

# **JOINT UPPER BLUE MASTER PLAN**

PREPARED BY THE

**JOINT UPPER BLUE MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE**



**ADOPTED AUGUST 20, 1997**

**UPPER BLUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
BRECKENRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL  
BLUE RIVER TOWN BOARD**

# **JOINT UPPER BLUE MASTER PLAN**

Prepared by the

Joint Upper Blue Master Plan Committee

Leigh Yule, Chair  
Wayne Brown  
Gary Lindstrom  
Sam Mamula  
Dave Pringle  
Robin Theobald  
Mike Turek

Past Members

Rick Hum  
Larry Nelson  
Frank Roberts

Summit County Planning Department

Brian Peters, Planning Director  
Chris Hawkins, Planner II  
Linda Lynch, Office Manager  
Steven Hill, Community Development Director

Town of Breckenridge Planning Department

Jan Prowell, Assistant Director, Long Range Planning  
Peter Grosshuesch, Community Development Director

**Adopted by the Upper Blue Planning Commission**

August 20, 1997

Resolution No. RPC-97-31

Leigh Yule, Chair  
Bobby Craig  
Dawn Smith  
Verna Enyeart  
Michael Good  
Randy Griffin  
Mike Turek



## **Acknowledgment**

Preparation of this plan would not have been possible without the sincere interest and input from the citizens of the Upper Blue Basin and Summit County. The community's insight and direction has made this a better plan.

In addition, a number of consultants and other staff contributed to the preparation of this plan:

### Land Use Inventory & Analysis:

RRC Associates

John Humphreys Associates

RG Plans

### Traffic/Transportation Analysis:

Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig:

### Legal Review:

Chris Deurksen, Clarion Associates

Larry Keuter, Isaacson, Rosenbaum, Woods & Levy

John Hayes, Hayes, Phillips, Mahoney & Haddock

Jeff Huntley, Summit County Attorney:

Tim Berry, Town of Breckenridge Attorney:

### Commercial Zoning Analysis:

ERA Consultants

## **Supporting Documents**

The following documents and information listed below were prepared in support of this plan. This information can be reviewed at the Summit County Planning Department offices.

Land Use Inventory and Analysis, prepared by RRC Associates, 1995/1996, Loose leaf information available for review at the Summit County Planning Department

Upper Blue Basin Transportation Plan, prepared by Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig, January, 1996

Commercial Zoning Analysis, prepared by ERA Consultants, June, 1997

Additional project files and information can be reviewed at the Summit County Planning Department and Town of Breckenridge Planning Department.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2
A Vision.....	2
A Process .....	2
I. BASIN OVERVIEW .....	3
BASIN WIDE CONCERNS/ISSUES .....	3
DATA & TRENDS .....	4
Land Status.....	4
Build Out.....	5
Population .....	6
Traffic and Transportation.....	7
OVERALL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT .....	8
Existing Conditions .....	8
Reducing Build Out Impacts .....	9
Activity Level Approach.....	10
BASIN GROWTH STRATEGY .....	11
DEVELOPMENT PATTERN.....	16
Urban/Micro Urban Area .....	16
Land Use.....	16
Traffic/Transportation.....	17
Rural/Backcountry Area.....	19
Land Use .....	19
Traffic/Transportation.....	20
RECREATION AND TRAILS .....	20
Trails    20	
Neighborhood Recreation.....	22
DESIGN & APPEARANCE .....	22
ENVIRONMENT .....	24
INFRASTRUCTURE/UTILITIES/COMMUNITY FACILITIES.....	25
HOUSING .....	26
HISTORIC RESOURCES.....	27
II. CONCLUSIONS.....	28

**JOINT UPPER BLUE MASTER PLAN**  
**ADOPTED**  
**AUGUST 20, 1997**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A Vision**

The Upper Blue Valley is both a valuable and vulnerable resource. The valley sustains the community in many ways. The sense of place and the spirit of the community is largely defined by the high alpine setting and pristine natural environment of the Upper Blue. The relatively unspoiled quality of the valley's resources - its clean air and water, spectacular mountain vistas, abundant open spaces, diverse and easily seen wildlife as well as rare plants and animals; relative lack of urban problems or annoyances such as worsening traffic congestion, serious crime, noise and light pollution; easy access to multiple outdoor recreation and opportunities for solitude in the backcountry; and the small town atmosphere are just some of the values which define this community. It is both individual and shared beliefs about the value of these intangibles, much more than measurable components like traffic volume and sewer capacity, which define our community as it is today and how we wish it to be in the future.

The valley's resources have brought us all here and made the community what it is today - a thriving resort area. At the same time, our economic success can threaten the values that we all hold dear. We are at a critical juncture. Recognizing that our high alpine setting is a fragile ecosystem, "Killing the goose that laid the golden egg," is a real possibility if urbanization as well as scattered growth and the resulting impacts created degrade the valley's resources. The vision of this plan, simply put, is to preserve the quality of the valley's resources and the character of the community as we know it today. That is not to suggest that continued economic growth should not or will not occur. Rather, the guiding theme of this plan is to implement a shared set of policies among the Town of Breckenridge, Town of Blue River and Summit County in order to preserve our high alpine environment along with the character and spirit of the community that we enjoy and value today as growth and inevitable change occurs.

### **A Process**

The Towns of Breckenridge and Blue River, together with Summit County have completed the first phase of a cooperative planning effort to address land use and related issues which are crucial to maintaining the special sense of community and quality of life that we all treasure in the Upper Blue Basin. In early 1994, the Joint Upper Blue Master Plan Committee was formed and charged with the imposing task of reviewing the existing master plans for the Upper Blue Basin and charting a course for the future. The Committee members represent the Breckenridge Town Council, Blue River Town Board, Board of County Commissioners, Breckenridge Planning Commission and Upper Blue Planning Commission.

The Committee began public meetings in March, 1994. Since then, more than 30 public meetings have been held. The Committee has heard from a wide spectrum of the community - residents (permanent, seasonal, 2nd home), landowners, business owners and other interests. An analysis of existing development, potential build out, zoning, subdivided areas, land ownership patterns, slopes and other environmental factors was completed and compiled for the entire basin. This data was broken down into 14 subbasins or neighborhoods to enable a finer grain analysis. In addition, a traffic/transportation analysis which investigated both basin wide and smaller travel shed conditions was completed. Existing master plans and other background materials were also reviewed. The Joint Upper Blue Master Plan Committee also toured most areas of the basin. The result is a set of findings and recommendations that can form the basis for a revised master or comprehensive plan for the Upper Blue.

The findings and recommendations of the Committee were forwarded to the towns and county and each jurisdiction has gone through a formal review and adoption process. The goal is to adopt a "seamless" plan

which provides for a unified vision and consistent land use policy for the entire basin. The plan attempts to focus on both the broad and more specific levels. In the Basin Overview, this plan proposes policies that will guide and direct overall growth within the entire Upper Blue. The more specific recommendations for land use, trails and other neighborhood scale concerns will be contained in the 14 separate subbasins that make up the Upper Blue. At this point, the subbasin portion of this plan has not been completed. The Committee's intent is to adopt the Basin Overview section of the plan, which will set the parameters for completing the subbasin section of the plan.

### **Purpose and Intent**

The purpose of the Joint Upper Blue Master Plan is to serve as an advisory guide for the future physical development of the Upper Blue Basin. In this context, it will be used by the Upper Blue Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, Breckenridge Planning Commission, Breckenridge Town Council and Blue River Town Board as a reference and guide for decisions which affect the physical development of the basin. The plan articulates a common vision for the future, and informs citizens, landowners and developers of the goals, policies and desired actions which will shape the future of the basin. It also provides a means for communication and coordination between the towns, county, special districts and federal, regional and state agencies.

The plan is not the equivalent of zoning or other land use regulations in that it does not regulate use of land. The plan is not binding upon the decision making authority of the County, or Towns of Breckenridge and Blue River. However, it is also recognized that each of these jurisdictions will strive to make decisions which are consistent with the plan.

The plan should also be used in conjunction with the Countywide Comprehensive Plan which provides policy guidance for the physical development of the entire county, the Town of Breckenridge master plan which provides for more specific direction within the town, and other more specific plans which may address other more limited areas or functions such as subbasin and neighborhood plans, trails plans and open space plans as examples.

## **I. BASIN OVERVIEW**

### **BASIN WIDE CONCERNS/ISSUES**

Throughout the course of the public meetings held to identify issues in the Upper Blue, citizens repeatedly expressed concern that values connected to the natural environment and small town atmosphere are endangered due to rapid growth and expanding development. Residents find favorite recreation spots more crowded and worry that access to trails and public lands will be restricted or eliminated. There is a strong desire to preserve the rural character of outlying or back country areas and the small mountain resort character of the Town of Breckenridge. Additional high priority concerns in this community are parking, traffic and affordable housing - problems typically found in urban areas.

Ski town development has recently been characterized as "micro urban." That is to say that the typical pattern is a small urban community surrounded by rural areas and public lands. The community must provide urban levels of service and contend with planning and development issues that are common in urban areas. At the same time, these communities often think of themselves as rural or small town. A high priority is placed on maintaining a small town lifestyle and rural surroundings. Residents value the surrounding open spaces, a high quality natural environment, easy access to recreation on public lands, comfort in knowing one's neighbors and the friendly lifestyle that is associated with a small community. Residents also desire urban services and amenities such as reliable mass transit, high quality law enforcement, fire and emergency response, recreation centers, arts and cultural programs, and varied opportunities for dining and entertainment.

In the past few years, the Town of Breckenridge has added a number of facilities that serve the needs of the entire Upper Blue basin and county as a whole. These include a recreation center, expansion and improvement of town park facilities, improved bike paths and trails, ice rink, Riverwalk Center and

riverwalk. Plans are underway for a skate board park, improved rodeo grounds and stables, and an open space acquisition program. The County has also contributed to improvements in the Upper Blue including realignment of the Farmers Korner section of the bike path and improved public access to trails and acquisition of open space parcels. These facilities and improvements have significantly improved the quality of life in the basin.

Retaining a small mountain town and rural surroundings while enjoying the benefits of urban type amenities and conveniences defines the dilemma of planning in a resort community. As development in the Upper Blue basin continues, the concerns and issues that define this dilemma will become more and more critical unless we put strategies and programs in place to address them. In other words - a plan.

## **DATA & TRENDS**

One of the first tasks in putting together this document was to compile and analyze information. Data for four important categories - land status, build out, traffic/transportation and commercial space needs were compiled and analyzed. The land status and build out analysis was completed by Rosall, Remmen and Cares, Inc., planning consultants. Their data were checked and revised by both the Breckenridge and County planning staffs. As part of this analysis, maps showing land status and build out within 14 separate subbasins and environmental conditions in the entire basin were compiled. All of the data and maps are contained within an Upper Blue Basin Geographic Information System, housed at the County Planning Department Office. The traffic and transportation analysis was completed by Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig, traffic engineering consultants. Their traffic projections were based on the build out analysis as prepared by Rosall, Remmen and Cares, Inc. and corrected by the planning staffs. The commercial zoning analysis was carried out by ERA consultants and looked at commercial space requirements for the basin. The information and reports prepared by these consultants will become appendices or correlative supplements to this plan.

### **Land Status**

The Upper Blue Basin contains approximately 80,500 acres. The basin extends from Dillon Reservoir on the north to Hoosier Pass on the south. The east and west boundaries are the Continental Divide and the Ten Mile Range, respectively. Within this area, the land ownership falls into six categories used for analysis in this plan:

USFS Retain: U.S. Forest Service lands which are identified for retention by the Forest Service in the Dillon Ranger District Land Ownership Adjustment Analysis. These are the public lands in the basin that are managed for multiple use in accordance with the White River National Forest Management Plan.

USFS Potential Conveyance: U.S. Forest Service lands which are identified for potential conveyance to ownership other than the Forest Service pursuant to the Dillon Ranger District Land Ownership Adjustment Analysis. These public lands are also managed for multiple use in accordance with the White River National Forest Management Plan.

Private Unsubdivided: Privately owned lands which have not been subdivided.

Private Subdivided: Privately owned lands which have been subdivided.

Private PUD: Privately owned land which is included in a Planned Unit Development.

ROW, Other Public: Public rights of way, administrative sites or other publicly owned land other than Forest Service lands.

Table 1 shows the acreage of land in each category within the basin. The totals are for the entire basin including both incorporated and unincorporated areas (i.e. town and county).

### **TABLE 1**

**UPPER BLUE BASIN LAND OWNERSHIP STATUS**

USFS Retain	USFS Potential Conveyance	Private Unsub.	Private Sub.	Private PUD	ROW, Other Public	TOTAL
59,041	1,978	10,966	6,451	1807	353	80,596

**Build Out**

An analysis of potential build out within the basin was conducted to illustrate the general status of build out and to understand the scope of potential additional development that could occur in the basin given existing development approvals. The original data were compiled during the first quarter of 1994. As of the end of 1996, the Upper Blue basin, including the towns of Breckenridge and Blue River is approximately 55% developed in terms of residential units, and 41% in commercial uses.

Residential: A complete analysis of residential build out within the basin was completed as part of the master plan process and will be included as an appendix to the plan. As of the first quarter of 1994, there were approximately 6650 existing dwelling units in the basin, with a potential total build out of 13,762 allowed under existing land use approvals, (i.e. no further upzonings occur). The build out analysis is displayed in Table 2. As of the end of 1996, it is estimated that there are approximately 7664 dwelling units in the basin. The data contained in Table 1 and in the appendix reflect first quarter, 1994 levels.

**TABLE 2  
UPPER BLUE BASIN RESIDENTIAL BUILD OUT PROJECTION  
(Dwelling Units)**

JURISDICTION	EXISTING UNITS	SUBDIVIDED/ UNBUILT	PUD/UNBUILT	OTHER UNSUB., FS TRADE	TOTAL BUILD OUT POTENTIAL
COUNTY	2468	2267	80	1004	5,819
BRECKENRIDGE	3685	1410	1935	26	7,056
BLUE RIVER	497	374	0	16	887
TOTAL	6,650 <sup>1</sup>	4,051	2,015	1,306	13,762

Commercial: Commercial build out in the basin was estimated by Town of Breckenridge and County planning department staffs using existing commercial zoning and development approvals as the basis. These estimates were completed in June, 1996. Included in this estimate are all retail, office, warehousing and other business uses in the basin. Hotel and lodge rooms are not included as commercial - they are counted in the residential estimates noted above. Currently there are approximately 1.4 million square feet of existing commercial development in the basin. Zoning and development approvals in place within the basin, combined with potential development pursuant to the Town of Breckenridge Master Plan, would allow approximately 3.4 million square feet of commercial development at build out.

**TABLE 3  
UPPER BLUE BASIN COMMERCIAL BUILD OUT PROJECTION  
(Square Feet)**

Jurisdiction	Existing Commercial	Maximum Build Out Potential
Breckenridge	1,236,989	2,655,104

<sup>1</sup>End of year 1996 estimate of existing units is 7664 based on data compiled by the Summit County Planning Department

County	145,285	744,096
TOTAL	1,382,274	3,399,200

### **Population**

In a little more than 30 years, Breckenridge and its surroundings have been transformed from a sleepy mountain community of 400 people to a thriving year round resort center of over 35,000 during maximum peak periods. Under these conditions, Breckenridge and the surrounding developed areas take on characteristics of a small city. Given existing development approvals and growth trends, the basin will have to accommodate anywhere from 45,000 to 65,000 people during the "high" season as build out is approached in the next 25 to 40 years.

Population estimates are shown in Table 4. Population in a resort community such as the Upper Blue includes permanent residents, 2nd home/overnight visitors and day visitor components. The figures in Table 4 are based on County Planning Department estimates. Peak population at build out is based on assumptions about occupancy rates and build out that are described in the footnotes to the table. Full build out would result in estimated average peak and maximum peak populations of 45,502 and 65,182, respectively.

**TABLE 4  
UPPER BLUE BASIN POPULATION**

	1995 Estimate	Build Out Estimate
<b>Average Peak<sup>2</sup></b>		
Permanent	5513	13762
2nd Home/Overnight	14853	28074
Day Visitor <sup>3</sup>	2820	3666
TOTAL	23,186	45502
<b>Maximum Peak<sup>4</sup></b>		
Permanent	5513	13762
2nd Home/Overnight	25324	45415
Day Visitor	4619	6005
TOTAL	35,456	65182

### Traffic and Transportation

A traffic analysis which evaluated current transit system and road capacities in the urban/micro urban area of the basin has been completed by Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig. The complete study ("Upper Blue River Basin Transportation Plan", January, 1996) is included as an appendix to this plan. The evaluation is based on a "30th" busiest hour condition. As a result, the findings are applicable to the 15 to 20 busiest days of the year. The analysis focused on three major issues:

- ◆ Quantification of potential travel demand and consequences on mobility
- ◆ Documentation of conceptual improvement options in the Highway 9 corridor
- ◆ Identification of a travel demand management concept plan for the Breckenridge Core area.

In addition, the analysis looked at trip generation along key collector and arterial roads in subbasins. These are addressed within the subbasin portion of this plan.

<sup>2</sup> Average peak assumes 2<sup>nd</sup> homes and other overnight accommodations are all occupied at an average rate. This estimate would be typical of an average peak weekend condition during the winter season. Population at build out was calculated as follows:

Assumptions: 40% permanent @ 2.5 persons/unit, 60% 2<sup>nd</sup> home/overnight @ 3.4 persons/unit  
 Permanent = 13762 x .40 x 2.5 = 13762  
 2<sup>nd</sup>/overnight = 13762 x .60 x 3.4 = 28074

<sup>3</sup> Day visitor numbers are estimates from the Summit County Planning Department. Day skier visits (i.e. day use only, not including overnight or destination visitors) for the Breckenridge Ski Area were assumed to increase by 30% based on marketing goals identified by Breckenridge Ski Area management.

<sup>4</sup> Maximum peak assumes maximum occupancy of 2<sup>nd</sup> home and overnight accommodations. Maximum peak is estimated to occur approximately 10 to 15 days annually. Population is calculated using the same method as the average peak with the exception that occupancy of 2<sup>nd</sup> home/overnight units is assumed to be 5.5 persons per unit which yields a total of 45415 in this category (13762 x .60 x 5.5)

The major system level findings of the analysis are:

- ◆ Design capacity of critical components of the basin's transportation system including Main Street in Breckenridge, the Main Street/Lincoln Street intersection, segments of Boreas Pass Road and segments of Highway 9 north of Breckenridge is either exceeded or almost fully utilized. At peak periods, these components can create bottle necks and ripple effects throughout large portions of the transportation system. Additionally, when you look at an average usage of the entire transportation system in the basin which includes mass transit, intersection capacity, arterial, collector and residential streets, existing development in the Upper Blue Basin utilizes or "consumes" approximately 2/3 of the system's design capacity.
- ◆ If build out of 13,762 units is realized, the resultant travel demands will exceed the existing transportation system capacity by 50% to 60%
- ◆ The existing transportation system will reach capacity at approximately 9000 units. During peak times, some elements of the system are already at their design capacity. There are improvements that can be made within the existing system that will increase efficiency of movement and allow the system to adequately serve up to 10500 dwelling units and an associated level of commercial development.
- ◆ During peak hour conditions as build out exceeds 9000 residential units, the level of service on Highway 9 north of Breckenridge will degrade to an LOS E or F<sup>5</sup>. This condition is likely to occur regardless of other system improvements that may be made such as major increases in regional transit utilization and ride-sharing.
- ◆ Physical improvement options to the SH 9 corridor are limited to upgrading the existing facility or developing a parallel road west of the Blue River.
- ◆ Within the Breckenridge core area, there are no viable physical improvement options for Highway 9 available which can accommodate the build out travel demand projections.
- ◆ Travel Demand Management options will need to be pursued within the Breckenridge core area if any significant level of build out within the study area is to be realized.
- ◆ Significantly increasing the capacity of Highway 9 north of Breckenridge will cause dramatic increases in congestion within town since the in town transportation system capacity cannot currently accommodate significant increases in demand.

## **OVERALL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Existing Conditions**

The nature of development pressure and the resulting activity patterns in a mountain setting such as the Upper Blue River Valley is very different than in areas with fewer constraints on development. The amount of developable land in the Valley is severely limited by the extensive land holdings of the Federal Government (73% of the land area in the Valley). Most of the private land that is suitable for higher densities is already developed. A large component of the remaining private land is generally too steep or too remote for all but low density rural residential development.

As a result of these constraints, the settlement pattern of the Valley as we know it has emerged. The densities at the heart of the settlement, the downtown area of Breckenridge, are high and relatively concentrated for a small community. This development pattern has necessitated more urban style solutions

---

<sup>5</sup> In a Level of Service E condition on Highway 9 between Breckenridge and Frisco, motorists could expect speeds well below the posted speed limit, possibly as low as 25 mph, depending on conditions (visibility, snow or ice, etc.). This could increase travel time from the typical 10 or 15 minutes to 20 minutes or more. Passing could become very difficult or impossible on two lane sections and backups behind slower moving vehicles or when interruptions (stalls, accidents, etc.) are encountered could be significant.

Level of Service F represents heavily congested traffic flow. Stop and go or prolonged periods with very little movement can occur, particularly when poor weather or poor road conditions occur. Improvement to Level of Service E is seldom more than a temporary or transition condition. As improvement from Level of Service F to E is approached under peak traffic flows, disruptions in flow will usually cause a rapid transition to Level of Service F.

in terms of public transportation infrastructure, such as the use of remote parking lots and the development of a substantial public transit system to link them with the downtown core and the Ski Area.

Notwithstanding the urban solutions, growth in the Valley has often exceeded the design capacity of the existing in town parking and transit systems. The lack of an adequate parking supply has been repeatedly identified as one of the most urgent problems for the town to solve. At peak hours of operation, the public transportation providers in town are unable to provide adequate service because of the traffic congestion.

Building more and larger infrastructure elements to keep pace with continued development is a never ending cycle that has multiple negative consequences for the community. A self fulfilling prophecy can occur where expanding infrastructure allows additional growth which, in turn, creates demand for more infrastructure. When this happens without regard to more important community values, the results will not be satisfactory to the community. At the root of the constraints is the roadway network which serves the Valley and the Town which was established in the historic mining era. Given the small amount of land on the valley floor, and the existing development patterns, there are very few alternatives for adding meaningful roadway capacity in the basin. While new road way configurations and capacity increases could be designed and probably funded, they probably cannot be constructed without dramatically altering the landscape and creating significant aesthetic and functional impacts that are not consistent with the community's values and its distinctive character.

### **Reducing Build Out Impacts**

The basic premise of this plan is to strike a reasonable balance between those who feel strongly that the valley is at its capacity now, and those who believe that few if any restrictions are necessary. A major finding of the plan is that the activity level and development impacts associated with full build out in the basin, coupled with unmitigated growth in day skier numbers would lead to a scenario that is inconsistent with the community's vision and values as expressed in public meetings and reflected in this plan.

In the draft plan prepared for the April 3, 1996 public hearing and workshop, the Committee proposed that Build Out level for the Valley should not exceed the equivalent of 10,500 residential dwelling units, or approximately 75% of the zoned maximum potential build out. This conclusion is based primarily on a concern that build out beyond this level would dramatically change the character of the community in a way that is contrary to the vision of this plan. Some of the specific factors that the committee considered in arriving at this recommendation included:

- ◆ At a build out of 10,500 units range of development, average peak population would grow to 37,396. Maximum peak would increase to 46,536. Based on the recent rates of development in the four to five percent range annually, it would take between six and 15 years to reach build out of 10,500 units. Assuming a more moderate two to three percent annual rate of development as experienced over the past 10 years, build out of 10,500 units would be reached in 11 to 25 years. It was determined that, with careful planning and sensitive design practices, this level of development and rate of growth could be accommodated in the basin in a manner that would retain the quality of the basin's resources and much of the existing character of the community.
- ◆ There is a reasonable expectation that the transportation system in the Upper Blue could be improved and upgraded to accommodate the 10,500 unit level of development without dramatically altering the character of the valley. For example, enhancements to mass transit service coupled with improvements to turning lane configurations and limited additional traffic signals could enable the system to reasonably handle the traffic associated with this level of build out. Shifting the transportation modal split from auto to transit through investments in a new parking and related transit concept, will also relieve pressure on the transportation infrastructure.
- ◆ There are indications from the Breckenridge Sanitation District that the planned treatment system capacity (including the currently planned plant expansion) in the basin could probably serve 75% of the zoned maximum potential Build Out.
- ◆ Public testimony and research conducted by the Upper Blue Master Plan Committee show that at the zoned maximum potential, full build out would erode the quality of life, change of the character of the community, degrade aesthetic qualities and threaten the associated economic benefits so critical to a resort community's economic well being.

- ◆ Full build out of the Valley will irrevocably alter the basic small town mountain character that is the principle element of our identity as a community.

### **Activity Level Approach**

It is the goal of the Plan to establish a balance between saving the valley's small town, rural character and allowing a reasonable increment of growth. This is based on public responses to the earlier draft of this plan which pointed out the need for a reduction of the potential build out, and that the burden of any reductions should be fairly distributed among the various land use types and activity generators within the basin. Therefore, the Plan identifies an "activity" level associated with 75% of projected build-out and recommends strategies to reduce or control activity level.

Activity level is defined as the amount of human and vehicular activity associated with a specified level of development. It can best be described through its various components. The hustle and bustle of Main Street creates an exciting and vibrant downtown. However, as more and more people are attracted to the commercial core area of Breckenridge, the congestion that results from large numbers of cars and people moving into and through downtown is a negative component of activity. Similarly, traffic activity on Highway 9 leading into and out of Breckenridge can easily become a negative component of activity during peak periods.

Activity level also can be related to residential development in the basin. Neighborhoods that are quiet most of the year can easily experience the negative aspects of increased activity when single family homes or other residential units are occupied by large numbers of short term and overnight visitors who come and go frequently in private automobiles or shuttles. Lack of adequate affordable housing for workers in the community also contributes to activity levels. Witness the daily commuting of workers from other parts of the County and from the Alma/Fairplay area into the Upper Blue.

There are also activity level impacts associated with recreational pursuits. With more and more visitors and residents looking for solitude or a backcountry experience, it is inevitable that a favorite backcountry road or trail will become more crowded and more user conflicts will occur. Day skiers are also a significant contributor to activity level as they generate traffic flow into the Breckenridge area and drive the need for additional parking facilities and transit service.

From a more intangible perspective, increasing activity levels will result in an increasingly faster urban pace and lifestyle, consequences which are contrary to the community's expressed desire to retain a small town character and informal lifestyle.

An area that is somewhat difficult to quantify, but which has an effect on activity levels is day skier impacts. It is expected that day skiers will grow by approximately 30%, which is the level of growth projected for the Breckenridge Ski Area in the foreseeable future. Day skiers impact the activity levels and increase demand in the basin in many ways, including traffic congestion and parking; infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, sidewalks); provision of adequate services (transportation, medical, auto related, police); and services and housing related to the need for seasonal employees. It is the recommendation of this Plan that the Breckenridge Ski Area be accountable for the day skier impacts and costs and that they insure that adverse impacts are mitigated.

It is recognized that limiting future growth will likely result in a more expensive community to live in. Already high housing costs could be pushed even higher, forcing more workers to live elsewhere and commute into the valley and adding to traffic congestion and overall activity level. Over time, the result could be a loss of community diversity and increased activity levels as more workers are forced to drive

into the valley every day. Strong incentives and other measures which seek to provide adequate supplies of affordable housing must be coupled with any limitations on development.

In summary, through the recommendations contained in the following pages, the plan seeks to sustain the quality of the valley's resources and the character of the community as we know it today through protecting community assets and natural systems, allowing for reduced development potential that is compatible with surrounding land uses, promoting adequate supplies of affordable housing and providing for efficient delivery of services. The plan recognizes that accommodating the additional increment of growth will not be easy, therefore it calls for major public resource outlays to sensitively develop the infrastructure capacity, public services, affordable housing, and recreation and open space needs to adequately serve the needs of the community as it grows. If fulfilled, the plan's goals and recommendations should preserve sense of place and spirit of the community while allowing for growth that can be comfortably accommodated without requiring dramatic increases in infrastructure and service capacities.

## **BASIN GROWTH STRATEGY**

The following two sections of this plan (BASIN GROWTH STRATEGY and DEVELOPMENT PATTERN) are intended to clearly describe the fundamental growth and development policies for the Upper Blue Basin. Implementation of the recommendations contained in this plan will require careful balancing of private property rights and community values. In implementing any action that may reduce approved densities, the community needs to recognize the legitimate rights of property owners. At the same time, property owners need to recognize the legitimate community values as expressed in this plan. Assuring fairness in achieving the goal of reducing approved density in accordance with community values is paramount.

### **Key Goals/Policies:**

1. Additional density should not be created anywhere within the Upper Blue Basin, whether through upzonings, annexations or some other mechanism. (Based on the best available data, potential build out within the Upper Blue Basin at the maximum total density currently permitted as calculated based on the total of existing units plus existing development approvals (zoning, approved plats, annexation agreements, master development plans, PUDs) is currently estimated at 13,762 units.
2. Potential activity levels within the Upper Blue Basin should be reduced to a level which is consistent with the vision of this plan.
3. Individual sites should be developed within the limitations of site specific constraints and overall service capacities within the basin.
4. Policies should be enacted, and land use recommendations adopted within the appropriate subbasins in order to preserve and protect the character of the back country.
5. Master plan policies, land use designations and land use regulations of the towns and county should be sufficiently consistent with one another in that they achieve the goals of this plan and result in a "seamless" set of land use policies and regulations within the Upper Blue Basin.

### **Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:**

1. Establish a transfer of development rights mechanism that allows for development rights to be moved from "sending areas" to "receiving areas" as described in the Development Pattern section of this plan. Specific policies and the operational program should be established through implementation after adoption of this Plan. This program is of major significance and should be developed within 12 months of adoption of this plan. Each jurisdiction should adopt an ordinance with consistent goals and an Intergovernmental Agreement allowing transfers across jurisdictional boundaries.
2. No new density (beyond that currently zoned) shall be approved or allocated to any parcel within the basin unless such density is transferred to the proposed development site in accordance with the guidelines established pursuant to this master plan. Vacant land annexations should restrict

development levels to the County zoning density or the Town of Breckenridge Land Use Guideline recommended density, whichever is less, unless additional density is transferred to the site from the sending areas established by policies to this plan. Rezoning or other actions which increase density beyond the level currently zoned should also require a transfer of development rights in accordance with this plan and subsequent policies established pursuant to this plan. Exceptions to the transfer requirements should be allowed for affordable housing projects which are targeted to low and moderate income levels.

3. Adopt site development standards which are consistent with the recommendations of this plan.
4. Strategies should be adopted which encourage and support reductions in approved development levels in order to move toward a desirable activity level at build out which is roughly equivalent to 75% of the projected full build out. This section includes projections about build out and strategies which, if realized, will move the basin toward the targeted build out of approximately 10500 residential units. The strategies represent a wide range of alternatives so that the burden of reductions can be fairly distributed among the full range of land use types and activity generators in the basin. Each projection and strategy option includes an estimate of the development level reduction that might be expected if the projection or strategy is fully realized. The reduction in residential development level that might be expected from the projections of build out 2550 units, assuming the projections are accurate and all the strategies achieve 100 percent success. Under this scenario, the resulting build out in the basin would be 11,212 units residential units. This does not achieve the targeted reduction to 10500 units and is 712 units short. However, based on the Commercial Zoning Requirements Analysis prepared by ERA Consultants, there is a reduction in commercial development that can be expected due to the relationship between commercial and residential development levels in the valley. While it is difficult to forecast the exact effects that reductions in commercial development will have on the community, it is very likely that activity levels associated with traffic, parking demand and pedestrian presence in Breckenridge will be reduced. This reduction in commercial development may not be equivalent to a reduction of 712 residential units, but will have the effect of reducing activity level. It is recommended that the towns and county continue to monitor build out and reductions in development potential that may occur in the future. This will enable a better understanding of the impacts of various land uses on activity levels and their interrelationships. Table 5 presents a summary of the possible reductions in build out.

- a. The Joint Upper Blue Master Plan Committee and other governmental entities have been concerned about commercial development levels and their effect on activity level in the basin. In order to assess commercial build out, a “Commercial Zoning Requirement Analysis” was prepared by ERA Consultants who specialize in analyzing commercial markets in resort communities. This analysis looked at the relationship between residential build out and the amount of commercial land use in the basin, and provided findings about the likely levels of commercial development that the community should be able to support.

Based on this analysis, it is clear that more study is needed to make recommendations on how to attain a healthy mix of commercial for the community. The ERA study pointed out the complex interplay of factors influencing the supply and demand for commercial, such as ski area marketing and increases in capacity, as well as the differing needs of permanent residents, part-time residents and visitors. It was ERA’s strong recommendation that there be improvement of data collection and analysis, to give the local governments more information to improve future decision making with regard to commercial.

Based on the ERA analysis and the Committee’s review of the data provided, the following conclusions about the commercial development within the basin can be drawn:

- The amount of commercial development that can be supported within the community is directly related to the basin’s population which includes year round and seasonal residents, destination visitors, day skiers and other day visitors.

- There is a very strong relationship between the basin's residential build out capacity and the amount of commercial development that can be supported.
- It is expected that demand for the full build out of the 3.4 million square feet of commercial development currently zoned or approved will never materialize. Instead, it is anticipated that market forces will result in significantly less commercial development due to a strong relationship to the amount of residential development in the basin. Therefore, as the reductions in residential build out recommended in this plan occur, there should be corresponding voluntary private market decisions to develop less than the zoned maximum commercial density.
- At the maximum residential build out of 13,762 units, the analysis projects that there would be demand for 1.692 million square feet of commercial development. At the desired residential built out of 10,500 dwelling units, the analysis indicates that approximately 1.394 million square feet of commercial development can be supported. The current level of commercial development is estimated to be 1.382 million square feet.

The following are recommendations with regard to commercial land use/development. These recommendations will complement and support the expectation that the market relationship between residential and commercial uses will be the primary force in determining the level of commercial build out within the basin:

- The Town of Breckenridge and the County should look for opportunities to limit or reduce the amount of commercial development that can occur. This approach needs to recognize the unique location and market sector factors that influence commercial development potential within existing commercial nodes or commercial areas, traffic impacts, infrastructure availability, and compatibility with surrounding areas.
  - The Town of Breckenridge Land Use Guidelines should be amended to restrict or prohibit conversions of commercial density to residential use unless there is a transfer of residential density to the site in accordance with this plan.
  - The County should adopt a commercial square foot equivalent that would be applied to all existing commercial zoning in the unincorporated area of the basin. This square foot equivalent (or sfe) would be set at levels that preserve an economically viable use of property, but at the same time, set limits on development potential on commercially zoned property where no such limits currently exist.
  - A data base should be developed to strengthen future commercial analysis and aid in the planning and monitoring of commercial development. This should include collection of data by Standard Industrial Classification, as well as expenditure patterns for visitors, residents (permanent and seasonal) and second homeowners. An understanding of commercial space demand and supply is critical for a coordinated economic growth strategy, and by developing more accurate information, indicators can be developed which will provide better information for decision making.
- b. Encouraging the continuation of voluntary and market driven decreases in density. Explore the possibility of gaining tax advantages for property with proper conservation values which is voluntarily downzoned using conservation easements or other appropriate mechanisms. The Committee believes that a 200 unit reduction is achievable through this strategy.
- c. Conduct a comprehensive review of existing zoning on developed and undeveloped lands within the County areas of the basin in order to identify potential strategic rezonings. The County should review undeveloped land which is zoned for multi-family development and consider rezonings where the following criteria indicate the zoning may be inappropriately high:
- the intensity and character of the surrounding area compared to the potential development under the existing zoning; the degree to which the existing zoning

is inconsistent with the land use designations of the applicable master plan for the area;

- the ability of the site to accommodate the intensity of development under the existing zoning in terms of site suitability and infrastructure requirements;
- the potential for adverse impact on the environmental and/or the general public health, safety or welfare that may result if the site is fully developed under existing zoning;

Additionally, vested rights which may exist on properties proposed for rezoning must be considered before any rezoning action is initiated by the County. The Committee believes that a 100 unit reduction is achievable through this strategy.

- d. Explore opportunities to create incentives or other voluntary mechanisms to encourage single family lots in older subdivisions to be combined. As with b. above, tax advantages may be available for properties voluntarily downzoned through conservation easements or other appropriate mechanisms. Incentives from local government should be extended for properties ineligible for Federal tax deductions. One such incentive is the savings in property tax payments that may be realized when single family zoned lots are combined. The savings can be significant due to the difference between residential property tax assessment rates of approximately 10% and vacant land tax assessment rates of approximately 28%. The Committee believes that 200 units reduction is achievable through this strategy.
- e. Review and adjust the density ranges contained within the Town of Breckenridge Land Use Guidelines, giving consideration to the following factors:
  - updates to the Town Master Plan
  - recent changes to the Town's Land Use and Development Code
  - refined information on physical characteristics of land within townThe Committee believes that 50 units reduction is achievable through this strategy.
- f. Insuring that all new development meets current site design and development standards regardless of the existing density on the parcel. This strategy recognizes that it may not be possible to develop a site at the maximum density which was allocated to the site through zoning or land use guidelines in the past. The Committee believes that 100 units reduction is achievable through this strategy. (It is possible that site constraints may contribute to unused densities described in 4.b. above, and therefore the relationship between the two strategies should be noted).
- g. Require that impacts associated with day skiers be completely mitigated (see the Overall Growth and Development Section and the discussion of traffic and transportation in the Development Pattern - Urban/Micro Urban section of this Plan for more detail with regard to mitigation of transportation related impacts). The Ski Area should address existing problems as well as those in the future. The Breckenridge Master Plan should also be revised to address the foregoing.
- h. In conjunction with the recommended policies and implementation strategies for the backcountry discussed in the Rural/Backcountry section of this Plan, establish an Upper Blue Basin open space/development rights acquisition program that would have adequate resources to acquire existing development rights to insure a reduction of 500 units. This reduction will require a very concerted effort on the parts of the Towns and County, including coordination with the County and Town of Breckenridge open space programs, and will require innovative methods, beyond out-right purchase, due to limited resources.
- i. Within the Towns and County, adopt policies which stipulate that a site which has effectively been fully developed is built-out. In such cases, any zoned and unused residual density is not available for use or density transfer. The intent of this policy is to limit development of additional units, not to restrict or prohibit minor modifications or additions to existing units.

The build out projection of 13,762 units accounts for implementation of this policy on sites which are already fully developed. For properties which are only partially developed or undeveloped, implementation of this policy is estimated to result in a reduction of an additional 1400 units. Of this total, 600 units are located in the County and 800 units are located in the Town of Breckenridge. These future estimates are based on looking at development trends in the last three to seven years which have typically resulted in properties being developed at less than their full zoning potential. It is difficult to judge what level of development reduction will occur through “above-ground density” related to Breckenridge’s Historic District Design Standards, and therefore the reduction estimate does not include a reduction within the Historical District.

**TABLE 5  
ESTIMATED REDUCTION IN BUILD OUT**

Category	Estimated Unit Yield
Voluntary Reduction	200
County Rezoning	100
Single Family Lot Combinations	200
Town Guidelines/Annexation Policy	50
Site Development Standards	100
Backcountry Acquisitions	500
Unusable Residual Density (Future Development)	
Town	800
County	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2550</b>

## **DEVELOPMENT PATTERN**

The overall development pattern in the Upper Blue can best be described as linear - generally following the Blue River valley from Farmer's Korner to Hoosier Pass. Breckenridge is the urban (or "micro urban") center. South to Hoosier Pass the predominant pattern is single family residential in the 1 unit to 2 units per acre range. North and east of Breckenridge, densities tend to transition from urban or suburban to rural. More remote areas of the basin (Upper Swan, French Gulch, Upper Boreas) are largely undeveloped. Since 1978, land use planning in the basin has embraced a growth center concept where high density development is concentrated in an urban core. Outside of the core, densities are significantly lower and eventually transition into a rural or undeveloped character. The 1988 Upper Blue Master Plan reinforced this concept and established a transition "scheme" through the land use designations adopted as part of the plan. One of the keys to achieving a "seamless" land use plan is to reach consensus on development patterns in transition areas where town and county jurisdictions meet.

This plan affirms the growth center concept, but significantly modifies the transition scheme of the 1988 plan by defining a boundary between development and rural/backcountry - i.e. a rural/backcountry boundary. The plan contemplates that rural and backcountry areas will remain primarily undeveloped. As a consequence many of the transition areas in the 1988 plan have been significantly reduced or eliminated altogether. The result is a growth center concept that consists of a urban or micro urban core and limited transition areas within the development area, surrounded by rural or undeveloped lands. Although preexisting land use patterns may not completely fit within this concept, it is the desire of the plan that future development follow this concept. The remainder of the development pattern section of this plan is organized under two subsections - urban/micro urban and rural/backcountry. Within each of these two subsections, we have tried to consolidate all of the goals, policies and recommended actions/implementation strategies that specifically relate to these two basic development patterns.

### **Urban/Micro Urban Area**

The urban/micro urban area consists of what is best described as the developed portions of the Upper Blue basin. It includes all of the incorporated areas within the towns of Breckenridge and Blue River, and most of the developed or partially developed areas in the county. Land uses include high density residential, lodging, commercial and mixed use development in the core area of Breckenridge, service commercial and light industrial uses located along County Road 450, airport and north valley areas, and moderate to lower density residential areas surrounding the towns and in outlying areas. The Breckenridge Ski Area is also located within the urban/micro urban area. Providing for high quality development of a full service resort community while maintaining the rural/small town character of the Upper Blue Basin as additional development occurs is the focus the urban/micro urban area.

#### Land UseLand UseLand Use:

#### Key Goals/Policies:

1. Identify and map a boundary which distinguishes areas where urban and transition development will occur from rural/backcountry areas.
2. The transition between the urban/micro urban and rural/backcountry development pattern should occur within the urban/micro urban area. Specific land use recommendations to guide this transition are contained within the subbasin section of this plan.
3. Support annexations which are consistent with the recommendations contained in this plan.

#### Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:

1. Identify receiving areas for density transfers where additional development can be accommodated within the limits of available services and infrastructure, site constraints and neighborhood compatibility.
2. Identify criteria, general locations or, if possible, specific sites that may be appropriate for affordable housing given consideration to the following factors:
  - a. Proximity to employment centers
  - b. Availability of necessary infrastructure and utilities
  - c. Adequate access
  - d. Access to mass transit
  - e. Neighborhood compatibility
  - f. Development constraints on the site
  - g. Opportunities to create a quality residential community on the site.

#### Traffic/Transportation:

The recommendations made in the "Upper Blue Transportation Plan." (January, 1996) fall into two categories: Highway 9 Corridor Alternatives and Breckenridge Travel Demand Alternatives. There are four basic methods to reduce traffic congestion:

- ◆ Reduce potential travel demand by limiting development potential
- ◆ Increase system capacity
- ◆ Maximize the capacity of the existing system through increased efficiency that can be achieved through improved performance and management
- ◆ Reduce the use of automobiles

#### Highway 9 Corridor:

Two basic alternatives to increase roadway capacity north of Breckenridge were considered: a four lane Highway 9 configuration and construction of a two lane west valley floor arterial road to supplement Highway 9 in its current configuration. A third alternative that would keep the Highway from exceeding capacity was considered as well, that being to cap development in the Valley travel-shed at 9,000 units. Opportunities to increase highway capacity south of Breckenridge were not considered due to physical limitations (topography, wetlands, existing development proximity to the highway).

1. Strongly encourage and emphasize mass transit solutions over increasing highway capacity as the long term solution to transportation along and from the I-70 corridor into the basin and the Breckenridge area.
2. Preserve the existing rural character and configuration of Highway 9 north of Breckenridge. This section of highway is the primary entry or gateway into the valley and should reflect this plans philosophy of maintaining the rural/small town character of the valley to the greatest extent possible, while recognizing the need for public safety. To this end, the following actions are recommended:
  - a. Plan for and complete minor improvements to Highway 9 north of Breckenridge in order to accommodate the desired build out of 10500 dwelling units. Such improvements might include turning lanes, limited signalization where absolutely necessary for traffic safety, etc.
  - b. If, in the future, build out exceeds 10500 dwelling units, Highway 9 north of Breckenridge should be widened to a full four lane cross section with turning lanes as needed. This alternative is preferable to a "west valley floor arterial" for the following reasons:
    - a widened SH 9 provides 68% greater capacity than the combined capacity of a 2 lane SH 9 and 2 lane west valley arterial

- construction of a west valley floor arterial would likely have significant adverse environmental impacts, and would likely encourage additional density to develop in the parcels it serves
- planning level cost estimates indicate that a four lane SH 9 would cost about 1/2 of a west valley arterial option

Breckenridge Travel Demand Alternatives:

Three basic components or system elements were addressed:

- A major intercept parking and mode transfer facility including potential new mountain access transit system
- An expanded and improved town transit system
- A core area parking management program

Intercept parking/mode transfer:

1. A major intercept parking/mode transfer facility should be developed on the north end of Breckenridge. The Watson/Sawmill area has been identified as a potential location. This facility should include the following components:
  - parking for 2000 to 2500 vehicles
  - direct access to Highway 9
  - a multi modal transfer point capable of accommodating 3 to 5 buses at one time and facilities for a potential new mountain access transit system related passenger waiting and information services
2. A "secondary" intercept parking/mode transfer facility should be constructed on the south end of Breckenridge in the vicinity of Highway 9 and Boreas Pass Road. This facility should include the following components:
  - parking
  - mode transfer point

Expanded/Modified Town Transit:

1. Develop a downtown circulator focused on connecting the downtown core with major parking lots and activity centers along the north-south spine defined by Main Street and Park Avenue.
2. Provide transit service connecting skier base areas.
3. Provide transit service connecting downtown to lodging facilities primarily along the Ski Hill Road, Four O'Clock/Kings Crown and Warriors Mark/Broken Lance areas.
4. Limit parking on Main Street and widen its sidewalks.
5. Enhance and improve transit service to better serve commuters and employees.

Core Area Parking Management:

1. The recommendations of the Downtown Parking Study for the Town of Breckenridge should be considered for identifying potential parking management strategies. The parking management strategy should provide incentives to encourage use of appropriate intercept parking areas as a destination for day visitor vehicles coming into Breckenridge.
2. Disincentives to the use of town streets and town parking lots in the core area by skiers should be considered. Easy availability of close in parking will encourage cars to come into town and search for parking spaces, resulting in increased levels of congestion.
3. A strategy for providing parking for the down town should be developed by the Town of Breckenridge.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle

1. Increase opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle modes of travel, and enhance their related facilities, including commuter routes and connections.

### Other Committee Recommendations:

1. Routing of regional or collector traffic on local streets through neighborhoods should be strongly discouraged.
2. Improvements to turning lane configurations at major intersections with Highway 9 should be encouraged.
3. Roadway design should be compatible with a mountain resort community image and the unique constraints of a high mountain environment.
4. Design standards for roads should be consistent among jurisdictions. Investigate revising rural road standards.
5. Marketing for visitor accommodations should emphasize use of mass transit and the ability to move around the county without a car.
6. Consider the effects of noise from Highway 9 and design future improvements to reduce the impacts of noise from Highway 9.

## **Rural/Backcountry Area**

The basin's rural or backcountry areas are, for the most part, sparsely developed. Some scattered residential development has occurred over the years and there are a few small subdivisions. Of the 13,762 units possible at full build out in the basin, approximately 500 to 1100 are located in the rural/backcountry area. This range recognizes that the rural/backcountry area is zoned A-1 which has a potential density of 1 unit/20 acres, but that some areas could develop at 1 unit 5 acres since many of the lode claims were established prior to zoning regulations which established the 1 unit per 20 acre standard. Even with the potential for residential development, the predominant use in rural/backcountry areas is recreation with some resource extraction (mining, logging).

The citizens who participated in the plan expressed an overwhelming desire to see development in the rural/backcountry area limited to the greatest extent possible. This desire is driven, in large part, by the importance of protecting the diverse wildlife habitat, unspoiled ridgeline and mountain vistas, forested hillsides and backdrops, along with the opportunities for solitude and outdoor recreation that characterize the rural/backcountry areas of the basin. Put another way, the rural/backcountry areas are critical to the sense of place and spirit of the community that exists in the Upper Blue. These areas provide residents and visitors a respite from the urban activity of Breckenridge and the more developed areas of the basin, in addition to major metropolitan areas where most visitors come from.

### Land Use:

#### Key Goals/Policies:

1. Preserve the natural resource and undeveloped character of rural/backcountry areas to the fullest extent possible.

#### Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:

1. Designate the rural/backcountry area as a sending area for transferable development rights and encourage development rights to be moved out of the rural/backcountry area to receiving sites in the urban/micro urban area which are more appropriate for development.
2. Create incentives that encourage landowners to limit the scale and intensity of development, preserve open spaces, views and other environmental values, and retain access to roads, trails and public lands.

3. Consider establishing an Upper Blue Basin open space/development rights acquisition program that would have adequate resources to acquire existing development rights in the rural/backcountry area.
4. Consider establishing a new backcountry zoning concept that can be applied to backcountry areas. This concept would limit the impact of development by limiting structure size and site disturbance, discourage construction of new roads, retain public access to existing trails and public lands and encourage reduced density and preservation of open space through an incentive approach.
5. Encourage land exchanges which increase the amount of public land in backcountry areas as suggested in the Land Ownership Adjustment Analysis for the Dillon Ranger District. Identify and map National Forest properties that should not be transferred to private ownership, and move expeditiously to preserve them as publicly held whether through acquisition or some other method.

#### Traffic/Transportation:

##### Key Goals/Policies:

1. Preserve the existing character of roads in rural/backcountry areas to the fullest extent possible given the need to provide for reasonable access to properties and protection of public health, safety and welfare.

##### Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:

1. Consider revising the County Road and Bridge Standards to provide a new road classification that is appropriate for rural/backcountry areas and consistent with the goal stated above.
2. Discourage construction of new roads in rural/backcountry areas.
3. Coordinate the classification, management and maintenance of roads in rural/backcountry areas with the travel management prescriptions in the Forest Management Plan for the Dillon Ranger District.
4. Winter maintenance of roads that have significant value for over the snow recreational uses should be prohibited or restricted to the fullest extent possible.

## **RECREATION AND TRAILS**

### **Trails**

Over 160 miles of trails in the Upper Blue Basin have been identified and mapped. The basin has a rich and varied trail network consisting of old ditches, burro trails, historic mining roads, jeep trails, single track, bike paths, and newer recreation trails. In addition to the basin's internal trail network, there are many important trails or routes that connect outside of the basin. Georgia Pass and Boreas Pass were some of the first routes into the Breckenridge area. The Colorado Trail and Wheeler Pack Trail are two significant backcountry hiking trails that have statewide and regional importance. The basin's trail system is a profound community asset. The ability to enjoy, from one's front door, a quiet walk in the woods, access to a favorite fishing spot, or mountain bike, hike, ski or ride in the basin's backcountry and alpine areas is critical to overall quality of life.

Many trails in the basin, and in particular those located east of Highway 9, cross through a patchwork of private and public lands created by mining claims which were patented during the basin's mining era. In many cases, public access across private lands has not been restricted, due in large part to the undeveloped status of most of these areas. However, as development expands outward into more remote areas and fills valley bottoms, public access could be endangered. Ensuring continued public access to this valuable trail network and the public lands and waters of the basin is a high priority of this plan.

An all day workshop was held on March 11, 1995 to get community input on the trail inventory and to identify priorities for protection and expansion of the basin's trail network. Recommendations on specific trail segments are contained in the subbasin portion of this plan.

**Key Goals/Policies:**

1. A rich and varied trail network that provides a variety of recreational opportunities should be preserved and enhanced. This network shall also provide for easy accessibility from residential neighborhoods and the core area of Breckenridge to public lands, trails, water and other recreation areas.
2. Public access to public lands and water should be retained where ever it exists and obtained wherever feasible.
3. Commuter use of bicycle and pedestrian trails should be accommodated and encouraged wherever possible.
4. Management of trail systems and trail head access should minimize conflicts among various user groups, minimize environmental impacts and provide for a quality recreational experience.

**Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:**

1. Identify high priority trails and define the most appropriate method of securing public access. Possible methods could include:
  - a. Securing easements through dedications as part of a development plan
  - b. Negotiating with landowners to obtain licenses, easements or other means of insuring long term public access
  - c. Pursuing validation of historical trail and road access through prescriptive rights
  - d. Acquisition of key access points and critical trail segments through purchase or condemnation if no other alternative is available and there is a strong likelihood that the access or trail segment will be lost.
2. Locate development so that opportunities to preserve existing trails and provide for public access to public lands and waters can be maximized.
3. Participate and coordinate with the Forest Management Plan for the Dillon Ranger District with particular attention to travel and recreation prescriptions in the plan.
4. Improve and develop trail heads in order to facilitate easy public access to trails and minimizes potential user conflicts.
5. A uniform requirement for improvement of shoulders to occur concurrent with improvements to state highways and other roads that are primary bicycle routes should be pursued
6. Local governments should take an active role in facilitating expansion of noncommercial recreational activities. Examples could include fishing access, active play/park areas in neighborhoods, nordic/backcountry skiing, recreational trails, wildlife viewing, sightseeing, etc.
7. Maintain, establish or re-establish access to the back country.
8. Use incentives and cooperation with land owners rather than confrontation to acquire trails.
9. Trail design and construction standards which result in trails which follow natural terrain with minimal environmental impact and provide buffers between trails and developed areas should be adopted.
10. Traffic impacts and parking needs should be considered before establishing new trail heads or trail access points within neighborhoods.

**Neighborhood Recreation**

Neighborhood recreation facilities include small park areas, open space and local pathways. In many of the basin's neighborhoods, undeveloped private properties have often functioned as open space. These undeveloped areas often have pathways where residents can walk and also can provide safe places for children to play. These lots are slowly being built on as neighborhoods continue to grow and develop. In many cases, there are no nearby parks or playground areas.

**Key Goals/Policies:**

1. Opportunities to acquire and develop small neighborhood parks should be identified. Both developed pocket parks and natural areas should be provided.

## **DESIGN & APPEARANCE**

The design and appearance of development can greatly impact the overall sense and feel of the community. Design issues range from regional landscape scale concerns like view corridors and ridgelines to more neighborhood and site specific concerns with basic site layout, massing of structures and identification of appropriate building materials to the details of building elevations, roof lines, entry ways and exterior trim. The landscape scale issues are usually addressed as part of the land use approval process (zoning and subdivision). Site plan review addresses the site layout, building mass and perhaps materials and colors. The detail of the building design is considered in the architectural review process. Breckenridge and Blue River have detailed architectural review processes. Breckenridge's review process is particularly rigorous within the historic district. In the county, detailed architectural review is a function of individual subdivision architectural review boards, not county government. Consequently, the level of review in unincorporated areas is dependent upon individual standards for each subdivision and the level of sophistication in the review process.

From an overall landscape perspective, preservation of important view corridors, ridgelines and prominent hillsides is very important. Poor location and design of development in these areas can significantly detract from overall community appearance and sense of place. The review of landscape scale design issues has not been adequately addressed in the land use approval process throughout the basin.

### **Key Goals/Policies:**

1. The visual image of the Upper Blue Basin should be one where spectacular mountain vistas and unique environments are retained, and development blends with the natural landscape to the fullest extent possible.

### **Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:**

1. Significant view corridors need to be identified and special design criteria established for future development. From a basin wide perspective, the Highway 9 corridor has special significance as a scenic entrance into the valley and Breckenridge. Special design criteria, including a development setback, should be established along the Highway to keep development from detracting from the natural mountain valley setting and obstructing views of the mountains. Other significant view corridors should be identified in the subbasin section of this plan. Additionally, preservation of significant views should be a goal of any TDR system, backcountry zoning, or open space acquisition program for the Basin.
2. Areas that are identified as having particularly outstanding visual quality, fragile or unique ecosystems that would be irreversibly and adversely affected by any development should be retained as open space.
3. Road cuts and utility installations should not result in permanent scars, nor be visible from a distance. Standards for rural roads should be developed in order to reduce visual impacts.
4. Restrictions on tree cutting and lot clearing should be implemented.
5. The desired character for landscaping and revegetation should be defined and used as a performance criteria for new development
6. Use of native vegetation and plant materials adapted to our high alpine environment should be required
7. Design guidelines which are keyed to the varying landforms, vegetation types and development types within the basin should be implemented. These design guidelines should consider the following:
  - a. Site design: Site design and architectural standards should be considered throughout the subbasin to insure that new homes are compatible with the scale and design of existing development and site conditions such as slope and vegetation. Setbacks, site coverage,

building mass and design are areas that should be addressed. Some form of restriction on building size such as floor area ratio should be considered, especially for lots of ½ acre or less where large homes have the potential to overwhelm the lot and neighborhood. A 1:5 floor area ratio (1 square foot of building floor area for every 5 square feet of lot area) might be appropriate. On a ½ acre lot, this ratio would allow a maximum of 4,350 square feet of building floor area.

- b. Meadows/Open Landscapes: Wherever possible, avoid locating buildings in meadows and open landscapes. Where it is not possible to avoid these areas, development should be located and designed according to the following guidelines:
- where appropriate, buildings should be located along forest edges
  - when possible, buildings should be located behind landforms to provide maximum screening
  - buildings should be located in areas that are least obtrusive and be as far from highways, public roads, trails and other public areas as possible
  - buildings that must be located in open areas should be clustered, designed and intensely landscaped to blend into their surroundings to the maximum extent possible
  - significant open areas should be retained between clusters of buildings to provide visual separation of structures
  - building materials and colors should blend in with the landscape
  - the height of buildings should be limited to the approximate level of tree height so they blend into the landscape to the maximum extent possible
  - where possible, roads, utilities and other site improvements should follow vegetation and landform edges to blend into the existing landscape
- c. Forested Areas: Buildings within forested areas should be located and designed so that the existing visual dominance of the forest is maintained. Development within forested areas should be located and designed according to the following guidelines:
- building heights should be such that structures do not penetrate the tree canopy
  - buildings along forest edges should utilize natural materials and colors so that they blend visually with the forest
  - removal of trees on steep slopes and ridgelines should be discouraged
  - in partially forested areas, and in particular where these areas are adjacent to or overlook open meadows, water features or other significant open landscapes, buildings should be located behind the front edge of trees to maximize the visual quality of the forest and gain the maximum effect of screening
  - County Fire Mitigation requirements should be reevaluated to insure consistency with the design goals of this plan
- d. Ridgelines/Slopes: Development on ridgelines and steep slopes should be avoided wherever possible. Where no feasible alternative exists, buildings on ridgelines and slopes should be located and designed so that the existing visual dominance of the natural landform, vegetation and topography is maintained. Where development on ridgelines and steep slopes must occur, it should be located and designed according to the following guidelines:
- development should not penetrate the skyline on ridgelines as viewed from any public road, trail, open space or recreation area.
  - on an existing lot where there is no alternative that avoids penetration of the skyline, building form should be consistent with the natural form of the ridgeline - flat or modestly pitched simple roofs where the ridge is broad and gently sloping, steeper sloping or hipped roofs where the ridge is broken and jagged. To the maximum extent possible building foundations should be located below the ridgeline to minimize the amount of skyline penetration
  - buildings should be set back from the edge of ridgelines and slopes so they do not appear to protrude or hang over the edge of ridgelines and slopes.
  - on forested ridges and slopes, buildings should be located behind the front edge of trees to maximize the visual quality of the forest and gain the maximum effect

- of screening. Clearing of trees on the edge of ridgelines and slopes should be strongly discouraged
- development shall minimize the need for grading, earth moving, vegetation removal and site disturbance to the maximum extent possible
- grading or earth moving to create a flat building pad on a slope should be discouraged, instead, buildings should be stepped to fit with the natural terrain
- in general, the steeper the slope, the smaller the allowable building footprint and associated site disturbance
- where building on ridgelines and steep slopes occurs, building mass shall be broken into distinct, smaller forms including facades and rooflines. Breaking the mass into smaller forms, which may involve repeating similar forms is preferred over large blocks or building masses
- roads and other linear utilities that require site disturbance and removal of vegetation should avoid crossing steeper slopes in the "mid slope" area.
- the horizontal and vertical extent of road cuts should be limited. Retaining walls constructed with natural materials such as timbers or rock are strongly preferred over large cut/fill slopes and exposed concrete retaining walls. Terraced retaining walls are preferred where the height of cut or fill is extensive.
- Use of excessive retaining walls or extensive cut and fill slopes should be prohibited or strongly discouraged.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The environment and natural systems which occur in the Upper Blue Basin are irreplaceable. Clean water, clean air, abundant wildlife and properly functioning natural systems are indicators of a healthy community. To residents and visitors, a high quality environment is critical to overall quality of life, both present and future. Protecting sensitive or critical environmental resources and avoiding development in areas with significant constraints are key to maintaining the basin's environmental quality.

The Upper Blue Basin is a high mountain valley. Elevation ranges from 9100 near Dillon Reservoir to over 14,000 at Quandary Peak. The natural systems in the basin are very sensitive to alteration. Revegetation and restoration at high altitude in a harsh climate is difficult. It was not possible within the context of this plan to identify specific areas that need to be protected. However, the plan strongly encourages development to avoid areas of significant development constraints, fragile or unique environmental resources or natural areas, and areas which are critical to sustaining a properly functioning natural ecosystem. Through site specific development review, areas which need to be protected or conserved can be identified in detail.

### Key Goals/Policies

1. Protection and maintenance of the basin's environment and natural systems should be emphasized.

### Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies

1. Proposed development should only be permitted if it is done at a scale and designed in a manner that preserves natural and recreational amenities in the area
2. Unique and sensitive environmental resources should be preserved and linked to or contained within open space where feasible. Where necessary to protect the resource, buffer areas should be established. Environmental resources to be protected include but are not limited to:
  - wetlands and riparian areas
  - alpine meadows and tundra
  - steep slopes
  - floodplains, unstable soils and avalanche areas
  - high value wildlife habitat
  - unique natural vegetation

3. A diversity of wildlife habitat and species should be retained. Special emphasis should be given to preserving wildlife species that are unique to the county, region, state and nation. Where possible development should avoid these habitats. Where necessary for preservation, development should be completely precluded. Development proposals should comply with the County's Wildlife Overlay Zone regulations.
4. The need to provide for urban wildlife should be considered in site design and landscape plans
5. Development of small reservoirs and ponds to augment stream flows should be encouraged in conjunction with new development, provided that environmental impacts can be minimized
6. Road sanding and other sources of air borne dust should be eliminated wherever possible
7. Identify major sources of noise pollution and require mitigation wherever possible
8. Outdoor lighting should be subdued and have minimal off site impacts

## **INFRASTRUCTURE/UTILITIES/COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

The adequacy of infrastructure, utilities and community facilities is key to a well functioning community. Service levels must be sufficient to serve anticipated development. Central water and sewer services are currently provided within the Town of Breckenridge and most of the larger residential subdivisions adjoining the town (Woodmoor, Tyrollean Terrace, Warriors Mark, Peak 7). Service providers include the Town of Breckenridge, Breckenridge Sanitation District, Woodmoor Water District and Swan's Nest Metropolitan District. The Town of Blue River is served entirely by wells with sewer service is provided by on site septic in most portions of the town. The exception is a limited area on the south end of Blue River which is served by the South Blue River Waste Water Treatment Plant operated by the Breckenridge Sanitation District. Small satellite waste water treatment plants operated by the Breckenridge Sanitation District serve Valley of the Blue Condos, Skiers Edge and McDill Placer. The remaining lower density and remote areas are served by on site wells and septic systems. Other utilities (electricity, cable and phone) are generally available within all developed portions of the basin.

There is some potential for extension of central sewer service into developed areas that are currently served by individual sewage disposal systems (i.e. septic systems). The potential public benefits of sewer extensions into these areas include improved public health and water quality through removal of older septic systems that may have been poorly designed, located in areas of marginal soil suitability or are not performing properly. Additionally, converting septic systems to central sewer will reduce the amount of phosphorus loading in Dillon Reservoir.

The Town of Breckenridge and Summit County provide a variety of community services and facilities (recreation center, library, social services, general purpose government). The Summit School District RE-1 provides K-12 education. Colorado Mountain College provides both community and college level education programs. Fire and emergency response protection in the basin is provided by the Red, White and Blue Fire Protection District and Summit County Ambulance. An emergency medical clinic is located in Breckenridge.

- 1.\* Development should be located adjacent to existing communities, when consistent with desired land use patterns, and designed so as to minimize the need for expansion of services.
- 2.\* New growth should be responsible for funding capital improvements which it requires. The developers of new growth should be responsible for all necessary capital improvements. The only exception to this should be for legitimate affordable housing projects which are targeted to low and moderate income residents. Criteria for these exceptions should be carefully established to prevent abuse.
- 3.\* The County and towns should cooperate in coordinated planning for schools, parks and other facilities with the school district.
4. The Town of Breckenridge should reassess policies on extending water service beyond the town's current service area boundaries in order to provide the most efficient service to new development that is consistent with mutually agreed upon land use patterns
5. The Breckenridge Sanitation District should work with appropriate jurisdictions and property owners to consider extension of central sewer systems into areas identified as having poor

- suitability for septic systems, substandard or failing systems. Areas with potential public health and water quality concerns should have priority for extension of central sewer service.
6. Careful consideration should be given to the growth impacts and potential change in character that may result if central sewer becomes widely available within the basin. Many lots which are currently "unbuildable" may be developed if central sewer is available.
  7. Decisions to provide central sewer into an area should be consistent with the land use designations established in this plan for each subbasin. Extensions of sewage collection systems and expansion of treatment facilities should not drive land use patterns.
  8. The impact of new development on aquifers and water tables that serve existing homes on individual wells should be evaluated on a project by project or specific area basis.
  9. Develop adequate levels of infrastructure to support the range of desirable build out identified in this plan.

\* Denotes a policy from the Countywide Comprehensive Plan

## HOUSING

Lack of affordable housing is consistently identified as one of the most pressing problems in the Upper Blue Basin. Adequate supply and availability of affordable housing is critical to retaining a healthy community and healthy economy. In 1996 the median price of a single family home in the basin was \$265,000. The median price of all housing in the basin was \$200,000 during the same time period. Median housing costs within Breckenridge are significantly higher at \$339,900 for single family and \$217,000 for all housing. These costs are beyond the means of many area residents and workers. Many people are forced to live in surrounding areas where costs are more reasonable. The lack of affordable housing in the basin has led to increased traffic congestion on Highway 9 due to workers commuting into the Breckenridge area, and, over the long term, could lead to a loss of community diversity and vitality. The Town of Breckenridge has moved proactively to address this problem through direct participation in the Pinewood Village (74 units) housing project. Other recent housing projects intended to be affordable for local residents include Kennington Place (36 units) and Wildflower Townhomes (32 units). Regardless, lack of affordable housing is a persistent community wide problem that will require community wide solutions. Policies in the basin plan can support and augment an overall county wide strategy.

Key Goals/Policies:

1. Support the Countywide Comprehensive Plan goals and policies regarding housing.
2. Develop an overall basin-wide strategy to address all aspects of the shortage of affordable housing.

Recommended Actions/Implementation Strategies:

1. Identify sites or general locations that are potentially appropriate for affordable housing. The following sites or general areas have been identified:
  - Hellerstein Property (Wellington Road)
  - Boreas Pass "infill" sites (undeveloped parcels in the Woodmoor/Lower Boreas area)
  - North Valley (a component of the mixed use development concept)
  - French Gulch (sites up the gulch subject to a review of development feasibility)
2. Affordable housing projects which are targeted to low and moderate income residents and employees should be exempt from requirements to transfer density.
3. The Breckenridge Ski Area, and other major employers should be encouraged to actively participate in providing housing for their employees with special attention to the needs of seasonal employees.
4. The local governments should provide incentives such as land and financing for affordable housing projects
5. Tap fees and policies for provision of infrastructure should be specifically reviewed to make sure they are consistent with the goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the basin
6. Breckenridge should reinstitute and Summit County should adopt an absolute housing policy to require that employee housing be provided in conjunction with new development.

7. Commercial development in the basin should be required to provide housing for employees.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Preservation and interpretation of our historic buildings and sites contributes to our unique sense of place. The Upper Blue Basin has a rich and varied history. Pre settlement camps and hunting grounds of the Ute Indians, early exploration and route finding by Americans, mining discovery and settlement, growth of communities and early transportation, decline of the mining industry, and the birth and growth of skiing and recreation all contribute the rich fabric of the community's history.

Key Goals/Policies:

1. Local government should continue to financially participate in preservation of historic sites and structures
2. Preservation of historic structures in place on the site where they exist is preferred over relocation
3. Prepare an inventory of historic sites and structures in the Upper Blue Basin

## **II. CONCLUSIONS**

The following section is a compilation and restatement of the key or most important goals and policies from the preceding section. They represent the major policy conclusions and recommendations made by the Joint Upper Blue Master Plan Committee over the course of the past 18 months of public input analysis of information and committee discussion.

1. Additional density should not be created anywhere within the Upper Blue Basin, whether through upzonings, annexations or some other mechanism. (Based on the best available data, potential build out within the Upper Blue Basin at the maximum total density currently permitted as calculated based on the total of existing units plus existing development approvals (zoning, approved plats, annexation agreements, master development plans, PUDs) is currently estimated at 13,762 units (Basin Growth Strategy, Key Goal/Policy #1, page 11).
2. Strategies should be adopted which encourage and support reductions in approved density in order to move toward a desirable activity level at build out which is roughly equivalent to 75% of full build out. These strategies should include the widest range of alternatives possible so that the burden of reductions can be fairly distributed among the full range of land use types and activity generators in the basin (Basin Growth Strategy, Recommended Action/Implementation Strategies #4 a. through i., pages 12 through 15).
3. Policies should be enacted and land use recommendations adopted within the appropriate subbasins in order to preserve and protect the character of the back country. Strategies could include designating the backcountry as a priority sending area for transfers of development rights, creating incentives that encourage landowners to limit the scale of development, establishing an Upper Blue Basin open space/development rights acquisition program, establishing a new backcountry zoning district which would limit the impact of development and encouraging land exchanges which increase public land ownership in the backcountry (Development Pattern - Rural/Backcountry Area, Recommended Action/Implementation Strategies 1 through 5, page 20).
4. Establish a transfer of development rights mechanism that allows for development rights to be moved from "sending areas" to "receiving areas" as described in the Development Pattern section of this plan. Each jurisdiction should adopt a transfer of development rights ordinance with consistent goals, including an ability to transfer density across jurisdiction boundaries. Each jurisdiction should adopt IGA's allowing the transfer development rights across jurisdiction boundaries (Basin Growth Strategy, Recommended Action/Implementation Strategy, #1, page 12).
5. Identify and map a boundary which distinguishes areas where urban and transition development will occur from rural/backcountry areas and encourage development to be located within the urban and transition areas in accordance with the specific land use designations contained in the subbasin section of this plan (Development Pattern - Urban/Micro Urban Area, Recommended Action/Implementation Strategy #1, page 16).
6. Master plan policies, land use designations and land use regulations of the towns and county should be sufficiently consistent with one another in that they achieve the goals of this plan and

result in a "seamless" set of land use policies and regulations within the Upper Blue Basin (Basin Growth Strategy, Key Goal/Policy #5, page 12).

7. A strategic plan should be developed for the basin to address increasing the supply of affordable housing for local employees (Housing, Key Goal/Policy #2, page 27).
8. Better data and analysis of commercial and economic activity in the basin should be carried out to provide more accurate information for decision making (Basin Growth Strategy, Recommended Action/Implementation Strategy #4a., pages 12 & 13).