

CHAPTER 8: Community Resources

Critical elements of any community's quality of life include infrastructure: water, sewer, roadways, solid waste disposal and recreational facilities. The City also provides law enforcement protection and a volunteer fire department. Some services are necessities for quality of life, while other facilities and services further enhance quality of life.

This chapter deals with existing and proposed infrastructure and services in the community. The information was gathered from generally available sources and from conversations with numerous entities around the city. Overall, the City's infrastructure is adequate and the City seems to be staying ahead of the curve in essential services. Impending growth necessitates that the existing systems not only be maintained, but that plans continually look forward to improving systems and to future growth. Awareness and planning for non-essential, but quality of life, services and facilities is also important to the current and future community.

Public Infrastructure

Water

The City does not have high priority water rights and gets water from the North and South Forks of Clear Creek and from Sourdough Creek. A pipeline runs to the treatment plant from a diversion dam on Clear Creek four to five miles west of the plant. Current storage capacity is sufficient for a population of 8,000 and includes a new 2.5 million gallon tank outside of town to the northwest, a 750,000 gallon "South" tank and a 600,000 gallon "North" tank at the west end of town near the plant. While current capacity is sufficient for the near future a Wyoming Water Development Level I Regional Study is in process to consider upgrade of the plant. The Study is most focused on raw water capacity and is looking at Lake Desmet, the Madison wells, and the potential to acquire additional Clear Creek water rights.

The treatment plant sells energy back to the power company via a high pressure energy breakdown system. The filtration system has some difficulties with algae accumulation. The plant is in process of an upgrade which will have capacity to serve a population of 9,000 – 12,000, dependent upon future landscaping demands.

The service lines in the City currently include three pressure zones, but a fourth will be added when a pressure reducing valve/station is installed in the vicinity of Highway 16 and the Interstate. This will enable the one zone that is currently over pressured to not exceed the 100 psi maximum required in the City Code. This will also allow an increase of approximately 10 psi above that zone to better serve some of the lower pressures of around 40 psi that currently exist in some of the hill areas. There is one pump station located at Lobban and Bennett that is used in the summer months.

Some trouble with pressure in future development to the northwest may be anticipated, however the existing system with the upgrade plans already in process seems to serve

present and future needs adequately. Review of extension of future water lines should be included in any development proposals.

Sewer

The current sewer system is gravity flow until the only in-line lift station where the main line crosses Clear Creek at East Highway 16, whence it must be lifted into the treatment plant. A second lift station at the plant moves the sewage from the primary pond to the secondary treatment pond.

Plans have been in the works to upgrade the treatment plant to an activated sludge plant that can be easily expanded. This system will treat and release water into the creek in a matter of hours and will not require storage lagoons. The existing lagoons could be used for emergencies and possibly for storage of irrigation water for the golf course and parks, etc.

In order to proceed with the upgrade, the City recently secured funds from the State to modify and expand the existing lagoon system. Additional funding is also being sought for the project. Discharge limits have been violated as the biological breakdown process of the plant has begun to fail and sludge is starting to accumulate. Therefore it is in the City's best interest to get the lagoon system modified and expanded as quickly as possible.

Review of extension of future sewer lines should be included in any development proposals.

Storm Water Drainage

There is some rudimentary sub-surface collection but mostly surface drainage. There are storm water detention plans in the works which should require that additional development manage runoff on-site before discharging it to the existing system. This will be especially important to developers, builders and future homeowners due to new State Department of Environmental Quality requirements.

Irrigation Water

Raw, untreated water from an infiltration gallery on Clear Creek currently is used for irrigation of the golf course, parks, and schools. If the water from this infiltration gallery is usurped for drinking water needs, an alternate source of irrigation water for the parks could be developed as noted in the future upgrade of the sewage treatment facilities. Plans for a pipeline for such possible future use should be considered.

Public Services and Facilities

Buffalo City Hall

City Hall is found at 46 N. Main Street. The current facilities are at capacity, but with some remodeling enough office space is probably available for the near future. Long term capacity requirements can be met by a second story addition if the building is structurally capable or by relocation to a new site and a new facility.

Johnson County Courthouse

The courthouse is at 76 North Main Street. There is a need for additional county government office space and a new law enforcement center. Moving the justice system offices to a new facility would assist with the lack of space for the other existing departments. The 2005 Johnson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan notes that other potential expansion sites include the Clear Creek Elementary School which is located just west of the courthouse, if and when it is vacated by the school system. Another potential site, if a land exchange could be made with the State, is the Wyoming Department of Transportation equipment yard which is situated along the south side of Fort Street, immediately adjacent to the existing City-County law enforcement complex.

Buffalo Police Department/Johnson County Sheriff Department

The joint City/County facility is located at 639 Fort Street. The Joint Powers Board is considering the development of a new law enforcement center that would include space for the Buffalo Police Department, the County Sheriff, the county jail and the county court system.

The current facility is primarily limited on jail space. The records keeping space is dwindling and the officers are sharing restricted space. There is a current need for another dispatcher and another officer. Personnel and resulting increase of space requirements will continue to increase with population growth in the city and the county. Any new facility is probably about five years down the road. The existing building would probably continue as a dispatch center and a records keeping facility.

Buffalo Fire Department

The volunteer fire department is headquartered at 20 Klondike Street. Equipment and personnel are sufficient at present but another truck or two and possibly more personnel will be required with additional growth of the community. Grant money may be available when additional equipment is needed. The volunteer fire protection service will probably remain in effect for the foreseeable future.

Johnson County Medical Center

Located at 497 West Lott, the Center includes a hospital, a nursing home, a medical clinic and a health hospice. There are approximately 200 employees and a budget of 17 million dollars. They have just completed an expansion and renovation of some of the facilities and have plans for additional expansion and renovation in the next few years. The Hospital District is doing fine financially and appears to have sufficient facilities for the near future. Growth beyond a city population of 8,000 and a county population of 13,000 will probably require plans for new facilities, perhaps through establishing a new site for the nursing home and through expansion of the other facilities into then vacated portions of the current facilities.

Johnson County School District #1

The current status of the school facilities in the city is outstanding. The new high school, serving grades 9-12, was put into use this year and does have room for expansion. The old high school will be demolished and will become part of the campus space, parking and playgrounds, for the new middle school which serves grades 5-8. The K-4 elementary school has a new addition. The elementary and middle schools are already full and continued growth would logically require a new intermediate school, perhaps serving grades 4-5.

A community group has been created to consider options for the old middle school. Although it could be a viable option for expansion of city or county facilities, it is unlikely that either entity could afford the building and the work required to transform it as necessary. Perhaps a trade of city or county property for the old middle school could assist one of those entities with making use of that facility while granting the school district a location for a future intermediate school expansion.

Johnson County Public Library

Located at 171 North Adams Avenue, off Fort Street and Adams Avenue, the library serves all county residents and is a member of a statewide consortium providing loans all over the state.

Landfill/Solid Waste

The landfill is situated southeast of the city at 284 TW Road. The current facility has approximately another 15 years of capacity and the Johnson County Solid Waste District has purchased 80 adjacent acres to the north that should continue to serve the community long term, dependent upon future State regulatory requirements.

The City garbage collection system is currently adequate, but continued development will require new equipment and enlargement of the crews. This should be considered in any development proposals, perhaps through some type of development impact fee.

Community Facilities

Community facilities in Buffalo include the American Legion, Buffalo Children's Center, Buffalo Senior Center, Saint Francis Animal Shelter, the Red Cross and a YMCA. There are numerous churches located in Buffalo as well. Most of these facilities can expect to expand proportionately with population increase, whether through additions to existing facilities or creation of new facilities.

Parks & Recreation

Buffalo Municipal Swimming Pool

The pool facility is adjacent to George Washington Park near the center of town. It is free and open to the public. At 1.2 million gallons, this is the largest outdoor pool in Wyoming and with the recent addition of a new spray park this facility is probably set to adequately serve the city far into the future.

Buffalo Golf Course

Located north of the County Hospital and west of the Burlington addition, this 136 acre facility has been rated as one of the "Places to Play" by Golf Digest.

Clear Creek Trail System and Parks/Open Space

This well used pedestrian and bicycle trail system extends from Mosier Gulch, approximately four miles west of Buffalo, to County Road 252 on the east end. This system connects over 300 acres of parks, open space and ball fields in town. These facilities include the Buffalo Park Addition and the Bicentennial Fields to the southwest and George Washington Park and the Prosinski Ballfields near the downtown area. The system also connects to Canyon Park, which is a watershed conservation area, to the west of town and Mountain Plains Heritage Park to the east of town, which includes a Wildlife Habitat Area. All of these sites are city owned.

The Northwest Greenbelt is an 18.6 acre open space in the northwest part of town that is a partially reclaimed landfill. North Burlington Park is a 1.4 acre space in the north end of town. Cloud Peak Park at one-half acre and Eva Knepper Park at five acres are located in the south part of town.

The trail system is extensive and well used. In 2007 City staff and local citizens developed a trail master plan map which illustrates locations where future trails should be developed and/or extended, including land outside the city limits. This information is particularly important for City decision makers to pay attention to as development proposals are received.

Insert Trails Map Here.

Planning for Future Parks

At the present time, the City of Buffalo has 294 acres of parks, which includes the golf course and land associated with Clear Creek. Most of the land held for parks is undeveloped. While there appears to be abundant passive open space, there seems to be a modest amount of neighborhood parks with recreational facilities. Future park development is to be addressed during the reviews of development proposals and could include policies to minimize water needs. Developers are given an option to pay a fee in lieu of dedicating land for a park or recreation purposes, and those funds may be used for other recreational purposes. In addition to this amount, attention should also be paid to the public acquisition of land for future parks or open space located outside of subdivisions, one example being for proposed trail routes.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides guidelines for park and open space development that are widely accepted for recreational planning purposes. In 1983, the association published the Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines. The standards were revisited and revised where necessary in the years that followed, with the common theme being that the material provided is strictly a guideline. What is clear is that local communities must decide for themselves what level of service they wish to provide for recreation and how much open space they wish to maintain. There is no absolute national standard for the number of acres that should be set aside for park and recreation land. Rather, they are strictly guidelines to be tweaked by local citizens.

Keeping this in mind, the rule of thumb suggests that there be 10 acres of developed open space for every 1,000 persons in the community. Thus Buffalo should have 50 acres of parkland for its 2007 population and approximately 60 acres for its estimated 2020 population. As noted above, the City has 294 acres for parks, with plenty of land in open space, greenbelts, and trails, but much less land is available for the active recreation typically found in mini-parks or neighborhood parks. The shortfall of these sites will only become greater unless it is addressed now through planning and the acquisition of land.

NRPA uses the following guides to plan for recreation space, which Buffalo officials should consider as development proposals come in for review and as the City has opportunities to purchase land for public use.

The guidelines include:

| Type | Use | Service Area | Size | Acres/1,000 Population | Site Characteristics |
|--------------|---|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------|---|
| Mini-Park | Specialized facilities for groups such as children or senior citizens | Less than ¼ mile radius | 1 acre or less | .25 to .5 acre | Within neighborhoods and close to apartments, townhouses, or senior housing |
| Neighborhood | Area for | ¼ to ½ mile | 15+ acres | 1.0 to 2.0 acres | Suited for |

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|------|---|---|--|--|---|
| Park | activities such as field games, court games, playground apparatus, picnicking, wading pools, etc. | radius to serve a population up to 5,000 (a neighborhood) | | | intense development; easily accessible to neighborhood population; safe walking and bike access |
|------|---|---|--|--|---|