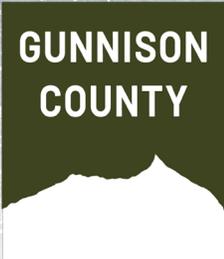




**GUNNISON AREA PLAN 2025**



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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Importance of the Plan	4
Purpose of the Plan	5
Guiding Principles	6
Planning Process Overview	7
Statutory Requirements	8
<b>GUNNISON AREA PLAN FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Regional Coordination	12
City of Gunnison Urban Growth Boundary	14
Jurisdictional Review and Annexation Process	15
<b>URBAN TRANSITION AREA DESCRIPTIONS.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Urban Transition Areas Overview	18
City Urban Growth Boundary	20
North Urban Transition Area	24
South Urban Transition Area	28
Rural Transition Area	32
Rural Area	36
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>38</b>



# Introduction

# IMPORTANCE OF THE PLAN

The Gunnison Area Plan is a shared roadmap for how the City of Gunnison and Gunnison County will collaborate to guide growth over the coming decades. Developed through significant public engagement, the Plan reflects the community's clear desire for compact, well-planned neighborhoods; the protection of agricultural lands and open space; stronger community connectivity; and the preservation of wildlife habitat. It answers a central question: how can our community meet the demand for housing, services, and infrastructure while protecting the rural character and landscapes that make Gunnison unique?

## WHY THIS PLAN MATTERS

Gunnison is growing, and decisions made today will shape the Valley for generations. Without clear direction, growth could result in sprawl across the landscape, driving up costs for infrastructure, threatening agricultural lands and wildlife habitat, and making housing even less attainable for local workers and families. This Plan provides the framework to focus growth near the City core and within designated areas while preserving the open lands, water resources, and rural identity that residents deeply value.

## WHY NOW?

Based on findings from the final 2024 Gunnison Valley Housing Needs Assessment, we understand that the Valley needs roughly 1,300–1,550 homes by 2029, and at least 75% must be priced below market to serve local residents and the workforce. Housing availability directly affects our businesses, services, and our community's quality of life and requires pro-active policy setting to ensure that we meet our community's housing needs and goals.

## OUTCOMES WE SEEK

This Plan is not about growth for its own sake. It is about shaping growth to reflect Gunnison's values: a thriving local economy supported by attainable housing, resilient infrastructure, preserved working lands, and healthy natural systems. The outcome is a Gunnison that grows smarter, not just bigger—a community where

residents can afford to live, businesses can hire and keep workers, children can walk safely to school, and the landscapes that define our identity remain intact.

## WHAT THIS PLAN DELIVERS

This Plan provides direction across several key policy areas including:

- **Housing Choice and Affordability** – This plan directs new neighborhoods into areas where infrastructure exists allows for a wider mix of housing types, including attainable homes for workers, seniors, and families.
- **Efficient and Fiscally Responsible Infrastructure** – This Plan supports phased growth that is well coordinated with utilities, roads, parks, and services ensuring future development is efficient and sustainable.
- **Walkable, Connected Neighborhoods** – This Plan promotes compact development patterns that support safe streets, sidewalks, trails, and transit connections, improving daily life for residents and reducing reliance on cars.
- **Preservation of Rural Lands and Community Character** – This Plan sets clear boundaries for future growth to help protect agricultural lands, wildlife corridors, and the scenic views that define Gunnison.
- **Streamlined Development Review** – This Plan promotes coordinated processes to reduce permitting time and costs, improve predictability for property owners and developers, and ensure that projects advancing community goals can move forward more efficiently.
- **Alignment Across Governments** – By linking City and County policies, annexation, and utility planning, this Plan ensures consistent decision-making and predictable outcomes for property owners and residents.

# PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Gunnison Area Plan is intended to align with, and support, the land use vision and policies outlined across City of Gunnison and County planning documents (further outlined on page 7), fostering sustainable growth and development in the region.

The Plan focuses on responsible land use management and infrastructure development within a three-mile radius surrounding the City limits. By prioritizing compact, mixed-use development patterns that enhance connectivity and reduce urban sprawl, the Plan mirrors the community's goals of promoting vibrant,

walkable neighborhoods while preserving open spaces and natural resources. Emphasizing diverse housing options, improved transportation networks, and integrated green spaces, the Plan not only supports economic vitality and community resilience but also ensures that development adheres to environmental stewardship principles supported by the greater Gunnison community.

This Plan will help guide future land use decisions, ensuring a balanced approach to meeting the community's needs and vision for future development.

## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



### More Housing Choices

Residents have access to new neighborhoods with more attainable housing units including cottages, townhomes, small apartments, and ADUs that fit the local character and incomes of teachers, first responders, healthcare workers, and service workers.



### Connected Places

Daily needs for residents is met within a short walk or bike ride, residents will have access to safe links to transit with the ability to have fewer long car trips.



### Working Lands & Protected Habitats

Growth is directed to areas that are serviced by utilities, roads and parks, and the community's rural landscapes and wildlife corridors are conserved.



### Efficient Infrastructure

Annexation is phased in order to adequately and efficiently expand water and sewer capacity for new development.



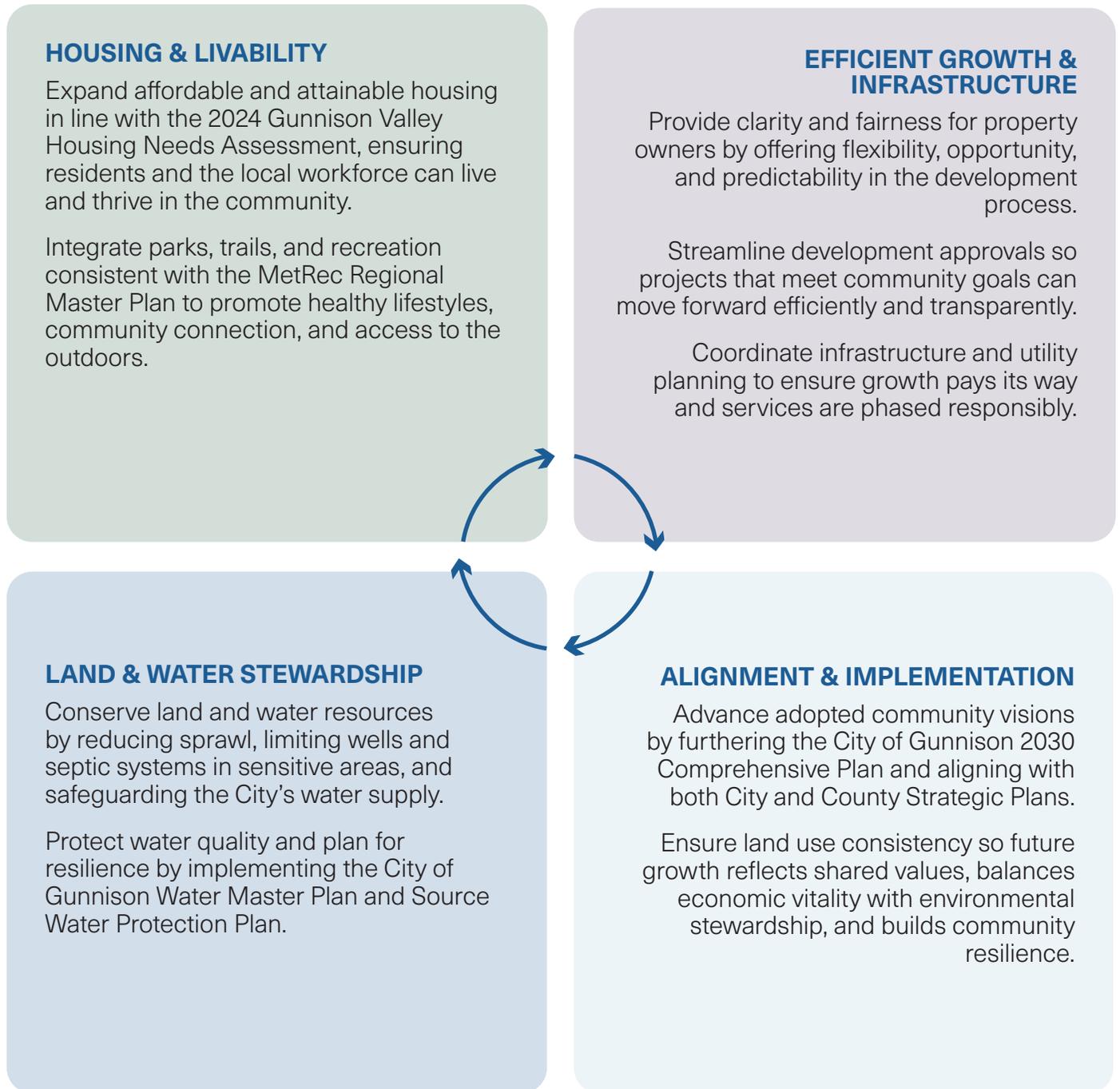
### Increased Resilience

Wildfire-wise design, water conservation, and connectivity to central utilities will reduce risk and costs over time.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Gunnison Area Plan provides a clear framework to support compact, connected development; protect natural resources; and strengthen housing and economic opportunity within the three-mile planning area (see Figure 6: Gunnison Three-Mile Area Boundary Map)

Our guiding principles are organized into four distinct but interconnected themes:



# PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The development of the Gunnison Area Plan (“Plan”) is a critical component in envisioning the future of both the City of Gunnison (City) and Gunnison County (County).

The Plan was developed through collaborative efforts to delineate clear objectives and guidelines that aim to enhance the region’s quality of life, promote economic vitality, and safeguard environmental resources for both current and future generations. This Plan fulfills the State of Colorado’s requirement for a three-mile plan and comes shortly after the adoption of the City of Gunnison’s Comprehensive Plan (2020) and Strategic Plan (2024) to ensure that the City and County are aligned across documents and goals.

As part of this effort, multiple documents and studies were reviewed to provide a foundation for historical policy evolutions and a deeper understanding of existing conditions across the County. This Plan, while a stand-alone document, works in collaboration and coordination with several other documents. It seeks to support, rather than duplicate or overwrite, previous efforts. Each of the following documents were reviewed to identify goals, recommendations, and findings to incorporate and bring forward into the Plan.

- **City of Gunnison 2030 Comprehensive Plan** – The Comprehensive Plan was developed to help the City navigate its growth and transition by proactively mitigating challenges and leveraging opportunities as it moves into the future.
- **Intergovernmental Agreement** – This document is a legal agreement between City of Gunnison City Council and Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners. It provides direction to regulate development that may have significant impacts on the Three-Mile Area, and has been updated as a part of the Gunnison Area Plan process.
- **Gunnison Valley Housing Needs Assessment 2024** – This assessment was developed to understand the existing conditions of housing in Gunnison Valley. It supports local jurisdictions, non-profits, and private sector developers in identifying

housing opportunities through highlighting existing housing gaps, home price ranges, and overall housing needs.

- **Gunnison County Board of Commissioners Strategic Plan (2022, 2024)** – This document helps guide the priorities of the County Board of Commissioners. This plan provides focus for capital projects and improvements and identifies how the County prioritizes resources such as staff dedication and funding.
- **Gunnison City Council Strategic Plan 2024** – This document seeks to address key topics identified by the community through engagement efforts. It provides a framework to align staff and financial resources to achieve critical results in addressing the community’s most important issues.
- **City of Gunnison Water Master Plan** – This plan analyzes the City’s water quality and quantity. It summarizes the capability of the existing system and identifies necessary improvements to meet future water demand, regulatory requirements, and delivery needs.
- **City of Gunnison Source Water Protection Plan** – This plan identifies methods to ensure that the City’s water source is protected, and potential threats are mitigated.
- **One Valley Resiliency Roadmap** – The One Valley Resilience Roadmap (OVR) was developed in collaboration with all stakeholders, organizations and municipalities that make up Gunnison County. Given the anticipated growth and changes for the Valley, it guides future goals on topics including housing affordability, land use, transportation, infrastructure planning, climate change, equity and inclusion, and a sense of community.
- **MetRec 2025 Regional Recreation Master Plan** – The Master Plan outlines a strategic vision for the future of parks, recreation, and multimodal connectivity within the Gunnison Area Plan area. The MetRec plan includes specific recommendations for trail connections and parks developed from key themes developed during the community engagement process.

# STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Colorado state legislature made changes to annexation laws in 1987 (Community Development Office, n.d.). These changes limited municipal annexations to no more than three miles beyond the current municipal boundary in any given year. Additionally, Colorado legislature requires municipalities in Colorado to adopt a Three-Mile plan prior to annexing property into their territorial boundaries (C.R.S. 31-12-105 et. Seq). The requirement states that the plan must “generally describe the proposed location, character, and extent of streets, subways, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, parkways, playgrounds, squares, parks, aviation fields, other public ways, grounds, open spaces, public utilities, and terminals for water, light, sanitation, transportation, and power to be provided by the municipality and the proposed land uses for the area.”

This requirement enforces a strategic approach to managing growth and development in a coordinated and sustainable manner. A three-mile plan does not require any property owner to annex into the City of Gunnison, nor does it mean that the City of Gunnison is intending to annex all areas within the three-mile plan area. The Gunnison Area Plan identifies land that could be considered for annexation, pending negotiations with individual landowners and compliance with specific standards. This document is a long-range plan that identifies the areas where annexation into the City of Gunnison will be considered and how services will be provided to them while sustaining adequate capacity for existing development. The State of Colorado’s annexation requirements can be found online at [Laws | Colorado General Assembly](#) and is currently stated in C.R.S. 31-12-105.



Figure 1: Retail Center City of Gunnison



Figure 2: Historic Residence



Figure 3: Recreational Trails



Figure 4: City of Gunnison Summer Music Cruise

2

# Gunnison Area Plan Framework

# REGIONAL COORDINATION

The City of Gunnison and the surrounding three-mile growth area is situated in the middle of Gunnison County, surrounded by the Rocky Mountains and Gunnison National Forest. The City is the gateway to the Gunnison Valley, located at the intersection of Highway 50, running east and west through the region, and Highway 135, running north to Crested Butte. Increased tourism to Crested Butte, in addition to the City's proximity to surrounding nature and recreation, attracts both new residents and year-round outdoor enthusiasts, serving as a driver for growth and demand for more attainable housing.

Both the County and the City are at a pivotal point of growth and change. The City of Gunnison is seeing more significant growth and as a result, transitioning from a rural mountain town to a small city. A critical consideration is where this increase in population will live and work given current development pressures in the community, including but not limited to:

- Limited housing availability
- Increasing land and infrastructure costs
- Threats to open space and habitat
- Risk of fragmented or inefficient development

In response to this anticipated growth, Gunnison County and the City of Gunnison began the update to the Three Mile Plan, now known as the Gunnison Area Plan, and associated maps to identify appropriate areas for growth.

This Plan will be implemented through zoning, annexation policies, special area regulations, and infrastructure coordination. This is accomplished through the coordinated development of an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Gunnison and Gunnison County, the development of Special Area Regulations (SAR) that provide guidance for development in the planning areas defined in this document.

These documents collectively ensure that there is no duplication or regulatory gaps, that infrastructure extensions are cost-effective, and that developers and the public can have certainty in land use outcomes.

Figure 5 below illustrates current County boundaries. Figure 6 to the right, illustrates the three mile planning area in which the Urban Transition Areas, defined on Page 18, are located.

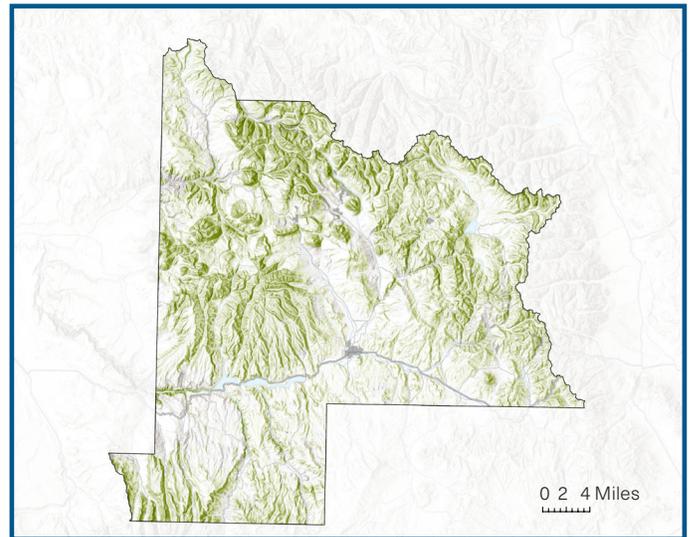


Figure 5: Gunnison County Map

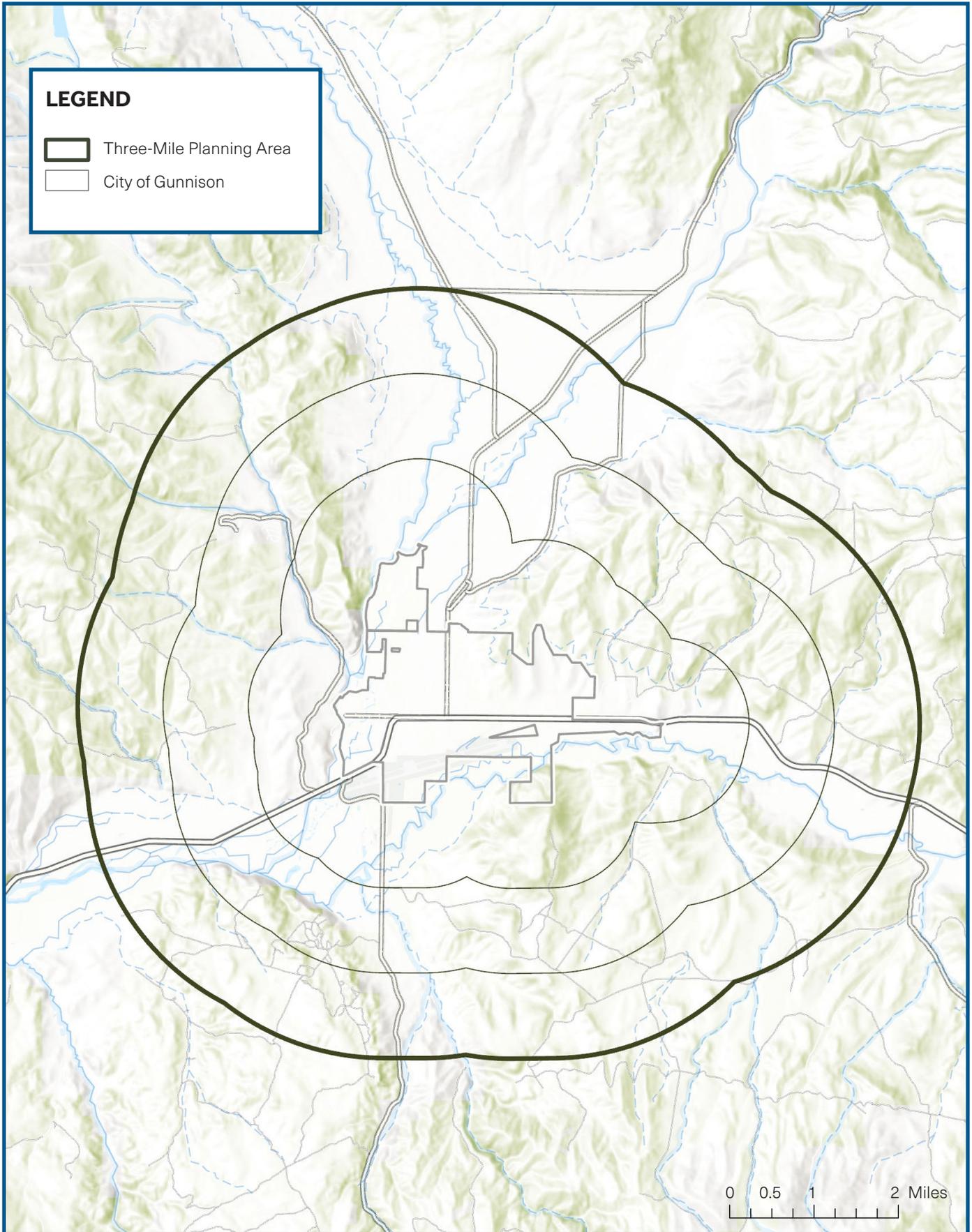


Figure 6: Gunnison Three-Mile Area Boundary Map

# CITY OF GUNNISON URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY

Urban Growth Boundaries are a growth management tool that defines where urban development is permitted and delineates between urban and rural development patterns.

In the City of Gunnison, the Urban Growth Boundary aims to control sprawl by designating specific areas for development, protecting natural landscapes and agricultural lands. For the purposes of this document, the City's urban growth boundary marks a clear transition point: land within the boundary is subject to City land use regulations, while land beyond it is subject to County regulations.

As Gunnison experiences increased pressure for growth and development, this Plan establishes a clear, collaborative framework to manage

land use at the City's edge. By guiding growth to appropriate areas, preserving sensitive landscapes, and aligning infrastructure and utility planning, the Plan supports the Gunnison Valley's long-term prosperity, sustainability, and quality of life.

The City of Gunnison Urban Growth Boundary Map, Figure 7 below, highlights the proposed zoning for areas, which includes C-Commercial, SR - Single Family Residential, MR - Mixed Residential, and HR - High Density Residential.

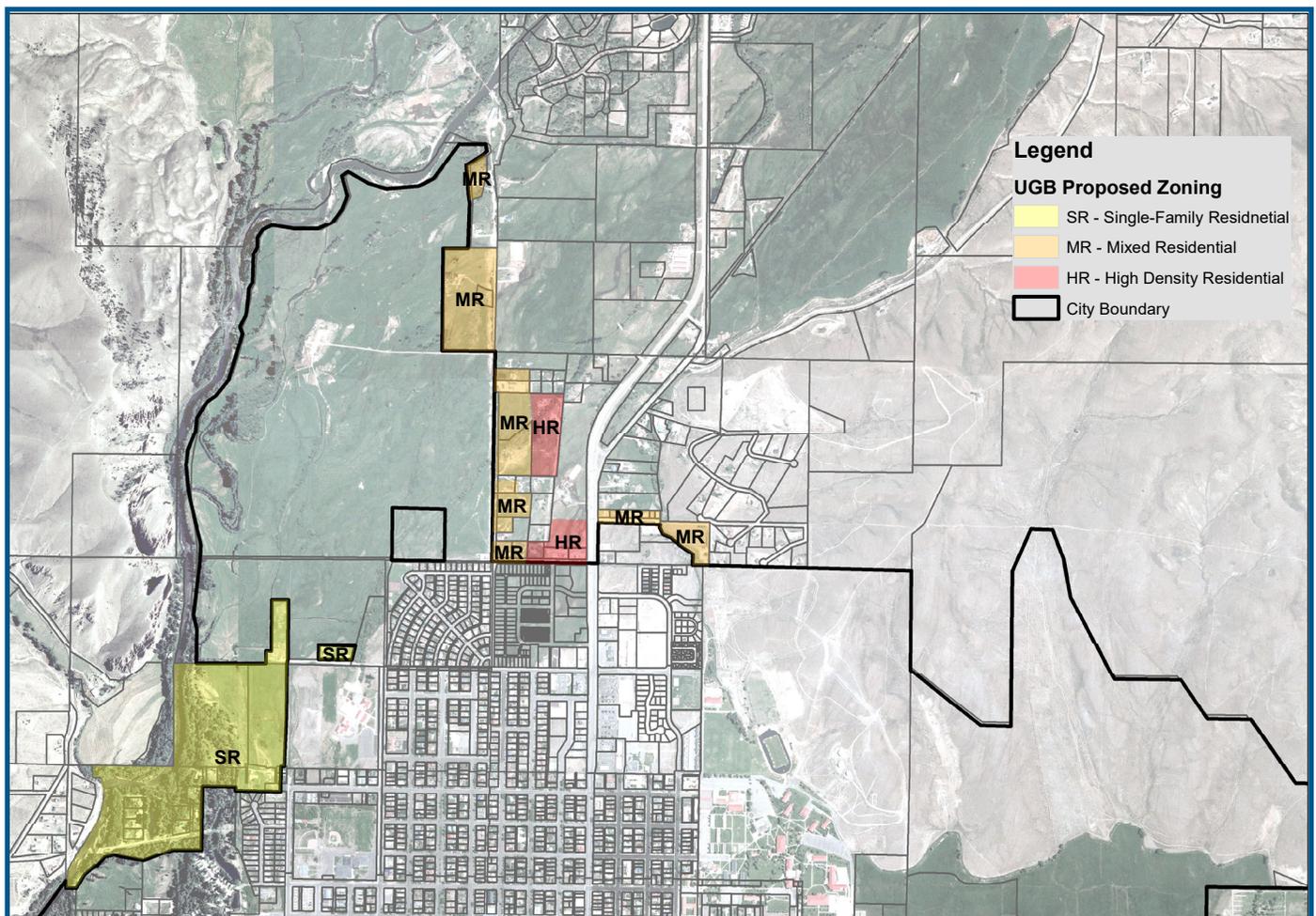


Figure 7: City of Gunnison Urban Growth Boundary Map

# JURISDICTIONAL REVIEW AND ANNEXATION PROCESS

The City of Gunnison is an incorporated home rule municipality with specific regulations related to zoning, density, and development standards. The three-mile planning area in Figure 9, encompasses land within the three-mile boundary outside of the City of Gunnison but within unincorporated Gunnison County.

These lands are governed by an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) that creates the legal framework for joint decision-making related to growth and development in the planning area. When a property is determined to be eligible for annexation, based on criteria found in C.R.S. 31-12-104, an applicant can apply for annexation and is subject to the City of Gunnison land use regulations. The steps for determining annexation are outlined below and are reflected in the Annexation Pathway graphic:

- **Eligibility Determination:** A property must meet statutory requirements for annexation, including contiguity to the City boundary and compliance with the City's Three-Mile Plan.
- **Pre-Annexation Coordination:** For development of properties within the North Urban Transition Area, a Pre-Annexation Agreement is required. This agreement outlines the terms under which development may occur prior to full annexation, including commitments for utility connections, infrastructure improvements, and land use compatibility.
- **Annexation Application:** Property owners must submit a formal annexation petition to the City. The application includes legal descriptions, maps, and documentation demonstrating compliance with state and local annexation criteria.
- **City Review and Public Hearings:** The City conducts a review of the annexation proposal, including staff analysis and City Council

deliberation. Public hearings are held to gather community input.

- **Annexation Agreement and Ordinance Adoption:** If approved, the City and applicant enter into a formal Annexation Agreement that details development expectations, utility provisions, and any special conditions. The City Council adopts an ordinance finalizing the annexation and initial zoning is applied.
- **Post-Annexation Development:** Once annexed, the property becomes subject to the City's zoning, development standards, and infrastructure requirements. Development may proceed in accordance with City plans, codes, and permitting processes.

Figure 8, below illustrates the jurisdictional hierarchy between the City of Gunnison and Gunnison County. The City has jurisdiction over all land located within the municipality and its Urban Growth Boundary includes defined areas within the three-mile boundary area where potential Annexation and expansion of City Services may occur. The County jurisdiction over all unincorporated lands in the County, covering rural planning and infrastructure reviews such as septic systems, wells, and private roads. Lands located within the three-mile boundary area including the urban transition areas, are subject to Special Area Regulations within the County's Land Use Resolution.

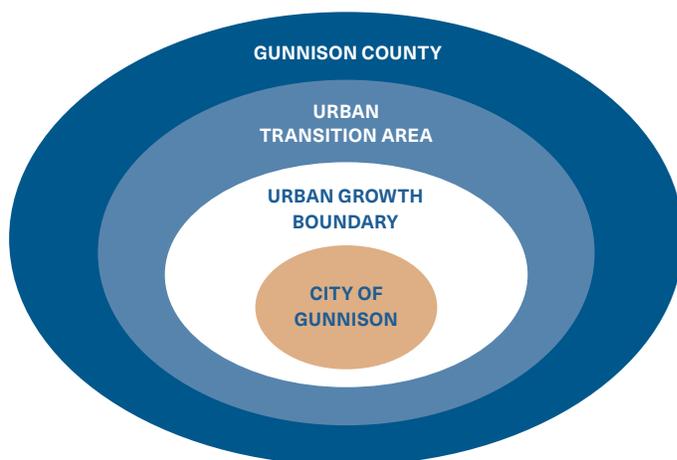


Figure 8: Jurisdictional Hierarchy

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# Urban Transition Area Descriptions

# URBAN TRANSITION AREAS OVERVIEW

Since the adoption of the last three-mile plan, three major changes to the City’s boundary have occurred. These include Gunnison Rising (633 acres), Van Tuyl Ranch (386.9 acres), and Gunnison North (11.93 acres). Within the Gunnison Rising annex, in addition to areas in West Gunnison, the City has undeveloped land that can accommodate growth and development through new households and commercial areas.

Opportunities for this land may include economic development, increased housing-mix diversity, retail attractions, and employment opportunities. As more people move to the area, additional opportunities such as increasing stores, more accessible shopping locations, more parks, greenways, cultural offerings, as community services become possible.

To provide order and framing to these opportunities, and others outside the UGB, a growth framework has been created to define several “Urban Transition Areas”.

These areas, and associated goals, are listed below:

- **City Urban Growth Boundary** - Additional affordable housing, infrastructure efficiency, walkability.
- **North Urban Transition Area** - Future expansion area, multimodal connections, and economic development.
- **South Urban Transition Area** - Moderate-density growth, infrastructure use, and increased housing choice.
- **Rural Transition Area** - Rural character, buffer zones, and limited infrastructure cost
- **Rural Area** - Conservation, water quality, and habitat protection

The City UGB, North Urban Transition Area, and South Urban Transition Area represent the most appropriate locations for near- and medium-

term growth in the Gunnison Valley. These areas provide a framework for inclusive, sustainable, and resilient community development that aligns with regional goals and public investment priorities.

These Urban Transition Areas provide a hierarchical system used to categorize different levels of preferred development and expansion to control potential of urban sprawl in the County lands. New growth should first be directed within the City’s Urban Growth Boundary, followed by the North and South Transition Areas, while lands designated as Rural Areas are reserved for preservation rather than development. This structure encourages compact growth near City boundaries, protects rural lands from sprawl, and directs infrastructure investments to areas with the greatest return on public investment.

Figure 9 below illustrates the Urban Transition Areas and how they relate to density. Development becomes more urban as it moves from Gunnison County to the City of Gunnison, where density increases and regulations become more prescriptive.

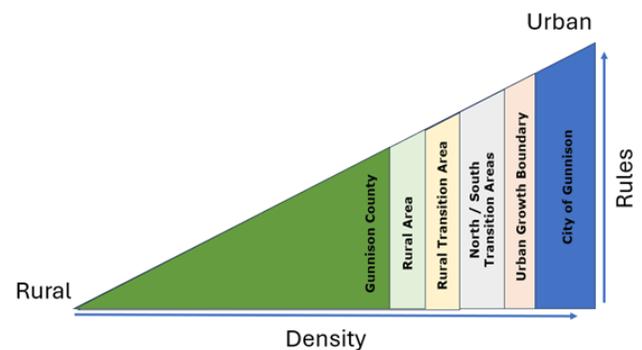


Figure 9: Urban Transition Areas and Relative Density

The Urban Transition Areas Map, Figure 10 to the right, illustrates the locations of the respective areas. Further descriptions are outlined in the pages that follow.

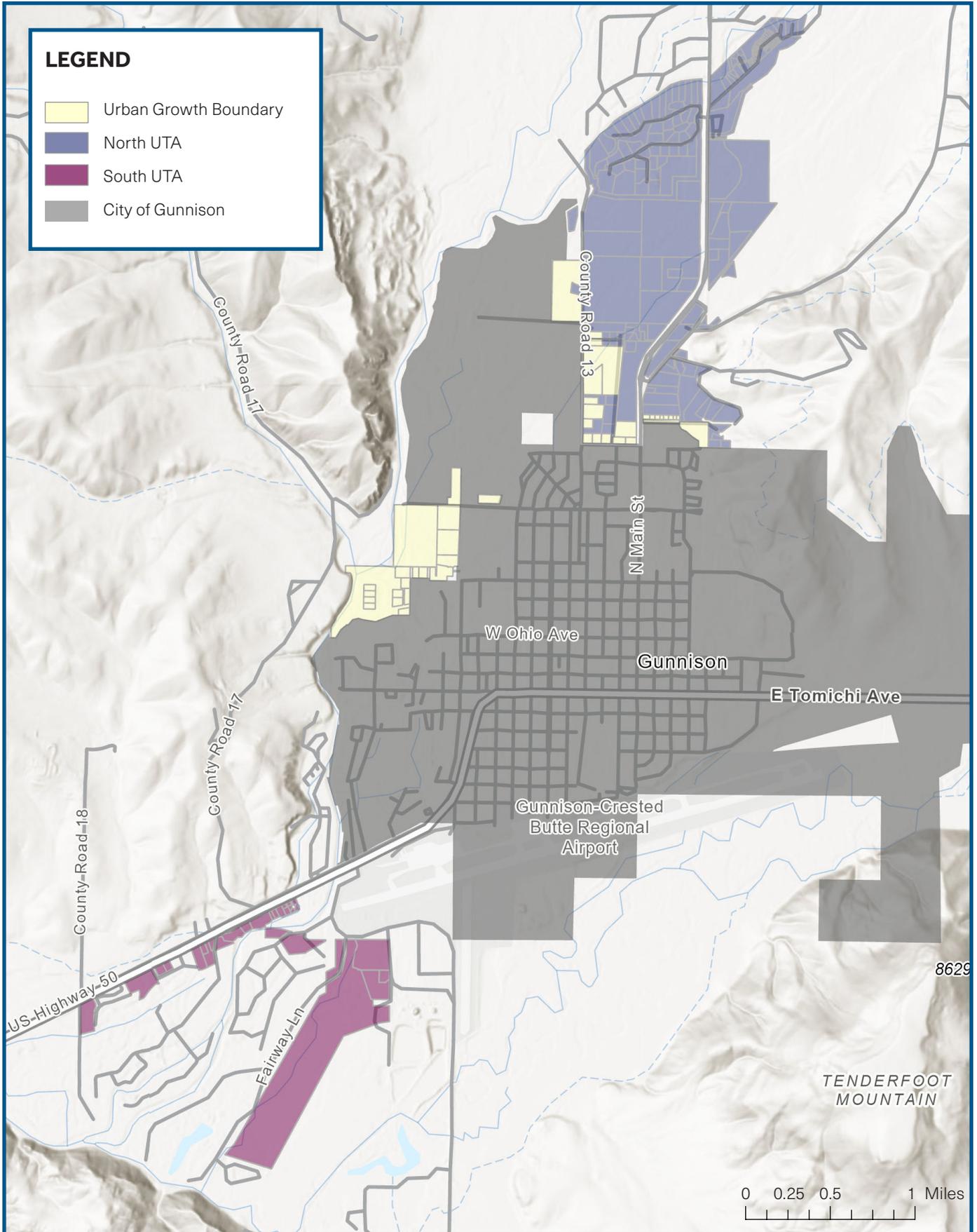


Figure 10: Urban Transition Areas Map

# CITY URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)

## **PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION**

For development located in the City of Gunnison Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), all parcels eligible for annexation will be directed to annex into the City. Development applications will be reviewed by the City of Gunnison.

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## **INTENT AND VISION**

The City Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is the initial focus for future urban growth and is expected to accommodate residential, commercial, and mixed used development. Development here must align with the City's comprehensive plans and infrastructure investments, both now and as they are updated from time to time, creating an efficient and sustainable urban expansion that strengthens the City's core.

---

## **DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

Development will occur through annexation and required connection to City utilities. All projects must comply with City standards, focusing on walkability, compact urban form, and mixed-use potential. Densities and uses will reflect urban characteristics, including multi-family housing and neighborhood commercial opportunities.

Concentrating growth within the UGB ensures efficient use of existing infrastructure and public services, reduces long-term maintenance costs, and prevents leapfrog development into more rural and sensitive areas. The UGB fosters development that maximizes infrastructure investments such as water, sewer, and transportation. This reduces the fiscal burden on both the City and County Rate Payers while accommodating future growth responsibly.

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## **ZONING IS REQUIRED:**

Development within the City Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) will be zoned through coordination with the City of Gunnison, aligning with anticipated residential, mixed-use, commercial, and light industrial districts. Zoning will be finalized at annexation to ensure consistency with City established zone districts, infrastructure and land use goals.

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# CITY URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)

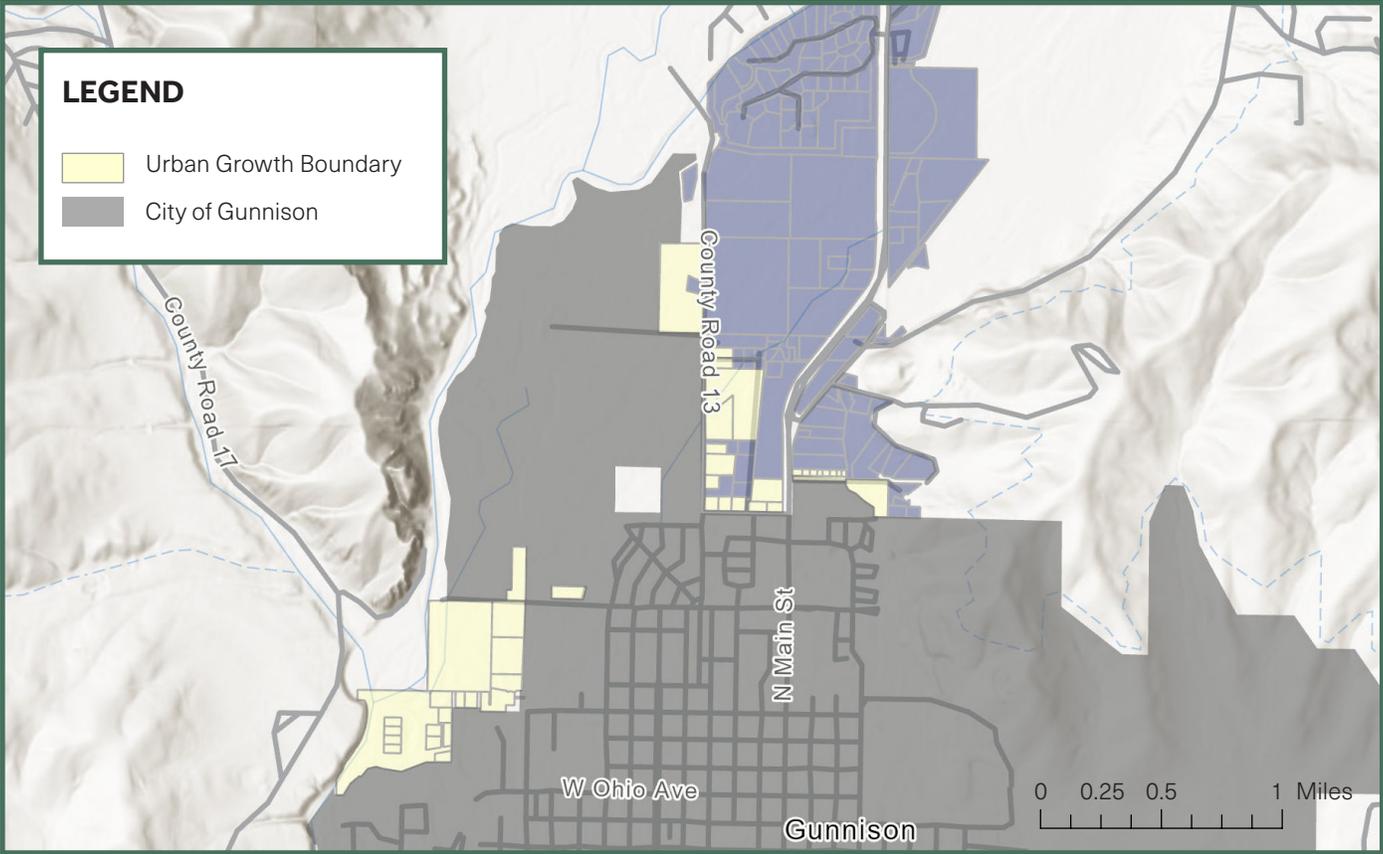


Figure 11: City Urban Growth Boundary Map

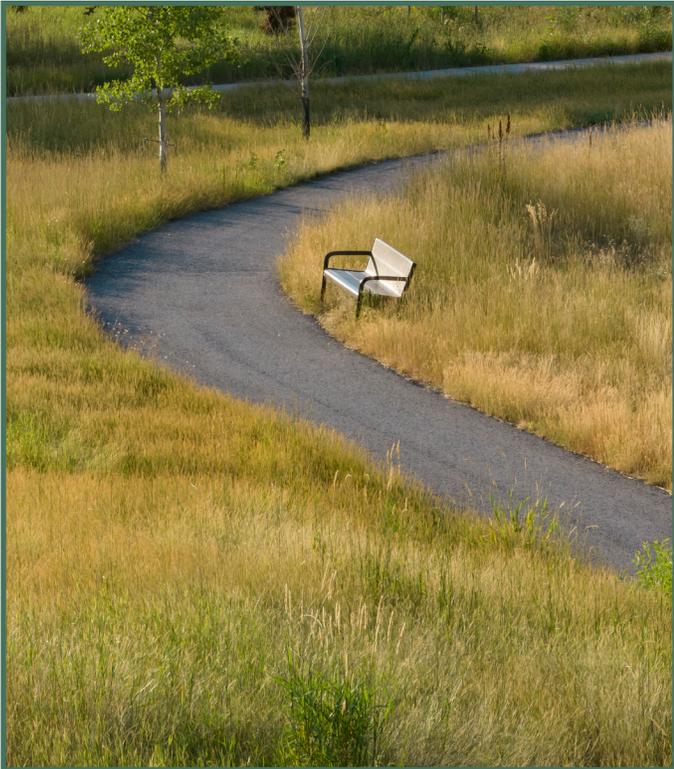


Figure 12: Example of Multi-Use Trails for UGB



Figure 13: Example of Mixed Use Development for the UGB

# CITY URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) defines a focused area where the City of Gunnison will direct future annexation and urban-style development. While geographically limited and affecting only a modest number of parcels, the UGB has a significant role in shaping how growth occurs. By requiring annexation, connection to City utilities, and compliance with City standards, the UGB ensures that development reflects compact, walkable, and mixed-use patterns that strengthen Gunnison's urban core.

Concentrating growth within the UGB delivers several community-wide benefits:

- » Compact, connected neighborhoods and public infrastructure: Promoting compact development preserves agricultural and natural lands, reduces community infrastructure costs, and supports vibrant neighborhoods with housing, jobs, parks, and civic spaces in close proximity.
- » Housing diversity and choice: Encouraging a range of housing types and densities supports infill development, reduces sprawl, and connects housing and transit planning to improve access and reduce vehicle travel.
- » Mixed-use vitality: Allowing neighborhood-serving commercial uses, live-work spaces, and mixed-use buildings supports walkable, efficient neighborhoods and reduces unnecessary separation between compatible uses.
- » Mobility and access: Streets and paths are designed for safe crossings, slower speeds, and connected networks for walking, biking, and transit, supported by coordinated service improvements and access management.
- » Placemaking and identity: Parks, plazas, gateways, and corridors create gathering spaces, reinforce community character, and provide a clear sense of place within new neighborhoods.

In short, while the physical footprint of the UGB is small, its role is powerful: it directs growth where it can be most efficient, connected, and sustainable—strengthening Gunnison's core while protecting the rural landscapes and natural resources that define the community's character.



Figure 14: Example of Multi-Family Housing for UGB



Figure 15: Example of desired development pattern in UGB

# CITY URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)



Figure 16: Example of desired housing types for the UGB

# NORTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (NUTA)

## PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

These areas are in Gunnison County that are not immediately eligible for annexation but are within the City of Gunnison utility service area. These areas are appropriate for potential annexation when they become eligible. Growth will be focused in these areas to leverage existing infrastructure, community services, and community characteristics to benefit future development. Development applications in these areas are reviewed by Gunnison County Staff and Planning Commission under County Special Area Regulations, with City coordination required to meet all City utility and Right of Way requirements and will proceed with a pre-annexation agreement with the City of Gunnison. Development of single-family and secondary residences are exempt from City utility connection and pre-annexation requirements. Pre-annexation agreements ensure that development contributes to public infrastructure, park land, and utility planning in alignment with City standards—even before formal annexation occurs.

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## INTENT AND VISION

The North Urban Transition Area (NUTA) represents a critical future growth corridor that will accommodate expansion beyond the current Urban Growth Boundary. This area will support a mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses in a form that is connected, infrastructure-ready, and reflective of the Gunnison Valley's values. Development in the NUTA is intended to occur in a phased, coordinated manner. This area provides opportunities to extend Gunnison's neighborhoods while integrating green infrastructure, transportation systems, and community amenities.

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## DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Development will emphasize connectivity to existing infrastructure and utilities through a Pre-Annexation Agreement. It will allow for moderate to high densities and mixed uses with right of way design and utility standards meeting City codes. Pedestrian-friendly layouts and access to services are prioritized. Development will expand multi-modal connectivity using the recommendations of the MetRec 2025 Regional Recreation Master Plan. Parks should be established in "service areas" intended to provide an outdoor gathering space for the surrounding area.

# NORTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (NUTA)

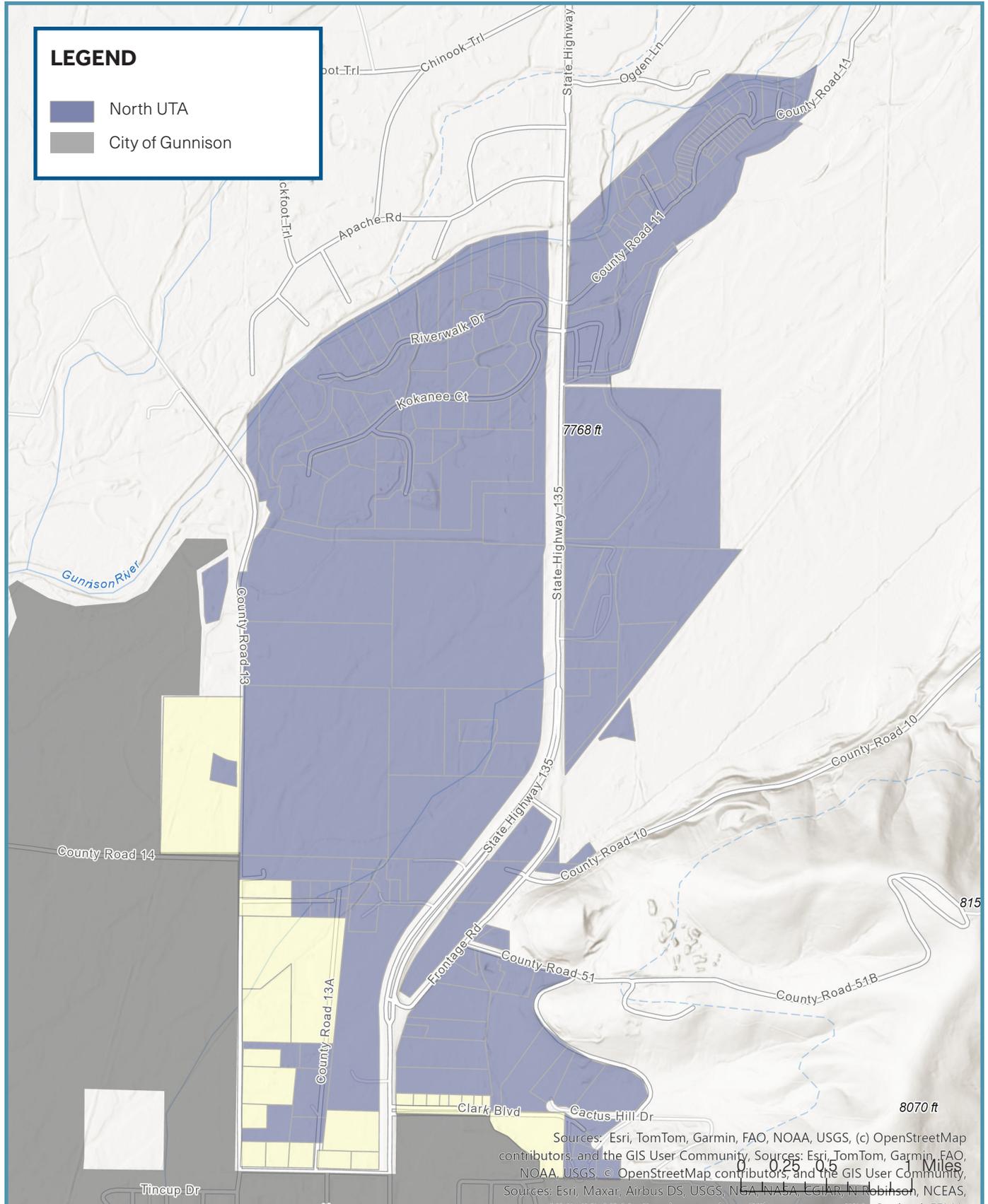


Figure 17: North Urban Transition Area Map

# NORTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (NUTA)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

The North Urban Transition Area (NUTA) is a critical corridor for Gunnison's future growth, offering space for new neighborhoods and community services in close proximity to the City core. By planning for phased, coordinated development, the NUTA allows the City and County to expand housing, transportation, and infrastructure in a way that supports community values while protecting rural lands and sensitive areas beyond.

Development in the NUTA will deliver broad community benefits, including:

- » Expanding housing choices with a mix of single-family, multi-family, and neighborhood-scale commercial uses that respond to the Valley's housing needs.
- » Coordinated infrastructure and utilities through pre-annexation agreements, ensuring that new neighborhoods are service-ready and integrated with City standards.
- » Transportation connectivity with pedestrian-friendly layouts, multimodal networks, and links to Main Street and regional trail systems, guided by the MetRec 2025 Regional Recreation Master Plan.
- » Vibrant, livable neighborhoods with parks, green infrastructure, and civic spaces that provide gathering places and enhance quality of life for all ages.
- » Predictability and fairness for property owners by aligning County and City review processes, establishing clear expectations, and reducing uncertainty in development outcomes.
- » Reduced pressure on rural landscapes by focusing growth where infrastructure and services already exist, helping preserve agricultural lands, wildlife corridors, and the open spaces that define Gunnison's character. Integrating park space and trails into neighborhood plans to support active living and connectivity for all ages.

As a significant growth area, the NUTA represents the next chapter in Gunnison's evolution: a place where coordinated planning translates into housing opportunity, efficient infrastructure, and vibrant community life, while maintaining the rural and natural landscapes that residents cherish.



Figure 18: Example of Single Family and Duplexes for NUTA



Figure 19: Example of Makers Space for NUTA

# NORTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (NUTA)



Figure 20: Example of Single Family Residences for NUTA



Figure 21: Example of desired neighborhood commercial for NUTA



Figure 22: Example of potential development patterns for NUTA

# SOUTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (SUTA)

## **PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION**

These areas are in Gunnison County and are not expected to be annexed into the City. They are served by County utilities and may be served by City electric services. These areas are appropriate for potential annexation if and when they become eligible. Growth will be focused in these areas to leverage existing infrastructure, community services, and community characteristics to benefit future development. Development applications in these areas are reviewed by Gunnison County, with coordination as needed for potential future annexation or utility connections. .

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## **INTENT AND VISION**

The South Urban Transition Area is intended to accommodate thoughtfully managed growth that supports Gunnison’s economic and housing needs while preserving the area’s community scale and character. This area serves as a flexible zone that leverages existing infrastructure to meet future needs, even if annexation is not currently anticipated.

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## **DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

Growth in this area will be served by County utilities (and City electric where available), with a focus on moderate-density residential development and small-scale non-residential uses. Development must maintain strong design standards and promote multimodal connectivity without assuming future annexation. Development will expand multimodal connectivity using the recommendations of the MetRec 2025 Regional Recreation Master Plan. Parks should be established in “service areas” intended to provide an outdoor gathering space for the surrounding area.

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# SOUTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (SUTA)

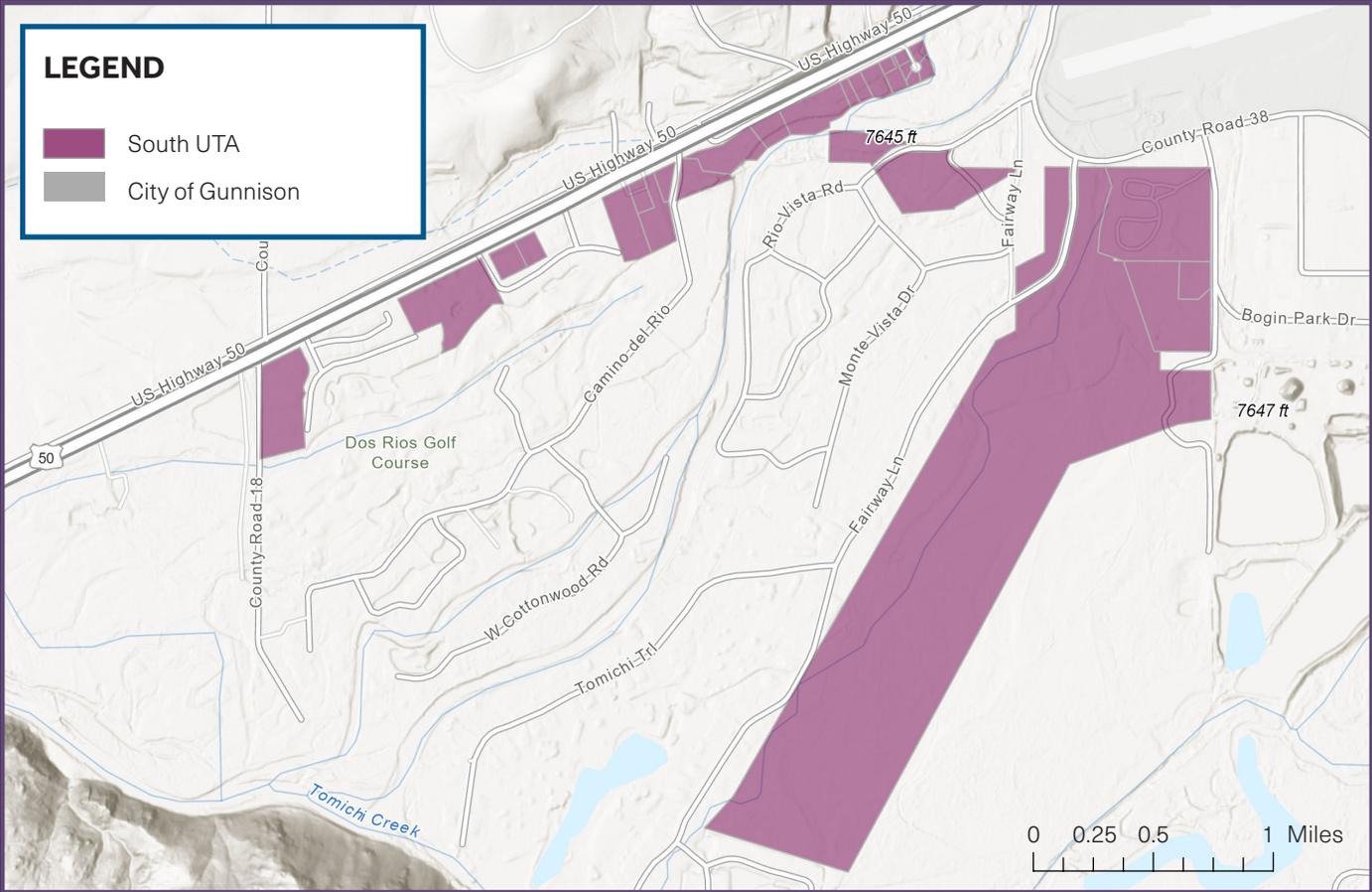


Figure 23: South Urban Transition Area Map



Figure 24: Example of Single Family Residence for SUTA

# SOUTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (SUTA)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

The South Urban Transition Area (SUTA) provides space for thoughtfully managed growth supported by existing utilities. Development here will play an important role in meeting Gunnison's housing and economic needs while maintaining the community's scale, character, and connection to surrounding neighborhoods.

Development in the SUTA will provide key community benefits, including:

- » Expanding housing opportunities through moderate-density residential neighborhoods that include a variety of home types, supporting long-term affordability and stability for local residents.
- » Strengthening community connectivity by creating walkable neighborhoods linked to multimodal networks and aligned with the MetRec 2025 Regional Recreation Master Plan
- » Enhancing livability with well-designed parks, gathering spaces, and small-scale non-residential uses that serve nearby residents and complement existing neighborhoods
- » Promoting sustainable development patterns that minimize environmental impacts, make efficient use of utilities, and reduce scattered rural development.
- » Preserving community character through design standards that reflect Gunnison's values and ensure compatibility with existing development.

The SUTA represents an opportunity to plan for steady, well-coordinated growth—balancing the community's need for housing and services with the protection of rural lands and the preservation of Gunnison's small-town character.



Figure 25: Example of Parks and Open Spaces for SUTA

# SOUTH URBAN TRANSITION AREA (SUTA)



Figure 26: Example of Cottage Court Development for SUTA



Figure 27: Example of desired locally-serving commercial for SUTA

# RURAL TRANSITION AREA (RTA)

## PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The Rural Transition Area (RTA) lies within the Three-Mile boundary but outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and the North and South Urban Transition Areas (NUTA/SUTA). These lands are not immediately eligible for annexation, lack City utility service, and are intended to remain rural in scale. Development applications are reviewed under Gunnison County standards and regulations.

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## INTENT AND VISION

The RTA provides a deliberate buffer between designated growth areas and the more sensitive Rural Areas (RA). Its purpose is to manage limited growth in ways that respect rural character, preserve agricultural viability, and protect scenic quality, while preventing scattered development from encroaching into lands that should remain undeveloped. The RTA is not intended for urban services or annexation, but rather for carefully managed, small-scale development that maintains the transition between Gunnison's neighborhoods and the Valley's rural landscapes.

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## DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Development in this area is limited to primarily single-family residences at rural densities, consistent with County standards. Urban-scale infrastructure and annexation are not anticipated. Site design should emphasize low-impact development, preservation of open viewsheds, and compatibility with surrounding agricultural and natural lands. Clustered or preservation-oriented subdivision may be considered where it better maintains agricultural use, rural character, or ecological resources. Development should not compromise the preservation intent of adjacent Rural Areas (RA).

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# RURAL TRANSITION AREA (RTA)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

The RTA helps manage Gunnison’s growth framework by acting as a transition zone that balances limited development with preservation. Its community benefits include:

- » Allowing limited, well-managed development while reducing sprawl by directing growth to appropriate rural locations and preventing scattered or leapfrog development.
- » Supporting agriculture and working lands by discouraging fragmentation and maintaining productive land use patterns.
- » Enhancing environmental resilience by maintaining open space that mitigates wildfire risk, protects water quality, and supports wildlife movement.
- » Providing a managed buffer that protects the long-term preservation of agricultural, ecological, and scenic lands while maintaining Gunnison’s rural identity.



Figure 28: Gunnison River in RTA

# RURAL TRANSITION AREA (RTA)



Figure 29: Example of Single Family Residential development for RTA

# RURAL TRANSITION AREA (RTA)



Figure 30: Example of desired cluster development RTA



Figure 31: Example of desired Open Space Recreation for RTA

# RURAL AREA (RA)

## PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The Rural Area (RA) includes lands within the Three-Mile boundary that are generally not suitable for development due to their ecological value, physical conditions, and location. These areas include ridgelines, critical wildlife habitat and migration corridors, agricultural lands, and areas prone to hazards such as flooding and wildfire. Development applications are reviewed by Gunnison County under County standards and regulations.

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## INTENT AND VISION

The RA is intended to remain largely undeveloped, preserving landscapes that are essential for ecological health, agricultural viability, scenic quality, and community safety. By maintaining these lands in their natural or working state, the RA helps prevent leapfrog development, limits sprawl, and reinforces Gunnison’s commitment to a clear growth framework that prioritizes compact, connected neighborhoods in designated areas.

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## DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

New development is strongly discouraged and limited to very low-intensity uses, consistent with County standards. Urban services, infrastructure expansion, and annexation are not appropriate. Land use decisions should prioritize preservation, agricultural use, hazard avoidance, and the prevention of scattered development patterns.

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Figure 32: Example of Appropriate Development in RA

# RURAL AREA (RA)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

The RA reinforces Gunnison’s identity as a community rooted in open landscapes, agriculture, and natural systems by:

- » Preserving wildlife habitat and migration corridors essential to ecological health.
- » Maintaining scenic ridgelines and viewsheds that define the Valley’s character.
- » Supporting agriculture and working lands by discouraging fragmentation and keeping prime soils in production.
- » Reducing community risk by limiting development in floodplains, wildfire-prone areas, and other hazardous locations.
- » Preventing sprawl and leapfrog development by clearly defining these lands as outside the urban growth framework.
- » Providing natural buffers that enhance resilience to climate and environmental change.



Figure 33: Example of Appropriate Development in RA

## CONCLUSION

The Gunnison Area Plan provides a clear framework for shaping growth in a way that reflects the values of the community and the vision of its residents. By directing development toward compact, connected neighborhoods and protecting the rural lands, agricultural heritage, and natural resources that define the Valley, this Plan balances the need for housing, infrastructure, and economic vitality with the preservation of community character. It is both a guide for decision-makers and a commitment to the public: that future growth will be thoughtful, efficient, and aligned with the principles of affordability, connectivity, resilience, and preservation.

As Gunnison continues to evolve, this Plan will serve as a living document—adaptable to changing conditions while steadfast in its purpose—to ensure that the community grows smarter, not bigger, and that future generations inherit a thriving town surrounded by open landscapes, strong neighborhoods, and enduring natural beauty.

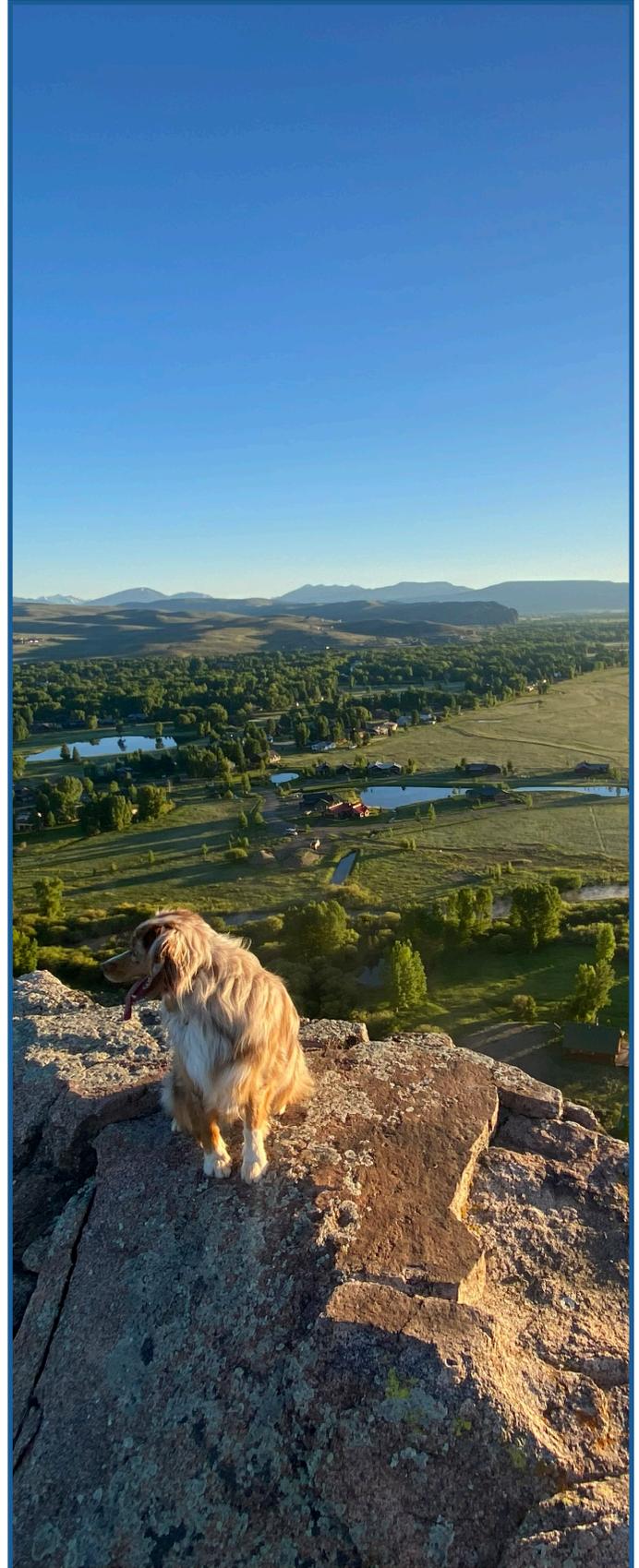


Figure 34: Hartman Rocks Trail



Figure 35: Gunnison Valley