



# **The Town Of Oak Creek**

**Comprehensive Plan Update**

**2008**





THE TOWN OF  
**OAK CREEK** Comprehensive Plan

Acknowledgments

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### PLAN OVERVIEW

*The 2008 update to the existing Oak Creek Comprehensive Plan is the product of a community input process which sought to obtain the current community vision. Through the use of several Stakeholder Meetings, Workshops and Survey's the communities "collective sense of place" was formed. Drawing from this new vision of the community, the existing 1996 Comprehensive Plan served as the foundation as the Policies and Action Items of the plan are realigned to meet the current vision for the Community.*

Land Use Code update and Capital Improvements Program are the products of an engaged core of people in Oak Creek with foresight, knowledge and determination. The new plan succeeds a previous comprehensive planning effort completed in 1980, which was followed by the adoption of the Land Use Code in 1983. Capital improvements were prioritized by the Town Board in 1991 and reviewed in 1995.

### PLAN STYLE

The Plan is a hybrid of traditional and character-based comprehensive plan styles. A "bottom up" planning process, with citizens actively involved in charting their future, is the cornerstone of character-based comprehensive planning, although such an approach is sometimes used in traditional planning as well. Also similar to a traditional plan, the character-based plan will often use statistical and demographic data to support land use, transportation, and housing and other plan elements. However, a character-based plan is founded on a "preferred scenario", rather than the "future land use map" of traditional comprehensive plans. A preferred scenario reflects a community's vision for a host of concepts (relationship with the natural and built environment, circulation networks, and where people live, work and play, etc.) rather than simply predicting or dictating a future land use pattern. For this reason, character-based plans tend to emphasize policies that protect the natural environment, recognize the diversity of the built architecture, and retain community values. Finally, since it is developed with strong public awareness and a solid technical grounding, the hybrid traditional/character-based comprehensive plan focuses on the incremental implementation of specific "actions" over a period of time. The Oak Creek Comprehensive Plan is therefore intended to be a dynamic document that is updated periodically and used frequently by residents, land owners, developers, and elected and appointed officials.

### PLANNING PROCESS

- The update process began with a "kick off meeting" held at town hall on April 9, 2008
- Community Survey
- Workshop (s)



## PREVIOUS PLANNING PROCESS

The comprehensive plan development process formally began with a town meeting held on Leap Day, February 29, 1996. An estimated 42 people (approximately 5% of the town population) attended. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the public, identify issues, and discuss what Oak Creek should be like in the future. After an introduction to the project, participants broke into three groups. Each group discussed 1) the qualities of Oak Creek, 2) concerns about present conditions, and 3) if the plan were to be successful, their vision of Oak Creek in the future. After an hour's discussion, representatives of each group summarized their findings for everyone. Appendix One summarizes the results.

Following the first meeting, the Town mailed a community survey to all utility billing customers. One hundred and sixty four individuals, or approximately 33% of recipients, responded to the survey. The survey indicated that residents generally seek diversification of their economy; are favorable to, yet cautious of, new growth; will consider key land use code modifications; and support town improvements. Appendix Two contains a summary of the results.

Meanwhile, information critical to the planning effort was collected, compiled and categorized into three major components: environment, service capacity, and land use. Information about each major component was analyzed and mapped. An environmental constraints map, a service capacity map, and two land use context maps were created for further review and analysis of existing conditions. This information is contained in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

Two plan alternatives evolved from the first town meeting, the community survey and the environmental, service capacity and land use analyses. Each alternative was mapped on an aerial photograph, and text was formatted into three major topic areas: Economy, Growth and Land Use; Transportation and Infrastructure; and Natural Resources and Recreation. Ten to twelve land use categories translated the concepts into general policies or potential actions. Over 35 people attended a second town meeting on April 10, 1996 to review the plan alternatives, dubbed the Apple Scenario and the Orange Scenario (Appendix Three).

The Orange Scenario was considered an "enhanced trend," projecting a low growth rate and an ultimate population ranging from 800 to 1200 residents. The Apple Scenario was more aggressive, with a larger population (1200- 2000 residents) supporting more services and amenities. Both alternatives sought to preserve the existing small town character of Oak Creek, a quality strongly championed at the first town meeting and within the community survey.

The two alternatives were displayed at an open house exhibit from April 1<sup>st</sup> through April 17, 1996 at the Town Hall. The exhibit included the land use context, environmental constraints and service infrastructure conditions mapping. Also displayed were two exercises completed by the 6th grade civics class at Soroco Middle School, which monitored the project.

The exhibit provided an opportunity for people to stop by at their leisure, review the options, and complete a brief questionnaire as to their preferences. Although attendance was below expectations, approximately



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40 questionnaires were completed. Appendix Three includes the questionnaire results for each alternative.

Items that received a favorable response from at least 85% of those compelling questionnaires were highlighted. A draft, "preferred" alternative emerged. To test its assumptions and gain a broader response, the draft preferred scenario was formatted into a new questionnaire no mailed to all utility billing customers in early May. Again, those items that received a favorable response from at least 85% of those completing questionnaires were incorporated into a "recommended" preferred scenario. In general, the recommended preferred scenario embodied many of the concepts of the Orange Scenario with some of the details from the Apple Scenario. Chapter Three includes a graphic of the Preferred Scenario.

A third town meeting was held May 22, 1996 at Town Hall. About 25 people participated in a dialogue on "areas of agreement" and "areas for additional discussion" Areas of agreement were those items that had at least an 85% favorable response from the recommended preferred scenario questionnaires. Items receiving less than 85% approval became areas for additional discussion. After a lively exchange of ideas, each participant received a set of eight red dots and was asked to identify his or her eight most important concepts or details from the: preferred direction.

Following the town meeting, the draft preferred scenario and "dot exercise" were available for review at Town Hall May 23 and May 24, 1996. Once again, attendance at the exhibit did not meet desired expectations, and it became necessary to further test the key issue of mobile home placement with a 5 option questionnaire. Options ranged from no action to restricting placement to areas within mobile home parks. The questionnaire was mailed to all utility billing customers in early June, and 87 responses were received (see Appendix Two). Results reflect a lack of public consensus, although a clear majority believes that some action must be taken to regulate mobile homes placed outside of mobile home parks.

With information from the town meetings, the technical analyses, the questionnaire and the draft preferred scenario, the plan began to take shape. Goals and policies from the 1980 plan were reviewed for applicability, and new policies were created as appropriate. A set of "actions" to implement the policies were prepared and prioritized by short-term (0 -3 years), mid-term (3 -5 years), and long term (> 5 years) timeframes.

When the draft plan was complete, the Land Use Code was reviewed for consistency with the plan policies. A land use attorney facilitated a joint workshop with the Planning Commission and Town Board on July 31, 1996. A draft ordinance was subsequently prepared (Appendix Four), outlining recommended Land Use Code changes.

Since the plan includes areas beyond the existing town boundaries, a workshop was held in Oak Creek with the Routt County Regional Planning Commission on August 15, 1996. The workshop is the first step in a process that should ultimately result in the acceptance and/or adoption of the plan by Routt County, possibly as an amendment to the Routt County Master Plan.

The draft Capital Improvement Program (CIP) found in Appendix Five is based on the plan, existing capital budget information and discussions with Town officials. A meeting was held with the Town Board





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on August 22, 1996 to review the draft. With the adoption of these planning tools, the community of Oak Creek will be prepared to actively shape its future.

## USE OF THE PLAN

The Plan is intended to be a guideline for use and development decisions within the Town of Oak Creek. The policies located in each chapter should be used to guide citizens, landowners, developers, elected and appointed officials toward achieving the goals and objectives of the community, as expressed through the Preferred Scenario. The Preferred Scenario should be used in conjunction with the policies to help direct growth and community development activity. While the Preferred Scenario is not intended to be regulatory, as is the Performance District Map, any changes to the Performance District Map should be consistent with the Preferred Scenario. Finally, the action plans should be used as a work program to implement the Plan incrementally over the next several years.

The draft Land Use Code revisions and draft Capital Improvement Program found in Appendix Four and Appendix Five, respectively, are intended to provide the Planning Commission and Town Board with recommendations established through the process of preparing the comprehensive plan. These Appendices should not be viewed as final documents, but rather as a "first cut" toward their eventual adoption.

### Policies and Action Items

1. *Encourage both new and existing residents to participate in civic committees to help implement the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.*
  - a. *Revise Land Use Code to include update Comprehensive Plan policies.*
  - b. *Revise Land Use Code to eliminate inconsistency with updated Comprehensive Plan policies.*
  - c. *Create a yearly Town Workshop to initiate the process of reviewing the Comprehensive Plan policies, Land Use Code and Capital Improvement Program.*
  - d. *Initiate the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan in its entirety every five years.*



## CHAPTER TWO: ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

The town of Oak Creek is located in Routt County, Colorado, at an elevation of approximately 7400 feet above sea level in Sections 31 and 32 of Township 5 North, Range 85 West of the Sixth Principle Meridian. Oak Creek enjoys an alpine climate, with typically a wet spring, mild summer, cool autumn and a long, snowy winter season.

A review of Oak Creek's environment and natural resources leads to an identification of environmental constraints that may affect the long-term growth and development of the community.

### ENVIRONMENT

Situated at the base of Thorpe Mountain and at the southern end of the Oak Creek canyon, the town of Oak Creek is surrounded by relatively dramatic topography. Oak Creek, a small stream, flows through the town that bears its name. The area's environment can be described by its geology, soils, vegetation, wetlands, wildlife and visual character.

### GEOLOGY

Analysis of geology has been based on maps provided by the Colorado Geological Survey. Most of the town of Oak Creek, extending south through the Rossi Meadow to Oak Creek, is underlain by a quaternary formation of surficial unconsolidated colluvial deposits, including talus, tills, and gravel. Much of the surrounding area is of the Mancos formation, Cretaceous shale, with the exception of the coal-producing areas on the plateau west of Oak Creek canyon. This entire plateau is a combination of the Williams Fork and Iles formations, both of which contain sandstone, shale and coal. A Browns Park formation occupies the higher elevations of Thorpe Mountain. Several fault lines extend from the southern half of the Rossi Ranch to the west and south towards Phippsburg. These are part of the Steamboat Springs Fault Zone and are classified by the Colorado Geological Survey as potentially active faults.

### **Policies and Action Items**

~~1. Update Land Use Code to require that a qualified professional be retained by the developer to determine the full extent of potential hazard problems on any proposed development site~~

### SOILS

Although there is no published soil survey for Routt County, soils information available from the Soil Conservation Service includes field surveys and a map with text describing different soil units. Routt



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Loam is the predominant soil type within the town of Oak Creek, the Rossi property to the south, and some of the drainages extending up the southwestern slopes of Thorpe Mountain. This is a deep, well drained soil type, formed in loess and alluvium derived from sandstone and shale. Buckskin Loam, found near the intersection of SH 131 and CR 14 and in narrow bands extending down the slopes of Thorpe Mountain, has characteristics similar to Routt Loam. The Binco Silty Clay Loam unit is found north of the town on the western slope of Thorpe Mountain. Aaberg Silty Clay is also a predominant soil type, found north of Oak Creek in the vicinity of the Sweetland property and south along SH 131. Along the Oak creek corridor the primary soil unit is Silas Variant Loam.

## VEGETATION

Data on vegetation has been interpreted from maps provided by the Colorado Department of Wildlife and Routt County. The DOW classifies most of the area as upland shrub/shrub steppe, whereas the County map shows the area as mountain shrub or sagebrush. Within the town limits, the most notable vegetative features are the large cottonwoods along Oak Creek and within some of the residential neighborhoods. The predominant vegetation on the open hillsides surrounding the town, other than sagebrush, is grasslands and scrub oak. Mixed conifer and aspen areas occur at the higher elevations, and pockets of aspen extend down into the lower elevations.

### Policies and Action Items

1. *Natural vegetation shall be protected whenever possible, unless it poses a hazard or is within a high risk wildfire area. ~~Trees larger than 2" caliper and/or exceeding 6 feet in height may be required to be preserved or replaced on a 1:1 basis.~~ (Add this language to land use code)*
2. *Unless required for construction, vegetation shall not be removed from areas that may contribute to a landslide, mudflow or debris flow. Areas of vegetation removed for construction shall be reclaimed with new vegetation where possible.*
3. *The Town shall also encourage downtown property owners to plant new street trees where feasible.*

## WETLANDS

Wetlands information does not currently exist for Oak Creek. The Soil Conservation Service, which collects some wetlands information, had none for the area.

Determination of wetlands will need to happen on a site specific basis prior to any development activity. The Army Corps of Engineers define wetlands as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas". Property owners are required to obtain a US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit prior to disturbance of any wetland areas.





### Policies and Action Items

1. *Development in wetland areas shall be avoided. Where development is unavoidable, all construction shall be designed to provide the least impact on wetland areas as practicable and in accordance with US Army 404 permit requirements.*
2. *Prior to seeking project approval or construction activity in potential wetland areas, a qualified professional shall be retained by the developer to determine the full extent of potential wetlands.*
3. *Efforts to maintain the water storage capacity and water quality of wetlands shall be encouraged. Activities that result in a loss of wetlands, eutrophication of wetlands, or loss of wildlife dependent upon wetlands shall be discouraged.*

#### **WILDLIFE**

Wildlife habitat has been described from Colorado Division of Wildlife maps. The DOW Routt County map series includes separate maps for each critical species of wildlife, with different types of habitat identified, such as winter range and concentration areas.

Elk and mule deer are species with habitat in the Oak Creek area. Elk winter concentration areas and severe winter ranges are found along the lower elevations of Oak Creek canyon. Critical elk habitat is within the canyon and on most of Thorpe Mountain, except at the higher elevations. Severe winter range is also present at the higher elevations southwest of Oak Creek. Critical habitat, winter range and concentration areas for mule deer are located east of the town of Oak Creek.

Other types of habitat in the area inventoried by the DOW include Canada goose, sandhill crane, golden eagle, sage grouse, and sharp-tailed grouse habitat. Habitat for the first four species is predominantly east of Oak Creek along the Yampa River corridor near Stagecoach Reservoir. The overall range for sharp tailed grouse extends throughout most of the lower elevations of Routt County, including Oak Creek.

#### **VISUAL CHARACTER**

The town of Oak Creek has a very well-defined visual character, which can be described by its containment, legibility and focal points.

The town is very contained, with little sense of sprawl into the countryside. Mature cottonwoods, conifers, and other vegetation help to define the town visually, distinguishing it from the surrounding open lands. Stands of aspen, conifer, and scrub oak at the higher elevations are also very important from a visual perspective, since they reinforce the slopes and hillsides that contain the town.

The development of Oak Creek has been in large part due its proximity to abundant natural resources. Natural resources in the region consist of mineral, energy and agricultural resources.



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Travelers coming from the north along SH 131 first receive a brief glimpse of the edge of town at a large bend in the road only a half mile away from town limits. The first full view of comes after passing its wastewater lagoons, approximately a 1000 feet from town.

Having the town revealed so suddenly is a rare quality in town form, providing a sense of surprise after traveling through the relatively long canyon. Traveling from the south, the view of the town does not emerge until one reaches the ridge that separates the Oak Creek and Yampa River watersheds.

This viewpoint, approximately two-thirds of a mile away from town limits is an important consideration in planning any future expansion of Oak Creek. Containing urban growth north of this point preserves rural character of the SH 131/CR 14 vicinity, a gateway to Stagecoach State Park.

Another visual characteristic of Oak Creek is clearly defined town form, or “legibility”. The gridded road pattern and relatively uniform block orientation, lots sizes and building setbacks all contribute to this quality. The clarity of Oak Creek’s form however is marginally disrupted by the railroad that divides the town, and varied topography which occasionally interrupts the grid pattern. While un-built streets, dead ends and steep grades add some variety to the neighborhoods, improvement of the railroad right-of way would help lessen its visual impact.

The town of Oak Creek also has very clear focal points. The recent placement of the old strip mining bucket at the Outdoor Museum adjacent to the Old Town Hall reinforces this site as the town central focal point. Other focal points in the commercial district include the historic Routt County Bank Building at Sharp Avenue and Colfax Street, and the Bell Mercantile Building and old Sinclair Gas Station, situated on the south corners of Main Street at Moffat Avenue. Outside the commercial district, focal points include the Victorian style residence at First Avenue, and the Soroco school buildings on the hill above SH 131.

Although the condition of many of the town’s structures and roads may be considered an aesthetic problem, there are residents who prefer the “messy diversity” inherent in Oak Creek’s character. A breadth of building material and signage provides an eclectic charm to the commercial district and residential neighborhoods, from old skis used as fence posts to antlers decorating a garage.

## Policies and Action Items

1. *Building placement and height ~~shall be~~ should be designed to avoid blocking scenic views from public rights of way, parks, and other public spaces. ~~in addition; building and/or structural height shall be restricted from blocking private access to solar energy.~~*
2. *Preservation to access of solar power should be encouraged.*
3. ~~—~~



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4.3. *To preserve the sense of containment provided by surrounding hillsides, buildings shall not be placed on a ridgeline that will create the effect of "skylining" the structure.*

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The development of Oak Creek has been in large part due its proximity to abundant natural resources. Natural resources in the region consist of mineral, energy and agricultural resources.

### **MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES**

The primary source of information on mineral and energy resources is the *Geologic Map and Energy and Mineral Resources Maps of Routt County* published by the Colorado Geological Survey. Coal, oil and gravel deposits are the three major resources identified.

Coal is the predominant energy resource, with abandoned coal mines extending along Oak Creek Canyon and southwest of the town along the upper reaches of Oak Creek. These mines lie within a large area of bituminous coal with less than 1000 feet of overburden. The coal reserves lie within the Iles and Williams Fork sandstone-shale formations. Another energy resource in the area is the Oak Creek Oil Field, located approximately two miles southwest of the town of Oak Creek.

A relatively small gravel deposit underlies the Town of Oak Creek, extending southeast approximately one mile and north approximately one-half mile. The deposit is small relative to other gravel resources in the Yampa River valley, is not desirable for road base work and thus is not likely to generate much interest from any gravel operators. In addition, its proximity to the Town of Oak Creek renders it unlikely that a mining permit would be granted so close to a population center.

### **AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

According to the Routt County Land Use and Natural Plant Communities map issued by the US. Soil Conservation Service, the primary irrigated agricultural lands within a three mile radius of the town consists of the Rossi Meadow south of town limits, the ranches at the intersection of SH 13 I and CR 14, and the ranchlands north of Phippsburg The Sweetland Ranch north of town limits is shown as non-irrigated cropland. Some smaller pockets of non-irrigated cropland are shown at higher elevations on Thorpe Mountain and north of Phippsburg.

## Policy and Action Items

1. *Annexation and subdivision of productive agricultural land shall be discouraged, except for those areas directly adjacent to Town identified on the Preferred Scenario for possible future development. Agricultural resources shall be protected whenever possible consistent with the Routt County Open Lands Plan.*

~~a. Prepare resolution of support for Routt County Open Lands Plan.~~



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

Environmental Individual constraints analyzed included geologic hazards, steep slopes, unstable soils, floodplains, and wildfire hazards. In addition to these mapped constraints, water and air quality were also investigated.

The environmental constraints to development have been summarized on the Environmental Character Graphic. The graphic classifies four levels of constraint: no constraints, minor constraints, significant constraints, and hazard areas. It should be noted that these areas are schematic, showing only the general locations of environmental constraints. The map should not be used to identify constraints on specific parcels of land. The environmental constraints are summarized below, with individual constraints described in more detail in the following sections.

Within the areas designated as no constraint, urban development could occur without significant environmental obstacles. These are areas of relatively flat terrain (0 -7 percent slopes), and devoid of floodplains, wildfire or geologic hazards.

Areas of minor constraint have one or more of the following characteristics: Slopes between 8 and 15 percent, low wildfire hazards, 100-year floodplains, stream corridors, potential subsidence problems, or fault zones. Potentially unstable soils are also considered minor constraints when located on slopes of 15% or less, Areas with minor constraints could accommodate urban development if certain precautions are taken, such as flood proofing, clearing brush to discourage wildfires, and/or proper engineering designs to mitigate unstable soils, subsidence problems or faults.

Areas of significant constraints include areas with medium wildfire hazards, moderately steep slopes (between 16 and 30 percent), or potentially unstable slopes. These are areas where development is not advisable, but could occur if extensive measures are taken to prevent potential problems.

The fourth category, hazard areas, are those areas where urban development is not recommended. These are areas with steep slopes (over 30 percent), severe wildfire hazards, or a history of unstable slopes.

### Polices and Action Items

1. Developers shall retain qualified professionals to determine the full extent of potential hazard problems on any proposed development site.



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*ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS TO DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN SUMMARIZED ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER GRAPHIC. THE GRAPHIC CLASSIFIES FOUR LEVELS OF CONSTRAINT: "NO CONSTRAINTS," "MINOR CONSTRAINTS," "SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTS," AND "HAZARD AREAS." IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THESE AREAS ARE SCHEMATIC, SHOWING ONLY THE GENERAL LOCATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS. THE MAP SHOULD NOT BE USED TO IDENTIFY CONSTRAINTS ON SPECIFIC PARCELS OF LAND*

*WITHIN THE AREAS DESIGNATED AS "NO CONSTRAINT," URBAN DEVELOPMENT COULD OCCUR WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL OBSTACLES. THESE ARE AREAS OF RELATIVELY FLAT TERRAIN (0-7 PERCENT SLOPES), AND DEVOID OF FLOODPLAINS, WILDFIRE OR GEOLOGIC HAZARDS. AREAS OF "MINOR CONSTRAINT" HAVE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS: SLOPES BETWEEN 8 AND 15 PERCENT, LOW WILDFIRE HAZARDS, 100-YEAR FLOODPLAINS, STREAM CORRIDORS, POTENTIALLY UNSTABLE SLOPES, POTENTIAL SUBSIDENCE PROBLEMS, OR FAULT ZONES. THESE AREAS COULD ACCOMMODATE URBAN DEVELOPMENT IF CERTAIN PRECAUTIONS WERE TAKEN, SUCH AS FLOOD-PROOFING, OR CLEARING BRUSH TO DISCOURAGE WILDFIRES.*

*AREAS OF "SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTS" INCLUDE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING: SLOPES BETWEEN 16 AND 30 PERCENT, MEDIUM WILDFIRE HAZARDS, SLOPE FAILURE COMPLEX, OR UNSTABLE SOILS. THESE ARE AREAS WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS NOT ADVISABLE, BUT COULD OCCUR IF EXTENSIVE MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO PREVENT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS.*

*THE FOURTH CATEGORY, HAZARD AREAS, ARE THOSE AREAS WHERE URBAN DEVELOPMENT IS NOT RECOMMENDED. THESE ARE AREAS WITH STEEP SLOPES (OVER 30 PERCENT), SEVERE WILDFIRE HAZARDS, OR A HISTORY OF LANDSLIDES AND DEBRIS FLOW.*

## **STEEP SLOPES**

Steep slopes, while helping to provide the strong sense of visual containment to the town, also create extensive constraints to development and expansion of the town boundaries. The only large areas near Oak Creek where slopes are primarily less than 16 percent are the Sweetland Ranch to the north and the Rossi Meadow to the south. The Rossi Meadow has the largest area of relatively flat slopes, much of it less than eight percent.

The steepest slopes lie northwest of the town, as the slopes of Thorpe Mountain descend down to Oak Creek canyon. Most slopes in this area are at least 30 percent, with many 40 percent areas. Above the canyon on the west side, slopes are 16 to 30 percent. These steep slopes are also highly constrained due to shallow soils and rock outcrops

## **GEOLOGIC HAZARDS AND UNSTABLE SOILS**

Since existing data on the location of active faults in Colorado is limited, fault zones surrounding Oak Creek are classified as areas of minor constraints pending future, more detailed, site specific studies. Areas with a history of subsidence were also classified as areas of minor constraint. Subsidence areas in





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the Oak Creek area are generally associated with abandoned coal mines and can be considered for development with adequate mitigation of mine hazards.

~~The most severe category, "Hazard Areas", includes areas with a history of landslides and debris fan. There are only two small landslide areas, both in Oak Creek canyon on the west side of Oak creek approximately one to two miles north of the town. The only area of debris fan is approximately one-half mile southwest of Oak Creek Reservoir, along County Road 25.~~

The primary development concerns with the soils in and around the town of Oak Creek include those with shrink-swell potential (which is common throughout Routt County), low permeability, and low strength. Where located in areas of relatively flat topography (0 to 15%), these soils pose a minor constraint to development. Proper foundation design and other mitigation measures must be employed to ensure safe building construction.

In areas with steeper slopes (over 15%) these soil conditions could lead to slope failure without proper engineering measures incorporated into development plans. Poor drainage combined with these soil and slope characteristics can also contribute to slope failure. These potentially unstable slope conditions are found in the steeper areas of Aaberg Silty Clay and Routt and Buckskin Loam soil units and are classified as areas of "Significant Constraint." These characteristics represent the most extensive constraints to development in the study area, with the entire western slope of Thorpe Mountain designated in this category.

The most severe environmental constraint category, hazard areas, includes areas with existing unstable slope conditions, such as landslides, debris flows, mudflows, or rock fall, or a history of unstable slopes. There are only two small landslide areas, both in Oak Creek Canyon on the west side of Oak Creek approximately one to two miles north of the town. The only area of debris flow is approximately one-half mile southwest of Oak Creek Reservoir, along County Road 25.

## Policies and Action Items

1. Development shall be prohibited in geologic hazard areas, defined as areas with a history of unstable soils, such as landslides, debris flow, rockfall, or mudflow, unless a qualified professional is retained and can demonstrate that the proposed project site does not have such hazards. Development shall be prohibited on slopes in excess of 30 degrees.
- ~~1. Prior to seeking project approval or construction activity in Oak Creek that is to occur in areas identified as a Hazard Area as indicated on the Environmental Constraints Map, a qualified professional shall be retained by the developer to determine the full extent of potential hazard problems.~~
2. Development shall be avoided in areas ~~where~~ moderately steep slopes (16 to 30%) are combined with unstable soils to create potentially unstable slopes. ~~a history of slope failure complex Or unstable~~



*slopes. If development in these areas is unavoidable, measures to mitigate the risks and impacts of such ~~landslide, rockfall, mudflow, debris flow~~ development, ~~and/or debris fan pathways~~ shall be identified by a qualified professional and implemented by the developer.*

*2.3. Development shall be allowed in areas with minor geologic hazards, but soil limitations such as shrink-swell potential and low permeability and strength shall require mitigation on a case-by-case basis through proper soils testing and foundation design.*

*4. The natural topography shall be retained to the greatest extent possible and excessive cut and fills to convert steep slopes to buildable sites shall be discouraged.*

*3.5. Where development above potential subsidence areas is found to be necessary, the developer shall commission a geologic report prior to commencing activities, identify effects of groundwater withdrawal, accurately locate any abandoned mines, commence mitigation measures as appropriate, and site non-conflicting uses such as passive open space over subsidence areas where possible,*

*4.6. A plan identifying erosion control measures shall be submitted with all development proposals.*

## **~~STEEP SLOPES AND UNSTABLE SOILS~~**

### **~~Steep Slopes and Unstable Soils~~**

~~Steep slopes, while helping to provide the strong sense of visual containment to the town, also create extensive constraints to development and expansion of the town boundaries. The only large areas near Oak Creek where slopes are primarily less than 16 percent are the Sweetland Ranch to the north and the Rossi Meadow to the south. The Rossi Meadow has the largest area of relatively flat slopes, much of it less than eight percent.~~

~~The steepest slopes lie northwest of the town, as the slopes of Thorpe Mountain descend down to Oak Creek canyon. Most slopes in this area are at least 30 percent, with many 40 percent areas. Above the canyon on the west side, slopes are 16 to 30 percent. These steep slopes are also highly constrained due to shallow soils and rock outcrops~~

~~The primary development concerns with the soils in and around the town of Oak Creek include those with shrink-swell potential (which is common throughout Routt County), low permeability, and low strength. This condition, known as slope failure complex, is found in the steeper areas of Aaberg Silty Clay and Routt and Buckskin Loam soil units. In addition, Silas Variant Loam, found along Oak Creek, bears a high water table and related flood hazards.~~



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~~Areas with slope failure complex or unstable soils are classified as areas of "Significant Constraint." These characteristics represent the most extensive environmental constraints, with the entire western slope of Thorpe Mountain designated slope failure complex.~~

~~Unstable slopes occur mostly within Oak Creek canyon and along the portion of Oak Creek southwest of the Rossi Meadow. Areas with potentially unstable slopes or a history of subsidence were classified as areas of "Minor Constraint." These areas occur primarily within the Rattlesnake Butte plateau west of Oak Creek canyon.~~

## FLOODPLAINS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map for Oak Creek and unincorporated Routt County contains base information on floodplains. It should be noted that the floodplain maps are very approximate in nature and should not be used for detailed planning.

Outside of town limits, the 100-year floodplain follows Oak Creek. Within town limits, the 100-year floodplain follows Oak Creek, two drainages entering town from the Sweetland Ranch, and the drainage running along Arthur Avenue. The Oak creek floodplain, once it reaches Decker Park, fans out to approximately 300 feet, narrowing where it crosses the railroad. Use of this area as a park is thus ideal, considering the extensive nature of the floodplain.

West of Decker Park, the floodplain fans out to 300 feet within the downtown area, between Bell and Moffat Avenues. The breadth of the floodplain in this area may become a future development constraint. For example, a water line replacement project in this area is tied to a federal grant, containing stipulations that could limit availability of service in floodplain areas to only existing structures and to those areas of minor impact. Due to this encumbrance, there may be delays or denials for infill development on vacant land within the floodplain.

### Policies and Action Items

- 1. Development in designated floodplain areas shall be avoided. Where development is unavoidable, all construction shall be designed to prevent damage due to flooding in accordance with FEMA guidelines. In no event shall development in designated floodplains be permitted to raise the flood elevation of downstream property.*
- 2. Natural drainage ways shall be maintained in a natural state.*
- 3. The town shall investigate the potential for improving the portions of Oak Creek within Decker Park and other areas of town to create a visual and recreational amenity.*

## WILDFIRE HAZARDS



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In the late 1970's, wildfire hazards were mapped for the Oak Creek area by Routt County. With many of the wildfire maps now outdated, the Routt County Wildland Fire Council recently received a grant to remap wildfire hazards. In the interim, Routt County Emergency Management personnel reviewed the existing map and found the information still valid with the exception that the two highest classes of hazard ("severe hazard – brush" and "severe hazard") should be combined into one class. These two are now considered equally hazardous since they are typically steep, inaccessible areas in which a fire would be difficult to control regardless of the vegetation type.

In general, fire hazards are either relatively low or relatively severe, with very little in between. Once the two most severe categories of hazard are combined, four categories of hazard will be defined.

The "No Hazard" areas include the developed portions within the town, a portion of the SH 131 control south of town limits, and a small area northeast of Soroco High School. The "Low hazard" zone consists of areas that are relatively flat and open, including the agricultural lands south and north of the town limits. These are areas where "defensible space" measures, such as clearing, could be easily implemented.

The few areas considered "Medium Hazard" are primarily isolated pockets of moderately steep, relatively open areas. The rest of the study area is considered "High Hazard" for wildland fires, and corresponds primarily to areas of steep slope, as well as some of the shrub areas north and south of Oak Creek. Urban development should be avoided in these areas due to the difficult access for controlling fires once they start.

## Policies and Action Items

1. *Development in areas designated as severe wildfire hazard by the Routt County Wildland Fire Council shall be avoided. Areas of medium hazards shall be avoided where possible. If development in these areas is unavoidable, **a fire mitigation plan approved by the Oak Creek Fire District shall be prepared and implemented by the developer to increase defensible space and otherwise mitigate wildfire hazard.***

## WATER QUALITY

State water quality standards for the portion of Oak Creek downstream of the town's wastewater treatment plant have been established to protect the following uses: cold water aquatic life, primary contact recreation, and agricultural uses. The standards upstream of the treatment plant are the same as downstream, with the addition of water supply as a protected use. Importantly, the stretch of Oak Creek immediately downstream of the treatment plant is designated "Water Quality Limited-Allocated." Due to this designation, Oak Creek's wastewater treatment plant may require more restrictive water quality limits. The effluent from the wastewater treatment plant, which was upgraded in the late 1980's, has generally been in compliance with State permit standards.



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Water quality in Oak Creek is monitored at Habro Bridge and Decker Park as part of the Colorado Division of Wildlife's River Watch Program. Water quality at Decker Park is considered adequate for aquatic life, with only minor levels of dissolved copper, iron, and manganese and occasional problems with low oxygen and pH during the Spring. Water quality at Habro Bridge, located several miles downstream of the town, has slightly higher levels of copper, cadmium, iron and manganese.

Water samples taken downstream from the town of Oak Creek and upstream of the Oak Creek drain between 1979 and 1992 showed some exceedances of State standards for certain metals, fecal coliform, suspended and dissolved solids, as well as high turbidity. Although standards were exceeded for some of these parameters, dissolved iron and manganese and fecal coliform have decreased since 1988.

The most notable water quality problem occurs in the Oak Creek drain, an abandoned mine drainage tunnel emptying into Oak creek approximately one mile north of the town. Excessive trace elements due to mining activities have been detected in the Oak creek drain. Water quality in the drain exceeds both water supply and aquatic life standards, with dissolved iron levels higher than any other location within the Upper Yampa River Watershed.

## Policies and Action Items

1. *The Town shall promote volunteer activities to protect its water resources, such as continuation of the annual "Clean up the Creek Day".*
2. *The surface and ground waters of Oak Creek shall be protected from land uses and management practices which could cause significant degradation of water quality or impair the natural protection and/or treatment processes provided by wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas.*
3. *Decisions to locate water supplies, wastewater treatment systems, and other facilities shall be made in a manner that protects water quality. Decisions regarding facility location shall also recognize the protection of floodplains, geologic hazard areas, wildlife habitats, wetlands and agricultural land.*
4. *The surface and ground waters of Oak Creek shall be protected from the use of pesticides, fertilizers, algaecides, road deicing and friction materials, and chemicals which would temporarily or permanently cause a significant degradation of water quality or impair the current or classified uses of these waters.*
5. *The Town shall work with Routt County, the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, and interested State and federal agencies to prepare a work plan to reduce metals contamination of the Oak creek drain.*

## AIR QUALITY

Information on air quality is very limited. According to the Routt County Department of Environmental Health, no air quality monitoring has been conducted in Oak Creek. It is known that Oak Creek's air





quality fluctuates seasonally. During winter and early spring, wood and coal burning contribute to diminished air quality. During summer and fall, fugitive dust is generated by the unpaved roads within the town.

With the presence of fugitive dust and wood and coal smoke, the most likely constraint on air quality is particulate matter smaller than ten microns in size (PM-10). Air quality monitoring for PM-10 standards could lead to greater public awareness of this health issue and the execution of a mitigation plan to reduce PM-10 exceedances. Additional opportunity to improve air quality could be realized if natural gas becomes available.

#### Polices and Action Items

1. *The Town ~~shall~~ should endeavor to improve air quality through gradually paving streets. The Town should pursue grant funding for street paving, such as Energy Impact Grant funds.*
2. *The Town ~~shall~~ should adopt regulations that prohibit installation of new coal-burning devices. The Town shall encourage conversion of existing coal-burning devices to cleaner energy sources, such as liquid propane or EPA-approved wood stoves.*
  - a. *Prepare and initiate a plan to obtain a natural gas supply for local connection.*
3. *The Town should conduct a feasibility study for a biomass-fueled power plant and consider development of other sustainable utilities such as wind, solar, and geothermal energy.*
4. *The Town shall encourage residents to increase the energy efficiency of their homes to conserve energy and reduce emissions. The Town shall work with the Governor's Energy Office and the Northwest Council of Governments to develop strategies for increasing energy efficiency of residential, commercial, and government buildings.*



## CHAPTER THREE: ECONOMY, LAND USE & GROWTH

### INTRODUCTION

Since its incorporation, Oak Creek has developed and retained a rugged, independent, western small town character that is shaped by its mining heritage, its proximity to abundant recreational resources, and fluctuating growth.

2000 Population by Age	%	Year	Projected Population
> 5	7.2	2007	959
5-9	7.3	2008	973
10 -14	7.4	2009	987
15-19	6.4	2010	1001
20-24	6.0	2011	1017
25-34	15.7	2012	1032
35-44	17.7	2013	1047
45-54	17.9	2014	1062
55-59	3.8	2015	1077
50-64	2.9	2016	1093
64-74	3.4	2017	1109
75-84	3.4	2018	1125
85 plus	0.9	2019	1141
		2020	1158

\*(Source) DOLA



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## HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

The first white settlers in Oak Creek were John Henry Myers and Bart Rooney, who, in 1887, established homesteads where the town of Oak Creek now stands. The Myers ranch occupied what is now known as the Rossi Meadow, whereas the Rooney homestead stood in what is now the main part of Oak Creek. Oak Creek's coal mining era began soon after. In 1889, 17 year old Martin Myers, son of John Myers, found an outcropping of coal and worked the mine for four years. This mine eventually became the Moffat mine, owned by S.M. Perry. James S. Walker came to the area in 1899 and opened what later became the Victor-American mine on the Pinnacle vein.

The small wagon-mining operations gave way to larger scale mining in 1907 when the Oak Creek Land and Mining Company bought the B.G. Schuster Ranch, originally the Rooney Ranch, in order to establish a town site for the rapidly developing coal mining operations. The Company was owned by Edward and Sam Bell, John Sharpe, and D.C Williams. The town was originally named Belltown, after the Bell brothers. With abundant shrub oak along its principal stream, the town was renamed Oak Creek when it was incorporated in December 1907.

After the railroad arrived to the area in 1908, the town boomed. In August of 1909 a depot was built in Oak Creek. Labor disputes developed with the new growth in tile coal mining industry. The wagon road to Steamboat Springs and what is now Twenty-mile Road were rerouted to eliminate public traffic through mine property. Each mining camp became a small empire, controlling the movement of employees and union organizers. In 1913 and 1914, labor conditions had deteriorated to the point of violence, and Colorado militia troops were sent by the Governor to restore order.

Labor unrest renewed in 1919, 1922 and 1927. Oak Creek's growth was continuously affected by disruptions in coal production and other fluctuations in the mining industry. Mine closures in the 1940's had the greatest impact, with the Victor American Mine closing in 1946. In 1948, the Oak Creek Times, after publishing for 40 years, ceased printing as the declining population could no longer support a newspaper. Only the Pittsburgh & Midway Edna Mine was operating by 1952.

Mining activity surged again during the 1970's as a result of the national oil crisis, yet waned in the early 1980's. Edna Mine, the last large mine in Oak Creek Canyon, closed in 1995.

## HISTORIC SITES

Many of Oak Creek's historic buildings have been destroyed. All of the buildings in the area known as Hickory Flats, a thriving "red light" district once located at the western edge of town, were torn down in the late 1960's. Many individual businesses that thrived in the old Piercen Block were tom down in 1967, and the Andy Black Block was torn down in 1983. Likewise, relatively few historic structures now stand within the Original Subdivision, Oak Creek's commercial district. Some of the older buildings still standing are:

- A. Hardware Store (~~Big Tuna's~~): This stone building, was originally a hardware store. It housed various establishments over the years, including Oak Creek's first Post Office. Established by the Bell brothers and located at Main Street and Moffat Avenue, the Mercantile marks the beginning



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of Oak Creek as a town site. The ground floor is used during the summer as an antique store, with a few apartments on both the ground floor and the upper floor.

- B. Pacific Hotel (Emmas): The Pacific Hotel, located on Moffat Avenue between Main Street and the railroad, was the first hotel in Oak Creek. The hotel was constructed around 1905 to service the newly established Oak Creek Land and Mining Company. There was a cafe and laundry in the structure and an adjacent livery stable. The building is now a 4 unit apartment complex.
- C. Old City Hall (Ambulance Barn): The Old City Hall, located on Main Street at the end of Moffat Avenue, was built in the early 1920's.
- D. Green Hotel (El Shaddai): Located on Main Street between Sharp and Moffat Avenues, the Green Hotel was built around 1911. The hotel had 15 rooms and was constructed over the J.W. Morris Grocery-Dry Goods Store. In the 1950's the upper half caught fire and was removed.
- E. Hageman Chevrolet Building (Bonfilio Drug Store): Built in the 1920's, this structure housed one of northwest Colorado's longest continuing automobile dealerships, lasting until the 1960's. The building is located on the north side of Main Street, between Bell and Sharp Avenues.
- F. Routt County Bank (Circle R Apartments): The Routt County Bank Building, located at the corner of Sharp and Colfax Avenues, was completed in 1911 with local stone and material. In addition to the bank, the building housed Walker Mercantile, a drugstore, and 24 rooms for rent. Uses within the building changed over the years, and included a Post Office, grocery store, movie theater, bowling alley, playhouse, church, restaurant, library, drugstore, hardware, and a department store. The building now contains the Yampa Valley National Bank and nine apartments. The building exterior appears to be close to the original facade, except for the wooden verandah and latticework, which is not part of the original structure.
- G. Old School Building (Soroco Middle School): Designed by prominent Colorado architect Robert K. Fuller, the original building was completed in 1924, with a 1951 addition.
- H. Billings Hotel (Curry Hotel): The Billings Hotel, built in 1929 at Sharp and Colfax avenues, was once considered the most elegant hotel and dining room in northwestern Colorado. Extensively remodeled in 1994, the building currently contains rental apartments and a Laundromat.
- I. Midland Hotel (Oak Creek Inn): The Midland Hotel, located on the southwest corner of Main Street and Bell Avenue, was originally part of the red light district. There were originally eight cabins constructed with the hotel, which in the 1950's became a rest home for senior citizens and later an apartment building in the early 1990's, new owners renovated the structure into a bed and breakfast.

The only one of these buildings officially registered as historic is the Bell Mercantile, which is on the Federal Register of Historic Places. The Oak Creek Inn was submitted to the State Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation in 1983 and determined to be eligible for the Federal Register. Several other structures listed above were also submitted for consideration, but were determined to be not eligible for



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the Federal Register. Since the State Register of Historic Places was established after 1983, many of these structures may be eligible for state designation.

## *Policies and Action Items*

1. *The Town shall work with Federal, State, County, Historic Routt County and other non-profit agencies to comprehensively identify historic residential and commercial structures within Oak Creek.*
  - a. *Encourage landowners to submit the following buildings and sites for inclusion on the County and/or State Register of Historic Places: Bell Mercantile, Hageman Chevrolet Building, Midland Hotel, Billings Hotel, Routt County Bank, Pacific Hotel, Hardware Store. (add historic routt county group)*
  - b. *Encourage the explore designation of the Phillips 66 Station, Oak Creek Cemetery, and other residential and commercial sites of historic character.*
2. *Any building officially registered by a Federal, Slate, or County agency CIS historic shall be preserved whenever possible.*
3. *The Town shall encourage owners of historic properties to the rehabilitate their of historic structures by historic landowners.*

## **ECONOMY**

Oak Creek's economy has historically been cyclical. Although all the Oak Creek mines are now closed, changing economic conditions or technology could result in the reopening of mining operations. Meanwhile, new residential growth is occurring throughout Routt County, and the town's relatively affordable housing an attractive alternative to the limited, expensive housing found in Steamboat Springs and the rural countryside. Oak Creek's steadily increasing population and escalating real estate values signal an emerging economic dynamic, one that is no longer as strongly dependent on resource extraction.

With the decline of mining and the increase in tourism activities, the profile of the Oak Creek worker has shifted. More workers are commuting longer distances or lower pay, and more families now require two incomes.

A new theme, "Four Seasons of Fun", reflects the arrival of tourism to Oak Creek. Restaurants, gift shops, and small retail businesses benefit from summer traffic that the increasingly popular Stagecoach Reservoir State Park brings to town. New residences in the Stagecoach vicinity also contribute to the improving health of Oak Creek's retail sector. Job growth is also occurring in Oak Creek's manufacturing sector. Since 1990, a parachute assembly plant and a kayak builder have set up shop in the South Arthur area.





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## Policies and Actions

1. The Town shall develop a Business Improvement Master Plan to guide the redevelopment, attraction and retention of businesses *within Oak Creek*. The Town shall work with the Upper Yampa Valley Economic Development Council to prepare *an Economic Development Plan for South Routt County*.
2. The Town shall *continue to* work with the Upper Yampa Valley Economic Development Council to support existing businesses and to identify *and* attract new businesses needed to meet local needs for a balanced level of commercial and *Light Industrial* activities.
  - a. ~~Establish a~~ *Continue to provide a* Town liaison to work with the Upper Yampa Valley Economic Development Council.
3. The Town shall update its development processes and provide clear information to the development community in its mission to foster *a* ~~an~~ favorable climate for local business activity.
  - a. Prepare an updated developers information packet.
  - b. *Maintain current developer's information on the Town or County's website.*
  - c. Update the Land Use Code to require that all tracts of land proposed for development at density greater than one unit per 5 acres shall be master planned.
4. The Town shall support opportunities to expand and increase the number of local businesses in Oak Creek.
5. The Town shall strengthen the Downtown Businesses *District* by creating infill design guidelines to make redevelopment less cost prohibitive.
6. The Town shall Support cottage industries.
  - a. Update the Land Use Code to ~~add~~ *review* standards for home businesses to sufficiently mitigate any neighborhood impact. *Replace with: Review the Land Use Code to ensure standards for home businesses are sufficient to mitigate neighborhood impacts.*

## LAND USE & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The town of Oak Creek is very contained, with a land use pattern based on a framework of gridded blocks and subdivided lots, upon which is interspersed a variety of residential, commercial and industrial development. The combination of contained and varied land use distinguishes Oak Creek as a uniquely independent, western Colorado small town.



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The town has a strong sense of being "nestled" in the hillsides. Related to this sense of containment is the fact that the town has very strong edges. In part defined by topography, the strong edges also result from the town's development form, a geometric street grid changing immediately to open lands.

The town was subdivided through a succession of plats in the early 1900's: Original, First, Second and Third Additions, Shemps, Shemps Garden and James Additions. Later, during the 1970's, new subdivisions were added to the north and south of these original filings with the Parker, Capitol Hill and Highland View Additions. Except for Highland View, each subdivision has successively extended the street grid, interrupted occasionally by a transecting right of way or encroaching structure. Future development should attempt to continue the grid system, while allowing some variation in the grid to accommodate slope.

The gridded street pattern of Oak Creek is bisected east/west by a 100 to 125 foot wide railroad right-of-way, currently controlled by the Southern Pacific Railroad. A second, parallel major right-of-way, State Highway 131, becomes Main Street as it transects the town. These two transportation corridors have provided important access for the town's commerce and development during the past 90 years.

The majority of commercial development occurs north of the railroad, and straddles Main Street between Bell and Lincoln. In the commercial district, almost all the structures are built up to the sidewalk, without parking between the sidewalk and building. A few detached residences are interspersed with the one and two story commercial structures. Unfortunately, the detached residences and several vacant lots disrupt any sustained architectural continuity within the commercial district. Gradual infill, however, should create a very strong pedestrian-oriented downtown; if commercial structures are built up to the sidewalk and any new residences are limited to second floor apartments.

Although the architecture of the existing commercial structures is relatively varied, there is a considerable amount of consistency in terms of the buildings' height, mass and rooflines. Maintaining a consistent scale will be important as the downtown gradually redevelops and improves its continuity. The use of local building materials with new construction and redevelopment will also be important, establishing an architectural texture that reflects an indigenous character.

Residential development of varying age, type and condition surround the commercial district, spreading up Lincoln and Grant Avenues to the northeast and up Bell, Sharp and Moffat Avenues to the south. Like the commercial district, the residential neighborhoods offer a broad mix of site conditions, most notably a varied degree of property maintenance. Several home businesses and cottage industries are also evident. A number of mobile homes are on lots within these neighborhoods, and a mobile home park is adjacent to the Parker Addition off Lincoln Avenue. The Town's maintenance facility and water treatment plant are adjacent to Highland View Subdivision.

Two small abandoned right-of-ways, one a former rail spur and the second an old tipple alignment, frame an area of recent light industrial development in the southwest portion of town known as South Arthur. This area, part of the Third Addition is surrounded by residential development, including new residences on its southern edge that are outside the town limits.



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The gridded development pattern begins to dissipate east of Moffat Street, due to the combination of topography, SI-I 131, the railroad and Oak creek narrowing together east and south of town. Colfax Street, which crosses Oak creek and the railroad at Moffat Avenue, winds into Short Street before heading under the SH 13 overpass and turning into Dodge Street. Land use in this area is a mix of residences, light industry and vacant land, and should be considered for focused redevelopment.

County Road 50Z acts as a frontage road to SH 131 on the east side of town. The road provides access to a variety of uses on odd parcel sizes, including a motel, several residences, two mobile home parks and Decker Park. South of the SI-I 131 / CR 50Z intersection, agricultural uses dominate the landscape.

Taking advantage of the area's topography and overlooking the Bell Mercantile community is an educational campus containing two schools and recreational fields. Further up the hillside and marking the far eastern edge of the community is the Oak Creek cemetery.

A number of utilities dot the landscape along SH 131 west and north of town. The Routt County road maintenance facility and Oak Creek's wastewater treatment plant are both located at the intersection or CR 27 and SH 131. The wastewater lagoons are just north of the wastewater plant. Farther up SH 131 in Oak Creek canyon, a large electric substation sits on a prominent knoll. Agricultural uses and large "ranchettes" dominate the countryside north of the canyon.

## *Policies and Action Items*

1. *All new development shall be considered in light of compliance with existing master plans, adopted policies and guidelines.*
2. *All new development shall be considered in light of its compatibility with adjacent, existing land uses, and its capability to "pay its own way" for infrastructure and services.*
3. *The Town shall work with the County to ensure compliance with Town and County master plans by development interests.*
4. *All tracts of land proposed for development at a density greater than one unit per 5 acres shall be master planned. Master plans shall address access, circulation, land use compatibility, architectural character, development impacts, infrastructure, services, public health and safety, and other issues as may be appropriate.*
5. *The infill of vacant land within the town shall be encouraged.*
  - a. *Create additional infill design standards to assure the stability of existing neighborhood and its character are not jeopardized.*
6. ~~*Clean industrial development of a small scale nature in the South Arthur/Diagonal Street area shall be encouraged. The Town shall evaluate the potential of a new Performance District in this area to recognize its industrial character.*~~



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7. *The Town should work towards enhancing its “Sense of Place” by pursuing opportunities to strengthen its identity.*
  - a. *Alternatives to accentuate the entries into town through the use of lighting, signage, landscaping and other streetscape improvements shall be evaluated.*
  - b. *Add a parallel entry feature at the east end of the town to compliment the existing pocket park, and develop new town entry feature at west edge of town.*
8. *The Town shall guide new development in a manner that is compatible with the existing small town historic mining character of Oak Creek.*
  - a. *Modify sections of the Land Use Code to assure new development is built to respect its surrounding neighborhood context. Specifically set out guidelines for building height, size, setback, and character.*
  - b. *New development in Performance District 1 shall be encouraged to fill in the vacant land between buildings. ~~New development shall be compatible with the existing structures in terms of height, mass, rooflines and relationship to the street.~~*
  - c. *Retail ~~and office~~ development within Performance District 1 shall be encouraged at street level. ~~New offices in this district shall be encouraged to locate on the second floor, however office may be permitted on the first floor in those buildings not located on Main Street.~~ New Residential development in Performance District 1 shall be limited to ~~either~~ second floor locations above businesses.*
  - d. *Prepare guidelines for ridgeline development.*
  - e. *The Town should consider modifying the Land Use Code to include lighting provisions which adhere to the “Dark Sky” standards. (All new multifamily and commercial development shall use fully shielded, high pressure sodium light fixtures for outdoor lighting. (green building code in routt county – this language to move to Land Use Code)*
9. *Commercial development shall be encouraged to locate within Performance District 1. Commercial development may be permitted in other Performance Districts, with requirements to insure that any impacts are sufficiently mitigated.*
10. *Modifying the land use code to create a performance district with use by criteria for the South Arthur Area to create a Light Industrial and Warehouse Retail District.*
11. *Cottage industry may be permitted in residential areas as home businesses, with requirements to insure that any impacts on neighborhood character are sufficiently mitigated.*



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12. *New standards shall be developed to guide the placement of mobile homes in Performance District 2. Mobile homes shall not be permitted in Performance District 1.*
13. *A landscaping plan prepared by a landscape architect may be required to buffer incompatible uses and enhance the aesthetic image of the town.*
14. *A plan identifying snow storage shall be required with commercial and multifamily residential development proposals.*
15. *The Town shall guide new development to reflect the existing street grid found in the historic portions of Oak Creek. By continuing this pattern of development it will provide continuity with the character of existing neighborhoods.*

## PERFORMANCE DISTRICTS

Oak Creek's Land Use Code is a hybrid between Euclidean zoning and performance-based zoning. The code allows considerable flexibility with where land use occurs, while specifying what type, and under what conditions, land use is permitted,

The town and surrounding area is divided into six Performance Districts. Performance District 1 is the commercial district, and is generally bounded by Colfax and First Streets, Bell and Lincoln Avenues. Performance District 2 is the remainder of the town's incorporated limits, and is intended to be primarily residential in character. The remaining performance districts are on each edge of the town and are established in the event of annexation: Performance District 3 to the north, Performance District 4 to the south, Performance District 5 to the east, and Performance District 6 is to the west of the existing Town boundaries.

Several issues are associated with the update or the Land Use Code, principal among them is the placement of mobile homes. Currently, mobile homes are not permitted outside of mobile home parks, except in Performance District 2. Considerable debate has centered on whether mobile homes should continue to be permitted outside of mobile home parks in Performance District 2. Options explored include outright prohibition, "grandfathering" existing mobile homes, amortizing their use until a certain date, increasing the level of standards required for placement, or enforcing existing codes and allowing continued placement.

### *Policies and Action Items:*

1. *Update district boundaries on Performance District Map.*
2. *Modifying the land use code to create a performance district with use by criteria for the South Arthur Area to create a Light Industrial and Warehouse Retail District.*





## GROWTH

Considering public sentiment, the desired buildout population of the town is no more than 1200 permanent residents by the year 2020. At an average density of 5 units per acre and an average household size of 2.24 persons per unit, an additional 40 acres of land would be more than adequate to accommodate desired residential growth.

A vacant land analysis determined that relatively few buildable lots are available for residential development within the town. In addition, most of the vacant land available outside of the commercial district is environmentally constrained in some fashion, usually due to excessive slope. A total of approximately 20 sites may be ultimately developable for residences, most of which are located in the Third and Parker additions.

Two areas presently delineated as residential, South Arthur and Short Street, have actually evolved as predominantly commercial or industrial in character and have few additional parcels for development for purposes of attracting jobs and encouraging redevelopment activities, the Town should consider providing an overlay district to recognize these commercial "pockets" and their special needs, such as increased buffering from residences.

Within the currently defined commercial district, several lots are available for development. Most of these lots are essentially 25 to 50 foot gaps between existing structures, although a few larger parcels are also available. Infill activity should focus on ~~businesses that can provide a compatible structure and use~~ **developments that are compatible with the adjacent downtown business district in terms of building design, site design and land use. Limiting the use of ground floor commercial space to retail businesses will help create a more vital pedestrian environment.** Likewise, the Town needs to ensure that its review processes provide a favorable climate for business retention and attraction.

### *Policies and Action Items:*

- 1. All new development shall be considered in light of compliance with existing master plans, adopted policies and guidelines.*
- 2. All new development shall be considered in light of its compatibility with adjacent, existing land uses, and its capability to "pay its own way" for infrastructure and services.*
- 3. Annexed land within a designated Future Growth area shall be developed in a pattern consistent with the lot, block and road pattern within the existing town boundaries. A gridded road pattern shall be encouraged, with variations in the grid where necessary to accommodate topography.*
- 4. Prior to the provision, extension and/or connection to Town services annexation shall be required. The Town of Oak Creek Comprehensive Plan shall serve as the "three mile annexation*



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plan” in compliance with C.R. S. 31-12-105. Annexation along SH 131 and outside of designated Future Growth Boundaries shall be discouraged.

5. Land shall be annexed only *if* the selected parcel is within a designated Future Growth area of the town and its development will provide a positive tax return to the town. Exceptions include existing residential structures adjacent to the town boundary that require city water and/or sanitary sewer service due to public health concerns.
6. The Town shall consider annexation of State or County roads for purposes of improving town entries or road maintenance.
7. *The Town shall prepare and circulate an annexation election petition for residences located outside but adjacent to town limits.*
8. ~~Prepare an~~ Annexation agreements for residences adjacent to town limits *should that* detail terms for provision of Town water and sewer services.
9. *The Town shall negotiate an intergovernmental agreement with Routt County concerning the improvement and subsequent annexation for CR 50z to SH 131, and the unincorporated portions of Colfax Street and Arthur Avenue.*
10. *The Town shall work with the County to help minimize ~~balance~~ the infrastructure impacts of growth by promoting an efficient land use pattern of contiguous and sustainable development.*

## PREFERRED DIRECTION

Due to the limited availability of existing lots for new development, as well as the town's geographic containment, future expansion is principally limited to agricultural lands north (Sweetland Ranch) and south (Rossi Meadow), and a few areas along the three regional transportation corridors (SH 131, CR 25, and CR 27). New growth along SH 131 and/or CR 27 would severely impair the town's sense of containment. However, additional residential growth may benefit the area along CR 25, with the extension of utilities and services becoming available to existing residences.

Small portions (less than twenty acres each) of the Rossi and Sweetland properties may also be desirable for planned residential growth. If this opportunity arises, it will be important that these parcels be subdivided in a manner that continues the town grid pattern and maintains the strong edge to the rural countryside.

The ten land use categories of the preferred scenario include:

1. Rural: Areas outside the town that is primarily agricultural, not urban nor considered for future growth.
2. Future Growth: Three small areas, each approximately acres, outside tile current Town boundaries. Two or these three potential annexation areas currently are part of the Rossi



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Meadow (south) and Sweetland Ranch (north). The third area, along County Road 25 (CR 25), includes a number of developed properties, primarily residential.

3. Residential: Existing houses, apartments and mobile homes within the town.
4. Commercial Downtown: That area between Colfax and First streets, Bell and Lincoln avenues, centered by Main Street.
5. Mixed Use/Redevelopment: That area generally southeast of the commercial district bounded by SH 131 and the railroad.
6. Neighborhood Retail: That area bounded by Colfax Street, Oak Street, Bell and Moffat avenues
7. Light Industry: Manufacturing and other light industrial businesses in the South Arthur/Diagonal Street area.
8. Institutional: Public buildings and facilities, including the middle and high schools, town hall, town maintenance shop, fire stations and cemetery. A proposed transit center is shown separately from this category.
9. Park/Recreational: Parks, and open space areas. Trails and town entries are shown separately from this category.
10. Rural Gateway: Those areas outside the Town boundaries along SH 131 as one approaches Oak Creek.



## CHAPTER FOUR - TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

### INTRODUCTION

The service delivery system for Oak Creek consists of transportation infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, rail and transit), utilities (water, wastewater, drainage, electricity, and solid waste) and emergency services (law enforcement, fire protection, and ambulance).

### TRANSPORTATION

Regional circulation and local mobility are accomplished through a network of roads, alleys and sidewalks. Access to the railroad and SH 131 offer opportunities for future transit service.

#### ROADS

Four classifications of roads are mapped:

1. Regional arterial
2. Regional collector,
3. Local paved
4. Local unpaved.

SH 131 is the sole regional arterial in the plan area, connecting Oak Creek with Steamboat Springs at US 40, and Interstate 70 to the south. Routt County Roads 14, 25, and 27 are regional collector roads that provide access to Stagecoach, the Routt and White River National Forests, and Hayden, respectively.

Of the roughly five lineal miles of roads within Oak Creek, less than one lineal mile is paved. Paved roads include Main Street, Myers Street, Grant Avenue south of Myers, Moffat Avenue between Main Street and the railroad, Bell Avenue between Main Street and the railroad, Colfax Street between Moffat and Sharp avenues, and Sharp Avenue between Virginia and the alley north of Main Street. All other local roads are unpaved.

Paving key streets would improve traffic circulation and reduce fugitive dust, a major complaint by business owners. Priorities for paving should include the completion of partially paved roads (Colfax Street, Moffat Avenue) and local residential collectors, such as Lincoln and Grant Streets, and Bell Avenue.

Several streets are quite steep and many platted streets were never built due to topography. With the exception of the Schemps Garden and Highland View Additions, the town was also platted with alleys. Alleys exist in the majority of their platted rights of way; some have been abandoned.

The Town's road maintenance generally consists of snow removal in the winter and applying calcium chloride to control fugitive dust on unpaved roads in the summer. Fugitive dust control on paved roads



should improve with the planned purchase of a street sweeping device that is attached to a front end loader. Since 1980, street improvements have been funded through a 1% sales tax.

#### *Policies and Action Items*

1. *The Town shall adopt standards for street design and construction. Streets, public or private, shall be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform with the adopted standards.*
2. *The Town shall prepare, adopt and update annually a Capital Improvement Program that will prioritize the paving of key streets, upgrade unpaved roads to graded, gravel condition, and adequately maintain the entire road network.*

### **SIDEWALKS**

Although a sidewalk ordinance was adopted in 1911, concrete sidewalks in Oak Creek are primarily limited to those constructed in association with a downtown improvement project in 1985. Sidewalk locations are shown on the Service and Infrastructure Composite Map.

The condition of sidewalks ranges from good to poor. Sidewalks improved or added along key roads would enhance pedestrian circulation within neighborhoods and between the residential and commercial districts.

#### *Policies and Action Items*

1. *The maintenance of sidewalks shall be the responsibility of individual property owners.*

### **RAILROAD**

The railroad arrived in Oak Creek in 1909, and is currently owned by Southern Pacific. The railroad bisects the town, with coal trains passing through Oak Creek several times a day. Three crossings exist (at Bell, Sharp and Moffat avenues), only one of which has a warning device consisting of crossing lights, cross arms and bells. Two other crossings are located nearby, one at each edge of town just outside the town boundaries.

Besides safety issues, railroad right-of way maintenance is an ongoing concern.

The rail line extends from Oak Creek south to Yampa, Toponas, Bond, State Bridge and eventually through Gore Canyon to Kremmling. North of Oak Creek, the railroad winds through Oak Creek Canyon into the Yampa Valley, passing through Steamboat Springs, Hayden, and Craig. The current viability of the rail line is strongly tied to the regional coal industry.



*Policies and Action Items:*

1. *The Town shall work with the Southern Pacific Railroad on improving the condition of the railroad rights-of way and increasing safety of railroad crossings within town boundaries.*
2. *Work with the Southern Pacific Railroad and other landowners to secure transit center site.*

## **TRANSIT**

Excluding car payments, maintenance and other life cycle costs, the monthly commuting cost of the Oak Creek worker averages \$51 per month. Commuting time varies considerably with road conditions. Under favorable conditions, a trip to Steamboat Springs is possible within twenty-five minutes. The same trip can average an additional twenty to thirty minutes during the long winter months, when snow, ice and wind often combine for treacherous driving conditions.

With the majority of Oak Creek commuters traveling to Steamboat Springs, bus and/or rail service are two transit opportunities. Bus service was attempted in 1992, but dropped due to low ridership. Lack of ridership was attributed to high fares and incompatible pick-up and drop-off times. At least eleven passengers are needed to make the service economically feasible.

A demonstration commuter rail project is planned in late 1996 or early 1997 to determine the feasibility of providing passenger rail service between Steamboat Springs and Winter Park. As a long term option, commuter rail could be combined with bus service to move people throughout South Routt and the Yampa Valley. In anticipation of commuter rail or bus service, a depot/bus station location should be secured, preferably within or nearby the railroad right-of way.

*Policies:*

1. *Work with Routt County, the city of Steamboat Springs and/or Alpine Taxi to offer bus services to South Routt County.*
2. *Construct the second phase (rail depot) of the transit center.*
3. *The Town shall work with the Southern Pacific Railroad and other landowners as necessary to secure a site for a bus station/train depot*
4. *The Town shall support the efforts of Routt County and the Colorado Department of Transportation to bring commuter rail service to Northwest Colorado.*





## UTILITIES

Town utilities include water, wastewater and electric facilities, and a limited drainage system.

### *WATER*

The water system consists of supply, storage, treatment, and distribution facilities.

The Town owns water rights for 4.0 cubic feet per second (cfs) now from Trout Creek and a .5 cfs flow from Oak Creek. These water rights are adequate to supply a population more than double the Current size of the town.

Sheriffs Reservoir, constructed in 1952 and located on Trout Creek approximately thirteen miles southwest at town, provides 987 acre-feet of storage. Enlarging the spillway or alternatively, providing soil cement overtopping protection to the dam structure is an ongoing topic of discussion and concern. The dam has been out of compliance with State and Federal Inspection standards since 1980. The dam is classified as "high hazard" due to the potential for loss of human life downstream in the event of a "maximum precipitation event". A 1995 estimate concluded that the overtopping protection would cost approximately \$835,000, with the spillway upgrade option approaching \$1 million. Without improvement, the State could impose restrictions on reservoir storage.

Unfortunately, the Town can neither afford to pay for improvements nor lose storage capacity.

Raw water stored at Sheriff's Reservoir is diverted from Trout Creek into Oak Creek via the Rich Ditch. From Oak Creek, water is diverted into Oak Creek Reservoir; a three acre-foot settling/storage pond located approximately two miles southwest of town. Enlargement of the Oak Creek Reservoir and or increasing the capacity of Rich Ditch are important considerations for future capital improvement.

The Oak Creek Treatment Plant, located on a hill at the southwest edge of town, receives raw water from Oak Creek Reservoir via a 10 inch transmission main. Water is treated through a process of flocculation, coagulation, sedimentation, filtration, chlorination and fluoridation. The water treatment utility was originally constructed in the 1940's and has since been expanded and upgraded. The treatment plant is classified as a "C" facility by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Peak design capacity is estimated at 1 million gallons per day (mgd), with peak day demand estimated at no more than .06 mgd.

Treated water is stored in a single 200,000 gallon tank constructed in 1975 and located adjacent to the treatment plant. With the exception of the Highland View Addition and a portion of the Parker Addition, water is distributed to residential and commercial customers via approximately ten lineal miles of 4 to 12 inch gravity mains at pressures generally ranging from 20 to 75 pounds per square inch (psi).

The distribution system is plagued by areas of undersized mains, inadequate pipe loops and low pressure. In particular, the Parker Addition experiences operating pressures in the 12 to 18 psi range and a fire flow availability of less than 200 gallons per minute (gpm), presenting health and safety concerns. In the Third Addition on the west side of town, a 1.5 inch water line serves approximately ten residences. Due to the size of the water line, as well as the lack of unlooped water mains in the area, water pressure and fire flow availability are also at unacceptable levels.



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All residential and commercial structures within town are connected to the water system, although a few residential structures just outside the town boundaries (near CR 25) draw groundwater from shallow wells. A flat rate is currently charged for water, as no water meters currently exist. With the addition of water meters, average residential consumption could decline significantly from its current levels of 350 gallons per person per day (gpd) to an average of 150 gpd.

To correct these problems, the Town has applied for a Farmers Home Loan Administration Rural Economic and Community Development grant. The funds would be used to install water meters for 500 residential units and 45 commercial units, add a new booster pump station in the Parker Addition, and replace 700 lineal feet of water main in the vicinity of Bell Avenue and Colfax Street.

However, the area for the water line replacement and some of the water meter installations is in Oak Creek's one hundred year floodplain. The RECD grant limits availability of service in floodplain areas to existing structures and to those "for which the RECD determines the locational impact is minor and to the extent that the floodplain's natural value and function are not affected." If accepted, the grant stipulations may result in delays or denials for new services to vacant residential and commercial land within the floodplain area.

## *Policies and Action Items*

1. *Construct Improvements to Sheriffs Reservoir*
2. *Improve and expand water supply system.*
3. *The Town shall adopt standards for water system design and construction. All water facilities shall be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform to the adopted standards.*
4. *All new development shall be connected to public water facilities. Prior to connection, a statement of the impact of the proposed development on existing water supply be required*
5. *Surface and non-tributary groundwater water rights shall be deeded to the Town upon annexation or subdivision of property.*
6. *The Town shall prepare, adopt and annually update a Capital Improvement Program that will prioritize the expenditure of funds improving and maintaining the water supply, storage, treatment and distribution system. Improvements shall be prioritized based on public health and safety considerations.*
  - a. *The Town should consider working with a Community Economic & Fiscal Analysis Consultant to evaluate feasible methods of funding Town-initiated public improvements.*
7. *The Town shall work with State agencies and consider all available funding opportunities for improving the spillway at Sheriffs Reservoir.*



## WASTEWATER

Oak Creek's sanitary sewer system consists of collection and treatment facilities. Wastewater is collected by gravity mains and routed into a secondary treatment process, a hybrid of activated sludge and aeration. The Town's treatment plant and lagoons are located at the west edge of Oak Creek between CR 27 and SH-131.

The collection system is adequate, although many lines are more than 65 years old. Inflow and infiltration into the system is high due to open pipe joints and the connection of basement drains and sump pumps to the system.

Peak treatment capacity is .8 mgd with current peak demand only .13 mgd. However, the high inflow and infiltration rate, especially during the annual spring runoff increases peak demands to near-capacity levels.

All residential and commercial structures within town are connected to the sanitary sewer system, although a few residential structures outside the town boundary near CR 25 are still on septic systems.

### *Policies and Action Items*

- 1. The Town shall adopt standards for sanitary sewer system design and construction. Sanitary sewer facilities shall be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform with adopted standards.*
- 2. All new development shall be connected to public sewerage facilities. Prior to connection, a statement of the impact on the proposed development on existing sewer capacity may be required.*
- 3. Residences adjacent to town limits should be considered for annexation and provision of Town sewer services.*
- 4. The Town shall prepare, adopt and annually update a Capital improvement Program that will prioritize the expenditure of funds for improving and maintaining the wastewater collection and treatment system. Improvements shall be prioritized based on public health and safety considerations.*

## DRAINAGE

The drainage system is limited to a few drainage ditches and swales along roads, with short stretches of culverts underlying the railroad tracks and certain road intersections. As part of a downtown improvement program during the mid-1980's, new 18, 24 and 36 inch storm sewer lines with concrete drain pans and catch basins were installed from Main Street to Oak Creek in Sharp Avenue, and in a half block of Moffat Avenue to the railroad.



Improving the town's drainage system should go hand-in-glove with road improvements. Therefore, an understanding of the town's drainage in a comprehensive fashion would be an important first step in a capital improvement program.

#### *Policies and Action Items*

1. *Natural drainage courses shall be retained as much as possible. Where necessary for new development, a drainage system shall be designed by a professional engineer.*
2. *The Town shall prepare a comprehensive drainage study to assist with decisions regarding new development, the improvement of water quality, and future road projects.*
3. *The Town shall adopt standards for drainage system design and construction. Drainage facilities shall be constructed by the subdivider/developer to conform to adopted standards.*

## **ELECTRICITY**

Oak Creek owns its electric distribution system, with a substation located north of town connected to a 138 KV transmission. Power is distributed through overhead 2.4 KV and 15 KV lines.

The town purchases wholesale power from the Nebraska Municipal Power Pool and the Western Area Power Authority, and has a contract to purchase excess power from the Yampa Valley Electric Association. Although its rates are slightly higher than YVEA, the electric utility generates significant revenue for the town. Any update to the 1982-1992 Electrical Power Distribution System Study should contain a discussion on fiscal impact to the town, including long term capital needs.

#### *Policies and Action Items:*

1. *Update the Electrical Power System Distribution Study*
2. *The Town shall conduct a feasibility study for a biomass-fueled power plant and consider development of other sustainable utilities such as wind, solar, and geothermal energy.*

## **SOLID WASTE**

Waste collection and disposal is contracted by the Town with Waste Management of the Rockies. In the past, the Town has paid for a special trash pickup in the summer to assist residents with the disposal of large items and junk. The special trash pickup is no longer funded due to recent budget constraints.



*Policies and Action Items:*

1. *The Town shall explore creative measures continued for continued free special trash pickup, providing the opportunity/or residents to improve property maintenance.*

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The Oak Creek Police Department consists of a Police Chief and two officers. One of the officers is funded through the federal "Cops Fast" program. The grant pays 70% of the cost of the new officer for a period of three years. The expanded force gives the Town better 24 hour coverage, spreads the workload and allows more reasonable hours for each officer.

Mutual aid agreements are in place with Routt County and the State Patrol. Traffic patrol generally results in the issuance of between 6 and 15 citations per month. The average response time for local calls is three minutes. Most of the calls deal with domestic disturbance, civil disputes, open doors, bar "walk-throughs" and juvenile problems. Animal complaints are also handled, with impoundment at a facility in Steamboat Springs.

*Policies and Action Items*

1. *The Town shall explore budget measures to sustain the operation of 24 hour law enforcement coverage. The Town shall endeavor to uniformly administer its nuisance, land use and other codes through personnel assigned to active code enforcement.*

### **FIRE AND AMBULANCE**

The Oak Creek Fire and Ambulance District includes the town and extends east to Stagecoach, south to Phippsburg's northern boundary, west to the Cyprus mine, and to the northern end of Oak Creek canyon. The district is funded through a mil levy and is administered by an elected Board of Directors.

The fire department is comprised of 18 volunteers. Two fire stations house two pumper trucks, one tanker truck, one rescue truck and a command vehicle. The fire stations are both located within town, one at be Old Town Hall and the other on Colfax Avenue Just east of Moffat Avenue,

The ambulance function includes 12 Emergency Medical Technicians and two ambulances housed with the fire station at the Old Town Hall.

According to the Fire Chief, the average response time is eight to ten minutes for local calls. Mutual aid agreements are in place with Yampa, Hayden and Steamboat Springs emergency services districts.



*Policies and Action Items*

1. *To ensure emergency vehicle access, all new subdivisions shall have a minimum two access points and maximum road grade of 7%.*

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## CHAPTER FIVE - HOUSING, RECREATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

### INTRODUCTION

The character of Oak Creek is, in part, a reaction of its people, their shelter and activities. Three major components are identified: housing, recreation, and human services.

Oak Creek's population once represented nearly two dozen different languages. Today, the community is comprised primarily of European descendants, many of whom have lived [in the community for generations](#).

### HOUSING

Oak Creek's housing stock is a diverse mixture, from Victorian residences to manufactured homes, miner cabins to framed cottages. A majority of the housing is single family residences, although mobile homes are prevalent throughout the community. Approximately 30% of the housing stock is not owner-occupied, as they are either rented or used as a second home.

Housing Tenure	Units
Owner	234
Renter	132
Total Households	366

Multifamily housing includes several small apartment buildings within the community. Housing for senior citizens is available at the Alpine Meadows Apartments, located on Moffat Avenue. 14 units were originally constructed with funding from the Farmers Home Loan Association. Another apartment complex in town serves as a shelter for battered women.

Of slightly over 300 single family structures, 58% are over 60 years old; 24% are over 80 years old. Most of these older homes are in need of some form of repair, and many are in very poor condition. Coal is still used as a primary heating source, supplemented by wood, propane or electricity.

### HOUSING UNITS

Housing prices and rents have steadily increased in Oak Creek since 1990. Many residents work in services that support the resort economy associated with Steamboat Springs, and find the housing in Oak Creek comparatively "affordable." However, the added cost of commuting, the condition of older housing and the somewhat high home heating costs (except coal) begin to negate the value of cheaper rents. Oak Creek's attraction to resort workers as a "bedroom community" to Steamboat Springs may decline over time as areas like Hayden, with similar rents, better access and natural gas heat available, build more housing and add more services.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

[With rising costs of living in Routt County and pressure for development of second homes, the need for affordable units in Oak Creek is great. The residents of Oak Creek enjoy the Town's affordability and the](#)



historic pattern of walkable modest miners homes offer a great opportunity to weave additional affordable units into the fabric of the community.

With development pressures increasing the cost of land and construction, the Town should take strides to assure the homes remain affordable. The Town must strike a balance between market forces, affordable housing and development that is sensitive to the environment.

Affordable housing not only offers an additional housing option for residents for years to come, it strengthens the community as the expanded number of new homeowners use local services, engage in civic services and frequent local businesses.

The Town should look to the Routt County Housing Authority for guidance for implementation of affordable housing initiatives. The Town should put particular emphasis on those initiatives which have already been successfully implemented in other parts of Routt County. Those methods as defined below include but are not limited to the following:

- Deed Restricted Housing – Housing units which work to close the “affordability gap” by restricting the price of the unit for a set period of time. The unit’s price is set below market rate and restricts buyers to be within an income level lower than the Town or County average.
- Habitat for Humanity or Self Help Housing – Housing Units which are built through “sweat equity” construction by the future homeowner and community. .
- Diversity of housing stock – Encouraging supply to keep up with demand by promoting infill of vacant units, vertical mixed use, accessory units (aka granny flats) and higher density multi-family.

#### Policies and Action Statements

1. *A balance and mix of different housing types of all income levels shall be encouraged within all new residential subdivision.*
  - a. *The Town should evaluate its available mixture of residential housing types (single family, apartments, senior units and townhouses) and encourage additional units of those types of residential the community is lacking.*
2. *The Town should work with the Yampa Valley Housing Authority (YVHA) to implement affordable housing initiatives.*
  - a. *The Town, working with the YVHA, should determine the appropriate percentage of deed restricted units for inclusion into new developments.*
  - b. *The Town should consider the modification of the Land Use Code to require a portion of new residential developments as affordable housing units.*



- c. The Town should modify the Land Use Code to offer general guidelines for construction of new affordable units which assure new units blend into the existing character of the neighborhood.*
  - d. The Town should work to promote community awareness of available affordable housing options through mailers, website links and information and community meetings.*
  - e. The committee should work to encourage additional Habitat for Humanity Projects within Oak Creek.*
  - f. The committee should work with Yampa Valley Housing Authority (YVHA) to develop lots owned by YVHA in the Sierra View development into deed restricted affordable housing.*
- 3. The Uniform Building Code, Energy Codes and other minimum standards for safe, decent, housing shall be strictly enforced.*
  - 4. The Town shall work with the Routt County Building Department to identify existing houses and structures dilapidated beyond repair, and initiate condemnation proceedings as appropriate.*
  - 5. State and Federal housing rehabilitation loans and grants shall be pursued for low and moderate income residents.*
  - 6. The Town shall review, revise and uniformly enforce nuisance codes that address the importance of property maintenance.*
  - 7. The Town shall work with Routt County and its Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to explore opportunities to maintain and promote housing a ability within Oak Creek*

## **RECREATION**

Outdoor recreation is a cornerstone of the Oak Creek lifestyle. Winter and summer recreational activities abound, with access to the Routt and White River National Forests, the Sarvis Creek and Flattop Wilderness areas, Stagecoach Reservoir State Park, and other public lands in close proximity. Oak Creek is also fortunate to have a beautiful town park, an ice skating and hockey facility, and several other local recreational amenities within town.

### **PARKS AND TRAILS**

Decker Park is situated east of Moffat Avenue and is framed by Oak Creek, which now's along its eastern and northern perimeter. The community park contains a playground, volleyball court, soccer field and a covered picnic pavilion.

A walking trail also extends through the park although it does not provide a formal connection to the rest or town. No Other trails are developed within the town, although the Colorado Center for Community Development prepared trail plan for Oak Creek in 1990.



### **ICE SKATING**

The Oak Creek Ice Rink Complex is located on Kodiak Lane west of Arthur Street. The ice rink complex is perhaps the strongest symbol of community pride in Oak Creek. Volunteers began the construction of the rink in 1994, with early-morning spraying of water from hoses. Ice grooming was accomplished by shovel and a homemade ice grooming machine. Skating and hockey were taught to the young by adults.

In 1995, the Oak Creek Hockey Association was formed. The OCHA is a member of the North Central Colorado Amateur Association. Also in 1995, a Zamboni ice grooming machine, was leased with an option for purchase. Recognizing the need for a warming hut and seating, the Town submitted a grant application to Great Outdoors Colorado for a multi-use facility. GOCO awarded \$70,000 and another \$50,000 in volunteer services and materials were donated to complete the warming hut in January, 1996.

### **OTHER LOCAL RECREATIONAL AMENITIES**

The Soroco School District owns recreational facilities adjacent to Soroco High School that includes a football field, two ball fields, and two tennis Courts.

#### *Policies and Action Items*

1. *The Town shall prepare, adopt and annually update a Capital Improvement Program that will prioritize park and trail improvements, and adequately maintain the park system.*
  - a. *Develop park northwest of ice rink*
  - b. *Construct a trail between the ice rink and the schools using railroad R.O.W. easements.*
  - c. *Improve town owned land as passive open space.*
2. *The Town should modify its Land Use Code to require the creation of additional Open Space, Trails and Recreation by the developer of each new development.*
- ~~2-3. The Town shall update its Parks and Trails Plan to include landscape guidelines and the Tree Planting Program.
  - a. ~~The Town should modify its Land Use Code to require the creation of additional Open Space, Trails and Recreation by the developer of each new development.~~
  - b. ~~Improve town owned land as passive open space.~~~~
- ~~3-4. The Town shall work with the Soroco School District to negotiate a joint- agreement for recreation facilities.~~
- ~~4-5. The Town should work with Routt County to implement sections of the Vision 2020 pertaining to Open Space, Trails and Recreation.~~



# THE TOWN OF OAK CREEK

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## COMMUNITY SERVICES

The South Routt Community Center, located on Dodge Street, houses the South Routt Library, Little Friends Pre-School, Colorado West Regional Mental Health Center, Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurses Association and classrooms for a branch of Colorado Northwestern Community College. The library holds a pre-school story hour every Friday morning. The community center is also a seniors' nutrition site. The building's maintenance and utility costs are funded by user rents, the Routt County United Way, and the Human Resource Coalition. The South Routt Medical Center on Main Street is staffed by Steamboat Springs' doctors on a periodic rotation. The medical center is a health care facility that also offers Planned Parenthood and Hearing Aid Service programs.

Other active community organizations in Oak Creek are:

- The America Legion Post and Auxiliary, Post 85
- Veterans of Foreign War Auxiliary
- Veterans of Foreign War, Post 33
- Morningstar Victim Center
- South Routt Alcoholics Anonymous

### *Policies and Action Items*

1. *The Town shall work with Yampa Valley Partners to provide accurate community service information to its residents.*

## EDUCATION

Oak Creek is located in the South Routt School District, RE-3. Today's Soroco Middle School was built in 1924, originally to accommodate grades 1-12, with the High School on the top floor. An addition to the school and a second building were built in 1951. The junior high moved to the top floor, the elementary school remains on the bottom floor, and the High School moved to the new building. In the 1960's the South Routt County schools were consolidated and the elementary school moved to the town of Yampa, nine miles south of Oak Creek.

School enrollment in the Soroco School District is steadily increasing, with a 1995 -1996 total enrollment of 446 students.

[A branch of Colorado Northwestern Community College \(CNCC\) provides limited post-secondary education for Oak Creek adults, many of whom graduated from high school, yet do not have a college degree.](#) CNCC has a computer lab and local administrative offices housed at the community center. Fourteen CNCC classes were held at Soroco High School and Soroco Elementary during the 1995-1996 academic year.



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The Alpine Campus of Colorado Mountain College in Steamboat Springs offers a broader range of coursework and degree programs than CNCC, although higher fees are paid by Oak Creek residents since they are classified as out of district students.

~~A branch of Colorado Northwestern Community College provides limited post-secondary education for Oak Creek.~~

Educational Attainment	%
High School Degree	35
Associates Degree	7
Bachelors Degree	13
Graduate or Professional Degree	5.4

*Policies and Action Items*

1. *Prior to seeking its designation as an historic structure, the Town shall work with the Soroco School District to determine the future of the Middle School.*
2. *The Town shall work with the Soroco School District to identify potential sites for new schools, establish a school land dedication requirement, and develop a referral process for reviewing residential development proposals.*
  - a. *Work with the Routt County and the Soroco School District to develop a school impact fee for all new development in the district.*
  - b. *Work with the Soroco School District to determine the future of the Middle School.*
3. *School land dedication requirements, based on national standards, shall be prepared, adopted and uniformly enforced by the Town.*





## CHAPTER 6 - IMPLEMENTATION

- Policy and Action Plan Matrix
- Capital Improvement Program
- Land Use Code

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