



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA  
OPEN SPACE  
& TRAILS MASTER PLAN

AUGUST 2008

# STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA OPEN SPACE & TRAILS MASTER PLAN

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# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

As identified in the 2004 Community Plan, population growth and development in Steamboat Springs' urban area has intensified the importance of open space and park lands to the community. Because of this, there is an increased interest in acquiring and maintaining open space within areas that are largely built out, in future neighborhoods, and in the remaining rural areas within and surrounding the community (2004 Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan).

Public comments have also indicated that Steamboat Springs residents highly cherish their open space resources. In the 2002 Community Survey, conducted by RRC Associates, the open space program ranked as the most widely supported in the city- 75% of respondents rated open space acquisition and preservation as 'very important'. Likewise, the 2005 Community Survey, conducted by the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, found that open space was very important to the community (80%) and that 54% of respondents supported open space acquisition and preservation, the highest ranking among all public facility improvements.



Open space serves the community on various levels. Open space contributes to the sustainability of Steamboat Springs' economy by protecting the viewsheds and recreational resources sought by tourists. Preserving agricultural lands also helps keep ranching viable here. Open space also helps protect environmentally sensitive areas and maintain natural drainageways. For residents, open space reinforces the area's outstanding quality of life by protecting the resources that keep the landscape rural and the community character intact.

The City, the County, and other organizations in the Yampa Valley have long been active in open space conservation and have many notable achievements, such as the Yampa River Legacy Project and the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Program. In recognition of the importance community residents place on open space, as well as new challenges that have emerged, a master planning effort was initiated in the summer of 2006. This report documents the results of that effort.

Following this introduction, the report provides a survey of existing conditions and the various community influences that informed and directed the contents of this plan. This is followed by a section on the community's vision for open space and trails, including a series of goals and policies and potential opportunities for an expanded land conservation program. The final section of the plan focuses on implementation strategies, considering an array of tools for meeting the financial, organizational and other challenges facing an expanded program of land conservation and trails development. The Appedix provides an inventory of the public comments and stakeholder input, which were reviewed by the TAC and incorporated into the Plan as appropriate.

## PLAN PARTICIPANTS

### TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Routt County Planning Department
- Steamboat Springs Parks, Open Space, and Recreational Services
- Steamboat Springs Department of Planning and Community Development
- Steamboat Springs Internal Services (GIS)
- Yampa Valley Land Trust
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- EDAW (Consultant)

### STAKEHOLDERS

- Routt County Extension Office
- Routt County Riders
- Adjacent Emerald Mountain Land Owners
- Steamboat II Metro District
- Yampa Valley Fly Fishers
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Citizens Advisory Board
- Friends of the Yampa

## PLANNING PROCESS

- Inventory and Analysis - June 2006
- Preliminary Vision, Goals, Issues, and Opportunities - August 2006
- Public Workshops - August 2006, January 2007
- Plan Development - October 2006 - July 2007
- Public Review, Implementation, and Recommendations - July-December 2007



# CHAPTER 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

## A. REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Steamboat Springs area is an ecologically diverse, culturally rich community located in one of Colorado's most spectacular river valleys. Its relatively remote location has allowed the area to embrace its heritage in a way that few other mountain communities have. Yet, the area is only 150 miles northwest of Denver, less than a half-day's drive from the state's urban areas, and home to a world-class ski area, Steamboat. Steamboat Springs has managed to set itself apart from other resort towns along the I-70 corridor by providing an experience many say is reminiscent of the 'old' Colorado.

The City of Steamboat Springs has 10 square miles of land area and is the largest municipality in Routt County. Routt County covers 2,231 square miles, 49% of which is publicly-owned. Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest makes up a significant portion of the county and contains three wilderness areas: Mt. Zirkel, Sarvis Creek, and Flat Tops; however, Flat Tops is found just south in Rio Blanco and Garfield Counties. Nearby state parks include Stagecoach Reservoir, Elkhead Reservoir, Pearl Lake, and Steamboat Lake. These public lands provide outstanding recreational opportunities year-round.

The Steamboat Springs area's geomorphology is responsible for its spectacular views, abundant water resources, and namesake hot springs. Situated at 6,695 ft in the Yampa River Valley, the area is surrounded by the Gore Range and the Rabbit Ears Range to the west, and the Sierra Madre and Park Range to the north. There are seven marked springs found within the City and one larger spring, Strawberry Park Hot Springs, 7 miles north of the City. The Yampa River flows through the heart of Steamboat Springs and provides the backbone for the Yampa River Core Trail. Additionally, Spring



Creek, Fish Creek, Walton Creek, and Butcherknife provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

## B. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Between 1990 and 2000, the US Census reported that the City of Steamboat Springs grew 46.6% from 6,695 to 9,815 residents. Most of this growth has occurred in the southern part of city; however more intense growth is expected to occur in the West of Steamboat area in the near future. Over the past 5 years, a number of community surveys have been conducted to understand how citizens feel about issues facing the city. This section will summarize those surveys as they relate to the Open Space and Trails Master Plan.

### 2002 CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS COMMUNITY SURVEY

"The Community Survey was sponsored by the City of Steamboat Springs and conducted by RRC Associates. The survey was designed to help determine community attitudes and perceptions about key local issues, including satisfaction with local public services, the performance of local government and community organizations, priorities for improving the quality of life in the community, the importance

of various issues to local residents, methods of financing community infrastructure, and other issues (Executive Summary, 5/7/2002).” As part of the survey, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a variety of Steamboat Springs functions and services on a scale of 1 “not at all satisfied” to 5 “very satisfied.”

**Key findings include:**

- Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a variety of Steamboat Springs functions and services on a scale of 1 “not at all satisfied” to 5 “very satisfied.” Respondents were “very satisfied” with the city’s recreational facilities.
- “Protection of environmental resources” and “providing large parcels of open space and natural areas” were among the top 5 most important issues among residents.
- “The vast majority of respondents (91 percent) are ‘very satisfied’ (ranked 4 or 5) with the ‘recreation opportunities’ in Steamboat Springs, where the average rating of all responses was 4.5. ‘Environmental quality in the city’ also received an average rank over 4, followed by ‘public access to open space’ (3.7).”
- Parks and recreation are “very important” to 80% of respondents.
- Respondents selected the “amount of open space area set aside” as their most or second most important parks and recreation priority.
- “As a recurring theme throughout the survey, ‘open space acquisitions and preservation’ and ‘development of more trails and bike paths’ were identified as the top two most important public facilities.”

**“THE VALUE OF RANCLANDS TO ROUTT COUNTY RESIDENTS, 1995-2005” (OCTOBER 2005)**

The authors of this study are Nicholas Magnan (Graduate Research Assistant, Colorado State University), Andrew Seidl (Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, Colorado State University), C.J. Mucklow (Director, Routt County Cooperative Extension) and Deborah Alpe (Director, Jackson County Cooperative Extension). The study was conducted to understand how Routt County residents feel about the preservation of ranchlands as open space.

**Key findings include:**

- “More than 90% of resident survey respondents would vote to protect Routt County ranchlands.”
- “Routt residents are willing-to-pay \$220 per year to preserve ranchlands in the county.”
- “The natural environment, ranchlands, and western historical preservation are the three most important contributors to local quality of life in Routt County.”

“TOURIST VALUE OF ROUTT COUNTY’S WORKING LANDSCAPE, 2005” (MAY 2005)

Similar in approach and to the aforementioned study, this study was written by Lindsey Ellingson (Graduate Research Assistant, Colorado State University), Andrew Seidl (Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, Colorado State University), and C.J. Mucklow (Director, Routt County Cooperative Extension), with the purpose “to estimate the support for open lands preservation and the contribution of Routt County’s working landscapes to the local summer tourism industry.”

Key findings include:

- “The natural environment, ranch open space, western historical preservation and recreation amenities are local assets that strongly add to the tourists’ experience.”
- “50% of Routt’s summer tourists would reduce their expenditures and time spent if existing ranch lands were converted to urban uses” which could cost the county and estimated “\$8 million per year in lost direct revenue”.



## C. PLANNING CONTEXT

A number of county and municipal planning documents and studies have been completed that influence the Steamboat Springs Area Open Space and Trails Master Plan. Relevant elements of these documents are summarized in this section.

Several plans provide specific guidance on development, open space, and trails for certain areas. This plan is meant to be used in conjunction with those existing plans. The proposed Steamboat 700 development will follow the guidance of the West Steamboat Springs Area Plan.

PLANNING LEVEL	RELATED PLANS AND LEGISLATION
County	Routt County Master Plan 2003
	Routt County Open Lands Plan 1995
	Routt County Zoning & Subdivision Regulations
	South Steamboat Springs Area Plan 1991
City	Base Area Plan Update 2005
	Mountain Town Sub-Area Plan 2005
	Steamboat Springs Community Development Code
	Steamboat Springs Sidewalk Master Plan 2006
	Steamboat Springs Trail System Master Plan and Design Guidelines
	Yampa River Management Plan 2003
City & County	Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan 2004
	Steamboat Springs Mobility and Circulation Plan 1997
	West Steamboat Springs Area Plan 2006 Update
	Yampa Valley Legacy Plan 1995
Local	Steamboat Ski Area Master Plan 2004

## COUNTY PLANS

### ROUTT COUNTY MASTER PLAN (2003)

The Routt County Master Plan aims to guide growth and development of unincorporated property while maintaining the County's rural character. The plan places an emphasis on the rights of private property owners while recognizing the regulatory role of policy makers in conserving natural resources and cultural heritage.

In various sections, the Master Plan directly addresses the importance of open space in preserving the rural landscape of the County, protecting its natural resources, such as wildlife and water, and its role in sustaining the economy through recreational and tourist opportunities.

### ROUTT COUNTY OPEN LANDS PLAN (1995)

The Open Lands Plan, funded by Routt County, the City of Steamboat Springs, and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), provides a framework for the "protection of agricultural lands, natural areas, and open space resources".

The Open Lands Plan consists of various land protection strategies to meet the diverse needs of landowners. The approach recognizes that to effectively preserve the agricultural heritage and natural resources of the County, landowners must have options for regulatory mechanisms tied to their property. Such land protection strategies include Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Land Protection Subdivision (LPS), Conservation Easements with Reserved Home sites, and the establishment of a Technical Resource Team (TRT) available to all land owners to assist them in choosing the best land protection strategy to accommodate their individual circumstances.

### SOUTH STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA PLAN (1991)

The area south of Steamboat Springs along Highway 40 has experienced some of the highest devel-

opment pressures in the Yampa River Valley. To address this, the Plan contains 17 goals that seek to preserve the character of the study area. This includes the protection and enhancement of open space and agricultural property, the preservation of the area's cultural heritage and traditional way of life, the protection of wildlife resources, water, and air quality, and the assurance that economic and development activities coincide with these goals.



## CITY PLANS

### MOUNTAIN TOWN SUB-AREA PLAN (1999), MOUNTAIN TOWN SUB-AREA PLAN UPDATE (2005)

The purpose of the original Mountain Town Sub-Area Plan was "to provide the City of Steamboat Springs with a plan that can be adopted and used as a flexible decision-making tool to guide the redevelopment and revitalization of the resort commercial areas of the City (Mission and Purpose, p. 9)".

In 1999, a 'main concern' for various locations throughout the City was the safety of and accessibility for pedestrians. "Top priorities' included additional green space, trail connections, sidewalks, and public spaces throughout the community. 'Primary recommendations' included specific locations for new public spaces such as Ski Time Square, sidewalks and bike lanes on Oak Street, and various locations along the Highway 40 Corridor for trails and open space.

In the 2005 update, key issues related to open space and trails include an overall concern about pedestrian circulation and movement, and the need to provide appealing summer activities to sustain the year-round nature of the resort.

#### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS SIDEWALK MASTER PLAN (2006)

The Sidewalk Master Plan was developed as a result of the Steamboat Springs Mobility and Circulation Plan's (1997) goal to provide better mobility for pedestrians. The Sidewalk Master Plan's goal is to "provide an interconnected and continuous network of sidewalks and trails throughout Steamboat Springs that allows residents and visitors to move about town safely and efficiently as possible (p.2)". The Plan provides a comprehensive inventory of existing trails and sidewalks, identifies gaps in the network, sets forth specific policies and standards to complete the community-wide trail network, and estimates the cost of maintaining such a system.

#### YAMPA RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN (2003)

"The Yampa River Management Plan is intended to help ensure protection of the biological integrity of the river and manage recreational uses at sustainable levels...the project study area includes a 0.25-mile wide corridor along the 6.5-mile stretch of the Yampa River within the Steamboat Springs vicinity (Plan Purpose, Section 1-1)."

An objective of the Plan that is relevant to Open Space and Trails is the intent to balance the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment with the ability to provide appealing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

#### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CODE

This code is current at the time of the Plan adoption; however proposed development is subject to any and all development code revisions, which occur on an ongoing basis.

#### Sec. 26-93. OR open space and recreation zone district.

Policy designates the Open Space and Recreation Zone District, which "is intended primarily to provide areas for public or private recreational uses, open space preservation, or other similar uses. This zone district may include protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, rivers and streams, development buffers, public recreation facilities such as parks, athletic fields, and ski areas, and community gathering spaces." (Ord. No. 1802, § 4.3, 7-23-01)

#### Sec. 26-184. Design standards for residential subdivisions.

D) "Each single-family, duplex, and multi-family residential subdivision (or part of a subdivision) shall designate land for the purpose of providing active parks, open space, passive recreation facilities, and/or recreation trails for the benefit of their residents.

- 1) Amount of land. A minimum of fifteen (15) percent of the gross land area shall be designated.
- 2) Alternate parcel. In lieu of designating land within the subdivision, the subdivider may dedicate an alternate parcel of land to the city, consisting of the same number of acres in another area if, in the sole and exclusive opinion of the city council, it is capable of use for recreational purposes and will serve the proposed subdivision.
- 3) Open space land dedication. In limited circumstances, the city council may consider the dedication of open space land. The area of land proposed for dedication shall be in addition to the open space land designation required in this section and city council shall have the sole authority to determine whether the city will accept the land dedication. If a land dedication is accepted by the city council, the city council shall have full discretion to require the subdivider to provide maintenance of the open space. The city council may consider the following

in determining whether the land dedication will be accepted:

- a) The size of the subdivision and its adequacy for accommodating a suitable active park site or recreation trails.
  - b) The topography, geology, and location of land in the subdivision available for development as active parks and trails;
  - c) The availability of existing parks and other public uses in the area, and the ability of those facilities to accommodate additional users;
  - d) The public facility components of the area community plan, the mobility and circulation plan and any other city plans adopted by ordinance or resolution; and
  - e) Other factors as deemed relevant by city council to the ability of the property to be integrated into the subdivision and the city as a public park, including cost of future maintenance.
- 4) Open space maintenance. The long-term maintenance of all designated open space shall be the responsibility of a Homeowners Association or property owner.
  - 5) Time of designation. Required land designation for open space and trails shall be made no later than the date of approval of the first final plat of land adjacent to, or across the street from the designated park or trails land.”

(Ord. No. 1802, § 7.4, 7-23-01)

#### Sec. 26-185. Design standards for commercial and industrial subdivisions.

“(D) Open space and trails. Each nonresidential subdivision (or part of a subdivision) shall set aside and designate land for the purpose of constructing open space, passive recreation, and recreation trails for the benefit of their occupants. Such designations shall be governed by the provisions and procedures of section 26-184(e), except that:

- 1) Commercial development. A minimum of fifteen (15) percent of the gross land area of the site shall be designated.

- 2) Industrial development. A minimum of ten (10) percent of the gross land area of the site shall be designated.”

(Ord. No. 1802, § 7.5, 7-23-01)

#### Sec. 26-134. Open space, vegetation and site grading.

(C) Open space and trails. All development subject to this section shall comply with those requirements for designation of on-site open space and trail lands described in subsections 26-184 (d) and 26-185(d) of this CDC, unless the subject property is part of an approved subdivision in which adequate open space has already been designated or dedicated for the benefit of the subject property, or unless the development is located in the CO, CN, or CY zone district.

(Ord. No. 1802, § 5.13, 7-23-01)

#### Sec. 26-143. Special setback standards.

(A) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to apply special setback standards for situations in which there are unique health and safety issues or sensitive environmental lands that warrant additional protection.

(B) Applicability. The standards in this section shall apply to all land use in the city.

(C) Setback requirements.

- 1) Waterbody setbacks.

- a) Waterbody setbacks should be provided for all waterbodies within the city. Closed loop systems, such as man-made ponds and water features, are exempt.
  - i) The setback shall be measured horizontally from the typical and ordinary high water mark (in average stream flow years).

- a) The following setbacks shall be required:
  - i) Named rivers and creeks.

- a) 50-foot building setback shall be required from the ordinary high water mark of the Yampa River, Walton Creek, Spring Creek, Burgess Creek (except for those areas within the Base Area as de-

scribed below in section B.), Fish Creek, Butcherknife Creek, and Soda Creek. A 30-foot building setback shall be required for those properties adjacent to the Yampa River and Butcherknife Creek on Yampa Street in the CY zone district. A greater setback may be required by the city council for particularly sensitive situations such as steep slopes of erodible soils.

- b) Waterbody setback in the Base Area. A minimum waterbody setback of twelve (12) feet per side is required along Burgess Creek in order to accommodate an eight-foot wide sidewalk, landscaping and access around buildings. While this is a minimum setback, the intent is to have areas in excess of twelve (12) feet in order to provide greater area for landscaping, open space and other natural areas. See drawing below that clarifies the intent to avoid a straight-walled, canyon effect of buildings along banks of the creek.
- ii) Tributary streams, intermittent streams and natural drainages.
  - a) A 30-foot building setback shall be required from the center of all tributary streams, intermittent streams, and natural drainages.
- 2) Encroachments into setback areas. The following improvements and features are permitted in setbacks:
  - a) Building features. Eaves and gutters provided that such projections do not project more than three (3) feet, measured horizontally into a required setback area. Decks of thirty (30) inches or less in height may encroach into any setback

area without obtaining a variance. In no case shall a deck encroach onto an adjacent property.

- b) Site improvements. Public improvements such as utilities, sidewalks, trails and public streets shall be allowed to encroach into setbacks. Private improvements such as utilities, driveways, landscaping, and parking lots, shall be allowed to encroach into setbacks provided they meet all other CDC standards.  
(Ord. No. 2029, § 9, 11-15-05)

#### Sec. 26-401 Definitions- Usable lot area.

The lot area, excluding required setback areas and any of the following:

- 1) Any area covered by a natural body of water and/or delineated wetlands;
- 2) Land where the natural slope exceeds thirty (30) percent;
- 3) Land with unstable slopes;
- 4) Land within twenty (20) feet of the normal high water mark, or floodway or a natural body of water or watercourse, or other natural obstruction or road.

## CITY & COUNTY PLANS

### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA COMMUNITY PLAN (2004)

The Steamboat Springs area has experienced significant growth and changing economic patterns over the last decade. In response to this, the Community Plan's overall goal is to "direct the type, location, and quality of growth, while addressing its impacts and reinforcing its desirable characteristics (Section 1-3)."

Open space and trails are addressed throughout the Community Plan as central mechanisms to protect the Steamboat area's resources, character, and appeal. Chapter 7 (Natural, Scenic, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas) and Chapter 8 (Open Space, Recreation and Trails) provide specific goals and policies to accomplish this. Chapter 8 points out

that in areas that are nearly built out such as Old Town, Mountain, and Fish Creek, the emphasis is to maintain existing park facilities, while in less developed areas such as West of Steamboat Springs, land acquisition for new parklands must coincide with new and proposed development. It is repeated, as in other plans, that pedestrian and bike connections between trails and public spaces are essential. Other key themes include securing funding solutions and balancing recreation with resource protection.

#### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION PLAN (1997)

“The Steamboat Springs Mobility and Circulation Plan advocates a multimodal approach to improving mobility in Steamboat Springs, and states that:…the cornerstone…is pedestrian facility improvements. Virtually all trips begin and end as pedestrian trips, and it is the intent of this Plan to encourage and allow more trips to be completed as pedestrian trips in their entirety. Part of the decision to make a trip as a pedestrian (and to leave one automobile parked) is governed by the proximity of the destination and the availability of safe and convenient facilities...(www.steamboatsprings.net).”

#### WEST STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA PLAN 2006 UPDATE

This West Steamboat Springs Area Plan was a combined effort between the City, Routt County, and landowners to guide growth in the less developed area west of Steamboat Springs. This area, with the exception of the Steamboat II subdivision built in the 1960's, has remained predominantly in large-lot or agricultural lands, while the area south of Steamboat Springs has experienced a high rate of growth. The 3 primary goals of the Plan are to establish a development pattern similar to what has worked in Old Town, provide an adequate amount of affordable housing, and to ensure that the fiscal impacts to the community are equal to or outweighed by the overall benefit of the development.

Relevant to the Open Space and Trails Plan, the West Steamboat Springs Area Plan proposed the

extension of the Core Trail to reach west to the Hard Rock Open Space property and north through Steamboat II and along Slate Creek (Master Plan map).

#### YAMPA RIVER SYSTEM LEGACY PROJECT (1995)

In 1996, a diverse group of governmental agencies, private organizations and private individuals come together to propose the Yampa River System Legacy Project, aimed at conserving rangeland along the river and coordinating recreation use of the river. This project was largely driven by the new funding opportunity created through Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), a state program dedicated to providing grants for open space programs. As a result of this project, numerous properties along the river have been protected through conservation easements.

### LOCAL PLANS

#### STEAMBOAT SKI AREA MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT (2004)

“The Ski Area Master Plan Amendment was prepared for the U.S. Forest Service as part of the ski area's Special Use Permit. It was accepted by the Forest Service in September 2004. A NEPA review is currently underway for the first three phases of the plan amendment (www.steamboat.com).”

The Master Plan Amendment (MPA) is meant to outline actions to upgrade the existing resort through improvement and additional facilities; however, it does not increase the current size of the Special Use Permit Boundary within the Routt National Forest.

Related to the Open Space and Trails Master Plan, the MPA proposes the promotion of activities beyond skiing/snowboarding that will sustain the resort year-round. These include biking and hiking, which will be especially successful if trails within the resort are connected to those throughout the City.

## D. EXISTING RESOURCES

### ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

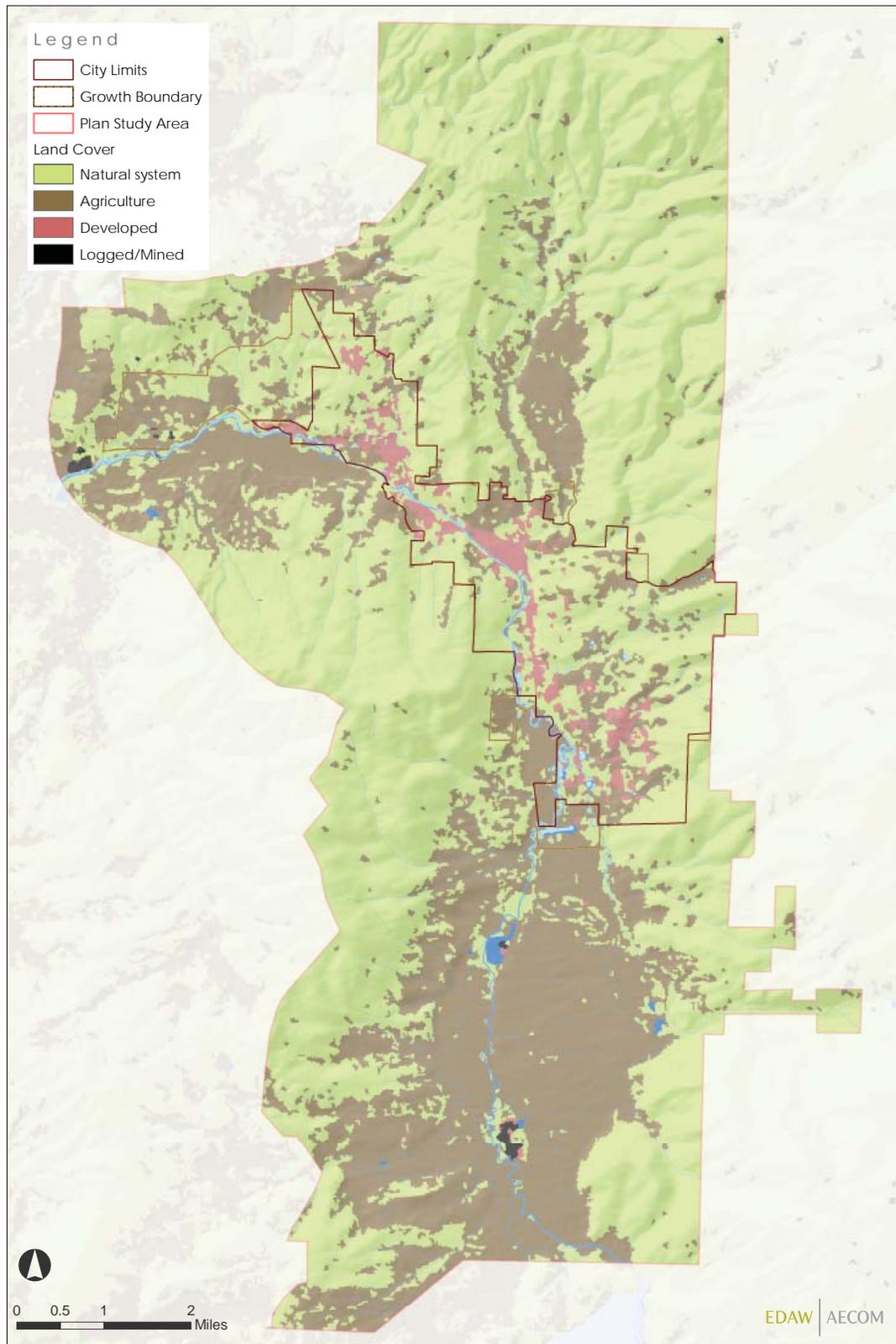
The study area for this Plan is approximately 50,000 acres (see Map 1). Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Project (SW ReGAP) landcover data indicates that over 31% of this is in agricultural lands, fol-

lowed by 22% in aspen forests and woodlands. Table 1 and Map 1 illustrate the diversity found in the area's ecological systems, as well as the fraction of land in the study area that is already developed (2%).

TABLE 1

<b>Area (acres)</b>	<b>% of Study Area</b>	<b>Ecological System Description</b>
15491	31.32%	Agriculture
11347	22.94%	Rocky Mountain Aspen Forest and Woodland
7734	15.64%	Rocky Mountain Gambel Oak-Mixed Montane Shrubland
6082	12.30%	Inter-Mountain Basins Montane Sagebrush Steppe
1397	2.82%	Rocky Mountain Montane Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland
1231	2.49%	Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland
994	2.01%	Developed, Medium - High Intensity
912	1.84%	Rocky Mountain Montane Dry-Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland
731	1.48%	Inter-Mountain West Aspen-Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland Complex
629	1.27%	Colorado Plateau Pinyon-Juniper Woodland
615	1.24%	Rocky Mountain Lower Montane-Foothill Shrubland
505	1.02%	Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland
268	0.54%	Rocky Mountain Subalpine-Montane Riparian Woodland
268	0.54%	Developed, Open Space - Low Intensity
190	0.38%	Rocky Mountain Subalpine-Montane Riparian Shrubland
182	0.37%	Rocky Mountain Cliff and Canyon
176	0.36%	Rocky Mountain Lodgepole Pine Forest
152	0.31%	Rocky Mountain Subalpine Dry-Mesic Spruce-Fir Forest and Woodland
147	0.30%	Rocky Mountain Subalpine Mesic Spruce-Fir Forest and Woodland
104	0.21%	Invasive Annual Grassland
99	0.20%	Open Water
84	0.17%	Recently Mined or Quarried
68	0.14%	Southern Rocky Mountain Montane-Subalpine Grassland
16	0.03%	Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub Steppe
15	0.03%	Rocky Mountain Subalpine Mesic Meadow
9	0.02%	Rocky Mountain Alpine-Montane Wet Meadow
4	0.01%	Inter-Mountain Basins Juniper Savanna
2	0.00%	Invasive Annual and Biennial Forbland
2	0.00%	Recently Logged Areas
2	0.00%	Invasive Perennial Grassland
2	0.00%	Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland

MAP 1



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
LAND COVER DISTRIBUTION

This data was prepared from publicly available information and should be used for reference purposes only. The City of Steamboat Springs makes no warranty, either express, implied, or statutory, with respect to the accuracy or completeness of this data, its merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose.

## WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Wildlife resources and habitat include the combination of landform, vegetation and water resources within the valley and the surrounding areas. Many of the lands within the valley provide migration corridors for large mammals, while other areas include reproductive habitat and areas of winter range critical for the survival of individual species. While there is an abundance of publicly-owned land within the county, property divisions do not necessarily conform to natural system boundaries and therefore, it becomes critical to develop a system for protection of both public and private lands.



The Important Wildlife Habitat Map (Map 2) illustrates some of the more important habitat types and features that occur in the Steamboat Springs vicinity, each of which is briefly discussed below:

- Elk Production Areas. These are areas where elk calve, which generally occurs from May 15 to June 15. Calving areas are widely distributed, most notably along much of Emerald Mountain, Blacktail Mountain, and scattered upland areas along the eastern edge of the Yampa Valley.
- Elk Winter Concentration Areas and Severe Winter Range. As the name implies, these are areas where elk concentrate during the winter. Severe winter range includes those areas where 90% of the herd concentrates in extreme conditions, such as during the winter of 1983-84.

- Mule Deer Winter Concentration Areas and Severe Winter Range. Deer use this habitat in the same way as was described for elk. Relatively little of this habitat type occurs in the Steamboat Springs vicinity; those that do occur are generally located along lower elevation, south and west-facing slopes above the Yampa River.
- Yampa River Corridor. Riparian habitat is one of the most valuable habitat types in Colorado, providing habitat for a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial species. In addition to its overall habitat values, the Yampa River corridor supports two active bald eagle nesting sites within the study area and provides winter habitat and concentration areas for this species. The river corridor also contains a series of great blue heron nesting areas.

The Important Wildlife Habitat Map (Map 2) also shows a series of conservation sites designated by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). Though not within this plan's study area, two primary CNHP sites are located nearby, the largest of which is Pleasant Valley south of the study area. This site is rated by CNHP as having a high biodiversity significance and is described as being a part of the extensive Yampa River riparian corridor, which is "one of the last remaining intact riparian systems in the west." In addition to montane riparian forest, cottonwood riparian forest, and riparian shrub communities, the Pleasant Valley site has a documented occurrence of boreal toad (a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973). Historically, the area has also been used as a great blue heron nesting site.





Soda Creek at Strawberry Park is the other primary CNHP site in the Steamboat Springs vicinity. This site is also ranked as having high biodiversity significance and includes montane riparian forests and willow carrs. Several other CNHP sites are located at the just outside of the planning area, including a tributary to Walton Creek that contains Colorado River Cutthroat Trout, which is listed as a Colorado Species of Special Concern.

Table 2 contains sensitive wildlife and plant species that are known to occur in Routt County (Colorado Natural Heritage Program 2007).

TABLE 2. SENSITIVE SPECIES INVENTORY

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	FEDERAL LISTING	CO LISTING	BLM/USFS SENSITIVITY
<b>Amphibians</b>				
<i>Bufo boreas pop. 1</i>	Boreal Toad	-	SE	USFS
<b>Birds</b>				
<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>	Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse	-	SC	USFS
<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	Boreal Owl	-	-	USFS
<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	American Peregrine Falcon	-	SC	USFS
<i>Amphispiza belli</i>	Sage Sparrow	-	-	USFS
<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	Lewis's Woodpecker	-	-	USFS
<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>	Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse	-	SC	BLM
<i>Grus canadensis tabida</i>	Greater Sandhill Crane	-	SC	-
<b>Fish</b>				
<i>Gila robusta</i>	Roundtail Chub	-	SC	USFS
<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii pleuriticus</i>	Colorado River Cutthroat Trout	-	SC	USFS
<i>Gila robusta</i>	Roundtail Chub	-	SC	BLM
<b>Mammals</b>				
<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	Lynx	FT	SE	-
<b>Vascular Plants</b>				
<i>Salix serissima</i>	autumn willow	-	-	USFS
<i>Botrychium multifidum</i>	leathery grape fern	-	-	USFS
<i>Carex diandra</i>	lesser panicled sedge	-	-	USFS
<i>Ipomopsis aggregata ssp. weberi</i>	rabbit ears gilia	-	-	USFS
<i>Penstemon harringtonii</i>	Harrington beardtongue	-	-	USFS
<i>Salix serissima</i>	autumn willow	-	-	BLM
<i>Penstemon harringtonii</i>	Harrington beardtongue	-	-	BLM

FE = Federally Endangered  
 FT = Federally Threatened  
 SE = State Endangered  
 ST = State Threatened  
 SC = State Special Concern

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL SENSITIVITY

The study area has an abundance of attractive landscapes, including those with significant views into, and across, the large open hay meadows along the valley floor. The Yampa River meanders through the valley floor, adding to the quality of the visual environment. Other panoramic views within or nearby the study area include Emerald Mountain, the “Sleeping Giant” formation, Strawberry Park, and Pleasant Valley. The Visual Sensitivity Map (Map 3) depicts key landscape elements, including landscape units and visual sensitivity.

As shown on the Visual Sensitivity Map (Map 3), eight landscape units were defined, all of which contribute to the overall setting of the Steamboat Springs community. The more natural landscape units are discussed below.

- Valley Bottom. This unit includes the most visible portions of the South Valley and, to a lesser extent, the Yampa River corridor in the West of Steamboat vicinity. This is an important cultural landscape that contains many of the remaining buildings and agricultural uses that evoke the area’s ranching heritage. It is arguably the landscape that most defines the Steamboat community and distinguishes it from other mountain resort communities. Due to its open and historic character, this landscape is very sensitive to change.
- Valley Transition. This unit consists of the open, slide slopes that mark the transition between the flat valley bottom and the more forested uplands. Portions of the unit are used for hay production, but the sloping landforms are more difficult to cultivate and thus grade into pasture and mountain shrub. While these areas are usually not in the foreground zone of the main highways, this unit is visually sensitive due to its open character.
- Upland Shrub. This unit has some similar characteristics to the valley transition unit but is generally too steep for cultivation. In the area south of downtown, this unit is a relatively narrow band; it widens on the north side of Emerald Mountain. Lower portions of this unit are highly visible from Highway 40, particularly through the downtown area. In general, however, this unit has a lower visual sensitivity than the valley units due to its greater distance from major roads and more dense and complex patterns of vegetation.
- Montane. Most of this unit is densely forested. As a result, it is somewhat less sensitive to change and has the ability to absorb development that is carefully done. However, insensitive development that removes a substantial number of trees and creates unnatural-appearing openings in the forest cover would be highly visible.
- Strawberry Park. This unit encompasses Strawberry Park, an open, scenic area that is enclosed by mountains. It consists of a mix of rural residential development; horse pastures and smaller scale agricultural uses.
- Riparian. In most places, this landscape unit is a narrow corridor extending along the Yampa and Walton Creek drainages. Although small in area, this landscape is a key element of the overall community setting. The natural values within the corridor are an important resource, and views to the river corridor should be maintained as much as possible from the highways and other key viewpoints.

In addition to landscape units, the Visual Sensitivity Map identifies areas with high visual sensitivity, including the highway foreground zone, key viewpoints and prominent ridgelines. Through much of the planning area, including the South Valley, the landscape remains mostly open with relatively little



development adjacent to Highways 40 or 131. At these locations, the foreground zone extends to a distance of approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile on both sides of the highway, which is the area depicted in the map. Approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north of the intersection of Highways 40 and 131, the setting becomes more urbanized, resulting in a reduced foreground zone and generally less sensitive landscape character. This condition extends through the urban area to a point approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile west of 129 Road. Past this point, the landscape opens up again and the highway foreground zone extends for a distance  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile either side of the highway.

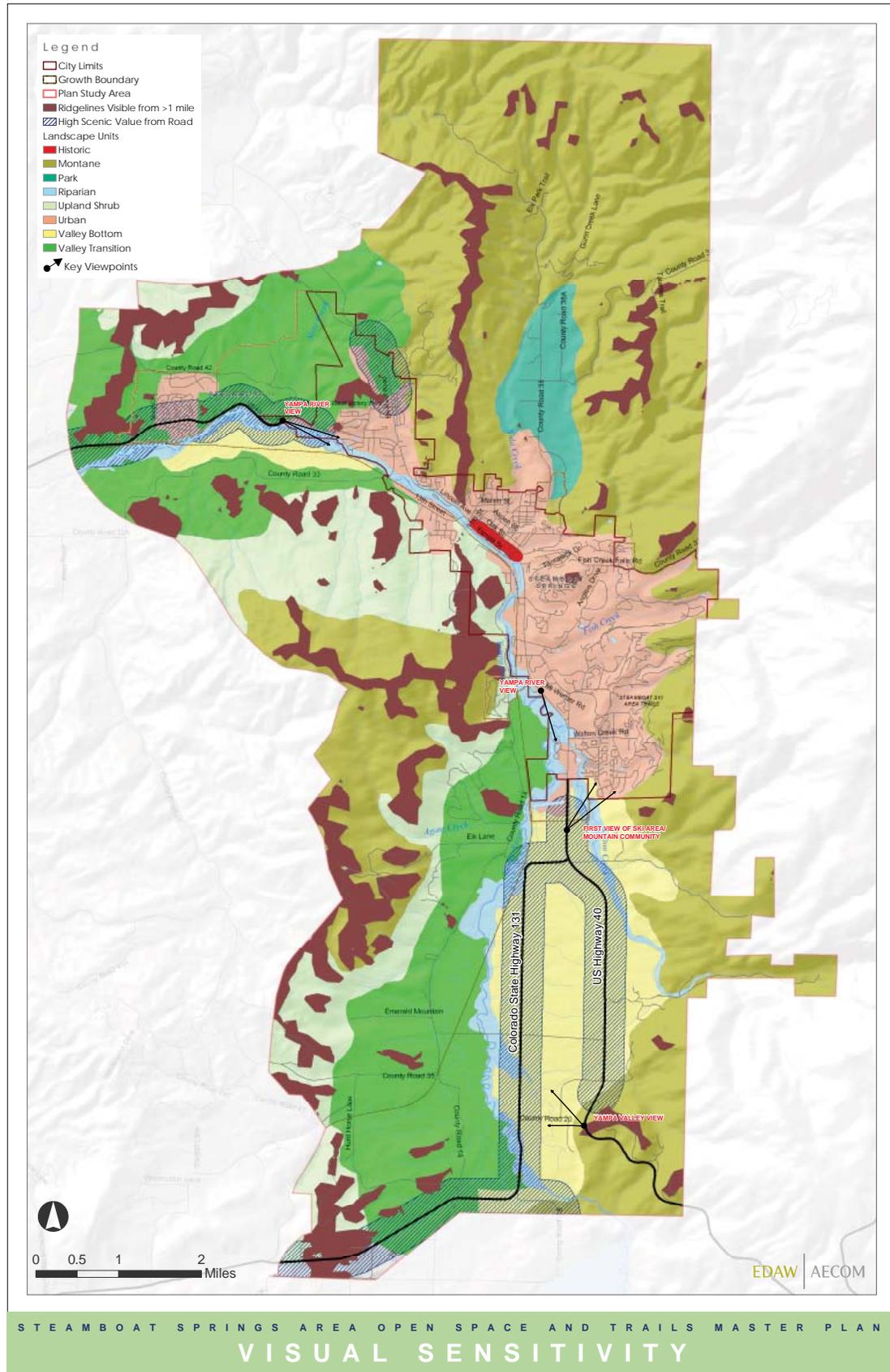
The highway foreground zones depicted on Map 3 are the most visually sensitive areas in the Steamboat Springs vicinity. They combine high visibility, which results from an open character and heavy traffic, with foreground views to ranch lands, the river corridor, and historic features that greatly contribute to the quality of the community setting. Also noted in this zone are a series of key viewpoints. The first of these key viewpoints is near the big turn on Highway 40 as the road descends into the Yampa Valley. The view from this point is highly scenic and also provides a first impression



and sense of arrival into the Steamboat Springs area. Another key viewpoint noted on Map 3 occurs approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile north of the Highway 40/131 intersection, where a driver traveling west comes upon the first view of the ski area and mountain community. Two other key viewpoints are foreground views to the Yampa River, which occur along Highway 40 near the western edge of the city limits and again near the intersection with Mount Werner Road.

Prominent ridgelines are also depicted on Map 3. These areas are visible throughout much of the planning area in views from major roads and other key viewpoints. The visual sensitivity of these areas derives from the fact that individual structures sited on top of a ridgeline may become “skylined” or visually prominent. The most significant visual impacts result from the skyline being penetrated by man-made structures, without a mitigating backdrop to reduce their visibility. Many of the sensitive ridgelines in the Steamboat vicinity outside of the study area occur along Emerald Mountain, but others are located west of Steamboat II and north of Colorado Mountain College.

MAP 3



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## E. EXISTING CONSERVATION AREAS

Although thousands of acres of National Forest and other public lands are located in proximity to the Steamboat Springs community, the majority (51%) of land in Routt County is privately owned. As development pressures increased in the 1990's, public and private groups began to look for ways to preserve some of the ranch lands and other privately held areas. As a result of these efforts, a substantial amount of land has been protected.

### EXISTING CITY PROPERTY

The City of Steamboat Springs currently has approximately 1946 acres of open space and 566 acres of parks. 485 additional acres is found in areas such as the airport or Transit Operations Center (Tables 3, 4, and 5). Existing open space resources vary in size from approximately 13.5 acres (Fournier Property) to over 800 acres (Spring Creek Mountain Preserve) and are used for limited recreation, wildlife habitat protection, neighborhood/wildland buffers, and agriculture. Current properties range from protected in perpetuity as conservation easements to no current legal protection.

TABLE 3. PARKS

NAME/DESCRIPTION	AREA (ACRES)
<i>Parks</i>	<i>566 total acres</i>
Bear River (future park)	18.80
Brooklyn Park	0.90
Dr. Rich Weiss Park	0.29
Eagle Scout Park	0.25
Emerald Park	47.00
Fetcher Park	14.00
Haymaker Golf Course	239.00
Howelson Park	149.25
Iron Springs	2.42
Little Toots Park	1.00
Memorial Park	7.62
Pine Grove & South Lincoln	0.53
Rita Valentine Park	38.08
Rotary Park	0.25
Ski Town Lions Park	0.25
Ski Town Park/Tennis Center	15.00
Steamboat Springs Park	2.42
Stehley Park	0.70
Stockbridge	3.00
West Lincoln Park	5.44
Whistler Park	14.80
Yampa River Botanic Park	5.00

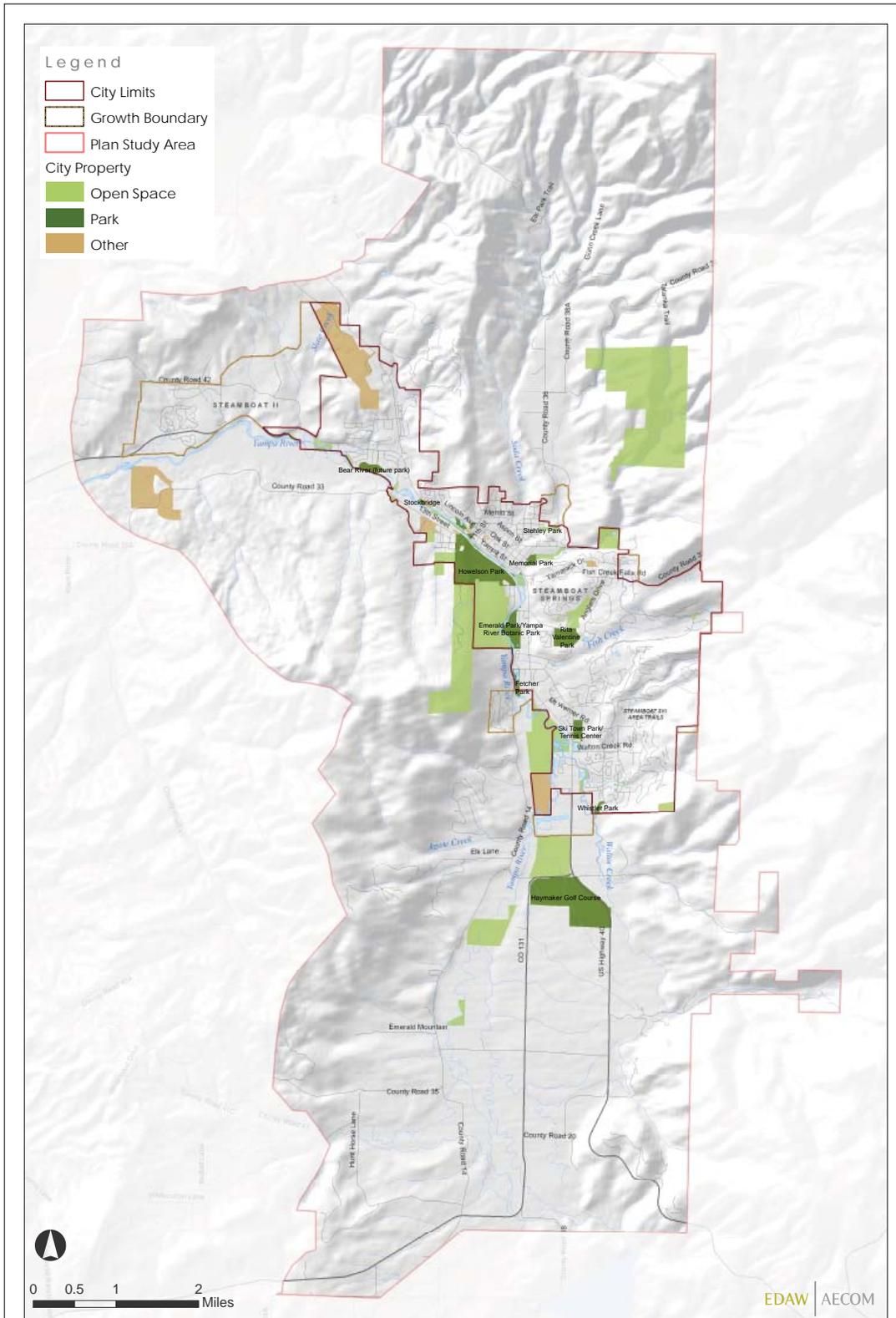
TABLE 4. OPEN SPACE

NAME/DESCRIPTION	AREA (ACRES)
<i>Open Space</i>	<i>1946 total acres</i>
Baldinger	15.06
Baldwin Property	3.63
Baxter	35.08
Baxter- CDOW CE	8.80
Baxter Ditch	25.00
Baxter- YVLT CE	133.00
Bear Creek Pond	2.39
Butcherknife	7.25
Casey's Pond	6.49
Combs Property- YVLT CE	23.84
Contiguous to Rotary Park	14.70
Fournier- YVLT CE	12.90
Fox Hunt	4.66
Gossard	120.00
James Brown	3.60
LaFarge/Chuck Lewis SWA	98.70
Legacy Ranch- YVLT CE	136.49
Lithia Spring	9.00
Lockhart	5.80
M & H Property	35.00
Mesa School House	0.49
Murri	159.49
OCCRA	21.00
Rivercreek Park	16.54
Riverside Picnic Park	1.64
Riverside Subdivision	3.69
Rotary Park- CDOW CE	29.32
Sleepy Bear subdivision	2.00
Smilkstein	10.00
Snake Island	10.15
SPREE	7.90
Spring Creek Mountain Preserve	824.18
Spring Creek Park	41.00
Walton Creek	9.00
Willet Heights	14.51
Williams Preserve- YVLT CE	93.54

TABLE 5. OTHER

NAME/DESCRIPTION	AREA (ACRES)
<i>Other</i>	<i>482 total acres</i>
Steamboat Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant	157.10
Airport	223.10
Fire Station #2	0.62
Transit Operations Center	18.00
Miller-Frazier Add	1.02
Norvell Add	0.18
Original Town of Steamboat Springs	3.20
Unknown	79.18

MAP 4



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
**EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

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## OTHER CONSERVATION LANDS

### PUBLIC LANDS

As discussed earlier, public lands play a large role in the conservation of important environmental resources. Table 6 briefly describes the state and Federal lands found near the Steamboat Springs area.

TABLE 6

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION
<i>State Lands</i>	
Colorado Division of Wildlife	Emerald Mountain State Wildlife Area (SWA) is approximately 650 acres adjacent to the east edge of the SLB's Emerald Mountain. Chuck Lewis SWA is approximately 200 acres ½ mile west of the US 40/CO 131 intersection. Service Creek SWA is a 337-acre property 9 miles south of the US 40/CO 131 intersection.
State Parks	Nearby state parks include Stagecoach Reservoir, Elkhead Reservoir, Pearl Lake, and Steamboat Lake.
<i>Federal Lands</i>	
Bureau of Land Management	In 2007, the BLM acquired 4,139 acres on Emerald Mountain through an exchange with the SLB. The BLM owns and manages several other properties in the vicinity of Steamboat Springs, however only two fall within the project study area. Both properties have public access, are adjacent to Routt National Forest north of the City, and total roughly 286 acres.
US Forest Service	Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest covers an extensive portion of Routt County and contains Mount Zirkel, Sarvis Creek, and Flat Tops Wilderness Areas.

## PRIVATE LANDS

Numerous private conservation easements and Land Preservation Subdivisions contribute to the Steamboat Springs area's collection of open space. While open space preservation and wildlife habitat protection occur, much of this land is not open to public access.

Routt County adopted the Land Preservation Subdivision (LPS) process in 1995. This process provides for an alternative to the traditional subdivision process and the pattern of largely unregulated 35-acre parcels allowed under Senate Bill 35. The LPS process offers incentives, including additional building lots, to landowners using conservation easements to protect agricultural lands, open space and wildlife habitat. Clustering and sensitive siting of development are required in the LPS process. Lands outside of the designated building sites are open space areas, and future building is limited through a development agreement. Catamount Ranch is an example of an LPS that has permanent protection of natural areas through a conservation easement.

While most LPS's contribute to the area's current system of open space, many of them do not have permanent conservation easements on their remainder parcels at this time. Such properties include Alpine Mountain Ranch, Agate Creek Preserve, Priest Creek Ranch, Tailwaters River Ranch, and Wildflowers Meadows. This policy is currently under review.

The Steamboat Springs area also has a number of conservation-oriented developments that were not necessarily part of the LPS process that have permanent easements in place. These include Lake Catamount & Cabins at Lake Catamount, JMB Ranch, Sidney Peak Ranch, and Storm Mountain Ranch. Additional conservation properties in the area that do not include development include Orton's at Emerald Mountain, Humble Ranch, Stanko Ranch, and Summer Ranch.

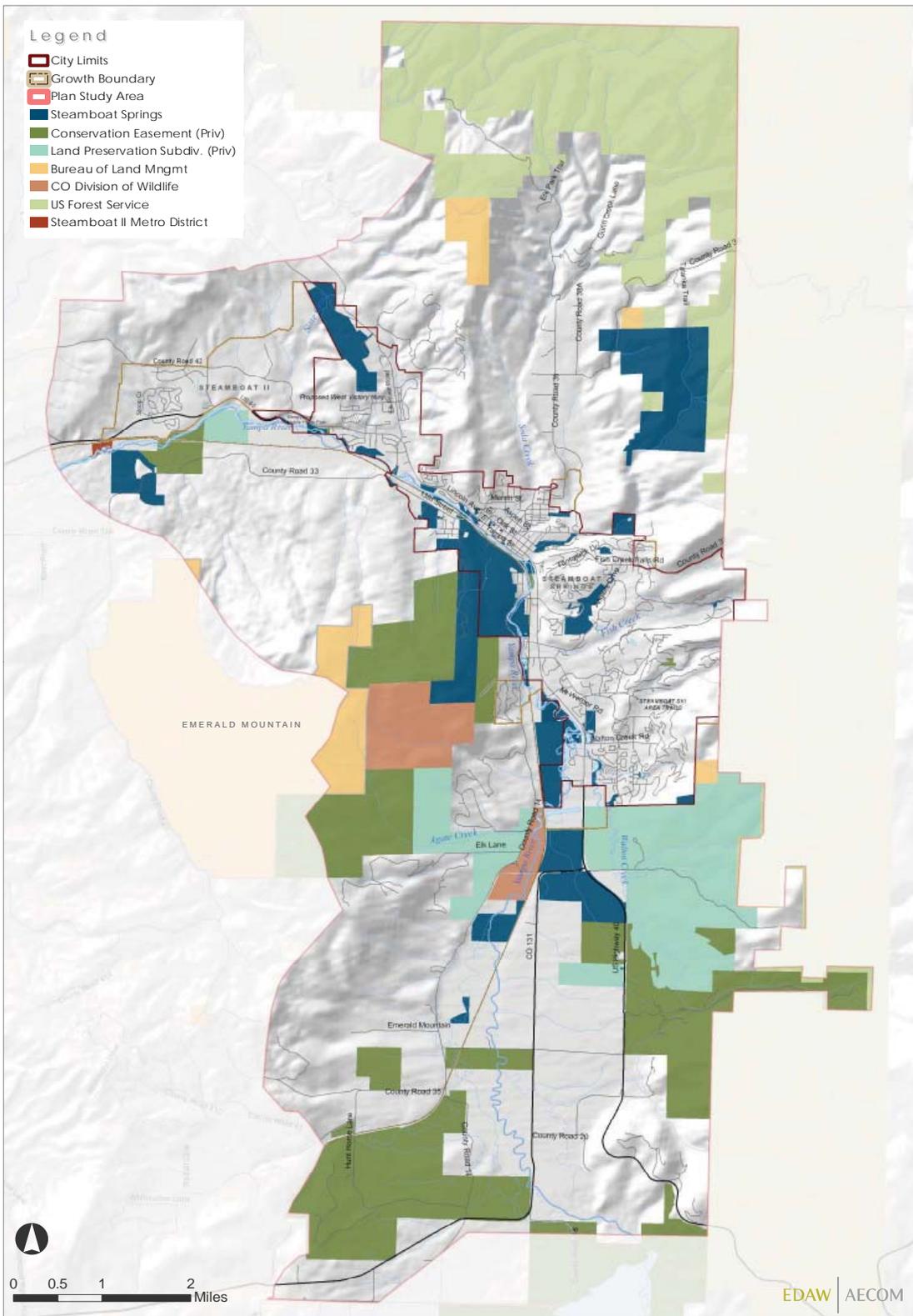


Routt County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program has also played a significant role in land protection in the area. In 1996, voters in Routt County passed a one-mil increase on property taxes dedicated to a purchase of development rights program. As assessed values increase, proceeds of this levy have also increased, rising from \$350,000 in 1997 to more than \$500,000 in 2001. In 2005, voters reauthorized this program and increased the mil levy to 1.5 mill. The county uses these funds to purchase conservation easements. In many instances, the landowners have partnered with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the Yampa Valley Land Trust, the City of Steamboat Springs, and other entities to leverage available funds. The Yampa Legacy Project is a notable example of this type of partnership.

Because many landowners wish to remain anonymous, and due to the ongoing nature of private land conservation, there are many more properties that were not mentioned here. None-the-less, private lands play a large role helping keep the Steamboat Springs area's environment and setting intact, and are included in future open space strategies discussed later in this document.

Map 5 illustrates the distribution of ownership of conservation lands in Routt County.

MAP 5



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
LAND OWNERSHIP

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## F. EXISTING TRAILS

A network of informal trails has evolved over time, some of which provide access to public lands. As the community continues to develop, it is likely that conflicts and landowner concerns will become increasingly apparent on these informal trails. The community needs to determine which segments of the informal system, if any, are important elements of the overall trail system and acquire the necessary easements or land rights to maintain these trails.

To date, the City has approximately 43 miles of trail, consisting mostly of unpaved and natural surface trails. The Yampa River Core Trail is the gem of Steamboat Springs' trail system, currently extending over 6 miles north to south. Secondary trails include portions of the Spring Creek Trail (~5 miles), the Walton Creek Trail (~1 mile), and various neighborhood trails. The Howelsen Hill Trail System comprises the majority of the backcountry trail network, with over 11 miles of unimproved, natural surface trails.

The trail system presented in this plan is only a portion of the area's greater trail network that extends into Steamboat Springs Ski Area, USFS and BLM properties. Please refer to those agencies for more information on surrounding or nearby trails.

The Steamboat Springs Sidewalk Master Plan (2006) addresses sidewalk design and locations within the planning area, and should be referenced in conjunction with this plan.

Map 6 illustrates the trails and sidewalks that currently exist within the community planning area. They are presented in a series of maps rather than in one community-wide map in order to provide clarity and sufficient detail. The trail types shown in the maps include the following designations:

Yampa River Core Trail .....	6.2
Secondary Trails .....	19.73
Backcountry Trails .....	16.88
Total.....	42.82 miles

### PRIMARY/CORE

This is the system located along the Yampa River. It is the City's most heavily-used trail and it currently extends from near Walton Creek Road on the south through downtown. The core trail consists of a 10-foot wide paved surface with a variety of amenities such as signage, overlooks, and benches. This trail can accommodate a wide variety of users, including bicycles, pedestrians and in line skaters.

### SECONDARY

There are nearly 20 miles of secondary trails dispersed throughout the Steamboat Springs community. Current secondary trails consist of both hard and soft surface trails 8 feet in width. Many of these trails are found within neighborhoods and provide linkages between parks, backcountry trails, and the core trail.

### BACKCOUNTRY

Over the years, an extensive network of backcountry trails has developed. These are natural or soft surface trails with a typical corridor width of 3-4 feet. Primary users are hikers and mountain bikers in summer and snowshoers and cross-country skiers in winter. The majority of these trails are located in the Howelsen Hill vicinity and Spring Creek Mountain Preserve.





# CHAPTER 3. PLAN VISION

## A. VISION STATEMENT

The community will develop a well financed and well maintained open lands program to protect the physical beauty, the open spaces, the special places, and the healthy ecosystem of the valley in perpetuity. Our open land program will not only seek to protect our open space resources, but also to educate our citizens on the open space treasures in their community.

Our community will take a comprehensive and regional approach to development of a trail system, linking existing trails, giving neighborhoods access to trails, and connecting urban and rural trails to public lands.

## B. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### OPEN SPACE

**GOAL:** Our community will preserve and/or manage open space to protect the agricultural, rural, and recreation-based nature of the community and to preserve wildlife habitats and view corridors.

#### Strategies:

- The City should focus preservation efforts on the most valued open space. Open space is valued when:
  - Recreation opportunities are provided;
  - Sensitive natural resources are protected;
  - Scenic resources and viewsheds are preserved; and/or
  - Agricultural areas are maintained.
- Continue to refine criteria for open space protection to better reflect the community's values and reflect the current inventory of open space properties.
- Adopt additional visually sensitive area standards.

**GOAL:** Create an open space system comprising of different types of permanent open space such as Community preserve, natural areas, special resource areas, agricultural lands.

#### Strategies:

- Continue to designate existing public lands as open space.
- Classify existing and proposed open space based on the open space classification scheme.
- Clearly differentiate parks from open space.
- Identify and categorize all city-acquired open space and post signage to denote their ownership status.

**GOAL:** Our community will continue to integrate our open space areas directly into urban areas of our community.

#### Strategies:

- In addition to land obtained through dedication requirements, acquire in-town open space parcels, especially in new growth areas.
- Link local multi-use trails to adjacent open space.

**GOAL:** Where appropriate and acceptable to land-owners, provide access to open space resources.

#### Strategy:

- Encourage the appropriate level of public access to open space based on its classification.

**GOAL:** Continue to consider other plans when planning for open space, including:

- Yampa River Management Plan
- Steamboat Springs Mobility and Circulation Plan
- Steamboat Springs Community Development Code

- West Steamboat Springs Area Plan 2006 Update
- Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan
- Steamboat Springs Trail System Master Plan and Design Guidelines
- Steamboat Springs Sidewalk Master Plan
- Mountain Town Sub-Area Plan
- Routt County Open Lands Plan
- South Steamboat Area Plan
- Steamboat Ski Area Master Plan
- Yampa Valley Legacy Plan

**GOAL:** Our community will establish a permanent and constant revenue source dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of open space.

**Strategies:**

- Explore and adopt a dedicated funding source.
- Be proactive - acquire land early.
- Continue to identify additional funding sources to support the program, including:
  - GOCO Funds
  - City General Fund
  - User fees
  - Private and corporate donations
  - PDR funding
  - IMBA funding
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - CDOW
  - Colorado Department of Transportation Grants



- City should partner with other programs and agencies to achieve objectives.

**GOAL:** Our community will identify critical wetland areas and critical wildlife habitats, and enhance and conserve these areas for future generations.

**Strategies:**

- Strengthen floodplain regulations.
- Provide adequate buffers for riparian areas and other water bodies.
- Develop local wetland protection standards.
- Develop a wildlife habitat overlay district and adopt appropriate standards.

Note that each of these strategies requires amendments to the City’s development code. See Chapter 4 for additional information.

**GOAL:** The City’s open space system will be supported with adequate staff and maintenance activities.

**Strategies:**

- Expand Open Space Division to support the program.
- Consider maintenance needs of existing and future open space.



## TRAILS

**GOAL:** Create a hierarchical, multi-use, and year-round non-motorized trail system. Separate bicycle and pedestrian traffic to reduce conflicts, when necessary.

### Strategies:

- Designate trail system according to the trail classification system.
- Construct trails according to the trail system cross sections and standards.
- Create way-finding signage to designate the trail system.

**GOAL:** Enhance and expand our existing City of Steamboat Springs trail system.

### Strategies:

- Take a comprehensive approach to the region's trail system, to link existing trails as a contiguous system; give neighborhoods access to trails; and connect urban and rural trails to public lands.
- Focus on expansion of the primary paved trail system.
- Create a loop system consisting of primary and secondary trails.
- Where appropriate, design a trail and sidewalk system to interconnect to provide access to the trail system.
- Modify the CDC to require trail system or connections to existing trail systems with new development.
- Utilize sidewalks when on-street and off-street trails are not available.
- Identify and preserve existing informal trails used within the community.
- Coordinate trail planning efforts with other agencies and adjacent landowners.
- Work with Routt County to address impacts to county roads when they are being considered as part of a looped trail system.

**GOAL:** Our community will establish constant revenue sources dedicated to the acquisition and maintenance of trails.

### Strategies:

- Explore and adopt a dedicated funding source.
- Continue to identify additional funding sources and other programs to support the trails, including:
  - GOCO Funds
  - City General Fund
  - User fees
  - Private and corporate donations
  - Trail dedication
  - Cash-in-Lieu System
  - Adopt-a-trail program

**GOAL:** The City will create a bicycle friendly community by creating an on-street trail system that connects to other trails, schools, neighborhoods and commercial areas. Continue to improve upon the "Bicycle Friendly Community" Silver Award status that the City received in 2007.

### Strategies:

- Expand commuting opportunities by designating an on-street system.
- Establish connections between new trails and proposed and existing bike routes.
- Create bike map, on-street trail signage, and wayfinding system.
- Develop bike lane and route standards as part of the road standards.
- Put on a promotional or safety event during National Bike Month.
- Continue to hold Bike to Work Day events.
- Work with local bike clubs to hold a bike safety training or incorporate bike safety training into a group ride.
- Establish annual data collection method to evaluate use of the bike system.
- Provide safe and convenient bicycle access to all parts of the community through a signed network of on- and off-street faci-

ties, low-speed streets, and secure parking. Local cyclists should be involved in identifying maintenance needs and ongoing improvements.

- Establish information programs to promote bicycling for all purposes, and to communicate the many benefits of bicycling to residents and businesses (e.g. with bicycle maps, public relations campaigns, neighborhood rides).
- Make the City a model employer by encouraging bicycle use among its employees (e.g. by providing parking, showers and lockers, and expanding the city bicycle fleet).
- Ensure all city policies, plans, codes, and programs are updated and implemented to take advantage of every opportunity to create a more bicycle-friendly community. Staff in all departments should be offered training to better enable them to complete this task.
- Educate all road users to share the road and interact safely. Road design and education programs should combine to increase the confidence of bicyclists.
- Enforce traffic laws to improve the safety and comfort of all road users, with a particular focus on behaviors and attitudes that cause motor vehicle/bicycle crashes.
- Develop special programs to encourage bicycle use in the community where significant segments of the population do not drive (e.g. through Safe Routes to Schools programs) and where short trips are most common.
- Promote intermodal travel between public transport and bicycles.
- Explore innovative solutions to minimize trail impacts.
- Designate a staff member as the bike coordinator to monitor plans and progress.
- Execute the list of improvements recommended by the Bicycle Friendly Community review committee.



**GOAL:** Apply context sensitive and sustainable trail design in order to protect sensitive habitat areas, integrate trails with existing and future land uses, and reduce maintenance costs.

**Strategies:**

- Avoid sensitive habitat areas when siting trails.
- Consider trail design and location during the design process of new developments.
- Develop and apply trail standards (such as IMBA standards).

**GOAL:** The City's trail system will be supported with adequate staff and maintenance activities.

**Strategies:**

- Expand Open Space Division to support the program.
- Consider maintenance needs of existing and future trail system.

**GOAL:** Routt County will consider bicycle use in the planning and design of future road improvements.

**GOAL:** Identify a network of trails that are suitable for winter uses, such as cross-country skiing, and manage those trails to accommodate winter use.

## C. OPEN SPACE DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION

### DEFINITION OF OPEN SPACE

Open Space properties are preserved and managed to sustain the natural values, historical land uses and passive recreation activities characteristic of the Yampa Valley for current and future generations. These properties are permanently designated or protected as open space and may or may not include public access.

#### THEY INCLUDE:

- Transition areas between different land uses.
- Buffers between trail systems and development.
- Natural (i.e. undeveloped) areas.
- Protected agricultural properties.
- Scenic areas or vistas.
- Lands with significant historical or cultural values.
- Undeveloped shorelines and riparian areas, particularly along the Yampa River and its tributaries.
- Wildlife habitats and/or migration corridors.
- Lands of unique ecological value or that provide potential habitat for plant or animal species of special concern.
- Lands of aesthetic or passive recreational value.
- Larger buffers between neighborhoods.



### OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATION

Within open space, there are various types of properties that serve different purposes to the community and function at different levels. This classification system outlines what differentiates these unique types of open space found in the Steamboat Springs area.

#### NOT CONSIDERED OPEN SPACE:

- Designated parkland and parks with recreational facilities such as ball fields, courts, playgrounds.
- Property buffers for public facilities such as the airport or water treatment plant.
- Small parcels of undevelopable land associated with building setbacks and environmental constraints within neighborhoods.

Table 8 describes the differences in purpose/function, size, management, and conservation strategy between each classification.



TABLE 8

CLASS	PURPOSE/ FUNCTION	SIZE	MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES	CONSERVATION STRATEGIES
<b>Community Preserve</b>	Protects large areas with natural resource values of community-wide significance. Provides opportunities for nature-oriented, outdoor recreation.	Typically consists of an area larger than 100 acres.	Emphasis is on achieving an appropriate balance between resource protection and public use. Facilities such as trails, picnic sites, parking, education/interpretive areas and other visitor support facilities should be adequate to support the intended level of visitation but should minimize conflicts with resource protection goals.	Core area should be conserved through fee simple purchase. However, area may be extended through conservation easements or other tools.
<b>Natural Areas</b>	Protects natural values on smaller parcels than a community preserve. Often located along stream corridors. Provides opportunities for nature-oriented, outdoor recreation, which often includes multi-purpose trails.	Parcel size is variable. Areas not contiguous to other protected areas should have a minimum parcel size of 10 acres.	Emphasis is on resource protection with some public access provided. Only a limited area should be dedicated to visitor support facilities.	Fee simple purchase for those areas where public access is intended.
<b>Special Resource Areas</b>	Protects areas with important natural, cultural, and other community values. These may include areas of significant vegetation, important and sensitive habitats, scenic areas, or areas that contribute to the urban shaping and buffering goals of the community.	Variable	Emphasis is on protection of the values that qualify the area for designation as a special resource area. In some cases, public access will not be provided and no facilities will be developed.	These areas can be preserved through a variety of strategies. In many cases, regulatory tools, such as floodplain regulations, buffer distance requirements, etc. may accomplish the intended conservation goal.
<b>Agricultural Lands</b>	Preserve agricultural areas and operations on lands traditionally used for such purposes.	Variable, but should be large enough to support viable agricultural use.	Typically, agricultural lands are subject to conservation easements or other constraints that limit public access. Ag operations are managed for sustainable use with resource protection.	A conservation easement is often the most appropriate tool, with the land remaining in private ownership. This may be done in conjunction with an LPS or other conservation strategy.

## D. OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITY AREAS

A review of the resource mapping previously discussed, public comments and other information collected during the planning process indicates that the community has numerous opportunities to protect additional areas as open space. A summary of comments from the public is provided in the Appendix. Although a wide variety of comments was received, several can be grouped on the theme that the City's conservation efforts should focus on natural areas, particularly areas with important wildlife habitat values and other areas with sensitive resources.

Generalized opportunity areas that should be considered for future conservation efforts are summarized in Table 9. These areas, which are not listed in any particular order, are meant to be a starting point. Their protection would be accomplished in partnership with landowners. It is not expected that all of the land within an opportunity area would be protected. They are intended to stimulate discussion about what open space means to the community and the types of places people treasure most.

The list of opportunity areas is not rigid. Identification of additional sensitive resources, landowner interest, review of development proposals, and funding availability are likely to stimulate changes to the current list of opportunities.

Protection mechanisms for lands included within an opportunity area include acquisition, conservation easements, inclusion within a Land Preservation Subdivisions, and more. These protected lands may or may not have public access.

Lands protected as open space can continue to be used for a variety of purposes, including agriculture and other historic uses. Recreational opportunities, such as trails and environmental education, could be integrated, depending on the property's intended use and other agreements.



TABLE 9

OPPORTUNITY AREA	ACRES	RESOURCE VALUES PRESENT	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	OTHER COMMENTS
Upper Yampa Valley	1484	Highway 131 foreground zone, riparian areas and key segment of Yampa corridor. Also includes great blue heron nesting areas.	Wetlands and Floodplain limit development potential in some areas.	This corridor provides an important link to other conservation lands in the south valley area.
South Valley Gateway	638	Highway 131 foreground zone and gateway to the Yampa Valley.	N/A	N/A
South Valley Edge	1174	Key winter habitat for elk and mule deer. Also foreground zone for Highway 40 and key gateway to the Yampa Valley.	Majority of this area has slopes 30% or greater.	Adjacent to National Forest and links other conserved areas (Lake Catamount and Storm Mountain Ranch).
South Emerald Mountain	1384	Elk winter concentration area and production areas. Also contains a visually prominent ridgeline.	Portions of the area are subject to Routt County's "skyline" development guidelines.	Adjacent to planned Emerald Mt. conservation area.
North Emerald Mt.	2844	Elk production area as well as elk severe and winter concentration areas. Contains portions of a visually prominent ridge.	Most of area consists of a few large parcels. Portions of the area are subject to Routt County's "skyline" development guidelines. Nearly a third of the area has slopes 30% or greater.	Adjacent to planned Emerald Mt. conservation area.
Spring Creek	1148	Most of area is elk winter concentration area.	Western edge of area has slopes 30% or greater.	Adjacent to National Forest. Smaller parcel present.
Soda Creek	281	Riparian habitat. Area is designated as a potential conservation area by CNHP due to its high biodiversity significance.	N/A	Area is not contiguous with other conserved areas.
Copper Ridge	2006	Elk severe and winter concentration area. Contains a visually prominent ridge.	The majority of this area has slopes 30% or greater.	Links to National Forest land at northern edge.
Steamboat II Ridge	605	Elk winter concentration area and visually prominent ridge.	As provided in WSSAP, may be accomplished through TDR. Portions of the area are subject to Routt County's "skyline" development guidelines. Some areas also have slopes 30% or greater.	This area has limited linkage with other conserved areas.
Yampa River West	n/a	Bald Eagle winter concentration area, great blue heron nesting area, and other riparian habitat values.	Much of this area is within the 100-year floodplain.	Provides an important link on the Yampa River Core Trail.
West Yampa Valley	458	Bald Eagle winter concentration area and great blue heron nesting area. Also contains riparian corridor and foreground zone along Highway 40. This is a key gateway into the Yampa Valley.	As provided in WSSAP, portions of area may be conserved through TDR. Portions of area have floodplain and other development limitations.	Area has limited linkage with other conserved areas except along the Yampa River corridor. Portions of the area are subject to Routt County's "skyline" development guidelines.

## E. PROPOSED TRAIL NETWORK

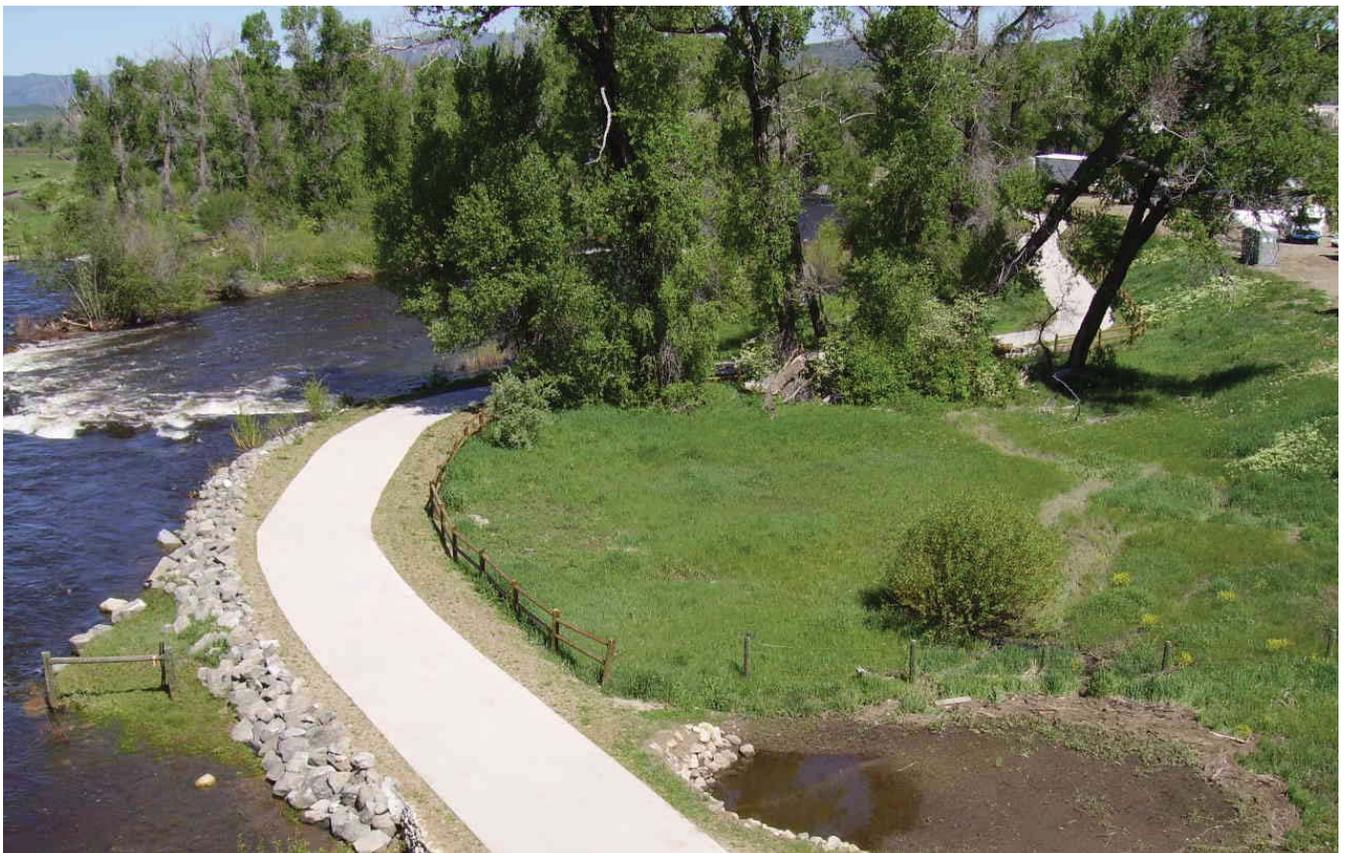
Trails provide critical connections between recreational, civic and neighborhood uses. A successful trail system accommodates a variety of users, allows access without getting in your vehicle, and provides connections to key community destinations. The purpose of this section is to provide a City-wide off-street trail classification system that will guide the City's decision process in creating a functional, interconnected trail system as new development and infrastructure improvements occur. This plan focuses on off-street trails that are primarily recreational in nature. Special use paths such as raised boardwalks should be designed to meet site-specific conditions and as such are not included in the following classification system.

The Existing and Proposed Trail Network Map (Maps 7) identifies trail corridor locations based on existing and future community needs and desired connections. Existing trail corridors are shown with

a solid line, while conceptual alignments for future trails are shown with a dashed line. Conceptual corridors require detailed analysis and design prior to construction, especially in cases where trails are proposed in developed areas in order to determine exact locations and designs for all trails, underpasses and crossings. This is especially true of the western extension of the Core Trail along the Yampa River, which must be designed in a manner that is sensitive to landowner concerns as well as protection of resource values.

The primary focus for expanding the system includes:

- Completing key links within the existing trail system;
- Providing connections to and creating an internal framework for new developments; and
- Expanding upon the existing system to provide regional connections.



## TRAILS CLASSIFICATIONS

The trails classification system shown on the maps is described in Table 10. Design criteria for each classification are determined by its primary users, volume of use, location and desired trail experience. These criteria are intended to apply to developing areas. Criteria for trails in some locations may not be met due to existing constraints such as limited land availability.

### PRIMARY TRAILS

#### Purpose

Primary trails are recreational destinations where users can spend a day or several hours exploring the trail. They are meant to accommodate a large number of daily users and generally are designed for higher speed use than secondary trails. This more intense use requires an appropriate sign system and other design criteria be met, in order to make the trail a fun and safe experience for all types of users.

Primary trails provide access to key community destinations and connect users to adjacent public lands and trail systems. They accommodate all trail users, including walkers, joggers, in-line skaters, recreational and commuter cyclists. Where appropriate; equestrian users may also be accommodated within the same trail corridor.

#### Design Standards

Trail corridor width greatly influences the user experience, especially when enclosed on both sides by development. Ideally, Primary Trail corridors should be located along drainages, utility easements, or other linear features where maximum corridor and separation from roadways can be achieved. Parallel equestrian trails or soft surface jogging shoulders may be provided where appropriate. Intersections and other areas where users must stop or dismount should be minimized. Below grade crossings should be used as much as possible, especially at major road crossings, in order to minimize pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. Trailheads, Trail

Waysides and interpretive signs should be provided at strategic locations throughout the corridor. Preferred design standards are shown in Figure 1A.

### SECONDARY TRAILS

#### Purpose

Secondary trails support the Primary trail system by providing connections to neighborhoods, parks, open spaces, and activity centers that are not on the primary system. Like Primary trails, these trails are designed to accommodate all trail users, including walkers, joggers, and recreational and commuter cyclists on the same trail. Secondary trails are generally not destination trails, have lower travel speeds and require slightly narrower corridors than Primary Trails. Secondary trails will most often occur within roadway corridors and may have more at-grade vehicular crossings.

#### Design Standards

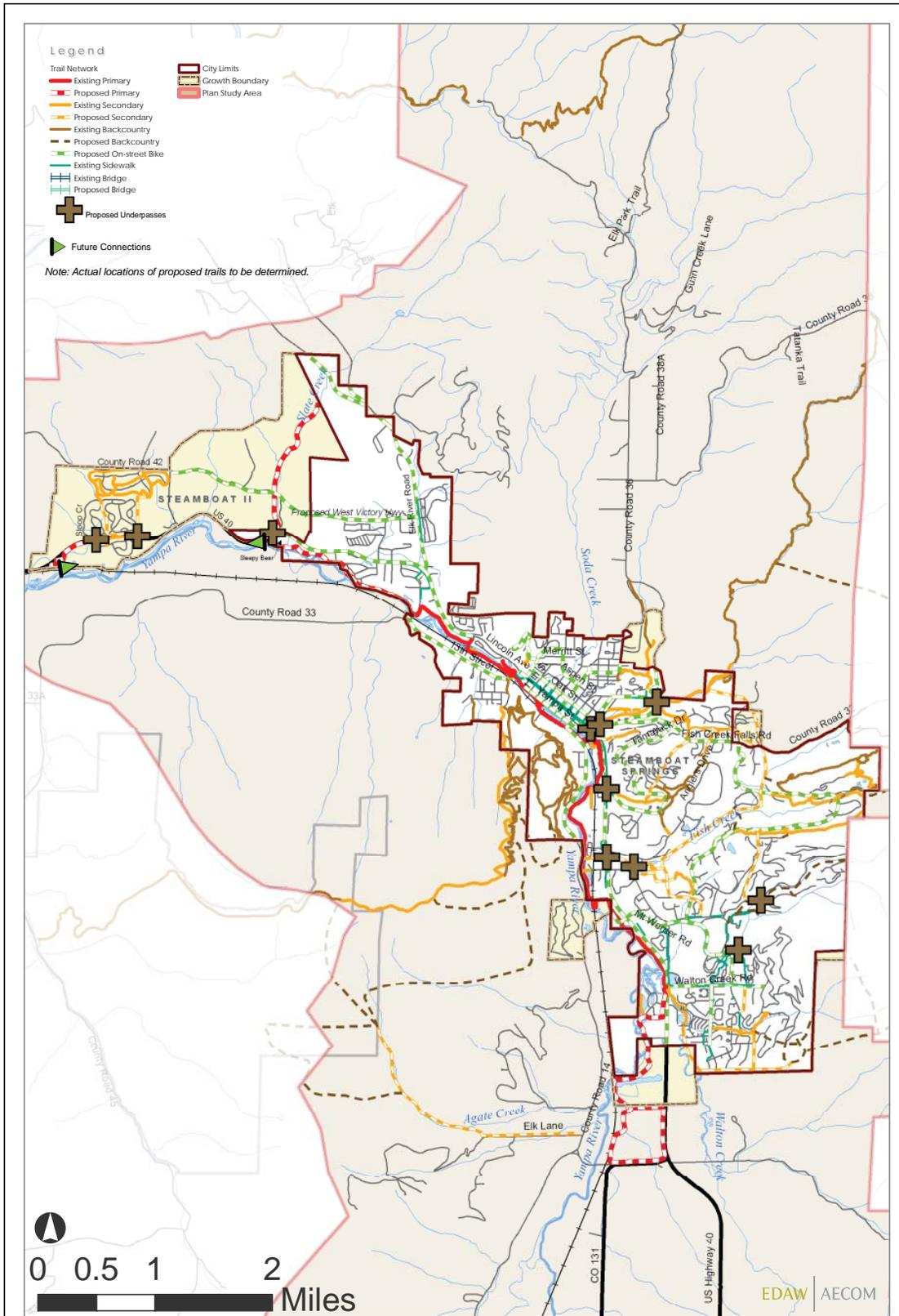
Trail corridors should maximize separation from vehicular travel lanes. Landscape buffers become more essential to enhancing the user experience in the narrower corridor width and provide critical separation from adjacent uses. Preferred design standards are shown in Figure 1-B.

### OTHER TRAILS

Additional trail types are also shown in cross-sections. Figure 1-C illustrates Backcountry trails, which are soft surface with a minimum corridor width of 3'. Figure 1-D illustrates on-street bike lanes. The design of on-street bike lanes is usually driven by transportation requirements and varies widely in response to roadway type and safety requirements. Therefore, a similar set of design guidelines is not provided for this type of trail. On-street bike lanes are primarily intended to offer alternative transportation choices and to provide links that may not be practical to achieve using an off-street system.

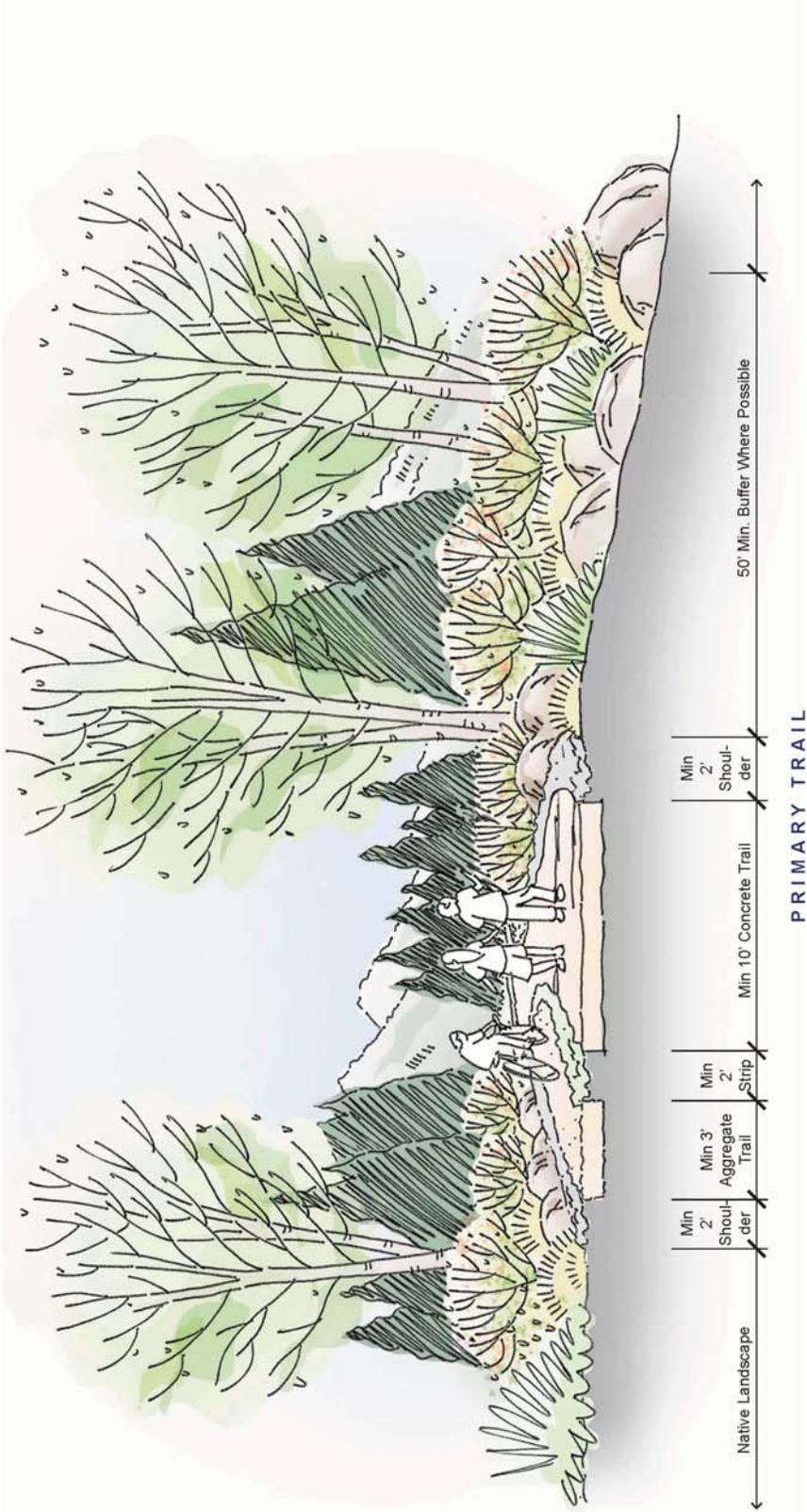
TABLE 10

	PRIMARY TRAILS	SECONDARY TRAILS	BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS
<b>Uses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connects community destinations, parks and open space</li> <li>▪ Recreation destination for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized users</li> <li>▪ Commuting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connects community destinations, neighborhoods, parks and open space</li> <li>▪ Recreation</li> <li>▪ Commuting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recreation destination for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized users</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open space, greenway or drainage corridors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Roadway corridors</li> <li>▪ Detached sidewalks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undeveloped backcountry, open space or rural areas</li> <li>▪ Natural setting</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred Corridor Width</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 30 feet</li> <li>▪ Min. 20 foot easement width</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 25 feet</li> <li>▪ Min. 20 foot easement width</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NA</li> </ul>
<b>Trail Width</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 10 feet min</li> <li>▪ Parallel 3 foot min path</li> <li>▪ 2 foot shoulders required on both sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 8 feet min</li> <li>▪ 2 foot shoulders required on both sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 foot corridor min</li> <li>▪ 10 foot corridor where maintenance vehicle access required</li> </ul>
<b>Trail Surface</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concrete</li> <li>▪ Crushed gravel path</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concrete</li> <li>▪ Crushed gravel may be used as determined by staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crushed gravel or native soil with dust inhibitors and soil hardener</li> </ul>
<b>Vertical Clearance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 8 feet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 8 feet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NA</li> </ul>
<b>Horizontal Clearance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Min. bridge width 10 feet</li> <li>▪ Min. 3 feet both sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Min. bridge width 8 feet</li> <li>▪ Min. 3 feet both sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Min. 3 feet</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Native, naturalized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Naturalized, urban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Native, naturalized</li> </ul>
<b>Guardrails and Handrails</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Per AASHTO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Per AASHTO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Per AASHTO</li> </ul>
<b>Lighting</b> (where possible and required for safety)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At trailheads and access points</li> <li>▪ At underpasses</li> <li>▪ At crosswalks and intersections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At trailheads and access points</li> <li>▪ At underpasses</li> <li>▪ At crosswalks and intersections</li> <li>▪ Utilize adjacent roadway lighting where appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At trailheads and access points</li> </ul>
<b>Trail Waysides</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Major waysides one per mile or as utilities are available</li> <li>▪ Minor waysides every ½ mile</li> <li>▪ Combine with trailheads where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minor waysides every ½ mile</li> <li>▪ Combine with trailheads where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minor waysides at areas of visual or interpretive interest, no utilities</li> </ul>
<b>Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Up to 8.3% with targeted 5% max where feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Up to 8.3% with targeted 5% max where feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avg 10% grades if ADA accommodation is unreasonable</li> <li>▪ Up to 8.3% for ADA accessible trails</li> <li>▪ Steps may be required on hiking only slopes with grades steeper than 10%</li> </ul>
<b>Signs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Per MUTCD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Per MUTCD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Per MUTCD</li> </ul>
<b>Markings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4 inch center stripe per AASHTO, where volumes and geometry dictate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> </ul>
<b>Trailheads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At major access points</li> <li>▪ Use parks and open space parking areas and facilities where possible</li> <li>▪ Restroom, shaded seating and picnic areas</li> <li>▪ Regulatory, informational and entry signs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At major access points</li> <li>▪ Use parks and open space parking areas and facilities where possible</li> <li>▪ Shaded seating and picnic areas</li> <li>▪ Regulatory, informational and entry signs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At trail access points</li> <li>▪ Use parks and open space parking areas and facilities where possible</li> <li>▪ Restroom, shaded seating and picnic areas</li> <li>▪ Regulatory, informational and entry signs</li> </ul>



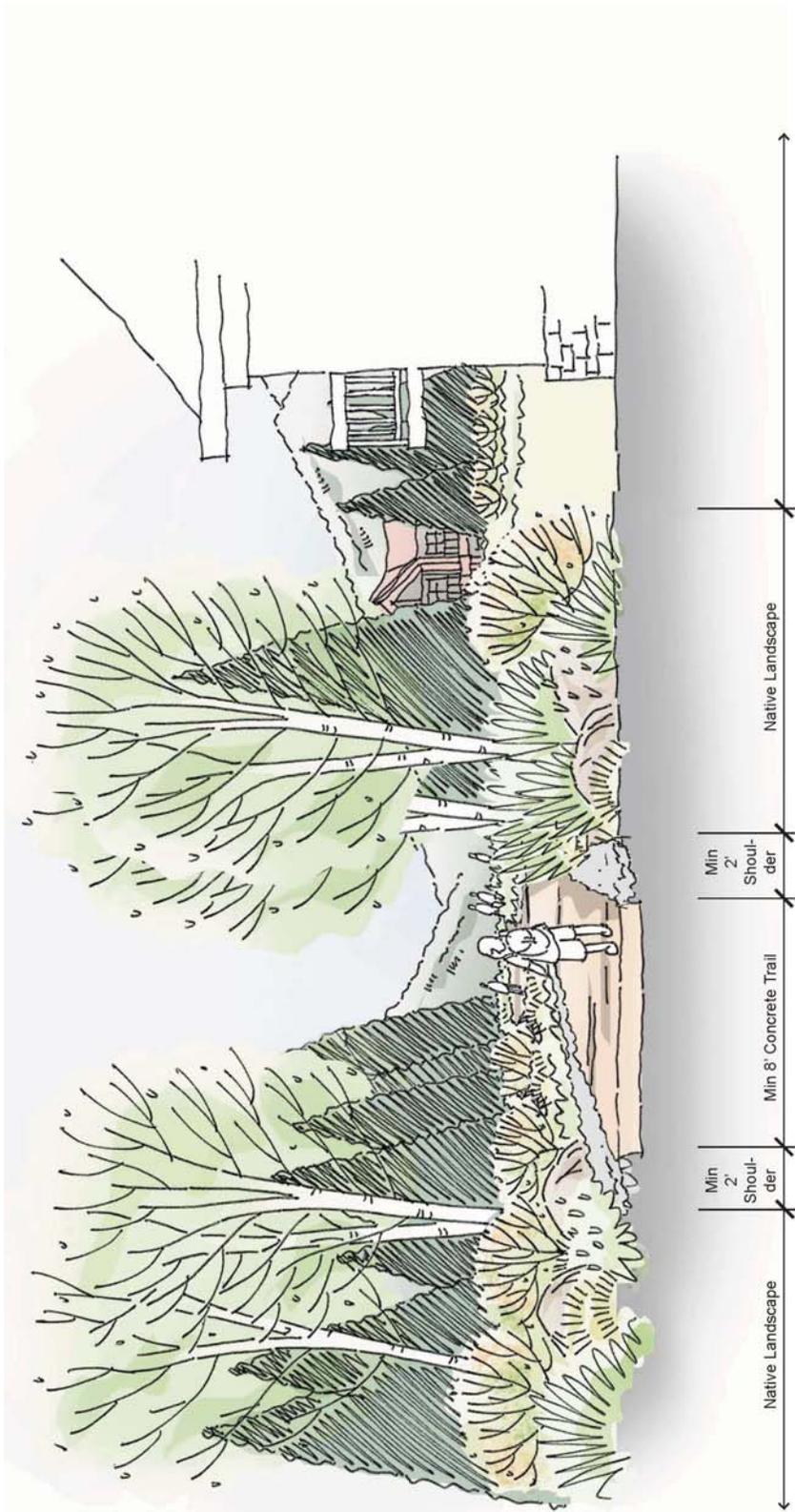
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AREA OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
**EXISTING & PROPOSED TRAILS**

This data was prepared from publicly available information and should be used for reference purposes only. The City of Steamboat Springs makes no warranty, either express, implied, or statutory, with respect to the accuracy or completeness of this data, its merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose.



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
STANDARD TRAIL DESIGN

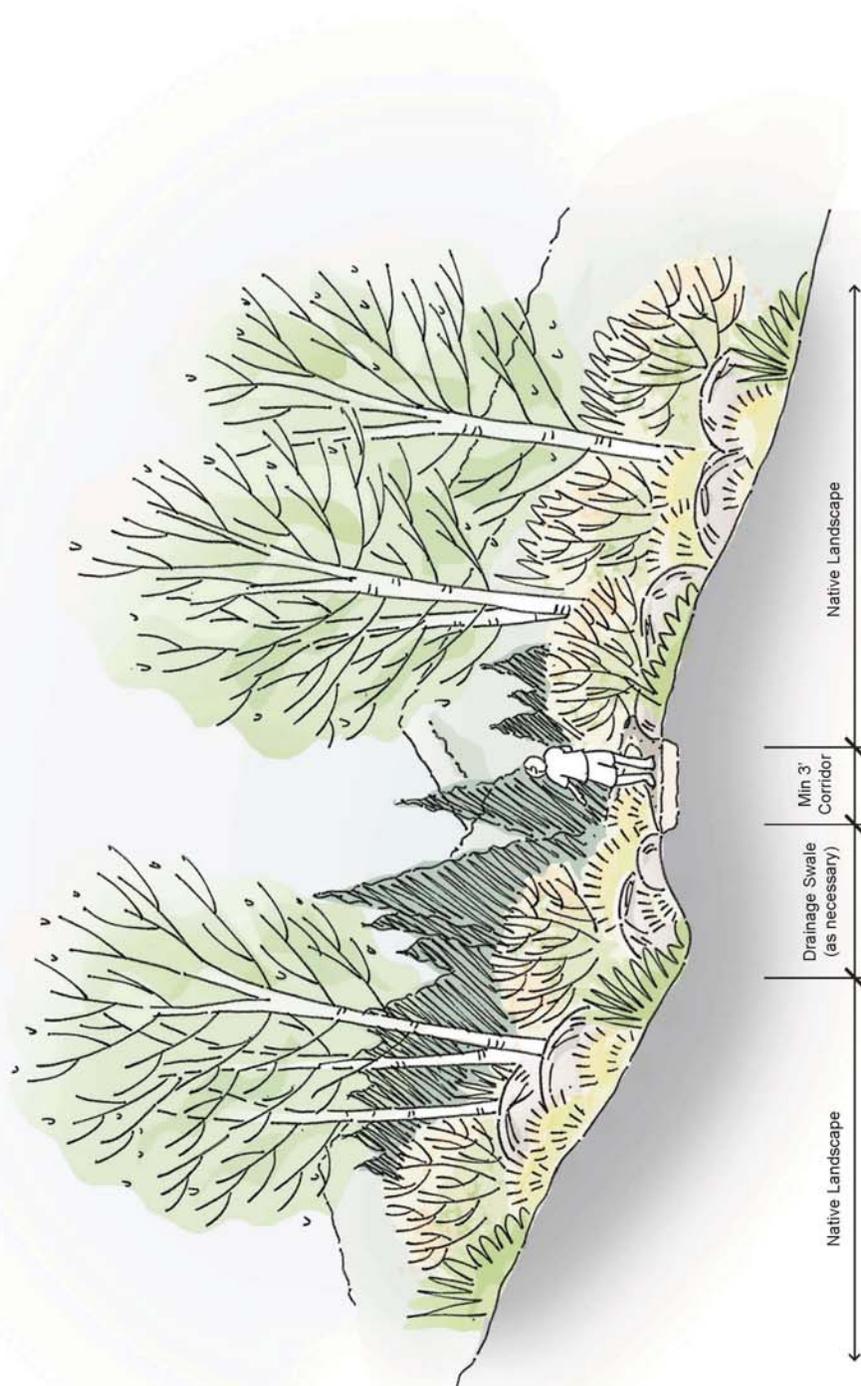
FIGURE 1A



SECONDARY TRAIL

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
STANDARD TRAIL DESIGN

FIGURE 1B



BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
STANDARD TRAIL DESIGN

FIGURE 1C



ON-STREET TRAIL (BIKE LANE)

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN  
STANDARD TRAIL DESIGN

FIGURE 1D

## CHAPTER 4. IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter focuses on developing an implementation program. Although any successful open lands protection effort utilizes a variety of tools and strategies, they generally fall within three broad categories – funding, voluntary efforts by property owners, and regulatory tools. The discussion that follows is organized by these categories; however, it should be noted that the lines between categories blur in actual practice and all three categories may be utilized on a single project. In addition to the three implementation categories, other program elements are also discussed, including operations and maintenance.

### A. FUNDING STRATEGIES

As in much of Colorado, land costs in the Steamboat Springs area have been increasing rapidly and funding is limited. In light of the importance the community places on protecting open lands, the need for additional funding mechanisms and approaches to protecting open lands have been identified as a priority. Although Routt County has a dedicated funding source for open lands protection, the Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR), the City of Steamboat Springs does not – it is one of the few major mountain resort communities in Colorado that lacks a funding source at the municipal level specifically dedicated for this purpose. For example, Frisco, Aspen, Breckenridge, Silverthorne, Vail, and Crested Butte all have dedicated funding sources of one type or another for open space.

As was pointed out earlier, not only is funding for open space protection strongly supported by community residents, it is an important element of an economic development program to support and promote the tourism industry. For example, a recent study (“Tourists’ Value of Routt County’s Working Landscape”, 2005) documents that the natural environment is an important asset in provid-

ing a high quality experience for visitors to the area. More specifically, the study found that the natural environment was the highest rated factor, with an average rating of 8, higher than community services with a rating of 6 and other elements included within the survey.

The City’s protection efforts to date have relied on Capital Improvement Project requests, partnerships and grants. Through the work of many dedicated citizens and the support of elected officials, much has been accomplished. However, some level of on-going, local funding is essential to building a full-scale program, one that has a reliable and predictable revenue stream, including funds needed for operations, long-term management and maintenance.

Although there are many theoretically available funding sources, the most viable mechanisms include a dedicated sales tax, lodging taxes, and a dedicated property tax. It should be noted that a real estate transfer tax, which is currently utilized in at least two Colorado mountain communities, is no longer a legally available option. Vail, for example, has had a 1% real estate transfer tax in place since 1980, which generates between \$1.3-2 million annually for parks, recreation and open space programs. Since the time when Vail’s program was implemented, the Colorado voters, through the passage of TABOR, have effectively eliminated the real estate transfer tax as an option, leaving it to those communities with a program that was “grandfathered” by having been previously established.

In addition to new funding tools, the community will need to continue to utilize grant programs to leverage available resources. These are also discussed later in this section.

**DEDICATED SALES TAX** - This is the tool of choice for open space protection in Colorado. It typically consists of a sales and use tax ranging from .1 to .5 cent (one tenth of a cent to one half cent) on purchases. Aspen and Breckenridge are examples of mountain communities that utilize a dedicated sales tax to fund open space protection.

The City of Steamboat Spring currently has 4.5% sales tax, which, when combined with county and state rates, results in a combined rate of 8.4%. One of the advantages of a sales tax in a community like Steamboat is that non-residents pay a large portion of the total tax. It is estimated that 50-60% of sales tax proceeds collected in Steamboat Springs are paid by non-residents. Further, part-time residents pay a significant share. Overall, it is estimated that year-round residents of Steamboat Springs pay only about 25% of total sales tax receipts (Don Taylor, 2007).

Based on current sales tax data, a dedicated sales tax rate of 1/4 cent would yield approximately \$1.125 million, while a lower rate of 1/8 cent would produce annual revenue of \$563,000. Sales tax receipts are healthy in Steamboat Springs; for example, proceeds increased 12% between 2005 and 2006. For forecasting purposes, it is reasonable to assume a 5% annual growth rate at least for the near term.

As with any tax increase, there are certain challenges in winning voter approval. One of these is a possible perception that open space is already adequately funded through an excise tax. An impact fee discussion in the community in 2001 resulted in a switch to an excise tax, which now generates about \$1 million/year. This funding is utilized for all types of capital needs, including trails and open space. However, the proceeds are not dedicated to a particular purpose and therefore don't result in a predictable revenue stream.

Also, although similar to the rates in communities such as Vail, Aspen, and Telluride, the sales tax rate in Steamboat Springs is among the highest in the

State. As with nearly every Colorado municipality, the City of Steamboat Springs is dependent on sales tax dollars to fund a variety of essential services and needs and the competition for revenue is intense.

It should also be noted that recent legislation (SB-98) allows for a county sales or use tax rate of up to 0.5 percent from the state-mandated sales tax cap. This legislation makes it easier for voters to approve an open space measure by removing real or perceived competition for scarce sales tax proceeds.

**PROPERTY TAX** - The City currently has no property tax levy, one of only a handful of cities in Colorado that have no mill levy. The overall mill levy in the Steamboat Springs area is about 50 mills. A 1 mill increase results in about \$440,000/year, based on an assessment on only those properties within the Steamboat Springs city limits.

Property tax proceeds are already used for open space conservation in the Steamboat Springs area. In 1996, Routt County voters approved a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program that provides for the use of property tax dollars to be used for purchase of development rights from willing landowners. In 2005, voters not only renewed the tax, but overwhelmingly voted to raise the levy rate to 1.5 mills and extend it for another 20 years. In the first year, the program raised approximately \$1.25 million. To date, the program has helped place more than 7,400 acres in conservation easements.

As with the sales tax discussion, one of the challenges facing approval of mill levy increase for open space is the potential perception that property owner's are already paying property taxes for this purpose. Business owners in Colorado are also sensitive about mill levy increases, fearing that they affect business properties disproportionately due to the Gallagher Amendment.

Finally, although part-time residents would contribute to a program funded through a property tax,

a larger portion of the burden would fall on local residents as compared to a dedicated sales tax. This is due to the fact that more than 50% of total sales tax receipts are collected on purchases made by visitors and part time residents.

**LODGING TAX** - In theory, proceeds from the lodging tax could be used to fund open space and related programs. The Town of Silverthorne utilizes lodging tax proceeds for parks and trails but the practice is not common among Colorado municipalities. The lodging tax in Steamboat Springs is currently 3%, with 1% of that going to the City for “above ground amenities”. These proceeds have been used for improvements to the golf course and some recreation improvements. The remaining 2% goes to a marketing/promotion district, which is a common use of these tax proceeds in communities with a strong tourism base.

Although there is a strong connection between open space conservation and a community’s attractiveness to tourists, diverting lodging tax for this purpose would disrupt historic practices and would probably not yield the level of funding potentially available through a sales tax or mill levy. It should be noted, however, that multiple comments were received from the public indicating that protection of open space is a good use of this funding source.

**GRANTS** - There are a variety of grant sources available for open space and trails projects in Colorado, chief among them the Great Outdoors Colorado program, or GOCO. Key grant programs are highlighted in this section, noting those programs that are most relevant and providing references to other grant programs that may be applicable on certain types of projects.

#### Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)

Use of these funds has become standard practice for local open space programs and the Steamboat Springs community has been adept at making successful grant requests to leverage local funding. The Yampa River Legacy Project, which among other

accomplishments integrated conservation with public access on approximately 3,000 acres along 4 miles of the Yampa River near Steamboat Springs, is a notable example of how these funds can be used. For this reason, a complete discussion of GOCO grant programs will not be provided in this master plan. However, it may be useful to summarize key program elements and accomplishments. GOCO funds a wide variety of parks, trails and open space projects.

Since 1994, when GOCO awarded its first grants, the program has committed nearly \$550 million to more than 2,700 projects throughout the state. Open space projects have been a major recipient of this funding, resulting in the protection of 580,171 acres of open space in perpetuity. Funding for open space projects is normally made available through a twice annual grant cycle, which are currently scheduled for August and February. GOCO grants are awarded on a competitive basis and require a carefully conceived project plan and a demonstrated ability to implement the project. A key consideration is the fact that awards require a funding commitment from the project sponsors, which often results in a need to match 50% or more of the project costs with matching contributions. One of the advantages of having a dedicated funding source for open space is the ability to demonstrate to GOCO and other grant sources the availability of a funding source that can be used for making the local match and providing funds for long-term maintenance.

In addition to the standard open space grant cycle, GOCO periodically makes funding available for larger scale projects through its legacy program, which are larger scale, multi-year projects of regional or state-wide significance. The Yampa River Legacy Project obtained funding through this program.

Although funding levels vary in response to proceeds received from the Lottery and strategic decisions made by the GOCO Board, a good indication

of the program's current status and priorities is provided by the recently-approved plan to spend \$100 million in fiscal year 2008. This is GOCO's largest spending plan to date and the majority of the 2008 funds will be used for land protection. More specifically:

- \$34 million will be awarded for projects normally funded through the twice annual grant cycle, including open space, community parks and outdoor recreation, and trails projects as well as the standard allocations made to Colorado State Parks and Division of Wildlife projects.
- The remaining \$66 million will be for Legacy grants to protect large landscapes.

Increasingly, GOCO is interested in funding conservation efforts that rely on the use of conservation easements as opposed to outright purchase.

#### Colorado Conservation Trust

Since its founding in 2000, the Colorado Conservation Trust (CCT) has contributed to the protection of more than 30,000 acres and has raised nearly \$10 million from foundations and individuals. The Yampa Valley/Routt County region is one of 8 priority areas the trust has identified in the State. In the past, the trust has contributed \$50,000 to the City of Steamboat Springs for purchase of a parcel along the Yampa River and they have also funded a study to determine the potential benefits of establishing a transfer of development rights program in Routt County. The trust does not have the resources of the GOCO but can be an important partner on certain projects.

#### Other Programs

As noted earlier, a wide variety of grant programs exist at the federal and state levels as well as within the private sector. In most cases, these sources are only able to provide supplemental funding on particular types of projects. A good survey of these sources is provided in a 2004 publication of the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts.

([http://www.cclt.org/CCLTFundingGuide\(OnlineVersion\)\\_files/FundingGuide.htm](http://www.cclt.org/CCLTFundingGuide(OnlineVersion)_files/FundingGuide.htm))

**CONCLUSION** - As stated previously, the City of Steamboat Springs should present a dedicated funding source to the voters. There are numerous examples in Colorado of communities and counties each having their own funding programs for open space. The City of Fort Collins and Larimer County are but one of several examples that could be cited. The availability of additional funding would make it easier for the City of Steamboat Springs to pursue joint projects with Routt County and further leverage available grant sources.

Ultimately, a decision on what funding strategy is most appropriate will be made by community leaders and the voters. A good case can be made, however, that a sales tax would yield major benefits to the community since such a high proportion is paid by non-residents. Sales tax and other funding mechanisms are most effective when they are designed to remain in effect for an extended period (10-20 periods years are common), and include a provision that directs a portion of the proceeds to long-term maintenance and operating expenses. This is discussed further later in this section.

Regardless of the funding strategy selected, it will be essential for the community to leverage available resources through partnerships and the aggressive pursuit of grant assistance.



## B. VOLUNTARY EFFORTS

Both Federal and Colorado tax law provides powerful incentives for landowners to donate conservation easements. This is an increasingly complex area of the law and tax policy, but the basic elements remain straightforward. At the Federal level, the Internal Revenue Service allows a deduction from Federal income taxes if the easement is perpetual and donated “exclusively for conservation purposes” to a qualified conservation organization, usually a land trust. The amount of the tax deduction is determined by the value of the conservation easement, considering fair market value of the property before and after placement of development restrictions placed on the property.

Colorado tax law provides similar benefits on state income tax. It is also one of the few states with a tax credit program. Colorado leads the nation in providing tax credits for the donation of a conservation easement, allowing a landowner to earn a tax credit valued at up to \$375,000.

Adding to the appeal of the program for landowners is the fact that the tax credit is transferable to a third party. Since many landowners don't have the high income levels required to take full advantage of an income tax deduction resulting from the donation of an easement with a large dollar value, Colorado law expands the potential group of landowners who can benefit from the program by allowing the sale or exchange of the credit to wealthier individuals who can. These exchanges are usually made through a broker, several of which operate within Colorado, and the landowner typically receives 80-85% of the value of the donation. In addition, the donor of a conservation easement will pay lower property taxes, usually based on the assessed value of the property as an agricultural use.

Armed with these incentives, land trust programs have been able to work with landowners to achieve major conservation results. The Yampa Valley Land Trust is a good example of how these programs can

work. Founded in 1994, the Trust now holds more than 30,000 acres under conservation easement, some of which was accomplished in partnership with Routt County's Land Preservation Subdivision Process and other partners.

## C. REGULATORY TOOLS

Regulatory tools already play an important role in open space conservation in the Steamboat Springs vicinity. These range from basic flood plain regulations that require development to meet certain criteria within the 100-year floodplain to more specific regulations that require planned developments to set aside a certain percentage of the site as open space. Within the City, current subdivision regulations require that 15% of a proposed development site must be set aside for parks, including areas that could be considered as open space. For the most part, set aside requirements result in neighborhood scale open space that primarily benefits residents of a given subdivision.

A more notable example of how a regulatory approach can contribute to protecting open space is Routt County's Land Preservation Subdivision (LPS) process. Since its adoption in 1992, the LPS process has resulted in the temporary or permanent conservation of more than 9,000 acres, several of which are located in key areas surrounding Steamboat Springs. See Chapter 2 for more detail about these projects.

In 2004, the City and Routt County jointly adopted the “Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan” that called for strengthening some of the regulatory tools that contribute to open space protection. In the interest of maintaining consistency between that plan and the Open Space and Trails Plan, key recommendations from the 2004 plan will be highlighted in this section rather than restated.

Strategy NS-1.1b: Strengthen Floodplain Regulations – Revise city and county codes to strengthen floodplain regulations. The new regulations should

be based on a policy of preventing any further urban development within the 100-year floodplain of the Elk and Yampa Rivers. In this context, urban development refers to buildings constructed for residential, commercial, or other purposes.

**Strategy 1.2a: Consider Increasing Minimum Setbacks** - The city and county should revise the development codes to increase the minimum setback for rivers to at least 100-feet in order to provide greater levels of resource protection. A buffer distance of up to 300 feet may be appropriate in more sensitive areas. The minimum setback for tributaries should be increased to 50-feet. In order to provide an appropriate level of flexibility and recognition of situations where lot size or other considerations create special circumstances, the regulations should allow exceptions to these minimum setbacks. The exceptions would be performance based, i.e. in return for restoration of other important riparian habitat or other appropriate conservation efforts, the minimum setback could be adjusted on a case-by-case basis.

**Strategy NS-4.1a: Develop Wetlands Protection Standards** - A local program should be based on community-wide inventory of wetland areas. The inventory can be at a coarse level of detail, e.g. based on existing sources and interpretation of aerial photos accompanied by limited field verification, but it should be designed to identify all potential wetland areas. No disturbance of these areas would be allowed prior to more detailed study,



which would either confirm the presence of wetlands and trigger a requirement for a more detailed delineation, or result in a determination that no wetlands are present.

Other key elements of a local program should include establishment of a buffer zone and definition of mitigation requirements. City staff has begun work on creating a wetland setback ordinance.

**Strategy NS-4.2b: Prepare Wildlife Habitat Overlay District** – Revise codes to include more comprehensive wildlife protection standards or guidelines. The overlay district would incorporate the habitat information shown in Map 2 and would be refined, as appropriate, following community review and comment. Routt County utilizes a habitat overlay as a reference tool and seeks CDOW advice as necessary.

This habitat information would serve as a “first screen” to determine if potential wildlife issues are present. A landowner or developer would have the option to supplement this somewhat generalized mapping with site specific studies to further illuminate the relative importance of the habitat and how it actually functions from an ecological standpoint. Required mitigation efforts could then be tailored to the level of effect that is actually anticipated.

**Strategy NS-4.3a: Develop a Joint City/County TDR Program.** Use of a TDR program requires establishing both “sending” areas (areas where lower density is desired) and “receiving” areas (areas usually within a municipality where higher densities are acceptable). Sending sites will be areas in the county designated as high priority natural and scenic protection areas. The West of Steamboat lands designated as “Very Low Density Residential” could become a receiving area as well as areas within the Steamboat Springs city limits.

As mentioned earlier, Routt County is evaluating the feasibility of implementing a TDR program. A number of jurisdictions in Colorado have adopted

TDR regulations but their use has not been widespread to date. Advantages of a TDR program include lower costs required for the purchase of development rights and other land costs and the potential for landowners to receive fair compensation through the recognition of existing development rights and incentives for developing property in a manner that protects site resources. However, the programs are also perceived as complex and not fully tested.

Strategy NS-5.1a: Adopt Additional Visually Sensitive Areas Protection Measures - Existing City regulations focus only on ridge lines and do not address other visually sensitive areas. The city and county may want to consider additional measures, including variable setbacks and design guidelines to provide more comprehensive landscape protection. Of particular importance in this context are the highway foreground zones and key viewpoint locations shown on Map 3.

Strategy NS-6.1a: Steep Slopes- Both City and County Planning codes have been amended to not allow new development to occur on slopes greater than 30%. Extremely steep slopes, those in excess of 30%, should be considered unbuildable and off-limits to urban development activities.

Strategy OS-3.1c: Trail Dedication - Require new trails to be dedicated and/or constructed by developers and/or landowners when the trails have the current or potential ability to provide a needed linkage between the new developments and key destinations, rather than requiring trails to be dedicated or constructed that have little practical value. The City requires trail design, construction and maintenance on developing properties through the planning process.

Strategy OS-3.1d: Cash-in-Lieu System for Trails - Create a cash-in-lieu system for the expansion of the trail system when installation of trails in new developments is not practical.

## **D. OTHER IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

This section addresses a series of other recommendations and actions that may be required to fully implement the plan.

### **CITY-OWNED LANDS**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the City owns a variety of properties. One of the goals of this open space plan is to categorize those lands according to their intended uses. To this end, city-owned properties were shown as falling within one of three categories: Open Space, Parks, and Other (see Tables 3, 4, and 5).

For those properties categorized as open space, it is important to assure that the city clearly states that these properties are intended to remain in an undeveloped condition in perpetuity and managed to protect and enhance their natural values and provide public access as appropriate. In some cases, such as when a property has a conservation easement in place, the property is adequately protected and its intended uses well defined. In other instances, the property's status is not so clear. Therefore, City Council should take action to officially declare that all properties included within the open space inventory are intended to remain as open space.

The need for applying additional protection mechanisms, such as placing a conservation easement on the property should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Lands that are classified as parks are managed primarily for recreational use and usually contain buildings, sports fields, and other developed facilities. These properties may also have natural areas within their boundaries and contribute to the community's open space needs. However, the primary purpose of these properties is to serve the community's needs for developed recreational sites and activities.

The third category, Other Properties, includes a mixture of property types that are either intended

to serve uses other than parks and open space, or their future use has not been fully determined. Properties can be placed in this category to provide a needed level of flexibility until the best future can be determined. Once determined, the property should be classified as appropriate.

#### PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Open lands maintenance costs vary widely, depending upon a variety of factors such as the level of public access, the type of ownership held, and intended use of the land. As shown in the table below, with approximately 1946 acres of open space, the City of Steamboat Spring’s 2008 budget allots approximately \$60/acre for maintenance. (Table 11).

TABLE 11

	TRAILS	RIVER MANAGEMENT	OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT	TOTAL
PERSONNEL	\$83,627	\$15,035	\$40,515	\$139,177
OPERATING	\$63,859	\$29,021	\$76,633	\$169,513
	\$147,486	\$44,056	\$117,148	\$308,690

A comparison with other open space programs suggests that the allocation for open space management is low. For example, the Larimer County open lands program budgets \$108/acre/year for low intensity, “back country” areas (including maintenance and operations). For more intensively used areas, this annual cost increases to \$385/acre. Jefferson County reports an overall annual maintenance cost for open space of \$90/acre. Other open space programs report similar costs. These comparisons point out the need for an increase in future funding levels, particularly as the City’s inventory of open space properties increases.

As discussed earlier in this section, an important recommendation of this plan is to identify a dedicated funding source for open space and present it to the voters for their consideration. Whatever funding mechanism is selected should include a provision that a portion of the revenue raised should be reserved for maintenance and other operational costs. It’s important to keep in mind that a measure

designed solely for maintenance purposes, whether it is open space, streets, or anything else, is often a difficult proposition to present to the voters and gain their approval. It is much better to bundle the maintenance costs, including staffing needs, into the overall measure so that voters can consider the program in its entirety, particularly the types of open space that will be protected if the measure is approved.

#### TRAIL MANAGEMENT

In 2008, the City allocated \$147,486 for personnel, operations, and maintenance of approximately 43 miles of trails. This allows for \$3430/mile or \$0.65/linear foot (lf). Construction costs for 2008 have been estimated at \$135/lf for primary trails, \$100/lf for secondary trails, and \$15/lf for back-country trails.

2008 estimates for bridge design and construction are \$80,000 for a 25 foot span, \$117,500 for a 50 foot span, and \$180,000 for a 100 foot span.

#### WAYFINDING

A review of current conditions and public comment suggest that the City should implement a program to create more consistent wayfinding and interpretive signs along existing trails. This need will become even more urgent as new trails are added and existing trails extended.

#### USER EDUCATION/CONFLICTS

A result of the increasing popularity of trail use is an increase in conflicts among various types of trail users. Where major conflicts have emerged, it becomes necessary to provide parallel tracks, limit certain user types, or implement other measures. A review of the overall trail system is needed to assure that potential user conflicts are effectively managed. In addition, it has been suggested that providing more signage and educational information can help to mitigate user and resource conflicts. This material could be produced in coordination with other groups such as Yampatika, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and others.

## WINTER TRAIL MAINTENANCE

A need to determine appropriate winter maintenance for trails was also identified. Several issues have emerged on this topic, including defining maintenance practices that are best suited for cross-country skiing and other winter uses, as well as a determination of which trail segments should be plowed and remain available for walking, biking and other uses.

The City maintains its own trail system with snow removal on all primary and many secondary trails that have collected 2” or more of new snow. All private development is required to maintain their hard surface primary and secondary trails to the same standards the City uses.

## VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Voluntary community groups can play an important role in the funding and maintenance of parks and open spaces, especially in recreation-oriented areas such as Steamboat Springs. Formation of a “Friends of Steamboat Springs Parks, Trails and Open Space” group could contribute to the City’s program by raising additional funds through donations to a group that could be formed with eligibility to receive charitable donations and enable donors to take advantage of the resulting tax benefits (Section 501(c)(3)). A number of communities have successfully implemented similar programs and Steamboat Springs has the right demographics for the program to succeed.

## OSTMP UPDATE

Updates to the Open Space and Trails Master Plan should occur every 5 years unless directed otherwise by City Council and the Board of County Commissioners. Updates to existing open space and trails maps should be conducted on a regular basis, as additional open space is conserved and the trail network expands.

Please see Table 12 on the following page for a summary of implementation actions.

TABLE 12

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION TABLE

STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	COMPLETED TO DATE?
IDENTIFY AND PROTECT ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE PROPERTIES.	CITY/COUNTY	ONGOING
IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY WITHIN THE TRAIL SYSTEM.	CITY	ONGOING
STRATEGY NS-1.1B: STRENGTHEN FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS.	CITY/COUNTY	No
STRATEGY 1.2A: CONSIDER INCREASING MINIMUM SETBACKS	CITY/COUNTY	No
STRATEGY NS-4.1A: DEVELOP WETLANDS PROTECTION STANDARDS	CITY/COUNTY	No
STRATEGY NS-4.2B: PREPARE WILDLIFE HABITAT OVERLAY DISTRICT	CITY/COUNTY	CITY-NO, COUNTY-YES
STRATEGY NS-4.3A: DEVELOP A JOINT CITY/COUNTY TDR PROGRAM.	CITY/COUNTY	No
STRATEGY NS-5.1A: ADOPT ADDITIONAL VISUALLY SENSITIVE AREAS PROTECTION MEASURES	CITY/COUNTY	RIDGELINES ONLY
STRATEGY NS-6.1A: STEEP SLOPES.	CITY/COUNTY	YES
STRATEGY OS-3.1C: TRAIL DEDICATION	CITY/COUNTY	CITY-YES, COUNTY-NO
STRATEGY OS-3.1D: CASH-IN-LIEU SYSTEM FOR TRAILS	CITY/COUNTY	No
OFFICIALLY DESIGNATE OPEN SPACE PROPERTIES.	CITY	No
ESTABLISH A DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCE FOR THE OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL PROGRAM.	CITY	No
IMPLEMENT AN IMPROVED WAYFINDING PROGRAM.	CITY	No
IMPLEMENT USER EDUCATION PROGRAM TO DECREASE USER CONFLICTS.	CITY	ONGOING
DETERMINE ADDITIONAL WINTER TRAIL MAINTENANCE NEEDS.	CITY	ONGOING
CONTINUE TO SUPPORT VOLUNTEER EFFORTS FOR FUNDING AND MAINTENANCE NEEDS.	CITY/COUNTY	ONGOING



# APPENDIX

## PUBLIC MEETING I SUMMARY AUGUST 23, 2006

A public open house was held on August 23, 2006 in Steamboat Springs to seek public input on the City of Steamboat Springs Open Space and Trails Plan. At this meeting, the 28 participants were asked to evaluate a series of values, goals, issues and opportunities on trail management and planning. If they agreed with a particular statement, participants were requested to place a green dot next to it. A higher number of green dots would indicate a correspondingly higher level of agreement with that objective or issue. Participants were also requested to place a red dot next to issues they disagreed with. In the discussion that follows, the number of dots placed next to an item is shown in parentheses, where appropriate.

Meeting participants also had the option of adding new statements or concerns, which could then be rated by other meeting participants using the dot system. Alternatively, participants had the opportunity to write comments on a comment form and leave it with the open house coordinators or mail it to them. Attached is a table with all of the raw data/comments, and below is a summary of these statements and the additional comments, separated into the following categories:

- Values
- Vision
- Key Issues
- Goals
- Opportunities

### VALUES

According to the number of responses at the public open house, the type of open space most valued is “Recreation Opportunity” (17), followed by “Riparian, Wetland and River Corridors” (13), “Scenic Resources and Viewsheds” (11), “Wildlife Re-

sources” (9), “Agricultural Values” (8), and “Cultural Resources” (5), respectively. Write in comments that also reflected community values included moving toward a bicycle friendly community, keeping trails away from agricultural operations and sensitive wildlife riparian corridors, enhancing river access, and non-motorized open space.

Responses indicated that the type of trail most valued was biking, hiking, and multi-use with the number of responses almost equally distributed among these three types. There was less support and some disagreement (red dots) over equestrian trails.

Backcountry mountain trails (8), neighborhood trails (6) and winter use trails (6) received the highest level of support. Again, there was some disagreement (red dots) on the importance of equestrian trails as well as neighborhood trails.

### VISION

The community will develop a well financed and well maintained open lands program to protect the physical beauty, the open spaces, the special places, and the healthy ecosystem of the valley.

Our community will take a comprehensive and regional approach to development of a trail system, linking existing trails, giving neighborhoods access to trails, and connecting city and county trails to public lands.

Relatively few direct comments were made on the visions statements. One comment asked if protection of open space meant in perpetuity. Another stated that open spaces should be strictly designated and not allow for changes in their status (i.e., buildings, parking lots, etc.). In response to a request to identify additional elements of a vision statement, the following comments were made:

- Expand commuting opportunities, including bike lanes and school routes.

- Include education in the mission statement
- Consider adding soft-surface trails instead of concrete
- More bike trails - mountain bike and bike lanes on roads
- Quit wasting money on consulting fees
- Consider protecting the wildlife that still exists in the valley; try keeping trails and recreation away from sensitive riparian corridor areas, on all ends of town. Let the endangered ranchers also work & live in peace, without recreation and trails impacts
- Bike maps and signs throughout the town

## GOALS

Preliminary goals for the plan were also presented and meeting participants were asked to respond to each.

**Goal:** Our community will preserve and manage open space to protect the agricultural, rural, and recreation-based nature of the community and to preserve wildlife habitats and view corridors. Specific areas of focus include:

- The South Valley Area
- Along 20 Mile Road in the West of Steamboat Plan Area
- Copper Ridge, adjacent to Colorado Mountain College
- The open meadows in Strawberry Park
- Emerald Mountain
- Yampa River corridor

Of the areas identified, Emerald Mountain received the highest level of support (7). This was followed by 20 Mile Road (3) and the Yampa River corridor (3). Copper Ridge (2) and Strawberry Park (2) received a slightly lower level of support. No dots were placed next to South Valley.

**Goal:** Our community will protect its important view corridors and visually sensitive areas.

Some support was noted for expanding existing regulations to address other visually sensitive areas, such as the highway foreground zones and key viewpoint locations (3).

**Goal:** Our community will establish a permanent and constant revenue source dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of open space.

A strategy of exploring and adopting a dedicated funding source received some support from attendees (5).

In terms of specific funding strategies, support for an increase in the lodging tax was split (3 green and 2 red). No other comments on funding sources were received.

**Goal:** Our community will utilize appropriate regulatory tools to protect sensitive areas.

### *Strategies:*

- New development will not occur in the 100-year floodplains.
  - This strategy received the most support from attendees (7).
- Provide adequate buffers for riparian areas and other water bodies; develop a local wetland protection program.
  - These strategies had the same level of support from attendees. (5)
- Develop a wildlife habitat overlay district and adopt appropriate standards.
  - This strategy received minimal support from attendees (1).

**Goal:** Enhance and expand our existing City of Steamboat Springs trail system.

### *Strategies:*

- Take a comprehensive approach to the region's trail system to link existing trails as a contiguous system, give neighborhoods access to trails, and connect city and county trails and public lands.
  - This strategy received strong support (11) with very minor opposition (1).
- Identify and preserve existing informal trails used within the community.
  - This strategy received a moderate level of support (6).

- Require trail dedication.
  - This strategy received a lower level of support (3).
- Create a cash-in-lieu system for trails.
  - Attendees were heavily opposed to a cash-in-lieu system for trails (14), with only one indication of support.
- Coordinate trail planning efforts with other agencies.
  - This strategy received a moderate level of support (5).

**Goal:** Our community will continue to integrate our open space areas into the fabric of our community.

*Strategies:*

- Acquire in-town open space parcels.
  - This is a new goal based on stakeholder and TAC comments. It had a moderate level of support (5).

**Goal:** Continue to designate existing public lands as official open space.

*Strategy:*

- Create a hierarchy of open space.
  - This is a new goal based on stakeholder and TAC comments. It had a moderate level of support (8).

**Other Suggested Goals:** They are listed in order from most support to least support with the level of support noted in parentheses. Redundant goals have been combined. If there was opposition to a goal, the number of red dots is also noted.

- Maximize funding by buying land early, using conservation easements, requiring partnerships/matching and encouraging management of land by private individuals. (8)
- Open space should be dedicated/designated in perpetuity. (7)
- Focus on sustainable/context sensitive trail development (core trail not always against the river, avoid sensitive areas, use standards such as IMBA etc.). (7)

- Be proactive with open space and trail development and acquisition. (5)
  - (This was also supported in a write-in goal, with an additional comment that Routt County should make an effort to acquire some of these areas )
- Identify additional funding sources to support the program. (5)
- Sensitive areas in the area should be preserved as open space. (4)
- Need additional criterion that supports the preservation of all types of open space, not just agricultural lands. (4)
- Expand Open Space Division to support the program. (4, plus 1 red dot)
- Need to provide access if it is City-owned open space. (4, plus 1 red dot)
- Encourage public access to existing and future public lands. (3, plus 2 red dots)
- City should partner with programs and agencies such as PDR to achieve objectives. (3)
- Celebrate our City's successes by officially designating existing and newly acquired open space with markers and signage, annual reports, etc. (3, plus 4 red dots)
- Consider maintenance needs of existing and future open space. (2)
- Irrigated agricultural lands have been a high priority; need to focus on other areas, especially sensitive habitat and wildlife corridors. (2)
- Create a hierarchy of open space, some with varying degrees of public access. (1)
- Enforce existing regulations and plans, especially the Yampa River Management Plan, in relation to the appropriate intensity of use on open space parcels. (1)
- Continue to provide interpretive and educational opportunities in relation to open space properties. (1)
- Easy and convenient access to nature (close-in). (1 red dot)

Attendees were also asked to provide a list of additional goals. These are listed below, in order from

most support to least support. A notation of opposition, if any, is also noted.

- Designate Rita Valentine/Curci-Turner open space at such in perpetuity. (6, plus 3 red dots)
- Adopt-a-trail program to get local individuals and businesses involved - promote it more and educate on what role they need to play. (3)
- Improve signage for trails. (3, plus 1 red dot)
- No motorized use on Emerald Mountain. (3)
- Options for roller-skiing. (2)
- No motorized vehicles in urban trails. (2)
- Become a Bike Friendly Community - lanes, maps, signs, etc. (2)
- There are very few sidewalks in town and some subdivisions. This should be a priority so people can walk safely and not on the city streets. (1)
- Need bike trail that connects Steamboat II to SS so kids aren't biking on highway. (1)
- Limited motorized use in urban trails. (0)
- Use restaurant tax to provide money to build trails. (0)

#### KEY ISSUES

Key issues were identified by EDAW prior to the open house. These issues and the level of support or opposition is noted below, starting with those that received the most support and descending to those with the least.

- Need distinction between open space and parks (recreation), including acceptable uses. (10)
- Managing competing interests for land -affordable housing, open space, commercial versus open space. (9)
- Need better trail maintenance. (5)
- Need to limit access and development according to Yampa River Management Plan. (5)
- Need more funds and staff for management and weed control. (4)
- Should not buy property for open space and then charge for use. (3, plus 2 red dots)

- Conflict between equestrian users and bikers/hikers. (2)
- Local trails could be overused by visitors. (2)
- Restoration is needed in some areas. (2)

While attendees agreed that all of the above are rightful issues, it should be noted that the most important issue identified is to create a distinction between open space and parks, including acceptable uses. This is followed closely by managing competing interests for land.

In the write-in section, modular homes in the view corridor for Hwy. 40 at County Road 33 were identified as a potential issue (7), with support showing desire to keep this type of affordable housing out of the corridor. Attendees also stressed the need to purchase open space in the near future in order to maintain natural wildlife habitats (4). A variety of other concerns were also noted, all receiving either 1 or 2 green dots. These included concerns with building new trails in sensitive riparian areas, agricultural and private land consumption or condemnation, as well as separation of multi-use/hiking/biking trails from equestrian. If equestrian trails are addressed, it should be noted that there will be a need for groups to maintain healthy, clean trails.

Some thought should be given to differing age groups of users; retirees settling in Steamboat Springs might have different needs and accessibility concerns than a younger generation.

The Curci-Turner Open Space and Rita Valentine Park should be preserved as a single entity in perpetuity. When considering new trails, the area on the north side of Hwy. 40 in West Steamboat was called out as a growing neighborhood where additional trails would be used. One supported suggestion is to create an atmosphere of education during planning, and to enlist student input and labor in the process.

## OPPORTUNITIES

The Suggested Opportunities section was split into four categories: Open Space, Trails, Funding and Additional Opportunities. Each section is listed below in order of most support:

### Open Space

- Emerald Mountain area should be protected. (13)
- Areas between Bear River Park and Steamboat II along the Yampa River should be a priority. (5, plus 1 red dot)
- Sensitive areas should be identified and prioritized for open space acquisition/protection. (4)
- Gateway entries into Steamboat should be a priority for open space acquisition. (4)
- Close-in areas, especially near growing areas. (2)
- Elk River Valley should be protected. (2)
- Identify additional limited access areas along the Yampa River. (1)
- Yampa River (only continuous natural feature through the City) should be the biggest priority. (1)
- Protect visual corridors, including US Highway 40. (1)

### Trails

- Bike lanes should be added to roads. (14)
- Expand core trails in both directions. (11, plus 2 red dots)
- Link all City properties with trails. (9, plus 3 red dots)
- Add additional mountain bike trails. (7)
- Link trails to adjacent public lands. (6)
- Add trails to the Spring Creek area. (6)
- Add trails along railroad corridors. (6, plus 2 red dots)
- Construct Emerald Mountain Bike and Trail Loop. (5)
- Add new loop trail in the Fish Creek areas. (5, plus 1 red dot)

### Funding

- Need to redirect the lodging tax to open space which has been shown that this is one of the reasons why people come here. (13)
- GOCO Funds (8)
- City General Fund (8)
- Development should have to put in public trails and maintain them (8)
- User fee for open space (pay to play ok) – for maintenance? (7)
- Ski area donation program (6)
- Private donations (people are will to donate funds or land) (4)
- Smart Wool donation program (3)
- PDR funding (1 to 1.2 mil a year) (3)
- IMBA funding (2)
- The Nature Conservancy (2)
- CDOW (2)
- Yampa River Legacy Project Funding (1)
- TEA21, new SAFETEA-LU Funds (1)
- Need a clear trail hierarchy. (1)
- Historic preservation grants (1)
- Fishing is Fun (1)
- Trout Unlimited (1)
- Create a sales tax. (7 red dots)
- Prioritize sales tax spending.
- Create a tax on bicycle rentals/sales to fund trail maintenance and construction. (6 red dots)
- Agricultural preservation funds (0)

### Additional Opportunities

- Any subdivision must extend (sic) trail to the subdivision. (6, plus 2 red dots)
- Try putting the west trails through the neighborhoods where they are needed - not in wildlife areas like the riparian corridor. (3)
- Become a BFC (Bicycle Friendly Community) - City Council supports. (1)
- Purchase of property on Hwy. 40 corridor to link trail in lieu of private property trespass. (1)
- Extra density for LPS if allow public access to trails and parks. (0)

- Adopt by ordinance public lands that are currently serving as open space. (0)
- A table or map classing each open space. (0)
- Consider that some of your favorite “open space view areas” have no access, and that is okay - that’s why they’re still “open space” - private agricultural lands. (0)
- No existing subdivision currently without designated easements should have to comply/add trails. (2 red dots)

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

JULY 26TH, 2006

### STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVES INCLUDED:

- Property owners (x 2)
- Routt County Riders
- Yampa Valley Fly Fishers
- PDR Program (x 2)
- Soil Extension Office

### KEY ISSUES

- Need better trail maintenance
- Conflict between equestrian users and bikers/hikers
- Managing competing interests for land -affordable housing, open space, commercial versus open space
- Should not buy property for open space and then charge for use
- Need distinction between open space and parks (recreation), including acceptable uses
- Need to limit access and development according to Yampa River Management Plan
- Need more funds and staff for management and weed control
- Local trails could be overused by visitors
- Restoration in some areas is needed

### GENERAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Need open space close-in growing areas
- Link City properties by trails

- Provide public access to private trails (not permitting any more private trails) on subdivisions/new developments
- Link trails to adjacent public lands
- Maintenance needs to be incorporated into planning (how do we fund this?)
- Commitment / promises – open space that is dedicated should be in perpetuity
- Promote front-loading, acquire early, while land is cheaper--Alternate view point: Promote conservation easements and other methods so purchase and management is done by individual; city shouldn’t be buying more open space lands
- Need a hierarchy of open space, some with public access and some with none.
- Need some limited access areas, especially along river
- Sensitive areas should be prioritized for open space acquisition/protection
- Need to enforce Yampa River Plan concept along the river corridor and elsewhere where there are competing intense uses
- Balance between uses and enforcement of rules
- Need to target not just agricultural lands, but also natural areas
- Leverage funds, always have partners
- Need clear definition of the hierarchy of open space. Need detailed criteria on the environment and land use in each to assist in evaluation
- Irrigated agricultural lands have been a high priority, need to focus on other areas
- More interpretive and educational opportunities (working on interpretive sign standards)
- A priority should be wildlife corridors (need to identify them at the local levels since they are not on current maps)
- Be proactive with open space and trail development and acquisition
- Parks Department needs more staff
- Need to provide access if City owns it
- Easy and convenient access to nature (close-in)

- Need more aggressive open space program
- Need to focus on sustainable trail development
- The expansion of the core trails needs to be done in a sensitive way (not always against river, avoiding open space or areas with sensitive environments)
- City needs to be a partner in the PDR program to achieve other objectives such as access
- PDR program should require some contribution from land owner

### SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- Add additional mountain bike trails
- Officially designate existing and newly acquired open space with markers, signage, etc.
- Construct Emerald Mountain Bike and Trail Loop
- Bike lanes should be added to roads
- Promote and educate citizens on PDR / open space successes
- Emerald Mountain area should be protected
- Yampa River (only continuous natural feature through the City) should be the biggest priority
- Elk River Valley should be protected
- Gateway entries into Steamboat should be a priority for open space acquisition
- Connection to Steamboat II should be a priority
- Areas between Bear River Park and Steamboat II along the Yampa River
- Fish Creek areas (new trail loop?)
- Spring Creek areas
- Trails along railroad corridors
- Dinosaur National Park
- Expansion of core trail both ways
- Protect visual corridors
- Do we need a sales tax?
- Tax on bicycle rentals/sales to fund trails?

### KEY FUNDING SOURCES

- Yampa River Legacy Project Funding
- Ski area donation program
- Smart Wool donation program
- TEA21, new SAFETEA-LU Funds
- GOCO Funds
- City General Fund
- User fee for open space (pay to play ok) – for maintenance ?
- Need to redirect the lodging tax to open space which has been shown that this is one of the reasons why people come here
- Private donations (people are will to donate funds or land)
- IMBA funding
- Development should have to put in public trails and maintain them.
- Need a clear trail hierarchy
- PDR funding (1 to 1.2 mil a year)
- The Nature Conservancy
- CDOW
- Agricultural preservation funds
- Historic preservation grants
- Fishing is Fun
- Trout Unlimited

### OTHER NOTES

- Survey mentioned that people want additional trails and open space
- Park City should be investigated as a model community especially related to trail dedication
- Get PDR annual report
- Mountain bike trail should be build according to IMBA standards
- Mountain bike races are an important part of the recreation opportunities
- Need to add public lands (masked) to the edges of study area
- Recent successes (Fornia)
- PDR program preserved 11,524 acres in the City and County

## PUBLIC WORKSHOP II SUMMARY

### JANUARY 24, 2007

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. The trail corridor to Steamboat II should remain on the north side of the Yampa River. The best crossing of Hwy 40 is at Ski Town Campground. Don't exclude the landowners until the end.
2. Trail should not cross or use any meadows in agricultural production, especially west of Steamboat. Trail needs to be north of the river, along highway. No way in hell will it cross any of my property.
3.
  - Provide bike racks to encourage that effort.
  - With the value placed by the citizens on open space, move toward a permanent funding source.
  - Open Haymaker Golf Course for snowshoeing, cross-country in the winter.
  - Encourage tourist use of the trail system with maps and directional signage.
  - How do we encourage and educate dog owners to keep our trail system "poop-free" for more enjoyment?
  - Develop a usage plan for the Legacy Ranch – it is an undeveloped opportunity.
  - Promote use of the Mesa School for a variety of uses – money set aside to redo the walls soon. Provide an outdoor "patio" area for summer use.
4. Need sidewalks downtown – walk before bike. Love the ideas, especially Steamboat becoming a bike-friendly city and the bike to work push. But don't forget pedestrians too.
5. Great idea!
6. I'm all for it! The more open spaces, the sooner, the better!
7. Open space around Rita Valentine has a lot of wildlife – deer, bear. It's also a corridor to water for animals during drought periods. This should be studied and noted. Please preserve permanently!
8. I'd like to Rita Valentine preserved as open space vs. developed recreational use.
9. Please preserve Rita Valentine Park as open space. No development!
10. We hope the city considers existing wetlands in their development of "their" open space.
11. My major concern is that the city would condemn private property to extend the core trail. Riverside is a unique neighborhood that does not currently experience very much transient traffic. By introducing the core trail, there would be a large increase in such traffic. I would be pleased after all this time and discussion to see alternative plans. Thanks.
12.
  - The stated "goals" need to be clarified so that people will know intent and can measure accomplishments.
  - Open space concepts should be pursued separately from trails, but obviously coordinated.
  - Don't see an "open space" policy to drive the vision. Suggest OS, P&R. Write one for CC approval.
  - Personally, would like RV and 4x4 people designated open space in perpetuity.
13. I would like to see the trail thru the sanctuary open in the winter to snowshoes and hikers, just as it is in the summer. There is adequate width for a skate/skiing path as well as a separate hiking/snowshoe path. It should be multi-use, year-round. The city currently has it listed as a year-round neighborhood trail, but it isn't. Please work with the touring center to open this trail in winter. By the way, the proposed trail system looks great. Let's implement

it. (I'm very interested in helping, especially to make SS bike friendly).

14. Open space is a treasure to be preserved at all costs in this community. It's why we live here. Please protect Rita Valentine Park.

15. Understanding that the west Steamboat bike/pedestrian trail is conceptual and "TBD," on future maps depicts the trail adjacent to the highway right-of-way. Include verbiage to say the trails in west Steamboat will be placed in the most appropriate places to take advantage of efficiency, views, minimal wildlife disruption, and landowner's willingness to incorporate a trail in their development plan.

16. The city should not build another rec center. Work strategically with Health and Recreation to accomplish some or most of what the community – not the special interest group – wants. No taxes for a redundant rec center.

17. From the map, it looks like Rita Valentine Park could provide a connection to two protected open space parcels? It's surrounded by neighborhoods, so why not further protect this parcel.

18. I would like to see some space left undeveloped in town. I would like to see Rita Valentine Park changed to open space designation.

19. "Potential opportunity areas" poster designates the Rita Valentine area as "protected lands." The "Examples of City-Owned Open Space" puts it in the "park" category. What timeline is in place to clarify this, and who will make the final decision as to whether this land is protected or not?

20. No trail through private property. You need to talk to landowners first before drawing lines through private property. No access by the river – disruptive to wildlife and agricultural.

21. I didn't see any plans for a bike lane on Hwy 129 to Columbine. A bike lane would open safe

access to the bike/hiking trails on/off 129. Is it possible to add this to the overall plan? Before it's too late?

22. We continue to support open space in our community now more than ever with ongoing development pressures; better bike facilities are very important as are safe walking areas. I see too many people walking along Fish Creek, Hilltop, Tamarack with substandard shoulders; this isn't safe.

23.

- The city should aggressively protect city-owned lands that are not protected through conservation, easement, etc.
- Trails that are off the highway have better user experiences.
- Connectivity of trails in town to neighborhood areas and the trail system as a whole is really important. Connectivity to West Steamboat is important to do soon.

24. What about forming a "Friends of Steamboat Springs Parks, Trails and Open Space" group to raise funds (additional) for the city's parks, trails and open space. Friends groups have their own 501 C status and can accept (and solicit) donations. Other communities have done this with great success. Steamboat has the demographics to succeed at this.

25. West of existing trail – Riverside – please retain wetlands and habitat there. There are bald eagles, ducks, cranes, fox, skunks, owls, porcupines, deer that enjoy that refuge. The area is healthy. Don't wreck it. Put the path up by the highway or cross the highway to be closer to the subdivisions.

26. As a Riverside resident, I would like to state my opposition to the bike trail going through our subdivision. Firstly, the city-owned greenbelt park was donated with stipulations to be left natural with no improvements, and be a neighborhood park, not a community park. Secondly, the park is a very healthy riparian area and wetlands that is perfect habitat for wintering eagles, game bird resting area, overall bird habitat, and home for mink beaver,

muskrat and once an otter siting. I also owned river frontage into the middle of the river and vehemently oppose the trail going my land. There are more options to run the trails along Hwy 40, like was done by the curve (Ace) sidewalk, and/or a trail along 20-Mile Road is one of the most scenic in the county and would be great for 10-speed bikes.

27.

- Please add Emerald Mountain “loop” Trail, Howelson Hill, Corridor Trail, Elk Lane, Agate Creek, Ridge Trail, BLM land, Orton Meadows, Howelson.
- Use blobs for open space areas.
- Connectivity for trails.
- Conserve open space on Copper Ridge – highly visible backdrop for community and some trails.
- Especially important to conserve ridgelines and skylines.

28. Suggest separate consideration of open space and trails to give each its fair review and due diligence. To a significant extent, they are independent and can be addressed individually. While there is an overlap in constituencies, there probably are folks who would see one of the two as more important to them (see survey results).

29. Core Bike Trail – would like to see it expanded to the west, all the way to Milner. As is, you can bike the whole trail and back in one hour. Need a trail system that goes somewhere. Going east to Haymaker would also be good. Need to widen county roads for bike lanes.

30. Need to keep Rita Valentine Park as a permanent open space area. Need for parks and recreation and city to designate as open space in perpetuity. This site should not be available for any development. We need in-town open space. Recreation center needs to be located in core area, like Howelson Hill, or let Old Town Hot Springs expand.

31. Bike Route:

- Additional access to Lincoln Street businesses.
- Underpath vs. 3rd Street / safer crossing of Lincoln.
- Connection to West Steamboat Village.
- Signage/lane for bike routes.
- Safe
- Pursue land acquisition of property to connect town to National Forest or Copper Ridge.

32. Another concern – downtown mega mansions, Lithia Springs, the \_\_\_\_\_ front, etc. etc.

33.

- Good to see definition of open space to be that parcel is permanently protected. City must classify its key open spaces accordingly. Also important to classify Rita Valentine Park (land donated to the city as parkland, i.e., passive park) to be open space – as it is now.
- City owns some wonderful historic resources in its parks:
- Howelson Hill ski area is listed on the Routt County and Colorado Historic Register – a unique treasure . . . yet the HH ski map makes no mention of this nor is it interpreted (yet) on this site.
- Lithia Springs on the Routt County Historic Register – not mentioned in city’s information. It should be!!
- City owns classic log cabins in Little Toots Park – lots of history, but not on a historic register (yet!).
- Map of city’s historic properties (mostly on parkland/open space) starting with Mesa School/Legacy Ranch/Howelson Hill Ski Area / Lithia Springs. \_\_\_\_\_, including (non-park) Carver Power Plant and Elkins House.
- Spend money providing consistent way-finding and interpretive signs on existing trails. Use development of new trails/parcel purchases as incentive for public support

for new permanent funding source for this investment/maintenance.

- Hopefully a change in political climate at county will bring about willingness for county to start funding trails. Do you have stats/comparisons of what other counties do in Colorado? Also, good to have comparisons with what other cities spend per acre for maintenance of open space – otherwise, the public is clueless!!
- Important to create a consistent catalog/inventory of city-owned property so that identification in the future of these parcels isn't so difficult! Probably requires CC resolution once it has been created / corrected / approved.

### **MEETING WITH DON TAYLOR, FINANCE DIRECTOR, CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS JANUARY 24, 2007**

City currently has a 4.5% sales tax. When County and State added in, total becomes 8.4%.

Sales tax receipts increased 12% between 2005 and 06.

For projection purposes, a 5% annual increase is reasonable.

A large portion of sales tax receipts comes from non-residents, at least 50-60%. Further, year-round residents pay only about 25% of sales tax proceeds; other portion is paid by part-time residents.

A dedicated sales tax of ½ cent generates about \$2.25 million, ¼ cent about \$1.125 million, etc.

An impact fee discussion in the community in 2001 resulted in a switch to an excise tax, which now generates about \$1million/year. This funding is utilized for all types of capital needs, including trails

and open space. This may lead some residents of the community to feel that they are already paying for open space and not support further funding mechanisms.

The county-wide purchase of development rights program was renewed last November by the voters. It assesses 4-6 mils county-wide.

The City currently has no property tax levy, one of only a handful of cities in Colorado that have no mil levy. Overall mill levy in Routt County is about 50 mils. A 1 mil increase results in about \$440,000/year, including only the assessment within Steamboat Springs city limits. The business community in Steamboat is sensitive about mill levy increases, fearing that it affects business properties disproportionately due to the Gallagher Amendment.

Lodging tax is currently 3%, with 1% of that going to City for “above ground amenities”. It has been used for improvements to the golf course and some recreation improvements. Not intended for open space. Other 3% goes to a marketing/promotion district. This could be increased, but politics may be sticky.