

Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan

City of Fort Collins

July 9, 2004



City of Fort Collins
Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan is the long-range visioning document of the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program.

The mission of the Natural Areas Program is to protect and enhance lands with existing or potential natural areas values, lands that serve as community separators, agricultural lands, and lands with scenic values. Protection of natural habitats and features is the highest priority, while providing for education and passive recreation for the Fort Collins community.

The Natural Areas Policy Plan has guided the Natural Areas Program since 1992. But the program has grown and changed dramatically, necessitating a document to set policy and direction for the next 10 years. The Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan replaces the 1992 Natural Areas Policy Plan.

Natural areas protection began long before the 1992 inception of the Natural Areas Program. In 1974, City Council adopted an open space plan that was implemented by the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Early acquisitions included sites in the foothills and along the Poudre River.

While 1973 and 1984 tax initiatives funded early natural areas and open space activities, 1992, 1997, and 2002 Fort Collins tax initiatives provide funding for the acquisition and management of natural areas in the current Natural Areas Program. In 1995 and 1999, Larimer County voters passed similar tax initiatives. These County

taxes also provide funding for the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, as well as for other cities and towns within Larimer County and for Larimer County's Open Lands Program.

Funding

Revenues over the past 11 years have totaled \$61,770,000. While dedicated tax revenues are the primary source of funding, grants, donations, dedications, and partnerships round out program funding. Great Outdoors Colorado has awarded grants of over \$1.5 million for land acquisition in Fort Collins. Other organizations have provided smaller grants for fishing piers, wildlife plantings, weed control, and education projects.

Land Conservation

The Natural Areas Program has taken a new direction. While early program efforts were focused primarily within the Fort Collins Growth Management Area, the program has expanded over the years to include conservation of community separators. Now the program is conserving lands in regional areas. This approach reflects ballot language of the 1977 Building Community Choices



tax, the 2002 Open Space Yes! Fort Collins sales tax initiative (which takes effect in 2006), City Council direction, and support expressed by the public during review of plans for this new direction. As of the end of 2003, the City has conserved 4,270 acres in the local focus area, 3,300 acres in the regional focus area, and 3,900 acres in the community separator focus area. Land conservation in the next 10 years will be within local, regional, and community separator focus areas, with funds anticipated to be fairly evenly allocated among the three focus areas.

Stewardship

While Chapter III provides a vision of where land conservation can be expected to occur, Chapter IV presents a vision of how the Natural Areas Program will continue to care for these lands. This includes an overview of program management, education, enforcement, public improvements, maintenance, restoration and habitat enhancement, facility operations, and staffing.

Program management's role is to provide the direction, resources, and staffing necessary to take care of the City's natural areas. Education functions include interpretive field trips, interpretive signs, and printed materials, all of which help visitors enjoy natural areas and provide an understanding that helps engender ecological protection. Volunteer Master Naturalists will continue to be a vital part of the education program.

The Natural Areas and Trails Ranger Program promotes the safety and well-being of natural areas and trails visitors while ensuring the protection of biological, physical, and ecological resources. Rangers will face new challenges as the Natural

Areas Program expands into regional areas. Larger, more distant properties will require the Ranger Program to identify new ways of patrolling including mounted patrol and working with volunteer groups for bike and backcountry patrol.

Public improvements help to make natural areas safe and enjoyable for visitors and help to protect natural resource values. These improvements include trails, parking lots, restrooms, kiosks, benches, fishing and wildlife observation structures, signs, and fencing. Along with maintaining these improvements, maintenance personnel manage the control of prairie dog movement from natural areas onto private property and continue the ongoing struggle with weed control and exotic shrub removal. Adopt-a-Natural Area volunteers will continue to play a key role in maintenance and litter control.

Restoration enhances and maximizes the potential natural values of sites acquired by the program. In the next 10 years, the restoration program will undertake significant ecological restorations on existing sites along the Poudre River and foothills corridors and on newly-acquired regional properties. Through the Natural Areas Certification Program and Enhancement Fund, the City assists private land owners who wish to restore their properties to more native conditions.

The Natural Areas Program operates out of a recently renovated historic farm, the Nix Maintenance Facility and Natural Areas Program Offices. The offices are in a restored 1920s era Craftsman style home. A new maintenance shop was constructed on the site to provide work space for field crews and storage for equipment, tools, and vehicles. Expansion to provide additional office and maintenance space was approved

with the original site development plan and will be needed as the program grows.

To meet the needs of the program, staffing has grown over the past 11 years, reaching 23.4 FTEs as of the end of 2003. Twelve of these are technicians and technician assistants who are critical to restoring and maintaining the growing number of acres managed by the Natural Areas Program. Over the next 10 years, the challenges of expanding into larger, more distant sites will require program managers to evaluate staffing levels. Volunteers will continue to be a critical element in the program.

Policies

Chapter V describes the existing policies under which the Natural Areas Program operates as well as additional policies that are needed. The land use policies under which the program operates are a part of City Plan, the City's community planning document. The City has Council-adopted policies that direct activities associated with prairie dog management and the granting of utility easements and rights-of-ways on natural areas or open lands managed by the Natural Areas Program. A Council-adopted policy is needed relative to user fees. Administratively-adopted policies are needed to direct conservation easements, land disposition/change of use, fire control and management, historic preservation, education, enforcement, and corporate sponsorship.

Chapter I: Introduction

A. Mission

The mission of the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program is to protect and enhance lands with existing or potential natural areas values, lands that serve as community separators, agricultural lands, and lands with scenic values. Protection of natural habitats and features is the highest priority, while providing for education and passive recreation for the Fort Collins community.



B. Purpose

The Natural Areas Program is 11 years old, yet it is still very much in its infancy. The Natural Areas Policy Plan (NAPP), adopted by the Fort Collins City Council in 1992, established the vision and policies for much of the first 11 years. The Natural Areas Program, however, has outgrown the NAPP. The Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan replaces the NAPP, establishing a vision for the new era 2004-2013, providing updated policies, and documenting the accomplishments of the Natural Areas Program's first 11 years. (Historical information in this document is through the end of 2003.)

C. Background

Official recognition of the value of the City's natural areas first occurred in 1974 when City Council adopted an open space plan. This plan addressed a wide variety of community needs and led to the establishment of an active open space acquisition and management program. The plan identified priority areas within and adjacent to Fort Collins to be included in the City's Open Space system. The importance of the area for fish and wildlife habitat was among the criteria used to identify priority sites. Specific areas identified as priorities included the Poudre River corridor, portions of Spring Creek, and the foothills west of the city.

During the early years, significant lands and riparian corridors were conserved along the Poudre River, Spring Creek, and Fossil Creek. These efforts helped to maintain corridors for wildlife movement, recreational trails, and visual serenity. Early conservation efforts also focused on protecting lands at the base of the city's foothills (Foothills Corridor). These lands provide ecological and recreational connectivity between the foothills and prairie ecosystems. They also contribute to maintaining a degree of community separation, which can be defined as land conservation efforts designed to preserve the identities of individual communities.

Initially, the Parks and Recreation Department was responsible for acquiring and managing natural areas preserved as open space, with the primary goal of providing recreational areas. The Parks Department also acquired areas that were left in a natural state in conjunction with some of their developed parks. One of the largest of these was the portion of Lee Martinez Community Park along the Poudre River.

In 1973, the citizens of Fort Collins passed a 7-year, 1-cent Capital Improvement Sales Tax; a portion of which went for the purchase of open spaces. This tax provided the funds for the initial parcels at Maxwell and Pineridge open spaces. In 1984, the citizens approved an additional ½-cent Capital Funds tax, which included allocation of a little over \$1 million for land acquisition and public improvements for open spaces and recreational trails, particularly for areas along the foothills. This tax provided funds for the purchase of portions of Reservoir Ridge and Campeau open spaces (later combined into one site – Reservoir Ridge Natural Area).

In 1992, the Natural Resources Department presented to City Council the Natural Areas Policy Plan, which focused land conservation on the protection and enhancement of natural areas; a change in direction from the previous efforts to acquire open spaces focused on providing recreational opportunities. Later that year, Fort Collins citizens passed the first ¼-cent sales tax entirely dedicated to implementing the Natural Areas Policy Plan for the first 5 years of the Natural Areas Program.

Citizens of Larimer County demonstrated their commitment to land conservation in 1995 by passing a citizen-initiated ¼-cent sales tax for the acquisition and long-term maintenance of open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, parks, and trails. A minimum of 55% of the funding was pledged to the municipalities of Loveland, Fort Collins, Estes Park, Berthoud, Timnath, and Wellington, with the remainder being directed to lands within unincorporated Larimer County and funding Larimer County's Open Lands Program.

In 1997, as part of the Building Community Choices tax and capital improvements package, Fort Collins voters extended a major portion of the 1992 ¼-cent City sales tax for natural areas and trails for 8 more years.

In 1999, in an effort known as Help Preserve Open Space, voters approved the extension of the 1995 County-wide ¼-cent sales tax until 2018.

In 2002, Fort Collins voters extended the City's ¼-cent sales tax until 2030. The 2002 Open Space Yes! citizen's initiative included a more "regional" approach to natural areas land protection as well as the protection of community separators and valued agricultural lands.

D. Master Plan Development, Review, and Approval Process

The development of the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan began in early 2002 when City Council asked staff to update the NAPP and take a look at broader opportunities for land conservation. Natural Areas Program staff formed a task force of local and regional land conservation experts to explore broader opportunities for land conservation that would benefit the citizens of Fort Collins. This task force identified high priority resource areas and grouped them into a series of focus areas. (Details can be found in Chapter III.)

In fall 2002, these focus areas were mapped and presented to City Council for review and comment. Staff explained that funding for the broader regional land conservation shown on the focus area map was not available within current funding, however if the Open Space Yes! sales tax passed in November, the broader more regional land conservation efforts could be funded. In November 2002, Open Space Yes! sales tax passed by 65%.

In April 2003, City Council adopted the Land Conservation Focus Area Map and amended the NAPP to provide for regional land conservation. City Council asked staff to seek more public input on the Focus Area Map and regional land conservation.

Staff prepared the Framework for Future Land Conservation in an effort to represent the community's priorities for land conservation. The Framework provides a vision for land conservation for the next 10 years (2004 – 2013). Through presentations to City of Fort Collins advisory boards, Larimer County advisory boards, Larimer County Commissioners, the Chamber of

Commerce Legislative Affairs Committee, civic groups, and a public open house, Natural Areas Program staff gathered input on the proposed Framework. A web site also was available for citizens to review the proposed Framework and provide input. Staff received comments from more than 75 people.

Overall, most people were in favor of the land conservation plan. They felt it was well balanced and flexible, and they expressed confidence in the Natural Areas Program to continue to implement its mission to protect and enhance lands with existing or potential natural areas values, as well as lands that serve as community separators and lands with scenic values. Residents said they felt fortunate that Fort Collins has a program in place to conserve natural areas and open lands.

At the December 9, 2003 study session, staff presented City Council the Framework for Future Land Conservation - 2004-2013 and the public input that had been received. Council acknowledged that they were comfortable with staff proceeding with implementation.

With the Land Conservation aspect of the Master Plan completed and accepted, staff began drafting the Stewardship aspect of the Master Plan to be in line with the Land Conservation plan. The Natural Resources Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Board, and Planning and Zoning Board reviewed the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan. The Natural Resources Advisory Board and Parks and Recreation Board recommend adoption. The Planning and Zoning Board was evenly split in their support of the plan.

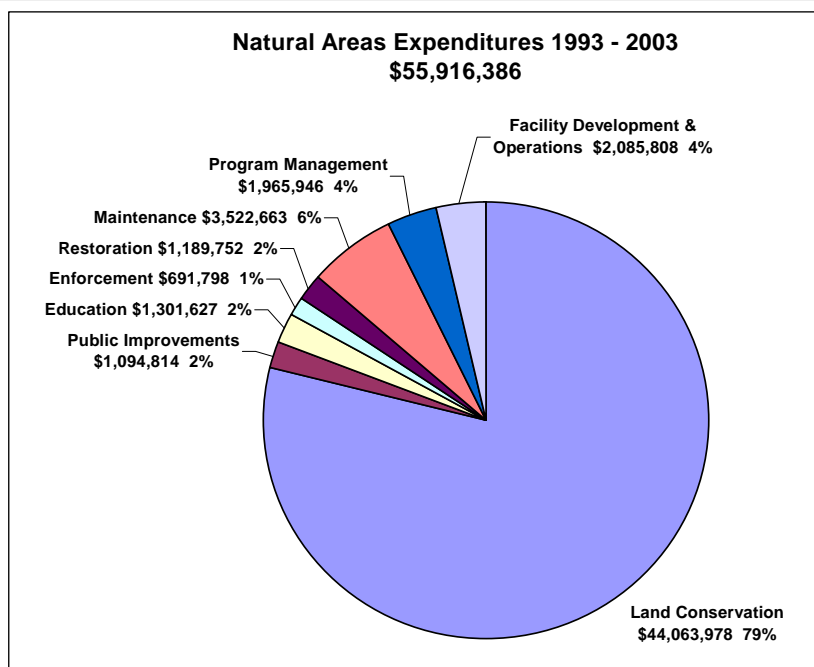
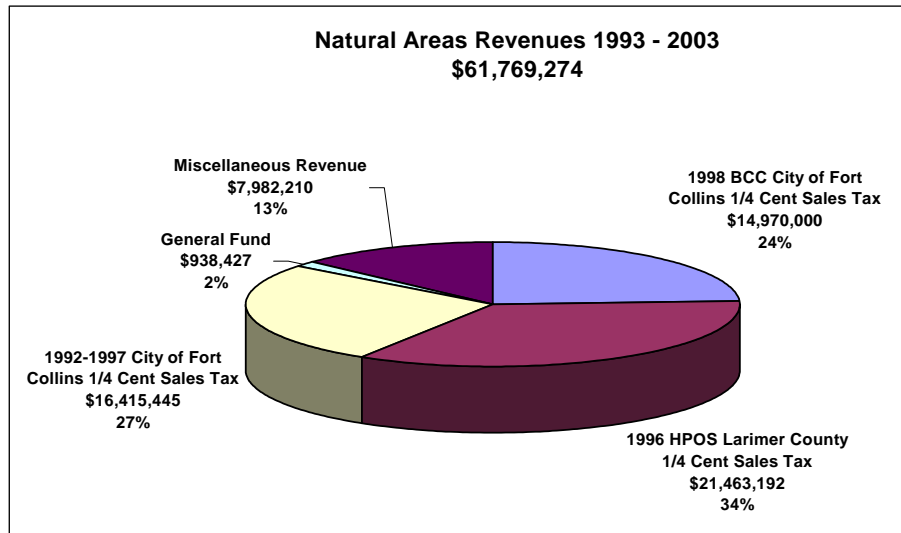
Chapter II: Funding and Expenditures

A. Historical Funding and Expenditures – 1993 through 2003

The Natural Areas Program has been primarily funded through various City natural areas and Larimer County open space sales taxes passed by the voters from 1992 through 2002 (described in detail in

Chapter I). Funding has also come from other sources, including City general fund, grants, donations, and partnerships.




The Natural Area Program's revenues over the 11-year period from 1993 through 2003 have amounted to nearly \$62 million, as shown below. During this period, expenditures of almost \$56 million were made. The remaining \$6 million will be spent on land conservation in 2004.



B. Future Funding and Expenditures – 2004 to 2013

The Natural Areas Program land conservation and stewardship activities are currently funded by a large portion of the

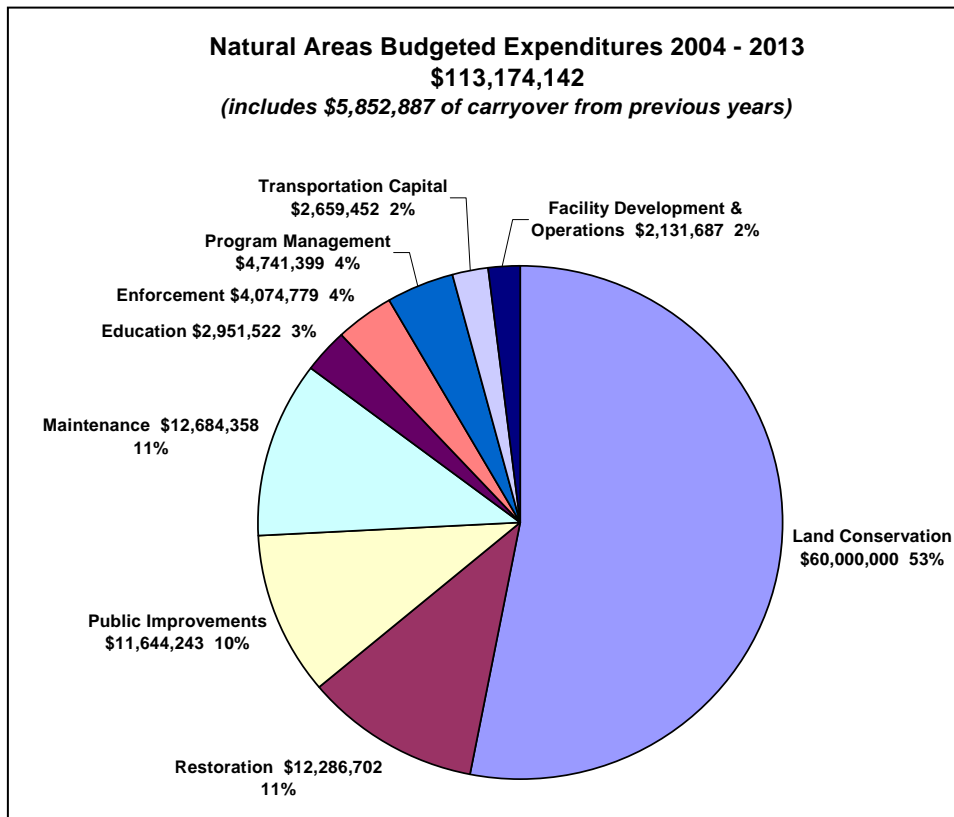
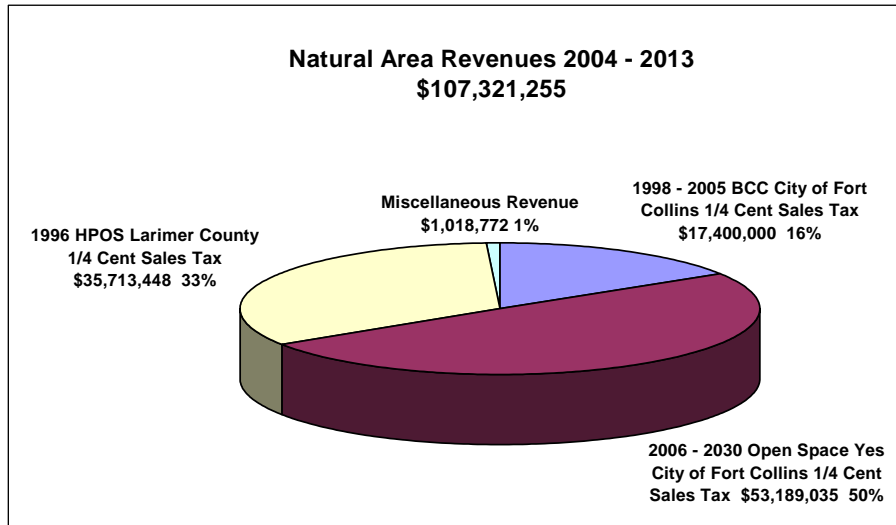
Fort Collins Building Community Choices $\frac{1}{4}$ -cent sales tax and a portion of Larimer County's Help Preserve Open Space $\frac{1}{4}$ -cent sales tax. Beginning in 2006, program funding also will include the Fort Collins Open Space Yes! citizen initiated $\frac{1}{4}$ -cent sales tax. The table below shows the timetable of each of these funding sources.

Sales Tax	Amount	Today	2030
HPOS (Larimer County Help Preserve Open Space)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cent		
BCC (Building Community Choices)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cent		
OSY! (Open Space Yes!)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cent		



The Natural Areas Program anticipates total sales tax revenue for 2004 – 2013 to be approximately \$104 million under current

economic assumptions. Anticipated revenues and expenditures are summarized below.



The Open Space Yes! City sales tax revenues, which will begin in 2006, have the following spending requirements:

- 80% or more of the revenues must be spent on Land Conservation and Restoration;
- 20 % or less may be spent on management, education, enforcement, public improvements, maintenance, and operations. Out of this 20%, 5% or less of the total Open Space Yes! tax revenues may be spent on City of Fort Collins transportation capital needs, which can be used for improvement of existing roads or acquisition of rights-of-way adjacent to property owned by the City of Fort Collins that was acquired after January 1, 2006 with the proceeds of this tax.

The City's portion of the Help Preserve Open Space County sales tax revenues has no percentage spending limitations. Therefore, until that tax expires in 2018, the overall program allocations to land conservation will not be equal to 80%.

During the first 11 years of the Natural Areas Program, 81% of revenues were spent on land conservation and restoration. Expenditure projections for the next 10 years show 64% of revenues being spent on land conservation and restoration. As the area of land, number of sites, and miles of trails the Natural Areas Program manages grows, the percentage of revenues spent on management, education, enforcement, public improvements, maintenance, and operations will grow, and the revenues available for land conservation and restoration will decrease. As we approach 2013, the Natural Areas Program will begin to have difficulty meeting the spending requirements of Open Space Yes! without additional operations

and maintenance funding from other revenue sources. Options for meeting this need will be evaluated.

C. Other Sources of Funding

Park Fees. Although no part of Park Fees (development fee) goes directly to the Natural Areas Program, the larger parks built after 1992, such as Fossil Creek Community Park and the future Southwest Community Park, as well as some neighborhood parks, have stream corridors that are managed by the Parks Department as natural area features within the parks. The conservation of these natural areas within parks adds to the total acreage of natural area habitat in Fort Collins.

Grants. The natural areas and open space taxes help Fort Collins and neighboring communities leverage funds to obtain large Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants. In 1994, GOCO awarded two grants totaling \$650,000 to the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County Open Lands to assist in the purchase of 200 acres to expand the Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area.

In 1996 and 1999, GOCO awarded the City of Fort Collins and nine other local government agency partners a total of \$5.9 million from their Legacy Grant Program for the Cache la Poudre – Big Thompson Rivers Legacy Project. The goal of this collaborative project was to protect open spaces and natural areas, construct regional recreational trails, and develop interdisciplinary environmental education and interpretation facilities along the Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson rivers from the South Platte River to Rocky Mountain National Park. Fort Collins Natural Areas Program's share was about \$1 million and was used to assist in the acquisition of

146 acres of natural areas, as well as the design and installation of interpretive features at seven sites.

In addition to GOCO grants, the Natural Areas Program has received smaller grants (<\$10,000 each) to assist in fishing pier construction, wildlife plantings, weed control, and education projects.

Donations. From the very beginning of the City's Open Space Program, donations, as well as dedications of land parcels (result of development approval), have contributed to the total acreage of protected lands owned and managed by the City. Since 1992, the Natural Areas Program has received donations or dedications for portions of 12 natural areas: Bobcat Ridge, Two Creeks, Colina Mariposa, Hazaleus, Hidden Cattails, Maxwell, McMurtry, Pineridge, Redtail Grove, Reservoir Ridge, Prairie Dog Meadow, and Riverbend Ponds.

Similar to land dedications, mitigation requirements for habitat impacts due to development have provided funds for a few small projects (\$1,000-\$2,000 each) to enhance wildlife habitat and to construct public improvements.

Partnerships. In addition to the Parks and Recreation Department, the Natural Areas Program has partnered with other City departments to help fund both acquisition and restoration of natural areas. Partnerships with the City's Utilities Services have included acquisition and restoration of Redwing Marsh, Red Fox Meadows, and Udall natural areas that serve dual functions of stormwater detention/water quality and wildlife habitat.

The Natural Areas Program also partners with entities outside City government. Larimer County Open Lands contributed funds for the acquisition of the City's Cathy

Fromme Prairie and Coyote Ridge natural areas. The City's Natural Areas Program contributed funds for the County's Devil's Backbone Open Space (Indian Creek parcel), Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, Rimrock Open Space, and Long View Farm Open Space. The City also partnered with the County on the development of the public improvements, restoration, and interpretive features on Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space. Both agencies partnered with the City of Loveland for the purchase of the Dryland Wheat Farm in the Fort Collins-Loveland Separator. The City and Larimer County have also partnered on a conservation easement in the Wellington Community Separator.

The U.S. Government has been involved in several partnerships with the City to restore gravel-mined sites along the Poudre River. In 1994, a collaborative reclamation plan prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey, Fort Collins Science Center; Lafarge North America, Inc.; Colorado State University, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture; and the City Natural Areas Program was initiated for the Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area. The site, which had been mined for gravel, was reclaimed to a combination of riparian, wet meadow, open water, and upland native habitats. The innovative project received the Reclamation Excellence Award from the Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology and the Environmental Stewardship Award from Larimer County. Currently, the Natural Areas Program is in a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a plan to restore the gravel ponds, weedy uplands, and stream bed of the Poudre on Kingfisher Point Natural Area. This project is in the design phase.

Partnerships with Larimer County Open Lands, City Departments, City of Loveland, and new partnerships will continue to be essential to the Natural Areas Program's land conservation efforts. Partnerships are currently being developed with Legacy Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, The Archeological Trust, and The Trust for Public Lands. New partnerships will be developed, perhaps with the US Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and private property owners and businesses.

Chapter III: Land Conservation

A. Introduction

In November 2002, the citizens of Fort Collins passed a tax initiative extending the City's ¼-cent sales tax for land conservation until 2030. In order to implement the will of the citizens, Natural Areas Program staff worked to develop a bold vision for land conservation. This chapter describes the results of that effort, which included the participation of a Citizens Task Force and other public outreach activities. The result is a ten-year framework for implementing a new land conservation vision. As noted in Chapter I, the Framework for Future Land Conservation received extensive public review.

In addition to presenting the Natural Areas Program's overall conservation vision, this chapter includes a summary of public comments and other information that was used in developing land conservation goals and strategies.

B. Inventory of Existing Natural Areas/Protected Areas

Prior to the establishment of the Natural Areas Program in 1992, the City protected 17 open space sites totaling 1,268 acres; more than half the sites were located along the Poudre River while 65% of the total acreage was located in the foothills. Many of these open space sites were protected by the City's Parks and Recreation Department; some were Utilities sites. Several developed parks also have natural areas within their boundaries (e.g., Lee Martinez Park, Overland Park, Avery Park, Troutman Park,

and Golden Meadows Park). Fort Collins also is fortunate to be near open space areas owned and managed by other entities including Larimer County's Horsetooth Mountain Park, Strauss Cabin, and Lyons Park and the State's CSU Environmental Learning Center and Lory State Park.

Adoption of the Natural Areas Policy Plan in 1992 and voter approval of a dedicated funding source were watershed events that launched a more comprehensive protection program.

During the period 1992 through 2003, the Fort Collins City Council formally approved the use of City funds allocated to the Natural Areas Program for the acquisition of land in the following geographic areas:

1. Natural areas within the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area (1992);
2. Open Lands within the Corridor between Fort Collins and Loveland (1995);
3. Community separators between Fort Collins and Wellington, Timnath, and Windsor (2002).
4. Regional Focus Areas (2003).

In addition to the efforts of the Natural Areas Program, other City departments have also participated in natural areas land conservation. The Parks and Recreation Department has continued to incorporate small natural areas and stream corridors into new community parks, the horticulture center, and some neighborhood parks. In 2002, a major natural areas land conservation effort was completed by the Parks and Recreation Department with the opening of Gateway Mountain Park — the 440-acre site of Fort Collins' retired Water

Treatment Plant #1 in the Poudre Canyon. This “natural park” provides recreational opportunities such as hiking, picnicking, fishing, and kayaking while maintaining the majority of the site in protected natural area habitat and preserving historic water works buildings.

As of the end of 2003, the City’s Natural Areas Program owns and manages natural areas ranging in size from 1 to 2,604 acres. A wide diversity of native plant communities have been protected, including mature cottonwood forests, foothills shrublands, wet meadows, emergent

marshes, and shortgrass prairie providing critical habitat for numerous wildlife species.

As of the end of 2003, the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program has conserved 11,472 acres of land. Map III-1 and Table III-1 show the natural areas inventory as of the end of 2003. The table indicates the total acres per site, the sum of which is greater than 11,472 acres because the 11,472 acres includes only the Natural Areas Program’s percentage on joint acquisitions.

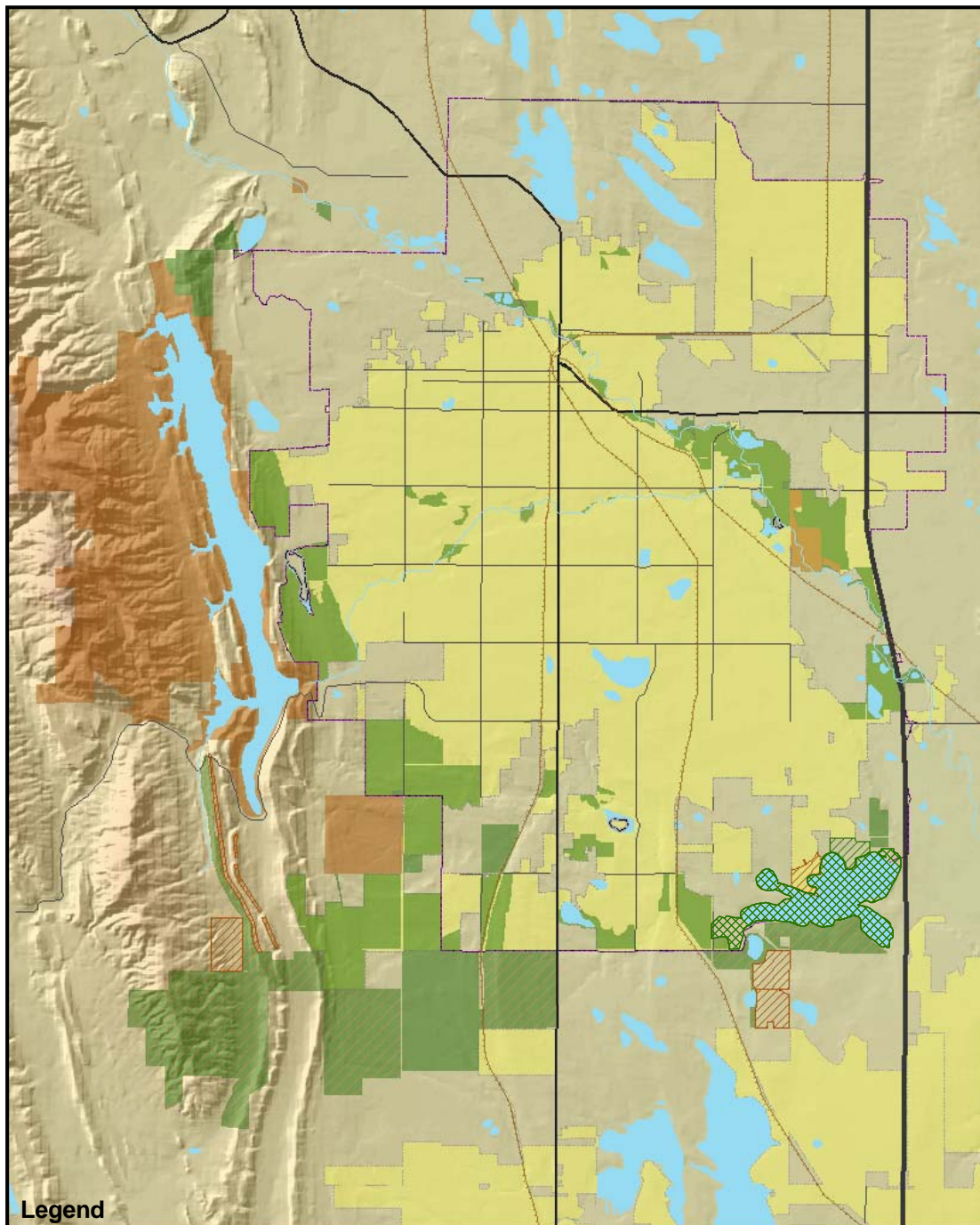
Table III-1 Natural Areas Inventory

Site	Acres	Comments
Local Focus Area		
Core Natural Areas		
Fischer Natural Area	11	Donated 1977 to Parks; transferred to Natural Areas.
Mallard’s Nest Natural Area	7	Acquired* 1985-2002 by Parks, Utilities, and Natural Areas; Natural Areas and Utilities manage.
Red Fox Meadows Natural Area	39	Acquired* 1986-2000 by Utilities, Parks, and Natural Areas; Natural Areas and Utilities manage.
Redwing Marsh Natural Area	16	Acquired 1993-1995 by Natural Areas and Utilities; Natural Areas and Utilities manage.
Ross Natural Area	31	Acquired 1978 by Parks and Utilities; transferred to Natural Areas; Natural Areas and Utilities manage.
The Coterie Natural Area	5	Acquired 2000 by Natural Areas.
Dry Creek Stormwater Wetland	7	Acquired 1999 by Natural Areas and Utilities; Utilities manages; no public access.
Horticulture Center (buffer portion)	5	Acquired 2001 by Natural Areas for Spring Creek buffer and native plant demonstration area; managed by Parks.
Poudre River Corridor		
Arapaho Bend Natural Area	278	Acquired 1995 by Natural Areas.
Butterfly Woods Natural Area	24	Acquired 1996 by Natural Areas and Parks; open to the public summer 2004.
Cattail Chorus Natural Area	40	Acquired 1997 by Natural Areas; received GOCO Grant.
Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area	93	Acquired 1995-1996 by Natural Areas.
Gustav Swanson Natural Area	12	Acquired* 1987-2002 by Utilities and Natural Areas.

Site	Acres	Comments
Kingfisher Point Natural Area	154	Acquired* 1997-2000 by Natural Areas.
Magpie Meander Natural Area	11	Acquired 1995 by Natural Areas; open to the public summer 2004.
McMurry Natural Area	45	Acquired* 1998-2003 by Natural Areas; received GOCO Grant.
Nix Natural Area	34	Acquired* 1979-1996 by Parks and Natural Areas; received GOCO Grant.
North Shields Pond Natural Area	10	Acquired 1962 by City of Fort Collins; transferred to Natural Areas.
Prospect Ponds Natural Area	25	Acquired 1974 by Utilities; Natural Areas manages.
Resource Recovery Farm	156	Acquired 2003 by Natural Areas; no public access.
River's Edge Natural Area	8	Acquired 1994-2001 by Natural Areas.
Riverbend Ponds Natural Area	225	Acquired* 1977-1999 by Parks and Natural Areas.
Running Deer Natural Area	275	Acquired 1998-2000 by Natural Areas; received GOCO Grant.
Salyer Natural Area	24	Donated 1985 to Parks; transferred to Natural Areas.
Springer Natural Area	24	Donated 1990 to Parks; transferred to Natural Areas.
Udall Natural Area	25	Acquired* 1994 by Natural Areas and Utilities; Natural Areas and Utilities manage; not yet open to the public.
Williams Natural Area	1	Donated 1990 to Parks; transferred to Natural Areas.
Archery Range Natural Area	50	Acquired 1983 by Utilities; transferred to Parks; Parks manages.
Fossil Creek Corridor		
Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area	1,088	Acquired* 1993-2002 by Natural Areas and Larimer County Open Lands (7%); received GOCO Grants.
Eagle View Natural Area	90	Acquired 2002 by Natural Areas; not yet open to the public.
Colina Mariposa Natural Area	192	Acquired* 1998 by Natural Areas; not yet open to the public.
Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area	833	Acquired* 1998-2001 by Natural Areas; 810 acres leased from North Poudre Irrigation Company; not yet open to the public.
Fossil Creek Wetlands Natural Area	229	Acquired 1995 by Natural Areas.
Hazaleus Natural Area	168	Acquired 1999 by Natural Areas; not yet open to the public.
Hidden Cattails Natural Area	3	Dedicated 1994 to Natural Areas.
Pelican Marsh Natural Area	156	Acquired 2002 by Natural Areas; not yet open to the public.
Prairie Dog Meadow	84	Acquired* 1994-2003 by Natural Areas; not yet open to the public.
Redtail Grove Natural Area	43	Acquired* 1996-1999; not yet open to the public.
Two Creeks Natural Area	30	Acquired* 1999 by Natural Areas.

Site	Acres	Comments
Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space	470	Acquired 2001-2003 by Natural Areas (50%) and Larimer County Open Lands; Natural Areas is contributing 50% toward educational and public improvements; Larimer County manages; open to the public fall 2004.
Swift Farm Conservation Easement	82	Conservation Easement acquired 2003 by Natural Areas; landowner manages; not open to the public.
Foothills Corridor		
Coyote Ridge Natural Area	1,118	Acquired* 1994-2000 by Natural Areas and Larimer County Open Lands (9%).
Maxwell Natural Area	311	Acquired* 1976-1996 by Parks and Natural Areas.
Pineridge Natural Area	661	Acquired* 1976-1998 by Parks and Natural Areas.
Reservoir Ridge Natural Area	311	Acquired* 1989-2002 by Parks and Natural Areas.
Regional Focus Area		
Foothills/Buckhorn/Redstone		
Bobcat Ridge Natural Area	2,604	Acquired* 2003 by Natural Areas; not yet open to the public.
Devil's Backbone Open Space (Indian Creek Property)	1,545	Acquired 2003 by Natural Areas (75%) and Larimer County Open Lands; Larimer County manages; not yet open to the public.
Rimrock Open Space	437	Acquired 2002 by Larimer County Open Lands and Natural Areas (10%); Larimer County manages.
Community Separators		
Wellington Separator		
Kerbel Conservation Easement	84	Conservation Easement acquired 2002 by Natural Areas (50%) and Larimer County Open Lands; landowner manages; Larimer County monitors conservation easement; not open to the public.
Fort Collins-Loveland Separator		
McKee Farm	973	Acquired 1997 by Natural Areas; not open to the public.
Dryland Wheat Farm	785	Acquired 2000 by City of Loveland Natural Areas, Larimer County Open Lands, and Natural Areas (10%); received GOCO Grant; City of Loveland manages; not open to the public.
Long View Farm	479	Acquired 1997 by Larimer County Open Lands and Natural Areas (28%); received GOCO Grant; Larimer County manages; not open to the public.

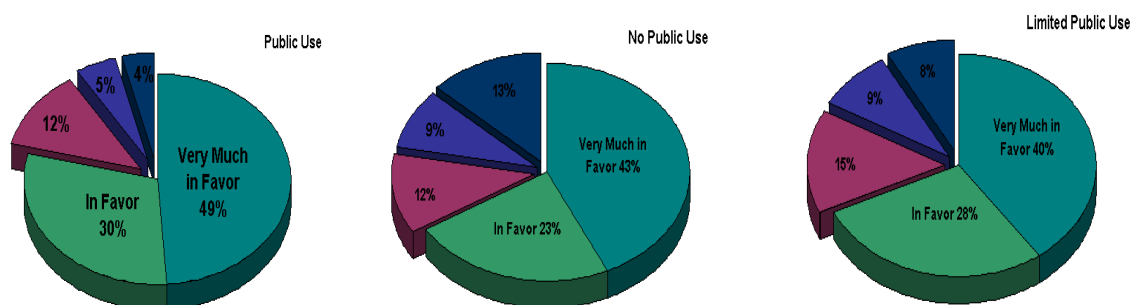
**Includes partial donation, dedication, and/or reduced purchase price.*



Map III-1. Existing Natural Areas (2003)

C. Data Synthesis and Identification of Resource Areas

In 2001, the Larimer County Open Lands Program surveyed Larimer County residents to determine the desired types and uses of county open lands. More than half of the respondents to the scientifically valid survey listed a residence in Fort Collins. Survey results for the Fort Collins respondents showed outstanding public support for conservation of open lands with public use (79%), with limited public use (68%), and with no public use (66%) (*Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan, Oct. 2001*). This survey provides significant evidence of widespread public support for land conservation and sets the backdrop for the Natural Areas Program data analysis and land conservation planning efforts.



In the summer of 2002, the Natural Areas Program convened a panel of local experts to help Natural Areas Program staff envision new opportunities for land conservation, natural resource protection, and appropriate recreation for the benefit of the citizens of Fort Collins. The Citizens Task Force met over a period of 2 months to identify geographic areas of high habitat value, value as a viewshed or scenic resource, recreation, productive agricultural value, important floodplains, and lands that serve as community separators. The Task Force

developed a geographic overlay analysis method that displayed areas of known conservation value. An overlap of two or more conservation features was considered as a “conservation hot spot,” which the Task Force used as a basis for further discussions. The following data sets and maps were utilized in this analysis:

1. City of Fort Collins

- Location of current natural areas in Fort Collins
- Known location of possible future natural areas in Fort Collins
- The City of Fort Collins Natural Habitat and Features Inventory Map (shows location of wetlands, native grasslands, foothills forest, etc.)

- Location for Community Separators (as identified in *The Northern Colorado Separator Study*, 1999)
- City of Fort Collins Structure Plan

2. Larimer County

- Location of important (productive) agricultural lands (Land Evaluation Site Analysis, LESA)



3. Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan

- Citizen Survey of Larimer County residents
- Wildlife (Division of Wildlife)
 - Bighorn sheep lambing areas
 - Pronghorn concentration areas
 - Mule deer migration corridors and winter concentration areas
 - Elk migration corridors and severe winter range areas
 - Duck winter range areas
- Rare and Sensitive Species
 - Colorado Division of Wildlife rare vegetation satellite data
- Public and Protected Lands
 - County, State, Federal
 - Private protected lands
 - Conservation easements
- Hydrology and Wetlands (Cooper and Merritt, 1999)
 - Wetlands, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs
 - 100- and 500-year flood zone

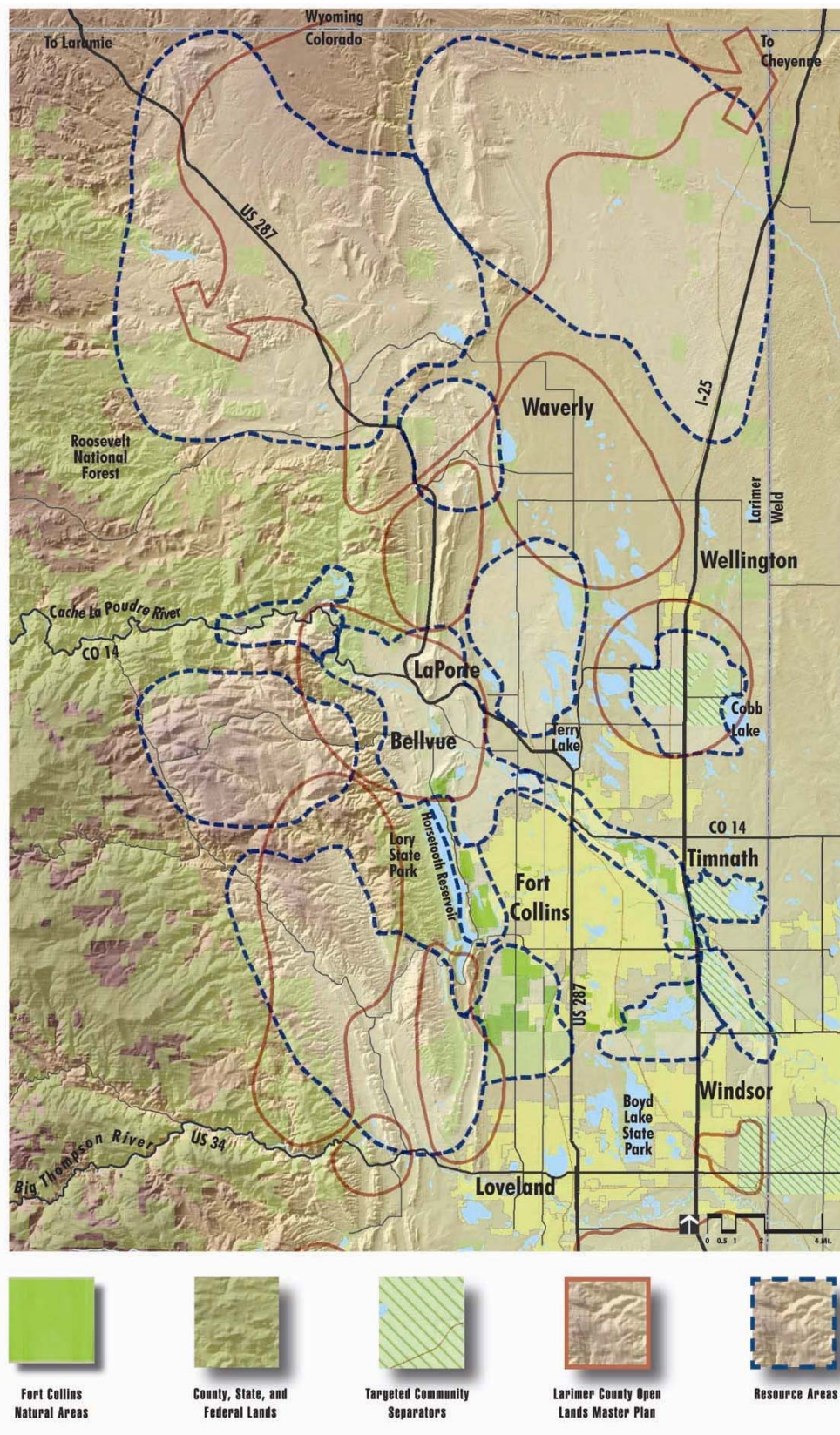
4. The Nature Conservancy

- Priority areas of high biodiversity identified by the Nature Conservancy

5. Colorado Natural Heritage Program - conservation sites

The resulting mapping and analysis identified a “first cut” of important conservation landscapes by highlighting “hot spots” with overlapping conservation features. The final map assembled these hot spots into single units or “resource areas” and is entitled “Conservation Focus Area” (see Map III-2).

Each resource area is intended to identify areas where high conservation values (ecological, scenic, lands that could provide community separation, etc.) exist and guide future land protection efforts. As described in the next section, the information presented in Map III-2, “Conservation Focus Area,” was further refined and became the basis for the overall land conservation vision described in the next section.



Map III-2. Land Conservation Task Force Vision

D. Natural Areas Land Conservation Vision

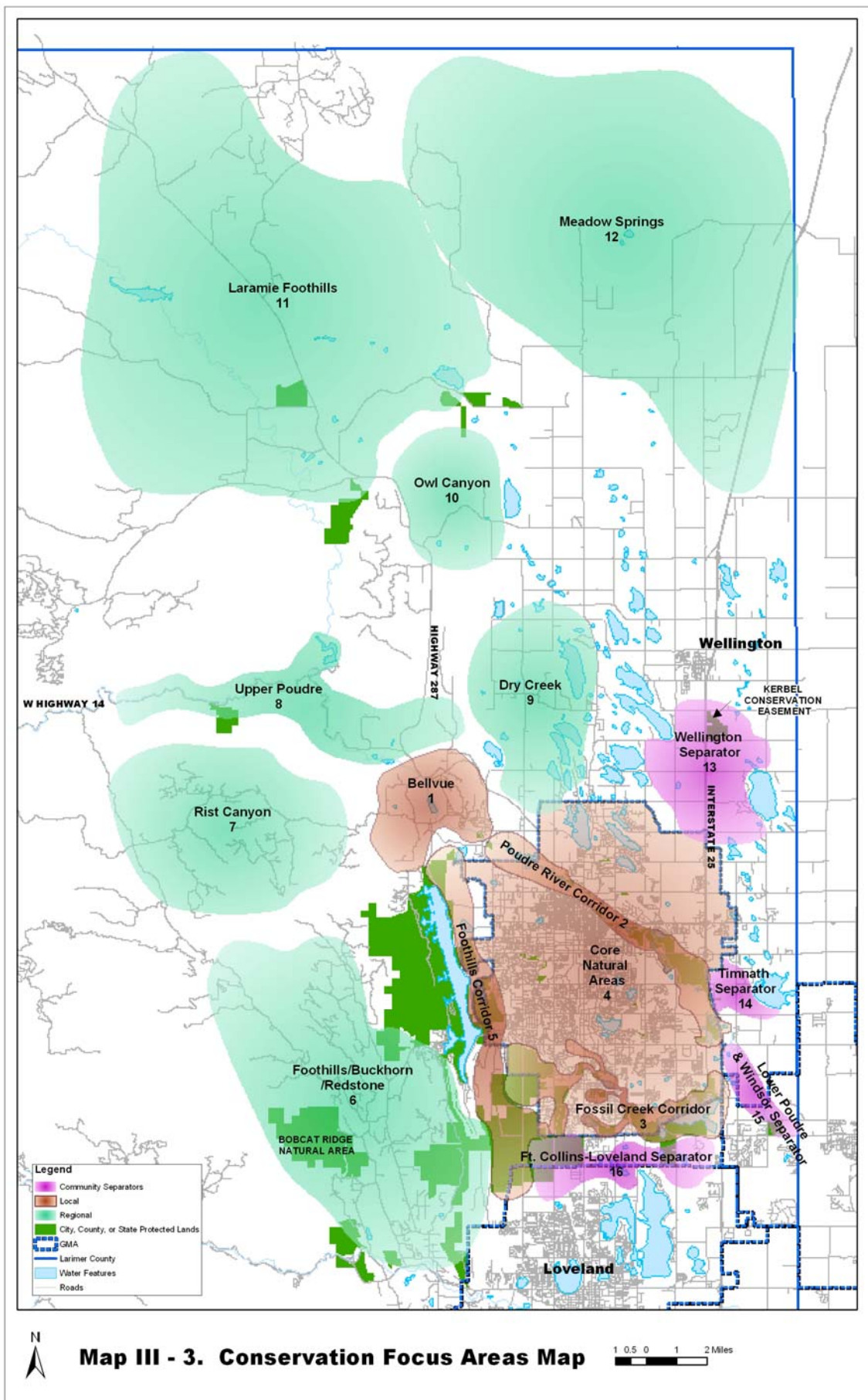
The mapping analysis and work of the Task Force resulted in the identification of 15 high priority resource areas. This information was further refined, and the high priority areas were grouped into a series of 16 focus areas that were then grouped into 3 categories: local, regional, and community separator. (See Map III-3). The intent of the analysis shown in Map III-3 is to identify focus areas with high conservation values and opportunities, not to acquire or protect the entire area.

As the Natural Areas Program pursues the vision outlined in Map III-3, land conservation efforts will emphasize achieving sustainability of native plant and animal communities. For this reason, land acquisitions will be evaluated to ascertain how they contribute to landscape-scale conservation, which is the scale needed to perpetuate natural processes and enable individuals, species, and native communities to thrive.

The vision is to conserve a Mountains to Plains corridor that would connect large publicly owned mountain landscapes to the west (Roosevelt National Forest, Rocky Mountain National Park) to large publicly held grasslands to the east (Pawnee National Grasslands). Such a large protected area could serve as a reintroduction site for the black-footed ferret and maintain sustainable levels of other native prairie wildlife including prairie dogs, pronghorn, burrowing owls, and grassland birds.



Each of the individual focus areas shown in Map III-3 is described below. The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program will pursue conservation projects within these focus areas alone or in partnerships with others, and with willing sellers or donors.



Local Focus Areas

1. Bellvue

Resource Values: Habitat, Agriculture, Viewshed, Community Separator, Floodplain



Purpose: To protect rare species habitat and important wetlands especially along the Poudre River floodplain and

adjacent riparian community. Land conservation provides ecosystem connectivity from the shortgrass prairie, through the hogback ridges and to the foothills forest, while building on protected open space to the south including Horsetooth Mountain Park and Lory State Park. Benefits include creating community separation between Fort Collins and LaPorte, maintaining the rural character of LaPorte and Bellvue communities, preserving the presence and historical importance of agriculture in the community, and protecting viewsheds from LaPorte, Bellvue, and area travel corridors for both wildlife and people.

2. Poudre River Corridor

Resource Values: Habitat, Floodplain, Watershed

Purpose: To protect and expand the City's current inventory of natural areas along the Poudre River Corridor. Continued protection along the river will ensure floodplain protection, habitat, and migration/travel corridor for both wildlife and people.

3. Fossil Creek Corridor

Resource Values: Habitat, Viewshed, Community Separator



Purpose: To expand protection in the ecologically sensitive Fossil Creek area. Land conservation will help protect rare

species and riparian/wetland areas by expanding upon the existing Fossil Creek natural areas/open spaces, provide recreation opportunities, and extend the Fossil Creek trail. Additional land protection in this area contributes to community separation between Fort Collins and Loveland/Windsor and preserves views to the foothills and mountains along the I-25 corridor.

4. Core Natural Areas

Resource Values: Habitat, Viewshed

Purpose: To protect and expand the City's current inventory of natural areas within the Growth Management Area. These areas provide quick recreational or educational get-aways for the citizens of Fort Collins. They also provide habitat for urban wildlife and protect pocket wetlands.

5. Foothills Corridor

Resource Values: Viewshed, Habitat, Community Separation



Purpose: To protect and expand the City's current inventory of natural areas in the Foothills Corridor. Continuing land

conservation in this area would add to the protection of rare plant habitat along the unique geology of the hogback ridges and would continue to build toward ecological connectivity between the shortgrass prairie and the foothills and further west to other protected lands. It will continue to support

rare and diverse species habitat and provide popular recreation activities. Land conserved in the southern portion of this area also functions as a community separator between Fort Collins and Loveland/Masonville. The City will continue to protect its mountain backdrop and popular recreation area.

Regional Focus Areas

6. Foothills/Buckhorn/Redstone

Resource Values: Viewshed, Habitat, Watershed



Purpose: To protect the viewshed of the foothills. Land conservation projects in these areas preserve important wildlife

habitat in the foothills transition zone, while providing ecosystem connectivity and trail connections to Horsetooth Mountain Park, Lory State Park, and Coyote Ridge Natural Area.

7. Rist Canyon

Resource Values: Habitat, Viewshed, Watershed



Purpose: To protect high diversity wetland and riparian areas that serve as important wildlife habitat.

Other land conservation projects will work toward maintaining natural viewsheds and rural/open character of the area.

8. Upper Poudre

Resource Values: Habitat, Watershed, Viewshed

Purpose: To create additional open space opportunities along the Upper Poudre River and Poudre Canyon that can compliment the City's Parks and Recreation Department's Gateway Park. Land conservation projects will enhance habitat protection and ecosystem connectivity for migrating wildlife along the canyon corridor. All land protection projects in this area will help promote healthy watersheds to maintain a clean and natural river water supply.

9. Dry Creek

Resource Values: Agriculture, Habitat, Viewshed, Floodplain

Purpose: To preserve agricultural land through the use of agricultural easements or through acquisition where there is strong ecological value or potential for native restoration. The focus of this resource area



is to conserve important upland and wetland areas to provide a natural transition between the plains and foothills.

10. Owl Canyon

Resource Values: Habitat, Viewshed



Purpose: To preserve important wildlife habitat while protecting viewsheds near US 287. A satellite natural

area in Owl Canyon could provide a short destination trip to this unique landscape.

11. Laramie Foothills

Resource Values: Habitat, Viewshed, Agriculture, Watershed



Purpose: To help provide large-scale habitat protection and rare species habitat protection in this area. Land conservation

projects will build toward providing ecosystem connectivity between the shortgrass prairie to the east and foothills forest and mountains to the west. City assists on projects that preserve the viewshed along US 287 and participates in land conservation on grazing lands where those lands and practices contribute to ecological and viewshed conservation goals.

12. Meadow Springs

Resource Values: Habitat, Agriculture, Viewshed



Purpose: To capitalize on or add to existing land owned by City Utilities in the area of Meadow Springs Ranch.

Land conservation projects in this area support opportunities for larger-scale prairie conservation including protection of prime pronghorn habitat, restoration of native shortgrass prairie species and protection of cultural and archaeological resources. It also sustains preservation of the I-25 viewshed to the west with its uninterrupted views of the foothills and mountains.

Community Separators

13. Wellington Separator

Resource Values: Community Separator, Viewshed, Agriculture



Purpose: To create distinct community separation between Fort Collins and Wellington. The area contains outstanding

agricultural land where the City could assist the County in acquiring agricultural conservation easements to promote an open character while preserving the viewshed to the foothills and mountains from the I-25 corridor.

14. Timnath Separator

Resource Values: Community Separator, Agriculture, Viewshed, Habitat



Purpose: To create distinct community separators between Fort Collins and the Timnath area. Land conservation projects will

protect rare species habitat and riparian areas along the Poudre River, and provide opportunities to extend the Poudre River Trail. Agricultural easements in the area will help preserve its open/rural character. Both habitat and agricultural conservation efforts together will help maintain the I-25 viewshed to the foothills and mountains.

15. Lower Poudre River and Windsor Separator

Resource Values: Habitat, Viewshed, Community Separator, Floodplain



Purpose: To protect rare species habitat, wetland/riparian communities, and agricultural values along the Poudre River to the

southeast of the city. Both habitat and agricultural conservation activities in this area will contribute to the Fort Collins - Windsor community separator project.

16. Fort Collins – Loveland Separator **Resource Values: Community Separator, Viewshed, Habitat, Agriculture**



Purpose: To protect and expand the City's current inventory of Natural Areas in this area. Most of

this area that is available for conservation has already been conserved and has thus protected scenic views, wildlife habitat, and the agricultural way of life. The open character between Loveland and Fort Collins on the western and eastern arterials helps give each community its own sense of character.

E. Ten-Year Land Conservation Framework (2004-2013)

The 10-year land conservation vision for the Natural Areas Program is based on citizen input, ballot direction from citizen initiatives, and the principles of conservation science. The conservation vision also reflects policy guidance from Fort Collins City Council. Specifically, on April 1, 2003 the City Council adopted resolution 2003-051 amending the Natural Areas Policy Plan to include “regional” land conservation projects and adopt the Focus Area Map. The Focus Area Map (Map III-3) illustrates the regional focus areas where the Natural Areas Program will pursue future land conservation efforts. In the same resolution, City Council adopted a set of land acquisition considerations directing staff to consider (when purchasing a property) the willingness of the property owner to sell, a property's potential recreation value, ecological value, acquisition cost, long-term stewardship costs, proximity to Fort Collins, and level of threat to the integrity of the natural resource values of a property. In view of these considerations adopted by City Council and other factors that influence land conservation decision making, Natural Areas Program staff have developed a “Land Evaluation Guidance System” as a decision-making guide. This guidance system is presented in Appendix C.

The Natural Areas Program's 10-year conservation goals and strategies balance factors such as the costs and benefits of conserving land locally versus regionally, conserving many small areas of land versus fewer large areas of land, and conserving land through acquisition versus conservation easements. These factors (listed below for each focus area), future funding, and available lands for conservation have been taken into consideration for the proposed 10-year plan.

Over the next 10 years, the Natural Areas Program will work to achieve significant community separation between Fort Collins and other municipalities while conserving special lands and providing recreational opportunities in both the local and regional focus areas.

Land Conservation Strategies

The Natural Areas Program will pursue land conservation opportunities alone or in partnerships with other land conservation organizations such as Larimer County Open Lands, Legacy Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy. Financial resources for land conservation will be allocated in the following manner: approximately one-third of the resources toward conservation in the Local Focus Areas, approximately one-third toward conservation in the Regional Focus Areas, and approximately one-third to conserving land in the Community Separator Focus Areas. The allocation of funds could result in the achievements in Table III-2.

Local Areas

- High acquisition costs
- Low to mixed ecological value
- High stewardship costs
- Within Fort Collins
- High threat to integrity
- Habitat, scenery
- Recreation opportunities

Regional Areas

- Low acquisition cost
- Mixed to high ecological value
- Low stewardship costs
- Farther from Fort Collins
- Moderate threat to integrity
- Habitat, scenery, watershed, agriculture
- Recreation opportunities

Community Separators

- Moderate acquisition costs
- Mixed ecological values
- Moderate stewardship costs
- Close to Fort Collins
- High threat to integrity
- Scenic, agriculture, community separation
- Recreation opportunities limited

Table III-2. Planned Land Conservation Allocations

Allocations	Anticipated Accomplishments 2004-2013
<p>\$20 million allocated for 2004 - 2013</p>	<p>Local Conservation Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add more natural areas, trails, and recreation opportunities within the local focus areas. • Focus more on areas near Bellvue (#1) and along the Poudre River (#2). • Conserve an additional ~3,000 acres.
<p>\$20 million allocated for 2004 - 2013</p>	<p>Regional Conservation Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of 1 or 2 large natural areas in the Foothills, Buckhorn, Redstone (#6) area to provide hiking, biking, equestrian, picnic, and educational opportunities. ~2,500 to 5,000 acres. • Work alone or in partnership on large conservation projects in the Laramie Foothills (#11) and/or Meadow Springs (#12) areas to protect scenic views along Hwy 287, conserve large habitat areas, preserve a prairie to peaks wildlife corridor, and provide many miles of trails, picnic shelters, and educational features to interpret the historic, archaeological, geological, and ecological resources. ~ 20,000 to 30,000 acres. • Add 1 or 2 large natural areas in Rist Canyon (#7), Dry Creek (#9), Upper Poudre (#8), and/or Owl Canyon (#10) areas to add more recreational opportunities within 30 minutes of the city.
<p>\$20 million allocated for 2004 - 2013</p>	<p>Community Separators: Accomplish significant portion of community separator areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timnath (#14) -1,800 acres desired for conservation. • Lower Poudre/Windsor (#15) -2,300 acres desired for conservation. • Wellington (#13) -7,000 acres desired for conservation. • Conserve ~ 3,000 to 4,000 acres of desired total of 11,000 acres.

Chapter IV: Stewardship

A. Introduction

This chapter describes the various aspects of the Natural Areas Program, existing as well as those envisioned for the future, that help make the City good stewards of the lands entrusted to it. The following discussion addresses program management, education, enforcement, public improvements, maintenance, restoration and habitat enhancement, facility operations, and staffing.

B. Program Management

What does it take to adequately manage the open lands the community has chosen to purchase and enhance?

The Program Management section of the Natural Area Program is responsible for answering that question. The Program Management section prepares master plans, individual site management plans, long-range action plans, and management guidelines. Program Management staff also conduct resource research and inventories, plan for the program's financial, material, equipment, and staffing needs, administer requests for special use permits, grant easements and leases, and conduct other functions necessary for the stewardship activities described in this chapter.

Elements of Program Management

Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan. This plan, which replaces the Natural Areas Policy Plan adopted in 1992, defines the vision for the future of the

program. This plan will be updated in 10 years.

Long-Range Plan. This plan will identify and anticipate the funding, staffing, and management the Natural Areas Program will need to implement the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan for the next 10 years. The current long-range plan is three years old. It will be updated in 2005 and in the future as often as warranted, perhaps every 5 years.

Management Plans. These plans specify how each natural area will be managed relative to habitat protection, site restoration and habitat enhancement, public access, appropriate recreation, public improvements, vegetation management, wildlife management, etc. Site management plans are reviewed by the public and by the Natural Resources Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The joint Trails Committee of both Boards reviews detailed trail location plans on natural areas. Site management plans are intended to be updated approximately 5 years after the completion of the initial plan and thereafter on a 10-year cycle.

Natural Areas Regulations. These are the laws that appear in City Code to protect the natural areas. They are changed as needed. Changes must go through the City Council approval process.

General Management Guidelines for Natural Areas and Agricultural Lands Managed by the Natural Resources Department. This document is the 2001 update of the 1994 General Management Guidelines for City owned Open Spaces and

Natural Areas that was prepared by the Open Space/Natural Areas Management Team after much public review. It also describes the natural areas management classification categories, which help to determine the level of resource protection on a site-by-site basis. The document will be updated as needed.

Budgets. The budget and budget forecast for the following year are prepared annually.

Work Plans. Each sub-program (i.e., program management, education, enforcement, public improvements, maintenance, and restoration and habitat enhancement) within the Natural Areas Program prepares an annual work plan. Individual employee work plans are prepared to coordinate with sub-program work plans.

Inventory and Research. The need for local wildlife and plant inventories and the need for site-specific research were recognized in the Natural Areas Policy Plan.

Funded Research: Since 1993, the Natural Resources Department has allocated \$15,000 annually to meet research needs. Over the past 10 years, research has included site-specific plant inventories; rare plant, raptor winter roost sites, Prebles meadow jumping mouse, and prairie dog colony surveys; and research projects on prairie dogs, wetland restoration, and rare plants.

Volunteer Research: Colorado State University students and others have volunteered their time to conduct surveys and research in local natural areas. These include the 9-year winter raptor data research. This information has been helpful in identifying key areas to protect.

Other Agencies: Other agencies often request permission to conduct their research projects on the City's natural areas. The Natural Areas Regulations allows such research depending on resource impacts. Researchers must apply for a Natural Areas Permit to conduct their projects on the City's natural areas. Over the past 5 years, over 50 research permits have been issued. Agencies that conduct research on City natural areas are required to provide a copy of the findings to the Natural Areas Program.

C. Education

The mission of the Natural Areas Education Program is to increase citizens' awareness of natural areas; promote understanding of natural systems, and foster each individual's realization of the importance and meaning natural places add to our lives.

The goals of the education program are to:

- Instill a sense of stewardship toward natural areas.
- Help all citizens, even those who do not visit natural areas, become aware of the overall values realized by the preservation of natural areas in our urban setting.
- Take a primarily interpretive approach to educational activities.
- Provide scientifically accurate information.
- Integrate education with recreation in natural areas to further promote awareness.
- Provide diverse materials on a variety of natural areas topics.

- Provide experiential and participatory learning situations.

Education is essential for ecological protection and visitor enjoyment. When site visitors understand the natural values being protected, they can better appreciate how some recreational activities fit into natural areas and others do not. When students learn about the intricacies of nature, they are better prepared to take care of the community's natural features and become leaders in natural areas protection.

Tactile and audio elements are incorporated into some education features to provide elements of interest to persons of various levels of capabilities who visit the natural areas. Programming elements make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities when such needs are identified.

Natural Areas Program education funds are expended for properties owned and managed by the City of Fort Collins as well as for properties jointly owned by the City and another entity (e.g., Larimer County) but managed by the other entity. For example, the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program is providing 50% of the funding for educational features at the City/County-owned Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space.

Components of the Education Program

Within funding and staffing allocations, the goals of the education program are met through various strategies. Components of the education program can be expected to include the Master Naturalist program, on-site interpretive features, printed materials, a teacher training program, public presentations, a presence on the City's Web

site, and participation in community events. Popular, effective components of the natural areas education program will continue to be implemented. Components that cease to be effective will be discontinued and new ones added as appropriate.

Master Naturalists. In 1994, at the urging of the Natural Resources Advisory Board, the volunteer Master Naturalist Program began. It has become the mainstay of the natural areas education program.

Certified Master Naturalists are trained volunteers who conduct interpretive field trips in natural areas for school groups, clubs, and other groups and for events sponsored by the Natural Areas Program. By the end of 2003, there were 100 Certified Master Naturalists. Over the 10 years of the program, volunteer Master Naturalists have donated over 7,500 hours, giving over 700 presentations and reaching over 34,000 people.

Interpretive Features. Interpretive features have been installed on many natural areas and will be installed on most, but not all, additional natural areas as time and funds allow. These interpretive products (usually signs) explain the natural features of the sites, increase visitor enjoyment, and contribute to visitor management. When people understand the values of a site, they are more likely to abide by site regulations (e.g., requirements to stay on trail).

Printed Materials. A brochure (*Nature Next Door*) providing a map of the City's natural areas and describing specific sites has been produced for several years and is a very popular publication. Information from this brochure also is provided on the web site. Individual site brochures are published for the more popular sites. Other popular publications include lists of native plants

suitable for urban landscapes, checklists of birds and mammals that can be seen in Fort Collins, and a brochure to help citizens design their home landscapes to attract wildlife. These brochures will be updated, and others developed, as needed in the growing Natural Areas Program.

Teacher Training. Since 1998, the Natural Areas Program and Fort Collins Utilities have provided a training program for Poudre School District teachers. The training, which is free, focuses on landforms, water, and wildlife explorations and offers standards-based activities that integrate science, reading, writing, math, and visual arts. Each teacher who goes through the training program receives transportation funding for a field trip for his/her class to an outdoor classroom or natural area, field teaching assistance by Master Naturalists and Utilities WaterSHED staff, access to field equipment for classroom use, and notebook materials. The City also pays for substitute teachers who cover the classroom while teachers attend the training.

Public Presentations. Natural Areas Program staff make presentations at events sponsored by the City and accept invitations to speak to service clubs and other organizations that want to learn more about the City's Natural Areas Program.

Web. The Natural Areas Program maintains pages and/or links on the City's web site providing information about the Natural Areas Program, volunteer opportunities, having a Master Naturalist presentation for a group or organization, regulations, and other information of interest.

Community Events. Education staff prepares displays for various community events such as Earth Day events, Riverfest, Avian Appreciation Days, and others. These

tend to be weekend events and are often staffed by Master Naturalists.

D. Enforcement

The Natural Areas and Trails Rangers play a critical role in the stewardship and management of Fort Collins' natural areas. The primary mission of the ranger program is to promote the safety and well-being of natural areas and trails visitors while ensuring the protection of the biological, physical, and ecological resources of the natural areas.

The ranger program includes wildland fire management, trail and boundary management, and implementation of pre-emptive crime prevention strategies.

Commission. Rangers are commissioned by the City of Fort Collins Chief of Police as "special police officers" conferring a level of authority comparable to the Fort Collins Police Department's Community Service Officers. This authority enables rangers to enforce natural areas regulations and issue summons for misdemeanors related to resource damage, littering, vandalism, criminal trespass, leash laws, illegal camping/hunting, etc. As natural areas become some of the last undeveloped and "natural spaces" in a highly urbanized environment, rangers are more commonly enforcing regulations related to non-permitted recreational uses such as off-trail biking, motorized vehicles (ATVs, scooters, etc.), and other incompatible activities.

Qualifications. Rangers complete a comprehensive criminal and personal background check consistent with City of Fort Collins Police Services standards. Rangers serve in an unarmed capacity. Rangers are highly skilled and trained in a variety of visitor management and resource

protection skills including law enforcement, wildland fire management, search and rescue, medical first responder and CPR, and environmental education.

Existing Challenge. A major complaint that led to the creation of the ranger program, as well as a continuing challenge, is dogs off leash in natural areas. In 2001, a “no tolerance policy” for off-leash pets was implemented in an attempt to resolve on-going visitor safety and resource protection issues. This policy has resulted in improved compliance, though it has not been 100% effective.

New Challenges. As the Natural Areas Program grows regionally, greater distances to natural areas will increase the time required for “back-up” police assistance to arrive to assist rangers. Rangers will begin to deal with illegal hunting, boundary management and trespass, and monitoring permitted uses on natural areas including utility easement construction. Rangers are increasingly dealing with potentially dangerous individuals (transients, gang members, wanted individuals) in natural areas. More and larger properties will require the ranger program to identify new methods of patrol including mounted patrol and working with citizen volunteer groups for bike and backcountry patrol.

E. Public Improvements

Public improvements serve two important functions: (1) help the public more safely use and enjoy natural areas and (2) help protect natural resource values of each site. By the end of 2003, about 70% of the City’s natural areas were open to the public. These sites accommodate visitors through trails, parking lots, restrooms, kiosks, benches, signage, public buildings, and observation structures. Not all of these public

improvements are needed at all sites open to the public. Fencing may be needed regardless of whether a site is open to the public.

It is acknowledged that public improvements have potential impacts to wildlife and native plant communities. Such potential impacts are evaluated and given high consideration during planning, design, and construction phases.

Public improvements are planned in accordance with the “General Management Guidelines for Natural Areas and Agricultural Lands” (2001) and individual site management plans.

The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program provides public improvements not only for properties owned and managed by the City but also for properties jointly owned by the City and another entity (e.g., Larimer County) and managed by the other entity. For example, the Natural Areas Program is paying 50% of the costs of public improvements at the City/County-owned Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space.

Improvement Elements

Trails. Trails on natural areas provide directed routes for recreation, reducing the impact to other portions of the sites and, thus, the overall impacts to wildlife populations and native plant communities. The Natural Areas Program provides “soft” trails composed of dirt, gravel, or crusher fines and wooden (or recycled plastic lumber) footbridges and boardwalks where necessary due to drainage issues. Over 23 miles of “soft” trails are present on the City’s natural areas. The Natural Areas Program envisions having “soft” trails on most natural areas acquired by the City.

The Parks and Recreation Department designs and constructs concrete trails that form the Fort Collins Bike Trail System, some of which runs through natural areas. The paved trail system is accessible to persons in wheelchairs. Funding for the paved trails comes from the Parks and Recreation Department, the Natural Areas Program, the Conservation Trust Fund, and Great Outdoors Colorado grants.

Parking Lots. Parking lots at natural areas are primarily for the convenience of the public, but they also help to reduce site impacts. Parking lots will be designed to meet the specific needs of each site and to minimize the physical and visual impact to the site. Design and construction standards for parking lots in natural areas will be developed.

Restrooms. The need for restrooms at natural areas is evaluated with respect to existing or planned facilities in the area, such as at nearby developed parks. Restroom facilities may be either permanent (i.e., vault toilets) or portable (i.e., rented, non-permanent structures) depending on the location. For example, vault toilets cannot be constructed in 100-year floodplains.

Kiosks. Kiosks can help to orient the visitor to the site, provide educational information, provide a place to post City notices related to natural areas, display regulatory information, and provide additional information as needed. Kiosk brochure holders make related materials available to visitors.

Benches. Benches provide a comfortable viewing and resting spot for visitors and help to limit off-trail impacts. Most benches are constructed from recycled plastic lumber and are similar in style, but occasionally unique designs or construction materials are

used. Some benches are as simple as a strategically placed log or as ornate as a bench that contains an interpretive feature.

Fishing and Wildlife Observation Structures. Fishing and wildlife observation structures help to reduce impacts to natural areas by providing a convenient, practical place to fish or watch wildlife. These structures often provide access for site visitors who are less mobile, including those who use wheelchairs. Fishing piers and fishing bank steps are especially useful in reducing bank erosion around popular fishing ponds.

Signage. Signs on natural areas identify sites, mark boundaries, inform the public of restricted use and regulations, mark trails, and provide user safety information.

Educational Centers and Public Meeting Space. Providing buildings for public meetings is not a goal of the Natural Areas Program. However, one site — Reservoir Ridge Natural Area — received a donation stipulating that the art studio on the site be available for public classes and, if possible, the home be available as a meeting place for local non-profit environmental and art organizations. The Natural Areas Program is working toward implementing this donor request.

Other buildings for educational purposes and public meetings may be built, or existing buildings utilized, depending on donor requests and on management plan development for specific sites.

Fencing. Fencing the perimeter of natural areas often is needed to prevent illegal access by vehicles, people, and/or domestic grazing animals from adjacent sites.

Barbed wire and electric fencing is prohibited within the city limits. Barbed, electric, and smooth wire fencing are potentially hazardous to wildlife, particularly raptors that can be severely injured or killed when their wings hit the wire upon swooping down or up when hunting prey under the fence. Fort Collins is within a major migratory and wintering corridor for bald eagles, ferruginous hawks, and other raptors. Whenever feasible, the Natural Areas Program removes wire fencing, replacing it with wood fencing where illegal access problems create a need for fencing.

Most fences are buck-and-rail style, which has become the program's "signature" fence. Staff have received many compliments on this style from the public and from other open lands agencies, some of whom have subsequently adopted this style for their public open spaces. People feel that the buck-and-rail fence portrays a "western" look, blends with the landscape, and identifies a site as a natural area even if a site sign isn't present. Western rail is used on some sites to blend with existing fences. Staff is currently considering the use of a single rail fence to use in place of the buck-and-rail. The single rail retains much of the character and function while reducing the cost.

Accessibility. The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program makes reasonable accommodation for access to services, programs, and activities and makes special communication arrangements for persons with disabilities.

F. Maintenance

Natural areas are maintained according to the "General Management Guidelines for Natural Areas and Agricultural Lands"

(2001) and individual site management plans. Ongoing maintenance of natural areas is essential for preserving wildlife habitat and native plant communities as well as providing site visitors a high quality, safe outdoor experience.

As of the end of 2003, the Natural Areas Program manages 40 local natural areas, totaling over 10,000 acres, with about 70% of these sites open to the public. In general, sites not yet open to the public are those in need of public improvements and/or major site restoration.

Although some maintenance activities increase when sites are opened to the public (e.g., cleaning restrooms, regrading parking lots, and trail maintenance), other activities (e.g., weed control, litter control, site clean-up, fence repair) remain the same. Vandalism repair, such as graffiti removal, can occur on sites open or closed to the public, but is more prevalent when public improvement structures and interpretive features are present.

Maintenance Activities

Site Clean-up. All natural areas require periodic litter and site clean-up. As more sites are open to the public, trash pick-up activities increase, but major site clean-up decreases (e.g., illegal dumping is not as prevalent on sites open to the public). Volunteers, including the "Adopt-a-Natural Area" participants, provide valuable assistance by conducting litter pick-up. In 2003, 25 organizations or groups of individuals who had adopted natural areas contributed over 700 hours to site clean-up activities.

Maintenance and Repair of Public Improvements. The Natural Areas Program maintains "soft" trails. Such

maintenance can be expected to increase with more use as the Fort Collins population increases.

The City's Parks Department maintains hard-surface trails (e.g., bike trails).

Parking lots on natural areas are primarily gravel, which require periodic regrading. A few of the parking lots have asphalt or paver surfaces. Design standards for natural area parking lots will be developed in 2004 to guide the development of future parking lots.

Various maintenance activities are required to keep natural areas attractive and functional. Maintenance of site features such as kiosks, benches, interpretive features, and signs is required at times due to vandalism. Interpretive signs are cleaned periodically to remove dirt and bird droppings. Fences are repaired as necessary due to vehicle accidents or vandalism. Older wooden structures (e.g., fences, benches, kiosks, boardwalks) may need to be repaired or replaced as the wood ages and weathers.

Wildlife Management. A primary component of wildlife management in natural areas is prairie dog colony maintenance including prairie dog barrier fencing and plantings to limit movement of prairie dogs onto adjacent residential property. Maintenance of predator enhancements (e.g., raptor poles, shrub plantings to provide coyote and fox "hunting cover") is also a key component of prairie dog colony management.

Other wildlife maintenance activities include protecting the trunks of larger cottonwood trees from beavers by poultry wire wrapping and/or "sand painting" bands. Beavers are allowed to take smaller cottonwoods, but many of the larger cottonwoods are

protected in areas of high beaver activity to provide feeding and nesting sites for songbirds.

Unique wildlife management needs are addressed as they arise. In 2003, a pair of osprey exhibited nesting behavior at Riverbend Ponds and Running Deer natural areas. Under the supervision of the Colorado Division of Wildlife, a potential nesting structure for the osprey will be improved and relocated to a more isolated location in the area of these two natural areas to, hopefully, provide the pair with a more attractive nest site.

Weed Control and Exotic Shrub Removal. Maintenance crews use an integrated weed management approach on natural areas. Various biological, cultural, chemical, and mechanical means are used to remove and control weedy species. Weed control efforts on natural areas include reducing the number and limiting the spread of leafy spurge, Canada thistle, knapweeds, dalmatian toadflax, and other persistent weeds. Efforts will continue to be made to eradicate purple loosestrife and other new, highly invasive weed species before they become well established in natural areas.

The Maintenance Crew controls the resprouting of invasive, exotic shrubs on natural areas including Russian olives, saltcedars, and Siberian elms on sites where these trees were initially removed as part of site restoration activities.

Volunteer Support. Volunteers contribute hours of dedicated service on various site management projects including site clean-up; trail, boardwalk, fishing pier, and footbridge construction; interpretive trail, brochure, and sign design; enhancement and restoration; prairie dog relocation and observation; weed control; raptor and other

predator enhancements; wildlife observations; bat and flicker box construction; barbed wire fence removal; and wildlife plantings. In 2003 alone, over 375 individuals contributed nearly 4,500 hours of volunteer labor on site management projects.

G. Restoration and Habitat Enhancement

The mission of the Natural Areas Program is "...to protect and enhance lands with existing or potential natural areas values...." It is the goal of the restoration program to enhance and maximize the potential natural area values of all acquired sites. The initial restoration process entails identifying the target goals of the restoration project. This involves determining the ecological potential for the site, the ecosystem that was native to the area prior to European settlement, and/or the site's potential to be managed for critical plant and animal species. It must first be ensured, however, that the appropriate conditions and ecological processes are in place to perpetuate the restoration goal. Therefore, extensive planning is required to identify components (plants, wildlife, soil, water), processes (drought, hydrologic regime, burning, soil movement), and interactions (grazing, predation, etc.) that must be restored to result in a properly functioning ecosystem. Restoration is a process and requires a multiple year commitment. For example, a former agricultural field can be planted in one season in native grasses, but a multi-year commitment must be made to control weeds, mow or graze (to gain good root establishment), and water or reseed if necessary. Once conversion to native and natural conditions occurs, monitoring must take place to assure that the appropriate ecological processes supplemented by

management are operating to maintain a "dynamic equilibrium."

Many of the City's natural areas have past land uses that degraded plant communities and wildlife habitat. These uses include cropland, grazing, gravel mining, and deposition of various types of fill. At the time of acquisition, the Natural Areas Program evaluates the management and restoration needs of the site with the goal to restore the land to as close to a natural condition as possible. This typically involves the control and removal of exotic vegetation, planting of native grasses and shrubs, and removal of man-made structures such as farmstead buildings, abandoned equipment, and debris.

In the next 10 years, the restoration program will undertake significant ecological restorations including existing sites along the Poudre River and foothills corridors and newly-acquired regional properties. Many natural areas along the Poudre River were previously mined for gravel, resulting in a string of open water ponds with bermed uplands. The banks of the Poudre River have also been altered significantly since settlement of the city, much of it having been armored through town.

In late 2002, the Natural Areas Program initiated its first major controlled burn in preparation for restoring Kingfisher Point Natural Area to native shortgrass prairie. The site, dominated by the weed kochia, was historically used for deposition of sugar beet waste.

The City also assists with restoration on non-City-owned properties. The Natural Areas Certification Program and Enhancement Fund was established in 1994 to assist landowners with restoration and enhancement of privately-owned natural

areas. Natural Areas Certification is open to individual private landowners, groups of private landowners (e.g., homeowners' association), and non-City public land management agencies whose properties are at least 1/4 acre in size, located within the Fort Collins Growth Management Area, and have existing or potential wildlife habitat value. As of the end of 2003, 33 sites have been certified as natural areas: 22 homeowner association open spaces, 5 school sites, and 6 private landowner properties. Enhancement projects on Certified Natural Areas are eligible for limited City funding.

H. Facility Operations

In 1996, the Natural Areas Program acquired the pioneer historic Nix Farm for the purpose of using the farm site and buildings for offices and maintenance facilities and restoring the surrounding lands to a natural area. In October 2002, the initial phases of the Nix Maintenance Facility and Natural Areas Program Offices were completed and the majority of the Natural Areas Program staff moved their offices to this building. A new maintenance shop was constructed to provide work space for field crews and storage for equipment, tools, and vehicles.

The complex has provided a much-needed central location for Natural Areas Program staff and operations, conveniently located near major roads that provide efficient access to local natural areas. Visitors to the site continue to have very positive comments about the central location of staff and information, preservation of historic buildings, and the setting. In 2003, the Fort Collins Landmark Preservation Commission awarded the Natural Areas Program the annual "Friend of Preservation Award" for its exemplary efforts in restoring the historic

Craftsman main house on the Nix complex property. The Nix complex is adjacent to over 1,000 acres of protected natural areas along the Poudre River.

Additional office space will be needed at the Nix facility to accommodate expected staff increases. Expansion and improvements to the Nix Maintenance Facility and Natural Areas Program Offices complex were approved with the original site development plan.

I. Staffing

At the inception of the Natural Areas Program in 1992, the Natural Resources Department had 2 1/4 FTE staff devoted to implementing the Natural Areas Policy Plan. On-site management of City-owned natural areas continued to be the responsibility of the Parks Division until 1998 when natural areas maintenance personnel were transferred to the Natural Resources Department.

Over the past 10 years, the number of acres of City-managed natural areas grew from 16 sites and about 1,200 acres to 40 sites and over 10,000 acres. There is public demand for higher levels of site maintenance, public access and improvements, restoration and enhancement, and education and interpretive features. Natural Areas Program staffing has increased to meet the program's needs.

By the beginning of 2004, Natural Areas Program staff was comprised of the following positions:

- Natural Areas Program Manager (1 FTE)
- Natural Resources Director (.5 FTE)
- Senior Environmental Planner (3 FTE)
- Environmental Planner (1 FTE)
- Education Coordinator (1.5 FTE)

- Natural Areas Crew Chief (1 FTE)
- Natural Areas Technician (6 FTE)
- Seasonal Natural Areas Technician Assistants (6.4 FTE)
- Natural Areas and Trails Rangers (3.25 FTE)
- Research Assistant (0.25 FTE)
- Administrative Support (1 FTE)
- Financial Coordinator (.5 FTE)
- Legal Counsel (.25 FTE)
- Real Estate Personnel (2 FTE)

In the next 10 years, increases will be needed to meet the needs of a growing program. Staffing will increase as more sites

managed by the Natural Areas Program are acquired. Increased volunteer efforts will require staffing support, which is expected to include a full-time volunteer coordinator. In addressing new challenges, the ranger program will explore working with local citizen volunteer groups as well as the possibility of additional staffing if needed.

Over the next 10 years, the City anticipates acquiring and managing several larger (e.g., $\geq 2,000$ acres/site) regional natural areas that will require on-site managers who will conduct routine maintenance and serve as on-site rangers.

Chapter V: Policies

A. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of policies under which the Natural Areas Program operates. It covers policies that have been previously adopted, including those in City Plan (the City's comprehensive plan) as well as topics for which new policies are needed. It discusses both City Council adopted policies and those that are administratively adopted within the Natural Areas Program.

B. Existing Policies

1. City Plan

In 1992, City Council adopted 12 natural areas policies to guide actions by the City of Fort Collins to achieve the recommended goals and objectives for natural areas. The policies were organized into seven categories: Public Land Management; Private Land Management; Recreation, Interpretation, and Education; Cooperation with Others; Public Information; Program Funding; and Program Evaluation. These policies were later incorporated into City Plan (1997), with some minor rewording and reorganization of themes under the category of Natural Areas and Open Lands. In addition, City Plan included new policies in the categories of Water Corridors, Poudre River Corridor, and Edges (Foothills and Rural/Open Lands), some of which the Natural Areas Program was, at least partially, responsible for implementing.

In April 2003, City Plan was reviewed by a Citizen Advisory Board and City staff for necessary changes and additions to all

policies. Additions included community separator policies.

The Natural Areas Program is responsible for implementing, at least partially, the following City Plan policies that relate to natural areas and other open lands, adopted by City Council on May 4, 2004. To the extent this Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan includes or references City Plan policies, such references are for convenience only and are not intended to supersede or alter the requirements of City Plan. Should City Plan policies change after the adoption of the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan, City Plan policies will prevail.

Open Lands

Policy OL-1.1 Open Lands System The City will have a system of publicly-owned open lands natural areas to protect the integrity of wildlife habitat and conservation sites, protect corridors between natural areas, preserve outstanding examples Fort Collins' diverse natural heritage, and provide a broad range of opportunities for educational, interpretive, and recreational programs to meet community needs.

Policy OL-1.2 Urban Development. The City will conserve and integrate open lands areas into the developed landscape by directing development away from natural habitats and features and by using innovative planning, design, and management practices. When it is not possible to direct development away from natural habitats and features, they should be integrated into the developed landscape in a manner that conserves their integrity. If integration will not effectively conserve the

integrity of the natural habitats and features, then either on-site or off-site mitigation will be applied. The City will encourage and assist efforts by private landowners and organizations to integrate open lands into new development and to protect, restore, or enhance privately owned natural areas within the Growth Management Area.

Policy OL-1.3 Public Programs. The City will promote understanding and enjoyment of local and regional open lands through appropriate recreational activities, formal and non-formal education, and interpretive programs.

Policy OL-1.4 Partnerships. The City will seek to develop effective local and regional partnerships with other governmental organizations and the private sector for the protection and preservation of locally and regionally valued open lands. It will also seek the cooperation and assistance of citizens, businesses, community groups, conservation organizations, and governmental agencies in the development and implementation of programs to protect and preserve local and regional open lands.

Policy OL-1.5 Inventory. The City will develop and maintain a data inventory on local and regional open lands to aid the City and the public in decisions about these areas, including management of publicly-owned lands.

Policy OL-1.6 Land Acquisition and Management. The City will acquire and manage land and water to preserve, protect, and enhance natural areas.

Policy OL-1.7 Internal Departmental and Agency Coordination. The City will coordinate open land's programs within the City and region to maximize public benefit

and explore ways of integrating open lands protection into ongoing City programs.

Policy OL-1.8 Ecosystems Management.

The City will manage, maintain, and enhance public open lands and natural areas to ensure the ongoing conservation of plants and animals in need of protection and their associated ecosystems, to control the invasion and spread of undesirable non-native plants, improve aesthetics, and provide opportunities for appropriate public use.

Policy OL-1.9 Conflicts. The City will manage conflicts between people and natural areas through site design, public information and education, habitat manipulation, and plant and animal population management techniques.

Policy OL-1.10 Public Involvement. The City will involve citizens in planning the management of public open lands.

Policy OL-1.11 Public Information. The City will collect, maintain, and distribute up-to-date information on the location, values, status, and management needs of local and regional open lands. It will also report periodically on the status of natural areas in the community.

Policy OL-1.12 Funding. The City will seek alternative funding sources to implement open lands policies and programs, including private, State, and Federal grants, and donations of money, property, and in-kind services.

Policy OL-1.13 Access. The City will design trail routes in open lands to enhance access and recreation while minimizing ecological impacts. Determination of type of trail or suitability for access will be made dependent on potential ecological impacts

and recreation needs. Special attention will be given to environmentally sensitive trail design, location, and construction.

Policy OL-2.1 Conservation Tools. The City will purchase open lands, conservation easements, and/or development rights and use other tools such as development regulations and planning for the purpose of defining and protecting community edges.

Policy OL-2.3 Community Buffer. Strategic open lands that serve as community separators outside the Growth Management Area will be identified for either public ownership or other land conservation measures.

Policy OL-2.5 Coordination. The City will actively work with local, regional, State, and Federal agencies, as well as private entities, to acquire larger tracts of key open lands in the region.

Water Corridors

Policy WC-1.2 Natural Environment and Wildlife. The City will preserve, protect, enhance, and restore important natural areas, wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and wildlife corridors within Water Corridors.

Poudre River Corridor

Policy PRC-1.4 Regional Collaboration. Because the reach of the Poudre River Corridor within the City is only a portion of a larger river system and watershed, the City will collaborate with other public and private entities throughout Northern Colorado to enhance river protection and stewardship efforts.

Policy PRC-2.1 Conservation. The City will conserve and protect important natural areas and natural values within the Poudre River

Corridor. This will include acquiring land for public natural areas and conservation easements to protect privately-owned lands; establishing appropriate cooperative agreements with adjacent landowners; developing and applying development regulations and design guidelines; and promoting public education and outreach programs, and other techniques as appropriate.

Policy PRC-2.3 Restoration and Enhancement. The City will restore or enhance degraded or disturbed areas of the Poudre River Corridor to improve natural habitat conditions and aesthetic and recreational values. Restoration and enhancement projects may be performed cooperatively with adjacent private landowners and volunteer community groups.

Policy PRC-7.1 Environmental Learning Opportunities. The City will continue to be supportive of environmental learning opportunities in the Poudre River Corridor.

Policy PRC-8.1 Gravel Mined Land Purchases. The City will continue to evaluate areas that have been mined for gravel and are identified as desirable for public open lands, to determine if they should be acquired for use as natural areas or other open lands along the Poudre River Corridor.

Policy PRC-8.2 Gravel Mine Reclamation. The City will collaborate with gravel mining interests to develop innovative approaches to gravel mine reclamation that will provide wildlife habitat, restoration of native landscapes, recreational opportunities, limited development, and other public values.

Community Separators

Policy CS-1.1 Community Separators.

Strategic open lands that serve as community separators inside and outside the Growth Management Area will be identified for either public ownership or other land conservation measures. Community separators should be as large as possible and could include low intensity residential development, undeveloped lands, and natural or rural landscapes including open lands, natural areas, farmland, clustered residential development and recreational areas such as golf courses.

Policy CS-1.3 Northern Colorado Community Separator Study. The physical and visual separation between Fort Collins, LaPorte, Loveland, Wellington, Timnath, and Windsor should be preserved and maintained in general accordance with approved community separator plans and studies and community comprehensive plans.

Policy CS-1.6 Open Lands Protection.

Open lands should be preserved, and protected through purchase of lands, development rights, or conservation easements and/or other measures such as land use planning or development regulations.

Foothills

Policy FE-1.2 Preservation of the Foothills.

The City will continue to consider appropriate measures to preserve and protect the natural features and views of the foothills, such as conservation easements, purchase of land or development rights, and zoning.

Policy FE-1.3 View Corridors and Access.

Special efforts will be undertaken to protect view corridors and public access to the foothills.

2. Land Acquisition

With passage of the 2002 Open Space Yes! sales tax, the City is able to expand its natural areas acquisition program beyond “local” lands to a more regional area, as well as focus on the preservation of community separators beyond the Fort Collins Growth Management Area. In April 2003, City Council adopted modifications to the natural areas policies including the addition of a “regional” category of land conservation in addition to the “local” category adopted in the 1992 Natural Areas Policy Plan. These changes have also been incorporated into the above City Plan policies. A new policy also adopted in April 2003 directed the City to implement a system of land conservation acquisition considerations by examining seven factors.

LCA-1.1. The City will implement a system of land conservation acquisition considerations by examining the following factors (listed in no priority order):

- Willingness of current property owner to sell
- Ecological value and importance
- Appropriate passive recreation and educational opportunities
- Costs of acquisition
- Long-term stewardship costs
- Expected threat to the integrity of the natural resource values of a property (development, agricultural conversion, etc.)
- Geographic proximity to Fort Collins

3. Specific Management Policies

Prairie Dog Policy for City Natural Areas. During the mid-1990's, management of prairie dogs became controversial in Fort Collins and elsewhere along the Front Range. Some people did not want the City to kill a single prairie dog, no matter the reason; some urged eradication of all prairie dogs within the city. In between were the majority of residents who supported conservation of prairie dogs and prairie ecosystems but understood the need for limited prairie dog population control to minimize conflict with adjacent landowners or to restore degraded habitat to native grassland so large prairie dog colonies would remain intact and healthy.

In fall 1997, the Prairie Dog Policy Review Committee, made up of City staff and community members, was formed to review current policies, guidelines, practices, and techniques related to prairie dog management conducted by the City. This committee developed a philosophy statement and formulated the 33 policy statements the City now follows in maintaining prairie dog colonies on City natural areas. The policies address land protection, education, research, natural control, barriers, relocation, disease control, and fumigation. They apply only to natural areas managed by the Natural Resources Department, not to other City properties such as developed parks, utility substations, or water treatment facilities. In March 1998, City Council adopted the 33 policies. The policies have been valuable in formalizing techniques and procedures, supporting public expenditures on prairie dogs and their habitats, and increasing public support for the City's efforts to preserve the prairie dog and its habitat.

Natural Areas and Open Lands Utility Easement Policy. In 2000, the Natural Resources Advisory Board directed staff to formalize into policies the practices and procedures used to grant requests for utility easements or rights-of-way on City natural areas or other open lands managed by the Natural Areas Program. The policies apply to requests for new utility easements or rights-of-way for a wide variety of purposes, including streets; water; sewer; drainage; flood control; electric power; and telecommunications facilities, and apply to City projects as well as those of other public entities (e.g., special utility districts) and private parties. The policies do not apply to trails, parking lots, interpretive features, or other facilities that are part of the management of the City natural area.

The goal of the policies is to avoid, to the maximum extent feasible, granting utility easements or rights-of-way for activities that will adversely affect the community's goals for natural area protection or community shaping.

Where utility easements or rights-of-way are permitted by ordinance of the City Council, to the maximum extent feasible, impact on the natural area or the community must be minimized by limiting size and visibility of the area affected; managing construction or other human activities with respect to timing, duration, and frequency of occurrence; and restoring affected areas to a condition equal to or better than the condition at the time the easement is granted. In 2001, City Council adopted nine policies that address alternatives analysis, land use consistency, master plan consistency, coordination with other entities, compliance with existing easements, resource protection standards, compensation, advisory board and council

review, and application requirements and review process.

Site Naming. In 1995, the Natural Areas Program developed, and administratively adopted, a policy for the process of naming natural areas. This policy is in effect as of December 2003.

C. Additional Policies Needed

The following policies are needed to provide consistent expectations and implementation within the Natural Areas Program. Their inclusion in this document does not ensure that all policies will be developed and adopted within the 10-year life of the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan. Rather, the expectation is that the advisability of developing these policies will be evaluated, and those policies deemed appropriate will be developed and brought forward for adoption at the appropriate level.

1. Council Adoption

The following has been identified as an area needing new policy adopted by City Council.

User Fees. The Natural Areas Program operates under the informal philosophy that through their taxes citizens have paid, and are paying, for public natural areas and should not be charged again for the privilege of visiting the sites. A Council adopted policy is needed to formalize that intent. Such policy also should address whether providing funding to other agencies (e.g., purchasing land in partnership with Larimer County) carries with it the requirement that the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program user fee policy be adhered to. As the Natural Areas Program matures, it may

be necessary to revisit the policy and establish a user fee structure.

2. Administrative Adoption

The following have been identified as areas needing new policy administratively adopted by the Natural Resources Director.

Conservation Easement. The Natural Areas Program has received a few requests from landowners asking the City to purchase conservation easements on their properties. Such requests may increase in the future with expansion of the City's land conservation beyond the Fort Collins Community Growth Management Area. Even accepting a donated conservation easement requires staff time to negotiate the easement agreement, develop the land management plan, and monitor the site in perpetuity. A City Council adopted policy is needed to establish criteria for acceptance or purchase of conservation easements. Such criteria would include location, land type, and subsequent management.

Land Disposition/Change of Use. An administratively adopted policy is needed to direct the disposition or change of use of properties, or portions of properties, owned or acquired by the Natural Areas Program. Such policy should address the conditions that would cause or allow the program to (1) place a conservation easement on a property and then sell the property, (2) sell a property, or portion of property, with no restriction, (3) change a property to, or from, agricultural use, (4) put cluster development on a property, (5) use properties for industrial purposes, or (6) other disposition or changes of use. While City Council approval is required for disposing of property, there is no policy to determine whether disposition of property is appropriate. Nor is there policy direction regarding change of use of a property.

Examples include the following: (1) under what conditions should a portion of property with a livable dwelling unit be sold and the rest of the property kept in Natural Areas Program ownership? (2) under what conditions should the program place a conservation easement on a piece of property an interested party wants to purchase and sell the property to the interested party? (3) under what conditions should the Natural Areas Program acquire properties with elements that could be used for active recreation and allow the property to be used for the active recreation?

Fire Control and Management. Over the past few years, Poudre Fire Authority (PFA) and the Natural Areas Program have become increasingly interested in using fire as a management tool on City natural areas. PFA's interest has been to decrease the build up of dense vegetation and litter (fuels), and thus the intensity of future wild fires. The Natural Areas Program's interest has been the use of fire, through a controlled burn, as a management tool to suppress weeds and exotic grasses while protecting wildlife, native plant communities, structures (both on City and adjacent private property), and air quality.

In September 2003, the Natural Resources Department and PFA administratively adopted the "Interim Fire Management and Control Guidelines," which presents five fire management policies and eight guidelines. The purpose of these policies and guidelines is to (1) assure the safety of the general public and Natural Areas Program staff, (2) provide interim guidelines for Poudre Fire Authority for their use in controlling natural or human-caused fires, and (3) define the role of Natural Areas Program staff in both wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire efforts. The Natural Areas Program will continue to work with PFA to develop a Fire Management Plan, which will

include additional administratively adopted policies and fire management objectives for natural areas.

Historic Preservation. Properties acquired as natural areas or conserved as open lands often have historic structures or features that the community may want to preserve or restore. Indeed, the City's Historic Preservation Program may require that certain structures be preserved. An administrative policy is needed to provide clear direction as to when Natural Area Program funds should be expended for the preservation or restoration of historic structures and features.

Education. An administratively adopted policy is needed to address issues such as when the trade-offs of negative site impacts will be permitted to allow the building of education/interpretive centers; how site impacts (e.g., damage caused by vehicles during installation and repair, visual impacts of signs, wildlife disturbance caused by artificial bird calls on interpretive features, etc.) will determine design and placement of interpretive features, the role of interpretive features in recreation management, what drives the content of interpretive features, whether all sites are required to have interpretive features, whether fees will be charged for interpretive programs, and the role of volunteers in education.

Enforcement. There is a growing concern for the safety of the rangers as they are increasingly dealing with potentially dangerous individuals (transients, gang members, wanted individuals) within natural areas. The addition of regional properties adds concerns related to time required for armed officer backup in more rural areas. It is anticipated that policy changes may be required to ensure the rangers have all tools and training needed to maintain officer and visitor safety.

Corporate Sponsors. Businesses and corporations sometimes want to provide funding for property acquisitions, public improvements, and other aspects of City of Fort Collins natural areas in exchange for corporate identity at a natural area or within the Natural Areas Program. An administratively adopted policy is needed to direct whether such an exchange is acceptable, and if so, the specifics of the type of corporate identity that would be allowed.

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Appendix A

Adoption Resolution

Appendix B

Definition of Terms

Definition of Terms

Administrative Adoption: Policy or document adopted by the Natural Resources Director. Such policies or documents can be changed at the department level.

Agricultural Land: Land on which the soil is cultivated, crops are produced, and/or livestock is raised or grazed.

Appropriate Recreation (referred to in some documents as passive recreation): Includes recreation that generally can be done by one person and does not include team-oriented activities or require specialized equipment. Activities typically termed “appropriate” in natural areas include hiking/walking, jogging, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, photography, horseback riding, and on-leash dog walking.

Community Separator: Physical and visual separation between Fort Collins and an adjoining community. The Natural Areas Program will protect properties to serve as community separators in designated areas. These properties may also have natural area values such as wildlife habitat, scenic views, or agricultural values.

Conservation Easement: Acquisition, through donation or purchase, of specific rights to the property rather than ownership of the property. Purchase of a conservation easement is less expensive than purchasing the property. Land management plans are negotiated between the land owner and easement holder. The land remains in private ownership and management; public access is limited or not allowed.

Council Adoption: Policy adopted by legal process through City Council. Such policies can only be changed or repealed by City Council.

Fee Simple Purchase: Outright purchase where buyer (the City) owns the land. Typically more expensive than a conservation easement since land ownership allows for management control and flexibility. Public access depends on the nature of the resources that are protected.

Focus Area: An organizational grouping of resource areas for the purposes of planning. Each grouping (i.e. Local, Regional, and Community Separator) is lumped together based on similar properties or characteristics. Focus Areas provide a regional framework through which the Natural Areas Program will pursue future land conservation efforts.

Growth Management Area: An area identified through official public policy, within which urban development will be allowed.

Guideline: A suggested, and expected but not necessarily required, course of action designed to accomplish the goals of the Natural Areas Program.

Land Conservation: The act of protecting land from developed uses. This typically involves purchasing the land outright to be managed for natural purposes or placing conservation

easements on the land to restrict (in perpetuity) undesirable types of uses/development that could occur.

Maintenance: Upkeep required to maintain properties in their natural or restored condition; reducing the decline of un-restored properties; upkeep required to maintain public improvements in good, clean, useable, safe condition.

Natural Area: Area of land or water that contains or supports the continued existence of geological, paleontological, ecological, or other natural features that are: classified as endangered or threatened, sensitive to the impact from human activity, or otherwise in need of protection; important to the conservation of natural resources that provide environmental protection, recreational, educational, scientific, aesthetic, or economic benefits; unique or rare examples of our natural heritage.

Open Lands: Open lands include natural areas, greenways, developed and undeveloped parks, trails, streetscapes, cemeteries, drainageways, and golf courses.

Policy: A decision directing actions that are to be followed relative to the Natural Areas Program.

Resource Area: A geographic location of high conservation value. Conservation values may be ecological, scenic, recreational, agricultural, desired areas for community separation, or important floodplains.

Restoration: Returning land to its natural, or near natural, condition.

Steward: One who manages another's property.

Stewardship: The office, duties, and obligations of a steward, also: the individual's responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard to the rights of others.

Utility Easement: Legal access across natural area property whereby grantee has the right, within stipulations of the easement, to use a specified portion of the property for installation and maintenance of a utility (e.g., water line, wastewater line, electric line, etc.)

Water Corridors: Natural and man-made waterways and open space – serving the needs for drainage and water conveyance, as well as recreational, educational, ecological, and environmental uses.

Appendix C

Land Evaluation Guidance System

Land Evaluation Guidance System

Natural Areas Current Program Mission

The mission of the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program is to protect and enhance lands with existing or potential natural areas values, lands that serve as community separators, and lands with scenic values. Protection of natural habitats and features is the highest priority, while also providing opportunities for education and appropriate recreation for the Fort Collins community.

What is a Land Evaluation Guidance System?

The Natural Areas Program has reached a point where there are more opportunities and/or requests for land protection funding than is available. With limited resources, staff has identified the need for a decision-support tool to inventory the merits of individual land conservation projects and identify land conservation priorities when more than one opportunity presents itself.

How will the Natural Areas Program use the Guidance System?

The intent of this guidance system is to aid managers in identifying the highest priority lands for acquisition or conservation easement. It is intended to evaluate all possible types of lands (natural areas, community separators, scenic viewsheds, etc.) and serve as a basis for comparison among these land types. This system can never, and is not intended to, supplant the knowledge and experience base of professional staff. Thus, this guidance system does not develop an overall ranking score or category (High, Moderate, Low) for all properties within the Focus Areas, but merely provides a high, moderate, or low rating for individual conservation values. The Guidance System is intended to be a tool to guide decision making, not to prescribe decisions.

All proposed land acquisitions shall be evaluated using this Guidance System, utilizing any and all resources available (site information, data, maps, etc.). Additional questions or issues may be considered during the evaluation process if determined appropriate by staff.

Land Evaluation Guidance System

The Guidance System is broken down into four distinct sections:

1. General Project Description
2. City Council Approved Acquisition Considerations
3. Conservation & Supplemental Values Assessment
4. Summary Assessment

Section 1: General Project Description describes the general physical location of the site, landowner/contact information the type of project (acquisition or conservation easement), and the nature of the land conservation deal.

Section 2: City Council Approved Acquisition Considerations: This section of the guidance system addresses City Council approved (from April 1, 2003) acquisition considerations and is the only part of this guidance system that staff is required to complete prior to the purchase of a new property in fee or part of acquiring an easement.

Section 3: The Conservation & Supplemental Values Assessment is intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of the property's natural, scenic, recreational, community separation, agricultural, cultural resources and other public benefits. This section also addresses how an individual land conservation project fits into a landscape scale conservation vision.

Section 4: The Summary Assessment identifies the potential assets or conflicts/liabilities that may be absorbed if a project were undertaken. It also summarizes the previous section, which serves for a quick reference, not a final score. To reiterate, only Section 2 (City Council Approved Acquisition Considerations) is approved policy (Resolution 2003-051, April 1, 2003) that requires staff to evaluate seven considerations when looking at properties for acquisition. However, these additional assessments will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the property.

Although a property or project may contain conservation and natural resource values or other public benefits, other factors will be considered in fully evaluating the project. Among these factors are the type of land and the resources to be protected, landowner objectives, the Natural Areas Program's available resources, and stewardship needs. For example, a conservation easement may be the best approach to preserving a property's scenic or agricultural values, whereas fee acquisition is typically the best alternative for land protection that includes public access. Conservation easements with substantial reserved landowner rights (such as multiple home sites) typically have greater negative impact on the resources to be protected and require more on-going management than do easements without substantial reserved rights. These and other factors must be considered when determining how or whether to undertake a project.

Section 1: General Project Description:

Project Name: _____

Physical location: _____

Contact Information: _____

Phone: _____

Date of Site Visit: _____

Project Map(s) Attached: Yes ☐ No ☐

Photos Available: Yes ☐ No ☐

Acres Involved: _____

Appraised/Estimated Value: _____

County: _____

Water Rights? _____

Zoning: _____ **City / County (circle one)** Mineral Rights? _____

Quad Map(s): _____

Natural Areas Resource Area: Yes ☐ No ☐ If so, which one? _____

Type of Project: ☐ Individual Landowner _____
☐ Partnership venture with _____
☐ Other: _____

Type of Deal: ☐ Fee Purchase ☐ CE Purchase ☐ Sale to 3rd Party
☐ Fee Donation ☐ CE Donation ☐ Bargain Sale

Date reviewed by Staff: _____

Describe the potential transaction. How did the project come about?

Describe how this project fits with the Natural Areas Land Conservation Implementation Framework and City Plan.

Do funds utilized conform to allocations set forth in the Land Conservation Implementation Framework?

What is the conservation classification of this property (flagship/satellite/core/community separator/conservation easement)?

Describe in general the land conservation values.

Describe why the project is important to the City of Fort Collins. Describe the possible direct and indirect costs/benefits of the acquisition (i.e. transportation, utilities, etc.).

Section 2: City of Fort Collins City Council Approved Natural Areas Acquisition Considerations

On April 1, 2003, City of Fort Collins City Council adopted resolution 2003-051 that established a set of seven considerations (in no priority order) as a general guide for the Natural Areas Program in land conservation and acquisition efforts. Briefly respond to the following questions and provide additional information if necessary.

1. **Is the current landowner a willing seller/donor? (choose one)**
 - a. Yes, owner is making partial / whole donation
 - b. Yes, seller is highly motivated
 - c. Yes, seller is willing to negotiate
 - d. No, not willing to sell or negotiate
2. **Describe the potential recreation opportunities for this property. (choose one)**
 - a. High appropriate recreation opportunity with extensive public access
 - b. Moderate appropriate recreation opportunity with limited public access
 - c. No recreation opportunity (explain) _____
3. **Describe the ecological value of this property.**
 - a. High - the property is large or native or hosts rare species/communities or is a critical wildlife corridor
 - b. Moderate - the property has important but not unusual ecological values
 - c. Moderate – the property has some values and needs some restoration
 - d. Low – the property requires significant ecological restoration
4. **What is the anticipated acquisition cost for this property? (state the amount)**
\$ _____
5. **Estimate the long-term stewardship costs for this property?**
 - a. General Operations: \$ _____ annually
 - b. Public Improvements: \$ _____ one-time cost
 - c. Restoration: \$ _____ annually
 - d. Other Liabilities: \$ _____ one-time cost
 - e. Education: \$ _____ one-time/annual cost
6. **Describe the property's geographic proximity to Fort Collins.**
 - a. Within City Limits
 - b. Less than 30 minutes from the City
 - c. 30 – 60 minutes from the City
7. **Describe the threat to the integrity of the property's natural resource values (choose one).**
 - a. Development is imminent (includes subdivision to 35-acre parcels)
 - b. Development is anticipated to occur within 3 years
 - c. Development is anticipated to occur within 5 – 10 years
 - d. Property is non-growth/low threat area

Based on questions 1 – 7, in your opinion would conservation of this property be of significant public benefit to the citizens of Fort Collins? (Yes or no and please explain)

Section 3: Conservation & Supplemental Values Assessment

Conservation Values

Because the mission of the Natural Areas Program is “*to protect and enhance lands with existing or potential habitat values*”, this section assesses ecological, habitat and wildlife values associated with the property in question. As with the required sections of this Project Selection Guidance System, these ratings are intended to inform decision making, not confine it.

Value	Definition	Ranking
General Overall Qualities		
Size	Property larger than 250 acres	High
	Property between 101 – 250 acres	Moderate
	Property smaller than 100 acres	Low
Connectivity	Adjacent to protected area or public land	High
	Adjacent to <u>planned</u> protected area or surrounded by undeveloped land	Moderate
	Isolated - surrounded by developed land	Low
Property Condition	Property is in relatively native condition	High
	Property requires some restorative management (weed control, cleanup, structure demolition, etc.).	Moderate
	Property requires significant restoration	Low
Wildlife and Habitat Resources		
Has the Colorado Natural Heritage Program been consulted to determine the status of species or communities of conservation interest?		YES or NO
<i>Describe below the general (terrestrial and aquatic) vegetation communities, habitat and wildlife resources that best characterize the property.</i>		
Species or Community Uniqueness	Presence of threatened, endangered, candidate, species of special concern <u>or</u> relatively intact native community	High
	Not unique in any particular way, but in generally good condition	Moderate
	Property has significant weed problem <u>or</u> requires significant restoration	Low
Landscape Connections & Corridor values	Property provides critical corridor for movement of wildlife from one habitat to another	High
	Property functions or could function as corridor depending on status of adjacent properties	Moderate
	Property is isolated by development	Low

Value	Definition	Ranking
Waterways, Riparian & Wetland Areas		
Waterways	Waterway contains year round flows <u>or</u> is relatively free from human impacts	High
	Waterways that do not meet “high” criteria; can include “naturalized” channels	Moderate
	Waterways either non-existent <u>or</u> highly eroded or channelized; may be adjacent to developed areas or other impacts. Includes drainage ways and detention ponds.	Low
Riparian & Wetland Areas	Property contains wetlands/riparian corridors that support multiple purposes (e.g. habitat, stormwater management, greenway, etc).	High
	Property contains functional wetland or riparian habitat including native species and a diverse plant community	High
	Property contains wetlands or riparian areas in good to fair condition, some restoration required (functional at-risk)	Moderate
	Property contains degraded, non-functioning wetland or riparian areas requiring significant restoration	Low
Education Opportunities	Property is close to schools or has high potential for a field trip opportunities; high opportunity for a nature center or other educational resource	High
	Property has some field trip potential, opportunity for interpretive features but not as extensive as a nature center	Moderate
	Property may be distant from urban center or has few or limited educational opportunities and little or no field trip potential	Low

Supplemental Values Assessment

Because many lands serve multiple functions and uses, this section is intended to assess other land values associated with the property that are not directly natural resource related. As with other sections of this Project Selection Guidance System, the ratings are intended to inform decision making, not confine it.

Value	Definition	Rating
Community Separation	Property is in identified CS	High
	Property not in identified CS area, but functions by maintaining open character	Moderate
	Property is rural or located such that it is not applicable	Low
<i>Describe what communities this property helps to separate and how it does that.</i>		
Scenic Resources & Viewsheds	Visible from a populated location or significant travelway	High
	Local scenic importance	Moderate
	Secluded or not visible to the general population	Low
<i>Briefly describe the scenic resources of the property.</i>		
Agricultural Values	Productive farm or ranchland	High
	Moderate or marginally productive farm or ranchland	Moderate
	Eroded, degraded or otherwise unproductive; restoration would be difficult	Low
<i>Briefly describe the agricultural values of the property. Is it irrigated or non-irrigated?</i>		
Cultural Resources	Property is known to include significant cultural resources	High
	Property has limited cultural resource values	Moderate
	Property known not to have significant cultural resources	Low
<i>Has the City of Fort Collins or the State of Colorado Historic Preservation Office been contacted about this property? Y/N</i> <i>Briefly describe the cultural/historic/archaeological resources of the property.</i>		

Public Access	High levels of visitor use experience; visitor use is compatible with resource protection	High
	Visitor use can be managed to protect resources	Moderate
	Public access would conflict or impact resource protection or no public access	Low
Recreation Opportunities	High appropriate recreation opportunity with extensive public access	High
	Appropriate recreation opportunity but with limited public access	Moderate
	No recreation opportunity	Low
<i>Briefly describe the possible appropriate recreation opportunities for the property.</i>		

Section 4: Summary Assessment

Feasibility	Yes	No	Unknown
Is the property owner willing to sell?			
Is there a good legal description?			
Are all property boundaries known and marked?			
Are there water rights associated with the property?			
Are there mineral rights associated with the property?			
Does acquisition of this property conform to the Natural Areas Land Conservation Implementation Framework?			
Issues			
Are there negative tax or legal issues?			
Are there unresolved Title issues?			
Are there zoning or development rights issues?			
Are there existing minerals/oil/gas leases?			
Are there known hazardous materials on the property?			
Are there other liability or safety issues?			
Would there be significant enforcement issues?			

Comments: _____

Total Acquisition Cost: \$ _____ Total Property Acreage: _____ Acres

Public Improvement: \$ _____
 Total Water Rights Cost: \$ _____
 Restoration Cost: \$ _____
 Total Cost for Conservation Easement \$ _____

Please review sections 3 and 4 and circle the rating you selected based on questions provided.

General Values	Rating	Supplemental Values			
Size	H M L	Community separation	H	M	L
Connectivity	H M L	Scenic resources & viewsheds	H	M	L
Property Condition	H M L	Agricultural values	H	M	L
Ecological Values		Cultural resources	H	M	L
Species or Community Uniqueness	H M L	Public access	H	M	L
Landscape Connections & Corridor Values	H M L	Recreation opportunities	H	M	L
Waterways	H M L				
Riparian & Wetland Areas	H M L				
Education Opportunities	H M L				

Given all the above considerations, is this property a good value and a significant public benefit to the citizens of Fort Collins? Yes or no and explain.

RESOLUTION 2004-092
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS
ADOPTING THE LAND CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP MASTER PLAN
AS A COMPONENT OF THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the voters of Fort Collins and of Larimer County have elected to entrust certain dedicated funding to the City of Fort Collins for the purpose of conserving and managing local and regional natural areas, community separators, agricultural lands, and scenic vistas; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, as of the end of 2003, had conserved over 11,000 acres of natural areas; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, in 1992, adopted the policies of the Natural Areas Policy Plan, which guided the conservation and management of natural areas; and

WHEREAS, the Natural Areas Policy Plan is now outdated and needs to be replaced; and

WHEREAS, the City Council in April 2003 adopted a new Natural Areas Policy to replace the policy component of the Natural Areas Policy Plan, which Natural Areas Policy has since been updated; and

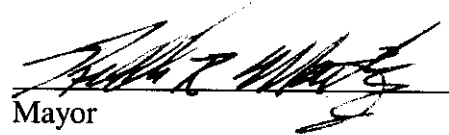
WHEREAS, the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan, a copy of which is on file in the Office of the City Clerk and available for public inspection, will replace and supercede the Natural Areas Policy Plan, and incorporate the concepts embodied by the 2003 Natural Areas Policy as amended, in order to establish a comprehensive vision for the Natural Areas Program for the next ten years (2004-2013) and to provide for a consistent program direction to support that vision; and

WHEREAS, the Natural Resources Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Board have reviewed the plan and recommended that Council adopt the plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Board's review of the plan resulted in a split decision: three voting for adoption and three against.

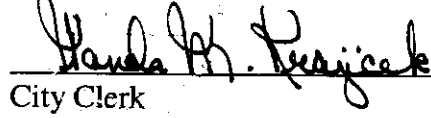
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS that the Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan is hereby adopted by the Council of the City of Fort Collins, thereby replacing and superceding the policies of the Natural Areas Policy Plan and establishing a vision and direction for the Natural Areas Program through 2013.

Passed and adopted at a regular meeting of the Council of the City of Fort Collins held this 20th day of July, A.D. 2004.



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk