



Sweetwater County Indoor Sports Event Feasibility

Presented: February 19, 2025





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Project Background and Objectives

Young Strategies and Rudloff Solutions worked with Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism to analyze the feasibility for the development of an indoor events facility to benefit residents and visitors to Sweetwater County.

The recent Sweetwater County Tourism Master Plan (Feb. 2022) refers to such an analysis in Strategy 3B: *Investigate the need and support for new events space, such as a multi-purpose facility, sports fieldhouse, or other events venue that can host activities year-round.*

Objectives of the Feasibility Study Process:

1. Analyze and understand Sweetwater County’s overall economy, travel industry, demographic characteristics, and political environment in relations to the sports/events markets.
2. Determine if demand exists for a new sports/events facility.
3. Determine what type of facility may be appropriate for development.
4. Determine the potential costs / benefits of a possible facility.
5. Engage the public and private sectors in the analysis process.



Executive Summary



Project Background and Objectives

Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism retained Rudloff Solutions and Young Strategies to analyze the feasibility for the development of an indoor sports events facility to benefit residents and visitors to Sweetwater County.

Objectives of the Feasibility Study Process:

1. Analyze and understand Sweetwater County's overall economy, travel industry, demographic characteristics, and political environment in relations to the sports/events markets.
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Feasibility Study Steps

Step 1 – Project Preparations

- Existing Facilities Review Sweetwater
- Interviews with Leaders in Sweetwater County

Step 2 – Local Resident & Visitor Market Analysis

- Trends Review
- Sports and Events Inventory and Analysis
- Sports Planner Interviews

*Presentation Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism
Decision to proceed?*

Step 3 – Analysis of Need for a new events facility

- Economic Impact of new events facility

Step 4 – Preliminary Facility Cost Estimates





Conclusions

- This study has uncovered demand for an indoor sports facility in Sweetwater County. The demand comes both 1) internally from local sports teams and athletes and 2) externally from sports organizations in the broader region.
- Demographic, population and participation trends suggest that demand for sports in the County will continue to grow.
- A multi-use, indoor sports facility would meet the demand and prepare for future population growth. The facility could help the County 1) grow as an economic hub for the region, 2) attract energy industry workers and their families.
- The challenges to be faced for the development of a new indoor multi-use sports facility are:
 - Obtaining State and Federal funding
 - Local funding capacity for both initial construction and ongoing operations and maintenance
 - Challenges remain in funding the existing sports facilities and amenities in Sweetwater County
 - Site selection and procurement for a new sports facility
 - Long-term sports facility management, operations and funding
 - History of inadequate cost recovery from user fees for area sports facilities



National Sports Trends



2024 Sports Participation Trends -- WY Youth are very active

- WY is among the top U.S. states for youth participation in sports.
 - Top states include Vermont (69%), Iowa (68%), North Dakota (67%), and **Wyoming (64%)**. All are rural in nature and less densely populated. The 2022 national average was 54%.
- Girls' sports participation is growing. WY is tied for 7th among the states at 63%, easily higher than the U.S. average of 49%.
- Nationally, boys' participation is declining, while girls' is increasing.
- Children are increasingly specializing in one sport. The average number of sports children ages 6-17 regularly played in 2023 was 1.6, down 13% since 2019. More than a decade ago, children used to average playing in more than two sports.

Source: Aspen Institute, State of Play 2024.

Consultant Note: Our research in other markets has shown that youth girls sports drive higher spending than boys due to the fact that more family members travel to watch girls compete and their free time is spent shopping and dining.



DESIGN

The Evolution of Sports Facility Design in 2024: A Focus on Smaller, More Engaging Venues

POSTED BY CAMERON CONNELLY ON APRIL 11, 2024 AT 3:17 PM

INDUSTRY TRENDS

Identifying the Top 5 Trends in Sports & Fitness Facilities

New Sports Venues to Watch in 2024

Multi-use facilities are opening from coast to coast

Posted On : February 29, 2024 By : Justin Shaw

FACILITIES

Big deals, new venues, mixed-use plans highlight 2024 sports facility stories



Trends in Sports Venue Development

1. Multipurpose Facilities -- Designed for various sports with flexible flooring, spectator seating, concessions, and other features.
2. Community engaged – Flexible for residents to enjoy activities beyond sports (dinners, birthday parties, expositions, government meetings). Used year-round by residents, maximizing the space utility and the bond between the facility and broader community.
3. Use of technology to make the venue more engaging and efficient (LED lighting, video boards, interactive displays, internet connectivity, audiovisual systems, climate control for energy efficiency).

Sources: Sports Business Journal, Forbes, Sports Business Journal.



Trends in Adapting Sports Facilities

Pickleball

Pickleball started to drastically rise in popularity in 2021. The pickleball community is a passionate and tight-knit group that loves friendly competition.

Non-Traditional Sports Programs

A lot of sports facilities have implemented family entertainment centers (FECs) in their facilities to entertain and distract the kids aren't participating in tournament action. FECs can come in the form of an arcade, laser tag, climbing walls, or ninja courses.

Sports Sampling

A good way to introduce kids to the many options that exist is by hosting sports sampling days or weekends at your facility. It is like speed dating for sports that allow kids to experience several sports in a short time so that they can figure out which ones they might want to pursue.

Homeschool P.E. Classes

In a U.S. Census Bureau Survey, it was found that the percentage of U.S. households with school-aged children that were homeschooling increased from 5.4% to 11.1% after the pandemic. But an important aspect of school that can be lost with homeschooling is physical education. Offering P.E. classes at your facility allows for homeschooled kids to get the exercise and education that they need while also offering their teachers (parents) a break from them for an hour.

Outdoor Exercise

In an Industry Report survey conducted by Recreation Management, one of the top three most commonly planned additions to sports and recreation centers for the past two years has been outdoor fitness equipment. Outdoor fitness equipment can make for a great playground for all ages, and they can be spread out on a trail or around a facility to influence users to walk or jog from station to station to get a full body workout.

<https://sportsfacilities.com/2023-sports-facility-programming-trends/>

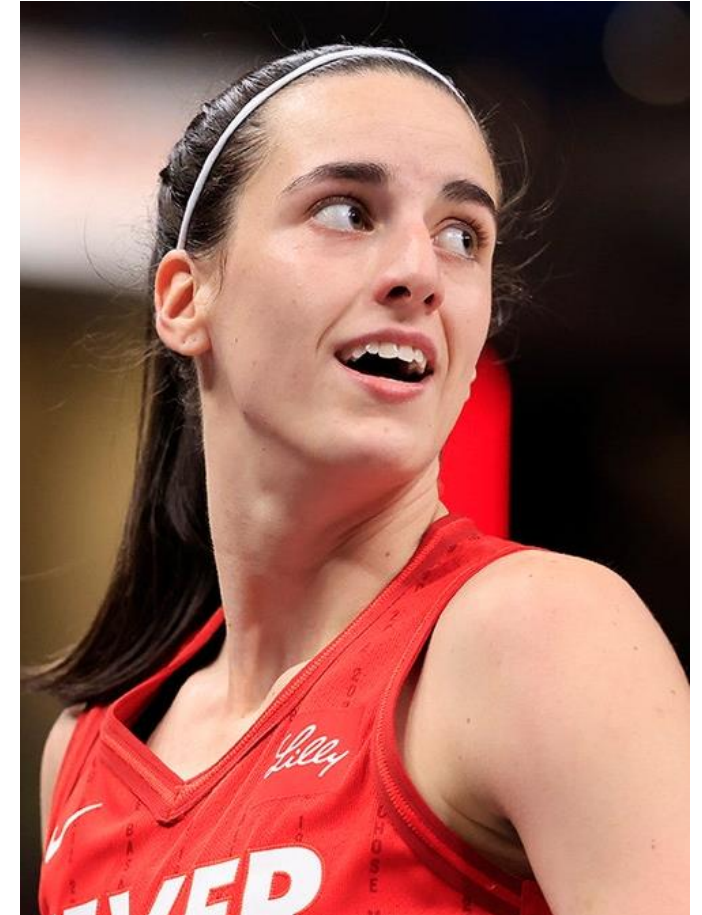




Other Trends in U.S. Athletic Activity

1. The *Caitlin Clark* effect is impacting youth sports, growing girls' participation, competition attendance, sales.
2. Pickleball is popular with all ages and growing fast.
3. Private equity firms are investing in youth sports, bringing money in, but also higher stakes for youth athletes, possibly hurting participation rates.
4. Advances in prosthetics and orthotics are enabling more people to participate in sports.
5. NIL (name image likeness) money is coming to high school athletics.
6. Artificial Intelligence is being increasingly applied to youth athletics for competitiveness, training, marketing, etc.
7. Major cities are investing more in parks for resident quality of life and employee recruitment benefits.

Source: Aspen Institute, State of Play 2024.





Sweetwater County Economic and Demographic Analysis



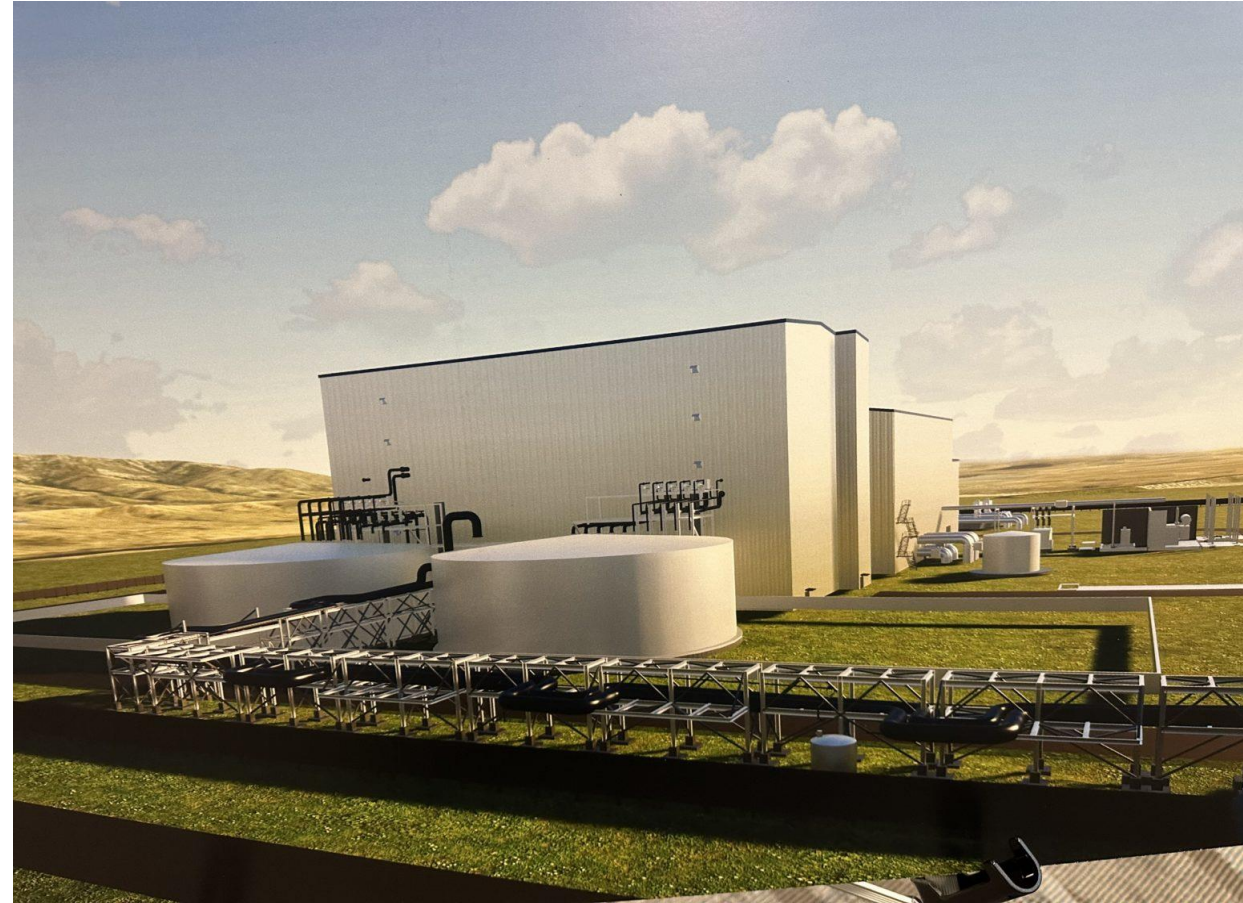
Economic Overview

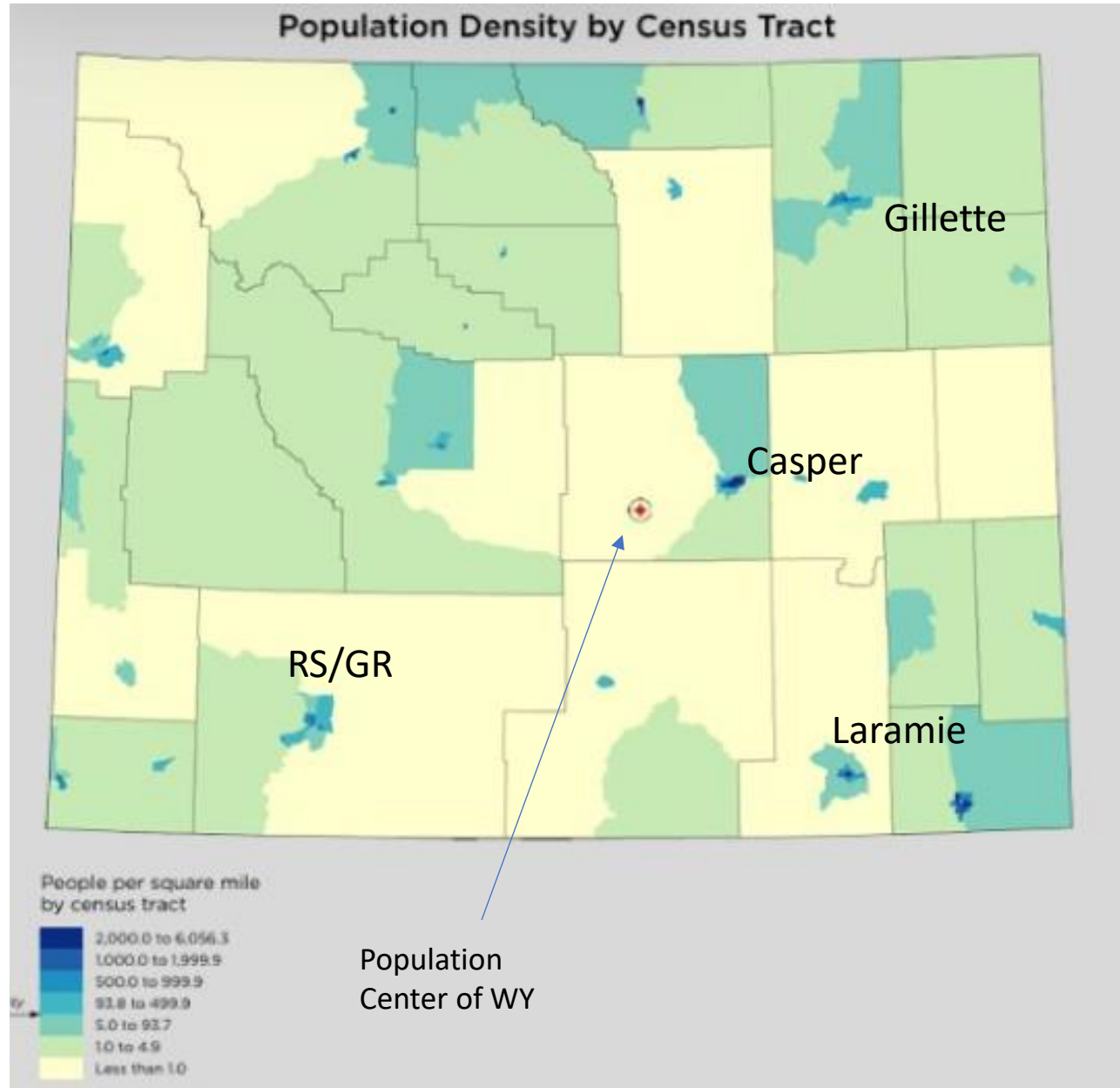
The energy industry dominates the county's economy. While coal employment has declined, employment in renewable energy, healthcare, and retail has grown.

The countywide unemployment has ranged between 3 and 4% during the last 3 years.

With new investments at the Kemmerer nuclear plant, the Dry Creek and Project West trona operations, and other energy projects, growth is likely going forward. Sweetwater County communities will be striving to attract workers.

Community amenities popular with young families will be vitally important to keep these workers living, working, and contributing to the county.





Population and Demographic Overview

- Sweetwater County is the 4th largest county by population in WY (Laramie, Natrona, Campbell, Sweetwater).
- In 2023, the County's population was 41,250.
- Rock Springs has grown a bit more than other areas as the service provider / retail center for the county.
- Smaller areas dependent on the coal industry have contracted.
- The energy industry attracts younger workers which is reflected in county demographic data.



Demographic Overview

Compared with Wyoming as a whole, Sweetwater County residents are younger, have higher household incomes, and have more children living at home.

	<u>Sweetwater County</u>	<u>WY</u>
Households w kids under 18	25.2%	22.9%
Households with children	35.3%	29.1%
Median Age	37.1	38.9
Median Household Income	\$76,668	\$68,002





Sweetwater County Lodging

2023 Lodging Market Study

Methodology

- Young Strategies performed a detailed lodging market study of Sweetwater County in 2023 which included a survey of lodging general managers and an analysis of detailed lodging sales data from Smith Travel Research. The 2023 study updated previous similar lodging studies from 2016 and 2018.
- For this Feasibility Research, Young Strategies reviewed 2024 lodging data and found that the results from 2023 are still valid.
- The consulting team reviewed the data in respect to the feasibility of a new indoor facility.

Why is Lodging Important?

The local economic impact derived from sports facilities is maximized when tournaments fill local lodging with participants who dine and shop locally.

Sweetwater County Lodging Market Analysis

Sweetwater County currently has 32 lodging properties. Most are in Rock Springs (22) and Green River (8).

The busiest lodging months are May – September, with occupancy rates above 60% (60s to upper 70s). The winter months are the least busy with much lower occupancies (upper 30s to upper 50s).

Sweetwater County is primarily a business market with more than 50% of room nights accounted for by business government, and blue-collar workers. Occupancy rates by day of the week show the business travel market as well with the highest occupancies during weekdays (instead of the weekends).

Team sports and tournaments account for about 11% of 2022 total room nights.

Overall, winter and should season weekends have the greatest capacity for future growth via group business and sports activity.

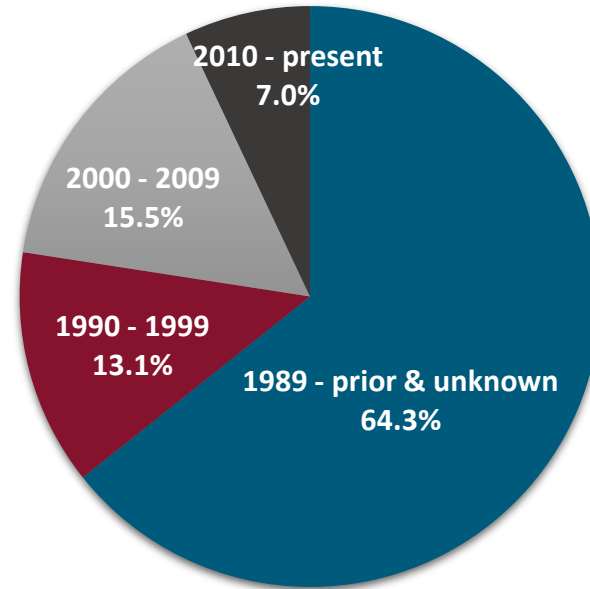


Sweetwater County Lodging Market Analysis

Sweetwater County Hotel/Motel Lodging Inventory

The 29 hotel/motel properties located in Sweetwater County are listed in chronological order by open date in the table below.

2022 Sweetwater Inventory	Open Date	Rooms
Date Unknown = 6 Properties	5.1%	103
Coachman Inn	N/A	18
Cozy Cottage (prev. Rocky Mountain Motel)	N/A	10
Flaming Gorge Motel	N/A	18
Mint Motel (previously Saddle Lite Motel)	N/A	18
Sands Inn	N/A	20
Sunset Inn	N/A	19
1989 – Prior = 14 Properties	59.2%	1,208
Little America	Jun-50	128
Motel 6*	Jun-63	99
Economy Guest Village	Jun-64	91
Best Western Outlaw Inn	Jun-66	100
Springs Motel	Jun-68	23
County West Motel (previously Western Inn)	Jun-70	32
Holiday Inn Rock Springs	May-73	170
Motel 8	Aug-73	92
Mustang Motel	Feb-75	20
Super 8 Motel Green River*	Jan-82	35
Clarion (previously America’s Best Value Inn)	Jun-83	147
Baymont Inn & Suites (previously LaQuinta)*	Jul-83	130
Quality Inn	Oct-86	103
Cody Motel	Jun-88	38



Observations:

- The pie chart to the left reveals that 64.3% of the Sweetwater County lodging inventory was built prior to 1989 (over 30 years old).
- During the 1990’s 13.1% of the hotel inventory was developed.
- Sixteen percent (15.5%) of the Sweetwater County inventory was built between 2000 – 2009.
- Since 2010, only 2 properties (7% of the current lodging inventory) have been built in Sweetwater County.

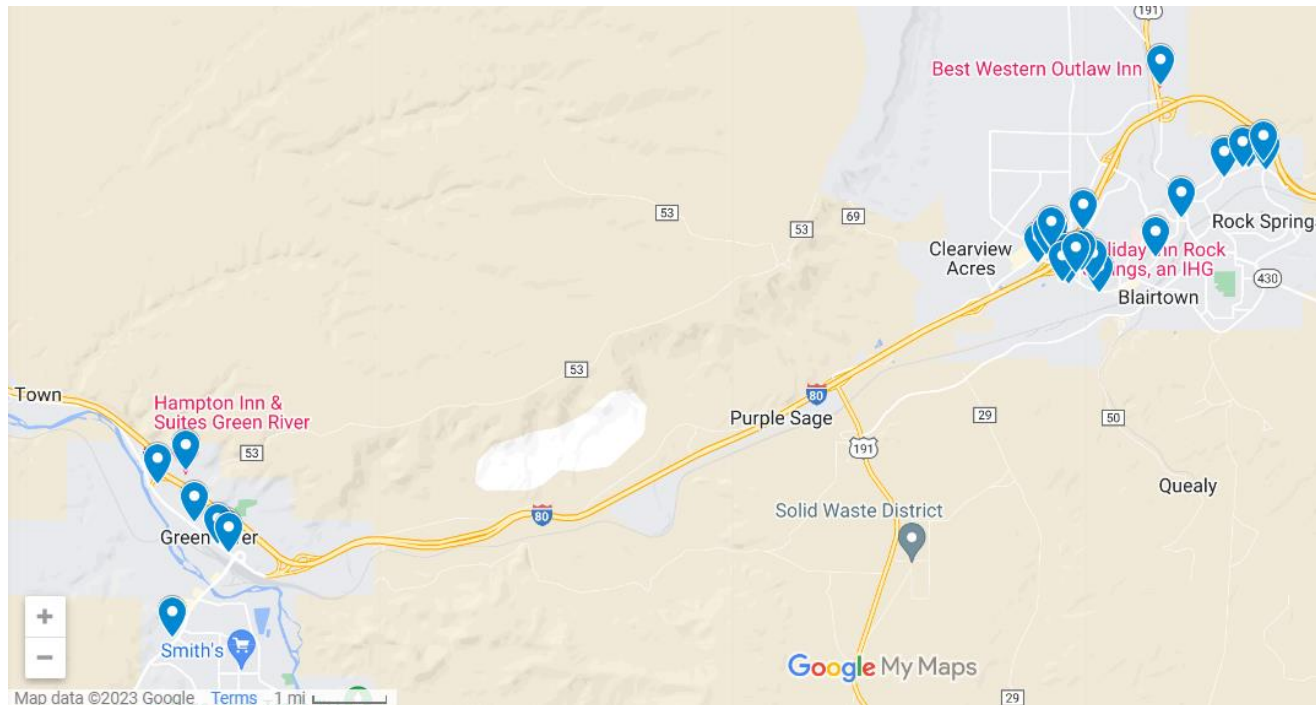
NOTE: In 2019 we reported Sweetwater County Lodging inventory of 35 properties with 2,306 rooms. Since then, six properties with 267 rooms that did not report to STR have closed.

1990 - 1999 = 3 Properties	13.1%	268
Little Bear Motel	Jun-95	29
Super 8 Motel Rock Springs*	Aug-95	49
Travelodge Hotel (previously Oak Tree Inn)	Sep-97	190
2000 - 2009 = 4 Properties	15.5%	317
Hampton Inn Rock Springs	Nov-05	70
Hampton Inn & Suites Green River	Sep-08	106
Comfort Inn	Oct-08	57
Homewood Suites by Hilton	Dec-08	84
2010 - Present = 2 Properties	7.0%	143
Holiday Inn Express	Apr-10	79
My Place Hotel	Mar-15	64
29 TOTAL hotel/motel properties	Rooms =	2,039



Sweetwater County Lodging Market Analysis

Map of Sweetwater County - Lodging properties



- Baymont by Wyndham Rock Springs
- Best Western Outlaw Inn
- Clarion Hotel
- Coachman Inn Motel
- Cody Motel
- Comfort Inn & Suites
- The Cozy Cottage Motel
- Economy Guest Village
- Flaming Gorge Motel
- Hampton Inn & Suites Green River
- Hampton Inn Rock Springs
- Holiday Inn Express & Suites Rock Springs
- Holiday Inn Rock Springs
- Homewood Suites by Hilton Rock Springs
- Little America Hotel - Wyoming
- Little Bear Motel
- The Mint Motel
- Motel 6 Rock Springs
- Motel 8 Rock Springs
- Mustang Motel
- My Place Hotel-Rock Springs, WY
- Quality Inn
- Sands Inn
- Springs Motel
- Sunset Inn
- Super 8 by Wyndham Green River
- Super 8 by Wyndham Rock Springs
- Travelodge by Wyndham Green River
- Western Inn

Sweetwater County STR Data – Monthly

Monthly occupancy is the percentage of available rooms sold during each month of the year; in this case we are looking at five years of monthly data.

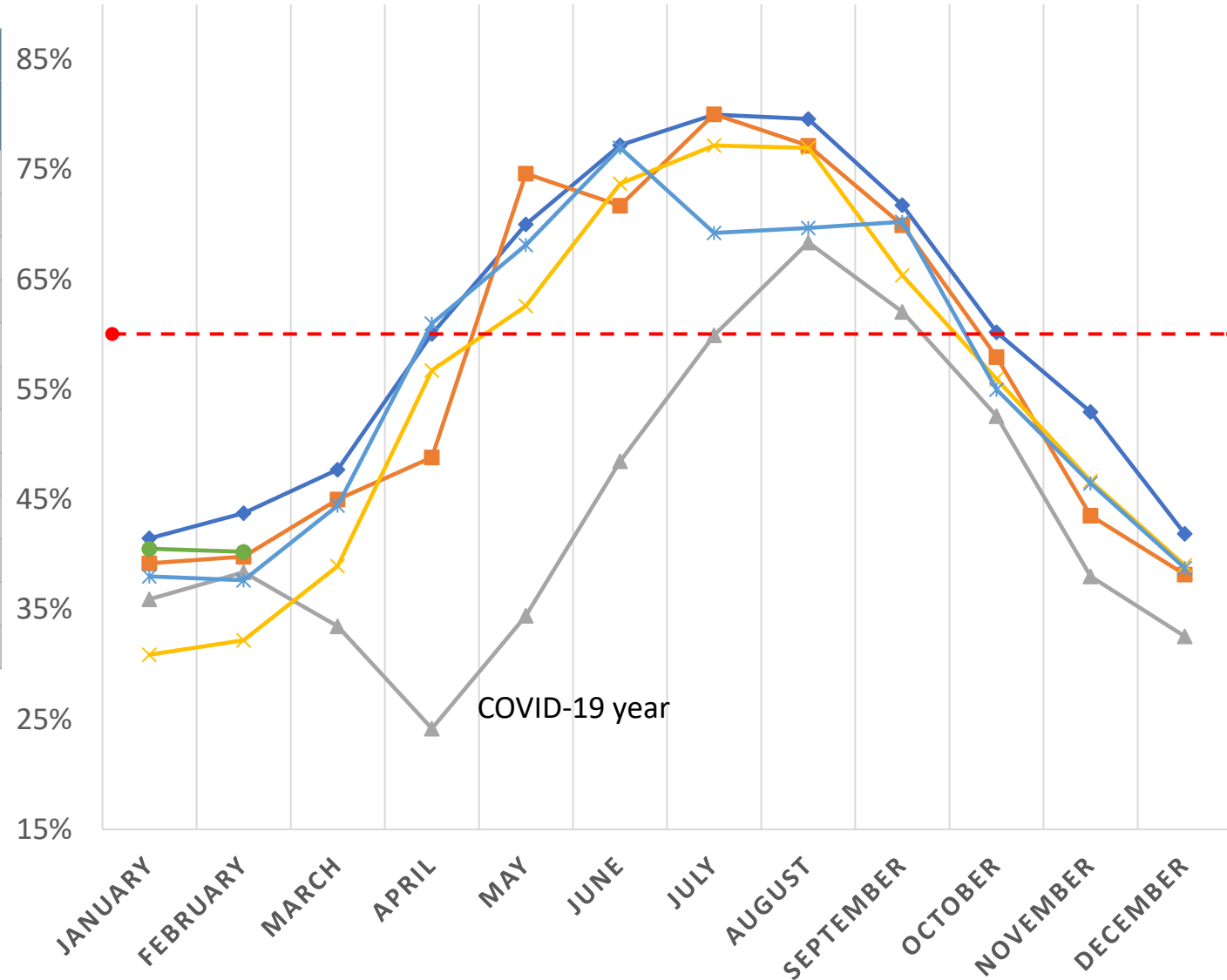
Sweetwater Monthly Occupancy Trend

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	41.5%	39.2%	35.9%	30.9%	38.0%	40.5%
February	43.8%	39.8%	38.4%	32.2%	37.7%	40.2%
March	47.7%	45.0%	33.5%	38.9%	44.4%	
April	60.1%	48.8%	24.2%	56.7%	61.0%	
May	70.0%	74.6%	34.4%	62.6%	68.1%	
June	77.2%	71.7%	48.5%	73.7%	77.0%	
July	80.0%	80.0%	59.9%	77.2%	69.2%	
August	79.6%	77.2%	68.4%	77.0%	69.7%	
September	71.8%	69.9%	62.0%	65.4%	70.2%	
October	60.2%	57.9%	52.6%	55.9%	55.0%	
November	52.9%	43.5%	38.0%	46.7%	46.5%	
December	41.9%	38.2%	32.6%	39.0%	38.8%	

Source: STR

MONTHLY OCCUPANCY TREND

2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023



Monthly Occupancy Trends

- The table above and chart on the right present the monthly lodging occupancy average for Sweetwater County properties reporting to STR 2018 – 2022.
- This data shows hotels run occupancy above 60% May – September indicating that most properties don't have large blocks of unsold rooms to accommodate large groups.

Sweetwater County STR Data – Day of the Week 3-Year Trend

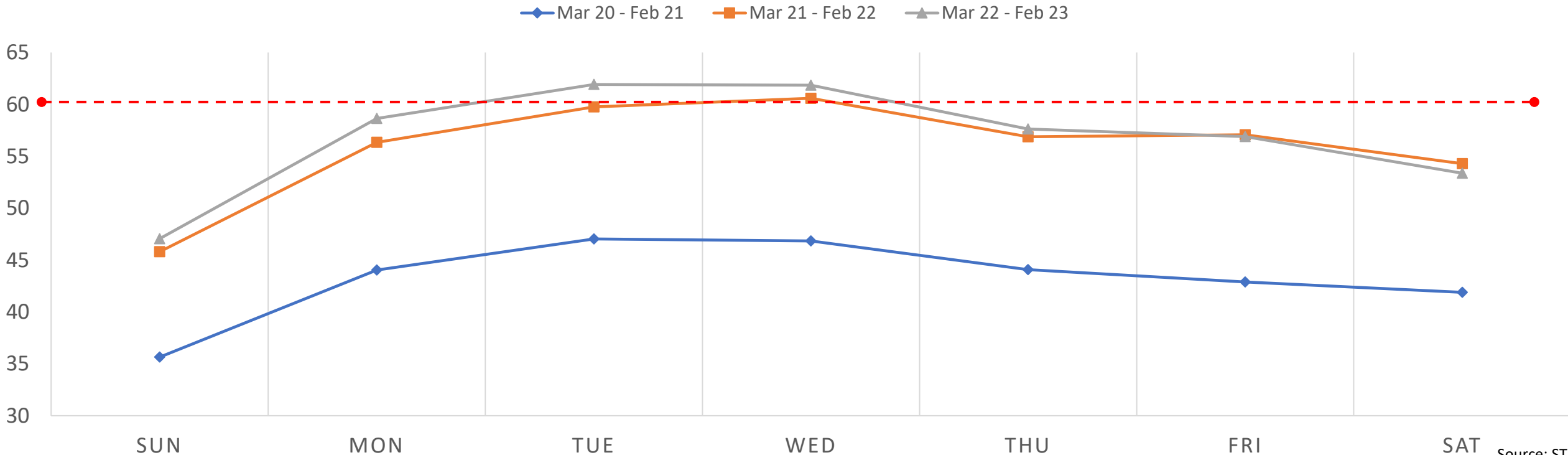
The STR data for Sweetwater County on this page shows the average occupancy by day of the week for the last three years.

Three Year Occupancy (%)							
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Mar 20 - Feb 21	35.6	44.0	47.0	46.8	44.1	42.9	41.9
Mar 21 - Feb 22	45.8	56.3	59.8	60.6	56.9	57.1	54.3
Mar 22 - Feb 23	47.1	58.7	61.9	61.8	57.6	56.9	53.4
Total 3 Yr	42.8	53.0	56.3	56.4	52.9	52.3	49.8

Observations:

- The tables to the left and charts below present the three year daily average occupancy for all STR participating properties in Sweetwater County.
- This data sets shows that midweek occupancy outpaces the weekends with midweeks.
- Midweek occupancy is driven by business transient travelers.
- Sunday nights run the lowest occupancy which is typical of all destinations.

3-YR DAY OF WEEK OCCUPANCY TREND



Sweetwater County Lodging Market Analysis

2022 Sweetwater County STR Occupancy

Observation: The tables below represent monthly occupancy calendars for ALL STR reporting hotels in Sweetwater County from January through December 2022. Daily STR reporting hotel occupancy is heat mapped to reflect higher occupancies in shades of green and **lower occupancies in shades of red. The darkest reds reflect the lowest occupancies of the year while the darkest greens reflect the highest occupancies of the year. Build facilities to fill the rooms in the red periods!**

January

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						32.7%
27.4%	35.9%	34.6%	39.5%	42.5%	32.9%	30.6%
26.8%	37.7%	38.6%	40.2%	42.3%	45.7%	37.8%
50.7%	53.8%	59.4%	39.8%	35.0%	35.7%	30.4%
26.9%	38.0%	40.6%	40.3%	41.1%	41.3%	39.4%
26.9%	33.8%					

February

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		36.7%	42.3%	33.3%	32.6%	32.9%
28.7%	39.7%	41.8%	40.9%	37.1%	42.5%	37.2%
26.9%	36.9%	40.0%	43.1%	43.8%	34.5%	35.6%
28.4%	41.4%	39.6%	41.3%	38.7%	42.3%	44.4%
32.1%	39.4%					

March

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		45.9%	44.2%	40.5%	40.3%	42.4%
33.0%	42.8%	48.2%	46.7%	41.2%	45.3%	39.5%
34.1%	40.0%	48.5%	50.6%	50.7%	57.1%	42.4%
34.8%	45.8%	50.3%	49.8%	43.0%	46.2%	43.6%
34.1%	47.8%	51.0%	53.1%	44.7%		

April

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					55.6%	50.8%
41.4%	52.7%	56.5%	57.1%	57.0%	56.2%	54.9%
46.4%	62.6%	64.9%	64.2%	55.7%	53.7%	47.0%
46.3%	66.9%	70.3%	74.1%	65.3%	58.0%	57.2%
60.0%	74.3%	79.6%	78.5%	72.0%	75.4%	75.0%

May

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
61.4%	72.6%	76.6%	77.0%	69.0%	63.9%	63.8%
61.0%	79.1%	83.8%	81.4%	76.1%	69.5%	69.5%
61.9%	76.4%	78.4%	73.6%	65.9%	63.8%	57.1%
56.0%	66.1%	69.5%	71.5%	68.4%	66.4%	65.1%
51.6%	53.0%	62.4%				

June

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			73.8%	71.0%	65.9%	67.8%
65.8%	79.0%	81.1%	83.6%	79.3%	82.8%	85.7%
75.6%	84.7%	87.0%	88.3%	84.2%	77.0%	70.8%
65.5%	81.0%	82.1%	81.9%	75.4%	71.9%	75.7%
63.4%	76.9%	82.3%	77.0%	72.8%		

4th of July

July

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					67.8%	62.4%
46.8%	43.9%	66.0%	75.2%	76.6%	68.2%	68.9%
57.6%	72.4%	73.5%	74.3%	71.2%	65.7%	68.6%
68.0%	84.4%	85.9%	85.9%	73.5%	67.3%	67.6%
58.6%	70.0%	77.1%	75.5%	72.1%	68.3%	68.3%
64.2%						

August

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	72.8%	81.8%	80.1%	75.7%	73.3%	71.3%
58.7%	75.5%	77.5%	80.1%	71.1%	73.9%	73.0%
62.3%	71.7%	73.3%	75.2%	70.6%	63.0%	62.9%
56.9%	70.5%	73.8%	70.1%	64.9%	62.3%	59.6%
52.3%	66.9%	72.0%	67.6%			

Memorial Day

Labor Day

September

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				64.8%	72.5%	73.6%
56.8%	52.1%	67.0%	75.6%	71.3%	67.7%	65.0%
67.7%	80.3%	84.7%	82.2%	83.4%	83.2%	70.7%
62.6%	73.9%	78.1%	75.4%	73.0%	75.8%	76.2%
50.4%	65.3%	68.6%	65.6%	62.7%	60.3%	

October

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						58.2%
48.0%	61.8%	63.3%	63.5%	58.6%	55.6%	49.0%
46.8%	58.1%	58.0%	61.9%	59.7%	51.2%	47.7%
42.0%	59.7%	64.0%	61.7%	58.2%	55.4%	51.8%
47.2%	57.4%	61.5%	60.3%	56.2%	45.7%	47.4%
41.3%	53.0%					

November

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		58.9%	63.3%	53.0%	56.3%	49.0%
39.9%	50.9%	53.3%	52.1%	51.3%	43.9%	44.1%
35.8%	58.1%	55.1%	54.2%	48.1%	55.8%	49.3%
38.8%	46.4%	40.5%	26.9%	26.2%	34.6%	38.6%
29.5%	46.1%	48.6%	46.2%			

December

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				39.1%	47.5%	43.1%
34.0%	44.9%	46.4%	46.4%	41.3%	38.5%	32.0%
36.0%	46.3%	46.1%	43.8%	54.6%	61.7%	45.8%
34.0%	45.6%	40.1%	30.8%	36.5%	27.4%	19.1%
17.9%	20.7%	39.0%	38.0%	34.1%	38.3%	29.7%



Sweetwater County Hotelier Survey – Lodging Guest Segmentation

Sweetwater County Lodging Market Guest Segmentation – YSI Hotel Survey of Hoteliers

The YSI survey of Sweetwater County hoteliers revealed the guest segments that are driving overnight visitation within the destination. Business transient and group/conference/meeting guests are tracked closely at the front desk by rate codes, while leisure segment data is often collected by the management team at the individual properties. Rank order is shown in table below.

[A total of sixteen properties participated in the YSI survey, thus providing an overall response rate of 67% of the rooms that collect the Sweetwater County lodging tax.](#)

2022	2018	2016	Market Segmentation
330,216	359,395	334,433	Annual Room Demand (reported to STR)
78.8% (260,210)	82.5% (296,501)	86.5% (289,285)	Individual Travelers
27.1%	28.7%	23.7%	Tourists visiting the area (local attractions, shopping, events, VFR, etc.)
22.3%	28.3%	24.9%	Business (long-term labor – construction – energy)
29.5%	25.5%	37.9%	Individual business & government travelers
21.2% (70,006)	17.5% (62,894)	13.5% (45,148)	Group / Conference / Meeting
11.7%	6.8%	7.6%	Team sports / tournaments
3.3%	4.8%	2.0%	Group Tour / Motorcoach
2.8%	3.7%	2.7%	Conference / Meeting
3.4%	2.2%	1.2%	Wedding / Reunion / Family events

Observations:

- The individual traveler segment (which includes tourists, long-term business and individual business and government travelers) accounted for 79% of the room nights (260,210) of the overall lodging market room demand in Sweetwater County.
- This data reinforces that Sweetwater County is a business destination as 52% of room nights sold are from the combined long-term business and individual business/government traveler.
- The combined segments for group/conference/meeting accounted for 21% of room nights (70,006) sold that included team sports (tournaments), group tour / motorcoach, conference/meeting and wedding / reunion / family events. This segmentation has shown steady increase over the years (13.5% in 2016 and 17.5% in 2018).

Source: YSI survey of Sweetwater County lodging properties



Wyoming Sports Facilities



Major sports facilities in Wyoming are located primarily in the eastern half of the state in:

- Gillette
- Casper
- Laramie

These 3 cities are currently dominant as locations for major statewide and regional sporting competitions and events.

Athletes in the western counties have to travel long distances to participate in the larger WY competitions in the three cities. Many western schools and sports clubs routinely cross state lines into Utah or Idaho for more convenient competitions.



The blue arrows indicate primary drive routes to Sweetwater County from population centers in Wyoming.

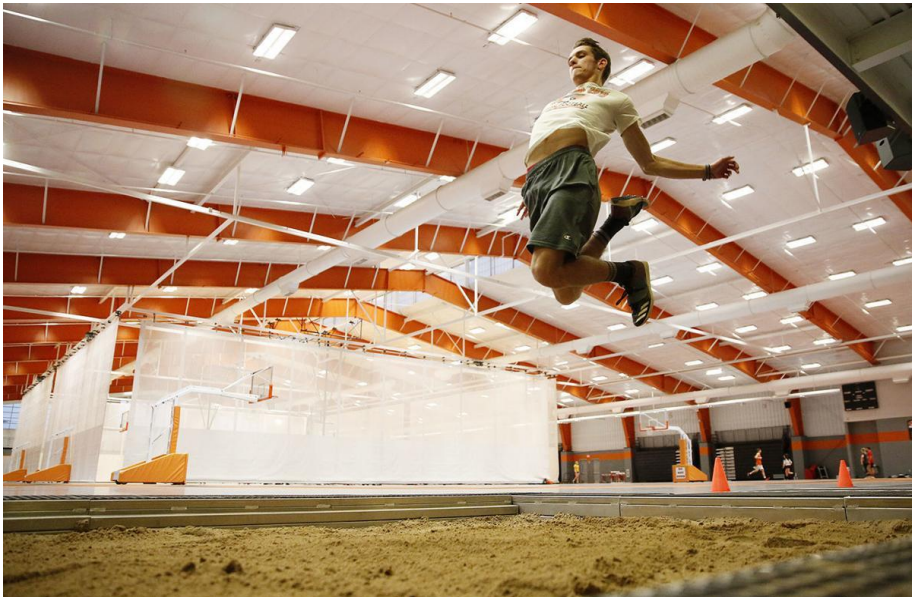


Gillette Family Recreation Center	189,000 sf	Opened 2010	Multipurpose - 200 m. track, field events, basketball, volleyball, wrestling, cheer.
Complex – Wyoming Center	65,000 sf	Opened 2008	3 halls (1 with ice) - Hockey, skating, wrestling, volleyball, cheer, dance.
Campbell County Aquatics Center	47,318 sf	Opening 2025	Competition swimming pool. Seats 1,000.
Pronghorn Center at Gillette College	52,000 sf	Opened 2017	Gym arena for basketball, volleyball.





The Sports Ranch	131,000 sf	Opened 2025	Multipurpose Facility. Basketball, volleyball, mat sports, cheer/dance, baseball practice.
Ford Wyoming Center	28,000 sf	Opened 1982	Multipurpose Arena Basketball, volleyball, wrestling, cheer, rodeo. Seats 8,000.
Natrona High School Gym		Opened 2014	200 m. track, basketball/volleyball/tennis courts, pole vault, long jump lanes and pits. Seats 1,200.
Casper Pickleball & Sports Complex	35,000 sf	Opened 2023	8 pickleball courts, baseball batting cages.





UW Indoor Practice Facility	87,000 sf	Opened 2007	Pavilion for football, soccer.
UniWYO Sports Complex		Opened 1984	Pavilion used for volleyball, wrestling.
UW War Memorial Fieldhouse	69,000 sf	Opened 1950	Indoor track, field events, wrestling.
UW Tennis Complex	37,000 sf	Opened 2011	Tennis pavilion with 4 indoor courts.





Existing Sweetwater County Sports Venues



Summary

- **Sweetwater County has many good sports facilities**
 - Western Wyoming Community College - 1969
 - Rock Springs High School - 1970
 - Sweetwater Events Complex - 1970
 - Rock Springs Civic Center – 1978
 - Rock Springs Family Recreation Center – 1983
 - Green River High School - 1999
- Most of the **facilities are not large enough (with enough spectator seating) to host statewide tournaments and sports events.**
- Many of the **facilities were built for single games/competitions** (one or two courts) and not tournaments and are lacking in courtside/poolside space for competitors.
- Many facilities lack open-space, high ceilings, and gathering space to serve as multi-purpose facilities.





Rock Springs Family Recreation Center

- Hockey, family swimming, wallyball, racquetball, weightlifting, 1/8-mile walking track.
- 145,500 sq ft. Built 1983 Operated by City of Rock Springs
- Large, multi-faceted recreation center with ice rink, gym and family pool. Includes specialty rooms for weight training and racquetball. Some racquetball/handball courts are being repurposed due to declining demand for those sports. Needs updating in areas.
- Primarily for resident use. Can be used for tournaments that can use its gym space, such as basketball, volleyball, wrestling, dance, cheerleading, etc.





Green River High School

- Gym, auxiliary gym, competition pool, outdoor sports (football, track and field, soccer) at the Green River Middle School.
- Built 1999 Sweetwater County School District #2
- Modern, attractive facilities.
- Very nice competition pool that could be used for more tournaments from High School to youth swimmers.
- Limited pool deck space causes crowded conditions during competitions.
- Excess capacity as the school is built for more students than are currently enrolled.





Rock Springs High School

- Gym, auxiliary gym, competition pool, outdoor track, football, and soccer fields.
- Built in 1970 Sweetwater School District #1
- Functional facilities. Not as large as more modern venues.
- The 2024 WY Legislature appropriated funds to replace the High School in the next few years. Uncertainty about construction timeline and new features that the school will have.
- Uncertainty surrounds what will be done with the old High School with its existing sports venues.





Western Wyoming Community College

- Gym, auxiliary gym, wrestling room, and soccer fields.
- School built in 1969, with several additions since then.
- Limited indoor sports venues. Not as large and open as modern facilities.
- National champions in wrestling, yet wrestling facilities are outdated and too small.
- Athletic staff and administration are very open to hosting tournaments and events but are aware of facility limitations.





Sweetwater Events Complex

- Main open-space hall. Rodeo arenas, agricultural barns, outdoor racetracks, camping areas.
- Built in 1970 Sweetwater County
- Well-used facility used by community members for a variety of events and activities.
- Main hall constantly booked for weddings, banquets, consumer shows, reunions, and other community functions. Has hosted sports events like boxing and martial arts, but not flexible enough for team sports. Low ceiling height limits use for some sports.
- Other venues are for AG and equestrian events.





Rock Springs Civic Center

- Opened 1978 City of Rock Springs
- Well-used facility used by community members, especially by senior citizens.
- Facility has significant structural issues (pool, roof, etc.).
- Serious infrastructure deficiencies noted in Rock Springs Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan research.





Sports Facilities in Recent Community Plans / Resident Sentiment

Resident Sentiment of Sports Facilities

In 2024, the City of Rock Springs gathered considerable resident input (large survey, focus groups) in creating a new Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. In addition, Sweetwater County created a Tourism Master Plan in 2022. Both efforts surveyed area residents and community leaders and noted the desire to explore construction of an indoor sports facility for community use.

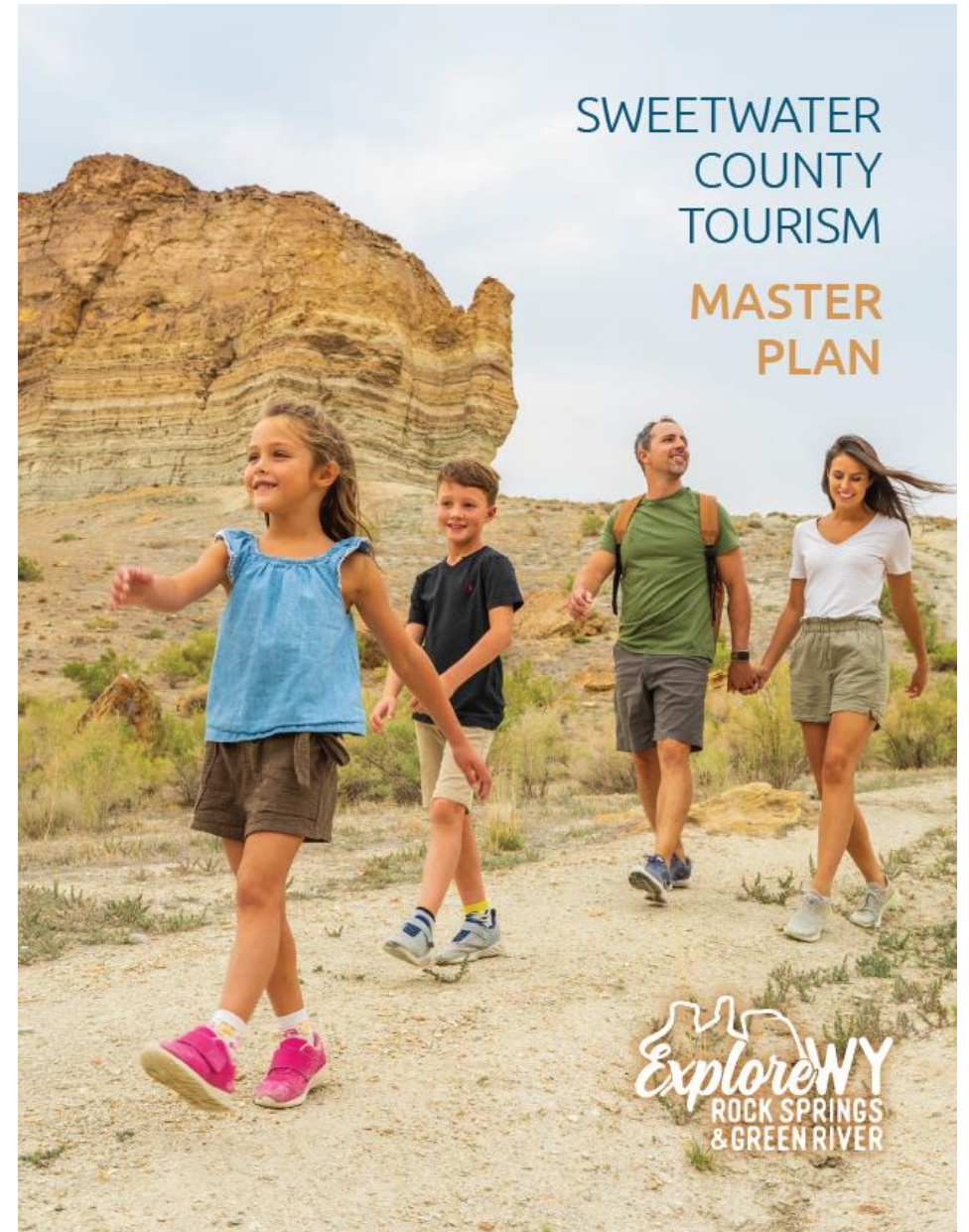


Sweetwater County Master Plan Feedback

In late 2021, Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism created a Sweetwater County Tourism Master Plan in conjunction with the county, local communities, economic development partners, civic organizations, and other interested parties.

The plan's research and community interviews identified a need for indoor recreation option suitable for sports activities during the winter months. The resulting Tourism Master Plan (Dec. 2021) included a plank to

Investigate the need and support for new events space, such as a multi-purpose facility, sports fieldhouse, or other events venue that can host activities year-round.



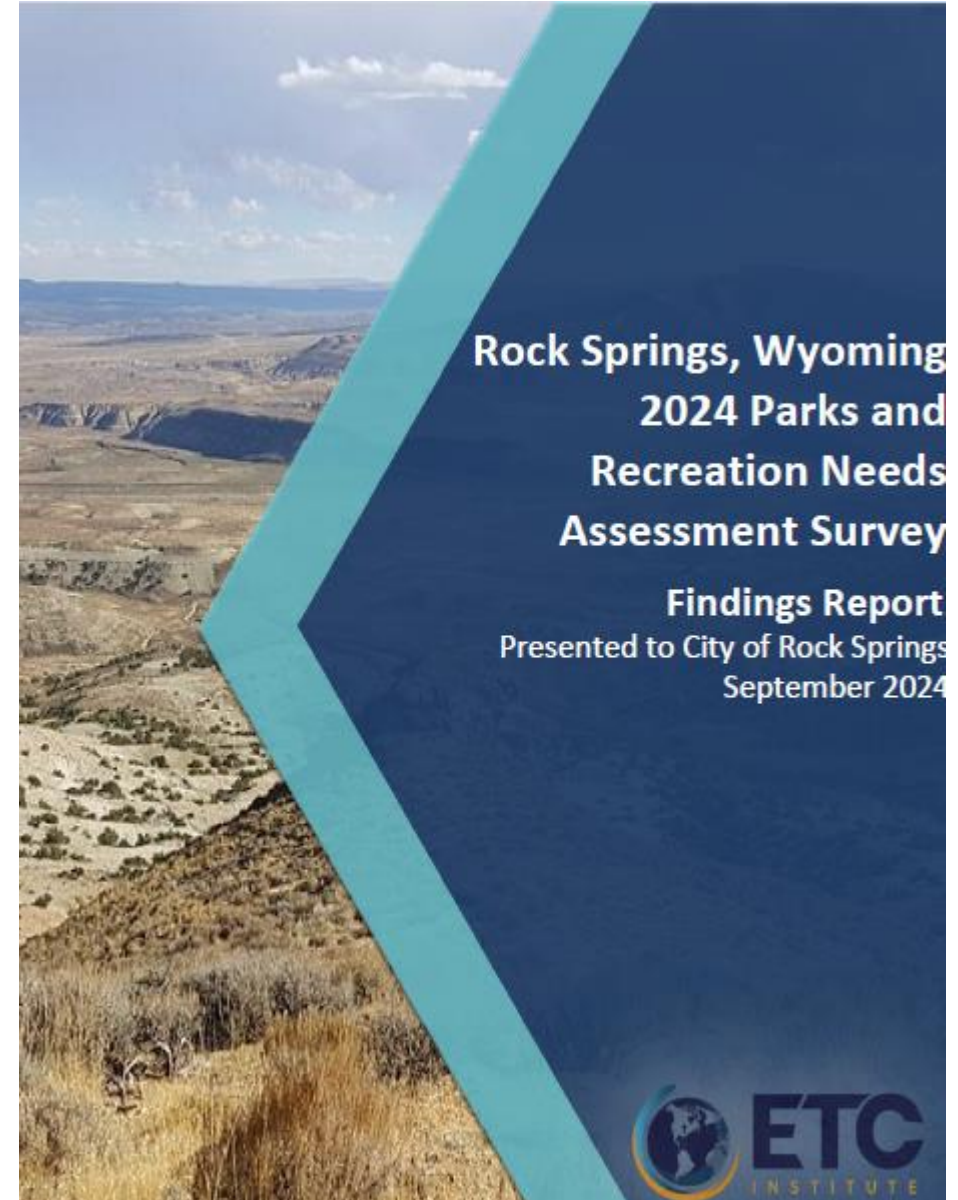


In 2024, Rock Springs Parks and Recreation sponsored a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment with ETC Institute.

ETC created a Priority Investment Rating (PIR) system to provide an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation investments. The PIR system equally weighs (1) the importance that residents place on facilities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facilities.

The PIR rated these facilities as highest needs for investment among 31 options. *Three of the top 6 facilities are indoor facilities.*

- Walking/hiking trails (PIR=196)
- **Indoor playground (PIR=158)**
- **Indoor field house sports fields (PIR=156)**
- Natural areas & wildlife habitats (PIR=152)
- Paved bike trails (PIR=146)
- **Indoor running/walking track (PIR=145)**





Resident comment:
About time this town invests into the youth

Resident comment:
Fabulous! We are behind the times. Desperately needed for our community!

Resident comment:
How about one that can be used for sports. Concerts. Or any type of event. Definitely is needed for sports and all of the above. RS should've had one years ago.

Resident comment:
This would be a huge improvement to the county!

Resident comment:
This would be a great asset to our community.

Resident comment:
Definitely something that is needed here!

Resident comment:
This would be great. I'd love to see indoor Tennis courts inside a track much like they have in the Gillette Red. Something that many sports can take advantage of: tennis, soccer, baseball, softball, pickleball, track and field, etc. The cost analysis will be interesting to see with all the programming potential

Resident comment:
This is greatly needed and wanted!

Resident comment:
An indoor sports facility would be a game-changer for Sweetwater County youth baseball, allowing them to practice year-round and contend with top teams from other states/.

Resident comment:
FINALLY!



Sports Planner Interviews



The consulting team interviewed the following leaders both in-person and by teleconference.

Executive Interviews

- Anthony Beardsley, Green River High School
- Amber Bliss, WY Special Olympics
- Byron Bolen, Rock Springs High School
- Matt Bowen, Southwest WY Pickleball Club
- Chris Bradford, Sweetwater County Parks and Recreation
- Kreston Cross , Rock Springs Avengers Soccer
- Tamika Davis , Rock Springs Avengers Soccer
- Christy Doak, Legacy Gymnastics (USA Gymnastics WY)
- Catherine Duncombe, Green River Parks & Recreation Director
- Lisa Frint, Miracle League
- Jason Fuss, Green River High School
- Dan Hansen, Green River High School
- Erika Koshar, Sweetwater Events Complex
- Jenissa Meredith, Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism
- Ryan Pauley, Rock Springs Avengers Soccer
- De Shann Schinkle, WY Senior Olympics
- Lu Sweet, Western Wyoming Community College
- J.J. Syvrud, Rock Springs Parks & Recreation Director
- Donna Tramp, Miracle League
- Casey Walker, Rock Springs High School
- Chad Whitworth, WY High School Activities Association
- Tom Wilson, Former Green River Athletic Dir.
- Gay Woodhouse, WY Senior Olympics



Sweetwater County Sports Managers

The lack of an indoor facility requires winter sports teams to regularly travel long distance, often in poor weather, to compete since they can't host events locally.

Local coaches expressed optimism that they would be able to host several new tournaments and expand existing ones with a suitable indoor facility.

Local summer sports teams are frustrated by the lack of indoor facilities which limits their winter practice, resulting in a competitive disadvantage against teams that can practice year-round.

The County could benefit economically from hosting tournaments instead of sending Sweetwater County dollars to other places.

Local sports clubs pay very low fees for the use of courts and fields.

Local schools and the cities of Green River and Rock Springs have a history of sharing sports facilities to help fill each other's needs.

Funding options for a facility mentioned most include the 6th penny sales tax, bond issues, corporate naming rights, and partnerships.

Uncertainty exists on the best way to manage an indoor facility. General sentiment is that strong MOUs between the three major local governments (County, Rock Springs, Green River), the two school districts, and sports teams will be a must.

The location of an indoor facility may be difficult as Green River and Rock Spring have a history of being very competitive with one another, although this rivalry is diminishing as the schools are now in different districts.



Statewide Organizations

Some statewide sports planners expressed interest in hosting more state and regional sporting events in Sweetwater County. The lack of indoor facilities in western Wyoming hinders their ability to recruit and service their clientele in that part of the state.

Planners noted that the county has sufficient lodging and dining capacity for new sports events and tournaments. While transportation in the winter months can be challenging, it was not considered a seriously limiting factor.

The WY High School Activities Association requires substantial spectator seating for its statewide finals, even for the lower division schools. As a result, most state finals events will remain in the state's larger arenas that have sufficient seating. A Sweetwater County indoor facility would not be attractive for finals unless it had major spectator seating.



Conclusions



Opportunities

- WY has high participation rates for youth sports, among the highest in the nation.
- Western Wyoming does not have any major indoor sports facilities. The state's major indoor facilities are in the eastern side.
- Sweetwater County's population is younger and has more families with children compared to WY as a whole.
- Southwest Wyoming has several large energy projects on the horizon which will bring workers and their families.
- Sweetwater County has lodging properties with ample capacity October – March (6 months), especially on weekends.
- The County has several indoor sports facilities owned by schools and the cities of Green River and Rock Springs. Most are heavily used with sports clubs keeping the facilities busy into the evenings, limiting the availability for casual sports and new events.
- Statewide sports planners express the desire to hold regional and statewide events in SW Wyoming to serve athletes that have been underserved on the state's western side. Possibilities for attracting athletes from Utah and Idaho exist as well.
- Local sports clubs are enthused by the possibility of a new indoor facility for winter practice, new tournaments, expanded existing tournaments, and other events. Instead of sending Sweetwater County dollars elsewhere for competitions, a local facility could keep those dollars in the county and attract more from other teams.
- After an initial Facebook post about the possibility for an indoor sports facility on Sweetwater NOW , 697 subscribers "liked" or "loved" the post, with another 221 people providing overwhelmingly positive comments.



Challenges

- Sweetwater County athletes and teams are accustomed to paying low or no user fees for court and field access for public facilities. A new facility will need financial support from user fees and concession revenues.
- The Rock Springs and Green River rivalry may make finding a location everyone supports challenging, although this rivalry seems to be decreasing.
- Uncertainty on funding and management issues.
- Several *existing* sports facilities in Sweetwater County need significant maintenance and updating.
- State and federal funding uncertainties in early 2025.
- Uncertainties exist about what will become of the current Rock Springs High School.



Options for a Multi-Use Indoor Sports Facility

- Multi-use facilities vary greatly depending upon intended use, sports supported, and the level of amenities. Size and design are customized based on the activities to be accommodated.
- Size can vary from 25,000 to 100,000+ square feet. A facility will usually include a large multi-purpose gym that can accommodate 1-2 basketball courts or 2-4 volleyball courts or multiple other racquet or mat sports. Often, a walking/running track encircles the gym. Popular amenities include spectator seating, locker and weight rooms, concession areas, and party/meeting rooms.
- For maximum community benefit: Adding a competition-level 200-meter track would increase facility demand significantly as there are only 2 such tracks in WY (Casper and Gillette). An indoor track with 6 lanes, the required space for turns, and associated space for field events increases the size needed to 80,000+ sf. The infield of the track will be able to accommodate basketball, volleyball, soccer, etc., but careful planning is required to fit these in with the track.
- From interviews with local team leaders and coaches, as well as planners from throughout WY, a Sweetwater County multi-use sports facility with indoor track could host approximately 18-20 new major sports tournaments / competitions per year, as well as help grow existing events such as the Flaming Gorge Classic.



Current Demand for a Sports Facility – Winter 2025

- Demand exists for an indoor sports facility for use by Sweetwater County athletes, as well as those from Wyoming's western half.
- This demand will increase as the County grows and competes to attract new workers (and their families) responding to the County's new energy projects starting within the next few years.
- The facility needs to be flexible and multi-use with the ability to shift configurations easily to get the highest possible sports usage and community buy-in, especially considering the possible need to cutback other existing facilities.
- The facility needs to have a regional perspective to draw from a multi-county and multi-state region. The facility must be a convenient, enjoyable and productive experience for out-of-county visitors.

Considerations

- Serious consideration is needed in planning a facility:
 - Existing and needed hospitality amenities (lodging, dining, entertainment)
 - Location / accessibility (taking advantage of the Interstate 80 corridor)
 - Type of sports included / flexible use
 - Unique identity for Sweetwater County / Western WY
 - Concessions / party room / other additions
 - Stand-alone project or part of an existing development

Challenges

Funding: Obtaining funding for both initial construction and ongoing operations and maintenance.

Operations and Management: Who and how will the facility be managed?

Location: Finding a location for maximum ROI and community buy-in.



Project Development Timeline

Casper Sports Ranch opened

Campbell County Aquatics Center Opens

Dry Creek & Project West trona projects begin –100s of jobs

TerraPower nuclear plant construction Begins – 1,600 jobs

TerraPower nuclear plant opens – 250 permanent jobs

Southwest Wyoming population grows with new energy development driving increased demand for facility 



Positioning Sweetwater County for future growth & quality of life 

- Sports Facility Feasibility study
- Cost projections & funding research

- Local gov'ts approve project
- Funding identified
- Potential sites identified

- Site selected
- Architectural planning
- Construction bids & contract

Sports facility construction

New multi-use sports facility opens



Next Steps?

Phase 2: Complete by March 30, 2025

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Analysis of Need for a new Sports Events Facility

1. What type of events facility? Size/configuration?
2. Local event growth
3. Outside events coming in
4. Estimate of potential usage

Economic Impact

Develop a model to estimate the economic benefits of the proposed facility (using IMPLAN Economic Impact Model)

1. Total spending at the proposed facility
2. New outside spending
3. Direct, Indirect, Induced Impact
4. Taxes generated



DARREN RUDLOFF - RUDLOFF SOLUTIONS



Twenty-five plus years of destination marketing & management experience at Visit Cheyenne and the Texas Office of Tourism. Rudloff has served on national, state and regional travel industry association boards. He is a recipient of 2020 Big WYO award for outstanding service to Wyoming tourism having completed twelve years on the state travel board and serving as its chair. Rudloff Solutions recently led strategic or master planning projects for destinations in South Dakota, Kansas, Wyoming, Oregon and Washington. Rudloff is a graduate of Texas A&M University and the University of Texas.

BERKELEY YOUNG, TMP – YOUNG STRATEGIES

Berkeley Young has 30+ years of travel/tourism marketing and management experience including destination marketing and hotel management. Young Strategies was incorporated in November 2004 focusing on strategic planning and research for destination marketing organizations. Young is a top-rated speaker at regional and national conferences. Young's experience as a hotelier, Chamber and DMO President uniquely qualifies him to lead strategic planning for destination organizations. Young has vast experience working with Mississippi destinations including Ridgeland.



MADELYN MATLOCK, TMP – YOUNG STRATEGIES



Madelyn is a graduate of the University of North Carolina Wilmington and has a master's degree from the University of Maryland in Business Analytics. In her time at Young Strategies, Madelyn has worked with over 50 client destinations. She specializes in survey instrument development, data collection, data analysis, and report development. Madelyn is proficient in using multiple analytics and data platforms. Madelyn earned her Travel Marketing Professional Certificate (TMP) and currently serves as Treasurer on the Southeast Chapter TTRA Board of Directors.