

1 Introduction

This introductory chapter discusses the reasons to plan for the future and how the Plan was established based upon public input.

- I. Purpose of the Plan
- II. Creating the Plan
- III. Data Collection
- IV. Engaging the Public
- V. Community Assessment
- VI. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)
- VII. How to Read This Plan



Photo Courtesy of Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association

I. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Master Plan proposes a framework for managing growth that will preserve the quality of life and foster a healthy economy in the City of Gunnison. It is a guide to be used by citizens, developers and Gunnison public officials when making decisions about future development within the City and its three-mile planning boundary.

While this Plan is primarily an advisory document, it is the basis for revising existing regulations, enacting new regulations and making land use decisions. Existing development will not be affected; however, voluntary compliance with the new policies will be encouraged.

The Plan recognizes that protection of individual property rights is a fundamental, legal and philosophical

principle of the United States, the State of Colorado, Gunnison County and the City of Gunnison. The Plan also presents a vision shared by the citizens of Gunnison to preserve and enhance the character, environment and scenic qualities of the community while working toward a more diverse economy.

II. CREATING THE PLAN

Long-range planning involves many steps, including public participation as well as professional data collection techniques. Results of the process determined the current conditions, examined trends, and identified goals. After this information was collected, a vision statement was drafted, and a projected growth scenario was developed.

Data Collection

Land use inventories and other data sources were used in the formation of this Plan. Many regional documents were used as valuable sources to determine the preferred growth patterns. These regional documents are listed in Appendix 1A.

Land Use Inventory

The projected land use map that is illustrated in later chapters was created using several sources:

1. Consultants and staff inventoried industrial, commercial and residential land during August and September of 2004 and the summer of 2005.
2. County Assessor parcel data from 2006 was used as a cross reference to the physical inventory.
3. County GIS data, physical inventories and parcels were manually entered into the City's GIS system.
4. US Census data.

Using GIS and Community Viz[®] modeling software, staff prepared land use scenarios for discussion with the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) resulting in the final projected land use scenario presented in *Chapter 5, Land Use and Growth*.

Engaging the Public

Telephone Public Opinion Survey

A telephone public opinion survey was conducted in November of 2004. Four-hundred households were contacted. Of these, 247 (two-thirds) lived in the City limits, and the remaining third lived within the three-mile planning area. Important issues

such as housing, economic viability, and community facilities were explored.¹

Interviews

Community leaders gave invaluable, multi-faceted perspectives when interviewed by the consultants. These individuals were helpful sources of information throughout the process.

Public Outreach

Staff participated in outreach sessions by presenting drafts of this Master Plan to various groups in the valley including the Gunnison Valley Contractors Association, the Gunnison Country Board of Realtors, the Gunnison Arts Center, Kiwanis, Western State College, Gunnison Valley Community Alliance, and the Gunnison County Planning Commission.

The Steering Committee

This committee consisted of residents of the City and County of Gunnison who were appointed by the Gunnison City Council. This collaboration of citizens provided critical direction to the consultants and the Planning Commission regarding the content of the plan. The steering committee met approximately 20 times throughout the course of development of the Plan and they were instrumental in critiquing policy ideas.

Planning and Zoning Commission

The P&Z hosted a Master Plan "Kick-Off" meeting in August of 2004, for the purpose of establishing a vision for the Plan. P&Z held numerous joint meetings with the Master Plan Steering Committee, the City Council and the

¹ Tosch Public Opinion Survey, 2004. Located in the Office of Community Development, City of Gunnison

County Planning Commission. Further, between December 2005 and February 2007, the P& Z held approximately 35 public work sessions to critique policy statements and approximately 15 public work sessions to edit the draft chapters of the plan.

Smart Growth Workshop

The City sponsored a Smart Growth Workshop in March 2006 for planners, developers and officials, (appointed and elected.) This workshop focused on the *Ten Principles of Smart Growth* and how well they were being implemented by the communities in Gunnison County. The Ten Principles of Smart Growth are listed in Appendix 1.B.

III COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A roadmap for the future should include a realistic assessment of Gunnison’s relationships to the local environment and to the larger world. It should also include an analysis of trends affecting Gunnison in the future. Staff and citizens assessed the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

Strengths

Gunnison has many attributes that contribute to a high quality of life and a viable economy, including:



Photo by Andie Ruggera

- A healthy tourism industry.
- Western State College and the cultural and economic benefits of a college town.
- A good hospital and emergency medical services.
- A functional airport capable of handling commercial passenger jet aircraft.
- A sunny climate with moderate summertime temperatures.
- A beautiful environmental setting.
- Many elements of historic and archeological interest.
- Extensive recreation opportunities, including parks, public lands and a bicycle-friendly atmosphere.
- An engaged, well-educated public that is interested in the community’s well being.
- An attractive built environment with good infrastructure, roads and other amenities.
- An active and viable arts community.
- Easy access to public lands surrounding the City.



Mountain Biking at Hartman Rocks
Photo courtesy of Jim Garrison and the Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association

City of Gunnison Master Plan

- An attractive community character.
- Location on Highway 50, an increasingly popular east-west corridor.

Weaknesses

Some weaknesses are inherent to Gunnison's remote mountain location, such as:

- Severe winters.
- Isolated location limits some services and products.
- High cost of living resulting from being associated with a resort area.
- Limited public transportation.
- Limited economic opportunities.

Opportunities

Foresight and thoughtful planning can avoid or mitigate some of the weaknesses and threats as described herein:

- Undeveloped and underdeveloped parts of West Gunnison present opportunities for quality infill within the present city limits.
- A sunny climate that facilitates solar-generated energy production
- Tracts of land bordering the city within the Urban Growth Boundary could be annexed, providing opportunities for high quality, sustainable development.
- Heritage Tourism is an opportunity that has, for the most part, been untapped, and could provide economic gain valley wide.

- Local and regional entities are dedicated to promoting economic development which could create opportunities for a more diversified, sustainable economy.

- The land development code can be modified to preserve open space; to provide mixed use development opportunities; to encourage green building practices; to encourage renewable energy practices; to encourage affordable housing; and to implement more efficient code administration.

- Physical links between WSC and downtown can be better established, which will enhance the partnership between the City of Gunnison and Western State College, cultivating student involvement in the community and vice versa.



Taylor Hall
Western State College
Photo by Andie Ruggera

- Improved transportation networks will enhance economic viability. Efforts include coordination with the Colorado Department of Transportation.



Therese Tantraw and students
Gunnison County County Literacy
Photo courtesy of
Paul Duba

- The changing demographics of Gunnison’s ethnic composition add diversity to Gunnison's economic base and community character.
- Beautify highway corridors (US 50 and SR 135); enhance valley-wide public transportation; and create new opportunities for bicycle, pedestrian, and other multimodal connectivity.
- Evaluate rising energy costs which can be mitigated through the following:
 1. More energy-efficient architectural design.
 2. Land use patterns and building practices that will require less use of automobiles and encourage greater use of alternative forms of transportation.
 3. Encouraging changes in lifestyle that are less energy intensive.

Threats

- Gunnison's high quality of life and long-term sustainability could be threatened by rising energy prices, which could impact construction, heating and transportation as well as reduce tourism.
- The lack of affordable housing, which negatively impacts existing and projected workforces.
- Gunnison’s growing racial and ethnic minority population must be integrated

into the social and civic fabric of our town to preserve the positive nature of our community character.

- Pressure from land development could reduce surrounding agricultural and open space, negatively impacting our community character and the economic viability of the ranching industry.

IV. HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

Each of the substantive chapters (Chapters 2 through 11) in this Plan is formatted similarly. The chapters begin with an introduction, a discussion of current conditions, and finally the chapter sets forth a specific goal along with policies and action items to implement the goals.

<u>An Example</u>
A <u>goal</u> would be that the City remains clean and attractive.
A <u>policy</u> of the City would be to create visually interesting City entrances.
An <u>action item</u> to implement this policy would be to design and construct entry features.

Chapter 12, Implementation presents a general framework of how the policies are prioritized.



Hay Meadow near Gunnison
Photo courtesy of
Tom Maynard

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