



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LARIMER COUNTY

**Adopted July 17, 2019**

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

***Special thank you to the County residents, business owners, and other stakeholders that contributed to this Comprehensive Plan.***

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L O G A N S I M P S O N



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# ACRONYMS:

**AAB:** Agricultural Advisory Board  
**ADU:** Accessory Dwelling Unit  
**BCC:** Board of County Commissioners  
**BLM:** Bureau of Land Management  
**CD:** Conservation Development  
**CDBG-DR:** Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery  
**CE:** Conservation Easement  
**CIA:** Community Influence Area  
**CIP:** Capital Improvement Program  
**CPA:** Cooperative Planning Area  
**CNHP:** Colorado Natural Heritage Program  
**DOLA:** Department of Local Affairs  
**ESAB:** Environmental & Science Advisory Board  
**FCC:** Federal Communications Commission  
**FEMA:** Federal Emergency Management Agency  
**GIS:** Geographic Information System  
**GMA:** Growth Management Area  
**HMP:** Hazard Mitigation Plan  
**HOA:** Homeowner's Associations  
**HUD:** Department of Housing and Urban Development  
**IGA:** Intergovernmental Agreement  
**IPC:** Intergovernmental Partners Committee  
**LLAC:** Chamber of Commerce Local Legislative Affairs Committee  
**PAC:** Planning Advisory Committee  
**PC:** Planning Commission  
**PLUS:** Partnership Land Use System  
**RLUP:** Rural Land Use Process  
**SC/RSC:** Stakeholder Committee/Rural Stakeholder Committee  
**TAC:** Technical Advisory Committee  
**TDU:** Transferable Density Units  
**WUI:** Wildland-Urban Interface



*Horsetooth Reservoir. Photo: Larimer County*

# Chapter One In this Chapter

## FOUNDATION

### **What is this Plan?**

Introduction to the Plan's purpose and the planning process.

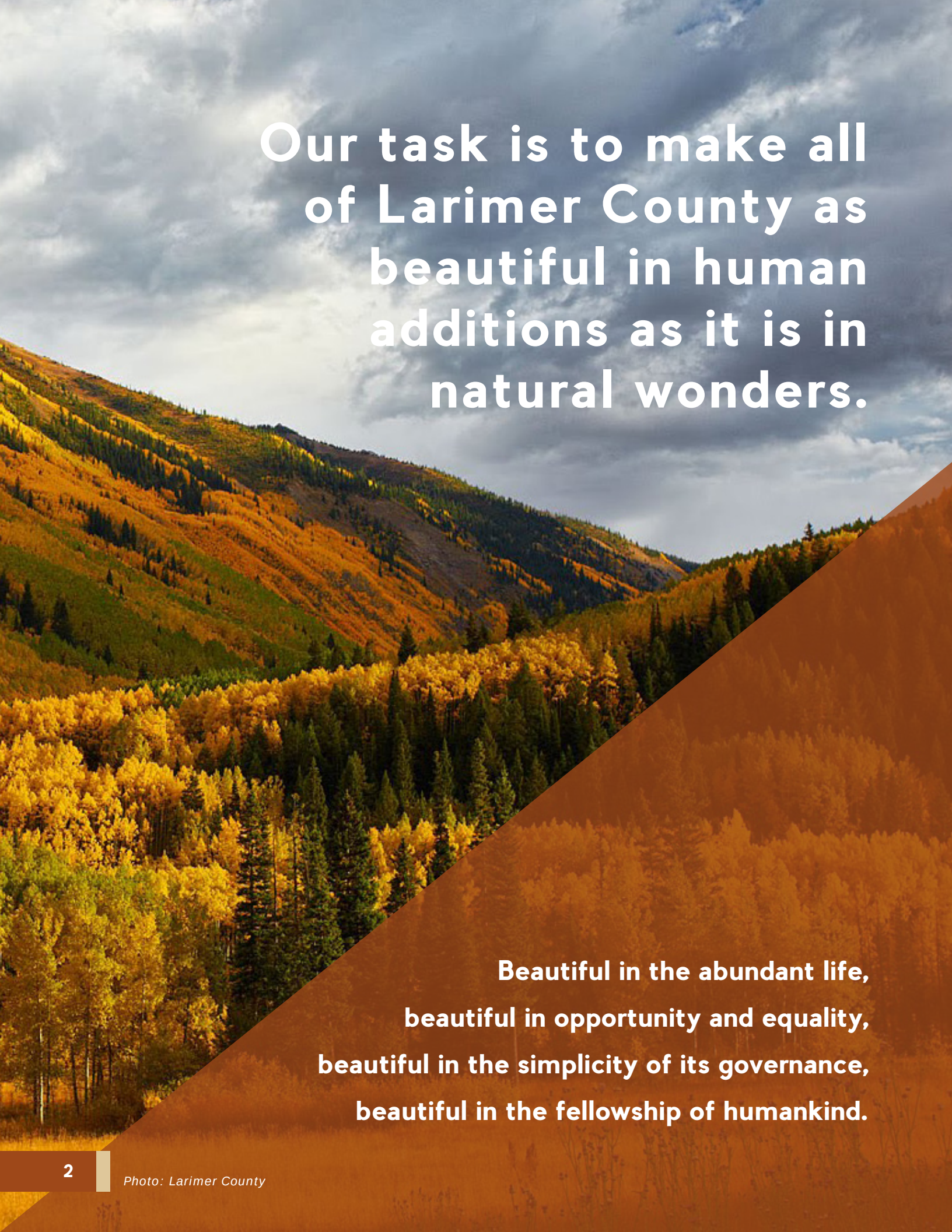
### **Foundational Plans.**

The influential plans that informed this planning process.

### **Big Issues.**

The issues and trends facing mountain and Front Range communities.





**Our task is to make all  
of Larimer County as  
beautiful in human  
additions as it is in  
natural wonders.**

**Beautiful in the abundant life,  
beautiful in opportunity and equality,  
beautiful in the simplicity of its governance,  
beautiful in the fellowship of humankind.**



# WHAT IS THE PLAN?

The Larimer County Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that establishes a long-range framework for decision-making for Larimer County. This Plan focuses on regional opportunities and challenges, with specific focus on the unique character of the unincorporated areas of Larimer County. Through Principles, Policies, and Implementation Strategies, the Plan provides policy guidance for future land development, public services, environmental protection, and to support future economic health to sustain the community. It is organized according to the Colorado Resiliency Framework, and replaces the 1997 Larimer County Master Plan.

Much like running a business, the future success of a community hinges on intentional and thoughtful planning. The owner's business plan identifies opportunities for growth and financial sustainability. The best business plans include a mission statement and list of specific and achievable goals, with supporting strategies, and measurable results.

Likewise, Larimer County is in the business of safeguarding public safety, health, and welfare; ensuring that new development provides adequate services to residents; economic development; and preserving natural resources for future generations. A unified vision and goals for the future offer internal consistency for staff and predictability for residents and businesses.

Most importantly, long-range planning is an opportunity to influence our trajectory—to set our own course for the future. Over the lifetime of the Plan, a span of 10 to 20 years, a single policy change can make a big cumulative impact. For example,

the 1997 Master Plan introduced the Rural Land Use Process and Conservation Development. The cluster development policies established over 20 years ago have resulted in thousands of acres of conserved residual land and more coherent rural patterns.

## Scope and Purpose

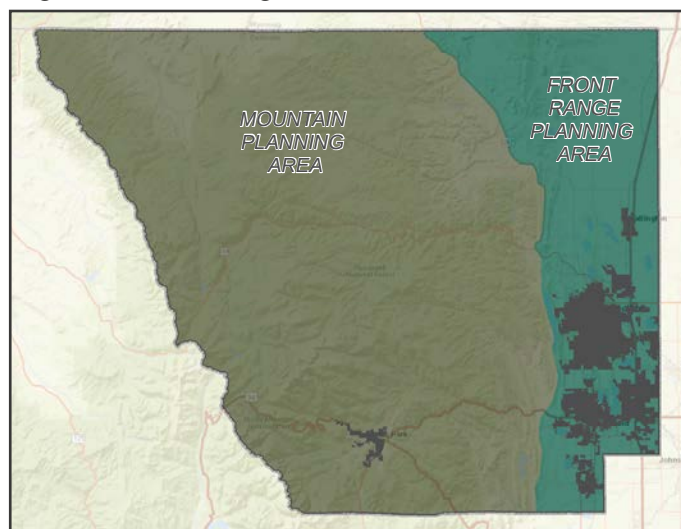
The planning area for this Comprehensive Plan includes all unincorporated areas with the exception of the Estes Valley Planning Area. The Plan does not address the incorporated areas of Fort Collins, Loveland, Berthoud, Wellington, Johnstown, Timnath, and Windsor, as cities and towns are governed by their own development codes and elected officials.

Comprehensive planning by county governments is authorized in Colorado Revised Statutes to achieve several purposes:

- To develop a community vision for the planning area and communicate that vision and the supporting land use policies to residents, landowners, developers and other governmental entities.
- To provide a policy basis for developing the Land Use Code and other land use regulations and procedures and to determine whether they are in harmony with the community's vision and implementation strategy.
- To provide a basis for intergovernmental agreements with the cities and towns of Larimer County, neighboring jurisdictions, and the many public and quasi-public agencies that provide services to Larimer County residents.
- To encourage County departments, other agencies, private developers, and landowners to design projects in harmony with the natural characteristics of the land and the capabilities of public services and facilities.
- To provide a basis for setting priorities and funding mechanisms for public capital improvements in Larimer County.

The Comprehensive Plan is aspirational and not intended to be a regulatory, prescriptive action plan. The strategies presented in Chapter 4 and Appendix E are best implemented through voluntary partnerships with each community, between departments, and through regional cooperation.

**Figure 1. Planning Areas**



Source: Larimer County

## STRATEGIC GROWTH AND WATER SUPPLY ELEMENTS

Colorado Senate Bill 24-174 (Sustainable Affordable Housing Assistance), adopted in 2024, is a major legislative measure that establishes statewide housing planning requirements to improve affordability. In addition to requirements for Housing Needs Assessments and Housing Actions Plans, this bill requires local governments to incorporate a Strategic Growth Element and a Water Supply Element into their comprehensive plans. These new comprehensive plan requirements are intended to support housing affordability by encouraging more efficient growth patterns, reducing sprawl, coordinating land use and infrastructure investments, and ensuring that future development is supported by available water resources.

The 2026 update of this Comprehensive Plan fulfills these statutory requirements. The Plan promotes compact, efficient development, conserves open space, and aligns future land use decisions with long-term water supply planning and conservation strategies to support responsible growth.

### The Strategic Growth Element requirements are met as described below:

- 1. Growth Policies and Tools:** This plan has 6 Principles and 51 Policies that work towards managing growth, minimizing sprawl, and avoiding development of high-value natural habitats and working farms. Additionally, the Framework Map and Categories reflect the intent of the strategic growth policies.
- 1. Vacant and Underutilized Sites:** The findings of the analysis of vacant and underutilized sites are summarized on the following pages and detailed in Appendix I.
- 2. Undeveloped (Greenfield) Sites:** The findings of the analysis of undeveloped sites are summarized on the following pages and detailed in Appendix I.

### The Water Supply Element requirements are met with the creation and adoption of the Larimer County Water Master Plan (Appendix G), the Regional Water Existing Conditions Report (Appendix H), and as described below:

- 1. Consult Water Providers:** The Water Master Plan attempted to engaged all 31 major water providers in the County. The participating providers are listed in the plan's acknowledgements.
- 2. Include Conservation Policies:** In addition to the goals and objectives housed in the Water Master Plan, there are 3 Principles and 12 Policies that support water conservation, found under the Water & Natural Resources section in Chapter 3.
- 3. Assess Future Needs:** The Water Supply Projections on the following page summarize the analysis and findings in the Water Master Plan (Appendix G) and the Regional Water Existing Conditions Report (Appendix H).

### RELEVANT PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

#### Strategic Growth Element

Relevant policies and tools are identified with a compass symbol:



#### Water Supply Element

Relevant principles and policies are identified with a water drop symbol:



Additionally, this Plan includes a housing principle (H1. Housing Needs) and related policies that more directly relate to affordable and attainable housing. These policies are strengthened by the Larimer County Regional Housing Needs Assessment, adopted in 2026.

## Growth Projections and Summary

Between 1998 and 2018, the County grew from roughly 234,000 residents to 349,079 (2018 estimate)—a nearly 49% growth in population. Job growth has been comparably strong, with sustained gains since the 2008 great recession (see Appendix E).

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs estimates that Larimer County will add nearly 200,000 new residents by 2050. Projections provided by Larimer County municipalities indicate growth is exceeding state forecasts, and show cities and towns absorbing approximately 96% of the County's total forecasted population growth. Municipalities are similarly expected to annex much of the unincorporated land within their Growth Management Areas (GMA).

## LAND SUPPLY IN UNINCORPORATED LARIMER COUNTY

To establish where that remaining growth can and should be accommodated, the County completed a parcel-level land supply analysis of unincorporated Larimer County. Every parcel was classified into a single category (Developed/Excluded, Underutilized, or Vacant) using assessor improvement and land values, building footprints, and constraint layers. Of approximately 1,529,800 acres of unincorporated land, the analysis identifies about 79,500 acres as vacant across 3,818 parcels and 14,700 acres as underutilized across 1,289 parcels—a combined available supply of roughly 94,200 acres and 5,107 parcels, or about 6% of unincorporated land.

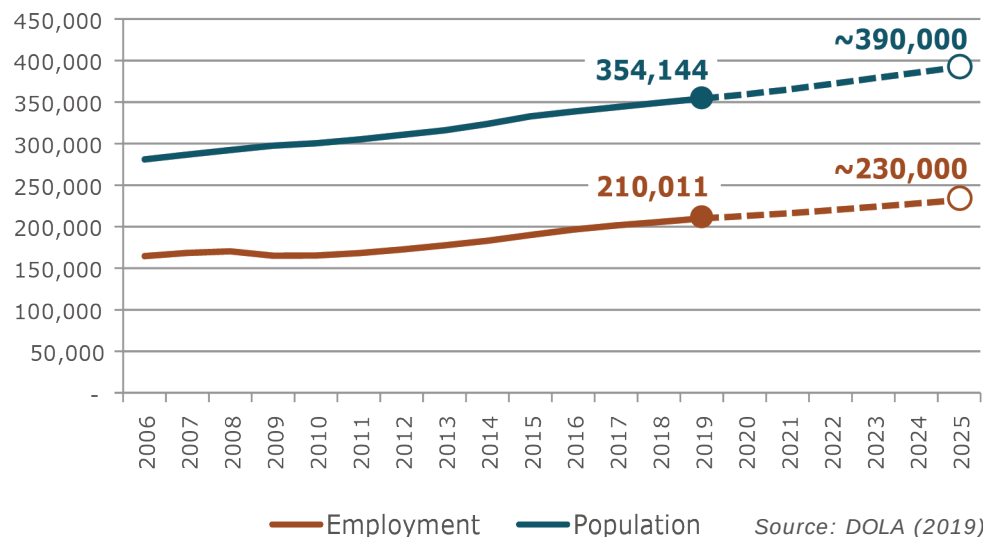
The County directs new growth to Growth Management Areas and adopted subarea plans, where approximately 11,700 acres of unincorporated supply remain (Figure 4), the same areas expected to absorb 96% of the County's projected population growth (Figure 3). The remaining 82,500 acres lie in rural and mountain areas outside any adopted growth boundary, concentrated in large parcels: of 3,818 vacant parcels, 889 are 35 acres or larger and account for 83% of all vacant acreage. Parcels at that scale typically yield a single dwelling, consuming far more land per unit than development inside a GMA while carrying the highest per-unit cost of service delivery. The 2019 Comprehensive Plan directed growth toward municipalities and their Growth Management Areas; this analysis confirms that direction and measures the distance still to close. It does not, however, establish that the remaining rural supply is developable, many of these

parcels hold significant wildlife habitat, tree cover, or productive agricultural soils, and site-specific review remains necessary.

## DIRECTION OF THE PLAN

The Plan does not affect valid, existing rights and entitlements. It does, however, establish the County's direction for where future growth should be encouraged and where it should not. The Plan policies, implementation tools, and land use framework are intended to work together to direct a greater share of development toward areas where infrastructure, services, and adopted plans already support it, and to reduce development pressure on the rural and mountain lands that hold the large majority of the County's remaining land supply.

**Figure 2. Larimer County Employment and Population Trends**



**Figure 3. Expected Absorption of Projected 2040 Population**

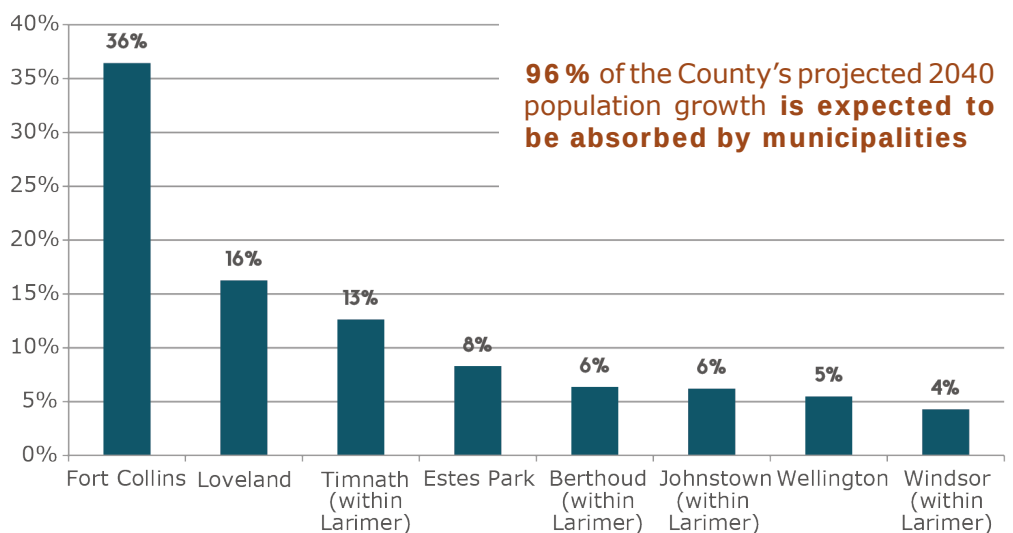
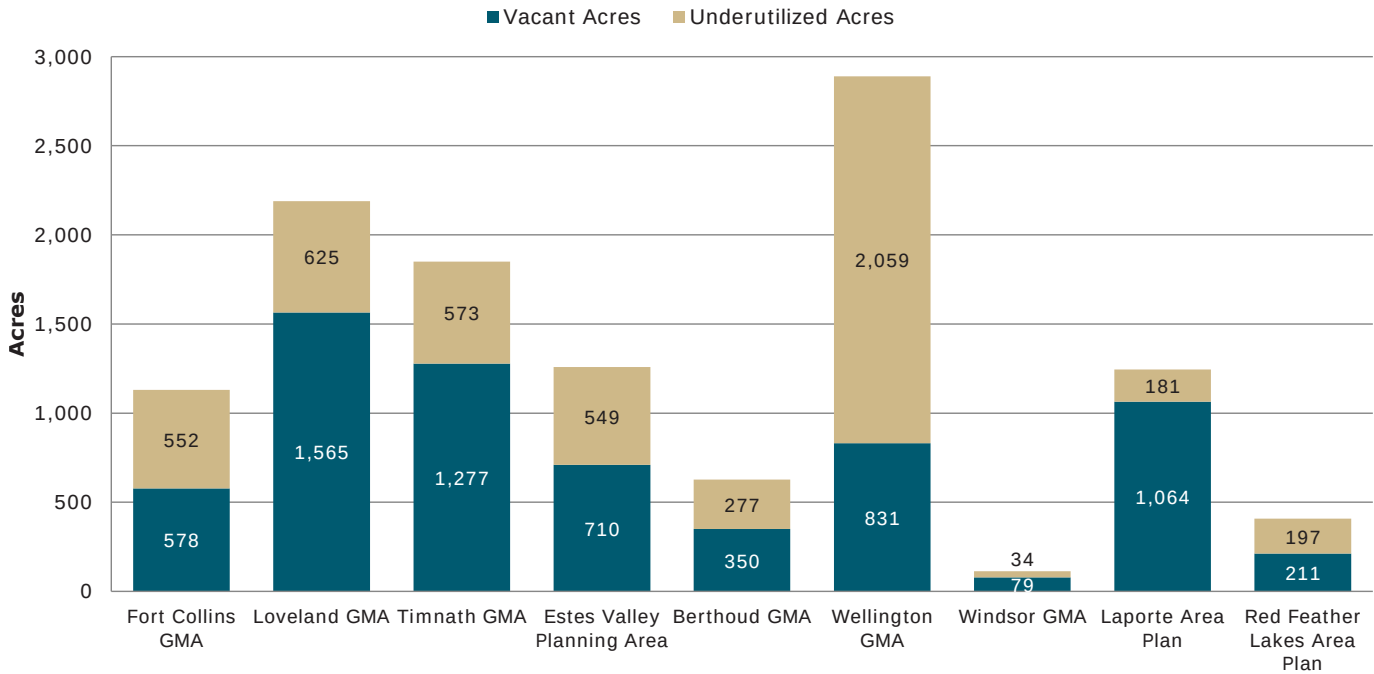




Figure 4. Growth Is Directed Where Infrastructure Already Exists



Water Supply Summary

As a non-provider county, Larimer County’s strategy for matching long-term water supply with future demand relies on coordinated land-use planning and regional partnerships. The County’s complex water landscape comprises 124 distinct water entities, though the vast majority of the population is served by 31 major providers (28 entirely within Larimer County and three crossing into Weld County).

Over a 20-year planning horizon, meeting the infrastructure and facility needs of projected public and private development requires a strict policy of focusing higher-density growth within already defined municipal GMAs. By concentrating urban development where established municipal providers have the structural capacity, infrastructure, and dedicated water conservation policies to absorb growth, the County minimizes regional water scarcity risks and ensures that new facility demands are met efficiently by the appropriate utilities.

Conversely, in unincorporated areas outside of GMAs, water availability is a major constraint for future growth. Recognizing this constraint, and prioritizing watershed health, the County has continued a commitment to low-density rural development. As of 2026, over 13,000 permitted wells exist in Larimer County, with approximately 10,600 homes relying directly on household wells for their domestic supply. To better understand the long-term viability of these rural supplies,

the County has secured funding to undergo a comprehensive groundwater study in 2027. The findings of this study will serve as a critical baseline to address open questions regarding water reliability and groundwater constraints.

Because the County does not directly control water delivery, our long-term strategy relies on enhanced coordination, regional partnerships, and increased communication alignment with the 31 major providers. The goal is to build a shared understanding of regional supply limits, ensuring County land-use decisions remain tightly aligned with utility capacities.

Table 1. Water Supply Summary

|                     |                                                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 43 %                | Water supplies that originate from the Colorado River            |
| 57 %                | Water supplies that originate from local watersheds and aquifers |
| 124                 | Centralized public water systems                                 |
| 385,559             | People served by centralized public water systems in 2020        |
| 13,090              | Water wells                                                      |
| 10,589              | Homes reliant on groundwater wells                               |
| 10,600-21,200 AC-FT | Estimated range of groundwater used from wells per year          |
| 25-90 %             | Projected growth in water demands at community buildout          |

Source: Larimer County Regional Water Existing Conditions Report (2022)

# THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND THE LAND USE CODE

A comprehensive plan is a non-regulatory guide for County leaders and staff on desired development patterns and infrastructure improvements. Codes, on the other hand, are regulatory documents that establish procedures and standards that mandate how property is used and developed.

## Larimer County Land Use Code

The original body of land use regulations for Larimer County was adopted in 1963 as a zoning resolution and separate supporting documents. As contradictions within this body of regulations have surfaced, focused updates have been made to individual resolutions over the years—in 1963, 1972, and 1987. To implement the 1997 Master Plan, several improvements were made to the subdivision regulations. Then in 2000, these multiple resolutions were consolidated into a single Land Use Code, as it exists today. However, a lack of

resources and time has prevented a comprehensive re-evaluation of the regulatory alignment with the community vision in the Master Plan for the past 30 years.

Stakeholders have stated that rural parts of the County lack a cohesive vision and that both the 1997 Master Plan and the Land Use Code are antiquated and out of touch with current conditions—especially in the mountains. The new Comprehensive Plan paves the way for a Land Use Code Update that reinforces the Plan’s Principles, Policies, and Strategies with implementable regulations. Aligning the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code would result in a stronger, more cohesive future for the County, and create more relevant and consistent community development tools. See the Implementation Strategies in Appendix E for more details regarding the Land Use Code Update.

| Comprehensive Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Land Use Code and Zoning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advisory.</li><li>• Establishes a cohesive community-wide vision for the future based on public input.</li><li>• Articulates Guiding Principles that form the basis for implementation strategies that could affect specific zoning and subdivision regulations.</li><li>• Recommends conceptual improvements to the Land Use Code.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulatory.</li><li>• Purpose is to protect landowner rights while also looking out for the health, safety and welfare of the overall community.</li><li>• Zoning is one part of the Land Use Code and refers to land use entitlements and requirements that regulate appropriate use, bulk, height, density, and other characteristics appropriate for a specific site.</li></ul> |

## CARRYING FORWARD FAIRNESS PRINCIPLES

Developing a land use system that is “fundamentally fair” was a premise of the 1997 Master Plan and previous Partnership Land Use System. Public comments over the last two decades indicate that the land use planning process can quickly be perceived as unfair or arbitrary by people on all sides of the issue. To provide a means of judging whether the Comprehensive Plan and implementing actions meet this goal, the County continues to utilize the Fairness Principles originally outlined in the 1997 Master Plan.

A Fair Process:

- Is timely;
- Has an open process to the public for information, input, etc.;
- Has open communication including neighborhood meetings;
- Has educational components on the process for affected parties;
- Respects individual property rights;
- Respects the values of the individuals in the community;
- Considers the cumulative impacts and future generations;
- Has application of fundamental due process in all administrative deliberations;
- Has an appeal process;
- Has consistent requirements that contain flexibility within the written criteria;
- Has incentives for exceeding the written criteria; and
- Makes it easy to do the right and responsible thing.

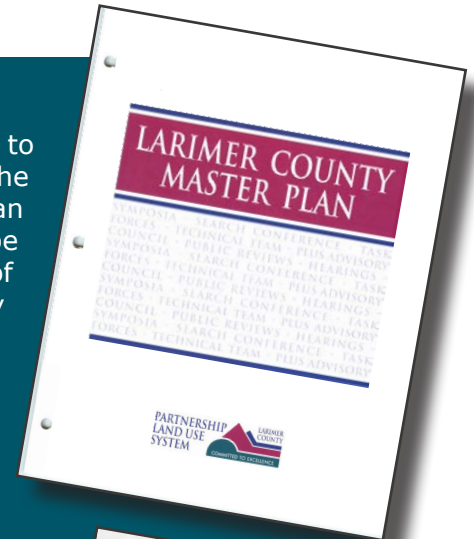
# FOUNDATIONAL PLANS

The Comprehensive Plan builds upon previous community- and data-driven efforts. While the implementation of the following plans will continue to shape specific projects and initiatives, the Comprehensive Plan incorporated and translated their high-level direction into County land use policy. A complete description of these and other plans is found in Appendix B. Chapter 3 calls out additional departmental master plans and studies that are incorporated by reference into each policy framework, and allows for their future updates.

## 1997 Master Plan

The 1997 Master Plan created a growth management process designed to ensure that Larimer County operates within its resources, protects the environment, and enhances the lives of its residents. The plan established an expectation that rural uses would remain in rural areas, and urban uses be concentrated in urban areas. The plan was largely successful and the level of public confidence and satisfaction with the Land Use Code and community development decisions has steadily increased since its adoption.

Foundational concepts that are continued in this Comprehensive Plan include Growth Management Areas where unified, municipal development is encouraged; the Rural Conservation Development and the Rural Land Use Processes; and the importance of open lands and agricultural lands, to name a few.



## 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

With the goals outlined in the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan largely accomplished, the Board of County Commissioners updated their strategic plan in tandem with this Comprehensive Plan. The [2019-2023 Strategic Plan](#) revisited the County's Mission, Vision Statement, and Guiding Principles, and placed priority on three specific overriding goals to prepare the community and government organization for a growing and evolving population.

**Goal 1:** Larimer County works collaboratively to ensure adequate public infrastructure is available to support the needs of our growing community.

**Goal 2:** Everyone in Larimer County has access to economic opportunities and a vibrant quality of life. We work together to remove barriers.

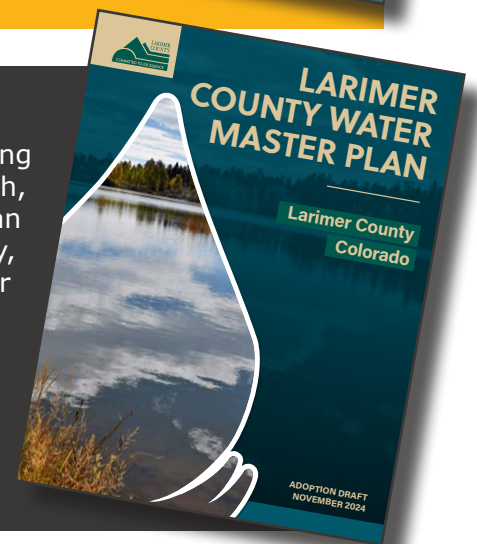
**Goal 3:** Larimer County government is ready to support the future service needs of our residents and visitors.



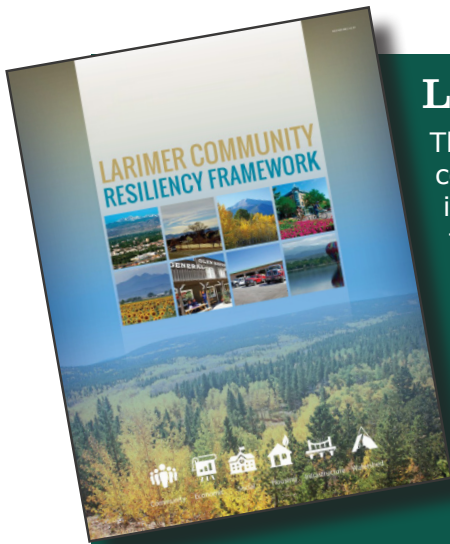
## Water Master Plan

The Larimer County Water Plan provides a long-term strategy for managing water resources and watershed health in response to population growth, changing climate conditions, and increasing water demands. The plan promotes water conservation, watershed resilience, agricultural sustainability, and collaborative water resource planning to help secure a reliable water future for the county.

To meet the requirements of Colorado Senate Bill 24-174, the Larimer County Water Master Plan is adopted as a component of the Comprehensive Plan and serves as the County's Water Supply Element. Its policies, goals, and strategies ensure that future land use and growth decisions are informed by water resource availability and sustainability considerations.



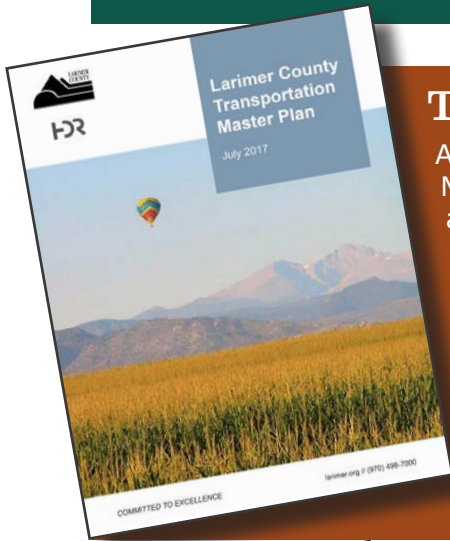




## Larimer Community Resiliency Framework

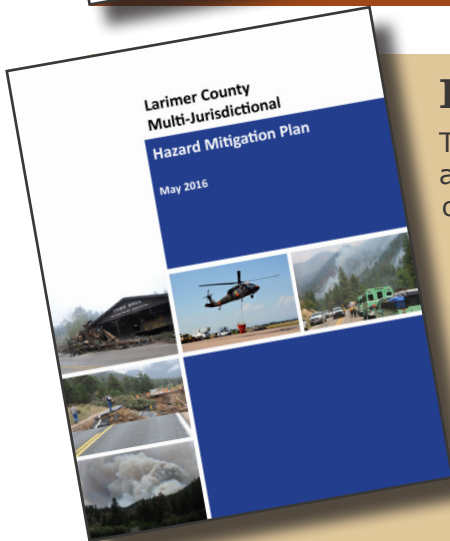
The 2016 [Resiliency Framework](#) represents the commitment and capacity of communities across Larimer County to embrace a more resilient future. As it is intended to be a living document—its six frameworks are carried into the Comprehensive Plan to further its implementation. It found that the Comprehensive Plan update is the most influential and useful vehicle for Larimer County and its communities to execute the framework’s visions, goals, and strategies.

The Risk Management section helps communities make informed land use, development, and capital improvement decisions to reduce exposure as communities grow and climate changes. The Resilient Natural and Built Infrastructure section recommends projects that have a system-wide ecosystem benefit. The Innovative Land Use Planning section allows for diversity in growth management and economic resiliency while supporting and protecting our natural environment.



## Transportation Master Plan

Adopted in 2017, the [Transportation Master Plan](#) (TMP) informs the Framework Map for this new Comprehensive Plan. The TMP provides an extensive and comprehensive analysis of the County’s transportation system that identifies short- and long-term funding needs and a list of potential projects for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). While roads are the primary transportation infrastructure, this plan expands its focus to include the expansion and maintenance of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities for a fully-integrated transportation network. The TMP provides data on the existing transportation system and identifies needs and goals for the system across five transportation elements owned and/or maintained by the County: roadway network, intersections, and bridges; bicycle facilities; pedestrian facilities; rail network; and transit systems.



## Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2016 [Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) (HMP) focused on two main topics; what are the County’s risks to hazards, and what projects can be implemented in order to reduce or eliminate those risks and vulnerabilities? Together, the Comprehensive Plan and the HMP assist in reducing the County’s collective risk to disasters.

High risk hazard areas (wildfire, flood, geologic, and soils) affect current and future land uses. As part of the comprehensive planning process, questions relating to regulating development in known high hazards areas were vetted to help reduce or minimize impacts on the built environment, and reduce the liability to taxpayers who subsidize those who chose to build in hazard-prone areas. The Comprehensive Plan also helps fulfill two land-use related mitigation projects identified in the HMP: 1) A long-range community planning effort to bring together all watershed coalition, governmental and non-governmental plans into one unified planning effort, and 2) an update to the Larimer County Land Use, Wildfire and Building Codes with recommendations to decrease future risk and disaster losses.

# BIG ISSUES



The following summary provides a high-level overview of current “big issues:” the key topics identified by the community, stakeholders, and subject matter experts during the planning process. As many of these issues are interconnected across topics, the redefined policy direction and land use solutions in this Comprehensive Plan have wide-reaching impacts, as articulated in Chapter 3. The full description and analysis of trends and existing conditions can be found in Appendices C and D.

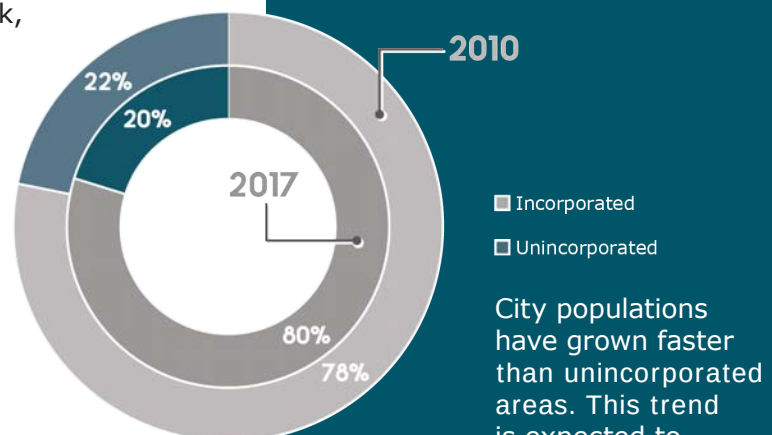
## Community Snapshot

The foundation of community resiliency is the ability to be self-sustaining and to assess, determine, implement, and learn from our experience and the experiences of similar communities. This is especially important for local unincorporated communities within Larimer County. However, the existing, informal local governance channels are ad hoc and largely ineffective in a community’s ability to influence development and action that occurs there. The Red Feather Lakes Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), and the LaPorte PAC are the only current examples of local governance in Larimer County. Rather than being proactive through long-range planning, the County has historically responded reactively to development proposals, which leaves little monitoring of long-term trends and limits a community’s ability to shape their future.

The ability for unincorporated communities to adapt and be locally proactive in the face of growth and threat of natural disasters is fundamental to resiliency and maintaining a high quality of life for all. The County supports community resilience by strengthening its role as a leader in regional cooperation, collaboration, and facilitation. Through Chapter 3’s the Policy Framework, this Plan updates planning tools, creates formalized channels for local governance, and improves other regulatory tools. In this way, the County can proactively support community resilience and regional collaboration.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES

- The County will continue to experience significant growth that goes beyond political boundaries, indicating a need to reassess the role of the County in facilitation and collaboration.
- The frequency and magnitude of disasters have increased. Community development tools in Larimer County have not.
- There are barriers to local governance and subarea planning, such as few formal channels for decision-making, staff availability, and communication, limiting the ability for communities to resolve local issues.



■ Incorporated  
■ Unincorporated

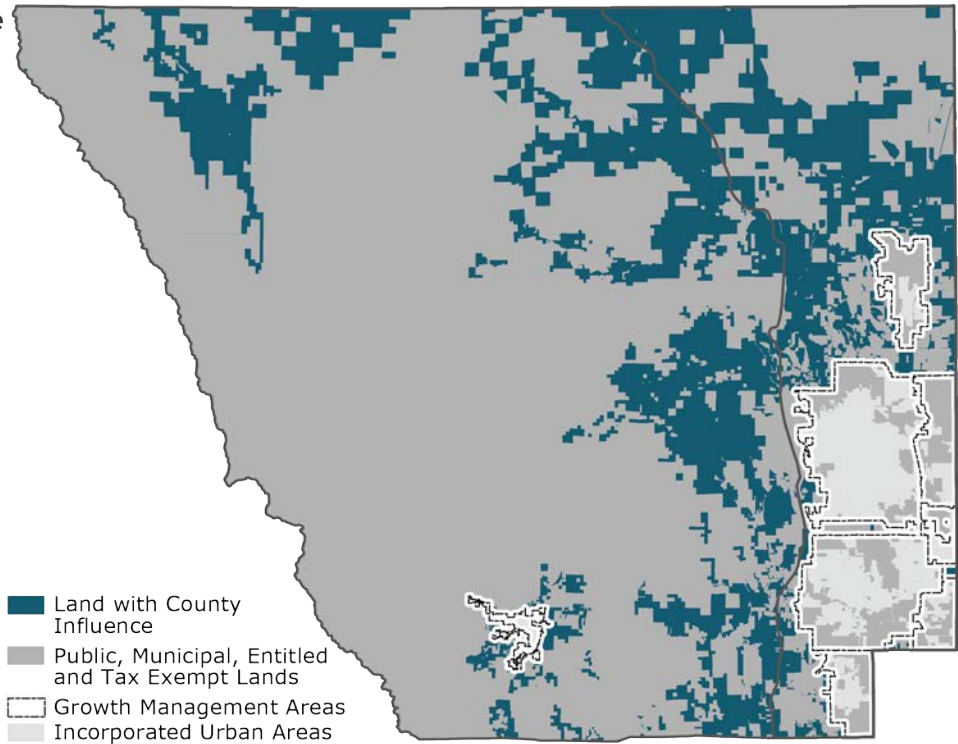
City populations have grown faster than unincorporated areas. This trend is expected to continue.

**Figure 5. Population Change in Incorporated vs. Unincorporated Larimer County**

*Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, County Population Projections, 2010 and 2017*

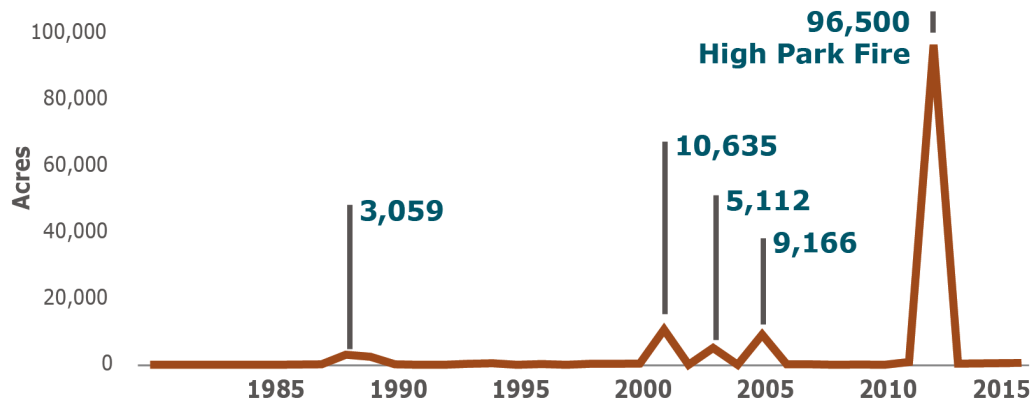
The County directly influences development on only **31%** of land

**Figure 6. Private Land Where County Can Influence New Development**



Source: Larimer County

**Figure 7. Number of Acres Burned by Wildfire Annually in Larimer County from 1980-2015**



Source: *Larimer County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2016*



## Economy Snapshot

The County's historically rural character, workforce needs, and land use trends are being impacted by the rapidly expanding regional economy occurring along the Front Range. Residents in mountain communities are more vulnerable to economic stresses and shocks because they are 1) more isolated from many necessary amenities and resources, 2) do not have the same level of service or accessibility as urban areas, and 3) rely on tourism and natural resource extraction as primary contributors to the local economy. Additionally, geographic and topographic constraints in the western County limit the potential for residential and commercial development.

Current County policies and regulations support the preservation of rural uses. However, they do not reflect the current economic realities of a changing workforce, shifting demographics, and unincorporated residents' daily needs, nor do they leverage local employment opportunities. This Comprehensive Plan supports principles and policies that address compatible economic development, workforce development, local employment opportunities, and leveraging innovation and technology in agriculture, found in the Chapter 3: Policy Framework.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Housing types, lifestyles, and preferences have changed but the subdivision processes and zoning codes have not kept pace, constraining the housing market.
- The shortage of attainable housing in the County is forcing lower- and middle-income residents farther from their place of work and compounding associated issues of transportation and distribution of services.
- The availability and cost of water services is the largest barrier to new housing development on lots less than 35 acres.
- Current future land use map and buffer and transition requirements for subdivision development are not adequate to reduce conflicts between different land uses and/or different intensities of development.
- The availability of fire and flood insurance strains residents and often results in homes being under-insured, affecting the ability to recover and rebuild after disaster events.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Current regulations have attempted to preserve rural uses, but are becoming a barrier to supporting compatible economic development.
- Inadequate access to communication services, outdated provisions in the Land Use Code, and geographic constraints to development are preventing the County from leveraging local employment opportunities and limiting disaster resiliency for unincorporated communities.
- The County and larger region are unprepared to support the changing needs of the workforce as the economy becomes increasingly regional and demographic shifts occur.
- Mountain tourism and outdoor recreation is a primary economic driver, which creates demand for more services in mountain communities.
- Reactive disaster recovery efforts place a financial and leadership burden on the entire County. Proactive preparedness provides dividends.

## Housing Snapshot

Safe, adequate, and attainable housing options are an important aspect to the overall well-being of County residents. Understanding the County's role in guiding development and growth patterns will help address emerging housing issues and anticipate future needs. As the Front Range continues to attract new residents, housing diversity, availability, affordability, quality, and location will be increasingly important aspects to address. On the other hand, western Larimer County is not densely populated but the vast majority of developed parcels are used for residential purposes, which indicate that housing policies and standards have a wide-reaching impact in this area. The Housing Policy Framework in Chapter 3 articulates specific approaches to address the diverse housing needs found throughout Larimer County, including supporting a variety of housing types and opportunities and improving the land division and planning processes.

**Figure 8. Community Facilities are Concentrated in Population Centers**

the unincorporated County has:

**33**

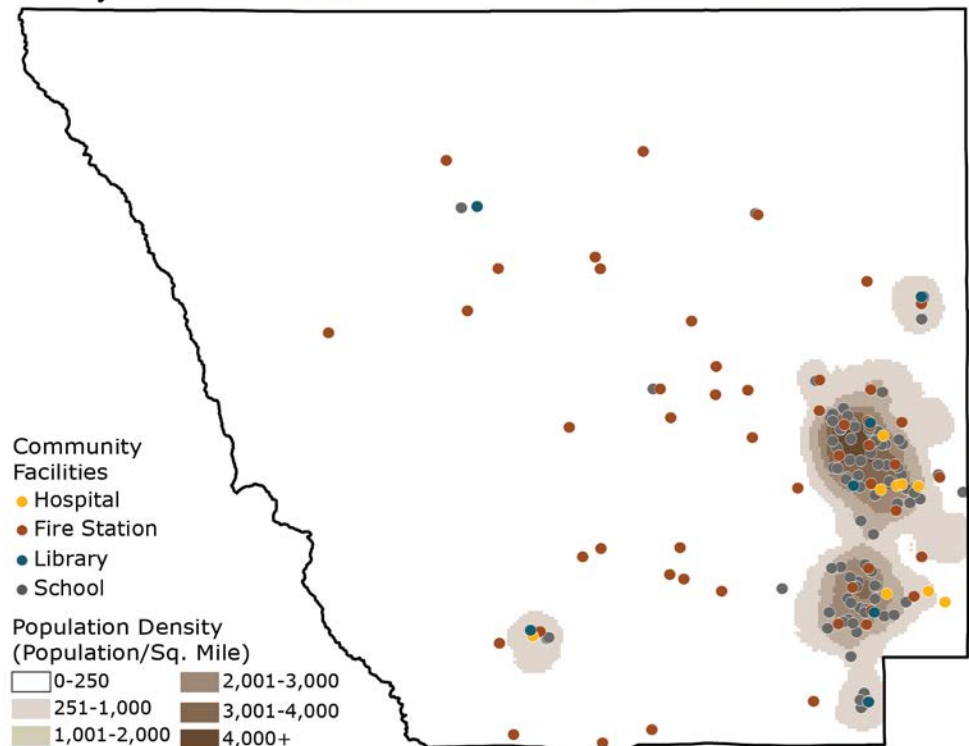
Fire Stations

**1**

Library

**8**

Schools



Source: Larimer County; US Census blocks (2017)

### SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Healthy and active lifestyles are an important element of our County's livability, but regional coordination is needed to improve viable active transportation and recreational opportunities.
- Access to services will continue to be a challenge for residents living farther from population centers, creating demand for supportive land uses.
- Maintaining environmentally healthy landscapes and the viability of local agriculture provides financially intangible yet essential health benefits.
- Many residents covet their isolation, but building community requires organizations and a good place to hang out.
- Remote mountain living can put vulnerable populations at higher risk.

### Health & Social Snapshot

A healthy community means making sure that all residents have the opportunity to thrive by having their needs met for safety, education, mental wellbeing, physical health, and access to health services by promoting a healthy natural and built environment.

The County shares the burden of providing these health and social services with a network of federal, state, special districts, non-profit, and private organizations. However, the real impact of the Comprehensive Plan can be felt in the principles and policies that promote positive health outcomes for the entire community. The County commits to maintaining a high quality of life, fostering social cohesion, and encouraging healthy lifestyles, as articulated in the Health & Social Policy Framework in Chapter 3.

## Infrastructure Snapshot

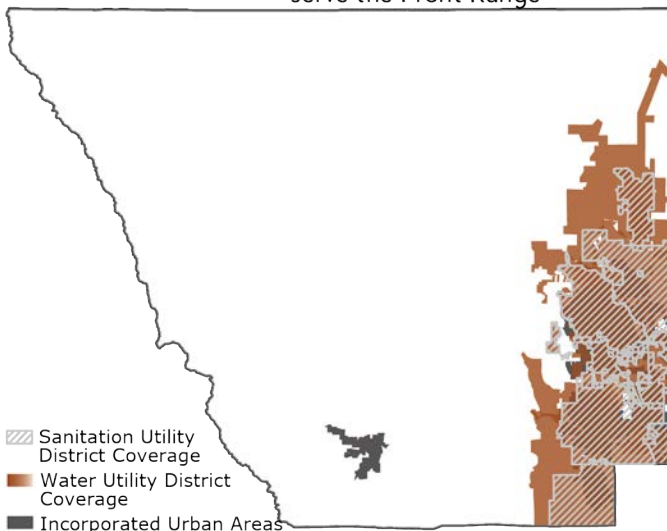
Rapid growth along the Front Range is impacting the County's ability to keep pace with infrastructure needs such as roads and transportation networks, utility provisions, communication services and high-speed internet, and energy development. Current funding mechanisms are not sufficient to accommodate the changing infrastructure needs; GMAs are not aligned with necessary infrastructure to support growth; insufficient communication infrastructure continues to be a challenge socially and economically; and energy development that is necessary for infrastructure improvements is met with difficulties.

Key infrastructure issues include the need for redundant and inter-operable systems that can meet changing customer needs and growing demand; the impact of natural hazards on aging and vulnerable infrastructure; balancing natural resource extraction with public health, safety and welfare; environmental protection; and preservation of community character; and prioritizing investments. This Comprehensive Plan supports the County's capacity to proactively plan for growth, meet the basic needs of communities, and ensure access, safety, and health for all residents, as outlined in the Infrastructure Policy Framework in Chapter 3.

## SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Funding mechanisms have not maintained pace with transportation and mobility needs required for a rapidly growing County (see Transportation Master Plan).
- Current Growth Management Areas are not aligned with the mosaic of water and sewer provider's service areas. This results in no clear plan for future delivery of the full spectrum of infrastructure services to guide the densification of growth and unified urban-level development.
- Rapid technological change and infrastructure-challenged areas create geographic separation and lack of access to basic services leading to social and economic disadvantages for rural residents.
- Conventional and renewable energy development and production and gravel mining in the County is often a controversial and contentious issue.
- The aging and vulnerable bridge and road system in the mountainous areas of the County, critical for providing safe daily service and in the event of disaster, requires investments to improve community resiliency and safety.
- Critical infrastructure has not historically been designed to reduce the impacts of hazards or account for expected increases in population.
- Close proximity between established neighborhoods and residential development near mining sites has contributed to land use controversies and concerns.

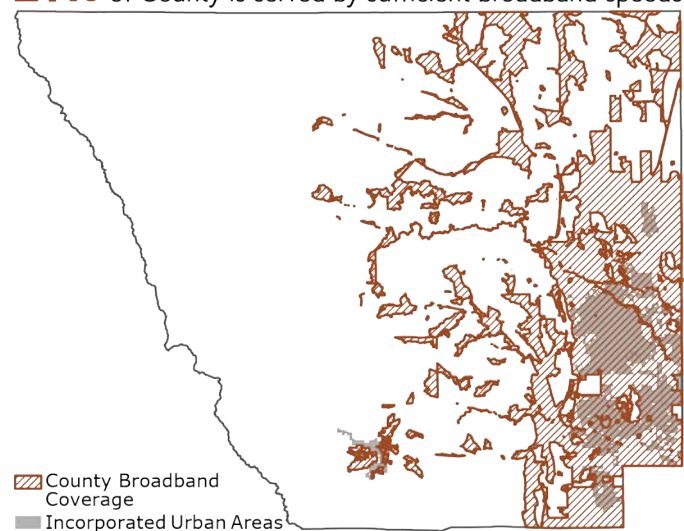
**16 different** water and sewer utility providers serve the Front Range



**Figure 9. Utility Provider Areas**

Source: Individual Utility Providers

**21%** of County is served by sufficient broadband speeds



**Figure 10. Broadband Access**

Source: Larimer County



## Watersheds & Natural Resources Snapshot

Larimer County residents are vocal in their support for preservation of natural resources and open space, often associating them with a high quality of life. However, growth in the Front Range is affecting Larimer County's natural resources as seen through landscape fragmentation, land use conflicts, disappearance of agricultural lands, and competition for water. Although there are regulations and policies in place to address these issues, this Comprehensive Plan supports re-evaluating floodplain regulations, community separation, water quality and supply, and protection of important farmlands and wildlife habits and corridors to adapt to and mitigate the effects of unmanageable development.

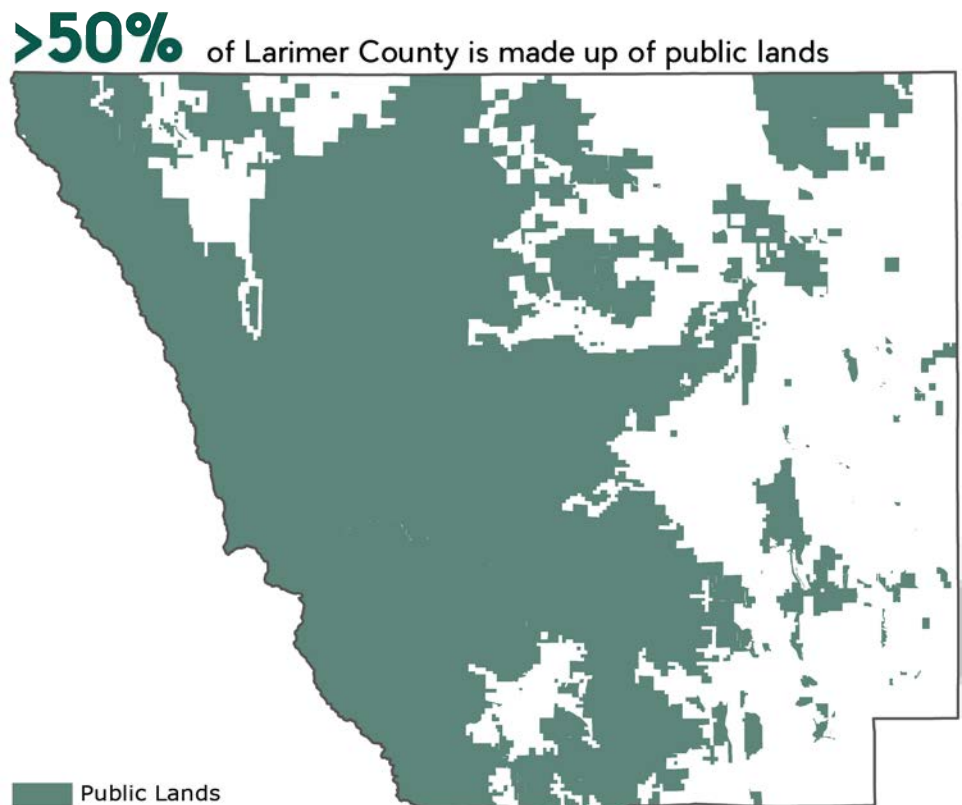
Extractive natural resource uses, such as mining, are often viewed by the general public as an issue because of noise, dust, traffic, etc. associated with the activities. Despite these potential impacts, some of these activities are essential to the continued economic health of the County. The County recognizes that some level of extractive natural resource uses will need to continue in order

### SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Stream corridors and their associated floodplains are a nexus of important resource conservation priorities. Effectively managing these corridors to reduce risk of disaster events requires a combination of tools rather than sole reliance on standard floodplain regulations.
- With continuing growth of our communities, the need for community separators remains important. However, efforts have lagged indicating a need for a renewed and regional approach to strengthen this collaborative planning tool.
- Increased development adjacent to land uses related to natural resources are intensifying. Conflicts between residents and industrial uses (such as aggregate mining and processing), agriculture, and oil and gas development are creating issues and growth is increasing demand for these resources.

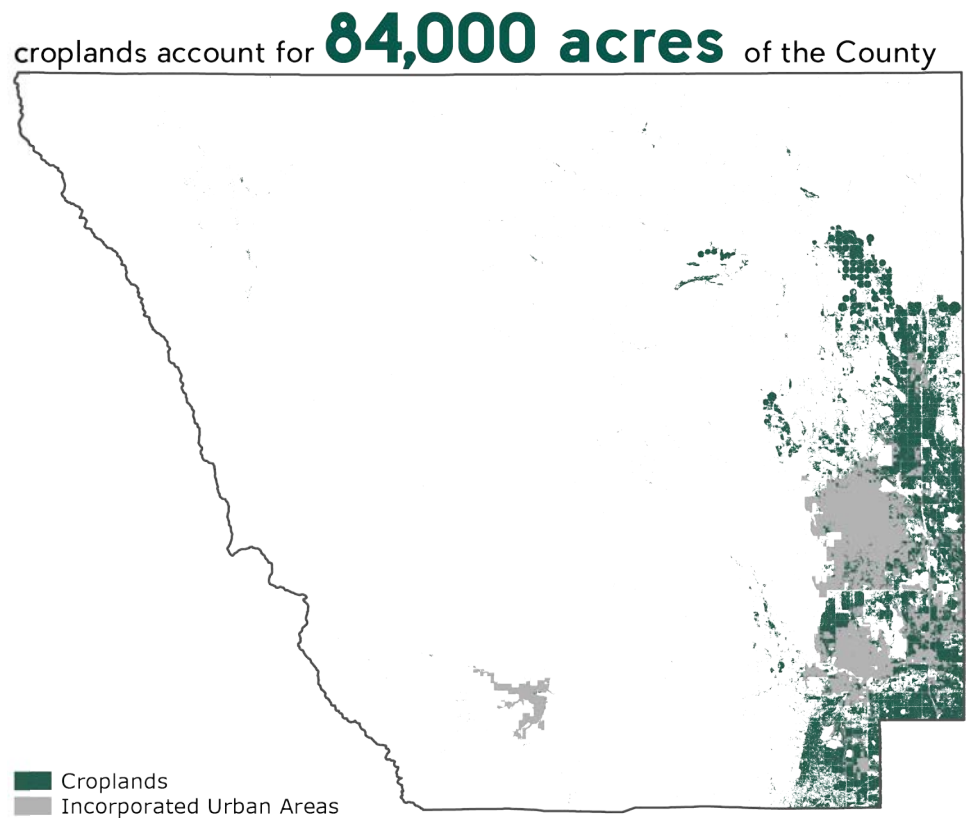
*Continued on following page*

Figure 11. Public Lands



Source: Larimer County

**Figure 12. Cropland in Larimer County**



Source: Larimer County; US Department of Agriculture

to sustain the well-being of the County. At the same time, such uses should be undertaken only when care is taken to protect the environment and the character of our communities.

Disaster resiliency and applying the lessons learned from the 2012 wildfire and 2013 flood is also imperative county-wide and especially in mountain communities which have unique challenges to resiliency. Although there are regulations and policies in place to protect these communities from wildfire and flooding risk, they have not proven to be sufficient in the face of recent events.

County policies can positively influence the outcomes of these disaster events by supporting renewed approaches to floodplain management, wildland-urban interface risk management, and the manner in which current services are being provided to improve the resiliency of the County's watersheds and natural resources. Principles and policies that address these issues can be found in the Chapter 3 Watersheds & Natural Resources Policy Framework.

*Issues continued from previous page*

- Protection of important farmlands provides many benefits, ranging from protecting the quality of our soil and food supply to maintaining community identity and separation, yet we are still losing farmland.
- Competition for water between agricultural, riparian, and residential use and development is pronounced, resulting in the loss of cultivated farmland and affordable housing.
- Protection of important wildlife habitat, corridors, and native vegetation is imperative to mitigating impacts of growth, maintaining healthy and natural ecosystems, and providing ecological services, resiliency and tax benefits, and quality of life for residents.
- Larimer County is one of the most hazardous counties in Colorado for wildfire, and regulatory tools to protect the public have not kept pace with the increased risk.
- Mountain and Front Range communities depend on limited water resources that are at risk.





*Photo: Peter Weckesser*

# Chapter Two >>>> VISION

## In this Chapter

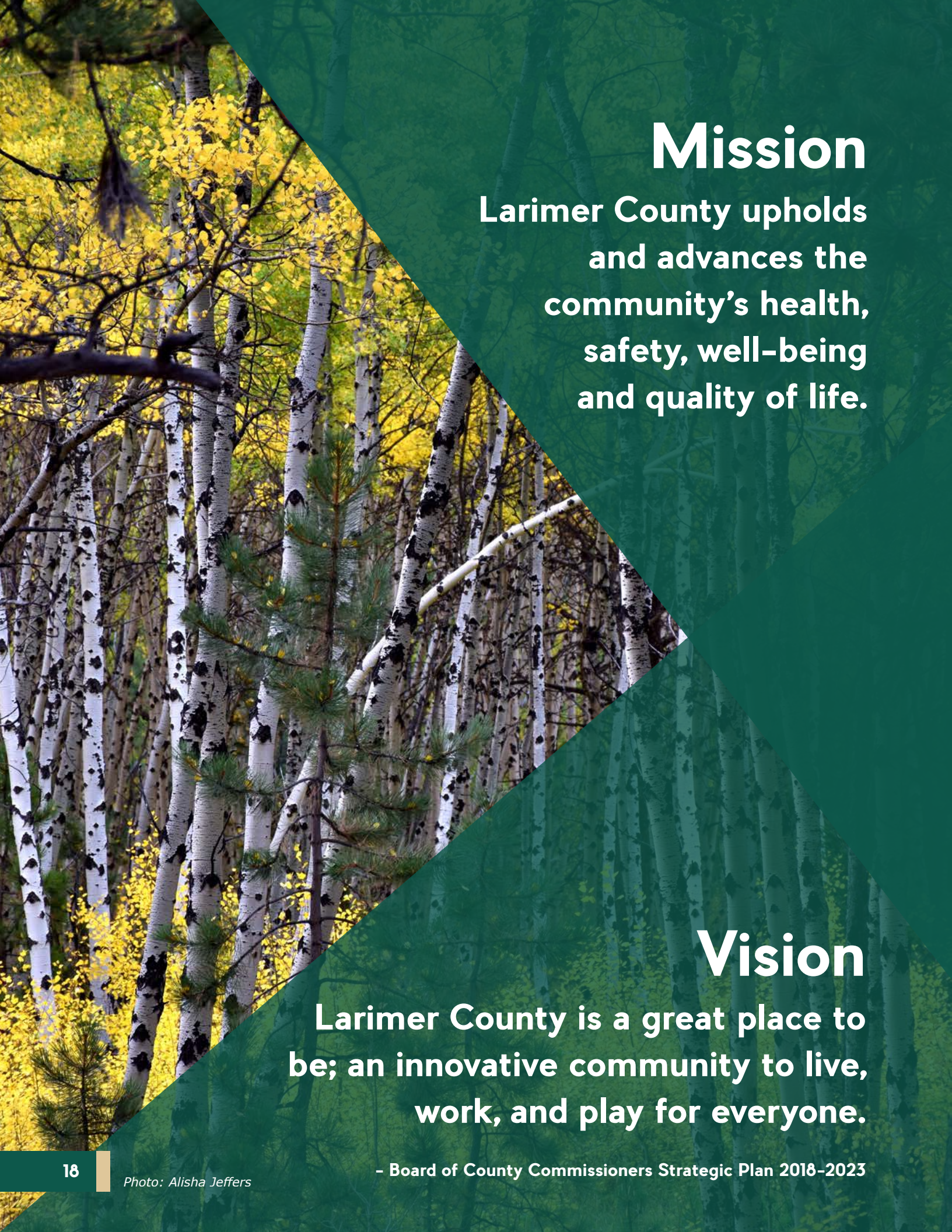
### **Plan Themes.**

A set of planning values developed through the public participation process that establishes the Comprehensive Plan's intent and vision.

### **Engagement Process.**

Overview of the outreach events that engaged mountain and Front Range communities, local organizations and community groups, and County staff and leaders.





# Mission

**Larimer County upholds  
and advances the  
community's health,  
safety, well-being  
and quality of life.**

# Vision

**Larimer County is a great place to  
be; an innovative community to live,  
work, and play for everyone.**



# PLAN THEMES

The Plan Themes are shared community values that capture the vision and direction for the Comprehensive Plan and unincorporated communities. These themes emerged from the public participation process and are reflected throughout this Plan and in the Principles and Policies in Chapter 3.

## 1. Inclusive Opportunities

The Comprehensive Plan balances the different needs and challenges of rural and urban, and mountain and Front Range communities through all-encompassing opportunities, from housing and employment to recreation and conservation. The County's goal is for residents to enjoy a high quality of life into the next 20 years by:

- Promoting a sustainable, resilient, and diverse economy to support a range of housing and employment opportunities, excellence in education and training, and a high quality of life for all.
- Ensuring agriculture, recreation, and tourism remain balanced and viable long-term segments of Larimer County's economic, cultural, and social fabric.
- Supporting the viability of a diverse range of housing options to meet the changing demographics of rural residents.
- Recognizing that recreation and conservation bring significant, synergistic economic, health, and quality of life benefits.

## 2. Community Connectivity

Connectivity is found in more than just the roads we use to get from one place to another. From the ability for residents to access the basic services they need, to how easy it is to travel by car, bike, bus, or on foot, the County supports connectivity by:

- Encouraging safe, affordable, and reliable infrastructure, connectivity, and services, compatible with rural activities and needs.
- Encouraging the deployment of reliable, affordable, and redundant connectivity with built-in redundancy for critical infrastructure.

## CITIZEN SURVEY 2018

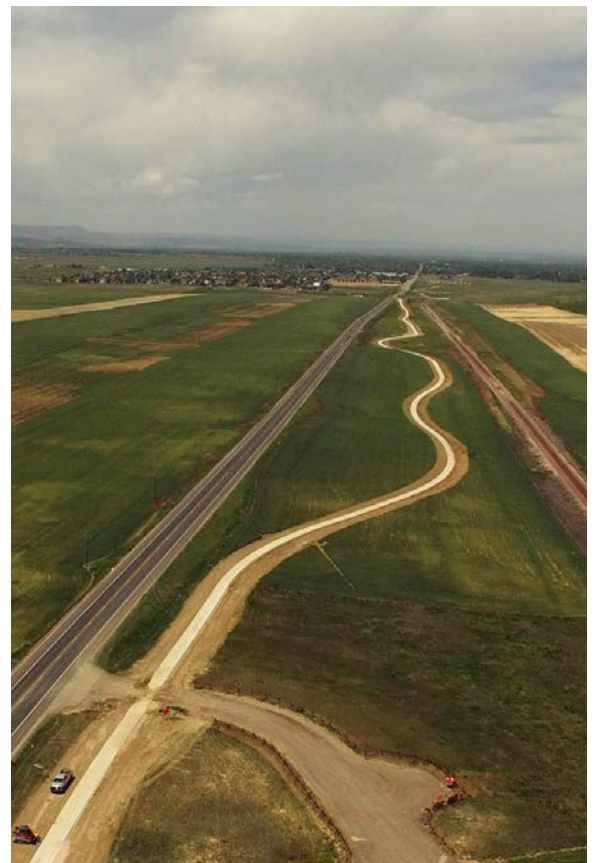
**3,682** respondents

May - June 2018

Highest Priorities for the County:

1. More regional planning to manage growth
2. Enhancing mental health services
3. Improving transportation infrastructure
4. Addressing housing affordability for all residents
5. Increasing social services for seniors, veterans, and children
6. Increasing fire and flood prevention/mitigation
7. Enhancing broadband service in rural areas

Source: <https://www.larimer.org/2018survey>



Long View Trail. Photo: Fort Collins

### 3. Health Guides Decision Making

“Upholding and advancing the community’s health, safety, and well-being” is written into Larimer County’s mission statement and is a central tenet of the Comprehensive Plan. Providing the opportunity for all community members to be healthy is complex, as a person’s ability to have “good health” is influenced by the conditions in which they live. The neighborhood and surrounding environment, educational opportunity, social and community interaction, access to healthcare, and economic stability all affect the conditions in which people live and are directly influenced by land use and infrastructure planning decisions. Planning decisions that increase public safety and opportunities for physical activity can make opportunities available to community members and can make the healthy choice a feasible and easy choice so all community members can thrive. The County supports the creation and integration of healthy, inclusive, and livable communities by:

- Recognizing the need to improve the community’s physical and behavioral health, as health guides all County standards, rules, and regulations.
- Offering the opportunity to participate in recreation and active transportation through open space conservation and creating connected transportation and trail systems.
- Supporting access to health care services and opportunities to socialize by clustering supportive land uses and promoting community gathering spaces for all ages and abilities.
- Offering access to healthy food choices by preserving our agricultural heritage.

### 4. Environmental Stewardship

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the importance of environmental stewardship to maintain the high quality of life enjoyed by residents. The County promotes the preservation of its natural resources and open space by:

- Valuing, identifying, protecting, and responsibly managing its natural and cultural resources to minimize impact and protect our air, soil, open spaces, watersheds, water supply, and other ecosystem services.
- Ensuring land use is suitable for and compatible with the environmental characteristics of the site.



*Coyote Ridge. Photo: Alisha Jeffers*



## 5. Rural Heritage

An open and rural character is central to the identity of unincorporated Larimer County. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of the County's rural heritage—environmentally, economically, and culturally—and strives to direct growth toward appropriate locations. The County supports the needs and activities of rural communities by:

- Continuing open spaces, working agricultural lands, waterways, and community separators as economic generators and defining features of the landscape of Larimer County.
- Supporting logical settlement patterns and locations that reflect the existing open, rural character as well as the natural constraints and opportunities of mountain areas.

## 6. People are Our Strength

The needs of residents are changing as the County grows more diverse, older, and more reliant on urban services including technology. The Comprehensive Plan promotes inclusivity to accommodate the diversifying population and ensure Larimer County remains an accessible and welcoming community for all. The County promotes an inclusive environment and cultural diversity by:

- Empowering the collective diversity, talents, character, and resiliency of our people.
- Supporting the diverse needs of a multigenerational population.

## 7. Regional Convener

As the northern Front Range continues to experience growth pains and strains that extend beyond political boundaries, the Comprehensive Plan strengthens the County's role as a convener. As a regional leader in facilitation, collaboration, and cooperation, the County is:

- Cultivating partnerships with all community members and organizations, local governments, businesses, non-profits, and district providers—including those outside the County—to influence the County's future.
- Promoting innovation, continuous improvement, accountability, transparency and consistency in County processes, regulations, and supporting plans and programs.
- Aligning the Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Code, and supporting services and plans while recognizing each community's unique identity and values.
- Ensuring the planning and development review processes and supporting regulations are consistent, accountable, and balance the needs and interests of communities, property owners, and neighboring municipalities.



*LaPorte. Photo: David Kingham*



*Larimer County Building. Photo: Alisha Jeffers*



## 8. A More Resilient Future

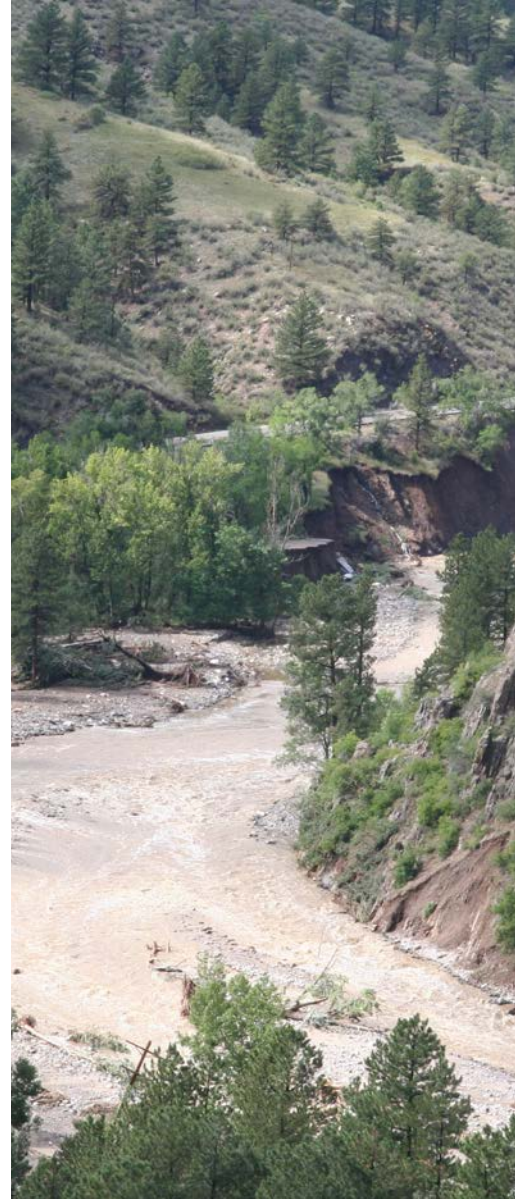
Larimer County's response and recovery from the 2012 High Park fire and 2013 flood revealed ways to become more resilient to future natural and human-caused disaster events. The Comprehensive Plan focuses on holistically applying these lessons learned to strengthen environmental, economic, and social resilience. The County works to address these issues by:

- Preparing for wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters, and helping residents and businesses prepare themselves to be resilient to such events.
- Providing and requiring resilient roads, bridges, water, wastewater, and communication infrastructure that allows for viability of small businesses and the provision of basic services to residents which is critical to the mountain communities' regional economic success.
- Promoting high value, low impact job creation, retention and connectivity to proactively encourage innovation and diversification and prevent economic downturns.

## 9. Economic Sustainability

The Comprehensive Plan lays a strong foundation for policies and regulations that reflect current economic realities to support a sustainable regional economy and environment. The County shapes responsible and strategic economic growth by:

- Creating stable, long-term, and diverse funding sources to protect environmental assets and support tourism and outdoor recreation.
- Developing a diverse regional economy that meets present needs without compromising the needs of future generations.



Cedar Cove. Photo: Scott Ellis



Photo: Larimer County

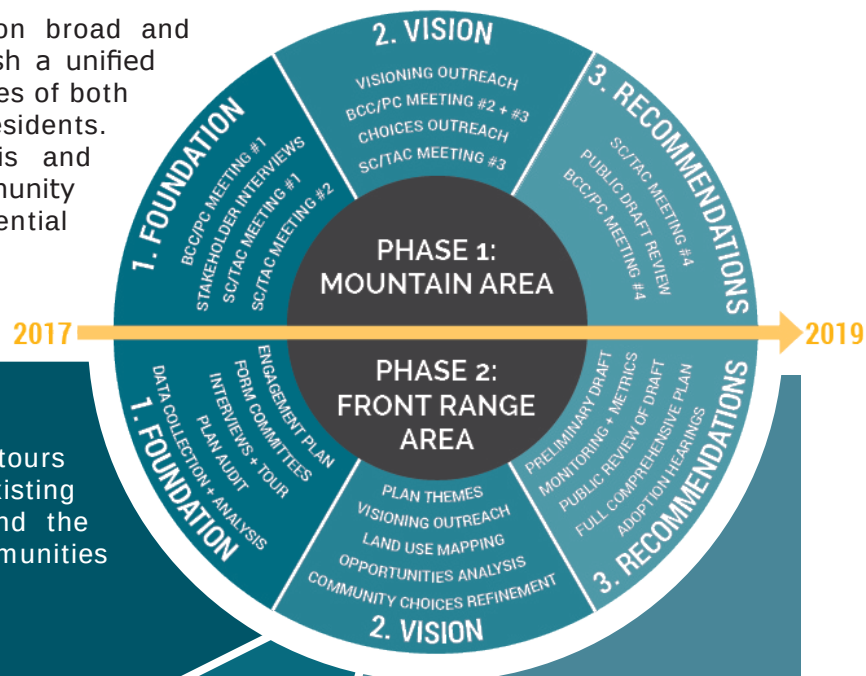
## 10. Infrastructure Management

Roads and transportation networks, utility provision, communication services and high-speed internet are all infrastructure needs that must keep pace with growth. The Comprehensive Plan supports proactive county planning and developer responsibility for adequate provision of this infrastructure, which is critical to ensuring access, safety, and health for all residents. The County collaboratively plans for these needs by:

- Locating urban-level development within Growth Management Areas and, per adopted subarea plans, where the full range of urban services is available and provided.
- Collaborating with district providers on the provision of utility and communication services.
- Ensuring that adequate public and/ or private facilities and services are provided and maintained concurrent with development.

# ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan process relied on broad and representative community input to establish a unified vision and clearly articulate the shared values of both the mountain community and Front Range residents. Through the two-phase process, analysis and engagement efforts refined the key community choices regarding Principles and Policies, Essential Questions, and Implementation Strategies.



## 1. Foundation

The project team analyzed trends, held tours and personal interviews, and reviewed existing County plans and policies to understand the essential issues that unincorporated communities are facing.

### Results:

- Big Issues (Chapter 1)
- Foundational Plans (Appendix A)
- Related Plans (Appendix B)
- Existing Conditions Snapshots (Appendix C and D)

## 2. Vision

The shared values gathered during the Foundation stage were refined through public outreach and committee discussion on questions such as: "What do you love about your community?" and "What do you want the next generation to be able to experience?" These conversations resulted in Plan Themes that tell the story of where and how Larimer County should grow.

As this community vision took shape, the planning team analyzed land use capacities and opportunities. Community members began weighing policy choices and strategies that would both address the big issues facing the County right now and move the County toward the 20-year vision.

### Results:

- Plan Themes (Chapter 2)

## 3. Recommendations

Internal feedback loops with committees and County leaders refined the principles, policies and implementation strategies. These were presented back to the public for month-long Draft Plan review periods. Phase 1 was unanimously approved by Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. Phase 2 integrated the previously approved mountain area content with Front Range recommendations resulting in unified, county-wide direction with targeted recommendations for each area.

### Results:

- Principles, Policies, Framework Map, and Essential Questions (Chapter 3)
- Implementation Strategies and Plan Monitoring (Chapter 4)
- Mountain and Front Range Outreach Summaries (Appendix C and D)
- Implementation Strategy (Appendix F)
- Metrics (Chapter 4)



## PLAN PARTICIPANTS

The Comprehensive Plan was refined through an ongoing, two-year dialogue at visioning, community choices, and draft plan events, with online questionnaires at each stage and workshops with the Stakeholder Committees, Technical Advisory Committee, Intergovernmental Partners Committee, Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, County Boards and Commissions, and other local organizations.

## Boards, Commissions and Committees

Both phases of the Comprehensive Plan development engaged County boards, commissions, and committees to provide detailed feedback at every stage process. These groups participated in multiple workshops at key milestones in the process: Foundation, Visioning, and Recommendations.

### 1. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Technical Advisory Committee brought together a team of County staff and agency representatives for interdisciplinary perspective on how the Plan would be used, interpreted, and implemented.

### 2. Stakeholder Committee (SC)

The Phase 1 Stakeholder Committee included representatives of mountain communities, organizations and boards, followed by a similar committee from the Front Range for Phase 2. They had two primary functions: 1) to inform the planning team of the unique issues, opportunities and values, and 2) to inform rural communities of the planning process and serve as liaisons to their communities and social networks.

### 3. Intergovernmental Partners Committee (IPC) (Phase 2 only)

City managers, planning directors, and school district planners coordinated long-range planning efforts with their jurisdiction's goals.

### 4. Boards and Commissions

Community members serving on 12 County advisory boards and commissions participated in special Boards and Commissions Summits during both phases of the project.

### 5. County Commissioner, Planning Commission, and Regional Elected Officials Involvement

Colorado Revised Statutes Section 30-28-106 (1) specifies that "it is the duty of a county planning commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of the county." To cultivate shared understanding, the Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission participated in joint work sessions. The plan's direction was also presented to elected officials throughout the region.

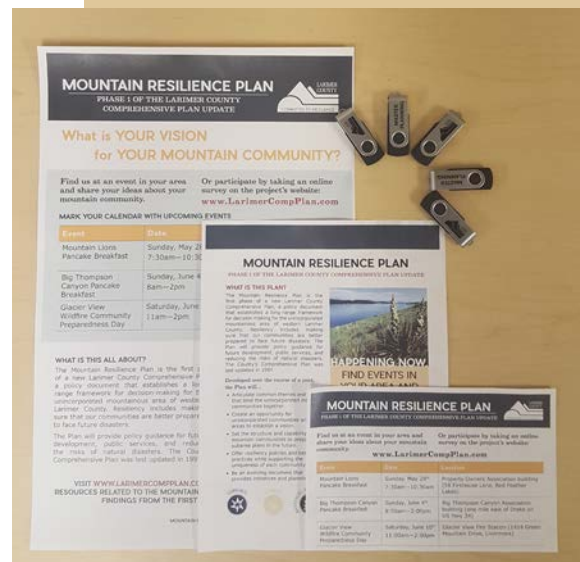
## NOTIFICATION AND UPDATES

The County distributed Press Releases at each milestone of the process to inform the public through formal channels and news outlets.

Regular email updates were sent out to those that signed up on the project website or at public meetings. Updates were also distributed through social media outlets like NextDoor, Facebook, and Twitter.

Committee members and community groups distributed and posted hard copy posters, fliers, and postcards at community gathering places (i.e. libraries, post offices, etc.).

Notification used distribution lists of homeowner associations, clubs, community amenities, road, water, and fire districts and departments, and more.



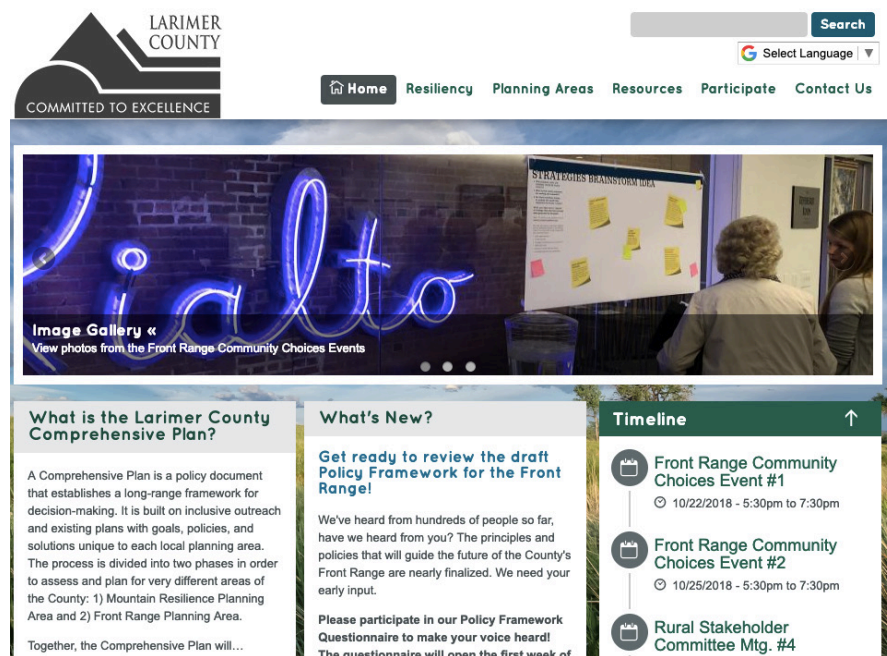
*Visioning Event Materials. Draft materials were placed on flash drives in areas where internet coverage is lacking.*

## WEB-BASED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

www.LarimerCompPlan.com provided routine updates, resources, and online activities. This included responding to a call to action, participating in online questionnaires, or reading through project materials and plan documents.

A public schedule for all events was posted and updated on the website with summaries of past meeting and presentations.

Online questionnaires, idea walls, and interactive mapping were active at key engagement milestones.



### ONLINE PARTICIPATION

**830** total online responses

**5,159** website users

**51,867** page views

### EVENT PARTICIPATION

**13** community events

**25** committee meetings

**46** personal interviews



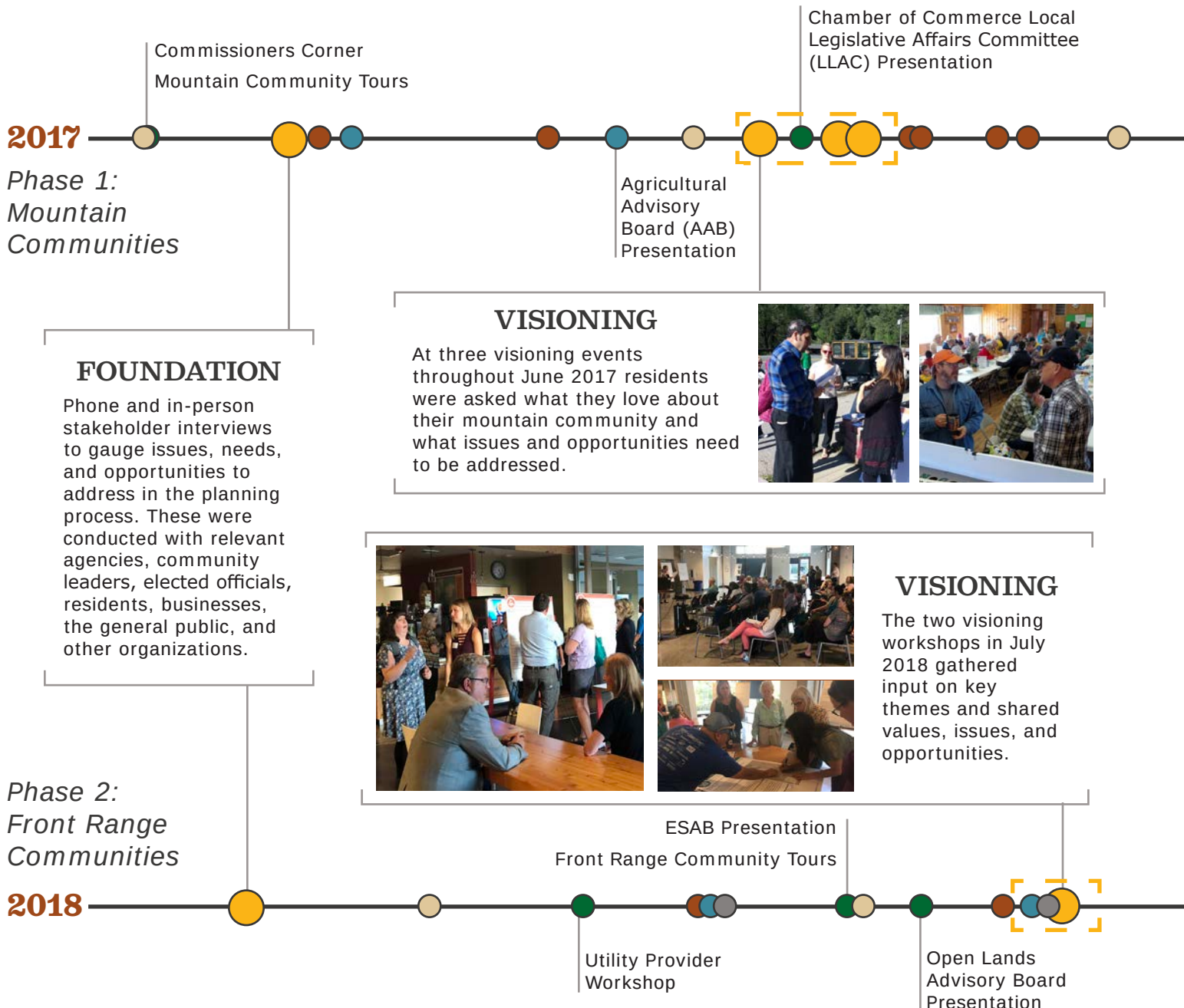
Clockwise from top left: SC meeting; Mountain Lions Pancake Breakfast; public event in Loveland; public event materials in Livermore; public event in Estes Park.

Photos: Larimer County

## PUBLIC EVENTS & LISTENING SESSIONS

Across both phases, the County engaged residents at 13 public events distributed geographically throughout the County. The events and meetings provided education about the content and planning process, solicited in-depth input from residents, generated interest and buy-in from local leaders and residents, actively engaged various stakeholders, and increased awareness of why this process is important in shaping the County's future.

- Public Engagement
- Boards & Commissions Summit
- TAC Meeting
- BCC/PC Study Session
- SC Meeting
- ✱ Plan Acceptance and Adoption Hearings
- IPC Meeting
- [ ] Online Activities
- Other Meeting





## COMMUNITY CHOICES

Two community choices events in August 2017 ask about the effectiveness of implementation strategies, programs, and tools for mountain communities.

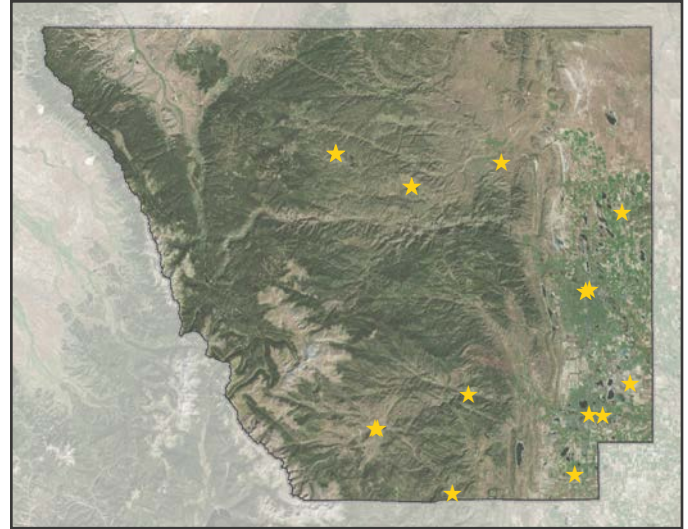
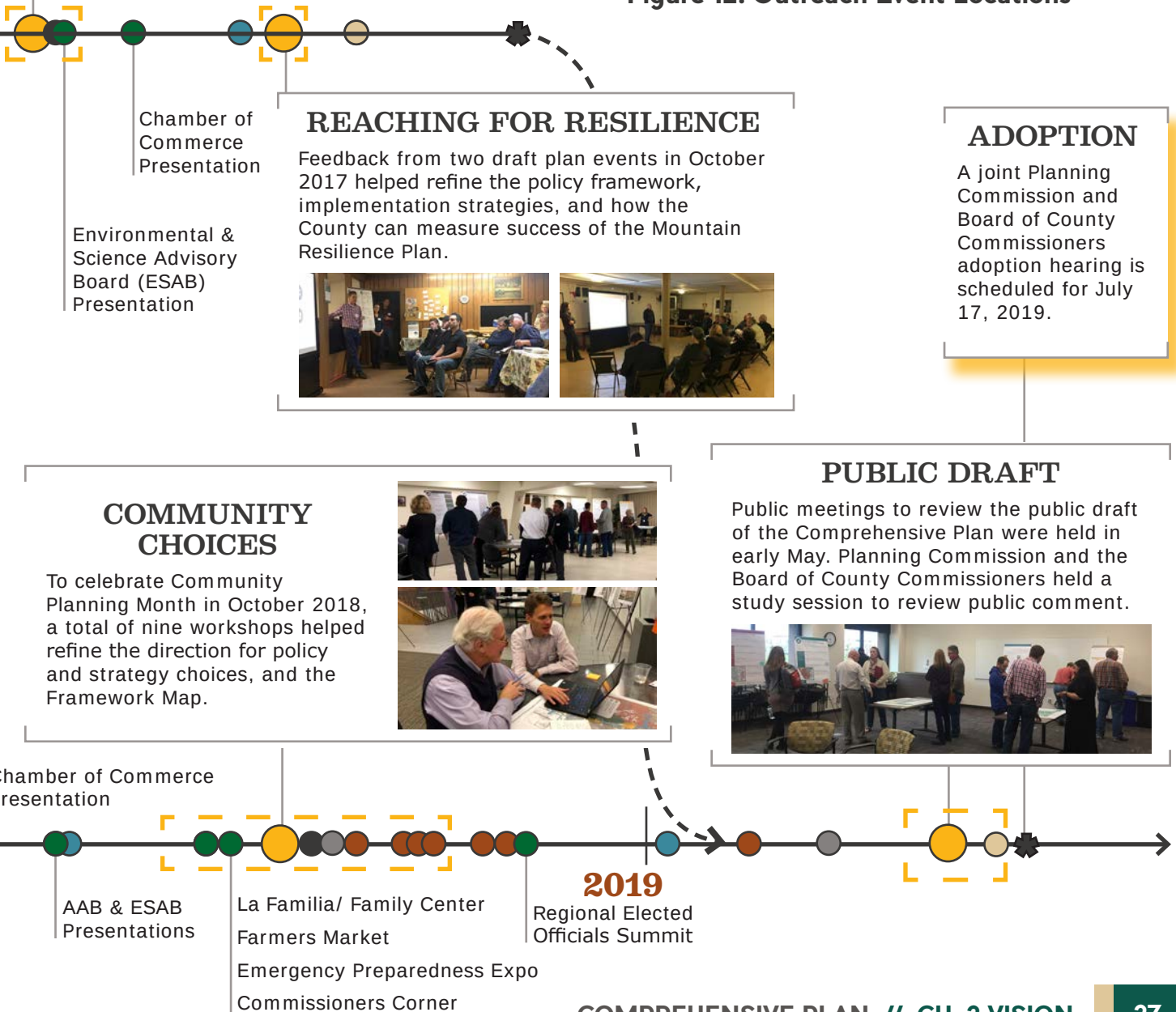


Figure 12. Outreach Event Locations



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Photo: Walt Hubis

# Chapter Three >>>>

## POLICY FRAMEWORK

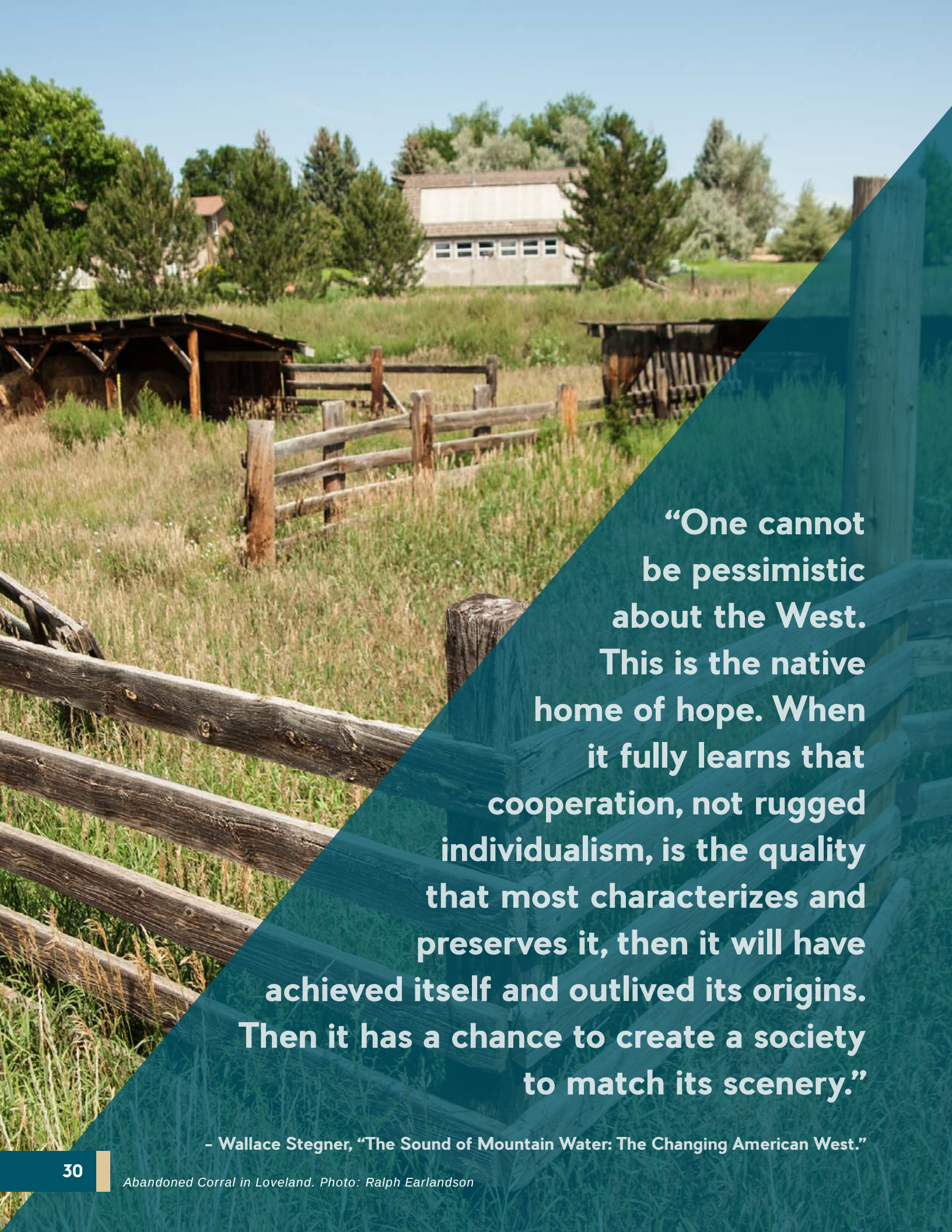
### In this Chapter

#### **Principles and Policies.**

Countywide policy direction articulated through a series of Principles and Policies.

#### **Framework Map and Categories.**





**“One cannot  
be pessimistic  
about the West.  
This is the native  
home of hope. When  
it fully learns that  
cooperation, not rugged  
individualism, is the quality  
that most characterizes and  
preserves it, then it will have  
achieved itself and outlived its origins.  
Then it has a chance to create a society  
to match its scenery.”**

**– Wallace Stegner, “The Sound of Mountain Water: The Changing American West.”**



# INTRODUCTION

The following Principles and Policies are designed to help the County enhance the lives of its residents, operate within its resources, protect the environment, guide sound public infrastructure investments, and make informed land use decisions.

They are a critical step toward community resilience to mitigate future health, economic, and environmental impacts from natural and economic disasters. The following pages define the County's role in resilience underlain by two beliefs: 1) that County governments are not able to provide the same level of infrastructure and emergency services that city governments provide (see the [Code of the West](#)); and 2) that individuals and families are primarily responsible for their own self-reliance, preparedness and the consequences of their actions or inaction. Specific actions toward achieving the Principles and Policies are identified in Appendix F: Implementation Strategies.



## Community

- C1. Regional Convener and Facilitator
- C2. Proactive Planning and Engagement
- C3. Framework Map
- C4. Targeted Urban Development
- C5. Subarea Planning
- C6. Rural Development



## Economy

- E1. Regional Economic Development
- E2. Agriculture and Innovation
- E3. Economic Health and Resiliency



## Housing

- H1. Housing Needs
- H2. Housing Diversity
- H3. Land Division and Residential Planning



## Health & Social

- HS1. Community Connectivity
- HS2. Environmental Public Health
- HS3. Health Access
- HS4. Individual and Community Preparedness



## Infrastructure

- I1. Transportation Network
- I2. Utility and Communication Services
- I3. Adequate Facilities and Services
- I4. Energy Provision
- I5. Solid Waste Management
- I6. Sustainable Design Measures



## Watersheds & Natural Resources

- WNR1. Natural Resource, Wildlife Habitat, and Ecosystems
- WNR2. Agricultural Lands Conservation and Stewardship
- WNR3. Watershed Protection and Enhancement
- WNR4. Water Conservation and Quality
- WNR5. Terrain and Natural Hazards

***For the purposes of this document, Principles and Policies are defined as follows:***

**PRINCIPLES.** Desired ideals and a value to be sought; an end toward which effort is directed.

**POLICIES.** Statements of standard or a course of action that guides governmental action and decision making.



# COMMUNITY

## Principles and Policies

### Relevant Plans

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Strategic Plan
- Special Area and Subarea Plans:
  - LaPorte Area Plan
  - Red Feather Lakes Area Plan
  - I-25 Corridor Plan
  - Plan for the Region between Fort Collins and Loveland (Larimer County / City of Fort Collins / Loveland)

### C1. REGIONAL CONVENER AND FACILITATOR

*Larimer County serves as a regional convener, facilitator and collaborator to build relationships and increase intergovernmental cooperation, partnerships, and proactive, long-range planning.*

- 1.1. Formulate and strengthen Intergovernmental Agreements to encourage coordination and cooperation among municipalities and local and regional agencies.
- 1.2. Facilitate planning efforts between cities, utility districts/providers, and unincorporated residents to ensure all interests are represented.
- 1.3. Encourage a variety of land use planning tools, such as the  Rural Land Use Process, Conservation Development Process, Transferable Density Units, public/private partnerships and other innovative planning tools to protect and conserve important natural and fiscal resources.
- 1.4. Establish Cooperative Planning Areas (CPAs) adjacent to Growth Management Areas (GMAs), to address future municipal and county interests in cooperation with municipalities, residents, and landowners. 



Larimer County Justice Center. Photo: Larimer County



*Larimer County values, includes, and collaborates with unincorporated residents, rural communities and the region through long-range comprehensive planning and meaningful representation. (See [E1. Regional Economic Development](#))*

- ## Map 1. Community Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans





### C3. FRAMEWORK MAP

*Larimer County guides the location, intensity, and pattern of development through a [Framework Map](#).*

- 3.1. Illustrate a countywide vision for physical development and conservation of unincorporated areas through the [Framework Map](#).
- 3.2. Guide land use patterns and surrounding land uses as described in the [Framework Map and Categories](#) that transitions residential density outward from urban areas, conserves connected resource areas, and identifies opportunities for non-residential uses based upon specific criteria such as resource location.
- 3.3. Align future rezoning of property to the [Framework Map](#).
- 3.4. Annually review the [Framework Map](#) to ensure it maintains relevancy and update as necessary.

#### FRAMEWORK CATEGORIES AND MAP

Framework Categories shown on the [Framework Map](#) are italicized throughout this section and further described on pages 49-59.



### C4. TARGETED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

*Larimer County promotes urban-level development and annexation within Growth Management Areas. (See [Framework Categories](#))*

- 4.1. Create and/or update GMA boundaries represented by the *Urban/Rural Interface* and *Urban Expansion* Framework Categories to implement urban development and Intergovernmental Agreements according to the following criteria:
  - The GMA district boundary is sized to accommodate 20-year growth projections and be annexed within the time frame anticipated by the municipality's comprehensive plan
  - Urban-level residential densities and non-residential intensities consistent with the municipality's comprehensive plan

- Similar urban design standards and fee structures so that lands may eventually be annexed as they become eligible, without extensive capital improvements or costs
- Provision of urban level services (water, sewer, urban streets, and urban fire protection) are available or planned
- Urban services provided by the County are minimized by facilitating the annexation of lands that have been or are designated for urban uses

- 4.2. Achieve consistency with municipal land use plans within GMA boundaries.
- 4.3. Maintain consistent City/County standards for transportation and drainage as applicable and coordinate development standards within approved GMAs.
- 4.4. Partner and coordinate with municipalities on reviewing development proposals within GMAs.
- 4.5. Use annexations and development approvals within GMAs to accomplish the residential densities, non-residential intensities and street patterns contained in the municipality's comprehensive plan.

### C5. SUBAREA PLANNING

*Larimer County promotes a mix of uses as allowed by adopted subarea plans and Community Influence Areas based on the availability and provision of a full range of services.*

- 5.1. Encourage subarea planning for unincorporated communities to tailor the [Framework Map and Categories](#), policies, zoning, and initiatives to location-specific needs. As identified in the [Framework Map](#), *Rural Centers* indicate areas where unincorporated communities may want to create Subarea Plans in the future.
- 5.2. Establish Cooperative Planning Areas (CPAs) adjacent to municipalities outside of GMAs as well as other identified areas, such as *Rural Centers* (see [Framework Map](#)) to ensure that all affected interests are considered in the planning process.



5.3. Emphasize upzoning requests in GMAs, Community Influence Areas, and Subarea Plans where urban development is specifically designated.

5.4. Plan for smaller-lot conservation developments served by sewer and water utilities within Municipal Planning Boundaries that have not been formally approved as a GMA (i.e., *Rural/Urban Interface Framework Category*).



## C6. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*Larimer County balances growth and preservation of community character outside of GMAs through flexible and predictable land use strategies, processes, and development standards in unincorporated areas. (See [Framework Map and Categories](#))*

6.1. Create compatibility criteria to ensure that new development proposals adequately address mitigation of land use impacts, conflicting community values, natural resource and agricultural protection, and economic growth.

6.2. Create Land Use Code and development standards that are responsive to and balance the unique needs and economic opportunities of rural areas.

6.3. In the Front Range, support community separators with affected municipalities and unincorporated communities to preserve open space, natural resources, and individual community identity.

6.4. In the Front Range, encourage clustered residential uses through the application of Conservation Developments or Rural Land Use Plans as a preferred alternative to 10 to 35 acre development.

6.5. Promote small, concentrated commercial or industrial development where utilities are available and where it supports agricultural and recreational uses, as represented by the *Retail Service Framework Category*.

6.6. Support industrial uses in strategic locations outside of GMAs only when it can be demonstrated that the use minimizes land

use and environmental health conflicts with residential areas and/or sensitive and unique natural areas, as represented by the *Industrial Framework Category*.

6.7. Support a mix of agriculturally supportive uses and clustered residential development that act as a buffer between existing and planned urban-level development and large-scale agricultural uses, as represented by the *Rural Framework Category*.

6.8. In the *Mountains & Foothills Framework Category*, design clustered development and transfers of density units to encourage a village pattern through efficient placement of gathering spaces and commercial uses serving daily needs without requiring urban level facilities and services.

6.9. Support clustered, locally-serving non-residential and civic development in *Rural Centers* to preserve a sense of place and serve the long-term health, live/work balance, and daily needs of the unincorporated community in the *Rural Center Framework Category*.

6.10. Preserve agriculture and ranching to support a rural economy, and where applicable, community separation, as represented in the *Agriculture & Ranching Framework Category*. Develop an Agricultural District to support perpetual farming and agricultural uses in specific rural areas where prime soils, irrigated agriculture, and supportive infrastructure exist.

6.11. Conserve natural resources and, where appropriate, support recreational uses within public lands or privately-owned conserved lands as represented by the *Natural Resource Framework Category*. If a publicly-owned parcel east of the first line of hogbacks is sold for private use, the Framework Category will default to *Mountains & Foothills*.

6.12. Support the reclamation of existing and future mining operations during and after mining in an effort to create wildlife habitat, restore vegetation, contribute to flood storage, and provide appropriate residential, commercial, recreational, or educational development opportunities.



# ECONOMY

## Principles and Policies

### Relevant Plans

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Special Area and Subarea Plans:
  - LaPorte Area Plan
  - Red Feather Lakes Area Plan
  - I-25 Corridor Plan
  - Plan for the Region between Fort Collins and Loveland (Larimer County / City of Fort Collins / Loveland)

### E1. REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*Larimer County fosters a diverse regional economy that adapts to changing needs of the workforce and supports business development, retention and expansion.*

- 1.1. Collaborate with municipalities, economic development and business groups, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions on a coordinated regional approach to economic and workforce development.
- 1.2. Develop incentives, such as expedited development review processes, fee reductions, or infrastructure improvements for desired non-residential development in the *Retail and Industrial Framework Map* locations.
- 1.3. Support investments in workforce development, training, technology, and education for the evolving needs of a diverse workforce and changing economy.
- 1.4. Encourage small-business development and entrepreneurship in non-residential locations.
- 1.5. Consider opportunities for non-residential development that are appropriate for type, location, and infrastructure (see criteria on [page 50](#)).
- 1.6. Support the redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial sites in both urban and rural areas.
- 1.7. Support provision of basic and enhanced services needed to foster local employment opportunities.
- 1.8. Leverage the Northern Colorado Regional Airport to increase economic activity within the region. Continue efforts to establish land use compatibility within the Airport's Influence Area.

### E2. AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATION

*Larimer County promotes innovation and technology in agriculture that provides a regional and local economic benefit and supports the long-term viability of the industry.*

- 2.1. Maintain existing agricultural operations and product development by allowing for value-added business ventures to locate in proximity to *Agricultural & Ranching* activities or near resource areas.
- 2.2. Be responsive, supportive and adaptable to new forms of agriculture and both large- and small-scale farming.
- 2.3. Support secondary-income options on agricultural land through home and accessory rural occupations.



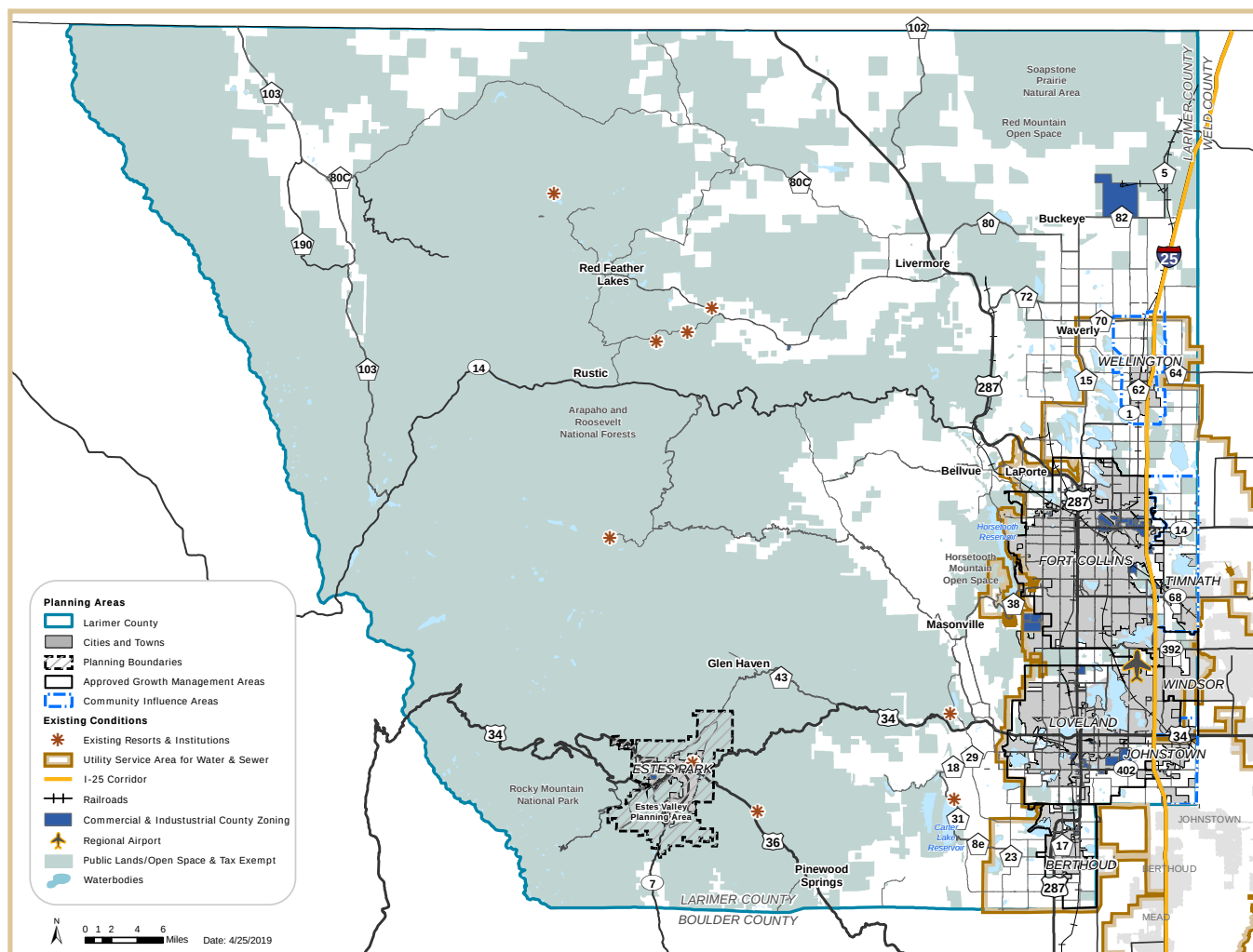


### E3. ECONOMIC HEALTH AND RESILIENCY

*Larimer County supports and facilitates rural economic development efforts that contribute to economic stability, wealth creation, and high-value, low-impact employment sectors.*

- 3.1. Ensure that land use practices and regulations accommodate needs of rural communities, future shocks and stresses, and changing trends regarding businesses, including home and accessory rural occupations.
- 3.2. Build on existing efforts to identify areas suitable for economic development to meet the specific needs of unincorporated mountain communities, potentially through the use of subarea plans and overlay zoning.
- 3.3. Ensure local employment opportunities balance economic success with local needs and community character.
- 3.4. Accommodate recreation and land conservation as economically valuable land uses in rural areas.
- 3.5. Leverage tourism (including eco- and ag-tourism) to benefit mountain communities and achieve subarea visions.

**Map 2. Economy Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans**





# HEALTH & SOCIAL

## Principles and Policies

### Relevant Plans

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Transportation Master Plan
- Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

### HS1. COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

*Larimer County creates integrated connectivity that encourages multi-modal transportation, physical activity, and social cohesion. (See [1.1. Transportation Network](#))*

- 1.1. Lead regional planning efforts and collaborate with state and local agencies to connect diverse mobility options (rail, bus, bike, carpooling, and walking).
- 1.2. Use public and private partnerships and code requirements to expand opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and transit infrastructure to reduce car dependency.
- 1.3. Advocate for affordable, safe, and easy-to-use transit options for everyone with emphasis on seniors, youth, people with low income levels, people with mobility impairments, and other transit-reliant individuals.
- 1.4. Engage residents in developing innovative ways to create regional connections to remote areas that do not rely on traditional transportation, such as senior transportation, emerging technologies, and broadband service.
- 1.5. Develop effective tools to complete accessible non-motorized transportation connections between adjacent land uses to assure recreational and active commuting opportunities.
- 1.6. Designate and create community gathering spaces in new and existing areas of rural residential, urban/rural interface, and rural centers for neighbors to meet, congregate, and recreate. (See the [Framework Map](#))
- 1.7. Encourage a broad distribution and connectivity of open spaces and natural areas for recreation, habitat conservation and associated physical and behavioral health opportunities.

### HS2. ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

*Larimer County works to improve environmental quality through reducing environmental public health impacts. (See [W&NR Principles](#))*

- 2.1. Incorporate community health data and environmental considerations in the development and implementation of future plans and regulatory changes.
- 2.2. Reduce motor vehicle emissions and trips, through strategies such as telecommuting and carpooling, and alternative transportation.
- 2.3. Reduce exposure to pollutants and promptly mitigate spills and releases of toxic chemicals.



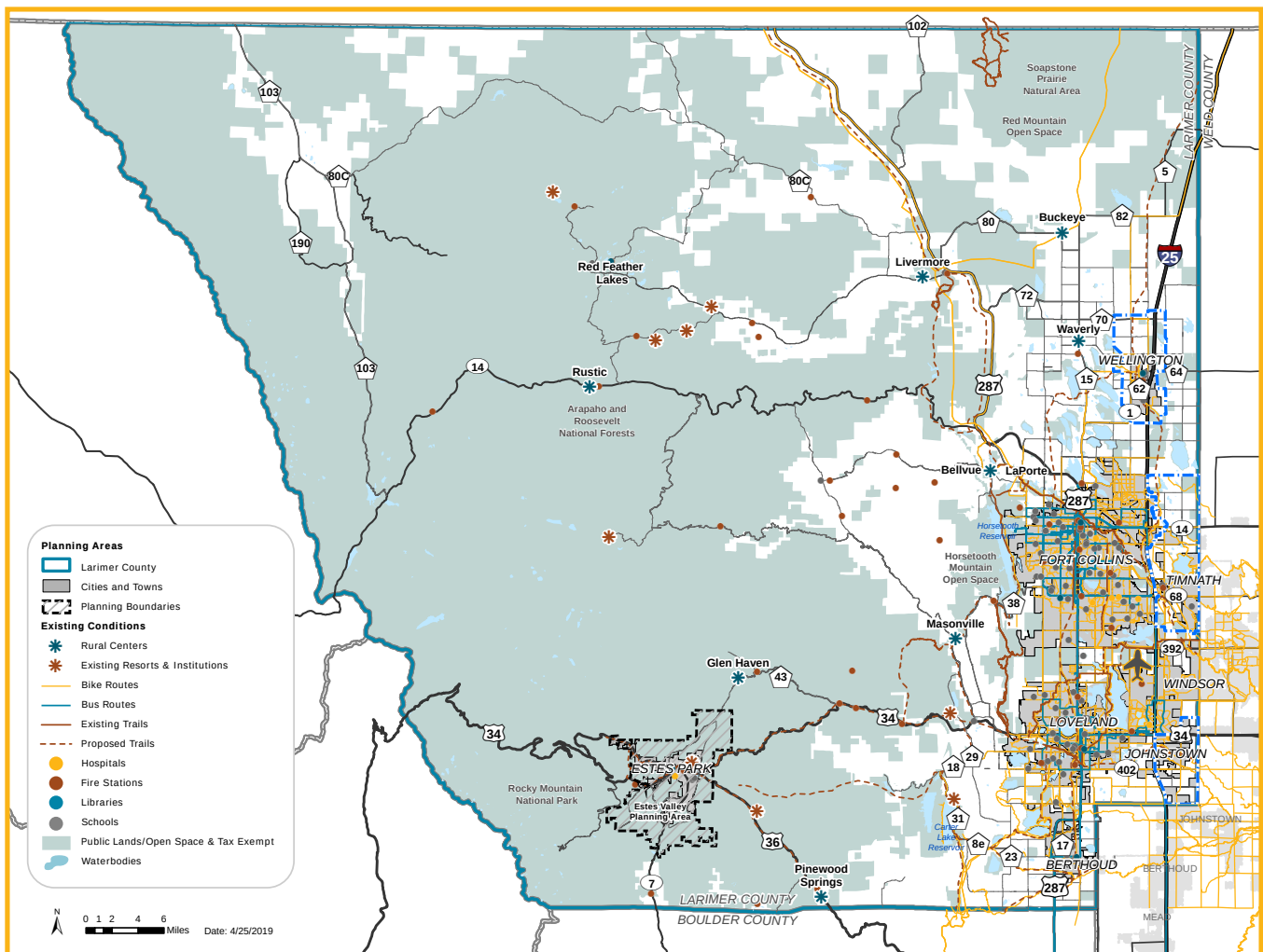
Coyote Ridge. Photo: Alisha Jeffers



- 2.4. Identify and implement dark sky strategies in appropriate areas to minimize light pollution.
- 2.5. Influence legislation and implement policies that improve air, water, and noise standards on a regional and statewide level.
- 2.6. Improve efforts to mitigate environmental and public health impacts associated with climate change.
- 2.7. Seek to reduce stationary and mobile source emissions and pollutants which cause adverse health effects, impair visibility, and contribute to climate change. Remain within the state and federal air quality standards.
- 2.8. Provide high levels of environmental protection for drinking water sources through stormwater management, development review, and water quality management plans.



**Map 3. Health & Social Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans**



### HS3. HEALTH ACCESS

*Larimer County supports improvement of physical and behavioral health for all members of the community.*

- 3.1. Promote appropriate land uses that enable communities to provide efficient need-based distribution of quality human services and health care facilities. (See [C4. Targeted Urban Development](#) and [C6. Rural Development](#) and the [Framework Map](#))
- 3.2. Encourage countywide partnerships between public and private sectors for the effective delivery of health care and human services.
- 3.3. Encourage development designs and infrastructure that enable residents to live in their communities with dignity as they age. Minimize barriers for all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, ability, income, familial status, and national origin.
- 3.4. Encourage the preservation of sustainable agriculture and ranching as a source of safe, healthy, locally grown food. (See [E2. Agriculture and Innovation](#) and [W&NR2. Agricultural Lands Conservation and Stewardship](#))
- 3.5. Connect local food markets to local agricultural operations of all sizes. (See [E2. Agriculture and Innovation](#))
- 3.6. Embrace new service delivery technologies to increase access to health care services in rural and limited transportation areas in an effort to support aging in place, those who have limited transportation options, and limited mobility.
-  3.7. Continue to coordinate and partner with School Districts on land use planning, transportation infrastructure, connectivity, shared use, and school facility retention and expansion.
- 3.8. Encourage innovative solutions to address the diverse issues associated with vulnerable populations in mountain communities that may have limited resources and assistance.

### HS4. INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

*Larimer County increases individual and community preparedness for all hazards, identifies unincorporated populations at greatest risk, empowers local leaders, and promotes resiliency actions. (See [W&NR5. Terrain and Natural Hazards](#))*

- 4.1. Help communities, businesses, and individuals take responsibility for their own collective preparedness in the event of a disruption.
- 4.2. Foster a culture of self-sustainability and public education on the realities of rural living and the [Code of the West](#).
- 4.3. Support a wide distribution of information and services to higher risk and remote areas.
-  4.4. Increase public education in partnership with community groups and educational institutions regarding how human activities interact with natural resource protection and hazard mitigation.
-  4.5. Collaborate across jurisdictions and with local, state, and federal land managers to promote resiliency and hazard planning and management.
- 4.6. Continue to collaborate with area partners (such as federal and state agencies, municipalities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations) through mutual aid agreements and long-term planning efforts.





# HOUSING

## Principles and Policies

### Relevant Plans

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Regional Housing Needs Assessment



Photo: Miriam McGilvray

### H1. HOUSING NEEDS

*Larimer County supports the development of safe, decent, and attainable housing types and choices to meet the needs of its residents.*

- 1.1. Engage in outreach and education measures to obtain a greater understanding of the housing needs of unincorporated residents.
- 1.2. Coordinate and continue to participate with other governmental entities, housing agencies, non-profits, developers/builders, and institutions to provide attainable housing.
- 1.3. Develop initiatives that preserve current attainable housing stocks and ownership options that will minimize displacement of residents living in communities threatened by redevelopment or changes in ownership.
- 1.4. Encourage development of attainable housing within and adjacent to Growth Management Areas. Support the expansion of opportunities for attainable housing in other locations where there is adequate or planned public infrastructure.
- 1.5. Collaborate with housing advocates in updating the Code to encourage development of attainable housing.
- 1.6. Support other non-public, nonprofit, and private sector organizations to provide attainable housing alternatives.

### H2. HOUSING DIVERSITY

*Larimer County encourages a diversity of housing types necessary to meet the need for identified housing choices.*

- 2.1. Create flexibility and ensure that the Land Use Code provides opportunities for a diversity of housing options including co-housing, accessory dwelling units, tiny homes, manufactured/modular homes, recreational vehicles/trailers/tiny homes on wheels, mixed use, and other innovative housing options where adequate infrastructure is available or is planned.
- 2.2. Work with municipalities to address tools for and needs of mobile home park residents.
- 2.3. Support the housing needs of multi-generational families and non-traditional households.
- 2.4. Develop and/or revise policies for accessory dwellings to increase housing and economic opportunities for current residents.

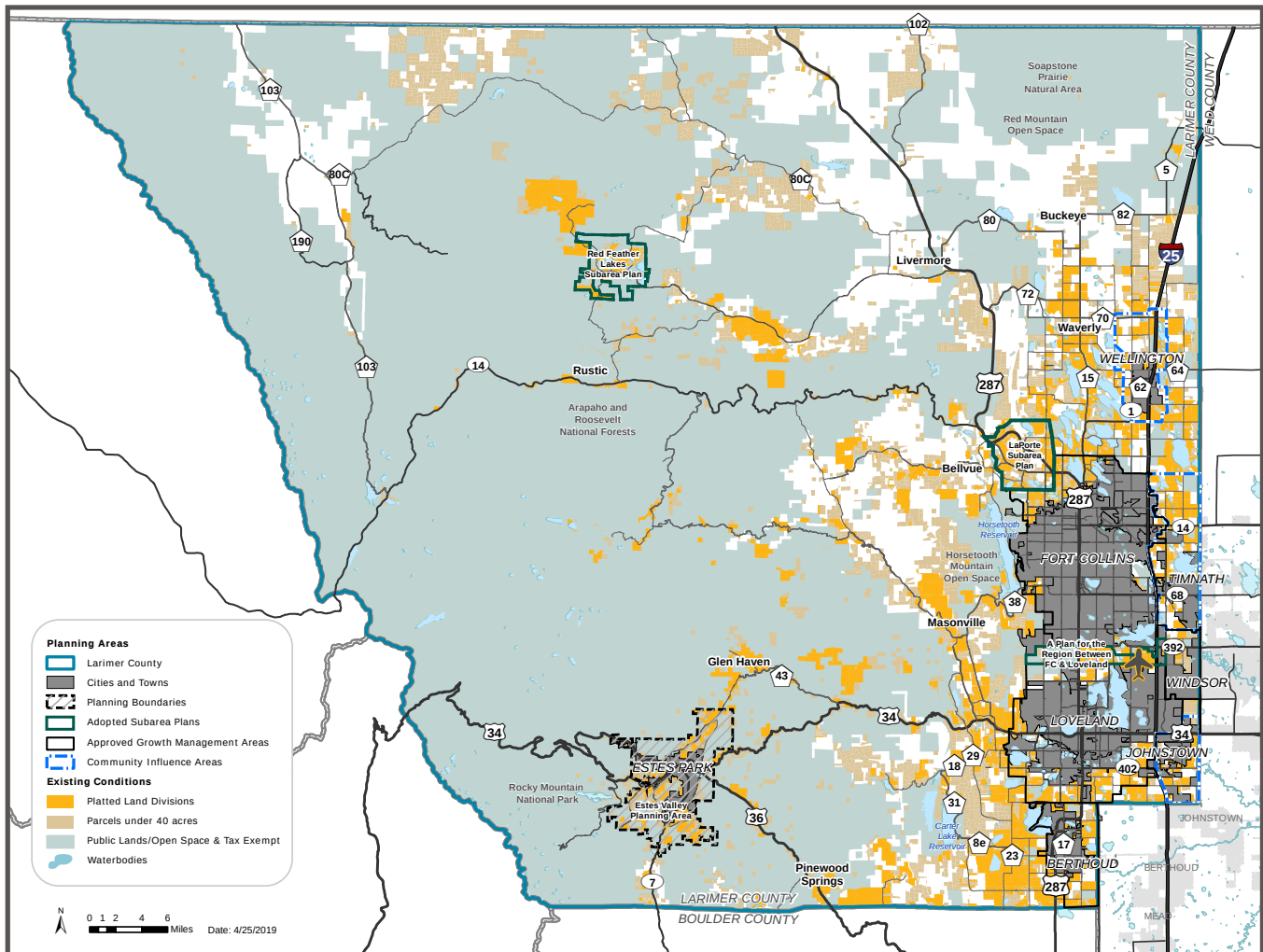


### H3. LAND DIVISION AND RESIDENTIAL PLANNING

*Larimer County coordinates planning processes and land division patterns to attain efficient and responsible growth that maintains compatibility with adjacent areas, sensitive environmental areas, and promotes a sense of community.*

- 3.1. Cluster residential subdivisions and support the Rural Land Use Process and incentives (i.e. Transferable Density Units) in ways that maximize contiguity and connectivity of residual conserved lands.
- 3.2. Encourage residential and mixed-use development in *Rural Centers* or where infrastructure is available or can be reasonably obtained, as shown on the [Framework Map](#).
- 3.3. Create standards to ensure compatibility between land uses to address potential conflicts (i.e. buffering).
- 3.4. Support provision of and access to common areas and natural spaces in and around all types of residential developments.
- 3.5. Require setbacks to minimize visual or direct impacts when siting new development and building envelopes on or near prominent landforms, landmarks, viewsheds, and natural features.
- 3.6. Require measures to preserve unique or distinctive natural features and viewsheds in the design of new development.
- 3.7. Mitigate negative effects of land uses that create high off-site impacts, such as noise, lighting, wildlife impacts, habitat fragmentation, barriers to wildlife movement and traffic, to the extent feasible.

**Map 4. Housing Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans**





# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Principles and Policies

### Relevant Plans

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Transportation Master Plan
- Facilities Master Plan
- Solid Waste Infrastructure Master Plan
- Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

### II. TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

*Larimer County provides a safe, integrated transportation network that considers all modes, aligns needs with master plans and development, and encourages equity to the extent possible.*

- 1.1. Identify and develop funding options for improvements and maintenance to the County's transportation infrastructure.
- 1.2. Utilize the Capital Improvement Plan and Asset Management Program to address deficiencies in County transportation facilities and system vulnerabilities.
- 1.3. Integrate resiliency and operational sustainability, such as secondary egress, into future infrastructure and hazard mitigation projects.
- 1.4. Construct and maintain planned and funded infrastructure per the Transportation Master Plan.
- 1.5. Encourage alternative and multiple modes of transportation through infrastructure improvements and supporting initiatives.
- 1.6. Plan for technological innovation, changing travel preferences, an aging population, and future transportation and mobility needs.
- 1.7. Collaborate with state, regional, and local entities to develop a more efficient, connected trail, transit, rail and multi-modal transportation system.
- 1.8. Continue to require new development to make or pay for its equitable share of necessary improvements to existing transportation facilities including planned multi-modal trail networks.
- 1.9. Review all proposed infrastructure projects to ensure they provide adequate service for current needs and future planned growth consistent with the Capital Improvement Plan, Transportation Plan, and Comprehensive Plan as applicable.
- 1.10. Inform and encourage residents to effectively maintain private roads long-term.

### 12. UTILITY AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES

*Larimer County facilitates the provision of utility and communication services to keep pace with demand and meet the needs of residents.*

- 2.1. Establish consistent service standards with water/sewer districts.



Butterfly Woods Natural Area. Photo: Ed Ogle



2.2. Collaborate with and promote coordination of utility providers to deliver affordable and reliable services, share resources, and increase efficiency.

2.3. Promote the resiliency and redundancy of critical infrastructure systems to minimize disruptions and failures in lifeline services, such as water and energy delivery and wastewater management.

2.4. Encourage, wherever possible, the use of public or private sewer systems in lieu of septic systems.

2.5. Require the future provision of reliable and affordable high speed internet and broadband in new developments and connect to such services where available.

2.6. Support the expansion of and accessibility to high-speed internet and broadband in rural areas.



### 13. ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

*Larimer County requires the provision of adequate public and/or private facilities and services concurrent with new development.*

3.1. Require new development to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure.

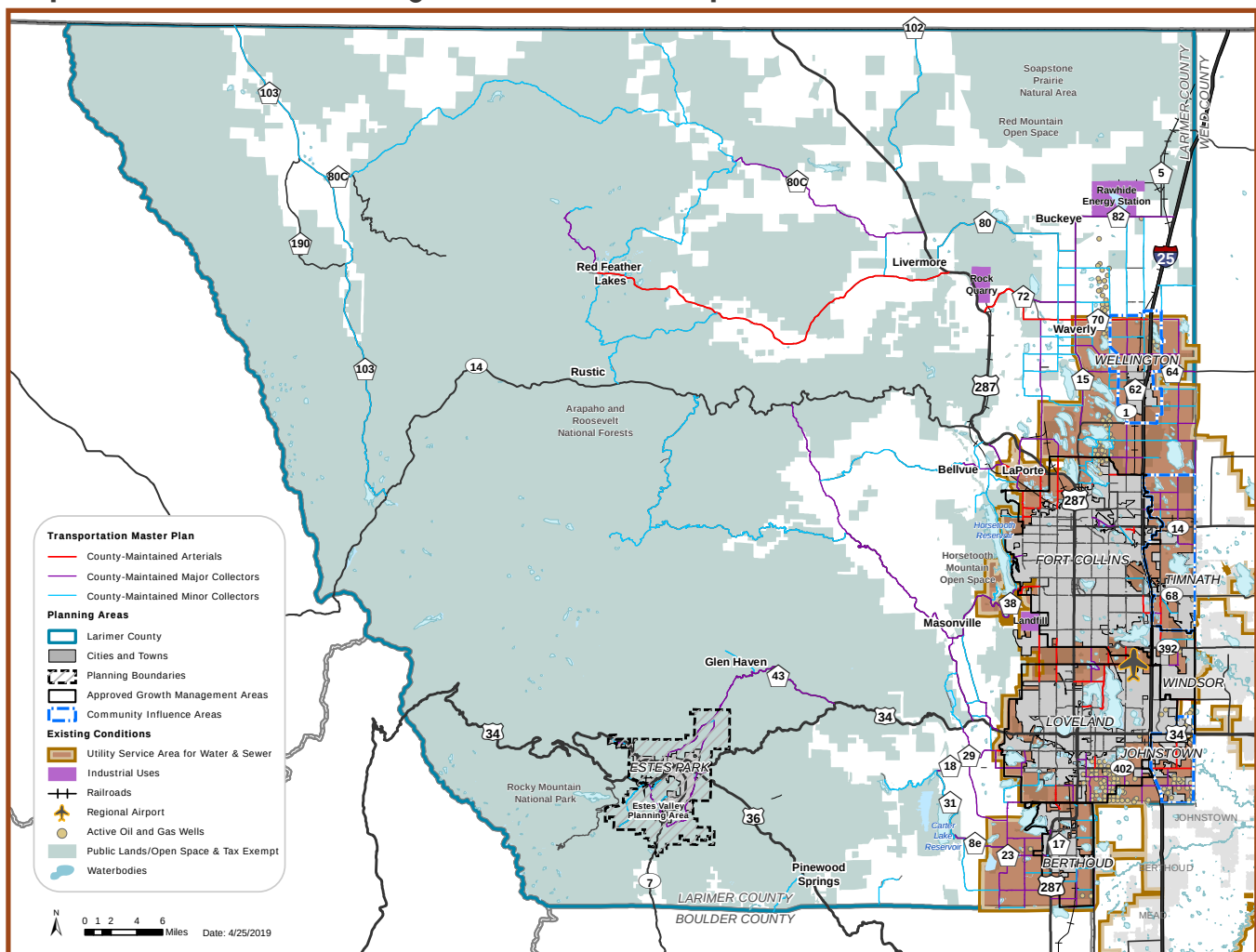


3.2. Allow private, on-site, water and sanitary sewer facilities only where they do not conflict with current or planned expansions of public or community systems.

3.3. Encourage the creation of multi-purpose districts for funding construction and long-term maintenance of roads and other infrastructure.



**Map 5. Infrastructure Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans**



3.4. Collaborate with adjacent municipalities and unincorporated communities to develop and implement basin-wide stormwater management plans.

 3.5. Foster partnerships with appropriate agencies at a local, state, and federal level to ensure that adequate infrastructure is available for development.

 3.6. Provide water supplies for fire protection by coordinating fire protection standards for water supply between water service providers and fire protection districts.

## 14. ENERGY PROVISION

*Larimer County collaborates on oil and gas, renewable energy, and gravel extraction to reduce land use conflicts, protect environmental quality and public health, and maintain reliable conventional and renewable energy sources.*

- 4.1. Encourage opportunities for wind, solar, battery, and future renewable energy sources in appropriate locations.
- 4.2. Support municipal and private utilities plans that will provide customers with choices to utilize carbon-free energy.
- 4.3. Encourage energy efficient commercial buildings and residential homes that include site design such as solar orientation, and water and energy conservation.
- 4.4. Promote local scale production of renewable energy (i.e., rooftop solar, small scale wind) to address the risks associated with utility provision, lifeline services, and grid failure in mountain communities.
- 4.5. Implement mitigation measures to minimize conflicts with land uses and air and water quality associated with energy development and subsurface resource extraction.
- 4.6. Assure responsible access to all mineral rights, including sand and gravel resources, through mitigation measures that can enable mining and mineral extraction within different Framework Categories.
- 4.7. Acknowledge the impacts associated with development of mineral and sand and gravel resources and use fact-based data to inform decision making regarding continued development of these resources.

4.8. Collaborate with adjacent counties and state agencies to ensure proper protections and environmental standards are met for air, water, noise, and reclamation.

## 15. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

*Implement options for the continued efficient, economical, and environmentally responsible handling of waste generated in the Larimer County Wasteshed.*

- 5.1. Establish a comprehensive, regional solid waste, recycling, and composting management system that is implemented in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable manner.
- 5.2. Implement waste management programs and facilities that reflect the needs and desires of users.
- 5.3. Develop a set of waste diversion/reduction/reuse goals that are adopted by and implemented with all jurisdictions in the Wasteshed.
- 5.4. Consistently inform and educate the public about waste management (i.e., rethink, refuse, reuse, recycle) programs and practices throughout the Wasteshed.

## 16. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN MEASURES

*Larimer County encourages sustainable design measures when making improvements and developing new infrastructure.*

-  6.1. Encourage resource-efficient building and site design, solar orientation, and water and energy conservation.
- 6.2. Utilize technology and innovation in infrastructure projects to increase robustness, modularity, cost effectiveness and diversity.



# WATERSHEDS & NATURAL RESOURCES

## Principles and Policies

### Relevant Plans

The following adopted plans are incorporated by reference and are not repeated in detail:

- Open Lands Master Plan
- Reservoir Parks Master Plan
- Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Water Master Plan
- Colorado Water Plan
- Vital Landscapes and Resources Report



### W&NRI. NATURAL RESOURCES, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND ECOSYSTEMS

*Larimer County supports and encourages the conservation, stewardship, and resiliency of our natural resources, wildlife habitat and ecosystems.*

- 1.1. Effectively sustain lands with high ecological value through a combination of land use planning tools that meet conservation goals in adopted plans.
- 1.2. Maintain strategic buffer between municipalities and/or *Rural Centers* as identified in the [Framework Map](#), consistent with adopted County plans. Useful planning tools and incentives include transfer of development units, conservation developments, Rural Land Use Process, cluster developments, land acquisition or conservation easements.
- 1.3. All new development shall be located to minimize impacts to unique, distinctive, and/or sensitive natural and cultural features.
- 1.4. Encourage well-designed conservation developments that take into account broader landscape connectivity of residual lands and conservation of significant natural, cultural, and visual resources.
- 1.5. Encourage review of all development proposals by local, state, federal and other land conservation and management sectors to ensure multiple land use goals are met when the development is either adjacent to or coincides with an area defined in existing municipal, County, CNHP, or state conservation plans.
- 1.6. Prioritize land conservation and acquisition that meets multiple natural resource protection and outdoor recreation goals in adopted plans.
- 1.7. Establish standards for buffers and setbacks between developments and wetlands, river corridors, wildlife habitat and movement corridors and native plant communities or require a finding that the proposed development is compatible with these natural values and/or effects have been adequately mitigated.
- 1.8. Minimize fragmentation and ensure connectivity of native habitats and movement corridors to protect ecosystems and native species when designing and constructing development and infrastructure projects.



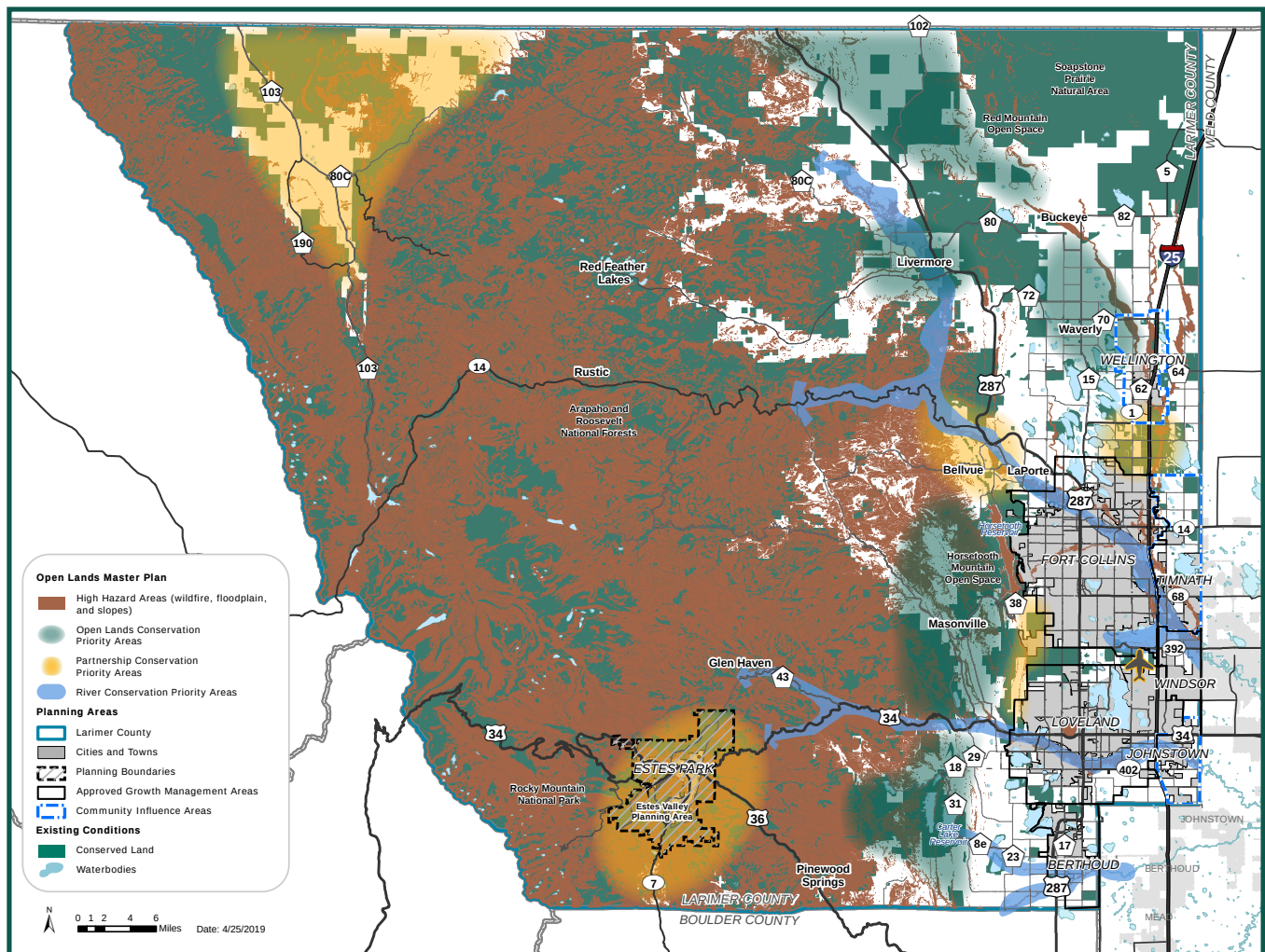
Lake Estes. Photo: Alisha Jeffers



- 
- A scenic view of a mountain lake with snow-capped peaks in the background and evergreen trees in the foreground. The lake is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery and the majestic mountains. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The foreground is filled with dense evergreen trees and rocky terrain. The mountains in the background are rugged and covered in patches of snow, with some peaks reaching high into the sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Rocky Mountain National Park. Photo: Larimer County

## Map 6. Watersheds & Natural Resources Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans





## W&NR2. AGRICULTURAL LANDS CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

*Larimer County promotes conservation of healthy, sustainable agricultural land and water resources by undertaking collaborative strategies to minimize the loss of productive land and water and continuing to pursue water sharing between agriculture, industrial and domestic utilities.*

- 2.1. Effectively sustain ranchlands and farmlands in prime agricultural areas through a combination of land use planning tools that meet agricultural land conservation goals.
- 2.2. Collaborate with stakeholders and other affected interests to sustain, promote, revitalize, and grow the agricultural community.
- 2.3. Investigate options for conserving associated water resources needed for sustainable agricultural uses.
- 2.4. Educate the public about the benefits and importance of agriculture and the Right to Farm policy in Larimer County and support and encourage young farming families through education and incentives.
- 2.5. Encourage private/public partnerships to incorporate best management practices for soil and water conservation, which promote healthy and sustainable agricultural lands.



## W&NR3. WATERSHED PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

*Development conserves wetlands and riparian areas to maintain water quality, wildlife habitat and corridors, flood protection, and other critical environmental functions.*

- 3.1. Promote land use and management practices that maintain, restore, and enhance natural ecologic, biological, and geologic function of watersheds, including protection of river corridor ecosystems and soil quality.
- 3.2. Mitigate potential flood damage through flood control projects that maintain ecologic and geologic function of streams.
- 3.3. Collaborate with water managers to develop action plans to mitigate flood impacts during flood events.
- 3.4. Collaborate with federal, state, and municipal partners to secure and enhance in-stream flows that support important ecological and biological functions, recreation amenities, and enhance Larimer County quality of life.
- 3.5. Protect and provide adequate water resources for current and future uses in the County, and explore options in partnership with other affected interests.
- 3.6. Evaluate cumulative impacts of proposed transfers of existing water resources out of the County on current and future land uses and natural resources, including agriculture.
- 3.7. Expand the range of tools and strategies for simultaneously protecting riverine habitat and water quality while minimizing flood damage.



Wellington. Photo: Alisha Jeffers





#### **W&NR4. WATER CONSERVATION AND QUALITY**

*Larimer County strives for high water quality and responsible management of limited water resources.*

- 4.1. Support drought adaptation, water conservation and efficiency measures for responsible use of limited water resources. 
- 4.2. Facilitate collaboration regarding water storage and supply and water sharing with agriculture and instream flows. 
- 4.3. Collaborate with regional partners and municipalities on water conservation issues. 
- 4.4. Promote efforts to improve the water quality of runoff, including promotion of pervious surfaces that allow on-site infiltration of stormwater and features designed to remove pollutants. 
- 4.5. Work with the building sector to encourage research and design that incorporates water conservation technologies such as grey water, on-site water reuse, and xeriscape. 
- 4.6. Continue to strengthen the County's role in protecting stormwater quality.

#### **W&NR5. TERRAIN AND NATURAL HAZARDS**

*Larimer County adapts to the challenges and natural hazard risks of our terrain and the necessity of compatible design and development practices to protect ecosystem values and minimize damage to life, property, and fiscal resources.*

- 5.1. Design development to mitigate safety hazards and economic costs from natural and human-caused events that may affect natural resources and watersheds. 
- 5.2. Promote sustainable best management practices in hazard areas (i.e. flood, wildfire, geologic) that protect ecosystem values while minimizing catastrophic damage to life and property. 

- 5.3. Develop emergency management and hazard mitigation programs and regulations, standards and guidelines to be relevant at the individual, household, community, municipal, county, and regional levels.
- 5.4. Evaluate, strengthen, and comply with regulations in floodways, floodplains, wildfire and geologic hazard areas. 
- 5.5. Discourage development in hazard areas or require that proposed development creates and maintains hazard mitigation long-term thereby minimizing safety and economic costs to the County. 
- 5.6. Anticipate natural events such as flood, fire, geologic events and drought in land use planning and project design, while balancing inherent risk.
- 5.7. Collaborate with multi-jurisdictional and private forest management in multidisciplinary approaches, including reduced fuel loads, natural fire breaks, range management, soil mitigation, and other strategies to achieve improved forest health.
- 5.8. Incorporate risk reduction principles into County documents and initiatives, and encourage other agencies to do the same.
- 5.9. Create and maintain defensible space around structures and otherwise mitigate potential hazards to life and property when building in wildfire hazard-prone areas. Encourage and educate private landowners and local, state, and federal governments to develop and implement cooperative strategies to minimize critical wildfire hazards.



# FRAMEWORK MAP AND CATEGORIES

How land should be used is one of the most important and fundamental values for landowners, residents, civic leaders and elected officials. And how land is used determines – in large measure – the future of Larimer County. Essential questions that have guided the development of the [Framework Map](#) are:

- Where should we live, work, play, and grow food?
- Where should we invest in infrastructure?
- Where and how should we protect and conserve watersheds, wildlife habitat, viewsheds, hazardous areas, and other resources?
- What type of County do we want to become?

This section spatially represents the Plan Themes, Principles, and Policies established in this Comprehensive Plan.

The [Framework Map](#) represents our collective vision of our desired future. It conveys the patterns and priorities of economic development and community character, the locations of neighborhoods and industries, and preservation of natural, agricultural and rural landscapes. It anticipates where the future population will live, and how to adapt to hazard events.

The [Framework Map](#) is advisory and does not change the existing zoning of any property or the ability of landowners to continue existing legal uses consistent with the existing zoning or non-conforming uses (see [C1.1](#)). It serves as a starting point for conversations about regional initiatives and development proposals by illustrating how sometimes separate and uncoordinated activities can help or harm our desired future. The timing of future development will depend on a number of factors including choices made by individual landowners, aspirations of the community, and future availability of facilities and services.

The [Framework Map](#) is not a zoning map and does not change the existing zoning of any property or the ability of landowners to continue existing legal uses consistent with the existing zoning or non-conforming uses. Zoning and existing legal nonconforming uses do not change when the property is leased, bought or sold.



## Distinctive Urban and Rural Areas

Since 1980, when the first Urban Growth Areas were established around the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland, the County's urban policy has been to encourage urban development to locate in cities and towns or adjacent to these areas with the expectation that the developed areas would soon be annexed. In the 1997 Master Plan, the Land Use Framework Map indicated only two distinct land use types: Urban and Rural. To better reflect existing conditions, resilient land use patterns, efficient and suitable locations for future growth, and maximum utilization of infrastructure, the Framework Categories and Map described on the following pages significantly expand those original framework categories.

The urban land use policies stated in this Comprehensive Plan are intended to strengthen the link between urban land use and eventual annexation by a city or town. This Map acknowledges the importance of GMAs and continued land use planning partnerships between the County and its municipal partners. It also continues an expectation that municipalities not the County will provide the full range of services necessary to support a quality urban environment.

Within GMAs, more detailed future land use information is contained in adopted community plans. As these plans are accepted by the County and incorporated into Intergovernmental Agreements, the more detailed categories and policies of these respective community plans will take precedence over the generalized [Framework Map](#). The Framework Map notes where these detailed community plans exist. Community Influence Areas (CIAs) are shown for municipalities that have not yet entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement.

As stated in Chapter 1 and in the Existing Conditions Snapshots (Appendices C and D), almost all of the forecasted growth through 2050 is expected to be accommodated within the planned areas of cities and towns. This pattern will enable rural areas to continue to accomplish what they are naturally suited for: to grow and process food; to protect watersheds and ecosystems; to support a regional watershed and energy resources; and to continue bolstering a high quality of rural living and outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities. To that end, the [Framework Map](#) categorizes areas outside of GMAs in order to guide appropriate development patterns, respect private property rights, and preserve the open and rural character that County residents value.



## Limited Non-Residential Uses

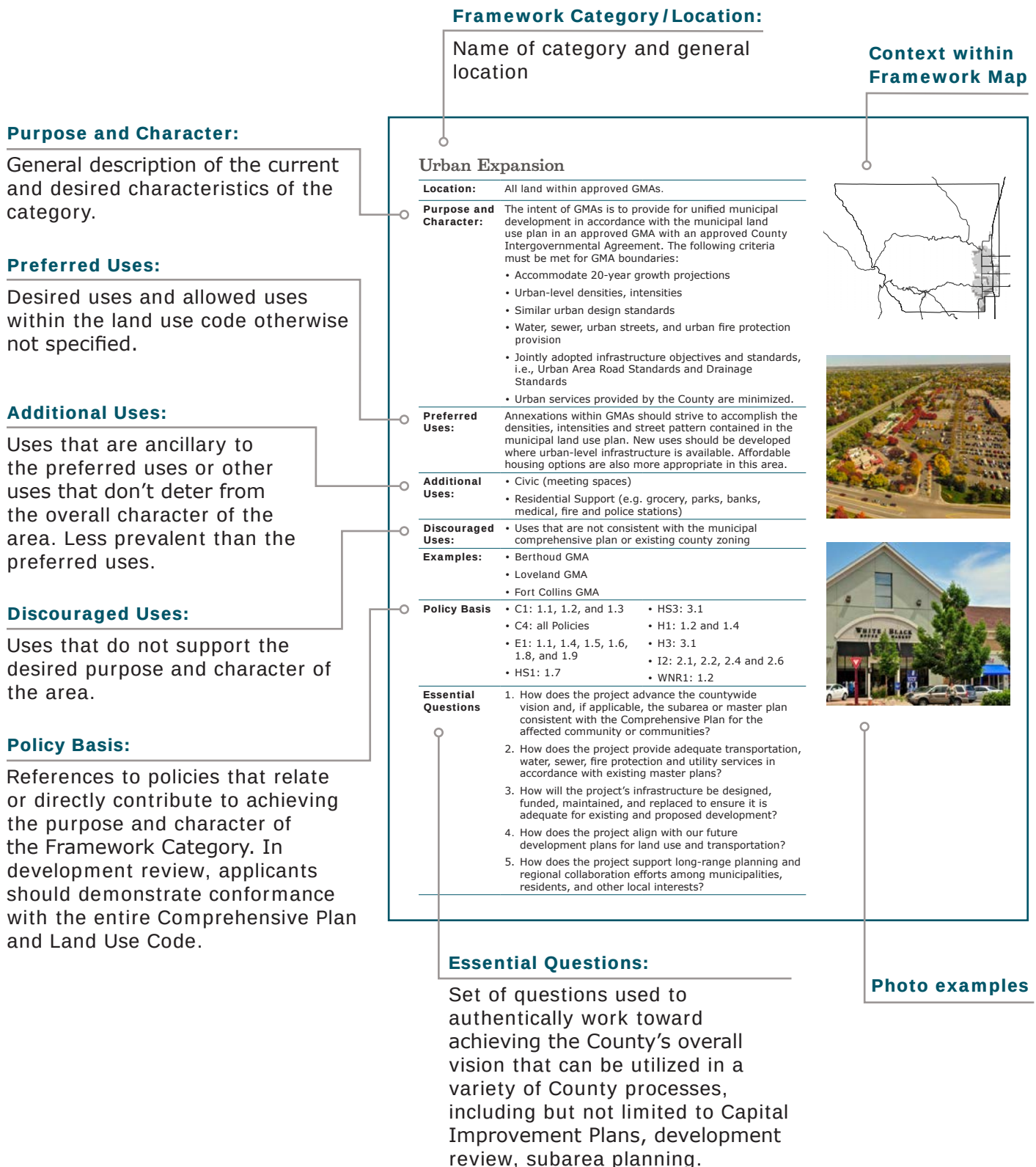
In addition to the preferred and limited uses listed, there may be opportunities for non-residential uses in *Mountains & Foothills*, *Agriculture & Ranching*, *Rural*, and *Urban/Rural Interface* not identified on the [Framework Map](#). Limited Non-residential Uses should be considered when they demonstrate alignment with the following applicable criteria. Non-residential development:

- Will support a demonstrable local need when located outside of an established GMA or sub-area plan.
- Should locate adjacent to a *Rural Center* or within an established subarea plan area when possible.
- Should be in proximity to and support the agricultural, ranching, and forestry industries.
- Should be in proximity and support tourism, resort, institutional or outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Should locate based upon the access and transportation requirements of the type and intensity of activity being proposed (e.g. a rustic camp may be acceptable on gravel road whereas an intense retail use should be located on a paved road).

- Should locate where it can be demonstrated that adequate facilities (i.e. water, sewer, fire protection and the like) can be provided or acquired to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the public utilizing such uses.
- Should locate at a fixed sand and gravel mineral resource that can adequately mitigate external effects to adjacent land uses.
- Demonstrates that the scale and intensity of the use is in context with the surrounding area based upon factors such as:
  - Character of place,
  - Proximity to residential areas,
  - Proximity to sensitive environmental features or wildlife areas, and
  - Proximity to unique or highly visible viewsheds, landforms, or places of interest.

# FRAMEWORK CATEGORIES

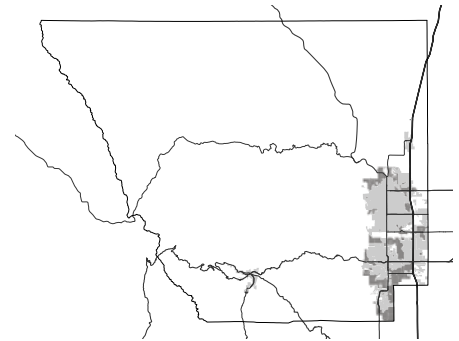
For the purpose of this document, the following definitions should apply:





## Urban Expansion

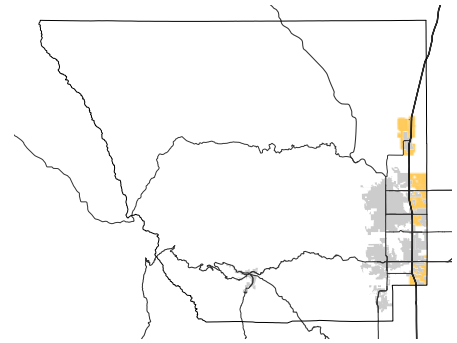
|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | All land within approved GMAs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | <p>The intent of GMAs is to provide for unified municipal development in accordance with the municipal land use plan in an approved GMA with an approved County Intergovernmental Agreement. The following criteria must be met for GMA boundaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodate 20-year growth projections</li> <li>• Urban-level densities, intensities</li> <li>• Similar urban design standards</li> <li>• Water, sewer, urban streets, and urban fire protection provision</li> <li>• Jointly adopted infrastructure objectives and standards, i.e., Urban Area Road Standards and Drainage Standards</li> <li>• Urban services provided by the County are minimized.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | Annexations within GMAs should strive to accomplish the densities, intensities and street pattern contained in the municipal land use plan. New uses should be developed where urban-level infrastructure is available. Affordable housing options are also more appropriate in this area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic (meeting spaces)</li> <li>• Residential Support (e.g. grocery, parks, banks, medical, fire and police stations)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | • Uses that are not consistent with the municipal comprehensive plan or existing county zoning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berthoud GMA</li> <li>• Loveland GMA</li> <li>• Fort Collins GMA</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C1: 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3</li> <li>• C4: all Policies</li> <li>• E1: 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, and 1.9</li> <li>• HS1: 1.7</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HS3: 3.1</li> <li>• H1: 1.2 and 1.4</li> <li>• H3: 3.1</li> <li>• I2: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 and 2.6</li> <li>• WNR1: 1.2</li> </ul> |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project advance the countywide vision and, if applicable, the subarea or master plan consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the affected community or communities?</li> <li>2. How does the project provide adequate transportation, water, sewer, fire protection and utility services in accordance with existing master plans?</li> <li>3. How will the project's infrastructure be designed, funded, maintained, and replaced to ensure it is adequate for existing and proposed development?</li> <li>4. How does the project align with our future development plans for land use and transportation?</li> <li>5. How does the project support long-range planning and regional collaboration efforts among municipalities, residents, and other local interests?</li> </ol> |                                                                                                                                                                      |



Photos: Larimer County

## Urban/Rural Interface

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | Development adjacent to municipal planning boundaries that could potentially be incorporated into GMAs. This use is temporary until an Intergovernmental Agreement is executed with Timnath, Johnstown, and Wellington.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Smaller-lot conservation developments served by sewer and water.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Lots on 35 acres or greater</li> <li>• Conservation Developments</li> <li>• Rural Planned Developments, i.e. lots generally smaller than 1 acre, preferably clustered to meet the intent of the municipal comprehensive plan<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-residential uses</li> <li>• Uses as allowed under current County zoning</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy Industrial</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within Community Influence Areas of Timnath, Johnstown, and Wellington</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C1: 1.4</li> <li>• C5: 5.2 and 5.4</li> <li>• HS1: 1.6</li> <li>• H1: 1.4</li> <li>• H3: 3.1, 3.3, and 3.4</li> <li>• WNR1: 1.2</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project advance the countywide vision and, if applicable, the subarea or master plan for the affected community or communities?</li> <li>2. How does the project provide adequate transportation, water, sewer, fire protection and utility services in accordance with existing master plans?</li> <li>3. How will the project's infrastructure be designed, funded, maintained, and replaced to ensure it is adequate for existing and proposed development?</li> <li>4. How does the project align with our future development plans for land use and transportation?</li> <li>5. How does the project support long-range planning and regional collaboration efforts among municipalities, residents, and other local interests?</li> </ol> |



Loveland. Photo: Miriam McGilvray



Hwy 402. Photo: Miriam McGilvray



Long View Trail. Photo: Fort Collins

<sup>1</sup> Within Urban/Rural Interface, residual lands within a clustered subdivision need not be deed-restricted to allow for future urban reserve opportunities. Density bonuses would not apply if the residual land is reserved for future urban development.

## Rural Center

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | Existing and potential commercial, tourist or civic nodes that function as service center for rural areas to support civic uses and basic needs of the community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Commercial and/or civic uses that serve local needs and do not require urban level facilities and services. Historic townsites, schools, gathering spaces, and similar uses create a focal point and foster social and economic resiliency for a community within an otherwise residential, ranching, or agricultural area.                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic</li> <li>• Commercial Office (including non-residential health services)</li> <li>• Commercial Retail</li> <li>• Educational</li> <li>• Multi-Family</li> <li>• Mixed Use</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodations</li> <li>• Tourist</li> <li>• Multi-Family Residential</li> <li>• Flex office/industrial</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy industrial</li> <li>• Large-lot residential development</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Feather Lakes Business District</li> <li>• Glen Haven commercial area</li> <li>• Drake commercial area</li> <li>• Stove Prairie School</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C5: 5.1 and 5.2</li> <li>• C6: 6.5</li> <li>• E3: 3.3</li> <li>• HS1: 1.6</li> <li>• H3: 3.2</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project encourage a “village pattern” and/or lifelines to allow a community to serve its daily needs without requiring urban levels of facilities and services?</li> <li>2. Is there a consensus demand for community services? If so, what are they and how are they met by this project?</li> <li>3. How does this project, and to what extent, benefit or alter the current culture of rural living?</li> </ol> |



Nearby Housing



School



Church



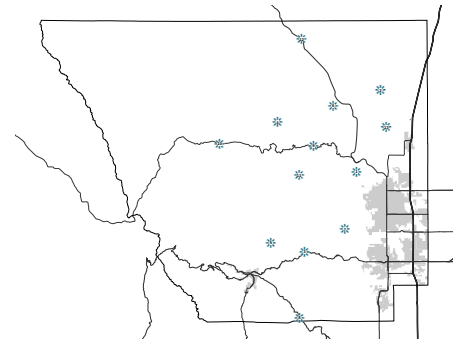
Post Office



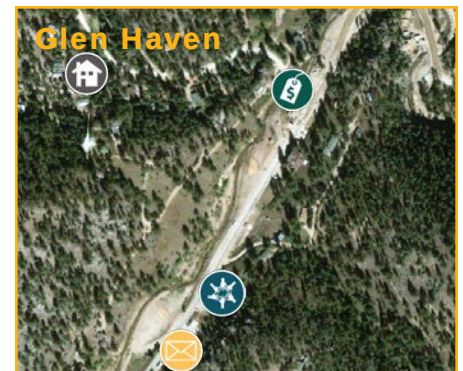
Commerce



Community Organization



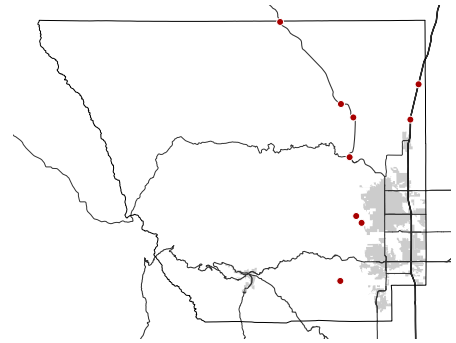
The Forks. Photo: Alisha Jeffers





## Retail Services

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | Nodes at interchanges and along major arterials where expanding or developing future commercial uses are desired. See Table 2 for other locations of limited non-residential uses.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Small, concentrated areas within communities or at interchanges where commercial and industrial uses supportive to agricultural and recreational uses. These will generally occur on less than 10 acres within 0.25 miles of an interchange.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office</li> <li>• Flex office/ industrial</li> <li>• Retail</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | Other uses may be compatible with residential areas with adequate buffering/design                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-Use</li> <li>• Residential development</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | • Ted's Place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C6: 6.8</li> <li>• E1: 1.2, 1.4, and 1.5</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project adhere to County policy and Code provisions to accommodate a balance of jobs, housing, and recreation for all economic classes?</li> <li>2. How does the project support high value, low impact employment opportunities?</li> <li>3. What is the estimated public investment required for this project? Is there sufficient population density and community benefit to justify public investment associated with this project?</li> </ol> |



Masonville. Photo: Dave Clark



Rustic. Photo: Jeffrey Beall



Red Feather. Photo: Alisha Jeffers

## Industrial

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | Existing or strategic industrial opportunities for expansion of potential future development located along highways and/or arterials, or where a commercial mineral deposit is identified.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Industrial uses, i.e. manufacturing, energy development, and/or resource extraction (mining). Separation from residential uses, community gateways and high visibility corridors (I-25, US 34 and 287) is advantageous.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light Industrial</li> <li>• Heavy Industrial</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural support industries (processing, packaging, distribution)</li> <li>• Commercial mineral deposits. The following factors should be considered when locating: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aggregate resources as mapped by Schwochow et al., Colorado Geological Survey, 1974.</li> <li>2. Wetlands and critical riparian areas and wildlife habitat.</li> <li>3. Size of the potential area.</li> <li>4. Existing development that effectively precludes extraction.</li> <li>5. Other site-specific factors rendering extraction inappropriate in light of the countervailing factors listed in C.R.S. 34-1-304(1), including the quality of life of the residents in and around areas which contain commercial mineral deposits and the ability to reclaim the area.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Retail</li> <li>• Commercial Office</li> <li>• Residential</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rawhide Energy Station</li> <li>• Active Gravel Mines</li> <li>• Oil and Gas Extraction Sites</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C6: 6.9</li> <li>• E1: 1.2, 1.6, and 1.8</li> <li>• I4: 4.1, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project support high value, low impact employment opportunities?</li> <li>2. How does the project provide adequate transportation, water, sewer, fire protection and utility services in accordance with existing master plans?</li> <li>3. How does the project align with our future development plans for land use and transportation?</li> <li>4. How does the project reasonably mitigate external effects to adjacent land uses?</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

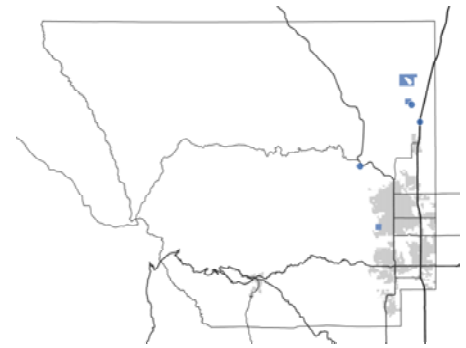


Photo: Larimer County



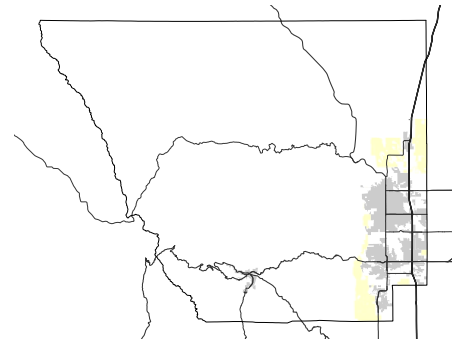
Google Street View



City of Arvada

# Rural

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | A mix of residential and agricultural development between Urban and Rural Centers not requiring urban-level water and sewer utility provision. This use only applies to areas outside of GMAs, and is not desirable within GMAs.                                                                   |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Large-lot or clustered residential development in the County that acts as a buffer between Urban or Rural Centers and large scale agricultural land uses.                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Ranching</li> <li>• Clustered Residential/Conservation Developments (CDs)</li> <li>• Transferable Density Units (TDUs)</li> <li>• Conservation Easements (CEs)</li> </ul>                                                          |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots on 35 acres or greater</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Office</li> <li>• Commercial Retail</li> <li>• Flex Office/ Industrial</li> <li>• Industrial</li> <li>• Heavy Industrial</li> <li>• Non-Clustered Residential</li> </ul>                                                                       |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legacy Heights CD</li> <li>• Farm at Blue Mountain Meadows CD</li> <li>• Canyon Ranch Estates RLUP</li> <li>• Grayhawk Knolls CD</li> <li>• Scenic Ranch Estates RLUP</li> <li>• Rainbow Lake Estates CD</li> <li>• Paradise Valley Estates CD</li> </ul> |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C6: 6.3, 6.4, and 6.6</li> <li>• HS1: 1.6</li> <li>• H1: 1.4 and 1.5</li> <li>• H2: 2.1</li> <li>• H3: 3.1</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project avoid impacts to agricultural infrastructure and the open character of rural areas?</li> <li>2. How does the project contribute to the provision of basic daily services to support rural lifestyles?</li> </ol>                    |



Wellington. Photo: Alisha Jeffers



Devils Backbone. Photo: Heather Paul

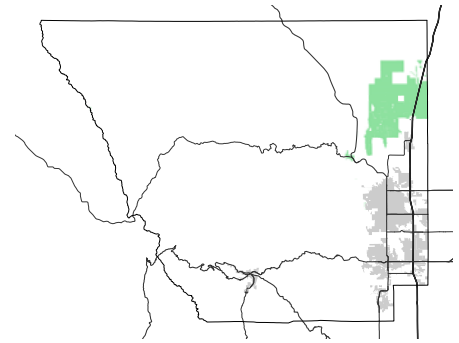


Photo: Larimer County



## Agriculture & Ranching

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | Private agriculture landscapes in the Front Range Planning Area outside of GMAs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Agricultural and rangeland uses on private lands under conservation easements (no public access) are expected to continue in the Front Range. Separation from residential developments is advantageous. The agricultural landscape provides separation between adjacent municipalities. The Plan recommends Agricultural District Overlays would occur on some areas designated for Agriculture. |                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Ranching</li> <li>• Conservation Easements (CEs) and conserved public lands</li> <li>• Agritourism</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial and Commercial uses directly supportive of agriculture (Processing, Packaging, Distribution)</li> <li>• Rural Land Use Process (RLUP)</li> <li>• Conservation Developments (CDs)</li> <li>• Transferable Density Units (TDUs)</li> <li>• Outdoor Recreation</li> </ul>                                                                       |                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential developments less than allowed in the RLUP</li> <li>• Commercial Office</li> <li>• Commercial Retail</li> <li>• Flex Office/ Industrial</li> <li>• Heavy Industrial</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrigated agricultural areas that are expected to continue</li> <li>• Conservation Easements on native and agricultural lands</li> </ul> <p>Accessory functions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value-added Agriculture</li> <li>• Rural Accessory Occupations</li> <li>• Farm Worker Housing</li> </ul>                          |                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C6: 6.1, 6.2, and 6.7</li> <li>• E2: all Policies</li> <li>• HS3: 3.5</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H3: 3.3</li> <li>• W&amp;NR1: 1.9</li> <li>• W&amp;NR2: all Policies</li> </ul> |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project avoid impacts to agricultural infrastructure and the open character of rural areas?</li> <li>2. How does the project contribute to the provision of basic services needed to support the regional agricultural economy?</li> </ol>                                                                                                |                                                                                                                          |



Wellington. Photo: Alisha Jeffers



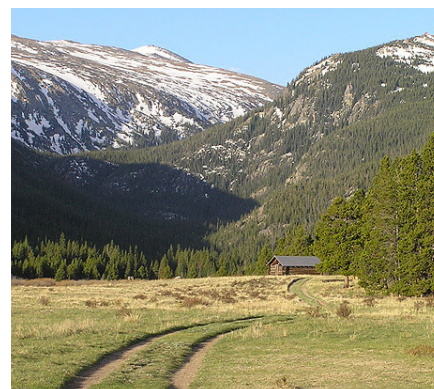
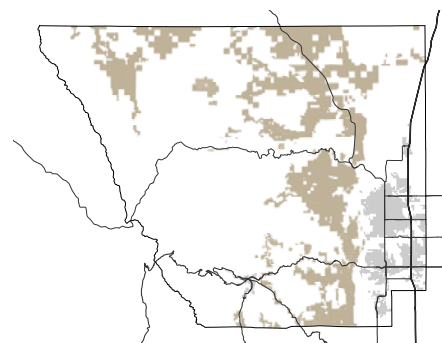
Johnstown. Photo: CL Baker



Farmland. Photo: Larimer County

## Mountains & Foothills

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | The majority of privately-owned mountains and foothills areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Forestry, ranching, and multiple resource uses on private lands. Forestry and ranching land uses are expected to continue. Maintaining the environmental quality of steep slopes, canyons, and forests with minimal residential development conserves watershed resources and improves resiliency from wildfire, geological and flood hazards.                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry</li> <li>• Ranching</li> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Conservation Easements (CEs) and conserved public lands</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watershed Protection</li> <li>• Hazard Mitigation (i.e. floodplain management, steep slopes, and high wildfire hazard)</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation and tourism</li> </ul>                                                                      |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35 acre lots or greater</li> <li>• Rural Land Use Process (RLUP)</li> <li>• Conservation Developments (CDs)</li> <li>• Resorts and Public institutions</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential development at a density less than 35 acres</li> <li>• Industrial</li> <li>• Commercial Office</li> <li>• Commercial Retail</li> <li>• Heavy Industrial</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US 285 between The Forks and Wyoming state line</li> <li>• Buckhorn Road between Masonville and Stove Prairie</li> <li>• Large, private ranches</li> <li>• Open Space and conserved private lands</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C1: 1.2 and 1.3</li> <li>• C2: all Policies</li> <li>• C5: 5.1 and 5.2</li> <li>• C6: 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5</li> <li>• E3: all Policies</li> <li>• HS3: 3.4 and 3.7</li> <li>• HS4: all Policies</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H1: 1.6</li> <li>• H2: all Policies</li> <li>• H3: 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7</li> <li>• H4: all Policies</li> <li>• Infrastructure: all Principles and Policies</li> <li>• W&amp;NR1, W&amp;NR3, W&amp;NR4, W&amp;NR5: all Policies</li> </ul> |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project adequately protect air and water quality, cultural and natural resources, and minimize fragmentation of the landscape?</li> <li>2. How does the project avoid impacts to the open character of rural areas, unique or highly visible viewsheds, landforms and ridgelines?</li> <li>3. How does the project consider the natural terrain in its design and siting to minimize environmental impacts and avoid or reduce hazard risk to an acceptable level?</li> </ol> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



Pingree Park. Photo: Larimer County



Masonville. Photo: Miriam McGilvray



Estes Park Photo: Alisha Jeffers

## Natural Resource

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>              | Publicly owned and conserved private lands.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Purpose and Character:</b> | Resource conservation and uses/products (i.e. forestry, ranching) on federal, state, and local government-owned lands. Some public lands are open to public access and recreation. Private lands under conservation easements (no public access). If public land is sold for private development that is not compatible with the Natural Resource category, the property should default to the Mountains & Foothills category.                                    |                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Preferred Uses:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple Resource Uses (i.e. forestry, and grazing)</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation on publicly accessible lands</li> <li>• Watershed Protection</li> <li>• Hazard Mitigation (i.e. floodplain management, steep slopes, and high wildfire hazard)</li> <li>• Conservation Easements (CEs)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Additional Uses:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential uses where permitted in a conservation easement</li> <li>• Research and Public Institutions</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Discouraged Uses:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential as a preferred use</li> <li>• Commercial</li> <li>• Industrial</li> <li>• Heavy Industrial</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Examples:</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Forest Service lands</li> <li>• Larimer County open spaces and parks</li> <li>• CSU mountain properties</li> <li>• Conservation Easements</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Policy Basis</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C6: 6.1 and 6.10</li> <li>• E3: 3.5</li> <li>• HS1: 1.7</li> <li>• H3: 3.4</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I4: 4.6 and 4.7</li> <li>• W&amp;NR all Principles and Policies</li> </ul> |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project adequately protect air and water quality, cultural and natural resources, and minimize fragmentation of the landscape?</li> <li>2. How does the project mitigate risks and reduce economic costs of natural hazard events to increase resiliency?</li> <li>3. How does the project comply with County policy, Code, Master Plans, and initiatives in relation to hazard risk reduction?</li> </ol> |                                                                                                                     |

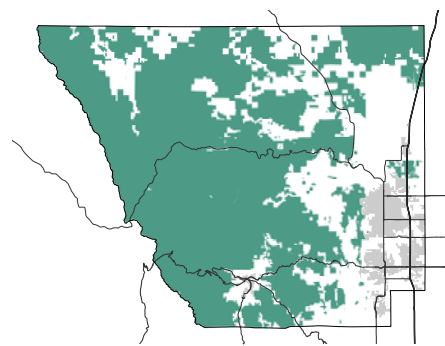


Photo: Larimer County



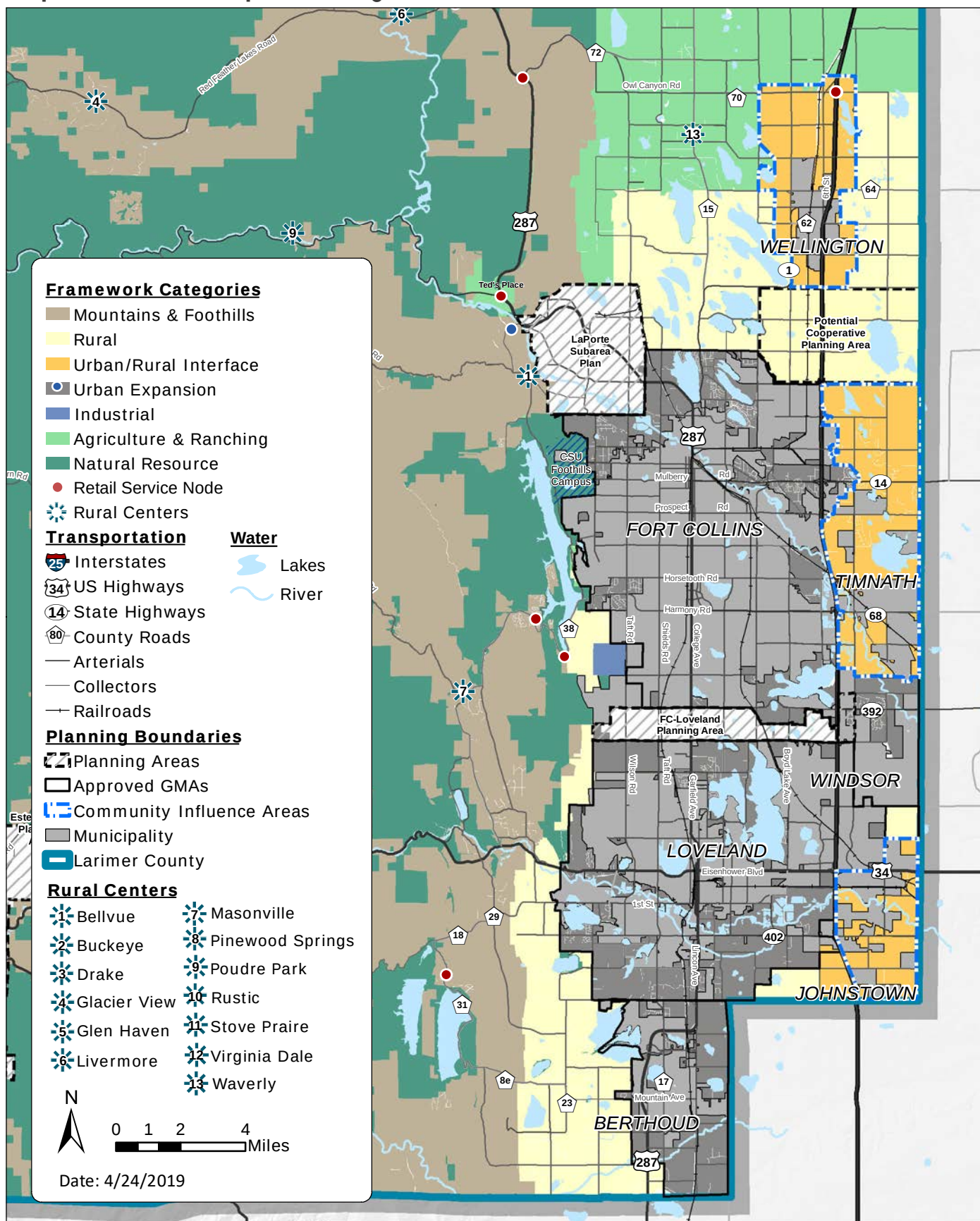
Horsetooth. Photo: Larimer County



Photo: Larimer County

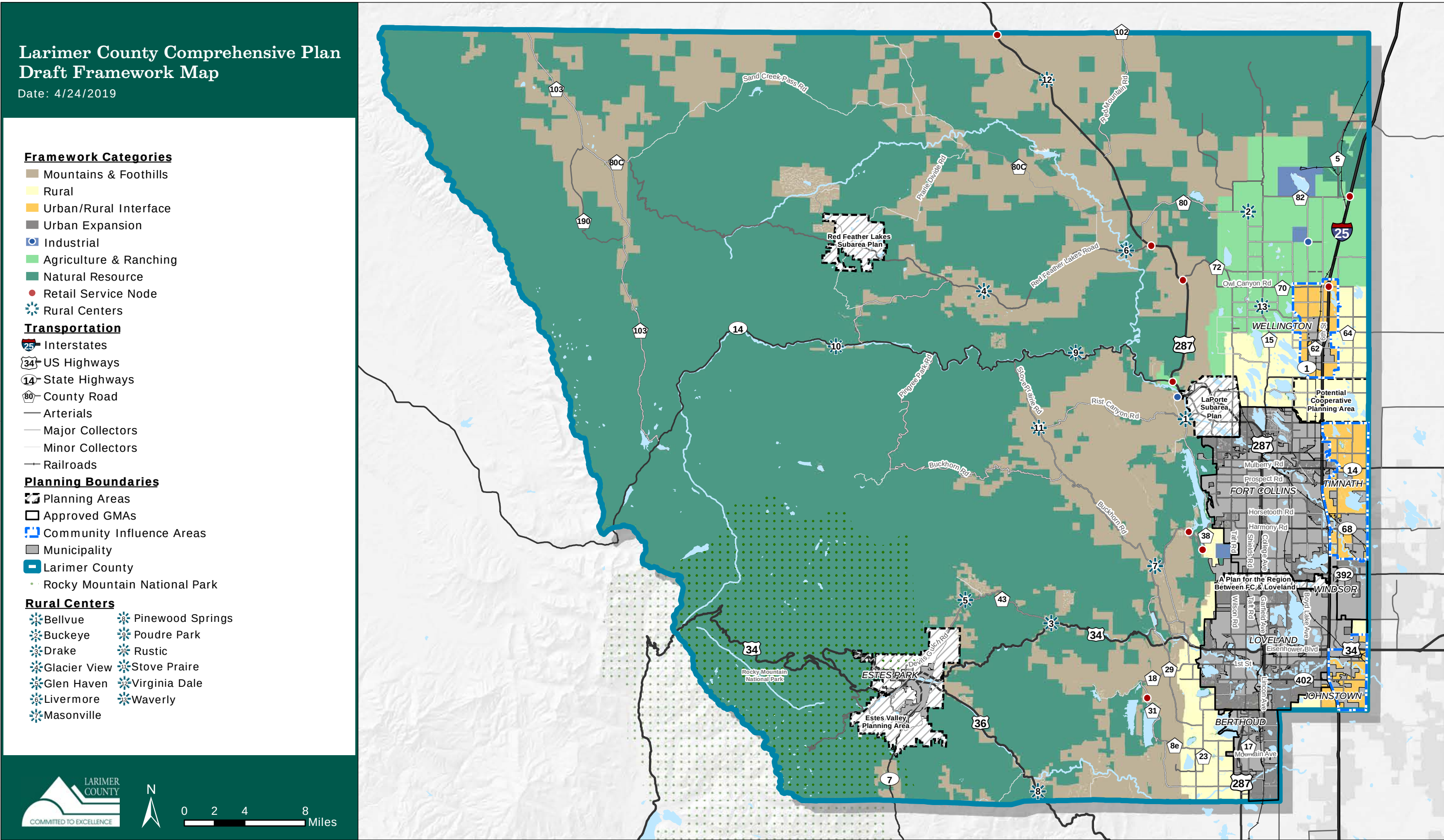


**Map 7. Framework Map Front Range Extent**





Map 8. Framework Map



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Boards and Commissions Summit. Photo: Larimer County

# Chapter Four >>>> IMPLEMENTATION

## In this Chapter

### **Implementation Responsibilities.**

Role of departments and organizations in implementing the Plan.

### **Funding Implementation.**

How to fund the Plan's initiatives.

### **Strategies & Annual Workplans.**

A menu of strategies (Appendix F) that can be prioritized annually.

### **Metrics & Monitoring.**

Indicators of success to evaluate the efficacy of the Plan.

### **Plan Management.**

Process to review, update, and amend the Comprehensive Plan.



**“The most effective way  
to do it, is to do it.”**

— Amelia Earhart

# IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter connects the Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Code, and other strategies and actions so that policy direction is usable and relevant for applicants, the community, and neighbors in the development review and decision-making processes. For county planning to remain proactive, the implementation strategy should be considered as important as the Plan itself.

## IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY

Successful implementation of this Plan depends on the coordinated and collective action of county decision-makers, staff members, community members, and other partners as follows:

**The Board of County Commissioners** is responsible to guide implementation through Annual Work Plan priorities, developing partnerships, and ensuring accountability of county department activities in harmony with the Plan's Themes, Principles, and Policies.

**Planning Commission** is responsible to use the guidance provided by the Comprehensive Plan and other associated adopted master plans in review of development proposals, promote and oversee updates to the Land Use Code, and amend or revise the Plan including the adoption or update of subarea plans and other county master plans.

**Residents and County partners** are encouraged to track the Plan's implementation through Annual Reports; participate in county budgeting to promote adequate funding for Strategies; and contribute to department and subarea master plans.



**Other Boards and Commissions** actively promote implementation by taking ownership of Principles and Policies. For example, the Open Lands Advisory Board and Environmental Science Advisory Board could identify annual board priorities from the Watersheds and Natural Resources Policy Framework.

**Planning staff** will prepare a section highlighting implementation achievements in their Annual Report, in coordination with other departments. Specifically, the Annual Report will share trends in metrics to understand the impact of the Plan on the community's trajectory and identify where refinements are needed. Staff will continue to review development proposals and department master plans, providing decision-makers with information as to whether such proposals align with the Principles and Policies within this Plan. They will also develop proposed plan amendments and present them to decision-makers for their consideration and potential approval.

**Department and Office Directors** integrate Strategies into their Annual Work Plans and annual budget development processes. Annual Work Plans for each county department should identify which Strategies will be implemented each year, for review and approval by the BCC and in coordination with the Capital Improvements Plan. Directors will work together to advance Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan goals. For example, the Office of Emergency Management will inform others regarding risk, risk reduction, mitigation, and resiliency in all future planning.



## FUNDING PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Plan will rely upon annual funding opportunities or limitations. The timing, prioritization, costs, and funding of the Strategies will be determined by the BCC as it considers Annual Workplans and capital budget requests presented by county departments and divisions. Future budget requests and approvals should align staffing and funding levels to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Many of the Policies found in this Plan were carried forward from the 1997 Master Plan. Similarly, several top Strategies in the Mountain Resilience Plan—such as Capital Improvement Planning and Community Hubs—already exist and can continue to be improved by expanding or reforming current services offered by the County. Some will require additional staffing and equitable funding mechanisms, and others might be accomplished through budget reallocations.

Since this Plan establishes a broad community vision and policies, additional planning efforts will be necessary to provide more detailed guidance and direction for specific topics, subareas, and codes. Regular updates to existing master plans, such as the Open Lands Master Plan and Transportation Plan, are also important windows to align decisions with supporting plans.

The Planning Department, in concert with other departments, will monitor the schedule and eligibility requirements for state and federal funding, and leverage funding sources that allow for stability and long-term impact. A number of state and federal grants and partnerships with local organizations (called soft funds), are available and can be applied for. Addressing the funding gap for hard fund plan implementation will be critical to prepare for and accommodate the future growth anticipated in Northern Colorado.

## STRATEGIES AND ANNUAL WORKPLANS

The Strategies are possible approaches—consistent with Larimer County’s vision and values—to implement the Principles and Policies. Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan depends on many specific actions on the part of County officials, city and town governments, and residents over the life of the Plan. These initiatives reach across jurisdictions and departments to show tangible projects or reforms that could be accomplished in the short term to implement the Comprehensive Plan. [Appendix F: Implementation Strategies](#) lists actions that came out of the comprehensive planning process and is not all-inclusive. Nor are Strategies necessary to adopt as they are revisited and re-prioritized annually by boards and commissions.

The Strategies are not intended to fit every situation. Some Strategies are appropriate countywide, some for certain rural mountain or Front Range communities, and others are appropriate for other areas. Rather, [Appendix F](#) serves as a living plan of action to begin (and continue) to implement the Comprehensive Plan systematically. The working table is searchable and sortable by topic (ADUs, agriculture, airport, etc.) or type of strategy (regulatory, capital project, process, etc.). The key is to create and maintain informal and formal communication channels with mountain and rural leaders to find the most effective solution within each context.

### GROWTH SHOULD BE MANAGED TO MOVE US TOWARD RESILIENCY.

Metrics indicate how to evaluate the amount, type, and location of growth, allowing Larimer County to adjust course as necessary.

# METRICS & MONITORING

As it is implemented, the Larimer County Comprehensive Plan will help create a future that is better than the future that would happen without planning. But how is tangible progress measured?

Staff and officials demonstrate their accountability and progress towards the desired future by regularly reporting on quality of life trends. Metrics are a set of indicators that measure progress toward achieving the Principles and Policies, and are integral to implementation. By quantifying a baseline and monitoring future changes, metrics can help decision-makers prioritize Strategies and the changes or funding necessary to better achieve the community vision. Regular monitoring will also provide an opportunity for the County to evaluate past successes and areas for continued refinement and improvement.

Developing a simple yet meaningful monitoring and evaluation program is an important plan implementation tool in itself and should have high priority among the many action items necessary to implement the Plan.

The results of the monitoring and evaluation program should be presented in departmental Annual Reports to the Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners and other advisory boards. The reports can include proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Plan for continuous improvement. If metrics do not indicate progress, corrective actions may be needed. Sample corrective actions could include:

- Policy, strategy, and/or Code refinements
- Capital Improvement Plan adjustments
- Additional funding sources
- New partnerships
- New suitable subareas to accommodate growth
- Amend metric desired trends

## HOW TO MONITOR AND WHO MONITORS

Several county departments have taken ownership of monitoring quality of life trends. Two in particular are very helpful evaluating the County's progress in achieving the vision established in the Plan:

- The Economic and Workforce Development Department's [Economic and Workforce Health Data Dashboard](#) tracks relevant statistics from public sources to describe economic, work force, and quality of life conditions in our community. Housing cost burden, poverty rates, (un)employment rates, median household income, and percent of population with less than a 30 minute commute are a few of relevant Plan indicators measured in comparison to other counties and the state.
- The Health Department created the [Larimer Health Tracker](#) to summarize locally, state, and nationally collected health data, which is broken down into age, education, gender, and income. This tool displays relevant Plan indicators such as the number of commutes to work by walking, bicycling or public transportation; access to exercise opportunities; access to healthy foods; farmers market density; farmer with direct sales to consumers; and air quality.

The Planning Department and County Managers Office will correlate these ongoing monitoring efforts with the Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan outcomes annually.

### A WELL-DESIGNED MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRAM CAN:

- Help the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners understand both progress and setbacks in achieving the Plan.
- Direct staff and decision-makers towards revisions for more effective Strategies.
- Provide County residents with the means to hold the government accountable for the actions it is taking to achieve the Plan's vision.

# PRIORITY METRICS

While current efforts are ongoing to monitor quality of life trends through multiple county departments, the planning process illuminated the need for additional indicators that are not measured by others that relate to proactive planning, the Framework Map, and other current county initiatives. The four metrics below complement existing efforts and strengthen the County's monitoring of specific needs identified through this planning process. Each of the four metrics below includes a baseline condition for the County to work forward from, a desired trend by which to measure performance, and the data source and update frequency.

## METRIC 1. *New Development Activity by Framework Category*

### DESCRIPTION

Monitoring newly entitled residential projects, the creation of new lots through a land division process, and new non-residential development allows the County to understand how and where growth is occurring over time, and whether the types of new development is helping to diversify housing types and industries. By tracking these three indicators by Framework Category, the effectiveness of the existing policies on the pattern and type of growth can be evaluated.

#### **1A.** *Building permits for new entitled residential projects*

##### **BASELINE**

(data collection in progress)

##### **DESIRED TREND**

Maintain certain percentage of building permits approved in the unincorporated county, including Rural Centers.

##### **DATA SOURCE AND UPDATE FREQUENCY**

The Larimer County Building Department tracks this metric and can update as needed.

#### **1B.** *New lots created through a land division process (subdivision, RLUP, CD, etc.)*

##### **BASELINE**

(data collection in progress)

##### **DESIRED TREND**

Maintain certain percentage of new residential lots that are created through a land division process. A higher percentage of RLUPs and CDs to promote a rural and open character is desired.

##### **DATA SOURCE AND UPDATE FREQUENCY**

The Larimer County Planning Department would track this metric annually or as needed.

**On an annual basis, these metrics will be updated and compared to previous baselines. These results will be reported across the County government and to the public to aid in the prioritization of future actions, policies, and funding decisions.**



**METRIC 2.** *Ratio of Population Growth*

**DESCRIPTION**

Understanding the location and expected population increase is essential to ensuring facilities and services are able to keep pace with growth while preserving the rural character of the County. Development requiring urban-level services is most appropriate within municipalities or Growth Management Areas (GMAs). Monitoring the pattern of growth in unincorporated vs. incorporated areas increases capacity for collaboration and proactive rather than reactive long-range planning. This measure of the historic, rural development pattern offers a way to measure changes to the County's western character.

**2A.** *Incorporated versus unincorporated population growth*

**BASELINE**

In 2016, the percentage of residents in incorporated compared to unincorporated areas was approximately 89% to 11%.

**DESIRED TREND**

As the County grows in population, maintain certain percentage of population in cities and towns compared to rural unincorporated areas. This would continue a historical pattern of delivering efficient infrastructure and services to the majority of the population that chooses to live in urban areas. Benefits include maintaining agricultural production, housing affordability, preserving the physical character of the County, and increasing social resilience while respecting property rights.

**DATA SOURCE AND UPDATE FREQUENCY**

The Larimer County Planning Department would utilize Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for county and municipal data to track population data annually.

**METRIC 3.** *Miles of Publicly Accessible Trails*

**DESCRIPTION**

Community health is directly linked to trail access because it provides an opportunity for active recreation and an alternate mode of transportation. Commuting, walking, biking, or running on trails instead of using motor vehicles also benefits the environment and air quality in the region and improves behavioral and physical health. For mountain communities specifically, increasing availability of and access to trails enhances community resiliency by providing evacuation alternatives if roads are closed during hazard events.

**BASELINE**

In 2019 Larimer County achieved a goal of opening 100 miles of trails to the public (85 miles of natural surface and 15 miles of paved trails). This does not include miles of trails on city, state and federal public lands.

**DESIRED TREND**

Continue to increase the number of publicly accessible trail miles to 150 miles by 2030.

**DATA SOURCE AND UPDATE FREQUENCY**

The Larimer County Natural Resource Department tracks this metric and can provide updates as needed.

#### **METRIC 4. Acres of Conserved Land by Larimer County**

##### **DESCRIPTION**

Natural resource health is directly linked to conserved lands. Public enjoyment and use of public lands are a core value to most residents and tourists. With partners and developers, the County conserves lands through the joint efforts of two departments: Natural Resources (conservation easements, trail easements, and fee simple acquisition) and Community Development (RLUPs, CDs, and deed restrictions). This metric track increases in conserved lands through all available means.

##### **BASELINE**

In 2019 Larimer County achieved a goal of opening 50,000 acres of CEs/acquisitions and RLUPs and CDs. (data collection in progress)

##### **DESIRED TREND**

Increase the acres of conserved land through all available tools.

##### **DATA SOURCE AND UPDATE FREQUENCY**

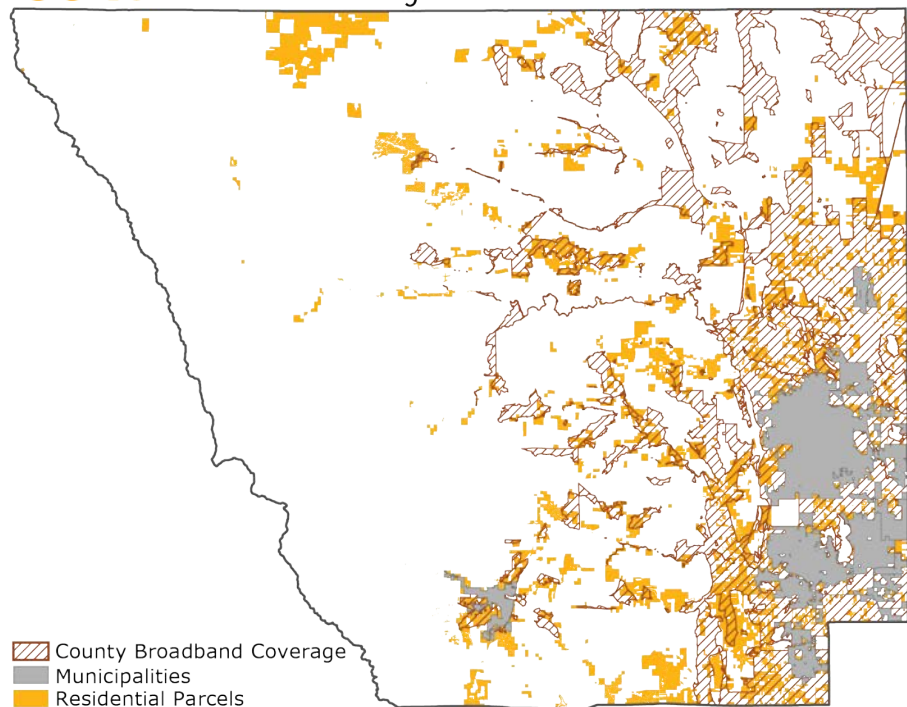
The Larimer County Natural Resource and Community Development Departments tracks this metric and can provide updates as needed.

#### **METRIC 5. Percentage of Private Lands with Broadband Service Coverage**

##### **Description**

Broadband speed internet accessibility is quickly becoming an essential service and requires redundancy and affordability. Many of the areas of the County do not have access to internet service at broadband speeds nor is the service reliable. This is primary a result of urban services being emphasized in urban areas. The rural population density spread across long distances and varied topography presents challenges to providing service. Broadband coverage data geographically illustrates areas where there is current and potential access to high-speed internet as defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Improved access to broadband internet would benefit many of the resiliency frameworks and deliver a vital, redundant, communications and education link.

**63%** unincorporated residential parcels have adequate broadband coverage



**Figure 13. Broadband Service Coverage**

##### **Baseline**

As of 2017, 63% of non-agricultural unincorporated residential lands in the Planning Area have broadband service.

##### **Desired Trend**

Increase the percentage of private lands with access to broadband speed internet.

##### **Data Source and Update Frequency**

The Colorado Office of Information Technology Broadband Office updates broadband coverage data from information received from the FCC Form 447. Updated information from the FCC is available twice yearly. This metric should be updated every two years. On an annual basis, these metrics will be updated and compared to previous baselines. These results, along with other accomplishments of the County's broadband initiative, will be reported across the County government and to the public to aid in the prioritization of future actions, policies, and funding decisions.

# PLAN MANAGEMENT

This Plan is appropriate at this point in time; however, it cannot anticipate all future changes in economic conditions, market demands, or lifestyle choices. In order to remain a relevant and functional document, this Plan should be reviewed regularly and if needed, updated. Alignment of this Plan with other adopted county master plans, the Land Use Code, and Intergovernmental Agreements is key to effective implementation.

## PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed in a study session with the Planning Commission at least annually (preferably in January). The Board of County Commissioners, Planning Commission or the Planning Department may recommend initiating amendments to the Plan. There are three methods to amend the Comprehensive Plan:

1. **Comprehensive updates** have a substantive effect on the Principles, Policies, Framework Map and/or Categories. These comprehensive updates should occur every 8-10 years, or as Planning Commission deems necessary, and should be grounded in a broad-based resident input process. Comprehensive updates are developed and adopted by the Planning Commission, and ratified by the Board of County Commissioners.
2. **Major amendments** may have a substantive impact to specific sections of the Plan, and are prompted by other County or regional planning efforts, shifts in trends identified in the metrics, disasters, disruptive technologies, changes to State Statutes, or other extreme changes. Major amendments are developed and adopted by the Planning Commission, and ratified by the Board of County Commissioners. Examples would include, but not be limited to:
  - Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan should align with the Board of County Commissioners' Strategic Plan and vice-versa.
  - Updating or adopting new Master Plans. All new Master Plans should review and if necessary, update, the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Department will coordinate inter-departmental and referral agency reviews of Master Plans (similar to the development review process) to ensure alignment with other efforts.
  - Updates to the Strategic Growth and/or Water Supply elements no less frequently than every five years per C.R.S. § 30-28-106(3). When minor, updates to these statutorily required elements may fall under #3 below.
3. **Administrative updates, corrections and additions** include changes that do not affect the intent of the Principles, Policies, or Framework recommendations in any substantive way. Administrative updates should be evaluated annually as needed. Administrative corrections that do not significantly change policy can be processed by staff and communicated to Planning Commission (with no formal action required from the Planning Commission). Examples of these are as follows:
  - Updating Strategies
  - Maintaining metrics and evaluating implementation effectiveness
  - Formatting changes
  - Typographical errors and omissions
  - Updating maps to reflect:
    - newly annexed or incorporated municipalities
    - new or revised planning areas from adopted Intergovernmental Agreements and Subarea Plans
    - areas newly designated as conserved public lands
    - updated information, i.e. roads, hydrology, hazard, and other similar data



# PLAN ALIGNMENT

Over time, additional master plans, subarea land use plans, and plans for Growth Management Areas and Cooperative Planning Areas will be adopted or amended as part of this Plan. Adoption of subarea plans and Intergovernmental Agreements that amend Growth Management Area boundaries should be considered at any time throughout the year. Actionable projects recommended in master plan and subarea plans should be incorporated into the Capital Improvement Plan concurrent with the plan review and adoption process.

The Larimer County Land Use Code should also be updated to reflect the intent of this Plan.

## The Land Use Code

In the past, much of the problem regarding certainty and consistency of land use decisions has come from basic inconsistencies between the adopted Plan and the land use regulations—particularly the zoning map. This Comprehensive Plan largely continues traditional patterns of land use without changing the gross densities of development established by current zoning. The County will use performance standards, design criteria, required levels of service and similar tools, as well as several incentive-driven alternative development patterns, to encourage new development to achieve Plan goals. This makes it imperative that the Principles and Policies be clearly translated into standards and criteria in a new Land Use Code.

The Land Use Code should be modernized and consolidated to reduce redundancies and contradictions, with a clear organizational structure and presentation that make it easy to understand and use. Graphics, diagrams, and tables should be used to make the Code more user-friendly. The standards and criteria that will be used in reviewing a development application should be specific, understandable, and consistent with the Principles and Policies.

## Intergovernmental Agreements and Cooperative Planning

Comprehensive planning in Larimer County implies coordination with a number of entities and jurisdictions that are responsible for growth management within their areas. The County's system for coordinated planning and growth management builds on successes from the past: Intergovernmental Agreements, jointly-defined urban areas, annexations of enclaves, and cooperative planning areas.

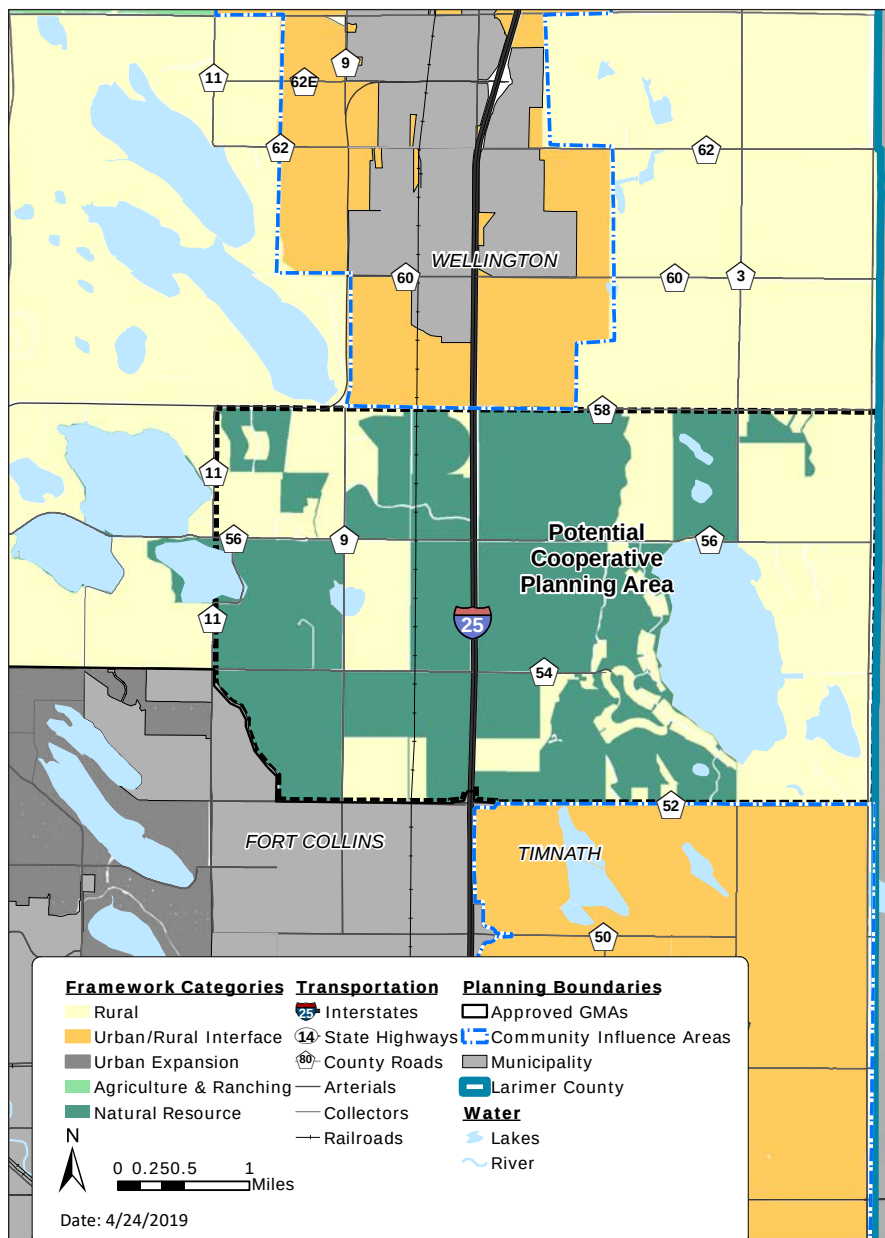
For four decades, Larimer County has worked with cities and towns to establish future urban service areas in a coordinated manner. These efforts ultimately result in the adoption of Intergovernmental Agreements between the jurisdictions and the designation of Growth Management Area overlay zoning districts around the cities. The basic purpose and structure of these agreements is to encourage urban development to locate in cities and towns or adjacent to these areas with the expectation that the developed areas would soon be annexed.

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan establishes two additional geographical boundaries, Cooperative Planning Areas (CPA) and Community Influence Area (CIA), described below.

[Map 1. Community Existing Conditions and Adopted Plans](#) shows existing adopted Intergovernmental Agreement areas, CPAs and CIAs (as of April 2019). The map is intended to be dynamic and flexible and inform users of the Plan of the current status of City/County IGAs.

**Growth Management Area (GMA)** boundaries should be based on a municipality's plan for providing urban-level services to the area within a 20-year time frame. The area does not necessarily need to be served exclusively by the municipality for all services, but the designated area should be serviceable by an existing urban service provider. For example, the GMA may include areas currently served by a water or sanitation district, with which the municipality has established a service area agreement. The municipality should, however, intend to annex the Growth Management Area within the 20-year time frame, and to provide the GMA with a full range of urban services in the future as described in Chapter 3.

**Map 9. Potential Cooperative Planning Areas**



Within Growth Management Areas, the County strives to achieve the municipality's adopted plan objectives, unless the land use applicant seeks existing vested rights, and the municipality would agree to annex all properties when they become eligible. Policies and regulations in the Intergovernmental Agreements should specify required facilities, design standards and phasing criteria for new development. The County would agree that urban development will not be approved outside the GMAs except in specifically named areas and according to the adopted County Comprehensive Plan.

Growth Management Areas are the only location of future urban-level development in the County, with the exception of unincorporated communities with an adopted subarea plan. The County will work with each of the cities and towns in Larimer County to reach mutually-beneficial Intergovernmental Agreements which address the Principles and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the growth management concerns of each jurisdiction.

**Cooperative Planning Areas (CPAs):** The County will lead collaborative efforts with jurisdictions on approaches for areas which are not planned for urban development and/or urban services within the city's

comprehensive plan time frame (i.e., 20 years) but where development may have an impact on future city growth patterns. Residents and landowners, neighboring municipalities, and the County each have a stake within CPAs. Development applications within these areas will be referred to the adjacent jurisdiction(s) for close coordination during the development review process. A subarea plan led by the County would include participation from all affected jurisdictions and interests. These arrangements will help avoid future annexation issues and to plan for community buffers or separators.

CPAs may include areas that could eventually be annexed and provided urban services based on topography or other service provision factors. It may also include areas that because of existing development patterns, conservation measures, service-delivery constraints or other factors, are not planned for urban development or services

**Community Influence Areas (CIAs):** Some municipalities propose urban service areas in their comprehensive plans that are not recognized by the County as a Growth Management Area, nor do they benefit from the County's cooperative annexation and development review processes. Until such time as a GMA is established through an IGA, municipal planning areas are a CIA. For example, municipalities that could someday "grow together" more than 20 years in the future can jointly identify their respective CIAs so they do not overlap, and therefore avoid having future disputed annexation areas, until IGAs are ratified.

## Subarea and Department Master Plans

Special area land use plans and studies are appropriate where conditions present unique land use issues and opportunities. These conditions require more detailed investigation than is possible for the majority of the county area or a specific resource (transportation, facilities, parks and open lands, etc.), usually including a great deal of public input. The outcome of the studies may be adoption of special area policies and implementation strategies, which are tailored to the specific issues of the area.

**Subarea plans**, such as the LaPorte Area Land Use Plan and Red Feather Lakes Area Plan, are adopted as part of the Larimer County Comprehensive Plan. The land use map and plan objectives and policies found in these plans will continue to be used as a guide to land use decisions by the County. As subarea plans are adopted or revised, the Comprehensive Plan and Framework Map should be revised to reflect those areas.

**The Northern Colorado Regional Airport Master Plan** defines the Airport Influence Area to recognize benefits and potentially adverse impacts that may occur within certain distances from public aviation facilities and to provide a policy framework to minimize these impacts as well as protect the safety and efficiency of aircraft operations.

The potential adverse impacts of airport operations are generally of two types. Within the critical zones that surround and extend beyond the runways, safety for persons and property is of concern. Within the noise contours surrounding the airport and under the flight paths, complaints from property owners, particularly residents of the area, can eventually change or even curtail aircraft operations.

At the same time, there are unique locational advantages to some types of non-residential uses in proximity to a public airport.

Larimer County recognizes the Airport Influence Area with the Airport zoning district. This is intended to limit non-compatible land developments and should reflect the Airport and FAA recommendations as outlined in the Airport Master Plan.

**Estes Valley Comprehensive Plan** is a joint planning effort between Larimer County and the Town of Estes Park. This approach is unique to the Estes Valley and required special state legislation to authorize the Joint Planning Commission. The Principles and Policies in this Comprehensive Plan apply to the entire unincorporated portion of Larimer County, except the Estes Valley Planning Area. The Estes Valley Comprehensive Plan is referred to in the County Comprehensive Plan for information and clarity, but it is a stand-alone, separately adopted document which is implemented through a separate set of land use regulations and procedures.

**Other County Department Master Plans** listed in Chapter 3 are adopted as part of this Comprehensive Plan, and were instrumental to its development. To the extent feasible, the recommendations in this Plan complement and expand upon the recommendations in these other County plans. When these plans are updated in the future, a part of the update process should be to consider the Principles, Policies, and Framework recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.



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*Photo on following page: Bingham Hill in Bellvue taken by David Kingham*



**“Do good.”**

**Lew Gaiter, 1959 - 2018**

**Drew Davis, 1955-2019**



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