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## A Parks and Recreation Plan for Wheatland Wyoming

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A PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN FOR  
WHEATLAND, WYOMING

by

Wade Weston Ward, Sr.

A report submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Plan B

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

1980

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Wade W. Ward

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

For Wheatland, Wyoming the necessity of a parks and recreation study is more important now than ever before because of the rapid population growth. This increase in both the population of Wheatland and Platte County is due primarily to the construction of the 1500 megawatt coal-fired Missouri Basin Power Project located 4-1/2 miles northeast of Wheatland.

With this increase in the population there will be greater demands placed on present parks, recreation areas, and facilities. Wheatland must be prepared to handle these increased demands on existing recreation areas or a problem of overuse may occur, causing a more rapid deterioration and an increase in replacement costs and maintenance in order to keep areas operating. Also, with more people comes a wider range of interests which may not be satisfied by the existing areas, programs and facilities.

Wheatland seems to have adequate land available for a parks system, most of which is underdeveloped or not developed at all. If the town fails to make plans for future growth and continues on the premise, when there is enough interest for something and they can afford it, they will find someplace to locate it, Wheatland will have a hodgepodge of poorly located and poorly thought out facilities.

The use or non-use of existing recreational facilities or areas is due to many factors: the cost of certain activities, and availability, condition and diversity of facilities. It is for these reasons that we must survey the needs and desires of the people to adequately determine goals and future developmental patterns.

Who is going to determine what areas and facilities are needed? How will improvements be financed? Who is going to administer the programs? These and other questions must be addressed and answered before a strong and unified parks and recreation plan can be prepared.

Providing adequate facilities for recreational needs and providing ways in which sites of scenic or historic value may be preserved, are two primary reasons for parks and recreational development. In this study I will present a comprehensive plan which will set guidelines for future development and acquisition of parks, and explore the recreational desires and requirements of the community and outlying areas.

## CHAPTER II

### STANDARDS

The need for established park and open space standards in recreational planning is becoming increasingly important because of the growing variety of individual interests. Standards function as guidelines for future development and acquisition of park and recreation areas. Standards represent the ideals the parks and recreation plan is trying to achieve. They serve as a means of measuring progress and bring to light weaknesses which exist within the plan, thus providing an opportunity to improve inadequacies.

Generally, standards are expressed in a population-to-park acreage--recreation demand ratio--making it extremely difficult to apply them in many situations. It should be stated that standards can never be universally applied without modifications because each individual town differs considerably due to population makeup, financial resources, social aspects, recreational needs and space availability. They must reflect the needs of the people who are to be served. If the standards fail to be realistic, they become unattainable and are of no value as criteria in the planning and decision-making process (4). If standards are to be effective they must satisfy certain criteria:



- 1) They must reflect the needs of the people in the specific area being served.
- 2) They must be reasonably or substantially attainable.
- 3) Adequate alternatives must be considered.
- 4) They must be acceptable and useable to the practitioner and policy maker.
- 5) They must be based on sound principles and the best available information.
- 6) They must stand the test of time.

In determining standards which would best serve Wheatland, it was realized that the majority of standards deal with cities with large populations (10,000 and over). Wyoming is hard-pressed to find many communities which could operate under these standards; therefore, in 1975 the Wyoming Recreation Commission published their "Outdoor Recreation Plan for Wyoming" which proposed that towns in Wyoming be classified into population groups using a sliding standard (1).

Based on various sources, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, the National Recreation and Park Association, the American Society of Planning Officials and the Wyoming Recreation Commission, the following criteria have been established to aid in determining future parks and recreation needs (1, 6, 8).



Table 1. Park area based on population

Population	Acres per 100 persons
Over 10,000	.75
4,000 - 10,000	1.0 - 1.25
1,000 - 4,000	1.7 - 2.00
Under 1,000	2.00

Source: Wyoming Recreation Commission, An Outdoor Recreation Plan for Wyoming, 1975.

### Recreation Administration and Programs

Communities may have the financial resources to equip recreational facilities but without proper guidance and planning the equipment and facilities can be meaningless. Many communities have made ineffective attempts to provide recreational facilities, areas and programs with little or no regard for the actual needs of the people they serve. Effective recreation planning requires well-qualified individuals who are able to solicit information from their community and then translate that information into a logical plan and meaningful programs.

The formation of a Parks and Recreation Department is very important because it should provide a series of checks and balances to assure the community of a Department which will be responsive to their needs.

Recreational programs are difficult to establish due to the wide variety of programs available and the varying demands of the community. It is for this reason that some general criteria must be present in order to establish guidelines in the development of worthwhile programs. If a recreation program is to be successful it must be easily accessible to everyone in the community. The activities must serve a wide range of interests, not just athletic in nature, but also culturally stimulating. The total range of age groups and sexes must be planned for and all economic levels must be considered. If these guidelines are followed, it will be much easier to establish programs through a Recreation Department.

### Funding

Funding of recreation facilities and programs is vital. Acquisition of funds is a central and very difficult task facing the recreation department. The majority of monies for recreation in Wheatland come from Federal and state grants on a matching basis. In the past it has been extremely difficult for a community such as Wheatland to generate the necessary matching funds (7). The following are some of the methods or sources of acquiring financing.

#### The general fund

The general fund is made up of sales taxes, property taxes, state gasoline rebates, and Federal revenue-sharing monies, with property taxes being the basis of the general fund.

The property tax is limited by the tax rate in the Town of Wheatland to eight mills, in accordance with the Wyoming constitution. Because of the lack of industrial property within the city limits the assessed valuation is very limited. The School District is also limited due to the large percentage of Federal and state-owned land in Platte County.

The County and School District will both see a substantial increase in future assessed valuation upon completion of the Missouri Basin Power Project: an increase of almost three or four times the present revenue. However the Town of Wheatland will not see much of an increase in valuation due to the location of the power plant, although they will be absorbing the largest percentage of the impact. This, coupled with the wide variety of other services the general fund must support, law enforcement, utilities, roads, etc., limits resources for recreational needs as present (13).

#### Recreation Board

Platte County has just recently established a Recreation Board which is currently administered by School District No. 1. The County has established a one mill tax levy which is available to the Recreation Board for recreational purposes such as parks maintenance, playgrounds and recreational programs. This is, at present, a limited source of funds, but with the increase in assessed valuation expected, could become an important source of funding for the program.

### Land and water conservation funds

These are funds made available to the Wyoming Recreation Commission by the Federal government. They are grants given local agencies on a matching basis and are becoming more difficult to obtain due to the large number of communities applying for them.

### Resource, conservation and development funds

Platte County is one of four counties within the Southeastern Wyoming Resource Conservation and Development District. These grants are available on a matching basis for water-based recreation projects.

In summary, if the Town of Wheatland is to provide an adequate and well-designed recreation system, it must have access to adequate funds. It is one thing to apply for grants and quite another to be able to match funds received.

I would suggest the following as a means of approaching the funding problem:

Annual parks and recreation budget. This should be used mainly for maintenance. A program to automatically increase the budget as the city grows is necessary to cover expanding population and increased costs.

Gifts. Civic groups and private citizens can help with cash, land or equipment. Service groups, the National Guard and individuals could help with initial installation of equipment, clearing, landscaping and possibly some maintenance of projects.

Dedication. All subdivisions should provide a percentage of the total acreage involved as a park or pay the Department a fee which would be equitable to both the Town and the developer.

Bonds. General bonds could be approved by voters to help match Federal or state monies for development.

### Definitions and Standards

#### Playlot

This facility serves as a substitute for backyards in high-density developments and should be provided by the developers. It is designed to serve children from preschool through sixth grade. The size is dependent on the number of units in the particular area but should be at least 4,000 square feet. It is desirable to locate this type of facility in a central interior portion of the development and enclose the area completely. The following are some of the facilities which are desirable in playlots:

- \* sand play space
- \* swings
- \* slides
- \* benches

#### Neighborhood park and playground

A neighborhood park serves people of all age groups as a center for all residents within a one-half mile radius of the facility. Whenever possible

it should be located adjacent to an elementary school site. This arrangement provides a year round use of facilities and serves the needs of residents more efficiently. When a school is not located in an area which needs a park, the facility should be developed separately. The site should be at least four acres or more depending on the population density. Some of the facilities which are desirable in this type of park are as follows:

- \* playgrounds for both pre-school and school aged children
- \* multi-purpose play field
- \* court games area
- \* passive recreation area
- \* restrooms
- \* drinking fountains
- \* landscaping
- \* tennis courts

#### Community park

The community park is much the same as a neighborhood park but on a larger scale. Here again the size is dependent upon the population of the area, but a minimum of 25 acres is desirable. The facility should be located within two or three miles of the population it is to serve and if possible, located adjacent to a high school to enable the sharing of facilities.



These types of parks are designed to provide recreational opportunities for all age groups. Some of the facilities desirable in a community park are:

- \* lighted tennis courts
- \* individual picnic areas and grills
- \* group picnic pavillions
- \* restrooms and drinking fountains
- \* court games
- \* benches
- \* play grounds for both pre-school and school aged children
- \* ice skating rink/roller skating rink
- \* jobbing/exercise trail
- \* passive recreation area
- \* ball complex--softball and hardball
- \* overnight camping
- \* sledding hill
- \* off street parking
- \* open space
- \* horseshoe pitching courts

#### Community center

This is a facility which serves the entire community. It is desirable to share school facilities if possible to hold down costs and prevent unneeded duplication of facilities. When a school lacks one or more of the

facilities needed it is possible for the parks and recreation department and the school district to jointly construct and operate the necessary facilities. The community-school concept is becoming more important in this day of skyrocketing construction costs and also promotes year-round use of facilities. Some of the items desired in a community center are:

- \* swimming pool
- \* gymnasium
- \* auditorium
- \* classrooms
- \* handball/racquet ball courts
- \* weight room
- \* locker rooms
- \* tennis courts

#### Special use areas

These areas are designed for a specific use. They may be a golf course, scenic drive, bikeways, historical sites, or campgrounds.

#### Private facilities

These are privately owned and operated facilities not open to the general public.



Commercial facilities

These facilities are open to the public but a use fee is required.

Examples of this type of facility are: bowling alleys, golf courses, swimming pools, etc.

### CHAPTER III

#### EXISTING CONDITIONS

In the preparation of a parks and recreation plan it is necessary that many characteristics of Wheatland be researched. Topics such as history, climate, land use of Wheatland and the vicinity, population, as well as many other factors must be addressed, for each of these are closely related to the plan itself.

Land use is extremely important in understanding the total growth pattern of the community, showing where potential deficiencies in parks may exist. The composition of the population has a direct affect on recreational needs. Climate shows that weather conditions may be potential limiting factors for many activities. Other characteristics, such as income, housing, private recreation facilities, etc. will also have a determining affect on the parks and recreation plan.

From this information, a knowledge of how the community has recreated in the past and what must be done to meet future needs can be determined.

#### Geographic Setting and Climatic Characteristics

Wheatland is located on gently rolling plains in central Platte County, which is in southeastern Wyoming. The area surrounding Wheatland is very diverse. To the west the land rises gently, and then abruptly, into the

Laramie Range with peaks from 8,000 to 9,000 feet. To the south and east the terrain is relatively flat, although the process of erosion has carved out some very interesting landscape. The elevation in the county varies from 4,275 feet to 5,000 feet.

There are several rivers and streams in the area: the most prominent ones being the Laramie River located 4 miles northeast of Wheatland, and the North Platte River which is located about 18 miles to the northeast. The Laramie Range tends to have the greatest affect on the climate in Wheatland, which is classified as semi-arid. The Range, combined with the general wind patterns in the area, usually move any cold air masses down the Laramie River Valley and away from Wheatland. The mean annual temperature in Wheatland is 49.5<sup>o</sup> F. , with the temperature very seldom reaching above 100<sup>o</sup> F (2). Most precipitation occurs in the spring, averaging between twelve and fourteen inches per year. It is the annual temperature, joined with the precipitation factor, which accounts for the 133-day growing season in the Wheatland area (2).

### History

Like most of Wyoming, Platte County has a rich and varied settlement history. The County was created by the Wyoming State Legislative Assembly in 1911 from what was then Laramie County. Platte County is in the southeastern part of Wyoming, bordered on the north by Converse and

Niobrara Counties, on the south by Laramie County, and on the west by Albany and Converse Counties. Elevation in the County varies from 4,275 feet to 5,000 feet. Major drainages in the area include the Laramie, North Laramie, and North Platte Rivers and the Sybille, Chugwater, Cottonwood, Horseshoe, Elkhorn, Fish, and Richard Creeks. The land area of the County comprises an area of 1,357,400 acres, of which the Federal government owns about 122,524 acres while the State and local governments own 279,118 acres. The remainder is privately owned.

The earliest inhabitants of the Platte County area were prehistoric hunters who probably inhabited the area as long as 8,000 to 10,000 years ago. Prehistoric quarries, known as the "Spanish Diggings" have been found in the northeastern corner of the county, supplying evidence of the existence of these early peoples.

Besides these original aborigines, the first people for which there is much written history are the "Plains Indians". These first permanent settlers were the Pawnees. When the first white explorers entered the North Platte River valley it was occupied by the Pawnees Indians who had established farm villages and hunted on the adjacent plains.

In the late 1870s, the Sioux left the forests near Lake Superior and moved out onto the plains. Soon several bands of Sioux entered the Platte River Valley and began to drive out the Pawnees. The Kiowas, who also occupied parts of what are now Platte and Goshen Counties, were likewise driven away.

The history of the white man in this area is tied to the Platte River Valley which served as a natural thoroughfare for western travelers. One of the first known records of white men in the valley is of a party of seven men under the leadership of Richard Stuart in 1812, who were returning from Oregon. Fort Laramie, located near the confluence of the Laramie and North Platte Rivers, is considered the first permanent settlement in Wyoming. The early 1800s in Platte County is primarily a history of immigrants passing through.

A great cattle boom took place in the area between 1870 and the 1880s. The hard winter of 1886-87 quickly marked the beginning of the decline of this cattle era. Rangeland was being cut off from water by homesteaders making claims along the waterways. Soon, dryland farmers were fencing much of the open range.

The first irrigation projects were started in 1883 and mark the beginning of the irrigated farming period which still dominates the economy of Platte County. The first large irrigation project in Platte County was started by the Wyoming Development Company on May 17, 1883.

The town of Wheatland owes its existence to the Wheatland Colony, the name given to the irrigated farms developed by the Wyoming Development Company between 1883 and 1893. Wheatland was incorporated in 1905 and, in 1911, became the county seat of Platte County.

Other towns in the county, Guernsey, Hartville and Sunrise, owe their existence primarily to the discovery of copper and iron ore deposits around the turn of the century. Glendo and Dwyer were originally founded and grew as the homes of dryland farmers, many of whom had migrated from Missouri. Chugwater and Slatersville were primarily cattle raising centers before the establishment of the major irrigation projects.

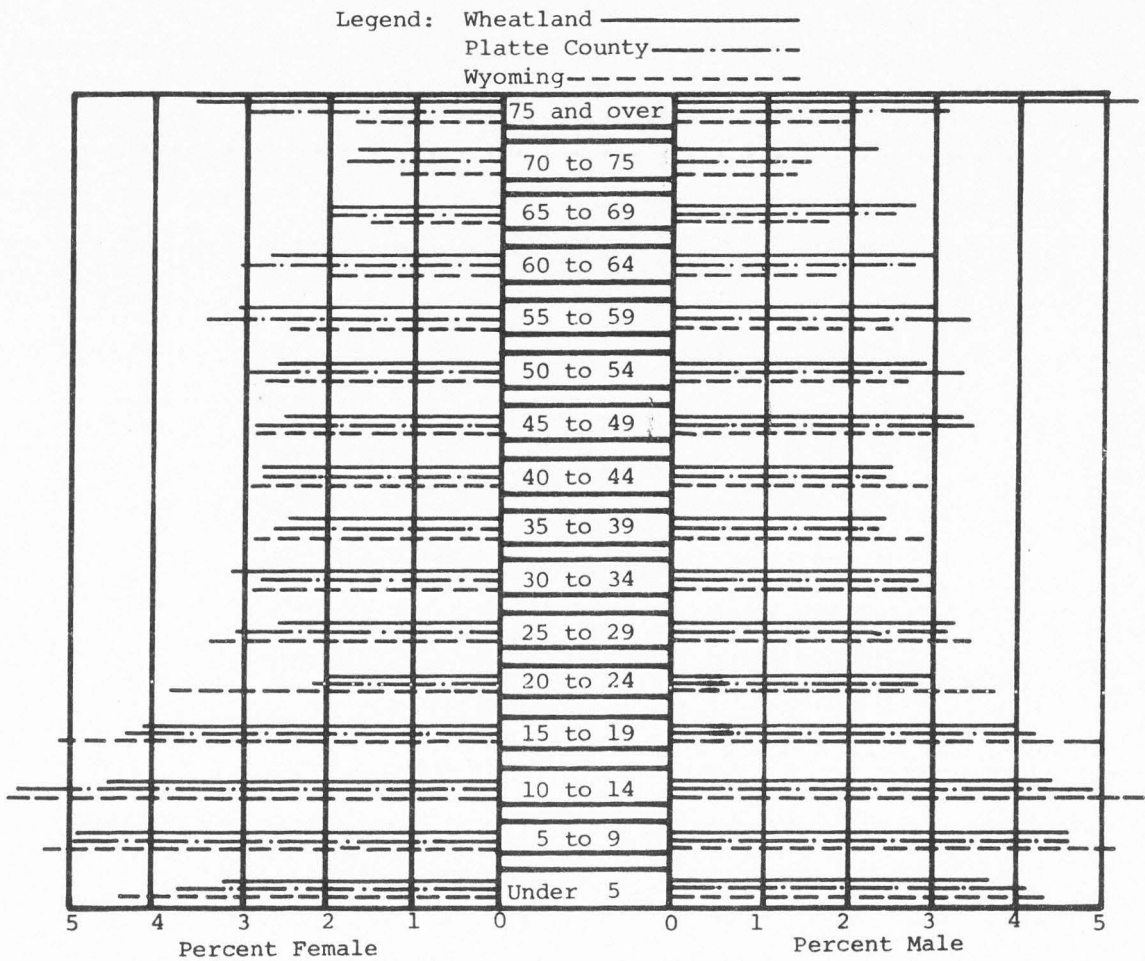
From the advent of the Wheatland irrigation project in 1883 until 1930, Platte County was a thriving agricultural community. This boom faded for Platte County during the 1930s. Like other agricultural communities, Platte County was hard-hit by the depression. The total number of farms was drastically reduced and the population in the County declined. Even after the rest of the country recovered from the depression, Platte County was still in a decline. This was reinforced during the 1940s and 1950s by two trends in agriculture: first, increased production, and second, a decrease in small family farms. This trend has only recently begun to reverse and the County and its communities are showing a slow population increase.

### Population

Wheatland has been experiencing a slow but steady growth rate even though the County has been on the decline. Since 1970 the annual growth rate has been approximately ten times the annual growth rate of the past 30 to 40 years. This increase is due greatly to the overflow in the regional growth pattern (12).



Table 2. Population by age and sex



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census Population, 1970

In the past there tended to be a higher percentage of older residents in Wheatland than in the County or the State (11). This is partly due to retired residents of the County moving into town to take better advantage of services and facilities. The out-migration of younger people of the community was also partly responsible for this situation.

Residents over 60 years of age make up around 23 percent of Wheatland's total population. The median age of Wheatland's population is 35.4 years compared to 33.7 for the County. The average size household in Wheatland was 2.6 as opposed to 2.9 in the County and 3.1 for the State, according to the 1970 census. It is also estimated that 60 percent of Platte County's population lives within five miles of Wheatland (12).

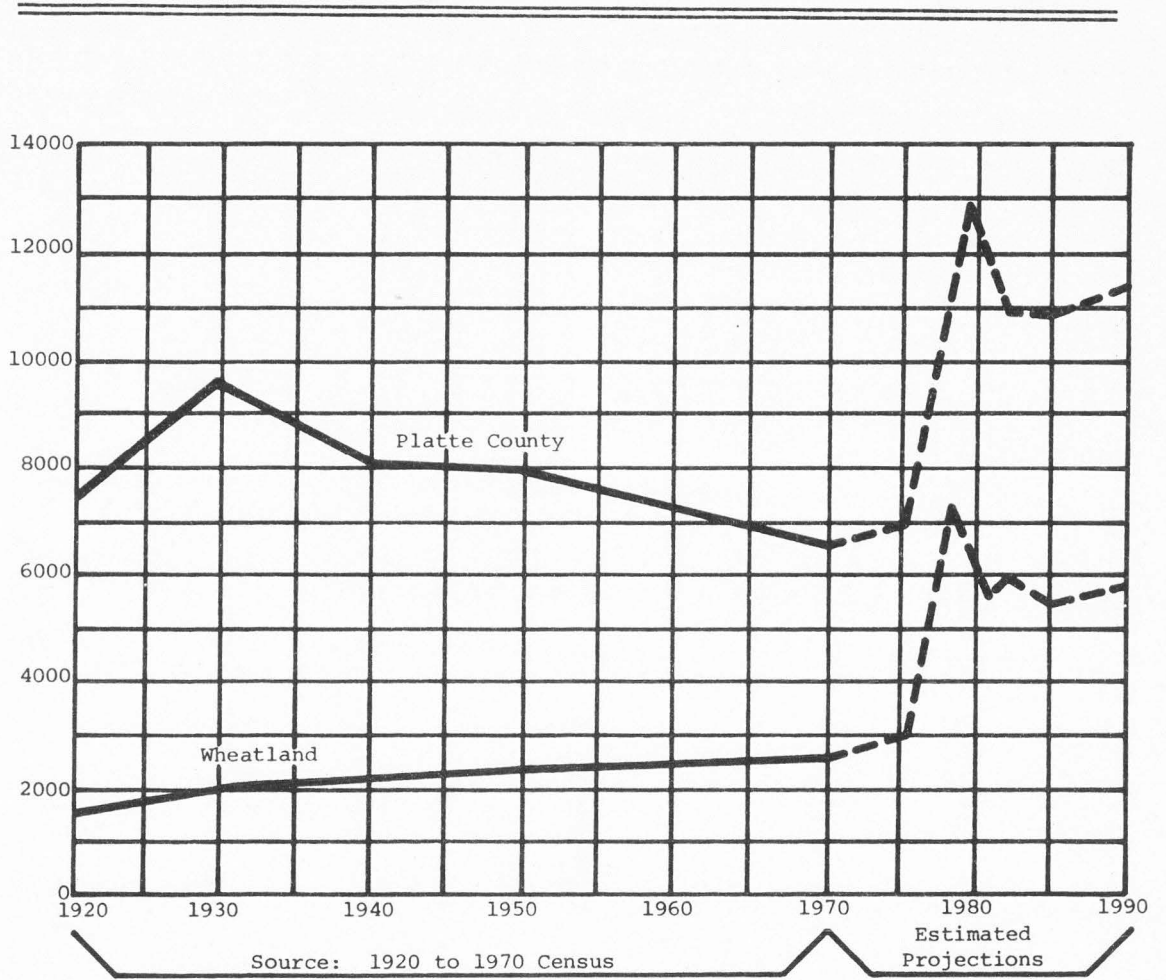
Wheatland and Platte County experienced a fairly high rate of out-migration of young people during the 1960s. This was due largely to the pool conditions of the local economy, making employment opportunities very unattractive.

The area is now experiencing a dramatic growth with the construction of the Missouri Basin Power Project. During this population increase the out-migration has reversed, bringing in young people to fill the many new job opportunities created directly and indirectly by the project.

The power plant site is 4-1/2 miles northeast of Wheatland and its major social and economic impact is going to be felt in Wheatland. It is also the feeling of many that even without this construction, Wheatland would have grown because of the influence of the energy-related resource development in the region.



Table 3. Population growth



During the last half of the 1978-79 fiscal year, Wheatland's most probable level of population is expected to rise from 2,900 to approximately 7,000 (9). This estimate is, again, dependent on the power project and related and induced activities. In 1985 the population is expected to stabilize around 5,500 and grow at about 2 percent per year thereafter.

#### Employment and Education

In 1970 it was estimated that 35.5 percent of Wheatland's labor force was employed in professional, technical, managerial, clerical and sales occupations. The remainder of the population tends to be in agricultural related or supportive fields (12).

In 1974 the percentage employed in "white collar" occupations had risen to 45.9 percent. The education level of the Wheatland residents is reflected in the following comparison chart. As can be seen, Wheatland is right at the national average.

Table 4. Indicators of educational level, 1970

	Percent Completed High School	Median Years of School Completed
Wheatland	56.2	12.2
Platte County	55.1	12.1
Wyoming	63.4	12.4
United States	55.1	12.2

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census; Census of Population, 1970.

Income

Wheatland's 1970 census showed the median family income to be \$7,548, or \$96 higher than Platte County. The census also showed that in Wheatland 24 percent of the families have incomes of \$4,000 or less. A large number of people who were below the poverty level in Wheatland were elderly.

In 1975 the median income had risen to \$8,129 but when the effects of inflation are held constant, this income is actually lower than in 1970 (10).

Table 5. Indicators of income level

	Families with Income of \$4,000 or less	Families with Income of \$20,000 or more	Median Family Income
Wheatland	24.0%	5.8%	\$7,548
Platte County	21.5%	5.3%	\$7,452
Wyoming	14.5%	9.5%	\$8,943
United States	19.3%	16.1%	\$9,867

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census: Census of Population, 1970.

The power plant will directly affect population and employment, thus affecting income. This creates a chain reaction in which housing costs, rent, services, land, etc. begin to rise. This in turn will place a burden on those who are living on fixed incomes, primarily the elderly, which comprise 23 percent of Wheatland's population.

Housing

In 1975 a housing survey was conducted in Wheatland by the Platte County Joint Planning Office (3). The results of that survey are shown in the following chart:

Table 6. Housing and residential land use survey

<u>Type</u>	Count	Percentage
Single family	884	78.1
Mobile homes (vacant pads)	49	13.4
(in place)	152	
Duplex	32	2.7
Apartments	65	5.7
Total housing units	1132	99.8
<u>Condition of housing</u>		
Dilapidated	31	2.6
Poor	6	.5
	<u>Percentage of Incorporated Area</u>	<u>Percentage of Developed Area</u>
<u>Residential land use</u>		
Single family	10.1	23.8
Mobile homes	1.3	3.0
Duples		
Apartments	.1	.3
Total percentages	11.5	37.1

Source: Housing Study for the Wheatland Impact Area, by Steven Wilson, Platte County Joint Planning Office.

Most of the housing in Wheatland is in relatively good condition, even though most houses are twenty-five years old or older. The older housing is attributed to Wheatland's slow growth and the condition of housing due to the high rate of owner-occupied homes (3).

Wheatland's slow outward development from the central business district has been attributed to the slow growth rate. This helps to explain the few land-use conflicts within Wheatland. Services and amenities are within easy access to most residential areas, the exceptions being the developments along county roads. Most residents live within three-fourths of a mile of the downtown area and one mile of the Wheatland schools. Recreational areas are within one-half mile of most residents. Residential areas are well-defined, with the majority of commercial being located in the commercial business district. Most industrial zones are located on the outer areas of Wheatland.

In the past few years new growth in residential, as well as commercial, has increased. Areas which were once agricultural lands are now being developed into housing and commercial subdivisions. With this expanded growth comes the problem of access. Most of the development is to the west of Interstate 25 which has only three access points. A segregation of housing areas from existing commercial and recreational lands is beginning to occur. There is relatively little industrial growth in Wheatland.

The largest of the developments is the Black Mountain Village area. This development was a condition of the Industrial Siting Council permit for the power project. The area was to help relieve the impact the Project would have on housing, recreation and schools in Wheatland.

The area is set up to accommodate 468 mobile homes and 314 recreational vehicles. It also has a very nice recreation facility, a new elementary school, and a four and a half acre park. Recently, 39 residential lots have been put up for sale in the area and a church and apartments are in the planning stages. There is also adequate room for commercial development as well as future expansion.

Table 6 shows the status of Missouri Basin Power Project housing as of August 1979. These figures include the housing in the Black Mountain subdivision in addition to the single family houses which are owned by Basin Electric Power Cooperative and located in the Allison Addition.

As of August 1979, nine subdivisions have been platted in Wheatland, bringing the total lots available for single family homes to 130. Seventeen subdivisions have been platted in Platte County, bringing the total lots available to 209 in the County, most of which are located close to Wheatland (5).



Table 7. MBPP housing stock status report

Type of housing	Available	Occupied	Vacant
Mobile homes	100	100	0
Mobile home pads	368	368	0
Bachelor quarters	204	166	38
RV pads	314	297	17
Single family lots	49	42	7
Single family homes	17	17	0
Phase III			
Mobile home pads	24	3	21
RV pads	<u>72</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>25</u>
Totals	<u>1,148</u>	<u>1,040</u>	<u>108</u>

Source: MBPP Impact Alleviation Monitoring Program Report, August 1979.

#### Land Use

The structure of Wheatland is somewhat lineal. The railroad on the east and the Interstate Highway on the west tend to confine the majority of the development. The airport is located on slightly higher ground to the east and commercial and light industrial developments are along Ninth Street and between Sixteenth Street and the Interstate.

Recent expansions of Wheatland are to the north and west. Growth to the south is restricted because of the Wheatland Country Club and Golf Course,

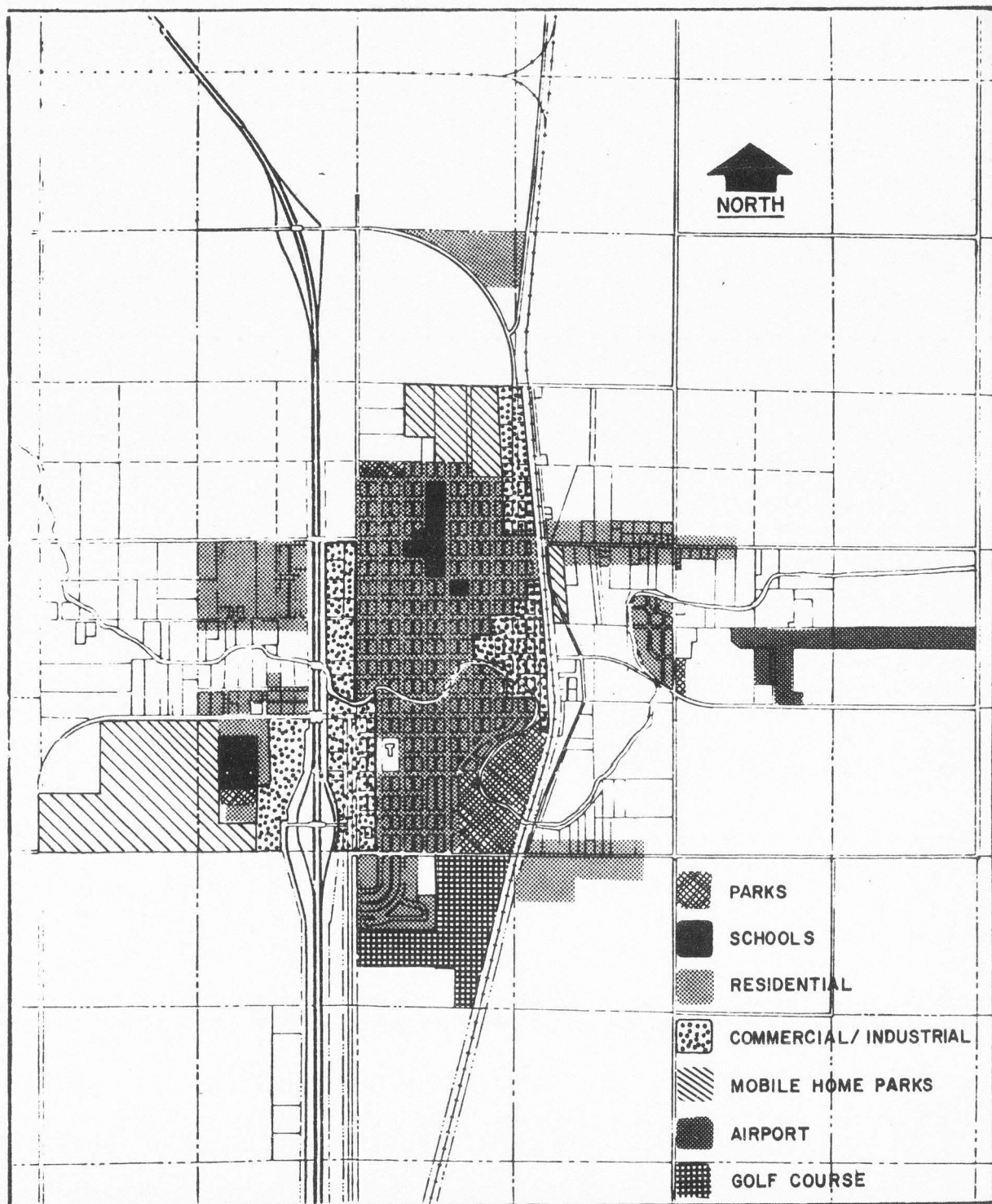
the Wheatland cemetery, the railroad and a flood plain. The area to the east is limited because of Rock Creek, the railroad, the airport and the fairgrounds. The Interstate Highway is the major disadvantage of development to the west, although this area is the best if one wants an unobstructed view of the Laramie Range. The land use map on the following pages illustrates the problems involved with development to the west (13).

The following is a chart breaking down the percent of developed land for Wheatland which was compiled by the Platte County Joint Planning Office in June 1975 from a land-use survey:

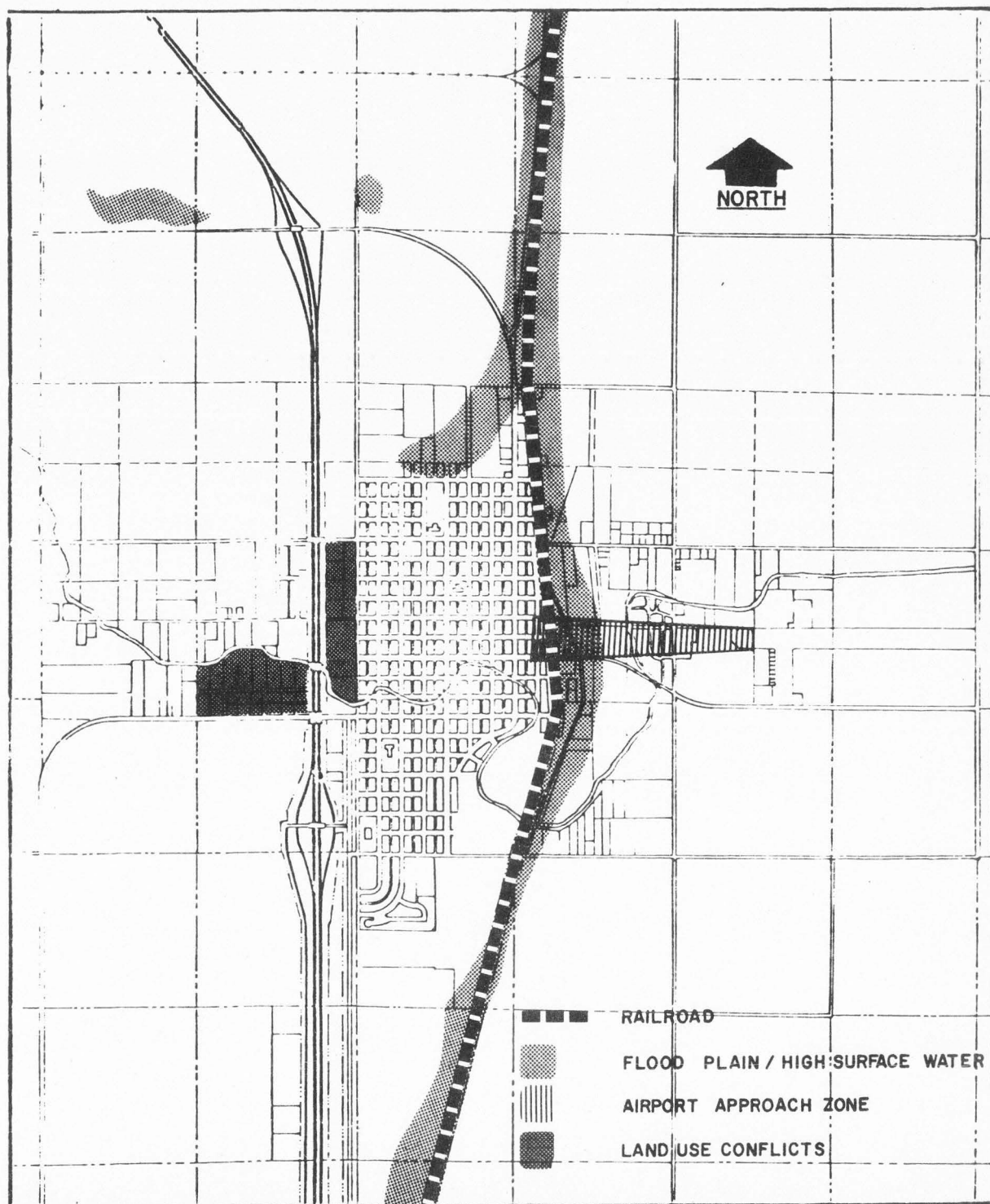
#### Recreation and Schools

The amount of land which is used for recreational and school purposes comprises approximately 68 acres, or 19 percent of all developed land. Although school and public recreation lands are different, I feel they must be recognized as interacting elements in any recreation plans. All of Wheatland's schools have adequate grounds, but have been left undeveloped. Libbey Elementary has a small, rundown playground; Wheatland Junior High has a totally undeveloped area completely surrounding it; Wheatland High School is newly constructed and the grounds close to the school have been sodded with the remainder left unimproved. West Elementary is the only school which is completely developed and in need of little, if any improvement.



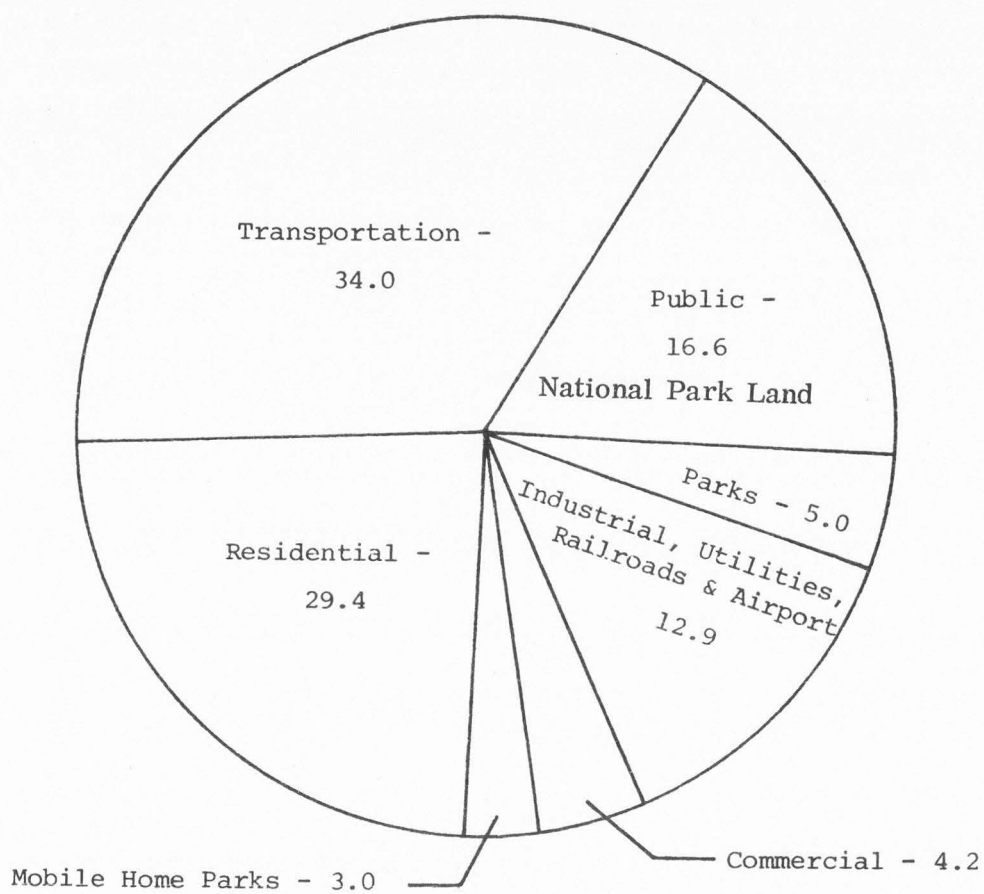


Map 1. Generalized land uses.



Map 2. Problem areas (land use).

Table 8. Percent of developed land



Source: Land Use Survey, Platte County Joint Planning Office, June 1975.

There seems to be a lack of neighborhood playgrounds, as some residences are beyond a one-quarter mile radius of existing areas. The recreation fields in Lewis Park are in need of organization and repair and this will be discussed in greater detail later.

### Private Recreation

The amount of land needed for these purposes is important for it has a direct effect on the demand for public recreational lands and facilities.

Facilities such as the bowling alley, swimming pool, golf course, etc. are of regional importance as well as important to the residents of Wheatland. Private recreation has a small effect on the recreational situation in Wheatland.

### Recreation Needs Surveys

Now that standards have been discussed and a profile of Wheatland has been established, we must begin to identify the recreational desires of the community. It is extremely difficult to reorganize or develop a totally new recreation and park system without knowledge of what the people want or need.

If any program is to be successful it must satisfy the greatest number of people in the community. There are many methods in which the desires and needs of the community can be determined. Surveys, for example, can

be taken which will show preferences for certain programs and facilities. Another method used in determining needs is by use date; in other words, how many people use any given facility or program during a month or year. Public meetings are also a valuable method of ascertaining likes and dislikes of the residents.

There have been several surveys conducted in Wheatland to obtain information which might help in the development of a recreational plan. The following is a list of the surveys and a summary of the findings:

- \* Wheatland High School Recreation Survey by the Human Services Project, April 1977

The results of this survey showed a demand for more teenage activities, better organized summer activities, better quality parks and more athletic activities for women. As for facilities desired they showed a strong need for an indoor swimming pool/community center, roller skating facilities, more gym facilities, more tennis courts, more ball fields and a motorcycle track.

- \* Wheatland Recreation Study by the Wyoming Human Services Project Office at the University of Wyoming, June 1977

This was a survey taken of Wheatland. The town was divided into thirteen areas and then residents were randomly selected to be surveyed. The results of this survey are as follows: the residents showed a need for a youth center, an indoor swimming pool/community center complex, a



senior citizen's center, more tennis courts, ice skating rink, better playgrounds, more ball fields and improved parks.

This survey indicates the residents feel the community is lacking in or failing to meet acceptable standards in several areas of the present parks and recreation system. We can begin to see some direction in which a more acceptable and usable system may be attained.

\* Construction Workforce Survey by Wade Ward, April 1978

This survey was conducted by randomly picking people in Black Mountain Village and asking various questions concerning their recreational desires. The response was somewhat different than those of longtime residents of the community. The women and children indicated that most of their needs were adequately met by the Black Mountain Recreation Center. The only areas they felt were inadequate were the ball fields and the need for more playground equipment at existing parks and schools.

The men indicated that after working at the plant site all day long they were not interested in physical activity but rather playing pool, taking a sauna, fishing, watching television, camping, etc. The three areas of greatest need other than those above mentioned were: better shooting facilities, a motor-cross area and better ball fields.

Judging from the results of these surveys we can see many things begin to unfold. The difference in needs and desires of the longtime residents and the temporary construction workforce becomes apparent. The fact that



many facilities are not available at all and many of those which are available are in sub-standard condition.

From this information we can begin to integrate community needs into the planning process, along with area inventories, etc. and start formulating a plan which will better serve the entire community over the many years to come.

In summary, the various characteristics of Wheatland are important factors in the development of a parks and recreation plan.

The population makeup in Wheatland shows a large percentage of the residents are over 60 years of age; therefore proper steps must be taken to assure their needs will not be overlooked. The community has a large number of pre-school and school age children who require facilities quite different from those of the older residents. Another factor that must be considered is the decline of out-migration of the young adults which will place additional demands on Wheatland's present parks and recreation facilities. None of these groups are being adequately provided for in the present park system.

Wheatland has the added responsibility of serving the needs of the construction workforce population which will be in the area for a relatively short period of time. The town must plan to serve the recreational needs of everyone during the peak population and still be realistic in planning for the ultimate projected population of the area after construction is over.

Table 9. Recreational needs survey summary

ACTIVITIES and FACILITIES	SURVEY	Construction Workforce Survey	Wheatland Recreation Study	Wheatland High School Recreation Survey
Summer Recreation Activities				●
Teen Activities				●
Women's Athletics				●
Roller Skating				●
Motorcycle Track		●		●
Improved Parks			●	●
Shooting		●		
Ice Skating			●	
Improved Playgrounds		●	●	
Community Center				
Indoor Pool			●	●
Improved Ball Fields		●	●	●
Youth Center			●	●
Additional Gymnasiums				●
Additional Tennis Courts			●	●

Employment and education are additional considerations that must be taken into account in the preparation of the recreation plan. Those people working indoors during the day are often looking for ways to recreate outdoors. The individual who works on a construction-oriented job all day may seek indoor recreation. The education level is a determining factor in recreation. A person who has finished high school and then gone on to college is more often exposed to a much broader range of recreational activities and therefore may demand more from a parks and recreation system.

The income level is extremely important in recreational planning. The family with a lower income is often more dependent on public facilities to satisfy their recreational needs. They are unable to use private facilities because of the cost involved.

A knowledge of the housing in a community can aid in planning for parks and recreation facilities. Knowing where apartment complexes and single family houses are and their relationship to present parks, along with the family makeup in these areas, can show if proper facilities are readily available to the residents. In addition, land use conflicts can be seen, which often result in major restrictions to planning in various parts of a community. Some areas of the community may be isolated from existing parks because of highways, canals, industrial areas, etc.

An analysis of the present school system is vitally important because of rising costs in the construction and maintenance of parks and recreation

facilities. If at all possible, joint development of school grounds and neighborhood parks is recommended. If a community can avoid duplication of facilities, the money saved can be channeled into other parts of the parks and recreation system.

Finally, private recreation facilities need to be recognized, for they often relieve some of the pressure on the public facilities, making it unnecessary to plan for an construct as many facilities as might otherwise be necessary.

If these items are considered in the parks and recreation planning process, Wheatland will have a more credible and workable plan in the years to come.

CHAPTER IV  
INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATION  
AREAS AND FACILITIES

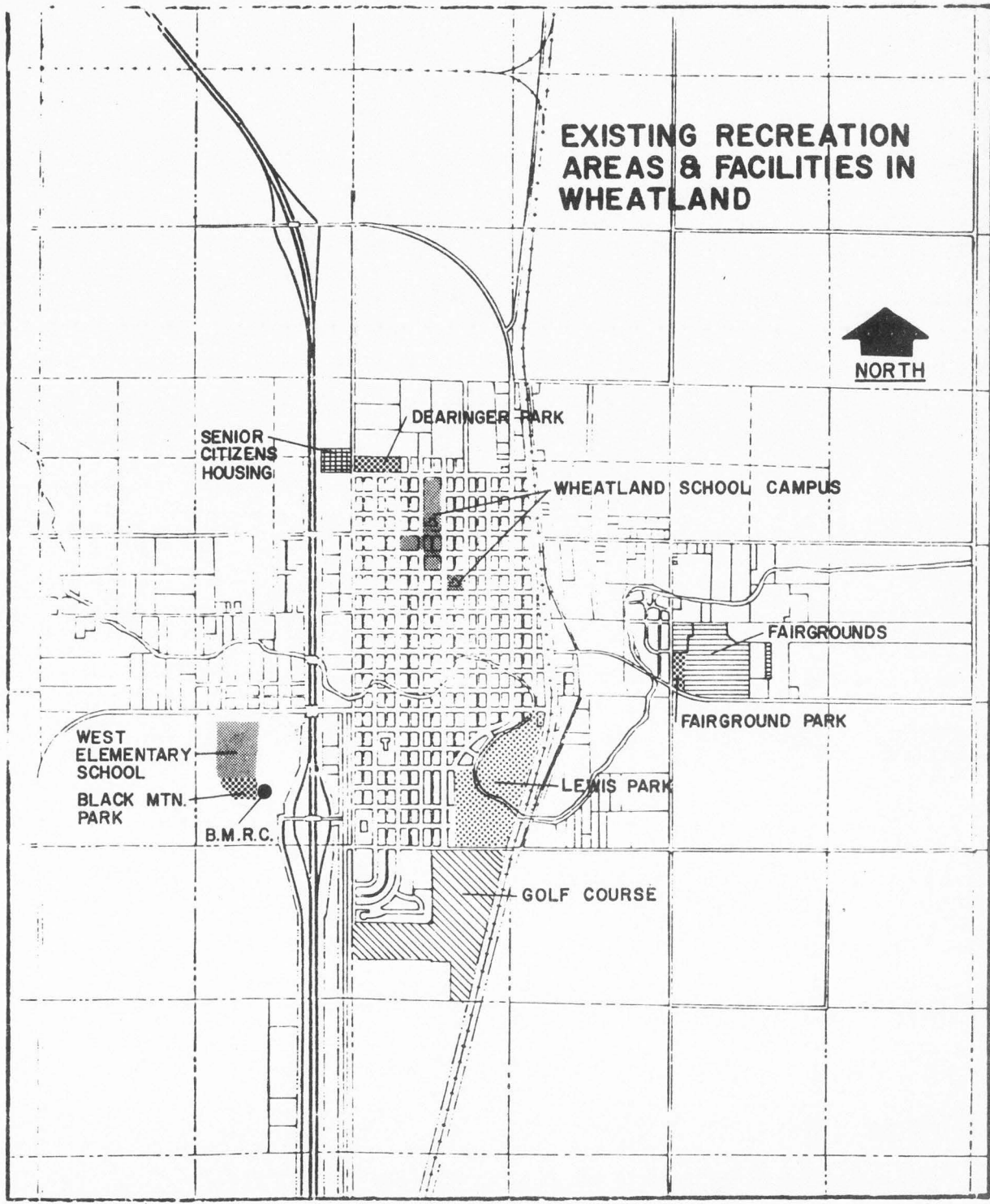
In making a determination of what is necessary for a successful parks and recreation system, it is first important to be familiar with facilities and areas which are now being used or have been earmarked for possible future use. On the following pages, Maps 3 and 4 and Table 10 help illustrate the location of recreational facilities, service areas, and general makeup now in use in Wheatland.

By conducting an inventory of these existing parks and facilities, a picture begins to develop as to the size, condition, use patterns and location of each area and how they relate to the parks system as a whole.

By comparing standards with the inventory of existing facilities, programs, areas, and administration, we will begin to see the lack of or deficiencies in the various existing park areas in and around Wheatland.

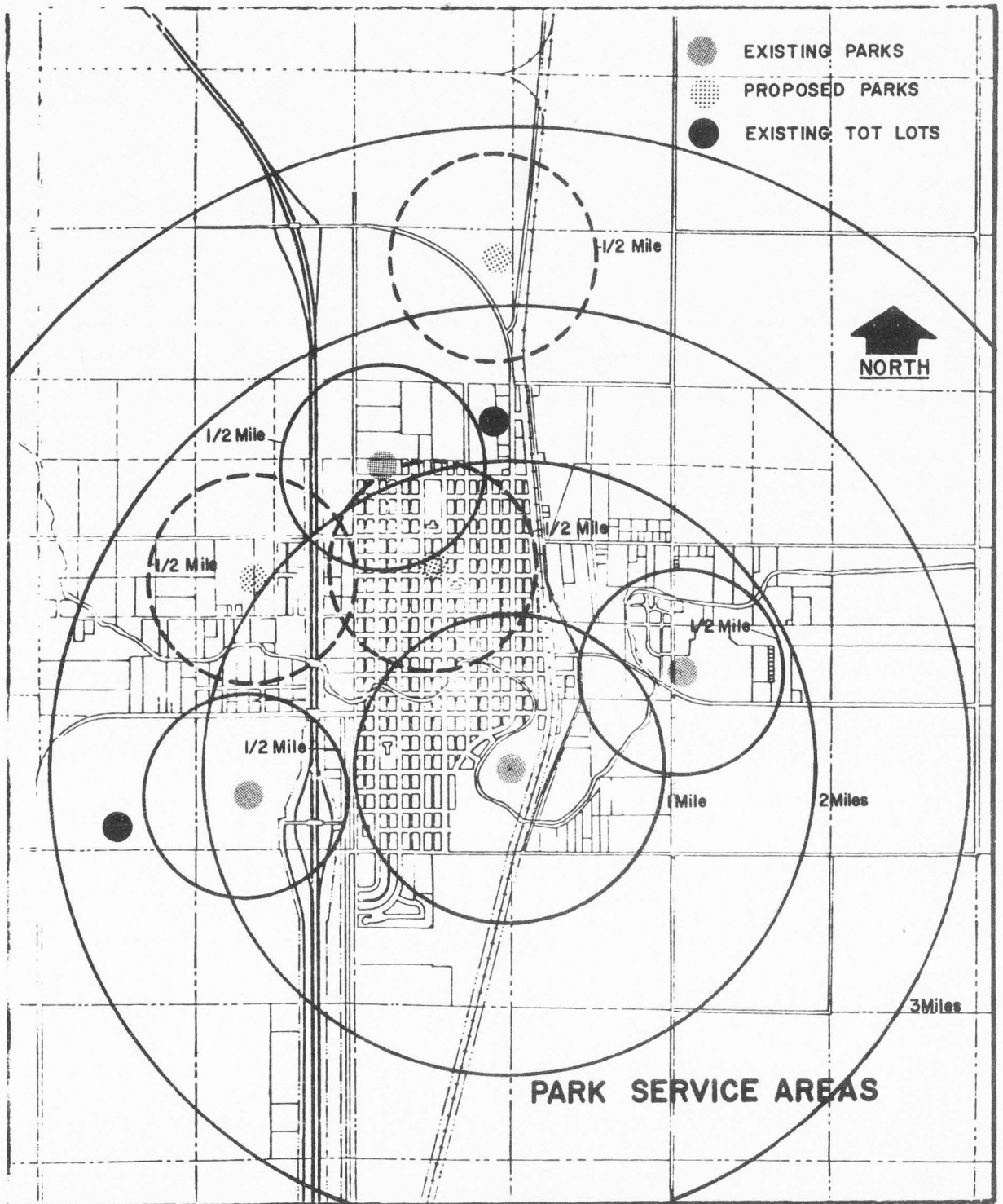
Presently, Wheatland has adequate park space and with the expected probable level of population, should be adequate in the future; however, the majority of this land is now unorganized and underdeveloped or not developed at all. There are two exceptions to this which are presently





Map 3. Existing recreation areas and facilities in Wheatland.





Map 4. Park service areas.

Table 10. Existing recreation facilities

FACILITY	ACTIVITY																							
	Golf	Community Center	Swimming Pool	Tennis Courts	Baseball/Softball	Horseshoes	Playgrounds	Ice Skating	Roller Skating	Sledding	Picnic Area	Camping	Comfort Station	Beaches	Water Skiing	Boating	Fishing	Hunting	Large Play Field	Basketball	Running Track	Parking	Gymnasium	
Lewis Park				●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●						●	●		●		
Wheatland Golf Club	●																					●	●	
Dearinger Park							●				●		●						●	●		●		
BMV Recreation Center		●	●	●			●						●						●			●		
Fairgrounds		●					●				●		●									●		
Wheatland High School								●											●	●	●	●	●	
Wheatland Junior High																			●	●	●	●	●	
Libbey Elementary							●												●	●	●	●	●	
West Elementary					●		●	●											●	●	●	●	●	
Black Mountain Park																			●			●		
Glendo Reservoir						●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				●		
Guernsey Reservoir						●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				●		
Festo Lake							●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Johnson Lake							●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Wheatland Reservoir							●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Rock Lake											●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Medicine Bow Natl. For.											●	●	●				●	●				●		

isolated from all existing parks. They are the North Fertig Addition and the Fertig/Allison Addition subdivisions. These areas have no park space or any plans for the development of parks.

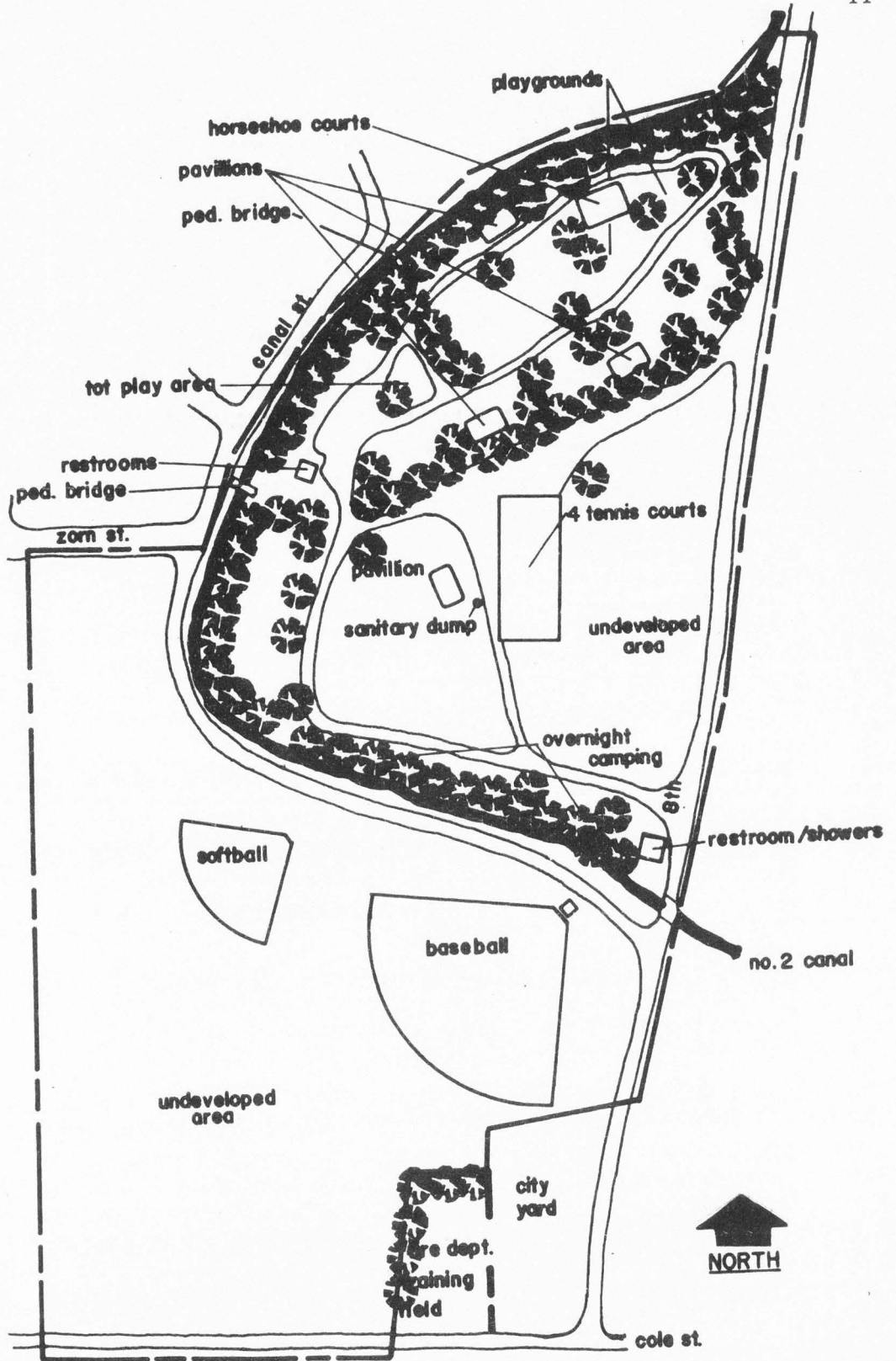
With these two exceptions it seems unnecessary to add any additional park land to the system but to work on the deficiencies which exist within the present system.

### Existing Facilities

#### Lewis Park (Map 5)



Photo 1. Lewis Park.



Map 5. Lewis Park (existing).



Lewis Park is the largest park in Wheatland, comprised of approximately 47 acres. It is located south of the central business district. At present, Lewis Park is used by all age groups. Activities in the park range from organized sports such as softball and baseball to passive play.

Presently the park is divided into three sections with use and development differing considerably in each.

The northerly section is the most fully developed area of this park. This area is surrounded by mature trees and has established grass play and picnic areas. Pre-school and elementary age children tend to use this section the most because of the location of playground equipment and seating and shaded areas for parents to sit and observe. The facilities in this section are in good condition. This area was the original Wheatland park and therefore has received the most attention, the result being an attractive and functional portion of the park. Because of this the remainder of Lewis Park has been neglected and most development has been piecemeal.

Development in the central section consists of four tennis courts, which are in excellent condition, an area with overnight hookups for camping, for which the city does not charge any fees at the present time, and a large open area with a picnic pavillion. This area is used more by people junior high and high school age or older. During the summer little league baseball and junior girls softball are played here due to the lack of fields elsewhere.

The southerly section of Lewis Park is the least developed of the entire park. The only activities or development in this section are the baseball and softball fields which are in deplorable condition and very awkwardly located, making it difficult for future expansion. During the summer months the area is used by peewee baseball and softball play through organized men's softball and baseball. Another problem with this section is the number two canal which completely separates it from the central portion of Lewis Park. There is only one bridge upon which people can cross to get back and forth.

The quality of landscaping at Lewis Park ranges from very good in the northern portion, to minimal in the central portion, to nonexistent in the southern portion. With some effort to tie the three sections together, Lewis Park could begin to serve everyone in the community much more efficiently.

The following are some of the facilities available at Lewis Park and the condition of each:

- \* baseball and softball (very poor)
- \* lighted tennis courts (very good)
- \* playgrounds (good)
- \* restrooms and showers (good)
- \* picnic tables (good)
- \* cooking grates (good)



- \* overnight trailer hookups (good)
- \* large open play spaces (excellent to poor)
- \* horseshoe pits (very poor)
- \* basketball (very poor)
- \* parking space (excellent)

Lewis Park deficiencies (Map 6)

\* No playground equipment in the central or southern portions of the park.

\* Horseshoe courts are located adjacent to the tot swings and other playground equipment causing a potentially hazardous conflict as they are now maintained.

\* Loop access road in northern portion of park that creates a dangerous conflict.

\* Canal separates southern section of park from central section with no pedestrian bridge.

\* There is little landscaping in the central and southern portions of the park.

\* There is no hard surface area for basketball.

\* The baseball and softball fields are in very poor condition.

\* There is a need for one or more additional ballfields.

Horseshoe courts in poor condition; need redesigning to clear up conflict with play areas.

There is a shortage of picnic tables.

Loop road creates dangerous conflict.

tot play area

restrooms  
ped. bridge

zorn st.

Lack of pedestrian bridges between central and southern portions of park.

Lack of playgrounds in central and southern portions of park.

Ball fields in extremely poor condition. More fields are needed.

undeveloped area

Very little to no landscaping in central and southern portions of park.

horseshoe courts

pavilions

ped. bridge

canal st.

playgrounds

pavilion

sanitary dump

4 tennis courts

There is not a uniform sign system.

undeveloped area

Better delineation of parking areas needed.

overnight camping

softball

Drainage is poor in this area.

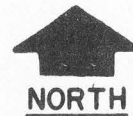
baseball

restroom/showers

no.2 canal

city yard

fire dept. training field



cole st.

Map 6. Lewis Park (deficiencies).

- \* There is no uniform sign system.
- \* Better delineation of parking areas needs to be made.
- \* There is a shortage of picnic tables.

Dearinger Park (Map 7)

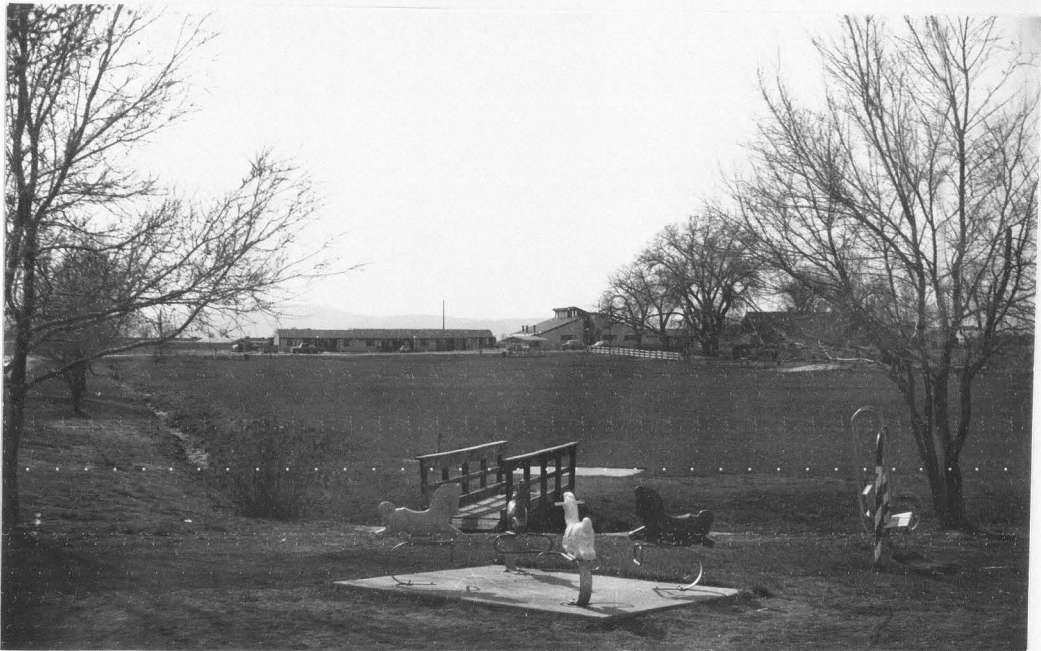
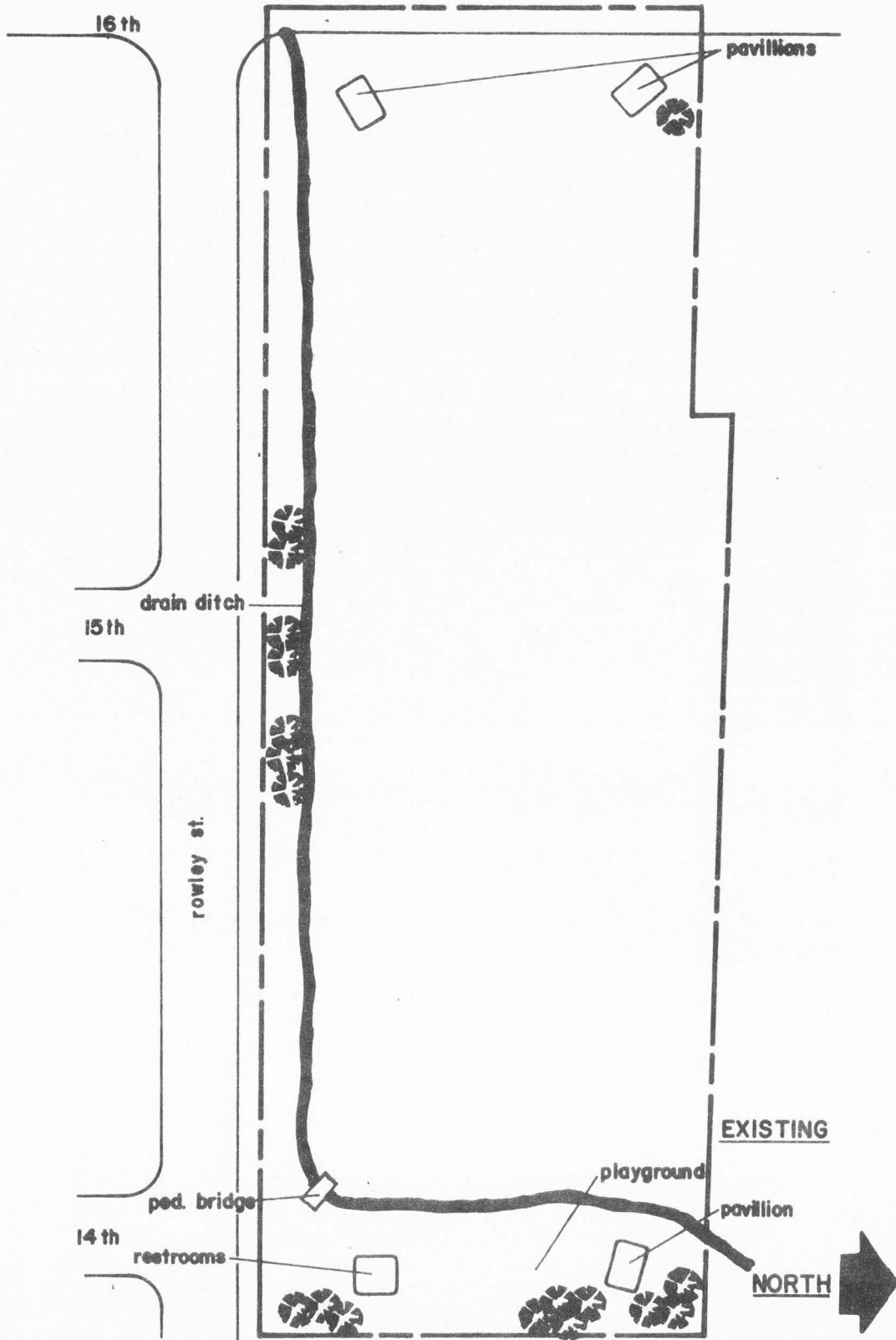


Photo 2. Dearinger Park

This park is located in the northern portion of Wheatland and consists of approximately five acres of land. The park presently serves primarily junior high and high school age groups although some elementary age children use the playground area. Because of its location and due to the lack of



Map 7. Dearinger Park (existing).

suitable open space at the junior high and high schools this park serves as a physical education area for those schools. It also is used as the high school's practice football field.

Recently the senior citizens housing was completed which is directly to the west of Dearinger Park. This should be taken into consideration in any future plans for this park, allowing for development compatible with some of their desires, i. e., benches, walks, shade areas, etc.

The park has never really been landscaped, other than installation of an underground sprinkler system and grass. There is a drainage ditch which runs along the south edge and then cuts across the east side of the park.

The following is a list of some of the facilities and their condition at Dearinger Park:

- \* playground equipment (good)
- \* restroom (good)
- \* picnic pavillion (good)
- \* large open space (good)
- \* cooking grill (good)
- \* parking (poor)
- \* landscaping (very poor)

The location of Dearinger Park is important as it serves the northern portion of Wheatland. As it now sits, it benefits primarily the Wheatland



school system. Possibly with the addition of picnic tables, tree plantings, walks, benches, horseshoe pits, and tennis courts it could better serve more people.

Dearinger Park deficiencies (Map 8)

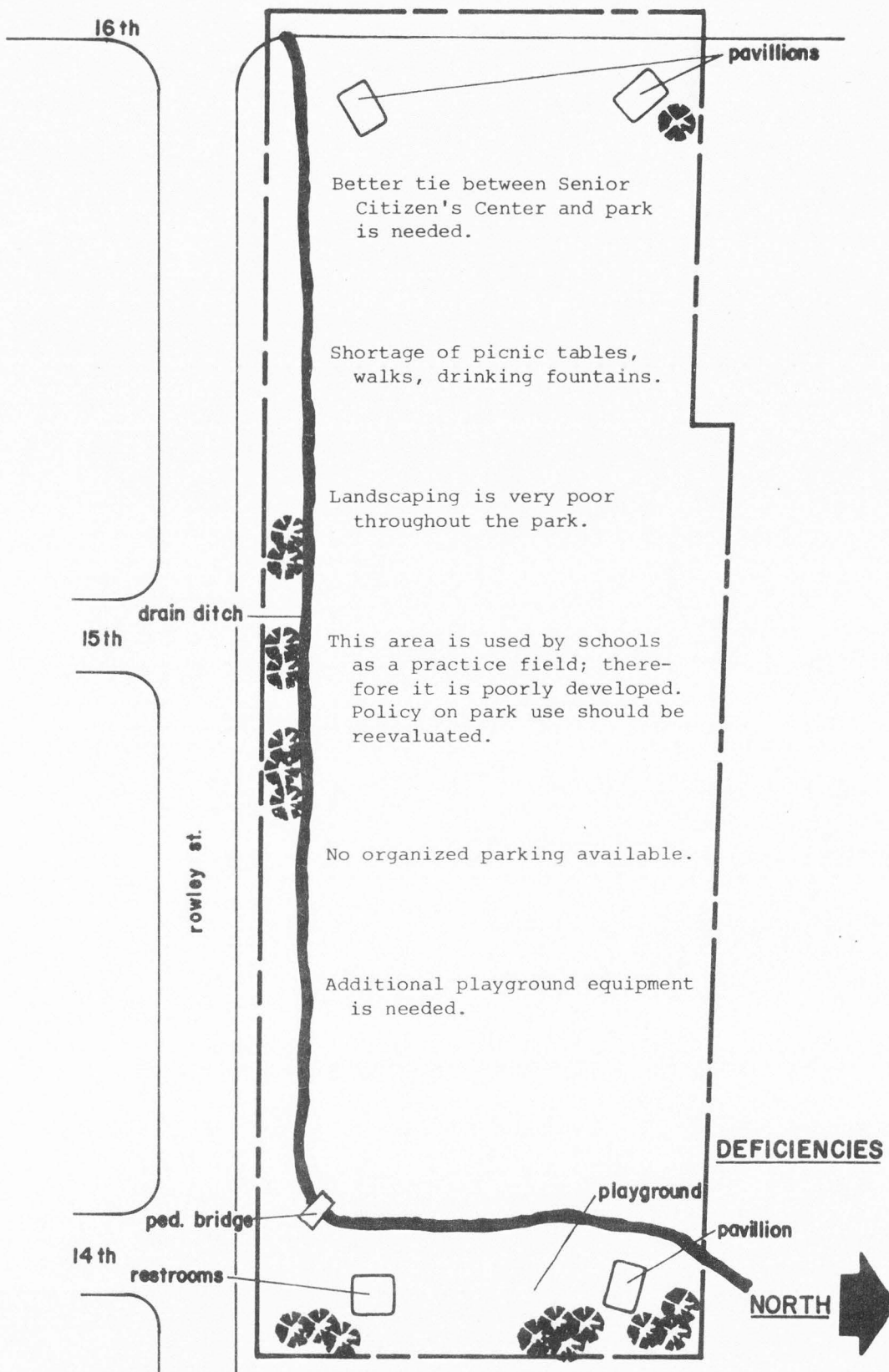
- \* Landscaping is non-existent.
- \* Shortage of picnic tables and benches.
- \* Shortage of drinking fountains
- \* Better tie between senior citizen housing and park should be made.
- \* No development with the senior citizen's needs in this park.
- \* Parking is unorganized.

Platte County Fairgrounds Park (Map 9)

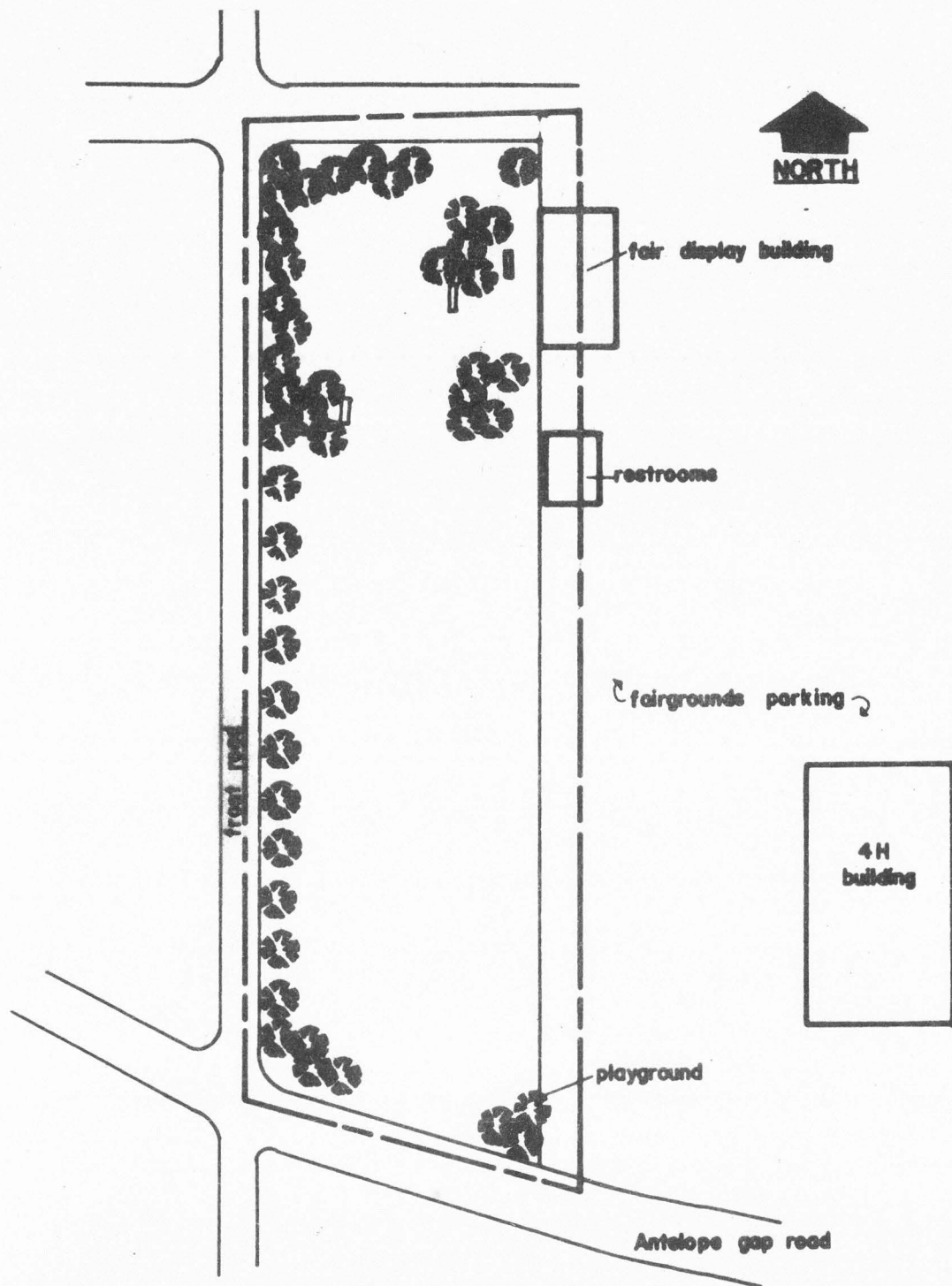


Photo 3. Platte County Fairgrounds Park.





Map 8. Dearinger Park (deficiencies).



Map 9. Fairground Park (existing).

This area is located one mile east of Wheatland and consists of 28 acres of land. A new area has recently been completed and much remodeling has occurred on its many buildings. There is a small park in the fairgrounds which serves the people who are attending the many summer functions related to the area. People living close to this area are all longtime residents of Wheatland and most have no children at home; therefore the park area receives very little use during the remainder of the year.

Fairgrounds Park deficiencies (Map 10)

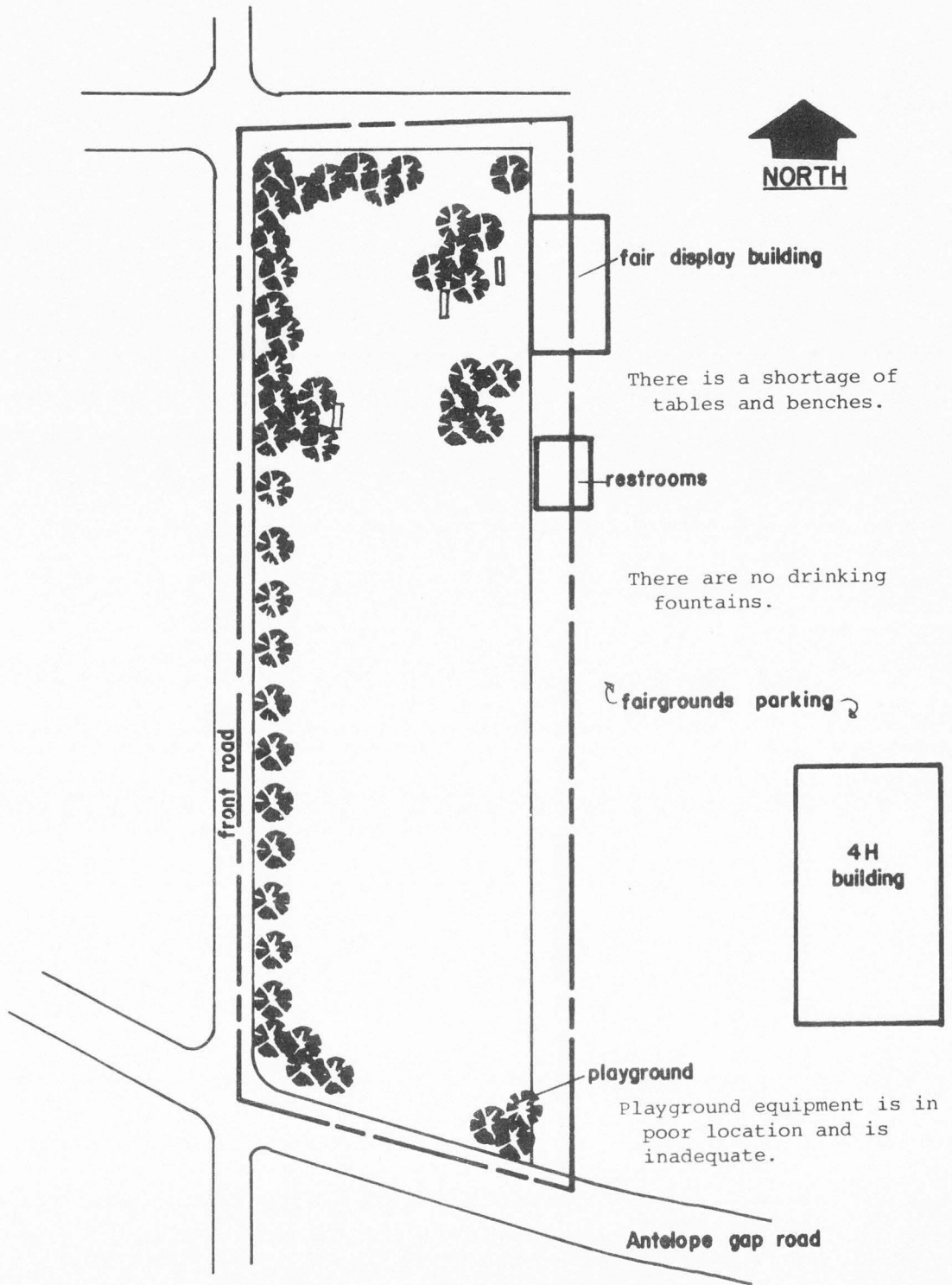
- \* playground equipment needs improvement
- \* not enough benches available
- \* playground poorly located

Black Mountain Recreation Center (Map 13)

The Black Mountain Recreation Center was developed by the Missouri Basin Power Project in cooperation with the Town of Wheatland to help minimize the impact of the power plant construction workforce on present Wheatland facilities. The Center is for use by only those people who are residents in Black Mountain Village or employed by the Project.

Some of the facilities available at the Recreation Center are:

- \* large meeting hall
- \* indoor swimming pool
- \* weight room



Map 10. Fairground Park (deficiencies).

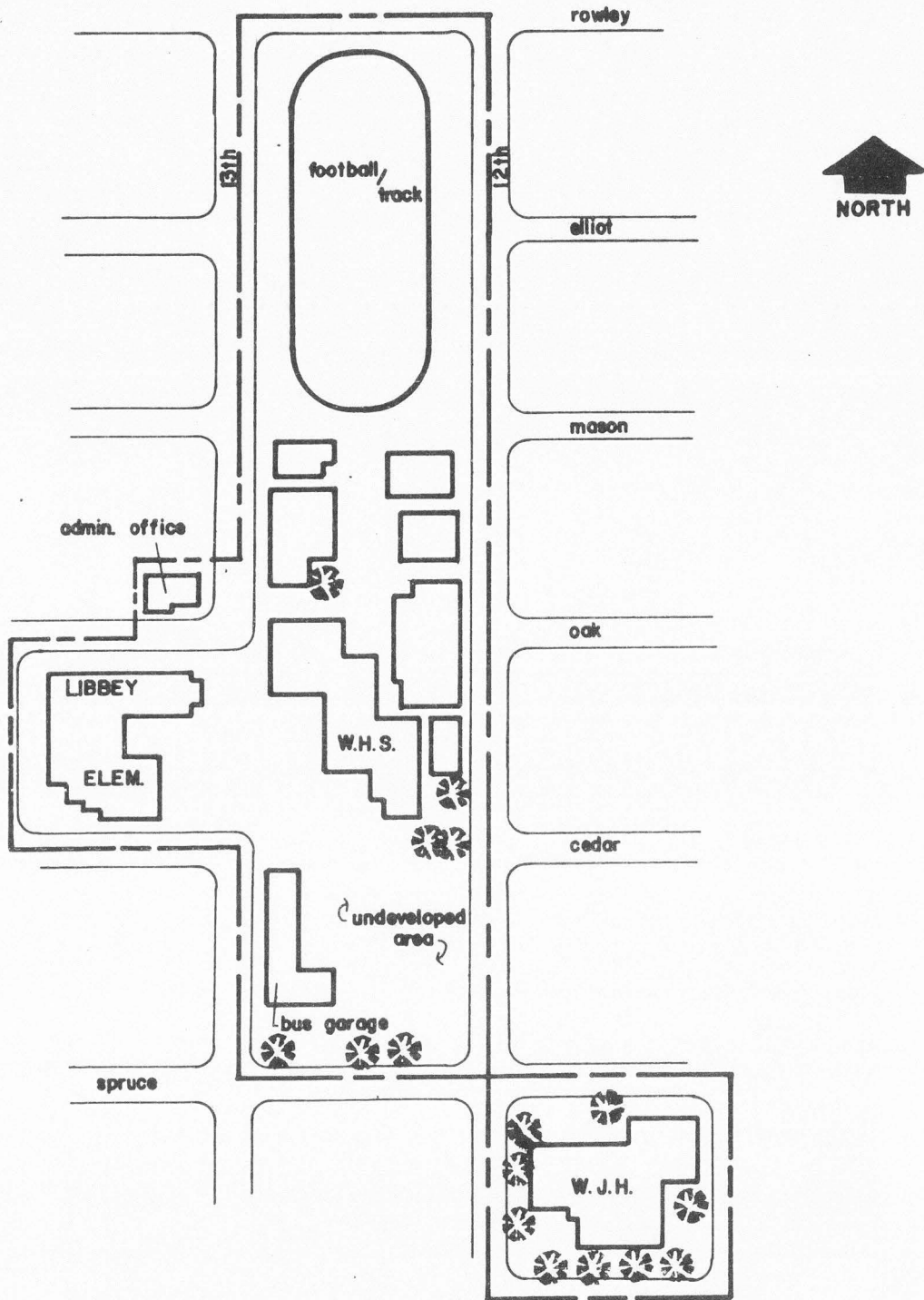
- \* pool room
- \* reading room
- \* saunas
- \* Jacuzzi
- \* locker rooms and showers
- \* day care center
- \* fenced outdoor recreation area
- \* two lighted tennis courts
- \* parking

School facilities (Maps 11 and 13)



Photo 4. Wheatland High School.





Map 11. Wheatland schools (existing).



School District number 1 provides many recreational opportunities for Wheatland area residents. Wheatland has an all new high school with a large gymnasium, handball and racquet ball courts, weight room, lighted football field and track, along with ample outdoor space for various activities. It also has a new auditorium with a seating capacity of 450 persons.



Photo 5. Wheatland Junior High School.

Wheatland Junior High has a large gymnasium for basketball and volleyball and a smaller all-purpose room, but no outdoor facilities for play.



Photo 6. Libbey Elementary School.

Libbey Elementary School has a small all purpose room and some playground equipment outside. There is some landscaping around the school.

West Elementary School, which just recently opened, has a new gymnasium, large developed play areas, a fenced softball field and playground equipment.

The public can use any of the exterior grounds at the schools throughout the year. The gymnasium facilities, weight room, and classrooms can be used only through recreation programs and extension classes. These are all regulated by the School Board which funds the present Recreation Department. School activities have priority over any Recreation Department program or



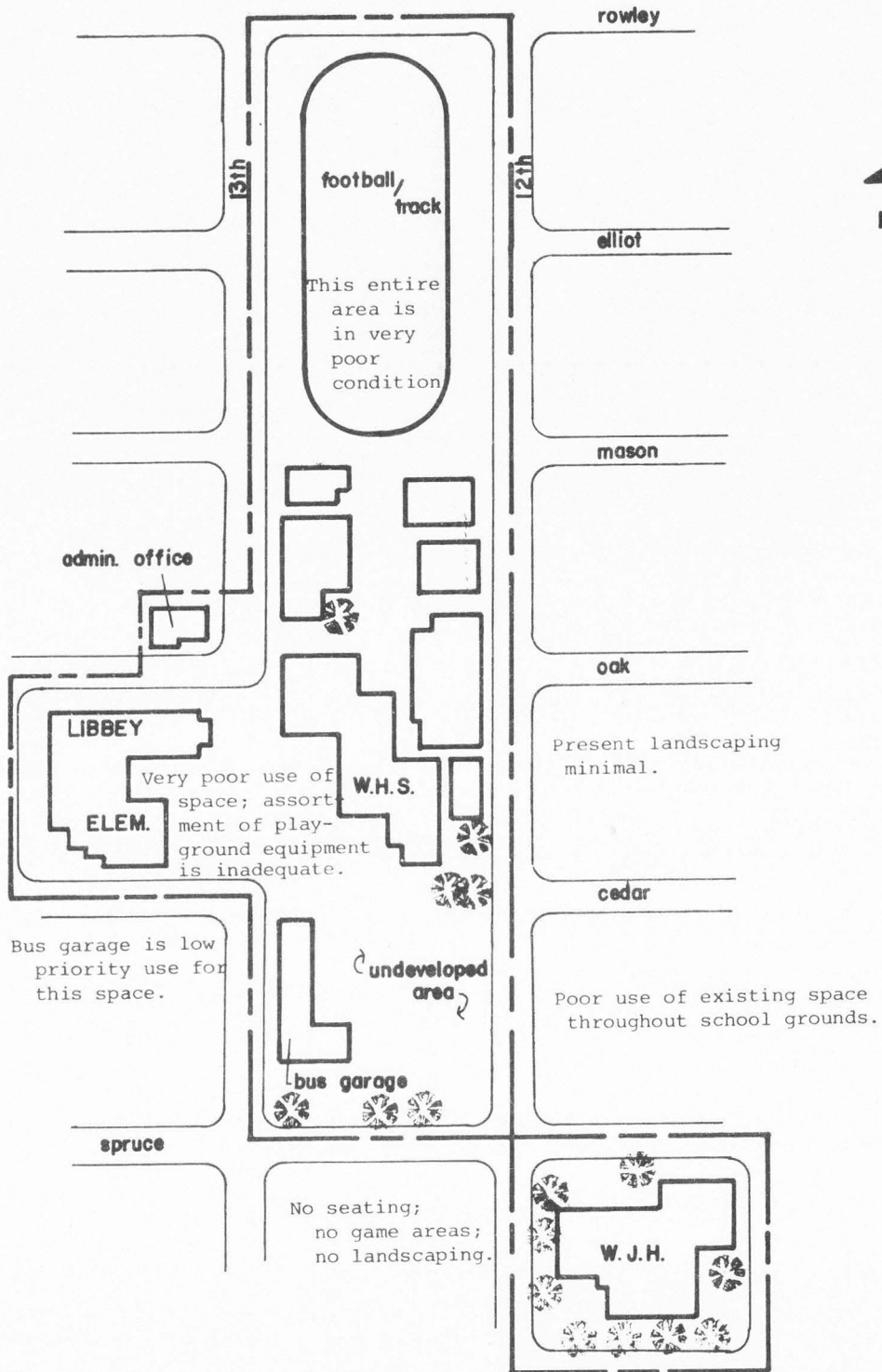
Photo 7. West Elementary School.

activity and when a conflict occurs the Recreation Department reschedules their classes or activities.

With the exception of West Elementary School, all of the Wheatland schools are in great need of landscaping and better organization of open space. The potential is tremendous and each could become a very attractive and useful development if properly planned.

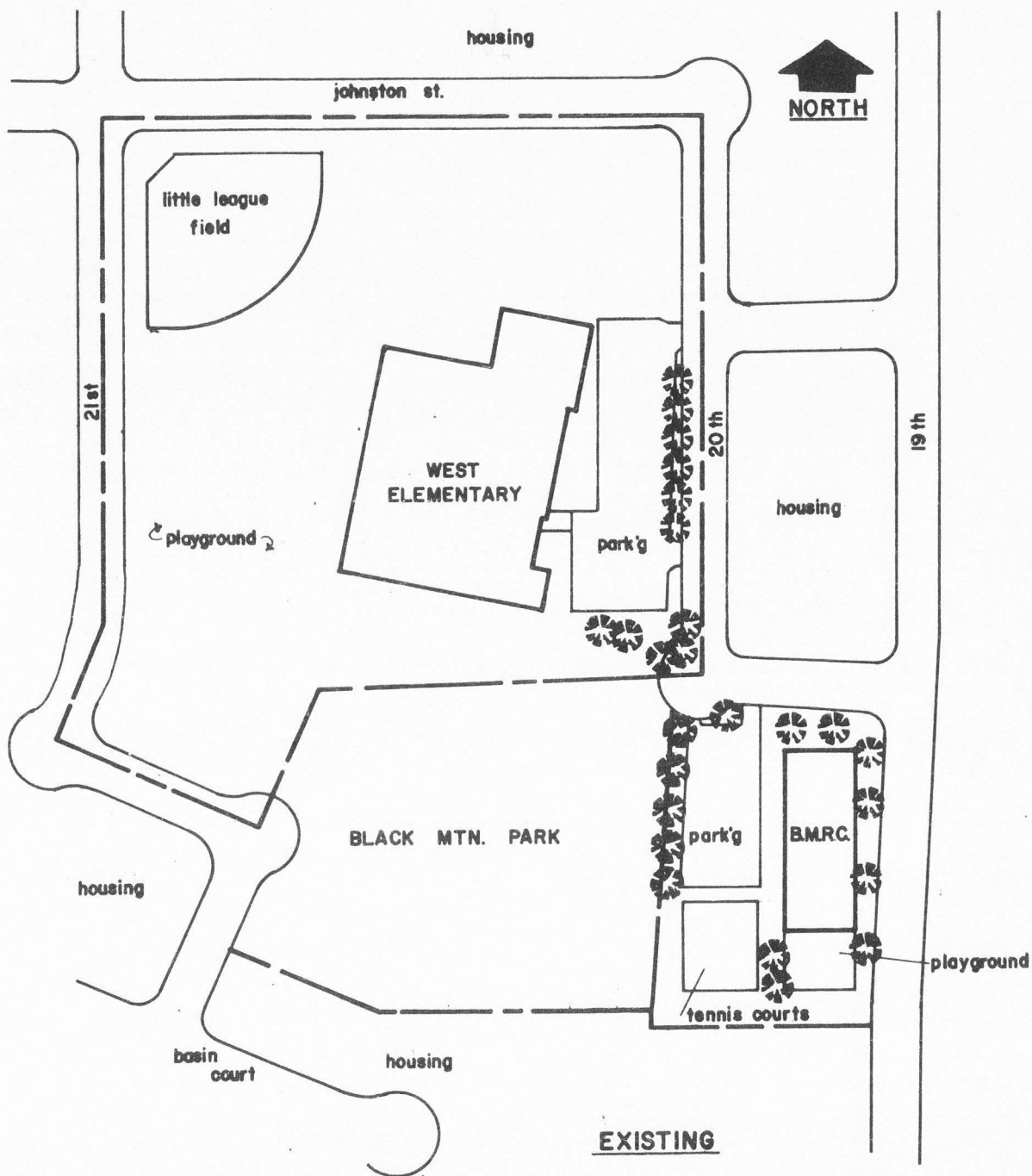
#### Wheatland High School deficiencies (Map 12)

- \* Poor landscaping around school.
- \* No tennis courts or hard surface areas near school.
- \* There is a need to improve sitting areas.
- \* Bus garage is located in very awkward place, using valuable space for a low priority function.



Map 12. Wheatland schools (deficiencies).





Map 13. West Elementary, Black Mountain Park, Black Mountain Recreation Center (existing).

- \* The track is in extremely poor condition and a better tie between football field and school would be helpful.

- \* There is a need for more organized parking.

Wheatland Junior High School  
deficiencies (Map 12)

- \* Exterior grounds of this school are in extremely poor condition including poor use of existing space.

- \* There are no hard surface areas for basketball, etc.

- \* Poor landscaping and no sitting areas offered.

Libbey Elementary School  
deficiencies (Map 12)

- \* Poor assortment of playground equipment in area.

- \* Poor use of existing space.

West Elementary School  
deficiencies (Map 14)

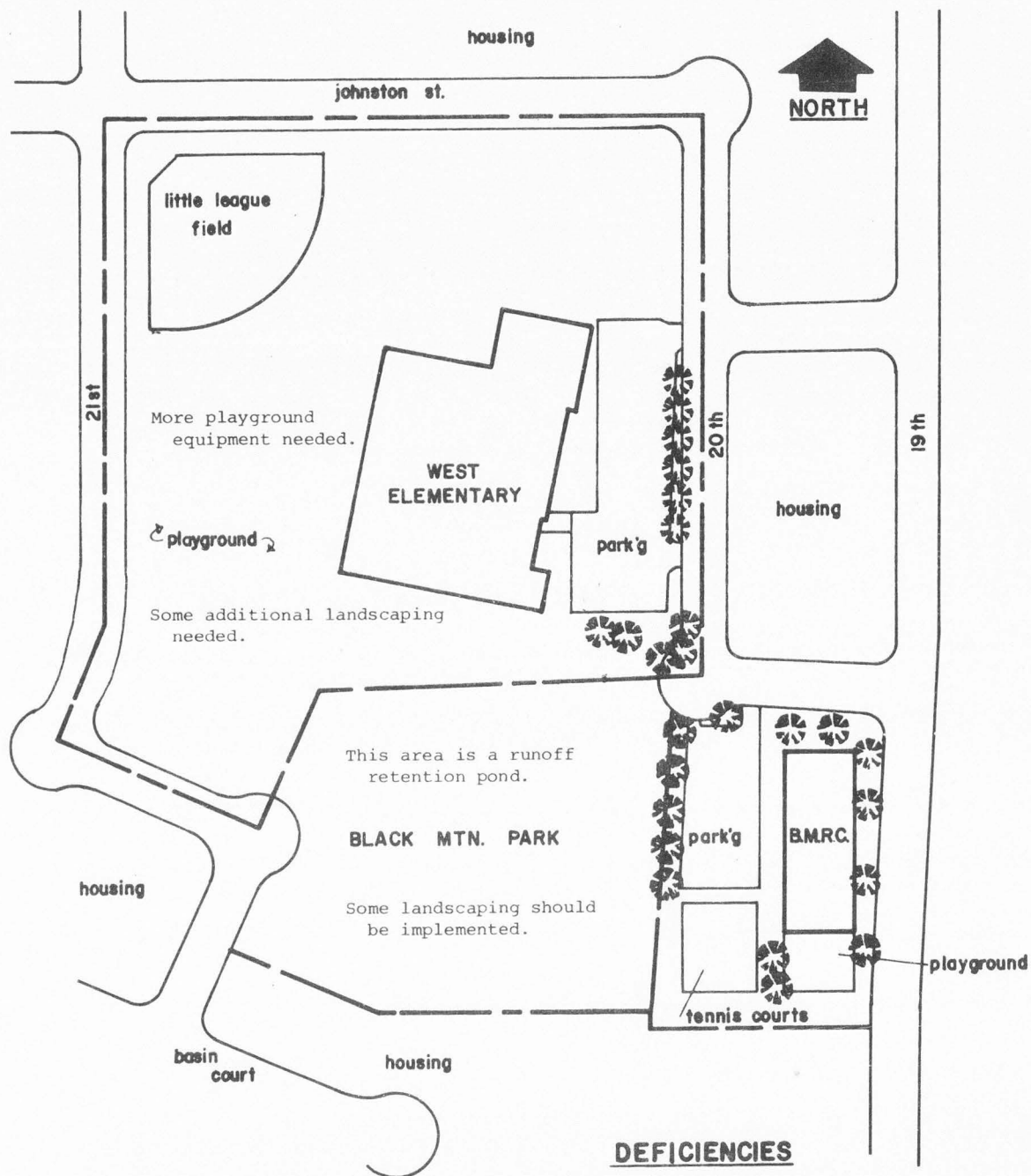
- \* This area is in need of more playground equipment.

- \* Needs additional landscaping.

Black Mountain Park (Map 13)

This is a small park, 4.5 acres in size, dedicated to the Town of Wheatland by the Missouri Basin Power Project. The area is a runoff control pond for Black Mountain Village and is completely grassed. Because of its





Map 14. West Elementary, Black Mountain Park, Black Mountain Recreation Center (deficiencies).

primary function as a control pond, no playground equipment or plantings are located here. It serves primarily as a field for peewee and adult softball and flag football programs.

Black Mountain Park  
deficiencies (Map 14)

\* Very little landscaping in this area.

Parks system in general

The Wheatland parks and recreation system presently has no strong unifying tie. Each park is independent from the other with no direct linkage. The system needs a series of bike paths or jogging trails which could provide the needed linkage and draw the parks closer together.

The major problem with this is working out agreements on usage of the various streets and the canal to locate such a system. Unclear jurisdiction as to who controls various streets in the town has caused problems between the city and State Highway Department in the past, as have problems between the town and the irrigation district over the Number 2 canal.

This is an area that should be given consideration in the formulation of the parks and recreation plan. All parties concerned should get together to discuss the problems and possibilities of developing the linkages discussed above.

### Wheatland Golf Course

Wheatland has a fine nine hole golf course which is owned and operated by the Wheatland Golf Club. The course is in very good condition although there is little chance of its expansion to 18 holes because of the land use surrounding the area.

### Wheatland swimming pool

\* The municipal pool has been condemned and closed so community is now without public pool facilities.

### Downtown area

\* There is a need to improve the appearance of the downtown area. Tree plantings and some benches are needed.

\* The Shopper's Park is in very poor condition.

### Parks and Recreation Department

Presently the Town of Wheatland does not operate a recreation department, but is served by School District Number 1's Recreation Department. This Department is governed by the Platte County Recreation Board, which consists of eight members who are in turn responsible to the District's School Board.

The Recreation Department presently has a full-time director, full-time sports director, full-time program director and one secretary. It also uses

students majoring in recreation at the University of Wyoming on an internship basis whenever possible. The Recreation Department is financed by School District number 1 and serves all communities within the boundaries of the District.

During the summer months the Recreation Department organizes the Wheatland, Glendo and Chugwater ball programs and offers various classes such as tennis, swimming, etc. In the winter months they organize and run men and women's volleyball and basketball programs and various community interest classes.

#### Parks and Recreation Department deficiencies

\* Lack of proper facilities makes it difficult to carry out many programs and activities.

\* Poor cooperation between the City, County and School District create problems with development of facilities and operation of programs.

\* Low operating budget.

#### Commercial recreation facilities

Wheatlanes. Wheatland's bowling alley has twelve lanes, pool tables, pinball machines, food service, pro shop and restrooms. It is located between Highway 87 and I-25. It is used heavily year round.

Cinema West. The movie theater is five years old and seats approximately 265 people.

Diamond Guest Ranch. This ranch is located 37 miles southwest of Chugwater. It offers camping and lodging facilities, with a restaurant and bar. There is a wide range of activities such as swimming, trail rides, fishing, etc. available to guests. In the past years this has been a very popular place for not only visitors to the area but local people as well.

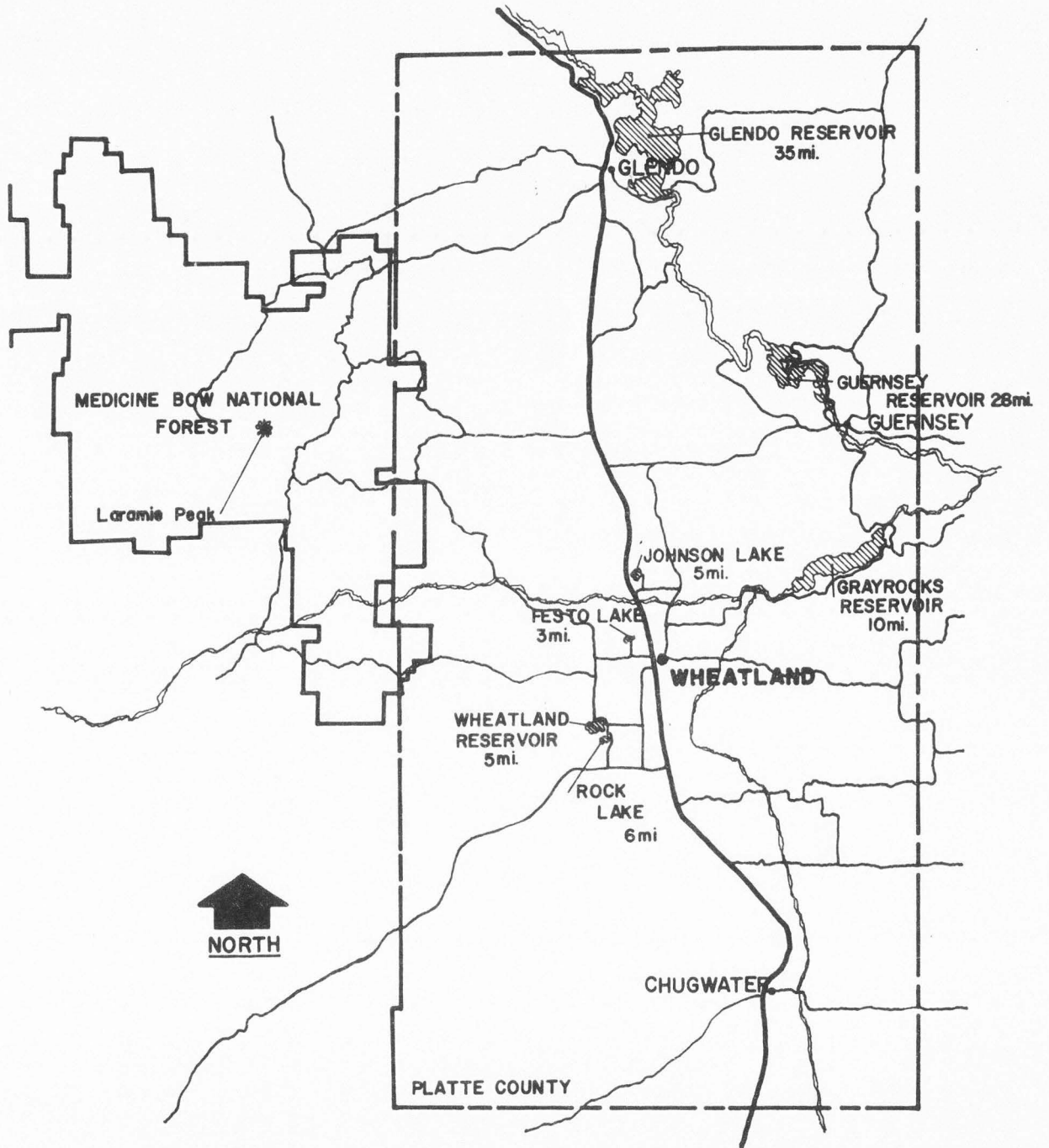
Maple Street Mall. This mini-shopping mall houses an arcade which has pool tables, foosball, pinball and many other games which young people can play.

#### Existing Area Recreation Facilities

Wheatland is very fortunate to have several fine lakes and recreational areas within a short distance. These areas satisfy many of the recreational needs of the community and county residents, thus supplementing the parks and recreation system of Wheatland. Map 15 shows the location of these lakes and areas relative to Wheatland.

#### Festo Lake (Joseph A. Elliott Memorial Park) (Map 15)

Festo Lake is located three miles northwest of Wheatland and is under the jurisdiction of Platte County. There are approximately 77 acres of land and water in the park makeup. This area has picnic areas, restrooms and



Map 15. Area lakes.



trailer hookups, all of which are in very poor condition. The lake fluctuates very little as it is not used for irrigation purposes. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has designated the southwest portion of the lake as a waterfowl refuge. No motorized boats are allowed on the lake because of this refuge. The primary uses of this area are hunting and fishing. The largest problem this park is experiencing is vandalism, which is attributed to the relatively low use and secluded location (7).

#### Johnson Lake (Map 15)

This lake is located five miles north of Wheatland and is administered by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. It is open to the public for fishing and picnicing. This lake is a popular swimming area in the summer and has restroom facilities, boat ramp and picnic tables. It is used for water skiing and canoeing in the summer and ice skating and ice fishing in the winter months (7).

#### Grayrocks Reservoir (Map 15)

In conjunction with the Missouri Basin Power Project a new dam is being constructed on the Laramie River, approximately ten miles southeast of Wheatland. It will be used for both fishing and recreation. The power project has entered into a contract with the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission who will be responsible for the supervision of facilities developed at the Reservoir. There will be picnic areas, boat launching ramps and wildlife

reserves at the site. The storage capacity of the Reservoir will be 104,000 acre feet of water and the surface area will be 3,547 acres.

#### Rock Lake (Map 15)

This area is located six miles southwest of Wheatland. It is a public hunting and fishing area, but is not a popular picnic place due to the location, lack of trees and poor facilities.

#### Wheatland Reservoir (Map 15)

The Wheatland Reservoir was built and is maintained by the Wheatland Irrigation District. It is a popular swimming and water skiing area with a boat ramp and some picnic facilities. Toward the end of the summer the drawdown precludes many activities.

### Regional Parks

#### Glendo State Park (Map 15)

Glendo State Park is located 35 miles, or 45 minutes driving time, north of Wheatland. It consists of 12,500 acres of water and 11,500 acres of land. A full range of marina services, including boat rental and repair, fishing equipment and bait, guides, lodging, a restaurant and groceries is available. Float trips on the North Platte River can also be arranged at the marina. Other activities popular here are swimming, camping,

picnicing, hiking, canoeing, sailing and water skiing. Glendo State Park is complete with interior roads, parking areas, tent and trailer spaces, cabin sites, picnic grounds, swimming beaches and boat ramps to serve the public and is open year-round.

Of the many boating areas in Wyoming, Glendo State Park ranks fifth in popularity with out-of-state boaters and seventh in popularity with Wyoming residents, according to a 1974 report.

#### Guernsey State Park (Map 15)

Guernsey State Park is located on the North Platte River two miles north of Guernsey and 28 miles northeast of Wheatland or 30 minutes driving time. It consists of 2,386 acres of water and 6,800 acres of land. The primary purpose of the reservoir is to regulate the water in the North Platte River, and toward the end of the irrigation season the reservoir experiences extreme drawdowns which preclude year-round water activities.

Motor boating, water skiing, swimming and canoeing are the most common water activities. Facilities for camping and picnicing are provided, and a museum is also located near the lake. Hiking is becoming more popular in this park due to the unique topography and geological formations.

Guernsey State Park is ranked eleventh of the Wyoming boating areas visited by out-of-state boaters according to a 1974 report.

### Medicine Bow ski area

This area is located in the Medicine Bow National Forest. It is a two hour drive from Wheatland and offers very good skiing for beginners and intermediate skiers. The ski area has a lodge with eating, bar and restroom facilities. The area also has a ski rental shop and ski school.

All other ski areas are at least a four hour drive, most being located in Colorado. Because of this, Medicine Bow Ski Area is very popular with Wheatland residents.

### Medicine Bow National Forest

Portions of the Medicine Bow National Forest lie along the western edge of Platte County in the Laramie Range. These National Forest lands are of great importance to public fishing and hunting grounds in Wyoming and comprise approximately 179,316 acres.

Campgrounds in the Medicine Bow Forest were originally designed for tent camping; however, many have been enlarged and redesigned to accommodate travel trailers and pickup campers. New campgrounds accommodate trailers up to 18 feet in length. These camping areas are becoming increasingly crowded each year, the main reason being the overcrowded conditions of parks and recreational areas in Colorado and the lack of facilities in western Nebraska. More and more people are coming from these areas each year to avoid the crowds in their own area.

National forest trails are for hiking, horseback riding and two-wheel motor vehicles, although some are designated for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. These trails are presently not maintained during the winter months.

The Forest Service lands and secondary primitive roads may be used by four-wheel drive vehicles, although this is being limited more and more. Outfitting for saddle and pack trips is available in some areas.

Fishing is popular on several of the rivers that flow through or near the Medicine Bow National Forest lands in Platte County. Brown trout and rainbow trout are taken from both the Laramie and North Platte rivers. Camping facilities and lodging is available near the Laramie River (7).

#### Historic Sites

As was mentioned in Chapter I, Wheatland and Platte County are rich in history. A number of historically significant sites are located in and around Wheatland. Some of these sites are listed on the National Register of Historical Places. There are many others which are equally historically important but have not been listed to date. The following is a list and description of historic and archeological sites (7):



### Fort Laramie National Monument

This park is located approximately 40 miles east of Wheatland, three miles southwest of the town of Fort Laramie. It is a landmark of the old west and is a very popular tourist area. This fort was used extensively by fur trappers in the 1830s. It later became an important military post which protected the overland trails. This Fort is in excellent condition and hosts a number of activities during the summer months. This site is listed in the National Register of Historical Places.

### Register Cliff

This area, which is located southeast of Guernsey, was a camping area for those emigrants going west from Fort Laramie. The cliff rises over 100 feet above the valley floor of the North Platte River. The travelers would etch their names in the soft limestone, leaving a permanent record of emigrants who passed through the area. This site also is listed on the National Register of Historical Places (7).

### Oregon Trail Ruts

This site is located one-half mile south of Guernsey. These ruts cut deep into the sandstone along the North Platte River providing evidence of the many thousands of emigrants which used the Oregon Trail. This site is listed on the National Register of Historical Places (7).



Swan Land and Cattle Company

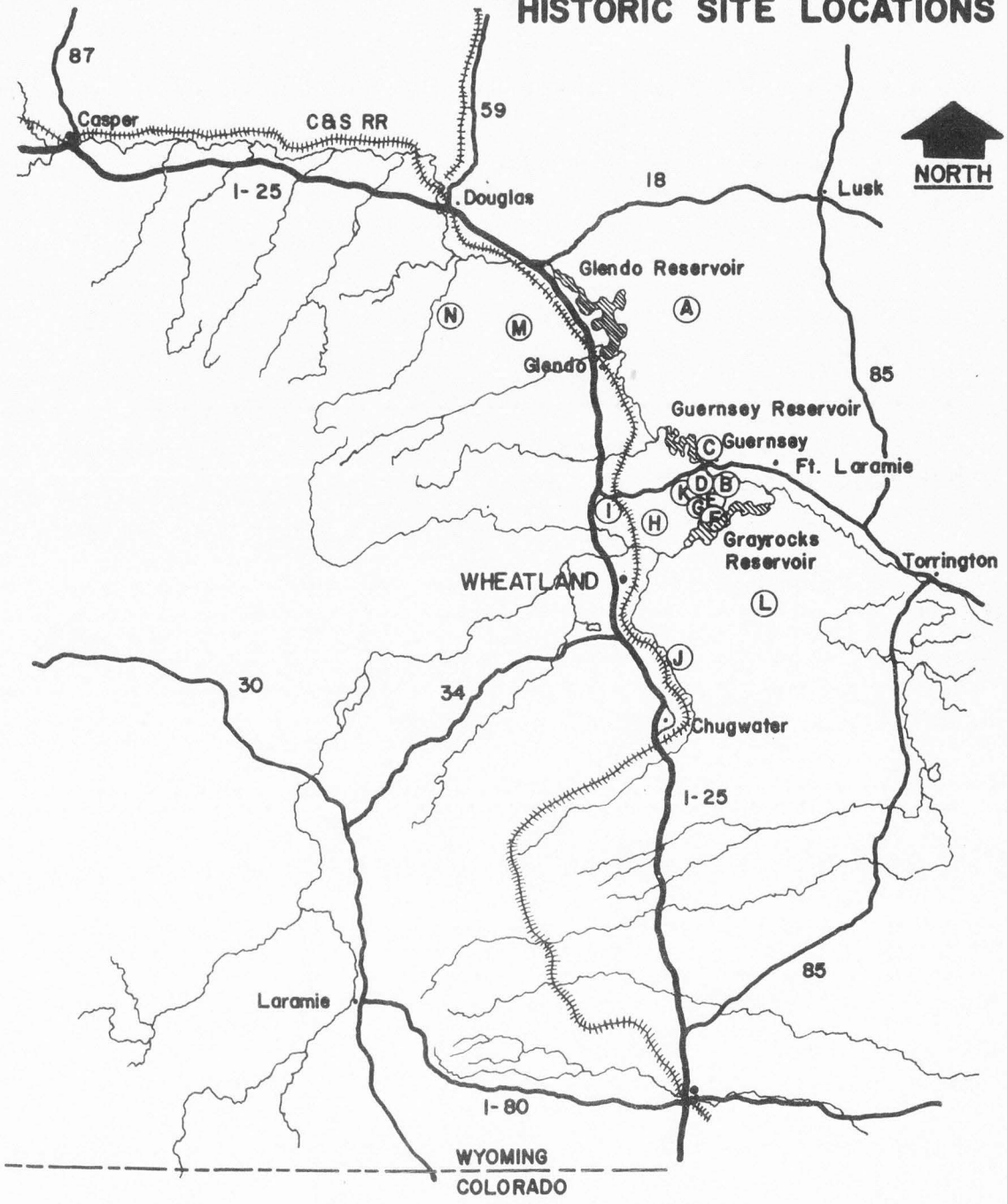
This cattle company, the largest in the area, was formed in 1883 by a Scottish-based company. The main headquarters was located at Chugwater, 27 miles south of Wheatland. This site is listed on the National Register of Historical Places (7).

There are many other areas close to Wheatland that are historically significant but have yet to be placed on the historical register. The following is a list of some of these areas and Map 16 shows the location.

The following is a summary of amenities presently provided in the parks and recreation system and the condition of each:

	<u>Amenity Provided</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Children	1. Playground equipment	- Good
	2. Large play area	- Excellent
	3. Sand play areas	- Poor
	4. Roller skating	- Poor
	5. Sledding	- Good
	6. Swimming	- Not available
	7. Restrooms	- Good
	8. Drinking fountains	- Good
	9. Recreation programs	- Good

# HISTORIC SITE LOCATIONS



- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A. Spanish Diggings                | H. DeBillier Teschmacher Ranch     |
| B. Mexican Hill                    | I. Jacques LaRame Monument         |
| C. Fairbank Smelter                | J. Bordeaux Station / Hunton Ranch |
| D. Prehistoric Indian Village      | K. Chug Springs / Cold Springs     |
| E. Lucindy Rollins Grave           | L. Eagle's Nest                    |
| F. Sand Point Pony Express Station | M. Elk Horn Station                |
| G. Warm Springs                    | N. Barrel Hoops Site               |

Map 16. Historic site locations.

	<u>Amenity Provided</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Teens	1. Baseball/softball fields	- Poor
	2. Large open space	- Excellent
	3. Hard surface court areas (basketball, etc.)	- Good
	4. Tennis courts	- Good
	5. Picnic tables	- Good
	6. Weight equipment	- Poor
	7. Swimming pool	- Not available
	8. Roller skating	- Poor
	9. Ice skating	- Not available
	10. Sledding	- Good
	11. Horseshoe pits	- Poor
	12. Bike paths	- Not available
	13. Gymnasiums	- Very good
	14. Rest rooms	- Good
	15. Drinking fountains	- Good
	16. Benches	- Poor
	17. Parking	- Good
	18. Cooking grates	- Good
	19. Recreation programs	- Good
	20. Golf course	- Excellent

	<u>Amenity Provided</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Adults	1. Tennis courts	- Good
	2. Hard surface court areas	- Good
	3. Benches	- Poor
	4. Picnic tables	- Good
	5. Cooking grates	- Good
	6. Horseshoe pits	- Poor
	7. Baseball/softball fields	- Poor
	8. Large open space	- Excellent
	9. Restrooms	- Good
	10. Drinking fountains	- Good
	11. Recreation programs	- Good
	12. Parking	- Good
	13. Gymnasiums	- Very Good
	14. Bike paths	- Not available
	15. Weight equipment	- Poor
	16. Golf course	- Excellent
	17. Swimming pool	- Not available
Senior Citizens	1. Benches	- Poor
	2. Picnic tables	- Good
	3. Cooking grates	- Good
	4. Recreation programs	- Good
	5. Drinking fountains	- Good

<u>Amenity Provided</u>	<u>Condition</u>
6. Horseshoe pits	- Poor
7. Court games	- Not available
8. Bike paths	- Not available
9. Golf course	- Excellent
10. Meeting hall	- Excellent

The present parks and recreation system is deficient in several areas. Wheatland no longer has a swimming pool, the ball fields are in rundown condition and are inadequate to meet present demands, there is a shortage of playground equipment in existing parks, and general landscape quality could be improved throughout the park system.

A greater effort to recognize the recreational needs and desires of the senior citizens must be made. Presently there are few recreational opportunities available to them.

A more concerted effort of cooperation by the school district, county commissioners, and Town of Wheatland must be made. It is impossible to have everyone working in different directions and hope to accomplish anything productive in parks and recreation development.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PLAN

The preceding chapters have established the necessary foundation upon which a parks and recreation plan can now be developed. The plan will strive to create a balance between areas, facilities and recreational programs, based on the desires of all the residents of Wheatland and its outlying areas. This plan will also encourage public agencies and community leaders to work together and innovatively create the optimum parks and recreation system.

Random recreation development is costly in terms of deficiencies, duplications and improper location of recreational facilities or programs. Wheatland has, in the past, maintained and operated a park system which was suitable and had appeal to the residents of the community. The Town now is in the middle of a period of rapid growth with a much broader demand for parks and recreation facilities.

Consideration must also be given for the differences in recreational requirements of all permanent long time residents of Wheatland and the temporary workforce population. It would be unrealistic for Wheatland to implement an extensive recreation plan for the present population with the knowledge that it will soon see a dramatic decrease in the population.

The surveys have indicated that most of the demands or requests for upgraded or additional facilities have come from the long time residents of Wheatland, with relatively few requests from the induced population. The main reason for this was the advanced planning of the Missouri Basin Power Project and construction of the Black Mountain Recreation Center to relieve pressure on local recreation.

Wheatland must be careful not to overdevelop its recreation system. The plan must be realistic and all facilities, programs, etc. should be a direct result of community needs, the ability to adequately use, maintain and finance them. It should be pointed out that a few well-located and planned parks and facilities which are indicative of community needs will develop a precedent for high quality. Proper location, quality design, construction and maintenance, not quantity, are the key contributing factors in a well-rounded parks and recreation system.

The residents of Wheatland have exhibited a great deal of interest in several areas. They have voiced their opinion for the need for a new indoor swimming pool. They also have shown a desire to have additional ball fields built to satisfy present demands. More playground equipment in parks is needed and the areas around the schools need to be put to more efficient use. More attention needs to be given the senior citizen's recreational needs and additional parks are needed in the North Fertig and Allison sub-divisions.

Many residents feel a community recreation complex is needed in Wheatland. A better working relationship between the various governing bodies is viewed as necessary if anything is to be accomplished by the Recreation Department.

In order to achieve this level of development, consideration must be given to the community goals and objectives expressed by residents, groups and local officials. The general goal for Wheatland is as follows: Wheatland must develop a parks and recreation system which will be responsive to the projected desires of all sectors of its ultimate population.

The development of a system of this nature must progress gradually and with respect to the population and community needs. At this point more specific goals and objectives become necessary. The following are some of the specific goals as indicated by residents of Wheatland:

- \* To reorganize the Parks and Recreation Department and the Recreation Board.
- \* To establish a better working relationship between the City, County and School District No. 1 with regard to recreational planning, in order to avoid costly duplication.
- \* To establish priorities for future parks and recreation system development.
- \* To upgrade all school grounds to promote year-round use.
- \* To establish high standards for present and future development of park facilities, programs and equipment in the recreation system.

- \* To construct a new athletic complex to meet community needs.
- \* To meet the needs of the Senior Citizens.
- \* To develop a greater variety of winter-oriented activities.
- \* To develop a downtown improvement plan.
- \* To increase the Parks and Recreation Department's operating budget.

The proposed parks and recreation plan is a synthesis of the recreational needs and desires as expressed by the residents of Wheatland. The plan also anticipates future parks and recreation needs as shown by projected population trends, land use patterns, etc. The significant features of the plan are as follows.

\* The development of a new indoor swimming pool complex. Since the closing of Wheatland's outdoor swimming pool this past summer the community is without adequate facilities. The community has long expressed a need for this type of complex and all efforts should be made to find the most suitable location for the facility.

\* Development of a new baseball/softball complex in Lewis Park. This is another area in which Wheatland's recreation facilities is lagging behind. The town is presently using its existing ball fields at their maximum. Scheduling of games is becoming more and more difficult and some games are even being played on private lots. The community is in need of a well-designed and functional ball complex which will serve the summer ball program much more efficiently.

\* Expansion and redevelopment of school grounds at Wheatland High School, Libbey Elementary and the Wheatland Junior High School. The school grounds are in need of much work if they are to ever serve the community, not to mention the School District. These schools are the worst offenders as the majority of land outside the buildings is utilized very little or not at all. The grounds, with proper design could tie the school complex together and become useful not only to the teacher and students but to the surrounding area as a neighborhood park when school is not in session. This also could reduce costs as the city and school could join forces and enter into joint development.

\* Development of plans for all of Wheatland's parks. This is very important if Wheatland is to have an orderly and usable parks and recreation system. Without giving proper planning and design considerations for each park, future development will be chaotic, non-functional and expensive.

\* Study and develop a plan for the better use of Number 2 canal in Wheatland. The Number 2 canal bisects Wheatland and is serving no use or value to the community. Its main function is to take irrigation water during the summer months from Wheatland Reservoir to farms east of town. As the canal is situated it has many potential uses, i. e., bike path, jogging trail, etc. It creates the greatest conflict where it cuts through Lewis Park; therefore it should be studied very closely when a plan for Lewis Park is formulated. Possible changes in the canal could be enclosing it in an



underground tube to remove the conflict or possibly widening it through Lewis Park and creating more of a stream effect than canal effect.

\* Development of small park/playground areas in the North Fertig and the Allison additions to provide the people living in those subdivisions closer recreational opportunities. These areas are isolated from all other existing parks and are in need of this type of facility.

\* Development of a better tie between existing recreation areas. This could be accomplished through the use of bikeways. The Number 2 canal could serve as the main artery with paths radiating at various points via streets to the different parks, schools, etc. This not only would help unify the parks and recreation system but would establish areas of regular bike travel which would add to the safety of the bike rider. A plan of this nature would require the cooperation of city, county, and state governments, as well as the Wheatland Irrigation District, and would be extremely beneficial to the residents of Wheatland.

\* Map 17 further illustrates the proposed parks and recreation plan.

### Implementation

As I have pointed out in this study, recreational desires vary as do location of facilities. It is for this reason that it is not the responsibility of one body to support everything. Facilities located in the town are used by those who reside in the country. Conversely, those activities such as



FERTIG NORTH SUBDIVISION

\*Small playground should be constructed here.

DEARINGER PARK (See Map 7)

\*More benches and picnic tables are needed.

\*Landscaping plans should be developed for this park.

\*Tennis courts should be built at this location.

\*Facilities for senior citizens are needed here: horseshoe courts, shuffleboard courts, walks, benches, and drinking fountains.

LIBBEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (See Map 11)

\*More playground equipment is needed here.

\*Redesign of grounds is needed.

\*A separation from the high school open space should be made.

HIGHWAY RIGHT OF WAY

\*This area should be landscaped to help enhance the area.

ALLISON ADDITION

\*A small playground should be constructed here.

WEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (See Map 13)

\*Additional plantings should be installed.

\*More playground equipment needed.

BLACK MOUNTAIN PARK (See Map 13)

\*Additional plantings should be installed.

BLACK MOUNTAIN RECREATION CENTER (See Map 13)

\*This could be utilized by more residents of Wheatland. Town and power project should work together toward joint use.

WHEATLAND HIGH SCHOOL (See Map 11)

\*Track and football field should be renovated.

\*Designated parking areas are needed.

\*Bus garage should be moved and all existing areas not improved should be put into grass and play fields.

\*At least two tennis courts should be built here.

\*Location for new swimming pool complex.

\*Grounds need to be organized for better use.

WHEATLAND JUNIOR HIGH (See Map 11)

\*Exterior area should be redesigned.

This area needs a paved area with benches. It should be landscaped to help give pride and identity to the students.

\*Hard-surface areas are needed for basketball and other activities.

\*Grassed areas for passive activities are also necessary.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

\*Downtown improvement plan should be developed.

NUMBER 2 CANAL

\*A pedestrian bike trail should be constructed along the canal.

\*In conjunction with this trail, a jogging (vita course) could be developed.

FAIRGROUNDS PARK (See Map 9)

\*More playground equipment should be placed in small park.

\*More benches and tables are needed.

\*Additional landscaping necessary.

LEWIS PARK (See Map 5)

\*Ballfields need to be moved and a complex (softball/hardball) should be constructed in southern portion of the park.

\*Possible winter activities (sledding) could be located in southern portion of the park.

\*More playground equipment should be installed.

\*Designated parking areas must be established.

\*Horseshoe area should be relocated to western portion of central park area, or redesigned to be more compatible with play area nearby.

\*More benches and picnic tables are needed.

\*Landscaping plan is needed.

PROPOSED PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

MAP 17

NORTH



hunting, boating, camping, etc. are used by those people residing in the town. Recreation areas are used interchangeably. If the burden of developing a recreation plan is placed solely on the Town of Wheatland, very little progress can be expected in filling the recreational needs of the residents of the area.

The Platte County Parks and Recreation Board should be given the responsibility for the development of this plan and they should be supported by the School District, County, Commissioners and the Town of Wheatland.

The Platte County Parks and Recreation Board should, with the cooperation of the City, County and School District, assume the responsibility and direct the development and operation of all the parks and recreation areas within its jurisdiction. The maintenance of these parks should be handled by the Town of Wheatland because they are equipped to do this sort of work.

#### Priorities

Since it is impractical, if not impossible, for a community to realize all of its goals immediately, it becomes necessary to establish a developmental sequence of action in accordance with the plan.

\* Studies should be made concerning the development, re-development and maintenance of all existing parks, seeking a high standard which will better serve the community. All aspects of design should be taken into account during these studies, such as cost, layout, landscaping, signs, equipment and phasing, so the total recreational needs will be met.

- \* A detailed design study for the development of the Number 2 canal.

This study should involve all parties with jurisdiction over the use of this canal.

- \* Long range plan for the development of Wheatland High School, Libbey Elementary and Junior High School grounds as neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

- \* Long range plan for the clean-up and beautification of the downtown area, the area west of 16th street from South Street to the south Interstate off ramp, and the area around the water towers.

- \* The immediate construction of a small park/playground in both the Allison and North Fertig Additions.

- \* Immediate plans for the development of a new indoor pool facility, preferably in conjunction with the Platte County School District number 1.

- \* Plans for a new softball/baseball complex with construction to begin as soon as possible.

- \* When developing plans for Wheatland's parks, special attention should be taken to assure that the needs of the Senior Citizens are met. This is most important in Dearing Park, as it is located directly to the east of the new Senior Citizens complex.

## CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY

If Wheatland is to reach its goal of a unified and complete recreation and park system, all governing bodies in Wheatland and Platte County must learn to work together. The plan will only be as effective as those who implement it. If the different agencies fail to consult one another and proceed in different directions, all the residents of the area can expect is a patchwork system which will not serve them well.

The Parks and Recreation Board should be given the responsibility of overseeing all phases of the development of the parks and recreation system. They should keep the public aware of what they are doing and periodically review and update the parks and recreation plan to insure that it is serving the purpose it was intended for.

It is this process, and only this process, that will insure the residents of Wheatland and the surrounding area of a parks and recreation system they can use and be proud of.

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