

## **LAND USE/GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

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**Residential Existing Conditions & Findings:** Whitewater is envisioned as an “urban community” where people live, work, and play in harmony with each other and the environment. It affords the people a secure and comfortable place to raise children and to enjoy being with friends. The residents take great pride in their community and work together to make it a pleasant place to live. Future land uses proposed in this plan include actions to transform Whitewater from a rural community into an urban community.

Whitewater has remained a rural, low-density community largely due to the lack of infrastructure in the area, including undersized water lines, the absence of sanitary sewer service, and the lack of storm water management. The opportunity for sanitary sewer service through a public improvement district was approved by the voters of Whitewater in November 2006. An urban community, with urban amenities such as day-to-day service needs (laundromat, coffee shop, daycare center, medical offices, etc.) and greater housing opportunities, requires public sanitary sewer service.

The Mesa County Whitewater Public Improvement District will initially provide sewer service to a limited area of existing residential structures in the core of Whitewater. The district can be expanded to allow varied residential development relative to size, sales price, location, density, and available services. The future land use plan is based on future provision of sanitary sewer by the district. Future residential land uses reflect an attempt to address a variety of needs as well as maintain existing characteristics valued by the community.

This plan promotes the goals of providing for a large enough population to support infrastructure and service improvements while at the same time allowing for acceptable levels of residential density. Without the Mesa County Whitewater Public Improvement District the rural, large parcel residential development pattern would have continued with limited population growth. However, urban levels of public services such as fire and police protection, parks and recreation, street lighting, and street sweeping will continue to be limited unless services to be provided by the WhitewaterPublic Improvement District are expanded.

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As of 2006, Whitewater has a population of approximately 1,125 people in approximately 450 households. As the population of Whitewater continues to grow, the community will transform from an agricultural/ranching community to a predominately residential area, with homes outnumbering ranching and agricultural uses. Whitewater is also experiencing a changing profile of homeowners.

Whereas homeowners were once described as a married family with two children, the residential market is now more diverse with multiple household groups who have a variety of needs and interests, i.e. retirees, young professionals, singles, etc. This diversity can be generally understood realizing the aging baby-boomer generation and an increasing immigrant population in both Mesa County and nationally. In planning for future growth, it is important to consider the assorted needs of future homeowners by allowing a range of residential development.



Whitewater Post Office located at 1<sup>st</sup> and Short Streets. June 2006

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The Whitewater planning area is approximately 18.5 square miles, with an historic community core of about one square mile, surrounded by federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management with views of the Grand Mesa. Bisected by Highway 50, Whitewater is easily accessed from Grand Junction (8 miles north) and Montrose (50 miles south). Whitewater is also the access point to Highway 141 (the Unaweep/Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway) which eventually ends at the historic mining camp of Placerville in San Miguel County, Colorado. Future residential and commercial development must respect the proximity of Whitewater to these scenic and historic resources.

Throughout the planning process, stakeholders informally identified areas of Whitewater relative to their unique characteristics defined by location, existing development, topography, and residential neighborhood. This plan recognizes these neighborhoods as:

1. Rancho Dos Rios area
2. Reeder Mesa Road
3. Elk Run subdivision
4. Coffman Road
5. Post Office Vicinity (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street)
6. Outer Old Town Core (primarily east side of Highway)
7. Southern Whitewater (south of Highway 141)

Residents of the existing community and Mesa County officials have agreed that the Whitewater area is facing the development pressures of increasing housing demand. They have agreed there is a need to plan for and embrace an acceptable level of growth – particularly in respect to future residential uses.

Existing residential development is mostly rural or low density. The residential development pattern is generally 2 – 5 acre lots, with the exception of the Post Office Vicinity where the existing lots are roughly 10,000 square feet in size.



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Easterly view of 1<sup>st</sup> Street depicting multiple drive ways on 10,000 square foot lots. Note the urban quality of the front yards with landscaping and fencing, but lack of a safe pedestrian connection between neighbors. June 2006

Lack of services is particularly evident in regards to sanitary sewer, fire protection, school facilities, and neighborhood-oriented retail such as grocery stores and gas stations. In particular, lack of a sanitary sewer system is the primary reason that residential development has continued on a large parcel, rural scale.

No public sanitary sewer service exists in any area of Whitewater. All existing land uses are serviced by individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS). ISDS is a common method of sewage treatment in rural communities, but not an efficient or practical means of service for a growing community. Individual septic systems are becoming increasingly problematic particularly in the Post Office vicinity where the water table is high and frequently causes flooding affecting the septic tanks in this area.

For future residential and commercial development to meet the increasing demand for housing and services, sewer service will need to be implemented. The Whitewater Public Improvement District will allow not only appropriate sanitary sewer service, but at some point in the future, may also provide an opportunity to improve existing infrastructure and additional services. Adequate infrastructure will promote increased services to Whitewater including a potential fire station, local school(s), recreation facilities and neighborhood serving commercial uses.

A critical mass of future residents is needed to achieve a general enhancement of services available to Whitewater. This critical mass could be achieved by rezoning portions of the

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Whitewater area following the Future Land Use Map depicted in this plan. The map recommends the following land uses: estate (1,387 acres), residential low density (2,840 acres), residential medium density (883 acres), and some mixed-use development (121 acres) to specifically allow higher density near commercial uses. If implemented through updated zoning, approximately 7,500+ households could be achieved (including existing households) in the Whitewater Community.

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### Residential Goals

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**Goals:** Whitewater as a community has created the following goals for increased residential density and the services necessary to support a growing population.

#### *COMMUNITY*

- To follow the Whitewater Community Plan as a means to implement the community's vision and goals.
- To build on the existing character and sense of community.
- To create places and opportunities for social interaction, lifestyle diversity, and foster unique neighborhoods.
- To create a stable, long-term, viable, and self-supporting community of distinctly individual neighborhoods.
- To provide adequate public safety services to the entire Whitewater community.

#### *ECONOMY*

- To create a mix of housing types, densities and neighborhoods with intent to manage infrastructure costs.
- To ensure concurrent public utility and safety services are provided to all new development.
- To plan for school sites in close proximity to neighborhoods so as to encourage student walkability.

#### *DESIGN & LOCATION*

- To promote a standard of design that is of high quality and compatible with historic features of the environment and community
- To utilize existing natural features, topography, and vegetation to capture the natural conditions of the area (color, texture, massing, etc.), so as to accentuate the image of the community.
- To reduce night lighting pollution.

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Photo of Castle Peak Mixed-Use Building, Eagle, CO



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

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## Residential Policies

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**Policies:** The above goals are to be accomplished through the residential policies and action plans serving as guidelines for future development and redevelopment projects.

### COMMUNITY:

- All new development will be consistent with the plan.
- Future development and redevelopment will form an organized well-planned community.
- Mesa County will periodically evaluate the Future Land Use classifications to ensure they are achieving the desired results and conditions and amend or modify as necessary based on community and decision-makers direction.
- Encourage a variety of housing types and densities as a critical component to implementing the plan and shaping the community.
- This plan is based on the medium, mixed-use density alternative. Residential lot sizes (future land use classification and corresponding zone districts) include:
  - CONSERVATION (5 acre average lot size) *Mesa County zone AFT*
  - ESTATE (2 to 5 acre lots) *Mesa County zone RSF-E*
  - RESIDENTIAL LOW (23,000 SF to 2 acres) *Mesa County zone RSF-2*
  - RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM (10,000 – 22,999 SF lots) *Mesa County zone RSF-4*
  - MIXED-USE (residential allowed up to 12 units per acre with commercial)
- New development, infrastructure, and amenities will create a sense of place, belonging, and community unique to Whitewater.
- Site planning shall create places where residents can have casual interactions such as at central mailboxes, pathway intersections, coffee shops, and the like.
- Mesa County will work with residents to expand neighborhood watch programs throughout the planning area as it grows and changes and requires higher levels of service.
- Evaluate emergency response and coordination issues.

### ECONOMY:

- Mesa County will support implementation of infrastructure and service improvements to transform Whitewater from a rural area to an urban community.
- Mesa County will continue to coordinate with service providers such as Clifton Water District, Grand Valley Rural Power Lines, Kinder Morgan Energy, and School District 51 to ensure infrastructure improvements are calculated and scheduled with future land uses and development.
- Mesa County will continue to work with the Lands End Fire Protection District to ensure they have the capacity to meet the needs of the community as it grows.

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- Improve the quality of living and economic self-sufficiency for the community through a variety of residential neighborhoods and housing types including mixed-residential and commercial/business uses.

### *DESIGN & LOCATION:*

- Use the Mesa County owned properties near the Road Department's maintenance building site (approximately 25 acres) to begin a new development blueprint along Highway 50 that will initiate the proposed mixed-use zoning district with an emphasis on associated higher density residential uses.
- Protect and respect the visual backdrop of the Uncompahgre Plateau, Colorado National Monument, Grand Mesa, and Gunnison River corridor through design criteria and standards that include height restrictions, reflective material limitations, and use of colors consistent with the environment of the planning area.



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



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## Residential Action Items

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**Residential Action Items:** The following residential action items are contingent on the provision of sewer service and other urban services to the community.

- Establish and adopt a document of Residential Design Standards in the Land Development Code to implement the Policies of this Community Plan. The Design Standards shall address at a minimum:
  - a flood plain map of the Gunnison River and major washes of the planning area;
  - sustainable design incorporating site-orientation guidelines to maximize solar gain for renewable energy opportunities as well as maximize natural ventilation opportunities for better living conditions in this desert climate;
  - pedestrian-oriented design to encourage reduced vehicle trips; utilization of provided pathways and trail connections and greater neighbor interaction;
  - designed to reflect the arid conditions of the area, creating aesthetic solutions to outdoor storage, utilities, and similar uses;
  - architectural character of new buildings and remodeled exteriors;
  - protection of natural resources, the Gunnison River, and views of the Grand Mesa;
  - create a Pattern Book to assist homeowners and builders as they build, repair or expand their houses and neighborhoods. A Pattern Book would identify the various building styles found in different neighborhoods within Whitewater and Western Colorado and illustrate key appropriate architectural components such as the shape of windows and doors, roof pitches, eave details and types of porches;
  - neighborhood entry features to create a sense of arrival and neighborhood identity; and
  - landscaping and irrigation design appropriate to the arid climate, soil conditions, and limited availability of water;
- Establish a Mixed-Use (MU) zone district that allows development to include employment, residential, and open space. Retail commercial uses may be appropriate as a secondary use, integral to other uses and structures or as small nodal development. Two variations are suggested – one with an emphasis on residential uses and the other with an emphasis on commercial uses.
- Implement the Future Land Use Map for the Whitewater Community through zoning. Specific neighborhood future land uses and corresponding zoning districts are designated as follows (See Figures 2 -8):
  - A. “Rancho Dos Rios area” Residential Low with 40 acres of Mixed-Use (MU) adjacent to Highway 50 - Figure 2. Respecting existing residential and commercial land uses.

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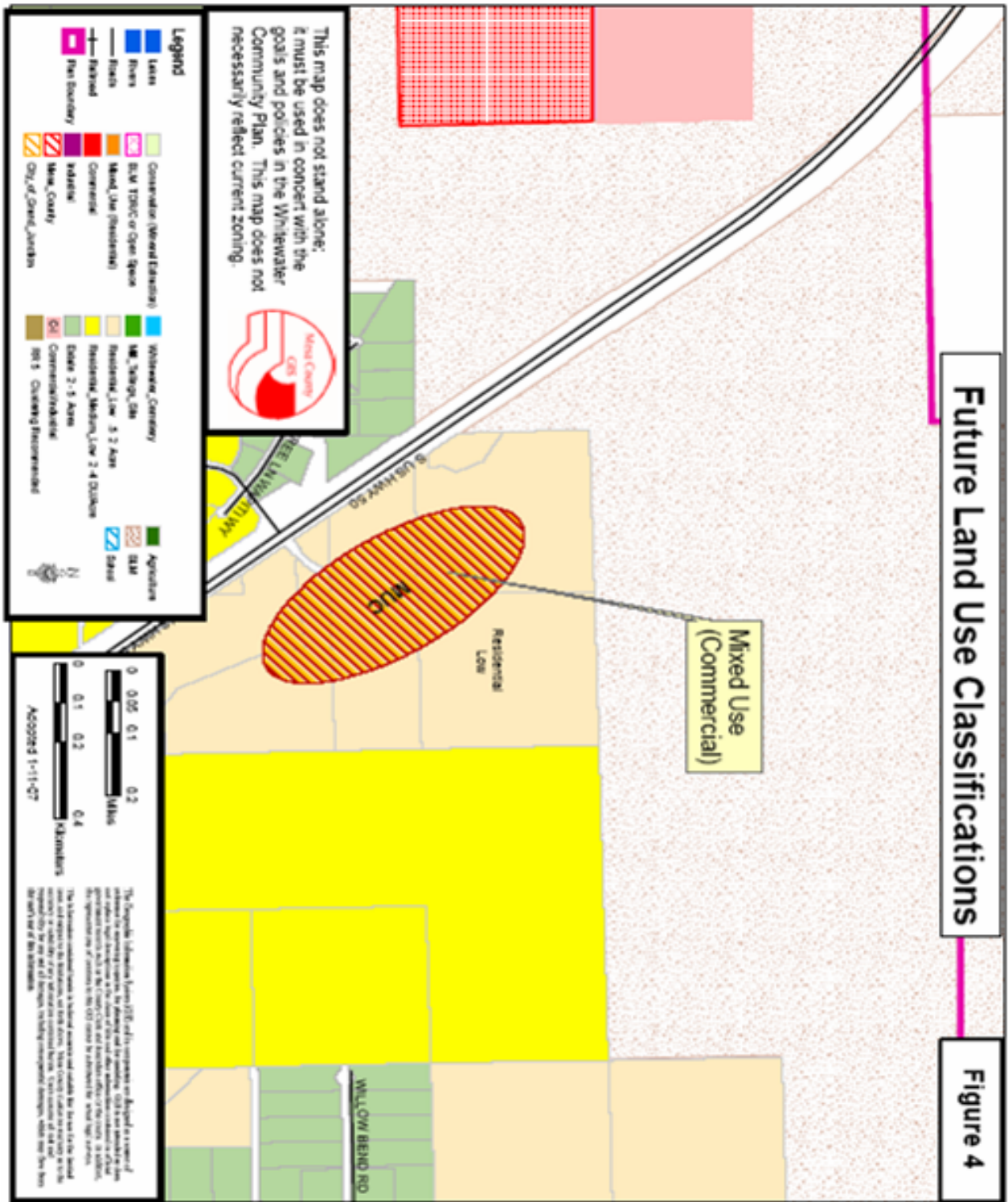
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- B.** “Reeder Mesa Road Area” Residential Low (RSF-2) and Estate (RSF-E) - Figure 3.
- C.** “Elk Run Subdivision” Rural (Estate) - Figure 4. Respects existing development.
- D.** “Coffman Road Area” Rural Residential 5 (AFT), Business Park (IO), and Commercial/Industrial (C-2, I-1) . Figure 5. Allowing approximately 55 new households and supports commercial and business park development this area.
- E.** “Outer Old Town Core,” including Mesa County owned properties, Mixed-Use with a residential emphasis (MUR) and Commercial (C, B-1, B-2, R-O) - Figure 6. Respects existing small lots and promotes neighborhood-oriented commercial and retail uses. As a landowner, Mesa County has the opportunity to develop the first mixed-use development in the area – creating a design standard for future mixed use developments.
- F.** “Post Office Vicinity” Residential Medium (RSF-4) - Figure 7. Respects existing neighborhood development pattern and uses.
- G.** “Southern Whitewater” Residential Medium (RSF-4) and Residential Low (RSF-2) - Figure 8. Recognizes proximity to Highway 50, the intersection of Highways 50 & 141, future commercial uses, and future recreational uses at the Mill Tailings Site. (Boat Launch Regional Park site)



Residential Development Source: [www.pedbikeimages.org/](http://www.pedbikeimages.org/)Dan Burden

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**Figure 4:** Rancho Dos Rios Future Land Uses

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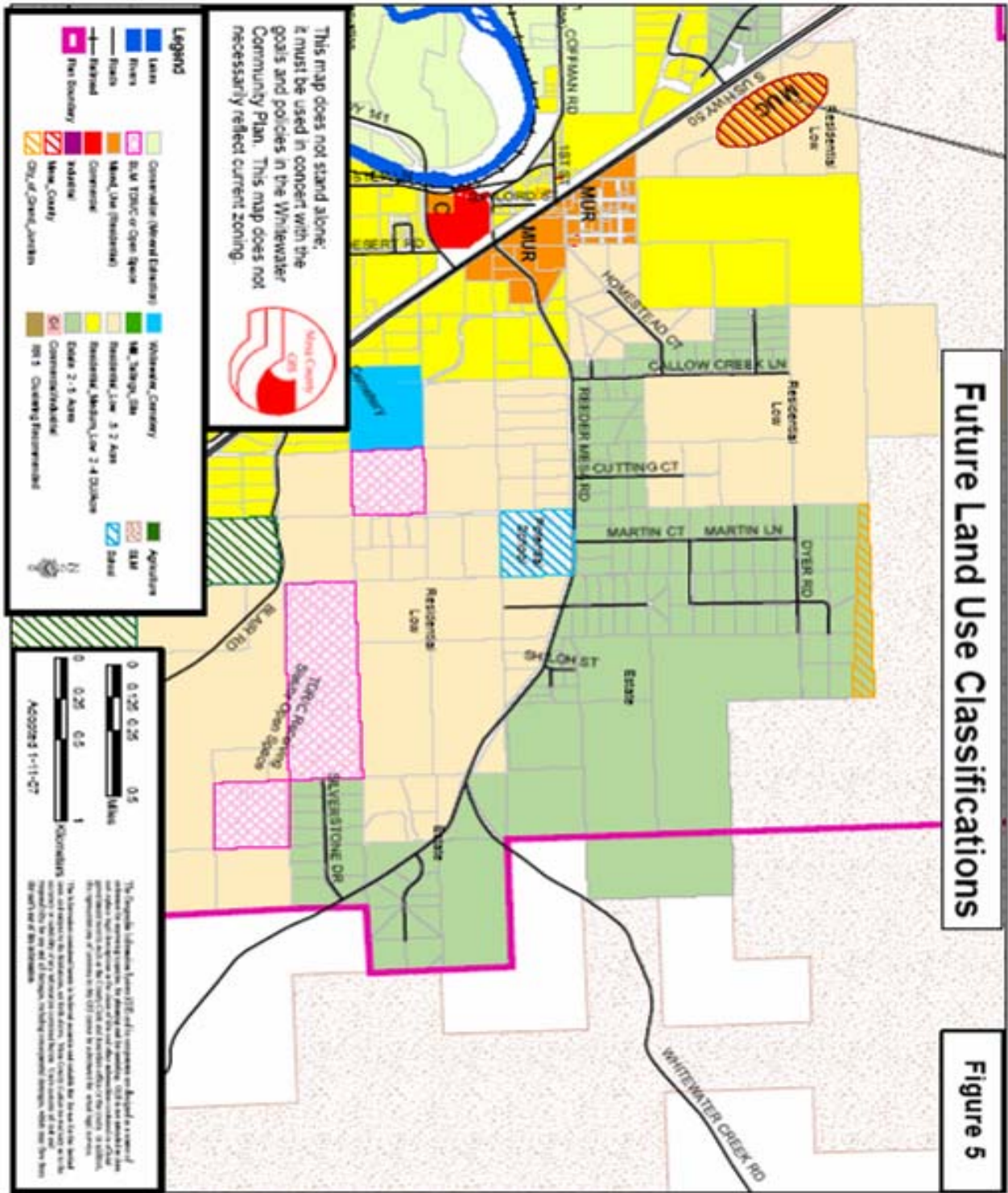
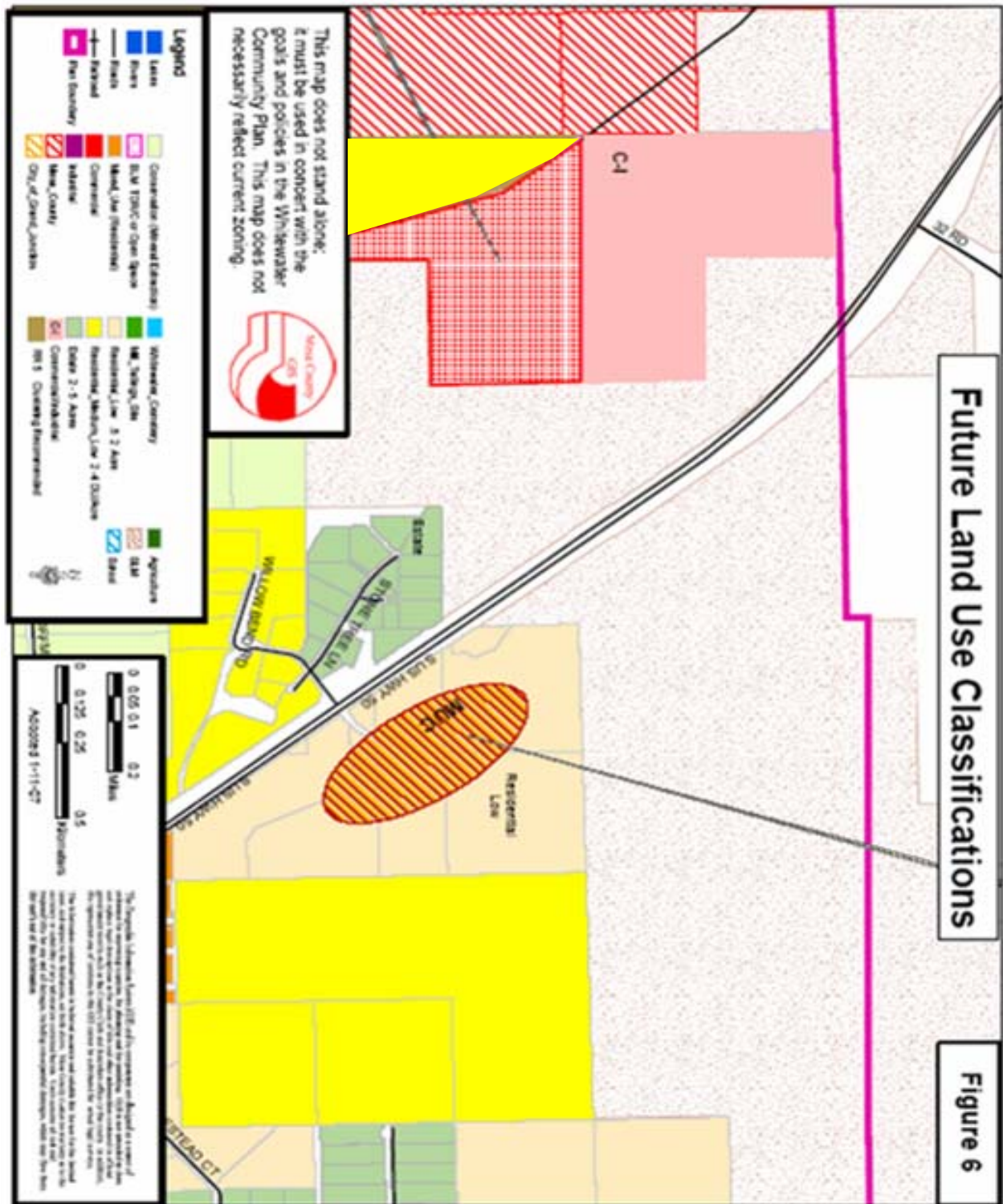


Figure 5. Reeder Mesa Road

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**Figure 6.** Elk Run Subdivision

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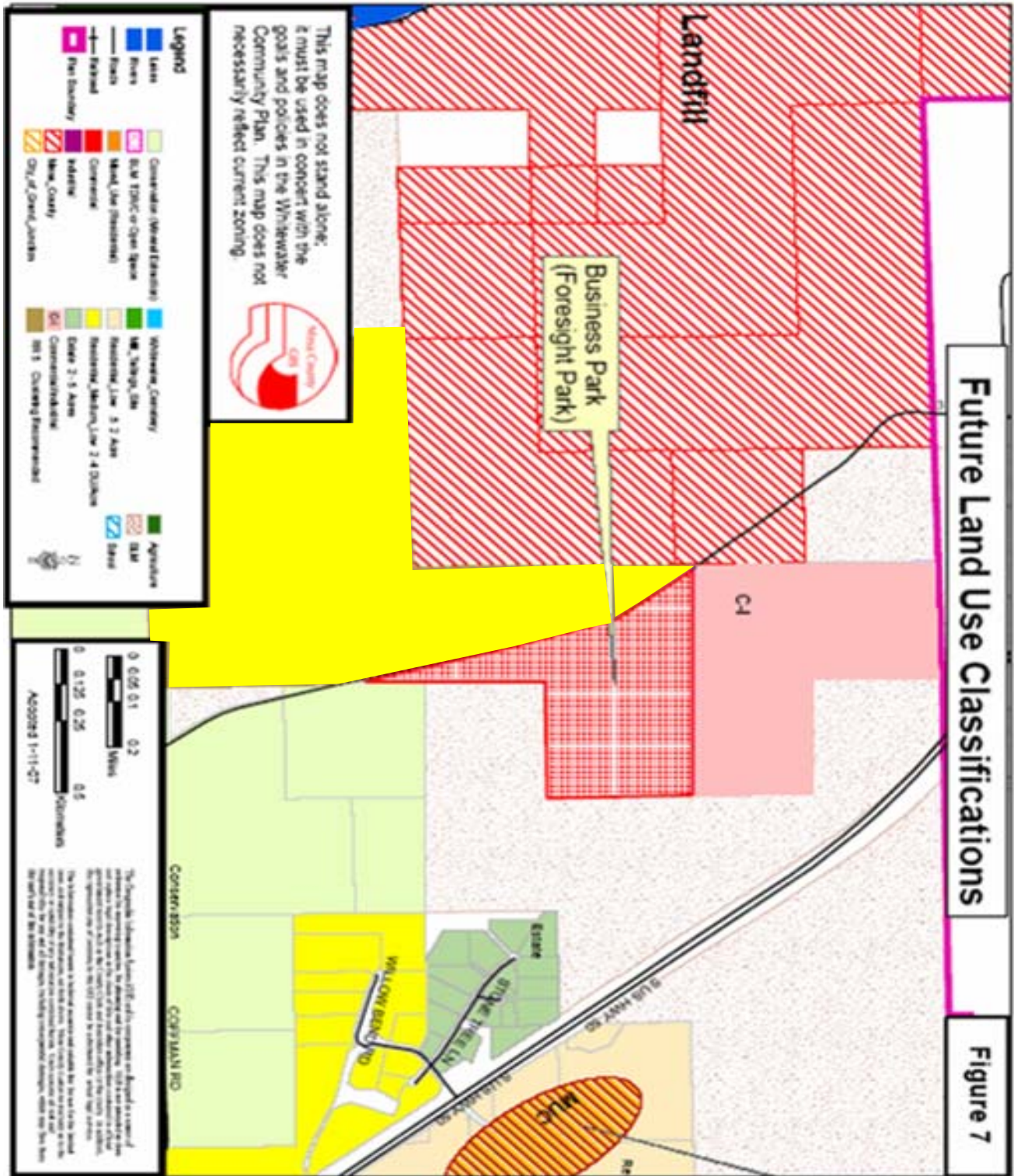
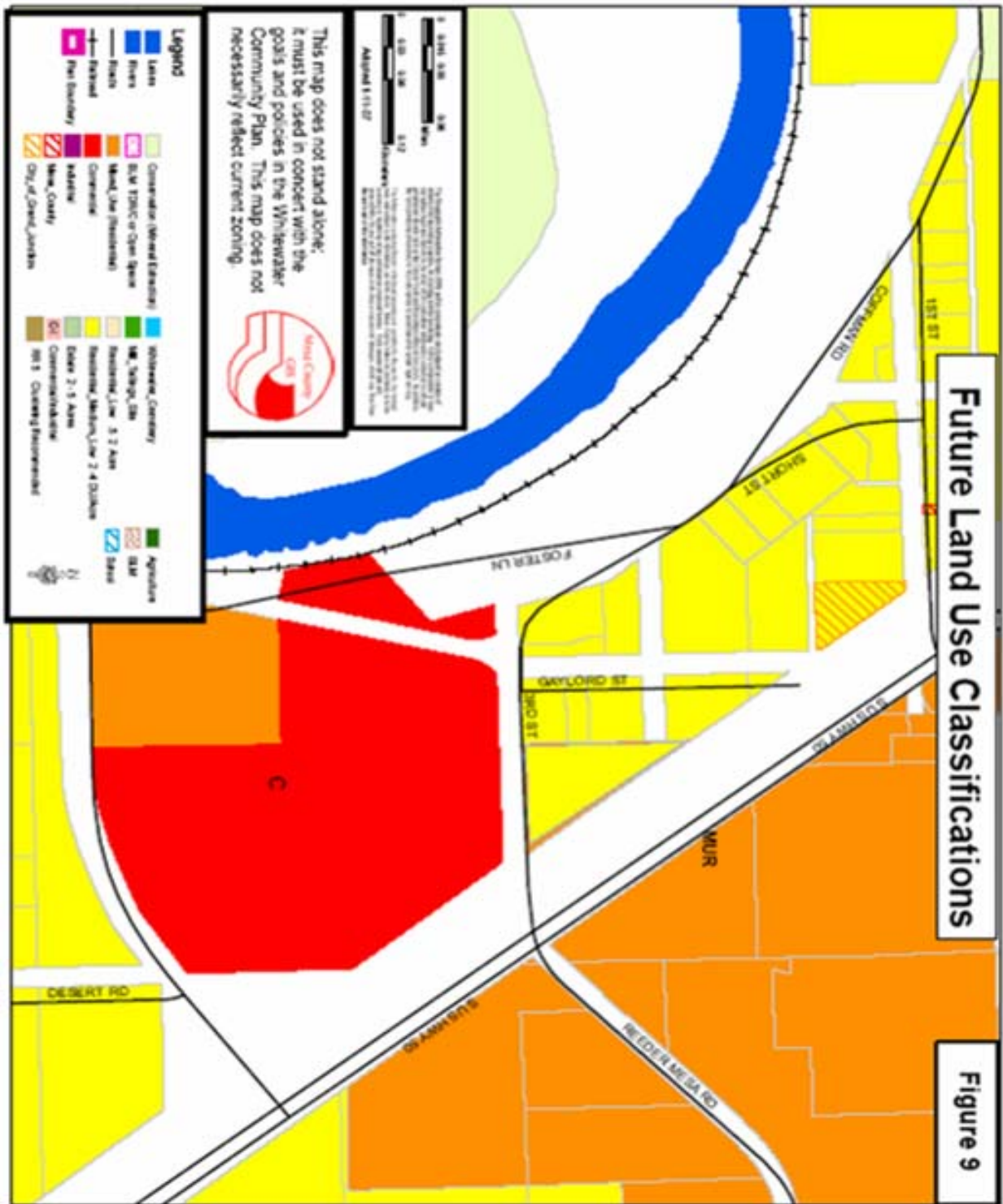


Figure 7. Coffman Road Area



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**Figure 9.** Post Office Vicinity





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