

# Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

## Overview

Pagosa Country is rich in beauty and offers abundant natural resources, an authentic small town feel and a strong sense of community. Like much of the Southwest and Four Corners region, the history of Pagosa Springs centers on individuals from diverse cultures who lived and migrated through the area. These influences from the past have blended together to create the cultures and lifestyles apparent today.

Pagosa Country encompasses an area bounded on the north by the rugged San Juan Mountains and the Continental Divide, on the south by the Colorado-New Mexico border, on the west by Yellow Jacket Pass and on the east by Wolf Creek Pass.

In the heart of Pagosa Country lies the community of Pagosa Springs, a town named after the great Pagosa Hot Springs. The word “Pagosa” originates from the Ute language meaning “boiling water.” Describing the appearance of the boiling, bubbling spring, the ancient Utes called it Pah-gosa (“pah”-water, “gosa”-boiling). Modern usage and advertising have changed the orthography to “Pagosa” and the meaning to “healing waters.”

Located on Highway 160 Pagosa Springs is approximately 60 miles east of Durango and 20 miles west of the Continental Divide and Wolf Creek Ski Area. The climate and terrain of Pagosa Springs offer year-round recreational activities to suit every age and lifestyle. During the summer and fall, visitors are invited to golf, fish, boat, hike, bike, swim or spend an afternoon on horseback. Winter activities include skiing “the most snow in Colorado” at Wolf Creek Ski Area, ice skating, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling or taking an evening sleigh ride. The hot springs offer a therapeutic and relaxing respite to locals and visitors alike, being one of the primary attractions in Pagosa Springs. What brings tourists back time and again is the relaxing yet energetic atmosphere of the small mountain town.

Tourism is one of the major sources of revenue in Pagosa Springs and in recent years the real estate and construction industries have bolstered Pagosa Springs’ local economy. The Mountain Hospital and Cloman Industrial Park combined with a new high school, give witness to the progressive thinking and actions of a community with a clear vision for the future.

## Community Assets and Issues

Numerous community assets and issues were identified by residents, business and property owners during Phase One of the Master Plan planning process and subsequent focus group meetings, Steering Committee meetings, stakeholder meetings and workshops. General discussions about community character including more specific comments about physical constraints, circulation systems and land uses were key topics addressed. Observations and concerns expressed at these meetings have guided this process and have been identified in this section.



*Historic building in Downtown Pagosa Springs*

#### *Downtown Assets*

- Elementary, Intermediate, Jr. High and High Schools
- Historic Buildings and Cisterns
- San Juan Historical Museum
- Natural hot springs and pools
- Geothermal resources
- Parks
- San Juan River
- Public Library
- Walkable, pedestrian-friendly streets
- Residential Neighborhoods
- Government Facilities including the County Building, Town Hall, Community Center, National Forest Service
- Historic Sites and Cisterns
- Scenic Overlooks
- Forest Service Information Center
- Reservoir Hill

*Input from public meetings,  
focus groups and surveys*

## **Community Character**

A key asset is the “small town character” that is reflected downtown in the scale of buildings, open views to surrounding mountains, river access and the collection of civic and cultural facilities. At the heart is the “400 Block” of Pagosa Street which conveys a traditional commercial identity which results from the collection of older commercial storefronts that have large display windows at street level and are aligned at the sidewalk edge creating a defined street wall.

The remainder of the Downtown Study Area is more diverse in character. To the east are auto-oriented uses and residential structures that are slowly being converted to office and commercial uses. Along Lewis Street several churches and surface parking lots exist that contain a variety of architectural styles and building setbacks. On the western edge of downtown there are several civic buildings such as the Pagosa Springs Elementary School and the Ruby Sisson Library.

The history of Pagosa Springs reveals diverse land use and development patterns that result in a cherished vernacular character that reflects the evolving history of the community. This diversity is specifically reflected in the variety of architectural styles exhibited by historic and new structures. Individual buildings contain a variety of architectural detailing, color schemes, styles, scale, massing and orientation resulting in an eclectic character that is cherished by local residents and visitors. Different architectural styles are often indicative of different uses. In areas where similar building heights, widths and setbacks from the street edge exist, clear development patterns can be delineated and identified. These patterns inform the design guidelines contained in “Chapter 6: Design Guidelines.”

Pagosa Springs has invested recently in streetscape and public improvements downtown; however, these efforts have not been consistent in design and have resulted in a fragmented appearance. The design guidelines in Chapter 6 recommend using basic unifying elements in streetscape improvements that will tie together the appearance of the public realm and improve visual consistency in the downtown.

## **Development and Ownership Patterns**

The downtown emerged along early highway and railroad alignments that followed the course of the San Juan River. Highway 160 which linked Pagosa Springs to Durango in the west and Monte Vista to the east, followed the north shore of the river and it was here that commercial buildings were erected. Even with some later road alignment and bridge changes the primary portion of downtown has remained. Other streets emerged that followed topographic features. Most notable is Hot Springs Boulevard which extends from Highway 160 to the south. The famous hot springs source pool is located on the south side of the river and in time hotels and motels appeared around it.

The main part of downtown was laid out in three independent street grids. The central portion focused around the “400 Block” of Pagosa Street and was positioned roughly parallel to the adjacent section of the San Juan River. It is approximately forty-five degrees off a true north-south grid orientation. The commercial center of town is located here, with a mix of governmental buildings, churches, schools and other civic and cultural institutions. A second part of downtown, which lies to the east of the “400 Block”, has a grid that follows this stretch of the river. The final larger portion was laid out south of Pagosa Street and west of the river. It is close to a true north-south orientation. These two areas developed primarily as residential neighborhoods. There are other smaller neighborhoods in the downtown

that have their own street systems, some of which are curvilinear, but these three larger sets of street grids form the bulk of what is considered downtown.

The original Townsite of Pagosa Springs was platted in 1883 in a traditional gridded lot and block pattern. Block lengths range from 700 feet to 900 feet by 320 feet in most of the commercial areas and the abutting neighborhoods for a common lot size of 7,500 square feet. However, variations exist in areas such as the commercial area north of Pagosa Street between First and Third streets where lots shorten to 125 feet due to highway right-of-way. Most of these gridded areas include alleys that are heavily used and relied upon for access and services.

The downtown area is defined by a concentration of commercial business paralleling the San Juan River and bordering Highway 160. The intensity of commercial uses diminishes in outlying blocks to the east and west of the “400 Block” of Pagosa Street. South of the San Juan River and north of Lewis Street the land uses become predominately residential.

The “400 Block” of the downtown area abuts the highway and faces towards the river. While the “north” side of the street is developed, the “south” side lacks development due to the shallow lot depth of some properties, and the steep hillside that drops to the river. As a result, some portions of the river edge property have remained undeveloped, excluding some public parking and river access points. This “Overlook” offers expansive views of the river and mountains to the southeast. The Overlook also includes direct pedestrian connections to Centennial Park, access to retailers along Pagosa Street, the natural hot springs and Town Park.

Downtown properties have traditionally been owned by a variety of public and private entities, which reflects typical small-scale ownership patterns of rural mountain communities. Increased interest, development pressure and private investment have resulted in some larger consolidated parcels. Other large parcels in close proximity to the Downtown Core include property along Hot Springs Boulevard.

## Physical Challenges

There are two primary physical features in downtown; the San Juan River and State Highway 160 which establish strong linear “spines” to the layout of downtown. The San Juan River winds through downtown paralleling the highway at many points which creates numerous commercial, residential and civic parcels with unique access to the river. The river is a noteworthy asset with recreational, scenic and environmental attractions, but also limits circulation options for pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles. Floodplain and wildlife habitat boundaries also limit some development options along the riverbank.

Highway 160 is a four-lane section of roadway through the downtown core and represents the primary traffic route through town. The highway provides necessary business traffic and access to local services and attractions while also creating challenges for pedestrians in terms of safe crossing points. Opportunities to reduce traffic volumes, minimize the effects of the traffic and provide alternative routes for local traffic were all recognized as important issues to address.



*The 400 block of Pagosa Street conveys a commercial identity.*



*Existing streetscape along Pagosa Street.*



*Highway 160 serves as both the artery for through-traffic and the primary east-west route for in-town traffic.*



*Crosswalks across the highway are heavily used.*



*Current pedestrian access along the San Juan River is limited and trails do not connect to one another.*

In addition to the highway and river, the extended length of the Downtown area which is approximately one and three-quarters of a mile from east to west, is a challenge. It is not easy or comfortable to walk its entire length and it is typically considered to be a complex of poorly connected “sub-areas.”

Varied topography adds another challenge. Hillsides that frame downtown rise more than two hundred feet above the river channel and some lots within the downtown area have an approximate 50 foot elevation change. While the hillsides and steep slopes add to the dramatic character of downtown, they also limit options for constructing new streets and walkways. Hillsides also mean that any new development within the downtown area will be visible from higher elevations.

## Circulation

### Pedestrian Attractions and Trails

Safe and convenient pedestrian routes throughout town are critical to the vision of a pedestrian-friendly downtown. Highway 160 currently impedes good pedestrian access while the San Juan River presents a challenge in linking development north and south of the river. Currently, three vehicular bridges and one dedicated pedestrian bridge exist that help connect the sub-areas of downtown; however they do not adequately serve vehicular and pedestrian needs.

New pedestrian bridges are in planning stages at the South 3rd Street right of way and above the “local’s favorite swimming hole” (Cotton’s Hole) at the Hermosa Street right of way. These bridges will create needed connectivity between existing and future pedestrian facilities.

The Town has embarked upon a Riverwalk trail system along the San Juan River, with a central portion in place. It is generally accessible but is in need of repair. New trail connections are needed to provide obvious and navigable routes from the East End to the concentrated commercial business district.

Pedestrian crossings are limited in number and walking along Pagosa Street can be unpleasant during peak traffic. Existing sidewalks are generally in poor condition and do not have adequate width. In some places, sidewalks do not exist. Existing crosswalks, especially those that cross the highway, are heavily used and pose safety concerns, especially in front of the existing County Courthouse. Because commercial development is currently concentrated on the north side of the highway in the Downtown Core Area, safe crossings between the commercial center and public parks, hot springs and trails are essential.

### Automobile Circulation

The highway serves as the town’s artery for through-traffic and is also the primary east-west route for in-town traffic. Due to topography and steep hillsides along the river, local traffic patterns rely on the highway and additional potential street connections are hindered.

Highway traffic volumes and speeds are recognized concerns. An inevitable increase in traffic volumes overtime promises to further complicate an already challenging situation. While highway traffic is a major factor, the use of other streets as alternative routes for internal circulation within the downtown is a challenge due to limited connectivity and topographic constraints.

Congestion, turning movements associated with the highway and safety are auto-related issues that local residents and business owners expressed as major concerns. They also noted that additional traffic calming improvements should be considered for the downtown.

## Parking

### Accessibility and Convenience

Accessible and convenient parking was identified by the public as an issue in Downtown Pagosa Springs. Parking is available in several locations and is configured in a variety of forms, including on-street parallel, diagonal spaces, and off-street surface parking lots. Some parking is also provided along alleys particularly in the “400 Block” of Pagosa Street.

Increases in population and tourist visits have heightened the demand for on-street and public parking along some sections of Pagosa Street. In addition, new and proposed commercial development in the downtown contributes to increasing concern from local residents and merchants who want to ensure that parking remains convenient and accessible.

Convenient parking is important to local businesses so that patrons have easy access. As part of the parking discussion in the “400 Block” of Pagosa Street, walking distance was repeatedly mentioned as the number one deterrent for development of parking lots in less proximate locations. It was discovered that there is a perception by some residents and business owners that business patrons will not walk between destinations and that businesses will lose valued customers if parking stalls within the “400 Block” are relocated. Encouraging infill and redevelopment projects that would increase density and diversity of the commercial core would connect existing commercial neighborhoods and reduce walking distances between destinations. There are, however, abundant on-street parking opportunities on Lewis Street and other side streets within a short distance of the main commercial development along Pagosa Street.

In recent years, a wide range of literature has discussed optimum walking distances for downtown areas. Several variables influence what is considered appropriate. Climate, topography and the age of user populations are broad scale factors that affect the distance people are willing to walk. It is clearly accepted that the quality of the walking experience is a major determinant. If the experience is pleasant with attractive landscaping, buildings and activities, people are more willing to walk a greater distance. Wayfinding signage, including pedestrian-oriented directories, also helps first-time visitors feel more comfortable using outlying parking spaces. Many designers recommend street blocks that are no more than 300 to 500 feet long, to break up the perceived distance. Overall, studies suggest that people will walk about 1200 feet to a specific destination, or the equivalent of about three to four conventional city blocks.



*A parking area, alley and Pagosa Street converge at this point.*



*Parking for business along the 400 block of Pagosa Street is currently located on the south side of the highway, next to the river.*

*Parking Issues*

- Confirm existing parking patterns and deficiencies
- Minimize the visual impact of parking facilities including future structured parking
- Make efficient and practical use of existing alley access and parking opportunities
- Provide alternative employee parking opportunities for Downtown businesses
- Maximize on-street parking opportunities
- Ensure that off-street public parking lots do not impact the desired street character

*Input from public meetings, focus groups and surveys*

**Current Parking Supply and Demand**

The location and number of parking spaces that are available in the downtown is a key point of discussion in the community. Overall, there is a sufficient supply, although there are times of shortages in some key locations, as described below.

As a supplement to the Downtown Master Plan the current parking supply and demand were analyzed and are included in Appendix B. Figure 1 provides an overview of current parking controls and restrictions. The matrix shows that most curb and off-street parking within the downtown is unrestricted. Notable exceptions are portions of Lewis Street, Fourth Street Pagosa Street, and the “Overlook” public parking where two-hour parking restrictions are enforced between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

In order to understand the nature of the current parking supply, parking data was collected during two time periods on both a weekday (Friday) and a weekend day (Saturday) in June 2006. To facilitate the data collection process, the Downtown Study Area was divided into three areas, as depicted on Figure 2: Parking Area Boundaries. Area 1 includes the Downtown Core and the West End. Area 2 covers the East Village, East End and the Lewis Street neighborhood. Area 3 includes those parts generally south of Pagosa Street including Hot Springs Boulevard and the Hermosa Street neighborhood.

The table below summarizes the overall parking survey results collected for the three study areas. The table indicates that at peak occupancy, on Friday during the lunch hour, 41 percent of all 1,833 on and off-street spaces were occupied. The lowest utilization was on Saturday evening, when 29 percent of the spaces were occupied.

Pagosa Springs Parking Survey Results				
	Friday		Saturday	
	11:30 AM	4:30 PM	11:30 AM	4:30 PM
<b>Available Spaces</b>				
On-Street	619	619	619	619
Off-Street	1214	1214	1214	1214
<b>Total On- and Off-Street Space</b>	<b>1833</b>			
<b>Occupied Spaces</b>				
On-Street	170	114	185	141
Off-Street	573	446	432	397
<b>Percent Occupied</b>				
On-Street	27%	18%	30%	23%
Off-Street	47%	37%	36%	33%
<b>Overall Utilization</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>29%</b>

Overall utilization, however, is only a part of the current parking picture. Parking supply must not only be adequate, it must also be convenient. Figure 3 through Figure 6 in Appendix B reveal a number of locations where current parking demand represents at least 80 percent of supply. These locations are as follows:

- North side of Pagosa Street, 400 Block (“Overlook”).
- North and south sides of Pagosa Street between 2nd Street and 3rd Street.
- Far eastern portion of the River Center near existing service center.

In each of these above listed locations a shortage of parking exists since eighty percent (80%) or more of the available spaces are occupied during peak times. Under these conditions, motorists may have difficulty finding a place to park which may result in a change of shopping behavior. Even in the absence of additional parking pressure within these areas, increasing the parking supply in the vicinity or enhancing the walking experience to other existing underutilized facilities, would typically be pursued to insure the continued economic viability of existing uses. Chapter 5 provides aditional context for the existing parking situation in conjunction with future parking demands and parking recommendations.

## Commercial Land Uses

Existing commercial land uses in Downtown Pagosa Springs range from restaurants and retail to offices and auto repair shops. To some extent similar uses have clustered into distinct sub-areas. Some of these, such as the Downtown Core have a distinct identity. Others, such as the East End, lack a specific identity. The Master Plan contains conceptual alternatives for improvements in each of these districts and also identifies opportunities to effectively link them into a cohesive downtown. The following commercial districts exist:

### Hot Springs Boulevard

The area immediately south of the San Juan River and flanking Hot Springs Boulevard contains several important community assets including hot springs facilities, the Post Office, Chamber of Commerce, Visitor's Center, Town Hall and the Community Center. The concentration of civic buildings combined with new streetscape improvements has resulted in a civic campus of important community structures that is readily accessible from the Downtown Core and takes advantage of views to the river and surrounding hillsides. This emerging identify for the boulevard, which includes institutional and resort facilities, is a new asset for the downtown, one which offers the opportunity to extend pedestrian activity south of the highway.

An important consideration in this neighborhood is the amount of undeveloped land including parcels along the eastern bank of the San Juan River and on both adjacent sides of Hot Springs Boulevard. The manner in which the area develops is important to create and enrich a pedestrian-oriented environment. In addition, portions of these properties may have environmental resources that should be protected, including existing wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Currently, sketch plans are in place that depict a variety of uses, including residential, that orient to the river and create an urban corridor along the roadway. In addition to this proposed mixed-use development, Archuleta County owns land along the east side of the street and may develop future administration offices at this location that would expand the civic uses in this area. Issues with future development of Hot Springs Boulevard property include increasing the traffic burden on the bridge at the intersection of Hot Springs Boulevard and Highway 160.

The Hot Springs Boulevard area is perceived as a long walk to the Downtown Core. Consideration for additional vehicular connectivity and pedestrian bridges is important. A pedestrian friendly street edge with urban form buildings is an important component for the future development of the Hot Springs Boulevard District.



*Hot Springs Boulevard has seen recent streetscape improvements.*



*The Post Office is located on Hot Springs Boulevard.*



*Lewis Street has a distinct identity.*



*Lewis Street contains a mix of churches and other institutional facilities*



*The East Village*



*There are several residential structures flanking Highway 160 to the east of the Downtown Core that have been renovated to accommodate commercial uses.*

## **Downtown Core**

The Downtown Core is bounded by 3rd Street to the east, 8th Street to the west, Rosita and Lewis Streets to the north and Centennial and Town Park to the south. This area contains the largest concentration of buildings that convey traditional storefront character and supports several retail establishments. At the center is the 400 Block of Pagosa Street where buildings extend to the front and side property lines and combine to create a block-long building wall with significant mass.

The “400 Block” is challenged in that the south side of the roadway has limited retail development along the riverside. In conventional retail planning a double-fronted arrangement is preferred. This allows patrons the opportunity to return to their point of origin without repeating the viewing experience. Finding ways to increase retail use on the south side while also retaining parking and overlooks is therefore an issue. Opportunities to expand retail opportunities on the riverside exist in areas between the existing County Courthouse and 6th Street.

Fourth Street, which is perpendicular to Pagosa Street, offers an extended mixed-use opportunity. The presence of school buildings along one side of this street particularly affects the retail character. This may change as alternative school locations are considered and relocation potentially occurs at the schools. In this respect, Fourth Street may offer opportunity for additional mixed-use development, including a residential component in the future.

Lewis Street is also an area with a distinct identity. It contains a mix of uses including churches and other institutional facilities, along with commercial buildings. This street is quiet compared to Pagosa Street, in terms of both pedestrian and automobile traffic. Lewis Street has some appeal in that the south end of the street is highly visible from the highway. Therefore opportunities exist on this side street for expanding uses and creating a vibrant pedestrian environment.

## **West End**

The West End is an area that focuses on Highway 160, beginning at 15th Street and continuing east to 8th Street. This portion of downtown is predominately commercial in use and lacks pedestrian amenities. Sidewalks in this area are not continuous and connectivity to the downtown core is limited.

Currently, the West End consists of freestanding buildings that are set back from the street edge creating a fragmented appearance that is often punctuated by curb cuts and surface parking lots. Some parcels are landscaped and others have an unfinished edge to the road.

This area has opportunity to develop as a distinct commercial district linked with pedestrian routes and accented with institutional facilities. The recently expanded Ruby Sisson Library is an anchor at the east end of this commercial district. The Library, combined with the elementary school creates a civic node. A large vacant parcel owned by Archuleta County affords the opportunity for significant future infill development.

## East Village

Between 3rd Street and 1st Street lies a corridor along Pagosa Street (Highway 160) that is commercial in use but was historically residential. As a result this district has a residential feel in both site layout and building design. The traditional residential structures establish a “village” scale that provides a distinct image for the area. The relative scale of these structures and the details incorporated into the porches and gable ends of buildings contribute to the visual aesthetics. Landscaped front yards also enhance the experience. The East Village offers an opportunity to expand the supply of specialty retail and a variety of housing options in the downtown.

Sidewalks in the East Village are in poor condition, narrow, sometimes non-existent and often discourage walking. New curb cuts, requirements for on-site parking and increased building mass in recent development threaten to alter the character of the neighborhood. The changing scale of buildings is a concern as perceived from Pagosa Street and also from abutting residential neighborhoods. Establishing a balance between the traditional scale and character of the area with new functional requirements will be a challenge in the East Village.

A special asset is the Town’s old water cistern which sits high on the bank of the river and is currently used as the local museum. This is a noteworthy historic resource that offers a unique view to the mountains in the east.

## East End

The East End extends from the intersection of Highway 84 and Highway 160, west to the 1st Street bridge. Upon entering the town from the east, the river valley becomes constrained between Reservoir Hill on the south and steep bluffs to the north. This pinch point in topography creates a natural gateway into Downtown Pagosa Springs.

Buildings in this area are generally set back from the street edge, reflecting the highway orientation of early developments. In portions, the right-of-way is rather broad, allowing space to develop frontage roads. These frontage roads provide internal circulation opportunities among parcels, without entering the highway.

The pedestrian experience in this area is considerably challenging. Neither the highway nor the frontage roads have sidewalks. The current configuration of the frontage road on the east end of Highway 160 discourages walking by expanding the current highway right-of-way by an additional twenty-four feet of pavement on both sides of the highway. The overall width of vehicle paving creates safety concerns for pedestrians.

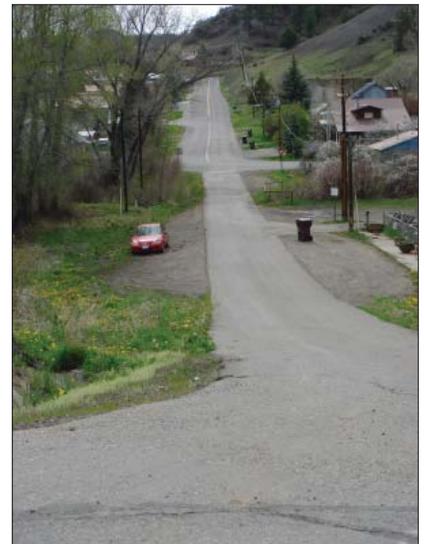
Additional paving for on-site parking in front of buildings creates the appearance of large-scale parking lots with little internal landscaping. Access to trails and other outdoor amenities are limited and not compatible with the 2003 Trails Plan. Recreational amenities also exist here, but are generally hidden assets. These include fishing ponds along the river, rafting “put in” spots and trail access points. The resulting character is a development pattern that is dictated by automobile access and conceals the public land and river just north of the existing buildings.



*Fishing ponds at the East End are a community asset.*



*The East End*



*Local streets are rural and unique in character.*

## Residential Land Uses

Residential neighborhoods also exist in the downtown generally adjacent to the commercial districts. These neighborhoods are predominately single family and align along quiet streets with low lighting and noise levels. However, as commercial development expands, increased traffic and noise may have impacts in these areas. Mitigation of these impacts should be considered vital to the successful integration of new uses within or in close proximity to existing neighborhoods. Promoting improved connections within these neighborhoods, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, is therefore an issue.

Established residential neighborhoods within the Downtown Study Area include:

### South Pagosa

South Pagosa reaches from the San Juan River west to 11th Street and is bounded on the north by Highway 160 and extends south to the High School. South Pagosa is predominately single family homes with occasional mobile homes and small apartment complexes. However, some areas within the neighborhood are currently transitioning into high-end townhomes and condominiums with limited architectural and site standards. Traditionally, this neighborhood is multi-cultural and is the most demographically diverse. Circulation is an issue for this neighborhood as access onto the highway is challenging and several platted east-west streets are not developable due to a large shale bluff.



*Existing residence on Hermosa Street.*



### Hermosa Street

Hermosa Street is a distinct neighborhood that lies south of the highway between 1st Street and Hot Springs Boulevard. Residential units in this area are predominately single-family and many are older structures that may qualify as significant historic structures. Residents of this neighborhood enjoy close proximity to the river and downtown. A concern is how to maintain convenient vehicular access from this neighborhood to the Downtown Core, though residents are also concerned about the amount and speeds of traffic along this street. The intensity of future alley usage is also an issue with potential higher density commercial development occurring in the East Village and sharing the abutting alley. This is an increasing issue as local residents continue to use this street to bypass highway traffic and as development pressure increases. Discussion has taken place regarding the closure of Hermosa Street from its intersection of Hot Springs Boulevard east through Town Park to the 3rd Street right-of-way. Discussion has also indicated interest in providing an additional vehicular bridge at 3rd Street or 2nd Street across the river to San Juan Street.



*Many established residential neighborhoods are located within the Downtown Study Area.*

### San Juan Street

San Juan Street is a unique neighborhood that is currently single-family residential but zoned for commercial use. Recent development indicates it is transitioning into a moderate density townhome area. San Juan Street is a dead-end roadway, which many residents find attractive because of the low levels of traffic, though discussions have indicated a vehicular bridge connecting this neighborhood to the Hermosa Street neighborhood, may be appropriate. This neighborhood is also in close proximity to the river, hot springs, downtown and civic buildings.

### **Lewis Street**

This residential neighborhood lies between 1st Street and 3rd Street and shares an alley with commercial uses in the East Village. Buildings in this area are generally single-family residential structures with an occasional church or business. Many structures in this area qualify for local landmark status, though few have been designated. Through the Comprehensive Planning process, this area was designated “Mixed-Use Residential” which would allow up to 30% of the structures to be used for commercial or mixed-use purposes. This may encourage more development in the area.

### **Mesa Heights Subdivision**

This neighborhood lies in the northeastern portion of the Downtown Study Area. Mesa Drive, Apple Street and 3rd Street are key roads. The neighborhood was platted in the 1970s and most of the single-family homes reflect this era of construction.

### **North Pagosa**

This area lies in the northwest portion of the Downtown Study Area and is bounded by Juanita Street, 5th Street on the east, 8th Street on the west and the highway on the south. McCabe Creek runs north to south through the neighborhood and has been identified as an underutilized natural amenity.

## **Natural Amenities**

Natural resources such as parks and open space are important to the image and enjoyment of downtown. For planning purposes, it is important to distinguish the types of parks and open spaces that exist here. Natural open space for example is different from organized parkland, where formal sports activities and structured uses may occur. A series of natural open space parks have been developed along the San Juan River in addition to a large passive recreation open space with a primitive trail system that abuts the study area on the east.

Water resources are also integral components to the downtown. The hot springs and related geothermal outflows constitute a signature amenity. The San Juan River and the contributory branches of McCabe Creek and Mill Creek (parallel with 1st Street) are also assets. These water resources should be celebrated and respected in any new development by means of public art, interpretive signage and other design enhancements.

### **San Juan River**

The San Juan River geographically divides the Town and is a cherished public amenity. As segments of the Riverwalk Trail are completed the pedestrian movement by foot and bicycle will increase.

While the river is a paramount asset, the trail system remains limited and there are shortages of access and overlook points. A majority of the access points that exist are difficult to find and lack clear identification.

The Town is working to implement a Whitewater and Restoration Plan for the San Juan River Corridor which was created in 2005. Some preliminary improvements in compliance with the plan have been executed and others are anticipated in the near future. These improvements will enhance the recreational viability of the river corridor and further distinguish the river as a regional attraction.



*McCabe Creek is an unknown feature in Downtown.*

## McCabe Creek

McCabe Creek is a relatively unknown feature within the Downtown Study Area. It winds through the entire North Pagosa neighborhood before crossing under the highway near 5th Street and ultimately feeding into the San Juan River. The Creek runs through culverts under Highway 160 and two buildings and then daylights approximately 150 feet from its confluence with the San Juan River. It was expressly stated by members of the public that McCabe Creek should be enhanced, made more visible, more accessible and that the town should explore the feasibility of constructing a trail along its bank.

## Geothermal Resources

Geothermal resources are especially important to Pagosa Springs. They distinguish Pagosa Springs from other communities in the region and offer recreation, tourism and healing opportunities. The source pool, listed on the State's Historic Register is located on private property and was noted as an important element of the natural environment that should be protected to ensure continued public access and interpretive opportunities. The hot springs also provide a key source for geothermal heating in the Downtown however the outflows from a number of the springs are underutilized and generally unattractive.

## Parks

### Reservoir Hill

Reservoir Hill is a valuable open space amenity that provides an immediate connection to the natural environment. The large scale and dominant form of the hill and the fact that it can be seen anywhere from the downtown make it a great asset to the town's identity. Reservoir Hill provides opportunities for hiking, biking, running and special events. Many people consider Reservoir Hill to be an underutilized asset as it is used mostly by locals. Access points exist behind the San Juan Motel, Park Street and Spring Street. These are generally hidden and difficult for visitors to locate. It has been suggested that signage would be a benefit to direct new users to this open space amenity as well as additional access points on the south and east end of the park.



*McCabe Creek is an underutilized community asset.*

### Centennial Park

Centennial Park stretches from Hot Springs Boulevard (below "The Overlook") west to 6th Street and includes the confluence of McCabe Creek. The town's Riverwalk Trail parallels the Park and connects to the neighboring Town Park. Centennial Park is easily accessible from the Downtown Core. The portion of Centennial Park behind the Courthouse is often used as a boating take-out. Outflows from the town's geothermal facility are piped under the Riverwalk and can be seen flowing into the San Juan River. These areas offer opportunities to create interesting water features and interpretive sites that would enhance the river experience.

### Town Park

Town Park is a prized asset and focal point for the community. The park sits below the elevation of the highway creating a steep bank that has limited access between the Highway and the Park. The Park is comprised of two sections which are separated by Hermosa Street. The northern section provides active recreation opportunities with sports fields and a backstop that are used for Intermediate and Jr. High school playfields. The other side is an informal green space with picnic tables that is popular for family events and gatherings. The Riverwalk Trail abuts the river on the south side of the park and provides a well-used pedestrian connection to Centennial Park.

Town Park is also used throughout the summer for large events that attract local residents and visitors. Although Town Park has served as an ideal site because of its proximity to the Downtown Core and the river, attendance continues to increase and some events have already outgrown the site.

### Riverside Park

This park includes fishing ponds that have been developed for accessibility and beginning anglers. During the winter months these ponds freeze and are maintained by the Town for ice skating. It also serves as a main put-in for local rafting companies. However, the park is difficult to access and could benefit from appropriately placed directional signage.

## Civic and Community Facilities

The Pagosa Springs Downtown Master Plan area encompasses a variety of civic, school and governmental facilities. While the downtown is fortunate to have these facilities, there are a number of challenges:

### Schools

The Junior High and Intermediate Schools are located on the highway in the commercial Downtown Core. The locations of these schools have been recognized as prime commercial property. The schools are also constrained because of the lack of playground and playfield space. Currently, students cross the highway to access Town Park for fitness classes and extra-curricular sports activities.

The Elementary School is located near the highway in the West End, which poses pedestrian, safety and vehicular circulation issues. The High School is located at the southern end of the Study Area and is disconnected from the main trail, parks and pedestrian pathways.

### Government Buildings

Town Hall and the Community Center are located on Hot Springs Boulevard at the southern end of the Study Area and are somewhat disconnected from the Downtown Core, other government buildings, main trails and parks. The Post Office is located on Hot Springs Boulevard and is challenged by internal circulation issues and limited access from the Highway.



*Town Park is a focal point for the community.*



*The old bell tower from the previous Town Hall sits at the corner of Hwy 160 and Lewis Street.*



*The Jr. High and Intermediate Schools are located on the highway.*



*The heat exchange building at the edge of Centennial Park.*



*A variety of wayfinding signs exist in Pagosa Springs.*

## Civic Buildings

The Library is located on South 8th Street near the Elementary School and poses similar pedestrian safety issues. Access at 8th Street onto the highway is also a challenge for this building location.

The Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center are presently located on the south side of the San Juan River, just south of the intersection of Hot Springs Boulevard and Highway 160. Parking, public restrooms, access to trails and way-finding signage are limited. These limitations have impacted the town's ability to adequately serve the needs of tour buses and tour groups who have expressed an interest in adding Pagosa Springs to travel itineraries. The town may benefit by relocating the Chamber of Commerce to a different site and creating a separate visitor's center with expanded public restroom facilities and designated bus parking.

The San Juan Historical Society Museum is located at the corner of 1st Street and Highway 160. The primary structure has been integrated into historic cisterns that are visible from 1st Street and highway eastbound lanes. Although the current size of the building is adequate for the annual number of visitors, public input indicated that the town and the Museum may benefit by relocating the Museum to a larger and more centralized location, preferably within walking distance of the existing Historic Business District.

## Heat Exchange Building

The Heat Exchange Building is a Town operated public utility building. The internal system uses hot water from the natural springs similar to the way a heat exchanger for a house works. The system heats non-mineralized water that is transferred through buried pipes to heat numerous downtown buildings and a public parking lot. The current heat exchange building, located just south of the intersection of 5th Street and the highway is a metal pre-fabricated building. Members of the public have noted that this facility should be relocated to a site that is more visible, accessible and aesthetically constructed.

## Signage and Wayfinding

Many resources and public amenities are well-kept secrets due to a lack of recognizable signage and access. Some information is provided on standard highway and street signs, but these are often placed too close to destinations to allow visitors adequate time to make informed decisions regarding route selection or parking. Signs to parks, trails, river access and public parking are limited. There are also no appropriately placed directories that would orient first-time visitors to public amenities and historic sites. Additionally, signage that does exist is generally non-descript in nature and lacks a cohesive graphic theme and style that would create consistency and result in recognition.

## Summary of Issues

Recent growth and development throughout the region and continued pressure for infill and redevelopment within the Downtown Study Area has increased awareness regarding the importance that downtown plays in the quality of life of residents and visitors in Pagosa Springs. In response, the community must adapt by focusing on strengthening the visible and physical attributes of downtown that contribute to the character and fulfill the vision of its residents. While the issues facing the community are diverse, they can be summarized into a series of statements that form the basis for the Master Plan, the Urban Design Framework and the recommendations for specific Opportunity Sites.

1. Specialty retail, dining, local offices, business and residential uses must be considered essential to the continued success of downtown.
2. The 400 Block of Pagosa Street is an attractive destination for local customers and visitors. However, street activity diminishes rapidly at the close of the workday. The diversity, density and intensity of uses in the downtown commercial areas must increase to generate additional pedestrian activity along the street in both the daytime and evening hours.
3. Pedestrian connectivity in the Downtown Core is available, but could be improved to provide more convenient, connected and safer access along the highway. This includes access from the highway to the trail system.
4. There are several commercial parcels that are currently underutilized and are critical to the overall health, continuity and viability of the downtown area.
5. Downtown could benefit from additional residential development to support existing and proposed commercial projects.
6. Many downtown assets are not well known or used to their potential.
7. Traffic volumes and speeds along Highway 160 discourage pedestrian connectivity.
8. Public parking is not managed to the fullest extent possible.
9. There is a lack of wayfinding and signage to direct visitors to specific destinations and existing signs detract from the landscape and desired character of downtown.
10. The loss of historic structures along Highway 160 could impact the character of downtown neighborhoods.
11. Recent development west of Town has diluted the intensity of downtown commercial uses; a central core of commercial activity is challenged by the competition, which has caused a shift in viable businesses.
12. Downtown lacks adequate public gathering spaces for large events, meeting spaces and performances.
13. Diverging architectural styles throughout downtown fragments the streetscape.
14. While current downtown parking supply is adequate overall, it is not necessarily convenient.
15. A need exists to have a cohesive group to manage improvements and marketing of the downtown.



*Auto-oriented land uses can impact the character of a commercial area.*

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