



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

Wednesday, August 5, 2026

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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 August 5th, 2026
4. **Public Comment**
 - a. Lily Williams
 - b. Hannah Ervick
5. **Conflict of Interest**
6. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Motion to approve the minutes of July 20th, 2026
7. **General Updates**
8. **New Business**
 - a. PUBLIC HEARING: Ordinance #16, Series 2026, an ordinance amending Section 21-105 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code to authorize the issuance of Conditional Use Permits as personal to the applicant and as limited or unlimited in duration.
9. **Old Business**
10. **Adjourn**
11. **Work Session Agenda**
 - a. Group Homes Code Amendment
 - b. Comprehensive Plan Draft Discussion
 - c. Idaho Springs Design Requirements 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.

Historic Preservation Committee

Lily Williams 412 Colorado Blvd.

I would like to propose an extension of the historic district and a unified building code on new buildings so they match the architectural integrity of greater Idaho Springs.

Right now, as it sits the Idaho Springs historic district is small for a largely historic town. This town has so much rich history laced through all the buildings and landmarks here. People visit because of this. A lot of us live in old houses and were drawn here because of the old house proximity to the old historic town.

My husband and I are like this. We love old buildings, old towns, brick, and all the creative colorful houses of Idaho Springs. We escaped the gentrification and demolishing of historic parts of Denver to come to a place we knew would remain historic. My worry is that if we don't have clear codes and rules on this though, we will get more new builds like the Field House Apartments and July 2026 Old Carlson proposal.

I think we have tools in our power to ensure that this historic town remains historic and that we have a consistent architectural integrity laces through the old and new parts of town.

Here are a few of my ideas in an order I think are achievable:

1. We extend the historic downtown district to include the Carnegie Library and Hose house block. It doesn't make sense that two preserved buildings aren't on a fully historic block. The block that is Old Carlson at 1300 Miner Street (between 13th and 14th Ave) would be part the historic downtown district.
2. Both sides of Colorado Blvd are part of a newly designated historic district, including the more modern houses that already exist there. This can include stipulations of what can be built new so that it matches the aesthetic of what already exists. On the 400 Block of the West end of town there is a trailer park and it too risks having a Field House apartment replacing the trailers there. If we historically designate the houses around it, it would impact what the new build could be.
3. We have a Unified Building Code that stipulates how new build structures (like apartments, condos, and parking garages) would be built to fit into the already existing Idaho Springs historic aesthetic and match the town. Bozeman, Montana just passed something similar and what they included puts restrictions on things like new building set backs, required design elements and materials, and horizontal massing requirements.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Lily Williams

From: [Hannah Ervick](#)
To: [Dylan Graves](#)
Subject: Resident comments for August 5 Planning Commission Meeting
Date: Thursday, July 23, 2026 10:17:50 AM



CKT Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender hannahervick@gmail.com

Hello Dylan,

My name is Hannah Ervick and I am an Idaho Springs resident at 904 Colorado Blvd po box 501. I wanted to send you a quick message addressing the massive new build that the planning commission is recommending be built at the old Carlson elementary site. I think I am too late to add my comments for the City Council meeting happening on July 27th, so if that's the case I would like to add the following comments to be read at the Planning Commission meeting on August 5th if possible.

"The residents of this town are asking for stricter building codes for our historic town so we can put healthy and sustainable limitations on new builds. I am specifically asking that changes be made to code Section 21-220 to place tighter restrictions on parking and new builds.

I also want to specifically address the massive new build that the planning commission is recommending be built at the old Carlson elementary site. While I support affordable housing in the community, this particular development project has way too many unanswered questions for it to be put forward to the city council to vote on yet. The residents of this town would first like clear answers on the following items before any development project is approved:

- PARKING for the new build**
- library parking accommodations**
- drainage**
- snow removal**
- historic building code enforcements - this project is not keeping with building requirements for our downtown historic or the buffer zone that surrounds it**

I do not think that this new build project at Carlson Elementary should be approved at this time without further research on the above items. Thank you for your time."

Please confirm receipt and let me know if you have any other questions!

Best,

Hannah Meyer Ervick



**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES - DRAFT
July 20th, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cindy Olson called the special meeting to order at 6:05 pm on Monday July 20th, 2026.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present were Alternate Judy Murphy, Chuck Howard, Caitlin Maxwell and Vice Chair Ursula Cruzalegui. Alternate Jefferson Lich and Commissioner Maxwell were absent. Commissioner Kent Slaymaker and Chair Cindy Olson were in attendance via ZOOM. Staff present were Community Development Planner Dylan Graves, City Administrator Andrew Marsh, Assistant City Administrator Guy Patterson and Deputy City Clerk Wonder Martell. Associate City Attorney Nick Klein was in attendance via ZOOM. Commissioner Maxwell arrived at the council chambers at 6:07 pm. Kent Slaymaker arrived in person at 8 pm.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Slaymaker moved to approve the agenda. Vice Chair Cruzalegui seconded, second followed by an all in favor voice vote, motion carries.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dru VanDoren Steele- 1414 Wall Street- Ms. VanDoren stated that the city needs to install some stop signs. There has been an influx of traffic, and this has been brought to council before. At 16th and Colorado Blvd, if people park in the designated handicapped spots, you cannot see either way when trying to pull off of 16th onto Colorado Blvd. City Council needs to place a stop sign there before someone really gets hurt.

Pauly Brunner 2616 Miner Street – Mr. Brunner stated that sometime in the past he received a text stating that the city was going to start ticketing people for expired car registration and he wanted to know when PD will begin issuing those tickets. Mr. Brunner stated there are multiple vehicles littering his neighborhood with expired tags and he would like to know what the enforcement schedule is for this.

Libby Caplan 219 14th Avenue – Ms. Caplan wanted to alert council that there is no more free parking at the Library and requests that the free spaces be returned for Library Patrons.

CONFLICT OF INTERST

There was no conflict.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice Chair Cruzalegui moved to approve the minutes from June 4th, 2026. Commissioner Maxwell seconded. Second followed by an all in favor voice vote. Motion carries.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING: FDP26-001. A request for a Final Development Plan for a fifty (50) unit affordable multifamily residential development at 1300 Colorado Boulevard, a 1.54-acre parcel, zoned C-2.

Chair Olson opened the public hearing at 6:14 pm

STAFF: Community Development Planner Mr. Graves advised the commission that this was sent out to all referral agencies (Police, Fire, Public Works, EMS to name a few). There are some key details, this property is owned by the Clear Creek School District, was the former location of Carlson Elementary and is now vacant. This property is zoned C-2. This property is just outside the Historic District. Final development plans shall conform to all use and development standards of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code as well as the Idaho Springs Standards and Specifications for Design and Construction and any underlying Planned Development. The criteria is as follows:

1. Land use and zoning standards-
2. Density
3. Lot coverage and building coverage
4. Setbacks
5. Maximum height
6. Traffic analysis
7. Access
8. Parking
9. Transit access
10. Garbage facilities
11. Snow removal
12. Landscaping
13. Compliance with civil standards (grading, drainage, erosion control, etc.)
14. Architectural design standards

The state mandates fast track review, with Prop 123 if 50% affordable housing, the review has to be completed in 90 days. This is a use by right, there is 22% open space proposed, max height is 35 feet from grade, and this proposal meets that criteria. There are two access points proposed. The architecture has created a little pause; the buildings seem to be in compliance. The Historic District is largely commercial architecture, this proposed building is not Victorian, but it is possible that it can compliment the Historic District. Any changes to the proposal would have to come back for FDP amendments.

Commissioner Slaymaker asked Mr. Graves how much of this would be for Planning Commission and City Council to approve. MR. Graves stated that the Right of Way Easement would take some review, and the other items would fall on staff so ensure that the other conditions are being adhered to. Chair Olson asked if someone from Planning Commission could be invited to participate in that review. Mr. Graves advised yes.

APPLICANT: Austin Richardson Furlong Circle, Fountain Colorado

Mr. Richardson stated that he is the Vice President from DW Development Group located in Kansas. Mr. Richardson thanked the commission for this review; he is pleased to see such a big turnout. This will be a 50-unit low-income housing unit. The AMI that will qualify is 30% to 60%. There is an application process to qualify, that requires the submission of financial information for HUD. Mr. Richardson stated that he has been working on this for 1.5 years. They have proposed 2 buildings so they can have 2 entry/exits on the property. There is a city sewer main that runs through the basement, and this design allows more access for the city. CHFA is the entity that will grant tax credits. There has been a market study that shows need for these lower AMI units. Mr. Richardson stated that they walked Miner Street, trying to come up with a compromise. This is a residential development, he is happy to change miner things for design, he is looking for approval. This development is anticipated to cost 22.5 million. Investors are sold the tax credits. There will be 16-30% units, 3-40% units, 3-50% units and 28-60% units. On the SW portion of the property, they intend to erect a monument of some sort, with a welcome sign, a clock tower and some kind of water feature, like a small pond. The amenities that will be provided to their residents are a gazebo, a BBQ area, a playground, a dog run, a fitness center, a club house and 2 access gates into the property. Mr. Richardson also mentioned that they are more than happy to keep allowing Library employees to park on the easement area.

PUBLIC COMMENT-

Kandace Lukow 1402 Miner Street – Ms. Lukow stated that this is not strongly supported and she would like the applicant to speak to the traffic study, she does not agree with the results of the traffic study. The pickup and drop off area that the school used at this location did not work well. This will also not work well. This will put our seniors at risk

as there will be too much action in the area. Traffic already backs up, the 4 way stop already clogs up traffic in the area and we would be better served with a development that can generate money for the city.

Dru VanDoren 1414 Wall Street – Ms. VanDoren stated that she is a realtor, she travels a lot, and she is in favor of affordable housing. This entrance is the gateway to Idaho Springs. Ms. VanDoren stated to Mr. Richardson that what he has in Kansas, is not always for us. The buffer zone is there for a reason. Compatibility, it seems all of Miner Street is thrown into this design. There are other housing buildings that have just been built that are not full. How much parking will be used for open space, a gated community is not for Idaho Springs. We come together for our community, we don't separate. Ms. VanDoren stated that she's afraid, always see pretty pictures, but then don't complete what they submit.

Chad Miller 1334 Virginia Street – Mr. Miller wants to echo Ms. VanDoren's sentiment. He did not even know this was happening until he looked at social media. Mr. Miller wants to know what the developer's connection to Idaho Springs is, which is clear that there is none as he is from Kansas. Why does every development have to be affordable housing? Mr. Miller states he was sold a bag of rocks with the Fieldhouse Project; it looks more like an extended stay motel. We live where people want to be, why should it be affordable. What about deeded flats, our money is going to those tax credits. Why not build more townhomes and make them nice, sellable and able to generate property tax.

Paul Brunner 2616 Miner Street – Mr. Brunner stated that he tried to start a business on the East end of town, but he couldn't build the garage that he wanted. Cost me a couple of thousand dollars and I couldn't because of parking. Mr. Brunner asked Mr. Richardson why he was here. You don't even live here.

Paul Stephenson – 1426 Virginia Street – Mr. Stephenson stated that he remembers when this building (City Hall) as moved to this location. He remembers that the Historical Society wanted to move it here to bring it closer to the Historic District. It was moved to make room for Safeway.

Eileen Wheelock 100 Sunny Easy Avenue Empire – Mrs. Wheelock mentioned that about 2 years ago she attended the meeting about the Carlson building, and that there were many people there who wrote down that they wanted to see at the Carlson site. What happened to that list, what came out of that meeting? At the meeting they agreed to use the brick, why is that not being used in this proposal? Mrs. Wheelock stated that her mother graduated from that building in 1938. The look has always been gas station, gas station, and school. We should use that space for more community minded use. Mrs. Wheelock also asked what the AMI was based off. Did it include Clear Creek County? That would include Evergreen, which is not very cheap.

H. Pete Galmish 1826 Wall Street – Mr. Galmish stated there are so many things that are significant. Parking, the biking people parking all over, he wishes the city would recognize the great need in this town, other than more apartments. Maybe support another grocery chain to replace Safeway. Greed and money is what it comes down to. Look at the Facebook posts, a lot of unhappiness in the atmosphere. The building does not fit, looks cheaply built. What about the snow removal, where is the snow going to go? Now it's being pushed onto Miner Street. This is a Kansas project not a Colorado. The pictures never show what ends up being built.

Dan Dalpes 1244 Colorado Blvd – Mr. Dalpes stated that he lives caddy corner to Carlson. His front porch has the best view in town, he is scared that his view is going to go away. Mr. Dalpes asked Mr. Richardson how much the property is for sale for? Mr. Richardson replied and stated that is the school's business. Mr. Dalpes stated that he moved here in 1973 back when there were kids in the county. Mr. Dalpes stated he loves this town, having been married 56 years. Is there a strict limit on the 35-foot max height from the ground level? He doesn't want to see any mechanical vents above the 35-foot max. Mr. Dalpes asked the audience if anyone was in support of this, he will be 85 years old next week. We are going to be casino employee housing town.

Jacob Scott 104 27th Place – Mr. Scott mentioned that he is new to town, he has a lot of questions on the letter and the application. The design language is a copout, local materials should be used, a stucco square building will not fit. The city intends to give over 200K in concessions, after raising taxes on everyone in town? Mr. Scott asked who wrote these letters? No concessions should be given to this developer. What are the repercussions if it ends up being like the Fieldhouse? Mr. Scott also expressed surprise that tax credits could be sold to investors. This doesn't fit, it should be multi-use with some commercial.

Bonnie Reimer 222 10th Avenue – How many homes have 2 people and only 1 car? Why can't this wait to see if the Fieldhouse fills up? This is going to cause a lot of shading with a 35-foot-tall building and with people whipping down Colorado blvd will be unsafe. Mrs. Reimer stated that we don't need more affordable housing, she has been here for 40 years and never had access to affordable housing, she's been looking all her life. She is opposed to these buildings, need to build something welcoming, an apartment building is not what we need. We invest in community, town, neighborhood. How about marketing to buyers, inviting people in that may not have the same ideas as this.

Bobbi Corthius (sp) 836 Miner Street – Bobbi stated that she hopes the school district can sell this property. Preschool teachers have been cut and the school really needs the money. There is trauma from the Fieldhouse, and that's the cities fault, a lot of lies. Thanks you to Dylan for removing the sidewalk that was placed in her parking space, please keep the trees, keep open communication, she is against sod, limit water usage, also noted that the city keeps dumping city water over the mountain as a tourist attraction.

Carla Pokrywka Cole 2857 Chicago Creek Road – Ms. Cole is going to start with what PC needs to know. The architectural features, the colors maybe should be changed, the windows do not look like punched windows, they do not give a historic look. The historic regulations state "should" which makes it hard for the city to say "shall". A water feature should not be added, should be water sensitive, do not put a fountain on site, this is our gateway.

Scott Pennell 1245 Colorado Blvd – Mr. Pennell sated that he knows what a difficult job that staff have. This is the entrance to our town, we only have control with what is currently in the municipal code. We need to focus on what we have control over like the architectural design. 13th and Colorado is the busiest corner and right only crossing will be difficult. Mr. Pennell stated that he is not sure how our code has the same parking requirements for a 1 bedroom and a 2 bedroom. What is going to control people from parking their cars on the street. Mr. Pennell is concerned with the construction noise and the traffic in the neighborhood.

Jennifer Upright 1632 Virginia Street – Ms. Upright stated that she lives in a townhome and she is appalled at this design, people who live in that area have no idea what they are getting into. Ms. Upright stated that they are only 8 units and you are bringing in 50 units. Ms. Upright stated to make it fit.

Jada Norris 1616 Wall Street – Ms. Norris is concerned with the affordable housing. She wants to make sure that the developer cares about affordability and not just the tax credits. If the AMI includes other towns, then it is not accurate. Who would you like to live here, I cannot afford what you are proposing. There are not a lot of single-family homes available. She is concerned about the traffic study, she has to inch out at her house. What about the tenant's visitor parking? Where do the visitors park? What value are you bringing in?

Orion Zamoria 100 E Sunny Avenue, Empire Co – A lot has happened, its hard to sustain a town like this when people visit for like 2 hours, we are having to rent out our basement and we are a family of 4. I am 19, the housing market is terrible, we can do something about it. The school kids now walk across the highway, everything has fallen down, need to sort out the biggest issue with the people, we are at a place to move past this.

Libby Caplan 219 14th Avenue – Thanks for the library employee parking, but we don't have any library only designated parking anymore, the traffic in the area that this will cause, will be affecting our seniors and our children.

Mariah White 1430 Miner Street – Ms. White stated she is the owner of the Bee's Knee's, she loves this community. Project Support just went through a lot and looks beautiful. You are throwing a city project into our community. All kinds of nonsense being built along C-470.

Jim Thomas 1235 Miner Street - Mr. Thomas stated that this falls on the parking. If the lot is full, visitors will spill out. The stop sign at 13th and Colorado Blvd gets run multiple times a day. The big semi-trucks come in from I-70, and they have a very hard time navigating this area and this intersection. The access needs to be changed.

Adam Bickford 2051 Miner Street – Mr. Bickford stated that he is working with Loaves & Fishes and there are many residents who are housing insecure. He is in favor of increasing the affordable housing unit. This will span across all ages. Increasing the number of affordable units will help to build this community.

Margaret Smith 1430 Miner Street – Ms. Smith stated that she is on the Historic Sites and Facilities Board, and they just spent 3 hours discussing gutters and downspouts for the library. This makes that discussion seem irrelevant. Trying to pressure the historic community. We love this community, there are many people here who need housing, but not at the entry of our town. What about the timing with the projected mobility hub, with all of that construction no one will be able to come into town. She is opposed to this, need to fight this as a community.

Lilly Hawkins 412 Colorado Blvd – We are a close community, this is a terrible vibe, building this in the middle of our town would be a travesty. Keep the Kansas stuff out of this town. No soul, no character, just like the Fieldhouse apartments. This can be reimagined to say something about this town. Affordable housing does not need to be like this, this is not a gift to this place.

Christian Hawkins 412 Colorado Blvd – A lot of points have already been made; we have one chance to get this right. When you start selling to developers it will not stop. They just bulldoze and bulldoze. There is nothing left of the neighborhood that I grew up in, it's now all 6 story apartment buildings. This development was submitted half done. Wish Idaho Springs would stay small forever, we need housing but not Walmart style. Use the existing building. All of the other points have been made.

Jan Bowland 175 Divide View Drive – I graduated from that building. We have owned a hotel and decided to stay here. This is a community. I am the President of the Historical Society, I want to give thanks to Dylan, for making it clear that it's the school board who is selling this building. We met with the school district and provided concepts at that meeting. I am not opposed to building, except how it looks. Put some commercial on the first level, redesign this, it does not represent our town. Visitors are directed to the Historic District; they come here because we are cute and quaint. There was a semi-truck that came in off Highway 103 and tried to turn down Miner Street. Had to be turned around with a forklift, this will change our town forever. Redesign it.

APPLICANT- Austin Richardson - Thank you for all your comments. This is a low-income project. When we are awarded tax credits the affordability lasts for 50 years. Once developed, it cannot be sold, it will not be worth anything. 15 years of initial compliance, the remaining time frame is extended compliance. AMI is decided by HUD, not the developers. Every year the AMI is adjusted. Great feedback on the design, this is not the final design. Could possibly use some brick, it will depend on the labor cost. The parking requirements for low income is 1.1, if you can qualify for low-income housing you will most likely not have multiple cars.

Mariah White - This sounds like you will be taking a loss, why do you have interest?

Applicant Richardson – Part of our company's mission. I run the affordable housing part of it. I don't live in Idaho Springs, Ive developed all over the country in rural towns and mountain towns. Typically, a local person cannot get approved to obtain tax credits; it usually takes a skilled professional. Ive built in Montana, Idaho and Colorado. Going off the traffic study that was done. This development is for families and teachers. Live in the community and walk downtown.

Chair Olson – What about the architecture.

Applicant Richardson – Open to suggestions and advise from the city if this is not working.

Cindy Olson – But you didn't, that is a red flag. You talk about the monument, and it sounds like you have not studied what the city is looking for. Where did the monument with a clock tower come from. Have you talked with the city on this?

Applicant Richardson – Yes, I've been working with the city for a year and a half.

Community Development Planner Graves – Gateway feature, design is not 100% perhaps there is a way to continue with better aesthetics.

Chair Olson – Confused on the traffic study. The middle of 13th Avenue is where people will be pulling out?

Applicant Richardson – Yes

Chair Olson - Not a very good area to pull out from.

Commissioner Slaymaker- Thanks to everyone for coming, point of clarification, are you getting any city tax credits?

Community Development Planner Graves- Not at this time, there has been mention of tap fee discounts but that would be done by city council.

Commissioner Maxwell - Can this be approved as is, or say after redesign?

Community Development Planner Graves - Difficult to approve tonight and ask for a complete redesign.

Commissioner Slaymaker - Is the sale of the property finalized?

Applicant Richardson - We are under contract, contingent on the Ly tech award from the state (state tax credits)

Vice Chair Cruzalegui – Will the Ly tech award allow for commercial uses?

Applicant Richardson – No as it increases the parking requirements

Vice Chair Cruzalegui – But you could?

Applicant Richardson - You can, but not feasible.

Commissioner Slaymaker – What is the housing need

Community Development Planner- This is outside the purview for approval, but the assessment says 109 units by 2032.

Commissioner Slaymaker – Long term hold, you’ve made promises, may ask for more. Can you convince us that you will not go back on what you say?

Applicant Richardson- I don’t lie, once there is a plan put together and we get a permit, we are required to build what we have submitted, as submitted. We cannot change it.

Community Development Planner Graves – If approved, if there are any changes proposed, we can require coming in for an amendment, they cannot just change.

Applicant Richardson – The need is here, must build this properly, going to built this using quality materials, we need to build this right the first time. Mr. Richardson stated that the entire 1st floor is ADA adaptable and they will have 3 designated ADA units. There will be no elevator. Mr. Richardson stated that he has 700 low-income projects across the country. Mr. Richardson stated that he would like to not have this be a gated area but because of the higher crime in the area, and CHFA sees that, so it must be mitigated by placing a gate all around the property.

Commissioner Slaymaker – Is the green space proposed going to be inside that gated are?

Applicant Richardson – It’s not a public place, it will be private property, so the green space and other amenities are for the residents of the property.

Resident Sandi Pennell – Have you shared your other low-income development with the commission?

Applicant Richardson – They are all on our website, we will have designated parking spaces for snow storage, it will be pushed behind some parking spots.

Chair Olson – I cannot find a report on the traffic study, having a hard time with the traffic thing. This is two-way traffic.

Vice Chair Cruzalegui – I would not love to have a 35-foot building in front of my home, but I would really love my service industry friends and senior friends to be able to afford to stay in the community. Snow and Ice is a concern with shading, maybe you can figure out a way to allow some sun to come thru.

DELIBERATION- Chair Olson stated she has concerns with what Associate Attorney Klein has brought up. If there is no leverage, the motion is on what’s in front of us. Chair Olson agreed with Commissioner Slaymaker but was not sure it could legally stand up. Commissioner Slaymaker stated if we condition what he said he was amicable to, maybe that’s being over cautious. Vice Chair Cruzalegui stated if he is willing, might as well try to trust him. Chair Olson stated they would need to add the condition to send to council. Associate Attorney Klein stated is it’s an applicant concession, it is not a requirement. Chair Olson stated to include all conditions, and wasn’t there a community meeting held about this, and at that meeting a 3-story building was not what was expressed as desired by the community. Commissioner Maxwell mentioned balancing the whole city, and how long this building can stay vacant. Associate Attorney Klein mentioned that this development is a use by right, they have a right to do with the property what they wish. Chair Olson stated that they have not sold the property to this developer yet, so there could be another developer coming in 6 months. Vich Chair Cruzalegui pointed out that the school district is in control of this property as they are the property owners. Chair Olson stated the traffic study should be revisited, with 13th Avenue cars turning both ways out of the development. Associate Attorney Klein advised the commission that they could continue the hearing to allow the inclusion of the traffic plan, 2. Deny some items that need to be figured out ahead of time. The applicant concession could be added as condition #10. If denied, the ask should be insufficient information. Commissioner Maxwell asked if denied, would the start day start over with another 90-day time frame? Community Development Planner Mr. Graves advised the commission that there is an allowance of 1–30-day extension.

MOTION

Associate Attorney Nickolas Klein read off the motion- Motion to recommend that the Idaho Springs City Council approve FDP-001 A Final Development Plan to construct 50 units of affordable multifamily rental housing at 1300 Colorado Blvd. With the findings that the proposed development complies with section 21-106(F) of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code with the conditions identified in the staff report as follows:

1. A sight distance triangle analysis of the driveway connections to 13th Avenue and 14th Avenue shall be provided before building permits will be issued for this project, at the developer's expense.
2. Final civil plans, including detailed engineering plans, final drainage reports and stormwater management calculations, final detention design and water quality calculations, geotechnical investigations, final utility reports, final water and sewer system design, final erosion and sediment control plans for construction management, final public improvement plans and cost estimates, and construction specifications and details are required prior to issuance of building permits associated with the subject property.
3. A Right-of-Way vacation request shall be submitted to the city for review that includes an exhibit, prepared by a licensed Colorado surveyor, showing the extent of Right-of-Way to be vacated. This Right-of-Way vacation request shall be approved prior to issuance of building permits for the subject property.
4. The applicant shall provide an access and utility easement for the city's existing sewer main that runs through the subject property. This easement shall be prepared at the applicant's expense and shall be submitted in concert with Condition #3 for review and approval prior to building permit issuance.
5. The applicant shall provide three (3) parking spaces on the subject property for use by library employees. An agreement shall be executed for these parking spaces prior to the issuance of any building permits for the subject property.
6. Final landscaping plans will be reviewed and approved prior to the issuance of building permits associated with the subject property. Plant species shall be appropriate for the Idaho Springs climate and appropriate irrigation shall be required.
7. Garbage enclosure details shall be submitted and approved prior to building permit issuance. The garbage enclosure shall be of similar architectural design to the proposed buildings to match the overall site design.
8. Exterior lighting shall be installed to illuminate included parking areas. Lighting shall include fully cut off and downcast fixtures to minimize light pollution to adjacent properties.
9. Decorative trims and parapet caps associated with the building shall be designed to complement a late 19th century / early 20th century architectural aesthetic and be enhanced to create a stronger horizontal expression, with clearly defined first floor and upper floors.

As well as the addition of condition #10 to read- The Development shall be designed to be compatible with the comprehensive plan recommendations to fit into the setting of the city and protect scenic view corridors, historic districts and historic landscape.

Commissioner Slaymaker stated so moved. Vice Chair Cruzalegui seconded, second followed by a roll call vote; Commissioner Howard – No, Commissioner Slaymaker – Yes, Commissioner Maxwell – Yes, Vice Chair Cruzalegui – Yes, Chair Olson – No. Motion carries 3-2.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business

ADJOURMENT

Chair Olson Adjourned the meeting at 9:35 pm.



TO: Idaho Springs City Council
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Ordinance #16, Series 2026, an ordinance amending Section 21-105 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code to authorize the issuance of Conditional Use Permits as personal to the applicant and as limited or unlimited in duration.
MEETING DATE: August 5, 2026 Planning Commission Regular Meeting

SCOPE:

Discuss a potential change to Sec. 21-105 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC) concerning Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) to establish standards to approve a temporary conditional use.

DISCUSSION:

Any uses not specifically allowed by right because of special requirements, potential impacts or unique characteristics may be approved by City Council as a conditional use as indicated in Sec. 21-15 of the ISMC. The proposed use must generally conform to the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Recently, the city has approved several CUPs on a “temporary” basis (CUP24-001 and CUP25-001, both to allow an employee campground use at 101 E. Idaho Springs Road). These were approved because of the seasonal nature of the use and the fact that the city was only willing to approve the use on a trial basis. In general, this is not how a CUP is supposed to work.

CUPs are not guaranteed for any definite period. Labeling them for some definite duration contradicts their express nature as “conditional” and revocable at any time if they should violate their conditions/requirements (after due process). CUPs are not meant to be approved for a particular term, unless for a short term that arises from Council’s unwillingness to fully green-light a “runs with the property” CUP.

Staff have had conversations with multiple property owners over the past few months who are looking to engage in a temporary use on their property for a particular term, rather than establishing a permanent use on the property that runs with the land. As such, the city’s attorneys have suggested that the city modify Sec. 21-105 to create the ability for the governing body to determine whether an approved use should run with the land, is personal to the applicant and would expire if the property were to sell, is transferable (or not), or of a definite duration. This would give the city express authority to determine whether a conditional use is appropriate forever, or only for a set period as conditioned in the approval.

No changes to the review criteria are proposed. Any use, whether approved in perpetuity or for a temporary term, would be required to meet the existing criteria for approval.

The proposed ordinance amends the ISMC to allow the city two additional ways of approving CUPs within the city to acknowledge that circumstance-specific conditions may exist that mean the conditional use should not be approved indefinitely.

First, the ordinance would allow the city to grant a CUP to an applicant that does not run with the land. Rather, it would only run with the property owner. If the property changed hands, the CUP would no longer be valid.

Second, the ordinance would allow the city to grant a CUP for a temporary, defined period. This would allow the city to time-constrain a CUP so that it is only valid for a certain period, after which time it would expire.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Staff believe that this proposed code amendment should be approved, as it gives the city additional tools to work with when reviewing and granting CUP applications. Not all CUP applications are appropriate for indefinite periods and this CUP amendment would acknowledge this fact and address the need to be able to time limit or owner limit an application.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Motion to recommend approval of Ordinance #16, Series 2026, an ordinance amending Section 21-105 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code to authorize the issuance of Conditional Use Permits as personal to the applicant and as limited or unlimited in duration.

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS
Clear Creek County, Colorado

Ordinance No. 16, Series 2026

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 21-105 OF THE IDAHO SPRINGS MUNICIPAL CODE TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS AS PERSONAL TO THE APPLICANT AND AS LIMITED OR UNLIMITED IN DURATION

WHEREAS, the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado (the “City”) is a statutory city, duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 31-23-301 *et seq.*, the Idaho Springs City Council (“Council”) is authorized to adopt laws and regulations governing zoning and land use within the City; and

WHEREAS, the Council has adopted such zoning and land use laws, codified generally as Chapter 21 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (“Code”); and

WHEREAS, Code Section 21-105 authorizes conditional uses and addresses how the same are applied for, reviewed and adjudicated; and

WHEREAS, conditional uses within the City are currently authorized as indefinite in duration, unless otherwise sought by or agreed to by an applicant, recorded against and running with the subject property; and

WHEREAS, the Council finds and determines that conditional uses by definition and nature are highly circumstance-specific in regards to their appropriateness; and

WHEREAS, the Council further finds that, due to their heavily fact-dependent nature, conditional uses may not always be appropriate indefinitely; and

WHEREAS, the Council therefore wishes to amend Code Section 21-105 to authorize conditional uses of a more limited duration when the proposed use is dependent upon design, management or operational aspects such that it meets all other review criteria only when it is a personal grant to the applicant or to the applicant and any subsequent owner who demonstrates a continuing ability to also satisfy such criteria, all as further set forth herein.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, as follows:

Section 1. Section 21-105 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (“Code”), concerning conditional uses, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 21-105. - Conditional uses.

(A) General. Article III of this Chapter permits uses not specified as being by right in the various zoning districts to be approved and implemented by conditional use. This Section governs the application for and approval, administration and enforcement of conditional uses. Conditional uses generally 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.

(B) Applicability. This Section applies to any uses proposed as conditional uses. No building permit shall be issued in any zoning district for any use not identified by right, nor shall any person cause or permit such use upon property owned, controlled or occupied by such person, until a conditional use has been approved by the City Council according to the requirements of this Section.

(C) Submittal requirements. Required materials shall be as indicated in the Submittal Requirements by Development Process table provided in this Article.

(D) Notification requirements. Public notification shall occur as indicated in the Required Public Notification by Development Process table provided in this Article.

(E) Public Hearings. A public hearing shall occur as indicated by the Required Decision Making Process for Development Applications table provided in this Article.

(F) Criteria for review and approval. Conditional uses may be approved by the City only where the applicant demonstrates that the following conditions will be met:

- (1) The proposed use conforms to all requirements of this Article and all other applicable provisions and other development regulations, standards or requirements adopted by the City;
- (2) The proposed use is in general conformance with applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Plan, or that changed conditions occurring since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan support approval of the proposed conditional use of the property; and
- (3) The proposed use will not result in impacts to adjacent properties which are significantly different in nature, type or extent than impacts caused by uses which are permitted by right in the zone district where the property is located.
- (4) Additionally, the City Council shall determine if the proposed use is dependent upon design, management or operational aspects such that it be a personal grant of use to the owner of the use and not a grant which transfers with the affected property, and, in that connection, the City Council shall decide whether the conditional use:
 - (a) Runs with the land in perpetuity; or
 - (b) Is personal to the applicant and may or may not be inherited; and/or
 - (c) Shall be granted only for a defined period, after which time the conditional use shall expire unless renewed subject to all of the requirements of this section.

(G) Post approval.

- (1) Nothing in this Section shall limit the authority of the City Council to refer its decision on the conditional use permit to the eligible electors of the City for final determination.
 - (2) All approved conditional use permits shall be approved by ordinance. Such ordinance shall include the legal description of the property, specify in detail the conditional use permitted and clearly specify any and all permit conditions imposed. ~~The ordinance shall be recorded in the records of the County Clerk and Recorder, and the permit shall run with the described property. All approved conditional uses shall be referenced on the zoning district map and a file containing all documents relevant to the application and the resulting permit shall be maintained by the City Clerk.~~
 - (3) A conditional use permit is valid so long as the conditions of approval are maintained unless a specific time limit for the use or development is set forth as part of the permit approval. Except as otherwise provided herein, if an approved conditional use ceases operation for any reason for a period of one (1) year, the conditional use permit shall be deemed expired, unless otherwise provided in the permit itself.
 - (4) If the conditions of a conditional use permit become the responsibility of a person or entity other than the applicant, the City shall be notified in writing, identifying the new person or entity responsible for maintaining the conditions of the permit. Until such notice is received, the applicant shall remain responsible for maintaining the conditions. The notice shall be attached to the permit on file with the City. It shall be the burden of the proposed new permit holder to demonstrate that its continuation of the conditional use shall meet the review criteria set forth in subsection (F) of this Section
 - (3 5) Revocation. Any conditional use may be revoked at any time by ordinance of the City Council, following notice to the owner of the property and observance of substantially the same procedure provided herein for City Council consideration of issuance of the permit, where the City Council finds failure to meet the conditions imposed, if any, or that the property has not been devoted to the approved conditional use for a period of one (1) year or more more than two (2) years.
 - (4 6) Any rezoning of the property after a conditional use is approved but before the approved conditional use is implemented on the property shall automatically terminate and void the conditional use permit unless the City expressly reaffirms the permit as part of the rezoning.
- (H) Amendment. An application for amendment of an approved and valid conditional use shall be processed in accordance with the requirements applicable to the issuance of a new conditional use.

Section 2. Any and all Ordinances or parts thereof in conflict or inconsistent herewith are, to the extent of such conflict or inconsistency, hereby repealed; provided, however, that the repeal of any such Ordinance or part thereof shall not revive any other section or part of any

Ordinance heretofore repealed or superseded.

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

INTRODUCED, READ AND ORDERED PUBLISHED at a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, held on the _____ day of _____, 2026.

Chuck Harmon, Mayor

ATTESTED AND CERTIFIED:

Jennie Kim, City Clerk

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED at a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, held on the ____ day of _____, 2026.

Chuck Harmon, Mayor

ATTESTED AND CERTIFIED:

Jennie Kim, City Clerk



TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Code Amendment to Update Regulations on Group Homes and Related Residential Uses to Conform with Colorado Law and the Federal Fair Housing Act
MEETING DATE: August 5, 2026 Work Session

BACKGROUND

Idaho Springs has existing regulatory standards in the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC) concerning group homes, which the ISMC defines as:

Group Home. An institution, place, building, or agency providing for a period exceeding twenty-four (24) consecutive hours accommodation, board, personal assistance, and other essential daily living activities to individuals not related to the administrator or owner thereof, who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis.

The ISMC currently allows group homes as a by-right use in the R-E, R-1, and R-3 zone districts. The city's attorneys have realized that the ISMC is out of compliance with current state and federal regulations on the subject, and have let city staff know that a code amendment is needed to get into compliance.

The General Assembly of the State of Colorado has declared, in CRS § 31-23-301(4), that a statutory or home rule municipality shall not enact an ordinance prohibiting the use of a state-licensed group home for either persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities or behavioral or mental health disorders that serves not more than eight persons and appropriate staff as a residential use of property for zoning purposes, and that the phrase "residential use of property for zoning purposes" expressly includes all forms of residential zoning, specifically including single-family residential zoning.

The General Assembly has further declared, in CRS § 31-23-303(2), that the establishment of state-licensed group homes for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, group homes for the aged for persons 60 years of age or older, state-licensed group homes for persons with behavioral or mental health disorders, and recovery residences for persons in recovery from substance use disorders are each matters of statewide concern, and that each constitutes a residential use of property for zoning purposes.

The General Assembly has further declared in CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b.7) that recovery residences, as defined in CRS § 27-80-129(1)(b), are a residential use of property for zoning purposes and are subject only to the regulations of like dwellings in the same zone, reflecting the state's policy to encourage, promote, and assist persons who are in recovery from substance use disorders to live in residential neighborhoods.

Individual residential services and supports settings for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities must be treated as residential property in the application of all local regulations, including zoning, land use development, fire and life safety, sanitation, and building codes, and that local governing authorities shall not impose additional regulations on such settings that do not apply to other residential properties. HB26-1147, goes further, expressly prohibiting local governing authorities from imposing additional regulations on individual residential services and supports settings that do not apply to other residential properties.

The federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) is also relevant, as local zoning codes are not exempt from FHA requirements.

With all that in mind, the attorneys have presented a draft ordinance that would bring the ISMC into compliance with all relevant state and federal requirements.

PROPOSED CHANGES:

Proposed changes include a revision to the existing definition of a Group Home, to be replaced with a definition for a Community Residential Home. The code amendment would also add definitions for a Group Home for the Aged, a Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders, Individual Residential Services and Supports Setting (IRSS Setting), and a Recovery Residence.

The amendment would also change Use Table 21-50-1 to allow these newly defined uses in all residential zone districts.

The amendment would further create group home standards that are greatly expanded as compared to what the ISMC has in place now, which is meant to ensure that any proposed group home meets state licensure prerequisites, establishes standards that regulate any residential use (setbacks, height, lot coverage, architectural design, parking standards, etc.), and establishes review procedures and standards that the city must meet. Administrative review would be required except in cases where any other residential use would require a public process. For example, if a multifamily group home is proposed, this would go through the city's Final Development Plan (FDP) process, as is required for any multifamily residential building. This ensures that while the use(s) are clearly allowed, they still must meet the standards that we would expect to see for any other residential development.

NEXT STEPS:

City staff will have the ordinance on the next scheduled Planning Commission regular meeting agenda for review and action. Staff believe that we must amend the code to get into compliance with state and federal standards, so there is little room for negotiation on the ordinance. However, if anyone has questions, please let staff know.

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS
Clear Creek County, Colorado

Ordinance No. ___, Series 2026

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 21 OF THE IDAHO SPRINGS MUNICIPAL CODE TO REGULATE GROUP HOMES AND RELATED RESIDENTIAL USES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CONFORMANCE WITH COLORADO LAW AND THE FEDERAL FAIR HOUSING ACT

WHEREAS, the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado (the “City”) is a statutory city, duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the State of Colorado has declared, in CRS § 31-23-301(4), that a statutory or home rule municipality shall not enact an ordinance prohibiting the use of a state-licensed group home for either persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities or behavioral or mental health disorders that serves not more than eight persons and appropriate staff as a residential use of property for zoning purposes, and that the phrase “residential use of property for zoning purposes” expressly includes all forms of residential zoning, specifically including single-family residential zoning; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has further declared, in CRS § 31-23-303(2), that the establishment of state-licensed group homes for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, group homes for the aged for persons 60 years of age or older, state-licensed group homes for persons with behavioral or mental health disorders, and recovery residences for persons in recovery from substance use disorders are each matters of statewide concern, and that each constitutes a residential use of property for zoning purposes; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has further declared in CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b.7) that recovery residences, as defined in CRS § 27-80-129(1)(b), are a residential use of property for zoning purposes and are subject only to the regulations of like dwellings in the same zone, reflecting the state’s policy to encourage, promote, and assist persons who are in recovery from substance use disorders to live in residential neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, CRS § 25.5-10-214(1) mandates that individual residential services and supports settings for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities must be treated as residential property in the application of all local regulations, including zoning, land use development, fire and life safety, sanitation, and building codes, and that local governing authorities shall not impose additional regulations on such settings that do not apply to other residential properties; and

WHEREAS, during its last regular session, the Colorado General Assembly reinforced and clarified these protections in House Bill 26-1147, signed into law on June 3, 2026 (effective August 12, 2026), which expressly prohibits local governing authorities from imposing additional regulations on individual residential services and supports settings that do not apply to other residential properties, and establishes a statewide database to provide accurate information about such settings; and

WHEREAS, CRS § 29-20-111, enacted as the “HOME Act,” prohibits local governments from limiting the number of people who may live together in a single dwelling based on familial

relationship, and provides that occupancy limits may be based only on demonstrated health and safety standards or affordable housing program guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the federal Fair Housing Act, as amended by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601 et seq. ("FHA"), prohibits discrimination in housing based on disability (referred to as "handicap" in the statute), including discrimination in the terms, conditions, and privileges of the sale or rental of a dwelling, 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(2), and expressly requires that municipalities make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford persons with disabilities equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(3)(B); and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court held in *City of Edmonds v. Oxford House, Inc.*, 514 U.S. 725 (1995), that family-composition rules in municipal zoning codes are not exempt from FHA scrutiny under 42 U.S.C. § 3607(b)(1) as maximum occupancy restrictions, and that municipalities must engage with FHA reasonable accommodation obligations when applying occupancy and family-definition restrictions to group homes for persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit held in *Courage to Change Ranches Holding Company v. El Paso County*, 73 F.4th 1175 (10th Cir. 2023), that a zoning code imposing lower occupancy caps on group homes for persons with disabilities than on comparable structured group-living arrangements constitutes facial discrimination under the FHA; that the proper comparator for group homes for persons with disabilities is other structured group-living arrangements in the local code, not single-family homes occupied by unrelated roommates; and that any justification for such differential treatment must be rooted in the language of the FHA or antidiscrimination case law; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Supreme Court held in *Adams County Ass'n for Retarded Citizens, Inc. v. City of Westminster*, 196 Colo. 79 (1978), that the legislature enacted the state group home statutes specifically to preclude municipalities from barring group homes from residential neighborhoods on the basis of fears and stereotypes about persons with disabilities, and that grounds such as adverse effect on single-family character, disruption of neighborhood peace and quiet, and general neighborhood hostility are impermissible bases for denial of a group home permit; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Supreme Court held in *Glennon Heights, Inc. v. Central Bank & Trust*, 658 P.2d 872 (1983), that CRS § 31-23-301(4)'s prohibition on municipal zoning ordinances that exclude qualifying group homes from residential districts constitutes a legitimate limitation on the legislative powers delegated to statutory cities, and that neighboring property owners have no vested right in the maintenance of a particular zoning classification as against the state's group home statutes; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Fair Housing Act, CRS § 24-34-502, independently prohibits disability-based discrimination in housing and has been construed by Colorado Courts to require reasonable accommodations in housing rules, policies, and practices when such accommodations are necessary to afford persons with disabilities equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho Springs City Council has reviewed the existing provisions of Chapter 21 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code ("Code") concerning group homes and group living uses and finds that such provisions require updating in order to comply with state and federal

law and ensure that persons with disabilities are afforded full and equal access to residential neighborhoods within the City on the same terms and conditions as other residents; and

WHEREAS, the City Council further finds that the amendments set forth in this Ordinance are consistent with and in furtherance of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Idaho Springs and with the general welfare of present and future City residents.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, as follows:

Section 1. Section 21-15 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (“Code”), concerning definitions applicable to Chapter 21, is hereby amended as follows:

The definition of “Group Home” is amended as follows:

Group Home. ~~An institution, place, building, or agency providing for a period exceeding twenty-four (24) consecutive hours accommodation, board, personal assistance, and other essential daily living activities to individuals not related to the administrator or owner thereof, who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis.~~ A Community Residential Home; Group Home for the Aged; Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders; Individual Residential Services and Supports Setting (IRSS Setting); or Recovery Residence, as further defined herein.

The following new definitions are inserted in appropriate alphabetical order:

Community Residential Home. A state-licensed residential home, as defined in CRS § 25.5-10-202, providing accommodation, training, supervision, and support for the exclusive use of not fewer than four (4) and not more than eight (8) persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, together with appropriate staff. A Community Residential Home must hold a current, valid license or certification issued by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing pursuant to CRS § 25.5-10-214. A Community Residential Home is a residential use of property for zoning purposes, including single-family residential zoning, pursuant to CRS §§ 31-23-301(4) and 31-23-303(2)(a).

Group Home for the Aged. A home providing accommodation and personal care for the exclusive use of not more than eight (8) persons who are 60 years of age or older, as contemplated by CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b)(II). A Group Home for the Aged must be distinguished from a nursing facility, as defined in CRS § 25.5-4-103, and from an institution providing life care, as defined in CRS § 11-49-101. A Group Home for the Aged is a residential use of property for zoning purposes, including single-family residential zoning, pursuant to CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b)(II).

Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders. A state-licensed group home providing accommodation for the exclusive use of not more than eight (8) persons with behavioral or mental health disorders, as defined in CRS § 27-65-102, together with appropriate staff, and licensed pursuant to applicable state law and rules of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

A Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders is a residential use of property for zoning purposes, including single-family residential zoning, pursuant to CRS §§ 31-23-301(4) and 31-23-303(2)(b.5). Persons determined to be not guilty by reason of insanity to a violent offense, and any person who has been convicted of a felony involving a violent offense, shall not be placed in such a group home, as provided in CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b.5).

Individual Residential Services and Supports Setting (IRSS Setting). Any setting in which individual residential services and supports are provided by a service provider agency to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities pursuant to CRS § 25.5-10-214, not otherwise qualifying as a Community Residential Home. An IRSS Setting must be treated as residential property in the application of all local regulations, including zoning, land use development, fire and life safety, sanitation, and building codes. No additional regulations beyond those applicable to other residential properties may be imposed on an IRSS Setting.

Recovery Residence. Any premises, place, facility, or building that provides housing accommodation for individuals with a primary diagnosis of a substance use disorder, as defined in CRS § 27-80-129(1)(b), that: (i) is free from alcohol and nonprescribed or illicit drugs; (ii) promotes independent living and life skill development; and (iii) provides structured activities and recovery support services primarily intended to promote recovery from substance use disorders. A Recovery Residence must be: (a) certified by a certifying body approved by the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration pursuant to CRS § 27-80-129; (b) chartered by Oxford House, Inc., or its successor organization; or (c) have been operating as a recovery residence in Colorado for thirty (30) or more years as of May 23, 2019. A Recovery Residence is a residential use of property for zoning purposes and is subject only to the regulations of like dwellings in the same zone, pursuant to CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b.7). The term "Recovery Residence" does not include a facility approved for residential treatment by the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration, permanent supportive housing units incorporated into affordable housing developments, or the facility described in CRS § 24-32-724.

Section 2. Table 21-50-1 of the Code, set forth under Code Section 21-50, is hereby amended by amending the “Group Living” rows under the “RESIDENTIAL” use category section of the Table, as follows:

Amended Group Living Rows – Table 21-50-1

<i>Table 21-50-1 (Group Living Uses) - Amended</i>												
<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>USE TYPE</i>	<i>ZONE DISTRICT</i>										
		<i>R-E</i>	<i>R-I</i>	<i>R-2</i>	<i>R-3</i>	<i>R-M</i>	<i>HD</i>	<i>C-1</i>	<i>C-2</i>	<i>C-3</i>	<i>L-I</i>	<i>P</i>
Group Living ¹	Group homes for up to eight (8) developmentally disabled persons, handicapped individuals, children or senior citizens.	X	X		X							

	Group homes for over eight (8) developmentally disabled persons, handicapped individuals, children or senior citizens.	X			X							
	<u>Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders (state-licensed; up to 8 residents and appropriate staff). Permitted in all residential and Historic Downtown zone districts as a use by right. Must not be located within 750 feet of another such group home unless otherwise provided by the City. Subject only to the same development regulations as other residential uses in the same zone. See Sec. 21-51.</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>					
	<u>Recovery Residence. For persons in recovery from substance use disorders; certified or chartered pursuant to CRS § 27-80-129. Permitted in all zone districts where residential uses are permitted as a use by right. Subject only to the regulations of like dwellings in the same zone. See Sec. 21-51.</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>					
	<u>Individual Residential Services and Supports (IRSS) Setting. For persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities provided pursuant to CRS § 25.5-10-214. Treated as residential property for all local regulatory purposes. No additional regulations may be imposed beyond those applicable to other residential properties. See Sec. 21-51.</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>					
	<u>Large group home or group residential facility for more than 8 persons with disabilities (not state-licensed under the above categories, or exceeding 8 residents): Permitted as conditional use in R-E, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-M, and HD zone districts; subject to reasonable</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>					

	<u>accommodation procedure at Sec. 21-52.</u>													
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Footnote 1 to Table 21-50-1 (Group Living category):

(1) Use by right in all residential districts and HD District. All Group Living uses listed above as permitted “by right” (marked X) in the R-E, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-M, and HD zone districts require only those permits and approvals applicable to any other residential use of the same type (e.g., building permit, certificate of occupancy). No special use permit, conditional use permit, public hearing, neighborhood notification, or registration process beyond that applicable to other residential uses may be required.

(2) Historic Downtown (HD) District. Group Living uses are permitted by right in the HD zone district to the extent that residential uses are permitted in that district. The HD district’s historic preservation review requirements and design standards applicable to all development in the district continue to apply to group homes on the same terms as they apply to other residential uses.

(3) Spacing requirement. A Group Home for the Aged established pursuant to § 31-23-303(2)(b)(II) shall not be located within 750 feet of another group home unless otherwise provided by the City. A Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders shall not be located within 750 feet of another such group home, or of a Community Residential Home or Group Home for the Aged, unless otherwise provided by the City, consistent with CRS § 31-23-303(2)(b.5).

(4) Recovery Residences. Recovery Residences are subject only to the regulations of like dwellings in the same zone. No additional zoning requirements, spacing requirements, registration requirements, or conditions may be imposed on Recovery Residences that are not imposed on other residential uses of like type in the same zone district.

(5) IRSS Settings. Individual Residential Services and Supports Settings must be treated as residential property for all local regulatory purposes. No additional regulations may be imposed on an IRSS Setting that do not apply to other residential properties, consistent with CRS § 25.5-10-214(1) and House Bill 26-1147.

(6) Generally applicable standards. All Group Living uses remain subject to the height, setback, area, lot coverage, external signage, and architectural design standards of this Chapter that apply to other residential uses in the same zone district, provided such standards are applied on the same terms as they are applied to other residential uses and do not operate to prohibit any Group Living use from any residential district. Nothing herein precludes enforcement of applicable state, county, and City health, safety, and fire codes. See also Sec. 21-51.

(7) Reasonable accommodation. Any person or entity seeking a modification of these or other zoning requirements with respect to a Group Living use because of disability may apply for a reasonable accommodation pursuant to Sec. 21-52 of this Chapter.

Section 3. Article III of Chapter 21 of the Code, concerning zoning, is hereby amended by the addition of two new Sections - 21-51 and 21-52 - to read in their respective entireties as follows:

Sec. 21-51. Group Home Compliance Standards

- (A) Purpose and Construction. The purpose of this Section is to set forth the standards applicable to Group Living uses defined in Section 21-15 of this Chapter and listed in Table 21-50-1, to confirm the legal framework under which such uses are permitted, and to establish clear boundaries between permissible local regulation and impermissible prohibition. This Section shall be construed broadly to effectuate the mandate of CRS §§ 31-23-301(4) and 31-23-303 that qualifying group homes are permitted as residential uses of property in all residential zone districts, and narrowly with respect to any restriction on group homes, consistent with those statutes.
- (B) State Licensure Prerequisite. The use-by-right status accorded to Community Residential Homes and Group Homes for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders under Section 21-50 and this Chapter applies only to homes that hold a current, valid state license or certification as required by applicable Colorado law. A group home that does not hold the required state license is not entitled to the protections of CRS § 31-23-301(4) or § 31-23-303. The operator of any Community Residential Home or Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders shall, upon request by the City Administrator, provide documentation of current state licensure.
- (C) Permissible Regulation. The City may apply to any Group Living use those provisions of this Chapter that govern: (1) height, setbacks, area, and lot coverage applicable to residential structures generally in the same zone district; (2) external signage standards applicable to residential uses; (3) architectural design standards, provided they are not substantially inconsistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood as applied to other residential uses; (4) fire, building, health, and sanitation codes applicable to all residential uses; and (5) specific location requirements that are reasonably related to the requirements of a particular home, including the availability of transportation, commercial services, and public recreation facilities, consistent with CRS § 31-23-303(2)(c). The City shall not require any permit, approval, registration, public hearing, neighborhood notification, or condition that is not required of other residential uses of the same type in the same zone district, except as expressly authorized by state law.
- (D) Prohibited Restrictions. The City shall not: (1) require any Group Living use permitted by right under Table 21-50-1 to obtain a special use permit, conditional use permit, or any other discretionary land use approval not required of other residential uses; (2) impose spacing, dispersal, or proximity requirements on Group Living uses, except the 750-foot spacing requirements applicable to Group Homes for the Aged and Group Homes for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders as set forth in Section 21-50-1, Note (3); (3) impose occupancy standards on Group Living uses that are more restrictive than those imposed on other structured group-living arrangements in the same zone district; (4) impose registration or notification requirements on Group Living uses not required of other residential uses; or (5) conduct,

require, or invite public comment on the placement of any Group Living use permitted by right, in a manner not applicable to other residential uses.

- (E) Treatment Activities. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to permit the conducting of ministerial activities of any private or public organization or agency, or to permit types of treatment activities or the rendering of services, in a manner substantially inconsistent with the activities otherwise permitted in the particular zone district, consistent with CRS § 31-23-303(2)(c). For the avoidance of doubt, the in-home provision of therapeutic, medical, or personal care services to residents of a Group Living use, by staff employed by the home or by visiting professionals, is a residential activity consistent with the residential character of any residential zone district and does not convert a Group Living use into a commercial, medical, or institutional use.
- (F) HOME Act Compliance. Consistent with CRS § 29-20-111, the City shall not limit the number of persons who may reside together in a Group Living use or any other dwelling based on familial relationship. Any occupancy limit applicable to a Group Living use must be based solely on demonstrated health and safety standards, such as applicable building code, fire code, or Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment wastewater and water quality standards.
- (G) Nonconforming Uses. Any Group Living use lawfully existing as of the effective date of this Ordinance that does not conform to the provisions of this Chapter as amended hereby shall be deemed a lawful conforming use from and after the effective date of this Ordinance to the extent this Ordinance expands the zones in which Group Living uses are permitted. No Group Living use that was previously permitted shall be rendered nonconforming by this Ordinance.

Sec. 21-52. Reasonable Accommodation Procedure.

- (A) Purpose. The purpose of this Section is to establish a formal procedure by which persons with disabilities, and entities acting on their behalf, may request a modification or exception to any rule, policy, practice, or requirement of this Chapter when such modification is necessary to afford such persons equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, as required by the federal Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(3)(B), and the Colorado Fair Housing Act, CRS § 24-34-502. This Section shall be liberally construed to effectuate these statutory protections.
- (B) Applicability. Any person with a disability, or any entity acting on behalf of one or more persons with disabilities, may submit a written request for a reasonable accommodation under this Section with respect to any provision of this Chapter if the accommodation is sought in connection with a dwelling or the use of a dwelling. This Section applies regardless of whether a permit, variance, or other approval is pending. A request for reasonable accommodation does not require the filing of any other application as a prerequisite.

- (C) Application. A request for reasonable accommodation shall be submitted in writing to the City Administrator on a form prescribed by the City Administrator. The form shall request, at minimum: (1) the name, address, and contact information of the applicant; (2) the address of the property for which the accommodation is requested; (3) the specific provision of this Chapter from which an accommodation is requested; (4) the nature of the accommodation requested; and (5) the reason the accommodation is necessary due to a disability of the person(s) who will benefit from the accommodation.
- (D) Information Regarding Disability. The City Administrator may request only such information regarding disability as is necessary to verify that the applicant or the persons on whose behalf the application is filed have a disability within the meaning of the FHA and the Colorado Fair Housing Act and to evaluate the disability-related need for the requested accommodation. The City shall not require an applicant to disclose the specific diagnosis or nature of any disability, nor to provide medical records, if the disability and the functional limitations giving rise to the need for accommodation can be verified by other reliable means. All information provided in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation shall be treated as confidential to the extent required by state and federal law and shall not be disclosed to third parties or made part of any public hearing record without the written consent of the applicant.
- (E) Administrative Review. The City Administrator, or the City Administrator's designee, shall review and decide requests for reasonable accommodation at the staff level, without referral to the Planning Commission, City Council, Variance Board, or any other public body, unless the applicant specifically requests a public hearing. Staff-level review is preferred to protect applicants from public stigmatization inconsistent with the FHA. The City Administrator shall issue a written decision within thirty (30) days of receipt of a complete application, unless the applicant and the City Administrator agree in writing to a longer period. The written decision shall state: (1) whether the applicant or persons on whose behalf the application is filed have a qualifying disability; (2) whether the requested accommodation is reasonable; (3) whether the accommodation is necessary to provide the applicant or such persons equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; and (4) the decision to grant or deny the request, with specific findings.
- (F) Interactive Process. Before issuing a denial of a reasonable accommodation request, the City Administrator shall make reasonable efforts to engage in an interactive process with the applicant to discuss whether alternative or modified accommodations might effectively address the applicant's disability-related need. The City Administrator shall document this interactive process in the written decision. Failure to engage in the interactive process where disability and need are reasonably apparent may constitute a failure to accommodate under the FHA.
- (G) Standard of Review. A reasonable accommodation shall be granted if the City Administrator finds that: (1) the person or persons on whose behalf the request

is made have a disability within the meaning of the FHA or the Colorado Fair Housing Act; (2) the requested accommodation is necessary to afford such person or persons equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; and (3) granting the accommodation would not impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the City, would not require a fundamental alteration of the City's land use regulatory scheme, and would not constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals. The burden of demonstrating that a requested accommodation is unreasonable, unnecessary, or an undue burden shall rest with the City.

(H) Conditions. The City Administrator may impose reasonable conditions on an approved accommodation, provided such conditions are narrowly tailored to legitimate public health, safety, or zoning interests and are reasonably related to the specific circumstances of the request. Conditions shall not be based on generalizations, stereotypes, or neighborhood opposition relating to the disability of the person or persons to be benefited by the accommodation.

(I) Appeal. An applicant aggrieved by a decision of the City Administrator on a request for reasonable accommodation may, within thirty (30) days of the date of the written decision, file a written notice of appeal with the City Clerk. Upon receipt of a timely notice of appeal, the City shall schedule a de novo hearing on the matter before the City Planning Commission as soon as practical, but in no event later than forty-five (45) days after the written appeal is filed. The Planning Commission shall issue a written decision within sixty (60) days of the hearing. Timely filing of a notice of appeal shall stay any enforcement action based on the matter that is the subject of the accommodation request, pending the Planning Commission decision.

(J) Fees. No application fee shall be charged for a reasonable accommodation request filed pursuant to this Section.

(K) Relationship to Other Approvals. An approved reasonable accommodation shall operate as a modification to or exception from the applicable provisions of this Chapter for the specific use and property identified in the application. An approved accommodation shall be recorded with the Clear Creek County Clerk and Recorder and shall run with the property unless the City Administrator's written decision specifies otherwise. An approved accommodation does not exempt the applicant from any requirement of this Chapter that is not the subject of the accommodation request.

(L) Judicial Review. Any person aggrieved by a final decision of the Planning Commission on a reasonable accommodation request may seek judicial review in the District Court for Clear Creek County pursuant to C.R.C.P. Rule 106(a)(4), or may pursue any available remedy under the federal Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the Colorado Fair Housing Act.

Section 4. Table 21-127-1 of the Code, set forth under Code Section 21-127, is hereby amended by amending the "Group Living" rows of the "RESIDENTIAL USES" category as follows:

Table 21-127-1 (Excerpt - Group Living parking standards, as amended)		
<i>Use Category</i>	<i>Use Type</i>	<i>Number of spaces required</i>
Group Living ¹	<u>Community Residential Home; Group Home for the Aged; Group Home for Persons with Behavioral or Mental Health Disorders; Individual Residential Services and Supports Setting (all sizes)</u>	1.25 per efficiency unit 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
	<u>Small group home (up to 8)</u>	1.75 per three-bedroom unit 900 SF or less
	<u>Large group home (more than 8)</u>	2.5 per three-bedroom unit over 900 SF
	<u>Recovery Residence (all sizes)</u>	<u>Number of spaces required is the same as required of a single-family dwelling or multi-family dwelling of equivalent size and configuration in the same zone district.</u>

Footnote 1: The parking standards for Group Living uses shall be applied on the same terms as the corresponding standards are applied to other residential uses of similar size and type. The City shall not impose more burdensome parking requirements on any Group Living use than are imposed on other residential uses of like size in the same zone district. Where a Group Living use is functionally equivalent to a single-family dwelling (i.e., the home operates as a normal household unit with residents sharing common living spaces), the parking standard for a single-family detached dwelling shall apply. The City Administrator may grant a parking reduction for any Group Living use upon a showing that the functional characteristics of the use, including the absence of private vehicles among residents, support a reduced parking requirement.

Section 5. Any and all Ordinances or parts thereof in conflict or inconsistent herewith are, to the extent of such conflict or inconsistency, hereby repealed; provided, however, that the repeal of any such Ordinance or part thereof shall not revive any other section or part of any Ordinance heretofore repealed or superseded.

Section 6. Should any one or more sections or provisions of this Ordinance be judicially determined invalid or unenforceable, such judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remaining provisions of this Ordinance, the intention being that the various provisions are severable.

INTRODUCED, READ AND ORDERED PUBLISHED at a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, held on the ____ day of _____, 2026.

Chuck Harmon, Mayor

ATTESTED AND CERTIFIED:

Jenni Kim, City Clerk

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED at a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, held on the ____ day of _____, 2026.

Chuck Harmon, Mayor

ATTESTED AND CERTIFIED:

Jenni Kim, City Clerk



PLANNING FOR GOLD: A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR IDAHO SPRINGS

Adopted XXX, 2026

Idaho Springs: Where Adventure Begins



This 2026 Comprehensive Plan update is an evolution of the previous Plan, adopted in 2017. Rather than starting from scratch, the city has taken this opportunity to update the plan to reflect current goals and objectives while building upon and acknowledging the successes that the city has experienced since 2017.

Acknowledgements

Planning Commission

- Cindy Olson, Chair
- Ursula Cruzalegui, Vice Chair
- Caitie Maxwell
- Chuck Howard
- Kent Slaymaker
- Jefferson Lich
- Judy Murphy

City Council

- Chuck Harmon, Mayor
- Jeremy Jones, Mayor Pro Tem
- Janine Mariani
- Kate Collier
- Lisa Manifold
- Sharon Bassist

City Staff

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- Guy Patterson, Assistant City Administrator
- Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
- Ed Sigward, Public Works Director
- Jennie Kim, City Clerk
- Wonder Martell, Deputy City Clerk
- Carmen Berry, City Attorney
- Nick Klein, City Attorney
- Nate Buseck, Police Chief

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Colorado Revised Statutes give the authority and responsibility to municipalities to “make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality” (C.R.S. 31-23-206). The statute further states: “The Plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare.” (C.R.S. 31-23-207).

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan that looks into the future, using the past as a guide. It articulates a vision for the future of the City of Idaho Springs and provides the goals and actions to achieve that vision. It is a policy document that provides guidance to City Council, Planning Commission, City Staff, residents, businesses, and developers to facilitate informed decisions about the current and future needs of the community. It is a valuable tool developed to:

- Promote the community’s vision for the future of Idaho Springs;
- Be a guide for consistent decision making;
- Maintain and improve the physical environment of the City;
- Be used as the basis for more specific rules, regulations, and ordinances that implement the policies expressed through the Comprehensive Plan;
- Identify and set budgeting priorities;
- Be used as the basis for future capital improvements, City projects, and evaluation of annexations and development proposals;
- Plan in a thoughtful, cohesive, and comprehensive manner;
- Protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens in the community; and,
- Address both current and long-term needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

People guide this Plan – current and future residents, business owners, visitors. Regardless of what your relationship with the city is, this plan is meant to address your needs and wants for the community. Not everything in this Plan will address everyone's needs but this plan attempts to be respectful of different opinions to avoid leaving anyone out. Inevitably not everyone will agree on the best idea on a topic, but this plan intends on providing a framework by which different opinions and ideas can be thoughtfully considered.

Ultimately this plan is a visionary document and is made with a positive look to the future. Where existing regulations no longer serve the needs of the community, the plan seeks to change those over time. Where priorities have shifted, this plan is written to shift with them. However, at its core, the goal is to serve people. We intend to serve people by accommodating their transportation needs, by aspiring to build housing that is affordable and attainable to those who live and work here, by providing services that address the community's needs.

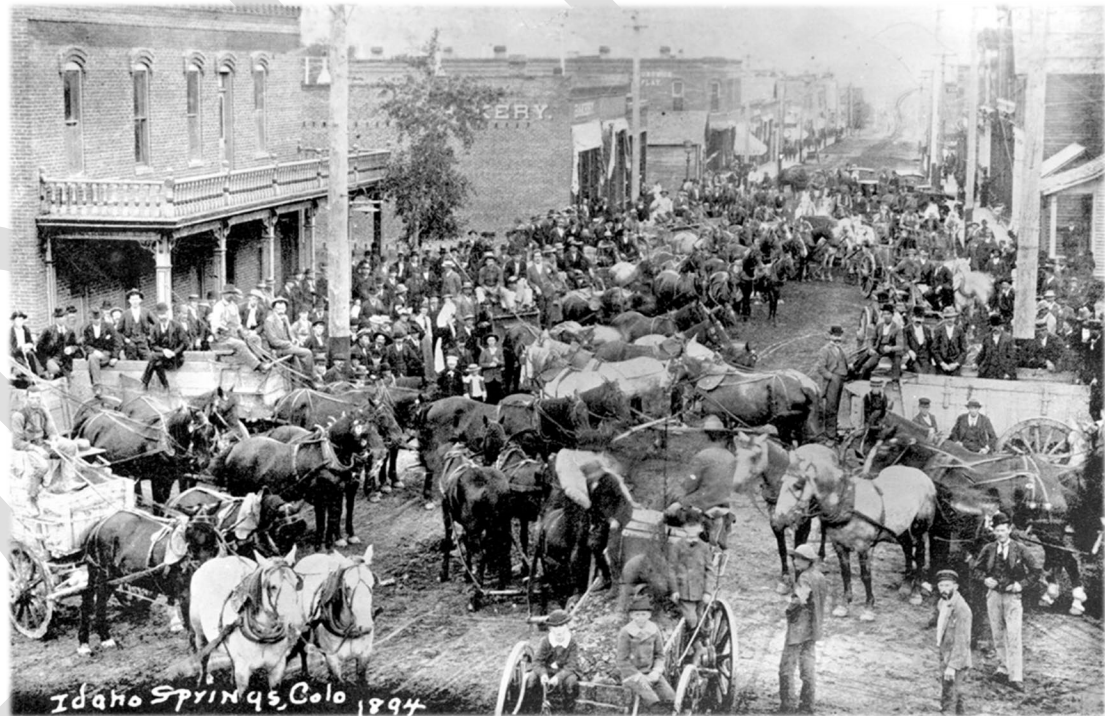
The city's vision is tied to four overarching principles that the city's objectives fit within across all elements included in this Plan, listed on the next four pages:

Idaho Springs is:

A historic community.

We are defined by our historic downtown and our quaint residential neighborhoods that have not changed much in 100+ years. This is a key asset for residents, businesses, and visitors who want Idaho Springs to retain the historic feel that makes it so special. Over and over, we heard that historic character and local, small-town charm were key to keeping Idaho Springs a great place to live. Historic preservation keeps the city from changing overnight and preserves small-town feel in important, historical parts of the city. While growth is encouraged where appropriate, the city does not want to sacrifice the things that make us special.

We will look to support history by protecting the historic city center; working to preserve existing neighborhoods; and supporting local residents and property owners in rehabilitating properties. We will also work to preserve the stories of past and current residents to keep their histories alive. We will strive to ensure that new developments support, complement, and build upon the historic foundation that has brought us to the present. By looking at the city's history and what has brought us to this point, we can help establish a future that pays homage to the past while keeping opportunities open for years to come.



A connected community.

The city is defined by connections. As a small, tight-knit community, the connections between neighbors are an important part of Idaho Springs. We are connected in town with a walkable built environment with a transportation network that gets people to necessary services and shops every day. We are also connected to the rest of Colorado via the I-70 corridor. This is a critical link to social opportunities, employment, shopping, learning, open space, recreation, and other amenities and services. It is also the key connection to Idaho Springs from elsewhere, bringing visitors and their wallets from around the country to our community. Enhancing this connection is key to ensuring that residents and visitors alike can easily come and go to and from the city. A lot of people think that the city's history is what makes it so special, and that is true to a degree, but the city's residents are critical to defining what Idaho Springs is and will become in the future.

To support this principle, we will focus on maintaining and improving human-scale design to help foster strong physical, social, and cultural connections. Public infrastructure will be designed to prioritize connections, and we will work to improve nearby access to the outdoors, recreation, and essential services. Regionally, we will continue working with CDOT and other regional partners to improve regional transit and access to key hubs, including our Clear Creek and Gilpin County neighbors, the Front Range, and beyond.



A healthy community.

A healthy community is a community with access to recreation, healthcare, safe and secure housing, and community amenities. Idaho Springs is a place with a great diversity of residents and visitors across ages and backgrounds. We will prioritize providing a safe and healthy environment for everyone by providing a safe transportation network; clean water; access to recreation and the outdoors; and access to safe, affordable, and secure housing.

We will focus on maintaining and improving local quality of life so that those who choose to call Idaho Springs home now and in the future can do so happily and healthily. Idaho Springs will look to support families by providing a range of housing options and prices that are friendly to families with children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. New housing will be developed in a manner that reinforces the community's unique character and provides access to schools, parks, and other public facilities. A focus on third spaces and other public improvements is another focus to give young people safe places to socialize and visitors places where they want to linger. Expanding outdoor amenities and recreational opportunities for residents will help people stay healthy and enjoy the area, however they want to recreate.

Protecting environmental resources, including the city's water supply, its air quality, and its open spaces is critical to ensure health and vitality. Working with the Fire Authority and other regional partners to mitigate wildfire risk, with CDOT to mitigate environmental impacts from I-70, and with other regional partners to support environmental protection is key to maintaining a high quality of life.



A welcoming community.

Idaho Springs is a place that should be welcoming to all. We want to create an environment where businesses thrive, visitors come back again and again, and residents can enjoy a high quality of life.

The city will continue to support existing businesses to enhance economic growth by addressing parking issues; providing safe streets and sidewalks; and working with the business community to meet the businesses' unique needs in this community. Promoting alternative transportation methods to access town, enhancing visitor experiences, and marketing Idaho Springs as a destination will only help the community thrive. Continued focus on attractive gateways to the city will further enhance the welcome we can offer visitors to the community.

Welcoming new housing, and new residents that come with them, is a way to ensure that the schools remain vibrant, the streets filled with laughter, and businesses remain fully staffed. Supporting housing is a key way to drive economic development and keep neighborhoods lively.

Arts and culture are essential to maintaining Idaho Springs' unique and distinctive identity and drive future economic growth while providing opportunities for residents and students to express themselves. Strengthening this industry could make Idaho Springs a premier destination for cultural events, entertainment, and the arts along the I-70 corridor. Opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in and experience the arts and culture scene will continue to be accessible and inclusive.

Accessibility is an important focus for an inclusive community. Idaho Springs streets, sidewalks, and public spaces should be accessible for all to ensure everyone in the city can access essential services, businesses, and public spaces. The city will strive to build inclusivity into projects to prioritize accessible design outcomes.

Finally, public participation and input is critical to ensuring that future development meets the community's needs. To that end, the city welcomes the public to participate in planning efforts and development decisions.



HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This Plan is a tool for decision-makers and property owners to use in making choices about public investment and land development in the future. The Comprehensive Plan provides a vision for how future development should proceed in and around Idaho Springs. It is NOT intended to provide legal review criteria for specific development proposals. The plan is intended to provide guidance for future rezoning and future updates to the city's land use regulations. The Comprehensive Plan provides a guide for future land use and redevelopment opportunity; however, it does NOT define site specific design. The City has established a vision for Idaho Springs, with goals that are built from this vision. Objectives and strategies specifically articulate how to achieve the community's vision. As it is an advisory policy document, this Plan will influence subsequent revisions to the Municipal Code to ensure consistency between the two. Proposed changes in land use should generally conform to the Plan's goals, objectives and maps.

For City Staff:

Members of the city staff will use the Comprehensive Plan to guide their day-to-day functions, plan for future improvements and initiatives, and provide a framework for future development and regulatory code changes.

For City Council and Planning Commission:

These bodies will use the Comprehensive Plan to guide their long-term strategic planning for the city and to consider proposals and ideas that come before them. The City Council and Planning Commission will use the vision and various recommendations contained within the Comprehensive Plan to guide all other city plans and programs.

For Property Owners:

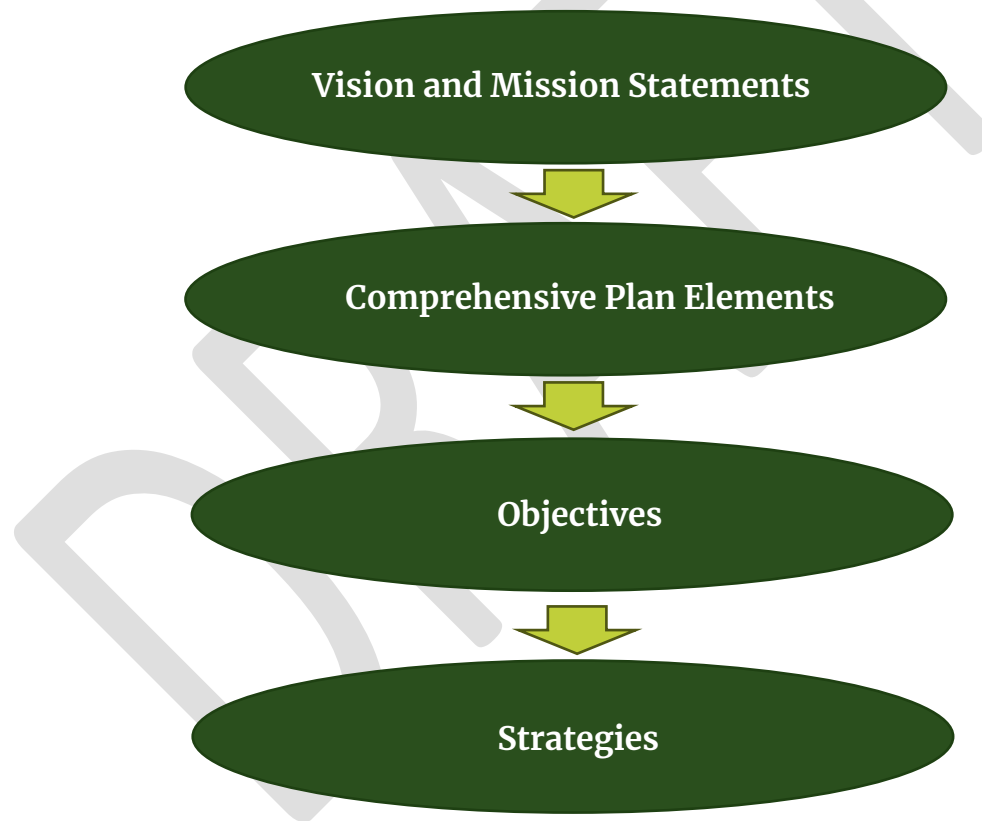
Property owners will use the Comprehensive Plan to understand how future development and redevelopment should proceed. It is meant to provide clarity so that these groups can plan their projects with the city's vision in mind and ensure that projects do not go against the city's goals.

For the General Public:

Residents and visitors to Idaho Springs will use the Comprehensive Plan to understand the community's long-term vision and the key policies and recommendations the city is following to achieve these goals. The public will also use the Comprehensive Plan as a reference document to understand the framework behind various city-led programs and initiatives.

HOW THIS PLAN IS ORGANIZED

This Comprehensive Plan is comprised of 10 elements, containing 37 total objectives the city has for its future, with strategies identified to achieve those objectives. Each of these objectives is meant to fit within at least one of the four guiding principles laid out above. These guiding principles are based on the vision and mission statements included in Chapter 3 of the Plan. The goals are statements of desired high-level outcomes to achieve in the next 10-15 years. They are intended to be as clear as possible, so city staff and leadership know what needs to be done and how work should be prioritized. The strategies contained within these goals are specific approaches to achieving the city's objectives. Strategies are meant to forward various goals as much as possible because of the interconnected nature of the elements that make up the city's plan for the future.



RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Numerous other plans and studies have been undertaken over the years which have influenced and impacted decisions made within the city of Idaho Springs. This Plan attempts to incorporate, recognize or reference the recommendations of these documents. Some of these documents include:

- Clear Creek County Master Plan 2030 (2017)
- Boomer Bond Summary Report (2017)
- the East End Action Plan (2016)
- City of Idaho Springs Source Water Protection Plan (2016)
- Idaho Springs Highest and Best Use Feasibility Study for the Interstate 70 Economic Hub at Exit 240 (2016)
- Clear Creek County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2016)
- Planning for Hazards: Land Use Solutions for Colorado (2016)
- Clear Creek Wildfire Protection Plan (2025)
- Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Housing Needs Assessment (2025)
- I-70 Mountain Corridor Record of Decision and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (2011)
- Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Master Plan (2019)
- Idaho Springs Downtown Master Plan (2021)
- Historic Resources Survey Plan (2022)
- Clear Creek County Recreation and Outdoor Management Plan (2024)
- Clear Creek County Housing Action Plan (in progress)

Hyperlinks to these documents are included in the Appendix to this Plan.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

An amendment is required when a requested change significantly alters the land use recommendations or other elements of the Comprehensive Plan document. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan will be approved by City Council with a recommendation made by the Planning Commission. An amendment may be submitted concurrently with a rezoning, subdivision, development permit or other land use application. An amendment may be requested by a citizen, property owner, City or County official, or City staff.

Criteria for Plan Amendments:

The city may amend the Comprehensive Plan if the proposed change is consistent with the vision (intent), goals and policies of the Plan and one or more of the following:

- Subsequent events have invalidated the original premise and findings; and/or

- The character and/or condition of the area has changed in that the amendment is consistent with this Plan; and/or
- The community or area will derive benefits from the proposed amendment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This Plan was developed and reviewed in public meetings and workshops at Planning Commission meetings between April 2025 and July 2026. City staff hosted a kickoff meeting on April 30, 2025 at City Hall. Approximately 20 community members attended.

A public survey was distributed throughout the community on a variety of topics relevant to the Plan update. The survey garnered over 60 responses, the majority of which were completed by Idaho Springs locals.

City staff hosted weekly “coffee chats” on various Plan topics throughout the spring and early summer of 2025, discussing Plan element topics such as housing, transportation, tourism, and economic development. Approximately 15 community members attended coffee chat events at City Hall.

City staff organized a community meeting on historic preservation, community character, and neighborhood charm on June 25, 2025, with 15 attendees (not including staff). Discussion focused on the need to balance growth and economic development against existing community character to avoid losing the charm and characteristics that make Idaho Springs a nice place for residents. City staff also organized a meeting about fire mitigation and fire risk that was hosted by the Clear Creek Fire Authority and was attended by over 25 people to discuss how to mitigate against fire risk, engage in structure hardening efforts, and address funding gaps to engage in mitigation efforts. Fire mitigation – and resilience in general – is a key component of this Plan in later sections.

City staff worked with the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District (CCMRD) on an open house to solicit comments from their users on recreation, parks, trails, and open space concerns. This was very well attended, with over 100 people stopping in during the day to give feedback.

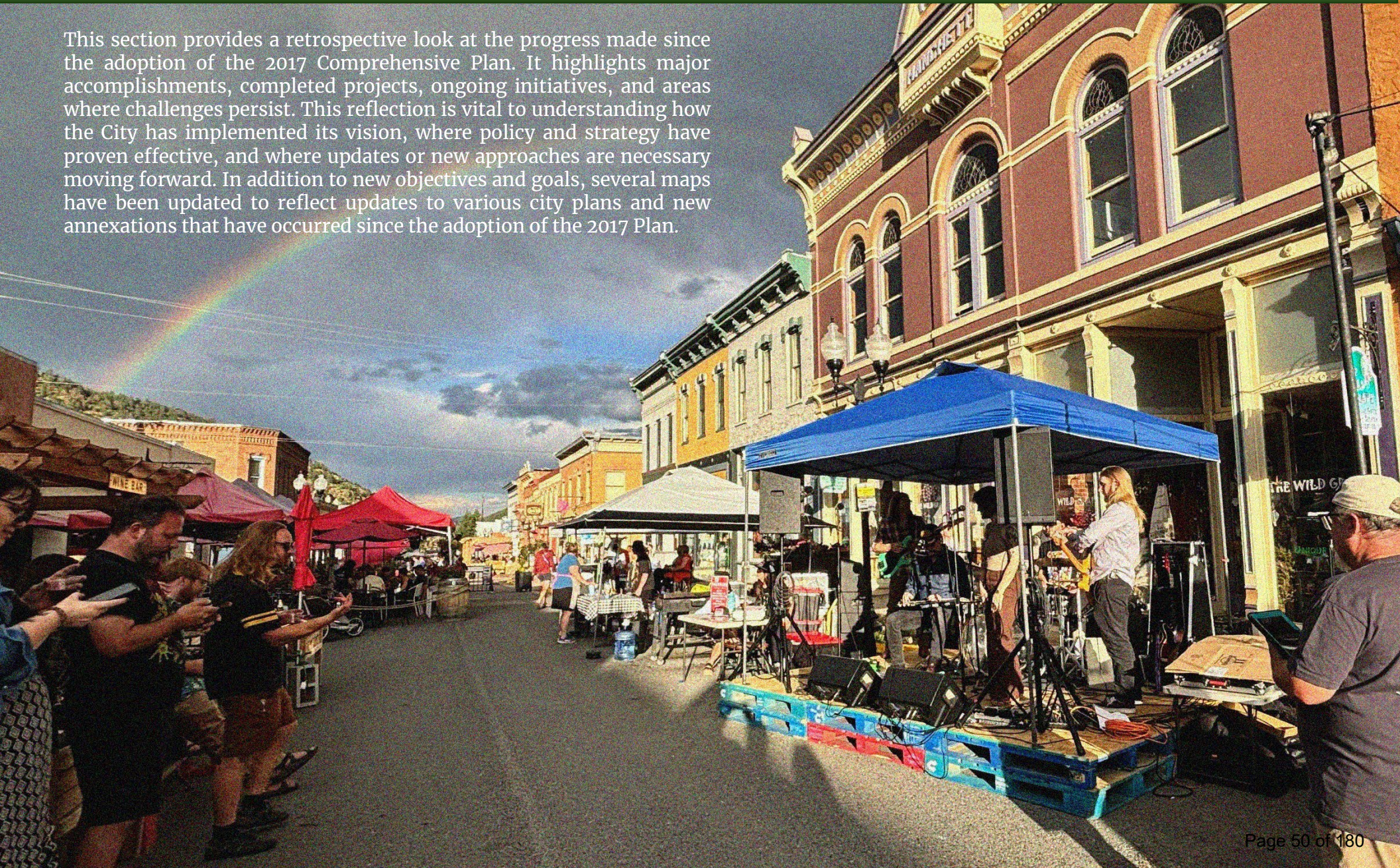
The historic element was discussed at several Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC) meetings after the commission had expressed interest in participating in the Plan update. This element – and all others – were then presented at a series of Planning Commission meetings in autumn 2025 into early 2026.

The city’s Business and Community Promotions Board (BCPB) was integral in drafting updated goals and objectives related to economic development and tourism, having provided substantial input and feedback at two BCPB meetings in late 2025.

The final Plan was presented to the Planning Commission on XXX and to the City Council on XXX where a final resolution adopting the Plan was passed.

CHAPTER 2: ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2017

This section provides a retrospective look at the progress made since the adoption of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan. It highlights major accomplishments, completed projects, ongoing initiatives, and areas where challenges persist. This reflection is vital to understanding how the City has implemented its vision, where policy and strategy have proven effective, and where updates or new approaches are necessary moving forward. In addition to new objectives and goals, several maps have been updated to reflect updates to various city plans and new annexations that have occurred since the adoption of the 2017 Plan.



Land Use and Community Character

There have been significant changes in the city since the adoption of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan. One of the most notable changes has been the opening of Virginia Canyon Mountain Park and the impact it has had on East End businesses. This has shifted business from being primarily geared toward the automotive industry to a destination for hikers and mountain bikers alike. In the Exit 240 Gateway Area, the City has annexed critical parcels of land into City Limits. Some of these include the Idaho Springs Cemetery and the site of future affordable senior housing.

One of the objectives of the 2017 Plan was to beautify, preserve, and activate the Historic District. In 2024, City Staff and the Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC) updated the Historic District design guidelines, aimed at preserving the Historic District while achieving beautification and activation goals. Additionally, the City has worked diligently to improve signage throughout Idaho Springs, including better wayfinding for key attractions such as the Charlie Tayler Water Wheel and Clear Creek Greenway. Furthermore, through the adoption of the City's Managed Parking Program, we have maximized the amount of paid parking spaces surrounding the Historic District, allowing us to close the Historic District to vehicle traffic during the summer months and activate the Miner Street Marketplace.

Another objective of the 2017 Plan was to upgrade the appearance of Idaho Springs as viewed from I-70. One of the most significant ways this has been accomplished is the commitment that new developments with considerable visibility from I-70 have primarily been designed to face the Interstate rather than back up to it.

Housing

The needs and goals for housing established in the 2017 Plan remain unchanged. Idaho Springs continues to experience unprecedented growth amidst an aging population, and there remains a tremendous need for affordable housing, workforce housing, and senior housing. The most significant achievement since the 2017 Plan was the establishment of the Clear Creek Multijurisdictional Housing Authority. The goal of this housing authority is to support the development of affordable housing that addresses the diverse needs of all residents within Clear Creek County and the local municipalities while strengthening community and providing options to a broad spectrum of the population, including vulnerable groups and seniors. The establishment of the housing authority has enabled us to achieve goals outlined in the 2017 Plan, including increasing the availability of affordable and senior housing.

The city also imposed regulations for Short Term Rentals (STRs) in 2018. The city allows 15 STR licenses and has a lottery system in place to allocate licenses when they come available. This has ensured that homes within the city remain available to long-term tenants.

The city has continued to invest in projects to support affordable housing, including the purchase of approximately two acres of land for a multi-family senior affordable housing facility on Highway 103. The city received a grant in 2025 to support development of that property, which will fulfill key Plan goals for senior housing projects that allow seniors to “age in place.”

Transportation

The most significant transportation goal that has been met since the 2017 Plan is the creation and implementation of the City's Managed Parking Program. This created a paid parking structure for visitors in Downtown Idaho Springs, as well as the establishment of residential parking-only zones. Furthermore, City and County residents have been allowed to register for resident permits, which enables them to park in designated areas within the Historic District at no charge, allowing them to enjoy the diverse dining and shopping options in the City of Idaho Springs.

One of the goals in the 2017 Plan was the devolution of Colorado Blvd and general improvements as part of this change. This work has been completed, and the impact continues to be seen in the revitalization of the East End of the city. Along with the East End updates and the establishment of the City's Managed Parking Program, there is now adequate residential parking along Colorado Blvd, keeping visitors away from critical residential parking areas.

While many of the 2017 Plan's transportation goals are ongoing, several goals have been achieved in the past 8 years. Long-term improvements to East Idaho Springs Road are continuing, and a productive partnership with CDOT completed the section of East Idaho Springs Road from east of the wastewater treatment plant to the former Game Check station.

While parking requirements have not been eliminated for businesses in the Historic District, the City Council approved the implementation of a fee-in-lieu program for parking requirements that new businesses have utilized in the Historic District.

Parking remains a key issue for residents, businesses, and visitors alike and is an ongoing item for discussion and work in the current, updated Plan.

Economic Development and Tourism

Like many sections of the 2017 Plan, the goals to support and cultivate economic development and tourism are ongoing. The city continues to maintain an active role in economic development through our partnerships with Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) and the City's newly formed Business Community Promotions Board, which has greatly increased the city's focus on economic development and tourism. The city has further strengthened its commitment to supporting economic development and tourism through the creation of the Director of Business and Community Promotions position.

In 2021, the city adopted the Idaho Springs Downtown Plan, which focuses on creating a vision for downtown redevelopment and activation. An important part of this plan is parking, with the goal of helping manage visitors and protect parking in residential areas. As of 2025, the city is working on designing a large-scale mobility improvement project to bring in better transit infrastructure, increase downtown parking with a parking structure, improve Miner Street and the Idaho Mall, and improve traffic flow at the Exit 240 interchange. These key goals came out of the 2021 downtown plan.

The focus on developing the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) has been a key priority over the length of the previous Comprehensive Plan. While discussed in more detail in the “Recreation” section below, the success of the park has helped support development and redevelopment of the East End business district.

An ongoing focus of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan was to actively pursue incentivizing economic development and supporting local businesses while protecting the quality of life of Idaho Springs residents. This continues into this updated plan, as this plan is a community-led document focused on community goals first and foremost.

Historic Resources Element

Historic preservation remains a strong priority at the forefront of residents’ and visitors’ minds, and this has been demonstrated many times since 2017. The two key objectives from the 2017 Plan were to:

- Continue to protect & preserve the historic resources of the Idaho Springs area.
- Promote the benefits of historic preservation.

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the city acts as a local preservation program to apply for grants of federal money for local projects, exercise greater autonomy in nominating properties to the National Register and participating in countywide historic preservation programs, and review Colorado State Tax Credits for local projects. With this status also comes the responsibility of reviewing and enforcing state and local preservation laws.

The 2017 Plan sought to explore how to increase participation in the Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC), which reviews projects that impact the exterior of historic buildings within the city. The HPRC has become a strong group with significant expertise on historic preservation related topics and strengthened the city’s Design Guidelines for Historic Structures in 2024 to ensure that property owners appropriately rehabilitate historic structures. The city has focused on ensuring that the HPRC review is the first step in an approval process, rather than the last.

The city published the *Historic Resources Survey Plan, 2022* using funding from a State Historical Fund Grant, which established goals for historical topics in the city and recommends projects that help achieve those goals. This plan builds on previous surveys to establish a set of projects that the city is currently working on and will continue to do so, which you will see as part of this 2025 Comprehensive Plan update. Over 300 properties around the city have been surveyed and analyzed for historical integrity, with a continued priority of expanding this work to have a complete understanding of Idaho Springs historical resources. Work is ongoing for surveying, with a goal of exploring new historic districts around the city to protect additional historical resources while providing financial opportunities for residents and property owners.

In 2025, the city formally created the Historic Sites and Facilities Board, which was historically a volunteer committee. This board is tasked with making recommendations on city-owned historic sites in and around Idaho Springs.

Continued work is needed on public engagement and educational programs to help property owners understand the need for historic preservation and the opportunities to receive financial support for renovation, preservation, and upkeep of historic properties. More work on historical tourism is needed, as well. Continued work on designating residential properties as local historic sites is another ongoing goal that will be included in this updated Plan.

Environment Element

The environment remains a key focus for the city and its residents, with progress made towards goals and objectives in many areas but with ongoing needs that will continue to need attention.

The city has worked diligently to protect water quality and water supply for the city. The Idaho Springs reservoir is a critical resource that remains in good condition, providing more than adequate water to the community. The city has won several awards since 2017 related to wastewater treatment, water quality, and water supply, thanks to the efforts of the city's water/wastewater department.

Wildfire prevention and mitigation is an ongoing concern. Beetle kill is a current issue causing problems in the forests surrounding the city. The Idaho Springs City Council has focused on fire mitigation as a key program going forward, with focus on developing programs that can help residents improve wildfire resiliency and expand defensible space.

Working with CDOT, Clear Creek County, and other stakeholders, large infrastructure projects have largely avoided impacts to wildlife and their habitats during development. CDOT has been entrenched in a large-scale I-70 improvement project that is anticipated to continue into 2028, which includes provisions for wildlife friendly fencing, wildlife underpasses/corridors, water quality improvements, and riparian habitat restorations. Within the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park, the city has created several bighorn sheep protection zones that ensure that habitat for this species is protected. The city has also installed bear-resistant containers throughout the city, replacing non-resistant options.

The 2017 Plan discussed considering a Hazard Overlay District to apply additional hazard mitigation/risk reduction regulations to existing zone districts. This has not yet been done but remains a priority in the updated Plan.

Additional noise and light pollution reductions may also be needed, as this was a goal of the 2017 Plan which has not been substantially addressed in the intervening years.

Parks, Open Space, Trails, and Recreation Element

The 2017 Plan focused on building upon and expanding recreational offerings in Idaho Springs. This has been largely successful over the past 8 years.

Courtney Ryley Cooper (CRC) Park expansion was completed, relocating the community garden to the area, building public restroom facilities, and expanding the size of the lawn in the park. A pedestrian bridge connects Riverside Drive to CRC Park today as part of the Clear Creek Trail.

The Clear Creek Trail (formerly known as the Peaks to Plains Trail) has been completed through the city limits and will eventually connect from Denver to Loveland Ski Area through the city. The city has committed to being a part of the Clear Creek Trail Collaborative, a group of all stakeholders along the route committed to helping realize full construction and implementation of the trail corridor.

The Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) has been a great success, bringing a new category of visitors to the city to enjoy over 14 miles of mountain bike and hiking trails, with more mileage coming over the next few years. Partnering with the Colorado Mountain Bike Association (COMBA), downhill-focused mountain bike trails have been built through the park that have drawn thousands of riders each month to the city.

More work is needed to continue to enhance recreational opportunities in Clear Creek. The city has a robust rafting industry that brings visitors to the city and continued focus on improving river put ins is a priority of this plan.

Finally, the city has focused on improving the Shelly / Quinn Ball Fields Park. While already well used by youth and adult recreation leagues, and activated for events like Rapid Grass annually, the city has partnered with the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District (CCMRD) to redevelop the park, converting the eastern ballfield into a skate park, tennis/pickleball courts, formal parking spaces, a playground, and green space. A long-term goal is to bring running water to the park for a permanent bathroom at that location.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND



HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

Long before white settlers took their first steps along Soda Creek, the Ute and Arapaho nations considered the hot springs as sacred ground where they could worship and bring their sick and wounded for healing. By the time white settlers arrived looking for gold in the mid-1800s, Soda Creek was considered the dividing line between the Ute and Arapaho nations and had long been treated as neutral ground, dating back as far as the 1300s to 1600s.

During the winter of 1858-59, George Jackson set up camp at the point where Chicago Creek and Clear Creek met. It was here that Mr. Jackson discovered gold on January 7, 1859, and helped spark the Colorado Gold Rush. Within a matter of months following Mr. Jackson's discovery, thousands flocked to the region, bringing the first major white populations into the area and settling into the cities of Denver, Boulder, Central City and Idaho Springs. By 1861, the region was no longer considered part of the Kansas Territory but the new territory of Colorado. The population of the area now known as Clear Creek County quickly grew to more than 60,000 people. When the Gold Rush ended, the territory continued to prosper in part because of the railroads built for the transport of gold.

It is easy to see how Idaho Springs grew around the mines and followed the contours of the land. Industry developed along Clear Creek, homes and narrow streets sprang up at the base of the steep inclines and the residents built a host of churches and shops. In the middle of this, the Miner Street commercial district grew into the cornerstone of Idaho Springs' historic landscape. All these elements - the topography, the mines, the homes, the shops, the churches and the creek - have survived relatively intact and, when viewed as a whole, afford modern day Coloradoans a rare insight into the history not just of Colorado but of development in the western United States.

Mining brought railroads, wagon roads and commerce to the new city. With the advent of the 20th century, the number of mines and active claims began to shrink as the easily mined ores played out. The decline in precious mineral mining and population continued through the first half of the 20th century, and most of the mines had closed down by the end of World War II. Many of the towns created by the miners of the 1800s have disappeared or become ghost towns. Idaho Springs, widely regarded as one of the first sites of a major Colorado gold strike, is among the handful of western gold rush towns that have survived to the present day. Unlike many of the others, however, Idaho Springs has not just survived but continues to be a vibrant community with a thriving downtown, steady population and a strong economy.

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Since the middle of the 20th century, the City has experienced minor swings in population based upon economic cycles associated with mining and tourism. First, the construction of U.S. Highways 6 and 40 started the expansion of automobile tourism, which has been the mainstay of the local economy for half a century. Later, the construction of I-70 brought both opportunities and challenges. The interstate's location and ability to move people to and from more distant areas quickly enhanced the development of mountain resort communities, first as ski resorts and more recently as year-round destinations. It also shortened day travel time from the Denver metro area to mountain communities across western Colorado.

Growth projections for Idaho Springs vary considerably depending upon the source. The city has an adequate water supply to meet these projected needs although expansion, and recent improvements to the city's wastewater treatment plant ensure that there is adequate capacity to meet the needs associated with future growth. See this Plan's water supply element for more information. The city has ensured that potential future growth continues to be considered through updates to the Three Mile Area Plan, through audits of the existing city codes to make it easier to develop housing in the city, and through strategic property purchases.

Data suggests a modest population increase is anticipated, though the population has remained relatively steady since the 1980s:

 Year	 Population	 Growth Rate	 Average Household Size
1980	2,077		2.50
1990	1,834	-11.70%	2.41
2000	1,889	3.00%	2.25
2010	1,717	-9.10%	2.18
2020	1,782	3.80%	2.34

Denver and Colorado Growth

Colorado is still experiencing population growth but has slowed since 2017. The 2017 Plan reported Colorado as the second fastest growing state in 2015. As of 2024, Colorado is no longer even one of the top ten fastest growing states, according to US Census Bureau data. Most current population growth continues to occur in the Denver Metropolitan Statistical Area* (MSA), with a population increase of 82,000 between 2020 and 2024 and a 28.81% population increase between 2000 and 2023. Given that the city of Idaho Springs is less than 30 minutes from the Denver Metro, pressures for additional housing as well as transportation improvements continue to be paramount for the foreseeable future.

Idaho Springs Age Demographics

The median age in Idaho Springs is estimated at 39.8 years old, a decrease from 41.7 years old at the time of the 2017 Plan. Although younger than the median age of 49.2 in Clear Creek County, Idaho Springs still has a higher median age as compared to Colorado as a whole, which is listed as 37.9 years old. 19.3% of the population of Idaho Springs is over 65 years old.

Idaho Springs Age Breakdown			
Age Range	Percentage	Age Range	Percentage
Under 5 Years	3.80%	45 to 49 years	5.40%
5 to 9 years	2.70%	50 to 54 years	10.80%
10 to 14 years	5.20%	55 to 59 years	7.50%
15 to 19 years	9.30%	60 to 64 years	6.90%
20 to 24 years	11.60%	65 to 69 years	5.90%
25 to 29 years	4.50%	70 to 74 years	5.10%
30 to 34 years	12.60%	75 to 79 years	4.70%
35 to 39 years	5.90%	80 to 84 years	1.50%
40 to 44 years	4.90%	85 years and over	2.10%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Economy

The Idaho Springs economy is regional in nature and is shaped by the metro area economy and that of the central mountain area. The economy is mostly based on tourism and outdoor recreation. Rafting revenues continue to grow, and the recently opened Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) has brought more visitors to the city, along with their dollars. The new cable car project being completed in town is expected to grow the city's tourism base further.

Sales tax receipts account for an average of 50% of the Idaho Springs General Fund. Since 2015, Idaho Springs has seen a consistent increase in sales tax revenues, with a significant increase in revenue post-2020. Much of the growth in sales tax revenues since 2020 are tied to post-pandemic spending and tourism practices that have brought more people into the Colorado mountains and along the I-70 corridor, which in 2024 saw over 50,000 vehicles daily passing Idaho Springs along the interstate. Capturing more tourism dollars through focused marketing and advertising has been an increasing focus for the city, attracting people to the city's various opportunities as a destination, rather than a stop along the way to a visitor's destination.

While the city's sales tax numbers and overall economy are doing well, city residents are still feeling housing affordability and availability pressures. The city has a higher number of housing cost-burdened households than Clear Creek County or the Denver region, with ~40% of local households reported as being cost-burdened (spending 30-49% of household income on housing) and an additional 20% reported as being severely cost-burdened (spending 50% or more of household income on housing), according to Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) data from 2022.

Year	💰 Sales Tax	📈 Annual Change
2015	\$2,036,865.00	–
2016	\$2,332,603.35	⬆ 11.45%
2017	\$2,483,993.40	⬆ 6.50%
2018	\$2,710,285.40	⬆ 9.11%
2019	\$2,996,152.60	⬆ 10.55%
2020	\$2,952,803.29	⬇ -1.45%
2021	\$3,662,261.52	⬆ 24.03%
2022	\$3,831,640.78	⬆ 4.62%
2023	\$4,748,395.34	⬆ 23.93%
2024	\$4,808,143.64	⬆ 1.26%
2025	\$4,919,713.10	⬆ 2.32%

City of Idaho Springs Sales Tax Since 2015

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE



2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Idaho Springs has a median household income of approximately \$72,101. This is significantly less than the \$87,169 median household income reflected for Clear Creek County or the \$91,681 reported for the Denver region. With the average price of a home in Idaho Springs being approximately \$500,000, a drastic increase from 2017, home ownership continues to be a challenge for many employed in the Idaho Springs service industry.

CHAPTER 4: VISION STATEMENT, MISSION STATEMENT, AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Vision Statement

Idaho Springs is dedicated to preserving its culture as a historic mining community, ensuring quality of life and its economic future through both preservation and responsible development, striving for an inclusive community, designing a complete transportation system, promoting recreational opportunities, and implementing the wise use of community and natural resources.

Mission Statement

Through inclusive engagement and proactive stewardship, we strive to enhance the quality of life and ensure the safety of every member of our diverse, historic community, embodying a commitment to sustainable growth and collective well-being.

Organizational Value Statements

Transparency – We value practicing transparent governance by encouraging open-minded communication to build and foster community trust and engagement.

Preservation – We encourage the preservation of our heritage by engaging the community stakeholders to ensure access to Idaho Springs' history for all and encourage lifelong learning.

Teamwork – We believe in building community by working together in the best interest of the residents and visitors.

Accountability – We will be accountable to the community through clear, responsible discussions and actions that promote sustainable policies for managing the community's resources.

Stewardship – We will serve our community responsibly through active listening, engagement and collaboration to preserve our finite resources.

Integrity – We will be honest, respectful and fair in all our actions.

CHAPTER 5: LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Goal: “We will maintain and enhance our community character and quality of life, while lessening the adverse effects of growth and directing new development to appropriate locations that are cost effective to serve.”

The Land Use and Community Character Element encourages appropriate land use patterns, seeks to preserve Idaho Springs’ high quality of life, protects property values, and supports redevelopment that takes advantage of existing infrastructure. The recommendations below do not change the existing zoning of property and are not meant to limit potential development opportunities. However, these recommendations should be consulted for future development proposals, updates to the zoning code, development standards, and other matters relating to the character, future land use or development patterns of the city. The goal is to promote development while also preserving the important characteristics that make Idaho Springs a high-quality place to live and visit.

Idaho Springs, Colo. 1926'

What is the Difference between Future Land Use and Zoning?

Future Land Use: serves as a community's guide and framework for future planning and development decisions. The Plan illustrates general land use concepts and categories (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, open space, etc.) but is flexible enough to allow for other land uses to be considered if they meet other community priorities and complement existing land uses in the surrounding area.

Zoning: specific, parcel-based regulations on land uses, density and intensity, types of development and other urban design or architectural regulations. Local regulations establish zone districts which may include multiple uses as identified within the future land use plan. Zoning boundaries are precise and typically follow parcel boundaries. See the table below as an example, though not inclusive of all potential uses.

Community Character and its Role in Development

Community character is a commonly discussed concept. We are seeing an increased interest in construction and development as the city becomes a regional destination for business and economic growth due to its proximity to I-70 and its connections to the Front Range to the east and rural resort communities further west. At the same time, Idaho Springs has established historic neighborhoods that feature walkability, connections to neighbors, and a sense of community that we do not want to lose. There are increasing concerns about traffic congestion, increasing tourism and visitation numbers, and a loss of character associated with new development that is of a different architectural design, scale, or mass as compared to what exists in the city today. The city hears a growing concern that the Idaho Springs people moved to is no longer the Idaho Springs that they are living in today.

With that in mind, community character is a key focus of any growth or development-related conversation about the city's future. While the city does not want to discourage growth or development, we need to be careful that development complements and builds upon the existing built environment that people know and enjoy. The preservation of community character can be an effective way to ensure that future developments work with – rather than against – the things that make Idaho Springs special. Future land use decisions and code amendments should consider an analysis of the city's existing makeup to ensure that future development works within the city's core tenets and priorities to build upon the things that are already here. Rather than discouraging growth or development, the city wants to encourage appropriate development that allows the city to remain a quality place to live, work, recreate, and visit for years to come.

In the Introduction and Background section, the four key principles that guide the Plan were introduced. In this section, the Plan will lay out the key land use principles that should guide future development in Idaho Springs that build off those four general principles that guide all sections of the Plan.

Architectural Design Principles

To ensure that future development decisions consider community character, this Plan establishes the following land use guiding principles:

- Architectural design and building scale and massing that complement the existing historic downtown and neighborhoods are important to ensure Idaho Springs remains a healthy community.
- Sustainability and environmental considerations are key to a healthy community – now and into the future.
- A human-centric scale to development is critical to ensure that the city continues to cater to the people who make up the community.
- The city wants to avoid a cookie cutter development style that could be found anywhere in the U.S. We want development that evokes “Idaho Springs”.

The city has several characteristic architectural types for both commercial and residential structures. Most residential structures in Idaho Springs were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. New developments in proximity to historic areas of the city should complement existing architectural design and existing neighborhood mass and scale. Compatibility is not about copying historic architecture or ornamentation. Rather, it is about maintaining consistent proportion and massing, focusing on providing similar roof pitches, window proportions, vertical versus horizontal emphasis, and other common architectural forms that allow developers to construct things that are of a modern time while still fitting in with the city’s historic neighborhoods.

Development in and adjacent to residential areas are encouraged to incorporate similar architectural design to fit into existing neighborhoods. Commercial and multifamily buildings should be designed to avoid large, unadorned, featureless façades. Design should include a variety of architectural elements and consider the existing architecture of the area and complement features from the relevant architectural types found in the area.

The Idaho Springs downtown area and historic neighborhoods were built on a scale that promotes mixed-use, walkable development that allows people to get around the city without a car. Post-war developments in the East End of the city were more car-centric but the core of the city’s built environment today was established before cars were readily available to Idaho Springs residents and visitors. Future development should consider this human scale to complement the city’s existing built environment. The city’s existing streets function as public spaces in many neighborhoods.

Idaho Springs values development that focuses on sustainability and environmentally friendly designs. Sustainable is not just about “green” development. It is also about high-quality development that stands the test of time. Yes, we need housing, but we need housing that will last for more than 20 years. Flexibility of design is an important consideration – buildings should be able to change uses without needing major reconstruction.

Land Use Categories

This element establishes the following use categories within the City of Idaho Springs. These are broad categories meant to guide development towards the community's goals and objectives for the future of the city, and will be considered when making land use decisions on topics such as rezonings, final development plans, and other new development projects:

1. MIXED DENSITY RESIDENTIAL:

These are areas most appropriate for single family residential development and low-density multifamily development. Future development in these areas should be respectful of surrounding housing types, densities, building scale and massing, and predominant architecture. Most of the city's existing single-family residential neighborhoods are designated mixed density residential. These neighborhoods are long-established and are made up of small, single-family lots. Redevelopment potential is relatively low, as lots are too small to accommodate much additional density. These are also areas that do not have adequate infrastructure to support much denser development, characterized by narrow roads, steep slopes, or other physical constraints. A developer looking to add density to this area would likely be required to provide additional infrastructure to accommodate that increase in density.

2. HIGHER DENSITY RESIDENTIAL:

Appropriate for higher density residential use, including multifamily development. These areas are either already higher density than the mixed density residential areas or have the infrastructure necessary to support higher densities. These areas have wider streets, sidewalks, and access to other necessary infrastructure. Some areas designated as higher density residential may only have single-family residences there now but could be redeveloped in the future to include duplexes, townhomes, or higher density multifamily housing. Neighborhood-scale commercial developments or mixed-use developments could be appropriate in this area if they are community-serving.

3. TRANSITIONAL MIXED-USE:

These are areas typically connecting residential areas to commercial areas. Development should maintain or be respectful of residential character. Appropriate uses in these areas include single family residential, attached single family and townhouses, multifamily development that respects the historic scale, massing, and architecture of the surrounding areas, lower intensity commercial uses, civic uses, daycares, hospitality and tourist services, and other similar uses. Areas designated as transitional mixed use can support a variety of activities and uses but at their core, they still maintain a residential feel. The West end of Idaho Springs is designated as transitional mixed use. Currently, most of this area is single-family residential, though small-scale commercial development and multifamily housing developments do exist today. Redevelopment of these areas designated transitional mixed-use may be appropriate but should pay attention to and respect existing residential neighborhoods and the architectural scale, massing, and design that characterizes these areas.

4. MIXED-USE:

These areas are commercial in nature and allow all the uses in Transitional Mixed-Use areas while also being appropriate for higher intensity multifamily, commercial, or mixed-use development. The top priority for these areas is commercial and mixed-use development that activates the city's important commercial areas, including the Miner Street downtown area and the East End. However, residential development may also be appropriate – in fact, many lots designated as mixed-use have single-family residences today. Maintaining those homes is appropriate but redevelopment would also be welcomed in these areas. Mixed-Use areas adjacent

5. REGIONAL COMMERCIAL:

This area is appropriate for many commercial uses, including those that have a regional draw. This includes retail and office uses of any size, hotels, public facilities and schools, tourism services, hospitals and healthcare uses, and other commercial development. Multifamily residential could also be appropriate in this category, though commercial and mixed-use development is the primary vision for these areas. The city's gateway areas are prime locations for regional commercial development and are areas that are already largely characterized by these types of uses.

6. INDUSTRIAL:

Uses such as heavy equipment storage, LP gas facilities, public works facilities, industrial plants, self-storage, automotive or RV storage, assembling, fabrication, finishing, manufacturing, packaging, or processing of goods, mineral extraction or similar uses. Uses may include working with hazardous materials. These are areas away from residential areas and would be appropriate for the highest intensities of commercial development.

7. PARKS / OPEN SPACE:

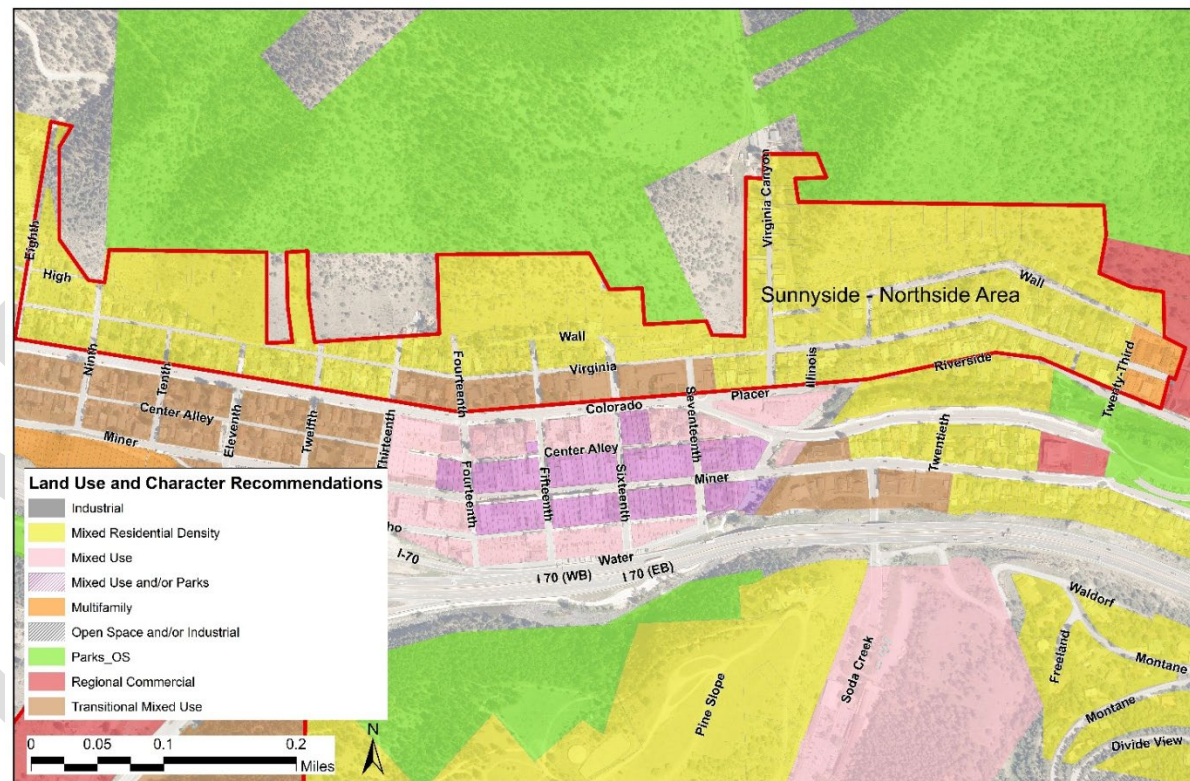
These are areas that are unlikely to be appropriate for residential, commercial, industrial, or other developments, and are most appropriate for parks and recreation related uses. Formal park facilities may be appropriate, or the area may be best suited to remain as open space.

NEIGHBORHOODS

The city can be broken up into a collection of unique “neighborhoods” that function as distinct city areas, though given the size of Idaho Springs, we largely function as one big community. This element identifies seven neighborhoods in the city, describes what makes them unique, and gives recommendations to strengthen, guide or protect these areas. These Areas are identified on the City of Idaho Springs’ Land Use and Character Areas Map, included in the appendices.

SUNNYSIDE - NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Sunnyside and Northside Neighborhoods are generally bounded by Wall Street to the north, Colorado Blvd to the south, the apartment complex at 23rd Avenue and the Argo-Riverside Area to the east and 8th Avenue to the west. Most of this area consists of established single-family residences, built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Preserving and protecting existing structures in the designated residential areas is a priority. If preservation or restoration is not feasible, new residential development should be consistent with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of architecture, size, massing and density. Land use changes are not anticipated, although non-residential uses are appropriate in the transitional mixed-use area.



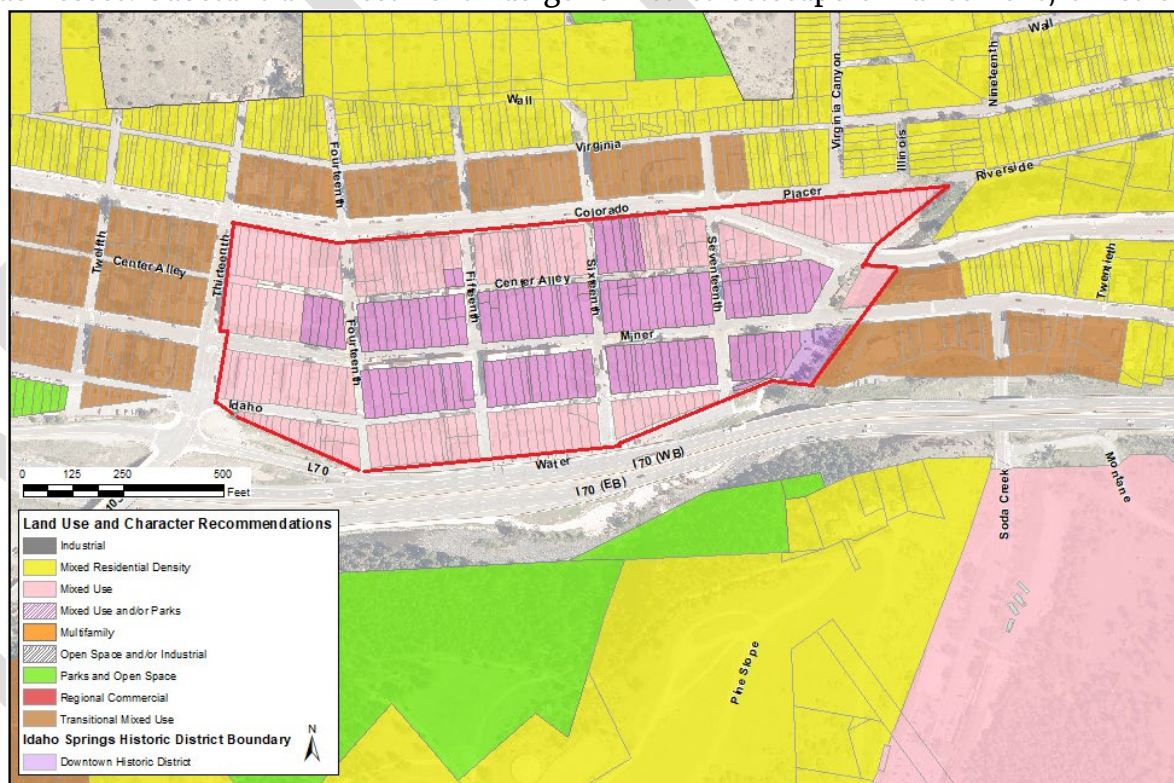
DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

The Idaho Springs Downtown District is generally bounded by Colorado Boulevard to the north, I-70 to the south, Clear Creek to the east and 13th Avenue to the west. This area includes portions of Colorado Boulevard, the Idaho Springs Historic Commercial District, and Charlie Tayler Water Wheel Park. Colorado Boulevard in this area is comprised of a mixture of newer and older single-family homes, public and civic buildings, shops and restaurants.

Idaho Springs Historic Commercial District

The Idaho Springs Historic Commercial District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and features one of the strongest historic commercial districts remaining in Colorado. The District contains a substantial number of visitor and resident oriented service and retail businesses. Substantial investment has gone into streetscape enhancement, off street parking and collaborative efforts in historic development and preservation. The buildings reflect the later 19th century commercial style.

As the Idaho Springs Downtown Commercial District is the heart of the City of Idaho Springs, the historical character and uses in the area should be preserved, maintained and celebrated. Future development in this mixed-use area should be pedestrian scaled tourist and local oriented goods and services such as cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating, tourist services, office uses, small retail stores and office buildings. Residential should be encouraged above commercial uses or behind storefront commercial in this area.



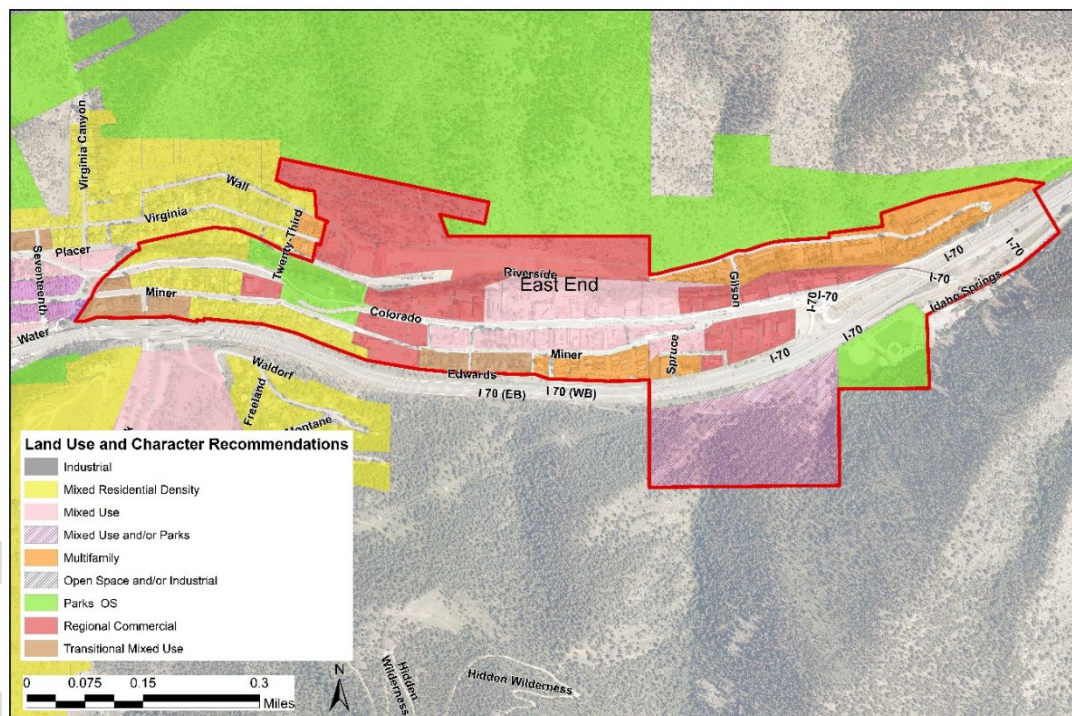
THE EAST END

This area consists largely of highway service commercial developments including food and beverage, retail, service and lodging establishments. Much of this area is a remnant of highway-style development of the 1950s. The quality of development in the area ranges considerably with recent renovation or development of lodging facilities, retail stores and food service establishments leading reinvestment efforts in the area. The East End also includes manufactured home residential parks and single-family residences. Idaho Springs' East End provides significant sales tax generation, jobs and general housing.

East End Overlay District

The City of Idaho Springs adopted an East End Action Plan in 2017 to promote redevelopment of the East End of the city.

This was incorporated into the Idaho Springs Municipal Code as Chapter 26, creating an Overlay District that is designed to support continued revitalization of and reinvestment in the East End through targeted infill/redevelopment and adaptive reuse; enhance connectivity and promote a pedestrian-oriented environment along Colorado Boulevard and Miner Street, and within the East End generally; support a mix of locally-serving and tourism-related uses; increase the range of housing options available in the East End; and promote innovative, high-quality, sustainable development.



THE WEST END

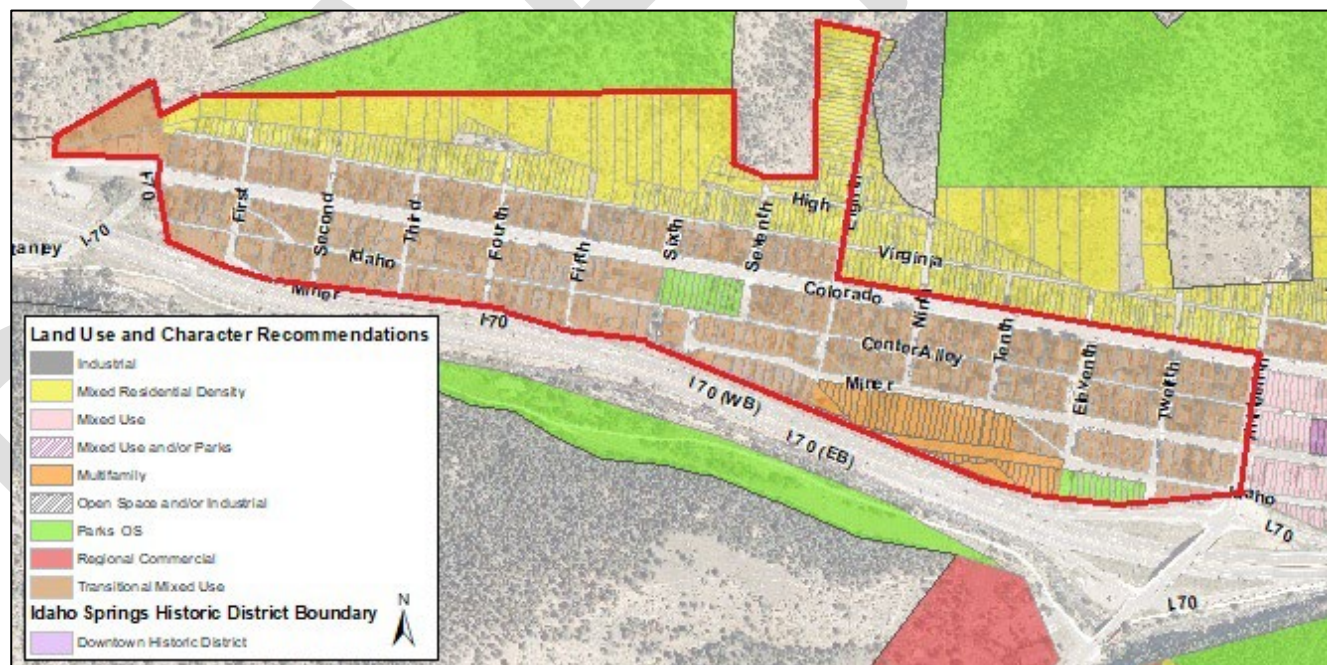
Beginning at 13th Avenue, the area to the west of the Historic District and to the end of the developed portion of the City is primarily residential. Some service businesses are found in the area, generally along Miner Street and Colorado Boulevard. A mix of well-preserved Victorian era homes, newly renovated homes and manufactured housing blend to create an eclectic area that serves as the core of the residential portion of the community. There are many manufactured and mobile homes and light industrial uses south of Colorado Blvd, primarily west of 8th Avenue.

West End Transitional Mixed-Use Area

The surrounding character is diverse in this area, including houses built in the early 1900s to manufactured homes over 40 years old, multifamily apartments, duplexes, triplexes, and low-intensity multifamily development. Future development can draw on varied uses, styles and architecture, as long as it remains sensitive to existing residences and addresses Colorado Boulevard. High density multifamily uses could be appropriate if respectful of existing building massing and scale.

Western Gateway

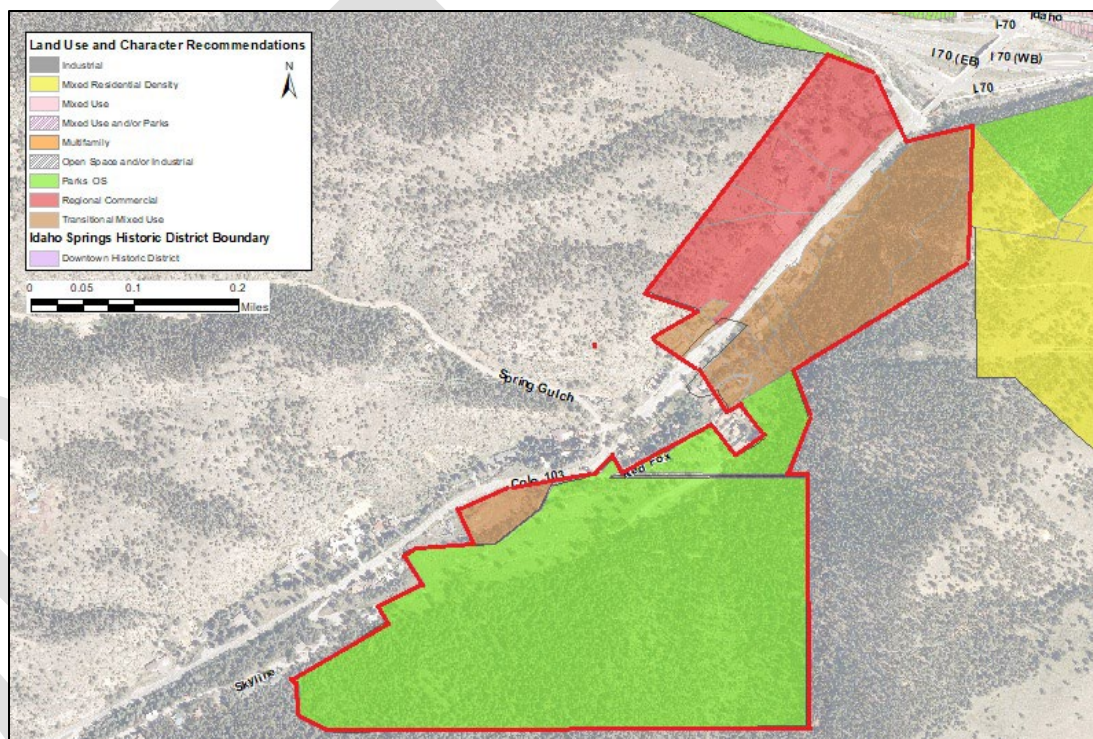
The intersection of Colorado Boulevard and Stanley Road, especially as viewed from Stanley Road traveling northeast, is the western gateway into the city and should provide an announcement of entrance into the city. Upgrades such as decorative features in the Colorado Boulevard / Stanley Road “gateway,” enhanced signage, and other welcoming infrastructure could improve this area.



EXIT 240 GATEWAY AREA

The Exit 240 Gateway Area is in the vicinity of Interstate-70 at the Exit 240 interchange. Current uses in the area include Carlson Elementary, a U.S. Forest Service building, rafting headquarters, a Clear Creek County EMS building, and single-family residential development.

There is potential for significant changes in land use and development character. The proximity to Exit 240 and downtown Idaho Springs makes it suitable for many uses, including higher density multifamily and mixed-use development or more intensive commercial development. Development should respect that this is a “gateway” into the City of Idaho Springs and the Mt. Blue Sky Scenic Byway and focus on design and massing that welcomes people into Idaho Springs.



CHICAGO - SODA CREEK AREAS

Soda Creek Area

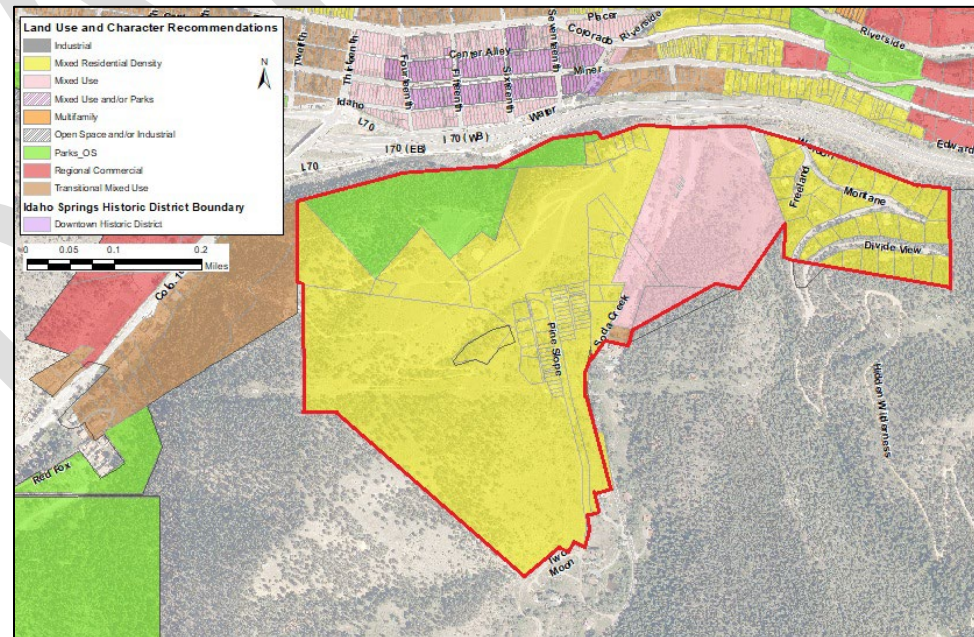
The Soda Creek Area contains the Hot Springs Pool and Lodge, Soda Creek, Montane Park Subdivision, Pine Slope Subdivision and Montague Placer Subdivisions, and several single-family residences.

This is the location of the Indian Hot Springs, a major amenity for the City of Idaho Springs that should be retained and enhanced. Future commercial development should be clustered near the Hot Springs and oriented to the street and Soda Creek. Connectivity from this area under I-70 and to Miner Street could be enhanced.

Montane Park is located southeast of I-70 and Soda Creek Road at elevations ranging between 7,640 and 7,900 feet and was developed in the 1960s. Pine Slope is located southwest of I-70 and Soda Creek Road at elevations ranging between 7,650 and 7,750 feet, and was developed in the early 1900s. New residential development should be consistent with the surrounding neighborhoods in terms of housing stock, architecture, size, massing and density.

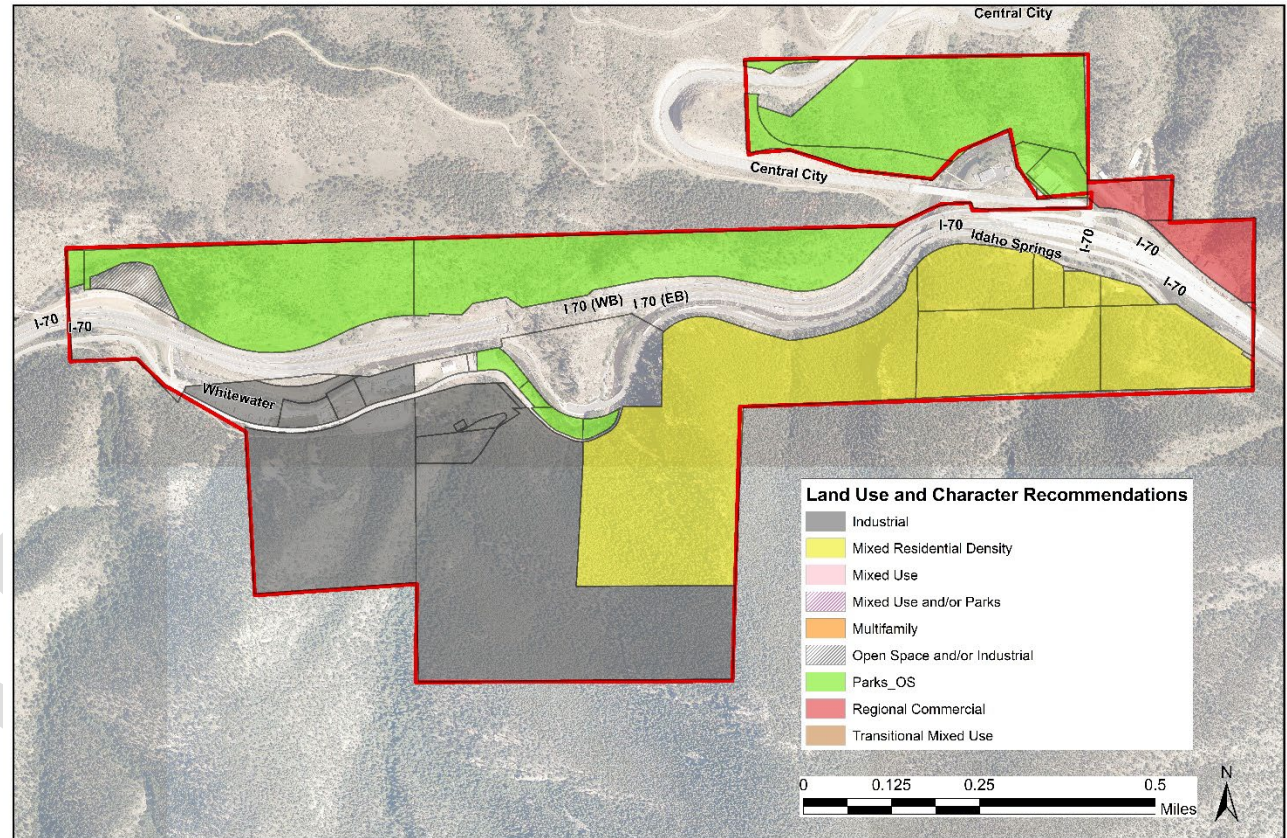
Chicago Creek Area

The Chicago Creek Area is south of the Exit 240 Area. This includes the Cemetery, scattered businesses, and the Highway 103 Annexation Area which consists of the water treatment facility, event center, and several residential properties. Chicago Creek Road (County Road 103) serves as a primary access and scenic byway to Mt. Blue Sky and experiences significant visitor traffic during the summer months. Tourism oriented hospitality uses, including RV parks, motels and campgrounds, are appropriate in this area if they respect and maintain the appearance of the surrounding mountain residential character. Better parking and staging should be pursued for the rafting industry which uses the confluence of Chicago Creek and Clear Creek as a launching area.



HIDDEN VALLEY AND TWIN TUNNELS

The I-70 interchange at Hidden Valley includes access for the Central City Parkway and East Idaho Springs Road (County Road 314.) This area was annexed into Idaho Springs, along with adjoining properties, in September 2004. Regional commercial development has already been built near this interchange. A lack of water and sewer infrastructure will likely be the limiting factor in regard to the type and density of development in this area. This area is suitable for industrial and commercial uses, although residential could also be appropriate. If extension of infrastructure is feasible, higher density uses such as multifamily or RV parks could be appropriate in all areas. The valley is narrow in this area, and any development will necessarily be relatively close to the interstate.



LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

Objective: Ensure that new developments are compatible with surrounding developments, promote the most efficient use of land, and meet the city's strategic growth and water supply objectives.

- a. New development or redevelopment should follow the land use recommendations in the City of Idaho Springs Land Use and Character Area Map.
- b. New development in a neighborhood should complement the existing neighborhood's mass and scale.
- c. The city will support infill development that takes advantage of existing infrastructure and services by considering incentive programs to encourage appropriate redevelopment.
- d. The city will seek public / private partnerships to foster more efficient use of land and existing structures, such as adaptive reuse of the previous middle and high school building for housing and community uses.

Objective: Improve neighborhood livability and quality of life.

- a. The city will work on regulations that require thoughtful landscaping standards to require new developments to beautify the adjacent public realm and right-of-way areas.
- b. The city will evaluate locations that would benefit from public infrastructure (trash cans, public benches, etc.) that promote walkability and opportunities for social interaction.

Objective: Beautify, preserve, and activate the Historic District.

- a. The city will encourage residential units above
- b. ground floor commercial uses by auditing current regulations and considering potential revisions to stimulate demand, including parking reductions, reduction in tap fees or building permit fees, or other potential incentive programs.
- c. The city will implement wayfinding infrastructure to better identity the location of less well-known areas of the city, including the Charlie Tayler Water Wheel Park and other off-the-beaten path locations around the city.
- d. The city will implement the adopted Downtown Plan designs into Miner Street to better activate the Miner Street Marketplace to improve the pedestrian experience in the historic downtown.

Objective: Upgrade the appearance of Idaho Springs as viewed from I-70.

- a. New development with significant visibility from I-70 should be designed with the appearance of facing the Interstate rather than backing to it.
- b. The city will work to activate the Idaho Mall as a pedestrian-oriented space fronting I-70 and rear parking lots using parklets, informational or vendor kiosks, landscaping and public realm space (seating, signage, historical artifacts) to

create a barrier and sense of pedestrian enclosure between the paved walkway at the south perimeter of the Historic District between 15th and 17th Avenues and the large parking area adjacent to I-70.

- c. The city will work to enhance the aesthetics of surface parking lots at the south side of town as viewed from I-70 through landscaping, art installations, and other enhancements will be a priority in the next two years

Objective: Create welcoming, active public spaces through public art installations at city-owned properties.

- a. The city will work with local artists and art organizations to establish a public art plan for Idaho Springs.
- b. The city will promote art installations at city-owned historic sites and facilities to further activate these sites and bring additional visitors to these areas.
- c. Using art, the city will work to connect different areas of Idaho Springs through a coordinated public art network. This could include art activations along the Clear Creek Trail connecting downtown Miner Street to the East End, murals in the downtown area, and other installations as people travel through town.

CHAPTER 6: HOUSING

Goal: “We will respect our existing single-family neighborhoods, provide a diversity of housing to promote a complete community, and accommodate needs to allow people to live in Idaho Springs throughout their lives.”



PURPOSE OF THIS ELEMENT

The Housing Element addresses the City's desire to promote a diverse housing supply and preserve the existing housing stock by encouraging a mixture of housing types, maintaining residential neighborhood quality, and providing opportunities that will assist in the development of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families. Housing combines to form neighborhoods, and neighborhoods combine with other uses to form the community. Housing is more than just shelter; it is our living environment. Attainable and affordable housing is necessary for economic and business success. Housing is a community asset – new development brings more workers, customers, and economic stability. We will support housing and growth to ensure that our residents can continue to find affordable, high-quality housing regardless of their jobs, economic backgrounds, or individual needs.

Housing is a critical issue for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. Business owners have a very difficult time fully staffing their businesses to full capacity because there is not enough housing to accommodate local employees. Employees that do commute into the city from elsewhere largely drive to work, taking up limited parking supply in the downtown Miner Street area. This creates parking challenges and longer service times for visitors who provide critical sales tax revenues for the city. The deficit in housing also makes it more difficult for existing residents to stay in their homes while maintaining affordability. Real estate values have risen dramatically in the past decade, increasing property values and associated property taxes.

RECENT HOUSING STUDIES

There have been several recent housing studies conducted. In 2017, Economic & Planning Systems (EPS), Inc. completed the Idaho Springs East End Market Analysis as part of the East End Action Plan. These studies analyzed the three main issues with housing in the City of Idaho Springs (and Clear Creek County) – availability, quality/age, and affordability. In 2024, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) conducted and published a regional Housing Needs Assessment (Assessment) for the Denver region, which includes Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County. In 2025, the City opted-in to the DRCOG Assessment and use the DRCOG data to address the City's housing needs. The City will need to continue to update their Assessment every ~5 years to maintain an accurate dataset about housing needs in the City.

DRCOG REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The DRCOG Regional Housing Needs Assessment (Assessment) identified a need for ~109 additional housing units in Idaho Springs by 2032, with over half of those units needed at 50% or less of the City's Area Median Income (AMI) data. The DRCOG data further identified that the majority of Idaho Springs renters (60.2%) are cost burdened, with housing costs exceeding 30% of gross income (ACS 2022 5-Year 2022). This shows a clear need to focus on increasing supply for lower-income housing to meet the needs of the city's most vulnerable residents.

HOUSING DIVERSITY

Idaho Springs is a city with an eclectic mix of housing. The city grew organically within the geographic constraints of the surrounding mountains and Clear Creek. Much of the housing was constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s and consists of a variety of home sizes, styles and income levels. Small multifamily structures were integrated into neighborhoods of large and small single family homes providing neighborhoods which comprised a variety of household sizes and incomes. The existing pattern of a mixture of housing types, family sizes and incomes in Idaho Springs is integral to the character of the community. This housing diversity ensures that there are options for people of all income levels. Maintaining housing diversity is key to improving housing availability for people of all needs, income levels, and ages.

The city's zoning codes and land use recommendations cater to continued development of diverse housing solutions. A mix of single-family, duplex, and multifamily housing is appropriate across the city to help provide choice to the city's residents. While we do not want to see historic neighborhoods converted into modern, high-density housing, there are opportunities for more housing options, and the city will support development that allows for a diverse housing stock that caters to residents of all ages at various stages in their lives. Approximately 60% of the existing residential properties in the city are zoned for single-family homes only, which limits the ability to increase local density. Nevertheless, with an average residential lot size of ~5,000 square feet, the city's residential areas average nearly eight units per acre.



Idaho Springs' Character is defined by its eclectic and varied styles of housing



Availability of Housing

There was little new housing construction in Idaho Springs between 2000 and 2017, when the previous Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Between 2017 and 2025, only three new single-family homes were built in Idaho Springs. One 47-unit apartment complex was constructed, and eight (8) townhomes were constructed. At the current rate of construction, the city may be able to reach the Housing Needs Assessment's goal if we continue to focus on providing options for developers to thoughtfully increase density in the city. This Plan's strategic growth element (Chapter 13) discusses how this can be done.

The lack of affordable housing has resulted in seasonal employees camping in and around the city and in people living long-term in hotels and motels designed for short-term accommodation. To combat this, the city has enacted extended stay lodging regulations, allowing lodging operators to offer long-term stays in their facilities with oversight, enforcement, and safety within those units. These units are licensed only when the city and the local fire authority have determined they are safe to occupy long-term.

Since 2017, there have been several larger multifamily developments built in city limits. These include the Riverbend Apartments, a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) affordable housing project that contains 47 one- and two-bedroom units; and the Fieldhouse Apartments, a 119-unit project that was built using opportunity zone funding and Proposition 123 Equity Program funding. New single-family construction has been limited, with only one new single-family home built in Idaho Springs between 2019 and 2026.

DRCOG data from the Regional Housing Needs Assessment prepared in 2024, based on data from the ACS 2022 5-Year study, shows that over 75% of dwelling units in Idaho Springs are detached single-family homes. Another approximately 5% of units are mobile home units. This contrasts with the city's zoning, of which only approximately 63% of residentially zoned properties are zoned for single-family only development. The remaining properties would allow, at least, duplex or two-family housing development or multifamily development. This suggests that there are some opportunities available for infill development in Idaho Springs.

With the current price of a single-family home being \$467,000, many local employees are priced out of the housing market or are cost burdened, unable to purchase a home. Median rents in Idaho Springs, according to the American Community Survey (2024) are \$1,548 per month.

SENIOR HOUSING

The City's population is aging. With the growth in the older adult population comes increased demands for aging services at the local and regional level, which affects nearly every aspect of community life. An aging population means greater demand for senior housing with specialized services to allow existing residents to "age in place". "Universal Design," a broad spectrum of ideas meant to produce products, buildings, or other built environments that are useable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life," is a priority. Wheelchair ramps, essential for people in wheelchairs but also used by all, are a common example. There are also cabinets with pull-out shelves, kitchen counters at several heights to accommodate different tasks and postures, and other accommodations. Currently, there are only two rent restricted properties that serve seniors in Idaho Springs. Project Support is privately financed and has 14 units with 13 rent assistance units funded through donations. All units have one bedroom. The Mitchell White building is a HUD property with 16 units, 15 with HUD rental assistance. Bringing additional housing supply to address the needs of the community's senior population remains an important objective for the city moving forward.



The Mitchell White building



Project Support and senior center, located in the downtown historic district

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are defined by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the following:

“Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) — also referred to as accessory apartments, second units, or granny flats are additional living quarters on single family lots that are independent of the primary dwelling unit. The separate living spaces are equipped with kitchen and bathroom facilities and can be either attached or detached from the main residence.”

There are typically three different types of ADUs – interior, attached and detached. Interior ADUs are usually constructed by conversion of interior space, such as a garage or attic, into a living unit. Attached ADUs are typically additions to the rear or side of a building. Detached ADUs are structures which are separate from the main building garage. They can be constructed over existing accessory structures, such as a detached garage, or they can be built as units that are separate from accessory and residential structures.



ADUs offer a variety of benefits. They help increase housing supply with relatively low impacts to the existing neighborhoods. They are less expensive than constructing separate housing units, so they are more affordable. They can be designed to be concealed into existing buildings thus providing little indication of their existence. They can be connected to the infrastructure of the primary dwellings. They can also provide additional income for homeowners.

HOUSING OBJECTIVES

Objective: Maintain a diverse housing stock.

- a. The city will address housing needs at all AMIs through partnership with Clear Creek County, Georgetown, Silver Plume, Empire, the Clear Creek Regional Housing Authority, DRCOG, nonprofit groups, and other relevant groups.
- b. The city will research and consider alternative homeownership opportunities that create shared equity, such as cohousing, co-living, community land trusts, rent-to-own, community REITs, and other opportunities.
- c. The city will explore regulations that incentivize the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units through fee waivers, water tap reductions, expedited permitting, etc. and will adopt regulations that may result in more ADU development.
- d. The city will continue to monitor and enforce STR regulations in the City to ensure that housing stock remains available for long-term occupancy.
- e. The city will focus on a mix of housing types – single-family detached, single-family attached, lower density multifamily, and higher density multifamily units to provide a diversity of options to current and future residents.
- f. The city will consider programs to improve existing mobile homes in the city to create better quality housing for residents of these types of units. We will consider allowing new mobile homes to replace existing mobile homes or programs to replace existing mobile homes with new factory-built or manufactured housing.

Objective: Increase the availability of housing in Idaho Springs to bring at least 109 new housing units to the city by 2045 to meet the city's Housing Needs Assessment goals.

- a. Updates to the city's Inclusionary Housing requirements will be considered that either require a certain number of units to be affordable or require fees-in-lieu of housing units with new development proposals.
- b. The city will use the adopted DRCOG Regional Housing Needs Assessment to promote construction of dwelling units that meet the needs of the community.
- c. The city will work with regional partners to create a Housing Action Plan (HAP) that addresses the community's housing needs by January 1, 2028.
- d. The city will prioritize the preservation of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) to ensure that existing homes that are affordable to residents remain affordable into the future while maintaining the quality of existing housing stock. The city will explore ways to fund the preservation and rehabilitation of NOAH units, with the goal of preserving at least one unit per year, on average.

Objective: Preserve and renovate existing housing stock.

- a. The city will work to promote neighborhood historic districts and designation of existing historic homes in the city and work with property owners of historic properties to secure funding for rehabilitation and preservation efforts.

- b. City staff will explore ways to promote the rehabilitation and renovation of legally existing non-conforming multifamily units in appropriate locations within single family neighborhoods.
- c. Where existing homes need to be rehabilitated, the city will promote redevelopment that is consistent with the neighborhood's existing scale, massing, and architectural design.
- d. The city will continue to regularly update and actively enforce the building codes, as may be amended which requires the application of minimum health, safety, and welfare standards to all new construction; reconstruction; historic preservation/ renovation; housing rehabilitation/adaptive reuse, and/or the removal of unsafe, unsanitary substandard structures.

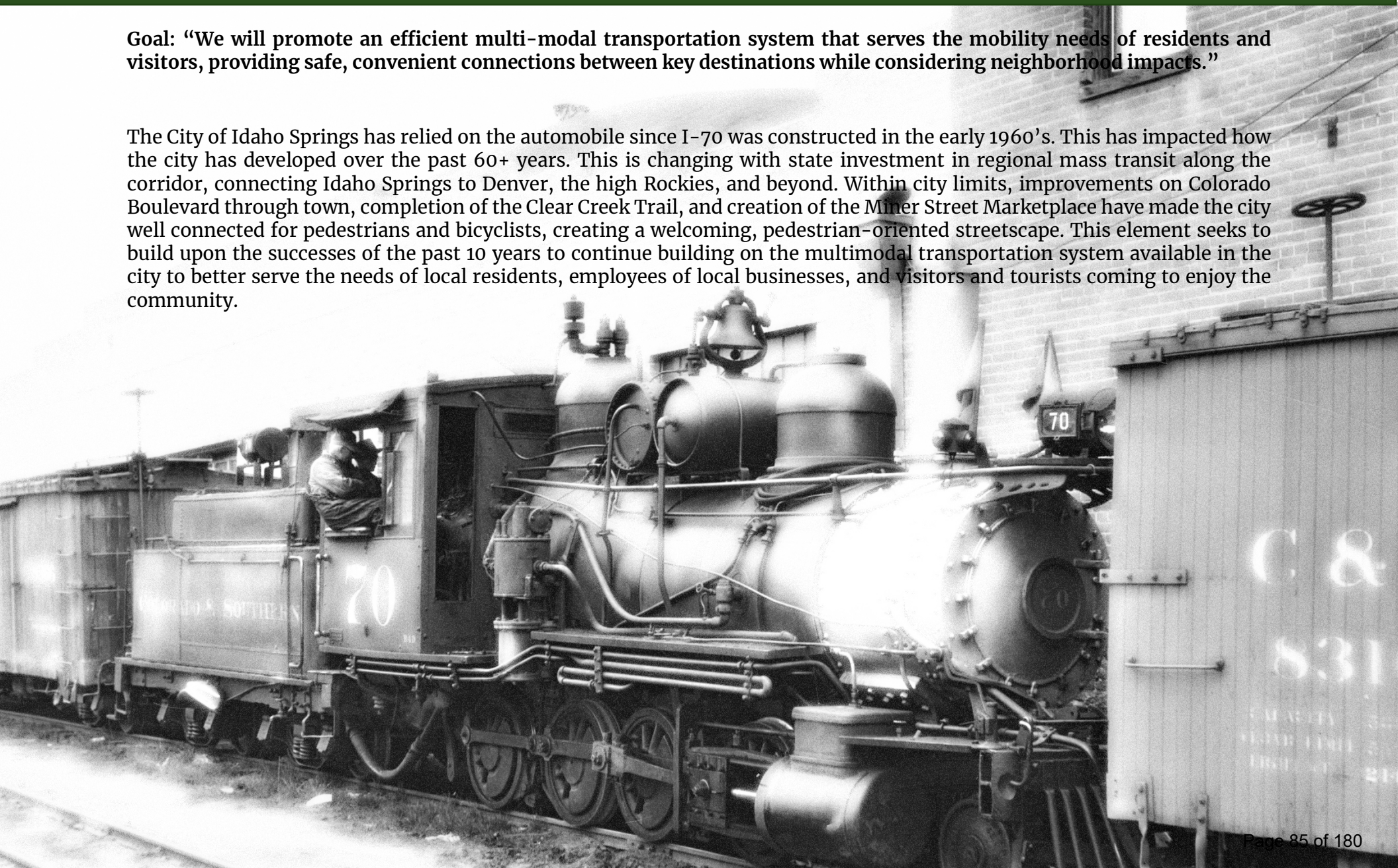
Objective: Pursue programs to allow seniors the opportunity to “age in place.”

- a. The city will participate in efforts to locate and develop adequate, affordable facilities for seniors, including independent adult housing, assisted living facilities, and elderly care facilities and programs.
- b. The city will create incentives and opportunities for the development of senior housing or assisted living so that there are more age-in-place opportunities.

CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Goal: “We will promote an efficient multi-modal transportation system that serves the mobility needs of residents and visitors, providing safe, convenient connections between key destinations while considering neighborhood impacts.”

The City of Idaho Springs has relied on the automobile since I-70 was constructed in the early 1960's. This has impacted how the city has developed over the past 60+ years. This is changing with state investment in regional mass transit along the corridor, connecting Idaho Springs to Denver, the high Rockies, and beyond. Within city limits, improvements on Colorado Boulevard through town, completion of the Clear Creek Trail, and creation of the Miner Street Marketplace have made the city well connected for pedestrians and bicyclists, creating a welcoming, pedestrian-oriented streetscape. This element seeks to build upon the successes of the past 10 years to continue building on the multimodal transportation system available in the city to better serve the needs of local residents, employees of local businesses, and visitors and tourists coming to enjoy the community.



INTERSTATE 70

Interstate 70 has significant impacts on the City of Idaho Springs, both positive and negative. When I-70 was constructed in the 1960s, it removed nearly a third of the historic downtown and cut the town off from Clear Creek. I-70 is the primary east/west route of commerce through the State of Colorado and provides access to the high country communities and other attractions. The volume of traffic using I-70 is both a liability and opportunity for the City of Idaho Springs. Accommodating and managing traffic congestion along this historically non-urban corridor has become a problem of statewide relevance. The city has taken an active role at the table with respect to I-70 planning.



Improvements to I-70 have continued, most recently the Floyd Hill project stretching from Exit 248 to 241. This should improve travel along the corridor by improving safety while increasing optimal travel speeds and is expected to be completed by 2029. This will bring capacity improvements to the corridor, allowing travelers to access Idaho Springs more quickly. With this comes the ability to improve transit capacity along the corridor. Leveraging CDOT investment in the corridor is a key way to improve the city's relationship with the interstate system.

PARKING

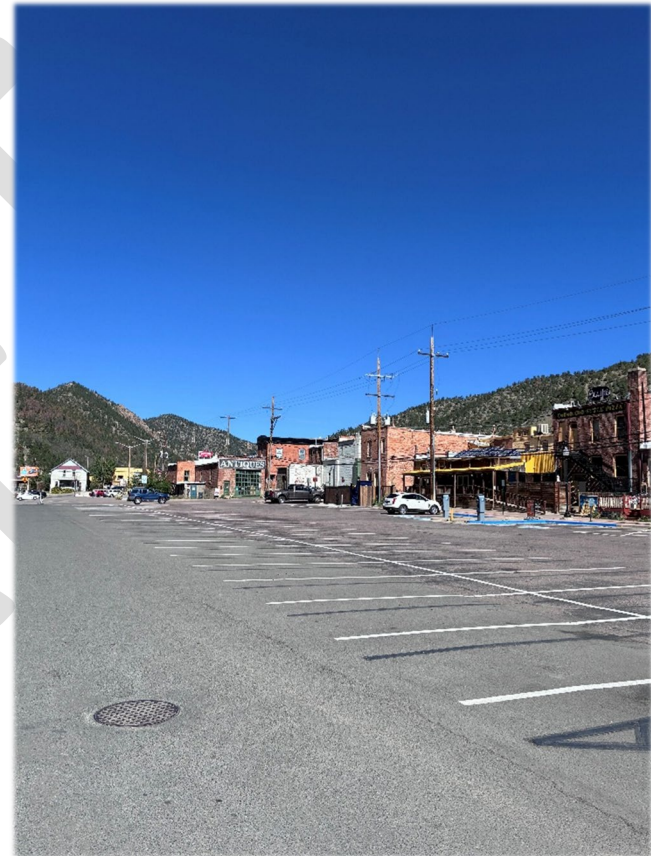
Lack of available parking is a significant problem in Idaho Springs. This is especially prevalent in the Historic District during peak times, in which the lack of available parking results in potential visitors leaving the town rather than patronizing the local businesses. This parking problem continues to exist today and has been exacerbated by recent developments that have brought more demand to the city. The east end of the city – historically underutilized for parking – is now nearing parking capacity with the opening of the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park and Mighty Argo Cable Car, bringing significant activity to a part of town. With that in mind, the city has made strides towards parking solutions and continues to focus on efforts to improve parking around town.

Managed Parking

The city instituted managed parking in 2019, which brought paid parking to the downtown Miner Street area. This increases turnover, which had been a substantial issue with people using the city's lots as park and ride spaces. It also generates revenues that are put into an enterprise fund that goes to parking and transportation improvements. This dual benefit ensures that the city will continue to invest in parking and transportation upgrades to continue addressing the city's parking needs. Managed parking has since been implemented on the east end of the city. The managed parking program has also protected residential parking, ensuring that residential areas remain available to residents of the city and county only.

Parking Fee-in-Lieu

The city in 2023 passed a parking fee-in-lieu ordinance to allow businesses to pay a fee in lieu of providing off-street parking spaces. Downtown businesses have difficulty providing off-street parking due to the age and configuration of the downtown area. This had historically discouraged new businesses in the downtown Miner Street area because off-street parking is a requirement for any change of use from one type of business to another. The parking fee-in-lieu program ensures that new businesses can open by providing the city with a fee instead. This fee is then used to offset the impact on city parking resources by investing in parking improvements elsewhere.



RAISE Planning Grant

In 2024, the city was awarded a \$2.4 million federal RAISE planning grant to bring the Downtown Master Plan recommendations to 60% design. This planning process is underway and is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2026. This will allow for construction to commence on the first phase of improvements, including the regional mobility hub, gateway improvements, surface parking improvements, and placemaking infrastructure along the Idaho Mall to create a more welcoming environment for people accessing the city's downtown. Funding for the entire suite of improvements is grant-dependent and requires a phasing of the project until funding gaps can be filled.

Surface Parking Improvements

The city remains committed to improving parking in the interim until a parking structure can be constructed. Surface parking improvements are a key part of the interim plan. Funding has been identified to continue adding surface parking as opportunities arise. This is seen as an interim solution, as surface parking is not a sustainable long-term solution for parking, being an inefficient land use that takes away from commercial and residential development opportunities. Surface parking can easily be redeveloped in the future, however, making it a reasonable use of land in the present while the demand for parking remains high.



A new surface parking lot in Idaho Springs, meant to address demand for parking on both the East End and downtown.

TRANSIT

Until recently, public transit in Clear Creek County and Idaho Springs was essentially nonexistent, either locally or regionally. For 54 years, from 1961 to 2015, I-70 bisected Idaho Springs and brought millions of cars along the corridor annually, but no regional or local bus services existed to move people along the corridor. This changed in July of 2015, when CDOT began operating the Bustang Transit Service, with scheduled buses running between Denver and Grand Junction. In 2017, CDOT expanded stops along the route to include a stop in downtown Idaho Springs. Bustang ridership has grown considerably since it was first rolled out in 2015, from 103,000 riders in 2015 to over 351,000 riders today. The Bustang transit service's West Line links Idaho Springs to Denver to the East and Frisco, Vail, Avon, Eagle, Glenwood Springs, Rifle, Parachute, and Grand Junction over a dozen times per day.



The city's current bus stop (above) provides access to 20+ buses daily.

In 2023, Clear Creek County began operating the Roundabout bus service that provides free transit to the communities of Clear Creek County. The Roundabout's Local Route makes 20 stops around Clear Creek County on a continuous loop. The Roundabout stops at each of these 20 stops nine (9) times throughout the day, providing connections between Idaho Springs, Georgetown, Silver Plume, Empire, Lawson, and Dumont.

CDOT and the City of Idaho Springs are in the process of designing a regional mobility hub in the vicinity of the exit 240 intersection. This will bring new opportunities to the city, including the opportunity for Snowstang service in town and a potential connection to the Denver International Airport. These would bring additional opportunity to connect visitors and tourists to Idaho Springs without a car. The city and CDOT have invested in transit as an opportunity to sustainably grow visitation to the city while linking residents and employees to regional destinations along the I-70 corridor and beyond.

CLEAR CREEK TRAIL



The Clear Creek Trail (CCT) is a collaborative effort to construct a 65-mile trail from the Continental Divide Trail at Loveland Pass to the South Platte River Trail in Denver and Adams County. Clear Creek County is presently engaged with the design of the Clear Creek Greenway segment – approximately 36 miles of this trail which begins at the Jefferson County line and ends in Empire. When completed, this greenway will provide a major non-motorized travel connection through the City of Idaho Springs. The trail segment at Charlie Tayler Waterwheel Park was completed in 2016 as part of the I-70 Eastbound Peak Period Shoulder Lane project. The next connection passes along the Idaho Springs City Hall to the east and continues on at the north side of Clear Creek adjacent to the Argo Mine and Mill before crossing back over Clear Creek near the old wastewater treatment facility and exiting the City along East Idaho Springs Road (County Road 314). The alignment and possible future improvements along this multi-functional amenity within Idaho Springs are reflected in the Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Element.



Clear
Creek
Trail



TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES

Objective: Leverage I-70 improvements to accomplish the city's objectives for economic development, tourism, and transportation improvements.

- a. As part of any I-70 construction efforts, the city will require that provisions of the Collaborative Agreement be used to enhance the operation and appearance of interchanges.
- b. The city will remain active in the NEPA and I-70 Stakeholder process as it relates to solutions for congestion on Interstate 70.
- c. The Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process as implemented through Project Leadership Teams must remain active through all phases of a project.

Objective: Develop and maintain safe, multimodal, attractive and efficient roadways.

- a. The city will ensure that streets effectively accommodate transit, pedestrian, bicycle and other modes of transportation safely.
- b. For future transportation projects, the city will require that traffic calming techniques be considered to create a multimodal streetscape that promotes cycling, walking, and transit in addition to vehicular travel.
- c. Recreational access and oversized vehicle parking at State Highway 103 will be improved and optimized in accordance with the city's Parking Plan.
- d. The city will continue to support advances in transportation technology, such as Autonomous Vehicles and Smart Cars.
- e. The city will develop and implement a street maintenance program and Capital Improvements Plan.
- f. The city will develop a circulator shuttle to move people easily and effectively around Idaho Springs without a private vehicle.
- g. New traffic studies will be conducted to ensure that capacity along Colorado Boulevard and other high traffic routes do not create safety issues. Safety issues identified in these studies (calming measures, stop signs, etc.) will be implemented using these results.

Objective: Make it feasible to visit or live in Idaho Springs without a car.

- a. The city will partner with other agencies and governments to develop, operate and maintain public transportation options within Idaho Springs and the I-70 corridor.
- b. The city will work with CDOT to construct the regional mobility hub at Exit 240 to optimize transportation infrastructure in the city.
- c. Strategies to encourage additional transit use by residents, employees, and visitors of the city to reduce car-dependency will be prioritized. The city will promote transit ridership to the city by offering incentives or discounts to visitors arriving to the city without a car.

- d. The city will continue its partnership with CDOT to create a program for free rides for locals and commuters to increase local ridership by at least 10% over the next ten years.
- e. To encourage car-free travel along the I-70 corridor and promote overnight stays during the winter months, the city will coordinate with CDOT to create a Snowstang stop in Idaho Springs so locals and visitors can stay in Idaho Springs and access nearby ski resorts without a car.
- f. The city will work with Clear Creek County to optimize the Roundabout bus service to increase ridership and increase the frequency of buses into Idaho Springs, making it a more viable option for local residents.
- g. In coordination with the Housing Element, the city will work to site new housing developments within 1/4-mile of existing transit and bring additional transit options to higher-density areas of the city.
- h. The city will work with CDOT, Clear Creek County, and the Clear Creek School District RE-1 to improve pedestrian safety in the vicinity of Exit 240, transit operations, the elementary school, and other areas of the city that experience high foot traffic through both physical improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and through education and outreach campaigns that focus on awareness of existing crosswalks, sidewalks, and recreational trails.

Objective: Manage the supply, operations, and demand for parking to encourage economic vitality, safety, and livability.

- a. The city will consider reduced parking requirements for new or expanded uses in the Historic District, expanding on the existing parking fee-in-lieu program.
- b. The city will continue working toward a parking structure in the vicinity of the Downtown area and elsewhere in the city.
- c. In conjunction with a circulator shuttle, the city will identify satellite lot locations that could accommodate parking without impacting existing community character in the city's core areas.

CHAPTER 8: 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. Idaho Springs strives to create a sustainable economy centered around heritage and recreation tourism while maintaining a high quality of life for residents.



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.

As the first community you pass when traveling West on I-70 from Denver, Idaho Springs is a great location 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.

KEY ASSETS IN IDAHO SPRINGS:

With its location being less than thirty miles from the Denver metro area, Idaho Springs allows for easy day travel to and from Denver. Thousands of vehicles pass by the city with its four I-70 interchanges each day. The city has invested heavily in marketing and advertising to capture tourism dollars and foster economic development in the area.



The Mount Blue Sky Scenic Byway, originating in town, is easily accessible from the metro area.



The Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) is open to the public after many years of development, providing biking and hiking trails in city limits.



The Argo Mill and the Mighty Argo Cable Car (MACC) is a major attraction within the city, providing a regional tourism draw.



The City of Idaho Springs' commercial downtown is a National Historic District, and heritage tourism is a major draw for visitors to the city. The city's historic character remains to this day in neighborhoods, too.



The Indian Hot Springs serves as a major tourist destination.



Clear Creek, the fifth-most popular rafting river in the country, directly bisects the city as a key recreational resource. ⁶⁵

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.



Miner Street from 14th Avenue to 17th Avenue is closed through the summer, allowing for activations, outdoor dining, and community events.

The East End

The city's East End, loosely defined as everything from the Visitor Center east to the Exit 241 interchange, has historically been characterized by highway service commercial developments, including hotels, restaurants, automotive service stations, retail shops, and other car-oriented developments. These highway-oriented businesses generate significant sales tax revenues for the city. The city has focused on creating a more pedestrian-friendly, walkable environment in this area, creating flexible zoning and development standards to encourage redevelopment in this area while promoting existing businesses to continue to thrive.

This car-centrism is slowly changing as new destination-tourism options have expanded on this end of town. Two key drivers of this growth have been the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP), home to hiking, running, and mountain biking trails, and the Mighty Argo Cable Car (MACC) that cuts through the park and adds to the area's opportunities for heritage and recreation tourism. The city anticipates further growth in demand for food and beverage, retail, and lodging resources on the East End of the city to accommodate these newer regional draws to the city.



The East End of the city is a significant sales tax generator, with highway-oriented businesses, thriving restaurants, and growing regional draws that build on heritage and outdoor tourism industries.

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. 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.



Idaho Springs has many high-quality overnight lodging options ready to welcome visitors to the city.

LOCAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

Service Jobs and the Lack of Affordable Housing

The median price of a home in Idaho Springs is approximately \$467,000 and average rent over \$1,500 per month, 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.

Competition with other Mountain Towns

Idaho Springs must compete for tourism dollars against rural resort communities like Winter Park, Summit County, Vail, and other communities along the I-70 corridor. As such, it is important that the city takes advantage of its location and access to the Front Range. Investment in recreation has been a major business focus in recent years, with the Mighty Argo Cable Car, rafting, the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park, and other recreation opportunities coming to the forefront. Idaho Springs is more affordable than many of the resort towns further west, allowing the city to market itself as a vacation destination that does not break the bank. Continuing to build upon this to attract more regional and out-of-state visitors is seen as a sustainable way of positioning the community as the destination, rather than a stop along the way to somewhere else. Ways to capitalize further on this include partnerships with Loveland Ski Area, CDOT, and other regional partners to continue improving transit to and from Idaho Springs; build opportunities to shuttle people from Idaho Springs to local and regional opportunities; and market the city as an affordable destination for visitors who want to experience an authentic Colorado experience.

The Impact of Weather

Recreation is a major tourism driver in Idaho Springs, which means that weather can have a large impact on how many visitors come to Idaho Springs. Recently, Colorado has experienced drought conditions, reducing river flows and snowfall. A dry winter without much snow can negatively impact recreation and tourism in Idaho Springs for the entire year. The total number of travelers on the I-70 corridor impacts visitation in Idaho Springs. A dry winter also affects the city's summer tourism season. A good snow season is critical for a good rafting season. In lower snowfall years, the rafting season is often shorter because there is less water running down Clear Creek. To combat this, the city must prioritize a resilient, diverse economy centered around several different types of visitors. By doing so, Idaho Springs can attract visitors with diverse interests, regardless of the weather or the season.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM OBJECTIVES

Objective: Support tourism and special event activities.

- a. The city will work 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. The city will promote, develop and market the use of Idaho Springs' historic and recreational assets.
- c. The city will 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.
- d. The city will conduct a study of the impact of various industries on the city's local economy, including heritage tourism, mountain biking, rafting, and other major tourism draws.

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

- a. The city will put together an updated Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), which will include an inventory of infrastructure improvements needed to redevelop vacant and available properties.
- b. The city will work with community organizations, nonprofits, and other entities to design and implement childcare improvements to support local employees and residents.
- c. The city will promote more overnight stays through coordination with the Clear Creek Tourism Bureau, Loveland Ski Area, CDOT's Bustang and Snowstang services, and local businesses to position Idaho Springs as an ideal weekend or vacation destination near the Front Range.
- d. The city will focus on workforce retention and job creation to increase the number of skilled trades, local employment opportunities, and increase the number of residents who are able to work locally.
- e. The city will work with local partners to promote local non-profit organizations who provide services in the community and attract relevant Front Range non-profits who may be able to provide satellite offices or local hubs.

Objective: Support continued redevelopment of the East End business district.

- a. The city will prioritize and strategize how to encourage development in the East End Overlay District (EEOD). 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.
- b. The city will promote activated storefronts and additional housing opportunities on the East End of the city to build upon existing and new businesses coming into the area.

CHAPTER 9: 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.

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.

Wildfire is a growing risk across the Mountain West. Idaho Springs is committed to mitigating and reducing community-wide risk through partnerships with local agencies and adjacent jurisdictions, promoting home-hardening strategies at local residents, and educating the public on how to stay safe with wildfire risk present in the area.

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.

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.

AIR, NOISE, AND LIGHT IMPACTS

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 quietude are significant amenities that residents and visitors expect in a mountain environment. Small regulatory changes can have large quality of life benefits for city residents and visitors. The city is actively working on code amendments that would better address noise and light pollution within city limits. Ongoing work to protect the city from these impacts is needed to maintain a high quality environment.

Air pollution is a concern that can have real consequences for local residents if not addressed. Local sources of emissions include motorized vehicles on I-70 and frontage roads, local mining operations, and wintertime wood burning. Pollution from traffic sources is a major community concern along the entire I-70 corridor, but particularly in Idaho Springs where residences are located close to the interstate in the narrow canyon. I-70 does meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for carbon monoxide and particulate matter, but the need for monitoring will continue as vehicular traffic continues to increase. Continued collaboration with CDOT is necessary to address air quality concerns going forward.

Much 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. I-70 is a major contributor to noise pollution, as well. CDOT has worked with the city to reduce I-70 impacts, including a new noise wall at the Exit 241 interchange, which is anticipated to be completed by 2029 and should be expected to reduce noise to residences in that area by a significant margin. Noise pollution can reduce a person's quality of life, so mitigating noise impacts is a priority. The city has not historically addressed noise through any official means, with minimal regulations related to the mitigation of noise pollution. As Idaho Springs becomes a busier community, efforts to regulate and minimize noise pollution are needed to protect residents from adverse impacts that include sleep disturbances, heightened stress and anxiety levels, hypertension, and other negative health outcomes. Noise pollution can also negatively impact wildlife populations, so addressing and regulating noise can benefit the city's animal residents, as well.

Exterior lighting is another external impact that can have negative implications for residents, but which can be reasonably addressed through proper regulations and policy choices. Lighting that provides security without excess light spill allows people to continue to appreciate the night sky and protects wildlife. Many communities have dark sky lighting ordinances that attempt to minimize exterior lighting at residences and businesses without reducing community safety or security.

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. Common wildlife sightings include bighorn sheep, black bears, deer, an occasional mountain lion, and a variety of birds and small mammals.

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 on 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 Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has placed substantial focus on wildlife protection and preservation. 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.

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.



The Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse is an endangered species found in Idaho Springs.



The mountains north of the city serve as critical winter habitat for bighorn sheep in the area.



Black bears are common sights in town, especially near residents' garbage cans.

ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective: Ensure that development does not aggravate, accelerate, or increase the level of risk from natural hazards.

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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, using tools such as overlay zoning districts, building envelopes to avoid construction on areas of concern (wetlands, hazardous slopes, etc.), clustered development standards, and other similar strategies.
- d. The city 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.
- e. The city will 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.
- f. The city will create a hazard mapping/GIS database by coordinating with USGS, Clear Creek County and CDOT to further study and map vulnerable areas to help consider whether habitat overlay zones, hazard mitigation overlay zones, or other additional regulatory tools are necessary to protect important environmental resources around the city.

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

- a. The city will 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. Stronger noise regulations will be pursued to align with state noise requirements and reduce noise impacts within city limits.
- c. The city will 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.
- d. New city infrastructure will be implemented to reduce noise, air, and light pollution on city properties and within the city's vehicle fleet.

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

- 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. The city will put together resources for local homeowners to improve 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. 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.
- c. Working with the Clear Creek Fire Authority, Clear Creek County, USFS, and other local land management agencies, the city will perform landscape-scale mitigation projects to link existing, mitigated areas together in alignment with USFS risk reduction goals.
- d. 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 10: WATER SUPPLY

Goal: “We will protect our water supply to ensure that adequate water is available for the sake of current and future residents, visitors, wildlife, and the natural environment. We will manage our resources efficiently to protect, preserve, and conserve the city’s surface water and groundwater resources.”



This element focuses on the city's water supply. Colorado Revised Statutes now require that municipal, county, and regional comprehensive plans include a water supply element, and these elements must be updated, in consultation with water providers, on no less than a 5-year basis. DOLA includes these requirements in grant guidelines.

When developing a water supply element in local or regional comprehensive plans, Colorado Revised Statutes 30-28-106(3)(a.5)(II) and 31-23-206(1.5)(c) require that the community **must**:

- Consult and coordinate with local water provider(s),
- Include water conservation policies, and
- Estimate a range of water supplies and facilities needed to support the potential public and private development described in the comprehensive plan.

This Chapter identifies key strategies to promote water conservation both through regulatory measures within the City's Municipal Code and incentives to promote water efficiency. As the population continues to grow, demands on the municipal water systems will increase and the city will need to be prepared. The element is intended to build upon and complement the Colorado Water Plan, which has the goal of protecting the state's water supply against growing demand and a warming average temperature to conserve up to 300,000 acre-feet per year by 2050.

Water Conservation is not only about consumption. This Chapter explores the need to protect local watersheds and invest in stormwater infrastructure. It includes strategies that promote the restoration of riparian areas, and protection of sensitive environmental areas. This Chapter also considers responsible recreation on the area's waterways, especially Clear Creek.

The data and information provided in this element were developed in coordination with the Idaho Springs Public Works and Water and Wastewater departments. As the sole supplier of water within city limits, the city's Water and Wastewater Department handles all water treatment and wastewater treatment for water used within city limits.

The Chicago Creek Sanitation District works with the city's Public Works Department to maintain sewer lines along Highway 103, which then connects to the city's system for treatment.

The core tenets of the water supply element are a focus on building a healthy and welcoming community. Without an adequate, healthy, and safe water supply, the city cannot accept new residents or businesses into the city. Continuing to monitor water supply is critical to ensure the city's future success.

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS WATER SUPPLY

Idaho Springs is part of the Clear Creek watershed, which is in turn part of the larger South Platte River watershed that originates in Park County near Fairplay and flows through the Denver Metropolitan Area and into Eastern Colorado into Nebraska. The Idaho Springs Reservoir is the primary storage facility for Idaho Springs Municipal Water and is located south of Echo Lake, approximately nine miles south of the city.

The Clear Creek Watershed contains 364,564 total acres, of which 59,787 acres are developed (16.4%).

Most of the water used in Idaho Springs is for residential use, with commercial use being the second largest water user. No water is used for agricultural purposes on a commercial scale.



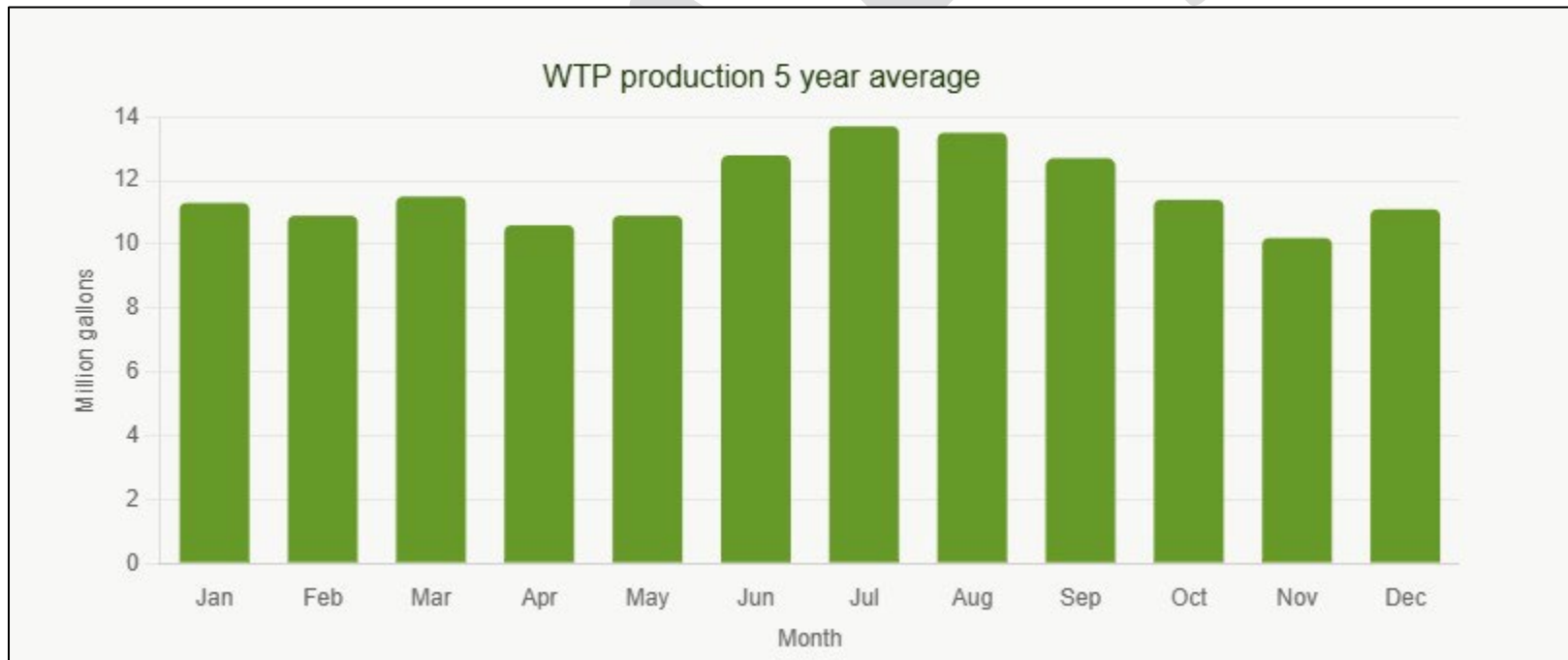
A map of the Clear Creek watershed

Idaho Springs' water rights total approximately 33.64 cubic feet per second of water per year from several sources and another 6.91 acre-feet of water storage related to the Idaho Springs Reservoir.

Idaho Springs' water plant is approximately four miles up Highway 103, south of the I-70 Exit 240 interchange. The current water plant capacity is 1.3 million gallons per day. However, the actual amount of water that can be produced depends on flows from Chicago Creek. The Idaho Springs Reservoir - which has a storage capacity of 320 acre-feet (104,272,457 gallons) and a normal storage of 230 acre-feet (74,945,829 gallons). Capacity in the winter is lower due to lower water levels in Chicago Creek.

The City of Idaho Springs is the sole water provider for in-city users and is the only service provider for nearby out of city users who want to be on a municipal supply. Outside of city limits, many of the residential properties are served by wells and are not reliant on city water, though out of city properties can tap into the city's municipal water system.

Since 2015, the water treatment plant has averaged 11.62 million gallons of water per month. In 2024, the average water treated per month was 11.496 million gallons and in 2025, the average was approximately 12 million gallons.



Average water treatment plant production per month, 2020-2025

While Idaho Springs currently does not have water quantity or capacity concerns, some growth is expected over the next 5-10 years, both in resident population and tourism-related visits. Given that the water plant's overall capacity is approximately 30 million gallons per month, the plant is only at about 1/3 of its overall capacity; this gives the city room to grow without taxing water resources.

The city currently has 976 residential units using the city's water supply, at an average amount of 2.5 million gallons of water per month. The city's municipal water supply uses approximately 325,000 gallons over the same period. There are 223 commercial users that use an average of 2.5 million gallons of water per month, as well. This amounts to an average usage of 2,597 gallons of water used monthly per residential unit and 11,211 gallons of water used per commercial user monthly. The municipal use of 325,000 gallons is used by 25 municipal buildings, which means each building averages about 13,000 gallons of water used monthly.

The city's Housing Needs Assessment shows a need for an additional 109 dwelling units by 2032. If these 109 units were added, we would expect to see these units use, on average, 283,073 additional gallons of water each month, or an increase of ~2.4%.

To reach capacity, at the city's water treatment plant, the city would need to see water usage increase by approximately 17 million gallons per month. This would be equivalent to approximately 6,500 new homes or 1,500 new commercial users.

That said, conservation is important and the city's water supply is at risk due to existing drought conditions. While the city currently has adequate capacity to accept additional users on the system, Colorado has experienced consistent drought conditions and is subject to an inconsistent snowpack in recent years. Ensuring adequate supply is maintained in the Idaho Springs Reservoir is critical to ensure a continued optimistic water supply outlook.



Water System Challenges

While the plant may have sufficient capacity, the city's existing water and sewer lines are a different story. The city has invested heavily in water and sewer infrastructure over the past ten years, with new water and sewer lines in Virginia Street, Virginia Canyon Road, Miner Street, and other areas being installed. The city is currently working to install a new water line from the water treatment plant to I-70, which will be completed over the next several years. Even with all this progress, there remains many lines in need of upgrade to support current and future demands.

Some water lines in Idaho Springs are more than 75 years old. The city will continue to require replacement of aging water mains and service lines, as well as examination and inventory of line capacities and conditions to assure adequate flow for water delivery, both for consumption and fire flow needs.

Water pressure is not a concern in most of the city, though development in areas above the elevation of the water storage tank (approximately 7,770 feet) will likely require the construction of additional pump stations and water storage facilities.

Another concern is the Chicago Creek water capacity. After being held at the Idaho Springs Reservoir, water is discharged from the reservoir along Chicago Creek to the water treatment plant. Maintaining adequate flows in the creek is critical to maintain a functional watershed and a functional water system. Additionally, surface water quality concerns could be exacerbated with additional growth along the Highway 103 corridor.

Even though the city has sufficient storage and sufficient water treatment capacity to supply adequate water to the community, water supply nevertheless remains an issue in drier years. Lack of snow in drought conditions – like Colorado has seen over the two decades starting in 2013 – has led to concerns about the amount of water physically entering the city's water supply system. With much of the city's water coming from surface water sources, drought conditions have an impact on the city's ability to provide water to future users.

To combat water system challenges, the city has implemented voluntary water restriction measures that can be implemented during drought conditions. To date, the city has not had to implement mandatory restrictions or reduce water use to non-city users, though this could change if drought conditions continue.

PRESERVING WATER QUALITY

The largest contributor to water quality impairment is from non-point source (NPS) sources. NPS pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters and ground waters. These contaminants include oil and antifreeze from automobiles, excess fertilizers, bacteria from livestock, and faulty septic systems.

There are other threats to Clear Creek water quality that will need to be monitored to ensure quality and supply are maintained. Clear Creek's existing water quality is affected by historical mine drainage, runoff from urban development, and runoff from I-70 and local roadways. Wildfires can also pose a substantial risk to water quality. Drought conditions that reduce supply can have an impact, as well.

Wildfire: Wildfires pose a substantial risk to water supplies because they can lead to severe flooding, erosion, and delivery of sediment, nutrients, and metals to rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. After wildfire, loss of canopy vegetation and changes to soil properties can result in more water flowing over the land surface during storms, leading to flooding, erosion, and delivery of sediment, ash, pollutants, and debris to surface water. This can result in decreased water quality, loss of reservoir storage capacity, stream habitat degradation, and increased treatment costs for drinking water providers.

Interstate 70: Approximately 20 million cars pass through Idaho Springs on Interstate 70 annually as the major east-west corridor in the state. With this traffic comes substantial impacts to water quality along the Clear Creek Corridor via vehicle leaks, roadway deicer used to maintain the road in the winter, sedimentation and erosion, and other activities that contribute to the salinity and other pollutants in Clear Creek. Sediment and chloride used for winter roadway maintenance are the primary stormwater runoff concerns from I-70 that affect water quality in Clear Creek. CDOT has permanent monitoring infrastructure in the creek to analyze impacts and take mitigation action, as required. Clear Creek water quality is a corridor-wide effort due to Interstate 70 impacts and their effects on the watershed.

New Development: New residential and commercial development can have a clear and measurable impact on water quality and water supply as major water users. While agriculture is by far the largest statewide water user, it is a very small user in Idaho Springs or Clear Creek County. Residential and commercial users are the primary water users in this area and new developments play a role in increasing threats to the city's water supply. Development activity has a long-term impact by increasing the overall water demand but short-term impacts from construction also play a role in water quality degradation.

Recreation: Clear Creek is a major recreational asset to the city and region. As the second-most rafted river in the state, with 49,356 reported users in 2025, it brings significant visitation and sales tax to the city. Echo Lake, the Idaho Springs Reservoir, Georgetown Lake, and local creeks and streams also provide recreational opportunities, including camping, fishing, paddleboarding, and other water-based activities. However, increasing recreational use also brings threats to water quality that must be properly managed.

Policies to Protect and Conserve Water in Idaho Springs

Source Water Protection Plan

In 2016, the City of Idaho Springs partnered with the Colorado Rural Water Association (CRWA) in the development of a Source Water Protection Plan. It is founded on the concept that informed citizens, equipped with fundamental knowledge about their drinking water source and the threats to it, will be the most effective advocates for protecting this valuable resource. The Plan identifies a water protection area, lists potential contaminant sources, and outlines best management practices (BMPs) to decrease risks to the water source. Most likely potential contaminant sources include wildfire, runoff and spills on roads, abandoned mines, septic failure and development.

Water Metering

Every licensed premises shall be required to have a water meter of a size, type and quality approved by the city to be read for billing purposes. Such meter shall be owned by the city and installed at the expense of the customer. The city manages and maintains all water meters to ensure that they are functioning properly. The requirement for water meters ensures that the city has accurate data and information about the amount of municipal water used.

Water Conservation and Restriction Measures

There are city regulations in Chapter 12 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code that would allow the City Council to adopt, amend, impose and suspend water conservation and curtailment orders and other rules and regulations concerning the delivery and use of potable water within the city.

In 2026, the city adopted a resolution adopting Phase One water use restrictions and guidelines. These guidelines are intended to address drought conditions with a goal of remaining responsible stewards of the city's water resources. Guidelines to date have been voluntary in nature, though in the future mandatory restrictions may be required. Restriction measures could pertain to many things, including grass watering; irrigation of trees, shrubs, vegetables, and other plants; vehicle washing; and other water uses.

Plant Investment Fees

The city imposes a plant investment fee for the purposes of defraying the costs of furnishing capital improvements and treatment capacity for the city water and wastewater systems that is required to be paid at the time application for a new license is made, or at such time as an increase in the EQR value for the premises is determined. The plant investment fee is in addition to any and all other fees and charges associated with the installation of a water service. Rates are set by the Municipal Code.

WATER SUPPLY OBJECTIVES AND CONSERVATION POLICIES

Objective: Protect, preserve, and conserve the city's surface water and groundwater resources.

- a. The city will continue to actively participate with the Upper Clear Creek Watershed Association, and the Clear Creek Watershed Foundation.
- b. The city will develop an education and information campaign to help the public to reduce point-source pollution and pollution from stormwater runoff.
- c. The city will review the recommendations of the Idaho Springs Source Water Protection Plan and consider action to implement recommendations. These include establishing procedures regarding spills, updating floodplain regulations, and providing maps of the source water protection area to adjacent municipalities with requests for notification of development activities occurring within this area.
- d. The city will develop best management practices (BMP) manuals for water and groundwater management and will pursue inclusion of critical BMPs into the Municipal Code over the next three years.
- e. In the next five years, the city will update the city's water and sewer line CIP rating assessment to maintain an accurate and up-to-date list of necessary infrastructure improvements around the city.
- f. The city will continue to work with CDOT to limit and mitigate water quality impacts from Interstate 70.

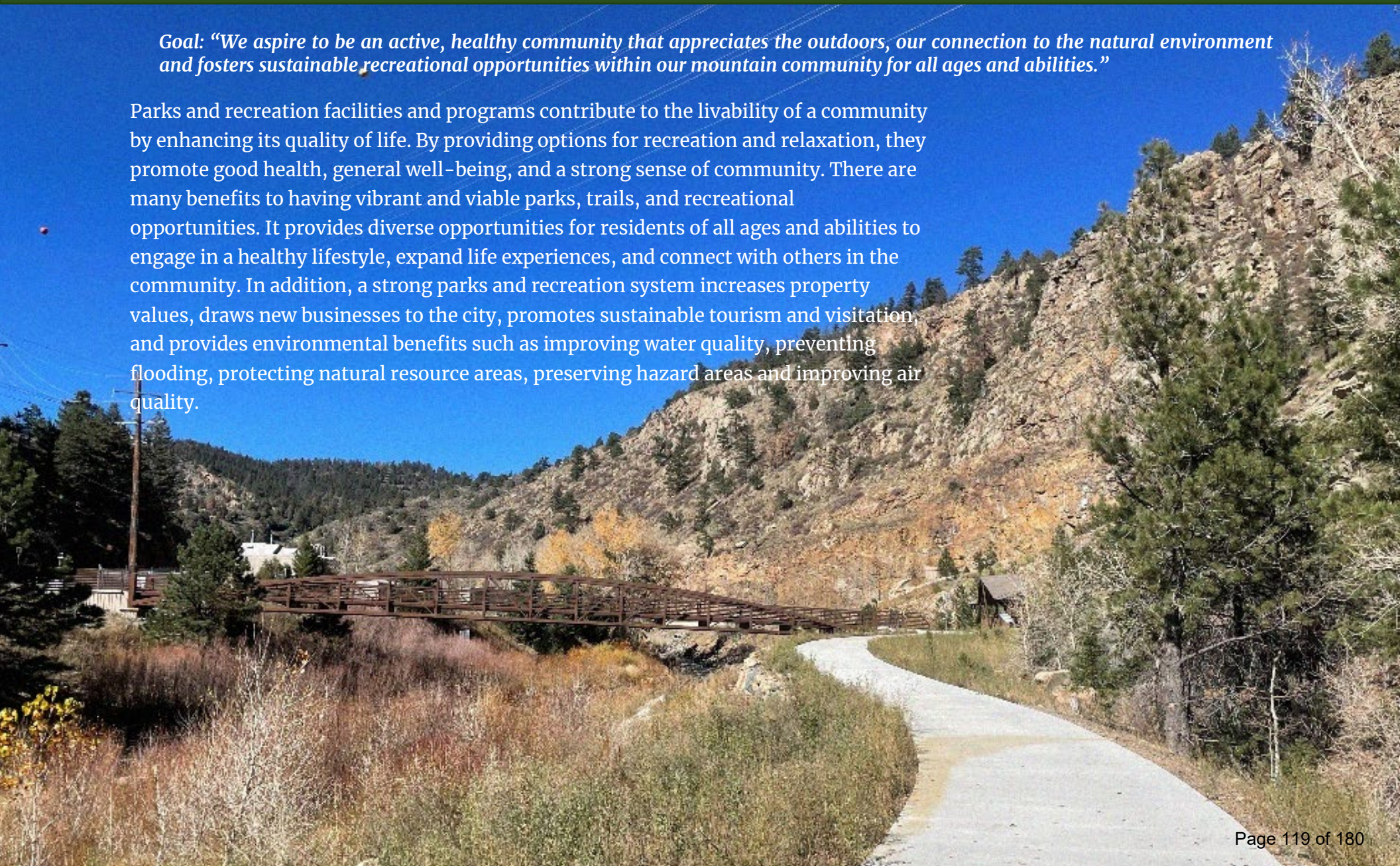
Objective: Implement water efficiency planning in the city to ensure that current Idaho Springs water rights and capacities can continue to support current and future developments.

- a. The city will continue to develop and implement drought restrictions to create a set of conditions under which water restrictions will be required. This is a high priority goal for the first-year post-adoption to build upon existing Phase One voluntary strategies to reduce water use.
- b. The city will work with the City Council to consider updates to the city's water restriction ordinance that can be considered to reduce per capita demand for water through irrigation limitations, low water landscaping requirements, and other factors that can reduce water use.
- c. The city will begin work on a water efficiency plan to assess the ways that the city, businesses, and residents can reduce water demand through infrastructure investments (low flow / high efficiency appliances, demand management, etc.).
- d. In concert with the above strategies, the city will put together a factsheet/guide that helps inform water users on voluntary measures that can help reduce water demand and improve efficiency within the city's system.
- e. The city will update current landscaping standards to consider xeriscaping or low water design

CHAPTER 11: 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



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".

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 RESOURCES

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 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile) shares Riverside Drive in the vicinity of the Argo Mill, with the rest being dedicated trail. There is an approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ 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.

The Clear Creek Trail will eventually connect Idaho Springs to Golden and Denver to the East and Loveland Ski Area to the West via a 65-mile multiuse recreational path.



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.



The Clear Creek Trail runs through Courtney Ryley Cooper Park, connecting the park with other parts of Idaho Springs.

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. 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 for users of all ages, abilities, and interests. Whether hiking or biking, VCMP is intended to be a welcoming place in the community for outdoor recreation.



VCMP has established itself as a key asset for Front Range mountain bikers. Hikers, trail runners, dog walkers, and other users also use the park regularly, making it a true multi-use recreation area.



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. Phase 2 projects, including the tennis/pickleball courts and playground, will be underway shortly, allowing the city and CCMRD to complete the project to fulfill the park's substantial potential for local recreation and programming.



Credit: Chris Koeberl



Credit: THK



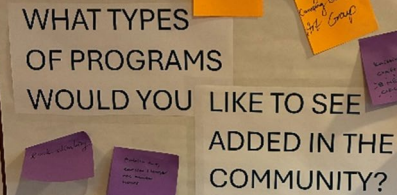
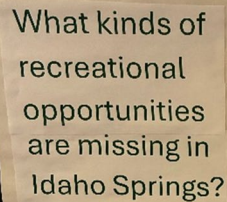
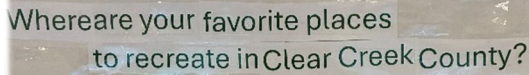
THE CLEAR CREEK METROPOLITAN RECREATION DISTRICT

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.





Over 100 people attended a joint open house hosted by the city and the CCMRD, providing feedback on a variety of topics surrounding parks, recreation, open space, and trails. Overall, responses were positive, indicating that Idaho Springs already has a strong mix of recreation options in the city.

Residents responded to questions about their favorite places to recreate in the community and elsewhere, what opportunities or facilities are missing in town, and what types of improvements would improve upon existing offerings.

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. The city will 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. The city will work to identify opportunities to create smaller public open spaces, such as neighborhood parks, plazas, pocket parks, courtyards and “parklets.”
- d. Wayfinding signage will be improved to direct people to the city’s recreational facilities to make it easier for users to access the city’s resources.
- e. The city will 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. The city will focus on the creation of a connected “greenbelt” trail around the city that connects the city’s various open space, recreation, and park areas to create a city-wide trail network for hiking and walking.

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

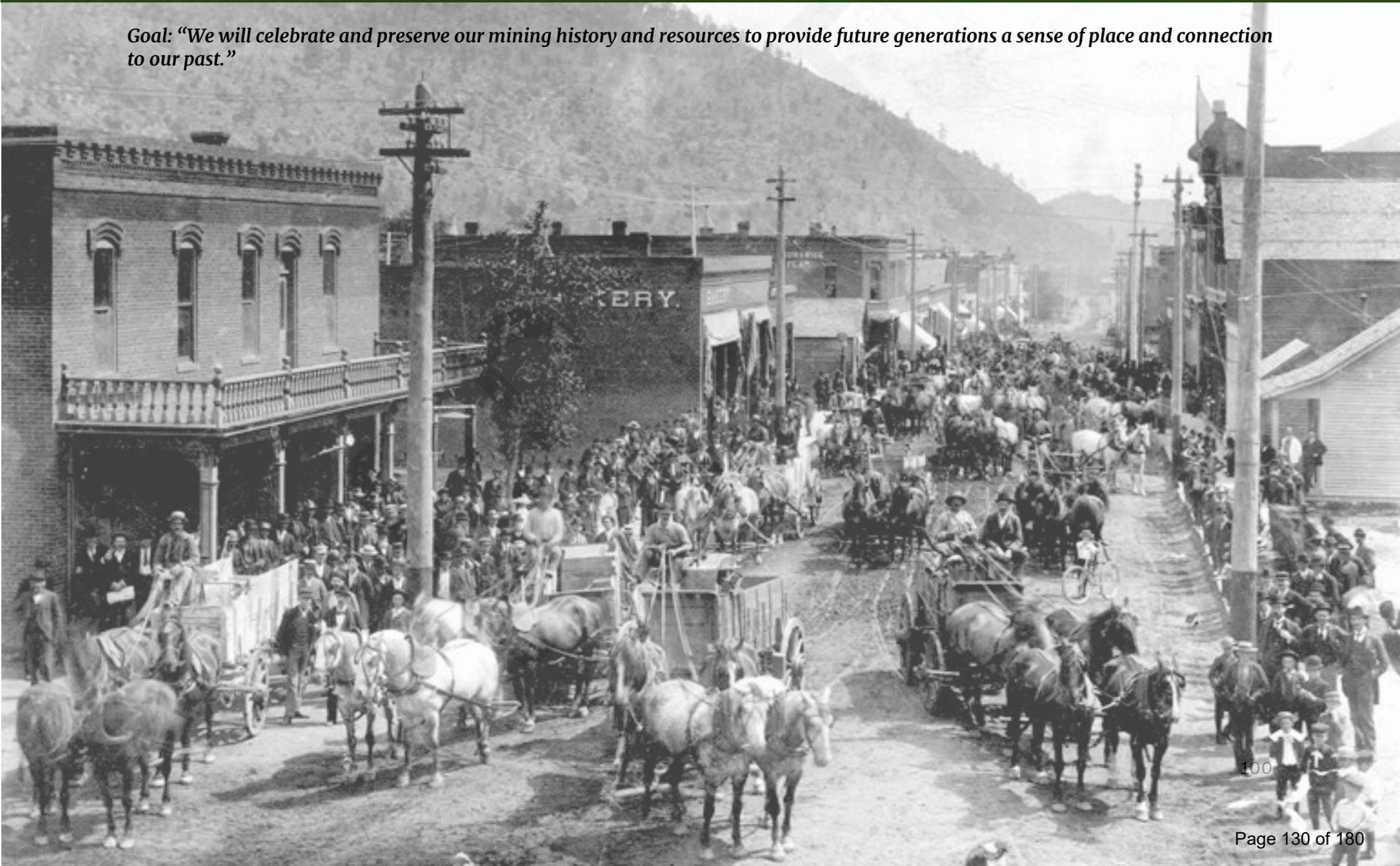
- a. The city will analyze the development of a City Park on the City-owned property in the Pine Slope Subdivision Area, near the existing water tank.
- b. The city will work with the local rafting community on improved rafting infrastructure to improve the recreational experience for users and mitigate impacts on traffic in parks and on local streets adjacent to the access points.
- c. The city will 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.
- d. The city will prioritize accessibility when considering park improvements to ensure that public spaces are available and accessible for all residents and visitors to Idaho Springs.
- e. The city will 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.
- f. The city will optimize underused resources within the city, including the horseshoe pits, Courtney-Ryley-Cooper Park, and the Clear Creek Trail.

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

- a. The city will explore opportunities to connect future developments and recreational facilities to the trail.
- b. The city will 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. The city will 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. The city will 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. The city will improve creek access for recreational users and improve access for rafting companies through improved creek put-ins and other creekside infrastructure.

CHAPTER 12: HISTORIC RESOURCES

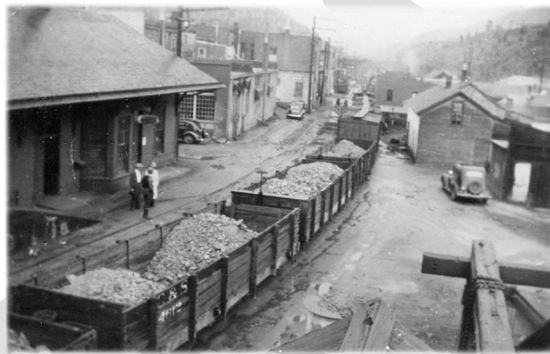
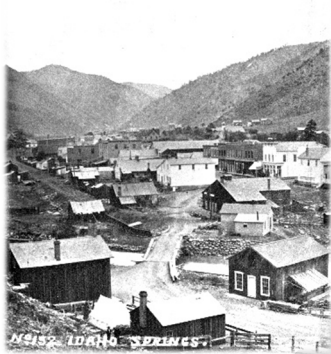
Goal: "We will celebrate and preserve our mining history and resources to provide future generations a sense of place and connection to our past."



The Idaho Springs Historic District is one of the primary attractions for tourists visiting the city. The eclectic collection of historic buildings and rich mining history is a significant contributor to Idaho Springs' sense of place and is highly valued by its residents. Idaho Springs contains an array of Victorian era homes and commercial buildings. Many of the structures within the city exceed 100 years in age.

History Colorado describes Historic Preservation as “the process of identifying, protecting, enhancing, and interpreting buildings, structures, sites, objects, districts and landscapes of historic and cultural significance.” History Colorado notes that historic preservation is important because it helps define our communities, and the resources of where we live, work and play. When historic buildings and neighborhoods are torn down or allowed to deteriorate, parts of our past disappear forever.

Because the city has so many intact historic structures, Idaho Springs has largely maintained its historic Victorian character. This attracts visitors to the city through a thriving heritage tourism industry, maintains attractive residential neighborhoods, and ensures that a connection to the region's history is maintained.



Historic Preservation is an important focus for the city to attract new developments while maintaining community character.



HERITAGE TOURISM

Promoting historic preservation can pay off for a community by attracting heritage tourism and visitation. Idaho Springs already sees tens of thousands of visitors to the National Register of Historic Places designated Miner Street downtown commercial district, largely because of the city's intact historic core. Colorado Preservation Inc. in 2015 indicated that studies have shown that every \$1 million spent on historic preservation in Colorado leads to \$1.03 million in additional spending, 14 new jobs, and \$636,700 in increased household incomes across the state. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present." It has been estimated that as many as 75 percent of US tourists have participated in some sort of heritage tourism activity in any given year. Colorado Preservation Inc. has estimated approximately 95.4 million visitors to the state as of 2024. These visitors contributed approximately \$28.5 billion to the state's economy, supporting approximately 188,210 jobs. This has supported an increase in state and local tax revenue to \$1.9 billion in 2024. A 2021 study funded through the History Colorado State Historical Fund found that heritage tourism accounts for approximately \$10.5 billion in spending in Colorado annually. Archaeology and history-related tourism supported 79,000 jobs, as of 2019.

Historic preservation can also pay off for property owners by helping fund rehabilitation and restoration work, ensuring that properties maintain their value. Designated sites can qualify for tax credits, grants, and other funding sources through the state and federal governments. The city has seen many successful rehabilitation projects funded by the State Historic Fund, including city-owned projects (Carnegie Library, Hose House No. 2, powder house) and privately held buildings (1402 Miner Street, Indian Hot Springs, etc.).

Every \$1 million spent on historic preservation in Colorado leads to \$1.03 million in additional spending, 14 new jobs, and \$636,700 in increased household incomes across the state.

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND SECTION 106 REVIEW

In the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Congress created a program to preserve and restore the United States' historic and cultural resources. One result of this program is the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Listing in the National Register can qualify select properties for federal funding, tax credits and grant funding.

A result of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is the requirement for Section 106 review, which requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of any federally funded projects. When a federal or federally - funded project is proposed, a survey to establish the "Area of Potential Effects" (APEs) is required. If historic properties in the APE could be potentially affected, Section 106 requires the federal agency to explore possible ways to eliminate or mitigate the adverse effect.

In addition to Section 106 review, in 1974, the State of Colorado adopted a statute to further define the authority of state and local governments in making planning decisions for matters of statewide interest (such as federally funded projects). These powers are commonly referred to as "1041 Powers or "Matters of Statewide Interest." The regulations allow local governments to designate 1041 areas and activities of state interest and grants them the ability to approve or deny projects within these areas through a public hearing process. In 2006, the City of Idaho Springs designated the City as a 1041 Area and approved regulations regarding review procedure, criteria and permitting process for any statewide interest and activities projects within this area. This includes the effects a proposed project may have on historic resources.

As part of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, Congress created state historic preservation offices to encourage preservation. These offices are funded through the National Park Service. In Colorado, it is History Colorado's Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation which assumes this role. Governments that participate and meet minimum criteria for historic preservation can become Certified Local Governments (CLGs). Requirements for CLGs include local preservation ordinances, establishment of a historic preservation commission, quarterly meetings, and a survey (inventory) of historic properties that is no more than 10 years old. CLGs that have state registered resources can receive benefits such as technical expertise, tax credits and grant funding for improvements or restorations for these resources.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN IDAHO SPRINGS

The Historic Preservation and Review Commission (HPRC) has the authority to review applications for building permits and demolition permits within the Historic Preservation District established in Chapter 22 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC) and at other established designated sites, to issue certificates of appropriateness (COAs), and to grant exemptions from requirements in Chapter 19 of the ISMC concerning buildings and building regulations.

Chapter 22 of the ISMC was adopted by ordinance to:

- Foster civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past and promote the use of the Historic District and other designated sites for the education and pleasure of the City's citizens.
- Protect the unique scenic and historic atmosphere and character of the City and protect the architectural, cultural and aesthetic heritage of the City.
- Strengthen the City's economy by protecting and enhancing the City's attractions for visitors.
- Preserve and protect the continued existence of historic structures and sites within the Historic District and other designated sites.
- Draw a reasonable balance between the desires of property owners and the preservation of the City's heritage, while avoiding the imposition of an unreasonable economic hardship.
- Prevent the use of materials or design in the repair, construction, reconstruction or remodeling of structures which:
- Adversely affect the desirability of the district or other designated site for business and residential purposes; or
- Are hazardous or incompatible with the historic character of the District or other designated site.

The city also has the Historic Sites and Facilities Board (HSFB), which was created to help manage and make recommendations about the maintenance, improvement, and promotion of the city-owned historic sites in and around Idaho Springs. The HSFB creates a work plan for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the city's facilities, and provides outreach and education opportunities for local residents, students, and visitors to help get the most out of the city's historic resources.

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS

DESIGN GUIDELINES for HISTORIC STRUCTURES



2024

In addition to the 57 structures within the Idaho Springs Historic Downtown Commercial District, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the city boasts the following registered historic sites:

National Register of Historic Places	
1	Argo Mill and Tunnel (2350 Riverside Drive)
2	Hose House #2 (NE Corner of 6 th Ave and Colorado Blvd)
3	Methodist Episcopal Church (1400 Colorado Blvd)
4	Miner Street Bridge (East of Miner Street and 17 th Ave)
5	Bryan Hose House (Illinois Street and Virginia Street)
State Registered Historic Properties	
1	Elks Lodge #607 (1600 Colorado Blvd)
2	Charlie Tayler Waterwheel (South of City Hall, opposite side of I-70)
Locally Registered Historic Properties	
1	Blue Ribbon Tunnel (Adjacent to Charlie Tayler Waterwheel Park)
2	Steve Canyon Statue (NE Corner of 23 rd Ave and Colorado Blvd in CRC Park)
3	City Hall (1711 Miner Street)
4	Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church (1921 Virginia Street)
5	804 Colorado Blvd – private residence
6	1520 Virginia Street – private residence
7	Indian Hot Springs (320 Soda Creek Road)
8	Jackson Monument (320 Highway 103)
9	Zion Evangelical Church (1921 Virginia Street)
10	Idaho Springs Cemetery (Highway 103)
11	Idaho Springs Powder House (Corner of Soda Creek Road and Little Bear Creek Road)

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IDAHO SPRINGS

In 2004, the City entered into a partnership agreement with the Historical Society of Idaho Springs wherein the partners established joint ownership of several historic properties within the City. The City continues to work with the Historical Society, under the partnership agreement, to operate, maintain, and improve the various properties and to continue welcoming and retention efforts at the Heritage Museum and Visitor Center.

The Historical Society of Idaho Springs is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit membership organization that was established in 1964 and has maintained a long mutually beneficial partnership with the City of Idaho Springs. The establishment of the downtown national historic district was a major goal reached as it was listed on the National Register in 1984.

In addition to the Heritage Museum and Visitor Center, the Historical Society of Idaho Springs runs the Underhill Museum in downtown Idaho Springs.



Many of the preservation success stories seen around Idaho Springs today would not have been possible without the efforts of the Historical Society and its dedicated members.



HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective: Coordinate with local and regional stakeholders to ensure that historic preservation work in Idaho Springs is prioritized.

- a. The city will continue to work with the Historic Society of Idaho Springs and other entities to preserve, protect and improve the historic resources of the community.
- b. The city will coordinate with other governmental entities such as Clear Creek County, CDOT, EPA, FHWA so that the historic character of Idaho Springs is understood and accounted for in the design of public projects.

Objective: Continue to protect & preserve the historic resources of the Idaho Springs area, increasing the number of designated properties by at least 10% over the next 10 years.

- a. The city will evaluate additional historic areas and individual landmarks for potential designation by City Council. We will identify funding sources to undertake an update of existing historic resources survey data and prepare designation proposals.
- b. The city will engage property owners in the process of designating additional historic districts and landmarks.
- c. The city will establish and publish clear guidance for property owners and project developers in buffer areas surrounding historic districts and landmarks so that the historic qualities of Idaho Springs are enhanced rather than harmed by physical changes in the City.
- d. The city will work on the creation of materials that can assist property owners in assessing whether designation would be beneficial to them, including process guidelines, toolkits explaining tax credits, sample/template residential historic district documents, etc.
- e. The city will prioritize continued maintenance of city-owned sites and facilities, relying on the Historic Sites and Facilities Board to provide recommendations and expertise.

Objective: Promote the benefits of historic preservation through education and outreach.

- a. The city will identify and promote incentives for local property owners to assist with preservation efforts.
- b. The city will create educational materials for property owners and project developers which clearly explain the benefits and the process for obtaining tax credits and grants associated with renovation, preservation and upkeep of historic properties.
- c. With the Sites and Facilities Board as the lead, the city will work to promote increased visitation and activation of city-owned historic sites and facilities to highlight historic resources citywide through the creation of wayfinding, signage, and educational materials.

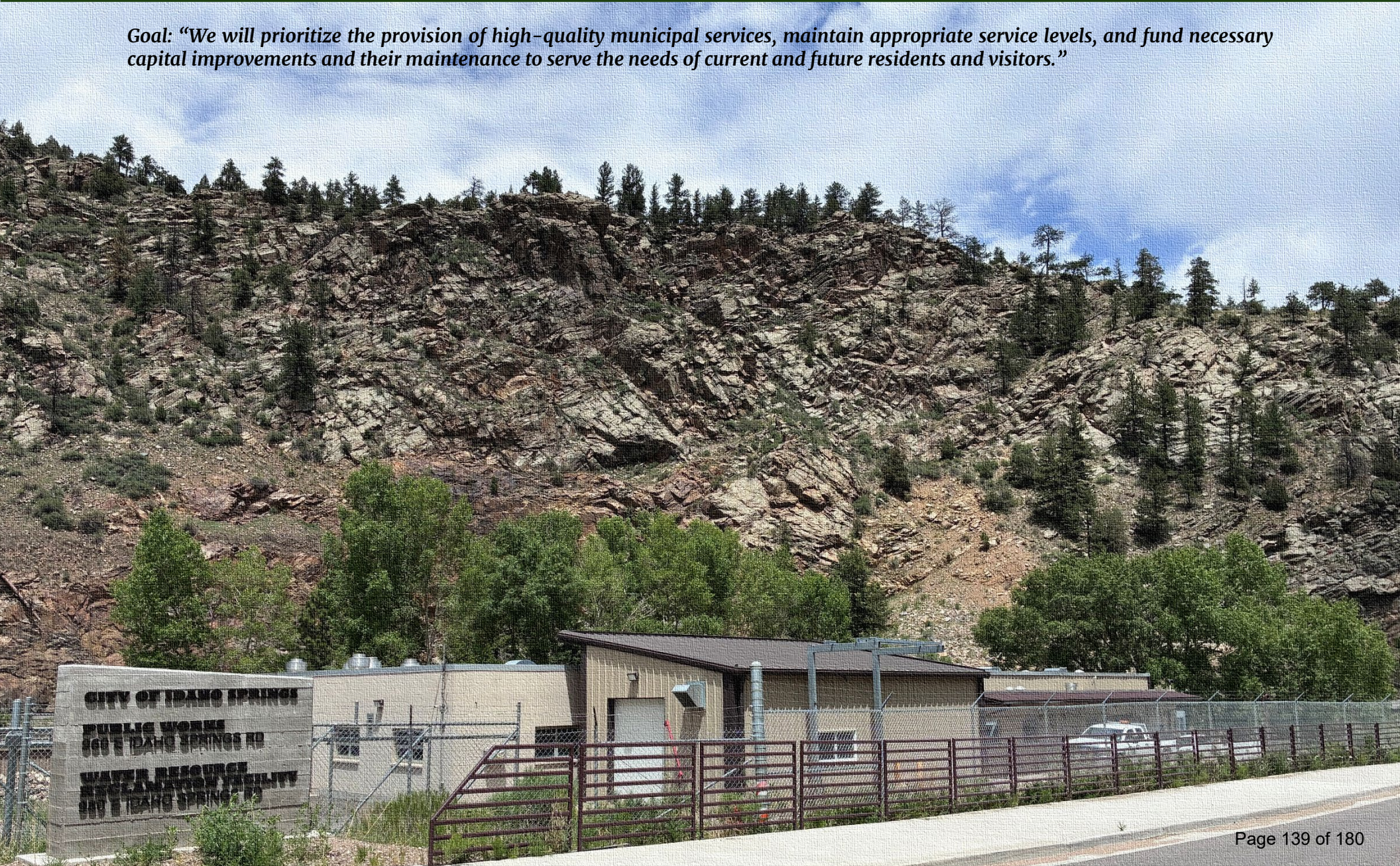
- d. The city will prepare point of contact materials for visitors to Idaho Springs highlighting the historic qualities of the city. Expand the content of interpretive materials beyond architectural history to include information on the individuals and groups of past residents who have left their marks on Idaho Springs.
- e. The city will provide educational opportunities to local property owners, realtors, mortgage companies, and other key stakeholders to ensure that current and future property owners are aware of and understand the restrictions – and opportunities – that come with owning a historic property.

Objective: Balance growth and economic development with historic preservation to ensure that future growth does not come at the expense of historic character, historic resources, or historic sites and facilities.

- a. The city will perform a code audit to determine regulations and requirements that can be strengthened to ensure that historic resources are considered as part of all development applications, including those in the two-block buffer area surrounding the historic downtown district.
- b. Development adjacent to historic districts should provide a compatible transition in scale, massing, site design, and architectural character while allowing contemporary architectural expression.
- c. Strengthening building permit and zoning processes to require property owners to consider the historic character of Idaho Springs will be prioritized.
- d. The city will work with the state and other potential entities to create an incentive program for architecturally compatible design and/or rehabilitation projects that take into account the city's Design Guidelines.
- e. The city will implement the eight (8) recommendations and priorities from the 2022 Historic Resources Survey Plan.

CHAPTER 13: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Goal: “We will prioritize the provision of high-quality municipal services, maintain appropriate service levels, and fund necessary capital improvements and their maintenance to serve the needs of current and future residents and visitors.”



The City of Idaho Springs is responsible for the following services:

- Government administration
- Public Works
- Water and Wastewater Operations
- Police Protection
- Municipal Court
- Building inspections
- Planning and Community Development

PUBLIC WORKS

The City of Idaho Springs' Public Works Department is located on the east side of the city on East Idaho Springs Road (CR 314). The Public Works Department provides snow removal, street sweeping, street repair, landscape maintenance, parks maintenance, and maintenance of utilities.

POLICE SERVICES

The Idaho Springs Police Department employs approximately 10 people, including sworn and support personnel. The existing facility is located in a former Colorado State Patrol Building located at Exit 241 of I-70. A new police station adjacent to the Miner Street downtown area is under construction, with occupancy anticipated in 2026 or 2027.

CITY / COUNTY COORDINATION

The city and the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District share responsibilities for various park and community recreation services. Emergency medical services and fire protection are provided by countywide service districts or authorities.

The Clear Creek County Health and Wellness Center is located within city limits, providing healthcare services to Idaho Springs residents and the wider Clear Creek County community.

Clear Creek County operates a transfer station on Soda Creek Road approximately 1.5 mile south of I-70. Services provided include trash drop off and recycling, including electronics recycling. Xcel Energy provides electric and gas services to the city of Idaho Springs. Solid waste collection is performed by private contractors or by individual homeowners.

WATER SYSTEM

The City obtains raw water from Chicago Creek, a tributary of Clear Creek, with additional water rights in Soda Creek. The water treatment plant is located about four miles upstream on Chicago Creek with the water storage tank located west of Pine Slope Road at approximately 7,770 feet in elevation.

Plant capacities and capabilities have been upgraded and are adequate to address current needs, with normal operational and maintenance issues to be expected. The capacity of the water treatment plant is 1.3 million gallons per day, with an annual

average consumption of approximately 375,000 gallons per day. As of 2025, the City has approximately 1,000 service connections remaining. Water supply will not be a constraint to development for the foreseeable future. Water rights owned by the City include both direct and storage rights, to meet any reasonable growth forecasts.

ROADWAY SYSTEM

The City of Idaho Springs maintains approximately 14 miles of streets across the city. The city also maintains approximately 10 miles of sidewalks within city limits. Providing accessible options for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles is important for the continued success of the city, ensuring that all visitors and residents can safely access necessary services across the city.

SCHOOLS

The City's residents are served by a public elementary school located in Idaho Springs and by a combined middle and high school located on Floyd Hill. Both schools are operated by the Clear Creek School District. These schools have capacity to serve increased enrollment. The city supports the District's efforts to maintain and improve programs at the three schools serving city residents. Substantial population growth and enrollment increases can occur without creating large capital investment needs. More importantly, population and enrollment increases are essential to maintaining the long-term viability of the school district.

METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICTS AND OTHER SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Special districts are permitted in Colorado through the state's Special Districts Act that facilitates the organization of several types of districts, including ambulance, fire protection, health services, metropolitan, parks and recreation, water, sanitation water, and water and sanitation districts. Within Idaho Springs, there are a few special districts that operate, including the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District, the Chicago Creek Sanitation District, the Clear Creek County Library District, the Clear Creek RE-1 School District, the Clear Creek Fire Authority, the Mighty Argo Metropolitan District #1, #2, and #3, and the Soda Creek Highlands Metropolitan District #1 and #2. These districts are meant to accomplish many things in the community outside of the local governments' responsibilities.

A metropolitan district (metro district) is a type of special district similar to a school, fire or water district. Developers establish them to finance the infrastructure necessary to support a new subdivision. By forming a governmental entity separate from the city, the developer (through the metro district) can obtain more favorable bonds guaranteed by future tax revenue to pay for things like roads, sewer lines, drainage facilities, and similar services necessary to support new development.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The city does not have a robust emergency or crisis management program. Wildfire protection is a critical concern and ensuring that public facilities are resilient against wildfire is a priority moving forward. The 2026 Clear Creek County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2025) seeks to identify strategic investments across the County to mitigate risk and promote community preparedness. The multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2022).

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES

Objective: Provide an effective and balanced system of community facilities, services and utilities to meet the current and future needs of the community and all its citizens.

- a. The city will evaluate existing services that determine areas that have the capacity for future development and continue to upgrade public infrastructure systems as needed to allow redevelopment in areas of the city that currently suffer from a lack of adequate infrastructure.
- b. The city will consider regulations that encourage renewal energy such as hydroelectric power on Chicago Creek, solar panels on city-owned properties, and wind power on hilltops.
- c. To assess the future potential for annexations and developments outside the city's historic core, the city will work with Xcel Energy to evaluate utility line service extensions in terms of long-term costs including maintenance and operations.
- d. The city will monitor water and wastewater enterprise funds to ensure adequate revenues are generated to address debt service, operational and maintenance expenses.
- e. The city will work to finish paving all city-maintained streets and roads to create a uniform street system with similar maintenance needs.
- f. The city will conduct an updated Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to assess the current condition of city streets, water and sewer lines, and other utility infrastructure.
- g. The city will assess the city's street and sidewalk system to determine compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidance and best practices.
- h. The city will work with Clear Creek County, other local municipalities, and non-profit partners to increase accessibility to recycling and composting in the community.

Objective: Locate and design new public facilities and utilities to decrease cost, increase efficiency and reduce impacts on the surrounding community.

- a. The city will construct utilities and communication equipment to minimize visual obtrusiveness by utilizing stealth technology, coloring equipment, locating away from residential areas, and/or screening to blend with the surroundings.
- b. The city will coordinate with the County, Special Districts and other quasi-governmental agencies in relocation, siting and possible co-location of public facilities such as the County bus maintenance facility, the police department and public works buildings and combination of the Clear Creek Fire and EMS Stations.

Objective: Consider the role that special districts play in providing services and infrastructure necessary for future growth, development, and programming within City Limits.

- a. The city will work with local special districts to ensure that both city and district goals are met, with a goal of furthering partnerships in a way that improves the delivery of services from both parties.
- b. The city will consider regulations and policies regarding metropolitan districts to ensure that necessary infrastructure associated with new developments does not cause an undue financial burden on existing residents outside the development's boundaries or for future residents of said developments.

Objective: Improve the city's resiliency through crisis and emergency management planning.

- a. The city will work with the other jurisdictions of Clear Creek County, the Clear Creek Fire Authority, Clear Creek EMS, and other stakeholders to implement the strategies from the 2022 Hazard Mitigation Plan and 2025 Clear Creek County Community Wildfire Protection Plan to improve the city's resilience against various hazards.
- b. The city will provide public outreach of local hazards to educate local residents and homeowners on ways to mitigate against hazards, promoting specific actions owners can take to reduce the impact of a natural disaster.

CHAPTER 14: STRATEGIC GROWTH

Goal: "We will encourage new developments in Idaho Springs that are high-quality, efficient, and take advantage of existing infrastructure to avoid sprawl into open space areas and promote the preservation of both the natural and built environment to protect the quality of life of the city's residents."



What is Strategic Growth?

This element focuses on strategic growth within the community, with a focus on promoting infill development, conserving open space, and supporting efficient infrastructure use. The amount of available land open to development in Idaho Springs is finite and development opportunities are limited. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to encourage development that matches the city's goals, objectives, and vision. This element seeks to lay out how that can be most effectively accomplished.

The strategic growth element is a state mandated section of the Comprehensive Plan, required as part of Senate Bill SB24-174. SB24-174 created a requirement for a strategic growth element to discourage sprawl and promote the development or redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels in urban areas to address the demonstrated housing needs of the region and mitigate the need for extension of infrastructure and public services to develop natural and agricultural lands for residential use.

The State of Colorado's Division of Local Affairs (DOLA) defines strategic growth as:

A fiscally and environmentally sustainable approach to land use planning, housing, community well-being, and infrastructure that promotes the development or redevelopment of vacant and underutilized infill parcels, and mitigates the need for extensions of infrastructure and public services into natural and agricultural lands.

The city commits to updating this regularly as needs, infrastructure, and priorities change. At minimum, the city commits to reviewing and updating this element every five years to align with the statutory update timeline but will address changes more frequently if needed.

Benefits of Strategic Growth

This Strategic Growth Element connects with various other elements of this Plan. This element seeks to identify areas suitable for development to reduce strain on the city's water supply – a goal of the Water Supply Element. The element seeks to minimize the need for additional infrastructure – a goal of the Plan's Public Facilities and Services Element. The Environmental Element is addressed through the promotion of infill development within the city's existing built environment and pushing development away from open space and other undeveloped areas. Working in concert with the other elements of this Plan, a plan that seeks to promote strategic, sustainable growth ensures that other goals and objectives in this Plan are not sacrificed for the sake of new development. Focusing on land that is already within city limits and near existing infrastructure ensures that the financial impacts of development are minimized and mitigated as much as possible.

Strategic Growth and Idaho Springs Guiding Principles

The Strategic Growth Element touches on all four of the city's guiding principles, focusing on building upon Idaho Springs as a historic, connected, healthy, and welcoming community. It strengthens the city's status as a historic community by seeking to situate development in places that are appropriate for new development and considering the need to preserve historic character and balances that against the need for growth. It strengthens the city's status as a connected community by ensuring that new growth needs to connect development to existing infrastructure, and goods and services. It strengthens the city's status as a healthy community by prioritizing developments that allow for healthy lifestyle choices. And it strengthens the city's status as a welcoming community by identifying areas for future growth that will allow new residents and visitors to enjoy the city and become part of the community.

Strategic Growth Report

The State's Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) published the state's Strategic Growth Report in October 2025. This report details policy recommendations to encourage fiscally and environmentally sustainable growth; an analysis of land use scenarios of future growth; and consideration of different regions and communities and the context in which they are working. Strategic growth can be described as a set of integrated policies, initiatives, and principles that typically include:

1. **Smart Land Use & Urban Planning:** Encouraging mixed-use developments, infill, and neighborhood/transit-oriented growth can reduce conversion of agricultural land and natural areas into urban uses.
2. **Infrastructure & Transportation Improvements:** Expanding and improving public transit, road networks, water and wastewater systems, and stormwater management to support population and economic growth in a manner that minimizes service extensions and reduces long-term costs.
3. **Water Resource Management:** Developing strategies that recognize limited water supplies, ensure adequate water supplies are available to support development, and encourage water conservation.

4. **Affordable Housing & Livability:** Promoting housing policies that provide affordable living options, reduce other household costs including transportation and utilities, and support housing production while maintaining Colorado's high quality of life.
5. **Public Services:** Providing adequate and cost-effective fire protection and suppression, law enforcement, public health, education, recreation, environmental protection, stormwater management, wastewater management, public transportation, public infrastructure maintenance, water, social services, and other services traditionally provided by the government.
6. **Mitigating Development in Hazardous Areas:** Adopting strategies that reduce or mitigate wildfire risks, risks from other natural hazards, and promote climate resilience to ensure long-term sustainability.
7. **Preserving Natural Areas:** Protecting natural landscapes both within and outside of urban areas that are critical to biodiversity, climate resilience, and community well-being; recognizing the ecological and social value of open space and natural areas that exist within cities and provide essential ecosystem services such as flood control, water filtration, and higher quality of life.
8. **Economic Vitality:** Recognizing that fiscally and environmentally sustainable growth are important to the long-term economic vitality of Colorado.
9. **Regional Collaboration:** Strategic growth can only succeed through collaboration between state and local governments, private sector investments, and public policy efforts to create a balanced and thriving future for residents.

According to the report, strategic growth can allow for more financially efficient infrastructure investment; protect and connect vital landscapes and resources; improve regional coordination; enhance climate and environmental outcomes; and provide greater predictability for developers and residents. A concern is that poorly designed strategic growth policies could constrain housing supply, create more complex governance, cause capacity challenges for administrations, potentially impact economic development, and result in unequal impacts on certain residents in a community.

Growth Trends in Idaho Springs

The 2020 census put the city's population at 1,782 residents. This represents a slight increase from the previous census (approximately 3.5%), though not one that has had an impact on city infrastructure or service capacity. Notably, the city has maintained this approximate population for over 125 years. The 1900 census showed a high-water mark for the city's population at 2,502 residents. The low point was 20 years later when the population dropped to 1,192 residents in 1920. Since then, the population has fluctuated between approximately 1,500 and 2,000 residents.

While the population has remained relatively constant, economic development, sales tax revenues, and home prices have risen sharply. The fact that over 60% of Idaho Springs residents are considered housing burdened is tied to the fact **that the current average home value has increased substantially, from \$261,453 in 2017 to \$504,531 in 2025.** At the same time, growth in housing supply has been incredibly slow. The 119-unit Fieldhouse Apartments is a recent housing success, bringing new rental units dedicated to rental rates at 70–100% of area median income (AMI), but there will remain a need for affordability and more housing diversity for current and future residents.

Along with making it difficult for new residents and employees to move to the area, the lack of new housing supply and increase in housing costs has an impact on existing residents due to rising property taxes and construction and labor costs. Strategic growth strategies that attempt to solve this problem without taxing existing city infrastructure are critical to ensure that Idaho Springs remains an attractive place to live while allowing and promoting necessary growth in suitable areas.



Strategic Growth in Idaho Springs

As part of this element, the city analyzed a map of vacant and “development opportunity” sites that are underutilized based on the existing zoning designation for the property. These are properties that currently have a single-family home on-site but are zoned for commercial development or multifamily housing. This does not mean that a site is appropriate for higher density – it only means that the site is zoned to allow for more density than what presently exists.

What this analysis showed is that the city does not have a substantial amount of vacant land in the existing city boundaries. Most of the larger vacant sites available for development are in the Hidden Valley area of the city near I-70 Exit 243 and above Pine Slope Road on the previously approved Bristlecone Pines Subdivision (yet to be developed). While there are approximately 40 vacant properties within city limits (including those near Pine Slope or Hidden Valley), only eleven (11) of these vacant sites are half an acre or larger, with most of the remaining vacant parcels being under 3,000 square feet. Of these 11 sites, only two are located within half a mile of the Historic Downtown.

The total area of Idaho Springs, as of 2023, is 2.4 square miles or 1,536 acres. Of this land, approximately 445 acres are zoned for residential development. An additional 175 acres are zoned commercial but would allow multifamily housing as a by-right use. Most of the remaining land is zoned Park & Recreation. As of 2026, there are 1063 housing units in Idaho Springs.

The city’s Three Mile Area Plan contemplates development within three miles of the city’s current boundaries. There are some properties within this area that are adjacent to existing city infrastructure and could support additional density. This is largely along Highway 103 and along Stanley Road, though slopes in that area may limit redevelopment. Future annexations in the Floyd Hill area could be possible but would require significant water and sewer upgrades to the area.

Currently, the city has 99 acres of land deemed “opportunity sites” that are development opportunity areas where additional density could be achieved. The main areas of opportunity site land in the city are near the four I-70 exits adjacent to city boundaries (Exits 243 through 239). Smaller pockets of land exist in proximity to the downtown commercial district surrounding Miner Street. This area is largely single-family residential, but there is opportunity for redevelopment over time for small multifamily developments or commercial conversions.

Strategic Growth– Vacant and “Development Opportunities” Map

The areas that are purple and red are already adjacent to city infrastructure – paved street, water and wastewater facilities, etc. These are areas that are likely to be able to accommodate growth without taxing existing city facilities or requiring substantial investment from a developer or property owner. As they are largely within the city’s existing “urban” core, they could have impacts on existing residents and neighboring uses, which will need to be a consideration of any redevelopment project.

The areas in blue and pink might be suitable for redevelopment – they are zoned for additional density or are vacant – but do not currently have access to existing city infrastructure. Infrastructure investment would be needed to accommodate additional growth in these areas. These areas contain the largest amount of acreage in the city, so considering how to build that necessary infrastructure may be worthwhile in the long-term.

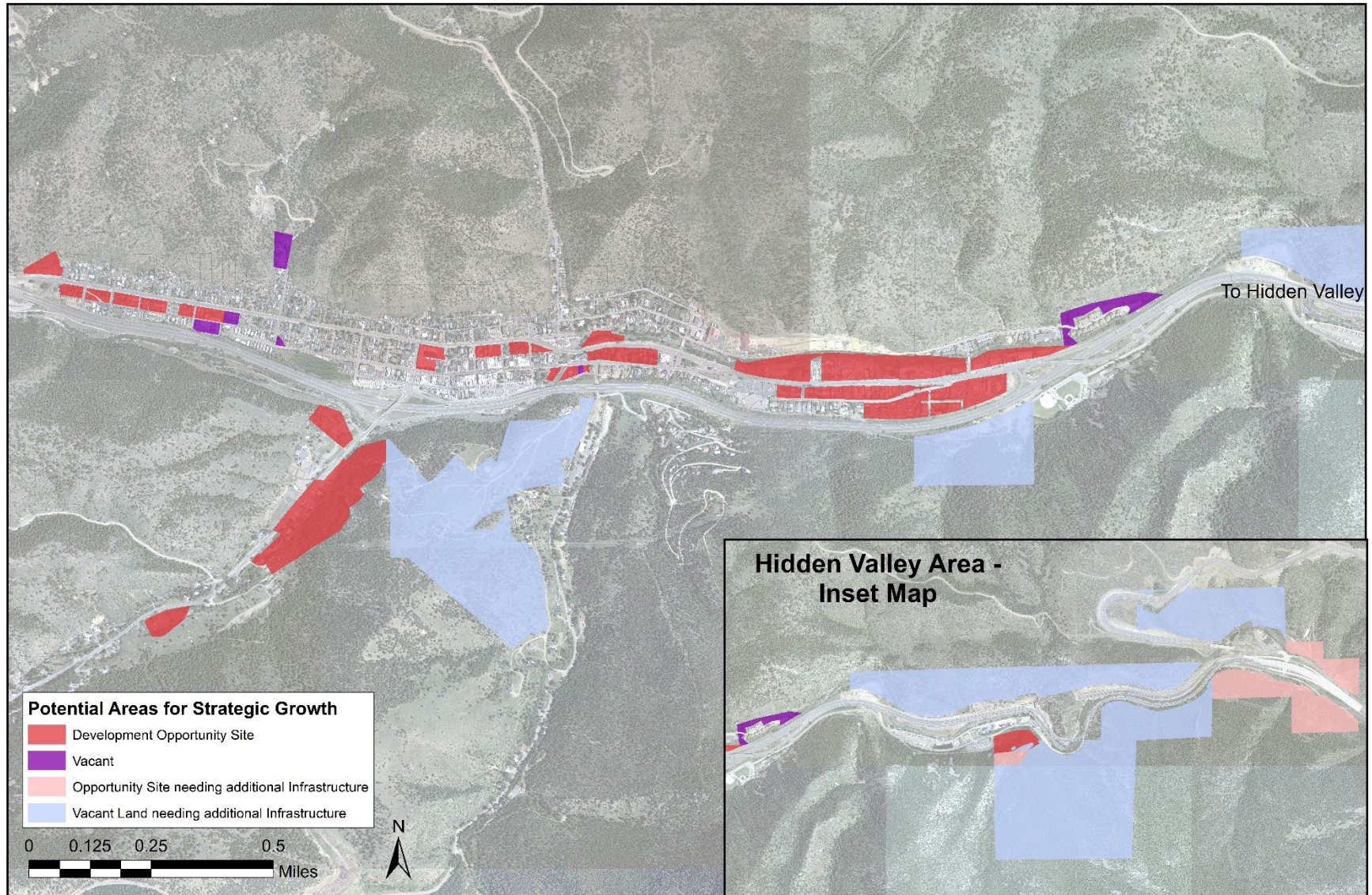
Of the properties that can be considered opportunity sites, context is important. A 5,000 square foot lot would not be able to accommodate a substantial increase in density because of the need for on-site parking, the city’s existing 35’ height limit, and required property line setbacks. This limits the redevelopment potential in areas within existing residential neighborhoods. Small increases in density could be feasible – redeveloping a single-family home as a duplex, for example – but major redevelopment would be difficult on these smaller lots.

Of existing vacant and underutilized lands, many would require additional infrastructure (water and sewer facilities, electrical lines, streets, etc.) to be suitable for development. This is possible but would require significant cost for infrastructure upgrades to those areas (in blue and pink on the map).

Another important consideration is the clear community desire to maintain character and charm within existing neighborhoods. The community does not want to see single-family homes redeveloped into multifamily housing if it takes away from neighborhood character. It is important that the city considers locations that can accommodate additional development or redevelopment without adversely impacting existing properties. Historic preservation becomes an important aspect to help shape growth strategically, since the city has many potentially historic residential homes in existing neighborhoods.

Given the high costs of construction, the city recognizes that development in areas that have adequate infrastructure and can support current and future demands is the priority for redevelopment and new developments within city limits and in the immediately surrounding Clear Creek County area.

Strategic Growth Map of Vacant and “Development Opportunity” Sites in Idaho Springs



Areas of Focus for Growth and Development

The community believes that there are opportunities for redevelopment and new growth, specifically around the I-70 interchanges in city limits. These include:

West Colorado Boulevard: the western portion of town, which has some redevelopment opportunities due to several blocks of commercial zoning adjacent to Colorado Boulevard. The area from the Exit 239 interchange to Fourth Avenue is zoned commercial, allowing for redevelopment of existing single-family homes into commercial use or multifamily housing. There are several businesses in this area, including an automotive repair shop, a dispensary, and an auto glass shop. Redevelopment in this area should be mindful of existing residential scale and massing, though this area could support redevelopment and has existing infrastructure.

Exit 240 Interchange: This is seen as an area of potential redevelopment near the downtown historic district. There are several lots near the interchange that could be redeveloped with an increase in density, including the United States Forest Service building just south of Exit 240 and other smaller sites currently occupied by local businesses or residences. Studies have shown this to be a potentially viable area for commercial or mixed-use development and water and sewer infrastructure already exists in the area.

Commercial Downtown: This area has small opportunities for redevelopment but most lots in the vicinity of the historic district are smaller than 5,000 square feet in area, making redevelopment at a large scale difficult. These are largely residential structures that could be redeveloped into small-scale commercial or mixed-use developments, though not at high densities. The major redevelopment opportunity in this area is the old Carlson Elementary school building, located at the gateway to the city's downtown commercial district. This redevelopment will have a large impact on the character of this area for years to come. The city is currently working on mobility improvements in this area, as well, including a mobility hub with CDOT and parking improvements.

East End: In 2018, the city created the East End Overlay District (EEOD) that encompasses the Colorado Boulevard and Miner Street corridors from the Miner Street bridge at Miner Street and Riverside Drive to the Exit 241 interchange. The purpose of the EEOD is to support continued revitalization of and reinvestment in the East End through targeted infill/redevelopment and adaptive reuse; enhance connectivity and promote a pedestrian-oriented environment along Colorado Boulevard and Miner Street, and within the East End generally; support a mix of locally-serving and tourism-related uses; increase the range of housing options available in the East End; and promote innovative, high-quality, sustainable development. The EEOD allows

for flexible development, including reduced setbacks and taller height limits. This is seen as the primary area to promote strategic growth within existing city limits.

Hidden Valley area (Exit 243 interchange): This is known as the gateway to the Central City Parkway, but it contains several potential development opportunities in Idaho Springs city limits. There are several vacant parcels and others that could be suitable for commercial or residential development. Infrastructure improvements would be necessary to redevelop this area.

Soda Creek Area: The primary opportunity for development in this area is the Upper Pine Slope area west of the existing single-family homes on Pine Slope Road. A single-family subdivision – Bristlecone Pines – was platted in the early 2000s but has not yet been developed. This development would require substantial infrastructure upgrades to bring water and sewer facilities, access roads, and other utilities to the area but has already gone through the subdivision process so may be developed in the future.

Lower Potential Areas: Community feedback was clear that existing residential neighborhoods should be protected from substantial redevelopment that would change community and neighborhood character. While some redevelopment is anticipated, these areas are areas that the community would like to see maintained so any redevelopment should occur naturally rather than through promotion by the city. Density increases would be appropriate in many residential areas, but existing land uses make the likelihood of redevelopment lower than other places in the city.

Areas outside city limits:

There are areas outside the city's current boundaries that might be appropriate for future development because of their proximity to existing city infrastructure and services. Key areas include:

- Highway 103 between Exit 240 and the Idaho Springs Cemetery
- Stanley Road west of Exit 239
- Floyd Hill (infrastructure investment would be needed)
- Soda Creek Road south of the hot springs

These areas are adjacent to Idaho Springs and have at least reasonable access to city infrastructure. Annexation into Idaho Springs or a rezoning at the County level would likely be necessary for any of these areas to be reasonably considered for increased density. Coordination with Clear Creek County will be necessary to assess feasibility of any areas outside city limits and the city believes that there are opportunities for cooperation and coordination.

Existing Policies to Promote Strategic Growth and Prevent Sprawl

Currently, Idaho Springs has several tools available that are meant to promote strategic growth.

Three Mile Area Plan:

Idaho Springs reviews and, if needed, updates its three-mile area plan annually, in accordance with state requirements. The Three Mile Area Plan provides direction concerning land use issues and infrastructure needs for lands within three miles of the current boundaries of the City. The plan identifies issues that should be addressed prior to any parcel of land being annexed but does not propose the annexation of any lands near the City. Annexation of any land into Idaho Springs remains an individual landowner decision.

This plan was overhauled with a new map in 2025, and analysis shows that much of the lands within three miles of the existing city boundaries are likely infeasible for future redevelopment due to the topography and geography of the region that would make it difficult and expensive to provide necessary infrastructure to the development. It is anticipated that major potential areas for new development are along the Highway 103 corridor, in the vicinity of Exit 243 (Hidden Valley), and west of the city along Stanley Road. There are water and sewer lines running along the Highway 103 corridor to the city's water treatment plant approximately four miles south of downtown Idaho Springs. This would allow for future annexations and development, though capacity could be an issue. The city also has a water line running west of the city along Stanley Road to Stanley Mine, approximately two miles west of Exit 239. The Exit 243 interchange does not currently have water or sewer, which would be a challenge to development in that area.

East End Overlay District:

In 2018, Idaho Springs adopted the East End Overlay District, which applies to areas within the East End Action Plan boundary that are zoned R-2, R-3, C-1, or C-2. Essentially, the East End Overlay District incorporates the entirety of the eastern end of Idaho Springs, from the 17th street bridge and eastward.

The District applies to projects that meet the following criteria:

- A. An infill project proposed for a vacant or substantially vacant lot within the East End Action Plan boundary.
- B. A redevelopment project proposed for a developed lot within the East End Action Plan boundary where more than fifty percent (50%) of the floor area of the existing structure would be demolished and a new structure or structures built.
- C. An addition or renovation project proposed within the East End Action Plan boundary where the total square footage of the proposed addition is greater than twenty percent (20%) of the total square footage of the existing principal structure.

- D. An addition or renovation project proposed within the East End Action Plan boundary where the cost of the improvements is greater than thirty percent (30%) of the assessed value of the existing improvements (as shown in tax records).
- E. The base zone districts within the East End Action Plan boundary shall continue to apply unless modified by the terms of this Chapter.

The purpose is to support continued revitalization of and reinvestment in the East End through targeted infill/redevelopment and adaptive reuse, enhance connectivity and promote a pedestrian-oriented environment along Colorado Boulevard and Miner Street, and within the East End generally, support a mix of locally-serving and tourism-related uses, increase the range of housing options available in the East End; and, promote innovative, high-quality, sustainable development. The District has the effect of encouraging redevelopment of existing properties on the east end of the city by allowing for taller buildings; smaller minimum lot areas and widths; reduced open space minimums; and reduced property line setbacks.

Downtown Master Plan:

The city's downtown master plan considers revitalization and redevelopment of the city's downtown historic district area surrounding Miner Street. The downtown master plan identifies a desire to increase the amount of housing in the downtown area of the city. There are 40-50 potential second-story dwelling units above ground floor commercial spaces that have yet to be fully realized. The downtown master plan also considers the potential for a shuttle service in the city, which would allow for off-site parking away from the downtown core. This could encourage redevelopment at higher densities away from the downtown core and allow parking areas in proximity to the downtown to be redeveloped to higher and better uses.

Water / Sewer and Other Utility Connection Requirements:

The Idaho Springs Municipal Code requires connection to the city's water and sewer system for any lot within the city. Unless exempted by the City Council for good cause and in conformity with applicable statutes and regulations, all improvements generating wastewater and all improvements requiring potable water shall be connected to the appropriate City system if City facilities are within one hundred (100) feet of the boundary of the parcel of property on which such improvements are located. While City Council could exempt a project from the requirement that they connect to the city's water and sewer systems, historically the city has only exempted small-scale developments. The cost of running new water and sewer lines to outlying areas away from the city is likely to reduce the likelihood that large-scale developments occur within city limits, ensuring that sprawling development patterns are mitigated.

STRATEGIC GROWTH ELEMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective: The city will increase density within City Limits by redeveloping underutilized and vacant properties that have the infrastructure and size necessary for redevelopment.

- a. Growth, when it occurs, should be prioritized first through infill and redevelopment.
- b. Existing infrastructure should be used before extending new infrastructure.
- c. Development should be concentrated in walkable areas.
- d. Infrastructure costs should be borne by growth, rather than paid for by existing residents or properties.
- e. Underutilized or vacant city-owned properties will be prioritized for redevelopment when not needed for a municipal purpose. Affordable workforce housing will be the top priority for these types of properties.
- f. The city will explore the development of an incentive program that encourages redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties already in city limits to encourage property owners and developers to consider projects that meet the city's goals for strategic growth.
- g. The city will continue to promote redevelopment of the East End Overlay District in accordance with Chapter 26 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code. If redevelopment is slow to progress, the city will further changes to the EEOD to encourage additional investment in this area.

Objective: Consider ways to discourage growth that does not meet the state's definition of strategic.

- a. The city will work to put together regulations and requirements that consider environmental constraints to growth, such as steep slopes, wetland or floodplain areas, or other environmentally sensitive conditions.
- b. The city will work with the Planning Commission and City Council to create a framework or guide that identifies appropriate site characteristics that are consistent with strategic growth to bring more clarity to developers and residents about the sorts of projects that meet the city's strategic growth goals.
- c. The city will promote infill development in areas that have already experienced infrastructure investment (roads, water and sewer infrastructure, etc.) and can handle additional capacity without needing infrastructure upgrades.
- d. The city will work with Clear Creek County to identify areas outside of existing city limits that could accommodate additional growth while meeting both City and County goals for development.
- e. The city will only consider development of undeveloped lands outside city limits where existing city infrastructure is already available or could be extended without substantial city costs.
- f. The city will consider new regulations related to metropolitan districts to ensure that any infrastructure required with future developments are properly funded to avoid future financial strain or responsibility on the city or its residents.
- g. In concert with the water supply element, the city will identify areas with suitable water and wastewater infrastructure and prioritize redevelopment in these areas.

- h. Future development outside the city's core that requires infrastructure investment will need to be funded by developers to avoid spending city resources on undeveloped or greenfield properties.
- i. The city will consider incentive programs for infill and redevelopment projects that are in areas that do not require additional infrastructure investment.

DRAFT

CHAPTER 15: FUTURE ANNEXATIONS

Colorado State Statute limits municipal annexations to no more than three miles beyond the current city boundaries in any given year, except under special circumstances. The legislature also requires that a municipality adopt an annexation master plan for the three-mile area (or Three Mile Plan, as they are commonly known) prior to the completion of any annexation. The Three Mile Plan is a document that guides municipalities about what and where to annex, and for the municipality to consider how annexation will impact existing city service levels. This plan should be updated at least once a year, which the city has committed to doing.

Objective: Develop, update and implement an annexation policy

- a. Update or review the Three Mile Plan annually.
- b. Incorporate open, public meetings early in the annexation process to identify and address issues of concern.
- c. Ensure that the analysis of any annexation considers the long-term costs and benefits of annexation.
- d. Support the annexation of developments that provide a net long-term benefit to the community.
- e. Ensure that all agreements and commitments between the City and applicants clearly identify the responsibilities and roles of each party.

IMPLEMENTATION

The process of implementing this Plan begins with its formal adoption and should continue as decisions are made in Idaho Springs during the life of the Plan. Development proposals should be measured against how they match the goals, objectives and strategies found in this document.

The policies listed in the Comprehensive Plan assume actions and programs that would be implemented by staff, contract consultants or appointed and elected officials. Much of the work involved in implementing a Comprehensive Plan will fall to staff and the Planning Commission as the new goals, objectives and strategies should be used as a benchmark to review proposals.

Land Use & Community Character

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Complete code audit for infill and redevelopment barriers	Community Development	2027	Audit completed
High	Adopt updated landscaping standards	Community Development	2027	Ordinance adopted
High	Develop downtown wayfinding system	Community Development / Public Works	2027-2028	Wayfinding signs installed
Medium	Establish public art plan	Community Development	2028	Public Art Plan adopted
Medium	Implement Miner Street Marketplace improvements	Public Works	2028-2030	Improvements completed
Long	Idaho Mall activation strategy	Community Development	2030+	Redevelopment projects initiated

Housing

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Prepare Housing Action Plan with regional partners	Community Development	2027	HAP adopted
High	Evaluate ADU incentive program	Community Development	2027	Ordinance amendments considered
High	Monitor STR compliance program	Community Development	Ongoing	Annual compliance report
Medium	Evaluate inclusionary housing updates	Community Development	2028	Code amendments considered
Medium	Develop NOAH preservation strategy	Community Development	2028-2029	Program established
Medium	Senior housing incentive package	Community Development	2028	Incentive package adopted
Long	Facilitate development of affordable senior housing	Community Development	Ongoing	Units developed

Transportation

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Participate in I-70 stakeholder process	City Administration	Ongoing	Attendance and comments submitted
High	Advance Exit 240 Mobility Hub	City Administration / CDOT	2027-2030	Project milestones achieved
High	Develop transit incentive program	Community Development	2027	Program launched

Medium	Circulator shuttle feasibility study	City Administration	2028	Study completed
Medium	Expand Roundabout service partnerships	City Administration	Ongoing	Ridership growth
Medium	Snowstang stop feasibility discussions	City Administration	2027-2029	Agreement reached
Long	Implement circulator shuttle service	City Administration	2030+	Service operational

Parking

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Evaluate parking requirement reductions downtown	Community Development	2027	Code amendments adopted
High	Identify satellite parking opportunities	Community Development	2027-2028	Sites identified
Medium	Continue downtown parking structure planning	City Administration	Ongoing	Funding secured
Long	Construct parking structure	City Administration	2030+	Structure completed

Economic Development

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Update Capital Improvements Plan	Public Works	2027	CIP adopted
High	Review regulations affecting home-based businesses	Community Development	2027	Code amendments adopted
High	Childcare needs assessment and partnership development	Community Development	2027-2028	Program established

Medium	Tourism economic impact study	Community Development	2028	Study completed
Medium	Available properties database	Community Development	2028	Database online
Long	Urban Renewal Area implementation (East End)	City Administration	Ongoing	Redevelopment activity

Environment & Resilience

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Develop dark sky lighting ordinance	Community Development	2027	Ordinance adopted
High	Participate in CRS Program	Public Works	2027-2029	CRS application submitted
High	Hazard mapping GIS database	Public Works	2028	Database completed
Medium	Noise mitigation strategy along I-70	Public Works	2028-2030	Plan completed
Medium	Wildlife-sensitive development regulations	Community Development	2029	Ordinance adopted
Ongoing	Defensible space education program	Fire Authority	Annual	Participation metrics

Water Supply

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Water supply self-assessment	Public Works	2028	Assessment completed
High	Update drought restriction framework	Public Works	2027	Updated ordinance adopted

High	Water efficiency plan	Public Works	2028-2029	Plan adopted
Medium	BMP Manual development	Public Works	2029	Manual completed
Ongoing	Watershed participation	Public Works	Annual	Participation maintained

Parks, Trails & Recreation

Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Recreation Master Plan	Parks / Community Development	2027-2028	Plan adopted
High	Social trail inventory	Parks	2028	Inventory completed
High	Trail wayfinding improvements	Parks	2028	Signs installed
Medium	Macy/Ruth Mill Park expansion study	Parks	2029	Study completed
Medium	Pine Slope park feasibility study	Parks	2029	Study completed
Medium	Clear Creek Trail amenity improvements	Parks	Ongoing	Amenities installed
Long	Citywide greenbelt trail network	Parks	2030+	Trail segments completed

Historic Preservation

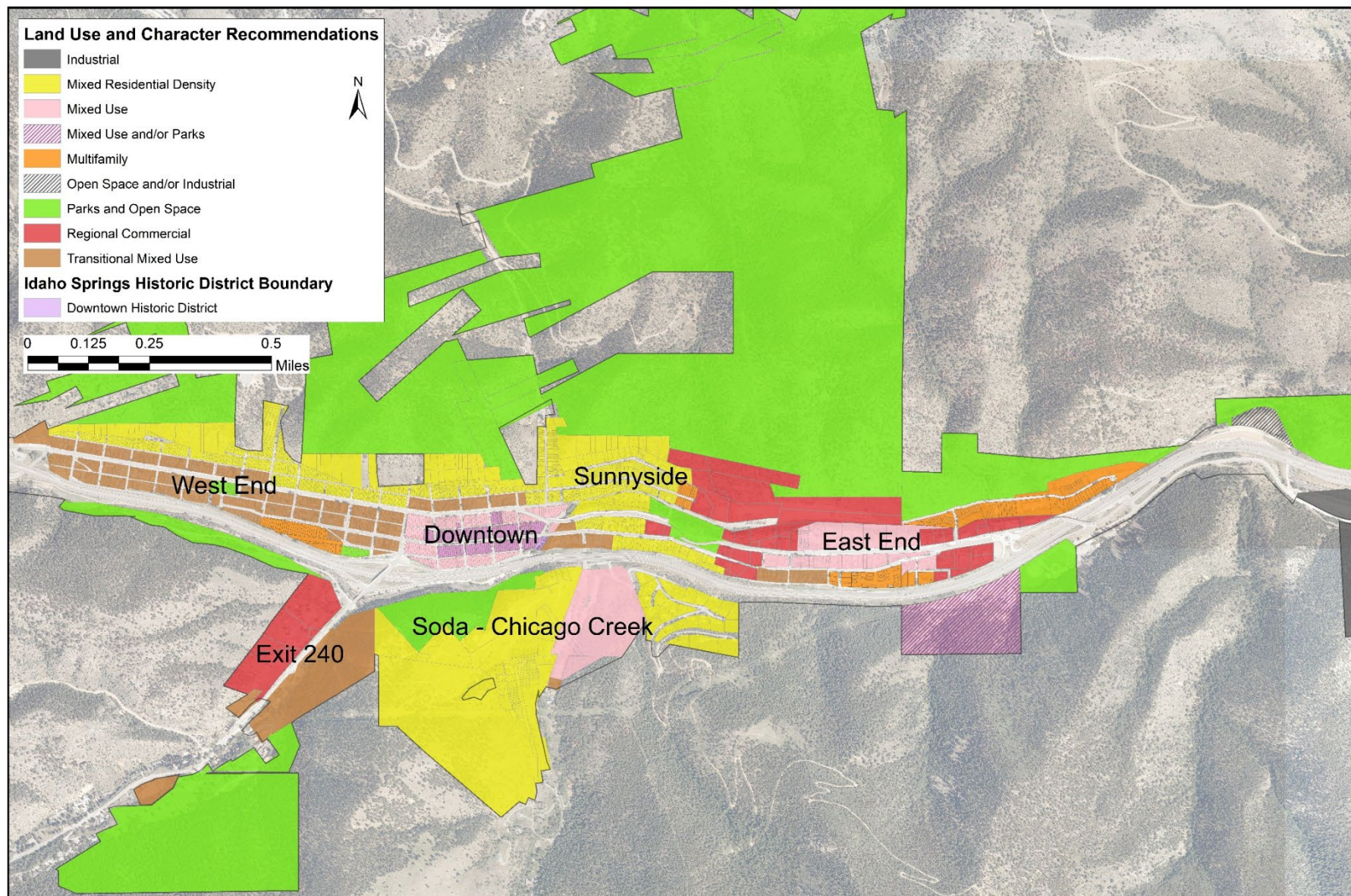
Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Historic preservation toolkit	Community Development / HPRC	2027	Toolkit published
High	Historic survey update funding strategy	Community Development	2027	Funding identified

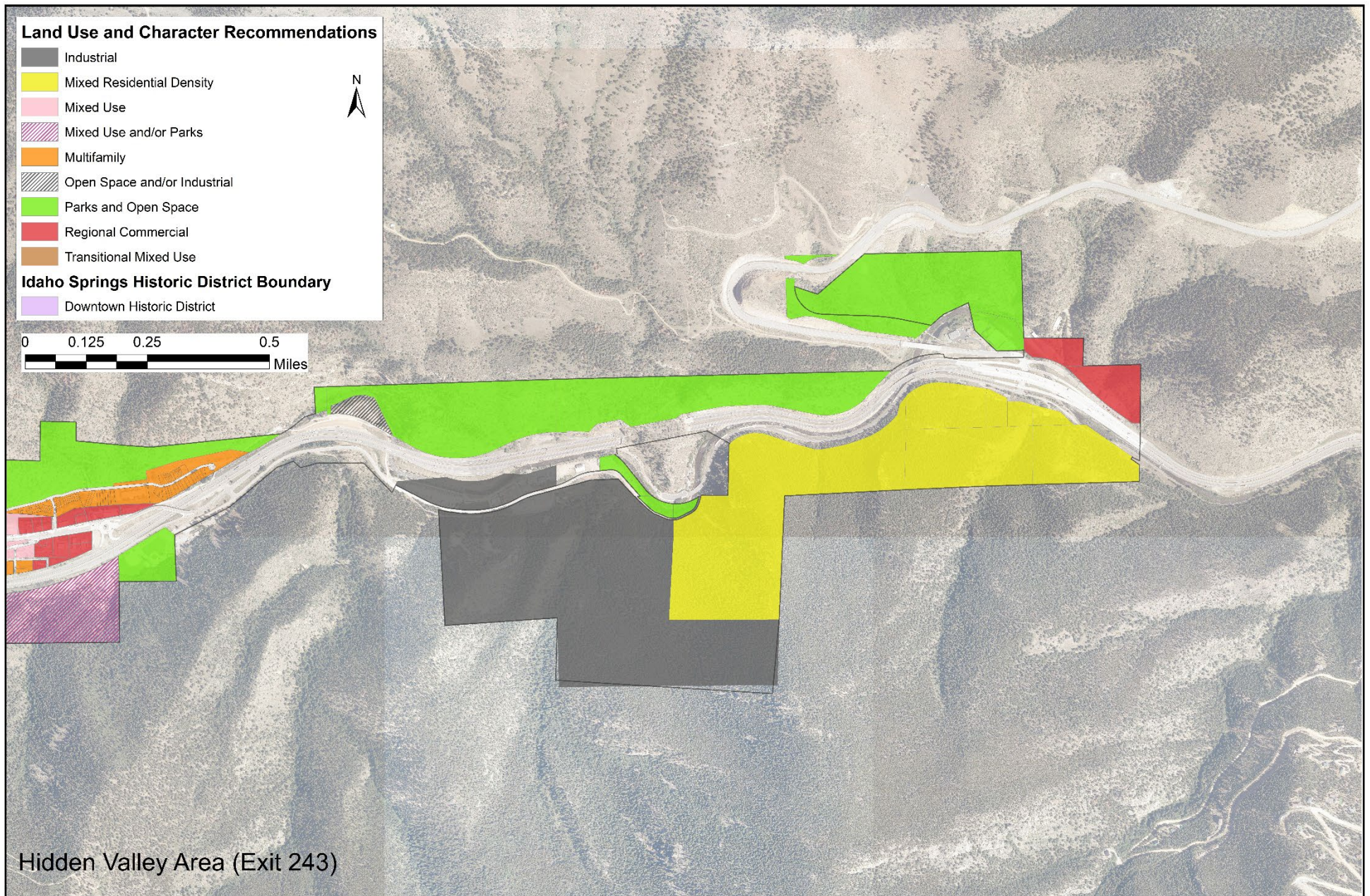
High	Historic district buffer guidance document	Community Development	2028	Guidance adopted
Medium	Historic designation outreach program	HPRC	Ongoing	Properties engaged
Medium	Development review process evaluation	Community Development	2028	Recommendations completed
Ongoing	Historic sites maintenance program	Sites & Facilities Board	Annual	Projects completed

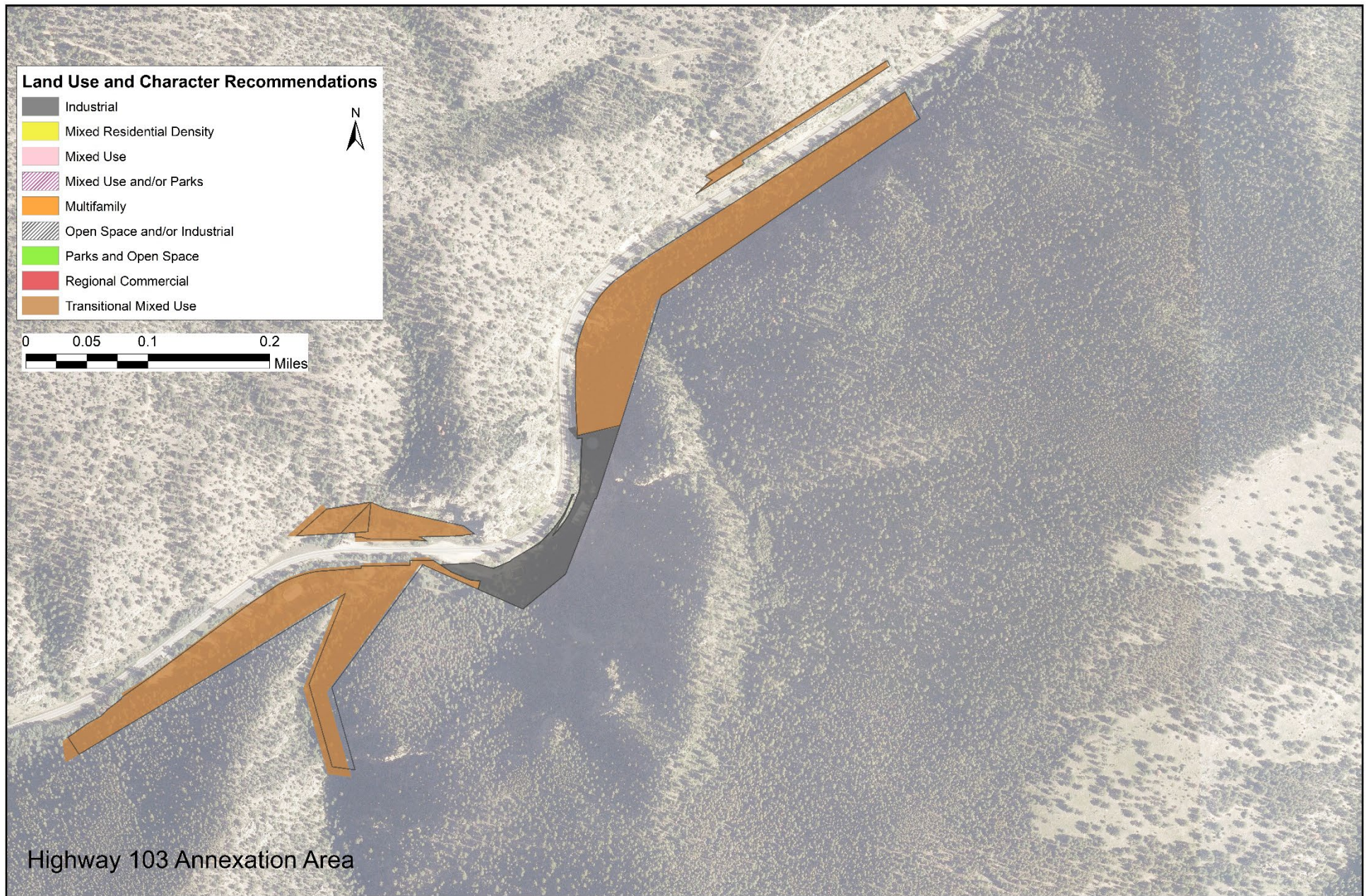
Strategic Growth

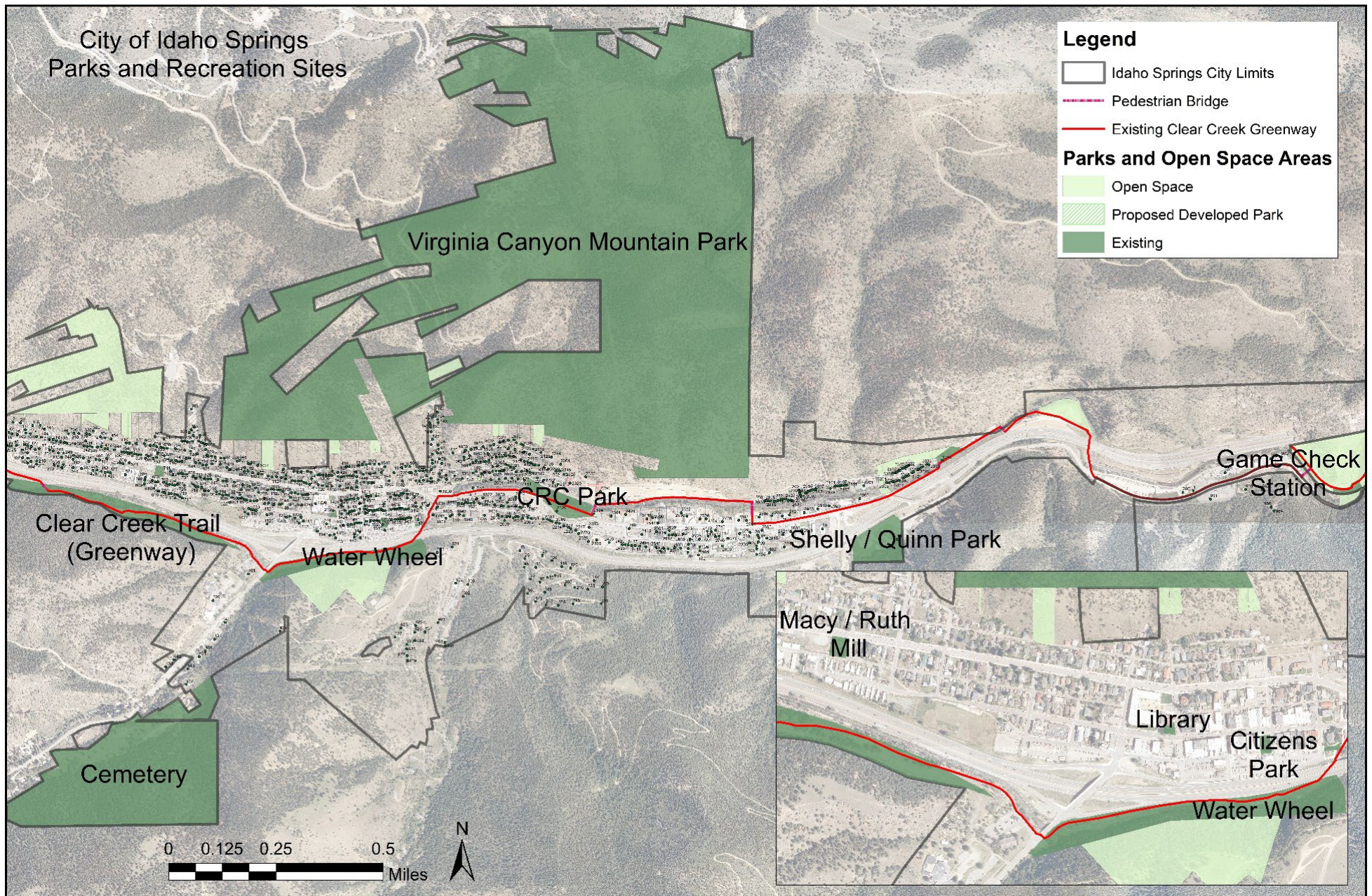
Priority	Action Item	Lead	Timeline	Performance Measure
High	Strategic Growth Framework	Community Development	2027	Framework adopted
High	Infill incentive program	Community Development	2028	Program launched
High	Infrastructure capacity mapping	Public Works	2028	Maps completed
Medium	Environmental constraints mapping	Community Development	2028	GIS layers completed
Medium	Metropolitan district policy review	Community Development	2029	Policy adopted
Ongoing	Three Mile Plan updates	Community Development	Annual	Updates completed

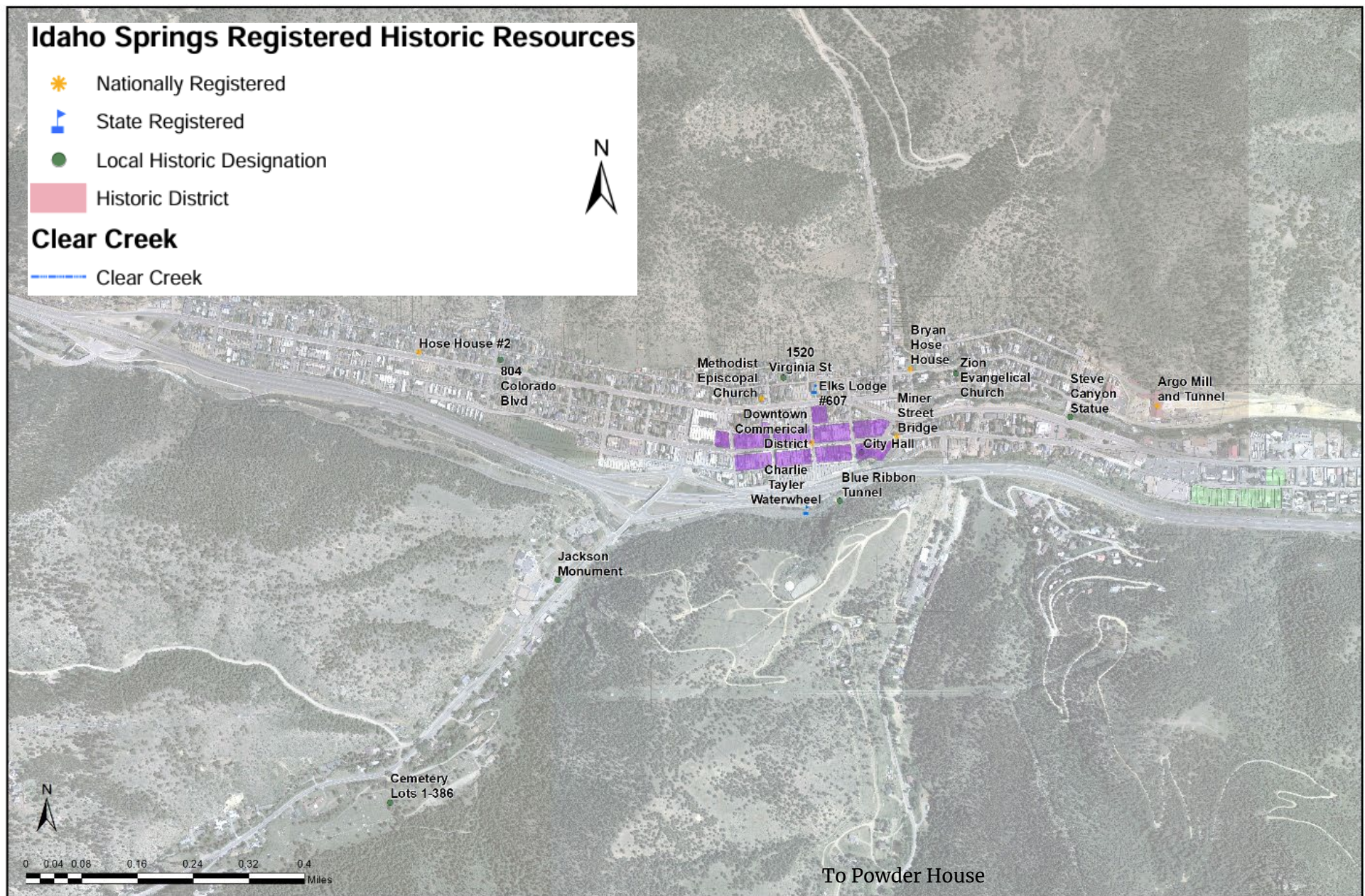
APPENDICES: MAPS



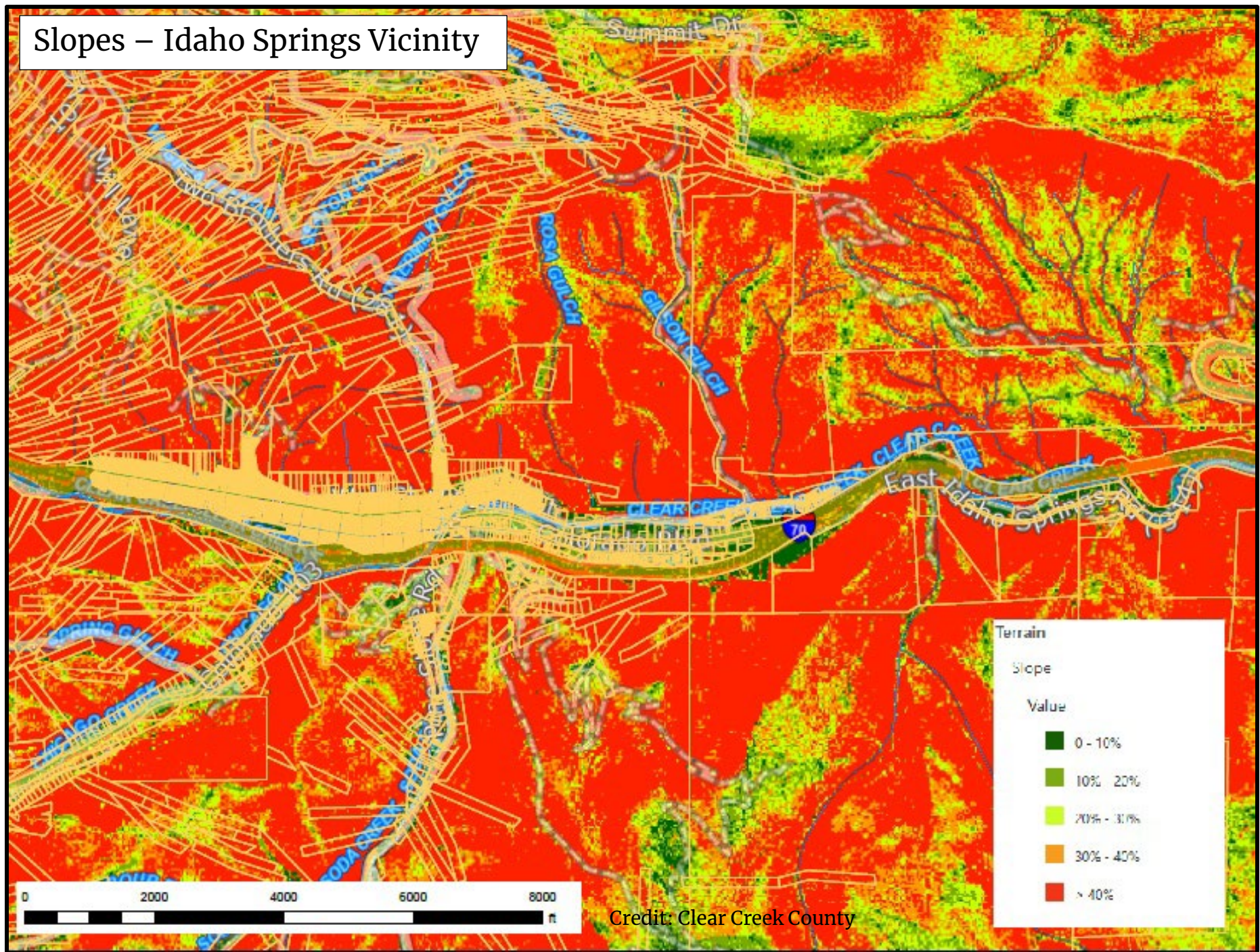








Slopes – Idaho Springs Vicinity



Credit: Clear Creek County

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TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Review
MEETING DATE: August 5, 2026

I published the draft Comprehensive Plan to solicit public comment from June 15th to July 31st. I received a few comments during the public comment period and made some edits to attempt to address their concerns and suggestions. With that in mind, the draft Comprehensive Plan is complete and ready for review by the Planning Commission for final suggestions and edits.

The goal is to take this to City Council for the August 24, 2026, work session to discuss any concerns they might have to take them through the process. After this, I will bring this back to Planning Commission on September 2, 2026, for final review and action. The Planning Commission holds the public hearing officially adopting the Comprehensive Plan, and the goal is for it to be adopted on September 2.

However, if there are any additional changes needed, we can push the adoption further. For tonight's meeting, the goal is to address any final comments or edits, assuming they are relatively minor.

This report goes over the major changes that are included in the Plan since 2017.

Background and Introduction:

The key updates to this section are as follows:

1. New section (pg. 2-5): Guiding Principles for the Plan
2. New section (pg. 6): How to Use the Plan
3. New section (pg. 10-14): Achievements Since 2017
4. Updated all the demographic and economic information.
5. Chapter 3: Updated the vision statements to match what City Council adopted in 2025.

Land Use and Community Character:

The key updates to this section are as follows:

1. Adding a "principles" section that talks about architectural design and preserving community character (pg. 1-3)
2. Updates to land use categories
 - a. Kept all the same categories but creating more flexibility to make it more about mass and scale of development, rather than the use itself.
 - b. Previously certain categories were appropriate for only single-family residential development, but I believe that we should be more flexible to allow other uses if they are compatible with the other uses/structures in the area.
 - c. The 2017 Plan seemed to largely match the city's land use recommendation map with the existing zoning, whereas now I am trying to be more proactive at allowing more flexibility where it makes sense while protecting areas that are largely residential and have historic characteristics we want to protect.
3. Updates to the objectives for this section.

Housing:

There have been no major changes since 2017. We simply updated goals to reflect the fact that Proposition 123 now exists, and we have updated Housing Needs Assessment for the area. The major implementation item for this section is to work collaboratively with the County and adjacent municipalities to put together a Housing Action Plan (HAP) in the next ~12 months.

Transportation:

There have been substantial improvements to public transit along the I-70 corridor since 2017. We now have Bustang and Pegasus buses running through town at least 20 times per day in each direction. We also have the County's Roundabout bus service. The major change for automobile travel is the Floyd Hill project that is anticipated to be complete in early 2029.

Economic Development and Tourism:

There are a few major updates since 2017. The Miner Street Marketplace has changed the downtown area and made it much more pedestrian-friendly, which is good for business. The Mighty Argo Cable Car and the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park have increased visitation significantly on the east end of town. With these changes in mind, there is a lot of room for additional improvements, and we must think about how to build upon these new draws.

Environment:

The biggest immediate concerns to be addressed are wildfire risk, drought, and water supply. These are key foci of the updated Plan for this section.

Water Supply:

This is a new state-required section that we used to estimate current water supply and demand, risks to the city's water system, ways to improve sustainability and conservation, and create plans to accommodate future development without putting existing residents at risk.

Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails:

There have been a few major achievements since 2017, notably the skatepark project at the ballfields complex and the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park. There are desires to keep building trails – especially hiking trails – and improve access to Clear Creek. A long-range goal is to connect the Clear Creek Trail all the way to Golden, working with Clear Creek County and Jefferson County to accomplish this.

Historic Resources:

This section acknowledges the importance that history has for Idaho Springs now and going forward. This section seeks to expand the city's historic protections through new historic districts that protect residential areas; to promote additional heritage tourism; protect the Historic District; and partner with the Historical Society to continue to promote history in the community.

Public Facilities and Services:

This is always a key focus for the city, as water and wastewater systems, the city's street and sidewalk network, and other capital improvements are always in need of maintenance to keep the city's quality of life high for residents and visitors.

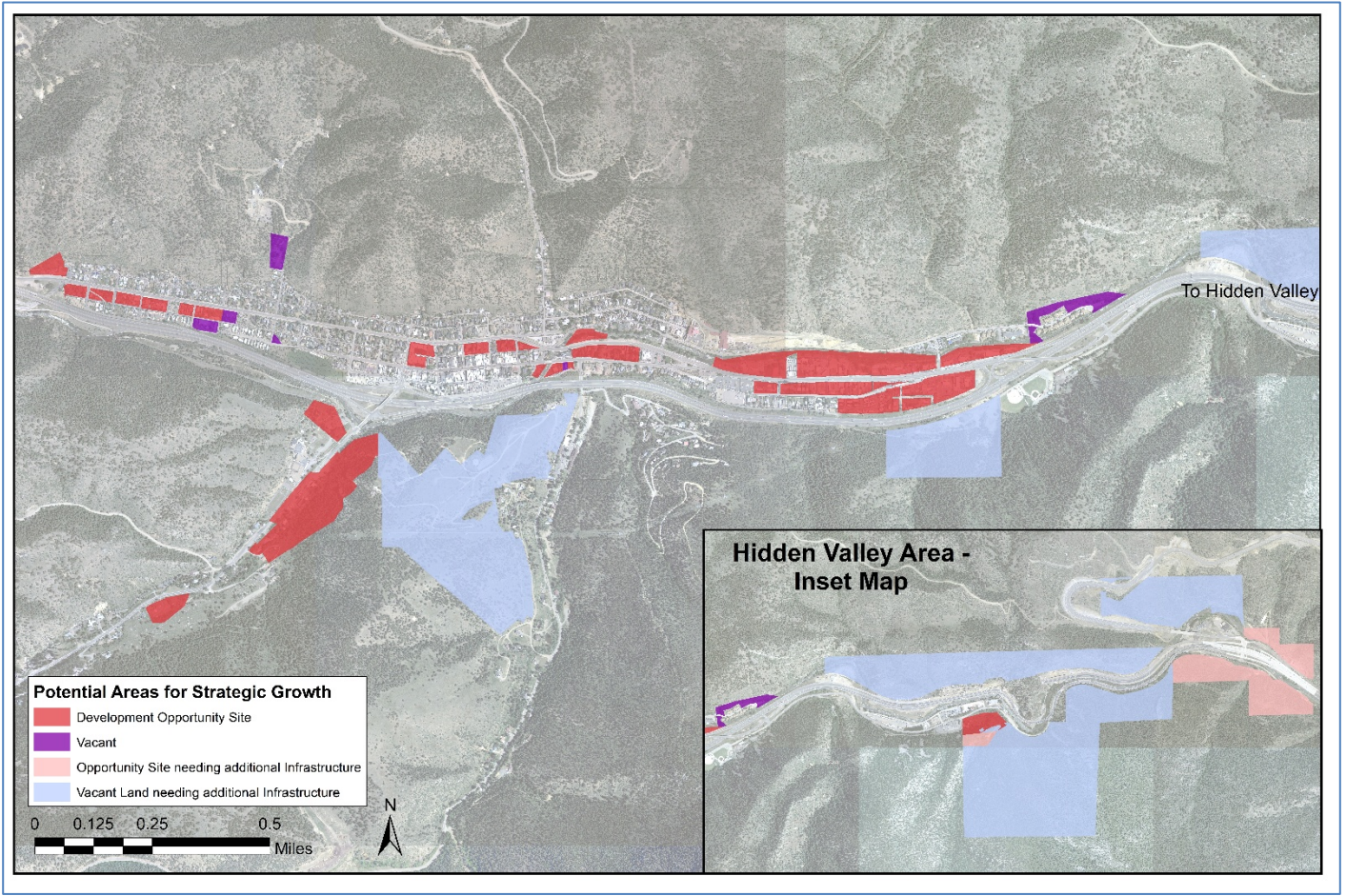
Strategic Growth Element:

This is a brand-new section that the state is requiring jurisdictions to adopt. The purpose of the section is to force communities to think about where growth and development could and should be promoted. The goal is to get communities to identify areas that are appropriate for development and areas that are not appropriate for development. While the state is broadly pro-housing and wants to encourage as much development as possible, they do not want to promote sprawl developments that use undeveloped lands (open space, forested lands, etc.) when there are redevelopment and infill development opportunities. The goal is to prioritize infill development in the existing city that is close to existing city infrastructure and only push for greenfield development if appropriate.

I analyzed all the lots in the city based on a few different metrics. First, where are the vacant and underutilized "opportunity" sites that could be redeveloped within city limits. These opportunity sites are those that could accept additional density or intensity of uses, e.g. a single-family home on a commercially zoned property.

Second, I looked at how close these lots were to existing infrastructure. If adequate water and sewer facilities and other utilities were available nearby, I identified them as a higher-potential property for redevelopment. Other properties would require

infrastructure investment, increasing development costs. Here is the map breaking those sites up into those with infrastructure and those with improvements needed:



This map shows us a few things.

1. Red properties: These are the most common opportunities identified for new development and redevelopment but because they have existing uses on-site, the timeframe for redevelopment on these parcels is probably longer term. If a property owner wanted to redevelop their properties, they certainly could because there is adequate water and sewer infrastructure in the vicinity, but it would require demolition or rehabilitation of existing buildings on-site to accommodate additional density or more intense uses. Over time, these properties may be redeveloped and if they are, they could accommodate more density.
 - a. Note that many of these parcels are small (about 50% are under 5,000 square feet) and would be unlikely to accommodate substantial density increases.
 - b. The east end of town has the largest concentration of larger properties that could be redeveloped and are clearly underutilized. This is a key area identified for infill and redevelopment, as shown with the East End Overlay District.
2. Purple properties: These are vacant sites adjacent to existing infrastructure and utilities. These are the top locations for infill development because they do not have existing uses on-site that would require rehabilitation/redevelopment. Some may be complicated due to slopes or lot size, but if someone wanted to build on these parcels, there would be relatively few hurdles.
 - a. Note that some of these lots are under 5,000 square feet and/or are located on steep slopes. In these cases, redevelopment potential is likely limited.

3. Pink properties: These are opportunity sites like the red properties, but they do not have water or sewer infrastructure nearby or are missing other key infrastructure elements. Some of these sites are likely appropriate for redevelopment because they are near a highway interchange (Exit 243) but would need infrastructure improvements to be feasible for higher intensity uses.
4. Blue properties: These are vacant properties that are missing at least one key infrastructure or utility element that would be needed before they could be developed.

Taken together, this section is meant to lay out areas where we as the city think development would be appropriate without requiring any sort of development. Additionally, other properties may be suitable for development or redevelopment even if not shown on the map. These are simply properties within city limits that could be redeveloped without going through any special processes, like a rezoning.

Implementation:

I have created a basic implementation schedule that identifies priorities as high, medium, or long-term to help determine which elements of the Plan the city should focus on first and which are longer-term goals or ongoing goals that we will need to continue working on over the duration of the plan.

Maps:

These maps were in the last Plan. I have updated them to be relevant for 2026.

REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

Any suggestions, comments, changes, or feedback are appreciated.



TO: Planning Commission
CC: City Administrator Andrew Marsh
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Updates to Sections 21-205 and 21-220, Building Height
MEETING DATE: August 5, 2026

BACKGROUND

During the Comprehensive Plan process that I have been undertaking since mid-2025, I have heard that people want to consider ways to preserve certain elements of the local community. While people are okay with growth and redevelopment, they want to make sure that it respects what is already special about Idaho Springs and want to ensure that growth occurs “sustainably”. Originally, I had intended on waiting to implement potential code amendments until the new Comprehensive Plan was adopted, but I believe that we could start discussing potential changes now to plan ahead.

For a bit of background, back in late 2025, I discussed with the Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC) ways to strengthen the two-block buffer zone discussed in Section 21-205 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC), which requires the following:

New developments within a two-block radius of the outside boundary of the Historic District should build upon and support the architectural features of the District itself. Use of Historic District building materials, architectural styles and designs based upon historic City sites are strongly encouraged.

There may be ways to improve the buffer zone requirements, but we could also consider other changes that would have an impact at the city-wide level and still get the city where we want to go, strengthening design requirements without making development significantly more costly or complicated.

Section 21-205: Design Setting (two-block buffer)

In 2017, consultants Andrew and Megan Mueller surveyed the Idaho Springs Downtown Commercial District as part of a CDOT compliance project. This survey listed neglect and new construction as the most likely threats to the historic district. This exemplifies the importance of the two-block buffer zone and the need for design setting.

There are 102 total properties in the two-block buffer zone of the Historic District, and bordered by the following streets/roads:

- 12th Avenue to the West
- Virginia Street to the North
- 19th Avenue/Soda Creek Road to the East
- I-70 to the South

Based on this discussion, a direction given to staff was to consider what it means to “support the architectural features of the District itself.” According to Preservation Brief 17, the following items are major contributors to a building’s overall character:

- Setting (location on the property, orientation, etc.)
- Shape of the building
- Roof and roof features (chimneys, cupolas, etc.)
- Building projections (porches, bay windows, etc.)
- Openings (windows, doors, etc.)
- Materials

The idea is to get a developer or property owner to include as many of these compatible defining features as possible.

The Downtown Commercial Historic District includes character-defining features including cast iron facades, kickplates, large display windows with transoms, decorative bracketed cornices, recessed entries, and door transoms. Most of the buildings within the district are either one- or two-story brick, with selected examples of frame construction. There also are examples of Early Twentieth Century Commercial buildings within the historic district. Character-defining features of these buildings include either recessed or flush entries, translucent window transoms, corbelled cornices, decorative brickwork, and parapets.

Something like the below might be able to better clarify what the city wants to see in this buffer zone:

"New development within two blocks of the Historic Commercial District should be compatible with the District's established character through building scale, massing, materials, façade rhythm, and roof forms. Contemporary architectural expression may be appropriate where it complements these characteristics, but use of Historic District building materials, architectural styles and designs based upon historic City sites are strongly encouraged."

In residential areas, especially along West Colorado Boulevard, there are many examples of Late Victorian period architecture, Queen Anne style architecture, and Edwardian style architecture. There are also examples of Foursquares and Classic Cottages.

Perhaps the city could update Section 21-205 to better explain what we want to see in that buffer zone to give clarity to developers on what particularly we are looking for, rather than just broadly saying that developers need to complement the Historic District and build upon it. By putting in more objective standards, there may be less confusion in the future and reduce subjectivity.

Section 21-220: Commercial and Multifamily Architecture

Staff have started thinking about updates to Section 21-220 of the ISMC concerning multifamily and commercial development, and it seems like this might be a good path forward. This would apply to every multifamily or commercial development that wants to come into the city, rather than only making changes to the "buffer" zone. Since there are strong examples of historic-style buildings city-wide, ensuring that architecture is compatible across the city may be a positive goal, especially since we have heard that there is appetite for redevelopment on the east and west end of the city.

There will need to be substantial discussion about how Section 21-220 could be reworked to better address the city's goals and objectives for architectural design city-wide. The goal of this meeting is to start brainstorming what components are most important. Existing requirements are relatively broad, so perhaps we could focus on incorporating more specific language that speaks to the type of buildings we want to see around the city. Do we want all buildings to have elements of Victorian-era architecture, or are we okay with different designs outside of the downtown area (e.g. mountain modern design).

Single Family Residential Design Requirements:

If the city is worried about changes to the character of the community, I believe that we should also consider creating basic requirements for single-family architectural design. Currently, there are no such standards. Someone could demolish their existing 120+ year old home and build a modern home that does not have any historic architectural design features. If this is something that Planning Commission is interested in considering further, I would be happy to do further research on how to best do this without making redevelopment too onerous for small property owners.

Building Height:

Currently, the city allows a 35 foot maximum height limit in every commercial and residential zone district, with the exception of the East End Overlay District (EEOD), which allows even taller heights in some areas. The industrial zone districts also vary in height requirements.

There is a reasonable question to be made about whether 35-foot height is suitable in parts of the city. This equates to an approximately 3-story building. There are a few ways that height changes could be considered.

The simplest would be to simply reduce the height maximum allowances in certain or all zoning districts, perhaps to 25-30 feet.

A second way would be to apply a standard that compares the height of a proposed building to adjacent buildings within a certain area. For example, the city could say that no new building can be more than 10% taller than the average height of principal buildings within 100' of the subject property. This would mean that if the average height of those adjacent buildings is 25 feet, the new building being built could not exceed 27.5 feet. This ensures that new buildings are suitable from a massing standpoint to not stand out compared to its neighbors. The maximum height could remain at 35 feet where appropriate, but would limit height to a lower maximum in areas where existing buildings are shorter. This seems uncommon around the country, but there may be ways to apply a more subjective standard than simply allowing all buildings to be up to 35 feet tall.

Residential Historic Districts and Local Designation of Historic Properties

Another important consideration is whether historic designation of historic properties could address local concerns about place-making and design. There are enough buildings with high historical integrity to create new districts or expand the existing historic district. However, political will is needed, as there is a misconception that if your property is designated as a historic resource, you are severely limited in what you can do. However, if the city really wants to maintain historic character and preserve the defining characteristics of the city, preserving the existing buildings is critical. This will require public buy-in, since property cannot be designated without property owner consent.

REQUEST FOR DIRECTION: How would the Commission like staff to proceed? What policies/changes does the Commission want staff to investigate further? Are there other ideas that we should investigate?