

Town of Silverton Compass Master Plan 2022

Community Engagement Merit Award

[Website](#)

The Challenge

Silverton, Colorado is a town with approximately 700 residents nestled in the heart of Colorado's San Juan Mountains. Like many small mountain towns, the community has struggled to sustain its character and natural environment, while shaping a more resilient economy. It is a rugged, remote, and picturesque community. The town has experienced an increase in tourism and popularity in recent years, particularly during the Covid-19 summers, due to its mountain town character and access to outdoor recreation.

Silverton is home to the Gold King Mine which has a history of driving the town's local economy. But in 2015, an accident occurred causing the release of toxic waste water into the Animas River. The community was able to utilize the Superfund program to clean-up the mess, but the effects of the disaster still have a hold on the community on their economy.

The [Colorado Department of Health and Environment](#) (CDPHE) had an interest in helping Silverton overcome the effects of the environmental disaster, while also helping the community deal with recent growth pressures. Enlisting the assistance of the [Colorado Brownfields Partnership](#) and [Community Builders](#), this project sought to create a unified community vision for Silverton by tackling tough issues like growth, affordable housing, economic diversification, and connecting to natural resources. After beginning the visioning process, the Town of Silverton and Community Builders partnered to conduct a town master plan.

Process

As part of the Silverton Compass Master Planning process, Community Builders and the Town of Silverton undertook a significant community engagement effort in 2021-2022 which directly influenced the development of the Plan. During this time period there were over 75 opportunities for the community to engage and over 350 community members (50%) participated in the process.

Throughout the process, the team conducted in depth outreach to engage hard to reach populations to obtain a wide range of voices to incorporate their input in shaping the master plan. This included meeting with the Latinx population at their places of employment, students at the K-12 school, senior center meetings, firefighters at the fire station, and conducting several open houses at popular coffee shops and restaurants during peak periods.

Another key component of the outreach process included a five part series of topic based webinars conducted over a 2 month period to teach community members the importance of the economy, responsible growth, housing, natural assets, and building civic health and capacity. Each webinar included expert guest speakers from other communities to discuss their successes and challenges on the topic. These webinars also resulted in a pool of community volunteers to assist with topic based task forces.

In addition to the above, Community Builders also conducted numerous Task Force Meetings, Walking Meetings, Targeted Focus Groups and traditional Open Houses/Workshops.

Key Outcomes and Deliverables

The unanimously adopted [Master Plan](#) includes recommendations, strategies, and funding opportunities to achieve the community's goals by strengthening the local economy, providing housing types and prices for everyone, creating family-friendly spaces, enhancing natural assets, and building civic health and capacity.

Community Builder and the Town of Silverton received a merit award for Community Engagement for this process during the 2023 State APA Conference. To learn more about the Silverton Compass Project, check out this [short film](#).



*Pictured L - R: J.J. Folsom, Community Builders Director
Gloria Kaasch-Buerger, Town of Silverton Administrator
Erica Heller, Community Builders Senior Director*

The following page includes several images from the outreach process.

