



# CHAPTER 2: BASELINE CONDITIONS

## INTRODUCTION

On the surface, demographic and economic data can appear as little more than sterile numbers and statistics. However, careful consideration of these numbers can illuminate the unique characteristics of a community, uncovering both challenges and potential opportunities. This Chapter summarizes the most pertinent issues which arise from the demographic and economic data.

A more complete and thorough summary of baseline demographic and economic conditions influencing this plan can be found in Appendix II.

### The State of the County

Clear Creek County is located approximately 20 miles west of Denver along the I-70 corridor. See MAP-1. The County was one of the original 17 counties created by the Colorado legislature on November 1, 1861, and is one of only two counties (along with Gilpin) to have maintained its original boundaries. It was named after Clear Creek, which runs down from the continental divide through the County and continues to influence the identity and economy of the community. The County's proximity to Denver and mountain location make it unique within Colorado, offering both a rural mountain lifestyle and a relatively quick commute to everything the Denver Metro has to offer.

I-70 acts as the “spine” of the transportation system in the County and links many of the communities within the county. There are four incorporated municipalities in the County (Georgetown, Silver Plume,



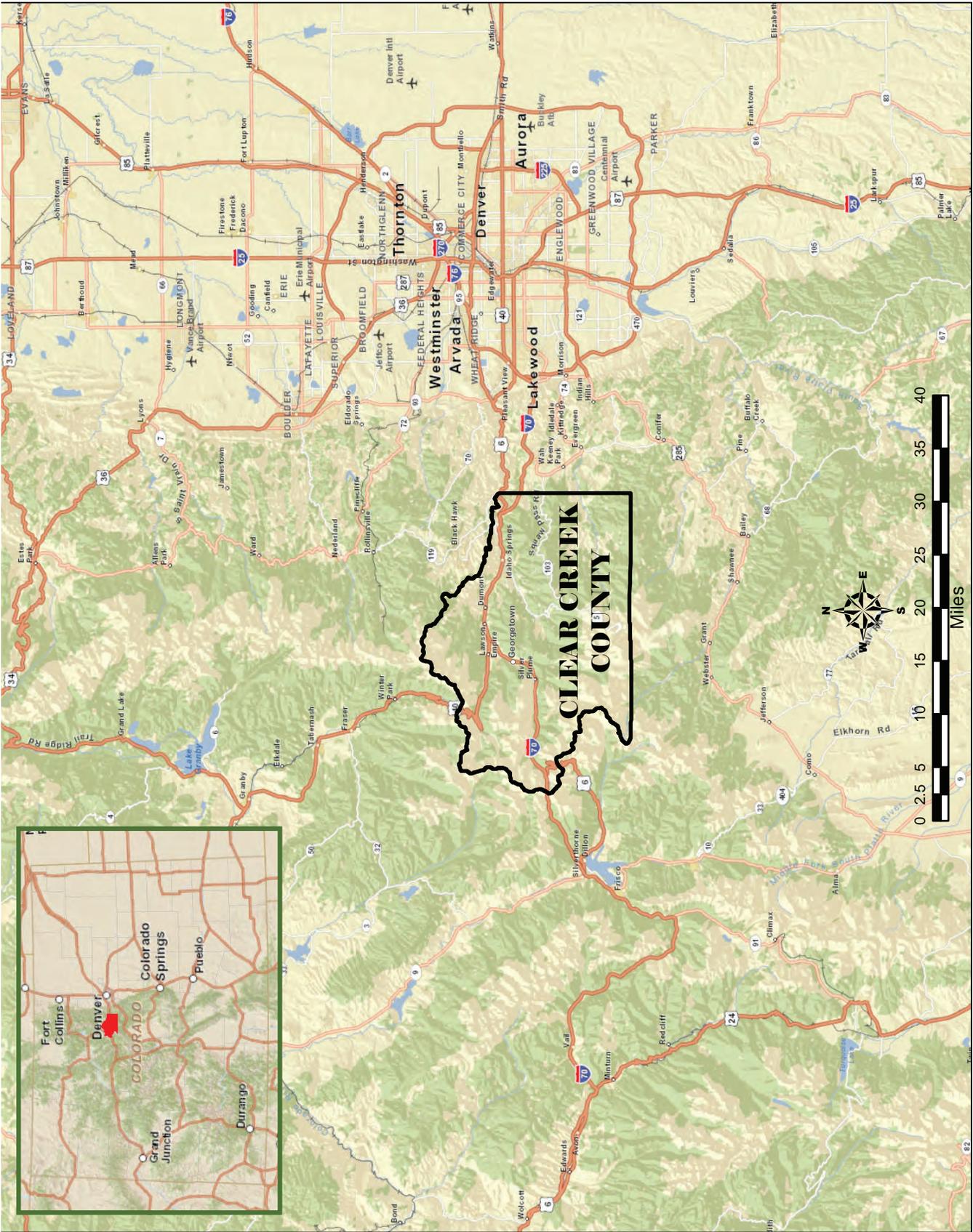
Empire and Idaho Springs) as well as approximately 20 “Sub-Areas.” See MAP-1. In general, population and services are clustered within the municipalities and sub-areas, with the most populace sub-areas being in the eastern portion of the County. Given the topography and limited transportation network connecting the municipalities and sub-areas together, there are geographic, cultural and demographic differences between the eastern portion of the County and the western portion of the County.

Clear Creek is a diverse county, with over 75 percent of the land being publicly held, primarily as national forest. Mineral resource extraction has and continues to be an important part of the County’s land use. The county was created as a direct result of George Andrew Jackson’s discovery of gold on January 7, 1859. Although he attempted to keep the discovery a secret, it only lasted until April of 1859, when the current location of Idaho Springs was inundated with its first group of miners. This first settlement was actually two miles above Idaho Springs and was named Spanish Bar, due to the evidence of earlier mining by the Spanish Conquistadors. As more and more miners moved into the county, the prospecting moved west following Clear Creek. Mining districts were founded creating their laws and civil government in order to protect their claims from claim jumpers, thieves, murderers, and all other unlawful acts. Incorporated and unincorporated communities (sub-areas) have grown up around many of the mining districts over the past 150 years hosting most of the commercial and retail activity within the county. See MAP-3. Many mining claims still exist within the county, and a recent trend in the County has been the conversion of mining claims into residential use, consistent with County Land Use Code provisions. Additionally, some mining lands are currently being used, and plan to be used for recreation purposes.

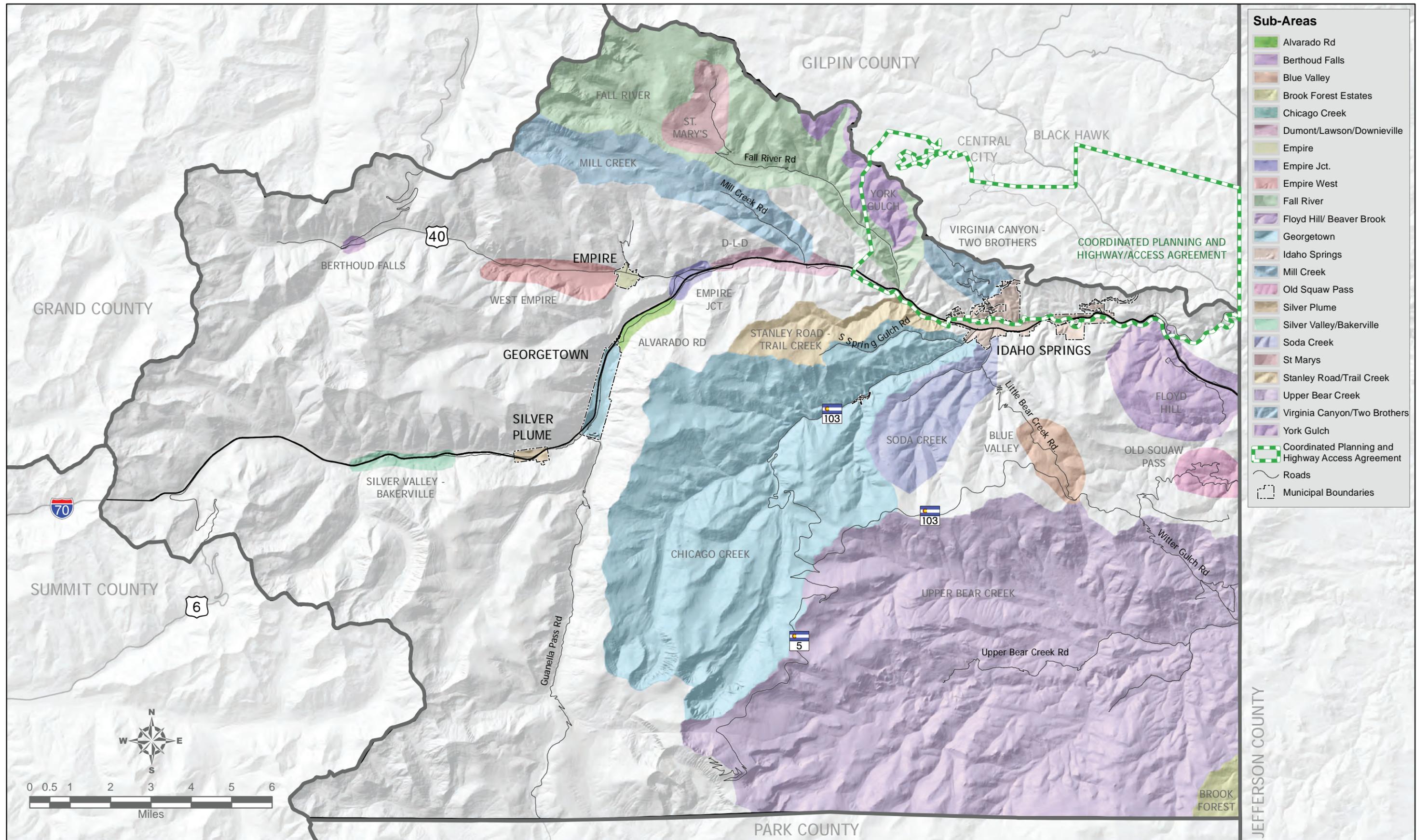
## THE EVOLVING DEMOGRAPHICS

### The Population Picture

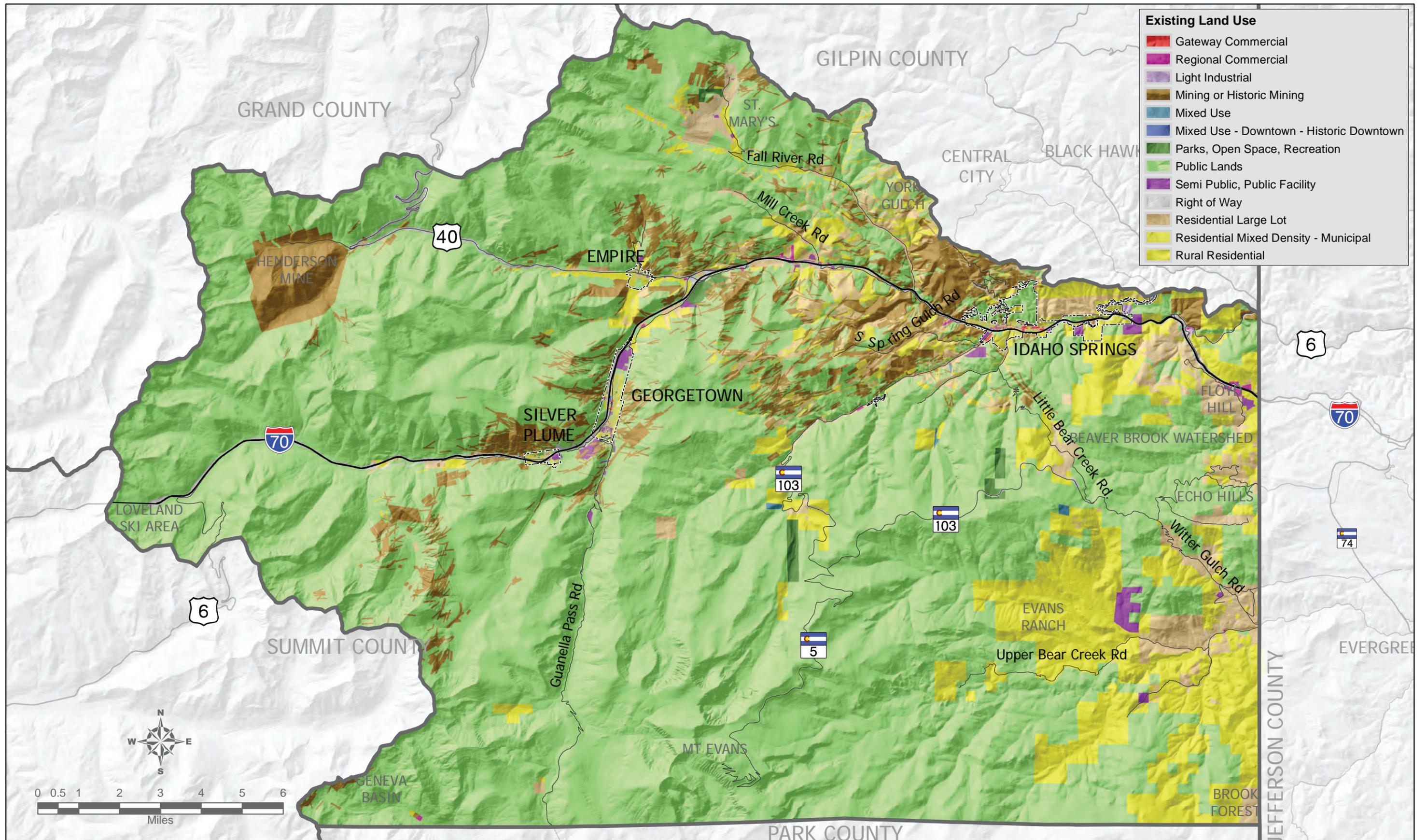
Overall the Clear Creek County population has been relatively stagnant in the past 20 years, declining slightly in the last 10 years (2003-2013) and increasing slightly in the previous decade (1993-2003). The Colorado State Demography Office projects this mildly fluctuating trend to continue for at least 10 years, with the County experiencing more dramatic growth in 15, 20, and 25 years. This long-term growth mirrors the growth the State Demography Office anticipates for the Denver Metro, which after comparing historical trends in the two areas does not seem appropriate. This plan considers the potential for some new population growth—and makes recommendations on how to plan for such growth—but does not anticipate any significant population growth for the County, at least in the short- to mid-term.



**MAP-1** | Regional Context



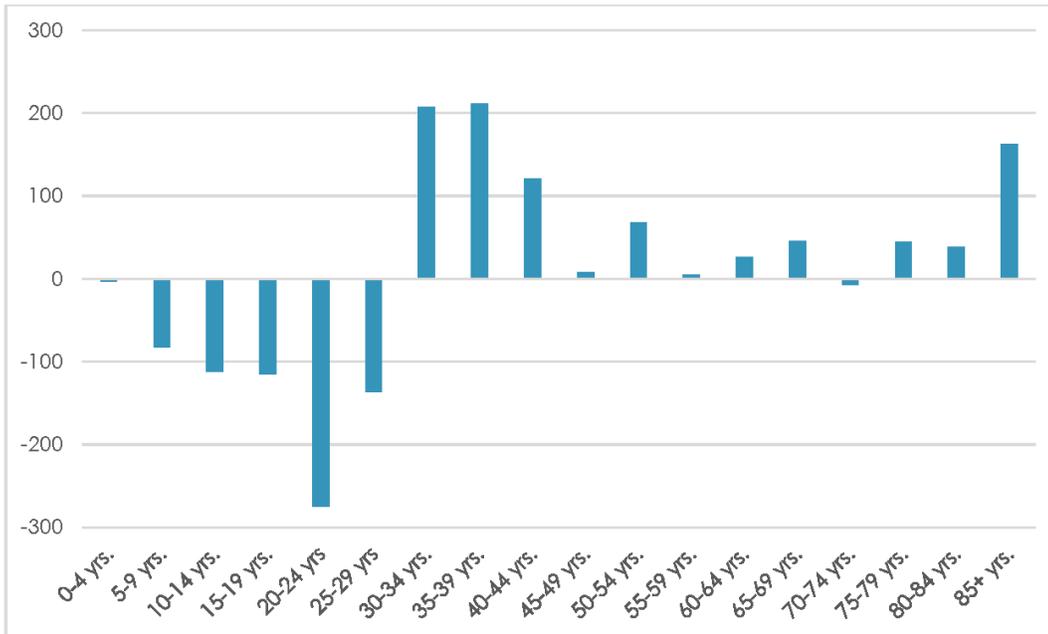
MAP-2 | Distinct Areas



MAP-3 | Existing Land Use



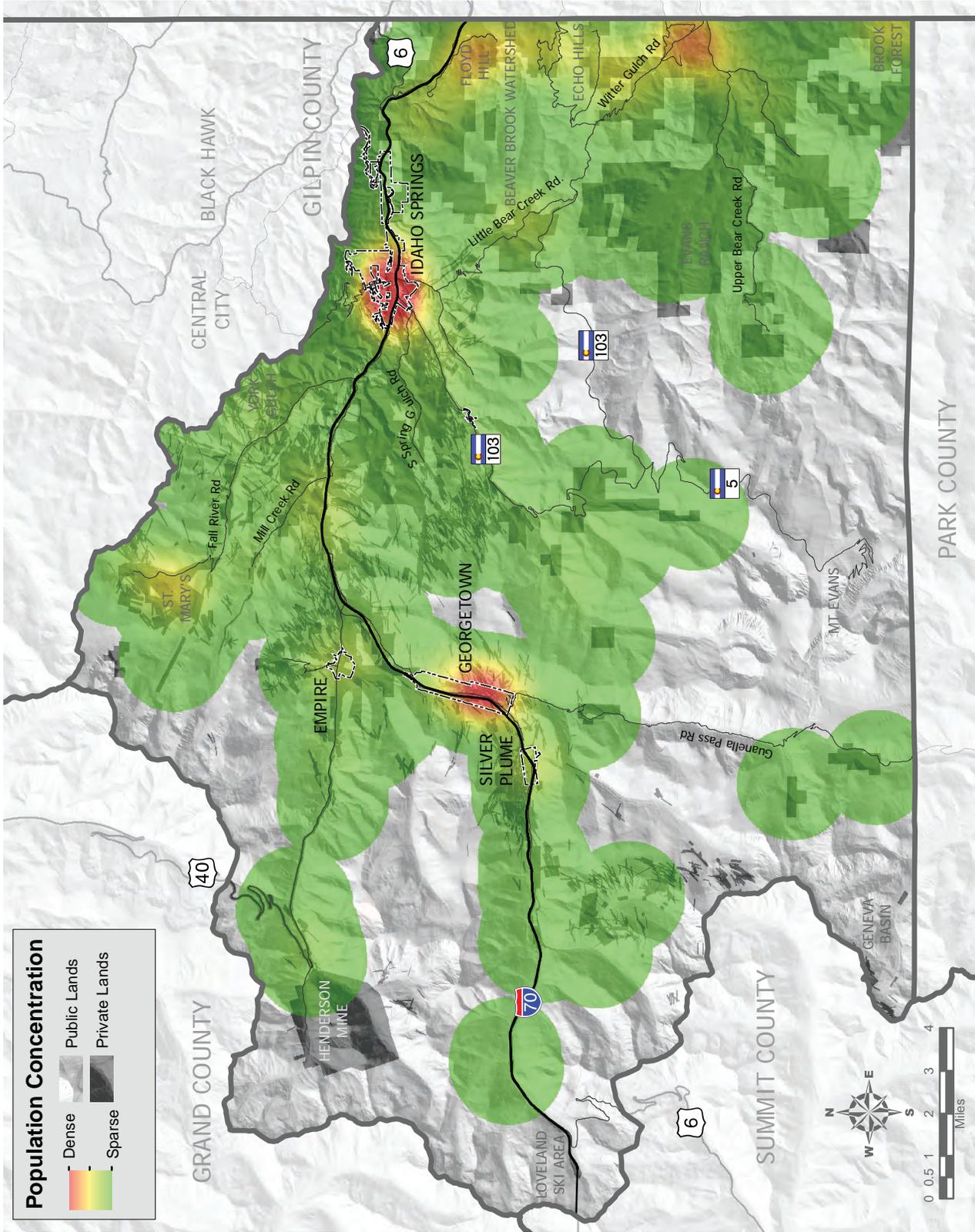
## HISTORIC POPULATION GROWTH 1980-2013



Source: Colorado Division of Local Government, Demography Section.

As of 2013, approximately 65 percent of the County population resided in unincorporated areas of the county, while the remaining 35 percent of the population resided in municipalities. Idaho Springs is the municipality with the largest share of the County population, with more than half of the municipal population living in Idaho Springs. Georgetown also contains a significant proportion of the County population, with smaller municipalities, unincorporated communities, and rural County land making up the rest. Generally, the eastern portion of Clear Creek County contains larger unincorporated communities such as Floyd Hill or Upper Bear Creek, while the western portion of the county contains smaller unincorporated communities such as Dumont and Downieville. See MAP-4.

While population decline was experienced throughout Clear Creek County between 2003 and 2013, the highest percent of population loss was in municipalities (Empire at 25.13 percent and Silver Plume at 15.08 percent). Unincorporated areas of the county experienced the least amount of loss during this period, with a decline of approximately 1.21 percent. The percent of the population living in unincorporated areas in the county increased from 57 percent in 1993 to 65 percent in 2013. Based on these existing patterns of growth, new growth in the county can be expected to be concentrated in unincorporated areas of the County. As such, new growth in these areas should be focused towards existing population centers and multiple-use areas where county services can be most efficiently provided.

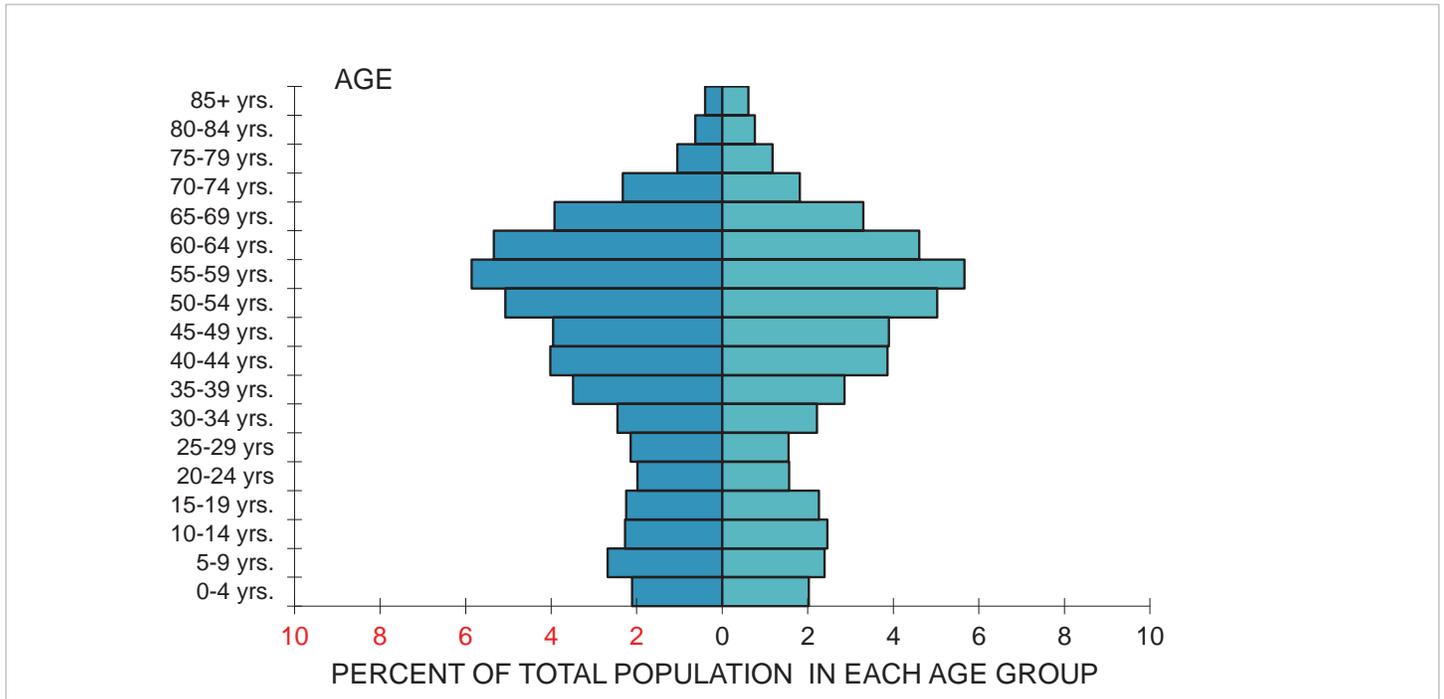




## Age, Households, and Migration

Data regarding age, household structure, and family suggests an aging population within the County and that young families with young children may be either moving away or not migrating into the County. The age distribution of Clear Creek County is depicted in the “population pyramid” figure below. These figures are referred to as pyramids because they generally form the shape of a pyramid when the population is growing (with the largest populations in the youngest age cohorts). The shape of the population pyramid for Clear Creek County, with the largest population cohorts being between 50 and 64 years of age, reflects an aging population within the County with relatively low numbers of young adults and children. The median age of the County is 46.6, compared to a median of 35.7 in the Denver Metro and 37.2 in the U.S. as a whole, which also reinforces this interpretation.

### CLEAR CREEK COUNTY POPULATION PYRAMID

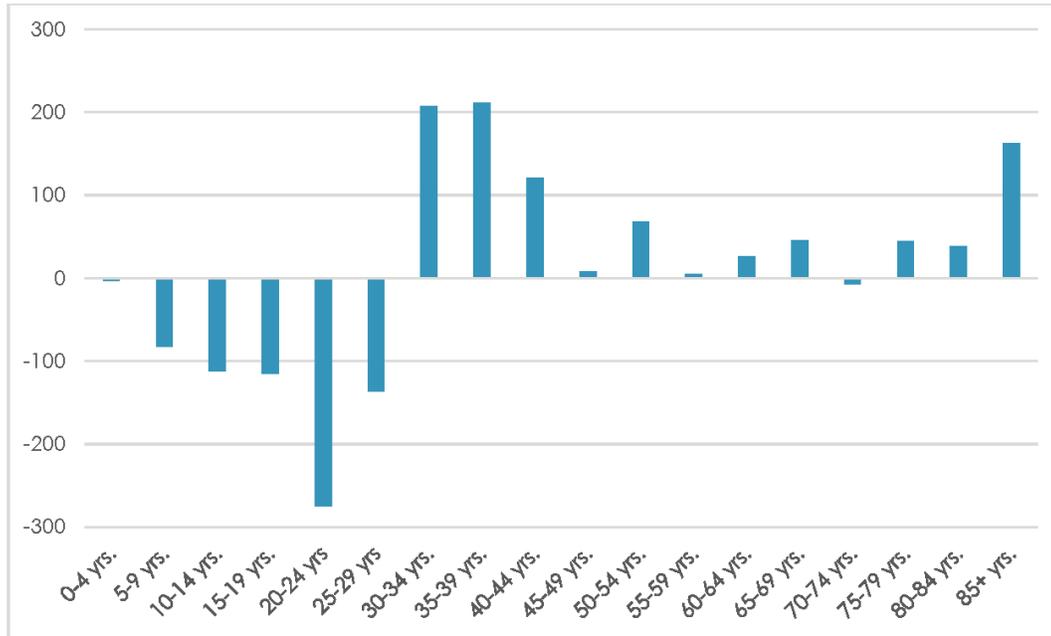


Source: Colorado Division of Local Government, Demography Section

Migration data for Clear Creek County also suggests that young families with young children may be either moving away or not migrating into the County. By analyzing migrations by age, the figure below shows that all age cohorts from 0 to age 30 have negative migration rates, meaning people are leaving the county in these cohorts, and that the largest in-migrations occur within the 30 to 44 age cohorts.



### NET MIGRATION 2000-2010, CLEAR CREEK COUNTY



Source: Colorado Division of Local Government, Demography Section

The average household size in Clear Creek County dropped between 1990 and 2000 and has continued to decline in recent years, decreasing from 2.31 persons per household in 2000 to 2.14 persons per household in 2010. Likewise, the average family size has decreased over this time period, from 2.81 persons per family in 2000 to 2.67 persons per family in 2010. The percent of family households (families with children, husband-wife families, single-parent households) decreased since 2000, dropping from approximately 65 percent in 2000 to approximately 60 percent in 2010.

All of these age, migration and household data for Clear Creek County point to an aging population, and a challenge with attracting and retaining young people and young families in the community, which is reflected in the recommended strategies for housing, transportation, economic development and recreation.

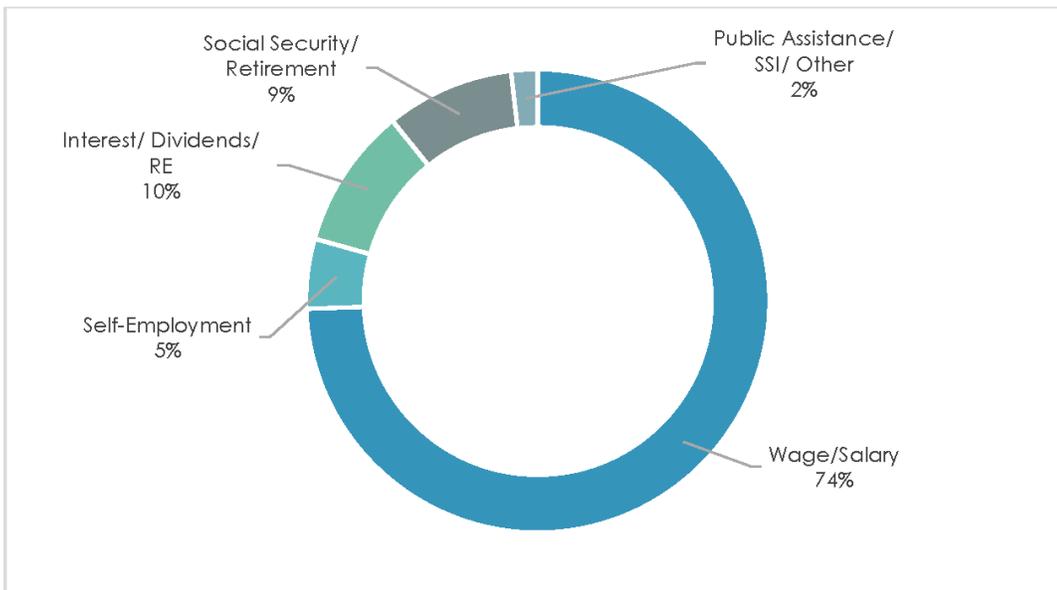


## ECONOMIC PROGRESS

### Tracking Income and Workers

The median household income for Clear Creek County was \$67,259 in 2013. While this figure is considerably higher than the national median income (\$51,939), real income (inflation adjusted) has increased only slightly (approximately 1 percent) in Clear Creek County since 2003. Clear Creek County has a relatively high proportion of income derived from interest, dividends and real estate, and slightly lower reliance on income from wages and salaries, highlighting the importance of other income sources and economic opportunities for County residents.

### CLEAR CREEK COUNTY HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY SOURCE



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

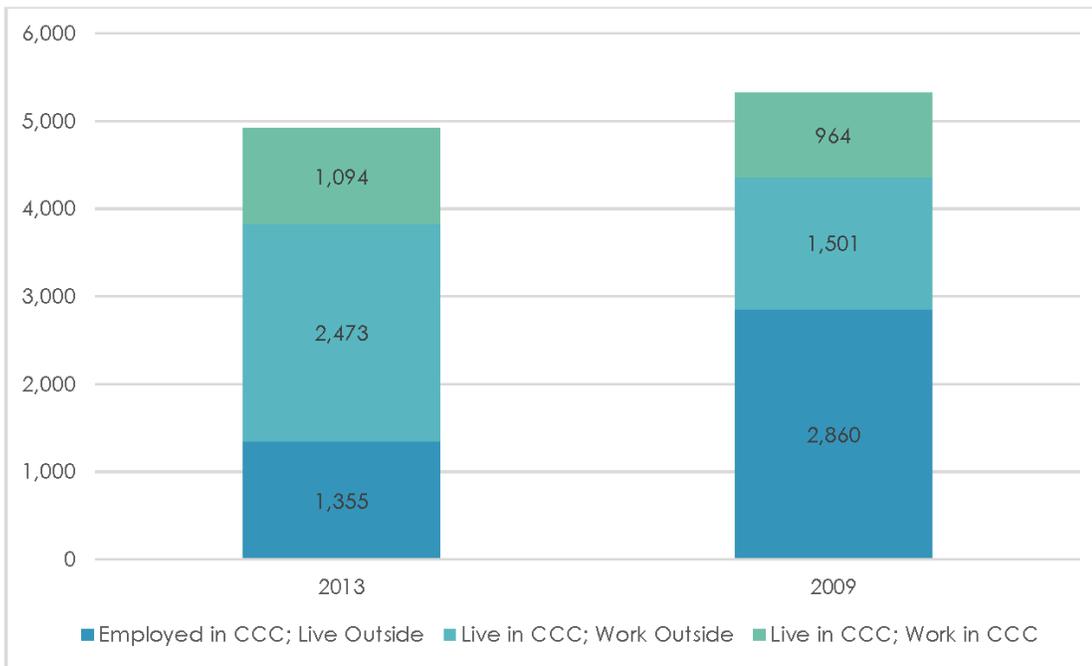
Almost half (49 percent) of Clear Creek County workers are between the ages of 45 and 64, while over a third is between 25 and 44 years of age, again indicating a slightly aging population in the County.

As of 2013, the vast majority (69 percent) of the Clear Creek County workforce was employed outside of the County, with Jefferson, Denver and Arapahoe Counties being the top three commuting destinations for these workers. This massive out-commute from the County demonstrates the importance of inter-county collaboration on transportation solutions, and belies the untapped capacity of the Clear Creek County workforce. While Clear Creek County has a slightly lower percent of worker's in management, business, science, and arts occupations compared to the Denver Metro, it has many more workers in these occupations than there are employment positions in these industries in the County (see Employment and Economic Growth, below). This means that these workers are commuting outside the County for these positions, but also presents an opportunity for economic development in these fields within Clear Creek County because the experience and capacity currently exists in the local workforce.



Between 2009 and 2013, Clear Creek County experienced a large decrease in the number of workers who were employed in Clear Creek County, but live outside the County between—a shift of over 1,500 employment positions. This decrease in employment is likely related to the phasing out of Henderson mine and the reduction of employees from Jefferson and Gilpin traveling to the mine for their work. Figure 15 (See Appendix I) also indicates a large increase in the number of workers who live in Clear Creek County and work outside the County between 2009 and 2013, growing from 1,501 workers in 2009 to 2,473 workers in 2013. This data is likely reflecting a low point of employment during the height of the national economic recession in 2009, and the recovery of many jobs by 2013, albeit at locations outside of Clear Creek County.

### WORKER FLOWS IN CLEAR CREEK COUNTY (2009 & 2013)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### Employment and Economic Growth

In 2013, the overall unemployment rate in Clear Creek County (7.5 percent) was significantly lower than that of the US (9.7 percent), the State of Colorado (8.5 percent), and the Denver Metro (8.3 percent), suggesting a good outlook for Clear Creek County workers. However, diving deeper into these numbers uncovers a few challenges associated with employment. First, as we saw above, nearly 70 percent of workers who live in Clear Creek County commute outside of the county for work—and this number has been growing—so while they are employed they are traveling farther to find work. Second, when examining the employment rate in Clear Creek County by age, we see that persons 24 to 44 years of age by far have the lowest unemployment rate of any age group at 2.9 percent unemployed. Persons aged 20 to 25 years had a significantly higher unemployment rate at 17.1 percent, suggesting it may be difficult for persons in this age group to find adequate employment, which also tracks with the age and migration



data. Finally, we see that while employment growth has occurred in Clear Creek County, it is slowing down. The average annual change in total employment for the 2002-2015 period was the addition of approximately 15 jobs per year. This figure is substantially lower than that of the 1994-2002 period, which had an average annual change of 56 additional jobs each year. This reduction in job creation is likely at least partially related to the economic recession experienced nationwide during this period.

These changes in employment also track with the economic growth in the County in terms of business composition and activity. Since 2004 total private employment in travel and tourism related industries has grown, while total employment in all other private industries has shrank. During the same period the amount of mining employment in the County has fluctuated considerably, peaking in 2006. Most growth that has happened since 2004, has occurred in either the mining or travel and tourism related industries, with 154 net new jobs in travel and tourism and 64 net new jobs in mining between 1998 and 2013, with net losses of jobs in other industries. These figures are based on the newest available data from the U.S. Census County Business Patterns program, but we know that many more mining jobs have been lost since 2013 with the phasing out of the Henderson Mine and that this trend will likely continue into the future.

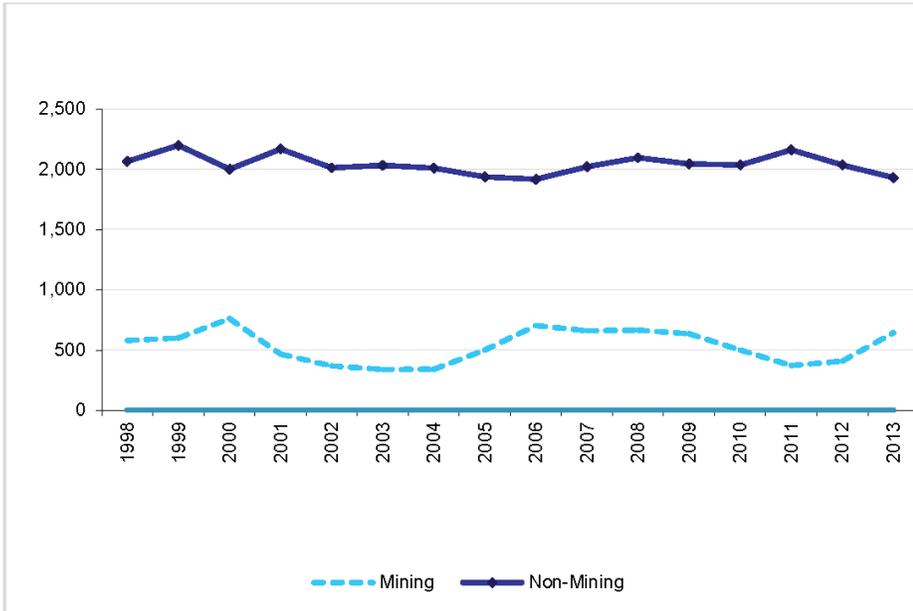
#### TOTAL PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AND TOURISM ECONOMY EMPLOYMENT, 1998-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns



### TOTAL MINING AND NON-MINING EMPLOYMENT, 1998-2013

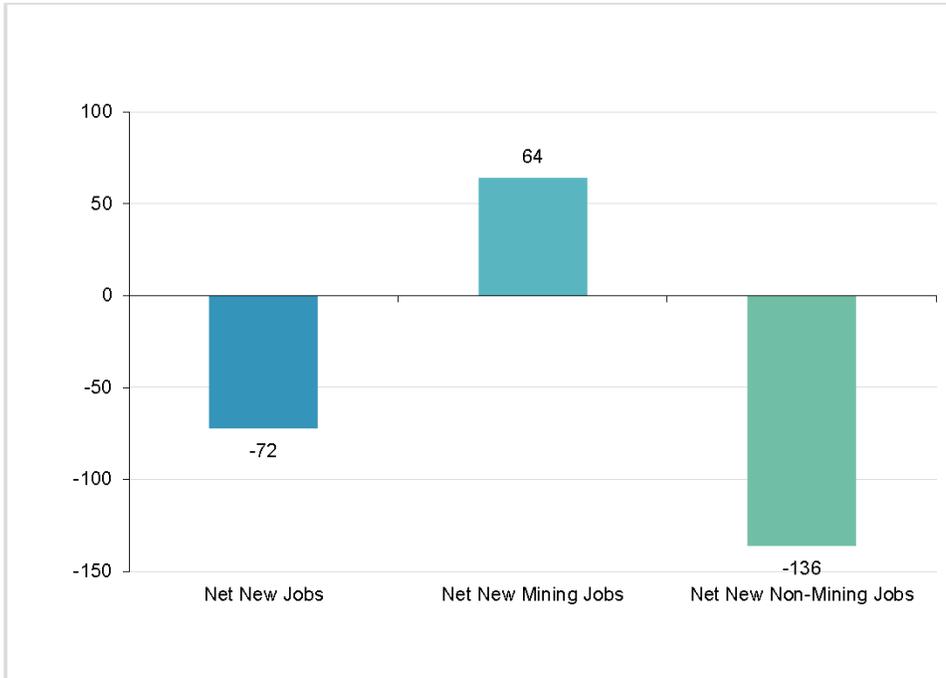


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns



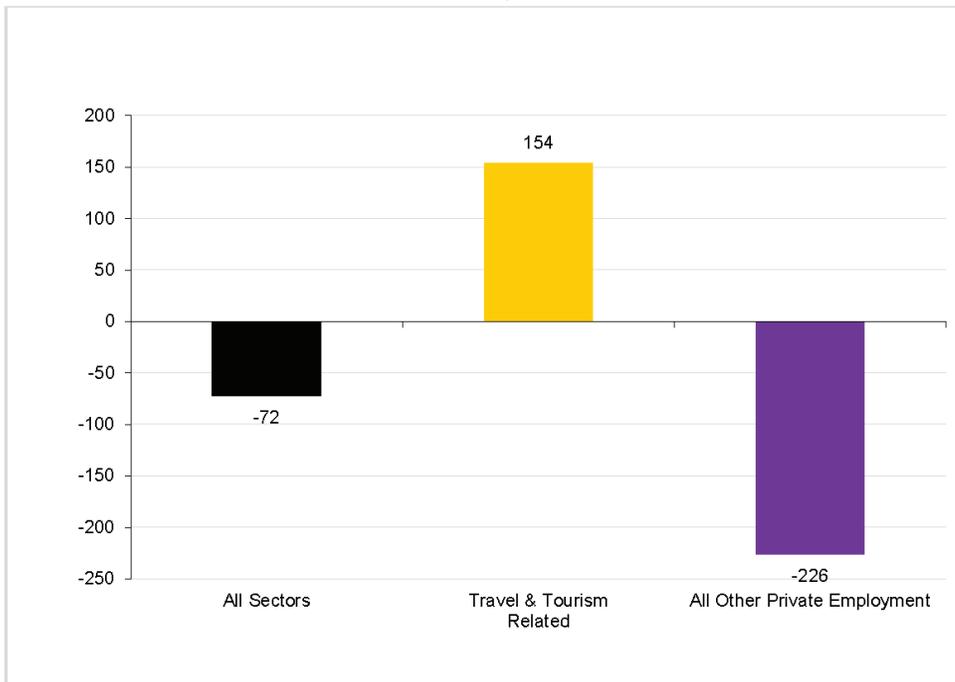


### NEW JOBS IN MINING AND NON-MINING, 1998-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns

### NEW JOBS IN THE TOURISM ECONOMY, 1998-2013



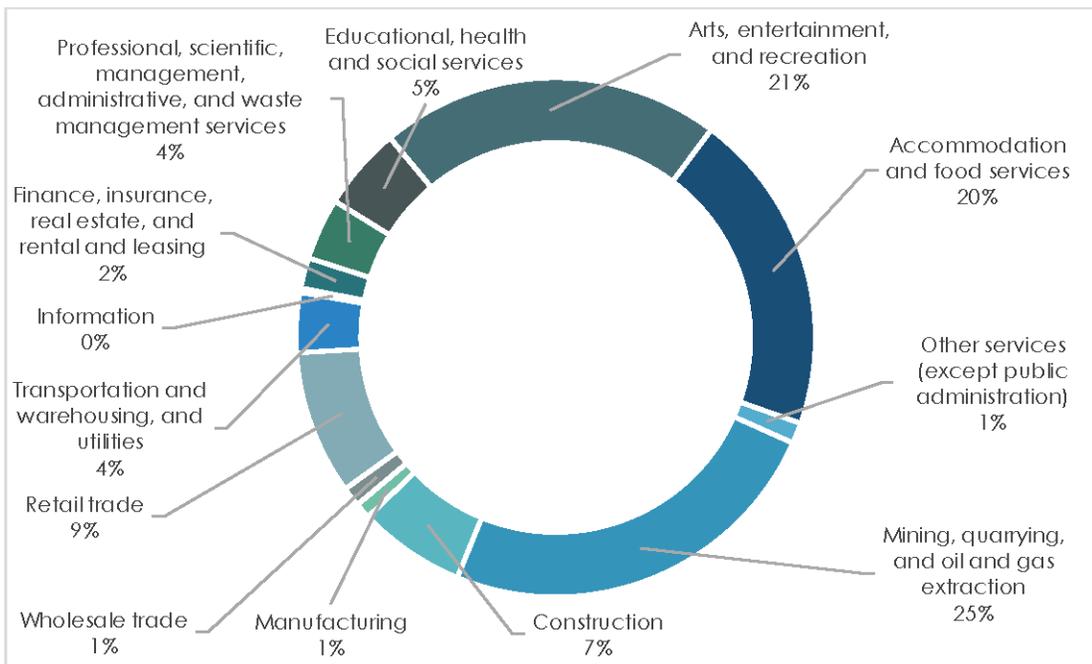
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns.



The phasing out of the Henderson Mine has highlighted a particular challenge for the Clear Creek County economy that is also evident in the economic data: the problem of economic diversification. There are two primary ways to consider the diversity of industry composition: through the number of businesses by industry and the distribution of employment by industry. By comparing the two, one can get a sense of economic stability and resiliency by analyzing the share of employment attributed to industries with only a few large employers, such as Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. The first figure below demonstrates the number of Clear Creek County business by industry. The professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services industry has the largest number of businesses in Clear Creek County (58), followed by the construction industry (52), retail trade (51), and accommodations and food services (42). The information industry has the fewest number of businesses in Clear Creek County (3), followed by the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction industry (4).

When these numbers are referenced with the distribution of employment by industry, we see vastly different results. For example, the professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services industry has the largest number business establishments, but generates only 4 percent of employment in the County. Likewise, The mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction industry only has four business establishments in Clear Creek County (one of which being the Henderson Mine), but accounts for the largest share of employment of any single industry group at 25 percent, although tourism which typically includes both arts, entertainment, and recreation industry and the accommodation and food services industry would be higher at 41 percent of total employment when grouped together as a single unit.

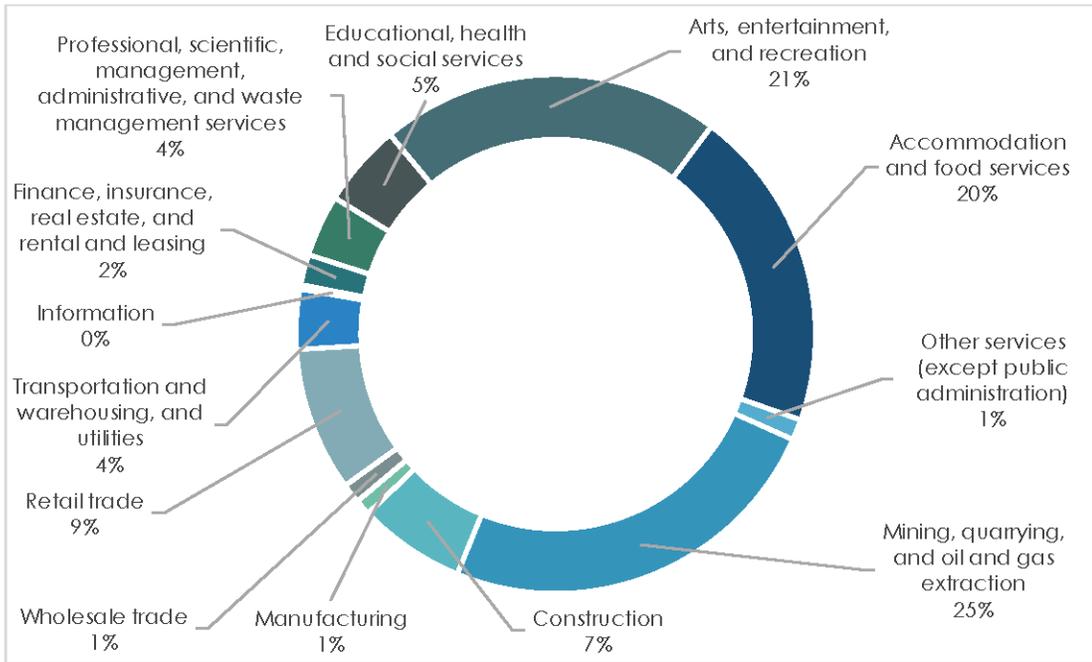
### NUMBER OF CLEAR CREEK COUNTY BUSINESS BY INDUSTRY



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns



### PERCENT OF CLEAR CREEK COUNTY EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns

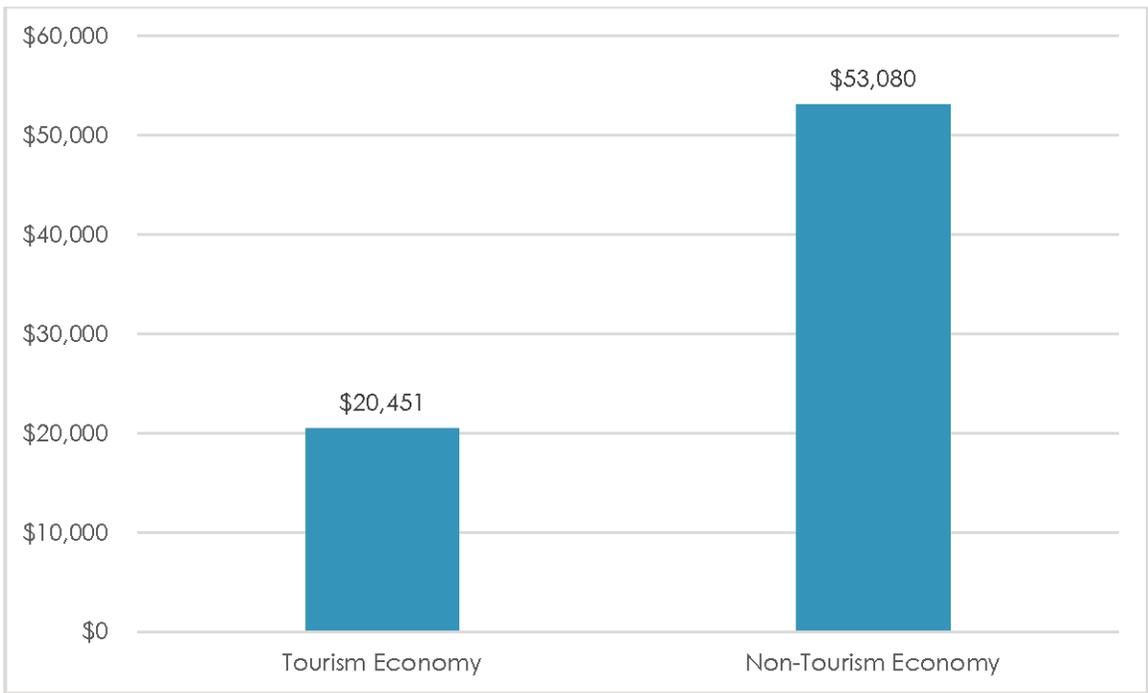




The recent phasing out of the Henderson Mine has created a real challenge for both the residents and the government in Clear Creek County, and highlights the issue with a lack of economic diversity. While many of the employees of the Henderson Mine commute from outside Clear Creek, the loss of the economic activity at the mine has resulted in some job loss for Clear Creek County residents, but has had an even more significant impact on the County's annual revenues, ultimately constraining the County's ability to provide services.

While the growth of the tourism economy in Clear Creek County has provided a real opportunity for economic development that can potentially help offset the loss of the mine, this growth is not without its challenges. Although the tourism economy is spread out over much a larger number of businesses than mining has been, the problem of economic diversification is still present because shifts in travel behaviors could have a significant impact on overall the county economy—much like the closing of Henderson Mine. The average annual wages associated with the tourism economy in Clear Creek County (\$20,451) are also less than half of the typical non-tourism economy wages for the County (\$53,080). While this reflects the nature of many tourism economy jobs—being either part-time, seasonal, or both—this disparity further suggests the need for a “multi-pronged” approach to economic diversification that capitalizes on the tourism economy opportunities available to Clear Creek County, while also pursuing other economic development strategies in other areas.

### CLEAR CREEK COUNTY TOURISM ECONOMY WAGES



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 County Business Patterns



## COUNTY ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Understanding the changing trends that will influence the County's future is an important aspect of a Master Plan. Key issues identified for each element below have been summarized. Appendix III provides more thorough and detailed baseline summaries for many of these elements.

### Transportation and Mobility

Since the 2004 Master Plan, the County's relationship with the Interstate 70 corridor has continued to be a major source of both opportunity and challenge. As described below, recent changes have been undertaken to lessen the impact of peak travel usage of the highway. Also, the ongoing implementation of the non-motorized Greenway Plan has also been connected to the I-70 corridor.

The ongoing maintenance of the County road network has continued to be a challenge given the rural and remote character of much of the network. The current road network, showing both County, US Forest Service, State of Colorado and private roadways can be found on MAP- 5.

While public transit options within the County remain unmet, some regional changes have helped provide additional opportunities for transit mobility.





## Interstate 70

The impact and influence of Interstate 70 on the County is profound. It serves as both the essential access into/out of the County and links many of the distinct areas where the majority of the population is located and where economic activity is highest. It also bisects many of these communities, creates noise, and has a level of congestion that can have staggering effects on the ability of County residents to move about conveniently and efficiently.

While the I-70 corridor has been a part of life in Clear Creek County for decades, a more recent series of short and long term projects led by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), have been undertaken to address peak travel conditions within the corridor associated with the peak summer and winter recreation seasons. As described in more detail in the Transportation Baseline Summary (See Appendix II), some of these improvements included expanding the Veterans Memorial Tunnel from two to three lanes, establishing of a Peak Period Shoulder Lane (PPSL) along a 13 mile eastbound stretch of tolled road from the tunnel to Empire Junction and completing of a feasibility study for a potential high-speed transit system between Golden and Eagle. In addition, new enforcement efforts (chains) and traveler information systems have been started to provide disincentives and/or incentives for peak travel time road highway use.

In addition to the above, CDOT has continued to plan for future changes to the I-70 corridor that certainly will influence outcomes in Clear Creek County. Improvements to interchanges near Empire Junction / US-40 and Floyd Hill, more pullouts and parking for truck operations and a westbound PPSL (Peak Period Shoulder Lane) have all been identified in CDOT's approved Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS).

## The Greenway Plan

The proposed 36 mile long Clear Creek Greenway ([www.ccgreenway.com](http://www.ccgreenway.com)) has been an important County priority since 1990 when it was identified as a non-motorized route in the Clear Creek County Non-Motorized Routes Master Plan. Since then, the County has been investing in planning and construction of various segments of the Greenway. In 2005, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) provided funding for the development of the Clear Creek Greenway Plan that more specifically identifies a proposed alignment and design guidance. At completion, the Greenway will weave together existing segments of multi-use trails with new links and establish a defined recreational trail network connecting the municipalities and distinct area along the I-70 corridor. While CDOT has been an active partner in the establishment of the project thus far, the non-profit Clear Creek County Greenway Authority (CCCGA) was established in 2014 to help facilitate the continued implementation of the project. Since 2005 the Greenway has added to two new segments to the original 9 miles. Additional segments are in the middle of design and permitting processes through 2017.

The development of the Greenway from 2005 to 2015 was done under the auspices of the Clear Creek County Open Space Commission (OSC). They sought grant funding and provided match money for efforts that include the development of two recreational nodes along the Greenway; the Lawson White Water Park, and the Philadelphia Mill Site.

The investment in the Greenway has continued with the CCCGA receiving \$2 million in RAMP (Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance and Partnerships) funding from CDOT in 2014. Combined with a \$500,000 match from Clear Creek County, the monies are being used to complete the design of a 14-mile segment



from Hidden Valley to Empire Junction. The CCCGA continues to pursue grant and investment monies to cover the expected \$4 million in design costs.

Reaching beyond the County's borders, Jefferson County has also been active in development of a trail network that will ultimately intersect with the Greenway Plan. A new 4-mile segment through Clear Creek Canyon (including 1 mile within Clear Creek County) was completed in 2016. The Clear Creek County portion of the trail was overseen by the OSC who sought and received \$2.8 million from GOCO through the River Corridor Initiative and was one of only nine projects awarded funding statewide. The "Peaks to Plains" Trail, which is the larger trail network of which the Clear Creek Greenway is a part of, has been identified by the Governor as one of the State's 16 most important trail gaps.

Other key elements of the Greenway, such as the Bakerville to Loveland Trail, Scott Lancaster Trail, and the Silver Plume to Georgetown segments, as well as some segments through Idaho Springs, were built with CDOT Enhancement Funds and other funding resources over the years.

The planned location of the Greenway is identified on MAP-6.

### County Roads

Clear Creek County maintains about 254 miles of roadway out of about 887 total miles within the County (approximately 29 percent). The vast majority of these roads are dead-ends or provide access to residential properties, businesses or recreational opportunities.

A critical challenge for Clear Creek County has been the ongoing maintenance of this road network. The challenging terrain of the County coupled with the often harsh weather (snow, rain) and remoteness of some road segments makes keeping up with road maintenance particularly daunting. The ongoing maintenance of this network is proscribed by the classification of roads as noted below:

#### Miles of County Maintained Road by Classification

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Miles</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Primary	69	27%
Secondary #1	24	9%
Secondary #2	64	25%
Secondary #3	11	4%
Secondary #4	86	34%
Total	254	100%

Generally speaking the Primary and Secondary #1 roads are considered critical in that they support (in addition to resident access) school transportation and rural mail delivery. Snow removal on roads classified as either Primary or Secondary #1 is planned to happen on the 1<sup>st</sup> day following the storm.

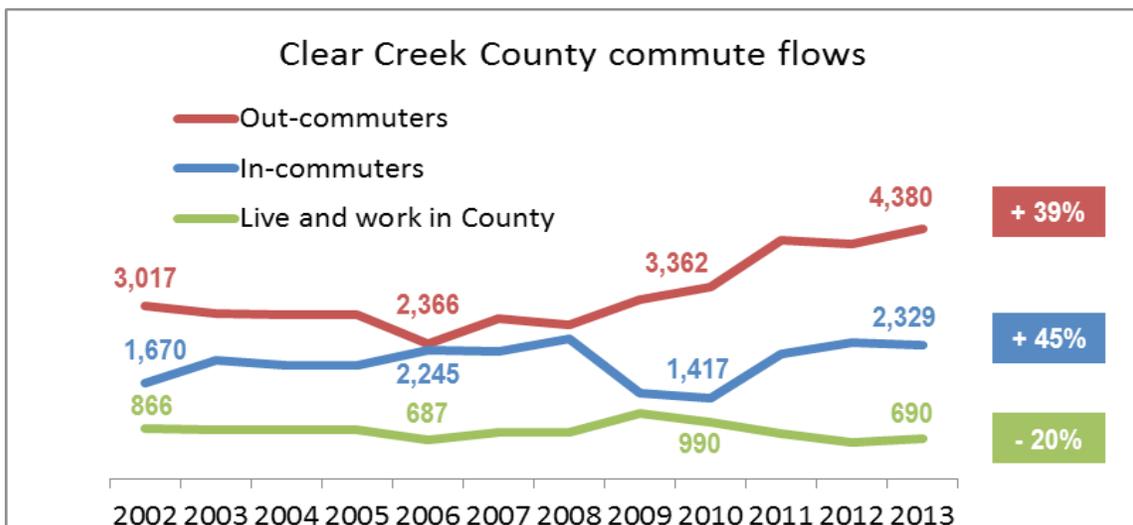
The pattern of County-maintained roadways is also depicted on MAP-5.

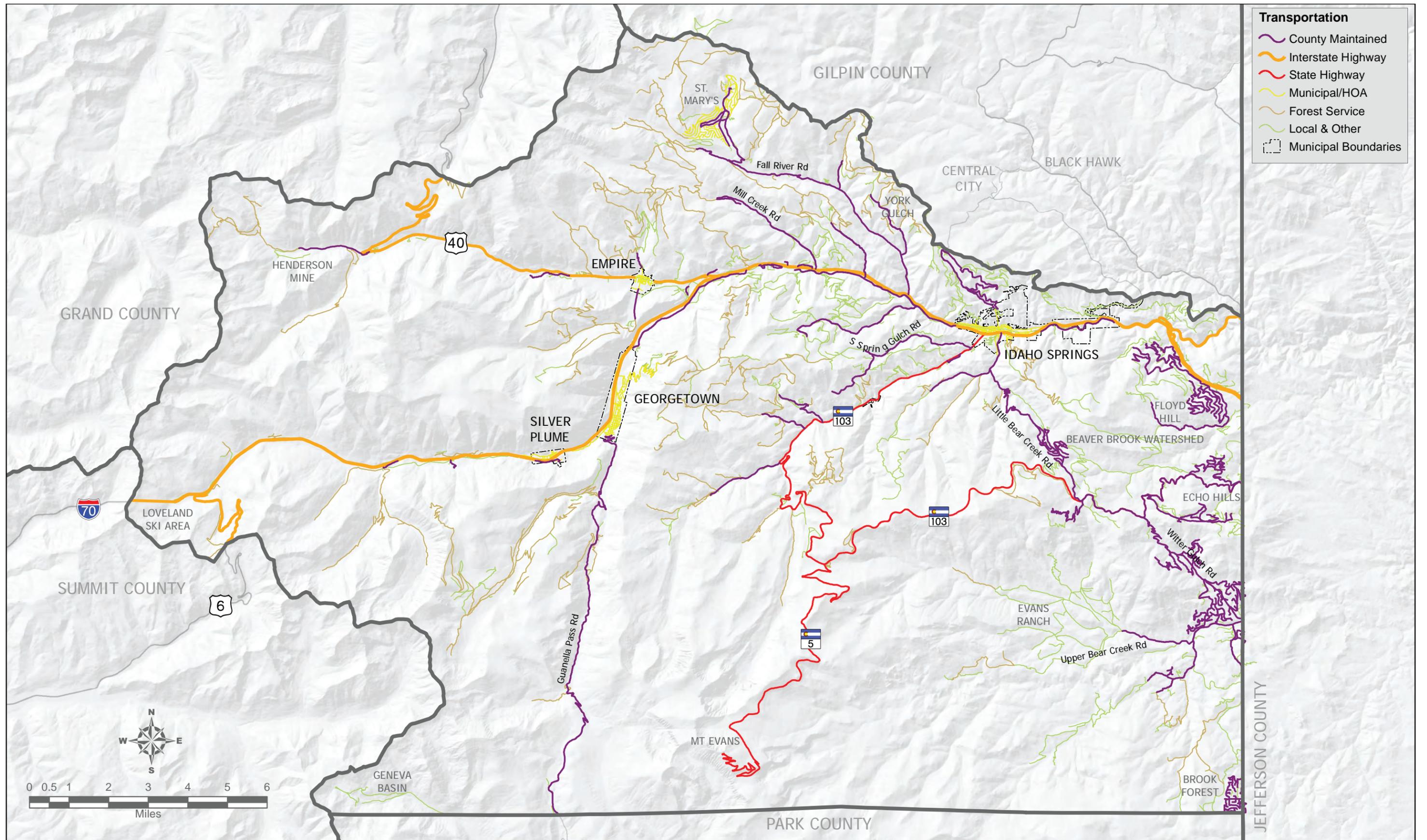
## Transit

The 2004 Master Plan noted the lack of available public transit opportunities for Clear Creek County residents. Currently there is no fixed-route local or regional public transit service within Clear Creek County. Greyhound provides a private, limited, regional intercity bus service and there is limited demand response service. Clear Creek County is not a part of the Regional Transportation District (RTD), which is the Denver Area transit provider. The closest RTD bus service is at the El Rancho Park-n-Ride at I-70 and Evergreen Parkway, which is served by the EV/ES/EX route. This route provides peak hour commuter bus service between Evergreen and Civic Center Station in Denver. Greyhound provides the only regularly scheduled bus service to the County via a bus stop in Idaho Springs.

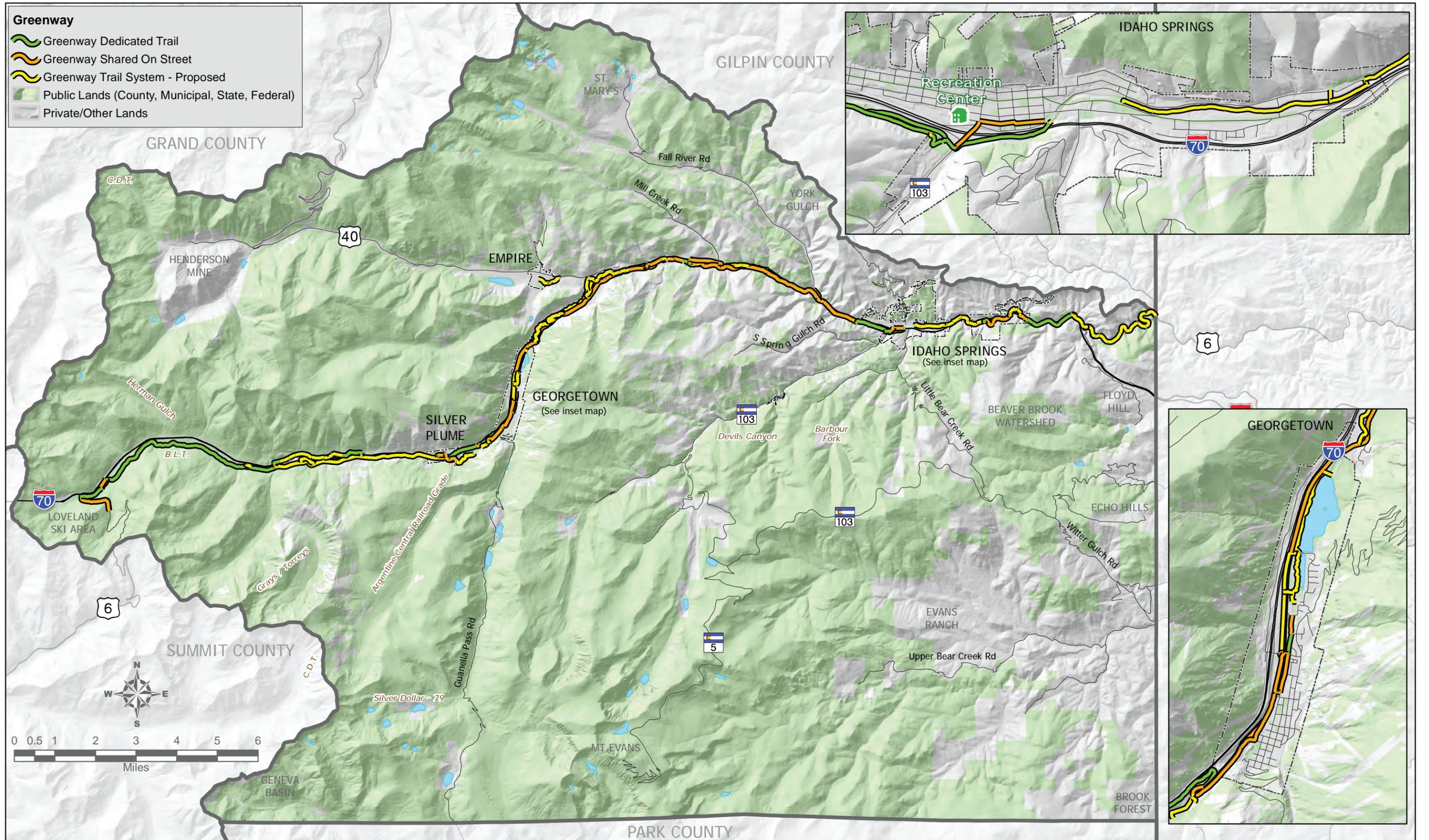
A limited amount of demand response transit service is offered in Clear Creek County including:

- The Loveland Ski Area provides an employee shuttle for employees living in Clear Creek County
- The Senior Resource Center provides on-demand transportation services to people over the age of 60 in Clear Creek County (based out of Evergreen)
- High Country Shuttle provides on-demand service between Clear Creek County and DIA
- Recent travel patterns also suggest there may be a growing need for transit service between Clear Creek County and Denver. Since 2002 the number of residents commuting to work outside the county increased 39 percent (the number of in-commuters commuting into the County for work also increased by 45 percent). As of 2013 about 49 percent of employed residents in Clear Creek County were commuting to the Denver Metro Area, including 18 percent to Jefferson County and 14 percent to Denver. Additionally, the transit commute mode share among County residents increased from 1 to 2 percent from 2009-2014 despite the fact that the County has no regularly scheduled transit service. This suggests there has been an increase in the number of County residents driving to Jefferson County to use RTD to commute into the Denver Metro Area.





MAP-5 | Transportation



MAP-6 | The Greenway



## Housing

The Citizen Survey and a recently completed housing study (the 2012 Clear Creek County Housing Needs Assessment) both indicate that the primary issues with housing are three-fold: availability, affordability and quality.

### Availability

A growing trend in parts of Clear Creek County is the conversion (or use) of unoccupied housing units as seasonal/recreational units. The recent Housing Needs Assessment identified increasing home ownership as an important goal. The increase in seasonal/recreational occupation of housing, at the expense of long-term and stable owner-occupied housing could be indicative of decreased local demand or an “affordability gap.”

### Affordability

While the median price for housing in Clear Creek County is modest when compared to nearby Summit or Jefferson County, affordability remains a challenge. In particular, when combined with the costs for transportation and the lack of diverse and affordable retail/shopping uses in the County, the overall burden of housing and living expenses has been identified as an important concern. The availability of long-term rental units, targeted towards those making 60 percent or less than the Area Median Income (AMI) was indicated as a priority in recent Housing Needs Assessment. Pressure on pricing for seasonal/recreational units only exacerbates affordability.

### Quality

The age and quality (or condition) of many of the homes in Clear Creek County has been identified as a primary concern. About 60 percent of all housing units in Clear Creek County were built prior to 1980. The Housing Needs Assessment identified modernization and energy efficiency measures are important steps to “preserve and improve” the existing housing stock.

A baseline summary of important housing issues is provided in Appendix III.



## Public Facilities and Services

Critical facilities and services within Clear Creek County related to water and wastewater are provided by a consortium of entities including the municipalities and special districts such as the St. Mary's Water and Sanitation District and Central Clear Creek Sanitation. A map illustrating where these service areas and special districts are located is provided as MAP-7.

In addition, Clear Creek County oversees a variety of public services that impact/influence the long-ranging planning for the County.

## Water Resources

Clear Creek County maintains significant water rights and is presently working on a Strategic Water Plan that will describe these rights, their associated infrastructure and operations. The County has recognized that its rights to water resources can play an important role in supporting economic development and the Strategic Water Plan will provide guidance to the BOCC in evaluating whether granting these rights in support of development is a "beneficial use".

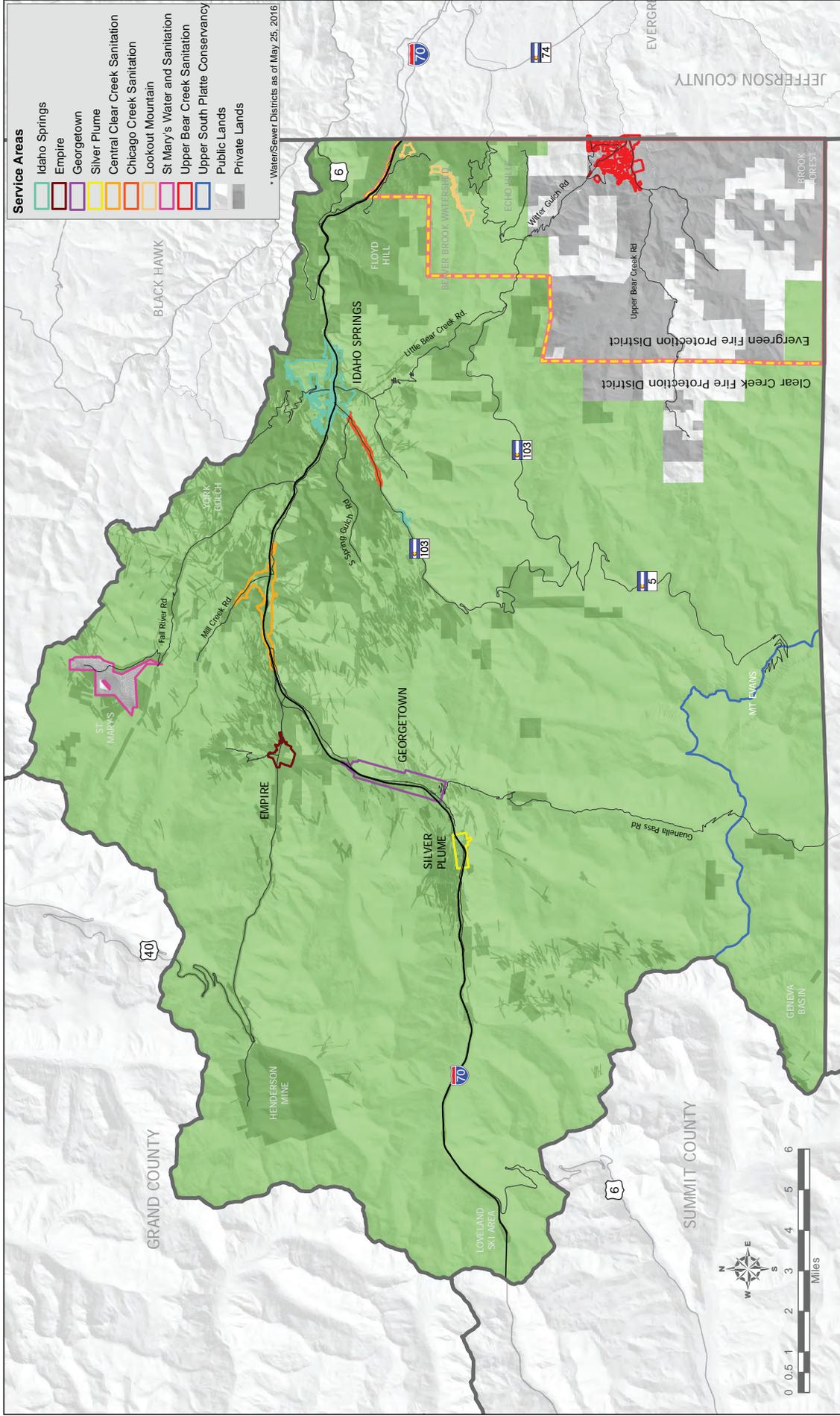
An important element of the water rights portfolio for the County is the headwaters position the County enjoys in relationship to South Platte Basin. This high altitude location enhances the conservation of water resources (i.e., they have less evaporation during winter months) and supports the application of these rights to downstream users. The County has and continues to be active in the South Platte Basin Roundtable to support the development of new infrastructure related to these water resources.

## Broadband Resources

In 2013, Clear Creek County, in collaboration with Gilpin County, retained Frank Ohrtman of Internet3 to complete a broadband assessment study (See <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7521088690>).

This high-level assessment was completed to help establish the service needs for the region as well as provided recommendations to help achieve these needs. As the study noted "actual speed testing, in all communities of Gilpin and Clear Creek are challenged in terms of Internet speeds". A residential survey prepared for the study concluded that outages in Internet access lasting longer than one day were found by more than 40 percent of survey participants. While that survey was not extensive in scope nor statistically valid, community comments during this process emphasized dissatisfaction with broadband connectivity. According to data from the Colorado Office of Information Technology (OIT) the current state of broadband within Clear Creek County for wired service is still limited to areas mostly within the defined municipalities and some subdivisions in the eastern portions of the county adjacent to Jefferson County. Within these wired service areas however, customers have complained of speeds that are less than 3 Mb/sec and sometimes even less than 1 Mb/sec. When adding wireless services to the mix (i.e., line-of-sight) the area of coverage expands considerably westward. Similarly, factoring data services delivered over the cellular network, the coverage area expands further into more remote portions of the County. However, coverage is not consistent and topographic challenges continue to make complete coverage difficult.

The survey data also noted that while the broadband coverage issue may continue to be problematic in more isolated parts of the County, the bigger challenge has been both the poor quality of this service (i.e., reliability) and the limited amount of broadband capacity. Generally both the residential and commercial Internet access speeds available within parts of Clear Creek County are within the 3-10 Mb/sec range. The



MAP-7 | Service Areas



growing number of household and business internet-enabled devices and demand for internet services such as cloud storage, streaming music and video have made even this range less than acceptable. The appropriate standard for consideration is 25 MB/sec download and 5 MB/sec upload.

In April 2016, the Gilpin/Clear Creek Broadband Development Committee (GCCBDC) issued a “Request for Proposals” for a Broadband Expansion Plan Concept to address this connectivity gaps and act as a strategic document through which both private and public investment in infrastructure could be organized. This effort has been managed by the Clear Creek County Information Technology Department.

### Public Health

As outlined in many responses to the Citizen Survey, access to healthcare is challenging in a rural community like Clear Creek County. In 2013 the Clear Creek Public and Environmental Health Department (CCPEH) issued a Community Health Improvement Plan (see [www.ClearCreekHealth.us](http://www.ClearCreekHealth.us)) that, in addition to outlining some of the pressing challenges for healthcare, also provided a set of goals and strategies that this Master Plan considered.

Highlights of this plan include:

- The percentage of the Clear Creek population that is classified as disabled is 26.3 percent versus the statewide mean of 23.7 percent. Mental health and substance abuse issues were also noted as significant challenges in Clear Creek County.
- A 2012-2013 Feasibility Study for the development (or reopening) of a primary care facility in Idaho Springs was completed and its results further emphasized transportation to services as the “most significant barrier” for residents. This study also noted that an important split between the eastern and western portions of the county. Eastern communities have improved access to healthcare in Evergreen and/or metro Denver. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in 2014 seeking a qualified primary care provider. No provider has been retained but the County continues to work on this issue.
- The use/support of the Senior Resource Center’s transportation services to help improve access to health care for elders in Clear Creek County
- Efforts to develop/re-open a health clinic have not been completed, but continues to be identified as an important goal.

### Open Space and Natural Resources

Approximately 76 percent of Clear Creek County is either located within the Arapahoe National Forest or public lands owned by other agencies or municipalities. As shown on the Public Lands Map (MAP-8), the pattern of public lands is highly complex and includes lands owned/managed by the United States Forest Service as well as various public entities and local governments. This list of open space owners/managers includes but is not limited to Historic Georgetown, Denver Mountain Parks, the City of Golden, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Colorado State Land Board. All told, about sixteen entities own/manage open or conserved lands within Clear Creek County.



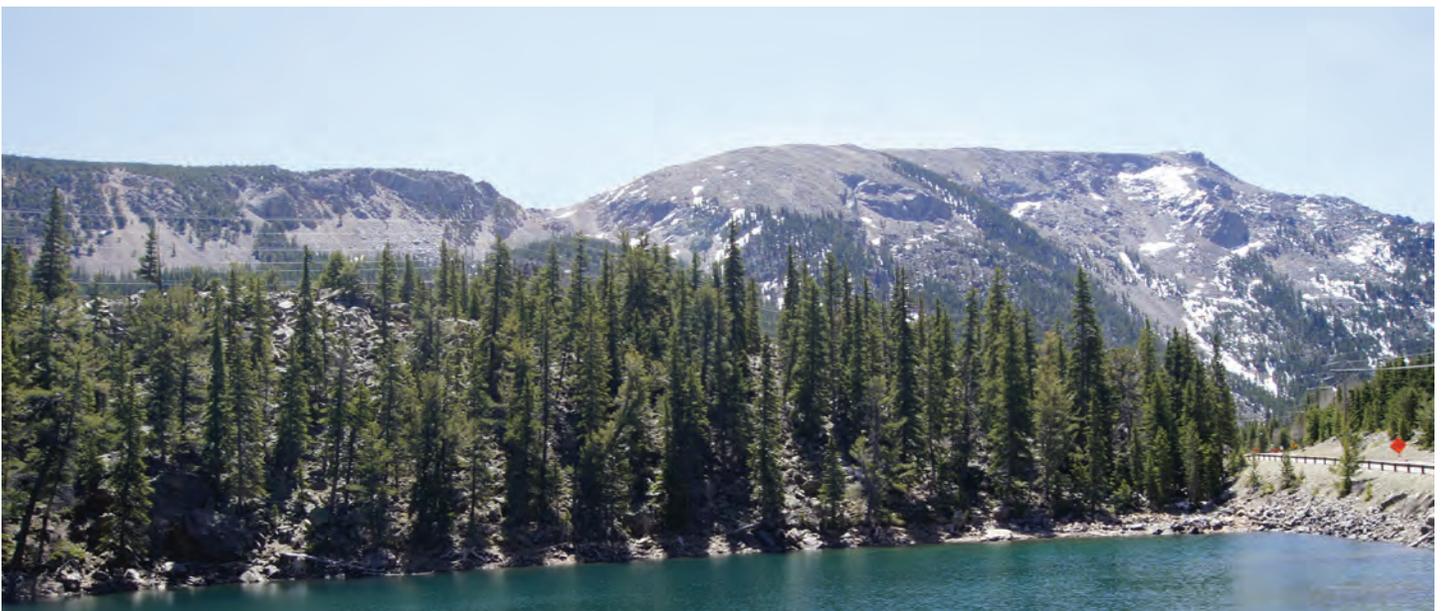
In 2005 the Clear Creek County Open Space Commission (OSC) adopted an Open Space Plan that had been included in the previous Clear Creek County Master Plan. In this plan the OSC identified important resources including:

- *Streams and Wetlands*
- *High Altitude Basins*
- *Critical Habitats and Wildlife Corridors*
- *Identified Conservation Areas*
- *Cultural Resources*
- *Important Features and Views*

In its strategies for acquisition, the Open Space Plan outlines the importance of partnerships with allied organizations, the need to dovetail open space with recreational access, and the ongoing importance of being good environmental stewards for open spaces.

Natural resources are also of critical importance to the people of Clear Creek County. Clear Creek County works closely with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to map and evaluate critical wildlife habitats within the County. Species including bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, deer and elk all have established habitats within portions of Clear Creek County.

The Arapahoe National Forest is an important contributor to the natural resource portfolio in Clear Creek County. The Mount Evans Recreation Area offers residents and visitors access to the 14,000 foot peaks on the highest paved road in North America. The associated Mount Evans Wilderness (designated by Congress in 1980) includes nearly 75,000 acres of important wildlife habitat, natural communities, recreational trails and scenic vistas. The Guanella Pass Scenic Byway is also home to diverse wildlife habitats, riparian areas and natural forest communities.





## Recreation, Culture, and Arts

In 2014 the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District (CCMRD) completed a *System Wide Master Plan* (SWMP) which inventoried existing parks and recreation facilities in the County and identified a range of issues surrounding them. The current CCMRD's mission is "Seizing opportunities and developing strategic partnerships to create and sustain the necessary resources for our present and future recreational needs." The SWMP was intended to help align the District with its mission.

In crafting the SWMP the CCRMD recognized that "Parks and recreation facilities and programs contribute to the livability of a community by enhancing its quality of life". They go on to note that most residents within the organized municipalities have access to parks in relatively close proximity to their homes. While the diversity and offerings of the parks vary considerably, the access to organized recreational space is good for those residents. The planning and implementation of parks in Clear Creek County has historically been the responsibility of these municipalities. The SWMP states the possibility of serving underserved neighborhoods in the unincorporated areas of Clear Creek County with park (and recreation) infrastructure as something the District might "consider."

The SWMP outlined a wide variety of goals and objectives, many of which relate to establishing the CCMRD as an important partner in bringing communities together. Among these, the SWMP addressed the need for greater "identity" in recreational infrastructure within the region, including better signage and graphic communication. In part, this need was stated to assure that residents better understand the recreational system, but elsewhere in the SWMP the importance of recreation to economic development initiatives was stressed. The idea of "branding" the District was also discussed in various forms.





The SWMP was developed with significant public outreach, including a survey, which affirmed the importance of recreation as a community amenity. Perhaps the biggest finding in the SWMP was its determination that a County-wide, 5 to 10 year plan for the “delivery of recreational services” is needed. In making that point the SWMP acknowledges that such plan would rely on participation of the District, the municipalities and community organizations. This partnership approach towards long-term planning for recreational infrastructure is consistent with the how recreational services are being delivered presently.

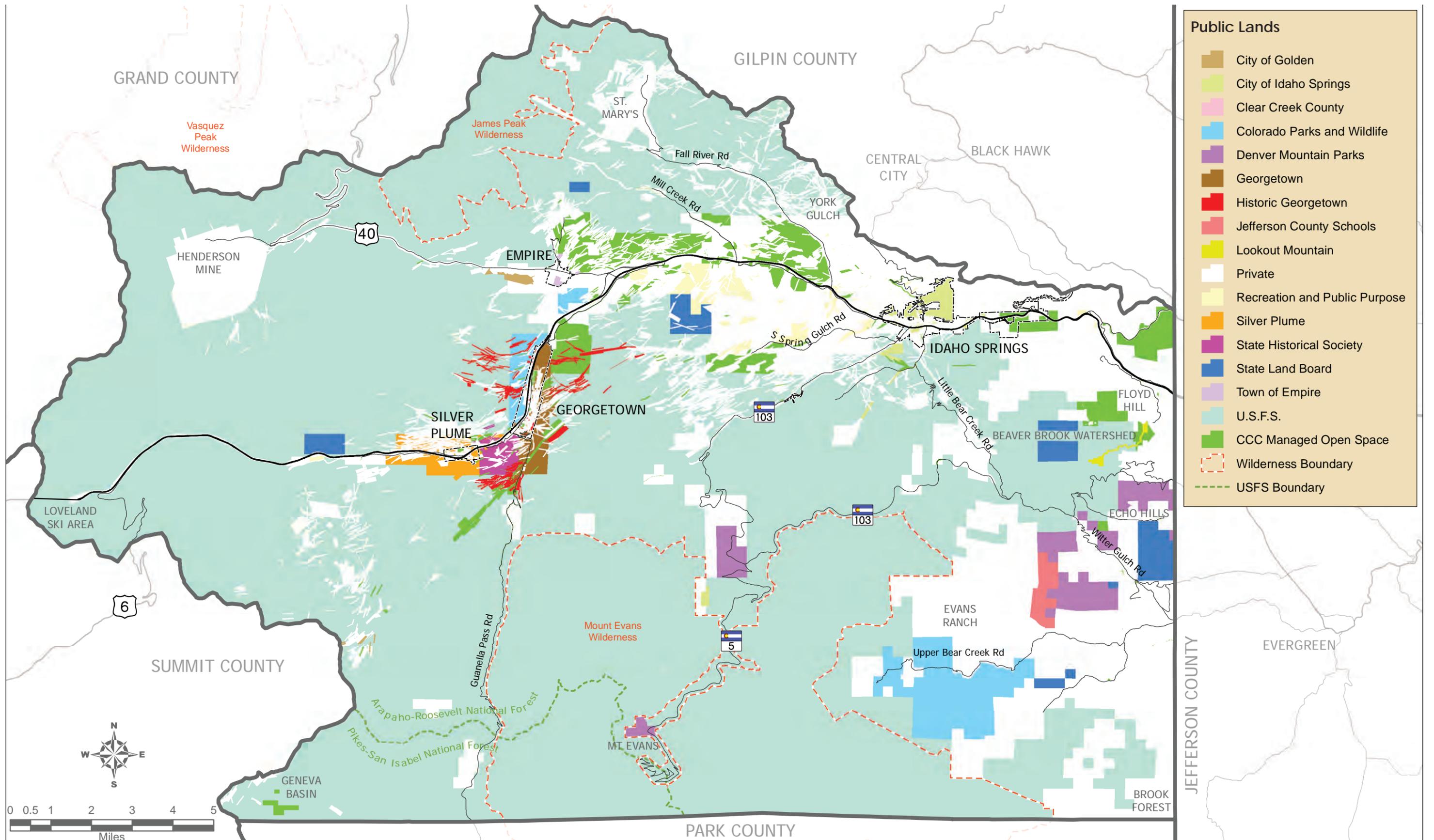
The location of important County recreational assets and trails is depicted on MAP-9. The full SWMP can be found online at: [http://clearcreekrecreation.com/CCMRD\\_SystemWideMasterPlan.pdf](http://clearcreekrecreation.com/CCMRD_SystemWideMasterPlan.pdf)

The mining heritage of Clear Creek County is an important element of the region’s culture and influences its arts. Heritage tourism is a popular attraction for many communities within Clear Creek County. In order to better protect the many cultural resources in the county, a Cultural Resources Management Plan was prepared for the Board of County Commissioners in 2012.

Although this plan was never accepted by the Board of County Commissioners, it provided a detailed baseline and evaluated the many cultural resources in Clear Creek County. In total, the plan identified 890 cultural resources throughout the county, including historic, archaeological, structural, architectural, prehistoric, and others. Of the 890 resources identified, 697 were mining related and archaeological in nature and spanned an era prior to Clear Creek County’s establishment in 1861 to modern day. The evaluation portion of this plan went on to prioritize which of the identified cultural resources and were worthy of planning consideration. The evaluation found that 123 cultural resources (61 of which have potential to be National Register eligible) had significant value to warrant their consideration in future planning.

The recommendations in the Cultural Resources Management Plan inform this plan in by determining the best approach to balancing the protection and enjoyment of the vast cultural resources that Clear Creek County has to offer. See MAP-10 (Cultural Resources).

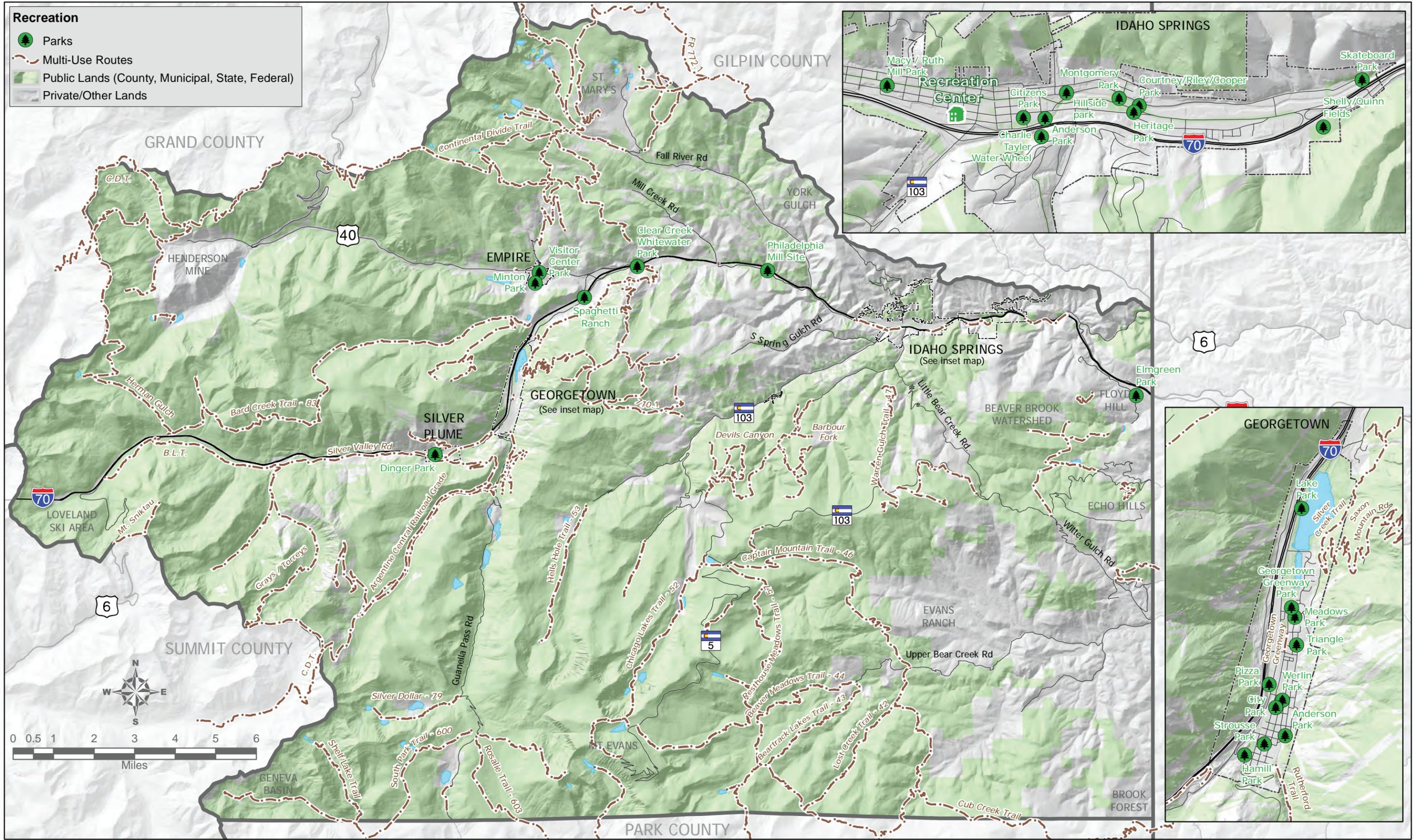




MAP-8 | Public Lands

**Recreation**

- Parks
- Multi-Use Routes
- Public Lands (County, Municipal, State, Federal)
- Private/Other Lands



MAP-9 | Recreation





## The Importance of Place

In many ways, Clear Creek County is a “place of places”. Whether an organized municipality like Georgetown, an unincorporated and established settlement like Downieville or a slightly more out of way area like Guanella Pass, the residents of Clear Creek County place great value on these distinct areas.

As shown on MAP-2 there are approximately 24 “Sub-Areas” within Clear Creek County, including the four incorporated municipalities; Georgetown, Silver Plume, Empire and Idaho Springs. While the population density in many of these distinctive sub-areas is quite sparse (see MAP-2), nine (9) of these areas have undertaken the process of developing sub-area plans.

- Dumont-Lawson-Downieville
- East Mount Evans
- Fall River Watershed
- Floyd Hill-Saddlebrook-Beaverbrook
- Georgetown Lake/Saxon Mountain Area
- Upper Bear Creek
- York Gulch Area
- Bakerville Neighborhood Land Use Plan
- Coordinated Highway Access Agreement Subarea

Brief summaries of each of these plans are provided in Appendix III.

The Dumont-Lawson-Downieville, East Mount Evans, Fall River Watershed, Upper Bear Creek, York Gulch Area and Bakerville subarea plans have the following common threads:

- *Quality of Life*. Each subarea has a goal to protect the “quality of life” and unique character within each subarea.
- *Open Space*. Each subarea has a goal to protect and preserve open space found on current federal and state lands for a wide variety of passive and active uses.
- *Water Resources*. Each subarea plan has a goal to protect and preserve water resources in both quantity and quality.
- *Infrastructure*. Each subarea plan has a goal to ensure adequate infrastructure to support existing and future development.
- *Wildlife/Ecosystems*. Each plan has a goal to protect and preserve wildlife and the associated ecosystems.
- *Protection of Visual Resources and Natural Setting*. Each subarea has a goal to protect the natural setting and the associated visual resources.
- *Natural Hazards*. Each subarea plan discusses natural hazards.
- *Transportation*. Each subarea has specific goals or policies and actions to ensure an adequate and safe transportation system.



East Mount Evans, Fall River Watershed, Upper Bear Creek, York Gulch Area plans have the following common threads:

- *Low Density Development.* Each subarea has a goal to maintain low density development.
- *Minimized Development.* Each subarea has a goal to minimize development to maintain rural and natural character.

The Dumont-Lawson-Downieville, East Mount Evans have the common thread policies relating to the protection and preservation of cultural/historic resources. The Bakerville Neighborhood Plan and the Coordinated Highway Access Agreement Subarea are the only detailed subarea plan with specific land uses mapped out, with the latter governing zoning and land use. The Georgetown Lake/Saxon Mountain Area is an open space plan.

At a minimum, future community or sub-area plans should address the elements of the Policy Framework expressed in this Master Plan. This will help ensure that the plans move beyond a single focus of consideration (e.g., economic development or open space) and think more broadly about how the specific community might advance the policies of the County with more local context and vision.

## Working with Others - Intergovernmental Agreements

Like most counties, Clear Creek County has a diverse and complex set of agreements (Intergovernmental Agreements or IGAs; Memoranda of Understanding or MOU) with other regions and/or the State of Colorado to help effectuate its policies and objectives. While this Master Plan is not the appropriate place to address all of the elements of these agreements, several of them have relevancy to long-range planning that is important to highlight for this Master Plan Update. Some of the provisions of these IGAs might need to be reconsidered given the changes in condition that have occurred since their original creation and approval.

A matrix of important agreements is provided in Appendix III.

### [1990 MOU between the USFS, BLM CDOW, CCC, Georgetown and Georgetown Society on the Saxon Mountain Study Area](#)

Saxon Mountain Study Area as defined by the 1988 CCC Master Plan. CCC Planning Commission created the Saxon Mountain Committee for reviewing any action proposed to the County within the identified Saxon Mountain Study Area. This MOU was of importance for the creation of the Georgetown-Silver Plume Historic District Public Lands Commission (HDPLC) which still exists as a planning forum for the various federal, state, and local land management agencies that hold lands within the historic district, the Saxon Mountain Study Area, and surrounding areas. Authority over the lands remains with the individual agencies.

Highlights of this agreement include: mutual cooperation in plans integration; coordination of land use decision making; the review process of land use proposals affecting the Saxon Mountain area; the identification of appropriate uses and the development of plans for the lake, summit and mountain face sectors of the study area; and the identification of cultural and natural resources within the study area for compilation in established inventories.



### 2005 IGA Directing Development in Coordinated Planning and Highway Access Agreement Subregion

This IGA between Central City, CCC and Idaho Springs has a binding land use plan to the north of Idaho Springs and the Central City Parkway interchange. The Land use policies of the Future Land Use Plan should reflect the presence of this agreement.

### 2009 Agreement for Land Use Planning Coordination with USFS, CSFS and CCC at Reception No. 255167

The parties agree on the need to coordinate efforts in developing policies and in planning for land management and development on forested and related lands in Clear Creek County This agreement requires the USFS to advise the parties on policies and plans for USFS lands in Clear Creek County, to share expertise and cooperate in preparing environmental statements required for projects or activities on USFS lands.

The agreement also requires the County to consult with the USFS prior to any proposed changes in private land zoning or land use plans affecting the National Forest, consider USFS and CSFS comments on land use proposals and to cooperate with the USFS and CSFS in developing land use policies and plans involving forest lands.

