

WBR ARTICLE

Building the Wyoming We Want plans June forum

By Brodie Farquhar

April 10, 2009 --

CASPER - The downturn in the economy this year has had numerous impacts in Wyoming, including the "Building the Wyoming We Want" initiative, launched in January 2008 by Gov. Dave Freudenthal.

In early February, the governor appointed Terry Cleveland of Casper, the former director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, to lead a statewide volunteer advisory committee that will guide the implementation of the initiative.

Following last year's conference, the initiative has:

- Been formally established as a non-profit organization.
- Named a statewide advisory board.
- Communicated with local initiatives already underway across Wyoming.
- Began building a tool box of planning tools for communities.
- Coordinated with state agencies that have the resources to help communities prepare for growth.

In an interview last month, Cleveland said the economic downturn and an emphasis on private donations made the original organizational structure of the initiative "unsustainable." The governor set up a new board of directors, including Jeff Fuller, a Sheridan engineer; Wendy Curran, a member of the governor's staff; Dick McGinity, Bill Daniels Chair of Business Ethics at the University of Wyoming; and Cleveland.

"Going forward, we are minimizing expenditures on staff, focusing on the work product and focusing on communicating that work product to the public. Terry Cleveland is well-equipped to help us communicate this message across the state of Wyoming," the Governor said. "The downturn has caused us to shift our focus, but it has not changed the importance of this project for the future of the state and for our children and grandchildren."

The 10-person advisory board, said Cleveland, may grow in size and responsibilities in the future.

"We've got two things going on," said Cleveland. The board has hired Dee Allsop, of Heart and Minds Strategies, to conduct a three-phase values study, which involves a survey of Wyoming leaders; a survey of the general public and state-wide strategy sessions at the local level.

Planning also is under way for a June 9-10 "Building the Wyoming We Want" conference at Casper College, which will share the results of the values questionnaires, discuss the planning tool kits available to towns, cities and counties; and learn from a few pilot projects around the state.

"We'll be asking ourselves 'where do we want to go from here' and how people can become engaged," said Cleveland.

The initial 2008 forum drew more than 500 people to a discussion focused on how to preserve the Wyoming that residents love while preparing for the changes associated with growth and development.

Much of the inspiration for the Wyoming initiative is Envision Utah, a public-private partnership which was initiated in 1996 to study the effects of long-term growth in the Greater Wasatch region and to propose strategies to address growth-related issues.

The Envision Utah analysis showed that in 2020, compared to the baseline, the Quality Growth Strategy will conserve 171 square miles of land; include a more market-driven mix of housing (by modifying some

restrictive zoning regulations); result in a 7.3 percent reduction in mobile source emissions; include less traffic congestion; and require \$4.5 billion less investment in transportation, water, sewer, and utility infrastructure.

Envision Utah tools that can be adapted for Wyoming include GIS mapping and best practices from Utah and around the country, said Cleveland.

"The worst thing we can do during this economic downturn," said Cleveland, "is to hunker down and try and wait it out. Yet we have the same people and resources we had before the downturn. We need to plan for a Wyoming our kids and grandkids will want."