



# Thrive Laramie: A Community and Economic Development Action Strategy for the Next 10 Years

January, 2020

**THRIVE**  
*Laramie*



# Recognition

## City of Laramie

City staff committed countless hours and invaluable guidance to this process in order to ensure that this plan was built on existing efforts, had open and wide public input and participation, and brought the right people to the table to help steer sector-specific recommendations.

In particular, the consulting team would like to extend a huge thank you to **Sarah Reese**, City Administrator for Economic and Community Initiatives, for working with us on a day-to-day basis, brainstorming ideas for how to respond to the opportunities and issues that were uncovered.

**Janine Jordan** for her tireless focus on improving the City of Laramie for the benefit of all current and future residents.

**Derek Teini** for his facilitation support and sharing his knowledge and perspective as recommendations were developed.

**Johnathan Rhoades** for supporting the information technology and website-related functions during the planning process.

## The Steering Committee

Thank you to the community, government, educational, business, and economic development leaders who contributed their time, experience, and knowledge to guide the strategic action plan process:

### Steering Committee Members

- » **Janine Jordan** Laramie City Manager  
Steering Committee Chair
- » **Brad Enzi** Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, CEO  
Steering Committee Co-Chair
- » **Heather Tupper** Wyoming Business Council, S.E. Regional Director  
Steering Committee Co-Chair
- » **Sarah Reese** City of Laramie Administrator, Economic and Community Initiatives
- » **Derek Teini** City of Laramie, Planning Manager
- » **Shannon Polk** City of Laramie Planning Commission
- » **Trey Sherwood** Laramie Main Street Alliance, Executive Director
- » **Brady Hammond** Albany County Campus of Laramie County  
Community College, Associate Vice President
- » **Ed Synakowski** University of Wyoming, VP of Research & Economic Development

» <b>Jean Garrison</b>	University of Wyoming, Chief Engagement Officer
» <b>Terri Jones</b>	Albany County Board of Commissioners, Chair
» <b>Dan Furphy</b>	WY Legislative Representative for Albany County
» <b>Chris Rothfuss</b>	WY Legislative Senator for Albany County
» <b>Anja Bendel</b>	Cheyenne LEADS, Director of Business Development Past President, Wyoming Economic Development Association
» <b>Jack Skinner</b>	Director, Laramie Regional Airport
» <b>Jack Bedessem</b>	Trihydro Corporation, President & CEO
» <b>Randal Six</b>	UL, LLC, Senior Programmer
» <b>Rebecca Miller</b>	NB Bank, Community Bank President Chairperson, Business Retention and Expansion Committee, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance
» <b>Chaz Avila</b>	ANB Bank, Assistant Vice President, Commercial Banking Chairperson, Downtown Development Authority
» <b>Mike Peck</b>	First Interstate Bank, Vice President Chairperson, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance Board of Directors
» <b>Tim Stamp</b>	Coffey Engineering, Business Development Director Chairperson, Laramie Regional Airport Board of Directors
» <b>Kendall Hutchison</b>	Wyoming Smart Capital Network, Development Specialist
» <b>Jessica Stalder</b>	City Council Ward 1
» <b>Jayne Pearce</b>	City Council Ward 2
» <b>Bryan Shuster</b>	City Council Ward 3

## Photos Courtesy of The City of Laramie

## Report Written & Designed by Fourth Economy



Fourth Economy is a national community and economic development consulting firm. Powered by a vision for an economy that serves the people, our approach is centered on principles of competitiveness, equity and resilience. We partner with communities and organizations, public and private, who are ready for change to equip them with the tools and innovative solutions to build better communities and stronger economies.

**1501 Preble Ave • Pittsburgh, PA 15233**

**[www.fourtheconomy.com](http://www.fourtheconomy.com) • [engage@fourtheconomy.com](mailto:engage@fourtheconomy.com)**

# Table of Contents

<b>Recognition</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
» Catalysts for Growth	
» Strategies and Recommendations	
» Implementing the Plan	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>32</b>
» About the Planning Process	
<b>Laramie Today</b>	<b>36</b>
» <b>Economic and Community Analysis</b>	
» Investment: Business and the Built Environment	
» Talent: A Growing and Highly-Skilled Workforce	
» Business Diversity and Entrepreneurship	
» Place: Infrastructure and Assets Promoting Quality of Life	
» Sustainability: Conditions that Support Healthy Lifestyles and Environment	
» <b>Community and Resident Feedback</b>	
» Investment: Business and the Built Environment	
» Talent: A Growing and Highly-Skilled Workforce	
» Business Diversity and Entrepreneurship	
» Place: Infrastructure and Assets Promoting Quality of Life	
» Sustainability: Conditions that Support Healthy Lifestyles and Environment	
<b>Laramie's Future</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Catalyst Recommendations for a Thriving Laramie</b>	<b>62</b>
1. Prepare for Population Growth to 50,000 to Support Economic Opportunity and Enhance Quality of Life	
2. Consistent and Cohesive Laramie Messaging	
3. Revenue Enhancements to Support Plan Implementation	
<b>Areas of Focus - Pursuit of Opportunities and Challenge Mitigation</b>	<b>72</b>
1. Diversifying Industry and Increasing Wages	
2. Strengthening Town-Gown Relations and Industry-Workforce Alignment	
3. Fostering Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship	
4. Enhancing the Impact of Art, Recreational, and Cultural Tourism	
5. Extending and Maintaining Infrastructure	
6. Expanding Housing Quality and Quantity	



**Recommendations ..... 84**

- » **Diversifying Industry and Increasing Wages**
  - » Strategy 1. Increase Regional Collaboration for Business Retention, Attraction, and Recruitment Efforts
  - » Strategy 2. Support Increased Revenue and Wages for Existing Business
- » **Strengthening Town-Gown Relationships and Workforce-Industry Alignment**
  - » Strategy 3. Enhance Laramie as a “Campus Community” by Better Integrating the University and City
  - » Strategy 4. Strengthen Connections Between Educational/ Training Providers and the Region’s Employers
- » **Fostering Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship**
  - » Strategy 5. Develop and Expand Tools and Programs for Laramie’s Entrepreneurs, Startups, and Small Businesses
  - » Strategy 6. Foster an Entrepreneurial Culture
- » **Enhancing the Impact of Art, Recreational, and Cultural Tourism**
  - » Strategy 7. Maximize Tourist Expenditure Capture
  - » Strategy 8. Promote Laramie as the Culture Capital of Wyoming
  - » Strategy 9. Sustainably Grow the Opportunity for and Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation and Related Tourism
- » **Extending and Maintaining Infrastructure**
  - » Strategy 10. Increase Broadband-Related Infrastructure Investments
  - » Strategy 11. Prioritize Municipal Infrastructure Improvements to Increase Economic Competitiveness
  - » Strategy 12. Prioritize Infrastructure Planning for Energy Resilience and Carbon Reduction
- » **Expanding Housing Quality and Quantity**
  - » Strategy 13. Work to expand the quality and quantity of housing options available

**Implementation & Funding Resources ..... 132**

- » Implementing the Plan
- » Funding the Plan

**Conclusion ..... 136**

- » Driving toward a Thriving Laramie

**Appendix ..... 140**

- » Glossary of Terms
- » Build Sessions Co-Chairs









# Executive Summary

# Thrive Laramie

In 2020, Laramie, Wyoming, is at an inflection point. Bolstered by success in the arts, history and culture, diversity, recreation, and tech, Laramie has lived up to its moniker as the Gem City of the Plains. Its charm and ruggedness attracts people from all over who enjoy outdoor pursuits such as fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and snowmobiling, in the vast natural reserves that surround the town, from Vedauwoo and Happy Jack, to the Snowy Range and Medicine Bow National Forest. The University of Wyoming (UW) is a huge community asset, preparing students from around the country and state to become the next generation of leaders. A remarkable education system from the Albany County School District (ACSD) to the Albany County Campus of the Laramie County Community College (LCCC) means Albany County, Wyoming residents are some of the most well-educated and skilled talent one might find anywhere in the country.

Still, Laramie can do more to prevent losing young people to other cities and towns that are able to offer better economic opportunities. Albany County residents earn the lowest median wages of all surrounding counties, especially among people aged 25-44. Compounded by high housing costs, people at the beginning of their careers are leaving the Gem City to make a living elsewhere.

At the same time, Laramie is in a unique position to attract and grow the types of companies that are powering our future while paying good wages to skilled employees. Local ventures have demonstrated that successful growth in Laramie is possible: Trihydro is an environmental engineering leader that has grown from its founding in Laramie in 1984 to twenty offices nationwide; UL, a global safety science company, acquired a local firm (IDES) and has been growing its presence in Laramie since

2012; Plenty, formerly Bright Agrotech, grew its operations from a garage to the University of Wyoming incubator system, and now has its R&D arm in Laramie and its marketing and operations in Silicon Valley; Coffey Engineering and Surveying is a family-owned, multi-generational firm specializing in land and building development and energy transmission and delivery. Becoming a leader in industries like boutique and machine manufacturing, telecommunications, data hosting and processing, and financial activities, as well as in the professional, scientific, and technical fields which include architectural, engineering, and design services, computer systems design, management and technical consulting, and scientific research and development is well within Laramie's reach given its experience, resources, and professional capacity in these areas.

In addition, there is a growing interest in entrepreneurship in Laramie, sparked by cutting edge research and development in areas like drones and supercomputing coming out of the university; courses and degree programs in innovative fields like brew science and "food-preneurship" at the community college; and a robust support system for startups and small businesses like that which is offered through the university-affiliated Business Resource Network. This interest should be nurtured and strengthened, as entrepreneurship is a crucial ingredient in economic development. Entrepreneurs who are carving their own path, taking risks and creating livelihoods for themselves and others, truly embody Cowboy Ethics and Code of the West.

None of these efforts are possible, though, without a strong business-ready infrastructure, the most fundamental of which is access to comprehensive high-speed broadband. Albany County is rural and at some times isolated, which is a draw but also a barrier for founders, freelancers, and remote workers, who depend on reliable and robust internet connectivity.



A second foundational barrier to business readiness is housing that is of high quality and quantity – a requirement of all people that is in short supply in Laramie. With home prices that look more like booming Fort Collins, Colorado, than like nearby Cheyenne or Casper in Wyoming, Laramie is facing a true housing shortage for middle-income working people. A number of factors contribute to this, including a short construction season, a lack of developers, builders, and skilled contractors, and transient college students putting pressure on the available stock. The strategies for overcoming these challenges that are outlined in this plan will be critical to support Laramie's growth. Increasing the availability of workforce housing will give employers confidence that they can invest in Laramie and support their employees.

Finally, the City of Laramie must seek stronger relationships with the University of Wyoming and other educational and training institutions that will prepare the region's workforce for the next wave of economic opportunity. Laramie should be recognized as a hub for educational and intellectual capital by employers and visitors alike. Beyond this, Laramie must realize its potential as a university town – enhancing Laramie as a campus community, where “town” and “gown” work together to integrate their physical presence as well as social activities to raise the quality of life and sense of place for residents, students, workers, and visitors.

As Laramie seeks to welcome new people and industry to enact its vision and goals, it should capitalize on and widely broadcast its strengths through coordinated marketing by key stakeholders: a highly educated workforce; quality educational institutions training workers in growing target industries; a destination for recreation, culture, arts, and tourism amenities; and a small but growing entrepreneurship scene. Laramie should also continue to nurture its strong commitment to diversity and inclusion – as the first city in Wyoming to pass an LGBT non-discrimination ordinance in 2015, and home of the first woman in the United States to cast a legal general election vote in 1870, courage and inclusion are baked into its history.

Because of all of this, Laramie is poised to be an engine of growth for the state, but first it must overcome its barrier of high housing costs; reduce its dependency on the currently dominant handful of non-traded and low-paying industries, diversifying its economy to increase wages; better connect its town and gown to enhance the experience of residents and visitors; better advertise Laramie's world-class amenities to draw new people in; and continue to invest in startups and small business support to grow the next generation of employers.

The recommendations in this plan were designed to do just that – to enact a future vision of Laramie as a welcoming cultural capital, education hub, and center for economic opportunity for all current and future residents. Stakeholders in Laramie are charged with working together to realize this vision, to allow Laramie to Thrive in the next 10 years and beyond.



# Catalysts for Growth



Throughout conversations associated with the 10-year community and economic development strategy planning effort, three general recommendations emerged that cross topic areas. These three areas will catalyze a thriving and prosperous community.

## Strategy 1. Population Growth to 50,000 to Support Economic Opportunity and Enhance Quality of Life

Laramie and Albany County's population growth over the past 50 years can be characterized as slow but steady; it has allowed for a continued expansion of the amenities and labor force needed to thrive. Throughout Laramie's history, the only spikes in population have resulted from the University of Wyoming's expansions. Today, one in three jobs are in the education sector, which demonstrates the benefits of the University as an employer but also the risk of having so many residents dependent on one sector. In communities throughout the country, there is a trend of population growth driving job growth. As more people identify a place they want to live, they either find or create their employment opportunity. With the explosive growth of the Fort Collins region, it can be expected that Laramie will begin to see spillover growth.



The Laramie community, if it can grow to a population of 50,000, would realize new opportunities and enhance the overall quality of life for its residents. Current population modeling shows a natural growth projection of 4,000 residents – to 42,000 people in 2030. This plan would seek to realize an additional 8,000 residents above what current population models indicate during that time period. While this would demonstrate a significant increase in the annual growth rate, it is certainly possible based on what is seen in other growing communities. Laramie can proactively manage its growth in order to minimize any potential negative impacts.

## Recommendation

**Ensure that this economic development strategy and other plans, including the comprehensive plan, identify what is needed to effectively host an additional 12,000 residents by 2030.**

## Strategy 2. Consistent and Cohesive Laramie Messaging



Laramie residents know and treasure how special their community is, but that sentiment is not shared among people outside of the community who simply aren't aware of Laramie's many amazing attributes. One of the most important keys to attracting visitors and future residents is messaging around what makes the community so beloved by its residents. There are many (and often varied) ways of discussing the awesomeness of Laramie. Communication

efforts have not been coordinated in the past, which has limited the effectiveness of the message and investments, as well as the positive impacts that could be realized from tourists, visitors, and existing residents. Consistent messaging would allow Laramie's organizations to build a suite of complementary statements about the best attributes of various components of the community.

### Recommendation

**Bring together stakeholders to develop a cohesive set of messages that can be adopted across platforms, as well as a common evaluation framework for those efforts, and then work collaboratively to implement targeted marketing campaigns.**

## Strategy 3. Revenue Enhancements to Support Plan Implementation



Existing reliance on sales tax due to the absence of property and income taxes limits the ability for Laramie, Albany County, and partners to invest in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth. Laramie needs to identify near-term resources to support the investment needs identified in this plan.

In the long term, the community should develop an approach to reduce dependence on state funding and create mechanisms to increase reliability/predictability and mitigate the boom-bust cycles experienced due to the state's tax structure. The Laramie community will support state revenue enhancement legislation, and will identify coordinated co-investment opportunities in mutually beneficial projects with strategic partners. In addition, the city needs to increase the frequency with which it pursues grant funding to support the recommendations that follow.

### Recommendation

**New revenues must be identified to reduce dependence on state funding, allow the community to thrive, and support investments in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth.**

# Strategies and Recommendations

The following make up the recommendations for the Thrive Laramie Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan.

## Industry Diversification and Increasing Wages



Median wages across all age groups in Albany County are lower than in neighboring communities and the country as a whole, contributing to the perception of limited opportunity in the region for job seekers. In recent years, Laramie has been able to attract and grow companies such as HiViz, UL, and MillaporeSigma. Still, the Laramie community struggles with talent retention, due in part to the lack of competitive wages and industry mix. Laramie has an opportunity to make an impact through purposeful, targeted growth and diversification.

### Strategy 1. Increase Regional Collaboration for Business Retention, Attraction, and Recruitment Efforts



To encourage the introduction and growth of new businesses and industry sectors that pay competitive wages, work should be done to address regulatory and other barriers that may exist, such as restrictive code related to building aesthetics and a lack of infrastructure to support new build and business expansion.

### Opportunity

Target industries that bring high-paying, skilled, primary labor market jobs for attraction and retention to diversify the region’s industry mix, drive economic growth, and increase wages.

### Recommendation

**Work collaboratively to enhance the “business brand” of Laramie and the region.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Develop strategy for target industries					
Host local business roundtables to address business friendliness					
Develop and launch a marketing strategy for the region					
Build a talent-engagement portal					
Develop physical space in identified development areas					

# Strategy 2. Support Increased Revenue and Wages for Existing Businesses



## Opportunity

Bring partners together to collaborate on solutions to reduce the cost of employment, increase revenues, and allow for employment and wage growth.

## Recommendation

Create the Revenue Catalyst - a resource initiative for employers to reduce costs and increase revenues.

### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Build an educational and peer-networking platform to encourage cultural change within existing businesses					
Enhance employer toolkits as a central place for businesses to find resources					
Work with the industry consortium (strategy 4) to connect employers with student talent and develop multi-business talent recruitment					
Work with employers to reduce individual costs					



# Town-Gown and Industry-Workforce Alignment



The presence of the University of Wyoming (“gown”), a land-grant university and a leading institution of learning, is a significant asset for the City of Laramie (“town”) as it considers growth over the next decade. The resources that the University provides, like workforce training, business incubation, shuttle services, and arts, sports and other cultural events, can help the city achieve its goals related to the workforce, cultural tourism, economic development, and overall quality of life.

## Strategy 3. Enhance Laramie as a “Campus Community”



To improve the impressions of first time visitors and enhance the quality of life for residents, there is a need to focus on city beautification and continuity between campus and the rest of the city. This includes gateway improvements, enhancing bike and pedestrian safety, and the development of more public art, green infrastructure, parks, and indoor community spaces for programs and events.

### Opportunity

Strengthen Laramie as a campus community by collaboratively and cooperatively improving the physical connectivity of “town” to “gown” community assets (gateways, corridors, dorms, transportation) as well as the social integration of the campus population and community through sports, the arts, and co-sponsored or co-organized programs, projects, and services. This may take the form of a committee structure as a mechanism for effective partnerships and a way to build trusted relationships.

### Recommendation

**Establish and strengthen effective mechanisms for coordinated Town-Gown co-investment that has buy-in from decision makers.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Determine 3-5 key issues/action items to pursue					
Highlight package of mutually beneficial amenities					
Quantify contributions toward achieving shared goals					
Publicize Town-Gown work and collect public perception through regular sentiment surveys					

## Strategy 4. Strengthen Connections Between Educational/Training Providers and State and Regional Employers



Improved industry-workforce alignment is needed to keep workers in the region, by ensuring they can pursue family-sustaining job opportunities and that they have the skills needed to fulfill employer requirements. The region is positioned to drive economic transformation in the state due to the innovative initiatives, research, and development happening at the postsecondary level. Educational institutions must work collaboratively and cooperatively to ensure that the next generation gains the skills needed to take advantage of these opportunities.

### Opportunity

Strengthen collaborations between training providers, educational institutions – including high school, technical training, community college, and university – and private employers to enhance workforce and industry alignment and support talent retention.

### Recommendation

**Create an industry consortium for talent enhancement and promote Laramie as a destination for education and intellectual capital.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Convene business and industry leaders and education and training institutions					
Create curricula, apprenticeship, and internship programs in high-demand, high-growth sectors					
Establish an employer relations team to coordinate among educational and training institutions					
Create incentives to reduce the costs of taking on interns, apprentices					
Create a policy advocacy platform for workforce development programs, initiatives, and funding					

# Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship



While attracting new business and industry from outside of the region is an exciting prospect that would certainly create new economic opportunity, fostering home-grown business development by encouraging technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship has added benefits, and has the potential to make even more scalable impacts.

## Strategy 5. Develop and Expand Tools and Programs for Laramie's Entrepreneurs, Startups, and Small Businesses



Though there are a number of resources and programs to support local innovators and help launch new ventures, more can be done to provide entrepreneurs across all sectors, including small business owners, with access to the tools they need to thrive.

### Opportunity

There are numerous high-quality programs that serve entrepreneurs in the community – however, they are decentralized and not all are accessible through a single information source. Entrepreneurs that seek out these resources will find them – but it would help if they were packaged in a way that gives the user a clear understanding of what exists, how they relate, and how effective they are. This improvement will also help stakeholders better understand how they can work collaboratively to deliver non-duplicative services, fill gaps that are missing, and scale existing (or develop new) programs and tools to ensure that all innovators, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and startups have what they need to thrive.

## Recommendation

**Develop an Entrepreneurial Partnership that coordinates and helps promote the primary organizations that are serving entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses.**

### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Identify an entity to serve as a neutral organizer. Submit all services and resources that serve entrepreneurs to the organizer					
Convene to map resources, identify redundancies, define roles, and create tools to better market resources					
Pilot new/unique sources of assistance to entrepreneurs (1-2 each year)					
Explore developing a business census or registration system to create an accurate business listing and more effectively deliver resources to local companies					
Identify additional funding sources to support entrepreneurs					

## Strategy 6. Fostering an Entrepreneurial Culture



The absence of a strong and thriving entrepreneurial culture limits the number of business births that a region experiences. A strong entrepreneurial culture that encourages peer learning, celebrates small wins, and minimizes the stigma of failing can help potential entrepreneurs unlearn aversions to risk, failure, and sharing with others.

### Opportunity

Create and/or enhance a culture of entrepreneurship in Laramie to encourage greater rates of new business startups and also support current entrepreneurs and small businesses so that they can thrive. Entrepreneurship, innovation, and startups are important ingredients for economic growth. Despite the rugged individual cowboy culture that exists in Wyoming, the region is relatively risk averse when it comes to starting new businesses. In order to inspire more entrepreneurship, it is important to encourage risk and failure by increasing exposure to entrepreneurship at all levels: both in incorporating more entrepreneurial, technology, and innovation opportunities inside of “traditional” K-12 and higher education, as well as encouraging and supporting those who have already started on the entrepreneurial path with needed tools and services.

### Recommendation

**Create a strategic marketing and recruiting plan that highlights Laramie’s existing entrepreneurial culture by celebrating successes and acknowledges the growth opportunities borne from failure; supports new and existing entrepreneurs through targeted education; and encourages seasoned entrepreneurs to relocate to the region.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Convene entrepreneurial leaders to document their experiences. Build a narrative of the positive aspects of entrepreneurship					
Replicate, scale, or promote entrepreneurial events to create more connections between new and seasoned entrepreneurs					
Identify strengths of other entrepreneurial communities. Create a shared definition of targeted growth goals in terms of types of firms, numbers of technologies licensed, etc.					
Highlight the region’s entrepreneurial amenities to target populations					
Expand tools, resources, and support for freelancing and entrepreneurship to reduce the risk					
Incorporate entrepreneurial training into primary, secondary, and post-secondary education					



# Art, Recreation, Culture, and Tourism



Art, recreational, and cultural tourism are significant engines of economic growth and prosperity for cities and regions across the country – creating jobs, increasing business revenue, and strengthening and supporting inclusive communities. Laramie, in particular, is quite dependent on tourism due in part to the state’s structural reliance on sales and lodging taxes. As Laramie works to diversify its economy, tourism provides an immediate growth opportunity that can generate additional revenues coming into the city via visitor spending on things like retail, dining, entertainment, and recreation.

## Strategy 7. Maximize Tourist Attraction and Expenditure Capture



Laramie is historic, vibrant, active, and lively, which is a draw for visitors and a perk for residents. However, efforts to draw people in and market Laramie’s assets, while successful, have historically been disjointed, and as a result visitors are not necessarily aware of or experiencing the full range of attractions that are available to them. Cross-promotion of Laramie’s assets, coordination of admission/use fee structures, and enhancing each visitors’ overall experience can help increase tourism expenditures and sales tax revenues.

### Opportunity

Enable the capture of additional arts-oriented, cultural (including sports and history), and recreation-related tourism expenditures, and, where possible, fees, to generate additional tax revenue and further develop the tourism-related ecosystem. It is important that the region maximizes the amount of tourist dollars it is able to capture by improving programming, communication, and marketing, and making sure tourists, whether in Laramie for sporting events, outdoor pursuits, arts and culture, or historic tourism, are connected to multiple assets in Laramie beyond the “main attraction” or their original reason to visit.

### Recommendation

**Build the tourism economy around existing ecosystem assets. Connect, communicate, and leverage efforts across entities.**

## At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Develop a series of information pathways with cohesive messaging for various amenities					
Evaluate current marketing techniques and scale these into an integrated tourism marketing campaign					
Co-sponsor and organize more events and programs to bring people in					
Develop a process to measure quality of experience, via visitor surveys or a rating system					
Improve the on-the-ground experience across the city and county. Enhance entry points into the community, creating attractive entry corridors					
Support and advocate for additional education and training in key areas that support these industries					

# Strategy 8. Promote Laramie as the Culture Capital of Wyoming



Albany County is home to a number of arts and culture businesses and organizations, and recent initiatives like the Laramie Mural Project have contributed to Laramie’s quality of life and resulted in public art pieces from dozens of artists. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the area’s music, art, and street festivals, and local arts and culture activity generates \$103 million in revenue annually. The arts are in a position to put an amplified focus on diversity, to reflect the fabric that makes up the community and ensure Laramie is even more welcoming and inclusive.

## Opportunity

Develop a funding strategy that can be used to cover the administrative aspects of arts and culture organizations in order to support more diverse, inclusive arts and culture in Laramie, making the area even more inclusive and welcoming to recruit more people to live, work, and visit.

## Recommendation

**Develop a mini-grant fund for equitable and inclusive arts and culture initiatives that is earmarked for project administration and management.**

### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Draw lessons learned from successful programs locally and elsewhere					
Identify available funding sources – both existing and future fund options – and create a budget for funding the program					
Establish a Board of Advisors that is accountable to and recruited from the community, to detail the program's purpose, objectives, and goals					
Seek input from the community and launch initial application and grant cycle					
Establish professional development and mentorship opportunities for smaller, disadvantaged, and underrepresented organizations					
Work to support local artist advancement and visibility. Explore bringing in major collectors and national and international artists					

## Strategy 9. Sustainably Grow the Opportunity for and Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation and Related Tourism



Marketing and promoting Laramie’s natural surroundings and world-class outdoor recreation amenities to locals and visitors more widely can bring enormous economic benefits to the community. Doing it in a sustainable way can ensure those benefits are maximized without putting unnecessary or harmful strain on Laramie’s infrastructure.

### Opportunity

Maximize the usage and economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry in Laramie. More can be done to capitalize on the opportunity that outdoor recreation presents, from encouraging more outdoor events and programs, to marketing and amplifying existing recreational attractions, to supporting outdoor recreation entrepreneurship ventures (bike rental/repair shops, tour guides, etc.). These should all be marketed to bring more people to the area to live, work, visit, and play, but without exploiting them or putting unnecessary pressure on Laramie’s infrastructure. Manageable, sustainable growth should be the goal.

### Recommendation

**Create an Outdoor Recreation Coalition that works to increase coordination and leverage resources to boost the use and economic impact of outdoor recreational assets.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Recruit organizations to join the coalition, form a board, and appoint an entity to spearhead it					
Conduct a SWOT analysis or a resource inventory of all available outdoor recreation amenities					
Amplify messaging to attract additional visitors, residents, and businesses to the region that value outdoor recreation					
Support the prioritization and implementation of projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Improve street, park, and community infrastructure in key corridors.					
Develop a Trail Etiquette program to help sustainably manage growth by guiding behavior on regional trails to ensure net economic benefit					

# Infrastructure



Infrastructure can either support or limit economic competitiveness depending on how much focus and planning is performed to map future opportunities and risks. A proactive approach to utility infrastructure improvements requires asset management, ongoing maintenance, and proper planning to understand what impacts are limiting potential or that may cause degradation in the future. Proactive infrastructure investment demonstrates a focus on economic competitiveness and overall quality of place.

## Strategy 10. Increase Broadband-Related Infrastructure Investments



### Opportunity

Make Laramie the state leader in connectivity, prioritizing investment in proactive broadband infrastructure upgrades to help attract and retain people and businesses to the region.

### Recommendation

**Form the Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition: A public-private partnership.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Convene partners to form the Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition					
Create a broadband master plan to set goals, evaluate the current system, and map desired infrastructure that accounts for future economic growth					
Creatively finance the system, and explore establishing a Broadband Utility					
Build a user base through market building and education					
Build capacity to support current end users and plan for expanded use with projected economic growth					



## Strategy 11. Prioritize Municipal Infrastructure Improvements to Increase Economic Competitiveness



Today much of Laramie's infrastructure, from roads to sewer to gas lines, is aging or at capacity, which limits growth and the development of new housing and businesses. As private developers look to develop commercial and residential properties at the edges of the city and beyond, extending the required infrastructure is a huge barrier.

### Opportunity

Identify areas for investment in proactive and managed municipal infrastructure upgrades to help attract and retain people and businesses to the region.

### Recommendation

**Plan for proactive road, stormwater, sanitary sewer, and water utility expansion and improvement in targeted growth areas.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Review current infrastructure capital plans as well as progress updates to identify potential priorities and partnerships. Define growth areas as well as geographic limits to growth					
Prioritize infrastructure expansion and improvement projects in targeted infrastructure improvement areas					
Establish joint planning to coordinate timelines and maximize investment efficiencies					
Identify funding sources for road and stormwater improvements, and in the case of new housing, commercial, or industrial development, determine which entities bear what portion of the cost burden					
Create a City-County-State Asset Management Inventory system					
Educate the public about ongoing and upcoming infrastructure improvement initiatives					

## Strategy 12. Prioritize Infrastructure Planning for Energy Resilience and Carbon Reduction



Competition from natural gas and renewables is lowering the country’s demand for Wyoming coal, which has made it less profitable to mine and threatens the state’s reliance on coal-related tax revenue. As Wyoming and the region look at next-generation sources of energy, Laramie can position itself at the forefront of initiatives like microgrids, solar, and wind farms, taking advantage of available land and resources at the University of Wyoming, community and technical colleges, the city and county, and at private enterprises.

### Opportunity

Increase energy resiliency and reliability by making needed infrastructure improvements, lessening dependence on one type of energy, and proactively preparing for and attracting the future of jobs and industry

### Recommendation

**Improve energy infrastructure and diversify energy portfolio to increase economic competitiveness and develop Laramie as a leader in this area.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Complete the energy audit at the city level. Support city-wide enterprise resource planning to improve efficiencies and lay the groundwork for enhanced grid and smart technology					
Form a Joint Task Force among leaders to communicate and share resources, and determine future of energy					
Explore opportunities for renewable power distribution to the city and county through Rocky Mountain Power’s wind turbines					
Work with the University of Wyoming on wind and solar energy research and collaborate on sustainability goals					
Attract green technology companies and those interested in integrating renewables into their energy mix. Market energy diversity to recruit residents and businesses					
Identify pilot renewable energy projects					
Explore becoming carbon neutral, as well as legislation to encourage renewable energy and increase net metering					

# Housing



The current lack of affordable, quality housing in Laramie has negative economic impacts on the community. The 2015 Housing Study conducted for the City of Laramie noted, “Future population and household growth in Laramie will be driven by new and expanded housing and economic development and public service activities. The most critical housing issues in the City include promoting the development of housing for the local workforce, college students and young professionals, affordable to all salary income levels.”

## Strategy 13. Work to Expand the Quality and Quantity of Housing Options Available



### Opportunity

Increase the volume of construction, as well as enhance the existing quality and diversity of housing stock in strategic locations to contribute to a more livable Laramie.

### Recommendations

To alleviate the negative consequences of the existing housing environment in Laramie the following objectives can be pursued:

- 1. Enhance the role that the city is playing with respect to code development and enforcement and the planning and policy environment related to housing development/redevelopment.**

#### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Implement recommendations from the code audit. Empower city staff to have latitude in working with developers, and to learn from peer cities					
Identify a city/county liaison for developers and property owners. Engage an outside code review officer to assist in mediating inconsistencies					
Launch a “Did You Know” campaign that covers existing regulations to increase understanding, and promotes defined housing demands and opportunities to inspire developers to build more in the city					
Advocate for code to enable “missing middle” housing typologies including ADUs to support increased density					

## 2. Increase the financing options available through public-private partnering opportunities.

### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Work with the Cheyenne Housing Authority to evaluate their capacity to expand beyond low income housing and identify opportunities for mixed-use development and expansion of workforce housing options					
Seek to partner with financial institutions to capitalize new/ expanding developers					
Create deed-restricted housing that allows for the preservation of affordability through the use of initial subsidies or other development/ redevelopment cost reductions					
Develop housing rehabilitation funding programs that can support residents aging in place and making needed home improvements and new market entrants who want to enhance housing quality					
Work with the Wyoming Community Development Authority to offer additional first time homebuyer access as new properties are built in Laramie					

## 3. Increase the pipeline of developers and laborers interested in working in Laramie.

### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Recruit developers in partnership with other regional partners					
Create a building supply warehouse to buy bulk materials for local developers or form a collective purchasing group to reduce the cost of materials					
Work with educational institutions to increase training – both skills and entrepreneurial – to increase the number of available developers, contracting companies, and laborers					

#### 4. Identify opportunities for infill development in strategic locations to prove the market.

##### At A Glance

Action Items	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Identify resources and partners to overcome the risks around land acquisition, funding, permitting and variances, or technical skills					
Identify infill opportunities to increase housing diversity within the core area of the city					
Explore tax incentives, fee waivers, and easing the permitting and approval process to encourage housing by lowering barriers of entry					
Secure land through conventional purchasing, land trusts, trades, or development authorities to incentivize housing growth					
Invest in infrastructure: improved streets, bike facilities, sidewalks and landscaping					
Explore the development of a Rental Registry and Inspection Program to reduce blighted properties. Develop/expand existing renter-education programs					
Consider growth opportunities in north and west Laramie and what type of development should occur to attract investment					

# Implementing the Plan

To ensure the success of the Thrive Laramie 10-Year Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan, an Implementation Committee will be formed from existing Steering Committee members who will initiate a “recommit” process, affirming their interest in continuing to engage. Implementation Committee members will provide guidance, direction, and accountability as they serve as lead advocates, doers, and fundraisers for the plan.

The Implementation Committee will be supported by a number of working groups and action committees associated with each of the plan’s focus area. Convening partners have been identified to lead each working group. They are charged with recruiting working group participants, inviting community organizations with a stake in a given strategy area to be a part of its implementation.















# Introduction

# About the planning process

Over the last 10 years, Laramie has seen movement and activity in a number of key areas, with job growth in tech and manufacturing, the state's first tech-zoned business park, a burgeoning art scene, a vibrant downtown, robust recreational opportunities, a highly educated population, and strong alliances with strategic partners. Laramie does not want to lose this momentum in the face of budget cuts due to a projected downturn of the state's economy, but instead looks to position itself to lead the state in several areas, including data analytics, renewable energy, arts and culture, research and development, and manufacturing.

In 2019 the City of Laramie selected Fourth Economy to help engage residents, students, businesses, and leaders in a planning process in order to update the economic development strategy portion of its Comprehensive Plan, last drafted in 2009. The goal was to create a compelling community vision and an actionable plan for the future of the city and region, to ensure that Laramie is a great place to live, work, and play for years to come.

The 10-year Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan that follows identifies actions, projects, and programs that the city and various partners in the community will take on to strengthen Laramie's future. These were developed with broad community input, including:

- » a 25-person steering committee of community, government, education, business, and economic development leaders, which convened in July of 2019 and held monthly meetings through December
- » 35 interviews with stakeholders from various sectors
- » 664 responses to a community survey, which was launched in August and spread online and in person at various community events and venues
- » 122 practitioners and industry or sector experts across twelve community build sessions convened in September and October
- » 3,360 Post-it notes submitted with ideas for strategies, action steps, and stakeholders to be involved in the recommendations that come out of the plan

This planning process will dovetail nicely with the work that Community Builders will be working on with the city in 2020 to develop achievable and implementable actions and strategies for improving housing options in Laramie.













# Laramie Today

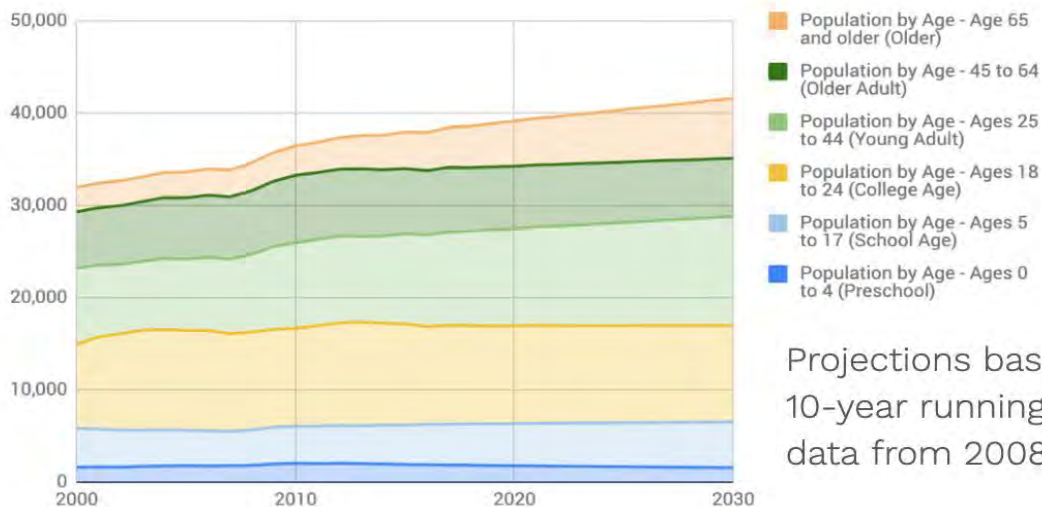
## History

Located along the Laramie River and nestled between the mountain ranges of Medicine Bow and the rocky outcrops of Vedauwoo, the city of Laramie, Wyoming has natural beauty, rural charm, and a remarkable history. Laramie's development began in the 1860s and the town soon became known as the Gem City of the Plains, as stage coaches and trains converged in this center for logistics, manufacturing, agriculture, and trade. Selection by the state legislature as the site of the state's land grant University of Wyoming (UW) in 1866 cemented Laramie as a hub for education and service.

## Population

Laramie's population growth can be best characterized as slow and steady. The only peaks of annual growth have been closely tied to the growth of the University of Wyoming, with increases in student enrollment and related university job growth in the 1940s and 1970s, resulting from the GI Bill.

**Figure 1: Population by Age Projections**



Projections based off of a 10-year running forecast using data from 2008 forward.

Source: Census with Fourth Economy projections

## Commuting and the Region

As the county seat of Albany County, Laramie sits 50 miles west of Cheyenne, the state capital and county seat of neighboring Laramie County, and 65 miles northwest of Fort Collins, in Larimer County, Colorado. Despite its proximity to these population centers nearby, the Greater Laramie region demonstrates weak commuting flows between the counties. As of 2017, the most recent year for which data is available:

- » Albany County, WY had 15,703 workers
  - » 11,472 (73%) commuted from within Albany County
- » The largest commuter flow was between Albany and Laramie Counties
  - » 1,546 Albany County residents commuted to Laramie County, WY (most to the City of Cheyenne) for work
  - » 1,195 Laramie County, WY residents commuted into Albany County for work (7% of Albany County workers, most to the City of Laramie)
- » The second largest commuter flow was with Natrona County
  - » 398 Albany County residents commuted to Natrona County for work
  - » 635 Natrona County residents commuted into Albany County for work (4% of Albany County workers, most to the City of Laramie)

This highlights that the primary economic drivers and immediate opportunities are located within the home community. Currently there are no employment centers that are drawing the labor force between the regional cities. However, with the continued growth of towns in Colorado, Laramie should be prepared for that to change.

## Economic Drivers

Today, the City of Laramie has become an outdoor destination and a hub for craft beer and coffee, a transformation symbolic of its economic trajectory and future potential growth as a community that specializes in tourism, innovation, and boutique manufacturing. Laramie's economic landscape boasts an educated population, a vibrant urban core, and unique opportunities in outdoor recreational tourism. Its economic strengths are forging a new horizon of opportunity for residents and those who will soon call Laramie home. Over the last decade, Laramie has looked to diversify its economy and to position itself as an economic powerhouse of the future.

As an example of one opportunity on the region's horizon, the announced Ground Based Strategic Missile Upgrade program, a proposed \$90B investment in the region's missile system, is slated to include the F.E. Warren Air Force Base missiles, in nearby Cheyenne, and as a result could inject billions of dollars into the regional economy. This project is currently in the design phase, but already organizations such as the Wyoming Business Council are encouraging regional firms to explore what role they can play as contracts are issued and a new labor force presents itself to the region to manage and construct this long-term development activity. Neighboring Cheyenne is expected to benefit greatly from its proximity to the Air Force base, but Laramie-based firms and their workforce are certainly in a position to engage in this development as well, especially given Laramie's strengths in manufacturing.

A detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the regional economy and community as well as an analysis of community perceptions follows.

# Economic and Community Analysis

## Investment: Business and the Built Environment

### Business Climate

Companies who call Laramie home take advantage of a favorable business climate, exemplified by its low corporate tax burden. The recent development of the Cirrus Sky Technology Park, a 95% Main Street business occupancy rate, and recent expansions by businesses such as UL LLC indicate that Laramie is becoming a key business destination.

### Industry Mix

2 out of 3 workers work in four industries: Educational Services, Accommodation and Food Service, Health Care & Social Assistance and Retail Trade

Over the past decade, industry and employment growth in Laramie has remained relatively flat and industry mix is low. The chart below shows the employment and wage breakdown of the primary industries for residents living in Albany County. Two out of three workers work in four industries: Educational Services, Accommodation and Food Service, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Retail Trade. **With the exception of educational services, all fall below the county's median wage of \$26,587.**

Figure 2: Albany County Workforce by Industry and Median Wages

Industry	Albany County 2018 Employment	Albany County Median Wages	Albany County Percent of Workforce	US Percent of Workforce
Educational Services	4,661	\$30,396	30%	9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,086	\$26,233	14%	14%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,824	\$10,810	12%	8%
Retail Trade	1,676	\$16,157	11%	11%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	852	\$46,875	6%	7%
Construction	821	\$32,202	5%	7%
Public Administration	745	\$48,281	5%	5%
Finance and Insurance	460	\$39,063	3%	5%
Manufacturing	372	\$40,538	2%	10%
Administrative and Support	371	\$16,250	2%	4%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	357	\$16,567	2%	5%
All Others	1,071		7%	15%
All Industries	15,296	\$26,587		

Source: Census, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD and Census American Community Survey

The percentage of the workforce in Educational Services is 21 percent greater than US averages, while Accommodation and Food Service is 4 percent higher comparatively. On the other hand, manufacturing sector employment is 8 percent lower in Albany County. **Growth in traded sectors<sup>1</sup> like manufacturing is important for enhancing the overall economic conditions of the community.**

Wages

Laramie has a low median household income across age groups compared to Cheyenne and Fort Collins. As a university town, the large number of students present might skew this data. However, when looking across age cohorts in Laramie it is clear that this is not the case. Instead, the median household income for prime working age individuals (25-44 year olds) in Laramie is especially low. These young professionals are likely to be working in one of the prevalent lower-paying occupations and are therefore bringing in a much lower wage than their peers in Fort Collins and throughout the rest of the state.

Laramie has a low median income overall compared to Cheyenne and Fort Collins. Median income is especially low for prime working age individuals (25-44 year olds)

Future Industry Targets

Figure 3: Wages are Low: Median Household Income Lags Cheyenne and Fort Collins

Median Household Income				
	Overall	25 to 44 year olds	45 to 65 year olds	65 and older
City of Laramie, WY	\$45,816	\$53,045	\$75,158	\$47,218
Cheyenne, WY	\$62,879	\$70,398	\$75,418	\$47,532
Fort Collins, CO	\$64,980	\$73,244	\$84,717	\$51,287

Source: Census American Community Survey, 2017

Laramie is challenged to focus on high-wage and high-growth industries, since current projected occupational growth in the region is largely concentrated in low-wage occupations. High-wage industries that pay more than 1.5x the average wage in Albany County – which grew by at least 10% from 2010-2017 in either Laramie County, WY or Larimer County, CO, two of Albany County’s comparable benchmark communities – can be priorities in Laramie. **These industries include: Machinery Manufacturing; Telecommunications; Securities, Commodities, and Other Financial Activities; and Professional Scientific and Technical Services (PST).<sup>2</sup>**

1 Traded sector: Traded sector industries are those that sell their product or service to a “global” audience rather than a local one. See glossary for more details.  
2 PST includes Legal Services; Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll; Architectural, Engineering, and Specialized Design Services; Computer Systems Design; Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting; Scientific Research and Development in Biotechnology, Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences, as well as the Social Sciences and Humanities; and Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services.



**Figure 4: Gold Collar Opportunities: High Growth, High Paying Industries**

NAICS	Industry	Benchmark Max Wage	Benchmark Max Growth	Albany County 2010-2017 Growth	Albany County 2017 Employment
541	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	\$79,056	15%	-2%	818
333	Machinery Manufacturing	\$91,527	79%	#N/A	48
221	Utilities	\$85,131	31%	-8%	29
517	Telecommunications	\$68,679	121%	27%	29
523	Securities, Commodities, and Other Financial Activities	\$91,266	105%	55%	16
425	Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers	\$130,644	56%	-13%	4

Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2010-2017

Laramie can also benefit from a focus on other high growth industries that pay above average median wages but do not necessarily require an advanced degree, such as **Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing; Beverage Product Manufacturing; and Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services**. These industries pay more than the average wage in Albany County, and grew by at least 10% from 2010-2017 in either Laramie County, WY or Larimer County, CO. According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, the six county Central-Southeast Region (Albany, Carbon, Converse, Goshen, Niobrara, and Platte counties) is expected to add 2,165 jobs between 2016-2026, nearly 80% of which will not require a bachelor's degree.

Between the high caliber K-12 system, WyoTech, the Laramie County Community College, and University of Wyoming, Laramie's workforce is prepared to take advantage of any and all of these opportunities.

**Figure 5: Good Opportunities: Other High Growth Industries with Above Average Wages**

NAICS	Industry	Benchmark Max Wage	Benchmark Max Growth	Albany County 2010-2017 Growth	Albany County 2017 Employment
811	Repair and Maintenance	\$44,910	20%	-7%	121
423	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	\$68,343	71%	46%	102
484	Truck Transportation	\$54,714	75%	20%	86
424	Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	\$65,421	74%	11%	74
488	Support Activities for Transportation	\$53,232	143%	0%	64
332	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	\$53,178	83%	#N/A	23
312	Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	\$57,345	63%	#N/A	23
237	Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	\$66,360	19%	-61%	22
518	Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	\$58,497	45%	67%	5

Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2010-2017



# Talent: A Growing and Highly Skilled Workforce

## Population and Education Level

According to the 2017 U.S. Census, the current population in Albany County is 38,601. **Over a quarter of county residents are college-aged adults (28%), with another quarter of the population (26%) between the ages of 25 and 44.** Benchmarking these trends nationally, Laramie has a lower percentage of school children and much lower percentage of older adults. Additionally, nearly 48 percent of its adult population over the age of 25 has a bachelor's degree or higher. That is higher than the percentage in the state and Cheyenne and is comparable to Fort Collins, CO. In fact, **Albany County ranks in the top two percent of counties in the country for educational attainment.**

Nearly 48% of adults 25 and older has a bachelor's degree or higher

**Figure 6: An Opportunity: The Region has the labor pool for an additional 1,720 jobs requiring a Bachelor's degree**

	Occupations Requiring a Bachelor's Degree or Higher					Bachelor's Degree Graduates in Albany County, 2016
	Regional	Occupational	Projections	2016-2026		
Occupation	Workers 2016	Exits (Annual)	Transfers (Annual)	Growth (Annual)	Total Annual Openings (Exits + Transfers + Growth)	Annual Degrees Completed 2016
Management	1,399	35	77	16	128	744
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	1,040	28	25	15	67	258
Business and Financial Operations	1,034	30	60	3	93	97
Computer and Mathematical	233	4	12	3	18	78
Community and Social Services	409	15	27	2	45	37
Life, Physical, and Social Science	358	8	23	2	34	212
Architecture and Engineering	314	7	14	2	23	220
Sales and Related	9	0	1	0	1	37
Arts, Design, Entertainment, and Media	395	19	28	0	46	76
Education, Training, and Library	1,959	81	79	-1	158	574
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>2,333</b>

Source: Wyoming Long-Term Substate Occupational Projections, 2016-2026, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016

The high educational attainment can be attributed, in part, to the presence of the land-grant University of Wyoming, the state's only university. The 785-acre campus enrolled over 12,000 undergraduates and graduate students in 2019, graduating 3,000 in the 2018-2019 academic year with degrees in in-demand fields such as business, law, engineering, and education.

Regional occupational data projections show that from 2016 to 2026, the University will have four new graduates each year for every job opening requiring an advanced degree. This means that the region has the labor pool for an additional 1,720 jobs requiring a bachelor's degree over the next several years. **Given this surplus of degreed workers, Laramie is positioned to be a great place for employers to locate.** Marketing this fact should give investors confidence that a rich and educated talent pool exists to draw from in Laramie.

# Business Diversity and Entrepreneurship

## Industry Diversity

As noted previously, there is a heavy concentration of education, health care, accommodation and food, and retail employment in the Laramie community. **Education and health care have demonstrated relatively consistent growth and can be leveraged to grow other sectors.** For trailing spouses and partners who are recruited to Laramie to work in the ‘eds and meds’ sector, there are many employment opportunities in diverse industries. The University of Wyoming significantly influences the county’s workforce, demographics, and housing which are covered in more detail in the following section (“Place”).

## Entrepreneurship and Rate of Startup

Albany County has a low business birth rate, compared to WY, the US and neighboring communities

From 2010 to 2016, Albany County ranked 21st out of 23 counties in Wyoming for its business birth rate of 8.6%, averaging 80 business births each year.<sup>3</sup> During the same period, Albany County’s business death rate averaged 8.3%, or 77 business deaths annually. This is according to the Statistics of US Businesses, which measures number of establishments, employment change, births, deaths, expansions, and contractions. This information is gathered from the Business Register (BR), a database of all known single- and multi-establishment employer companies maintained and updated by the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>4</sup>

During the same period, the state of Wyoming’s business birth rate was 10.2%, and the U.S. business birth rate was 8.97%.

Neighboring Laramie County has higher business birth and death rates than Albany County (9.5% death rate, 1.1% higher than Albany County; 12.6% birth rate, 4% higher than Albany County). Albany County would need to produce at least 42 additional businesses each year to reach the number one rank in the state.

**Figure 7: Business Birth Rate by County (2010-2016)**

Rank	County	Total Establishments	Annual Average Business Births	Annual Average Business Birth Rate	Additional Annual Births Albany County would need for Rank
1	Lincoln	503	66	13.1%	42
2	Teton	1542	195	12.6%	37
3	Laramie	2564	323	12.6%	37
...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>21</b>	<b>Albany</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>0</b>
22	Park	1068	91	8.5%	-1
23	Goshen	314	24	7.8%	-8

Source: Statistics of US Businesses (SUSB) - Census Bureau, 2010-2016

<sup>3</sup> Business Birth Rate: Calculating the number of annual business births against the number of total establishments in that same year provides a “business birth rate” ratio, a way to compare municipalities of vastly different sizes. See glossary for more details.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics of US Businesses (SUSB) - Census Bureau, 2010-2016.

The only industry in which this is not true is manufacturing (12% birth rate, 6% death rate in Albany County, compared to 5% birth rate and 6% death rate in Laramie County), which may indicate that Albany County has an entrepreneurial competitive advantage in manufacturing.

## Research & Development (R&D)

**Figure 8: Types of Businesses Started in Albany County between 2015-2019**

Type of Business	Count	Employees
Aircraft Parts & Equipment Manufacturing	1	4
Business Consultants	3	17
Crude Petroleum Pipelines	1	4
Engineers & Engineering Services	1	8
Financial Advisory Services	1	9
Heavy & Civil Engineering Construction	1	9
Machine Shops	1	8
Nonclassified Establishments	28	4
Physicians & Surgeons	2	12
All Other (Retail, Services, etc)	90	715
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>790</b>

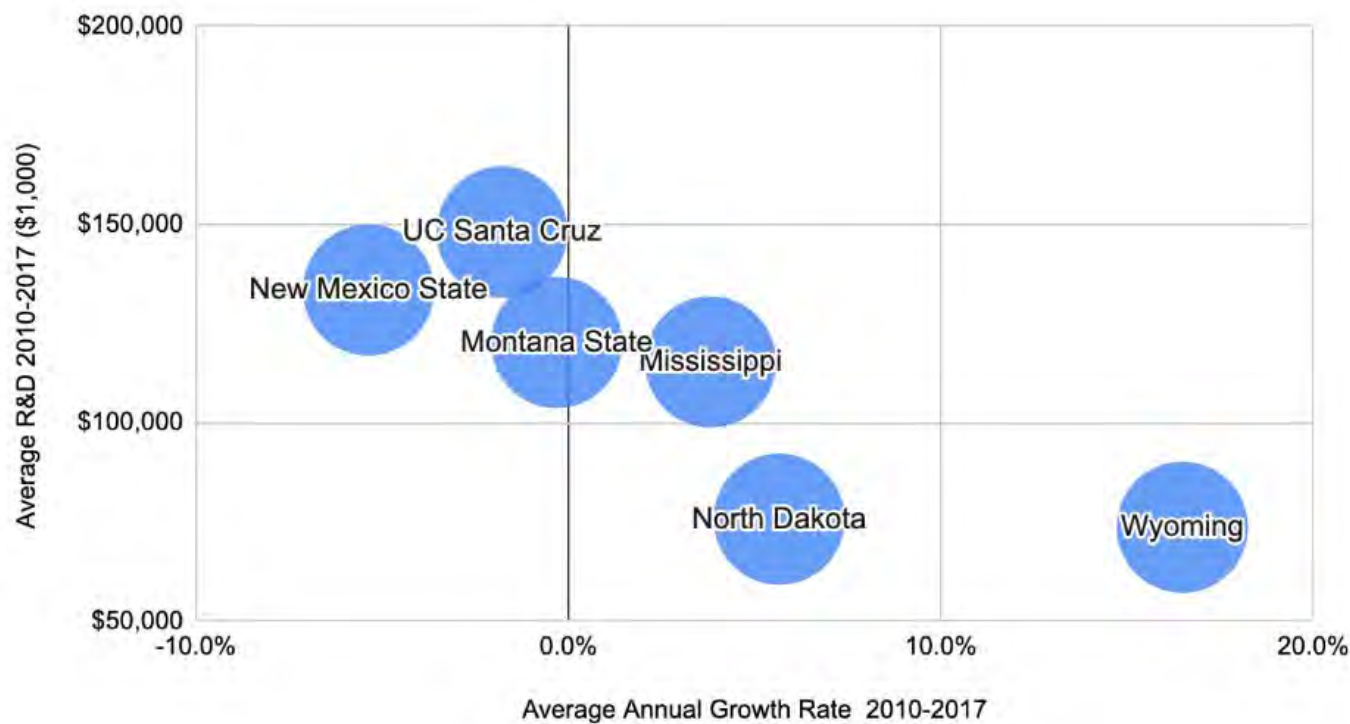
Source: A to Z Business

Laramie's R&D advantage is helping to turn the tide on slow business starts. Between 2015 and 2017, the University of Wyoming increased its R&D expenditures from \$57 million to \$125 million and shifted its focus to funding experimental development and applied research, which are the stepping stones to university spinout and commercialization activity (as opposed to basic research). For example, recent National Science Foundation awards received by the University of Wyoming have been geared towards incubation, technology, and STEM<sup>5</sup> programming.

The University of Wyoming's R&D expenditures averaged roughly \$75 million annually from 2010-2017, a lower R&D base than peers like the University of North Dakota, Montana State University, and University of California at Santa Cruz, but grew by an average of 16% annually, which is much higher than those schools. Between 30-56 projects have been funded annually at an average of \$11.5 - \$18.1 million.

5 STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. See glossary for more details.

**Figure 9: Average Annual R&D Expenditures 2010-17 (\$1,000) and Growth in R&D 2010-17**



Source: National Science Foundation, Higher Education Research and Development Survey, 2010-2017

This change comes at a time when the state’s economic diversification efforts include growing an entrepreneurship ecosystem and related infrastructure to advance and nurture next-generation sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and recreation. In addition, the Wyoming Technology Business Center (WTBC) is incubating companies both within its walls and in the statewide community through its leadership and management of the Fisher Innovation Launch Pad, Southeast Innovation Launchpad, and e2e activities. Since 2006 the WTBC has played an important role in helping to launch dozens of companies. A few examples are highlighted below.

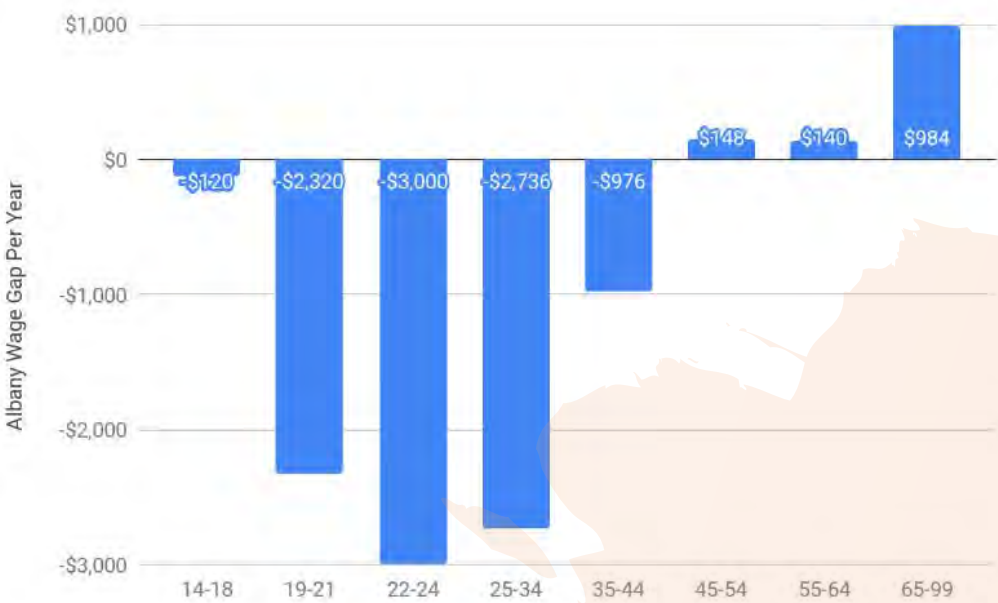
Teton Simulation Software	Serial entrepreneur Mike Kmetz (IDES, acquired by Underwriters Laboratories in 2012) and his team of twelve employees are making serious strides in maximizing the efficiency of 3D printed materials with significant impact in the automotive and heavy equipment manufacturing sectors.
JarrowTech	A UW student startup company from the Fisher Innovation Launchpad, JarrowTech offers a blockchain-based system for tracking commercial hemp from seed to shelf across state lines for governmental agencies and producers. Having won the Fisher in late 2019, the company will grow from two co-founders to six total employees in Q1 2020.
Altus	This Laramie-based C-Corp, aligned with a partner 501c3 organization, works to educate the world about human trafficking through their engagetogogether.com online curriculum. Altus is currently in the middle of significant fundraising which will enable their growth from three to twenty employees in early 2020.

# Place: Infrastructure and Assets Promoting Quality of Life

## Wages and Purchasing Power

Infrastructure in ‘place analysis’ is broadly defined to include both physical assets and systems-related infrastructure including wages and poverty. Students living in Laramie demonstrate significantly higher levels of poverty as compared to their peers – 57% live in poverty versus 22% nationally. This may be due in part to the fact that the university is an affordable institution for a diverse body of students, but it also demonstrates the obligation and opportunity that the University of Wyoming has to allow its students to pursue a degree and find eventual employment that allows them to advance. For the community it means that these students currently have fewer resources to spend on local goods and services and limited purchasing power as compared to students on other campuses.

**Figure 10: Recent grads face a wage premium to work in Albany county: Albany Wage Gap compared to Wyoming**



To work in Albany County...

- 22-24 year olds make \$3,000 less
- 25-34 year olds make \$2,736 less
- 35-44 year olds make \$976 less

A person that lives in Albany County from the time they graduate to retirement at age 65, makes \$43,000 less than their Wyoming peers.

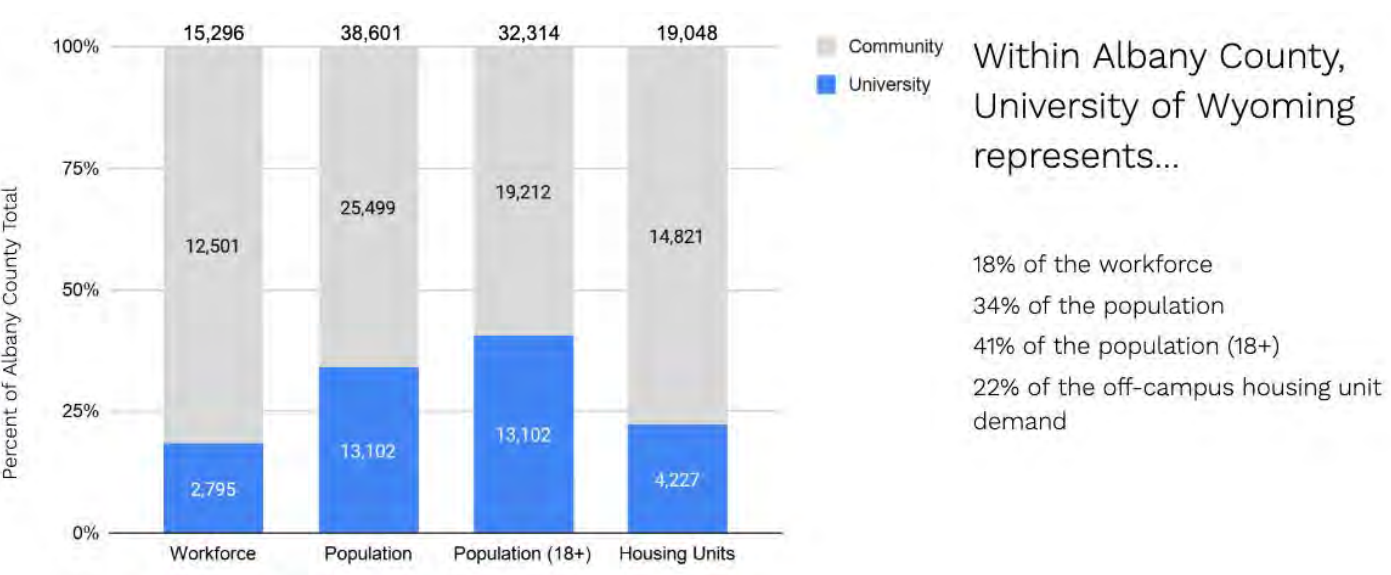
Source: Census American Community Survey, 2017



Unfortunately, upon graduation many of these students continue to face earning issues because Albany county employment opportunities pay less than similar jobs throughout the state. This, combined with high median home values, makes Laramie a less affordable location to live.

There are a variety of causes driving this low-wage and higher housing cost environment. A smaller number of employment opportunities and slow growth combined with a lack of housing unit growth limit the stock and overall price competition that is needed to lower housing costs. **The university is a significant driver on both sides of this equation as well, as UW students and employees represent 41% of the adult population, 22% of the off-campus housing units, and 18% of the workforce.** In terms of income, a previously conducted analysis demonstrated that wages paid to university workers are lower across nearly all occupations than the average pay for the same positions elsewhere within the state. This drives down the overall salary levels in the community. On the housing front, recently announced dorm projects may provide an opportunity to repurpose some off-campus housing into affordable units for community residents.

**Figure 11: University of Wyoming’s Impact on Workforce, Demographics and Housing**



Source: Census American Community Survey, UW Employment and Enrollment Figures

# Sustainability: Conditions that Support Healthy Lifestyles and Environment

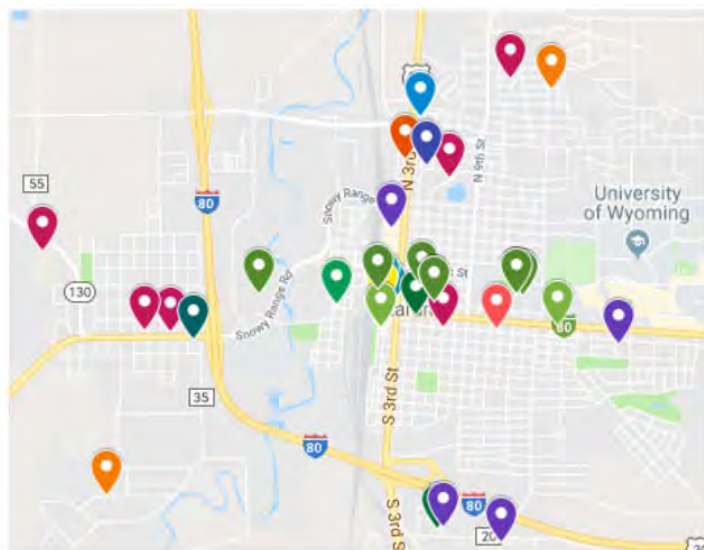
## Healthy Lifestyles

Iverson Memorial Hospital provides exceptional healthcare services to residents in the Greater Laramie community. Outside of traditional healthcare, unrivaled access to recreation, arts, tourism, and cultural experiences at community members' doorsteps support the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle for those who desire it. Hiking, biking, fishing, skiing, recreational powered riding, and other activities should be even more widely advertised to people who value that lifestyle to attract them to and retain them in Laramie.

The health of the community is also supported by the diversity of arts and cultural organizations. These groups play a vital role in the social and civic infrastructure that is critical for a community to thrive.

In 2018, Albany County welcomed 796,000 overnight visitors. Travelers to the county spent \$171.2 million and contributed \$3.5 million in sales taxes, which makes up 17% of all sales tax collections. Travel-generated tax revenues help support infrastructure and public services. The 1,610 jobs created by travelers represent 7% of Albany County's total private industry.

**Figure 12: Albany County is home to a number of arts and culture businesses and organizations**



Arts and Culture businesses generate an estimated \$103 M annually in revenue.

Estimated revenue includes data from 51 Arts and Culture businesses in Amusement & Recreation Services, Museums, Art Galleries, Sporting Goods & Bicycle Stores, Auditoriums, Golf Courses, and Arcades.

- Amusement & Recreation Services
- Museums
- Physical Fitness Facilities
- Art Galleries
- Bands ,Orchestras, Actors & Entertainer...
- Arcades
- Golf Courses
- Halls & Auditoriums

Source: A to Z Business Directory, 2018

# Community and Resident Feedback

The Thrive Laramie Community Survey launched in September and was spread via the City of Laramie’s website, social media accounts from the city and its partners, and via business cards with the survey url printed on them that were distributed at strategic locations throughout town and at community events. Over the course of two months, 664 people completed the survey.

The **664 respondents** were representative of the community:

- 85% (567) live in Laramie
- 9.3% (62) were students of any level
- 2.3% (15) work in Laramie but live somewhere else
- 3.0% (20) were visitors to Laramie

The 567 who live in Laramie have resided there for varying lengths of time:

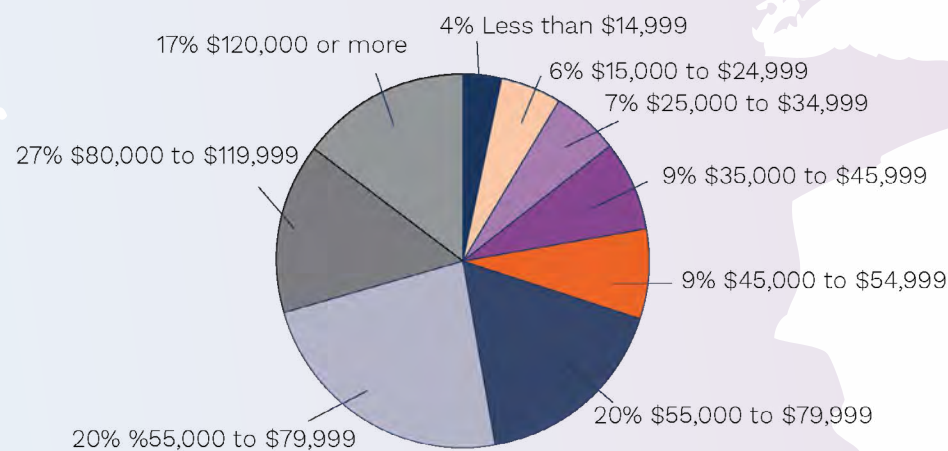
**Figure 14: Length of Residence**

Value	Percent	Responses
Less than 5 years	36.2%	205
5-9 years	21.9%	124
10-19 years	18.7%	106
20+ years	23.1%	131

Source: Community Survey

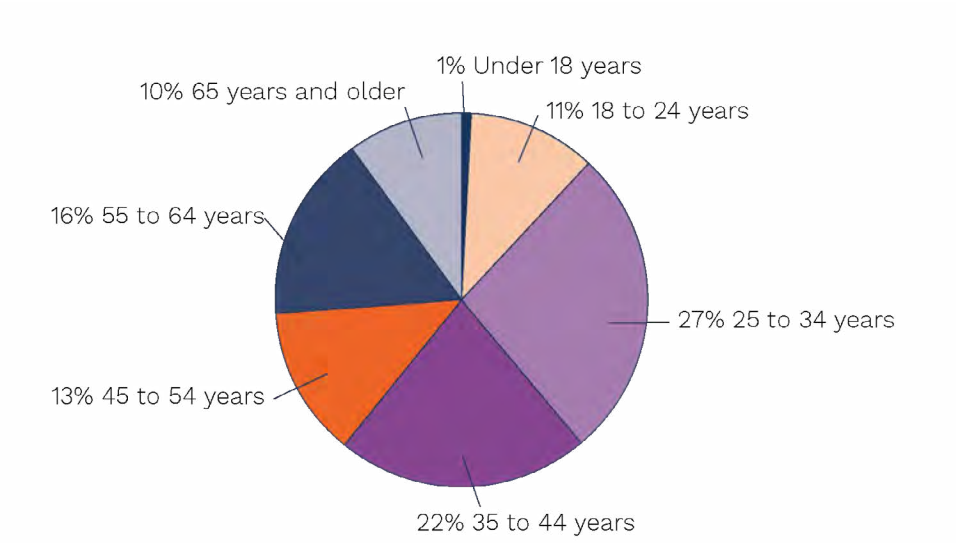
Constituents of various ages and household income levels (households average 2.4 people in Albany County) took the survey:

**Figure 56: Household Income of Survey Respondents**



Source: Community Survey

**Figure 16: Age of Survey Respondents**

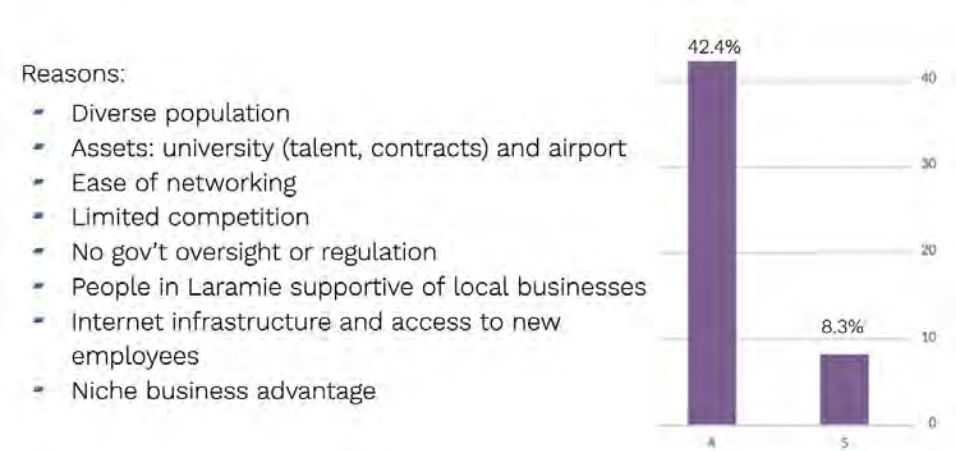


Source: Community Survey

## Investment: Business and the Built Environment

As part of the Thrive Laramie Community Survey, respondents were asked if they owned or ran a local business, and **171** indicated that they did. Over 50% of those business leaders agreed that Laramie is a good place to operate a business, as indicated in the graph below, which shows 50.8% of business owners rating their ability to operate a business in Laramie as four (easy) or five (very easy). The 64 respondents who rated their ability to operate a business three (neutral) or below (difficult or very difficult) gave reasons such as: finding employees with sufficient training, education, experience, and soft skills; challenges recruiting and retaining staff due to competition for employees with out-of-state firms; wages and benefits; government bureaucracy, inconsistent regulatory environment, and long, non-transparent approval cycles; low access to supplies and high development costs; and a shortage of affordable commercial real-estate.

**Figure 17: Ability to Operate a Business (4=Easy, 5=Very Easy)**

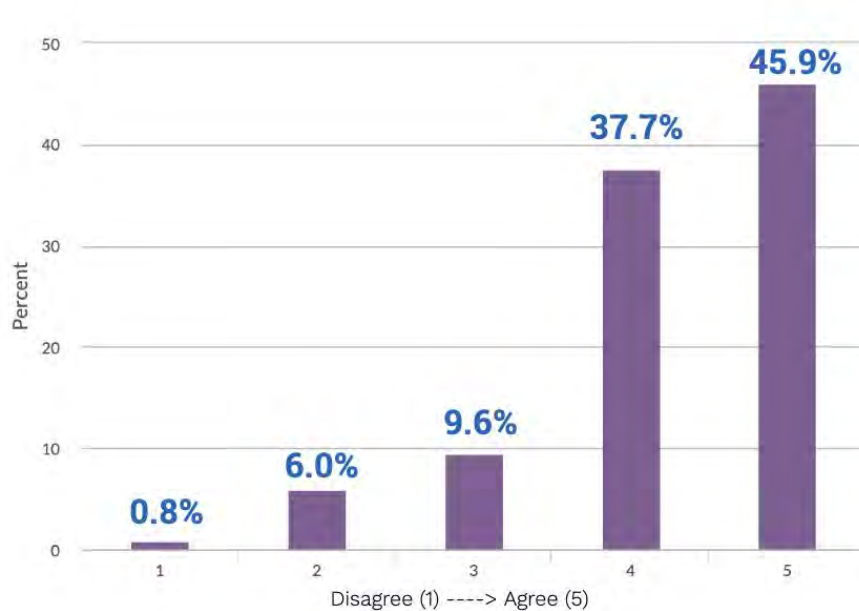


Source: Community Survey

# Talent: A Growing and Highly-Skilled Workforce

Of the 664 respondents, just over 57% agreed that Laramie is a great place to work. Of the respondents who agreed, 68% were between the ages of 45-55.

**Figure 17: Laramie is a Great Place to Work**



Source: Community Survey

**Those between the ages of 18-25 (74 respondents) disagreed the most with the claim that Laramie is a great place to work (40% of respondents in this age range disagreed).** Of the 62 students who took the survey, 87% agreed that Laramie is a great place to go to school and learn, while only 45% agreed it is a great place to work.

Reasons why survey respondents believe Laramie isn't a great place to work:

- » "The job market is not diverse enough"
- » "Wages are low and stagnant"
- » "Low wages and high housing prices make Laramie a tough place to find a suitable job"
- » "Unless you work at the University, it can be difficult for educated people to stay, live, and thrive here"



Business owners and operators who responded to the survey noted concerns related to the ability to recruit workers **locally** (within Laramie), **within the region** (Albany County plus), and **outside** the region (national). They noted specific issues such as workers’ inability to reliably show up for work, which was cited as a top issue for manufacturing, transportation, and warehouse related firms. Childcare was a top issue for the information industry, transportation and warehousing, and manufacturing companies. During the build sessions it was noted that there is a lack of quality childcare available, especially during non-traditional work hours.

Figure 18: Rate the Ability to Recruit



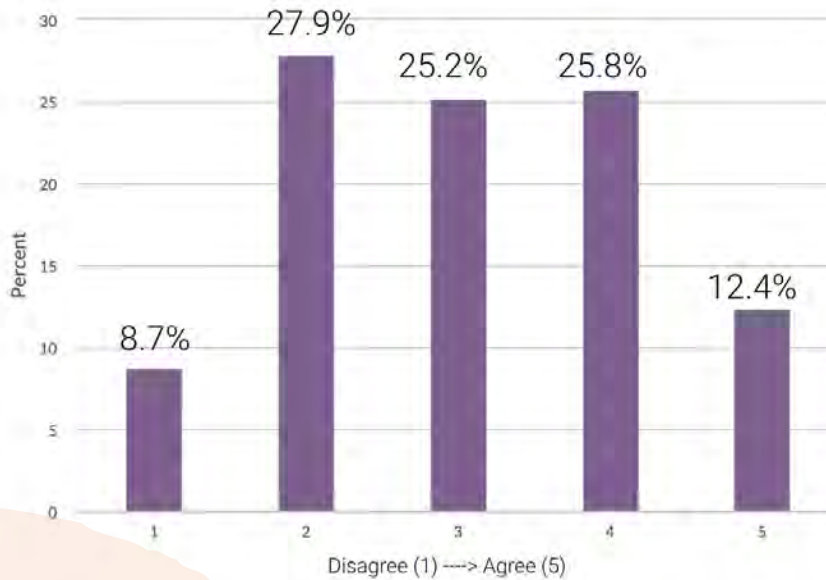
Source: Community Survey

# Business Diversity and Entrepreneurship

Community Survey respondents noted that there are opportunities to do more local hiring of firms for services and products. This would allow for stronger local firms and growth in employment opportunities.

**High property costs and strict, hard to navigate, or inconsistent regulations were noted as barriers to pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors.** This will be an area for improvement over the next decade and is critical to help support diversification in the economy.

**Figure 19: Laramie is a Great Place to Innovate and Start New Things**



Source: Community Survey

# Place: Infrastructure and Assets Promoting Quality of Life

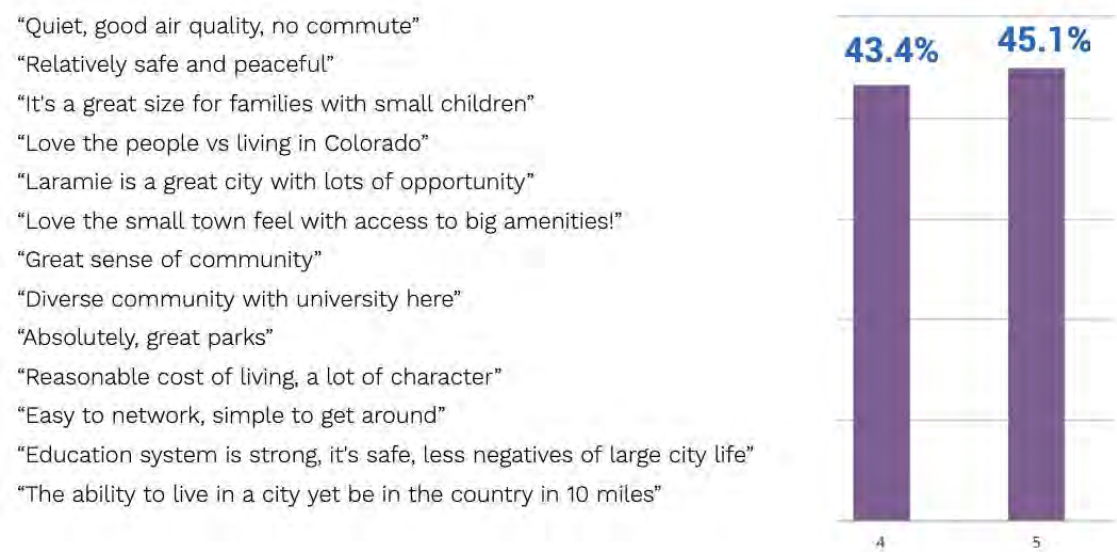
Of 664 survey respondents, nearly 90% (563) somewhat agreed or agreed that Laramie is a great place to live. **This is a critical fact as it demonstrates that people are enjoying the community, which in theory should help with retention. It should also serve as a calling card as the community looks to continue to grow.** Many of the attributes noted, like a strong sense of community, environmental beauty, unique character, and a high-quality education system, are those that national surveys cite as decision points when someone is looking to relocate to a new area of the country.

Reasons why survey respondents believe Laramie is a great place to live:

- » “Relatively safe, peaceful and friendly”
- » “Great sense of community. I love the people and culture”
- » “A City with lots of opportunity”
- » “Great for small families and children”
- » “Clean. Moderate cost. Variety of educational, cultural and job opportunities”

The areas for improvement include housing costs and the lack of retail options.

**Figure 20: Laramie is a Great Place to Live**



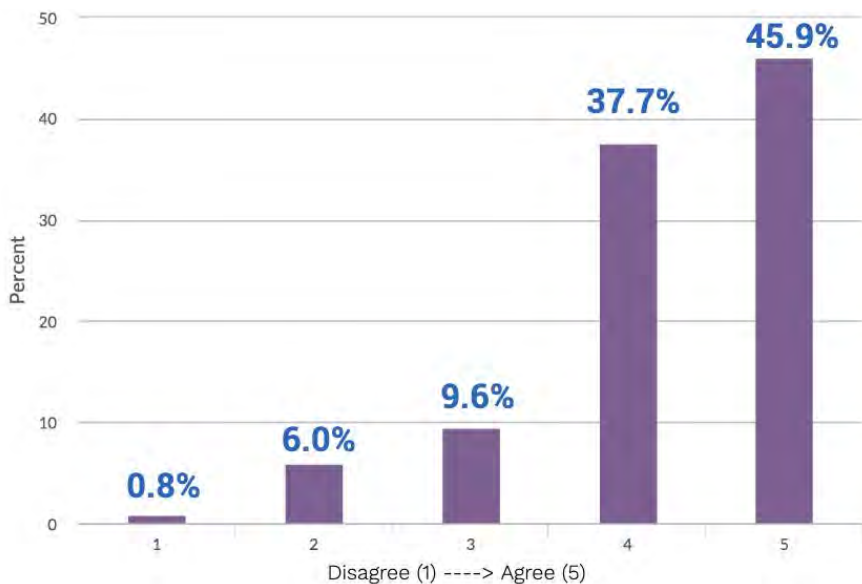
Source: Community Survey

# Sustainability: Conditions that Support Healthy Lifestyles and Environment

Survey respondents noted that they enjoy access to outdoor activities that promote healthy lifestyles. For many residents, the biggest draw and advantage to living in Laramie is its outdoor amenities. Outdoor recreation opportunities include mountain biking, skiing, hiking, camping, fishing, etc. The Pilot Hill project is one of many examples of areas where the community is looking to continue to invest in outdoor recreation opportunities.

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly positive when considering Laramie as a place to recreate. Nearly 84% of the 664 respondents believe it is a great place to relax, play and enjoy.

**Figure 21: Laramie is a Great Place to Recreate**



Source: Community Survey

With notable mentions of Laramie needing more kid-friendly and indoor activities, more to do within Laramie proper (especially during winters), and more trails and connectivity, reasons why Laramie is a great place to recreate include:

- » “Great nature nearby - the surrounding forests, great parks, access to mountains”
- » “With Pilot Hill, Laramie will be a huge place for recreation”
- » “Lots of open space and great hiking and skiing”
- » “This is the best thing about Laramie, trails, sun, parks, mountains, and local teams”

When asked about their housing situation, nearly 70 percent of resident respondents are satisfied with their proximity to amenities such as a park and pool and nearly 74 percent are satisfied with living in a neighborhood that supports their lifestyle. When asked what factors they consider when choosing to buy a home, 62% prefer walkability and bikeability and 47 percent prefer proximity to recreational amenities.

They also expressed a desire for the community to have a greater focus on next-generation support such as **broadband and renewable energy**. A few respondents noted that due to the dominance of the university-related population and its fluctuations, business sustainability in certain retail and service industries is difficult.













# Laramie's Future

# Vision

**Laramie is a thriving cultural capital, education destination, and magnet community attracting a diversity of people and businesses to the state and region.**

This vision for the 10-year community and economic development strategy captures the energy and passion that Laramie residents have for their community. When asked what they wanted in the next five and ten years, community survey respondents highlighted the desire to have a growing and vibrant community that is “people”-focused, “growing,” “affordable,” “friendly,” “diverse,” and “safe.”



Through the course of this planning process residents cited a desire to grow at a manageable pace and not experience the negative impacts of rapid, unmanaged growth seen in some nearby communities.

# Mission

**The City of Laramie and its partners collaborate to enhance quality of life for all by guiding economic growth through targeted investments and strategic support.**



# Goals

To support the Thrive Laramie vision and mission, the following plan articulates a clear set of goals defined by six areas of focus:

1. Laramie hosts a diversity of employers that pay competitive wages to workers across various skill sets.
2. Laramie provides training opportunities accessible to all that reflect the changing needs of employers. Educational institutions are active participants in community and economic development.
3. Laramie is a hotbed of technological and innovative activity where all entrepreneurs and innovators have the tools they need to thrive.
4. Laramie is the Cultural Capital of Wyoming, known for its vibrant downtown, diverse arts amenities, rich history, and world-class outdoor recreation.
5. Laramie has modern infrastructure that is resilient and secure, that attracts and retains people and businesses to the region.
6. Laramie has a variety of quality housing options that meet the needs of residents at all income levels, present and future.

Together, the vision, mission, and goals define a future Laramie that draws in new people, businesses, and visitors, where residents continue to love their community and are able to benefit from the increased opportunity that a slightly larger population brings.











# Catalyst Recommendations for a Thriving Laramie

Throughout conversations associated with the 10-year community and economic development strategy planning effort, there have been three general recommendations that have emerged that cross topic areas. **These three areas will catalyze a thriving and prosperous community.**

# Strategy 1. Population Growth to 50,000 to Support Economic Opportunity and Enhance Quality of Life

Laramie and Albany County’s population growth over the past 50 years can be characterized as slow but steady; it has allowed for a continued expansion of the amenities and labor force needed to thrive. Throughout Laramie’s history, the only spikes in population have resulted from the University of Wyoming’s expansions. Today, one in three jobs are in the education sector, which demonstrates the benefits of the University as an employer but also the risk of having so many residents dependent on one sector. In communities throughout the country, there is a trend of population growth driving job growth. As more people identify a place they want to live, they either find or create their employment opportunity. With the explosive growth of the Fort Collins region, it can be expected that Laramie will begin to see spillover growth.

## Recommendation

**Ensure that this economic development strategy and other plans, including the comprehensive plan, identify what is needed to effectively host an additional 12,000 residents by 2030.**



The Laramie community, if it can grow to a population of 50,000, would realize new opportunities and enhance the overall quality of life for its residents. Current population modeling shows a natural growth projection of 4,000 residents – to 42,000 people in 2030. This plan would seek to realize an additional 8,000 residents above what current population models indicate during that time period. While this would demonstrate a significant increase in the annual growth rate, it is certainly possible based on what is seen in other growing communities. Laramie can proactively manage its growth in order to minimize any potential negative impacts.

## Action Steps

1. Run scenarios for what Laramie will need in terms of infrastructure (water, sewer, electricity, etc.) and housing to reach this milestone. Identify the land use needs required to support residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
2. Plan for how to utilize population growth to enhance community vibrancy through the capture of additional tax revenue, resident engagement, development of infill and rehabilitated properties, and more. Care should be taken to preserve core community assets and the cultural identity that makes Laramie special, while welcoming the influx of new ideas and needs that new residents bring.
3. Align city, county, and university land use and infrastructure plans to support enhanced growth. Through shared understanding and model development, the community can mitigate any potential downside to population growth and achieve a thriving community.

## Measuring Success

As the Laramie community grows, success can be measured on two fronts.

- » Sentiment: Residents continue to proclaim that Laramie is a great place to live. The City of Laramie Community Survey (conducted at least every-five years) should maintain these questions going forward to measure any changes.
- » Quantitative: Annual growth in population with the goal of 50,000 residents by 2030.

## Key Partners & Roles

City, County, WYDOT, University of Wyoming, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Iverson Memorial, and utilities must all come together to run the population scenarios and discuss what will be needed to satisfy population growth.



## Strategy 2. Consistent and Cohesive Laramie Messaging



Laramie residents know and treasure how special their community is, but that sentiment is not shared among people outside of the community who simply aren't aware of Laramie's many amazing attributes. One of the most important keys to attracting visitors and future residents is messaging around what makes the community so beloved by its residents. There are many (and often varied) ways of discussing the awesomeness of Laramie. Communication

efforts have not been coordinated in the past, which has limited the effectiveness of the message and investments, as well as the positive impacts that could be realized from tourists, visitors, and existing residents. Consistent messaging would allow Laramie's organizations to build a suite of complementary statements about the best attributes of various components of the community.

### Recommendation

**Bring together stakeholders to develop a cohesive set of messages that can be adopted across platforms, as well as a common evaluation framework for those efforts, and then work collaboratively to implement targeted marketing campaigns.**

## Action Steps

1. The Albany County Tourism Board should convene core partners including the Main Street Alliance, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, University of Wyoming, Laramie County Community College, Laramie Regional Airport, City of Laramie, Albany County, and others as appropriate to form the Laramie Marketing Taskforce. This may be a committee under the Tourism Board.
2. A critical first step will be evaluating existing messaging such as the University's "The World Needs More Cowboys" motto and existing tourism and business marketing materials. Existing data on these various campaigns can be used to analyze the results.
3. The Marketing Taskforce can then engage creative talent to determine possible messaging. The taskforce should then:
  - » Identify existing advertising/promotional budgets, and decide how to adopt the messaging across arts, recreation, education, and economic development organizations. Identify shared marketing, identity, and storytelling opportunities, and coordinate to promote Laramie to visitors experiencing Laramie for the first time.
  - » Develop a targeted list of personas and test out campaigns.
  - » Finalize and implement messaging, realizing the need to refresh messaging every 3-5 years.

## Measuring Success

- » Development and utilization of a common branding campaign and messaging platform.
- » Increase in web traffic, visitors and business/investment inquiries as reported by each of the branding partnership members.

## Key Partners & Roles

Albany County Tourism Board can serve as the lead convener, while the Main Street Alliance, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, University of Wyoming, Laramie County Community College, Laramie Regional Airport, Wyoming Business Council, City of Laramie, and Albany County should all serve on the partnership.

## Promising Practice

"Pure Michigan" is a tourism, business, and talent recruitment campaign launched in Michigan in 2008. While it is difficult to fully account for the return on investment of the campaign, it is clear that aligning state messages has helped create a consistent and well recognized identity. A 2017 study noted a ROI of \$8.33<sup>1</sup> in tax revenue for every \$1 invested in the campaign. In addition, local businesses can integrate the brand into their own promotional materials.

---

1 [Is 'Pure Michigan' a Clear Success?](#)



## Strategy 3. Revenue Enhancements to Support Plan Implementation

Existing reliance on sales tax due to the absence of property and income taxes limits the ability of Laramie, Albany County, and partners to invest in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth. Laramie needs to identify near-term resources to support the investments identified in this plan.



In the long term, the community should develop an approach to reduce dependence on state funding and should create mechanisms to increase revenue reliability/predictability and mitigate the boom-bust cycles that result from the state's tax structure. The Laramie community will support state revenue enhancement legislation, and will identify coordinated co-investment opportunities in mutually beneficial projects with strategic partners. In addition, the city needs to increase the frequency with which it pursues grant funding to support the recommendations that follow.

### Recommendation

**New revenues must be identified to reduce dependence on state funding, allow the community to thrive, and support investments in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth.**

## Action Steps

1. As strategic plan action strategies are unveiled, demonstrate how increased financial capacity can enhance community and economic development and help Laramie thrive.
2. Develop a platform of revenue enhancements that includes fee generation.
3. Explore co-investment opportunities in mutually beneficial community enhancements like those outlined in this plan to foster coordination. To begin this process the city and its non-profit partners should evaluate recent investments and/or support to advance shared goals that have been allocated to date.
4. Bring together grant writers from leading organizations to explore a shared approach to the exploration and development of grant proposals.

## Key Partners & Roles

City of Laramie, Albany County, University of Wyoming, Albany County Tourism Board, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Main Street Alliance, state legislators, City of Cheyenne, and other regional communities and supporters.

## Promising Practice

The community of Manhattan, Kansas and Kansas State University began a special arrangement in 1994. The agreement, now known as the City/University Special Projects Fund<sup>1</sup>, allocates funding captured from university activities to projects of mutual benefit that are authorized by a committee of private and university-related individuals. The City-University Projects Fund Committee reviews recommendations forwarded from the President of Kansas State University and the City of Manhattan and makes recommendations to the City Commission to budget for projects and programs from the City/University Projects Fund.

---

1 [City-University Special Project Fund Committee](#)









## Areas of Focus - Pursuit of Opportunities and Challenge Mitigation

After looking at the baseline economic analysis, analyzing general sentiment through the Community Survey, and interviewing stakeholders to identify the major challenges and opportunities in Laramie, six distinct areas of focus emerged:

1. Diversifying Industry and Increasing Wages
2. Strengthening Town-Gown Relations and Industry-Workforce Alignment
3. Fostering Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
4. Enhancing the Impact of Art, Recreational, and Cultural Tourism
5. Extending and Maintaining Infrastructure
6. Expanding Housing Quality and Quantity



# Area 1. Diversifying Industry and Increasing Wages

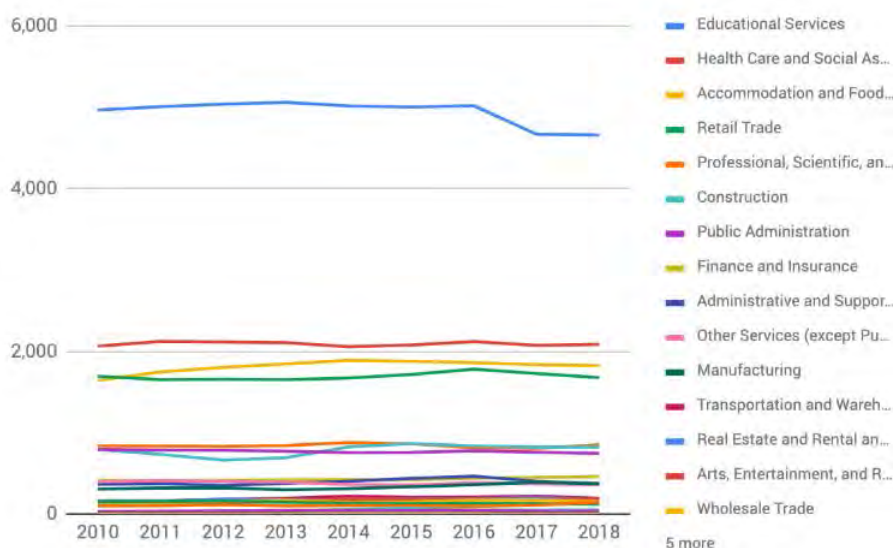


## Industry Trends and Wages

Median wages across all age groups in Albany County are lower than in neighboring communities and the country as a whole, contributing to the perception of limited opportunity in the region for job seekers. Part of this may be attributed to the fact that much of Laramie’s current employment is concentrated in non-traded sectors such as education and healthcare, which generally circulate money within a community rather than bringing new wealth in from outside the region.

In recent years, Laramie has been able to attract and grow companies such as HiViz, UL, and MillaporeSigma. Still, the Greater Laramie community struggles with talent retention, due in part to the lack of competitive wages and industry mix. Employment trends over the past decade demonstrate that industry growth is relatively flat; however, modest growth has occurred in industries such as arts, entertainment, and recreation; manufacturing; transportation and warehousing; real estate; finance; and accommodation and food services. However, with the exception of jobs in real estate and finance, these industries, which are projected to continue growing over the next ten years, are concentrated in lower-paying occupations.

**Figure 22: Industry Growth in Albany County**



Source: Census, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2010-2018

## Barriers to Industry Growth

Laramie has an opportunity to make an impact through purposeful, targeted growth and diversification. To encourage the introduction and growth of new businesses and industry sectors that pay competitive wages, **work should be done to address regulatory and other barriers that may exist, such as restrictive code related to building aesthetics, and lack of infrastructure to support new building and business expansion.** For example, there are few shovel-ready sites available for prospective businesses considering relocation to the area, and there is currently no established regional entry point or "one stop shop" for businesses or investors to turn to when looking to invest in Laramie. The city - and region - would benefit from a strong outward-facing economic development entity that can help Laramie achieve its economic diversification and growth goals.

## Industry Diversification

Diversifying the economy is not just good for growth but also for talent attraction. ENDOW, which focused on economic diversification, emphasized increasing energy, mining, and tourism throughout the state, all of which bring new money into the region. However, sitting in Southeast Wyoming, which lacks any substantial energy production, and bolstered by the degree and training opportunities that University of Wyoming, LCCC, and WyoTech bring, Laramie is positioned to be a leader in other sectors like **professional and scientific services (which includes healthcare and information technology, as well as research and development), advanced manufacturing, and arts and culture.** The region is already making progress, attracting related industries working on drones, data processing, and boutique manufacturing. In addition, Laramie can promote the fact that leading-edge companies such as Underwriters Laboratories and Plenty Farms are choosing the community as a key location for their success.

## Increasing Wages

Growth in Laramie's target industries should bring plenty of **high paying, primary labor market jobs** - both white collar jobs requiring higher education degrees, but also skilled trade occupations like plumbers, electricians, mechanics, and technicians. At the same time, those industries will be supported by those in food, retail, accommodation, healthcare, and education, which are lower paying occupations. Where raising wages is not feasible, steps should be taken to reduce the cost of employment and increase total take-home pay for employees.

## Area 2. Strengthening Town-Gown Relationships and Workforce-Industry Alignment

### Laramie as a “Campus Community”

The presence of the University of Wyoming (“gown”), a land-grant university and a leading institution of learning, is a significant asset for the City of Laramie (“town”) as it considers growth over the next decade. The resources that the University provides, like workforce training, business incubation, shuttle services, and arts, sports, and other cultural events, can help the city achieve its goals related to workforce growth, cultural tourism, economic development, and improving overall quality of life. Many of these resources, though, are not made available to the community at large, which puts a strain on town-gown relationships.

In addition, **the campus itself feels quite separate from the rest of the city, and main corridors and gateways throughout the town suffer from a lack of investment**, tainting the impressions of first-time visitors to the City.

To improve the impressions of first-time visitors and enhance the quality of life for long-time residents, there is a need to focus on city beautification and creating continuity between the university campus and the rest of the city. This includes gateway improvements, enhancing bike and pedestrian safety, and the development of more public art, green infrastructure, parks, and indoor community spaces for programs and events.



The University’s Office of Engagement and Outreach was recently created to serve as a connection point between the university and communities throughout the state, and provides a new platform to foster positive town-gown relations. Annual events like the Mashup bring town and gown together, meanwhile similar ideas include things like:

- » Holding more events, like Homecoming activities, off-campus
- » Enhancing and expanding access to the University’s Business Resource Network
- » Launching initiatives that encourage and support getting younger people to take on leadership roles, and that ensure all boards have diverse representation and perspectives
- » Producing profiles of students who work at local businesses, highlighting their hometown, major, and institution, and sharing them as a spotlight feature within those local businesses as well as in local media or on social media
- » University of Wyoming Art Museum more engaged with public art programs
- » Creating a city-wide International Festival and/or international student programming
- » Establishing an exchange program to train young leaders (such as YALI, YTILI, and the Mandela Fellowship)
- » Expanding K-12 inclusion in university programming

## Workforce-Industry Alignment

**Figure 23: Educational Attainment, Adults 25 years and older**

	Albany County, WY		United States	Wyoming	Cheyenne, WY	Fort Collins, CO
High School or Equivalent	3,372	16%	27%	29%	25%	19%
Associate's Degree	1,756	8%	8%	11%	13%	9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	10,404	48%	31%	27%	29%	46%

Source: Census American Community Survey, 2017

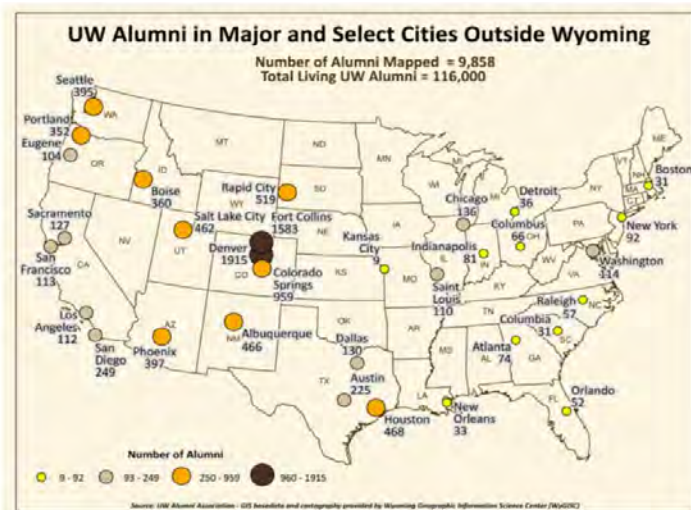
Laramie's population boasts a level of educational attainment that is almost double the state and national averages, likely due to the university and community college presence in Laramie, which draws a lot of students to the region.

However, analysis shows that there are not enough high-paying job opportunities to match graduates' skill sets, and that at the same time, companies say they can't find the workforce they need. This potentially leads to people leaving the region (popular destinations for University of Wyoming alumni include Denver, Fort Collins, Albuquerque, Houston, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Seattle, Portland, and Boise)<sup>1</sup>, and disincentivizes employers from locating or expanding here.

**Improved workforce-industry alignment is needed to keep workers in the region, by ensuring they can pursue family-sustaining job opportunities and that they have the skills needed to fulfill employer requirements.** As

local industry considers its workforce needs and its ability to find local workers trained in the required skills and with the right experience, the University of Wyoming, Laramie County Community College, Wyotech Technical College, and local high schools can play a large role in educating and retaining talent for the jobs available now and into the future. The region is positioned to drive economic transformation in the state due to the innovative initiatives, research, and development happening in secondary and higher education. Educational institutions must work collaboratively and cooperatively to ensure that the next generation is taught the skills they need to take advantage of high-wage opportunities.

**Figure 24: UW Alumni in Major and Select Cities Outside Wyoming**



Source: UW

<sup>1</sup> Source: University of Wyoming Alumni Association, 2013



## Technical Skills Training

Not all jobs in Laramie require a college degree. According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, less than 1 in 5 occupations projected to grow over the next 10 years in the state's Central-Southeast Region (Albany, Carbon, Converse, Goshen, Niobrara, and Platte counties) will require a bachelor's degree or higher. **Laramie is poised to provide technical skills training through its robust educational system, and must let employers know that workers of all levels are being trained with the skills and education they need to thrive.**

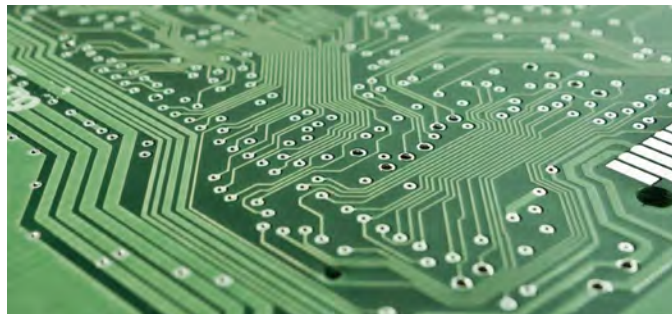
Workforce-industry alignment and 21st-century learning starts well before post-secondary education. The local high schools are implementing the "Portrait of a Graduate" program, which is designed to help engage nonprofits, parents, and businesses in answering the question, what do we want our high school graduates to look like and how do we get there? Programs like FFA (Future Farmers of America) and mechanical skills training in high school enhance the region's very high-quality public school system.

## Jobs and Industry Opportunities

Education and training must match local employer requirements, but also be nimble and responsive to changing needs as time passes. Equal access to basic education and occupational training for all residents, regardless of income level, is also important. The National Governors Association (NGA), in partnership with Strada Education Network, recently selected the state of Wyoming to receive grant funding and technical assistance to align post-secondary education with workforce priorities for adult learners, and to connect residents to jobs in growing industries. There are many examples of regions that have strong industry-workforce development relationships. For example, the Horizon Education Alliance (HEA) in Elkhart County, Indiana, is an alliance of educators, businesses, and community leaders who use a collaborative approach to improve education outcomes and talent development. To increase the attainment of post-secondary credentials and build pathways to high-demand post-secondary credentials, Horizon Education Alliance assists partners in developing networks of sector partnerships, business-education roundtables, and comprehensive counseling programs. HEA also sought support through the Indiana Talent Network to initiate student apprenticeships, project-based learning opportunities, programs designed for low-income, minority, and first generation students, and manufacturing days and career pathways events. In 2018, for instance, all 2,911 middle schoolers in Elkhart County visited a manufacturer.

One of Laramie's goals is to connect with a few of these "mentor communities" to gather lessons learned and best practices.

## Area 3. Fostering Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship



While attracting new business and industry from outside of the region is an exciting prospect that would certainly create new economic opportunity, fostering home-grown business development by encouraging technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship has added benefits – and the potential to make even more scalable impacts. Though there are a number of resources and programs to support local innovators and help launch new ventures, more can be done to support entrepreneurs across all sectors, including small business owners, and to provide access to the tools they need to thrive.

### Startup and Small Business Resources

Organizations such as the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network, Manufacturing Works, and the Wyoming Women's Business Center offer a wide variety of no- or low-cost training to entrepreneurs ranging from basic "start your own business" classes to product development bootcamps. Downtown and small businesses in Laramie can take advantage of established programs and new initiatives like the Wyoming Business Council's "Made on Main" pilot, which is designed to help grow boutique manufacturing in the downtown area. The Wyoming Technology Business Center offers incubation space to new, university-affiliated startups. Rural LISC is partnering with the Laramie Main Street Alliance, its first Wyoming partner and the first Main Street partner.

### Funding for Entrepreneurs

In terms of funding, the Wyoming Business Council offers several business grant and loan programs, and the University of Wyoming's Small Business Development Center provides services to businesses throughout the county and state, including information about and referrals to programs like the Women's Business Center, USDA rural business development grants, and equipment loan programs. Other resources for startups include the Startup Wyoming Grants, which provide matching funds for companies that receive federal funding through Small Business Innovation Research or Small Business Technology Transfer programs.

### Fostering an Entrepreneurial Culture

Absence or presence of a strong and thriving entrepreneurial culture is a factor that either limits or expands the number of business births that a region experiences: aversion to risk, failure, and sharing with others are traits that can be unlearned in the presence of a strong entrepreneurial culture that encourages peer learning, celebrating small wins, and minimizes the stigma of failure.

## Area 4. Enhancing the Impact of Art, Recreational, and Cultural Tourism

Art, recreational, and cultural tourism are significant engines of economic growth and prosperity for cities and regions across the country - creating jobs, increasing business revenue, and strengthening and supporting inclusive communities. Laramie, in particular, is quite dependent on tourism due in part to the state's structural reliance on sales and lodging taxes. **As Laramie works to diversify its economy, tourism provides an immediate growth opportunity that can generate additional revenues coming into the city** via spending on things like retail, dining, entertainment, and recreation. It can also provide new employment opportunities, and increased revenues could allow retail, accommodation and food and beverage establishments to increase wages for their existing workforce.



### Tourism Opportunity

Laramie is historic, vibrant, active, and lively, which is a draw for visitors and a perk for residents. However, efforts to draw people in and market Laramie's assets, while successful, have historically been disjointed, and as a result visitors are not necessarily aware of or experiencing the full range of attractions that are available to them. Laramie boasts incredible natural surroundings that make it a great place for outdoor recreational pursuits. Historical and cultural attractions around women's suffrage, the frontier, and the railroad, as well as University sporting events, continue to drive tourism. The arts are some of Laramie's greatest assets, drawing a variety of people from outside the region and enhancing the quality of life for those who live in the area. While the Downtown district is a growing hub for entertainment and leisure, Laramie has a unique opportunity to strengthen its tourism offerings across the city as a whole. **Cross-promotion of Laramie's assets, coordination of admission/use fee structures, and enhancing the overall experience for each visitor** can help increase tourism spend and sales tax revenues.

## Outdoor Recreation

Approximately 54.7 percent of Wyoming is public land managed by the state or federal government, providing enormous latent potential for outdoor recreation. Just beyond Laramie's city limits, the foothills of shortgrass prairie rise to the summit of Pilot Hill, at 8,860 feet in elevation. This land would directly connect Laramie to the western boundaries of Pole Mountain in the Medicine Bow National Forest, almost nine square miles of open space in the foothills, and acres of neighboring Bureau of Land Management and state land. **The impending purchase and land swap of the 5,472 acre Pilot Hill property provides an incredible new opportunity for Laramie to capitalize on,** enhancing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, and providing a world-class natural amenity to attract and retain businesses and their employees. Laramie has a truly unique opportunity to secure this landscape as open space for recreation and permanently protect a portion of the aquifer, ultimately improving the city's quality of life and bolstering economic growth.

Marketing and promoting the natural surroundings and outdoor recreation amenities like these to locals and visitors more widely can bring enormous economic benefits to the community (via imposing potential fees, and increased spending on things like gear, rentals, and dining). Doing it in a sustainable way (for example, by establishing a trail etiquette and maintenance plan to reduce negative consequences of use) can ensure those benefits are maximized while not putting unnecessary or harmful strain on Laramie's infrastructure.

## Arts and Culture

Albany County is home to a number of arts and culture businesses and organizations, and recent initiatives like the Laramie Mural Project have contributed to Laramie's quality of life and resulted in public art pieces from dozens of artists. **Residents and visitors alike enjoy the area's music, art, and street festivals, and local arts and culture activity generates \$103 million in revenue annually.**<sup>1</sup> Albany County ranks among the most racially and ethnically diverse counties in the state<sup>2</sup>, and the Public Art Coalition has prioritized highlighting diverse perspectives and showcasing the diversity that makes up the fabric of the community. The arts are in a position to put an amplified focus on diversity, to reflect the fabric that makes up the community and ensure Laramie is even more welcoming and inclusive. Anecdotally, public art like the Mural Project has made Laramie feel welcoming to outsiders, especially those coming from diverse backgrounds.

At the same time, between the University of Wyoming's Art Museum, the "UW Presents" performance calendar, and year-round sporting events, the University has the assets to serve as a cultural center and hub for arts and entertainment in Laramie. However, these assets could be better utilized and connected to other community events and regional tourism efforts. In addition, improving the visibility of and accessibility to the University of Wyoming's offerings to the community at large presents a huge opportunity for both town and gown.

---

1 AtoZ Business Directory, 2018.

2 Diversity Index, American Community Survey, 2017.



## Area 5. Extending and Maintaining Infrastructure



Infrastructure can either support or limit economic competitiveness depending on how much focus and planning is performed to map future opportunities and risks. A proactive approach to utility infrastructure improvements requires asset management, ongoing maintenance, and proper planning to understand what impacts are limiting potential or that may cause degradation in the future. Proactive infrastructure investment demonstrates a focus on economic competitiveness and overall quality of place.

Today much of Laramie's infrastructure, from roads to sewers to gas lines, is aging or at capacity, which limits growth and development of new housing and businesses. As private developers look to develop commercial and residential properties at the edges of the city and beyond, extending the required infrastructure is a huge barrier. In the case of parcels that sit on the city-county line and that abut city land but are technically outside of its limits, a best practice solution is for the city to annex the intervening property to easily extend city infrastructure to that property. However, this solution is seen as politically untenable due to its pressure on private property rights in the surrounding county. Furthermore, there is disagreement among stakeholders about where infrastructure improvements should be prioritized and which entities should bear the cost burden of infrastructure expansion to support these developments.

One recommendation is to set geographic limits on development, which would provide some predictability to expansion and would require dialogue and agreement between city and county. This could take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding that articulates where the agreed-upon growth areas are and might include delayed improvement provisions, or areas ripe for land swaps. Laramie does a good job of leveraging partnerships and should continue to strengthen these relationships to improve infrastructure for collective gain.

### Broadband

Specific initiatives around broadband exist in Laramie, Albany County, and throughout the state. The State of Wyoming is committed to making Wyoming a technology leader by expanding broadband services throughout the state. During the 2018 legislative session, Gov. Matt Mead signed into law SEA No. 0036, which provided \$10 million to establish a broadband infrastructure grant fund. This has spurred initiatives like Albany County/Vistabeam's proposal to extend the existing fixed wireless network into the Centennial area and to the area around Rob Roy Reservoir in Albany County. The project would pass 15 businesses and 423 homes, providing broadband access or upgrades to 95% of households in the area. Meanwhile, the city recently completed the Neighborly Broadband Accelerator program and is planning next steps with the information collected during the engagement.

## Energy Diversification

Wyoming has led the U.S. in coal production since 1986, and holds more than one-third of U.S. recoverable coal reserves at producing mines. This has led the state to be historically reliant on revenues from coal extraction, as \$1 billion annually (or 10% of state and local tax revenue) is attributed to coal. However, competition from natural gas and renewables is lowering demand for Wyoming coal from around the country and has made it less profitable to mine. In fact, the recent bankruptcy of Blackjewel LLC, one of 19 coal operators in the state, on July 1st, 2019 sparked fears of **tax revenue losses that would impact funding for the University of Wyoming**, for instance. Permanent closure of these mines would mean a combined loss of no less than \$45.6 million a year for state and local governments. While coal-fired power plants still produce about 85% of Wyoming's net electricity generation, wind energy's share has increased rapidly in the last 10 years, contributing nearly 10% of net electricity generation for the state in 2017. Small hydroelectric facilities and natural gas and petroleum-fueled generating units contribute the remaining 5% of Wyoming's electricity generation.

As Wyoming and the region looks at next-generation sources of energy, Laramie can position itself at the forefront of initiatives like microgrids, solar power, and wind farms, taking advantage of available land and resources at the University of Wyoming and community and technical colleges, at the city and county, and at private enterprises. For example, a recent bill that would have restricted net-metering failed to pass the state legislature, which sent a positive signal to enterprises, like the airport, which are considering investing in renewable energy arrays to defray costs. Meanwhile, local companies like Trihydro have used their investment in solar power as a cost-savings measure but also as a recruiting tool, having attracted employees to the firm due to their sustainability commitments.

The Pilot Hill development or the city's Monolith Ranch property could be locations to pilot these initiatives, and the region could capitalize on the potential for educational tourism at sites like these (e.g., elementary, secondary, and post-secondary STEM educational trips to study and improve this infrastructure).

In addition to looking at alternate sources of energy, it is important that Laramie look at the **reliability** of its existing electricity infrastructure. Power outages due to wind and winter weather are common, and local provider Rocky Mountain Power is currently working to update its crossarms and other equipment. However, tariffs at the national level are raising the cost of iron, steel, and aluminum, affecting Rocky Mountain Power's ability to cost effectively make those improvements.

Finally, as Laramie plans for **transportation** improvements, it is important to take note of the large environmental impact of cement and asphalt manufacturing associated with building new roads, and work with the local engineering community to take available steps to reduce that impact, like using Recycled Asphalt Pavement, and offering incentives for developers through performance-based specifications and development and design standards.

# Area 6. Expanding Housing Quality and Quantity

The current lack of affordable, quality housing in Laramie has negative economic impacts on the community. The 2015 Housing Study conducted for the City of Laramie noted, “Future population and household growth in Laramie will be driven by new and expanded housing and economic development and public service activities. The most critical housing issues in the City include promoting the development of housing for the local workforce, college students and young professionals, affordable to all salary income levels and at a pace that will equal the demand of a rapidly growing Community. Other priority housing needs include providing housing opportunities for the elderly, first time homebuyers, middle-income persons and families and persons with special needs.”

This observation was made in 2015 when the population was slated to increase by 2,000 to reach 34,000 by 2020. In 2015 the Housing Study noted, “To meet the housing needs of current and future residents of the City, an estimated 1,538 new housing units should be developed in Laramie by 2020. A total of 640 owner and 898 rental housing units should be built to accommodate the housing needs of low- to moderate-income families, the elderly and special population households, especially the housing needs of the local workforce and students. An estimated 1,310 housing units, 578 owner and 732 rental units, should be developed by 2024 and an estimated 1,258 housing units, 544 owner and 714 rental units, by 2030. Overall, the City of Laramie has an estimated total 15-year housing demand for 4,106 units, including



1,762 owner and 2,344 rental units. An estimated 27 to 33 percent of the rental housing target demand should include off-campus student rental housing.” Unfortunately a variety of market factors have prevented the development of additional housing units and have further exacerbated these issues.

Anecdotally, local employers have a hard time retaining mid-level employees, students leave the community after graduating, and much of the Laramie community is cost burdened, spending over 30% of their income on housing. Compounding this problem is the city’s low median household income, so that Laramie’s home value to income ratio looks more similar to Fort Collins and Colorado as a whole than to other neighboring counties or Wyoming. Residents cite housing as the number one factor driving up the cost of living in Laramie, and **employers cite housing as one of the top factors limiting their ability to recruit.** Similarly, the Laramie Chamber Business Alliance lists housing shortages among the top concerns in recruiting new businesses to the community. In order to make Laramie a more attractive place to live and work, and to attract and expand businesses, the region should address factors that lead to high housing costs.

**Figure 25: Laramie’s Household income to housing cost is high, meaning homes are relatively unaffordable**

Geography	Median Home Value	Median Household Income	Ratio
Laramie, WY	223,000	45,816	4.9
Cheyenne, WY	202,800	62,279	3.2
Fort Collins, CO	306,600	64,980	4.7

Source: Census American Community Survey, 2017



## Housing to Income Ratio and Product

At \$223,000, Laramie's median home value is higher than Cheyenne's median of \$203,000. At the same time, Laramie has low median household income - \$45,816 across age groups - compared to Cheyenne at \$62,879 and Fort Collins at \$64,980. Meanwhile, there is not a lot of "affordable" inventory at the \$250,000-300,000 level. Consumers are interested in single family homes in this price range - often a ranch with basic finishes and a small yard, which is appealing as a starter home. It has also been noted that "twin homes" priced in the \$250,000 range are in demand. Based on the feedback from realtors, houses in this price range are and will be snapped up. Real estate professionals noted that the average housing value appreciation range in Laramie is 6%, whereas nationally it is generally between three and five percent. Anecdotal information indicates that local builders are booked as much as three years out and are not able to respond to any near-term needs.

## Developer Expertise

Local developers are comfortable with building single family homes and twin homes but may lack the experience in alternative structures. Second stories of commercial buildings could be better utilized as housing for people who want to live downtown, but builders' lack of experience and high rehab costs seem to be preventing much growth of this option.

## Aging Population

Over the next 10 years, projections indicate that 3,272 Laramie residents will turn 65, aging them out of the workforce and into retirement. In 2030, 6,485 Laramie residents will be 65 years or older. This presents a new challenge to consider as older adults decide whether or not they have the housing types that allow them to age in place.

## University Impact on Housing

Between faculty, staff, and full-time, non-distance students who don't live in dorms, the University of Wyoming represents approximately 9,879 people that need off-campus housing. Divided by Laramie's 2.3 people per household, this means 4,227 off-campus units are needed to house people working or attending school at the University.

In addition it is notable that outside investors - often parents of college students - are purchasing properties as short-term investments.







## Recommendations

What follows are the recommendations of the Thrive Laramie Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan. Recommendations are organized by the six focus areas, each of which has two to three strategies and associated recommendations. Each recommendation has a number of action steps and measures of success. A rough timeline of action steps is included in the executive summary.





## **Recommendations: Diversifying Industry and Increasing Wages**

# Strategy 1. Increase Regional Collaboration for Business Retention, Attraction, and Recruitment Efforts



## Opportunity

Target industries that bring high-paying, skilled, primary labor market jobs for attraction and retention to diversify the region's industry mix, drive economic growth, and increase wages.

## Recommendation

**Work collaboratively to enhance the “business brand” of Laramie and the region.**

## Action Steps

1. Continue to develop a strategy that determines a sustainable level of growth and defines the region's approach to attraction, prioritizing specific industries and types of businesses to target for attraction and expansion tools and incentives. This should be based on high-opportunity sectors and emerging technologies that will help grow the region, and that match the assets that exist locally. These include Manufacturing; Telecommunications; Securities, Commodities, and Other Financial Activities; Professional Scientific and Technical Services; and Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services. Proactively recruit specific high-paying industries as part of a targeted approach. Model the [Colorado Space Coalition](#) up with a plan and then work to address the three most pressing of those barriers. These might include reducing red tape and streamlining processes for businesses to open and expand, or publishing guides to make rules and regulations more clear and transparent. For example, according to the [Ash Center for Democratic Governance](#) and Innovation at Harvard, best practices for modern cities are to “Post permit and license process maps online for the city staff and the public. Include details, such as key contact information, average timeline, average cost, and average number of procedural steps,” and “create a customer service culture within city staff, regardless of the regulatory task (issuing permits, performing inspections, etc.), that appreciates the monetary value of time to small businesses.” These practices can help ease tensions and build mutually beneficial relationships amongst business and public leaders.
2. Hold round table discussions with local business owners to diagnose the top factors that influence Laramie's ease of doing business and document amenity gaps that businesses will want to see filled when considering relocating to the city. Work with the city and county to come

3. Create a marketing strategy that “sells” Laramie’s open-for-business climate and enhances the outside perception of the region. This might include promoting local assets – such as family-friendliness, culture and recreation, deep talent pool and favorable tax climate, fiber connectivity, research and development job opportunities, easy access to transportation between I-80 and I-25, several rail lines (including the United Pacific), and two airports – to recruit businesses to the region. In addition to defined industry targets, the strategy should be geared toward companies that have remote workers, and spin-offs from larger corporations in Colorado. The marketing strategy should also include the promotion of success stories for national companies in Laramie and Cheyenne through video testimonials. Include a focus on the “Cowboys Worldwide” network that allows for support/spinoff businesses to grow within Laramie. Create an ambassador program, recruiting from retired business professionals, to consult with business leaders considering relocating to the region.
4. Partner with other economic development agencies in the region, such as Cheyenne LEADS, Colorado Counties/Alliances, and the Southeast Wyoming Economic Development District, to create an attraction plan that is standardized across the region but has the ability to include messaging that is hyper-localized. Develop consensus for desire/degree of collaboration and strategy for how to move forward.
5. Build a talent-engagement portal that highlights talent including interns, new graduates, and alumni, as well as career pathways with upward mobility, to encourage recent graduates to stay and attract back alumni who have left. Engage high school students in the portal’s development to get feedback about careers they are interested in, and use that information to expand programs like “Exploratory Studies” at UW and “Guided

Pathways” at LCCC that expose students to industry and different career paths.

6. Develop physical space to support companies at different levels and scales, including shovel-ready sites, spec buildings of 10,000 square feet or more, as well as shared-use facilities that are industry- or sector-specific. These spaces should specifically target and consider the needs of technology companies, home-based businesses or those in incubators that are outgrowing their space, and spin-offs from larger corporations in Colorado. Locations should be selected in partnership with city and county representatives.

## Measuring Success

- » **Strategy and marketing campaign** are publicized and updated at regular intervals
- » **Roundtables** are held, resulting recommendations are developed, and the three most pressing barriers are addressed
- » An **annual survey** of local businesses is conducted, to measure their:
  - » Sentiment around ease of doing business
  - » State of the “trailing spouse” issue
- » **Growth is demonstrated** in Laramie’s target industries, including Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, Manufacturing, and Finance and Insurance. To do this, track and increase:
  - » **Businesses expansions** – a transforming economy will see both growth and retraction of industry. Overall, the goal should be that 66% of all sectors are expanding by 2030.
  - » **Businesses in target industries** attracted to Laramie
  - » **Square footage** of new or redeveloped industrial and commercial space
  - » **Number of graduates** placed in local jobs



## Key Partners

Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Main Street Alliance, Business Resource Network, City of Laramie, Albany County, Cheyenne LEADS, Colorado Counties/Alliances, and the Southeast Wyoming Economic Development District, University of Wyoming, LCCC, WyoTech, Manufacturing Works, Wyoming Business Council/State of Wyoming, local developers

## Promising Practices

While **Austin, Texas** is a much larger community than Laramie, a state capitol, and a leader in population and economic expansion, this was not always the case. In 2003, a crisis was unfolding in Austin. The energy sector was once again facing a decline and the narrow technology sector that had shown much promise was faltering as well. 36,000 jobs had been lost in three years, and massive cuts in government programs and services were being made to balance budgets. A group of government and community leaders rose to proclaim they needed a strategy to end this cycle and truly diversify their economy. They formed “[Opportunity Austin](#)” to promote their assets, raise badly needed economic development capacity, and, most importantly, target the

industries that aligned with their assets. An aggressive recruitment campaign resulted in over 1,000 prospect visits and investment in home-grown entrepreneurial infrastructure. The chart here demonstrates how the economic development leaders exceeded their 10-year goals in almost every category. These accomplishments continue to pay dividends and the community is now on their third multi-year strategy.

The **Bloomington Technology Partnership** (BTP) runs a [web-based social media and talent attraction portal](#) to connect job seekers and companies. The partnership is a public-private initiative that was created to increase awareness of Bloomington, Indiana’s tech industry and to help individuals involved or interested in Bloomington’s tech industry make connections and find resources. . BTP is an initiative of the Bloomington Economic Development Corporation and is funded by the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana University, and Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington, as well as private industry grants and memberships.

In **Salina, Kansas**, the [Salina Area Chamber of Commerce](#) coordinates a Trailing Spouse Program, whereby local employers who are members of the chamber may submit the resume of the spouse or partner of a new or potential new hire. The Chamber of Commerce then forwards the resume and qualifications of the partner to companies who might be interested. This program is designed to assist with talent attraction by making it easier for outside hires’ partners to find employment, increasing the likelihood of relocation.

**Figure 26: Opportunity Austin: Reported Results**

	10-Year Results	10-Year Goal	Difference
New Jobs	226,800	189,000	+36,000
Payroll Increase	\$11.5 billion	\$13.7 billion	-\$2.2 billion
Corporate relocation announcements	306,600	64,980	4.7
Out-of-Region Visits	2,348	1,100	+1,188
Prospect Visits	1,409	500	+823
Regional Retention Visits	6,185	2,275	+3,534

Source: <https://www.austinchamber.com/about/opportunity-austin>

## Strategy 2. Support Increased Revenue and Wages for Existing Businesses



### Opportunity

Bring partners together to collaborate on solutions to reduce the cost of employment, increase revenues, and allow for employment and wage growth.

### Recommendation

**Create the Revenue Catalyst - a resource initiative for employers to reduce costs and increase revenues.**

### Action Steps

1. Support and help build the Laramie Chamber Business Alliance's (LCBA) educational and peer-networking platform to encourage cultural change within existing businesses, including scaling peer mentorship and info sharing, workshops on specific topics like recruiting techniques, and small business round tables. Work with major employers to identify industry champions who can serve as spokespeople, and partner with Main Street Alliance to loop in retail, food, and other small businesses in the downtown district.
2. Enhance the LCBA's growing role as a central place for businesses to plug in by updating and promoting the LCBA's "employer toolkits" for businesses in multiple industries with resources like easy step-by-step guides to permitting, comparable information about wages, and access to programs like Wyoming Grown that help promote local businesses.
3. Maintain relationships with resources like the College of Business, which can provide student talent via experiential learning, and involve the Laramie Young Professionals initiative to help employers find talent.
4. Develop a multi-business talent recruiting strategy with headhunter capacity that targets people in smaller towns and cities in the broader region. Look at the [Next Gen partnership](#) as a resource, potentially partnering to replicate that effort with a small business cohort.
5. Work with employers to explore joint initiatives to reduce individual costs, like new transportation solutions (once identified, collaborate and coordinate with Albany County, City Planning, and Public Works to design new pathways and update roadways), a health insurance pool for small businesses (explore Associated Health Plans, to help address the issue of lack of competition), subscription days with a telemedicine initiative, and shared daycare facilities.

## Measuring Success

- » **Number of businesses** participating and finding value in the network is measured by an annual business survey
- » **New initiatives** are launched with the goal of helping to decrease costs of employment
- » **Number of employees** placed at local firms is increased, especially in high-paying target industries
  - » Albany County's total workforce grew up by 30%, from 15,703 to 20,414
  - » The identified sectors that pay 1.5x above the median wage currently employ 1,684 workers (11% of total). In 10 years the goal is to see that ratio at 20% of the employment base
- » **"Brain drain"** is reduced, measured in collaboration with alumni offices

## Key Partners

Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Main Street Alliance, Business Resource Network, City of Laramie, Albany County School District Board, University of Wyoming, LCCC, WyoTech, Laramie Young Professionals, local employers

## Promising Practices

A coalition of economic development and private companies in **Evansville, Indiana** came together to use targeted social media campaigns for the recruitment of common employment opportunities. Research indicates that over 50% of people looking for new employment opportunities are using social media channels to do so. The pilot utilized employment ads to target people who once lived in the area or had some other publicly demonstrated connection to the community. This pilot delivered some success, but also allowed the companies to realize that their hiring processes were cumbersome and presented a barrier to the efficient transformation of someone's interest into a successful recruitment experience. The community is retooling the pilot and looking to relaunch in 2020.

**HealthSource RI** took advantage of the Affordable Care Act and aggressively focused on offering the Small Business Health Options Program to employers in the state. From offering online information and a registration platform, to working with trade groups and others who work with small businesses, they were able to enroll over 700 small businesses by 2018. This allowed these small businesses to lower their healthcare costs and in many cases offer health insurance for the first time.





## **Recommendations: Strengthening Town - Gown Relationships and Workforce - Industry Alignment**

## Strategy 3. Enhance Laramie as a “Campus Community”



### Opportunity

Strengthen Laramie as a campus community by collaboratively and cooperatively improving the physical connectivity of “town” to “gown” community assets (gateways, corridors, dorms, transportation) as well as the social integration of the campus population and community through sports, the arts, and co-sponsored or co-organized programs, projects, and services. This may take the form of a committee structure as a mechanism for effective partnerships and a way to build trusted relationships

### Recommendation

**Establish and strengthen effective mechanisms for coordinated Town-Gown co-investment that has buy-in from decision makers.**

In 2016 the Laramie Town Gown Association was created between the City of Laramie, Albany County, University of Wyoming, LCCC-Albany County campus, WyoTech, and the Prevention Management Organization of Wyoming. The purpose of this association is largely related to public safety on and off campus, and therefore is likely not the right vehicle for this effort. However, it might serve as a model for wider collaboration among municipal and community leaders and educational and training institutions.

### Action Steps

1. Bring partners to the table and create buy-in from those partners. To do this, it will be important for the group to agree on the key actions it will take and issues it will address, such as co-investing in infrastructure improvements (including housing) and co-hosting community-focused programs. This list should be limited to 3-5 items in the short term to build momentum and a track record of success. It will be crucial to document the partners' existing resources that can be used to address these issues and contribute to the action items. This will help coalesce the group around discrete objectives to work on together, create a sense of ownership, and foster acknowledgment that the partners around the table are key to making those changes happen.
2. Key to this process will be developing an appropriate and viable mechanism to accomplish the goals set out in this plan. This includes determining:
  - » What form should this entity take, and how do partners commit to participating?
  - » What are its mandates?
  - » What is the time frame for accomplishing its goals?

3. In order to influence decision makers, it will be necessary to develop a case that highlights the package of town-related assets that help a university recruit and retain students and recent graduates, faculty, researchers, and administrators, and which are of great value to all who call Laramie home. These assets include a vibrant culture, strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, high quality aesthetics and character, safe multi-modal roads and reliable infrastructure, and a wealth of well-paying job opportunities.
4. It will be important to cite and quantify the contributions of both the city and the university toward developing and maintaining those assets. This should be followed by coordinating contributions from each entity to financially support the achievement of these shared goals and objectives (see Catalysts to Growth, Recommendation 3, Revenue Enhancements).
5. It will be important to publicize this work to the greater public, holding forums and conducting open and transparent communication about the goals and actions of the committee. These forums should include the LCCC Student Leadership Committee, ASUW (UW's Student Senate), UW staff and faculty senates, and institutional offices like SLCE (Service | Leadership | Community Engagement) to give students, faculty, and staff a voice in shaping how the town is experienced and what is needed and wanted. Forums should also include K - 12 schools, UW's Office of Engagement and Outreach, Engagement Council, and Office of Research and Economic Development, LCCC Albany County Campus, and WyoTech to provide the perspective of educational and training institutions.
6. Set a baseline by measuring resident sentiment through an annual survey, and gathering data around the number of events and programs held for the community. A sentiment survey polls residents about whether they

view a particular thing or activity as getting better or worse. Sentiment and perceptions about the health of town-gown connectivity should be measured on a regular basis, possibly through the City of Laramie Community Survey (conducted at least every five years).

## Measuring Success

- » A **committee** is formed with defined bylaws or rules for governance
- » **Sentiment perceptions** of residents, students, faculty, staff, and employers about how they experience the town and/or campus and connectivity between the two is tracked and improves over time. This could be done by adding questions to the City of Laramie Community Survey (conducted at least every-five years)
- » Explore the creation of a **standardized event evaluation** form to create a record of demographics and general satisfaction of all attendees at UW-affiliated educational events that occur in the community.
- » Three to five **joint planning activities** are identified in the short, medium, and long term
- » A number of select **building, land, or infrastructure projects** are identified for coordinated contributions
- » A number of **social integration activities** (e.g. Main Street City Guide included in University of Wyoming scheduling) are identified for coordinated contributions



## Key Partners and Roles

Stakeholders	Role
Local Institutional Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» LBCA</li> <li>» Local businesses</li> <li>» City</li> <li>» Office of Tourism</li> <li>» Main Street Alliance</li> <li>» Library</li> <li>» UW marketing</li> </ul>	Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Arts, cultural events, and entertainment assets in town to students, faculty, staff</li> <li>» Educational events off campus</li> </ul>
Implementation Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» City Public Works; Planning and Zoning</li> <li>» University Infrastructure Department</li> <li>» UW trustees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increasing connectivity and decreasing physical barriers between the university and city</li> <li>» Determining effects of development on utilities and vice versa</li> <li>» Wayfinding</li> </ul>

**Current Example Underway:** Both the city and the university campus are currently undergoing planning efforts related to the built environment, such as the Wayfinding Master Plan developed in partnership with Laramie Main Street Alliance, the City of Laramie, and the University of Wyoming in August 2018. If planning efforts could be synchronized across partners in a similar manner more often, with an emphasis in planning documents on how cooperation can be mutually beneficial, it would result in fewer duplicative efforts, greater alignment, and economies of scale regarding impact for all stakeholders involved.

**Potential Future Initiative:** There are initiatives being discussed as part of this planning process that could affect town-gown relations in addition to bringing more broad-based benefits to Laramie as a whole, like a “Shop Local” policy for anchors, or the \$2 Challenge sponsored by the Boomerang and the UniWyo Credit Union.<sup>1</sup> This would encourage local learning institutions, as well as others like the hospital and local government offices, to spend more money locally or in-state. This could take the form of cooperative purchasing to lessen the burden on any one institution and increase collective impact.

<sup>1</sup> [Boomerang, UniWyo encourage shopping local with \\$2 challenge](#)

## Promising Practices

An innovative, collaborative living-learning space in **Pittsburg, Kansas**, [Block22](#) was selected as a recipient of the 2018 UEDA Award of Excellence in the Place + Innovation category. Block22 is a mixed-use living-learning community that features residential, commercial, dining, and entertainment spaces. It combines nearly 100 units of student housing for Pittsburg State University students with more than 16,000 square feet of innovation space for students to explore their own entrepreneurial ventures, while also contributing to the success of local entrepreneurs. Block22 is made up of four historic downtown buildings that are being renovated and restored. The project was made possible through a partnership between Pittsburg State University, the City of Pittsburg, and the Vecino Group, a Springfield-based development company.

In the Neighborhood Services Department of **Fort Collins, CO**, a [Community Liaison](#) is jointly funded by the city and Colorado State University. The liaison coordinates and facilitates student engagement, education, and volunteer opportunities to help bridge the CSU and Fort Collins communities. Past initiatives include themed conversation series, a bike library, and urban renewal projects.

**[Philadelphia Anchors for Growth and Equity \(PAGE\)](#)** is a partnership between the Economy League, the City of Philadelphia, and more than a dozen Philadelphia-area institutions that works to increase local purchasing by large institutional buyers to grow Philadelphia businesses, strengthen the local economy, create jobs, and build wealth. The 34 universities and hospitals located in Philadelphia together spend \$5.3 billion on goods and services every year, but nearly half of these dollars are currently spent outside of Philadelphia. Analysis of the local business landscape suggests that at least \$530 million of anchor dollars currently being spent outside of the region align with local market supply. Capturing just 25% of this half-billion dollar opportunity would translate into 1,250 new manufacturing jobs and 4,000 indirect jobs in Philadelphia.

## Strategy 4. Strengthen Connections Between Educational/Training Providers and State and Regional Employers



### Opportunity

Strengthen collaborations between training providers, educational institutions – including high school, technical training, community college, and university – and private employers to enhance workforce and industry alignment and support talent retention.

### Recommendation

**Create an industry consortium to enhance talent placement and promote Laramie as a destination for education and intellectual capital.**

### Action Steps

1. Bring together existing educational and training organizations that are currently performing employer engagement in order to understand how outreach to private sector employers is currently conducted, how feedback is being recorded, and what potential exists to share that feedback. Connect with mentor communities that have strong industry-workforce relationships to learn and adopt best practices.
2. Fully define the sectors this consortium/network will focus on, such as the UAS/UAV<sup>1</sup> initiative, Big Data, or cyber security. Start with hospitality and tourism as a top leading industry, as well as the construction trades, manufacturing, and professional scientific and technical services as high-paying target industries.
3. Map the current and emerging workforce needs of those industries, and create a population target with which to build those skills. For example, focus on young residents lacking traditional educational training and in need of basic skills; older adults re-entering the workplace, e.g. re-training workers in the energy sector; work-study or internships for current students; and an ‘attract back’ program for former students who have left the region.
4. Focus on industry needs and form stronger connections with the business community. Work with partners who are or represent business and industry leaders who can provide employer perspective and support. Create a common rallying point – a call to action – as part of the plan. Survey employers that take on new talent to understand what has worked and what is missing.

<sup>1</sup> UAS/UAV: Unmanned Aerial Systems/Vehicles (i.e., drones)



5. Work with educational providers to develop programs that emerging industries need. Tailor existing programs to better prepare students for real-world issues including networking and soft skills.
  - » Use hybrid educational models for training
  - » Strengthen internships and service learning opportunities with local companies
  - » Establish training program partnerships with businesses and schools
  - » Promote skills earned through the trades in addition to traditional education
  - » Scale the “Live Local Work Local” program
  - » Build on existing programs, including work-study, Job Corps, apprenticeships, and Live Local Work Local
6. Establish an employer relations team to work with local businesses. Create agreement among various departments at UW and LCCC so that businesses are called on for internship, work-study, and other experiential learning opportunities in a coordinated manner, for example once per semester by one entity, rather than ad hoc throughout the year by various departments and representatives.
7. Work with employers engaged in this initiative to identify common costs associated with hosting interns or apprentices. Create and define incentives that reduce or offset the costs of onboarding for employers, which might include first pick of talent, coordinated purchasing, or a salary match to reduce barriers to bringing on these types of positions.
8. Convene groups of people who have firsthand experience of job hunting, working, and advancing in Laramie. Develop a cohesive voice to pursue joint action opportunities to influence policy and seek funding for initiatives that promote Laramie as a destination for education and intellectual capital and strengthen connections between the business community and education/training providers, such as:
  - » Increasing access to Wyoming Workforce training grants
  - » Expanding the Hathaway Scholarship program, including broadening to the trades and increasing the dollar value granted
  - » Incentivizing the implementation of new degree programs to provide training in high-demand fields
  - » Exploring state rules that regulate education about food fermenting
  - » Lobbying to create a Wyoming equal protection law
  - » Starting basic workforce training earlier in the educational process – for example the Perkins fund, which will provide over \$5 million in federal funding to Wyoming during the 2019-20 school year for youth Career and Technical Education
  - » Enhancing articulation between community college and university, increasing current TwoPlusTwo transfer agreements and sharing students
  - » Promoting UW and Laramie to international students and increasing international student engagement both on and off campus. This can include the engagement of international students in entrepreneurial programming.
  - » Advocating for “Next Gen 2.0,” focusing on industries like Construction, Recreation, Art, Food, and Boutique Manufacturing
  - » Advocating for a housing tax or tuition credit to incentivize graduates to stay and attract high school and college alumni back to Laramie

## Measuring Success

- » **Employer complaints** about skills mismatch are decreased, measured by annual business survey
- » Overall quality of life and sentiment that “Laramie is a great place to work” by all segments of the population are increased, measured by the City of Laramie Community Survey (conducted at least every-five years)
- » **Number of internships** hosted by local companies is increased
- » **Student retention** in the region and the state is improved, tracked and reported by alumni offices
- » **Median wage** is increased from \$45,816 to \$63,000
  - » Focus on median wage increases for those aged 25-44, from \$53,405 to \$71,000

## Key Partners and Resources

Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, NextGen Partnership, Wyoming Excels Program (Curriculum development with industry), business advisory groups or similar at UW, WyoTech, LCCC, and ACSD, UW Office of Engagement and Outreach and Office of Research and Economic Development, LCCC Albany County Campus, WyoTech, K-12 schools, Wyoming Works, Rotary (as a representative group of business and professional leaders), private industry partners, large employers, local business owners, entrepreneurs with new business ventures, startups, high-tech companies, recent graduates from educational institutions, young professionals, new families

There are many potential mechanisms to fund workforce development initiatives like these, including implementing BOCES, collaborative efforts in pursuing federal money, like EDA funding, or accessing the city’s Economic Development Fund for workforce initiatives.

## Promising Practice

Provided through the **Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC)**, [InternBR](#) is an eight-week summer program that connects students to local employers and provides professional development workshops for the fellows and employers. The fellows also participate in local service activities and social events. This program is supported by relationships with area universities, who help develop and host the workshops for both students and employers.



## **Recommendations: Fostering Tech, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship**



## Strategy 5. Develop and Expand Tools and Programs for Laramie's Entrepreneurs, Startups, and Small Businesses



### Opportunity

There are numerous high-quality programs that serve entrepreneurs in the community – however, they are decentralized and not all are accessible through a single information source. Entrepreneurs that seek out these resources will find them – but it would help if they were packaged in a way that gives the user a clear understanding of what exists, how they relate, and how effective they are. This improvement will also help stakeholders better understand how they can work collaboratively to deliver non-duplicative services, fill gaps that are missing, and scale existing (or develop new) programs and tools to ensure that all innovators, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and startups have what they need to thrive.

### Recommendation

**Develop an Entrepreneurial Partnership that coordinates and helps promote the primary organizations that are serving entrepreneurs, startups and small businesses.**

Task this group with two actions:

1. Mapping entrepreneurial resources so entrepreneurs are better apprised of what is available.
2. Identifying opportunities to scale and refine programs and to enhance collaboration and coordination between programs.

### Action Steps

1. Identify a third party individual or organization (i.e., a non-entrepreneurial program operator) to serve as the organizer of the Entrepreneurial Partnership. This will assure objectivity and an allowance of time/capacity that can support the advancement of activities. Have all economic development partners that assist entrepreneurs submit their list of services and resources to the organizer.
2. Convene the Entrepreneurial Partnership and schedule a brainstorming and deliberation session aimed at:
  - » Defining roles regarding collaboration between organizations
  - » Identifying any redundancies in program/service offerings, and developing a united message around where entrepreneurs can find particular services and resources
  - » Creating a glossary of terms and definitions, easy to understand labels, and titles

3. Develop tools that help entrepreneurs find existing funding sources, such as a website/portal that lists funding sources available; allows for easy navigation depending on needs; and captures the entrepreneur's contact information for follow-up by a partnering organization. This may entail adopting the Wyoming Business Council's database and updating it to be more accurate and easily used in Laramie.

- » Utilize information regarding entrepreneurial needs captured from this resource and via events to host an annual Entrepreneurial Partnership work-planning session that supports program enhancements

4. Explore alternative sources of assistance to entrepreneurs, such as:

- » A barter system that allows the trade of time and expertise between entrepreneurs and service providers
- » A directory of local businesses and individuals with skills to offer entrepreneurs
- » An entrepreneurial job board that allows young companies to post open positions including FT/PT positions as well as contract or assignment-based needs.
- » Reimagine and relaunch the Welcome Wagon – whereby entrepreneurial support organizations provide founders of new ventures with the suite of tools and resources they might need.

5. Ensure resources for entrepreneurs can be easily found online by using search engine optimization (SEO) and other marketing best practices.

6. Explore the creation of a business census or business licensing/registration system to create a more complete and accurate business listing. This listing could enable the city and its economic development partners to deliver resources and notify companies about new programs for funding, talent, or other incentives. A census could be administered by the city

and its economic development partners with help from students, and would ask for information like number of employees, years in business, sector, etc. A registration program might have a nominal annual renewal fee that is fixed for 10 years, the proceeds of which might roll back into a facade improvement, street beautification, or building improvement fund.

7. The Entrepreneurial Partnership would then identify opportunities to:

- » Increase the amount of capital accessed by local businesses
- » Create more international connections
- » Identify partnership opportunities with like-focused organizations throughout the region
- » Develop a locally funded Opportunity Zone/Opportunity Fund to invest in entrepreneurship

## Measuring Success

- » An **annual survey to entrepreneurs** is developed that tracks how organized and helpful they feel the entrepreneurial environment is, as well as their overall awareness of the various resources
- » A **centralized communication and data portal** is launched that highlights and tracks:
  - » **Number of new business start-ups** increases from an average of 80 per year to an average of 130 per year over the next 10 years. This would allow Albany County's business birth rate to climb from 8.6% today to 13%, establishing it as 1st among the 23 counties for highest business birth rate
  - » Business longevity increases
  - » **Business death** rate decreases
  - » Increased **employment diversity**, especially more women-owned businesses
  - » Increased number of **types of businesses** in Laramie

It will be important that tracking and metrics are consistent among entrepreneurial support organizations, and that this information, when compiled, is available to all. This can be accomplished by implementing an annual head count survey that is administered by economic development organizations or industry groups that represent various sectors or industries. This work can build on the Business Resource Network analysis conducted by the University of Wyoming Office of Research and Economic Development.



Consistency can be accomplished by implementing an annual head count survey that is administered by economic development organizations or industry groups that represent various sectors or industries

## Key Partners and Resources

Partners include Laramie Chamber Business Alliance (LCBA), Laramie Main Street Alliance, UW + Business Resource Network (College of Business, International Office, Research and Economic Development, Small Business Development Center, Wyoming Technology Business Center, Wyoming Women's Business Center), LCCC, ACSD, Co-working spaces and incubators, like the Durlacher, Laramie-grown business owners, Wyoming Business Council, City of Laramie, Albany County

Funding to develop the portal and possibly pay for the organizer's capacity will be critical. Grants from the EDA, USDA, LISC, and the Kaufman Foundation can be pursued to support the effort.

Other initiatives, like a "Shop Local" project, would encourage local anchors – such as institutions, hospitals, and local government – to support local businesses by purchasing products and services locally or in-state when feasible, given cost concerns. This could take the form of cooperative purchasing to lessen the burden on any one institution and increase collective impact. Finally, implementing BOCES could provide some additional funding for entrepreneurial education in Laramie.

## Promising Practice

**RI BizBuilder** is an online resource that allows an entrepreneur, startup, or small business to answer a few questions and then see what organizations or programs may be appropriate to service their needs. The backend of the website is a directory of all the organizations and programs that are available from federal, state, and local government as well as the array of non-profit organizations that provide service within the state.



## Strategy 6. Foster an Entrepreneurial Culture



### Opportunity

**Create and/or enhance a culture of entrepreneurship in Laramie to encourage greater rates of new business startups and also support current entrepreneurs and small businesses so that they can thrive.** Entrepreneurship, innovation, and startups are important ingredients for economic growth. Despite the rugged individual cowboy culture that exists in Wyoming, the region is relatively risk averse when it comes to starting new businesses. In order to inspire more entrepreneurship, it is important to encourage risk and failure by increasing exposure to entrepreneurship at all levels: both in incorporating more entrepreneurial, technology, and innovation opportunities inside of “traditional” K-12 and higher education, as well as encouraging and supporting those who have already started on the entrepreneurial path with needed tools and services.

### Recommendation

**Create a strategic marketing and recruiting plan that highlights Laramie’s existing entrepreneurial culture by celebrating successes and acknowledges the growth opportunities borne from failure; supports new and existing entrepreneurs through targeted education; and encourages seasoned entrepreneurs to relocate to the region.**

### Action Steps

1. Convene entrepreneurial leaders to hear about their experiences starting and building their businesses. Document which resources they might have taken advantage of if they had had access to them.
2. Document the positive aspects of entrepreneurship, such as working for one’s self (compatible with rugged individualism) and building meaningful opportunities for the community (following in the footsteps of successful local companies like Bright Agrotech, acquired by Plenty Farms in 2017). Celebrate successes to encourage more entrepreneurship and inspire more people to start businesses.
3. Redefine entrepreneurial wins to make it clear that success does not exclusively mean rapid growth, but includes celebrating notable milestones such as launching, new hires, and smaller points of incremental growth.

4. Replicate, scale, and promote entrepreneurial events to create more one-on-one, personal connections between new and experienced/seasoned entrepreneurs. This includes building existing business-to-business mentorship programs, networking events like Unstuck Mondays or 1 Million Cups – where entrepreneurs get together to discuss their biggest pain points and strategize about how to overcome current barriers to growth – and Fail Fest, where entrepreneurs celebrate their failures. This helps develop a culture of asking for help (rather than being guarded), allows entrepreneurs to learn from and commiserate with peers, and introduces them to tools that might exist within the entrepreneurial support system.
5. Identify strengths of other entrepreneurial communities. Create a shared definition of targeted growth goals in terms of types of firms, numbers of technologies licensed, etc.
6. Highlight the region's entrepreneurial amenities to target populations like alumni who have moved away, or successful business builders who might be recruited to the university. Compare the level of amenities to other communities that have strong entrepreneurial ecosystems and higher business birth rates to determine where improvements might be made.
7. Identify appropriate publicity engines for delivering these messages. Traditional printed or digital news publications like the Boomerang or Laramie Live may not be the best messenger for this campaign, due to limited capacity and reach. Explore new media like podcasting and social media, as well as non-print media like radio, and tap into resources like writers and media students at UW and LCCC.
8. Expand tools, resources, and support for freelancing and entrepreneurship – such as working with the city and county to fill in the gaps in broadband infrastructure and creating co-op healthcare for small businesses and the self employed – as well as access to non-traditional benefits including gym memberships and therapy.
9. Incorporate entrepreneurial training into primary, secondary, and post-secondary education by developing more STEM programs in K-12 schools, creating opportunities for secondary and post-secondary students to do hands-on learning through work-study within local businesses, developing more experiential learning opportunities such as having business owners sponsor semester projects or serve as guest lecturers, and using post-secondary students and faculty as resources for things like building business plans, coming up with marketing strategies, and other challenges businesses might face.

## Measuring Success

- » A **sense of community** is built so that when small businesses, entrepreneurs, and general community members are surveyed, more people share the sentiment that “Laramie is a great place to start and run a business; Laramie is a great place to innovate.”
- » Technology leaders and business owners lead these community building efforts, as measured by number of programs held by entrepreneurs and number of discrete participants
- » **Business births** are increased from the current annual average of 80 to an average of 130 per year by 2030. This will boost Albany County to 1st out of 23 counties and demonstrate that Laramie is a recognized place to start a business. (see Figure 7: Business Birth Rate by County, 2010- 2016)
- » **Number of jobs** among current startups and small businesses are increased

## Key Partners

Laramie Chamber Business Alliance (LCBA), Laramie Main Street Alliance, UW Business Resource Network (College of Business, International Office, Research and Economic Development, Small Business Development Center, Wyoming Technology Business Center, Wyoming Women’s Business Center), LCCC, ACSD, Co-working spaces and incubators, like the Durlacher, Laramie-grown business owners, Wyoming Business Council, City of Laramie, Albany County

## Promising Practices

**Tulsa, Oklahoma**, like many cities in the Heartland, has struggled with retaining and attracting young people to the area to grow their population. In November 2018, the George Kaiser Family Foundation launched the [Tulsa Remote Worker](#) program to attract professionals to the city. The program offers professionals a \$10,000 stipend, coworking space, housing stipend, and ways to connect with the community if they are willing to relocate to Tulsa. In order to be qualified to apply, workers needed to be able to move to Tulsa within 6 months and have full-time remote employment or be self-employed outside Tulsa County. Within the first 2 days, the program attracted over 1,800 applicants vying for roughly 20 to 25 spots.

**Roanoke Innovates** is a new public-private partnership to support the Roanoke Innovation Corridor. The large-scale branding initiative is designed to brand the region as a biomedical and tech hub so they can bring in more students, researchers and development. The city and university partners created “a common brand, strategy, and fully integrated website that will serve as a unifying platform for the various partners in marketing the Corridor to citizens, businesses, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders.”

**Kansas City, Missouri** was chosen to be a trial site for Google Fiber in 2011 in the Kansas City StartUp Village. This has since resulted in a boom of tech innovation and entrepreneurship, enabling Kansas City to brand itself as a tech hub for freelancers, tech startups, and also big industry.



## **Recommendations: Enhancing the Impact of Art, Recreational, and Cultural Tourism**



## Strategy 7. Maximize Tourist Attraction and Expenditure Capture



### Opportunity

Enable the capture of additional arts-oriented, cultural (including sports and history), and recreation-related tourism expenditures, and, where possible, fees, to generate additional tax revenue and further develop the tourism-related ecosystem. It is important that the region maximizes the amount of tourist dollars it is able to capture by improving programming, communication, and marketing, and making sure tourists, whether in Laramie for sporting events, outdoor pursuits, arts and culture, or historic tourism, are connected to multiple assets in Laramie beyond the “main attraction” or their original reason to visit.

### Recommendation

**Build the tourism economy around existing ecosystem assets. Connect, communicate, and leverage efforts across entities.**

### Action Steps

1. Convene partners to develop a series of information pathways that feature varied messaging for those drawn in by sports, outdoor recreation, the arts, history, as well as specific personas (e.g., daytrippers, I-80 drivers, craft brewery enthusiasts), with the goal of ensuring that people have a well-rounded experience of the region’s various types of activities. This includes coordinating with the marketing arm of these various amenities to ensure cohesion and consistency where possible.
2. Partner with the Laramie Marketing Taskforce to evaluate current marketing techniques and provide resources to scale these into an integrated tourism marketing campaign.
  - » Capture traffic off of I-80 through physical (brochures, magazines, coupon books and other publications) and digital marketing
  - » Track visitors via a mobile device ID campaign
  - » Build on Albany County Tourism’s recent social media revamp with regular and integrated social posts
  - » Continue current SEO work for tourism website, optimize site for mobile, support updated web wireframe

- » Enhance email marketing campaign
  - » Assess print publication reach that is packaged with digital banner ads
3. Co-sponsor and organize more events and programs like the following, leveraging UW's tourism degree, incubator, and tour guides:
    - » Special interest tours
    - » Recurring artist studio tours
    - » More races, tournaments, conferences, and festivals
    - » Highlight free or low cost recreation
    - » Neighborhood block parties
    - » Enhance and support live music
  4. Improve the digital experience for visitors and residents alike.
    - » Help restaurants, independent retailers, and other local small experiential businesses upgrade their online presence
    - » Partner with companies to offer discounted rates or bundles to visitors and daytrippers
  5. Develop a process to measure quality of experience, via visitor surveys or a rating system of hotels and other amenities. Pilot with specific audiences, such as "MICE" attendees – meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions – or UW sporting visitors.
  6. Support improvements to the on-the-ground experience across the city and county.
    - » Add wayfinding signage throughout community
    - » Identify amenity gaps, and advocate for enhanced transportation, connectivity, accessibility between and among neighborhoods
    - » Implement a code enforcement and beautification strategy for core tourist areas
  7. Support and advocate for additional education and training in key areas that support these industries:
    - » Use more local art throughout community
    - » Culinary and ag-tech
    - » Hospitality
    - » Craft brew
    - » Pro start program - high school culinary program
    - » Arts entrepreneurs training and support
    - » Recreation entrepreneurship

## Measuring Success

- » **Quality of the tourism experience** is tracked and improved, measured by a satisfaction survey comparable to the Service Excellence Program used in Steamboat Springs, CO.
- » **Metrics** are captured and are increased over time:
  - » Number of **events**
  - » Digital presence of local tourism-related ventures
  - » **Digital traffic** from local and out of region visitors
  - » Number of **overnight visitors**
  - » Tourism-related **expenditures**
  - » **Sales tax** revenues
  - » **Lodging tax** revenues

## Key Partners and Resources

**Partners:** Albany County Tourism, Laramie Marketing Taskforce (see Catalysts for Growth) Main Street Alliance, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance (LCBA), City of Laramie, Albany County, large employers, LCCC, UW, Museums, Territorial Prison, Downtown Shopping and Dining Establishments, Gryphon Theatre, Wyo Theatre, Motel/ Hotels, Harney Viaduct, Laramie Mural Project, Ice rink, Public Park. UW and State high school athletic association, LGBTQ events and Pride Festival

**Revenue streams:** all of this requires establishing additional funding to support tourism efforts, which may include:

- » Pursuing state support for events and physical assets
- » Taxing Airbnb and vacation rentals
- » Creating an Arts District – provide special incentives/support
- » A shop local campaign to benefit all businesses in these industries

## Strategy 8. Promote Laramie as the Culture Capital of Wyoming



### Opportunity

Capitalize on the existing vibrant arts scene and talent. Enable more to happen by developing a funding strategy that can be used to cover the administrative aspects of arts and culture organizations in order to support more diverse, inclusive arts and culture in Laramie, **making the area even more inclusive and welcoming to recruit more people to live, work, and visit.**

### Recommendation

**Develop a mini-grant fund for equitable and inclusive arts and culture initiatives that is earmarked for project administration and management.**

### Action Steps

1. Research what other successful communities are doing, tapping into the expertise of the Wyoming Arts Council and Americans for the Arts. Explore creating a City/County Arts Deputy position to staff the program. Look to successful, productive arts organizations in the community, like LPAC, to provide a best-practice implementation model for how to collaborate with the city to support more art in public places.
2. Identify available funding sources – both existing and future fund options – and create a budget for funding the program. An initial grant might come from the Wyoming Business or Arts Councils, national art funders, or local donors via the Community Foundation. The city should pursue the 7th cent tax for economic development, earmarking a portion of that for art within the city. Additional funds might come from local businesses, who can provide sponsorship dollars as well as a place to display art. Explore the development of a 1 percent policy, where 1 percent of the costs of capital construction projects is set aside for art installations.
3. Establish a Board of Advisors that is recruited from and accountable to the community. The Board of Advisors will detail the purpose, objectives, and goals of the program, define who the program will support, develop application criteria, and define benchmarks for equity. Assign an established non-profit partner like the Albany County Public Library or the Laramie Community Foundation to manage, facilitate, promote, or otherwise support the mini-grant fund. Ensure funding allocation accountability, and determine who must have authority, not just a presence, at the table.



4. Develop a list of fiscal sponsors that may serve as intermediaries for the grant money, and pursue funding options.
5. Seek feedback from the artist community, including those along the I-80 corridor, about ideas and events, such as building more art-centered physical spaces, installing public art to enhance existing assets, and creating programs and events that demonstrate the community's values. Pursue locals who are experienced in music booking, lighting and sound, etc., to save on operating costs and tap local expertise.
6. Identify additional places to showcase the projects that come out of the mini-grant fund, including the Laramie Plains Civic Center, Wyo Theatre, and the University of Wyoming's Museum and exhibition spaces.
7. Explore professional development opportunities for smaller, disadvantaged or underrepresented organizations to better take advantage of the mini-grant, including building coalitions of disparate arts groups and establishing mentorship or technical assistance program for new events.
8. Work with the Laramie Artist Project/ Touchstone Art Exhibition & Sale, Wyoming Art Party, and the UW Student Art League, that support local artist advancement and visibility. Explore bringing in major collectors to elevate Laramie and include high quality national and international artists.

## Measuring Success

- » The **number of new events** is tracked and increased
- » More arts initiatives are receiving a **cash match**
- » **Equity in action** is demonstrated and highlighted – showcasing a broader and more inclusive arts base
- » **Quality of life** for residents is increased – measured through annual sentiment survey
- » **Equitable and meaningful limitations** on the fund are established, including budget size, population served, and topics of priority

## Key Partners and Resources

**Partners:** City Council, Wyoming Arts Council, Americans for the Arts, Laramie Public Art Commission, Laramie Plains Civic Center, Wyo Theater, local theater companies, UW, Laramie Artist Project, Wyoming Art Party, Student Art League, Wyoming Community Foundation, local artists

**Funding:** Funding for arts and culture could come from establishing a fund for public art at the Wyoming Community Foundation, or from a push to increase the state allocation for the Art in Public Buildings legislation. Currently, one percent of construction costs of new, state-owned buildings must go toward placing artwork in the public setting, helping to beautify public buildings and draw attention to the wealth of artist experience within the region.

However, for the purposes of this plan, the city would prioritize funding solutions that are under local control, such as the **7 cent tax for economic development. A portion of that revenue would be earmarked for art within the city.**

## Promising Practice

In **Burlington, Vermont**, there is a [Burlington City Arts Community Fund](#) that offers grants for projects and programs that foster equity and inclusion in the city. Applicants to the program must include how their project will contribute to diversity and inclusion; “commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion” and “demonstrated community benefit” account for half of the eligibility criteria. Grantees are evaluated based on their success in these areas. This funding opportunity is made available through Burlington City Arts, which is a department of the city. The department started as a Mayor’s Art Council in 1981, and because of their successes and growing interest, the Burlington City Council established it as a department in 1990. It is structured as a two-headed entity; a non-profit with a board of directors is one governing body, and the Mayor is the other.

## Strategy 9. Sustainably Grow the Opportunity for and Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation and Related Tourism



### Opportunity

Maximize the usage and economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry in Laramie. More can be done to capitalize on the opportunity that outdoor recreation presents, from encouraging more outdoor events and programs, to marketing and amplifying existing recreational attractions, to supporting outdoor recreation entrepreneurship ventures (bike rental/repair shops, tour guides, etc.). These should all be marketed to bring more people to the area to live, work, visit, and play, but without exploiting them or putting unnecessary pressure on Laramie's infrastructure. Manageable, sustainable growth should be the goal.

### Recommendation

**Create an Outdoor Recreation Coalition that works to increase coordination and leverage resources to boost the use and economic impact of outdoor recreational assets.**

### Action Steps

1. Recruit organizations to join the coalition, form a board, and appoint an entity to spearhead efforts, manage funds, plan fundraising events, and generally lead the coalition.
2. Partner with the UW Haub School Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program to do a SWOT analysis or a resource inventory of all available outdoor recreation amenities in terms of local use and recruiting new users, including the forthcoming Pilot Hill Project.
3. Partner with the Laramie Marketing Taskforce to amplify messaging to attract additional visitors, residents, and businesses to the region, especially targeting tourists from Colorado, the Midwest, people heading to Jackson Hole and other regions, underrepresented cohorts – minorities, the LGBTQ community – I-80 drivers, and people who attend conferences in the community.
4. Work to refine messages related to the recruitment of workers who want to work where they play, and share messaging with wider regional marketing efforts such as those of the Main Street Alliance and the Laramie Chamber Business Alliance (LCBA). Amplify marketing of the outdoor recreation industry to attract visitors, residents, and businesses such as gear sales and rental companies, designers, manufacturers, and investors.

5. Support the prioritization and implementation of projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan - which includes finishing the GreenBelt to better connect those using it to downtown, which will increase patronage at downtown dining, shopping, and entertainment businesses. With many recreation opportunities located in the county, the city should work with Albany County to adopt policies that support recreation and maximize the potential the surrounding area has to offer.
6. Develop a Trail Etiquette program to help sustainably manage growth by guiding behavior on regional trails to ensure that this opportunity brings net economic benefit, minimizes maintenance and repair expense, and increases user satisfaction and therefore the rate of return visits. Explore partnership with a group like Common Outdoor Ground – a local organization providing volunteer support for the sustainability of outdoor spaces in southeast Wyoming and promoting responsible and informed outdoor ethics.



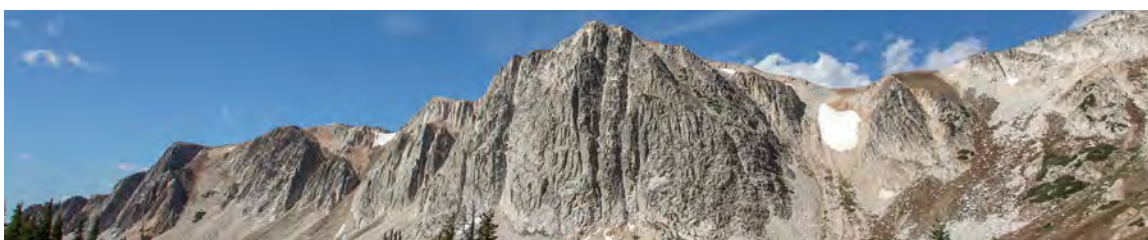
## Measuring Success

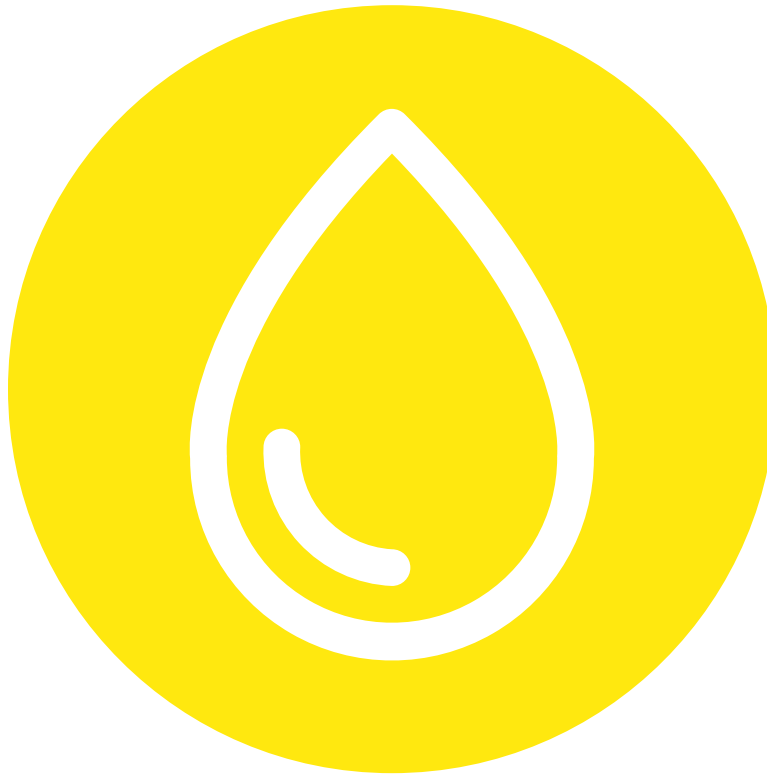
- » The coalition is formed with interested parties involved
- » Outdoor recreation assets, strengths, and weaknesses are catalogued and documented to identify gaps for improvement
- » **Number of businesses** created are tracked and increased
- » **Number of jobs** supported in the industry are tracked and increased

## Key Partners and Resources

**Partners:** City of Laramie Parks and Rec Department, Friends of the Laramie Skatepark, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Pole Mountain and Medicine Bow units of the United States Forest Service, Happy Jack recreation area, Vedauwoo - climbing and hiking, Wyoming Territorial Prison, Pilot Hill, University of Wyoming (including the Golf Course), Golforth Reservoir, Mortenson Lake, and Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuges, Rogers Canyon (Bureau of Land Management), The Laramie River, Curt Gowdy State Park, Snowy Range Ski Area (SRSA), Snowy Range Snowmobile Club, Woods Landing, Medicine Bow Nordic Association, High Plains Harriers, Laramie Bikenet, Laramie Racing, Rendezvous Wyoming, Wyoming Women's Council, Outdoor-oriented business leaders in the community

**Resources:** Revisit the Recreation Millage grant process to identify opportunities for more collaboration.





## **Recommendations: Extending and Maintaining Infrastructure**

## Strategy 10. Increase Broadband-Related Infrastructure Investments



### Opportunity

**Make Laramie the state leader in connectivity,** prioritizing investment in proactive broadband infrastructure upgrades to help attract and retain people and businesses to the region.

### Recommendation

**Form the Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition: A public-private partnership.**

### Action Steps

1. Bring all the players to the table to design a system that fits the community for now and the future. Create the Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition, ensuring there is representation from larger broadband users (the University of Wyoming, Laramie School District, Iverson Memorial Hospital, City of Laramie, and Albany County) as well as representatives of other consumer categories (e.g. Main Street businesses, tech and manufacturing companies, home-based businesses, real estate owners).
2. Charge the coalition with creating a broadband master plan, which includes setting a mission/vision/framework for planning, as well as a series of actions that will fulfill the stated mission. This includes:
  - » Working with providers to evaluate the system, mapping the baseline of existing providers and cost, capacity, and reliability attributes
  - » Creating a desired infrastructure map
  - » Planning for future economic growth factors that will influence the need for increased broadband capacity, including increased numbers of telecommuters, entrepreneurs, freelancers, and sole proprietors, increases in Advanced Manufacturing, and Laramie's growth as a data analysis hub
  - » Defining how to engage end-users to take advantage of broadband access enhancements through things like on-line learning and establishing home-based businesses, and using tourism and main street online capabilities
  - » Build a user base through market building and education

3. Develop educational materials that demystify broadband by explaining what it is why the community should make it a priority. Develop a Greater Laramie Region Broadband Coalition website that shows what is available and at what cost.
  - » Encourage competition between providers with incentives based on quality of service and whether providers invest in the community
  - » Establish and enhance free Wi-Fi in locations such as government facilities, UW, Ivins Memorial Hospital, downtown, Cirrus Sky, and Adams Business Park, and create a downtown high-speed hotspot
  - » Create a Community Committee with residents, business owners, and community partnerships to raise awareness about these improvements
4. Creatively finance the system, potentially by creating a broadband utility.
  - » The City of Laramie is not eligible for the USDA Reconnect program but portions of Albany County are, which may allow for regional connectivity – especially to tourism and cultural assets
  - » Build capacity to support current end users and explore expanded use with projected economic growth.
  - » Explore a public-private partnership model that can support network enhancements
  - » Consult the Wyoming Broadband Program and Advisory Council
  - » Support data access enhancements to all parts of the region where growth is targeted
  - » Develop a network management and technical/IT support group to advise consumers – offer some level of service free of charge or allow for service provider sponsorship
- » Utilize build opportunities to expand access. Adopt a Dig Once Policy that allows for additional conduit for future expansion, establishes design criteria to allow share trenches, requires conduit for all new construction, and grants right-of-way access
- » National best practices from the Fiber to the Home Council show that adopting [Dig Smart](#) policies can bridge the digital divide and save public dollars. For example, a Dig Once policy mandates that fiber optic conduit - the flexible plastic pipes to allow for communications cables - be installed whenever there is construction on publicly-funded infrastructure projects. This reduces the majority of the cost of broadband projects, which is often the digging and tearing up of roads, and helps remove barriers associated with community broadband projects. Installation should be pursued to the maximum extent reasonable at the local government's discretion and should consider concerns for installation and construction projects intersecting with waterways or other less-than-ideal conditions



## Measuring Success

- » Laramie should become the **state leader in connectivity** – there is no other Wyoming community with an articulated development plan. This can be accomplished by forming the coalition, and creating a master plan by gathering data, establishing benchmarks, and determining goals
- » Ensure city policies prepare the region for future broadband, including **improved service, quality, and assets**
- » **Education materials** are created
- » **User base** increases

## Key Partners

City of Laramie, Albany County, University of Wyoming, LCCC, ACSD, Ivinson Memorial Hospital, Main Street Businesses, tech and manufacturing companies, home based businesses, real estate owners

## Promising Practices

The [City of Boston](#) is working to cultivate a broadband ecosystem that serves the current and future connectivity needs of residents, businesses, and institutions. The real estate development process offers a unique opportunity to create a building stock in Boston that enables this vision, in partnership with the development community, the Boston Planning and Development Authority, and the City of Boston. Additionally, a [Digital Equity Fund](#) was created to support local organizations in bridging the digital divide. The fund, which is administered by the City of Boston's Innovation and Technology Department, disperses \$100,000 in grants every year towards projects that help Bostonians improve digital literacy for professional or educational purposes and increase broadband access.

The **City of Chattanooga, Tennessee** partnered with the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga, a municipally-owned electric utility, to offer broadband for residents and businesses within the city's 600 square-mile radius.

# Strategy 11. Prioritize Municipal Infrastructure Improvements to Increase Economic Competitiveness

## Opportunity

Identify prioritized areas for investment in proactive and managed municipal infrastructure upgrades to help attract and retain people and businesses to the region.



## Recommendation

**Plan for proactive road, stormwater, sanitary sewer, and water utility expansion and improvement in targeted growth areas.**

## Action Steps

1. Convene key partners to review current infrastructure capital plans and progress updates and identify potential priorities and partnerships. Define growth areas as well as geographic limits to growth so lands can be annexed and stakeholders are in agreement about where growth can occur. This could take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that articulates where the agreed upon growth areas are. The MOU might also include delayed improvement provisions, or areas ripe for land swaps.
2. Work together to prioritize infrastructure expansion and improvement projects (like current Bill Nye Sewer, Reynolds Sewer, and 3rd Street water upgrades) in targeted infrastructure improvement areas.
3. Move toward cooperative planning in identified development areas. Establish joint planning coordination between the city, county, and lead institutions like the hospital and university in order to coordinate timelines and maximize investment efficiencies for infrastructure improvements.
4. Identify funding sources for road and stormwater improvements (the city currently uses enterprise funds to account for water, wastewater, and solid waste services) and, in the case of new housing, commercial, or industrial development, establish a framework for determining which entities bear what portion of the cost burden.
5. Create a City-County-State Asset Management Inventory system. This entails completing the city's infrastructure inventory GIS mapping for identification and management of infrastructure improvements, updating basic enterprise resource planning systems, such as finance modules, as well as integrating county and state planned and ongoing construction activity layers to the city's Capital Improvement Planning GIS site.
6. Educate the public about initiatives like the city's priority water line replacement plan.

## Measuring Success

- » **Asset Management Inventory system** is developed and launched
- » A **shared vision and timeline** commitment among partners is established, synergy is increased
- » Number of surprises and time spent reacting is reduced
- » Ability to serve current and future utility users is improved
- » **Water utility break history** is lessened over time
- » **Sewer backups** and other reactive maintenance is reduced
- » **PCI** is increased

## Key Partners and Resources

**Partners:** City of Laramie Public Works, UW Engineering, Albany County Government, Private Industry, WYDOT

**Resources:** There are a number of ways we might fund infrastructure improvements, including a specific purpose excise tax, special tax districts, municipal loan authority, Wyoming State Revolving Funds Program (SRF), Wyoming Water Development Commission (WWDC), fees or coordinated co-investments in mutually beneficial projects from area nonprofits, a Stormwater enterprise fund/utility, or accessing federal money (for example, targeting the EDA for broadband funding). There are other tools like the Wyoming Business Council's Community Development Block Grant Program and Business Ready Community Grant and Loan Program that can be used to invest in infrastructure, from airport improvements to community amenities to landscaping and more.

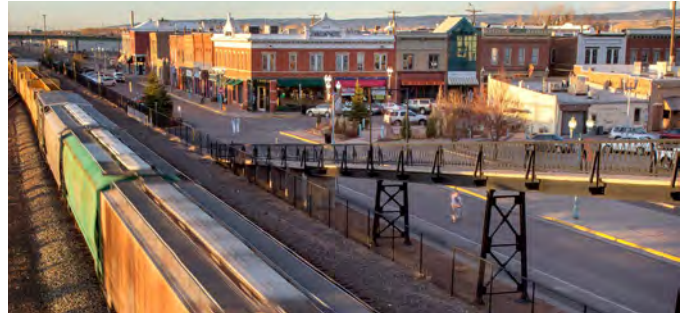
The city is currently updating a capital improvement plan for infrastructure. According to financial forecasts of water and sewer rate payers, capital funding levels are in place for improvements to these systems. The

city reviews the needs for infrastructure and determines rate increases by considering projected projects, funding sources, and cash flows. Where the city falls short is in non-business funds which are supported by taxes, such as stormwater and street funding. For stormwater improvements, there are grant match opportunities through the federal government, and the State of Wyoming's appropriations committee is recommending in this legislative session to approve a storm drain utility without voter election, which can be used to fund stormwater systems in Laramie. In 2018, Albany County citizens passed a \$27 million local specific purpose tax to assist with the funding of storm and street projects.

## Promising Practice

**Prince Edward Island** published a [Municipal Infrastructure Asset Inventories Guide](#) for Municipalities, which aims to aid the region's municipalities on their path to develop a comprehensive infrastructure asset inventory, evaluate the current condition and performance of their infrastructure, and outline all anticipated costs associated with operation and maintenance.

## Strategy 12. Prioritize Infrastructure Planning for Energy Resilience and Carbon Reduction



### Opportunity

Increase energy resiliency and reliability by making needed infrastructure improvements, lessening dependence on one type of energy, and proactively preparing for and attracting the future of jobs and industry.

### Recommendation

**Improve energy infrastructure and diversify energy portfolio to increase economic competitiveness and develop Laramie as a leader in this area.**

### Action Steps

1. Complete the energy audit at the city level. Support city-wide enterprise resource planning to improve efficiencies and lay the groundwork for an enhanced grid and smart technology.
2. Form a Joint Task Force among County Commissioners, the City of Laramie, and UW to communicate and share resources and determine the future energy needs of the region.
3. Explore opportunities for renewable power distribution to the city and county through Rocky Mountain Power's wind turbines.
4. Work with UW on wind and solar energy research. The Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources' multidisciplinary program has students who are interested in sustainability, and the university has space and buildings for more installations. The city should collaborate with the university on its sustainability goals.
5. Specifically attract green technology companies, including those in the Internet of Things, data analytics, cyber security, and blockchain industries, but also companies interested in integrating renewables into their energy mix. Market energy diversity to recruit residents and businesses.
6. Identify renewable energy pilot projects such as microgrids (like those in Fort Collins), solar and wind farms, and downtown co-gen. Re-activate UW's solar panels and wind tower, and look at the city's properties for installations.
7. Engage the public through city-wide round tables to disseminate information, or by hosting open houses at the power plant and water treatment facilities.
8. Explore becoming a carbon neutral city, as well as passing legislation to encourage renewable energy and increase net metering.



## Measuring Success

- » **Infrastructure is improved** in key areas of Laramie, defined collaboratively, and a more reliable, renewable grid for the region's businesses is created
- » The number and length of **power outages** is documented and reduced
- » The number of **pilot projects and education outreach** to the public is increased

## Key Partners

City of Laramie, Albany County Commissioners, UW, LCCC, LCBA, private employers and utilities



## **Recommendations: Expanding Housing Quality and Quantity**

## Strategy 13. Work to Expand the Quality and Quantity of Housing Options Available



### Opportunity

Increase the volume of construction and enhance the quality and diversity of Laramie's housing stock in strategic locations to contribute to a more livable Laramie.

### Recommendation

**To alleviate the negative consequences of the existing housing environment in Laramie, the following objectives can be pursued:**

1. Enhance the role that the city is playing with respect to code development and enforcement, as well as to the planning and policy environment related to housing development/redevelopment.
2. Increase the financing options available through public-private partnering opportunities.
3. Increase the pipeline of developers and laborers interested in working in Laramie.
4. Identify opportunities for infill development in strategic locations to prove the market.
5. Better understand the short and long-range impacts that the University of Wyoming's dorm construction will have on the existing housing stock.

## Action Steps

The City of Laramie can support an increase in housing development through the following actions:

### 1. **Conduct a Code Audit and Establish a Liaison Role:**

- The city is currently conducting a code audit to identify barriers to development. Recommendations from this audit should be implemented the following year.
- » In addition, launch a “Did You Know” campaign that covers existing regulations and promotes defined housing demands and opportunities to inspire developers to build more in the city and promotes understanding of rules and regulations
  - » Publish this information in a roadmap format to provide property owners, developers, and investors with a clear process and expected timeline
  - » Identify an individual as a city/county liaison for developers and property owners
  - » Maintain consistency with the code, and where change is necessary make sure communications are clear to support developer confidence. If disagreements occur engage an outside code review officer to assist in mediating disagreements and provide unbiased advice to both parties
  - » Identify code restrictions around missing middle housing typologies including ADUs (accessory dwelling units) to support increased density
  - » Empower city staff to have some latitude in working with developers rather than adopting a “no” approach, learning from peer cities

### 2. **Encourage Development:**

- » Establish meaningful partnerships to fill housing gaps and encourage strategic housing growth
  - » Create public-private partnerships: public sector, private sector, and institutional players can leverage resources to overcome the risks and financial challenges around housing. This can include land acquisition costs, funding, permitting and variances, or technical skills. Leverage city-owned property through a public-private partnership
  - » Development incentives: The city can look at tax incentives, fee waivers, and easing the permitting and approval process to encourage housing by lowering barriers of entry for new development
- » Identify infill opportunities to increase housing diversity within the core area of the city
  - » Secure land: the city can amass properties through conventional purchasing, land trusts, trades, or development authorities to incentivize housing growth. These properties can be sold at a lower cost to developers with projects that align with community goals
  - » Infrastructure: city investment in improved streets, bike facilities, sidewalks, and landscaping through CIP funding and/or bond or tax initiatives support private sector investment
- » Initiate planning efforts that consider growth opportunities in north and West Laramie to determine how these areas should grow, and aid the city and county in conversations around what type of development should occur to attract investment



- » Identify partners, including the city and property managers, to explore the development of a Rental Registry and Inspection Program to reduce blighted properties that are negatively impacting property values and neighborhood investment. Work with Laramie County Community College to develop/expand existing renter education programs

### 3. **Seek Financing:**

- » Develop a program that supports the creation of deed restricted housing that allows for the preservation of affordability through the use of initial subsidies or other development/redevelopment cost reductions
- » Seek to partner with financial institutions to capitalize new/expanding developers
- » Work with the [Cheyenne Housing Authority](#) to evaluate their capacity to expand beyond low-income housing and identify opportunities for mixed-use development and the expansion of workforce housing options
- » Develop housing rehabilitation funding programs that can support residents aging in place and making needed home improvements and new market entrants who want to enhance housing quality. Targeted strategies around ADU funding for infill development can help by providing housing options for aging residents and income opportunities to offset mortgage costs for new home buyers
- » Work with the Wyoming Community Development Authority to offer additional first time homebuyer access as more properties are built in Laramie.

### 4. **Build the Ecosystem:**

- » Seek to create a building supply warehouse to provide materials to local developers; this could also take the form of a collective purchasing group. Either approach would allow for a reduction in the cost of materials
- » Work with educational institutions to increase training – both skills and entrepreneurial – to support an increase in the number of available developers, contracting companies, and laborers
- » Recruit developers in coordination with other regional partners

## Measuring Success

- » The number of **new owner-occupied and rental units** is increased to meet target 2030 numbers
- » The number of **units rehabbed** per year is increased to help meet housing demand
- » The number of residents **spending over 30%** of their income on housing is reduced
- » The **diversity of homes** for all residents is increased, including for the elderly, first time homebuyers, middle-income persons, and families and persons with special needs

## Key Partners and Resources

**Partners:** City of Laramie, Funders, Developers and Builders, Realtors, Property Managers, Property Owners, UW, LCCC, WyoTech

**Resources:**

- » Wyoming Community Development Authority
- » Banks such as Wyoming Financial are a possible finance partner for bond/finance
- » Downtown Development Authority
- » Federal programs such as CDBG and EDA funding should be looked at to support programmatic development
- » Brownfield Redevelopment Grants, Opportunity Zones, New Market Tax Credits

## Promising Practice

**Building Great Futures** is a collaborative initiative that dually addresses workforce concerns and issues of blight in Cleveland by using abandoned homes as a skills training platform for youth. The goal of the program is to prepare young people, especially those from impoverished areas, for high-paying skills jobs, but it also provides youth with mentorship, transportation, and services beyond construction skills gained in the 10-week program. Building Great Futures is orchestrated by Cleveland Habitat for Humanity, Boys and Girls Club, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, and Cuyahoga County, and is also supported financially by the county and corporate and individual donations.





Oaxaca

F.L.H. VII





# Implementation & Funding Resources



# Implementing the Plan

To ensure the success of the Thrive Laramie 10-Year Community Economic Development Strategic Action Plan, an Implementation Committee will be formed from existing Steering Committee members who will initiate a “recommit” process, affirming their interest in continuing to engage. Implementation Committee members will provide guidance, direction, and accountability as they serve as lead advocates, doers, and fundraisers for the plan.

The Implementation Committee will be supported by a number of working groups and action committees associated with each of the plan’s focus area. Convening partners have been identified to lead each working group. They are charged with recruiting working group participants, inviting community organizations with a stake in a given strategy area to be a part of its implementation.

## Funding the Plan

The portfolio of recommendations in the Thrive Laramie Action Plan will require significant funds. As was mentioned above, Wyoming’s tax structure and state funding fluctuations limits the ability of Laramie, Albany County, and partners to invest in the initiatives, programs, and services required for growth that are identified in this plan. A number of new and existing mechanisms should be explored as possible ways to finance the recommended actions.

### Grants

#### Federal Grants

- » U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), Small Business Administration (SBA) , and Department of Agriculture (USDA) offer grants like the Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) program, geared toward providing support to organizations assisting **businesses** in rural communities.
- » U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers grants for **housing**.
- » U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers grants and match opportunities for **stormwater** improvements.
- » USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) provides grants and loans to farmers and businesses for **energy efficiency** improvements and purchase of wind, solar or other renewable energy systems, and also provides grants to help farmers with energy audits and renewable energy development.
- » USDA ReConnect Program is a pilot to provide grants, loans, and grant/loan combinations to increase retail **broadband** service to customers in rural areas currently lacking sufficient broadband access.

#### National Grants

- » Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) offers grants for important components of community revitalization such as **housing, economic development, safety, education, and sports and recreation**.
- » Kaufman Foundation awards grants to organizations assisting small businesses and **startups** around the country.

## State Grants

### » Wyoming Business Council

- » Wyoming Main Street Grants are for main street district revitalization efforts including promotion and design.
- » Small Business Energy Audit/Retrofit Grant Program
- » Business Ready Community Grant and Loan Program funds economic or educational development infrastructure projects which may include, but are not limited to: **water, sewer, streets and roads, telecommunications**, airports, purchase of **rights of way, purchase of land, buildings, facilities**, industrial and business parks, **industrial site or business district development**, amenities within a business or industrial park, landscaping, recreational and convention facilities and other physical projects.
- » Broadband Development Grant Program
- » Community Development Block Grant Program works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses.
- » Workforce Development Training Grants

### » Wyoming Water Development Commission (WWDC)

- » Small Water Project Program (SWPP) grant funding provides incentives for improving watershed condition and function, including the construction or rehabilitation of small reservoirs, wells, solar platforms, pipelines and conveyance facilities, springs, wetland developments, environmental projects, irrigation works, windmills, rural community fire suppression systems, and recreational projects. Activities should improve watershed condition and function and provide benefits for wildlife, livestock, and the environment. Projects may provide improved water quality, riparian habitat, habitat for fish and wildlife, and address environmental concerns by providing water supplies to support plant and animal species or serve to improve natural resource conditions.

- » **Wyoming Arts Council Grants** to fund local community art projects.

## Local Grants

- » Laramie Community Foundation might encourage local donors to fund the arts, town-gown initiatives like wayfinding and community promotion, improvements to recreation amenities, and other quality of life improvement projects in Laramie.
- » Recreation Millage Grant - Used to fund arts initiatives and identify opportunities for more collaboration

## Loans

- » Wyoming State Revolving Funds Program (SRF) assists public entities with funding for **water or wastewater infrastructure** improvement projects.
- » Municipal Loan Authority offers debt security issued by the municipality or county to finance capital expenditures, including the construction of highways, roads, bridges, and other **infrastructure** improvements.

## Other Local Options

- » **Fee generation** from tourism amenities to fund **tourism-related** improvements.
- » **City/non-profit partner project fund** to foster coordination and support mutually beneficial community enhancements like those outlined in this plan.
- » **1 percent policy**, where 1 percent of the costs of capital construction projects is set aside for **art** installations.
- » **Laramie Regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)**, under Wyoming state statute, provide a method whereby school districts and community college districts or any combination may work together and cooperate to provide educational services – including but not limited to postsecondary education, vocational-technical education, adult education, and services for children with disabilities – when the services can be more effectively provided through a cooperative effort. If passed by local districts, a mill would be levied that could be used to fund actions in this plan, including entrepreneurial education and workforce development items.
- » **Establishing a Stormwater Enterprise Fund/Utility.** A stormwater utility, like a water and sewer utility, is an assessment district established to collect funds specifically for stormwater management. A customer's rate is usually determined based on the customer's contributions of stormwater runoff into the infrastructure system, and may go directly towards a stormwater utility's infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, plan development and control measures, and water-quality programs. It may be added to an existing utility entity, but is frequently given to a city's public works or water department to manage.
- » **City Economic Development Fund** created through a 7-cent tax for economic development. It could be used to fund many components of this plan, from supporting **public art** within the city, to **workforce initiatives**, to purchasing **open space** to maintain the city's local character and encourage inward growth rather than sprawl.
- » **Other Local Tax Reform Options**
  - » Imposing a lodging tax on Airbnb and vacation rentals to fund **tourism and promotional efforts**.
  - » Establishing a Specific Purpose Excise Tax, or Special Tax Districts to fund **infrastructure** projects.











# Conclusion

# Driving Towards a Thriving Laramie

The recommendations in this plan are meant to guide Laramie toward its economic development goals over the next ten years. The strategies are wide ranging, and cover many aspects outside of what was once considered the core of traditional economic development, i.e. business attraction and expansion. The breathtaking natural surroundings, strong arts scene, iconic culture, and the people that call Laramie home make it truly special, and, if properly embraced, are the components that will drive its economic growth forward.

At the same time, it is imperative that the region's stakeholders work together to collaboratively address its barriers to growth – including, first and foremost, infrastructure and housing development. It will also be important that the community continue to encourage the innovation, technology development, and entrepreneurship that powers new economic activity locally and throughout the state, and that work is done to better match and connect employers with Laramie's world-class talent.

If Laramie does these things, it will be well positioned to become an economic driver for the state, and embody its reputation as the Gem City of the Plains.













# Appendix

# Build Sessions Co-Chairs

This plan would not have been possible without the dedicated build session co-chairs who pulled together the 122 practitioners and industry or sector experts who contributed to the recommendation outcomes through the build session planning process.

## Industry Diversification and Wage Growth

- » Rebecca Miller ANB Bank, Community Bank President  
Chairperson, Business Retention and Expansion  
Committee, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance
- » Brad Enzi Laramie Chamber Business Alliance CEO

## Housing

- » Chaz Avila ANB Bank, Assistant Vice President, Commercial Banking;  
Chairperson, Downtown Development Authority
- » Warren Greaser Rawstone Development, Land Developer and Urban Planner  
Vice-Chairperson, Laramie Chamber  
Business Alliance Board of Directors

## Town-Gown and Industry-Workforce Relations

- » Brady Hammond Albany County Campus of Laramie County  
Community College, Associate Vice President
- » Jean Garrison University of Wyoming, Chief Engagement Officer
- » Steve Farkas University of Wyoming College of Business, Assistant Dean

## Infrastructure

- » Janine Jordan Laramie City Manager
- » Heather Tupper Wyoming Business Council, S.E. Regional Director

## Tech, Innovation, Entrepreneurship

- » Mike Peck First Interstate Bank, Vice President;  
Chairperson, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance Board of Directors
- » Audrey Jansen University of Wyoming, Small Business Development Center

## Art, Recreation, Culture, Tourism

- » Scott Larson Albany County Tourism Board, Executive Director
- » Brian Harrington City Council Ward 1

# Glossary of Terms

- » **Manufacturing** - This sector includes everything from industrial manufacturing (producing finished materials from raw materials for other industrial use), to boutique manufacturing (custom, limited quantity production), to advanced manufacturing (innovative application of technologies and processes). It encompasses industries like textiles and clothing, food production, wood products, metal manufacturing, and more. In 2015, according to the Brookings Institute, U.S. manufacturing accounted for 12 percent of national GDP, and 18 percent of global manufacturing output.
- » **STEM** - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. It is generally the case that the tech sector is defined by having a high concentration of workers whose primary job responsibilities and skill set are STEM-related. STEM occupations account for 5.8 percent of all jobs in the U.S. economy.
- » **Tech-based industries**, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, include high-tech manufacturing industries, which have a large concentration of engineers working in them, and high-tech services industries, which tend to have higher concentrations of scientists and computer and mathematical occupations. Tech-sector industries are an essential part of the U.S. economy, since they encompass 12 percent of all jobs but produce almost 23 percent of total economic output.
- » **Traded-sector industries** are those that sell their output to a “global” audience, rather than a local audience. Traded-sector businesses are typically in competition with businesses in other states or nations. A healthy economy has a good mix of traded industries, which are important because they bring outside money into the community. Examples include products made through manufacturing, or web services that can be sold all over the globe. This is in contrast to the product and service output of industries consumed primarily at the local level, like education, healthcare, or food service.
- » **UAS/UAV** - Unmanned Aircraft Systems include Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (i.e., drones), the pilot/controller of the vehicle, and the communication system in place that connects the two.
- » **Business Friendliness** - There are a number of ways to parse how “business friendly” a community is. Generally this comes down to the degree to which municipal regulations protect the public interest without overly burdening the ability of private and non-profit corporations to open, expand, and conduct business. Municipalities with a high degree of business friendliness have the latitude to consider the degree to which existing regulations are necessary for public health and safety, make it easy to apply for permits, variances, and licenses, make the approval process speedy and transparent, and have the ability to make adjustments where needed. Best practices include publishing process maps that include key contact information, average timeline, average cost, and average number of procedural steps, and creating a customer service culture among city staff, regardless of the regulatory task (issuing permits, performing inspections, etc.), that appreciates the monetary value of time to small businesses.

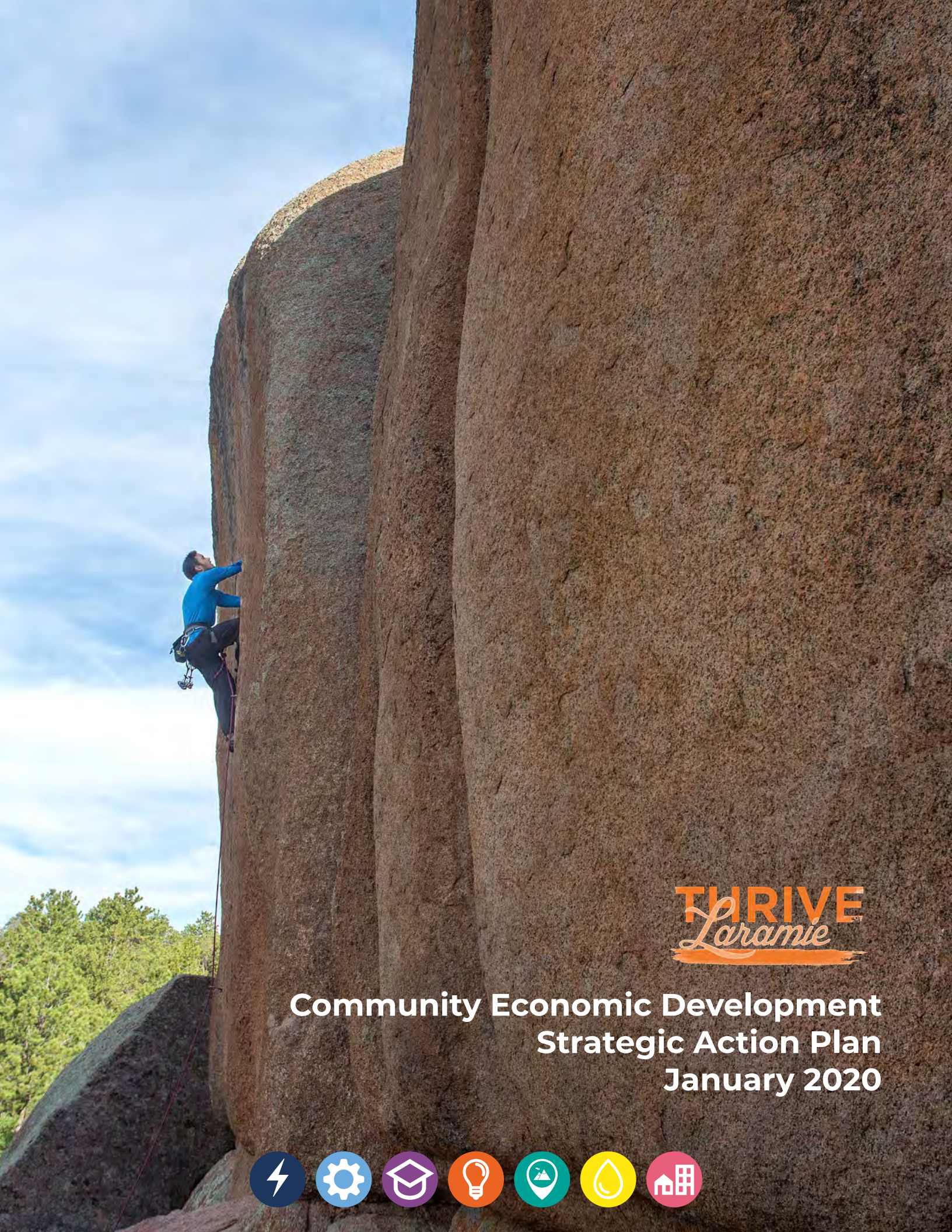


- » **Business Birth Rate** - As the primary source of information on the nation's labor market, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) collects data on new businesses and job creation. Data produced by the BLS Business Employment Dynamics (BED) program provide insight into the contribution of young and small businesses to the overall number of businesses and jobs in the economy. BLS publishes data on business births and deaths on a quarterly basis. The birth and death data series is the most timely source of data available on new private sector business establishments in the United States. Calculating the number of annual business births against the number of total establishments in that same year provides a "business birth rate" ratio, a way to compare municipalities of vastly different sizes.
- » **Laramie** - Throughout the plan, the Laramie community is referred to in several ways.
  - » **Laramie** or the **Laramie community** generally describes what people colloquially would refer to as Laramie - the area that encompasses the City of Laramie and surrounding Albany County.
  - » **The City of Laramie** and **Albany County** refer to the municipal boundaries of the city and county, and also to the public agencies that govern these geographic areas. Most available data and analysis that appear in this plan are at the county level due to data collection methodology of publicly available data sources.
  - » **The Laramie region** or **the region** refer to an aspirational region that includes the cities of Laramie, Cheyenne, and Fort Collins and their counties: Albany County, WY; Laramie County, WY; and Larimer County, Colorado. Laramie is positioned to capture some of the spillover effect of the population growth in Fort Collins and Cheyenne, as well as to attract residents, workers, and visitors from those areas and vice versa. Laramie should seek to work with its economic development partners and counterparts in both cities to create a cohesive and mutually beneficial strategy for growth that draws on the unique strengths of each area.









**Community Economic Development  
Strategic Action Plan  
January 2020**

