

Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team

Because Silver Saddle Ranch and the adjacent Prison Hill emerged through the public workshops as focal areas, one team at the charrette was tasked with focusing just on these areas. Specifically, the team was asked to explore:

- How Silver Saddle Ranch could function as a hub for passive recreation, education and interpretation in the context of the site as an historic ranch
- Options for developing a nature center at Silver Saddle Ranch
- Prison Hill uses, particularly the west and south side where recreation/trail uses interface with residences
- Management/policy considerations
- How to connect these sites into the broader Planning Area



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

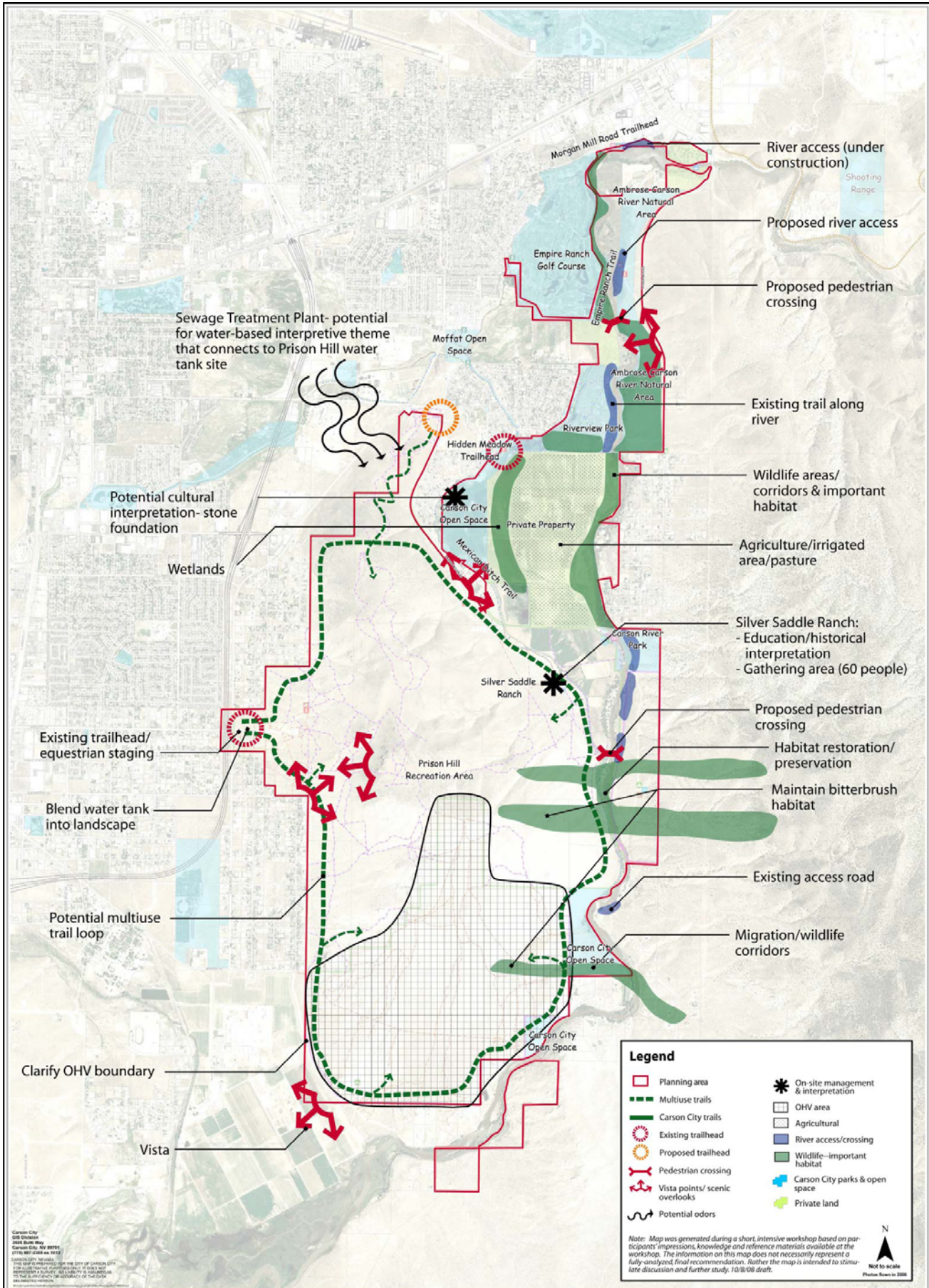
To get started, the team brainstorms approaches to their assigned tasks



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Team members roll up their sleeves and start mapping

The group spent Friday generating an analysis of the existing conditions, opportunities and constraints for these areas (Figure 16: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team-Site Analysis). Based on this analysis, the group explored each of the five topics assigned to them (Appendix L: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team Original Notes and Drawings).



Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Site Analysis
 CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 16. Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Site Analysis

Silver Saddle Ranch

Once the group had a common understanding of the Planning Area, they explored what it would mean for Silver Saddle Ranch to be a "hub" and concluded that the ranch could be a focal point for passive recreation, education, and interpretation. As an overall concept for the ranch, the group felt that preserving it as a "family working ranch" would help to demonstrate and interpret Carson City's heritage while providing opportunities for recreation.

To achieve this, the team recommended designating a "ranch bubble" within which ranch-related uses and events would take place. Any non-ranch related uses, including parking, would be excluded from this "bubble" and take place around the perimeter of the ranch (*Figure 17: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Silver Saddle Ranch Area Uses*). In addition, under the topics listed and described below, the group identified numerous recommendations:

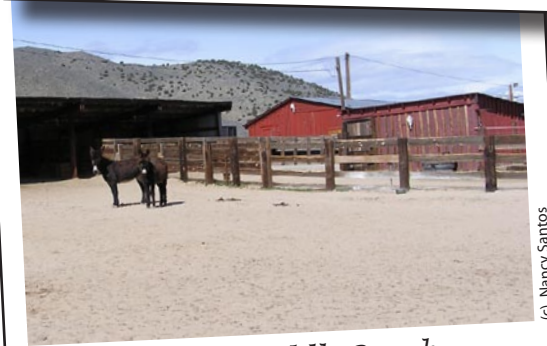
Planning Considerations:

- Silver Saddle Ranch should be used as a "headquarters" for the whole Planning Area. Possibly site any "headquarter" facilities near intersection of 5th Street and Carson River Road rather than on the ranch
- The context of the ranch is as important as what happens inside the ranch "bubble" for preserving its character
- Each site in the Planning Area does not have to provide all types of recreation uses—too many access points—possibly one Carson River Park access—look at globally
- Use charrette as springboard to development plans for all resources/management areas to use day to day
- Agricultural uses that are consistent with the ranch's history should be considered
- Look at a new name to encompass the entire Planning Area that is the subject of the charrette
- Develop standards for consistent signage throughout the Planning Area



Pole barn at Silver Saddle Ranch sheltering hay

(c) Nancy Santos



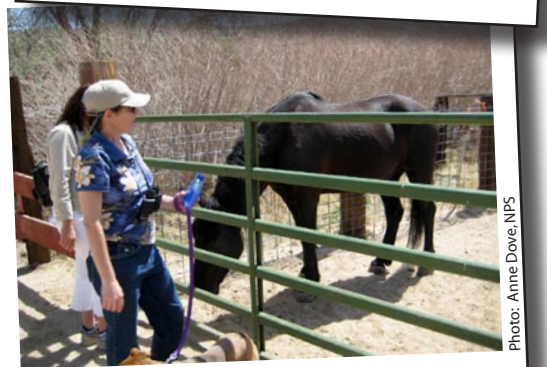
Burros at Silver Saddle Ranch

(c) Nancy Santos



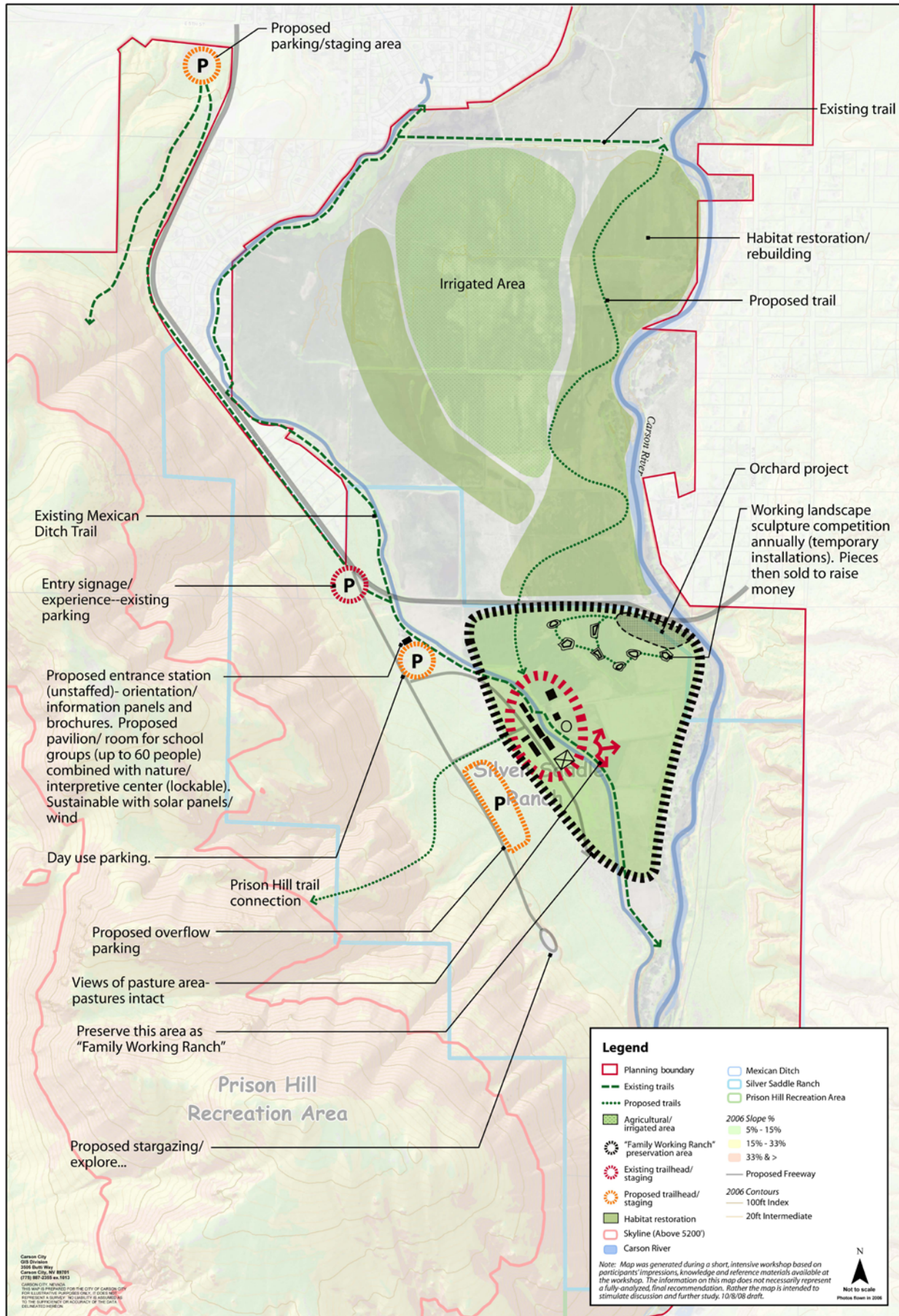
Charrette participants view pasture area of Silver Saddle Ranch from Carson River Park

Photo: Anne Dove, NPS



Horse at Silver Saddle Ranch

Photo: Anne Dove, NPS



Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Silver Saddle Ranch Area Uses
 CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 17. Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Silver Saddle Ranch Area Uses

Recreation & Access:

- Explore providing recreational experiences that are consistent with the site as a ranch but that do not impact the character of the ranch (e.g. equestrian use, trail rides, tractor/wagon rides, etc.)
- Access to the ranch, especially for youth, is lacking and could be enhanced
- Equestrian activities could include use of an arena, using the ranch for trail trials and trail riding/staging
- The "sandpit" area could be used for stargazing
- Nature-based recreation such as birdwatching would be consistent with the ranch concept
- Youth group activities such as 4-H and scout groups could be planned for the site
- Archaeology and cultural uses fit with the overarching concept for the ranch

Interpretation & Education:

- Develop an interpretive plan that addresses themes, appropriate stories, support materials, programs, etc.
- Consider Carson River as a key overarching theme that ties together other themes including cultural, historic and environmental
- Working with the schools, develop an environmental education plan based on an understanding of needs and how the ranch could be used as a site to meet those needs



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Equestrian trail use is a popular activity at Silver Saddle Ranch



(c) Nancy Santos

Young birder enjoying wildlife viewing at Silver Saddle Ranch



(c) Nancy Santos

Interpretation of area's ranching heritage is an opportunity



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Mexican Ditch interpretive panel



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

The annual "Escape from Prison Hill" half-marathon is staged at Silver Saddle Ranch

Events

- Small event center (indoor/outdoor)—up to 60 people
- For larger events, consider using the recently-acquired "Buzzy's Ranch" site to the north of the ranch either in concert with Silver Saddle Ranch or as an alternative location to the ranch
- An event area that could accommodate equestrian events would fit with the overarching working ranch concept. Possibly use pasture area for event staging as needed.
- Events should be consistent with the theme of the site and be managed to not compromise or impact the core ranch "bubble" area

Natural Resources:

- Protect natural resources
- Conduct surveys/inventories of wildlife and vegetation and develop management strategies to sustain them
- Consider restoring degraded areas

Nature/Interpretive Center

The team was tasked with exploring how a nature or interpretive center could be integrated into the Silver Saddle Ranch area. The team developed the following recommendations:



(c) Nancy Santos

Organized bird walks are a regular feature at Silver Saddle Ranch

- Need to stay with theme of river--provide setting for activities without impacting ranch as a cultural landscape. Support infrastructure for events needs to be located outside historic "bubble" area.
- Nature education could be accommodated somewhere on ranch—consider relationship of center to the river
- Examples of other facilities in the region that could be referenced include the Western Folklife Center in Elko and Bartley Ranch in Reno



(c) Nancy Santos

Building bird boxes at Silver Saddle Ranch

Prison Hill

The third area the team was tasked with considering is Prison Hill. Because of its direct connection to Silver Saddle Ranch and direct interface with residential neighborhoods, Prison Hill will likely continue to be a popular recreation site. The group proposed that the primary uses for Prison Hill remain open space access and trail use (*Figure 16: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Site Analysis*). More specific recommendations included:

Access

- Trail access could be separated by uses: north-pedestrian/equestrian; south-OHV; east: pedestrian/equestrian; west-Koontz Lane access pedestrian/equestrian, Valley View Drive access equestrian, and Clearview Drive access pedestrian/equestrian
- West entry: limit to passive uses and better integrate the water tank into landscape to reduce visual impact
- Equestrian overpass-on freeway at Valley View low impact uses

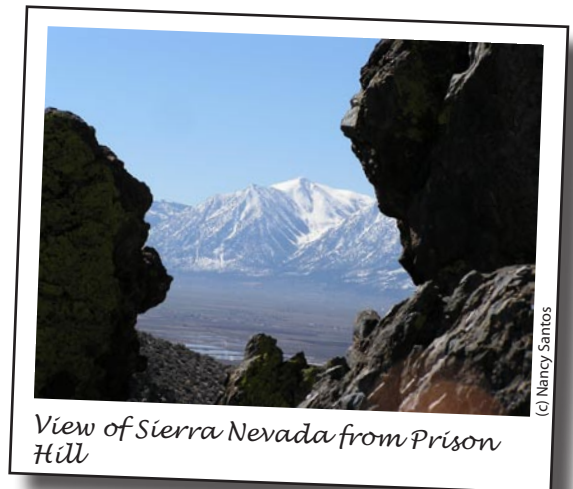
Trail uses

- Conduct an accurate inventory of the existing trail system and where different user groups are accessing which sites. Decommission redundant or inappropriately sited/constructed trails (most of which are informal)
- Keep OHV where is now—define a better boundary based on topography. Encourage local use. Make sure there is adequate access to this area that discourages trespassing and crossing into nonmotorized trail areas. Consider fencing between public and private properties where conflicts arise
- Consider keeping the southern area of Prison Hill for OHV use; the central area of Prison Hill for nonmotorized and multiple use and then separate trails for biking/ hiking/ equestrian uses
- Ensure there is a well-defined, useable trail that connects Prison Hill to Silver Saddle Ranch
- Decide on policies about informal trails that extend into Prison Hill from individual properties/houses
- Consider a nonmotorized loop trail around Prison Hill
- Better marked trails and provide systematic signage
- Use scenic viewpoints as destinations in the trail system



View of Silver Saddle Ranch from Prison Hill

(c) Nancy Santos



View of Sierra Nevada from Prison Hill

(c) Nancy Santos

Management & Policy

One of the key issues the team identified is how the City, should the federal lands in the Planning Area be transferred to them, plan, develop, maintain, manage, protect and enforce this large area. The team developed the following possible recommendations:

Management organizations/partnerships

- Establish an interagency task force that would include existing managers and nongovernmental groups. Scope of the task force’s work could include:
 - Transition issues
 - Developing plans for the site, including management
 - Finance issues
 - Ongoing management including organizational development, volunteer coordination, natural resources monitoring and event management
- Explore possibility of expanding the mission of the Carson River Advisory Committee to include the Planning Area rather than creating a new advisory body
- Consider creating a “Friends” group, coalition or partnership for the entire Planning Area
- Engage nonprofits and others with expertise in planning and management
- Define roles, rights and responsibilities of any partners

Management Policies

- Regulations needed to address special events and fees
- Policies for use of the area by nonprofits and commercial groups need to be defined
- Wildlife and archeological/cultural resource management is not typically undertaken by the City. Strategies and policies to undertake this will be needed
- Develop scheduling and use policies—develop a web-based, master scheduling system that is accessible to interested parties

Enforcement/patrols

- Involve law enforcement and emergency management agencies in planning
- Consider using city park rangers to patrol area, preferably with trail patrols included
- Explore potential for developing volunteer patrol program—possibly a “deputy” program
- Develop city OHV ordinance and coordinate with law enforcement agencies

to develop enforcement strategies

- Consider an onsite caretaker located at Silver Saddle Ranch to assist with monitoring/patrolling area

Financing/funding/fees

- Manage ranch as an “enterprise account” and generate business for revenue to manage the site. Ensure that any revenue-generating activities are consistent with and do not impact the site.
- Assess the pros/cons of a fee-based system to generate income including user fees, entrance fees, special fees, event fees, etc.
- Explore fee system for events and assess the extent to which it would contribute to sustaining the site

Connecting Silver Saddle Ranch and Prison Hill to the Rest of Planning Area and Beyond

The team was asked to explore how to integrate and connect the ranch into the broader Planning Area, landscape and city. Suggestions included:

- Consider physical, informational and partnership connections with V&T Railroad depot
- Explore possibilities of connecting down river to Lyon County, possibly via the Carson River aquatic trail
- Identify possible connections from the Carson River to the Sierra Front
- All river components need to be connected by a first rate nonmotorized trail system
- Connections to Douglas County would likely be most feasible via Prison Hill. Coordinate with Douglas County to explore possibilities



Team brainstorms management ideas

Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Final Presentation Feedback

The final event within the three-day charrette was a public presentation of the teams' work. Saturday afternoon, each team displayed their work and provided a summary of their recommendations. The public was asked to respond to the work. Comments included:

Natural Resources

- The state has grant money to spray for weeds. There could be a partnership opportunity to address weed issues in the Planning Area
- There is an existing east-west wildlife corridor that is used by wildlife and wild horses
- The existing foot bridge by Eagle Creek should be moved up- or downstream
- The wildlife corridor from Prison Hill to Silver Saddle Ranch across Carson River Road is cut off for deer movement
- The recently acquired Carson City Open Space (Andersen Ranch) area and the property to its east support wildlife as part of a broader system. This should be considered in planning for these areas



Trails & Passive Recreation

- Trail staging with horse trailer access at south end of Mexican Dam neighborhood would be good
- Trail surfacing—currently, trails are all decomposed granite. If they need additional armoring (i.e. asphalt), that trail surface probably does not belong there
- Upstream river management—will anything happen in the future to impact the Carson River section that passes through Carson City?

Future

- It seems like the Planning Area is now well managed and has great resources. In the future, maybe only “minor tweaking” is needed
- An identity is needed for whole area. Potentially a community contest that involves kids/youth could be undertaken to name the area.
- Fees? Looked at examples of funding like Washoe Lake, Q1 funds, and open space funds previously used for acquisition
- How will city pay for this? Need to explore grants, partnerships and sponsorships
- There is some need to wait until the federal lands bill comes out so there will be some sense of what will happen in the future. There is a need to think short, mid- and long-term.

Public Feedback

Following the drafting of the charrette report, a summary of the results of the charrette were presented at a public meeting on December 11, 2008. Participants were asked to respond to the ideas generated during the charrette (*Appendix M: Public Feedback on Charrette Results*).

MOVING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The ideas generated during the charrette represent a range of possibilities and not a set prescription for the future. Rather than describe what *should* happen in the Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Area, the ideas generated through the charrette process represent possibilities of what *could* happen. This process represents a starting point for defining the future, while setting a trajectory that is rooted in a foundation developed through community engagement.

Potential next steps could include:

- Circulation and presentation of the charrette report to Carson City decision-making and advisory bodies
- Partnership-building among the public and private organizations with an interest and a stake in the future of the Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Area

Given the confluence of events affecting the future of this area, great opportunities exist to guide the long-term future of Carson City and the surrounding region by taking advantage of this unique moment in time.

The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch (FOSSR) was incorporated in July, 2001 and is a Carson City based, not-for-profit, community organization located in Carson City. FOSSR is dedicated to the preservation of the ranch and its cultural, historical and natural resources as both open space and a working ranch.



For more information:
Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch
P.O. Box 19992
Carson City, NV 89721-9992
info@fossr.org
www.fossr.org
or
Carson City
775-887-2363 ext. 1004

The "Creating a Community Vision: Silver Saddle Ranch and the Carson River" community design charrette is being undertaken by the Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch through partnership with the following organizations:

