

this material can be very rapid, resulting in quick recharge of groundwater with poor quality effluent. Contamination with coliform bacteria or nitrates can occur under these conditions.

SEWER SYSTEM SUMMARY

Section	Conventional	Vault	Privy Vault	Total
19	2	1	0	3
20	5	6	0	11
21	22	20	29	71
22	3	1	0	4
27	48	44	25	117
28	101	90	16	207
29	79	54	20	153
30	4	0	1	5
31	1	2	2	5
32	36	2	4	42
33	9	13	4	26
34	4	1	0	5
35	6	1	0	7
Totals	320	235	101	656
%	49%	36%	15%	100%

Notes:

- Does not include systems that were built prior to County permitting.
- Section refers to the section number within Township 10 North, Range 73 West.
- Conventional systems utilize a septic tank and some type of soil absorption systems (leach field).
- Vaults are water-tight tanks design to receive household sewage flows, and require pumping when full.
- Privy Vaults are concrete tanks under an outhouse type structure. They require periodic pumping.

Studies of groundwater in crystalline rock indicate that the formations have very low porosity, a measure of water holding capacity. This is because the rocks are densely structured and contain little storage capacity. The vast majority of water occurring within these formations is in the fractures which develop. A low porosity means that relatively little groundwater is stored within the water table. This means that the water table is much more subject to contamination than groundwater within non-crystalline formations. This point is important because even under ideal conditions, conventional on-site sewer systems discharge some substances in concentrations that are above drinking water standards, and dilution with clean groundwater is necessary to lower their concentration. Nitrates are the principle concern in this regard. Treated wastewater below a soil absorption system typically contains about 40 parts per million of nitrates. The public drinking water standard is 10 parts per million. Nitrates do not undergo further treatment within the groundwater, and must be diluted to safe levels. As compared to locations on the plains, mountain subdivisions need more land in order to provide for required

dilution. Lot size and density are important tools for protecting groundwater quality once treatment in on-site systems has occurred.

Historically, many of the properties in the planning area have been developed as vacation or seasonal cabins. A large percentage use either sealed vault or privy vault sewer systems that are not designed to discharge treated sewage into the groundwater system. Many of the lots were platted prior to County adoption of zoning and subdivision standards, and are too small to accommodate wells and conventional septic systems. Continued pressure for more intense development in the “downtown” area, the conversion of many cabins to year-around dwellings, or a building boom on the remaining small lots would present significant challenges for maintaining safe water and sewer systems.

DOMESTIC WATER SYSTEMS AND WELLS*

In the Red Feather Lakes Plan Area, only Fox Acres Country Club and High Country Estates provide community water systems for their residents. Other residents and business owners rely on water from individual wells, or in some cases, water is hauled to the site.

The State of Colorado operates under a water allocation system known as the prior appropriation doctrine. The first claimant of water has a senior right to that water that must be satisfied before other junior rights can receive water. The State Division of Water Resources administers surface and ground water rights to ensure that this system is enforced. Every new well must receive a well permit from the Division. There are two classes of wells – those that are exempt from the water rights administration system and those that are non-exempt.

Exempt wells include Household Use Only Wells that are permitted on lots created prior to June 1, 1972. This type of well is issued for a single-family dwelling and does not allow use of any outside water or livestock watering. Domestic and Livestock Well permits are issued on tracts of land that are 35 acres or more. In some cases, these wells may serve up to three single-family dwellings, irrigate one acre or less of lawn and gardens and provide water to domestic animals and livestock. Commercial Exempt Wells are available to small businesses on lots created prior to June 1, 1972. Water is metered on new wells and is limited to one-third acre-foot per year. Outside use of water is not permitted. Some types of commercial uses do not qualify for this type of well, including motels, kennels and horse-boarding operations.

Other types of uses, including new subdivisions that propose use of well water, are required to replace out-of-priority stream depletions in time, place, amount and quality of water. An augmentation plan must be approved by a water court, indicating how water will be replaced to prevent injury to senior water right holders. In addition, County

* This section relies on information contained in the “Guide to Colorado Well Permits, Water Rights, and Water Administration,” Colorado Division of Water Resources, June 2002.

Adequate Public Facility Standards for new development require applicants to demonstrate that the water source will be safe, adequate and reliable.

Data from the State identifies 678 well permits in the Plan Area. The data available for the wells is substantial, but it does not provide all of the information that might be useful regarding existing wells. Water quality of individual wells is not monitored by any State or local agency. Individuals may bring water samples to the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment for testing, but they are sent on to a laboratory in Weld County. Records of the test results are not maintained.

Another piece of information that would be useful concerns the success rate of well drilling in the Red Feather Lakes area. In some cases the State data includes well depth, but does not include information about dry holes.

RECREATIONAL WATER

Until 1948, the water in the area lakes and ditches was a small part of a much larger irrigation system that provided water to the Poudre River and on to farms on the eastern plains. Formation of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and the potential of the Colorado-Big Thompson project further diminished the role of the Lone Pine drainage in the irrigation system.

In the late 1940's, the idea of separating the irrigation and recreation water rights gained momentum. The Red Feather Storage and Irrigation Company was formed and the new entity purchased water rights and the area reservoirs and ditches from the Tunnel Water Company. In turn, the Company sold West, Dowdy and Bellaire Lakes to the State Game and Fish Department. Water levels in the lakes that had previously fluctuated widely were maintained year-round, supporting fishing and other recreational uses. Currently, fishing in the lakes is open to any property owner, and to renters who pay dues. This arrangement has benefited the area for many years, and the lakes help define the community.

The Storage and Irrigation Company owns the most senior water rights in the Red Feather Basin. However, recently Company managers have raised concerns about the future of the water in the area. Domestic water use has preference over all other uses in times of shortage, and municipalities have the power to condemn water rights if the owners are paid just compensation. There is increasing competition in the Front Range for additional water to support growth. Some believe that it is only a matter of time before some type of claim is made on the Red Feather Lakes water.

The beneficial use decree that guarantees the Storage and Irrigation Company's use of the water is for recreation, fish propagation and domestic use. The idea of developing a domestic water system has been suggested as a possible method for protecting the water rights and keeping the water in Red Feather Lakes. A public water district could be

formed that would be able to provide domestic water to a portion of the Red Feather Lakes area, with the central village business area most often identified for future service.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation in the Red Feather Lakes Area is currently accomplished almost exclusively by private vehicles on roadways with functional classifications that range from arterials to local roads. Arterial roadways primarily provide mobility by connecting major destinations; major and minor collectors are the primary roads between various development areas and connect to the arterials; and the local road system provides direct access to adjacent land uses.

County Maintained Roads

The table below lists the mainline county road system that serves the Red Feather Lakes area. Larimer County is responsible for road maintenance on these roads which are typically located within a public right of way, either asphalt or gravel, approximately 22-24 ft in width, with limited shoulders, and no curb, gutter or sidewalk. Roadside ditches (swales) provide for drainage. A road map with an indication of these roads and their surface type is located at the end of the chapter.

COUNTY MAINTAINED ROADS

County Road	Known As...	Classification	Surface Type	Speed Limit
74E	Red Feather Lakes Road	Arterial	Paved to 73C	45 mph
73C	Creedmore Lakes Road	Major Collector	Paved to Hiawatha Highway	30 mph
162	Manhattan Road	Minor Collector	Gravel	30 mph
67J / 179	Prairie Divide Road	Minor Collector	Paved to Fox Acres	30 mph
218	Dowdy Lake Road	Local	Paved to campground	25 mph
162	Deadman Road	Local	Gravel	25 mph

Non County-Maintained Local Roads

Roadways not identified as county numbered roads are local roads that were generally established as part of the subdivision process and are privately maintained. Except where the County Commissioners have specifically accepted maintenance responsibility, the county does not maintain local subdivision roads. This private maintenance is accomplished via informal arrangements between adjacent property owners, homeowners associations, or sometimes property owners vote to form improvement districts, which can provide property tax revenue to improve and maintain subdivision roads in their area.

One such district exists within the plan area and the map at the end of the chapter identifies the boundaries of General Improvement District 13A.

These local subdivision roads are typically simple gravel facilities, often narrow and occasionally with a substandard alignment and/or geometrics due to topography. For some facilities, the roadways appear to preclude proper emergency access for fire equipment.

The fact that these roads are privately maintained is not an indication of whether the access rights are public or private. In fact, the location and access rights on non-county maintained local roads in the Red Feather area varies greatly. In some areas right-of-way has been dedicated, although it can be as narrow as 20 ft. In other cases, local roads are located only on access easements instead of public dedications of right of way. And in older subdivisions, the actual location of the roads often does not match the location of roads as shown on the original subdivision plats.

Many of these subdivision roadways have been used as public roadways for decades although in some cases their legal status as a public facility is not clear. (The exception is Fox Acres Country Club, whose gated roadways are specifically designated as private roads.) These variations and uncertainties make for a very complex transportation situation within the plan area.

Snow Removal

The county generally provides snow removal through the use of a priority system on county-maintained roadways. The Poudre School District augments that snow removal on their bus routes that extend beyond the county maintained roads. However, PSD routes change from year to year according to student needs, so there is no certainty about which roads will receive this service.

Existing Traffic Volumes

The county collects traffic volume information every other year in the summer season along county-maintained roads. Average Daily Traffic counts (ADTs) are gathered for both a weekday and weekend, typically in July and are shown on the map at the end of the chapter. The weekend volumes tend to be approximately 60% higher than a weekday. Because the year round occupancy of homes is only approximately 25%, off-season or winter volumes are substantially lower.

Paving Thresholds

The Larimer County Land Use Code adheres to state air quality statutes that identify the daily traffic volumes on unpaved roadways above which fugitive dust control is warranted. In mountainous areas such as Red Feather Lakes, the county has adopted the thresholds shown in the table below.

**DUST CONTROL AND/OR PAVING THRESHOLD
(Daily Traffic Volumes)**

Terrain	Untreated for Dust Suppression	Treated Gravel
Mountainous	150	300

A proposed development that accesses onto an unpaved roadway whose volumes exceed those in the table would be required to provide mitigation, generally through paving.

The unpaved county maintained roadways in the plan area are treated for dust suppression. The only county-maintained gravel road with existing traffic counts greater than the paving threshold is CR 162, which has a summer weekday / weekend ADT of 420 / 620 vehicles per day. (Sections of CR 73C or Creedmore Lakes Road also exceed the paving threshold, but this area is outside the study area and traffic is due to the Crystal Lakes and Beaver Meadows subdivisions.)

It appears that the main entrances to most Red Feather Lakes subdivisions have access to a paved county maintained roadway. The exceptions are South Nokomis Lake and Ramona Heights, which both access CR 67J via Hiawatha Heights. Again, Crystal Lakes is not included in the study area.

The county does not collect traffic volume information for privately maintained local roadways; therefore it is not specifically known which roadways are above the dust abatement and/or paving threshold. However, it is likely that the more significant local roads including Main Street, Ramona Drive, and Hiawatha Highway currently exceed the paving threshold during the peak summer months.

Bridge Structures

There are no major bridge structures in the plan area. Drainage across roadways is generally accomplished via culvert pipes.

Downtown Area and Commercial Businesses

There are a number of commercial businesses and facilities that provide a wide range of goods and services to the residents of Red Feather Lakes. Many of the businesses are located in the downtown area in the vicinity of Main Street. Main Street is unpaved, and no well-defined delineation exists between the traveled way, parking, and pedestrian movement areas.

The only county-maintained access to the downtown area is along CR 67J (Prairie Divide Road). Residents in outlying subdivisions, such as Letitia Lake, East Owassa, and Crystal Lakes, either need to access the downtown area via 74E and 67J, or “cut through”

other subdivisions. This has been identified as a concern, especially along Hiawatha Highway.

Special Events

The area has several special events every year, the largest of which is the July 4th celebration. This event draws significant attendance, with some estimates as high as 5,000-6,000 people. It is an important component of the economic well-being of area businesses. The parade route is along Hiawatha Highway and Main Street, and cars are parked on private unpaved parcels.

ENVIRONMENT

The Red Feather Lakes area is located in a beautiful natural setting that includes vistas of mountains and valleys, abundant wildlife and of course, the many lakes from which the community takes its name. Along with timbering, water development brought many of the early entrepreneurs to the area. In the early 1900's, local business people began to appreciate the recreational potential of the area's many amenities, leading to ambitious plans for resort development. Today, residents and visitors alike are drawn by the natural beauty and the wealth of outdoor activities available on the community's door step. In many ways, the natural environment defines the Red Feather Lakes area.

Forest Health

The Red Feather Lakes area is located at an elevation between 8000 and 8600 feet. The dominant forest cover type is ponderosa pine for the overstory canopy with various shrubs, grasses and sedges making up the understory ground cover. Shrubs found frequently in this habitat type are kinnikinnik and common juniper. Elk sedge and kings fescue are the predominant sedge/grass associated with ponderosa pine stands at this location. On flat and south facing slopes these forest stands tend to be primarily ponderosa pine. On north and moist facing slopes Douglas-fir is also present.

The most common forest pests that threaten the health of ponderosa pine stands in the Red Feather Lakes area are the mountain pine beetle and dwarf mistletoe. Mountain pine beetle populations are cyclical and tend to increase due to poor forest conditions such as long durations of draught and forest overcrowding. Severe damage and mortality to forest stands of ponderosa pine has been documented for this area in the past. The needles of trees infested with mountain beetle one summer will fade to red/rust the following summer and fall and the tree will be dead soon after.

Dwarf mistletoe is a plant parasite that lives on the branches and trunks of both ponderosa and lodgepole pine in this area. The mistletoe competes for moisture and nutrients with the host tree and eventually disrupts the flow of these life processes. Trees infected with dwarf mistletoe can survive for decades before succumbing to this parasite. Deformity of the terminal and lateral branches is a sign of infection. Dwarf mistletoe

also predisposes the weakened trees to other forest pests such as insects, blister rusts and root diseases.

The second most common forest cover type for this area is quaking aspen. Aspen stands grow in clonal patches in which all trees in the patch are connected by the same root system and are genetically identical. The understories of aspen stands are more lush than ponderosa pine as they tend to grow on moister sites. On the moist aspen sites, some lodgepole pine, Engelman spruce and subalpine fir can be found growing in the understory. Thick sedges, grasses and herbs thrive under aspen stands. Aspen stands provide very good cover and forage for many animals. Willows and thin leaf alder can be readily found in the wet draws, along streams and near the shores and banks of the lakes in and around the Red Feather area.

Wildfire Hazard

Forest conditions within the Red Feather Lakes Plan Area have evolved with fire, and fire will continue to play a major role in forest succession. Years of undisturbed forest growth and resultant fuel accumulation caused by successful fire suppression, lack of forest management, a general misunderstanding of forestry and fire ecology, and more homes and communities within the forest have combined to create a significant wildfire problem. The potential for wildfire is a constant concern in developed rural areas, where wildfire may pose a significant threat to life and property.

The County has taken a proactive stance towards reducing this risk, through the development and enforcement of building and land use codes that address wildfire hazards, and through creation of the Wildfire Safety Program. This program provides education and awareness information to citizen on mitigation techniques designed to reduce the impact of a wildfire; plus, provides guidance on the creation of defensible space, construction materials and forest stewardship issues. Additionally mitigation of wildfire hazards is addressed in the review process for new development.

Larimer County first adopted maps for wildfire hazard areas in the 1970's and the maps were updated in 2000. The hazard mapping considers vegetation type, slope, aspect (south-facing slopes receive more sunlight and are drier), access, water supply, defensible space, construction materials and overall subdivision layout. The Plan area contains some areas within the moderate and severe hazard ratings. Avoidance is always the preferred method of mitigating potential impacts of hazard areas, and this information must be considered in the design of any new development.

Though County, State and Federal agencies have a significant role in coordinating wildfire mitigation efforts, ultimately it is the responsibility of the private landowner to implement mitigation techniques on private lands.

Wetlands

The most significant wetland mapped in the Red Feather Planning area is identified on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and is located adjacent to South Lone Pine Creek to the south of County Road 74E. The wetland area starts at Indian Prayer Park subdivision and drains into Parvin Lake. NWI has mapped this wetland as a Palustrine wetland that is classified as seasonal-riparian.

The NWI maps show the general location of wetlands and do not provide the precise extent and location of the wetlands in the Red Feather Plan Area. Other wetland types that are likely to occur in this area are montane wet meadows, montane riparian shrubland, montane willow carr and montane riparian forest.

Wildlife

The Red Feather Plan Area experiences frequent visits from a variety of wildlife including black bears, mountain lions, mule deer, moose and elk. The area is also home to migratory songbirds, shorebirds and waterfowl during all or parts of the year. However, the Plan Area does not contain areas that have been mapped as Important Wildlife Habitat by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. There are also no known threatened or endangered species in the area.

Wildlife and human conflicts have increased in recent years as the Red Feather Lakes area has grown. Division of Wildlife staff has stated that the largest problem they encounter involves bears attracted to garbage and other odor producing outdoor uses. It is important that residents and visitors to the area use the proper precautions to bear-proof their cabins, camp sites and residences.

HISTORY AND CULTURAL RESOURCES*

The Red Feather Lakes community has a rich and colorful history that relates directly to the current land use and development pattern of the area. Heirs of some of the earliest families in the area still reside or own property in and around Red Feather Lakes. Settlers were first drawn to the area in the last quarter of the 1800s, to mine and to develop timber resources for the Union Pacific Railroad in southern Wyoming. Soon, the prospect of water diversion from the Laramie River into the Poudre River basin was explored, but the scheme was struck down by the US Supreme Court. Since the earliest days, water development and use has played a central role in the area.

Early in the twentieth century, area business people began to realize the recreational potential of the area and its many lakes. The Red Feather Mountain Lakes Association

* This section relies on information obtained from *Red Feather Lakes: the first hundred years 1871 – 1971*, by Evadene Burris Swanson.

was incorporated in 1923 and developed plans for a large recreational/resort community. By 1925, nineteen hundred lots were sold and one hundred cabins ordered.

The community's name is derived from a popular Native American concert singer's name, Princess Tsianina Redfeather. The singer studied in Denver and was acquainted with some of the Association's members. Her persona and quest for her grandfather's grave in Colorado provided some of the early marketing for the fledging resort community.

Many historical sites and structures remain in the area. The Red Feather Historical Society has mapped 45 sites and referenced them back to the *First Hundred Years* book.

CONCLUSIONS: Opportunities, Issues and Constraints

The spectacular natural beauty of the Red Feather Lakes area is one of its greatest resources. For the most part, natural and environmental conditions do not present major concerns or constraints for present and future development. The major exception is the issue of wildfire, which is currently being explored by the Fire District through a planning process.

The Red Feather Lakes area in its present form was first established in the 1920s as a summer resort and recreational community. For the past several decades, full-time residency has been increasing and the current population includes a large percentage of retirees. In the earliest area subdivisions, there are often discrepancies between the written and mapped property descriptions and the way development has occurred over the years. The physical locations of structures and roads sometimes conflict with surveyed property boundaries, creating many problems for property owners and residents.

The business community includes a handful of seasonal businesses, but most remain open year-round. The largest concentration of businesses is located in the village center area, along with most of the community's civic and institutional uses. Many of the existing uses in the village center area and elsewhere are not appropriately zoned for the current use. The inconsistency between land use and zoning creates difficulty for the affected businesses that wish to expand or change from one type of business use to another. The area planning process is an opportunity to determine appropriate land uses and to bring zoning and preferred land use into consistency.

Existing infrastructure, or the lack of it, stands out as the major constraint governing future development of the Red Feather Lakes area. The lack of a public sewer system impacts both use of existing lots and new development. Most existing lots are smaller than current standards would allow for individual on-site sewage disposal. Lack of a public water system also affects both existing and potential new development. Many existing lots are eligible for exempt domestic well permits, but there are concerns with both quality and quantity of water that may be available for the long term.

There is also increasing concern about retention of the recreational water rights in the area lakes. Using some of this water to provide domestic water service to a portion of the community has been discussed as a possible way to retain the water in the community.

The County numbered road system provides good access to the area, but the challenges remain for some of the existing local subdivision roads. Some of these roads do not meet current standards such as width and alignment, and may present issues for emergency access. Maintenance of the local subdivision roads is also an issue. Local roads in the village center area (and a handful of others) attract "through" traffic, yet maintenance is the responsibility of local property owners or improvement districts funded by assessments on local property owners. In the subdivisions that were platted in the 1920s,

uncertainty about right-of-way location and questions of public versus private access status of the roads greatly complicates possible solutions.

Lack of public water and sewer systems, along with problems with some of the existing platted lot descriptions and road issues are underlying concerns that must be addressed before any significant changes in land use can occur. Land use planning and infrastructure planning (planning for water, sewer, roads and similar items) should be closely coordinated.

Generally, the designation of future land use should be made concurrent with or prior to sewer and water planning in order for the community's plan to set the direction for future growth and development. It is then possible to design utility systems and roads to meet future needs. However, it is also important to consider the need for new infrastructure, its cost and other impacts, as part of land use planning process. Different plan alternatives may have very different infrastructure needs, and that can be a determining factor in selecting one alternative over another.

CHAPTER III. Community Choices

The process of developing the area plan was designed to keep all of the interested parties informed and to include everyone who wanted to participate. Since about 75% of the property owners in the community either reside out-of-town or live in Red Feather Lakes during only part of the year, a special effort was made to keep this group involved. A number of different community access media were used, and all were designed to provide information about the planning process and to obtain input from the community.

Newsletters were mailed throughout the process to all known property owners and residents, and a web site was developed to provide up-to-date information. All meetings of the Plan Advisory Committee were publicized, and many community members attended. Public comments from the PAC meetings were recorded and posted on the web site.

Two community meetings were held during the summer of 2005 and another in June of 2006. Meetings took place on Saturdays during the summer to allow as many interested citizens to attend as possible. An opinion survey was mailed to property owners and residents in June, 2005. A tabulation of the survey responses is included below, and a summary of the written comments is included in the Appendix.

A summary of the draft plan was mailed to property owners and residents in May, 2006, along with a comment form requesting input on the draft. More than 50 responses were received. A number of written comments were also made at the Open House or mailed or emailed to the Planning Department. All of these comments were compiled for review by the planning team and the Plan Advisory Committee.

THE RED FEATHER LAKES OPINION SURVEY*

In the spring of 2005, the Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) reviewed the conclusions and trends from the existing conditions report, and used that information together with their knowledge of the community to begin a discussion of the most pressing issues, opportunities and constraints facing Red Feather Lakes. This discussion formed the basis of the Red Feather Lakes Opinion Survey that was mailed to 1250 property owners and residents of the area in May 2005. More than a quarter of the total forms were returned, 336 in all. Of those surveys that were returned, almost half, or 155, also included additional written comments.

The survey was divided into two sections. The first section, titled Choices and Alternatives, contained six questions related to future land use and development issues.

* It should be noted that the survey methodology was not designed to obtain a statistically valid sample of the Red Feather Lakes population. The survey was mailed to all known residents and property owners, each of whom decided whether to return the form or not.

It purposefully included questions that reflected some of the types of new development that had been proposed or discussed in the community in the recent past.

The second section, Community Improvements, contained a series of potential community improvements that had been suggested to address some of the existing issues in the community. Respondents were also asked how they would prioritize the community improvements that they supported and these tabulated responses are included in the Appendix.

Choices and Alternatives	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I would support <u>new business and service development</u> in Red Feather Lakes to serve area residents	46 15%	95 30%	62 20%	112 36%
2. I would prefer for all <u>new</u> businesses and services to locate in the village center area, if concerns about water and sewer can be met in that area.	82 26%	120 38%	49 16%	62 20%
3. I would support <u>new</u> businesses and services locating adjacent to Red Feather Lakes Rd.	16 5%	69 22%	76 24%	150 48%
4. I would support <u>new</u> accommodation development like motels, campgrounds and resorts.	27 9%	74 24%	72 23%	141 45%
5. I would support <u>new</u> development that was higher density than zoning currently allows (more houses than one house for each 10 acres).	13 4%	51 16%	74 24%	176 56%
6. I would support efforts to reduce the potential for <u>new</u> development in the area such as raising money to acquire land or development rights from willing sellers or other <u>voluntary</u> conservation programs.	95 31%	97 31%	77 25%	39 13%
Community Improvements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A. An effort should be made to clarify/correct road and lot line location errors in older subdivisions.	38 12%	110 35%	87 28%	78 25%
B. An effort should be made to provide public water to existing developed areas.	45 14%	95 30%	77 25%	95 30%
C. An effort should be made to provide public sewer to existing developed areas.	52 17%	85 27%	77 23%	104 33%
D. A public park or playing fields should be developed in the village center area, including public restroom facilities.	30 10%	102 34%	82 27%	90 30%

Choices and Alternatives	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
E. An effort should be made to preserve historic sites and structures through <u>voluntary</u> acquisition or incentives.	98 31%	168 54%	24 8%	22 7%
F. All roads in the village center area should be paved.	55 18%	88 29%	70 23%	92 30%
G. All “main” or “through” roads should be paved.	36 12%	76 24%	90 29%	111 35%
H. All “main” or “through” roads should be maintained on a community-wide basis.	54 18%	124 41%	62 21%	61 20%
I. Local subdivision roads should be maintained on a community-wide basis instead of by individual subdivisions.	45 15%	110 37%	74 25%	61 20%
J. Bicycle/walking paths should be developed throughout the community.	38 12%	84 27%	90 29%	102 32%
K. A community effort should be made to protect the private recreational water rights for the lakes in Red Feather Lakes.	149 48%	118 38%	20 6%	25 8%

CHAPTER IV. Community Vision

A community vision is a description of a desired future for the community. Developing a vision statement is a major step in the community planning process. It identifies the community elements that are most important to protect and provides direction for the future. Based on community input including the Opinion Survey, the Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) reached agreement on the following statement in July, 2005. The vision statement was presented to the community in the August 2005 newsletter and at the August 27 Community Open House, and received a favorable response.

The Community Vision
<p>Red Feather Lakes desires to continue its traditions of being a community that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains its existing historic character as a family recreation area and its small mountain village atmosphere • Embraces and respects its history and the natural beauty of the area. • Pursues solutions for the challenges that could threaten its existing character and viability. • Sustains a safe, healthy and viable community for residents, businesses, visitors and property owners in a rural mountain environment.

The question of how to address the topic of “growth” in the Plan was central to many of the discussions about the Community Vision. In the end, PAC decided to put aside, but not ignore or forget, the topic of growth. Many PAC members felt that the issue could be better addressed in the course of discussing more specific principles and strategies in the Plan.

Some key points were made during the discussions.

- The word “growth” is a loaded, “red-flag” term that has different meanings to different people.
- Rather than focus on the term “growth” it would be more productive to deal with the various aspects of growth that are of concern or are important to the community.
- The entire planning process and plan document revolves around issues of growth, growth management, community development and change. Trying to capture these topics in a single statement tends to grossly over-simplify the issues.
- A deep division of opinion exists in the community and among PAC members on some of these issues. Adopting a statement in the face of widespread

disagreement could lead to polarization that would be detrimental to the future planning and decision making process.

- The community vision statement needs to speak to the areas of agreement, as well as the disagreements in the community, in order to provide a foundation for the community to move forward to problem solving on the topics where there is wide agreement.

CHAPTER V. Land Use and Development

The Red Feather Lakes community identifies itself as a small mountain village, and desires to maintain that existing historic character. The Area Plan is designed to help the community, individual landowners and Larimer County with decisions about future development that may occur. This chapter outlines the types of future land use that might be consistent with the community vision and community preferences about where future development should be located. It also identifies issues that the community faces to accomplish its vision concerning future land use and some of the pathways that the community may wish to pursue.

VILLAGE CENTER

The village center of Red Feather Lakes is an essential element of the community's historic character. It includes the gathering places where most of the community's events are held. Many of the business uses that meet the service and convenience shopping needs of the community are located there. It is also the location of many of the civic and institutional uses that are important to the whole community, such as the Post Office and Library.

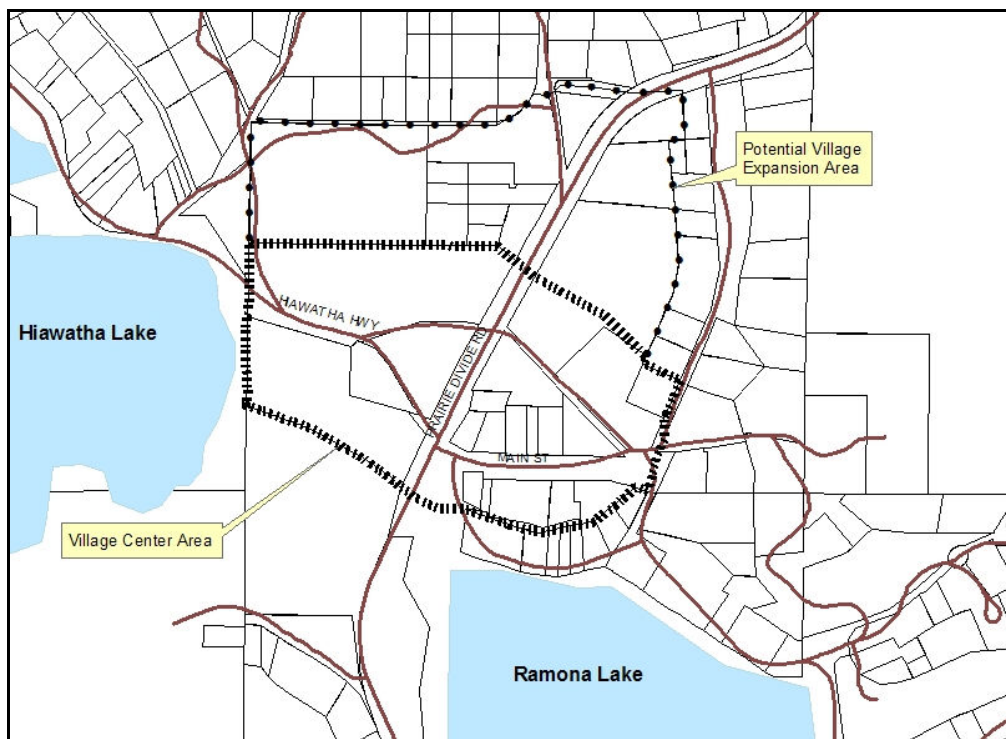
The village center area provides a strong focal point for the community. Although the area does not include developed pedestrian facilities, its compact form encourages walking and presents opportunities for meeting friends and neighbors. The benefits of this type of compact central business area are well documented in community planning principles. Besides helping to promote a sense of community, it is convenient for customers and provides the potential for business owners to work together on projects to promote and improve the area.

The Red Feather Lakes community has indicated a strong preference for maintaining the existing character of the village center area and this Plan supports maintaining and expanding the village center area as the primary business and civic center of the community. The Plan also recognizes some uses may not be appropriate for this area and other areas could be considered for future business uses. Applications for new business uses in other locations should be judged on a case-by-case basis according to the broad statements of the Community Vision.

The Village Center Map below shows the area of the current village center and a potential future expansion area. The existing village center area is mostly developed and it is appropriate for it to expand to meet the future needs of the community. The potential future expansion area includes mostly undeveloped property and also several existing residential uses. It is important to understand that any future expansion of the village center or any change from residential to business uses would be a private development decision requiring an application from the individual property owner.

Some community residents have voiced concerns about a government use of eminent domain or other means to condemn property or to force property owners to accommodate a different land use in this area. Statutory counties such as Larimer County do not have authority to use eminent domain or condemnation for economic development purposes, and this Area Plan does not support any forced change in use. It does provide an opportunity for property owners in this area to consider new development options for their property.

Another concern is the potential change in property tax on residential or undeveloped property in the area. State law provides that property will be taxed according to the existing use of the property, not the zoning or potential use shown in a planning document such as this area plan.



Village Center Area

One essential element for new development in the expanded village center area is maintaining the contiguous, compact form of the existing village center and a mix of uses that is compatible with existing uses and meets community needs. Another important goal for new development in the area is to facilitate the affected property owners' ability to work together to address common infrastructure needs. It is these joint efforts that have the potential to bring about the community's vision for land use in the village center. If and when major infrastructure changes are being planned for the area, it may be appropriate to consider a revision to this part of the Area Plan, so that utilities, transportation and land use planning can be coordinated.

Land use and zoning

Existing non-residential land uses in the village center include the following:

- General retail uses.
- Restaurants.
- Professional offices.
- Personal services.
- Civic and institutional uses.

Future land use should be consistent and compatible with existing uses, and should meet the service and convenience shopping needs of community residents and visitors.

Until improvements are made to area infrastructure, individual proposals for new uses and for expansion and change of existing uses will be considered on a case-by-case basis as they have in the past. New uses should be consistent with B-Business zoning or with the zoning that is adopted for the existing village center, as is discussed below.

The majority of the zoning in this area is O-Open, resulting in many of the businesses being considered non-conforming under the Larimer County Land Use Code. The term “non-conforming” generally means that the business was established before the current zoning or land use definitions came into effect. The existing business can continue to operate; it is often referred to as being “grandfathered”. However, non-conforming uses are not allowed to expand or to change from one type of business to another, and if the existing use is discontinued for more than a year, the right to the non-conforming use is lost. These zoning rules may be appealed to the appropriate County board and the applications are judged on a case-by-case basis.

In the village center area where the Plan supports present and future business development, it is more efficient to consider appropriate zoning for the entire area as a whole rather than for each business to individually request a zone change or appeal. After the Plan is adopted, an area-wide rezoning for existing business properties within the existing village center area should be considered, consistent with this Plan.

Although the B-Business district definition is a good fit for most existing and potential businesses, there are some exceptions. The B-Business district does not specifically include some of the civic and institutional uses that are located in the village center. Automobile service stations and convenience stores including retail sale of gasoline and other petroleum products are permitted in the B-Business district as a Special Review use, not as a use-by-right. Also, there is potential for a mix of residential and non-residential uses in the village center that is not currently allowed in the B-Business district description, such as the following:

- Live/work uses for artisans, professionals and personal or business service providers.
- Residential uses above or behind shops and/or offices.

Besides rezoning the existing businesses, a second action is recommended to review the B-Business zone to possibly allow these and similar uses, either as uses-by-right or as

Special Review uses. Another option that will be considered is creation of a new zoning district that is designed specifically to meet the needs of the Red Feather Lakes community and possibly other similar areas in unincorporated Larimer County.

Infrastructure needs

The existing concentration of activity in the village center provides an opportunity for developing new infrastructure that perhaps could not be replicated in another area. Supporting the area as the preferred location for new business development may help provide the necessary scale and stability to encourage investment in the area. This is important because developing the necessary improvements to meet basic standards will require substantial planning and investment on the part of the affected property and business owners, and support from the community as a whole.

The following section summarizes the essential improvements that are needed to insure the future of the village center area. These improvements are based on existing requirements for new development under the Larimer County Land Use Code. Some of these requirements and standards could cause significant challenges to individual proposals for new development in the village center area, and could better be addressed through the combined action of affected landowners in the area.

- Domestic water. All new development must demonstrate that it can be served either by a public community water system or by individual or shared wells that meet defined standards. In the case of wells, these standards include a confirmation from the Colorado Division of Water Resources that well permits will be issued, if the wells are not already in existence or if the use is changing from residential to non-residential. Also, evidence may be required to demonstrate that adequate water quality and quantity can be made available for the proposed use. Applicants must show that the water source will be safe, adequate and reliable.

As described in the Existing Conditions chapter, exempt well permits are available to parcels that were created before 1972, which includes most of the existing parcels in the village center. Exempt commercial well permits restrict the quantity of water, and there are also limits on the specific commercial uses that can be served. These standards and restrictions may have the effect of limiting the types of uses that can occur in the village center area.

- Sewage disposal. A public central wastewater system is the preferred method of sewage treatment in all areas of the County except the lowest density residential areas. Where a public system is not available, on-site treatment systems are allowed, but must meet specific standards that consider both the requirements of the proposed use and any site constraints that may exist. There are also spacing requirements between on-site systems and wells. In the village center, the existing small lots and the use of wells impose constraints that may present significant hurdles for proposed new development.

- **Paving.** As noted in the Existing Conditions chapter, it is estimated that Main Street (and potentially other roadways such as Hiawatha Highway and Ramona Drive) exceed the allowable daily vehicular capacity of untreated gravel roads. Any proposed developments accessing a non-paved facility whose volumes exceed the standards must pave the roadway (to the closest paved roadway) in order to comply with the County's Adequate Public Facilities Standard. This is an issue driven by state requirements and County Adequate Public Facilities standards, and there are limited options and alternatives available to meet compliance.
- **Storm water drainage.** If paving is required for a proposed development, storm water drainage along the paved portion needs to be addressed. In a "downtown" type environment with on-street parking, potentially limited right of way and a number of pedestrians, consideration could be given to providing a curb and gutter system in lieu of the typical roadside drainage ditches.
- **Number of Parking Spaces.** The area around Main Street does not currently accommodate a large number of parking spaces, and proposed developments may have difficulty meeting standard Land Use Code parking requirements. Calculations that incorporate shared parking and assumed trip chains (visiting more than one business in one stop) could help identify whether additional parking is absolutely necessary.

OTHER EXISTING BUSINESS AREAS

The purpose of this section is to recognize the existing businesses that are located outside of the existing village center area, and to support their ability to continue to operate successfully. Some of these businesses are already zoned or approved for business uses. This category includes the parcels in the High Country Estates PUD that are zoned T-Tourist and C-Commercial. It also includes the parcel at the east end of Main Street that has received approval of a Special Exception in the O-Open zoning district to operate a medical clinic and the Monroe Excavation property on County Road 74E that received approval of a Special Review.

There are several other existing businesses located on parcels that are zoned O-Open, and are considered non conforming uses. This category includes the parcels currently occupied by the Alpine Lodge, the Trout Lodge, the High Country Restaurant, the Pot Belly Restaurant and the Ponderosa Realty business.

In order to provide these existing businesses more flexibility in their business planning and operation, this plan supports rezoning to an appropriate non-residential zoning district that is consistent with the existing use. At this time, the A-Accommodations district is proposed for the Alpine Lodge and the Trout Lodge, T-Tourist district is proposed for the two restaurant properties, and B-Business is proposed for the Ponderosa

Realty property. Appropriate zoning will be reviewed with the affected business owners, and any proposed changes in zoning definitions or new zoning districts will also be considered.

The rezoning of existing businesses does not provide a precedent for the rezoning of adjacent properties.

NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The two most recently developed residential areas in the Red Feather Lakes, Fox Acres and High Country Estates, are platted as clustered developments. Residential lots and building sites in these subdivisions are clustered on a portion of the property, leaving the remainder for permanent private open space.

Clustered residential development offers several advantages.

- Clustering will help continue the existing pattern of development in the Red Feather Lakes plan area, where groups of residential lots are interspersed with natural open areas, or in the case of Fox Acres and High Country Estates, more active recreation areas.
- Important natural features and environmentally sensitive areas can be included in the undeveloped residual area, thereby protecting them while allowing property owners to develop their property.
- Clustering residential areas on a portion of the total property can make the necessary utility and road systems cheaper to build and easier to maintain.

Current County regulations require new rural subdivisions to be clustered using the standards and requirements for Conservation Development contained in the Larimer County Land Use Code.* The existing O-Open zoning allows a maximum of one dwelling unit for each ten acres, but the developed areas are clustered with smaller residential lots that are generally two acres each, creating private open space (residual land) on 80% of the total development area. The existing zoning is appropriate under current conditions, but if public water and sewer service becomes available to the community in the future, it may be appropriate to consider higher density residential development.

* Exceptions to this rule include properties that are less than 30 acres, properties that are submitted for development through the rural land use process and the division of parcels into lots of 35 acres or more.

Guidelines for New Residential Development

In addition to the requirements for Conservation Development contained in the Larimer County Land Use Code, the following guidelines should be considered in designing and locating areas for development and residual land (private open space):

- Residential development parcels should be sited in areas that are compatible with the specific characteristics of the area.
- In general, residual land should separate new residential lots from existing platted subdivision lots.
- Critical environmental areas and natural and cultural areas of local importance should be located in the residual area and potential impacts on these resources should be avoided or mitigated as part of the development design process.
- Private open space (residual land) areas should be designed to pull development away from adjacent roads in order to protect views and maintain the existing open character of the area.
- Wildfire hazard areas should be located in the residual area or otherwise avoided, and developed areas should be designed in accordance with community evacuation plans and/or input from the Fire District and other wildfire safety experts.
- Development should recognize existing public lands.

RED FEATHER LAKES ROAD CORRIDOR

The Red Feather Lakes Road (County Road 74E) provides the primary access to Red Feather Lakes, and the community has indicated a strong desire to maintain the character, vistas and beauty of this area. Careful design of any new development is very important. For example, although the north side of the road is more developed than the south, it retains a generally open appearance. As on the south side of the road, some of the structures are partly obscured by trees and other natural features, which preserve the existing open character of the corridor.

The Red Feather Lakes Plan does not intend to encourage or discourage proposals for change of land use / rezoning.

Unresolved Issues: Future Land Use

All of the undeveloped land in the corridor area is zoned O-Open. This zoning district allows low density residential development that would be clustered according to current Larimer County code requirements for Conservation Developments. Overall density with O-Open zoning is a maximum of one dwelling unit for each ten acres, but the developed areas are clustered with smaller residential lots, creating private open space (residual land) on 80% of the total development area. (See the discussion under New Clustered Residential Areas above for additional information.) This type of development can be designed to accomplish many of the objectives that are discussed above.

The O-Open district also allows certain rural accommodation uses including resort cabins, RV parks and campgrounds and retreats, as Special Review uses. The Special Review process requires the applicant to meet specific development standards, and public hearings are conducted to consider approval. The Corridor area has been discussed as a possible location for this type of development. The Corridor area has also been discussed as a location for new business development, particularly adjacent to existing business areas. At the present time, there does not appear to be community agreement on these issues, and therefore, the Area Plan is silent.

This silence should not be interpreted to mean that the Plan takes a negative stand that might impact a particular development application. In the Road Corridor and elsewhere, when the Plan does not address specific elements, individual development and rezoning applications should be judged on a case-by-case basis according to the broad statements of the Community Vision.

To clarify this statement, land use principles in the Larimer County Master Plan state that new non-residential zoning should be limited to Growth Management Areas and designated areas in adopted Area Plans. The specific language of an adopted Area Plan overrides the general principle of the Master Plan that rezoning for business and industrial uses is not appropriate in rural areas.

Conservation Options

Larimer County strongly supports the ability of property owners to use their property according to the existing regulations and standards adopted in the County Land Use Code. For this reason, County area plans do not use land use designations of “future open space” or similar terms for those areas that community members might wish to have remain undeveloped. Property owners retain the right to use their land according to its existing zoning, as long as they can meet the requirements that apply to all land development in the County.

This in no way impacts the ability of individuals and groups to work with interested landowners on preservation options. Some area landowners have been instrumental in providing continuous stewardship of their land for many years, in a manner that is consistent with the heritage of their families. This heritage and tradition may make voluntary preservation a viable option. Voluntary options for acquiring land in the Road Corridor area and elsewhere have also been discussed throughout the process of developing the Plan, and are included in the Community Pathways chapter.

Chapter VI. Community Pathways

After the Area Plan is adopted by the Larimer County Planning Commission, the process of achieving the Community Vision of Red Feather Lakes will have just begun. Both the community and the County will have a number of potential steps that could be taken to continue the process of addressing issues and opportunities.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline some of the actions that the community may wish to pursue, in order to maintain a high level of communication and consensus building and to begin to chart pathways to making desired community improvements. The chapter also identifies some of the specific steps that the County can take to help implement the Community Vision.

The pathways for community action focus on several different issues, but all have some elements in common. Successful problem solving in the Red Feather Lakes community, and probably in any community, requires a carefully designed approach. Problem solving is most successful when it works “from the ground up,” with a goal of ensuring inclusiveness and transparency in the process. All of the affected interests need to be included, and they need to give their consent to the solutions that are eventually selected, in order for effective implementation to occur.

The Red Feather Lakes Opinion Survey (see chapter III) asked questions about a number of potential projects that had been suggested by some individuals to benefit the quality of life in the community. With a few exceptions, the response to these ideas was very mixed. Until there is clearer agreement that the issues need to be addressed and that the result would truly be a better quality of life, it is probably premature to formulate specific action steps.

In the fall of 2005, the Plan Advisory Committee began a series of discussions focused on the high priority issues and opportunities facing the community. The issues that PAC selected as being most critical included water and recreational water rights, water quality and sewage disposal, and road maintenance and improvement. Other issues that were identified as high priority for future problem solving included fire mitigation, roads and lot line issues in older subdivisions and voluntary conservation strategies to reduce growth potential.

Before real progress can be made on these or similar community issues, there needs to be consensus among the affected parties that the problem is critical and needs to be addressed. Once that point is reached, real problem solving can begin. Until that point, it is most important to maintain a forum for education and discussion such as what was begun by the Plan Advisory Committee.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

One of the first issues discussed by the Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) was the need for an on-going community structure to enable a forum for discussions about community issues.

There are two separate objectives for a community organizational structure:

- Communication with the County regarding development proposals and other issues that involve both the community and the County.
- Communication and decision making on issues that are internal to the Red Feather Lakes community.

These two functions could be performed by a single community organization, or by one or more new or existing organizations.

PAC noted that there are existing organizations that are the problem solvers in the community. However, these existing organizations are focused on their own specific areas of interest. There is not currently an organization looking at community issues as a whole in a public forum. There is a need for the group that is seen as representing the various viewpoints of the whole community with a very inclusive, open and visible meeting process. Community meetings should be open to all, well publicized and held at convenient times and locations.

The initial charter of Red Feather Lakes PAC was to advise the County on developing an Area Plan. The PAC members were specifically selected by the County Commissioners because they represented various viewpoints in the community and were committed to a very inclusive, transparent community process for developing the plan. During the plan development process, PAC was instrumental in bringing together various viewpoints.

After discussing these issues over the course of several meetings, PAC developed the following recommendation for an interim community organization:

- The County should reappoint the existing PAC with no restrictions on the issues to be discussed; its charge would include but not be limited to commenting on land use and development applications.

If this recommendation is accepted by the Board of County Commissioners, one of the first items of discussion could be the potential alternative long term approaches for community organization. The PAC has spent considerable time discussing these issues, but it is important to include the community in the decision making process.

Alternative Long-Term Approaches: Pros and Cons

The following section outlines some, although probably not all, of the potential ways that the community could organize itself to communicate with the County and provide communication and decision making within the community. The pros and cons also are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to briefly state some of the issues that should be considered when the community begins the discussion of how it wishes to proceed.

The Red Feather Lakes PAC could continue to fulfill both community structure objectives. This would require approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Pros: Regarding the role of communication with the County on development proposals and general issues, the RFL PAC would be similar to the LaPorte Area Planning Advisory Committee, which that community generally regards very favorably. County policy would help ensure that the County appointed members would represent a range of viewpoints and that meetings would be open and publicized. The County Planning Department could provide staffing on discussions of development applications and possibly other matters.

Cons: County policy for appointed boards and commissions limits the independence of such a group. All formal communication must be to or through (approved by) the Board of County Commissioners. A group appointed by the County Commissioners might not have the same community support as one selected by community members.

The Red Feather Lakes PAC could communicate with the County regarding County/community issues and development proposals AND a new community organization could be formed by the community for the purpose of communication and decision making internal to the Red Feather Lakes community.

Pros: A group formed by the community could act independently, and a board (officers) selected from and by the organization might have more community support than a County appointed committee. A new group might be better able to avoid perceptions of not being inclusive or having a single viewpoint that might attach to an existing group.

Cons: The logistics of forming such an organization would be very complex, if it is intended to represent all of the community segments including non-resident property owners and seasonal residents. The County would not be obliged to support such a group.

The Red Feather Lakes PAC could communicate with the County regarding County/community issues and development proposals AND an existing community organization could assume the additional role of community wide communication and decisions making internal to the community.

Pros: An existing group has the advantage of existing structure and membership that could be built upon to support a broader mission.

Cons: An existing group might not want to or be able to take on an additional mission and responsibility. An existing group might not be able to overcome perceptions of having a more limited viewpoint.

A new or existing group could assume both of the community structure roles, communicating with the County and providing community wide communication and decision making.

Pros: A new or existing group would be independent of County policies and could determine its own path.

Cons: The County would not be obliged to support such a group, or recognize it as representing the community. This future decision of the Board of County Commissioners would be based at least in part on characteristics of the organization and its performance in being inclusive and open in its operation.

The community could incorporate. Although a more detailed analysis would be required to be certain, it appears that the Red Feather Lakes community could meet the statutory requirements to allow it to incorporate as a Town.

Pros: Forming an independent governmental entity would provide the most flexibility and independence in decision making and problem solving. The political process of voting is well understood as a means of determining public opinion and providing direction.

Cons: The process of incorporation is complex and would probably require hiring a consultant to provide assistance. An election is required, so that the outcome of the process would not be certain. Incorporation would require the new Town to provide and pay for the services that are currently provided by the County as well as any additional services it might choose to provide.

POTENTIAL FUTURE COMMUNITY ACTION STEPS

The following section outlines some of the steps that the community may want to pursue, if and when it has decided that a critical issue exists that requires action. In general, the suggested possible action steps follow a process of strategic problem solving.

- Problem statement - Develop a short, concise statement of the problem
- Causes/constraints - Identify the basic causes and constraints related to the problem
- Resources - Determine what resources are required and what resources might be available
- Desired outcomes - Define a desired outcome and alternative solutions
- Action plan - Develop a strategic implementation plan

The potential issues that are listed below are those that were identified by the Plan Advisory Committee as high priority.

Protecting the Water in Area Lakes

This issue involves the concern that the water in the area lakes, which is primarily used for recreation purposes, might at some future point be appropriated for domestic use by a downstream water system. The beneficial use decree that guarantees the Storage and Irrigation Company's use of the water is for recreation, fish propagation and domestic use.

The idea of developing a local domestic water system using the water has been suggested as a possible method for protecting the water rights and keeping the water in Red Feather Lakes. A public water district could be formed that would be able to provide domestic water to a portion of the Red Feather Lakes area, with the village center area most often identified for initial service. The community opinion survey indicated strong support for community action to protect the area water rights.

Possible Action Steps: Discussion on this issue has been on-going in the community for some time, and the problem solving process appears to have reached the stage of defining desired outcomes and alternatives. The next step would be identifying the target area for the initial water service and gaining support from the effected interests to proceed with a detailed implementation plan. The critical effected interests in this issue appear to be the Storage and Irrigation Company and the property owners in the area that would be served by the domestic water system. Either of these groups could take a leadership role. The specific vehicle for domestic water service would be a water district (or metropolitan district or water and sanitation district). More information about forming a district is described below.

Domestic Water

In the Red Feather Lakes Plan Area, only Fox Acres Country Club and High Country Estates provide community water systems for their residents. Other residents and business owners rely on water from individual wells, or in some cases, water is hauled to the site. Some individuals have expressed concerns with both quality and quantity of water that may be available from wells for the long term. Others do not share the concern or do not believe that the issue is critical at this time. The Plan Advisory Committee recommended gathering more information by providing a voluntary well testing program, but there was disagreement about the details of how such a program should be run. Some community members were present at the PAC discussion that did not support the idea.

Possible Action Steps: This issue does not appear to have reached the point where there is widespread consensus in the community. The PAC recommendation of well testing could provide valuable information that might help clarify the issue. Before that step can be implemented, community discussion needs to continue to determine if there is sufficient interest to pursue a well testing program at this time. If and when the community is ready to proceed, the County Department of Environmental Health could provide technical assistance in designing a testing program and interpreting the results. It is possible that some funding assistance could be available from the County or another source.

If after more discussion and collection of information, the community determines that moving from individual wells to a public water system would be desirable, the next step would be formation of a water district. A water district could service the entire community or only a part of it.

Formation of a Water District: The following brief description of the mechanics of forming a water district is included to provide some general information that may be useful as the community continues to discuss the domestic water issue. This general description of the process would also apply to forming a sanitation district or other special service district, or a metropolitan district, which is a special district that provides more than one type of service.

A water district is a type of special purpose unit of government that is created to provide water service to a specific area. State statutes define how districts are created and how they can operate. A district is created only after the qualified electors of the proposed area vote in favor of forming the district. Before the election is held, the promoters of the district must develop a service plan that includes both preliminary engineering studies and a financial plan, and the Board of County Commissioners must approve the plan following a public hearing. One of the County's considerations is whether or not the proposal is consistent with the County Master Plan (which includes the Red Feather Lakes Area Plan).

Forming a special district is a relatively complex procedure, and generally involves hiring a consulting team that includes expertise in engineering, law and financial analysis. When the community indicates that it may be ready to pursue this option, there may be technical and/or financial assistance from the County and possibly from grants or low-interest loans that could aid in financing the construction of the treatment and delivery system. Resources include the County Department of Environmental Health and the State Department of Local Affairs.

Wastewater Treatment

All of the residences and businesses in the Plan Area except in Fox Acres and High Country Estates are served by individual on site sewer systems, which may be conventional systems, vaults or vault privies. Only about half of the existing dwelling units with individual treatment systems have conventional systems, with the remainder using vaults or privy vaults. The geology of the area is not ideal for conventional septic systems, as is discussed in more detail in chapter II. These conditions have created concern with water quality both for ground and surface water. This issue overlaps with the issue of domestic water quality from wells that is outlined above, and the possible action steps for addressing the issue are the same.

Road Maintenance and Improvement

Roadways that are not identified as county numbered roads are local roads that were generally established as part of the subdivision process and are privately maintained. Except where the County Commissioners have specifically accepted maintenance responsibility, the county does not maintain local subdivision roads.

The property owners in the western part of the community (generally west of Prairie Divide Road) voted to form an improvement district (General Improvement District 13A) which provides property tax revenue to improve and maintain subdivisions roads in their area. One of the issues associated with this situation is that some of roads within the Improvement District are used by community members and others who do not help to fund the maintenance. Another issue is that some of the community's most used roads (for example Main Street and Ramona Drive) are not located in an improvement district.

Possible Action Steps: If and when the property owners of a neighborhood that is not currently included in General Improvement District 13A would like to address road maintenance and improvement in their area, the County Engineering Department could provide assistance to help form an improvement district. Another pathway that could be explored is including road maintenance with other community services such as public water or sewer in a metropolitan district. A metropolitan district is a type of special district that provides more than one type of community service (see the description under Formation of a Water District above).

Formation of a County Improvement District: County improvement districts are taxing units that counties are authorized to create in order to enable property owners within a given area to construct, operate or maintain a public improvement or service. There are two types of county improvement districts. General improvement districts (GIDs – also know as public improvement districts) are funded by an increased mill levy on the property within the district. They can be used for operation and maintenance as well as initial construction of public improvements. The road district in Red Feather Lakes (GID 13A) is an example of this type of district.

Local improvement districts (LIDs) are another type of county improvement district that can be used to construct and finance public projects over a predetermined period of time (usually 10 years) so that the whole cost of the improvement does not have to be paid at once. Funding for LIDs is provided by an assessment on property, not a mill levy, and the assessment may be made according to the benefit received by the property. Local improvement district may also use sales tax to provide funding.

If at least 60% of the property owners support the district formation, the county will help prepare an improvement plan including preliminary engineering studies and estimated cost. The County will also help prepare the formal petition that is necessary to initiate the hearing process. There is a \$100 application fee to begin the district formation procedure.

Lot Line and Road Location Issues

In the earliest area subdivisions, there are often discrepancies between the written and mapped property descriptions and the way development has occurred over the years. The physical locations of structures and roads sometimes conflict with surveyed property boundaries and subdivision plats, creating many problems for property owners and residents. The situation also greatly complicates efforts to maintain and improve roads, as the locations of the rights-of-way are sometimes in question.

At the present time, property owners deal with their individual situations through a County process such as amending the plat to conform to existing conditions. However, it is often the case that agreement and action by many property owners is necessary to “solve” the problems. An example is the case in which a road is not constructed where it is shown on the original subdivision plat and this road crosses several lots.

Instead of each property owner amending the plat of their individual property one at a time, it might be more cost effective for a group of owners of contiguous property to work together on surveying and drafting an amended plat for a larger area. This approach could have the added benefit of clearly establishing the location of road rights of way in a subdivision or part of a subdivision.

Possible Action Steps: A possible method for funding such an effort would be creation of a County improvement district, as is described above. Both the County Engineering Department and the County Planning Department are resources that could provide assistance in organizing a replatting project.

Village Center Issues

Chapter VI above discusses how water, sewer, roads and other transportation issues affect the potential for change in the village center area. The chapter notes that the existing concentration of activity in the village center provides an opportunity for developing new infrastructure that possibly could not be replicated in another area. If the business and property owners of this area decide that they would like to begin to address these issues, there are several implementation strategies that could be considered.

Possible Action Steps: One potential strategy would be forming a metropolitan district for the village center area. The general process is described above under Formation of a Water District. Services provided by a metropolitan district are financed through a mill levy and user fees. The district has the ability to incur debt (bond) in order to finance construction projects. Various County departments, including Engineering, Environmental Health and Planning, as well as the State Department of Local Affairs are potential resources to assist in the initial planning for such a district. There may be grants and low-interest loans available, depending on the specific projects that are desired.

Another potential implementation strategy is formation of a county improvement district in conjunction with a special district providing water and/or sewer service. The general process for forming an improvement district is described above. In Larimer County, improvement districts have primarily been used for road and stormwater projects, but the enabling legislation provides for a larger range of potential projects and services. County local improvement districts (LIDs) have the ability to use sales tax revenue to finance some activities, which might be appropriate to the business area.

If and when the affected interests in the village center area would like to explore options for improving the infrastructure in the area, the County and State are potential resources. Depending on the outcome of these discussions, it may be appropriate to revisit the future land use for the area that is described in chapter VI through a plan amendment.

Voluntary Conservation Strategies

Throughout the development of the Area Plan, citizens and the Plan Advisory Committee have discussed the natural areas and historic sites that have special importance to the

community. The idea of working with willing property owners on strategies to protect these special places is not new to this planning process, but discussions about future land use in the area have raised awareness on the subject. Land that is currently undeveloped will not necessarily stay that way in the future. All private property in Larimer County is zoned to permit some level of use. Most of the undeveloped property in the plan area is zoned to permit low density residential development.

Individuals and groups of citizens are coming together to work with willing land owners to purchase land for open space, purchase conservation easements and secure donations of land or development rights. The Red Feather Historical Society, Inc., a group of citizens with special interest in the area's wealth of historic sites and structures, has been working on conservation strategies for some time.

Possible Action Steps: Larimer County has an active Open Lands program that works with private land owners to purchase or otherwise protect areas of the County that are consistent with the goals of the adopted Open Lands Master Plan. That Plan focuses on the Front Range area where the majority of open space pressure occurs, and does not specifically identify any priority areas in the Red Feather Lakes area. The Plan does state that the Open Lands program will work in partnership with other agencies and groups to protect natural resources and open space throughout the County. All activities of the Open Land program involve willing buyer / willing seller negotiations.

Individuals and groups of citizens who wish to work toward preserving areas with special local significance might consider partnering with one of several Land Trusts that work on preservation issues in Larimer County. Although anyone can work to acquire property outright from a willing seller, state and federal tax laws may also provide potential advantages to property owners who sell or donate their property or development rights to an appropriate public or non-profit entity for conservation purposes.

The Colorado Historical Society offers programs that help communities identify the sites and structures that have historical and archeological significance. The State Historical Society also maintains a register of historic properties that imposes no restrictions on what private property owners may or may not do with their property. Listing does provide eligibility to apply for state tax credits for restoration, rehabilitation or preservation. The Society also offers grants from the Colorado Historical Fund that may be used for acquisition and development, education and survey and planning projects.

COUNTY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Following adoption of the Red Feather Lakes Area Plan, several County actions are recommended to help implement the purpose and intent of the Plan.

Reappoint the Plan Advisory Committee

The Board of County Commissioners should appoint the Red Feather Lakes Plan Advisory Committee for an additional period to be determined by the Commissioners. For this time period, the PAC would be responsible for providing communication between the County and the Red Feather Lakes community on development applications and community issues. In addition, PAC would continue to provide a forum for on-going discussions on topics of potential future community action steps such as those outlined above. Prior to the end of the period, PAC would be responsible for providing a recommendation for future community organizational structure.

Initiate Rezoning of Existing Business Properties

Chapter V outlines a process for rezoning existing business properties in the Red Feather Lakes plan area, and also for considering amendments to the zoning chapter of the Larimer County Land Use Code. Prior to beginning any rezoning process, the County Planning Department will contact all of the affected property owners. No rezoning action associated with this planning process will take place without the consent of the affected property owners.

Provide Technical Assistance

Larimer County will continue to provide assistance to the Red Feather Lakes Plan Advisory Committee and the community as it seeks to achieve its vision for the future.