SHERIDAN COUNTY

Comprehensive Plan

2014

Appendix 6:
Public Facilities

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Sheridan County Courthouse

Built in 1904, the Sheridan County courthouse is home to 19 employees including the county clerk, treasurer, and assessor on the main floor, the district court and probation office on the 2nd floor and houses maintenance activities in the basement. At the writing of this plan, the courthouse accommodated all activities, parking, and storage adequately and is ADA accessible via a lift at the front entrance. The only point of conflict is that the district court room is also serving as a break room for the county staff, so future updates to the building could include a designated break area for county staff. The façade and history of the building should be preserved and recorded for future generations.

Other County Buildings

Sheridan County owns eleven (11) buildings, nine of which house highway and roads department equipment or activities. Rushville is home to the county courthouse and sheriff's office/jail as well as the roads department offices and two other roads department equipment sheds. A roads department garage and two equipment sheds are located in Gordon, two equipment sheds are located in Hay Springs, and one roads department building is located in Lakeside in southern Sheridan County.

City Offices

Hay Springs indicated adequate space in the city office building while the city of Gordon stated spatial and structural inadequacies of its current office building. More storage space is needed for Rushville's city offices.

Solid Waste Collection

Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Sheridan County are members of the Solid Waste Agency of Northwest Nebraska (SWANN). SWANN is a regional collaboration of eight communities in the region that have combined their resources to more efficiently dispose of solid waste. While rural residents do not get curbside pickup, they can bring their waste to drop off sites. SWANN also provides recycling services at drop off sites. The greatest need is seen for education about what can and cannot be picked up for recycling and waste disposal.

Hay Springs received a grant for the recycling of crushed concrete.

Sheriff

The Sheriff is elected to four year terms by the voters of Sheridan County and is responsible for law enforcement in rural areas, Rushville, and Hay Springs as well as the villages of Whiteclay, Antioch, Lakeside, Ellsworth, and Bingham.

Jail

The Sheridan County Sheriff is also the administrator for the 24 bed capacity jail. The 2009 average daily population was 18.8 inmates. Jail staff consists of four full time and one part-time jailors/dispatchers and four full time and one part time dispatchers/matrons. One jailor/dispatcher and one dispatcher/matron are working at all times.

Local Police

Gordon's police force includes one chief, three officers, one dispatcher. The city of Gordon Police Department does not have adequate office space or storage. The police department is said to have some equipment needs though none critical in nature. Rushville's law enforcement is contracted out with the county.

911 Dispatching

The department utilizes 911 communication and vehicles are adequately equipped for pursuit. Deputies travel throughout the County and the department utilized an interlocal agreement with Grant County for response along the Highway 2 corridor.

Water

Hay Springs has three wells in operation. The water quality is good but the quantity of water is reported to be lacking. Hay Springs has a 100,000 gallon water storage capacity which is adequately filling the city's needs.

Gordon has five wells in operation. At the writing of this plan, Gordon's 700,000 gallon water storage facility is unusable and in need of repair. Once fixed, the update will fill the cities needs with adequate water pressure control. Recent construction and renovations have been done to the water well field. The city is benefitting from recent replacement of hydrants, valves, and distribution lines.

Electricity

The city of Hay Springs has indicated updates to the electric distribution system. Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) supplies all electricity to the city of Hay Springs, Gordon, Rushville, and the much of the rural areas of the county.

Other areas of the county not served by NPPD are served by the Northwest Rural Public Power District (NRPPD), based out of Hay Springs. NRPPD serves 3,500 square miles and also serves Dawes and part of Cherry County.   Panhandle Rural Electric Membership Association supplies power to nearly half of the rural areas in Sheridan County. PREMA is based out of Alliance, NE and covers parts of 11 counties in Western Nebraska.

Fire Department
The city of Gordon has 38 volunteer firemen and 6 EMTs. A need exists for additional vehicle storage. Current fire rescue units include 2 pumpers (750 gpm), 3 tankers (750 gpm), 25 rural grass units, and a quick attack pickup. Most of these units are in good condition. The Gordon volunteer fire department covers the largest fire district in the state of Nebraska, covering 1,287 square miles.

Hay Springs has 23 firemen and 9 EMTs and is hosted in a relatively new fire hall with adequate space for the department's needs. Most of the equipment is in fair or good condition.

Rushville Fire services
The rural fire protections districts in the county are run by their own boards but share the equipment and volunteers of the local community fire departments in Hay Springs, Gordon, and Rushville. Each of the fire departments and rural fire districts are equipped to handle rural fire issues. Main concerns in the non-incorporated parts of the county are regular home and building fires with an added threat of grass and wildfires.

Heart of the Hills Fire District serves a large portion of southern Sheridan County along Highway 2 and Highways 250 and 27. This district also covers a portion of northern Garden County.   Southeastern Sheridan County is served by the Alliance Fire District.

Disaster Preparedness
The Sheridan County Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) provides a plan for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Main threats to the county include wildfire, tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, winter storms, and hazardous materials incidents.   Local and county law enforcement and fire departments all signed on to the agreement with the Region 23 Emergency Management Coordinator assisting and supporting operations in the county.   Government activities are directed by the county commissioners, though the mayors and city managers are responsible for their respective village, city or county operations. The county Sheriff's office in Rushville serves as the Emergency Operating Center (EOC) and may be repositioned to local fire department buildings if the center was unsuitable for operations. Requests for assistance will first be sent out to neighboring communities and then to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) through the Region 23 Emergency Management Coordinator. Other responsibilities and activities are outlined in the LEOP.

Parks and Public Land
Smith Lake State Wildlife Management Area provides fishing opportunities, camping, and no-wake boating. Walgren Lake and Shell Lake offer public access for fishing and no wake boating as well as some primitive camping.   Isham Dam, Hay Springs, Larabee Creek, Pine Creek, and White Clay Creek also present fishing and recreation opportunities but are located on private land and permission for access must be obtained.
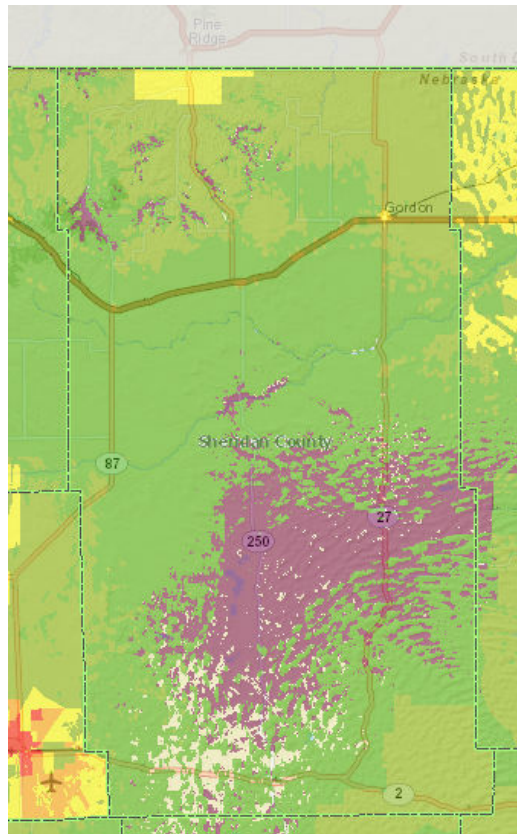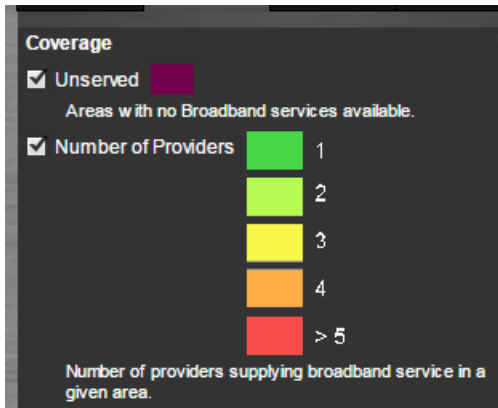
Medical Facilities

Sheridan County has one hospital, Gordon Memorial, whose service area includes most of Sheridan County, part of Cherry County, NE and portions of southwestern South Dakota. Gordon Memorial Hospital is a designated Critical Access Hospital with 25 acute care beds, 24 hour CT, x-ray, lab, surgical, and emergency services. The hospital also operates Gordon Countryside Care, a 32 bed nursing home and 10 bed assisted living facility. Gordon Memorial operates two clinics: one in Gordon and one in Rushville. The Gordon Clinic offers services Monday through Friday and also offers a phone line. The Rushville Clinic operates Monday-Wednesday & Fridays from 8am-5pm. Chadron Community Hospital operates a clinic in Hay Springs every Monday and Friday from 10 am to 4 pm.

Broadband and Internet

Most of Sheridan County is served by one or no broadband providers. Gordon and White Clay are served by as many as three providers but the sparsely populated Sandhills region south of the Niobrara River has little to no coverage.
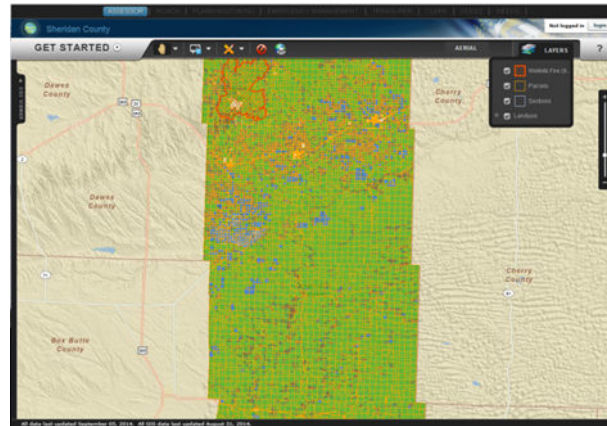
Internet Presence

Sheridan County has an exceptional web presence which serves as a good online "front door" to the county and its communities. The County's visitor's site, visitsheridancounty.com, is an easy to use and attractive hub of information for visitors to the county and was produced in part through a grant from the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism. Links to recreational, shopping, food, and contact information are all clearly available and should be maintained to keep the county visible and to give potential visitors current information.

The county's governmental website, sheridancountyne.com, is also up to date, easily navigable, and attractive to visitors. All departments and contacts are available and meeting notices, minutes of past meetings, district maps, and helpful related links keep residents and visitors informed and keep governmental happenings transparent. Geographical information systems (GIS) information, which provides mapping services of county land use and other topics, is available through the assessor's page and maintained through services provided

by GIS Workshop. More electronic documents available online can be useful for county residents looking for information and makes the plans, regulations, and history readily available for outsiders looking to locate or do business in the county.

A strong web presence in county towns and villages is also important for a strong county web presence. Hay Springs currently does not have a website but its contact information is available on visitsheridancounty.com. Taking steps to partner with the community to have basic city information available online would improve the commercial, marketing, and residential strength of the rest of the county.

The city of Rushville maintains an attractive and easily navigable website (rushvillene.com) with basic general and contact information, though it is directed mainly towards visitors. Contact information for businesses, churches, financial services as well as information for attractions, economic development, and history are all available on the site. Including more municipal and governance information strengthens the community's visibility, governmental transparency, community engagement, and aids outsiders in learning about the community. Steps should also be taken to encourage and support efforts to continue to improve Rushville's already useful website.

Gordon's website (ci.gordon.ne.us) provides adequate and vital information to residents and visitors as well as some important information for economic development. Links to an NPPD site provides good and current information for demographics and community information which those looking to locate a business in the community would find useful. A comprehensive listing of businesses with contact phone numbers is also a great aspect of the website. The city of Gordon could strengthen its visibility and presence by upgrading its website's attractiveness and navigability. The Gordon Chamber of Commerce has a great website with good information about the city, events, recreation, and businesses. For many, a website is their first experience and impression of a community and this digital "front door" should not be over looked.

Cross referencing for all of these websites is critical in building a cohesive and attractive front to outsiders and providing a seamless web of information for Sheridan County residents. Sheridan County could strengthen its web presence by having aspects of the county and the county visitor's website cross referenced by neighboring counties and communities.