

Winter Park's Aspirational Approach to Comprehensive Planning: Imagine Winter Park



by Community Development Team, Town of Winter Park

The Town of Winter Park is one of the few Colorado ski towns not formed as a mining or railroad town. Instead, it has organically grown along with the Winter Park Ski Area into the eclectic and unpretentious resort community it is today. Slow and incremental growth built on this strong foundation has helped the Town to keep its small-town feel and unique character over time.

In contrast to the past however, Winter Park has experienced substantial transformation in the past five years. Unfortunately, the Town's previous Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2006, was outdated and made it difficult to

respond to the growing problems and stresses facing the community including attainable housing, water availability and healthy stream flow, transportation and mobility, and natural resource management.

Knowing that the previous plan was not working to positively shape the future as the Town continued to grow and change, the Town pursued the creation of a new Comprehensive plan. The intent of this new Comprehensive Plan was to refocus planning efforts and policies to address both current issues and future opportunities to ensure that future generations can experience the same aspects of Winter Park that people love today.

I LOVE WINTER PARK FOR ITS: accessibility • authenticity • beauty • bikeability • bus service • cleanliness • community values • diverse appeal • downtown • engagement • entertainment venues • amenities • family-friendly feel • feels home • festivals/ events • few big boxes/ chains • fraser river • fun • hideaway park • laid back vibe • lifestyle/ culture • local businesses • location • lodging • low key • authentic ski town • mountains • music events • open space • outdoor recreation • outdoors/ wilderness • people • potential • public parks • quiet pace • range of activities • restaurants • safe • sense of community • services • size • skate park • skiing/ ski resort • small town/ local feel • small town with big town amenities • stay summer • town council investment • trail system • trees • uncrowded • valley • variety of activities • views walkable • weather

IF WINTER PARK WAS KNOWN FOR ONE THING, IT WOULD BE: adventurous • affordable fun • affordable living • affordable mountain housing • affordable ski town • alternative transportation • arts • culture • authenticity • classy resort town • clean • complete • connected • diverse appeal • diverse mountain town • down-home charm • easily accessible • environmentally friendly • family-friendliness • family-friendly destination • family-friendly recreation • festivals/ events • friendliness • fun • healthy/ active community • high-end • hospitality • intelligence • forethought • laid back/ vibe • low car footprint • mountain biking • mountain lifestyle • music venue • new stage • outdoor green living • outdoor recreation • premier trail system • premier year-round outdoor recreation • progressive in sustainable living • quality • quality of life • quiet town • resourceful • responsible development • skateboarding • ski resort • small town of the Rockies • small-town feel • charm • special place to live or visit • sustainable year-round population • trendy • true to its roots • unspoiled beauty • variety of activities • vibrancy • walkable • welcoming/ inviting • world-class hiking • world-class mountain retreat • world-class outdoor recreation • world-class ski town • world-class skiing • world-class vacation destination • authentic mountain town

I COULD IMPROVE ONE THING ABOUT WINTER PARK IT WOULD BE: add a grocer • add an indoor skatepark • add an indoor tennis facility • add bike lanes • add more activities/ amenities in town • add more lodging for visitors • add more public parks • add more restaurants/ bars • shops • add more sidewalks • add more sober-fun entertainment • add selfie spots around town • add sports fields • address building placement • address housing crisis • attract an institution for higher education • build gondolas connecting the ski resort to downtown • connect south side of town to fraser river trail • connect the town and resort • continue expansion of trails for hiking + biking • continue to be bike-friendly through town • create a center for the arts • create a more pedestrian-friendly town • create a pedestrian-friendly main street • create a walkable downtown • create safe highway crossings • discourage nightly rentals • promote hotel accommodations • eliminate strip parking lots • encourage beautification • reuse of existing structures • encourage removal of rundown buildings along hwy 40 • enhance mountain town feeling • enhance the downtown environment/ experience • enhance transportation system • enhance wayfinding • ensure that new buildings are architecturally-interesting • expand downtown core • expand social services • explore solutions for reducing homelessness • free parking at the resort • higher wages for service industry employees • laborers host events year-round at the events center • host more early evening events • implement building height restrictions • implement careful thoughtful planning • implement stricter design guidelines • improve/ widen roads • improve cohesiveness within the downtown corridor • improve housing • improve paving on hwy 40 through town • improve pedestrian experience • building facades • improve pedestrian safety • improve placemaking downtown • improve quality of accommodations • improve shopping experience • improve signage • improve the aesthetic appeal of the town • increase advertising for events • increase bus routes • increase collaboration with the resort • increase commuter access • increase density • increase family-friendliness • increase housing availability • increase outreach • inclusiveness • increase variety of services • infill downtown • install bike pumps in the parks • install hammock poles in the parks • install wayfinding for trail businesses • keep the town affordable • keep the town family-friendly • less is better • leverage the river • limit pop shops • lower taxes • market the biking/ hiking trails • minimize light pollution • mitigate traffic • more affordable housing • more affordable long-term rental options for locals • more housing options • more of the same • more public parking • more single-family starter homes • more transparency in town processes • more workforce housing • preserve the natural landscape • preserve views • prohibit nightly rentals • reduce reliance on the automobile • reduce speed limit

What We Heard
 The Town Plan was created with the community, through workshops, public meetings, and community events. This means that the residents, visitors, property owners, and businesses of Winter Park are the true creators of the plan. Input from the community helped to create everything from the vision themes and principles, all the way to the strategies themselves. A small sample of what we heard in these workshops, surveys, and community events can be seen listed above. Overall planning process was broken into four phases. Please find links below to summaries of the four phases which detail more specifically the community input and how it shaped the plan.

May-August 2017 | August - November 2017 | December 2017 - April 2018 | April - October 2018

To accomplish this ambitious goal, the Town hired Logan Simpson in the spring of 2017 to assist in the development of a new Comprehensive Plan. After creating the tag line, “Imagine Winter Park,” the Town started a year-long initiative working with the community to create a common vision for the future that everyone could embrace.

From the very first community event at one of our weekly free concerts, to the numerous workshops, public meetings, and steering committee meetings, people were at the heart of this plan. Food, games, concerts, and interactive events throughout the process promoted a lively public dialogue and resulted in thousands of comments, thoughts, and suggestions for the plan. This extensive community engagement resulted in an adaptive, visionary, and aspirational plan focused around four main themes:

- Our Character and Our Culture
- Our Global and Local Connectivity
- Our World-Class Outdoor Recreation
- Our Healthy and Thriving Environment

These Vision Themes create the structure and heart of the Plan, and are built around the community’s values to ensure that the community is reflected in every principal and strategy. This aspirational approach aligns the Town under one common vision and allows the plan to be flexible and adaptable to both present and future challenges.

Since the plan adoption in January of 2019, the Town has already begun work on three catalytic projects that will help to bring the visions identified in Imagine Winter Park to life: a community informed Downtown Plan (assisted by Design Workshop), the development of a Unified Development Code (assisted by Kendig Keast) and the creation of a Sustainability Assessment (through a CU Denver MURP Capstone Project).

This rapid implementation is the direct result of a plan that was modeled by the community and continues to have incredible community support. Focusing the community on identifying their ideal vision for the future instead of evaluating individual projects also helped to foster conversations that are not often possible when specific proposals are presented. Instead of evaluating the merits of a certain set of projects, this approach allows broader community conversations around what the ideal future should be. Then, all future projects can be built to fit that vision instead of the other way around. The success of this aspirational approach to comprehensive planning we hope will serve as a model for other communities that face rapid change and could benefit from an adaptive and flexible guiding plan.

Imagine WINTER PARK
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WPODY.COM/IMAGINEWP

CREATING OUR PATH FORWARD

1 Our Character and Our Culture

2 Our Global and Local Connectivity

3 Our World-Class Outdoor Recreation

4 Our Healthy and Thriving Environment

Four Visions

Imagine Winter Park is built around four community visions. The four community visions are statements that describe the desired future of the Town and are based on extensive input from the Winter Park Community.

Principles for Each Vision

The principles further elaborate on the community's desires for the Town over the next 10-15 years and are organized within each of the four community visions.

What is Imagine Winter Park?

Imagine Winter Park is the Town of Winter Park's Master Plan, also known as The Town Plan. This plan establishes a common vision for the Town's future and outlines the process for achieving that vision. It is a tool that will guide the Town in everything from policy development and project funding, to decisions on land use, development, public services, and economic development.

Strategies

The Strategies are the last and most specific component of the plan. They provide action items for achieving the Principles.

CC 3.1 - Fully integrate workforce housing throughout the Town's built environment

EN 1.2 - Maintain healthy stream flows for ecological, recreational, and scenic purposes

EN 3.3 - Work to become a Dark Sky Community

OR 1.5 - Manage trailhead parking to mitigate impacts to the environment and to residents

CO 1.5 - Initiate a comprehensive signage program to provide intuitive wayfinding throughout the Town

CC 4.3 - Ensure accessible transportation options are available to all our residents and visitors.

* Strategies listed here are only a brief sampling. Explore the many strategies choices to achieve each Principle in Chapters 3-6 of the Town Plan.

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