

HILL CITY, SD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED JUNE 26, 2017

HILL CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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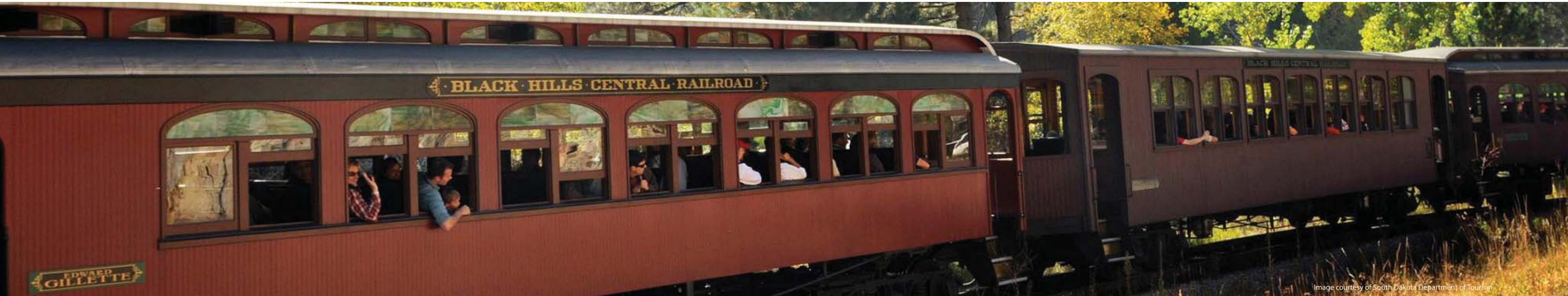


Image courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The purpose of the Hill City Comprehensive Plan update is to create a planning document that can be used to guide the growth and development of Hill City over the next 10 years and beyond. As part of the planning process, a collective community vision was formed based on people’s individual values and desires for the future of their community. To achieve this vision, goals and strategies are set forth in this document that reflect both the opinions of local stakeholders, including the public, Planning & Zoning Commission, Common Council, and city staff, as well as the many local and external conditions currently affecting Hill City’s growth and development.

In South Dakota, adoption of a Comprehensive Plan is required by SDCL 11-6-2 for the purpose of promoting the health, safety,

and general welfare of a municipality. The Hill City Comprehensive Plan accomplishes this purpose by providing a firm foundation for policy and action which address current community issues and enable the community to create a more certain future. Furthermore, this Comprehensive Plan also makes it possible for the community to function more efficiently and effectively as expectations for future growth and development are clearly established, helping not only city staff and elected and appointed officials to make decisions, but also by clearly communicating these expectations to the public.

The ultimate goal of the Hill City Comprehensive Plan is to enhance the quality of life for the people that live and work in the community while maintaining Hill City’s small town

look and feel. To that end, adoption of the Comprehensive Plan does not complete the planning effort, rather it is a starting point for taking action to address the current needs and wants of the community and for working toward a better future. The plan elements discussed in detail in this document, and their associated goals and strategies, provide a basis for action intended to realize the collective community vision established as part of this Comprehensive Plan update.

PLANNING HISTORY

Hill City has been involved with land use planning for over three decades, dating back to the early 1980’s. During this time, several revisions have been made to the Hill City Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, with

the most recent comprehensive revision to these ordinances being done in 2003 and 2014 (current Title 9 of the Hill City Municipal Code). Conversely, up until this current update, the Hill City Comprehensive Plan has remained unchanged since its original adoption on July 23, 1984. The 1984 Comprehensive Plan included the following seven chapters with an analysis, implications, and recommendations section for each:

- I. Population Characteristics and Trends
- II. Economic Base Study
- III. Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- IV. Transportation Plan
- V. Public Utilities Plan
- VI. Land Use Plan
- VII. Annexation Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is defined by SDCL 11-6-1 as “any document which describes in words, and may illustrate by maps, plats, charts, and other descriptive matter, the goals, policies, and objectives of the municipality to interrelate all functional and natural systems and activities relating to the development of the territory under its jurisdiction.”

Many issues facing Hill City identified in the 1984 Comprehensive Plan remain as relevant today as they were then, such as those associated with a seasonal economy based on tourism, gravel roads in city limits, a lack of full-time employment opportunities, limited availability of developable land, and the quality and quantity of parks and recreation facilities. Much has also changed in Hill City since 1984, which has resolved several problems previously identified in the original Comprehensive Plan, while also introducing many new challenges.

Since the last comprehensive planning effort, many new strategies and technologies have emerged that offer more dynamic ways of dealing with community challenges. These, along with well-established planning methods, are employed in this Comprehensive Plan to best address the old and new challenges facing Hill City. However, constantly changing conditions and unforeseen consequences will require Hill City to be continually adaptive to ensure its planning efforts are resulting in the desired outcomes of the community and, as such, the history of planning in Hill City will continue to evolve.

PAST CHALLENGES RESOLVED

- Downtown Hill City has largely been revitalized
- The completion of the Mickelson Trail has expanded recreation opportunities for locals
- The Spring Creek (Memorial) Park Plan has been mostly completed
- Street design standards have been adopted
- Expansion of water and sewer services
- Downtown sidewalks (scheduled for 2017)

NEW CHALLENGES

- Need for new modern public restrooms on Main Street to service tourists and locals
- More highway traffic and noise, particularly associated with the growth of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
- Need for more availability of affordable housing and a variety of housing types
- Residents' desires for a community center and recycling service
- Impacts of pine beetle infestation to the surrounding forest





PLANNING PROCESS

In early 2015, the Hill City Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission and Common Council decided it was time to move forward with updating the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The City’s Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1984, and since that time a number of significant changes have occurred in Hill City: the population nearly doubled from 535 in 1980¹ to 995 in 2015²; a new high school was built; the Mickelson Trail was completed; and, Hill City has become a well-known arts community.

The City of Hill City contracted with Black Hills Council of Local Governments in July of 2015, to facilitate the updating of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Early in the update process, the P&Z Commission expressed

their desire for a document to be created that doesn’t just “sit on a shelf,” but, rather, is regularly consulted during decision-making by the P&Z Commission, Common Council, and City staff. In doing so, the Comprehensive Plan update will provide an effective framework to guide the city’s growth and development in a direction its community members desire.

Following preliminary work and discussion by the P&Z Commission and Black Hills Council staff during the fall of 2015 and beginning of 2016, the first opportunity for public input was provided through a community survey. During the months of February and March 2016, staff from the City of Hill City and Black Hills Council met with several local organizations³ to invite participation in the survey and advertize for

upcoming community input meetings. The community survey was available both online and in paper format, and in both English and Spanish. The community survey was open during March and April 2016. In total, 242 survey responses were collected.

On March 22, 2016, two community input meetings were held at the Hill City Senior Center. These meetings were advertised in the Hill City Prevaler, on the project web-site (myhillcitysd.com), and on flyers posted at businesses and public buildings around town. Approximately 40 people attended these meetings, representing residents, business owners, and elected and appointed officials. The attendees were asked two questions: what they liked about Hill City, and what could be better. Much of the input provided at these meetings echoed the responses to the community survey.

Unique to the planning process was the opportunity to engage with students at Hill City High School. On April 6, 2016, a full day was spent in Mr. Noyes’s classroom where a cross-section of students from 9th-12th grades were asked their opinions about what they like about Hill City, what they would like to see change, and what would make them want to live in Hill City as an adult. Students were also given the opportunity to take the community survey on their school laptops. The time spent with the students provided an interesting perspective about Hill City that may not have been captured otherwise and is reflected throughout this document.

In May and June of 2016, the final survey

results were presented to the P&Z Commission and made available to the public on the project website and in paper format. Due to the very large response rate and variety of topics covered, multiple P&Z Commission meetings were spent reviewing the survey results.

The next step in the planning process was community visioning, which involved two public input meetings on June 28, 2016, also held at the Hill City Senior Center. At these meetings, the public participated in a series of individual and group activities focused on identifying their vision for the future of Hill City. This included having groups of attendees complete the sentence “In 2026, my Hill City will be…” in an attempt to create a shared vision for the future. About 25 people participated in the community visioning, which ultimately helped form the basis of the Community Vision of this plan.

From August to October 2016, Black Hills Council staff met with the P&Z Commission at their regular meetings to solidify a shared community vision and discuss each element of the Comprehensive Plan in order to develop planning priorities. An additional P&Z Commission meeting was spent reviewing previous planning efforts in Hill City, namely the All Aboard Hill City document, and another meeting was spent specifically discussing future land use in and around Hill City and the possibility of adopting an extra-territorial jurisdiction in the future.

The final steps of the Comprehensive Plan update process involved public review of the draft Comprehensive Plan document in April,

¹ 1984 Hill City Comprehensive Plan
² U.S. Census Bureau American Fact Finder 2015 Population Estimate
³ These local organizations included: Evergreen Garden Club, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance, Let’s Ride ATV/UTV Club, Hill City Chamber of Commerce, Hill City Parent Involvement Parent Teacher Organization (PIPTO), Friends of the Library, Hill City Merchants, Hill City School Board, Hill City Senior Center, Hill City Arts Council, and Heart of the Hills Economic Development Corporation.

2017. Following changes to the document based on public input and the opinions of the P&Z Commission, Common Council, and City staff, the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan was presented and adopted by the Common Council on June 26, 2017.

Going forward, regular updates to this Comprehensive Plan are anticipated, as necessary, to ensure citizens’ desires inform policy and projects; planning efforts are adaptive to the changing environmental, economic, and social factors affecting growth and development; and, to make sure this document remains a current and effective document for decision-making.

HILL CITY LIFESTYLE: The Great Outdoors & Rural Resort Dwellers

The Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) tapestry lifestyle data looks at demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for neighborhoods and zip codes throughout the United States. Each neighborhood is then put into one of 67 unique segments based on lifestyle choices, buying habits, and how people spend their free time. This information is useful for understanding characteristics about the local population and their lifestyle preferences, which ultimately plays a role in the type of community in which they like to live. Hill City fits into two primary tapestry segments: “The Great Outdoors” and “Rural Resort Dwellers.”

The Great Outdoors neighborhoods are characterized as being found in pastoral settings with older, educated residents who live an active, but modest lifestyle, support civic causes, have pets, garden, and enjoy outdoor activities, such as hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating.

The Rural Resort Dwellers are typically comprised of residents who are close to retirement, live modestly, maintain a social calendar, are passionate about gardening, and prefer to spend disposable income on their hobbies. These neighborhoods are set in scenic rural locations with over half of the housing units being vacant due to a high seasonal vacancy rate.

To find out more, visit: www.esri.com/tapestry.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

HISTORY

Being the first established settlement in Pennington County and the second known in the Black Hills, Hill City has a long history in the area. Originally settled in the year 1877 by miners that were prospecting for gold in the nearby French Creek area, Hill City’s original town name was “Hillyo.” When gold mining later moved to the northern Black Hills, Hill City nearly disappeared, but was revitalized by tin mining for a short time during the late 1800’s. Around 1900, Hill City became an industrial railroad hub for nearly half a century and in the late 1950’s, the Black Hills Central Railroad established the first passenger train (now known as the “1880 Train”).¹

Hill City eventually evolved into a major tourist destination during the second half of the 20th century largely due its central location close to several well-known attractions in the Black Hills, including Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Custer State Park, Jewel Cave, Wind Cave, as well as thousands of acres of Black Hills National Forest, two through trail systems (the Mickelson Trail and the Centennial Trail), and several nearby lakes, campgrounds, and resorts. As tourism developed in Hill City and the nearby area, so did many businesses and services catering to tourists, including restaurants, retail shops, lodging, and entertainment, which comprise

the primary core of Hill City’s economy today. The combination of Hill City’s central location and its reputation for warm hospitality has led to its well-suited nickname: “Heart of the Black Hills.”

THE PEOPLE

In 2016, an estimated 1,008 people² were living in Hill City, up from 948 people in 2010³. The population has the following characteristics:

- A nearly equal number of males and females, at 51.2% and 48.8% of the total population, respectively³.
- A median age of 37.9, just slightly higher than the U.S. median age of 37.2³.
- 88.1% of people over the age of 18 are a high school graduate or higher, which exceeds the U.S. estimate of 86.7%⁴.
- An average household size of 2.41 people, compared to an average of 2.58 in the U.S.³
- A median home value of \$152,300, compared to \$140,500 for South Dakota⁴.
- A median rent payment of \$698, \$43 higher than the median rent for South Dakota⁴.
- A median household income of \$46,607, compared to \$50,957 for South Dakota⁴.
- An unemployment rate of 2.9% in 2016, below the U.S. annual rate of 4.9%⁵.
- An average commute time of 21.9 minutes

¹ www.hillcitysd.com/visitor-information/history-of-hill-city

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder 2016 Estimate

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Fact Finder 5-Year Estimates

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (not seasonally adjusted; 2.9% is for Pennington County)

Hill City is somewhat unique in terms of its demographic makeup in that 18.8% of its population (179 people) identifies as being Hispanic or Latino⁶, which is more than double or quadruple the percentage in other communities throughout the Black Hills. This percentage is largely attributed to the number of Hispanic people that originally came to Hill City to work in the logging industry and have since become established in the community and encouraged others to move here⁷. This population will presumably continue to grow in the foreseeable future and, as a result, they will have an increasing influence on the community of Hill City for many years to come.

THE ECONOMY

Demonstrating the importance of tourism to the Hill City economy, of the 114 businesses in Hill City, 81 are in the retail trades or services group (i.e. restaurants, gas stations, hotels/motels) and, in 2015, employed an estimated 714 people, or 86.7% of Hill City’s total workforce. In contrast, the remaining business classifications in Hill City only employ 109 people altogether and include the following number of businesses: 19 financial/ insurance/real estate, five (5) government, three (3) wholesale trade, two (2) manufacturing, two (2) construction, one (1) transportation, and one (1) unclassified establishment.⁸

Another indicator of the importance of tourism to the Hill City economy is the taxable sales numbers filed with the South Dakota

Department of Revenue, which show the retail trades and services groups of businesses regularly contributing to a very large portion of the total taxable sales for Hill City during the summer months. In June through August of 2016, for example, the retail trades and services groups were attributed with over 90% of the total taxable sales in Hill City.⁹

Beyond tourism, there are many other industries in the nearby area which play a role in the health of Hill City’s economy. The most predominant of these is forestry-related activities, including logging in the Black Hills National Forest and a lumber mill just east of town that is the largest employer in the area. Other influencing industries include agriculture, construction, real estate, and manufacturing.

LOCAL CULTURE

In recent years, the Hill City community has worked hard to offer unique experiences for visitors and locals and to become more diverse than a tourist destination. As a result, Hill City has become well-known for its arts culture, museums, special events, and is associated with several wineries and breweries just outside its city limits. These attributes, combined with Hill City’s community spirit and a unique aesthetic that reflects Hill City’s natural surroundings and long history with hints of alpine architecture, make Hill City undeniably distinct from other communities in the Black Hills.

³ U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census
⁴ Rapid City Journal: “State’s Hispanic population growing quickly” (May 24, 2011)
⁸ ESRI Total Residential Population Forecasts for 2015
⁹ South Dakota Department of Revenue

COMMUNITY VISION

IN 2026, MY HILL CITY WILL BE...

A SAFE, THRIVING, YEAR-ROUND COMMUNITY

Hill City will offer an exceptional quality of life for residents by working together as a community to promote the safety and well-being of all people, to provide a positive economic climate for small businesses to thrive year-round, and to create an environment where residents can live, work, and meet their lifelong needs.

A SMALL TOWN PRESERVING ITS IDENTITY

Hill City will strive to maintain a balance between change and the preservation of its local culture and natural environment by developing and implementing planning efforts with the help of area residents that encourage positive growth and change while still maintaining the small town look and feel of Hill City and the beauty of the Black Hills.

A MAJOR DESTINATION: “HEART OF THE BLACK HILLS”

Hill City will become a major tourist destination by elevating its image as the “Heart of the Black Hills” through memorable community events, exceptional retail and dining experiences, warm and welcoming hospitality, and promotion of Hill City as an ideal base for many outdoor recreation opportunities.



PLAN ELEMENTS

Throughout the planning process several common themes emerged: the desire for a more diversified, year-round economy; the value placed on the city’s small-town identity and sense of place; and, the importance of promoting Hill City as a travel destination. These themes make up the guiding vision statement outlined on the previous page.

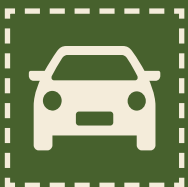
This guiding vision was used as the basis for the goals and strategies detailed for each plan element. The action plans developed for each element outline specific steps that Hill City can take to realize this vision by the year 2026.



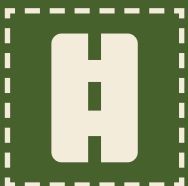
GROWTH & LAND USE



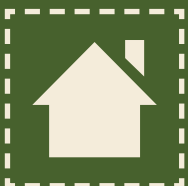
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



TRANSPORTATION & UTILITIES



COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES



HOUSING



RECREATION

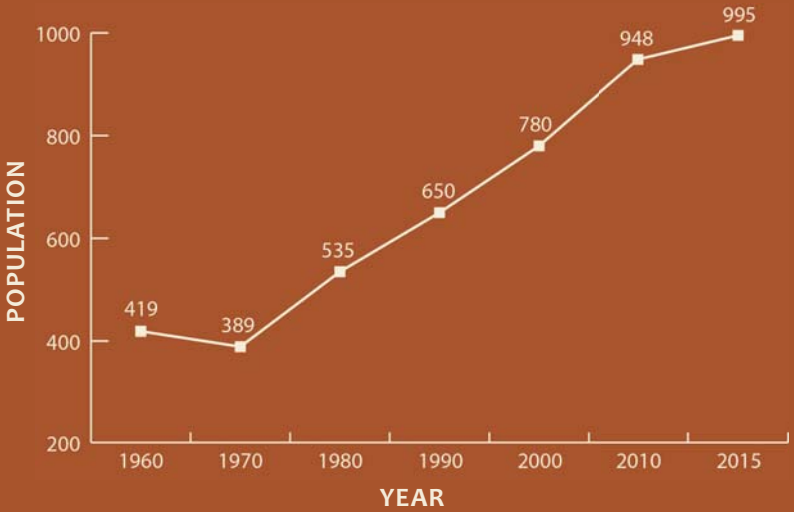


ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & NATURAL HAZARDS



Image courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism

Hill City Population Growth



Year 2025 Population Estimates:

- 1,075 people - projected at 0.80% annual growth rate (U.S. average)
- 1,178 people - projected at 1.84% annual growth rate (Hill City average since 2000)
- 1,244 - projected at 2.25% annual growth rate (Hill City average since 1960)

GROWTH & LAND USE

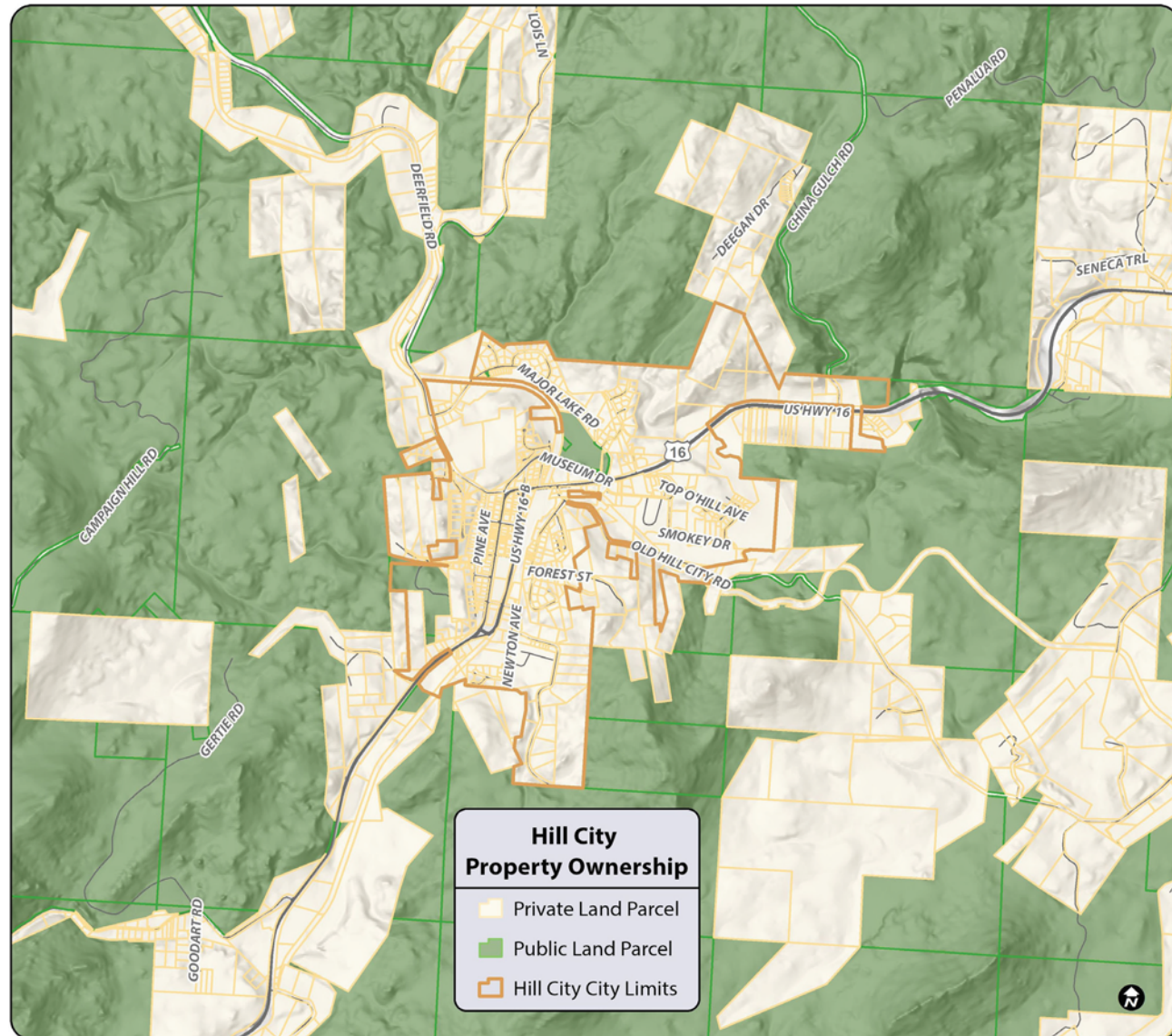
Hill City has experienced above-average population growth over the past few decades with the population nearly doubling since 1980. If this were to keep pace, around 200 more people could be expected to be living in Hill City by the year 2025, whereas a growth rate on par with the current U.S. average would result in approximately 80 more people living in Hill City by 2025. Though these population projections are only estimates and there are many factors that will influence the actual rate of growth, it can reasonably be anticipated that Hill City’s population will continue to grow at an average or above average rate based on historical trends and current economic conditions favorable to growth. One result of this population growth will be the need for Hill City to also grow physically in order in order to meet the needs of these new residents for housing, transportation, recreation, and other services.

Hill City’s physical growth is encumbered by two main factors, steep topography and the large amount of public land, primarily managed by the U.S. Forest Service, surrounding the city. Thus, Hill City’s future growth may occur through the annexation of properties along road corridors where there is adjacent private land, such as north and west along Deerfield Road and south along Highway 385/16. There is also potential for future growth to occur without significant, or even any, expansion of city limits through the annexation of properties currently outside of city limits, but primarily surrounded by city limits (so-called “donut hole” or “island” properties), and by further development of those properties already located within city limits. The second of these would result in a higher-density land use pattern and might occur, for instance, from the further subdivision of existing lots or increasing the use intensity on existing lots, such as allowing the development

of larger and taller buildings or more uses to occur on one property. Hill City’s future growth will presumably advance from a combination of all these, but it is important to understand the positive and negative implications of each type of growth when making land use decisions. For example, a more compact or high-density land use pattern lends itself better to creating a pedestrian-friendly community and maintaining a small-town look, while growing outwardly allows people to maintain ownership of larger lot sizes, which is often preferable for people who have chosen not to live in a “big city.”

When people were asked in the community survey about what direction they most see Hill City growing in the future, the overwhelming top response was to the “North and East” (along Highway 16/385 toward “Three Forks”), with “South” (along Highway 16/385 in the direction of Custer) coming in second and “North” (Sunset creek Estates/Major Lake Drive

area) a distant third. Growth to the north and east was presumably chosen by the survey respondents due to its connection with Rapid City and the significant amount of commercial and residential development that already exists along this corridor; however, there are some challenges which may limit the ability of Hill City to grow in this direction, including a parcel of steep public land in the Mitchell Lake area and the capacity for the City of Hill City to cost-effectively provide water and sewer service in this direction. As a result, it may be more logical to encourage growth in a southerly direction along Highway 385/16 where there is a larger quantity of private land adjacent to city limits and the existing water and sewer infrastructure is capable of being more easily extended. Nonetheless, due to the rate of development to the north and east of Hill City in the past, it should be expected that there will continue to be demand for development in this direction in the future, and so it should not be overlooked during future planning activities.



Hill City’s current land use pattern primarily consists of residential and commercial uses with no properties knowingly being used for industrial purposes inside city limits. The continuation of this pattern is seemingly preferable for local residents based on the responses to the community survey, in which residential was the first choice for what type of development people feel is most needed in Hill City, followed by civic uses, commercial, and parking areas. The general preference for

these types of development was also echoed throughout the community survey and at public meetings where people’s desire for more housing, parks and community facilities, year-round businesses, and downtown parking was made apparent. It can be expected that commercial land uses will continue to exist and be further developed along the highway corridors and for residential uses to be located beyond in the outlying areas of Hill City.

In contrast, industrial, mixed-use, and higher-density development were ranked at the bottom of people’s preferences for what type of development is most needed in Hill City, which corresponds to there being limited or no development of this nature in Hill City currently. Some common concerns with these types of development may be their visual appearance and potential to produce negative impacts, such as the storage of materials or smokestacks commonly associated with industrial uses, and the tendency for mixed-use or higher-density buildings to have more of an urban feel and require more parking. However, these types of development also have the potential to help solve some of the challenges facing Hill City, including lack of full-time employment opportunities, housing deficiencies, and limited room for growth. For example, the establishment of an industrial business could create full-time employment opportunities for locals and mixed-use or higher-density development could help create more housing units and keep the size of Hill City more compact. So while these types of development may not be desirable or appropriate at this time, they may be worthy of future consideration so long as they are conducted in appropriate locations, their negative impacts are minimized, and their appearance is made to blend in with the small-town look of Hill City.

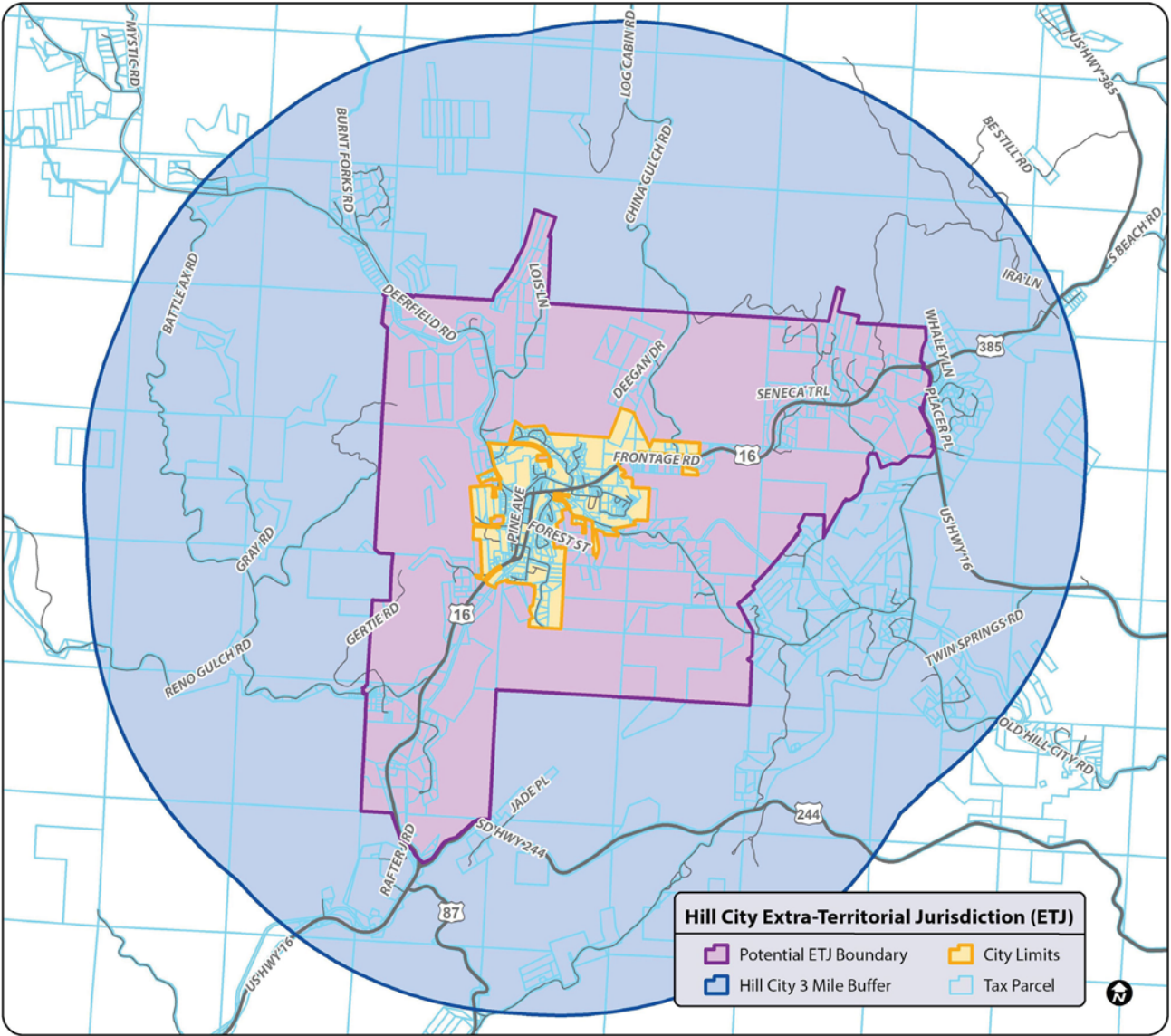
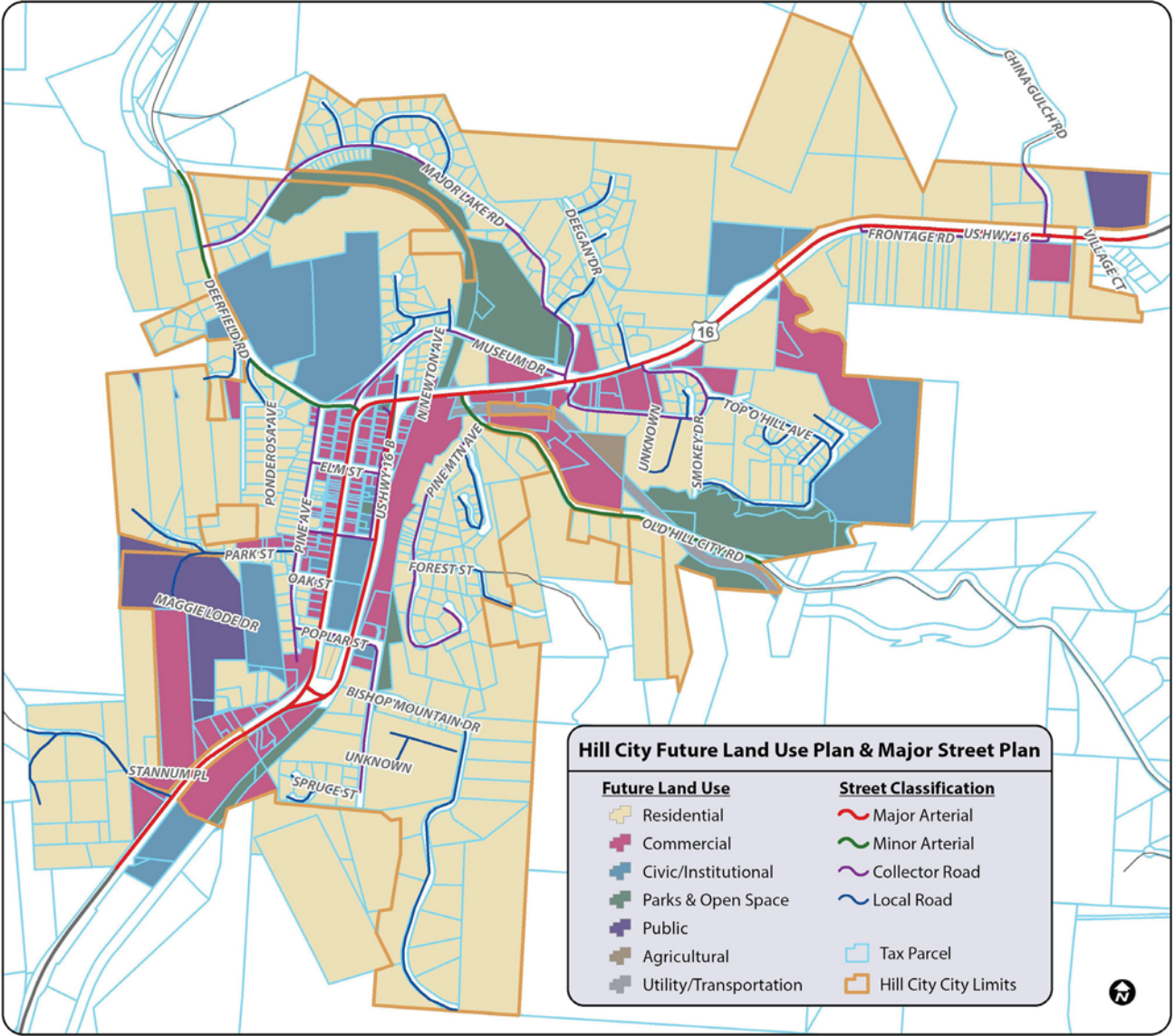
The primary method for planning for growth in a way that is compatible with the community’s vision for the future is through the adoption of a Future Land Use Map, which classifies all parcels of land with a recommended land

use type. This map is intended to help guide future growth so it follows an orderly pattern of development, but it is not intended to be a permanently static map, meaning changing conditions and circumstances yet unknown will likely necessitate deviations from the original land use designations recommended by the map. Hill City has not previously adopted a Future Land Use map and so development requests have typically been considered based on present circumstances without regard for a formal plan for the future. Going forward, the Future Land Use map will help decision makers and the public follow a planned land use pattern with land uses designated in appropriate areas based on several factors, including, but not limited to, access, location of utilities, adjacent land uses, property ownership, historical and current growth patterns, as well as the community’s desires for the future growth of Hill City.

The Future Land Use Map adopted in conjunction with this plan follows the same general pattern as the existing zoning classifications, with commercial areas primarily located in the core of Hill City and along highway corridors and residential land uses set further back. The other land use classifications used in the map, including civic/institutional, parks and open space, public, agricultural, and utility/transportation, are primarily designated in the location of existing or planned facilities of the corresponding type. Of particular note, there are no parcels of land designated as industrial in the Future Land Use Map. This reflects both the community’s lack of desire and the lack of

potentially suitable locations for this type of development in Hill City. Specifically, the areas in the northeast and south portions of Hill City, adjacent to Highway 16/385, have primarily been given future land use designations of commercial and residential in a partial attempt to prevent industrial development from occurring so that the visual aesthetics of Hill City are maintained in a way that gives a positive impression to visitors traveling in and out of Hill City.

In an effort to address future growth, the Future Land Use Map also designates a recommended future land use type for several parcels of land currently located outside of Hill City, but in close proximity to city limits. This is intended to assist with future planning activities, such as the extension of water and sewer lines or siting of new community facilities, as there is potential for annexation of these areas by the City of Hill City in the future.



Another recommendation for addressing future growth beyond city limits is the adoption of an extra-territorial jurisdiction by the City of Hill City, as allowed by South Dakota Codified Law 11-6-26. This would give the City the authority to approve subdivision plats up to three (3) miles outside of its corporate limits. The purpose of this would be to create continuity between the areas within and surrounding Hill City by requiring them to meet the same development standards.

As discussed with the Planning and Zoning Commission, adoption of an extra-territorial jurisdiction is a short-term goal (in the next five (5) years), though it would likely not extend the full three (3) miles allowed. Instead, an extra-territorial jurisdictional boundary could be adopted which only extends to the areas Hill City realistically expects to grow in the near future, such as to the “Three Forks” intersection to the northeast and the intersection of Highways 16/385 and 244 to the south.

WE WILL...

- Promote a pattern of land development which helps maintain the small-town look and feel of Hill City and is pedestrian-friendly.
- Encourage the efficient use of land available for growth and promote compatible land uses to minimize the potential negative impacts of future development on existing uses and development.

BY...

1. Preserving the visual aesthetics that contribute positively to Hill City's look and feel, including the natural surroundings, unique buildings, and existing forms of low-impact development, particularly along the highway corridors.
2. Pursuing the annexation of properties in the county currently surrounded by Hill City limits.
3. Consulting the Future Land Use Map adopted with this plan when reviewing development requests as a way to encourage the future development of property in appropriate locations.
4. Adopting an Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction to ensure the subdivision of land in areas near Hill City is compatible with the development of land within Hill City.
5. Considering more intense development of properties within city limits, as an alternative to the outward expansion of Hill City's city limits, to accommodate future growth needs and prevent urban sprawl.
6. Encouraging future development and growth in areas where the provision of city utilities and services is most cost-effective.
7. Creating and maintaining digital maps and layers of data related to land use, zoning, and city infrastructure to facilitate future planning efforts.
8. Reviewing and revising, as necessary, the commercial zoning districts in the Zoning Ordinance to ensure clarity and consistency for regulating new and existing commercial development in Hill City.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Hill City's economy has long been defined by its seasonal nature following the pattern of peak tourism activity during the summer months, slower spring and fall seasons, and typically quiet winters. This provides for many tourism-related jobs and a flourishing economy during four to five months of the year, but creates gaps in job availability and economic activity the remainder of the year. As a result, many people seek year-round, better-paying employment in other communities and the majority of businesses, particularly along Main Street, close for several months during the off-season, leaving empty or shuttered storefronts and giving people the impression that Hill City is closed for business during the winter.

While the important role tourism plays in Hill City's economy is evident, solutions for the two main economic challenges it presents, lack of full-time job opportunities and year-round businesses, are not so easy or obvious. These challenges were similarly identified in the 1984 Comprehensive Plan. Some progress has been made on the solutions recommended then, such as revitalizing the downtown area and reorganizing the local development corporation (now the Heart of the Hills Economic Development Corporation), but work remains to be done on some of the other prescribed solutions that remain relevant today, including strengthening the basic industries tied to the natural resources of the area and extending and intensifying the tourism season. The first of these is aimed

at diversifying the local economy so it is less dependent on tourism and the second seeks to extend both the length of time that tourists stay in Hill City and the overall tourism season into the winter months with added opportunities for lodging, entertainment, and recreation.

The open-ended responses to the community survey also provided many excellent suggestions for attracting businesses and jobs to Hill City. Some of these were direct strategies, such as providing incentives for businesses to locate in Hill City or be open year-round, working with other local and state economic development entities to create a marketing plan, and adding more events to attract visitors during the off-season. Other suggestions were more indirect in nature, meaning they are intended to promote economic development through overall community improvement, such as by paving streets, creating more affordable housing, and improving the aesthetics of Hill City. All of these suggestions, as well as those shown below, are worthy of further consideration, and possible development, as both direct and indirect economic development strategies are integral to improving the economic climate of Hill City.

Responses to the community survey also revealed what types of businesses people would like to see added in the community. The top four (4) choices, in order, were Entertainment (i.e. restaurants, movie theatre, bowling alley), Retail (i.e. grocery stores, home good stores, clothing stores), Social Services (i.e. day cares, low-income assistance), and Recreation and Active Living (i.e. gym, yoga studio, nutrition assistance). Perhaps not surprising, the least

**BUSINESS AND JOB
ATTRACTION IDEAS
FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

Direct Strategies

- Incentives: *tax breaks, easier permitting process, low-cost loans, affordable rents/ leases for businesses, etc.*
- Work with local and state economic development entities to promote Hill City: *low taxes, good work force, buildings on Main Street are move-in ready, small town, arts culture, etc.*
- Comprehensive Marketing Plan: *use to advertise in other areas and target the types of businesses Hill City wants to attract*
- Attract People During the Off-season: *with more winter events and activities*

Indirect Strategies

- Business Support: *provide more housing, daycare, and other support businesses*
- Improve Infrastructure: *parking, water & sewer, internet, streets, and parks*
- Go Beyond Main Street: *clean up other areas of town, allow more commercial development, establish an industrial/ manufacturing park*
- Aesthetics: *keep Hill City unique, make Hill City visually inviting so it doesn't look like a tourist town, clean up areas around downtown*
- Attract Young People: *with affordable housing, more jobs, and things to do*

popular choice was Tourism-related businesses, thus, clearly conveying residents' desires for more businesses that cater to locals, not tourists. Specific mention was repeatedly made throughout the public input process of the need for a pharmacy, daycare, bakery, farmers market, and places and activities for young adults in Hill City. Though it is usually difficult to influence the specific types of businesses that locate in a community, as this is more often regulated by market demands, the types of businesses locals desire for their community is still helpful information for developing a marketing plan, as well as for the purposes of future land use planning.

As Hill City looks toward the future, economic growth is undoubtedly vital to the long-term well-being of the community, but it is just as important to attract types of growth that are high-quality in nature as it is a large quantity

of growth. In Hill City's case, for example, it is seemingly preferable for a few high-paying jobs to be created, rather than several low-wage jobs, and for one year-round business serving local residents' needs to be opened, rather than multiple seasonal businesses catering to tourists. Thus, Hill City stands to benefit from economic development activities which focus on generating not only sheer growth, but also shared and sustained economic growth, meaning the growth is beneficial for all involved and can be maintained without creating other economic, social, or environmental problems. This can be achieved by taking into consideration both the immediate impacts and the long-term consequences of economic growth when making decision and undertaking efforts to attract and grow businesses, which, ultimately, ensures that economic growth will help Hill City to realize its vision for the future.

WE WILL...

- Play an active role in addressing the problems associated with Hill City's seasonal economy in order to improve the economic well-being of all.
- Strive to create a shared and sustainable economy that is beneficial for the entire community, now and in the future.

BY...

1. Working with the Heart of the Hills Economic Development Corporation and the South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development to create a comprehensive economic development strategy and to work on specific economic development projects.
2. Undertaking community improvement projects that will make Hill City an attractive place for businesses to locate.
3. Promoting off-season events and activities that will encourage visitation outside of the normal tourist season.
4. Participating in regional economic development activities.
5. Exploring the use of incentives for attracting year-round jobs and businesses.
6. Considering both the short- and long-term consequences of economic growth, to the extent possible, during decision making related to economic development.



TRANSPORTATION & UTILITIES

One of the most commonly identified issues throughout the community engagement process related to transportation and utilities was the paving of gravel roads (streets). Currently, there are approximately 13.52 miles total of roads in Hill City, 3.41 miles of which have a gravel or crushed rock surface, equating to about 25.2%.¹ While seemingly high for a municipality, the majority of gravel roads in Hill City are located in residential areas and provide access to low-density subdivisions.

The City of Hill City has improved some gravel roads in the past and currently has a priority list

of additional roads to be paved; however, the debt still owed in the form of bond payments for past road improvements and the high costs involved with paving gravel roads have prevented more roads from being improved in recent years. Without a major funding source or imposing property assessments, the ability for Hill City to pave roads will likely be limited for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, efforts to maintain the gravel roads to ensure the safety of travelers should continue to be a priority.

Another concern relating to transportation

¹ Calculations conducted using the South Dakota Department of Transportation's Road Data for Pennington County
(Source: <http://arcgis.sd.gov/Server/DOT/DOTViewer/>)

PRIORITY ROAD PAVING PROJECTS*

- Deegan Drive / Lacy’s Court
- Top O Hill Avenue / Bud’s Drive
- Spruce Street / Short Street
- Forest Street
- Bishop Mountain Drive (north/south)
- Smokey Drive

**The priorities identified here are subject to change due to the availability of funding, project costs, changing need/urgency, and future potential for construction efficiencies.*

is parking in commercial areas, particularly during the tourist season and the Sturgis Rally, with over half of the survey respondents choosing “adding more parking in commercial areas” as being most important for improving transportation in Hill City. During the summer months, free parking is available for tourists all along Main Street and its nearby side streets, in the school parking lots, portions of Walnut Avenue, and nearby Tracy Park, though people identified employees taking up parking on Main Street and lack of signage directing tourists to parking areas off Main Street as diminishing the actual and perceived amount of parking available for tourists.

Commercial parking has been a long-standing issue in Hill City and providing convenient parking for visitors to access the businesses on Main Street is understandably of high-priority for this tourist-oriented community; however, it is currently unknown how the availability of parking in Hill City relates to peak visitor demand and employee parking needs and so further study of this issue is recommended before taking action. Beyond adding more

parking spaces, there may be other, more cost-effective options (i.e. time limits, improved signage, dedicated employee parking, etc.) for improving the parking situation in the downtown area.

The second and third most popular responses for improving transportation in Hill City were adding or improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, such as sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, paths, and trails. This follows national trends for transportation networks to preferably accommodate multiple modes of transportation, beyond just automobiles, in order to make communities more inclusive, affordable, healthier, and safer, as well as having the added benefit of decreasing the need for parking spaces. As Hill City continues to grow and change, planning for the inclusion of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, in addition to vehicle lanes, in right-of-ways is essential for realizing these benefits.

Several specific suggestions for pedestrian and bicycle improvements were mentioned in the

community survey open-ended responses, most notably fixing the unevenness of the sidewalks downtown (along the west side of Main Street); installing sidewalks where needed to connect areas of town for pedestrians (i.e. along Deerfield Road); improving pedestrian crossings across Highway 16/385; and, tying in the Mickelson Trail to downtown more prevalently. First, regarding the downtown sidewalks, an improvement project is already planned by the South Dakota Department of Transportation for completion in 2017 or 2018. Next, the installation of new sidewalks is costly and, therefore, requires significant planning and effort to set aside or seek funding, though as properties are redeveloped and roads redone, sidewalks can be required to

be installed and a more complete pedestrian network will be created over time. Third, although there are currently several pedestrian/ bicycle crossings along Highway 385/16, concerns about their location and visibility would require coordination with the South Dakota Department of Transportation, whose jurisdiction they fall under. And lastly, an effort to better direct bicyclists on the Mickelson Trail to downtown Hill City would require cooperation with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department, as well as participation from several other community organizations.

Other transportation concerns in Hill City relate to traffic flow during the tourist season and Sturgis Rally. In particular, higher traffic

SPECIFIC TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT IDEAS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| • Downtown sidewalks | • Bikes lanes, separate from sidewalks, particularly on Main Street | • Clean up gravel and sand on roads and sidewalks |
| • Downtown parking | | • Extend sidewalks to all commercial areas (i.e. City Hall, hotels for tourists, Visitor’s Information Center) |
| • Accessibility for persons with disabilities, particularly downtown | • Paved bike paths in an out of town | |
| • Sidewalk along Deerfield Road | • Bike racks downtown | • Traffic light at Old Hill City Road and Highway intersection |
| • Bridge overlooking Major Lake | • Better connection to Mickelson Trail for bicyclists (i.e. bike lanes through town and to downtown, signage) | • Side streets too narrow for parking on both sides |
| • Roads behind Krull’s Market | | • Snow removal on sidewalks |
| • Pine Ave. (too narrow) | • Pave all gravel roads | |
| • Chute Rooster Drive | • Paint crosswalks | |
| • Larger school parking lot | | |

volumes along Main Street, parking for Recreational Vehicles (RVs), and the need for a traffic light at the Old Hill City Road/Highway 16/385 intersection were frequently cited during the community engagement process as on-going transportation issues. The highway by-pass (Highway 16B) completed in 1995 has undoubtedly alleviated some of the traffic problems on Main Street, but on-going traffic issues along Main Street and Highway 16/385 will require coordination with the South Dakota Department of Transportation to first determine the severity of the problem and then, if warranted, possible remedies. The perceived problems associated with parking for RVs could also be identified and addressed along with a study of commercial parking needs in Hill City.

Regarding utilities, the City of Hill City provides water and sewer service to most residents and businesses in Hill City, though a few homes are known to remain on private on-site wastewater treatment (septic) systems. As of 2016, the water treatment facility and wastewater treatment plant are both adequately sized to handle current demand and flow capacities, but future growth and the wearing out of equipment from regular use will require the need for upgrades and expansion in the future. Future growth will also require the extension of water and sewer lines to areas currently not served. Thus, planning for future water and sewer needs and the proper maintenance of treatment facilities will remain ongoing objectives of the City of Hill City.

ACTION PLAN

WE WILL...

- Provide a safe and efficient transportation network that accommodates vehicular traffic, as well as creates a user-friendly environment for pedestrians and bicyclists in order to promote wellness and an enhanced image of the community.
- Supply high-quality water and sewer utilities to residents and businesses and ensure water and sewer facilities are adequate for future growth.

BY...

1. Continuing to maintain all roads, paved and unpaved, for safe driving conditions.
2. Pursuing funding sources to pave gravel roads.
3. Coordinating with the South Dakota Department of Transportation to identify and correct issues along Main Street and Highway 385/16, dealing with traffic flow, pedestrian crossings, and future pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure needs.
4. Increasing knowledge about the possible issues related to downtown parking by undertaking a parking study.
5. Creating a more complete and safe walking and bicycling environment through the inclusion of pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure in road and street designs, wherever possible.
6. Pursuing grant funding to install sidewalks throughout the community to create a more connected pedestrian network.
7. Periodically analyzing population projections and growth patterns to anticipate future water and sewer service needs and increase capacity and upgrade facilities, as necessary, to continually meet community needs.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

The City of Hill City owns and maintains multiple community facilities and provides several services that better the lives of those living and working in Hill City. These include the Hill City Library, Senior Center, City Hall, and the building that currently houses the Girls and Boys Club. Street lighting, snow removal, street maintenance, water and wastewater systems, and law enforcement (contracted with the Pennington County Sheriff’s Office) are among the services the City provides. While these facilities and services provide for the basic needs of local residents and workers, the input provided as part of the community survey and during the public input meetings clearly communicated that additional community facilities and services are desired in Hill City.

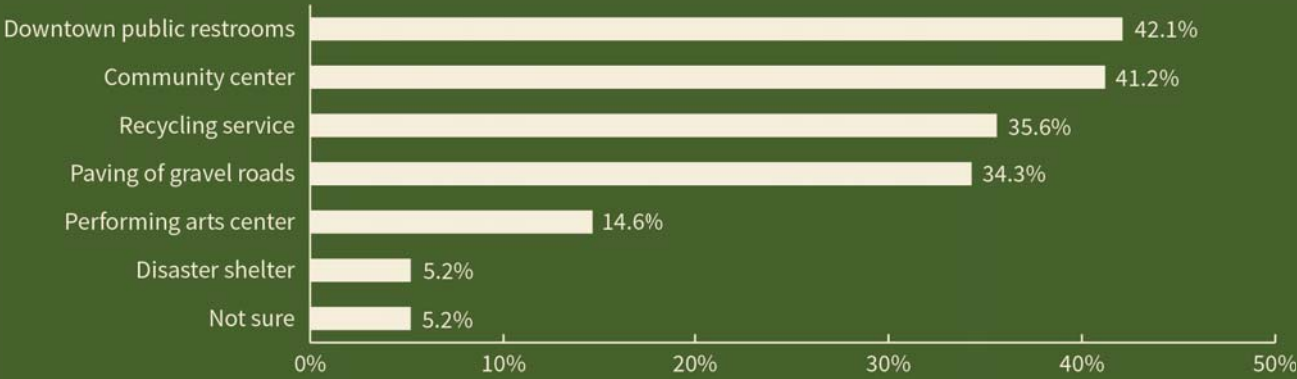
In terms of community facilities, people regularly identified downtown public restrooms and a community center as being top priorities. To a lesser degree, but still notable, a larger library and a town square area, similar to the recently developed Main Street Square in Rapid City, were other common suggestions for desired community facilities. The perceived need for public restrooms to be located on, or in very close proximity to, Main Street stems from the poor condition and inconvenient location of the existing public restrooms located in the alley behind the east side of Main Street. The general consensus is that, in addition

to meeting the needs and expectations of today’s travelers, a modern, welcoming, and convenient restroom facility located on Main Street will enhance the image of Hill City and entice visitors to stay in the community longer and patronize local businesses. The public’s desire for a community center and larger library is to provide more amenities for local residents, while the town square area would serve both local residents and visitors by providing a space for events and socializing.

While these identified community facilities would be welcome additions in Hill City, their development is hindered primarily by the availability of funding for construction, maintenance, and staffing, as well as the availability of appropriate sites. Development of the downtown public restrooms, in particular, is also hindered by issues relating to ownership and management, as the City of Hill City has expressed their disinterest in taking on this role in the past.

The development of these facilities, however, is clearly worthy of further discussion based on the strong opinions of the public identified during this comprehensive planning process. Integral to moving forward with the planning and completion of any of these community facilities, particularly the downtown public restrooms, will be a community-wide effort

SURVEY RESPONSES: What additional community facilities, services, and/or enhancement are most needed in Hill City?



involving the participation and cooperation of many community groups, individuals, and the City of Hill City.

The community service that people feel is most lacking in Hill City is recycling. The City of Hill City does not provide garbage service so individual property owners contract with a private company for this, in which curbside recycling pick up is not currently offered. In lieu of curbside recycling, people suggested a central recycling drop-off location could be established in Hill City and also recommended that recycling containers be made available downtown, alongside garbage bins, enabling visitors to also recycle and improving Hill City’s environmentally-friendly image. A central recycling drop-off location was apparently attempted in the past without long-term success and there are many logistical challenges to implementing a recycling program in Hill City; however, due to people’s changing attitudes toward environmental issues and the ever-increasing importance of reducing

waste in landfills, it seems the possibility of providing a recycling service is, at a minimum, worthy of further investigation. Again, this may necessitate the involvement of community groups and/or individuals, as well as the City of Hill City.

In addition to a new recycling service, the results of the community survey also revealed several suggestions for improving existing community services in Hill City. Many of these are addressed in other sections of this Comprehensive Plan with the notable exceptions of street lighting, city government, and aesthetics/cleanliness as they relate to city cleanup and improvement efforts. Regarding street lighting, responses to the community survey indicated that it is difficult to see at night on residential side streets and so either more street lights are needed and/or the existing lights need to be fixed. Although more illumination on the roads may be needed for safety, there was also some consensus that the street lighting in Hill City should be as efficient as possible and protect

night skies by utilizing energy-efficient bulbs and not emitting excessive light. Being more energy-efficient and limiting light pollution also has the added benefit of saving the community money as less power is needed. In order to make these improvements, a process could be setup for the public to notify the City of problem areas in residential neighborhoods and a plan could be drafted for replacing street lighting infrastructure at the end of its useful life with more efficient fixtures and bulbs that limit light pollution.

According to the community survey, another community service in need of improvement is city government. Specifically, the survey respondents said they would like representation from outside city limits, more focus on the interests of locals (rather than tourists), city government to be more proactive, and more communication about what the administration is doing. The city administration could make a greater attempt to distribute information about city actions and undertakings, for example, through the creation of a regular city newsletter. The distribution of a newsletter has proven to be effective at improving communication in several other communities in the Black Hills region.

Lastly, the results of the community survey brought to light people's concerns over the cleanliness and overall aesthetics of the community. In particular, people commented on the numerous unmaintained properties and buildings that need to be cleaned up, both residential and commercial, and also how the

look of the community could be improved through additional greenery, making the town less touristy, and improving the "gateway" areas coming into town from the north and south with welcome signage and landscaping. Some of these improvements require minimal effort, such as sending nuisance violation letters to property owners, while others involve more work and long-term planning.

For example, an annual city-wide clean up day could be planned to encourage residents and business owners to clean up their properties; landscaping and signage ordinances could be reviewed to ensure they help improve the look of Hill City; and, the improvement of dedicated "gateway" areas could be managed as a city project or undertaken by a community group as a service project. These are just a few of the many possibilities that could help improve the cleanliness and aesthetics of Hill City, both of which play an important role in the formation of the town's identity and reputation.



ACTION PLAN

WE WILL...

- Plan for additional community facilities to be developed in Hill City to serve the needs of local residents and improve visitor's experiences.
- Continually work to provide and improve city services in ways that are cost-effective and in the best interest of the community and environment long-term.

BY...

1. Considering funding strategies and pursuing options, including working with community groups and individuals, for developing new community facilities and services, such as a community/event center, town square, and daycare facility.
2. Reviewing city ordinances to ensure they contribute positively to the aesthetics of the community and enforce those not being met.
3. Helping to facilitate community efforts to develop new public restrooms on Main Street.
4. Researching the cost and logistics of providing a recycling service for local residents and businesses, as well as potential funding sources.
5. Publishing a quarterly newsletter highlighting city news of interest to the public.
6. Enforcing the Nuisance Ordinance in order to improve the cleanliness and safety of the community and dedicating additional staff time, as possible, to work with property owners to bring their properties into compliance, focusing on the areas around Main Street and the "gateway" areas coming in and out of town first.
7. Conducting a city-wide cleanup effort with a dedicated event each spring.
8. Inviting the public to submit concerns about street lighting in their neighborhoods.
9. Developing and adopting a street lighting plan for replacing street lighting infrastructure with more energy-efficient fixtures and bulbs that includes lessening the impact on the night sky as one of the primary goals.
10. Identifying potential "gateway" areas to the north and south of Hill City along Highway 16/385 and work with community groups to install welcome signage and landscaping.



HOUSING

The responses to the community survey and input provided at public meetings overwhelmingly indicate a need for more housing and a variety of housing types in Hill City. In particular, single-family residences costing less than \$150,000, apartment units, and senior housing, such as assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Other frequent comments provided suggested there is also a need for quality (well-built) housing and housing that is affordable for low- and middle-income people and families, some of the existing housing in Hill City needs to be cleaned-up and better-maintained, and there are too many vacation home rentals.

In 2014, there were an estimated 551 total housing units in Hill City with a 79.5% occupancy rate, which is lower than the South

Dakota state average of 88.6%¹; however, this smaller-than-average occupancy rate in Hill City may be partially attributed to the use of several existing housing units as vacation home rentals. With a population projection of 150 or more additional people living in Hill City by the year 2025, a minimum of approximately 56 more housing units will be needed in Hill City² to accommodate this growth. Although many factors will affect the actual number of housing units needed in Hill City in the next ten years, it is apparent that Hill City needs to plan for the location of and associated infrastructure needed for additional housing growth.

Regarding the affordability of housing in Hill City, in 2014, the median home value was \$159,500 and the median gross rent was \$752, both of which are significantly higher than the

South Dakota state averages of \$135,700 and \$648, respectively.³ This may be attributed to Hill City’s median household income of \$51,875 also being higher than the South Dakota state average of \$50,338⁴, as well as the desirability of living in Hill City.

Furthermore, it is common knowledge that there are typically few housing units for sale or rent in Hill City at any given time, helping contribute to a perceived shortage of housing in the community. Although the exact causes

of the limited availability and high cost of housing are not entirely clear, the addition of retirees moving into the area, seasonal workers needing housing in the summer, and the limited availability of developable land in Hill City limits all likely contribute to this. However, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the housing issues discussed here and develop specific strategies to remedy them, an in depth study of the housing situation in Hill City is recommended.

³ Ibid
⁴ Ibid

ACTION PLAN

WE WILL...

- Improve the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Hill City.
- Promote the development of a variety of different housing types to accommodate people in various life stages.
- Ensure residential neighborhoods are being well-maintained.

BY...

1. Conducting a housing needs study to better understand the housing situation in Hill City, including the potential causes and remedies pertaining to the issues of availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Hill City.
2. Dedicating staff time, as possible, to the enforcement of the Nuisance Ordinance to ensure residential properties are being adequately maintained.
3. Reviewing the residential zoning districts to ensure they accommodate the development of a wide variety of housing types desired in Hill City, including new and non-traditional housing types that may help to address current housing issues, and make changes, as necessary.
4. Considering the use of incentives to support the development of a variety of housing options and improve the affordability of housing in Hill City, based on the outcomes of a housing needs study.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau – 2010-2014 American Community Survey
² Estimate based on an average household size of 2.67 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010-2014 American Community Survey)

RECREATION

The top priority that community survey respondents identified as a recreation amenity they would like to have available in the future is an affordable, indoor recreation community facility, followed by bicycle and walking paths, picnic shelters, community gardens, and playgrounds. The popularity of an indoor recreation center was also apparent at the public input meetings where it was frequently mentioned.



Other common suggestions provided throughout the community engagement process regarding needed recreation improvements were a community pool and organized recreation programs, particularly for

youth. Although some of these recreation facilities or programs may not be within the current ability of Hill City to provide, the public input strongly suggests that people have a desire for more recreation facilities and opportunities than what is currently available.

Regarding existing park and recreation facilities in Hill City, public input from the community survey and meetings indicated people are somewhat dissatisfied with the current quality and quantity available. In particular, people suggested more parks are needed, the existing parks are run down and need upgrading, the sports fields particularly need more attention, the BMX track should either be maintained or eliminated, and the Parks Board should be more active.

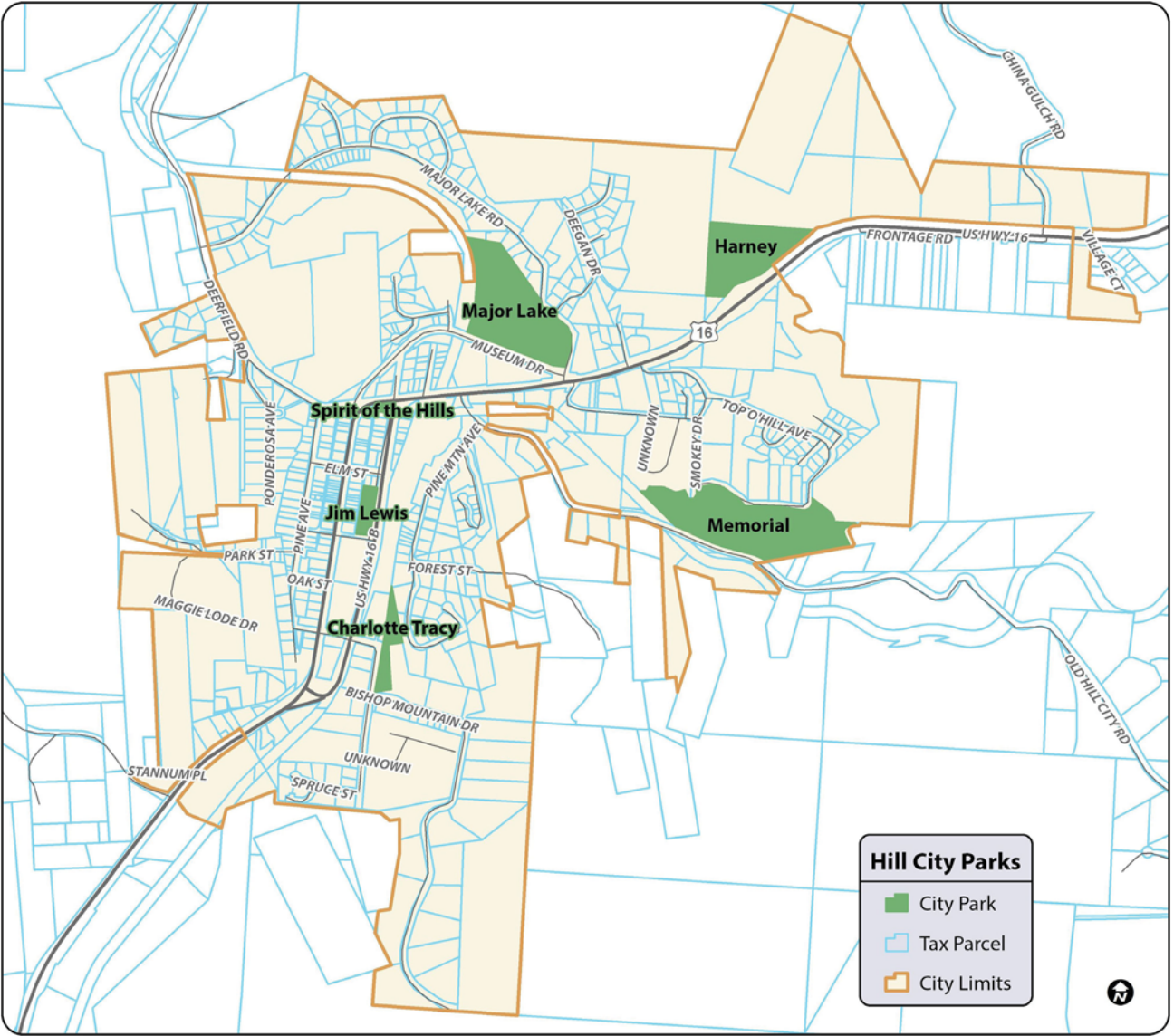
Similarly, the students at Hill City High School expressed their dissatisfaction with the current upkeep of the parks and sports fields, the degrading state of the BMX track,



the declining cleanliness of Major Lake, and the lack of recreation leagues and a recreation department. In addition, the students often commented that they are seeking activities and places to gather outside of school, which recreational programming and improved park facilities could help provide. The Ranger Field improvement project being done by the Hill City School District, including upgrades to the football field, track, and the addition of bleachers, is a start to offering the youth

improved recreation opportunities. There are currently six parks located in Hill City: Memorial, Charlotte Tracy, Spirit of the Hills, Jim Lewis, Major Lake, and Harney, totaling 41.26 acres.¹ Calculated as a percentage of park acres to total city area (1.27 square miles), this equals about 5.05%, which is less than the national median of 8.9% in 2016.² However, if the acreage of U.S. Forest Service land and the portion of the Mickelson Trail located within

¹ www.rapidmap.org
² The Trust for Public Land ParkScore 2016 (<http://parkscore.tpl.org/methodology.php>)



city limits is also factored in, the percentage of park acres to total city area increases to 9.18%. And just beyond city limits, residents are also afforded additional recreation opportunities in the Black Hills National Forest and on the Mickelson Trail.

Parks and recreation facilities are known to play an important role for improving the quality of life of residents, making communities healthier

and more desirable places to live, improving environmental quality, reducing crime, and having a positive economic impact by drawing visitors to the community and improving property values.³ Therefore, both the continual upkeep of park and recreation facilities and planning for future needs are vital for not only contributing to an enhanced quality of life for the residents of Hill City, but also for achieving many other community goals.

³The Trust for Public Land: The Benefits of Parks (<https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits-park-benefits-white-paper12005.pdf>)

ACTION PLAN

WE WILL...

- Provide a variety of high-quality park and recreation facilities and experiences for residents and visitors.
- Utilize and improve existing park and recreation facilities to create opportunities and amenities for youth.

BY...

1. Reinstating and supporting the Parks Board to improve the parks and recreation services and to expand the opportunities available for residents and visitors, particularly for youth.
2. Dedicating additional city resources, as feasible, to the maintenance and upgrading of existing park and recreation facilities.
3. Working with community groups and the schools to conduct park improvement volunteer projects.
4. Determining the most appropriate use for the BMX track with input from the public.
5. Conducting a separate comprehensive parks and recreation planning effort to address community desires for additional facilities and services.

An aerial photograph showing a vast, snow-covered mountain range. The terrain is rugged, with numerous peaks and valleys. Evergreen trees are scattered across the slopes, some appearing as dark green patches against the white snow. The lighting suggests a bright day, with shadows cast across the mountain's surface.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & NATURAL HAZARDS

Hill City is fortunate to have good quality environmental resources and limited geologic and natural hazards, however, it is still important to plan for times when environmental quality is degraded or natural hazards do occur, especially considering the potential impacts to people and property.

According to the community survey responses, the primary concern related to environmental resources in Hill City is improving forest health in areas surrounding town to reduce the risk of wildland fires, followed closely by protecting water quality. The forest health of areas nearby

Hill City has been negatively impacted by historic overgrowth and the on-going mountain pine beetle epidemic occurring throughout the Black Hills, both of which can contribute to the duration and intensity of forest fires, such as the Storm Hill fire just east of Hill City in April, 2016. Although the ability of Hill City to improve forest health is limited, the threat of forest fires is a very real concern considering Hill City's natural surroundings, making even small efforts to lessen the duration and intensity of forest fires in the area worthwhile.

The second most chosen environmental

40 Hill City Comprehensive Plan

Hill City Comprehensive Plan 41

concern, water quality, is influenced by a number of different factors that occur both in and beyond the boundaries of Hill City, such as storm and agricultural runoff, erosion, air pollution, sedimentation, and precipitation patterns. Thus, maintaining or improving water quality can be a difficult task, but extremely important considering its effect on all living things.

Although Hill City regularly maintains satisfactory drinking water quality, the surface water of Spring Creek has been intermittently listed as impaired for its assigned beneficial uses by the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources since 1998 due to fecal coliform and temperature exceeding designated standards.¹ The City of Hill City is a sponsor of the Spring Creek Watershed 319 Project whose objective is to utilize best management practices in the Spring Creek Watershed to restore the beneficial uses of Spring Creek by bringing its bacteria levels into compliance.² This Project was implemented in 2010 and remains ongoing.

Development in Hill City also has the potential to directly impact environmental quality, such as from hard surfaces creating more runoff, removal of trees, and so on. One way to lessen these impacts is to allow alternative forms of building materials and infrastructure to be used, in appropriate situations, when land is being developed. For example, green roofs, porous

concrete, use of grass swales instead of curb and gutter, and solar panels are just a few of the methods and technologies that can be used for helping to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of development. However, the use of these may not currently be allowed per Hill City's development codes and so changes may need to be considered to allow more flexibility for alternative forms of development.

Another way of lessening environmental impacts in Hill City is to increase landscaping. The addition of landscaping in a community, particularly the planting of trees, has several positive environmental effects, such as improving water quality, decreasing air and noise pollution, reducing heating and cooling costs in buildings, and providing wildlife habitat.³ Additionally, landscaping in developed areas is known to provide numerous economic and social benefits as well as positively influencing the overall aesthetics of a community. While the Zoning Regulations currently require landscaping for building and additions over 500 square feet on private property, Hill City would seemingly benefit from the addition of more trees and landscaping at public spaces in town. In particular, Main Street was repeatedly mentioned in the community survey and at public meetings as an area that could be improved by the addition of trees and landscaping.

The most likely geologic and natural hazards

to occur in Hill City include wildland fires, flooding, and severe storm events, both in the summer and winter. Other potential hazards range from tornadoes and landslides to air and water pollution. While little can be done to prevent geologic or natural hazards from occurring in Hill City, the community can work to be prepared for and mitigate the effects of these events as much as possible. This is vital for minimizing losses to human life and property and for helping the community to be

more resilient, or to recover quicker, after an emergency. Regarding Hill City's preparedness for natural disasters, the community survey results revealed people generally feel Hill City is not well-prepared and the community lacks knowledge about what to do in an emergency. Thus, additional planning and preparation work for natural disasters may be warranted in Hill City, along with communicating to locals what emergency plans are in place and what they should do during a natural disaster.

¹ South Dakota Department of Natural Resources – Fecal Coliform Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Spring Creek, Pennington County, South Dakota (http://denr.sd.gov/dfta/wp/tmdl/TMDL_SpringCreekFecal1208.pdf) & U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – 2012 Waterbody Report for Spring Creek (https://ofimpub.epa.gov/waters10/attains_waterbody.control?p_auid=SD-CH-R-SPRING_01&p_cycle=2012#attainments)
² Pennington County Spring Creek Watershed 319 Project (<http://www.pennco.org/springcreek/>)
³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service – Sustaining American's Urban Trees and Forests (http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/fote/reports/nrs-62_sustaining_american_urban.pdf)

WE WILL...

- Preserve and improve the quality of environmental resources in Hill City.
- Better prepare for natural disasters and ensure local residents are informed of what to do in an emergency.

BY...

1. Supporting efforts to improve the forest health of areas within and surrounding Hill City.
2. Participating in efforts to restore the water quality of Spring Creek so it is no longer listed as impaired by the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
3. Allowing flexibility in development standards so that more environmentally-friendly methods and technologies may be utilized, where appropriate.
4. Increasing the amount of landscaping and trees in public spaces in Hill City.
5. Pursuing Tree City USA designation as certified by the Arbor Day Foundation.
6. Coordinating with the Pennington County Emergency Management Department to improve preparedness for natural disasters through mitigation planning and communication efforts.
7. Working with the Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Ambulance Service, and Pennington County Sheriff's Office to provide emergency preparedness information and materials for locals.

IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW

The Hill City Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a guide to the future development of the city; however, more specific tools must be implemented to effectively direct development. The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document, and regulatory tools and incentives provide the authority to shape the physical environment within the city.

The Hill City Comprehensive Plan provides a policy framework to guide the city's decision making process and will serve as a work plan for the Hill City Planning and Zoning Commission. The plan provides direction for future planning efforts, the adoption and revision of regulations, the development of incentive programs, setting spending priorities, and creating partnerships. However, the implementation of specific projects and priorities identified in this document are subject to the discretion of the Common Council and may otherwise be influenced by the financial, social, and environmental realities of the future, as well as the availability of staff and urgency of other city projects.

Regular evaluation and monitoring is a key component of the implementation of the plan and provides a way to measure the plan's effectiveness. As such, the goals and strategies identified in the plan shall be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Common Council on an annual basis to ensure that progress is being made toward implementation. Changes to the goals and strategies should be preceded by an amendment to the plan based on the evidence to support the change.

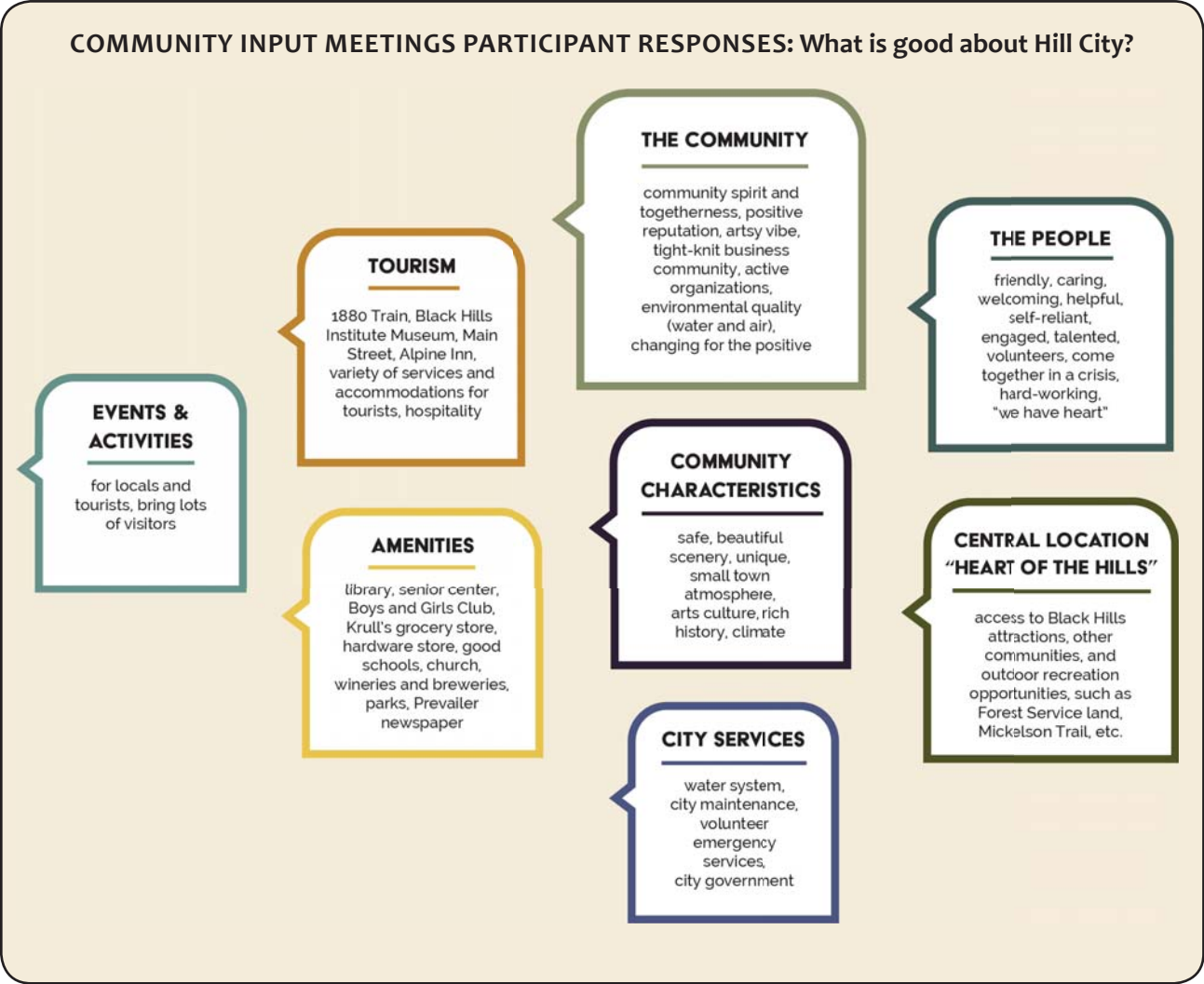
The city should conduct a major review and evaluation of the plan at least every five years. This review should include an evaluation of the changes in the community and the goals and strategies included in the plan. This review should also include a process for notifying the public and for soliciting comments and suggestions regarding the plan. Any proposed amendments to this plan must be reviewed and considered utilizing the same process and procedures required for adoption of a plan, and if adopted, will be incorporated into a revised plan.



APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Engaging community members in discussions about the future of Hill City ensures that the Comprehensive Plan reflects the needs and desires of citizens. For the Hill City Comprehensive Plan update, community input meetings, engagement at the local high school, and a community survey were the primary means of collecting community input. In addition, citizens were invited to attend P&Z Commission meetings and contact the City to express their ideas regarding the future of Hill City.

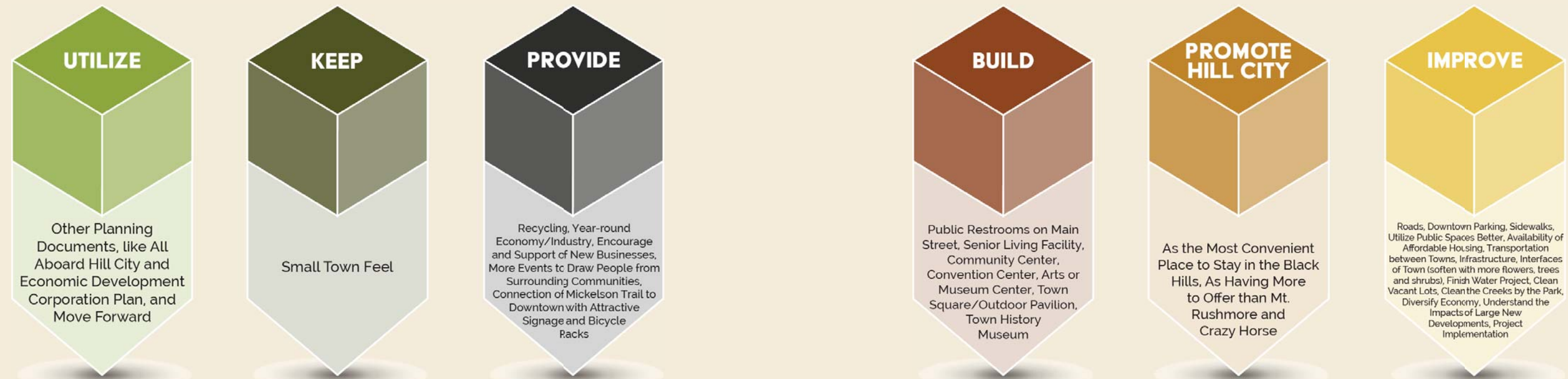
The public input gathered as a result of the Comprehensive Plan update provided a foundation for the plan’s vision, goals, and strategies and a framework to guide future decision making by the Planning & Zoning Commission and Common Council.



COMMUNITY INPUT MEETINGS

To kick-off the Comprehensive Plan update process, two Community Input meetings were held and were well attended by community members. The purpose of these meetings was to gather people’s opinions about what they like about Hill City and what more could be done to make Hill City a better place. Participants in the meetings were first asked what is currently good about Hill City. Answers ranged from the friendly, volunteer-minded people, to the community’s reputation as artsy and active, to community events, to amenities and city services like the library, senior center, Boy’s and Girl’s Club, stores, school, churches, volunteer emergency services, and the city government. People also discussed the importance of tourism, outdoor recreation opportunities, the small town atmosphere, history, scenery, and safety.

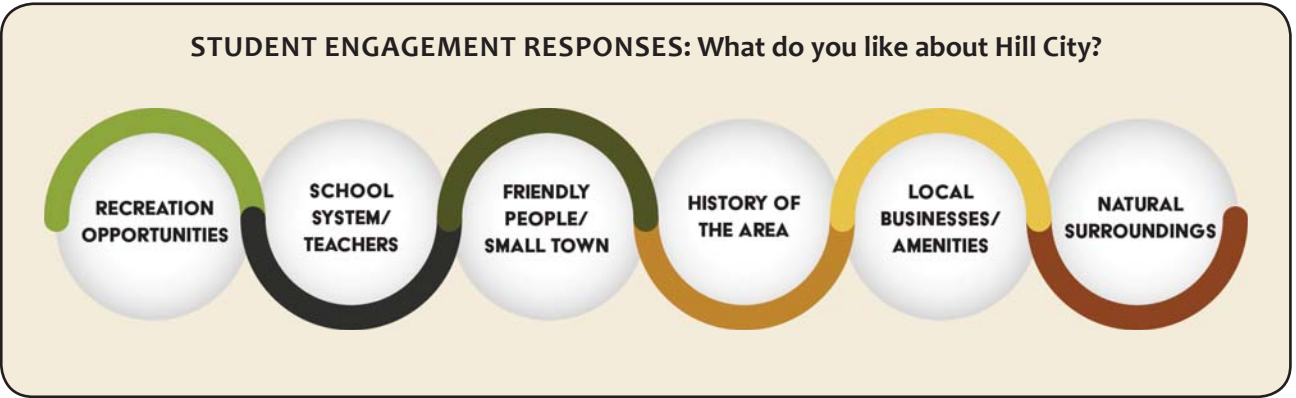
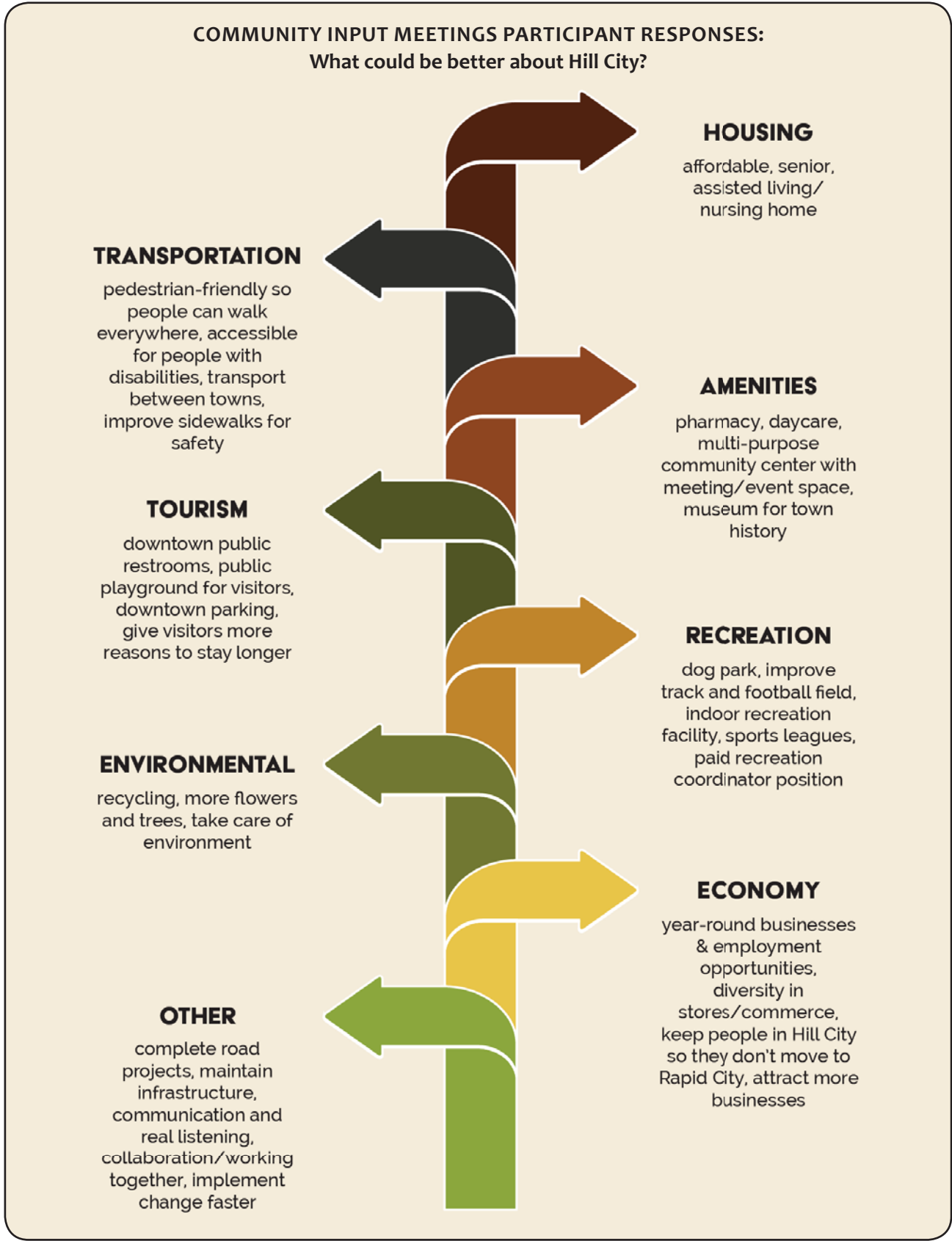
COMMUNITY INPUT MEETINGS PARTICIPANT RESPONSES: What needs to be done in Hill City?



Participants were then asked what could be better about Hill City. Housing was one of the main issues discussed. Many said that they feel that the lack of housing options in Hill City is a major community issue. People would like to see more affordable housing options and housing types that cater to seniors. Also, participants articulated the desire for the city to focus on attracting more diverse and year-round businesses, more job opportunities, and local services and shopping. Creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment with the development, and improvement, of city sidewalks, as well as, increasing recreation opportunities were two items that many believe are particularly important to enhancing the quality of life in Hill City.

Finally, participants were asked about what things need to be done in Hill City. People voiced the desire to maintain the small town feel of Hill City, while making improvements in the areas of affordable housing, the overall appearance of the city, and diversifying the economy.





HIGH SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Consultants spent a day with students at Hill City High School in order to gain a youth perspective of the city. Over the course of six class periods, nearly 100 students responded to a series of questions about Hill City. Students were first asked what they like about the Hill City community. Answers ranged from outdoor recreation opportunities in the nearby area to the school system and teachers to local businesses and area history, as well as summer job opportunities and the small town feel.

Students were then asked what improvements would make them want to live in Hill City ten years from now. Recreation and entertainment options were some of the top responses, such as a recreation center, swimming pool or water park, improvements to the parks, fixing the football field, and places for young people to hang out, like a movie theater, bowling alley, or arcade. Students also talked of the importance of becoming less tourism dependent, developing non-tourist jobs, creating youth mentorship opportunities, and developing more businesses that are open year-round. There was also discussion about the historic feel and natural scenery of Hill City, and how both should be maintained and built upon in the future. Expanded healthcare options, paved streets, improved street lighting, availability of recycling, and more housing options were also identified as priorities to these students. Finally, students talked about the importance of there being more community involvement for them to want to live in Hill City as adults.

The last question posed to the students was why they wouldn't want to live in Hill City in ten years. Students pointed to feelings that the city was too small, too quiet and calm, that there is not a lot to do (especially in the winter), not enough room for growth, and a lack of job opportunities. The students also discussed how they need to go to Rapid City for most everything and that everything is expensive in Hill City. Students talked about the lack of a recreation department and the run down state of existing parks, as well as issues with parking downtown and no public restrooms.

COMMUNITY VISIONING MEETINGS

The Community Visioning meetings provided an opportunity for community members to come together to formulate a vision for the Comprehensive Plan. To begin the process participants were asked to form groups and discuss what they would like to preserve, change, and create in Hill City. The graphic to the right lists all the participant answers, which are consistent with the issues that were echoed throughout the planning process, like the need for more affordable housing, the desire to retain Hill City’s character, the desire for more year-round job and retail opportunities, and additional community facilities.

Participants then worked individually to express--through pictures or words-- what their vision was for the future of Hill City, and then collectively developed a vision statement as a group. These vision statements (see below) were then used to form the overall vision statement detailed in the Comprehensive Plan.

IN 2026, MY HILL CITY WILL BE...

"Safe, vibrant, year-round destination; Maintain uniqueness and friendly hospitality; and, Best of the Best."

"Senior Center will be new, bigger and better; Hill City won't own Main Street [right-of-way] yet; and, City border will expand upstream and downstream."

"Safe, fun, family-oriented, visitor friendly, open all year, up-to-date tech, and still Hill City."

"A thriving community that works together for improving Hill City. We'll have a year round economy that will support families. We'll continue to have the small town atmosphere and a variety of events and activities to make Hill City a destination."

"A five star community with a supportive culture for residents, businesses, and visitors."

"A year-round world class environmental and cultural destination for all ages."

COMMUNITY VISIONING MEETINGS PARTICIPANT RESPONSES:
What would you like to preserve, change, and create in Hill City?

PRESERVE: Small Town Feel and Friendliness, Sense of Community, Community Facilities (i.e. school, library, senior center, Major Lake), Strong Tourism (i.e. 1880 Train, unique shops, visitor's center, events) Look and Feel of Old Buildings Downtown, Uniqueness, Creative Arts Culture, History, Surrounding Natural Environment, and Outdoor Opportunities

CHANGE: Availability of Shopping Opportunities for Locals, Year-round, Larger Library, More Services for Seniors, Downtown Infrastructure, Small-town Thinking, Community Participation, RVs parked on Main Street, Sidewalks, Downtown Public Restrooms, Increase City Revenue, More Diverse Special Events, Parks and Recreation Opportunities in Summer and Winter, Signage

CREATE: More and Better Paying Jobs, More Affordable Housing, Year-round Businesses for Locals' Needs, Opportunities for Youth and Non-tourists, Recycling, Community Spaces (i.e. downtown square, community center, and arts & cultural center), Downtown Public Restrooms, Infrastructure for Growth, More Parking Downtown, Pedestrian-friendly Community

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey asked 24 questions covering the following eight categories: Community Facilities & Services, Housing, Transportation, Environmental & Recreational Resources, Land Use, Economic Development, Issues & Opportunities, and About You. Due to the very large response rate (242 total responses), the results of the community survey are too lengthy to summarize within the pages of this Comprehensive Plan, but they have contributed extensively to its writing. As an alternative, a copy of the community survey results shall indefinitely be available for the public to review at Hill City City Hall.

APPENDIX B: PRINCIPLES & STRATEGIES SUMMARY

***High-priority Strategies are shown as underlined text.**

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES:



GROWTH & LAND USE	
Principles	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote a pattern of land use which helps maintain the small-town look and feel of Hill City and is pedestrian-friendly.• Encourage the efficient use of land available for growth and promote compatible land uses to minimize the potential negative impacts of future development on existing uses and development.	
Strategies	
1.	<u>Preserve the visual aesthetics that contribute positively to Hill City’s look and feel, including the natural surroundings, unique buildings, and existing forms of low-impact development, particularly along the highway corridors.</u>
2.	<u>Pursue the annexation of properties in the county currently surrounded by Hill City limits.</u>
3.	Consult the Future Land Use Map adopted with this plan when reviewing development requests as a way to encourage the future development of property in appropriate locations.
4.	Adopt an Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction to ensure the subdivision of land in areas near Hill City is compatible with the development of land within Hill City.
5.	Consider more intense development of properties within city limits, as an alternative to the outward expansion of Hill City’s city limits, to accommodate future growth needs and prevent urban sprawl.
6.	Encourage future development and growth in areas where the provision of city utilities and services is most cost-effective.
7.	Create and maintain digital maps and layers of data related to land use, zoning, and city infrastructure to facilitate future planning efforts.
8.	Review and revise, as necessary, the commercial zoning districts in the Zoning Ordinance to ensure clarity and consistency for regulating new and existing commercial development in Hill City.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Principles	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play an active role in addressing the problems associated with Hill City’s seasonal economy in order to improve the economic well-being of all.• Strive to create a shared and sustainable economy that is beneficial for the entire community, now and in the future.	
Strategies	
1.	Work with the Heart of the Hills Economic Development Corporation and the South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development to create a comprehensive economic development strategy and to work on specific economic development projects.
2.	<u>Undertake community improvement projects that will make Hill City an attractive place for businesses to locate.</u>
3.	<u>Promote off-season events and activities that will encourage visitation outside of the normal tourist season.</u>
4.	Participate in regional economic development activities.
5.	Explore the use of incentives for attracting year-round jobs and businesses.
6.	Consider both the short- and long-term consequences of economic growth, to the extent possible, during decision making related to economic development.

TRANSPORTATION & UTILITIES
Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a safe and efficient transportation network that accommodates vehicular traffic, as well as creates a user-friendly environment for pedestrian and bicyclists in order to promote wellness and an enhanced image of the community.• Supply high-quality water and sewer utilities to residents and businesses and ensure water and sewer facilities are adequate for future growth.
Strategies
1. Continue to maintain all roads, paved and unpaved, for safe driving conditions.
2. Pursue funding sources to pave gravel roads.
3. Coordinate with the South Dakota Department of Transportation to identify and correct issues along Main Street and Highway 385/16, dealing with traffic flow, pedestrian crossings, and future pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure needs.
4. Increase knowledge about the possible issues related to downtown parking by undertaking a parking study.
5. <u>Create a more complete and safe walking and bicycling environment through the inclusion of pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure in road and street designs, wherever possible.</u>
6. <u>Pursue grant funding to install sidewalks throughout the community to create a more connected pedestrian network.</u>
7. <u>Periodically analyze population projections and growth patterns to anticipate future water and sewer service needs and increase capacity and upgrade facilities, as necessary, to continually meet community needs.</u>
8. Work with snow removal staff to improve operations and find alternatives to piling snow on Main Street.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES
Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan for additional community facilities to be developed in Hill City to serve the needs of local residents and improve visitors’ experiences.• Continually work to provide and improve city services in ways that are cost-effective and in the best interest of the community and environment long-term.
Strategies
1. Consider funding strategies and pursue options, including working with community groups and individuals, for developing new community facilities and services, such as a community/ event center, town square, and daycare facility.
2. Review city ordinances to ensure they contribute positively to the aesthetics of the community and enforce those not being met.
3. <u>Help to facilitate community efforts to develop new public restrooms on Main Street.</u>
4. Research the cost and logistics of providing a recycling service for local residents and businesses, as well as potential funding sources.
5. Publish a quarterly newsletter highlighting city news of interest to the public.
6. Enforce the Nuisance Ordinance in order to improve the cleanliness and safety of the community and dedicate additional staff time, as possible, to work with property owners to bring their properties into compliance, focusing on the areas around Main Street and the “gateway” areas coming in and out of town first.
7. Conduct a city-wide cleanup effort with a dedicated event each spring.
8. Invite the public to submit concerns about street lighting in their neighborhoods.
9. Develop and adopt a street lighting plan for replacing street lighting infrastructure with more energy-efficient fixtures and bulbs that includes lessening the impact on the night sky as one of the primary goals.
10. <u>Identify potential “gateway” areas to the north and south of Hill City along Highway 16/385 and work with community groups to install welcome signage and landscaping.</u>

HOUSING
Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Hill City.• Promote the development of a variety of different housing types to accommodate people in various life stages.• Ensure residential neighborhoods are being well-maintained.
Strategies
1. <u>Conduct a housing needs study to better understand the housing situation in Hill City, including the potential causes and remedies pertaining to the issues of availability, affordability, and quality of housing in Hill City.</u>
2. Dedicate staff time, as possible, to the enforcement of the Nuisance Ordinance to ensure residential properties are being adequately maintained.
3. <u>Review the residential zoning districts to ensure they accommodate the development of a wide variety of housing types desired in Hill City, including new and non-traditional housing types that may help to address current housing issues, and make changes, as necessary.</u>
4. Consider the use of incentives to support the development of a variety of housing options and improve the affordability of housing in Hill City, based on the outcomes of a housing needs study.

RECREATION
Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a variety of high-quality park and recreation facilities and experiences for residents and visitors.• Utilize and improve existing park and recreation facilities to create opportunities and amenities for youth.
Strategies
1. <u>Reinstitute and support the Parks Board to improve the parks and recreation services and to expand the opportunities available for residents and visitors, particularly for youth.</u>
2. <u>Dedicate additional city resources, as feasible, to the maintenance and upgrading of existing park and recreation facilities.</u>
3. Work with community groups and the schools to conduct park improvement volunteer projects.
4. Determine the most appropriate use for the BMX track with input from the public.
5. Conduct a separate comprehensive parks and recreation planning effort to address community desires for additional facilities and services.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & NATURAL HAZARDS

Principles

- Preserve and improve the quality of environmental resources in Hill City.
- Better prepare for natural disasters and ensure local residents are informed of what to do in an emergency.

Strategies

1. Support efforts to improve the forest health of areas within and surrounding Hill City.
2. Participate in efforts to restore the water quality of Spring Creek so it is no longer listed as impaired by the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
3. Allow flexibility in development standards so that more environmentally-friendly methods and technologies may be utilized, where appropriate.
4. Increase the amount of landscaping and trees in public spaces in Hill City.
5. Pursue Tree City USA designation as certified by the Arbor Day Foundation.
6. Coordinate with the Pennington County Emergency Management Department to improve preparedness for natural disasters through mitigation planning and communication efforts.
7. Work with the Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Ambulance Service, and Pennington County Sheriff’s Office to provide emergency preparedness information and materials for locals.

**HILL CITY, SD
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**