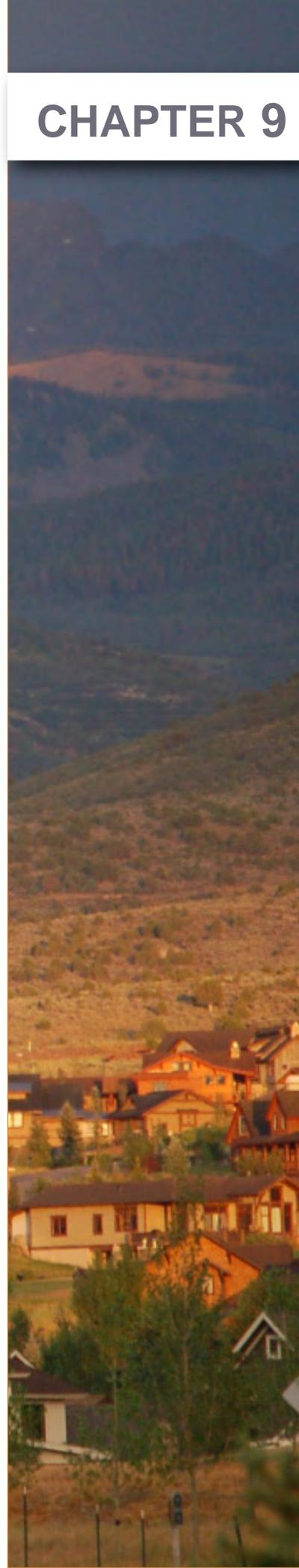


**CHAPTER 9:
Open Space, Recreation
and Trails**



Open Space, Recreation and Trails

Open space, recreation, and trails are integral to the quality of life enjoyed by Eagle residents, and to the success of local businesses that rely on related activities. In the 2007 Town of Eagle Community Survey, residents listed “open space on the fringes of town” as the most important enhancement to quality of life in the community. The intent of this chapter is to define a general approach and philosophy regarding open space, trails and recreation for the Eagle Planning Area.

The Benefits of Open Space

The definition of open space in this plan was proposed in the Eagle Area Open Lands Conservation Plan (EAOLCP) approved by the Town in 2004, and reads as follows:

“ . . . undeveloped areas characterized by scenic lands and sensitive environmental resources which provide numerous community benefits if conserved in perpetuity.”

Results of the 2007 Community Survey show that scenery and recreational amenities are major reasons residents choose to live in the Eagle Planning Area. Community survey respondents rated “acquire open space areas” as the second highest priority for the Town of Eagle.

Preserving open space has many benefits, including but not limited to the following:

- protects habitat for wildlife and plant diversity;
- reduces storm water runoff and water pollution;



Open Space trail on Third Gulch south of Eagle.

- preserves scenic views and rural atmosphere;
- provides access and connectivity to nature;
- enhances recreational uses;
- creates buffers between communities;
- encourages the efficient concentration of development;
- preserves and fosters agricultural land uses in out-lying areas; and
- enhances livability, and the attractiveness of the area to new businesses

It is important to note that 74% of the open lands surrounding the Town of Eagle (within the Eagle Area Community Plan boundary) are federally owned. While generally stable in configuration, these lands may or may not remain open space in perpetuity. Federal lands can be transferred to private ownership through land trades or exchanges. Additionally, resource extraction activities (mining and logging) on these lands can diminish their value to residents and recreationalists as open space.

A variety of tools are available to the Town and the County to help preserve open space and sensitive lands. The 1996 Eagle Area Community Plan identified a lodging tax as a funding source for open space acquisition. Local voters approved this tax in 1996, and since then the Town has acquired open space and

made a significant contribution to perpetually preserve Sylvan Lake State Park on East and West Brush Creek. In 2002, county residents approved an increase in property taxes to fund open



Signs provide education and regulation in open space areas.

space acquisitions, resulting in a pool of available money that is now administered by Eagle County. Public open space funds can be used to purchase open space properties in fee simple, or to purchase conservation easements, which in essence purchase the development rights on a property while allowing it to

remain in private ownership. This approach is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It strategically reduces the amount of development that can occur on a property.
- It assures that a property's environmental, cultural or open space values are properly preserved and managed.
- It allows the land to continue to be used in profitable ways by the land owner.
- It assures long-term maintenance of the land (by the property owner) without public subsidy, and
- It is significantly cheaper than a fee simple purchase of the property.

Future efforts should focus on targeting specific lands for open space and implementing appropriate acquisition strategies. In addition to utilizing public open space funds, both the Town and the County can work with developers and land owners to preserve quality open space areas through annexation and/or entitlement processes. General preservation priorities include:

- Riparian corridors, particularly along the Eagle River and Brush Creek;
- Sensitive wildlife habitat and movement corridors;
- Prominent ridgelines and hillsides;
- Public trails and points of access to public lands;

- Lands east and west of the Town of Eagle that serve as community buffers;
- Lands that contribute to scenic viewsheds
- Lands that contribute to the preservation of the area's character, heritage and sense of openness

The work to evaluate lands, land use patterns and land use impacts for the purpose of identifying key parcels for conservation should be a collaborative venture, involving local governments, state, national and local agencies, and involved organizations, citizens and other stakeholders.

Recreation and Trail Amenities

The 1996 Eagle Area Community Plan identified access points, potential trail corridors, and sites for recreational activities. Improvements since 1996 include completion of the Eagle Area Open Lands Conservation Plan in 1997, creation of the Eagle County Regional Trails Plan in 2001, construction of the Eagle Pool and Ice Rink in 2003, and improvements to Eagle Town Park in 2006. Based on the State of Colorado Small Community Park and Recreation Planning Standards, the Town currently exceeds the standard for parks (.8 acres of park land per 1,000 residents) by providing 2.29 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.

The demand for outdoor recreation is expected to grow, from both locals and visitors to the area. The community survey suggests alpine skiing, hiking, and walking/jogging as the most popular recreational activities for residents of the Eagle Planning Area, followed by fishing, golf, mountain biking, road biking and snowshoeing. Recreational resources include numerous neighborhood parks, Eagle County Fairgrounds, Eagle Pool and Ice Rink, Eagle Ranch Golf Course, an extensive trail system, the Eagle River and Brush Creek, the Visitor Center Park, and the expansive public lands outside of the Growth Boundary.

close proximity to the Town's boundary. The expansion of paved paths and trails in collaboration with the Eagle Valley Regional Trails Plan was a strongly suggested recreational enhancement in the community survey. The Town should pursue additional funding sources for trail maintenance and construction, and coordinate with the BLM and U.S.F.S for access to federally owned lands. Appropriate parking and signage should be developed to direct people to open space, recreation and trails. Signage within the downtown area will help visitors locate businesses, parking, and amenities.



The Town and County should continue to acquire new, and maintain and manage existing open space and recreational sites and facilities including appropriate trails, river access points, and access to publicly owned lands. Particular focus should be given to open space areas and trails in

The Eagle Pool and Ice Rink is an important year-round recreational amenity.

Open Space Goal #1: *Open space in the Eagle Planning Area is appropriately preserved and managed.*

POLICIES	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Open Space Policy 1.1</p> <p>Protect lands of high conservation or recreation value as open space.</p>	<p>A. Utilize relevant and available resources, including current resource maps and Town and County Open Space Plans, to identify open space lands worthy of preservation.</p> <p>B. Work with state, national and local agencies, as well as interested citizens and organizations to evaluate and coordinate the acquisition of the targeted open space lands.</p> <p>C. Retain existing public land configurations in the area unless the public benefits realized through a public land trade or exchange significantly outweigh any negative impacts.</p> <p>D. Implement strategies for the preservation of open space including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Acquiring conservation easements. 2) Preserving open space through development negotiations and/or exactions. 3) Requiring/creating buffers between development and adjacent public lands. 4) Promoting a transfer of development rights (TDR) program. 5) Promoting lease-back arrangements. As part of a land purchase contract, the Town can lease the land back to the seller for a specified time for continuation of farming or ranching. 6) Developing zone districts and/or future land use designations that require “conservation oriented development”. Conservation oriented development emphasizes the preservation of lands of high conservation value as a part of a development proposal. 7) Fostering appropriate intergovernmental and interagency collaboration. 8) Working to educate landowners about tax incentives associated with the preservation of open space.

<i>POLICIES</i>	<i>RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES</i>
<p>Open Space Policy 1.2</p> <p>Support efforts to enhance or expand Town parks, trails and recreation amenities.</p>	<p>A. Prepare a detailed Recreation Master Plan that addresses the importance of both dispersed and organized recreational activities and supporting amenities and facilities in the Eagle Planning Area.</p> <p>B. Identify enhancements to existing or proposed Town parks and trails. Recommended improvements include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improved access to the Eagle River through town. 2) The development of a park and connecting trails at the confluence of Brush Creek and the Eagle River. 3) Expanding parks and trails to keep pace with a growing community. 4) Expanded linkages to and extensions of the Eagle County (ECO) Regional Trails Plan. Work with the Eco Trails Committee to identify needs and construct new trails. <p>C. Pursue funding for trail maintenance and for the construction of new trails and parks.</p> <p>D. Require new development to provide adequate parks, trails and other recreational facilities.</p> <p>E. Require new development to provide trail connections to local and regional destinations or existing trail systems.</p> <p>F. Explore opportunities for a white water park at or near the Eagle County Fairgrounds.</p>

Open Space Goal #2: *Residents and visitors to the Eagle Planning Area are provided appropriate access to public lands, open space and river/stream corridors.*

<i>POLICIES</i>	<i>RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES</i>
<p>Open Space Policy 2.1</p> <p>Work to preserve and acquire appropriate access to public lands, open space and river/stream corridors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Work with stakeholder groups to identify and map existing and desired access points to public lands, rivers and streams. B. Maintain, improve or work to add public land access points where appropriate. Use a variety of techniques such as development incentives, acquisition of development rights, and donation of easements to preserve, enhance and/or acquire such access. C. Secure public rights-of-way, for existing or new access to public lands. D. Require that all development applications or annexation proposals for property adjacent to public lands include appropriate public access. E. For lands adjacent to public lands, require a pre-application consultation with relevant state and federal land management agencies to discuss issues such as appropriate travel/use restrictions, site development, seasonal closures and similar issues that would affect adjacent public lands. F. Develop programs to educate citizens on appropriate use of public lands, including the need for seasonal closures to protect wildlife.