

Carbondale Parks & Recreation



Carbondale, Colorado's Park System Master Plan process addressed small-town challenges of engaging community members and stakeholders to inform the creation of a plan and support its implementation. Carbondale's challenges to gathering public input included limited staff time dedicated to stakeholder coordination and broad community outreach, limited consultant funds, community fatigue from recent community planning efforts, and a variety of barriers to participation. Town staff and the Design Workshop consultant team worked together incorporating tried-and-true and innovative engagement strategies into a consolidated timeline to ensure a wide cross-section of the community contributed quality input and played an integral role in the formulation of recommendations.



For a town of just over 6,000 people, it was a major accomplishment to gain input from over 950 people throughout the process and garnered feedback from often underrepresented populations, such as Latinos, youth, the commuting workforce, visitors and seniors. A targeted outreach and engagement effort focused on generating representative community responses through online and paper surveys, providing insight into the community's impressions, values, and priorities for the park system. The second stage of engagement was centered around a consolidated, in-depth planning workshop to gain an understanding of community's priorities and preferences over three days. Community-based solutions were formulated through the

collective influence of engaged elected officials, stakeholders, Town staff, and a variety of community leaders that participated throughout the planning process. The use of creative and low-cost outreach methods along with a streamlined process is an appropriate model for other small towns or rural areas faced with limited resources for public engagement.

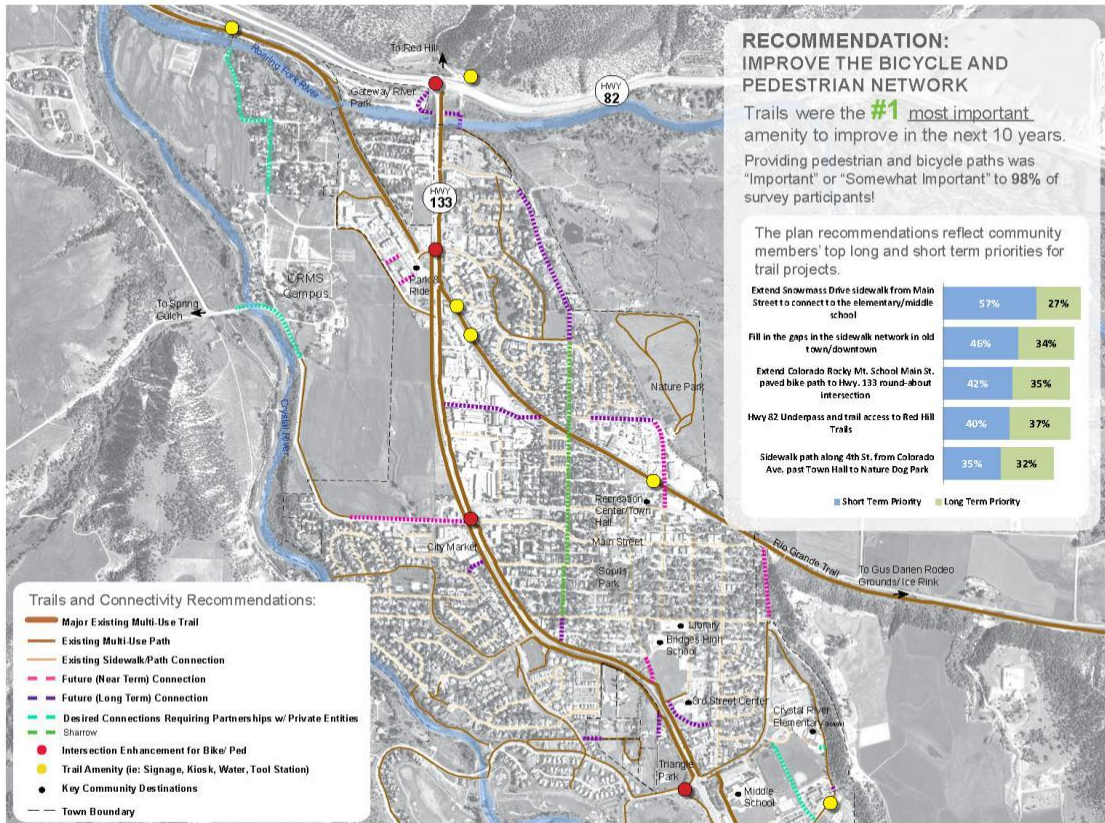
The resulting plan captures the identity of Carbondale; its premier outdoor environment defined by its strong bicycle culture, access to mountain recreation opportunities, healthy lifestyles, ranching heritage, community diversity and the celebration of arts, culture and community events. The plan highlights opportunities to advance the established environmental ethos of the community through energy efficiency and environmental stewardship. This responsiveness to community values resulted in a well-supported plan even though it outlined challenging funding mandates.



9 | Distinct user groups, special interest organizations, and technical experts met in focus groups to discuss the parks and recreation needs for the next 10 years.

The plan created is not one that has gathered dust on a shelf. The Town commission and staff use the 11 core themes to drive their work priorities, annual budget, and filter the public's desire for improvements. Evidence of plan implementation include many trail improvements and the creation of two parks along the trails that are primarily possible through volunteer building and donations. One of these parks is the Hispanic Art Garden, an idea born out of

the new emphasis on Latino engagement.



10 | From engagement to implementation, the community voiced that highlighting the rivers as community assets and recreation opportunities was a priority.