Former Acme Power Plant Site Opportunity Analysis

Challenges and Opportunities

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Prepared For:

Sheridan County Conservation District

Prepared By:

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KSU-Technical Assistance to Brownfields

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluating Reuse Opportunities

This report synthesizes research and analysis on the Acme Power Plant site in Sheridan County, Wyoming to provide recommendation for the property's potential higher and better uses. The analysis evaluates potential viable site reuse scenarios against prevailing market conditions. Previous community visioning exercises and preferences are explicitly included in the evaluation and specific site use examples are used to illustrate the findings. The report's methodology considers physically possible, legally permissible, and economically viable uses. Financial feasibility and gap funding analysis for specific reuse concepts has not been conducted, pending further Team discussion of the findings presented herein.

Opportunities and Constraints

This analysis applies economic principles of real estate investment while evaluating specific site characteristics. These characteristics included existing conditions of the property, environmental issues challenging redevelopment, the site's topography, floodplain extents, infrastructure and utilities, zoning and encumbrances on the property, the site's access, as well as the site's compatibility with the local economy and regional markets. Community input for the future redevelopment of the site and the surrounding area were also considered.

The findings were tabulated within a Matrix to better quantify the opportunities and constraints the site poses to a spectrum of uses. This Matrix allows for different reuses to be contrasted with each other given the County's demographic and economic trend, as well as the specific site characteristics.

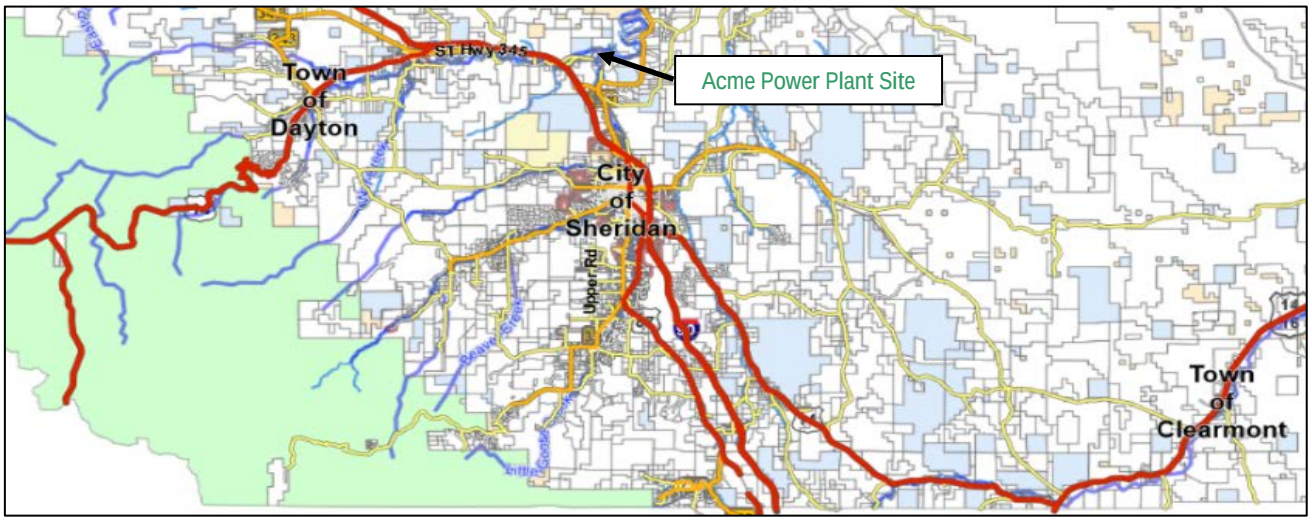
Likeliest Reuse Scenarios

This study finds the likeliest site reuse opportunities to be focused on Outdoor Recreation Activities and Educational Facilities, with the option for ancillary goods and service providers. The following list identifies potential prospects for this site. This list is not exhaustive, but rather food for thought. The suggestions made have not yet been evaluated through a feasibility or gap funding analysis.

- Parks/Open Space/Trails
- Rustic Camping
- White water park
- RV Camping
- Nature education uses
- YMCA conservation/education
- Boy Scout Nature Retreat
- Portage site around water diversion, possibly with services
- Guide Services & Watercraft Rentals (as customer service kiosks)
- Food Truck Services
- Solar Energy Aggregate Net-Metering Facility (Community Solar Garden)
- Hydroponic farming

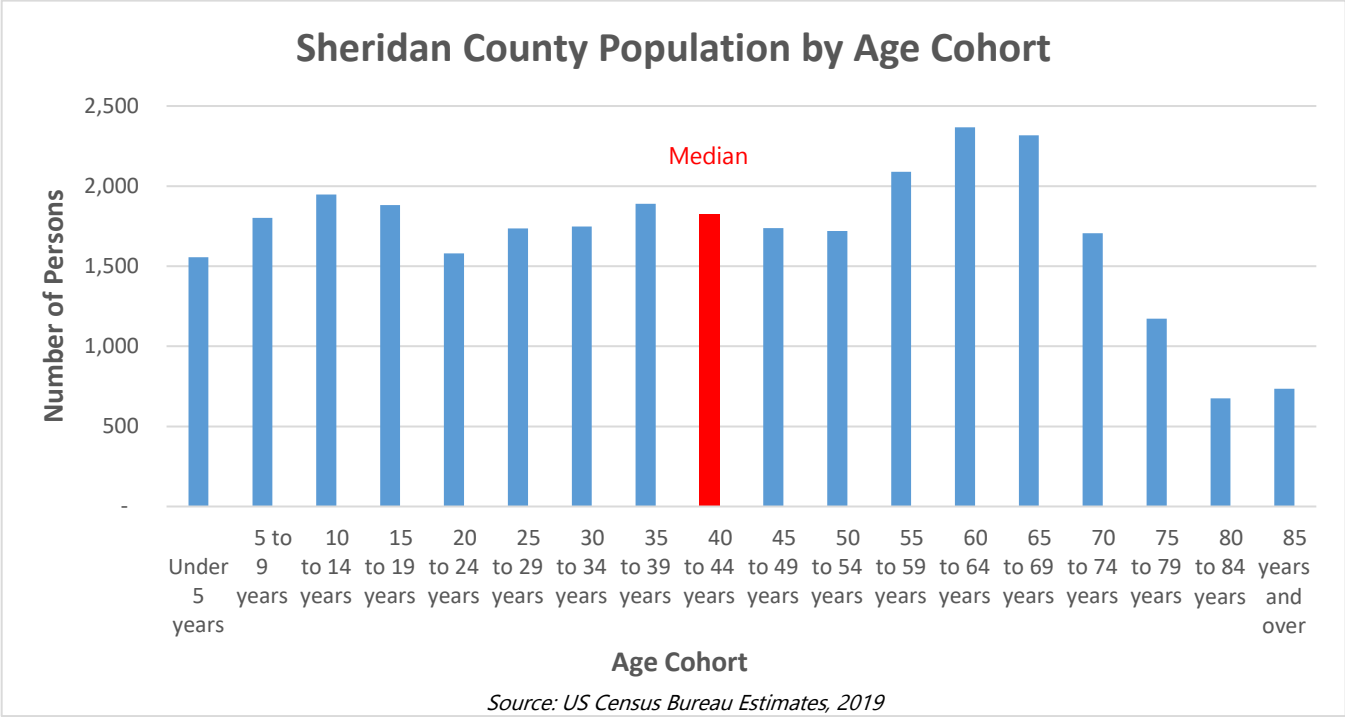
ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Sheridan County is centrally located along Wyoming's northern border. The county abuts the Stateline with Montana to the north, the Bighorn Mountains to the west, and stretches out east across the plains. The county encompasses 2,527 square miles, making it the 18th largest County in the state. The County's largest municipality is the City of Sheridan, followed by the Towns of Ranchester, Dayton and Clearmont. The Acme Power Plant site is approximately 5 miles north of the City of Sheridan, 20 miles east of the Town of Dayton, and 9 miles east of the Town of Ranchester.



Sheridan County has an estimated population of 30,485, or just over 5% of the State's total population. The County population's median age is 43 years, making it the 11th oldest county in Wyoming and significantly older than the US median age of 38.1 years. Since 2010, Sheridan County's population has grown by 4.7%. A notable portion of Sheridan County's population growth has been in retiree and senior population, which may indicate Sheridan County is a retirement destination community. The following tables and charts summarize Sheridan County's socio-economic profile:

Sheridan County Profile	
Total Population	30,485
Median Age	43
Median Income (Household)	$60,807
Total Households	13,251
Total Housing Units	14,915
Source: US Census Bureau Estimates, 2019	



Source: US Census Bureau Estimates, 2019

According to the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division, Sheridan County's full-time wage and salary employment totals 13,437 people. In the private sector, employment totaled 9,952. The major private sector industries, estimated total employment, and percentage of the County's total employment are reflected in the table below:

Sheridan County, Wyoming: Wage and Salary Employment: 2020 Estimate		
	Sheridan	**Percent**
Total	13,437	100%
Private	9,952	74.1
Leisure & Hospitality	1,691	12.6
Retail Trade	1,592	11.8
Educational & Health Services	1,484	11.0
Construction	1,259	9.4
Professional & Business Services	985	7.3
Manufacturing	705	5.2
Financial Activities	609	4.5
Other Services	480	3.6
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	309	2.3
Transportation & Warehousing	290	2.2
Wholesale Trade	241	1.8
Information	183	1.4
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction	81	0.6
Utilities	43	0.3
Government	3,485	25.9
Source: Wyoming Department of Administration & Information, Economic Analysis Division		

The County's five largest private sector industry groups reflect demographic trends that have moved the County's economy away from extraction industries and towards tourism industries. The County's abundant natural resources make it an outdoor recreation destination and illustrate why there appears to be an influx of younger cohorts and retirees. These groups are presumably relocating to take advantage of Sheridan's outdoor recreation lifestyle.

It's important to note one industry that just fell outside the County's top-five, which is the manufacturing industry. Sheridan County has launched multiple initiatives to help strengthen the industrial base of their community, especially in their manufacturing sector. These initiatives can be found at the County's Economic Development Website, forwardsheridan.com. It can be expected that these initiatives will continue to increase the County's manufacturing sector in the coming years.

To better understand which industries are uniquely strong in Sheridan County, this report analyzed location quotients (LQ). An industry LQ indicates the proportion of the workforce employed in that industry relative to the national norm. Industries that have higher LQ values typically represent those that find a comparative advantage in that region's natural, economic, and workforce resources and are likely to experience growth.

The table below identifies the five industries with the highest employment LQ's within Sheridan County. These industries represent a mix of the County's historic extraction based economic sectors and its newer tourism-based economic sectors. This mix suggests that the Sheridan County economy is shifting towards more tourist-oriented, outdoor recreation industries:

NAICS Sector Code	Industry Description	Employment Location Quotient
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.47
23	Construction	1.82
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	1.36
21	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1.32
72	Accommodation and food services	1.26
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics QCEW 2020 annual averages for Sheridan County, WY; SEH		

Over the past decade, the County has grown, albeit at a rate slightly slower than the national average. Even so, its population has become more educated and wealthier in that time. The economy has shifted as well, with a growing emphasis on service based and tourism-based industries. The higher Location Quotients within industries such as arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as accommodation and food services indicate that the County's tourism-based economy is active and growing. This growth is expected to continue. The County's 2020 Comprehensive Plan update outlined policies for these "niche or specialized cluster" industries to be supported, especially those involving outdoor recreation. Taken together, these demographic and industry figures provide an economic backdrop for the feasible reuse of the former Acme Power Plant site. This general demographic and economic data help inform the real estate economic principles used by this report to determine the most likely reuses for the Acme Power Plant site.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Acme Power Plant site is in the Upper Tongue River Valley, on the banks of the Tongue River and in proximity to its confluence with Goose Creek. According to Sheridan County GIS, the site is 5.8 acres in size. The parcel is roughly rectangular in shape, with a small portion extending across the Tongue River to include the adjacent bank. This northern portion sits on coal ash piles and is not considered usable for near-future redevelopment. The estimated size of the developable land is approximately 4-acres. There are several existing structures on the site, however, the size and relatively flat topography of the property could accommodate many different uses.

Property Data

The Acme Power Plant site is in the Upper Tongue River Valley, on the banks of the Tongue River:

- The entire site is 5.8 acres in size, however, only the south 3.7-acres are considered developable for this study.
- The parcel is roughly rectangular/pentagonal in shape, with a small portion extending north across the Tongue River to include the adjacent bank.
- There is a coal ash pile across the river between the northern property boundary and the Tongue River.
- Per the property owner's intents, the portion of the site being evaluated herein is the approximately 3.7-acre site adjacent to and south of the Tongue River.
- The former Acme Power Plant site is surrounded by privately owned property owned by the Padlock Ranch Company.

Building and Site Improvements

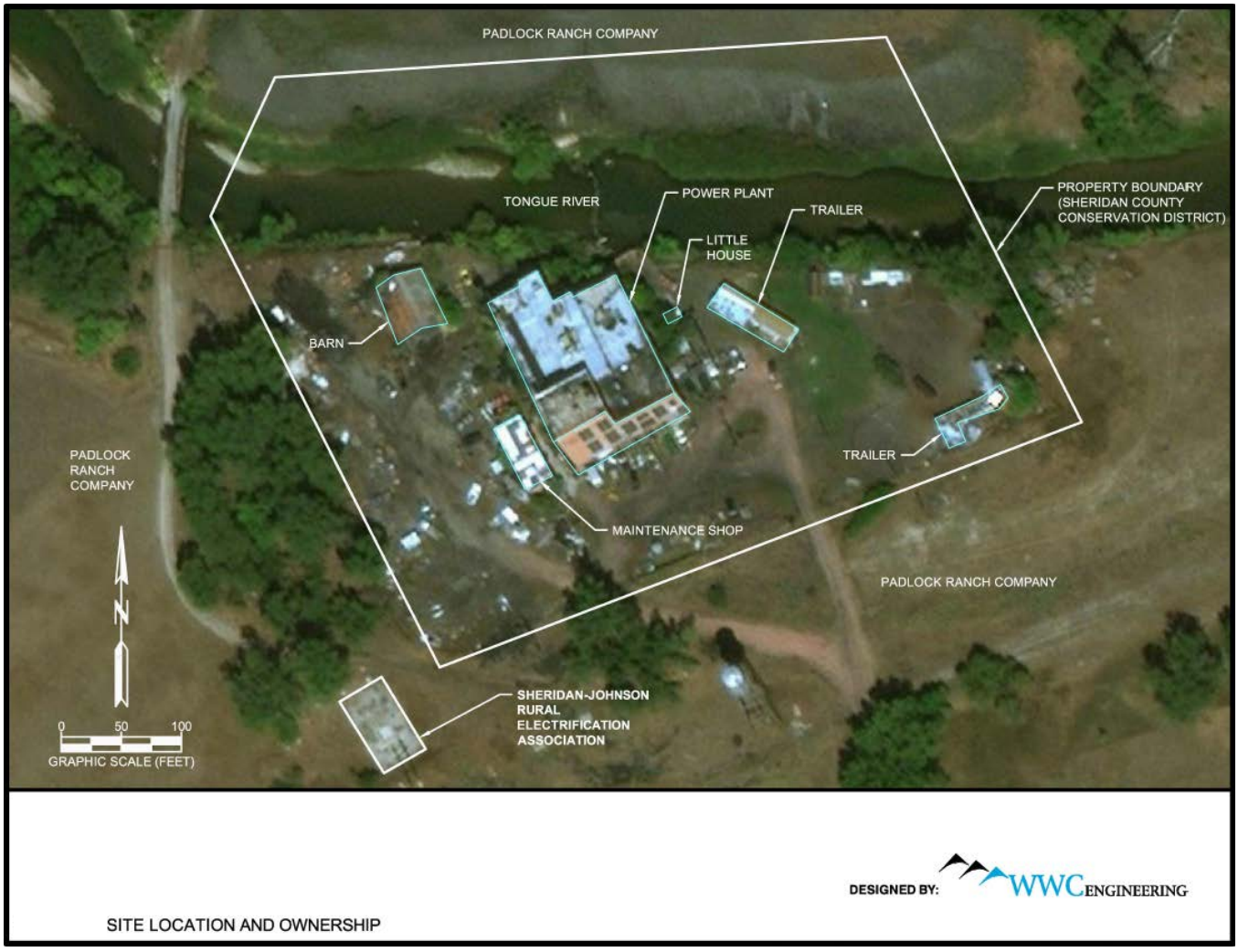
This site has a long history of past uses including a coal-burning power plant, recycling processing facility, and an auto salvage yard. Other uses such as hydroponic farming was proposed but never materialized on this site. Although the existing buildings exhibit a historic quality, they are not designated as historic structures. Public meetings regarding future uses on the site have highlighted a community desire to reuse the buildings if possible. However, if the buildings are found to be structurally unsound, or that building reuse would simply be too costly to keep, then these structures may be razed (or partially razed) in favor of new development opportunities.

Publicly Recorded Property Information	
Parcel ID Number	57841530000333
Property Owner	Sheridan County Conservation District
Street Address	165 Acme Road
Land Acreage	5.8 acres
Former Power Plant (brick) *Power Plant Basement* Storage Warehouse/Maintenance Shop (brick) Barn/Shed (wood) Total Above Ground Building Square Feet	16,553 *14,295* 1,440 2,112 20,105
2021 Assessed Value	$12,067
Source: Sheridan County Wyoming Assessors' Property Records	

- According to the Sheridan County Property Records database there are three buildings on site totaling 20,105 gross square feet and all constructed in 1910.
    - The former 16,553 square foot (plus 14,295 sf basement) brick coal-burning power plant.
    - A 1,440 square foot brick storage warehouse/maintenance shop
    - A 2,112 stand-alone wooden barn.
    - Aerial photos show abandoned trailers and an outbuilding/storage shed on the property.
- The power plant was constructed in three phases: 1910, 1947 and the early 1950s, to supply electrical power to the local coal mine, the village of Acme and the town of Sheridan. The power plant was decommissioned in 1976. [Acme Power Plant – Structural Evaluation, American Engineering Testing, Inc, October 11, 2020]
    - The power plant retains sufficient capacity to support all but the highest potential live occupancy loads.
    - It has sufficient capacity to resist all wind loads.
    - Roof Deterioration at the 1910 building and 1947 addition require reconstruction to resist modern snow and rain loads. The 1950s addition roof has sufficient capacity to support modern snow and rain loads.

- Overall, the ACME power plant is in good structural condition, and does not exhibit conditions that put the building in jeopardy in the short term.
- The study estimates recommended repairs such as the roofing membrane, structural roof in the 1910 building, cracked center wall bricks, exterior brick walls, soil investigation and stabilization of the small ancillary building, will likely fall within the $150,000 to $225,000 range.
- Modifications to support new uses would exceed these costs.

- The buildings exhibit a historic quality; however, are not designated as historic structures.
- The presence of former industrial equipment or building systems, or any other salvageable items is unknown to the authors.



PROPERTY ATTRIBUTES

In addition to a site's size, dimensions, and existing improvements, usability is a function of physical, legal, and regulatory factors. Together, these attributes define market desirability and value for the site and impacts the types of uses that could be successfully developed.

Environmental Issues

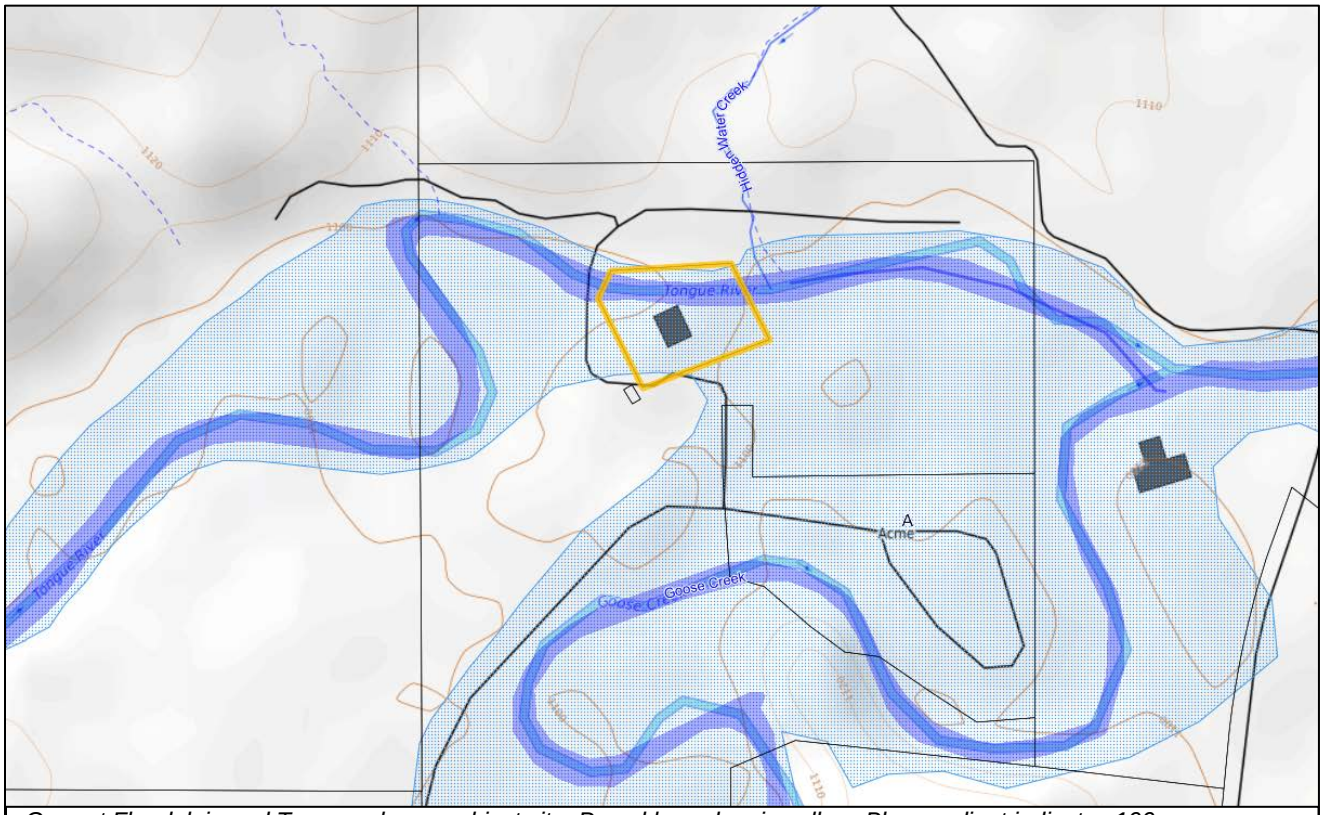
The historic uses at this site have cumulatively created environmental hazards that require remediation. Many of these assessment and remediation efforts are ongoing. This report has outlined the key dates in which significant progress was made to address environmental issues on this site. The anticipated cleanup schedule is highly dependent on the availability of financial resources and the discovery of yet unknown conditions that may be found at the site; a timeline for remediation activity has yet to be determined:

- In 2017 the USEPA conducted Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, and a Phase II Building Materials Assessment Report.
    - Various metals, PCBs, petroleum hydrocarbons, and other known carcinogens were identified in soils, bank sediments, coal-ash piles, and groundwater.
    - Soils are impacted by hazardous substances and petroleum hydrocarbons
    - Multiple drum storage areas with unknown substances
    - Buildings are contaminated with asbestos and lead-based paint, and debris
        - Asbestos was found in the soil and friable asbestos fibers were discovered to have migrated beyond the walls of the power plant building
- In December 2017, the Acme Working Group was formed to provide input to SCCD related to site cleanup and reuse planning activities.
- In January 2018 the Acme Working Group enrolled the site in WDEQ Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) A USEPA Assessment Grant, administered by the Wyoming Voluntary Remediation Program, found that one of the primary contaminants of concern is asbestos in the soil. Friable asbestos fibers were discovered to have migrated beyond the walls of the power plant building.
- Site cleanup has been ongoing since third-quarter 2018 with the largest obstacle being asbestos abatement costs.
- For more detailed information please see the USEPA Phase I Environmental Site Assessments.

Topography and Floodplain

Topography and floodplain significantly impact the types of uses, as well as the intensity of those uses, that are feasible on a development site. The subject site's development potential benefits from favorable topography but is limited by the 100-year floodplain and its associated regulations. The site's topography would lend it to a variety of potential reuses; however, these uses would need to fit within the narrow scope of Sheridan County's floodplain development permits and FEMA regulations.

- The site's topography is relatively flat, with little to no elevation change across the parcel, and would support redevelopment and reuse scenarios including commercial, retail, industrial, lodging, residential, and other uses.
- Most of the site is located within a FEMA designated Special Flood Hazard area, Zone A, within a 100-year floodplain.
    - This zone limits development types and land use intensity.
    - FEMA regulates required flood insurance and regulations for development within the floodplain.
    - Sheridan County requires a "Floodplain Program Development Permit" for new development in this Special Flood Hazard Area.

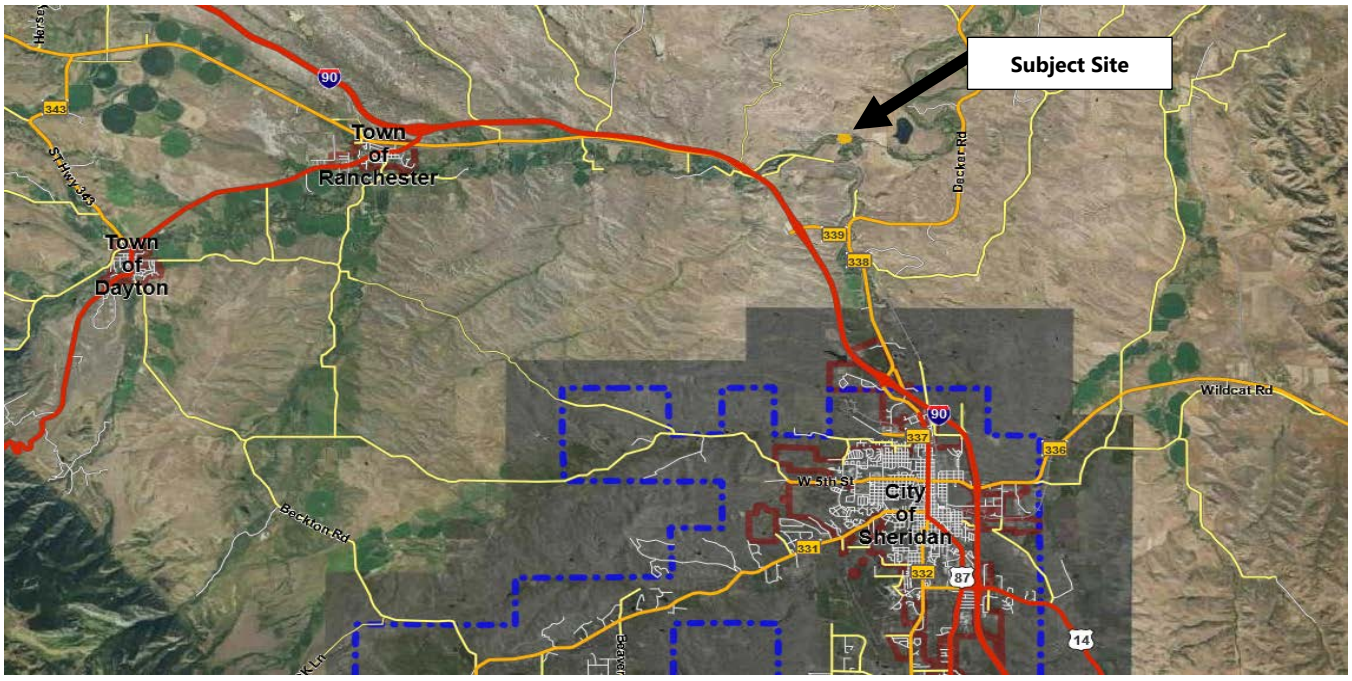


Current Floodplain and Topography on subject site. Parcel boundary in yellow. Blue gradient indicates 100-year floodplain. Brown lines are 10-ft contour lines.

Infrastructure and utilities

The subject site's redevelopment options are limited by its lack of infrastructure and utilities. According to the Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan update, it is the municipalities' responsibility to provide urban services that include central water and sewer, paved roads, sidewalks, solid waste collection and other similar facilities. "Other than its participation in the Sheridan Area Water Supply (SAWS) Joint Powers Board, Sheridan County does not provide these services and is not equipped to do so". The Acme site is significantly removed from municipal-controlled areas that are planning for infrastructure and utility services. The site is also located within a Groundwater Protection Area, which regulates and limits the types of wastewater/septic treatment methods permissible. The historic operation of the coal power plant does provide this site with water rights and access to the power grid. However, these benefits are limited by the lack of critical infrastructure and full suite of utilities to the property.

The ability to develop the site for long-term or high-density occupancy is severely impacted by the lack of sewer infrastructure to support human daily needs. Without extending these services, the site's reuse opportunities are limited. The additional cost to extend central water and sewer, coupled with the groundwater protection area's regulations, increase the redevelopment challenges on the Acme power plant site. An existing connection to the power grid may lend itself to renewable energy use.

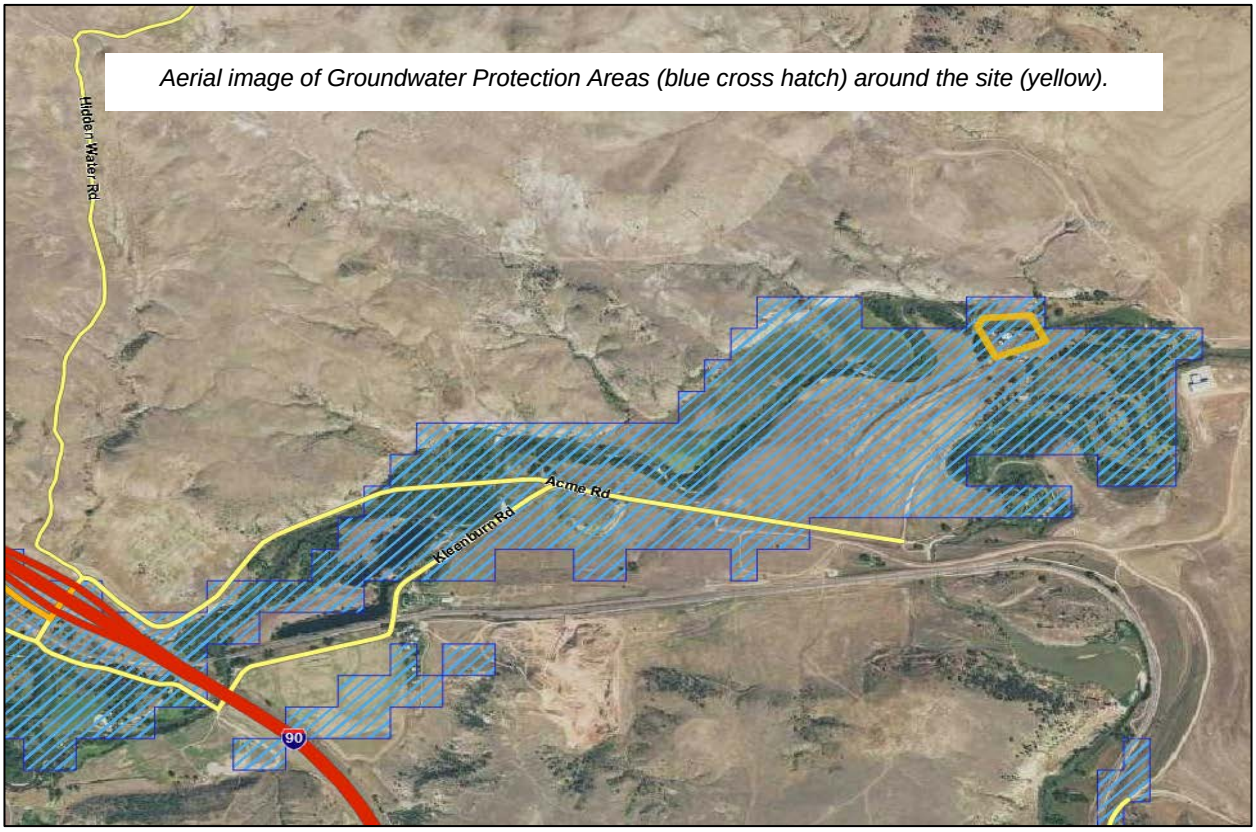


Aerial of service area boundaries relative to subject site. Municipal boundaries are in burgundy, while SAWS boundary designated by the hashed blue line.

- The Acme Power Plant site lacks connections to municipal water and sewer services which limits redevelopment options.
    - It is costly to extend water and sewer infrastructure to this site.
    - The Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan states that future infrastructure extensions will be concentrated around municipal areas and high growth areas and the site is miles distant from a municipal boundary.

  - Extending these services will require the developer to incur the cost or require significant financial assistance to serve a relatively small area which is already restricted from high intensity use due to floodplain issues.

- The Acme Power site is within a County designated Groundwater Protection Area which impacts the ability to use septic systems
  - New development within a groundwater protection area is required to connect to sewer or wastewater systems, where reasonable
  - The Sheridan County Joint-Land Use Plan specifies that future development requiring septic would be subject to "tight restrictions on lot sizes and septic/wastewater treatment methods"
  - The Groundwater Protection Zone designation precludes heavy industrial and most manufacturing uses.
- Reportedly, the power grid connection from the Acme Power Plant is intact, which would provide electrical power in reuse.
  - The power line is reportedly single-phase power not triple phase, which may limit the intensity of uses demanding large amounts of power.
  - The existing power line could possibly support small scale renewable energy development.

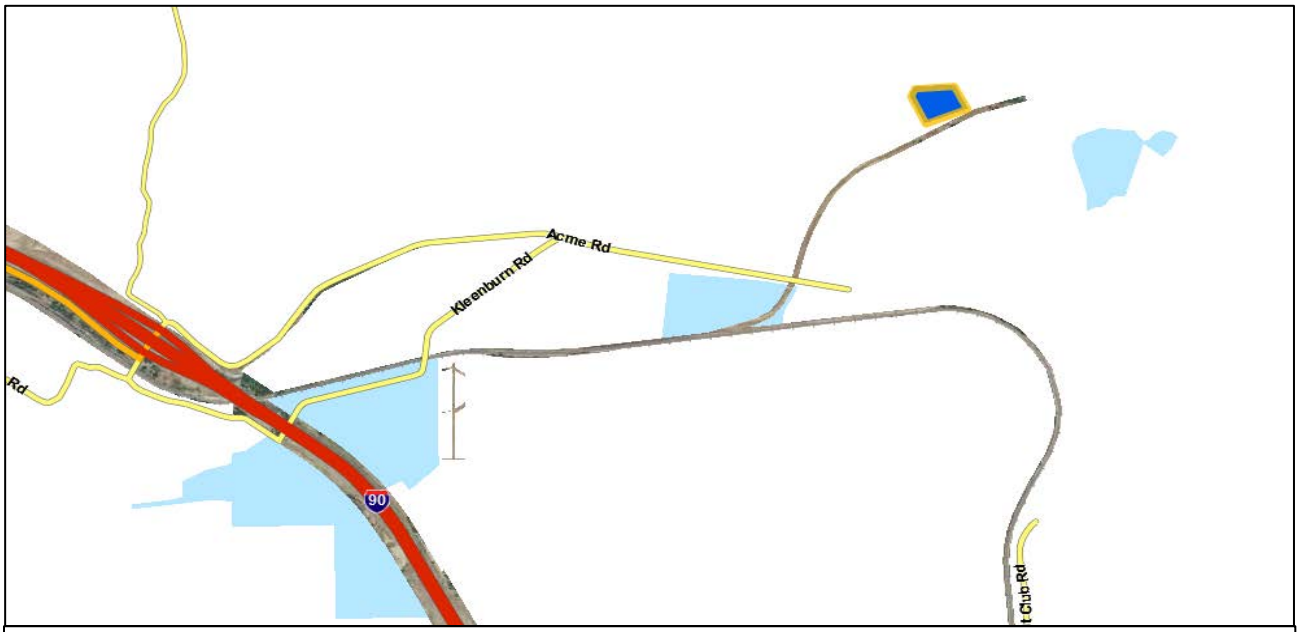


Aerial image of Groundwater Protection Areas (blue cross hatch) around the site (yellow).

Zoning and Entitlements

The Site is zoned I-1, one of the most inclusive zones within the County that permits a wide variety of uses on the site. The Site is also within the Acme Special Planning area. The inclusion into a special planning area implies that reuse applications on this site will be subject to greater levels of scrutiny than other I-1 Industrial zoning districts within the county. While the site's zoning is supportive for various industrial and commercial redevelopment scenarios, the regulations triggered by the floodplain, the Groundwater Protection Area, as well as the surface water's classifications, take precedence and limit the feasibility of uses under this zoning designation. Many of these regulations mandate or require central water and sewer connections for new development. The cost to extend sewer utilities to the site will likely make any industrial development infeasible. Low intensity uses, including open space and parks, would require a rezoning the site:

- In 1993 the site was rezoned from Agriculture to I-1 heavy industrial when Black Diamond Resources announced a plan to invest $12 million to retool the Acme Power Plant into a coal gasification plant; however, this proposed use did not come to fruition.
- The property was reassigned to "future industrial" zoning in 2018.
- The I-1 Zone is one of the most inclusive zones within the County, which would permit a wide variety of uses on this site.
    - However, because the site is within a Groundwater Protection Area, it is subject to minimum lot area requirements of only one industrial building on site. If the site were to gain access to central water and sewer services, it would be exempt from this requirement.
    - The regulations under a Groundwater Protection Area may preclude many industrial uses and would need to be reviewed for compliance with this designation.



Aerial of County Zoning. Acme Site (Yellow Outline and Blue) is zoned I-1 Industrial. White areas are Agricultural zones and light blue areas designate I-2 Light Industrial zones.

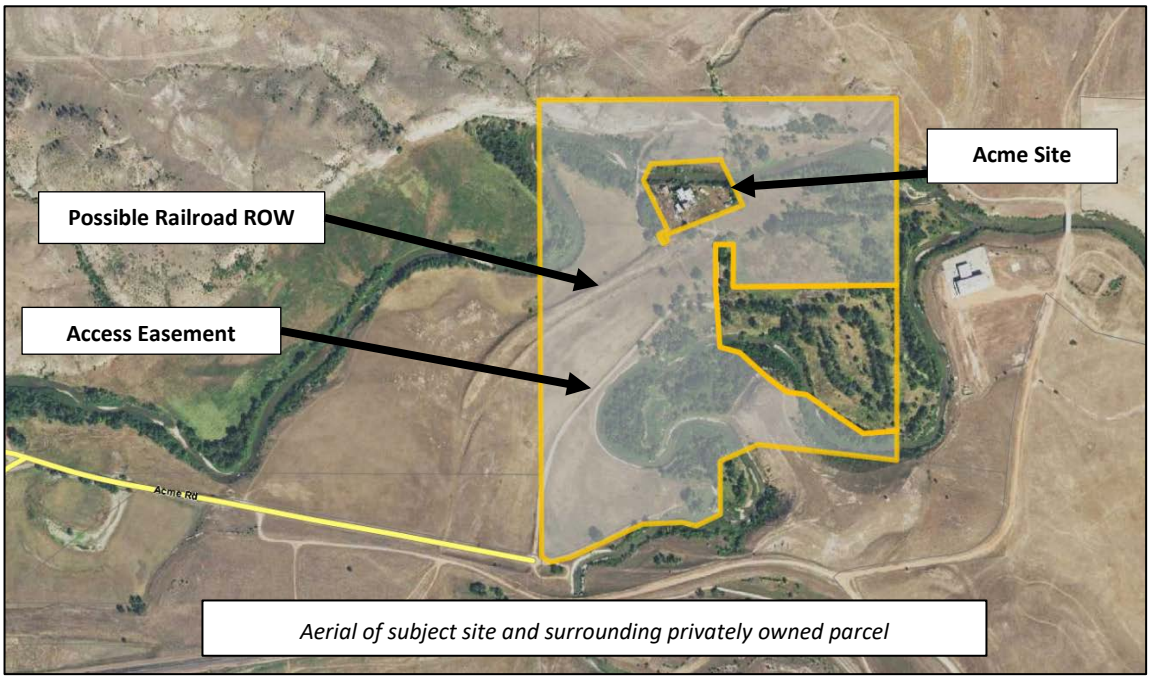
- The County's Comprehensive Plan also creates an "Acme Special Planning Area"
    - This special planning area includes the subject site and is already identified on the Comprehensive Plan's future land use map.
    - This Special Planning Area is "identified as an area where future development may occur but where land use designations will not be specified until a public master plan review process has concluded"
    - The Masterplan review process requires that future development within a special planning area be reviewed in a comprehensive manner to ensure that the development is compatible with surrounding land uses, protects viewsheds and natural amenities, has proper circulation and access, as well as facilities and infrastructure services.
- The County has also adopted development standards for industrial uses aligned with this zoning designation. These standards include:
    - Creating 1 off-street parking space per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area.
    - Stream Protection Set-Back Requirements - This applies to all lots legally created after November 2010. The Tongue River and Goose Creek are both classified as Class 2 Surface Waters by the WDEQ. This classification requires a minimum 100-foot setback from the banks of the Tongue River.
        - If these setbacks are triggered, an estimated 2.7 acres of the site remain developable.

Site Access

Accessibility is a key factor for development potential. The Acme site, despite being awarded access easements from its neighboring parcels, has remote and limited access to major transportation corridors. The Acme site is approximately 2-miles from I-90 via dirt road. The existing access is better suited for low intensity uses:

- The subject site is surrounded by private land, an enclave within a larger parcel owned by the Padlock Ranch Company
    - The Sheridan County Conservation District acquired a dedicated road easement in 2020 across this parcel that will ensure permanent access to the subject site
    - The permanent easement provides the site with access to Acme Road, which also connects with Kleenburn Road and Interstate 90.
    - The easement is critical for future reuse applications on the site. By accessing Interstate 90, the site is connected to the busiest roadway in the County. This transportation corridor also connects with Highway 14, a main highway for travelling to Yellowstone National Park.

- The BNSF railroad runs east-west just south of the site.
  - The Acme power plant site was served by a rail spur, which is no longer in service.
  - However, this rail spur's rights-of-way appears in the County's property records and there may be an opportunity to re-establish rail access.
- The Tongue River also provides access to the site and is part of the Tongue River Water Trail used by floaters, paddlers, fisherman, photographers, and others.
  - During community input sessions, public access to the site, especially for outdoor recreation purposes, was highlighted as an import community desire for future reuse and redevelopment of the site.



Aerial of subject site and surrounding privately owned parcel

Compatibility With Surrounding Land Uses

Potential redevelopment scenarios are dependent on how the adjacent and regional land uses support and accommodate a new use. For example, an apartment building is not compatible within a heavy industrial park; however, neighborhood serving retail may fit well within a residential subdivision. The Acme site is located along the banks of the Tongue River surrounded primarily by agricultural uses and natural environments. The Acme site is accessed by dirt roads and miles away from Sheridan County's population centers, villages and towns. It is in a picturesque setting amidst state recreation areas and along a well-known recreational waterway trail.

The Tongue River Water Trail is an established trail network and rafting route that crosses this site. "The Tongue River Water Trail is one such experience that showcases the beauty and amenities of the Tongue River to paddlers and floaters alike". Stated goals and policies within Sheridan County's Comprehensive Plan support reuse of this site to enhance trail networks. Low-intensity, tourist-oriented outdoor uses would be very compatible with the agricultural uses and natural amenities surrounding the parcel. Higher-density commercial or industrial uses are less compatible with the surroundings and may challenge tenant and consumer demand.

Recent County zoning and planning updates have made higher intensity uses, such as commercial and industrial uses, a possibility on this site. However, Sheridan County's economic development initiative, ForwardSheridan has identified three large industrial parks for light and heavy industrial development. These parks include the Sheridan County Airport Business Park, the Sheridan Commercial Park, and the Hi-Tech Business Park. These parks range from 25 acres to 300+ acres and are suited for attracting new commercial and industrial development. The parks are within the SAWS service area, and are currently served by central water and sewer, have the appropriate utilities and power grids for manufacturing activities, and are also owned by the Sheridan Economic and Educational Development Authority (SEEDA). These commercial parks are competition for the Acme site in a commercial and/or industrial uses. In addition, the Acme site exhibits significant cost and functional disadvantages including its relatively remote location, lack of infrastructure and utilities, and other regulatory constraints impacting the site.

While Sheridan County has tourist-oriented outdoor recreation businesses and campgrounds, none of these facilities exist within the Acme area. The site's location, coupled with its proximity to two waterways and natural amenities, make it a logical location for lower intensity uses such as primitive campsites, RV parks, interpretive programming, and perhaps a single-family home. Commercial kiosks serving site users, such as for recreation guide and equipment rental services or limited-service eateries, to serve the site's primary use, would also be compatible with this site.

It is most likely that a commercial or industrial development would prefer to locate in an established location than pioneer an outparcel with limited development potential and costly infrastructure improvements needed. At the same time, low-intensity outdoor recreation, recreation serving ancillary retail, outdoor educational use, and historical/cultural educational uses nicely integrate with the Acme site's setting and amenities.

Property Summary Table

ACME POWER SITE	OBSERVATIONS
Site Size: Acreage/sf	5.8 Acres / 252,648 sf
Shape	Pentagon
Dimensions	Roughly 575 ft x 510 feet.
Usable Site Area	A portion of the site extends north across the Tongue River and the adjacent bank which has a coal ash pile. The useable portion of the site is estimated at 3.7-acres.
Topography	Site exhibits minimal slopes, relatively flat. Suitable for most development projects.
Floodplains	Site is within FEMA SFHA Zone A, 100-Year Floodplain which can restrict development per FEMA and County regulations and development review requirements.
Existing Buildings	Site has three (3) existing structures totaling 20,105 sf; an October 2020 structural engineering report noted the ACME power plant is in good structural condition but faces notable maintenance and repair items that may significantly increase the cost of long-term reuse.
Site Access	Site surrounded by private land. County Road access to the edge of private land at Goose Creek Culvert Access Parking. Site is approximately 2-miles from I-90 via dirt road. The site is in proximity to a BNSF rail line and reportedly still has a right-of-way for a rail spur.
Infrastructure	Site lacks paved roads, central water/sewer.
Utilities	Site is reportedly serviced with single phase electrical service. No central water or sewer service. Well/septic systems may be limited to FEMA and Groundwater Protection Area restrictions.
Zoning/Entitlements	Site within Special Planning Area, Zoned I-1. Development standards include Floodplain, Groundwater Protection Area, and Stream Protection setbacks which may greatly reduce site usability.
Environmental Hazards	Site requires environmental remediation. Asbestos found in soil and building. Former salvage yard uses also pose an environmental hazard from various potential soil and groundwater issues.
Regional Market Compatibility	Lower intensity, tourist oriented, outdoor recreational uses are compatible with existing regional uses. The existence of large commercial parks near urban areas makes this site less compatible with higher intensity, industrial uses.
Environmental Impacts	Site is within a floodplain and groundwater protection area. Higher intensity uses may disrupt existing trail and waterway networks, or risk contaminating groundwater. Lower intensity uses unlikely to cause significant environmental impacts.
Surrounding Use Compatibility	Low-Intensity uses are compatible with surrounding recreational, open space, and public uses. Higher intensity commercial or industrial uses are compatible in that surrounding land uses won't inhibit such use; however, these uses may negatively impact existing surrounding uses. The existence of better located, better accessed, utility-served sites in various business parks in Sheridan County will reduce demand for this site as a higher-intensity location.
Community Input	Community visioning sessions indicate public desire to utilize site for outdoor recreation, historical and/or educational purposes.

COMMUNITY INPUT

The Acme power plant site has been the subject of ongoing community input over the past decade. The Sheridan County Comprehensive Plan states that during public open houses held on June 20th and August 15th of 2019, County residents placed dots representing future industrial uses around the Acme area. This is part of the justification for creating the Special Planning Area around the Acme site, with a stated goal of helping locate industry within that area.

Separately, the Sheridan County Conservation District purchased this specific site and began assessment and environmental remediation efforts and public meetings for future reuse and redevelopment opportunities. Early in the process, initial project partners identified three expectations for future reuse of the site including:

1. Protection of Land and Water Quality
2. Ensuring Public Access and Use
3. Capturing the Historical Importance

These expectations were presented to participants at the initial Community Visioning Session held August 24th, 2017 and all subsequent meetings and discussions regarding the site. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted for this site, which found that participants overwhelmingly supported "some sort of outdoor recreation and an appreciation of the area history".

The Acme Working Group (AWG) was formed shortly after this visioning session was concluded in 2017. The Acme Working Group, which includes a mix of government agencies, non-profit and non-government organizations, for-profit utilities, and landowners incorporated previous input to define a proposed reuse strategy for the site. Ideas from previous meetings and other feedback were grouped into 3 reuse categories and then voted upon by members of the Working Group. The same group and process was used to indicate a preference for whether or not the building should be retained.

Reuse Idea	Total Points	# of "top" ranking*
Outdoor Recreation/Park	58	11
Education Facility/Retreat Space	24	1
Commercial Operation	9	0
Other: Open Space	5	1
Other: Agriculture	1	0
Other:	0	
Building Preference		
No building/complete removal	47	6
Keep/reuse the building	17	2
Incorporate some building elements into reuse	37	5
Other:	0	
Other:	0	

** number of voters (out of 13) that ranked the category as their top choice of 5 points*

The Sheridan County Conservation District's (SCCD) visioning sessions and the Acme Working Group present a different vision for the site than the Comprehensive Plan's update. A reason for this could be scope. The Comprehensive Plan evaluated the entirety of Sheridan County. The SCCD visioning session and AWG survey results indicate that the public desires lower intensity uses which have synergy with the natural environment and highlight the historic character of the power plant.

SITE OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

After evaluating the site's attributes and characteristics, this study analyzed specific reuse types based on their market practicability. These reuse types were selected based upon the demographic and economic context of Sheridan County, through discussion with the Sheridan County Conservation District, and input provided from public visioning efforts. Specifically, each selected reuse type was scored against each site attribute and characteristic considered in this analysis.

The scoring was based simply on whether the specific characteristic is considered an opportunity for redevelopment, is neutral, or creates challenges for that reuse category. For example, if the specific use requires flat topography on the site, and the site exhibits this characteristic, it would be classified as an opportunity. This study scores opportunities as +1, neutral characteristics as 0, and challenging characteristics as -1. These scores were tabulated in an Opportunities Matrix, which follows the narrative analysis.

Heavy Industrial

The heavy industrial reuse category includes uses that could include manufacturing and fabrication facilities, smokestack industries, storage facilities, and salvage yards. The Groundwater Protection Zone designation further limits use by precluding heavy industrial and most manufacturing uses. While zoning, flat topography, and reported existence of a rail spur right-of-way would support this, there are federal and County regulations and encumbrances, location, and vehicle access issues that would prove challenging for this site. The lack of infrastructure and utilities on site would increase development costs since a development would have to shoulder the cost to extend those services to the site. The site's access, which is gained via private easements on dirt roads to its remote location, is a challenge for this type of use. The site is also within a 100-year floodplain and groundwater protection area, meaning that this type of development would be required to properly mitigate environmental impacts as well as obtain a floodplain development permit from the county. While the site is zoned for this specific use, the entitlement regulations and the site's inclusion in a special planning area are largely incompatible with this type of use. Community input sessions generated mixed reactions to the idea of heavy industrial uses on the site, with the most recent community surveys rejecting heavy industrial uses on this site. Finally, there is significant market competition for heavy industrial uses within the County. There are numerous sites and existing business parks within municipal limits that are served by central water and sewer, paved roads, and have the requisite power necessary for manufacturing. These characteristics work against this specific reuse, causing questionable economic feasibility.

Light Industrial

There is a wide array of smaller scale light industrial uses that could locate on the 5-acre site including office warehouse, industrial-flex, office-flex, many other non-smokestack businesses. However, many challenges exist including poor access to the site, lack of infrastructure and limited utilities, as well as regulatory and environmental issues that would impede these types of development. The floodplain, groundwater protection areas, as well as surface water stream setbacks, pose entitlement concerns that will drive up development costs and limit the scale of future light industrial development. Light industrial uses would likely need to extend central water and sewer to the site, improve the roads leading to the site, and upgrade the power utilities connecting to the site. These significant costs would weigh heavily on financial feasibility for the site. Light industrial businesses tend to generate more employees, which would also create compatibility challenges with the surrounding low-intensity uses. This special planning area requires new development to submit a master plan for public review, adding an additional layer of scrutiny that does not exist in other industrial parks throughout the County. These

other parks are a significant source of competition for light industrial uses. It would be very challenging to attract a light industrial user to the Acme site when they have a choice of multiple sites with better access to the interstate, central water and sewer on site, paved roads and parking lots, as well as industry clusters already taking shape. These characteristics work against this specific reuse, causing reuse scenario to be very challenging.

Commercial Office

Commercial office development faces significant challenges on this site that are largely incompatible from a market perspective. Typically, office space is concentrated within municipalities, or at the very least in higher density population areas. The remote location of the site, coupled with its poor access to major transportation corridors, causes the site to be less attractive for this type of development. The site's lack of infrastructure, limited utilities, location within a floodplain, and groundwater protection area create a situation in which new development becomes very expensive. Infrastructure services would need to be extended by the developer to the site, and floodplain regulations would require new construction to be properly mitigated from floods. These factors increase the cost of development on the site, which make it less competitive in the regional market. Given that there are numerous commercial parks within the Town of Sheridan that have adequate infrastructure and amenities, better access, and can be developed at a lower cost. These challenges associated with the Acme Power Plant site limits the demand for Commercial Office development and likely precludes such use at this location.

Destination Retail

This study defines destination retail as a particular store, or a collection of stores, that attracts people regardless of the location, as opposed to a business that relies on convenience of location for its customers. Destination retail is a retail operation that consumers find attractive and are therefore willing to make a special trip solely for the purpose of shopping at that location. The Acme power plant's location does provide a compelling site for this type of use, being in a beautiful natural environment and in proximity to two rivers that may engage customers. A unique retailer such as Bass Pro or Cabela's may find the Acme site intriguing for their audience and provide landscape to test recreation equipment before purchase. However, the cost of infrastructure upgrades and lack of nearby supporting retail and dining options would likely make this site not as favorable. Additionally, destination retail generates significant customer traffic with many employees, and would require significant upgrades to road access and parking. This use may be incompatible with the natural surroundings and interfere with quiet recreational enjoyment of the river trail. A unique challenge for this type of reuse may be the lack of community support for a project that would likely demand public incentives. For these reasons the site is challenged to find a destination retailer and the reuse scenario is unlikely.

Ancillary Retail

The analysis found significant opportunities for Ancillary Retail on this site. Ancillary retail is defined by this study as retail uses that enhance or support the economic activity on the site. These could include guide service kiosks, equipment repair kiosks, sundries, food trucks, pop-up vendors, or similar uses that would support a primary site use. For example, outdoor equipment rental/guide service pop-ups and food trucks or kiosks could serve people recreating on the river or on nearby conservation areas. Low-tech temporary services may enhance campsite or RV park uses of the site. Ancillary Retail uses scored high for opportunity because they are low intensity uses that do not require the same levels of infrastructure and utilities as higher intensity uses. Central water and sewer are not necessary for food trucks or pop-up vendors and the site's existing utilities are more than adequate for these types of uses. Current site zoning and entitlements support this type of reuse. Ancillary Retail would not trigger than same floodplain and groundwater protection regulations that permanent commercial or industrial uses are

subject to. Community input sessions also indicated that these types of uses would be supported by the public. These factors are what makes ancillary retail a likely feasible reuse opportunity for the site.

Multi-Family Housing

Higher density residential development would face numerous challenges on this site, making it one of the least feasible reuse categories evaluated. First, the site's zoning does not permit residential uses, only commercial and industrial uses. Even if a rezone were to be approved, the floodplain and groundwater protection area regulations would cause future residential development to be both costly and difficult to get permitted. Residential development within the floodplain has strict mitigation requirements for construction, and the County limits septic permits for development occurring within a groundwater protection area. The number of persons living on site and their utility needs causes the extension of infrastructure to be necessary and very costly at this location, causing the development costs per unit to be extraordinary. Cleaning environmental contamination to residential standards may also be prohibitively expensive compared to open space or commercial uses. Community visioning sessions for reuse on the site did not even consider residential development an option, indicating that this type of reuse would be strongly opposed by the public. Multi-family development is not considered a likely feasible use.

Hotel/Motel/Lodging

Lodging uses would have to contend with restrictive regulations surrounding the floodplain and groundwater protection areas, as well as the site's poor access and lack of infrastructure and utilities. However, the site does offer a unique location near beautiful natural amenities and trails. This location provides the site with a competitive advantage over other hotels and motels throughout Sheridan County. The remote location and proximity to rivers could prove to be a marketable draw to lodging guests. However, these beneficial factors alone are unlikely to overcome the challenges posed by the regulations and the cost to extend necessary infrastructure and utilities. Also, the community did not indicate its support for this reuse category in any of the surveys or visioning sessions. While a lodging reuse on this site offers an interesting possibility, the financial feasibility for this scenario is highly challenged.

RV Parks, Travel Van Sites, and Campgrounds

RV Parks and Campgrounds represent a notable development opportunity for this site. These uses are permissible by FEMA within the 100-year floodplain and are unlikely to generate significant environmental impacts. The site's lack of infrastructure is not an issue for this type of reuse. In fact, the site's remote location provides it with a competitive advantage. While other RV Parks and Campgrounds tend to be concentrated near municipalities throughout the County, this site offers a more rustic experience. The proximity of the Tongue River and Goose creek provide the site with natural amenities that are likely to be a draw to outdoor recreation enthusiasts. These waterways, and their trails, would supplement this use with recreational opportunities as well. The community input session seems to prefer this type of low-intensity, outdoor recreation use. Campgrounds are permitted by zoning, which also allows water wells. This type of use could support ancillary retail uses also, providing the site with a synergy of reuse opportunities.

Open Space, Parks, and Education

Visioning sessions and surveys indicate the highest scoring reuse category as Open Space, Parks and Public Amenities. This category includes uses such as public parks, galleries or museums, educational purposes, as well as open space. These uses would strongly align with the community desires for the site. Public access to the site, and specifically the river, was also a goal identified by the Acme Working Group during their public visioning sessions

for the site. These uses would not require major infrastructure or utility improvements. The current access would likely be adequate to support these uses. The environmental impacts would be minimal with this type of reuse. It would be an acceptable use for the floodplain and would not trigger groundwater protection area regulations. The existing historic buildings, or portions of the buildings, could be an asset for the site. This reuse category would be highly compatible with the surrounding agricultural and conservation area uses. Ironically, the only characteristic not compatible with this type of reuse is the zoning. The existing I-1 zone does not permit open space, meaning that this use would require a rezoning of the parcel. But overall, this type of reuse is an opportunity. It would also prove an opportunity for ancillary retail uses.

Opportunities matrix

The following Matrix summarizes each reuse category and how it scores relative to the site's characteristics. Feasibility scores greater than zero indicate that there is an opportunity for that specific use on this site. Feasibility scores less than zero indicate that the site would prove challenging for that specific reuse.

REUSE CATEGORY:	Heavy Industrial	Light Industrial	Commercial Office	Destination Retail	Ancillary Retail	Multi-Family Housing	Hotel/ Motel Lodging	RV Parks/ Campground	Open Space, Parks and Education
Feasibility Score	**-4**	**-4**	**-6**	**-4**	**6**	**-6**	**-3**	**9**	**11**
Site Size: Acreage/sf	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Shape	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dimensions	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Site Access	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	1	1
Existing Buildings/ Site Obstacles	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	0	1
Floodplains	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0
Topography	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Infrastructure	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	0	1
Utilities	0	0	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	0	1
Zoning	1	1	1	1	1	-1	1	1	-1
Entitlements	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	1	1
Surrounding Uses Compatibility	-1	0	-1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Regional Market Compatibility	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1	0	1	1
Environmental Impacts	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	1
Environmental Hazards	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Community Input	0	0	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	1	1

The following is a summary of each reuse category and how it scored relative to the site's characteristics. Opportunity Scores greater than zero indicate that there is an opportunity for that specific use on this site. Opportunity Scores less than zero indicate that the site would prove challenging for that specific reuse. The list is sorted from highest to lowest opportunity score:

1. Open Space, Parks, and Education — Opportunity Score = 11
2. RV Parks and Campgrounds — Opportunity Score = 9
3. Ancillary Retail — Opportunity Score = 6
4. Hotel/Motel Lodging: — Opportunity Score = -3
5. Light Industrial Reuse — Opportunity Score = -4
6. Heavy Industrial Reuse — Opportunity Score = -4
7. Destination Retail Reuse — Opportunity Score = -4
8. Multi-Family Housing — Opportunity Score = -6
9. Commercial Office Reuse — Opportunity Score = -6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research and analysis presented herein, this study finds that the site, in its current condition, is best suited for open space, parks, educational facilities and/or services, campgrounds (including rustic, developed, and/or recreational vehicle), and ancillary retail or support services.

This study finds the likeliest site reuse opportunities to be focused on outdoor recreation activities and educational facilities, with the option for ancillary goods and service providers. The following list identifies some of the better prospects for this site. This list is not exhaustive, and the suggestions made below should be further analyzed by a feasibility and/or gap funding analysis.

- Parks/Open Space/Trails
- Rustic Camping
- White water park
- RV Camping
- Nature education uses
- YMCA conservation/education
- Boy Scout (or other youth group) Nature Retreat
- Portage site around water diversion, possibly with services
- Guide Services & Watercraft Rentals (as customer service kiosks)
- Food Kiosk and Truck Services
- Solar Energy Aggregate Net-Metering Facility (Community Solar Garden)
- Hydroponic farming

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