



BOWMAN COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN

UPDATE: 2024  
10/10/2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	<b>1</b>
Existing County Comprehensive Plan.....	1
Purpose of Updating the Comprehensive Plan .....	1
Bowman County Comprehensive Plan .....	2
Definitions .....	2
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	<b>3</b>
Objectives: .....	3
Implementation Strategies: .....	4
GOVERNMENTAL .....	<b>5</b>
Objectives: .....	5
Implementation Strategies: .....	5
NATURAL RESOURCES.....	<b>7</b>
Objectives: .....	7
Implementation Strategies: .....	7
LAND USE .....	<b>9</b>
Objectives: .....	9
Implementation Strategies: .....	9
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES.....	<b>11</b>
Objectives: .....	11
Implementation Strategies: .....	11
TRANSPORTATION .....	<b>13</b>
Objectives: .....	13
Implementation Strategies: .....	13
RECREATION.....	<b>15</b>
Objectives.....	15
Implementation Strategies.....	15

# INTRODUCTION

## **Existing County Comprehensive Plan**

Bowman County has been guided by a comprehensive plan entitled the Bowman County Comprehensive Plan since 1996. During this sixteen (16) year period the county avoided a significant population decline that other rural areas of North Dakota experienced. The county is now confronted with growth and development issues in the agriculture and energy sectors. The increased scrutiny of the cost of public services, changing economic trends, growing concern about the effects of land consumption, and energy development has resulted in a decision to update the Bowman County Comprehensive Plan.

## **Purpose of Updating the Comprehensive Plan**

Communities and counties make a decision to update their comprehensive plans for a variety of reasons. Typically, everything that is addressed in a comprehensive plan is meant to guide policy-makers in their decisions-making process with respect to the physical nature of the land in their jurisdiction, and the manner in which those decisions affect public services. Times change. The issues and values that once drove certain land use decisions may no longer be valid and new issues and community values become more prominent. When county leaders make a decision to update a comprehensive plan, they are acknowledging these changes and are laying the groundwork to take advantage of new opportunities to guide the future of their county. The reasons for updating the Bowman County Comprehensive Plan have been identified as follows:

- Effectively plan for and manage growth
- Efficient use of public lands
- Retain the viability of agricultural activities
- Promote economic vitality and growth
- Identify, preserve, and promote the wise use of natural resources
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Promote recreational opportunities throughout the county
- Ensure consistency with other planning processes
- Ensure adequate provision of public facilities and services
- Preserve historic, cultural, and archaeological resources
- Promote fiscal responsibility

## **Bowman County Comprehensive Plan**

A comprehensive plan serves as a basis for making decisions on long-range development. It indicates in a general way the thoughts the people and local decision-makers have about their county and its communities and the way they want to develop over the next years. It is not a binding document, but rather an ongoing process designed to be flexible and dynamic – subject to periodic updating and changes as needs dictate.

The plan consist of two parts: Part I contains background information on the human, economic, and natural resources and land characteristics of the county or the cities; Part II presents the plan itself through a series of Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Strategies as recommended by the Bowman County Planning and Zoning Commission based on input received from the public and the conclusions of the various characteristics and problems as determined through an analysis of the background information and are subsequently adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

### **Definitions**

**Goal:** Broad general concept that an individual, a community, or a society wishes to attain in the future.

**Objective:** A more specific, measurable step to be taken toward achieving a goal.

**Implementation Strategies:** (Policies) A particular and coordinated action which is designed to achieve the goal and objectives.

## **Vision**

Bowman County is located in the far southwestern corner of North Dakota, bordering both Montana and South Dakota. The county sits between the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and badlands to the north and the Black Hills of South Dakota to the south. The County was settled by ranchers, farmers, and tradesmen in the 1890's and early 1900's. There are four incorporated communities within the County: Bowman, Gascoyne, Rhame, and Scranton. Agriculture traditionally has been and remains the backbone of the local economy.

The County experienced oil development in the 1980's and 1990's and is familiar with both the benefits and impacts resulting from such development. Bowman County is now on the threshold of a new phase of energy development with the potential for more extreme impacts than previously experienced. The challenge is to maintain the quality of place currently enjoyed by the residents while reaping the benefits as well as addressing the detriments of energy development. The County is focused on building new opportunities for the future.

This vision will be realized by initiatives in several areas including:

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Health, schools, traffic, the environment, public service, economic growth are all affected by development decisions. Growth presents a tremendous opportunity for progress in Bowman County. At the same time growth pressures trigger a struggle to maintain farmland or natural landscapes, small town traditions, and rural character while still benefitting from development. Economic development focuses on:

- 1) Governmental policies and programs directed at elements of the economy expanding the economic base;
- 2) Policies and programs designed to provide high quality transportation systems, public safety, housing, health, and work-force training; and
- 3) Policies and programs directed at job creation and retention, higher wage levels, and real estate development.

**Goal:** Enhance and diversify Bowman County's economy.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Strive for a well-rounded, stable economic foundation for the county.
- B. Maintain a viable workforce for economic growth.

- C. Preserve the importance of the agriculture sector in the county.
- D. Coordinate plans to ensure an adequate supply of industrial and commercial land in appropriate locations.

**Implementation Strategies:**

With respect to economic development, Bowman County adopts the following policies:

- 1) Bowman County supports collaborative planning efforts with all jurisdictions in the County and with economic development organizations directed at identifying the need for future commercial/industrial land.
- 2) Bowman County supports efforts made toward sustainable economic development that results in good stewardship of natural resources.
- 3) Bowman County supports economic development efforts that result in a majority of living wage jobs.
- 4) Bowman County supports the land use and zoning designation of an adequate supply of commercial and industrial land as needed to attract quality business and industrial development within the County. In particular this type of growth should be directed to areas adjacent to Bowman, Gascoyne, Rhame, and Scranton along the US Highway 12 corridor.
- 5) Bowman County supports efforts to promote tourism and the county's recreational potential.
- 6) Bowman County supports research, processing and utilization of agricultural products and by-products.
- 7) Bowman County supports and promotes the ideal of the family farm.
- 8) Encourage workforce development and training efforts.

## GOVERNMENTAL

While philosophies over time differ as to the role of government or the size of governmental administrative agencies, government on the county and local level, at a minimum, is charged with the task of providing for the health, safety, and welfare of the general public. As county government attempts reasonable management of beneficial growth, it must find a balance between the interest of industry, commerce, and the general public, while at the same time maintaining and protecting the rural character of the county.

Bowman County must establish governmental policies, practices, and priorities that protect the public health and welfare and balance the needs of both the public and growth interests.

**Goal:** Ensure efficient administration of county government for the betterment of Bowman County and its residents.

**Objectives:**

- A. Provide for improved levels of communication and coordination between the county and the cities within Bowman County.
- B. Provide for public involvement in the decision-making process.
- C. Provided for a cost-effective and efficient method of governmental administration and services.

**Implementation Strategies:**

With respect to governmental administration, Bowman County adopts the following policies:

- 1) Bowman County supports coordination with state, federal and regional agencies, companies, and associations involved in energy development to ensure appropriate planning.
- 2) Bowman County supports working for the development of consistent and complementary zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, annexation procedures, and extraterritorial jurisdictions between Bowman County and the cities within the county.
- 3) Bowman County supports proportionate and equitable increases in distribution of state oil/gas and coal severance taxes relative to the energy producing counties.

- 4) Bowman County supports maintaining a close working relationship between the county and the communities.
- 5) Bowman County supports the cooperation, interaction, and communication on a regular basis with the neighboring county commissions of southwestern North Dakota.
- 6) Bowman County supports the periodic review of county codes and ordinances to ensure their current relevancy.
- 7) Bowman County supports the solicitation, consideration, and utilization of citizen input and suggestions when making public decisions.
- 8) Bowman County supports the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and data analysis in the decision-making process where appropriate.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

Bowman County is blessed with abundant natural resources – coal, oil, gas, wind, uranium – with current and the potential for future development. It also has a delicate watershed system and soils conducive to erosion. The stewardship of natural resources often results in polarized opinions. All acknowledge the need to protect our natural resources. Technologies need to be developed that meet human population and economic needs in such a manner that allows the environment to sustain and regenerate its resources.

**Goal:** Encourage the wise and proper use or development of the county's natural resources.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Recognize the potentials and capabilities of the land and its uses, particularly in regard to natural resource development.
- B. Maintain Bowman County's clean and favorable environment.
- C. Discourage the misuse of productive agricultural land.
- D. Preserve adequate quantities and quality of ground and surface water supplies.

### **Implementation Strategies:**

With respect to natural resource development and conservation, Bowman County adopts the following policies:

- 1) Bowman County supports the establishment and maintenance of county natural, recreational or historical preservation areas.
- 2) Bowman County supports proper planning for impacts resulting from coal, oil, natural gas, wind, uranium, or other natural resource development.
- 3) Bowman County supports the prohibition of mining activities within a two-mile radius of the jurisdictional limits of any incorporated city within the county.
- 4) Bowman County supports the preservation of open spaces and natural features in private and public developments.
- 5) Bowman County supports the identification of and protection of available and potential sources of surface and groundwater.

- 6) Bowman County supports coordination with the Bowman County Water Resources District with respect to drainage issues and new development.
- 7) Bowman County supports the identification of prime and unique farmland locations.

## LAND USE

Planners strive to find the best and most efficient use of land. This goal is tempered by competing use values. Bowman County has a diversified economy. Agriculture has historically played a dominant role in the local economy. Multiple generations of families have owned and operated the land. Any land use plan must take into account this rural heritage and the rural values it has fostered over the years. Cultural and historical resources as well as competing industrial and commercial demands must be considered in the development of any land use plan.

**Goal:** Assure that the use of land is properly planned and compatible with adjacent land uses.

**Objectives:**

- A. Encourage the wise use of agricultural land.
- B. Strive to protect the agricultural integrity of rural areas.
- C. Ensure orderly and desirable energy development.
- D. Provide for proper growth management practices.
- E. Avoid conflicts between land uses.

**Implementation Strategies:**

With respect to land uses, Bowman County adopts the following policies:

- 1) Bowman County supports prohibition of non-agricultural uses of floodplain areas.
- 2) Bowman County supports working toward uniform land use regulations.
- 3) Bowman County supports ensuring that lot or subdivision development programs do not create runoff, siltation, dust, odor, or conflicting uses for adjacent property owners.
- 4) Bowman County supports the establishment of rural subdivisions in accessible, easy-to-service areas.
- 5) Bowman County supports the utilization of defined growth management sectors and procedures within the county for planning and decision-making purposes.

- 6) Bowman County supports the prohibition of residential or commercial subdivisions on problem soils areas.
- 7) Bowman County supports the use of existing utility corridors and discouraging developments that are not readily accessible to utility services.
- 8) Bowman County supports subdivision designs that are compatible with the environmental characteristics of the site, as well as complement the location.
- 9) Bowman County supports evaluating the need for providing separate areas for mixed housing types.
- 10) Bowman County supports ensuring that adequate water and waste disposal is available prior to subdivision approval.
- 11) Bowman County supports avoiding strip development or activities that encourage strip developments.
- 12) Bowman County supports the prohibition of uses that depreciate land values of adjacent properties.
- 13) Bowman County supports the development of standards for the construction of and maintenance of roads in subdivision developments.
- 14) Bowman County supports and encourages housing developments on sites in or adjoining the County's existing cities

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

County government is charged with the task of providing services and facilities for public use. These benefits are designed to protect the general health and welfare of the citizenry and to improve the general quality of life. Bowman County is experiencing significant development in unincorporated areas. This presents concerns not only of whether the county is capable of meeting new demands but that the cost of providing these services often exceed the revenue generated from taxes and fees in these areas. Public services and facilities as a minimum involve law enforcement, ambulance services, fire protection services and road maintenance.

**Goal:** Plan, develop, provide and maintain adequate and efficient public facilities and services.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Keep abreast of financial and physical needs and changes throughout the county.
- B. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of county operations and services.
- C. Ensure safe and healthy living conditions for the residents of the county.
- D. Provide a means by which the county and its cities can direct future growth and development.

### **Implementation Strategies:**

With respect to the county's needs for public facilities and service, Bowman County adopts the following policies:

- 1) Bowman County supports examining the feasibility of combining city and county governmental services and facilities through intergovernmental cooperation and joint-exercise-of-powers agreements for cooperative ventures, thus avoiding duplication of services and facilities and minimizing tax expenditures.
- 2) Bowman County supports ensuring that the costs of additional services and facilities are equitably distributed among actual users, developers, and beneficiaries without undue stress upon general taxpayers.
- 3) Bowman County supports the continual update of departmental manpower and equipment needs assessments, priorities, fiscal impact analysis and capital improvement programs.

- 4) Bowman County supports providing adequate law enforcement services and equipment throughout the county.
- 5) Bowman County supports providing for the needs of the county's senior citizen population.
- 6) Bowman County supports providing adequate emergency services throughout the county and training for emergency medical and para-medical personnel.
- 7) Bowman County supports ensuring that social service programs are available and managed in a cost-effective manner.
- 8) Bowman County supports the sustainability of adequate medical facilities within the county.
- 9) Bowman County supports the use of a county-wide Geographic Information System (GIS) incorporating all jurisdictions.
- 10) Bowman County supports upgrading its current website for the use and benefit of the citizens of the county and to take advantage of technological advances for information dissemination.
- 11) Bowman County supports the establishment and maintenance of an address identification system adequate for emergency response purposes.

## TRANSPORTATION

An adequate transportation system is essential to the continued economic growth and development in Bowman County. This is the case both for agricultural and commercial interests. Bowman County currently enjoys vehicular, truck, train, bus and air services. Energy development impacts tend to stress the county's transportation systems and networks.

**Goal:** Provide and maintain an adequate transportation system within Bowman County.

**Objectives:**

- A. Provide reliable routes for the transfer of agricultural products from farms to markets.
- B. Integrate county road improvements with land use needs and public service areas.
- C. Ensure the long-term viability of air, truck, bus, and rail services in the county.

**Implementation Strategies:**

- 1) Bowman County supports ensuring access by county residents to necessary facilities, services, and public transportation systems.
- 2) Bowman County supports developing a road improvement and bridge replacement program.
- 3) Bowman County supports developing a preferred heavy traffic road network by cataloging and posting roads by weight limits.
- 4) Bowman County supports the use of low water crossings as an alternative to over-designed bridges and structures where appropriate.
- 5) Bowman County supports a regular assessment of the rural roads system to determine maintenance scheduling and road access needs.
- 6) Bowman County supports establishing and implementing right of way needs for future roadway network improvements.
- 7) Bowman County supports locating rural subdivisions in areas presently serviced by arterial roads and which can accommodate the additional traffic load.

- 8) Bowman County supports the prohibition of non-farm development from being placed in a location that does not have a paved road or highway as its primary route of access to the development's local street system.
- 9) Bowman County supports updating the county's subdivision regulations to establish requirements for developer financing of paving access roads between the paved highway system and the local streets within the development.
- 10) Bowman County supports the development of new airport facilities.



## RECREATION

Bowman County provides a wide array of recreational opportunities spread out throughout the county. Hunting, fishing, water-based sports, golf, paleontology digs, hiking, and rodeos represent but just a few of the assets and activities available to the user. These activities also support a growing tourism trade within the area. The reaches of the North Dakota Badlands extend to the western edge of the county and provide a scenic display of their rugged nature.

**Goal:** Optimize the county's recreational assets.

**Objectives:**

- A. Recognize, develop, promote and maintain the value of recreational assets of the county.
- B. Encourage tourism development through promotion the use of the county's recreational assets.

**Implementation Strategies:**

With respect to recreation, Bowman County adopts the following policies:

- 1) Bowman County supports the development and maintenance of parks and recreational sites and activities for all county residents and visitors.
- 2) Bowman County supports the expansion of facilities and services when warranted by population densities and opportunities.
- 3) Bowman County seeks to coordinate with city programs and facilities to meet the needs of the county's residents.
- 4) Bowman County supports efforts to promote tourism and the county's recreational potential.