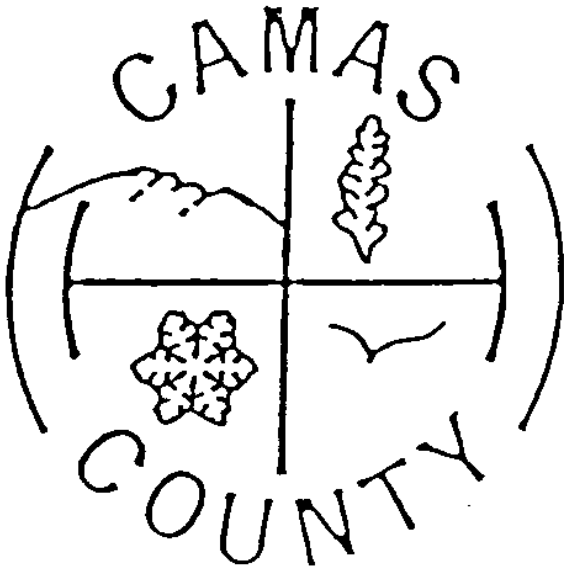


CAMAS COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



DATE: 08/26/2024
RESOLUTION NO. 216
Amends # 162

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Camas County Comprehensive Plan

Introduction

Camas County was created by the Idaho Legislature on February 6, 1917, by a partition of Blaine County. It is named for the camas root, or Camassia, a lily-like plant found in the region. The root bulb is edible, and was used as a food source by Native Americans and settlers. Camas County is still a beautiful and rural place. For the hard-working and freedom loving individual, Camas County can be a magnificent home. The people are neighborly, fiercely independent and cherish a rural lifestyle. Change is coming to the Camas Prairie and the citizens of the community are determined to provide the document to guide that change.

The purpose of the Camas County Comprehensive Plan is to provide a guide for growth to the citizens of Camas County in the near and distant future. The Comprehensive Plan is not a zoning ordinance; however, it provides direction for land use. Future growth will be encouraged in Camas County, but only that growth which is compatible and non-intrusive on the quality of life now enjoyed by its residents and only that growth which is ultimately good for the County. The priorities for the future of Camas County are clear throughout this plan. The preservation of agriculture and the way of life that is intrinsic to agriculture, being good stewards of the natural resources that abound here, protection of wide-open spaces and scenic areas, attract new and retain current businesses, management of recreation and tourism activities to increase benefits and minimize negative impacts are just a few of the goals stressed in this plan.

Camas County of the future will be one that has grown, but has managed growth to have minimal impacts upon the environment. Residential developments will be encouraged near community centers or recreation/tourist areas, leaving an ample supply of productive agricultural land. As growth occurs in appropriate areas, costs of that growth will be borne by the developers and not by the current county residents and taxpayers. Recreational opportunities will be encouraged and developed in the appropriate areas.

The components, as listed in Title 67 Chapter 65 of the Idaho code, Local Land Use Planning Act, are contained within this plan. They include, private property rights, population, school facilities and transportation, economic development, land use, natural resources, hazardous areas, public services, facilities and utilities, transportation, recreation, special areas or sites, housing, community design, agriculture, national interest electric transmission corridors, public airport facilities and implementation.

Change will occur in Camas County as growth happens. It is essential that this plan stay current with these changes, requiring review and amendments as deemed needed.

- I. **Property Rights-** It shall be the policy of Camas County to protect, enhance and ensure private property values and rights within the accepted confines of the national, state and local laws.

Camas County shall not manifest unnecessary limitations on the use of property, negatively impact property values, or violate private property rights. Camas County shall preserve and protect private property rights as required per the provision of Idaho Code §67-6508A and Idaho Code §67-8003.

All property and structures located in Camas County must be in compliance with current zoning ordinances unless otherwise exempt.

- II. **Population-** Camas County is one of the least populated in Idaho. There is approximately 1 person per square mile. No significant growth is anticipated in the near future; however, the County will accommodate future growth in an efficient manner. According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, the population was 1077 with a per capita income of \$29,680. Persons under the age of 5 made up 4.1% of the population and persons 65 years and older made up 23.7%. The population did see a small decrease of 3.6% over ten years and seems to be aging to some extent with a 6.6% increase in the 65 or older group.

| Camas County | <i>Census 1960</i> | <i>Census 1970</i> | <i>Census 1980</i> | <i>Census 1990</i> | <i>Census 2000</i> | <i>Census 2010</i> | <i>Census 2020</i> |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | 917 | 728 | 818 | 727 | 991 | 1,117 | 1,077 |
| <i>Change</i> | | -20.6% | 12.4% | -11.1% | 36.3% | 12.7% | -3.6% |

- III. **School Facilities and Transportation-** The Camas County population has remained somewhat consistent over recent years. Camas County supports its public education system. If significant growth is expected with larger residential developments, the school district will be notified and encouraged to plan accordingly. For the last several years enrollment has hovered around 150 students in grades K-12.

A major school addition and new construction project were completed in 2004, uniting all grade facilities under one roof. The school district maintains 4 different bus routes capable of accommodating 160 passengers. The bus routes are set and are not expected to change significantly with future growth.

- IV. **Economic Development-** Camas County is part of the Hailey, ID Micropolitan Statistical Area. Camas County has a median household income of \$37,367 and there are approximately 9.5% at or below the poverty level according to the latest

US Census. As of 2021, the County had a total labor force of 705 with an unemployment rate of 1.7%. One of the biggest industries in Camas County is Public Administration with an average of 65 jobs and an average wage of \$44,562 per year. Second is Education and Health Services with an average of 65 jobs and an average wage of \$37,256. Third is Trade, Transportation and Utilities with an average of 63 jobs and an average wage of \$89,152.

The agricultural industry, the primary industry on the prairie, is addressed in detail in a separate section of this plan. This industry is a mature industry that will decline if land is used for development.

Economic development is best left to the private sector as long as zoning permitted and conditional uses are adhered to. Currently there is ongoing interest to recruit, retain and expand businesses in the area. Growth should be encouraged in small business, including home-based business and cottage industries. Camas County supports home occupational businesses as principle permitted uses in the appropriate zones as an accessory to residential uses.

The goal of Camas County is to attract new and retain current businesses; with a focus on agriculture, the recreational industry, tourism, light manufacturing and production, and other home based or cottage industries of all types thus creating more employment opportunities for County residents.

- V. Land Use-** The northern part of the County is a mountainous area and only conducive to limited development. There is some development over Couch Summit and over Fleck Summit on patented mining claims, however most of the northern half of the county is part of the Sawtooth National Forest. The country is steep and subject to avalanche and forest fires, as well as demanding heavy maintenance cost for the maintenance of roads and public utilities. The center of the prairie has a high-water table and ground disposal of sewage may often be difficult in anything other than large lots. To be developed for urban use may require development patterns that would facilitate the treatment of effluent to secondary levels. The area in Camas County most suited for higher density development is the area adjacent to and north of the city of Fairfield to the Soldier township, Manard, Hill City, Corral, Blaine and adjacent to West Magic.

Agriculture and rangeland involve 77% of total land use in Camas County. There is a high percentage (approximately 68.5%) of public land in the County, used mostly for recreational and grazing purposes. The private land (31.5%) is used primarily for agricultural purposes, either for farm or range land. Protection of current agricultural activities is a high priority. With the primary force of the economy derived from agriculture and agriculturally related activities, maintaining viable tracts of agricultural and range land is a goal for local area leaders.

The County has one incorporated community, the City of Fairfield, which is home to approximately 400 of the county's residents. Fairfield is a residential community, with commercial and industrial businesses located along the state highway corridor and along the main street. Fairfield is still of the size and inclination to allow agricultural related uses within the area of impact and around its borders. These lands are considered to be in a changing environment where public facilities and services will be necessary before intensive urbanization should occur.

Areas designated as residential will allow for low, medium and high density, including manufactured homes meeting certain building requirements. Other uses allowed in this land use designation might include home based businesses or occupations which have minimal impact on the neighborhood. All residential uses shall meet South Central Health District requirements for sewer systems. High density residential development may be required to have a central water and sewer system.

The goal is to provide for a variety of land uses that meet the needs of the residents of Camas County but protect the rural nature of the valley and the quality-of-life residents now enjoy. Private property owners can decide for themselves what is the best use for their land. Land owners can investigate the Camas County Zoning Ordinance to see what use is permitted or conditional. The official Future Land Use Map can be viewed online or at the Planning and Zoning Office.

- VI. Natural Resources-** Natural resources must be carefully assessed and considered in making any development decisions in the community. Soil and water are the most important natural resources in the survey area. Grazing land, scenic vistas, wildlife, and clean air are other important natural resources. Most of the soils in the valley are cultivated. In most years there is adequate moisture from snow and rain to produce a crop without irrigation. Water for irrigation is provided by creeks, wells, and reservoirs. It is the policy of Camas County to be concerned about ground water quality and quantity. Camas County also encourages the protection of natural resources to maintain recreation and tourism opportunities.

As natural resources are an integral part of the quality of life for the residents of Camas County, they must be protected and planned for in growth. Enterprising private property owners are best suited to analyze the uses of these natural resources while adhering to county zoning and state regulations.

The County's goals are to remain aware of environmental impacts as growth occurs and to encourage protection of natural resources in order to maintain recreation and tourism opportunities.

- VII. Hazardous areas-** The following hazards were identified based upon the Camas County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan; hazards include: floods, landslides, earthquakes, severe weather, avalanche and wildland fire. A detailed description of Camas County's hazardous areas can be found in the Camas County, Idaho Multi-Hazard Mitigation plan volume one. These volumes can be viewed in the Camas County Planning and Zoning office.

City and county planning should also consider potential industrial hazards. Industrial hazards include, but are not limited to, underground storage tanks, grain silos, hazardous chemicals, and pesticides. Identification of such industrial hazards will assist city and county planners in ensuring the safety of the citizens.

The goal is to protect the public health and safety by guiding growth away from hazardous areas. A balance between development and the environment is essential.

- VIII. Public services, facilities, and utilities-** Camas County contains numerous public and quasi-public facilities and services that serve the public. Some are identified below followed by a brief description.

Water Resources - All water needs in Camas County, whether for domestic, municipal or agricultural use, are served by the Snake River Basin. There exist many claims on the basin which could impact Camas County's current and future water supplies. These need to be carefully monitored by the County so impacts can be anticipated and planned for. The Idaho Department of Water Resource is now requiring monitoring devices on all wells other than domestic. The department may require cities and developments to monitor water usage in the case of community wells. Large scale subdivisions may be required to install a central water system for the development.

Sewer Systems - The county residents are served by individual septic systems approved by the district health department. Future development should meet all new requirements for such systems and be done in a density so that pollution of surrounding properties is not possible. The City of Fairfield has a central sewer system, which serves city residents only. Large scale subdivisions may be required to install a central sewer system for the development.

Library - The library has moved into a new facility just North of the County Courthouse Annex building. The library is operated by a library district and funding for the library is through property taxes, user fees and from private donations. The library is open on a part time basis.

Electric - The county is currently served by Idaho Power. Off of these lines come individual service lines serving residential and commercial development in the County. Within the next 10 years there are no plans by Idaho Power to expand these facilities significantly, nor to require additional sites or right of ways for transmission facilities. Currently Idaho Power has a plan in place to bring power from Wyoming to Idaho via a corridor. Location of these lines in the future should be placed along the County's historic corridor, major roadways and not in locations where they interfere or make less efficient farm or ranch operations.

Broadband Internet – The county will have a new Broadband Internet infrastructure funded by the State of Idaho's Capital Project Funds which is set to be completed before the end of 2026. This infrastructure will include fiber internet in the city of Fairfield and wireless internet for major portions of the County.

Solid Waste Disposal - The County is currently served by a private garbage company hauling all solid waste to a transfer station.

Law Enforcement - Law enforcement in Camas County is currently provided by the Camas County Sheriff Department. The department also contracts to provide law enforcement services in the National Forest at the north end of the county and within the City of Fairfield which is contracted on a year-to-year basis. Mutual aid is provided by the Idaho State Patrol, who concentrates on traffic enforcement on the state highway on a somewhat limited basis, and by the Elmore County Sheriff's Department.

Fire Protection - Fire protection services are provided by the Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department, which serves both the community of Fairfield as well as outlying areas. The department has Brush Trucks, Tankers and Pumpers. The Forest Service also responds to range and some structure fires in the county.

Health Facilities - Camas County currently has a part time clinic which operates three days a week in Fairfield. There is also a Life Flight service available out of Ada County which serves this region.

Senior Center - The Camas County Senior Center is located in Fairfield. The Senior Center is adequate to provide the space needed for senior activities, meals and other public gatherings. This building is used regularly by the

residents for a meeting space for public and social events. It is equipped with a full kitchen and restroom facilities and is ADA accessible.

Parks - All parks in Camas County are located in the City of Fairfield and are owned and maintained by the city. They serve residents and visitors alike. The County also has many natural recreational areas managed by the Federal and State government.

The goal of the County is to provide public and quasi-public facilities and services at a level to meet the needs of the public, to maintain health and safety standards for our citizens, to provide necessary facilities to meet reasonable federal and state requirements and to provide these within the financial ability of our citizens. Zoning should set realistic expectations of potential physical constraints to our public services, particularly in the outlying county areas.

- IX. Transportation-** The primary source of transportation is vehicular; the County being served directly by US Highway 20 running east to west and State Highway 46 running north to south. The County's dependence upon the highway and the local road system is considerable. The Idaho Department of Transportation identifies Hwy 20 as a principal arterial; Highway 46, Soldier Road and West Magic Road as major collectors and Baseline Road as a minor collector.

Both Highway 20 and 46 are maintained by the State of Idaho. The City of Fairfield maintains the roads within the city limits. The remaining roads outside of Fairfield not considered state highways are maintained by the County Road and Bridge Department. This department maintains approximately 420 miles of roads within the county. Of these, only 22 miles are paved and the rest are of gravel surface. Road right of way requirements consist of 120 feet for a principal arterial, 80 feet for a major collector and 60 feet for a minor collector.

Roads are in fair to good condition. Currently, maintenance is done on an as-needed basis with a plan for annual upkeep on the roads under County jurisdiction. A good portion of Camas County's annual budget is spent on road and bridge maintenance; however, none of these funds currently come from property taxes. The County's Road and Bridge budget is adequate to maintain and service the existing roads under its jurisdiction. This budget however is not adequate to handle new growth to the public road system. Developers should not expect new growth to the public road system. No dedication or transfer of a private road to the public should be made due to limitations in the Road & Bridge budget and acceptance of said dedications into the public system will be very restricted. Private roads may be required in subdivisions and these private roads will require a road maintenance agreement that is applicable to each property served by these private roads.

The goal of the County is to keep, improve and maintain a transportation system which fulfills the needs of citizens, visitors and economic development, while maintaining rural standards.

- X. Recreation-** Camas County has many outdoor recreation possibilities and almost the entire County can be utilized. Some activities such as downhill skiing and reservoir fishing are confined to relatively small areas. Most activities however may be enjoyed throughout the County and are compatible with traditional agriculture.

Camas County, being very sparsely populated, has great opportunities for outdoor recreation and encourages growth in this area. The County also encourages low impact private recreation businesses to operate in our community. Tourism dollars contribute greatly to our local economy with non-residents outnumbering County residents in the enjoyment of the recreation choices available.

It's difficult to list all the recreational areas within Camas County but some of the main ones include the following: Magic reservoir for fishing, boating and camping. Kid's pond for fishing. Camas Prairie Centennial Marsh for sight seeing and bird watching. Soldier mountain peaks for snowmobiling, hiking and fishing. Soldier mountain ski area for alpine and cross-country skiing. And Forest Service campgrounds for camping and hiking.

The County's goals are to develop, maintain, and improve recreation opportunities while protecting wildlife and the environment. To manage recreational activities that improve the economic situation in Camas County. Also, to develop, maintain, and improve winter recreation opportunities.

- XI. Special areas or sites-**The citizens of Camas County have identified several sites within their county that have special or historical significance to them. These are:

- 1) The Camas County cemeteries at Hill City, Corral, Fairfield and Manard
- 2) Camas Prairie Centennial Marsh (Hill City Marsh) - IDFG
- 3) Old Depot - Fairfield
- 4) South Fork - Boise River
- 5) Union Pacific RR Caboose - Visitors Center
- 6) Manard School Site
- 7) Soldier Mountain
- 8) Big Smokey Guard Station

- 9) Carriatown (abandoned mining town)
- 10) Hill City's once largest sheep shipping station in North America
- 11) Mormon Reservoir
- 12) Historical Sites of Native American importance.

Currently there is only one historic site in Camas County on the National Register of Historic Places. That is the Bannock Wars site approximately 3 miles west of Fairfield on the south side of U.S 20.

These special areas may be protected by the County's definition of overlay districts. The County's goals are to continue to maintain areas of interest in our community whether for lessons in education, historical preservation or to maintain a sense of community.

XII. Housing- Housing needs of the community, housing types, and housing market values are best determined by the private sector. Higher density growth should be encouraged in areas best supported by our infrastructure and services. Camas County has adopted the 2018 building, fire and energy codes in its ordinances; thus, ensuring safe and sanitary construction. Furthermore, Camas County has adopted a Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance to assist property owners in platting housing tracts, mobile home parks, and manufactured housing. Manufactured homes are considered as a suitable housing type for single family lots when meeting certain construction and placement requirements set by the county. Alternative housing also can include Public Agency Workforce Housing.

DATA FROM U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

According to the Census, the following housing breakdown prevailed over 1990-2020.

| | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Housing Units (including modular) | 481 | 601 | 831 | 875 |
| Owner-Occupied | 221 | 208 | 374 | 662 |
| Renter-Occupied | 67 | 89 | 113 | n/a |
| Average House Value | \$35,500 | \$86,400 | \$209,100 | \$183,300 |

According to the above data, since 2000, approximately 274 new housing units have been built in the County.

| Households by Type – 2010 Census | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Total Households | 420 | 100 |
| Family Households | 279 | 66.4 |
| With Children under 18 | 106 | 25.2 |
| Households with Individuals under 18 years | 119 | 28.3 |
| Households with Individuals 65 years and over | 113 | 29.6 |
| Total Housing Units | 709 | 100 |
| Seasonal, Recreational or Occasional Use | 168 | 23.7 |

DATA FROM IDAHO STATE SOURCES

Age of Homes

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Pre-1970 | 299 |
| 1970-79 | 120 |
| 1980-88 | 59 |
| 1989-92 | 15 |
| 1990-1994 | 44 |
| 1995-2000 | 99 |
| 2001-2010 | 73 |

- XIII. Community Design-** Camas County has a Subdivision Ordinance to help guide developers with community design. In 2008 Camas County adopted a new Zoning Ordinance and map that allows development in areas that are suited for growth. This helps to maintain agricultural lands and develop land that is not as suitable for farm production. It is the County’s policy to encourage developing these zones to accommodate the intended uses set by the Zoning Ordinance before rezoning new areas until such time as it is needed.

The details of community design such as tree planting, signage, beautification and landscaping are best left to the private sector. The County has developed standards for such things as wrecking yards, mobile home parks, gravel pits, commercial feedlots and streamside development. These standards can be found in the current Zoning Ordinance. Building design is mostly up to the private individual provided they adhere to the current building codes and Zoning Ordinances set by the County.

- XIV. Agriculture-** With the primary force of the economy derived from agriculture and agriculturally related activities, maintaining viable tracts of agricultural and range land is a goal for local area leaders. Agriculture and rangeland involve 77% of total land use in the County. Care must be taken to encourage residential development in more urban areas, within the communities themselves and the established Area of City Impact.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 151 farms in Camas County which is an increase of 32% since 2012 and 95% of the farms are family owned. Total land use in farms increased by 15% in the same period with a total of 192,672 acres devoted to farm land. The Census estimated 51% of farm land in the County is used for crops and 42% is used for pasture.

The County has adopted a Zoning Ordinance and map that allows development in areas that are suited for growth. This helps to maintain agricultural lands and develop land that is not as suitable for farm production. Large scale subdivisions should reference the Zoning Map for areas suitable for development.

Farmers and ranchers have expressed a need to view agriculture as any other major industry and protect its resources for future success in operation. Inappropriate urban growth will endanger the major economic industry of Camas County if standards for such growth are not set. The lack of clustering of new homes will cause these impacts to be widespread rather than isolated to areas where problems could be addressed and handled when growth is concentrated.

Preservation of farm and range land is a high priority and due consideration is given by the Camas County Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Commissioners and Camas Soil Conservation District.

The County's goals are to preserve the agricultural way of life in Camas County and to encourage lower housing densities in the agricultural areas.

- XV. National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor.** To date no notification has been received from the Idaho Public Utilities Commission in regard to a federally designated National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor. A proposed corridor does lay to the south in Gooding County and a small portion of that corridor is a third alternate route, that may be proposed, across the extreme Southeast corner of Camas County.
- XVI. Public Airport Facilities.** Camas County Airport (U86) is a general aviation airport, located just south of the City of Fairfield along U.S. Highway 20. Camas County owns and operates the airport which has one dirt runway that is 2,950

feet long and 40 feet wide. There are three aircraft hangars, a wind cone, segmented circle, a tie down ramp, and a partial perimeter fence. There are no aircraft services available at this time.

Magic Reservoir Airport is located in South Central Idaho about 20.5 miles east-southeast of Fairfield and adjacent to Magic Reservoir. The airport has two active runways; the primary runway 04/22 is 4,000 feet long with a dirt surface while the secondary runway 10/28 is 1750 feet long with a turf surface. Fencing surrounds most of the facility except the end of runway 22. Other facilities include a wind cone, rest room, picnic table with no available water, and one private hangar near the end of runway 10. The State of Idaho has identified the Magic Reservoir Airport as a General Aviation-Basic Service Airport. A Basic Service Airport serves a limited role in the local economy, primarily accommodating recreational and personal flying.

Both public and private airports have zoning requirements. Negative impacts to surrounding landowners will be mitigated within the parameters of the Zoning Ordinance and Conditional Use Permits.

XVII. Implementation. The Comprehensive Plan shall be implemented by the Camas County Zoning Ordinance. Priority should be given to those items that best protect the rural nature of the county and its resources.