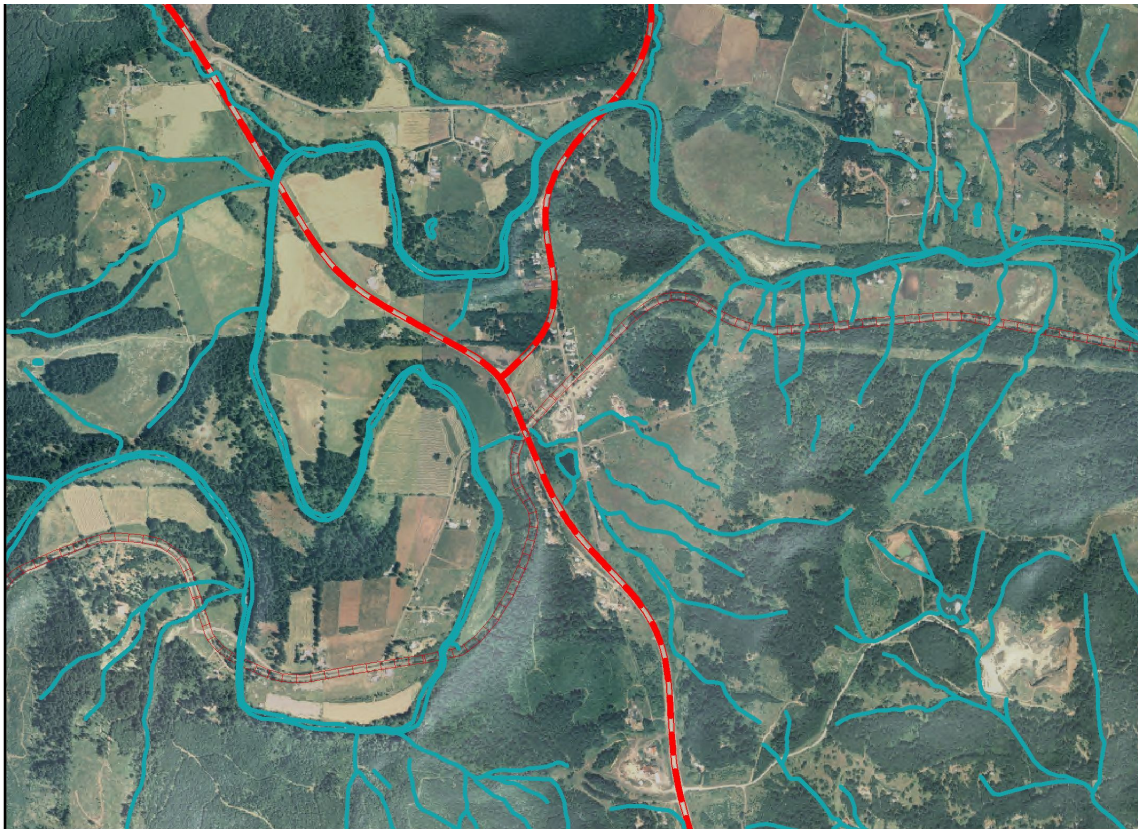


Wren Community Plan

Benton County, Oregon

“... sometimes it seems like each generation must re-learn the meaning of the word “community”...”



Effective August, 2007

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Chapter 1: Planning Overview

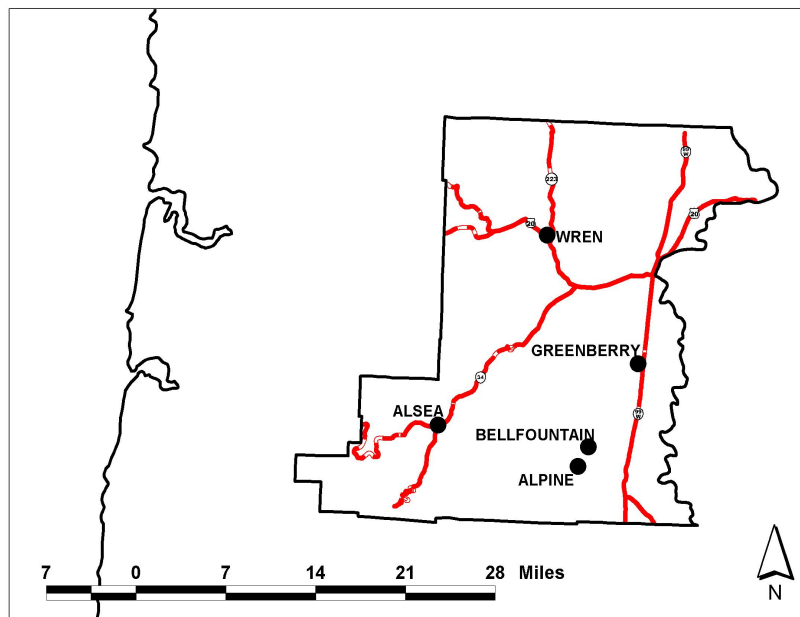
1.1 The Planning Process

In the fall of 1994 the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) adopted Administrative Rule amendments that established planning and zoning requirements for unincorporated communities outside established Urban Growth Boundaries (OAR 660, Division 22, the “Unincorporated Communities Rule” or “UCR”). The UCR includes criteria for determining the qualifications and boundaries for four types of unincorporated communities: Resort Community, Rural Community, Rural Service Center, and Urban Unincorporated Community.

According to the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) criteria, Benton County has identified 5 unincorporated communities:

Communities:

- **Alpine**
- **Alsea**
- **Bellfountain**
- **Greenberry**
- **Wren**



The Benton County Department of Community Development has undertaken planning for two of these communities, Wren and Alsea, as part of its periodic review work tasks for 2005. This document details Benton County’s planning process and resulting plan for the community of Wren.

1.2 Community Type

According to the criteria of the UCR, Wren is classified as a Rural Community because it consists “... **primarily of residential dwellings but also has at least two other land uses that provide commercial, industrial, or public uses ... to the**

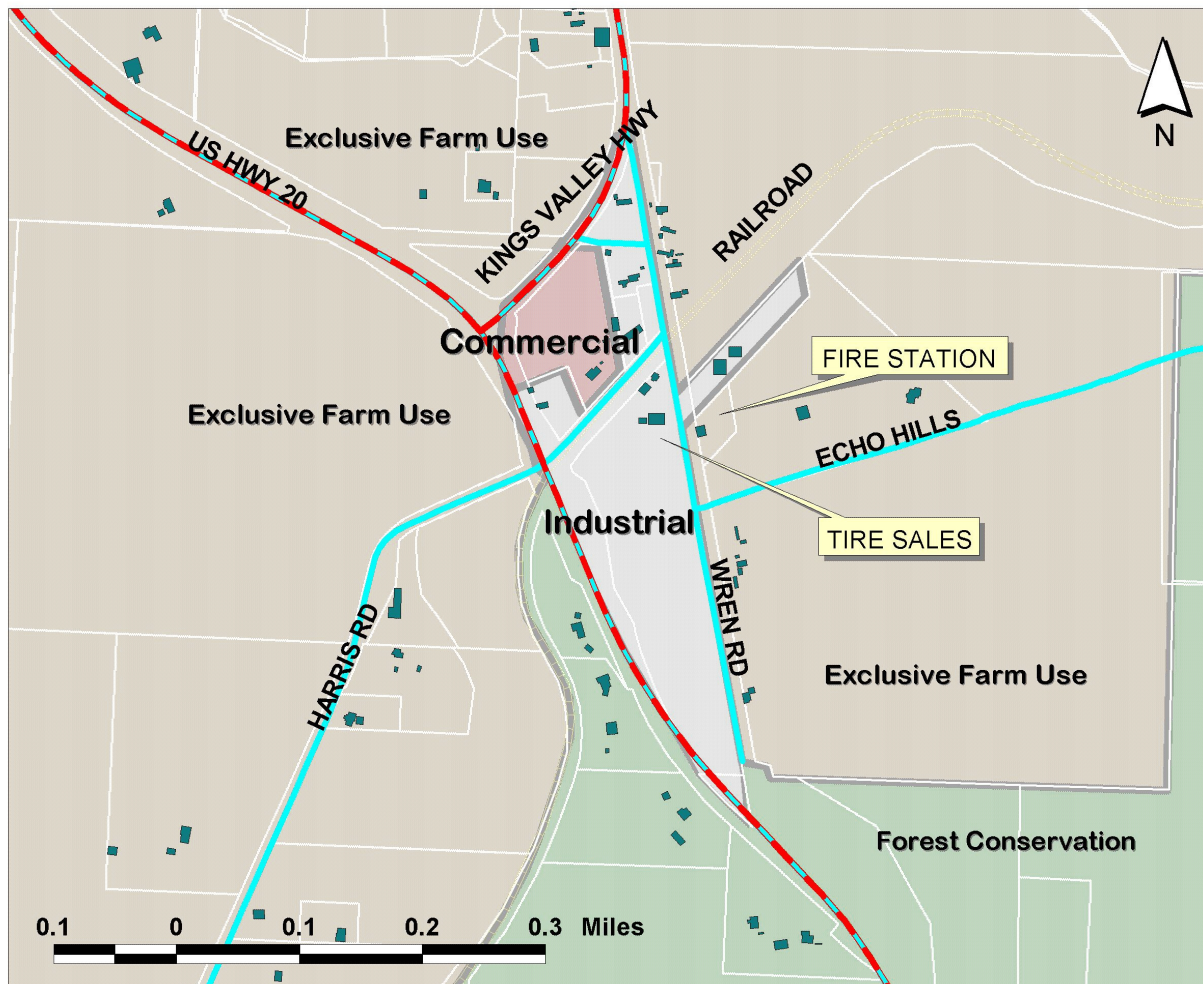
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community, the surrounding rural area, or to persons traveling through the area.” (OAR 660-022-0010[7]) The Unincorporated Community of Wren consists of 8 parcels, of which 1 is zoned Commercial (C) and the remaining 8 Industrial (I). This area contains one commercial use (tire sales), and 5 residences. Located adjacent to the Unincorporated Community boundary is the Fire Station, on land zoned Exclusive Farm Use (EFU).

1.3 Unincorporated Community Boundary

The community boundary of Wren was effectively established in the Goal Exception document adopted as part of the Benton County Comprehensive Plan in May 1982. This document acknowledged Goal 3 and 4 exception areas zoned Industrial and Commercial that were developed and committed to non-resource use.

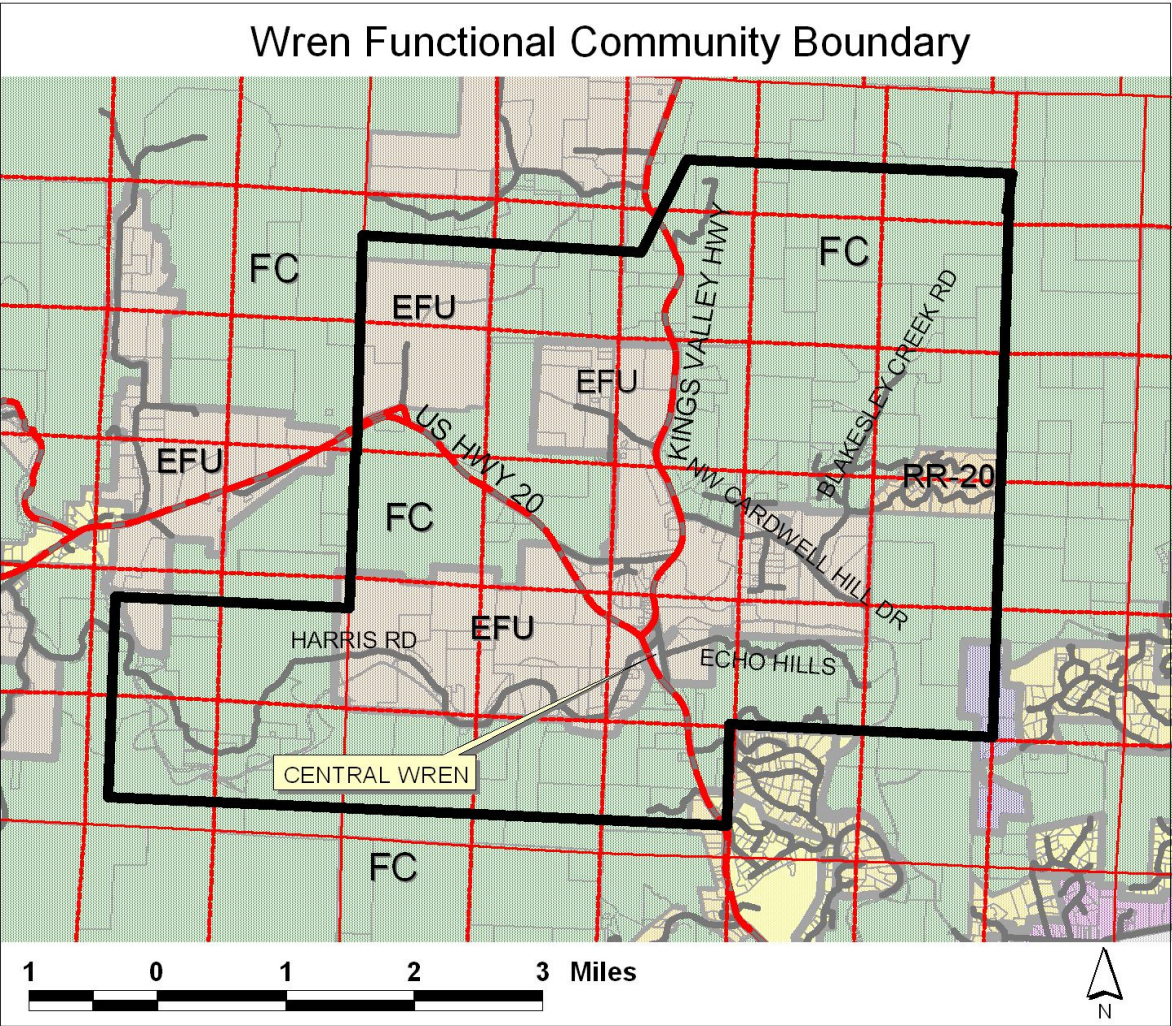
The Unincorporated Community Boundary of Wren consists of 23.07 acres, 4.54 acres zoned Commercial and 18.53 zoned Industrial, shown in Figure 1, below.



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1.4 Functional Community Boundary

Since the earliest days of Wren, the community has defined itself much more widely than the definitions of OAR allow. All efforts of the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) and Wren Community Club (WCC) include a much larger geographic area, 17 square miles, which includes approximately 200 residences on resource and rural residential lands. This area is illustrated below.



The Wren CAC and WCC are well-organized and active organizations, holding frequent activities at the Community Hall, and representing the larger community of Wren in county forums. The Wren Community Hall is located approximately one mile north of the Unincorporated Community boundary, on Highway 223, the Kings Valley Highway, and is the site of community meetings, events, and celebrations.

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1.5 Public Involvement

Four citizen groups are active in the community of Wren: the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is the most active in the county. The Wren Community Club (WCC) focuses its efforts on communications (publishing a newsletter), community activities, and the Wren Community Hall. The Wren Historical Society has researched the history of Wren, and published Memories of Wren in 1998. A subgroup of the Marys River Watershed Council, a voluntary grassroots organization, has devoted energy and expertise to local watershed issues.

Public involvement for this Rural Unincorporated Community Plan began in Wren in February of 2005 when county staff met with the CAC at the Wren Community Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the upcoming planning effort, and explain the limitations and possible benefits to the community. The meeting agenda, handout prepared for the meeting, and the CAC's response are included in Appendix A.

At subsequent meetings with the CAC and WCC, community members and staff recognized that the officially defined boundaries of the RUC would not allow participation of the entire community, as perceived by its residents. For this reason it was determined to include the larger community in the survey effort, and differentiate between responses from the official and larger community.

1.6 Past Community Planning

In October of 1994 a citizen-initiated effort to prepare a community plan was begun, culminating in 1995 in a professionally prepared plan funded by grants from the U.S. Forest Service Rural Community Assistance Program and Benton County. As part of the 1995 plan, a detailed survey was administered to the larger community, (see map above) and a character statement and community goals were written. The survey responses indicated that the community felt that Corvallis and Philomath should be supported as the primary service centers for Wren, and that any local commercial activity focuses on the needs of the local community. Most respondents preferred to see no future increase in Wren's population.

An extensive list of possible actions to benefit the community was generated and prioritized, and in the past 10 years volunteer efforts have resulted in the accomplishment of several of the identified important projects. Among these are publication of Wrenditions local newsletter, improvement of the Wren Community Hall, continued CAC involvement, establishment of a recycling center, outreach to ill and elderly residents, and county recognition of the community plan. Although it is a far-flung community, the dedication and organizational skills of many residents has

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achieved a high degree of success in achieving community goals. The 1995 Wren Community Plan is included in Appendix B.

1.7 Community Survey

Wren's CAC desired to update their 1995 community opinion survey, to determine the community's perception of improvement in the past ten years, and to guide future actions. County staff coordinated with Wren's survey subcommittee to fashion a survey instrument that met the needs of both the larger community and the county's rural unincorporated planning effort. The survey was announced by a postcard mailing to all households in the larger Wren community in early April 2005. The survey was prepared, hand-delivered by community volunteers in a massive weekend effort, and follow-up postcards were mailed to thank respondents and remind those who had not responded. Distribution of 256 surveys yielded a return of 97, representing a 37% return rate.

The responses sought by county staff were more general in nature, and designed for maximum freedom of response. These are summarized below. The community group sought responses that would specifically measure the community's change in perception over the past ten years, and point the direction for future projects in the larger community.

Although the responses of households within the official RUC boundary and the larger community were separated for purposes of tabulation, no significant difference was measured in these two groups' responses.

What brought you to Wren?

The most common response was that property had been found here, followed by the rural setting and natural environment, and the proximity of family.

How long have you lived here? _____ years

The average time for residence in the area was 18 years (median is 14), with the longest resident claiming 84 years.

How long has your family been in the community? _____ years

The average time for family presence in the area is 26 (median is 20) years, with three families showing 100 years, and one with 150 years of history in the area.

What keeps you here?

Most respondents noted the rural character, peacefulness, and natural beauty of the area. The presence of family and good people was another frequent response.

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What do you like most about Wren?

Responses to this question strongly favored good neighbors, the community's small size, peace and quiet, abundant wildlife, strong sense of community, and low population density.

If you could change anything about Wren, what would it be?

The strongest response to this question was "nothing". Some respondents noted the need for a small store, and others felt that it would improve the community to eliminate the sources of rifle range and quarry noise.

Multiple Choice Questions

Through the multiple-choice responses it has become apparent that about half the community feels that the sense of community has improved in the past ten years. The most effective tool for enhancing community spirit has been the newsletter Wrenditions. Safety concerns focus on fire protection, traffic, and hunting. The community supports the idea of jobs for youth, as well as other local activities for young people. Chief targets for recreation are hiking trails, Marys River access, and education of the public regarding trespass and illegal activities on private lands. The control of invasive exotic vegetation such as Scotch broom is a big concern, as is the health of the Marys River. About two-thirds of residents are aware of the Watershed Council, and improvement of river health is valued for its larger ecosystem effects.

The postcard mailings, survey instrument, and detailed survey tabulation are included in Appendix C.

Chapter 2: Community Profile

2.1 Physical Setting

The rural unincorporated community of Wren is located in the eastern foothills of the Coast Range, about 5 miles west of Philomath on Oregon Highway 34 at the junction of Highway 223, the Kings Valley Highway. This 23-acre of high-value farmland is bordered and bisected by roads and highways, surrounded by productive farm and forest lands, and the Marys River flows nearby.

2.2 History

The triangle of land bordered by roads and highways was once known as Wren Station, the site of a passenger depot for the Corvallis-Yaquina Bay Railroad, 2 schools, post office, general store, and steam-powered sawmill. In 1927, when Wren's "Little Red Schoolhouse" was replaced it was the oldest school building in use in Oregon. The 1930's saw the construction of the Wren Community Club north of town, where basketball games, dances, and community gatherings were held. The Wren Road

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sawmill was closed and dismantled in 1993, following the closing of the other commercial uses in Wren.

2.3 Economics

Wren's economy is based primarily upon its proximity to Philomath (5 miles) and Corvallis (10 miles), and responses to the survey indicate that the majority of residents in the area do not want urban commercial development. Small-scale locally-owned businesses such as a grocery, service station and post office were mentioned as possible additions within the RUC boundary, where a tire business is the only existing commercial use.

Farm and forest uses as well as home-based businesses are operating in the larger community, and several survey respondents suggested publication of a directory of local goods and services so that Wren residents could support their community by purchasing locally. Similarly, many survey respondents felt that a local posting of jobs for youth might help local young people to find part-time employment close to home.

Discussions with owners of Commercial and Industrial properties within the RUC boundary indicate that zone or use changes are not viewed favorably at this time.

2.4 Community Form

The physical form of Wren was established early in its history, dictated by road and rail transportation routes that intersected at this location. This spot served as a hub, with spokes radiating outward to serve residences, farms, and forest industries in the larger community.

The easy access and central location of the lands zoned Commercial and Industrial may some day be important factors in considering rezoning of these properties for community use. At this time however, it appears that community efforts will be directed elsewhere.

2.5 Buildable Land and Zoning

Within Wren's RUC boundary totaling 23 acres are 8 parcels, and all are developed except one unbuildable 0.65 acre parcel at the point Wren Road connected to the highway in the past. The table below lists each parcel, its zoning, size, and current use.

The 13.62 acre parcel currently used for tire sales and zoned Industrial could be partitioned under existing regulations, if other requirements can be met. Industrial zone minimum parcel size allows a 2-acre minimum parcel size if on-site septic disposal and water supply are used. Although past ideas have included using portions of this

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property for community uses such as park and community center, no interest exists at this time on the part of the property owners to initiate this effort.

Parcel	Zoning	Size	Land Use
116280000201	Commercial	4.54 acres	Residential
116280000202	Industrial	1.00 acre	Residential
116280000600	Industrial	13.62 acres	Commercial, tire sales
116280001700	Industrial	0.65 acre	Vacant, unbuildable
11628B001202	Industrial	1.14 acre	Residential
11628B001400	Industrial	0.88 acre	Residential
11628B001500	Industrial	0.76 acre	Residential
11628B001600	Industrial	0.48 acre	Accessory to adjacent residential

2.6 Public Facilities

Wren has no public facilities at this time. All land uses are served by private, individual water and sewer systems.

Chapter 3: Community Goals and Policies

As a result of the community survey, meetings held in Wren, and extensive community input, four broad community goals supported by policies have been developed. These policies apply to the area defined as the Rural Unincorporated Community of Wren as well as the larger community of Wren as defined by the area residents. The Benton County Comprehensive Plan 2006 incorporates these policies and they will be used to guide Development Code regulations.

Goal 1: Wren will remain a low-density, peaceful, safe, rural farm and forest based community.

Goal 2: Wren will be distinguished by its natural areas with abundant wildlife and healthy rivers.

Goal 3: Wren will be a community that respects individual needs and privacy while promoting a sense of belonging.

Goal 4: Wren residents will work together to maintain and improve the quality of the community.

Policies

Policies 1 and 2 are specific to the Unincorporated Community of Wren, as defined by ORS, consisting of the lands zoned Commercial and Industrial. (See

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map on page 2.) **Policies 3 – 13 pertain to the functional community boundary.**
(See map on page 3.)

1. Benton County shall allow flexibility in the use of Wren’s limited non-resource lands, as complies with Statewide Planning Goals.
 2. Benton County shall recommend that when new commercial or industrial activities are proposed within the RUC boundary of Wren, they focus on the needs of the local community or be related to local resource uses, in order to minimize impact on the local quality of life.
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3. Benton County shall recognize and support* the role of local community groups in the process of community-building, plan implementation and the capacity to respond to changing needs.
 4. Benton County shall support the efforts of community organizations, property owners and residents in Wren to strengthen the local sense of community.
 5. Benton County shall support and encourage the development of Wren youth as contributing members of the community.
 6. Benton County shall maintain and support an active Citizen Advisory Committee in Wren to enable citizen participation in County affairs and ensure County recognition of the community’s goals.
 7. Benton County shall limit new housing development in the Wren area to preserve the small, rural character of the community.
 8. Benton County shall recognize the efforts of the community to support forestry, farming and home based businesses as the primary industries of the Wren community.
 9. Benton County shall participate with residents, community volunteers and the local fire district to ensure the security and safety of residents of the Wren community.
 10. Benton County shall work with local community organizations, property owners, and residents to maintain and enhance Wren’s rural community atmosphere and to protect and enhance the historical and environmental assets of the community.
 11. Benton County shall support the community’s efforts to improve access to recreational areas and reduce incidence of trespass on private lands.
 12. Benton County shall facilitate communications between the community of Wren and state and federal agencies.
 13. Benton County shall consider community input prior to changes in public roads and their capacities.

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*Support, as used within the policies above, includes recognition of community goals, administrative assistance, participation in inter-agency partnerships, and facilitation of community efforts to achieve stated goals.

Chapter 4: Strategies for Reaching Goals

The community of Wren is fortunate to have active organizations and skillful individuals willing to devote time and energy to improving the community. The survey that was administered as part of this plan will be a useful tool as the community continues to work towards achieving its goals. One way in which Benton County can assist the community of Wren is by facilitating inter-agency communications, for example, negotiations with ODOT.

One common element of Wren's community goals and policies is to maintain the community as it is today. To that end, the zoning will remain industrial and commercial. However, some modifications (for example, to limit the scale of allowed uses) are necessary to the industrial and commercial zone chapters in the Development Code to ensure compliance with the Unincorporated Communities Rule. Appendix D contains the newly proposed Rural Industrial and Rural Commercial zones.

Opening and maintaining channels of communication between Benton County and the active community groups of Wren is the best course of action at this time. By being aware of the needs of this community, and responding with assistance and expertise, Benton County can empower the community organizations committed to the protection and enrichment of Wren.

Appendices

Appendix A: February meeting agenda, handout prepared for the meeting, CAC's response

Appendix B: Wren Community Plan prepared in 1995

Appendix C: Postcard mailings, survey instrument, and detailed survey tabulation