

IMPACT



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Code of the West—Canyon County, Idaho

The Situation

Canyon County's largest economic sector has been, and continues to be agriculture and agriculture processing. Currently, Canyon County ranks sixth in agricultural sales in Idaho. In 1999 Canyon County ranked second in agricultural sales. Agriculture accounts for 32.4 percent of Canyon County's economic base. The economic base is defined as the sale of products to consumers outside of the county; activities that bring new dollars into the local economy. Manufacturing is the second largest sector of Canyon County's economy, accounting for 27.1 percent of the economic base.

At the same time, Canyon County is experiencing rapid population growth, growing 39.8 percent in the 1990's. This growth is causing agricultural land to be converted to housing and other development. Consequently, land area in farms decreased from 354,919 acres in 1997 to 271,992 acres in 2002. Growth is also creating conflicts between agriculture interests and people without agriculture interests who live in the rural areas of Canyon County. One of Canyon County's challenges is to figure out how to protect the mainstay of the local economy and reduce conflict, while at the same time taking advantage of the economic benefits of manufacturing and growth.

Our Response

The Canyon County Extension Office and the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Department at the University of Idaho collaborated with the Canyon Agricultural Foundation for Education (CAFÉ), Idaho Farm Bureau and Canyon County Development Services to develop a

publication entitled the "Code of the West—Canyon County, Idaho" (Code). The purpose of the Code is to educate people that are contemplating a move to the rural areas of Canyon County about the differences between city and rural life before they make the move. For example, the Code offers the following items for consideration:

- **Services**—It may be necessary to cross property owned by others in order to extend electric and other services to your property. It is important to make sure that the proper easements are in place to allow these utilities to be extended to your property.
- **Property**—If there is a ditch, canal or other water conveyance crossing your property, the users of the conveyance may have the right to come onto your property to maintain and access the conveyance.
- **Agriculture**—Agriculture is an important part of the Canyon County economy. If you choose to live among the farms and ranches of our rural countryside, do not expect county government to intervene in the normal day-to-day operations of your agri-business neighbors. In fact, the Idaho Legislature passed Right to Farm legislation that protects farmers and ranchers from nuisance and liability lawsuits.

Codes of the West were written in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana prior to the development of the Canyon County Code of the West. In early 2002 these documents were used as resources to develop the Canyon County Code of the West.

Lorie Higgins, Assistant Professor in the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Department at the University of Idaho facilitated the process of determining who should be involved in the project, as well as the content of the finished document. Canyon County Cooperative Extension, Canyon County Development Services and CAFÉ reviewed prior codes and researched material for inclusion in the Canyon County Code of the West. CAFÉ then prepared a draft Code for review by a focus group. Higgins also facilitated the focus group, which was comprised of representatives from the Canyon County Commissioners and Development Services, CAFÉ, Canyon County Cooperative Extension, local farmers and key citizens. Following the focus group revisions the University of Idaho's Agricultural Communications Department provided final editing and design services. Idaho Farm Bureau provided funds for the initial printing of 1,500 copies and a reprint of 1,000 copies. Development of the Code was truly a collaborative process where all participants were able to provide input and consequently everyone enthusiastically supported the project.

The Code is currently being distributed through the Canyon County Commissioners, Canyon County Development Services and Canyon County Planning and Zoning Board. It is also being distributed by the Nampa and Caldwell Chambers of Commerce, Canyon County Farm Bureau, Canyon County Cooperative Extension and CAFÉ. Copies have been either given or mailed by these organizations to home builders, developers, farmers, realtors, title companies and mortgage companies. They have also been requested for inclusion in packets for Idaho Ag Summit, Treasure Valley Legislative tour and Food Producers of Idaho Legislative tour.

Program Outcomes

Project participants have received many positive comments about the Code.

Donna West, Director of Canyon County Development Services reports that it is the one document in her office that catches the public's eye and quickly disappears off the reading table.

Teri Ottens from Canyon County Farm Bureau reports she has received comments from people that

read the Code and were thankful because they were educated about issues they hadn't previously thought about. In addition, Ottens reports that though realtors were at first apprehensive about giving the Code to their clients, they have since come to distribute it extensively because it is a comprehensive document they can use to educate clients about matters related to living in the country. Realtors have found that the Code hasn't discouraged anyone from moving to the country, but it has prompted clients to conduct more thorough research and has been instrumental in helping people select property that fits their needs.

The Canyon County Code of the West is educating people contemplating a move to the rural areas of the county and helping them to make more informed decisions. It is also reducing conflict because newcomers to the county's rural areas are better informed about the activities that take place there.

Collaborators

- Lorie Higgins, Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, University of Idaho
- Terri Ottens, Canyon County Farm Bureau
- Canyon County Commissioners and Developmental Services

For More Information

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