

CASTLE CREEK CAUCUS MASTER PLAN

Appendix A – Existing Conditions Report

INTRODUCTION

The Castle Creek Caucus (Caucus) was originally established as part of the Maroon-Castle Creek Caucus in 1990 via BOCC Resolution #90-99 in order to provide a local forum for residents of the two Valleys. In May of 2015, the BOCC passed Resolution No. 037-2015, which recognized the Maroon Creek Caucus as separate entity and awarding the newly-recognized caucus all functions set forth in Article IV of the Pitkin County Home Rule Charter. Resolution No. 037-2015 also states, “The recognition of a Maroon Creek Caucus and the designation of the caucus area supersedes the recognition and designation of the previously existing Maroon/Castle Creek Caucus such that the previously existing caucus will become two smaller, separate caucus areas existing side by side.” As a result, the Castle Creek Caucus is now also considered an independently recognized caucus with all functions granted in Article IV of the Pitkin County Charter.

The Caucus typically functions as a recommending body that provides comments to the County on all matters, particularly land use and planning related matters, directly affecting the caucus area. The Castle Creek Caucus Area (Caucus Area) boundary generally includes the watershed from Richmond Ridge on the east to the ridge above Castle Creek on the west; to the City of Aspen boundary line on the north, to the Pitkin County/Gunnison County boundary on the south (See Figure 1).

This appendix includes existing conditions data and information which supports and informs the policies and implementation measures contained in the 2018 Castle Creek Caucus Master Plan to which this document is appended. The information contained herein is intended to provide a snapshot of the existing conditions within the Caucus Area for each of the policy topics covered in the Master Plan. These policy topics are listed as follows:

- Existing Land Use;
- Zoning;
- Residential Development (addressed under Existing Land Use and Zoning topics);
- Commercial Development (addressed under Existing Land Use and Zoning topics);
- Growth;
- Water Use, Quality and Quantity;
- Air Quality;
- Roads;
- Transit;
- Natural Environment;
- Open Space/Trails/Recreation/Tourism;
- Agriculture;
- Scenic Quality;
- Affordable Housing;

- Historic Resources;
- Mineral Exploration/Extraction

EXISTING LAND USE

While the Castle Creek Valley supports a residential community, it also functions as a portal to mining and ranching history, and to recreation ranging from cycling on County roads, to hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, Nordic skiing, backcountry skiing and mountaineering on United States Forest Service (USFS) lands. The area also contains high-quality wetlands and riparian habitat and a healthy beaver population. The Castle Creek Valley provides an excellent opportunity for environmental education, focusing on preservation and stewardship of the area's natural resources.

As shown on the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 2), the Caucus Area consists primarily of detached single-family rural residential development, which is located along Castle Creek Road; in the Little Annie/Midnight Mine/Richmond Ridge area, in the Conundrum Valley and to a very limited extent, up Express Creek. There are mining claims scattered throughout the Caucus Area. There are also a few commercial and institutional uses within the Caucus Area including, the Prince of Peace Church, the Aspen Music School/Country Day School campus, the Pine Creek Cook House, Toklat (now known as the Catto Center at Toklat) and the Ashcroft Ski Touring Center.

Residential development is located on lots generally ranging in size from two to forty acres, though larger acreages exist. Most of the subdivided land cannot be further subdivided due to zoning or restrictive covenants.

The following paragraphs provide a general summary of existing uses:

Subdivisions

- Hardy (3 lots, ranging in size from 24-57 acres, 122 ac. total)
- Castle Creek Valley Ranch (16 lots, ranging in size from 3-37 acres; 4 affordable housing lots; 342 ac. Total, including 142 acres of open space. Common areas and roads)
- Feinsinger (2 lots, 17 & 41 ac. respectively, 59 ac. total)
- Castle Creek Banks (3 lots, 24, 31, and 3 ac., 58 ac total)
- Castle Creek Ranch (3 lots, 2 at 2 ac. and one at 4.7 ac., 9 ac. total),
- HES 113 (2 lots, 10 & 15 ac. Respectively, 25 ac. total)
- Lime Village (6 lots, approx 2 ac. Each, 13 ac. total)
- Navratilova (2 lots 100 & 21 ac. Respectively, 121 ac. total)
- Castle Creek Four (4 lots, 10 ac. Each, 39 ac. total)
- Twin Ridge (13 lots, approximately .2 ac. Each, 2 open space parcels, 5.6 ac. total)
- Twin Ridge Townhomes (12 lots plus one common area parcel, .02 ac. Each, .83 ac. total)
- Meadowood (67 residential lots from .5 to 1.5 ac., two open-space parcels, 83 ac. total)
- Sawmill (3 lots, .5, 1.2 and 1.7 ac. respectively, one of these lots includes a portion of the commuter trail that crosses the Castle Creek and connects the Marolt Open Space with downtown Aspen, 3.87 ac. total)
- HES 305 (2 lots, 20 and 21 ac. respectively, 41 ac. total)

- Peter Vought (2 lots, 1.4 and 1.8 ac. respectively, 3.2 ac. total)
- MAA (3 lots which form the Aspen Music School/Aspen Country Day School campus plus one separately-owned residential lot, 52.8 ac. total)

Affordable Housing

In addition to scattered caretaker dwelling units, affordable housing consists of three PMH (permanent moderate housing) lots at Castle Creek Valley Ranch (CCVR), Twin Ridge, and housing associated with Ashcroft/Pine Creek Cookhouse.

Rural & Remote Cabins

In the Little Annie/Richmond Ridge area, which is zoned Rural/Remote, seven cabins have been built on mining claims since 1994, when the Rural/Remote zone district was established (several other cabins existed prior to the rezoning.) One cabin was built up Cooper Creek. An additional five cabins have been approved since 1994 in the Rural/Remote areas up Castle Creek, but not built.

Commercial Uses

There is limited commercial development within the Caucus Area. Development that exists is tourist-related and includes the Pine Creek Cookhouse and the Ashcroft Ski Touring Company. The caucus area also includes small portions of both the Aspen Mountain and Highlands ski areas. These uses all operate under existing, approved master plans. The Pine Creek Cookhouse is allowed pursuant to the SKI-REC Master Plan for the Ashcroft Ski Area.

The Toklat cabin, which is located within the AR-10 zone district, was purchased by the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES) in 2004 and is currently known as the Catto Center at Toklat. According to the ACES website, the facility “serves as a gathering place for cultural and ecological discourse.” As a non-profit institutional use, this use is considered to be non-conforming in the AR-10 zone district.

The following commercial recreational uses also exist within the Caucus Area subject to USFS permits:

- Braun huts
- Bike tours
- Jeep tours
- Hut/mountain guides
- Environmental and historical education

While existing commercial uses are generally supported by residents in the valleys, there is a general consensus that *any new* commercial activities (other than Forest-based commercial recreational) are more appropriately located within the urban growth boundary areas in the County.

Public Access

Public access to federal lands includes the Cathedral & American Lake trailheads, and Midnight Mine, Little Annie, Express Creek, Montezuma, Cooper Creek and Pearl Pass Roads which provide access for huts, winter skiing & snowmobiling; summer biking, off-roading, dirt biking and hiking.

Transferable Development Rights

Certificates have been issued for 83 transferable development rights from 57 parcels, one USFS site and one defunct mining claim within the Castle Creek area. As a result, approximately 1,037 acres of rural/remote-zoned land within the Caucus Area have been deed restricted against development. Conversely, 15 parcels within the Caucus Area have been approved as TDR receiver sites. In total, 26 TDR's have been extinguished on these 15 parcels. On all but one of the receiver sites, the TDR's were used to allow additional floor area on a residence. On the remaining parcel, one TDR was used to create an initial development right and a second TDR was used for additional floor area. The parcels that have been approved as sending and receiving sites are depicted on the TDR Inventory Map (Figure 3).

ZONING

Zone Descriptions

The Caucus Area contains a mix of zoning types including AH, AR-10, AR-2, P-I, R-15, R-30, RR, and SKI-REC. Table 1 below provides a summary of the intentions of each zone district. Figure 4 is a map showing the existing zoning pattern within the Caucus Area.

Table 1
Summary of Zone Districts Intent

Zone District	Intent
AH (Twin Ridge and Castle Creek Valley Ranch) - <i>DU</i>	The AH (Affordable Housing) zone district is intended to provide land for the production of Category affordable housing.
<i>1 Dwelling Unit per 10 acres of land</i>	The intent of the AR-10 (Agricultural/ Residential) zone district is “to accommodate small scale agricultural activities and large-lot residential development that maintains the rural character and appearance of the land. Because few agricultural activities can be accomplished on a lot of ten (10) acres, the majority of such land will be used for residential uses. Residential development should be clustered and/or grouped at the edges of valleys or wooded areas in order to minimize the visual disruption of the natural landforms and to avoid the appearance of unrelated homes spread randomly across the land.”
Skyview Subdivision only - <i>maximum of one dwelling unit per 2 acres of land</i>	The intent of the AR-2 (Agricultural/Forestry/Residential) zone district is “to provide for a moderate density, transition zone between moderate and low density residential land uses. This zone district primarily contains existing housing concentrations with densities exceeding those in surrounding areas. It is not intended to be used to accommodate new development in the Rural Area of the County.:
P-I – (Aspen Music School/Aspen Country	The intent of the P-I (Public and Institutional) zone district is to provide for the development of public and institutional uses, facilities and services for

Day School Camps) – Development density set by master plan	governmental, civic, educational, humanitarian, health care and other non-profit public purposes consistent with the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan and to provide for related uses that are customarily incidental or accessory to public and institutional uses. The district is also intended to provide for other non-profit facilities and uses that require sites with multiple buildings, unique facilities, or facilities that are not easily categorized into an existing use category.
R-15 - 1 dwelling unit per 15,000 sf of land	The R-15 (Moderate Density Residential) zone district is intended to provide areas for moderate density, single-family, residential dwelling units with customary accessory uses.
R-30 - 1 dwelling unit per 30,000 sf of land	The R-30 (Suburban Density Residential) zone district is intended to provide areas for suburban density, single-family and duplex residential dwelling units with customary accessory uses. Recreational and institutional uses customarily found near residential areas are also contemplated. R-30 zoning should only be applied to lands designated for this density on the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan, or to rezone already-developed areas into conformity with actual development patterns and densities.
RR - 1 dwelling unit per 35 acres of land	The intent of the RR (Rural/Remote) zone district is “to: (i) conserve and protect the natural environment and its resources, while allowing for limited recreational uses and limited residential development, (ii) preserve the small scale, low-density backcountry character and lifestyle, (iii) retain undeveloped areas, and (iv) allow for the transfer of development rights to areas that are more appropriate for development. This district accommodates only small new structures and very limited types of development.”
SKI-REC (Ashcroft, Aspen Mountain, Highlands) - Development density set by master plan	The SKI-REC (Ski-Recreation) zone district is “intended for lands that are used for downhill and cross-country skiing and other uses permitted by a Federal or other public agency, such as grazing, hunting, and passive and other recreational uses. The district also accommodates affordable housing. Development activity within the SKI-REC zone district is subject to a master plan.

Buildout Analysis

Buildout analysis for the Caucus Area is summarized in Table 2 below. The analysis indicates that parcels zoned RR provide the greatest potential for additional residential growth, since this zone district is only built to 37% of its potential. The number of homes within the RR zone district would nearly double if all of the undeveloped RR-zoned properties within the caucus area were subdivided and built to their full potential. However, it’s unlikely that this potential will ever be realized, based on physical and access constraints inherent in the Little Annie/Richmond Ridge area where the zoning primarily exists.

Table 2

Buildout Analysis Summary

Zone District	Private Land ¹			Land subject to Conservation Agreements ²		Maximum Buildout Allowed by Zoning (Dwelling Units)	# Dwelling Units Removed from development potential due to Conservation or subdivision restrictions ⁷	Buildout Potential after accounting for reduction from Conservation and subdivisions restrictions	# Existing Dwelling Units	Maximum Remaining Buildout Potential (Dwelling Units)	Likely ³ Remaining Buildout Potential (Dwelling Units)	% Built Out based on maximum potential (Units)	Avg. House Size (sq. ft. based on heated area)
	Parcels	Acres	%	Acres	%								
Caucus Acreage: 44,074	464	3,988	9%	1,437	36%	509	186	323	236	89	53	73%	3,435
AR-10	113	1,434	36%	156	11%	143	24	119	87	32	19	73%	5,070
AH	31	8	0%	2	23%	31	-	31	31	-	-	100%	1,563
RR ⁵	191	2,360	59%	1,261	53%	194	103	91	34	57	34	37%	1,731
AR-2	1	29	1%	-	0%	14	14	-	-	-	-	100%	5,095
R-15	15	14	0%	-	0%	43	29	14	14	-	-	100%	5,154
R-30	71	58	1%	3	5%	84	16	68	68	-	-	100%	4,539
P-I	2	39	1%	-	0%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SKI-REC	40	46	1%	15	34%	NA	NA	NA	2	-	-	100%	2,552

¹ Includes privately-held parcels, parcels in conservation easement, Pitkin County-owned parcels and property owned by public entities for civic uses. Also, see note 5 regarding mining claims.

² Includes conservation easements, transferable development rights (TDR) sending sites and Pitkin County-owned open space. Acreage for Legal Tenders is counted only once though both conservation easement and TDR transfer

³ Likely scenario assumes that approximately 60% of maximum buildout potential is likely to be built due to physical restraints such as slope, avalanche paths, and riparian zones as well as historical development patterns related to economic conditions and growth management. Individual caucuses may wish to work with Community Development Department to revise likely build out based on local knowledge of properties

⁴ The Castle & Maroon Creek Planning area (including both the Castle and Maroon Creek Valleys) is roughly 69% built-out. Buildout potential has been reduced by 12% between 2003 and 2014.

⁵ The number of parcels excludes 77 mining claim fragments containing less than .75 acres. In addition to their small size and odd configuration, non of these fragments are listed as having an owner in the Assessor's parcel database.

⁶ Where parcels are divided by a zone district boundary build-out numbers for the entire parcel are based on the more restrictive zone district, unless a substantial majority of the parcel is within the other district.

⁷ Number for AR-10 includes 15 units based on acreage of conservation easements and 9 units associated with subdivision common area/open space.

The second largest potential for growth exists in the AR-10 zone district. The maximum remaining buildout potential for the AR-10 district is 32 dwelling units. However, this is an unlikely scenario given two factors: 1) Due to physical constraints, (steep slopes, floodplain, access, etc.), it's unlikely that zoned density could physically be accomplished on many parcels; 2) To compete successfully in Pitkin County's Growth management system, density of projects is typically 50% of that allowed under current zoning.

The areas zoned AH, AR-2, R-15 and R-30 are all fully developed. These zone districts are located primarily in the northern portion of the caucus area, within the Aspen UGB. In addition, there is minimal potential for additional development within the existing subdivisions in the caucus area since nearly all the subdivided lots have already been built on. Only three subdivision lots are identified as being vacant in the Assessor's records and one of those currently has a house under construction. Another seven subdivision lots show up with total improvement values (land plus structures) less than \$75,000. This is sufficiently low as to suggest that these lots are either undeveloped or significantly underdeveloped.

Uses in the SKI-REC district are dictated by the Aspen Mountain, Highlands and Ashcroft Ski Area Master Plans. As residential uses in this area are limited to affordable housing associated with the ski areas, the zone district was given zero potential for additional residential buildout in Table 2. Similarly, the P-I zone district is limited to the Aspen Music School/Country Day School campus which is governed by the P-I master plan for the campus. The master plan does not contemplate residential uses on the site.

AR-10 Zoning Summary

The character of this valley is comprised of a combination of rural residential use, limited tourist commercial use, limited agricultural use, recreational uses of public lands and the institutional use of the Aspen Music School/Aspen Country Day School campus. Under current zoning, the second

greatest development potential lies within the AR-10 zone district, most of this potential exists on a limited number of parcels that have larger acreages and relatively little existing development. Other recent master plans in the County have reviewed the AR-10 zone district to see if it continues to achieve the goal of maintaining the rural, low density character that distinguishes the rural valleys from the more urban portions of the County; or whether there are areas in which the AR-10 zoning should be replaced with larger lot zoning to better achieve rural goals. If the AR-10 zoning remains unchanged in the Castle Creek valley, there is a threat of a moderate increase in density in the event that the larger undeveloped parcels subdivide to the full extent possible. While an increase in density is possible on the larger parcels, it is less likely on most of the remaining parcels in the AR-10 district, which are mostly either built-out or have already undergone subdivision.

Citizens in the area believe that increased density is not so much an issue as is the visual impact of large homes that may be built on undeveloped land and seen from public roads. Increased density may be acceptable (to the limited extent that it may occur in these valleys) if homes are either moderately sized or located so that they can't be seen. Consequently, a change in zoning may not be necessary to accomplish the County and Caucus goal of preserving the rural character of these valleys. In 2006, the County added "Rural Character Guidelines for Building Location" to the Scenic View Protection section of the Land Use Code. These guidelines are only applicable in the rural area. However, the rural area contains most, if not all, of the developable land within the Caucus Area since there are no undeveloped parcels within the Aspen UGB portion of the Caucus Area that are large enough to be subdivided. The County could also enforce limitations on home sizes as another method for limiting visual impacts within the Caucus Area.

While the AR-10 zone district currently supports mostly residential development in the Planning area, several commercial uses also exist within the zone district. Residents believe that the district should be modified to preclude any *new* commercial development. (See discussion under the *Commercial Development* section of this Plan).

RR Zoning Summary

The Rural/Remote zone district currently allows any legally-established property to either build a cabin or sell the development right off-site as a transferable development right, also known as a "TDR." There are mining claims in the Little Annie/Richmond Ridge area that are big enough to prospect on, but not big enough to realistically build a cabin on, particularly given the need to have space for a water source (storage at a minimum) and sewage disposal. As these properties are not large enough to accommodate residential development, the County included a provision in the Code which provides a process for considering a TDR request for parcels containing less than one acre. The applicant must demonstrate that the parcel has legal access, can accommodate a building footprint of at least 1,000 square feet, and can meet the well and septic system separation requirements. ~~may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to allow them to transfer a development right off-site.~~

There are currently parcels in the AR-10 zone district that gain access off of Express Creek Road. These parcels share many of the characteristics found in the rural/remote zone district in terms of accessibility and terrain. The County revised the boundary of the Rural/Remote zone district to

include the parcels further up Express Creek Road in 2005. There are only three AR-10-zoned parcels remaining that are accessed off Express Creek Road. One of these is developed, while the other two appear to be vacant. ~~that are more appropriately regulated under the rural remote zoning in terms of use, bulk and area requirements.~~

Public Land Zoning Summary

The vast majority of federally-owned land within the caucus area is zone RR. However, there is a significant area of federally-owned public land which is zoned AR-10. The intent of the AR-10 zone district does not readily fit the uses contemplated on the Forest in the White River National Forest Management Plan since it allows for residential uses that would be inappropriate on the Forest. The zoning for the Forest property should more accurately reflect the non-residential uses typically pursued on the Forest. In 2006 the County created the RS-G (Resource-Government) zone district for just such situations. The intent statement for this district is described in the following excerpt from the Land Use Code:

“The intent of the RS-G district is to “control the future of lands currently owned by the federal, state and local governments and currently used for non-development purposes, and to avoid inappropriate development of such lands in the event they are sold, exchanged, or otherwise made available (i.e., by long-term lease) for use by an entity other than the federal, state, or local government. It is intended to allow a continuation of the types of uses permitted while in federal, state, or local government ownership and control, but not an intensification or replacement of those uses by other uses of the land. The zone district is intended to allow only very low intensity resource uses on such lands.”

The RS-G district is available outside of the urban growth boundaries. The transfer of development rights is not permitted on lands located within the RS-G zone district. To date no lands have been zoned to RS-G.

GROWTH

In Pitkin County, growth management deals with the rate of growth, the location of growth and the quality and quantity of growth. The *location* of growth is typically determined on a site-specific basis at the time of land use review.

Rate and quantity of growth are determined through zoning allowances, annual competition for a specific amount of square footage allowed via the Growth Management Quota system (GMQS), and through growth management exemptions.

In January 2000, new growth management regulations were adopted in Pitkin County. As a result, house size restrictions were adopted. Most of the Caucus Area lies within the *rural* growth management portion of the County. New homes within the rural portion of the Caucus Area are exempt from growth management up to a size of 5,750 square feet, which may be exceeded subject to purchase of transferable development rights (TDR's) as a growth management exemption, or through annual competition for growth management allocations .

As house size is perceived as more of an issue than density in this area, the County may wish to consider lowering the amount of floor area that is currently available countywide and establishing an allotment specifically for the Castle Creek valley. To further pace growth in the rural area, the County eliminated the use of TDR's to establish new development rights exempt from growth management in 2006. . Any further changes to the TDR program will have to be made as part of a countywide assessment of the TDR program to ensure that the program will continue to be effective subject to proposed modifications.

The growth management approvals that have been granted through the GMQS competition process are listed in the following table. There have been no GMQS competition allotments granted within the Caucus Area.

Table 3
GMQS Competition Allotments

	Location	How is SF to be used?	Parcel ID #	SF Amount	Approval #	Allotment Used?
2001						
CCVR Lot 8	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273526201003	6,000	BOCC 097-2001	4,553
CCVR Lot 11	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273526401002	5,500	BOCC 097-2001	
CCVR Lot 12	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273526401004	5,500	BOCC 097-2001	
CCVR Lot 13	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273535101001	3,815	BOCC 097-2001	
CCVR Lot 14	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273526201001	5,500	BOCC 097-2001	455 sf used in 2004
2002						
Rivers Family Trust	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273535401002	5,000	BOCC 081-2002	4,712 in 2002
CCVR Lot 7	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	273526201002	5,500	BOCC 081-2002	
2004						
Mathys	Castle Creek/Conundrum	Additional floor area	291102100023	1,750	BOCC 064-2004	
2005						
Lester/Cora May 1 & 2 USMS 6817	Castle Creek	Additional floor area	290918300017	4,250	BOCC 159-2005 PZ 01-2005	
2007						
Mathys	Castle Creek/Conundrum	Additional floor area	291102300020	4,250	BOCC 059-2007	
2010						
Ashcroft Ski Touring	Castle Creek	Tourist Accom. units	299906100002	5 XC ski cabins	BOCC 120-2011	
2012						
Castle Creek Investors	Castle Creek/Midnight Mine	New development right	273536200003	1,000 sf	BOCC 024-2013	

In addition to the GMQS allotments listed above, Table 4 lists the Growth Management exemption approvals that have been granted within the Caucus Area. In 2006 the County amended the Land Use Code to eliminate the use of TDR's for initial development rights in the rural area. As a result, most of the TDR exemptions that have been granted within the Caucus Area were used to allow additional floor area to an existing dwelling. The parcels listed in the table below, referred to as "Receiver Sites," are also depicted on the TDR Inventory Map (Figure 3), along with the parcels from which TDR's have been transferred (Sending Sites).

Table 4
TDR Receiver Site Inventory

	Location	# TDRs approved	TDRs Used For	Date Extinguished	Parcel ID	TDR Certificate # (if extinguished)	Approval #
1999							
Enough claim	Little Annie	2	Aggregation of square footage within Rural/Remote	Apr, 2001	291101400007	IR-00-02-SW IR-00-03-SW	BOCC 17-2000
2008							
Hardy	Castle Creek	3	Additional floor area for subgrade/garage on Lots 1A & 3	10/2/12 (Lot 1A)	273514402001 273514402002 273514402003	IR-08-08-C-SW	BOCC 118-2008 BOCC 149-2010
Hedstrom	Castle Creek	1	Additional floor area		290919102001		HO 06-2008
Aspeneyes	Castle Creek	3	Additional floor area to 13,250	8/5/09	290918301002	IR-41-07-SW IR-42-08-SW	HO 11-2008
PT Ranch/Barn LLC	Castle Creek	3	Additional floor area to 13,250	6/1/09	273523403002	IR-32-05-SW IR-28-06-SW IR-40-07-SW	HO 13-2008
2009							
Launer B	Conundrum	2	Additional floor area		273535400006		HO-04-2009
Asp Properties	Castle Creek	3	Additional floor area to 15,000	11/13/13	290918301001	IR-20-07-SW IR-21-07-SW	HO 05-2010 (replaces HO 19-2007)
2012							

Stringer Trust	Castle Creek	1	Additional floor area	12/11/12	291102100003	IR-46-07-SW	HO 06-2012
2014							
Castle Creek Valley Ranch LLC	Castle Creek	1	Additional floor area	11/6/14	273526101002	IR-08-13-SW	N/A
Aspen Residence Family Trust	Castle Creek	2	1 - Development right 1 - Additional floor area	4/21/15	273513300005	IR-02-14-SW IR-56-07-SW	BOCC 150-2003, 073-2008, 004-2013 HO 07-2014
2016							
500 S Hayden	Castle Creek	2	Additional floor area	2/18/16	273526401002	IR-21-05-SW IR-03-15-C-SW	N/A
2017							
Miles Butera Irrevocable Trust	Castle Creek	1	Additional floor area		273523403001		HO 05-2017
Sharples	Castle Creek	1	Additional floor area	6/16/17	273526401001	IR-08-14-SW	N/A

WATER USE, QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Drainages

The headwaters of Castle Creek begins at Castle Peak (14,265 feet). Castle Creek flows northward toward Aspen and drains into the Roaring Fork River on the northeast edge of town. While Castle Creek is the main drainage in the valley, several smaller creeks, including Conundrum and Express Creeks drain into Castle Creek. These drainages support high-quality wetlands and riparian habitat and are an integral piece of the recreational amenities provided in the Castle Creek area. Castle Creek also functions as one of the sources for the City of Aspen's water supply and for snowmaking for the Aspen Skiing Company.

Water Services

City water is available across the north end of the Caucus Area, including all the land within the Aspen UGB and everything as far south as the Music School/Country Day School campus (see Figure 5). All other properties are served by individual wells.

Sewage Disposal

Properties at the north end of the Caucus Area, including the Meadowood and Twin Ridge subdivisions, and the area on the east side of Castle Creek across from the Marolt Open Space, are served by Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District (ACSD). The Music School/Country Day School campus is not within the ACSD boundary. Most properties within the Caucus Area are on individual septic systems. Figure 5 shows the portion of the Caucus Area served by ACSD.

AIR QUALITY

The City of Aspen and Pitkin County both place a high value on preserving the best air quality possible. The City of Aspen has been monitoring air quality for over 25 years. This is primarily due to the fact that air quality in the upper Roaring Fork Valley was found to be in violation of the EPA's 24-hour standards for fine particulate air pollution (PM-10) as articulated in the Clean Air Act. Figure 6 is a map showing the PM-10 Non-attainment area which was established as a result of EPA standard violation back in the late 1980's. As seen on Figure 6, the northern portion of the Caucus Area is within the Non-attainment area. Due to regular monitoring and the enforcement of regulations adopted to address fine particulate air pollution, air quality in the Aspen area was re-designated as meeting the Clean Air Act standards in 2002. The Aspen Environmental Health Department provides current air quality monitoring data on its website: (<https://www.cityofaspen.com/298/Current-Air-Quality>).

A major component of fine particulate air pollution is caused by vehicular traffic. Estimates indicate that up to 83% of the upper valley PM-10 pollution comes from dirt kicked up by traffic driving on paved roads. The popularity of RFTA transit service and changes in road maintenance practices have helped achieve the significant reductions in PM-10 pollution.

ROADS

The roads within the caucus area provide residential and recreational access and are used extensively for cycling. The upper portion of Castle Creek Road is closed to automobile traffic in the winter and may be used for Nordic skiing by the public during this period. The Little Annie and Midnight Mine Roads are also used for hiking, biking and skiing.

Castle Creek Road Service Level

The information in this section is based largely on the 2016 Pitkin County Road Maintenance and Management Plan. For more detailed information this document can be viewed on the [Pitkin County Engineering/Road and Bridge Department's webpage](#). The first five miles of Castle Creek Road (below Conundrum) are considered a *high service area* road per the 2016 Pitkin County Road Maintenance and Management Plan. The next six miles of Castle Creek Road above Conundrum are considered a *moderate service area* road. The remaining 2.1 miles, known as Upper Castle Creek Road is considered a *limited service area* road. The following text provides description for each of the service area categories as found in the Road Maintenance and Management Plan.

HIGH SERVICE AREA: The high service includes roads within or adjacent to the more densely developed population areas such as the Aspen Snowmass area and collector roads which are used for commuting to and from these population centers. Roads within the high service area will receive the greatest level of maintenance by the County. Ease of travel by vehicles will be the primary goal of these maintenance efforts. Non-vehicular uses will be accommodated within road rights-of-way in a safe and effective manner, based upon the policies stated above.

MODERATE SERVICE AREA: The moderate service area includes roads that allow access to medium-density residential developments and improved subdivisions and may be used as commuting alternatives to Hwy 82. Roads in this service area serve as the secondary road system. They typically carry less traffic than the high service area roads. Maintenance of roads in the moderate service area will attempt to provide comfortable safe travel. These roads will not receive the priority maintenance of the high service area roads, but will be maintained for safe passage as practicable.

LOW SERVICE AREA: The low service area includes roads that allow access to low-density residential, agricultural and public uses but are removed from high travel corridors and population centers. These roads typically access low-density developments or popular recreational destinations. Maintenance of the roads in the low service area will attempt to provide access to specified areas, but not necessarily comfortable travel. These roads will not receive maintenance levels as high as those seen in the moderate area of service. Road users can expect the roads in this service area to be passable and adequately maintained at most times. However, the user must accept a reduced ease of travel on these roads because of the policies followed by the County. Snow plowing may not occur in as timely a fashion as seen in the moderate and high service areas. This reduced level of plowing may temporarily limit ease of passage. Motorized vehicles will share the driving surface with other modes of travel and must accommodate these additional uses.

LIMITED SERVICE AREA: These roads provide access to outlying and backcountry areas of the County and are usually located within the United States Forest or areas zoned Rural and Remote. Very low design speeds are necessitated by harsh alpine or topographic conditions. These roads can be a part of the Pitkin County/USFS Joint Road System. Roads with this designation access several of the recreational opportunities in the County and are often considered to be recreational opportunities themselves. Roads within the limited service area will receive the least amount of maintenance. Road users can expect a vigorous experience that requires an additional amount of attention and awareness when traveling. Roads may be restricted to certain forms of travel in some portions of the service area. No regular plowing of snow will be performed in the limited service area without prior consent by the County, requiring the user to be prepared to leave the vehicle at designated parking areas and continue travel with other means of transport (other over-the-snow modes of transportation are allowed; however, no snow removal is allowed). Roads may become closed without warning due to acts of nature such as high winds and landslides. All of these conditions will require the road user to plan for additional trip time and be prepared for conditions that are not expected in the low, moderate or high service areas.

Pitkin County conducts annual traffic counts for key roads within the County and has been doing so for many years. The counts are done for both winter and summer peak times and for various segments of each road. The winter counts are typically done in November, December or March, in some years there is a November/December count and a March count. Summer counts are usually done in July or August, though this has varied somewhat over the years. The original Maroon-Castle Valleys Master Plan included a traffic count comparison for two segments of Castle Creek Road for the years 1998 and 2002. The two segments that were compared could be described as the *urbanized segment* (from just above the hospital to Conundrum Creek Road) and the *rural*

segment (from just above the Conundrum Creek Road). Table 5 below provides an update of this data to include the counts along the same two segments for 2017.

Table 5
Castle Creek Road Traffic Counts Comparison

	Vehicles Per Day (winter)			Average VPD (winters)		Vehicles Per Day (summer)			Average VPD (summers)	
	1998/99	2002	2017 ¹	1998 - 2002	2003 - 2017	1998	2002	2017	1998 - 2002 ³	2003 - 2017
Castle Creek Road above Conundrum	677 ²	234	340	366 ⁸	345 ⁶	987	313	675	697	655 ⁴
Castle Creek Road above hospital entrance	1332	646	1246	1202 ³	1226 ⁷	2917	1233	2481	2632	2248 ⁵

¹ Average of March and November counts from County Engineer's annual traffic count spreadsheet.

² No data available for 1998 so 1999 data was used

³ No data available for 2000

⁴ No data available for 2010, 2013 or 2015.

⁵ No data available for 2004, 2012, 2013, or 2015

⁶ No data available for 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2013 or 2014

⁷ No data available for 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013 or 2014

⁸ No data available for 1998 or 2000.

This data shows that traffic volumes went down significantly from 1998 to 2002 and has since rebounded, though in no case does the current traffic count exceed the counts taken in 1998. Traffic along the urbanized segment has rebounded to almost the same level as in 1998 while along the rural segment traffic is still only one-half to two-thirds what it was in 1998.

At the time the original Maroon-Castle Creek Valleys Master Plan was prepared, the 20 Year Maintenance Plan for the Castle Creek area included a scheduled overlay for Castle Creek Road (below Conundrum) in 2008 and for Upper Castle Creek Road (above Conundrum), in 2016. The County completed the overlay for Castle Creek Road in 2012. In addition, Pearl Pass Road is graded every 3-4 years.

As of July of 2018, the Castle Creek Bridge replacement project was in the design phase and construction was expected to begin in 2019. The County replaced the Conundrum and Midnight Mine Road bridges in the 1990's. The Music School Bridge is owned by the County but is not on the replacement schedule. In 2018, a private party undertook a project to install a fiber optic line up Castle Creek road within the County right-of-way. This project was ongoing at the time this Master Plan was being prepared and was expected to be completed in late 2018 or early 2019.

Castle Creek Road is also identified as a "shared roadway" in the Pitkin County Road Maintenance and Management Plan. Shared roadways are roads that have been identified as having characteristics that would make them desirable for biking. Such roads are intended to be designated by a sign to be placed at either end of the road, notifying travelers that the road is to be shared by bicycles and vehicles alike.

Unpaved Spur Roads

The following County Policy Guideline exists regarding unpaved roads:

“Where practical, the county seeks to retain existing unpaved roads as a reflection of our rural character”

Unpaved area spur roads off of Castle Creek Road include:

- ~~Music School Road – 0.28 miles~~
- Summer Road/Aspen Mountain Road – 4.5 miles
- Lower Midnight Mine Road – 0.8 miles
- Upper Midnight Mine Road – 4.51 miles (Limited Service)
- Lower Conundrum Creek Road – .91 miles (Low Service)
- Lower Little Annie Road – 1.3 miles
- Upper Little Annie Road – 3.16 miles (Limited Service)
- Taylor Pass/Express Creek – 4.54 miles (Limited Service)
- Richmond Hill Road – 11.8 miles
- Pearl Pass – 6.1 miles (Limited Service)

Maintenance

There is no winter maintenance provided on Castle Creek Road above the 10.8 mile mark; or on Midnight Mine Road above the .78 mile mark; or on Little Annie Road above the 1.33 mile mark, (at the Hurricane Road intersection.) Private maintenance is provided above Lime Creek Village up Hurricane to the first residence past Lime Creek Village Subdivision. As directed in the Rural Remote zone district and in the Road Maintenance and Management Plan, properties located in the R/R zone district have no wintertime automobile access and must be accessed by over-the-snow vehicles, by foot, or by ski. Winter service levels on upper Castle Creek Road are intended to accommodate Nordic skiing at Ashcroft and to comply with the road limitations established in the Rural Remote zone district, which is located in the upper reaches of the valley.

Parking

At the point where plowing ends on Little Annie Road, residents park their automobiles and ski, hike and/or snowmobile to their homes. While this particular area has been used for parking for several years, there is no formal agreement on the part of the property owners for use of this transition area for parking.

Safety

Complaints regarding roads in the Caucus Area generally consist of problems with rock fall, the need for wider shoulders and passing lanes, and conflicts with bicycle traffic. There is a significant amount of bicycle traffic on both Maroon and Castle Creek Roads. Due to the narrow, winding nature of the rural roads, there is a substantial risk for auto/bicycle conflicts. While residents don't want significant changes made to the road width, safety improvements such as guardrails, signs and the addition of a shoulder (where feasible), and paved pull-outs are recommended.

TRANSIT

Access to transit within the Caucus Area is limited. Transit service is provided to the Music School. Transit to the Ashcroft area has been considered in the past but is not currently warranted by the numbers of potential riders. The local taxi company does provide service to the area. Residents support the current level of service.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Wildlife

The Caucus Area contains numerous occurrences of ecological communities that are of significant importance at the state and global level including a wide assortment of wetland and riparian systems. This area contains habitat for federally-listed threatened and endangered species including peregrine falcons, boreal toads, and Canada lynx as well as a plethora of U.S. Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Species. Detailed maps of the habitat types that exist in Pitkin County can be viewed on the [Colorado Parks and Wildlife All Species Activity Mapping Data Web Services portal](#).

Fortunately, the vast majority of these important habitats are on public lands – predominantly White River National Forest – and much of that is within the Maroon Bells – Snowmass Wilderness Area. The Caucus Area contains thousands of acres of mule deer, elk, mountain goat, and bighorn sheep summer range but again, most of this is on federal lands. While there are few true “migration corridors” within the area there are numerous migration patterns as defined by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. These include the Castle Creek and East Maroon Creek-Maroon Creek-Willow Creek routes.

It is important to note that the elk that summer in this part of the county historically wintered from the southwesterly facing slopes above lower Maroon and Castle Creeks down to what is now the Aspen School Campus, Meadowood, the west facing slopes of Shadow Mountain, the former Moore Ranch, and down toward the Aspen Golf Course-Burlingame area. As this habitat was lost to development, the elk were forced to find alternative winter range. The only severe winter range left within the Caucus Area is the west facing slopes above Castle Creek extending from the undeveloped portions of the west side of Shadow Mountain up to about 9800 feet and as far up Castle Creek as Castle Creek Valley Ranch (see Figure 7 - Elk Habitat Map). This is not an optimal situation, should the valley see a truly harsh winter these animals may be in dire straits.

Moose habitat within the Caucus Area has changed dramatically in recent years. Figures 8 and 9 show the extent of Moose Summer Range and Overall Range for the years 2013 and 2016. These maps show a dramatic expansion of moose habitat over a short period of time. The summer range and overall range have expanded from the county’s southern boundary to just north of the confluence of Castle Creek and Conundrum Creek. While it’s good to see moose reintroduction efforts succeed, it also increases the potential for wildlife-human conflicts. Of particular concern, are conflicts involving vehicles. With the increased population in Colorado, vehicle collisions with moose are becoming more common, and in some cases with devastating results. Increased

education regarding moose behavior, and areas where animal populations are on the rise, could help reduce the potential for conflicts.

Another concern within the Caucus Area is for the health of the numerous wetlands and the riparian areas associated with Castle Creek and its tributaries. These riparian areas support four significant plant communities dominated by Drummond's willow (*Salix drummondiana*), narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) or blue spruce (*Picea pungens*). At the lower elevations, dominated by private land, the riparian areas and many of the riparian wetlands are degraded and surrounded by residential development. Roads and driveways associated with residential development activities, parallel the riparian areas and cause siltation, erosion, and reduced ecological function.

Wildfire

As is common throughout the county, lower areas of flatter, more open terrain within the Caucus Area typically have a low wildfire rating, while steeper forested slopes have a severe rating due to vegetative cover and steep slopes. Figure 10 shows the wildfire hazard for the northern one-third of the Caucus Area. The red and orange areas on this map represent severe hazard. Fortunately, most of the more densely developed portions of the Caucus Area are located within severe hazard areas. However, many of the mining claim parcels along Richmond Ridge are located within the moderate to severe hazard areas. Due to the proximity of private lands to the edge of public lands throughout most of the upper portions of the Castle Creek Valley, the risk for structure-initiated wildfire on the Forest is an issue that should be addressed.

OPEN SPACE/TRAILS/RECREATION/TOURISM

The Castle Creek Valley provides road and trailhead access to public lands and wilderness areas that contain a wide range of recreational activities. Castle Creek Road is a public asset for the local and tourist economy. Public access to federal lands includes the Cathedral & American Lakes trailheads, and Midnight Mine, Little Annie, Express Creek, Montezuma, Cooper Creek and Pearl Pass Roads. The roads and trailheads within the Caucus Area provide access for huts, mountaineering, winter skiing & snowmobiling, summer biking, camping, fishing, horseback riding, off-roading, dirt biking and hiking.

Due to overuse and some unfortunate behavior at the Conundrum Hot Springs, the USFS initiated a permit system for overnight use in 2018. However, day use of the hot springs continues to create parking and other issues stemming from overuse. Continued collaboration between the County and US Forest Service will be needed to address these issues and to ensure the highest quality experience possible for all who visit the area.

Summary of the Little Annie/Richmond Ridge Management Plan

In 1999, a management plan was developed for the Little Annie/Richmond Ridge and Pearl Pass areas by a group of interested citizens, the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Pitkin County staff. The planning effort was initiated because there were several recreational groups that were converging on the area, and there was concern that the overall quality of the recreational

experience was degrading because of overuse and/or conflicting uses. The goals of this group included efficient management of the available resources, resolving conflicts between user groups and residents, preserving the environment, and ensuring a quality experience for everyone. The plan addresses specific issues and creates action items dealing with recreation accessing public lands off of Midnight Mine Road, Little Annie Road, Express Creek Road, and the Pearl Pass Area. Illegal parking, trespassing, and noise were identified as fairly common concerns. The Pitkin County Planning and Zoning Commission informally adopted the Plan on April 18, 2000.

To achieve goals of the Plan, implementation items were divided into a three-phased approach. The first phase implements an education strategy and efficient use of existing facilities. If the educational outreach in Phase 1 proved effective, there would be no need for additional phases. Phase 2 incorporates new regulations and a limited, self-enforcing permit system. If Phase 2 failed, then Phase 3 would be initiated. This phase includes new regulations and a mandatory, all-user pay permit system.

Implementation measures were modeled in part on a user system, which was developed and implemented by citizens in the Shrine Pass area near Vail Pass. The intent was to come up with a system that could be implemented and to a great extent, enforced by Citizens with assistance from the Forest and/or County. The Plan was not intended to result in a strategy that required more than very limited County or USFS staffing or budget.

Little of the Plan has been implemented to date. A decision should be made as to whether the conflicts in this area have resolved themselves and/or whether the Plan should be revisited and revised to accomplish the Plan's stated goals.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture within the Caucus Area is limited to a few, large remaining parcels. Nonetheless, these parcels contain open pastures on the valley floor that help define the area. As such, they play a critical role in making the valley appealing to residents and tourists who travel Caucus Area roads to their homes or use the roads for recreation.

SCENIC QUALITY

One of the qualities that is intrinsic to the "rural character" of the Caucus Area is the quantity of open landscape containing irrigated pastures, meadows, mountain views, and remnants of historic buildings.

With the adoption of the 2006 Land Use Code, the County expanded the area subject to review under the Scenic View Protection standards of the Code (§ 7-20-120). The current extent of the area for which scenic review must be conducted includes all areas visible from Castle Creek Road (see Figure 11). The intent of the Scenic View Protection section of the Code is to maintain a

natural ridgeline silhouette against the sky; to steer development away from ridgelines and skylines throughout the County, as viewed from public roadway corridors; and to ensure that new development is designed and located to complement the natural landscape and the natural features within the public viewplane in order to achieve an aesthetically pleasing, rural atmosphere.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Given the lack of population density within the Caucus Area, there is a limited amount of affordable housing. In addition to Caretaker Dwelling Units (CDU's), there are a few other affordable housing options available.

There are three permanent moderate housing lots at Castle Creek Valley Ranch. In addition, some units have been approved in association with the Ashcroft/Pine Creek Cookhouse, which was rebuilt following a devastating fire. The approvals include a dorm to sleep 8; one 3-bedroom unit; four 1-bedroom units; and one owner/manager RO unit. The two 1-bedroom units have been constructed on the Montezuma Mill Site and the owners are preparing to build two more 1-bedroom units near the King Cabin. Previously, Ashcroft/Pine Creek Cookhouse housed their employees in the Schoolhouse and in some A-frame cabins on the Ryan Parcel. However, these structures have now been demolished. ~~, which is scheduled to be demolished. There are some A-frames and cabins on the Ryan parcel that are considered affordable, however they are not deed restricted.~~ The Ashcroft owners are requesting the ability to pay the affordable housing impact fee instead of building the approved 3-bedroom unit. Additional cross-county ski huts have also been proposed and affordable housing mitigation would be required in association with this project.

Existing affordable housing within the Caucus area is dispersed and consistent with the densities in the area.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The historic resources within the Caucus Area were identified in the 1999 Historic Building Inventory Record (Table 6). All but one of the cabins on the 330 Cathedral Lake Road site have been removed. Some of these properties have since been included on the Pitkin County Historic Inventory which the County established as part of the 2006 Land Use Code. Listing on the Inventory is voluntary, though incentives are provided in the Land Use Code. Table 7 is an excerpt from the official Pitkin County Historic Inventory showing the listed properties within the Castle Creek Caucus Area. Figure 12 is a map showing the location of properties listed in Table 7.

Table 6
1999 Historic Building Inventory
(Castle Creek Caucus Area)

Location	Resource
2 Music School Road	Newman Mine bldgs. at MAA campus & Music School Bldgs.; 1965; Fritz Benedict
202 Midnight Mine Road	Waterfall House (demolished); Newman Mine Mill
Castle Creek Valley Ranch	Coke ovens
5387 Castle Creek Road	Highland Bavarian Lodge

5835 Castle Creek Road:	King Cabin at King Ranch
10080 Castle Creek Road	Elk Mountain Lodge cabins (2)
11247 Castle Creek Road	Toklat
Castle Creek Road	Ashcroft Townsite – National Register
330 Cathedral Lake Road	Fitzpatrick & Royal cabins; 10 th Mountain tent platforms

Table 7
Pitkin County Historic Register

Property Description Approval Name	Approval Document	Parcel ID #	Incentive Granted	Covenant Recorded (reception #)
3700 Little Annie Road (?) Castle Creek Investors – Crazy Dan Cabin	BOCC 111-2001	273536400001		
Elk Mountain Lodge – Homestead & Treehorn Cabins	BOCC 034-2007	290919400006	Additional residence (built)	540285
Greenway – Little Annie Mine Site	BOCC 108-2008	291101100052	1 TDR, additional Rural/Remote cabin & subgrade space	554948
2 Music School Road (Castle Creek) Aspen Music School Campus – Admin Building & Business Building	BOCC 50-2008	273514401802		
Bunta/Manning Annex Cabin	BOCC 053-2011	291101100051	1 TDR & 500 sf subgrade space	598087

MINERAL EXPLORATION/EXTRACTION

Mining has historically occurred in the Castle Creek valley. The Little Annie/Richmond Ridge area, which was heavily prospected in the past, contains limited residential development today. Given the price of silver it is unlikely, but under 1872 mining laws, these mining claims may be used for prospecting and mining subject to local and federal regulations.

Figure 13 is a map showing the registered mining claims with the Caucus Area and in the surrounding region. This map illustrates the complicated and overlapping ownership pattern which is typical of mining claims. The claims typically have very convoluted chains of title and in many cases the owners are either unknown or highly fractionalized. In addition, mineral and surface rights have, in some cases, been separated and access is often difficult or unachievable. For these reasons development of the remaining undeveloped claims is unlikely to reach full buildout potential as discussed previously in this report.

PLANS AFFECTING MAROON & CASTLE CREEK VALLEYS

The Little Annie/Richmond Ridge Management Plan (2000)
Aspen Mountain Ski Area Master Plan (1998)
Aspen Highlands Ski Area Master Plan (1997)
White River National Forest Management Plan (2002)
Pitkin County Road Maintenance and Management Plan (2016)