

NONURBAN LAND USE

The Douglas County Comprehensive Master Plan enhances the quality of life for residents by protecting the natural landscape, rural areas, and historic sites of the County. Specific nonurban subarea policies have been established to protect and preserve the rural character, heritage, wildlife habitat, viewsheds and historic townsites of the County. The Plan also identifies individual nonurban subareas to allow policies to reflect specific needs within these areas. The protection of nonurban areas is further implemented through zoning, which establishes maximum thresholds for intensive land uses that may not be supported by nonurban area goals.



Nonurban development is supported in these subareas to preserve the County's rural heritage while providing compatible outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. Nonurban land uses are generally low-intensity activities that include farming, ranching, large lot residential, limited-service commercial, parks and open spaces. To support and protect community values for nonurban residential and agricultural communities, appropriate commercial, service, or civic land uses are established.

Nonurban land uses fall into two primary categories: semi-rural and rural development. Semi-rural development is generally defined at a density of one unit per 2.5 acres to one dwelling unit per 17.4 acres, while rural development allow a maximum density of one dwelling unit per 17.5 acres.

SECTION 3

NATURAL AREAS

Douglas County citizens have placed a high value on the conservation of the natural and rural character of the nonurban areas of the County.

To maintain the character of the rural portions of the County, the CMP supports efforts by landowners to continue the agricultural lifestyle they enjoy.

The County is rich in historic and cultural features that should be preserved for future generations. The CMP supports efforts to keep rural lands open between the urbanized areas to maintain a sense of place and retain community character.

The commitment to maintaining the rural areas of the County comes with a responsibility for stewardship of these lands. This section of the CMP contains policies to ensure that investments in land preservation are protected through proper management.

Land use proposals must take into consideration the significant wildlife habitat found within and adjacent to riparian corridors, including, especially, Cherry Creek, East and West Plum Creeks, as well as the wildlife that depends on those resources for survival. Archaeological and historic resources have also been identified as important features to be considered and protected, whenever possible.

PIKE NATIONAL FOREST

The southwestern portion of Douglas County is dominated by the foothills and forested mountains of the Pike National Forest and contains important habitat for numerous wildlife species. The Pike National Forest offers exceptional scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. The mountains and forests create incredible vistas.

Private property and old mining claims occur sporadically through the area. The few roads are narrow and winding, many are gravel, and large portions of the area are inaccessible through the winter. Groundwater occurs inconsistently and is unreliable in this

region. The wildfire danger is high and fires in these areas can be very intense and cause substantial damage. Areas that have been impacted by wildfire are subject to flash flooding. Infrastructure and services are limited.

The Pike National Forest is controlled by the United States Forest Service (USFS); Douglas County has limited control over land uses on the National Forest itself. However, land use policies found in this document apply to non-Federal lands in the Pike National Forest Area. Nonurban land use policies are appropriate in this rural area.

With its proximity to the Denver Metropolitan area, the Pike National Forest is a popular recreational area, offering hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, equestrian use, motor sports, and wildlife viewing. The Pike National Forest area has a wide variety of wildlife and is home to the Platte River gold medal fishery. It also boasts a large and complex system of motorized and non-motorized trails. Managing the negative impacts to recreation resources is a challenge the South Platte Ranger District is addressing through proactive planning.

Commercial operations and water development have always been included in the US Forest Service's multiple-use philosophy. Douglas County encourages the opportunity for local resource harvest and development. Any development or land-use should respect the unique character of the Pike National Forest and minimize impacts to the local community and natural setting.

Management is critical to keep the forests healthy and the infrastructure intact. Some management activities are intensive and require heavy equipment; examples include timber harvest, controlled burning, restoration of burned areas, road and bridge reconstruction, stream stabilization and sediment removal. Activities such as wildlife management, weed control, watershed management, and beetle control may be less intensive but just as important.

Residential development opportunities are constrained by limited access, services, water,

increased wildfire and flood hazard and other obstacles. Rural cluster regulations are appropriate. Wildfire risk should be mitigated wherever possible.

NONURBAN DEVELOPMENT

Residents of Douglas County value the "small town" feel and the quietness that the rural areas provide. Through the Zoning and Subdivision Resolutions, the CMP provides a basis for good design to accomplish preservation of the rural landscape, natural habitats, critical viewsheds, and community separators. Design concepts are applied that respect rural communities, vegetative cover, ridgelines, wetlands, critical wildlife habitat and movement corridors. In conjunction with the Douglas County Water-Supply Overlay Zone District, the CMP defines areas that can physically support new development.

Design policies compel development to conserve and showcase important natural and rural features of the County. The CMP seeks to establish and preserve, through its policies, the values expressed by citizens for scenic views, dark skies at night, wide open spaces, undeveloped ridgelines, protected riparian areas, and agricultural landscapes.



As part of the land-use review process, wildfire hazards, geologic hazards, and visual impacts must be evaluated and mitigated, to the extent possible. The process also requires demonstration of a dependable, long-term water supply in accordance with Section 18-A, Water Supply-Overlay District, of the Douglas County Zoning Resolution, as well as

review of other important services. The provision of local and regional trails and potential new connections to existing trails should also be considered as part of land-use proposals.

NONURBAN SUBAREAS

There are six distinct nonurban subareas identified in this Plan: Chatfield Valley, Cherry Valley, High Plateau, Indian Creek, Northeast, and West Plum Creek. The subareas were established to create goals and policies that address their individual and unique character, circumstances and needs.

HOW THIS SECTION RELATES TO OTHER SECTIONS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

Policies in this section of the Plan primarily deal with land use in the nonurban area, heavily emphasizing rural character, scenic views, open space, and design issues. Topics such as community resources, transportation, water supply, wildlife habitat preservation, and open space opportunities are addressed in other sections of the Plan, including the urban land use section, and should be reviewed simultaneously with nonurban land use policies.

GOAL 3-1

PROTECT AND CONSERVE THE NATURAL AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE NONURBAN AREA.

OBJECTIVE 3-1A

PRESERVE LAND THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY RANCHING, FARMING, SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE HABITAT, IMPORTANT BIOTIC SYSTEMS, OR IMPORTANT SCENIC VIEWS, IN PERPETUITY.

POLICY 3-1A.1

To protect environmentally and visually sensitive nonurban areas, use the sale and/or transfer of development credits to send development to areas in the County more able to support development, consistent with this Plan.

POLICY 3-1A.2

Preserve open space through the purchase of land or conservation easements, donations, acquisitions, partnerships, or other appropriate land-conservation tools.

OBJECTIVE 3-1B

SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OWNERS OF RURAL LANDS TO CONTINUE RANCHING AND FARMING.

POLICY 3-1B.1

Diminish the impact of development to existing agricultural operations by buffering them from incompatible uses.



POLICY 3-1B.2

Encourage opportunities for the expansion of agricultural operations in the nonurban area.

POLICY 3-1B.3

Promote edible landscape plantings in nonurban areas.

OBJECTIVE 3-1C

PRESERVE RURAL HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND SITES.

POLICY 3-1C.1

Support restoration and management efforts of historic structures and sites as part of all rural land use applications.

POLICY 3-1C.2

Design new development to locate away from, and be compatible with, historic structures and sites.

OBJECTIVE 3-1D

ESTABLISH COMMUNITY SEPARATORS TO MAINTAIN COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND SENSE OF PLACE.

POLICY 3-1D.1

Maintain community separators through the identification of suitable land uses and appropriate location of development. Land uses that do not maintain community separation are inconsistent with this Plan.

OBJECTIVE 3-1E

PRESERVE AND PROVIDE FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREAS.

POLICY 3-1E.1

Identify and set aside, through the land use and development review processes, important open spaces in tracts or easements, where appropriate.

**POLICY 3-1E.2**

Require management plans, including forest and weed management plans, for conserved lands which are outside of residential lots or parcels, or within conservation easements, as appropriate. Management plans should identify the managing entity, funding source, and stewardship responsibilities.

GOAL 3-2

ENSURE LAND USE AND DESIGN IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE NATURAL AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE NONURBAN AREA.

OBJECTIVE 3-2A

ENSURE THE NATURE AND INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE NONURBAN AREA.

POLICY 3-2A.1

Design should be of a scale and character that complements the rural character of the nonurban area.

POLICY 3-2A.2

Where possible, fencing should be wildlife-friendly, in accordance with standards recommended by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

OBJECTIVE 3-2B

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT TO CONSERVE AND SHOW-CASE IMPORTANT NATURAL AND RURAL FEATURES.

POLICY 3-2B.1

Use building envelopes, clustering and other site-design techniques, where appropriate, to direct building away from environmentally- and visually-sensitive lands.

POLICY 3-2B.2

Design structures and site amenities with materials and colors that complement the natural landscape.

POLICY 3-2B.3

Encourage the preservation and construction of drainageways and stormwater management facilities that complement the natural and rural landscape.

POLICY 3-2B.4

Preserve vegetation, soils, and landforms by minimizing site disturbance. Overlot grading is strongly discouraged in the nonurban areas, except as needed for clustering or to screen residential development.

POLICY 3-2B.5

Design landscape plantings to minimize water consumption and blend with native vegetation using existing on-site trees and vegetation.

POLICY 3-2B.6

Grade disturbed slopes to blend with the natural terrain and revegetate with native grasses and vegetation.

POLICY 3-2B.7

Encourage designs that minimize the use of resources to provide energy efficiency in both construction and operation.

OBJECTIVE 3-2C

PRESERVE THE VISUAL INTEGRITY OF SIGNIFICANT RIDGELINES, ROAD VIEWSHEDS, HORIZON LINES, VIEWS OF THE MOUNTAIN BACKDROP, AND OTHER IMPORTANT NATURAL FEATURES.

POLICY 3-2C.1

Locate houses, utilities, and other structures away from important ridgelines and horizon lines.

POLICY 3-2C.2

Design development within the major highway corridors to protect viewsheds in the nonurban area.

POLICY 3-2C.3

Encourage residential site design and locations that complement the nonurban landscape and minimize the impact of road noise.

POLICY 3-2C.4

Minimize the impacts of light pollution from commercial and residential uses through lighting standards that support dark-sky principles.

OBJECTIVE 3-2D

ENCOURAGE RURAL DEVELOPMENT THAT SUPPORTS “HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.”

POLICY 3-2D.1

Require the provision of open space and trail corridors within residential development to allow access to natural features and to promote recreation and exercise opportunities.

POLICY 3-2D.2

Develop park facilities in the nonurban area for active and passive uses, where appropriate.

POLICY 3-2D.3

Develop local trail systems and a regional, interconnected system of multi-use trails that links communities, recreation areas, open space, neighborhood trails, and trail systems, including those outside of Douglas County.

POLICY 3-2D.4

Support the paving of shoulders along rural roads, outside of environmentally sensitive areas.

NONURBAN SUBAREAS**GOAL 3-3**

MAINTAIN THE UNIQUE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE CHERRY VALLEY, CHATFIELD VALLEY (NONURBAN AREA), HIGH PLATEAU, INDIAN CREEK, NORTHEAST, PIKE NATIONAL FOREST AND FOOTHILLS, AND WEST PLUM CREEK SUBAREAS.

CHATFIELD VALLEY SUBAREA**OBJECTIVE 3-3A**

ENSURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHATFIELD VALLEY SUBAREA RESPECTS THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE AREA.

POLICY 3-3A.1

Low-intensity rural development is supported in the Chatfield Valley Subarea. Rural site plans may be approved where they meet the goals, objectives, and policies of the Plan.

**POLICY 3-3A.2**

Semi-rural development in the Chatfield Valley Subarea is not supported by this Plan.

POLICY 3-3A.3

New development in the nonurban areas of the Chatfield Valley Subarea should apply stringent water-conservation measures and avoid water-intensive uses.

POLICY 3-3A.4

Support ongoing planning and management efforts to ensure water quality is maintained now and into the future.

POLICY 3-3A.5

New development within the Chatfield Valley Subarea should include conservation of important grassland and other habitat areas, and wildlife movement corridors that link habitat areas.

POLICY 3-3A.6

New development within the Chatfield Valley Subarea should identify and preserve significant archaeological and historic features, and be incorporated appropriately into development plans.

POLICY 3-3A.7

New development proposed within the Chatfield Valley Subarea should mitigate visual impacts to the mountain backdrop.

**POLICY 3-3A.8**

Development within the Chatfield Valley Subarea should conserve a buffer around the communities of Louviers, Roxborough, and Sedalia.

CHERRY VALLEY SUBAREA**OBJECTIVE 3-3B**

MAINTAIN THE AGRICULTURAL LIFESTYLE AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE CHERRY VALLEY SUBAREA.

POLICY 3-3B.1

Low intensity rural development is supported in the Cherry Valley Subarea. Rural site plans may be approved where they meet the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan.

POLICY 3-3B.2

Semi-rural development in the Cherry Valley Subarea is not supported by this Plan.

POLICY 3-3B.3

Future development within the Cherry Valley Subarea should minimize any negative impacts on the riparian corridor of Cherry Creek and its sub-drainages.

POLICY 3-3B.4

Preserve grassland areas in the Cherry Valley Subarea to ensure the survival of species such as the Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse and Pronghorn Antelope.

POLICY 3-3B.5

Maintain wildlife movement corridors through the Cherry Valley Subarea and to adjoining subareas, including the Greenland/ I-25 wildlife underpass.

POLICY 3-3B.6

Development in the Cherry Valley Subarea should minimize visual impacts within major viewsheds.

POLICY 3-3B.7

Development within the Cherry Valley Subarea should conserve and maintain buffers to support distinctive community form and boundaries around the Town of Castle Rock and Franktown Rural Community.

POLICY 3-3B.8

Future trail projects should support a trail connection between Greenland Ranch and Prairie Canyon/Castlewood Canyon.

HIGH PLATEAU SUBAREA**OBJECTIVE 3-3C**

ENSURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE HIGH PLATEAU SUBAREA IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PLAN.

POLICY 3-3C.1

Low-intensity rural development is supported in the High Plateau Subarea. Rural site plans may be approved where they meet the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan.

POLICY 3-3C.2

Development in the High Plateau Subarea should provide open lands adjacent to Interstate 25, and cluster development adjacent to existing development at a density compatible with adjoining incorporated and unincorporated land uses, to protect important viewsheds.

POLICY 3-3C.3

Semi-rural development is generally not supported in the High Plateau Subarea.

INDIAN CREEK SUBAREA**OBJECTIVE 3-3D**

ENSURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE INDIAN CREEK SUBAREA IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PLAN.

POLICY 3-3D.1

Low-intensity rural development is supported in the Indian Creek Subarea. Rural site plans may be approved where they meet the goals, objectives, and policies of the Plan.

POLICY 3-3D.2

Semi-rural development in the Indian Creek Subarea is not supported by this Plan.

POLICY 3-3D.3

New development in the Indian Creek Subarea should apply stringent water-conservation measures and avoid water-intensive uses.

POLICY 3-3D.4

Support ongoing planning and management efforts to ensure water quality is maintained now and into the future.

POLICY 3-3D.5

New development within the Indian Creek Subarea should include conservation of important grassland and other habitat areas, wildlife movement corridors that link habitat areas.

POLICY 3-3D.6

New development within the Indian Creek Subarea should identify and preserve significant archaeological and historic features, and be incorporated appropriately into the development plan.

POLICY 3-3D.7

New development proposed within the nonurban areas of the Indian Creek Subarea should minimize visual impacts to the mountain backdrop.

POLICY 3-3D.8

Development within the Indian Creek Subarea should conserve a buffer around the community of Sedalia.

NORTHEAST SUBAREA**OBJECTIVE 3-3E**

ENSURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHEAST SUBAREA IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PLAN.

POLICY 3-3E.1

Support semi-rural development where it is logical infill, where approximately 50% of the property boundary is adjacent to zoned lands or parcel sizes consistent with the proposed development, and where site characteristics can generally support it.

**POLICY 3-3E.2**

Rural site plans in the Northeast Subarea may be approved where they meet the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan.

POLICY 3-3E.3

Semi-rural development is supported in the Northeast Subarea where there is adequate public infrastructure to support the proposed development and where the other goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan have been met.

POLICY 3-3E.4

Encourage connections to central water and sewer district systems, when possible.

POLICY 3-3E.5

New development within the Northeast Subarea should take measures to protect the existing alluvial wells used as water supply in this area.

POLICY 3-3E.6

New development within the Northeast Subarea should be designed to minimize the removal of vegetation and to use trees and landforms to screen development, where possible. Additional trees and vegetation should be planted, where necessary and appropriate, to screen development.

POLICY 3-3E.7

Maintain natural drainages for wildlife movement, as possible, and provide open space linkages within and between large-lot developments.

POLICY 3-3E.8

Development along existing roads in the Northeast Subarea should be carefully sited and designed to minimize visual impacts, particularly of distant Front Range mountain views and open meadows.

WEST PLUM CREEK SUBAREA**OBJECTIVE 3-3F**

ENSURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST PLUM CREEK SUBAREA IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PLAN.

POLICY 3-3F.1

Low-intensity rural development of the County's rural site plan and 35-acre cluster regulations are supported in the West Plum Creek Subarea.

POLICY 3-3F.2

Semi-rural development in the West Plum Creek Subarea is not supported by this Plan.

POLICY 3-3F.3

Parcels within, and directly adjacent to, the Perry Park development, that have been rezoned to semi-rural and urban densities under the provisions of previous Comprehensive Master Plans may proceed through the subdivision review process.

POLICY 3-3F.4

Support the establishment of Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) to improve internal roads and extend water and sewer infrastructure.

POLICY 3-3F.5

Support build out of Perry Park to the extent that development can be appropriately served by roads, water, and sewer infrastructure without undue harm to the natural environment.

POLICY 3-3F.6

Support limited transfer of development credits from platted portions of Perry Park that contain physical and environmental constraints, to more appropriate areas in the County.

**POLICY 3-3F.7**

New development within the West Plum Creek Subarea should avoid and mitigate impacts to the riparian corridor of East and West Plum Creeks and their sub-drainages.

POLICY 3-3F.8

Development along major roads in the West Plum Creek Subarea should be carefully sited and designed to minimize visual impacts, particularly to the foothills, Front Range mountain views, and open meadows.

POLICY 3-3F.9

Strongly encourage land use and transportation patterns that foster the establishment of visually distinctive communities.

POLICY 3-3F.10

Support paving shoulders along major roads to provide a safe place for bicyclists and all users.

POLICY 3-3F.11

Support establishment of a trail in the West Plum Creek area, with a connection to Green-land Ranch.

PIKE NATIONAL FOREST AND FOOTHILLS SUBAREA

OBJECTIVE 3-3G

PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND SCENIC BEAUTY OF THE PIKE NATIONAL FOREST AND FOOTHILLS SUBAREA, WHILE PROVIDING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

POLICY 3-3G.1

Support and encourage the conservation of lands important as natural resources.

POLICY 3-3G.2

Encourage actions to convert in-holdings to Pike National Forest.



OBJECTIVE 3-3H

PROVIDE APPROPRIATE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PIKE NATIONAL FOREST.

POLICY 3-3H.1

Support the development of appropriately located trailheads and access to forest trails from lands along the eastern boundary of the Pike National Forest and Foothills Subarea.

POLICY 3-3H.2

Support cooperative efforts to plan for natural resource protection, management, and recreational uses in the Pike National Forest.

OBJECTIVE 3-3I

PRESERVE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE PIKE NATIONAL FOREST AND FOOTHILLS SUBAREA.

POLICY 3-3I.1

Urban or semi-rural development in the Pike National Forest and Foothills Subarea is inconsistent with this Plan.

POLICY 3-3I.2

Minimize the impact of development and respect the distinct character of the Pike National Forest during development review.

POLICY 3-3I.3

Support the use of the County's 35-acre cluster regulations.

POLICY 3-3I.4

Ensure development proposed for the Pike National Forest, including, but not limited to, mineral extraction, water storage, recreation, major public utility facilities, and telecommunication facilities, is consistent with the County's Matters of State Interest (1041) Regulations, and the Zoning Resolution.

OBJECTIVE 3-3J

PROVIDE APPROPRIATE RESOURCE HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PIKE NATIONAL FOREST AND FOOTHILLS SUBAREA.

POLICY 3-3J.1

Encourage the responsible private/commercial harvesting of timber.

POLICY 3-3J.2

Support the responsible private/commercial harvest or extraction of other natural resources.

POLICY 3-3J.3

Support the responsible improvement of the watershed and development of water resources.

POLICY 3-3J.4

Support industrial type uses specific to resource harvest or development, such as saw mills or wood product processing facilities where appropriate infrastructure can be provided and impacts to the local community can be minimized.