

Master Plan

City of Florence | January 2026

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CONSULTING SERVICES

CITY OF FLORENCE
FLORENCE CO

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

About the City of Florence

Incorporated in 1887, Florence is a statutory city of 3,847 people located in Fremont County, Colorado. Situated in Colorado's "banana belt" at the base of the Rocky Mountains, alongside the banks of the Arkansas River, Florence's unique location provides mild winters, allows for numerous agricultural pursuits, and gives the city unique river and mountain parks, which are accessible to the public free of charge.

Florence has been home to Native Peoples of the Ute Tribe, Sioux Nation, Comanche Nation, Cheyenne Tribe, and Arapahoe Nation. Florence's history includes being claimed by Spain, sold to France, and eventually being sold to the United States. The first settlement of what is now Florence proper consisted of a few buildings in 1870. In 1874, Senator James McCandless plotted his 160-acre farm into a townsite to ensure the area was not bypassed in William Palmer's effort to establish Labran (an area east of Florence) as the primary railway stop. McCandless asked other landowners to join him and donate land to make a "real town". The engineer who was hired to survey the plat became acquainted with the three-year-old daughter of McCandless, Minnie Florence McCandless. He suggested her middle name, "Florence", as the name of the town. McCandless became the first Mayor and Postmaster of Florence in 1887.





Florence is known as the home of the first producing oil field west of the Mississippi River, discovered in 1862 and still pumping today, and has an even longer history of rich coal fields. Florence was home to three railroads (Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Atchison and Topeka Railroad, and the Santa Fe Railroad) and a small depot (used today as a senior center), providing a commercial hub for coal and oil mining activities located in the area.

1894 saw the opening of the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad which opened the flow of Cripple Creek gold into Florence's nine processing mills. With the many refining and reduction mills (eight reduction mills, seven oil refineries, five brick factories) the town flourished until the turn of the century. At that point, ore from the gold mines decreased and fires took their toll on many of the local mills. Coal mining remained a strong industry, as did cement production and other various smaller industries.

In 1994, the United States Federal Bureau of Prisons opened a federal correctional complex comprised of multiple facilities 2.3 miles south of downtown Florence. This 49-acre complex is home to the Florence Administrative Maximum Facility or “ADMAX” as well as other facilities with varying degrees of security.

Today, Florence is a destination for travelers and antique collectors, an ideal location for small business owners, the “Antique Capital of America”, and the place more than three thousand eight hundred residents call home. Its historic downtown district preserves the character of the nineteenth century and is now home to antique stores, galleries, shops, and new culinary and artistic spaces. In addition to providing everyday municipal services, Florence operates as a regional water authority in partnership with nearby communities. The city maintains a strong sense of community with active local groups and year-round events.

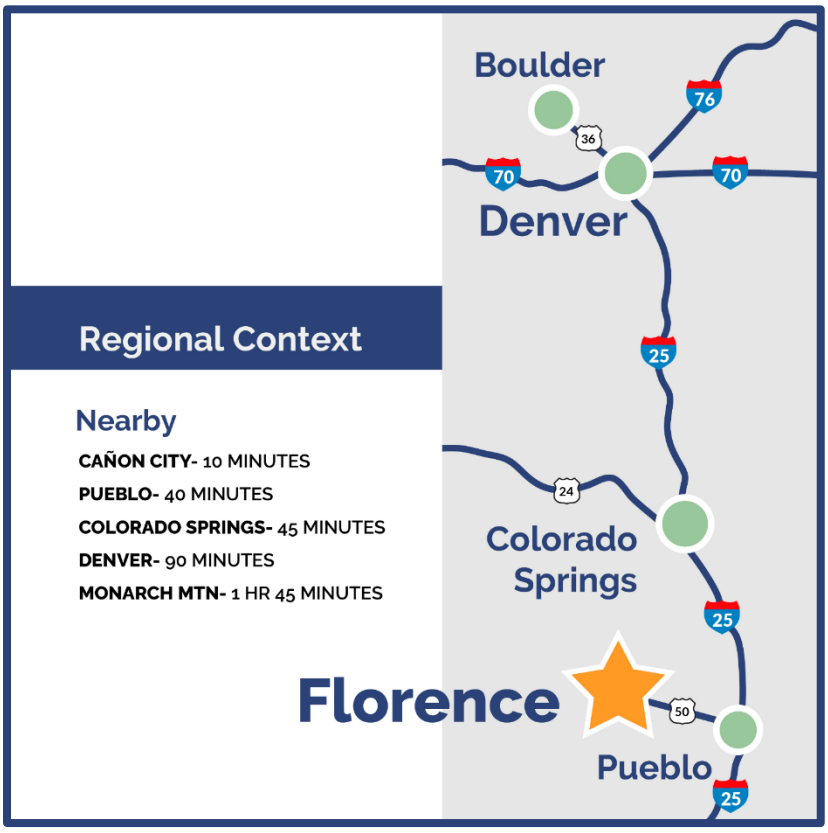
Geographic Location and Context

Florence is located in Fremont County within southern Colorado's Arkansas River Valley. The city sits at an elevation of 5180 feet and lies roughly ten minutes from Cañon City, forty minutes from Pueblo, forty five minutes from Colorado Springs, and ninety minutes from Denver. This proximity places Florence within reach of a combined Front Range population of more than one point three million residents and supports access to jobs, services, and regional destinations.

Florence occupies a central position between Cañon City and Pueblo, connecting it to markets across the Front Range. U.S. Highway 50 and State Highways 67 and 115 link the city to nearby communities and major travel corridors. These routes support freight activity, daily commuting, visitor travel, and tourism. They also reinforce Florence's role as a small hub community along a larger regional system.

The city's location near the Arkansas River and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains provides scenic landscapes and convenient access to hiking, fishing, and outdoor recreation. These natural features contribute to Florence's quality of life and support its appeal to residents and visitors.

Figure 01. Regional Context for the City of Florence



Communities of the Florence Area

Florence is part of a cluster of historic and modern towns in eastern Fremont County. These communities share infrastructure, cultural ties, and economic relationships, and residents frequently move between them for work, school, and recreation. While Florence serves as a hub for retail, antiques, and civic services, nearby towns such as Brookside, Williamsburg, Rockvale, and Coal Creek reflect the area's coal-mining past and maintain distinct identities.

Figure 02. Local Context for the City of Florence

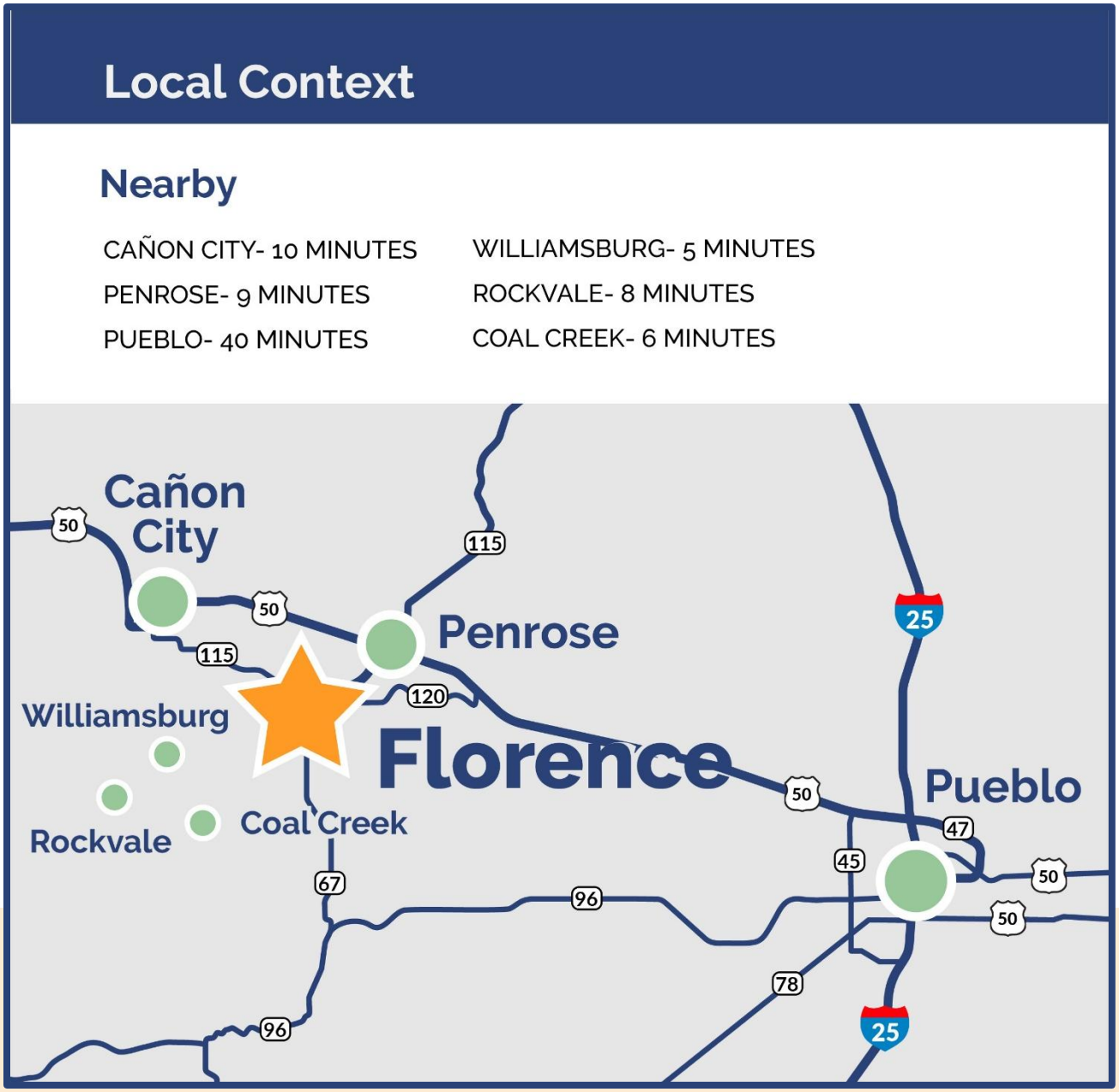


Table 01. Florence and Surrounding Communities

Community	Population (est.)	Incorporated / Unincorporated	Notes / Relationship to Florence
Florence	3,847	Yes	Regional hub for antiques, arts, and small businesses
Cañon City	17,419	Yes	County seat, major service and retail center
Penrose	3,978	No	This unincorporated bedroom community is located along the Highway 115 corridor and features more agricultural land than Florence. Population estimates are based on the Census Designated Place.
Brookside	233	Yes	Adjacent small town, shares services and identity
Williamsburg	661	Yes	Nearby historic coal town, residential character and Regional Water Partner
Rockvale	487	Yes	Historic coal town, residential character, and Regional Water Partner
Coal Creek	343	Yes	Historic coal town, Regional Water Partner, and more residential character

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office, 2023 estimates.

Purpose of the Plan

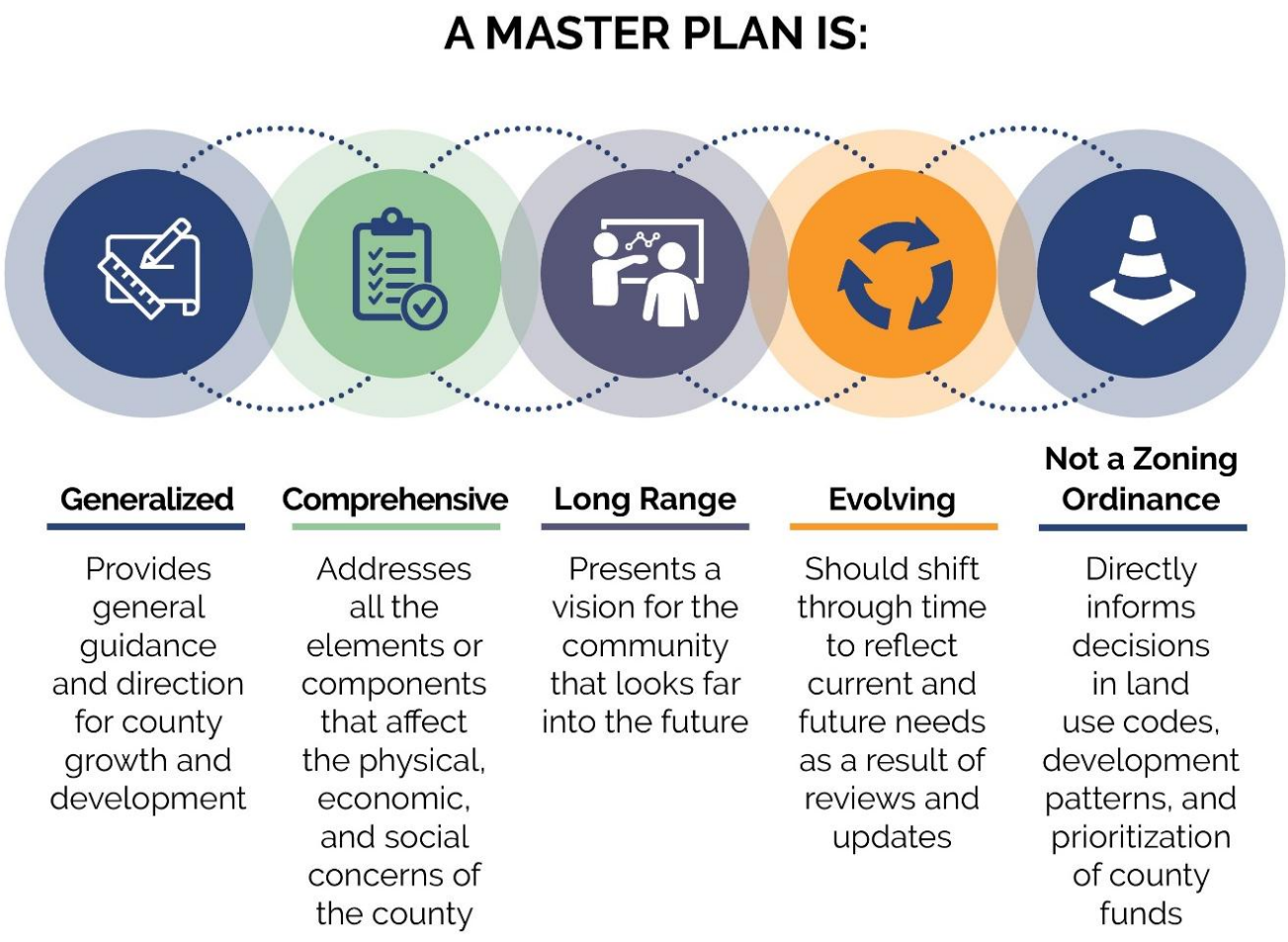
The Florence Master Plan serves as the city's overarching policy guide and advisory document, outlining a shared vision for its future. It establishes a framework for forming policy and making decisions that reflect community values and long-term goals.

Updating the Master Plan provides a renewed vision for Florence's future. The plan builds on input gathered through public engagement to identify opportunities, challenges, and priorities. It sets out policies and strategies that will help the community achieve its vision while ensuring that Florence continues to provide a high quality of life for residents.

The Master Plan fulfills the requirements of Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) while also reflecting Florence's unique identity and values. It provides guidance for growth, redevelopment, land use, infrastructure, transportation, and preservation. The plan balances the rights of property owners with the city's responsibility to manage resources and anticipate future needs.

As a living document, the Master Plan may be amended over time to respond to new circumstances. It is intended to be used by the public, City staff, Planning Commission, and City Council as a framework for decisions on land use, development, annexation, transportation, and community investments.

Figure 03. What is a Master Plan? Diagram



Plan Process



The Florence Master Plan was developed through a structured process designed to provide a clear understanding of current conditions, gather community input, and translate that input into policies and strategies.

The process included four major steps:

1. **Existing Conditions:** A data-driven profile of Florence and its surrounding area was created to capture demographics, housing, economy, infrastructure, and community character. This baseline information provided a foundation for identifying opportunities and challenges.
2. **Public Engagement:** Community input guided the plan from the outset. Residents, businesses, and stakeholders contributed through surveys, workshops, and public meetings. This engagement ensured that the Master Plan reflects local priorities and values.
3. **Plan Framework:** Using the information gathered, the planning team developed draft goals, policies, and strategies. These elements were shaped by both state requirements and community aspirations.
4. **Draft Plan:** A full draft was prepared and shared with the community and decision-makers for feedback. The final version incorporates that feedback and serves as the guiding policy document for Florence's future.



Community input guided every phase of the Master Plan update. The process & outcomes of this engagement are described in the *Community Engagement at a Glance* section.

Figure 04. Public Engagement Photo Collage



Statutory Authority

Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.) 31-23-206 authorizes municipal planning commissions to adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality. The plan must outline the vision, goals, and policies related to land use, transportation, infrastructure, and other aspects of development. In alignment with this directive, the City of Florence has prepared and updated its Master Plan.

Context & Trends

Florence is a small statutory city in Fremont County that combines historic character with an evolving economy and community identity. While the city's population has remained relatively stable over the past decade, regional growth pressures, economic diversification, and housing dynamics all shape Florence's outlook. This section summarizes key demographic and economic indicators, highlighting both current conditions and emerging needs that the Master Plan must address. The findings draw on data from the Colorado State Demography Office and U.S. Census Bureau, as well as analysis prepared for this plan.



Key Demographics & Economic Findings

Population and Age

- Florence had a population of **3,847 in 2023**, a slight decrease compared to 2010, with a compound annual growth rate of **-0.1%**. This growth rate is lower than Fremont County as a whole and nearby communities such as Rockvale and Williamsburg.[1]
- The city's median age is 43.3 years, higher than Colorado's (37.5) but slightly lower than Fremont County's (44.9), reflecting a more settled population that still includes younger families. While regional growth has slowed, Florence's stability supports a consistent workforce and civic base.

Table 02. Florence Population Cumulative Annual Growth Rate Comparison with Local Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	2010	2023	CAGR
Florence	**3,877**	**3,847**	**-0.1%**
Brookside	233	241	0.3%
Cañon City	16,391	17,419	0.5%
Coal Creek	343	377	0.7%
Rockvale	487	561	1.1%
Williamsburg	661	766	1.1%
Unincorporated Fremont County	24,862	27,148	0.7%
Fremont County (Total)	46,854	50,359	0.6%

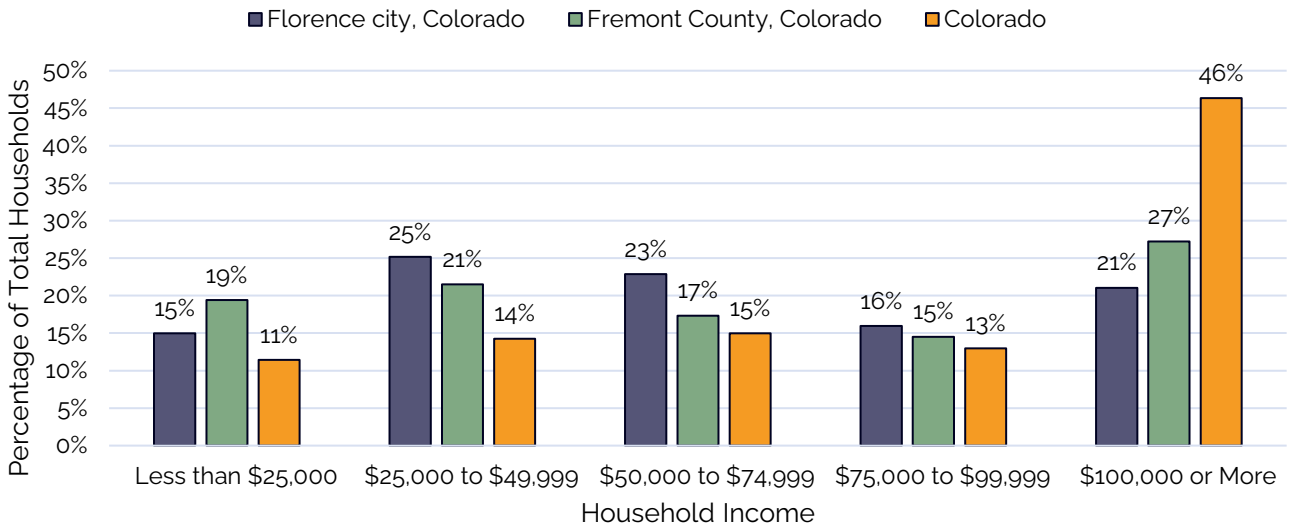
Source: State Demography Office.

[1] Data note: American Community Survey estimates for small rural communities carry wider margins of error, so values in this section should be interpreted as approximations.

Income and Poverty

- The **median household income in 2023 was $57,239**, which is comparatively below Fremont County at $61,027 and the statewide median of $92,470.

Figure 05. Florence, Fremont County, and Colorado Annual Household Income/Benefits



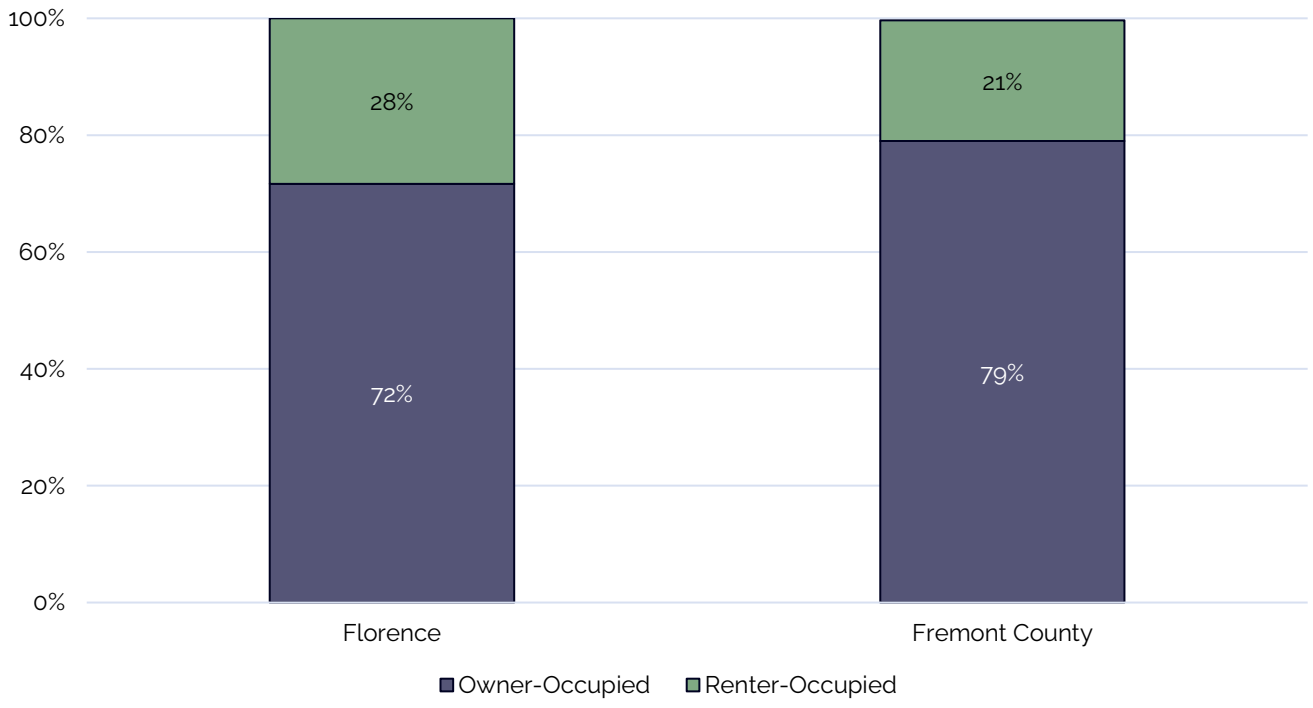
Source: American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03

- Other federal income data shows that Florence has a larger share of households in lower income ranges compared to Fremont County and Colorado.

Housing Supply and Tenure

- Florence has about **1,797 housing units**, with a **vacancy rate of 8.7%** - lower than the county average.
- Housing is mostly owner-occupied (**72%**), though rental housing represents a significant **28%** of the supply. Florence is denser than surrounding areas, with more multi-unit housing options.

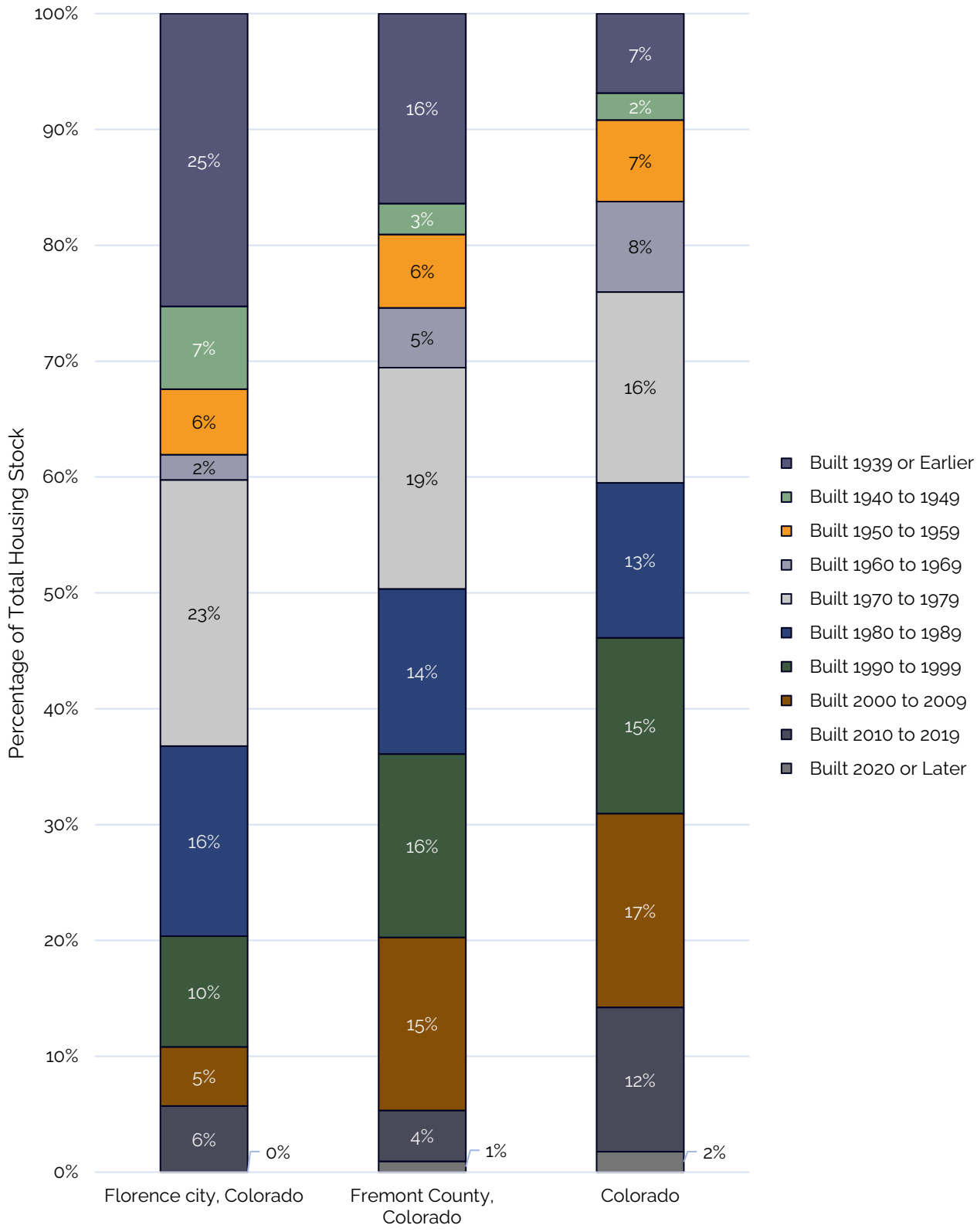
Figure 06. Owner vs. Renter Occupancy in Florence and Fremont County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

- The city's housing stock is older than the county or state average. About **63% of housing stock in Florence was built before 1980**, and a quarter is more than 80 years old.

Figure 07. Florence Housing Construction by Decade



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Housing Affordability and Rent

- The **median home value in 2023 was $228,300**, substantially lower than Fremont County ($282,100) and Colorado ($502,200).
- **85% of homes are valued under $300,000**, making Florence comparatively affordable in the region.

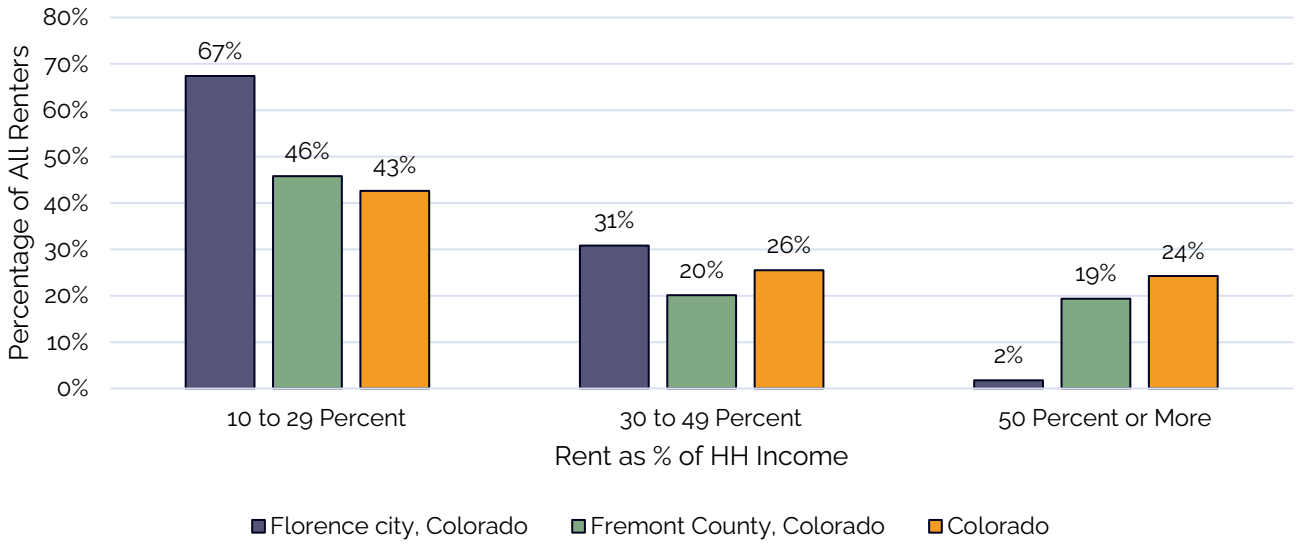
Table 03. Value of Owner-Occupied Units as a Share of Total Housing Stock

Value of Owner-Occupied Units	Florence	Fremont County	Colorado
Less than $20,000	3%	4%	1%
$20,000 to $49,999	16%	4%	2%
$50,000 to $99,999	0%	4%	2%
$100,000 to $149,999	11%	8%	2%
$150,000 to $299,999	55%	35%	11%
$300,000 to $499,999	13%	30%	32%
$500,000 to $749,999	2%	11%	29%
$750,000 to $999,999	2%	3%	11%
$1,000,000 or More	0%	1%	10%
Median Value	**$228,300**	**$282,100**	**$502,200**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

- Rent in Florence is relatively affordable, though about **31 percent** of renters spend **30 to 50 percent of their income** on housing. Because Census data relies mainly on subsidized apartment complexes, Fremont County estimates are a better reflection of local market rates. The FY 2026 Fair Market Rent for **a two-bedroom unit is $1,244**, per HUD.

Figure 08: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Future Needs & Trends

- **Stable but Aging Population:** While Florence is not growing rapidly, its older age profile suggests a need to plan for aging-in-place housing, health services, and accessible infrastructure.
- **Economic Challenges:** Median incomes remain well below state averages, and high poverty rates indicate the importance of workforce development, small business support, and strategies to diversify the local economy.
- **Housing Quality and Affordability:** The city has a relatively affordable market, but much of the housing is old and may require reinvestment. Ensuring safe, efficient, and attractive housing options is a priority.
- **Rental Supply and Choice:** With nearly one-third of residents renting, demand for stable, quality rental housing will remain important, particularly for lower-income households.
- **Regional Connectivity:** Florence's location within Fremont County and along key highways positions it to benefit from regional growth while maintaining its small-town identity. Collaboration with neighboring communities will be key to addressing shared infrastructure and housing needs.

For a detailed breakdown of demographic and economic data, including additional charts and tables, see **Appendix A: Community Profile Report**.

Community Engagement at a Glance

The City of Florence updated its Master Plan in accordance with **Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 30-28-106 and 31-23-206**. The Master Plan provides a strategic guide for decisions related to land use, infrastructure, housing, hazard mitigation, economic development, natural resource stewardship, and other community priorities. It includes goals, objectives, and strategies to shape growth, enhance quality of life, and support the well-being of current and future residents.

Public Involvement

Community participation was central to the planning process. Residents and stakeholders had multiple opportunities to provide input, helping to shape the plan's content and priorities. The Community Engagement Plan outlined strategies and tools to ensure inclusive, transparent, and meaningful engagement. The Community Engagement Summary highlights the outreach methods, participation, key themes, and how public input informed the plan's recommendations.

A total of 131 people took part in the process, which represents about 3.4% of Florence's population. This level of participation is not large enough for statistically representative results, since a much bigger sample would be needed to reach a low margin of error.

However, early stages of master planning rely more on qualitative feedback than on statistical precision. Conversations, written comments, and survey responses help identify the values, concerns, and lived experience that guide the direction of the plan. The aim at this stage is to understand broad patterns and shared priorities, not to produce population wide estimates. In the future, a longer planning process could offer more engagement opportunities and increase participation through continued outreach.

For complete information on engagement strategies, activities, and public feedback, see **Appendix B: Community Engagement Plan** and **Appendix C: Community Engagement Summary**

Key Engagement Tools and Methods

- **Project Website** – Served as the central hub for project updates, meeting materials, draft documents, event announcements, and online feedback through surveys and comment portals.
- **Social Media** – Facebook was used to promote engagement opportunities, share updates, and highlight milestones. Posts linked to the project website and included visuals, event announcements, and surveys.
- **Utility Billing** – Notices in monthly utility bills provided a direct way to reach nearly all residents with information about participation opportunities.
- **Printed Materials** – Posters, flyers, and handouts at events helped reach residents with limited digital access and reinforced engagement around key milestones.
- **Newspaper Articles and Press Releases** – Local news outlets were used to announce events, explain the importance of public input, and reach residents less engaged through digital channels.

This multi-channel approach ensured broad awareness, encouraged participation, and reinforced transparency throughout the Master Plan process, keeping the community connected and informed every step of the way.

Community Engagement Activities

The City of Florence used a range of engagement activities throughout the Master Plan update to ensure broad and meaningful participation. These included stakeholder interviews, a citywide community survey, interactive public workshops, and opportunities for input during the formal adoption process. Each step gathered diverse perspectives, built community understanding, and ensured that local priorities were reflected in the final Master Plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

Conducted 18 one-on-one interviews (45 min each) via Zoom or phone with leaders from education, business, housing, nonprofit, civic, and cultural organizations to gather in-depth perspectives on priorities and opportunities for Florence. For more detailed information about stakeholder interviews, including a list of interviewees and themes, see **Appendix D: Stakeholder Interview Summary.**



Farmers Market Booth

Hosted an information booth to connect with residents in an informal setting. Promoted via social media, newspaper, and utility bill. Attendees learned about the event through multiple channels and provided feedback on Master Plan priorities.

Library Open House

Provided a welcoming opportunity for residents to learn about the Master Plan and share ideas through interactive displays and activities. Promoted via flyers, social media, and the cities website, and partner outreach.

Figure 9. Library Open House Setup



Penny Poll

Participants used three pennies to vote on what they felt makes Florence special, either in one category or spread across multiple. This activity captured community perceptions in a simple, interactive way.

Dot Poll and Imagine Florence's Future Board

- **Dot Poll:** Residents placed colored dots to indicate how much change they wanted to see — "Keep Things the Same" (pink), "Some Change is Good" (orange), or "Big Changes are Needed" (green).
- **Imagine Florence's Future Board** *(Figure 10, Page 20)***:** Participants elaborated on their choices by writing ideas on sticky notes, which were posted under the corresponding color categories.

Graffiti Wall

A large format board at the library allowed community members to leave comments, drawings, or ideas about Florence's future over several weeks. Supplies and clear instructions encouraged thoughtful, positive contributions.

Community Survey

A citywide survey captured input from residents, workers, and business owners on topics including housing, economic development, parks & recreation, arts & culture, health & safety, and transportation/infrastructure. Responses informed plan goals, policies, and strategies. For more detailed information about the community survey, including a complete list of questions and responses, see **Appendix E: Community Survey Summary.**

Newspaper Outreach

Articles in the *Canõn City Daily Record* promoted the Master Plan and encouraged community participation at events like the Farmers Market and Planning Commission meeting, reaching residents less active online.

Figure 10. Imagine Florence's Future - Comment Capture Board



Community Vision and Values

Florence is a welcoming small-town community with deep historic roots and a spirit of resilience. Many factors have shaped its character over time, from its early industries in oil, coal, and railroads to its more recent identity as the "Antique Capital of America" and a hub for arts, creativity, and small business. At the same time, Florence benefits from its natural surroundings, regional connections, and the traditions that bring people together.

The City and its residents take pride in their history, natural setting, and authentic character, while also recognizing the importance of adaptability and opportunity for the future. The values below define what Florence stands for today and what it aspires to preserve and grow for generations to come. They shape the City's vision and provide the foundation for this Master Plan. These values were developed based on feedback from the Master Plan Project Team (MPPT), the Planning Commission, and community members.



Values

Small-Town Character & Welcoming Spirit

Florence values its identity as a connected small town where neighbors know one another, and we strive to make both newcomers and long-time residents feel welcome, engaged, and included in civic life.

Community Events & Traditions

We celebrate the gatherings, festivals, and shared traditions that bring people together, strengthen our sense of belonging, and create lasting connections across generations.

Nature and Outdoor Spaces

Florence treasures its natural surroundings and outdoor spaces, recognizing them as central to quality of life, recreation, and community pride & well-being.



Art & Local Creativity

We support the artists, makers, and entrepreneurs whose creativity expresses Florence's character, enriches community life, and contributes to a strong and diverse local economy.

Heritage & Historic Downtown

We honor our history, roots, and authenticity, recognized in part by our listing on the National Historic Registry, and expressed through a downtown known for its antiques, architecture, walkability, and charm — serving as both a cultural anchor and a welcoming destination.

Innovation & Opportunity

We value a resilient and adaptable economy that builds on Florence's antique and small-business heritage while fostering workforce growth and welcoming new industries such as technology, creative enterprise, and other future-focused opportunities.

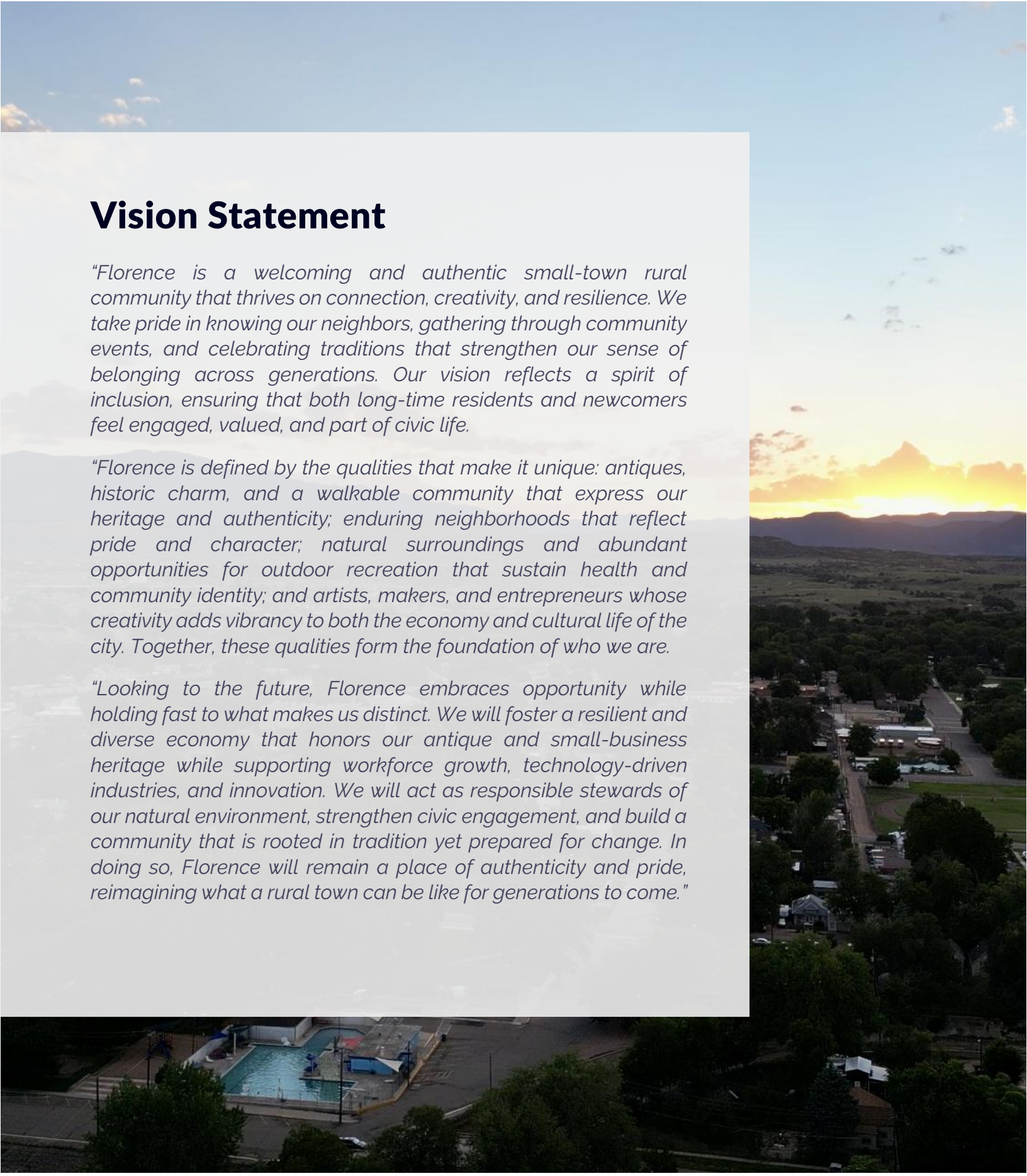


Vision Statement

"Florence is a welcoming and authentic small-town rural community that thrives on connection, creativity, and resilience. We take pride in knowing our neighbors, gathering through community events, and celebrating traditions that strengthen our sense of belonging across generations. Our vision reflects a spirit of inclusion, ensuring that both long-time residents and newcomers feel engaged, valued, and part of civic life.

"Florence is defined by the qualities that make it unique: antiques, historic charm, and a walkable community that express our heritage and authenticity; enduring neighborhoods that reflect pride and character; natural surroundings and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation that sustain health and community identity; and artists, makers, and entrepreneurs whose creativity adds vibrancy to both the economy and cultural life of the city. Together, these qualities form the foundation of who we are.

"Looking to the future, Florence embraces opportunity while holding fast to what makes us distinct. We will foster a resilient and diverse economy that honors our antique and small-business heritage while supporting workforce growth, technology-driven industries, and innovation. We will act as responsible stewards of our natural environment, strengthen civic engagement, and build a community that is rooted in tradition yet prepared for change. In doing so, Florence will remain a place of authenticity and pride, reimagining what a rural town can be like for generations to come."



Policy Framework Structure

Planning and Regulatory Instruments

Towns and cities generally employ two types of instruments to guide and enact legislation. Though each is intentionally distinct, they must be well coordinated and complementary:

- **Policy Documents** – Such as this master plan, to set direction.
- **Regulatory Documents** – Such as zoning or development regulations, to implement objectives.

As a policy document, this plan does not hold legal sway over City activities or automatically extend into land-use regulation. Instead, it provides a first comprehensive, coordinated step towards a large variety of community goals. Additional steps may be essential, including development of implementing studies, plans, simple inventories, or updates to create consistency between the master plan and regulatory documents.

Expression of Goals and Policies

Goal and policy statements are typically expressed in written form, but may also exist as maps or diagrams, such as in land use mapping. Other charts and supporting information are provided to show conditions or projections that shaped plan objectives.



Definitions: Goals, Policies, and Actions

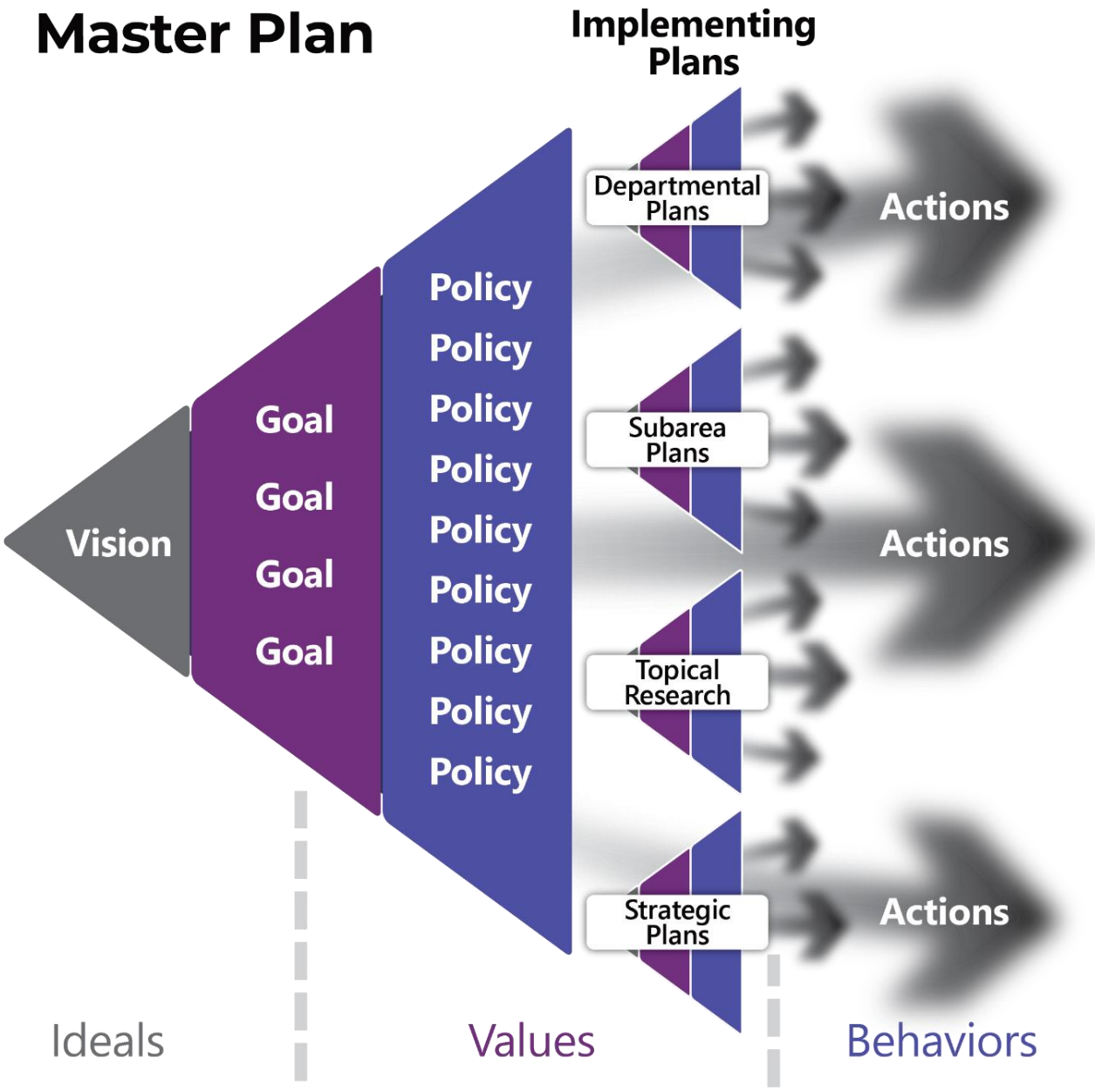
- **Goal** – Broad statements indicating a general aim or purpose to be achieved. A goal is a direction setter, an ideal future end, condition, or state related to public health, safety, or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed.
- **Policy –** A policy is a topic-specific statement providing guidelines for current and future decision-making. It indicates clear commitment from the local legislative body. A policy is an extension of a plan's goals, reflecting topical nuance as well as an assessment of conditions.
- **Actions –** Budgetable steps envisioned or undertaken to implement plan policies. Actions may include the development of more detailed and localized plans, work to implement policies, formal agreements, regulations or other strategies.

Relationship Between Vision, Goals, Policies, and Actions

The illustration on the following page (*Figure 11, Page 27*) demonstrates how the above features are related, flowing from vision through increasingly defined goals, policies and various types of implementing plans and actions the City may undertake.



Figure 11. Policy Framework Structure



Arts, Culture, & Tourism

Introduction

Florence's character is defined by the creativity of its people, the richness of its history, and the welcoming spirit that draws visitors to experience both. From carved trees and antiques to community murals, galleries, and festivals, arts and culture are woven into the daily life of the city. These creative expressions strengthen civic identity, support a resilient economy, and make Florence a place where both residents and visitors feel a sense of belonging.

Downtown's historic buildings, antique shops, and walkable streets anchor a strong sense of place, while institutions like the *Bell Tower Cultural Center, the Historic Rialto Theater*, *the Pioneer Museum, and the Florence Historical Archives* preserve and share stories that shape the community.

By celebrating creativity, embracing its heritage, and welcoming visitors from near and far, Florence builds a future where arts, culture, and tourism are central to economic opportunity, community pride, and a shared sense of place.





Arts

Florence's arts community is active, diverse, and deeply rooted in local creativity. The city's galleries, studios, and public art pieces reflect the talent and initiative of its residents. Murals and sculptures enliven public spaces, while events like art walks and open studios showcase local work and strengthen connections between artists, businesses, and the public. The Bell Tower Cultural Center serves as a cornerstone for arts programming, exhibitions, and education, providing a place for artists of all ages to learn, collaborate, and share their work. These creative efforts strengthen the city's identity and contribute to the vitality of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Culture

Florence's culture reflects its frontier heritage, small-town hospitality, and pride in community traditions. The City's historic buildings and well-preserved historic homes, along with its festivals and local organizations, sustain a strong sense of place and belonging. Residents take an active role in preserving local history through institutions such as the *Florence Historical Archive, the Pioneer Museum, and the Florence Historic Preservation Commission*. Cultural events, including the Wet and Dry Parade, Pioneer Days, the annual car show, and Downtown Christmas Magic, bring people together and share community stories across generations. This enduring cultural identity not only honors the past but also shapes how Florence continues to grow and engage new generations.

Tourism

Florence is well-positioned to expand its tourism economy by leveraging its rich historical character and the growing regional demand for outdoor and cultural experiences. Florence's well-preserved downtown, antique commerce, and unique cultural assets offer a strong foundation for heritage tourism, which supports both historic preservation and long-term economic development.

According to the Colorado Heritage Area Partnership, “Heritage tourism helps protect the resources that define a community’s distinctive character.” In addition to protecting local identity, heritage tourism offers a competitive economic advantage by attracting a higher-than-average yield of visitors and increasing the average length of stay.

The City’s participation in heritage tourism efforts will reinforce the value of its historic structures, enhance community pride, and support the effectiveness of local ordinances designed to preserve Florence’s historic character. These efforts also increase citizen awareness of local history, strengthen the City’s cultural identity, and contribute to the continued vitality of the downtown and surrounding areas.

Florence also recognizes the value of recreational tourism, including access to parks, trails, and natural areas that appeal to both residents and out-of-town visitors. Investments in tourism infrastructure, such as cultural venues, wayfinding, recreational amenities, and overnight accommodations, not only improve visitor experiences but also enhance the quality of life for residents. By embracing a dual focus on historical and recreational tourism, the City of Florence aims to build a vibrant, resilient, and economically diverse community that honors its past while preparing for a dynamic future.

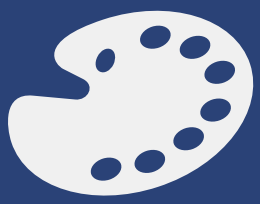


Goals, Policies, and Actions

Arts & Culture

Goal ACT-1: Foster a vibrant and visible arts scene that enriches public spaces, strengthens community identity, and supports local creative talent.

- **Policy ACT-1.1:** Support the integration of art into Florence's built environment and public spaces.
    - *Action ACT-1.1.1:* Support the incorporation of public art such as murals, sculptures, carved trees, artist-designed benches, and other creative elements into parks, plazas, signage, and city infrastructure projects as part of new development and capital improvements.
    - *Action ACT-1.1.2:* Ensure that all major city capital projects include thoughtful discussion around incorporating public art and planning for its long-term care and maintenance.
    - *Action ACT-1.1.3:* Collaborate with local artists to establish a rotating public art program that includes murals, sculptures, benches, carved trees, and other creative installations.
- **Policy ACT-1.2:** Invest in programs that elevate and promote local artists.
    - *Action ACT-1.2.1:* Provide resources, commissions, and exhibition opportunities to support artists who live and work in Florence.
    - *Action ACT-1.2.2:* Develop and maintain a local artist directory and promote events such as open studios, art walks, Paint the Town, gallery exhibits, theater performances, and public exhibitions to showcase creative work.
    - *Action ACT-1.2.3:* Partner with regional arts organizations to expand grant opportunities, host workshops, and build networking programs for local artists.



Goal ACT-2: Engage the community through the arts.

- **Policy ACT-2.1:** Foster inclusive opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in arts and cultural experiences.
    - *Action ACT-2.1.1:* Support the development of arts programs for youth, seniors, and underserved groups in partnership with schools, nonprofits, and community organizations.
    - *Action ACT-2.1.2:* Provide funding for community-led art projects, temporary exhibits, and neighborhood initiatives.
    - *Action ACT-2.1.3:* Incorporate performances, demonstrations, pop-up theater and workshops into local festivals, markets, and public events.
    - *Action ACT-2.1.4:* Support youth-led creative projects.
- **Policy ACT-2.2:** Encourage collaboration between artists, schools, businesses, and community partners.
    - *Action ACT-2.2.1:* Support public-private partnerships to develop new creative spaces, shared studios, galleries, or cultural venues in underused or historic buildings.
    - *Action ACT-2.2.2:* Facilitate activations such as pop-up galleries, storefront exhibits, artist residencies, and temporary performance spaces in visible and accessible community spaces.

Goal ACT-3: Celebrate Florence's cultural heritage, traditions, and signature events as essential parts of community life.

- **Policy ACT-3.1:** Support and sustain festivals, parades, and community events that strengthen Florence's identity and bring residents together.
    - *Action ACT-3.1.1:* Partner with event organizers to provide logistical, promotional, and funding support for signature events such as Pioneer Days, the Fourth of July Festival, the Wet and Dry Parade, and the annual car show.
    - *Action ACT-3.1.2:* Explore opportunities to revive or reimagine discontinued events based on community interest and capacity.
    - *Action ACT-3.1.3:* Incorporate arts programming such as performances, installations, and exhibitions into community events and festivals.

- **Policy ACT-3.2:** Preserve and promote historic and cultural institutions as anchors of Florence's identity.
    - *Action ACT-3.2.1:* Support the continued operation, programming, and promotion of the Bell Tower Cultural Center, Pioneer Museum, and Florence Historical Archives.
    - *Action ACT-3.2.2:* Collaborate with cultural institutions to develop exhibitions, performances, and educational programming that connect residents and visitors with Florence's history and traditions.

Tourism

Goal ACT-4: Strengthen Florence's identity as a destination by preserving its historic character, celebrating arts and culture, and expanding tourism experiences that support local businesses and enhance community life.

- **Policy ACT-4.1:** Promote Florence as a destination by highlighting its history, arts, and small-town character.
    - *Action ACT-4.1.1:* Develop a coordinated marketing strategy that expands Florence's digital presence and promotes its art, history, and visitor experiences.
    - *Action ACT-4.1.2:* Collaborate with the Fremont County Tourism Council and other regional partners to coordinate marketing, share resources, and strengthen Florence's role in the region's tourism network.
- **Policy ACT-4.2:** Enhance visitor experiences through storytelling, interpretation, and cultural amenities.
    - *Action ACT-4.2.1:* Improve visitor information services, including signage, maps, and digital resources that help people visiting Florence.
    - *Action ACT-4.2.2:* Develop interpretive signage, self-guided walking tours, and public art installations that tell the story of Florence's past and present.
- **Policy ACT-4.3:** Support the preservation and activation of cultural assets as part of Florence's tourism economy.
    - *Action ACT-4.3.1:* Encourage adaptive reuse of historic and underutilized buildings for arts, cultural, and visitor-oriented uses such as galleries, studios, or performance venues, consistent with HP-1.2.
    - *Action ACT-4.3.2:* Support and expand events and festivals that highlight local arts, culture, and history and draw visitors into the community.

Community Health

Florence's vision for the future is rooted in the well-being of its people. A healthy community is one where residents can access quality care, enjoy safe and welcoming places for physical activity, and connect with one another in meaningful ways. Community health goes beyond medical care. It also includes the design of the built environment, access to information and resources, and the social networks that support people throughout their lives.

Promoting health in Florence requires collaboration. By working with healthcare providers, community organizations, schools, and regional partners, the city can expand services, share resources, and close gaps in care. Investments in parks, trails, and walkable streets make it easier for residents to stay active and prevent chronic disease. Programs and partnerships can improve access to information and bring services directly to the people who need them. Together, these efforts help ensure that Florence remains a place where residents of all ages can live active, healthy, and connected lives.



Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal CH-1: Promote a healthier Florence.

- **Policy CH-1.1:** Strengthen access to healthcare and essential services through collaboration and local partnerships.
    - *Action CH-1.1.1:* Partner with healthcare providers to expand services, offer free or low-cost screenings, and explore transportation options for medical access.
    - *Action CH-1.1.2:* Facilitate connections between healthcare providers, community organizations, and residents to identify and address service gaps.
- **Policy CH-1.2:** Promote active living and healthy lifestyles through recreation and the built environment.
    - *Action CH-1.2.1:* Expand and maintain a connected network of trails, parks, and recreational spaces that support daily physical activity.
    - *Action CH-1.2.2:* Integrate sidewalks, safe crossings, and other pedestrian-friendly features into public infrastructure projects to make walking and biking easier.
- **Policy CH-1.3:** Support mental health and social well-being through outreach, connection, and community partnerships.
    - *Action CH-1.3.1:* Partner with local organizations and service providers to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and connect residents with available support services.
    - *Action CH-1.3.2:* Incorporate wellness information, resources, and outreach opportunities into community events, city communications, and public spaces.
    - *Action CH-1.3.3:* Support programs and spaces that build social connection, such as community centers, peer-support groups, and intergenerational activities.

Economic Development

Florence's economic future depends on a resilient, diverse, and adaptable economy that supports local businesses, attracts new investment, and creates quality jobs. A thriving business climate should embrace innovation, entrepreneurship, and emerging industries while preserving the historic small-town character. As economic conditions and population trends evolve, the city must implement policies that support sustainable growth and reduce barriers to business success.

Florence's distinctive character and assets offer a strong foundation for economic development. Its historic downtown, cultural landmarks, outdoor recreation opportunities, and high quality of life position the city as an attractive destination for residents, visitors, and employers alike. Strategic investments in infrastructure, walkability, connectivity, and access — particularly in established commercial and industrial areas — will support business viability, enhance community vitality, and ensure growth contributes to environmental quality and long-term prosperity.

Collaboration will be central to Florence's success. By strengthening partnerships with organizations such as the Fremont Economic Development Corporation, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and state and federal agencies, the city can expand workforce training, promote business retention and expansion, and attract new enterprises. Coordinated efforts with tourism boards, outdoor recreation groups, and creative industry networks will further diversify the economy and create opportunities that benefit residents and businesses across the community.

Strategic Partnerships

Florence recognizes the critical importance of forging strategic partnerships and collaboration with a wide array of stakeholders is essential for driving economic development, enhancing community resilience, and improving the overall quality of life for all residents. Some strategic partners for Florence to help capitalize on economic development may include:

- **Local and Regional Economic Partners** Collaborating with local chambers of commerce, the Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC), and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) can connect the City to networks of businesses, entrepreneurs, and community leaders who support economic growth through advocacy, networking, and resource sharing.
- **Economic Development Organizations:** Partnering with economic development organizations, such as regional development authorities or nonprofit agencies focused on economic growth, can provide expertise, resources, and support for initiatives aimed at attracting investment, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting job creation.
- **Tourism Boards and Destination Marketing Organizations:** Working with tourism boards and destination marketing organizations can help promote heritage and recreational tourism.
- **Outdoor Recreation Groups:** Engaging with outdoor recreation groups, including hiking clubs, cycling organizations, ATV/OHV, jeeping, snowmobile, off-road-motorcycle, and conservation nonprofits, can help capitalize on the area's natural assets and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as part of the economic development strategy.
- **Local Governments and Agencies:** Collaborating with municipal and county governments, as well as state and federal agencies, can provide support for infrastructure improvements, regulatory assistance, and funding opportunities to enhance economic development.
- **Educational Institutions:** Partnering with local schools, colleges, and universities can foster workforce development initiatives, entrepreneurship programs, and research collaborations to support economic growth and innovation.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal ED-1: Support the growth and expansion of quality jobs in Florence.

- **Policy ED-1.1:** Partner with regional organizations to align workforce training with future job needs.
    - *Action ED-1.1.1:* Collaborate with the Florence Chamber of Commerce, Emergent Campus, the Merchants group in the downtown core and other partners to assess workforce needs and promote job training programs.
    - *Action ED-1.1.2:* Collaborate with the Fremont Economic Development Corporation and the Southern Colorado Economic District to coordinate workforce training programs that align with projected regional job growth and industry needs.



- **Policy ED-1.2:** Streamline development processes to support business investment.
    - *Action ED-1.2.1:* Review and update permitting procedures to ensure they are transparent, predictable, and responsive.
    - *Action ED-1.2.2:* Provide consistent regulatory decision-making and enforcement to build trust and support business operations.

Goal ED-2: Create a business-friendly environment.

- **Policy ED-2.1:** Foster a responsive and solution-oriented local government.
    - *Action ED-2.1.1:* Provide ongoing training for city staff to improve guidance and support for business owners and investors.
- **Policy ED-2.2:** Invest in essential infrastructure to support economic growth.
    - *Action ED-2.2.1:* Upgrade and expand infrastructure, including broadband, roads, and utilities, to meet business needs while avoiding reliance on water-intensive industries.

Goal ED-3: Revitalize downtown Florence as a vibrant commercial, cultural, and social hub.

- **Policy ED-3.1:** Strengthen downtown's economic base.
    - *Action ED-3.1.1:* Consider conducting a market gap analysis to identify unmet needs and guide recruitment of complementary businesses.
    - *Action ED-3.1.2:* Support entertainment, lodging, and dining by offering incentives, adjusting zoning, and hosting events that encourage extended hours.
    - *Action ED-3.1.3:* Support the antiquing businesses by partnering with them, the Chamber and the Merchants Group to market Florence as the "Antique Capital of America".

- **Policy ED-3.2:** Enhance the downtown environment and visitor experience.
    - *Action ED-3.2.1:* Invest in streetscape improvements and maintain a clean, safe, and welcoming public realm by addressing property maintenance issues, reducing blight, and encouraging the revitalization of underused or deteriorated sites. This could include features such as antique-style lighting, coordinated signage, and wayfinding elements to reinforce downtown's character and enhance the visitor experience.
    - *Action ED-3.2.2:* Plan for parking and improving non-motorized access to downtown.
    - *Action ED-3.2.3:* Pilot temporary pedestrian or festival-friendly zones during special events and gather community feedback.
- **Policy ED-3.3:** Participate in the Colorado Main Street Program to promote downtown investment and building improvements.
    - *Action ED-3.3.1:* Pursue designation as a Colorado Main Street community and participate in the program's training, funding, and partnership opportunities.
    - *Action ED-3.3.2:* Develop a façade improvement program to assist property owners with storefront rehabilitation, signage, and accessibility upgrades, in coordination with the Colorado Main Street Program and local partners.
    - *Action ED-3.3.3:* Partner with the Florence Chamber of Commerce, The Merchants Group, and downtown business owners to identify priority buildings for improvements and promote the benefits of Main Street participation.



Goal ED-4: Expand economic opportunities for all residents by supporting business development.

- **Policy ED-4.1:** Use incentives and visibility to grow Florence's business base.
    - *Action ED-4.1.1:* Create a flexible and transparent incentive program to attract and retain businesses that offer stable employment.
    - *Action ED-4.1.2:* Support visibility for local businesses through "shop local" campaigns, partnerships, and events that drive foot traffic.
    - *Action ED-4.1.3:* Provide an online business directory and collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants Group on joint promotions.
- **Policy ED-4.2:** Strengthen existing commercial and industrial areas to support long-term economic vitality.
    - *Action ED-4.2.1:* Invest in structural upgrades, pedestrian improvements, parking, and access infrastructure to support the health and competitiveness of existing commercial and industrial districts.
    - *Action ED-4.2.2:* Focus recruitment and expansion efforts on businesses and industries locating within designated employment and commercial areas.
    - *Action ED-4.2.3:* Prioritize attraction of non-polluting, low-impact industries that minimize noise, dust, and emissions, especially adjacent to sensitive land uses.

Goal ED-5: Revitalize underused and environmentally impacted areas.

- **Policy ED-5.1:** Encourage redevelopment of strategic sites.
    - *Action ED-5.1.1:* Create and utilize existing urban renewal districts to facilitate redevelopment of downtown and other areas of Florence.
    - *Action ED-5.1.2:* Partner with historians and researchers to gather data and verify significant historical sites to support informed city planning and preservation. As funding allows, conduct a more comprehensive study identify areas of significance and identify alternative environmental restoration.
    - *Action ED-5.1.3:* Integrate study findings into planning and preservation efforts to guide future development.
    - *Action ED-5.1.4:* Pursue partnerships and grants to remediate environmentally contaminated properties and return them to productive use.

Education & Youth

Florence's future depends on the success, creativity, and engagement of its young people. A thriving community is one where youth are not only supported in their educational journeys but also given meaningful opportunities to participate in civic life, develop leadership skills, and shape the places they call home. By investing in youth, Florence builds a stronger sense of belonging, cultivates future leaders, and fosters the civic pride and responsibility that sustains a vibrant community.

Partnerships are key to this work. Collaborating with schools, community organizations, local employers, and families creates pathways for young people to connect with their city and each other. Programs that blend service, creativity, leadership, and career readiness can help students explore their interests, gain valuable experience, and see themselves as active contributors to Florence's future.

By expanding youth engagement in local government, supporting employment and mentorship opportunities, and creating inclusive spaces for young people to learn, grow, and lead, Florence will continue to build a community that values its next generation — and is shaped by their voices.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal EY-1: Empower Florence's youth through civic engagement, leadership opportunities, and workforce development.

- **Policy EY-1.1:** Encourage youth involvement in local government, community decision-making, and public life.
    - *Action EY-1.1.1:* Work with the School District to establish a youth advisory group to help develop, organize, and promote youth-led events, civic projects, and community initiatives such as mural painting, park clean-up days, and community gardens.

- *Action EY-1.1.2:* Reinvigorate youth representation on city boards and committees by reviewing structure, purpose, and promotion of available roles, and by aligning participation with school service-hour requirements where possible.
- *Action EY-1.1.3:* Explore partnerships with schools and community leaders to develop shared service-learning opportunities, including a "Government 101" course or civic education programs.

- **Policy EY-1.2:** Expand youth employment, mentorship, internship, and career preparation opportunities.
  - *Action EY-1.2.1:* Work with local employers, schools, and organizations to create seasonal and part-time positions, internships, and job-shadowing opportunities for students.
  - *Action EY-1.2.2:* Support youth-led entrepreneurship, creative projects, and volunteer programs that provide workforce skills and leadership experience.
  - *Action EY-1.2.3:* Partner with local organizations and stakeholders on internship programs, including school districts, business owners, the Emergent Campus, and other relevant partners.



Historic Preservation

Florence's rich history is one of its most defining and beloved qualities. Its historic buildings, distinctive streetscapes, and cultural landmarks reflect the stories, traditions, and values that shaped the community over generations. Preserving this heritage is essential not only to honor the past, but also to strengthen Florence's identity, support its economy, and create a vibrant future for generations to come.

Historic preservation is more than the protection of buildings — it is an investment in community character, economic vitality, and quality of life. Maintaining and rehabilitating historic properties supports local businesses, attracts visitors, and enhances property values while reducing environmental impacts associated with demolition and new construction. Through adaptive reuse, historic structures can find new life like homes, shops, cultural spaces, or gathering places that serve contemporary needs while maintaining their connection to Florence's past.

By fostering stewardship among property owners, offering education and incentives, and integrating preservation goals into broader planning and development decisions, Florence can ensure its historic resources continue to shape the city's identity and enrich its future.



Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal HP-1: Preserve and enhance Florence's historic resources.

- **Policy HP-1.1:** Support property owners in preserving and maintaining historic buildings.
    - *Action HP-1.1.1:* Encourage property owners to actively preserve and maintain their historic buildings and homes.
    - *Action HP-1.1.2:* Promote access to state and federal preservation incentives by supporting landmark designations or the creation of a historic district.
    - *Action HP-1.1.3:* Provide guidance on appropriate maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation practices for historic properties.
- **Policy HP-1.2:** Promote adaptive reuse as a tool for preservation and revitalization.
    - *Action HP-1.2.1:* Encourage the sensitive and appropriate reuse of historic structures for new purposes that serve community needs.

Goal HP-2: Protect and strengthen the character of Florence's neighborhoods and the downtown area.

- **Policy HP-2.1:** Ensure new development and renovations contribute to a cohesive historic context.
    - *Action HP-2.1.1:* Identify and document areas of special character to guide the design and scale of new construction.
    - *Action HP-2.1.2:* Encourage renovations that respect and preserve the historic character of existing buildings.
    - *Action HP-2.1.3:* Support preservation and design review processes in a fair, efficient, and predictable manner.
    - *Action HP-2.1.4:* Develop streetscape plans and public space designs that reflect and reinforce the character of surrounding areas.

Goal HP-3: Enhance Florence's identity as a historic destination and expand public engagement with its heritage.

- **Policy HP-3.1:** Improve access to historic and cultural resources for residents and visitors.
    - *Action HP-3.1.1:* Develop user-friendly tools such as apps, brochures, signage, and tours to make Florence's history and architecture more accessible.
    - *Action HP-3.1.2:* Strengthen programs and events that celebrate Florence's heritage and attract visitors.
    - *Action HP-3.1.3:* Create welcoming gateways and entry features that orient visitors and highlight historic resources.
    - *Action HP-3.1.4:* Cooperate with the Florence Historic Preservation Commission to assist private property owners with historic landmarking, connect them with state and federal preservation programs, and pursue historic preservation grants and tax credit opportunities.
    - *Action HP-3.1.5:* Promote opportunities for National, State, and local historic designation to preserve significant sites and expand eligibility for financial incentives.

Goal HP-4: Leverage preservation as an economic development strategy.

- **Policy HP-4.1:** Support business growth and investment within historic *areas.*
    - *Action HP-4.1.1:* Encourage businesses that provide goods, services, dining, and lodging within the Central Historic Business District.
    - *Action HP-4.1.2:* Promote opportunities for businesses to operate within Florence's historic context.
    - *Action HP-4.1.3:* Use preservation incentives and historic designations to attract investment and increase access to financial benefits.

Housing

A strong housing foundation is essential to Florence's long-term vitality and quality of life. Access to safe, affordable, and diverse housing options allows residents of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds to put down roots, participate in community life, and plan for the future. It also ensures that local employers can attract and retain workers, schools can serve stable populations, and the City remains welcoming to new residents and families.

Florence's historic character, small-town charm, and quality of life make it an attractive place to live, but housing supply has not kept pace with changing needs. Many neighborhoods face aging housing stock and deferred maintenance, while new development can be constrained by infrastructure costs and limited land availability. Addressing these challenges will require strategic public investment, partnerships with the private sector, and policies that encourage innovation in housing design and delivery.

By supporting neighborhood reinvestment, expanding housing options, and aligning local regulations, land use, and infrastructure with future needs, Florence can create a more resilient and connected housing market and community. Enhancing walkable infrastructure, planning new pedestrian and bicycle connections, and coordinating with parks and recreation investments will strengthen neighborhood vitality and improve quality of life for current and future residents.

Housing Demographics

Florence's housing stock reflects both its historic character and its changing community needs. Most homes in the city were built before 1980, and only a small share of new housing has been added in recent decades. While this older housing contributes to the city's charm, it also presents maintenance and reinvestment challenges.

The city has a higher share of rental housing and multi-unit buildings than the rest of Fremont County, providing some diversity in housing options. However, supply remains limited, and vacancy rates are low, suggesting continued demand for both ownership and rental opportunities. Most owner-occupied homes in Florence are valued below $300,000, offering relative affordability compared to state averages but also reflecting lower local incomes.

Additional demographic and housing data, including detailed figures on household composition, housing types, and home values, can be found in **Appendix A: Community Profile Report.**

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal H-1: Increase the supply and quality of housing in Florence to meet current and future community needs.

- **Policy H-1.1:** Plan for future housing needs and support infrastructure that enables development.
    - *Action H-1.1.1:* Complete a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) to determine the quantity, type, and location of housing needed.
    - *Action H-1.1.2:* Explore public-private partnerships to fund infrastructure improvements that unlock housing development in existing platted subdivisions.
- **Policy H-1.2:** Support reinvestment and rehabilitation in existing neighborhoods.
    - *Action H-1.2.1:* Partner with contractors, property owners, and community organizations to rehabilitate deteriorating housing and improve neighborhood conditions.

Goal H-2: Encourage a diverse mix of housing types to meet the needs of all residents.

- **Policy H-2.1:** Support the development of housing that serves residents at all income levels and life stages.
    - *Action H-2.1.1:* Work closely with developers to facilitate new housing options across a range of price points.
    - *Action H-2.1.2:* Allow the development of tiny homes as an alternative housing option, ensuring they are compatible with the scale and character of surrounding neighborhoods.
    - *Action H-2.1.3:* Conduct a study to develop façade and design guidelines that preserve and enhance the architectural character of existing neighborhoods.
    - *Action H-2.1.4:* Pursue state and federal grant opportunities, such as through OEDIT and DOLA, to support affordable housing development.

- **Policy H-2.2:** Analyze existing and future housing needs to guide the city's approach to housing diversity and availability.
    - *Action H-2.2.:* Conduct regular analyses of housing supply, demand, and affordability, including middle housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units.
    - *Action H-2.2.2:* Use findings from the Housing Needs Assessment to inform zoning updates, development incentives, and infrastructure planning that support a wider range of housing choices.



Land Use & Growth

Florence's approach to growth is grounded in a commitment to preserving its rural small-town character while accommodating future development in a strategic and sustainable way. Thoughtful land use planning ensures that new development complements existing neighborhoods, supports a vibrant local economy, protects historic resources, and maintains the community's high quality of life. A balanced approach also helps the City plan for infrastructure, public services, and transportation networks that can support new growth without compromising the needs of current residents.

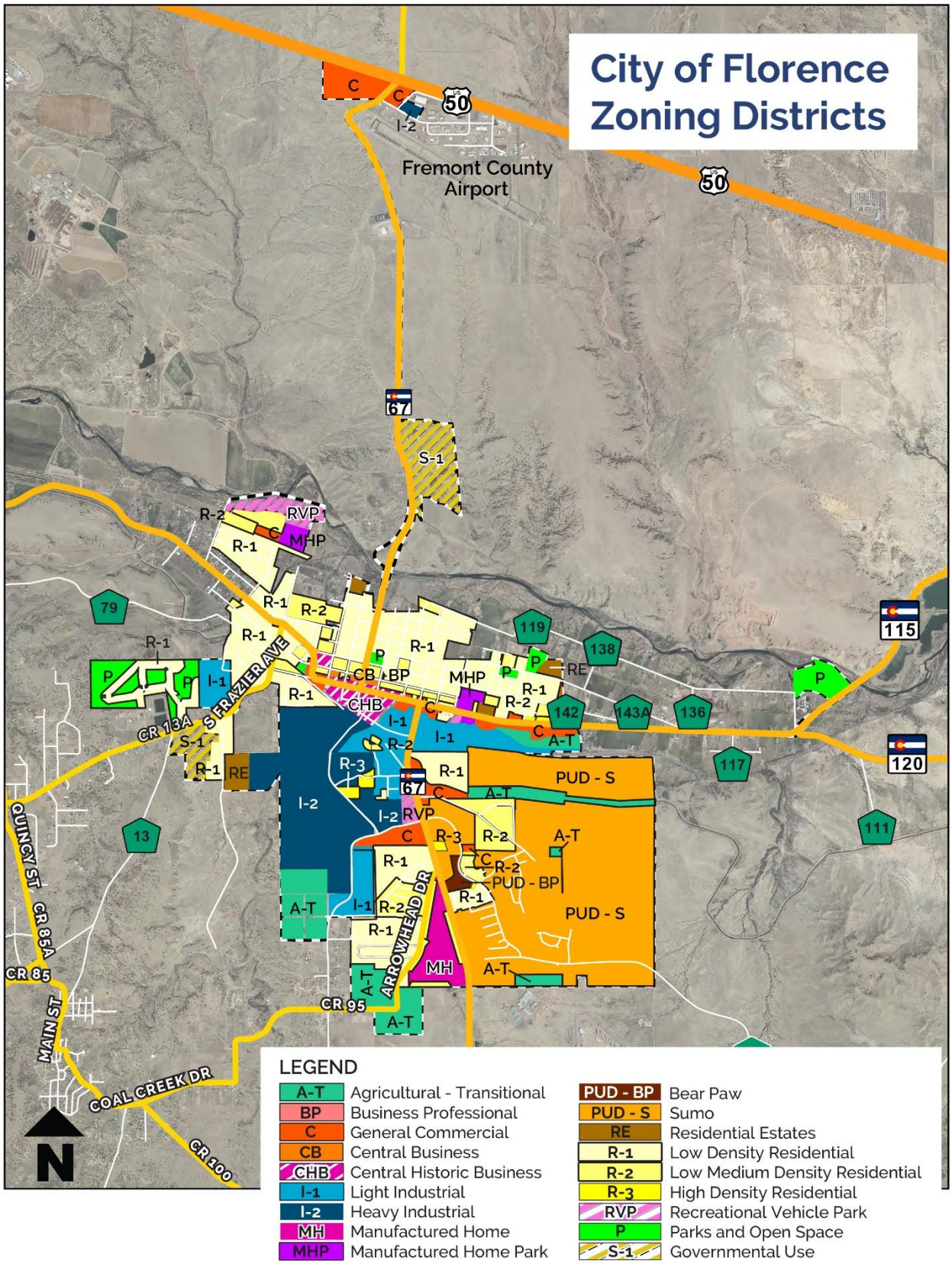
The 2017 Future Land Use Plan and its associated land use designations remain the foundation for guiding future growth. These designations reflect Florence's unique character and development patterns, from historic mixed-use neighborhoods and rural residential areas to employment centers and downtown commercial districts. As growth continues, the city will revisit these designations to ensure they reflect evolving market conditions, housing needs, and community priorities.

Coordinating land use planning with infrastructure investment, zoning updates, and regional partnerships will be essential to Florence's long-term success. By carefully managing growth and ensuring that development aligns with community values, Florence can strengthen its economic base, enhance its identity, and ensure that future development contributes to a connected, resilient, and welcoming community.

Zoning

Zoning is a tool used by municipalities in Colorado to guide land use and development. It divides a community into districts, or "zones," and establishes the types of uses—such as residential, commercial, or industrial—permitted in each area. Zoning also sets standards for building form, density, setbacks, and other site-specific considerations (*see Figure 12, Page 50*). Through these regulations, zoning helps support organized growth, maintain community character, and promote public health, safety, and welfare.

Figure 12. City of Florence Zoning Districts



3-Mile Plan

Area of Influence and Growth Framework

The City of Florence's Area of Influence (AOI), established through the state-mandated Three-Mile Plan (C.R.S. §31-12-105(1)(e)), encompasses lands within approximately three miles of the city limits and serves as the framework for coordinated planning, growth management, and future annexation (*see Figure 13, Page 52*). Within this area, the City anticipates accommodating near- to mid-term urban development—typically over the next 10 to 20 years—focusing on locations that can be efficiently served by existing or planned infrastructure. The Initial Growth Boundary (IGB) (referred to as Opportunity Areas within this plan) identifies the subset of the AOI where development is expected first, guiding investment, infrastructure, and services to support compact growth while preserving Florence's small-town character. Together, these designations help the City prioritize redevelopment, annexation, and strategic infrastructure expansion while fostering coordinated planning with Fremont County and regional partners.

Contextual Limitations

In defining the AOI, several constraints influenced the boundaries:

Adjacent Jurisdictions

- Westward expansion of Florence is limited due to proximity to surrounding cities and towns, including Canõn City, Brookside, Williamsburg, Rockvale, and Coal Creek. These areas are already established with distinct planning frameworks and service provisions, which naturally restrict outward growth.

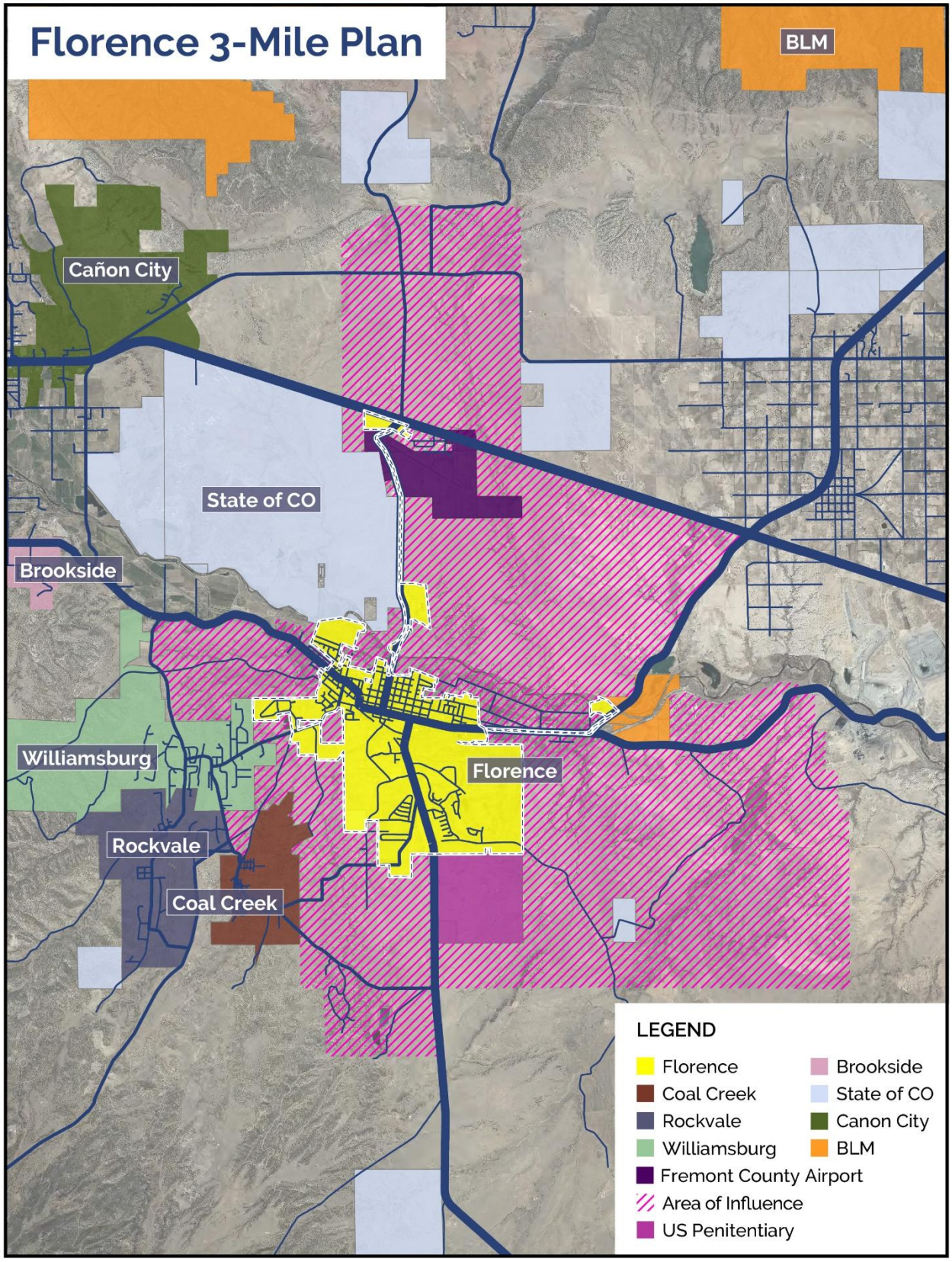
Unincorporated Areas

- Areas of eastern Fremont County were considered; their unincorporated status presents different annexation opportunities and limits immediate urban expansion.

Natural and Infrastructure Features

- Physical barriers, existing land use patterns, and transportation corridors helped define practical limits to growth.
- South of Highway 50: areas have easier access to city water and sewer, making development more feasible.
- North of Highway 50: currently relies on hauled water and septic systems. Extending services would require constructing new mains under the highway, a water storage tank, and pump stations—costs to be borne by developers.

Figure 13. City of Florence 3-Mile Plan



Land Ownership and State/County Parcels

- Areas like Canõn City Park and Recreation District and Fremont County-owned lands were factored in to avoid conflicts with existing public uses.
- State-owned lands also create natural limits to development.

Industrial and Development Considerations

- Certain areas were intentionally excluded or included based on current and proposed industrial and commercial development (e.g., gypsum board plant redevelopment along Highway 120, potential industrial park expansion, and data center).

Opportunities for Expansion

While the AOI recognizes limitations, the City of Florence also identifies areas with potential for growth:

North of Highway 50

- North of Highway 50, beyond the airport, Florence anticipates future urban development. Services may eventually extend into this area, creating opportunities for residential, commercial, or industrial development. The area presents greater service challenges but also long-term strategic value for the city.

Highway 120 Area

- Redevelopment of an old gypsum board plant into a tiny-home and residential manufacturing facility.
- Homes will be steel-constructed and nearly fire-resistant.
- Plans to expand into an industrial park with potential additional businesses.
- Proposed data center on site.
- Location on the Union Pacific Rail line will allow shipping opportunities for the facility and future industrial tenants.

Area East of the Federal Prison

- Currently ranch land or rock/gravel quarries.
- Potential for future industrial, agricultural, or other development.

Overall

- Designed considering surrounding municipalities, state-owned land, and county/public parcels (Canõn City Recreation and Fremont County land).
- South of Highway 50 has easier access to city water and sewer services, supporting potential development.
- North of Highway 50 could be developed with new infrastructure (water mains, storage tank, pump stations) at developer cost.

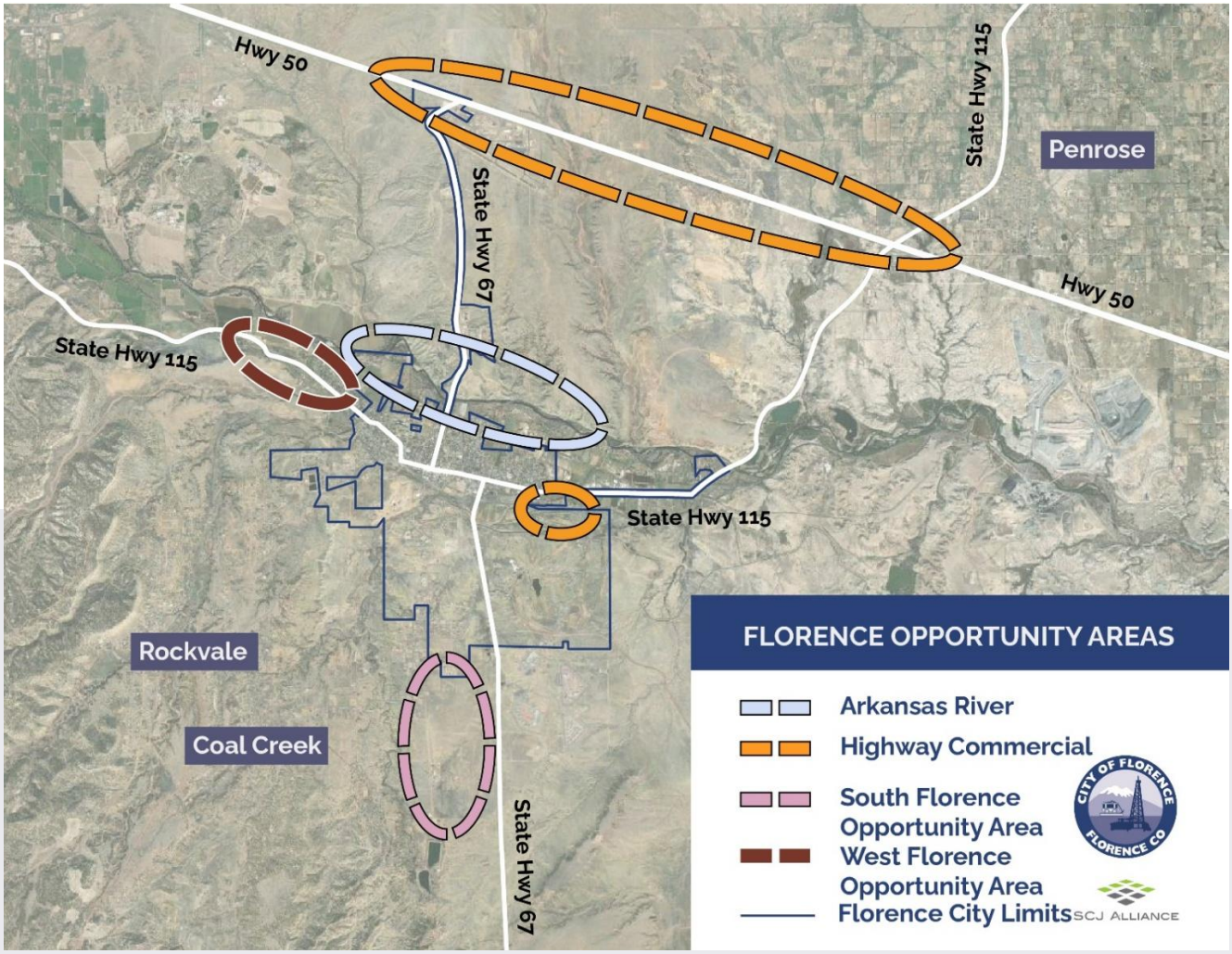
Growth Opportunity Areas

Opportunity Areas are locations within and around the City of Florence that hold significant potential for redevelopment, annexation, or collaborative planning (*see Figure 14, Page 55*). Building on the Growth Priority Tiers established in the 2017 Master Plan, these areas are prioritized to support compact, thoughtful growth while minimizing impacts on existing residents and preserving the City's small-town character. **Strategic Tiering** is applied within the AOI to guide growth priorities and service planning, ensuring development aligns with the City's long-term vision and infrastructure capacity.

- **Tier I (Priority Growth Areas):** Areas closest to existing services, where growth can be efficiently supported and new infrastructure can be provided at minimal cost.
    - *Opportunity Areas in Tier I* focus on strengthening connections to downtown, enhancing walkability, and leveraging existing amenities to support infill development and economic activity.
- **Tier II (Secondary Growth Areas):** Areas with sufficient land to accommodate long-term growth (approximately 25 years) and with existing infrastructure within one mile.
    - *Opportunity Areas in Tier II* are suited for strategic annexation, incremental development, and integration with Tier I growth, ensuring that infrastructure and public services expand in a coordinated manner.
- **Tier III (Future Growth Areas):** Lands requiring significant investment in infrastructure or services, often beyond the immediate reach of existing urban development.
    - *Opportunity Areas in Tier III* present possibilities for partnerships with Fremont County and neighboring municipalities, collaborative planning efforts, and long-term growth strategies that align with the City's vision.

By identifying and focusing on these Opportunity Areas, the City can guide growth strategically, strengthen connections to downtown, support recreational and tourism initiatives, and create catalysts for economic development. Collaboration with Fremont County and other regional partners will be essential to achieve coordinated, mutually beneficial outcomes while maintaining the character and quality of life that define Florence.

Figure 14. Growth Opportunity Areas for the City of Florence



Tier I

Growth inside city limits generally easily served by utilities and easy to access for existing clients and future residents & businesses

Florence City Proper

- Focus on infill development and reinvestment within established neighborhoods.
- Strengthen connections between neighborhoods, downtown, and community amenities.
- Expand access to existing sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure.
- Encourage compact, walkable development patterns that support efficient service delivery.
- Promote neighborhood reinvestment, housing diversity, and small-scale commercial growth compatible with surrounding uses.

By prioritizing Tier I growth, Florence can maximize existing public investments, improve connectivity, and reinforce the city's small-town character while accommodating future needs.



Tier II

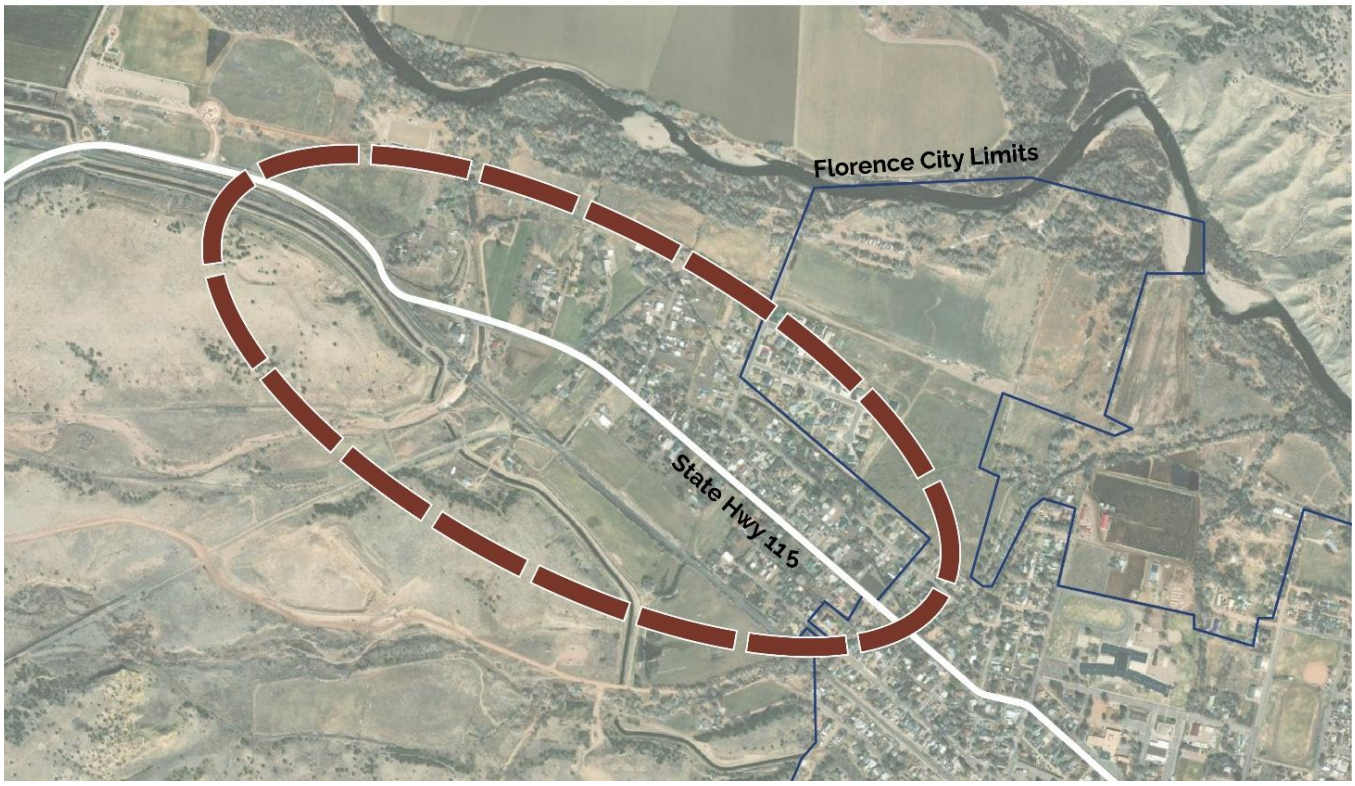
Relatively easy to provide services with major share being funded by petition business, on a case-by-case basis

West Florence

- West of Florence is located along Highway 115, serving as a key connection to and from the Cañon City region (*see*
- *Figure* 15*, below*).
- The corridor begins at Chandler Creek and extends east to the city limits.
- Today, the area is characterized by older residential homes lining both sides of the highway, with varying levels of upkeep and appearance.
- Over time, this corridor presents an opportunity for reinvestment, infill housing, and neighborhood improvements that enhance the area's character and strengthen connections to downtown.

Figure 15. Tier II Opportunity Area – West Florence

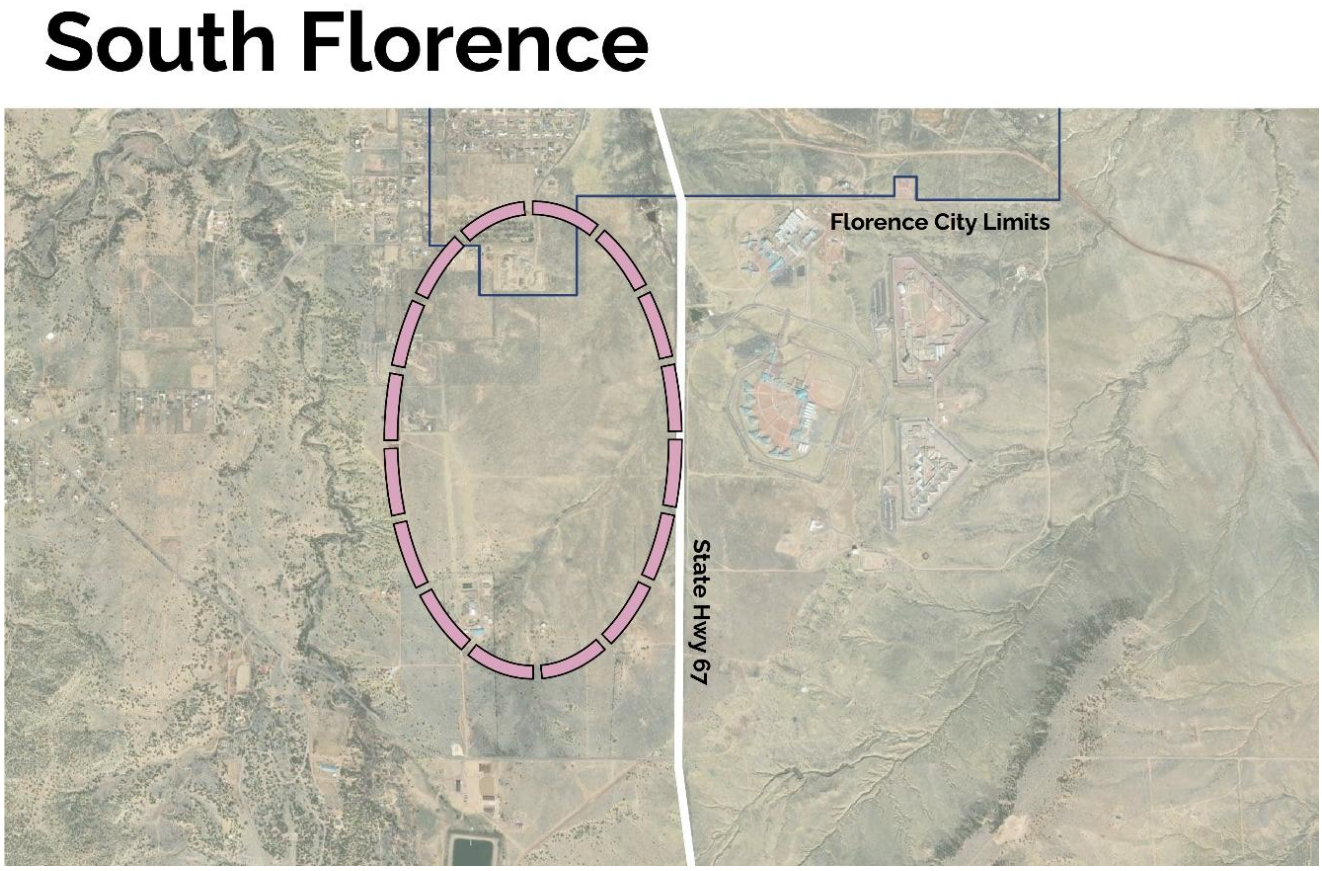
West Florence



South Florence

- This area is situated along Highway 67 South, which becomes South Robinson Avenue as it enters Florence (*see Figure 16, below*).
- The entrance into the city primarily serves commuter traffic, residents from the southern neighborhoods, and employees of the Federal Prison.
- The corridor passes through largely undeveloped land, presenting opportunities for future industrial or commercial development.
- Additionally, the area could accommodate tiny home communities or mixed-use housing, offering diverse options for growth.

Figure 16. Tier II Opportunity Area - South Florence



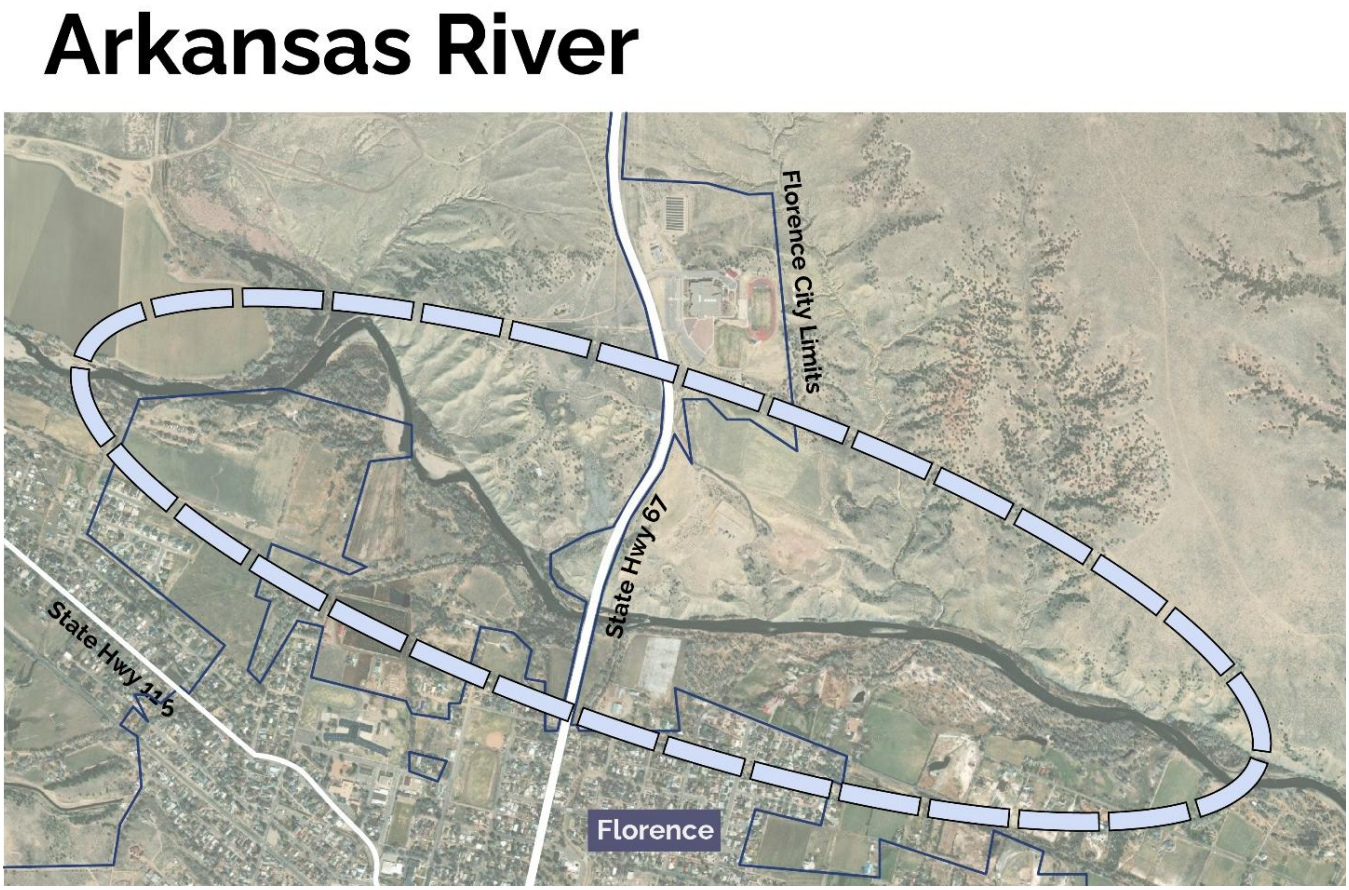
Tier III

Difficult to serve but may offer future benefits for Florence

Arkansas River

- The river corridor, while largely privately owned, presents a unique opportunity to create a vibrant, multi-purpose community asset (*see Figure 17, below*).
- Strategic partnerships and voluntary easements could establish trails, parks, and greenways that enhance recreation and connectivity to the City.
- Coordinated efforts with landowners and community groups can support river cleanup and conservation, improving water quality and natural habitats.
- Thoughtful development along the corridor could also attract tourism, promote local businesses, and strengthen the City's identity, making the river a central feature of both community life and economic vitality.

Figure 17. Tier III Opportunity Area - Arkansas River



Highway Commercial US Highway 50

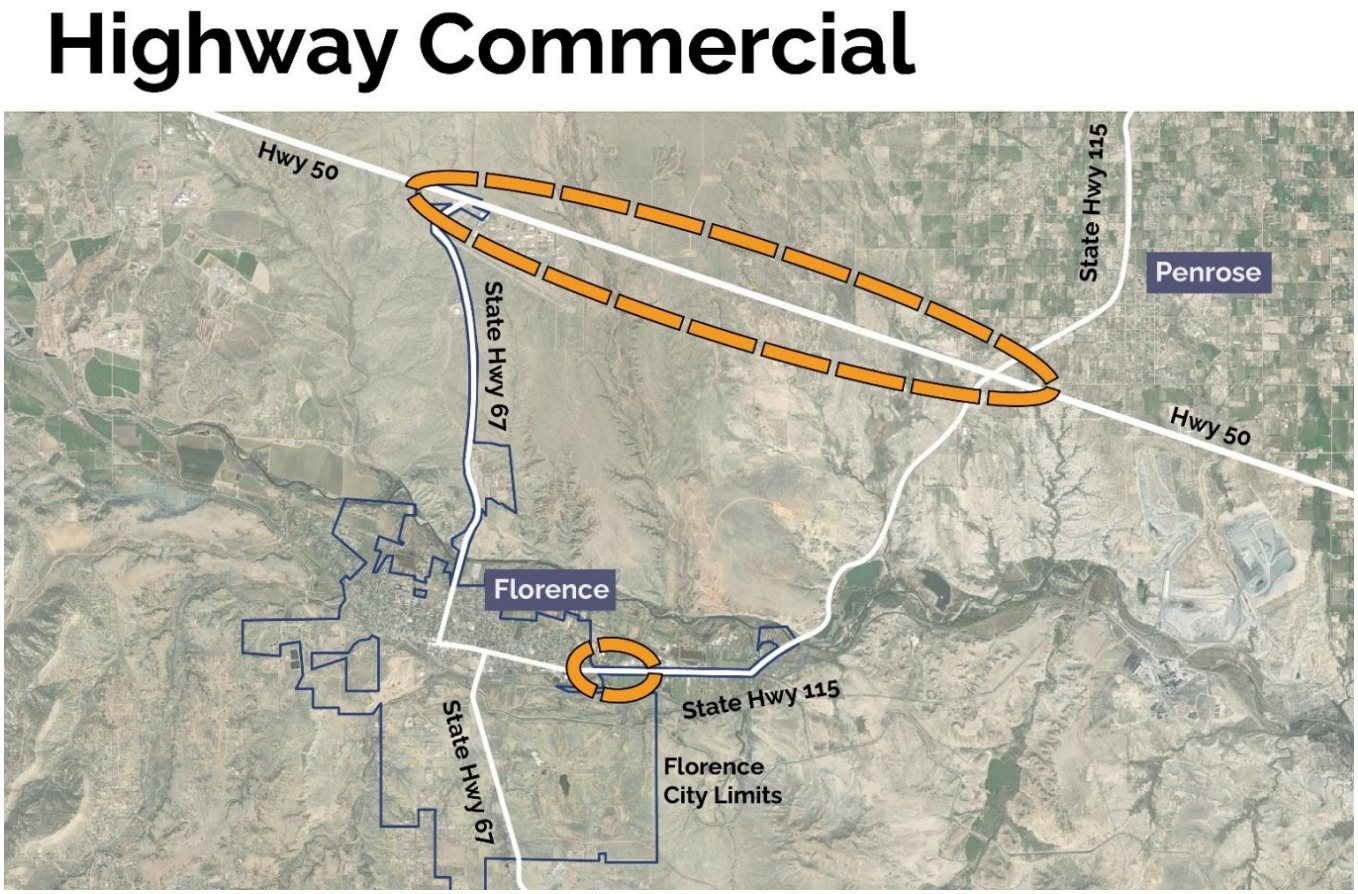
- The corridor along Highway 50, situated between State Highway 67 and State Highway 115, includes the Fremont County Airport, vacant land, and some residential uses (*see Figure 18 on the following page*).
- The area offers opportunities for a variety of future development options, including large-scale industrial or commercial uses, open space, or mixed-use projects.
- Its location along a major transportation route makes it strategically important for economic growth and connectivity.

Highway Commercial State Highway 115

- Connects Colorado Springs and Penrose to Florence, stretching from the Arkansas River to the Central Historic Business District (*see Figure 18 on the following page*).
- The eastern section opens through agricultural landscapes, which gradually gives way to a mix of commercial and residential development as travelers approach the City's core.
- While much of the area is still used for agriculture and should continue as if the property owner chooses, it does offer potential for future development as a mix of commercial and residential uses.



Figure 18. Tier III Opportunity Area - Highway Commercial



Future Land Use

Future land use designations are categories that indicate the community's vision for how different areas of Florence could develop in the future. These should not be confused with zoning districts, which are found in the Zoning Regulations. While zoning districts regulate how land can be used currently, land use designations are aspirational and reflect the desired pattern of growth and development in the city.

Changing the land use from existing conditions may require utility or infrastructure extensions, zoning changes, or other substantial procedures. Establishing clear land use designations is essential for guiding the growth and development of Florence.

Below are the proposed future land use designations for the city, followed by the Future Land Use map showing the suggested locations for each designation.

Designations

Florence's Future Land Use Plan is built around a set of land use designations that describe the intended character, purpose, and development pattern of different areas of the city. These designations serve as a guide for future zoning decisions, infrastructure planning, and private development proposals. While they do not replace zones, they help ensure that future growth is compatible with community priorities, preserves Florence's unique character, and provides a logical framework for where and how the city should grow.

The following designations, carried forward from the 2017 Master Plan, reflect Florence's existing development patterns while allowing flexibility for future needs.

Historic Mixed Use (H-MU)

These established neighborhoods, built before World War II, were designed for a walkable, non-motorized lifestyle. They include a wide range of historic housing types along with some infill development, duplexes, and small multifamily buildings. Limited neighborhood commercial and live-work uses may be considered on a case-by-case basis, especially along collector streets and key intersections. Future development should focus on residential uses while allowing carefully managed commercial or mixed-use infill where impacts can be mitigated.

Single Family Residential (SF)

This designation applies to primarily residential neighborhoods developed during the automobile era. They consist mostly of single-family homes, with occasional opportunities for low-density multifamily housing or special uses such as schools, churches, or community facilities. The intent is to provide stable, high-quality areas for single-family living while accommodating compatible supporting uses where appropriate.

Multi-Family Residential (MF)

These areas are intended for larger multifamily developments that expand housing choices and help address Florence's housing needs. Multifamily areas are typically located in transitional zones and should be designed to buffer adjacent uses while maintaining high-quality site and building design standards. These developments should serve as long-term community assets.

Rural Estate (RE)

Rural Estate areas are characterized by large lots, low-density residential development, and limited agricultural or equestrian uses. These properties are common outside city limits but exist in limited areas within Florence. Most developments will continue as single-family residential with a rural character.

Employment Centers (E)

Employment Centers accommodate low- to mid-intensity industrial and commercial uses with limited external impacts. These areas often consist of larger parcels and are typically located away from residential neighborhoods. Buffer uses such as mini-storage or low-intensity commercial activities may be used to create transitions between employment and residential areas.

Downtown Mixed Use (MU-D)

The Downtown Mixed-Use designation encompasses Florence's historic commercial core, developed between the 1890s and 1930s. This pedestrian-oriented district supports retail, dining, office, cultural, entertainment, and limited hospitality uses. Residential uses are encouraged on upper floors or behind commercial frontages, provided street-level spaces remain active and commercially focused. Compatible new infill and adaptive reuse projects are encouraged to strengthen downtown's economic vitality and historic character.

Mixed Use Transitional (MU-T)

Mixed-Use Transitional areas are intended for locations where land use changes are likely over the next five to ten years. These flexible areas may evolve into residential, commercial, or mixed-use developments depending on market demand. The designation allows for a wide range of uses and emphasizes context-sensitive design and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

Mixed Use Highway Commercial (MU-HC)

This designation applies to highway corridors where commercial redevelopment is anticipated. Existing residential uses may remain, but redevelopment for commercial uses is encouraged, particularly for underutilized or blighted properties. MU-HC areas should accommodate a broad range of retail, service, and hospitality uses that serve both residents and visitors.

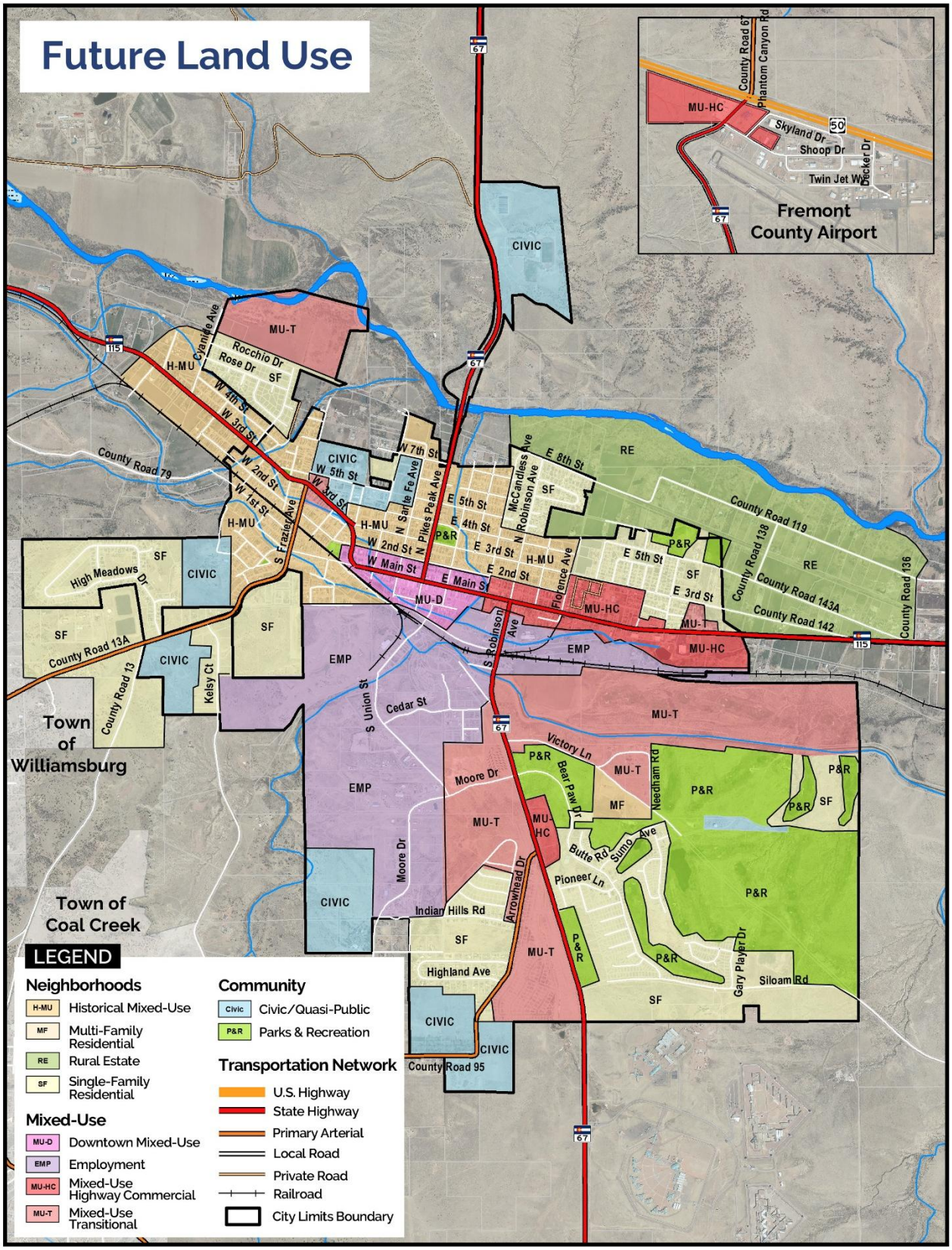
Civic / Quasi-Public (Civic)

This designation is reserved for schools, government facilities, and other public or quasi-public uses. It also includes land that may be needed for future expansions of such facilities.

Parks and Recreation (P&R)

This designation includes land used for public parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces. These areas provide essential community benefits such as recreation, environmental protection, and opportunities for social interaction.

Figure 19. Future Land Use Map for the City of Florence



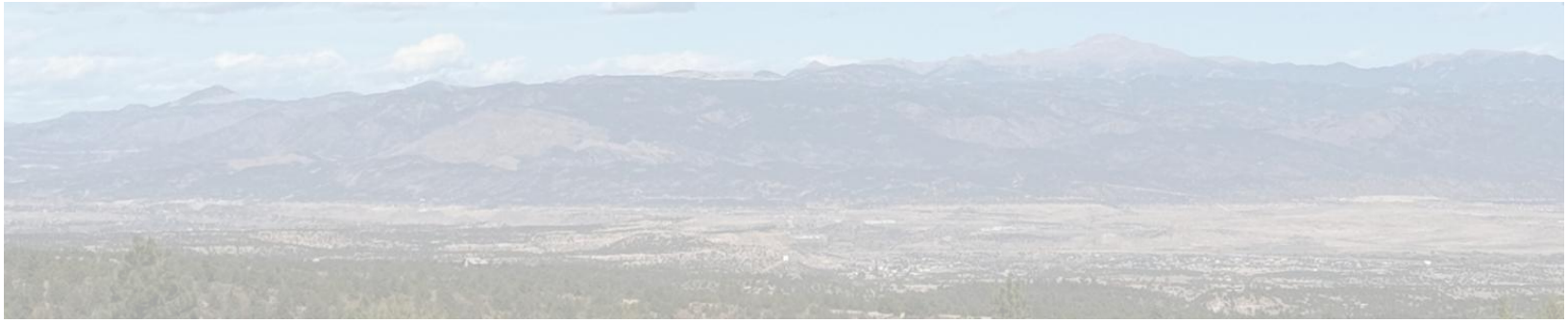
Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal LU-1: Guide growth in a way that strengthens community character, supports economic vitality, and enhances quality of life.

- **Policy LU-1.1:** Use the Future Land Use Plan as a framework for decision-making.
    - *Action LU-1.1.1:* Evaluate development proposals to ensure they reflect the intent of the Future Land Use Plan and contribute to a balanced mix of uses.
    - *Action LU-1.1.2:* Require new development to provide or fund the infrastructure and utility services needed to support growth.
- **Policy LU-1.2:** Ensure development patterns are compatible, fiscally responsible, and support community goals.
    - *Action LU-1.2.1:* Require new development to demonstrate compatibility with surrounding land uses and minimize adverse impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.
    - *Action LU-1.2.2:* Update land development regulations to align with current standards, best practices, and the goals of the Master Plan.
    - *Action LU-1.2.3:* Require developers to fund necessary infrastructure and services (such as utilities, streets, parks, and public safety) and demonstrate that ongoing operations and maintenance costs can be sustained.
    - *Action LU-1.2.4:* Discourage leapfrog development and prioritize contiguous, efficient growth that supports cost-effective delivery of public services.
    - *Action LU-1.2.5:* Promote land use patterns that achieve a balance of economic return, environmental protection, visual quality, and human comfort.
- **Policy LU-1.3:** Protect environmental systems and natural resources through land use decisions.
    - *Action LU-1.3.1:* Protect underground water recharge areas and significant mineral deposit sites from surface development and pollution by prioritizing open space or other compatible land uses.
    - *Action LU-1.3.2:* Require all development and redevelopment to comply with applicable state and federal air and water quality standards.
    - *Action LU-1.3.3:* Explore opportunities to expand long-term water storage, including evaluation of the Oak Creek Reservoir concept, to support community resilience and water security.

Goal LU-2: Ensure that development regulations are clear, predictable, and aligned with community values.

- **Policy LU-2.1:** Encourage redevelopment and adaptive use in key transition areas.
    - *Action LU-2.1.1:* Facilitate rezoning along 2nd Street and Pike's Peak Avenue to allow for limited mixed-use, live-work, or small-scale commercial uses compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.
    - *Action LU-2.1.2:* Review and update overlay districts, including the Multiple Use Overlay District, to encourage redevelopment that meets current market needs.
- **Policy LU-2.2:** Coordinate growth beyond city boundaries.
    - *Action LU-2.2.1:* Identify and plan for future growth areas, including potential annexation zones, which align with infrastructure capacity, environmental stewardship, and regional priorities. Ensure that annexations occur in a logical, sequential manner that avoids creating enclaves and prioritizes annexing existing enclaves where feasible.
    - *Action LU-2.2.2:* Collaborate with Fremont County and other regional partners to coordinate land use planning and infrastructure investments in shared growth areas.
    - *Action LU-2.2.3:* Coordinate annexation and land use decisions with Fremont County, the Fremont Sanitation District, the Florence Fire Protection District, and other relevant service providers to ensure alignment with regional plans and adequate provision of utilities and services.
    - *Action LU-2.2.4:* Review annexation and development proposals for consistency with Resolution 38-95 and assess water supply, infrastructure capacity, and service delivery needs prior to approval.
    - *Action LU-2.2.5:* Collaborate with property owners seeking annexation to minimize fragmented growth patterns and ensure new development integrates seamlessly with existing neighborhoods.



Goal LU-3: Protect environmental quality and natural systems.

- **Policy LU-3.1:** Conserve and enhance air, water, and land resources.
    - *Action LU-3.1.1:* Maintain, improve, and protect the quality of air, water, and land resources through planning, development review, and long-term monitoring.
    - *Action LU-3.1.2:* Protect natural ecosystems and habitats for native plant and animal species on public and private lands through land use plans, development regulations, and best management practices.
- **Policy LU-3.2:** Sustain and expand Florence's urban forest and green infrastructure.
    - *Action LU-3.2.1:* Promote public and private tree planting, replacement, and preservation programs to expand tree canopy coverage.
    - *Action LU-3.2.2:* Support private organizations that plant trees in native areas and along public rights-of-way and discourage the removal of healthy trees except for safety or health reasons.
- **Policy LU-3.3:** Minimize environmental hazards and land use conflicts.
    - *Action LU-3.3.1:* Consider natural and man-made hazards in all planning, policy, and development decisions, and require mitigation strategies to minimize risks to people, property, and the environment.
    - *Action LU-3.3.2:* Collaborate with Fremont County, state agencies, and regional partners to develop plans, regulations, and incentives that reduce risks from hazards and support long-term resilience.
    - *Action LU-3.3.3:* Use development review processes, ordinances, and buffer zone requirements to protect environmental quality and important ecological functions.
- **Policy LU-3.4:** Reduce pollution and environmental impacts.
    - *Action LU-3.4.1:* Enforce light pollution and noise standards to protect community character and environmental quality.
    - *Action LU-3.4.2:* Encourage, facilitate, and regulate energy efficiency and renewable energy use in both the public and private sectors.
    - *Action LU-3.4.3:* Identify and remove regulatory or procedural barriers to renewable energy adoption.
    - *Action LU-3.4.4:* Promote recycling, reuse, and waste reduction through public education and partnerships with private service providers.
    - *Action LU-3.4.5:* Support noxious weed eradication efforts to protect native ecosystems and reduce fire risk.

Parks & Recreation

Florence's parks, open spaces, and natural landscapes are essential to quality of life, community identity, and long-term sustainability. They provide places for recreation, gathering, and connection, while also supporting public health, environmental stewardship, and economic vitality. A strong parks and recreation system also enhances the city's appeal as a place to live, work, and visit, offering opportunities for residents and visitors alike to engage with the outdoors and enjoy the natural beauty of the Arkansas River Valley.

The City's park system includes a range of spaces that serve different roles in community life. Pioneer Park, home to a public swimming pool and numerous community events, is the centerpiece of Florence's park network. Florence River Park provides river access, habitat, and opportunities for fishing, picnicking, and trail connections, while Florence Mountain Park offers a unique natural setting just outside city limits with access to regional trail systems. Together with neighborhood parks, trails, and open spaces, these resources create a strong foundation for recreation and community life.

Looking ahead, Florence's goal is to build on this foundation by expanding recreational opportunities, strengthening regional connections, and adapting its park system to serve a growing and changing population. Strategic investments in trails, green infrastructure, and programming, combined with collaborative partnerships and creative use of existing spaces, will ensure that parks and recreation continue to enrich life in Florence for generations to come.



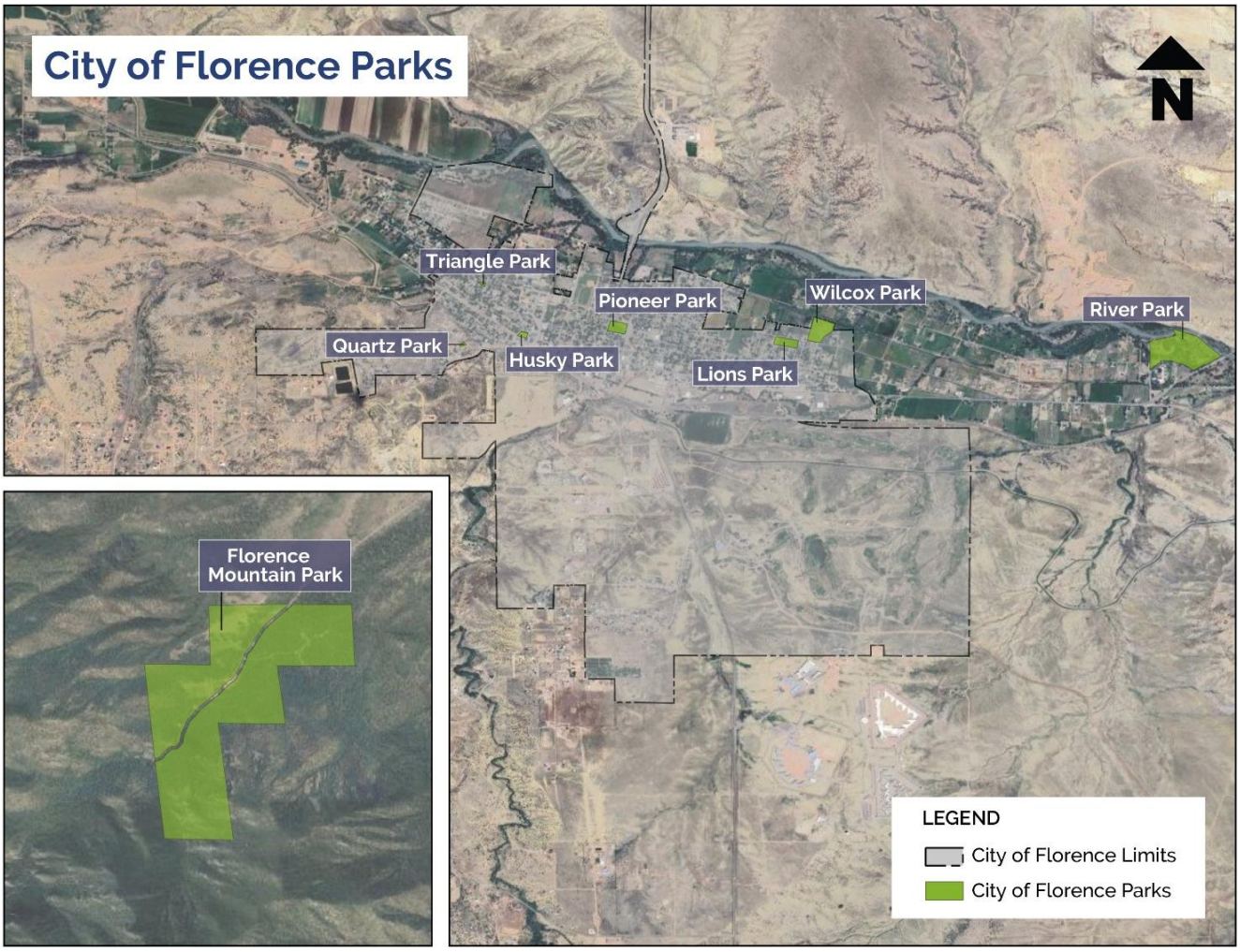
Recreational Assets of Florence:

- **Florence Mountain Park** is located just outside city limits and provides access to regional trail systems and foothill terrain. The park offers natural terrain for hiking, picnicking, and outdoor exploration, along with sweeping views of the Arkansas River Valley. It is a favorite destination for residents who enjoy outdoor recreation in a more natural, rugged setting.
- **Florence River Park** is located along the Arkansas River near the city's eastern edge. It offers public access to the river for fishing, picnicking, and small-group recreation, with open space and shade areas for relaxation. The park also serves as a starting point for local trail connections and is valued by residents for its natural setting and scenic views.
- **Husky Park** is a neighborhood park located near the former Florence High School site, now the Emergent Campus. The park features open play fields, a playground, and shaded picnic areas that support everyday recreation and community gatherings. It remains a popular destination for local youth and families.
- **Lions Park** serves as an important neighborhood gathering space but currently lacks key infrastructure to support regular community use. Improvements such as restrooms, seating, and shaded areas would help expand its role in Florence's park system.
- **Pioneer Park** is Florence's largest and most active community park, centrally located and home to the city's public swimming pool. It hosts community events, festivals, and family gatherings throughout the year. The park includes open lawns, playgrounds, and sports areas, making it a focal point of daily recreation and social life in Florence.



- **Quartz Park** is tucked within a quiet residential neighborhood and offers a welcoming space for families and neighbors to relax and play. The small park features open green spaces, trees, a set of swings and a picnic table, making it a favorite spot for children and casual gatherings. Its cozy setting and easy accessibility provide a peaceful retreat within the community.
- **Triangle Park** is located along a busy city street yet nestled within a residential area, offering a welcoming green space for nearby residents. Shaded by large mature trees, the park features a swing set and a picnic table, providing a comfortable place for families and neighbors to gather and enjoy the outdoors despite the surrounding activity.
- **Wilcox Park** is a community park located in a residential area of Florence, offering open space for recreation and gatherings. The park includes ballfields, open grassy areas, mature trees, and seating that make it a comfortable neighborhood destination. Its layout and accessibility support everyday use by nearby residents of all ages.

Figure 20. Parks and Recreational Assets of the City of Florence



Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal PR-1: Create a connected system of parks, trails, and open spaces that enhances quality of life, encourages active living, and links Florence to the region.

- **Policy PR-1.1:** Expand regional and community connectivity.
    - *Action PR-1.1.1:* Coordinate with regional partners to plan and implement long-range trail connections that link Florence to nearby communities and destinations.
    - *Action PR-1.1.2:* Identify opportunities to grow the park and trail network using areas such as floodways, easements, and other lands that are less suitable for development, and explore potential sites for new neighborhood or community parks.
    - *Action PR-1.1.3:* Identify opportunities to develop new parks and recreation areas in underserved neighborhoods and future growth areas, prioritizing equitable access, walkability, and alignment with community needs.
    - *Action PR-1.1.4:* Revisit previously proposed park concepts, such as the Cyanide Avenue site, to assess community interest, design feasibility, and potential funding opportunities for future neighborhood parks.
    - *Action PR-1.1.5:* Engage nearby residents early in the planning process to ensure any new park proposals reflect community preferences, address past concerns, and align with neighborhood needs.
    - *Action PR-1.1.6:* Develop a comprehensive Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails (PROST) Plan to guide future investments and priorities.
    - *Action PR-1.1.7:* Collaborate with Fremont County, landowners, and partners like Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area to realize the potential of the Arkansas River Opportunity Area, as outlined in the Future Land Use Plan.
    - *Action PR-1.1.8:* Continue and expand Tree City USA Efforts and explore funding opportunities through state forestry grants and public-private partnerships to support tree planting, canopy restoration, and long-term urban forest management.
    - *Action PR-1.1.9:* Conduct a citywide Parks Infrastructure Assessment to identify existing gaps in amenities such as restrooms, lighting, seating, and accessibility, and prioritize improvements based on community needs, park usage, and long-term maintenance capacity.
    - *Action PR-1.1.10:* Upgrade existing parks citywide by replacing outdated equipment, improving accessibility, and adding features such as restrooms, picnic areas, and shaded gathering spaces.
    - *Action PR-1.1.11:* Support sustainability and innovation. Incorporate solar lighting, EV charging, and other green infrastructure into park upgrades wherever feasible.

- *Action PR-1.1.12:* Activate Florence River Park. Transform this underused gem into a vibrant community destination by adding new amenities, improving access and signage, offering recreational programming, and assessing opportunities for safety enhancements and bank stabilization.
- *Action PR-1.1.13:* In coordination with the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area and state partners, explore opportunities for riverbank stabilization, habitat restoration, and community access improvements adjacent to Florence River Park. These efforts should complement the Florence River Park activation strategy and support long-term ecological health and recreational use of the Arkansas River corridor.
- *Action PR-1.1.14:* Reinvest in Florence Mountain Park. Add essential amenities such as restrooms, picnic tables, and seating to support community use and small events.
- *Action PR-1.2.15:* Promote the use of city parks for public and private activities, events, and community gatherings to strengthen social connections and support local organizations.
- *Action PR-1.2.16:* Strengthen and enforce open space and land dedication requirements as part of new commercial, industrial, and residential development to ensure long-term recreational and ecological benefits.
- *Action PR-1.2.17:* Design open space lands to provide multiple community benefits, such as wildlife habitat, environmental protection, and recreational opportunities, wherever possible.
- *Action PR-1.2.18:* Install wayfinding and interpretive signage, including Byway designation markers, to improve navigation, highlight unique recreational assets, and encourage greater use of parks, trails, and scenic routes.

- **Policy PR-1.2:** Improve local access and user experience.
    - *Action PR-1.2.1:* Develop a citywide connectivity plan that links neighborhoods to parks, schools, downtown, and other key destinations, with a focus on safe and accessible routes for walking, biking, and rolling.
    - *Action PR-1.2.2:* Engage property owners and stakeholders to explore voluntary easements, land agreements, and acquisition strategies that expand public access while respecting private property rights.
    - *Action PR-1.2.3:* Pursue grant funding and technical assistance from state and federal programs to support planning, design, and construction of new sidewalks, pathways, and active transportation connections.

Goal PR-3: Expand access to inclusive, community-driven recreation opportunities that serve residents of all ages and interests.

- **Policy PR-3.1:** Understand and respond to community priorities.
    - *Action PR-3.1.1:* Conduct regular surveys and outreach to identify recreation priorities and ensure programs remain inclusive, accessible, and relevant.
    - *Action PR-3.1.2:* Establish a consistent and accessible method for collecting community feedback, such as a dedicated online platform or physical drop box.
- **Policy PR-3.2:** Deliver diverse programming through collaboration and creativity.
    - *Action PR-3.2.1:* Partner with schools, nonprofits, and regional organizations to offer a wide range of recreation, arts, education, and wellness opportunities.
    - *Action PR-3.2.2:* Use parks and public spaces for seasonal programs, pop-up events, and community-led activities that activate spaces without requiring major new infrastructure.



Public Safety

Public safety is essential to Florence's quality of life and its identity as a welcoming, connected community. Residents generally feel safe and take pride in the City's small-town character, but evolving challenges such as substance use, housing instability, and increasing service demands require continued investment, innovation, and collaboration.

The Florence Police Department plays a vital role in meeting these challenges by protecting residents, responding to emergencies, and addressing issues that affect daily life, from crime prevention to traffic safety and code enforcement. As the community grows and its needs become more complex, the department must continue adapting through strategic staffing, modernized training and equipment, and stronger partnerships with regional agencies.

Community engagement will remain central to long-term safety and resilience. Building trust, creating opportunities for collaboration, and connecting residents to resources all contribute to a safer and more cohesive community. By combining proactive policing, community partnerships, and modern tools, Florence can ensure that public safety remains a cornerstone of its future.



Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal PS-1: Maintain a safe, welcoming, and resilient community for residents, businesses, and visitors.

- **Policy PS-1.1:** Ensure police services keep pace with community growth and evolving needs.
    - *Action PS-1.1.1:* Ensure police services, including staffing levels and training programs, are aligned with community growth, demographic changes, and evolving public safety issues.
    - *Action PS-1.1.2:* Promote organizational excellence, accountability, and professionalism within public safety operations through strong leadership and continuous improvement, including exploration of new policing strategies.
- **Policy PS-1.2:** Strengthen prevention and response to public safety challenges.
    - *Action PS-1.2.1:* Coordinate with regional partners to address substance use through prevention, enforcement, and recovery programs.
    - *Action PS-1.2.2:* Support collaborative approaches to address homelessness and housing instability, including partnerships with social service agencies and nonprofits.
    - *Action PS-1.2.3:* Engage neighborhoods to gather input on perceived or experienced safety concerns, including downtown lighting, public surveillance, and emergency communication systems. Create a community-informed plan to address identified issues.
- **Policy PS-1.3:** Strengthen organizational capacity, accountability, and professional excellence.
    - *Action PS-1.3.1:* Conduct regular records and evidence management audits to ensure full compliance with state and federal standards and minimize agency liability.



- *Action PS-1.3.2:* Provide ongoing leadership and supervision training to support effective management, succession planning, and organizational stability.
- *Action PS-1.3.3:* Develop internal culture and communication initiatives that promote transparency, accountability, and teamwork across all levels of the department.

Goal PS-2: Foster strong relationships between public safety agencies and the community.

- **Policy PS-2.1:** Build trust and collaboration through community engagement.
  - *Action PS-2.1.1:* Create regular opportunities for officers to interact with residents through outreach events such as "Coffee with a Cop", school programs, and neighborhood meetings.
  - *Action PS-2.1.2:* Implement community policing initiatives that emphasize problem-solving, relationship-building, and proactive service.
  - *Action PS-2.1.3:* Provide clear and accessible public information about police services, community safety programs, and reporting tools.

Goal PS-3: Strengthen Florence's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and natural hazards.

- **Policy PS-3.1:** Plan proactively for community safety and resilience.
  - *Action PS-3.1.1:* Develop and maintain an all-hazards emergency management plan that identifies risks, outlines response protocols, and coordinates resources across agencies.
  - *Action PS-3.1.2:* Conduct regular training exercises and simulations with regional partners, emergency services, schools, and community organizations.
  - *Action PS-3.1.3:* Establish clear communication strategies and public education programs to ensure residents understand how to prepare for and respond to emergencies.
- **Policy PS-3.2:** Ensure that critical infrastructure, communication systems, and essential services support effective emergency response.
  - *Action PS-3.2.1:* Evaluate and enhance critical infrastructure, including communication systems, evacuation routes, and emergency shelters to ensure reliability and resilience during emergencies.
  - *Action PS-3.2.2:* Work with utility providers, healthcare agencies, and regional partners to plan for continuity of essential services during and after emergencies.

Resiliency

Florence's ability to adapt and recover from challenges—whether natural, economic, or social—is essential to its long-term success. Building resilience means preparing for potential hazards while also strengthening the systems, partnerships, and resources that help the community thrive in the face of change. This includes planning for floods, wildfires, and energy disruptions, as well as ensuring that residents, businesses, and institutions are ready to respond and recover together.

By partnering with state and federal agencies, such as the Colorado Resiliency Office, the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Florence can align its planning and investments with available programs and funding opportunities that support local resilience.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal R-1: Build community resilience by preparing Florence to anticipate, respond to, and recover from natural or human-caused hazards.

- **Policy R-1.1:** Identify and assess local risks to strengthen preparedness and planning.
    - *Action R-1.1.1:* Complete a local risk assessment to identify the potential impacts of hazards on Florence's physical, social, economic, and environmental assets.
    - *Action R-1.1.2:* Evaluate the need for a wildfire risk assessment, and if appropriate, conduct it and implement mitigation strategies.
    - *Action R-1.1.3:* Map and analyze flood- and erosion-prone areas along the river corridor and evaluate the feasibility of a Flood Control Master Plan in coordination with regional agencies.
- **Policy R-1.2:** Strengthen energy resilience and reduce vulnerability to disruption.
    - *Action R-1.2.1:* Assess vulnerability of local energy systems to disruption, including grid capacity, critical facilities, and emergency services.
    - *Action R-1.2.2:* Pursue grid hardening or microgrid development in partnership with state and federal programs, including the NREL "Energy to Communities" program and the DOLA Microgrids for Community Resilience Program.

- **Policy R-1.3:** Support community preparedness and recovery capacity.
    - *Action R-1.3.1:* Evaluate the need for a resilience hub to serve as a community support center during emergencies, based on findings from the local risk assessment.
    - *Action R-1.3.2:* Develop public education and outreach materials that help residents understand emergency procedures, evacuation routes, and available resources.
    - *Action R-1.3.3:* Partner with regional agencies and nonprofits to expand training and volunteer programs that strengthen local capacity for disaster response and recovery.



Transportation, Infrastructure, & Public Works

Florence's transportation network and public works systems are the foundation of its daily life and long-term growth. The city benefits from a compact, walkable urban form, where commercial, residential, civic, and educational uses are located within a short distance of one another. State Highways 67 and 115 provide vital regional connections to Cañon City, Westcliffe, and Highway 50, while proximity to Fremont County Airport supports both economic activity and emergency services. These strengths position Florence to support a growing population and increased mobility needs well into the future.

However, the city also faces challenges that require proactive planning and investment. Rising traffic volumes, heavy truck movement, and seasonal tourism all contribute to congestion and parking pressures, particularly in and around the downtown core. Aging roads, sidewalks, and utilities require regular maintenance, and decades of deferred investment have created gaps in the city's infrastructure system. Addressing these needs is essential to ensure safety, improve traffic flow, and support economic vitality.

Public Transport and Shuttle Services

Florence currently does not operate its own public transportation system, although limited transit options are available to residents. The City recognizes the benefits of establishing a more robust public transportation system. Future public transit services within Florence could support residents lacking private transportation, promote environmental sustainability, and help reduce local traffic congestion and parking demand. Additionally, a regional transit system would improve mobility between Florence and neighboring communities, enhancing economic and social connectivity.

The Fremont County Transit/Golden Shuttle provides service to Florence, Cañon City, and Penrose, offering essential transportation particularly for seniors and individuals without personal vehicles. This service is available upon request and prescheduled.

This service runs seven days a week, with stops in Penrose, connecting riders eastbound to Pueblo (including the Pueblo Transit Center), and westbound to Cotopaxi, Salida, Poncha Springs, Moffat, and Alamosa. From the Pueblo Transit Center, riders can connect to broader statewide transit options via Bustang's main routes.

Looking ahead, Florence aims to build a transportation system that offers more choices for how people move. Expanding opportunities for walking, biking, and public transit will reduce reliance on cars, improve accessibility, and support healthier, more connected neighborhoods. Public works will play a critical role in this effort, from maintaining roads and sidewalks to managing stormwater, upgrading utilities, and improving lighting. Together, these investments will enhance mobility, strengthen resilience, and support a high quality of life for all residents.

Airports

The Fremont County Airport is the only airport facility in the county and is located approximately 1.5 miles north of Florence, near the intersection of U.S. Highway 50 and State Highway 67. The airport supports a wide range of operations, including military flight training through the U.S. Air Force Academy and Fort Carson, as well as State and Federal correctional facility transportation. It also plays a key role in wildland firefighting efforts.

Additional services offered at the airport include aircraft rental, maintenance and storage, pilot supplies, flight instruction, air charter services, and recreational skydiving. In addition to aviation services, the Fremont County Airport serves as a strategic site for industrial and commercial development due to its location and infrastructure.

Regional Transportation Planning

Florence is an active participant in regional transportation planning efforts that help coordinate investments across Fremont County and the Central Front Range. The City is part of the Central Front Range Transportation Planning Region (TPR), administered by the Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments (UAACOG) in coordination with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Through this partnership, Florence contributes to the development of long-range transportation plans, funding priorities, and strategies that improve mobility, safety, and economic connectivity throughout the region.

Active coordination with UAACOG and CDOT ensures that local transportation goals align with regional and statewide priorities. This collaboration positions Florence to compete effectively for transportation funding and to advance projects that enhance community access, reduce congestion, and support sustainable growth across Fremont County and neighboring communities.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Streets and Mobility

Goal TI-1: Maintain a safe and efficient street network that supports growth and connects the community.

- **Policy TI-1.1:** Plan and invest in a multimodal street network that meets current needs and anticipates future growth.
    - *Action TI-1.1.1:* Coordinate with CDOT and regional partners on traffic studies, corridor plans, and strategies to improve safety (such as Safe Routes to Schools), manage congestion, and seek funding.
    - *Action TI-1.1.2:* Prioritize maintenance, repair, and upgrades to local streets based on condition, safety, and connectivity.
    - *Action TI-1.1.3:* Evaluate truck routes to minimize impacts on neighborhoods and downtown while maintaining freight access for businesses.
- **Policy TI-1.2:** Support efficient and sustainable transportation operations.
    - *Action TI-1.2.1:* Pursue funding opportunities for street and intersection improvements through state and federal programs.
    - *Action TI-1.2.2:* Implement access management and roadway design standards that improve traffic flow and safety.

Walking, Biking, and Transit

Goal TI-2: Expand safe and accessible options for walking, biking, and transit to improve mobility and quality of life.

- **Policy TI-2.1:** Build a connected network for active transportation.
    - *Action TI-2.1.1:* Create a comprehensive mobility plan that integrates sidewalks, trails, bike routes, and crossings into the transportation system.
    - *Action TI-2.1.2:* Enforce sidewalk construction requirements for new development and prioritize gap-filling projects in existing neighborhoods.
    - *Action TI-2.1.3:* Improve pedestrian safety by adding lighting, signage, and crossing enhancements.
    - *Action TI-2.1.4:* Encourage the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian trails within all new development and redevelopment projects to strengthen the citywide active transportation network.

- *Action TI-2.1.5:* Plan and pursue the development of bicycle and pedestrian trails that connect neighborhoods, downtown, parks, schools, and regional recreation destinations.
- *Action TI-2.1.6:* Develop and implement a program to install street lighting in older residential neighborhoods to improve safety, visibility, and walkability.

- **Policy TI-2.2:** Expand transit options and regional connections.
  - *Action TI-2.2.1:* Explore opportunities to expand public transit through partnerships with Fremont County Transit, UAACOG, and other providers.
  - *Action TI-2.2.2:* Advocate for improved regional transit routes and connections to nearby communities and job centers.

- **Policy TI-2.3:** Advance the *School Connection Corridor* as a priority transportation investment that strengthens connections between neighborhoods, schools, and community destinations.
  - *Action TI-2.3.1:* Develop a coordinated plan for the School Connection Corridor, identifying infrastructure needs, design standards, and implementation strategies for sidewalk, trail, and bicycle improvements between the Junior/Senior High School and the Arkansas River.
  - *Action TI-2.3.2:* Pursue state, federal, and regional funding partnerships to construct a sidewalk and multi-use trail extending from Main Street along North Pikes Peak Avenue (Highway 67) to the new Junior/Senior High School, enhancing safe routes to school and community access.
  - *Action TI-2.3.3:* Collaborate with Fremont County, the school district, and local property owners to align land use, access, and infrastructure investments and to explore annexation opportunities where appropriate.

Downtown Access and Parking

Goal TI-3: Improve access, circulation, and parking in the downtown core.

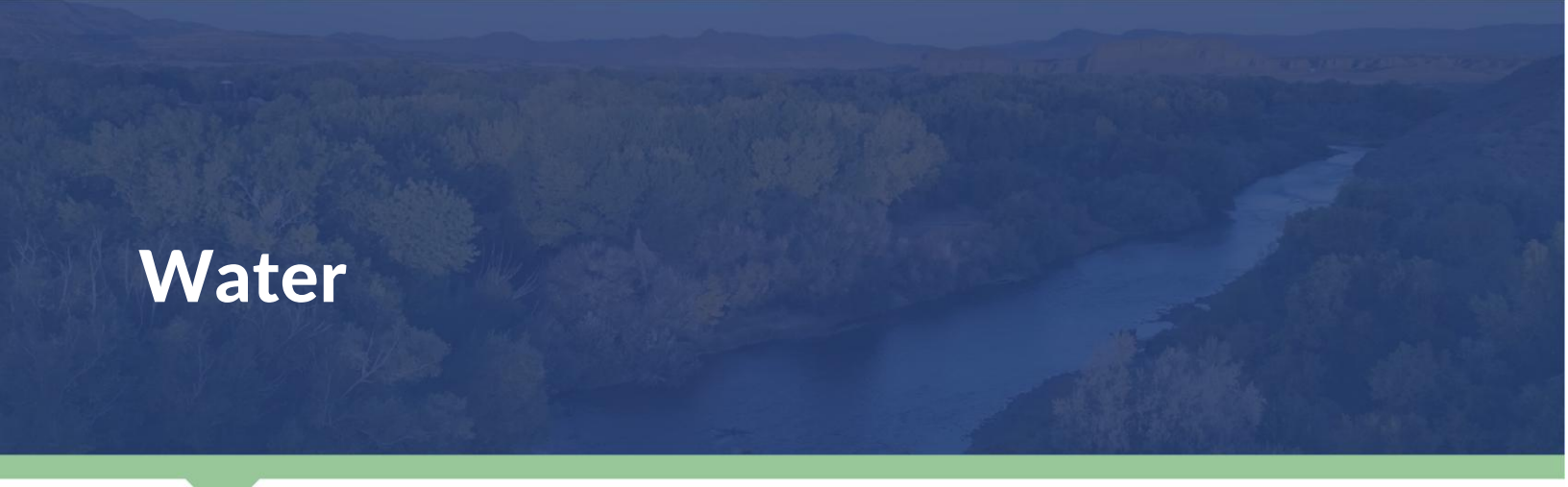
- **Policy TI-3.1:** Plan for coordinated parking and circulation solutions.
  - *Action TI-3.1.1:* Promote shared parking strategies, public-private partnerships, and design solutions that maximize available space.
  - *Action TI-3.1.2:* Explore temporary or seasonal pedestrian zones to support events and downtown activation.
  - *ActionTI-3.1.3:* Explore other creative parking solutions with other entities.

Public Works and Infrastructure

Goal TI-4: Maintain and upgrade essential infrastructure to support a safe, resilient, and growing community.

- **Policy TI-4.1:** Invest strategically in public infrastructure.
    - *Action TI-4.1.1:* Target improvements that support economic development, housing, and neighborhood reinvestment.
    - *Action TI-4.1.2:* Seek state and federal funding to support transportation and infrastructure projects.
- **Policy TI-4.2:** Improve stormwater management and reduce flood risks.
    - *Action TI-4.2.1:* Identify and address flood-prone areas with drainage improvements and green infrastructure.





Water

Reliable access to clean, high-quality drinking water is essential to public health, economic growth, and overall quality of life in Florence. The City is proud to provide safe and dependable water service not only to its own residents but also to the communities of Rockvale, Williamsburg, Coal Creek, East Florence, and the Federal Correctional Complex. Florence's water system is a shared regional resource and a vital part of local infrastructure, supporting homes, businesses, schools, industry, and recreation.

Florence owns the oldest municipal water rights on the Arkansas River, dating back to 1861, and continues to manage water from four main sources: the Arkansas River (via the Minnequa Canal), Adobe Creek, Mineral Creek, and Newlin Creek. These sources feed four raw water reservoirs with a combined storage capacity of 120 to 130 million gallons. The City's raw water is stored in local reservoirs that provide reliable year-end supply. Water is treated at the City's Water Treatment Facility, which can process up to 6 million gallons per day, and then distributed through a robust system of tanks, pump stations, and pipelines. On average, Florence delivers more than 165 million gallons of water each year to its own customers, along with significant volumes to regional partners.

Planning for the future is essential as water use patterns evolve, infrastructure ages, and climate conditions change. Ongoing investments in storage, treatment, and distribution systems will strengthen resilience and ensure capacity for future growth. Coordination with regional partners, alignment with state water planning priorities, and participation in long-term water resource management will also help Florence safeguard this critical resource. By pairing responsible management with forward-looking investments, the City will continue to deliver safe, reliable water while preserving water resources for generations to come. The City of Florence is proud to provide safe, high-quality drinking water to our residents and regional partners, protecting public health and supporting community growth.

Treatment and Distribution

South of the city, Florence operates the Southfield Water Treatment Facility with the capacity to process 6.0 million gallons per day (MGD). Treated water is then delivered through a distribution system that includes:

- Six storage tanks with a total capacity of over six million gallons.
- Four finished-water pump stations.
- Three raw-water pump stations.

Through this system, Florence provides potable water to Florence residents, Rockvale, Williamsburg, Coal Creek, East Florence, and the Federal Correctional Complex. Additional services include a bulk water station and supply to the Sumo Golf Course.

The Southfield Water Treatment Plant was constructed for future expansion. Piping infrastructure for expansion is imbedded in the existing plant. By moving one wall and the addition of filters, the plant's capacity can be increased to 9 MGD at minimal cost.

Regional Water System

Florence, Rockvale, Williamsburg, and Coal Creek are united through a Regional Water System:

- **Rockvale** holds water rights to six wells connected to the May Ditch. Water from these wells is released into Florence's system, treated at our facility, and then returned to Rockvale for distribution.
- **Coal Creek and Williamsburg** each hold rights to Arkansas River water. Florence treats their allocations and delivers the finished water back to them through the regional system.
- **East Florence and the Federal Prison** purchased treated water directly from the City.

Regional Water Storage

The Oak Creek Reservoir

The City of Florence, and the Town of Coal Creek and Town of Williamsburg possess storage degrees for eventual storage of raw water into a proposed and decreed Oak Creek Reservoir storing 2250-acre feet of raw water. Eventually construction and storage within this off-channel reservoir will provide participating entities and future additional regional partners with stored water for uncertain times and will reduce the floodplain for Florence posed by the current Oak Creek channel.

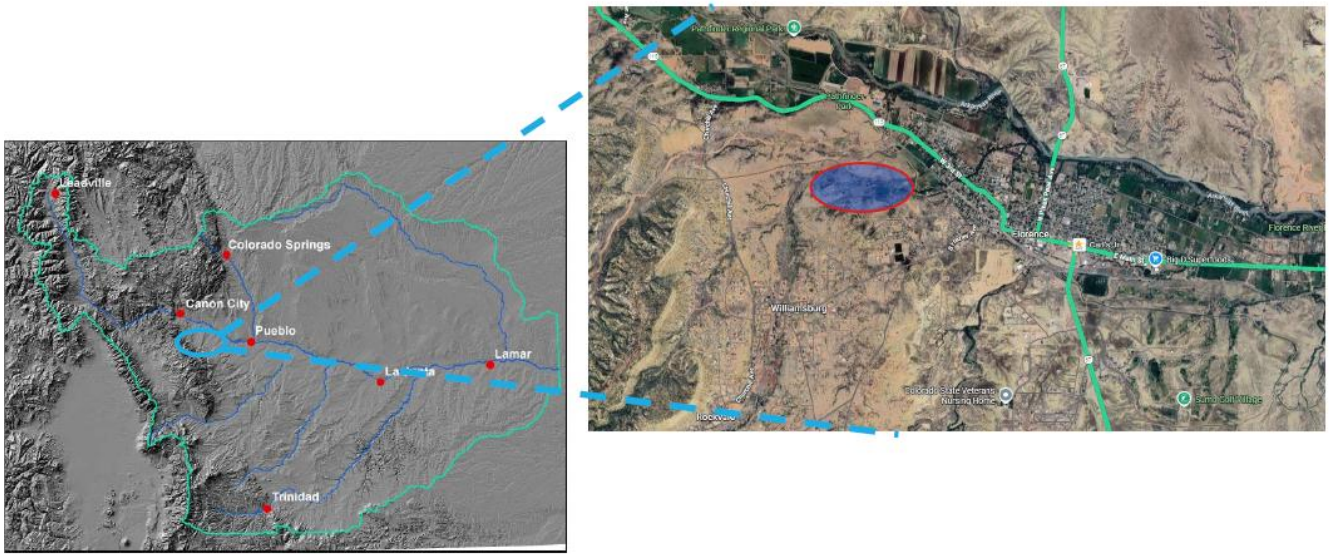


Figure 21 Oak Creek Reservoir

Commitment to Quality

The Florence Water Department's mission is to provide safe, reliable drinking water 24 hours a day, seven days a week while protecting both public health and the environment. We strive to meet and exceed all state and federal health and safety standards.

The Florence Water Treatment Facility is staffed by a dedicated team that emphasizes ongoing training and professional development to ensure the highest level of expertise. The department also responds quickly to customer inquiries about water quality and service, providing timely analysis and clear communication.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Supply & Infrastructure

Goal W-1: Ensure a reliable and resilient water supply system.

- **Policy W-1.1:** Expand and modernize water storage, treatment, and delivery infrastructure.
    - *Action W-1.1.1:* Increase storage capacity for both raw and treated water to improve drought resilience and ensure reliable supply during peak demand or emergencies.

- *Action W-1.1.2:* Modernize intake and diversion systems to improve efficiency, reduce water loss, and enhance the City's ability to capture and convey raw water.
- *Action W-1.1.3:* Upgrade aging water lines, pump stations, and valves to reduce leaks, improve pressure, and increase energy efficiency.
- *Action W-1.1.4:* Invest in upgrades at the Water Treatment Plant to maintain compliance, improve water quality, and increase operational efficiency.
- *Action W 1.1.5*: Pursue ongoing funding and partnerships to support water storage projects, treatment upgrades, and improvements to the distribution system.

Management & Planning

Goal W-2: Strengthen system management and long-term planning.

- **Policy W-2.1:** Improve data accuracy and system planning capabilities.
  - *Action W-2.1.1:* Update the City's GIS to include accurate locations of all mains, hydrants, meter pits, and valves.
- **Policy W-2.2:** Plan for growth and operational resilience.
  - *Action W-2.2.1:* Coordinate water planning with future land use, growth projections, and emergency preparedness needs.

Protection & Sustainability

Goal W-3: Protect water resources and promote sustainable management.

- **Policy W-3.1:** Align local water management with state and regional priorities.
  - *Action W-3.1.1:* Establish regular coordination with agencies such as the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Division of Water Resources, and Department of Public Health and Environment to ensure alignment and address emerging challenges.
  - *Action W-3.1.2:* Pursue grant funding from state programs to support water conservation and watershed protection efforts.
- **Policy W-3.2:** Promote conservation and community stewardship.
  - *Action W-3.2.1:* Develop programs and incentives to encourage water conservation among residents, businesses, and institutional users.



Appendices

A. Community Profile Report
B. Community Engagement Plan
C. Community Engagement Summary
D. Stakeholder Interview Summary
E. Community Survey Summary
F. Maps
    - Zoning Map
    - 3-Mile Plan Map
    - Opportunity Maps
    - Future Land Use Map
    - Florence Parks Map


THANKS
FOR VISITING
FLORENCE
COME SEE
US AGAIN