

PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

Introduction: Whitewater is situated in an 18.5 square mile area, surrounded primarily by BLM land as well as internally dotted by BLM “disposal” properties. There are over 2,500 acres of BLM properties within the Plan Area. The open space and recreation opportunities provided by these BLM lands define a significant part of the rural character of Whitewater as well as the edges of the Community.

The existing low density residential development, number of undeveloped parcels and surrounding BLM properties lend to the rustic, open and rural qualities of the area. Whitewater is increasingly being recognized for housing opportunities and the amount of undeveloped property that is diminishing. As future residential development occurs at higher densities in response to increasing housing demands, these rural qualities will be challenged. It is important that as development progresses, targeted park, recreation, and open space parcels are conserved to continue to foster this quality of life for existing and future Whitewater residents.

Existing Conditions & Findings: As an historically rural area, the only part of Whitewater officially designated for open space or recreation are the boat launch site at the Mill Tailings Site, the Old Spanish Trail and the Gunnison Bluffs Trail. There are no organized or designated neighborhood or community parks. This lack of designated areas for public open space or recreation uses limits opportunities for casual neighbor interaction or gatherings. There is no community focal point (park or community center) which defines the Whitewater Community.

In addition to the surrounding BLM lands, Whitewater has excellent trails for hiking, biking, equestrian and off-road vehicle uses. There are outstanding opportunities within Whitewater to connect to surrounding trail systems. Currently the Old Spanish Trail, Gunnison Bluffs Trails, and the Tabeguache trails are mostly independent of any surrounding area trails including the Delta County Trail System.

The Gunnison River is popular for boating activities. The existing Mill Tailings Site currently acts as river access for boaters. The residents of Whitewater have identified Highway 141 as being another river access point where no formal parking area exists. Parking and related traffic accessing the river often burdens Highway 141.



Source: www.pedbikeimages.org/Annie Lux

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Mesa County owns approximately 1,500 acres surrounding the current Mesa County landfill. This land was acquired from BLM in 1994. The actual landfill is planned for 126 acres, although only 60 acres are currently in such use. The remaining 1,300+ acres are currently used for recreation and buffer other land uses. As Whitewater grows into an urban community, is it appropriate that sections of this property are used for open space and recreation, commercial, industrial.

South of the landfill is an area referred to as the Gunnison Bluffs. In the Gunnison Bluffs are two major trails – the Old Spanish Trail and the Gunnison Bluffs Trail. These trails offer non-motorized recreation activities including hiking, biking and horseback riding and connect Whitewater to the northerly located Intermountain Veterans Park on Orchard Mesa. Protection of trailheads and amenities is highly encouraged.

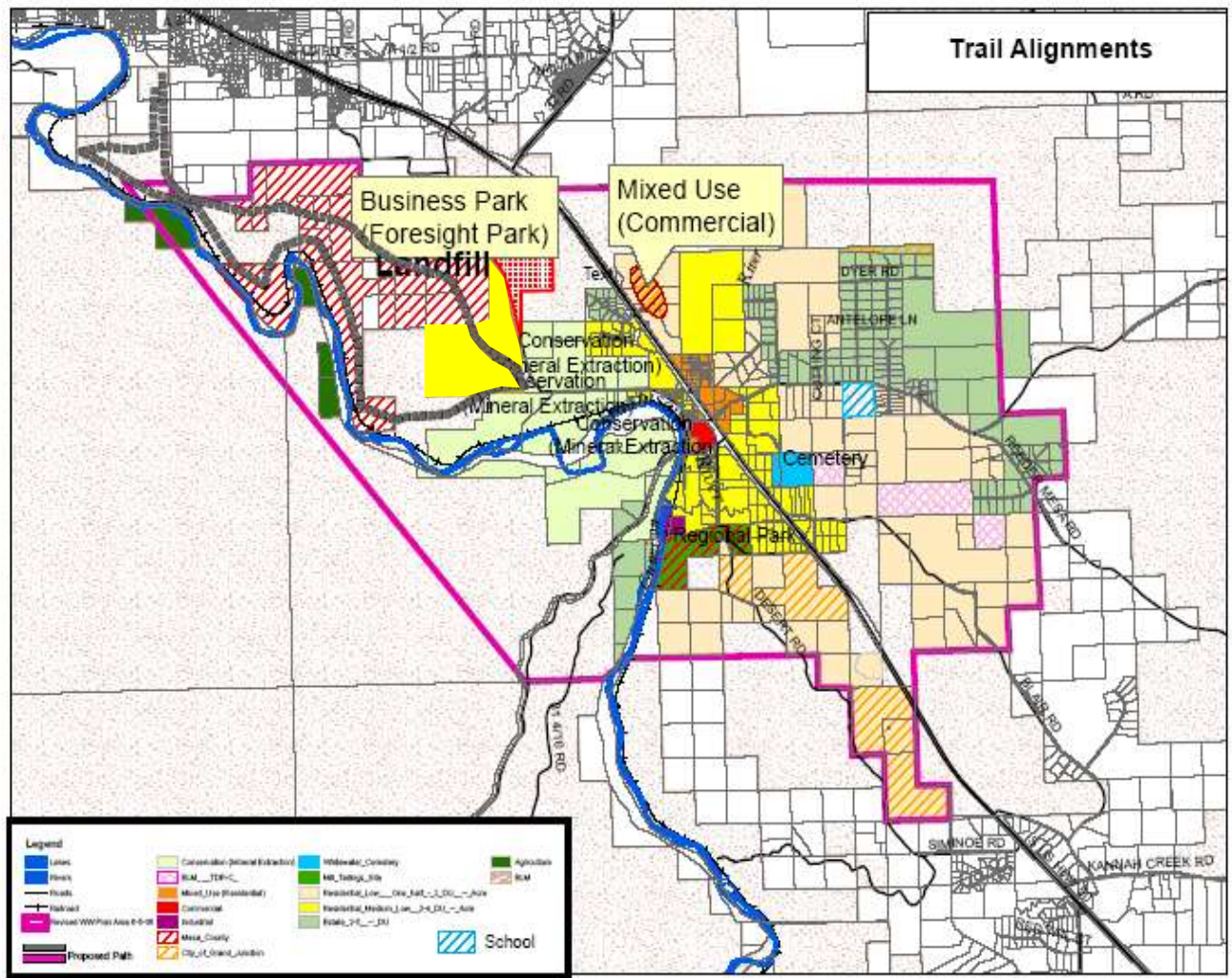


Figure 15 Gunnison River Bluffs and Old Spanish Trails

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Parks, Recreation & Open Space Goals

Goals:

As Whitewater grows, future development will define the character of the community. Commercial and mixed-use development will create services and more formal areas for community gathering. Outdoor community spaces are equally as important to contributing to a sense of place including passive and active open spaces, recreation facilities and a comprehensive pathway system. Whitewater is abundant with outdoor recreation opportunities and future development of parks or conservation of open space shall respect and build on these qualities.

COMMUNITY

- To ensure adequate community parks and recreation services and facilities are provided to the Whitewater Community in a manner that enhances the appearance and character of the Community.
- To provide adequate public school and park sites with trail linkages to residential areas to serve the Whitewater Community.
- To promote recreation areas to serve as gathering places and host public activities to encourage social interaction and a sense of community.
- To provide adequate and appropriate direction for park, open space and trail development within the community.

ECONOMY

- Growth and development of outdoor recreation shall be furthered through expanded partnerships among government agencies, non-profit organizations, private sector businesses and area residents.
- To ensure development of recreation and tourism opportunities in Whitewater.

DESIGN & LOCATION

- To ensure recreational facilities are designed and built to preserve, enhance, restore, and compliment the natural beauty of local environmental features.
- To protect important rural features, scenic vistas/corridors, and natural areas impacted by proposed development (e.g. large trees, washes, riparian areas, historic structures, etc.) and mitigate such impacts where avoidance is not practicable.

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Parks, Recreation & Open Space Policies

Policies: Multiple open space and planned recreation sites are encouraged throughout the Whitewater community. Different amenities should be offered at each site. This will encourage residents to visit different sites and neighborhoods increasing neighbor interaction and social commerce.

COMMUNITY

- Mesa County will work with School District 51 to plan for, acquire, and develop school and



Source: [www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden](http://www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan%20Burden)

parks sites for the benefit of all residents.

- Continue to work cooperatively with BLM, the Riverfront Commission, RTPO, and others with an interest in trails to plan and build trails in the Whitewater community.
- The future recreation facility at the Mill Tailings site shall provide opportunities for all types of recreation, for example; river access, hiking, biking, equestrian and off-road vehicle trails as well as traditional playgrounds including a possible skateboard park.
- Neighborhood parks shall be developed and made available to urban residential areas as development occurs.



Source: [www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden](http://www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan%20Burden)

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- Mesa County will evaluate this plan periodically to ensure that it is providing adequate and appropriate direction for park, open space and trail development within the community.
- Mesa County will continue to work cooperatively with BLM, the Riverfront Commission, RTPO, and others with an interest in trails to plan and build trails in the Whitewater community.

ECONOMY

- Coordinate with BLM for use and development of BLM disposal parcels.
- Mesa County will coordinate with BLM and School District 51 to evaluate and identify disposal properties that may be of interest to the School District for future school sites.
- Developers and residents of the community who benefit most directly from urban amenities, such as parks, open space and recreation will play an important role as partners in providing those amenities as development occurs.



Source: www.pedbikeimages.org/Michael King

DESIGN & LOCATION

- Scenic vistas shall be protected from future development.
- Gravel mining is a reality in the Whitewater area for the foreseeable future. At the end of mining operations, these resource extraction areas shall be redeveloped into open space, recreation areas, and other appropriate uses.
- Pathway connections shall be created to link the existing Old Spanish Trail and Tabeguache Trail to surrounding trail opportunities.
- Pathway connections shall be created separate from motor vehicle traffic when feasible.

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- Pathways shall be of a multipurpose, pervious surface that is suitable for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding uses. A separate road-biking lane may also be considered.
- To encourage use, pathways shall be constructed of light colored, pervious materials that reflect sunlight rather than absorb its heat, helping to reduce the buildup of heat. Permeable paving materials allow rainwater to pass through them into the ground, reducing the volume of runoff and potentially recharging underground aquifers.
- Drought tolerant shade trees or similar vegetation shall be planted to reduce heat along the pathways and encourage more use.
- Neighborhood parks shall be designed for maximum use by using design methods that encourage and promote their use.

Parks, Recreation & Open Space Action Items

Action Items:

- The 150+ acre Mill Tailings Site will be renamed and redeveloped as a Regional Park.
- The Regional Park should include the adjacent BLM property of +/- 40 acres, if feasible, and shall serve as a focal point for recreation in Whitewater.
- Mesa County will revise the Land Development Code to require all new residential subdivisions and PUDs to dedicate private open space/park(s) within the development. A minimum of 50% of the dedicated land area will be for active recreational uses as recommended in 1999 by the Mesa County Planning Commission.
- Mesa County, CDOT, and others with an interest in the Whitewater community will look into the types and feasibility of making improvements to the existing underpass between 1st and 3rd Streets.
- Mesa County, Riverfront Commission, State Parks, and whitewater river enthusiasts will work together to enhance river access & activities along the Gunnison River.
- Create a variety of activities including playground, picnic area, skateboard park, etc.
- Create amenities to service park users, for example restrooms, shade structure, picnic tables, trash cans, etc.
- Designate trails for non-motorized & motorized activities.
- Locate appropriate commercial nearby.
- Currently, the City of Grand Junction pipes raw water through the Whitewater area north to Grand Junction. An agreement between the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County should be evaluated to access the potential use of non-potable water to use for irrigation of regional and neighborhood parks.
- Link the Gunnison Bluffs Trail to Reeder Mesa.
- Link the Old Spanish Trail to the Regional Park future recreation site with a designated bicycle lane from Coffman Road to Mill Tailings Road.

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- Link the Old Spanish Trail to Reeder Mesa Road with a designated bicycle lane from Coffman Road to Reeder Mesa Road. (*Figure 17*)
- Expand the Mesa County Whitewater Public Improvement District to provide parks and recreation facilities and services.
- Evaluate the feasibility of enhancing signage for the Old Spanish Trail with the participants of the Grand Mesa Slopes.
- Mesa County and others with an interest in the community should provide interpretive signage within the historical Whitewater town site (the Post Office Vicinity) for key buildings and past activities.



Source: Mesa County

- Grand Mesa Slopes participants and others with an interest in the Whitewater community will work together to explore partnerships to create and improve trail amenities (parking lots, signage, trailheads, etc.) in the area.
- Mesa County, BLM, Grand Mesa Slopes participants and others with an interest in the Whitewater community will work together to provide more visible signage for non-motorized or off-road vehicle trails.
- Work with School District 51 to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of using the BLM 40 acre disposal parcel (Gd207) at Reeder Mesa Road (NE ¼ of the NE Quarter, Section 13, T2S, R1E) for a school site.
- Mesa County and the BLM will explore the desirability and feasibility of using disposal parcel (Gd214) near Blair Road (on the east side of Highway 50) as an open lands buffer to protect the aesthetic appearance of the community as a gateway into Mesa County.
- Work with BLM to designate disposal sites as TDR receiving sites.
- Continue to work with the BLM and Grand Mesa Slopes participants to implement actions of the plan including fencing and providing trash pick-up to improve the Gunnison Bluff Trail appearance.

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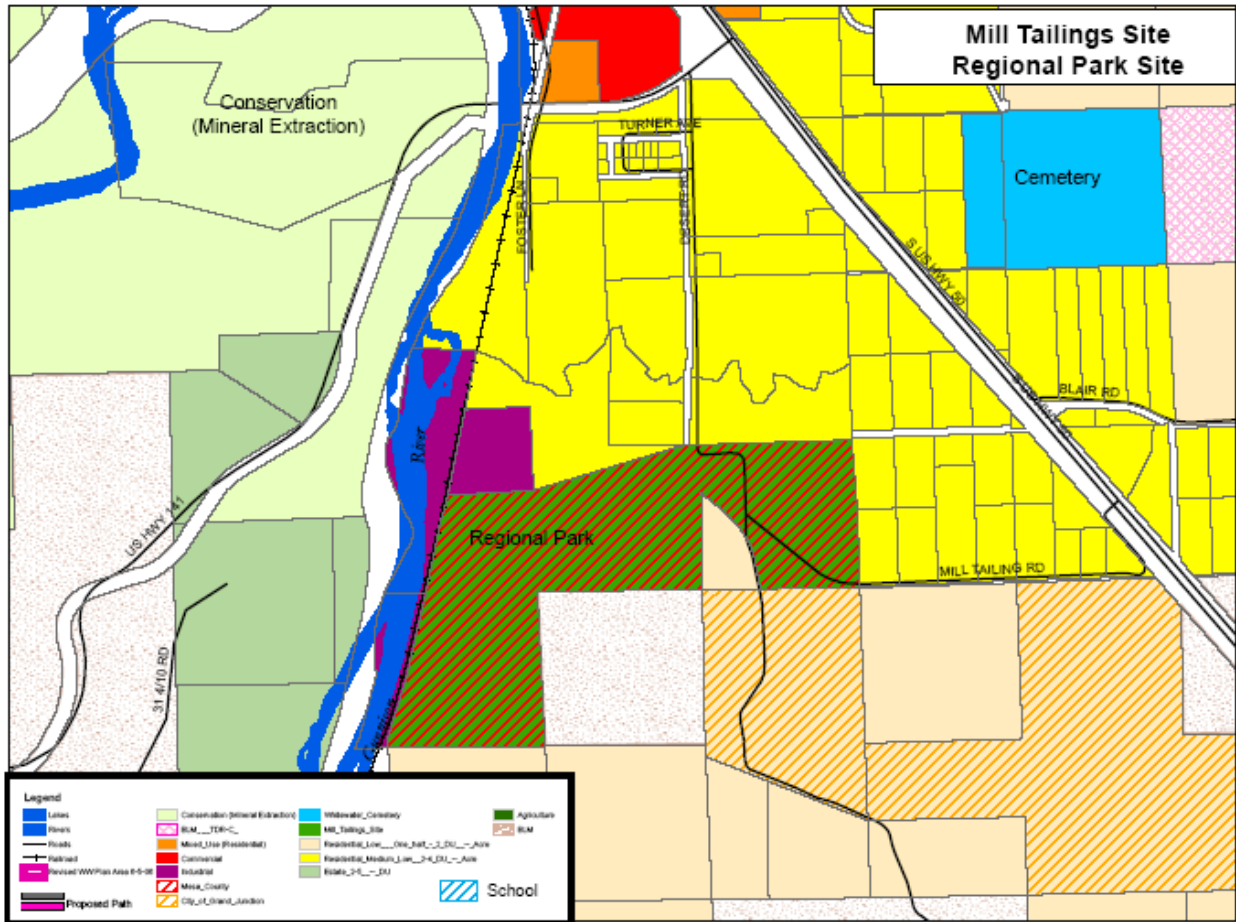


Figure 16. Mill Tailings Site -- Regional Park Location

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