

# WYOMING BUSINESS REPORT

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## *Goshen, Platte residents dream big*

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TORRINGTON - Residents in Goshen and Platte counties had the opportunity to dream big last week while looking 30 years into the future at recent public workshops, hosted by the High Plains Initiative (HPI) Steering Committee.

The workshops were conducted in LaGrange, Glendo, Wheatland, Fort Laramie, Torrington and Guernsey, with Gabe Epperson of Envision Utah facilitating at some sites.

Epperson's firm will take all of the results and combine them to present the costs and impacts of the proposed changes. He did not respond to a request for an interview with the Wyoming Business Report.

At each town, attendees voted with electronic voting devices, choosing answers that agreed with their opinions on topics ranging from economic growth, oil and wind development, housing, services and amenities, infrastructure, governments addressing potential growth issues and more.

Cindy Witt, committee co-chair, the counties are projected to grow by an estimated 24 percent by 2040. After voting, participants were split up among tables to design their ideal growth patterns onto maps through a variety of colored tapes and paper to represent industry, housing developments, roadways, etc.

In Torrington, the majority favored a four-lane highway for the seven miles to the Nebraska border, as well as protecting the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express trails that crisscross the area. Residents also promoted a recreation center and expanding the airport and hospital.

Lisa Johnson, executive director of the Goshen County Economic Development Corporation in Torrington and a member of the HPI committee, said the members started meeting last spring. Initially, they were looking at the potential for wind energy growth in the area, and then in June, the Niobrara oil play came to light, Johnson said.

"A really good part about this process is that it is based on statistics and past trends and projecting that forward to a likely scenario," Johnson explained, adding that the meetings have been a good way to get the public involved and engaged.

According to Johnson, "Torrington has been working diligently in recent times trying to work on infrastructure, sewer lines in certain parts of town, public safe issues and more. If you wait until you want to build, it's more expensive. We want to plan ahead."

The High Plains Initiative is part of the Building We Want Project, a nonprofit plan to build resources to assist communities and regions in identifying their shared values and long-range vision for the future, as well as to help show residents what future growth might look like and how they might direct the course of development.