



Planning Commission City Hall - 1711 Miner Street, Idaho Springs, CO 80452 Agenda

Thursday, May 7, 2026

Tel: (303) 567-4421 Fax: (303) 567-4955

Video from Meetings are viewable on the City's Website.

**You must join the Zoom Meeting
(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82200987574>) passcode 627970 to participate in a meeting remotely.**

- 1. Call to Order (6:00 PM)**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Agenda Approval**
 - a. Motion to approve the agenda of May 7th, 2026
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Conflict of Interest**
- 6. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Motion to approve the minutes of March 5th, 2026
- 7. General Updates**
 - a. Staff Update
- 8. New Business**
 - a. Planning Commission Resolution #2, Series 2026: A Resolution recommending approval of an annexation to the City of Idaho Springs certain unincorporated lands located in Section 31, Township 3 South, Range 72 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, and Section 25, Township 3 South, Range 73 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, in Clear Creek County, Colorado, to be known as the "VCMP Annexation to the City of Idaho Springs", and zoning the approximately 23.36 acres located in Section 31, Township 3 South, Range 72 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, and Section 25, Township 3 South, Range 73 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, Clear Creek County, Colorado, and known in part as the 'VCMP Annexation to the City of Idaho Springs,' as Planned Development (PD).
- 9. Old Business**
- 10. Adjourn**
- 11. Work Session Agenda**

- a. Comprehensive Plan Update
- b. Exterior Lighting Regulations
- c. Parking Discussion

In-person and remote meeting public attendance and participation instructions:

Participation

- To provide scheduled public comment, either in person or remotely, please fill out and return the Public Comment Form on the City's website. All requests must be submitted to the City Clerk (cityclerk@idahospringsco.com) by 6 p.m. (Six) the Wednesday before the scheduled meeting.
- To provide unscheduled public comment, please join the Zoom Meeting, identify yourself with your full first and last name, and use the "Raise Hand" feature to indicate your desire to speak.

General Guidelines

- Each public comment, whether scheduled or unscheduled, is limited to three (3) minutes.
- The Commission typically does not provide feedback during public comment sessions.
- If you would like to provide materials for the Commission to review along with your Comment, please sign up for Scheduled Public Comment and provide those materials to the City Clerk by the Wednesday Deadline.



**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES - DRAFT
March 5th, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ursula Cruzalegui called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present were Vice Chair Ursula Cruzalegui, Caitlin Maxwell, Alternate Judy Murphy, Chuck Howard and Alternate Jefferson Lich. Kent Slaymaker was present via ZOOM but the audio was not working so he arrived at the meeting in person at 6:09 pm. Chair Cindy Olson was absent. Staff present were Community Development Planner Dylan Graves, Assistant City Attorney Nick Klein, and Deputy City Clerk Wonder Martell.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Maxwell moved to approve the agenda as amended by moving Item # 3- Swearing in reappointed members to item 10. B to allow Commissioner Slaymaker to arrive in person to be sworn in. Commissioner Slaymaker will not participate in any vote on this agenda until after the swearing in. Commissioner Murphy seconded, second followed by an all in favor voice vote (Commissioner Slaymaker abstaining from the vote).

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Commissioner Howard moved to re-elect Cindy Olson to Chair of the Idaho Springs Planning Commission and to re-elect Ursula Cruzalegui to Vice Chair of the Idaho Springs Planning Commission. Commissioner Murphy seconded, second followed by an all in favor roll call vote. (Commissioner Slaymaker abstaining from the vote).

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There was no conflict.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Howard moved to approve the minutes from February 5th, 2026. Commissioner Lich seconded. Second followed by an all in favor voice vote. (Commissioner Slaymaker abstaining from the vote) Motion carries.

GENERAL UPDATES

Community Development Planner Dylan Graves advised the commission that he had included some recent Housing Bills in the packet, HB26-0001 Housing Developments on Qualifying Properties and HB26-1114 Allowed Minimum lot size for Subject Jurisdictions for the commission to be aware of and to keep them updated. Mr. Graves asked the commission if they had any questions about his staff report. Vice Chair Cruzalegui asked Mr. Graves if these house bills were proposed bills? Mr. Graves advised the commission that the bills were currently being discussed, and they may take a few months to pass so there may be some changes in between.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Hearing: Resolution No. PC 1 – A resolution of the Planning Commission for the City of Idaho Springs Colorado recommending Approval of the Columbus Placer Minor Subdivision Plat.

Vice Chair Cruzalegui opened the public hearing at 6:13 pm and staff for their presentation.

STAFF - Mr. Graves went over his staff report for the commission. This is a request for a Minor Subdivision to create five (5) lots at 3669-3673 Chicago Creek Road (known as Blackstone Rivers Ranch) in accordance with Article XI of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC). If approved, the existing property would be subdivided into five properties. The zoning on-site is C-3: Commercial Interchange Development. This is not proposed to change. Existing uses on-site include the Blackstone Rivers Ranch event venue, owned and operated by the applicants, Rachel and Zuri Betz. This property was annexed into the City in 2007.

One purpose of the subdivision is to encourage the development of additional lodging in the area but that is not owned or operated by Blackstone Rivers Ranch. By subdividing the property, a lot could be sold to a developer who could provide additional lodging for event guests or complimentary businesses in this vicinity. Any future development requests would be subject to their own approval processes, possibly including a Final Development Plan (FDP).

Mr. Graves advised the commission that he did not receive any negative feedback from any of the referral agencies regarding this subdivision request. Mr. Graves mentioned that there is suitable access, suitable utilities, the lots created would meet all applicable criteria. Staff recommends approval and there are no conditions in place at this time.

APPLICANT – Rachel Betz 3669 Chicago Creek Road, Idaho Springs CO 80452 – Ms. Betz advised the commission that lot 1 is the current event space and that the driver of this subdivision is because they are looking for partners to build more lodging in partnership with Blackstone Rivers Ranch. Ms. Betz advised the commission that the building envelope was already approved for them to build an 18 room boutique hotel They are interested I maybe a spa, a fitness center to take the property to the next level and to enhance the current commercial operations of Blackstone Rivers Ranch and to keep people in town for longer than 1 day. All proposed uses stay within the current zoning of the property and they would like to begin marketing one of those uses.

COMMISSION COMMENTS/QUESTIONS - Commissioner Murphy asked if any of these lots would be zoned commercial? Ms. Betz advised they would not as they are all zoned commercial. Mr. Graves advised the commission that single family would require re-zoning, but multi-family could be done but that would require a Final Development Plan (FDP). Ms. Murphy mentioned that she was hesitant about any more Metro-Districts and would this turn into one. Ms. Betz asked for the definition of a metro-district. Ms. Betz also stated that when this property was annexed into the City they were required to connect to the City water and sewer, so they have no need to develop any utilities as they are already connected to water and sewer.

Vice Chair Cruzalegui closed the public hearing at 6:30 pm

MOTION

Commissioner Maxwell made the motion approving Resolution # PC1 Series 2026 A recommendation of the Planning Commission of the City of Idaho Springs Colorado recommending approval of the Columbus Placer Minor Subdivision Plot, Commissioner Howard Seconded, second followed by an all in favor roll call vote.

SWEARING IN REAPPOINTED MEMBERS

Deputy City Clerk swore in re-appointed member Kent Slaymaker for an additional term on Planning Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Cruzalegui Adjourned the meeting at 6:33 pm to go into work session.



City of Idaho Springs
1711 Miner Street
P.O. Box 907
Idaho Springs, CO, 80452-0907
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www.idahospringsco.com

Community Development Planner Communication

Meeting Date: May 7, 2026
To: Idaho Springs Planning Commission
From: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
RE: Community Development Report

Comprehensive Plan To-Do List Items:

After this meeting, where we are discussing the Environment, Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development/Tourism sections, we will have reviewed each individual element of the Plan.

I am working on incorporating edits from each section based on our conversations. I will have those edits done ahead of the June Planning Commission meeting. From there, I will publish the full document on the website and give everyone a chance to review until the July meeting. I will also advertise this as a review for the public so that they can provide comments, if they wish.

At the July meeting, I would like to get all feedback to put together a final draft. If needed, I will bring it back to Planning Commission once more, but if we are broadly happy with it July, I will move forward to City Council. The Plan should be complete by the end of August as long as there are not major changes needed in June or July.

There are several items I need to address in addition to the edits to the text. These include:

- Photos, graphics, and formatting
- Index (updated maps from the 2017 Plan)
- Executive Summary
- Implementation Schedule for Objectives

These are relatively minor things, but they will take some time to put together. That said, I think I can accomplish all of these final items in the timeline presented above.

IDAHO SPRINGS PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: May 7, 2026	Page 1 of 3	Item: Planning Commission Resolution #2, Series 2026
Presented by: Dylan Graves Community Development Planner		

PROPOSAL:

This is an application to annex the properties acquired as part of the land exchange between the City and the Young Ranch that was approved by City residents in November, and zone them into the Planned Development (PD) zoning that the rest of the park is zoned. The land exchange resulted in the acquisition of approximately 23.36 acres that will be added into the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) by annexing the lands into the City and zoning the parcels. The annexation of city-owned property does not require Planning Commission review or a public hearing; however, the zoning of the property does. The first reading of the annexation and zoning ordinances is set to occur on May 11, 2026 at the City Council regular meeting. Pending any changes recommended by Planning Commission, the second reading of the ordinances and public hearing for the zoning will take place on June 8, 2026.

BACKGROUND:

The subject properties first must be annexed into the incorporated Idaho Springs city limits. Because the City owns the properties, the process requires a simple ordinance. Once the properties not currently within city limits are annexed into the City of Idaho Springs, all properties associated with the land exchange will need to be zoned in accordance with Sec. 21-23 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC).

The parcels to be zoned are 23.36 acres in size. The parcels have been part of the Young Ranch and have historically been used as ranch lands and agriculture, though they are zoned Mountain Residential – Single Family (MR-1). The intention is to combine the parcels with the existing VCMP property to be used in accordance with park and recreation uses. The key benefits of this land exchange were the creation of a clear boundary along Gilson Gulch between VCMP and the Young Ranch property.

The zoning proposed by this zoning application is Argo / Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development (PD). This PD zoning covers the approximately 472-acre mountain park and regulates development within the park and its vicinity. The land coming into the City will be part of Use Area 3 of the PD, which allows for recreational uses as permitted in the City’s Parks & Recreation (P) zoning district.

PLANNING COMMISSION ROLE:

The ISMC requires every application for a zoning application to go before the Planning Commission for review and recommendation of either approval or denial to Council. The City Council will act on a zoning request via ordinance. The annexation does not require Planning Commission review, since they are city-owned parcels, but we are including the annexation in the resolution and city staff recommend that the parcels not already in city limits be annexed into city limits to create a clear jurisdictional boundary for the park.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL – ZONING:

Per Sec. 21-108(F) of the ISMC, when reviewing the requested zoning application, the Commission may consider the following factors:

1. Whether the proposed zoning is in conformity with the Comprehensive Plan;

Given that the existing property was not located within City Limits when 2017 City of Idaho Springs Comprehensive Plan, no land use or character area was designated for the subject site. However, the area is already adjacent to the Mountain Park, which is an area designated in the Comprehensive Plan as “Parks – Open Space.” Zoning the land in question into the PD fits within this Comprehensive Plan determination.

2. Whether there have been material changes in the character of the neighborhood such as to justify a change in the zoning.

The property is being annexed into the City of Idaho Springs and historically has been within Clear Creek County’s jurisdiction. The existing use of the site is agricultural in nature, having been used as grazing land as part of the Young Ranch. Bringing the land into the PD zoning ensures that it remains in a similar use – parks, recreation, and open space.

3. Whether the proposed rezoning will tend to preserve and promote property values in the neighborhood.

Staff believe that the rezoning will preserve and promote property values in the area. The property in question will allow for a clear boundary between the park and adjacent property owners, reducing the potential for impacts on either property owner.

4. Whether development of the property in accordance with the proposed rezoning will be in harmony and compatible with surrounding land uses and present development in the area.

The proposed development of the parcels – recreational trails and open space – is in harmony with surrounding land uses and present development in the area.

5. Whether the proposed rezoning will affect traffic congestion in the area.

The proposed rezoning is not anticipated to affect traffic congestion in the area, since there is no direct access to the city or county roadway system.

6. Whether the proposed rezoning will promote the public welfare.

The proposed zoning will promote the public welfare by reducing the potential for people to trespass on private lands, and could also allow additional recreational trails to be built in the Mountain Park, which could improve recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

7. Whether denial of the proposed rezoning would impose an undue hardship on the owner.

Staff believe that undue hardship on the owner could occur if the proposed rezoning is denied, as the parcels are intended to be used for the same purposes as the land immediately adjacent that is already zoned as part of the PD.

STAFF ANALYSIS OF PROPOSAL:

Staff believe that the zoning application conforms with the necessary criteria for approval of a rezoning application.

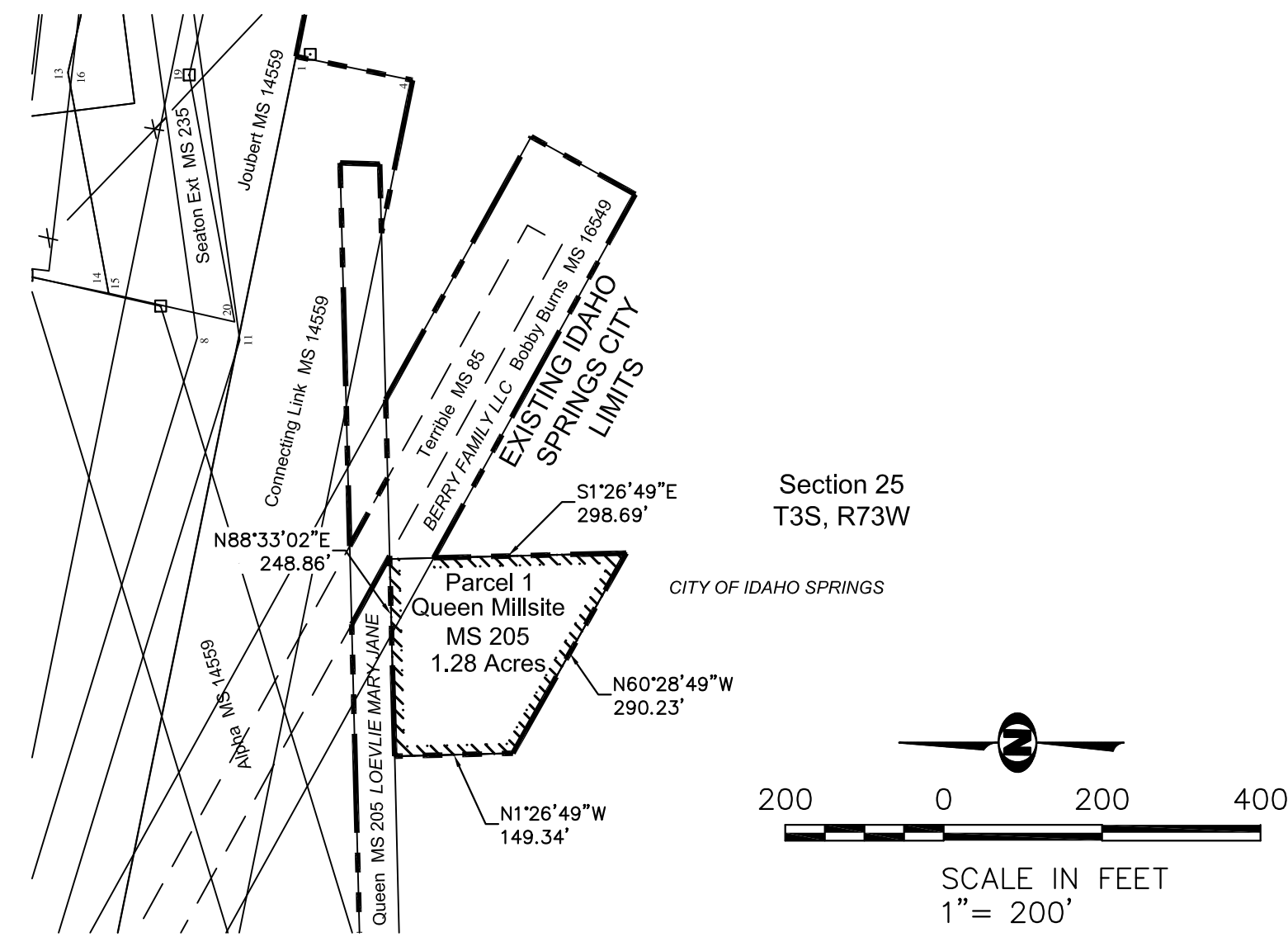
PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend that the Planning Commission approve Planning Commission Resolution #2, Series 2026 concerning the annexation and zoning of properties into the Argo / Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development.

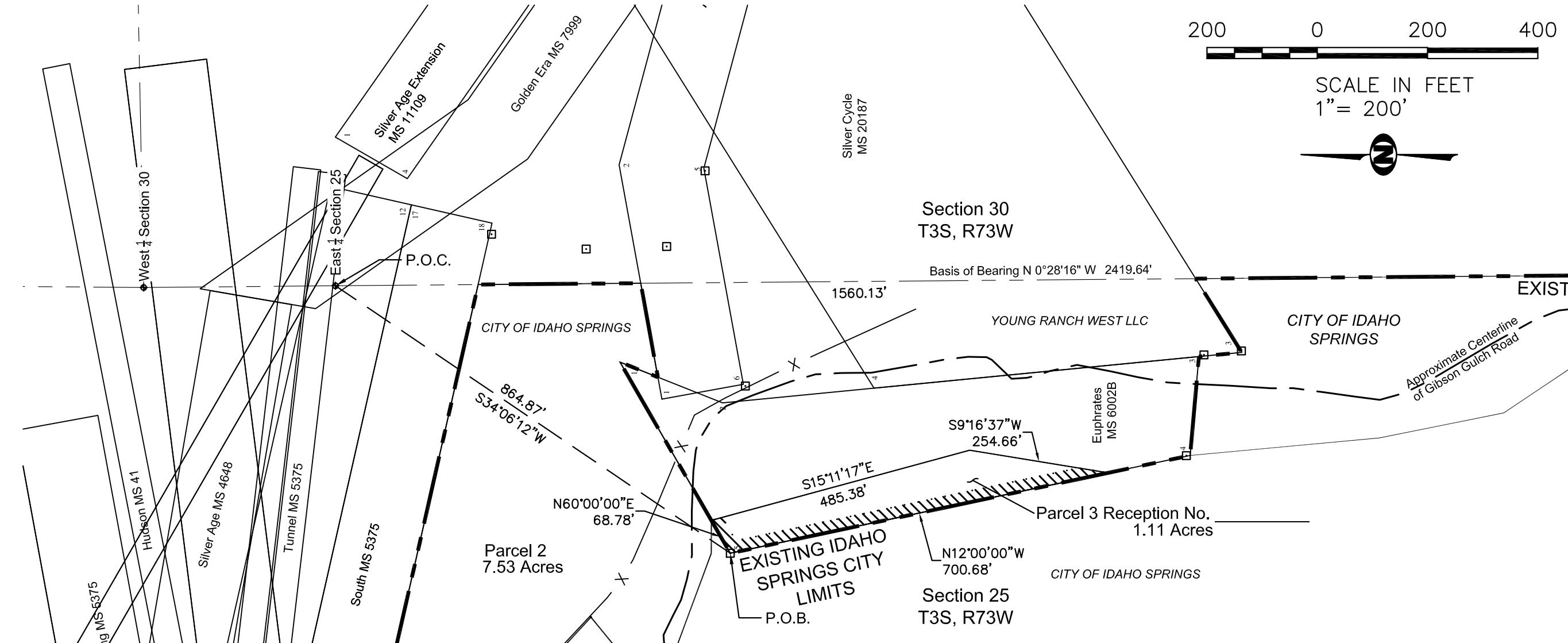
VCMP Annexation to the City of Idaho Springs

PARCELS IN SECTION 31, T3S, R72W AND SECTION 25, T3S, R73W, 6th P.M.
CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS, COUNTY OF CLEAR CREEK, STATE OF COLORADO

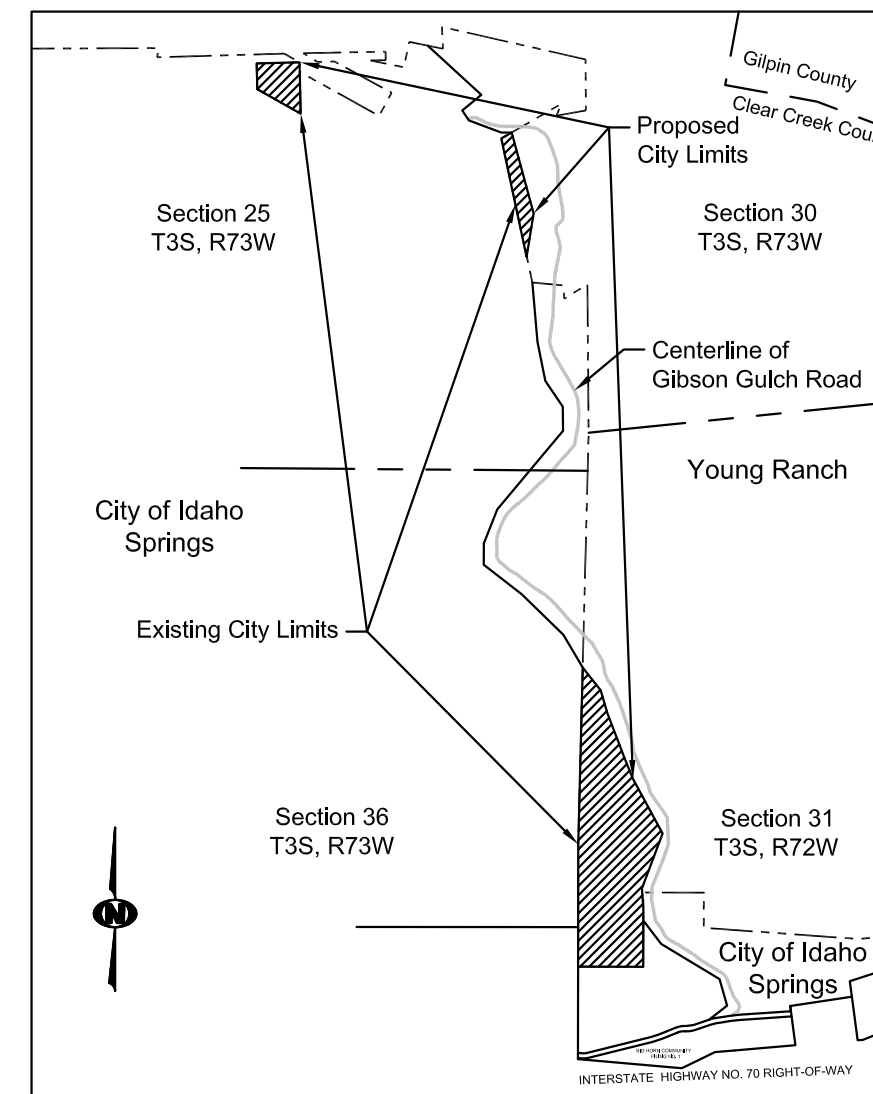
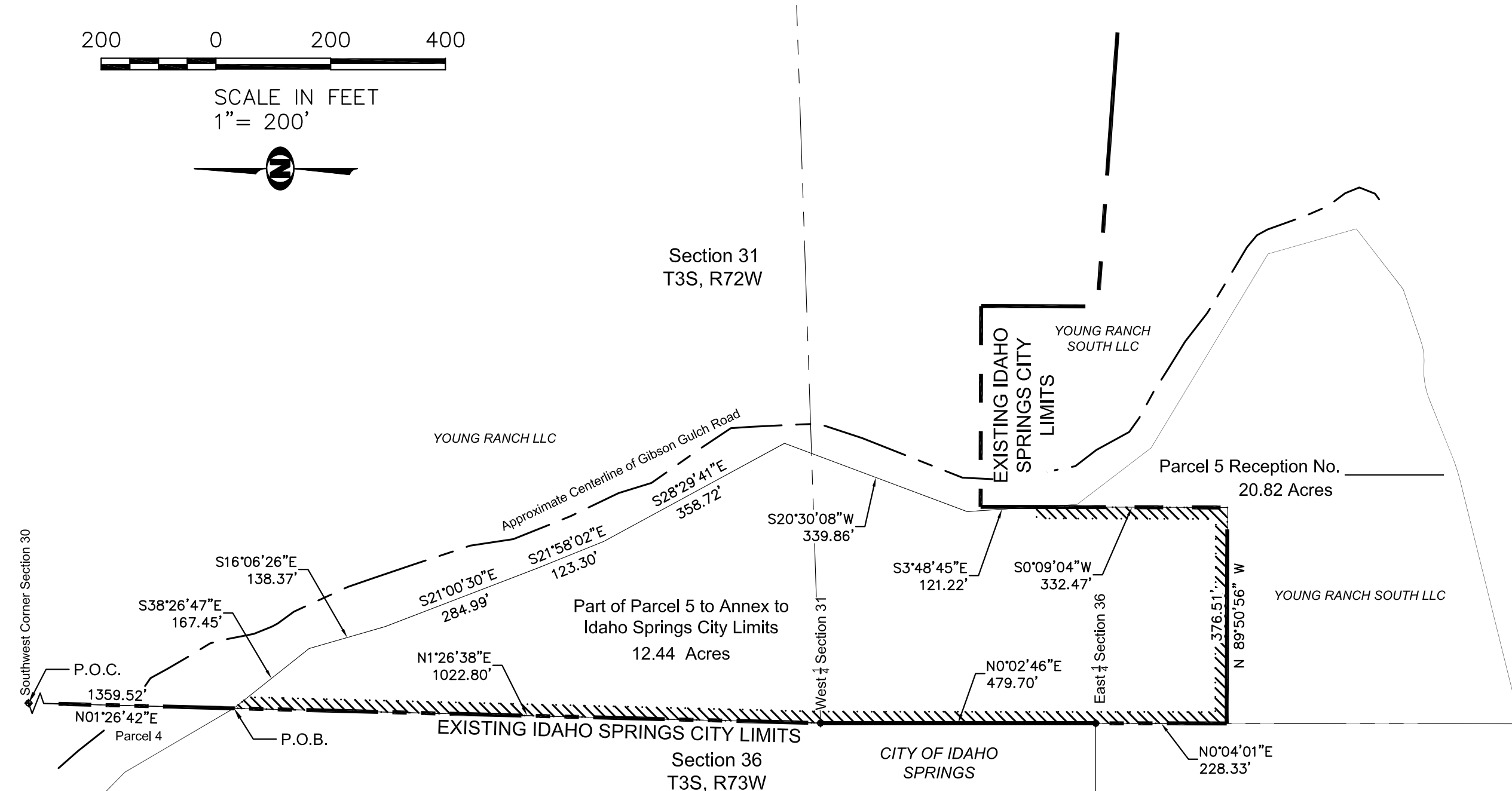
PARCEL 1



PARCEL 3



PART OF PARCEL 5



VICINITY MAP
NO SCALE

Parcel Descriptions:

Parcel 1

The Queen Millsite, U.S. Mineral Survey No. 205, located in the SW 1/4 of Section 25, Township 3 South, Range 73 West of the 6th PM, Clear Creek County, Colorado, containing 55748 square feet or 1.28 acres, more or less.

Parcel 3

A parcel of land located in the Euphrates Mill Site, US Mineral Survey No. 6002B in the southeast 1/4 of Section 25, Township 3 South, Range 73 West of the 6th PM, Clear Creek County, Colorado, and being more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the East 1/4 corner of said Section 25, T3S, R73W, being a found BLM Brass Cap from whence the Southwest corner of Section 30, T3S, R72W being a found BLM Brass Cap, bears S 0°28'16\"/>

Thence North 60° 00' 00\"/>

Part of Parcel 5

A parcel of land located in Section 31, Township 3 South, Range 72 West of the 6th PM, Clear Creek County, Colorado, and being more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the Southwest corner of Section 30, T3S, R72W being a found BLM Brass Cap from whence the East 1/4 corner of said Section 25, T3S, R73W, being a found BLM Brass Cap, bears N 0°28'16\"/>

Thence South 38° 26' 47\"/>

Thence along the existing Idaho Springs City Limits the following four (4) courses:
 1. South 00° 09' 04\"/>

Contiguity Statement Parcel 1:

The above described land is contiguous to the City of Idaho Springs and meets the requirements set forth in Colorado Revised Statutes 1973, 21-132-104-(1) (a) that one-sixth or more of the perimeter to be annexed is contiguous with the annexing municipality.

- Total perimeter considered for annexation = 987.12'
- One-sixth of total perimeter required for annexation = 155.24'
- Perimeter contiguous with existing city limits = 931.46'

Contiguity Statement Parcel 3:

The above described land is contiguous to the City of Idaho Springs and meets the requirements set forth in Colorado Revised Statutes 1973, 21-132-104-(1) (a) that one-sixth or more of the perimeter to be annexed is contiguous with the annexing municipality.

- Total perimeter considered for annexation = 1,509.50'
- One-sixth of total perimeter required for annexation = 251.58'
- Perimeter contiguous with existing city limits = 769.44'

Contiguity Statement Part of Parcel 5:

The above described land is contiguous to the City of Idaho Springs and meets the requirements set forth in Colorado Revised Statutes 1973, 21-132-104-(1) (a) that one-sixth or more of the perimeter to be annexed is contiguous with the annexing municipality.

- Total perimeter considered for annexation = 3,973.71'
- One-sixth of total perimeter required for annexation = 662.29'
- Perimeter contiguous with existing city limits = 2,439.80'

Owner's Certificate:

Owner _____

Signed this _____ day of _____, 2025

State of Colorado)
) SS
 County of Clear Creek)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Witness hand and official seal
 My commission expires _____
 Notary Public

Surveyor's Certification:

I, Douglas L. Howell, a Professional Land Surveyor registered in the State of Colorado, hereby certify that this annexation map was made in accordance with applicable standards of practice, was prepared under my responsible charge, and is accurate to the best of my professional knowledge, information, and belief. This is not a guaranty or warranty, either expressed or implied.

Douglas L. Howell, Professional Land Surveyor
 Colorado P.L.S. No. 20140
 For and on behalf of His Consultants, Inc.



County Recorder's Certificate:

This plat was filed for record in the office of the County Clerk and Recorder of Clear Creek County this day of _____, 2025, at _____ m., in book _____, at page _____, reception number _____.

Clerk and Recorder

Approval Certificate:

Approved for filing by the City of Idaho Springs this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Attest:

Chuck Harmon, Mayor _____
 Diane Breece, City Clerk _____

State of Colorado) SS
 County of Clear Creek)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____, 2025

Witness hand and official seal
 My commission expires _____
 Notary Public

LEGEND:

□ found original stone

VCMP Annexation to the City of Idaho Springs

His Consultants, Inc.

Lakewood, Colorado
 720-273-9940

DRAWN BY: dec	CHECKED BY: dlh
DATE: 9/12/2025	SCALE: shown
FILE NAME: YR Land Swap Claims	SHEET NO. 1 of 1

**CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS
PLANNING COMMISSION
Clear Creek County, Colorado**

Resolution No. PC 2, Series 2026

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS, COLORADO RECOMMENDING ANNEXATION OF 23.38 ACRES OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY INTO THE CITY AND ZONING THE SAME AS A PORTION OF THE ARGO / VIRGINIA CANYON MOUNTAIN PARK PLANNED DEVELOPMENT.

WHEREAS, the City of Idaho Springs (“City”) is processing an annexation and associated zoning application for certain City-owned properties that were acquired as part of a land exchange between the City and the Young Ranch that was approved by City residents in November 2024; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to incorporate the City’s newly acquired parcels into the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) by annexing the lands into the City and zoning the parcels with the Argo/Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development designation; and

WHEREAS, Idaho Springs Municipal Code (“ISMC”) Sec. 21-23 requires every zoning application to go before the Planning Commission for review and recommendation of either approval or denial to the City Council (“Council”); and;

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the applicable criteria provided by ISMC Sec. 21-108(F) in reviewing the proposed zoning for the properties and desires to make findings and a recommendation to Council concerning same.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, as follows:

Section 1. The above and foregoing recitals are hereby incorporated herein as specific findings of the Planning Commission.

Section 2. Pursuant to ISMC Sec. 21-108(F), the Planning Commission finds and determines that the annexation of the subject properties into the City with a zoning designation of Argo/Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development (PD) satisfies all applicable ISMC requirements and hereby recommends approval of same by the City Council.

Section 3. Should any one or more sections or provisions of this Resolution be judicially determined invalid or unenforceable, such judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remaining provisions of this Resolution, the intention being that the various sections and provisions are severable.

ADOPTED, after public hearing, this 7th day of May 2026.

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS

Cindy Olson, Chair

ATTEST:

By: _____
Jennie Kim, City Clerk

CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT

Goal: “We will preserve water quality, protect from the effects of hazardous conditions, foster appropriate management of our natural resources, and aspire to minimize impacts from development on our community.”

People are attracted to the City of Idaho Springs because of its natural setting and resources. The surrounding mountains, the river corridors, the dark night sky, and healthy wildlife and habitat contribute to our quality of life and are important community assets which must be preserved. In addition, some natural resources, such as our water quality, present a direct impact on the health of our community and our economy.

Some of these amenities also pose significant risk from hazards. This includes wildfires, potential flood risks, landslides, and long-term impacts from historic mining activities. Many are drawn to build homes and businesses in places where risks are elevated, despite the potential loss of life and property. Often the simplest way to ensure safer communities is to prohibit building in hazardous areas. However, stopping development altogether in high-risk areas is not always feasible, and planners and local officials must balance the protection of public health and safety with other important goals such as economic development and respecting property rights.

This Plan lays out a variety of goals focused on increasing housing opportunities, promoting tourism and economic development, and otherwise continuing to appropriately develop the city. While some growth is necessary to continue to provide a high quality of life for residents and a quality experience for visitors to the city, development must be respectful of the environment and natural resources that help make the area special.

This Element develops goals and strategies that will ensure that the environment within and adjacent to the community is preserved and enhanced and allows appropriate development to occur while also protecting people and property from the impacts of environmental hazards. This Element addresses hazards, air, noise and light, and wildlife.

RELEVANT PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

- 2025 Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Clear Creek County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Upper Clear Creek Watershed Pre-Wildland Fire Planning Study
- Colorado Forest Action Plan
- Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment (2022)

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Hazard Mitigation Plans

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 gives communities the authority to prepare hazard mitigation plans to address risks to their communities. It requires that state and local governments develop, adopt, and routinely update hazard mitigation plans in order to remain eligible for pre- and post-disaster mitigation funding. Local hazard mitigation plans consolidate all the hazard-related information prepared by the community, including descriptions of potential hazards, risk assessments, identification of vulnerable populations, and mitigation strategies. Prior to 2000, federal disaster funding focused on disaster relief and recovery, with limited funding for hazard mitigation planning.

Clear Creek County participated in previous hazard mitigation plans as part of the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). The DRCOG Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan included 7 counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Clear Creek, and Gilpin) and 20 cities and towns and was approved by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VIII in 2011. In accordance with FEMA preferences for individual hazard mitigation plans for each county or community, in 2016 Clear Creek County began creation of the Clear Creek County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The Clear Creek County Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies potential hazards in Clear Creek County. The greatest threats to the City of Idaho Springs were identified as:

1. Wildfires
2. Flooding
3. Geologic hazards

Wildfires

Wildfires are of significant concern throughout Colorado. According to the Colorado State Forest Service, vegetation fires occur on an annual basis; most are controlled and contained early with limited damage. Decades of aggressive fire suppression in fire-dependent ecosystems, coupled with persistent drought, disease and insect infestation, have all converged to create a threat that is increasingly commanding both national attention and substantial resources. While originally intended to protect human settlement and forest resources, the practice of fire exclusion proved to be short-sighted and has led to the accumulation of hazardous fuels and weakened, overgrown timber, in these same “fire-dependent” regions. The Clear Creek County Hazard Mitigation Plan estimates there are approximately 200 structures within moderate to severe wildfire risk areas in Idaho Springs.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identifies Clear Creek County as at a relatively moderate risk for wildfires. The 2022 Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment (COWRA) identifies Clear Creek County as a high-risk location for wildfires, especially in the undeveloped, forested lands surrounding Idaho Springs where there are steep slopes.

In 2014 the City of Idaho Springs, in cooperation with the Forest Service, Clear Creek Office of Emergency Management and Clear Creek Fire Authority completed the City of Idaho Springs Area Community Wildfire Protection Implementation Plan (CWPP). The Plan provides an assessment of wildfire risks and hazards, analyzes wildfire risk areas within and in the vicinity of Idaho Springs, and gives specific mitigation recommendations. These recommendations include public awareness, defensible space measures, reducing structural ignitability and fire breaks in specific locations. A Wildfire Hazard Map is included with this Plan that indicates wildfire risk areas as well as specific mitigation areas. The CWPP should be consulted for specific mitigation recommendations in each identified fire risk area. This CWPP was updated in 2025 and adopted by Clear Creek County and the City of Idaho Springs. Due to the Ips Beetle and Douglas Fir Tussock Moth, trees across the county have begun dying, increasing wildfire risk. This makes mitigation efforts critical, both at the community and individual homeowner levels.

The community’s wildfire risk levels are having a substantial impact on the ability to secure homeowners’ insurance at an affordable rate, especially with several high-profile fires in the state in the recent past. Wildfire mitigation and resiliency efforts are critical to ensuring that property owners have access to insurance and are protected from high fire dangers.

Floods

The causes of floods relate directly to the accumulation of water from precipitation, rapid snowmelt, or the failure of man-made structures, such as dams or levees. Floodplains are any land area susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters from any source. Because of the steep mountain slopes and narrow valleys in Clear Creek County, as well as the preference to live near bodies of water, development tends to occur near the streams and often within the floodplain. City streets and state and interstate highways cross the floodplains and often constrict the free-flowing streams with bridges and embankments. Continuing development is expected, and pressures leading to intensified floodplain use will probably accompany such development.

There have been several significant flooding events in Idaho Springs. In 1998 and 2003 there were flash flood mudslides down Virginia Canyon that flooded basements, along with washouts of Virginia Canyon Road that occurred in 2004. A major flood event occurred in Northern Colorado in September of 2013. During this event, a number of private residence bridge and culvert crossing structures along Soda Creek Road in Idaho Springs sustained damage or were washed out. There are plans underway to begin reconstructing Soda Creek Road and upgrading drainage improvements. However, shallow flooding outside the channel will probably continue to occur in this area during major flood events.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

The NFIP makes federally backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters, and business owners in participating communities. In order to be recognized as a participating community, certain minimum requirements must be met with building permits. These include new buildings being required to be elevated to protect against damage from the 100 year floodplain, and new development not aggravating existing flood problems.

For most participating communities, FEMA has prepared a detailed Flood Insurance Study (FIS). The study presents water surface elevations for floods of various magnitudes, including the 1% annual chance flood (the 100-year flood) and the 0.2% annual chance flood (the 500- year flood). Base flood elevations and the boundaries of the 100- and 500-year floodplains are shown on Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), which are the principal tool for identifying the extent and location of the flood hazard. FIRMs are the most detailed and consistent data source available, and for many communities they represent the minimum area of oversight under their floodplain management program. In 2017, FEMA updated the FIRM Maps for Clear Creek County.

A high-level map with the most recent floodplain information has been included with this Comprehensive Plan in the appendix.

Geologic Hazards

The Clear Creek County Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies the two potential geologic hazards within the City of Idaho Springs as being landslides and subsidence.

Landslides

A landslide is a general term for a downslope movement of soil, rock, and vegetation under gravitational influence. Some of the natural causes of ground instability are stream and lakeshore erosion, heavy rainfall, and poor quality natural materials. Human activities contribute to soil instability through grading of steep slopes or overloading them with artificial fill, by extensive irrigation, construction of impermeable surfaces, excessive groundwater withdrawal, and removal of stabilizing vegetation. Landslide potential can be exacerbated in areas where development occurs on slopes of greater than 30%.

Subsidence

According to the 2013 Colorado State Hazard Mitigation Plan, “ground subsidence is the sinking of land over human caused or natural underground voids and the settlement of native low-density soils.” As mining played a significant part of Idaho Springs’ early economy, the remnant mines and the underground passages that still exist result in void spaces in the rock. These voids can then be affected by natural and man-made processes such as caving, changes in flowage, or changes in overlying rock and soil material resulting in collapse or subsidence. There have been several recorded incidents of collapse and sinkholes in Clear Creek County. Hazards from these abandoned sites are complicated by the fact that many “final mine maps” are inaccurate or incomplete (Colorado Geological Survey 2014). There are some mapped, known mine hazard areas in Colorado and in Clear Creek County. Subsidence can result in severe structural damage or even loss of life. As development pressures increase, it is possible potential development could occur in locations where mining impacts still exist. In areas where subsidence hazards may be present, geotechnical analysis should be required prior to construction. A Mining Sites and Slope Map has been included with this Comprehensive Plan.

IMPACTS TO AIR, NOISE, AND LIGHT

As already mentioned, people are attracted to the City of Idaho Springs because of its natural setting and resources. Clean air, dark night skies and quiet are significant amenities that residents and visitors expect in a mountain environment.

Air pollution is presently created by automobile and truck traffic that travels through Idaho Springs in addition to pollution created by woodburning appliances within the community. Less air pollution means increased health of residents. The majority of the noise pollution within Idaho Springs is likewise created by various activities related primarily to traffic and commercial uses found along Colorado Blvd and Miner Street. Reduction in noise pollution results in higher quality of life. Lighting along I-70, the commercial areas, headlights from improperly designed parking facilities and streetlights can interrupt sleep as well as inhibit views of the night sky. Lighting that provides security without excess light spill allows people to continue to appreciate the night sky and protects wildlife.

RESPECTING WILDLIFE

A variety of wildlife and habitat exists in and around the City of Idaho Springs. The health and survival of wildlife depend on the amount and quality of habitat. Wildlife contributes to the quality of life within the City of Idaho Springs and provides significant attraction for residents as well as visitors to the city.

As development occurs, habitat is fragmented, nesting, calving and birthing sites can be compromised, wildlife corridors are interrupted, and human / wildlife encounters increase. Of particular concern are areas identified as severe winter range. Colorado Parks and Wildlife define "Severe Winter Range" as "that part of the overall range where 90% of the individuals are located when the annual snowpack is at its maximum and/or temperatures are at a minimum in the two worst winters out of ten." Development impacts within these areas can have significant impacts to a local wildlife population. The city has an important bighorn sheep population that uses portions of the hillsides on the slopes north of the city for critical winter habitat. These areas are especially important during the breeding and calving seasons. Identifying important habitat areas and protecting them from future development ensures that wildlife continues to be respected within and around the city.

The Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse is listed as a threatened species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This mouse is commonly found in areas in or near stream channels, riparian habitats, floodplains, wetlands including wet meadows (both natural and those created by seeps from man-made structures such as dams, irrigation canals, ditches, and areas within 300 feet of 100-year floodplains associated with rivers and creeks). Elevations are typically at 7,600 feet and lower. If disturbance is proposed within 100 feet of Clear Creek in identified habitat areas, Colorado Parks and Wildlife should be contacted to determine if the disturbance areas pose a risk to the species. It is possible CPW will not allow disturbance in the most critical areas.

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has placed substantial focus on wildlife protection and preservation as part of their recent development efforts east of Idaho Springs as part of the Interstate 70 Floyd Hill project. The interstate has a major impact on wildlife and CDOT has worked to mitigate these impacts by providing wildlife fencing, safe wildlife crossings at points along the highway, and otherwise focusing on reducing wildlife impacts along the corridor. Continued collaboration with CDOT in the vicinity of Idaho Springs can ensure that wildlife is respected in our vicinity.

The City of Idaho Springs community cares deeply for its local wildlife and understands careful planning is needed to ensure that important habitat is not adversely impacted.

ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective: Development should not aggravate, accelerate, or increase the level of risk from natural hazards.

- a. Consider creation of a Hazard Overlay District that applies additional hazard mitigation/risk reduction regulations to existing zone districts, including geologic analysis and mitigation measures for development occurring in geologic hazard areas, and defensible space permits for development proposed in severe wildfire hazards areas.
- b. Working with FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers, the city will work to create clearer floodplain development regulations to ensure that property owners within a flood zone understand what is required to develop in those areas.
- c. The city will work to create wetland and navigable water buffers to ensure that development near sensitive waterways and wetland areas does not cause environmental harm.
- d. The city will work to create regulations that limit or mitigate construction on slopes of greater than 30% and other areas identified as having hazardous slopes or soil conditions
- e. We will work to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System (CRS) - this is a voluntary, incentive-based community program that recognizes, encourages, and rewards local floodplain management activities that exceed minimum standards.
- f. Coordinate with first responders to inform and educate citizens on accomplishing defensible space on private properties. This can be done through meetings, special "wildfire days" involving fire department and forest service officials, mailings, or other events.
- g. City staff will create a hazard mapping/GIS database by coordinating with USGS, Clear Creek County and CDOT to further study and map vulnerable areas.

Objective: Encourage effective management of air quality and the impacts of light and noise.

- a. Work with property owners and CDOT to create a plan to reduce the impacts of noise coming from activities along I-70. This may include the installation of berms, sound attenuating structures or fencing.
- b. Develop "dark sky" lighting regulations that would apply to the height of light poles, intensity of the luminaries, types of bulbs, light shielding, and maximum allowed foot-candles from property.

Objective: Minimize and/or mitigate impacts on wildlife, their habitats and migration corridors as development occurs.

- a. The city will work to develop regulations that require new developments to consider the existing species found within the immediate area and take actions to mitigate any potential negative impacts to wildlife.

- b. The city will encourage the use of bear-resistant containers, especially in human-bear conflict areas, working with local trash and recycling companies to provide solutions that better address wildlife interactions in the community.

Objective: Work to reduce wildfire risk and increase wildfire resiliency in Idaho Springs.

- a. Work with local homeowners to support defensible space, home hardening, and other wildfire resiliency actions on a home-by-home basis by establishing an incentive and education program to help homeowners improve their property's resiliency against wildfires.
- b. Provide educational materials and tools to local property owners to improve their understanding of local wildfire risks.
- c. The city will work with the Clear Creek Fire Authority and other agencies to promote and implement roadside mitigation actions to improve residents' ability to evacuate effectively.
- d. Work with the Clear Creek Fire Authority, Clear Creek County, USFS, and other local land management agencies to perform landscape-scale mitigation projects to link existing, mitigated areas together in alignment with USFS risk reduction goals.
- e. The city will work to adopt updated landscaping regulations that require native plant species and species that are fire/drought tolerant to reduce the risk of wildfire within the built environment.

CHAPTER 12: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM ELEMENT

Goal: “We value our local businesses, we will maintain a vibrant historic community, promote tourism as a year round destination resort and seek to accommodate a balance of land uses that create jobs to enhance our economic diversity.”

A community that offers a diverse and adequate number of jobs is necessary for economic sustainability. A healthy economy allows citizens to maintain a high quality of life and provides employment opportunities closer to home.

TOURISM ECONOMY

Idaho Springs has a predominately tourism and service-based economy with sales tax being the primary revenue generator. Recreation is a key tourism industry in the region and brings millions of people to and through Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County annually. The world class recreational opportunities of the ski industry are accessed by I-70, heavily traveled all year, with the City of Idaho Springs being the first mountain town between the Denver metro area and the high country. Over the past few years, the local economy has from a “stopover” tourism model into one that now blends outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, and community activation, and there is tremendous opportunity to continue growing this approach as we lean deeper into our rich history and the significance of this place in Colorado’s story. Idaho Springs is a year-round destination, with different attractions depending on the time of year. As a non-ski resort destination, the city is not affected by the fickle nature of seasonal snowfall or other weather-related impacts.

LOCATIONAL ADVANTAGE

Thousands of cars pass through the City of Idaho Springs daily via I-70 and capturing a higher percentage of these highway travelers remains a key focus. Approximately 20 million drivers pass through Idaho Springs via I-70 annually. The city has focused – and will continue to focus – on becoming a destination for those drivers, rather than a quick stopover.

Idaho Springs anchors the Mount Blue Sky Scenic Byway, the highest paved road in the United States, at its northern terminus, with the Idaho Springs Visitor Center serving as the official starting point. Recreational activities include scenic driving, numerous hiking opportunities, cross country skiing, mountaineering, and wildlife viewing. The city has opportunities to capitalize on this advantage, such as additional tour information, the locating of tourist services along County Road 103 (the Chicago Creek Road), and branding opportunities such as the “Gateway to Mount Blue Sky.”

Idaho Springs is also uniquely located at the bottom entrance to the Central City Parkway, one of the primary accesses to Gilpin County. The southern portion of Gilpin County contains Central City and Black Hawk, both historic gaming towns, the Central City Opera House, several museums and numerous other heritage tourism attractions. The Central City Parkway also provides access to the Peak-to-Peak Highway, numerous off-roading opportunities and the Indian Peaks Wilderness.

Within city limits, the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) and the historic downtown Miner Street commercial district, are primary draws to Idaho Springs. VCMP is a regional draw for recreation, including hiking and downhill mountain biking and gondola users. The Miner Street downtown commercial district is a draw for heritage tourism, hosting a variety of restaurants and tourism-related shops in the National Historic District.

Being so close to the Front Range, Idaho Springs is a great draw for people looking to get out of Denver and into the mountains without having to drive for hours or sit in substantial traffic. The city's recent efforts to capitalize on this locational advantage will pay dividends long-term, creating a sustainable tourism model that has a goal of bringing sustained visitation to the area without greatly impacting existing and future residents.

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY PROMOTIONS BOARD

Idaho Springs established the Business and Community Promotions Board (BCPB) in 2024. The purpose of the BCPB is to develop and suggest methods the city may employ to enhance the economic climate and overall vitality of the city, providing recommendations to the city on how to use the city's Community Promotions budget.

Some initiatives that the BCPB has undertaken since formation include:

- Visit Idaho Springs website: The city has purchased a website domain to serve as the city's clearinghouse for tourism and visitation to promote the city and bring more visitors and economic development opportunities to the city.
- Idaho Springs branding: The city has revamped its forward-facing branding to be able to better market itself as a destination in Colorado. The branding builds off the city's location in the mountains, the city's mining heritage, and outdoor recreation opportunities to create a cohesive brand that can be used for marketing and city signage.
- Wayfinding and signage improvements: Key issues that came up during the engagement process were traffic congestion, parking supply and demand, pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and circulation in the vicinity of the downtown commercial district.

- Wayfinding planning is under way to address these concerns and will continue to be a focus during the next few years.

These initiatives seek to use partnerships amongst businesses from various industries to grow all businesses in a responsible way that seeks long-term vitality by focusing on infrastructure that is readily recognizable across scales (local, regional, state-wide) to get people where they need to go efficiently.

MINER STREET MARKETPLACE AND HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DOWNTOWN

To combat an economic downturn that plagued many communities during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the city and its businesses established the Miner Street Marketplace, which operates seasonally from early May until early November. The Miner Street Marketplace transforms Miner Street from 14th Avenue and 17th Avenue into a pedestrian area that lends itself to numerous events and activations.

As part of the Miner Street Marketplace, the city adopted a Communal Outdoor Dining Area (CODA). The CODA is located along Miner Street from 14th Avenue to 17th Avenue and allows for activities, including alcohol sales and consumption, on the city street and sidewalks along these three blocks. This has allowed for food and beverage establishments to establish outdoor dining areas along Miner Street, creating a lively, activated streetscape in the spring, summer, and autumn months and is especially valuable when there are events.

LOCAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

Service Jobs and the Lack of Affordable Housing

The median price of a home in Idaho Springs is approximately \$500,000, which is out of reach of most of those employed in the Idaho Springs service industry. Most current Idaho Springs residents commute out of Clear Creek County for their jobs, and most Idaho Springs employees commute into Clear Creek County from housing elsewhere in the state. Finding enough qualified employees for the service industry jobs is often difficult due to the lack of affordable housing. The city has committed to improving the area's housing situation, committing to the state's Proposition 123 initiatives to bring more affordable housing to Colorado and make things easier – and cheaper – for developers to invest in the area. The city realizes that affordable housing is key to a vibrant, sustainable economy by allowing local employees to live in the city; reduce the need to commute to the city by car; and maintain a high quality of life for residents and employees. Economic growth and quality of life are inextricably linked, and high-quality, attainable housing is a critical avenue to ensuring both important city priorities are maintained. The city is focused on a “work here, live here” vision to improve housing availability and opportunity for residents and employees. By addressing housing need to allow more workers to live in the community, economic development can also improve quality of life for residents.

IDAHO SPRINGS DOWNTOWN PLAN

In 2021, Idaho Springs adopted a new downtown plan to serve as a guide for downtown improvements for the next 15 to 20 years.

The Plan was adopted because there was no existing, specific plan for the downtown area; parking capacity had become a growing concern for the downtown area; CDOT had pledged money to go towards a mobility hub and parking improvements to improve public transit options in the city; CDOT awarded the city a “Revitalize Main Street” grant; and the city had implemented the Miner Street Marketplace to improve outdoor dining options to combat the economic impacts of COVID-19.

These various changes, issues, and opportunities led the city to create a plan that would prioritize resources for future public investments to improve downtown. The plan provides guidance on prioritization of projects based on funding options, and offers short as well as long-term options to explore. The plan offers conceptual designs for public realm improvements that can serve as the basis for further design and construction.

PROMOTING OVERNIGHT STAYS

Idaho Springs is a great day trip destination from the Front Range but increasingly it is a good overnight destination, too, as there are enough activities in the region for a multi-day trip. In the summer, visitors can go whitewater rafting; hike on hundreds of miles of trails in the county, including up four 14,000 foot peaks; use the gondola and/or mountain bike in VCMP; enjoy the downtown shops and restaurants in the historic district; cycle the Clear Creek Trail; visit other communities in the area; soak at the Indian Hot Springs; and enjoy any number of additional activities. While historically many of the city’s overnight lodging resources had been used as long-term occupancy properties, overnight lodging operators are now realizing that there is a market for high-quality lodging options. Because the city limits Short-Term Rentals (STRs) to only 15 total licenses in the city, commercial lodging is a critical market to continue expanding the number of overnight stays in the city.

Promoting overnight visitors can benefit the city beyond sales tax and economic development. Visitors staying at hotels are less likely to need to park in public parking lots and spaces, opening spaces to increase visitors. Overnight visitors also promote businesses staying open later to capture additional sales. A theme commonly heard through the Comprehensive Plan process was that the town shuts down after it gets dark. Increasing the number of overnight visitors may increase demand to keep businesses open later and create a livelier streetscape after dark.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM OBJECTIVES

Objective: Maintain a strong business district.

- a. Ensure that a coordinated and holistic effort is made to preserve and promote the historic elements of the city.
- b. Continue scheduling regular meetings between the city, the public, and business owners to ensure continued coordination, collaboration, and conversation amongst key stakeholders in the community.
- c. Explore collaboration to implement a “Main Street” or Downtown Development Authority (DDA) program through DOLA. The DDA process is explained in detail in the 2012 Downtown Assessment and could be a mechanism to help fund construction of a downtown parking structure.
- d. Implement the city’s wayfinding study takeaways through installation of additional informational and wayfinding signage to better manage the flow of vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists in the city.

Objective: Support tourism and special event activities.

- a. Proactively reach out to neighboring communities to promote tourism and other events in cooperation with Clear Creek County, Georgetown, Central City, and others to create a sustainable regional economy and increase visitation across the County.
- b. Promote, develop and market the use of Idaho Springs’ historic and recreational assets with consultation from the BCPB, the Historic Sites & Facilities Board, and the Historical Society of Idaho Springs.
- c. Continue work to improve the visual image of Idaho Springs, especially as viewed from the I-70 corridor to make Idaho Springs an attractive destination from the highway to draw eyes and visitors to the city as soon as they get off the highway. leverage digital marketing and storytelling through Visit Idaho Springs, social media, and partner channels to strengthen destination awareness and visitor retention to the area. Collaborate with other Clear Creek County jurisdictions to strengthen this effort further.

Objective: Actively pursue incentivizing economic development and supporting local businesses while protecting the Idaho Springs quality of life.

- a. The city will use the next few years to implement the plan to increase predictability for developers and property owners looking to do work in the city, striving for clear, simple regulations and consistency among Idaho Springs departments.
- b. The city will continue to collaborate with the Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation as well as the State Office of Economic Development to attract technological and environmentally friendly businesses, and identify and market economic development strategies, such as land banking and tax credits.

- c. The city will conduct an updated Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), which will include an inventory of infrastructure improvements needed to redevelop vacant and available properties.
- d. City staff will review and modify zoning and subdivision regulations to support home-based and small business development, including home-based childcare solutions.
- e. The city will work with community organizations, nonprofits, and other entities to design and implement childcare improvements to support local employees and residents.

Objective: Support development/redevelopment of the East End business district.

- a. Prioritize and strategize to implement the recommendations of the East End Action Plan. This includes formation of an Urban Renewal District, funds for business façade improvements, enhancements of the gateway areas, infrastructure improvements, and creation of an available properties database.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, TRAILS AND RECREATION

Goal: “We aspire to be an active, healthy community that appreciates the outdoors, our connection to the natural environment and fosters sustainable recreational opportunities within our mountain community for all ages and abilities.”

Parks and recreation facilities and programs contribute to the livability of a community by enhancing its quality of life. By providing options for recreation and relaxation, they promote good health, general well-being, and a strong sense of community. There are many benefits to having vibrant and viable parks, trails, and recreational opportunities. It provides diverse opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to engage in a healthy lifestyle, expand life experiences, and connect with others in the community. In addition, a strong parks and recreation system increases property values, draws new businesses to the city, promotes sustainable tourism and visitation, and provides environmental benefits such as improving water quality, preventing flooding, protecting natural resource areas, preserving hazard areas and improving air quality.



EXISTING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

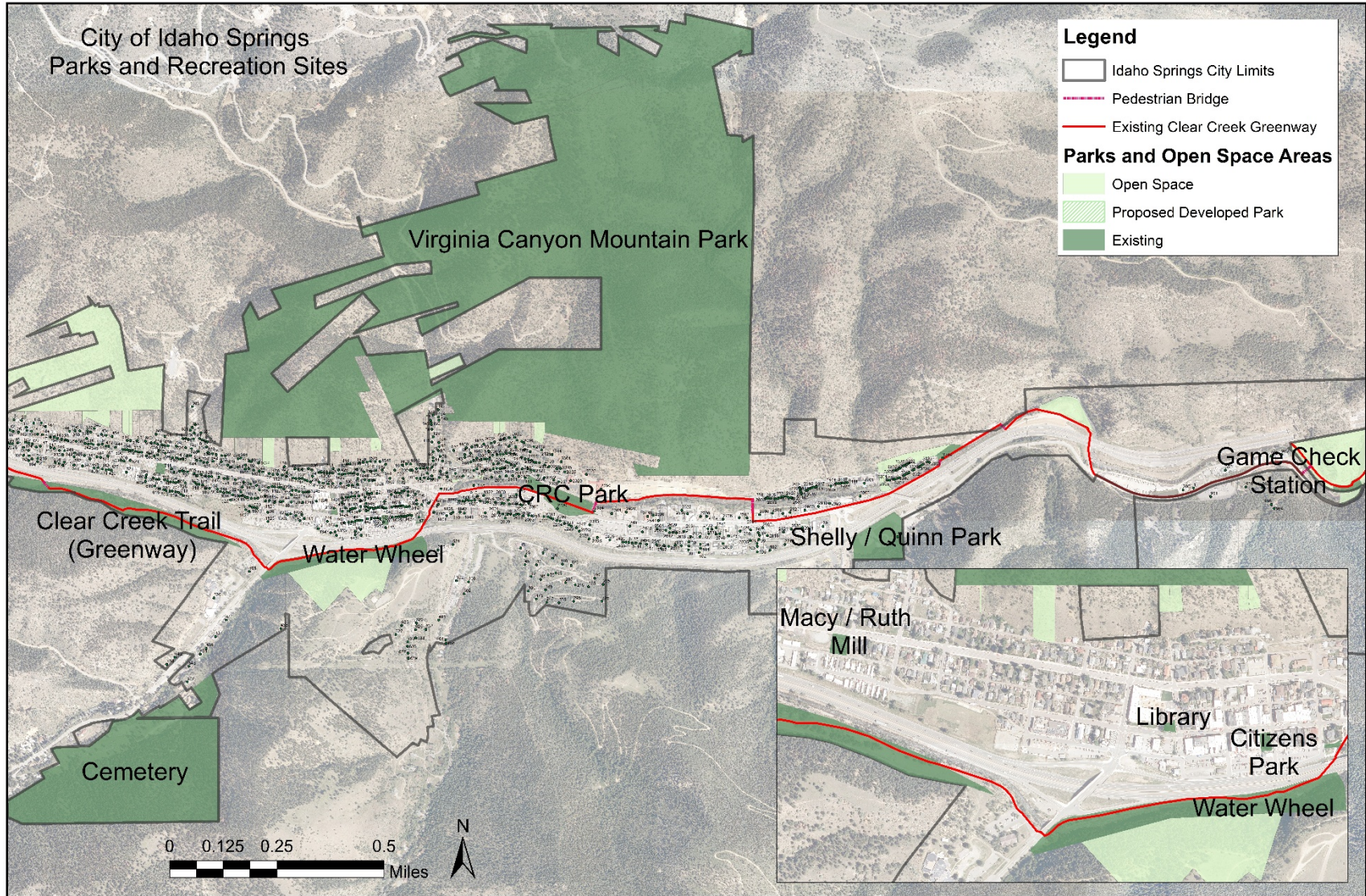
As a tourism-oriented community, Idaho Springs has a wide range of recreational venues within a short distance of the city. Skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing, rafting, fishing, bicycling, hiking and hunting activities are readily accessible. Federal lands are a significant portion of the county's total land area and the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests are near the city limits. Open mountain slopes are the defining feature of the area as over 80% of Clear Creek County is public lands.

To build an economic niche as an outdoor recreation destination, the City must have the infrastructure in place. Idaho Springs has additional opportunities to capitalize on its natural amenities to become more of a destination rather than a pass-through location for goods and services for travelers in route to the mountain resort communities further west.

IDAHO SPRINGS RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

1. Carlson Elementary School
2. Citizens Park
3. City Hall Park (including locomotive)
4. Clear Creek (fishing, rafting, swimming, etc.)
5. Clear Creek Trail
6. Clear Creek Metro District Recreation Center
7. Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park
8. Shelly/Quinn Ball Fields and Skatepark
9. Idaho Springs Visitor Center and Heritage Museum
10. Hillside Park
11. Idaho Springs Cemetery
12. Idaho Springs Library & Memorial
13. Macy/Mill Park
14. Game Check Station Trailhead
15. Mt. Blue Sky Scenic and Historic Byway
16. Underhill Museum
17. United Center
18. Waterwheel Park
19. Idaho Springs Community Garden
20. Virginia Canyon Mountain Park

City Parks and Recreation Sites



CLEAR CREEK

Clear Creek is a significant recreational resource that runs directly through the heart of Idaho Springs, providing direct access to water-based recreation and recreation along its banks. The Clear Creek Trail – which runs from Golden to Loveland Pass – hugs the creek’s banks through Idaho Springs. Clear Creek is easily accessible from several of the city’s established parks.

Clear Creek provides opportunities for water sports, including fishing, rafting, kayaking, and other recreational uses. There are several river access points along Clear Creek within the city’s boundaries, including those at Exit 239 and Exit 240 interchanges, at Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park, and at the Game Check Station trailhead. The city manages commercial rafting through the city by requiring outfitter licenses and a small fee from each commercial user to go into management and improvement costs. Data suggests that Clear Creek is the 5th most rafted river in the United States, making it a key driver of the city’s economy and a clear recreational asset that should be protected and prioritized as a key city “park”:



(https://www.americaoutdoors.org/assets/1/27/2022_U.S._Commercial_River_Use_Report.pdf?7091).

Clear Creek serves as the backbone of Idaho Springs from East to West along the entire length of the city from Exit 243 to Exit 239 and beyond.

There are opportunities for investment along the Clear Creek Trail. Currently, there is limited public infrastructure and the trail could benefit from additional trash and recycling facilities, benches or picnic tables, river access points, and related infrastructure. Additionally, there may be opportunities to enhance recreational opportunities on the trail, such as singletrack sections that could provide a different hiking/cycling experience; rock climbing features, such as artificial boulders; workout equipment; and more

opportunities to engage with the creek. Public art is another way that the user experience could be improved. The Waterwheel Park is a good example of a portion of trail that contains public art and this could be expanded.

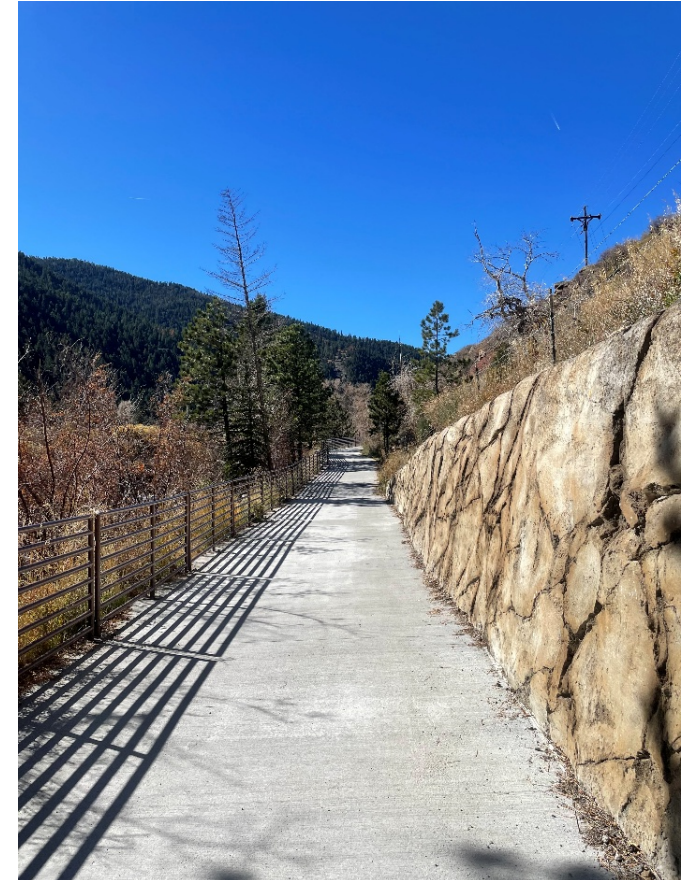
NOTABLE RECREATIONAL PROJECTS

Clear Creek Trail

Running alongside Clear Creek between Jefferson County and the Continental Divide, the Clear Creek Trail ties together communities with a string of parks, recreational facilities, open space and commercial recreational opportunities from Denver to Loveland Ski Resort. The trail incorporates, enhances and creates many types of active and passive recreational opportunities along Clear Creek. Those opportunities include kayaking, rafting, hiking, walking, biking, picnicking, camping and fishing. In 2024, the Clear Creek Trail Collaborative (CCTC) was established and is made up of trail management agencies to create a shared, consistent trail experience across duration. The city is a managing entity of the CCTC.

Idaho Springs has approximately 5 miles of the Clear Creek Trail. The trail runs directly through the City of Idaho Springs along the length of Clear Creek. This provides a critical non-motorized connection from the east side of town to the west. A small portion (approximately ½ mile) shares Riverside Drive in the vicinity of the Argo Mill, with the rest being dedicated trail. There is an approximately ½ mile stretch to the west of the city was recently annexed into Idaho Springs. There are no current plans to create dedicated trail through that stretch of the city along Stanley Road, though signage improvements could help improve safety in this area.

The waterwheel park, just north of City Hall along Clear Creek, is a good example of a well-activated section of the Clear Creek Trail. Because there are benches, informational signage, garbage cans, and access to the creek, this is a well-used section of trail that can be used as an example for other stretches throughout the city.



Courtney Ryley Cooper Park

Courtney Ryley Cooper Park (CRC) is the City's main park, located toward the middle of the City at 23d Avenue and Colorado Boulevard. The Park underwent a significant expansion in conjunction with the Colorado Boulevard reconstruction that was completed in 2018, which included additional parking, new restrooms, better river access for rafting, new picnic areas, new pedestrian bridge crossing Clear Creek at the east of the park, and relocation and redevelopment of the community garden to the area south of Colorado Boulevard. A new, expanded playground area is the next planned project in CRC Park.

Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP)

In 1994, Clear Creek County acquired approximately 7,400 acres of property from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. This land is generally the majority of the hillside north of the City. In 2003, the County transferred approximately 424 acres of this property to the City of Idaho Springs. As part of the transfer agreement, Idaho Springs prepared a long-range management plan for the site. This Virginia Canyon Open Space Concept Plan (also known as “Area 28”) was prepared in 2006 through grants with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety) and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). Stakeholders involved in this early process included Clear Creek County, Colorado State Parks, and the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA). The Plan conceptualized 10-15 miles of trails, designed for mountain bikes, although at the time the project did not go forward.

Beginning in 2016 there was renewed interest in the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park, driven by new leadership, design of the Clear Creek Trail and Mighty Argo Cable Car Project, which was approved in 2021. A master plan for the park was adopted in 2019, containing a vision for approximately 15 miles of multi-use trails, including those dedicated to mountain biking. This has since been revised to include up to 28 miles of trails.

Recognizing the recreational and economic development potential of this park within the City limits, in 2017 the City Council directed staff to continue to move this project forward as an open space for both hiking and mountain biking. The city to-date has received \$500,000 in funding from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW); a \$250,000 sponsorship from Trek Bicycles (to rename the park the Trek Trails at Virginia Canyon Mountain Park), and thousands of hours of in-kind volunteer work in partnership with COMBA.

The first trail was opened in 2022 and the first downhill, mountain bike specific trails were opened in late 2024. Continued partnerships with local businesses, grant sources, and other stakeholders will be critical to continued growth of the park.

Idaho Springs Sports and Events Complex

The city, in partnership with the CCMRD, has committed to the redevelopment of the Shelly/Quinn Ballfields Park to create a recreational center that will eventually contain:

- Baseball field
- Music stage
- Bathrooms and pavilion facilities
- Multi-use grass fields
- Playground
- Tennis/Pickleball courts
- Skatepark
- ~40 space parking lot

With funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the city and CCMRD were able to officially open the skatepark in September 2025. The skatepark was designed through collaboration with the local Skate Board, a group of residents committed to bringing the design to construction.

Future funding is necessary for phase 2 projects, including the tennis/pickleball courts and playground.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

While the city has a robust parks and recreation system, there are many new opportunities for continued development and there is a need for continued maintenance of existing parks and recreation areas. The city has several existing open space areas that have not yet been developed, including the area directly above the water wheel and waterfall up Pine Slope Road, the city-owned powder house parcel at the intersection of Soda Creek Road and Little Bear Road, and on the western portion of the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park west of Virginia Canyon Road. Developing these resources would help grow the city's recreational facilities while connecting with nearby recreational areas outside but near city limits, such as Barbour Forks, recreational opportunities on Highway 103 going to Mount Blue Sky, and areas north of the city along Virginia Canyon Road towards Central City and Gilpin County. Promoting connectivity between the city's resources and outlying opportunities would promote longer stays in the city and continue to build Idaho Springs as a regional hub for recreation along the I-70 corridor.

In addition, there are several informal but popular social trails that provide additional recreational opportunities. Many of these trails and recreation areas are on private property but have long been used for dog-walking, running, and other recreational opportunities. Focus on formalizing and protecting access to these informal trails and recreation areas would help connect neighborhood areas to the rest of the city's parks and trails network and secure long-term access to these areas. Working with the CCMRD, U.S. Forest Service, COMBA, private property owners, and other stakeholders to make these connections and formalize existing social trails would go a long way to help improve the city's parks and recreation network without substantial city investment.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY DESIRES

The city surveyed residents and visitors about recreational opportunities missing in the community. Staff also co-hosted an open house with the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District (CCMRD) at the local recreation center to solicit additional feedback from residents and recreation center users.

There are a few existing resources that people frequently mention as their favorite places to recreate, including the Clear Creek Trail through town, the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP), and the CCMRD recreation center. The skatepark is a new addition to the city that multiple community members identified as a beneficial resource.

Popular features that people would like to see more of in town included a dog park, more indoor recreational facilities (such as an indoor turf field or more group fitness opportunities), hiking-specific trails, and disc golf-related infrastructure. People also identified clubs and social groups as a thing that is missing – multiple people mentioned how more opportunities for social interaction while recreating would be positive and they even mentioned non-fitness programming that could be beneficial, like a chess, board game, or cards club. A tennis and pickleball court complex was mentioned, as were batting cages and outdoor basketball courts. Finally, a focus on activities for teens was brought up multiple times, identifying parks and recreational facilities as positive outlets for the community's young people.

Maintenance is a key priority for existing resources. While people love CRC Park, they mentioned that playground equipment needed repairs. The community mentioned a need for more bag stations at popular locations around the city, like CRC Park, City Hall, and the Clear Creek Trail.

At the open house, we asked people where they like to recreate outside of Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County to get a sense of the types of places that are worth travelling to for recreation. Many places were mentioned, but top locations included Moab, Utah; Fruita, Colorado; Salida, Colorado; Golden, Colorado; and the high mountains of Summit County, Colorado and Lake County, Colorado. People appreciated that these are active communities that have a variety of different activities available to visitors in a small area, with plenty of recreational opportunities accessible close to town. They also mentioned that these places were able to attract visitors while maintaining a sense of charm. Focusing on other communities around the region and identifying the positive aspects of these places will be important for Idaho Springs as the community continues to grow as a recreation destination.

THE CLEAR CREEK METROPOLITAN RECREATION DISTRICT

The Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District (“CCMRD”) was formed in 1979 to enhance the park and recreation amenities that would be available to Clear Creek County residents and to provide facilities that were beyond the capabilities of the individual cities and towns. The District covers most of Clear Creek County, including the City of Idaho Springs and the Towns of Georgetown, Silver Plume, and Empire. Within the City of Idaho Springs, the District maintains the Clear Creek Recreation Center - a state-of-the-art facility containing two swimming pools, a hot tub, weight room, basketball and other sport courts and meeting rooms. The CCMRD also maintains the Shelly/Quinn Ball Fields, near Exit 241 of I-70, which is the site of the Idaho Springs skatepark and future recreation complex.

The City of Idaho Springs has a strong partnership relationship with the CCMRD. The CCMRD continues to explore creative ways to compensate for any potential loss of property tax revenue. It is possible the city will have to enter into additional cost-sharing and maintenance arrangements with the CCMRD.

During the Comprehensive Plan process, we received substantial feedback about the services that the CCMRD provides, indicating that the CCMRD is critical to the community’s vision for parks and recreation. The recreation center in Idaho Springs is highly valued by the community and the programming provided in addition to recreation – childcare, classes, community nights, etc. – is very well used. Because of the importance the CCMRD plays on the Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County communities, continued support for their services and programming is a key priority for the future.

CLEAR CREEK COUNTY RECREATION AND OUTDOOR MANAGEMENT PLAN (ROMP)

In 2024, Clear Creek County adopted its Recreation and Outdoor Management Plan (ROMP). The ROMP creates an aligned vision for outdoor recreation that enriches local communities and welcomes a diverse range of visitors in a way that protects and improves the integrity of the area's natural and cultural resources for the long term. The goal for the ROMP is to meet the following vision statement: Outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County enriches local communities and welcomes a diverse range of visitors in a way that protects and improves the integrity of the area's natural and cultural resources for the long term.

The ROMP seeks to preserve natural and culture resources; provide an authentic mountain culture and a high quality of life for residents; create a vibrant local economy supported by outdoor recreation; provide a variety of high-quality recreation opportunities accessible to locals and visitors; and create resilient and sustainable recreational amenities that reduce resource impacts, reduce user conflicts, and minimize maintenance costs.

While the City of Idaho Springs has not formally adopted the Clear Creek County ROMP, many of the priorities, goals, and visions are relevant to the city's parks and recreational goals and objectives. As such, the city intends to use this document as an additional guidance document and build upon its framework for countywide collaboration on sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities.

OPEN SPACE, TRAILS AND RECREATION OBJECTIVES

Objective: Create a quality system of recreational facilities, parks, trails and pathways to make Idaho Springs a premier recreation destination for residents and visitors.

- a. Develop a City-wide recreational master plan that addresses existing facilities, provides recommendations on new facilities, and addresses operations and maintenance. This city-wide plan will function like a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to prioritize maintenance schedules and develop new facilities in existing and new recreation spaces.
- b. The city will work with funding partners and private landowners to facilitate a connected parks and recreation system across the city, connecting recreational opportunities along the Clear Creek Trail.
- c. We will work to identify opportunities to create smaller public open spaces, such as neighborhood parks, plazas, pocket parks, courtyards and “parklets.”
- d. Improve wayfinding signage to direct people to the city’s recreational facilities to make it easier for users to access the city’s resources.
- e. Create an inventory of existing social trails in the Idaho Springs area and work with private landowners and public land managers to “legalize” existing social trails and recreational areas to improve the city’s existing trail networks to create a robust, connected network of parks and trails across the city.
- f. Create a connected “greenbelt” trail around the city that connects the city’s various open space, recreation, and park areas.
- g. Create more community-oriented events that take advantage of the city’s parks and recreational resources.

Objective: Provide park amenities for residents of all ages and abilities.

- a. Through surveys, targeted meetings, and other avenues, annually assess the needs of the community as demographics change to address and update park amenities.
- b. Expand Macy / Ruth Mill Park and provide better connections from the park to the residential areas along Miner Street to the south.
- c. Analyze the development of a City Park on the City-owned property in the Pine Slope Subdivision Area, near the existing water tank.
- d. Work with the local rafting community on improved rafting infrastructure to improve the recreational experience for users and mitigate impacts on traffic in parks and on local streets adjacent to the access points.
- e. Promote and improve access and facilities at the Powder House at the intersection of Little Bear Road and Soda Creek Road to encourage additional visitation to the area.

- f. Ensure that park improvements are made with accessibility in mind to ensure that public spaces are available and accessible for all residents and visitors to Idaho Springs.
- g. Create a park and picnic area at the site of the recently restored Idaho Springs powder house at the intersection of Soda Creek Road and Little Bear Road.
- h. Promote parks and recreational opportunities in close proximity to the city, including the Barbour Forks area, the Idaho Springs Powder House, OHV trails south of Montane Park, and other recreational areas just outside city limits.

Objective: Support continued development and improvement on the Clear Creek Trail.

- a. Explore opportunities to connect future developments and recreational facilities to the trail.
- b. Market and promote the trail as a major regional amenity as part of the city’s collaboration with the CCTC to promote non-motorized recreation through the city, allowing users to pass a variety recreational resources and the historic downtown along the way.
- c. Focus on improved wayfinding and trail signage to ensure that trail users can effectively and safely access the trail through the city and attract them to stop and enjoy other local amenities.
- d. Add relevant infrastructure along the Clear Creek Trail to create more amenities to trail users, including trash cans, benches, dog waste bag stations, etc., to promote a high-quality user experience.
- e. Improve creek access for recreational users and improve access for rafting companies through improved creek put-ins and other creekside infrastructure.
- f. Incorporate public art opportunities along the trail to improve the user experience.
- g. Establish a series of art installations along the Clear Creek Trail to promote the trail and community’s beauty, with an emphasis on the community’s history.



TO: Idaho Springs Planning Commission
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Exterior Lighting
MEETING DATE: May 7, 2026 – Work Session

Scope:

Discuss the city's existing exterior lighting regulations, work that was done several years ago to create a draft ordinance to institute exterior lighting regulations, potential ideas to build on that work that was not completed and solicit feedback.

Background:

We spoke about this at the last Planning Commission meeting and the Commission asked me to investigate exterior lighting further. Looking at the July 1, 2020 packet, which I have attached as part of this meeting packet, my idea was to go through various sections and highlight points that are worth discussing.

The ordinance requires full cut off fixtures; maximum light levels beyond property lines; lighting limits for both commercial and residential uses; and exemptions. At the last meeting, we all agreed that the ordinance Ms. Cole had drafted was a good start, but we may want to consider some changes since it has been ~6 years since it was last reviewed. Other minor changes might be needed for clarity – for example, the ordinance refers to a Board of Trustees, instead of the City Council.

Intent Section:

The ordinance required that any projects over 500 square feet that require a building permit be required to use lighting that minimizes the impact of lighting on the night sky. So, existing homes with existing lighting would not be subject to the new requirements, nor would existing commercial buildings that are not changing their lighting plans.

I think it could be wise to apply the new requirements to any new light fixture, regardless of the size of the project. That way, small garages or sheds would not be exempt from exterior lighting regulations. Similarly, if someone wanted to install an updated fixture, we would ask that it meet current codes. If the goal is to reduce light pollution in the city, I think it could be wise to make this a tighter standard so it applies to more properties over time. The city would not need a photometric lighting plan for a single new light at a property, but it would be easy to require that they provide information on the lighting fixture they intend on using.

Wheat Ridge requirements apply to any property, residential or commercial, but exempt lights one hundred (100) watts and less per fixture, fluorescent lights forty (40) watts and less per fixture, gas-fired fixtures and lights used for holiday decorations. This is a way of avoiding over-regulation of residential properties but would allow the city to control the brightness of lights even in residential areas.

Request for Direction: Do we want to apply exterior lighting regulations to a larger number of projects and properties, instead of just for projects that are over 500 square feet?

Warmth of Lights:

The draft ordinance did not include anything about the warmth of lights being installed. The ARGO / VCMP PD requires that lighting intensity be under 3,000 Kelvin, which may be appropriate elsewhere in the city. This is something that other communities regulate.

Sunset Period for Non-Compliant Lights:

Do we want to add a sunset period by which all properties get into compliance with dark-sky lighting regulations that require downcast, cut-off fixtures? For example, we could apply the new standards to all new projects going forward and require that when an existing light needs to be replaced, it must be replaced with a compliant fixture. This could be complicated to enforce, but it might be worth considering so that we can reduce non-compliant lights. Allowing for an exemption for fixtures with low wattage levels would reduce the number of fixtures the city would need to review and enforce upon.

Internal Illumination:

What do we want to do with internally illuminated light fixtures, like the McDonald's or Carl's Jr. signs? They likely would meet the city's standards for light intensity, but they are not fully cut-off fixtures. Other communities typically regulate the brightness of these lights and allow for greater brightness during the day than at night. For example, daytime might be allowed up to 5,000 or 7,000 nits, while at night this might be reduced to under 1,000 nits. To achieve this, jurisdictions can require automatic dimming so that it adjusts depending on ambient light levels. What are your thoughts on this sort of requirement?

Motion Activated Lights:

Many jurisdictions allow motion activated lights to be exempt from the dark sky lighting requirements but require them to be on a timer. Is this something we would like to do here? If so, are we alright with the idea of exempting motion activated lights if they are on a timer of less than perhaps 5-10 minutes? The other requirement some jurisdictions place on motion activated lights is that they should be set up so that they don't activate unless the motion occurs on the property. This is meant to avoid a scenario where they keep coming on all night every time a car passes by.

Other Thoughts?

Are there any other lighting related topics that people want to address in a draft exterior lighting ordinance?

Next Steps:

Once we address some of these questions tonight, I will ask the city's attorneys to update the ordinance to make sure it meets their standards for the ISMC and is consistent with existing codes. I will have a draft ordinance ready for the next meeting that can be considered, with a goal of having standards ready for a recommendation in early summer.

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS PLANNING COMMISSION COMMUNICATION

Meeting Date: Wednesday, July 1, 2020	Page 1 of 1	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Draft Lighting Ordinance</h2>
Presented by: Barb Cole Community Development Planner		
<p>Background:</p> <p>At the last Planning Commission meeting the Commissioners asked about the status of creating a Dark Sky Lighting Ordinance. The Commissioners directed staff to prepare such ordinance noting that it could be simple to start but that it was important to get something adopted.</p> <p>Draft Code Update for Lighting: I have drafted a very simple and straightforward lighting ordinance to protect the night sky. When controlling light spillage, there are two factors to consider:</p> <p><i>1) Requirement for IES true cut off fixture and 2) the amount of light that is allowed within the property and beyond the property line.</i></p> <p>The approach we have taken is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Require IES full cut off fixtures; IES true cut off light fixtures are readily available at all big box stores and lighting stores. 2) Measure light levels beyond the property line and set a maximum light level. 3) Establish the overall limit onsite to 10 foot-candles to ensure businesses have adequate lighting.. 4) Establish lighting limits for residential and non-residential uses. 5) Provide exemptions for outdoor recreational courts and fields. <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Note that the standards used are consistent with the lighting standards contained in the PD zone for Argo.</p>		
<p>STAFF RECOMMENDATION:</p> <p>Staff recommends to City Council approval of the new code section on lighting.</p>		

Secs. 21-206 Lighting Standards.

Drafting Notes

Lighting requirements generally have two components: 1) Requirement for IES true cut off fixture and 2) the amount of light that is allowed within the property and beyond the property line. The approach we have taken is to measure light levels beyond the property line and then set the overall limit onsite to 10 footcandles to ensure businesses have adequate lighting. IES true cut off light fixtures are readily available at all big box stores and lighting stores. If you are lighting a large project, the dealer or architect can easily create a site map showing footcandles on your property or it can be even measured with your cell phone.

Definition of Footcandle: *Foot candles are the most common unit of measure used by lighting professionals to calculate light levels in businesses and outdoor spaces. In a nutshell, a foot candle is a measurement of light intensity and is defined as the illuminance on a one-square foot surface from a uniform source of light.*

A. Intent. Any project over 500 sq. ft. that requires a building permit shall utilize lighting that minimizes the impact of the lighting on the night sky. Exterior lighting shall be used for purposes of identification, security and safety, and illumination in areas of pedestrian circulation and vehicular traffic. These standards apply to all development within the City of Idaho Springs. The purposes of the lighting standards are:

- (1) Promote safety and security.
- (2) Reduce the escalation of nighttime light pollution.
- (3) Help preserve the small-town character.
- (4) Reduce glare and offensive light sources.
- (5) Provide clear guidance to builders and developers.
- (6) Encourage the use of improved technologies for lighting.
- (7) Conserve energy.
- (8) Prevent inappropriate and poorly designed or installed exterior lighting.
- (9) Minimize interference with use or enjoyment of property through unnecessary night-time illumination and the loss of scenic night sky views due to increased urban sky-glow.

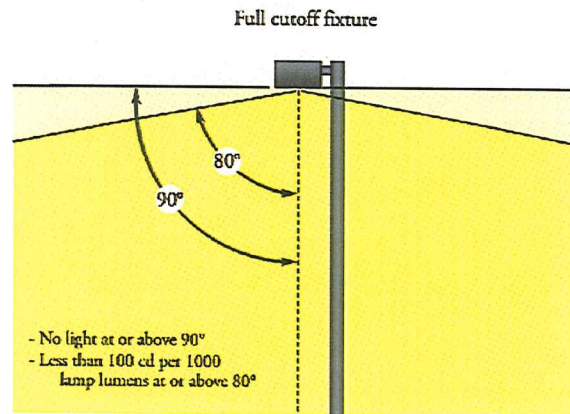
B. General Standards.

- (1) Neither the direct nor reflected light from any light source may create a traffic hazard to operators of motor vehicles on public roads, nor may colored lights be used in such a way as to be confused or construed as traffic control devices. Background spaces, such as parking lots and circulation drives, shall be illuminated to be as unobtrusive as reasonably possible while meeting the functional needs of safe circulation and of protecting people and property.

- (2) Light sources must minimize contrast with the light produced by surrounding uses and must produce an unobtrusive degree of brightness in both illumination levels and color rendition.
- (3) Light sources shall be downcast, concealed, and shielded, and shall feature sharp cut-off capability to minimize up-lighting, spill-lighting, glare, and unnecessary diffusion onto adjacent property.
- (4) Except as otherwise allowed for herein, all lighting (including without limitation street, parking lot, security, walkway, and building) shall conform with the Illuminating Engineers Society (IES) criteria for true cut-off fixtures (ninety percent (90%) of fixture light output within the 0-60° range from vertical). If the bulb position within a fixture is vertical, all lights must be retrofitted with shielding in a manner such that the light conforms to IES criteria for true cut-off fixtures as defined herein. The following are required:

- a. A high socket mount.
- b. A translucent fixture lens.
- c. An opaque coating or shield on a portion of the perimeter of the lens, or other industry accepted measures to ensure that the fixture IES

Classification as a true cut-off is not compromised.



- (5) Maximum on-site lighting levels shall not exceed 10 foot-candles, except for loading and unloading platforms. For reasons of security, a maximum of one and one-half (1.5) foot-candles at entrances, stairways and loading docks is permitted unless required by any federal, state, or local jurisdiction.
- (6) Hours of Lighting Operation. All parking lot lighting fixtures and exterior building lights, except those required for security purposes, shall be extinguished within one (1) hour after the end of business hours and remain extinguished until one (1) hour prior to the beginning of business hours. If a portion of a parking lot is used after dark, only that portion shall be lighted.
- (7) Height and Material Standards for Lighting.
 - a. Residential Zoning Districts. Light fixtures shall be mounted on concrete, fiberglass, or painted metal poles no higher than sixteen (16) feet from the ground. Lighting mounted on a building or structure shall not exceed the height of the building or structure. Bollard-type lighting fixtures shall be between three (3) and four (4) feet high.
 - b. Nonresidential Zoning Districts. Light fixtures shall be mounted on concrete, fiberglass or painted metal poles no higher than twenty-five (25) feet from the ground, unless a greater height, not to exceed the maximum building height in the applicable zone district, is approved by the Planning Commission or Board of Trustees through a development application review process. Lighting mounted on a building or structure shall not exceed the height of the building or structure. Bollard-type lighting fixtures shall be between three (3) and four (4) feet high.

(8) Exemption for Outdoor Recreational Uses. Because of their limited hours of operation and their unique requirements for nighttime visibility, ball diamonds, playing fields, tennis courts and other similar outdoor recreational uses (both public and private), unless otherwise restricted by the Board of Trustees, shall be exempt from the general provisions of this Section. However, exterior lighting for such uses shall be extinguished no later than 11:00 p.m.

(9) Light spill shall not exceed .06-foot candles beyond the property line and .03 footcandles when next to residences. *(Drafting note: This is the same requirement used in the Argo PD)*

(10) Light levels measured at twenty (20) feet beyond the property line of the development site onto adjacent residential uses or public rights-of-way shall not exceed one-tenth (0.1) foot-candle as a direct result of on-site lighting.

(11) Blinking, flashing, or changing intensity lights are prohibited; except for temporary holiday displays or lighting required by the FAA.

(12) Up-lighting is prohibited except for the up-lighting of flags within nonresidential development and with a limit of two (2) fixtures per flagpole with a maximum of one hundred fifty (150) watts each. The fixtures must be shielded.

Secs. 21-207 Lighting Plan Required

a. The lighting plan shall be prepared and submitted in accordance with the following. Lighting plans require administrative approval by the Community Development Planner.

- (1) Show locations of all exterior lighting.
- (2) Identify proposed and existing fixtures and heights.
- (3) Provide elevation details and manufacturer's literature.
- (4) Provide a photometric plan.
- (5) For approval, the lighting plan shall demonstrate compliance with the above design and submission standards.

FOR REFERENCE ONLY: THIS WILL NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE LIGHTING ORDINANCE

**Table 1
Environmental Area
Classifications
Based on Ambient Lighting**

E1	Areas with intrinsically dark landscapes. Examples are national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, or residential areas where inhabitants have expressed a strong desire for strict limitation of light trespass.
E2	Areas of low ambient brightness. These may be outer urban and rural residential areas. Roadways may be lighted to typical residential standards.
E3	Areas of medium ambient brightness. This will generally be urban residential areas. Roadway lighting will normally be to traffic route standards.
E4	Area of high ambient brightness. Normally this category will include urban areas with mixed residential and commercial use with a high level of nighttime activity.

**Table 2
Recommended Light Trespass Limitations
Illuminance at the Eye**

Environmental Zone	Pre-Curfew Limitations		Post-Curfew Limitations	
	Lux	Footcandles	Lux	Footcandles
E1	1.0	0.10	0.0*	0.00*
E2	3.0	0.30	1.0	0.10
E3	8.0	0.80	3.0	0.30
E4	15.0	1.50	6.0	0.60



TO: Idaho Springs Planning Commission
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Miscellaneous Parking Items
MEETING DATE: May 7, 2026 – Work Session

Scope:

Discuss several potential changes to the city’s parking requirements to address private paid parking, parking requirements for senior housing developments, and adjust the city’s fee-in-lieu program to address inconsistencies in the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC)

Background:

Parking is an important subject in Idaho Springs and needs to be carefully managed to avoid causing issues for property owners, residents, or visitors to the city. The city first instituted managed parking in 2003, with a major update in 2019 to implement paid parking in the downtown Miner Street area. A residential parking system, designating resident-only parking zones and allowing Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County to park for free in commercial paid parking areas, was introduced at that time, too. In 2025, the city adopted paid parking on the East End. Residents of Idaho Springs or Clear Creek County can park for free anywhere in the city.

Chapter 21, Article VI, Division I of the ISMC sets parking and loading requirements. Parking requirements by use are identified in Table Sec. 21-127-1. This table identifies the parking requirements associated with most uses around the city, though it does not address all uses. If someone wants to establish a new use in the city, the ISMC requires that off-street parking be built to accommodate the use. If a use was in existence prior to 2019, the operator was not required to provide additional parking to comply with new regulations. However, if an existing use is expanded, new parking must be provided as necessary to serve the new/expanded area. Additionally, if an existing use by-right is changed to another use by-right with a higher parking requirement, the owner must provide new parking spaces only if the new use requires spaces in excess of one hundred twenty-five (125) percent of the spaces required by the old use. To address scenarios where parking could not be added in the dense downtown Miner Street area, the city adopted a Parking Fee-In-Lieu program in 2023.

There is a desire to address several parking-related items at this time to better reflect the demand for parking, address increasing interest in providing private, paid parking, and slightly modify the fee-in-lieu program to reflect current policy desires.

Off-Street Parking Requirements:

City staff believe that several changes to the parking requirements listed in Sec. 21-127 be considered. Parking is controversial in general, but some minor changes might be beneficial to optimize the requirements while avoiding impacts to the public.

- Parking for Senior Developments:

The first change that staff would like feedback on is adding a parking category for senior housing. The Project Support senior center at 1402 Miner Street and the Mitchell White building at 1840 Miner Street are the city’s two examples of senior housing, totaling 27 units.

1402 Miner Street has 14 units and 8 parking spaces, an average of 0.57 spaces per unit. There have been little to no parking issues at this property. 1840 Colorado Boulevard has 13 units and 13 parking spaces, an average of one space per unit. Similarly, there have never been complaints about a lack of parking at this location.

Data seems to back this up. Studies suggest that the demand for parking per unit for a regular multifamily development is about 1.4 spaces per unit, which is right in line with the city’s requirements for multifamily developments. However, senior housing developments only have a demand for ~0.5 spaces per unit, which is far lower. This is because people over the age of 65 tend to drive less than younger adults. Examples around Colorado show that many communities already have parking standards for senior housing, which range from 0.5 spaces per unit to 1.0 spaces per unit. In Idaho Springs, there are several resources that further reduce the need for parking. Volunteers of America (VA) provides transportation services, nutrition services, and Meals on Wheels for local seniors, reducing the need for private transportation. Project Support also provides services that are beneficial for the community’s seniors.

Request for Direction: If Planning Commission is amenable to further research, city staff will look into this more and report back on what might be suitable for Idaho Springs.

- Affordable housing projects

Studies suggest that affordable housing projects (those in the 30-80% Area Median Income (AMI) range) create a smaller demand for parking than market-rate housing with the same number of units. Los Angeles County data showed that affordable housing generated a need for 1.0 spaces/unit while market-rate housing produced 1.4 spaces/unit of demand, all else being equal. That study showed that affordable senior housing only generated 0.6 spaces/unit of demand.

Reducing parking demand for housing reduces construction costs associated with the development and means that more units could be built in the same area.

Request for Direction: Would Planning Commission be interested in exploring this further?

- Commercial parking uses

Some commercial uses do not seem to fully capture the impact of parking on the public roadway system. A good example is rafting. Right now, the city's parking requirements require one off-street parking space per 400 square feet of gross floor area. A river rafting office that has only 800 square feet of floor area would only need two parking spaces. This may not effectively capture the parking demand since they attract a lot of visitors to their site for rafting. Theatre/event center uses are similar, in that the ISMC requires one space per four seats. This does not do a great job of clearly identifying the demand for a live music venue that does not have seats.

Request for Direction: Would Planning Commission like staff to research parking requirements for commercial businesses in more depth?

Private, Paid Parking:

Another parking-related issue that we have received directions to discuss is the idea of private, paid parking lots. Currently, parking is not a by-right use in any zone district in Idaho Springs. Parking is an accessory use to an approved use. If you want to start a coffee shop, you need to provide one space for 300 square feet of floor area, for example. The ISMC does not prohibit a property owner from charging their customers for use of those spaces, however. In Denver, we see plenty of private businesses that charge their clients for parking, including grocery stores. If Safeway wanted to start charging their patrons to park in their lot, the ISMC would not prohibit that. The city does not regulate the use of private parking lots, either. It is up to the business itself to ensure that people they do not want to park there are prevented from doing so. Not all businesses do enforcement for their private lots.

One property owner has taken advantage of this by creating a small retail gift shop near downtown that is only intermittently open. They had space to build more parking spaces than required and started charging for these excess spaces. Because their business is seldom open, it ends up looking like it is a private, paid lot, but in fact they were issued a business license for a commercial retail shop and the parking is considered "accessory" to that.

Request for direction: What does the Planning Commission think about this type of situation, and should we address it in some way?

The second question is about how to address someone who wants to establish private, paid parking as the primary use of the property, not an accessory use to another business use. Since parking in itself is not a primary use, staff have advised interested property owners that they would need to go through the city's Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process. We have some interest from property owners, and I would expect to eventually see an application come in.

A CUP seems like a reasonable way of reviewing an application because the process is already designed to evaluate uses that "present special impacts upon adjacent properties which necessitate individualized review and consideration and, in most instances, the approval of a conditional use requires the imposition of conditions or requirements designed to eliminate, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts resulting from the proposed use." ISMC Sec 21-105(A).

As an alternative to addressing stand-alone paid parking lots as a Conditional Use only, the city could instead expressly allow them in certain zone districts or prohibit them altogether. Taking one of these alternative approaches (outside the current CUP process) would require a Code amendment.

Request for Direction:

How does the City prefer to address stand-alone paid private parking lots? 1) Continue with the current approach – permitted only with a CUP; 2) Expressly allow them as a use by-right in certain districts?; 3) Expressly prohibit them (everywhere or in certain districts)?; or 4) a combination of the above.

Fee-in-Lieu:

Last year, we received direction from City Council asking us to consider changes to the Fee-in-Lieu ordinance. One such change was specifying that property owners taking advantage of the Fee-in-Lieu program would be able to pay monthly. This could present challenges in regards to collection and financial guarantees that need to be addressed. Wonder has brought this to my attention that we have not adopted updated rules for this to clarify that this is a possibility. Additionally, we had previously discussed whether to expand the program city-wide. This would allow businesses in other areas of the city besides the downtown Miner Street area to take advantage of the program and reduce their required on-site parking, which could allow them to more efficiently use their space for activated uses.

Request for Direction: Does the Planning Commission want to consider these changes to the Fee-in-Lieu program?

Sec. 21-127. Parking space required.

- (A) Each use permitted shall provide the minimum number of automobile parking spaces indicated in the Parking Requirement by Use table below. If a proposed use is not listed in the table, the City Administrator shall calculate the required number of parking spaces by applying the requirement for the use listed which is most similar to the proposed use, or shall require the applicant to submit to a parking study.
- (A) Each use permitted shall provide the minimum number of automobile parking spaces indicated in the Parking Requirement by Use table below. If a proposed use is not listed in the table, the City Administrator shall calculate the required number of parking spaces by applying the requirement for the use listed which is most similar to the proposed use, or shall require the applicant to submit to a parking study.
 - (1) The parking requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units, as identified in the Parking Requirement by Use table below, shall only apply if the parcel on which the accessory dwelling unit is located:
 - (i) Does not have an existing off-street parking space;
 - (ii) Is in a zoning district that requires one (1) or more parking spaces for the primary dwelling unit; and
 - (iii) Is located on a block where on-street parking is prohibited.
- (B) Parking study. Parking ratios that deviate from the provisions of the parking requirements table may be approved by the decision making body indicated in Table 20-82-1 if the applicant submits a parking study that demonstrates the parking as proposed is the minimum required without creating additional parking deficiency on neighboring properties, adjacent public right-of-ways or parking facilities.

Table Sec. 21-127-1: Parking Requirements by Use		
Use Category	Use Type	Number of spaces required
RESIDENTIAL USES		
Household Living	Dwelling, accessory	1 per ADU
	Dwelling, live/work	1 per dwelling unit
	Dwelling, single-family detached	2 per dwelling unit
	Dwelling, multiple-family	1.25 per efficiency unit
	Dwelling, single-family attached	1.5 per one-bedroom unit
	Dwelling, two family (duplexes)	1.5 per two-bedroom unit 800 SF or less 1.75 per two-bedroom unit over 800 SF 1.75 per three-bedroom unit 900 SF or less 2.5 per three-bedroom unit over 900 SF
Group Living	Small group home (up to 8)	1.25 per efficiency unit
	Large group home (more than 8)	1.5 per one-bedroom unit 1.5 per two-bedroom unit 800 SF or less 1.75 per two-bedroom unit over 800 SF 1.75 per three-bedroom unit 900 SF or less 2.5 per three-bedroom unit over 900 SF

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	Assisted Living Facility	1 per 400 SF GFA, and 1 additional space, reserved for pickup and delivery of adults, per 800 SF GFA
	Nursing home	
COMMERCIAL USES		
Agricultural and Animal-Related Uses	Large animal veterinary hospital of clinic (enclosed)	1 per 600 SF GFA
	Small animal veterinarian or clinic	
Arts	Body art establishments	1 space per 300 SF GFA
	Studio for teaching or selling fine arts	
Food and Beverage Services	Microbrewery, distillery, and/or tasting room	1 space per 250 SF GFA
	Restaurants and drinking places without drive-through	
	Restaurants with drive-in facilities	
	Restaurants with outdoor dining facilities	1 per every 250 SF (including outdoor waiting/ seating/dining areas)
Health and Fitness	Fitness Center / Club	1 space per 150 square feet
Institutional/Public	Church	One (1) space per three (3) seats or every six (6) feet of bench length in the main auditorium.
	Hospital	One and one-half (1½) spaces per bed.
	Library / Museum	1 space per 400 square feet of gross floor area, plus 1 space per every 2 employees.
	Schools (all but High School)	1.5 stalls/classroom, plus 1 stall/5 fixed seats in auditorium, gymnasium or similar public assembly facility
	High School	1.5 stalls/classroom, plus 1 stall/3 students based on maximum student capacity
Lodging Facilities	Bed and breakfast	2 spaces + 1 per guest bedroom
	Hotel, motel, tourist home	1 per guestroom plus 2 for staff and housekeeping
	Unstaffed hotel	1 per guestroom
Office, Business, and Professional Services	Banks, savings and loan, and finance companies	1 space per 400 SF of GFA
	Barbershop and beauty shop	
	Medical or dental clinic	
	Professional office	
	River rafting offices and operations	
Personal Services	Dry cleaning or laundry	1 space per 250 SF GFA
	Cleaning shop or laundry (limited)	
Retail Sales	General commercial and retail sales	1 per 300 SF of GFA
	Grocery stores	1 per 300 SF GFA
	Wholesale stores and large volume/traffic retail stores	1 per every 1,000 SF GFA

	Sale, rental, repair, or inside storage of any equipment, supplies, or materials	1 per 400 SF
Recreation, Indoor	Bowling alley	5 spaces per lane, plus 1 space per 2 employees.
	Event Center / Music Venue	1 space per 4 seats
	Theater	1 space per 4 seats
Vehicles and Equipment	Automotive sales or repairing	1 for every 300 SF GFA of sales and showroom area, 3 spaces for every service bay in repair garage areas. This shall not include space provided for vehicles for sale or lease.
	Auto wash	4 stacking spaces if automatic, 3 stacking spaces if self-service
	Automotive service station	1 per every 400 SF GFA
INDUSTRIAL USES		
Industrial Services	Contractor's office and yard	1 per 300 SF GFA
	Printing and newspaper offices	1 per 1,500 SF GFA
Manufacturing and Production	Assembly without fabrication (enclosed)	1 per 1,500 SF GFA
	Brewery, bottling plant	
	Heavy manufacturing (enclosed)	
	Light manufacturing	
	Workshops and custom small industry use	
ACCESSORY USES		
	Accessory dwelling unit	See Residential Uses above.
	Home occupation	Parking for not more than one customer's motor vehicle and one additional motor vehicle associated with the home occupation may be provided on site; (plus additional required spaces for single-family dwelling)

(Ord. No. 19, §2(Exh. A), 2019; Ord. No. 13, §3, 2024; Ord. No. 11, §5, 2025)