



JOHNSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

June 2026

DRAFT
FOR REVIEW



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- ❖ Dave Hall
- ❖ Shawn Miller
- ❖ Jason Gardner
- ❖ Nathan Williams
- ❖ Wayne Graves

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Johnson County Land Use Plan Update provides a long-range, non-regulatory framework to guide land-use decisions, protect natural resources, and maintain the rural character that defines Johnson County. The Plan is designed to support informed decision-making by the County Commission, Planning & Zoning Commission, partner agencies, and landowners, while respecting private property rights and existing land uses.

This update builds upon the previous Johnson County Land Use Plan and reflects extensive public input, Steering Committee guidance, and coordination with adopted County plans, including the Natural Resource Management Plan (2021). Detailed background information supporting this Plan is included in the Trends and Conditions Technical Report, provided in Appendix B.

A COUNTY SHAPED BY LANDSCAPE AND TRADITION

Johnson County's identity is rooted in sweeping plains, mountain foothills, agricultural heritage, outdoor recreation, and a strong sense of community. Agriculture and ranching cover roughly three-quarters of the County's land area, while extensive federal and state holdings shape settlement patterns and limit where growth can occur. Most residents live near Buffalo or along major transportation corridors, while large areas of the County remain rural due to terrain, public ownership, and limited infrastructure.

KEY TRENDS AFFECTING LAND USE

Johnson County's population has grown gradually over time, reaching an estimated 8,908 in 2025 from 7,075 at the 2000 U.S. Census, but with periodic fluctuations typical of a rural, resource-based economy. The County is aging faster than the state as a whole, with a significant share of residents age 65 or older. These demographic patterns influence housing demand, workforce availability, and long-term service needs.

Housing affordability remains a challenge, especially for workers in service-based occupations. While homeownership is high, rental costs and home prices increasingly outpace earnings. Much of the rural landscape lacks water and sewer infrastructure, making dispersed residential development expensive to serve and maintain.

Economically, Johnson County has diversified beyond its historical reliance on ranching and mineral development. Service-sector jobs, including tourism, health care, real estate, and retail, do not make up the largest share of employment. Tourism continues to grow, supported by the Bighorn Mountains, Lake DeSmet, and historic attractions. Manufacturing in Johnson County remains important, while mineral activity continues to fluctuate with global markets.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) guides development toward areas with suitable access, infrastructure capacity, and minimal natural resource constraints. It introduces clear land use

categories that distinguish between appropriate development areas and places where development should remain limited due to terrain, wildfire risk, habitat values, or lack of services.

The FLUM categories include:

- ❖ Category A: Growth Areas – Areas generally near municipalities, paved roads, and existing infrastructure
- ❖ Category B: Rural Residential Transition Areas – Areas within ½ mile of paved roads, and year-round maintained state and county roads within five miles of a municipality, intended to accommodate gradual, low-density development
- ❖ Category C: Agricultural Production Areas – Irrigated and non-irrigated lands
- ❖ Category D: Mountainous and Forested Terrain Areas – Areas characterized by steep terrain, limited access, wildfire risk, and long or delayed emergency response time

These categories help align land-use decisions with County goals while respecting property rights and local values.

PLAN GOALS

The Plan is built around four core goals:

1. Preserve and Protect Natural Resources: Safeguard water, rangelands, wildlife habitat, forests, energy resources, and agricultural lands.
2. Champion Character and Way of Life: Maintain Johnson County’s rural identity, heritage, and community values while accommodating responsible growth.
3. Prepare for Changes and Shifts: Anticipate emerging pressures, evaluate regulatory needs, and plan for growth aligned with infrastructure capacity and public safety.
4. Build Countywide Partnerships: Strengthen collaboration with Buffalo, Kaycee, state and federal agencies, and community organizations.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The Implementation Framework provides clear direction for carrying out the Plan. It emphasizes:

- ❖ Using the FLUM to provide consistent, predictable guidance.
- ❖ Applying subdivision and development tools effectively.
- ❖ Aligning growth with infrastructure capacity, especially water availability and emergency access.
- ❖ Evaluating the fiscal impacts of dispersed rural development.
- ❖ Monitoring trends and updating the Plan as conditions evolve.

Short-range and long-range strategies accompany each goal to support ongoing implementation.

MOVING FORWARD

The Johnson County Land Use Plan Update provides a balanced, community-driven approach to guiding growth while preserving the natural resources, working lands, and rural character that residents value. By directing development where it can be supported, strengthening partnerships, and maintaining flexibility as conditions change, the Plan gives Johnson County a practical pathway for protecting its heritage while planning thoughtfully for the future.

CHAPTER 1: VISION & GOALS

The Johnson County Land Use Plan serves as a forward-looking roadmap that guides the County's efforts to protect natural resources, support community values, and prepare for future growth. While the Plan is not regulatory in nature, it provides consistent direction for policy decisions, partnerships, and land-use choices. The goals of the Land Use Plan, along with their action steps, timelines, and partnerships, are designed to be clear and achievable. Their focused presentation highlights what Johnson County citizens value most.

Although the goals themselves are straightforward, the work required to achieve them, building partnerships, holding public meetings, and shaping meaningful outcomes, is substantial and often challenging. Prioritizing these goals helps the County stay focused and intentional about its future. The goals represent collective citizen effort; they are not quick fixes. A thriving County depends on the commitment and participation of everyone. Implementation begins with a vision statement that establishes the direction and tone for carrying the plan forward.

1.1 JOHNSON COUNTY VISION

Johnson County envisions a future in which its natural resources, rural character, and traditional way of life are preserved, strengthened, and passed on to future generations. The County seeks to foster a resilient, diversified economy; uphold the cultural and agricultural heritage that defines the County; and ensure growth that respects the landscape, supports local families, and enhances overall quality of life.

Through thoughtful planning, collaborative partnerships, and responsible stewardship, Johnson County aims to remain a place where residents, current and future, can enjoy clean water, healthy ecosystems, strong community ties, safe and vibrant neighborhoods, and opportunities for prosperity, while retaining the rural values that make Johnson County unique. This vision provides the foundation for the goals and implementation steps contained in this Plan.

1.2 LAND USE GOALS

Goal 1: Preserve and Protect Natural Resources

Ensure the long-term preservation, stewardship, and sustainable management of Johnson County's natural resources, including open spaces, water resources, irrigated and non-irrigated agricultural lands, rangelands, forests, energy and mineral resources, and wildlife habitats, in order to maintain ecological integrity, support working landscapes, and safeguard these assets for current and future generations.

Johnson County residents consistently identify natural resources as foundational to their identity, economy, and quality of life. Protecting these resources is not only an environmental priority but also a cultural and economic one, given the County's reliance on agriculture, outdoor recreation, energy development, and high-quality landscapes. This goal emphasizes sustained stewardship and the continued use of existing planning tools, especially the 2021 Natural Resource Management Plan, to ensure decisions reflect both scientific understanding

and local values. The goal also recognizes that oil, gas, mineral, and renewable energy development play an important role in the County's economic history and future, while also requiring thoughtful siting and coordination to protect other valued resources.

Action Steps

1. Maintain ongoing collaboration with Federal, State, and local agencies and entities through the implementation of the updated Natural Resources Management Plan (2021), which is the most current version at the time of this Land Use Plan's adoption.
2. Develop and maintain ongoing public education efforts, through public meetings, community partnerships, and schools, to promote the preservation and protection of natural resources and to increase awareness of development-related pressures on those resources.
3. Inform the public about the potential need to update the Johnson County Subdivision Regulations to better address water use, water quality, and water availability. Emphasize that current potable water requirements, especially for individual on-lot wells, are limited under Chapter 23 of the Wyoming DEQ Water Quality Rules, which may not adequately support future growth or protect long-term water resources.
4. Encourage land-use decisions that balance agricultural operations, wildlife habitat, and energy development while minimizing conflicts.

Implementation Schedule

Ongoing

- ❖ Maintain interagency cooperation and coordination throughout the duration of this Land Use Plan and beyond, recognizing that natural resource planning is continuous.

Short-Range (1-3 years)

- ❖ Implement targeted public education programs led by the Johnson County Planning Department, with assistance from the County Commission, School District, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Conservation Districts, and community organizations, focusing on water use, water limitations, and potential regulatory updates.

Goal 2: Character and Way of Life

Champion and uphold Johnson County's unique rural character, cultural heritage, and overall quality of life as the County population grows, ensuring that future land-use decisions reflect and protect the values, traditions, and lifestyle that define the County.

Johnson County's identity is deeply rooted in rural living, community connections, agricultural heritage, and the pride residents take in their landscape and traditions. As the County grows, maintaining this character requires intentional education, meaningful engagement, and careful use of planning tools. This goal recognizes that preserving the County's way of life depends not

only on regulations, but also on informed residents who understand how land-use choices affect the community.

Action Steps

1. Conduct sponsored workshops that emphasize the importance of Johnson County's character and way of life and demonstrate the planning tools available to support and protect these County values.
2. Educate residents and decision-makers on subdivision impacts, including water supply and quality, road maintenance, emergency access, and agricultural conflicts.
3. Evaluate potential updates to Subdivision Regulations addressing infrastructure demands, agricultural compatibility, and water availability.
4. Encourage citizen participation in existing volunteer events throughout Johnson County to strengthen connections and engage residents in activities that celebrate and reinforce local identity.

Implementation Schedule

Ongoing

- ❖ Conduct workshops throughout the process of updating the Land Use Plan to support continuous learning and engagement.

Short-Range (1-3 years)

- ❖ Pursue amendments to the Subdivision Regulations to evaluate impact fees, agricultural protections, and infrastructure placement requirements.
- ❖ Establish and promote an annual Johnson County Volunteer Day to highlight community unity and civic involvement

Goal 3: Prepare for Changes and Shifts

Anticipate and proactively plan for the changes and challenges associated with growth, ensuring that Johnson County remains resilient, adaptable, and well-positioned to guide development in a manner that supports County values and long-term sustainability.

The County recognizes that change is inevitable, whether driven by population shifts, market pressures, economic development, or outside influences. Preparing for these shifts requires early evaluation of regulatory requirements and the thoughtful integration of environmental and infrastructure constraints into long-term planning. This goal emphasizes proactive planning rather than reactive decision-making.

Action Steps

1. Conduct a series of countywide workshops to evaluate whether additional land use regulations should be adopted to effectively manage future growth.

2. Integrate infrastructure capacity, emergency response, wildfire risk, and access considerations into growth planning.
3. Coordinate with emergency service providers to identify areas where development may pose safety concerns.

Implementation Schedule

Short-term (1-3 years)

- ❖ Within 1 year of Land Use Plan adoption, conduct countywide workshops to determine what regulations or planning strategies are necessary to address growth pressures and maintain alignment with community values.

Goal 4: County-Wide Partnerships

Build and sustain countywide partnerships that enhance economic development, expand housing affordability, promote efficient use of central water and sewer infrastructure, and support initiatives that encourage and enable youth to remain and thrive in Johnson County.

Johnson County understands that many long-term goals cannot be accomplished by any single entity. Strong communication, shared decision-making, and coordinated investment across jurisdictions and organizations are essential to addressing challenges such as housing, infrastructure expansion, economic diversification, and opportunities for youth and families.

Action Steps

1. Establish an intergovernmental coordination group including Johnson County, Buffalo, Kaycee, and relevant partners.
2. Support collaboration related to housing, infrastructure, workforce development, and youth opportunities.
3. Maintain ongoing communication to align priorities and reduce duplication of effort.

Implementation Schedule

Short-term (1-3 years)

- ❖ Establish the intergovernmental group.
- ❖ Maintain the group as a permanent resource for fostering alignment, communication, and coordinated decision-making.

Countywide Partnerships

Successful implementation of the Johnson County Land Use Plan relies on strong, ongoing partnerships among local organizations, government entities, community groups, and private stakeholders. While each goal identifies specific areas of focus, many of the same partners contribute across multiple initiatives. Consolidating partnership information into a single section emphasizes the shared responsibility and collaborative spirit necessary to carry out the Plan's vision.

Johnson County's partnerships include federal, state, regional, and local entities; agricultural and natural resource groups; municipal governments; community organizations; businesses; landowners; and residents. Together, these partners help ensure that land-use decisions reflect community values, support responsible growth, and protect natural and cultural resources.

Key Partnership Categories

Federal, State, and Regional Agencies

These agencies support natural resource stewardship, environmental compliance, infrastructure coordination, planning assistance, and technical expertise. They also help ensure Johnson County's goals align with broader regional and statewide planning priorities. Common partners include:

- ❖ U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- ❖ Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- ❖ Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ)
- ❖ Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD)
- ❖ State forestry, water, and conservation agencies
- ❖ Other regulatory and resource management partners

County and Municipal Governments

Coordination across jurisdictions is essential for infrastructure planning, housing, development review, water and sewer services, and long-range growth strategies. Partners include:

- ❖ Johnson County
- ❖ City of Buffalo
- ❖ Town of Kaycee
- ❖ Unincorporated communities
- ❖ Planning Commission
- ❖ County departments
- ❖ Emergency services, public works, and transportation departments

These entities support the creation of shared policies, infrastructure investment priorities, and collaborative growth management strategies.

Local Schools, Youth Organizations, and Educational Institutions

These partners play a vital role in outreach, youth engagement, natural resource education, and supporting long-term community vitality. Organizations include:

- ❖ Johnson County School Districts
- ❖ Youth stewardship and leadership organizations
- ❖ Extension service

Agricultural Organizations, Landowners, and Working Lands Partners

Because agricultural lands, rangelands, and working ranches are central to Johnson County's identity and economy, partnerships with agricultural groups help protect rural livelihoods and maintain open landscapes.

Partners include:

- ❖ Ranch families and agricultural landowners
- ❖ Conservation Districts (Powder River & Clear Creek)
- ❖ Watershed groups
- ❖ Irrigation districts
- ❖ Agricultural associations and cooperatives

Community, Civic, and Volunteer Organizations

Community organizations support outreach, public participation, heritage preservation, volunteerism, and local events that strengthen Johnson County's character and sense of place. Examples include:

- ❖ Civic organizations and community clubs
- ❖ Local historical groups and museums
- ❖ Neighborhood associations
- ❖ Local nonprofits
- ❖ Tourism boards and Chambers of Commerce

Business, Real Estate, and Development Community

These partners contribute to discussions about land development, subdivision standards, infrastructure demands, and responsible growth. Their involvement is essential when evaluating Subdivision Regulations, siting development, and coordinating infrastructure needs. Partners include:

- ❖ Local and regional developers
- ❖ Real estate professionals
- ❖ Engineers, surveyors, and planners
- ❖ Local business owners and industry representatives

Public-at-Large and Individual Residents

Residents are central partners in implementing the Land Use Plan. Public engagement, volunteerism, participation in workshops, and involvement in civic discussions ensure that County decisions genuinely reflect community values. Citizens contribute through:

- ❖ Volunteer events
- ❖ Public meetings and workshops
- ❖ Survey and outreach participation
- ❖ Direct involvement in community initiatives

CHAPTER 2: FUTURE LAND USE MAP

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) provides a generalized, long-range vision for how Johnson County intends to guide development, protect natural resources, and maintain its rural character. The FLUM is **NOT** a zoning map; it does not change allowable land uses or remove existing property rights. Instead, it acts as a decision-making guide to help ensure that future development occurs in appropriate locations where infrastructure, environmental suitability, and community values can support it.

The Johnson County FLUM is designed to:

- ❖ Identify where development is most appropriate, based on access, infrastructure, and suitability.
- ❖ Highlight areas where development is discouraged due to resource value, steep terrain, wildfire risk, or lack of access.
- ❖ Preserve agricultural and rangeland landscapes, which are essential to Johnson County's identity and economy.
- ❖ Minimize conflicts between land uses, especially between development and long-standing ranching operations.
- ❖ Provide a consistent reference for land-use decisions, subdivision review, infrastructure conversations, and intergovernmental coordination.
- ❖ Support the goals in Chapter 1, particularly resource protection, character preservation, and coordinated growth.

Because Johnson County contains large areas of federal, state, and privately managed land, the FLUM also helps clarify the County's role in coordinating with land management agencies and advocating for local values in regional decision-making.

2.2 HOW TO USE THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The FLUM is intended for public use, landowners, developers, County staff, and decision-makers to understand how potential development aligns with County goals. The Map directs attention to areas where development may be encouraged and areas where caution, mitigation, or limitation is advisable.

The FLUM should be used to:

- ❖ Inform zoning changes, subdivision applications, and development review.
- ❖ Evaluate whether the proposed development is compatible with existing land uses, natural conditions, and infrastructure.
- ❖ Guide future public infrastructure investments.
- ❖ Support collaboration with municipalities on growth and service extensions.
- ❖ Offer predictability to landowners regarding long-term development expectations.

The FLUM should **NOT** be used to:

- ❖ Replace zoning, Subdivision Regulations, or other regulatory tools.
- ❖ Prohibit existing uses, agricultural operations, or land management activities.
- ❖ Restrict federal or state land uses outside of County jurisdiction.
- ❖ Serve as a parcel-specific approval or denial tool.

The FLUM is advisory and general in nature, intended to support informed and thoughtful decision-making.

2.3 FUTURE LAND USE MAPS (FLUM)

The FLUM will serve as Johnson County's long-range guide for where development is most appropriate, where it should be limited, and where natural or agricultural land uses should remain the primary focus. While the map is not regulatory, it provides a consistent reference for evaluating subdivision requests, coordinating with municipalities, and making decisions that align with community values and infrastructure realities.

Johnson County's landscape includes working ranchlands, open rangeland, foothills, and mountain terrain, each with different capacities to support development. Areas near Buffalo, Kaycee, major transportation corridors, and existing services are generally the most suitable for new growth. In contrast, lands with limited access, steep slopes, wildfire risk, important wildlife habitat, or agricultural production value are less appropriate for development and benefit from continued open space or working land uses.

The FLUM will organize the County into broad land-use categories that reflect these differences. These categories will distinguish:

- ❖ Areas most suitable for new development.
- ❖ Areas appropriate for low-density rural living.
- ❖ Agricultural preservation areas.
- ❖ Open space where development is discouraged.
- ❖ Mountain and forest interface areas where development poses safety or access concerns.
- ❖ Key overlays such as wildlife habitat or scenic resource areas.

These categories establish a clear framework without prescribing parcel-specific outcomes. Once the mapping work is complete, the FLUM will visually illustrate how these concepts apply countywide and will support the County's goals of protecting natural resources, preserving rural character, and directing growth to locations best equipped to support it.

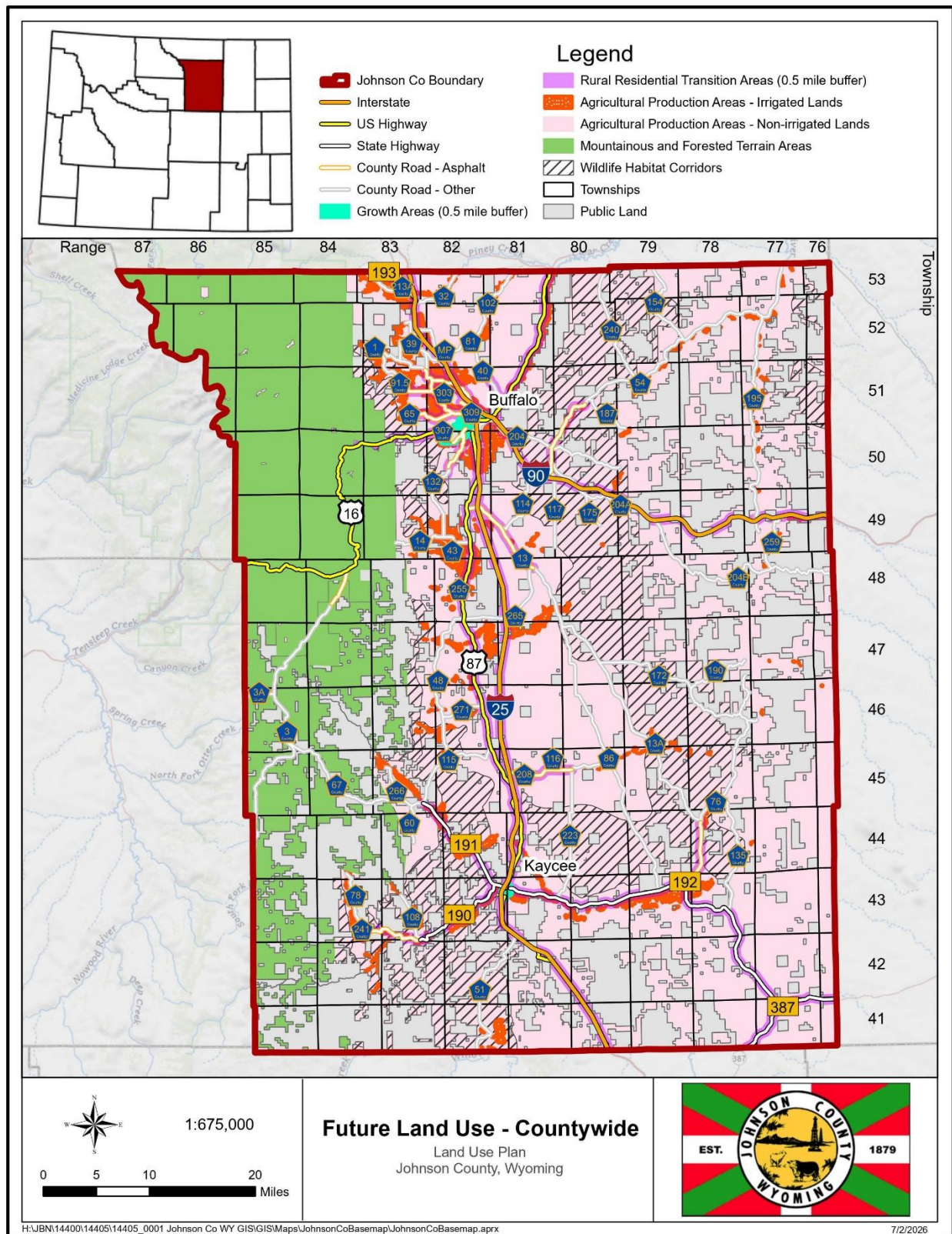


Figure 1. Overview of future land use categories for Johnson County.

2.4 FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The FLUM organizes Johnson County into broad land use categories that reflect differences in access, infrastructure, service capacity, agricultural value, terrain, and environmental constraints. These categories are advisory, not regulatory, and are intended to guide consistent, informed decision-making rather than prescribed parcel-specific outcomes.

Each category represents a general level of suitability for development based on physical conditions, public safety considerations, and long-term fiscal impacts to the County. Some areas are better equipped to support growth, while others warrant caution due to limited access, emergency response challenges, or the need to maintain working lands and natural systems.

The categories are intentionally flexible and should be applied with site-specific review and professional judgment. Certain considerations, such as wildlife habitat, scenic resources, and natural hazards, apply across multiple categories and are addressed through overlay designations. The Future land Use Maps are located in Appendix A - Figure 1 Figure 5.

Category A: Growth Areas (Teal/Blue on Maps)

Purpose

Identify the lands most suitable for new development based on access, available infrastructure, proximity to existing communities, and lower environmental constraints.

Description

Growth Areas are located primarily near Buffalo, Kaycee, and other areas with feasible access to utilities, year-round maintained roads, and emergency services. These areas provide opportunities for residential, commercial, and mixed-use development that does not compromise agricultural integrity or environmental health.

Characteristics:

- ❖ Proximity to municipal services or realistic potential for extension
- ❖ Gentle slopes with minimal physical constraints
- ❖ Lower wildfire risk and better emergency response access
- ❖ Logical locations for subdivision, infill, or redevelopment
- ❖ Compatible with long-term fiscal responsibility due to service proximity

Development Expectations:

- ❖ Clustered or compact development patterns are preferred.
- ❖ New subdivisions should connect to existing communities when possible.
- ❖ Development should avoid fragmenting adjacent agricultural operations.

Category B: Rural Residential Transition Areas (Pink on Maps)

Purpose

Provide space for rural living on larger lots while still being near established services and transportation corridors.

Description

These areas serve as a buffer between incorporated areas, as well as lands within ½ mile buffer of all paved roads and County or State maintained year-round within five miles of a municipality. Rural Residential areas accommodate homeowners seeking space for small-scale livestock, privacy, and a rural lifestyle while remaining within a reasonable travel distance of community services.

Characteristics:

- ❖ Larger parcels (typically 5-40 acres)
- ❖ Access to maintained roads, though not always multiple access points
- ❖ Suitable for well and septic, provided groundwater availability is demonstrated
- ❖ Not immediately adjacent to prime irrigated agricultural land (There are locations where the Rural Residential Transition Areas overlap with mapped irrigated agricultural lands. The intent of this plan is not to divide or convert agricultural lands, but rather to recognize the overlap of these areas.)

Development Expectations:

- ❖ Subdivisions should maintain open space and avoid agricultural conflicts.
- ❖ Driveway and access standards must support emergency response.
- ❖ Development must avoid steep slopes and wildfire-prone areas.

Category C: Agricultural Production Areas (Orange and Pastel Pink on Maps)

Purpose

Maintain and support working agricultural landscapes essential to Johnson County's economy, identity, and open character.

Description

Agricultural Production Areas include irrigated farmland, grazing lands, and associated agricultural infrastructure. These lands are the backbone of the County's rural economy and visual landscape.

For mapping purposes, irrigated and non-irrigated agricultural lands are displayed separately; however, they function as a single land-use category.

Characteristics:

- ❖ Active ranching, farming, or grazing operations
- ❖ Highly sensitive to land fragmentation
- ❖ Limited infrastructure and services
- ❖ Important wildlife, watershed, and scenic values

Development Guidance:

- ❖ Residential development should be minimal and very low-density.
- ❖ Subdivision patterns that interfere with irrigation systems or livestock movement are discouraged.
- ❖ Voluntary conservation tools and clustering are encouraged.
- ❖ Right-to-farm and ranch considerations should be clearly communicated.

Category D: Mountainous and Forested Terrain Areas

Purpose

Protect life and property, in areas with significant environmental constraints and limited access.

Description

These areas include foothills, forested slopes, and mountain terrain characterized by steep slopes, elevated wildfire risk, seasonal access limitations, and extended emergency response times. They function as transition zones between lower-intensity rural landscapes and more remote natural areas and are recognized as environmentally sensitive with limited infrastructure.

These areas are unique landscapes that are increasingly pressured by competing land uses; however, development is intended to remain very limited, carefully sited, and low-intensity, with an emphasis on public safety, hazard mitigation, protection of natural resources, and long-term landscape resilience. It is recognized that different land uses include variable impacts and may require different considerations within this unique area.

Characteristics:

- ❖ High wildfire risk
- ❖ Seasonal road access and closures
- ❖ Limited water availability
- ❖ Complicated emergency response logistics
- ❖ Mix of private land, recreational cabins, agricultural support uses, and public land interfaces

Development Guidance:

- ❖ New development is strongly discouraged.
- ❖ Any development must meet elevated standards for access, water supply, and fire mitigation.

- ❖ Emergency service limitations should be clearly disclosed.
- ❖ Conservation, recreation, and agricultural support uses are preferred.

2.5 LAND USE OVERLAY AREA (APPLIED ACROSS CATEGORIES)

Purpose

The Wildlife Habitat and Corridor Overlay identifies areas of Johnson County that provide important seasonal habitat, migration corridors, and landscape connectivity for wildlife species. The overlay exists to ensure that land-use decisions recognize the presence and movement needs of wildlife resources that are integral to the County's ecology, agricultural working lands, recreation economy, and overall quality of life.

This overlay does not prohibit development or designate wildlife protection zones. Instead, it signals where additional awareness, coordination, and site-specific consideration are appropriate when development is proposed.

Narrative

Johnson County contains extensive wildlife habitat that supports big game migration, winter range, riparian corridors, and diverse species movement between the plains and the mountains. Many of these habitats overlap with private agricultural lands, rangelands, and rural residential areas. In these locations, wildlife use and human land uses have historically coexisted and will continue to do so.

The Wildlife Habitat and Corridor Overlay applies across multiple Future Land Use categories and does not function as a separate land-use designation. Its role is to highlight areas where development decisions should be informed by wildlife presence, seasonal movement patterns, and habitat connectivity. This perspective helps minimize unintended conflicts, reduce long-term impacts on wildlife, and support landowner awareness without imposing additional regulatory burden.

The overlay recognizes that wildlife movement often occurs outside clearly defined corridors and can vary by species, season, weather conditions, and land management practices. As a result, mapped information is intended as general guidance and should be supplemented by site-specific information, professional judgment, and coordination with appropriate agencies when needed.

Development Considerations

Within areas identified by the Wildlife Habitat and Corridor Overlay, the County encourages land-use practices that:

- ❖ Maintain large, contiguous open areas to reduce habitat fragmentation.
- ❖ Use clustered or shared development patterns where feasible to preserve movement corridors.
- ❖ Consider wildlife-friendly fencing, road crossings, and site layouts.

- ❖ Coordinate early with Wyoming Game and Fish and other relevant partners for site-specific information.
- ❖ Acknowledge seasonal timing considerations for construction or land-disturbing activities when appropriate.

These considerations are intended to support informed planning and voluntary design choices, not to limit lawful land uses or agricultural operations.

Relationship to County Goals

The Wildlife Habitat and Corridor Overlay supports several County goals by:

- ❖ Protecting natural resources while respecting private land ownership.
- ❖ Reducing conflict between development, wildlife activity, and agricultural operations.
- ❖ Supporting tourism, hunting, and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- ❖ Reinforcing the County's rural character and open landscape values.

By incorporating wildlife considerations early in the planning process, Johnson County can better balance growth, stewardship, and long-term community interests.

2.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAND USE CATEGORIES AND COUNTY GOALS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The FLUM serves as the spatial link between the County's vision, goals, and day-to-day land-use decision-making. By illustrating where different development patterns are most appropriate, the FLUM helps translate the goals outlined in Chapter 1 into practical guidance that reflects infrastructure realities, public safety needs, and long-term stewardship.

Specifically, the FLUM supports County goals by:

- ❖ **Directing growth toward areas with service capacity.**
The map highlights locations near existing communities, paved roads, and established services where development can be accommodated more efficiently and safely, thereby reducing the need for costly infrastructure extensions.
- ❖ **Protecting agricultural operations and rural character.**
By identifying agricultural production areas and discouraging fragmentation of working lands, the FLUM helps maintain the open landscapes, ranching heritage, and land-use patterns that define Johnson County's identity.
- ❖ **Reducing long-term public costs.**
Encouraging development in areas where roads, emergency services, and utilities already exist helps limit ongoing maintenance expenses and reduces fiscal strain associated with scattered, remote development.
- ❖ **Supporting emergency service planning and public safety.**

The FLUM acknowledges access limitations, wildfire risk, and response-time challenges, particularly in remote and mountain areas, thereby allowing these considerations to be incorporated early in development discussions.

❖ **Providing a common framework for County and municipal coordination.**

The map serves as a shared reference for collaboration among Johnson County, Buffalo, Kaycee, and partner agencies, supporting coordinated planning for growth, infrastructure investment, and service delivery.

Taken together, the FLUM reinforces a balanced approach to growth, one that supports community needs while respecting the County's land, resources, and long-term capacity.

2.7 FUTURE UPDATES AND FLEXIBILITY

The FLUM is intended to be a flexible, living framework that can adapt as conditions, information, and community priorities evolve. While the map provides long-range guidance, it is not static and should remain responsive to new data and changing circumstances affecting land use in Johnson County.

Updates to the FLUM may be considered in response to:

- ❖ Changes in infrastructure capacity or service availability, including roads, utilities, and emergency services.
- ❖ Updated hazard information, such as wildfire risk assessments or floodplain mapping.
- ❖ New or revised wildlife habitat, migration, or corridor data.
- ❖ Shifts in development patterns, growth pressures, or land-use trends.
- ❖ Changes in County, municipal, regional, or state priorities that influence land-use planning.

Periodic review of the FLUM allows the County to incorporate improved data and community feedback while maintaining consistency with the Plan's vision and goals. Any future updates should balance adaptability with stability, ensuring that property rights, rural character, and local values are respected as the County plans for the future.

CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF FRAMEWORK & ACTION STRATEGIES

3.1 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The Implementation Framework establishes the structure Johnson County will use to transform the Land Use Plan's goals and policies into coordinated actions. While the Plan itself is non-regulatory, successful implementation requires consistent use of available tools, cross-agency partnerships, and ongoing evaluation of development trends and community needs. This framework is designed to ensure that Johnson County's land-use decisions reflect community values, protect natural resources, and support responsible, fiscally sustainable growth.

The Implementation Framework is organized around four central components:

Align Decisions with the Future Land Use Map

The FLUM provides the spatial foundation for implementing Johnson County's land-use vision. County leadership, advisory boards, and staff should use the FLUM as a primary reference when reviewing subdivision applications, zone changes, variance requests, building patterns, and infrastructure discussions.

Key elements include:

- ❖ Ensuring land-use decisions reflect suitability categories identified on the FLUM.
- ❖ Encouraging development within "Growth Areas" and discouraging development in areas with wildfire risk, resource sensitivity, or limited access.
- ❖ Minimizing fragmentation of agricultural lands and wildlife habitat.
- ❖ Supporting annexation discussions and municipal growth planning with Buffalo and Kaycee.

Use Regulations and Tools Consistently

Several implementation tools already exist within Johnson County's land-use processes. These tools should be consistently updated and applied to ensure the County can effectively manage growth pressures, protect natural resources, and clarify expectations for developers and landowners.

Relevant tools include:

- ❖ Subdivision Regulations – especially around water availability, road standards, clusters, and agricultural buffering.
- ❖ Zoning tools (where applicable) – for compatible use, property rights, and public health.
- ❖ Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) – particularly for energy, commercial, or higher-impact activities.
- ❖ Interagency coordination with the DEQ, BLM, USFS, WGFD, and WYDOT.
- ❖ Natural Resource Management Plan (2021) – for consistency in natural resource planning.

Evaluate Infrastructure Capacity and Service Provision

Johnson County's ability to support development depends heavily on road maintenance availability, water supply, emergency services accessibility, and proximity to municipal services. The County must consider:

- ❖ The cost of extending services to remote subdivisions.
- ❖ Fire response limitations in high-wildfire-risk areas.
- ❖ Road maintenance commitments for new development.
- ❖ The long-term fiscal impact of scattered rural development.
- ❖ Water availability concerns under DEQ Chapter 23 standards.

Growth should be directed to areas where infrastructure already exists or where future utility extensions are feasible and cost-effective.

Monitor Progress and Adjust as Needed

The Land Use Plan is intended to be a living document. Johnson County should periodically evaluate progress, identify emerging needs, and adjust strategies as conditions change. Monitoring includes:

- ❖ Annual updates to the Planning & Zoning Commission and County Commission.
- ❖ Tracking subdivision activity, infrastructure demands, and natural resource conditions.
- ❖ Adapting to new state policies, wildlife data, or federal land management actions.
- ❖ Revising strategies when community priorities shift.

3.2 ACTION STRATEGIES

Action Strategies describe the tasks Johnson County will undertake to realize its goals. They are organized around the four major goals identified in Chapter 1, incorporating short-range, long-range, and ongoing steps.

Goal 1: Preserve and Protect Natural Resources

Action Strategies

Short-Range (1-3 Years)

- ❖ Launch a public education program on natural resource issues, including water availability, groundwater limitations, wildfire awareness, and responsible development practices.
- ❖ Develop informational materials summarizing DEQ Chapter 23 potable water requirements for wells and septic systems.
- ❖ Evaluate whether updates to the Subdivision Regulations are needed to strengthen protections related to water quality, water availability, and irrigation systems.

Long-Range/Ongoing

- ❖ Maintain active collaboration with federal, state, and local agencies through implementation of the Natural Resource Management Plan (2021).
- ❖ Support conservation and stewardship initiatives that protect wildlife corridors, rangeland health, forest resources, and watersheds.
- ❖ Encourage voluntary conservation tools such as clustering, open space dedication, or conservation easements.
- ❖ Work with local agricultural organizations to ensure development does not hinder livestock operations or irrigation infrastructure.

Goal 2: Character and Way of Life

Action Strategies

Short-Range (1-3 Years)

- ❖ Conduct workshops on Johnson County's cultural heritage, rural character, and land-use tools that help maintain these qualities.
- ❖ Consider targeted Subdivision Regulation updates that address:
 - Impact fees where appropriate
 - Agricultural land protection near growth areas
 - Steering growth to areas with adequate infrastructure
- ❖ Establish an annual Johnson County Volunteer Day to strengthen community ties and highlight rural values.

Long-Range/Ongoing

- ❖ Support events, programs, and partnerships that highlight the County's ranching heritage, local history, and community identity.
- ❖ Encourage volunteer participation in beautification projects, river cleanups, historical preservation, or community events.
- ❖ Promote design approaches in new development that reflect Johnson County's rural context.

Goal 3: Prepare for Changes and Shifts

Action Strategies (1-3 Years)

- ❖ Conduct countywide workshops to evaluate whether new or updated land-use regulations may be needed to manage growth responsibly.
- ❖ Develop an evaluation tool for comparing proposed subdivisions against the FLUM categories, wildfire risk, and infrastructure capacity.

Long-Range/Ongoing

- ❖ Integrate environmental and infrastructure overlays (floodplain, wildfire, wildlife habitat, airport influence areas, steep slopes) into long-range planning efforts.
- ❖ Work with emergency services providers to identify areas where access limitations may restrict safe development.

- ❖ Continue monitoring changes in demographic trends, industry shifts, and housing demands, adjusting planning practices as needed.

Goal 4: County-Wide Partnerships

Action Strategies

Short-Range (1-3 Years)

- ❖ Establish an intergovernmental coordinating group consisting of Johnson County, Buffalo, Kaycee, and other relevant jurisdictions to support collaborative land-use planning.
- ❖ Begin discussions with municipalities on shared infrastructure planning, including roads, utilities, water, and emergency services.

Long-Range/Ongoing

- ❖ Encourage countywide cooperation on economic development, workforce housing, youth retention, and tourism initiatives.
- ❖ Partner with school districts, youth organizations, and employers to develop opportunities that encourage young residents to remain in the County.
- ❖ Maintain ongoing collaboration with state agencies, Chamber of Commerce, tourism groups, and civic organizations to strengthen cross-jurisdictional planning.
- ❖ Support coordinated grant applications for shared infrastructure, recreation assets, or community facilities.

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

The success of the Land Use Plan depends on continued commitment from the County Commission, Planning & Zoning Commission, Planning Department, municipal partners, landowners, and local organizations. Johnson County will:

- ❖ Publish an annual report summarizing progress on implementation strategies.
- ❖ Review and update the FLUM and goals as needed based on new information.
- ❖ Maintain transparency through public engagement, accessible information, and clear communication channels.
- ❖ Use the Plan as a guiding reference in all major land-use decisions.

Through consistent application, collaboration, and stewardship, the County can ensure that Johnson County remains a place where natural resources are protected, rural character is honored, and growth occurs in a manner that supports long-term community prosperity.

CHAPTER 4: BACKGROUND AND TRENDS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Johnson County's land-use decisions occur within a physical, demographic, and economic environment that is both resilient and deeply rooted in its rural heritage. Understanding the conditions that influence development, such as population changes, housing patterns, infrastructure limitations, economic drivers, and environmental context, is essential for guiding future growth. This chapter provides a concise but comprehensive overview of the most relevant trends shaping Johnson County today. While the full Trends & Conditions report contains extensive tables, historic data, and detailed analysis, the following section distills that information into the key themes needed to inform land-use decisions.

4.2 PHYSICAL SETTING AND COUNTY CONTEXT

Johnson County stretches from expansive rolling plains in the east to the forested, high-elevation slopes of the Bighorn Mountains in the west. This range of landscapes shapes development opportunities: the eastern plains offer the most accessible and developable land, while the western portion features steep slopes, dense forests, and significant wildfire conditions that limit growth potential. Located in north-central Wyoming and bordered by Sheridan, Big Horn, and Campbell counties, Johnson County encompasses 4,175 square miles, making it the tenth-largest county in the state. Despite its size, it remains one of Wyoming's least densely populated counties, with just over two people per square mile.

Land ownership patterns are a defining characteristic of Johnson County. Only 60% of the land is privately owned, while 40% is federally or state-managed. Public lands include Bureau of Land Management holdings, significant areas of Bighorn National Forest, and large tracts of State Trust Lands. These lands contribute to the County's heritage, economy, and outdoor recreation opportunities, but also limit where population and business growth can occur. The County's landscape and ownership structure create both constraints and opportunities: steep mountain terrain restricts private development but attracts year-round recreation, while public lands support grazing, energy development, and tourism.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Johnson County has historically been a slow-growth, fluctuating population area with modest increases over the past 80 years. The population has grown from 4,980 in 1940 to 8,447 in 2020, with small declines in certain decades tied to broader economic cycles. The 2022 population estimate of 8,536 suggests a continuation of this long-term pattern: stable overall, but subject to periodic declines.

A critical demographic trend is the County's rapidly aging population. Johnson County's median age of 48 is among the highest in Wyoming, and 26.6% of residents are age 65 or older. This share is significantly above the statewide average, indicating a strong presence of retirees and long-term residents. Meanwhile, younger populations remain comparatively small, reflecting limited

economic opportunities and a local workforce increasingly dependent on attracting and retaining younger families. The aging trend has implications for the County's labor force, housing preferences, emergency services, and future service needs.

Household and family sizes in Johnson County are smaller than statewide averages, and more than one-third of households include at least one resident age 65 or older. These patterns reinforce the demographic shift toward an older community and underscore the need for land-use decisions that account for accessibility, proximity to healthcare, and housing diversity.

4.4 HOUSING CONDITIONS AND AFFORDABILITY

Housing availability, affordability, and location patterns are central to long-term land-use considerations in Johnson County. The County has 4,592 housing units, of which 3,825 are occupied. Owner-occupancy remains strong, with 71% of residents owning their homes; notably, over half of those owners have no mortgage, reflecting a stable base of long-term residents.

Despite this stability, housing affordability presents a growing challenge. Median home values and rents are rising, while incomes in many job sectors, particularly service-sector occupations, cannot support median housing costs. Workforce affordability data show that many of the County's most common occupations cannot afford the median home price, and a substantial share of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing. This mismatch affects businesses, which struggle to recruit and retain workers, and underscores the need for a diverse range of housing options near employment centers in Buffalo and Kaycee.

Housing market pressures are compounded by an ageing population staying longer in their homes, slower turnover, and limited supply for younger households. Additionally, much of the County's rural landscape lacks water and sewer infrastructure, making dispersed residential growth costly to serve and maintain. These conditions point to the importance of strategic residential development near existing communities and infrastructure.

4.5 ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE

Johnson County's economy blends agriculture, service industries, government employment, manufacturing, tourism, and historically mineral development. Over the past two decades, total employment increased significantly, with service-sector jobs driving the majority of the growth. Between 2001 and 2022, service-related jobs expanded from 2,678 to 4,272, reflecting steady increases in real estate, finance, insurance, hospitality, and professional services. In contrast, non-service jobs, particularly construction and mining, have fluctuated sharply with global energy markets, demonstrating the County's continued vulnerability to resource-based economic cycles.

Although the mineral industry has been central to Johnson County's past economic expansions, recent declines in mining employment illustrate the sector's volatility. Meanwhile, manufacturing operations in and around Buffalo, including metal fabrication, wool processing, and construction materials, provide a stable economic anchor supported by access to transportation and community infrastructure.

Government employment remains an important and consistent part of the local economy. Federal land management, public schools, and County and municipal services contribute to steady job numbers and help balance fluctuations in private-sector employment.

For land use planning, these economic trends suggest the need for focused commercial and industrial growth near Buffalo, Kaycee, and major transportation routes, where utilities and workforce access are most viable. Small-scale home-based enterprises, agricultural support services, and tourism-related businesses also contribute meaningfully to the County's rural economy and should be expected to grow.

4.6 AGRICULTURE AND RANCHING

Agriculture and ranching remain the foundation of Johnson County's landscape, culture, and economic life. Ranching operations operate across a mix of private holdings, State Trust Lands, and federal grazing leases, reflecting a long-established pattern of land use spanning generations. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of farms increased, as did total agricultural land, signaling continued investment in agricultural production.

Livestock production dominates the sector, accounting for the majority of agricultural sales. Johnson County ranks third in Wyoming for agricultural output, and its agricultural base reflects both traditional ranching operations and newer, smaller-scale agricultural enterprises. However, the County is experiencing an aging agricultural workforce, with the number of producers over age 65 rising notably. This trend raises concerns about future agricultural succession and long-term land stewardship.

From a land-use perspective, agricultural preservation is central to maintaining Johnson County's rural character. Rising pressures for small-acreage splits, rural residential development, and land fragmentation could threaten the continuity of working ranchlands if not managed carefully.

4.7 TOURISM, OUTDOOR RECREATION, AND AMENITIES

Tourism plays a steady and growing role in Johnson County's economy, bolstered by the Bighorn Mountains, historic sites, museums, fishing waters, trail systems, and scenic highways such as the Cloud Peak Skyway. Visitor spending has increased over the past decade, especially in the post-COVID period, contributing to local tax revenue and supporting businesses in accommodations, dining, retail, and recreation services.

Outdoor recreation attracts both visitors and new residents, offering access to hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, camping, and fishing experiences that define the County's lifestyle and appeal. The County's natural assets, particularly Lake DeSmet, the Bighorns, and historic destinations like Hole-in-the-Wall, create opportunities for tourism-oriented development when thoughtfully planned.

For land use, it is essential to ensure that development along scenic corridors, lakefront areas, and recreation gateways retains the qualities that draw visitors and residents. Balancing tourism growth with natural resource protection will be a key long-term consideration.

4.8 ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Mineral development has long played a significant role in Johnson County, with oil and gas production shaping employment and population cycles. Production levels for both oil and natural gas have fluctuated over several decades, with periods of pronounced growth followed by decline. Although renewables such as wind and solar have not yet been developed within the County, statewide trends suggest potential interest that could emerge over time.

Energy development affects land use by requiring access roads, pipelines, industrial sites, and workforce housing during boom periods. It also shapes fiscal conditions, influencing County revenue and long-term infrastructure needs. Any future renewable development will require careful siting to avoid impacts on wildlife habitat, scenic quality, and existing land uses.

4.9 INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS

Infrastructure capacity is one of the most influential factors in determining where development should occur in Johnson County. Buffalo and Kaycee are the only communities with central water and sewer systems, and neither has plans for major expansion. Most rural residents rely on individual wells and septic systems, which are subject to state permitting and require adequate groundwater availability. Aquifer limitations in certain parts of the County may affect the feasibility of new rural subdivisions.

Transportation infrastructure is anchored by the junction of Interstate 25 and 90 in Buffalo, one of only two such junctions in Wyoming, and by the major east-west route of U.S. Highway 16. The County maintains an extensive rural road network, much of which is unpaved and costly to maintain. Increased dispersed development strains emergency services, road maintenance budgets, and school transportation.

For land-use planning, these constraints indicate that future growth should be encouraged near existing services and transportation routes, rather than in remote areas where public costs and safety concerns are greater.

4.10 KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR LAND USE PLANNING

Taken together, these trends reveal several overarching implications for Johnson County's future. The County's slow and fluctuating population growth suggests that development pressures are manageable, but the aging population and rising housing costs point to a need for housing options that support workforce attraction and retention. The predominance of agricultural land emphasizes the importance of maintaining large, unfragmented tracts to sustain ranching and natural resource values. Infrastructure limitations and the dispersed nature of rural

development demonstrate the fiscal and safety benefits of encouraging growth near Buffalo, Kaycee, and key transportation corridors.

Tourism and outdoor recreation continue to offer opportunities for economic diversification, particularly when paired with thoughtful protection of scenic and natural assets. Meanwhile, the significant federal and state landholdings underscore the need for ongoing coordination with land management agencies, as many local land-use outcomes are shaped by external policy decisions.

4.11 SUMMARY

Johnson County's landscape, demographics, economy, and infrastructure form a unique environment that blends a deeply rooted rural heritage with natural amenities and long-standing economic cycles. Understanding the conditions summarized in this chapter helps clarify where and how future growth is most appropriate. While Johnson County faces challenges related to housing affordability, aging demographics, and infrastructure constraints, it also possesses strengths: a diverse economic base, a strong agricultural identity, and unmatched recreational assets.

APPENDIX A – LAND USE MAPS

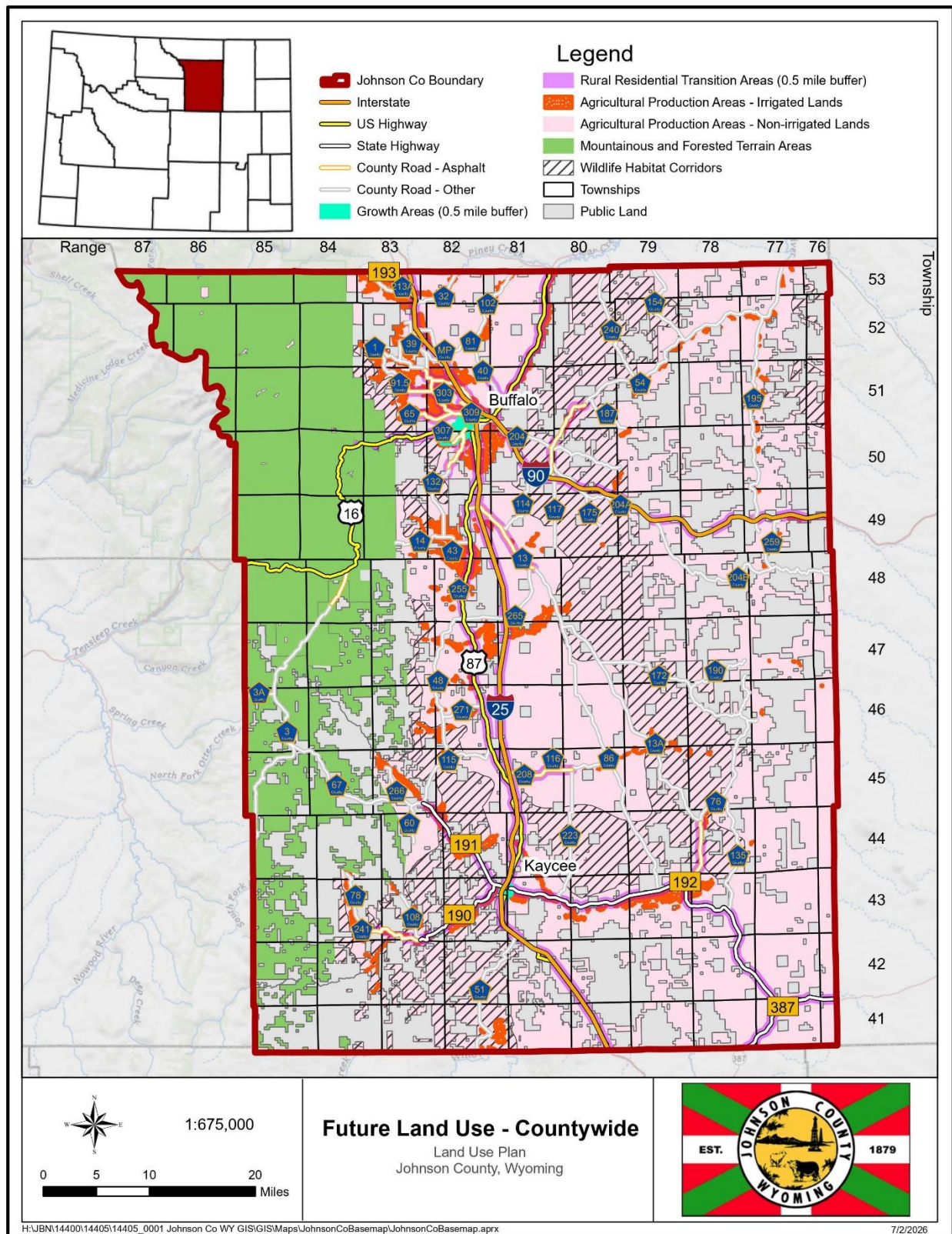


Figure 1. Overview of future land use categories for Johnson County.

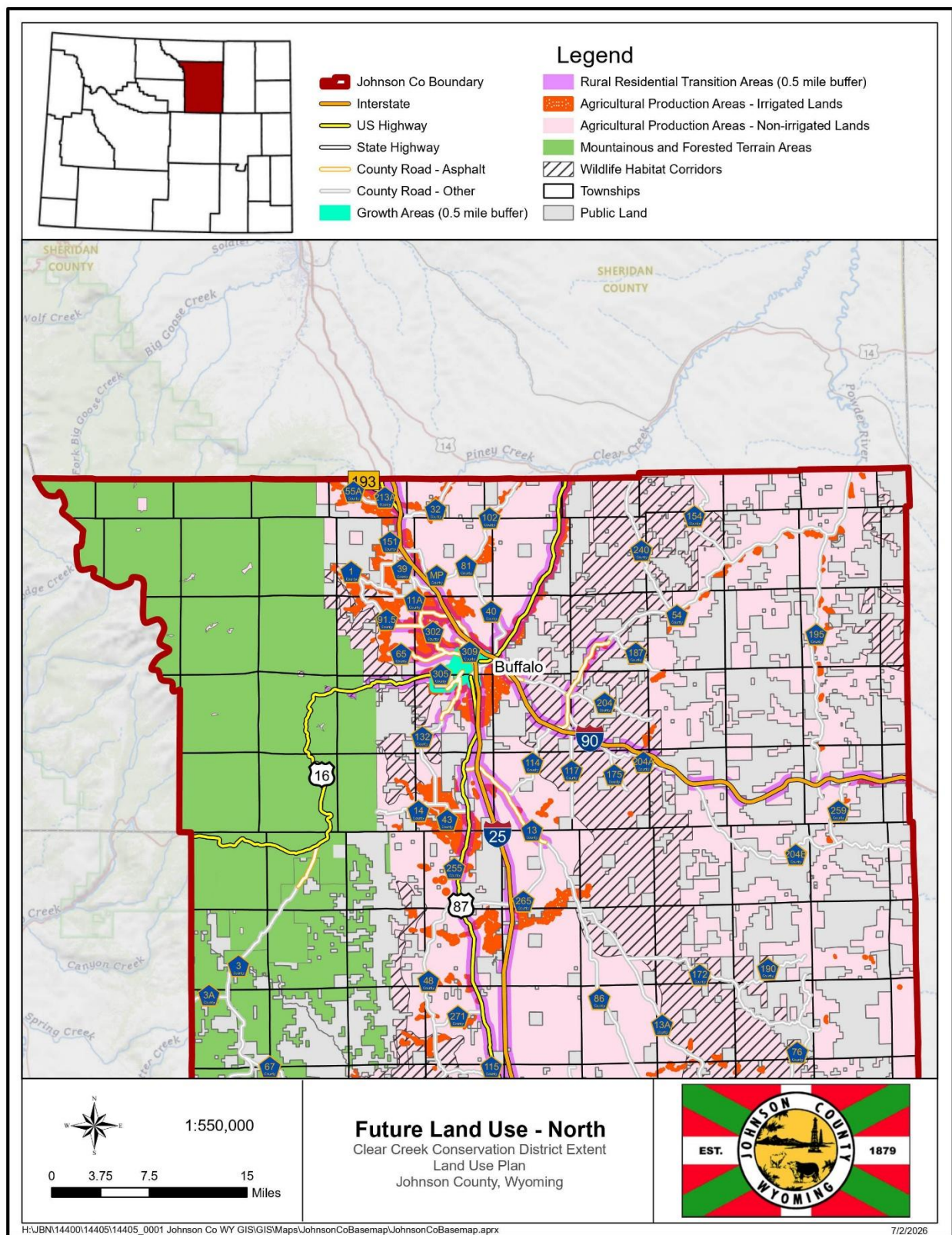


Figure 2. Future land use categories for Johnson County-North.

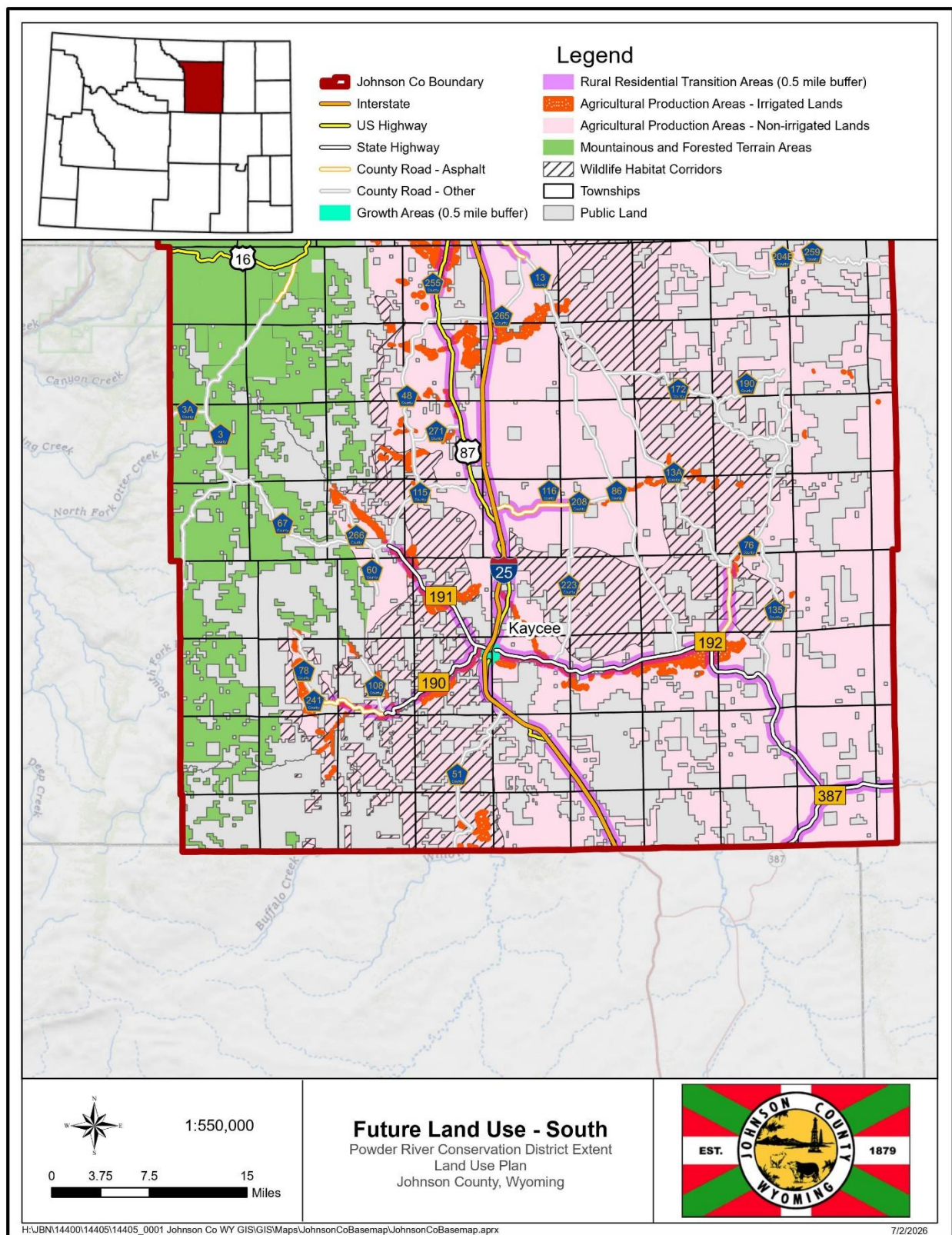


Figure 3. Future land use categories for Johnson County-South.

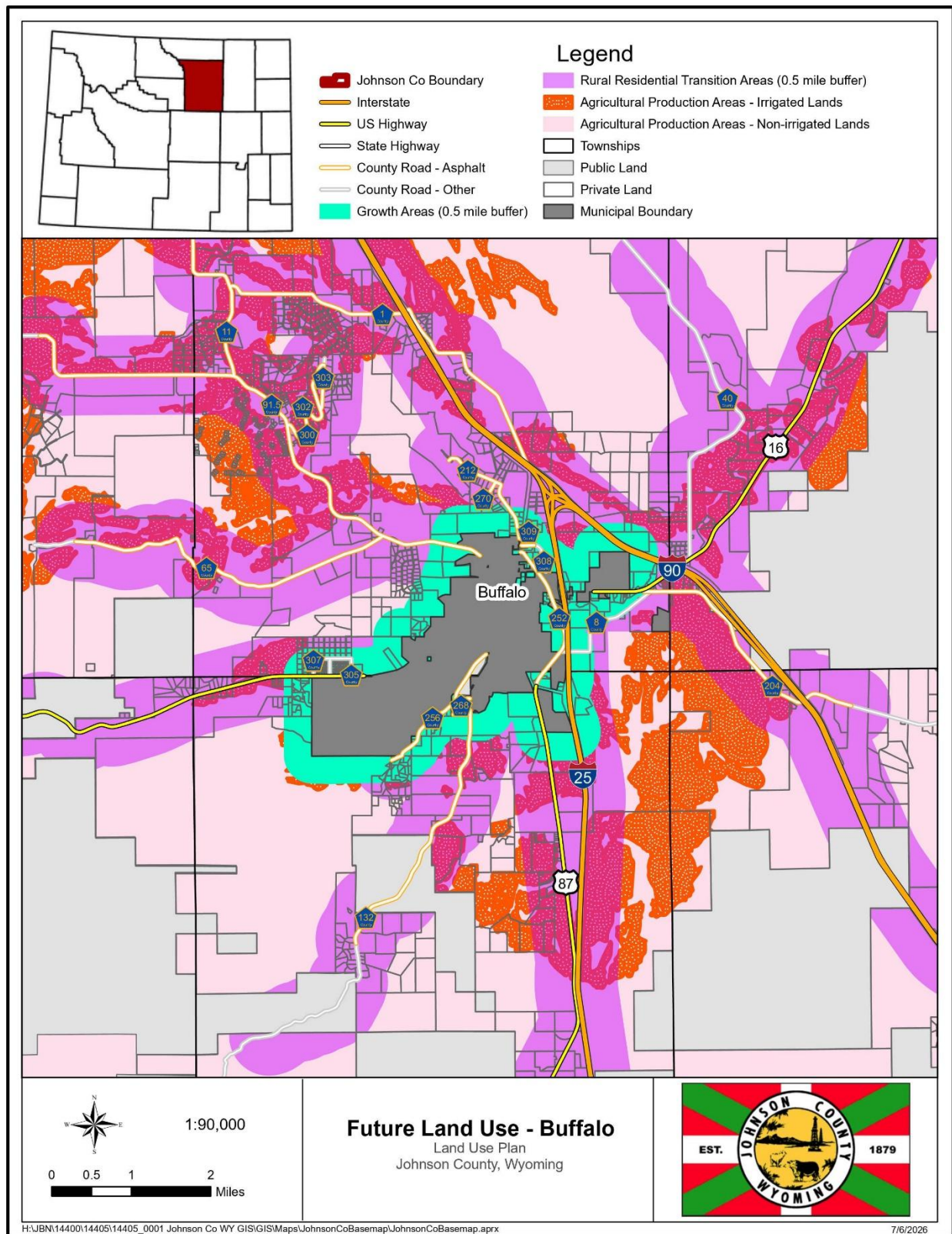


Figure 4. Future land use categories for Johnson County-Buffalo

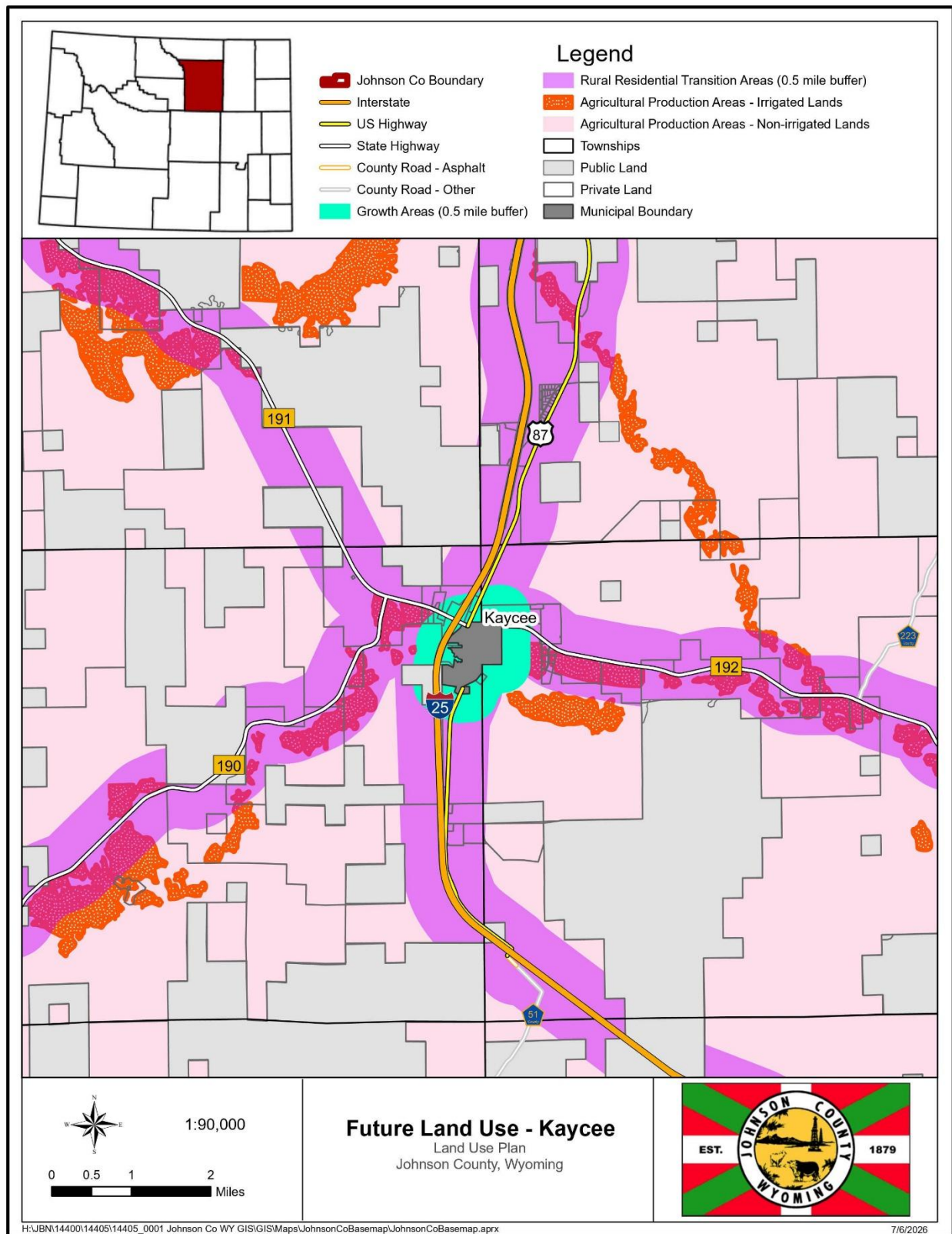


Figure 5. Future land use categories for Johnson County-Kaycee.

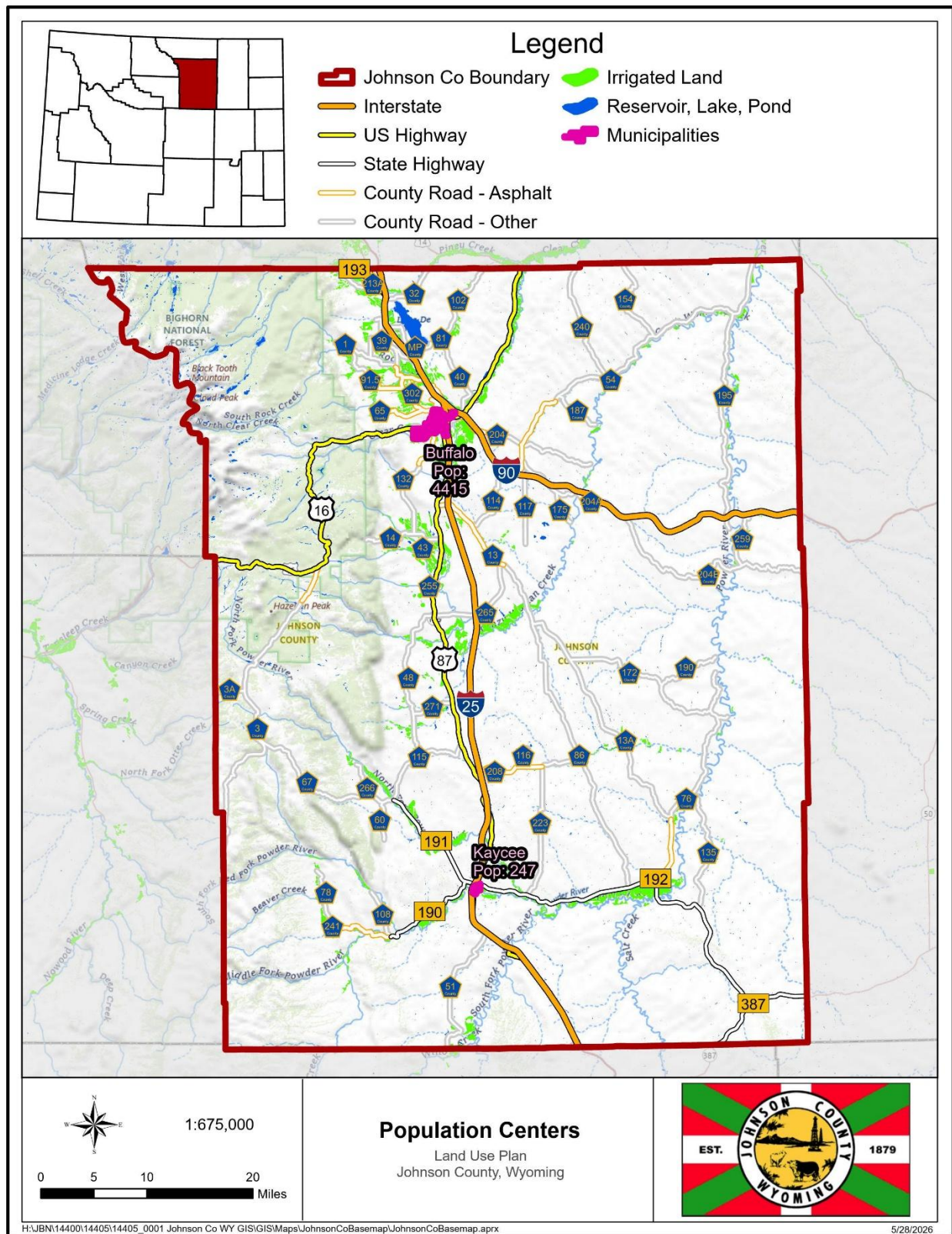


Figure 7. Population centers in Johnson County.

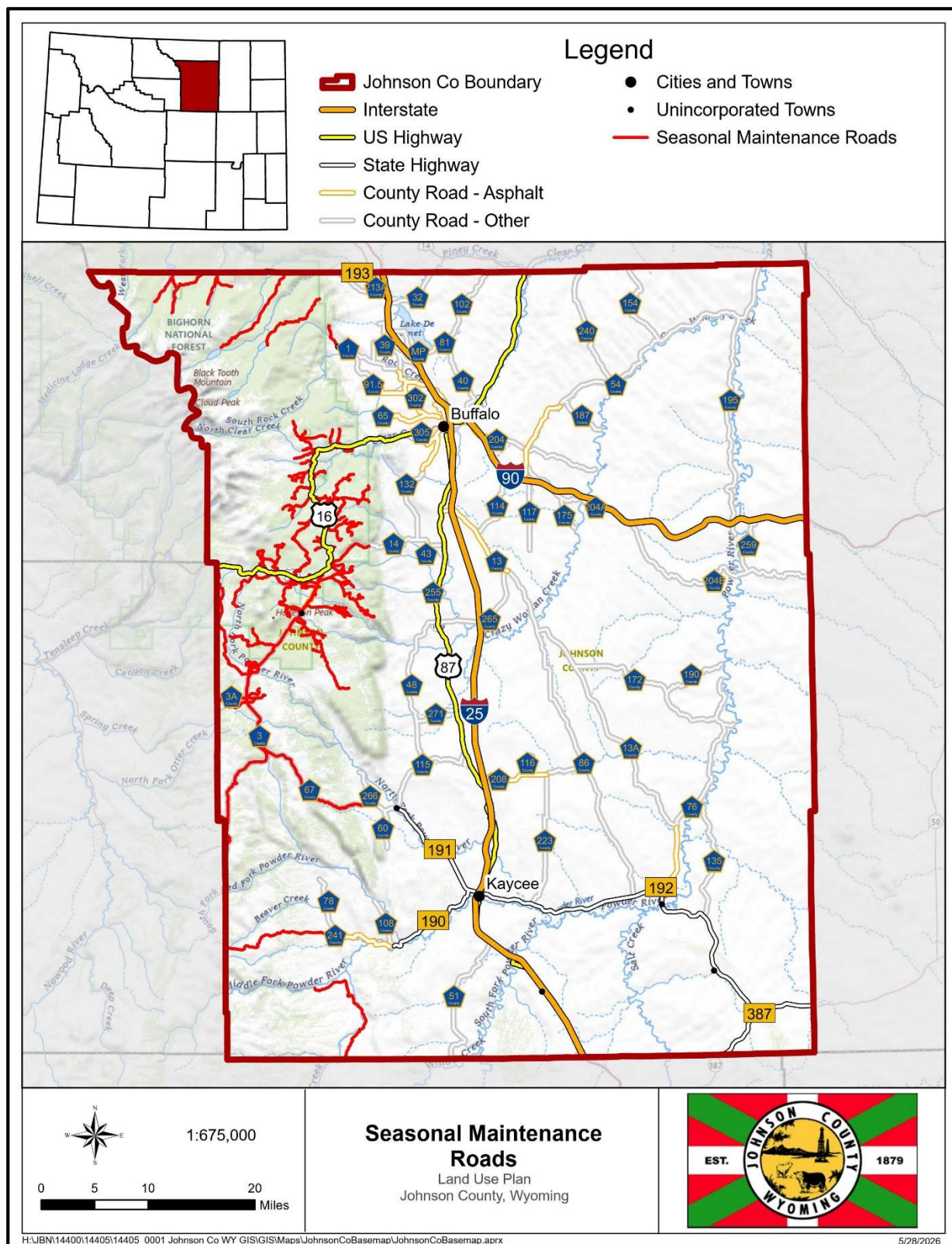


Figure 8. Seasonally maintained roads in Johnson County.

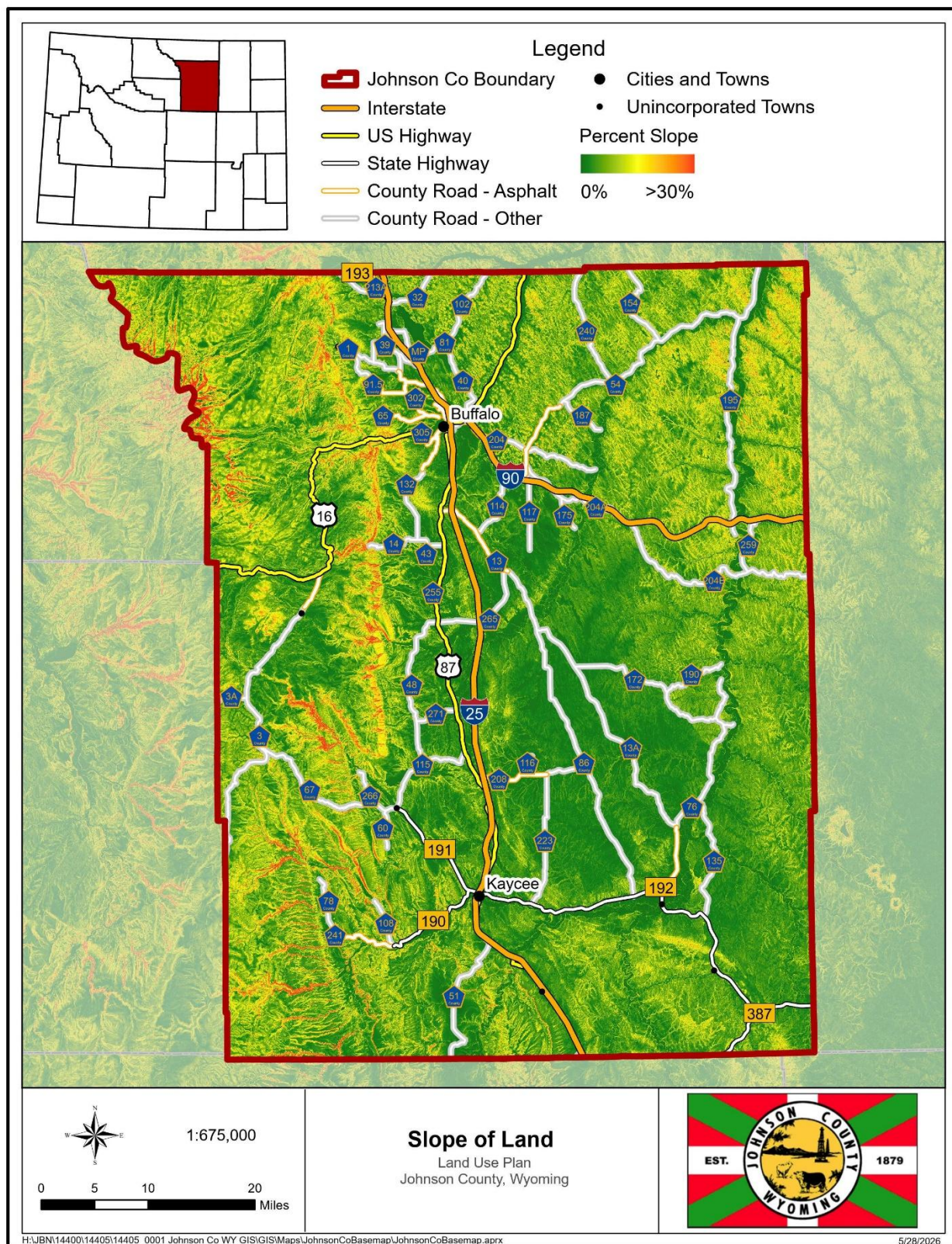


Figure 9. Mapped slopes for Johnson County.

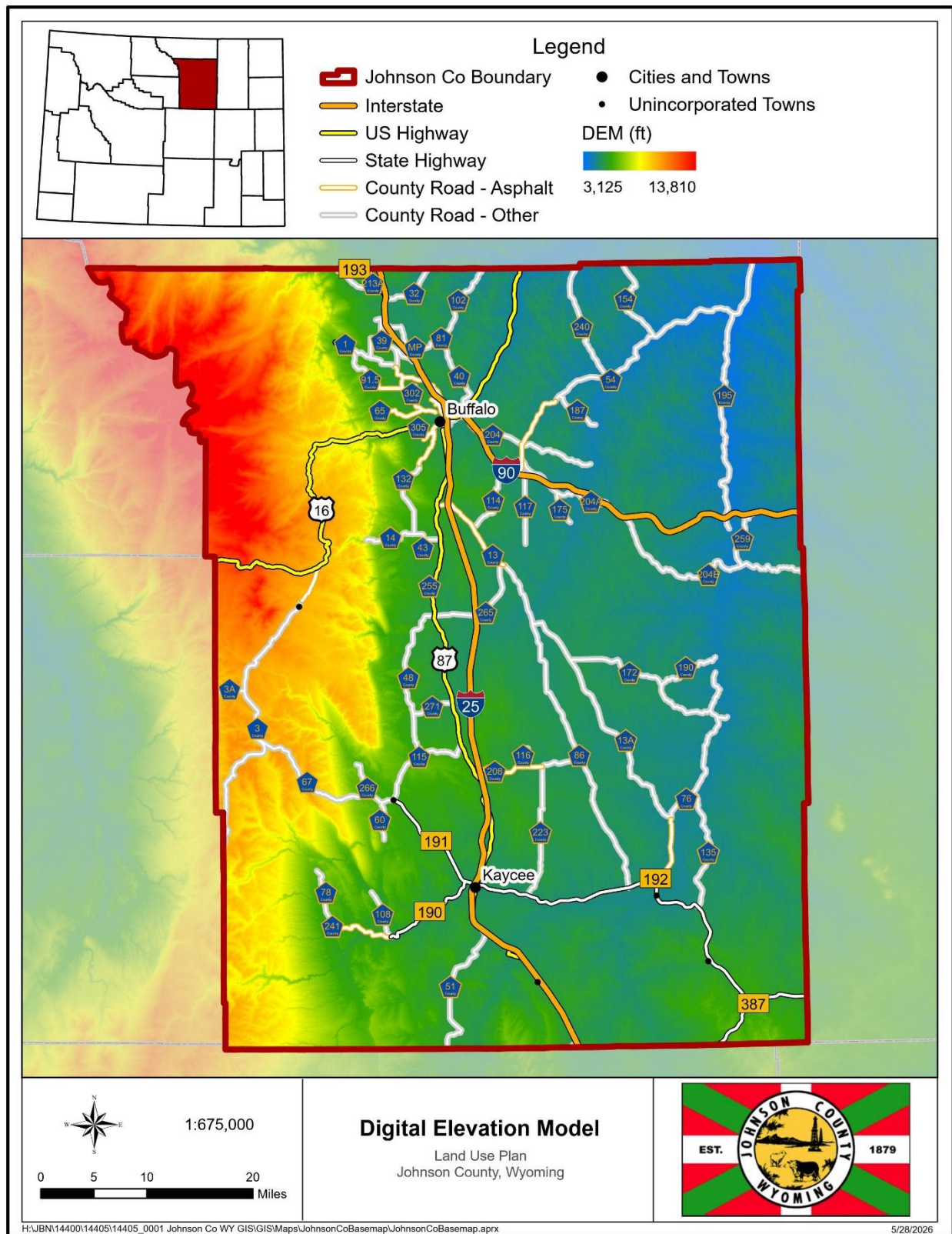


Figure 10. Digital Elevation Model for Johnson County.

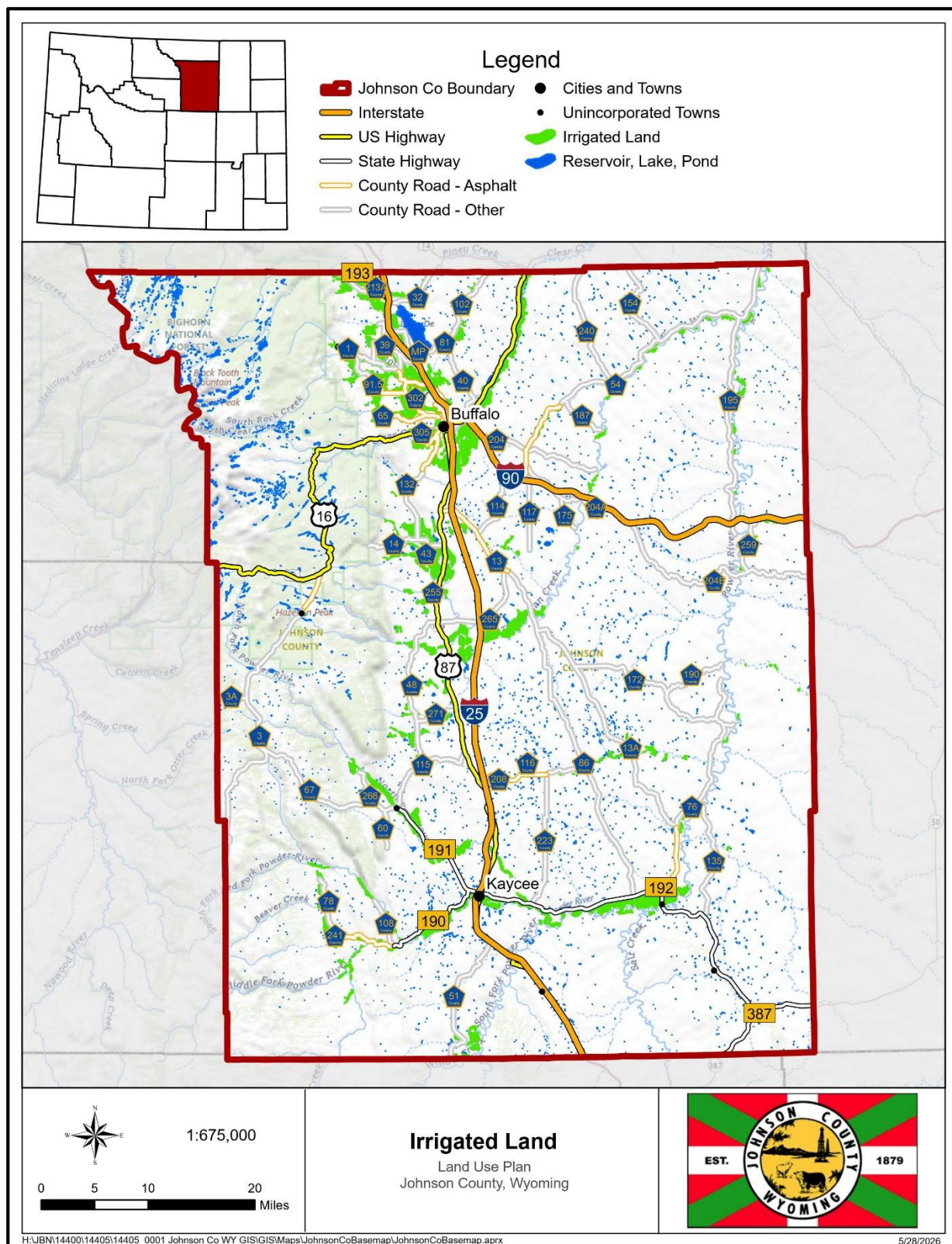


Figure 11. Irrigated lands in Johnson County.

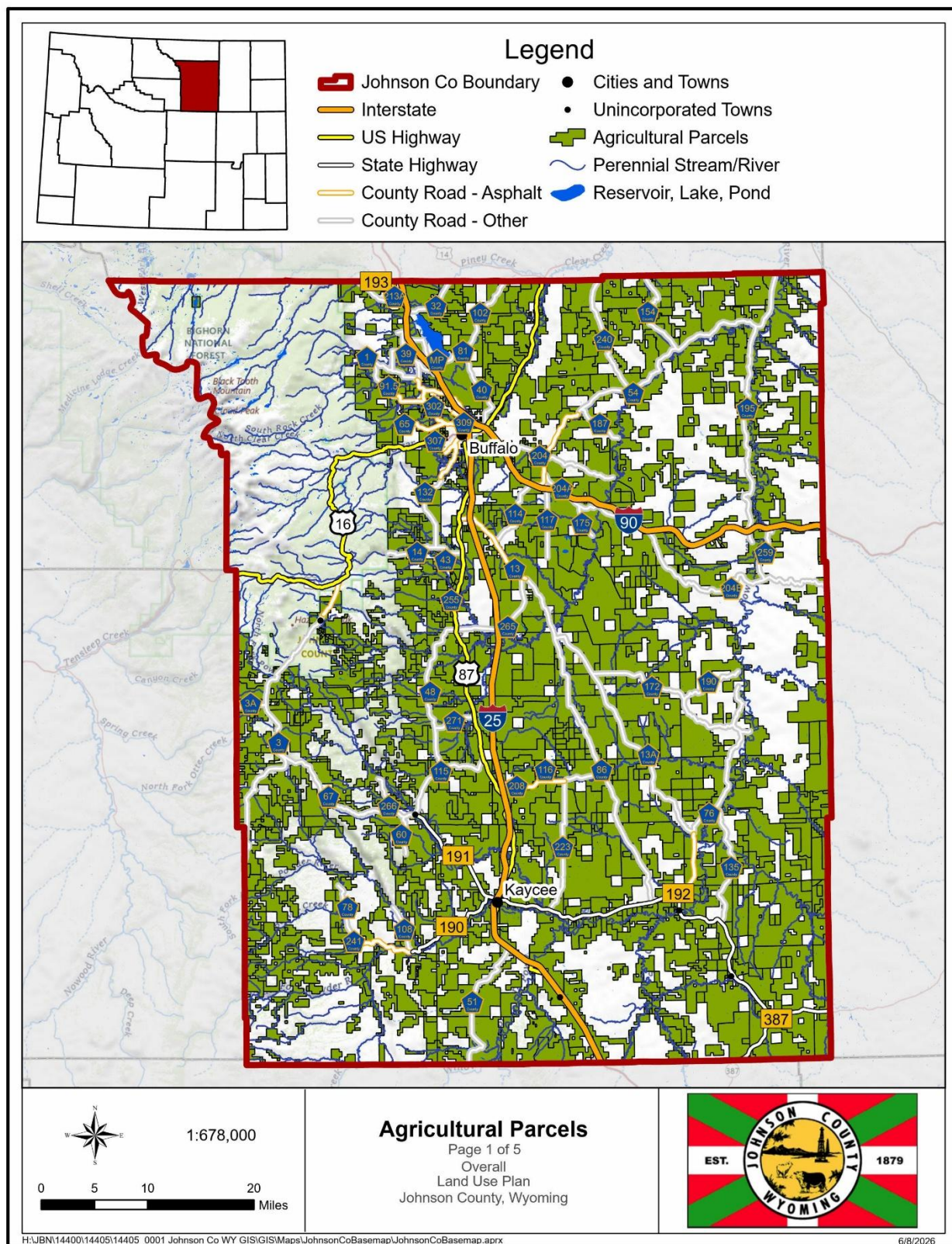


Figure 12. Agricultural parcels in Johnson County.

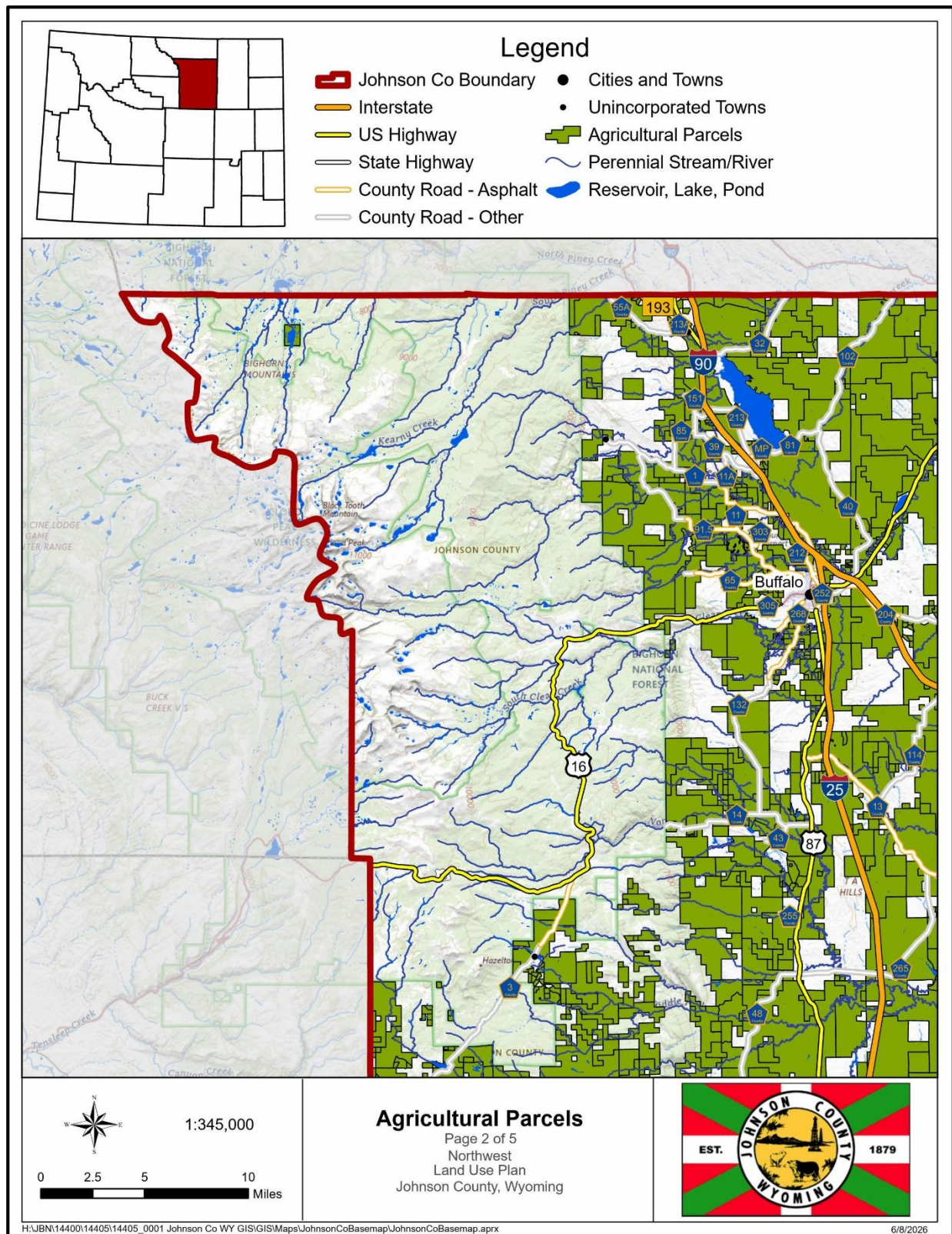


Figure 13. Agricultural parcels in Johnson County- Northwest.

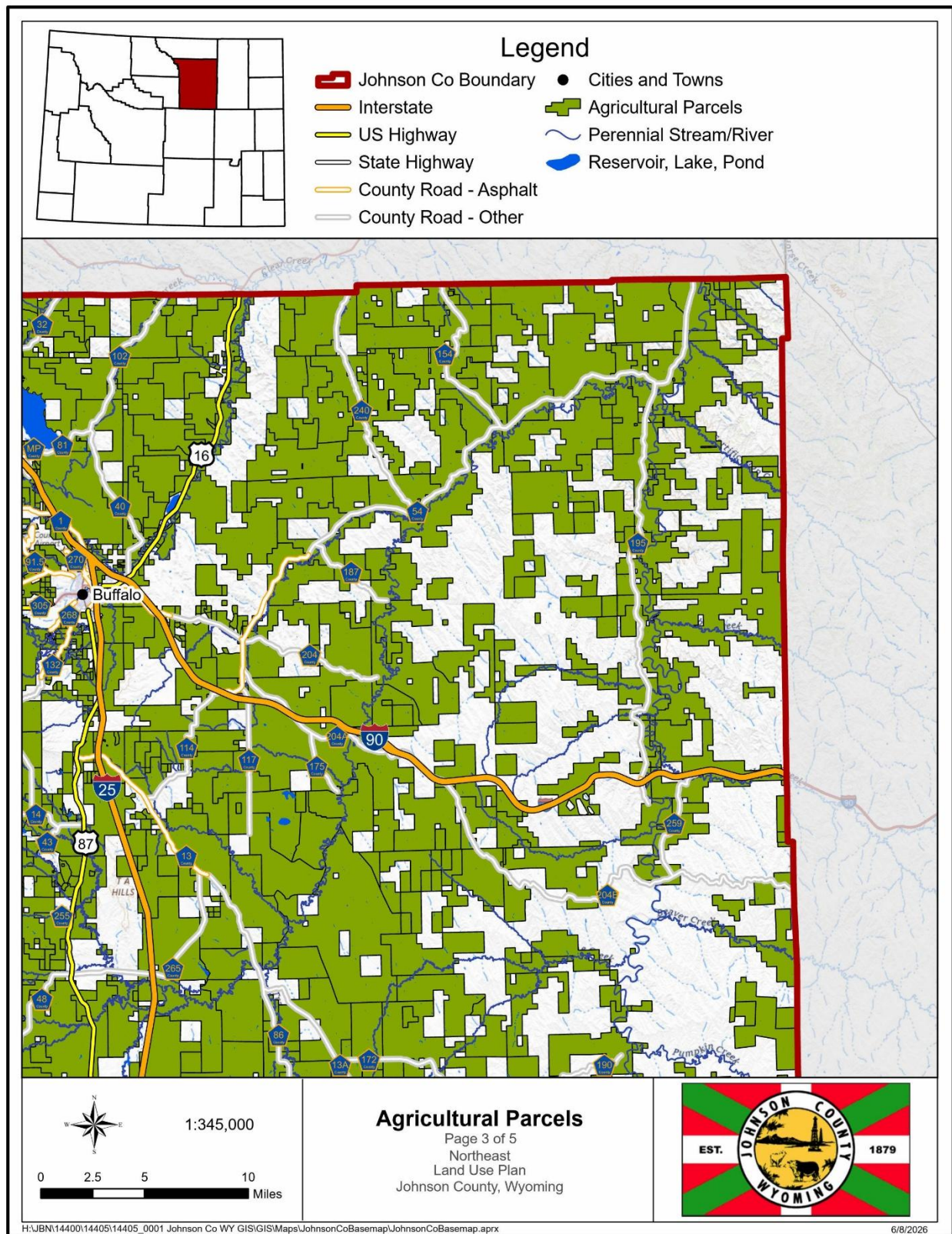


Figure 14. Agricultural parcels in Johnson County- Northeast.

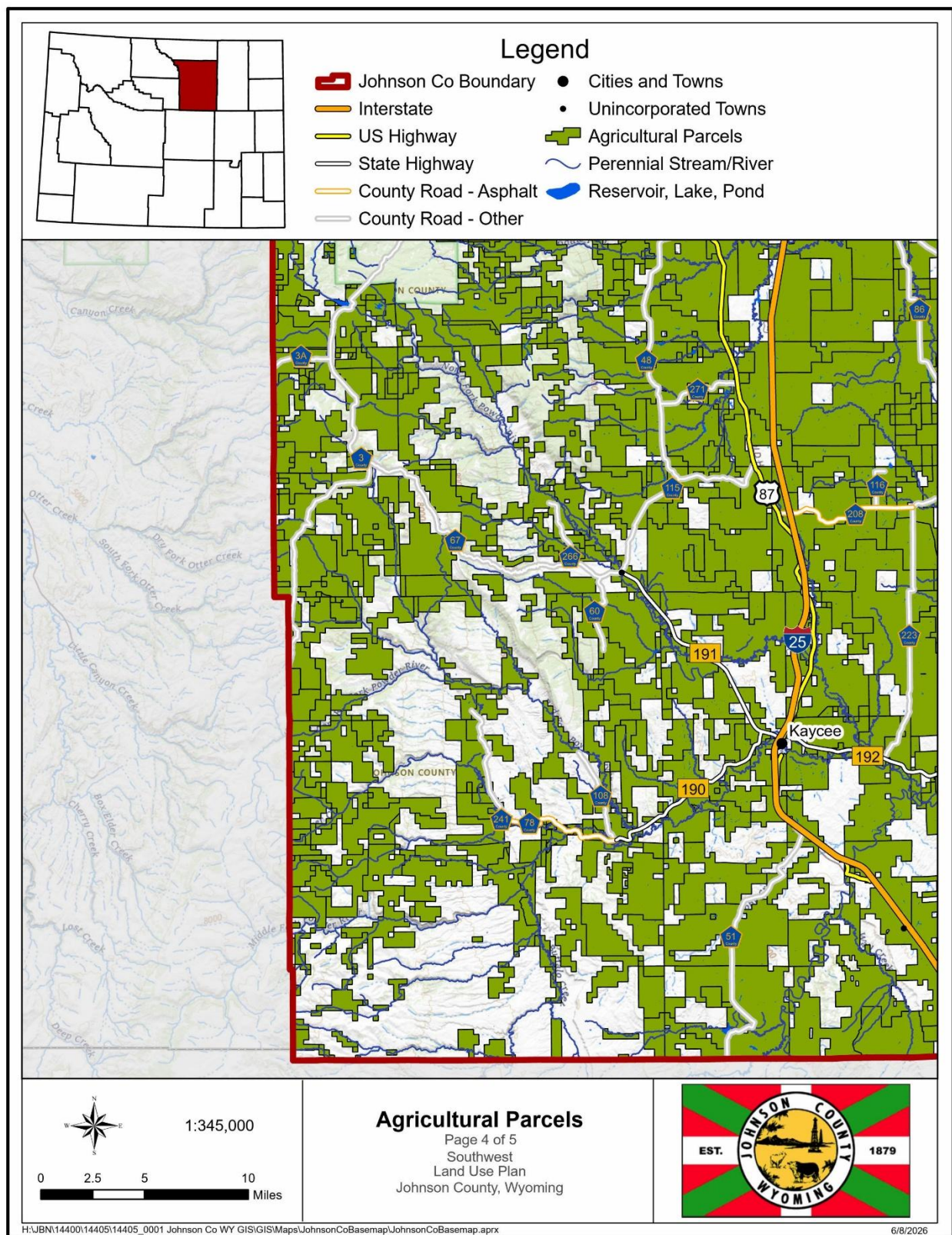


Figure 15. Agricultural parcels in Johnson County- Southwest.

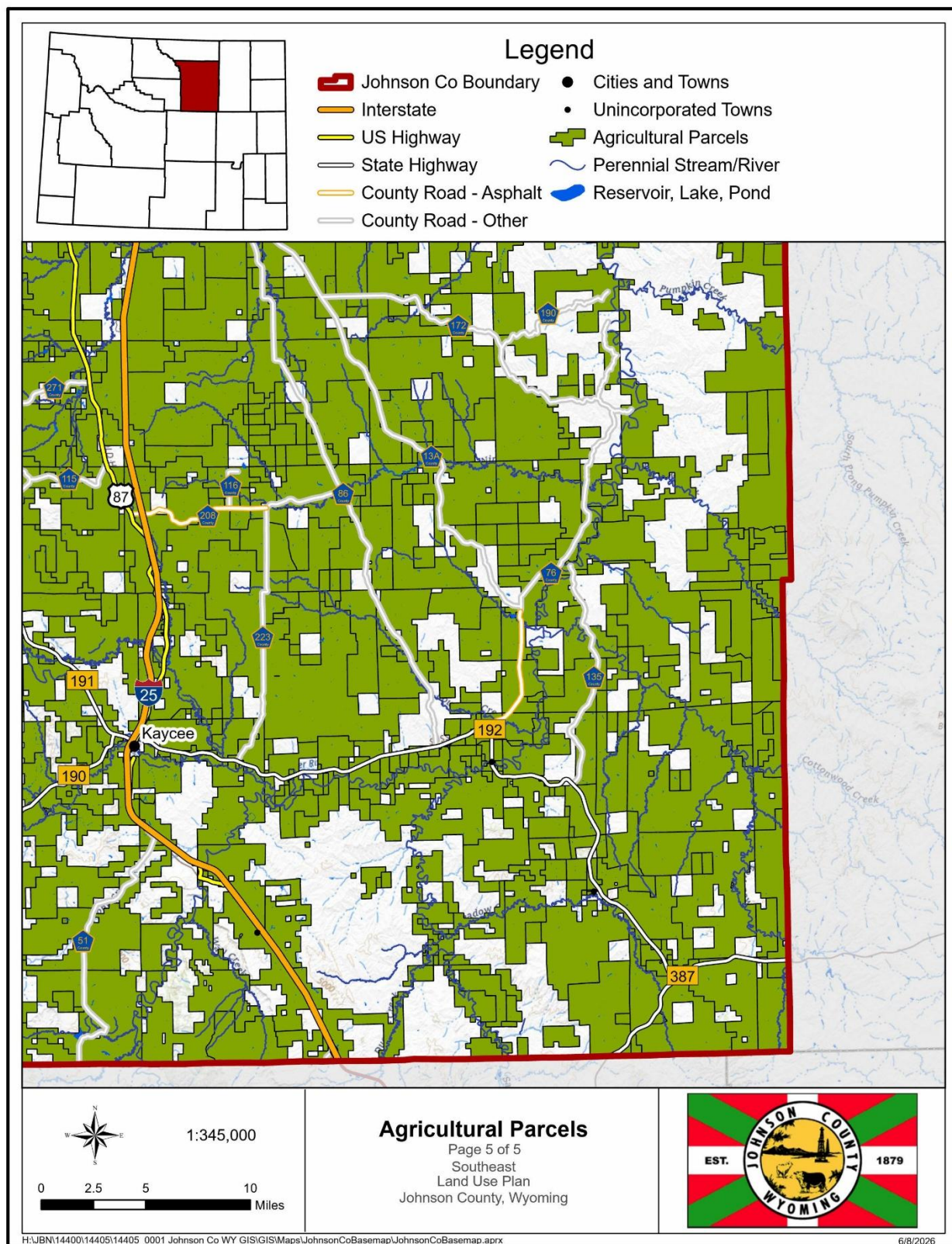


Figure 16. Agricultural parcels in Johnson County- Southeast.

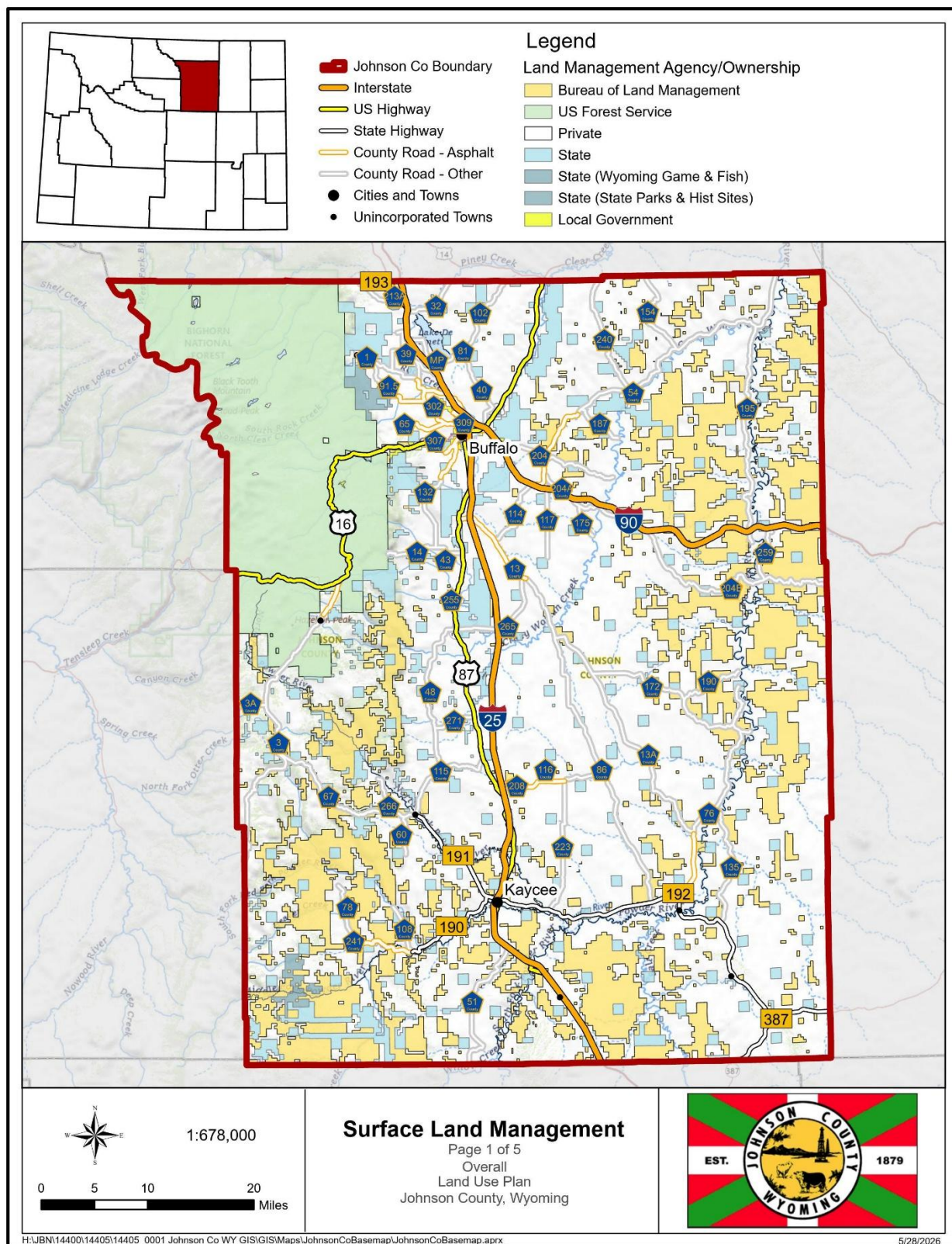


Figure 17. Overview of Surface land management for Johnson County.

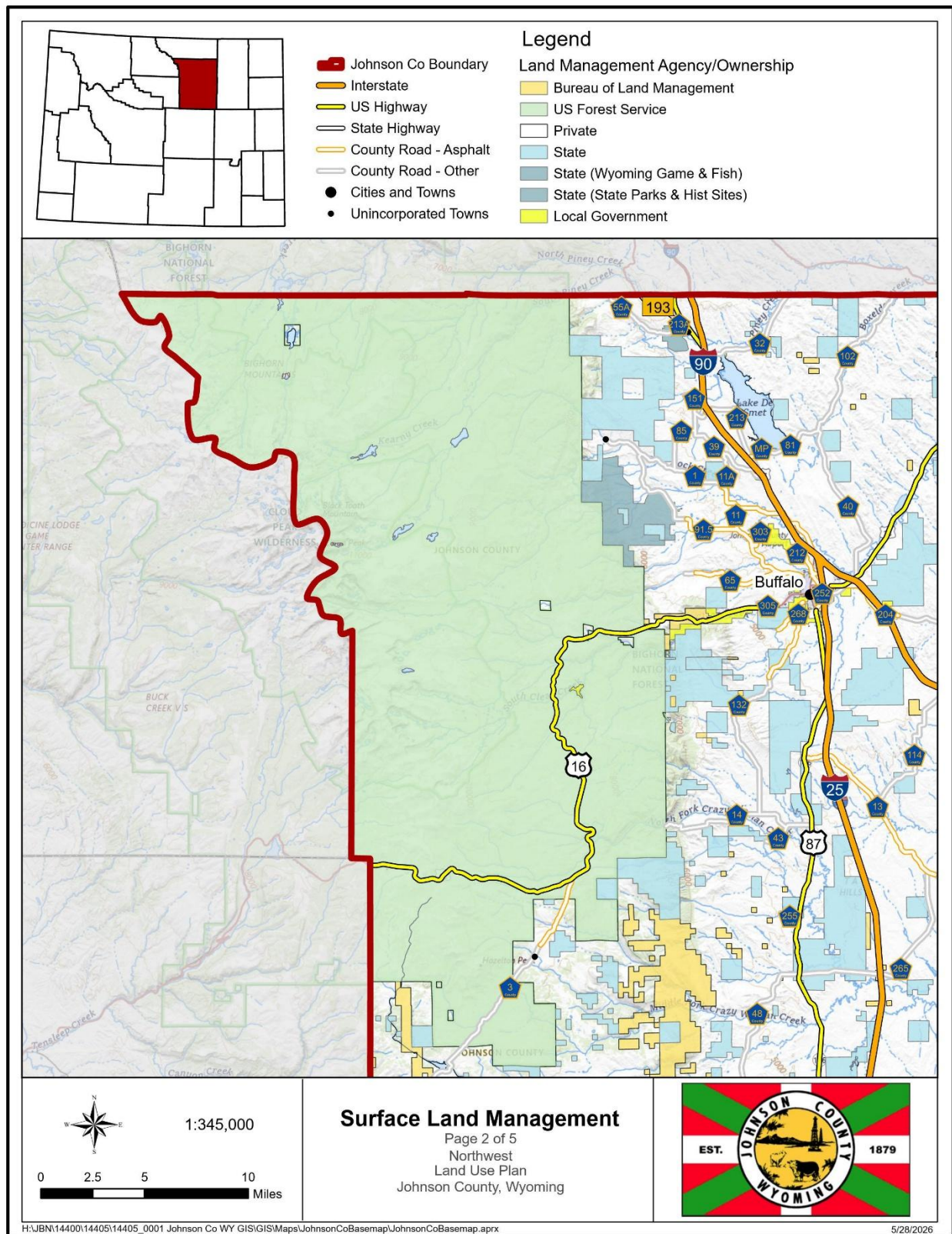


Figure 18. Surface land management for Johnson County-Northwest.

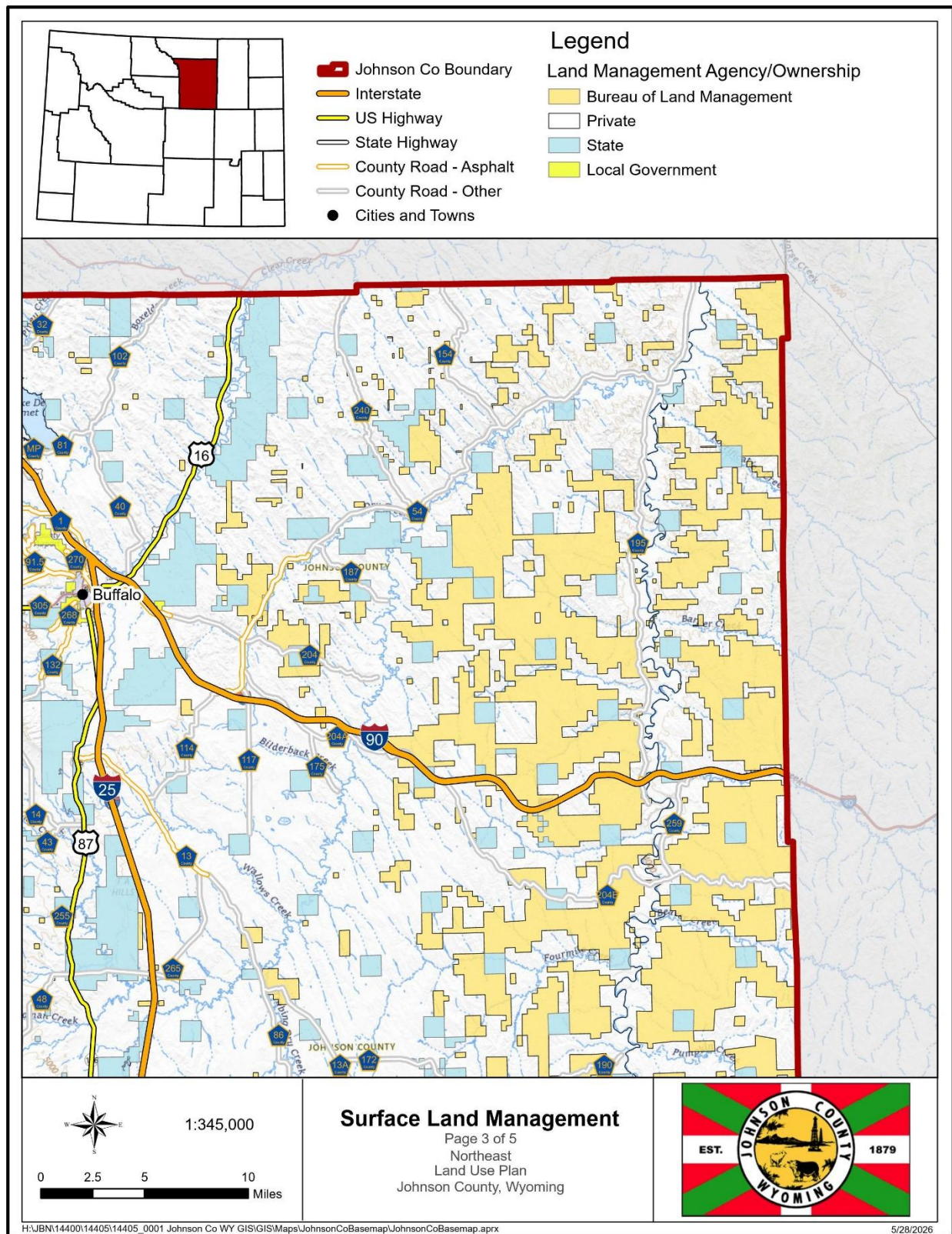


Figure 19. Surface land management for Johnson County-Northeast.

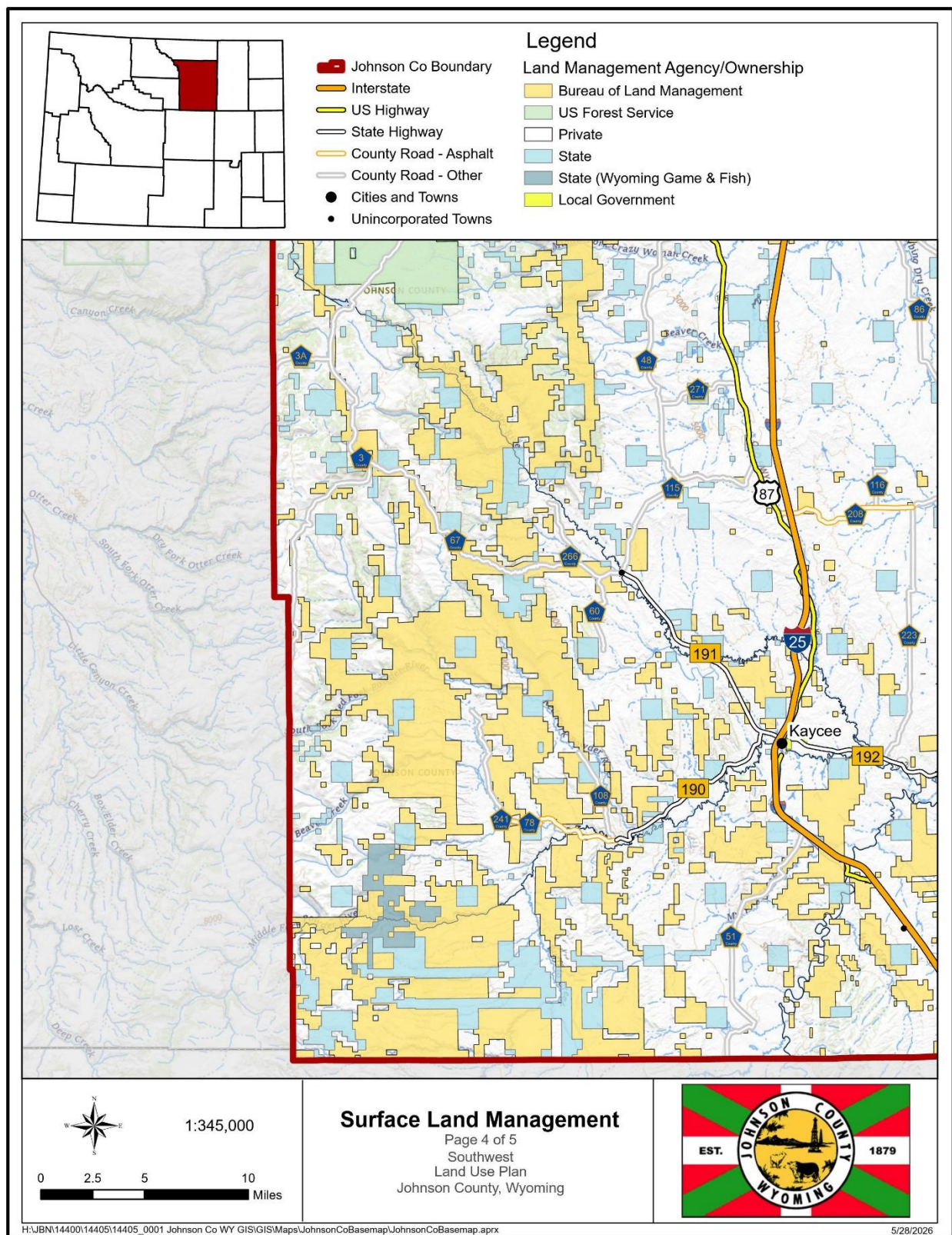
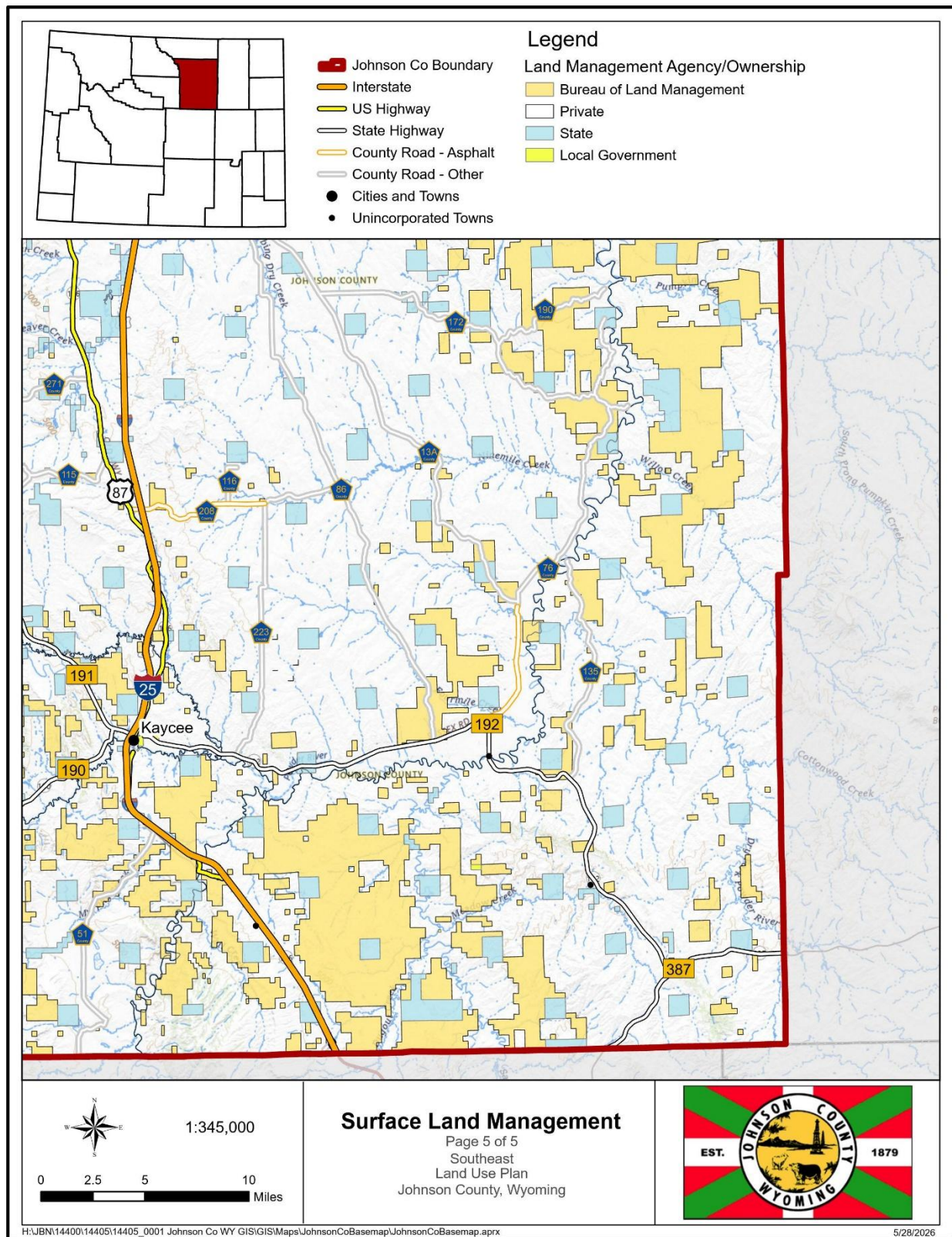


Figure 20. Surface land management for Johnson County-Southwest.



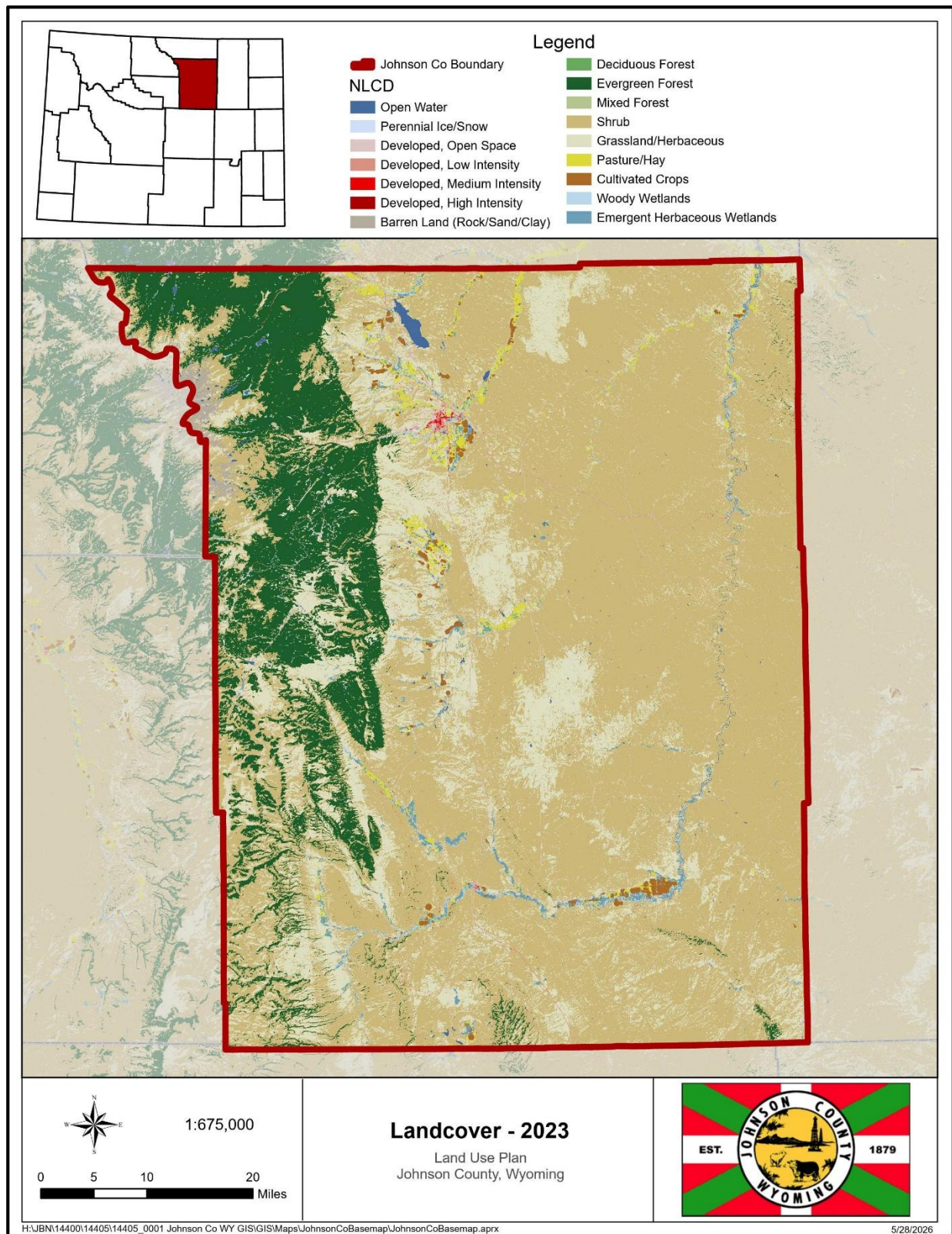


Figure 22. Mapped landcover from the National Land Cover Database Johnson County.

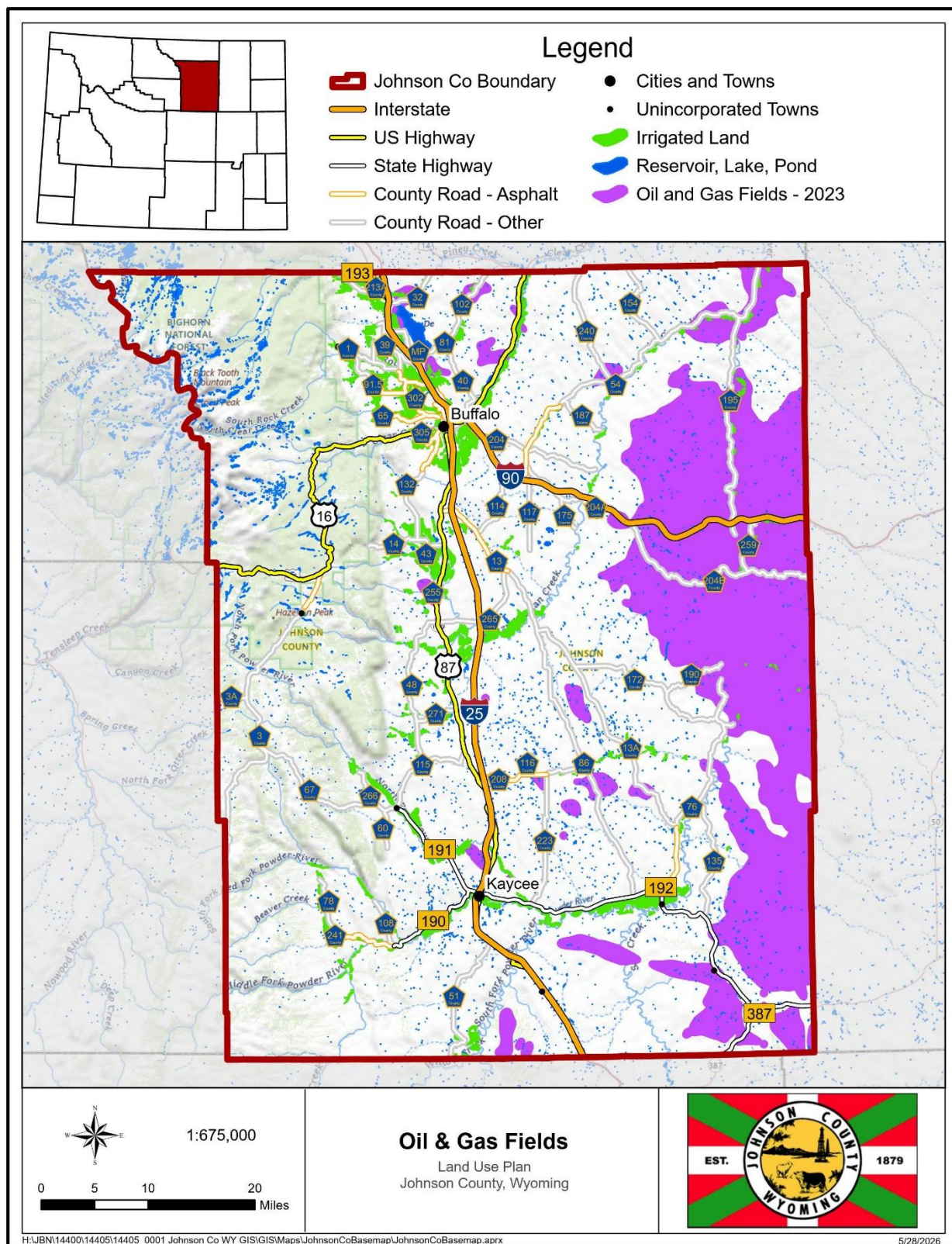


Figure 23. Oil and gas fields in Johnson County.

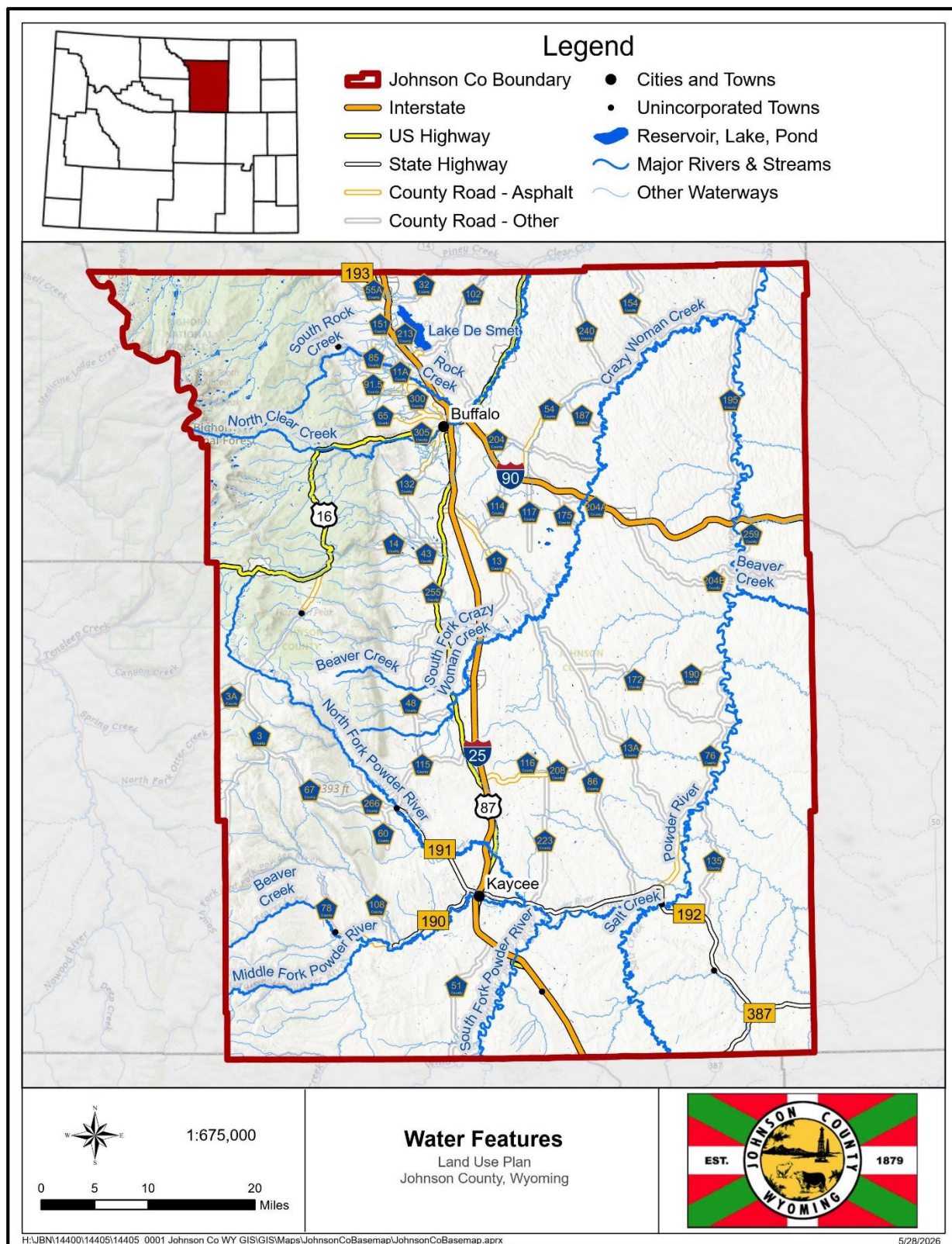


Figure 24. Water features of Johnson County.

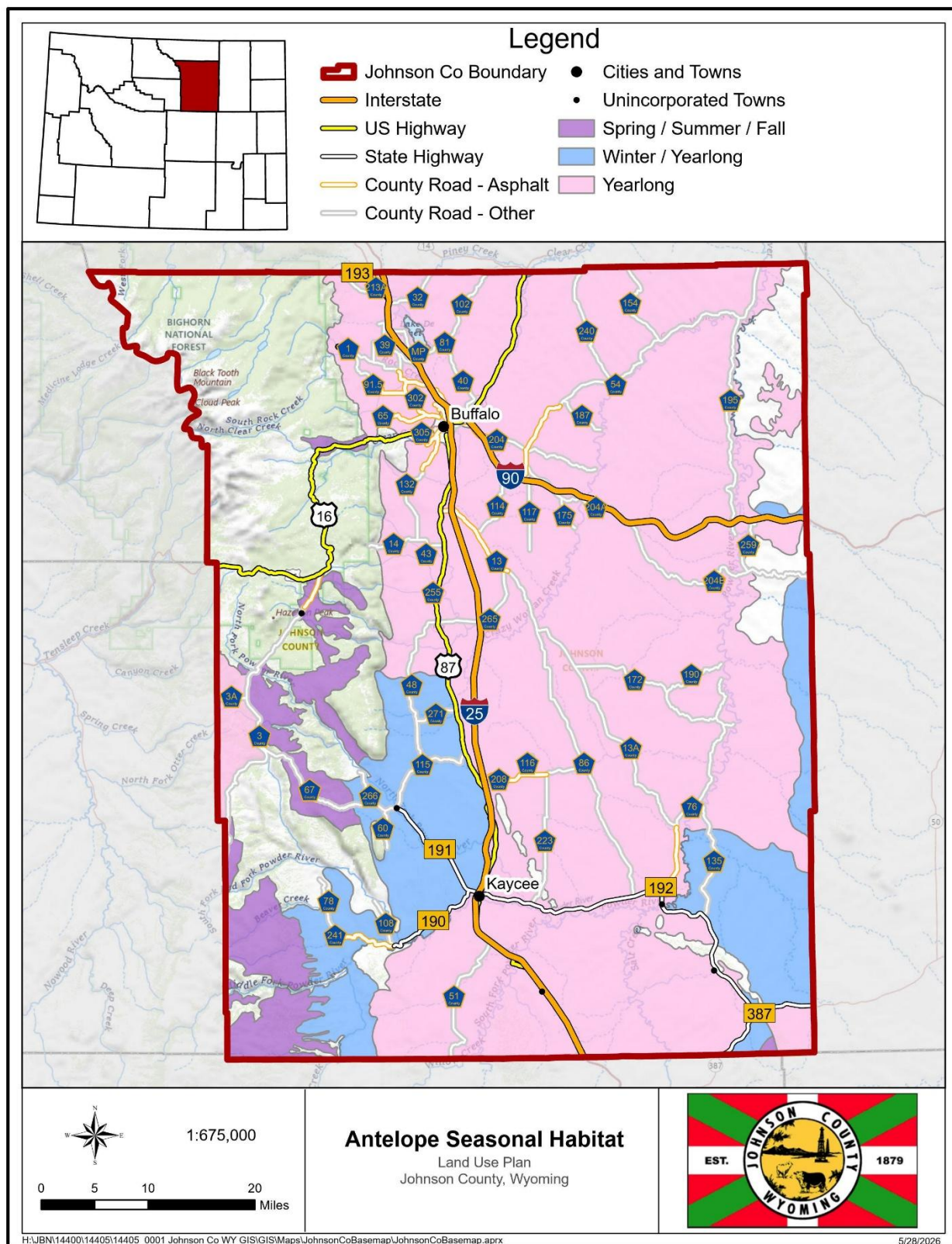


Figure 25. Antelope seasonal habitats mapped for Johnson County.

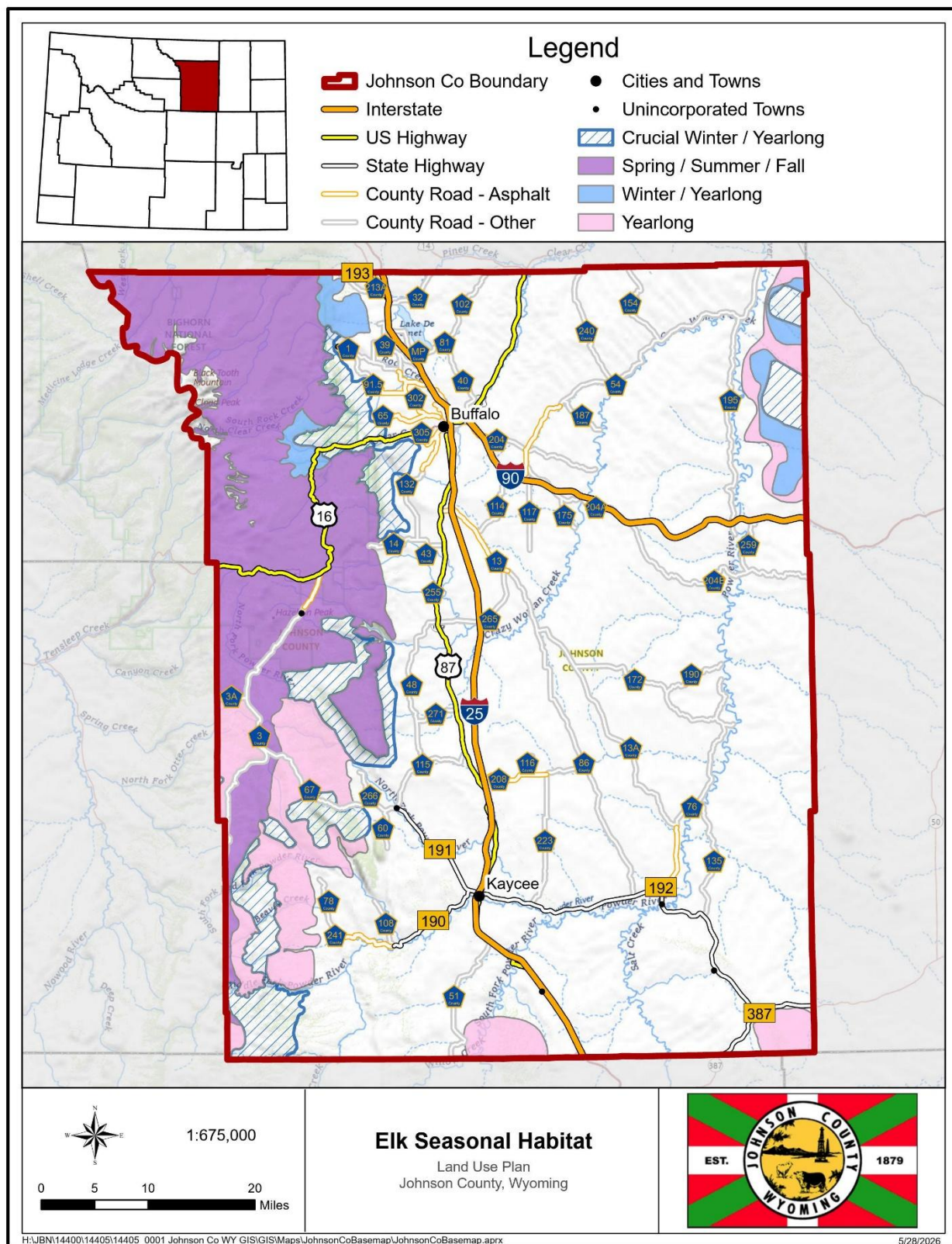


Figure 26. Elk seasonal habitats mapped for Johnson County.

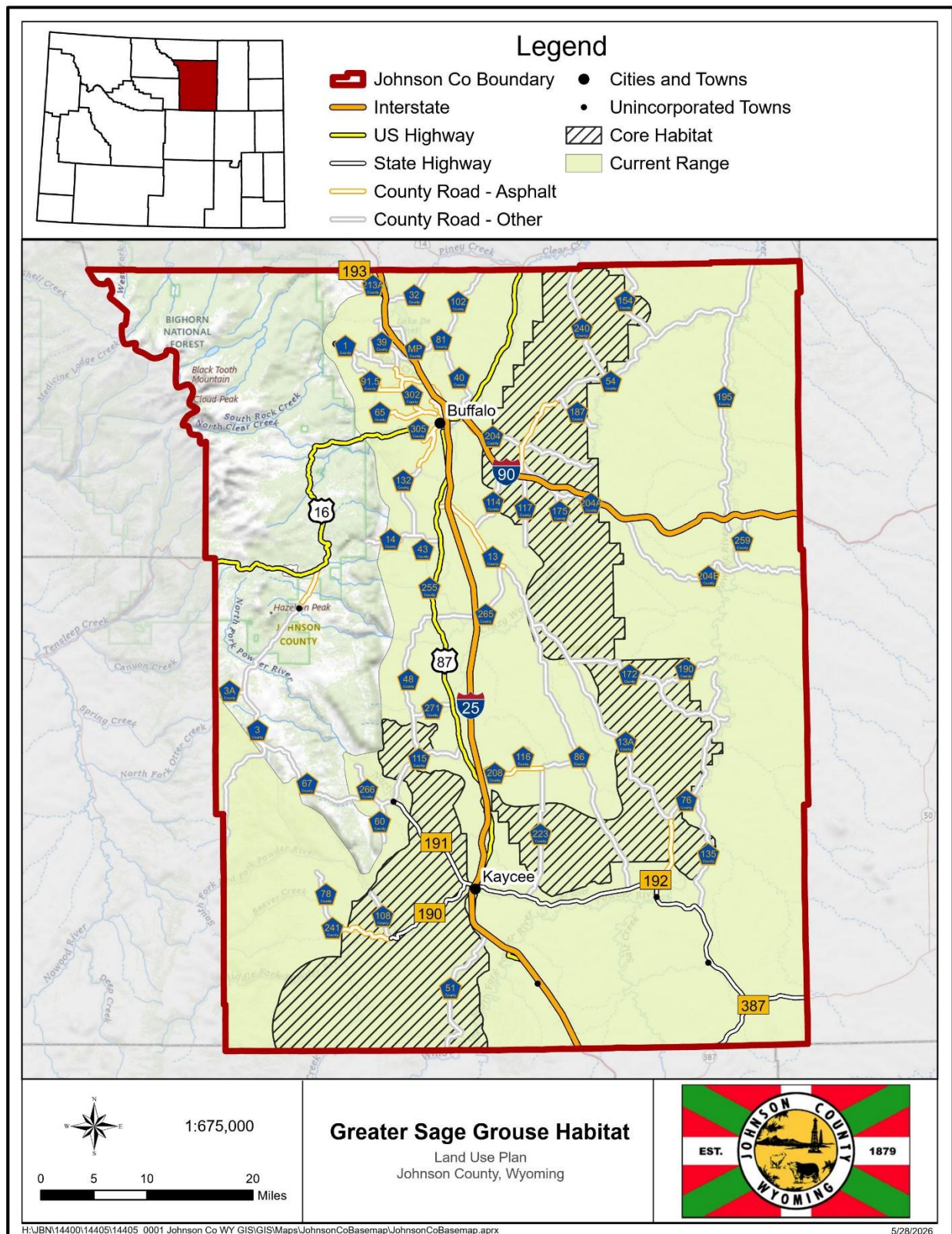


Figure 27. Greater Sage Grouse range and core habitat mapped for Johnson County.

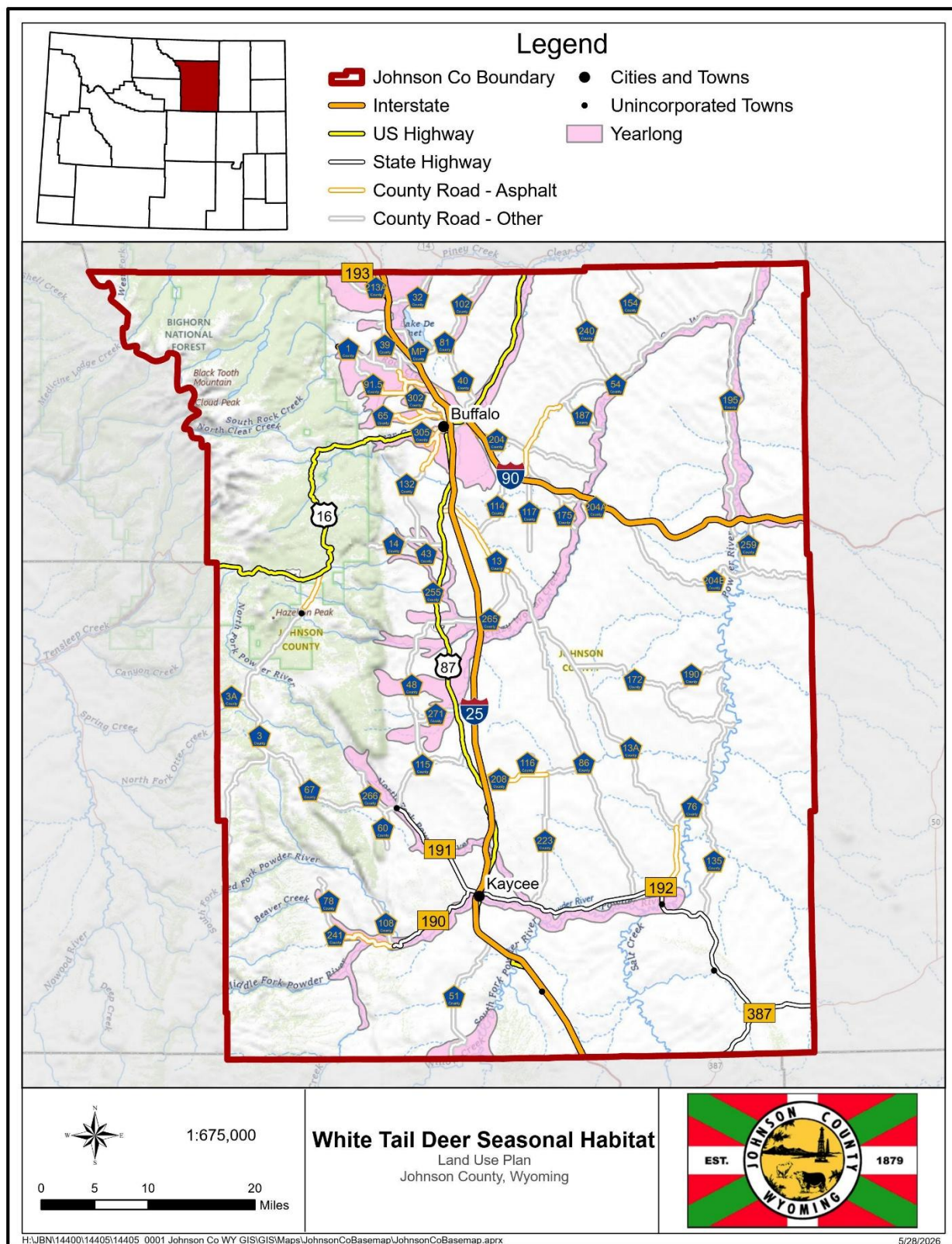


Figure 28. White-tail deer seasonal habitats mapped for Johnson County.

APPENDIX B - TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

TECHNICAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

ROLLING PLAINS TO RISING MOUNTAINS

There are several ways to drive into Johnson County, including Interstate 90 from the west or Interstate 25 from the north. Johnson County features a panorama of flat and rolling plains with views of pronghorn antelope and stretches to the Bighorn Mountains on the western horizon. There is snow visible on those mountain peaks well into the summer.

This section of the Plan will present and analyze a wide range of Johnson County background information, including demographic, social, economic, infrastructure, and land-use essentials.

The analysis, along with concerns and questions, will play a crucial role in public participation. Public engagement activities include interviews with key stakeholders, a public survey, and public meetings. The analysis and public involvement are used to develop goals, objectives, and implementation steps to carry out the Johnson County Land Use Plan. Another fundamental component of the plan is the Johnson County Land Use Plan Map.

JOHNSON COUNTY

Historically, Johnson County exemplifies the American West, from the northern plains' horse culture to trapping and trading, to the rise of cattle barons and cowboys, and to the Johnson County War, which contributed to the decline of the open range. As these events unfolded, agriculture on ranches and farms became the most extensive land use in the County today.

Over the past 80 years, the population and economy have fluctuated. There has been continuous expansion in the amount of agricultural/ranching land in the last 20 years. The overall community's growth has been slow year over year. This resilient, rural community has adapted to changing conditions and continues to maintain what is essential to Johnson County's character—steadfastness, with an eye toward the future.

LOCATION

Johnson County is located in north-central Wyoming, sitting south of Sheridan County, east of Big Horn County, and west of Campbell County. It is located on the high plains of eastern Wyoming, bordered by the Bighorn Mountains on the northwest. The Powder River flows from south to north through the eastern portion of the county. The highest elevation in the county is Cloud Peak summit at 13,167 feet in the Bighorn Mountains.

LAND AREA AND DENSITY

- 4,175 square miles with 2.04 people per square mile.
- It is one of the least densely populated counties in the state, along with Carbon County.
- 10th largest county in state, out of 23 counties.
- The 2023 population of Johnson County was 8,536.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, From Wyoming Economic Analysis Division 2020, U.S. Census Bureau 2023

LAND OWNERSHIP

- Federal 31%
- State 9%
- Local Government - Minimal
- Private land ownership 60%

Source: University of Wyoming Extension, Johnson County Profile 2018,

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITIES

It's the people and where they call home that create a county's culture and values. Every community within the county plays an integral role in shaping and representing it. Each community has its own history and attributes and is part of the ongoing Johnson County story.

Johnson County is made up of two (2) incorporated and five (5) unincorporated communities, and smaller places that stretch across the plains to the mountains. Each of these areas is described below.

Buffalo

Buffalo is the county seat of Johnson County and is located at the juncture of Interstates 90 and 25. Buffalo is almost equidistant from Yellowstone National Park and Mount Rushmore. The 2020 population was 4,415, or 52% of the total Johnson County population. The incorporated city size is 4.46 square miles.

The original purpose of Buffalo was to provide supplies to Fort Kearney to the west, "up on flat land." As the story goes, its name was drawn from a hat by men staying at the Occidental Hotel.

The Historic Occidental Hotel still operates today along Main Street. Its guest registry includes Teddy Roosevelt, Calamity, and Ernest Hemingway. The hotel has been completely restored and is on National Geographic Travel's "Must Stay List".

Kaycee

Kaycee is a small, incorporated town located along Interstate 25, approximately 40 miles south of Buffalo. Its 2020 population was 247. Kaycee operates a central water supply. Kaycee is home to the Hoofprints of the Past Museum, a popular Johnson County attraction. The town is 0.41 square miles in size.

Mayoworth

Mayoworth is a small, unincorporated community located in southwest Johnson County, northwest of Kaycee. It is on the North Fork of the Powder River. Slip Road, a rugged and beautiful drive, connects Mayoworth to the southern part of the Big Horn National Forest.

Sussex

Sussex is a small, unincorporated community located 17 miles east of Kaycee. The Bozeman Trail crossed the Powder River at several points around this area, and Fort Reno is nearby. Fort Reno was an outpost of Fort Kearney, located near Buffalo. This area was part of early Wyoming history.

Linch

Linch, lying along WYO 192, is a small, unincorporated community located southeast of Buffalo. Oil was discovered there in 1947 and became the area's leading industry. It was surveyed and recorded as Linch in 1950.

Saddlestring

Saddlestring, located along Rock Creek Road on the eastern edge of the Big Horn National Forest, is a small unincorporated area northwest of Buffalo. Saddlestring is the inspirational hometown of the very popular Joe Pickett series, written by Wyoming author C.J. Box.

Saddlestring and HF Bar Ranch are synonymous. HF Bar Ranch is a dude ranch, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Its deeded acres are within a conservation easement.

Barnum

Barnum is in the southern part of the county, west of Kaycee. It is near the Hole in the Wall area, made famous by Butch Cassidy and others, who hid away from the law. It is the access point to the Middle Fork of the Powder River Recreation Area, where the Rock Art Cave and Bar C Cairn Line are located.

Other Places

- ❖ Greub, along the Middle Fork of the Powder River, began as a home. Then it became a roadhouse, adding a telephone and a post office. It is a landmark today.
- ❖ Hazelton is located south of the Cloud Peak Skyway between Bullcamp Road and Poison Creek Canyon Road. The Hazelton Pyramid Peaks are well known among rock climbers and mountaineers.
- ❖ Kearny is the location of Fort Kearny, built and occupied by the U.S. Army to protect settlers along the Bozeman Trail. It is located at the forks of the Big and Little Piney Creeks. Today, Kearney is a State Historic Site.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

While planning for the future in Johnson County, current circumstances and emerging trends should be understood. Issues and opportunities impacting the future are identified through an inventory and analysis of local demographic, housing, workforce, economic, and land-use information. These categories gauge existing conditions and identify trends that signal anticipated changes.



This section provides background information over time. It acts as a baseline against which community members and leaders can measure and assess change over the next decade. The analysis is provided for practical use throughout the Johnson County Land Use Plan Update.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

1940 – 2020 COUNTYWIDE POPULATION TRENDS

Jurisdiction	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Johnson County	4,980	4,707	5,475	5,587	6,700	6,145	7,075	8,569	8,447
Buffalo	2,302	2,674	2,907	3,394	3,799	3,302	3,900	4,585	4,415
Kaycee	210	211	284	272	271	256	249	263	247

TABLE DATA

Over the 80 years from 1940 to 2020, the Johnson County population grew from 4,980 to 8,447, an increase of 69.6%. This represents an annual growth rate of 0.87%. Most of the growth took place from 1970 to 2020.

The City of Buffalo, during the same period, grew by 91.7%, from 2,302 to 4,405 in total population.

The Town of Kaycee grew from 210 to 247 people over 80 years, or 17.6%.

Johnson County reported population increases six times and population losses three times over the nine census reporting periods. Those reporting periods were 1950, 1990, and 2020.

Buffalo shows two reporting periods, 1990 and 2020, when population loss occurred.

Kaycee shows five census reporting periods with population loss: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2020.

Overall, Johnson County and the two municipalities have experienced population fluctuations over the period 1940 – 2020.

FOCUS

The overall population of Johnson County includes Buffalo, Kaycee, and the unincorporated portion of the community. The following table shows the population of unincorporated Johnson County and the percentage of the County's total population from 1940 to 2020.

1940 – 2020 UNINCORPORATED JOHNSON COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS									
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Unincorporated County	1,468	1,822	2,284	1,921	2,630	2,587	2,926	3,717	3,785
Percentage of total County population	49.5%	38.7%	41.7%	34.3%	39.2%	42.0%	41.3%	43.3%	44.8%

The data show that the unincorporated population has been increasing since 1970.

POPULATION TABLE TRENDS

Johnson County has grown slowly, and population growth has fluctuated. The average annual growth rate has been 0.86% over the past 80 years.

As a slow-growth community, Johnson County's population has grown at an annual rate of 0.65% over the past 40 years.

The lower growth rate over the past 40 years can be partially attributed to booms and busts, as mineral development grew and then faded. Mineral development is closely linked to demand for services and housing, as well as to the construction industry.

Over the past 40 years, the data shows that unincorporated Johnson County grew by 1,155 people. Buffalo has gained 616 residents, and Kaycee has lost 24.

The tables also indicate that the incorporated communities of Buffalo and Kaycee have increased their share of the total population from 50.5% in 1940 to 55.2% in 2020. However, from 1980 through 2020, that proportion has decreased from 60.8% to 55.2% of the total county population living in incorporated communities.

Unincorporated Johnson County accounted for 49.5% in 1940 and 44.8% in 2020. However, from 1980 to 2020, it increased its total share of the county population from 39.2% to 44.8%.

POPULATION UPDATE: 2022 U.S. CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Census Bureau reports that 8,536 people lived in Johnson County in 2022. This represents a 1% increase from the 2020 population of 8,447. The population is 33 short of the 2010 total of 8,569, which was the highest population for Johnson County. This is another example of the fluctuating population, as Johnson County moves into the future.

POPULATION TAKEAWAYS

- Since 1940, Johnson County has been a slow-growth community. There were 1.19 people per square mile then, and in 2022 it stood at 2.04 people per square mile.
- Over the past 84 years, Johnson County has shown that its population is not in decline, but rather experiences population loss from time to time.
- Future population numbers are dependent upon Johnson County being able to diversify its economy and attract new residents.

MEDIAN AGE



The Johnson County median age was 48 in 2020, compared to Wyoming's median age of 38.9. Therefore, the Johnson County median age is 8.1 years older than the state median age. This number reflects the fluctuating population and the community's slow growth. It indicates a lack of economic opportunities for new and younger people moving to and living in Johnson County.

The median ages for Johnson County since 1980 are:

1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
30.7	37.5	43.0	46.1	48.0

Source: U.S. Census Data

The median age in Johnson County increased by almost 17 years over the 40-year period shown. The 2020 median age is greater than 50% more than the median age of 1980.

The median age for Wyoming over the same period, according to the U.S. Census shows:

1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
27.0	32.1	36.2	36.8	39.1

Source: U.S. Census Data

The median age in Wyoming increased by more than 12 years over the same 40-year period. The median age in Wyoming was slightly lower than in Johnson County in 2020. The median age in Wyoming increased by 47% over the 40 years.

Combined, the tables indicate that Johnson County is part of the overall increase in median age across the Wyoming population. The state's oldest county was Park County at a median age of 48.7, followed by Johnson and Platte counties. All these counties exceeded the median age of 45.

Source: WY. Economic Analysis Division, "Wyoming Continues to Age Fast", July 2022

MEDIAN AGE TAKEAWAYS

The connection between the Johnson County median age rising more than 16 years from 1980 to 2020, and the lack of economic draw, shows:

- There should be tools available to help attract population growth and provide workforce training to maintain and expand existing industries within the county.
- It also shows a need to develop attractions for younger people to live and participate in the Johnson County economy by economic diversification.

POPULATION 65 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER



The population aged 65 or older accounts for 26.6% of the total population. In comparison, Wyoming has 18.6% of its population aged 65 or older. This is a 8.0% difference. Johnson County has the second highest percentage of residents in this age category, after Hot Springs County.

According to the U.S. Census, Johnson County shows the following percentages of the total population aged 65 or older.

1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
13.8%	17.4%	18.1%	18.5%	26.2%

Source: U.S. Census Data

The table shows that the percentage of the population aged 65 years or older almost doubled from 1980 to 2020.

65 AND OVER - TAKEAWAYS

One out of four people in Johnson County is 65 years old or older. The implications include:

- A growing need for elder care, as well as support services.
- A labor pool that needs replenishment.

POPULATION DIVERSITY

The 2020 population makeup of Johnson County is primarily White at 92.4%. Hispanic, Black American, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander groups make up the remaining 7.6% of the population.

Source: U.S. Census 2020

SPECIFIC COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The percentage of high school graduates or higher in Johnson County is 96%. The average for Wyoming is 93.2%

The percentage of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher is 31.7%, compared to Wyoming's 27.4%.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 – 2021 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

In Johnson County, 87% of the population has health insurance, leaving 13.0% without coverage. This compares to 11.4% of individuals in Wyoming without health insurance.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5 Year estimates

POVERTY

People with incomes below the poverty level make up 16.4% of the population in Johnson County. By comparison, the State of Wyoming shows that 11.8% of the population has income below the poverty level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities in Johnson County make up 13.3% of the population. The state has 14.3% of the population with disabilities.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 – 2021 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimate

HOUSING



Housing Data Source:

*U.S. Census Bureau 2017 –
2021 American
Community Survey 5 Year*

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	4,592
Occupied Housing Units	3,825
Vacant Housing Units	767
Owner Occupied	2,841
Renter Occupied	984
MEDIAN HOME VALUE	\$255,500
State of Wyoming	\$237,900
MORTGAGE STATUS	
Owner-Occupied Units	2,841
Units with a Mortgage	1,280
Units with no mortgage	1,561

The notable number of owner-occupied units with no mortgage is 54.9%. This percentage may show longevity living in Johnson County.

For those units with a mortgage, the mortgage cost is greater than 30% of income for 212 units, divided by 1,280, or 16.5%.

GROSS RENT

Occupied Units Paying Rent	869
Median Rent	\$944
Median Rent for Wyoming	\$878

The number of renters greater than 30% of income is 280 or 32.2% of all rental units. This equates to approximately one-third of all rental-occupied units in Johnson County.

Note: The percentage paid at 30% of income for rentals is nearly double the monthly mortgage payment for owner-occupied units.

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Johnson County	2.18
Wyoming	2.46

AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE

Johnson County	2.70
Wyoming	3.02

HOME OWNERSHIP RATE

The homeownership rate in Johnson County is 71.4%. This number is about the same as the homeownership percentage across Wyoming, which is 72%.

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ELDERLY RESIDENTS

Johnson County households with one or more people age 65 years or older are 35.6%.
In Wyoming, 28.1% of households have one or more people 65 years old or older.

INTERNET ACCESS IN OCCUPIED HOUSEHOLDS

This number was taken from occupied households since unoccupied housing units are not verifiable. Therefore, the total number of occupied housing units in Johnson County is 3,825.

Internet access is 88.5% for all Johnson County households. This means that 3,386 households have access to internet services. Internet access by subscription accounts for 83.7%, and access without a subscription accounts for 4.8% of all households with access.

A total of 11.5% (439) of all occupied households in Johnson County lack verifiable internet access. This is compared to 89.5% in Wyoming with household internet access, with or without a subscription. Therefore, 10.5% of Wyoming households, or 24,461 households, have no internet access.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 – 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

HOME AS A WORKPLACE

Of all workers in Johnson County, 13.7% worked from home, 73% drove to work alone, and 6.4% used a bicycle. Working from home has been rising since 2020, during COVID, along with biking to work.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 – 2021 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates



WORKER AFFORDABILITY FOR HOUSING

The following Workforce Affordability table was developed by the Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) in 2021 for community use.

WCDA was authorized by statute in 1975. The organization assists first-time homebuyers in Wyoming, as well as renters whose income is below certain percentages of the state's median family income, where the program may be offered.

Note: The table is meant to be educational and covers 79% of all occupations within the total workforce, or nearly 4 out of 5 workforce jobs.

Occupation	2021 % of Employment	2021 Median Earnings	Maximum Rent	Can Afford Median Rent?	Maximum Purchase Price	Can Afford Median Price?
Management, Business & Financial	23%	\$48,723	\$1,218	Yes	\$211,464	No
Office & Administrative Support	11%	\$33,750	\$844	No	\$146,479	No
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Services	10%	\$87,381	\$2,185	Yes	\$379,245	Yes
Education, Legal, Arts, Media & Community Service	10%	\$60,574	\$1,514	Yes	\$262,782	Yes
Sales & Related Occupations	9%	\$33,176	\$829	No	\$143,988	No
Computer, Science & Engineering	2%	\$55,000	\$1,375	Yes	\$238,707	No
Construction & Extraction	10%	\$52,399	\$1,310	Yes	\$227,419	No
Production	2%	\$55,588	\$1,390	Yes	\$241,519	No
Healthcare Support	1%	\$36,198	\$905	No	\$157,104	No

Food Preparation & Serving	1%	\$17,361	\$434	No	\$75,349	No
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Source: Wyoming Community Development Authority, 2021, Johnson County Dashboard

The table shows that a significant portion of the Johnson County workforce is unable to afford the median rent, and a considerable percentage is unable to afford the median price of a home on the market.

The table sends a clear signal about housing unaffordability for Johnson County, which affects the rental and home sales markets.

There are a number of negative impacts associated with unaffordable housing. Housing unaffordability not only negatively impacts the homeownership rate but can also encourage workers to rent in another county and commute to work in Johnson County.

Many communities struggle with housing affordability, a long-standing challenge in the United States. Recently, high interest rates, construction slowdowns, and the growing impact of private investment firms purchasing new homes to rent out have made housing affordability out of reach for many people and families.

There has also been a nationwide, long-standing slowdown in housing construction that began during the Financial Crisis of 2008. Another factor that impacts supply is the large number of Boomers who are aging in place in their homes rather than moving in with children or to a retirement community. The pace of household formation among Millennials is also increasing rapidly, placing greater demand on housing. When there is a housing deficit, the fewer homes on the market command higher prices.

In Wyoming, economic booms have contributed to housing unaffordability. Within some very wealthy communities, the cost of housing has pushed the workforce to live outside the County. Other communities have experienced an influx of cash buyers who view Wyoming prices as low, thus enabling prices to climb. Others have indicated that government regulation is a cause of housing unaffordability. However, this is not the case in Johnson County, where development regulations are minimal, and building permits are not required.

High housing costs can harm recruitment for new businesses, employee recruitment for existing businesses, and the job retention of existing employees. It is detrimental to a community's economy.

Johnson County has an opportunity to learn more about unaffordable housing and to make decisions about how best to address this issue.

JOHNSON COUNTY ECONOMY

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

JOHNSON COUNTY JOBS 1970 – 2000

Insight into which industries account for most jobs and which sectors are growing or declining is key to understanding the type of economy that exists, how it has changed over time, and its evolving strengths.

There are three job sectors, including non-service, service, and government. Jobs are divided into non-service-related occupations, such as farming and construction, and service-related occupations, such as retail, trade, real estate, and health care. Government jobs fall into a separate industry sector because they include both service and non-service jobs. Therefore, it can skew the number of jobs in the private sector, presenting an unrealistic view of the number of workers in a community and the types of jobs performed.



Data from Headwaters Economics, Johnson County Socioeconomic Profile, gathered in 2024, shows that from 1970 to 2000, jobs grew by 80.5%. In 1970, there were 2,240 total jobs in Johnson County, and in 2000, there were 4,746.

The breakdown includes:

- Non-service jobs grew by 19%
- Service-related jobs grew by 122%
- Government jobs grew by 85%

In smaller rural communities like Johnson County, government plays an important role in the economy, especially where mineral and forestry resources are present, and government land is available for grazing leases.

JOHNSON COUNTY JOBS 2001 – 2022

The following table shows details on non-service-related, service-related, and government jobs from 2001 through 2020.

TOTAL JOBS BY SECTOR 2001 – 2022			
Years→	2001	2010	2022
Sector↓			
Non-Service	1,275	1,579	1,508
Service	2,678	3,221	4,272
Government	856	1,059	1,001
Total Jobs →	4,809	5,916	6,781

Source: Source: Headwaters Economics, Johnson County, A Profile of Socioeconomic Trends, 2024

The table demonstrates that from 2001 to 2022, jobs within:

- Non-service industries grew by 18%
- Service-related jobs grew by 60%
- Government jobs grew by 17%

The table also shows fluctuations and differences between job sectors:

- Non-service jobs increased significantly from 2001 to 2010, then decreased from 2010 to 2022.
- Service jobs increased consistently from 2001 to 2010 and then again in 2022.
- Government jobs increased from 2001 to 2010, then decreased from 2010 to 2022.

The following table shows the percentage of total jobs in each sector from 2001 to 2022.

Years→	2001	2010	2022
Sector ↓			
Non-Service	26.5%	26.7%	22.3%
Service	55.7%	55.4%	63.0%
Government	17.8%	17.9%	14.7%
Totals→	100% or 4,809 jobs	100% or 5,916 jobs	100% or 6,781 jobs

The table shows that the service sector has the most jobs of the three (3) sectors in all reporting years. Non-service and government jobs decreased from 2010 to 2022.

The following table shows the job details for each sector over the reporting period.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY FROM 2001 – 2022
SHOWING CHANGE 2010 - 2022

Type	2001	2010	2022	Change from 2010 to 2022 Plus (+) Minus (-)
Total Jobs	4,809	5,916	6,781	+865
Non-Service Related	1,275	1,579	1,508	-71
Farm	420	406	467	+61
Forestry, fishing and agriculture	129	137	141	+4
Mining	259	420	316	-104
Construction	381	536	435	-101
Manufacturing	86	80	149	+69
Services Related	2,678	3,221	4,272	+ 1,051
Utilities	9	16	12	-4
Wholesale	83	104	144	+40
Retail	537	501	537	+36
Transportation & Warehousing	157	166	118	-48
Information	60	52	109	+57

Finance & Insurance	219	309	492	+183
Real estate, rental & leasing	275	465	870	+405
Professional & Technical services	169	240	366	+126
Management of companies	0	13	39	+26
Administrative & waste services	85	131	156	+25
Educational services	11	41	55	+14
Health care & social assistance	190	245	295	+50
Arts, entertainment & recreation	117	150	188	+38
Accommodation & food service	510	553	590	+37
Other services	256	245	301	+56
Government	856	1,059	1,001	-58

Source: Source: Headwaters Economics, Johnson County Socioeconomic Profile, 2024

The table demonstrates that total jobs increased by 40% from 2001 to 2022. This is an average annual job growth rate of 1.81% overall.

NON-SERVICE JOBS 2001-2022

2001 -2010

Non-service-related jobs grew 23.8% during the timeframe. The growth was led by Mining (+161 jobs) and Construction (+155 jobs). The Farming and Manufacturing sectors lost a total of 20 jobs. Forestry, fishing, and agriculture added a total of six jobs.

During this period, the Johnson County population grew significantly by 21.1%. The Johnson County growth in mining (mineral development) came hand in hand with added construction jobs.

2010 – 2022

Overall, the non-service-related job sectors experienced negative growth over the period. This is due to job losses in the mining and construction sectors. The manufacturing, farm and forestry, fishing, and agriculture job sectors experienced modest growth, but did not outpace the losses in mining and construction.

TAKEAWAYS: NON-SERVICE JOBS 2001 - 2022

- ❖ Non-service jobs show a high degree of sensitivity toward swings in mining and construction employment. Between 2000 and 2010, when mineral development was on the upswing, mining and construction jobs increased significantly. During the timeframe of 2010 to 2022, as mineral development decreased, both construction and mining jobs were lost. These job losses show an alteration from high to low levels of activity in the business cycle for those industries.
- ❖ Non-service jobs increased by 18.2% from 2001 to 2022 in Johnson County. This 21-year period shows an overall increase in economic activity in the business cycle for non-service jobs.

- ❖ As a cautionary note for the future, non-service jobs are highly connected to market demand, interest rates, and commodity prices. All these components fluctuate over time and impact communities.

SERVICE-RELATED JOBS 2001 - 2022

Service jobs were analyzed from 2001 through 2022. The top 12 service industries, out of 15 shown, were ranked by the number of jobs in each sector for the three periods: 2001, 2010, and 2022.

The following table shows the ranking by service sector. Due to the naming of the sectors shown on the previous table, the following abbreviations are used. For ease of use, the abbreviations listed below follow the rankings in the table.

R = Retail	TW = Transportation and Warehousing
AF = Accommodations and Food Services	AW = Administration and Waste Services
RE = Real Estate, Rentals, and Leasing	W = Wholesale
O = Other Services	I = Information
FI = Finance and Insurance	ES = Educational Services
HS = Health Care and Social Assistance	A = Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
PT = Professional and Technical Services	

Rank By Jobs Added →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Report Year ↓												
2001	R	AF	RE	O	FI	HS	PT	TW	AW	W	I	ES
2010	AF	R	RE	FI	HS & O	PT	TW	A	AW	W	I	ES
2022	RE	AF	R	FI	PT	O	HS	A	AW	W	TW	I

The table shows that in 2001, 2010, and again in 2022, Retail (R), Accommodations and Food Service (AF), and Real Estate, Rentals and Leasing (RE) consistently had the most jobs in service-related employment. All three service sectors traded rankings across the range, from the most jobs to the third-most service jobs, over the 21 years.

It is unusual for Real Estate, Rentals, and Leasing to have more employees than either Accommodations and Food Services (motels, sit-down restaurants, fast-food establishments) or Retail. But that is what the data shows in 2022.

Service-related job rankings 4 through 6 over the same reporting period show Finance and Insurance (FI) increased, moving from 5th in 2000 to 4th in 2010 and 2022. Other Services (OS) moved from 4th to 5th, then to 6th, in the overall rankings for jobs during the period. Health Care and Social Assistance (HS) ranked 6th in 2000, then tied for 5th in 2010. It was not in the top six (6) service industries for jobs in 2020 but was ranked 7th.

Rankings for service-related jobs in the 7th, 8th, and 9th positions show that Administrative and Waste Services (AW) consistently ranked 9th across all reporting years. It also showed that the Arts,

Entertainment, and Recreation (A) service sector ranked 8th in terms of number of employees in 2010 and 2022. Professional and Technical Services (PT) ranked 7th in 2000, 6th in 2010, and 5th in 2022 by number of employees. Transportation and Warehousing (TW) had the 8th-highest number of employees in 2000, ranked 7th in 2010, and ranked 11th in 2022.

In most service-sector jobs, the 10th, 11th, and 12th positions show that Warehousing (W) consistently ranks 10th across all three reporting periods. Information (I) was the 11th-largest sector in 2000 and 2010 but ranked 12th in 2022.

PERSPECTIVES: SERVICE-RELATED JOBS

Growth From 2010 – 2022

In order, the three (3) service industries that grew the most jobs from 2010 to 2022 include:

- ❖ Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
- ❖ Finance and Insurance
- ❖ Professional and Technical Services

Most Service Jobs 2001 – 2022

Over the 2001 – 2022 period, the three service industries that consistently have the most employees include:

- ❖ Accommodation and Food Service
- ❖ Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
- ❖ Retail Service

TAKEAWAYS – SERVICE JOBS 2001 -2022

- ❖ Retail (R), Accommodations and Food Service (AF), along with Real Estate, Rentals and Leasing (RE), consistently had the most jobs in service-related employment from 2001 to 2022.
- ❖ The job growth in Finance and Insurance (FI), Professional and Technical Services (PT), and Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing (RE) from 2010 to 2022 represents the majority of growth in service sector jobs. It shows a developing local economy.

GOVERNMENT JOBS 2001 - 2022

The government employment sector comprises all local, state, and federal jobs. It is an important part of any local economy. It is considered a sector of its own for two reasons. First, as a separate sector, it does not skew private sector job numbers. In Johnson County, it is also related to the significant land holdings by the government, as well as the mineral development, recreation, and agricultural resources, which play important roles in the local economy.

TAKEAWAYS – GOVERNMENT JOBS 2001 -2022

- ❖ Government jobs fluctuated through the reporting period, rising from 2001 to 2010, and then declining from that date to 2022.
- ❖ Government jobs grew 16.9% from 2001 to 2022 in Johnson County.

AVERAGE EARNINGS PER JOB, PERCENT CHANGE 2000 – 2022

The average earnings per job in Johnson County increased 13.8% from 2000 to 2022. This compares to a statewide average of 11.5% over the same timeframe.

Source: Headwaters Economics, Johnson County Socioeconomic Profile, 2024

UNEMPLOYMENT 2020 - 2025

Lower unemployment is an indicator of well-being. Unemployment acts as an economic and social stressor for individuals and the community when unemployment rates are high. The following information is sourced from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Johnson County unemployment rate by month from January 2020 through June 2024 shows the lowest month was September 2023 at 2.0%, while the highest rate was May 2020 at 8.0%.

AVERAGE YEARLY UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR JOHNSON COUNTY 2020 - 2025

Year	Johnson County Average Unemployment Rate
2020	5.5%
2021	4.2%
2022	3.2%
2023	2.7%
2024	3.0%

The average yearly unemployment rate from January 2020 through December 2023 was 3.9%. The unemployment rates show the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery afterward.

The following table shows the interplay between jobs and population from 1970 to 2022.

JOBS AND POPULATION 1970 - 2022

	1970	2000	2010	2022	Growth: 1970 – 2022 by Number	Growth By Percentage Over 52 Years	Annual Average Growth Rate Over 52 Years
Jobs: All Non- Service, Service & Government Sectors	2,240	4,746	5,916	6,781	4,541 or an average of 87 jobs per year	302% for Johnson County Wyoming at 211%	5.8% or ~6% for Johnson County Wyoming at 4.5%
Job Growth During Time Period		2,506 added since 1970, average of 84 jobs/year	1,170 added since 2000, an average of 117 jobs/year	795 added since 2010, an average of 67 jobs/year			

Population	5,587	7,075	8,569	8,447	2,860 or an average of 55 people per year	51.1% For Johnson County Wyoming at 174%	0.98% or ~1% for Johnson County Wyoming at 3.3%
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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and Wyoming Workforce Services, Employment Research and Planning

TAKEAWAYS – JOHNSON COUNTY JOBS AND POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS 1970-2022

- ❖ From 1970 to 2022, the number of jobs increased from 2,240 to 6,781.
- ❖ The population increased by 2,860 over the same period of time. Population growth was nominally higher from 1970 to 2000 than from 2000 to 2022. The population growth is slow.
- ❖ Jobs grew at a faster rate than the population from 1970 to 2022. The same applies to Wyoming as a whole and the United States.
- ❖ Job growth is positive for all service sectors from 2001 to 2022 in Johnson County.
- ❖ Jobs in the non-service sector are very susceptible to outside economic forces. This is demonstrated by the job losses in Johnson County from 2010 to 2022.
- ❖ Related to jobs, the median age in Johnson County is rising and is greater than the median age for Wyoming. This signals a need to create attractions to bring in young people to live in Johnson County.
- ❖ Regarding jobs, the number of people aged 65 and older is better than 25% of the population in Johnson County. This can signal a labor pool shortage for existing and new businesses.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT / BUSINESS GROWTH

Workforce development services are available to businesses and individuals in Johnson County. Wyoming Workforce Services works with businesses, economic development organizations, community colleges, and other partners on a wide variety of needs.

Service programs are offered by workforce centers across the state. Nearby centers are in Sheridan, Gillette, and Casper. The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services provides services including business expansion, skill development, veterans' assistance, programs for single parents, and more.

The Wyoming Business Council works directly with manufacturers, producers, and entrepreneurs to help businesses build capacity. Programs are available for every size and type. Bottom line services are aimed at assessment, advanced manufacturing technologies, prototyping, supply chains, quality management, workforce development, cybersecurity, and continuous improvement.

Locally, JOCO First, the economic development corporation for Johnson County, works to attract new businesses and support the growth of existing businesses.

INCOME



Measuring income within a community provides insight into its well-being and economic stability. Various variables are presented that provide insight.

The table below provides context on income trends in Johnson County from 1970 to 2020.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME 1920-2020 / COMPAISON WITH WYOMING

Reporting Years	Johnson County	State of Wyoming	Percentage Comparison to State
1970	\$ 21,313	\$ 25,285	16% Less
1980	\$ 27,096	\$ 28,220	4% Less
1990	\$ 22,057	\$ 27,096	19% Less
2000	\$ 34,012	\$ 37,892	10% Less
2010	\$ 58,132	\$64,049	9% Less
2020	\$ 60,667	\$ 70,042	9% Less

Source: U.S. Census 1970 - 2020

Median household income is used instead of mean household income because it better reflects actual household income. One-half of all households are above; the other half is below. The mean family income is less realistic because it can be skewed in either direction.

The table shows that the median household income in Johnson County grew by 2.8 times over the 50-year reporting period. It also illustrates that Wyoming grew 2.7 times over the same period.

While the median household income in Johnson County was always lower than that of the State of Wyoming, it grew slightly faster than the state. Both are comparable to one another.

LABOR AND NON-LABOR INCOME

There was a time when labor income was viewed as a near-singular measure of well-being and long-term economic stability. Labor income is derived from earnings at a person's place of work.

Today, non-labor income has entered the spotlight alongside labor income to provide a more accurate view of well-being and economic stability. Non-labor income includes interest, dividends, government retirement and disability, medical payments, and unemployment insurance.

The following table shows Labor Earnings and Non-Labor Income as components of personal income for the period of 1970-2022 in Johnson County.

LABOR EARNINGS AND NON-LABOR INCOME			
Years →	1970	2000	2022
Personal Income Components ↓			
Labor earnings as percentage	66.5%	48.1%	51.3%
Non-labor income as percentage	33.5%	51.9%	48.7%

In 1970, non-labor income accounted for 33% of total personal income. By 2022, non-labor income represented 48.7, or nearly one-half of total personal income in Johnson County.

Indicators of growth in non-labor income include gains from investments and rising stock markets. Locally, it gains more credence with the growing share of people age 65 and older in Johnson County, along with the rising median age of all residents.

TAKEAWAYS ON INCOME

Over the 22 years from 2000 to 2022:

- ❖ Labor earnings as a percentage of personal income decreased by almost 23%.
- ❖ Non-labor income as a percentage of total personal income increased slightly more than 45%.
- ❖ The two parts of total personal income are proportionally close as the population percentage grew from 1970 to 2022.

Growth in non-labor income in Johnson County may indicate that it is an attractive place to live, with ample recreational opportunities, affordable housing for those on fixed incomes, and available healthcare facilities. It can also be indicative of Johnson County's economic situation, as well as a source of stable income or income maintenance.

SPECIFIC BUSINESS SECTORS

AGRICULTURE AND RANCHING



Historically, agriculture and ranching have been at the heart of Johnson County's culture, values, and economy. It is important for employment and the greater economy of Johnson County. Johnson County accounts for 3% of state agricultural sales. Agriculture not only provides jobs for owners and workers, but also generates revenue through food exports to other states, provides open space, and provides wildlife habitat across Johnson County.

The following table is a 2022 profile of Johnson County agriculture and ranching practices, with comparisons to 2017.

JOHNSON COUNTY AGRICULTURE PROFILE IN 2022 – COMPARED TO 2017

	2022	2017
Number of Farms	402 – increased by 18	384
Land in Farms	2,034,098 acres – increased 3%	1,974,363 acres
Average Size	5,060 acres – decreased 1.4%	5,142 acres
Land in Farms by Use	By Acres	By Acres
Cropland	47,087 – increased by 1.8%	39,486 acres
Pastureland	1,968,968 increased by 1.7%	1,934,847 acres
Woodland	8,280	N/A
Acres Irrigated	36,760 acres	31,697 acres
	Reported Top Crops in Acres	Reported Top Crops in Acres
	Forage - all - 31,776 acres	Forage - all - 29,970 acres
	Top 3 Livestock Inventory	Top 3 Livestock Inventory
	Cattle & Calves	Cattle & Calves
	Sheep & Lambs	Sheep & Lambs
	Horses & Ponies	Horses & Ponies
	Share of Sales by Type - %	Share of Sales by Type - %
	Crops 12 %	Crops 7%
	Livestock, Poultry & Products 88%	Livestock, Poultry & Products 93%
Area Family Farms	95% or 382 Farms	90% or 347 Farms
Hire Farm Labor	29% or 117 Farms	33% or 127 Farms
Total Producers – Maximum of 4 per Farm	797	720
Age < 35	62	65
Age 35-64	368	406
Age 65 or older	367	249
Rank in State for all 23 Counties for Ag Sales	3	3

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 and 2022, Census of Agriculture.

Agriculture and ranching are vital parts of the Johnson County economy. Johnson County ranked third out of all 23 counties for agricultural sales in 2017 and 2022. The 2017 total market value for livestock products was \$41,049,000, and for crop products was \$3,098,000. The 2022 total market value for livestock products was \$48,175,000, and for crop production was \$6,613,00. The figures represent a 33% increase in overall agricultural sales over the five years.

The data shows not only the importance of agriculture but also its economic growth from 2017 to 2022. It is important to Johnson County, which represents 3% of agricultural sales statewide.

It is also worth noting an increase in the number of farms and in agricultural land.

Of concern is the aging of farm operators over the five years. The number of farm operators under the age of 35, as well as those aged 35 to 64, decreased, while the number of those aged 65 or older increased by 47% or 122 people. This signals a potential workforce shortage for the future

NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL & RANCHING OPERATIONS & SIZES 1992 -2022

Size of Agricultural Operation	1992	2022	Change in number of Agricultural Operations
1 - 9 acres	15	23	+ 8
10 - 49 acres	13	55	+ 42
50 – 179 acres	20	75	+ 55
180 - 499 acres	29	74	+ 45
500 - 999 acres	34	11	-23
1,000+ acres	179	164	-15
Total operations	290	402	

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service: 1999 and 2022, Census of Agriculture

Over 30 years, from 1992 to 2022, the number of farm operations increased by 112. The increase happened in the five size categories under 1,000 acres. Conversely, there was a decrease of 38 agricultural operations with 500 acres or more.

The data shows a significant increase in agricultural operations in the categories of 10-49, 50-179, and 180-499 acres, and a decrease in operational numbers in the 500-999 and 1,000+ acre categories.

While large agricultural operations of 1,000+ acres predominate in the 1992 and 2022 size categories, the growing number of smaller operations indicates increased interest in agriculture. It also demonstrates that agricultural operations in Johnson County are being split into smaller businesses.

The amount of land used for agriculture in Johnson County also increased from 2002 to 2022.

Agricultural land use grew 29% from 2002 to 2022. This means 716 square miles were added to farming and ranching land use over the 20 years. Agricultural and ranching land use makes up 76.1% of all land in Johnson County.

The growth in agricultural and ranching land use demonstrates a serious financial commitment to increasing its overall value and to participating in crop and livestock markets.

According to the USDA Economic Research Service, Johnson County is opposite the nationwide trend of losing land for agriculture and ranching, and fewer agricultural operations. Instead, Johnson County has expanded into more land devoted to agriculture and ranching, and the number of agricultural operations has increased.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from the Census of Agriculture through 2022 and Land in Farms 2023 Summary (Feb.2024).

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are used in Wyoming with agriculture to ensure the longevity of a ranch or farm. Conservation easements may set aside land for open space, conservation areas, or as a method to protect a working farm or ranch. There are more than 25,000 acres of conservation easements in Johnson County.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Johnson County is where the rolling, far western plains landscape rises into the magnificent Cloud Peak at 13,000 feet in the Bighorn Mountains. The land embodies the spirit of the American West. Johnson County has a history of Native American conflicts over land, range wars between cattlemen and settlers, cattle barons, and the development of modern-day ranching.



It is a place where the outlaw Butch Cassidy hid out, and where hiking trails within the Bighorn National Forest and Bighorn Wilderness stand out. Horses and ponies are as abundant here as the rainbow of mountain meadow wildflowers in July. Anglers know that trout fishing is an honored pastime, and hunting is as abundant as the miles of snow for snowmobiles.

This is a place where a proud heritage comes alive with museums that showcase day tours and attract tourists to enjoy long country drives. Restaurants, motels, and the community are eager to tell and share the ongoing Johnson County story. Tourism enables a community to thrive.

Travel and tourism in Johnson County includes accommodations and food service, retail, arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as passenger transportation. Other subsectors include, but are not limited to, travel agents, reservation services, and recreation management companies.

The employment trend for travel and tourism shows that from 2001 to 2023, travel and tourism employment grew from 559 to 583 jobs, a 4.3% increase. As employment growth in travel and tourism has been slow, it accounted for a smaller share of overall jobs in Johnson County in 2023 than in 2001.

Source: *Travel and Tourism Profile, 2024, Headwaters Economics*

DIRECT TRAVEL IMPACT SPENT BY VISITORS 2014 – 2023

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Spending By	\$46.3	\$44.8	\$43.2	\$47.7	\$49.8	\$51.2	\$41.6	\$57.2	\$59.9	\$58.2
\$ Millions										

Source: *Economic Impact of Travel in Wyoming, WY Office of Tourism, 2023*

Over the past 10 years, there has been a trend of increased spending by visitors on travel and tourism. The highest amounts show post-COVID.

LOCAL TAX REVENUE IN JOHNSON COUNTY DRIVED FROM VISITORS & TOURISM

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue By	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.1	1.0
\$ Millions										

Source: *Source: Economic Impact of Travel in Wyoming, WY Office of Tourism, 2023*

The 10-year period shows a trend of increasing tax revenue due to travel and tourism. The higher amounts occur post-COVID.

Visitor spending by type of traveler accommodation from 2014 to 2023 shows motels and campgrounds as the most favored. Within the last three years, short-term vacation rentals have been available and claim 3.6% of the market, while seasonal homes claim 2.3% of the traveler accommodations market.

JOHNSON COUNTY OUTDOORS

Johnson County offers a wide range of year-round outdoor recreational activities for residents and visitors. The outdoor offerings fit many interests and pursuits for residents and tourists alike.

Popular activities include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ❖ Mountain biking | ❖ Fishing in lakes, streams, and rivers |
| ❖ Bird watching | ❖ Floating a river |
| ❖ Camping in the National Forest | ❖ Hiking in the Big Horns & on BLM land |
| ❖ Camping in Wilderness areas | ❖ Picnics |
| ❖ Campgrounds for RVs | ❖ Rock hounding & discovery |
| ❖ Day use areas on BLM lands | ❖ Rock climbing |
| ❖ Exploration of paleontological history | ❖ Winter camping |
| ❖ Geological features to explore | ❖ Snowmobiles |
| ❖ Horseback riding | ❖ Swimming during summer |
| ❖ Hunting walk-in areas & hunting ranches | ❖ Finding your own favorite place |

Trails

- ❖ Clear Creek Trail System, Buffalo
- ❖ Big Horn Mountains, various trails

Recreational & Scenic Areas

- ❖ Like DeSmet, North of Buffalo – Fishing, boating, paddleboarding, campground, RV park, and ice fishing during winter.
- ❖ Crazy Woman Canyon, South of Buffalo
- ❖ Outlaw Canyon and Cave, Near Kaycee - Campground is a no-fee site, and the trail descends some 500 feet to the area of Outlaw Cave.
- ❖ Healy Reservoir, North of Buffalo – Reservoir accommodates boat access and exceptional fishing.
- ❖ Mountain Plains Heritage Park, Buffalo - This loop trail has great views of the Big Horn Mountains and additional trails which lead to Clear Creek.
- ❖ Main Street, Buffalo

Settlers, Cowboys & Bandits

- ❖ Hoofprints of the Past Museum, Kaycee
- ❖ Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum, Buffalo
- ❖ The Historic Occidental Hotel Museum, Buffalo

Music, Arts & Culture

- ❖ Old Time Country Bluegrass Jam, Buffalo
- ❖ Art Galleries and Blacksmithing School, Buffalo
- ❖ Rodeos
- ❖ Dude Ranches
- ❖ Fort Phil Kearny, Buffalo
- ❖ Hole in the Wall, Big Horn Mountains

Tours

- ❖ Bozeman Trail of Powder River
- ❖ Hole in the Wall, Big Horn Mountains
- ❖ Johnson County War

Scenic Roadways

- ❖ Cloud Peak Skyway - US Highway 16, Buffalo to Ten Sleep
- ❖ South Big Horn/Red Wall Back Country Byway

Takeaways

- ❖ The Johnson County Visitors Association has embarked on an innovative Strategic Plan process to increase tourism and travel. It has partnerships throughout Johnson County to continue the forward momentum.
- ❖ Johnson County has the natural resource assets and ongoing community-built resources to grow a robust year-round tourism industry.



ENERGY DEVELOPMENT – MINERALS AND RENEWABLES



MINERALS

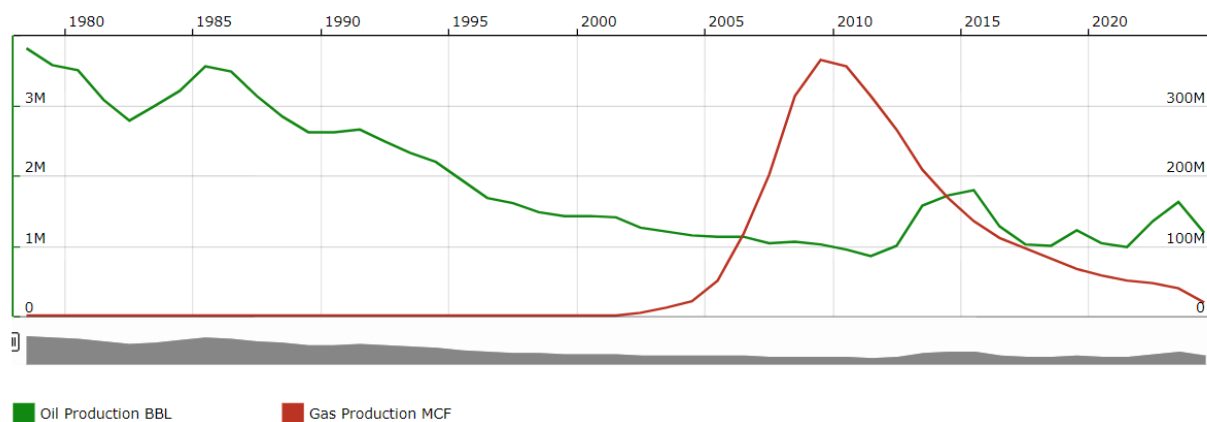
According to the *Wyoming Geological Survey Oil and Gas Facts*, in 2023, Wyoming ranked 8th nationally in crude oil production and 9th in natural gas production.

Twenty-one out of the 23 Wyoming counties produce oil and gas. The gas and oil industries are integral to the state economy.

Wyoming had 978 million barrels of proven oil reserves in 2021, which accounted for nearly 2.4% of the U.S. total reserves.

As of 2021, Wyoming had an estimated 15,005 billion cubic feet of proven reserves of dry natural gas, or 2.5% of the total U.S. reserves.

Drilling Edge, a reporting company for oil and gas production, shows the following graph of oil and gas production in Johnson County from 1978 to 2024. Oil is shown by BBL, or barrels of crude oil. Gas is shown by MCF, or 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas.



OIL

The graph shows that oil production peaked in 1978 (3.8 million BBL) and then dropped until 1982. Production continued to decline until 2011, when volume increased through 2015, then declined. There were increases in production in 2018 – 2019, as well as from 2021 through 2023, when volume then decreased into 2024 at 1.020 million BBL.

GAS

The graph shows that gas production remained low from 1978 through 2001 (1.3–1.4 MCF). Production increased in 2002, reaching a peak of 365.83 MCF in 2009. It started to decline, showing a 17.22 MCF in 2024. The production of gas today is significantly higher than in 2002.

University of Wyoming researchers are focusing on Johnson County oil and gas fields. Two projects are in progress, with the eventual goal of increasing oil and gas production in the Powder River Basin and within Johnson County. The study and implementation process, which includes mineral companies, is expected to take a long time to show results.

Source: Buffalo Bulletin on February 24, 2024.

RENEWABLES



Wind and solar projects have been increasing in Wyoming since 2017.

WIND

While there has been discussion of wind energy projects in Johnson County, there are currently no active sites. Wind power projects in Wyoming have been concentrated in the southern half of the state.

Wyoming has strong wind energy potential due to its geography. It sits in the mid latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere, where weather patterns constantly move past and interact with one another. Any region in the mid-latitudes will experience strong prevailing winds. Wyoming is a high point in the mid-latitudes, which better enables wind power.

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Wyoming ranks 8th among states in wind power potential.

SOLAR

While there has been conversation about a solar project in Johnson County, none have been developed to date. According to the *U.S. Energy Information Administration, Wyoming State Profile, 2023*, there are significant solar resources within the state. There are three solar energy projects, with one installed at this time and the others approved and awaiting construction.

While providing long-term tax revenue to a county and mainly short-term construction jobs, wind and solar projects are not without potential problems. Both alter the landscape view and impact the existing animal population. Other concerns worth mentioning are the sound and glare.

TAKEAWAY

As a leading energy state in the country, Wyoming's natural resources benefit the lives of others across the country. As an energy exporter, the Wyoming State Legislature is reviewing the need to tax wind and solar projects to better address the long-term needs of the state's population through the marketable use of Wyoming's renewable resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In this section, we will discuss the physical foundation systems for Johnson County.

TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION MODES

County Roads

The Johnson County Road and Bridge Department manages county roads.

Airport

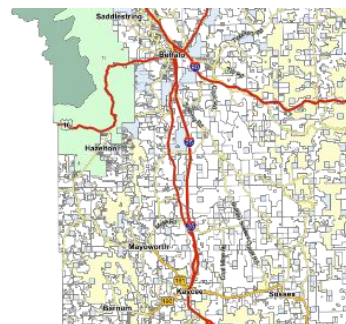
Johnson County Airport is county-owned and is located 3 miles northeast of Buffalo. It primarily serves general aviation and does not offer commercial air service.

Local Public Transportation

The Buffalo Area Transit System (BATS) offers service to Buffalo and Johnson County. Weekly trips to Gillette and Sheridan are also offered. A service extension to Kaycee is planned soon.

Intercity Bus Lines

Jefferson Bus Lines offers service to Buffalo, Gillette, and Sheridan.



ROADWAYS IN JOHNSON COUNTY

Federal	State	County
Interstate 90	WY Highways 192, 193, 196 & 387	566 miles – Paved & Unpaved
Interstate 25		
U.S. Highway 16		

WORK COMMUTE

Of all workers, 73% drove to work alone, while 6.4% used a bicycle, and 13.7% worked from home. Working at home has been rising since the COVID-19 pandemic, along with biking to work. Driving alone to work remains the preferred method in Johnson County, as well as in Wyoming and the United States as a whole. It is a necessity in rural communities like Johnson County.

UNIQUE TRANSPORTATION FEATURES

There are only two intersections in Wyoming where two different interstates meet.

Interstate 25 meets up with Interstate 90 in Buffalo, and Interstate 25 meets Interstate 80 in Cheyenne.

Interstate 90 is a major transcontinental highway running from Boston to Seattle. Interstate 80, also a major transcontinental highway, runs from California to New Jersey. Both interstate highways carry significant freight volumes across the country. Interstate 25 is a south-north interstate that starts in New Mexico and ends in Buffalo, where it meets Interstate 90. Both carry visitors and tourists to Johnson County. This unique highway feature also provides highway-related development opportunities in this area of Johnson County.



The Cloud Peak Skyway, or the U.S. Highway 16 portion that runs from Buffalo to Ten Sleep, is one of the most scenic drives in Wyoming. In Johnson County, the highway starts in Buffalo and goes all the way to Yellowstone National Park. This picturesque highway carries many visitors and is accessed primarily by Interstates 90 and 25.

When autumn colors abound in the Bighorn National Forest, this route attracts locals and visitors alike. The roadway climbs west of Buffalo to Powder River Pass at 9,666 feet, where there is Alpine tundra. Summertime mountain flowers create an array of color, and it is the only road to Cloud Peak, standing at some 13,499 feet above sea level. Historically, just south of the scenic highway, the Johnson County War began in 1892, marking the beginning of modern-day ranching.

WYDOT 2024 – 2029 SCHEDULED STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The following table shows the schedule of roadway improvements for Johnson County through the WYDOT State Transportation Improvement Program for 2024 -2029. The projects are subject to revision due to available federal and state funding levels.

Year	Highway	Location	Miles	Treatment	Current Rounded Cost
2024	U.S. Hwy 16	Buffalo-Ucross	5.28	Mill & Overlay	\$3.5 M
	I25/I90/WYO 196	Buffalo Main street	3.3	Rehab	\$14.6
2025	WY 196	Buffalo South/WYO 196		Culvert Extension	\$425,00
2026	U.S. Hwy 16	Buffalo West	11.3	Mill, Level & Overlay	\$15.8 M
	In Buffalo	Main & Fort		Signal Replacement	\$650,000
2027	I 90 East Bound and West Bound Lanes	Buffalo	11.3	Mill & Overlay	\$15.8 M
	1 90 (Combined)	Mile marker 55.02		Structure Replacement	\$2.25 M
	I 90 (Combined)			Structure Replacement	\$4.1 M
2028	No projects scheduled				
2029	I-25	Buffalo West Shell Creek Interchange Eastbound	11.2	Mill, Level and Overlay	\$18.1

Source: WYDOT STIP Program, District 4, 2024

WATER

The following table shows pertinent information about the central water systems in Buffalo and Kaycee.

WATER SYSTEMS IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO & TOWN OF KAYCEE						
Attributes→	Population Served	# Taps Inside Entity	Outside Users	Bulk Water Sales & Type	Total Annual Use & Peak Day Use by Gallons	Expansion Plans
City of Buffalo	4,575	2,209	Yes - 74	Yes Treated & Untreated	413.1 Million 3.4 Million	No
Town of Kaycee	263	230	Yes - 13	Yes Untreated	32.7 Million \$168,400,000	No

Source: Wyoming Water Development Commission, 2022 Water Systems Report

Lake DeSmet Operating Department

The Johnson County Lake DeSmet Operating Department makes water available for industrial (construction), agricultural, municipal, and other uses. Johnson County is responsible for most of the annual maintenance costs, along with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD).

Lake DeSmet is also a recreation area. Johnson County and WGFD work together to maintain the sustainability of the lake while preserving its recreational value.

Lake DeSmet is a natural basin and has a capacity of 234,897-acre feet of water. According to the WGFD, it is the most important trout fishery in northeast Wyoming.



Individual Wells

Individual wells in Johnson County are permitted through the State Engineer's Office.

Community Wells

Community wells of 15 or more connections are permitted through the State Engineer's Office, and health and safety concerns are administered through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Agricultural Irrigation

Irrigation is important to agriculture in Johnson County. The amount of agricultural land used for irrigation increased in Johnson County by 15.9% from 2017 to 2022, according to the USDA Census of Agriculture. Irrigated land rose from 49.5 square miles to 57.4 square miles for the 5 years. Irrigated areas are primarily

used to produce hay and grain that serve as supplemental food for livestock. Livestock is a key agricultural commodity in Johnson County.

Since 1982, irrigated land acreage has had little fluctuation overall. This is demonstrated in the following table:

	1982	1992	2002	2017	2022
Acres of Irrigation	36,100	39,051	38,933	31,697	39,760

Conservation Districts

In Johnson County, the Clear Creek and Powder River Conservation Districts are charged with promoting and protecting the quality and quantity of Wyoming's water, as part of their overall responsibilities.

Clear Creek Conservation District serves the northern part of Johnson County, while the Powder River Conservation District serves the southern portion.

SANITARY SEWER TREATMENT

City of Buffalo

The City of Buffalo operates a sanitary sewage treatment plant. The treatment plant has a capacity of 10 million gallons per day.

Town of Kaycee

The City of Buffalo operates a sanitary sewage treatment plant. The treatment plant has an estimated capacity of 3 million gallons per day.

Individual Septic Systems

Individual septic systems require design by a Wyoming-registered professional engineer. Johnson County approves a septic tank permit.

Community Septic Systems

Community septic systems require design by a Wyoming-registered professional engineer. Johnson County approves the plans.

INFLUENCES ON JOHNSON COUNTY

Historically, Johnson County has been rural. It is located a distance from communities in neighboring counties with larger populations. It grows slowly and is a community that has had farming and ranching at its heart for generations. Residents enjoy the scenic forestland and mountains. Johnson County moves forward with quiet and determined self-reliance.

ALWAYS RURAL TENDENCIES

According to a nationwide study of counties in 2020, carried out by Headwaters Economics, there are three types of counties: Always Rural, Always Urban, and “Switchers”, those counties that have transformed from rural to urban.

The study reviewed socioeconomic data from 1970 to 2020, spanning 50 years. Those indicators included population, average earnings per job, unemployment, poverty, and college attainment.

There is not a single headline or story that describes Always Rural counties. Their history, population makeup, and economies differ. Every rural county has its own unique set of demographic and economic circumstances, which change over time.

Johnson County shows the following:

- ❖ Of the 524 Always-Rural counties that depend on mining, oil and gas, or farming, 362 lost population between 1970 and 2018.
 - Johnson County did the opposite. It gained population with a 51.9% increase.
- ❖ The places that have lost the most population tended to have been resource-dependent on farming economies.
 - The population increase over time in Johnson County defied its resource and farming economies.
- ❖ Most places that have grown rapidly while staying rural are recreation-dependent or are retirement destinations and tend to have amenity-based economies.
 - Johnson County has the potential to grow its travel, tourism, and recreation economy and create living places for those who wish to retire.
- ❖ In 1970, Always Rural counties had the lowest unemployment rate. Today, higher unemployment is expected in Always Rural counties than in Always Urban counties, which have the lowest unemployment rate and greater economic diversity.
 - The Johnson County unemployment rate fluctuated from low to high, so a reasonable comparison cannot be made. The average monthly unemployment rate in 2020 for Johnson County was 5.3%, which is normally of concern but not considered a high unemployment rate. The employment rate dropped to an average of 2.7% for 2023.

- ❖ Average earnings per job tend to be higher in Always Urban Counties.
 - Johnson County, as an Always Rural County, cannot compete due to the lack of diversity and specialization within its economy and workforce.

Along with being a rural community amid fluctuating economic circumstances, Johnson County is influenced by broader economic and demographic trends in the American West and the State of Wyoming.

FAR-REACHING CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ Housing affordability is a growing challenge for many people, whether renting or buying.
 - Can I work and live in Johnson County?
 - Can I sell my home and find another in Johnson County?
 - Can I afford the rent?
- ❖ Market forces are moving toward renewables like wind and solar instead of oil and gas.
 - What will be the future for mineral development in Johnson County?
- ❖ Some areas are slowly changing in the Intermountain West, where there are lower taxes and plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities, from “BOOM” to “ZOOM,” or becoming havens for primary or secondary homes, which serve as a desired slower way of living over the hustle and bustle of urban areas. It culminates in recreation or retirement destinations.
 - Johnson County has significant outdoor recreational resources.
- ❖ Population fluctuations and the growth of the elderly population, along with an increasing median age, are not just confined to western rural counties. It is occurring in all regions of the United States.
 - Johnson County is not alone as it faces these three different demographic concerns.

CLOSER TO HOME CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ Wyoming continues to play an important energy role through mineral development, and an increasing role in renewable energy development. Both are the lifeblood of the national economy. Mineral revenue funds have fluctuated over the past 10 years and are slowly decreasing.
- ❖ The State Legislature and numerous communities across the state have started to address housing affordability.

- ❖ There are ongoing efforts statewide aimed at economic diversification and variety to create better long-term stability.
- ❖ The culture of Wyoming is sewn together with a strong independent streak, doing things the “Wyoming Way.”

IN OUR BACKYARD CONSIDERATIONS

Land

Of the 4,176 square miles total in Johnson County, there are 2,505 square miles in private ownership.

- ❖ The largest land use in Johnson County is agriculture and ranching, which occurs on private as well as government-owned land. It covers slightly more than 3 out of every 4 acres in the community.

Location and Population

- ❖ Johnson County is distant from the comprehensive services offered by urban areas.
- ❖ It also has a low population density.
- ❖ Most of the population lives near Buffalo.
- ❖ Population growth countywide is slow.
- ❖ The population has fluctuated over the past 80 years.

Jobs and Economy

- ❖ The number of total jobs has grown in Johnson County in a fluctuating manner.
- ❖ Most jobs are within the service sector.
- ❖ Non-service sector jobs are susceptible to market demand, interest rates, and commodity pricing. Mineral development, construction, and agriculture/ranching are the most susceptible.
- ❖ The rising median age signals a need for workforce programs for training younger workers.
- ❖ Continuing the efforts toward creating attractors through local economic diversification enables long-term stability.

Phrases Which Describe Johnson County

- ❖ It is a very rural place.
- ❖ It has a small-town feel.
- ❖ Fundamentally an agriculture emphasis.
- ❖ Outdoor recreation abounds with National Forest, Bighorn Mountains, and BLM lands.
- ❖ Slow growth.
- ❖ Change happens bit by bit.
- ❖ The population has fluctuated since 1940.
- ❖ Shows need for ongoing stability through economic diversification.
- ❖ Epitomizes the American West – Buffalo and Kaycee.
- ❖ Aging faster than Wyoming.
- ❖ Only community in northern Wyoming where two interstates join up.

LAND USE

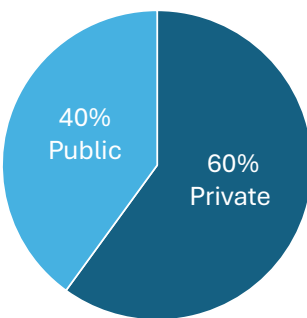
Land use is defined simply as how land is used. It is also a relationship between people and the land. Land use is the purpose people assign to land they own, may settle upon, or utilize in a variety of ways.

Land use can change over time due to population growth, individual interests, and community needs. It is an ongoing process as people adapt the surrounding environment to their needs and wants.



This section explores the relationships between land and the people of Johnson County. It intends to serve as a tool for what Johnson County desires for its future.

SIZE, DENSITY & OWNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS



Johnson County is 4,176 square miles with 2.01 people per square mile. Johnson County has 2,505 square miles, or 60% of the total land area, under private ownership. Public land ownership is 40%. Like many rural counties of the American West, this skews population density.

Dividing the square miles of Johnson County by the 2020 population yields a density of 2.01 people per square mile. Using the 2,505 square miles within private ownership gives a population density of 3.3 people per square mile, a significant difference.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Johnson County has 4 out of every 10 acres of public land where no population growth or development can occur. These areas include public land ownership limits and influences where population and businesses may be established.

It also presents opportunities for Johnson County, which enhances the local community's economic resiliency through long-term tourism and outdoor activities that add value and jobs to the local economy and contribute to residents' quality of life.

Public ownership also allows for grazing leases (agricultural growth), oil and gas development, and renewable energy like wind and solar, which add to the Johnson County economy.

Significant Land Uses Influences

AGRICULTURE & RANCHING

Agriculture and ranching make up 3,178 square miles or 76.1% of all land in Johnson County. Agriculture and ranching are the most consequential land uses in Johnson County. They make up about 3 out of every 4 acres in the community. Agriculture and ranching are endeavors that have been in place for many generations. It was the livestock industry that brought settlement to Johnson County. In 2017 and 2022, agriculture and ranching in Johnson County accounted for 3% of all agricultural sales in Wyoming, and it continues to grow.

FEDERAL & STATE LAND

Federal and state land ownership comprises 40% of Johnson County's land area, or 1,671 square miles. Federal lands are primarily managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Forest Service. Federal land ownership is 1,295 square miles.

The BLM manages 835 square miles, which represents 20% of Johnson County's land area. The BLM utilizes land resources for oil and gas exploration and grazing leases in Johnson County. The BLM also operates four special recreation areas:

- ❖ Hole in the Wall
- ❖ Dry Fork
- ❖ Mosier Gulch
- ❖ Middle Fork Powder River

The activities that take place on BLM land range from horseback riding and hiking to educational and picnic areas, and to cultural significance and educational value about Johnson County's natural resources.

The Big Horn National Forest covers 459 square miles within Johnson County, representing 11% of the county's land area. As one of the oldest national forests, 29% of the Bighorn National Forest, or 459 square miles out of the total 1,742 square miles, is situated in Johnson County.

The Big Horn National Forest offers a wide range of outdoor recreation:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| ❖ Hiking | ❖ Hunting |
| ❖ Camping | ❖ Snow skiing |
| ❖ Fishing | ❖ Swimming |
| ❖ Horseback riding | ❖ Other activities |
| ❖ Picnicking | |

The forest enhances residents' quality of life and serves as a strong draw for tourism.

The State of Wyoming owns 376 square miles, or 9% of Johnson County's total land area. The State of Wyoming primarily provides grazing and agricultural leases in Johnson County. The Wyoming Office of State Lands also provides easements, wind energy leases, special use leases, and temporary use permits to the public.

Takeaways – Significant Land Use Influences

The following takeaways are meant to create understanding. It is important to go beyond the numbers and offer insight on what the numbers mean, how Johnson County is affected, and what people may want so that Johnson County benefits in the future.

Most Significant Takeaway

- ❖ The federal and state governments, through their policies and actions, have the greatest amount of outside influence on the way of life and the economic structure of the county. The management has contributed to the customs and culture of Johnson County. It also provides significant jobs within the community. This level of land management has created an essential government-to-government relationship, enabling Johnson County to continue benefiting.

Opportunity Takeaways

- ❖ Living as a resident in Johnson County means having connections to and enjoyment of the land through hunting, fishing, camping, off-roading, snowmobiling, and many other outdoor recreational activities. It is part of the way of life for many families, individuals, and friends.
- ❖ Agriculture is the oldest continuing industry in Johnson County. It also uses 3 out of every 4 acres countywide. It is at the heart of the community. Agriculture and ranching thrive on partnerships, whether on public or private land, to continue their growth. Today's cattle ranchers are heavily reliant on grazing leases to maintain healthy, productive stock, which accounts for a significant portion of agricultural income.
- ❖ Mineral development has an intrinsic relationship with public/private lands to remain viable.
- ❖ Tourism and travel have the natural assets of public lands to utilize and present an opportunity to create more partnerships to continue to diversify the local economy.

Challenge Takeaways

- ❖ The ongoing pursuit of coordination with federal and state agencies is essential for the Johnson County community.
- ❖ Many farming areas and rural communities have lost agricultural land to residential and other development. Johnson County has done the opposite. Strategic choices include protecting existing agriculture and expanding it, or leaving it to the marketplace for residential or commercial land uses.

Private Land Use

- ❖ Private land makes up 60% or 2,505 square miles of Johnson County.
- ❖ Focusing on private land, 97.5%, or 2,430 square miles, is in agricultural use, according to the Wyoming Department of Revenue.
- ❖ There are 63 square miles of private land ownership that are not in agricultural use.

Private landownership, while widespread across the county, shows a wide swath running north-south through the central areas, extending all the way to Kaycee.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

It is estimated that most of the residential development in unincorporated Johnson County is within 15 miles of Buffalo.

Residential development in Johnson County moves slowly, as shown by the annual population growth rate since 1940. Historically, it is susceptible to the ups and downs of the mineral economy while benefiting from the resilience of the agricultural sector. However, agricultural activities do not result in a fast spurt of growth. Mineral development does, and then it recedes.

COMMERCIAL LAND USE

Commercial land use is primarily centered in and around Buffalo and Kaycee. According to the current land-use plan, there are 40 commercial operations within 1 mile of Buffalo and Kaycee in unincorporated Johnson County. The City of Buffalo has the highest concentration of business operations, followed by the Town of Kaycee. It is those incorporated areas that are responsible for locating commercial land uses within their jurisdiction.

Buffalo and Kaycee act as the commercial centers in Johnson County. Both are located along interstate highways and have the necessary public infrastructure to support commercial land use.

Commercial land use in unincorporated Johnson County is expectedly low. This is due to the lack of population to support it, available infrastructure to connect with, and the ease of access by publicly maintained roadways. However, there are opportunities for large-scale business operations in unincorporated Johnson County.

LARGE-SCALE COMMERCIAL

There are areas to explore for future large-scale commercial operations in unincorporated Johnson County. Communities can experience higher traffic volumes around interstate interchanges, adding to the community's existing traffic. Interchange traffic volume and surrounding traffic volume typically serve as indicators of potential commercial development.

INTERSTATE 90 & INTERSTATE 25 INTERCHANGES

The areas near and around the interstate interchanges in Kaycee, along Interstate 25, and in Buffalo, at the junctions of Interstate 25 and Interstate 90, have accessible, available land that can be examined for business use.

The I-25 interchange at Kaycee serves the community and travelers, as access is available to both. The interchange handles traffic in both directions.

The interstate interchange at Buffalo is also a major interchange. It captures traffic moving east to west along Interstate 90, and traffic flowing south onto Interstate 25 and north from I-25 to the directional choices at I-90. The interchange captures traffic on I-25 heading north, which can go either west or east at the I-90 interchange. This type of interchange, capturing traffic from four directions and served by two interstates, occurs at only one other location in Wyoming: the I-25 and I-80 interchange in Cheyenne.

Traffic counts for the Buffalo area are available in the table below.

BUFFALO TRAFFIC COUNTS			
Location Along Interstate August 2024	Daily Traffic Monthly Average	Weekday Traffic Monthly Average	Weekend Traffic Monthly Average
I-90 north of Buffalo	10,081	10,156	9,994
% Change from August 2023	Increase 2.65%	Increase 4.56%	Increase 1.85%
I-25 south of Buffalo	4,125	4,050	4,312
% Change from August 2023	Not reported	Not Reported	Not Reported

Source: WYDOT's August 2024 monthly traffic counts.

Examples of travel and highway business uses include RV campgrounds, motels, fuel stations with convenience stores, and restaurants.

Examples of other business uses can include warehousing durable or nondurable goods specified for interstate transport, retail centers aimed at the traveling public, or a mixed-use development with a retail/fuel/motel/restaurant combination.

SMALL TO MODEST SCALE COMMERCIAL

Developing land for commercial operations in unincorporated Johnson County shows an existing example with farming and ranching. These are commercial operations, where crops and livestock are tended to, grown, and then sold. The operators may live where they work, and most do. The result is that more jobs are created. Farmers and ranchers develop their niches within the overall agricultural marketplace.

Putting this approach to work for small- to modest-scale commercial land use in unincorporated Johnson County is useful. It means having a business niche with an opportunity to succeed at a particular location. The business niche and the area should go hand in hand for solid foundations, longevity, and stability.

Location is important for the success of the business and for surrounding landowners. No one wants a nuisance neighbor, as most people generally desire peace and quiet. The popular phrase “live and let live” has boundaries related to public health, safety, and the welfare of the community.

The following table shows examples of service-oriented businesses for unincorporated Johnson County that are small to modest business operations. It is within a rural and low-density framework.

SERVICE-ORIENTED BUSINESSES			
Service Oriented Examples/Ideas	Examples for Small to Modest Business Operations	Location for Small Business Operation	Location for Modest Sized Business Operation
Mobile Service – Go to Customer	Plumber	At Home	At Home with Shop
	Electrician	At Home	At Home with Shop
	Shearing	At Home	At Home with Shop
	Guide	At Home	At Home
	Contractor	At Home	At Home with Shop
	Specialty Butchering	At Home with Shop	At Home with Shop
Services Performed On Site	Gunsmith	At Home	At Home with Shop
	Sewing	At Home	At Home
	Bed and Breakfast	Use Existing Dwelling	Use Existing Dwelling
	Real Estate	At Home	At Home with Office
	Tutoring – School/Music	At Home	Normally One Person
	Online Teaching, Market Research, Data Entry, E-Commerce Sales <i>(May or May not Deliver)</i>	At Home	Normally One Person
	Seasonal Campgrounds	At home on Larger Tract	At Home on Larger Tract
	Repair shop – All Types	At Home with Shop on Larger Tract	At Home with Shop on Larger Tract or Separate Location

The following table shows examples and ideas of product-oriented businesses that are small to modest operations. These examples also fall within the rural, low-density population framework of Johnson County.

PRODUCT-ORIENTED BUSINESSES

Product Oriented Examples/Ideas	Examples for Small to Modest Business Operations	Location Examples for Small Business Operation	Location examples for Modest Sized Business Operation
Durable Goods	Wooden Fence Posts, Tent Pegs, Hiking Sticks & Walking Sticks	At Home	At home with Shop or Separate Location
	Cabinets & shelving	At Home	At home with Shop or Separate Location
	Craft Work - Wood, Metal, Pottery & Other Materials	At Home With Shop	At home with Shop or Separate Location
	Artwork – All Types	At Home	At Home with Studio
	Material Making for Horse Blankets, Game Watching Shawls	At Home	At Home with Studio
	Custom Hunting / Camping Tents/Shelters	At Home	At Home with Studio or Separate Location
	Fishing Lures	At Home	At Home with Studio
	Specialty Knives	At Home with Workshop	At Home with Workshop
Nondurable Goods	Baking goods for surrounding community	At Home with Commercial Kitchen	At Home with Commercial Kitchen or Building or Separate Location
	Bee Honey	At Home with Bee Hives & Structure to Process	At Home with Bee Hives & Structure to Process

Commercial land use is important for entrepreneurship, job creation, and revenue that stays in the county. The more variety of commercial business operations a community can generate and maintain, the better its overall economic stability.

While commercial land use will probably continue to concentrate in and around Buffalo and Kaycee, unincorporated Johnson County provides small-scale opportunities as well.

Industrial Land Use

UNINCORPORATED JOHNSON COUNTY

Existing industrial land use in unincorporated Johnson County includes mining, oil and gas exploration and production, and support facilities, as well as regional public utility system facilities and infrastructure.

MANUFACTURING IN & AROUND BUFFALO

Industrial land use focused on manufacturing is located within or near Buffalo, which has the infrastructure and road access to support it easily. The proximity allows the companies to access better employees and supplies, as well as to make shipments or deliveries.

This includes companies like:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| ❖ Mine Rite Technologies | ❖ Big Horn Meat Cutting |
| ❖ Frontier Ironworks | ❖ Black Tooth Innovations |
| ❖ Mountain Meadow Wool | ❖ Croell |

Johnson County manufacturing will most likely continue and develop in and around Buffalo.

INTERSTATE INTERCHANGES

Interstate interchanges can be examined for manufacturing and other industrial uses.

Land Use Summary

Land Use Needs

DENSITY WITHIN UNINCORPORATED JOHNSON COUNTY

Density is connected to land-use needs and capacity. Unincorporated Johnson County has a historically low population density. Most of the people living in unincorporated Johnson County live within 15 miles of Buffalo. The remaining people live around Kaycee or in other areas across the county.

The low-density population is served primarily by private roads and easements, county roads, and state highways. At various locations, there are connections to the interstate highways.

The population in unincorporated Johnson County does not have central water and sewer service.

Primary land uses in unincorporated Johnson County are agriculture/ranching, the Big Horn National Forest, and BLM lands. These types of land use are less dependent on a connected transportation network or central water services than urbanized areas. Agriculture and ranching require open land to thrive. Federal lands in Johnson County do not allow private land-use development, which would grow the population.

In the face of large government ownership and little to no water or sewer infrastructure, how does unincorporated Johnson County grow and develop? The most appropriate answer is that it is up to the

people of Johnson County. Johnson County has opportunities and choices about how it wants to manage future land-use development in the unincorporated area.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHOICES

Patterns

The overwhelming amount of unincorporated land is rural, along with Buffalo and Kaycee, which are urbanized with infrastructure. There is an interplay between communities with infrastructure and surrounding rural areas that may or may not be close to infrastructure, such as water and sewer.

It has been shown that sprawl in rural areas increases public costs for fire, law enforcement, emergency services, road maintenance, and public school transportation. Therefore, it is important to consider whether Johnson County wants to encourage either pattern or to let the current situation continue, with a mixture of both.

Encouragement for Growth

According to the data, there are 2,505 square miles of privately owned land. There are small, medium, and large land tracts. Agriculture and ranching own 97.5% of private land, or 2,442 square miles. This means there are 63 square miles of various uses under private ownership. Again, it is important to consider what kind of encouragement Johnson County would like to give toward growth and development within the unincorporated area.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE: EXISTING & FUTURE

Residential land use in Johnson County has focused on and around Buffalo and Kaycee for infrastructure, access, and all-important jobs. This shows a natural tendency to live close to essential services and work.

Residential development in unincorporated Johnson County is more distant from infrastructure, services, and jobs. It does have land-use connections to agriculture and ranching, the Big Horn Forest, and BLM holdings.

Future residential development is needed to grow the population. Its location can be chosen to protect agriculture, or it can be determined by the marketplace.

Long term, it is more efficient to provide roads, fire protection, law enforcement, school buses, and deliveries for residential development that are close to existing infrastructure, rather than in more distant or remote areas.

It is understood that while it costs more public funds to provide services for residential land-use development, which can be isolated, it is still possible. The marketplace will show the need or interest. The big question is: Does Johnson County want to encourage residential development in the unincorporated area?

COMMERCIAL LAND USE: EXISTING & FUTURE

Existing commercial activities are focused in and around Buffalo and Kaycee. The businesses deliver the retail, motel, food, and health care service needs of Johnson County residents and the travel and tourism market.

Future commercial development is expected to grow in Buffalo and Kaycee to meet ongoing service demands. Unincorporated Johnson County offers opportunities for business activities at a small to modest scale, thanks to access and infrastructure. Again, it is up to Johnson County how to proceed. Is there a desire to encourage small to modest-sized commercial businesses in the unincorporated area?

INDUSTRIAL LAND USE: EXISTING & FUTURE

Industrial land use in Johnson County is centered around Buffalo, with a hub of manufacturing companies. Available infrastructure and access promote this area, and in turn, encourage job creation and economic diversification.

Industrial land use in unincorporated Johnson County is dependent upon market demand and the economic feasibility for oil, gas, and mining development. Does Johnson County want to encourage other industrial development, such as wind or solar farms?

Particular Land Use Assets

JOB HUBS

Buffalo and Kaycee function as the local job hubs for Johnson County. Their infrastructure, interstate highway locations, and connections are assets to build upon.

EXISTING MANUFACTURING IN & AROUND BUFFALO

The existing centralized manufacturing location in and around Buffalo offers efficiency and ease of access for manufacturers and producers, thanks to its proximity to existing infrastructure. The City's industrial park encourages manufacturing, helping diversify the Johnson County economy.

AIRPORT

The Johnson County Airport is a county-owned asset that promotes business, industry, and tourism. Currently, the airport is used by both private and corporate aircraft in Johnson County.

INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS & INTERSTATE INTERCHANGES

Johnson County is served by north-south and east-west interstates, which allow direct access to and from the community. The Interstate 90 and Interstate 25 interchanges at Buffalo and Kaycee, respectively, can be examined for business-related development.

LAKE DESMET

Lake DeSmet is a natural draw for local tourism and travel to Johnson County. Its eye-catching view stands out to those passing by, making it the most striking lake attraction along Interstate 90 in northeast Wyoming. Fishing, RV campground, tent camping, winter ice fishing, and boating activities are opportunities to enhance further travel and tourism, as well as for use by Johnson County residents.

FEDERAL LANDS

Government land in Johnson County serves many needs. It is where significant mineral development has taken place over time and is important for grazing leases. Residents hunt, climb, fish, hike, explore, ski, and camp there. It attracts a growing number of tourists, and the lands also hold important historical resources that the public can experience. Federal lands are available for year-round use.

Continued coordination among Johnson County, the state, and federal government agencies is necessary to ensure continued benefits.

INCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

Buffalo and Kaycee offer infrastructure for a broad range of development. Both communities have easy access by interstate highway. Infrastructure and access can be used to preserve open space within the unincorporated area while also promoting land-use efficiencies for developers and incorporated communities.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES

Barnum, Linch, Mayoworth, Saddlestring, and Sussex are community identity places, where a person may call home.

Mayoworth and Barnum also serve as jump-off points for recreational areas. Mayoworth connects to the southern part of the Big Horn National Forest.

APPENDIX C – PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY

PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

The Johnson County Land Use Plan update process relied heavily on stakeholder and citizen input to establish a unified vision for the future and clearly articulate the shared values of Johnson County residents. This section summarizes the public input collected through the survey. The survey questions were developed to help understand citizens' thoughts across Johnson County on land use and the county's future. The responses were used to help guide and develop the recommended goals, policies, and strategic action steps that formulate implementation steps for the land use plan.

The survey was administered using the ESRI online engagement tool Survey123. The survey was open from February 17, 2025, through March 31, 2025, and allowed one response per unique user/device.

Survey Response

The online survey was openly advertised and invited all Johnson County residents to participate. A postcard was also mailed to 2,476 residents through a USPS Every Door Direct mailing. It targeted households in unincorporated areas of the county and invited them to participate in the online survey. A total of 387 respondents completed the survey. Using the postcard mailings as the sample, we obtain a 15.6% response rate at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of $\pm 4.84\%$. This response rate indicates that the survey results should accurately reflect the views of landowners in the county, with a $\pm 4.84\%$ margin of error.

The survey questions included a mix of multiple-choice questions and open-ended comment questions. The question topics focused on quality of life in Johnson County, current and future opportunities in the county, and housing and land-use controls.

The major themes that emerged from the survey results included:

- ❖ Protection of important wildlife habitats, natural resources, and open spaces.
- ❖ Preservation of agricultural lands and rural lifestyles.
- ❖ The request to keep and maintain access to public lands and use areas.
- ❖ New development should require the location and connection to existing public infrastructure.
- ❖ Development near natural resources, as well as potable water supplies, should receive extra scrutiny and review.

WHO RESPONDED & KEY THEMES

The majority of respondents live in the unincorporated areas of Johnson County. The next greatest number of respondents live in Buffalo. Nearly 45% of respondents have lived in Johnson County for more than 21 years, and the largest group in the survey was 65-74 years old (27.13%).

Nearly 46% of survey respondents feel that the quality of life in Johnson County is “Very Good”. When asked which aspects of Johnson County are most important to their quality of life, the top answers from those surveyed were water and air quality (88.37%), outdoor recreation (73.39%), and protection of wildlife habitat (70.03%).

Regarding future development and potential land-use controls, a large majority of respondents (81.91%) agreed that new development in close proximity to water resources should be subject to a more stringent review process. Additionally, 71% of respondents stated that areas with prime agricultural lands should be protected from encroaching development.

Regarding future county priorities, 85.79% of residents feel that protecting public water quality and supply should be a high priority, followed by protecting open space, such as ranching, agricultural, and wild lands from development (73.13%).

When asked whether Johnson County should implement land-use tools to establish standards for how land in the county may be used and developed, 61.24% of respondents answered “Yes.” Regarding the types of land-use controls that might be used, 71% felt that infrastructure requirements (e.g., public water/sewer, required septic disposal systems) should be implemented. That was followed by 64% who felt there should be restrictions on use, such as short-term rentals, junkyards, quarries, etc. Lastly, a majority of survey takers (63.57%) said it is most important for Johnson County to manage growth and ensure the county is prepared to respond to it before it occurs. There is no clear consensus on the use of land use regulation.

The open-ended comments expanded on these views, with nearly half of the responses focused on potential development and energy projects. Responses ranged from ideas like “Do not approve wind energy” to comments specific to a particular topic, such as “Rural density and the ability to create housing, and rural living parcels are encouraged to sustain moderate growth in Johnson County.” The many comments received regarding both future residential and energy development indicate strong interest and specific opinions that warrant deeper exploration in the planning process.

The following pages provide a detailed summary of the results and all open-ended responses from the survey form.

SURVEY QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

Question 1: How would you describe yourself and where you live?

	Count	Percentage
Full-time resident of Johnson County	381	98.45%
Non-resident but Johnson County property owner	2	0.78%
Part-time resident of Johnson County/second homeowner	0	0%
Non-Resident and not a property owner in Johnson County	0	0%
Other	3	0.78%

❖ 386 responses & 1 skipped.

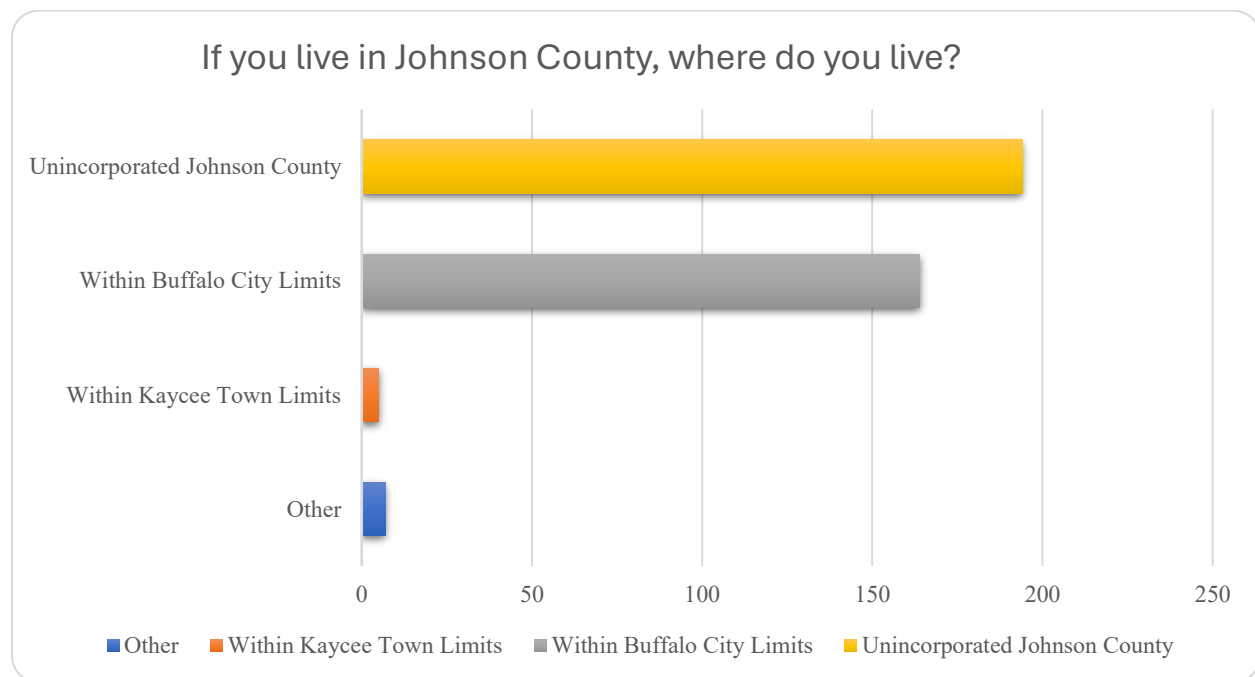
QUESTION 1 SUMMARY

The responses show that Johnson County residents accounted for the overwhelming majority of survey respondents, at almost 99%. This underscores that the choices, thoughts, and opinions expressed throughout the survey are rooted in the hometown. A total of 99.7% of participants who took the survey answered this question.

Question 2: If you live in Johnson County, where do you live?

Unincorporated Johnson County	194	50.13%
Within Buffalo City Limits	164	42.38%
Within Kaycee Town Limits	5	1.29%
Other	7	1.29%

❖ 370 responses & 17 skipped.



QUESTION 2 SUMMARY

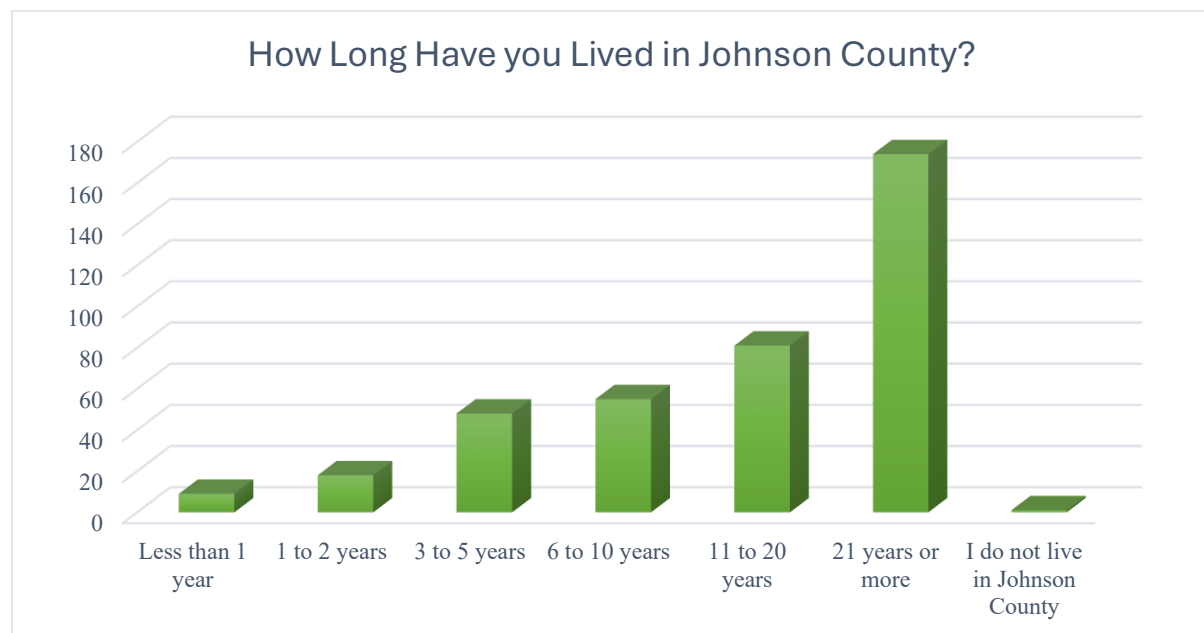
Half of the people who answered this question live in unincorporated Johnson County (50.13%). A little better than 42% live within the City of Buffalo limits. A total of 43.67% of the 370 respondents live in an incorporated community.

With the mix of county and municipal responses, the results demonstrate interest in the county's future, regardless of where people live. Of everyone taking the survey, 95.6% responded to this question.

Question 3: How long have you lived in Johnson County?

Less than 1 year	9	2.33%
1 to 2 years	18	4.65%
3 to 5 years	48	12.4%
6 to 10 years	55	14.21%
11 to 20 years	81	20.93%
21 years or more	174	44.96%
I do not live in Johnson County	1	0.26%

❖ 386 responses & 1 skipped.



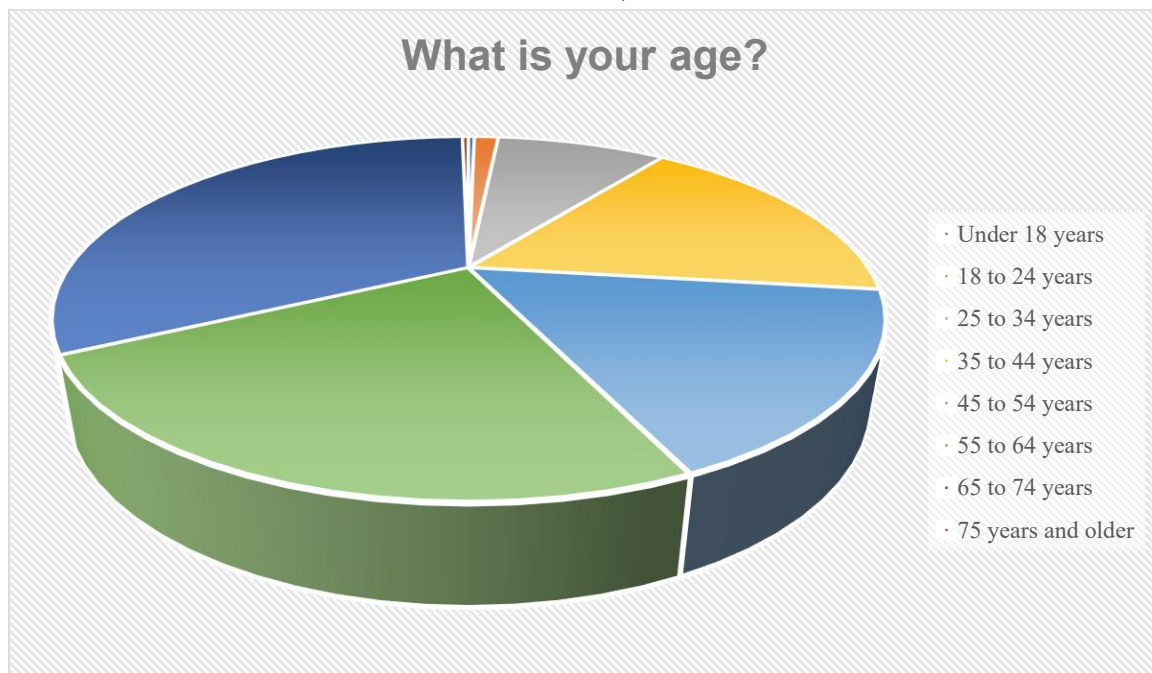
QUESTION 3 SUMMARY

Better than 99% of respondents answered this question. The responses show that people who have lived in Johnson County for 21 years or more are the largest group of respondents. The response rate increased the longer a person has lived in Johnson County. This is considered normal because it takes time for any individual to become integrated into community life.

Question 4: What is your age?

Age Cohort Groups	Responses	Percentage of All Responses
Under 18 years	1	0.26%
18 to 24 years	4	1.03%
25 to 34 years	28	7.24%
35 to 44 years	55	14.21%
45 to 54 years	53	13.7%
55 to 64 years	79	20.41%
65 to 74 years	105	27.13%
75 years and older	1	0.26%

❖ 387 responses & 0 skipped.

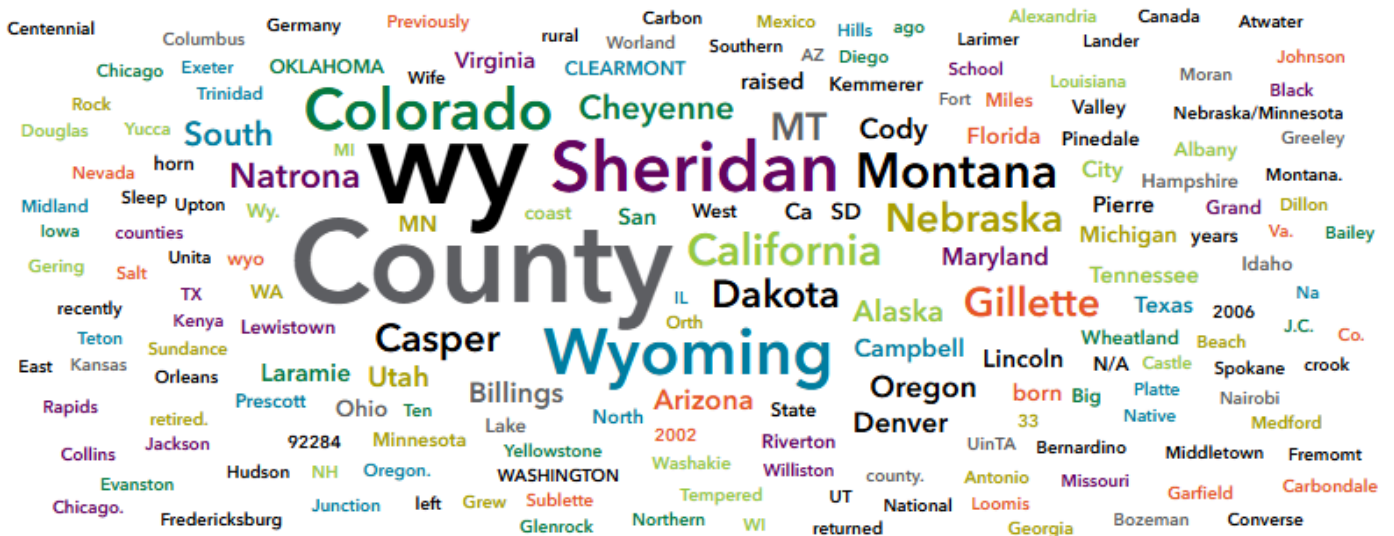


QUESTION 4 SUMMARY

Everyone who took the survey answered this question. People aged 65 to 74 were the largest age group to respond to the survey. Those aged 65 and older accounted for 25% of the population in Johnson County.

The three age cohorts of 25–34, 35–44, and 45–54 are generally considered the mainstay of the working population. The three groups combined make up 35.1% of all responses. With one exception (those aged 45 to 54 years), responses increased from under 18 years to 75 years or older.

QUESTION 5: IF YOU MOVED TO JOHNSON COUNTY, WHERE FROM?



QUESTION 5 SUMMARY

Question 5 received 275 responses, with 112 people not responding. This means approximately 7 out of 10 people taking the survey answered the question.

The top five states in order of where people lived before moving to Johnson County were Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, California, and Nebraska. The top four Wyoming counties from which people moved into Johnson County include Campbell, Sheridan, Laramie, and Natrona. The top four Wyoming communities from which people moved into Johnson County include Sheridan, Gillette, Casper, and Cheyenne.

Question 6: What brought you to Johnson County?

	Count	Percentage
Rural/Small town living	210	54.26%
Scenery/natural beauty of the area	197	50.9%
Recreational amenities	133	34.37%
Job/employment opportunity	133	34.37%
To live with/near family	104	26.87%
Like-minded people	88	22.74%
I was born here	59	15.25%
The lower cost of living	42	10.85%
I grew up here, moved away, and moved back	41	10.59%
Other	34	8.80%
I moved here as a child (<18 years old)	22	5.68%
Vacationed here and decided to move	13	3.36%

❖ 385 responses & 2 skipped.



QUESTION 6 SUMMARY

More than 99% of survey participants answered this question. Multiple responses were allowed. The total of 1,076 responses to the question shows an average of 2.7 choices per respondent.

The choices of rural/small-town living (54.26%) and the area's scenery/natural beauty (50.9%) are the top two attractors or reasons that brought a respondent to Johnson County. Combined, these responses connect to neighborliness, culture and values, the economy, and land use.

The choices of recreational amenities and job/employment opportunities (34.37% each) are tied to recreation out my back door, a job close by, the economy, and land use.

The third tier of responses, to live with/near family (26.87%) and like-minded people (22.74%), shows that attachment to family is important and that sharing a similar or compatible view and way of living is also important. Both may have implications for how differences of opinion are managed, as the land use plan presents various options.

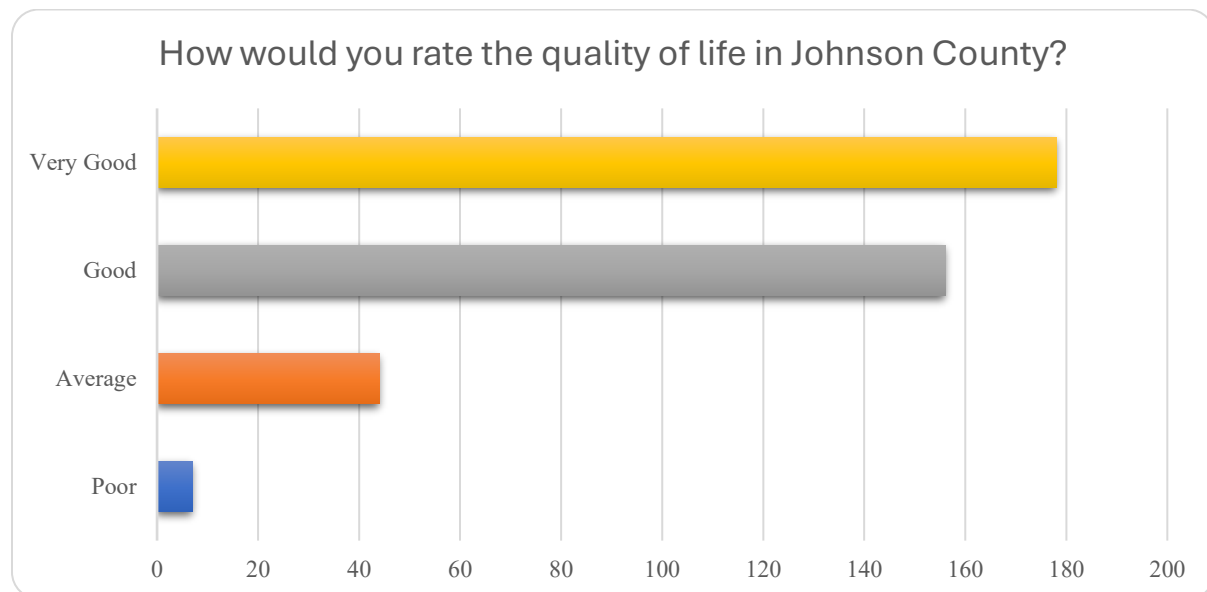
The fourth tier of responses, including, I was born here (15.25%), the lower cost of living (10.85%), and I grew up here, moved away, and moved back (10.59%), display the deep roots that people experience and feel about Johnson County as their home. It also shows that the lower cost of living in Johnson County is important.

The fifth tier, made up of other (8.80%), I moved here as a child (<18 years old) at 5.68%, and vacationed here and decided to move (3.36%), shows the deep rootedness within the community, as well as Johnson County having attractors as a place to live.

Question 7: How would you rate the quality of life?

Very good	178	45.99%
Good	156	40.31%
Average	44	11.37%
Poor	7	1.81%

❖ 385 responses & 2 skipped

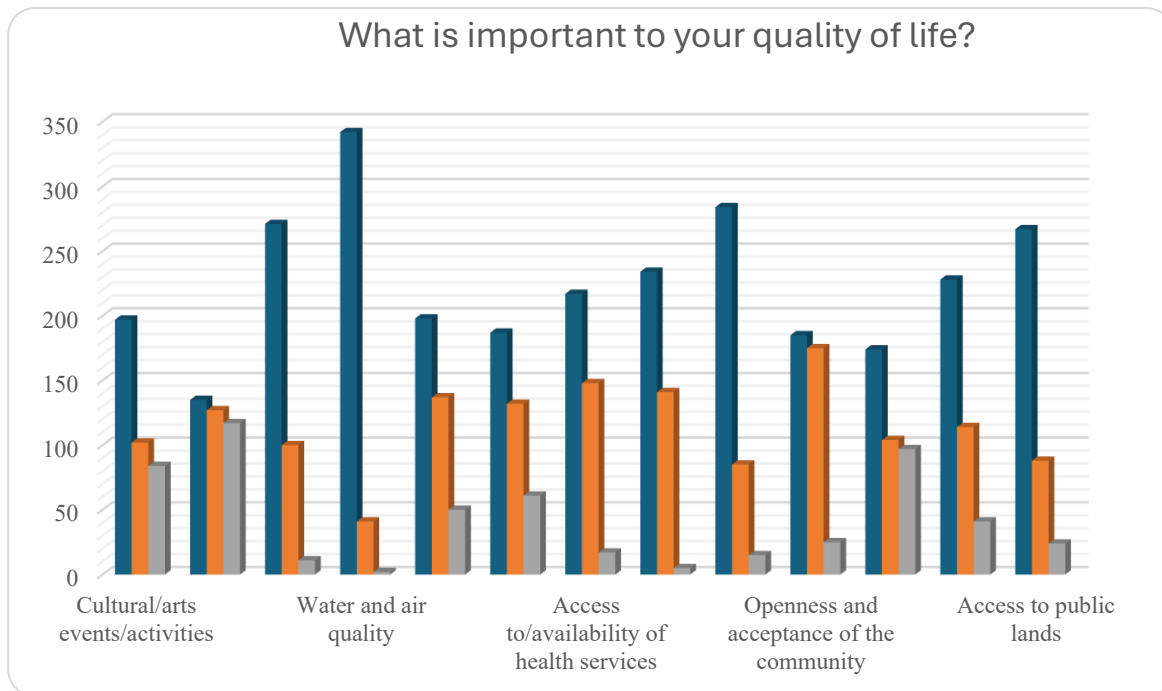


QUESTION 7 SUMMARY

Question 7 also had a very high response rate, exceeding 99%. The overwhelming majority of respondents (86.30%) rate the quality of life in Johnson County as good to very good. The number of responses in the very good category indicates that nearly half of all respondents are rather pleased with the quality of life in their community. This probably has implications for the types of choices people may make about the future of Johnson County.

Question 8: What IS important to your quality of life?

	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Total Responses
Water and air quality	342	88.37%	41	10.59%	2	0.52%	385, 2 skipped
Outdoor recreation	284	73.39%	85	21.96%	15	3.88%	384, 3 skipped
Protecting wildlife habitat	271	70.03%	100	25.84%	11	2.84%	382, 5 skipped
Access to public lands	267	68.99%	88	22.74%	24	6.2%	379, 8 skipped
Overall cost of living	234	60.47%	141	36.43%	5	1.29%	380, 7 skipped
Property rights/freedom from government overreach	228	58.91%	114	29.46%	41	10.59%	383, 4 skipped
Access to/availability of health services	217	56.07%	148	38.24%	17	4.39%	382, 5 skipped
Rural western lifestyle	198	51.16%	137	35.4%	50	12.95%	385, 2 skipped
Cultural/art events/activities	197	50.9%	102	26.36%	84	21.71%	383, 4 skipped
Educational opportunities (for youth and adults)	187	48.32%	132	34.11%	61	15.76%	380, 7 skipped
Openness and acceptance of the community	185	47.8%	175	45.22%	25	6.46%	385, 2 skipped
My job/business	174	44.96%	104	26.87%	97	25.06%	375, 12 skipped
Nearby family	135	34.88%	127	32.82%	117	30.23%	379, 8 skipped



QUESTION 8 SUMMARY

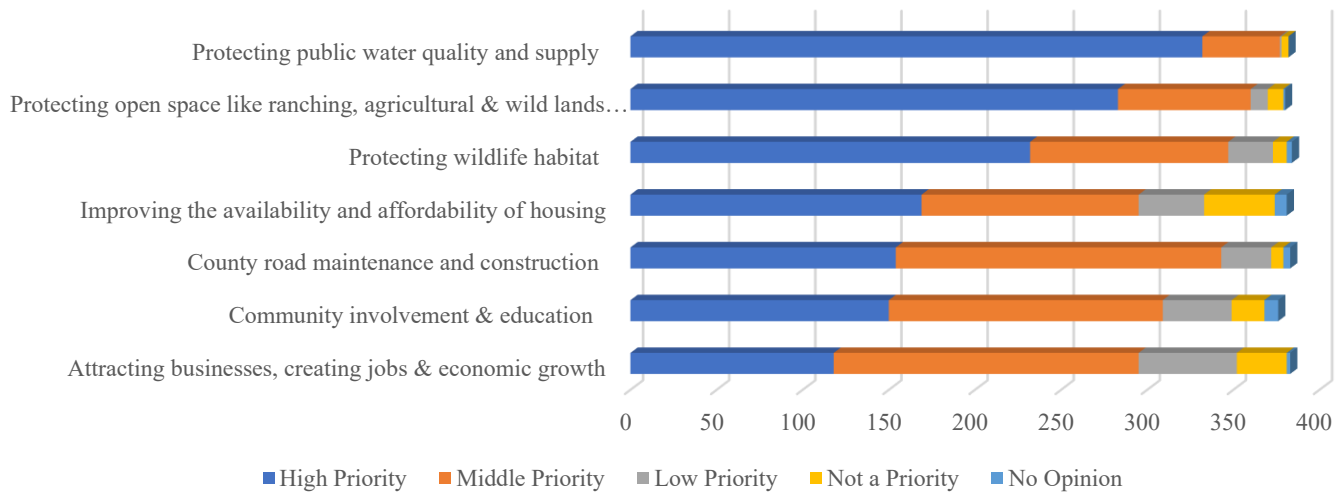
The three highest-ranked aspects of a person's quality of life (highlighted in gray) show water and air quality, outdoor recreation, and protecting wildlife. These show connections to land use and preservation of open space. The three highest-ranked as somewhat important (highlighted in light blue) are openness & acceptance of the community, access to/availability of health care services, and overall cost of living. All have connections to the way of life and the economy.

Question 9: What should be county priorities?

There are many issues that county officials will be facing over the next few years. Please indicate how much of a priority each of the issues below should be for Johnson County to address.

	High Priority		Middle Priority		Low Priority		Not a Priority		No Opinion		Total Responses
Protecting public water quality and supply	332	85.79%	45	11.63%	1	0.26%	4	1.03%	0	0%	382
Protecting open space like ranching, agricultural and wild lands from development	283	73.13%	77	19.9%	10	2.58%	9	2.33%	1	0.26%	380
Protecting wildlife habitat	232	59.95%	115	29.72%	26	6.72%	8	2.07%	3	0.78%	384
Improving the availability and affordability of housing	169	43.67%	126	32.56%	38	9.82%	41	10.59%	7	1.81%	381
County road maintenance and construction	154	39.79%	189	48.84%	29	7.49%	7	1.81%	4	1.03%	383
Community involvement & education	150	38.76%	159	41.09%	40	10.34%	19	4.91%	8	2.07%	376
Attracting businesses, creating jobs & economic growth	118	30.49%	177	45.74%	57	14.73%	29	7.49%	2	0.52%	383

What should be County priorities?



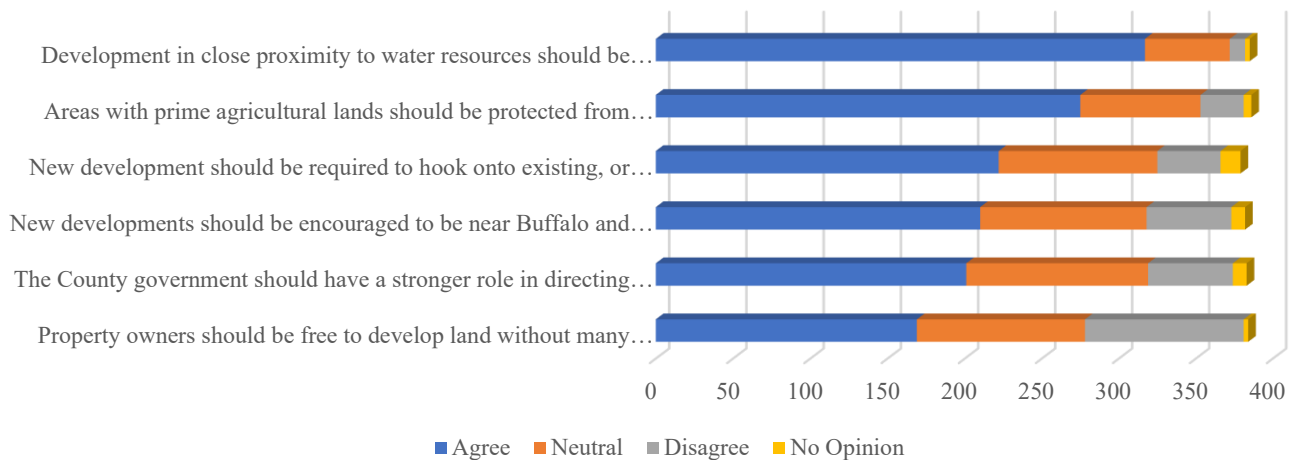
QUESTION 9 SUMMARY

The three highest priorities, by far, are protecting public water quality and supply, protecting open space like ranching, agricultural, and wild lands from development, and protecting wildlife habitat. The highest priorities all share connections to land use. Other connections include public health/safety, the way of life in the community, the economy, and the sense of ruralness.

Question 10: What are your thoughts on growth and development?

	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		No Opinion		Total Responses
Development in close proximity to water resources should be subject to more stringent review	317	81.91%	55	14.21%	10	2.58%	3	0.78%	385
Areas with prime agricultural lands should be protected from encroaching, non-agricultural development	275	71.06%	78	20.16%	28	7.24%	5	1.29%	386
New development should be required to hook onto existing, or develop new public infrastructure (i.e. water or sewer systems	222	57.36%	103	26.61%	41	10.59%	13	3.36%	379
New developments should be encouraged to be near Buffalo and Kaycee	210	54.26%	108	27.91%	55	14.21%	9	2.33%	382
The County government should have a stronger role in directing future growth and development in appropriate areas	201	51.94%	118	30.49%	55	14.21%	9	2.33%	383
Property owners should be free to develop land without many restrictions	169	43.67%	109	28.17%	103	26.61%	3	0.78%	384

What are your thoughts on growth & development?



QUESTION 10 SUMMARY

Thoughts and opinions about growth and development in Johnson County share at least one thing in common: all six choices drew better than a 98% response rate. The high level of interest in this question shows a pattern of responses.

When combined, the top tier of three areas of agreement (shown in blue) has a higher response rate, less feelings of neutrality, and a lower amount of disagreement, than the second tier shown on the chart.

The top tier has reflections of the top three priorities, as shown by the survey results. Protecting the water supply and open space was very important to the respondents, ranking as a top priority and top of mind when thinking about development. Combined, they send a consistent, clear message about priorities and what respondents view as very important for growth in Johnson County.

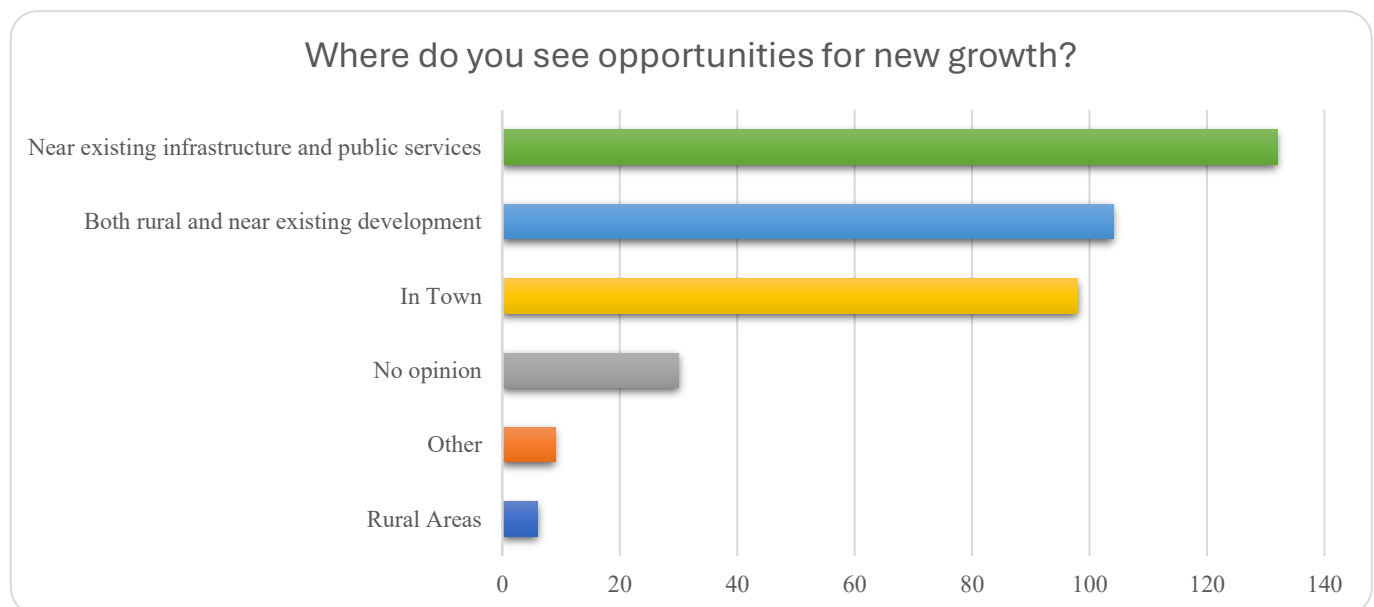
The second tier shows development from two perspectives. First, responses indicating that development should be near Buffalo and Kaycee achieved a 54% agreement rate. But more than a quarter of respondents had no opinion.

Secondly, the almost diametrically opposed viewpoints of the county having a stronger role in guiding development (51.94% agreement) versus property owners should be able to develop land with few restrictions (43.67% agreement), demonstrate an interest in the county taking an active role in new development. However, both viewpoints also received the highest number of responses, indicating neutral feelings toward the subject. This signals that if the county were to take a more active role in guiding development, a cautious educational approach before any decisions to enact new land development guidance will be important.

Question 11: Where do you see opportunities for new growth?

Near existing infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.) and public services	132	34.11%
Both rural and near existing development	104	26.87%
In Town	98	25.32%
No opinion	30	7.75%
Other	9	2.33%
Rural Areas	6	1.55%

❖ 379 responses & 8 skipped.



QUESTION 11 SUMMARY

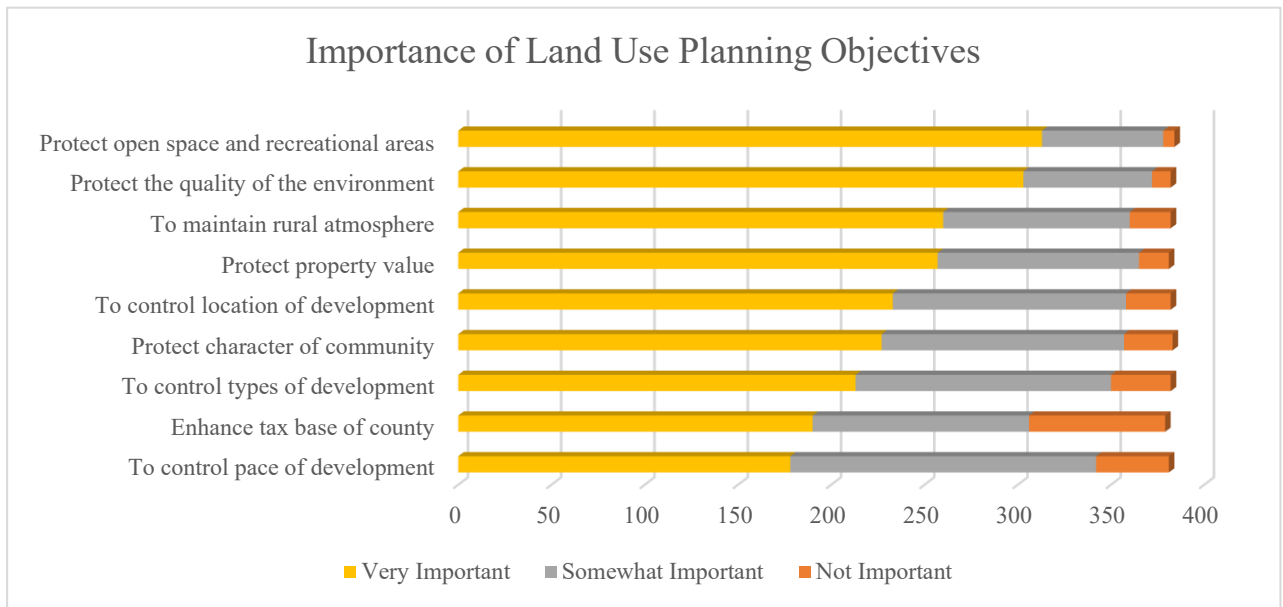
New growth occurring near existing infrastructure and public services is consistent with preserving agricultural lands and open space. This viewpoint appeared in about one-third of all responses. New growth occurring in both rural and near-existing development was reported in more than one-quarter of responses. Combined, 61% of all respondents either desire new growth near infrastructure or both in rural areas near existing development. There is a clear interest in making new growth more efficient, but there is also room to develop in rural areas near existing development. Scattered, sprawling development is not desired.

Question 12: Importance of Land Use Planning objectives.

Land use planning tools have many objectives. Please rate the following items according to importance to you:

	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
Protect open space and recreational areas	313	80.88%	65	16.8%	6	1.55%
Protect the quality of the environment	303	78.29%	69	17.83%	10	2.58%
To maintain rural atmosphere	260	67.18%	100	25.84%	22	5.68%
Protect property value	257	66.41%	108	27.91%	16	4.13%
To control location of development	233	60.21%	125	32.3%	24	6.2%
Protect character of community	227	58.66%	130	33.59%	26	6.72%
To control types of development	213	55.04%	137	35.4%	32	8.27%
Enhance tax base of county	190	49.1%	116	29.97%	73	18.86%
To control pace of development	178	45.99%	164	42.38%	39	10.08%

Note: The 3 highest ranked under very important are highlighted in blue. The 3 highest ranked as somewhat important are highlighted gray.



QUESTION 12 SUMMARY

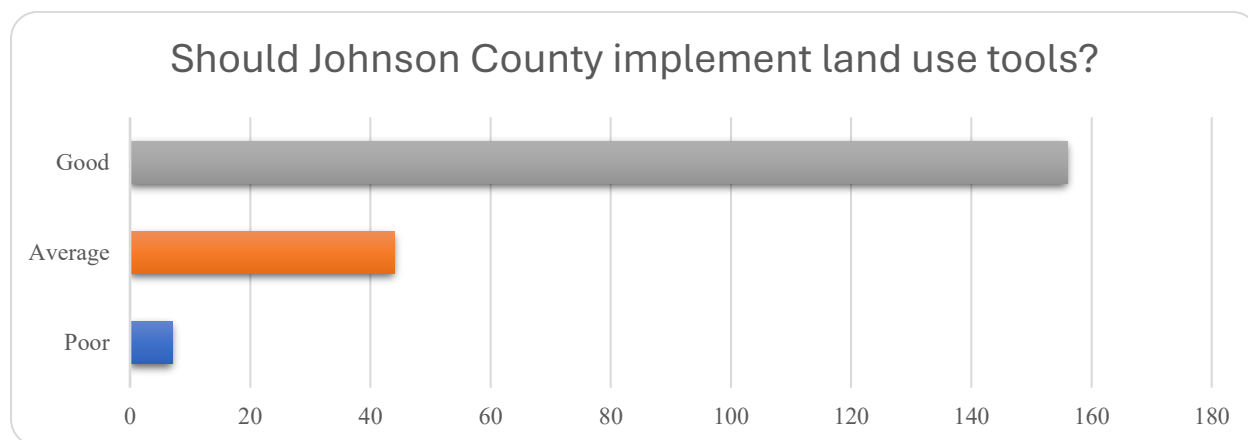
There are two distinctions shown by the three land use planning tools ranked very important and those ranked as somewhat important. The three land use planning tools shown as very important are typically used to set policy or give direction. The three land use planning tools ranked as somewhat important are either used for guidance or included with regulatory measures, like subdivision regulations or zoning standards.

Question 13: Should Johnson County implement land use tools?

These tools would provide standards for how land in the County may be used and developed.

Yes	237	61.24%
No	93	24.03%
Not sure/No opinion	53	13.7%

❖ 383 responses, 4 skipped



QUESTION 13 SUMMARY

This question had almost a 99% response rate. Of those responding, 61.24% believe Johnson County should implement land use tools that would provide standards for how land may be used and developed. Some 24.03% of respondents, or almost one in four, indicated that Johnson County should not take those actions. Some 13.7% of those taking the survey were not sure or had no opinion.

The responses show strong interest in regulatory tools. However, a significant number of people are opposed, unsure, or have no opinion. This group makes up a little more than one-third of all respondents.

An informed public is the best way to approach land-use regulation. It is recommended that the county consider implementing an educational program on regulatory tools to help all better understand their purpose and gather public input.

Question 14: What Standards should be included?

The full question reads: If Johnson County were to implement land use tools in the future, what standards should be included?

Infrastructure requirements (i.e., public water/sewer, required septic disposal systems)	276	71.32%
Use restrictions (i.e., short-term rentals, quarries, junk yards, etc.)	248	64.08%
Resource & infrastructure protections (i.e., flood plains, airport influence areas, etc.)	242	62.53%
Uses allowed in different areas or zones (i.e., residential, commercial, agriculture, etc.)	239	61.76%
Parcel and lot size minimums	187	48.32%
Dimensional standards (i.e. setbacks, building heights, density limits, etc.)	171	44.19%
Site design (i.e., building materials, rooflines, landscaping, etc.)	105	27.13%
Other	24	6.2%

❖ 358 responses & 29 skipped

QUESTION 14 SUMMARY

Two tiers of interest are shown in the data. The top tier ranges from 61% to 71% for the type of land use tool shown.

- ❖ The top response related to infrastructure requirements has connections to subdivision regulations, as well as interlocal agreements.
- ❖ Use restrictions are a part of zoning standards.
- ❖ Resource and infrastructure protections can be provided through floodplain regulations and zoning standards.
- ❖ Uses allowed in different areas are part of zoning standards.

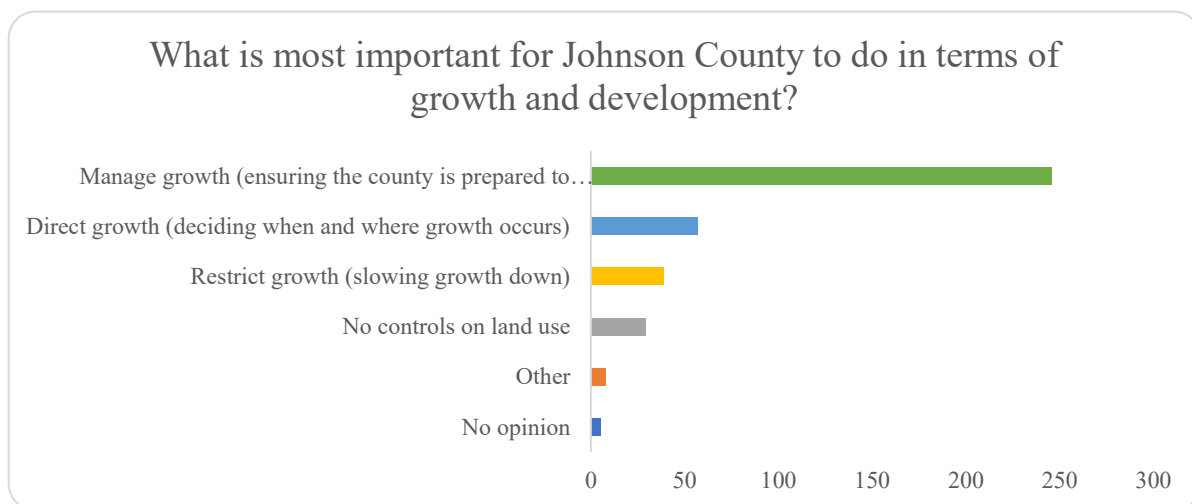
The second tier shows that fewer than 50% are interested in implementing. This metric indicates:

- ❖ Parcel and lot size minimums are part of zoning standards.
- ❖ Dimensional standards are a part of zoning regulations.
- ❖ Site design standards are normally a part of zoning regulations.

Question 15: Most important in terms of growth & development

Manage growth (ensuring the county is prepared to respond/react to growth before it occurs)	246	63.57%
Direct growth (deciding when and where growth occurs)	57	14.73%
Restrict growth (slowing growth down)	39	10.08%
No controls on land use	29	7.49%
Other	8	2.07%
No opinion	5	1.29%

❖ 384 responses, 3 skipped



QUESTION 15 SUMMARY

This question was answered by 99.2% of survey respondents. The responses cover a wide range of attitudes towards what the county should do regarding growth, from no controls to restricting, directing, and managing it. Those who desired no controls accounted for 7.49% of all respondents. Restricting growth by slowing it down received 10.08% of all responses. Directing growth, to where and when growth occurs, received 14.73% of all responses.

Managing growth to ensure the county is ready to respond and react before it occurs gathered 63.5% of all responses. Managing growth takes various forms. It can take the form of guidance such as educational programs, a capital improvement program, or inter-local agreements.

Managing growth can also involve regulatory components, such as subdivision regulations, floodplain management rules, and zoning standards.

Directing growth to specific locations, such as within certain districts, would be contained within a set of zoning standards. When growth could occur, it would necessarily be connected to infrastructure. The response rate was a low 14.73% when using this approach, underscoring the importance of managing growth and development.

Restricting growth by slowing development down received a low 10.08% response rate as a growth management tool.

The 7.49% response rate indicates that a small proportion of respondents oppose land-use controls.

Question 16: Additional comments

Please use the space below to provide any additional comments you have about this survey or land use planning in Johnson County.

Thank you for considering all options. Community engagement will be important here.

Protect production agriculture. Protect viewsheds. Protect dark sky.

We need more affordable housing for the youth, and single mothers. With apartments not being an option for most. The youth is being driven out due to no housing, and no jobs.

Please keep Johnson County small and rural and don't try to compete for large development. We have what we want and need here. Put some controls on growth and we will stay a caring community that support each other during good times and bad.

Roads should be fixed before spending money on growth. Fill the potholes!

Water availability needs to be addressed before more building allowed. Water pressure in city has noticeably declined over last 10 years.

Johnson County has to be able to grow. No growth will kill the county. It is impossible to remain at some nostalgic point of the past. Things change and best to be in a position to be ready for the growth, so we don't price out the dream of being able to afford a home and provide for a family.

We love Wyoming, we love Johnson County, and we love Buffalo. I would characterize myself as moderately anti-growth. We moved away from a small rural area where we lived for decades because it had grown too large due to officials putting growth ahead of maintaining the rural character of the area that most people came there for. I do not want that to happen in Buffalo. We lived on a dirt road on 5 acres and knew everyone in the immediate area. We moved when we didn't know any neighbors due to the predominance of absentee owners converting the homes into short term rental properties. I do not want that to happen in Buffalo. Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Let the people govern themselves as long as they are causing no harm to others.

Keep Johnson County a quiet and peaceful community.

Thank you for seeking input from residents. What Buffalo has is very precious & too much growth may destroy it.

First, great you are doing this survey. I think that the city and county need to outline and update their plans with all parties involved. There needs to be incentives to developers to (ex: deferred payments on infrastructure as being one, some tax incentives possibly) so planned growth can happen for the needs in our community and surrounding areas. Affordable housing is a problem here. I sell real estate, and the balance is not good. Staffing our businesses is challenging and needs to be addressed. It seems to me that because not everyone has the same thoughts, nothing happens. We need planned growth, not organic growth because the outcome may not be what is best for the long term. Update the 2005 plan and

implement it but have options or strategies that a leave room for variables or possibly different ways to getting something accomplished. Don't be staunch but remain pliable to new thoughts and ideas.

The most valuable and infrastructure-served plot of land in the county is currently located within Buffalo and houses city and county services. Might want to review this for the best short-term “win-win” situation. The surrounding residential areas would benefit greatly.

I would like to see slow but steady growth, while respecting the rights of citizens of Johnson County using common sense. Now, good luck with that.

Private Property Rights are important.

Johnson County really needs to focus on maintaining their roads especially the ones on the outskirts of town. Many of the rural roads are falling apart and not being paid attention to. Also, some updates on speed limits for rural roads. It is quite a shame driving on the roads that have just been let go. Also, a little more pride of the town. The “Welcome to Buffalo” billboard has been falling down for a few years.

Make sure parks are well maintained and good for kids. It would be nice to have more opportunities for kids and places for them to spend time.

There appears to be a mafia running the county.

Putting gravel pits anywhere near residents. This is in reference to French Creek Quarry. Allowing no oversight on dust abatement and noise. No response from EPA, sheriff’s office, county commissioners, road and bridge, City of Buffalo and our legislators. Allowing large trucks going right through residential streets of Buffalo. Allowing this with no consequences to the company is simply cruel to the residents of Johnson County.

People move TO Johnson County because they want to be left alone. We don't like ANYONE telling us what to do or not do. Unrestricted development of agricultural land is the ranchers/ farmers retirement plan. County-wide land use regulations will not likely pass in rural Wyoming counties.

I would like to limit rural development. Small acreage properties diminish the appeal of the rural aspect of our county and out of state people tend to do stupid things on these small acreages, negatively affecting larger neighboring properties (like building ponds on drainages they have no water rights on).

The county should require new construction to meet building codes.

I think restricting growth but embracing tourism would be a good direction to go. Other communities in Wyoming seem to really take advantage of tourism and are able to collect a lot of money through taxes and local business thriving in the summer months. If we embraced tourism maybe we could keep restaurants open and allow our local business to grow.

After living here for 40+ years I would like to have something done to limit the hodge/podge development that continues to occur and is unnecessarily interfering with the view scape of the county. It is probably too late to do much good. The county has failed in the past.

New business and housing developments outside city limits should NOT be added to the city and receive the benefits and expenses of the city.

Growth needs to be carefully managed and balanced with sustainability and maintaining the desirability of life in and around a small town.

Johnson County is way behind in land use planning and is now experiencing the consequences of no land use plan in haphazard development (Trashing road area), lack of management of type of housing permitted, and lack of planning for infrastructure for development, i.e., water, sewer, road development.

We moved here from Teton County to avoid this very thing. Johnson County has the same problems, both political & community problems as Jackson, only on a smaller scale. Please DON'T change the small-town character of Buffalo. It is the one thing that attracts a lot of new people. Whoever is in charge of this "plan" needs to be very careful & slowly develop whatever you feel needs to be developed. Is there really a need for another new subdivision? Probably not. Thanks for the ability to take a survey regarding this "plan".

Thank you for this opportunity. The loudest voices aren't necessarily the dominant view. Plan development to preserve open spaces, viewsheds, productive agriculture, stream/water/habitat quality. Advocate tax structure to encourage agriculture versus houses. Show all costs of development, i.e. school bus & emergency services, road maintenance, etc. Display a map to show how development has occurred over the past 40 years & where it is headed given the trajectory. Compare it to the Colorado Front Range or MT Paradise valley. Rural spaces are rapidly being chopped up with a house atop every ridgeline, lit up all night long & seen for miles. Light pollution is real.

We need zoning.

The realtors are destroying our rural and agricultural existence all for the \$\$.

Some level of zoning within the county is important. Industrial uses (heavy equipment operations, gravel pits, etc.), doggy daycares, and similar disruptive commercial operations should not be allowed in residential neighborhoods/subdivisions just because their outside town limits.

COUNTY TAX ON HOMES IS TOO HIGH AND ROADS IN BUFFALO AREA NEEDS MAINTANCE OR REPLACED.

The push for economic development is completely backwards to goals. People move here because they love the atmosphere and then decide we need "more development". This is counter to most residents' goals of keeping it the same. More economic development increases the stress on public services and drives up utility prices. If we push hard enough, we can be just like Jackson Hole! Only problem is that Jackson Hole is now an overpriced place of tourist activity!! We need to start by double taxation for seasonal residents, followed by a freeze of current services. If people want economic development, they can move to Sheridan where they have already ruined everything that was Wyoming. Good luck and godspeed, I'm sure you imported politicians have nothing but great things in store for our county!!!!

Plenty of room within the city for rehabilitation of old buildings & infrastructure without encroaching on rural areas.

For water and sewer build sites should be no smaller than 5 acres.

I'm appalled that the county thinks water quality isn't even considered a high priority. That should not be on the chopping block! Everyone deserves to have clean drinking water! Our public lands should be protected; they belong to all of us.

I think we need to stay away from building codes. They are out of control. The county does a good job now in that area. I don't think people should be able to have junkyard places without that being a land use allowance. We need good water and sanitation measures like we have now. More open spaces and trails on county land like around the airport would be great.

Growth is inevitable, to lead growth in the direction of balance and sustainability is essential.

Steady as she Goes, is a good way to proceed on this topic.

There will be a lot of opposition to any sort of at-large County zoning, but I believe we need it, more than ever, for the reasons listed above.

The county has the ability to manipulate / limit rural development via septic system permitting. Beyond that, new rural subdivisions can have their own covenants to enforce for protection of the lot owners and there's no need for the county to butt in on that. There's also no need for the county to pick winners and losers with rural subdivision development location options.

Limit residential growth to in / near town. In the 1970s, we did not have all of these McMansions dotting the countryside. They ruin the prairie and ranch lands. And those people eventually want to restrict or limit public land access or its use (no shooting, hunting, hiking, etc.). Johnson County has done a much better job than Sheridan County. Sheridan is a mini Jackson Hole! Keep Johnson County the special place that it is. Thank you!

Think of the kids and their future.

You have to have some restrictions in the town and in the county but do not fall into government overreach, i.e. the freedom caucus takeover.

Far too many private wealthy landowners using public lands for economic gain at the cost of Buffalo and its citizens.

The free-for-all to development in JC needs to end. Measures need to be implemented in the existing urban sprawl areas like Richardson park to address issues like sewer & water infrastructure. JC's future is in its renewable resources, wildlife & wild places, in the way of recreation & tourism; this gold mine needs to be managed as the economic future it holds for our success.

Do not place restrictions on properties where no problems exist. If it isn't broke then don't fix it!!

JC needs to get off the fence and accept that it will grow due to its prime location. In conjunction with City of Buffalo, more activities and development of rec is needed. "Protecting the west" only will result in absurd costs of living to defend the idea of a lifestyle. Restricting growth is a hilariously non-conservative, non-capitalistic idea that goes against all ideals of freedom. This isn't the Soviet Union, planning for the growth, not planning the growth is needed.

Municipalities in Johnson County should invest more in public amenities and opportunities for economic growth related to an increase in recreation infrastructure I.e. pathways and trails. The City of Buffalo is very resistant to supporting public resources such as the ball fields, ice rink, and recreation resources. This is a huge loss for citizens who need access to sports and recreation for wellbeing.

Restricting growth of land use and opportunities for economic development will only hamstring the county into losing young people and families and making it difficult for incomers to afford a place to live. Johnson county is a prime access point for recreation and should build on this access because it can support more tourists- only if the cities would let go of the idea that they can resist change forever. It's not the Wild West anymore. Johnson county should embrace the opportunity for more people to witness its amazing natural resources.

A structured economic development strategy should be created and implemented to manage the type of business being attracted to the area and the impact that will have on development within the community.

I guess we all would like the right to do whatever we wish with our own property but hate when our neighbor wants to do something we disagree with. If you move in next to a junkyard you don't have the right to complain (you knew it was there). If a junkyard moves in next to you, you definitely have reason to be upset. It makes sense to have a plan in place so that doesn't happen.

I'd prefer there be no zoning regulations within the rural areas. However, with that said I understand that some regulations may be needed to manage potential growth outside of city limits, if so, this needs to be kept at a minimum in addressing specific issues.

What is the vision for Johnson County? How will it look in 20, 30 years? What values drive our vision - quality of life? Culture? Community? What do we want for our children and grandchildren? Asking ourselves questions like this will help shape a plan for JC land use and development. Do we want to live in a community that encourages opportunity where people thrive? How can we plan a future without asking ourselves these questions?

Developments, especially housing subdivisions, should be required to have fire management plans which the county approves. These plans should address not only standard fuels reduction practices, but also garbage piles and other flammable accumulations which exacerbate fire spread. Developments must take some responsibility for wildfire management, and I think they could survive most fires with a little planning and landowner requirements.

Developments should adopt wildlife friendly fencing specifications and reduce fencing when possible. Subdivisions and adjacent lands could be classified as 'fence in' rather than 'fence out', which might lessen the surge of fencing that is occurring in our county.

Outdoor lighting throughout town and county must be limited to the property it is lighting. That is, lights should be sheltered or angled to avoid trespassing onto adjacent property.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Glad to see this effort. Its 20+ years late— but hopefully locals will understand this is the way to protect our environment and encourage quality growth.

Thank you for becoming proactive on planning.

Your highest priorities should be infrastructure maintenance and improvement. Do more paving and widening where possible. Also, you should plan long term for a drinking water system that connects from Kaycee all the way up to the SAWS system.

Affordable housing is a must & new industry. The job market & the astronomical housing prices don't complement each other. My family is considering moving because of the high price of housing, fuel, groceries, etc. and no high paying jobs here to help balance that out. I make \$23/hr., he makes \$30/hr. (he started at \$24/hr.) With a \$1400 house payment for a \$200K forever fixer-upper house we managed to get VERY lucky to find. We couldn't afford much more than that. We have 5 people in a 3-bedroom house (1 non-conforming) that doesn't really suit our family but it's what we could make work. We LOVE the small town feel here & local accessibility to necessities & beautiful surroundings, but cost is our main concern. Wish that wasn't the case or we would 100% stay. A combined \$53/hr in Kansas would get us so much more. Implementation of a local DOGE could probably open up a bunch of money for new endeavors. This place has to make a ton on property taxes alone. Thanks for allowing my 2 cents...

Encourage light industry, create an environment that is appealing to the small manufacturing community.

Find a balance that minimizes infringement on private property rights and stimulates economic development.

Shopping in Johnson County is nearly a joke. Stores, even franchise retailers, carry such low inventory, they force residents to drive to larger towns in other counties to shop, when we'd just as soon shop locally and not have to drive distances.

In general governments are poor organizations to control growth. The best they can generally do is be open enough to encourage growth. Any government restriction upon private property is an attack upon private property and will restrict growth. With that background, guiding growth with a light handed touch can be very important.

We definitely need some types of zoning and quality standards. Unsightly junkyards and gravel pits that seem to pop up everywhere regardless of location need to be eliminated. The natural beauty of the area and peaceful country living is ruined as soon as someone decides to make a few bucks digging gravel. Public lands NEED to have public access!!! Ranchers who own property surrounding public lands need to be required to provide access to those lands.

Difficult questions to answer. My answers though are only in opinion. Thank you.

The biggest challenge in Johnson County in handling growth is the lack of availability of water. The City of Buffalo uses the maximum allotment of its legal water rights during summer months. The City may have the infrastructure and capacity to handle more water and sewer use but does not have the supply. Also, ensuring that irrigated, agricultural lands remain in production should be a priority. There are very limited lands in Johnson County and Wyoming that are suitable for irrigated agriculture and that have the associated water rights for irrigation. Conversion of those arable, agricultural lands to residential development should be forbidden. There needs to be meaningful, county zoning, with sufficient legal strength, to direct or restrict inappropriate development. Local governments need to stop facilitating and

encouraging growth and development. Also, local governments need to make sure that developers pay for all new infrastructure costs rather than taxpayers.

Effects on wildlife corridors and habitat, environmental impacts, and quality of life for residents should be prioritized when considering development. Off-street walking and bike paths as well as parks, community spaces and infrastructure need to be prioritized and considered BEFORE development occurs.

Land use planning is very important. I am glad the county is willing to make this effort.

Plow more and fix these streets in Buffalo! Enough churches already!

Johnson County needs to get into the 21st century before others do, and we lose control of what is happening in the reaches of the county (I.e. Trabing subdivisions and Lake DeSmet).

Hiking, camping, fishing, access to my own property.

While I understand the need for some county oversight of growth and development, I cannot give a “blanket” endorsement of government oversight of it. A growth and development committee (private or governmental) always seems to have an agenda that leads them to develop their committee. Such committees do not represent the county as a whole and equally, often at the expense of those who want to see the scenic beauty and rural lifestyle preserved while understanding the need for growth. Often, such committees are looking at attracting in companies that will create jobs, while not addressing the necessary housing entailed with growth. I’ve seen this not only in Johnson County, but other counties in Wyoming as well.

JC needs to grow or it will be stagnant.

Get the city of buffalo to step out of 2004 rules and regulations. Work with developers in the areas around Buffalo the make sense for developments. Such as West of golf course. On airport road. Let's subdivision in rock piles around Buffalo instead of taking good farm land to subdivide.

Definitely don't want to see similar restrictions on land that the City of Buffalo has. People choose to live in the county for various reasons, including not being subject to strict land use regulations or limiting use of property. If County looks at land use regulations or limiting- it should be for health and safety requirements and protecting the open areas, wildlife and agriculture.

I love Johnson County for its open spaces and lower population, but we need to encourage investment in long term stable commerce (manufacturing, server farm, etc.). Oil has provided for us but the boom/bust nature of it makes it unreliable for the long-term future.

Would like to see the county be proactive as to reactive with growth. There are grants and loans that they could apply for infrastructure just outside the city as to be ready for future need. Especially projects that are close to Buffalo proper. Rather see smart growth around the city than urban sprawl.

Do these things with as few people and permits as possible.

Time to elect some new people.

I am in favor of private property rights and the county/city being more open to development and tie in to existing public infrastructure and multi-use of property (ex: not allowing use of existing addition dwelling units on property zones single family). Zoning and restriction in city and nearby has resulted in decreased housing and increased cost of living leading to loss of businesses, employees and valuable community members.

Really, I don't think any changes are necessary. No more government control is necessary.

We cannot afford to bring in businesses who compete for entry level staff without affordable housing. At the Nursing Home, we cannot even bring in enough travel staff to provide more care because we do not have affordable housing options for those staff. People's children have no choice but to move out of town after high school because they cannot find affordable housing. We are forcing them to leave. This is not acceptable. Once those kids begin having families, we risk losing the stable middle class taxpayers who may choose to leave town to be closer to their grandchildren.

Planning needs to be smarter by being mindful of community aesthetics, which are so important for property values and for driving high value growth. Protect open spaces and restrict the amount of crap people can have in their yards. Quit allowing stupid businesses that make us look like a cheap, miserable place to live like dollar stores and truck stops!

Would be nice to have more/ better access to public utilities near town mainly due to ground water quality.

Buffalo has always been a small, peaceful and naturally beautiful community. It maintained this through the coal bed methane boom but now seems to be changing. We aren't the type of community that needs a Love's Travel Stop or the other vast amenities of the urban centers. Sometimes it's just nice to live and enjoy the simple life. That's what Buffalo has always offered, and I think the city should strive to maintain that way of life for its residents.

Johnson County was and is appealing because of its rural setting. It's a cowboy town with Christian values. Keeping that rural and Christian appeal should be first and foremost to those making decisions about our growth. Don't move to Johnson County to change it.

There should be no county zoning, freedom to use lands we purchase as we see fit is why we live here. Government has already reached too deep into everyday functions. We do not need them in our backyard any further than they already are.

Growth within our means ensures a healthy thriving community. Avoiding a Jackson situation, big money chasing out the majority, should be avoided at all costs.

Lake De Smet is a huge asset. I believe the county has access to the high-water line, but I see housing developments potentially interfering with this access. Some type of zoning control and enforcement may be needed.

I support smart planning and development, and don't support 'freedom to do whatever I want and make a mess'; the community always pays for the latter one way or the other. I'm very concerned about the closures of many restaurants and other businesses, so affordable housing is critical if we are to remain a good place to live, and to attract tourist dollars to help in this. Sensical land use plans and guidelines/ statutes are critical to quality of life.

Thanks for the opportunity. Curious to see if/how this data is implemented.

The worst thing that is happening in JC is the 35-acre ranchette takeover. Need denser development. I would suggest divisions less than 80 or 120 acres be subject to subdivision rules and permitting.

Johnson county needs to divest from the YMCA and manage its own outdoor and indoor pools. YMCA is not providing services equal to the many different funds appropriated and infrastructure provided by community. YMCA is a national nonprofit not local.

My priorities are preserving and conserving agricultural lands and open spaces; improving habitat for wildlife; protecting agricultural water, partly by developing water-saving beaver analog dams and improving riparian areas through cooperation between state agencies and private land owners; maintaining county roads while prohibiting off-road scarring of land by vehicles; protecting view scrapes (I am angry at people who perch their ugly boxes of houses on the high ridges near Piney Creek next to I 25). I strongly support conservation easements and the WY Stockgrowers Land Trust.

Our area has a distinct history; the county land plan should encourage residents to engage with librarians and historians to record local history and make it accessible to the public so that newcomers can understand the factors that have created the area and thus not despoil significant landmarks and areas.

Not impressed with the way Johnson County is handling the potential problem with septic tanks in Richardson Park, too many small lots with no concern for space for minimum distance between water wells and septic tanks and leach fields when initially constructed and now that it is a problem the county wants to dump it on the home owners to take the responsibly to make the corrections by making the special sewer district. they should have been responsible for this in the first place, and it would be much easier if they make the district than having the homeowners attempt to do it as they can work with the required government agencies needed to be sure the process is done correctly and efficiently. In my opinion this reeks of incompetence and passing the buck for a failure on the county's responsibility.

There are countless examples in this and neighboring states where beautiful small/rural towns promoted growth, usually by a minority of the population, until the town experienced rampant growth and a huge decrease in the quality of life. Once a small town does get overrun by the snowballing of human growth there is no going back to the way things used to be. Please do not let this beautiful small town and area be another place overrun and ruined by humans.

I'm considering the water issue we have and not to have too many residents on the wells. Our water quality has diminished.

The county requires subdivision developments to have covenants, yet there is little to no enforcement. Property owners ignore the covenants and do not feel obligated to comply. This can have a negative impact on adjacent residents: 1) reducing and impacting real estate values; 2) creating public nuisance; 3) allowing hazardous waste; 4) lack of maintenance and upkeep. Regulations need to be enforced! Small subdivisions do not have the collective will to organize and police one another as large subdivisions often do through a homeowner's association.

Appreciate growth bringing fresh mindsets and opportunities to Johnson County, but do not appreciate new residents moving in, raising housing costs/turning apartments into short term rentals, and taking over

the community's politics to become more divisive and tearing down the kindness, honesty, and mind-your-own-business character that Johnson County and Wyoming have long held.

Bike/walking path along French Creek Road from city limits to Upper French Creek Road.

I am a homeowner in Richardson Park. When this area was developed the county did not have a permitting process in place for the placement of wells and septic tanks. The county did not restrict lot size and allowed the developer to make the lots "city size" without bringing in water and sewer lines. Now there are serious issues with septic tank leach fields failing with no alternative fields available. Johnson County should bear the burden of creating a special district to bring the sewer system in, as well as bearing the financial burden of bringing the sewer system to the properties instead of the homeowners in Richardson Park. Johnson County dropped the ball. Johnson County should pick it up and fix it.

Land management goals were needed 50 years ago.

Examine and verify water rights transferred to City & County and record these transfers.

Rural homes should be required to do wildfire mitigation around their buildings. Another option to reduce the potential loss of life or property in the wild land areas would be to require T1A building standards. The most proactive step the county should take would be to zone areas as they are now being used. Zoning allows neighbors' concerns to at least be addressed to mitigate potential negative impacts to their property values. If there was an industrial scale pig farm planned upwind of your dwelling you should have some say in that proposal! Plus, there should enforceable building codes in the county. And that necessitates zoning.

Don't let it become a Jackson Hole full of elitists or you will ruin it for the folks that are reality based, and tax them out of their property.

Zoning that allows the county to control types & location of industry or agriculture industry such as pig farms, chicken farms and large feed lots should be enacted before it is too late.

Don't let developers ruin our rural way of life. They are just carpetbagging and go from place to place not caring about the damage they cause to communities.

Growth in Buffalo is inevitable. Heads in the sand approach only creates chaos. Manage infrastructure in a way that solves problems 20-50 years into the future. Our workforce needs to grow to accommodate the growth that is inevitable, but the affordability has restricted many, even middle-income workers from attainable housing. If this isn't addressed the community will suffer for decades to come.

The county needs to have control over growth roads, water, subdivision, etc. The county needs control over growth so they will be able to provide adequate services to the whole county.

Zoning is important to me. Cleaning up unsightly entrances to town is important to me. Legal time limits on campers, boats, recreational vehicles parked is important to me.

Johnson County does not need a repeat of the problems like those occurring in the Richardson Park area with wells, sewers, and the street/alley situation.

Controlling minimum lots size is a great idea. The newer neighborhoods where the houses are built so close are not as nice a place to live with so little space and privacy. These neighborhoods just look crowded, even

the nicer ones. The junkyard on I90 that greets visitors when coming from Gillette is STILL an eye sore. Protect our old buildings please. We need another pool!!!

Requiring subdivisions to have adequate water and sewer systems, not relying on individual wells and septic systems.

You can't have affordable housing and prevent growth!

If we want people to stay in Wyoming and reverse a trend that has been happening for generations where people leave for better jobs and housing we have to have affordable housing close to town.

But, this needs to be done in a responsible way to protect the homeowners that currently own a home or business.

Allowing people to put in rock quarries in neighborhoods is absolutely nuts. Another thing that is bonkers is allowing people to build shops and businesses in neighborhoods.

These things absolutely destroy the value of the homes that surround them.

Many of the people in these situations bought their homes 30-50 years ago and cannot afford to move. It would be very hard to sell the home for its appropriate value now it has become a mixed used area.

Buffalo has always been a very special place with beautiful neighborhoods and large lots. Lack of zoning is destroying those neighborhoods with ugly shops and businesses.

I'm for zoning and controls on land use; Johnson County doesn't need uncontrolled growth like Sheridan County. I'm concerned about rural subdivisions impact on open space and wildlife habitat. I live here because of the quality of rural life. I applaud the planning commission in reaching out for input.

Would love to see a walking path developed along French Creek Road.

Thank you for putting this comment section together. It is very important we take care of our land. There is only so much of it.

It would benefit if the county were to adopt modest rules to address Gravel Pits, Density, Floodplain, and Airport protections.

The rural subdivisions in Johnson County, including large tracts of land being split into 40-acre parcels, are creating a situation where it is hard to provide services with the tax base available. Subdivisions by Lake DeSmet are effecting public access and water quality at the lake.

DOES JOHNSON COUNTY CURRENTLY HAVE A BUILDING INSPECTOR. BUILDING PLANS SHOULD BE REVIEWED AND REQUIRED TO MEET GOOD BUILDING CODES.

Left without any control or planning... we will become a junkyard.

It's so hard to buy a home here for younger generations. However, I think the community is going to grow whether we like it or not. Controlling the how it grows and being prepared is important, so we don't have issues like Richardson Park.

I feel that there is no better place to live and raise a family than Johnson County!! Are we ever blessed to be born in America and live in Buffalo or Johnson County!!

I'd love more ways to get involved.

Zoning is a very important factor to implement. Haphazard residential structures like trailer homes mixed in with residential homes and a barn here or a workshop there; all within an area designated as a neighborhood is a condition that can't be logically corrected. It creates a blight to our city, county, and state. Purposeful future and consistent planning is a must!

I think if people are going to move here it is hard to say they cannot. Just because we came here first doesn't mean we have the ultimate say. If this is a free country that we live in putting restrictions on others is not right. Are the people that already live here going to live under these restrictions too, or are they going to be grandfathered in? Seems hypocritical that we don't all live under any new restriction to me. I understand that water usage and rights do outweigh as they should growth of cities. We cannot shut water flow downstream for agricultural use because a town is growing. If there are alternatives for water supply to a growing town i.e. wells then we should look into those alternatives. Downstream usage is very important for others. We need to be able to share the water. As far as public property is concerned it is just that public. It should be open for everyone that is a citizen to use. I don't like the idea of regulating us off the mountain!

I think our county needs to attract investors to develop more city building lots & subdivisions. We need to actively recruit private sector business that will bring in an adequate job base to Buffalo & Kaycee. The city and county should develop resources available to these businesses. Need more in city development and less rural sprawl.

Please publish number of responses to this survey vs number of population.

protect property values

Think long term like Teddy Roosevelt. Will J, Scott Madsen, Jimmy Hicks, the Hickson Bull, Cynthia Twing, etc. are shallow, short-term monument builders to self. If you could convince the "more and bigger" to move to Tonopah, NV, you might stand a chance to preserve Buffalo & JC. But they won't go. They couldn't compete with the big dogs of like mind who are already entrenched there. All they build will, like them, turn to dust and they will doom JC in the process.

Protect water source (high productive areas).

Johnson county needs growth but we have a real housing situation, and jobs here do not allow families to make enough money. Sad situation.

This is not a one size/one answer that fits all process. The key aspect is the available resource and the reasonable expectation of services. The "reasonable" means a hard look at the costs of services in light of what people can afford and SHOULD be expected to pay for. It's my sense that many of the people who have moved here to retire came because of the availability of services that previous residents had established & paid for. The earlier residents did not make huge amounts of money, but their taxes and their participation got the facilities built. Now their incomes are fixed. Their children have moved away because the economy doesn't allow for the kind of living they wanted their children to enjoy. Now we face deteriorating infrastructure and reduced services that the more recent residents expect the government to provide - failing to realize that much of the building in Buffalo began with both taxpayer dollars and significant contributions of community members. Until newer residents realize their responsibility is to help maintain and improve our community, I don't see much hope in getting the services we need. And want. The demands on the governing bodies - county and cities (particularly Buffalo) are unreasonable. To say it is time to use reserves in the county coffers does not account for the reduction in revenue sources. To expect

us to be "saved" by mineral development and taxes on oil & gas, coal and uranium does not put burdens on the ones wanting services – then there's little likelihood of another boom in any of these sectors any time in the foreseeable future. We must plan for doing what we can and expect that services may not be what we've enjoyed in the past or the private sector with the resources to do so may have to do more heavy lifting. (It is not the poor or people working the golf course or the YMCA where 'fees' are required).

Agriculture needs to be protected, and growth needs to be controlled. A 50-acre piece of property on the edge and surround by another landowner should not be able to be subdivided. The county should not be responsible for infrastructure. This should be buyers responsibility (water, roads, etc.). Is housing guaranteed?

Pulling out old trailer homes and disposing of them. Tearing down old homes. Cleaning up people's property to make town look nice.

Preserve our wide-open spaces, I don't think we need huge factories.

QUESTION 16 SUMMARY

Out of 387 total respondents, 132 people provided comments about the survey or land use planning in Johnson County. This is a 34.1% response rate. Those who made comments gave significant insight into the attitudes, opinions, and thoughts about land use planning in the community.

Comments were provided across a broad range of topics with a wide range of thoughts and opinions. There is consensus that Johnson County is not what it used to be. They felt that growth is bringing new challenges, and Johnson County is struggling with its ruralness. The respondents are concerned about the future and what it will bring. A sense of alarm shows, acting now is important to the county's future. There is also concern about not being able to manage infrastructure needs like roads, water supply, and water quality. There is similar concern shown about protecting agricultural lands, open space, and a way of life. Concerns about housing affordability and economic development were also expressed.

It is noted that there were more than two dozen comments which provided depth about a respondent's viewpoint. The comments covered their experience of living in Johnson County, how they feel about it, and what the respondents view as important now and into the future. The fact that more than one out of five of those surveyed took time to respond to this question and shared their personal viewpoints to Johnson County and how it affects their life, is noteworthy and useful.

In summary, everything from housing affordability to encouraging youth to stay in Johnson County, to economic development, and to pro and con opinions about using guidance and regulatory tools to manage growth was expressed. The responses provided a complete picture of opinions about what it is like to face the challenges of growth in a historic, slow-growth rural community.

Land use topic areas that stood out in the comment section include:

- ❖ Protection and preservation:
 - Agriculture land, water, wildlife, dark skies, open space, water wells, property values, wildfire mitigation, beaver dams, way of life, the quiet and peacefulness, rural way of life, viewsheds, natural habitat, impacts on environment, and rural setting.
- ❖ Growth - guidance approach. Direct and indirect comments include:
 - Be ready for growth, stay slow and steady, carefully manage with balance and sustainability, and be proactive.
- ❖ Growth - regulatory approach:
 - There were more than 30 direct or indirect comments about using a regulatory approach to manage growth. Comments were thoughtful and covered a wide spectrum of opinion.

A sampling includes:

1. Do not put restrictions on property where no problem exists.
 2. There needs to be legal, meaningful zoning.
 3. We cannot give the government a blanket endorsement of it.
 4. Let people govern themselves. Private property rights are important.
 5. We need to stay away from building codes.
 6. Limit rural development.
 7. Put some conditions on growth.
 8. If we are left without any control or planning, we will become a junkyard.
- ❖ Infrastructure
 - Maintain, improve, and fix the roads.
 - We have adequate water and sewer systems.
 - We need control over growth to provide adequate services throughout the county.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Introduction

Although all residents, employees, and visitors are stakeholders in the county's long-term future, the initial stakeholder interviews conducted by the Y2 team targeted individuals representing a diversity of interests and organizations in the county. In November 2024, the Y2 team conducted a series of interviews with representatives from community organizations, active non-profit agencies, public agencies, land development agencies, and local businesses. Interviewees were identified by the JCLUP Steering Committee members as being associated with or representing interests regarding the Land Use Plan update.

The primary purpose of each interview was to gather information on the elements of Johnson County's land-use plan, identify issues and opportunities within the county, and gather ideas for future development. Interviewees provided feedback on common themes in the county and ideas for creative solutions to inform eventual recommendations. The individual nature of the interviews also enabled participants to be more candid and in-depth than they otherwise might be in a larger community forum.

The Stakeholder Interview Summary is not an exhaustive compilation of all the comments and ideas expressed during the interviews. Instead, it is the consultant team's summary of the high-level "takeaways" and common themes identified from the individual conversations.

The interviews typically lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, with conversational flexibility guided by each interviewee's own viewpoints and interests. The list of participants in the stakeholder interviews is below.

INTERVIEW LIST, JOHNSON COUNTY LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

1	Bruce McWhorter	Johnson County Airport	November 20, 2024
2	Brent Berg	Uranium One	November 14, 2024
3	Montgomery Hughes	Uranium One	November 14, 2024
4	Britni Camino	Healthcare District	November 26, 2024
5	Robb Hicks	Buffalo Bulletin	November 19, 2024
6	Toby Carrig	Johnson County Tourism	November 20, 2024
7	Tom Knapp	JOCO First/Economic Development	November 20, 2024
8	Clay Miller	Paradise Guest Ranch	November 21, 2024

Topics & Issues

Conversations with interviewees brought up multiple topics, generally related to housing, growth and development, tourism, the local workforce, and healthcare.

OPPORTUNITIES & STRENGTHS

❖ **Outdoor Recreation**

The most common response to the question, “What are Johnson County’s strengths?” was the county’s natural resources, scenic beauty, and rural lifestyle. Access to hiking, biking, open spaces, and other outdoor recreational amenities is the most important feature for residents.

❖ **Community Pride**

Johnson County has a rich culture and history. There are still many multi-generational families and residents who have spent their entire lives in Johnson County. In addition to outdoor recreational amenities, friendly people and neighbors who help one another are among the county’s greatest assets. When someone is in need, the community comes together. The recent community recovery efforts from the 2024 Horse Draw Fire are a great example of the community spirit in Johnson County.

❖ **High-Quality Schools, Infrastructure & Economic Support**

Many interviewees mentioned the high quality of local schools, with small class sizes and a forward-thinking school district. The quality of county roads and county road maintenance are also appreciated, as are the county's support and efforts to keep local infrastructure in good shape, which benefit local businesses' ability to operate.

ISSUES & CONSTRAINTS

❖ **Job opportunities exist, but there is nowhere to live.**

There is consensus among residents that employment and workforce housing are linked. Johnson County and its municipalities cannot recruit employees without a guarantee of housing availability. Youth in Johnson County are unable to see a future there due to unaffordable housing and limited career opportunities. The ability of people to continue living in or move to Johnson County for job opportunities is becoming more difficult due to the ever-increasing cost of housing.

❖ **People are moving in from out of state.**

In the post-COVID era, with the ability to work remotely, the appeal of rural, open spaces like Johnson County is growing. There is a migration of newcomers from out of state, particularly second homeowners and part-time residents, which influences housing availability and affordability. It can also affect county services, as new residents in remote areas begin requesting road maintenance, winter plowing, and emergency response services, which impact the county’s budget and resources.

❖ **The population is aging.**

Not only are new residents moving into Johnson County, but a majority of them are also retirees. Like the rest of Wyoming, Johnson County's population is also aging, with the

median resident age rising to 47 in 2023, up from 43 in 2000. As the population ages, it is imperative to find the workforce and employees to fill healthcare jobs and provide the care older residents need.

❖ **Lack of land use Controls.**

Currently, Johnson County has no zoning or local land-use controls to regulate where new development occurs. With new developments occurring both in the county and near the town limits of Kaycee and Buffalo, coordinated planning efforts are needed. Other challenges related to future growth and development include access to public infrastructure, financing infrastructure expansion, and ensuring compatibility between proposed uses and developments and surrounding properties, while balancing private property rights.

NOTABLE QUOTES

“Plan for jobs and the economic mix that will happen when the housing meets the needs.

Focus first on workforce housing.”

“It is a very tight knit community. People are there for each other.”

“Growth will come because it’s a good place to live and people want to be here. We need to support the people who live here, as well as find career opportunities here

for the younger generations.”

“The competition across Wyoming for workers is huge. If there are things that Johnson County can do to entice people to come and build a home and life with their family,

then it’s good for the county and industry.”

WORD CLOUD

Interviewees were asked to provide five words or phrases that best describe living in Johnson County. The word cloud below summarizes all responses, with repeated responses shown larger.



Interview Questions

Below are the Stakeholder interview questions asked of each individual.

1. What are Johnson County's strengths as a county and as a community? What has the county done right?
2. What do you foresee to be the county's greatest challenges as it grows and changes over the coming decades? What are the key issues, both opportunities and constraints?
3. From the perspective of the organization or group that you represent, how supportive has the county been for your purpose or discipline?
4. What should the county do to plan effectively for the future?
5. What do you think Johnson County will be like in 20 years?
6. What are the top five words that best describe living in Johnson County?

APPENDIX D- GLOSSARY

Agricultural Production Areas- Land designated for farming and ranching, including irrigated and non-irrigated lands, where development is kept minimal to preserve agricultural use.

Clustered Development- A development pattern that groups buildings together to preserve open space and reduce land fragmentation.

Commercial Land Use- Land used for business, retail, and service activities, primarily located near incorporated communities.

Conditional Use Permit (CUP)- A permit allowing certain uses that may have greater impacts, subject to review and approval.

Conservation Easement- A voluntary agreement that limits development to protect land for agriculture, open space, or natural resource conservation.

Density- The number of people or housing units within a given area, typically measured per square mile or acre.

Energy Development- Extraction or generation of energy resources, including oil, gas, and potential renewable sources.

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)- A non-regulatory map that guides long-term development patterns based on infrastructure, environmental constraints, and community goals.

Growth Areas- Locations near municipalities and infrastructure where development is most suitable and encouraged.

Growth Management- Policies and strategies used to guide the location, timing, and type of development.

Habitat Fragmentation- The division of large, continuous wildlife habitats into smaller, isolated areas due to development.

Implementation Framework- The structure used to apply the Land Use Plan, including tools, policies, and monitoring processes.

Industrial Land Use- Land used for manufacturing, processing, raw material storage, and resource-based activities such as mining or fabrication.

Infill Development- New development that occurs on vacant or underutilized land within or adjacent to existing developed areas, typically in locations with access to infrastructure, services, and established roads.

Infrastructure- Physical systems that support development, including roads, water, sewer, and emergency services.

Land Use- The way land is utilized by people, including residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, and recreational purposes.

Land Use Categories- Broad groupings used in the FLUM to describe general suitability for development patterns based on infrastructure, environmental constraints, and community goals.

Land Use Plan- A long-range, non-regulatory guide for managing growth, protecting resources, and maintaining community character.

Mountainous and Forested Terrain Areas- Areas with steep slopes, limited access, and high wildfire risk where development poses challenges and is discouraged.

Natural Resources- Environmental assets such as water, wildlife habitat, forests, rangelands, and minerals.

Open Space- Undeveloped land preserved for agriculture, recreation, scenic value, or environmental protection.

Overlay- A planning designation that applies additional considerations (such as wildlife or hazards) across multiple land use categories.

Rural Character- The traditional identity of the County, shaped by open space, agriculture, and low-density development.

Rural Development- Low-density development occurring outside incorporated areas, typically reliant on individual wells and septic systems.

Rural Residential Transition Areas- Areas of larger residential lots near roads and towns that act as a buffer between urban and agricultural land uses.

Service Capacity- The ability of infrastructure systems to support additional growth and development.

Sprawl- Dispersed, low-density development that can strain infrastructure and increase public costs.

Subdivision- The division of land into smaller parcels for development.

Subdivision Regulations- Rules governing how land is divided and developed, including standards for infrastructure and services.

Wildfire Risk- The potential for fire hazards that influence where and how development can safely occur.

Wildlife Habitat and Corridor Overlay- A designation identifying important wildlife areas and migration routes where development should consider habitat protection.

Zoning- A regulatory system that controls land use types and development standards (not directly established by this Plan).