



Community Assessment and Assumption Report

To: Planning Commission
From: Master Plan Project Team
Date: March 3, 2022
RE: Master Plan Recommendations Guided by Community Input

This memo outlines the Master Plan recommendations we have identified through our community meetings and input from the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners. Before we start writing the details of the Master Plan, we wanted to share with you the main topics where we have gotten input from the community and subject matter experts.

As you know, the Routt County Master Plan will continue to preserve open space and direct growth to Stagecoach and West Steamboat. But, since our area has grown in population since the last update of the Master Plan, there are several suggestions to preserve the character of Routt County and address issues like our precious resources of agricultural heritage and water and new pressures such as affordable housing, regional transportation and alternative energy.

As you read through the document, make note of items that you would like to discuss, or about which you have questions or concerns. Please remember that the goal of the discussion around this document is to guide, from a very high, conceptual level, the creation of the draft plan. Once the high-level concepts are discussed, there will be another opportunity for Planning Commission to weigh in on the details.

Introduction to Community Assessment Report

The Master Plan Community Assessment Report is a compilation of the comments and suggestions received through a robust outreach process that included 925 individual survey responses, ten community & municipal meetings, six technical advisory committee meetings, and twelve focus group and individual stakeholder interviews.

A great deal of the information gathered confirms that the Routt County community continues to support the overarching goals of the existing Master Plan. While everyone acknowledges that the County is growing, there is consensus that the most effective means of expanding

housing opportunities to accommodate future growth while maintaining what we all love about Routt County, and protecting our natural and cultural resources, is to continue to direct new development to the designated growth centers: our existing, vibrant municipalities, which can grow through infill development where possible, and annexation when appropriate, as well as to the areas targeted for growth (West of Steamboat and the North Stagecoach) that can be served by central water and sewer.

This Assessment Report will be used as the outline for the draft Master Plan. There are some items listed in this document that are very specific and would not be appropriate for inclusion in the Master Plan, but are included in this document as possible ways in which the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations might be modified to implement the Master Plan. In other areas, specific lists are provided as examples to illustrate the larger concept.

Some items are admittedly aspirational (such as a dedicated bike lane alongside CR129), but were included because they have overwhelming support in the community. Other items have been highlighted because staff is seeking input (such as how far to extend the prohibition of water hauling to support new development) or confirmation (continuing to disallow Short-term rentals (STR) in unincorporated Routt County). Some highlighted items are more controversial and merit further discussion (i.e. setting a maximum home size, or adjusting the maximum size allowed for a Secondary Dwelling Unit (SDU)).

Master Plan Priority Areas

The priority areas are how we have organized the feedback we received from the community including the subject matter experts on the Technical Advisory Committee. It was also clear from the community that most people do not make a distinction among federal, state, county and city land jurisdictions. When we draft the final document, we will distinguish what the County can do and what suggestions are dependent on other agencies or municipalities. The following priority areas are:

- Conservation, Recreation and Tourism
- Preservation of Open Space and Agricultural Lands
- Mobility/Transportation
- Growth and Development
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Climate Action Sustainability and Natural Resources
- Equity and Community Health
- Infrastructure

Conservation, Recreation, and Tourism

- Review existing sub-area plans, Land Use Chart, and zoning to identify most appropriate areas for recreational uses
- Review Outdoor Recreation zone standards or consider requiring a PUD as a possible tool for expanding management of recreation
- Review list of available recreation-oriented Special and Conditional Uses in the A/F zone district, like Recreational Facilities
- Collaborate with the ranching and agricultural community to carefully plan recreational activities that could impact their operations
- Improve partnerships with land managers (USFS, BLM, State Parks) to develop coordinated public access and manage recreational impacts, including impact on wildlife, relieving pressures on overcrowded trailheads, parking areas, etc.
 - Develop administrative review process to mitigate off-site impacts of current uses-by-right (e.g. river access)
 - Identify responsibilities and funding sources to improve parking areas and maintenance of popular destinations
 - Explore funding options to offset impacts of recreation
- Consider creating a County Recreation Map to identify areas that should be avoided when considering development/permits
 - Identify reasonable river access points, trailheads, recreational parking areas, etc.
 - Identify target areas for conservation: south valley floor, forestlands, waterways
 - Identify wildlife corridors and sensitive areas
 - Consider overlay mapping or zone district to mitigate/curb impacts of recreation
 - Incorporate Routt Recreation Conservation Roundtable (RRCR) mapping when available
 - Strengthen review standards for specific recreation-oriented uses to address site clean-up, setbacks, noise, air & light pollution, road impacts, congestion, wildlife impacts
 - Coordinate progress of the Routt Recreation and Conservation Roundtable to incorporate mapping efforts to include in the County's web-based mapping applications
 - Regularly update these maps and utilize them to consider supplementary review criteria for projects within their boundaries
 - Incorporate the above tools into the existing sub-area plans

Preservation of Open Space and Agricultural Lands

- Support policies that curb rural sprawl and discourage 35-acre development
 - Consider a new process, similar to a streamlined LPS system, as a simple alternative to 35-acre development

- Leave current LPS system intact
- Continue policies to preserve open space in rural Routt County to protect agricultural, cultural, and historical values
- Support the Routt County Climate Action Plan in land use planning.
 - For example, consider alternative energy development that is compatible with agricultural operations
- Re-evaluate Special and Conditional Uses allowed in the A/F zone district to improve opportunities for agricultural operators and prevent misuse.
 - Agritourism
 - Ecosystem services (e.g. tree planting for carbon sequestration, wind turbines, etc.)
 - Trailheads, river access points
 - Campgrounds
 - Hip camps
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 - Lodging/Bed & Breakfast
 - Home industry/Home Occupation
 - Guest Ranches
- Re-evaluate uses not being used by agricultural operators and consider policy changes
 - Dedicated wedding venues
 - Corporate events and retreats
- Develop review criteria to confirm authenticity of ongoing agricultural operations
- Continue to support the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to support conservation easements.
- Explore additional new funding sources to preserve open lands

Mobility/Transportation

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the County to improve connectivity & safety, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as stated in the Climate Action Plan
 - Encourage the development of trail networks that connect neighborhoods and feed into the Core Trail Develop road crossing treatment guidelines and/or standards for new development
 - Encourage the development of safe, easy and accessible pedestrian/bicycle routes to transit stops
 - Improve signage re: bikes & pedestrians
 - Improve wayfinding for bikes & pedestrians
 - Extend the Core Trail to the west and south
 - Connectivity to Steamboat II is a priority for the community
 - Support separated grade crossing for Core Trail to the west to improve safety

- Identify high priority crossings and develop safe crossing points
 - US 40 (e.g. Sleeping Giant School)
 - Hwy 131 (e.g. at CR 14)
- Widen road shoulders where possible on county roads
- Establish bike/pedestrian lanes on high-traffic routes, when feasible
 - CR 14, CR 129
- Improve deteriorating roadways
 - Continue to measure, track and dedicate funding to road improvements and maintenance
 - Reconsider methodology for prioritizing road pavement projects
 - Implement a funding prioritization program for road maintenance and improvements (shoulder widening, bike/ped facilities, increased winter maintenance)
 - Explore federal, state, and local grants and other funding solutions to support road maintenance
- Address increasingly frequent road closures (particularly of I-70) that cause traffic to be re-routed through Routt County
 - Define specific detour routes and improve wayfinding to avoid damage to County roads
 - Work with CDOT to identify improvements to Hwy 131 to accommodate detoured traffic
- Collect and regularly analyze uniform crash data to prioritize safety improvements to roadways and intersections with high crash histories
- Consider policies to forestall increased traffic and congestion from new growth and tourism
- Expand and support convenient public transit and alternative modes of transportation within Routt County
 - Work with operators to increase frequency of bus service between Steamboat Springs, Hayden, and Craig
 - Improve transportation options to and from Yampa Valley Regional Airport (YVRA)
 - Pursue grants and other funding opportunities; partner with Steamboat Springs Transit to expand service and frequency
 - Study potential ridership in Oak Creek/Stagecoach and surrounding areas to determine need
 - Consider creative transit options from Stagecoach and South Routt
 - Vanpools
 - Deviated fixed route
 - Activity bus
 - Add regional route
- Work with operators to Increase frequency of bus service to and from the Front Range

- Pursue new public transit options
 - Leverage existing assets in the County (i.e. Union Pacific’s rail network) to explore public transportation and freight options in Routt County
 - Work with Moffat County, Ski Corp., and other stakeholders on public transit solutions to benefit the region
- Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and consider the zoning policies needed to implement it in the future
 - Define how an RTA can be used to further the above stated goals
 - Investigate how an RTA has been used in other comparable communities

Growth and Development

- Continue to direct growth to designated and potential growth centers (Stagecoach and West Steamboat)
 - Support housing and density where central water and sewer services are available
- **Do not allow water to be hauled to support new subdivisions/development**
 - Consider what this applies to: new lots, SDUs, LPS
- Explore a more effective way to incorporate sub-area plans into Master Plan
- Consolidate West Steamboat Springs Area Plan (WSSAP) and Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan (SSACP)
 - Work with City to evaluate/update SSACP
 - Work with the City to revisit SSACP planning boundary and/or UGB to better reflect potential service area
- Support annexation of Brown Ranch into the City
- Develop recommended standards or a template for Home Owners Association (HOA) covenants consistent with County goals
 - Discourage minimum home sizes
 - Conserve/reduce energy and water use
- **Create a Future Land Use Map framework to illustrate potential growth in the County:**
 - Include transitional uses for areas of the County within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)
 - Include transitional uses for areas adjacent to the UGB
 - Community gardens
 - Parks
 - Boarding kennels
 - Composting facilities
 - Landscaping/nursery
 - Include areas immediately outside municipalities & target areas
 - Incorporate stronger wildfire mitigation guidance for new development through fire wise design standards or other land use policy

- Identify current and potential new recreational use areas (see Recreation and Tourism above)
- Explore opportunities for overlay areas to better manage recreational activities like access points and protect wildlife corridors
- Create overlay or use districts that encourages green energy and align with the Climate Action Plan like carbon sequestration, solar farms, or other on-site renewables

Housing

- Consider policies in the Master Plan & sub-area plans and incentives in the regulations for expanded workforce housing in West of Steamboat area and Stagecoach
- Discuss how Yampa Valley Housing Authority can expand supply in smaller communities (Oak Creek, Milner, Hayden, Stagecoach, South Routt) to meet demands in the county.
- Review dimensional standards for secondary structures in the A/F zone district to consider an increase to the minimum size
- Continue to prohibit Short Term Rentals (STRs) and continue an enforcement program

Infrastructure

- Seek new funding sources from State/USFS/other federal grants and partner on maintenance and road improvements in high-use areas
- Create a system to ensure technology (internet, data, etc.) is installed at the same pace as growth and other infrastructure and prioritize gap areas
 - Prioritize installation of conduit during concurrent road maintenance or utility work (dig once policy)
 - Encourage municipalities to implement a dig once policy

Historic and Cultural Resources

- Consider initiatives from Historic Routt County
 - Ensure that the preservation of cultural resources, including archeological sites, natural, agricultural and landscapes that have value to the community, utilitarian and habitable structures, is a guiding philosophy of the Routt County Master Plan
 - Consider dedicating staff and resources to the identification, protection, preservation and active use of the County's historically valuable landscapes, structures, and artifacts
 - Identify existing historic structures, sites and landscapes that should be considered for preservation

- Consider establishing a program that would allow for Routt County's recognition by the State of Colorado as a Certified Local Government to bolster preservation guidelines and to qualify property owners for grant funding and tax credits for private investment in historic preservation.
- Improve public access to information about cultural resources in Routt County
- Consider zoning and building criteria for what is subject to review
- Incentivize and support adaptive re-use of historic structures
 - Consider re-use as Secondary Dwelling Units
 - Consider re-use as Accessory Structures

Climate Action, Sustainability, Natural Resources

- Support the Climate Action Plan (CAP) in the County Master Plan
- Measure and report updates to the CAP as they occur
- Strengthen renewable energy production opportunities in the County
 - Streamline permitting process
 - Allow as use-by-right within a certain size
 - Expand electric vehicle infrastructure throughout Routt County: add line to Land Use Chart for EV charging stations
- Strengthen solid waste management policy
 - Incentivize/encourage waste reduction and diversion
 - Identify areas for recycling, composting
 - Identify potential future landfill locations as Routt County grows
- Align Routt County's land-use review process for extraction permits with Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) policy and guidelines
- Promote water conservation practices and include them in the building codes to effectively manage water resources
- Incorporate the Basin Roundtable Integrated Water Management Plan into the Master Plan
- Support and partner with the agricultural community to improve water conservation, measurement, adaptation, and education
- Recognize the connection between water resources and forest health as much of the County's watershed is in forested areas
- Support community efforts to improve river flows, river health and agricultural infrastructure upgrades
- Strengthen efforts to protect and restore Routt County's natural resources
 - Consider strengthening stream protections
 - Incentivize stream and riparian habitat restoration and protection

- To decrease energy, water and materials use, set a maximum size for residential structures. Options for recourse include:
 - None. The max is the max.
 - Implement a special use tax/impact fee for residential buildings over a specific square footage to offset increased energy and water use and fund climate change mitigation
 - Encourage municipalities to also set maximum home size if a maximum size is set for unincorporated Routt County
- Revise building code to limit BTUs, etc. of energy inefficient appliances, remove unneeded amenities and focus on only necessary home ownership items
 - Limit square footage of snow melt systems (or disallow them entirely)
 - Consider restrictions on outdoor amenities/heating sources
- Do not allow new development without proof of on-site water source (no water hauling)

Equity and Community/Public Health

- Encourage land uses that provide essential services in West Steamboat, Hayden, Oak Creek, Stagecoach, Phippsburg, Milner, and Yampa (e.g. grocery store, medical care, child care) that support families of all income ranges to have shorter, healthier and walkable trips to amenities.
- Continue to direct diverse growth and commercial activities to designated growth centers to minimize displacement by supporting a variety of housing options and employment opportunities.

Considerations:

The County and municipalities have worked on plans that affect land use, zoning, and policies. The Routt County Master will support and highlight ways it integrates the goals of the following plans:

- Climate Action Plan
- Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Integrated Water Management Plan
- Public Health Plan
- Wildfire Mitigation Plan

In addition once the Routt County Master Plan is adopted, the County will work with the appropriate representatives to update, combine and or eliminate some of these plans:

- Sub-area plans
 - Combining the West Steamboat Area Plan with the Steamboat Springs Areas Community Plan
 - Stagecoach Community Plan



- Upper Elk Community Plan
- Sarvis Creek Plan
- Municipal Plans