Infrastructure

Overview

The Town of Paonia is responsible for managing key infrastructure that collectively shapes the community’s quality of life and economic viability. This includes the full water system from raw water to treated water for distribution, the collection and treatment of stormwater, and the collection and discharge of wastewater. The majority of source water infrastructure is aged and was designed prior to the impacts of desertification, long-term drought, and increasing heat.

Water Tap Moratorium: In January 2020 the Town of Paonia held a special election for the Citizens Initiative Petition and Water Moratorium which, upon passage, suspended the sale of all new domestic water taps that the Town of Paonia was not already legally obligated to serve. The citizen initiative arose from a critical water supply issue occurring in February of 2019 that resulted in the entire water system losing service. The decision as to if, when, and under what circumstances the moratorium should be lifted is included in the original moratorium and amendments.

A vital component of the Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that the Town can continue to provide enough water to adequately supply and deliver to the Town’s Residents and the extended Paonia community. The availability of water resources and utility infrastructure determines how Paonia grows and are essential considerations of future land use choices.

As a full-service community, Paonia owns and maintains its own water and wastewater utilities, manages the conveyance of stormwater from Town streets, and provides solid waste collections services. The associated infrastructure system is aging, but is still valued at $11 million, and represents the Town’s largest asset. This system includes an operational water treatment plant, wastewater treatment plant, many miles of pipes, fire hydrants, pumps, tanks, valves and other critical infrastructure to ensure exceptional water, wastewater, and stormwater service for the Town and the extended Paonia Community.

Provision of utilities and services outside of the Town’s capability, such as energy and telecommunications, will be evaluated for adequacy and potential improvements as new development is proposed.

In 2022, the Town began a historic investment in its water utility and started designing systematic improvements to the water supply, treatment and distribution systems of the Town. Through these recent and ongoing utility planning efforts, Paonia also plans to promote water smart principles and increase sustainable planning efforts. These goals will be balanced with the need to address current market challenges while ensuring that natural resources aren’t unduly affected. The Comprehensive Plan and companion plans such as the Paonia in Motion plan, Water Capital Improvement Plan, and Paonia Municipal Code, should continue to be evaluated and updated as needed to ensure alignment.

Our trees and areas of grass are an essential part of our “green” urban infrastructure. The character of Paonia and quality of life enjoyed by residents is shaped in no small part by the substantial presence of our Town’s forest. Paonia has been designated by the Arbor Day Foundation as Tree City USA.

For a review of Paonia’s water and other infrastructure systems, please see Appendix B, Infrastructure. Streets and sidewalks are often considered infrastructure but are included in the Transportation element of this Plan.

Vision

Paonia’s robust infrastructure provides high-quality and reliable service to current residents. The systems are managed proactively such that today’s needs are met while future needs are understood and planned for. The water and wastewater systems are healthy and resilient. The water supply is strong, and the wastewater system plays a positive role in regional water cycle management. Paonia’s waste recovery systems are well maintained and the people of Paonia are encouraged to participate in manufactured and organic material reuse and recycling. Paonia is home to a thriving, safe, and uniquely beloved Town forest that is both resilient and adaptive to a changing climate and the aging of individual trees within the larger canopy. All parts of Paonia’s ecology—people, plants, animals, and natural cycles—are valued and considered with each investment/decision.



Photo Credit: Stefen Wynn

~~Values~~  Goals

**INFRA – 1** Planning for infrastructure that is comprehensive, innovative, and forward thinking, and ensure current customers and new development maintain a balance between water supply and demand.

**INFRA – 2** Plan, budget, operate and maintain, construct and Invest~~ing~~ in stormwater, water treatment, and green infrastructure that support quality public services in health, water availability, and safety.

**INFRA – 3** Infrastructure that is dependable and provides locals stability and economic prosperity.

**INFRA – 4** Investing regularly in quality public infrastructure and timely maintenance.

**INFRA – 5**  Support a healthy watershed that supports both water quality and water production.

**INFRA – 6** Ensuring local businesses and residents can build economic prosperity and enhance food security.

**INFRA – 7** A wastewater utility that explores and pursues innovative solutions for capital asset development.

**INFRA – 8**  Sanitation services that are well maintained, professionally staffed, and in compliance with all state laws.

**INFRA – 9** Encouraging solid and organic material resource recovery including reuse, recycling, and composting and ensuring the highest and best use of discarded materials.

**INFRA – 10** The wonderful quality of life, ecosystem, and increased walkability and real estate values that our town forest provides.

**INFRA – 11** Protect the community from adverse flooding and pollution impacts of runoff with efficient and progressive stormwater management practices.

**INFRA – 12** Cultivate improved waste and materials management that supports source reduction, sustainable diversion, and regulatory compliance through accessible services and programs for residential and commercial land uses.

The following goals and policies provide direction for all aspects of physical planning. Goals are defined as desired ideals and a value to be attained. Policies articulate a course of action that guides governmental decision-making to meet the goal. To further define how policies can be implemented in the short and long term, specific strategies can be found in the appendices. They are not inclusive of all actions and options.

POLICIES GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE

goal

**INFRA – 1** Planning for infrastructure that is comprehensive, innovative, and forward thinking, and ensure current customers and new development maintain a balance between water supply and demand.

**INFRA – 2** Plan, budget, operate and maintain, construct and Invest~~ing~~ in stormwater, water treatment, and green infrastructure that support quality public services in health, water availability, and safety.

**INFRA – 3** Infrastructure that is dependable and provides locals stability and economic prosperity.

**INFRA – 4** Investing regularly in quality public infrastructure and timely maintenance.

Policies

**POLICY INFRA-1:** Ensure that all residents can obtain clean water and essential utility services.

**POLICY INFRA-2:** Prioritize investments in water, wastewater, stormwater, and reuse that builds confidence in the services and are reliable for existing users while considering future needs.

**POLICY INFRA-3:** Maintain a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to proactively prepare for infrastructure maintenance and upgrade needs as well as other capital projects into the future. Regularly use the CIP for planning and budgeting improvements each fiscal year.

**POLICY INFRA-4:** Coordinate infrastructure repairs and upgrades across utilities and other property maintenance needs. Coordinate with overlapping agencies to minimize the number and scale of excavations when completing improvements to Town infrastructure.

**POLICY INFRA-5:** Maintain utility rates that cover the costs of the service provided and consider future needs by conducting regular rate studies.

WATER

Water is precious in the West, and especially so for Paonia. The uniqueness and age of Paonia’s water system combined with the level of investment required in the coming years for upgrades, and transitions in climate and temperature, presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only rebuild the old system but to also reimagine how the Town and relevant regional stakeholders can work together to preserve the performance of the water source and enhance the longevity of the watershed.

Water in Paonia flows through three distinct systems:

* the North Fork of the Gunnison River and its tributaries, which provide for vegetation and wildlife and which cool, clean, and green the region;
* the river-connected ditches and their laterals that supply water for in-town and out-of-town agricultural users and in-town landscape use; and
* the spring-fed source water system that supplies municipal households and commercial users with drinking water.

Wildlife & Irrigation

The river and ditch systems which support Paonia’s unique local microclimate, ecology, wildlife, and agriculture are fed throughout the summer by the reserve of water in Paonia Reservoir, and from the North Fork of the Gunnison that flows from the West Elks and Ragged Mountain ranges. Paonia Reservoir currently has a total holding capacity of 14,674 acre-feet. Its capacity has shrunk 25% since 1962 due to heavy sedimentation from Muddy Creek, its main water source. The reservoir is managed by the US Bureau of Land Management and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Municipal

The municipal system which provides Town treated water is supplied by approximately 25 springs that form five spring complexes which ring the north and west basins of Mount Lamborn. The Town owns the land for Steven’s springs, but the majority of springs are located on US Forest Service lands and private property.

Past, Present, Future

Paonia has a unique municipal water system, unlike any other in the State of Colorado. Leading achievements in water engineering at the time it was completed, the Paonia Project–which made the Paonia reservoir, and the series of ditches and pipes constructed around the five spring complexes surrounding the north and west slopes of Mount Lamborn–fed the growth of mining and agriculture in the region. However, complexity, age, change in climatic patterns, and human-caused desertification pose substantial challenges to the viability of the water system. The spring-fed municipal water system needs extensive repair, from restoration of the watershed itself to the treatment plants and the elaborate networks of pipes and valves that deliver water into and around Town.

Water Efficiency & Redundancy

While customer water use efficiency has increased in the past decade, there remains room for further gains from water efficient appliances and practices in both commercial and residential use. There are substantial efficiency gains to be had from increasing performance in the water delivery system. Approximately 23-39% of water produced is currently unaccounted for in delivery between treatment plants and customers. As of the beginning of 2024, the first steps are already underway with the implementation of the first phase of the Capital Improvement Plan and associated rate increases which will support upgrades and fixes to this system and reduce overall water loss. Due to the overall age and nature of the gravity fed system some level of leaks will remain and should be taken into account when looking at overall water availability going forward.

Redundancy in the water treatment system is critical to the resilience of the system. In 2019 the Town suffered a critical water supply issue that was exacerbated by the fact that “the lower treatment plant and 1-MG storage tank were not in service during this event [thus making] half of the Town’s raw water supply, half of its treatment capacity, and 33% of its finished water storage capacity unavailable to support demand during the emergency.” Current and future proposed upgrades to address these issues including the rehabilitation of the Clock treatment plant, have been outlined in the 2023 Water Capital Improvement Plan.

Water Volume & Source Reliability

The springs that feed the Town of Paonia are highly sensitive to drought conditions due to their strict dependence upon snowfall and runoff season. While Colorado weather is already well known for its variability, the increase in severity and duration of drought, increased winter and spring temperatures, increased duration and severity of spring winds, increased rates of sublimation of snowpack and decreases in soil moisture due to vegetation degradation, and changes in precipitation patterns moving away from snow to rain mean there is and will continue to be less and less reliable or regular snowpack, and also that the moisture from melting snow is less likely to translate into liquid water run-off. The Town of Paonia recognizes these threats to its water supply.

Paonia’s watershed has high groundwater recharge potential and semi-arid climates are known to be especially sensitive to changes in vegetation and surface water making the system also potentially viable for regeneration and land management intervention to support both system water retention and ongoing supply.

“Precipitation type (rainfall versus snowfall), amount, and temporal and spatial distribution are important for determining the amount of recharge that a groundwater system may receive, particularly as infiltration from precipitation to the shallow bedrock groundwater systems.”

Average annual precipitation determines the climate of the project area, and in the case of the North Fork Valley, the topographically higher terrains near Grand Mesa and West Elk Mountains are sub humid and cool and have excellent recharge potential, both from rainfall in the spring, summer, and autumn months, and from the melting of snowpack throughout the winter and early spring, especially areas covered by gravels and slope deposits.

The small water cycle is more important to local precipitation patterns than the large water cycle. In fact, it is estimated that mean global precipitation overland is 720 mm, of which only 310 mm is from the large water cycle and 410 mm comes from the repeated evaporation-precipitation process of the small water cycle. -Walter Jehne

The Town of Paonia has a designated Municipal Watershed within its broader watershed, as defined in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Source Water Protection Plan. Most of this land lies within the Gunnison National Forest, which is managed by the US Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service. Other landowners in the protection area include the Bureau of Land Management and privately owned lands, which sit under jurisdiction of Delta County. Both BLM and USFS lease lands for grazing in these areas to private ranchers. Work to restore and regenerate the watershed will need to be conducted in concert with relevant landowners and stakeholders.

Rates

In 2023 the Town of Paonia increased rates for water, sewer and trash. Future increases in rates will be required to meet the base financials required to secure funding to implement the 2023 Water Capital Improvement Plan. While the Town will not wholly rely on water rate revenue, rate increases are likely essential for obtaining other funds in the form of grants and low interest loans needed to fully fund capital improvements.

Policies WATER

goal

INFRA-1 Planning for infrastructure that is comprehensive, innovative, and forward thinking, and ensure current customers and new development maintain a balance between water demand and supply.

Policies

POLICY INFRA WATER-1 Appropriately coordinate the Comprehensive Plan and Water Capital Improvement Plan to ensure existing and future customers have a safe and reliable water supply.

POLICY INFRA WATER-2 Responsibly manage and conserve the Town’s limited water resources in both existing and new development.

POLICY INFRA WATER-3 Implement water conservation strategies and use the results of the Hydrogeological Study to inform those strategies.

POLICY INFRA WATER-4 Monitor demographic, development, water supply, and usage trends with regular reporting to the Board of Trustees and proactively identify where adjustments to the Comprehensive Plan may be needed should water use increase

POLICY INFRA WATER-5 Strengthen the integration of land use and water planning and policies and manage growth so that the quantity, pace, and type of development does not exceed the capacity of public facilities.

goal

**INFRA – 4** Investing regularly in quality public infrastructure and timely maintenance.

Policies

POLICY INFRA WATER-6 Support long-range planning that addresses replacement of aging infrastructure within the municipal water system. These planning efforts will consider projections of future development, as identified in the Future Land Use Element, to anticipate the need to increase line sizes where necessary as replacement occurs.

POLICY INFRA WATER-7 Pursue long-term planning and development of the Town’s water infrastructure to include water supply, storage and treatment options which provide the flexibility to accommodate full development within the planning area, as well as the ability to adapt to problems associated with any single water source.

POLICY INFRA WATER-8 New water facilities shall be constructed to conform to the Town’s most recent water system design and construction standards.

goal

**INFRA – 5**  Support a healthy watershed that supports both water quality and water production.

Policies

POLICY INFRA WATER-9 Proactively protect the Town’s source water by preventing contamination from wildfire, pollution, and ecological degradation with regional partners. Ensure that development does not adversely affect the Town’s raw water sources.

POLICY INFRA WATER-10 Take a holistic and regenerative approach to watershed health and protection, including wildfire management and mitigation, soil health, and responsible use of grazing around municipal source waters in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

POLICY INFRA WATER-11 New development shall be connected to both the municipal water system and the Town’s sewer system. Prior to connection, the developer shall prepare and submit an impact report of the proposed development. This report will address the development’s impact on the existing water supply and existing sewer capacity.

goal

**INFRA – 3** Infrastructure that is dependable and provides locals stability and economic prosperity.

**INFRA – 6** Ensuring local businesses and residents can build economic prosperity and enhance food security.

Policies

POLICY INFRA WATER-12 Require all new development within the Town’s growth management area to annex or complete a pre-annexation agreement to be executed upon the final approval of a connection or tap and the development shall include in the agreements dedication of water rights to the Town that are sufficient in quantity and seniority to meet the needs of the project being constructed.

POLICY INFRA WATER-13 Discourage the construction of independent water or sewer systems or districts within urbanizing areas, except for the specified purpose of making improvements which will be transferred to the Town when the cost of improvements is paid.

POLICY INFRA WATER-14 Promote water conservation in accordance with Colorado’s Growing Water Smart Guidebook. Promote community awareness programs for best landscape management of drought and small water-cycle function in landscaping, new construction, and all irrigation activities.

POLICY INFRA WATER-15 Consider the long-term viability of source water production and explore nature-based solutions to best protect and support the Town’s springs. Conduct regional water cycle management at the watershed level in coordination with regional partners. Continue to invest in and acquire water rights with potential new partnerships and within existing agreements or collaborations.

Wastewater

Paonia’s Wastewater Treatment Plant manages wastewater collection from residential and commercial customers. The treatment plant was brought online in 2006 and consists of a manual bar screen, two aerated lagoons, a settling/polishing pond, a serpentine chlorine contact chamber and a dichlorination feature. It has a permitted rated capacity of 0.495 million gallons per day (MGD) and typically treats 0.15 MGD. Wastewater from the system is discharged to the North Fork of the Gunnison River.

The 10.5 miles of pipe that make up the wastewater collection system are entirely gravity driven and consist of service laterals, manholes, and gravity sewer mains. The collection system is composed of approximately 63% PVC piping and 37% vitrified clay piping (VCP). The majority of the clay pipe is past its expected lifetime and an estimated 20,000 ft of PVC pipe will need to be replaced in near future making the entire system in need of upgrade in the near future.

It is worth noting that overall treatment levels of water treated are lower in the winter. The Water Tap Moratorium also has an effect here: as long as it remains in effect~~, or even as 7-14 new homes are added as is planned in the 2023 budget~~, wastewater treatment levels are unlikely to grow materially. With an ongoing increase in winter temperatures, it is worth considering the use of green infrastructure, in particular constructed wetlands in future wastewater treatment upgrades. Studies have shown the positive impacts that wetlands have in semi-arid regions when it comes to local temperature regulation, in particular when it comes to extreme heat mitigation, as they have been shown to lower ambient temperatures by 7-14 degrees as compared to similar areas where they are not present.

Policies wasteWATER

goal

**INFRA – 2** Plan, budget, operate and maintain, construct and Invest in stormwater, water treatment, and green infrastructure that support quality public services in health, water availability, and safety.

**INFRA – 3** Infrastructure that is dependable and provides locals stability and economic prosperity.

**INFRA – 4** Investing regularly in quality public infrastructure and timely maintenance.

Policies

POLICY INFRA New development shall be connected to both the municipal water system

WASTEWATER-1 and the Town’s sewer system. Prior to connection, the developer shall prepare and submit an impact report of the proposed development. This report will address the development’s impact on the existing water supply and existing sewer capacity.

POLICY INFRA Maintain a wastewater system that returns high-quality, clean water to the

WASTEWATER-2 North Folk of the Gunnison River and explore green infrastructure options for treatment that provide positive impacts on local temperature regulation and enhance the viability and resilience of local ecology.

POLICY INFRA Consider water reuse and recycling when designing new wastewater and

WASTEWATER-3 stormwater systems.

POLICY INFRA New sewer infrastructure shall be constructed to conform to the current

WASTEWATER-4 sewer design and construction standards.

POLICY INFRA Discourage the construction of independent sewer systems or districts within

WASTEWATER-5 urbanizing areas, except for the specified purpose of making improvements, which will be transferred to the Town when the cost of improvements is paid.

POLICY INFRA Monitor the Utility Condition Index (UCI) as a measurement of the amount of

WASTEWATER-6 useful life remaining in the utility system and use the UCI to guide the Minimally Responsible Capital Improvements Project Package.

POLICY INFRA Support long-range planning that addresses replacement of aging

WASTEWATER-7 infrastructure within the municipal water system. These planning efforts will consider projections of future development, as identified in the Future Land Use Element, to anticipate the need to increase line sizes where necessary as replacement occurs.

goal

**INFRA – 7** A wastewater utility that explores and pursues innovative solutions for capital asset development.

Policies

POLICY INFRA Provide service consistent with established levels of service referencing

WASTEWATER-8 applicable requirements of state regulations, Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

POLICY INFRA Prioritize public health and safety through strategic and proactive efforts to

WASTEWATER-9 protect water quality and the environment.

STORMWATER

Paonia’s Stormwater program historically has been an afterthought during road construction, maintenance and repair. The Town has experienced significant flood events throughout its history and on May 28, 1993, a nearly 100-year flood event was recorded that caused erosion to properties surrounding town. At the time, the Town’s flood control facilities consisted mostly of bank armoring, and they were severely damaged by the flood event. Damage included erosion to the stone riprap at the old location of Paonia’s wastewater treatment plant, and to homes along the Huff Subdivision. In 2018, the Town experienced a significant flood event and damage to Apple Valley Park, and again experienced economic distress after flooding caused a section of Highway 133 to wash out in 2023.

The Town has no current mechanism to budget, plan and fund improvements to the Stormwater infrastructure running through Town. The only funding that can currently go towards stormwater improvements is from the highway user tax fund. In some cases, irrigation companies convey their irrigation water through the Town’s existing Stormwater system, which causes significant wear on the existing culverts, pipes, and gutters that comprise the infrastructure of the stormwater system.

Policies STORMWATER

goal

**INFRA – 2** Plan, budget, operate and maintain, construct and Invest~~ing~~ in stormwater, water treatment, and green infrastructure that support quality public services in health, water availability, and safety.

**INFRA – 3** Infrastructure that is dependable and provides locals stability and economic prosperity.

**INFRA – 4** Investing regularly in quality public infrastructure and timely maintenance.

Policies

POLICY INFRA

STORMWATER-1 Establish a Stormwater Utility to fund infrastructure improvements and create and implement a master stormwater plan for the entire Town.

POLICY INFRA Codify and or create standards and specifications for stormwater mitigation

STORMWATER-2 requirements for new development. Ensure that standards for drainage system design and construction are kept current. New development shall construct drainage systems that conform to these standards.

POLICY INFRA New development will preserve natural drainage courses. Where necessary,

STORMWATER-3 a drainage system designed by a professional engineer, may be required.

goal

**INFRA – 11** Protect the community from adverse flooding and pollution impacts of runoff with efficient and progressive stormwater management practices.

Policies

POLICY INFRA Encourage green stormwater infrastructure measures to reduce pollutants

STORMWATER-4 from development and redevelopment.

POLICY INFRA Coordinate storm drainage and flood management with appropriate

STORMWATER-5 agencies, including Delta County, local irrigation/ditch companies, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

POLICY INFRA Ensure that development and redevelopment activities are compliant with

STORMWATER-6 the Town’s Storm Drainage Design and Technical Criteria and the State’s Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements.

POLICY INFRA Establish and maintain floodplain buffers to ensure compliance with FEMA

STORMWATER-7 required floodplain regulations, to promote water quality and to improve riparian habitat. When possible, encourage the use of natural runoff filtration such as bio-swales, pervious pavement, etc. for on-site retention.

POLICY INFRA Ensure the long-term financial viability and sustainability of the stormwater

STORMWATER-8 utility.

Sanitation and Resource Recovery

The Town provides garbage collection services to approximately 900 accounts within Town limits. There are no municipal composting or recycling services. The majority of trash collection accounts are residential with a varying amount of commercial. Trash services offer 33 Gallon Cans, 2- and 3-cubic yard dumpsters and oversized items. Residents may also leave yard trimmings in bundles no bigger than 1’x3’ neatly tied next to the trash bins. Many individuals compost personally or report bringing food scraps to neighbors with farms or livestock. There are at least two private recycling haulers that service Paonia. Aluminum cans may be dropped off for recycling outside of Don’s Market and there are cardboard and paper recycling bins in the parking lot of City Market in Hotchkiss. Delta County supports free recycling at the Double J Recycle Center in Austin. CHT Resources operates a composting facility for organic waste in Austin.

Private recycling services combined with the free drop-off options appear to be servicing the area well. Curbside recycling and composting is unlikely to prove economical given the level of at home and on-farm composting and the small service area. However, the community ethos of self-sufficiency has led to a high individual participation rate in both manufactured and organic materials recycling.

According to the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment & Housing Action Plan consultant team, the average residential rates for water, sewer and trash total $320 per month. These rates are higher than the national monthly average which is $171 according to Energy Star and the Colorado state average which is $241. Simultaneously, the assessment found that roughly one of every five homeowners and two of every five renters are cost burdened. While the state of Colorado offers some financial relief for heating costs through the Low-income Energy Assistance LEAP program, the high cost of water and sewer fall outside of LEAP’s coverage. Rates are expected to increase in both water and wastewater over the next five years - the base rate for residential water is expected to rise from $43.00 in 2024, to 48.30 in 2028 and wastewater rates will raise two dollars between 2023 and 2024 (and will likely need to be raised again in the coming three years).

Policies SANITATION AND RESOURCE RECOVERY

goal

**INFRA – 8**  Sanitation services that are well maintained, professionally staffed, and in compliance with all state laws.

**INFRA – 9** Encouraging solid and organic material resource recovery including reuse, recycling, and composting and ensuring the highest and best use of discarded materials.

**INFRA – 12** Cultivate improved waste and materials management that supports source reduction, sustainable diversion, and regulatory compliance through accessible services and programs for residential and commercial land uses.

Policies

POLICY INFRA Provide consistent and quality waste collection services for all new and

SANITATION & RR-1 existing residents and ensure residential participation is commensurate with rates charged and received.

POLICY INFRA Utilize Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment technical

SANITATION & RR-2 assistance programs to develop and establish a recycling program.

POLICY INFRA Support public awareness activities and information alongside businesses

SANITATION & RR-3 that provide recycling, composting, and other opportunities to reuse and recycle material resources within the Town and county.

POLICY INFRA Increase reduction and recycling efforts within the Town to divert solid waste

SANITATION & RR-4 from landfills.

POLICY INFRA Promote the importance of recycling industrial and construction waste.

SANITATION & RR-5

Urban Forest

All urban trees require management as they mature in the landscape. To increase tree diversity and canopy resilience in Town, new tree species must be consciously curated and properly planted and cared for. To sustain the urban forest’s vital functions in Paonia, funding is needed to take care of existing trees and plant new ones. As Paonia’s urban forest ages and comes under increasing stress from drought, increased heat, and high winds, formalizing care for the Town forest is critical. As trees reach maturity new smaller trees must be planted adjacent to them to support successful succession. The 2021 Paonia Street Tree Inventory provides a robust framework with direction for street-tree care and the establishment of regular and professional maintenance and replacement that will support their longevity and reduce risk to the Town. However, this report is just the first step, and several follow-on actions are suggested in this Plan to establish the quality of service required to maintain our valuable urban canopy.

Policies URBAN FOREST

goal

**INFRA – 10** The wonderful quality of life, ecosystem, and increased walkability and real estate values that our town forest provides.

Policies

POLICY INFRA Monitor, properly care for, and carefully replace street and park trees to

URBAN FOREST-1 maintain, improve, and expand the Town’s urban forest. Provide greater support and accountability for homeowners’ maintenance of trees in public rights-of-way and engage and empower citizens to participate in street-tree care.

POLICY INFRA Maintain compliance with Tree City USA designation and work to foster

URBAN FORES-2 collaboration between the Tree Board, public, and local business community to support tree maintenance, safety, and overall beautification and shade coverage.