

# Estes Valley Open Space Plan

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## 2021 Honor Award: Sustainability

As Colorado's Front Range continues to grow and visitation to the Estes Valley increases, the Estes Valley Land Trust (EVLTL) convened a diverse group of partners to set the stage for Estes Park's comprehensive plan update. The Land Trust's partners, including financial support from the Town of Estes Park, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, GOCO, and the Economic Development Corporation, share the goals of conserving land that reflects community's values, as well as providing inclusive and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities, and supporting a strong regional economy that does not harm the natural environment.



The Open Space Plan recognizes that residents and visitors are a part of (not apart from) the shared natural environment and that land-use decisions can either harm the environment or better protect it. While there may still be tensions between conservation and development today, especially in the national atmosphere of extreme divisiveness, the economic development interests in the Estes Valley recognize that nature is the golden goose and that protecting the environment is in everyone's best interest, residents, and visitors alike. Development and conservation advocates came together recognizing that we all depend on a healthy economy and that Estes' quality of life is tied to vibrant town centers and a strong job market. Housing for the Valley's workforce has become unaffordable, and towns and businesses struggle to retain the teachers, police officers, grocery store clerks, and others that serve us all.



This plan was developed to not only conserve and preserve open space in the Estes Valley for the next generation, but for many more - continuing the long history of land conservation and outdoor recreation as a staple of the culture of residents of the Valley. While past efforts have primarily been opportunistic, this plan for tomorrow looks to provide an intentional path forward for not only preservation but development as well. Now more than ever, as the world lives through a global health pandemic, is the time to plan for a resilient, beautiful community and that integrates seamlessly and symbiotically with the natural world. The conservation priorities were centered around five core community values: wildlife habitat, open space and scenery, outdoor recreation, history and character, and sustainable town and rural centers.

The process to develop the Estes Valley Open Space Plan included multiple public and stakeholder outreach events and methods. The Steering Committee included a broad representation of stakeholders including the Town of Estes Park and other public agencies, recreation and housing providers, economic development organizations, the Board of Realtors, and several other open space partners in a truly unique partnership.



As the public is more inclined to watch than read, videos are quickly taking the place of plans. A final video narrates a "page turn" through the plan with personal interviews. The video is available on the project website and at: <https://vimeo.com/494267757>. Consultants on the team included Logan Simpson of Fort Collins, CO and Root House Studio of Boulder, CO.