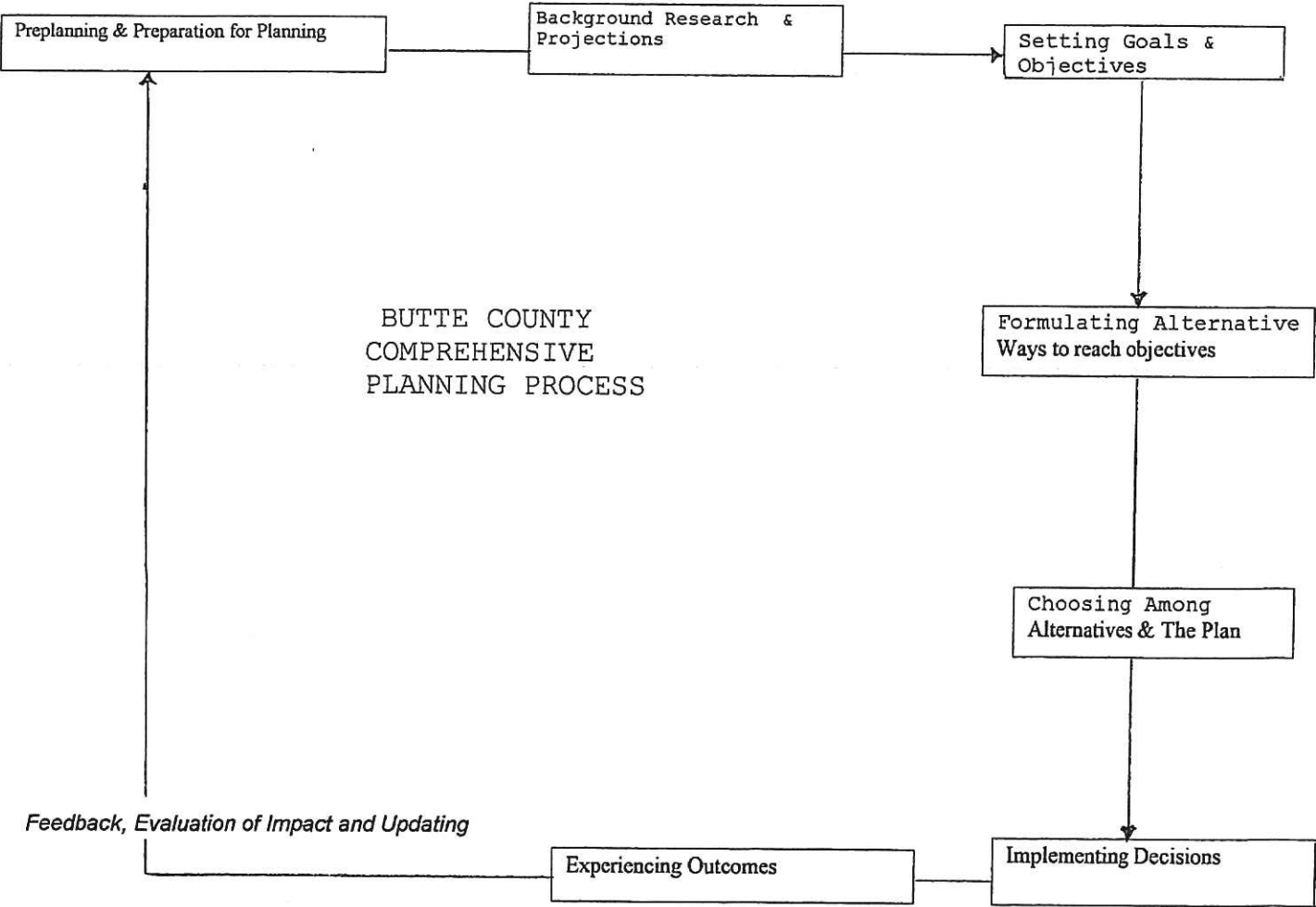
1. background studies;
2. land use;
3. public facilities and utilities;
4. transportation;
5. recreation.

Throughout the planning process, the planning committee kept in mind the flexible nature of planning and the planning process to;

- 1. stimulate private investment;
- 2. strengthen budgeting and management capacity;
- 3. coordinate public investment strategy;
- 4. provide the basis on which informed decisions will be made;
- 5. increase political accountability through public program evaluation;
- 6. develop the critical means for institutional change or organizational development; and
- 7. provide access for citizen-constituents in the governmental decision mating process.

The following flowchart shows the process that was utilized in the drafting of this Comprehensive plan.

Figure 1.1  
Butte County Comprehensive Planning Process





## *Overall Mission and Goal Statements*

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Butte County Comprehensive Plan is to establish those policies which will: preserve, protect and promote the rich agricultural heritage of the county while encouraging new economic development in areas not in conflict with traditional land uses thereby generating positive economic, environmental and social impacts for its residents; promote the orderly division and development of land through comprehensive mapping and zoning in a way that is manageable, sustainable and responsive to the areas of high and low density; providing the highest level of county services and infrastructure maintenance promoting the general health, safety and welfare of its citizens, making Butte County a thriving and positive place to live.

### **Goal Statements**

Once the mission statement had been established, a number of developmental goals were adopted to guide the comprehensive plan and meet the above mission statement. Found below are those goals.

Maintain Butte County as a rural county preserving its natural beauty with population densities being maintained at a low to moderate level with the possibility of cluster development and multifamily units at appropriate locations.

Recognize the economic development potential of Butte County in terms of its proximity to the ongoing growth of business/industrial activity in Spearfish, gaming activities of Deadwood, and with respect to the overall recreation/tourism potential of the Black Hills.

Investigate the possibility of merging existing local, county, state and federal services and land uses to maximize limited resources.

## Specific Goal and Objective Statements

### *Economic Development Goal*

To provide a diversified economy which will expand both agricultural and non-agricultural employment opportunities which can serve to provide stability to the residents of the county.

### *Economic Development Objectives*

Promote and support the growth of economic development activities while maintaining the county's agricultural heritage, historical integrity and significance.

Reserve land not currently being utilized as rangeland or for crop production within the county for potential commercial and industrial location or relocation,

Encourage economic development which will provide employment opportunities to unemployed and underemployed residents of the county.

### *Land Use Goal*

To establish a land use pattern which will enhance and protect both the agricultural heritage of the county as well as the environment while still allowing new growth and development to occur in those areas where such growth will not be in direct conflict with that agricultural heritage.

### *Land Use Objectives*

Protect prime agricultural lands from development and direct future urban growth toward areas more suitable to development.

Prohibit development in natural hazard areas, such as flood plains, steeply sloping areas, and unstable geologic areas.

Promote clustering activities of similar developments to discourage inefficient land use, possibly through implementing tax incentives.

Support reasonable air, water and land quality management.

Protect sensitive natural areas, such as unique scenic vistas, natural areas, wildlife habitat and aquifer recharge areas.

## ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

### County Background

The regional location of the county can exert considerable influence on its growth and character. Physical factors such as topography and natural settings will have a bearing, and to some extent, limit or stimulate growth and development.

In this respect, Butte County is fortunate, as it is located in a physically attractive setting. The region *as a whole* has grown at a faster rate than many other parts of the State. The county is also located near excellent regional facilities and natural resources such as Orman Dam and Bentonite mines. The effect, is that Butte County has great potential in many areas.

### ECONOMIC FACTORS

#### Transportation Facilities

Butte County is fortunate to have several major highways passing through it. Major north/south routes through the county are highway's 85 through Belle Fourche, and 79 through Newell. Major east/west routes are highway 212 passing through both Newell and Belle Fourche, and highway 34 through Belle Fourche. East/West Interstate 90 lies just to the South of the county line. There is also rail service through Belle Fourche, servicing Colony, WY and points east.

#### Local Taxes

Butte County should do the best possible job of assessing property for tax purposes at full and true value as prescribed by State law. This will insure an equitable distribution of the property tax burden.

#### Retail Trade

Butte County policies and laws must be in the best interest of retailers in the county. Future planning should be directed toward capturing as much of the potential trade as possible.

#### Agriculture

Butte County has its economic roots in agriculture. There has been a decline in the farm/ranch population in recent years, but this decline has been comparable to other farm/ranch oriented counties throughout the State and the Country. County planning and policies should be favorable to the success of the farm/ranch community.

#### Tourism and Recreation

The tourism and recreation component of the counties overall economy is one of increasing importance that is *easy* to overlook. Government and business's need to be alert to new possibilities to enhance the growth of tourism in Butte County.

### SUMMARY

As stated above, the county is fortunate to have the strong economic factors it has. In planning the future of the county, officials should protect and utilize these factors to enhance growth and development.



## RECREATIONAL GOAL

To provide accessible public recreation areas and facilities which are adequate to meet the current and future needs of the county's residents.

## RECREATION OBJECTIVES

Through joint city/county/school district involvement, encourage recreation area development adjacent to or in conjunction with existing or proposed sites or projects.

Provide for recreational opportunities for resident of all ages.

Procure combined local, state and federal financial assistance to complete identified recreational related projects.

## INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL

To provide a system of facilities which will provide the public with adequate social, economic and physical services, including provisions relating to providing for a safe, efficient and balanced transportation system which results in improved traffic movement, is cost efficient and minimizes impacts on adjacent land uses.

## INFRASTRUCTURE OBJECTIVES

Development of long-range strategies, priorities and financial programming for new and /or expected infrastructure systems to meet the needs of current and future residents of the county.

Require developers to contribute toward the projected infrastructure needs.

Establish a system whereby residents of the county may actively participate in setting priorities as they concern county goals so that public officials may allocate county resources on the basis of public consensus.

Reserve land for the development of future infrastructure, which will be required for future growth.

Provide for adequate road capacity to serve both current and future needs as new development occurs.

Provide financial resources for improvement and adequate maintenance of existing roads.

Evaluate street improvement standards as they relate to the development of residential subdivisions to encourage designs, which serve to reduce effects on adjacent and abutting land uses.



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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Create new jobs in the County.
- ◆ Expand tax base in the County.
- ◆ Recruit and promote diversified industries/business in the County.
- ◆ Promote the expansion of existing business and industry in the County.
  - Agriculture
  - Cottage Industry
  - Service Industry

## POLICIES

- ◆ Encourage public initiative and support of new business and industry.
- ◆ Identifying appropriate growth areas of land within the County for commercial and industrial development.
- ◆ Identifying appropriate growth areas of land within the County for residential development.
- ◆ Identifying appropriate growth areas of land within the County for various types of development taking into consideration the availability of resources.
  - Water
  - Septic system impact on water quality.
- ◆ Encourage development and expansion of various existing resource providers that
- ◆ Encourages orderly growth and development of industrial and residential areas.
- ◆ Actively support and participate in activities of various economic development entities.
  - Black Hills Community Development Inc.
  - Belle Fourche Economic Development
  - Newell Economic Development
  - Other

- ◆ Explore and consider County economic development revolving fund.
- ◆ Encourage appropriate transportation facility expansion and improvement.
- ◆ Encourage Western heritage of County so that private enterprise will develop tourism related economic development.
- ◆ Consider offering tax incentives.
  - For orderly development and development of infrastructure in residential developments.
  - For industry and other businesses in the County.
  - Encourage appropriate and co-existent use of Orman Dam resources for agricultural and recreational purposes thereby encouraging appropriate economic development consistent with those uses.

#### IN GENERAL

- ◆ Encourage economic development which will provide employment opportunities to unemployed and underemployed residents of the County.
- ◆ Work with the City of Belle Fourche in promoting Belle Fourche Municipal Airport.
- ◆ Promote and support the growth of economic development activities while maintaining the County's agricultural heritage, historical integrity' and significance.
- ◆ Identify land not currently being utilized as range land, agricultural land, or crop production within the County for potential commercial and industrial location or relocation,
- ◆ Work with the cities of Belle Fourche and Newell to ensure orderly and appropriate growth within potential jurisdictional limits of these municipalities.

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## LAND USE

### CURRENT LAND USE ANALYSIS

Counties are complex organisms whose continuation and growth result from a combination of social, geographical, economic and other factors. Some of these factors such as climatic conditions, soil fertility, mineral deposits and topographic features are coincidences of nature. Others are manmade such as transportation systems, communications networks, political subdivisions, military installations and other physical structures within and around a county border. It is in this latter category that Butte County can significantly influence its own future. Of course, there are many factors beyond the county's control. For example, economic market areas and the continued expansion and development of Belle Fourche can influence the patterns of growth within the county.

Although the rate of growth in an area is often times only moderate and may appear slow to residents, new developments, bringing with them new buildings, streets and other facilities. Other changes take place and, over a long period of time, many conditions change can and do change. It is through coordination and guidance of these changes that a plan is carried out. The means of accomplishing this coordination and guidance includes the adoption and enforcement of sound development standards. The effectiveness of these will depend on the understanding and support of the residents of Butte County.

In looking at the recent population census figures we find the follow interesting facts. Newell, Nisland and Vale have shown a negative growth during the last 10 years. Belle Fourche has shown a moderate growth rate of about 5%. Butte County outside the organized cities in the county on the other hand has shown a growth rate of nearly 30%, mostly in the areas along the highway corridors of Hwy 34 East and West of Belle Fourche and Hwy 85 South from Belle Fourche to Interstate 90, a slower growth it appears will extend North, East and West of Belle Fourche along Hwy 212 and Hwy 85 North. Some residential growth will be seen within the County in all areas along with Hwy Service Commercial and Industrial growth. It is certain that this growth and development trend will continue in the coming years. The projected Land Development plan must explore the special needs of these areas, and the long range changes in land use patterns which may become desirable. This plan must in the coming years indentify and assist in guiding this development change, and guild this development with the adjacent communities and agricultural land. Some controls and restrictions may also be needed in the future in establishing area relationships with adjoining land and uses.

Basically, the analysis and planning of area relationships can revolve around two points. The First being the relationship of one land area to another and, secondly, the relationship between land areas and systems, Concerning the first point, that of area-to-area relationships, involves topographical and manmade difference such as physical structures and areas of activity. The second pint is important because it is futile to talk about the land and not its inhabitants. Their movements between different use areas contribute to the formation of the land pattern itself. When changes occur in the modes or routes of travel, development patterns will be reoriented, and existing relationships may be drastically changed.



## LAND SUITABILITY

The primary features affecting the patterns of development in Butte County are (1) increased economic and resulting residential activity in the Nisland, Newell and Belle Fourche areas. (2) farm/ranching activities in the area influenced by the Butte Sanitary District and the Belle Fourche Irrigation District, and (3) the remaining areas of the county relying on traditional dry-land farming methods. These features have acted as both a deterrent and a stimulant to residential expansion in and around the county's incorporated municipalities, depending on which activity (economic or farming/ranching) is being impacted.

In addition, past activities and expansions/improvement have had an effect on the current land suitability picture. A prime example of this is Interstate I-90 which forms a conduit for increased activity into the southern most reaches of the county. Through the past 20 years, the City of Belle Fourche has begun to develop that area leading south to the Interstate, which has spurred on development within the county, primarily in the immediate non-incorporated area to the east, southeast, south and west of Belle Fourche. The amount of development will increase with the proposed developments found in Lawrence County. Butte County will want to look carefully at how that development in that part of the county takes place.

Other man's past activities that affect the current land suitability situation in the county are the other highways, railroad and land-use activities themselves. For example, service, commercial and certain industrial uses are strongly attracted to highway facilities. Other activities, such as information and high-technology, are much less dependent on both rail and highway access, but are extremely dependent on newly devised "information highways". Another example is residential development. This normally avoids expansion in and adjacent to predominantly industrial and commercial land-use areas, while, on the other hand, a public facility such as an elementary school will attract residential development.

With this point in mind, existing developments immediately adjacent to the county's municipalities should be brought under acceptable standard development practices and future developments should only be allowed in areas already impacted. By doing so, past ill planned or otherwise inappropriate land uses can be corrected to some degree and any future development can be done in a manner so as to minimize any negative impact to those affected by the development. The purpose of this position is two-fold. First, from an aesthetic point of view, the controlled expansion of either residential or commercial development is much more appealing than an example of haphazard development with mixed land uses (i.e., residential mixed with commercial) on acreages that are inappropriate (either too big or too small) for a specific type of development. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, to allow the expansion of existing developments or the creation of new developments in an uncontrolled manner will only lead to the loss of important farm and ranch lands, which is the very character of Butte County.

Attached and intended to be made a part of this comprehensive plan is a current and long term projected growth map. Each specific use, both existing and projected have been developed based on past growth and use, and a projected use and growth map based on past performance and the 2000 census figures. For this growth to be most effective, it will be necessary for all parties involved to understand, and agree to, the most beneficial use of the county's land and resources.



