

SUNSET VISTA NATURAL AREA 2018 MANAGEMENT PLAN



CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS & TRAILS
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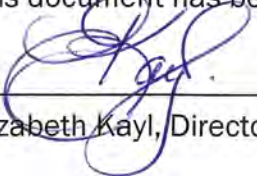
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**SUNSET VISTA NATURAL AREA
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Plan

The purpose of the Sunset Vista Natural Area Management Plan is to describe an inventory of existing conditions of the natural, cultural and visual resources at Sunset Vista Natural Area, and make specific recommendations for wildlife/habitat protection and restoration, cultural/historic resources preservation, agricultural management, visitor use management, and educational/interpretive opportunities. Management recommendations are presented in conjunction with proposed actions to provide a framework for plan implementation. These actions will be executed as funding and organizational capacity allows.

The objectives of this plan focus on balancing outdoor recreation use with the protection, enhancement, and management of natural, cultural, agricultural, and visual resources. Emphasis is placed on supporting habitat values that sustain the function and connectivity of the regional landscape while providing a diversity of high quality visitor experiences.

The objectives of the Sunset Vista Management Plan include:

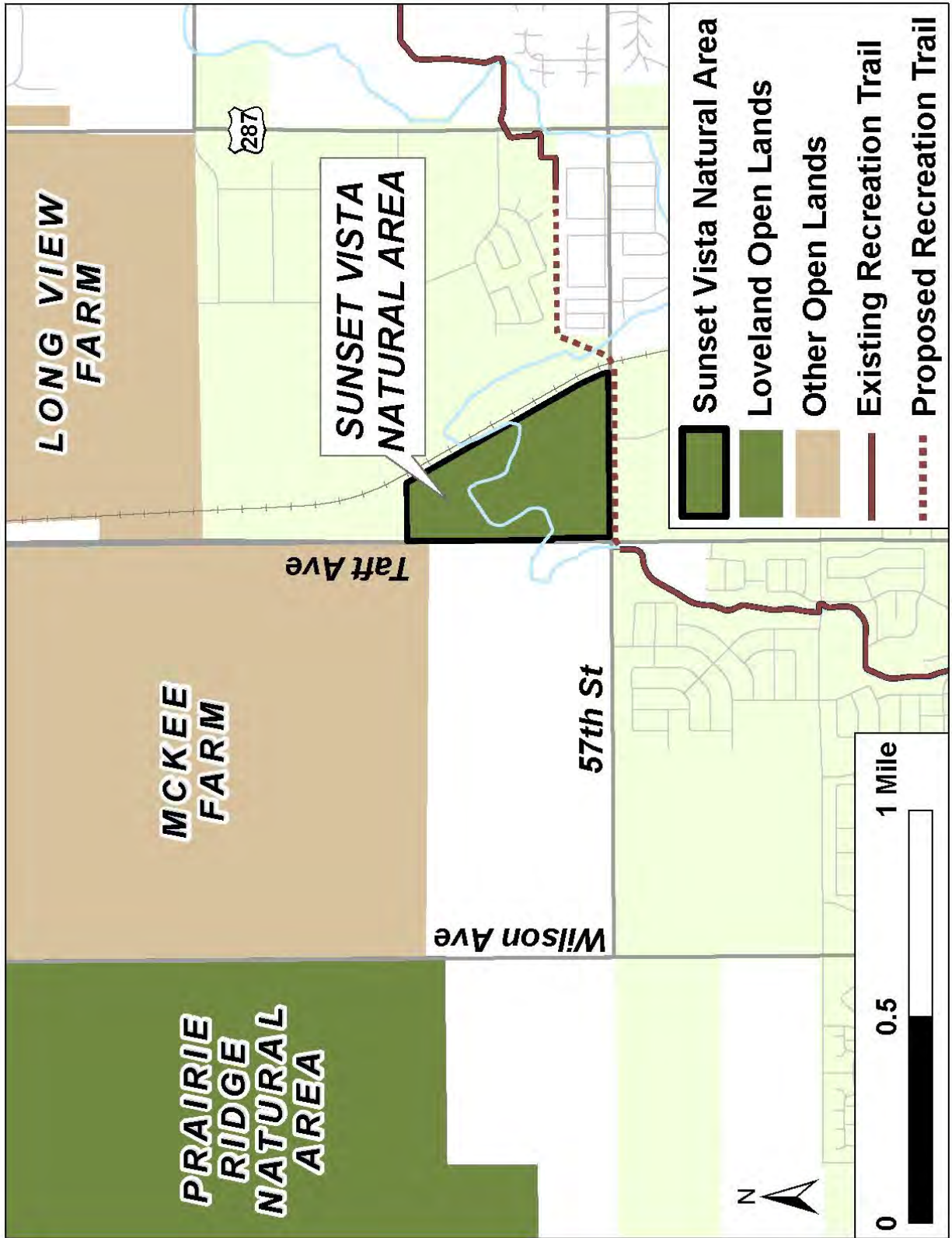
- Protect, maintain, and enhance healthy ecosystems and their natural processes.
- Offer diverse, enjoyable, safe, and environmentally sustainable recreational opportunities that encourage visitors to experience the natural, cultural and visual resources of Sunset Vista.
- Enable agricultural opportunities that are compatible with conservation goals.
- Specify actions that will successfully meet Sunset Vista Natural Area's site management plan objectives.

1.2 Land Use History

Sunset Vista Natural Area was acquired by the City of Loveland Open Lands Program in August 2014. The purchase price of \$1.5 million was funded primarily by Loveland's share of the voter-approved open space sales tax collected throughout Larimer County, and a \$200,000 contribution from the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. Included in the purchase agreement were Colorado-Big Thompson water shares and Loudon Ditch water rights. At the time of purchase, Sunset Vista represented a significant opportunity to add a key 87-acre parcel to the contiguous 3,500-acre community separator between Loveland and Fort Collins, for open space conservation and recreation opportunities. See Fig. 1 Location Map.

Historic records indicate the property was first homesteaded in 1887 by Margaret E. Roswell, and farming has remained the predominant land use since then. The property was sold in 1904 to the Weitzel family, who farmed the property for nearly a century. The site has been closed to public access since Loveland's acquisition in 2014.

Figure1 Location Map



The preservation of open space and agricultural land between Fort Collins and Loveland as a community separator has been a conservation priority for public agencies since the mid-1990s. During this time, several long-range planning efforts identified the need for a corridor buffer between Fort Collins and Loveland as a means of preserving community identity and agricultural heritage. Such planning documents include: Larimer County's 1995 *A Plan for the Region Between Fort Collins and Loveland*; Larimer County's 1997 *Partnership Land Use System*; the 1997 *City of Fort Collins Master City Plan*; and the 1995 *City of Loveland Comprehensive Master Plan*.

While these plans recognized the need for preserving open space between the two cities, financial means were not available until the passage of the Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales tax in 1995. Today, the community separator consists of numerous natural areas and open spaces conserved by Loveland, Fort Collins, and Larimer County from the foothills to the plains.

The intent to acquire land within the community separator historically focused on the protection and preservation of open space and agricultural land. However, acquisition of the Sunset Vista property included another important facet: local and regional trail connectivity. Prior to its purchase, the property was identified as a potential site for trail connectivity in several long-range planning documents, including Larimer County's 2013 *Our Lands--Our Future: Recreation and Conservation Choices for Northern Colorado*, and Loveland's 2014 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Through these long-range planning efforts, Sunset Vista came to represent a critical link in opening two long-awaited, off-street, multi-use trails: the Loveland Recreation Trail Loop and the Long View Trail. The acquisition secured a connection for the Long View Trail, a 4.4-mile paved multi-use trail connecting Loveland and Fort Collins. Sunset Vista also enables the city to come closer to completing the final gap in the Loveland Recreation Trail loop, a 22-mile multi-use paved trail that encircles the city. The Long View Trail project received nearly \$2 million in grant funding for design and construction and is opened in summer 2018, resulting in a significant interconnected regional trail system between the two cities.

In addition to the recreational opportunities the site affords, Sunset Vista is home to a number of significant natural, cultural and visual resources. It provides a sanctuary for wildlife such as songbirds, raptors, amphibians, and mammals of all sizes. Tributary wetlands, a section of the Loudon Ditch, and agricultural lands provide wildlife habitat, cover and movement corridors for these species. Wetlands support native grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. The remaining portion of a historic farmstead serves as a reminder of the site's past agricultural land use, while expansive views of the Rocky Mountains reveal the regional mountains-to-plains ecological system.

1.3 Scope and Organization of the Plan

The Sunset Vista Natural Area Management Plan is structured to initially describe the existing conditions of the site in order to establish a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the property. The existing conditions surveyed include: natural, visual and cultural resources, existing improvements, and mineral/water rights.

After describing the existing conditions of the site, the Management Plan will cover the topics of natural resource management, visitor management and education, cultural resource management, and management plan implementation. Finally, it provides appendices consisting of species lists, Open Space Management Plan type descriptions, and public feedback comments.

The scope of this plan is limited to management of Sunset Vista Natural Area and potential future trail connections to adjacent protected lands and trail systems.

1.4 Geographic Context

Sunset Vista Natural Area is an 87-acre property located at the northeast corner of North Taft Avenue and West 57th Street, in northwest Loveland. It is bounded to the east by the BNSF Railroad; west by North Taft Avenue and a portion of Fort Collins' Coyote Ridge Natural Area; north by a Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association (PVREA) Substation; and south by West 57th Street. It is adjacent to undeveloped land to the east, west, and southwest, slated for low-density single-family housing with 2-4 dwelling units per acre. Sunset Vista is at the southern boundary of the community separator between Loveland and Fort Collins.

1.5 Public and Agency Involvement

Since the city's acquisition of the Sunset Vista property and throughout the planning process, the public was invited to share their thoughts and provide input about the management and potential public access through numerous venues. The city first introduced the Sunset Vista property to the public on August 26, 2014 in a media release highlighting the property purchase. Between September 29 and November 15, 2014, the public was invited to submit names for the site and over 300 entries were received from more than 150 community members. In January 2015, the names were presented to the Open Lands Advisory Commission, from which the name *Sunset Vista* was selected, based on its location providing the perfect foreground to "the best sunsets in Loveland," according to the submitters.

On March 9, 2016 staff presented to the Open Lands Advisory Commission concepts for ongoing land stewardship, regional trail connectivity, soft-surface trail development, and interpretive opportunities. The presentation provided an overview of site opportunities and constraints, existing resources, and preliminary management plan objectives. The Commission weighed in on concept alternatives,

and provided feedback on managing open space within working landscapes, project phasing, and preferred educational themes.

On June 2, 2016 staff from the Loveland Reporter-Herald newspaper were invited on a site tour of the Sunset Vista property with city and High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC) staff. The purpose was to publicize the partnership between the city and HPEC designed to share resources and expertise. HPEC has shared their knowledge of native plants, weed mitigation, land stewardship and restoration techniques. HPEC staff field documented existing species on the property and made recommendations on buffer zone species between wetlands and farmed areas.

On June 27, 2016 city staff conducted a field tour for the Open Lands Advisory Commission. The visit allowed commission members to witness firsthand the site's diverse landscape, wildlife resources, the Long View Trail alignment, and historic structures. The tour resulted in a recommendation for a soft-surface trail network that jointly capitalizes on views of the Rocky Mountains and corridors along wetlands.

On July 20, 2016 the Open Lands Division hosted a public open house to solicit input on the development of Sunset Vista. An existing conditions exhibit, concept plans for a soft-surface trail network, a phased land management plan, and opportunities for interpretive signage were presented. More than 50 community members attended the meeting and offered feedback. The public meeting was announced through social media, the city website, and local media outlets. Exhibits from the open house were also made available online for review and comment via email. Public comments are included for reference in Appendix D.

On September 18, 2017, staff presented to the Loveland Historic Preservation Commission. The presentation addressed the current condition of the structures, and proposed conceptual plans for use and interpretation of the historic structures. The commission was supportive and interested in the future cultural and historical interpretation of the site.

Staff also consulted with Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Larimer County Planning staff, Larimer County Weed District, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, City of Pinyon Environmental Inc., and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Demand for recreational opportunities has continued to rise in northern Colorado along with population growth, and due to its proximity to urban areas and established connections to over 65 miles of regional trails, Sunset Vista Natural Area has the potential to provide crucial transportation connections and recreation opportunities for non-motorized recreation in the region. Proposals for five single-family housing developments, each totaling at least 400 homes, are currently being considered for development within one mile of Sunset Vista. Master planning processes have repeatedly demonstrated Loveland's desire for more access to soft-surface trails and outdoor recreation. Public surveys for the 2014 Loveland *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* ranked trails and paths as the greatest recreational need in Loveland. The 2015 Larimer County *Open Lands Plan* identified a desire among county

residents to develop a system of regional trails to connect communities to each other and with open spaces and other public lands (Larimer County 2015, 23). The 2013 Colorado *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* identified “complete a regional trail system” as the third most significant investment need in the state (CPW 2013).

The community has worked cooperatively to create this management plan. As the city begins to implement actions outlined in this management plan, an adaptive management process will be implemented, based on results of the actions described here. This management plan will serve as a living document and may be adjusted to meet future needs and conditions.



Views from Sunset Vista (facing northwest)

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 Overview

Sunset Vista has been a priority area for conservation for many years, as it contains two ecologically important sites identified in Loveland's 2008 *Natural Areas Sites Report*. The majority of the property encompasses Natural Area Site 151, consisting of two intermittent wetland tributaries of Dry Creek and the Louden Ditch corridor. The wetlands in the southeast corner of the property represent the northern tip of Natural Area Site 79, which consists of a cattail marsh running south along the railroad tracks. In the 2008 report, Site 151 received high scores for songbird and wetland habitat characteristics. Site 79 received high ratings for overall habitat, wetlands and herptiles. See Fig. 2 Existing Conditions.

Climate

Sunset Vista Natural Area is located along the western edge of the Great Prairie and therefore has highly variable weather. The climate is categorized as semi-arid with a strong seasonal variation in temperature, abundant sunshine and relatively low precipitation.

High temperatures average between 81-85 °F between June and August and low temperatures average between 21-23 °F between November and March. Winters are generally cold but are characterized by significant temperature swings. High temperatures in the 50s are not uncommon in the winter months.

Average annual precipitation is 15-16 inches, with the greatest amount occurring in April and May. Average annual snowfall is approximately 41 inches, but as a result of wind redistribution and topographic patterns, the snow depth can vary throughout the site.

Topography / Geology / Soils

Sunset Vista consists of flat to gently rolling topography, sloping generally down to the southeast towards the Dry Creek drainage. There are two intermittent tributaries of Dry Creek on the property, with topography on both sides of the tributaries sloping down toward the drainage bottoms. The elevation of the site ranges from approximately 5,050 to 5,080 feet.

Sunset Vista contains 7 main soil types as shown in Fig. 3 Soil Map. The soil associations listed in the Soils Survey of Larimer County Area, Colorado by the USDA-NRCS, include the following;

Fort Collins Loam - 36

This soil type is found on the northern and southern borders of the property, as well as a narrow section in the center of the property, and represents 12.5% of the area. This soil is found on slopes from 3-5%, is deep, well drained, and experiences little runoff.

Figure 2 Existing Conditions



A WEITZEL HISTORIC FARMSTEAD



B WETLANDS



C RED-TAILED HAWK NEST



D EXPANSIVE MOUNTAIN VIEWS



E NOXIOUS WEEDS



F LOUDEN DITCH



G RAILROAD



SUNSET VISTA NATURAL AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Figure 3 Soil Map



Fort Collins Loam – 37

This soil type represents a significant portion of the center of the property, and is also found in a small segment on Sunset Vista's southern border, representing 31.7% of the area. This soil is found on slopes from 5-9%, is deep, well drained, and experiences a moderate amount of runoff.

Heldt Clay Loam – 49

This soil type is found along most of the eastern border of the property, representing 10.5% of the area. This soil is found on slopes of 3-6%, is deep, well drained, and experiences very high levels of runoff.

Longmont Clay – 63

This soil type is found in a large section of the southern portion of the property, and runs in a narrow strip towards both the northwestern and southeastern corners of the property, representing 39.9% of the area. This soil is found on slopes of 0-3%, is deep, poorly drained, and experiences high levels of runoff.

Midway Clay Loam – 65

This soil type is found in two small portions of the property – on the northern border and on the western border near the old farmstead, representing 1.3% of the area. This soil is found on slopes of 5-25%, is moderately deep, well drained, and experiences very high levels of runoff.

Nunn Clay Loam -74

This soil type is found in a small section of the southwestern portion of the property, representing 0.5% of the area. It is found on slopes of 1-3%, is deep, well-drained, and experiences high levels of runoff.

Renohill Clay Loam – 90

This soil type is found on the northern border of the property, as well as a small portion of the western border, representing 3.6% of the area. It is found on slopes of 3-9%, is moderately deep, well drained, and experiences very high levels of runoff.

Hydrology

Sunset Vista Natural Area contains numerous hydrological features, including the Loudon Ditch and two wetland drainage corridors. The Loudon Ditch traverses the property from west to east and has several headgates that have been used historically for irrigation purposes. The northern wetland tributary runs through the center of the property from northwest to southeast, with a culvert under the Loudon Ditch. The southern wetland tributary traverses the property from west to east from a culvert under North Taft Ave. and joins the main wetland near the southeast corner of the site, where they converge into the Dry Creek drainage. See Fig. 2 Existing Conditions for wetland boundaries. Based on information from the USGS Depth to Water Table map, depth to groundwater is expected to be between 5 and 20 feet,

with seasonally perched groundwater at less than 10 feet. Based on site observations, the water table may be close to the surface near the tributaries, as standing water and wetland vegetation were present. There are no registered wells on the site according to the Colorado Division of Water Resources records, but a supply well is present in the former farmstead area. The area is designated as an area of minimal flood hazard by FEMA.

2.2 Natural Resources

Vegetation Resources

Sunset Vista Natural Area contains variety of vegetation communities, including dryland cropland, grasslands, wetlands, and riparian communities. Botanical surveys were conducted by staff from High Plains Environmental Center in spring/summer 2017. See Appendix A for a complete list of plant species observed at Sunset Vista.

Grasslands

Sunset Vista's upland areas have been farmed for dryland wheat in recent years and left fallow in alternate years. Since 2016, areas north of the Loudon Ditch have been leased for farming, and areas south of the ditch have been left to grow organic matter in order to prevent erosion and sedimentation and to enrich the soil in anticipation of restoration to native shortgrass prairie. Management activities have included biannual vegetation mowing and spraying to control noxious weeds.

Riparian communities and wetlands

Two wetland drainages bisect the property and eventually converge at the southeast corner in an extensive wetland area. The wetlands support dense stands of vegetation such as cattail, reed canarygrass, sedges, and willows. The edges of these wetlands have been mowed to control for invasive plants and allow warm-season native vegetation to thrive. The Loudon Ditch corridor through the property supports several large cottonwood trees along its banks.

Exotic plants and noxious weeds

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act, passed in 1991 and amended in 1996, mandates the control of noxious weeds by local governments. Several invasive and noxious plant species were found at Sunset Vista, including three List B species and two List C species. Russian olives (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), and houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) are list B species identified at Sunset Vista, which requires management to contain the spread of infestations. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) are List C species identified on the site, which are required to be managed where deemed appropriate.

Endangered and threatened plants

No federally endangered or threatened plants have been observed at Sunset Vista. Consultation with USFWS confirmed these findings.

Rare plants/ rare plant communities

No rare plants or rare plant communities have been identified at Sunset Vista.

Agricultural Resources

The agricultural portions of Sunset Vista north of the Loudon Ditch are farmed for dryland wheat under a lease agreement with the City of Loveland. Irrigation water will not be used on site, which may limit the types of crops that can be grown.

Wildlife

The Sunset Vista Natural Area habitat supports a wide variety of wildlife including mule deer, coyote, cottontail, black-tailed prairie dog, badger, bullsnake, western rattlesnake, tiger salamander, and other species. Numerous resident and migratory birds also utilize the site including raptors, songbirds, and waterfowl. Wetland drainages and a section of the Loudon Ditch provide nesting and breeding habitat for birds and amphibians, and travel corridors for larger wildlife. Agricultural land provides foraging habitat for raptors and waterfowl. See Appendix A for a list of wildlife species observed or likely present at Sunset Vista Natural Area.

Birds

A red-tailed hawk nest was observed near the Loudon Ditch along the Long View Trail corridor. Red-tails have nested at Sunset Vista intermittently over the past several years, including 2015 and 2016, but a pair did not nest on site in 2017. There is also evidence of great-horned owl activity in the farmstead area, including a nest used occasionally west of Taft Ave. (off-site). Songbirds and raptors commonly use trees and shrubs throughout the property and in the farmstead area. Waterfowl are often seen using the Loudon Ditch and large flocks of Canada geese are frequently observed in cultivated fields during the winter.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Sunset Vista Natural Area contains potential habitat for the state-listed threatened burrowing owl and two species of concern: bald eagle and black-tailed prairie dog. These species are not listed for protection under the ESA, nor were any species protected by the Act – or their habitats - observed at Sunset Vista (Pinyon Environmental 2016). Consultation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife revealed the Long View Trail project would have negligible impacts on any protected species.

Environmental Site Assessment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was performed by CTL Thompson for the City of Loveland in 2015. The Phase I found an absence of significant environmental concerns at the property (CTL Thompson 2015, 9). Interviews, site inspections, and

records research performed by CTL Thompson indicate there have been no significant contamination of soils or storage of hazardous materials on the site (ibid). There have been no environmental liens, violations, or lawsuits pertaining to hazardous materials, petroleum products, or environmental regulations involving the site. Historically, there has been normal agricultural use of herbicides at the site, which were pre-mixed and not stored on the property (ibid). Pesticides have not been used recently on the property. CTL Thompson found no evidence of landfills, lagoons, pits, underground storage tanks, spills, releases or discharge of hazardous materials. Solid waste was observed around the buildings, along with empty 55-gallon drums, paint buckets, and two 5-gallon buckets of motor oil, but there was no evidence of soil staining (ibid, 13). None of the adjoining properties have been used for industrial uses or other land uses likely to emit significant pollutants, and no NPL or RCRA sites exist in near proximity to the site (ibid).

2.3 Visual Resources

The name *Sunset Vista* was proposed based on the site's "perfect foreground to the best sunsets in Loveland," according to nearby residents. The property is at the southern boundary of a contiguous 3,500-acre publicly-held open space community separator between Fort Collins and Loveland. *Sunset Vista* conserves 87 acres of visually appealing farmland, wetland resources, and grasslands, highly visible from Taft Ave. and W. 57th Street due to the open nature of the landscape. Long View Trail and soft-surface trails through the property will provide visitors with excellent views towards other community separator properties and the foothills and Rocky Mountains to the west. The site is adjacent to undeveloped land to the east, west and southwest. Areas to the south are slated for low-density single-family housing with 2-4 dwelling units per acre. *Sunset Vista* sits at the northern boundary of Loveland's Growth Management Area. As this area of Loveland continues to develop, the visual resource opportunities provided by areas like *Sunset Vista* will become even more valuable.

2.4 Cultural Resources

The *Sunset Vista* property was historically part of a homestead beginning in the late 1880s. Margaret E. Roswell originally homesteaded the property in 1887. In 1898, she sold the property to Adoniram J. Dwinell. Mr. Dwinell retained ownership for four years, selling the property in 1902 to Lewis J. Nettleton. Lewis Nettleton then sold the property two years later to John C. Weitzel for \$3,000 (Pinyon Environmental 2016). According to census records, the Weitzel family spoke German but immigrated from Russia, indicating they were part of a large trend of German immigrants who settled in the Volga River area in Russia that later immigrated to the United States seeking land, cultural and religious freedom, and an escape from forced Russian military service. Census records indicate that John C. Weitzel was a farmer who worked in poultry, rather than the popular sugar beet production that dominated much of the agricultural efforts of the German-Russian immigrants in the area. The farm

remained in the Weitzel family for just over one hundred years. In 2005, it was sold to the Ogiela Family Trust/Loveland LV LLC, who sold the property to the City of Loveland in 2014.

At the time of the city's acquisition of the property, the former farmstead area consisted of buildings along the Loudon Ditch access road, adjacent to the east side of North Taft Avenue. The buildings south of the ditch consisted of a house, a shed, and two animal pens. A second area of buildings located north of the ditch included a garage, a barn, and the ruins of a wooden building. The buildings had been vacant for an estimated 15 to 20 years. Assessor records indicate the stone portion of the farm house was constructed initially in 1879. The remainder of the residence appeared to be added in the 1920s or 1930s, as an 894-square foot building with four rooms (CTL Thompson 2015, 7). According to a cultural resource report performed by Pinyon Environmental, Inc. (2016), the resource "retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association...The resource is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history. It is associated with the agricultural development of the Loveland area and stands as a relatively intact agricultural complex." Significant restoration efforts would likely be necessary to ensure future generations could continue to enjoy these resources (Larsen 2015). After extensive evaluation and consultation, it was determined that the majority of the structures would need to be removed due to the cost and effort of restoration for public use. With the exception of the original stone portion of the farm house, the structures were removed in 2016 and 2017. Hazardous materials, including asbestos and lead-based paint, were removed in accordance with regulations prior to demolition of the structures.



Farmstead buildings at Sunset Vista Natural Area

2.5 Existing Improvements

Public improvements help to make open lands safe and enjoyable for visitors and help to protect natural resource values. These improvements may include trails, parking lots, restrooms, kiosks, benches, wildlife observation structures, picnic tables, signs, and fencing. As the property is prepared for opening to public access in 2018, recreational improvements are being added, including trails, benches, signs, kiosks, and a parking lot/trailhead for the Long View Trail. Improvements for past and current agricultural uses of the property consist of fencing for livestock management, the Loudon Ditch and adjacent access road, and structures in the farmstead area as described above.

Loveland Recreation Trail

The Loveland Recreation Trail runs east-west across the southern portion of Sunset Vista, from the intersection of 57th Street and North Taft Avenue to the parking area. A small section of trail is needed to complete the final portion of the Recreation Trail loop, and Sunset Vista was acquired, in part, to address this need. The 22-mile Recreation Trail loop nearly encircles the city, but a gap exists between the parking lot and the Wintergreen subdivision east of Sunset Vista. In the future, a trail continuing east from the parking area and across the BNSF railroad tracks will complete this final missing section of the Recreation Trail.

Long View Trail

The Long View Trail connects the cities of Loveland and Fort Collins via a 4.4-mile, 10-foot wide concrete trail. Construction began in December 2017 and was completed in summer 2018. The trail runs generally north-south through the western portion of Sunset Vista, following the Loudon Ditch south and past the former farmstead area, and connecting into the city's existing Recreation Trail near the south end of the property.

Water/Mineral Rights

Ten units of Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) water were conveyed with the acquisition of the property. Additionally, three shares of Loudon Irrigating Canal and Reservoir Company water were transferred with the purchase. The mineral rights remain intact with the property title.

Roads

The Loudon Irrigating Canal and Reservoir Company maintains a soft-surface access road along the north side of the Loudon Ditch running through the property. The only other road on the property is the short driveway to the farmstead off Taft Avenue. Access to cultivated areas for farming activities consists of a few two-tracks and a culvert crossing of the main wetland drainage, just south of the Loudon Ditch. The new parking area/trailhead along 57th Street will serve as the primary vehicular access point for the public to visit Sunset Vista Natural Area and access Long View Trail.

Ditches

The Louden Ditch meanders through the center of the property, running generally west to east. Numerous working headgates remain along the ditch in Sunset Vista from historic irrigation practices.

Power Lines

Power lines run east-west along the right-of-way for 57th Street along the southern boundary of Sunset Vista. Transmission lines also run to the former homestead area.

Fencing

Barbed wire fencing runs north-south along the Taft Ave. right-of-way, on the western border of Sunset Vista Natural Area.



Cottonwoods along the Louden Ditch at Sunset Vista

3. MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.1 Overview

Sunset Vista contains a unique matrix of land uses and habitat types that will provide a variety of opportunities for wildlife management, visitor enjoyment, and non-motorized passive recreation. Areas of native shortgrass prairie and wetlands will be restored to improve wildlife habitat, and noxious and non-native species will continue to be addressed through multiple land management tools. The Long View Trail will provide a safe, off-street paved trail connection between northern Colorado's two largest communities. Opportunities for more passive uses, including bird-watching and nature study, will be accommodated with a soft-surface trail where visitors can enjoy expansive views and natural habitat. Dryland wheat farming will continue to be used in the northern portion of the property as a land management tool and as a reference to the area's farming heritage.

Impacts to natural resources will be mitigated through the use of buffers and the avoidance of sensitive plant communities and wildlife habitat.

Finally, the Open Lands Division will utilize visitor management tools to monitor the impact of recreational use at Sunset Vista to ensure it does not conflict with ecological, visual, or cultural values provided by the natural area.

3.2 Short-Term Management

Sunset Vista was acquired by the City of Loveland in 2014. Because federal funding was secured to develop the Long View Trail, environmental and historic evaluations were conducted to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These evaluations supported the development of a short-term stewardship plan to guide activities while long-term management activities were being planned. The following actions have been taken in support of the short-term stewardship plan:

- Extending the agricultural lease on portions of the property through 2023 to help manage vegetation and invasive species.
- Demolishing and removing structures on site that do not have a feasible purpose.
- Posting signs, installing gates and marking boundaries to restrict public access to closed areas.
- Initiating routine patrol to safeguard the area.
- Completing a vegetation inventory with High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC).
- Collaborating with Colorado Parks & Wildlife to determine existing wildlife at the site.
- Completing bird surveys with assistance from qualified volunteers.
- General site clean-up.

3.3 Natural Resources Management

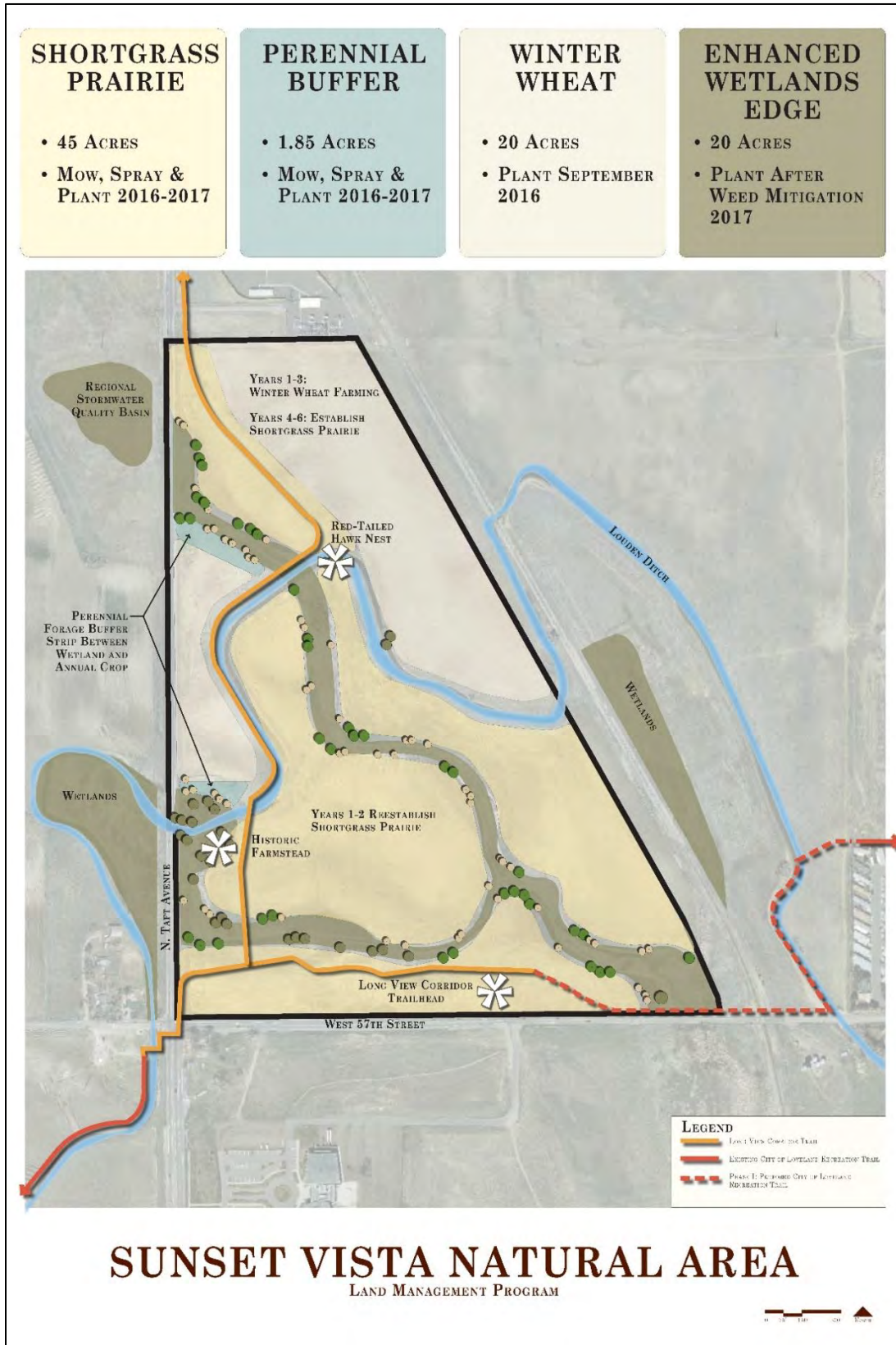
3.3.1 Vegetation Management

Sunset Vista Natural Area contains a wide variety of vegetation types. Recent field surveys by agency and HPEC staff provide valuable information on a number of species and plant communities present and the general characteristics of Sunset Vista's vegetation. Weed populations are one of the largest obstacles affecting a natural area's ability to contribute and sustain healthy ecosystems. If left unchecked, invasive weeds can overtake and permanently impact native plant populations. When measures of removal or management are not implemented, weeds will continue to endanger the condition of natural areas and restrict the variety of recreational pursuits and wildlife habitat that can occur there. Control of exotic and noxious weeds helps limit their spread and eliminate threats to ecosystem function.

The following vegetation resource management actions will help ensure that Sunset Vista's natural resources receive the special attention and protection they require (see Fig. 4 Land Management Plan):

- Overall land management plan – to improve sustainability of the resource, recreational and agricultural opportunities, and overall habitat quality, the site's vegetation will be managed in the following manner:
 - Winter Wheat – 20 acres in the northern portion of the property. Five-year leases will be renegotiated in 2018, with an additional five-year lease renewal option. This area may be converted to native shortgrass prairie once farming is no longer feasible.
 - Shortgrass Prairie – 45 acres south of the Loudon Ditch. Shortgrass prairie will be re-established through planting, spraying, and mowing practices.
 - Perennial Buffer – 1.85 acres located west of Long View Trail and north of the farmstead to be restored with native coyote willow to buffer wetlands and cultivated lands.
- Grasslands restoration plan
 - Activities needed to obtain goals:
 - Site clean up
 - Removal of non-native and undesirable vegetation
 - Improving soils
 - Seeding of native grasses
 - Planting of native trees and shrubs
 - Reseeding as necessary, including forbs once weeds are under control
 - Develop annual work plans to perform prescribed activities
 - Monitoring and mapping of progress
 - Annual reassessment of restoration goals, activities and work plans

Figure 4 Land Management Plan



- Riparian and wetland communities
 - Wetland drainages through the property will be enhanced with new native vegetation plantings, including cottonwood trees, coyote willows, and a variety of woody shrubs at the wetland margins. Native species such as sedges and rushes will also be planted to enhance existing wetland species. See Appendix D for a list of recommended restoration species.
- Exotic plants and noxious weeds
 - Apply adaptive, contemporary, integrated weed control methods. An integrated weed management plan will be designed to manage infestations by cultural, mechanical, biological and/or chemical control methods.
 - Active control of exotic and noxious species will be necessary until native vegetation is well-established to 85% cover and abundance or more.
 - Remove and control non-native Russian olive trees.
- Rare, endangered, and threatened plants
 - Monitor for presence of rare, endangered, and threatened plant species.

3.3.2 Wildlife Management

The rapid urbanization of Loveland and Colorado in general has created many challenges and opportunities for wildlife management. When humans and wildlife meet, there is an inherent possibility of conflict, and also a chance for preserving wildlife populations and improving the public's understanding of and appreciation for wildlife. Natural areas located in the urban/suburban setting are critical for wildlife populations who are sensitive to development. Natural areas and open lands offer a variety of important services to wildlife including providing habitat for pollinators and the plants relying on pollinators to reproduce, and creating the proper space and habitat for wildlife to forage, breed, travel and protect themselves from predators. The conservation and management of Loveland's wildlife habitat through natural areas and open lands provides accessible stewardship and recreation opportunities and addresses the separation from nature that many urban populations experience.

Sunset Vista Natural Area contains biologically diverse wildlife habitat in the transition zone between the Rockies and the Great Plains, including shortgrass prairie, ephemeral aquatic features, and habitats that support a variety of native wildlife species. This property functions as a buffer protecting high quality habitat from the adjacent residential development. The following wildlife management actions will assist in addressing the management of wildlife needs in Sunset Vista Natural Area:

- Avoid fragmenting sensitive wildlife habitat when developing new trails and accesses, and minimize impacts by using wildlife-friendly culvert designs.
- Offer education and interpretive signage on the ecology of Sunset Vista to protect both wildlife and visitors.
- Provide information about native wildlife and habitats to encourage stewardship and appreciation of the natural area and its features.
- Monitor for impact of recreational developments on wildlife populations.
- Birds:
 - The red-tailed hawk nest in a cottonwood tree along the Loudon Ditch has not been active since 2016. If the nest becomes active in the future, activity on the new Long View Trail may impact the nest. The trail alignment was adjusted as much as feasible away from the nest (due to slope and wetlands). Disturbance to the nest will be mitigated with vegetation plantings such as coyote willows. The nest can be moved by CPW with a USFWS permit if activity causes excess disturbance. The nest was surveyed in 2017 and 2018 with no sign of active nesting by red-tailed hawks in any large trees on the property.
- Prairie Dogs: if prairie dogs return to the site, control to as needed to protect agricultural uses and short-grass prairie habitat.

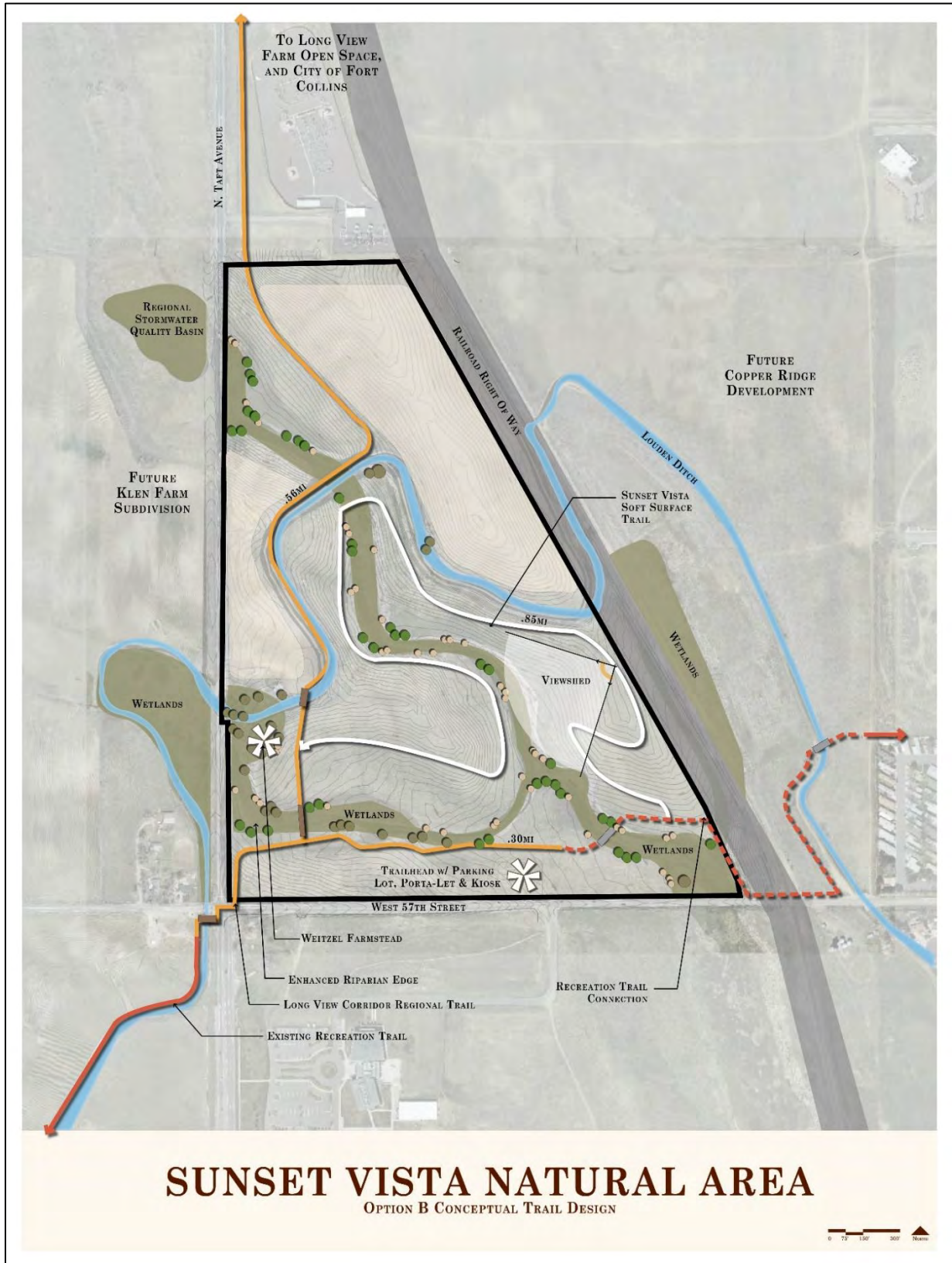
3.4 Visitor Management and Education

The purpose of visitor management is to emphasize the safety, health, and enjoyment of Sunset Vista’s visitors while conserving the site’s cultural, physical and ecological features. When the public visit a natural area and understand the natural resources that are preserved, they will be more appreciative of how recreational pursuits can coexist with open lands and natural area goals. Educating youth on the intricacies of nature prepares them to be better future stewards of Loveland’s natural resources and arise as leaders in the preservation of open lands.

The following visitor management and education actions will assist in protecting both visitors and the natural resources of the site while providing a high quality visitor experience by offering a diverse range of recreational opportunities (see Fig. 5 Master Plan):

- Trails
 - The Long View Trail project was completed in summer 2018. The 0.5-mile section of the trail through Sunset Vista runs generally north-south through the western portion of the property.
 - Two bridges allow users to cross: 1) the Loudon Ditch in the homestead area, and 2) the wetland drainage near the connection with the Recreation Trail to the south.

Figure 5 Master Plan



- A 4'-wide soft-surface trail is located adjacent to the concrete trail where possible, allowing for a wider range of recreational activities and minimizing potential trail conflicts.
 - The Recreation Trail connection runs parallel with 57th Street along the southern portion of the property, from the intersection of 57th and Taft Ave. east to the parking area/trailhead. The portion of the trail from the parking area to the east, across (or under) the railroad tracks and connecting to the current terminus near the Wintergreen subdivision will be constructed as a future phase once the BNSF Railroad grants an access easement to cross.
 - Pedestrian-activated crosswalks at the intersection of 57th Street and Taft Avenue allow users to safely connect from Sunset Vista to the Loveland Recreation Trail to the southwest.
 - A bridge may be necessary to cross the wetlands in the southeastern corner of Sunset Vista for future trail connections.
 - Both paved trails are concrete-surface, 10' wide, and open to pedestrians, leashed dogs, cyclists, and other non-motorized users. Horses and motorized vehicles are not permitted on Sunset Vista trails.
 - A proposed soft-surface trail would start at the trailhead/parking area and meander north along the wetlands, cross the wetlands at the farmers culvert, and head west towards the farmstead area where it will connect with the paved trail. This 0.8-mile trail would provide commanding views of the foothills to the west, opportunities for wildlife viewing, bird-watching and nature study along wetlands and riparian areas, and relative solitude near an urban environment. Hikers and leashed dogs will be allowed on this trail. See Fig. 5 for an illustration of the proposed trails.
 - Soft-surface trails will be closed when mud or other unsafe or unsustainable conditions exist, in order to protect the resource from damages stemming from recreational activities.
 - Benches are installed periodically along trails throughout the site, to provide rest areas and viewpoints for visitors.
 - The Open Lands and Trails Division will continue to work with the Public Works Department on safe connections, missing sidewalks, and bike lanes, to enhance the safety of visitors using the area.
- Trailhead
 - A trailhead is located on 57th Street across from the existing Duffield Ave right-of-way. A parking lot, porta-let, and informational kiosk are located at the trailhead. This is the primary access point for the public at Sunset Vista. The parking lot consists of two paved ADA-accessible parking spots and 20 soft-surface, non-ADA stalls.

- Signage
 - Interpretive signage will provide opportunities to educate the public on natural history at Sunset Vista, including short-grass prairie, wetlands, wildlife, birds, and identification of mountain peaks visible to the west.
 - Trail etiquette and multi-use trail signage will be placed as needed.
 - Signage will be placed to encourage users to stay on-trail in order to protect sensitive resources.

3.5 Cultural Resource Management

Sunset Vista Natural Area offers unique opportunities for visitors to learn about the lives of past residents and their relationships with Loveland's natural resources. Cultural resources expand our understanding of history by offering data on the historic uses and importance of sites used in the past and also serve as an another interest drawing visitors to a site.

The following cultural resource management actions will help ensure that Sunset Vista Natural Area's cultural resources are highlighted:

- Restore the remaining historic stone structure to a condition similar to original, by replacing roof, repointing exterior surfaces, and stabilizing.
- Include interpretive signage regarding historic use of the farmstead area, Loveland's agricultural heritage, and the importance of the Loudon Ditch.

3.6 Management Plan Implementation

Implementation Steps	Cost Estimate	2018-2022	2023-2027	Notes
Prairie Health				
Monitor grassland health	Minimal	Annual	Annual	
Revegetate 45 acres to shortgrass prairie	Moderate	Ongoing		
Apply noxious and non-native vegetation control methods	Moderate	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Create 1.85-acre perennial buffer	Moderate	2019		
Educate visitors on native vegetation	Minimal	Continual		
Agricultural Management				
Renew 5-year lease to continue dryland wheat farming	Minimal	2018	Re-negotiate in 2023	
Wetland Management				
Restore and enhance wetlands with plantings, buffering, weed management, and culvert crossings	Moderate	2018-2020		
Restore currently cultivated wetland areas	Minimal	2020		
Build bridges over wetlands	Capital/ Trails	2018-2020		
Wildlife Management				
Inventory and monitor the locations of sensitive and non-sensitive species	Minimal / Volunteer	Annual	Annual	
Offer education on the ecology of wildlife to protect both wildlife and visitors	Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Collaborate with CPW to enhance wildlife habitat as needed	Minimal	As needed	As needed	
Visitor Management				
Build Long View Trail	Capital/ Trails	Spring - Fall 2018		
Construct trailhead and associated amenities	Capital/ Open Lands & Trails	Fall 2018		

Implementation Steps	Cost Estimate	2018-2022	2023-2027	Notes
Construct Recreation Trail Connection Phase 1		2018		
Construct Recreation Trail Connection Phase 2	Capital			Development-driven and BNSF permission
Construct soft-surface trail	Moderate	2019		
Perform trail maintenance as needed	Minimal	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Install trail etiquette, multi-use, and resource protection signage	Moderate	2018	Replace as necessary	
Install gate at entrance to soft-surface trail to protect resource in muddy conditions	Moderate	2018		
Install interpretive signage along trails	Moderate	2019		
Monitor recreational use to ensure it does not conflict with other values	Minimal/volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Continually monitor capacity at trailhead	Minimal/volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Provide opportunities for visitor education at the property	Minimal/volunteer	2019-on		
Cultural Resource Management				
Incorporate cultural history into interpretive materials	Minimal	2018		
Restore historic stone structure	Capital	2019		
Include interpretive signage regarding historic uses	Moderate	2019	Ongoing	

3.7 Conclusion

This management plan provides a framework and implementation actions for the protection, management, restoration and enhancement of Sunset Vista Natural Area’s visual, cultural, and natural resources, while providing new opportunities for passive outdoor recreation in Loveland. This document will be reviewed as needed and future updates will be initiated based on results of plan implementation, site conditions and recreational use patterns.

APPENDIX A: Species Lists

Wildlife species observed or likely present at Sunset Vista Natural Area

Mammals

Prairie vole
Meadow vole
Hispid pocket mouse
Rock mouse
Deer mouse
Black-tailed prairie dog
Eastern cottontail rabbit
Red fox
Coyote
Black bear
Striped skunk
Badger
Raccoon
Elk
Mule deer

Amphibians & Reptiles

Western tiger salamander
Woodhouse's toad
Boreal chorus frog
Short-horned lizard
Prairie lizard
Bullsnake
Plains garter snake
North American facer
Prairie rattlesnake
Six-lined racerunner lizard

Birds

American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Kestrel
American Robin
American Tree Sparrow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Blue Jay
Brewer's Sparrow
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Bullock's Oriole
Cackling Goose
Canada Goose
Cedar Waxwing
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
Cliff Swallow
Common Grackle
Common Raven
Downy Woodpecker
Eurasian Collared-Dove
European Starling
Ferruginous Hawk

Great Blue Heron
Great Horned Owl
gull sp.
House Finch
House Sparrow
House Wren
Killdeer
Lesser Goldfinch
Mallard
Mourning Dove
Northern Flicker
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull
Ring-necked Pheasant
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)
Rough-legged Hawk
Song Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Western Kingbird
Western Meadowlark
Wilson's Snipe
woodpecker sp.
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler

Plant Species Observed or Likely Present at Sunset Vista Natural Area:

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family	Notes
Woody Plants			
<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>	Russian olive	Elaeagnaceae	Invasive
<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i> (formerly <i>Chrysothamnus</i>)	Rubber Rabbitbrush	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Green Ash	Oleaceae	Horticultural
<i>Glycyrrhiza lepidota</i>	American Licorice	Fabaceae	Native
<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>	Rocky Mountain Juniper	Cupressaceae	Horticultural
<i>Malus pumila</i>	Apple	Rosaceae	Horticultural
<i>Morus</i>	Mulberry	Moraceae	Landscape
<i>Padus (Prunus) virginiana</i> var <i>melanocarpa</i>	Chokecherry	Rosaceae	Native
<i>Populus xacuminata</i>	Lanceleaf Cottonwood	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Eastern Cottonwood	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Salix exigua</i>	Coyote Willow	Salicaceae	Native
<i>Salix fragilis</i>	Crack Willow	Salicaceae	Non-native
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Common Lilac	Oleaceae	Horticultural
<i>Ulmus pumila</i>	Siberian Elm	Ulmaceae	Native
Grasses and “grass-like” plants			
<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>	Asparagus	Asparagaceae	Non-native
<i>Bromus inermis</i>	Smooth Brome	Poaceae	Invasive
<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	Cheat Grass	Poaceae	Invasive
<i>Carex emoryi</i>	Emory Sedge	Cyperaceae	Native
<i>Carex nebrascensis</i>	Nebraska Sedge	Cyperaceae	Native
<i>Carex pellita</i>	Wooly Sedge	Cyperaceae	Native
<i>Distichlis spicata</i>	Inland Saltgrass	Poaceae	Native
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Horsetail	Equisetaceae	Native
<i>Hordeum jubatum</i>	Foxtail Barley	Poaceae	Native
<i>Juncus balticus</i>	Baltic Rush	Juncaceae	Native
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>	Western Wheatgrass	Poaceae	Native
<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	Reed Canarygrass	Poaceae	Invasive
<i>Schoenoplectus americanus</i> (syn. <i>Scirpus americanus</i>)	Three-square Bulrush	Cyperaceae	Native
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Cattail	Typhaceae	Native

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family	Notes
Forbs			
<i>Apocynum cannabinum</i>	Dogbane	Apocynaceae	Native
<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i>	Prairie Sage	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp Milkweed	Apocynaceae	Native
<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	Showy Milkweed	Apocynaceae	Native
<i>Aster</i>	Small White Aster	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Barbarea orthoceras</i>	American Wintercress	Brassicaceae	Native
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Canada Thistle	Asteraceae	Invasive
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Bull Thistle	Asteraceae	Invasive
<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i>	Houndstongue	Boraginaceae	Invasive
<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Annual Sunflower	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Kochia scoparia</i>	Kochia	Amaranthaceae	Invasive
<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	Prickly Lettuce	Asteraceae	Invasive
<i>Lathyrus latifolius</i>	Perennial Sweetpea	Fabaceae	Invasive
<i>Liatris punctata</i>	Gayfeather	Asteraceae	Native
<i>Malva neglecta</i>	Common Mallow	Malvaceae	Invasive
<i>Medicago sativa</i>	Alfalfa	Fabaceae	Native
<i>Mentha arvensis</i>	Horsemint	Lamiaceae	Native
<i>Nepeta cataria</i>	Catnip	Lamiaceae	Invasive
<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	Tall Evening Primrose	Onagraceae	Native
<i>Physalis virginiana</i>	Virginia groundcherry	Solanaceae	Invasive
<i>Plantago major</i>	Plantain	Plantaginaceae	Non-native
<i>Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum</i>	Watercress	Brassicaceae	Non-native
<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i>	Scarlet Globe Mallow	Malvaceae	Native
<i>Solidago velutina.</i> (Syn: <i>Solidago canadensis.</i>)	Velvet Goldenrod	Asteraceae	Invasive
<i>Tragopogon dubius</i>	Salsify Flower	Asteraceae	Non-native
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	Great Mullian	Scrophularia ae	Invasive

APPENDIX B: Open Space Management Plan Type Descriptions

Developed Open Space: Portions of a Natural Area that allow for full public access and use. Generally includes facilities such as parking lots, picnic areas, and fishing access points.

Public Access Open Space: Portions of a Natural Area that allow for access that is on- and off-trail. Some public facilities may exist.

Resource Protection Area: Portions of a Natural Area that are primarily travel zone areas with limited development. Access is generally limited to on-trail.

Closed Area: Natural Areas or portions that are closed to the public because public access is not currently appropriate. Areas are managed to maintain or improve natural resource values.

APPENDIX C: Public Comments

- Thank you for great work on the new Sunset Vista Open Space. Priority one for me should be building the connecting trails to connect to the Ft Collins trail system north, and to connect east to our existing trail system east of Hwy. 287. As the Reporter-Herald editorial recently stated, our trail system is 25 yrs old and still incomplete! These additions will make a huge difference to trail users.
- I vote for trail A it is less invasive to the more natural area such as wetlands.
- I think trail plan A is a better choice because it stays away from the more sensitive areas of the property.
- Option A has my vote. I like how the soft trail has more separation from the main trail and really takes advantage of the expansive views and open space.
- Glad to hear of the new trails coming to Loveland/Ft. Collins.
- I do wish that the trail around the city of Loveland could be completed. Today's paper had the quote regarding the trail: "we're working on it" stage. We moved to Loveland 7 years ago and the "we're working on it" stage has been going on ever since we moved here. Please complete the trail around Loveland.
- As an avid rider of all Northern Colorado Trails I must say that the proposed Long View Trail immediately parallel to Taft Road/Shields north of Loveland would be an immensely boring location for a trail. This is due to the fact that it would monotonously run straight adjacent to Taft Road/Shields with all the exhaust fumes and noise that this road offers. I'd suggest a more western route which would run along the eastern edge of the hogbacks just to Loveland's and Fort Collins western borders. You could pick up the trail near Mehaffey Park and run it virtually due north under the existing power lines and fields, just west of the county dump and thus connecting with the Cathy Fromme trail. A much better choice.
- Hi! Thank you for having the open house, my hubby and I attended and are very excited about the future plans. We are avid birders and enjoy all the Loveland & Ft Collins open lands for this purpose. So we'd just like to comment that we'd love to see the Option B (interior trail) plan. But looking forward to this new area no matter what. Thanks for listening Loveland!
- Please consider wildlife as the primary resource in this Open Space. This habitat is good for a variety of species and continuing development along the northern Front Range is squeezing more and more wildlife species out of their former homes. The red-tailed hawk nest should be protected from the disturbance of too many people walking by too closely. I suggest that this be a "no dogs" Open Space due to the wildlife potential and the already-existing nest. A combination of Concept A and B trails might need to be considered for protection of this nest – a trail that meanders thru the wetlands (I am a bird-watcher and this would likely be the best habitat for songbird species), then travels up to one or both of the views, and then continues up and around to hook into the already-existing Long View Corridor Trail. Whatever would best preserve a sufficient zone around the hawk nest so as not to disturb it, but still provide a trail at least partially thru some of the wetlands for birdwatching, nature study, etc.
- It's great the city obtained this property, and the trails are sorely needed. This area needs to be planned with wildlife in mind, as we are urbanizing so fast. I would like some local history to be researched and signed at the farmstead, with an eye for a place to bring a busload of school kids for a history/nature lesson field trip. Since we lost the Viestenz-Smith Park for nature lessons, our environmental education options are diminished.
- I am concerned about the hawk's nest and how these paths might interfere with the hawk's behavior. Is there a way to move the path a bit further away? I will love riding my bike through the area, but I do not wish to upset the hawks that are already there. If I have to choose between the plans outlined, I choose plan A because that seems the least disruptive to the nesting area.
- Thank you for this opportunity to comment on concept plans. I'm sorry that I was out of town for the Open House on July 20 - I would really have liked to attend. First, neither Plan A nor Plan B should be implemented, because both of them run a paved recreation trail in close proximity to an active hawk nest. Instead, route the paved trail alongside Taft. It already parallels Taft except for this little jog

anyway. I am a frequent bicyclist on Taft between Loveland and Fort Collins, and I see many other cyclists on the shoulder. We will all be thrilled to be just a little further from traffic and don't need extra distance added due to a jog because many of these cyclists are commuters. I am very concerned that hawks will abandon the nest as a result of construction, people, bicycles and dogs coming far closer to the tree than I did when I walked toward the tree this spring (at staff's request) to try to get a view of the nest. I was able to see the female hawk on the nest from no more than 1/8th mile from the tree, at which point I turned around. About that time, the male hawk returned to his usual spot in the cottonwoods by the buildings. He screamed at me continually from the time I turned around until I had passed out of his sight, beyond the buildings. If one person who is clearly ignoring the birds causes this much distress, then gawkers from close range would make the hawks unlikely to try to start a nest at all. Second, we need a continuous supply of young hawks to control the rodent population now that the fox population has been decimated and shows no sign of returning to NW Loveland. Juvenile hawks from nests north of 57th get 'parked' on our rooftops while the mother hunts for food for them. Many, many rodents are consumed, thanks to our small hawk population. But hawk mortality is high. I've seen several dead beside the roads in NW Loveland as I bicycle. Nesting spots are declining. When Klen Farm develops, we'll lose two more active nests. The nest further north on Taft seems precarious in a lone tree. Third, I noted a quote from CANDO's meeting on July 27 "People want to come to natural areas to connect with nature." I submit that the sight of a hawk, from a distance, will be inspiring to people. If the hawks leave, we're left with uninspiring animals like starlings and rabbits. Yawn. Fourth, please do not allow dogs on the property. Especially in Loveland there is an unmet need for people like me who want to enjoy nature without having to see dogs constantly, running off leash, chasing and munching on goodness knows what, but certainly preventing birds, small animals and insects from finding a safe habitat to eat, sleep and reproduce. Since Loveland has no code enforcement to speak of, it's widespread and rather sickening to see this go on throughout the few, small natural areas that Loveland has - even at Morey as well as properties not yet open to the public. In order for those of us who truly enjoy nature for its own sake and are not merely looking for a bigger dog park, we need to drive to RMNP. Consequently we get little use from our open space tax dollars. Regarding the unpaved trail, if dogs are not allowed on the property, then I would support running this trail close to the wetlands. If dogs are allowed on the property, then run the trail as far away from the stream and wetlands as possible. Otherwise, it's a good plan and it will be exciting to see a new natural area open up to people's use. Thank you all for your work on these concept plans and for asking people what we think.

APPENDIX D: Restoration Species Lists

Shortgrass Prairie Suggested Seed Mix, Courtesy USDA-NRCS Fort Collins 2017

<u>Species</u>	<u>Variety</u>	1 Required PLS rates <u>Per acre</u> <u>(100%)</u>	2 % of Species <u>in</u> <u>mixture</u>	3 PLS Seeding Rate per <u>species/Ac</u>	4 <u>Planned</u> <u>Acres</u>	5 Total PLS Lbs/Species <u>planned (3)</u> <u>x (4)</u>
Western wheatgrass	Arriba	8	30	2.4	86	206.4
Sideoats grama	Vaughn	4.5	15	0.675	86	58.05
Blue grama	Lovington	1.5	10	0.15	86	12.9
Green needlegrass	Lodorm	5	10	0.5	86	43
Switchgrass	Neb. 28, Blackwell	2.5	8	0.2	86	17.2
Big bluestem	Kaw, Bison, Champ	5.5	8	0.44	86	37.84
Little bluestem	Pastura, Blaze	3.5	5	0.175	86	15.05
Buffalograss	Sharps, Cody, Bowie	3	5	0.15	86	12.9
Yellow indiagrass	Llano, Holt, Cheyenne	5	5	0.25	86	21.5
Alkali sacaton	Salado	1	4	0.04	86	3.44
Yarrow		0.05		0.05	86	4.3
Purple prairie clover		0.1		0.1	86	8.6
Louisiana sage		0.01		0.01	86	0.86
Blanket flower		0.1		0.1	86	8.6
Prairie coneflower		0.2		0.2	86	17.2

Suggested Wetland Restoration Species, Courtesy High Plains Environmental Center

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Carex aquatilis</i>	Water Sedge
<i>Carex nebrascensis</i>	Nebraska Sedge
<i>Carex pellita</i>	Wooly Sedge
<i>Carex praticola</i>	Meadow Sedge
<i>Juncus balticus</i>	Baltic Rush

Woody Shrubs and Trees

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Plains Cottonwood
<i>Cornus sericea coloradense</i>	Colorado Dogwood
<i>Prunus virginiana melanocarpa</i>	Native Chokecherry
<i>Prunus Americana</i>	American Plum
<i>Rhus trilobata</i>	Three-leaf Sumac
<i>Ribes aureum</i>	Yellow Flowering Currant
<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	Woods' Rose
<i>Salix amigdaloides</i>	Peach Leaf Willow
<i>Symphoricarpos occidentalis</i>	Western Snowberry

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