

BERTHOUD OPEN SPACE PLAN



Adopted
September 2021



[BERTHOUD.ORG/OPENSOURCE](https://berthoud.org/openspace)

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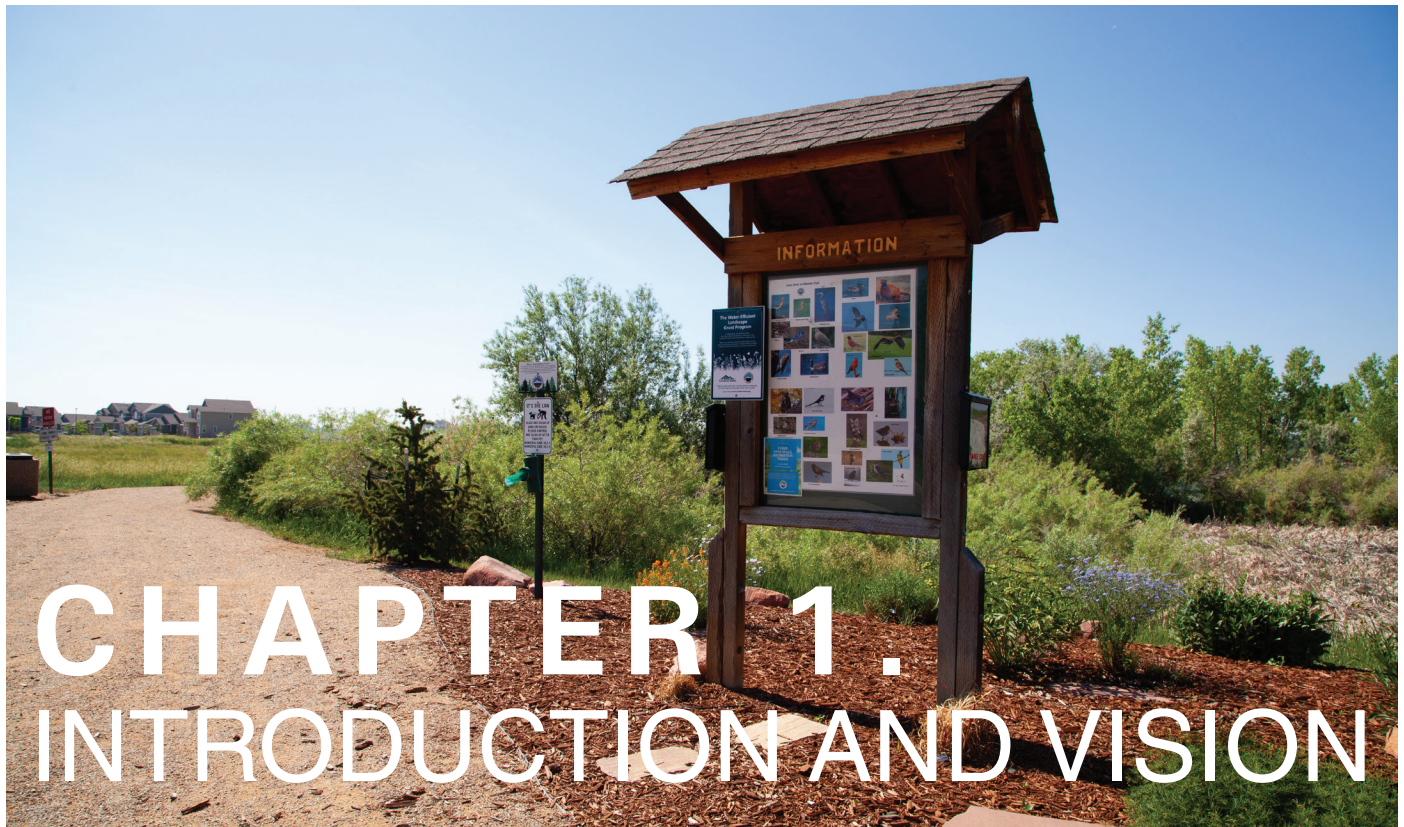
Special thanks to regional agency and conservation partners for their thoughtful input and active support.



**Garden
Spot of
Colorado**

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Can you imagine the Town of Berthoud before it was settled or before the first shovels began digging the Handy Ditch? The treeless grasslands supported but a single, scrubby hackberry tree – hence the name Lone Tree from which the reservoir derived its name. The Town’s development was tied to harnessing scarce water that irrigated oats, wheat, barley, alfalfa, potatoes, sugar beets, cattle, and sheep that wagon trails and later the railroad carried to markets.

Who we are and where we are headed have always been shaped by our natural setting. Today we are defined in part by the priceless views of majestic Long’s Peak, the fertile Little Thompson Valley, meandering streams and shady ditches that feed reservoirs and the community’s agricultural roots.

In this Chapter:

- **How the plan was developed, and its relationship to other initiatives**
- **Berthoud’s open space partners**
- **Community values towards open space and development**
- **The Town’s guiding vision, goals, and roles**

PLAN PURPOSE

Since the early 2010s, the Town of Berthoud has seen exponential population growth, and much of the natural and agricultural open lands that have defined its character for the last 120 years have been developed into neighborhoods or other urban uses. With the principal cities of Loveland and Fort Collins largely built out, the development focus has moved to traditionally bedroom and agricultural communities that dot the I-25 corridor.

With these considerations in mind, at the Board of Trustees' May 2020 strategic planning retreat, the Board embarked on an open space plan with partners to guide the preservation of important resources.

Defining Open Space:

The terms open lands, open space, or natural areas are similar but often used by various jurisdictions with slightly different meanings. For the purposes of this plan, open space is defined as undeveloped land that protects sensitive environmental resources, such as prime agricultural lands, riparian corridors, and wildlife habitat, offering limited passive recreation where appropriate.

This Plan focuses on three general types of open space:

- **Natural Areas**
- **Agriculture**
- **Regional Trail Corridors**

This Open Space Plan serves as the Town's policy foundation to expand support for open space priorities and clarify the Town's role and strategic actions. This Open Space Plan is closely aligned with the Comprehensive Plan to shape the physical form, health, and quality of life of the Town.

PLANNING PROCESS

The process to develop the Open Space Plan built off previous planning efforts, worked with conservation and natural resource partners, and gathered input from the Parks, Open Space, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees.

The four-phase planning process is shown below:

Start Up + Foundation

- **Trustee + Partnership Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Summary of Existing Assets + Facilities**
- **Definition of Open Space Typologies**

Opportunities + Recommendations

- **Comprehensive Plan Coordination**
- **Vision, Goals, + Roles**
- **Open Space Focus Areas**

Action Plan

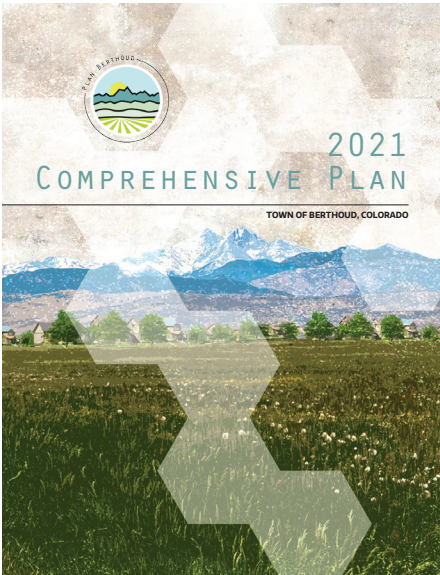
- **Preliminary Action Items**
- **Funding + Regulatory Tools**
- **Partnerships**

Final Plan

- **Administrative Draft**
- **Action Item Prioritization**

PREVIOUS PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Open Space Plan coalesces portions of adopted master plans that have complementary objectives related to open space acquisition, development of passive recreational opportunities, and long-term stewardship of conserved lands.



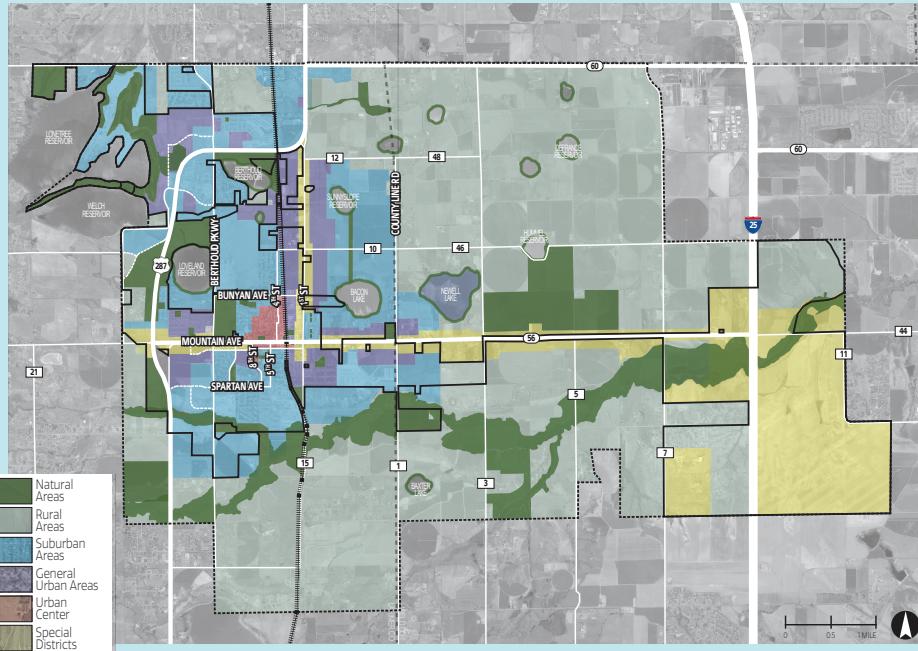
BERTHOUD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE (2021)

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update shapes future growth through a Future Land Use Map as well as maintains the Town’s distinctive character. The Berthoud Comprehensive Plan is a statement of how the community views itself, what the Town envisions for the community’s future, and the actions the Town will undertake to implement the vision and goals of the community. It provides the policy framework for this Open Space Plan, including community vision statements and associated achievable goals and key strategies.

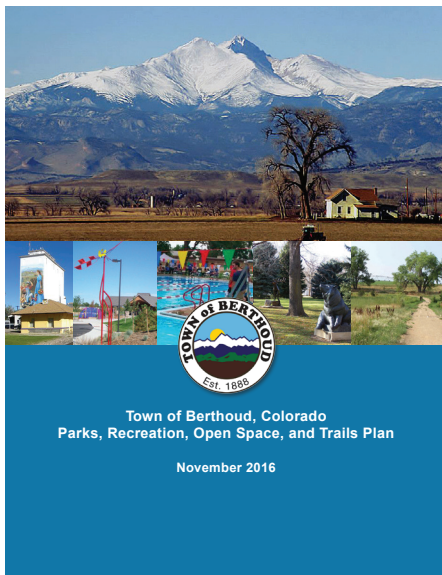
During the 2021 Update, the Comprehensive Plan and Open Space Plan teams worked closely to integrate the two planning efforts and public input, as land use patterns and the conservation of open space are vital to each other. The reader should review the Comprehensive Plan’s community profile, historic and archaeological assets, and plan direction as these are not duplicated in this plan.

The Comprehensive Plan sets direction for conserving land through the development review process. While the Open Space Plan focuses on proactive conservation ahead of the development process.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	OPEN SPACE PLAN
<p>Establishes land use pattern for the Growth Management Area.</p> <p>Largely conserves through the development review process (in response to proposals).</p> <p>Tools: Annexation, zoning, park dedications, trail dedications, setbacks, infrastructure sizing and timing.</p>	<p>How to achieve the land use pattern for Natural Areas and Rural Areas.</p> <p>Conserves proactively ahead of development proposals.</p> <p>Tools: Purchase of surface and/or water rights, trail easements, conservation easements, donations, recreation improvements.</p>



The Comprehensive Plan depicts the six major place types and their character districts within the Town's Growth Management Area (GMA). The GMA represents the area the Town of Berthoud has defined as important for managing growth to fulfill the cultural, economic, and geographic vision for our community.



PARKS, OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND TRAILS PLAN (2016)

This plan was developed as a tool for economic development and to create a small, hometown feel. It provides a long-range vision intended to capture the interest of the community, developers, funding sponsors, and foster an atmosphere of collaborative planning with regional neighbors. It provides guidance for taking care of current assets; recommends new parks and a community center now under construction; emphasizes connectivity among Town parks, recreation, open spaces, other public spaces, and to neighboring trail systems; and the reality of implementation timing and costs.

BERTHOUD UNIFIED TRAIL MASTER PLAN (2018)

In 2018 The Berthoud Unified Trail Master Plan was created as the next step in the Parks, Open Space, Recreation, and Trails (PORT) Master Plan. The Berthoud Unified Trail Master Plan graphically represents existing, planned, and envisioned trails within the Town and their connections to adjacent regional trails. The plan also includes a hierarchy of trail priorities and a probable cost estimate of trails based on surface materials and trail widths.



PARTNERS PLANNING GUIDANCE

Partner agencies and organizations play a vital role in the surrounding land use development patterns and agricultural land preservation. Many of these partners have long-range plans that provide guidance on the goals and priorities for open space in the greater Berthoud area. These plans are discussed below.

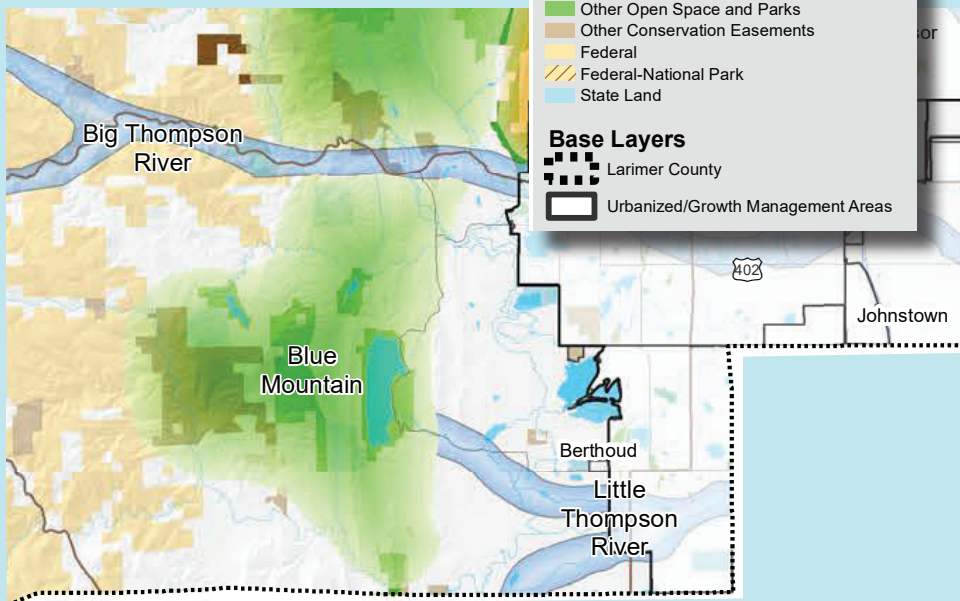
LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS PROGRAM

The Open Lands Program primarily focuses on the natural landscapes, areas of high ecological value, river corridors, and agricultural priorities areas with willing landowners beyond municipal Growth Management Areas. The Open Lands Program will expand existing open lands and conserved properties by conserving in-holdings and adjacent lands, cities, towns, and non-profit land trusts should lead conservation activities in the partnership priority areas and within their respective Growth Management Areas, with potential financial support from the County. Their current focus in the Berthoud Area is connecting the [Front Range Trail](#) from Berthoud to Loveland and developing appropriate access for [Red-Tail Ridge Open Space](#). The Little Thompson River corridor is a conservation priority. Larimer County currently holds fee title to the Little Thompson Farm Open Space, a working farm.

Our Lands, Our Future (2014)

Through a regional study process ([Our Lands - Our Future](#)), Larimer County and its partners developed innovative Geographic Information Systems models weighted by public values to evaluate and map the region's greatest natural resource assets and land conservation opportunities. These models identify natural resource assets and land conservation opportunities that merit special consideration for protection to achieve the public's values for open space conservation.

The conservation priority areas mapped by Larimer County identify areas to be considered as prime candidates for protection.



Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan (2015)

The [Open Lands Master Plan](#) presents a vision and priorities for conserved lands, passive recreation access, and regional trails that would be led by the County and supporting partnership opportunities with cities and towns within their Growth Management Areas. The Plan further proposes land management strategies for County-maintained lands, clarifies the County's role in protection of water resources, identifies regional trail corridors and recreational opportunities, levels of service, and future funding sources.

COUNTY PLANNING

Berthoud spans across both Larimer and Weld counties, with much of the Growth Management Area in Weld County. While county codes and regulations determine the land use pattern in these areas, intergovernmental agreements outline how the Town and County will coordinate on the review of proposed development.

Larimer County's relevant land use goals are to have 1) a clear plan, 2) predictable annexation policies, and 3) and be able to work together on conservation goals. Nearly all zoning in the county area is FA-1 Farming, which allows a minimum lot size of 2.3 acres. Lots in a conservation development or rural land plan that use a well or an individual septic system must contain at least 2 acres. Lots in a conservation development or rural land plan connected to public water and either a public sewer or community sewer system are not required to meet minimum lot size requirements (except for the purpose of calculating original density). Development standards may change as the County completes a Land Use Code Update by 2022.

Larimer County Comprehensive Plan (2019)

The [Larimer County Comprehensive Plan](#) establishes a long-range framework for decision-making for Larimer County. It anticipates that land within Berthoud's Growth Management Area will accomplish the densities, intensities, and street pattern contained in Berthoud's Comprehensive Plan. Preferred uses outside of the Growth Management Plan are agriculture, lots of 35 acres or greater, conservation developments and rural planned developments (i.e. lots generally smaller than 1 acre, preferably clustered to meet the intent of the municipal comprehensive plan).

Weld County Comprehensive Plan (2020)

Weld County updated its [Comprehensive Plan](#) in 2020. It outlines development opportunity zones along the I-25 corridor and places an emphasis on steering development towards towns. The majority of the unincorporated County is zoned as agricultural.

Northern Colorado Separator Study (1999)

When Northern Colorado started its growth boom in the late 90s, many of the regions' communities entered into cooperative planning agreements intended to maintain physical separation in a manner that is fair and equitable to landowners. While the vision of a Berthoud-Loveland separator has not been fully realized, small opportunities remain to transition residential densities and recreation areas between the two communities. The Berthoud-Johnstown agricultural separator, planned between the commercial development along the I-25 corridor and the original Town of Berthoud to the west, highlights this area along Highway 56 as a critical community gateway and an area essential to maintaining the community's small town, agricultural setting.

LAND TRUSTS AND OTHER CONSERVATION PARTNERS

Land trusts and other non-profits work with willing landowners to conserve the lands' unique values through conservation easements, water agreements, and/or stewardship activities. Organizations such as Colorado Open Lands, Trust for Public Lands, and Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust have a history of conserving productive irrigated agricultural lands and significant wildlife habitat in the Berthoud area.

These partners work with many entities and funding partners to achieve their goals and Berthoud can show support through Plans like this and/or contribution of funding.

Private Land Conservation:

"Since 1965, nonprofit land trusts in Colorado have helped conserve over 3.2 million acres, permanently keeping working farms and ranches in production; restoring critical wildlife habitat; and protecting open space and Colorado's iconic vistas. In addition to making agreements with landowners to voluntarily conserve their properties, many land trusts have expanded their portfolios – from involving local communities in setting conservation priorities to grooming the next generation of land stewards."

<https://www.keepitco.org/private-lands-plan>



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The Comprehensive Plan Update included an extensive survey in July 2020 to understand the values and priorities of the community – with many questions resulted in unequivocal preferences related to the future of Berthoud’s open space.

Why We Live in Berthoud

Bike and pedestrian trails

Land conservation

Maintaining the tree canopy

Wildlife habitat preservation

Source: Berthoud Comprehensive Plan Update Survey July 2020

The idea of “small town” as a strength of Berthoud was an important theme expressed in a variety of ways through the survey responses.

The survey contained several questions that evaluated “Improvement or Enhancement Priorities.” Interestingly, newer residents to the area were especially likely to identify these priorities: open space, trails and parks and recreation; they generally place higher priority on all the factors included on the list in the survey. Clearly, these are attributes that are important to newer residents and continued attention to these priorities will likely support help to keep Berthoud neighborhoods attractive in the future.

Top Priorities

ACQUIRE AND/OR PROTECT OPEN SPACE LANDS	Average Ranking 4.4
PROVIDE MORE TRAILS AND PATHS TO CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS, PARKS, OPEN SPACES, PLACES OF SHOPPING AND EMPLOYMENT, ETC	4.1
PROVIDE MORE PARKS AND/OR RECREATION FACILITIES	3.8
EXPAND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS	3.7

Top Priorities for Overall Improvements

“Further, trails, open space, trees, and wildlife habitat scored highest on priorities specifically for environmental programs.”

Source: Berthoud Comprehensive Plan Update Survey July 2020

Through initial conversations with partners, stakeholders, as well as the Comprehensive Plan outreach above, the following summarizes the key issues and opportunities, which are listed in no particular order.

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES INCLUDED:

- Scenic views from gateways (between I-25 and the Berthoud Downtown) and Highway 287
- Buffers between adjacent communities
- Working agricultural (irrigated) lands
- Little Thompson River & Dry Creek riparian habitat and floodway

WATER PRIORITIES INCLUDED:

- Conserve water rights and water for agricultural uses, tying water to land
- Protect in-stream flows in the Little Thompson River
- Protect existing municipal drinking water sources
- Transfer to a non-potable system for parks and open spaces

TRAIL CORRIDOR PRIORITIES INCLUDED:

- Front Range Trail (especially to the north)
- Little Thompson/Dry Creek Corridor, including corridor to Carter Lake

FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE INCLUDED:

- Conservation Easements with partners (Cattlemen's, TPL, Colorado Open Lands)
- Open space/trail impact fees
- Water sharing agreements/alternative transfer methods (Berthoud Water Utility, Little Thompson Water District, Western Water Partnership)
- Fee simple ownership with option to lease farming and water
- Consistency between County and Town future land use/zoning
- Transfer of Development Units
- Ballot measures (sales, property, bonds)
- Educate community and landowners on conservation tools and the role of the Town versus partners

GUIDING DIRECTION

Based on public and stakeholder input throughout the Comprehensive Plan and previous planning documents, the key vision for Berthoud's Open Space Plan is to:

Protect open lands that conserve unique or sensitive environmental resources, buffers between Berthoud and adjacent communities, prime agricultural lands, and key view corridors that contribute to the town's rural identity.

A PLACE...

that retains its small town feel and strong sense of community by...

Preserving views to agricultural lands, natural areas, and the mountains along major roadway corridors.

Protecting and enhancing the floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas of the Little Thompson River and Dry Creek corridors.

Becoming a model for the public through educating and advocating for conservation practices in river corridors, bluffs, trails, and working agricultural areas.

Conserving water for working farms while providing adequate and reliable service to residents.

A PLACE...

with abundant parks and open spaces connected by trails by...

Providing a diverse collection of passive and active recreational opportunities in parks, open spaces, trails and other indoor or outdoor settings.

Continuing to protect environmentally sensitive areas including shorelines and riparian corridors that provide for wildlife habitats and other natural functions.

A PLACE...

that values its surrounding rural and pastoral character by...

Retaining the viability of working farms, sustainable agriculture, and rural development.

Supporting the agricultural economy through establishing local food source markets.

Developing future growth areas with conservation in mind.

A PLACE...

that recognizes the Town's proximity to regional economic centers, amenities, and outdoor recreation by...

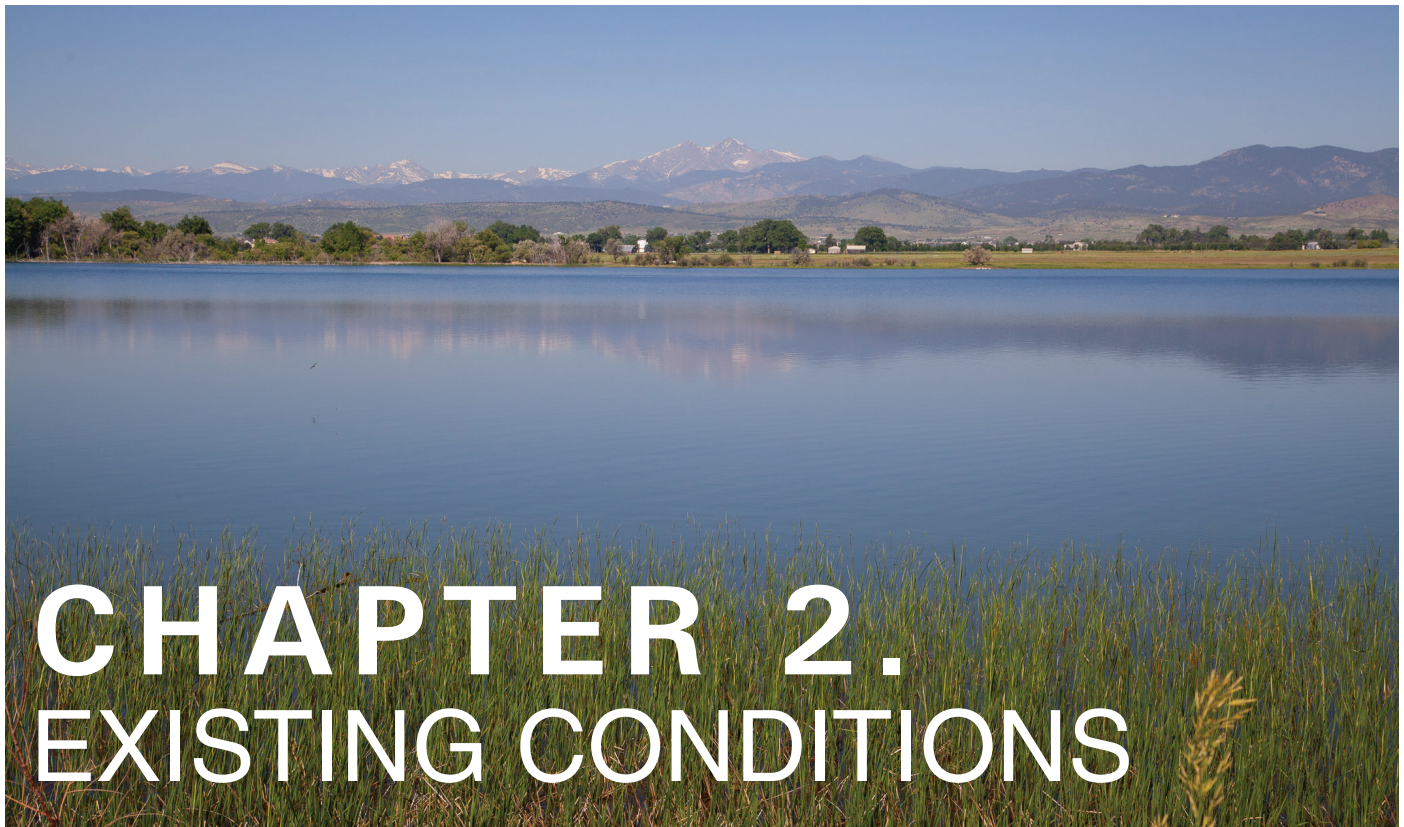
Securing regional trail corridors such as Little Thompson, Front Range Trail, and Dry Creek to Carter Lake.

Creating more reservoir recreation and associated natural areas to serve the entire community.

ROLES

To accomplish this vision and focus the efforts of the Town's resources and leadership, Berthoud will take on the following lead and support roles with partners.

LEAD	SUPPORT
Continuing current lease agreements for specific existing properties for agricultural use. Educating the public and landowners on the goals and benefits of open spaces and working agricultural lands. Acquiring and maintaining regional trail corridor easements and/or land purchases. Acquiring select natural area lands for passive recreation. Securing funding sources.	Assisting land trusts and conservation partners on conservation easement agreements and other conservation methods for agricultural lands when initiated by willing landowners. Collaborating with Larimer and Weld counties and adjacent jurisdictions on land use and development proposals and regional conservation opportunities.



CHAPTER 2.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Town owns and maintains a variety of properties including large open spaces and reservoirs, undeveloped parkland, and select farms, as well as traditional community parks and a recreation center. These town-owned properties are complemented by neighborhood pocket parks (owned and maintained by homeowner associations) and conserved working agricultural lands (owned and maintained by farmers). Together these shape the community's active and passive green spaces.

This Chapter utilizes Berthoud's GMA for the purposes of the planning area.

In this Chapter:

- **Existing conserved lands**
- **Agriculture and water resources**
- **Regional trails**
- **Demographics and development patterns**
- **A synopsis of open space staffing and funding**

All of these factors play a role in how open space is defined and managed to meet the Vision.

Within the GMA...

225 acres

Existing parks and open space

170 acres

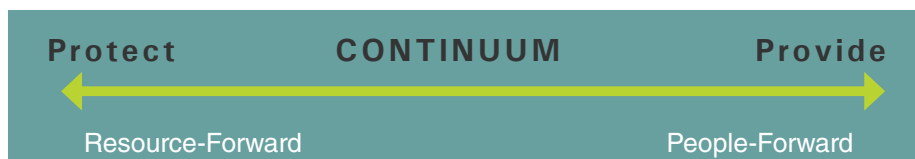
Planned parks and open space

1,251 acres

Conserved Agricultural Lands

There are nuances and challenges in managing for properties for both resources and people, represented by the protect/provide continuum. Not mutually exclusive designations, the protect/provide continuum is instead a spectrum where land management goals and objectives must balance competing interests, resources and people.

Lands with no public access are at the 'protect' end of the continuum for biological, agricultural, or other special values (i.e., 'resource-forward'). Parks are at the 'provide' end of the continuum with active recreation programs and developed infrastructure (i.e., 'people-forward'). There are always areas where resource values and outdoor nature-based activity values coincide and must be balanced with each other; hence each property (and zones within those properties) will be managed for a different emphasis along the continuum.

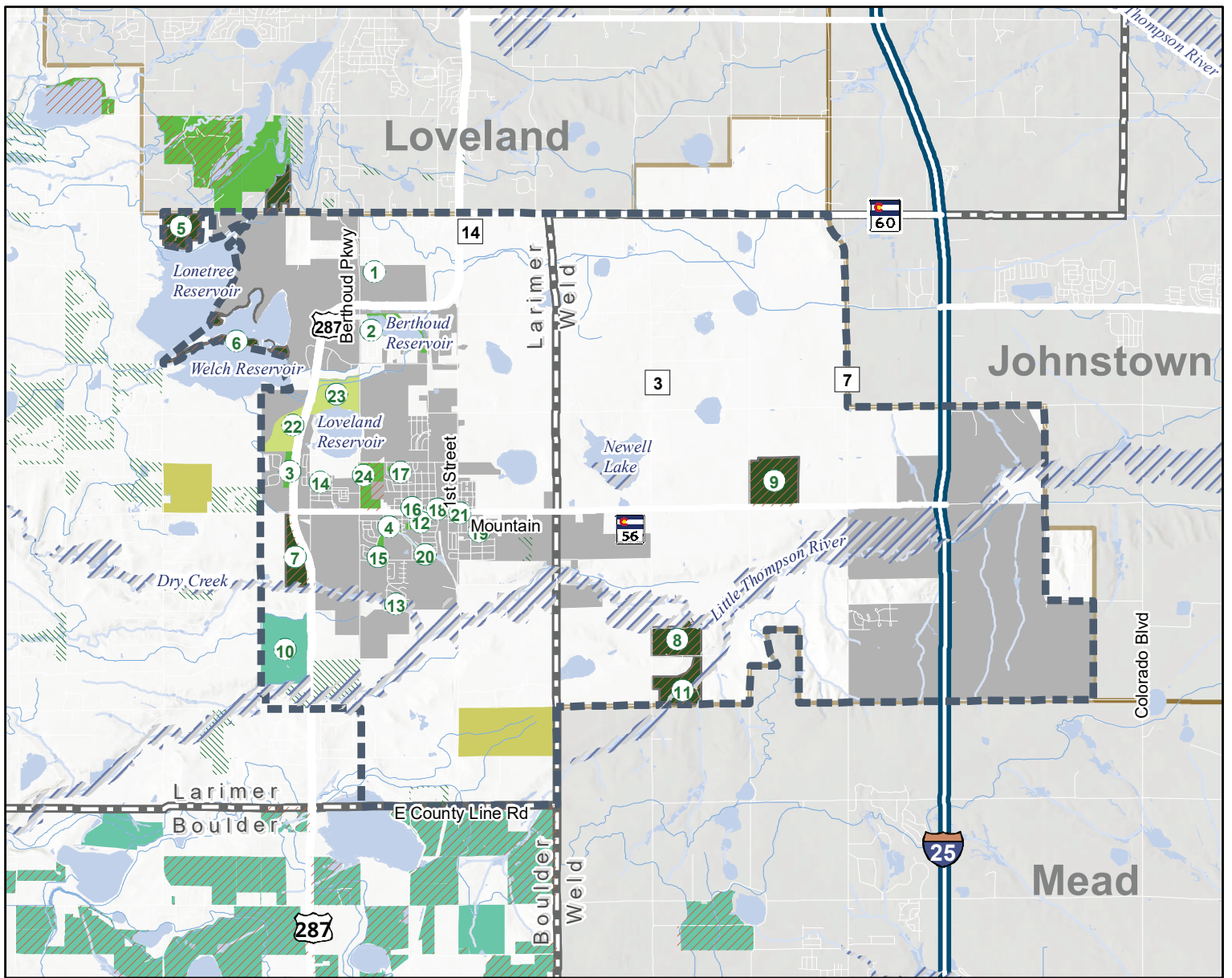


EXISTING & PLANNED PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Berthoud has historically not defined a difference between parks and natural areas; therefore, the following summary includes all parks and open spaces. The Berthoud Area Existing Open Space, Parks, and Conserved Lands Map shows the locations and names of these properties.

The following summarizes the existing and planned properties:

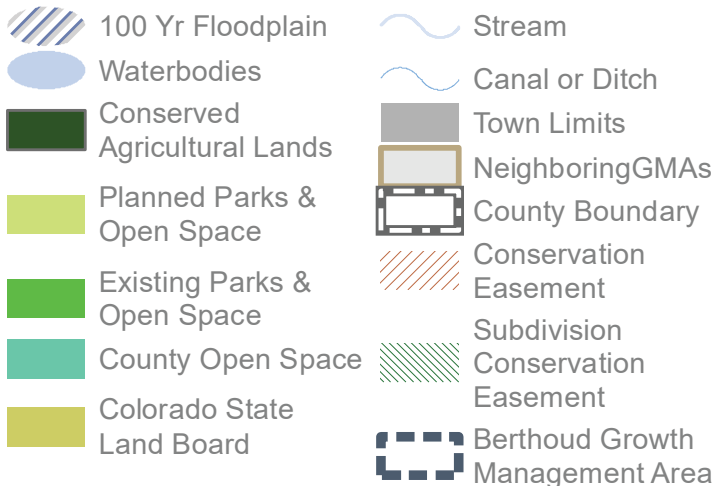
- Traditional community parks are located within the core of Berthoud's commercial and residential development.
- Hillsdale Park is an 11-acre natural area located within the Dry Creek floodplain.
- Berthoud Reservoir was opened in 2020 to the public with a walking trail, restroom, paddle craft access, and parking area, with additional amenities planned in the future.
- Waggener Farm Park is the location of Berthoud's brand-new recreation center, which opened in Fall 2021, with the remaining land managed as natural area.
- Larger parcels of undeveloped parkland and natural areas surround the Town's core. These include Richardson Park and Knievel Park, which are planned to be developed with public access to sports fields as well as natural area.
- Additionally, adjacent municipalities such as the City of Loveland and Boulder County have conserved a variety of open space and agricultural lands.
- Privately owned and maintained working farms that are conserved in perpetuity through conservation easements with land trusts outside of town limits.
- Other types of conserved lands include Conservation Developments and Rural Land Use Plans entitled through Larimer County's review process.



Date: 6/24/2021

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

Berthoud Area Existing Open Space, Parks and Conserved Lands



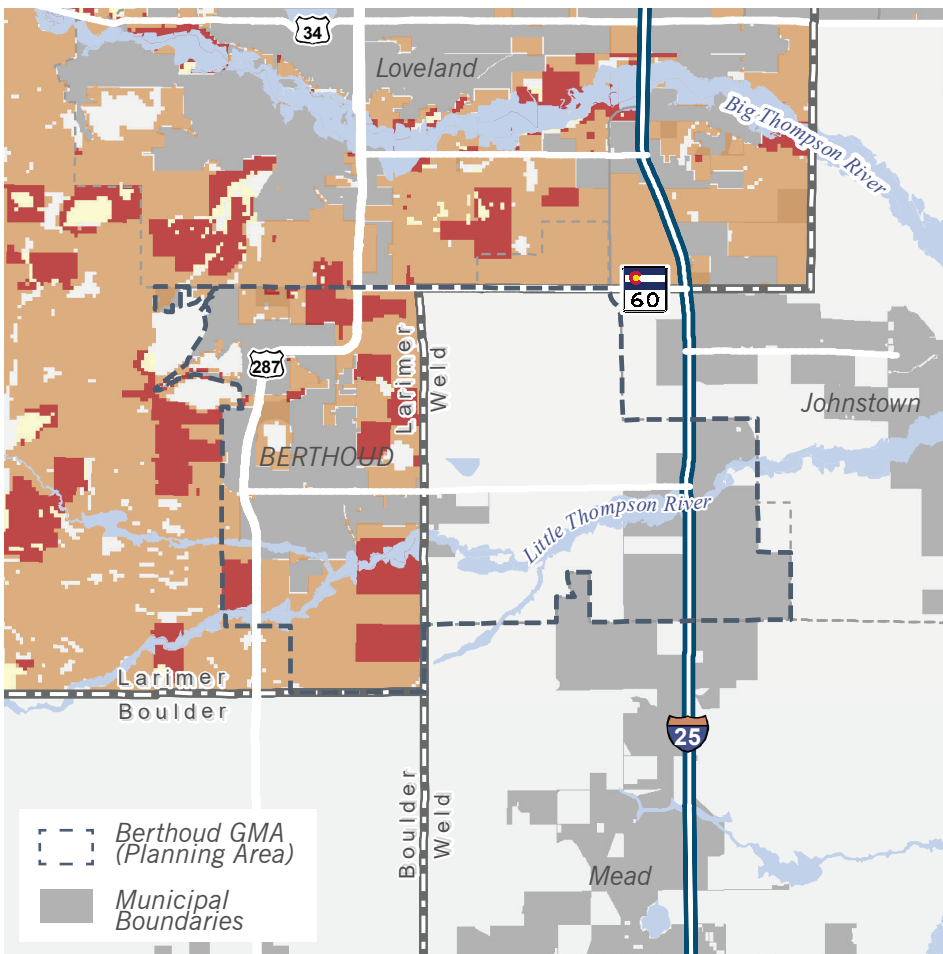
- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Prairiestar Park | 13. Hillsdale Park |
| 2. Berthoud Reservoir | 14. Collins Park |
| 3. Matthew's Trail | 15. Bein Park |
| 4. Dog Park | 16. Fickel Park |
| 5. Jaskowski CE | 17. Roberts Lake |
| 6. Heron Lakes CE | 18. Railroad Park |
| 7. Yeager CE | 19. Pioneer Park |
| 8. Rockwell CE | 20. Nielsen's Greenway |
| 9. Hofmeister CE | 21. Skate Park |
| 10. Little Thompson Farm | 22. Knievel Park |
| 11. Neal CE | 23. Richardson Park |
| 12. Town Park | 24. Waggenger Farm Park |

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVED LANDS

Much of the land surrounding the Town limits that is not subdivided consists of giant green circles of irrigated crop land within square section lines. The Northern Front Range/Lower South Platte River system provides some of the state's best soils and riparian connections. The area primarily grows corn, alfalfa, and wheat (Source: <https://nassgeodata.gmu.edu/CropScape/>).

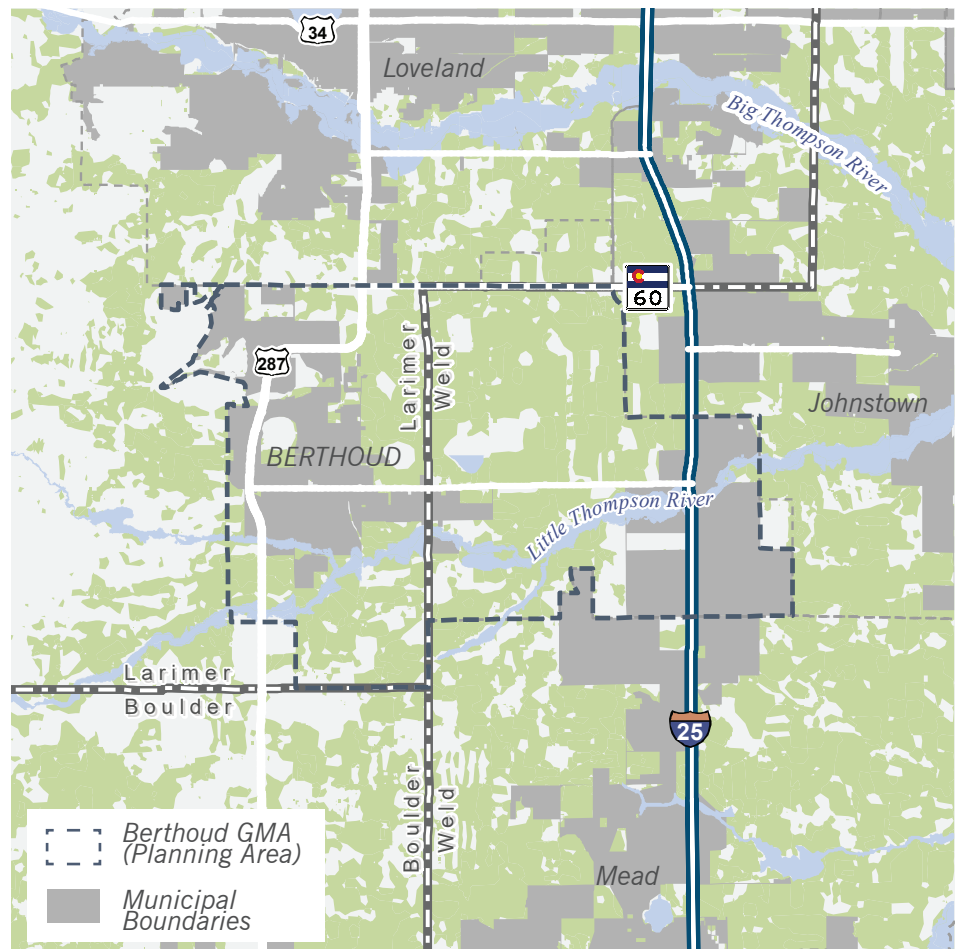
A growing acreage of private lands within the GMA, 1,251 acres, are being placed into conservation easements where farmers continue to own and operate the land with no public access.

These conservation easements do not encumber the Town with perpetual operations and maintenance costs. Unique and locally significant farms, including Little Thompson Farm and the Jaskowski conservation easement, are owned by Larimer County and the Town of Berthoud, respectively.



The Our Lands Our Future Report highlighted the top agricultural conservation opportunities (in red) around Berthoud.

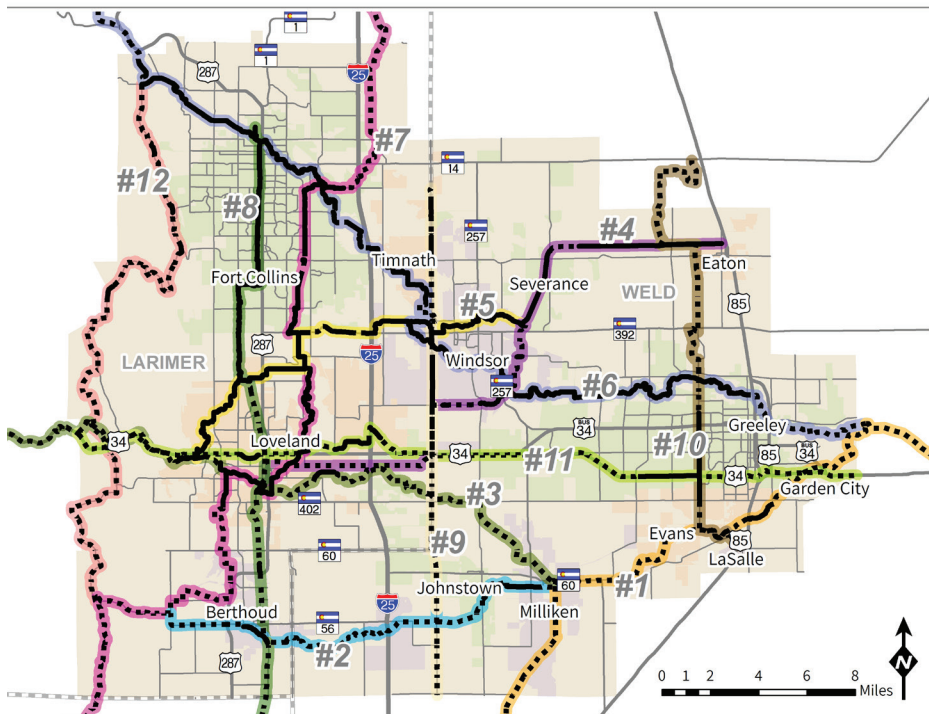
Conserving agricultural lands, along with the water needed to continue agricultural practices, maintain local food production, the region's heritage and rural character, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and the economic diversity sustained year after year from renewable resources (soil, water, sunlight). Additionally, conserving the irrigated agriculture provides groundwater recharge, flood surge control, and the potential for innovative water sharing projects.



Satellite imagery shows that cultivated and irrigated agriculture and pasture (in green) are the primary land uses outside of Berthoud. That traditional use is quickly being converted to large lot residential; several platted subdivisions have not been built yet.

REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDORS

A complete and convenient multi-use regional trail network complements and expands the benefits of the open space system. This Open Space Plan focuses on regional trail connections, where the coordination of open space along a large corridor is vital to the future implementation of a regional trail. Benefits include lifestyle and health advantages, increased property values, improved tourism and tax revenue, special events, and the ability to attract regional employers and employees. The Berthoud Unified Trail Master Plan provides specific neighborhood level connections not shown on the maps.



Legend

- | | | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| — Existing or Interim Alignment | 6: Poudre River Trail | County Boundary |
| --- Proposed Alignment | 7: Front Range Trail (West) | NFRMPO Planning Area |
| 1: South Platte/American Discovery Trail | 8: BNSF Fort Collins/Berthoud | |
| 2: Little Thompson River | 9: Johnstown/Timnath | |
| 3: Big Thompson River | 10: Eaton/LaSalle | |
| 4: Great Western/Johnstown/Loveland | 11: US 34 Parallel | |
| 5: North Loveland/Windsor | 12: Carter Lake/Horsetooth Foothills Corridor | |

June 2021
Sources: CDOT, NFRMPO



Through coordination with the Town of Berthoud, both Larimer County and the Northern Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) have completed plans for regional trail corridors, also known as active transportation corridors.

The 2016 Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan also highlights regional trail corridors and is intended to be used primarily for the coordination of regional connectivity between open space and jurisdictions.

In 2021 the NFRMPO updated the Non-Motorized Plan to complete a Regional Active Transportation Plan, which expands important local connections, major barriers, and opportunities for completion. In Berthoud these include the Colorado Front Range Trail along the west side of town, the Little Thompson River/Dry Creek corridor south of town, and the BNSF corridor through town. Sections of the Colorado Front Range Trail are currently under development within the Heron Lakes subdivision.

WATER RESOURCES

Stream corridors and their associated floodplains are a nexus of important resource conservation priorities – both for critical wildlife habitat areas and for human safety. Effectively managing these corridors to reduce risk of disaster events requires a combination of tools rather than sole reliance on standard floodplain regulations. Berthoud’s ambition is to allow rivers to act as rivers by providing space for natural flooding and inundation of floodplains to ensure river resiliency and habitat regeneration and protection in flood events. Riparian zones along rivers comprise approximately less than 2% of Colorado’s land cover but provide some of the richest and most important habitats and function by filtering runoff from uplands and protect water quality in rivers.

Within Colorado, most areas receive less than 20 inches of natural precipitation each year, so most of the state requires irrigation to grow crops or to support urban landscapes. About 80% of nature’s water falls on the Western Slope, yet about 90% of the state’s population resides on the Eastern Slope. Most of Colorado’s irrigated agriculture lands are east of the divide as well.

Water is and will continue to be a highly desirable and controversial resource as population growth continues and with it the need to conserve water for ecological and agricultural purposes. Water rights are in high demand for developers: the Colorado Water Conservation Board estimates that the South Platte River Basin would have a supply shortage of 196,000 acre-feet per year by 2050 – with the single biggest driver being population growth ([South Platte Basin Implementation Plan 2015](#)). The majority of this demand is anticipated to be supplied by current agricultural water rights: 500,000 to 700,000 acre-feet could be transferred to municipal use by 2050. This means that up to 33% of irrigated land could be dried up by 2050 to meet new municipal demands (Colorado Water Conservation Board 2021). A 2012 study found that Larimer County’s farmland is being lost to alternative land uses at a rate of 4,500 acres each year at a cost of \$1.2 million in agricultural output (sales) each year, another significant consideration (Larimer County 2012).

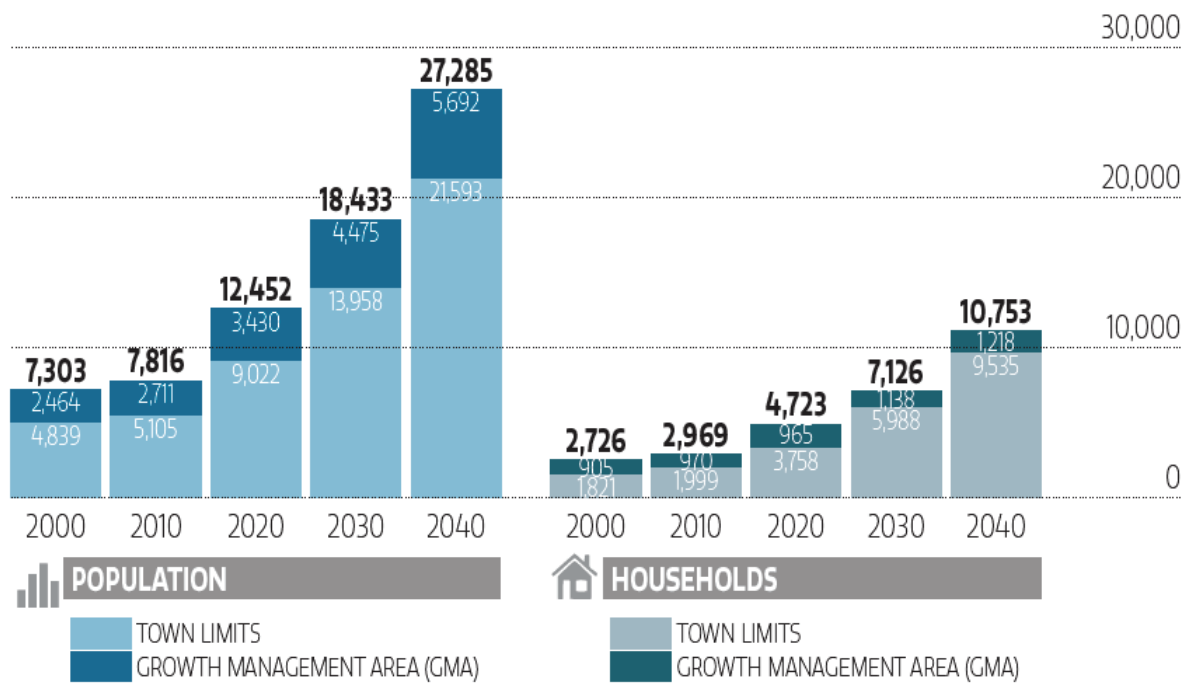
“Colorado Open Lands is working on creative approaches to meeting Colorado’s growing water demand while keeping farmers on farms – a future that supports the rural agricultural communities, families, and wildlife that depend on the South Platte River system.”

Meeting this demand will require more intense water conservation and agriculture/urban sharing of water resources and has implications for how water rights must be addressed in future conservation easements and fee-simple acquisitions. Innovative water solutions are needed to sustain significant habitat, growing municipal water use, and traditional irrigated agricultural practices.

DEMOGRAPHICS/DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

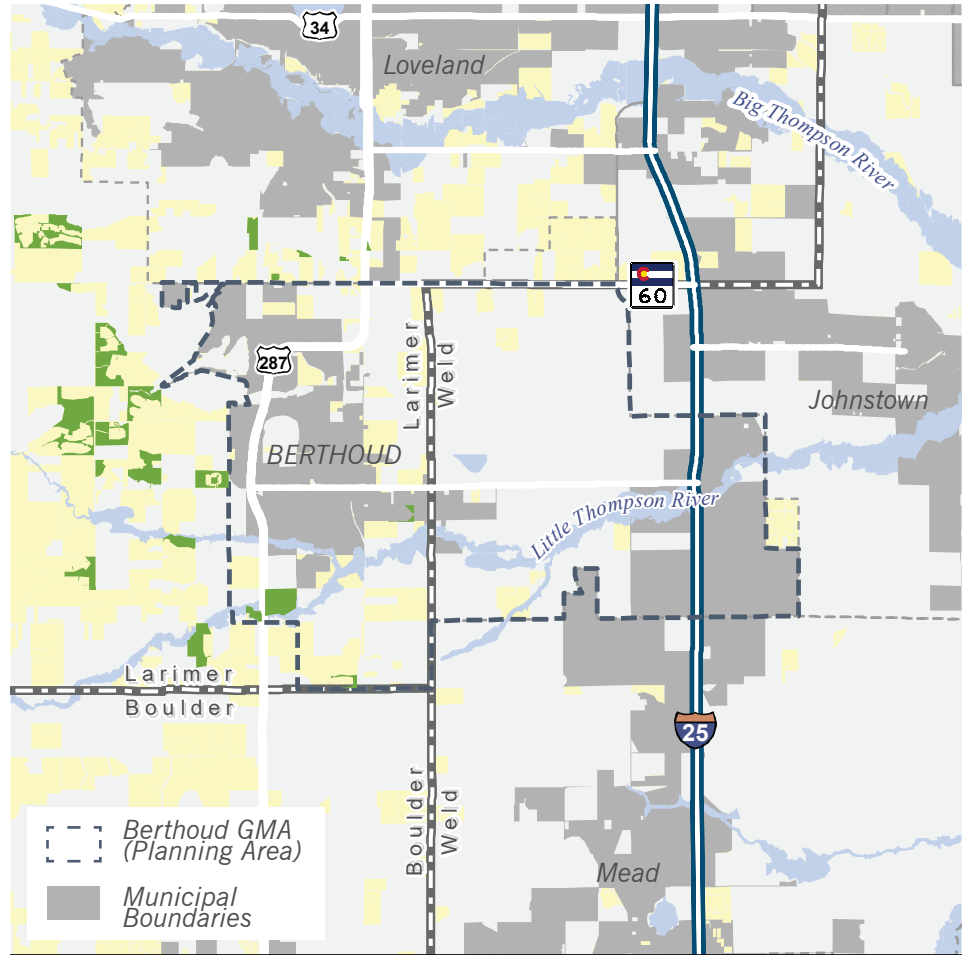
The Colorado Front Range has seen dramatic increases in population over the past 20+ years. Specifically in Berthoud, this increase started in earnest after the Great Recession in the late 2000s. Growth patterns are expected to continue to rise into the next two decades.

POPULATION & HOUSEHOLDS, 2000-2040



County subdivisions (in yellow) have been entitled on every side of Berthoud's Town limits, leaving few opportunities for significant land conservation. Fortunately, most Larimer County subdivisions are conservation subdivisions where residential lots are clustered, leaving 50 to 80% of the original parcel as residual land for agricultural, natural, or private open space uses (in green). Weld County does not offer a similar planning tool.

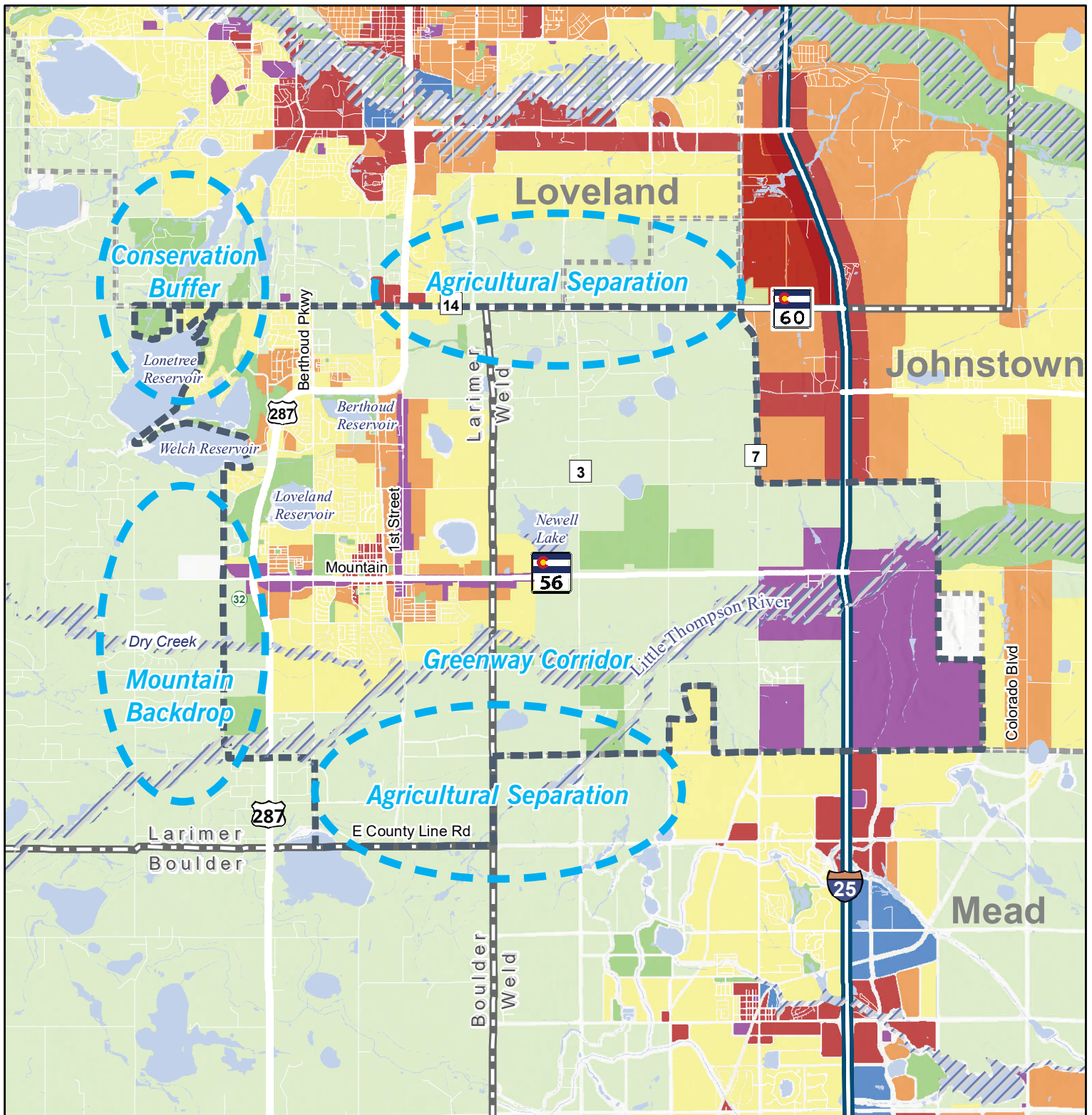
Increased development adjacent to agricultural land uses are intensifying. Conflicts between new residents unfamiliar with agricultural practices results in complaints and misunderstanding.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE

The Comprehensive Plan and this Open Space Plan reflect the open space ambitions of Loveland, Johnstown, and Mead in three ways: 1) a mutual desire to transition rural density and character at specific edges, 2) a greenway and trail corridor along the Little Thompson River between Berthoud and Johnstown, and 3) land conservation priorities between Lonetree, Lon Hagler, and Ryan Gulch reservoirs in northwest Berthoud and Loveland.

The following map presents the planned future land uses for Berthoud and the surrounding communities.



Future Land Use categories have been aggregated and simplified to show comparisons to adjacent jurisdictions.

Regional Future Land Use

Berthoud Growth Management Area

Adjacent Growth Management Areas

100 Yr Floodplain

Regional Future Land Use

Open Space

Rural

Low Density

Medium Density

High Density

Industrial

Mixed Density Mixed Use

BERTHOUD DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

STAFFING

In a small town like Berthoud, employees wear multiple hats. Management responsibilities for the Town’s parks, trails, recreation, and open spaces are shared between Public Works (including the Parks Department) and Forestry and Open Space.

The Public Works Department oversees the management and maintenance of the parks, streets, the cemetery, and town facilities and coordinates with outside agencies such as the Colorado Department of Transportation and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Forestry and Open Space provides a safe, aesthetically pleasing, and sustainable urban forest and open space system, and is responsible for tree and natural area inventory, maintenance, and development within town-owned properties.

Roles:

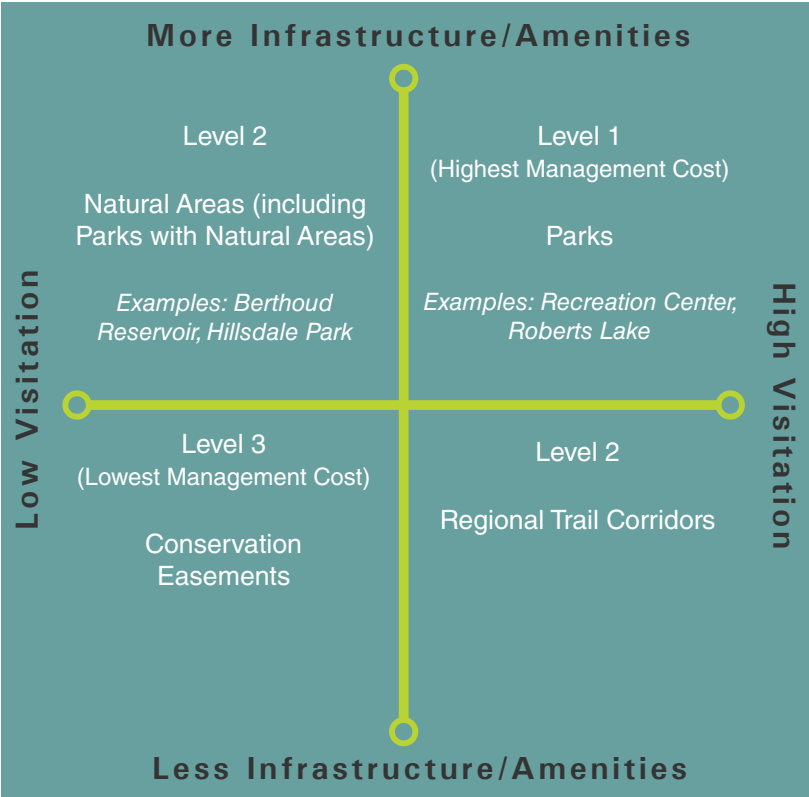
Natural Areas: Currently, parks with natural areas are managed by either the Public Works Operational Manager or the Forestry and Open Space Manager, a new position created in 2021. Future natural areas are likely to be managed by the Forestry and Open Space Department, which currently consists of up to three employees (Manager, Forestry Technician, Open Space Technician).

Agriculture: The Town will take a supporting role in conserving future agricultural lands largely through funding and facilitating conservation easements. These easements mean the lands are still held by a private owner who is responsible for maintenance and management, with the conservation easement holder

(i.e. a land trust or county) acting as the stewardship monitor. This approach minimizes the Town’s long-term staffing and maintenance obligations. Public Works manages the leasing of Berthoud owned farms (i.e. Jaskowski).

Regional Trail Corridors: Trails are planned, acquired, and managed by the Public Works Operational Manager.

While not the focus of this Plan, the Public Works Division’s capital improvement plans include vastly expanding the number and acre of developed parks – funded by the recently passed 2019 1% Sales Tax. Each time a new park is built, funds must be added to the Operating Budget to maintain the park. Because Town responsibilities, costs, and staffing increase with every new park and trail, it is expected that Public Works will focus less on natural areas over time. Forestry and Open Space will also grow as new natural areas come online. Staffing for both should increase commensurate with acres managed to provide continual acquisition, capital development, land stewardship and maintenance activities for natural areas and regional trail corridors. Healthy lands are less expensive to maintain, require less pesticides, reduce negative impacts to neighbors, and provide “ecosystem services” such as mitigation of flood impacts and pollination.



Each property can be classified as a Level 1, 2, or 3 maintenance level. Parks with high recreation use and facilities cost the most to maintain (Level 1). Level 2 have less infrastructure and maintenance typically focuses on habitat restoration, noxious weeds, and passive recreation.

FUNDING TOOLS

Just as there are different methods (fee simple, conservation easement, dedication, deed restriction, etc.) to conserve different open space typologies, each type has different funding sources. Similarly, different funding sources are often directed toward a specific phase of life cycle costs. The Current Funding Sources Table summarizes how dependable program funding options are historically used on a regular or occasional basis by the Town.

Most outside funding sources come with strings attached. For example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) requires that the conserved land not be sold or redeveloped in perpetuity. Some grant programs like GOCO fund major projects yet are highly competitive and cannot be relied upon from year to year. To fully

leverage grants, the Town needs matching funds, staff capacity to prepare novel ideas and applications, and partners who demonstrate support for the application.

Few sources fund long-term maintenance of town-owned property or facilities. These routine activities typically are paid out of the General Fund or a dedicated tax.

Without sufficient funding, too often routine maintenance cannibalizes the funds could otherwise be directed to land acquisition. See Chapter 3, Recommendations, for a list of recommended and alternative funding sources.

CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS		
			Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Acquisition	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship
1998 1% Sales Tax	\$	Town	X		X	X	X	
2019 1% Sales Tax	\$	Town	X				X	
CO Conservation Trust Fund	\$	Town/State	X	X	X	X	X	X
Larimer County HPOS Sales Tax Share-back	\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X		X
Parkland Dedication, Open Space Dedication, or Fee-in-Lieu	\$\$	Town	X		X	X	X	
General Fund	\$	Town	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collaboration with Adjacent Jurisdictions	\$\$\$	City/County	X	X	X	X	X	
Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)	\$\$\$	State	X	X	X	X	X	X
Donations and Capital Campaign	\$\$	NGO	X	X	X	X	X	
Colorado Open Lands	\$\$\$	NGO		X	X	X		
Leases and Rents	\$	Town/Private		X				X



CHAPTER 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES AND STANDARDS

Based on the community input and analysis of existing conditions and trends, there are three Open Space Typologies that have been defined:

In this Chapter:

- **Recommendations to meet the vision and goals**
- **Three Open Space Typologies**
- **Focus Areas Map**
- **Action items to achieve the vision over a 20-year period**
- **Priority implementation actions**

TYPOLGY	WHERE	WHAT	HOW (TYPICAL)
Natural Areas	Environmental Sensitive Area	People and Resource Balanced	Fee-simple Purchase
Agriculture	Rural Areas	Resource-forward	Conservation Easement
Regional Trail Corridors	Varies, primarily in Environmental Sensitive Area	People-forward	Trail Easement

NATURAL AREAS

Definition:

Lands with significant ecological and ecosystems values, floodplains and floodways, natural drainages and wetlands, native trees and vegetation, wildlife travel corridors and habitats, scenery, water quality protection functions, and/or water bodies. Natural areas could also include unbuildable areas, river corridor, or detention areas. This definition is generally consistent with Development Code 30-2-119 (Environmental Considerations). The intent of this section is to ensure that new development limits or mitigates impact to wildlife and wildlife habitat, and that environmental impacts from development are minimized.

Uses:

Non-motorized, passive recreational uses such as nature observation, walking, hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, riding horses, picnicking, non-motorized boating (e.g. paddle sports), and environmental education.

Primary Location:

Natural areas were identified based on the Comprehensive Plan Place Types Map. They consist of visual and community buffers, where there is high development pressure, and areas around large reservoirs to protect significant wildlife while providing limited passive recreation opportunities.

Berthoud's Role:

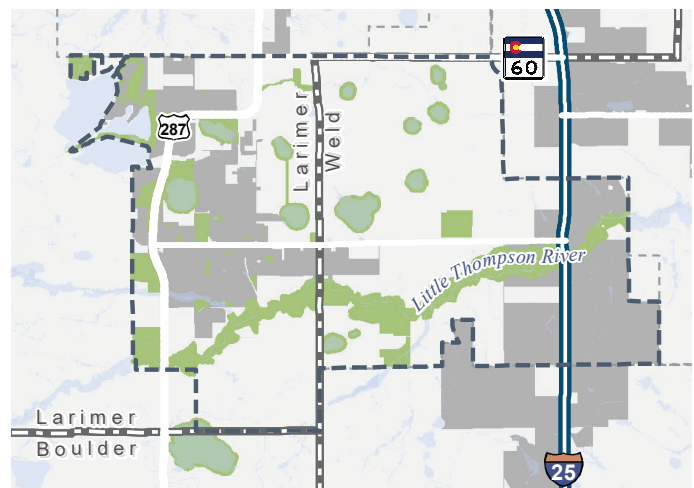
Lead role in conserving natural areas through acquisitions or the development review process because they are less likely to be conserved by other voluntary measures. However, recent state legislation further incentives conservation easements with a 90% tax credit, which may make it more beneficial to willing landowners.

Typical Size:

Varies, but should be large enough to conserve its primary resource values. Can be a naturalized portion of a more developed park.

Applicable Comprehensive Plan Place Types:

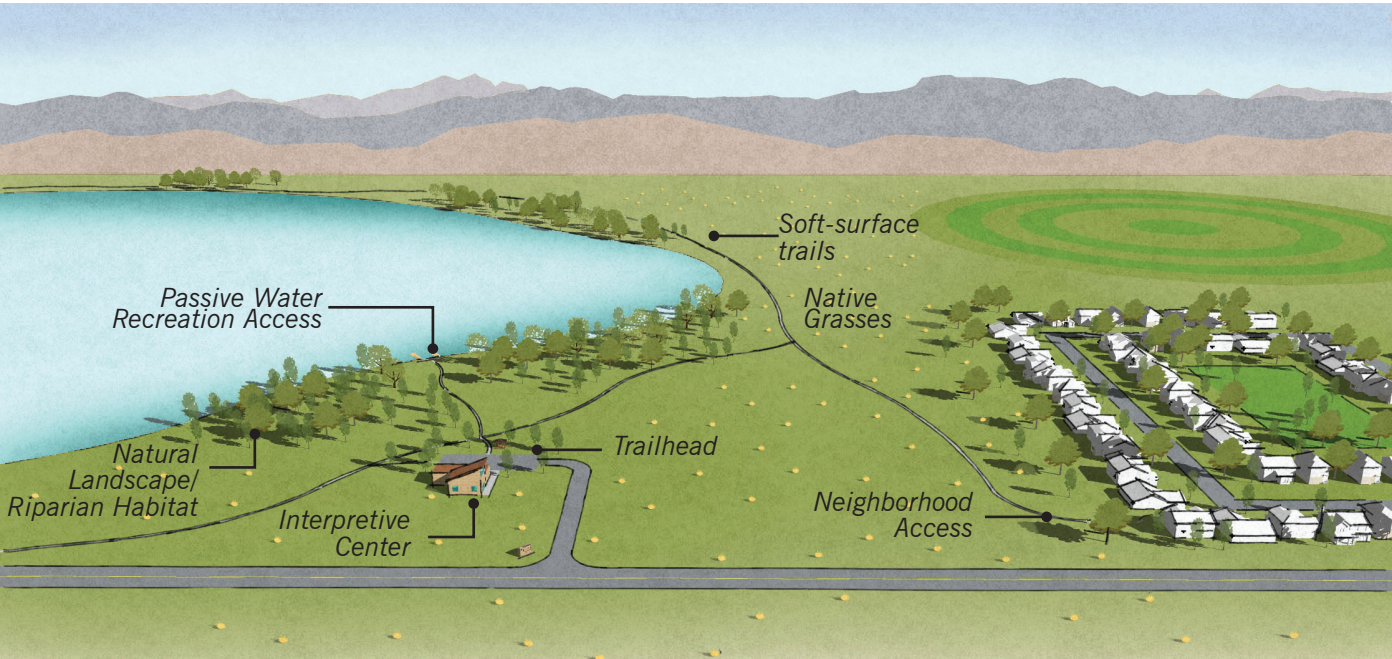
Place Type: Natural Area
Character District: Environmental Sensitive Areas or Open Space



Key Attributes:

RECREATION			CONSERVATION			CULTURAL			ECOLOGICAL SENSITIVE AREAS				
Trails	Passive Recreation Amenities (picnic tables)	Trailheads /Parking	Town Maintenance	Public Access	Community Separator	Agricultural Preservation	Historic /Landmark	Interpretation and Education	Scenic Corridors and Viewsheds	Floodplain /Wetlands / Stormwater	Hazard Mitigation: wind break, erosion control, fire break etc.	Steep Slopes	Wildlife Habitats and Corridors

=Typically present/primary feature
 =sometimes present/secondary feature



AGRICULTURE



Definition:

Lands utilized for grazing and/or irrigated crop production. Primary values include local food production, agricultural infrastructure, cultural heritage, scenic viewsheds, community separator, and economic resiliency.

Uses:

Agriculture, and potentially environmental or cultural education where public access is permitted.

Primary Location:

Unincorporated areas between Berthoud's downtown and new development proposed along the I-25 corridor, north and south on Highway 56 in Weld County, and south of the Little Thompson River west of County Road 7.

Berthoud's Role:

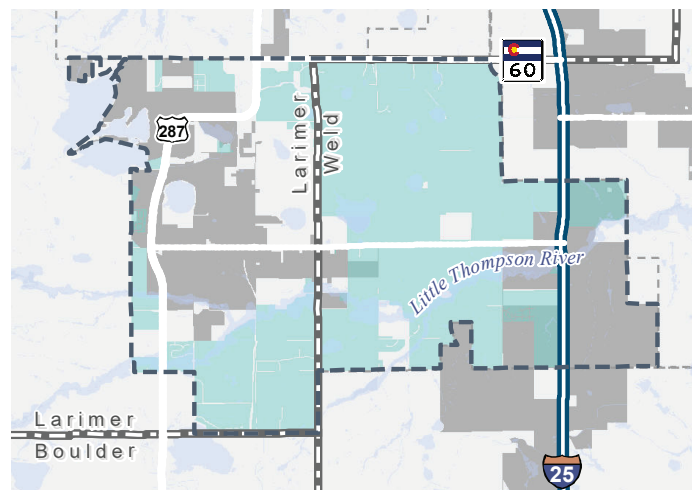
Assisting land trusts and conservation partners on securing conservation easements with willing landowners. Working with Larimer County, Weld County, and adjacent jurisdictions on land use plans and development proposals.

Typical Size:

Varies, however ideal properties are larger working farms with scenic views, wildlife habitat, and water resources.

Applicable Comprehensive Plan Place Types:

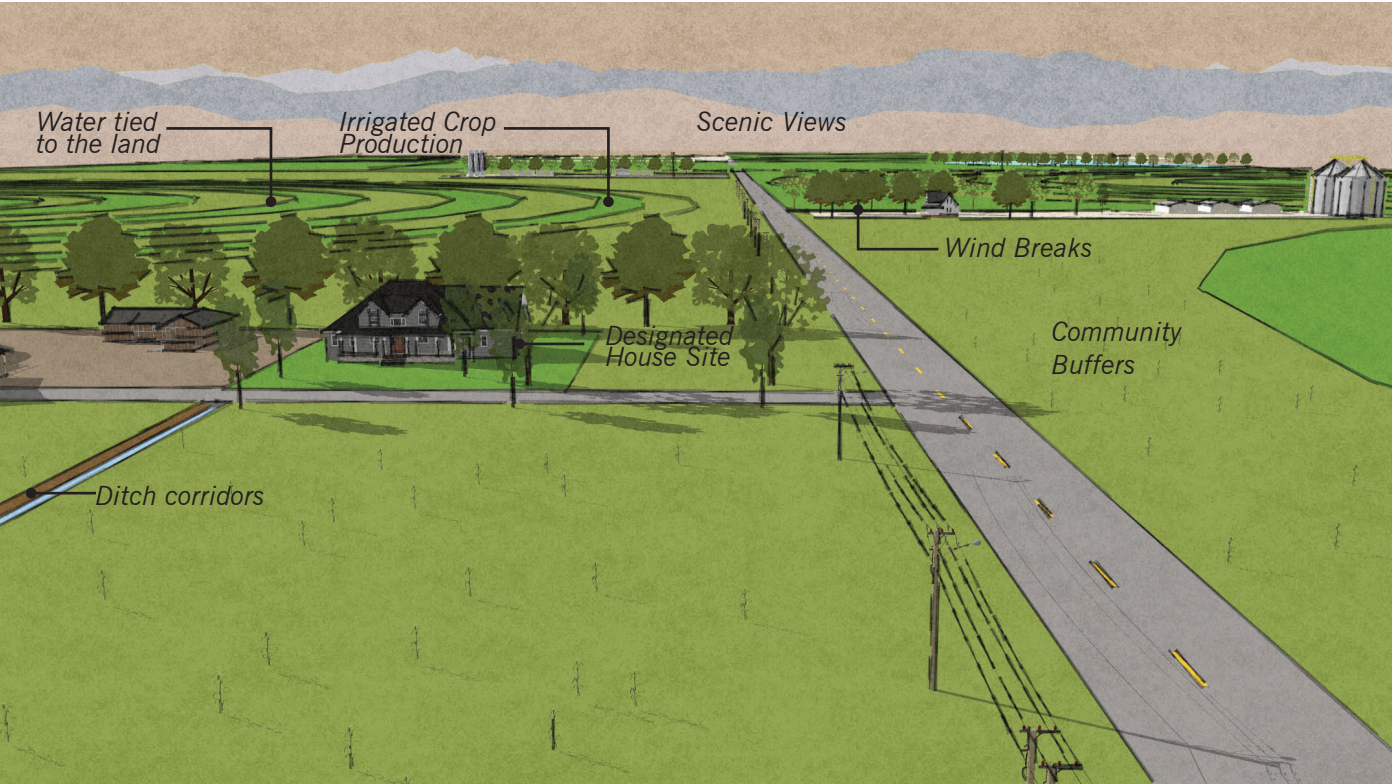
Place Type: Rural Areas
Character District: Agricultural



Key Attributes:

RECREATION				CONSERVATION				CULTURAL				ECOLOGICAL SENSITIVE AREAS			
Trails	Passive Recreation Amenities (picnic tables)	Trailheads /Parking	Town Maintenance	Public Access	Community Separator	Agricultural Preservation		Historic /Landmark	Interpretation and Education	Scenic Corridors and Viewsheds		Floodplain /Wetlands / Stormwater	Hazard Mitigation: wind break, erosion control, fire break etc.	Steep Slopes	Wildlife Habitats and Corridors

=Typically present/primary feature



REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDORS



Definition:

Open corridors for paved or natural surface trails that serve the entire community, and that may provide connections to destinations beyond the GMA, such as the Front Range Trail. Intended to provide a location for non-motorized trail users.

Uses:

Walking, hiking, bicycling, skating, horseback riding, and other forms of non-motorized travel, and trailheads with parking and restrooms. May also include picnicking, overlooks, and/or interpretive features.

Primary Location:

A designated trail easement or right-of-way that connects to parks, natural areas, residential and civic areas, as well as adjacent municipalities. Away from road corridors where possible, and along linear features such as rivers, drainage corridors, railroads, and large utility easements. In floodplain areas, locate the trail outside the 1% probability flood zone, and 200 feet from the floodway to account for the natural movements of the river, reduce long-term maintenance, and minimize impacts to wildlife.

Berthoud's Role:

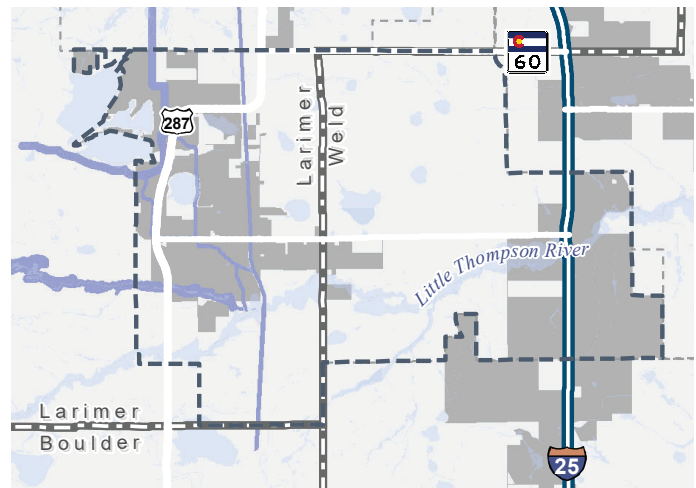
Lead role within the GMA for acquiring easements or purchasing land, and designing, constructing, and maintaining the corridor and trail. May create agreements with developers to construct and maintain regional trails through subdivisions.

Typical Size:

When adjacent to a natural area or other protected land, Ideal corridor width is 30-feet with a minimum 20-foot width.

Applicable Comprehensive Plan Place Types:

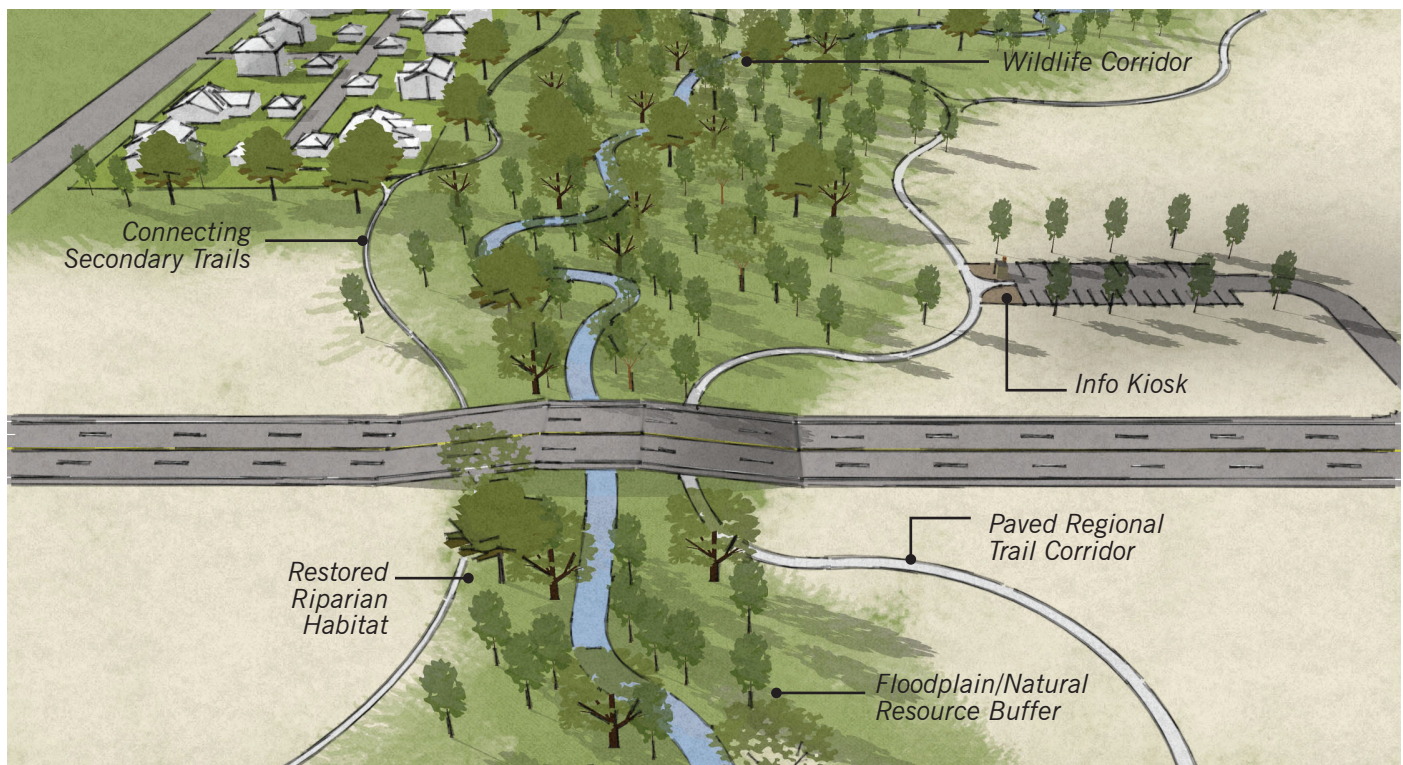
Place Type: Natural Areas
Character District: Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Open Space



Key Attributes:

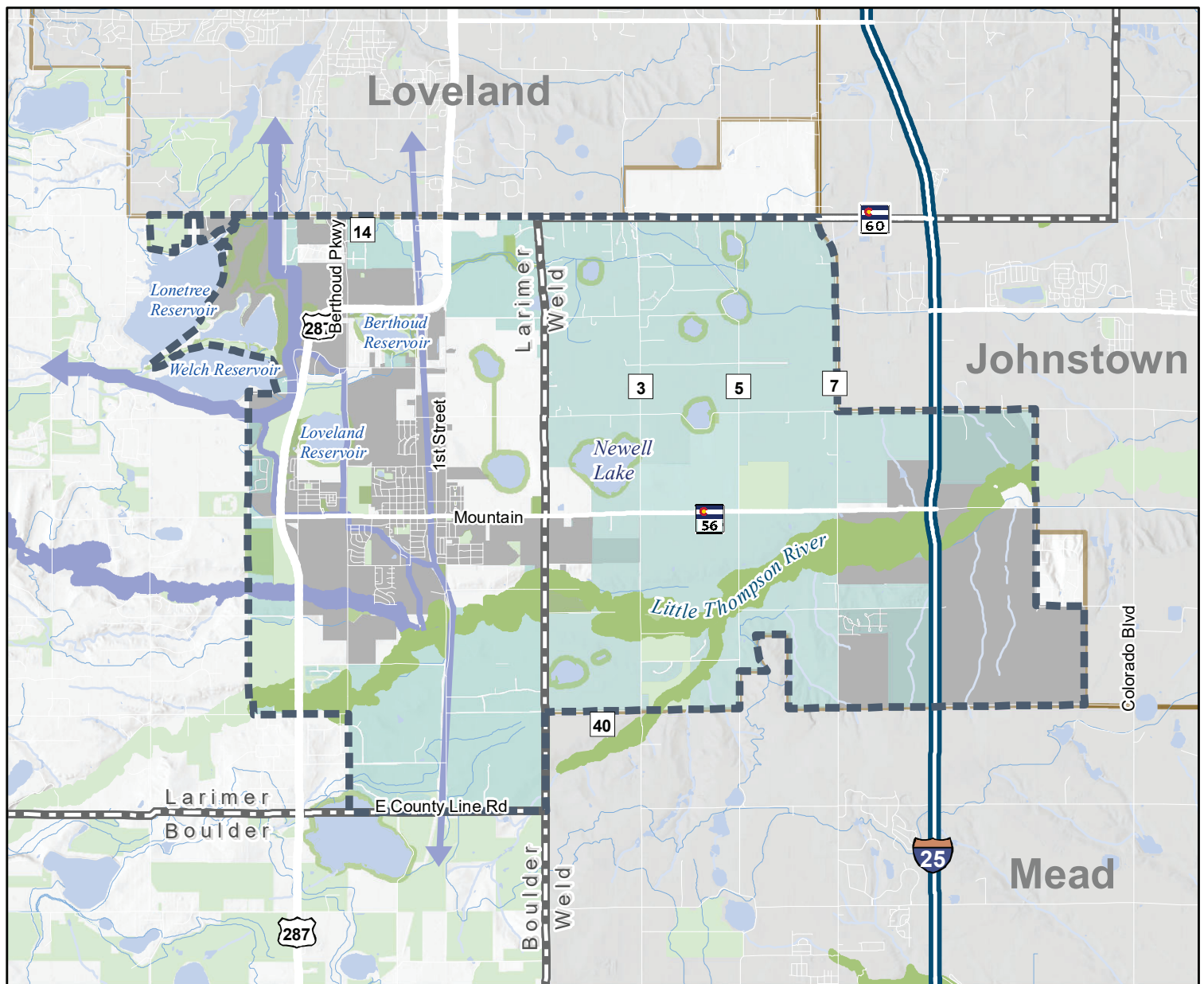
RECREATION				CONSERVATION				CULTURAL				ECOLOGICAL SENSITIVE AREAS			
Trails	Passive Recreation Amenities (picnic tables)	Trailheads /Parking	Town Maintenance	Public Access	Community Separator	Agricultural Preservation		Historic /Landmark	Interpretation and Education	Scenic Corridors and Viewsheds		Floodplain /Wetlands / Stormwater	Hazard Mitigation: wind break, erosion control, fire break etc.	Steep Slopes	Wildlife Habitats and Corridors

 = Typically present/primary feature

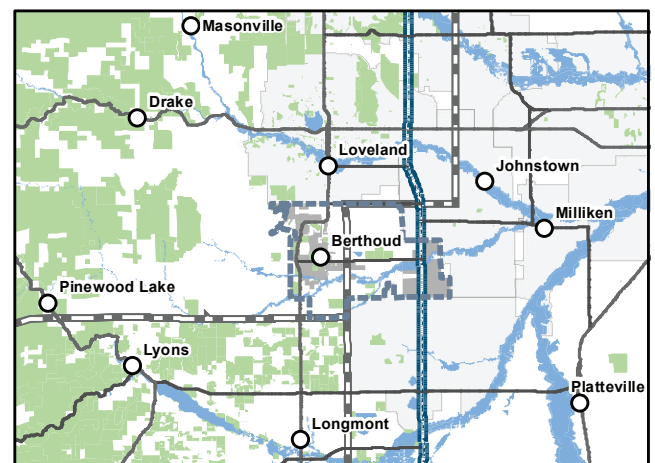
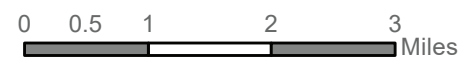
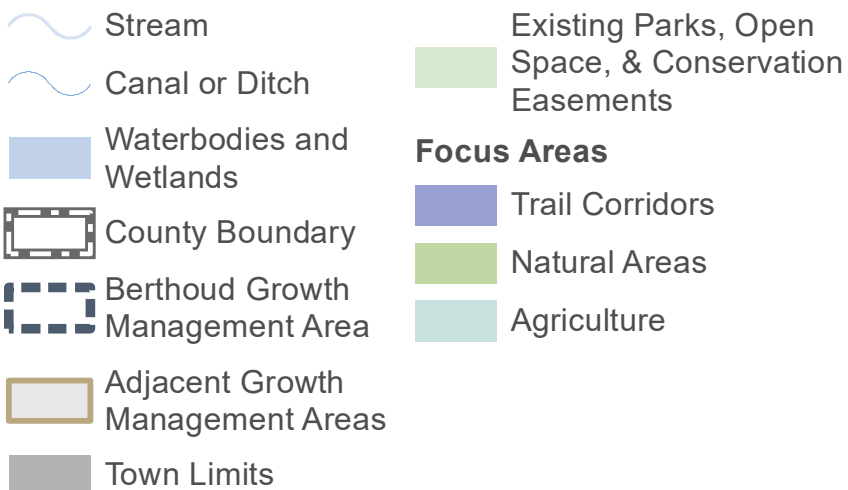


OPEN SPACE FOCUS AREAS MAP

The Open Space Focus Areas Map shows high priority corridors and areas for conservation for the three Open Space Typologies. It is not the intent or the desire of the Town to acquire or conserve all of the land within the Focus Areas. Additionally, areas outside of these locations may be considered if key opportunities emerge. The Town will pursue conservation projects within these Focus Areas with willing sellers, donors, and partners.



Open Space Focus Areas



ACTION PLAN

Plan implementation follows the same framework as the Comprehensive Plan, Section 4. The primary responsibility for leadership will be the Town of Berthoud with the support of a number of effective partners (see Chapter 2, Guiding Direction). The following table presents specific action items to implement the goals, roles, typologies, and focus areas. They are grouped by the primary typology.

NATURAL AREAS

ACTION TITLE	ACTION DETAILS	TYPE	PRIORITY	ROLES	TIME-FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
Partnerships with watershed coalition and Little Thompson River partners	Establish working relationships to further land conservation and restoration efforts with the Little Thompson Watershed Coalition and other conservation partners to meet in-stream flow targets and other conservation measures.	Partnership	1	Lead: Town Support: Partners	Short-term	Staff time
Recreational water access	Pursue opportunities (locations, lease expiration dates, etc.) for obtaining public recreational access/surface rights to local reservoirs (Welch Reservoir, Lonetree Reservoir, Ish Reservoir, Bacon, Newell, etc.).	Policy/Plan, Acquisition	1*	Lead: Town Support: Partners, Landowners, Developers	Mid-Term	Existing sales tax, setbacks or land dedication requirements
Natural areas buffer code	Further define the 150 foot natural areas buffer in the Town's code (30-2-119 Environmental Considerations) as measured from the edge of the floodplain (removing floodway), up to 200 feet from lakes, and accommodate public access. These improvements would allow for wildlife movement, natural river functions, and trail corridors. Update the Development Code to protect public views of lake shorelines.	Policy/Plan	1*	Lead: Town Support: NA	Short-term	Staff time
Expand open space staffing	Working with Parks Division, increase staffing consistent with acres of managed natural areas and regional trail corridors.	Operations	1	Lead: Town Support: NA	Mid- to Long-Term	General fund

Priority Level:

1. Critical
2. Vital
3. Desirable

* Also found in the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix

Timeframe:

- Short Term: 1-3 Years
 Mid Term: 3-5 Years
 Long Term: 5+ Years
 Ongoing: As Needed

ACTION TITLE	ACTION DETAILS	TYPE	PRIORITY	ROLES	TIME-FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
Dry Creek Conservation	Pursue conservation of Dry Creek drainage, especially adjacent to existing public land. Work with existing developer (Trails at Creekview) on fee simple purchase or conservation easements/ land dedication incentives.	Acquisition	1	Lead: Town Support: Landowners	Short-term	Existing sales tax/Land dedication
Berthoud Reservoir Park and Open Space (Phase 2)	Continue to implement the Berthoud Reservoir Master Plan.	Capital/ Operations	2	Lead: Town Support: NA	Mid-Term	Existing sales tax
Signage/ wayfinding standards	As part of community branding campaign and Wayfinding Signage Plan (see Comprehensive Plan), create new standards to improve wayfinding and branding of open spaces.	Operations	2*	Lead: Town Support: Consultant	Mid-term	Staff time/ General fund
Monitor future land use of State Land Board properties	Monitor SLB's 10-year leases. If plans change toward disposal, consider raising funds with partners for fee-simple purchase. See Existing Conditions Map.	Other	3	Lead: Town Support: SLB	Long-term	NA
Future foothills public access	Partner with Larimer and Boulder counties on acquiring new, or opening existing properties.	Acquisition	3	Lead: Town Support: Larimer and Boulder counties	Long-term	Multiple

AGRICULTURAL

ACTION TITLE	ACTION DETAILS	TYPE	PRIORITY	ROLES	TIME-FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
Water conservation and sharing rights for agricultural purposes	Retain water rights on conserved lands through Alternative Transfer Methods, water sharing agreements, or other methods. Evaluate Town drought supplies. Coordinate with town staff, 2020 Water Resources Plan, water attorneys, water brokers, and water rights engineers. Continue to work with ditch and irrigation companies to maintain effective operations.	Partnership	1	Lead: Town Support: Conservation Partners/Ditch & Irrigation Companies	Short-term	New source
Local landowners education - conservation easements	Expand ongoing outreach programs of Land Trusts/conservation partners. See also action item on providing public information.	Education	1	Lead: Land Trusts Support: Town	On-going	New source/ General fund/ Grants
Land Agent Position	Hire new .25 FTE to continue conversations between land trusts, TPL, and others, and to facilitate working relationships with willing landowners.	Operations	1	Lead: Town Support: NA	Short-term	General fund/ Existing sales tax
Funding source for agricultural land preservation	Develop a fund for conservation easement transactions, matching grants, water rights, and purchase and maintenance of agricultural lands.	Funding	1	Lead: Town - Trustees Support: Trust for Public Lands (if needed)	Short-term	Staff time/ Board or voter approval
Agricultural lands/viewshed conservation easements	Support conservation partners and willing landowners to establish conservation easements along Hwy 56 Corridor from I25 to Downtown and Hwy 287 Corridor South to Longmont. Town would provide supporting funds.	Partnership	1	Lead: Land Trusts Support: Town	Short-term	New source

Priority Level:

1. Critical
2. Vital
3. Desirable

* Also found in the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix

Timeframe:

Short Term: 1-3 Years
Mid Term: 3-5 Years
Long Term: 5+ Years
Ongoing: As Needed

ACTION TITLE	ACTION DETAILS	TYPE	PRIORITY	ROLES	TIME-FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
General public awareness and education	Update Town's website to include open space goals, conservation incentives, Open Space Focus Areas Map, and agriculture preservation resources. Open Space Plan implementation progress could be tracked on this page.	Education	1	Lead: Town Support: NA	Short-term	Staff time/ General fund/ Grants
Trail easements	Work with partners to ensure trail easements are identified on future conservation easements that overlap Regional Trail Corridors. See Open Space Focus Areas Map.	Partnership	2	Lead: Town Support: Land Trusts/ Conservation Partners	Long-term	Staff time
Local agricultural industries	Market agricultural related industries, local farms, farm to table restaurants, etc. to enhance the local food economy.	Education	2	Lead: Town - Economic Development Support: Larimer, Boulder, and Weld counties	On-going	New source
Agricultural school programming	Support CSU extension, FFA, Thompson School District, etc. to offer/expand programs to further the agricultural heritage of Berthoud. Programs could be held on existing agricultural owned lands.	Education/ Partnership	3	Lead: Extension/ FFA/School District with IGA Support: Larimer and Weld County Extension	On-going	New source/ Partnerships
Larimer County/ Town IGA	Update agreements to ensure consistency on desired rural land use patterns.	Policy/Plan	3*	Lead: Town Support: Larimer County	Long-term	Staff time
Weld County/ Town CPA	Update agreements to ensure consistency on desired rural land use patterns.	Policy/Plan	3*	Lead: Town Support: Weld County	Long-term	Staff time

REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDORS

ACTION TITLE	ACTION DETAILS	TYPE	PRIORITY	ROLES	TIME-FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
Connections to Loveland trail system	Establish connections with partners through trail easements or fee simple acquisition.	Acquisition/ Partnership	1	Lead: Town Support: Loveland, NFRMPO, Larimer County	Short-term	Existing sales tax
Development Review	Incorporate open space typologies into the development review process; require the right-of-way to be provided or the facilities to be constructed as new developments are approved; connect on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities with the trail network to encourage bicycling and walking for recreational and commuting purposes.	Operations	1	Lead: Town Support: Counties, NFRMPO, CDOT	On-going	Staff time
Dry Creek to Carter Lake/ Regional Trail	Conduct feasibility study of potential corridors. Investigate possibility to combine with the Front Range Trail.	Policy/Plan	2	Lead: Town Support: Larimer County, NFRMPO	Long-term	Staff time/ General fund
Little Thompson Regional Trail	Estimate a trail alignment. Acquire lands and/or partner through trail easements as identified on NFRMPO and other master plans.	Acquisition/ Partnership	3	Lead: Town Support: Johnstown, LTWC, Land Trusts, NFRMPO	Long-term	Existing sales tax/New source
Active Transportation Plan	Update the Trails Master Plan to include multiple modes, Safe Routes to School and Nature, and in coordination with the updated NFRMPO Regional Active Transportation Plan.	Policy/Plan	2	Lead: Town Support: NFRMPO	Mid-term	Staff time/ General fund

Priority Level:

1. Critical
2. Vital
3. Desirable

* Also found in the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix

Timeframe:

- Short Term: 1-3 Years
 Mid Term: 3-5 Years
 Long Term: 5+ Years
 Ongoing: As Needed

ACTION TITLE	ACTION DETAILS	TYPE	PRIORITY	ROLES	TIME-FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
Highway 56/ Mountain Avenue	Per the Mountain Avenue Corridor Overlay Plan develop multi-modal and off-street connections along the corridor connecting to future development and transit hub.	Capital/ Operations	2	Lead: Town Support: NFRMPO	Mid-Term	General fund/ Existing Sales Tax
Front Range Trail West - Welch to Carter, south to Rabbit Mountain	Conduct feasibility study of potential corridors. Continue the investigation of the feasibility of a trail along the Northern Water outlet from Carter Lake to Boulder County. Obtain north side public access point to Rabbit Mountain.	Policy/Plan	3	Lead: Larimer County Support: Town, NFRMPO, Boulder County, Northern Water	Long-term	Staff time/ General fund
Emerging technology policies	Develop Code Language as needed in the future. Collaborate on policies where trails cross jurisdictions. For example, E-bikes continue to rise in popularity. Many communities have begun to allow for and create guidance around allowing Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes on paved trails only.	Policy/Plan	3	Lead: Town Support: NA	Long-term	Staff time/ General fund

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Like all growing municipalities, the perennial challenge is to create funding sources that sustainably and equitably acquire, restore, and maintain natural areas and expansion of the Town's trail system. Current levels of funding are insufficient to conserve the amount of land desired by the community and still cover the costs of implementing plan recommendations. This cannot be accomplished simply by redirecting an existing funding source (i.e., 1998 1% Sales Tax or 2019 1% Sales Tax) which already are fully utilized for other community priorities. Therefore, a top priority is establishing a dedicated funding source.

To accomplish the vision, additional funding is specifically needed to expand agricultural acquisition efforts – this is most often accomplished by Front Range communities through a dedicated funding source in the form of a sales tax or property tax. If the Town were to partner with a local land trust the funding would be modest yet highly impactful. For example, if the annual revenue already available through Larimer County's Help Preserve Open Space sales tax were directed towards a part-time land agent position and conservation easement transaction costs, the Town could pool resources to conserve the most land at a far lower cost than fee-simple acquisition.

The Recommended Funding Sources Table outlines a realistic funding strategy in combination with existing revenue streams for long-term acquisition, capital construction, and long-term stewardship revenue sources. These recommended funding sources are the workhorses that typically provide 90% of cash or in-kind services for local government open space programs.

Alternative sources can creatively supplement funding for a given opportunity. These alternatives are new to or infrequently used by the Town, offer lower return on investment, or may not be as supported by the community. Should recommended funding sources not be pursued, or should the Town find itself in a situation where revenues are no longer available, then these alternative resources might be considered.

Before embarking upon a property tax increase, sales tax increase, or open space or trails impact fee, a concise exploratory study should be conducted to evaluate feasibility, potential fee levels, voter support.

Recommended Funding Sources

REC'D FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS			NOTES
			Regional Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Acquisition	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship	
1998 1% Sales Tax (Existing)	\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X	X	X	This 1% sales tax may be utilized “exclusively for uses presently allowed and for the construction, operation, and maintenance of capital improvements to parks, open spaces, recreation facilities, and trails” including “for the purchase of land to be used as open space and as buffer areas.” Annual revenues of \$1.5 million typically pay for street and sidewalk improvements and Berthoud Area Transportation System. Consider allocating more to open space priorities.

REC'D FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS			NOTES
			Regional Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Acquisition	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship	
2019 1% Sales Tax (Existing)	\$	Town	X				X		Voters approved a 1% sales tax in 2019 "to use solely for parks and recreation purposes". For the foreseeable future, its annual revenues of \$1.5 million are dedicated to Recreation Center construction and operations, though it is also eligible for trail corridors.
CO Conservation Trust Fund (Existing)	\$	Town/ State	X	X	X	X	X	X	Very reliable and steady state disbursements to each local government occur quarterly based on percent of state population, amounting to \$55,000 annually. Some local governments dedicate Conservation Trust Funds exclusively towards conservation or trails. Berthoud uses these funds for all types of parks, open space, and recreation expenses. Consider directing trust revenues solely toward open space expenditures. The \$55,000 annual revenue may not be impactful for land acquisition itself, but could help catalyze other funding partners.
Larimer County HPOS Sales Tax Share-back (Existing)	\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X		X	Annual revenues of approximately \$200,000 are based on the percent of County population. Berthoud uses Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) revenues for a variety of parks, open space and recreation needs. Consider directing HPOS revenues solely toward open space expenditures, such as matching funds for agricultural conservation easements.
Parkland Dedication, Fee-in-Lieu (Existing)	\$\$	Town	X		X	X	X		See the discussion below on Development Impact Fees.
Open Space Impact Fee	\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X	X		See the discussion below on Development Impact Fees.
Trail Impact Fee (Existing)	\$\$	Town	X			X	X		See the discussion below on Development Impact Fees.
Municipal Fee (Existing)	\$	Town			X			X*	Fee charged to all units with in Town with utility billing statement *general funding towards signage, snow removal, trash removal, and other Town functions.

REC'D FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS			NOTES
			Regional Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Acquisition	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship	
Water Rights Purchases (Existing)	\$\$\$	Town		X	X	X			Approximately \$30 million has been allocated to purchase reliable water sources, often by purchasing agricultural lands. These lands should be strategically located, with water rights staying with the land and water sharing agreements for Town use.
Collaboration with Adjacent Jurisdictions (Existing)	\$\$\$	City/County	X	X	X	X	X		Several projects have been accomplished in collaboration, most notably the Little Thompson Farm. Proactively and jointly identify projects to complete with Larimer and Boulder counties, Loveland, Johnstown, and Mead.
NFRMPO	\$\$	MPO/County	X			X	X		Apply for annual funding for regional trail corridors and multi-modal improvements.
Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and other grant sources such as CO Parks and Wildlife, CO Historical Society	\$\$\$	State	X	X	X	X	X	X	GOCO distributes Colorado Lottery net proceeds in four categories, including matching competitive grants for planning, acquisition of and management of open space. Funding priorities are based on their Strategic Plan. Between 1995 through 2020, \$60 million in 202 competitive grants were awarded across Larimer County, conserving 64,171 acres. Berthoud has been successful in receiving GOCO grants for two past open space and trail master plans, Nielsen Greenway (between Berthoud Parkway and 5th Street), and a \$950,000 grant for the Heron Lakes Regional Recreation and Open Space Project. Apply annually for competitive grants for planning, acquisition of and management of open space, and provide a local match.
Land and Water Conservation Fund	\$	Federal (NPS) / State	X		X	X	X		50% matching grants for total project-related allowable costs that relate to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Berthoud has received funding in the past but it is infrequently used.
Farm and Ranch Protection Fund	\$	Federal (USDA NRCS)		X		X	X	X	Apply for one of the few programs that funds stewardship through Conservation Innovation Grants, Grassland Reserve, Wetlands Reserve initiatives, etc.

REC'D FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS			NOTES
			Regional Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Acquisition	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship	
Donations and Capital Campaign	\$\$	NGO	X	X	X	X	X		Private property donations, corporate donations, foundations, sponsorships, cause marketing, planned giving, memorial gifts. For example, the Jaskowski Farm was a donation. Conduct landowner outreach for private property donations and planned giving or create capital campaign for highly visible projects.
Colorado Open Lands and/or Colorado Cattlemen's Trust	\$\$\$	NGO		X	X	X			The Berthoud area is a priority. Increase the capacity of these land trusts already operating in the Berthoud area through transaction costs, staff time (i.e., land agent), and landowner outreach/education.
Trust for Public Land and/or The Nature Conservancy	\$\$	NGO	X	X	X	X	X		These land trusts could work in the area if approached by landowners.
Leases and Rents	\$	Town/Private		X				X	Assess leasing program in order to offset property maintenance costs.
Volunteer & In-Kind Services	\$	Town/NGO	X		X		X	X	Modest staff time can generate a high return on investment

Alternative Funding Sources

ALT FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS			NOTES
			Regional Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Conservation	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship	
Property Tax	\$\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X	X	X	A valuable source for communities that lack retail tax base, though may not be supported by the community.
Additional Sales Tax	\$\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X	X	X	The Town currently has a 4% sales tax rate as part of Larimer County's total 7.7% sales tax rate, or 6.9% for sales made within Weld County in the Town of Berthoud.
General Fund	\$	Town	X	X	X	X	X	X	All departments compete for General Fund dollars, and amounts change annually. Still, the General Fund is an important source of matching funds.
User Fees or Per Unit Charges for Services	\$	Town						X	Typically for cost-recovery only. For example, special event fees cover the cost of event management. Longmont charges every residential unit a Park and Greenway Maintenance Fee via City utility bills for their maintenance and operations.
Farmland or Natural Area Mitigation Requirement	\$\$	Town		X					Farmland mitigation programs require that an equal or greater amount of farmland be preserved if a project converts farmland to another use. Projects developing on farmland would be required to either purchase land, conservation easements (with water rights), or pay a fee-in-lieu of acquisition. Mitigation property and/or fee revenue is held by a government entity or an approved land trust. Farmland mitigation programs have been used throughout the U.S. (especially California's Central Valley) and can be extended to natural areas.
Density Transfer Fee	\$\$	Town	X	X	X	X			In 1999 Berthoud created an innovative Density Transfer Fee but its implementation was short-lived. For rezonings that grant additional density, each unit gained from a rezoning was subject to a \$3,000 per single family unit and \$1,500 per multifamily unit fee. Revenue could be used for acquiring land and conservation easements for permanent preservation.
Foundation or "Friends Of"	\$	Town/ NGO	X	X	X	X	X	X	Would need to be created.

ALT FUNDING SOURCES	POTENTIAL AMOUNT	PARTNER TYPE	FOCUS AREAS			APPLICABLE TO LIFE CYCLE COSTS			NOTES
			Regional Trail Corridors	Agriculture	Natural Areas	Land Conservation	Capital Construction	Long-Term Stewardship	
Special Recreation District	\$	District	X		X	X	X	X	Used in metropolitan or unincorporated areas.
Interagency Staff Consulting	\$	Varies	X	X	X	X	X	X	Technical expertise from Larimer and Boulder counties, adjacent municipalities, and NGOs; project-dependent
CO Parks and Wildlife	\$	State	X			X	X	X	Apply for Colorado Front Range Trail grants (capital); Recreational Trails Program grants (acquisition and capital), Habitat Grants (stewardship), and other grants
CO Historical Society	\$	State		X	X		X	X	Can help protect and restore historic farm buildings and landscapes
The Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited and other NGOs	\$	NGO			X	X	X	X	Habitat enhancement and stewardship projects
Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District	\$	District	X	X		X		X	Partnerships that support NCWCD's mission and project priorities

PRIORITIES

Priorities must be defined to make sure limited staff resources and funding are used effectively and efficiently. A variety of factors were considered in prioritizing current action items, including the amount of funding, available partnerships, community significance, ease of implementation, and Board of Trustee input.

Priority 1: Creation of Funding Source: Development Impact Fee

Development impact fees are imposed on new development to finance impacts associated with the development. Development impact ordinances intend to assure that development bear an appropriate share of the cost of capital expenditures necessary to provide public facilities within the Town of Berthoud and its service area to serve the needs arising out of development and which reasonably benefits the new land development. Per Chapter 30.10 of the Development Code, open space and trails are included in the definition of capital improvement. New development contributes its proportionate share of funds necessary to accommodate its impact on public facilities having a rational nexus to the proposed development, and for which the need is attributable to the proposed development. State statute grants local governments the authority to impose impact fees or other similar development charges (§29-20-104.5 and §29-20-104(1)(g)) provided that the fee methodology complies with certain legal principles (e.g., that development only pays for its fair share of impact).

New developments in Berthoud dedicate a portion of land for parks at a rate of one acre of parkland per 100 dwelling units, or pay a fee-in-lieu of dedication.

Neighboring communities along the Front Range have similar dedication requirements and/or charge impact fees for open spaces, and trails together or separately. Wellington has a natural areas land dedication requirement, and Windsor allows natural areas land dedication as partial credit of its parkland dedication requirements. Windsor and Johnstown both have open space impact fees, and Loveland's Park and Open Space Fee has funded Rivers Edge Natural Area

and the High Plains Environmental Center. Longmont charges a Park Improvement Fee and a Recreation Buildings Impact Fee for new residential development, then after construction charges a monthly Park and Greenway Maintenance Fee to care for the parks. Berthoud currently collects park improvement fees per residential dwelling of \$3,131 to 5,429 depending on the square feet.

A Trail Impact Fee funds supports the idea of growth paying its way for the expansion of the trail system. The fee would be imposed one-time on each new residential unit. This is similar to current park development fees which provide funding for new parks. Greeley charges a Trail Development Fee to new home construction, however, this fee does not cover the full construction cost of a typical 10-foot paved trail, which averages \$1 million per mile, nor maintenance of the existing trails.

The 2016 Parks, Open Space, Recreation and Trails Master Plan recommended a \$300-500 trail fee.

This plan recommends a specific study to evaluate increasing the total parkland dedication requirement, require non-landscaped open space land as an increased dedication percentage, and/or adding an open space and/or trails impact fee.

The above recognition that "growth pays for growth" has limits. Impact fees typically only provides infrastructure that serve the development. There is not an impact fee for conserving nature ahead of development outside Town limits much less restoring lands degraded by development. An opportunistic regional approach of acting on potential land conservation deals ahead of development requires accruing cash in advance.

Priority 2: Regulatory Tools

The above discussion centered on funding available to the Town. A companion approach is for developers to conserve through development. Developers can be incentivized or required to direct growth away from sensitive areas through the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code. In addition to the tools above (Open Space Dedication Requirement) opportunities to better utilize regulatory tools include:

Section 30-2-109 requires developers to provide an open space buffer zone of 150 feet around all natural areas unless otherwise authorized by the Town. This setback may not be wide enough along lakes to allow for public access nor along natural drainageways and floodplains to allow for river movement, as evidenced by several segments of the Poudre River Trail that have been damaged during recent flood events. Consider revising the Code to 1) measure the open space buffer from the edge of floodplains, 2) increase the buffer zone to up to 300 feet from the high water mark of reservoirs, and 3) accommodate public access within the open space buffer to allow water access.

Following adoption of this plan and the Comprehensive Plan, the Development Code should be updated to align with plan priorities.

