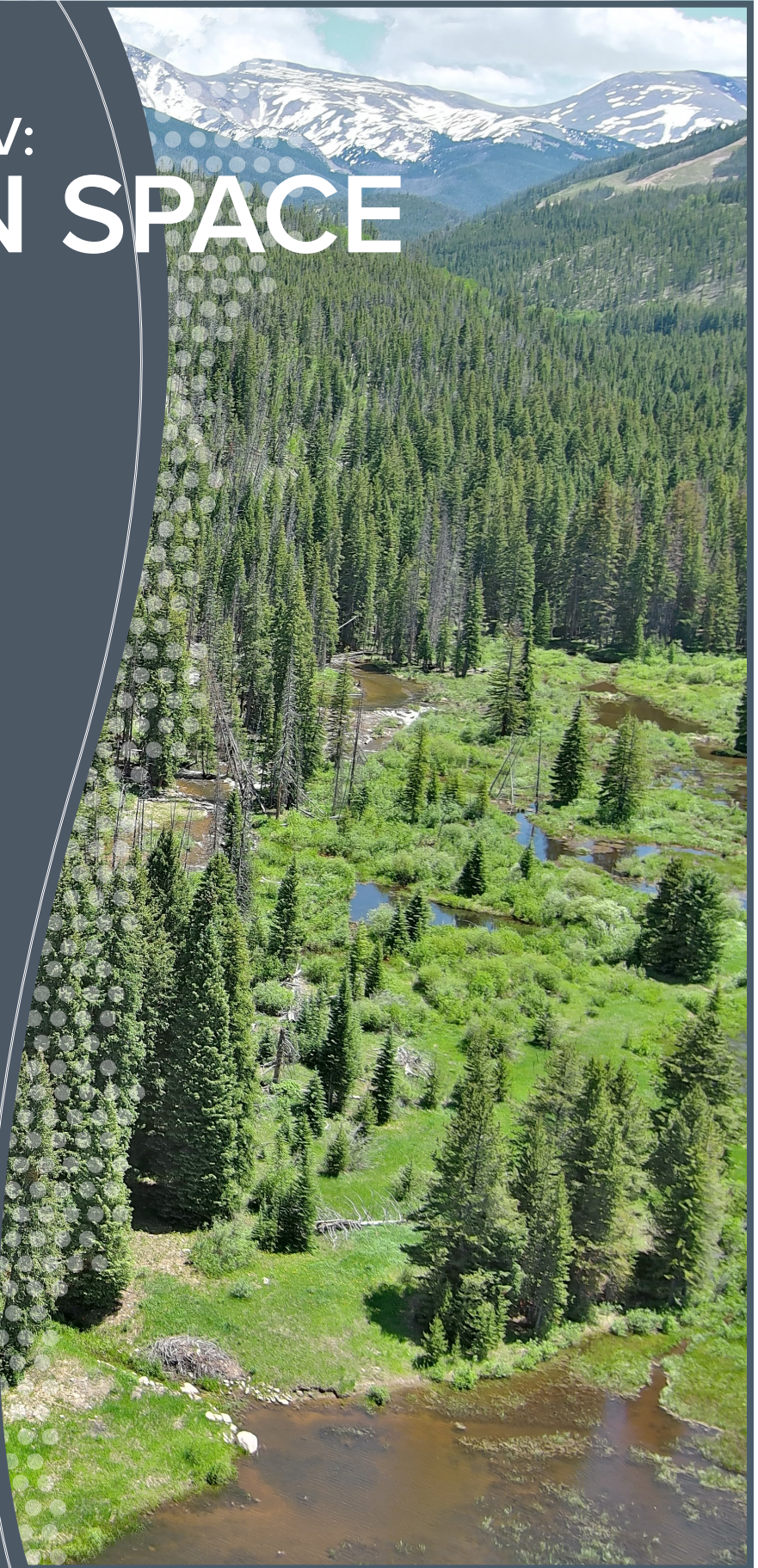


CHAPTER V: OPEN SPACE



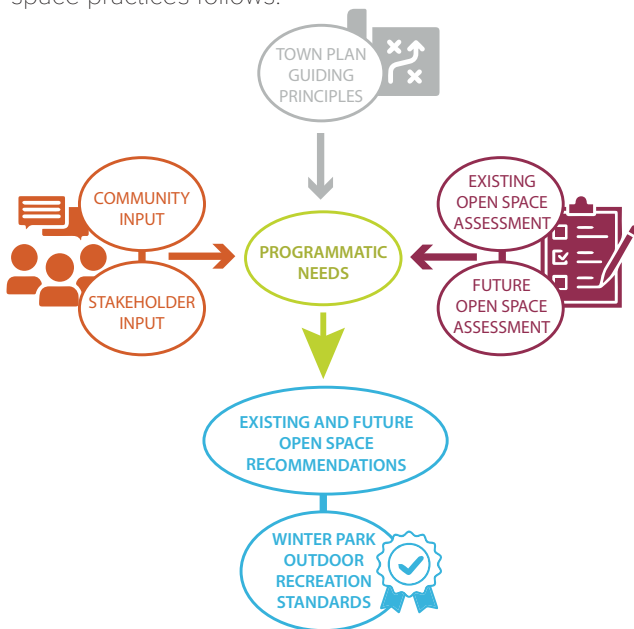
OPEN SPACE

Introduction

The mission of the Town of Winter Park (the Town) Open Space program is to acquire, preserve, maintain, and manage open space for multiple purposes including, but not limited to, recreation, wildlife, access and development. Open space stewardship practices seek to preserve and enhance the ecological, scenic, recreational and cultural values of the open space and trails acquired by the Town. Through joint planning and acquisition efforts, and through the Town’s land use approval process, the Town actively performs its role as the public’s advocate for trails, for the preservation of open space, and for access to public lands and protection of water resources.

Existing Open Space Standards

The Town’s existing standards for open space generally align with broader goals related to preserving the natural environment and ensuring recreational opportunities for the community. These standards can be found in the town’s zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, and comprehensive plans. However, there is no single unified document that contains all open space standards, as they may vary depending on the specific zoning district, development type, or location within Winter Park. A summary of existing open space practices follows.



Open Space Requirements in Zoning Districts:

Different zoning districts may have varying open space requirements. Residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments have their own set of expectations for dedicating open space or making contributions to the town’s open space fund.

Dedication of Open Space in New Subdivisions:

New developments are typically required to dedicate a portion of the property for open space or provide compensation through fees. This is done to ensure that new growth doesn’t negatively impact the town’s environmental resources or public access to recreational areas.

Public Access and Trails:

Open space in Winter Park may include public trails and access to public lands, including National Forests. The Town often incorporates these connections into the development process, particularly for pedestrian and recreational access.

Open Space Maintenance and Design:

For new developments that include open spaces, the Town sets design guidelines to ensure spaces are usable, accessible, and integrated with the natural environment. Developers may also be required to provide maintenance plans for newly created open spaces.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs):

The town policies around the transfer of development rights to preserve open space, which can protect key natural areas by allowing development to occur elsewhere, away from sensitive lands.

PART V OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

- Town Plan Guiding Principles
- Community Input
- Stakeholder Input
- Programmatic Needs
- Existing Open Space
- Existing Open Space Recommendations
- Future Open Space
- Future Open Space Recommendations
- See Part VI Winter Park Outdoor Standards

FIGURE 5–1. This chapter is organized using the following visual structure. Color guides on each page indicate if that page corresponds to either Guiding Principles, Community/ Stakeholder Input, Assessments, or Recommendations.

Open Space Overview

The Town of Winter Park's open space network includes both existing and future parcels that enhance the town's natural and ecological character. Additional privately-owned parcels considered as open space also exist and add to the overall network acreage, however they are not assessed in this document. Currently, six open space parcels totaling approximately six acres are intermixed within the town and existing parks. These parcels contain a range of vegetation that is reflective of the Fraser Valley, and includes lodgepole pine forests, mixed aspen-spruce-fir woodlands, and open grasslands which provide valuable habitat and recreational activities.

Looking ahead, future areas may be acquired for open space if the Town annexes properties identified in the Town's *Three Mile Area Plan (2021)*. These properties include the Denver Water West Parcel, Denver Water East Parcel, Snowshoe Parcel, and Forest Service LOAP Parcel. If these properties are annexed, they will significantly expand the Town's open space network. These parcels encompass diverse habitats, including riparian shrublands, wetlands, mature spruce-fir forests, aspen woodlands, and lodgepole pine forests and will further contribute to wildlife conservation, ecological connectivity, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

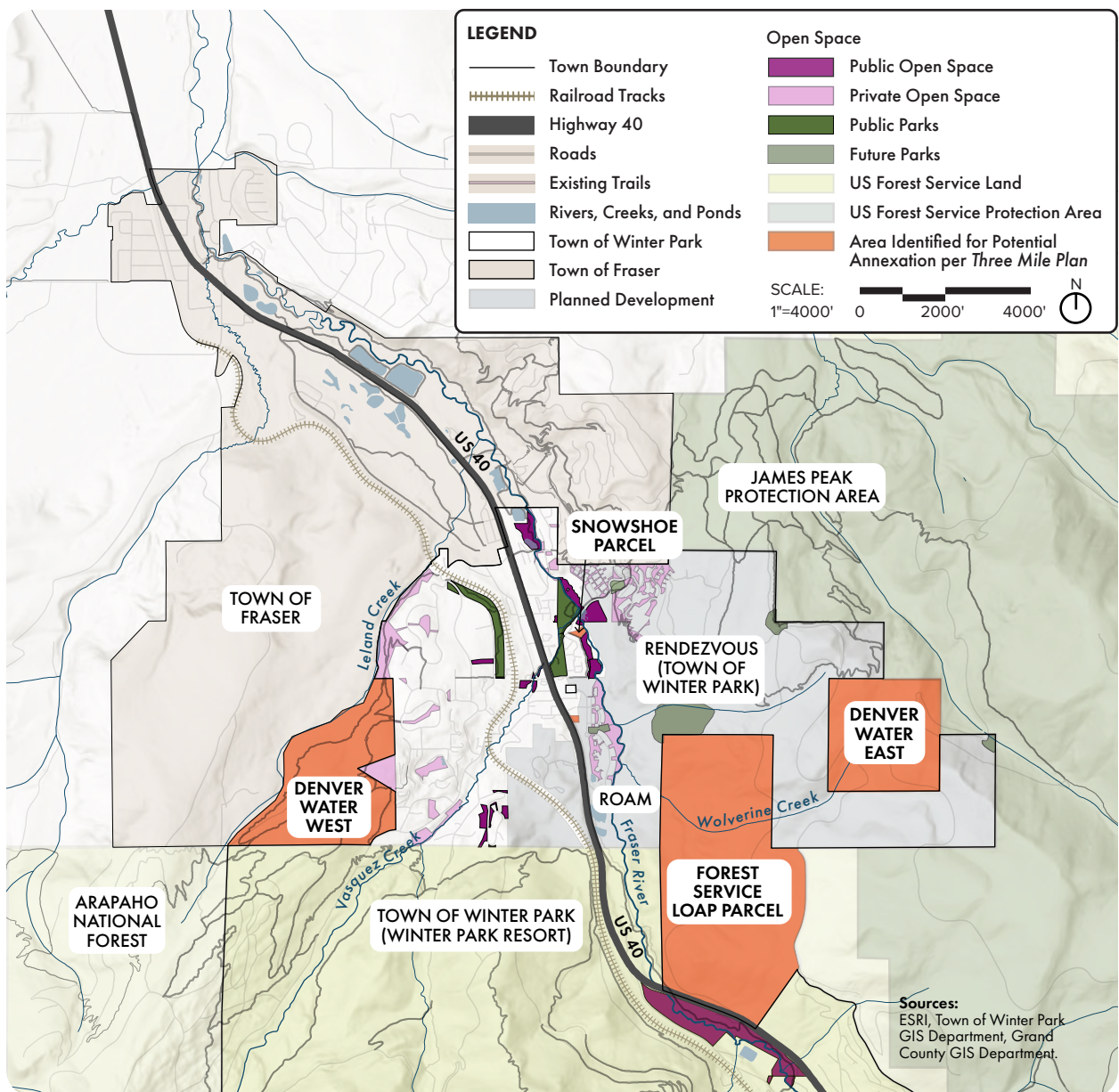


FIGURE 5–2. Town of Winter Park context map with the locations of existing public and private open spaces. Areas for potential annexation are also highlighted.

Ecological Zone Overview

The existing and proposed open space parcels in Winter Park overlap with key ecological zones, as detailed on the following pages. Each is characterized by distinct vegetation communities and structural elements representative of the regional ecology. Most parcels include lodgepole pine forests, a fire-adapted community typically found on well-drained soils at elevations above 8,000 feet. These forests are characterized by dense, uniform stands resulting from fire regeneration, with sparse understories dominated by drought-tolerant shrubs and grasses such as Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), huckleberry (*Vaccinium scoparium*), and golden banner (*Thermopsis divaricarpa*).

Parcels containing significant waterways, such as the Fraser River or Wolverine Creek, frequently support riparian shrublands, which are typically dominated by a mix of willows (*Salix ssp.*), alder (*Alnus incana*), and water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), occurring in areas with seasonally saturated soils and low-velocity water flow. The dense shrub layer in these areas stabilizes streambanks and facilitates nutrient cycling in floodplains.

Aspen woodlands are present in parcels with moderate slopes and mesic conditions. These forests often have an open canopy that allows light penetration, fostering a dense understory of forbs, grasses, and shrubs, including ninebark (*Physocarpus monogynus*), cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), and meadow rue (*Thalictrum spp.*). Aspen stands often regenerate through root suckers, particularly after disturbances such as fire or logging, and maintain their dominance in early successional stages. Aspen stands were uncommon throughout the analysis of the existing and proposed open space parcels, and should be preserved, if possible, to increase habitat diversity present on conserved land parcels.

Spruce-fir forests are present in wetter and higher-elevation areas. These forests are characterized by a dense overstory of Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), and blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), with a sparse understory due to the limited light penetration. Mosses and lichens are commonly found in these moist environments, contributing to nutrient cycling and soil stability. These forests are present in many of the parcels, with unique, mature stands present in the Forest Service LOAP and Denver Water East parcels.

Lodgepole Pine Forest



Mixed Montane Aspen Forest



Wet Meadows



Riparian Areas



Montane Grasslands



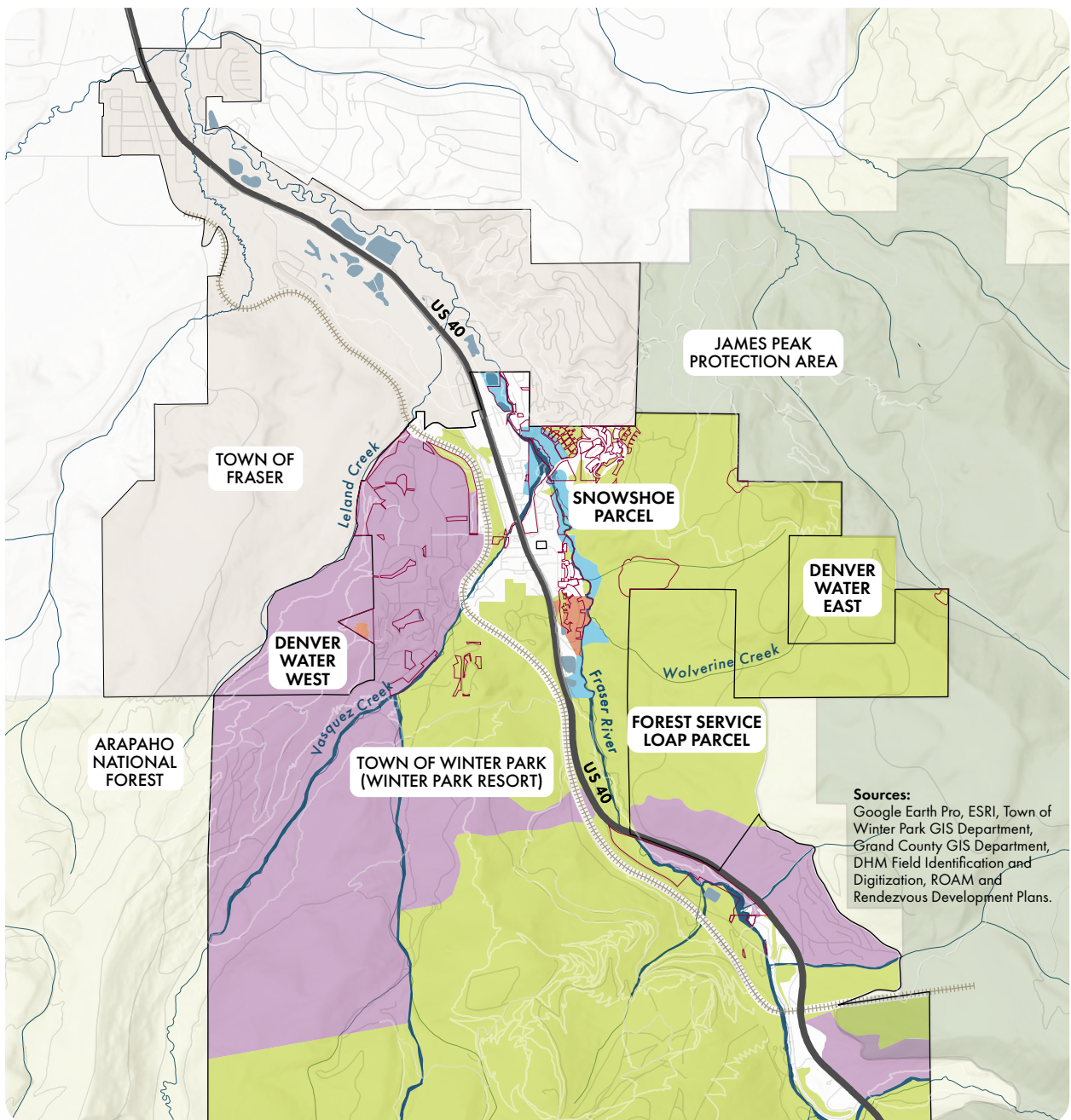
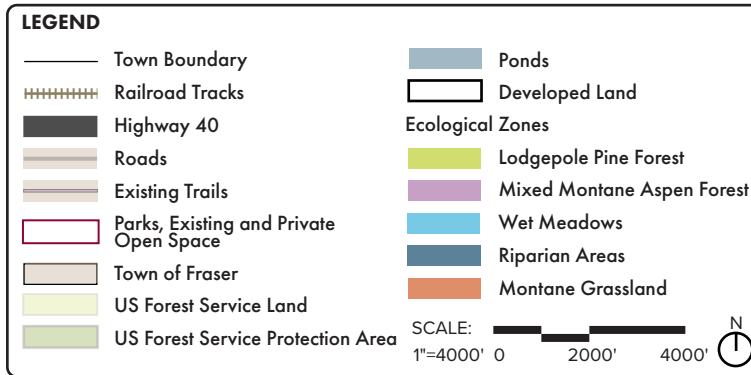


FIGURE 5-3. Ecological zone context map with the locations of open spaces outlined.



FIGURE 5-4. The section above illustrates the variety of ecozones that can be found in one cross-section of Town.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Lodgepole Pine Forest | <p>Description</p> <p>Lodgepole pine forests are the most common ecological community in town and the surrounding area. They occur between 8,000 and 10,500 feet. This forest community is heavily shaded and thrives in the aftermath of fire. This habitat is known to provide important forest cover for mule deer, elk, black bear and a variety of birds.</p> | <p>Common Vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinnikinnick / <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> • Huckleberry / <i>Vaccinium scoparium</i> • Oregon Grape / <i>Mahonia repens</i> • Common Juniper / <i>Juniperus communis</i> • Golden Banner / <i>Thermopsis divaricarpa</i> • Heartleaf Arnica / <i>Arnica cardifolia</i> • Columbia Needlegrass / <i>Achnatherum nelsonii</i> |
| Mixed Montane Aspen Forest | <p>Description</p> <p>Mixed Montane Aspen Forests are characterized by a diverse mix of aspen and various conifers including spruce, fir and pine. They occur between 5,000 and 10,000 feet. Aspens have open canopies which allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, leading to a more lush understory. The aspens provide vibrant fall color amidst the dense green conifer forest.</p> | <p>Common Vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain Ninebark / <i>Physocarpus monogynus</i> • Cinquefoil / <i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> • Meadow Rue / <i>Thalictrum fendleri</i> • Silvery Lupine / <i>Lupinus argenteus</i> • Indian Paintbrush / <i>Castilleja coccinea</i> • Snowberry / <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> • Thurber Fescue / <i>Festuca thurberi</i> • Prairie Junegrass / <i>Koeleria macrantha</i> • Wild Strawberry / <i>Fragaria virginiana</i> |
| Wet Meadows | <p>Description</p> <p>Wet Meadows occur along river and creek corridors. This ecological community is becoming increasingly rare in the western slope as development alters hydrology and decreases water availability in meadows. The water table in this location is high and is fed by spring runoff. This vegetation community typically contains high plant species diversity and is heavily used by wildlife including waterfowl, ungulates, migratory birds and small mammals.</p> | <p>Common Vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaked Sedge / <i>Carex utriculata</i> • Water Sedge / <i>Carex aquatilis</i> • Tufted Hairgrass / <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i> • Baltic Rush / <i>Juncus balticus</i> • White Marsh Marigold / <i>Caltha leptosephala</i> • Purple Avens / <i>Geum rivale</i> • Rocky Mountain Willow / <i>Salix monticola</i> • Bebb's Willow / <i>Salix bebbiana</i> • Geyer Willow / <i>Salix geyeriana</i> |
| Riparian Areas | <p>Description</p> <p>Riparian Areas, including shrublands and forests, are found within the flood zone of rivers and immediately adjacent to streambanks, including the Fraser River. Animals that occupy montane habitats rely on riparian forests at some point in their life cycle including beavers, river otters, amphibians.</p> | <p>Common Vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinleaf Alder / <i>Alnus tenuifolia</i> • Water Birch / <i>Betula occidentalis</i> • Rocky Mountain Willow / <i>Salix monticola</i> • Geyer Willow / <i>Salix geyeriana</i> • Drummond's Willow / <i>Salix drummondii</i> • Colorado Blue Spruce / <i>Picea pungens</i> • Wax Currant / <i>Ribes cereum</i> • Wild Licorice / <i>Glycyrrhiza lepidota</i> • False Solomon's Seal / <i>Maianthemum racemosum</i> |
| Montane Grasslands | <p>Description</p> <p>Montane Grasslands are found sparsely within the Town boundary. This ecotype is devoid of tree and shrub strata and is often found on flatter and drier sites. These patch-grasslands are commonly intermixed in lodgepole pine and aspen forests. Grasslands provides essential foraging opportunities for wildlife including ungulates and small burrowing mammals.</p> | <p>Common Vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thubers Fescue / <i>Festuca thurberi</i> • Arizona Fescue / <i>Festuca arizonica</i> • Mountain Muhly / <i>Muhlenbergia montana</i> • Bluebunch Wheatgrass / <i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i> • Blue Grama / <i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> • Sandberg Bluegrass / <i>Poa secunda</i> |

| | Strategy | Vision Statement |
|----------------------------------|----------|---|
| Character and Culture | CC 5.1 | Allow for publicly accessible parks, plazas, and open spaces in both design and policy, meeting the goal of being an inviting community. |
| | CC 5.2 | Include neighborhood-scale parks and open spaces within developments that are fully accessible to the public. |
| World-Class Outdoor Recreation | OR 2.1 | Develop recreational opportunities suited to short, daily activities (e.g. shorter, close-to-town trails, opportunities for water play, fishing ponds, etc.). |
| | OR 3.7 | Examine regional solutions when responding to evolving recreational preferences and opportunities (e.g. determining where a facility would fit best). |
| Healthy and Thriving Environment | EN 1.1 | Protect and increase physical and visual access to waterways within and around the Town. |
| | EN 1.4 | Strengthen the Fraser River and its associated floodplain as a recreational and economic amenity while preserving the riparian habitat. |
| | EN 1.5 | Protect the viability of natural wetlands and watercourses as a key component of our natural and built environments. |
| | EN 1.7 | Restore or enhance degraded or disturbed waterways to improve ecological conditions, aesthetics, and recreation. |
| | EN 2.1 | Support forest biodiversity and control the invasion and spread of undesirable non-native plants, animals, and insects. |
| | EN 2.3 | Protect the integrity of significant wildlife habitat and movement corridors. |
| | EN 2.4 | Foster alliances and partnerships with organizations that are working toward a healthy & thriving environment. |
| | EN 2.5 | Promote education & understanding of public lands through appropriate recreational activities, formal and non-formal education, and interpretive programs. |
| | EN 2.7 | Protect significant viewsheds to maintain our connection with the natural environment. |
| | EN 3.1 | Encourage density in appropriate locations and clustering of development to maximize open space. |

FIGURE 5-5. The strategies above from the *Imagine Winter Park Town Plan (2019)* relate directly to the principles that guide the Open Space chapter of this report.

Town Plan Guiding Principles

This chapter builds upon the strategies outlined in the *Imagine Winter Park Town Plan (2019)* and uses them as the foundation for its guiding principles for open space resources.

Character and Culture

- ▶ Preserve in-town public and private open spaces. The forested character of lots and open spaces gives the Town its mountain-town character while providing sensitive habitat for the wildlife;
- ▶ Avoid development or rezoning of these to protect the scenic character in-town and maintain them per recommendations.

World-Class Outdoor Recreation

- ▶ Establish open space areas for both active and passive recreation use. Whereas active recreation is more programmed and hosts a variety amenities, passive recreation and areas of limited programming are equally important to preserve scenic character, provide areas for solitude and connection with nature, and protect natural resources.

Healthy and Thriving Environment

- ▶ Manage open spaces as part of a regional system, aiming to provide land connectivity between isolated, undisturbed patches of land, through preservation of important riparian corridors, and maintaining intact forests, to protect and enhance habitat for plants and wildlife throughout Town;
- ▶ Distribute interpretive signage throughout parks and open space areas to educate locals and visitors about the importance of the surrounding natural systems;
- ▶ Preserve and enhance the Fraser River and supporting tributaries as well as viable wetlands and surrounding habitats that support riparian corridors;
- ▶ Restore degraded or diminished habitats.

OPEN SPACE

Community Input

Community input was gathered through in-person events and online engagement. In the summer of 2024, the Town and the consultant team held two community pop-up events during High-Note Thursdays at Hideaway Park to engage the public on the open space areas. Participants from the community shared input based on existing open space and future open space needs. Town staff and the consultant team answered questions, discussed issues, and guided the public to participate in the online survey. Key takeaways and general sentiments from the community input are discussed below.

Key Takeaways on Open Space in Winter Park

- ▶ Community members are concerned about the increased scale and speed of development in recent years;
- ▶ Community members wish to see protections put into place for creek and river corridors as well as surrounding wetlands;
- ▶ Community members have concerns with the loss of scenic views and viewsheds around Town. They would like the Town to retain its mountain-town feeling and preserve views to mountains and surrounding forest areas;
- ▶ Community members would like to see more open space areas and protections in the Fraser River and Vasquez Creek corridors;
- ▶ Community members would like to see a buffer between US Forest Service lands and development to limit the proliferation of user-created trails;
- ▶ Surveyed community members are in favor of the Town acquiring more land for open space but would like to see more community input before the acquisition of land. Community members want to weigh in on the level of development of these potential lands.

Stakeholder Input

The Town and consultant team identified stakeholders who have an overlapping interest in open space. Although all stakeholder groups were interviewed about open space, only Headwaters Trails Alliance (HTA) provided input on open space and the Town's future role in preserving it.



Headwaters Trails Alliance

Feedback on Open Space in Winter Park

- ▶ HTA continues to advocate for habitat preservation along waterways and wildlife corridors to protect the character of the Fraser Valley;
- ▶ HTA would like the master plan to include language for protection of natural areas and viewsheds within the Fraser Valley. They would like to see modifications to "relocatable easements" for trails. They feel trail connectivity has been fragmented by development;
- ▶ HTA believes the Town should work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to designate open space and provide more wildlife protections;
- ▶ HTA expressed that the Town should engage CPW and support the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership's Colorado Outdoors Strategy that outlines common goals, amplifies regional efforts for conservation, and provides data/tools for local decision-making.

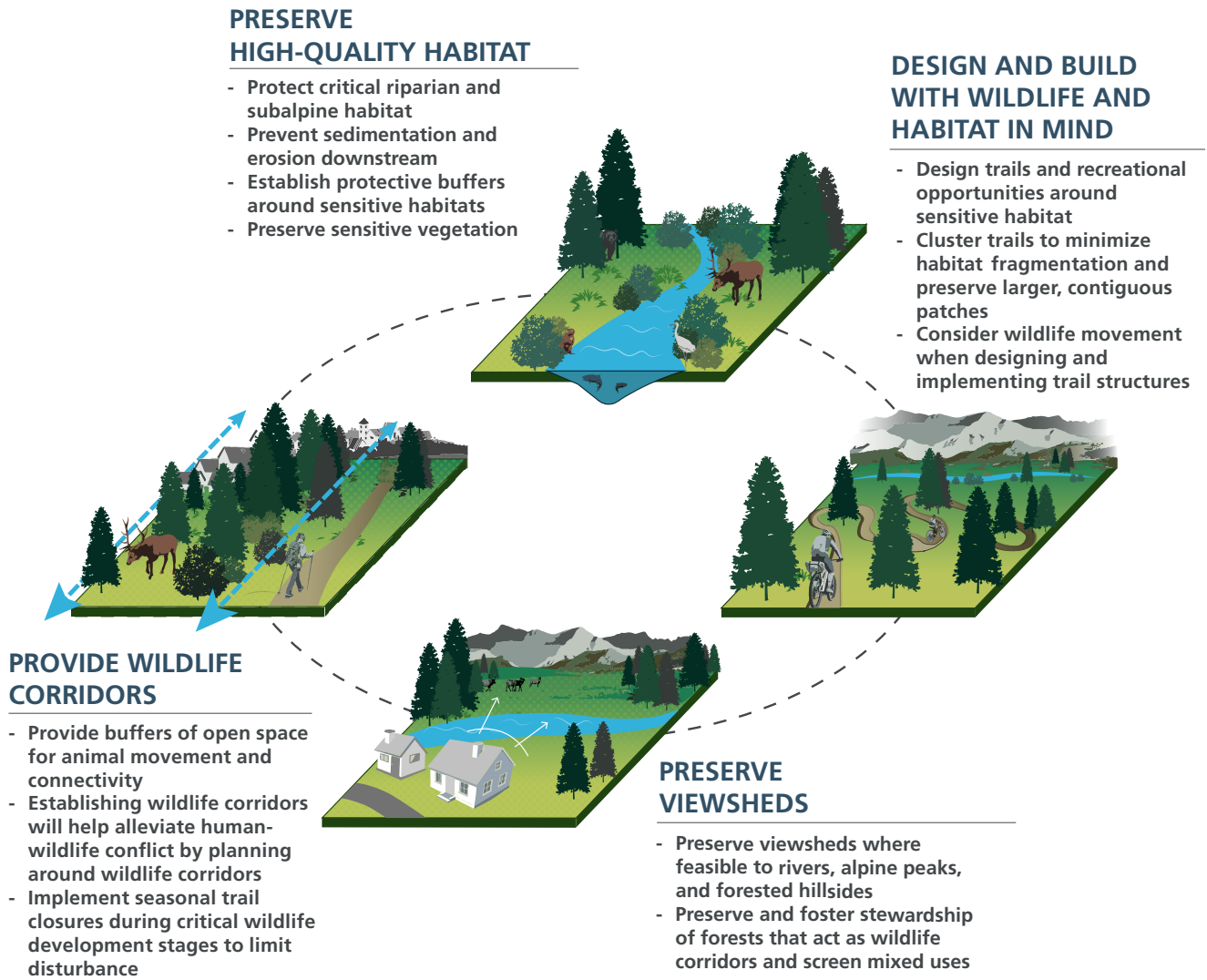


FIGURE 5-6. The above priorities for open space and natural resource management were identified based on the Town's *Imagine Winter Park Town Plan (2019)* and conversations with community members and stakeholders.

Programmatic Needs

The Town's setting offers unmatched scenic views and recreational access to its surrounding natural areas. This master plan outlines and identifies some of the key natural resources that support the Town's character.

Public feedback stressed the need to maintain the natural and scenic qualities of the Town as development expands. This master plan is limited in that the open space parcels identified cannot fully address the regional natural resource needs identified in the Town's *Imagine Winter Park Town Plan (2019)* and by community members and stakeholders. The Town should develop a *Natural Resource Management Plan* to address key needs identified including:

- ▶ The protection of significant wildlife habitat and movement corridors (EN 2.2);
- ▶ Methods to reduce conflicts between wildlife, humans, and domestic animals (EN 3.6);
- ▶ Recommendations for fire mitigation to reduce community vulnerability (EN 2.6 and 3.4);

- ▶ Regional viewshed analysis to identify significant viewsheds and methods for protection (EN 2.7);
- ▶ Methods and recommendations for becoming a Dark Sky Community (EN 3.2).

The Town is currently not able to acquire more open space outside of the areas identified for potential annexation in the *Three Mile Area Plan (2021)*. Additionally, the Town is not able to amend any of the Final Development Plans (FDPs) previously approved to increase its open space capacity. However, the Town can work with these landowners and other private homeowners to advocate for the stewardship of the natural resource protection on private lands. Some private land developers have set aside private open space parcels in wetlands areas, along private trails, and in riparian corridors. It is in the best interest of the community that these areas are protected and maintained.

The matrix below identifies some of the needs the existing and future Town-owned open spaces can meet. **Further information about these open spaces can be found within the Assessment and Recommendations sections on the following pages.**

| | Existing Open Space | Forest Service LOAP Parcel | Snowshoe Parcel | Denver Water East Parcel | Denver Water West Parcel |
|---|--|--|---------------------|---|--|
| | Existing Town Open Space | Future Open Space | | | |
| Acreage | 65 ac | 434.7 ac* | 1.1 ac* | 157.8 ac* | 195.9 ac* |
| Ecological Zone | Lodgepole Pine, Mixed Montane Aspen Forest, Riparian, & Wetlands | Lodgepole Pine, Mixed Montane Aspen Forest, Riparian, & Wetlands | Riparian & Wetlands | Lodgepole Pine Forest, Riparian, and Wetlands | Mixed Montane Aspen Forest, Riparian, and Wetlands |
| Forest Cover | x | x | x | x | x |
| Riparian Corridor | Vasquez Creek | Wolverine Creek | Fraser River | Wolverine Creek | Leland Creek |
| Wetlands | x | x | x | x | x |
| Scenic Value | Low to Medium | High | Low to Medium | Medium to High | Medium to High |
| Supports Wildlife Movement | x | x | x | x | x |
| | Recommendations | | | | |
| Native Vegetation Enhancements | x | x | x | x | x |
| Wildlife and Habitat Enhancements | x | x | x | x | x |
| Wetland/ Water Resource Enhancements | x | x | x | x | x |

*Denotes total land area for parcel. Open space areas to be determined in final platting if parcel is annexed by the Town.

FIGURE 5-7. Programmatic Needs matrix for existing and future open space parcels.

Existing Open Space Assessment

The Town currently owns twenty-one open space parcels, totaling approximately 65 acres. These properties, ranging in size from 0.13 to 41.53 acres, are interspersed throughout the town and integrated with existing parks, enhancing the community's access to natural areas. The parcels feature diverse vegetation communities, including lodgepole pine forests, mixed aspen-spruce-fir woodlands, open grasslands, wet meadows, and riparian corridors which provide habitat for wildlife and contribute to the town's scenic and ecological value.

These open spaces play a crucial role in supporting local biodiversity, offer opportunities for recreation, and preserve the natural character of Winter Park.

Additionally, there are 55 parcels owned by private landowners and Denver Water. These parcels account for 105 acres. While not covered in this assessment, these areas should continue to be preserved as open space by private developers to preserve the natural character of the Town.

| Parcel # | Acreage | Description |
|--|---------|---|
| West Side (Wolf Park/Vasquez Creek) | | |
| 158733203028 | 1.1 | Located west of Wolf Park, this open space provides additional green space in an area otherwise composed primarily of private development. It contains a variety of vegetation including mixed aspen, lodgepole pine, willow, and wet meadow. |
| 158733200083 | 0.44 | These three parcels are located along Vasquez Creek and Lions Gate Drive. They are primarily forest of mixed lodgepole pine forests with Douglas-fir and aspen interspersed with private development and bisected by private drives. Sections of Vasquez Creek in these areas have dense riparian shrublands. |
| 158733206023 | 0.28 | |
| 158733206024 | 0.13 | |
| West Side (Timber Drive Parcels) | | |
| 158733305003 | 0.26 | Five irregular shaped open space parcels are located along Timber Drive, a road that switchbacks and loops uphill through a mixed lodgepole pine forest and aspen woodlands. Many of the open space areas contain new growth and the parcels are interspersed with private residential development. Directly east of the site is an undeveloped area that will eventually become the planned residential development area for Cooper Creek. |
| 158733302005 | 0.67 | |
| 158733302007 | 0.76 | |
| 158733302021 | 2.48 | |
| 158733302016 | 0.1 | |
| West Side (Winter Park Village) | | |
| 170510112001 | 41.53 | These parcels are located along the east side of US 40 and border US Forest Service land and Winter Park Village. The largest of these parcels is bisected by the Fraser River and contains a mix of aspen and lodgepole pine forests as well as riparian and wet meadow ecologies typical of the Fraser River corridor. |
| 170510146004 | 0.3 | |
| 170510123006 | 0.92 | |
| 170510100001 | 0.28 | |
| East Side (Fraser River) | | |
| 158728354004 | 5.77 | Located north of Telemark Drive, near the Town of Winter Park and Fraser boundary, this open space parcel contains a man-made pond and contains wet meadows and small stand of lodge pole pines and riparian trees/shrubs. The parcel borders a section of the Fraser River Trail and borders the west side of the Fraser River. |
| 158728403004 | 2.92 | Located on the east side of Confluence Park and the Fraser River, this wet meadow features woody vegetation similar to that found within the park including lodgepole pine, aspen, mixed willow and alder species as well as wetland vegetation including sedges and rushes. |
| 158728349007 | 0.20 | This small parcel borders the west side of Confluence Park and acts a buffer between the park and Red Quill Village. The Riverwalk development borders the west side of the parcel. The parcel contains mixed aspen, lodgepole pine, and wet meadow vegetation. |
| 158728400181 | 4.65 | Located across from Confluence Park along Ski Idlewild Road, these parcels border both sides of the Fraser River. The larger parcel to the east contain wetlands and wetland vegetation as well as lodgepole pines and Engelmann spruce. |
| 15872840008 | 0.39 | |
| 158733125011 | 1.91 | These open space parcels are located between the Trailhead Lodge development and the Fraser River. They contain a mix of lodgepole pine forests, wet meadow, and riparian vegetation. |
| 158733109034 | 0.31 | |
| 158733109017 | 2.24 | |

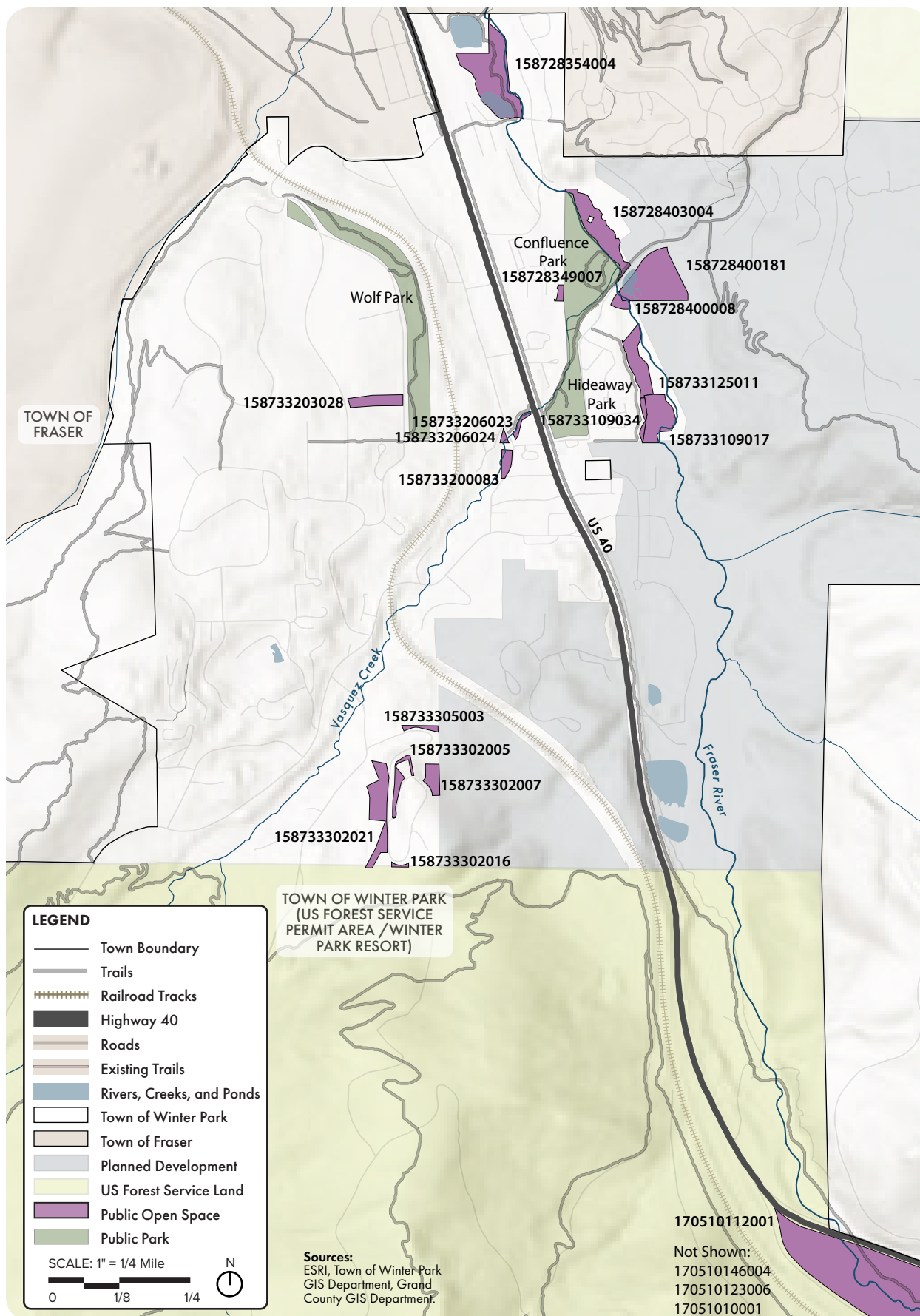


FIGURE 5-8. Context map indicating the location of existing open space parcels owned and managed by the Town.

Existing Open Space Recommendations

The following recommendations outline strategies to preserve and enhance ecological integrity, habitat connectivity, and recreational value of existing open space properties while minimizing impacts to sensitive habitats and wildlife. These recommendations consider each properties' urban context and locations.

Manage Native Vegetation:

- ▶ Restore, enhance, and maintain native vegetation communities in disturbed areas within the properties. Use native plant species suited for local ecological conditions to improve habitat quality, increase biodiversity, and reduce the need for maintenance.

Create Wildlife-Friendly Buffers:

- ▶ Establish vegetative buffers along parcel edges to minimize disturbances from nearby developed areas. These buffers can include dense plantings of shrubs and small trees to provide cover for wildlife and reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

Preserve and Enhance Wetland and Water Resources:

- ▶ Implement protective measures to maintain the integrity of wetlands and water resources within the existing open space properties. Establish no-disturbance buffers around wetlands and waterways to prevent degradation from urban runoff, sedimentation, and human activities. Avoid or limit impacts to areas adjacent to perennial water sources, which provide important habitat for wildlife species present in the area.

Manage Non-native Plant Species:

- ▶ Implement regular monitoring and removal programs for non-native plants that may out compete native vegetation or degrade habitat quality.

Develop Low-Impact Recreational Opportunities:

- ▶ Where appropriate, create small-scale trails, interpretive signage, or viewing areas that allow residents and visitors to enjoy the parcels without significantly impacting their ecological integrity. Use natural materials and design features that blend with the environment. Restore unnecessary or redundant social trails on open space properties;
- ▶ Group or consolidate trails to the extent possible to limit the overall disturbance to the land.

Enhance Wildlife Habitat:

- ▶ Install bird nesting boxes (bluebirds, swallows, kestrels), bat boxes, or pollinator gardens to support species native to the region. These features can help mitigate the limited habitat availability caused by the parcels' small sizes and the surrounding development.

Preserve Existing Privately-Owned Open Space

- ▶ Work with private landowners to preserve and manage existing privately-owned open space parcels. These parcels offer patches of habitat that provide connectivity to other open space areas, preserve river corridors such as the Vasquez Creek and the Fraser River, and provide relief for wildlife traveling through developed areas of town. Work with private landowners to develop trail easements on privately-owned open space parcels *identified in the Trails Chapter of this Master Plan.*

Future Open Space Assessment

The parcels identified for potential annexation in the *Three Mile Area Plan (2021)* include areas for open space which offer a diverse array of ecological, hydrological, and recreational values. The Denver Water West, Denver Water East, Snowshoe, and Forest Service LOAP parcels encompass a variety of habitats ranging from riparian shrublands and wetlands to mature spruce-fir forests, aspen woodlands, and lodgepole pine forests. Each parcel contributes uniquely to the regional landscape by supporting biodiversity, providing wildlife corridors, and preserving wetland and water resources. Their proximity to important water resources, including the Fraser River, Leland Creek, and Wolverine Creek, further enhance the importance of conservation and public enjoyment. Detailed descriptions of each parcel's ecological characteristics and management considerations are provided in the following sections.

Conservation Suitability Analysis

A comprehensive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis was conducted to evaluate the suitability of conservation for the proposed open space parcels. This analysis was based on the potential to provide high-quality habitat for wildlife and plants and existing development at each parcel that would degrade habitat. This analysis incorporated multiple GIS data layers that were scored and summarized based on

overlapping areas to assess habitat values and potential environmental constraints.

Data layers include CPW Species Activity Mapping information which are broad datasets outlining important wildlife ranges and activity areas. Slope data was analyzed to understand terrain variability and to identify steep areas that may present challenges for development or specific ecological significance. Unique vegetative communities documented during field surveys were mapped to highlight habitats of particular ecological importance, such as mature spruce stands or aspen woodlands.

Additionally, wetland and water resource data were integrated to identify sensitive hydrological features, including riparian buffers and wetland complexes, which are critical for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health. Lastly, developed areas, such as trails and roads, were incorporated and given a negative score as these areas provide low to no conservation value after previous disturbance. This GIS-driven approach provides a robust foundation for identifying priority conservation areas and informing management recommendations for each parcel.

A summary of the data and the scores associated with the individual data layers are provided in the table on this page and maps of each parcel are provided in respective sections.

| Data Layer | Source | Conservation Value Score |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Wet Meadow | DHM Design Ecological Team | 5 |
| Wetland Complex | DHM Design Ecological Team | 5 |
| Mature Spruce Forest | DHM Design Ecological Team | 4 |
| Aspen Woodland | DHM Design Ecological Team | 4 |
| Moose Priority Habitat | CPW SAM | 3 |
| Moose Concentration Area | CPW SAM | 3 |
| Black Bear Summer Concentration Area | CPW SAM | 3 |
| Black Bear Migration Corridor | CPW SAM | 3 |
| Wetlands | National Wetland Inventory | 3 |
| Streams / Rivers + 300' Buffer | National Hydrography Dataset | 3 |
| Slope | DHM Design Ecological Team | 0: 0-10% slope |
| | | 1: >10-20% slope |
| | | 2: >20-30% slope |
| | | 4: >30-60% slope |
| | | 6: >60-100% slope |
| Trails (Official and social) + 2-foot buffer | DHM Design GIS Team (digitized) | -1 |
| Existing Disturbed Area | DHM Design GIS Team (digitized) | -2 |
| Roads + 10-foot buffer | DHM Design GIS Team (digitized) | -3 |
| Existing Infrastructure + 5-foot buffer | DHM Design GIS Team (digitized) | -3 |

Forest Service LOAP Parcel

The Forest Service LOAP Parcel is currently zoned as Forestry and Open Space in Grand County and was identified as a potential growth area for Winter Park in the 2011 *Grand County Master Plan*. The *Three Mile Area Plan (2021)* notes that the 434.7 acre parcel is currently undeveloped forest owned by the US Forest Service. The *Land Ownership Adjustment Plan (Resolution 257, Series 1988)* states that this area should encourage the retention and development of attractive open space as well as establish provisions for passive and active recreation areas.

The Forest Service LOAP Parcel is the largest of the parcels considered for open space designation. It is located southwest of the Denver Water East Parcel and is bordered by private property. The parcel is defined by the Fraser River, which runs north-to-south outside of its western boundary, and Wolverine Creek, which branches off from the river into the upper third of the site. These hydrological features enhance the ecological diversity and connectivity of the parcel, providing movement corridors and aquatic and riparian habitats.

The vegetation of the parcel is primarily composed of lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) woodlands,

interspersed with areas of spruce-fir forests, open aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) woodlands, and montane riparian shrublands. The lodgepole pine forests dominate much of the landscape and are characterized by open canopies and sparsely vegetated understory. Spruce-fir forests, found primarily along Wolverine Creek, provide dense, moist habitat critical for species requiring cooler microclimates and mature forest structure. The mature spruce (*Picea spp.*) in these areas should be preserved to enhance ecological function of the forests by increasing age class diversity. Scattered open aspen woodlands, with their open canopies and rich understories, offer significant habitat for a variety of wildlife, including herbivores and cavity-nesting birds. Montane riparian shrublands, located along the Fraser River and Wolverine Creek, further contribute to the parcel's ecological value by supporting large mammals and songbirds, while also stabilizing stream banks and improving water quality.

The parcel's expansive size, diverse vegetation communities, and hydrological features make it a sound candidate for open space designation, as it can provide wildlife habitat, vegetative diversity, and regional ecological connectivity.



FIGURE 5-9. The Forest Service LOAP Parcel is located along US 40 and across from the Town's public works complex.

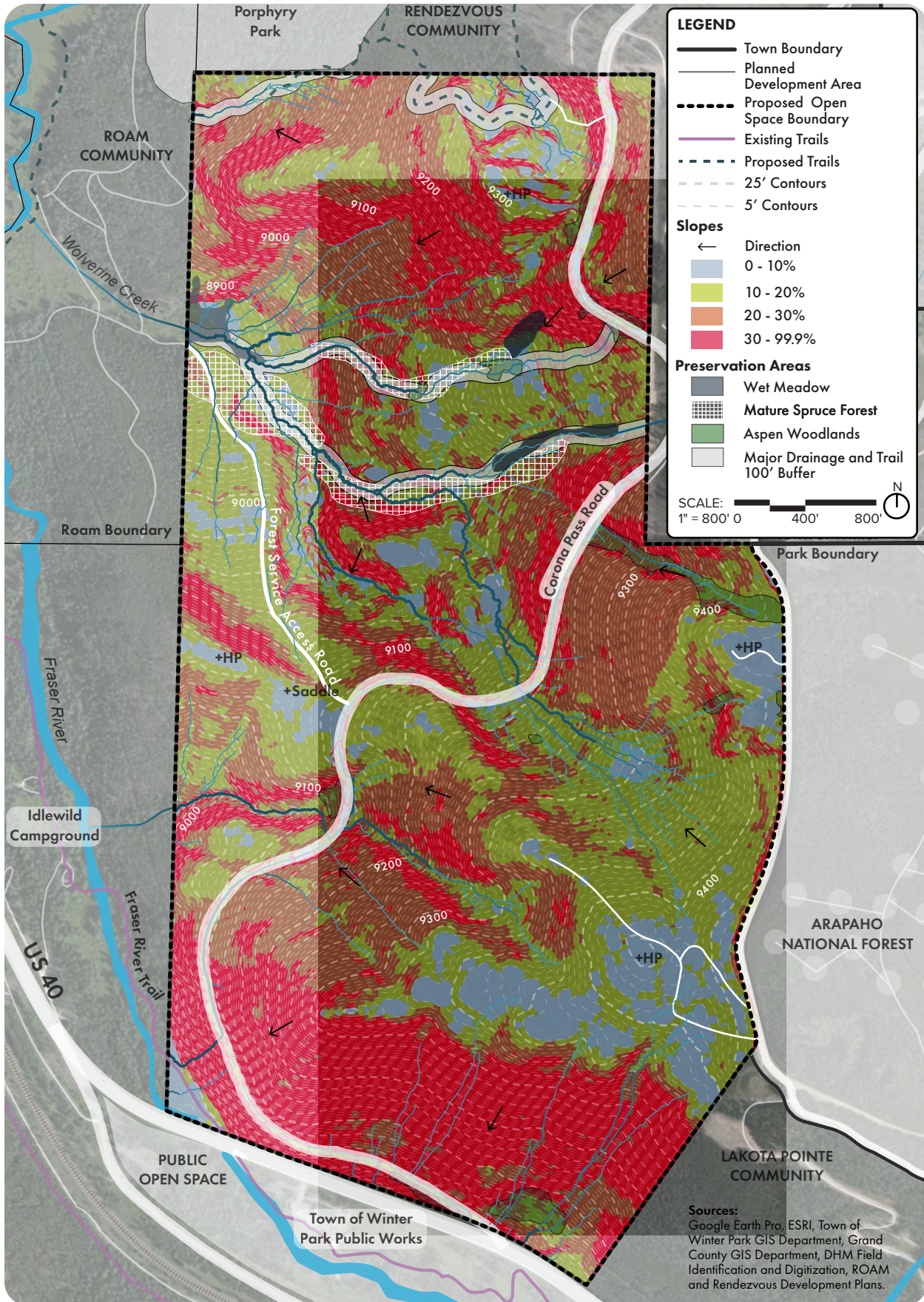


FIGURE 5-10. Slope analysis and preservation area map for Forest Service LOAP parcel.

Conservation Suitability

The Forest Service LOAP Parcel has extensive areas of high conservation value (4–5), particularly along the Fraser River and Wolverine Creek, which support riparian shrublands and mature spruce forests critical for aquatic and terrestrial species. The scattered aspen stands throughout the parcel add vegetative diversity and moderate conservation value (3–4), while the lodgepole pine forests and spruce-fir forests contribute significant ecological value. The parcel's size and connectivity to adjacent lands amplify its importance, particularly for regional wildlife corridors and sensitive habitat preservation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline strategies to preserve and enhance ecological integrity, habitat connectivity, and recreational value of the parcel while minimizing impacts to sensitive habitats and wildlife. The recommendation map on the following page shows areas of conservation priority that could be incorporated into the Town's existing open space, private open space or conservation easements.

Design and Build Trails with Wildlife Habitat in Mind

- ▶ Cluster trails in designated areas to concentrate recreational impacts and preserve larger, contiguous patches of undisturbed habitat. Use existing natural or human-made barriers, such as topography or existing roads, to define trail groupings and to limit new trail sprawl;
- ▶ Allow for the development of scenic trails in select locations to improve connectivity from downtown to the Lakota Pointe Community;
- ▶ Establish small trailhead(s) and parking along Corona Pass Road outside of sensitive areas so future trails intersect with the road.

Establish Protective Buffers Around Sensitive Habitats

- ▶ Avoid placing trails within a minimum 300-foot buffer zone around riparian and wetland habitats associated with Wolverine Creek. This buffer will protect the ecological integrity of these sensitive areas, reduce disturbances to wildlife, and maintain water quality.

Implement Seasonal Trail Closures for Wildlife Protection

- ▶ Temporarily close trails during critical wildlife life stages, such as calving, nesting, or migration periods, to minimize disturbances. Use signage and public outreach to inform trail users of the closures and the ecological reasons behind them, fostering awareness and compliance.

Preserve Unique Vegetation

- ▶ The three wet meadows within the Wolverine Creek floodplain, mature spruce stands surrounding Wolverine Creek, and scattered aspen stands should be avoided areas during future development.

Porphyry Park Expansion

- ▶ If annexed, consider expanding Porphyry Park south of its proposed boundary to include high-sensitivity areas like the Wolverine Creek drainage area.

Viewshed Preservation

- ▶ Preserve the viewsheds that define the Town's character and attract residents and visitors. Identify key visual corridors within the parcel for protection, particularly those framing the surrounding mountain ranges and forested landscapes;
- ▶ Implement zoning policies which limit development heights and require site planning that minimizes visual intrusion into vistas. Incorporate vegetation management practices to screen potential structures;
- ▶ Design trails and recreation areas to enhance viewshed experiences.

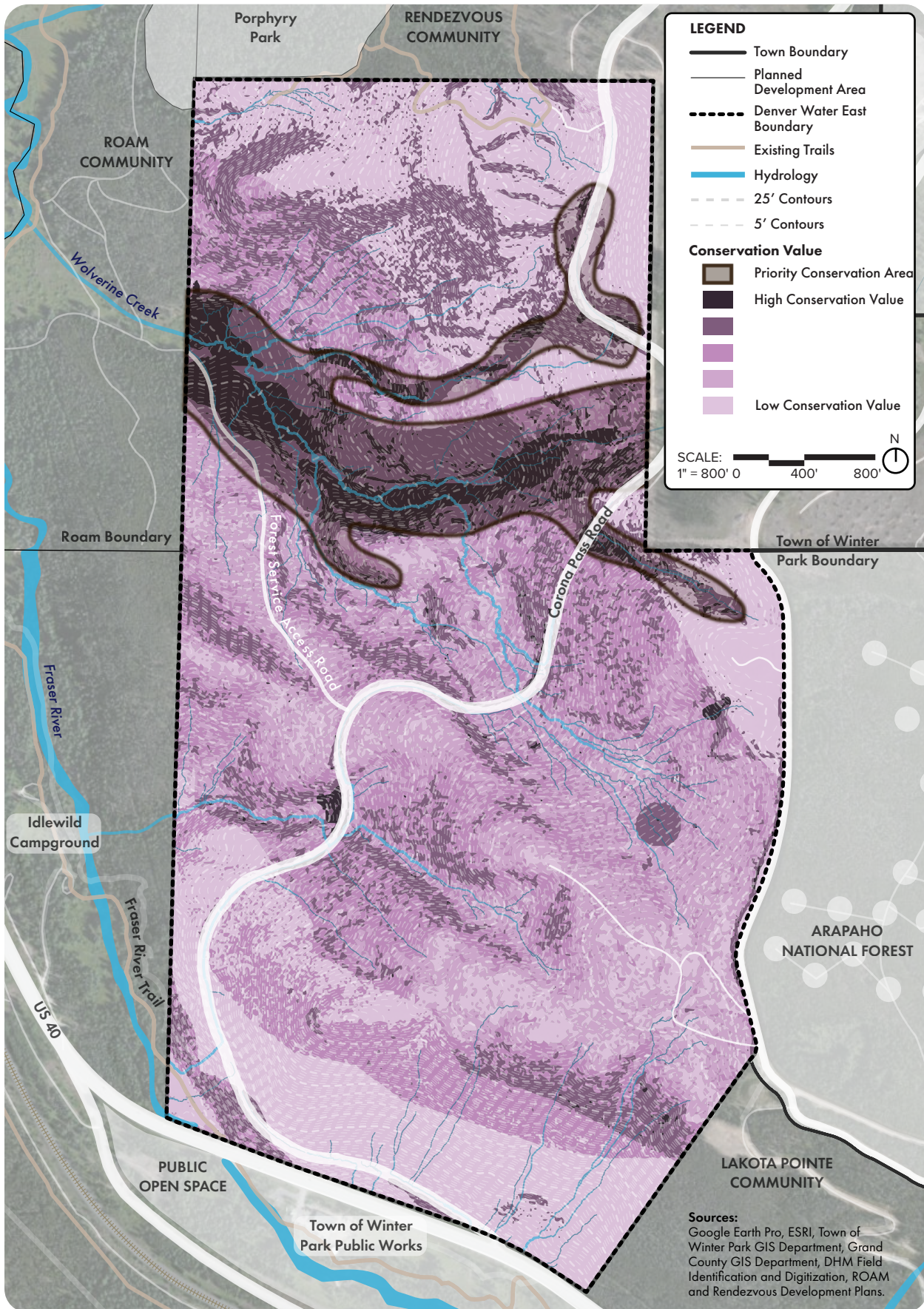


FIGURE 5-11. The Conservation Suitability analysis map for the Forest Service LOAP Parcel ranks the priority conservation areas that should be preserved for Open Space or Conservation Easements if the parcel is annexed into the Town for development.

Snowshoe Parcel

The Snowshoe Parcel is currently zoned as Forestry and Open Space in Grand County and was identified as a potential growth area for Winter Park in the 2011 *Grand County Master Plan*. The 1.1-acre parcel is owned by Snowshoe Properties LLC.

The *Three Mile Area Plan (2021)* notes that the parcel is developed with a single-family home. It is in close proximity to the Fraser River and 0.4 acres from surrounding wetlands.

The Snowshoe Parcel, situated east of the Town, is a small but ecologically significant property. The surrounding areas are privately owned, including the planned Riverwalk and Rendezvous developments. The proposed Phase 2 portion of the Fraser River Trail is planned to traverse the center of the parcel's location. The western side of the parcel has been previously disturbed and contains two structures. Its location along the Fraser River near the confluence with Vasquez Creek makes it a unique parcel of land that can provide high conservation value to the Town. The proximity to two converging waterways enhances the parcel's role in supporting riparian and aquatic ecosystems.

The vegetation within the Snowshoe Parcel consists primarily of willow (*Salix spp.*) shrublands in low-lying areas and lodgepole pine forests in upland areas. The willow shrublands thrive in the moist soils near the Fraser River, providing important habitat for a variety of riparian species, including songbirds, small mammals, moose, mule deer, and pollinators. These areas also contribute to bank stabilization and water quality. The upland lodgepole pine forests are characterized by closed-canopy forests with drought-tolerant understory vegetation, supporting a different suite of wildlife which are adapted to drier conditions, including important calving grounds for elk, mule deer, and moose.

The property slopes eastward toward the Fraser River, creating a gradient of ecological conditions from upland to riparian zones. This gradient supports a diverse assemblage of plant and animal species, enhancing the parcel's ecological value despite its small size. The Snowshoe Parcel's location and varied habitats make it a valuable resource for both conservation and connectivity for the Town.



FIGURE 5–12. The Snowshoe Parcel is located in proximity to Ski Idlewild Road and the Fraser River.

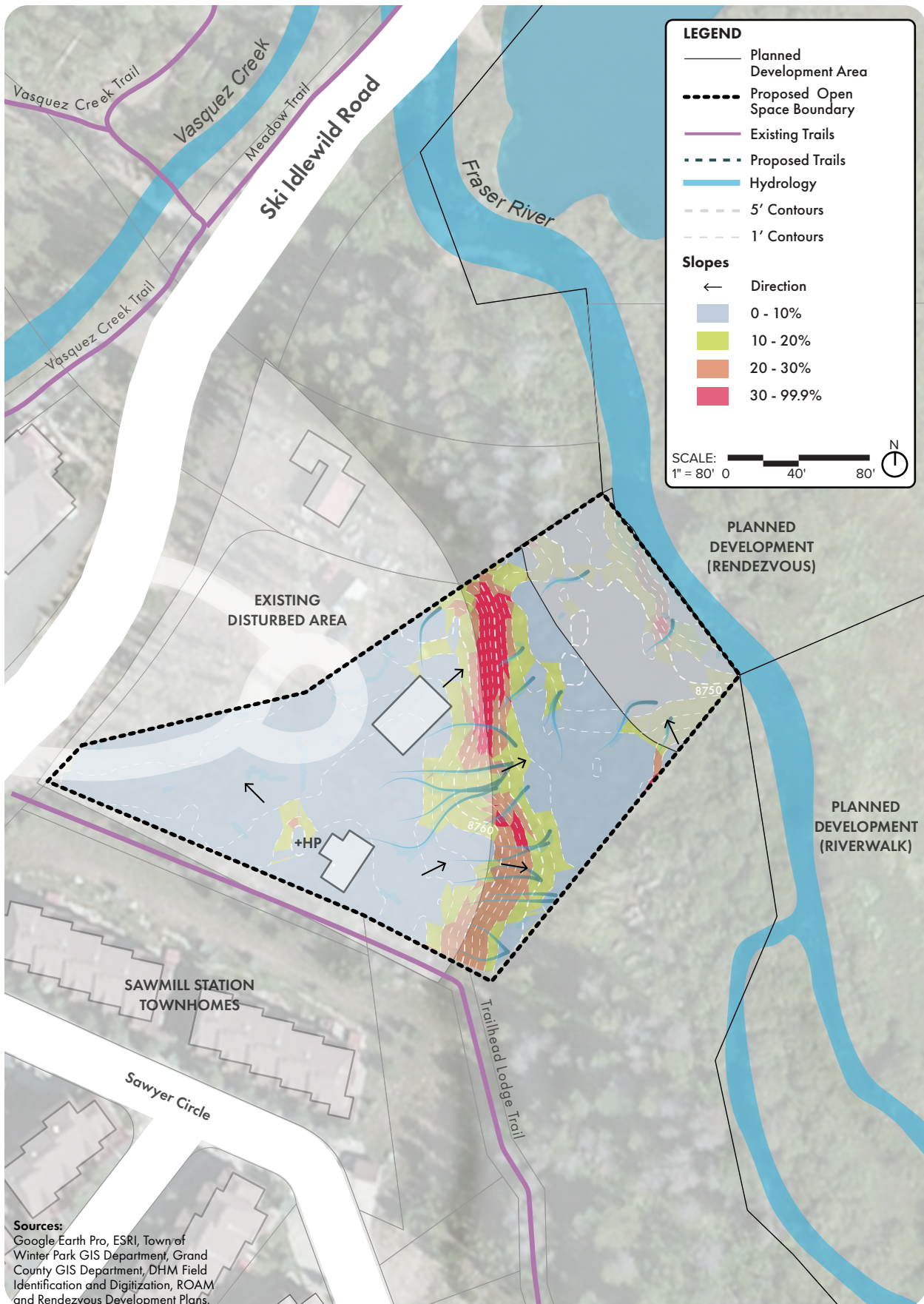


FIGURE 5-13. Slope analysis and preservation area map for the Snowshoe Parcel.

Conservation Suitability

Despite its small size, the Snowshoe Parcel includes areas of high conservation value (4–5) along the Fraser River and near its confluence with Vasquez Creek. These riparian zones support critical hydrological and ecological processes, and the willow shrublands within them are particularly sensitive. The upland ponderosa pine woodlands have moderate conservation value (3–4), but their ecological role is significant given the parcel's connectivity to the larger river system.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline strategies to preserve and enhance ecological integrity, habitat connectivity, and recreational value of the parcel while minimizing impacts to sensitive habitats and wildlife. The recommendation map on the following page shows areas of conservation priority that could be incorporated into the Town's existing open space, private open space or conservation easements.

Design and Build the Fraser River Trail with Wildlife Habitat in Mind

- ▶ Incorporate the Fraser River Trail Phase II extension along a trail easement through this parcel. Extend easement/open space to incorporate high-quality wetlands and sensitive areas to offer additional protection of these resources;
- ▶ Cluster trails in designated areas to concentrate recreational impacts and preserve larger, contiguous patches of undisturbed habitat. Use existing natural or human-made barriers, such as topography or existing roads, to define trail groupings and to limit new trail sprawl;
- ▶ Establish a small trailhead across from Confluence Park, along Ski Idlewild Road and outside of sensitive areas.

Establish Protective Buffers Around Sensitive Habitats

- ▶ Avoid placing trails within a minimum 300-foot buffer zone around riparian and wetland habitats associated with the Fraser River. This buffer will protect the ecological integrity of these sensitive areas, reduce disturbances to wildlife, and maintain water quality.

Implement Seasonal Trail Closures for Wildlife Protection

- ▶ Temporarily close trails during critical wildlife life stages, such as calving, nesting, or migration periods, to minimize disturbances. Use signage and public outreach to inform trail users of the closures and the ecological reasons behind them, fostering awareness and compliance.

Viewshed Preservation

- ▶ Preserve the viewsheds that define the Town's character and attract residents and visitors. Identify key visual corridors within the parcel for protection, particularly those framing the surrounding mountain ranges and forested landscapes;
- ▶ Implement zoning policies which limit development heights and require site planning that minimizes visual intrusion into vistas. Incorporate vegetation management practices to screen potential structures;
- ▶ Design trails and recreation areas to enhance viewshed experiences.

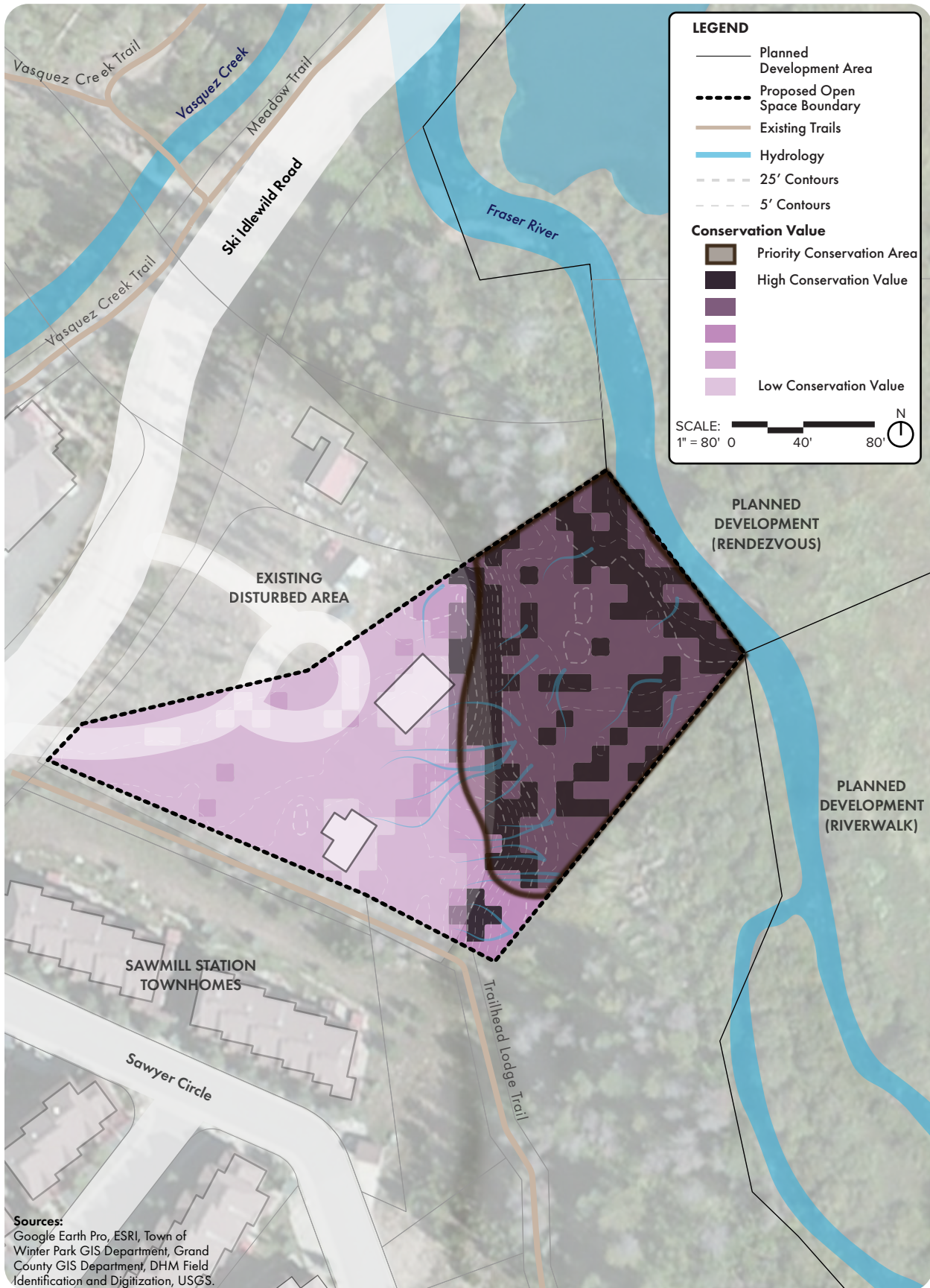


FIGURE 5-14. The Conservation Suitability analysis map for the Snowshoe Parcel ranks the priority conservation areas that should be preserved for open space or conservation easements if the parcel is annexed into the Town for development.

Denver Water East Parcel

The Denver Water East Parcel is currently zoned as Forestry and Open Space in Grand County and was identified as a potential growth area for Winter Park in the 2011 *Grand County Master Plan*. The parcel borders the Rendezvous development on three sides. The 158-acre parcel is owned by Denver Water.

Denver Water uses this parcel to store materials associated with projects in the area. The majority of the site was clear-cut in 2008 after the pine beetle epidemic and has since regenerated with lodgepole pine.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Town of Arrow (or Arrowhead) was located at the southwest corner of what is now the Denver Water East Parcel, near the intersection of Corona Pass Road. The town served a population of 2,000 people at its peak. The town burned to the ground in 1905. Today, only building foundations and stray material remain.

The parcel is located east of Winter Park and is a diverse ecological area bordered by private properties and the Arapaho National Forest. Wolverine Creek, a key hydrological feature, flows into the property from the southeast and contributes to a large wetland complex located in the lower elevations of this region. This wetland area is surrounded by mature spruce (*Picea spp.*) forests, which is a unique ecological feature of the site that should be maintained.

Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) forests are the dominant vegetation community on site and are interspersed with diverse understory species including kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), huckleberry (*Vaccinium scoparium*), and Oregon Grape (*Mahonia repens*). Pockets of aspen woodlands with younger spruce trees are also present, adjacent to County Road 81 and Corona Pass Road, offering open canopies that foster a lush understory and important habitat for herbivores and cavity-nesting birds. It is advised that these aspen stands be preserved, if possible, to maintain vegetative diversity on the site. Additionally, spruce-fir forests are present scattered throughout the property which thrive in cold, moist climates with short growing seasons and deep, well-drained soils. These communities support a range of herbaceous and woody plants that provide forage and cover for wildlife.

The wetland complex in the southeast corner of the property serves as a critical resource for both terrestrial and aquatic species, supporting amphibians, birds, and mammals reliant on water and riparian vegetation. The presence of mature spruce forests adjacent to these wetlands enhances habitat diversity, creating transition zones that support a wide array of wildlife.

Although some major roads cross portions of the parcel, careful management of human activities can mitigate their impact on wildlife corridors. The Denver Water East Parcel's combination of wetland, forest, and steep slope ecosystems highlights its ecological importance and role as a key interface between private lands and the surrounding Arapaho National Forest.

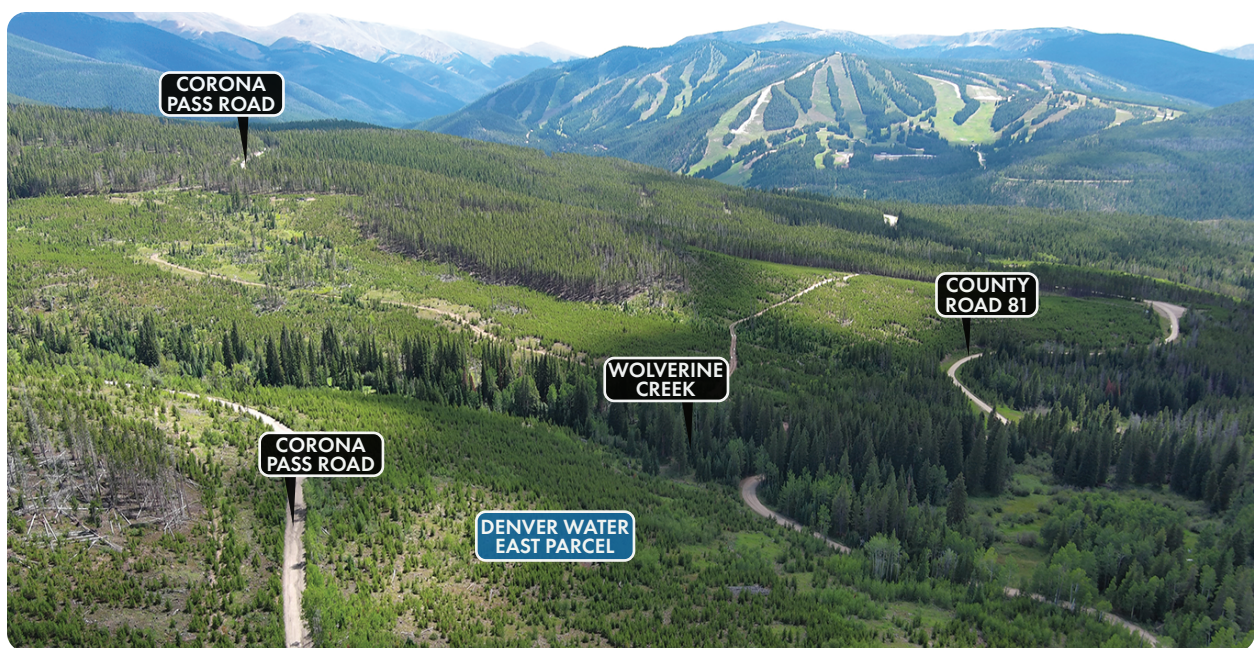


FIGURE 5–15. Denver Water East has multiple existing forest roads extending across it and the remnants of the historic Arrow Town Site.

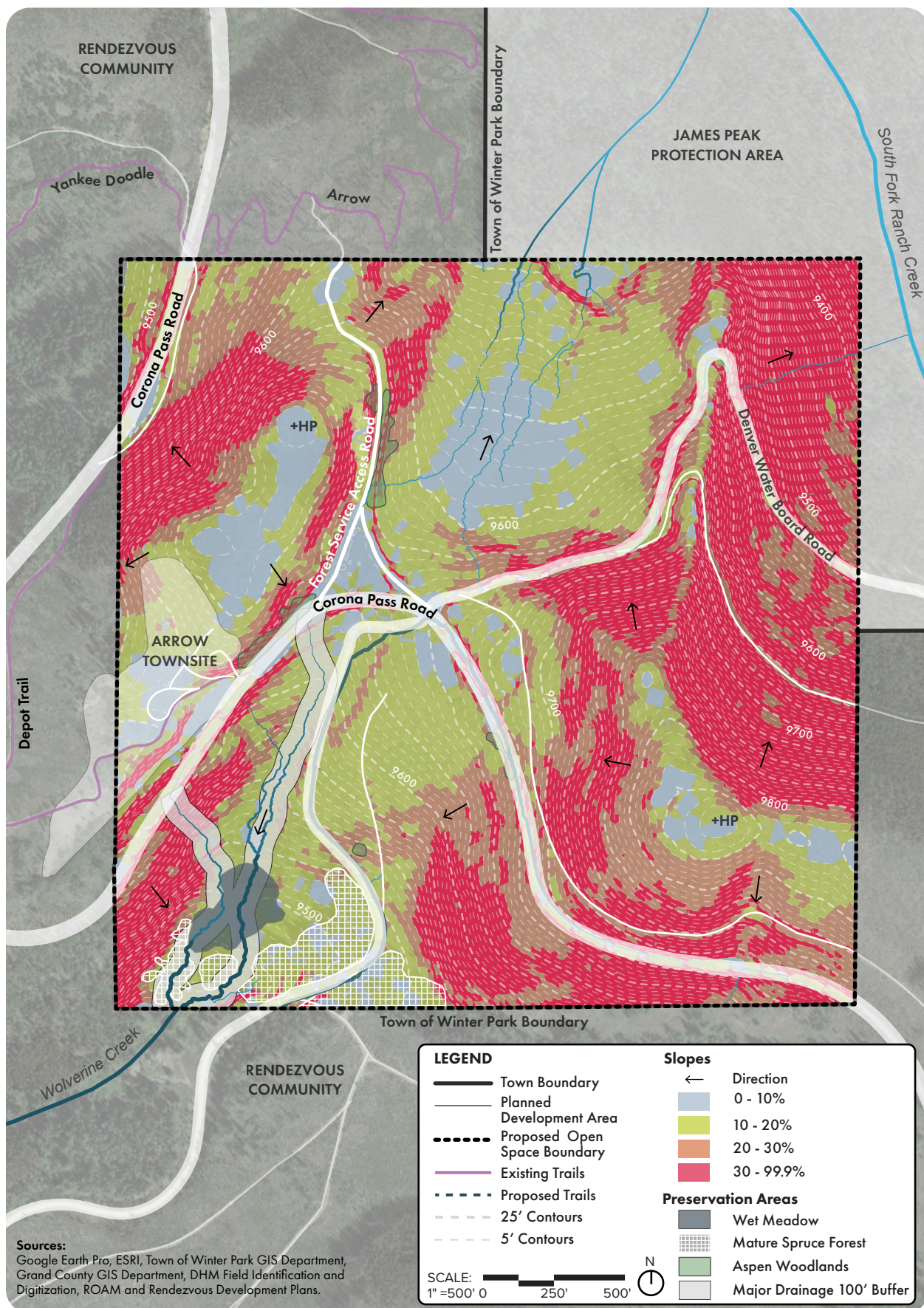


FIGURE 5-16. Analysis map for the location of Forest Spur Park in the Rendezvous Community.

Conservation Suitability

High conservation value areas (ratings of 4–5) are concentrated in the wetland complex in the southeastern portion of the parcel and along Wolverine Creek. These areas are essential for hydrological function and provide important habitats for wetland vegetation and mature spruce forests. The slopes and aspen stands in the eastern section have moderate conservation value (3–4), with vegetative diversity and wildlife value. Preserving these features ensures the protection of sensitive ecosystems and species.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline strategies to preserve and enhance ecological integrity, habitat connectivity, and recreational value of the Denver Water East Parcel, while minimizing impacts to sensitive habitats and wildlife. The recommendation map on the following page shows areas of conservation priority that could be incorporated into the Town's existing open space, private open space or conservation easements.

Design and Build Trails with Wildlife Habitat in Mind

- ▶ Cluster trails in designated areas to concentrate recreational impacts and preserve larger, contiguous patches of undisturbed habitat. Use existing natural or human-made barriers, such as topography or existing roads, to define trail groupings and to limit new trail sprawl;
- ▶ Allow for the development of scenic trails in select locations to improve connectivity to the Arrow Town site and Rendezvous;
- ▶ Establish small trailhead(s) and parking along Corona Pass Road outside of sensitive areas future trails intersect with the road.

Establish Protective Buffers Around Sensitive Habitats

- ▶ Avoid placing trails within a minimum 300-foot buffer zone around riparian and wetland habitats associated with Wolverine Creek. This buffer will protect the ecological integrity of these sensitive areas, reduce disturbances to wildlife, and maintain water quality.

Implement Seasonal Trail Closures for Wildlife Protection

- ▶ Temporarily close trails during critical wildlife life stages, such as calving, nesting, or migration periods, to minimize disturbances. Use signage and public outreach to inform trail users of the closures and the ecological reasons behind them, fostering awareness and compliance.

Preserve Unique Vegetation

- ▶ The large wetland complex in the southwest corner of the property, mature spruce stands surrounding Wolverine Creek, and scattered aspen stands should be avoided areas during future development.

Provide Interpretation at the Arrow Town Site

- ▶ Hire a third-party consultant to perform a cultural resource assessment/State Historic Preservation Office review to determine extent of existing historic resources and define a boundary of the Historic Town Site;
- ▶ Preserve the remains of the Arrow Town Site as an interpretive area. Incorporate signage and passive use opportunities including trails and parking;
- ▶ Rehabilitate the site to incorporate passive, protect existing historic resources, and interpretive the site. Repair and revegetate extensive network of social trails;
- ▶ Incorporate design that deters dispersed camping activities which have led to extensive damage to the resources and surrounding lands.

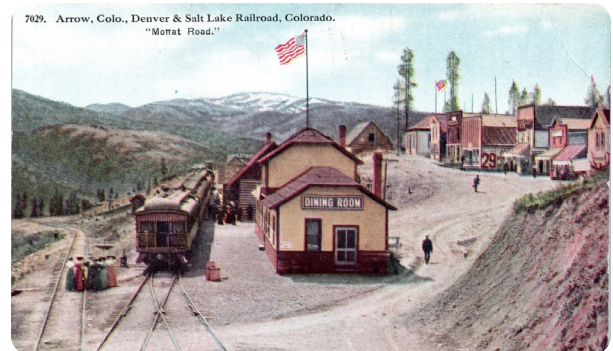


FIGURE 5–17. A cultural resource assessment will help identify future resources for interpretation at the Arrow Town Site (Google Images, Original source unknown).

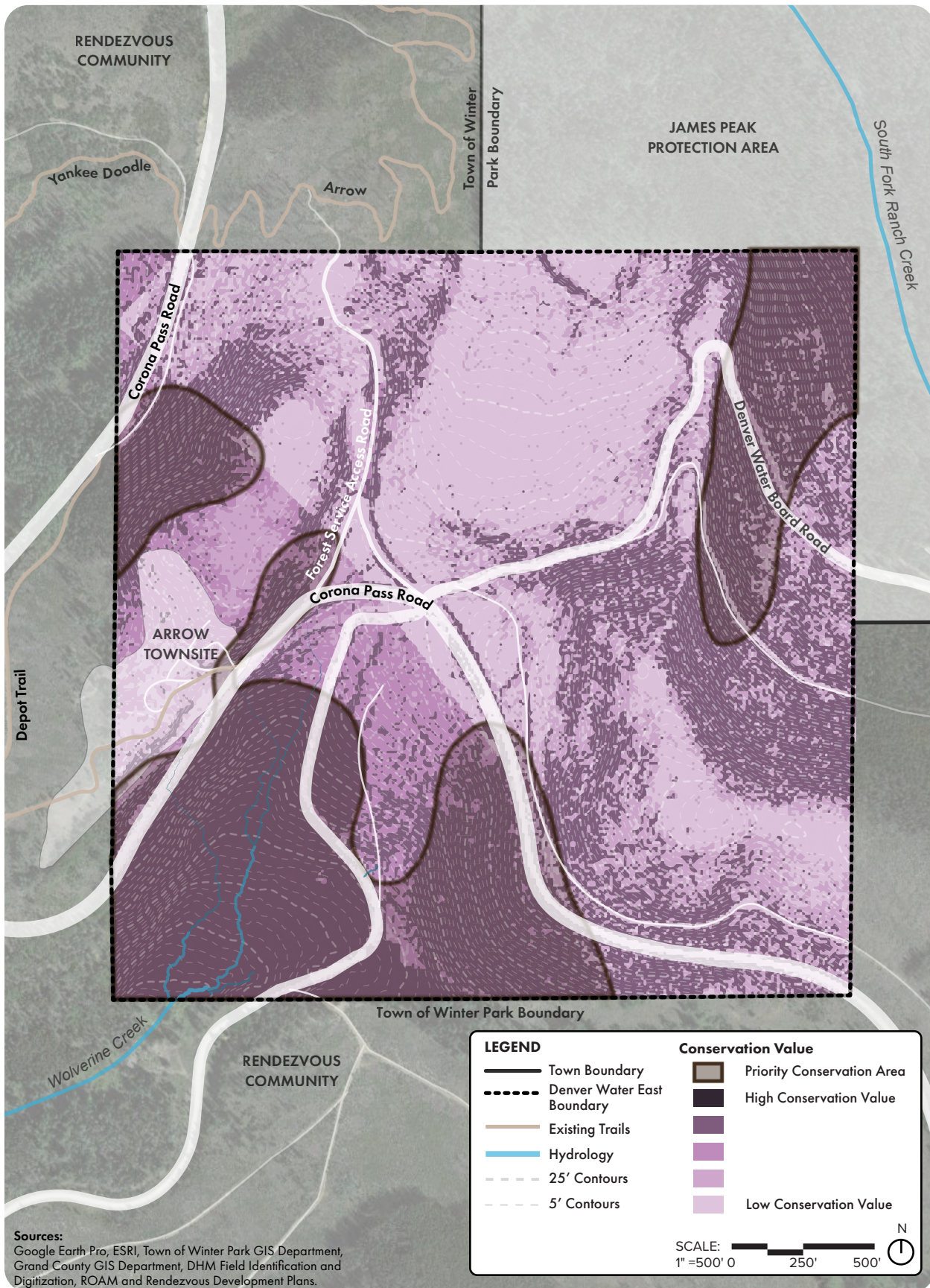


FIGURE 5-18. The Conservation Suitability analysis map for the Denver Water East Parcel ranks the priority conservation areas that should be preserved for Open Space or Conservation Easements if the parcel is annexed into the Town for development.

Denver Water West Parcel

The Denver Water West Parcel is currently zoned as Forestry and Open Space in Grand County and was identified as a potential growth area for Winter Park in the 2011 *Grand County Master Plan*. The 199 acre parcel borders the west side of Winter Park and is owned by Denver Water. A private development in the Town of Fraser extends along the west side of the parcel.

The Town of Winter Park has a lease agreement with Denver Water to use the parcel as an open space for trails. The majority of the site was clear-cut in 2008 after the pine beetle epidemic and has since regenerated with lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*).

The Denver Water West Parcel is bordered to the north, east, and west by private lands, and to the south by Arapaho National Forest, owned and operated by the US Forest Service. The parcel is an ecologically diverse area defined by its unique hydrology, vegetation, and wildlife habitat. The northwestern limits of the property are bounded by Leland Creek, a perennial waterway that serves as a key hydrological feature supporting riparian ecosystems and connecting to several smaller drainages that traverse the property. Several hiking and mountain bike trails are present, bisecting the parcel.

The vegetation within the Denver Water West Parcel is predominantly lodgepole pine forest, with additional coverage by mixed montane aspen-conifer forests and riparian communities. The lodgepole pine forests are heavily shaded, adapted to post-fire regeneration, and provide important habitat and cover for a range of species, including mule deer, elk, black bear, and various avian species. Mixed montane aspen-conifer forests consist of a heterogeneous blend of aspen

(*Populus tremuloides*) and coniferous species such as Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), fir (*Abies spp.*), and lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*).

The open canopy of the aspen woodlands allows for sunlight penetration, fostering a diversity of understory herbaceous plant species. Riparian scrub-shrub habitat, located along Leland Creek and its adjacent floodplains, supports a high level of biodiversity. These areas provide essential habitat for species such as moose, black bear, mule deer, mountain lions, a high diversity of avian species, and amphibians and serve as critical resources for many species inhabiting the montane ecosystem.

The southeastern portion of the parcel is characterized by steep slopes where upland vegetation dominates. This terrain provides a transition zone between the lower wetlands and higher elevation forests, fostering diverse microhabitats. In contrast, the northwestern portion of the property supports scrub-shrub wetlands, which are seasonally saturated areas dominated by willows (*Salix spp.*) and other riparian vegetation. These wetlands serve essential ecological functions, including water filtration, flood attenuation, and providing habitat for numerous wildlife species.

Of particular note is the parcel's designation as high-quality, priority habitat for moose by CPW. Moose utilize the scrub-shrub wetlands and riparian areas for foraging, primarily on willow and aspen, and the upland slopes for shelter and movement. The parcel topographically connects habitat surrounding Leland Creek to Vasquez Creek. The identified habitat is important for supporting the local moose population, particularly during calving and the winter months when food and shelter become limited.



FIGURE 5–19. Denver Water West Parcel features a rich diversity of ecological communities and hosts the Town's designated mountain biking trails.

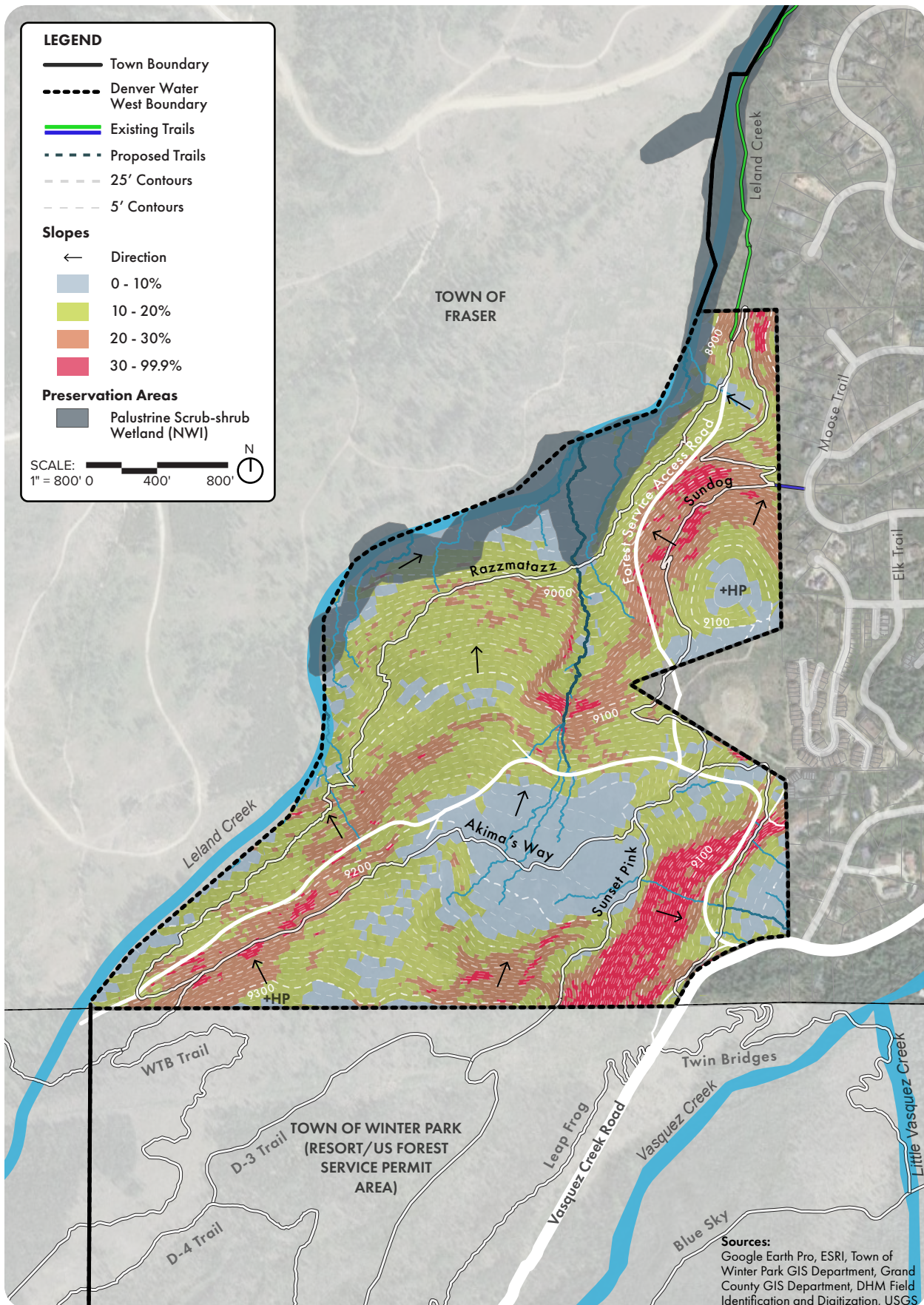


FIGURE 5-20. Analysis map for the Denver Water West Parcel.

Conservation Suitability

This parcel exhibits high conservation value primarily along Leland Creek and the associated wetlands, which are areas of high value due to their critical role in supporting riparian and wetland-dependent species. The steep slopes in the southeastern portion are moderately sensitive, with potential for erosion if trails or development occur. Conservation value ratings are highest (4–5) near Leland Creek, emphasizing the importance of protecting riparian corridors and the adjacent priority moose habitat.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline strategies to preserve and enhance ecological integrity, habitat connectivity, and recreational value of the Denver Water West Parcel while minimizing impacts to sensitive habitats and wildlife. The recommendation map on the following page shows areas of conservation priority that could be incorporated into the Town's existing open space, private open space or conservation easements.

Design and Build Trails with Wildlife Habitat in Mind

- ▶ Cluster trails in designated areas to concentrate recreational impacts and preserve larger, contiguous patches of undisturbed habitat. Use existing natural or human-made barriers, such as topography or existing roads, to define trail groupings and to limit new trail sprawl;
- ▶ Allow for the development of scenic trails and mountain bike trails in select locations to improve connectivity and access across the parcel.

Establish Protective Buffers Around Sensitive Habitats

- ▶ Avoid placing trails within a minimum 300-foot buffer zone around riparian and wetland habitats associated with Leland Creek. This buffer will protect the ecological integrity of these sensitive areas, reduce disturbances to wildlife, and maintain water quality.

Incorporate a Wildlife Movement Corridor

- ▶ Designate and maintain a pathway through the site that allows moose and other large mammals to move freely between Leland Creek and Vasquez Creek. Ensure this corridor is free of high-use trails and other barriers, using signage or fencing to limit human intrusion and maintain its functionality for wildlife.

Implement Seasonal Trail Closures for Wildlife Protection

- ▶ Temporarily close trails during critical wildlife life stages, such as calving, nesting, or migration periods, to minimize disturbances. Use signage and public outreach to inform trail users of the closures and the ecological reasons behind them, fostering awareness and compliance.

Viewshed Preservation

- ▶ Preserve the viewsheds that define the Town's character and attract residents and visitors. Identify key visual corridors within the parcel for protection, particularly those framing the surrounding mountain ranges and forested landscapes;
- ▶ Implement zoning policies which limit development heights and require site planning that minimizes visual intrusion into vistas. Incorporate vegetation management practices to screen potential structures;
- ▶ Design trails and recreation areas to enhance viewshed experiences.

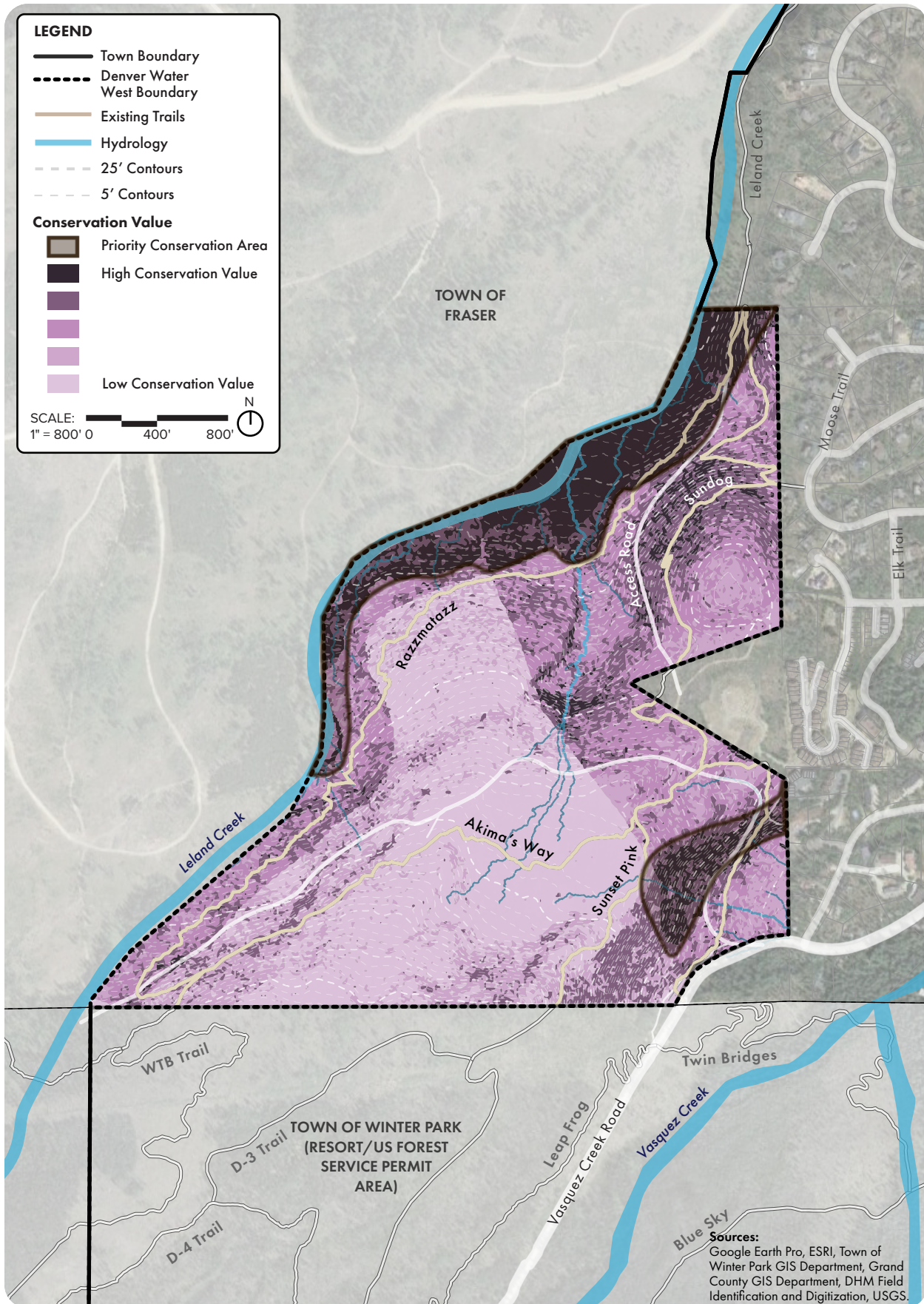


FIGURE 5-21. Analysis map for the Denver Water West Parcel.