



# UNCOMPAHGRE RIVERWAY



# UNCOMPAHGRE RIVERWAY MASTER PLAN

April 2011

## Acknowledgements

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Adopted by City Council  
April 5, 2011

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City of Montrose

Montrose Recreation District

Montrose Community Foundation

Friends of the River Uncompahgre

The process also included review of previous and related planning affecting the area including:

- Montrose Comprehensive Plan 2008
- City of Montrose, Community Economic Development Assessment, 2009
- Montrose Greenway Feasibility Study, 2000
- City of Montrose Storm Drain Master Plan, 2009
- City of Montrose and Recreation District, Needs Assessment Survey, 2005

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## Section 1: Introduction



Study area and current Public property

## Section 1.1 Executive Summary

### **Introduction**

The Uncompahgre River is a tremendous hidden asset to the City of Montrose. Improvements to the river corridor will provide the community with multiple benefits. The Riverway Master Plan is an effort to preserve, enhance, and promote the valley's greatest natural asset: the Uncompahgre River. The long range vision is to achieve a linear river greenway system that links open space and parks with a trail system. The future corridor would be inviting and more visible to the surrounding community, highlighting the value of river adjacent property with views and links to the corridor. By applying the strategies included in the master plan, the riparian system has the potential to be strengthened and mitigate impacts from surrounding development while also providing the public expanded opportunities for recreation, commuting, nature studies and education.

### **Community Process**

The preparation of this plan originated from previous citizen supported efforts to preserve and feature the river as a community amenity. During the planning process, a River Corridor Work Group provided guidance and input representing a cross section of the larger community. Three public meetings were held, and project input was gathered through phone calls, post cards, flyers, and via the City dedicated Riverway website comment form. Focus group meetings were held with property owners and other interest groups. The primary project goals developed with citizen input are summarized as follows:

- Protection and enhancement of the river ecology health for the river channel and adjacent riparian corridor.
- Continuous trail route and perpendicular connections.
- Economic benefits related to riverway amenities and activities.
- Expanded recreation potential.
- Whitewater park installation.

### **Design Standards**

Design standards including sketch illustrations are provided to guide the completion of trails, materials, furnishings and other components proposed in the plan. The standards help ensure safety, durability and consistency while allowing for flexibility to respond to the conditions of each location.

### **Recommended Improvements Maps**

The existing condition maps describe ecological conditions including identification of key riparian vegetation and areas previously disturbed by development. The recommended improvements are noted on aerial maps and include trail routes, crossings, potential acquisitions, park sites, ecological enhancements, commercial areas, and other proposed improvements.

### **Ecological System**

The ecological system is the foundation of the river corridor. All improvements need to be in balance with protecting and enhancing the river corridor ecological system. Improvements to the health of the natural systems will in turn improve aquatic habitat and fishing, increase biological diversity and improve water quality including bank and channel stabilization along with restoration of riparian habitat.

### **Stormwater Management**

With increasing urbanization and impacts to the river from historical mining and agricultural runoff, an opportunity exists within the Riverway to provide stormwater management components into the river corridor including detention to reduce flood flows, water quality treatment, and constructed wetlands. By locating stormwater elements along the river corridor as part of a regional strategy, the riparian corridor benefits from the system of ponds, basins and associated vegetation as opposed to isolating these elements on individual development sites.

### **Economic Benefits**

With increased public access, expanded recreation opportunities and greater visibility, the river corridor has the potential to raise adjacent property values and increase tourism. Appropriate commercial businesses will be

encouraged to locate near the Uncompahgre River, providing increased land values and expanded development areas. The local secret will be transformed into a well-known attraction. This amenity will add to the competitiveness of Montrose by becoming a factor in the decisions of new businesses and residents considering moving to the area.

### **Signage and Education**

A series of signs with a new Riverway logo will help identify the Riverway and connecting routes. Educational opportunities are described for interpreting nature studies and regional history. Opportunities for historic interpretation include linking to the American Indian history, mining, agricultural history, and Rails to Trails with interpretive signage, overlooks, and use of materials that reference historical elements.

### **Parks, Trails and Recreation**

A continuous hard surface multipurpose recreation trail extending along the length of the corridor along with lateral connections and additional bridge crossings was highly desired by a wide variety of users and supported by other recent community surveys. The segments connecting parks, schools and shopping are a top priority. Additionally, water based activities including boating and wading have a significant opportunity for expansion. Whitewater park elements designed for a range of users including tubers, rafters, and kayakers would provide a new attraction, increase related economic activity and quickly raise awareness of the river to residents and visitors all while improving fishing habitat. Passive, low-impact uses compatible with the river ecological system are especially desirable, increasing the opportunity for people to experience the landscape views, wildlife and natural outdoor environment.

A number of parks exist along the river corridor, hosting a range of active and passive recreation. This plan describes improvements for newly acquired parks including the North 9th and Grand Ave. site and Taviwach Park. Additional park sites should be acquired along the corridor to expand the continuity of the river system. Future parks with a wide range of spaces and elements would offer an amenity to surrounding neighborhoods, trail users and visitors. In addition, open space areas can function to protect existing riparian vegetation and provide places for river restoration, wetland mitigation and stormwater management elements.

### **Implementation and Prioritization**

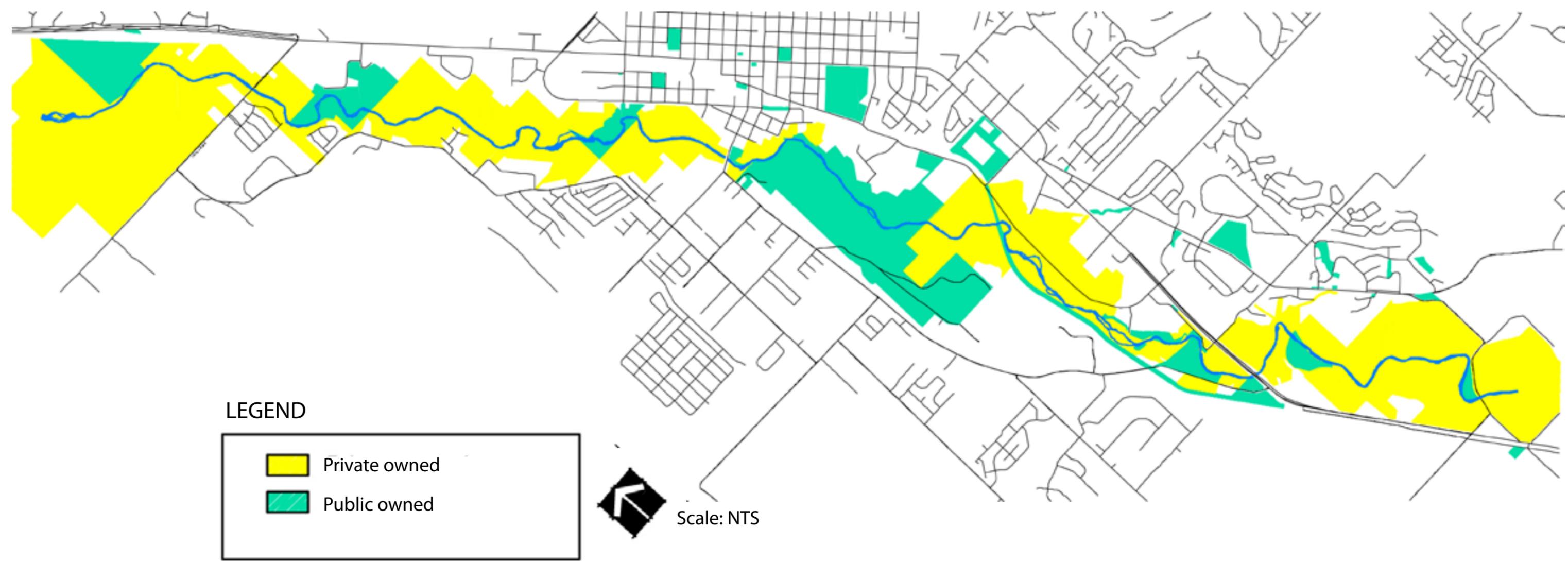
Implementation of the Uncompahgre Riverway and Trail will be a significant multi-year effort. The total package of improvements for the trail and related amenities is estimated to cost approximately \$25 Million. This plan recommends a three-to-five-year initial implementation period for completion of the higher priority projects including those with high visibility and adjacency to the existing City parks. The City should consider a dedicated funding source to meet the multiple goals of the plan. These funds can be used for leveraging matching funds from Great Outdoor Colorado and other grant funding sources. Partnerships with agencies and related projects will provide further opportunities to complete improvements.

### **Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of the Uncompahgre Riverway Master Plan is to provide a common vision that all stakeholders share for the Uncompahgre River corridor running through the City of Montrose.

The Uncompahgre Riverway Master Plan is a result of the citizens desire to preserve and enhance the river corridor as a valuable community asset. Investment in the corridor has the potential to increase public access, expand recreational opportunities, attract adjacent commercial development, repair impacts from previous uses and enhance wildlife habitat through the City of Montrose.

The City of Montrose 1998 Comprehensive Plan first identified the importance of preserving and protecting the Uncompahgre River corridor. The Cities 2000 Montrose Greenway Feasibility Study elaborated on the possibilities and indicated support from landowners. In 2005, the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey showed strong support (65%) for natural areas and greenways along the river. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan also identified the economic and



**Current Ownership**

Refer to City GIS data base for current ownership data.

## Section 1.2 Study Area Description

recreation potential of the river corridor and called for a master plan for the Uncompahgre River. In 2009, the City of Montrose coordinated with the State Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) for an assessment of the Montrose Community. A panel of experts from across the state identified the Uncompahgre River corridor as one of the City's Infrastructure Development Strengths and recommended GOCO grant funding for a river master plan.

The Uncompahgre Riverway Master Plan will serve as the guiding document for future design and development of approximately ten miles of the Uncompahgre River Corridor through the City of Montrose. Key properties desirable for acquisition by the City of Montrose as future river oriented park and open space are identified. Additionally, the plan suggests locations suitable for river oriented commercial development that would benefit from views and access to the river and associated trail network.

This document is a guide for developers describing key elements to be included within the corridor, such as the trail route, stormwater elements, and vegetated buffers. Standards are provided to meet code requirements and achieve visual consistency while allowing considerable flexibility regarding final location within a larger development plan.

The plan organization includes the following primary sections:

- Introduction and Project Description
- Goals and Objectives
- Guiding Principles and Design Components
- Recommended Improvements
- Parks and Recreation
- Implementation Strategies

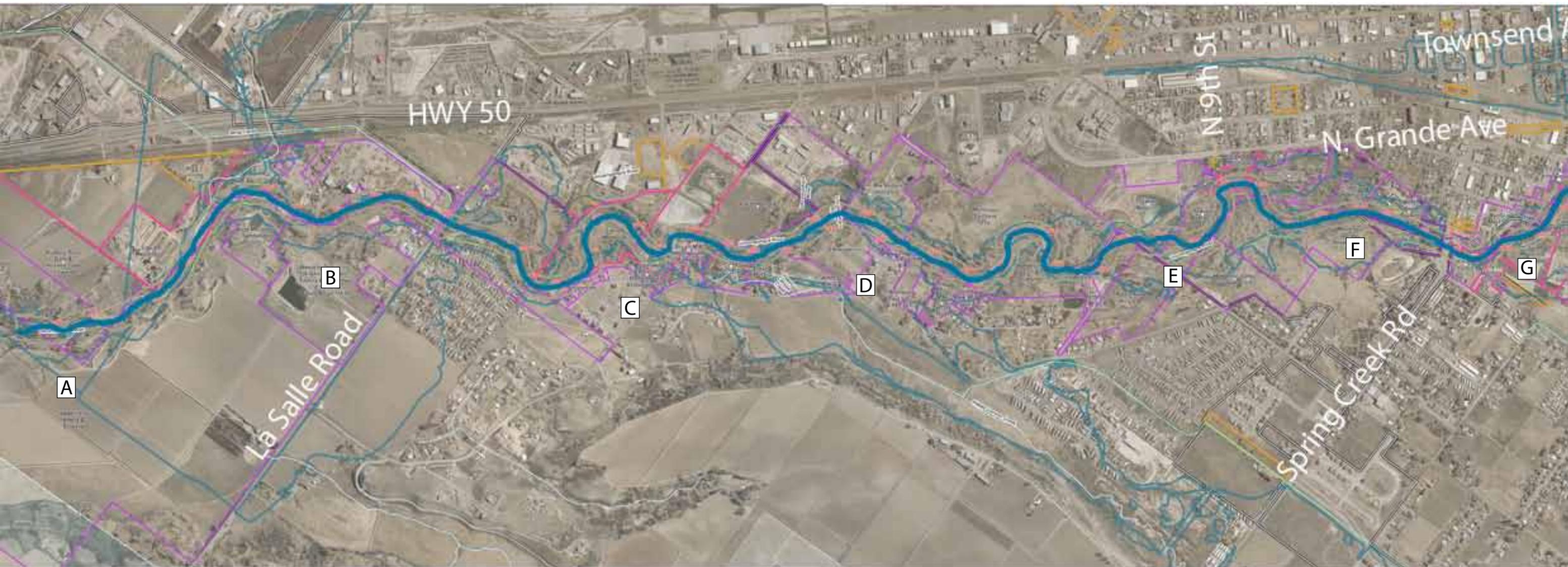
The study area extends along the Uncompahgre River from the City waste water treatment facility on the northern, downstream end to south of Racine Road on the southern, upstream end. There is both public and private owned property along the corridor including many separate parcels with river frontage. Current City owned and managed parks along the corridor include Cerise Park, Riverbottom Park, Taviwach Park, West Main Park and River Landing Park. Additionally, the North 9th and Grand Park property has the potential to be developed as described in this plan. Chipeta Lake, managed by the Division of Wildlife and the Ute Museum, offers additional public facilities along the river. Trails currently exist within Cerise Park, linking to Main Street, along River Landing Park, and along the Rails to Trails alignment. The width and surface materials of the existing trail segments vary. There are pedestrian bridges within Riverbottom Park and on the Rails to Trails segment near the base of Sunset Mesa. No underpasses currently exist at major roads.

The City of Montrose originated as a base camp with ranching and agricultural uses supporting the mining industry in the mountain towns. Over time, Montrose became a portal to surrounding tourist destinations including the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and prospered from gravel mining. Within the City, Riverbottom and Cerise Park give the community a significant park and open space resource along the river. Additionally, recent developers of property along the river have dedicated park property to the City and constructed segments of the river trail, providing links to the future system.

The river reaches between La Salle Road to the north and Townsend to the south are closest to the most intensely developed areas. This area is a higher priority for improvements. The West Main crossing of the river is particularly important to highlighting this area as a potential retail zone and brings awareness to the river corridor as a community resource. North and south of Main, the river corridor has the potential to provide a pedestrian route linking neighborhoods and community destinations including schools, museums, downtown, businesses and recreation facilities. Ute Museum is a focal point that could benefit from a gateway trailhead with highly visible access to the river corridor.

The corridor route upstream of the south Townsend bridge crossing is adjacent to existing and future residential and commercial zones. Some existing agricultural uses and the Loutsenhizer Canal diversion occur in this area. Future trail extensions beyond Townsend would likely occur as growth and development reaches this area and is part of a long range vision for an off-road trail connecting to Ridgway State Park.

The area north of La Salle Road includes the City waste water treatment facility, gravel operations and adjacent agricultural uses. The diversion structure just downstream from La Salle Road poses a significant obstacle to boating and wildlife movement. Surrounding development density decreases in this area and the stream corridor includes braiding and evidence of impacts from gravel mining. While increased redevelopment in this area is probably farther into the future, the long range vision includes improving impacted segments of the river channel to improve overall aquatic habitat and extend the trail northward.

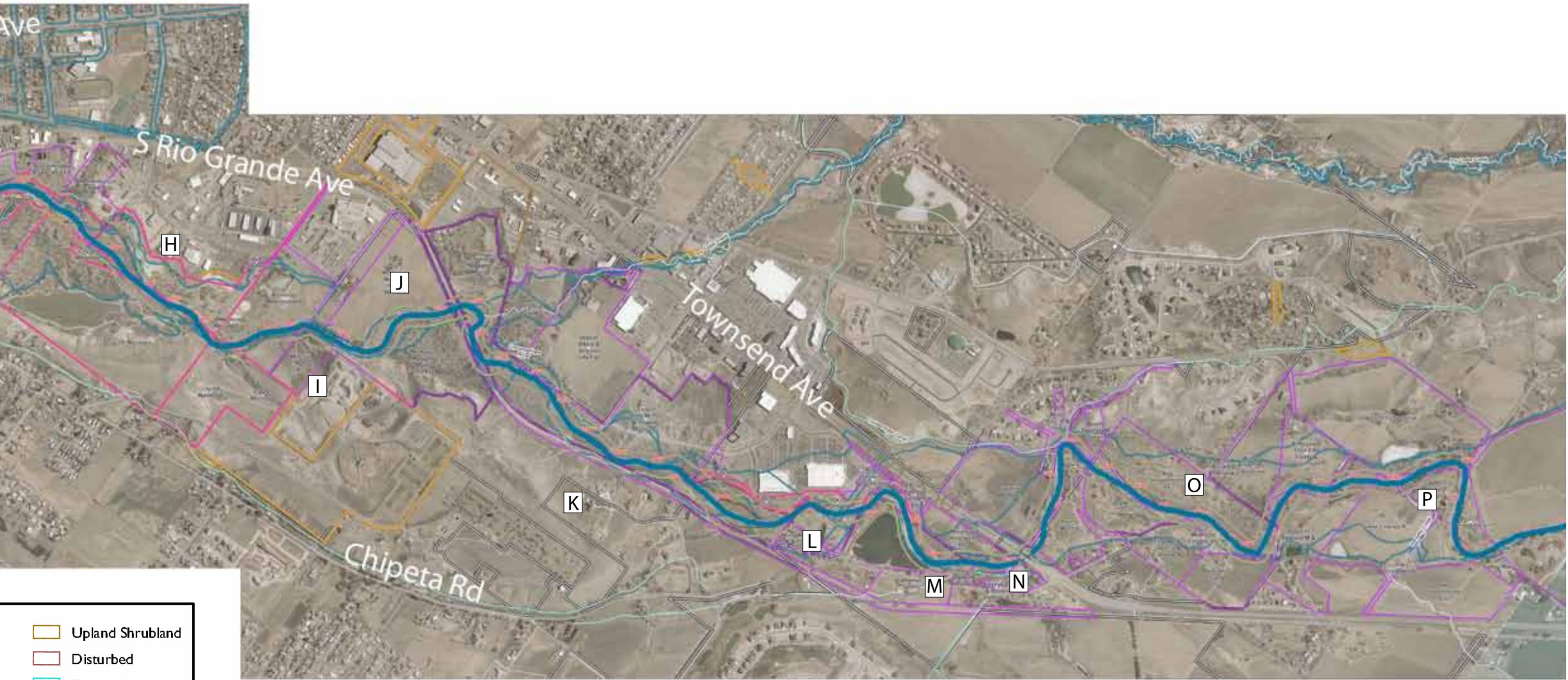


**Study Area**

- ReachA: Downstream Braided Agricultural
- ReachB: La Salle Road
- ReachC: Taviwach
- ReachD: Happy Canyon
- ReachE: North 9th
- ReachF: Main Street
- ReachG: Lower Cerise Park
- ReachH: Upper Cerise Park
- ReachI: Sunset Mesa Hogback
- ReachJ: Oak Grove Road
- ReachK: Ogden Road
- ReachL: River Park
- ReachM: Chipeta Lake
- ReachN: Ute Mountain Museum
- ReachO: Loutsenhizer Canal
- ReachP: Upstream Agriculture

**Legend** (typical for all existing condition maps)

	Existing Concrete Trail		Herbaceous Wetland		Open Water
	River		Shrub-Scrub Wetland		Grassland
	Creek or Canal		Forested		Turf
	Existing Park				



- Upland Shrubland
- Disturbed
- Forested

Scale: NTS



May 2010 site assessment

## Section 1.3 Planning Process and Community Participation

The planning process included the following tasks for completion of the master plan:

1. Inventory and analysis of corridor.
2. Review and summary of previous plans.
3. Extensive community input process.
4. Potential improvements mapping including identifying key areas for protection and improvements.
5. Prepared suggested trail alignments, bridge locations, potential acquisitions, connections and other river corridor components.
6. Design standards for trail construction, furnishings, materials and construction techniques.
7. Conceptual park plans for improvements at Taviwach and North 9th and Grand.
8. Facilitated input on prioritization.
9. Funding and implementation strategies.
10. Logo and signage concept.

The participation of the community in the river corridor plan was extensive, constructive, and integral to the development of the plan. The public involvement strategy was multi-faceted and balanced involving several approaches to communicate with people who live, work, and/or own property in the Montrose area. The various efforts are summarized below. The substance of the comments, suggestions, and questions the planning team received from the community are contained as an appendix to the plan.

### The River Corridor Work Group

More than a year before the river corridor master plan began, city council appointed the 11 member River Corridor Work Group to advise the planning staff, planning commission, and city council on a river protection buffer ordinance that was passed by City Council in April 2010. Because this group was already mobilized and had already successfully advised the city on river corridor policies, the city council re-convened this group to advise the planning team as they developed the river corridor plan. The group consists of a wide range of perspectives on river corridor planning with members who are developers or realtors, river corridor property owners, riparian habitat conservationists, river boaters, bicycling advocates and other interested citizens.

Over the course of developing the river corridor plan, the working group met for three evenings and helped the planning team on several fronts. The work group:

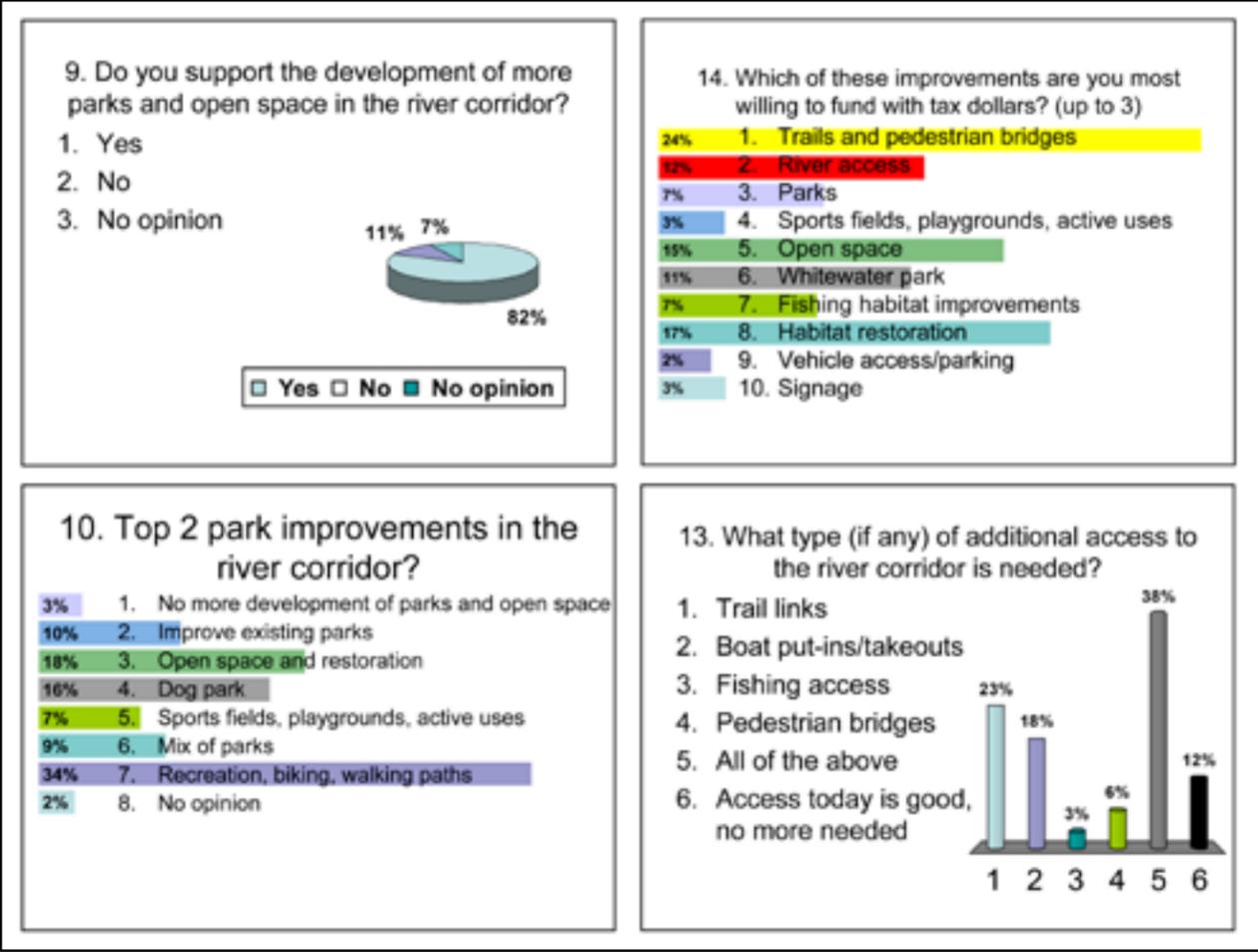
- Examined plan concepts in the early stages of plan development and offered suggestions for what elements of the river corridor should be covered by the plan (parks, trails, heritage, for example).
- Provided local knowledge and expertise to make the information base more accurate.
- Provided background and context.
- Networked and marketed the river corridor vision event.
- Helped the planning team integrate the comments from the vision event into the plan.

### River Corridor Vision Event and Key-Pad Polling

Before applying and refining the plan concepts developed early in the process to create this plan, the planning team invited the community to a river corridor vision event in July 2010. This event was attended by more than 120 people from throughout the Montrose region.

On the walls of the Montrose Pavilion were drawings, maps, and other visual images of the concepts under consideration in the river corridor plan. Having had a chance to browse the plan concepts, attendees were invited to participate in a key pad polling session designed to measure the preferences, priorities, and aspirations for the uses in the Uncompahgre River Corridor through Montrose. Key pad polling gives people a chance to voice their opinions anonymously and see the group polling results instantly on the screen. The results from the key pad polling session are included in the appendix.

After the polling session, attendees were encouraged to place site specific and general comments on poster boards containing the plan concepts. This allowed community members to voice concerns and preferences in response to specific



Key Pad Polling. Full results available in Appendix

concepts and in the context of specific places along the corridor. This input was catalogued and used to refine the plan to fit the community's needs and preferences. Results from all public meetings are in the appendix.

**River Corridor Vision Questionnaire**

For people who could not or preferred not to attend the vision event, there was an electronic questionnaire available on the river corridor website hosted by the City. Sixty completed questionnaires were routed to the planning team and were summarized and integrated into the plan. See the appendix for a summary of online comments.

**Information Dissemination**

*Press*

Those that did not participate directly in developing the plan were able to read about it in the Montrose Daily Press, which diligently covered the plan and public involvement events throughout the process.

*River Corridor Website*

The City hosted a website for the duration of the planning process containing plan documents, meeting information, public comment, an electronic vision questionnaire, and other information as it became available.

*Groups and Organizations*

To achieve a higher level of communication, the planning team undertook an extensive outreach program to invite input from several specific groups including Montrose County; the towns of Ridgway, Olathe, and Ouray; tourism centers; realtor groups; the school district; recreation groups; the Chamber of Commerce; Kiwanis and Lions Club; the Bureau of Reclamation; Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association and area retailers.

*Property Owner's Open Houses*

Without the cooperation of river corridor property owners, the plan could not be completely implemented, so the planning team made a special effort to make contact with property owners along the river corridor. There were two property owners' open houses. Personal invitations were extended to property owners via US mail or personal phone calls. One hundred seventy-five invitations were mailed to City of Montrose and Montrose County river corridor property owners for the second property owners' open house. During these open houses, the planning team displayed maps and other plan materials and initiated group discussions and one-on-one conversations with property owners. The first of these open houses was early in the plan development to surface concerns and provide information early in the process and the second was later, after the vision event as the plan was taking shape. In all, the planning team had conversations with about 50 river corridor property owners.

*Official Groups*

Other groups that were targeted with special meetings included:

- The City of Montrose Parks Advisory Board
- The City of Montrose Downtown Development Association
- Montrose Recreation District

*Informal Communications*

During the first phase of the planning process, team members spent a weekend travelling up and down the river corridor, observing recreational uses and interviewing people who were out enjoying the river. This initial contact with recreationists at the river corridor proved to be a valuable addition to the guidance received from the public during plan development.

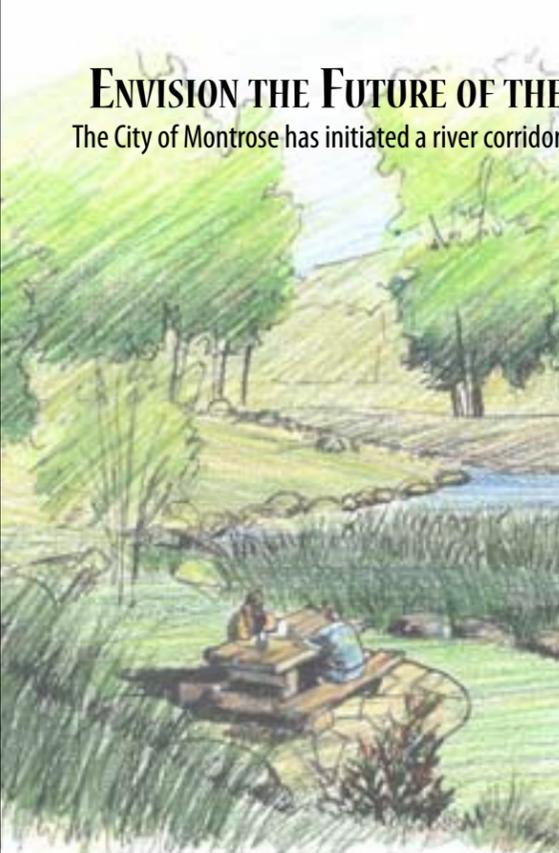
Finally, the planning team provided phone numbers on project materials, advertisements, press releases, and meeting materials. Dozens of phone calls came to the planning team during the development of the plan, resulting in dozens of one-on-one informal conversations about the river corridor master plan.

**City Council and Planning Commission Updates**

The planning team kept the decision makers updated incrementally as the plan was developed. During these work session updates, the planning team described the plan and summarized the comments received from the public and answered questions. The Planning Commission and Council meetings provided additional opportunity for public input.



July 26, 2010 Vision Meeting



## ENVISION THE FUTURE OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE RIVER CORRIDOR

The City of Montrose has initiated a river corridor master plan process and your participation is essential.

**WHAT IS THE UNCOMPAHGRE RIVER CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN?**  
 The Plan will provide guidance on the following topics:

- recreation and infrastructure improvements
- land acquisitions
- river trail system
- education
- river ecosystem health

**HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?**  
 Attend the vision workshop:  
**Monday, July 26th, 5:30 - 8:00 PM at the Montrose Pavilion**

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PARTICIPATE?**  
 Community involvement is paramount for developing a master plan to attract funding and make it happen.

The plan is funded in part with a grant from Greater Outdoor Colorado.



Postcard Questionnaire, see full version in Appendix

## Section 1.4 Goals and Objectives

These over arching goals and objectives are intended to help prioritize improvements and capture the vision for the future of the Riverway. The following goals and objectives emerged through the public participation process and provide policy direction for development of the Uncompahgre Riverway Master Plan.

### **Goal: Expand Park Development and Recreation Trails**

#### Objectives

- a. Create a string of parks and open spaces along the river that feature a diverse range of river oriented activities and settings.
- b. Increase overall public access.
- c. Develop the North 9th and Grand Ave Park and the Taviwach Park properties.
- d. Construct a continuous, hard surface recreation trail along the entire length of the river corridor.
- e. Connect the river to downtown, neighborhoods and commercial areas.

### **Goal: Protect and Enhance Wildlife Habitat, Open Space and Greenbelts**

#### Objectives

- a. Improve wildlife habitat and protect riparian buffer areas.
- b. Provide space for migration.
- c. Identify key riparian, open space and critical wildlife habitat areas for acquisition and protection.
- d. Improve aquatic functioning of the river.
- e. Stabilize eroding banks.
- f. Implement stormwater management improvements to improve water quality.
- g. Promote environmental education opportunities.

### **Goal: Expand Recreational Opportunities**

#### Objectives

- a. Enhance public recreational opportunities along the river for residents and visitors.
- b. Develop a whitewater park.
- c. Improve fish habitat and fishing access.
- d. Develop safe river boating and wading access points at key locations.
- e. Promote educational opportunities.

### **Goal: Promote Commercial Opportunities**

#### Objectives

- a. Encourage appropriately designed, river-oriented commercial development.
- b. Promote the Uncompahgre Riverway as a major destination.
- c. Increase signage to expand awareness of the river as an amenity.
- d. Emphasize views and access to increase real estate values.
- e. Publicize the increased property values and economic competitiveness of the entire community possible with improvements to the Riverway.