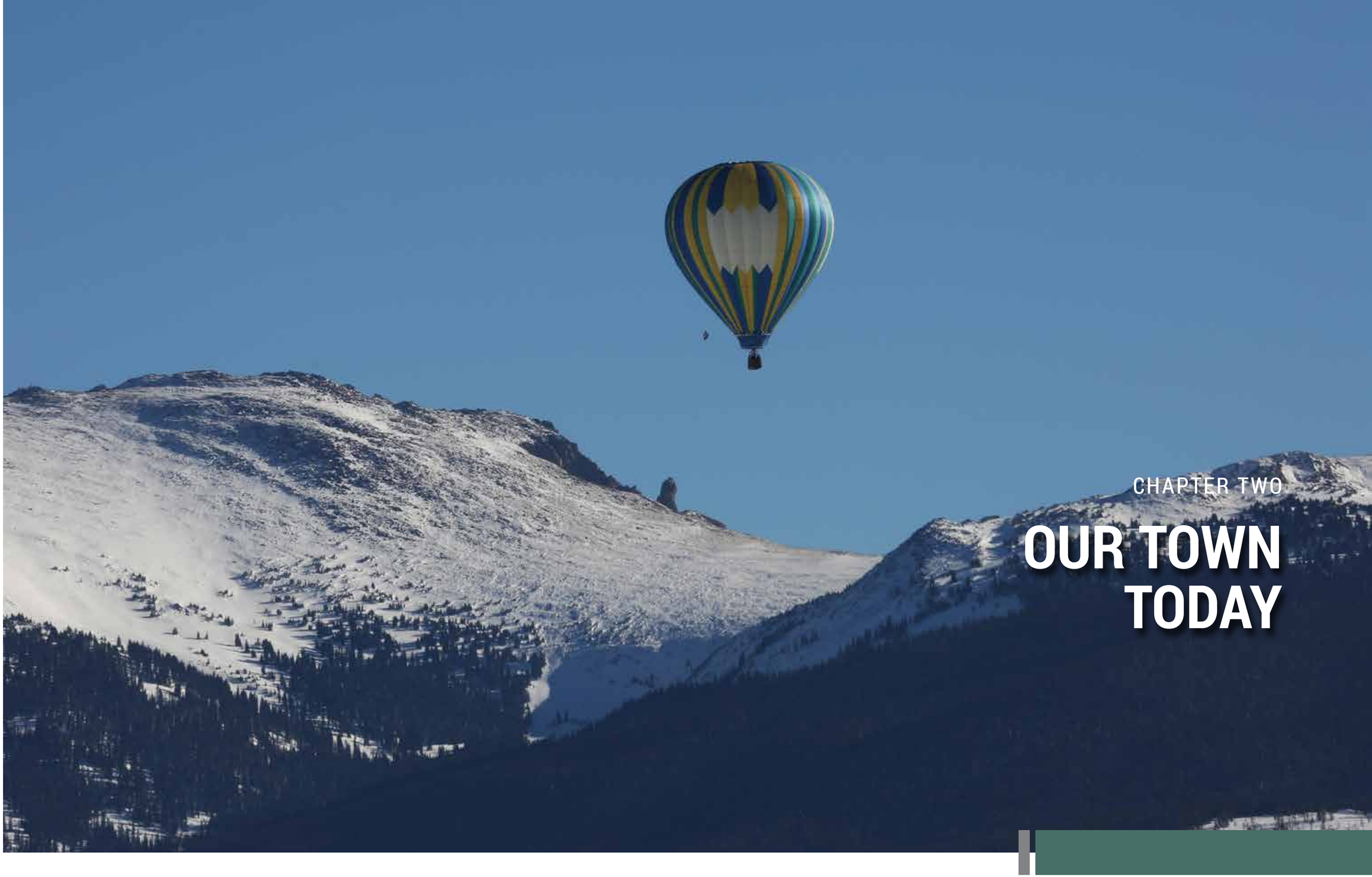


CHAPTER TWO

OUR TOWN TODAY

Trends and Existing Conditions

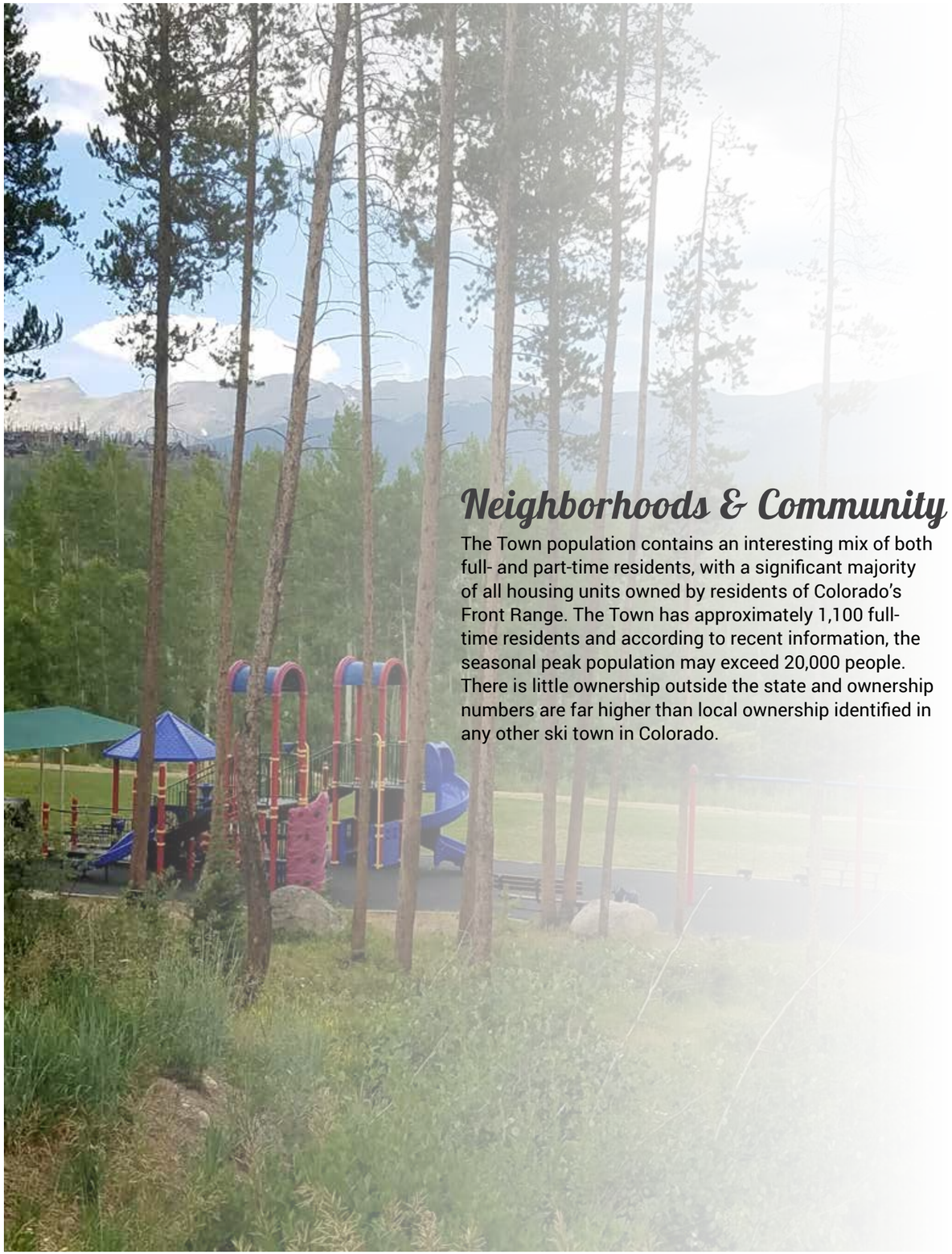
OVERVIEW

The following existing conditions "snapshots" have been complied using the most recent available data from the Town of Winter Park, Grand County, the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, and other sources. These snapshots present an overview of the Town's baseline conditions.

These snapshots will aid the update of the Town's vision, identify major opportunities, and set the stage for a strategic, forward-thinking land use plan.

The snapshots are divided into three categories:

1. Neighborhoods & Community
2. Connections
3. Environment and Amenities



Neighborhoods & Community

The Town population contains an interesting mix of both full- and part-time residents, with a significant majority of all housing units owned by residents of Colorado's Front Range. The Town has approximately 1,100 full-time residents and according to recent information, the seasonal peak population may exceed 20,000 people. There is little ownership outside the state and ownership numbers are far higher than local ownership identified in any other ski town in Colorado.

HOUSING

It is estimated that that perhaps 20% of the Town's housing stock is owned by full time residents. Consistent with other intermountain west resort communities, there are increasing numbers of second homeowners who, upon retirement, become full-time residents. The part-time/absentee population is slightly greater than that observed in other mountain communities. Figures from both the 2000 and 2010 US Census of Winter Park yield the following key findings:

- Population growth rates vary due to the availability of affordable housing.
- Home ownership has increased, although many of these are second homes.
- Household size has decreased.
- Family growth has been greatest where affordable housing is available.
- The aging population and influx of retirees continue to outpace the growth of the other demographic sectors.

Ownership patterns, both local and absentee, vary little by product type. Additionally, the Town has little diversity in the availability of current housing inventory. Over 70% of the existing housing stock consists of condominiums and townhomes, while the remaining 30% consists of single-family detached or smaller townhome developments. The vast majority of housing in Winter Park was built prior to 2010.

Neighborhoods and Community Key Highlights

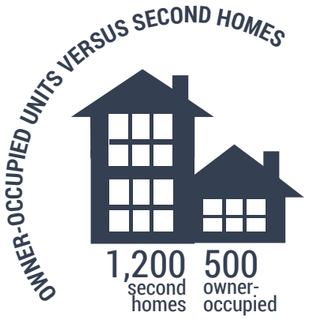
ISSUES

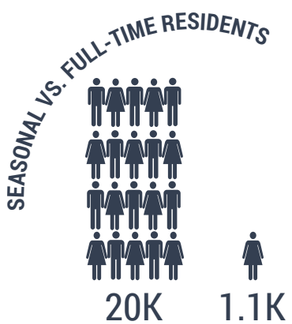
- A shortage of workforce housing impacts both the economic sustainability and culture of the community.
- Much of the existing housing stock is dated as the majority was built prior to 2010.
- The development pattern and physical separation between Downtown and the Resort create a lack of cohesiveness and cultural disconnect.
- A lack of a year-round population makes it difficult to sustain certain businesses.
- There is a lack of clearly defined gateways, branding, and wayfinding throughout the Town.
- The limited amount of social gathering spaces within the Town impacts the Town's sense of identity.
- Employment is focused primarily on recreation, tourism, and supporting industries such as accommodation and restaurants.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The Town owns several parcels of land that can be used to provide workforce housing.
- Growth patterns along Main Street are trending toward mixed-use development which can be used to encourage walkability, transit use, live/work options, and a more vibrant community.
- Future business development can diversify the existing employment base encouraging a year round community.
- Unified streetscape and wayfinding elements can help create a cohesive connection between the Downtown and the Resort.
- New annexations and developments can provide opportunities for additional public parks and plazas.
- Completing the Fraser River Trail can provide a continuous connection through Town and increase the vitality of the community.
- Enhanced broadband connections can be implemented to increase Winter Park's attractiveness for business development.

By the Numbers





The Town has a significant shortage of workforce housing which is exacerbated by its recent increase in economic growth and visitation rates. Additionally, due to demand across the resort marketplace and the notion that Winter Park may be the last, best, and most affordable ski town, property values are rapidly trending upward. The average price of a single-family home is approaching $650,000, while multi-family units average $355,000. With a median household income of $78,000, most families cannot afford to live in Town. Single-family home prices increased by approximately 30% in 2017, with a similar increase in multi-family homes.

In response to the need for increased workforce housing affordability, the Town purchased several vacant parcels within the Downtown core. These include:

- The Dimmit Parcel: This is the initial phase of Hideaway Junction including 10 units of detached, single-family housing specifically for full-time residents. Phase II planning is currently underway for 35 to 40 additional single-family homes that will be constructed over the next 5 years.
- The Dimmit 2 Parcel: This parcel is located near the Town Center within walking distance of Main Street, downtown shopping, and event venues. Future plans may consist of a workforce apartment complex for seasonal and full-time Resort employees.
- Fireside Creek: A 2 acre parcel located adjacent to Wolf Park, which is currently zoned for 40 units.
- High Seasons: This .8 acre parcel is located immediately east of the railroad which separates this parcel from the Fireside Creek property.
- Roam: In conjunction with the annexation of the Roam property, the Town will acquire 3 acres within the development.

Of the Town's estimated 2,700 housing units, resident-occupied units are decreasing as the economy has recovered from the 2008 recession, and as short-term rentals have increased (VRBO, Airbnb, etc.). The discrepancy between workforce housing needs in the community and suitable housing availability is perhaps best illustrated by the information provided by the Winter Park Resort. Out of approximately 2,000 employees, the Resort only provides housing for 350 seasonal workers. The Resort is currently unable to provide satisfactory housing for the rest of its workforce. Of its 400 summer seasonal staff and 1,500 winter seasonal staff, 90% come from outside of the community and need to find housing when they move here.

Economic Development

The Town's economy is characterized by seasonal fluctuations thoroughout the year. The Town's busiest months are during the ski season, from December through March. While summer months and the fall shoulder season continue to grow, revenue is less than half of the winter months.

Visitation is increasing year-round; visitor days have grown nearly 50% between 2014 and 2017. The Town adopted a Transit and Trails Sales Tax in 2015, increasing the sales tax rate from 5% to 7%. Economic growth is optimistic, with several positive indicators being the development of the Fireside Market and Eatery, the purchase of the Resort by Alterra Mountain Company, and several new mixed use developments totaling approximately 60,000 square feet of retail and over 100 residential units.

Broadband connectivity and cellular service within the Town is limited in certain areas. A feasibility study has outlined recommendations for expanding last-mile solutions to service homes and businesses. As broadband is now a necessity, improving internet connections may allow for more year-round residents as telecommuting and the ability to live in Winter Park and commute occasionally to the Denver area grows.

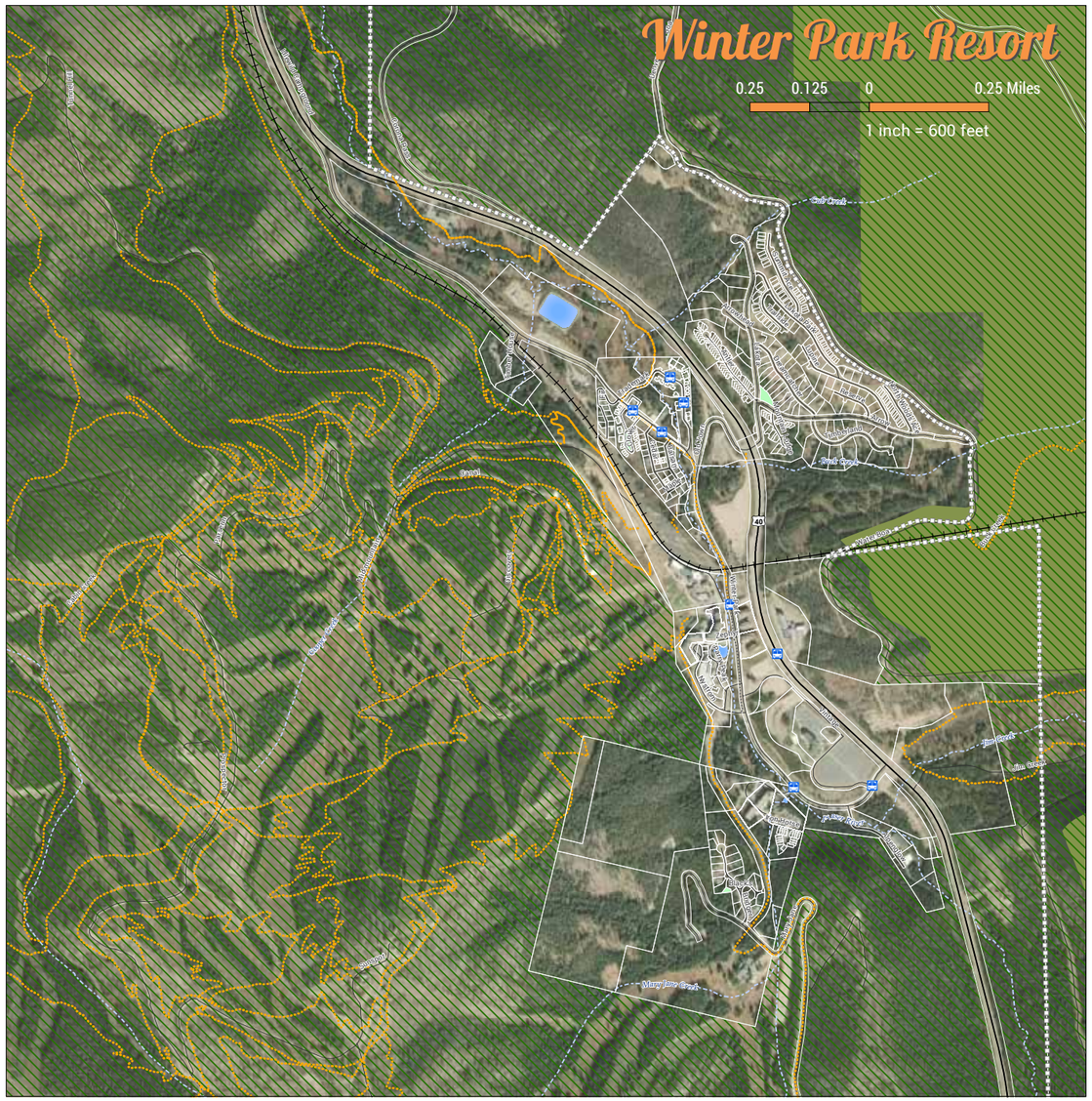
Winter Park, Colorado

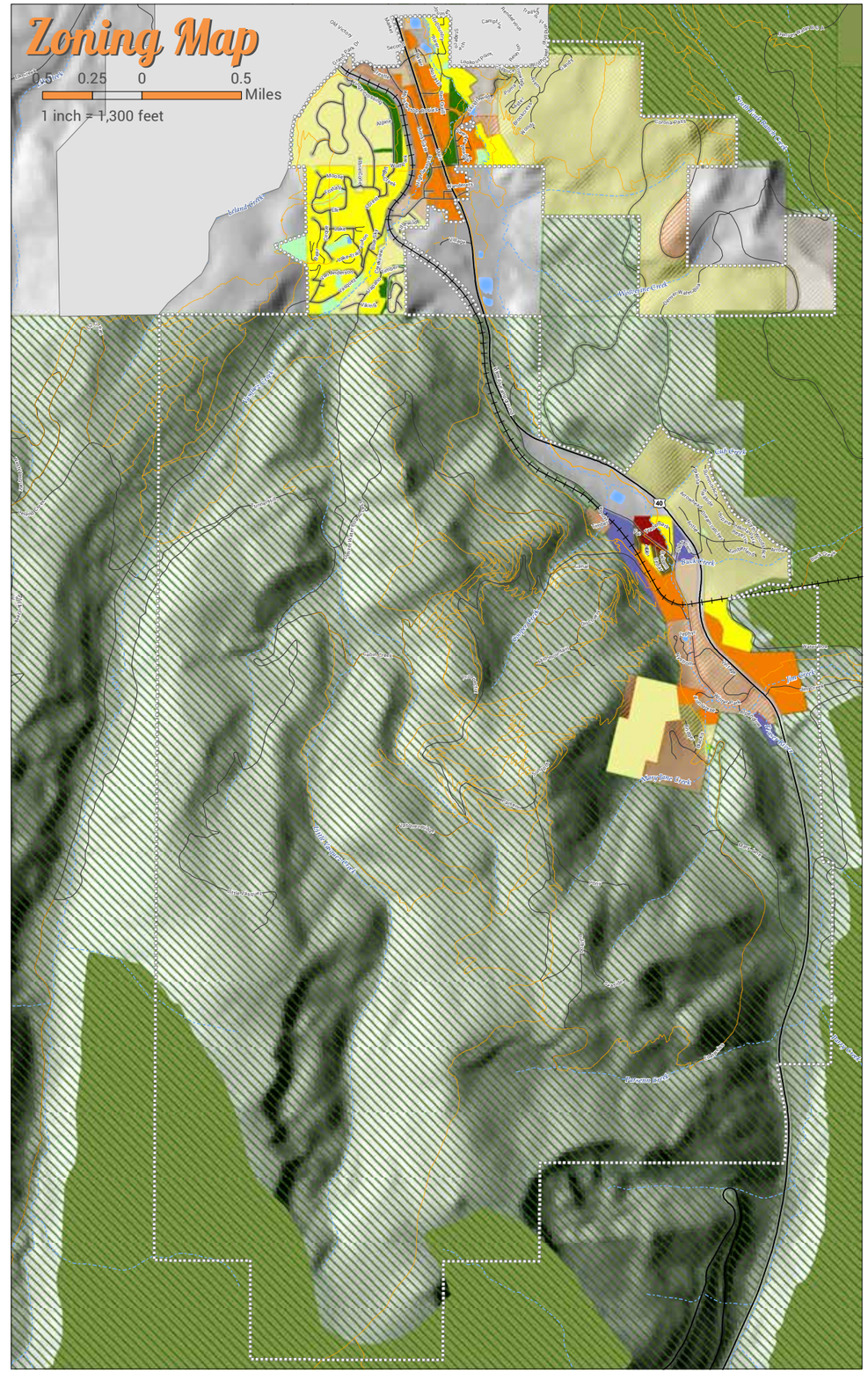
LEGEND

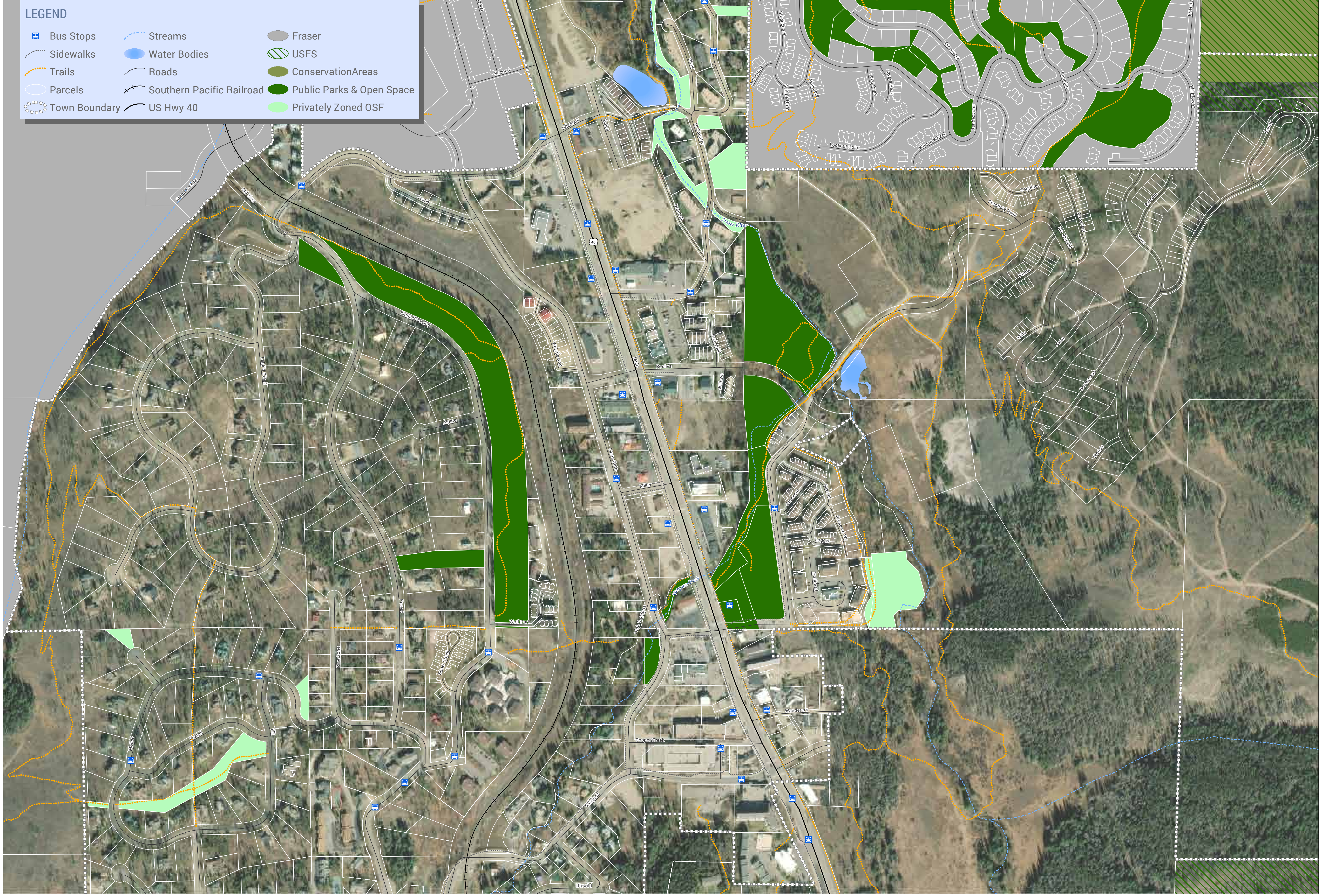
- Bus Stops
- Sidewalks
- Town Boundary
- Parcels
- Trails
- Southern Pacific Railroad
- US Hwy 40
- Roads
- Streams
- Water Bodies
- Fraser
- USFS
- ConservationAreas
- Public Parks & Open Space
- Privately Zoned OSF

Zoning

- Downtown Business Overlay
- Limited Commercial
- Destination Center
- Residential-Commercial Service
- Single-Family Residential
- Multiple-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential/Old Town
- Planned Development (PD)
- PD (OSF)
- PD (Destination Center)
- PD (Multi-Family Residential)
- PD (Res-Comm Service)






LEGEND
Bus Stops
Sidewalks
Trails
Parcels
Town Boundary
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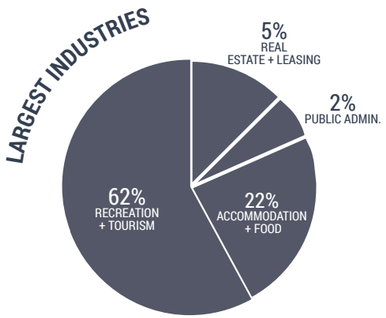
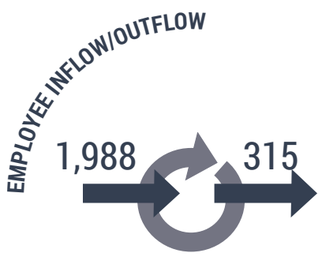
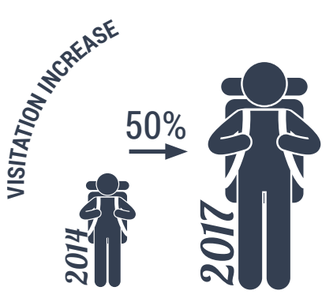
By the Numbers







Development Pattern/Zoning Mix

Winter Park has two very distinct development areas, the Downtown area, and the Resort area. Each of these areas has considerable residential and commercial development. Although these areas are separated by approximately 2 miles of national forest, they are deeply interconnected.

These two main urban areas, zoned Destination Center (DC), continue to anchor the community along Main Street (US-40). A mix of high density residential and additional commercial zoning immediately surrounds these DC zones and farther upslope moves into predominantly single-family and multi-family zoning.

Currently, the Town limits encompass 16.5 square miles, primarily split between the land surrounding Downtown and the land at the Resort. Approximately 13 square miles of the Town are within U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands.

Character, Identity, and Public Spaces

The predominant public spaces within the community consist of Cooper Creek Square, Hideaway Park, Wolf Park, and the base area at the Resort. Rendezvous Event Center at Hideaway Park is the Town's premier social area, often programmed with festivals and events. In addition, the Town has created extensive trail and outdoor recreation areas to hike, bike, fish, and enjoy the surrounding natural environment.

Unlike many other mountain communities, the Town does not have a clearly defined, cohesive architectural or themed character but its eclectic and unstructured development has given it an authentic look and feel.

The many restaurants, breweries, bars, and coffee shops throughout Town act as secondary gathering spaces and help foster a sense of community.

CHARACTER AREAS

DOWNTOWN CORE/MAIN STREET

The Downtown is overwhelmingly defined by US-40 which also serves as the Town's Main Street. The Downtown Core, roughly defined as the area between Vasquez Road and Kings Crossing, is one of the Town's more pedestrian-scaled areas, with outdoor dining, and landscaped areas between public sidewalks and building fronts. However, the overall feel of the area is still dominated by vehicular needs, both in terms of the scale of US 40 and by large building setbacks and the presence of parking lots in front of some buildings.

The lack of human scale and enclosure is, in many cases, exacerbated by building orientation, with a number of structures oriented sideways to the main roadway with main facades perpendicular (instead of parallel) to Main Street. However, recent development has focused on the creation of pedestrian friendly retail spaces oriented along Main Street.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The Town's residential areas can be broken into two general types:

Valley Neighborhoods: higher density groups of condominiums and townhomes located within walking distance of Main Street or the Resort Base. These tend to be tightly packed, with tuck-under parking as well as surface lots. Although some properties such as Hi Country Haus do have planted and riverfront areas, the majority of these groupings do not offer internal open space amenities

Hillside Neighborhoods: more distant homes are typically lower density/ larger lot single-family or townhouse/condominium groupings. These tend to occupy larger, more wooded lots with dedicated garage parking.

Both types of development are notable for their lack of internal and external connectivity, specifically sidewalks or internal pedestrian/ bike paths. Valley Neighborhoods have access to downtown businesses and more frequent Lift service which limits the need for a private vehicle, although these areas could benefit from enhanced pedestrian and bike connections. Hillside Neighborhoods are characterized by winding roads and steep topography with longer distances to core commercial areas, but still have access to The Lift transit service. The Town has started development of pedestrian and bike trails through many of these neighborhoods, increasing access to commercial districts.

RESORT AREA AND OLD TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

This character area consists of Resort-oriented retail, residential, hotel services, and operations at the base of Winter Park and Mary Jane ski areas. The defining feature of the Resort is the pedestrian village at the base of Winter Park. This area is a vibrant commercial district, especially during the winter months. The Resort utilizes its own unique branding and design standards which define the character of these areas. With the recent purchase of The Resort by Alterra Mountain Company, the base areas are seeing significant reinvestment including the installation of a new 10-person Gondola with an uphill capacity of 3,600 people per hour.

Old Town is a mainly residential neighborhood directly adjacent to the Winter Park base area, characterized by a primarily residential development pattern and limited commercial. The area has potential for additional commercial with the existing zoning along Winter Park Drive.

Connections

A balanced, multi-modal system is needed to provide options for residents and visitors alike. People choose transportation based on many different factors including destination, speed, convenience, weather, and even baggage (as is well known in a resort town). A person may choose different modes depending upon their needs on any particular day, and the best transportation systems make those choices available and easy.

A flexible system responds to both existing and future needs. Existing needs demand a system that can respond to seasonal changes in volume, pattern, and mode. Future flexibility requires thoughtful consideration of how both user expectation and technology changes may impact physical systems. Examples of this might be preservation of right-of-way for future transportation corridors (and interim uses for those corridors); conversion of lanes for autonomous vehicles, and repurposing of existing parking lots if parking needs decrease.

Getting Around Town

The Town's current thoroughfare, Main Street (US 40), is designed for speed and efficiency of vehicles, not for a sense of place. As the main transportation corridor, the highway serves as both a state highway and a local main street, which conflict in design and purpose. Pedestrian and bicycle crossing opportunities are limited, with distances between marked crosswalks ranging from 500 to 900 feet, and all located at intersections. The greatest distance between crosswalks at signalized intersections is nearly 3,000 feet, over a half mile.

With several public parking structures already built, the Town has the infrastructure to emphasize a district parking approach and ensure parking is planned to encourage pedestrian character, high quality design, and active transportation.

The Town has assumed responsibility for the management of the transit system that serves Winter Park, Fraser, and down-valley communities in Grand County. Existing low-density residential development patterns, combined with winding roads and topography, make comprehensive transit coverage challenging. Some developments provide private transit service but have expressed a desire to discontinue this amenity.

Non-vehicular linkages abound within the built fabric of Town. These include a multi-purpose bike and pedestrian path network and the Fraser River Trail that provides pleasant access to outdoor amenities that characterize the unique mountain environment. The Fraser River Trail offers excellent bicycle connectivity from Downtown to the Resort, but bike routes and facilities within the Town proper are undefined. It is unclear if cyclists should ride on the highway shoulder, mix with traffic, or ride on the sidewalk.

Connections Key Highlights

ISSUES

- Main Street sidewalks provide pedestrian access through the Downtown core, but connectivity overall is varied and often sub-optimal.
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing opportunities across Main Street are limited.
- The Town's paved bicycle system is limited to the Fraser River Trail which ends at the Resort and the Downtown Core but does not directly extend to either of the Town's main commercial areas.
- Regional transit service has no central point or facility for transfer between local bus, regional bus, private shuttles, and other potential or future options.
- Parking of motorized vehicles has both a physical and visual priority within the Town.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Additional east-west pedestrian connections to Main Street and alternative pedestrian/bicycle facilities parallel to Main Street can be implemented to improve non-vehicular connections throughout Town.
- New development provides an opportunity to develop more of the grid system off Main Street, consolidate driveways along Main Street, and reduce the number of pedestrian conflict points.
- Several developments oriented towards main street offer opportunities to humanize Main Street with public pedestrian plazas, and pedestrian focused design.
- A Transit Center at the Town's Vasquez Parking structure could be leveraged to centralize transit not only for local bus, but also for regional transit options, private shuttles, and other potential or future options.
- Winter Park has unique transportation capabilities such as connections by train to Downtown Denver and Denver International Airport that could be more fully utilized.

By the Numbers

WINTER PARK EXPRESS (SKI TRAIN)

REVITALIZED IN 2015

EXPRESS FROM UNION STATION

56 MILES
2.5 HOURS

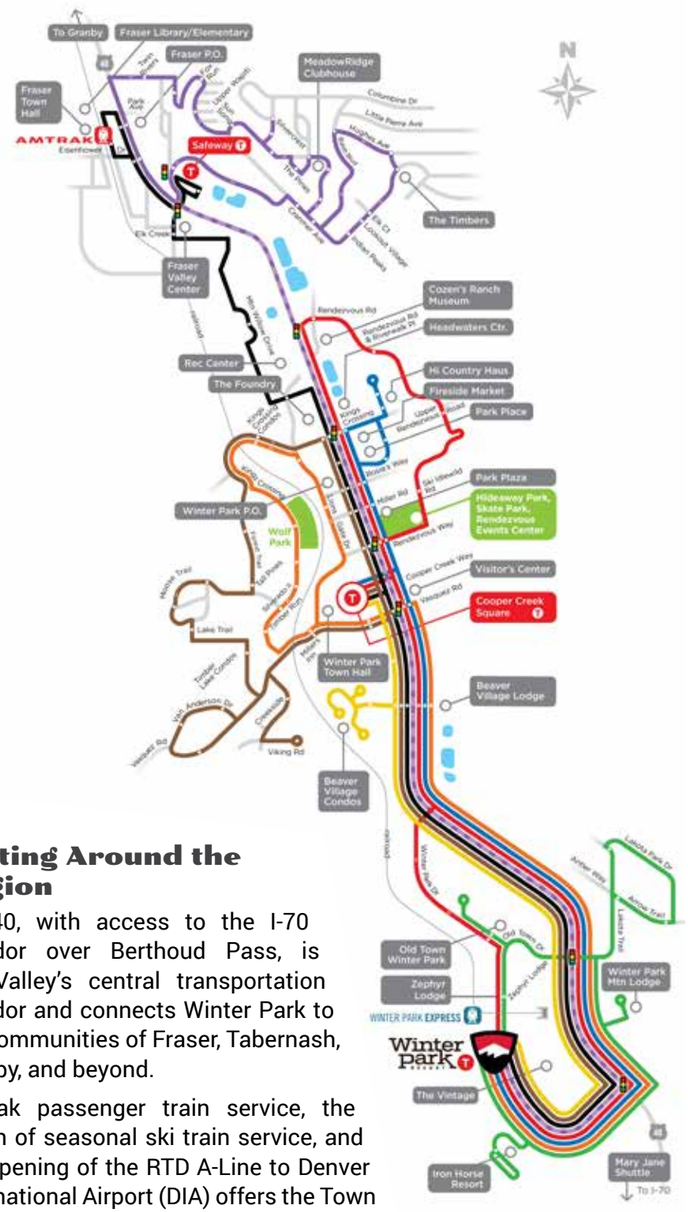
4,000 FT
VERTICAL CLIMB

AMAZING VIEWS

AVERAGE COMMUTE TIME (WINTER PARK VS COLORADO)

17.7 MIN

24.5 MIN



Getting Around the Region

US 40, with access to the I-70 corridor over Berthoud Pass, is the Valley's central transportation corridor and connects Winter Park to the communities of Fraser, Tabernash, Granby, and beyond.

Amtrak passenger train service, the return of seasonal ski train service, and the opening of the RTD A-Line to Denver International Airport (DIA) offers the Town an opportunity unique among all Colorado resorts; the ability to connect from airport to Town without the need for a private vehicle. The Winter Park Express (Ski Train) provides weekend and first Friday service from Denver's historic Union Station to the Resort, and the regular Amtrak service runs once a day from Union Station year round. Following the historic route, the ride stretches 4,000 vertical feet over 2.5 hours. Other common regional transportation options from DIA and the Denver metro area are van shuttles provided by multiple companies, which operate more frequently in the winter.

Environment & Amenities

While many amenities and recreational opportunities exist within Town limits, Winter Park is part of the larger Fraser Valley that provides abundant public lands and trails that draw both residents and visitors to the community. The Chamber champions promotion of the Fraser Valley, marketing the area as "Colorado's Favorite Playground."

Culture

There many factors that contributes to a community's culture. The physical realm and built environment are just as important to this culture as the events, public processes, and those friendly hellos on the street. Arts and music play an increasingly critical role in the community's culture with the many musical events and festivals planned throughout the year. These events, geared to both locals and visitors help set the stage for a vibrant community culture.

Environment & Amenities Key Highlights

ISSUES

- Public access to the Fraser River and Vasquez Creek from a commercial and residential standpoint is limited; however, recreational opportunity along the Fraser River is a key amenity.
- As the year-round population increases, existing (public) facilities will need to grow accordingly.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The Community Trails Plan, completed in 2014, outlines priority trails for Winter Park and Fraser including working with HOAs and Denver Water Board to complete trail connections.
- The Fraser River and associated floodplain can be built on to be a larger recreation amenity.
- The community and Town have the desire to support protecting the natural features of the area, such as air quality, water quality, and scenic views.

By the Numbers

RIVER MILES

28.5 MILES

MOUNTAIN BIKE CAPITAL USA- TRAIL MILES

600 MILES
(IN THE COUNTY)

TOWN PARKS

3

TRAILS IN TOWN

96 MILES

Recreation

The primary recreation activities in Winter Park are skiing and mountain biking, both at the Resort and throughout the surrounding National Forest. Recreational skiing began as early as 1883, with skiing becoming popular in the 1930s and the Resort officially opening in 1940. The Fraser River is another recreational opportunity for activities such as fishing and hiking, and flows south to north along the base of the Resort and through the center of Downtown, where it connects with Vasquez Creek.

There are three primary community parks within the Town; Confluence Park, Hideaway Park, and Wolf Park. Confluence Park is part of the Great Outdoors Colorado Fraser River Enhancement Project. It includes in stream habitat improvements for both the Fraser River and Vasquez Creek, interpretive trails and signage, a fly-fishing deck, wetland mitigation, a boreal toad pond, and is ADA accessible. Hideaway Park caters to community events, gathering spaces, and family fun. This park features the Rendezvous Event Center, a picnic shelter, restrooms with potable water, paved paths along Vasquez Creek, a climbing wall, playground, skate park, free sledding hill, fire pits, a brand new amphitheater stage, and is also ADA-accessible. Wolf Park is a quiet, neighborhood park with a pavilion available for reservation from May – October. It also features restrooms with potable water, barbecue grills, a playground, sand box, volleyball, tennis, basketball courts, bike racks, fitness trail, and is ADA-accessible.

Two official campgrounds exist within the Town limits; Idlewild and Midland. These two campgrounds are Forest Service campgrounds operated by the Fraser Valley Lions Club. Three additional campgrounds are located just outside of Town. Trailheads are located all throughout the community and most are easily accessible via local roads or the Fraser River Trail.

Utilities and Infrastructure

Natural gas is available in most parts of Grand County from Xcel. Electricity is supplied to most parts of the County by Mountain Parks Electric, Inc. (MPE) — a not-for-profit electric provider serving all of Grand and Jackson counties, and parts of Routt, Summit, and Larimer counties. Telephone and internet service is provided by Comcast and CenturyLink.

Municipal water service within the Town is currently provided by two separate districts, and both rely on local stream flows as their primary water source. With limited water storage facilities to sustain system flows during peak water demands, the municipal water supply is susceptible to water shortages due to variations in the adjacent stream flows. These stream flows are not only impacted by weather patterns, local precipitation and snow pack, but also by water diversions by Denver Water Board to the Front Range which are generally upstream of the Town's primary water sources (the Fraser River and Vasquez Creek). Diversions to the Front Range can significantly diminish flows within the Fraser River which, at times, limits the Town's ability to divert water for municipal services and still maintain viable water levels in the river for fish and riparian habitat.

According to the Grand County Stream Management Plan, increased water demands from the Front Range have depleted the Fraser River to the point where winter base flows, without flow enhancements or restoration, will be lower than recommended flow ranges. The Stream Management Plan developed environmental target flows that were determined to best maintain the ecological needs of the stream in relation to its fisheries. Local municipalities have been working diligently with Denver Water Board and others to address this potential shortfall in stream flows through the Colorado River Cooperative Agreement. This is an intergovernmental agreement developed to protect watersheds in the Colorado River Basin while allowing Denver Water to develop future water supplies.

While a key asset, the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), or the transition zone between open land and human development can create risks. Winter Park's largest natural hazard risks include avalanches, landsides, drought, floods, high winds, and wildfire amplified by pine beetle infestation. Careful planning and mitigation measures can reduce the impact of natural hazards on the public health and safety, as well as personal property.