



# Wright's Mesa



## MASTER PLAN

San Miguel County, Colorado

February 13, 2008

# *Acknowledgements*

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# Chapter 1. Introduction and Overview

The Wright's Mesa Master Plan is a plan for the future. It contains a Vision, goals and policies, a Future Land Use Plan and specific strategies. This Plan is an update to the 1998 Master Plan and reflects the work of a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, as well as a great deal of input from the public during various events in 2007.

## Where is the Planning Area?

The Wright's Mesa Master Plan applies to a 50± square mile area of unincorporated San Miguel County surrounding the Town of Norwood. It is bordered by the Montrose County line to the north, the Naturita canyon to the west and Beaver Canyon to the east, and it terminates just south of Gurley Reservoir. (See Figure 1.1: Wright's Mesa Master Plan Area, on page 4.)

## When Does this Plan Apply?

The Wright's Mesa Master Plan is a policy document intended to provide guidance for future land use activities. In accordance with Colorado law, as a part of the county's Comprehensive Plan, it is not a regulatory document. Therefore, this Plan does not apply to existing land uses or agricultural activities, but looks to the future and describes the intent for the kind of activities that should occur if development occurs. The county's Land Use Code is the regulatory document that describes what kind of land use and specific activities are permitted and regulates how buildings may be placed on a piece of land as well as procedures for re-zoning and other planning applications.

## What is the Plan's Purpose?

The Wright's Mesa Master Plan is a sub-area plan that is part of the county's Comprehensive Plan. The Plan will help to maintain and enhance the qualities that make the Wright's Mesa area a great place in which to live, work,

and play, by guiding San Miguel County in its decisions as new development or changes occur.

## The Plan is an Update to the 1998 Plan

The 1998 Plan had a strong focus on balancing protecting the rural character and lifestyle of Wright's Mesa while allowing for economic opportunity. This update was an opportunity to prepare an overarching "mission" or "vision" statement in this Plan, and to clarify the plan's intent. It also reaffirms and clarifies statements about the area:

- Identifying "rural" and "town" character areas of Wright's Mesa,
- Identifying where economic opportunities should occur and what type,
- Defining what type of flexible land use opportunities are appropriate and where,
- Identifying how to minimize conflicts and ensure compatibility,
- Identifying specific environmentally sensitive areas and what measures to put in place to protect them,
- Addressing what is an adequate number of permanent housing units (for Norwood and Wright's Mesa), and
- Determining how to locate development in areas where visual impacts can be mitigated.

The 1998 Plan did not provide specific direction on appropriate land uses within distinct areas of the Mesa—deferring to a "good neighbor" strategy for deciding land uses, should no consensus be reached.

## What are the Key Issues?

Early in the planning process, the planning team and Citizen Advisory Committee identified a number of issues that this Plan needed to address. Three of the most critical key issues are:

1. Protecting character and natural features,
2. Coordinating with the Town of Norwood, for future growth plans, and
3. Revising zoning to provide more clarity to avoid complex, case-by-case review of every project.

These issues are summarized below.

### **Protecting Character and Natural Features**

The 1998 Plan emphasized protecting rural character, encouraging agriculture and ranching, and protecting natural features. This Plan update better defines the specific features to support or protect, such as habitat areas. The plan emphasizes the need to continue to balance growth in a manner that protects natural features and rural lifestyles, and does not inhibit viable agriculture—even as the area experiences more pressure for development.

### **Coordinating with the Town of Norwood**

The self-described “Cozy Cowboy Town” of Norwood has a population of just under 500 people, and the incorporated town covers almost 170 acres.

The town recently adopted an update to its master plan to address growth and development in the town and in the Future Land Use Plan Boundary. It expanded the 1996 boundary to accommodate a build-out of 1,500 residents, while still seeking to retain its small-town characteristics. (Note: This Plan refers to the expanded boundary as the “2007 Future Land Use Plan Boundary” for purpose of the Wright’s Mesa Master Plan.) The town’s 2007 Future Land Use Plan boundary is an area of joint

concern for Norwood and San Miguel County, because the land is unincorporated and thus is still subject to county development review and project approval. Coordination with Norwood to plan for this joint area (i.e., within the 2007 boundary) and for utilities and development was an important part of the Wright’s Mesa planning effort.

### **Wright’s Mesa Zone District and Recent Development**

The San Miguel County Land Use Code classifies virtually all land on Wright’s Mesa outside of Norwood town limits as Wright’s Mesa (WM) Zone District. The WM district does not distinguish appropriate “town” uses in areas closer to Norwood or within the town’s planning area boundary.

The intent of the WM district was to discourage large-lot patterns of sprawl and discourage strip commercial development. Depending on the lot size, a landowner is eligible for a single-family dwelling, a home occupation, and agriculture and ranching uses, plus a second principal use or second dwelling unit on each lot. Other uses and activities require a Special Use Permit.

The county and residents were finding the Special Use Permit (“good neighbor” strategy) for managing land use and development inherent in the 1998 Plan and WM District difficult to administer. The strategy does not provide clear criteria or standards regarding land use.

In addition, recent development proposals for mixed industrial and large facilities in more remote and rural areas on the Mesa may not be entirely compatible with neighboring agricultural and residential uses and the intent of the WM Zone District. This Plan is intended to more clearly address compatibility issues, and provide better guidance for decision-makers. This Plan recommends adjustments to the Land Use Code. (See Chapter 5, Strategies.)

## How is this Plan Organized?

This Plan contains five parts, including:

- Chapter 1. Introduction and Overview (this section),
- Chapter 2. Vision Statement, which reflects the broad values and intent of this Plan,
- Chapter 3. Goals and Policies, which address growth and development, economic vitality, resource conservation, and other topics,
- Chapter 4. Future Land Use Plan, which includes the map and describes future land uses and development patterns for all of Wright's Mesa and the area to be coordinated with the Town of Norwood—the Norwood Master Plan Area, and
- Chapter 5. Strategies, which addresses actions and priorities to implement this Plan.

The plan appendices also include:

- A. Existing Conditions (2007) and inventory maps,
- B. Options for farm and ranch land conservation,
- C. Summary of the public participation process to update this Plan, and
- D. Definitions.

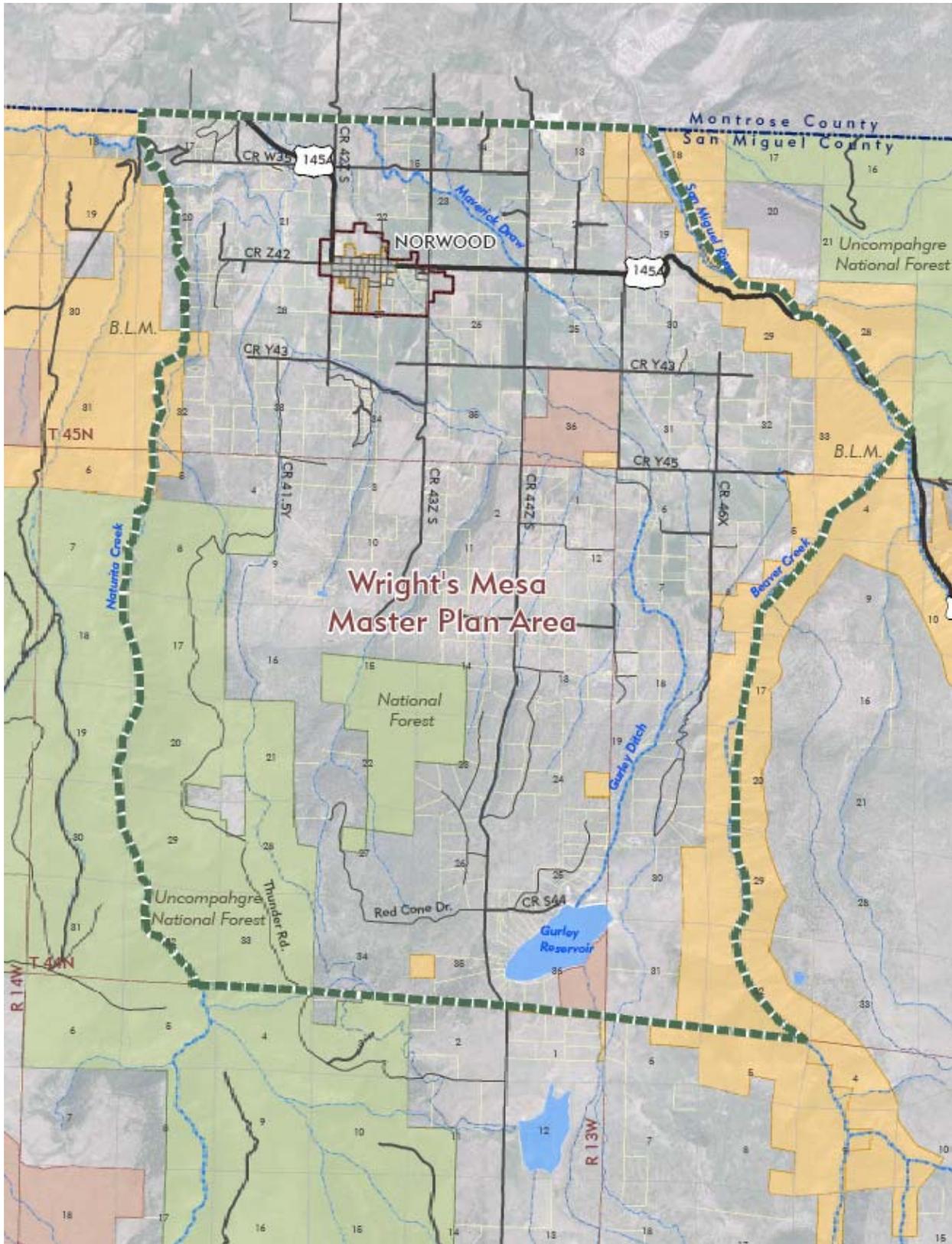


Figure 1.1: Wright's Mesa Master Plan Area

## Chapter 2. Vision Statement

The Vision is a broad statement of values and ideals for Wright's Mesa to explain the general intent of this Plan.

### In the future, Wright's Mesa will:

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- ◆ Foster orderly growth that is compatible with our small town and rural characteristics;
- ◆ Maintain our rural way of life, equestrian activities, and agriculture;
- ◆ Protect our assets (views, wildlife, public land access, night sky, sense of space and open lands);
- ◆ Retain opportunities for families and multiple generations to live and work on Wright's Mesa;
- ◆ Promote land use that conserves energy and resources; and
- ◆ Celebrate our independent spirit and history.



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# Chapter 3. Goals and Policies

## Overview

Goals are statements about what the county aims to achieve. They are intended to give decision-makers and citizens a clear idea about this Plan's intended direction. Policies will provide a definite course of direction for the county that will guide decisions. They provide ongoing guidance for elected and appointed officials, staff, and administrators as community leaders make decisions about development, programs, and capital investments.

This section contains goals and policies for the following topics:

- Land Use Balance and Orderly Growth,
- Economic Vitality,
- Character and Scenic Quality,
- Environmental Quality,
- Transportation Mobility and Safety,
- Adequate Public Facilities and Utilities, and
- Public Lands Access and Coordination.

## Land Use Balance and Orderly Growth

Some of the key issues driving this Plan relate to future land use and growth on Wright's Mesa and the Town of Norwood, as addressed in the Introduction. The goals below complement the Future Land Use Plan (in Chapter 4) and aim for orderly growth and future development that is compatible with the small Town of Norwood and the rural areas and agriculture outside it.

Specifically they address:

1. Overall balanced land uses and coordinated growth,
2. Planned Town of Norwood growth,
3. Town residential and housing in neighborhoods,
4. Norwood commercial core,
5. Industry and jobs,
6. Compatible rural residential, and
7. Viable and sustained agriculture and natural resources.

### **Goal LU 1 – Balanced Land Uses and Coordinated Growth**

**Promote coordinated, compatible, and balanced land use activity on Wright's Mesa, distinguishing between town-level development and rural uses to plan for efficient and orderly growth and to retain the character of the area.**

**Policies**

**LU 1(a) – Future Land Use Plan**

Future growth and development on Wright’s Mesa will be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and the goals and policies of this Plan.

**Goal LU 2 – Planned Town of Norwood Future Growth**

Support a logical expansion of the Town of Norwood that provides adequate land for town growth, creates livable neighborhoods near services with open lands and parks and other civic facilities, supports viable economic development, protects agriculture lands, and promotes efficient use of utilities and services.

**Policies**

**LU 2(a) – Norwood Master Plan Area**

New town-level development on Wright’s Mesa will occur first within the town’s incorporated limits, and second within the Town of Norwood Master Plan Area. (See Future Land Use Plan.)

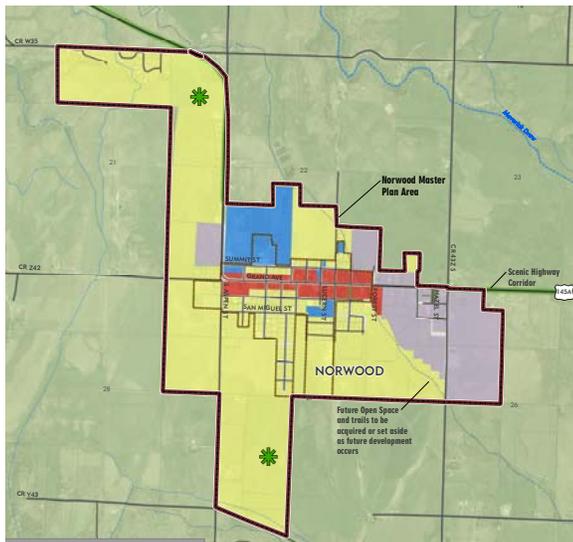


Figure 3.1: Norwood Master Plan Area

**LU 2(b) – Coordinated Town Growth for Properties Eligible for Annexation**

Development within the Norwood Master Plan Area will meet Norwood standards for new residential and commercial uses, and be annexed at the time of being developed if eligible for annexation.

**LU 2(c) – Coordinated Town Growth for Properties Not Eligible for Annexation**

In those instances where property within the Norwood Master Plan Area that is proposed for development is not eligible for annexation, it will still meet town standards for new residential and commercial uses, and will be subject to a pre-annexation agreement to ensure that said development is annexed to the town in an orderly manner when it is eligible.

**Goal LU 3 – Town Residential and Housing in Neighborhoods**

New residential neighborhoods will locate where they can be served with sewer and water near town services and jobs, and they will provide housing opportunities for Wright’s Mesa residents, families, and workers.



Norwood Residential Neighborhood

**Policies**

**LU 3(a) – Town Residential to Have Public Improvements and Utilities**

Town-level residential development (i.e., at least one unit per acre) will only occur within the Norwood Master Plan Area, where basic public improvements and services are available or where they are provided by the landowner or developer. Neighborhoods should be within walkable distances of parks, schools, and services (i.e., less than half a mile).

**LU 3(b) – Housing for Diverse Population**

Encourage construction and maintenance of housing to meet the diverse needs of the community.

**LU 3(c) – Housing to Meet Future Needs**

Future town neighborhoods within the Norwood Master Plan Area should provide housing units to meet the needs of the projected population.



*New residential example.*

**Goal LU 4 – Vibrant Commercial Core in Norwood**

Commercial services for Wright's Mesa will occur in the Town of Norwood and its planning boundary to ensure efficient services and utilities, avoid strip commercial, and create a vibrant community core.



*Existing grocery and offices in "Commercial Core" of Norwood.*

**Policies**

**LU 4(a) – Norwood as Wright's Mesa Commercial Core**

The Town of Norwood is the vital commercial center of Wright's Mesa. Commercial uses will locate in Norwood and its planning boundary where adequate public services, improvements, parking, and utilities can be provided in a cost effective manner. No proliferation of commercial development will occur along Highway 145 outside the Norwood Master Plan Area.

**LU 4(b) – Commercial Uses that Fit Town Character**

New commercial development will minimize its impacts on neighboring properties (in mixed agricultural and residential areas) by locating in designated town locations. It will be designed to fit the "small town" through siting and design of

buildings and parking lots that are pedestrian-oriented, buildings oriented to the street, and in scale with adjacent structures.

### **Goal LU 5 – Industry and Jobs**

**Establish and maintain a supply of land designated for light industry to provide employment for current and future residents of Wright's Mesa.**

#### **Policies**

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#### **LU 5(a) – Light Industry in and Near Norwood**

New light industrial uses will locate within the Norwood Master Plan Area in locations shown on the Future Land Use Plan. Light industry should occur where adequate public services, improvements, parking, and utilities (water and sewer) can be provided in a cost effective manner and in a way that does not negatively affect adjacent residential areas and scenic quality. (See Chapter 4, Light Industry category, for more information.)

#### **LU 5(b) – Light Manufacturing and Craft Industries Desirable**

New light manufacturing and craft industries will provide job opportunities and fit the small town and rural atmosphere of Wright's Mesa through proper location and design. Such facilities should occur in designated Light Industry areas.

#### **LU 5(c) – Light Industry Designed to Fit Character**

New light industry will be designed to respond to the rural or neighborhood character of the area within which it will be located.

#### **LU 5(d) – Heavy Industry Criteria**

Heavy industry will occur only where it meets criteria that addresses location, use compatibility, traffic access and impacts, availability of services, and visual impacts. (See Chapter 4, Heavy

Industry category and criteria, for more information.)

#### **LU 5(e) – Heavy Industry and Resource Extraction will Mitigate Impacts**

Mining activities and exploration will expand only when developers can mitigate impacts on environment and community and meet all applicable county land use standards.

### **Goal LU 6 – Compatible Rural Residential**

**New rural residential will be compatible with rural lifestyles, agriculture, scenic views, and sensitive areas, and it should be configured to conserve productive agricultural lands to the extent possible.**

#### **Policies**

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#### **LU 6(a) – Promote Conservation of Productive Agricultural Lands**

Development that occurs outside of the Norwood Master Plan Area will continue at very low densities to conserve productive agricultural lands to the extent possible.

This Plan provides two rural land use options to transfer residential units away from productive agricultural lands and to configure lots to conserve open lands (i.e., Open Land Protection Subdivision Exemption). The county will provide density bonuses as incentive for conserving productive agriculture. (See Chapter 4: Rural Land Use Categories and Options.)

#### **LU 6(b) – Very Low Density Residential Development and Agriculture**

Development on lands that are outside of the Norwood Master Plan Area will remain at very low densities (i.e., no more than 1 residential unit per 35 acres), except where rural land use options are used.

## **Goal LU 7 – Viable and Sustained Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Enhance the economic viability of agricultural lands and promote opportunities for rural and agricultural support uses that conserve and enhance our agricultural and rural way of life.

### **Policies**

#### **LU 7(a) – Agricultural Support Uses**

Allow a range of land use options for agricultural lands as a means of promoting and enhancing opportunities for large parcels of land to remain intact, agriculturally productive, and economically viable. Recognize and provide flexibility for farmers and ranchers to be able to respond to a future bio-economy (where agriculture plays an increasing role in providing new types of plant-based and renewable energy as well as food).

#### **LU 7(b) – Water Resources Protection**

New development should protect quantity and quality of water resources for agriculture as well as development uses.

#### **LU 7(c) – Encourage Voluntary Options to Conserve Agriculture Lands**

The county will encourage the use of the Open Land Protection (OLP) process to conserve intact agricultural lands and cluster residential development on unproductive land. This Plan also encourages non-contiguous parcel density transfers away from productive lands and encourages pursuing additional opportunities for purchasing development rights (PDR). The county has a program, but its PDR criteria do not favor high land values of Wright's Mesa properties.

#### **LU 7(d) – No New Regulations for Existing Agricultural Operations**

The county will not create new regulations that unduly affect existing farming and ranching operations.



*Agriculture is important to the economy of Wright's Mesa.*

#### **LU 7(e) – Wright's Mesa Right to Farm**

Promote a Right to Farm law for Wright's Mesa to limit nuisance complaints for new residential neighbors regarding pre-existing operating agriculture.

## Economic Vitality

This section addresses economic issues for the town and rural economy. Norwood recognizes it needs more year-round sustainable commercial services to improve the tax base and to provide services and recreation options for residents. Such economic development is a function of Norwood's plan and takes place through coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and other economic development organizations.

This Plan does not play a significant role in strategic economic development for the town, other than to ensure that its policies are consistent with those of the town. It also aims to support rural economic activity that is consistent with the character and livability of the area.

### Goal EV 1 – Stable, Diverse Economy

Promote a stable and diverse town economy while maintaining agriculture and ranching as an essential sector on Wright's Mesa.



*Agriculture and rural economic uses and tourism contribute to the economy of Wright's Mesa.*

## Policies

### EV 1(a) – Support a Diversified Economy that Creates Jobs Appropriate for the Mesa

Support a diversified economy appropriate to the scale of the community and economic activity on Wright's Mesa, promoting the following types of activities:

- Agriculture and equestrian activities and support activities,
- Small, locally-serving businesses, and local service economy,
- Craft industry and businesses,
- Other small scale businesses and clean industries, and
- Agricultural tourism- and recreation-related services and facilities including guest ranches and Bed and Breakfasts.

### EV 1(b) – Business and Industry Locations that are Consistent with Future Land Use Plan

Encourage commercial and industrial development to locate in designated locations shown on the Future Land Use Plan (either in the town or its Master Plan boundary), where public facilities exist or are planned to accommodate such development cost-effectively.

**EV 1(c) – Agriculture-Support Uses**

Allow by-right support agriculture uses necessary for farms and ranches (See Chapter 4 for a list of uses and criteria.).

**EV 1(d) – Home Occupations**

Continue to promote non-retail home-based employment opportunities through continued allowed home occupations.

**Character and Scenic Quality**

The 1998 Plan supported protection of scenic quality on Wright's Mesa, recognizing the views, history, and rural image as unique assets of the area contributing to its character and value as a place to visit and live. The goal below carries forward the intent of the 1998 Plan as well as input in 2007.

**Goal CS 1 – Wright's Mesa Character and Scenic Quality Protected**

Protect the scenic quality and historical and cultural features of Wright's Mesa by minimizing the visual impacts of development.

**Policies****CS 1(a) – Wright's Mesa Image and Appearance**

The county will encourage and cooperate with the Town of Norwood, other government entities, and landowners, to protect attributes of Wright's Mesa that contribute to its unique character and image, including:

- Small, self-contained town,
- Scenic views of mountains from Highway 145 and county roads,
- Natural, forested setting with low intensity development, and

- Large, intact properties with viable agriculture.



*The small town and ranches contribute to the character and image of Wright's Mesa, as illustrated by two images above.*

**CS 1(b) – New Development Maintains Scenic Quality and Highway Views**

New development will be sited to minimize the negative visual impacts on neighboring properties and rights-of-way. New residential development along State Highway 145 should be set back from the road if possible, and landscaped and screened with trees or other vegetation or topography to maintain scenic quality.

**CS 1(c) – Preserve Rural Historical Features**

Landowners in rural areas should preserve historical structures, sites, and other features to the extent possible.

### **CS 1(d) – Rural Roads Fit Topography**

New roads and driveways will follow natural topographic contours wherever possible and should be constructed to reflect rural qualities of the area.

### **CS 1(e) – Transmission Lines Mitigate Impacts**

Interstate and trans-country utility transmission lines should be installed in a manner that protects scenic corridors and mitigates adverse impacts on residents.

### **CS 1 (f) – Maintain Dark Skies**

Protect dark night skies and maintain ambiance of the night sky through lighting standards. Limit lighting to the amount needed to address safety and security while preventing glare.

## **Environmental Quality**

Residents on Wright's Mesa value its setting on the mesa between two river canyons and nestled in the San Juan Mountains with great access to public lands. The clean air, water, and connection with the outdoors, wildlife, and the San Miguel River is a key aspect of quality of life.

The goals in this section address how to maintain a healthy and clean environment and address overall environmental health and quality, air and water quality, and energy resources and conservation. This Plan does not suggest goals or policies that San Miguel County already addresses through its countywide codes or plans.

### **Goal EQ 1 – Overall Environmental Quality Sustained**

**Protect environmental quality and environmentally sensitive areas (such as wildlife habitat and streams), on Wright's Mesa, while avoiding unnecessary infringement on private property rights.**

## **Policies**

### **EQ 1(a) – Avoid Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

Development and land disturbance should not occur in environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands, streams, wildlife habitat areas, and source water protection areas to the extent possible. If no alternatives are available, development will mitigate impacts.

### **EQ 1(b) – Avoid Steep Slopes**

To the extent possible, development and roads should not occur on steep slopes. Roads and driveways should follow topographic contours to minimize disturbance and erosion.

### **EQ 1(c) – Conserve Wildlife Habitat**

New development will be designed to conserve wildlife habitat, including Gunnison Sage Grouse and Elk winter concentration area, to the extent possible. (See principles for wildlife-friendly development in Chapter 4.)

### **EQ 1(d) – Development Mitigation—Geologic Hazards**

New development will comply with countywide standards for Geologic Hazard Areas.

### **EQ 1(e) – Protect Vegetation**

New development will protect existing vegetation, including large significant healthy trees, to the extent possible.

### **EQ 1(f) – Noxious Weed Control**

New development will minimize land disturbance that may contribute to non-native invasive plants (noxious weeds) harmful to agriculture as well as native plants and animal species.

## **Goal EQ 2 – Protect Water and Air Quality**

Protect and seek to improve water quality and air quality, and discourage land uses and development patterns that would be detrimental to clean water and air.

### **Policies**

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#### **EQ 2(a) – Source Water Protection**

New development will be sited to minimize impacts on surface water bodies, including streams and ditches of Wright's Mesa, particularly within the Source Water Protection area.

#### **EQ 2(b) – Improve Air Quality**

The county will help protect and improve air quality by promoting compact development to reduce vehicle miles traveled and encourage county transit use. Development and land disturbance should also not create fugitive dust problems.

## **Goal EQ 3 – Energy Resources and Conservation**

Land uses will conserve energy and encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use.

### **Policies**

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#### **EQ 3(a) – Land Use Planning**

To promote efficient use of energy resources, a majority of new housing and industry on Wright's Mesa should occur within the Norwood Master Plan Area.

#### **EQ 3(b) – Energy Demands**

All public utility feasibility studies will include consideration of present and future local energy demands.

#### **EQ 3(c) – Energy Efficiency and Green Building for Residences**

The county requires energy conservation and green building through its "Prescriptive Energy Code and Green Building Standards" adopted in 2005 (LUC Section 230). New residential development on Wright's Mesa will comply with the standards to conserve energy and also use renewable resources when possible.

## **Transportation Mobility and Safety**

Residents of Wright's Mesa would like to continue to have an efficient and safe transportation system that works for vehicles and also transit, pedestrians, equestrians, and bicycles. The goals in this section address the connectivity and expanded opportunities for multiple modes of transportation.

## **Goal T 1 - Connected, Safe Transportation System**

Develop and maintain a transportation system that serves both the existing and future population of the Wright's Mesa Area. The system will be comprised of roads, bikeways, pathways, and transit.

### **Policies**

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#### **T 1(a) – Adequate Level of Service for Roads**

New development should not result in traffic hazards or significant service level reduction on County roads or State Highway 145. Rural roads will be built to meet county road standards.

### ***T 1(b) – Roads, Transportation Facilities, Connected and Coordinated***

Development of transportation facilities, especially the county road system, should be coordinated with proposed land use patterns to direct growth and provide efficient service. All future streets in the Norwood Master Plan Area should connect with other streets (either existing or planned). Cul de sacs are not a desirable pattern. Streets should be designed for pedestrians and to control traffic in neighborhoods.

### ***T 1(c) – Public Transit***

The county will continue to support and enhance public transit to and from Telluride in order to reduce traffic strain on Highway 145 and Norwood Hill.

### ***T 1(d) – Connected Trails***

The Norwood Master Plan and Future Land Use Plan shows trails in and around the town. Trails should be developed for recreational purposes (e.g., walking, equestrian, and biking) to connect to and from public lands trails, and as alternatives to vehicular travel. Trails could be parallel to county roads if adequate right of way exists.

New developments should provide trails and should provide alternatives to the use of the automobile and opportunities for passive recreation. Trails should respect private property rights and not interfere with agricultural land management or wildlife habitat to the extent possible.

The county will work with the town and regional trails groups to identify locations and ways to link trails to provide access to surrounding public lands.

### ***T 1(e) – Pedestrian and Bike Network in and Adjacent to Town***

New town neighborhoods will have pedestrian and bike networks to supplement roads and vehicular travel.

## **Adequate Facilities and Utilities**

This section addresses facilities and services that contribute to health, safety, and welfare of residents on Wright's Mesa. The county is responsible for providing some, but not all public services. For instance, it provides road maintenance, public safety, extension services, and Fairgrounds. The Town of Norwood, Norwood Water Commission, Norwood Sanitation District, R2J School District, Norwood Fire Protection District, provide utilities and services.

These goals aim to ensure that proper facilities and services are in place as new development occurs, and that coordination takes place between the agencies.

### ***Goal PS 1 – Adequate Facilities and Services***

**Develop and maintain public and semi-public facilities and recreation facilities of adequate size and condition, and at proper locations, to serve the existing and projected population of Wright's Mesa.**

#### **Policies**

### ***PS 1(a) – Development does not Exceed Capacity of Utilities***

New development will not exceed capacity of utilities and facilities (addressed in policies below) to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

### ***PS 1(b) – Health and Emergency Services Facilities***

New development will not exceed capacity for adequate health facilities and emergency services—including ambulance, clinic, and

search and rescue—to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

### **PS 1(c) – Adequate Fire Protection**

New development will not exceed capacity for adequate fire protection facilities and equipment, pursuant to Norwood Fire District.

### **PS 1(d) – Fire Hazard Prevention and Mitigation**

New development will avoid high wildfire hazard ranges, as identified on the San Miguel County Fire Hazard map, or will mitigate hazards.

### **PS 1(e) – Public Parks and Recreation Facilities**

New town residential development will develop and maintain public parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of future residents and that are consistent with town standards. The Future Land Use Plan designates two future locations.

### **PS 1(f) – School Capacity**

New development will not exceed school capacity.

### **PS 1(g) – Telecommunication Facilities**

Encourage the expansion of telephone, television, and radio services to all areas of Wright's Mesa where residents desire such services.

### **PS 1(h) – County Fairgrounds**

Lands north of the County Fairgrounds are designated as Agriculture / Rural residential land use category, which is compatible with the Fairgrounds use to avoid future complaints about noise, odor, and dust. This land should not convert to Town Residential.

## **Goal PS 2 – Adequate Water and Sewer**

**Ensure new development has adequate water and sewer.**

### **Policies**

#### **PS 2(a) – Adequate Water and Sewer Utilities**

All new town developments will have adequate community water and sewer. New rural developments must comply with county requirements for well and septic.



*Norwood water storage.*

#### **PS 2(b) – Adequate Water for Rural Residential Development**

New rural residential development will have adequate on-site water to meet its needs before land subdivision occurs.

#### **PS 2(c) – Water Conservation**

The county will encourage water conservation to maintain an adequate and stable water supply for agriculture, domestic, commercial, and industrial uses.

## Public Lands Access and Coordination

The goals in this section address balancing demands for public lands use and coordinating with federal agencies.

### ***Goal PL 1 – Public Lands Access***

**Protect and benefit all public land users and retain access to public lands as new development occurs.**

#### **Policies**

---

#### ***PL 1(a) – Outdoor Recreation Facilities***

The county will encourage public agencies to create and improve outdoor recreation facilities, such as camping and trails, where appropriate on public lands.

#### ***PL 1(b) – Managed Recreation Access and Grazing***

Public recreation areas should avoid conflicts with traditional grazing use of public lands.

#### ***PL 1(c) – Resource Conservation on Public Lands***

Historical, archaeological, and natural resources and landmarks on public lands should be preserved to the extent possible.

# Chapter 4. Future Land Use

## Overview

This chapter describes the Future Land Use Plan which illustrates how and where to best accommodate future growth on Wright's Mesa and how to balance growth and conservation in a sustainable manner. Overall, the Future Land Use Plan will foster orderly development that is efficient to serve logical town growth around Norwood while protecting the natural environment and retaining desirable rural qualities of Wright's Mesa. The Future Land Use Plan does not apply to existing land uses, unless landowners are proposing new development, and it does not propose changes to stable developed areas or neighborhoods. It also upholds the rights of property owners by maintaining current zoning and a certain level of flexibility.

## Future Land Use Plan Primary Concepts

The Future Land Use Plan has five primary concepts, described below. They are:

1. Concentrate town growth within the Norwood Master Plan Area.
2. Promote Norwood as the commercial "center" for Wright's Mesa.
3. Provide options for landowners, including agriculture support uses.
4. Promote rural residential patterns that fit the character of Wright's Mesa.
5. Protect sensitive resources.

## Concept 1. Concentrate Town Growth in the Norwood Master Plan Area

Norwood's Master Plan Area is the appropriate location for logical expansion of town-level density for housing, light industry, and commercial activity. Ideally such future development will also be connected to public water and sewer services provided by Norwood Water and Sanitation Districts. The county has worked with the Town of Norwood to ensure consistency between the plans to achieve orderly and compatible growth and development on Wright's Mesa and distinguish between rural and town areas.

### The Town of Norwood's Master Plan says:

*"In response to the problems posed by low density "rural development" and to provide for an orderly and efficient transition from rural to urban uses, the town has developed a Master Plan Boundary to identify and separate urbanized land from rural land. The Master Plan Boundary anticipates and guides growth and annexations over the next ten to twenty years. There is more than adequate land within the boundary for foreseeable future needs without going outside the boundary for development. The Master Plan Boundary includes over three hundred acres of raw land planned for residential development, which will accommodate more than twice the current population of Norwood." (See Town of Norwood Major Streets and Future Land Use Plan, p. 11.)*



Town Hall Park, Norwood.

### **Concept 2. Planned Commercial and Industry**

The Future Land Use Plan promotes Norwood as the commercial “center” for Wright’s Mesa. Norwood Commercial is shown on the plan along Grand Avenue. Light industry should also locate at the periphery of the town, within the Master Plan Area, as shown on the map.

Appropriate locations for heavy industry on Wright’s Mesa will be determined through locational criteria, to ensure that it will only be sited in appropriate locations if any. At this time none have been identified. (Note: Definitions of Light Industrial and Heavy Industrial categories occur later in this chapter.)

### **Concept 3. Provide Rural Land Options, Including Agriculture Support Uses**

Agriculture and rural residential will remain the predominant uses on the Mesa, with expanded agriculture support uses and options for landowners to conserve land outside the Norwood Master Plan Area. Enhanced incentives to use a non-contiguous density transfer approach and the Open Lands Protection Subdivision Exemption are two options described later in this chapter—for landowners seeking to conserve land but benefit from some development.

### **Concept 4. Promote Rural Residential that Fits Wright’s Mesa**

The intent of this Plan is to continue to allow very low density rural residential on Wright’s Mesa (outside the Norwood Master Plan Area) but ensure that such development fits the character of the mesa and does not interfere with ranching and other resource protection. This plan still upholds property rights and ability and flexibility of property owners to use land, as promoted in the 1998 Plan.

### **Concept 5. Resource Protection**

This plan promotes protection for natural resources and features, especially scenic quality, wildlife habitat, and water resources. The Future Land Use Plan illustrates these features that are described below.

#### **Scenic Highway Corridor**

The Future Land Use Plan designates the Highway 145 corridor to the east of Norwood and north and west of town as Scenic Highway Corridor. This designation is generally consistent with the intent of the 1998 Plan. (See Chapter 5, Strategies for more explanation.)

#### **Wildlife Habitat (Elk winter concentration and Gunnison Sage - Grouse)**

The Future Land Use Plan map also indicates locations of Elk Winter Concentration habitat and Gunnison Sage-Grouse where wildlife-friendly development principles and the Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan apply.

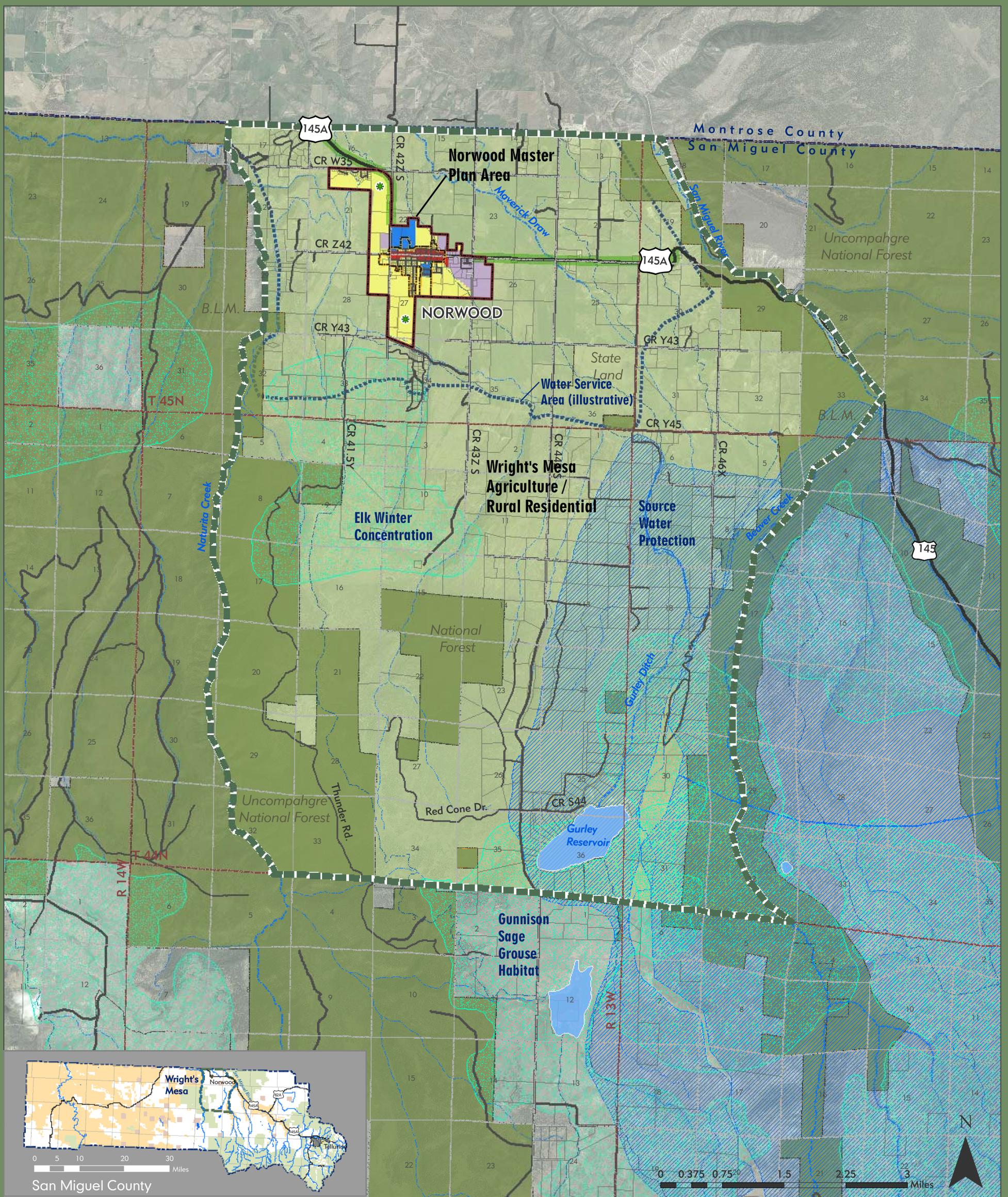
#### **Source Water Protection**

The Source Water Protection area is the area around the Gurley Ditch and San Miguel River that is critical to protect from pollution and development that could affect its water quality.

### **Guide to Using the Future Land Use Plan**

The Future Land Use Plan will guide land development and conservation in unincorporated parts of Wright’s Mesa. It does not apply to the incorporated Town of Norwood, but it applies to unincorporated land within the Norwood Master Plan Area and on Wright’s Mesa outside the Norwood Master Plan Area. Future land use is illustrated on two maps:

1. Future Land Use Plan (page 21), and
2. Future Land Use – Norwood Master Plan Area (page 22).



# Wright's Mesa Master Plan

San Miguel County, Colorado

Figure 4.1

## LEGEND

### Boundaries

- Wright's Mesa Planning Area
- County Boundary
- Town Limits (Norwood)
- Norwood Planning Area
- Township & Range
- Section

- Local Road
- County Road
- Highway
- River or Stream
- Lake or Reservoir

### Wright's Mesa

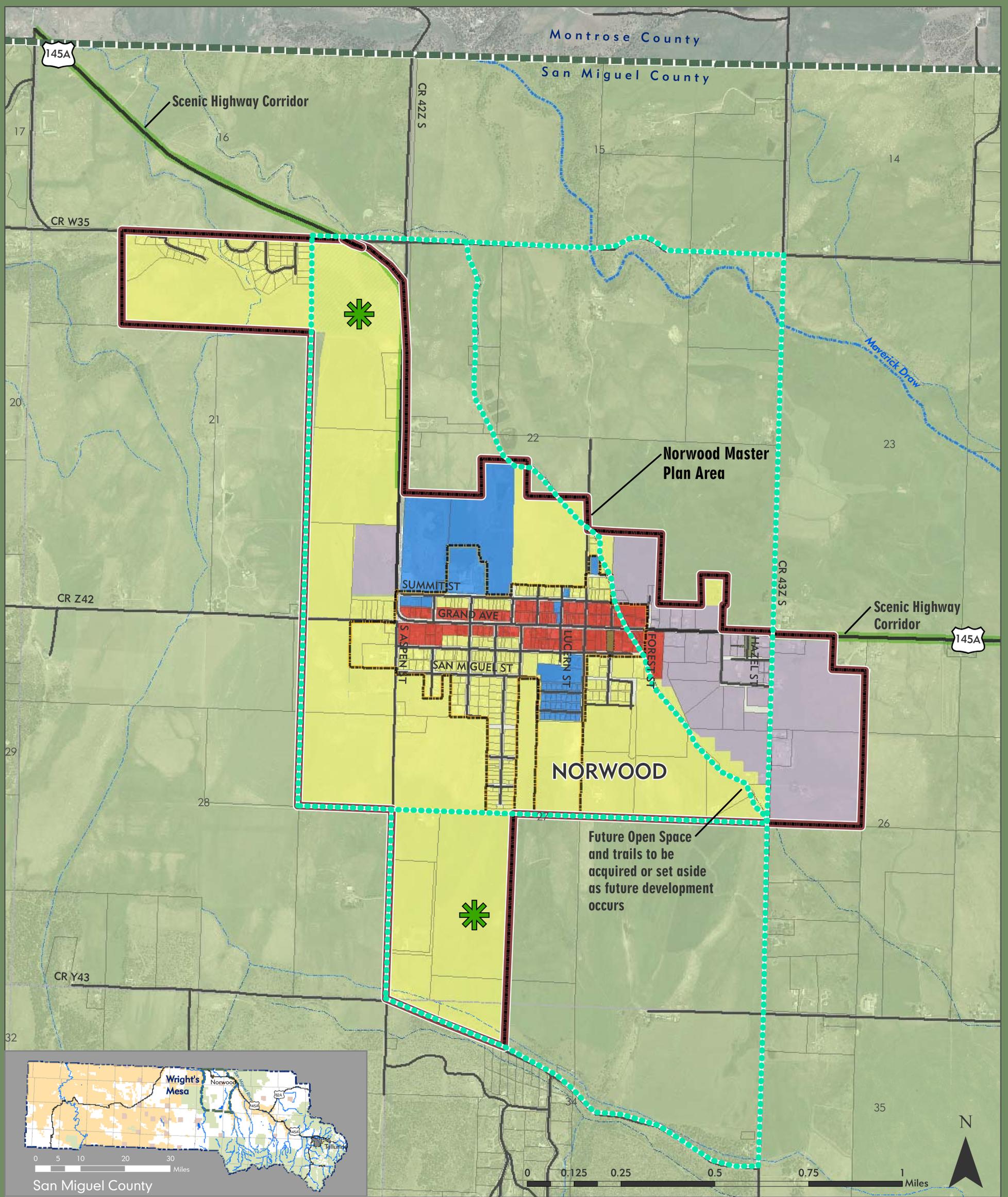
- Agriculture/Rural Residential
- Wildlife Habitat
- Source Water Protection Area

### Town of Norwood and Master Plan Area

- Norwood Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Public
- Town Residential
- Future Park (location to be determined)

Source: San Miguel County GIS, Clarion Associates

February 2008



# Wright's Mesa Master Plan

San Miguel County, Colorado

Figure 4.2

## LEGEND

### Boundaries

- Wright's Mesa Planning Area
- County Boundary
- Town Limits (Norwood)
- Norwood Master Plan Area

- Local Road
- County Road
- Highway
- River or Stream

### Town of Norwood and Master Plan Area

- Norwood Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Public
- Town Residential
- Future Park (location to be determined)
- Future Trail (Norwood)

### Outside Norwood Master Plan Area

- Agriculture/ Rural Residential

Source: San Miguel County GIS, Clarion Associates

February 2008

# FUTURE LAND USE - NORWOOD MASTER PLAN AREA

## Future Land Use Plan - General Designations

### Wright’s Mesa Outside Norwood Master Plan Area

All lands outside the Norwood Master Plan Area are classified as Wright’s Mesa Agriculture / Rural Residential. Proposed development projects must comply with the allowable uses and intensities specified in this Plan and in the county’s Wright’s Mesa Zone District (as amended).

### Norwood Master Plan Area

Within the Norwood Master Plan Area, the Future Land Use Plan designates town land use categories that are consistent with the Norwood Master Plan.

#### Eligible for Annexation

The intent of this Plan is that landowners seeking to develop property in the Norwood Master Plan Area should first approach the Town of Norwood to determine eligibility for annexation. If property owners are contiguous with the town’s incorporated boundary and are eligible, according to the criteria on this page, they should annex into the town and should obtain water from Norwood Water Commission and connect to sewer provided by Norwood Sanitation District.

#### Not Eligible for Annexation

If property in the Norwood Master Plan Area to be developed is not eligible for annexation, then the county will review proposed projects and require them to be consistent with this Plan and with the town’s Future Land Use Plan. New developments in the Norwood Master Plan Area must connect to public water and sanitary sewer if available. If public sewer connection is not possible, the project must provide acceptable engineered on-site wastewater treatment facility to be approved by county and proper health authorities.

Residential and commercial developments may be required to enter into a pre-annexation agreement, ensuring that they will annex into the Town of Norwood as soon as they are eligible.

#### The Town of Norwood’s Master Plan Criteria for Annexation include:

*“Review of annexations of vacant land shall be based on the following general criteria:*

1. *There is a need for additional developable land.*
2. *There is a need for high priority land uses such as technical education and recreational education and service facilities, as well as recreation (trails), affordable housing and light industrial uses.*
3. *The town and other service entities have the physical and economic capabilities and capacity to provide urban-level services to the site within a reasonable period of time.*
4. *There is a positive cost benefit analysis of the project.*
5. *The developer of the site has the ability to install all needed services and facilities to the site.”*

*(See Town of Norwood Major Streets and Future Land Use Plan, p. 13.)*

## Norwood Planned Land Uses

The Future Land Use Plan categories within the Norwood Master Plan Area will accommodate a mix of commercial, residential, light industrial activities, and civic/public uses. The table below shows the amount and proportion of land planned for each land use. It includes developed properties and lands within town limits.

**Norwood Master Plan Area: Planned Land Uses**

Use	Acres	Percent
Commercial	39	4.0%
Light Industrial	160	16.3%
Town Residential	678	69.2%
Public/Civic	61	6.2%
Right of Way	43	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Town Land Use Categories - Norwood Master Plan Area

The following sections describe the land use categories shown on the Future Land Use Plan and allowable future uses and activities within the Norwood Master Plan Area.

Land uses shown within the Norwood Master Plan Area, but outside town limits will be consistent with the Town of Norwood’s Master Plan in terms of uses and density for Town Residential, Norwood Commercial, Light Industrial, and Public land uses, as described below.

### Town Residential

**Uses:**

The Town Residential category primarily allows single family uses and some multi-family uses. Secondary uses include parks, day care, places of worship, and similar compatible uses.

**Location/Characteristics:**

The plan expands the area of residential development in a compact and logical fashion to provide for future neighborhoods. Residential areas will include a variety of lot sizes and residential uses to meet the housing needs of future residents (if developed in a compact manner). Neighborhoods will be designed to be walkable and to contain amenities such as parks.

Large-lot residential (i.e., larger than 10,000 square foot lots) is more costly to provide with public facilities and services and should not occur within the Norwood Master Plan Area.

The locations for future town residential areas are to the northwest (including the Pioneer Village subdivision) to the south extending to the Fitts Subdivision, and west to the ridge west of Highway 145.



*Residential neighborhood examples: Existing single family (top) and duplex/multi-family (bottom).*

**Density:**

Density in town neighborhoods will range from six (6) to 12 units per acre (in some areas depending upon site characteristics and compatibility). New single family lots should not be larger than 10,000 square feet. In rare circumstances, densities of up to 15 units per acre may be appropriate, if annexed to the town and if compatible with adjacent uses close to the Grand Avenue commercial area. Lower densities should occur near the edge of the Norwood Master Plan boundary. (Note: criteria in the Norwood Master Plan shall apply to new town residential development.)

In some instances, larger lots and/or lower densities may be allowed as a transition between town-level development and adjoining rural or agricultural land uses.

## Norwood Commercial

### Uses:

The Norwood Commercial category allows for retail commercial, offices, services, and lodging. As a secondary use, the Norwood Master Plan also encourages a mix of residential above commercial uses.



*Existing commercial core includes retail, services and some residential.*

### Location/Characteristics:

The commercial services that serve Wright's Mesa are currently located along Grand Avenue, which is designated as the primary commercial area in the town. It could expand to the west and east into the Norwood Master Plan Area. Commercial development should be pedestrian-oriented and compact.

Norwood encourages infill prior to expansion and preserving the historic character of downtown. It is not the intent of either this Plan or the Town of Norwood Master Plan to allow commercial uses outside the Norwood Master Plan Area.

### Density:

The town standards will guide the density of commercial development.



*New commercial in the town's core should fit the scale and mix of activities that give Downtown Norwood its small town image and appearance.*

## Norwood Light Industrial

### Uses:

Light industry includes small-scale manufacturing and processing, offices, business services, live-work, and compatible civic uses such as schools and fire stations. A motel or lodging may be appropriate. Auto repair can occur, provided it is primarily indoors, not adjacent to existing or planned residential uses and noise and odors are mitigated.

### Location/General Characteristics:

The Light Industrial category offers significant economic development opportunities for the Town and Wright's Mesa. Light industry is oriented and geared toward services to residents of the community and other county residents. This category is appropriate for manufacturing activities that produce items of relatively high value (per unit weight), that are non-polluting, and that involve relatively little truck traffic. Generally, these activities for Wright's Mesa will occur inside small-scale facilities (e.g., less than 20,000 square feet).

### Compatibility Criteria:

Light industrial uses have the potential to create negative impacts on adjacent properties. Such development will mitigate impacts as follows:

- Provide appropriate screening and landscaping between adjacent residential uses.
- For proposed light industrial uses south of Highway 145, divert traffic to the north along CR 43ZS away from residential and ranch land to the south.
- Provide a buffer area along Highway 145 to maintain positive open space and scenic qualities, using techniques such as berms and landscaping.
- Comply with all adopted town standards for light industrial uses.



*Examples of Light Industry*

### Density:

Density should be consistent with town standards.

## Public

**Uses:**

The public category allows for schools, fire stations, libraries, government services, and future trails and open spaces.



*Norwood School is an example of a public use.*

**Location/General Description:**

The Public category is shown where government facilities and utilities exist or will occur in the future. The Gurley Ditch land should become public open space either through acquisition or as a set aside if and when future development occurs.

## Future Neighborhood Parks

Two potential neighborhood parks are shown in future town residential areas: (a) between town and Pioneer Village (to the northwest), and (b) between town and the Fitts subdivision (to the south). The exact location will be determined if and when new development on those properties occurs.



*Park and playgrounds should be in new neighborhoods to provide opportunities for social and community gathering and health and recreational activities.*

## Rural Land Use Category and Options - Wright's Mesa

The following sections describe the land use categories and allowable future uses and activities for the Wright's Mesa outside of the Norwood Master Plan Area. All lands are classified as Wright's Mesa Agriculture / Rural Residential.

### Wright's Mesa Agriculture / Rural Residential

#### Uses:

The Wright's Mesa Agriculture/Rural Residential category allows agriculture and ranching, agriculture support uses (described in the next column), day care, home occupations, tourism and recreation-related uses, and very low density single family residential. Clustered residential development is also an option.

#### Location and General Characteristics:

This category occurs outside the Norwood Master Plan Area. The intent is to retain large intact parcels of land and agriculture that maintain a rural lifestyle, while not interfering with farm and ranching operations.

To discourage the large lot, semi-rural pattern of sprawl created through 35-acre development, this Plan puts in place flexible incentives for keeping large parcels of land intact and economically viable. It includes rural land use "options" to provide greater economic and land conservation opportunities for landowners, including options to: (a) transfer development away from productive agricultural lands, and (b) retain open lands through clustering. (See Rural Land Use Options on page 31.)

#### Density:

This category allows a base residential density of 1 unit per 35 acres. Landowners may be eligible for increased density if they are able to meet other conservation objectives. (See Rural Land Use Options on page 31.)

## Agriculture Support Uses

#### As Secondary Uses on Wright's Mesa:

This Plan promotes agriculture support uses as secondary uses within the Agriculture / Rural Residential category. Agriculture support uses will follow staff (administrative) review process (rather than be reviewed as a special use), if they are on the site of an agricultural operation and meet the criteria on the next page. The Wright's Mesa Zone District standards will address appropriate size for practical agricultural use.

Agriculture support uses are intended to generate additional income in support of the economic viability of the on-site agricultural operation or expand agriculture-related tourism.

#### Types:

Appropriate agriculture support uses or tourism-related uses include, but are not limited to:

- Barns, stables, equestrian facilities,
- Agricultural produce sales stands (e.g., fruits and vegetables),
- Logging operations,
- Dog breeding or boarding (if meeting criteria to address impacts),
- Blacksmith or small welding or machine shop (if meeting criteria to address impacts),
- Tenant dwelling for seasonal labor,
- Hunting lodges / guest ranches,
- Bed and Breakfasts,
- Art studios, galleries, and crafts, and
- Open Land Protection (OLP) expedited review, except for within the Source Water Protection area.

### Location and Siting Criteria for Agriculture Support Uses:

To be eligible for by-right approval, proposed agriculture support use(s) will meet the following criteria. If proposal does not meet these criteria, a special use permit will be necessary. Criteria are:

1. Odors from proposed agriculture support use will not disturb adjacent residential properties.
2. Noise from proposed agriculture support use will not disturb adjacent residential properties.
3. Lighting from proposed activity will not spill over to adjacent residential properties or public rights-of way.

Additional guidelines to assist landowners include:

4. Proposed new development should be sited away from irrigated or productive agriculture land or on a separate parcel (if possible) with access to roads.
5. Scale and bulk of buildings should relate to other buildings on the site and should be set back from public roads and neighboring properties, and screened to the extent possible to minimize visual impacts.
6. Outdoor storage should be screened from adjacent residential buildings or road rights-of-way.

## Wright's Mesa Heavy Industry

### Definition and Uses:

Heavy Industry typically requires a larger site or facility, may entail more outdoor storage, and has greater environmental impacts (i.e., odors, noise, dust, truck activity, and chemicals) than light industry. Types of Heavy Industry that may be appropriate on Wright's Mesa include:

- Radio tower or cell tower,
- Manufacturing and processing facility larger than 20,000 square feet,
- Waste-related activity,
- Contractor's materials and staging, and
- Resource extraction.

### Locations for Heavy Industry:

The Norwood Master Plan indicates that heavy industry should occur outside the Town of Norwood's Master Plan Area in the unincorporated county. This Plan is consistent with that premise; however, such activity must meet criteria to ensure compatibility with the rural character and minimize impacts. At this time, no locations have been identified that meet the criteria on page 30.



*Heavy Industry example*

### Heavy Industry Locational Criteria:

The Future Land Use Plan does not designate locations for heavy industrial uses. However, it is possible for heavy industrial activity to occur on Wright's Mesa only if it meets the following criteria. It will locate:

1. where land is already impacted by heavy industry or mining;
2. away from Highway 145 on a paved county road;
3. where it will minimize visibility and skylining from Highway 145 and county roads, especially for heavy equipment and facilities;
4. outside the Source Water Protection area: and
5. where prevailing winds will not affect town population or existing developed neighborhoods.

### Heavy Industry Standards:

If a landowner identifies a suitable location for heavy industry (using the locational criteria above), the proposed activity must also meet certain performance standards to ensure it does not negatively affect adjoining properties or health and safety of Wright's Mesa's residents. Standards should address issues including but not limited to:

- Minimum setback of 200 feet from any existing or future residential property.
- Screening of outside storage, waste and refuse facilities, mechanical equipment, and loading facilities from public right of way.
- Maximum height of outdoor storage and structures.
- Vibration or noise beyond the property line (specific quantifiable measures to be determined).
- Pollution prevention plan to address use of chemicals, types of waste generated, disposal methods, and potential impacts on water and air.

### Why Do Farms and Ranches and Conservation Matter?

Productive ranch and farm land is a valuable resource that can help provide jobs and an economic mainstay to a few people who work the land and provide many benefits to the economy, environment, and heritage of the Norwood community. Yet, agricultural and ranch land is being developed at a rate higher than population growth around the west, especially near public lands.

To remain viable, ranch land should be retained in large, contiguous blocks to maintain a "critical mass" of farms and ranch land.

A multitude of tools must address economic viability and options for landowners. (See Appendix B for some discussion of tools.)

### The problem with 35-Acre Pattern of Development

Colorado's 35-acre exemption law, passed in 1972, has proven to be a "savior and a curse" to farmers and ranchers, according to the Colorado Farm Bureau, American Farmland Trust, and other organizations.

On one hand, the law gives landowners the right to subdivide and sell land. Although farmers often hate to see a neighbor's ranch being sold to newcomers lacking knowledge about farming. Land subdivision and sales also can drive up property values and make a farm worth more or provide operating capital in the short-term.

On the other hand, the 35-acre subdivision is problematic land use type because it creates lots that are too large to manage for residential purposes but too small for viable farms and ranches. These lots can become "weed patches" that are a real nuisance to farms and ranches nearby. The pattern of ranchettes also contributes to:

- Homes in potential wildfire areas.
- Fragmented lot dividing and homes in wildlife habitat areas, with roads and driveways that obstruct migration paths and impede access to public lands.
- Counties with fiscal shortfall between the property tax new homeowners pay versus the actual costs incurred by counties in providing services for homeowners in remote areas.
- An opportunity for developers to skirt subdivision laws.

## Rural Land Use Options

### Option A. Non-Contiguous Density Transfer

#### How Does it Work?

To conserve agricultural lands or other resources and to place development in locations closer to town where it can be served by Norwood Water Commission and town services, property owners may transfer density (units) from one property to another.

Either one property owner or more than one property owner may work together to transfer potential development units from one "sending property" to another "receiving property." This is provided that the owner of a sending parcel and the owner of a receiving parcel can agree to a price for the dwelling unit rights to be transferred that the receiver pays. In addition, the owner of the sending parcel must agree to permanently reduce its development capacity (e.g., through deed restriction) and continue agricultural operations after the sale. The county will process such a development as a plat subdivision for up to 20 lots on the "receiving property."

### Bonus Residential Lots and Units

The base density is 1 unit per 35 acres. To provide an incentive for land conservation, farmers and ranchers are eligible for bonus residential units of up to 3 units per 35 acres, if they transfer these potential residential units away from agriculture and ranch land to another parcel that is more suitable for development, as described in the criteria that follow.



Irrigated or productive agriculture land.



An example of non-contiguous density transfer. The landowner of the 160-acre parcel conserves that land, except for the original house. The receiving parcel is developed closer to town.

### Criteria for "Sending Properties"

Potential residential density or development units can be transferred away from sending properties. An eligible sending property must meet the following criteria:

- Be a minimum of 70 acres,
- Be located within the Water Service Area (as generally illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan based on information from the Norwood Water Plans. Landowners will need to verify availability of service),
- Contain irrigated agriculture or other historically productive agriculture,
- Retain water rights with the land, if applicable, and/or
- Contain wildlife habitat or environmentally sensitive resources.

In addition, the property owner will provide certification of a deed restriction or conservation easement for the portion of property to be conserved for agriculture.



*Productive rangeland on Wright's Mesa would be eligible to transfer density to another parcel.*

### Criteria for "Receiving Properties"

For a property to be eligible for receiving additional development units, it must meet the following criteria:

- Be located within ½ mile of the Norwood Master Plan Area.
- Have access to a paved county road.
- Consist of unproductive agricultural land (i.e., has not been used for farming or ranching in the past several years).
- Not be designated as wildlife habitat on the Future Land Use Plan.

In addition:

- Lots must be configured to be a minimum of two acres (one acre with water and sewer) and a maximum of five acres.
- Proposed development units will connect to Norwood Water System.
- Residential structures will be at least 100 feet from existing irrigated agriculture equipment or structures.

### One Example

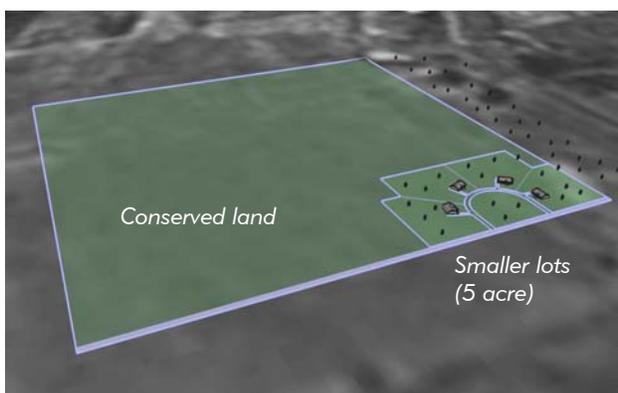
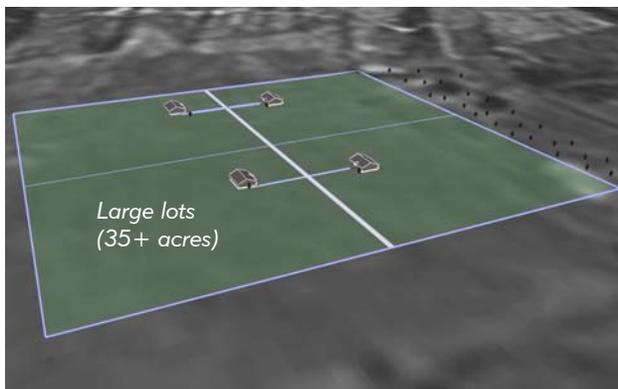
For example, one appropriate "receiving property" may be the unproductive agricultural land just west of the Norwood Master Plan Area to the south of Pioneer Village. In this location, the county could allow lots of a minimum of 2 acres, if density is transferred from elsewhere on Wright's Mesa and if water service is available.

## Option B. Open Land Protection Subdivision - Clustering

### How Does it Work?

Another option for landowners to retain large intact agricultural and ranchland properties is through the Open Land Protection (OLP) Subdivision Exemption in the County Land Use Code. The OLP provides an alternative way for landowners to obtain equity from their land, and it encourages a more compact form of development through clustered development.

The current OLP process includes minimal bonus incentives and rudimentary standards for review. This section provides recommendations to increase the bonus—to entice landowners to use the option, and it includes recommendations to improve the site planning process.



Above examples: (a) Standard Development approach with four 40-acre lots carved out of a 160-acre parcel, and (b) Conservation approach using OLP with four 5-acre lots within 160-acre parcel with 140 acres conserved. (Note: This example does not illustrate bonus lots.)

### Bonus Residential Lots and Units

The base density within the Agriculture / Rural residential land use category is 1 unit per 35 acres, but farmers and ranchers are eligible for bonus residential lots and units of up to 2 units per 35 acres using the Open Land Protection (OLP) process, if they meet criteria below.

### Wright's Mesa Open Lands Protection Subdivision Exemption - Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, the parcel must:

- Be a minimum of 70 acres.
- Be able to connect to Norwood water.
- Contain productive agricultural land, useable common open space, wildlife habitat, or sensitive environmental features, such as wetlands.

In addition:

- Development lots and units must cluster on unproductive land with a minimum size of 2 acres.
- To use this option, the property owner will address its long-term management of the property.
- Restrict further residential development of the conservation area.



Example of unproductive agricultural land.

**Recommendations to Improve OLP Site Planning Process—Site Analysis and Plan**

A thorough site analysis is a key first step for development of any property. This Plan recommends enhancing the process by which land is subdivided and developed as follows.

**A. Identify Site Features, Site Analysis**

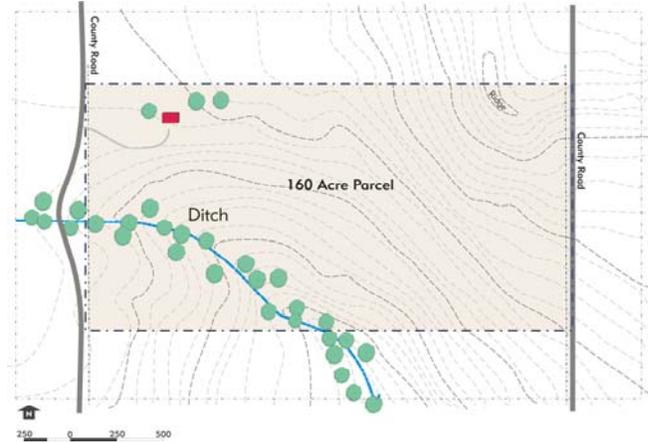
First, identify the following:

- 1 Roads, trails, utility easements and rights-of-way,
- 2 Topography (steep slopes and ridgelines),
- 3 Environmentally sensitive areas, including but not limited to streams, ditches, source water protection area, drainages, and wetlands.
- 4 Wildlife habitat,
- 5 Geologic hazard areas,
- 6 Adjacent public lands,
- 7 Existing conservation easements or protected lands,
- 8 Adjacent property lot sizes, setbacks, and building sizes,
- 9 Built features, including driveways, farm roads, buildings, fences, walks, barns or sheds, drainage fields, utilities and utility easements, and
- 10 Historically and culturally significant sites or structures.

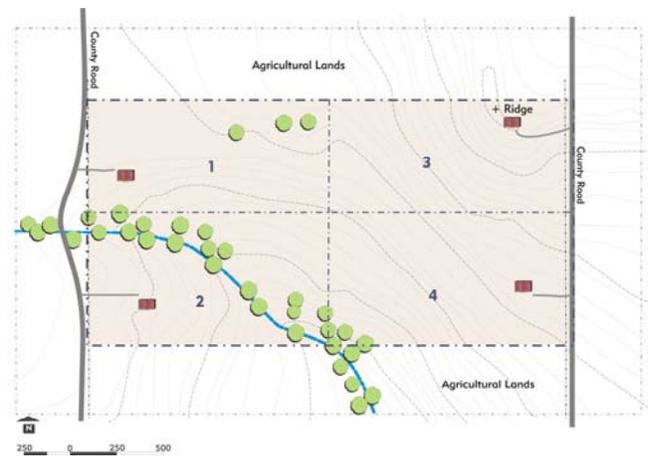
**B. Delineate Conservation Area(s) and Show Buildable Area**

Next, delineate the conservation area(s) to:

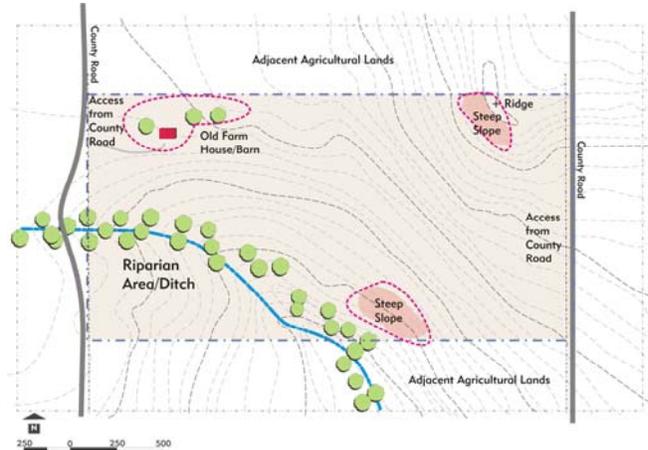
- 1 Provide contiguity with adjacent open lands, conservation areas, and agriculture lands.
- 2 Protect unique natural, historic, or cultural site features.
- 3 Provide a minimum buffer of 100 feet between any residential structure and adjacent agricultural activities or open lands.
- 4 Provide a minimum buffer for residential lots of 100 feet along county roads or along Highway 145.
- 5 Avoid fragmentation of conservation areas within the site.



(a) An illustrative 160-acre site...



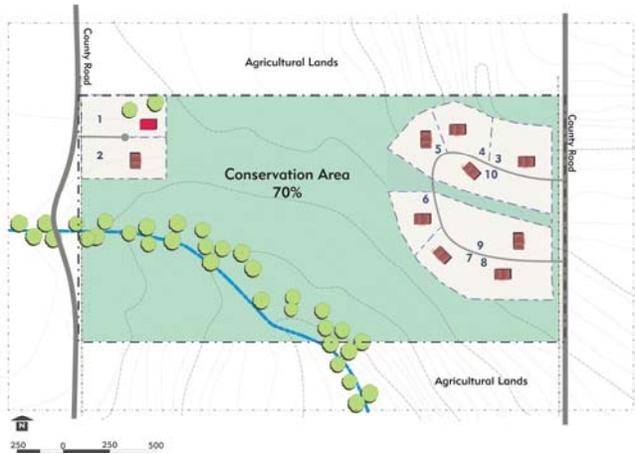
(b) With standard 1 unit per 35 acre subdivision.



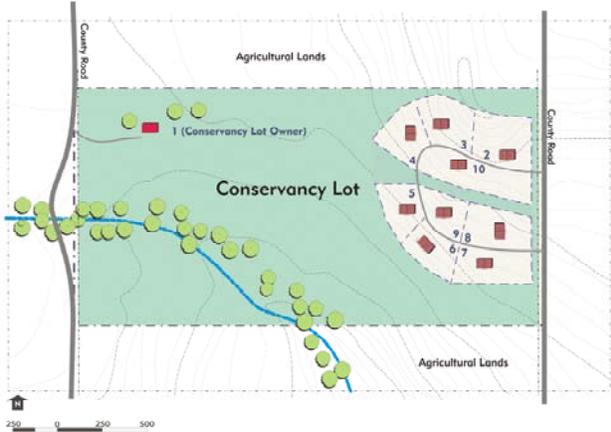
(c) Site analysis example for the 160 acres delineating conservation areas.

### C. Determine Building Sites

Buildable sites should then be based on avoiding the conservation areas such as riparian areas and ridgelines.



(d) With open land conservation—with 70% Conservation.



(e) Or, with open land conservation—with conservancy lot that would be owned and managed by the owner of Lot Number 1.

<b>Rural Residential Development Options and Development Units</b>						
<b>Type</b>	<b>Minimum Parcel Size</b>	<b>Development Units</b>	<b>Bonus</b>	<b>Minimum % Conservation or Open Lands</b>	<b>Minimum Lot Size</b>	<b>Maximum Lot Size</b>
<b>Standard Rural Subdivision – 1 unit per 35</b>	n/a	1 unit per 35 acres	n/a	n/a	35 acres	n/a
<b>OPTIONS</b>						
<b>A. Non-Contiguous Density Transfer</b>	70 acres	3 units per 35 acres	2 unit per 35 acres	All of “sending” parcel is conserved, except for one unit (original house)	2 acres on “receiving parcel” with water and septic  1 acre with water and sewer	5 acres on “receiving parcel”
<b>B. Open Lands Protection Subdivision Exemption</b>	70 acres	2 units per 35 acres	1 units per 35 acres	70%	2 acres	5 acres

## Wright's Mesa Rural Development Principles

Wright's Mesa is made up of a diverse and eclectic variety of homes, horse properties, open fields, and scenic mountain views. For over a century, scattered rural development has cropped up, coexisting with traditional agricultural uses and farms.

Using rural residential development principles, the Mesa will retain its valued traits (such as natural features and scenic views), and new housing will be designed in a manner that conserves open lands, shows variety, protects vistas, and retains and conforms with many of the rural characteristics of the area.

### Principles for Rural Residential Development

The ten principles below apply to rural residential development on Wright's Mesa. They should be the basis for land use code changes and help guide development in the Wright's Mesa Zone District.

1. Ensure that new development respects and complements existing agricultural activities through the use of appropriate fencing, setbacks, and overall placement of structures.
2. Locate buildings at the toe of slopes and edges of meadows to allow for natural windbreaks and shelter, avoiding ridgelines.
3. Avoid development and roads on steep or unstable slopes as defined by the county Land Use Code (including all slopes greater than 30%).
4. Minimize cut and fill for roads.
5. Salvage and replant native plants whenever possible and use native plants for landscaping.
6. Protect significant geological features, such as rock outcroppings.

7. Incorporate wildlife-friendly fencing in accordance with Colorado Division of Wildlife guidelines.
8. Design buildings that mimic the profiles of the natural landscapes and that reflect the architectural heritage of the area.
9. Ensure that lighting is downcast and shielded.
10. Concentrate development lots away from wetlands, streams, riparian areas, wildlife habitat, or agriculture in one or more clusters.

### Principles for Wildlife-Friendly Development

Development can contribute to mortality of elk and deer if not designed to mitigate the impact on wildlife. Fencing, roads, and loss of habitat are the main offenders. The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) publishes two brochures and has other programs that are helpful for landowners or ranchers working with land and attempting to make wildlife-friendly choices. (See "Developing for Wildlife," and "Fencing with Wildlife in Mind" on the CDOW website for more information. CDOW suggests fencing and ideas that require minimal expense and upkeep and field tests its recommendations.)

When development occurs it must comply with standards set forth in the Land Use Code (Section 5-407) for wildlife habitat areas.

The following principles are also helpful for making development as wildlife-friendly as possible.

#### 1. Contiguous Corridors and Open Lands

Large contiguous open lands set aside through clustered development are of greater benefit to wildlife than small isolated parcels. Open areas should include native, unmowed vegetation. Leaving one or more corridors through a development can allow wildlife to move through it.

## **2. Landscaping Vegetation and Controlled Weeds**

Planting native vegetation, flowers, and shrubs, and controlling noxious weeds can benefit wildlife. Creating wetlands can also benefit wildlife.

## **3. Controlled Pets**

Uncontrolled pets (cats and dogs) are a significant threat to wildlife, as well as to farm animals and livestock. New development must meet county requirements in Section 5-407 of the Land Use Code prohibiting dogs in wildlife habitat areas.

## **4. Trash Containment**

Proper trash containment can help keep property and residents safe. Covenants can also address trash containment.

## **5. Fencing for Wildlife**

According to Colorado Division of Wildlife, "the less fence, the better." Fencing should allow for relatively free movement of wildlife. Fences for residential properties should either be kept close to buildings or be open designs. Livestock fencing can incorporate designs that allow wildlife movement. Development must comply with Section 5-407 of the Land Use Code regarding fencing.

# Chapter 5. Strategies

## Overview

A key aspect of the Wright's Mesa Master Plan is how it will be carried out after it is adopted. Strategies are specific actions the county or others must take to make this Plan a reality.

This chapter first presents a set of "Priority Actions" that are most critical to the successful implementation of this Plan. These are the steps that the county should undertake as soon as possible, following adoption.

The second part of this chapter presents strategies to achieve the goals and policies presented in Chapter 3—organized by the same topics:

- Land Use Balance and Orderly Growth,
- Economic Vitality,
- Character and Scenic Quality,
- Environmental Quality,
- Transportation Mobility and Safety,
- Adequate Facilities and Utilities, and
- Public Lands Access and Coordination.

San Miguel County will need a range of tools to implement the policies outlined in this Plan, including day-to-day policy decisions, revisions to the county's Land Use Code, and coordination with other governmental and non-governmental agencies, such as water and sanitation districts, school and fire districts, foundations, and other organizations to establish and manage conservation lands.

## Priority Actions

The following are the priority actions needed to implement this Plan:

**1. Revise the Wright's Mesa (WM) Zone District to be consistent with this Plan** – revisions to the WM Zone District will be needed to make it consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan and the Future Land Use Plan map and allow only low intensity uses outside the Norwood Master Plan Area. The county may also need to create new zone districts for town residential and light industry that will occur within the Norwood Master Plan Area.

**2. Intergovernmental Agreement with the Town of Norwood** – An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) may be needed between Norwood and San Miguel County to implement this Plan. The agreement would accomplish several purposes: (a) establish and recognize the Norwood Master Plan Area; (b) work toward consistent standards and clear annexation procedures and criteria for uses in the Norwood Master Plan Area; and (c) consider the possibility of pre-annexation agreements with property owners to ensure orderly development and annexation patterns.

**3. Non-Contiguous Density Transfers** – Develop procedures and standards to allow density transfers on contiguous and non-contiguous agricultural parcels outside the Norwood Master Plan Area to retain irrigated and productive agriculture lands. This would allow for development to be transferred from the agriculture conservation areas to areas within or adjacent to the Norwood Master Plan Area.

## Strategies

This section lists the strategies to accomplish the plan's goals and policies.

### **Land Use Balance and Orderly Growth**

The land use goals strive to promote coordinated and compatible growth on Wright's Mesa—through a logical expansion of Norwood and with continued agricultural operations and rural lifestyle outside the town.

### **Strategies to Coordinate Growth Overall**

#### **LU 1.1 – Future Land Use Plan**

The Future Land Use Plan map clearly delineates and distinguishes between areas suitable for town-level development and those suitable for agricultural and rural residential uses. Use the Future Land Use Plan and supporting policies to guide growth and development.

#### **LU 1.2 – Revise the Wright's Mesa Zone District**

Revise the Wright's Mesa Zone District to make it consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan and the Future Land Use Plan map and allow only low intensive uses outside the Norwood Master Plan Area. (See Priority Actions on page 39 for more information.)

### **Strategies to Coordinate with the Town of Norwood**

#### **LU 2.1 – Intergovernmental Agreement**

Develop an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Town of Norwood and San Miguel County that establishes and recognizes the Norwood Master Plan Area. (see Priority Actions on page 39 for more information.)

#### **LU 2.2 – Consistent Land Use Plans**

Work with the Town of Norwood to update the Future Land Use Plan for the Norwood Master

Plan Area from time to time to ensure that the land use plans of both entities are consistent.

### **Strategies to Promote Town Housing in Neighborhoods**

#### **LU 3.1 – Develop Consistent Town Residential Zone District and Standards**

Amend the county's Land Use Code to develop a Town Residential Zone District and standards for neighborhoods, and work with the Town of Norwood to adopt consistent standards for residential neighborhoods within the Norwood Master Plan Area. The county should also work with the town to monitor the demand for affordable housing, land and construction costs, and discuss strategies that may be considered or implemented to retain opportunities for affordable housing.

#### **LU 3.2 – Standards to Allow PUDs in Norwood**

Refine standards that make it easier for Planned Unit Developments within the proposed Norwood Master Plan Area (i.e., unincorporated San Miguel County for eventual annexation), provided they meet town standards.

### **Strategies for Commercial Land Uses**

#### **LU 4.1 – Commercial in Norwood Master Plan Area**

Work with the Town of Norwood to require new commercial development to be consistent with designated districts within the Norwood Master Plan Area and to be annexed. New commercial development should comply with town standards addressing size, appearance, parking, relationship to street and sidewalk, and other factors. The county does not intend to create a Commercial Zone District for Wright's Mesa.

## Strategies for Industrial Uses

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### LU 5.1 – Refine Land Use Code / Special Use Permitting Approach

Revise the county's Land Use Code to remove the Special Use Permitting approach for industrial uses in the Wright's Mesa Zone District and more clearly define and streamline approvals for agriculture support uses that are appropriate.

### LU 5.2 – Light Industrial Zone District and Standards

Amend the Land Use Code to create a new Light Industry Zone District and standards to be consistent with Norwood adopted designations for light industry.

### LU 5.3 – Criteria for Heavy Industry

Amend the Wright's Mesa Zone District to define locational criteria and performance standards for heavy industry.

## Strategies for Compatible Rural Residential

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### LU 6.1 – Improve Incentives for the Open Land Protection Subdivision

Outside the Norwood Master Plan Area, eliminate the Subdivision Exemption (allowing an extra dwelling unit) but increase accessory bonus units as an incentive for development using Open Land Protection Subdivision if at least 70% of a parcel is conserved for agriculture.

### LU 6.2 – Revisit Subdivision Exemption

Wright's Mesa has a subdivision exemption in place with the intent to allow farmers and ranchers to split off land for a family member. The county will revisit the exemption during the Land Use Code update to see if it is achieving that intent or if it has become a development tool.

## Strategies to Support Agriculture and Provide Options

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### LU 7.1 – Maintain/Refine Wright's Mesa Zone District

Maintain and refine the Wright's Mesa Zone District to retain agriculture activities and rural lifestyles.

### LU 7.2 – Non-Contiguous Density Transfers

Develop procedures and standards to allow density transfers on contiguous and non-contiguous agricultural parcels outside the Norwood Master Plan Area to retain irrigated agriculture lands. (See Priority Actions on page 39 for more information.)

#### Wright's Mesa Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)

*The planning team and Citizen Advisory Committee discussed establishment of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program for Wright's Mesa that requires the purchase of development rights from desired conservation areas outside the Norwood Master Plan Area to achieve density increases for town development. It was determined that such a program would be too complex and difficult to administer at the countywide level and would not attract sufficient interest from property owners.*

*Alternatively, this Plan recommends that the county establish procedures to allow for density transfers between properties on an individual contractual basis, as a means of achieving similar conservation goals.*

### LU 7.3 – Refine Open Land Protection Process

Refine the standards and criteria of the Open Land Protection (OLP) process to better align them with the agricultural conservation goals of this Plan, including:

- Administrative review for 20 or fewer lots,
- A 70% minimum open space set aside, balanced with increased bonus units as incentive,
- Site planning principles or guidelines for cluster subdivisions to ensure

compatibility with on-going agricultural operations and meet conservation goals.

#### **LU 7.4 – Work with Partners for Conservation**

Continue to work with landowners and land trusts to conserve large intact parcels (e.g., with conservation easements).

#### **LU 7.5 – Refine Wright's Mesa Zone District / Agriculture Support Uses**

Identify the regulatory obstacles on agricultural operations and uses, and amend the county's Land Use Code to remedy such constraints as appropriate.

Expand the definition of agriculture support uses to allow expanded activities compatible with retaining rural lifestyles and viable farms and ranches. Revise zoning to make it an administrative process (streamlined process) to obtain permits for agriculture support uses (e.g., roadside stands, equestrian activities and stables, and limited tourism and visitor uses).

#### **LU 7.6 – Promote Use of County PDR Program to Acquire Development Rights**

To retain productive agriculture land on Wright's Mesa, the county's Purchase of Development Rights Program, if it could be used, could be one option for conserving land. However, the criteria would need slight redefinition.

### **Economic Vitality**

The Economic Vitality goals and policies promote a stable and diverse town economy while maintaining ranching and rural economic uses.

The previous land use section addresses Land Use Code revisions that will help achieve economic vitality including, revising the Wright's Mesa Zone District to allow agriculture support uses and adding a district for light industry, consistent with town designations.

Generally, it is not the county's role to promote economic development as much as to remove obstacles to it. The county will continue to coordinate with the Town of Norwood, Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development

organizations to support a healthy vibrant economy. This Plan does not identify other specific economic development actions.

### **Character and Scenic Quality**

The Character and Scenic Quality goals and policies aim to protect the rural qualities and historical and cultural features of Wright's Mesa by minimizing the visual impacts of development and promoting historic sites.

#### **Strategies to Protect Character**

##### **CS 1.1 – Historical Sites and Markers**

Expand the list of San Miguel County historical sites, and develop a program to construct and restore historical markers.

##### **CS 1.2 – Lighting Standards**

Standards for lighting should minimize spillover and glare by ensuring lighting is of appropriate height, lamp wattage, and is shielded and downward-directed.

##### **CS 1.3 – Scenic Highway Overlay District**

Establish a Scenic Highway Overlay District for Highway 145 to protect scenic resources. This standard would only apply to property that is proposed to be developed or subdivided; existing development and agricultural uses would not be subject to any requirements. The overlay district would affect lands visible from Highway 145 that contribute to the visual quality of Wright's Mesa. The district should address, building massing and siting with topography, lighting, screening, and natural landscaping for residential development. Section 5-316 of the Land Use Code development standards could be a model to use.

### **Environmental Quality**

The Environmental Quality goals and policies aim to protect environmentally sensitive areas (such as wildlife habitat) and maintain clean air and water while avoiding unnecessary infringement on property rights.

## Strategies to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Water and Air Quality

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### EQ 1.1 – Follow Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan

Adhere to standards of BLM's Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan.

### EQ 1.2 – Use Wildlife-Friendly Development Guidelines

Develop and use wildlife-friendly guidelines to address development in Elk winter range habitat areas.

### EQ 1.3 – Follow Oil and Gas Regulations

Adhere to the county's oil and gas regulations.

### EQ 1.4 – Development Permit for Land Disturbance

Establish a Development Permit requirement for land disturbance, as required in other parts of San Miguel County. Permits should address public health and safety and emergency-related issues, wildlife habitat, and weed management (Note: Agriculture will be exempt from the process.)

## Transportation Mobility and Safety

The Transportation goals and policies aim to develop and maintain a transportation system that serves both the existing and future population of Wright's Mesa. The system will be comprised of roads, bikeways, sidewalks, pathways, and transit.

## Strategies to Achieve Transportation Mobility and Safety

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### T 1.1 – Town Road Standards

Within the Norwood Master Plan Area, require roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes in all new developments to be constructed to town standards.

### T 1.2 – Coordinated Planning for Connected Roads

Coordinate planning with Norwood to create a connected, efficient local road system to avoid bottlenecks on Highway 145.

### T 1.3 – Access Control on Highway 145

Coordinate with the Colorado Department of Transportation to minimize the number of access points to State Highway 145. Combine or eliminate access points if it will improve the safety, design, and/or service capacity of the highway.

### T 1.4 – Promote Expansion of County Transit

Work with regional employers and the county transit providers to expand Park-and-Ride and transit schedules.

### T 1.4 – Trails Coordination

To identify locations and ways to link trails to provide access to surrounding public lands, coordinate with the Town of Norwood, regional trails groups, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the State Highway Department of Transportation, and private landowners.

Evaluate county roads and rights-of-way to determine if they could support recreation trails.

## Adequate Facilities and Utilities

The Adequate Facilities and Utilities goals and policies strive to develop and maintain public and semi-public facilities, recreation facilities, and water and wastewater facilities, of adequate size and condition and in the right locations to serve existing and future Wright's Mesa residents.

## Strategies to Achieve Adequate Facilities and Utilities

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### PS 1.1 – Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Utilities

Enter into an IGA with the Town of Norwood and Norwood Water Commission and Sanitation District to address consistent standards for the

provision of services and facilities, to ensure that requirements are consistent between Norwood, service districts, and San Miguel County.

### **PS 1.2 – New Development Pays Fair Share**

Ensure that new development pays its fair share of the cost of providing new capital facilities necessary to serve it.

### **PS 1.3 – Review Telecommunication Facility Development Standards**

Review county development regulations for telecommunication facilities to ensure that facilities are sited and/or co-located in a manner that does not detract from the Mesa's scenic character.

### **PS 1.4 – Coordinate with Norwood Fire District**

Coordinate with Norwood Fire District to review development applications and future plan updates.

### **PS 1.5 – Development Standards to Reduce Fire Hazard**

Develop standards to reduce fire hazard in high risk potential areas, identified by BLM, and high fire hazard areas identified by San Miguel County.

### **PS 1.6 – Coordinate with R-2J School District**

Coordinate with Norwood R-2J School District to review development applications and future plan updates.

### **PS 1.7 – Coordinate with Power Utilities**

Coordinate with power utilities to review development applications and ensure new development does not exceed capacity.

### **PS 2.1 – Coordinate with Water and Sewer Utilities**

Coordinate with utility districts to ensure new town development does not exceed the design capacity of water and sewer facilities.

## ***Public Lands Access and Coordination***

The Public Lands Access and Coordination strategies aim to protect and benefit public land users and retain access to public lands as new development occurs. The county has jurisdiction for private development on school sections that are under State Land Board control. For federal lands, however, the county does not have jurisdiction, so it will need to coordinate with federal agencies. This Plan can determine what kind of development occurs adjacent to public lands and whether access is retained.