CITY OF DURANGO
ANIMAS RIVER
CORRIDOR PLAN

An Amendment to the
Durango Comprehensive Plan

JUNE 1994

Prepared by the Durango Planning Office
Under the Direction of the Durango Riverfront Task Force
Adopted May 24, 1994
by the Durango Planning Commission
Adopted June 7, 1994
by the Durango City Council
CITY OF DURANGO
CITY COUNCIL
Jasper A. Welch, III.
Lee R. Goddard
Richard M. Langhart
Lynn Shine
Leonel B. Silva
CITY MANAGER
Robert F. Ledger, Jr.
RIVERFRONT TASK FORCE
Cap Allen
Bonnie Boyle
Amos Cordova
Thomas Cummins
Laurie E. Dickson
Ken Francis
Casey D. Lynch
Tom Maynard
Jan A. Milburn
Shawn O'Reilly
John A. Squire
Barbara Kay Stanford
Jim Upchurch
Bill Vega
Paul Wilbert
Bob Bright
Linda Geer
Ron Margolis
Sharon H. Matheson
Richard Roskowinski
Pat Tucker
OFFICE OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Gregory S. Hoch, Director
Jill Seyfarth, Project Planner
Teri E. Johnson, Administrative Secretary

June 1994
RESOLUTION NO. R-1994-24

A RESOLUTION OF THE DURANGO CITY COUNCIL REGARDING ADOPTION OF THE ANIMAS RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN FOR DURANGO

WHEREAS, the City of Durango is empowered to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan pursuant to powers granted by the Durango City Charter and Colorado State Statutes; and

WHEREAS, heretofore the City of Durango has adopted and has in effect a Comprehensive Plan which serves as a guide for all future City action concerning land use and development regulations; and

WHEREAS, the City may modify said Comprehensive Plan from time to time; and

WHEREAS, the Durango City Council has appointed a Riverfront Task Force to engage in public dialogue and prepare a plan for future development of the Riverfront Corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Riverfront Task Force has completed an extensive public comment process and has researched issues identified with the riverfront; and

WHEREAS, the Riverfront Task Force has identified numerous significant features of the river and river corridor as essential to the City in the present and as growth occurs; and

WHEREAS, the Animas River Corridor Plan summarizes the important features of the river corridor, and recommends goals, policies, and actions to conserve these features; and

WHEREAS, the Durango Planning Commission has reviewed the Plan in a public hearing and has approved a resolution to adopt the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Durango City Council finds the Plan to be necessary to help protect the environmental, economic, and aesthetic features of the Durango community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Durango City Council hereby adopts The Animas River Corridor Plan, attached hereto, as an additional amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Approved and adopted this 7th day of June, 1994.

DURANGO CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF DURANGO, COLORADO

Jasper A. Welch, III, Mayor

Linda D. Yeager, City Clerk
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. The Plan Introduction ........................................... 1
   Development of the Plan ........................................ 2
      A. Riverfront Task Force ..................................... 2
      B. Characteristics of the Plan Area ......................... 2

II. Public Vision .................................................... 8
    A. Public Sentiment ........................................... 8
    B. Goals ..................................................... 8

III. Policies and Recommendations ................................. 12

IV. Specific Recommendations by River Section ................. 15

V. Implementation of the Plan .................................... 22
THE PLAN

This plan sets forth the goals and recommended actions to preserve, protect and enhance the Animas River and the riverine environment that traverses the City of Durango and its service area. The Plan is an amendment to and element of the City of Durango’s Comprehensive Plan, presenting a realistic community vision for the river, stating the goals and policies of the City of Durango, and outlining activities to implement the plan. Statements in this plan will guide the City Council and Planning Commission as they review public and private development within the Animas River corridor, and conversely will help corridor property owners in proper stewardship of this invaluable asset.

The Plan includes five parts and maps. Part I is a description of the people involved, the planning process and the riverfront corridor area. Part II describes the public vision for the river, followed by a statement and discussion of goals for the corridor. Part III lists City policies and related implementation strategies. Part IV is a segment by segment discussion of qualities unique to each portion of the river with specific recommendations for each area. Part V summarizes the next steps in implementing the Plan. The maps were presented at the public hearings held by the Planning Commission and City Council.

The following discussion sets forth the recommended policies and implementation strategies for this plan. Adoption of this document as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan includes acceptance of and commitment to these policies and strategies as part of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the goals discussed in Part II, and the specific Section recommendations implementing these policies in Part IV.
PART I: DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

A. The Riverfront Task Force

The plan was prepared with guidance from the Riverfront Task Force, which was appointed by the Durango City Council to define the issues affecting the river and to make recommendations as to the appropriate actions to address these issues. Task Force members represent a broad spectrum of Durango and Animas Valley residents. Ex-officio members include the chairpersons of various City boards and commissions, local professionals in environmental and design fields, and the staff of the Durango Office of Planning and Community Development.

The Task Force began work in September of 1993, with a series of public meetings to hear and gauge the visions Durango citizens have for the river. Public input meetings were held in October, November and December for both specific interest groups and for the general public. Publicity was used to invite participation in the meetings (such as notices in the Durango Herald and announcements on radio and television). Approximately 625 individual letters were mailed to City and County riverfront landowners within the study area and to various governmental entities and special interest groups.

The first public meeting, on October 26, sought input from riverfront landowners. The second public meeting, on November 15, was open to the general public and all special interest groups. The third public meeting, on November 30, was for input from County riverfront landowners as well as from Durango Central Business District property owners who had not attended the October 26 meeting. Considerable input was received from those attending the meetings, and via letters from those who could not attend but desired to comment.

The Task Force held regular meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month until February of 1994. Additional public meetings and subcommittee meetings held up to that time included presentations from representatives of the Farmington and Grand Junction riverfront projects, and discussions with experts from the State Division of Wildlife, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, the Durango Public Works Department, and the U.S. Forest Service. From February until May of 1994, City staff drafted the Plan with assistance from various subcommittees of the Task Force.

Public comments played a very significant role in defining the vision for the river (Part II) and in developing the recommendations for this plan (Part IV). While not all of the issues raised could be included in the Task Force recommendations, all expressed viewpoints were considered, including the sometimes strongly differing opinions of task force members.

B. Characteristics of the Plan Area

The Task Force study focused on that part of the Animas River which most immediately affects the City of Durango. The corridor boundaries are a combination of the City’s Service Area (where City services such as sewer or water now exist or may be provided in the future) and the areas with the most immediate impact on the actual channel of the river and the river-dependent riparian habitat.

1. Natural Features of the Area

The Animas River originates in the San Juan mountains on the north and flows south through the Animas Valley into New Mexico and the San Juan River. The river moves slowly as it approaches the north end of town, its meanders and oxbows creating a broad flood plain area comprised of large stands of riparian environments and numerous wetlands. The river channel then straightens and the flow picks up speed as the river passes 34th Street and heads toward the center of the city. The floodplain narrows considerably within Durango, as the channel deepens and the banks become steeper. South of Gateway Park, the river channel widens slightly but is still contained by the steep slopes of the adjoining terraces.
DRAFT MAP: ANIMAS RIVER CORRIDOR

Boundaries Approximate

Figure 1

River Corridor Boundaries
Figure 2 The floodplain changes considerably as the river flows south into the City of Durango.
The most severe floods in Durango usually come in the fall as a result of heavy rains. Snow melt in May and June has also caused flooding. No major flood control features have been constructed on the Animas although minor improvements for erosion control are noted in the Army Corps of Engineers 1977 Flood Hazard Study. The river’s average yearly flow for the period between 1911 and 1993 is 605,000 acre-feet. An acre foot is the amount of water it takes to cover an acre of land one foot deep. In 1977, one of the driest years of record, the river reached a low of 212,400 acre feet.

Figure 3 The most severe flood in Durango in October of 1911 resulted in floodwater up to six feet deep in some locations in town. Photo source: Durango Herald

Water quality has improved with clean-up and closure of some of the mines at the headwaters of the river and with the removal of the uranium tailings at the former smelter operations across the river from downtown Durango. Soils in general are loams formed from the Mesa Verde Sandstone and Mancos Shale in the valley, mixed with river cobbles.

The river provides important wildlife habitat. Studies conducted by the Colorado Division of Wildlife in 1993 concluded that fish habitat is very good and the fish are healthy. Bald and Golden eagles are sighted regularly as are the Marsh and Red-tailed hawks and Kestrels. Migratory birds and waterfowl are common along the Animas, including the recently introduced
Canada Geese. Beavers, muskrat, mule deer and elk are also seen along the Animas. The beaver population appears to be increasing. Beaver have cut down a substantial number of trees that help stabilize the river banks. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors are located within riparian areas. The riverine environment is also vital to maintaining clean water, decreasing flood hazards and stabilizing river banks. Storm water is filtered as it percolates through the soils in riparian environments. Flood water is slowed as it flows over the river bank and into the riparian areas. Vegetation holds the soil in place.

2. Man Made Features

The river has shaped the course of human settlement in the valley both in the past and the present. The river would have been an important source of water for prehistoric people who hunted and gathered in the Animas Valley beginning about 6000 years B.C., and who began farming in the area after about 0 A.D. In recent history, rivers were not just important sources of food and water, but also provided power, transportation and waste disposal. Most modern river cities can trace their industrial history through their riverfront factories, mills and power plants. Both Durango, which was founded as a railroad and smelter town, and its upstream neighbor Animas City, a farming and logging community, depended on the Animas for survival. The trains that brought ore to town and the smelters that processed the ore relied on the transportation route along the river through the Animas Valley. Today we travel the highway that follows much the same route.

3. Land Use and Zoning

(a) Commercial Properties

With the founding of Durango in 1881, numerous industrial and commercial enterprises located along Durango’s riverfront. As late as 1960, the downtown riverbank was lined with the smelter, the Graden Flour Mill (Red Lion Inn), three lumber yards (Albertsons/Holiday Inn), Sheppard’s Wholesale Bakery (Liquor World), the remains of Booker’s Junkyard (the King Center), and the Durango Power Plant. Since 1960 the central business district (CBD) has rapidly evolved from industrial to retail and service enterprises. A comprehensive rezone of remaining industrial properties in the CBD to commercial uses occurred in 1986. A riverfront overlay zone containing flexible development standards for buildings along the river within the CBD was adopted in 1979 and amended in 1983.

Other commercially zoned properties are located north and south of the central business district at the Durango Mall and sporadically along Animas View Drive. The Island Cove Trailer Park, located off Florida Road, is also zoned commercial. Properties between Gateway Park and the Durango Mall area on both sides of the river are located outside of the city limits and are not zoned. Many of these properties are now, or were previously, developed for industrial uses such as sawmills and auto salvage yards. The area between Gateway Park and the Durango Mall is within the City’s service area and is designated for light commercial uses in the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Properties south of the Durango Mall have a mixture of uses on large lots including a middle school, industrial shops and yards, and mobile home sales. A mix of retail commercial and residential uses are anticipated in this area with a heavier emphasis on commercial development.

(b) Residential Properties

In most cases, residential properties do not front directly on the river. The DSGRR corridor separates much of the west bank from these properties, while the east bank abuts parks. Generally, the residential properties that front the river have a building site located above a steep bank of the river. One major exception is the Island Cove Trailer Park, which has a few mobile homes extending into the mapped floodplain.

La Plata County adopted a land use plan for the Animas Valley north of the City limits (and north of the corridor) in 1993. The County Plan includes a River Corridor District which is defined as following the boundary of the 100 year flood plain elevation on the east side and a
500 foot setback from the west bank on the west side. Uses in this district are defined in the plan and generally fall under a light intensity, low density commercial/residential category with a minimum lot size of 12 acres for new subdivisions. Structures are prohibited from locating within 50 feet of the riverbank. The County Plan also designates some industrial districts along the river, but the County Plan states the designated industrial district "...make(s) existing industrial uses conforming while not encouraging new ones." The County Plan includes a policy that public access to the river is encouraged as a condition of approval for any commercial projects permitted via the County’s Special Use Permit process.

4. Utilities

City water and sewer are available within the City limits and the service area. The property south of the Durango Mall may require upgrading of some utility lines, depending on the size and location of the project. A new sewer main will be installed between Gateway Park and the Durango Mall in 1994. The easement over the sewer line will be used for a bicycle and pedestrian path. Development outside of the City but within the corridor study area would most likely require the extension of utility lines and call for the developer to contract with the City to obtain water and sewer. Such contractual agreements, known as implied consent agreements, require development in compliance with City standards and are not approved by the City Council if the proposal conflicts with Durango’s Comprehensive Plan.

5. River Access

A majority of the available public accesses to the river are within the City’s riverfront parks. The Animas View Drive neighborhood is the only developed area in the corridor that lacks public access within a reasonable distance to the river. The closest developed access is the Animas City Park north of 32nd Street and along Bennett Street. Properties south of Gateway Park do not have public access to the river.
PART II: THE PUBLIC VISION

A. Public Sentiment

The public comments gathered by the Riverfront Task Force, and those of its members, provided a clear community vision for the river corridor. The letters and the public testimony revealed that area residents view the river as an asset to the community and recognize the river’s past and future role in shaping both our physical and community character. Durangoans envision a river corridor where the riverfront properties are developed in a manner that respects and preserves the riverine environment. They realize a large amount of riverfront property remains undeveloped on both the north and south ends of the corridor, and encourage the preservation of key natural areas if these properties develop.

Creating or maintaining public access to the river and providing for a continuous trail along the riverfront corridor were identified as essential to the community for recreational, transportation, and community uses. A very few commenters voiced opposition to trail development, citing concerns over maintaining private property rights and privacy. The privacy of existing homes should be protected wherever possible when locating the trail, and the trail should be designed to be safe and to discourage vandalism. Fishing, non-motorized boating and watching wildlife were noted as important amenities.

Durangoans foresee a river corridor where much of the riparian and all wetlands areas are maintained and preserved. Residents expressed concerns about losing access to these special areas along the river as vacant properties develop. They believe the riverfront areas presently in public ownership should remain in public ownership. Public comments supported the present City park system and strongly encouraged keeping the “natural” areas natural, rather than developing only urban parks with grass, play structures, etc.

Aesthetics are also of great concern. Public comments indicated development in the river corridor should be designed to be set back from the direct view of people on the river. New development should be designed to preserve views to the river and avoid degradation of the riverbanks and riverine environment.

B. Goals

The public vision, combined with the Task Force’s findings and observations about environmental and development issues, resulted in the Plan’s five major goals:

Goal 1: Maintain and Enhance the Visual Qualities of the River and Riverfront Area

The beauty and visual appearance of the Animas River is critical to Durango’s quality of life. Development within the riverfront corridor should enhance and complement, not degrade, the river environment. Most previous developments ignored the advantages of their river frontage, and built structures that obstruct views of and access to this valuable amenity. Some owners now find themselves seeking methods to retrofit their buildings for their employees and customers to enjoy the ambience of the river. The community also benefits when the river’s natural qualities are accessible.

Regardless of the type of land use proposed, development proposals should be designed to result in a pleasing view from the river and should not obscure views to the river. Viewsheds, visibility issues and protection of the existing natural environment should be addressed by establishing minimum allowed setbacks from the river and applying development standards that address environmental issues including preserving quality and density of the existing riparian zone and habitat features, maintaining the topography of the riverbank and location of the floodplain, and the amount of disturbance when uses occur within the riverine environment.

In previously undeveloped areas, land uses should be allowed that complement the natural riparian environment. The city can take the lead in encouraging sensitive treatment of the
riverbank by designating special areas within the corridor for particular treatment, including urban parks, wildlife habitat, critical areas and undeveloped or "natural" parks (see the area specific discussions in Part V).

Be they commercial or residential, in developed areas, allowed land uses should be compatible with the established character. Some development is inherently intrusive (such as utility line crossings) and should be minimized. Industrial uses are generally not compatible with the character of the river corridor and should not be allowed along the river unless measures can be taken to remove all negative land use, visual and environmental impacts on the river corridor.

**Goal 2: Preserve and Develop Opportunities for Recreational Use of the River Compatible With The Riverine Environment.**

The need and demand for river access increases as our community grows. This goal provides a way to direct the public to areas that can safely accommodate public use, and to discourage trespassing on private property. Public river and riverfront facilities should be treated as part of the City’s Parks and Recreational program. Recreational uses that do not impact the natural flow of the river should be encouraged; boat launching activities should be directed to areas developed for that purpose. The heavy use of the City’s "put-in" sites has resulted in bank erosion and littering should have increased maintenance and policing. New non-motorized boating access points should be carefully planned for at appropriate locations along the river; motorized boating uses should not be permitted at public launch sites. Other funding sources may also be available and should be considered for other river recreation user fees, to be used for making river-related improvements.

Additional access points and opportunities for fishing should be established, particularly as new development closes off some of the historic but unofficial accesses from private property. Public trails to fishing access points should be a priority in the City’s trails plans. A required fishing access easement could be included, when appropriate, as part of development standards for riverfront property.

**Goal 3: Make The Riverbanks Accessible and Amenable For Riverside Activities, Including Non-motorized Travel. Recreation and Cultural Experiences.**

The City can help ensure public access to the river and along the corridor by keeping, 1) all existing public river access; and 2) all public land along the river, in city ownership if the property can contribute to the riverfront goals. The City should also actively acquire riverfront property that could serve as undeveloped open space, or as park areas. Special areas should be designated as undeveloped "passive parks" or undeveloped open space to preserve riparian habitat and to allow the public to observe wildlife and enjoy the riverine environment in unobtrusive ways. Designated public art and public plazas would be appropriate, particularly in the urbanized portions of the riverfront. A critical urban area is the site of the old Power Plant. This site could serve as a focal point along the riverfront trail and as a community resource. The building and its future use should be addressed in the immediate future to determine the most appropriate community use, before further deterioration of the structure occurs.

A continuous bicycle and pedestrian trail along the entire length of the river corridor provides an ideal opportunity for a combined recreational and non-vehicular commuter route through town. This trail improvement was the top priority recommended by Durango residents in a survey taken in 1991, and portions of it have been in place for years. However, existing trail segments should be expanded to provide a commuter route, to connect the parks along the river and link to other urban and non-urban trails, and to serve as a buffer between developed land and undeveloped river banks. This trail should be expanded, maintained and patrolled.
Pedestrian-only trail segments for river access and passive recreation, such as observing wildlife, should also be established at appropriate locations throughout the river corridor. Dogs should be restricted to leashes or prohibited in sensitive areas. These segments would not be designed to support the higher intensity traffic that would use the corridor trail discussed above.

In order to keep the river accessible to all while allowing for growth and development, all residential subdivisions or commercial new construction or major remodels/expansions on properties traversed by the trail should be required to dedicate and construct the segment of the path that crosses the property as a required public improvement. Properties in areas lacking convenient public access to the trail should provide an access easement when the property is developed or substantially remodeled. Motorized uses should be prohibited along the riverbank, except where authorized for specific needs, such as motor-driven wheelchairs or a trailer approach to a designated boat launch.

**Goal 4: Maintain and Enhance the Natural Ecology of the Animas River Including Water Quality, Floodplain and Habitat Preservation**

**Water Quality**

Water quality can be preserved and enhanced through City regulations by applying appropriate land use and development standards. All public and private development projects should be reviewed for impacts on water quality, and should not be allowed to negatively impact water quality with contaminated run-off or by contributing to sediment erosion. Development along tributaries to the river should also be reviewed for potential impacts on the river.

Activities which disturb the river channel itself can also have direct impacts on water quality. These activities include dumping into the river, which should be prohibited, and utility crossings under the river bed, which should be minimized.

Development standards should have a proactive approach to provide opportunities to maintain and improve water quality. Drainage plans for new development should be required to include alternatives to channeling storm water directly into the river, such as the creation of wetlands, minimizing impervious surfaces, or establishing percolation through riparian habitat.
Floodplain

Durango participates in the National Flood Insurance program and enforces a permit system to regulate development in the floodplain. The program should be appended to emphasize the following points.

- Development activities shall neither alter nor diminish the river’s flood carrying capacity and natural course.
- Fill shall not be placed in designated floodplains unless in compliance with the City’s floodplain ordinance and in accordance with the intent of this Plan.
- Measures interrupting the river’s navigability (including fencing and low bridge crossings) shall be prohibited.

Properties to be annexed into the city upon development and properties outside the city limits but served by city utilities should be required to meet City floodplain standards. A floodplain study is now underway in some of the targeted annexation areas, but in areas where the floodplain has not yet been mapped, developers should be responsible for the completion of floodplain studies prior to site plan approval.

Habitat

Riparian and wetlands areas are critical to the river and to our community. These areas provide a natural cleansing system for run-off. The vegetation provides bank stabilization and soil retention, and assists in flood containment. Wildlife habitat and corridors are dependent upon the riparian and wetlands ecosystem. These special areas should be set aside to preserve riparian and wildlife habitats, or to provide open space. Development within the riparian and/or wetland habitats should be designed to enhance or complement these habitats, and all development or use of the river corridor should meet development standards to minimize impacts on the riverine environment. Development should be prohibited in designated critical riparian or wetland environments. If trails are needed in riparian areas, they should be done with care and minimal disruption to the natural environment. Consultations should be required with the Colorado Division of Wildlife when development is proposed within the corridor to identify and mitigate impacts on any sensitive habitat areas and necessary corridors for wildlife.

An intake structure and pumping facility for the Animas-La Plata project are planned for construction on the west bank of the river, opposite Gateway Park. The size, scope, and siting of these facilities will be significant features of the riverine environment. The siting, design, and landscaping for these facilities must be sensitive to the goals for the river corridor.

Goal 5: Promote Awareness of the Natural Ecology of the River and the Riparian Corridor

Citizen involvement is the key to a clean, healthy, attractive and safe river. Citizen involvement should be encouraged in trail maintenance and development. Citizen initiative should be supported for riverbank stabilization and clean up projects, and to develop public education programs. Incentives for river bank improvements on developed properties might also be considered.
PART III. POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following discussion sets forth the recommended policies and implementation strategies for this plan. Adoption of this document as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan includes acceptance of and commitment to these policies and strategies, the goals discussed in Part II, and the specific Section recommendations implementing these policies in Part IV.

Policy #1

The City of Durango will protect the Animas River and riverine environment by designating a Riverfront Corridor Overlay Zone concurrent with the boundaries of the riverfront to protect, enhance and preserve the corridor and by requiring that development be compatible with the goals, policies, and recommendations of this plan.

Given the unique ecological and social character of the riverfront corridor properties, and the strong public desire to apply specific standards to maintain that character, the corridor will be established as a Riverfront Corridor Overlay Zone, concurrent with the boundaries of this Plan's riverfront corridor. Development standards for the corridor will be applied to all projects within the overlay zone. Compliance with these standards will be required before any new development-related permits are issued. The existing riverfront overlay zone that covers the river frontage within the central business district will remain as an urban design district within the larger overlay zone. Other similar districts will be established within the Overlay Zone to address areas with specific characteristics.

Since the corridor boundaries extend south beyond the City limits into an unzoned area of La Plata County, the overlay zone should be recognized and supported by both governments. La Plata County has initiated discussions to change how development is reviewed in the City's service area south of the city limits. This appears to be the appropriate time to propose that the Riverfront Corridor Overlay Zone be adopted by both City and County governments to be included in any subsequent development requirements.

This policy shall be implemented by public and/or private entities by adhering to the following steps:

1) Define districts (such as the Central Business District) within the Riverfront Overlay Zone to identify areas containing unique situations. Expand, enhance and strengthen the existing riverfront standards in the Central Business District.
2) Require all development of properties within the Riverfront Overlay Zone to be reviewed for compliance with the goals and policies of this plan and approve only those that do comply.
3) Develop standards applicable to properties developed within the corridor that address architectural compatibility, protection of views to the river, landscaping, and protection of views from the river.
4) Define a minimum setback from the river for all riverfront development. Determine the setback on a per-property basis in consideration of the size of the lot, and the environmental and aesthetic issues.
5) Define development standards for environmental issues including preservation of the riparian zones and habitat features, maintaining topography and vegetation of the riverbank and of the floodplain, and considering the amount of disturbance already present.
6) Define development standards to preserve water quality, floodplain and wildlife-wetland-riparian habitats.
7) Establish a consultation process with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to identify wildlife corridors and to minimize impacts to wildlife.
8) Establish a permit process for utilities or bridges proposed to cross the river.
9) Include costs of environmental mitigation and restoration in all public works project budgets.
10) Initiate a floodplain mapping project for properties not yet so mapped.
11) Develop a master plan for public areas identifying the special areas to be set aside along
the river corridor for parks, conservation areas, public art, and public gathering places.

12) Establish standards for public access easements as part of development or redevelopment.
13) Establish a permit process for alteration or clearance of vegetation within the overlay zone.
14) Allow opportunities to close public access to allow an area to regenerate, or to preserve the area from additional overuse.

**Policy #2**

The City will develop a riverfront corridor trails system to provide recreation access to the river, and to offer an alternative, non-vehicular, commuting route through Durango. The trail system will be designed to be safe and will be located to avoid unnecessary intrusion into undeveloped natural areas. The trails system will link riverfront parks and ensure public access to the river.

The establishment of a public multi-purpose trail which runs the full length of the River within the Plan boundaries has been one of the highest priorities of the community in recent years. This trail should be a public way and thoroughfare, and should have a sufficient width of easement to accommodate anticipated public travel needs well into the future. This main corridor trail should be improved to a paved standard and be handicapped accessible. It should be part of a broader system or network of trails, which can be pedestrian, single path, or combined-use paths and trails which link neighborhoods and developed areas with the corridor trail, with each other, and other public parks and spaces. Recommendations for where the corridor trail and some of its network trail connections should be are set forth in Part IV of this Plan.

Implementation steps should include:

1) Develop a master trails and paths plan and adopt it as part of the Comprehensive Plan.
2) Develop a master parks plan as part of the Comprehensive Plan to identify active and passive parks comprising the linear park system along the river.
3) Require that the designated trail and park areas be dedicated to the City in accordance with parkland dedication requirements and improved in accordance with standard public improvement requirements.
4) Establish standards for trail easement dedications and trail improvements.
5) Incorporate educational features into the trail system design, including interpretive signing.
6) Develop a process for citizen involvement, including volunteer trail clean-up, adopt-a-path programs, and assistance for civic organizations.
7) Maintain and patrol the trail system.

**Policy #3**

The City will support environmentally compatible forms of recreation in the riverfront corridor through maintenance of existing public access points, and increasing the number of accesses.

This following strategies will help implement this policy:

1) Expand the Parks and Recreation Department authority and budget to:
   - enhance existing launch sites through such measures as stabilizing the river banks and improving the launch sites
   - develop non-motorized launch sites in appropriate locations.
2) Work with other governmental entities (including La Plata County, School District 9R, and the Southern Ute Tribe) to establish boating access points at strategic locations in the corridor.
3) Actively pursue acquisition of riverfront property in keeping with the goals and policies of the River Corridor Plan.
4) Maintain publicly owned riverfront property in public ownership, unless it can be demonstrated that there is a more appropriate form of ownership.
5) Fund a study for the power plant.
6) Prohibit motorized water craft on the river except for emergency or specially permitted situations.

Policy #4

The City supports the development of public awareness about the sensitive characteristics of the Animas River corridor.

This is a broad based policy to allow a diverse approach to public education. Some of the implementation strategies follow:

1) Ask and encourage the Animas La Plata Water Conservancy District and the Bureau of Reclamation to provide a public forum to develop a comment process for the location and design of the proposed intake structure for the Animas La Plata Project
2) Work with the Department of Wildlife to determine effective management practices to control beaver activity.
3) Form partnerships with a non-profit river foundation to assist in qualifying for grants and other projects.
4) Develop an incentive program to encourage property owners to preserve riverbank topography and vegetation.
5) Work with the Department of Wildlife to provide public education and information about the Animas River.
PART IV. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS BY RIVER SECTION

The unique characteristics of certain portions of the river call for a segment by segment discussion. These sections identify issues specific to the river portion and addresses public access needs.

Section 1: North Boundary of the Corridor to 32nd Street

This area is characterized by a wide floodplain, large sweeping bends in the river channel, oxbows on the east side of the river channel, and an extensive amount of undeveloped property and riparian and wetland habitats. Two conservation easements over properties on the east side of the river preserve open space and wildlife habitat.

Recent development proposals in the area have raised concerns that a wildlife corridor should be designated and secured on the west side of the river to provide access from Animas Mountain, and that as much habitat remain undisturbed in this area as possible.

The extent of the floodplain and the sensitive natural areas will place considerable constraints on any new development in the area. If any new development occurs in this area, it should be of extremely low density. All developers will be expected to consult with the Division of Wildlife to determine the most appropriate locations for habitat conservation and wildlife corridors.

The river corridor trail should be established in this area on both sides of the River. On the west side, beginning where Animas View Drive intersects Highway 550 near the Iron Horse Inn, a trail easement should be obtained to gain access to the Railroad right-of-way. With the cooperation and concurrence of the Railroad, much of this trail can be provided through this segment by utilizing the Railroad right-of-way, with appropriate safety improvements to separate trails users from the train. The trail should be on the west side of the tracks down to the United Campground property, cross the tracks there, and remain on the east side of the tracks down to the area just south of the day care center. From there, the trail should cross the tracks again, heading south on the west side of the Railroad right-of-way to another track crossing just opposite the River House Bed and Breakfast property, where it should cross back to the east side. The trail here should leave the Railroad right-of-way and be along the west bank of the River where it will connect with residential properties where a trail easement has already been secured as an extension of the Silverton Avenue right-of-way. The trail can then connect to 36th Street, and follow Bennett Street down to 32nd Street where it can connect to trail segments on either East 2nd or East 3rd Avenues.

On the east side of the River, every attempt should be made to secure an easement and create a trail which would link the anticipated development on the Kroeger Ranch, known as the Riverside development, with 32nd Street through the current Durango Metals property and/or the 34th Street/Riverbend area. The trail, which would need to either be right along the winding east riverbank or traverse one or possibly two conservation easements in the floodplain, and in some instances floodway, will not easily be accomplished. However, given its great potential for a bicycle/commuter trail route which would relieve traffic loads on East Animas and 32nd Street, this trail should be pursued despite its seemingly large hurdles.

No public access is available to the river in Section 1 except for the boat launch area off of East 3rd Avenue north of 32nd Street. The heavy private and commercial use of this launch area calls for upgrading of the launch site to stabilize the banks and to control traffic movement on the site. The 36th Street Right of Way provides an ideal opportunity for limited public access to the river that might be able to relieve some of the pressure on the 33rd Street put-in. The right of way extends to the river bank and is presently not developed past the intersection of 36th and Silverton Street. This area should be studied for the feasibility of a small scale boat launch for small non-commercial watercraft, or as a fishing point.

An access should be developed from Animas View Drive to the river. The access should connect with the proposed location of the Animas Corridor Trail, and provide an opportunity
Figure 5

This section of the river corridor extends north beyond this map to the edge of the city limits at the Summit Inn/Sweeney's.

Section 1 from the northern city limits to the 32nd Street bridge.
for passive recreation such as watching wildlife. A public access route should also be provided for the east side of the river. Although public right of ways extend north beyond the improved portions of East 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues, the right of ways dead end into a privately owned strip of land that edges the river. Access could be gained from East 32nd Street east of 7th Avenue, and could also serve as a connecting point for the trail recommended along the east side of the river to create a bicycle/pedestrian connection to development on East Animas Road (CR 250), primarily the Kroeger Ranch/Riverside area.

Specific additional recommendations to the City Council from the Riverfront Task Force for this area include:

- Establish a put-in at the Iron Horse
- The City should review the possibility of purchasing the "cottonwood forest" south of the Iron Horse as a passive park, or having the property dedicated as a public park.

Section 2: 32nd Street to the Intersection with Junction Creek.

This area is a relatively straight corridor with faster river flow than the upstream section. City parks and undeveloped city-owned property line much of the east bank, while the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad borders the west bank. It is recommended the city develop a small park out of the strip of land on the west side of the railroad tracks between 31st and 32nd Street. Uncertainties over the ownership of this property need to be resolved before any further action is taken.

This area also has seen good progress on the Corridor Trail concept. While improvements to create a trail off of East 3rd Avenue adjacent to the riverbank should be made from 32nd to 29th on the east side and 32nd to 31st on the west, the trail already exists from 29th Street south (The Oppie Reames trail) down to the High School footbridge, where it crosses the river and continues south through Rank Park to Junction Creek.

On the west side of the river, there is no room to install a new trail, so a bicycle route should be designated on East 2nd from 31st to just south of 29th, where the abandoned road which skirts the Fairgrounds should be maintained as a key trail connection. The County and the School District should provide for continued access from 25th and Main Avenue along their common boundary to maintain the existing link there. On the east side of the River south of the High School footbridge, the City should seek to secure and improve as a passive single track trail a connection along the River up through an undeveloped parcel out to Riverview Drive. This will provide a pedestrian-only trail connection to the trails leading out from Chapman Hill up to College Mesa and to other public lands to the east. This is an important recreational and commuter link which can be made without having to build the trail to the full improved standard of the Corridor Trail.

Public access to the river is very good in this area. One public boat launch and a fishing deck area receives considerable use at the parking lot on 29th Street and East 3rd next to the nature trail. With proper use and maintenance, the launch should continue to be functional. The connection to the river from the extension of the access off of East 2nd Avenue behind the County fairgrounds is heavily used and should be maintained, although vehicular access should be prohibited except on an emergency basis. Public access is available via Rank Park. Future redevelopment of the fairgrounds site should provide direct access to the river from Main Avenue.

Section 3: Junction Creek to the Main Avenue Bridge

The river bends from Junction Creek to the Main Avenue bridge. Most of the riverfront properties are developed in this area. The Division of Wildlife is planning a riverfront educational park on its property. Two single undeveloped privately-owned parcels are located in this area. One property is next to Rotary Park; the other is north of Island Cove Trailer Park. Construction on the Rotary Park lot should be compatible with the park and riverine
Section 2 from 32nd Street to the intersection with Junction Creek.
Section 3 from Junction Creek to the Main Avenue bridge.
setting, while public acquisition of the second (Rea) parcel should be pursued.

The potential for the Animas Corridor Trail through this section was greatly improved in 1993-1994 with the installation of the north/south sewer interceptor, which required re-contouring the banks containing Railroad right-of-way located behind Alamo Drive and below Mercy Hospital. With the timely cooperation and assistance of the Railroad and Mercy Hospital, the Trail connection from Junction Creek down to the State Fish Hatchery can now be made within the Railroad right-of-way. Bridges need to be installed across Junction Creek and the Animas River, which will link the entire northern section of the Trail to the Central Business District without any use/automobile conflicts. Public access to this part of the river is provided through Rotary Park and the Division of Wildlife property. Additional access is planned from Mercy Hospital and Park Avenue. Should the DOW property ever change ownership, a public access easement should be established to continue public access to the river on the north bank.

Specific recommendations to the City Council from the Riverfront Task Force for this area include:

- The City should encourage the DOW's pending project to develop the park on the south end of their property.
- The City should explore ways to buy key undeveloped riverfront properties in this section.

Section 4: The Main Avenue Bridge to the Highway 160 Bridge

The river divides commercial (east side) from residential and public (west side) uses in this section. The east side is governed by riverfront and design review overlay zones. The primary objectives of this zone are to preserve the riverfront character and environment and to obtain a continuous riverfront trail (part of the Animas Corridor trail) as part of development projects. Approximately 1/3 of that trail has been completed in the Riverfront Overlay Zone to date. Many of the standards in the overlay zone are simply encouraged or negotiable and in need of strengthening.

Once the Corridor Trail reaches the Central Business District at Rotary Park, it faces a substantial challenge in remaining a separated path from public streets due to the nature of construction of the Main Avenue bridge. While the short-term solution is to use the signalized crossing at the 14th and Main intersection, studies should be undertaken to explore the feasibility of going either underground through a tunnel or over the street with an overpass to allow for trail users to gain access to the existing trail and swinging bridge at the north end of the old Power Plant property. The trail then heads south through the River City Hall property and, with a connection now under construction, extends to approximately 11th Street.

The need to extend the Trail from 11th Street to the north end of Albertsons (essentially 8th Street) along the east bank is obvious but it also poses significant challenges. The Trail could be engineered, with fill necessarily being placed in the river at the base of the steep banks, from Precision Automotive down under the 9th Street Bridge, then rising up to existing grade behind the Holiday Inn. If that route proves insurmountable, another alternative route would bridge the Animas to get the Trail over to Schneider Park, and under the 9th Street Bridge on the west side, then bridging again to connect to the Albertsons property. A third option, where the City purchases commercial properties and/or an easement down to 9th Street, is also possible. This option would entail having a safe connection ensured across 9th Street itself, as well as working out an arrangement with the Holiday Inn to utilize some of their access and maneuvering area to make the link to the existing Albertsons path. The last needed improvement on the east bank is to create the underpass trail under the Highway 160 Bridge. This can be done and has already been tentatively authorized by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), although the federal funding of the project appears at this time to be questionable. Regardless of the funding source, this connection must be made.

On the west bank, no trail improvements are recommended from the Main Avenue Bridge to the Swinging Bridge. However, efforts should be made with the owners of the residential Animas
Section 4 from the Main Avenue bridge to the Highway 160 bridge.
Crossing project to create a trail directly south off the Swinging Bridge to connect with Schneider Park. A Trail extension through Schneider Park should be planned for in order to reduce the amount of bicycle and pedestrian traffic on the busy and dangerous Roosa Avenue roadway. Whether a formalized Trail needs to be created along Roosa south of 9th Street to U.S. Highway 160 will depend upon what the east bank trail prospects are and what the purpose and extent of improvements will be to the City-owned riverbanks along Roosa.

The City has a golden opportunity in the form of the historic power plant to develop a cultural center or focal point along the riverbank. The property is identified as an anchor for the Central Business District and the connecting point at the Swinging Bridge that provides access from the residential (west) side of the river. The building is in need of stabilization and/or removal of the asbestos in the structure before it can be successfully reused.

The residential properties on the west side above the river along West Park Avenue are predominantly historic houses perched above a steep shale slope. To the south, Schneider Park forms a linear park down to the Ninth Street bridge. The park is popular for many family-oriented activities on the riverbank and for kayakers who can put in from the park. The remainder of the west side riverfront property is a narrow strip of level land occupied mostly by Roosa Avenue between the riverbank and steep Mancos Shale slopes. The unimproved ground between Roosa and the river bank is lined with trees, and is a very popular lunch spot for people eating in their cars. This area should be developed with minor improvements such as parking pull outs, fishing points and picnic tables. Large expanses of impervious surfaces should be avoided in this area that drains directly into the river. The property along Roosa is extremely sensitive because it is highly visible from the Central Business District, and is the foreground view of anyone using the river or riverfront path. Any development of the property along Roosa should be visually compatible with the riverfront setting.

Two launch sites are located in this area. One is a privately owned launch that is used exclusively for one commercial rafting company. The other is on City property just south of the 9th Street bridge. This site should be upgraded to provide a safe bus unloading area.

Specific additional recommendations to the City Council from the Riverfront Task Force for this area include:

- The City should consider the power plant as a cultural center and focal point of that section of the riverfront park.
- The City should explore options for public purchase of, or easements across, key riverfront parcels which are too small to successfully accommodate commercial re-development.

Section 5: Highway 160 Bridge to the High Bridge

This section begins where Highway 160 intersects Highway 550. From this bridge to the Santa Rita bridge, the river corridor is bounded on the west by the former tailings property and on the east by 160/550, and the City’s Wastewater Treatment Plant and Whitewater and Gateway Parks. This section contains some of the most challenging white water within the river corridor, Smelter Rapids. From Santa Rita Bridge to the High Bridge, the river corridor widens and flows past a series of terraces which provide level building sites at different elevations along either bank. On the east is State Highway 3, and on the west is the Bodo East area, the Durango Mall, and the annexed but undeveloped CarVon property.

The Durango City limits extend along the river south of the Highway 160 bridge, expanding to include Gateway Park, and then narrow again to either side of the Highway 160 right of way, with two expansions to include Centennial Shopping Center and the Durango Mall, CarVon property, and High Five movie theater complex. The remainder of the property is under the jurisdiction of La Plata County, although new development in this area contracts for Durango utilities subject to meeting certain city development standards, and will ultimately be annexed into the City.
Section 5 from the Highway 160 bridge to the high bridge.
On the west side of the river south of the U.S. Highway 160 bridge, a trail connection should be planned through the former tailings property along the old existing haul road at the bottom of Smelter Mountain to access the Centennial Shopping Mall area and County Road 211. This trail would utilize an existing bridge over Lightner Creek. There is one potential hazardous location along the route where the trail would pass beneath what appears to be a steep active slump area. This area warrants an engineering study before an investment in a paved trail is made. Perhaps if it is considered too dangerous, an unpaved mountain bike trail could be developed to access the Smelter Mountain and Ridges Basin area. This would be particularly important if the Animas La Plata project is built. Another possibility here would be to bridge the Animas just north of Smelter rapids, bringing the trail through the northern part of the tailings property, then skirting the steep, active slumping area by bringing the trail down to the Whitewater and Gateway Parks area.

On the east side, the Trail exists from U.S. 160 (although CDOT needs to make some improvements to this twelve year old segment) down into Whitewater Park, through Gateway park and then under the U.S. 160/550 Bridge (Santa Rita) and over the old Railroad Bridge. From here, the Trail is to be extended down to the Durango Mall in conjunction with the Bodo East sewer main installation during the summer of 1994.

At the south end of the Durango Mall, the trail needs to be extended through the Carvon property and bridged across the Animas to get to the southeastern end of the High (Carbon Junction) Bridge. Exactly where the trail and the bridge should be needs to be resolved, but the property owners are already committed to the easements and willing to work with City staff on where the bridge crossing should occur. Wildlife habitat and floodway/floodplain considerations should be taken into account during decisions on where to locate this connection.

From the Santa Rita bridge, on the east side of the River, another trail may be possible along the old Denver and Rio Grande Western railroad grade to access the Carbon Junction bridge. It appears that there is currently an existing telephone line easement along this route. However, there are problems with private property, and the railroad grade is lost in the vicinity of the old sawmill site, Red Barn Lumber, the truss plant, and Lon’s Auto Wrecking. South of this problem area, the route is currently used by fishermen to access the Animas River. It is recommended that this segment of trail be pursued over the long term. If the trail on the west side of the river is not constructed, then this east side trail should be changed to a short term priority.

Once this east side connection is made or when the Carvorn trail plans are finalized, the trail should be placed as close as possible to the River on the south(east) side of the High Bridge. CDOT officials must be persuaded as to the feasibility and desirability of this under-the-bridge connection. Being able to make this connection will provide a safe route to the new middle school site and additional development areas.

Although the river in this section of the plan area is used extensively for fishing and boating, the sole public access is the extremely successful facility at the Gateway Whitewater Park area. Not only is the park a focal point for local and visitor recreation, the park hosts professional white water races on a course developed for kayakers. The park is a connecting point on the Animas Corridor trail.

Opposite Gateway Park is the proposed location for the intake structure for the Animas La Plata Project. The size, scope and location of the facility and related ponds as presented by the representative of the Bureau of Reclamation were deemed by the members of the task force to have unacceptable impacts on the aesthetic environment, and natural habitat.

The State Department of Transportation owns a 17 acre property that could continue the linear park system south of Gateway Park. As more properties develop south of the park on the east side of the river, public access points should be required between the frontage road and the river. On the west side of the river, the remains of the Denver and Rio Grande Western railroad grade provide an excellent opportunity to provide pedestrian access from Gateway Drive. Additional access should be made available off Sawmill Road. Given the steep slopes and
wildlife habitat near the river, access on the west side of the river should be limited to pedestrians and used for passive activities and fishing.

Immediately south of the Highway 160 bridge is a large piece of property that was formerly the location of Durango's historic smelter works. The smelter was converted to a uranium processing plant during World War II leaving radioactive material. The property has been cleaned up but some question remains as to whether the site is completely "clean", because of the pre-tailings slag pile left over from the heavy ore smelting which began in the 1880's. Whether the site may be available for development depends upon completion of the DOE's final report and resolution of the slag pile's status by the State, which owns the entire tailing property.

This section of the river is one of the most visible in Durango. It is part of the entry to the city, while the slopes on the west side provide background views. All activities in this area should be conducted with the aesthetic impacts both from the river perspective and toward the river as major criteria in the review process. Steps should be taken to beautify through landscaping much of the area if allowed by governmental authorities.

Most of the river's west slopes are steep and can not accommodate development between Gateway Park and the Durango Mall. The east slope has at least two levels of developable area. A sawmill and other industrial uses were located here, and remnants of these activities are strewn across the slopes in full view of traffic passing on Highway 160. Light industrial uses and warehouses have extensive outdoor storage and large signs to advertise their locations to travellers across the valley on Highway 160. The aesthetic impacts of future development, particularly as viewed from the river and from Highway 160, should be a critical element in future developments along the west side of the river. Outdoor storage should be screened, and a sign code should be instituted and followed. This area is in need of extensive clean up and would be a good area for a river foundation to adopt as a community project.

Specific additional recommendations to the Council from the Riverfront Task Force for this area include:

- The city should acquire or secure the dedication of the floodplain behind and below K-Mart for a passive park
- The city should procure the 17 acre Colorado Division of Transportation property for public use as an active park in the city's park system
- Once all clean up requirements have been satisfied, the city should take ownership of the tailings property

Section 6: The High Bridge at Carbon Junction to the T-Bone

This area, which has large parcels undergoing intense development pressures, also has large tracts of undisturbed riparian and wetland environments. Because this section of the river has such significant undisturbed natural areas, all efforts should be made to preserve the River Corridor in its natural state along both sides of the river. Prior to development in this area, developers should be required to employ an environmental professional to delineate the extent of the riparian habitat, and to have the floodplain mapped.

The east side of this corridor along Highway 160/550, located above and to the east of the river channel, is a main entry point into Durango for all traffic from the south, the east and the airport. The properties fronting the highway are desirable commercial properties, many of which front the river as well. The recent construction of a public school in the area has also spurred residential development.

The Animas Trail should be extended through this section along the east side of the River from the High Bridge down to the vicinity of Farmington Hill and south beyond the boundaries of this Plan's study area. Once the under-the-bridge connection is made, the trail should be extended through the Humane Society property (where the easement is already available) into and through the proposed Wal-Mart property all the way down to the Middle School site. The trail here
Figure 10

Section 6 from the high bridge at Carbon Junction to the T-Bone curve.
could follow the old railroad grade. Wherever a traffic signal is to be installed, a trail connection to the east side of the highway should be secured so as to provide a link to a trail anticipated to connect from the Grandview area.

South of the school site, the Trail should be continued to the furthest point possible. Once the existing residential area south of the CDOT/County yard area is reached, the Trail should again follow the old railroad grade to avoid conflict with riverfront property owners.

Formalized public access to the river has not been established in this area, for the most part because of the lack of large scale development on the river side of Highway 160. A change in this situation is imminent, so access issues should be addressed before any more major construction begins. Development of the tract just north of the high bridge at Carbon Junction was approved in 1990 and is ready for development for construction of the Humane Society animal building and the Society’s Thrift Store. A commonly used road to the river crosses the site, ending at a heavily utilized raft take-out site. The Humane Society has agreed to a public access easement along its river frontage, but the issue of the take-out site and access to it has not been resolved. All efforts should be made to obtain and secure this access easement.

The river provides an unique opportunity to include an attractive amenity on an otherwise standard strip commercial highway frontage site. Site plans should not treat the river as the back door of the property. For example, School District 9R and the Colorado Division of Wildlife will be developing a nature trail and nature park area between the school building and the river. Other similar developments should be encouraged.

Most of the properties in this area are characterized by a broad level, or slightly sloping, plain that breaks to a short steep slope and then onto a small terrace before the property slopes into the riparian zone and the wetlands. Generally speaking, construction should be limited to these upper level areas. No significant surface disturbance should be allowed on the lowest slope, and major fill should be prohibited in the corridor. Elimination of undisturbed natural areas and destruction of habitat should not be allowed. The Animas Corridor Trail should be the closest disturbed area to the river, and can provide the buffer between the disturbed and undisturbed areas.

The west bank of the river in this section is lined by La Posta Road. No room exists for development along La Posta until the river makes a bend to the east. Extensive commercial development plans in this area have been denied because of size and condition of La Posta Road. If development eventually occurs in this area, development should be restricted to the level areas above the river bank, and public access should be provided. Aesthetic provisions should be considered, and a bicycle/pedestrian trail should be included in plans to upgrade La Posta Road or else a bridge connection should be explored to link the developable west side areas with the east side corridor trails. Specific additional recommendations to the City Council from the Riverfront Task Force for this area include:

- The city should support efforts to work with the county and the Southern Ute Tribe to develop a put in south of the corridor
PART V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

Public Review Process

This Plan will be reviewed and considered for adoption as part of the Durango Comprehensive Plan via a public hearing process in front of the City Planning Commission. The approved and/or amended Plan will then be reviewed by the City Council for adoption as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

The implementation statements in this document will guide further action related to the Corridor, including designating the Riverfront Overlay zone and establishing development standards within the zone. La Plata County will also need to accept the plan for applicability to areas in the riverfront corridor zone outside of the limits or enter into an intergovernmental agreement that accomplishes the same. La Plata County should encourage extension of the trail system beyond the northern and southern limits of this Corridor Plan area.

Action Plan

The first component in implementing the plan requires specific delineation of the corridor boundaries, and development of the performance standards, review procedures, and the processing protocol. These steps are outlined in the discussion of Policy #1 on page 14. The corridor boundaries have been delineated on working maps used by the Riverfront Task Force; but the specific districts within the zone remain to be defined. This step should be quickly accomplished.

Performance standards should be developed by the staff working with a committee of development professionals including former Riverfront Task Force members. Implementation strategy numbers 1, 3-6, 11 and 12 under Policy #1 will provide a framework for these standards.

Review procedures should be established to determine at what level of development the standards will be applied, and whether an activity will require a separate permit, or whether it is to be reviewed as part of the City's existing site plan and building permit review process. Implementation item numbers 2, 7, 8, 12, and 13 under Policy #1 will guide the formation of review procedures.

Policy #2, which relates to development of the trail system, also includes implementation steps that will guide this action. Those steps are #’s 3 and 6 which discuss requirements for trail and park dedications and trail construction.

Processing protocol is an in-house function of the City staff. The staff should determine how the review of a project in the overlay zone would be administered. The staff will need to address such questions as:

1) What departments will be responsible for reviewing the project?
2) When is a variance request or interpretation issue addressed and which public body is responsible?
3) What will be the administrative process when consultations are required?
4) How will development standards be enforced?
5) Will review fees be charged; and if so, what will the fee be?

A master plan for public properties and trails within the overlay zone should be identified as the second component of the implementation process. This item has been initiated in the City's present Comprehensive Plan, and is scheduled for amendments as part of the update to the Plan, which is in process. The master plan will influence future budgeting for development of City-owned properties, expansion of recreation facilities and acquisition of public property as called for in Policies 2 and 3.

Public awareness, the next component of the action plan is an ongoing process. The Riverfront
Task Force may provide a core group for a non-profit public education entity, perhaps in association with other non-profit collaboratives such as Trails 2000 and Friends of the Animas River.

Although the activities outlined for implementation are time consuming and labor intensive, these tasks should be completed quickly. Growth and development are welcome when a community has planned to accommodate it as a benefit to all.