

# Which Wyoming do you want?

## *Governor's initiative designed to guide growth*

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Kevin Colman appreciates the long vistas available to him in his portion of Carbon County.

"Even if it's raining or snowing, you can see forever," said Colman, Medicine Bow mayor.

But, as much as he enjoys the view, he'd also like to have a job that doesn't require him to commute 100 miles each day.

As it stands now, though, that's what Colman has to do. Most jobs in the area don't offer the kind of benefits that his job in Laramie does, he said.

Building the Wyoming We Want, an initiative launched by Gov. Dave Freudenthal, aims to encourage Wyoming residents like Colman to have their say in state developments that could shape the state's balance between open space and industry.

Building the Wyoming We Want grew out of a January 2008 conference. The program is designed to prompt residents to consider what elements of their state they want to preserve and what they think needs to be added to it. Eventually, these decisions will shape plans for new development, said Cara Eastwood, Freudenthal's press secretary.

As a means to reaching that goal, initiative organizers plan to provide residents with resources they need to prepare for possible expansion. Those resources include images generated by geographic information systems that can help residents envision what their area will look like as it grows, according to a news release from Freudenthal's office.

The initiative is modeled after an initiative in Utah called "Envision Utah." The project included public meetings in which residents could view different growth models that included possible employment, recreation and shopping areas, according to an article in the Ogden Standard-Examiner.

Several cities and towns have offered their communities to test the Wyoming version of the initiative, Eastwood said.

At the Rawlins City Council's regular meeting last week, City Manager Steve Golnar said he had offered the city of Rawlins to be one of them.

The program is still in the first stages of implementation and participating communities have not been chosen yet.

"We are optimistic we will have something soon," Eastwood said. "... I think the board is still discussing how and when that will happen."

In Colman's estimation, officials in Carbon County and its cities and towns must strike a balance between development and preservation.

He pointed specifically to what he believes is a lack of local jobs that offer competitive benefits and salaries.

"It's not something that would be nice," Colman said. "It's a necessity."

Although wind energy has sometimes been touted as a solution, Colman disagrees. The relatively small number of long-term workers needed on wind farms isn't enough to employ most local residents, he said.

"Wind energy isn't the answer," he said.

Instead, he believes that the state should focus on developing its technological infrastructure and attracting industries that could employ more people.

Until then, Colman plans to continue making his daily commutes to and from Laramie. He hopes that at some point, he can find something closer to home.

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