

# Planning Division

## End of the Year Report 2018

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The Planning Division consists of three (3) employees in the Community Development Director, the City Planner and the Administrative Support Technician.

### Planning Cases:

The Planning Division processed a total of thirty-one (31) development applications during 2018. Development applications often consist of multiple requests (i.e. zone change AND replat, etc.) A summary of the individual requests is as follows:

- Conditional Use Permits – (3)
- Zone Changes – (4)
- Annexations – (1)
- Plats/Replats – (3)
- Minor Boundary Adjustment Plats – (8)
- Site Plans – (13)
- Exceptions/Variations – (1)
- Wireless Applications (new process this year) – (2)

In addition to the City applications listed above, the Planning Division also processed one (1) County subdivision that was located within a mile of the Casper City limits and fell under Casper's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. This year, the Wyoming State Legislature changed the law with regard to Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, the result of which is that the City will no longer process these requests.

For comparison, in 2017 the Planning Division processed a total of forty five (45) development applications and four (4) County subdivisions.

### Notable Development Projects Approved During 2018:

- Lincoln Elementary School building addition/site plan in North Casper;
- Alpine Motorsports site plan (redevelopment of old A & W Restaurant) on CY Avenue;
- Sleep Number Retail store site plan on East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, adjacent to Triangle Plaza;
- Taco Johns site plan on Plaza Drive;
- Regional U-Haul Facility site plan on Bryan Stock Trail;
- Reeds Automotive site plan on Collins Drive;

- Multi-Tenant retail building site plan on East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, adjacent to Red Lobster;
- Commercial center site plan, including a bank, restaurant, and offices, located at 15<sup>th</sup> and Wyoming Boulevard;
- Envision Electric commercial building site plan located on Durango Court;
- State Office Building Architectural and Site Plan Review.

OYD Reviews:

The Old Yellowstone District (OYD) Architectural Review Committee provides guidance to property owners and developers with regard to all development permits in the OYD. It is comprised of the Community Development Director, Public Services Director, City Planner, Building Official, a City Councilman, and a volunteer professional architect. A streamlined approval process was created as a part of the implementation of the Form Based Code governing the area, whereby all reviews are conducted administratively. The Committee meets every Friday. During 2018, the following development projects were reviewed:

- Numerous meetings with the State Construction Management Department representatives and architects about the State Office Building design and site plan.
- Ashby Construction – adaptive reuse of former Milo’s Auto Body building into a new construction office.
- Ashby Construction - new construction of three (3) live/work spaces called Ash Street Commons.
- Rocky Mountain Oilfield Warehouse – signage review.
- Countertop Distributing – signage review.
- Casper Furniture – signage review.
- Remodel of former Ka-Lark’s building on Ash Street.
- Remodel of former Municipal Garage connected to Firehouse #1 on David Street.
- Yellowstone Upholstery – signage review.
- Casper-Natrona County Health Department – signage review.
- Racca’s – signage review.
- The Perfect Cup coffee kiosk – signage review.



Historic Preservation Commission:

The Planning Division oversees and provides staff support for the Casper Historic Preservation Commission, consisting of eleven (11) citizen volunteers. The Commission meets on the second Monday of each month. Much of staff's and the Commission's time and efforts centered on the Strategic Planning process that is currently underway. The Division was awarded a Grant by the State, which is being used to fund a Historic Preservation Consultant to assist with the development of the Strategic Plan. During 2018, the Commission and Staff created an RFP, interviewed consultants, awarded the project, and began work on the development of the Strategic Plan, which will guide Historic Preservation efforts in years to come and help implement the specific goals in the Comprehensive Plan related to "Endless Character." By far, the most fruitful accomplishment thus far has been in fostering public interest and involvement through public engagement. Social media has been an extremely useful tool, and the Commission has worked hard to provide interesting, relevant information to the public via Facebook and Instagram. Over the last year, the Commission and Staff attended two community "Art Walk" events in the downtown, setting up displays and refreshments at the Turner-Cottman building, and at Art321 which attracted interest from hundreds of participants. During those Art Walks, Commissioners and Staff used the face-to-face opportunity with the citizens of Casper to extract as much information as possible, using formal surveys to obtain input that will ultimately be used to formulate the Strategic Plan.



Historic Preservation Commission Public Engagement:

- The Commission is providing two of its members to serve on the City's recently-created

Wayfinding Committee, the purpose of which is to do a better job of drawing attention to, and capitalizing on, community assets, including its historic tourism opportunities.

- The Commission has also asked for more involvement in the general development process. As a result, staff has integrated the Historic Preservation Commission with the Planning and Zoning Commission by creating a new liaison position.
- Also new this year, and given the significance of many of the buildings in the downtown, the Historic Preservation Commission is now providing a liaison to the Old Yellowstone District Advisory Committee.
- Due to concerns raised by the Historic Preservation Commission in 2018, Staff has created a new Building Demolition workflow in the Building Division, whereby forty-eight (48) hours of notice must not be given prior to a demolition to allow Staff and/or the Historic Preservation Commission to take pictures, and catalog the building before it is lost.
- Over the last year, the Commission and Staff have done several preservation-related press releases, as well as television and radio spotlights. As a part of the public input process for the Strategic Plan, the Commission and Staff held a listening session at the Casper Senior Center, and was also asked to speak at this year's realtor/appraiser training last February. In recognition of the support that the Commission has provided in the ongoing redevelopment efforts of the downtown, the Commission received the "Good Neighbor Award" at the annual Old Yellowstone District (OYD) "Oscars" award ceremony this year.
- The Commission spent many weekends leading up to the 2018 Christmas parade, as well as their own money and resources, preparing a float. The float celebrated Casper's history by including detailed cutouts of many of the community's iconic historic structures. The float also somberly noted that many historic structures have already been lost forever by encircling the perimeter of the float with the names of the razed buildings. During the parade, the Commissioners walked the entire route while displaying their "Historic Casper Matters" tee shirts and name tags, and handed out informational cards to the public, urging people to complete the online Historic Preservation survey.



Planning and Zoning Commission:

The Planning Division oversees and provides staff support for the Planning and Zoning Commission, consisting of seven (7) citizen volunteers. The Commission meets on the third Thursday of each month for its regularly-scheduled public hearing to review development cases. In addition, Staff and the Commission conduct trainings approximately once a month, informally called “lunch and learn” sessions. Yearly topics included:

- Robert’s Rules of Order
- How to Run an Effective Meeting, such as making motions, creating Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, etc.
- Plan Development and Code Amendment “work sessions” such as Comprehensive Plan Development, Municipal Code fencing/buffering standards, etc.
- Planning Studies such as downtown outdoor seating, downtown parking plan, etc.
- Legal briefings/trainings such as Fair Housing Act, Telecommunications Act, Religious Land Use And Institutionalized Persons Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, etc.
- Discussion of current issues, such as parking in the City-owned parkways, Plains Furniture buildings, Opportunity Zones, etc.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and staff participated in two (2) Wyoming Planning Association (WYOPASS) workshops in 2018. One workshop was held in Riverton, WY in May, and the other was held in Douglas, WY in October. Casper had the strongest representation of Planning Commissioners in the

State at the conferences, with six (6) out of the seven (7) Commissioners attending. During those workshops, Staff and the Commissioners received training on the following topics:

- Mobile Vending and Food Trucks
- Tiny Houses
- Legislative Updates
- Historic Preservation
- Main Street Program
- Planning Commission 101
- Effective Staff Reports

The Planning and Zoning Commission also provides support/members for several outside committees, including the Old Yellowstone Advisory Committee (2 Liaisons), the 2020 Census Complete Count Committee (1 Liaison), and the Historic Preservation Commission (1 Liaison).



Participation/Involvement:

Planning Division Staff provided active representation and participation to the following groups and organizations during 2018:

- Historic Preservation Commission
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Natrona County Weed and Pest Board of Directors
- Casper Rotary Club
- Old Yellowstone District Architectural Review Committee
- Old Yellowstone District Advisory Committee
- Downtown Development Authority

- Platte River Revival
- Wyoming Community Foundation – Casper Affiliate – Board of Directors
- City Safety Committee

#### Special Projects and Accomplishments:

- \$400,000 EPA Brownfields Grant - The original scope of the project anticipated enough funding for twelve (12) Phase I Environmental Assessments and five (5) Phase II's. During 2018, TriHydro, the City's contracted engineering firm for this project, has completed a total of eleven (11) Phase I Assessments and Six (6) Phase II reports (asbestos inspections for the State of Wyoming Office Building project). Thus far, only fifty percent (50%) of the grant has been expended so, due to the efficient use of Grant monies, the City and TriHydro will be able to complete a significantly higher number of Environmental Assessments than the EPA anticipated. Given the large amount of Grant money remaining, the EPA has given the City a preliminary commitment for an extension beyond the September 2019 end date of the Grant to complete additional assessments in the Old Yellowstone District. The City has already received a request for a Phase II report from the McMurry Group to assist with their planned development of a Conference Center. The availability of the EPA Grant for these types of development projects has been very well received by property owners in the Old Yellowstone District.
- Developer Forums – Staff coordinated four (4) quarterly “coffee talk” events at City Hall during 2018. Topics included:
  - Soil Compaction
  - Community Risk Reduction/Fire Chief
  - One Cent Projects
  - State Office Building Update
  - Kimley-Horn Consultants on Downtown Parking Study
  - Opportunity Zones
  - Nelson Nygaard update on LRTP.



- Attended Midwest Avenue Reconstruction Project weekly planning, status and safety meetings with Old Yellowstone District (OYD) businesses and property owners, City Engineering staff, and contractors during the Phase I improvements.
- Coordinated the submittal of \$5M BUILD grant to Federal DOT, and \$2.5M Business Ready Infrastructure Grant to the Wyoming Business Council for the Midwest Avenue reconstruction project.
- Management of wireless communication facility leases on City-owned property. Significantly increased City revenues by negotiating lease for a new cell tower which was constructed during 2018 at Mike Sedar Park, and for a renewal of an existing lease site at the Municipal Golf Course. The Golf Course lease contributed approximately \$207,000 in revenue to the City over its previous term, and was renegotiated at a new rate of \$1.3 Million, or more (depending on future co-locations). The Mike Sedar Park tower is also providing \$1.3 Million in revenue, minimum, over its term.
- Wireless communication facility lease billing has been in disarray for years. Division staff worked with the Finance Division to verify existing leases, confirm current carriers and management companies, correct billing errors, process terminations, process co-locations and subleases, and better organize rent escalations and renewals for ten (10) separate property leases with a current combined net revenue of over \$5 Million. During the reorganization process, one site was discovered to be holding over on a City-owned property in the North Platte Industrial Park. Their lease had expired, and they had stopped paying the City; however, it was discovered that they had not formally given notice of termination; therefore, they were billed approximately \$6,000 in back rent, and the lease was formally terminated by staff.
- Identified an unmet developer obligation in relation to the McMurry Business Park PUD required open space in which Division staff prevented the review/approval of development plans and building permits in order to enforce the open space provisions of the Municipal Code, which were originally agreed-upon by the developer over ten years prior. In order to bring the McMurry Business Park into compliance, the developer agreed to pay the City \$142,000 for various park/open space improvements, and agreed to give the City several open-space parcels. One of the parcels that has been promised, and is now in the process of being transferred to the City, is intended for a proposed off-leash dog park.
- The Division collected a total of \$12,000 on behalf of the Parks Division during 2018, for improvements to parks and public properties. The fees were generated by a landscaping in-lieu-of-fee for two separate site plans that received approval. Landscaping in-lieu-of-fees are only permitted when circumstances prevent on-site landscaping requirements from being met, and require the approval of the Community Development Director.
- The Planning Division implemented a forty (40) percent increase in its application fees during 2018, in addition to a forty (40) percent increase in building permit fees. Although the number of

projects, and total valuations of construction was lower than in 2017, the fees that have been collected by the Department/Division are significantly higher. In addition, new fees were developed for processing Wireless Facilities Applications (\$1,000-\$2,000 per application), as well as for PUD Amendments (\$1,000, was previously free), processing license agreements/leases (\$250, was previously free), and vacations of public rights-of-ways (\$400, was previously free).

- Issued an RFP to prequalify technical consultants to assist the City with reviewing Wireless Communication Facility Applications. Ultimately six (6) consultants were pre-qualified, and placed under contract, at no cost to the organization, and all fees for their services being paid for by the applicants.
- Participated in a WYDOT-driven initiative to develop an east-side belt loop/bypass which would have redirected traffic off of Wyoming Boulevard, and generally through the Country Club/Ardon Lane neighborhood, to ultimately connect with Interstate 25 at approximately Hat Six Road. Staff supported the neighborhood in its opposition to the belt loop, using multiple existing plans and extensive public input that had been collected in recent years as support. Division staff formally asked WYDOT to reprioritize their plans away from the bypass, and to instead focus on investing in existing WYDOT streets that are already constructed throughout Casper, and in need of improvements and updates. The construction of a belt loop would probably have had major impacts on the ability of the City to provide services in the area that would have been opened up to development. WYDOT underestimated public sentiment in the surrounding area, which can probably be attributed to insufficient public engagement. By contrast, the Planning Division was better equipped to understand the wants/needs of the residents because of the extensive public engagement that has occurred in the recent past from the Comp Plan and MPO initiatives.
- Participated in the WYDOT-driven Poplar Street reconstruction planning meetings/discussion. Provided detailed design feedback to WYDOT based on adopted plans which the City and/or MPO have completed in the past. The project will stretch over multiple years, but staff is hopeful that Poplar Street, from First Street to Collins Drive, will be reconstructed in a visually appealing, pedestrian/bike friendly manner that wouldn't have naturally occurred without the support/influence of past planning efforts conducted by the City.
- Given the upcoming 2020 Census, Planning staff spent approximately 120 hours of time working with three (3) individuals from other divisions to review and verify every address in Casper by May 30, 2018. As errors were discovered, they had to be corrected, to ensure that the upcoming Census will be as accurate as possible with regard to total population, in that the City's sales tax revenue is determined by population.



- At Council's direction, developed a Municipal Code amendment to Section 17.12.120 regarding fencing/buffering requirements. The project was initiated based on an appeal of a zone change in North Casper in which a property owner wanted to buffer their multifamily structure from an adjacent sexually oriented business. The amendment was successful, and allowed additional flexibility to residential property owners with regard to constructing buffering/fencing when they are adjacent to a commercial property.
- Finalized Natrona County High School (NCHS) Campus multiple street and alley vacations. A significant amount of staff time has been spent over the last five (5) years assisting the School District with the incorporation of numerous public streets and alleys into the high school campus. The development process began with a site plan submitted to the Planning Division for review, and culminated in 2018 with the successful completion of the vacations, and final completion of construction. NCHS is a jewel that the entire community is rightfully proud of, and the Planning Division had a significant role to play in creating a continuing legacy for the community for the next 100 years to come.
- Streamlining of the MBA (Minor Boundary Adjustment) plat process. Several years ago staff developed an administrative platting process for small, one or two lot "subdivisions" which saves applicants approximately three (3) months of time to obtain approval. During 2018 tensions between the County Clerk's Office and the City boiled over due to a misunderstanding that the County had about the MBA platting process. The Planning Division met 6-8 times with the City Attorney's Office, the County Attorney, and the County Clerk's Office to iron out procedures, legal language, and misunderstandings. The result of the project was the creation of a seamless process whereby applicants are provided with review/approval of simple plats extremely quickly, and a more efficient use of staff time.
- City Planner maintained AICP Certification through the completion of a minimum of sixteen (16) credit hours per year.

## 2019 Goals:

- Continue with multiple property sales/disposals to get City-owned properties back into productive use.
- Implementation of the specific goals and policies of the Generation Casper Comprehensive Plan.
  - **Endless Character** – Casper will cultivate a dynamic, welcoming community with growth and redevelopment based in best practices and history that set the stage for a vibrant future.
  - **Vibrant Urban Center** – Casper will work to realize untapped potential and foster a vast network of entrepreneurs to support a thriving Downtown and Old Yellowstone District with unique character that anchors the community.
  - **Distinctive Regional Hub** – Casper will embrace strong relationships between education and industry to retain talent, promote business-friendly policies, and cultivate incubators aimed at fostering fresh ideas and allowing small businesses to make their mark on Casper.
  - **Enhanced Connectivity** – Casper will offer transportation choices through safe, reliable streets and a bike and pathway network that connect all residents to their destinations through a variety of traditional and emerging transportation modes.
  - **Embracing the River** – Casper will engage the world-class North Platte River and a network of trails that are visually and physically linked to commercial centers to foster economic opportunities.
  - **Undiscovered Quality of Life** – Casper will be comprised of creative, safe, family-friendly neighborhoods and gathering areas where all residents and visitors can enjoy rich culture, stunning vistas, vast open spaces, recreational opportunities, and big city amenities.