



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

Thursday, October 2, 2025

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

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

You must join the Zoom Meeting

**(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82200987574>) passcode 627970 to
participate in a meeting remotely.**

- 1. Call to Order Regular Meeting 6:00 PM**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Agenda Approval**
 - a. Move to approve the Agenda of October 2nd, 2025
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Conflict of Interest**
- 6. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Move to approve the minutes from August 6th, 2025
- 7. General Updates**
 - a. Ordinance #12, Series 2025 - An Ordinance Annexing to the City of Idaho Springs Certain Unincorporated Lands Located in Section 31, Township 3 South, Range 72 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, in Clear Creek County, Colorado, to be Known as the "VCMP Annexation to the City of Idaho Springs." (to be rescheduled)
 - b. Ordinance #13, Series 2025: An Ordinance Zoning approximately 23.36 acres located in Section 31, Township 3 South, Range 72 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, and Section 25, Township 3 South, Range 73 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, Clear Creek County, Colorado, and known in part as the "VCMP Annexation to the City of Idaho Springs," As Planned Development (PD). (to be rescheduled)
- 8. New Business**
- 9. Old Business**
- 10. Adjourn**
- 11. Work Session Agenda**
 - a. Standards and Specifications for Design and Construction Exception/Modification Process

- b. Comprehensive Plan - Updates and Discussion into Historic Resources Element, Housing Element, and Strategic Growth
- c. Discussion on Potential Code Amendments to Chapter 21 to address site design, place setting, architectural character and design, and other elements of new developments

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 12 p.m. (Noon) the Thursday 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.
- Council typically does not provide feedback during public comment sessions.
- If you would like to provide materials for Council to review along with your Comment, please sign up for Scheduled Public Comment and provide those materials to the City Clerk by the Thursday Deadline.



**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 6th, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cindy Olson called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present were Chair Cindy Olson, Chuck Howard, Alternate Judy Murphy, and Caitlin Maxwell. Kent Slaymaker and Vice Chair Ursula Cruzalegui joined the meeting via Zoom. Alternate Jefferson Lich was absent. Staff present were Community Development Planner Dylan Graves, Deputy City Clerk Wonder Martell and Assistant City Attorney Nick Klein.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Howard moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Maxwell seconded followed by an all in favor voice vote. Motion carries

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There was no conflict.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dan Dalpes 1244 Colorado Blvd – Mr. Dalpes is here to speak about all of the traffic around the old Carlson at 13th Avenue. Mr. Dalpes suggested a roundabout be placed at that intersection as this is the most traffic he has ever seen and the City should require all new developments to provide adequate parking. Mr. Dalpes also suggested that there be some rubber mats placed on the concrete at the horseshoe pits as the concrete is a launching pad and he has never seen anyone use the horseshoe pits. Mr. Dales advised the commission that they have a hard job, and they should be micromanaging the traffic on Colorado Blvd.

Sarah Wirtz 2612 Miner Street – Just moved back to Idaho Springs, grew up here. The rafting company down by the baseball fields has created a lot of very fast traffic in the area. Ms. Wirtz stated that she frequently walks the road through the tunnel headed to the ballfields with her dog and the fast traffic near the ballfields is hazardous. She suggested that speed bumps be installed in the area to help control the speed. Ms. Wirtz is making this comment to get this topic on a future agenda, and she has almost been hit twice while walking in the area.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Howard moved to approve the minutes from July 2nd, 2025. Commissioner Slaymaker seconded. Chair Olson mentioned under general updates there is a space missing from June 25th. Deputy Clity Clerk Ms. Martell advised she would make that correction to the July 2nd minutes. Discussion followed by an all in favor voice vote.

GENERAL UPDATES

Community Development Planner Dylan Graves spoke about the updated parking plan that is going to council on August 11th. Mr. Graves mentioned that the residential parking will be going all the way west and the paid parking program will extend to the east side of Idaho Springs. Chair Olson asked if the paid parking was going to go up towards the Hot Springs? Mr. Graves stated he was not sure how many city parking spaces are on Soda Creek as the Hot Springs owns some parking also, but the city spaces will become paid parking spots. Chair Olson mentioned that the area is a bit confusing as there are Hot Springs signs close to the city parking and that visitors may become confused about what is paid parking and what is the Hot Springs Parking. Mr. Graves stated he would go look at the area to make sure the signs are not located in City ROW. Chair Olson also mentioned that she thinks that people are not aware that parking is free after 6pm and wondered if the paid parking signs stated that on them and it would be helpful if the Kiosks alerted people paying after hours that payment was not necessary. Chair Olson thinks this knowledge could possibly bring more people to town later in the day/evening and that could possibly make the shops stay open later to serve the visitors. Commissioner Slaymaker suggested when Mr. Graves goes and looks at the Kiosks that if there is a kiosk that accepts \$ after 6pm, that it should be fixed to not accept payment after 6pm. Mr. Graves agreed and mentioned he would reach out to the parking company and check the app as well.

Mr. Graves also mentioned to the commission that he was awarded a scholarship for the University of Denver executive certificate program for affordable housing. Mr. Graves also advised the board that in order for him to be able to attend this schooling, that takes place Wednesdays for the duration of the program, that Planning Commission would need to reschedule their meeting from Wednesday evening to a different night of the week. Mr. Graves asked the commission if they were willing and if it worked with their schedules to change the meeting evening to maybe Tuesdays or Thursdays. The commission agreed that Thursdays would work best to hold Planning Commission meetings during Mr. Graves certificate program.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Regional Housing Needs Assessment opt In to Satisfy SB24-124 Requirements. Chair Olson mentioned that the main thing is the income levels and wanted confirmation that this took that into account. Mr. Graves replied and stated that this includes the Denver AMI and the data shows we need more on the low end of the AMI. Data could be more granular. Chair Olson said to the commission its best not reinvent the wheel and the best would probably be to opt in. Mr. Graves mentioned by 2028 the city needs to have an action plan. Chair Olson asked if the 66 units will count towards the 122 required affordable housing units. Mr. Graves advised the commission that the Fieldhouse Project (Former Goldigger Field) was awarded 8.5 million for affordable housing and they have to restrict 66 units at 70% to 100% AMI. Any housing that gets funded by Prop – 123 Equity funds count towards the requirements. Chair Olson stated let's opt in and use those units, so it works for us. Commissioner Slaymaker stated that it makes sense to opt in, continue conversation to get the data more granular, this is a great excuse to have conversations with a wider group, opting in makes sense. Voice Vote was conducted and all of the commissioners agreed yes, to recommend to council to Opt In. Motion Carries to council.

2. Ordinance #15, Series 2025, An Ordinance Accepting and Recognizing a Portion of Wall Street as a Legal Public Street. Mr. Graves advised the commission that this ordinance is similar to the one they just recommended to council last month on Virginia Canyon and Virginia Street to clean up property lines and Mr. Graves confirmed that it does. Commissioner Howard moved to approve to council Ordinance #15, Series 2025 An Ordinance Accepting and Recognizing a Portion of Wall Street as a Legal Public Street. Commissioner Slaymaker seconded, second followed by an all in favor roll call vote. Motion carries to council.

OLD BUSINESS

Community Development Planner Mr. Graves advised the commission that the group of spectators that let council chambers thought that the Planning Commission was going to be talking about the old Carlson Elementary building. There was an article in the Clear Creek Courant mentioning public meetings were coming up. This was a misunderstanding and Mr. Graves alerted the audience to this fact. Chair Olson asked staff if the train was going to be brought back and was it going to be placed in the City Hall Staff Parking Lot? Mr. Graves advised the commission that the train is in Silver Plume being restored and it cannot be placed in the spot it came from because of all of the utilities in the area. There is a plan to bring it back but there needs to be a protective cover and that cover needs to be a bit more affordable than the 1.5 Million that has previously been quoted.

ADJOURMENT

Chair Olson Adjourned the meeting at 6:43 pm to go into work session.

**IDAHO SPRINGS
PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

Meeting Date: October 2, 2025	Page 1 of 3	Item: ZONING25-002: Request to Annex and Zone Portions of Land Acquired through a Land Exchange into the ARGO / Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development (PD)
Presented by: Dylan Graves Community Development Planner		

PROPOSAL:

This is a request to zone the properties acquired as part of the land exchange between the City and the Young Ranch that was approved by City residents in November. This resulted in the exchange of approximately 23.38 acres in either direction. The next step in the process is to incorporate the City’s newly acquired parcels into the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) by annexing the lands into the City and zoning the parcels. The annexation of city-owned property does not require Planning Commission review or a public hearing; however, the zoning of the property does. The first reading of the annexation and zoning occurred on September 22, 2025, with City Council. Pending any changes recommended at the October 2, 2025, Planning Commission meeting, the second reading of Ordinance #12 and Ordinance #13 and public hearing for the zoning will take place on October 13, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

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

The parcels to be zoned are 23.36 acres in size. The parcels have been part of the Young Ranch and have historically been used as ranch lands and agriculture, though they are zoned Mountain Residential – Single Family (MR-1). The intention is to combine the parcels with the existing VCMP property to be used in accordance with park and recreation uses. The key benefits of this land exchange were the creation of a clear boundary along Gilson Gulch between VCMP and the Young Ranch property, and the opportunity to build additional mountain bike and hiking trails on the eastern side of VCMP. The new alignment of the park’s eastern boundary facilitates better trail alignments in this portion of the park.

The zoning proposed by this zoning application is Argo / Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development (PD). This PD zoning covers the approximately 450-acre mountain park and regulates development within the park and its vicinity. The land coming into the City will be part of Use Area 3 of the PD, which allows for recreational uses as permitted in the City’s Parks & Recreation (P) zoning district.

PLANNING COMMISSION ROLE:

The ISMC requires every application for a zoning application to go before the Planning Commission for review and recommendation of either approval or denial to Council. The City Council will act on a zoning request via ordinance. The annexation does not require Planning Commission review, since they are city-owned parcels.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL – ZONING:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Staff believe that the rezoning will preserve and promote property values in the area. The Mountain Park is planned to be a driver of economic activity for the City and the properties in question will allow for additional recreation trails to be built in the vicinity, increasing the recreational opportunities in the Mountain Park.

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

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

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

The proposed rezoning is not anticipated to affect traffic congestion in the area.

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

The proposed zoning will promote the public welfare by allowing additional recreational trails to be built in the Mountain Park. This improves recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

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

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

STAFF ANALYSIS OF PROPOSAL:

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

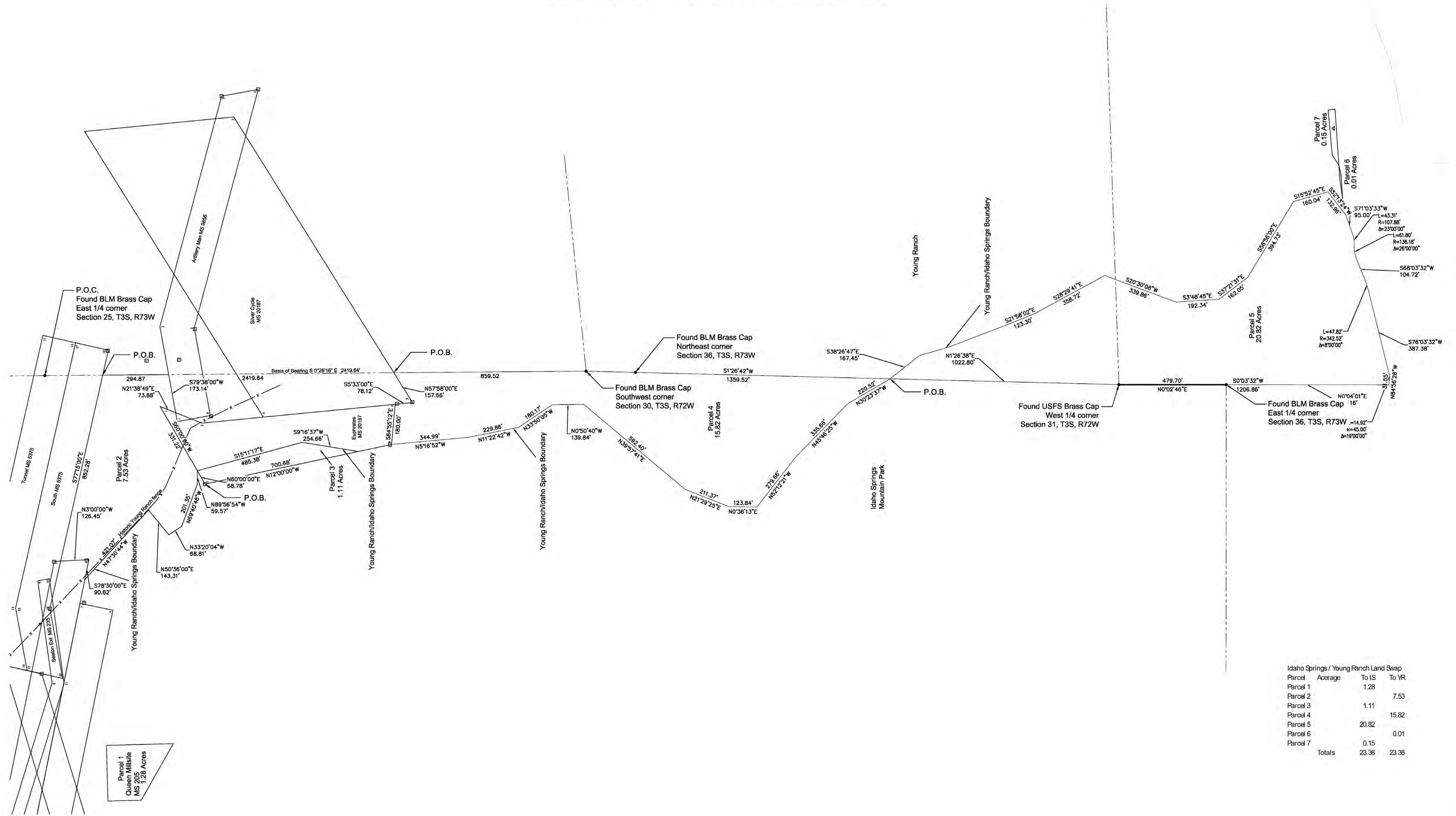
PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend that the Planning Commission recommend that City Council approve ZONE25-002, an application to zone approximately 23.36 acres of City-owned land ARGO / Virginia Canyon Mountain Park Planned Development once annexed into the city.

LAND SURVEY PLAT

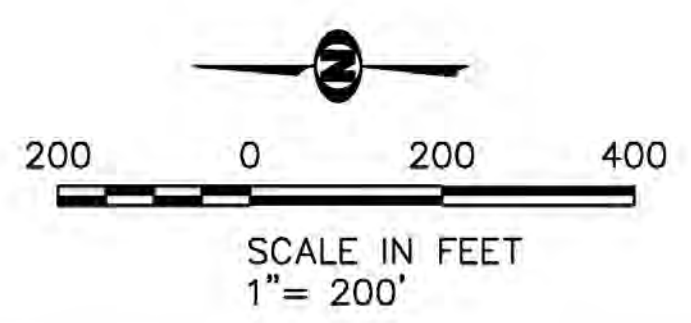
Idaho Springs Mountain Park / Young Ranch Land Swap 2024

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



Idaho Springs / Young Ranch Land Swap			
Parcel	Average	To IS	To YR
Parcel 1	1.28		
Parcel 2		7.53	
Parcel 3	1.11		
Parcel 4		15.82	
Parcel 5	20.82		
Parcel 6		0.01	
Parcel 7	0.15		
Totals	23.36	23.36	

LEGEND:
 □ found original stone
 ○ found rebar and 1.5" alum. cap unless noted otherwise
 set 18" #5 rebar and cap, PLS 20140
 x barbed wire fence



County Recorder Certificate:
 This plat was filed for record in the office of the County Clerk and Recorder of Clear Creek County this _____ Day of _____, 20__ at _____ M.
 in Book _____ at Page _____
 Reception Number _____

 Clerk and Recorder

Idaho Springs Mountain Park / Young Ranch Land Swap 2024			
His Consultants, Inc.		DRAWN BY:	deh
		CHECKED BY:	dea
Lakewood, Colorado 720-273-9940		DATE:	5/09/2024
		SCALE:	shown
		FILE NAME:	YR Land Swap Claims
		SHEET NO.:	1 of 2

CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS
Clear Creek County, Colorado

Ordinance No. ___, Series 2025

AN ORDINANCE ZONING APPROXIMATELY 23.36 ACRES LOCATED IN SECTION 31, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 72 WEST OF THE SIXTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, AND SECTION 25, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 73 WEST OF THE SIXTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, CLEAR CREEK COUNTY, COLORADO, AND KNOWN IN PART AS THE ‘VCMP ANNEXATION TO THE CITY OF IDAHO SPRINGS,’ AS PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (PD)

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

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Colorado Municipal Annexation Act, C.R.S. § 31-12-101, *et seq.*, and by Ordinance No. ___, Series 2025, the Idaho Springs City Council (“Council”) annexed certain City-owned land recently acquired from Robert Young and associated entities (the “Annexed Property”); and

WHEREAS, the Annexed Property, together with other property in the same area already within City boundaries, also acquired from Mr. Young, constitute the entirety of land that City electors approved adding to the boundaries of existing Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) at the November 5, 2024 election (the “Property,” more specifically described in **Exhibit A**) in order to create a more natural and recognizable VCMP boundary along the park’s eastern edge, to follow Gilson Gulch; and

WHEREAS, the City Council further finds that the VCMP is currently zoned as Planned Development (PD), the specific parameters of which were approved by the City by Ordinance No. 8, Series 2019, on June 10, 2019 and recorded in the records of Clear Creek County at Reception No. 293437 (“Argo VCMP PD Zoning”); and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that zoning the Property as PD with the Argo VCMP PD Zoning specifications would permit the Property to be incorporated into the existing park with the same zoning and use designations, generally conform with the City's comprehensive plan, preserve and promote property values in the area, and be in harmony and compatible with the surrounding land uses and present development in the area, and will generally promote the public welfare; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 31-12-115, the City must zone recently-annexed property within ninety (90) days of annexation; and

WHEREAS, the Council therefore wishes to approve the zoning of the Property to the Argo VCMP PD Zoning.

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

Section 1. The above and foregoing recitals are incorporated herein by reference and adopted as findings and determinations of the Council.

Section 2. The zoning classification for the Property more particularly and fully described in **Exhibit A**, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, is hereby approved and established as the Argo VCMP PD Zoning.

Section 3. The official zoning map of the City is hereby amended to incorporate therein the zoning classification established in Section 2, above. Except as expressly so amended, the said zoning map is readopted, ratified and confirmed in all respects.

Section 4. 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 5. 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 22nd day of September, 2025.

Chuck Harmon, Mayor

ATTESTED AND CERTIFIED:

Diane Breece, City Clerk

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED, after publication and following public hearing, at a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Idaho Springs, Colorado, held on the 13th day of October, 2025.

Chuck Harmon, Mayor

ATTESTED AND CERTIFIED:

Diane Breece, City Clerk

EXHIBIT A

LEGAL DESCRIPTION of ZONED PROPERTY:

Parcel 1

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

Parcel 3

A parcel of land located in the Euphrates Lode, US Mineral Survey No. 20187, In the southeast 1/4 of Section 25, Township 3 South, Range 73 West of the 6th PM, Clear Creek County. Colorado, and being more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the East 1/4 corner of said Section 25, T3S, R73W, being a found BLM Brass Cap from whence the Southwest corner of Section 30, T3S, R72W being a found BLM Brass Cap. bears S 0°28'16" E, a distance of 2,419.64 feet, said line forming the Basis of Bearing for this description; thence S 34°06'12" W a distance of 864.87 feet to corner no. 5 of said Euphrates lode and the Point of Beginning.

Thence North 60° 00' 00" East along line 5-1 of said Euphrates Lode a distance of 68.78 feet;
Thence South 15° 11' 17" East a distance of 485.38 feet;
Thence South 09° 16' 37" West a distance of 254.66 feet to a point on line 4-5 of said Euphrates Lode;
Thence North 12° 00' 00" West along said line 4-5 a distance of 700.68 feet to the Point of Beginning.
containing 48,513 square feet or 1.11 acres, more or less.

Parcel 5

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

Commencing al the Southwest corner of Section 30, T3S, R72W being a found BLM Brass Cap from whence the East 1/4 corner of said Section 25, T3S, R73W, being a found BLM Brass Cap, bears N 0°28'16"W, a distance of 2,419.64 feet, said line forming the Basis of Bearing for this description; Thence South 01° 26' 42" West along the westerly line of Section 31, T3S, R72W a distance of 1359.52 feet to the Point of Beginning.

Thence South 38° 26' 47" East a distance of 167.45 feet;
Thence South 16° 06' 26" East a distance of 138.37 feet;
Thence South 21° 00' 30" East a distance of 284.99 feet;
Thence South 21° 58' 02" East a distance of 123.30 feet;
Thence South 28° 29' 41" East a distance of 358.72 feet;
Thence South 20° 30' 08" West a distance of 339.66 feet;
Thence South 03° 48' 45" East a distance of 192.34 feet;

Thence South 37° 21' 31" East a distance of 162.05 feet;
Thence South 55° 56' 00" East a distance of 394.73 feet;
Thence South 15° 52' 45" East a distance of 160.04 feet;
Thence South 52° 13' 24" West a distance of 132.96 feet;
Thence South 71° 03' 33" West a distance of 95.00 feet to the point of intersection with Parcel 3-CC, Reception No. 301356, Clear Creek County records;

Thence along said Parcel 3-CC the following 8 courses:

1. 43.31 feet along the arc of a curve to concave to the north, with a radius of 107.88 feet, a central angle of 23° 00' 00", and whose chord bears South 82° 33' 32" West, a distance of 43.01 feet to a point of non-tangent compound curvature;
2. 61.80 feet along the arc of a curve concave to the south, with a radius of 136.16 feet, a central angle of 26° 00' 00". and whose chord bears South 81° 03' 32" West, a distance of 61.27 feet to a point;
3. South 68° 03' 32" West a distance of 104.72 feet to a point of curvature;
4. 47.82 feet along the arc of a curve concave to the north, with a radius of 342.52 feet, a central angle of 08° 00' 00", and whose chord bears South 72° 03' 32" West, a distance of 47.79 feet to a point;
5. South 76° 03' 32" West a distance of 387.38 feet to a point of curvature;
6. 14.92 feet along the arc of a curve concave to the north, with a radius of 45.00 feet, a central angle of 19° 00' 00", and whose chord bears South 85° 33' 32" West, a distance of 14.85 feet to a point;
7. North 84° 56' 28" West a distance of 31.55 feet to a point on said westerly line of Section 31;
8. Thence North 00° 04' 01" West along said westerly line a distance of 727.16 feet to the East 1/4 corner of said Section 36, T3S, R73W;

Thence North 00° 02' 46" East continuing along said westerly line a distance of 479.70 feet to the West 1/4 corner of said Section 31;

Thence North 01° 26' 38" East continuing along said westerly line a distance of 1022.60 feet to the Point of Beginning, containing 906,902 square feet or 20.82 acres, more or less.

Parcel 7

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

Commencing at the West 1/4 corner of Section 31, T3S, R72W being a found USFS Brass Cap from whence the East 1/4 corner of said Section 36, T3S, R73W, being a found BLM Brass Cap, bears S 0°02'46" W, a distance of 479.70 feet, said line forming the Basis of Bearing for this description: Thence South 52° 40' 36" East a distance of 1542.79 feet to the point of Intersection with Parcel 3-CC, Reception No. 301356, Clear Creek County records, said point also being the Point of Beginning.

Thence along said Parcel 3-CC Iha following 2 courses;

1. South 07° 30' 03" East a distance of 30.79 feet;
2. South 86° 03' 32" West a distance of 251.20 feet;

Thence North 57° 26' 32" East a distance of 55.15 feet;

Thence North 64° 49' 39" East a distance of 200.93 feet to the Point of Beginning, containing 6,408 square feet or 0.15 acres, more or less.



TO: Planning Commission
CC: City Administrator Andrew Marsh
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Variance Process for Items in the *Standards and Specifications for Design and Construction*
MEETING DATE: October 2, 2025

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this memo is to discuss potential changes to the variance proceedings/requirements for variances from the *Standards and Specifications for Design and Construction* (“Public Works Standards”) that impose technical and design requirements for public and private improvements permitted by the City, such as roadways, driveways, utilities, and excavation and grading work, among other things.

Currently, the Public Works Standards require a variance to any of its terms to go before the City’s Variance Board. The Variance Board is tasked with reviewing requests for exemptions from Chapter 20 and Chapter 21 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC). The *Standards and Specifications* document references the Variance Board as the approving body for variances from the Public Works Standards as well. Currently, this process is required not only for new developments but also for existing developed lots, such as existing single-family or multifamily residential construction – if someone wanted to rebuild their driveway at their existing home in a way that did not comply with the Public Works Standards, a Variance Board review would be required.

Staff do not believe that the Variance Board is the appropriate body for variances from construction and engineering standards. Rather, it is believed that variances from standards related to roadways, driveways, utilities, excavation and grading work, etc. can be better reviewed administratively with approval from the Public Works Department in consultation with the City Engineer and Planner and the Clear Creek Fire Authority. Non-technical standards, such as location and placement of streets, driveways and utilities, would still be reviewed and approved for new development by the Planning Commission and City Council as part of the Final Development Plan (FDP) process.

If the City wishes to change the current process, the City’s attorneys recommend adding a “modification” or “exception” section to Chapter 13, Article III, which is the ISMC article that discusses the *Standards and Specifications* document. The City Attorney’s office would provide the appropriate language depending on the direction.

Request for Direction: Would the Planning Commission be in favor of eliminating the Variance Board review requirement for exceptions/modifications from the Public Works Standards and instead allow modifications and exceptions to be approved administratively?

CHAPTER 12: STRATEGIC GROWTH ELEMENT

Chapter 12 is a new chapter in the Idaho Springs Comprehensive Plan. 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 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.

This element is required to contain:

- A description of existing and potential policies and tools to promote strategic growth and prevent sprawl;
- An analysis of vacant and underutilized sites that identifies vacant, partially vacant, and underutilized land near existing or planned transit or job centers that could be used for infill development, redevelopment, and new development of housing; assesses the general feasibility of the development or redevelopment of such sites for residential use based on existing and needed infrastructure, transportation capacity, access to public transit, and public facilities and services to serve such sites; describes the public benefits of the development or redevelopment of such sites to the county or region as an alternative to the development of previously undeveloped natural or agricultural land; and in a manner that is consistent with the master plan, designates such sites for which development or redevelopment is deemed to be generally feasible for future uses that include residential uses in a manner that addresses the demonstrated housing needs of the county or region at all income; and,
- An analysis of undeveloped sites that identifies previously undeveloped parcels that are not adjacent to developed land, including existing natural and agricultural land, under consideration for future development, and, for a county or region in a metropolitan planning organization established under the "FEDERAL TRANSIT ACT OF 1998," 49 U.S.C. SEC. 5301 ET SEQ., as amended, land outside of census urban areas as defined by the United States Bureau of the Census; assesses the general feasibility of the development of such sites for residential use based on existing and needed infrastructure, transportation capacity, access to public transit, and public facilities and services to serve such sites; and describes the long-term fiscal impact to the county or region of the construction, ownership, maintenance, and replacement of infrastructure and public facilities and the provision of public services to serve development of such sites;

Strategic Growth Report

Colorado's DOLA is publishing 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.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The City of Idaho Springs recently was included as part of the Denver Regional Council of Government's (DRCOG's) Regional Housing Needs Assessment for the Denver Region.

The regional assessment analyzed recent trends, current supply and demand for housing; present needs; and future population projections to determine the amount of housing each community in the Denver Region will need by 2032 and 2050. They also determined the overall need across the Denver Region.

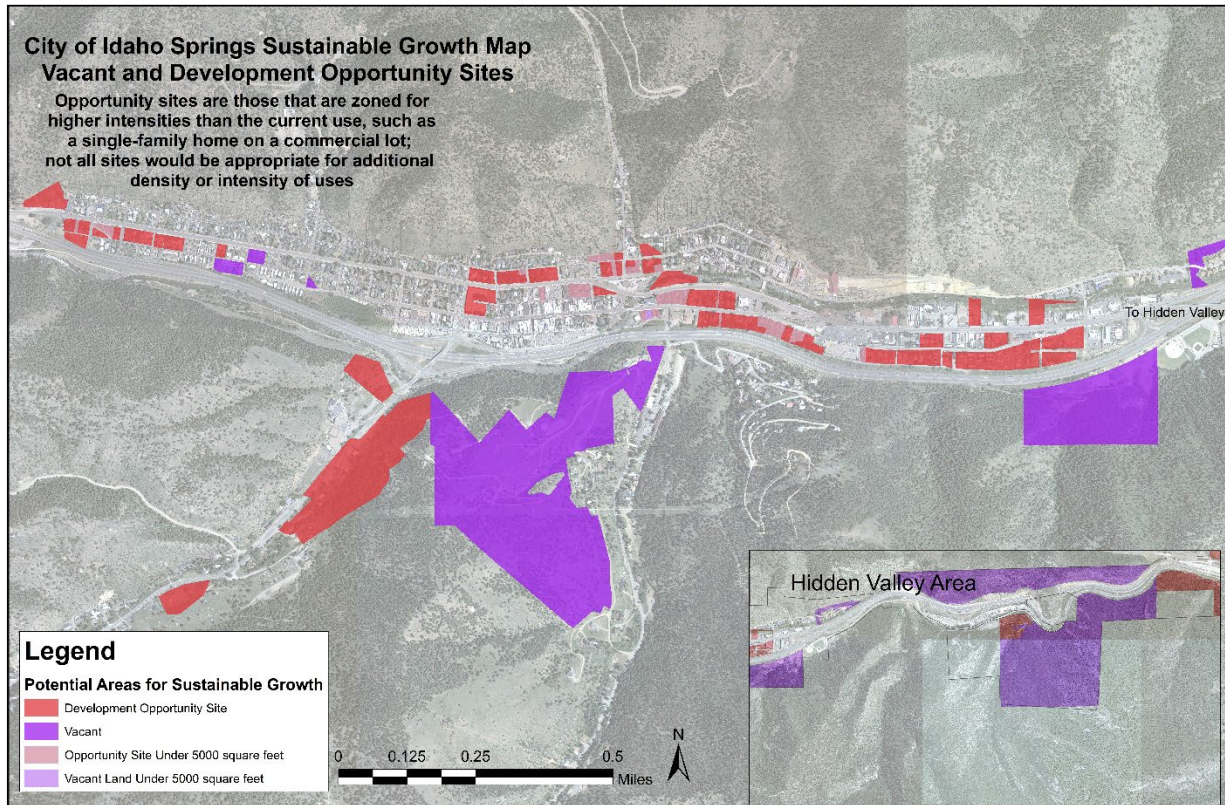
The assessment found that by 2032, Idaho Springs needs an additional 109 housing units, ranging from low-income affordable housing to market-rate housing. Given this need for housing, consideration of how to strategically grow is paramount to avoid sprawling development and the negative outcomes that can result.

Strategic Growth in Idaho Springs

Strategic growth in Idaho Springs will consider ways to redevelop existing sites that can accommodate additional density or undeveloped sites in the city, to avoid building housing in wildfire prone areas, in areas that cannot accommodate additional densities, or in areas that are important natural areas near the existing city limits. It also considers quality of life considerations, such as walkability to businesses, transit, and services; access to outdoor and recreational spaces; and other concerns.

As part of this element, the city has created a Sustainable Growth Map showing all vacant and "development opportunity" sites that are underutilized based on the existing zoning designation for the property. This would refer to a property that currently has a single-family home on-site but is zoned for commercial development or multifamily housing. This does not mean that the site is appropriate for higher density – it only means that the site is zoned to allow for more density than what presently exists.

Strategic Growth Map City of Idaho Springs



What this map shows 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. While there are approximately 40 vacant properties within city limits, 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.

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.

As of 2025, there are 944 housing units in Idaho Springs. Considering all lots in the city that are zoned residential or would allow multifamily housing, this equates to an average density across the city of 1.5 units per acre. Approximately 275 acres of land zoned residential are currently vacant. Considering only properties that already have development, the average residential density of the city is 2.74 units per acre.

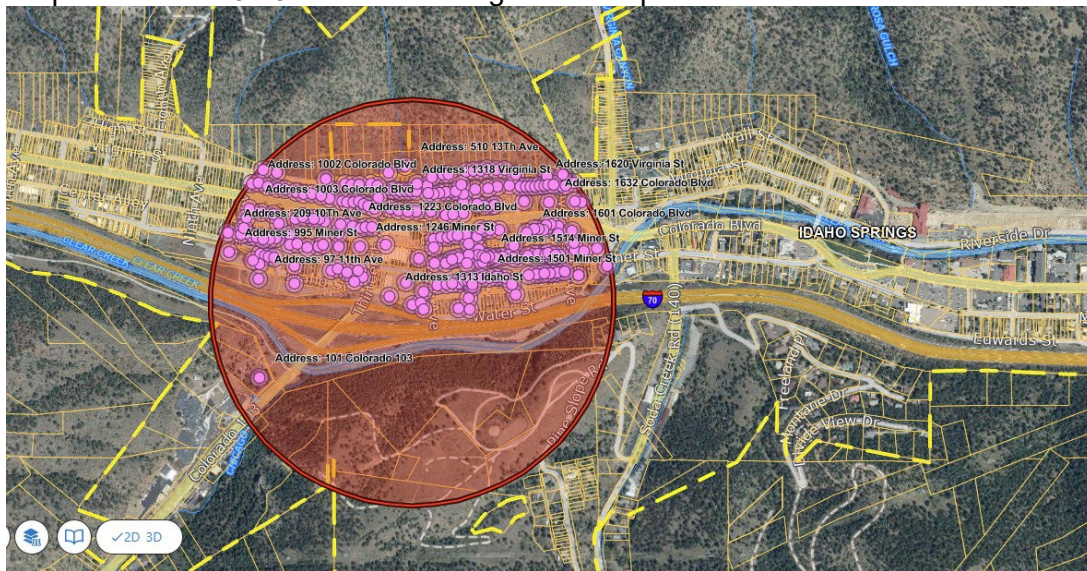
This is increasing with the Fieldhouse Apartments complex at 905 Miner Street just west of Exit 240 which contain 119 units on 3.31 acres – an average density of 35.9 units/acre. This increases the overall density of the city to ~3.1 units per acre. This sort of development is a good example of the type of redevelopment project that meets the state's vision for strategic growth. It is located on a lot that has existing infrastructure nearby – water and sewer, paved roads, and other utilities; is walkable to the downtown core; is near a highway interchange; and is within 0.25 miles of a public transit stop.

Currently, the city has 99 acres of land deemed “underutilized” that are development opportunity areas where additional density could be achieved. Taken with ~175 acres of vacant land, the city has nearly 275 acres of land that can be redeveloped or developed for the first time.

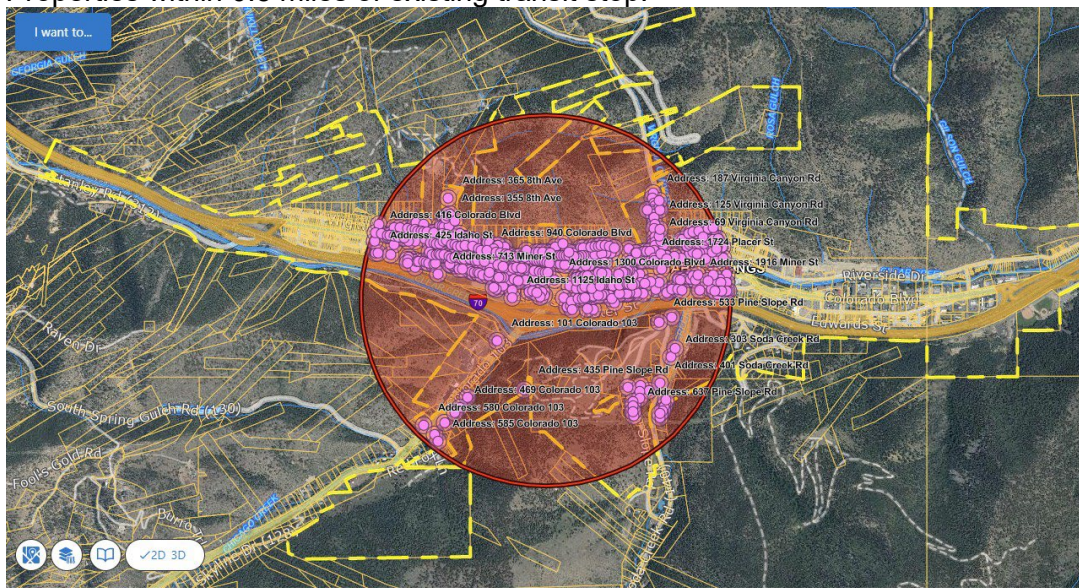
Of the properties that can be considered “underutilized,” context is important. A 5,000 square foot lot would not be able to accommodate a substantial increase in density because of the need for on-site parking, the city’s existing 35’ height limit, and required property line setbacks. Of sites designated as “development opportunity” sites, 109 of the 429 properties are under 5,000 square feet.

Access to transit, shops and restaurants, and essential services (doctor’s office, hardware store, etc.) is another key component of strategic growth.

Properties within 0.25 miles of existing transit stop:



Properties within 0.5 miles of existing transit stop:



Another important consideration of strategic growth 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 developed properties in proximity to the redevelopment site. Historic preservation becomes an important aspect to help shape growth strategically, since the city has a large number of potentially historic residential homes in existing neighborhoods.

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.

The Three Mile Area Plan's conclusion that there is limited potential for annexations suggests that the potential for sprawl like the development occurring in the Denver Metro Area is relatively low.

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 lots 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.

Potential Policies/Tools/Strategies:

- Steep slope requirements (limiting development on certain slope percentages)

- Incentive programs for redevelopment in certain opportunity areas (such as EEOD) that focus on meeting certain city goals

Objective: Underutilized or vacant city properties will be prioritized for redevelopment when not needed for a municipal purpose. Affordable workforce housing would be the top priority for these types of properties.

Objective: Explore ways to increase density within City Limits by redeveloping underutilized properties that have the infrastructure and size necessary for redevelopment.

Objective: Continue to promote redevelopment of the East End Overlay District in accordance with Chapter 26 of the Idaho Springs Municipal Code.

CHAPTER 10: HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT

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 are highly valued by its residents. Idaho Springs contains an array of Victorian era homes and commercial buildings, ~~especially in the downtown area along Miner Street~~. Many of the structures within the City exceed 100 years in age.

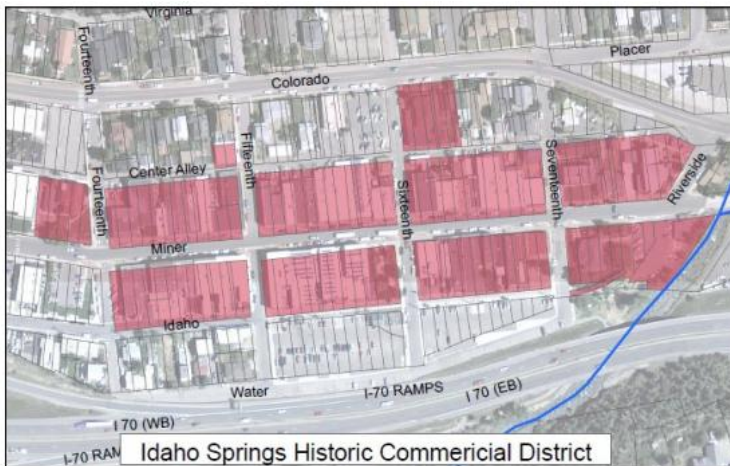
WHAT IS HISTORIC PRESERVATION?

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, a part of our past disappears forever.

BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

• Defining a community's identity	• Encouraging reuse of existing buildings
• Preserving a community's past	• Benefiting local businesses
• Revitalizing Main Streets	• Significantly increasing tourism
• Increasing tax base	• Serving as a vehicle for additional funding
• Increasing property values	

Historic Preservation has proven to provide many benefits. Colorado Preservation Inc. ~~in 2015~~ ~~has~~ 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.



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HERITAGE TOURISM

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 ~~73.395.4 million leisure trips took place in Colorado during 2015~~ visitors to the state as of 2024. ~~These tourists spent over \$19.1 billion on travel that year, supporting over 160,000 jobs throughout the state. In addition, tourism activities generated \$1.1 billion in state and local taxes, not including property taxes. Spending generated by overnight travel in particular accounted for approximately \$17.4 billion.~~ These visitors contributed approximately \$28.5 billion to the state’s economy, supporting approximately 188,210 jobs (Colorado OEDIT). <https://oedit.colorado.gov/press-release/tourism-industry-contributes-285-billion-to-colorado-economy-and-supports-over-188000> .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 (History Colorado). <https://www.historycolorado.org/press-release/2021/10/21/new-report-highlights-massive-economic-benefits-archaeology-colorado>

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.

Section 106 in Regard to Effects of Federally-Funded Projects on Historic Resources.

Another result of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is the requirement for Section 106 review. Section 106 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. ~~For properties that are listed on the National Register, Section 106 requires the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register. The Advisory Council oversees and ensures the consideration of historic properties in the federal planning process.~~

Idaho Springs Area of Potential Effect

Due to the wealth of historic resources, the number of historic mines in and around the ridges surrounding Idaho Springs, and the impacts that have been associated with I-70 highway improvements, the City of Idaho Springs has consistently held the position that the City of Idaho Springs APE should extend the length of the City from ridgeline to ridgeline.

1041 REGULATIONS IN REGARD TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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.

THE COLORADO CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

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 what is known as 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. [The City of Idaho Springs is a CLG.](#)

IDAHO SPRINGS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In 1984, the Idaho Springs Downtown Commercial District was surveyed and added to the National Register of Historic Places. The District included 57 individual structures. In 1988 the City Council adopted an ordinance establishing the Idaho Springs Historic Preservation District, became a Certified Local Government, and created the Idaho Springs Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC). Idaho Springs' Historic Preservation Ordinance requires certificates of appropriateness for building permits or demolition permits for exterior modifications to any structures located within the Idaho Springs Historic Downtown District, or a locally, nationally or state registered historic resource. ~~The City should explore completing a historical resources survey of the entire City.~~

2002 Reconnaissance Survey

In 2002 the City of Idaho Springs HPRC selected a qualified member of their commission to conduct a reconnaissance survey to determine which residences in the City were 50 years or older, had outstanding architectural styles or features, or were associated with people associated with the historical context of the City of Idaho Springs. A \$24,000 grant was awarded to Idaho Springs for this purpose, and a map was completed indicating the following:

1. Properties that had already been surveyed;
2. Potentially eligible historic properties that had not yet been surveyed;
3. Properties warranting further research that had not yet been surveyed;
4. Non-Contributing Sites.

The result of this project was to consider the possibility of another historic district along Colorado Boulevard west of 13th as well as to serve as a resource to encourage additional Section 106 review on future CDOT projects.

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2022 Historic Resources Survey Plan

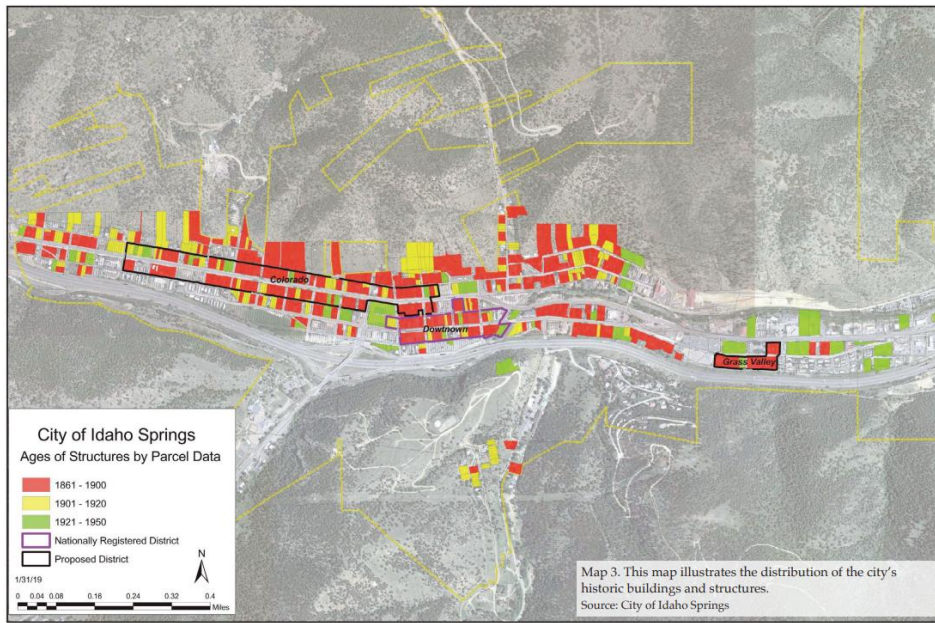
In 2022, the city adopted a Historic Resources Survey Plan using funding received from the State Historic Fund. The Plan was completed to assist the community in analyzing the current state of the city's survey program and make informed decisions regarding future documentation projects. Additionally, the Plan identifies eight (8) key goals and objectives to consider and implement going forward. Several of these are already underway. The Plan also includes an analysis of existing structures in town, ranking them as low, medium, or high integrity buildings.

The Plan identified a potential neighborhood historic district surrounding West Colorado Boulevard from approximately 6th Avenue to 17th Avenue and an additional neighborhood historic district in the Grass Valley area. The Plan suggests that additional comprehensive surveying needs to be done to fully assess potential designations.

The key priorities from the plan are included as an objective below that will continue to be monitored and worked on over the duration of this Plan.

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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 a number of 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. The ability of the Historical Society to successfully raise significant funds (approximately \$1.4 million) toward common goals with the City has also resulted in numerous accomplishments.

Among those accomplishments are the restoration and maintenance support of the Charlie Tayler Waterwheel, exterior restoration of the narrow gauge train and the construction and operation of the Idaho Springs Visitor Center that houses the history museum, including a US Forest Service information Office. Funds from multiple sources have already been secured to restore the Central Hose House and the Jackson Monument. All of the noted properties are City owned. The preservation of the City's historic assets is an important goal for both entities not only for the intrinsic historic value to the community but as a major catalyst for the very important, lucrative and growing Heritage Tourism industry.

Historic Preservation and Review Commission (HPRC)

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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:

1. 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.
2. Protect the unique scenic and historic atmosphere and character of the City and protect the architectural, cultural and aesthetic heritage of the City.
3. Strengthen the City's economy by protecting and enhancing the City's attractions for visitors.
4. Preserve and protect the continued existence of historic structures and sites within the Historic District and other designated sites.
5. 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.
6. Prevent the use of materials or design in the repair, construction, reconstruction or remodeling of structures which:
 - a. Adversely affect the desirability of the district or other designated site for business and residential purposes; or
 - b. Are hazardous or incompatible with the historic character of the District or other designated site.

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Historic Sites and Facilities Board

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The Historic Sites and Facilities (Sites & Facilities) Board was formally established as a city board in 2024 to perform several functions. The Board's jurisdiction extends to sixteen (16) city-owned sites around the community.

Strategic Plan:

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The Sites and Facilities Board is tasked with preparing a work plan that identifies and priorities necessary work at the city's historic sites and facilities. In 2025, City Council adopted the 2025-2028 work plan that the Board had prepared. This work plan identifies the projects necessary at each site and facility in the city and establishes priorities on how quickly the work needs to be done.

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Oversight of Maintenance Practices and Project Review:

Since 2017, the city has made substantial progress protecting the historic resources the city owns. The city's historic Coach has been successfully restored in partnership with the Georgetown Loop. The coach and engine will be relocated to the east side of the City Hall property and a cover will need to be built in the near future to protect the resources. The engine restoration will be the next major project to be completed and is a high priority. Signage at each of the city's sites and facilities is also needed to help highlight the city's history. The Hose House #2 was renovated in 2022/2023, and the Idaho Springs Powder House was renovated in 2025. Future improvements at the Powder House site may include a park or picnic area to further highlight that space.

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 (2351 Riverside Drive)
2. Hose House #2 (NE corner of 6th Ave and Colorado Blvd)
3. Methodist Episcopal Church (1400 Colorado Blvd)
4. Miner Street Bridge (East of Miner St and 17th Ave)
5. Bryan Hose House (Illinois St and Virginia St)

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 Property

1. Blue Ribbon Tunnel (adjacent to Charlie Tayler Waterwheel Park)
2. Steve Canyon Statue (NE corner of 23d Ave and Colorado Blvd)
3. City Hall
4. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church (1921 Virginia St)
5. 804 Colorado Blvd – private residence
6. 1520 Virginia St – private residence

National Register of Historic Places

1. Argo Mill and Tunnel (2351 Riverside Drive)
2. Hose House #2 (NE Corner of 6th Ave and Colorado Blvd)
3. Methodist Episcopal Church (1400 Colorado Blvd)
4. Miner Street Bridge (East of Miner Street and 17th 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 23rd 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)

The Idaho Springs Registered Historic Resources map indicates the location of the Historic Downtown District and additional historic resources.



HISTORIC RESOURCES ELEMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective: Continue to protect & preserve the historic resources of the Idaho Springs area.

Strategies

- a.—Explore how to increase participation in the HPRC and reduce duplication of services. Consider retaining the services of an architect or preservationist to educate and make recommendations to the HPRC.
- b.—Ensure the building permit review process requires HPRC review prior to application of building permits and not following building permit approval.
- ~~c.a.~~ Work with the State or other potential entities toward available grants to complete a City-wide survey of historic properties. The HPRC and city staff shall evaluate additional historic areas and individual landmarks for potential designation by City Council. Identify funding sources to undertake an update of existing survey data and preparation of designation proposals.
- ~~d.b.~~ Continue to work with the Historic Society of Idaho Springs and ~~its leadership committee~~ other entities to preserve, protect and improve the historic resources of the community.

- c. Maintain the integrity of the Idaho Springs 1041 Regulations and the associated 1041 Impact Area.
- d. HPRC evaluate additional historic areas and individual landmarks for potential designation by City Council. Identify funding sources to undertake an update of existing historic resources survey data and prepare designation proposals.
- e. HPRC engage property owners in the process of designating additional historic districts and landmarks.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. 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.
- i. Evaluate the existing application review process for possible improvements to the process, documents, and regulations.

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Objective: Promote the benefits of historic preservation.

Strategies

- a. Identify and promote incentives for local property owners to assist with preservation efforts.
- b. Create and distribute handouts and a website to 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. ~~Prepare content on cultural resources through multiple media sources (website, podcasts, road markers, etc.).~~ With the Sites and Facilities Board, 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. 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.
- d. ~~Develop preservation tourism opportunities that help increase the economic viability of the historic resources of the community.~~
- e. ~~Coordinate with the Historical Society of Idaho Springs, the HPRC and History Colorado to educate decision makers and the public in regard to the benefits and impacts of historic preservation.~~

Objective: Promote public engagement and information on historic preservation.

Strategies:

- Prepare content on cultural resources through multiple media sources (website, podcasts, road markers, etc.).
- Coordinate with the Historical Society of Idaho Springs, the HPRC and History Colorado to educate decision makers and the public in regard to the benefits and impacts of historic preservation.
- Engage with the public and partner organizations in preservation activities
- Provide preservation information to residents, businesses, and visitors.

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Objective: Implement the eight (8) recommendations and priorities from the 2022 Historic Resources Survey Plan

Strategies:

- Conduct a citywide selective intensive survey of sites that have been chosen for documentation based upon the results of the informal reconnaissance survey performed as part of the Historic Resources Survey Plan.
- Establish city infrastructure to facilitate designation of historic sites and begin a pilot program to encourage owners of properties determined eligible for listing to pursue designation.
- Perform additional research and selective intensive surveys in Grass Valley to determine eligibility for a local historic district.
- Promote tax credit opportunities for local residents and property owners interested in local designation and historic preservation efforts.
- Prepare historic context to tell the story of tourism in Idaho Springs, presenting the experience of tourists and local entrepreneurs from the early 1880s when health-seekers journeyed to Indian Hot Springs to the post-1958 period when the recently completed I-70 ushered in crowds of auto tourists.
- Prepare historic context to tell the story of ethnic communities and associated places in Idaho Springs, including Chinese, Italian, Cornish, and other immigrants critical to the mining industry and development of Idaho Springs.
- Consult with National Register staff about 2005 survey forms and create a plan to designate a West Colorado Boulevard historic district.
- Conduct citywide selective intensive survey to benefit the city's Sites and Facilities Board, which is tasked with overseeing the care of both city-owned historic properties and designated landmarks in public ownership.

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

Strategies:

- Consider 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.

- Promote new developments and redevelopments outside the historic district that complement and build upon existing historic character through the creation of stronger architectural guidelines for single-family, multifamily, and commercial development
- Strengthen building permit and zoning processes to encourage property owners to consider the historic character of Idaho Springs and demonstrate how they have taken community historic preservation values into account in designing their project.
- 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.

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CHAPTER 5: 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.”

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 is one of the distinctive physical aspects of a community. 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. In communities where housing is unaffordable to the local workforce, it can reduce the number of employees a business can attract, as few will commute long distances from larger population centers for service-level wages. It also reduces residents' ability to obtain goods and services. This affects local businesses, and reduces sales tax available to local governments

As there is presently little housing for this income level in the City, businesses have found it challenging to attract or retain employees at service level jobs due to the lack of housing in the City and the economic unfeasibility of service workers commuting to Idaho Springs more than 30 miles from the Denver Metropolitan Area.

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. Many of these long-established housing types, such as duplexes and triplexes, exist in zone districts that presently do not allow them by right, and additional development processes with public hearings are required for any repairs or upgrades to them. The “newer” areas of housing in the City include multifamily units at the East End, and a significant number of manufactured homes at the south side of the City, adjacent to I-70. Much of the manufactured housing was constructed between 1950 and 1980.

[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.](#)

RECENT HOUSING STUDIES

There have been several recent housing studies conducted. [In 2012, the Clear Creek County Housing Needs Assessment was completed for Clear Creek County.](#) 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).

PROPOSITION 123

The State of Colorado voters passed Proposition 123 in 2022, which created approximately \$300 million in funding to be used for affordable housing projects around the state. To be eligible for this funding, municipalities and counties were required to opt-in to Proposition 123, which the City of Idaho Springs did in 2023. Proposition 123 requires municipalities to pass regulations to support affordable housing construction, such as expedited permit reviews, amendments that reduce regulations and requirements, and other measures meant to incentivize housing development around the state. In exchange, municipalities and developers within those municipalities are eligible for funding to purchase lands for housing, build housing developments, or work with developers and property owners to deed restrict housing to affordable rates for the local workforce.

Idaho Springs has worked to fulfill its Proposition 123 commitments, which were for 22 new affordable housing units by the end of 2026. As of 2025, the City has met its commitment with the Fieldhouse Apartments, though reporting is ongoing.

Availability of Housing

There ~~has been~~was little new housing construction in Idaho Springs ~~since 2000~~between 2000 and 2017, when the previous Comprehensive Plan was adopted, ~~with~~As of the 2020 Census, the City had approximately 950 existing housing units. ~~EPS estimated a demand of at least 150 additional housing units over the next 10 years.~~ The DRCOG Regional Housing Needs Assessment estimated that the city currently needs approximately 109 new housing units by 2032, at a range of AMIs (though the greatest need is at the 0-50% AMI level). There are presently 98 motels within the City of Idaho Springs, and most of these motels are being used as full-time housing. The lack of affordable housing has resulted in seasonal employees illegally camping in and around the City, as well. The City has sought to address this by passing an ordinance regulating commercial lodging facilities to allow them to operate as extended stay lodging facilities, improving oversight, enforcement, and safety within those units. Additionally, the City has worked with developers on several substantial housing projects that meet affordability criteria, including the Riverbend Apartments (47 affordable units) and Fieldhouse Apartments (119 affordable middle-income units). EPS calculated the type of housing stock in the City of Idaho Springs, as well as the ownership patterns, as can be seen below:

HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE, 2014			
* Source: Economic & Planning Systems, (2017), <i>Idaho Springs East End Market Analysis</i>			
Single Family Detached	52%	5-9 Units Structures	2%
Single Family, Attached	14%	10-19 Unit Structures	5%
2 Unit Structures	1%	20-49 Unit Structures	6%
3-4 Unit Structures	14%	Mobile Home	7%

HOUSING UNITS OWNED VS. RENTED 2016		
* Source: Economic & Planning Systems, (2017), <i>Idaho Springs East End Market Analysis</i>		
Owner-Occupied	490	52%
Renter-Occupied	339	36%
Vacant	110	12%

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 is in contrast to the city's current zoning regulations, however.

As can be seen, the majority of housing in Idaho Springs is single family residential, with more than a third of the population being renters.

Quality and Age of Housing

The existing housing stock is relatively old, with only 3 percent of the City's housing units built after 2000, while 44 percent were built before 1939 and one-third were built between 1960 and 1979. Older homes can be expensive to repair and update, many homes are not consistent with current building codes, and lower income owners often cannot afford a bank loan to make repairs. Upon aging to 40 or 50 years, houses are normally in need of considerable major structural repairs or renovation of major systems such as roofing, plumbing, and heating. There is also a sizeable number of manufactured homes within the City that are more than 40 years old, dilapidated, with owners who cannot afford to buy new ones. Given the high demand for workforce housing, versus the inadequate supply and limited options, some landlords have had little incentive to upkeep and maintain their properties.

Affordability of Housing

Attainable Housing

Attainable housing has been a growing concern in recent years as the increase in housing costs has outpaced wage increases. Attainable housing is usually described in one of two ways:

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1. A general term to describe housing availability for all types of housing and income levels in a community.
2. When housing consumes no more than 30% of a household's gross, pre-tax income and can meet the "core housing need" which is housing that is safe, in a reasonable state of repair and large enough to accommodate household members. Those who pay more than 30% of their income for housing expenses (rent/mortgage payment and utilities) are considered "cost burdened."

Workforce Housing

The US Department of Housing and Development (HUD) defines "Workforce Housing" as housing available to those making between 50% to 120% Area Median Income. This is commonly thought of as housing available to teachers, firefighters, policeman, government workers, etc. Workforce housing should also be in relative proximity to the local workforce. A household making the Idaho Springs median household income of \$52,000 and spending 30 percent of income on housing can afford a \$207,000 home, or \$800 in monthly rent. With the current price of a single-family home being \$275,000 and typical rent being \$1,300, many are priced out of the housing market or are cost burdened.

Affordable Housing

The City of Idaho Springs has a predominately service based economy. The typical service worker annual salary is approximately \$22,000. A worker in the service industry can afford a mortgage or rent payment of approximately \$550 monthly (an approximately \$65,000 house).

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In order for housing to be affordable to those earning incomes far below the market price of housing or rent in the City of Idaho Springs, subsidies, regulations or public-private partnerships may be required. One regulatory mechanism that could aid in the construction of new affordable housing is an "Inclusionary Housing Ordinance" which requires a certain number of deed restricted affordable units, or fees in lieu of units, be set aside whenever a new development project is proposed.

Idaho Springs' location in Clear Creek County can be beneficial for both HUD programs and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Clear Creek County is within the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). As this MSA is based on a higher urban income, more households in Idaho Springs could qualify for HUD programs. However, Clear Creek County is also within the USDA's Rural Development Zone, which would qualify Idaho Springs households for Rural Development Funds.

Within this definition, the City has identified several different categories of "affordability" and views affordability as a spectrum, rather than a black or white designation. The City defines affordability in the five following categories:

- Ultra Low-Income Housing: 0-20% of AMI
- Low-Income Housing: 20-50% of AMI
- Moderate-Income Housing: 50-80% of AMI
- Middle-Income Housing: 80-120% of AMI
- Market-Rate Housing: 120%+ of AMI

RESOURCES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Resources exist to aid in more affordable housing. In addition to HUD and USDA programs, several prominent agencies include the Clear Creek Housing Authority, the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) and the Division of Housing of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). These agencies provide home purchase and refinance loans, land banking, grants, down payment assistance, closing costs assistance, and offer loans and credits to build or renovate multifamily housing for moderate to low income households. In addition, Idaho Springs is within an Enterprise Zone, which provides tax incentives to encourage job creation and capital investment.

MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENT

The majority of the City of Idaho Springs is already built out, and with the topographic constraints as well as the lack of infrastructure on available vacant land, there are limited opportunities for new low density single family residential developments. However, there are redevelopment sites within the City where high density multifamily should be encouraged. This includes large vacant properties in the periphery of the City that are currently lacking infrastructure, where encouraging a mix of housing along with increased density can result in the economies of scale to make housing units financially feasible. The Potential Multifamily Opportunity Sites Map indicates areas within the City where higher density multifamily housing could be encouraged. These areas are meant to represent where multifamily would be appropriate as a stand-alone use, although the map does not necessarily suggest these areas should be comprised entirely of multifamily residential.

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SENIOR HOUSING

The Denver Region's population is undergoing unprecedented change. Twenty years from now, one in four of the Region's residents will be 60 years or older. During the next 10 years, the Region will experience a more than 40 percent increase in the 60-plus population. By comparison, the increase in all other age categories will be just over 10 percent during the same time. The growth in the older adult population will bring increased demands for aging services at the local and regional level and affect nearly every aspect of community life. A growing population of elderly residents means greater demand for senior housing with specialized services. It also likely means more elderly people will want to continue living in the homes they own or have known for many years; that is, "aging in place." Universal Design needs to be retrofitted into existing structures and incorporated into new ones. "Universal Design" refers to 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. 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 owns both properties. Project Support I is privately financed and has 14 units with 13 rent assistance units funded through donations. All units have one bedroom. Project Support II is a HUD property with 16 units, 15 with HUD rental assistance. There are no restricted rental properties targeted to families, individuals other than seniors, or persons with disabilities in Idaho Springs.

[In 2025, the City acquired a 1.99-acre property adjacent to the Idaho Springs Cemetery on Highway 103 for senior housing development. This property is restricted to use as senior housing, with plans in the works for multifamily development. In 2025, the City received a Local](#)

Planning Capacity (LPC) grant to help guide development of this property. Plans include 40+ units of affordable senior housing within ½ mile of the commercial Historic District. Entitlements are needed for this project.

Boomer Bond

In 2017 the City of Idaho Springs participated with the Denver Council of Governments (DRCOG) in the “Boomer Bond” program. As described by DRCOG, the goal of the Boomer Bond assessment was to facilitate discussion between City Staff and external stakeholders and develop recommendations for supporting healthy aging within the community. Four areas were assessed – housing, mobility and access, support services and community living. The final document provided recommendations in regard to how prepared the City was to deal with an increasing senior population. Where possible, recommendations of the Boomer Bond were incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

In addition to working toward including more multifamily units within the City of Idaho Springs, there are other measures that can be taken to increase housing opportunities within the City. Density can be increased within established neighborhoods with 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 on 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 are typically limited to a particular square footage or percentage in relation to the primary residential structure. 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.

The City allows ADUs in all residential zone districts and the C-1, C-2, and HD zone districts and encourages development on any lot that can accommodate an ADU.

The City should explore how to incentivize the construction of ADUs in appropriate locations through such measures as regulation revisions, easier and lower cost permitting, reduced water and sewer tap costs, and public outreach.

SHORT TERM RENTALS

Short Term Rentals (STRs), or “Vacation Rentals By Owner” (VRBOs) are increasingly on the rise, especially in Colorado. They provide additional income to property owners, increase the vacation housing stock, and provide attractive alternatives to hotels, especially in mountain resort towns. However, the rise in Short Term Rentals has also led to considerable controversy. Complaints include renters being in the STR to “vacation” and disrupting the surrounding neighborhood, parking issues, unregulated STRs not paying taxes and having an unfair advantage over the hotel industry, reducing the availability of longer term renting, and increasing neighborhood rental rates. Consequently, Colorado municipalities are beginning to grapple with how to regulate STRs. In 2016 the Town of Georgetown adopted regulations to control the STR industry, which include notification of the surrounding community, yearly permitting, inspections, tax requirements, business licensing, parking requirements, and limiting the number of STRs to a certain percentage. The City should consider whether STRs pose a significant issue and if STRs should be regulated.

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HOUSING OBJECTIVES

Objective: Maintain a diverse and affordable housing stock.

Strategies

- a. Promote high density multifamily in locations as indicated on the Potential Multifamily Opportunity Sites Map.
- b. Promote a wide range of housing alternatives including single family, multifamily and condominium/townhome development.
- c. Create regulations that incentivize the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units and Workforce and Affordable Housing by such means as allowing multi-bedroom ADUs, fee waivers, water tap reductions, expedited ~~and byright~~ permitting, etc.
- d. Consider an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance that either requires a certain amount of units to be affordable or requires fees-in-lieu of housing units with new development proposals.
- e. Encourage Developers to account for the housing needs of displaced residents whenever new housing projects are developed in place of existing older housing developments, such as existing mobile home communities.
- f. Support the principle of “no net loss” in regard to workforce and affordable housing.
- g. Encourage housing units on upper floor or behind existing storefronts of local businesses when adequate parking is demonstrated.
- h. Facilitate discussions with major employers to understand the needs of their employees and possibly forge new partnerships to help meet employee housing needs through public/private partnerships.
- i. ~~Study the prevalence and impacts of Short Term Rentals in the community and whether regulation is warranted. Continue to monitor and enforce STR regulations in the City to ensure that housing stock remains available for long-term occupancy.~~
- j. Cooperate with agencies such as CHFA, DOLA and Clear Creek Housing Authority to identify strategies for funding affordable housing projects and proactively outreach to potential developers.
- k. Consider implementation of a Housing Committee, either with City representatives or as a cooperative public / private effort to implement the strategies of this Housing Element.
- l. ~~a. Use the DRCOG Regional Housing Needs Assessment to promote construction of dwelling units that meet the needs of the community.~~

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m. 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.

k-n.

Objective: Preserve and renovate existing housing stock.

Strategies

- a. Participate in the local designation of Victorian-era homes and in securing financial assistance in maintaining those properties.
- b. Explore the rehabilitation and renovation of legally existing non-conforming multifamily units in appropriate locations within single family neighborhoods through mechanisms such as by-right permitting.
- c. 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.”

Strategies

- a. Participate in County and local jurisdictional efforts to locate and develop adequate facilities for seniors.
- b. Participate in County and local jurisdictional efforts to locate and develop adequate facilities for seniors, including active adult housing, assisted living facilities, and elderly care facilities and programs.
- c. Create incentives and opportunities for the development of senior housing or assisted living so that there are more age-in-place opportunities.

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OBJECTIVE: Consider Housing Equity when making land use decisions to ensure that current and future residents have access to safe, high quality housing options at a range of income levels.

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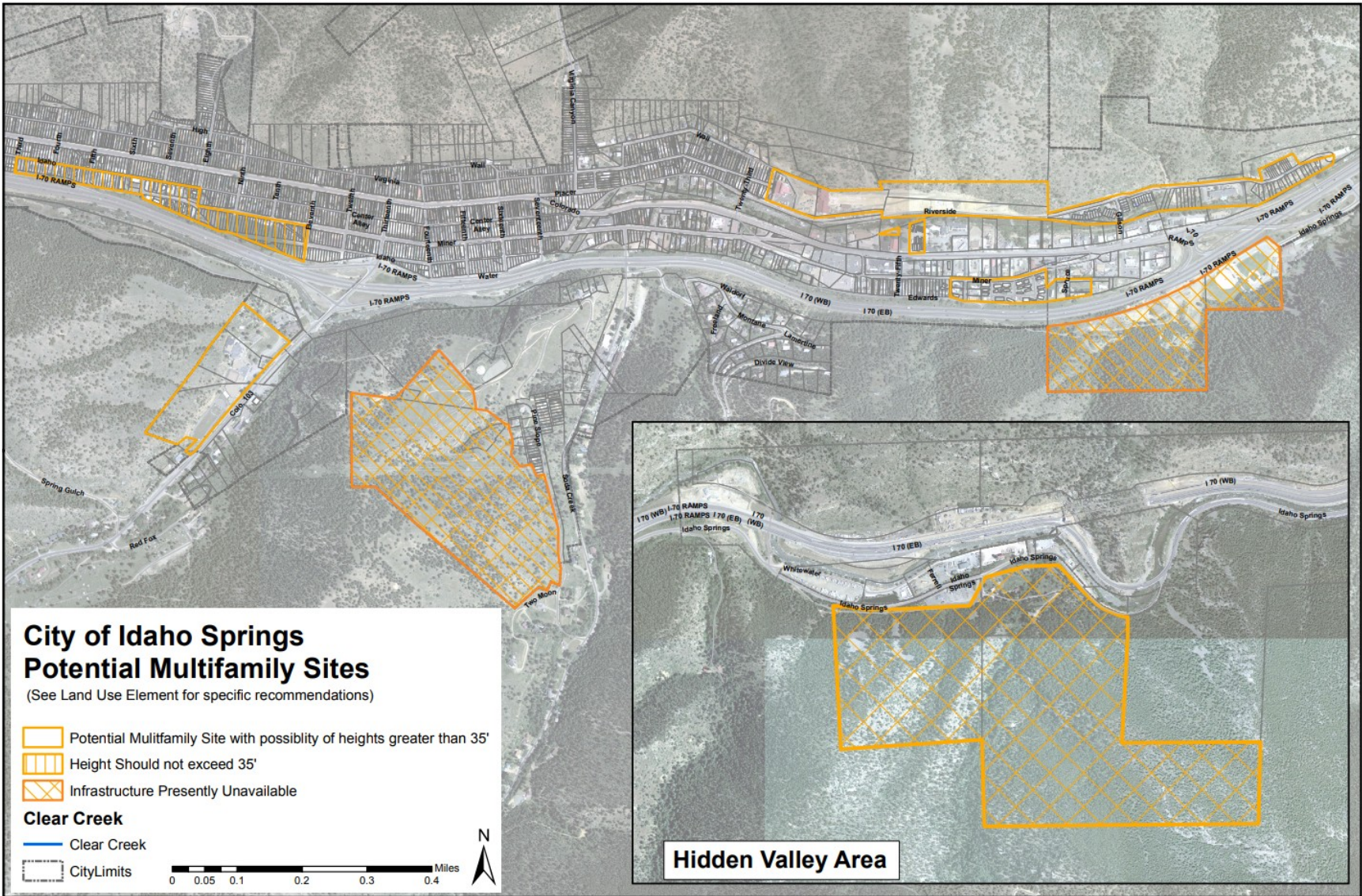
OBJECTIVE: Address housing needs at all AMIs through partnership with Clear Creek County, Georgetown, Silver Plume, Empire, the Clear Creek Regional Housing Authority, DRCOG, nonprofit groups, and other relevant groups.

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OBJECTIVE: Pursue an update to the city’s inclusionary housing policies to ensure that new developments help contribute to affordable housing development in Idaho Springs.

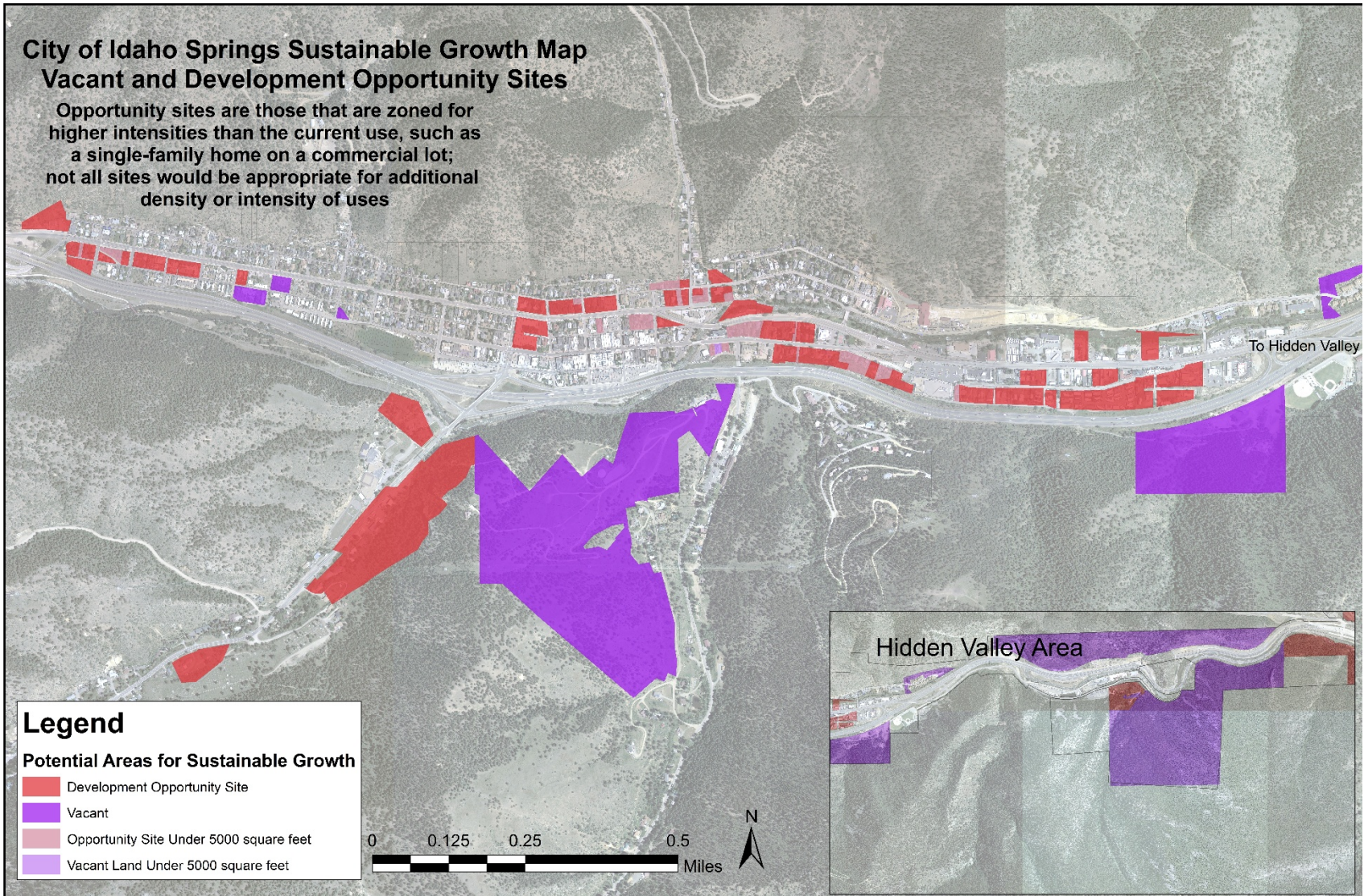
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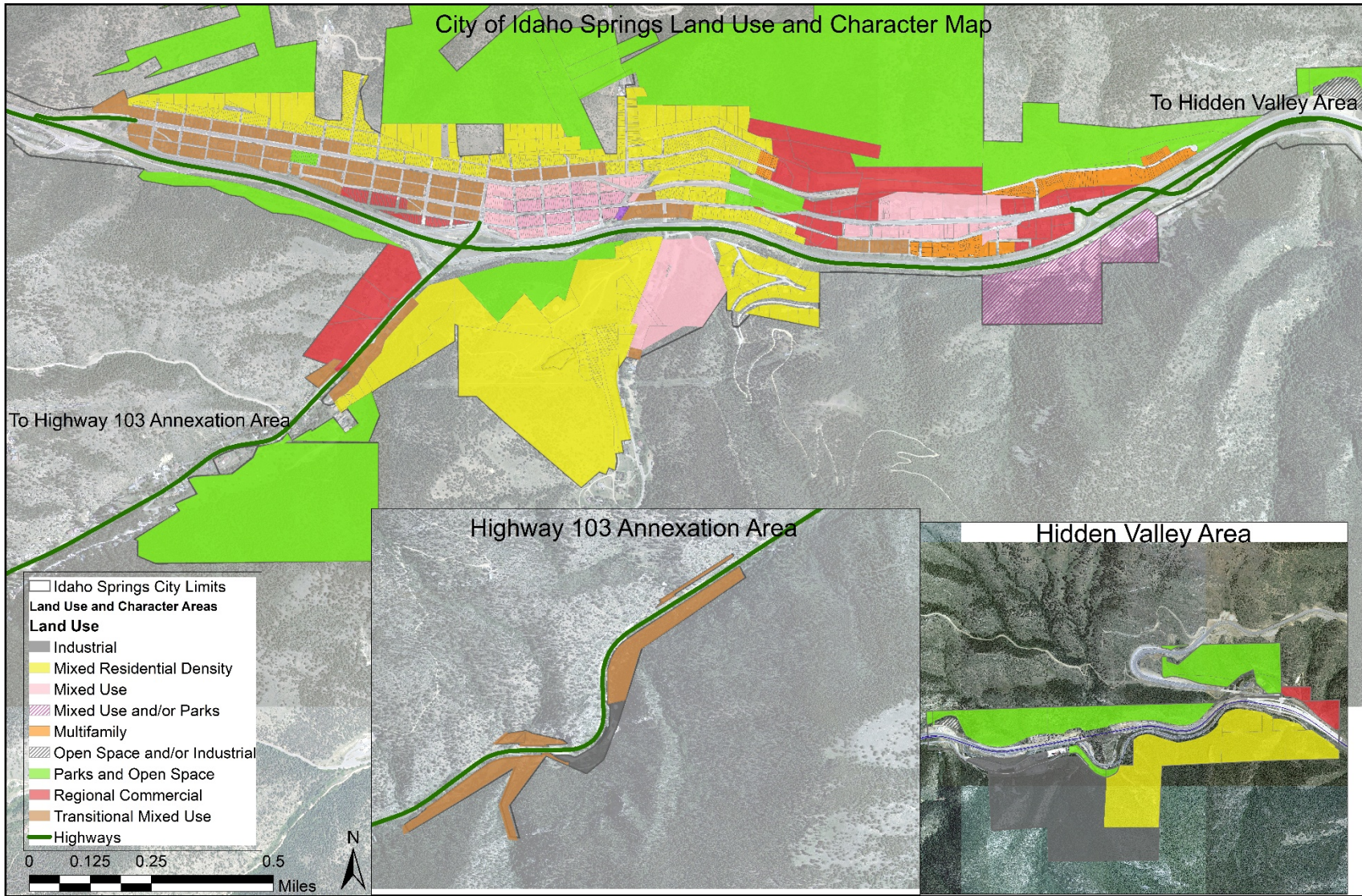
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City of Idaho Springs Sustainable Growth Map Vacant and Development Opportunity Sites

Opportunity sites are those that are zoned for higher intensities than the current use, such as a single-family home on a commercial lot; not all sites would be appropriate for additional density or intensity of uses







TO: Planning Commission
CC: City Administrator Andrew Marsh
FROM: Dylan Graves, Community Development Planner
SUBJECT: Potential Code Amendments / New Policies for New Developments in Idaho Springs
MEETING DATE: October 2, 2025

BACKGROUND

Over the past year, new developments in Idaho Springs have become a major topic of discussion. There is a substantial increase in interest in the city due to the Virginia Canyon Mountain Park (VCMP) on the east end, consistent downtown tourism, and several new or potential housing projects that will bring additional people to the community and change the city's built environment (for example, the Fieldhouse apartments). With the downtown mobility hub and parking structure improvements proposed for the next few years, potential redevelopment of the old Carlson Elementary at the gateway to Miner Street, and potential for redevelopment of other parcels in the city, discussing whether the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC) continues to address the city's goals and objectives may be beneficial. This may be better suited for a Comprehensive Plan discussion, rather than a code amendment now.

CONCERN: Some people in the city are concerned that new developments might not meet the city's goals and objectives, even if the proposal meets all current city regulations. This is becoming increasingly important as development pressures increase.

There are minimum standards for every aspect of development: building height, setbacks, architectural design, parking, etc. A proposal that meets all minimum standards should be approved since it conforms to all standards listed in the Idaho Springs Municipal Code (ISMC). That said, there has been discussion lately that the city should rethink some of the requirements to better consider how future developments fit within the existing built environment.

There are a few ways in which the city already attempts to ensure that development meets the city's goals and priorities. Staff would like Commission input on whether any of these requirements should be strengthened or modified to better get at community goals and objectives. Staff believe that this would be a good discussion topic for the comprehensive plan update.

First, Section 21-205 of the ISMC details design setting requirements for distinct areas in the city, including the east end, the commercial downtown and a two-block buffer around the downtown area, the west end, and community gateway areas. Second, Chapter 26 of the ISMC contains specific requirements for the East End Overlay District (EEOD), which was implemented to support redevelopment of the east end of the city. The EEOD has specific standards that are unique to the district, ensuring development that meets the city's goals for redevelopment of that part of the city. Third, properties in the commercial downtown Historic District are required to meet the city's *Design Guidelines for Historic Structures*. Fourth, Section 21-220 of the ISMC regulates multifamily and commercial architecture to ensure that these types of developments fit within the city's goals and objectives for new development and redevelopment. Additionally, the city has long-standing parking requirements; height, open space, and setback requirements; and other development standards to govern the built environment. We also have the requirement that new homes in the R-1 zone district cannot be more than 50% larger than the average of existing homes within 150' of the subject property (Sec. 21-62). Taken together, there are a lot of tools in the city's toolbox to address compatibility of proposed developments. The question is whether we believe the city should strengthen existing tools or add additional tools.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION:

- Consider amending certain sections of ISMC, including 21-103 through 21-109, 21-205, 21-220, etc.

If the city wants to have more regulatory tools in place to address new developments, we could consider updating the ISMC to better reflect the city's goals and priorities.

Sections 21-103 through 21-109 discuss the city's current development applications. They all contain certain criteria for approval to be considered when reviewing an application. We could audit the approval criteria for each application type and determine if anything is missing. For example, Section 21-109 (Variances) has six criteria for approval, none of which consider whether the design of the building matches the design of the existing developments in the city/area. Architectural compatibility is only considered as part of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) reviews, but HPRC has made the point that the city's historic character extends citywide, not just to the downtown commercial historic district.

Request for Direction: After reviewing the criteria for approval for the city's various development application types, are there any application types that appear to be missing critical review criteria that the Commission would like to see strengthened?

Section 21-205 deals with design setting. Design setting ensures that developments are compatible with the Comprehensive Plan recommendations to fit into the setting of the City and protect scenic view corridors, historic districts and historic landscapes, and apply standards to the East End, Commercial Downtown, West End, and Community Gateways. The HPRC has discussed the Commercial Downtown portion of this section in detail as it relates to the two-block buffer zone around the historic district and it may be worth considering changes to this section if things appear to be missing. The HPRC has also discussed how design citywide has an impact on the city's historic resources. As an example, the new Fieldhouse Apartments provide many benefits to the city – additional middle income rental housing, Miner Street improvements, utility improvements, etc. – but a critique has been that the height and mass of the buildings detract from the historic character of the city.

Request for Direction: Does the Commission share the HPRC's sentiments that the city should consider ways to better manage development in close proximity to the historic district? Does the Commission believe that there are improvements that could be made to design setting within the ISMC?

Section 21-220 requires standards to be met for multifamily and commercial development. The HPRC has discussed their interest in adding historic architectural criteria to this section so that new developments citywide need to incorporate historic design features to better complement the historic buildings in town. We could consider other changes to those types of architecture, too. The city does not have standards for single-family development currently, other than in certain areas (East End, Historic District, etc.).

Request for Direction: Would the Commission like to see more discussion on ways to incorporate more architectural design considerations within Section 21-220 of the ISMC to better reflect historical architecture types? Would the Commission like to see an analysis of potential design requirements for single-family developments?

Other sections could benefit from changes, too, but have not been reviewed in any detail. A recommendation staff have for the Comprehensive Plan is to create an objective around auditing the ISMC to find any inaccuracies, errors, or outdated code sections. This could be a way to catch other changes that might be needed elsewhere to better meet city goals and objectives.

OTHER POTENTIAL IDEAS:

- Ranking or points-based system to determine how well a proposed project meets the city's goals and objectives, creating a spectrum of compliance, rather than a simple yes or no. This could be an incentive program designed to grant projects bonuses for projects that go above and beyond minimum standards, or the city could make it mandatory that development projects include a certain percentage of the items that we determine to be important.

At a previous Planning Commission meeting, a potential update to the ISMC was brought up about a rating/points system that allows the city to review land use applications with more nuance. This was particularly in reference to affordable housing projects and incentive programs to bring in new affordable housing development, but this could also be applied to any new development in the city.

This is a tool used in other communities in the state, the closest (by distance) being Breckenridge.

Once minimum standards currently in the ISMC that any development would be required to meet, including zoning requirements (minimum setbacks, height limits, parking requirements, etc.), engineering requirements (drainage, grading, etc.), and building and fire code standards, are reached, the city could apply additional points to projects that address other key city goals. This system could be used to identify desirable items that are impactful but are not part of the minimum standards that must be met for every development. These desirable items could include:

- Environmental design (energy efficiency, water conservation, green roofs, LEED certification).
- Community benefits (affordable housing, public art, open space dedication).
- Design character (compatibility with historic or neighborhood style).
- Transportation (bike/pedestrian facilities, transit-supportive design).
- Economic contribution (supporting local workforce housing, mixed-use, year-round vitality).

The city could require that a certain percentage of “optional” items be included as mandatory, e.g. the development must include a certain number of the desirable items to get approval, or it could be an incentive program that grants developers bonuses for meeting additional city goals/objectives. Incentives might include density bonuses, height or setback bonuses, parking reductions, etc.

REQUEST FOR DIRECTION: What are the Commission’s thoughts on whether a points-based incentive program would be beneficial? Does the Commission think that a points-based system might be beneficial either as a mandatory requirement or as part of an incentive program?