BONNEVILLE COUNTY
Stakeholder Summary Report

Prepared for Bonneville County
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Executive Summary

As part of Bonneville County's Master Facilities Plan (MFP) and Comprehensive Financial Plan (CFP), Clearwater Financial (CWF) conducted nine (9) individual stakeholder interviews between August 31 and October 1, 2026. Participants represented municipal government, major employers, commercial development, community planning, and nonprofit organizations. The interviews gathered perspectives on County services and facilities, anticipated growth, fiscal priorities, and opportunities for improvement.

Stakeholders expressed positive perceptions of Bonneville County's leadership, staff, and services, while identifying challenges associated with continued growth and the need for coordinated, long-term investments.

Five key themes emerged from the interviews:

- **County leadership and services:** Participants described County staff as professional, responsive, and helpful. Several recognized improvements in leadership, communication, and the County's willingness to address longstanding challenges and plan for future needs.

- **Growth and infrastructure:** Residential and commercial development were viewed as opportunities for the region, but stakeholders raised concerns about infrastructure and service capacity keeping pace with growth. Development outside municipal boundaries, increasing traffic, and long-term infrastructure responsibilities were recurring topics.

- **County facilities and accessibility:** Experiences with County facilities varied. Some stakeholders expressed satisfaction with existing buildings and recent improvements, while others identified challenges involving aging facilities, courthouse access and security, parking, and the distribution of services across multiple locations. Participants also discussed potential benefits of consolidating certain services and expanding online access.

- **Fiscal responsibility and capital priorities:** Stakeholders expressed confidence in the County's financial management, although several acknowledged limited familiarity with its budget. Participants emphasized the need to balance investments in facilities, infrastructure, and staffing with available resources and taxpayer affordability.

- **Intergovernmental coordination:** Stakeholders recognized improvements in collaboration between the County and neighboring municipalities, particularly regarding development review and planning. Continued coordination on infrastructure projects, service responsibilities, and anticipated regional growth was identified as important to future planning.

Together, these planning efforts will help the County evaluate facility alternatives, establish capital investment priorities, and consider financial strategies that support current operations and anticipated future needs.

1. Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

Bonneville County serves a geographically diverse area of approximately 1,866 square miles, encompassing urban communities, growing suburban areas, and rural populations. The County is developing a Master Facilities Plan (MFP) and Comprehensive Financial Plan (CFP) to evaluate existing facilities, identify current and future needs, and establish a long-term framework for facility investments and financial planning across this service area.

Stakeholder interviews provide an opportunity to incorporate perspectives from outside County government into the planning process. Participants bring different experiences and connections to the community, offering insight into how County services and facilities support residents and businesses, challenges associated with growth, and priorities for the future.

1.2 Methodology

CWF conducted the stakeholder interviews between August 31 and October 1, 2026. Participants were selected by Bonneville County and represented municipal government, major employers, commercial development, community planning, and nonprofit organizations.

Interviews followed a common questionnaire developed to encourage open-ended discussion of County services, facility conditions and accessibility, growth-related challenges, fiscal responsibility, future priorities, and community characteristics stakeholders value. Participants were also invited to share additional observations based on their experiences and interactions with the County.

To encourage candid feedback, individual responses were summarized without attribution to specific individuals or organizations. CWF reviewed the interviews to identify recurring themes, areas of agreement, and differing perspectives, which are presented collectively in this report.

The interviews provide qualitative perspectives and are not intended to represent the views of all Bonneville County residents. The findings reflect participants' experiences, observations, and opinions and are intended to supplement the technical assessments and other information developed through the MFP and CFP process.

2. Major Themes

The stakeholder interviews identified several recurring themes related to County leadership and services, growth management, facility conditions, fiscal planning, and intergovernmental coordination. Overall, participants expressed appreciation for Bonneville County's services and recent planning efforts while identifying opportunities to better prepare for continued growth.

Although stakeholders commonly shared an interest in the County's long-term success, their perspectives differed on how growth should be managed, how County facilities should be organized, and where future investments should be directed.

2.1 County Leadership, Services, and Overall Perceptions

Stakeholders largely expressed positive perceptions of Bonneville County, describing County staff and leadership as professional, responsive, and willing to work collaboratively with residents, businesses, and neighboring municipalities. Participants with experience working directly with County departments described staff as knowledgeable, responsive, and helpful. Positive experiences included assistance navigating planning and development applications, coordination on public works and roadway projects, and a willingness to work through questions or challenges as they arise.

Several stakeholders also recognized improvements in the County's approach to long-term planning, particularly its willingness to address facility and infrastructure needs that have been deferred or difficult to resolve in the past. While mostly supportive of these efforts, participants acknowledged the challenges of maintaining services and planning for future needs across a large geographic area with limited financial and staffing resources.

2.2 Growth Management and Infrastructure Planning

Growth management emerged as a significant theme throughout the interviews. Participants recognized the economic opportunities associated with Bonneville County's continued development while expressing concerns about the ability of infrastructure, public services, and local governments to accommodate future growth.

A recurring concern involved residential development in unincorporated areas near existing municipalities. Several stakeholders questioned whether historical development patterns have adequately considered long-term infrastructure requirements, access to services, and the responsibilities of the County and neighboring cities. Participants noted that residential growth outside municipal boundaries can complicate roadway and utility planning, service responsibilities, and future annexation.

Roadway infrastructure received particular attention. Stakeholders identified increasing traffic, road capacity, maintenance, and coordination of construction projects as important considerations. One concern involved residential development outside municipal boundaries, where two-lane County roads increasingly serve as major travel corridors, particularly in areas without nearby commercial services. Participants also discussed the need for additional east-west roadway capacity and continued planning for future regional transportation routes.

2.3 County Facilities, Accessibility, and Service Delivery

Stakeholders discussed several County facilities, including recent renovations, building accessibility, customer service areas, and the distribution of offices throughout downtown Idaho Falls. Feedback reflected both appreciation for improvements to existing facilities and concerns about how well certain buildings accommodate public access and service delivery.

Recent renovations received positive feedback. Stakeholders specifically praised the Planning and Zoning offices for their open workspace and conference rooms, noting the value of renovating an existing downtown building rather than constructing a new facility. The Elections Office expansion was also recognized for its appearance, compatibility with downtown design standards, and upstairs conference room.

The historic courthouse was identified as a facility with accessibility challenges. Stakeholders described the need to enter through security screening on the annex side and navigate through the building to reach offices in the historic courthouse. One participant noted that the security screening area has room for only two people indoors, while others must wait outdoors, creating difficulties during winter months. Although participants recognized the importance of building security, some questioned whether the current entrance and circulation arrangements provide convenient access to County services.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) received mixed feedback. One stakeholder described a positive experience completing multiple vehicle registrations and driver's license transactions, noting adequate parking, helpful service counters, and an efficient process. Others described crowded conditions, long lines, and limited waiting space. One participant noted the different queuing procedures used for DMV services, including standing in line or taking a number, and suggested expanding appointment options. Stakeholders also expressed interest in conducting more transactions online, identifying the Planning and Zoning Department's online application process as an example of an effective existing service.

The distribution of County offices across downtown Idaho Falls prompted differing perspectives. Some stakeholders appreciated the proximity of County buildings and noted that relocating offices outside the courthouse can make those services easier to access without passing through security. Others described difficulty remembering which building houses a particular Department and suggested that consolidating offices could simplify public access. Parking experiences also varied, with some participants reporting adequate parking at facilities such as the DMV, while others noted that visiting downtown offices may require parking farther from the destination.

Stakeholders also discussed the broader implications of the County's downtown property ownership. Participants recognized that County offices bring employees and activity downtown and acknowledged the improvements made to existing buildings. However, some expressed concern that County ownership removes properties from the tax rolls and limits opportunities for private redevelopment. Consolidating certain County operations and evaluating alternative uses for existing downtown properties were identified as potential considerations for long-term facility planning.

2.4 Fiscal Responsibility and Long-Term Investment Priorities

Stakeholders expressed confidence in Bonneville County's management of public funds, although several acknowledged having limited familiarity with the County's budget and financial decisions. Participants

described the County as mindful of financial constraints and recognized the challenges of maintaining services across a large geographic area. One stakeholder specifically noted the demands of providing law enforcement coverage across the County, including rural communities such as Swan Valley.

While recognizing the County's efforts to manage available resources, some stakeholders questioned whether past development and infrastructure decisions have adequately accounted for long-term costs. One participant expressed concern that development standards and infrastructure requirements in unincorporated areas may not fully account for the costs associated with growth, potentially shifting future roadway and infrastructure expenses to taxpayers. Others emphasized the importance of planning for additional roadway capacity and coordinating infrastructure responsibilities with neighboring municipalities. Impact fees were also discussed as a potential mechanism for addressing growth-related infrastructure costs, although participants did not identify a specific approach for the County.

Facility investment and financing were also discussed. One stakeholder suggested that, if the County pursues consolidation of certain offices, selling properties that would no longer be needed could help offset the cost of a new facility and reduce the amount requiring taxpayer financing. The same participant expressed concern that postponing major facility improvements for another 10 or 20 years could result in higher construction costs while leaving existing facility needs unresolved.

Staffing was identified as another long-term financial consideration. One stakeholder questioned whether County compensation levels are competitive enough to attract and retain qualified employees, particularly for professional and administrative positions. Another emphasized recruitment and training as important investments in developing experienced County staff and preparing for future workforce transitions.

Participants also recognized the challenges of securing public support for major capital investments. Stakeholders acknowledged that proposals requiring additional tax revenue could face resistance, even when facility improvements are needed. The importance of demonstrating project needs, identifying potential funding sources, and explaining how proposed investments would benefit taxpayers emerged as considerations for future financial planning.

2.5 Intergovernmental Coordination and Regional Partnerships

Stakeholders recognized improvements in Bonneville County's relationships with neighboring municipalities, particularly in recent years. Participants described County leadership and staff as more accessible, responsive, and willing to work collaboratively on development and infrastructure matters. Several contrasted these experiences with previous challenges involving communication, differing development priorities, and coordination between jurisdictions.

One example involved agreements establishing procedures for municipal review of proposed developments within areas of city impact. A stakeholder described how the County now refers applicable development proposals to the affected municipality for review of local requirements, including setbacks and development standards. This was identified as a positive change that gives municipalities an opportunity to identify concerns before development proceeds.

Roadway construction and maintenance were also identified as areas where coordination affects neighboring communities. One stakeholder described the extended closure of Iona Road and a subsequent closure on 49th, which required residents to take longer routes to reach surrounding

communities. The participant emphasized the importance of involving affected municipalities when planning road closures and construction projects. Another example involved questions about whether earlier coordination on roadway improvements could reduce the need for subsequent modifications.

Stakeholders also discussed the challenges of providing services to residential developments located near municipal boundaries but outside city limits. Examples included neighborhoods that remain unincorporated despite their proximity to existing cities, creating questions about responsibility for road maintenance, snow removal, utilities, and other services. Participants recognized that future annexation could change these responsibilities and emphasized the importance of coordination as development occurs.

Existing service partnerships received positive feedback. Stakeholders identified County maintenance of arterial roads serving neighboring cities, snow removal, landfill operations, weed control, and contracted law enforcement as examples of services that support municipalities and their residents. These arrangements were recognized as important to communities that rely on the County for services they do not provide independently.

Coordination with major employers was also identified as important to long-term infrastructure planning. One stakeholder described the challenges of planning transportation and utility improvements around potential employment growth when the timing and scale of that growth remain uncertain. The participant noted that development involving both city and County properties can complicate planning and emphasized the importance of considering future growth scenarios before infrastructure limitations restrict available options. Potential regional transportation improvements, including a bypass south of Idaho Falls, were identified as examples of projects that could benefit from early coordination.

3. Planning Considerations

The stakeholder interviews identified several considerations relevant to Bonneville County's facility and financial planning efforts. These perspectives provide additional context for evaluating facility needs, establishing capital priorities, and considering how future growth may affect County operations.

3.1 Facility Investment and Service Delivery

Stakeholder feedback highlighted the importance of considering public access, building functionality, and service delivery when evaluating future facility investments. While participants recognized improvements to facilities such as the Planning and Zoning offices and Elections Office, they also identified challenges associated with courthouse access, DMV waiting areas, and the distribution of County offices across multiple downtown locations.

Relevant considerations include:

- **Public access and convenience:** How building entrances, security screening, parking, and the location of County offices affect residents' ability to access services, particularly at the historic courthouse and downtown facilities.
- **Operational efficiency:** Whether existing space arrangements adequately support departmental functions, customer waiting areas, staff coordination, and efficient service delivery.
- **Facility alternatives:** The potential advantages and limitations of renovating, expanding, replacing, or consolidating facilities, including how different approaches could affect public access and the use of existing County properties.
- **Service delivery options:** Whether expanded online transactions, appointment scheduling, and improvements to customer queuing procedures could reduce congestion and improve the experience of residents accessing services such as the DMV.

3.2 Growth and Future Service Needs

Stakeholders expressed concern that residential development in unincorporated areas has placed increasing demands on roadway infrastructure and public services. They also identified the challenges of planning for future employment growth when the timing and scale of development remain uncertain.

These perspectives reinforce the importance of evaluating facility and service needs under different growth scenarios rather than relying solely on existing conditions. Considerations include the location and pace of anticipated residential and employment growth, potential changes in staffing and operational requirements, and the ability of existing facilities to accommodate future demand.

Stakeholder feedback also highlighted the relationship between development patterns and the County's service responsibilities. Residential areas near municipal boundaries may create additional demands for County services even where future annexation is possible. Understanding where growth is anticipated, how service responsibilities may change, and whether planned infrastructure improvements could affect facility locations may help inform the timing and scale of future investments.

3.3 Capital Prioritization and Financial Planning

Stakeholders expressed confidence in the County's management of available resources while identifying concerns about the long-term costs of growth, delaying facility investments, and maintaining taxpayer affordability. Participants also raised questions about whether existing County properties and alternative financing approaches could help offset the costs of future improvements.

The CFP provides an opportunity to consider:

- **Investment timing:** The financial and operational implications of addressing identified facility needs in the near term compared with delaying improvements, including potential increases in future construction costs.
- **Funding and affordability:** Available financial resources, potential funding strategies, and the effects of capital investments on taxpayers.
- **Long-term costs:** The financial implications of maintaining existing facilities compared with renovation, replacement, or consolidation, including the ongoing costs of operating multiple locations.
- **Existing assets:** Whether County-owned properties that may no longer be needed following consolidation could be repurposed or sold, and how potential proceeds could contribute to financing future investments.

Stakeholder feedback also identified employee recruitment, compensation, and training as important long-term investments in maintaining County services. Although these considerations extend beyond capital financing, changes in staffing levels and personnel costs may affect future facility space requirements and the County's overall financial capacity.

Clearly documenting project needs, anticipated costs, funding options, and implementation priorities can also support informed decisions by County leadership and provide context for future discussions about major capital investments.

3.4 Intergovernmental and Regional Coordination

Stakeholders recognized improvements in the County's coordination with neighboring municipalities, including agreements that provide opportunities for municipal review of proposed development within areas of city impact. At the same time, participants identified challenges associated with roadway construction schedules, development near municipal boundaries, and the division of service responsibilities between jurisdictions.

For the MFP and CFP, these perspectives are relevant where future facility needs may be affected by residential development outside city limits, changes in responsibilities for roads and other services, or infrastructure improvements planned by neighboring municipalities.

Stakeholders also identified existing partnerships involving roadway maintenance, snow removal, landfill operations, weed control, and contracted law enforcement. These relationships provide context for understanding the services the County delivers across jurisdictional boundaries and how future changes in service arrangements could affect staffing, facilities, and financial requirements.

Coordination with major employers and regional planning partners may provide additional information about anticipated employment growth, transportation improvements, and utility needs. Considering potential growth scenarios and infrastructure dependencies, including longer-term regional roadway projects, can help the County evaluate facility investments in the context of broader development plans.