

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY PLAN?

Generation Casper is the City of Casper's revised and updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Transportation Plan. The Plan (or Generation Casper) serves as a guide for policy changes, land use and transportation planning, economic development forecasting, and capital improvement planning. It is essentially a land use policy document that will help to ensure efficient city services, adequate key infrastructure, and continued growth of Casper's unique quality of life.

The City's last comprehensive plan update was nearly a generation ago, primarily based on data from the 1990s. Economics, demographics, and the areas of growth in and around Casper have changed dramatically since its publication; it has become outdated and out of scope. Generation Casper revisits, reconfirms, and where necessary, re-envision the 2000 update. It is a living document intended to guide local decision makers, be a vision for community leaders, and serve as a policy document for developers.

The land use plan provides an overview of the City's obstacles and opportunities; outlines future land use and transportation visions, principles, and goals; and includes a monitoring program for both implementation and necessary amendments to reflect changing conditions and values.

Just as ancient civilizations and the earliest American cities laid out plans for settlement, the Generation Casper Comprehensive Plan devises a path forward, guiding the future of the City.

PLAN OVERVIEW & HIGHLIGHTS

VISION

The City has a duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community through planning and management of future growth. A community-driven vision was set forth to guide investment in public infrastructure and private development; this vision is supported by six themes: Endless Character, Vibrant Urban Center, Distinctive Regional Hub, Enhanced Connectivity, Embracing the River, and Undiscovered Quality of Life.



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.

OUR VISION FOR CASPER

In 2030, Casper serves as an economically diverse, regional hub centered on lively commercial centers that embraces a strong and unique community identity through a world-class quality of life.

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 with 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.



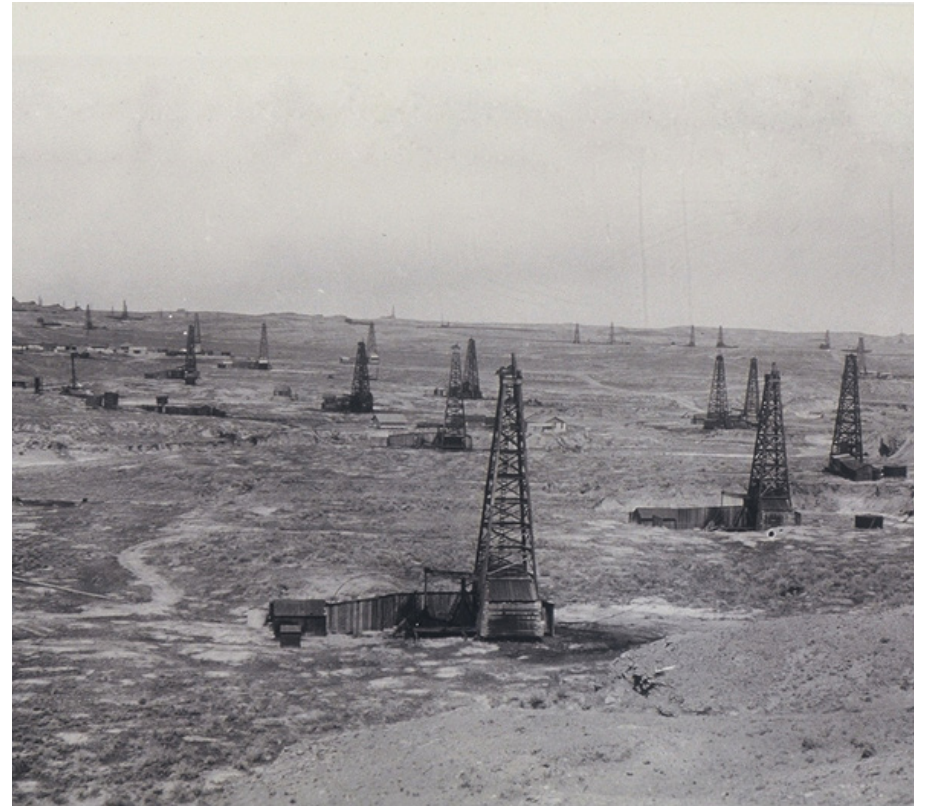
The Salt Creek Oil Field was discovered north of Casper in the early 1900s.
(photo below, Source: esri.com)

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

The planning process offered an unprecedented opportunity for the community to reflect, have a dialogue about the future of growth and development in Casper, and garner community pride. The process gave the community the opportunity to comment and provide valuable input for what they want Casper to be. Elected officials, city staff, community organizations, citizens, and many others came together to form this Plan. When the community was asked to envision Casper in 10 to 20 years, residents said “safe, family-friendly, economically stable and diverse, and affordable”.

As Casper’s close association with energy industries makes it economically susceptible to boom and bust cycles, and as Casper expects future growth, now is the time to reflect and look forward. A significant reality is that Casper and the state of Wyoming are economically dependent on the oil and gas (energy) industry. This is a fact that will not change in the near future - and is beyond the immediate control of Casper. As the energy industry is a volatile industry prone to ebbs and flows, expanding the breadth of other industries could result in less significant impacts in those times of hardship. In the context of planning for the Casper area, economic diversification should be understood as supplementing the energy industry’s role, rather than reducing its influence.

Casper’s population has historically fluctuated with the energy industry, damaging the community in the process. To build a stable residential community, this plan focuses on enhancing the quality of life, embracing the natural and recreational assets, and celebrating the entrepreneurial culture of Casper. A lively and dynamic community will attract families to stay in Casper through economic hardships and keep the next generation living and investing in Casper.



EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

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

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

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



KEY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

While this plan focuses on efforts to maintain and increase the quality of life in Casper, this plan can also serve as a strategy to reduce long term costs by managing growth, encouraging infill, and exploring new ways to finance infrastructure. Growth, while positive and encouraging, can create detrimental and long lasting impacts to city services when left unchecked. The land use plan addresses how growth should be achieved, and prioritizes implementation based on strategies. Generation Casper's implementation will take the effort of not only the City, but organizations, developers, and the greater community.

While a seemingly overwhelming feat of strategies is outlined at the end of this document, it is important to remember that thoughtful change takes time. No community can implement all of the strategies set forth in their comprehensive plan overnight; therefore, the following priorities have been set as short-term actions to implement Generation Casper with minimal capital and personnel costs.

PRIORITIES include short-term actions to implement Generation Casper with minimal capital and personnel costs.

A focus on reducing infrastructure, urban sprawl, and long term maintenance costs and impacts to city services through managed growth:

- Codify the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to require development within the areas presented on the Future Land Use Map.
- Align the City of Casper Water and Sewer Policy with the UGB to encourage growth in appropriate locations.

A focus on zoning code changes:

- Evaluate code changes to encourage shared parking and parking reform.
- Align the Zoning Code with the Future Land Use Plan by changing zoning category definitions and/or create new zoning district options and applying in the Zoning Map. Allow for the integration of residential development to create flexible housing options. Review Floor Area Ratio (FAR), setbacks, parking, and incentivize the development of multifamily and mixed use housing.
- Implement the strategies recommended in the Boomer Study, including implementing zoning code updates, creating consistent and improved sidewalks with tree lawns, and applying for AARP "Liveable Communities" Program.
- Establish roadway spacing standards for arterial, collector, and local roadways and enforce them through new development applications.
- Establish standards for block sizes, block configuration, parcel interconnection, and access limitations.
- Adopt a complete streets ordinance/policy and identify where various users are permitted to travel.
- Review Traffic Study requirements in the Code of Ordinances.

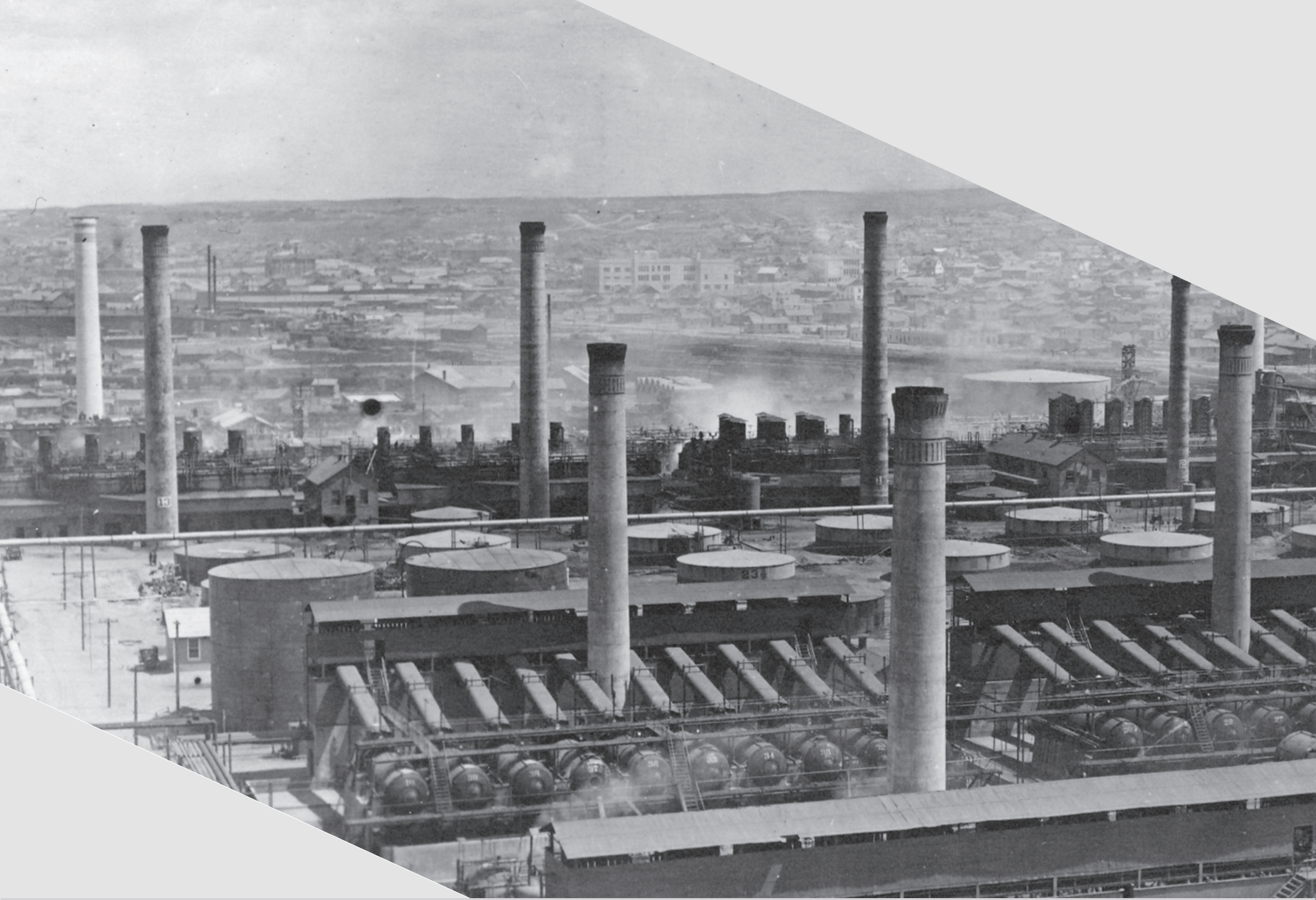
A focus on rethinking infrastructure financing:

- Implement reasonable impact fees on building permits for the adequate construction of future roadways to ensure equity in financing infrastructure. Utilize fees for specific infrastructure associated with auto and non-auto modes. During the establishment of an impact fee/mobility fee system, direct a portion of the funds towards redevelopment infrastructure, or reduce the fees for redevelopment projects to encourage infill development.
- Codify and implement an impact fee structure to create a funding source for the funding of other public infrastructure and amenities such as parks and public spaces.

A focus on working with partners to complete a City-wide economic development strategy for Casper:

- Work with Casper Area Economic Development Alliance (CAEDA) to implement their four Industry Focus Areas; Energy, Medical, Advanced Manufacturing, and Finance/Insurance with the strategies of investment in existing businesses, recruitment of new business, creation of an innovation culture, expansion of workforce development, and improvement of quality of life.

Over the next 10 to 20 years, the City's economic situation will likely change - but the values that the community holds true will not. Through an annual review of metrics and development of a strategic action plan, Generation Casper affords the community the opportunity to continually monitor and reevaluate its priorities.



Aerial View of Standard Oil Refinery, 1920. Blackmore Collection, Casper College Western History Center