

Gunnison 2030: Live. Learn. Earn.

2021 Honor Award: General Planning Project

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The City's first comprehensive planning effort and community-wide guiding document since 2007 focuses on the development and activation of strategies and an implementation plan, focusing City resources and promoting interagency collaboration for the next decade. The plan includes specific actions to improve our City's image and function for residents and visitors alike.

The Comprehensive Plan update process kicked off with an aggressive schedule in to be completed by the end of 2019 and formally adopted by City Council at the beginning of 2020. The accelerated schedule driven by a one-year adoption goal was ambitious and unique to the Gunnison 2030 process.

Beginning in January 2019, and continuing through April, consultants and City staff conducted 19 community focus group meetings and direct stakeholder interviews. These focused group meetings and one-on-one interviews were a chance for stakeholders to convey more specific information about their experiences living and working in Gunnison. The project team met with residents; City leadership; emergency service personnel; community facility representatives; business owners and operators; high

school, university undergraduate and graduate students; senior citizens; ESL population, interagency staff, and other key stakeholders. Focus groups and interviews were organized around stakeholder groups with shared, common expertise or interest in key topics or fields, such as transportation, housing, and infrastructure. The primary goal of these interactions was to bring out nuanced information on topics in fine detail from specific perspectives while tapping into the local expertise in our Gunnison Valley community.

Another unique and innovative aspect of the plan was the City's formation of a partnership with Western Colorado University's Master in Environmental Management Program to work with City staff, the consultant team, and the community to identify issues and opportunities for creating a more sustainable society. This partnership included discussions with various stakeholder groups related to water, energy sustainability, and solid waste, which was further informed by collaborative participation in the Gunnison Valley Climate Action Conference in January 2020, producing sustainability recommendations that touched all chapters of the Gunnison 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

An Issues and Opportunities Memorandum was drafted that represented the culmination of focused, initial outreach and data collection for the plan. From this point, there were ongoing opportunities for input through additional Community, Spanish Language, Business, and Visioning workshops.

In June 2019, City staff assembled six focus groups to address the six primary subjects that were identified by the community participants as key priorities to be addressed within the Comprehensive Plan. The key priorities were: housing; land use/growth; transportation and transit; economy; environment and sustainability; and image and identity. Participants in these topical focus groups worked to formulate vision statements, goals, and strategies, each intended to provide clear direction for the future. Invitations were sent out to each person that had participated in the process to date. Additional outreach for comments was solicited at public events such as the weekend Farmer's Market and through the City's email distribution list. At the end of July 2019, the workshop focus groups were reconvened for a second review and additional feedback. The refined Vision, Goals, and Strategies were reviewed and approved by City Council in August. These Vision, Goals, and Strategies were assembled into the final format of the Gunnison 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Community Outreach Takeaways

The following are overarching outreach themes that highlighted the community's views on issues and opportunities within Gunnison:

Affordable Housing. The need for more affordable housing is a top issue in Gunnison, especially to attract and maintain employees. The high cost of building materials, increasing land value, and a lack of specialized affordable housing developers were highlighted as impediments.

Community Character and Identity. Community members enjoy Gunnison's tight knit, welcoming character and wish to improve the City's gateways and wayfinding to enhance sense of place.

Environmental Sustainability. The maintenance and protection of natural resources and surrounding open spaces is crucial for the long-term success of Gunnison and its urban growth area. There is strong interest for environmental sustainability and exploring new city-wide green practices.

Economic Prosperity. Community members wish to sustain a year-round economy through winter months and provide better jobs and living wages.

Infrastructure. Gunnison's infrastructure is a concern, such as existing gaps in the sidewalk network, high material costs, and the cost and magnitude of servicing growth areas like Gunnison Rising.

Broadband and Telecommunications. Broadband and telecommunications infrastructure within the City and the siting of new telecommunication towers are significant issues that need to be addressed as the City plans for the future.

Transportation and Mobility. Community members wish to lower high speeds on Tomicl Avenue and Main Street and provide safe intersections and crossings to make Gunnison friendly to all modes of transportation.

Improved Connectivity. Gunnison residents and stakeholders wish to better connect the City by creating more trails that connect to the regional system for pedestrians and bikers and increasing transit options.

Western Colorado University. A major asset and source of pride, community members and students wish to better link Western and the City by improving physical connections between the campus and downtown as well as strengthening event and entrepreneurial partnerships.

Assets. Among its many great qualities, community members especially cherish Gunnison's sense of community, small town feel, Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport, schools, surrounding natural areas and outdoor recreational amenities, public lands and open spaces, and the proactive and accessible City government.

Quotes of comments received during community outreach are dispersed throughout the Plan to provide insight to the community's outlook and aspirations.

