

**OLD BELLE ROAD AREA STUDY
BACKGROUND REPORT
Part 1 of 2**

**Prepared Jointly
By:
The Planning and Zoning Departments
Of:**



The City of Spearfish



Lawrence County

March 31, 2009

Old Belle Road Area Study Background Report

Introduction:

This area study is the second in a series of planning studies being done jointly with the City and County Planning and Zoning offices in the growth areas surrounding Spearfish in an effort to gain greater understanding of the constraints and opportunities in this challenging landscape. This effort is being done to identify a planning strategy that will guide future land use decisions for both City of Spearfish and Lawrence County. It is not intended for this study to dictate changes for land owners who are now enjoying a rural lifestyle through ranching, farming or residing within the area because they like the setting and scenic qualities of the area. This second part of this study contains recommended guidelines that should be used to evaluate individual requests for change in land use, whether that would be by annexation, use permit or rezoning. Knowing that each request is unique, all



situations will not be covered in the guidelines, and that is when the general planning policies of the City and County would need to be reviewed and evaluated.

Physical Geography:

The study area is depicted in the attached map to this report. It has significantly different land forms and environmental features throughout. The far west side are gently rolling hills generally without tree cover, or

with tree cover in shelter belts and other strategically placed areas, such as in these photos. These areas are used for open grazing of livestock, hay crops, etc.

Toward the center of the study area, the influence of the Spearfish Creek flood plain is clearly evident, with rich top soils on the parcels between the upper rolling



hills on the west side of the study area and Spearfish Creek.

The groundwater supplies in the areas north of I-90 and south of Valley View Drive are the sources of the City of Belle Fourche water supply. A 14 inch water line runs parallel to the Old Belle Road for most of the study areas north of Camp Comfort Road.



Existing Land Uses:

A variety of land uses exist in the area. At the far south and southwest portions of the study area, suburban neighborhoods exist in concentrated locations, separated by parcels not developed, or used for agriculture purposes. Several quasi-industrial uses also exist. A gravel quarry is located west of Old Belle Road ½ mile. A trucking company is located on Old Belle Road about 1 mile north of I-90. Other specialized agriculture uses in the area include a cattle feed lot on Chicken Creek Road, a fish hatchery approximately ¼ mile south of the feed lot, and a dairy ½ mile north of I-90. Aside from these Ag uses, the remaining agricultural lands are primarily being used for open grazing, pasture, and crop production.



A variety of structures dot the landscape. New residences can be found on the same lots where the original home was built. Agriculture buildings of a variety of age and structure are as unique as the landscape surrounding it.



Public Input Session #1

On March 19, 2009 approximately 65 area land owners and residents offered their view of the characteristics of the area and the following comments were recorded

during the course of several group discussions held that night. In recording these comments, all opinions were welcomed and debated.

Neighborhood Form and Future Growth

- ◆ Future development should not be lots smaller than 5 acre tracts.
- ◆ Homes along Old Belle Road at the Reserve should not have been so close together.
- ◆ County and City approved the Reserve as a solution to offer an affordable housing option in the community and smaller lots with smaller setbacks were one method to do so.
- ◆ Sidewalks should be provided on both sides of the street at the Reserve.
- ◆ Part of county/rural life is not living next to, or having to look at, high density housing and commercial development.
- ◆ Why is this area being identified for growth? Why are places like Elkhorn Ridge not developing?
- ◆ Driving into town for groceries, school, medical care etc., not a problem. Do not want all that commercial development in this area.
- ◆ Do not annex before development needs to take place. City should annex as growth requires.
- ◆ What would you do with 5 acres? Develop or save the land? Everyone has their price in all reality.
- ◆ Make no changes in land use from here on out.

- ◆ Develop the core areas of the community first – no more annexations that put development displaced from the community (like Elkhorn Ridge and the Reserve).
- ◆ Realizing that Ag operations may not continue after the current elder generation is gone and the ‘kids’ don’t want to farm, what choices other than development are there?
- ◆ Keep something for everyone – a place for suburban neighborhoods like the Reserve but nothing farther north than where it is now. Only larger acreages and ranchettes for the rest of the study area.

Open Space/Agricultural Land Conservation -

- ◆ Owners desiring agricultural conservation should be willing to restrict their own property from development through the use of special deed restrictions.
- ◆ Conflicts exist between Ag/Ranching operations and nearby owners that move in and don’t like the smells, activities, etc.
- ◆ Creek Corridors should be preserved (Spearfish Creek and Redwater).
- ◆ Deer population is out of control.
- ◆ Public access to creek corridors should be planned; some trespassing exists.
- ◆ Need bigger buffer next to Old Belle/McGuigan if similar high density housing is proposed in the future.
- ◆ What are the possibilities to require larger setbacks along McGuigan/Old Belle?
- ◆ The scenic vista of the bluffs over the Redwater needs to be preserved.

Roads and Paths -

- ◆ No place for county residents to walk/run/ride horses safely on County Roads; need room and location for this activity.
- ◆ Ag vehicles often block the road.
- ◆ Need better dust control on dirt roads.
- ◆ Old Belle Road is an unsafe road for pedestrians; people try to walk in the ditches and shoulders.
- ◆ County needs to provide funds to develop paths along county roads.

Environment –

- ◆ Long term water quality needs to be monitored.
- ◆ Wind energy systems acceptable.
- ◆ Cell towers not acceptable.
- ◆ Property maintenance issues are a problem – junked or abandoned vehicles mostly plus badly deteriorating structures.
- ◆ Some residents cannot afford to move junk, fix up dwellings. Who has the right to tell a person to do it? Is there a funding available to help people fix up?
- ◆ Septic tank regulations need to be more stringent, and monitored.

Administration

- ◆ P&Z and Building Departments need to be consistent in enforcement of codes.
- ◆ Lawrence County tax structure is a major problem and inconsistent, codes hard to understand and not well described on tax notices.
- ◆ Don't plan too far in advance.

Public Input Session #2

On August 27 2009 a second public input opportunity was provided and approximately 30 residents attended. The following input was gathered regarding a proposal to limit growth to the areas immediately surrounding the Exit 8 infrastructure, and within ½ mile of the Reserve:

- ◆ For areas west of Old Belle Road between I-90 and northern boundary of the Reserve, Split the area into two character zones: suburban closer to the interstate, and transitional (1 home per 5 acres) for the north half.
- ◆ Need better traffic control on Old Belle Road
- ◆ Roadway shoulders by the Reserve, entry points need to be improved
- ◆ Turning lanes needed into the commercial area of the Reserve
- ◆ Traffic studies needed on Old Belle Road
- ◆ City should take over all roads they have property annexed examples: The Reserve and Evans Lane (Evans Addition)
- ◆ The irrigation ditches should be preserved by adding a setback layer and not allowing them to be covered or changed
- ◆ Do a preservation setback of 400 ft. on both sides of the Old Belle Road to keep it open
- ◆ Specify some non-growth areas in the plan
- ◆ Require perimeter fencing for lots backing up to Old Belle Road, and remove pathway

Background Summary:

In general, the area owners wish to retain their rural experience, leaving the more intense development scenarios for areas that are considered more connected to the "City" portions of Lawrence County.

Old Belle Road
Joint County-City
Land Use Study

