



TOWN OF CRESTED BUTTE COMMUNITY PLAN

FINAL DRAFT FOR TOWN COUNCIL & BOZAR REVIEW



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary 4

What's Inside this Document

Introduction 6

About this Plan & Why It's Needed

Crested Butte's Future 10

A Vision Rooted in Community Values

Unlocking Potential 14

Bringing the Vision to Life through Policy, Programs, and Incentives

Making it Happen 30

What Comes Next

Glossary 32

Appendix

i. Crested Butte's Context, Challenges, and Opportunities 34

ii. How This Plan was Developed 43



Executive Summary

The Crested Butte Community Plan (CP) sets a long-term vision to enhance livability, functionality, and sense of community by aligning the Town of Crested Butte’s development regulations with the community’s values and strategic goals.

This plan reflects a shift in tactics. While Crested Butte and the Gunnison Valley have long prioritized public investment in affordable housing, with major projects like Paradise Park, Mineral Point, and Gunnison County’s Whetstone project underway, this plan aims to broaden the approach. It seeks to strengthen the community fabric by incentivizing private-sector investment in community-serving housing, as well as spaces for local-serving businesses and non-profits, in Crested Butte, where infrastructure, transit access, and an incredibly pedestrian-friendly environment exist.

Without action, Crested Butte risks becoming less like the place people cherish—less affordable, less livable, and less connected. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive and strategic approach that shapes the future rather than allowing incremental change to reshape the town.

The CP charts a course that builds on the Community Compass to meet these challenges head-on. It aims to keep Crested Butte, Crested Butte—preserving the people, places, and values that define its identity.

This plan focuses on two clear objectives:

- 1. Expand, diversify, and distribute community-serving housing:** Advance a broader mix of attainable housing—like ADUs, microlots, condos, and multi-family homes—woven throughout neighborhoods and mixed-use areas to meet evolving needs and strengthen neighbor-to-neighbor connections.
- 2. Facilitate, create, and preserve community-serving spaces:** Encourage and protect spaces for local-serving businesses, nonprofits, services, and gathering places that meet everyday needs and foster community connection.

Together, these strategies aim to rebalance the relationship between the public and private sectors, ensuring that new development supports community goals while remaining viable for responsible developers. The CP proposes a refreshed regulatory toolkit, prioritizing incentive-based zoning with complementary programs for different areas of Crested Butte, rather than sweeping mandates.

Key strategies are organized around four focus areas:

- 1. Town-Wide: Parking Requirements:** Rebalance space to prioritize people over cars by easing parking rules where other options exist.
- 2. Neighborhoods & Historic Core:** Incentivize gentle infill—like ADUs and microlots—that adds housing while preserving neighborhood character.
- 3. Belleview Avenue:** Support Belleview as the Town’s everyday commercial core by leveraging zoning flexibility in exchange for community-serving spaces for tradespeople, auto repair, and essential services with housing above.
- 4. Sixth Street Corridor:** Retain Sixth Street as the ‘Welcome to Crested Butte’ spine connecting the Town, while slowing development to thoughtfully prepare for the future and apply lessons learned to set the corridor up for success. Leverage the

context of the Slate River Annexation to introduce higher-density housing. Preserve and expand opportunities for multi-family housing along the corridor’s edges in the R4 and Tourist Zones.

The CP identifies specific strategies and recommendations for each focus area to directly inform the Town’s next steps: a comprehensive update to the zoning code and the creation of two five-year implementation tools – a Housing Strategy and a Community Spaces Strategy – to complement the new regulatory framework. It also lays the groundwork for regional collaboration, including the upcoming 2025 Gunnison County Corridor Plan, which will help align land use, transportation, and infrastructure planning across the CO-135 corridor.

The CP is a bold, values-driven vision and roadmap to keep Crested Butte, Crested Butte. By aligning our tools, regulations, and investments, it sets the stage for real action, ensuring our community can thrive for generations to come.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS DOCUMENT

In this document, the reader will be guided through the essential elements of the CP:

INTRODUCTION: About this Plan & Why It’s Needed

An overview of the Plan’s purpose, key challenges and opportunities, and integration with the Town’s Compass Navigation effort.

CRESTED BUTTE’S FUTURE: A Vision Rooted in Community Values

A community-driven vision that reflects seven strategic goals and prioritizes preserving what makes Crested Butte unique.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: Bringing the Vision to Life through Policy, Programs, and Incentives

Recommended strategies to align zoning, programs, and incentives with the CP vision across four key areas of Town.

MAKING IT HAPPEN: What Comes Next

Covers the next phase, including a comprehensive zoning code update, new five-year housing and community space strategies, and emphasizes this plan’s role in upcoming regional planning.



Introduction

About This Plan & Why It's Needed

The Community Plan (CP) outlines a shared vision for the future of Crested Butte and identifies recommended zoning updates, programs, and priorities needed to make that vision a reality.

Grounded in the values of the Town's Community Compass, the plan focuses on what matters most: protecting what makes Crested Butte unique while enhancing its livability, functionality, and sense of community. It prioritizes space for community-serving housing, local businesses, and nonprofits that keep Crested Butte running—and rooted.

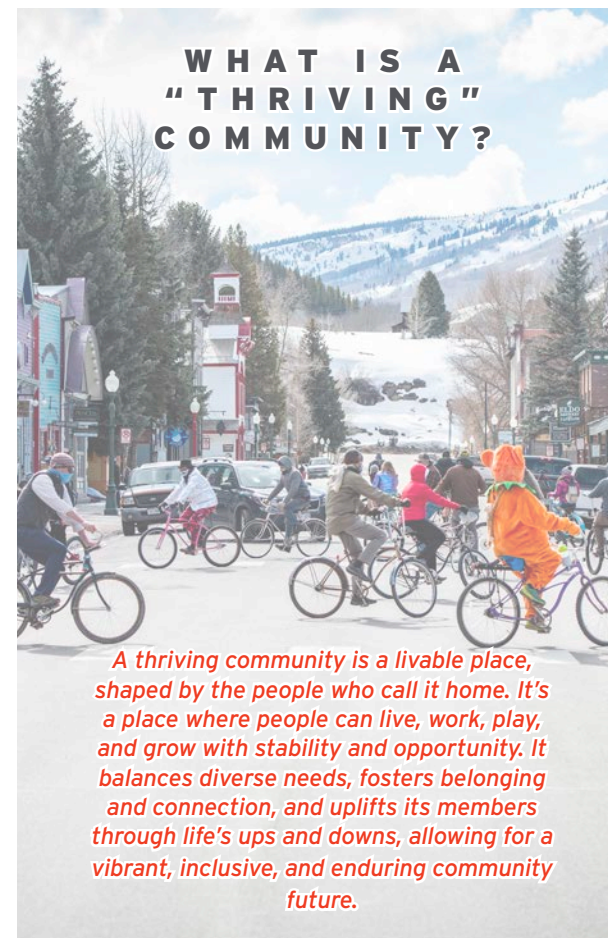
At its core, the CP sets the foundation for two key next steps:

1. A comprehensive update to the zoning code
2. The development of new five-year Housing and Community Spaces Strategies

Together, these tools will work in unison to spark private investment in spaces and housing that truly serve the people who call Crested Butte home—without relying solely on public funding—ensuring that our community remains a thriving place for generations to come.

The Community Plan Goal

The goal of this plan is to improve the livability, functionality, and sense of community in Crested Butte by leveraging the Town's development regulations and community resources to incentivize free market investment in community-serving housing and spaces for businesses and non-profits.



BREAKING DOWN THE GOAL

COMMUNITY-SERVING HOUSING refers to affordable, accessible, and diverse housing options and programs designed for people who work and contribute locally. This includes seasonal employees, year-round service providers, individuals, families, and seniors, across a range of income levels. The goal is to provide attainable housing options that meets the wide spectrum of needs within the local workforce, an essential foundation for a thriving community.

COMMUNITY-SERVING SPACES are places that meet the everyday needs of people who live and work in Crested Butte and the Gunnison Valley. This includes public spaces and places for local businesses and non-profits to operate and thrive. Whether it's a daycare, a hardware store, a clinic, or a community organization, these spaces play a key role in supporting the valley's everyday quality of life. They help keep essential services close to home and ensure that the heart of town remains rooted in serving the people who make this place what it is.



The Urgency of this Plan

Crested Butte is known for its historic charm, vibrant buildings, and stunning natural landscapes. But what truly makes it special is the tight-knit, caring community – evident in neighborhood gatherings, townie celebrations, and the quirky spirit that defines us.

However, our Town is at a crossroads, where growing economic investment is shifting priorities. Luxury hotels, high-end restaurants, and amenities catering to tourists and part-time residents are being favored by the market, while the everyday needs of the people who live and work here are often subsidized. This visitor-centered development has fostered an unusually high level of amenity for our rural community, but it has also placed increasing pressure on affordability, especially for full-time residents. For years, we've relied on public subsidies to meet community development needs, but this system is becoming less sustainable. Despite years of public investment in affordable housing, we're still struggling to retain the local workforce and maintain the social fabric that defines our community. Rising costs of living and construction are pushing essential services and workers further down the valley and even out of Gunnison County, resulting in longer commutes and fewer full-time residents. This shift is gradually eroding Crested Butte's authenticity and its close-knit, vibrant community spirit.

In recent years, the focus of our housing goals has been expanding the deed-restricted housing stock to accommodate essential workforce members. While significant progress has been made, the landscape is changing. We now have an opportunity to broaden our planning approach, including exploring regulatory solutions that tap into the free market to address community needs in a more sustainable way.

This CP update reflects that shift in priorities.

While affordable housing remains critical, we must recognize that the next large-scale housing project may be years away due to funding limitations and

Crested Butte's Context: Check out the [Appendix here](#) to dive deeper on Crested Butte's history, context, challenges, and opportunities as it relates to this plan.

competing priorities. In the meantime, we need to stimulate the free market with more diverse and distributed **community-serving housing** options like accessory dwelling units (ADUs), microlots, and multi-family projects—approaches that require less public investment and align with the evolving needs of residents.

At the same time, the CP acknowledges the growing need to protect and cultivate **community-serving spaces**. As Crested Butte and the region grow, high land values and construction costs, combined with outdated development regulations, are incentivizing luxury uses and skewing growth away from essential services. To preserve the Town's character and quality of life, we must protect spaces that serve local businesses, nonprofits, and public services allowing our community to thrive.

The CP not only reimagines housing solutions but also proposes a comprehensive approach to preserving the civic and cultural infrastructure that keeps Crested Butte functional and desirable for residents. This CP, and its implementation, identifies an ambitious vision and actionable path forward, one that balances the needs of residents with the realities of economic pressures, ensuring the Town remains a place where people can live, work, and thrive for generations to come.



Following the Compass

Crested Butte has long faced economic challenges, but until now, the Town has addressed them in a piecemeal manner, making incremental zoning amendments and implementing specific projects that sometimes resulted in unintended consequences.

Leading meaningful change requires vision and persistence. In 2022, the Town recognized the need for a more strategic, unified approach and created the Community Compass (Compass) as its guiding framework. The Compass, built on core values of being authentic, connected, accountable, and bold, outlines a five-year strategic plan and decision-making framework—shifting from reactive adjustments to proactive, collaborative leadership.

To bring this vision to life, the Town launched Compass Navigation. This initiative integrates the Community Plan (CP) with other key planning efforts, including the Transportation Mobility Plan (TMP), Historic Preservation Plan (HPP), Climate Action Plan (CAP), and the upcoming Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Plan (PROST). Together, these plans reflect a shared community vision and address critical trade-offs and opportunities in areas like affordable housing, climate goals, preservation, mobility, and recreation. Compass Navigation is more than plan-making—it's about aligning every decision with community values to shape a thriving future.



Creating the CP: Dive into the [Appendix here](#) here to see how the CP came together by blending local insight with technical expertise from Torti Gallas + Partners and Hoffman Strategy Group.

Defining Success for the Community Plan

With the Compass setting the direction, the CP needs to define what success looks like along the journey. Grounded in community values, these success measures ensure the CP leads with purpose, aligning policies, regulations, and investments with what matters most to Crested Butte.

Success for the CP means this plan will...

- ✓ **Ensure new regulations and incentives reflect Crested Butte's character**, preserving the Town's historic districts and maintaining Crested Butte's mass, scale, and form.
- ✓ **Increase the share of full-time, year-round households** to strengthen the fabric of the community with an emphasis placed on percentage rather than absolute numbers.
- ✓ **Expand the number, type, and distribution of community-serving housing units**, with options that allow people to grow or downsize based on life stage and needs.
- ✓ **Create more community-serving spaces for local businesses and non-profits** to get started and stay rooted, supporting services that meet the everyday needs of the community.
- ✓ **Maintain and enhance gathering spaces** that foster social connection and community life.
- ✓ **Keep Crested Butte's rough edges intact**, polishing only when it adds real value to the community's character.
- ✓ **Support the Town's transportation mobility goals** by increasing opportunities for people to live closer to where they work.
- ✓ **Support the Town's climate action goals** by increasing opportunities for development efficiencies.

Compass Navigation: [Click here](#) to learn more about the different Compass Navigation plans.



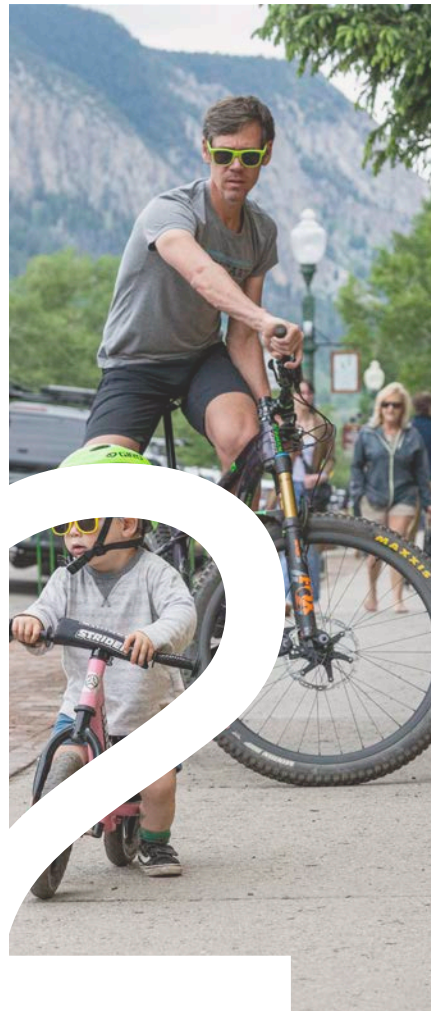
Crested Butte's Future

A Vision Rooted in Community Values

The vision at the heart of this plan is shaped by Crested Butte's core values – authentic, connected, accountable, and bold – and guided by the Compass strategic goals and insights from the community.

It centers on preserving the unique character and spirit that make Crested Butte unmistakably itself. And by “character and spirit,” we mean the people—the personalities, passions, and quirks—that give this place its soul.

At the same time, the vision embraces opportunities to enhance Crested Butte's character, both in the physical look and feel of Town, and by strengthening the full-time community made up of diverse and unique individuals who call it home. It offers a path toward a thriving, resilient future that honors what makes this place special and ensures it remains vibrant for generations to come.



From Goals to Vision

The Compass outlines seven guiding strategic goals. The following is an expansion of each strategic goal with a vision designed to support the two overarching objectives: (1) expand, diversify, and distribute community-serving housing and (2) facilitate, create, and preserve community-serving spaces, in a way that complements the Town's other strategic goals.

1. Approach community challenges through active collaboration and public engagement.

Picture a Town where the streets and public spaces foster regular gatherings and promote ongoing dialogue between full-time residents, part-time residents, and visitors, helping to ensure that community engagement is at the heart of decision-making.

2. Accommodate growth in a way that maintains the Town's and Valley's rural feel.

Picture new development concentrated and distributed within the Town and not in the rural corridor. This new development is near existing infrastructure, transit, and services, preserving open spaces and agricultural lands as buffers to maintain the Valley's town-and-country feel and strong connection to the landscape.

3. Enable people who live and work here to thrive.

Picture a Crested Butte where living takes effort, but the rewards are real. With attainable housing options, accessible services, and a vibrant local business and non-profit scene, residents at any stage of life have the opportunity to build a future and support the community that sustains them.

4. Retain the unique character and traditions of Crested Butte.

Picture a community where life isn't just about having a roof over your head and accessing the services you need, but it's about living in distinctive and quirky ways. It's about skiing through the alleys and admiring the historic sheds, digging trails together, burning the grump, joining in a polka dance, slowing down for the cattle drive, and celebrating the things that remind us why we fell in love with Crested Butte.

5. De-emphasize cars and focus on walking, biking, rolling, and transit.

Picture a Town where neighbors casually chat while walking or biking to work, where townie takeovers are the norm, and public transit feels like a natural part of daily life, creating a more connected community that prioritizes people over cars.

6. Continue to passionately care for our natural surroundings and forever protect Red Lady.

Picture an area where protected natural areas, including Red Lady, are a seamless part of the landscape, preserving Crested Butte's natural beauty for future generations.

7. Act on the urgency of climate change and prepare for the changes we expect from it.

Picture a community that builds on its legacy of environmental stewardship to become a leader in climate action, proactively preparing for the changes ahead. It prioritizes energy efficiency, with buildings designed to minimize consumption and energy costs, while renewable energy sources power everyday life.





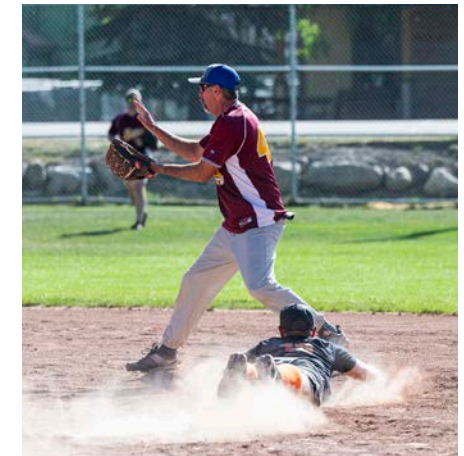
The Vision
A THRIVING CRESTED BUTTE

Preserving the people and spirit that makes Crested Butte, Crested Butte.

In the future, Crested Butte will remain a place where the community thrives together, staying true to its roots while embracing thoughtful development. The future of Crested Butte depends on preserving and growing the full-time community—the people who give this place its heart. Crested Butte will be a place where year-round residents can build lives, start businesses or non-profits, find a career and/or give back to the community, raise families or empty nest, and age in place, all while playing and enjoying what brought them here in the first place. Crested Butte isn't just about living here; it's about connecting with your neighbors, whether on the street, at the post office, on the trail, or during spontaneous gatherings. It's a place where relationships bloom and community is always at the forefront.

Its small-town charm will stay intact, and we'll build in, not out, and keep density where it makes sense in mixed-use corridors, so we can continue to enjoy the open spaces and breathtaking views around us and be able to move around comfortably by boots, bikes, or bus. Residential neighborhoods will grow gradually while retaining their modest and historic charm, with a mix of small-scale homes of different sizes to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Living in Crested Butte isn't easy. We know it takes grit to embrace mountain life. But for those who are up for the challenge, this can continue to be a place to make a real home. A home where you don't need wealth to get started, where the community always has your back, where people are valued over property, and community is prioritized above all.





Unlocking Potential

Bringing the Vision to Life through Policy, Programs, and Incentives

Realizing the vision outlined in this Community Plan, which is rooted in the values and strategic goals of the Community Compass, requires a deliberate shift in policy frameworks. Zoning regulations and development policies, combined with incentives and programs, can be restructured or created to enable and achieve the CP vision. Unlocking the potential of our community depends on aligning tools and rules with today's challenges and tomorrow's aspirations.

About Zoning and its Influence

Zoning is one of the most powerful tools a town has. It shapes what can be built, and what gets built shapes how people live, work, and connect.

Crested Butte's zoning rules date back to 1961 and have evolved into Chapter 16 of the Municipal Code, which now includes 23 zoning districts, each crafted to shape the look, feel, and function of a part of Town. Town Council sets the rules, and BOZAR (the Board of Zoning and Architectural Review) ensures that new development follows them.

WAYS TO USE ZONING

ZONING CAN BE A BARRIER... Under the current code, Crested Butte could still develop 655 new homes and over 360,000 square feet of commercial space. That full buildout may come slowly—or not at all—but the potential is real.

Yet zoning isn't just a growth-shaping tool, it can also be a hurdle. Overlapping rules, outdated standards, and red tape can stall projects. And because rising land prices don't affect all projects equally, luxury development often pushes through, while community-serving efforts get stuck or sidelined.

...OR A TOOL THAT REFLECTS COMMUNITY VALUES... The goal isn't to reinvent Crested Butte—it's to update the code so it helps protect what's unique while guiding growth in the right direction. By rethinking how the zoning tools of land use, density, and fit are applied, the Town can create more space for the kind of development that supports locals, reinforces the Town's identity, and brings the Community Plan to life.

DON'T LET PERFECTION BE THE ENEMY OF PROGRESS... Zoning isn't a perfect tool, and trying to fix it one rule at a time rarely works. This effort takes a step back to look at the code holistically and ask: What's working? What's holding us back? And how can we tweak the system to better reflect what this community values? The goal isn't perfection, it's progress.

So, How Can Crested Butte's Zoning Code Do Better?

The key lies in using zoning not just as a gatekeeper but as a tool to guide development in a direction that supports the CP vision.

This chapter introduces zoning updates across Crested Butte using an incentives-based approach: offering greater flexibility in land use, density, and design, but only when projects provide clear public benefits like deed-restricted housing or space for local businesses and non-profits. Projects without these benefits would follow a more prescriptive path. This approach supports community-oriented development while staying financially feasible. Streamlining the review process is also essential. Clearer standards, an updated zoning map, and faster approvals for compliant projects will make the system more predictable and effective.

The remainder of this chapter identifies recommended zoning updates for four focus areas of Crested Butte, and Phase 2 of implementing the CP will codify those recommendations into an updated code.

Complementing Zoning with Incentives, Programs, and Projects

Zoning alone won't bring the CP vision to life. While updated regulations provide a foundation, meaningful change requires broader collaboration and action.

To fully implement the CP, the Town must work alongside residents, developers, businesses, and other partners by leveraging targeted incentives, supportive programs, complementary projects, and financial tools to drive progress in expanding and preserving community-serving housing and spaces for businesses and non-profits in Crested Butte.

The remainder of this chapter additionally identifies complementary incentives, programs, and projects to support the zoning code, which will be further refined and prioritized in Phase 2, through the 5-year Housing strategy and 5-year Community Spaces strategy.



What Could This Look Like in Crested Butte?

This draft future Zoning Map highlights four key **FOCUS AREAS** where targeted zoning adjustments, combined with incentives, programs, and projects, can help align development with the CP vision.

FOCUS AREA

Town-Wide: Parking Requirements

Rebalance space for people over cars by easing parking rules where other options exist.

FOCUS AREA

Neighborhoods & Historic Core

Incentivize gentle infill-like ADUs and microlots—that adds housing while preserving neighborhood character.

FOCUS AREA

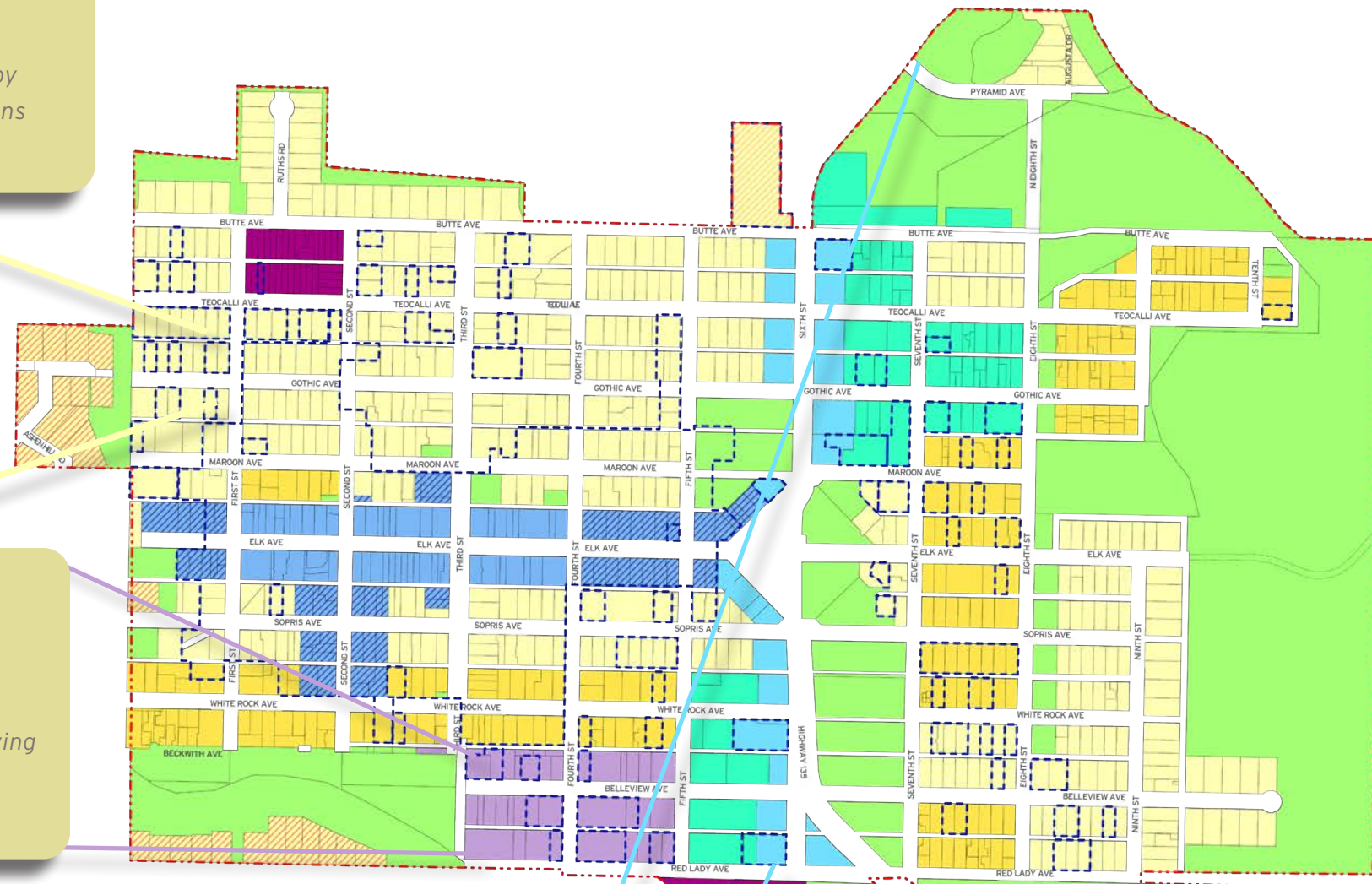
Bellevue Avenue

Support Bellevue as the Town's everyday commercial core by leveraging zoning flexibility in exchange for community-serving spaces for tradespeople, auto repair, and essential services with housing above.

FOCUS AREA

Sixth Street Corridor

Retain Sixth Street as the 'Welcome to Crested Butte' spine connecting the Town, while slowing development to thoughtfully prepare for the future and apply lessons learned to set the corridor up for success. Leverage the context of the Slate River Annexation to introduce higher-density housing. Preserve and expand opportunities for multi-family housing along the corridor's edges in the R4 and Tourist Zones.

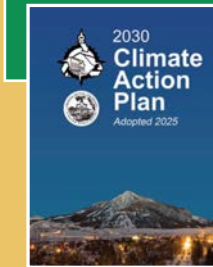


LEGEND

- Residential Low
- R1A (Kapushion Annexation)
- R1B (Higher Elevations)
- Residential Moderate
- B1 (Elk Avenue)
- B2 (Sixth Street Corridor)
- Historic Mixed Use
- Mixed Use (R4/T)
- C (Commercial)
- M (Mobile Home)
- Public Zones
- Historic Preservation Districts

Compass Navigation Connections

Climate Action Plan (CAP)



More Homes Near Jobs = Fewer Emissions

Support infill near transit and services to reduce reliance on cars and advance building and transportation emissions goals.

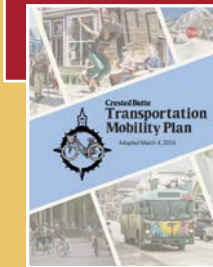
Historic Preservation Plan (HPP)



Overlay Zones for Historic Preservation Integrity

Create two overlay districts—Historic Core and Early Recreation Era—to reflect the distinct eras of Crested Butte's heritage and ensure context-sensitive development that aligns with adopted design standards.

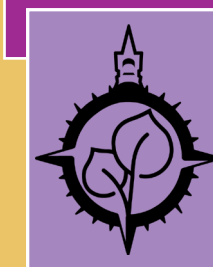
Transportation Mobility Plan (TMP)



Less Parking, More People

Reduce parking minimums and make better use of on-street parking to free up space for community-serving uses—while investing in walking, biking, and transit so needing multiple cars becomes optional, not essential.

Coming Soon: Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Plan (PROST)



Spaces to Play

Maintain parks and open spaces. The CP vision goes beyond housing and community commercial spaces—it's also about protecting our quality of life and recognizing the vital role that parks play in fostering community connections and supporting everyday life.



Town-Wide: Parking Requirements

Crested Butte’s land is limited and every square foot matters. Yet the Town’s current parking minimums, modeled on national standards rather than local needs, often require more off-street parking than necessary. In a walkable, bikeable, and transit-accessible town, that means land is being used for cars instead of housing, public spaces, or community-serving businesses even though public parking, on-street options, and future transportation and mobility commitments help meet demand.

How can parking requirements support the CP vision?

Crested Butte’s existing parking standards don’t reflect our current goals for housing affordability, climate action, or community-serving development. Revising these standards is key to realizing the CP’s vision

It already works in Crested Butte:

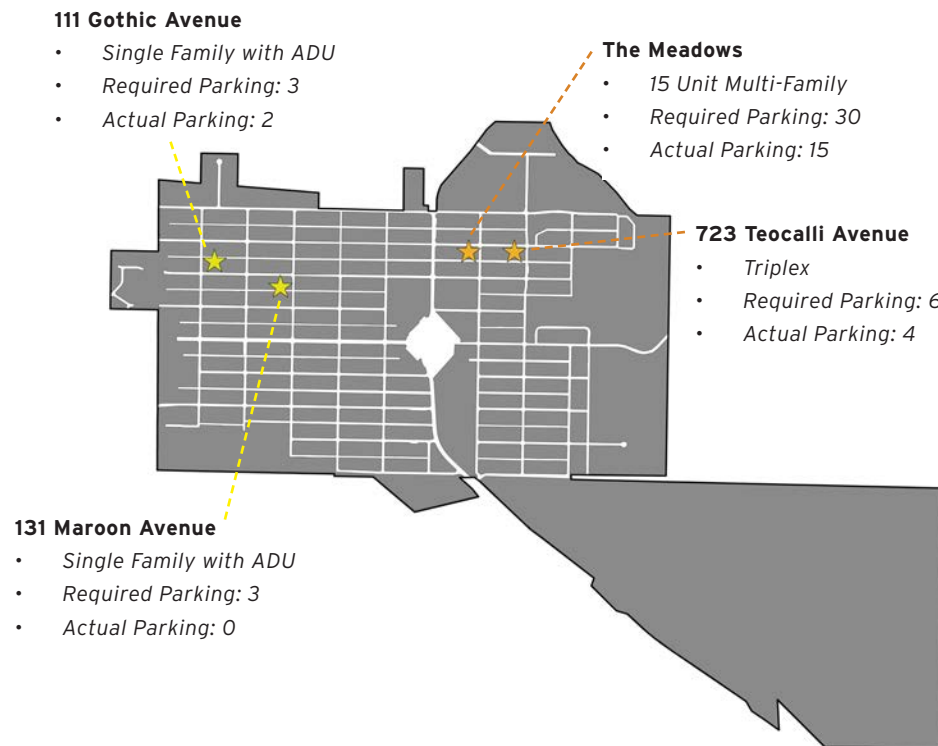
Examples of market rate developments with lower than Town Code parking requirements are highlighted to the right.

These developments are able to leverage Crested Butte’s 2,616 off-street spaces (more than the 2,021 off-street private spaces).



especially around expanding deed-restricted housing and enabling mixed-use and local-serving spaces.

The goal isn’t to eliminate cars but to right-size parking rules so they don’t stand in the way of the homes and community spaces we really need. The strategies below aim to require the parking we need—no more, no less—while freeing up land and resources for community priorities.



Parking Requirements Recommendations:

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
1. Free Up Site Space for Housing by Right-Sizing Parking Requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce off-street residential parking minimums to one space per unit. Turn the current minimum into a maximum (for example, maximum of two spaces if that is today’s current requirement.) 	Continue implementing the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) through neighborhood parking permit programs and investment in regional transit and park-n-rides.	Leverage the buildable space to accommodate more affordable housing units, like ADU and micro-lots, while ensuring one off-street parking space per unit with on-street use for those with trailers and more cars.
2. Incentivize Community-Serving Commercial Uses Through Smarter Parking Tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain parking minimums for lodging and light industrial. Require Payment-in-Lieu (PIL) instead of on-site parking for retail, restaurants, offices, and entertainment, with exemptions for community-serving spaces. 	Use PIL revenue to fund TMP actions: transit improvements, parking management, and regional mobility investments.	Ensure parking access to local businesses while aligning with TMP goals by using PIL to improve mobility options—not expand on-site parking. Supports shared parking, transit, walking, and biking, while also serving as a financial tool to reduce barriers for community-serving spaces.
3. Eliminate Incentives or Allowances for High-Cost Parking That Drives Luxury Development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove Floor Area Ratio (FAR) bonuses for structured or underground parking and consider prohibiting underground and structured parking. Instead, leverage PIL to contribute towards community-wide parking and transportation investments. 	Use PIL revenue to fund TMP actions like transit improvements, parking management, and regional park-n-rides that serve the full-community instead of single serving one development.	Underground parking is cost-prohibitive, environmentally intensive, and drives upscale development to recoup investment costs. Removing this allowance aligns with affordability, simplicity, and community character.



Neighborhoods and Historic Core

Crested Butte's neighborhoods, defined by their charm, character, and walkable scale, are the heart of community life. With historic architecture, human-scale streets, and vibrant social ties, these areas are essential to the Town's identity. As Crested Butte grows, we have an opportunity to preserve what makes these neighborhoods special while making space for more full-time residents through small-scale housing options.

How can the Residential Neighborhoods and Historic Core support the CP vision?

Crested Butte's neighborhoods and historic core are not frozen in time, they are evolving. With thoughtful updates, we can maintain their authenticity while enabling housing types that serve today's needs. This includes incentives for ADUs, tools to facilitate micro-lot or condo homeownership, and clearer, simpler standards that support the CP vision. The following recommendations use a mix of regulatory updates and supportive programs to preserve neighborhood character while broadening housing access and flexibility.



A conceptual rendering of an alley in Crested Butte, filled in with lived-in ADUs.



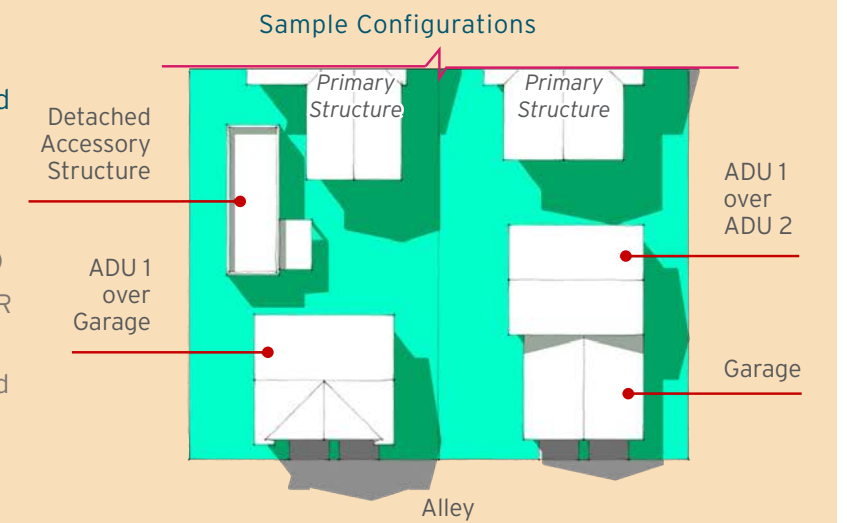
Neighborhoods and Historic Core Recommendations:

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
1. Update the ADU incentive structure by introducing more regulatory incentives with complementary programs, beyond subsidizing tap fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow two ADUs per lot (outside the historic core), with one required as a long-term rental. Reduce minimum unit size, which is currently 400 sq ft. Exempt garages and accessory structures from the maximum FAR for homes with ADUs. Streamline approvals by making ADUs permitted uses with administrative review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop pre-approved ADU plans. Explore financial incentives beyond tap fee subsidies. Establish a landlord-tenant matching program. Create an alley access/easement policy for ADUs. 	Increases full-time housing supply while offering a development incentive through an extra market-rate unit or additional living space, and makes it easier to get approved and developed.
2. Further incentivize ADUs by requiring more from large homes that don't build them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count garages and accessories toward FAR for homes without ADUs and prohibit basements. Require full Resident Occupied Affordable Housing (ROAH) mitigation for homes without ADUs, which is an impact fee that calculates housing mitigation required for jobs generated by new development. 	N/A	Ensures homes that don't add housing contribute fairly to affordability goals, making the ADU pathway more attractive.

ADU Incentive Program Example

Incentives for Providing Deed Restricted ADU (outside of historic core)

- Reduced 10' Front Setback
- 2nd ADU or Accessory Structure (with at least one required to be long-term rental)
- Garage Area excluded from Maximum FAR Calculation
- Basements could be allowed and excluded from Maximum FAR Calculation (and prohibited or counted if an ADU is not built)

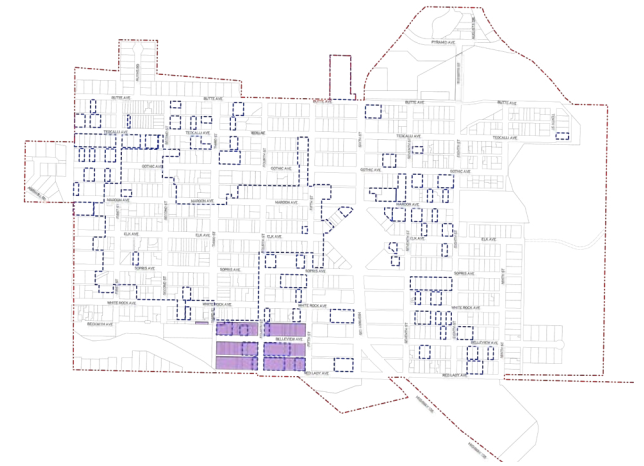


Neighborhoods and Historic Core Recommendations (cont.):

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
3. Simplify overlapping zone districts to improve clarity and process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merge similar residential zones (such as subzones like R1-R1F). • Clearly articulate standards and incentives for ADU. 	N/A	Fewer zones mean clearer rules and more predictable processes—for staff, BOZAR, and property owners alike.
4. Enable new deed restricted homeownership options by facilitating micro-lots and condo conversions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow subdivision of deed-restricted micro-lots. • Reduce minimum unit size to 350 sq ft. • Permit condominium subdivision of properties with separate units, enabling individual ownership opportunities in exchange for deed-restrictions for full-time residency. • Streamline processes and reduce or waive subdivision or condo conversion fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore down payment assistance programs. • Update deed restrictions to ensure these uses meet community housing needs. • Offer pre-approved plans and condo declaration templates to support new housing types. 	Expands access to homeownership and allows homeowners to unlock equity by selling part of their property. Creates new affordable ownership units within the existing neighborhood fabric.
5. Reduce red tape for everyday home repairs and maintenance.	Allow administrative review for minor exterior work (e.g., roofs, windows, small additions).	Offer financial incentives to preserve historic structures and outbuildings (to support the HPP).	Makes it easier and faster for residents to maintain their homes while reducing staff workload and costs.
6. Support flexibility in the mobile home zone as an incentive to retain full-time residency.	Allow modular construction and/or stick-built additions in M zones in exchange for full-time residency deed restrictions.	Develop a new deed restriction tailored to this district.	Preserves affordability and full-time occupancy, while supporting durable building types that protect deed-restricted investments.
7. Expand home-based business opportunities that fit the neighborhood.	Re-evaluate the home occupation definition to allow more small businesses to operate from homes.	Explore opportunities to collaborate on local business support programs.	Supports local entrepreneurship by eliminating the barrier of renting commercial space, without impacting residential character.

Bellevue Avenue

Bellevue Avenue represents one of Crested Butte’s most compelling opportunities for thoughtful commercial infill and can serve as a test case for how zoning incentives and flexibility can be leveraged to advance community goals. Situated at the edge of the historic core and adjacent to established neighborhoods, Bellevue has the potential to evolve into a dynamic mixed-use commercial hub, one that increases everyday commercial and light industrial spaces while adding housing above that complements, rather than duplicates, the character of surrounding neighborhoods.



How can Bellevue Avenue support the CP vision?

Bellevue offers a unique chance to demonstrate how targeted zoning incentives and flexibility, such as increased building height, reduced setbacks, and flexible development standards, can be exchanged for tangible community benefits like community-serving spaces and/or deed-restricted housing, or a mix of both. This approach not only supports local businesses and addresses housing needs but also enhances project feasibility by making development more economically viable.



Belleview Avenue Recommendations:

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
<p>1. Incentivize community-serving commercial spaces and/or housing through zoning incentives and flexibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow a fourth story, reduced setbacks, and reduced parking in exchange for providing deed-restricted housing or commercial space (for example, 20% of total development). • Update design guidelines to ensure mass, scale, and form are maintained with added height in a way that balances character of the corridor with construction cost considerations. • Identify minimum and maximum commercial unit sizes to facilitate more affordable commercial spaces. • Establish clear definitions and inclusion thresholds for community-serving space (with a focus on light industrial and commercial). • Improve review processes to reduce uncertainty while maintaining flexibility and negotiation potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the market and example developments to determine viable percentages requirements for community-serving spaces and/or housing. • Explore potential for deed-restriction of commercial space. • Explore additional support opportunities for light industrial and commercial tenants. 	<p>Encourages private development to meet community needs without requiring public investment, while retaining neighborhood character and livability.</p>
<p>2. Require stronger housing mitigation from projects that don't opt into community-serving incentives.</p>	<p>Increase the ROAH mitigation rate and cost structure (currently 20% of gap to provide worker housing tied to 2012 construction pricing) for projects that do not include community-serving elements.</p>	<p>Update ROAH unit requirements to ensure it fits into the housing portfolio of community needs.</p>	<p>Ensures that development not directly aligned with plan goals still contributes equitably to Crested Butte's housing needs.</p>

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
<p>3. Expand residential opportunities while maintaining light industrial & commercial priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep light industrial & commercial uses required on first floors. • Eliminate the cap of three residential units and limitation to 600 sf units above commercial uses. 	<p>Define the types of businesses considered community-serving or priority.</p>	<p>Increases the viability of mixed-use development and support housing production. Allows additional market rate housing to financially offset the cost of below-market commercial rents.</p>
<p>4. Update zoning to make Belleview more pedestrian-friendly and align with TMP mobility goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift away from head-in parking; require rear-lot parking and support parallel on-street parking. • Require designated loading/unloading areas. 	<p>Continue exploring sidewalk connections between key destinations like CBCS and Big Mine.</p>	<p>Reinforces walkability (and bikeability) and safety, supports business access, and aligns Belleview's design with long-term transportation priorities.</p>

A model of a proposed fourth story height incentive, in exchange for a development providing a percentage of community-serving commercial spaces or housing (or a mix of both). Commercial uses would still be required on at least the ground floor, ensuring Belleview remains the commercial core of Crested Butte.



Sixth Street Corridor

Sixth Street is one of Crested Butte’s most prominent and active corridors, serving as the Town’s front door and a connector between neighborhoods, businesses, and civic amenities.

This corridor includes:

1. The **B2 Business District** between Red Lady Avenue and Butte Avenue
2. The **Slate River Annexation**, an emerging neighborhood at Pyramid Avenue
3. The **R4 and Tourist (T) Zones** flanking Sixth Street, which already support higher-density housing and lodging near services and transit

While Sixth Street today is beloved for its mountain views, public parks, and small-town charm, it holds long-term potential to evolve into a more vibrant, mixed-use corridor. With thoughtful planning, it can offer locals and visitors alike more everyday amenities – retail, services, eateries, and housing above – while also enhancing its role as a seam that connects the Town, not a line that divides it.

How can the Sixth Street Corridor support the CP vision?

The Town has an opportunity to shape the future of Sixth Street intentionally and incrementally. By strengthening the existing Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, and prohibiting underground parking (as previously discussed in parking requirements section) to maintain the corridor’s scale and and pace of development,



the Town can preserve what people love about Sixth Street while setting the stage for future improvements.

Rather than immediately introducing new zoning incentives, Sixth Street can serve as a place to apply lessons learned from areas like Bellevue Avenue, by testing what works before scaling it more broadly. Over time, the Town can consider additional zoning flexibility beyond the PUD process, allowing modest incentives in exchange for deed-restricted housing or community-serving commercial uses, based on proven outcomes.

Future activity and vibrancy can also be supported through focused infill of higher-density housing in the Slate River Annexation, preservation of existing multi-family housing in the R4 and Tourist zones, and long-term reimagining of Town assets like the 4-Way.

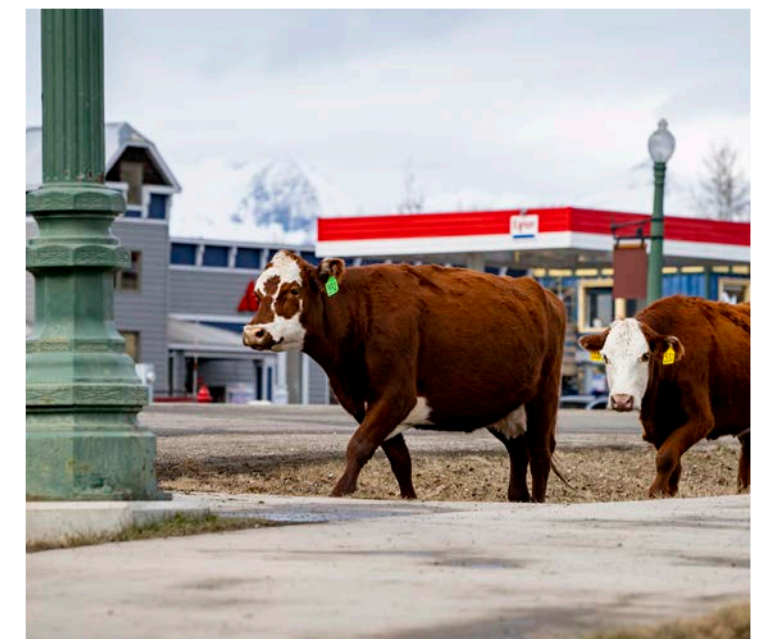
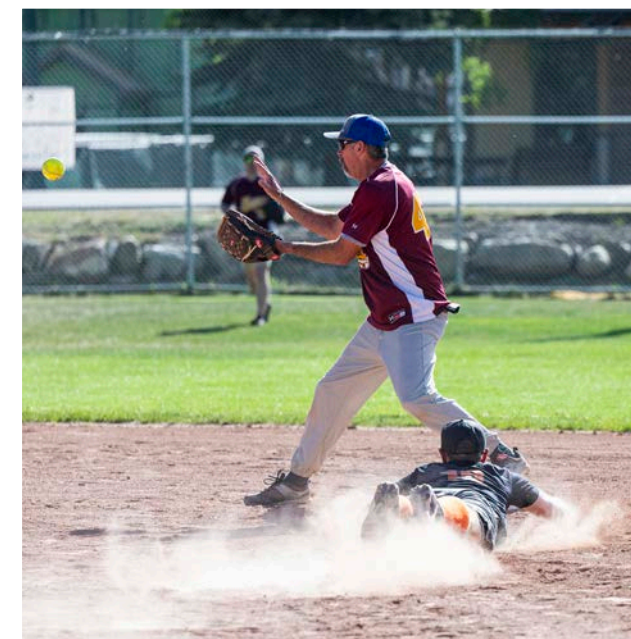
By proceeding with care and commitment, Sixth Street can evolve into a welcoming spine that reflects Crested Butte’s values and creates a lasting first impression that truly says, “Welcome to Crested Butte.”



Sixth Street Proper (B2) Recommendations:

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
1. Strengthen the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process to deliver clear community benefits like deed-restricted housing and community-serving commercial spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify desired public benefits in the PUD process, prioritizing deed-restricted housing and community-serving commercial spaces like retail, restaurant, and service-oriented uses. • Define clear thresholds or targets for the amount and type of community-serving space expected in a PUD project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze market conditions to ensure community benefit requirements remain economically viable for developers. • Explore local strategies to support small-scale retail and restaurant tenants as part of PUD projects. 	Ensures the PUD process is a proactive tool for implementing the CP, giving the Town more control over outcomes while providing developers with a clear, feasible path forward. It supports mixed-use projects that add vibrancy and serve local needs, without compromising the character of Sixth Street.
2. Require stronger housing mitigation from projects that don't opt into community-serving incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the ROAH mitigation rate and cost structure (currently 20% of gap to provide worker housing tied to 2012 construction pricing) for projects that do not include community-serving elements. 	Update ROAH unit requirements to ensure it fits into the housing portfolio of community needs.	Ensures that development not directly aligned with plan goals still contributes equitably to Crested Butte’s housing needs.

Sixth Street is Crested Butte’s front door, and can thoughtfully continue to evolve into a vibrant corridor of community connection.



Sixth Street Proper (B2) Recommendations (Cont.):

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
3. Expand residential allowances while maintaining commercial business priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep business uses (restaurants, retail, services) required on first floors. Eliminate the cap of 50% residential units, enabling a possibility of two stories of housing above commercial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritize everyday-serving business types (e.g. everyday eateries). Explore deed restrictions for commercial space. 	<p>Increases the viability of mixed-use development and supports housing production.</p> <p>Allows additional market rate housing to financially offset the cost of below-market commercial rents.</p>
4. Zone the (currently unzoned) 4-way Public.	Enable the 4-way to be re-envisioned in the long-term to serve more community uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore Town-led projects such as live/work units, senior housing, library or visitor service upgrades, and community spaces. Explore other opportunities in the corridor like expanding Stepping Stones to address childcare needs. 	Activates a public space at the 4-way while retaining the history/character of this key node and creates an opportunity for public-private synergy in achieving community goals.

Slate River Annexation (P) Recommendations:

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
5. Adjust zoning and design standards and guidelines to enable simple, more efficient development.	Reduce parking and open space minimums, and simplify design standards and guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify specific housing types and income levels to target on TP1. Explore complementary uses on TP2 (e.g., healthcare, recreation). 	<p>More flexible standards can help reduce construction costs and support diverse community-serving development near the edge of Town. Pyramid Avenue is a great example of an underutilized street that could absorb cars if the parking requirements are reduced.</p>

Sample site plans for TP1 and TP2 in the Slate River Annexation illustrate how higher-density development can be thoughtfully integrated with recreation areas and essential community services, such as medical facilities.



Adjacent R4 and T Zones Recommendations:

Strategy	Zoning Code Update Considerations	Complementary Housing or Community Spaces Strategy Considerations	Why it Matters
7. Preserve and encourage multi-family housing in the R4 and T zones.	Consolidate the T Zone into the R4 Zone, allowing lodging as a conditional use.	Explore Good Deed deed restriction purchase opportunities to preserve existing lower-cost multi-family housing.	Reflects existing land use patterns and ensures lodging is thoughtfully integrated near services and transit, while protecting housing supply.

Existing multi-family housing in the T Zone. This plan prioritizes preserving and expanding this type of workforce-oriented housing to support year-round residents, rather than focusing on high-end lodging aimed primarily at tourists.”



Making it Happen

What Comes Next

The CP lays out an ambitious, values-driven vision for Crested Butte's future, one rooted in local priorities and a strong sense of place. Now comes the real work: turning that vision into action.

Following adoption of the CP, the Town will begin Phase 2: updating the zoning code and developing complementary five-year strategies for housing and community spaces. This next phase, launching in summer 2025, will focus on translating policy recommendations into practical tools, by shaping how development, incentives, programs, and projects move forward.

For the **housing strategy**, the Town will analyze lessons learned from past efforts and build a more refined understanding of its existing housing portfolio and future needs and gaps, especially as larger projects like Whetstone come online. This foundation will inform a targeted housing strategy to guide priorities of investment, programs, and projects over the next five years that complement the zoning code update.

For the **community spaces strategy**, the first step will be defining what "community space" truly means in the Crested Butte context. From there, the Town will conduct an initial needs assessment to understand existing gaps and establish success measures to guide future improvements. While the Town brings decades of experience to the housing arena, stepping into the commercial realm will require a deliberate and thoughtful approach as it begins to shape a new framework for supporting community spaces used by locally-serving businesses and non-profits.

Implementation will also continue through other key efforts, including the TMP, HPP, and creation of a new PROST Plan, which will focus on parks, recreation, and open space. These overlapping efforts will require coordinated work with the Town Council, BOZAR, property owners, neighbors, nonprofits, business owners, and the broader community.

It will also take a Regional Approach...

While the CP focuses on Crested Butte's unique context, its success is tied to the broader Gunnison Valley. Our challenges, especially around housing, infrastructure, transportation, and public services, extend beyond town boundaries.

That's why regional collaboration is essential. Starting in 2025, the Town will participate in the Gunnison County Corridor Plan, a joint effort led by Gunnison County, with Mt. Crested

Butte, CB South, Gunnison, RTA, and Mountain Express, to coordinate land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments along the CO-135 corridor. This initiative builds on the One Valley Resiliency Roadmap, which highlights shared regional goals like community sustainability, equity, climate action, and environmental resilience.

This CP supports that effort by first looking inward and focusing on opportunities within Town limits that align with existing infrastructure and services. By doing so, Crested Butte strengthens its ability to grow thoughtfully and contribute meaningfully to a connected regional future.

...and a Sustainable Funding Source

To bring this plan to life, the Town will need a dedicated, long-term funding source. While existing tools like grants, bonds, taxes, and public-private partnerships remain essential, a more predictable financial foundation is necessary to sustain progress. Reliable funding will allow the Town to deliver spaces and housing that serve the community, financially incentivize the market to become a bigger player in meeting the community's needs, support local businesses and nonprofits, and implement the incentives and programs outlined in this plan. Exploring new funding mechanisms, whether voter-approved or revenue-based, will be key to ensuring Crested Butte can move forward with confidence and consistency.



Glossary

Breaking down common Community Development lingo and acronyms.

- **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU):** A secondary, self-contained residential unit on a single-family lot, typically used for rental purposes, guest accommodations, or housing for family members. In Crested Butte, ADUs are currently restricted to be a long-term rental.
- **Administrative Review:** A process in which minor or routine development applications are reviewed and approved by administrative staff, rather than requiring review by BOZAR.
- **Affordable Housing:** Housing that is affordable to local residents and is intended for occupancy by those who live and work in the community, often subject to income restrictions and other criteria.
- **Board of Zoning and Architectural Review (BOZAR):** The Town's appointed board responsible for reviewing and approving development applications to ensure they comply with the Town's zoning code and design standards and guidelines.
- **Climate Action Plan (CAP):** The Plan that defines the goals, strategies, and actions until 2030 for the Town to set the example of what is possible for mountain communities to take responsibility for our climate impacts and strategically drive down Crested Butte's GHG emissions.
- **Community Compass:** The Town of Crested Butte's comprehensive plan, which identifies the Crested Butte community's core values, 5-year strategic plan, and decision-making framework.
- **Community Plan (CP):** The Plan that establishes a physical vision for the build-out of Crested Butte that aligns with the Crested Butte community's goals and values.
- **Compass Navigation:** The coordinated approach to implementing the goals and strategies outlined in the Community Compass, encompassing the Transportation Mobility Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Community Plan.
- **Conditional Uses:** Activities that may be allowed with special approval, subject to specific conditions or review processes.
- **Deed Restriction:** A legal provision placed on a property that restricts its use or occupancy, often used to ensure affordability or compliance with certain zoning or preservation standards.
- **Density:** The measure of the number of housing units or buildings allowed per unit of land area, typically expressed as units per acre (residential) or floor area ratio (commercial).
- **Design Standards & Guidelines:** The Town's standards and guidelines that govern architectural design review for the different historic and non-historic districts in Crested Butte.

- **District Intent:** The primary purpose and goals of a specific zoning district, outlining the desired character, land uses, and development patterns for that area.
- **Figure Ground:** A diagrammatic representation of built structures and open spaces, used to analyze the spatial relationship between the physical built environment and vacant or open areas.
- **Fit:** How a building or development fits on the site, such as its height, setbacks to neighboring properties, snow storage, and parking.
- **Floor Area Ratio (FAR):** A ratio of the total floor area of a building to the area of the lot on which it is built, used to regulate the size/density of development.
- **Height:** The vertical measurement of a building from the ground level to the highest point of the roof or structure, as regulated by zoning standards.
- **Historic District:** An area designated for preservation due to its historical or cultural significance, where development and alteration are subject to stricter guidelines and review.
- **Historic Preservation Plan (HPP):** The Plan that defines the goals, strategies, and actions to guide Crested Butte's historic preservation program and regulations, to ensure the Town's architectural identity reflects Crested Butte's deep sense of community and its evolution over time.
- **Land Use:** The designation or classification of property according to its intended use, such as residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational.
- **Lot Measurements:** The dimensions and size of a parcel of land, typically including length, width, and area, used to determine allowable land use and development.
- **Parking Requirements:** The minimum number of parking spaces required for a development to provide on site, based on factors such as building size, type of activity, and zoning.
- **Payment in Lieu of:** The allowance to provide a payment in lieu of a specific zoning requirement, such as paying in lieu of providing on-site parking.
- **Periods of Significance (POS):** Specific time frames or historical events that define the importance of a structure, district, or community, often used in the context of historic preservation to guide the assessment of historical integrity.
- **Permitted Uses:** Activities allowed by right in a specific zoning district.
- **Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Master Plan (PROST Plan):** The Plan that will study the existing conditions of PROST amenities and services, evaluate needs based upon projected growth in the community

as identified in current development proposals, identify values and develop policies to align with stated values, and collaboratively develop recommendations that align with current local, state, and regional planning efforts.

- **Resident Occupied Affordable Housing (ROAH):** A program created by the Town in 2012 that calculates the impact of new development in terms of new jobs created and requires a percentage of mitigation of the new jobs by providing affordable housing or payment in lieu of.
- **Restrictive Covenant:** A legal agreement that limits or dictates the use of land, typically designed to protect property values, maintain community standards, or ensure compatibility with surrounding uses.
- **Rights of Way (ROW):** The legal rights granted to use a specific portion of land for public or utility purposes, such as streets, sidewalks, and utilities.
- **Snow!** Refers to considerations regarding snow accumulation and removal within the town, including regulations for snow storage and management in development plans.
- **Snow Storage:** Designated areas where snow is stored after being cleared from a property to ensure public safety and maintain accessibility.
- **Transportation Mobility Plan (TMP):** The Plan that defines the goals, strategies, and actions through 2040 for the Town to remain a pedestrian and townie-first community by de-emphasizing cars and focusing on walking, biking, rolling, and transit.
- **Variance:** An exception granted from zoning requirements or regulations, typically granted when strict enforcement would cause undue hardship due to the unique circumstances of the property.
- **Yard & Bulk:** Yard: The open space around a building, typically including front, side, and rear areas, required to be kept clear of structures. Bulk: The size, mass, and overall dimensions of a building or structure, often regulated by zoning codes.
- **Zoning Code:** A set of regulations governing land use and development within specific zones in the town, detailing allowed land uses, densities, and site requirements.
- **Zoning Map and Districts:** A visual tool that outlines the different zones or districts within the town, each with district having specific land use designations, development standards, and restrictions.



Appendix i.

Crested Butte's Context, Challenges, and Opportunities

This Appendix provides background context on the CP, starting with a brief history and an overview of Crested Butte's unique context, setting the stage for a deeper understanding of the Town's current challenges. It then examines the economic and social issues facing the community, reframing them as opportunities to inspire actionable solutions.



Crested Butte's Past & Evolution

A Town Shaped by its Environment and History

Crested Butte rests on Núuagha-tuvu-pu (Ute) land, a region shaped by centuries of transformation. Originally home to the Ute people, the area's history was shaped by both natural forces and human activity and shifted dramatically when the Town was incorporated in 1880. The Town's early history was driven by the discovery of rich coal deposits, which sparked a mining boom that lasted through the late 19th century. With the arrival of the railroad in 1881, the region's rugged terrain became more accessible, transforming Crested Butte from a remote frontier settlement into a thriving coal town, home to over 1,000 residents by 1882.

The 20th century ushered in both progress and disruption. As automobiles and mail-order catalogs changed commerce and connectivity, the environmental landscape remained a constant force, with coal production advances helping the Town weather the Great Depression. World Wars I and II fueled coal demand, but by the early 1950s, the decline of coal mining and the closure of the Big Mine in 1952 marked a period of retreat. When the railroad was dismantled in 1955, the Town was left isolated, and its population dwindled to fewer than 300 people.

In the 1960s, Crested Butte began to evolve once again, but this time toward a new identity rooted in its natural beauty. The opening of paved mountain roads and the establishment of the Crested Butte Winter Sports Area in 1961 began a new chapter focused on

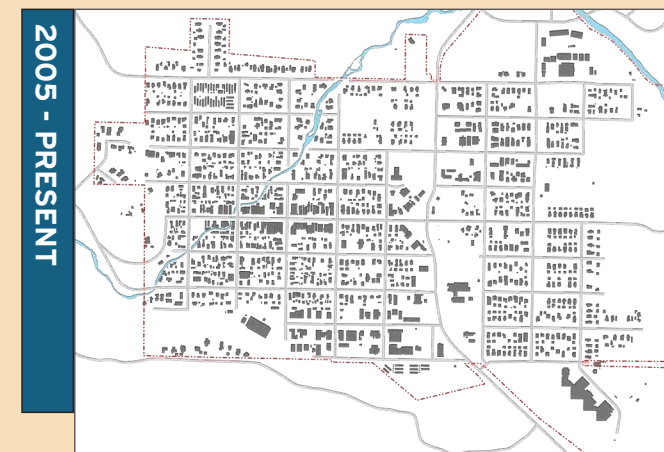
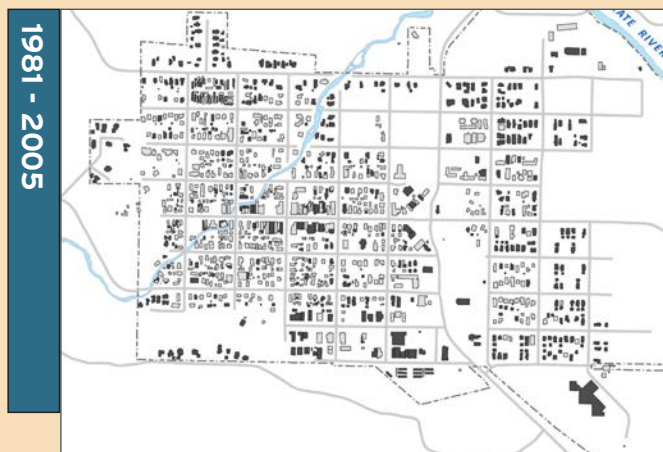
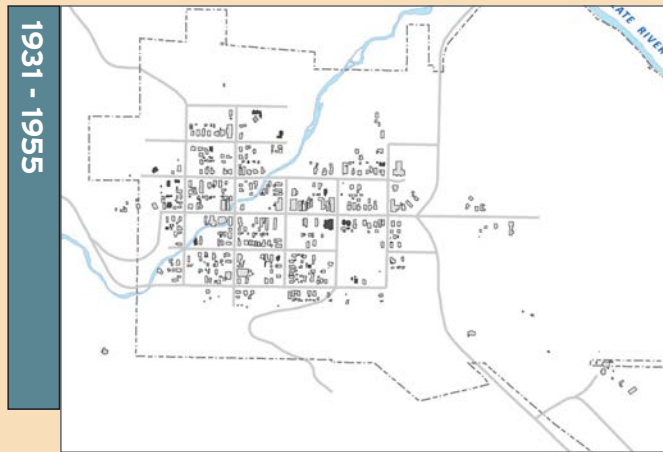
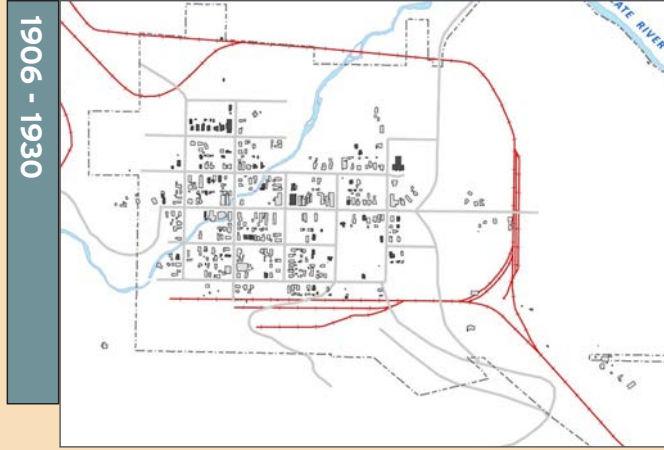
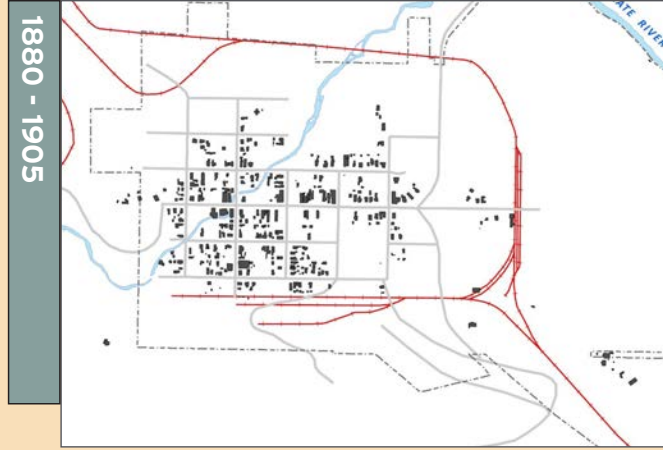
recreation, as the area's mountainous terrain drew visitors seeking winter sports and outdoor adventures. Over time, the ski area grew into a renowned resort and Crested Butte also became a summer destination for its acclaimed mountain biking and hiking, and the Town's population rebounded, surpassing 1,500 by the turn of the century.

The Town's evolution has always been closely tied to its environment. Nestled at 8,885 feet in the Elk Range of the Colorado Rockies, Crested Butte is surrounded by natural beauty—snow-capped peaks, wildflower-filled meadows, mountain streams, and expansive forests. This natural beauty is not just a backdrop—it defines the Town's character while imposing clear limits on its physical expansion.

The Crested Butte community famously charted its own path by becoming the "Town that said 'Hell No!'" to a massive molybdenum mine on the cherished Red Lady (Mount Emmons), a 48-year battle that finally successfully concluded in 2024. This decisive movement reflected a bold commitment to protecting the essence of the community and a future inspired by harmony with the land rather than a return to mining its riches.

Tucked at the end of the road, Crested Butte embraces a sense of isolation, especially during the winter months. Surrounded by a patchwork of conserved private and public lands including three national wilderness areas, the Town faces unique constraints that demand intentional community planning. Balancing growth with a steadfast dedication to preserving the area's environmental integrity, while preparing for resiliency in the face of a changing climate, remains a defining challenge—and opportunity—for this mountain community.





Crested Butte. The evolution of the Town has predominantly adhered to the historic boundaries of the 1880s settlement.

Crested Butte Today Facing Complex Challenges that should be leveraged as Opportunities

Crested Butte stands at a critical moment. With a population exceeding 1,600—the highest since its mining days—the Town is grappling with an economic paradox common to many amenities-rich communities throughout the world. Rising property values, driven by continued investment, are exacerbating housing affordability and pricing out full-time residents and the local workforce. While new high-end restaurants and a \$20 million art center signal economic growth, the real estate market's median sales price of \$1.1 million and homes listed as high as \$5.5 million in 2023 highlight the challenge created by this snowballing investment in the community and the financial pressures faced by its residents.

This paradox is no surprise. As this chapter will illustrate, the forces driving Crested Butte's current growth—escalating land values and rising construction costs, coupled with the Town's outdated development regulations—are disproportionately favoring construction of luxury developments and amenities, over providing locally affordable housing and community-based goods and services. As a result, critically needed community infrastructure—such as affordable housing, locally-owned businesses, and essential goods and services—continue to be undersupplied and are slowly eroding out of the economy.

In this chapter, the economic paradox facing Crested Butte is explored in greater detail, highlighting the key challenges the Town and community is encountering. But with challenge comes opportunity, and opportunities for the CP are identified to shape Crested Butte's future, setting a course for a future where Crested Butte's community can continue to thrive.



Development in Crested Butte is producing luxury amenities, while the shortage of workforce housing continues to grow.



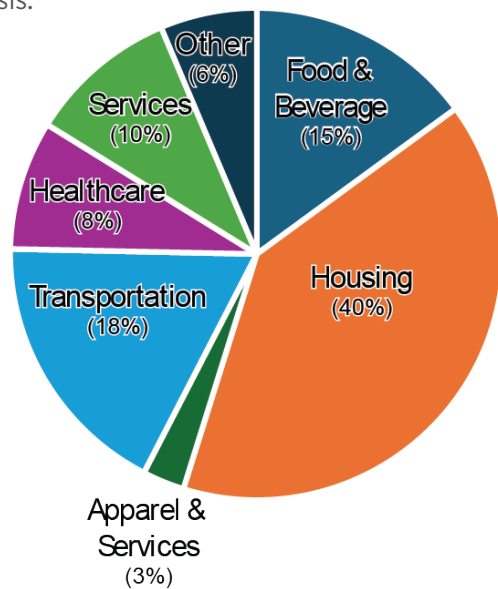
Crested Butte is facing...

...An economic paradox

The economic market study conducted for the CP revealed a striking “economic paradox”—while the local economy appears strong, with taxable sales growing at 6.7% annually, residents’ purchasing power is shrinking. The typical household spends 18% of income on transportation, 15% on food, and 40% on housing, far exceeding the national housing burden threshold of 30%. The rising cost of living and lack of affordable housing weaken economic resilience, forcing many to live farther from work, reducing quality of life and community cohesion.

With challenge comes opportunity

Addressing affordability requires more than just addressing housing. The CP takes a holistic approach, integrating community-serving housing, businesses, and nonprofits with affordable transportation options. By concentrating these elements within Crested Butte—where transit, infrastructure, and walkability already exist—the plan aims to lower household costs, reduce transportation burdens, and ease financial pressures, shifting the trajectory of the affordability crisis.



Crested Butte's Typical Household Expenditures, 2024.

Economic Market Study: [Click here](#) to read the economic market study.

...A very concentrated economy

Crested Butte's economy is heavily reliant on tourism and serving part-time residents. 67% of total economic activity in the Town and 50% of the North Gunnison Valley is estimated to be from accommodation and food services, which primarily cater to tourists and part-time residents.

Meanwhile, essential goods and services—such as trades, education, and childcare—contribute minimally, highlighting a shortage of businesses that support daily community needs. Rising land values and construction costs threaten these businesses further, as many owners face retirement or closure due to economic pressures. This dependence on tourism and serving part-time residents not only makes the economy vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations but also risks displacing the very businesses that sustain the local workforce.

With challenge comes opportunity

The CP proposes a regulatory framework that preserves space for community-serving businesses and ensures economic resilience. Strategies include regulating commercial unit sizes, introducing incentives and deed restrictions, and exploring Town-led programs such as subsidized rents or incubator spaces for emerging community-serving businesses. By fostering economic diversification, the CP can help sustain essential services and strengthen Crested Butte's long-term economic stability.



Crested Butte's economy is heavily reliant on tourism, particularly accommodation and food services.

...A decline of full-time community

Crested Butte's full-time occupancy rate has dropped from 80% in 2000 to 64% today, according to a local census—down from 65% in 2021. While higher than many mountain towns, this decline is concerning.

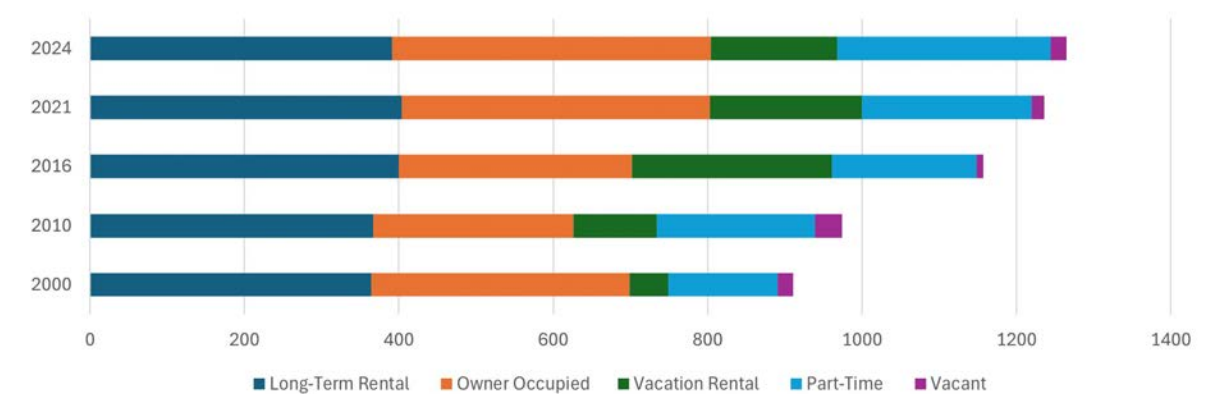
Many long-time residents who bought homes when prices were lower now face rising essential commodity prices and property taxes on fixed incomes with limited downsizing options. If they sell, homes are often purchased by wealthier buyers who may not live or work full-time in Crested Butte, further driving up property values and reducing housing availability for the local workforce. This trend threatens to erode Crested Butte's full-time community, undermining its character and sense of belonging.

With challenge comes opportunity

The CP prioritizes retaining and growing the full-time community, recognizing the benefits of a stable workforce, engaged local citizenry, and stronger volunteer networks. Expanding diverse affordable housing options is key—addressing the needs of essential workers, seasonal employees, new families, and retirees. Different areas present opportunities for ADUs, multi-family units, and mixed-use apartments with varied bedroom counts.

To ease pressures on existing homeowners, the CP also explores strategies like incentivizing affordable ADUs and creating micro-lots through subdivision on parcels that can accommodate them to generate income or provide downsizing options. These initiatives could help longtime residents stay in Crested Butte while maintaining affordability and community stability.

How has the use of homes in Crested Butte changed over time?



Crested Butte Census Comparison of Home Use, 2000 v 2024.



Crested Butte's neighborhoods are becoming increasingly bifurcated, with deed-restricted areas maintaining full-time residency, while some free-market neighborhoods are witnessing a decline in year-round residents.



Crested Butte is facing...

...A hamster wheel of affordable housing development

Since the late 1980s, Crested Butte has proactively developed affordable housing, from deed restricted ADU incentives to large-scale projects, ensuring 26% of its housing stock is deed-restricted for local workers and long-term rentals (soon to be 29% with current projects under construction). Yet, demand continues to outpace supply, and the Town cannot build its way out of this crisis.

A 2024 Housing Needs Assessment underscores the challenge, projecting that the North Gunnison Valley needs 545-650 units by 2029 to address rental shortages, unfilled jobs, workforce turnover, and job growth. While projects like Mineral Point (34 units, 2025), Paradise Park (14 units, 2025), and Whetstone (255 units, 2026) will help, the current reliance on public funding is unsustainable. As the free market

prioritizes luxury development, local governments bear the burden, creating a cycle that is increasingly difficult to break.

With challenge comes opportunity

While the Town will remain a key player in community development, it must leverage its regulations to encourage private-sector participation. Performance-based zoning incentives—such as increased height or density in exchange for affordable housing—can help expand supply at little to no cost to the Town.

Additionally, strengthening tools like the Resident Occupied Affordable Housing (ROAH) policy can require developers to mitigate housing impacts by building units or contributing funds based on the jobs created by the development.

By aligning the Town's regulatory framework and market forces with the community's needs, Crested Butte can change the paradigm and break out of the hamster wheel.

...A development code that isn't achieving what the community wants or needs

Crested Butte's current development code, coupled with rising property values and construction costs, is driving development toward luxury amenities instead of addressing the Town's essential needs. The zoning code, which heavily favors single-family homes, has resulted in high-cost developments catering primarily to high-income buyers rather than the long-term local community.

For example, the R1 single-family zoning covers 60% of the Town's developable land, permitting only single-family homes and ADUs or duplexes through a conditional use process. This has led to the construction of large, expensive homes—often priced at over \$1,000 per sq ft—with typical homes like a 2,800-sq ft house costing around \$2.8 million, and a 450-sq ft ADU making the total \$3.5 million.

The emerging homogeneity of maximized, large homes are a departure from Crested Butte's historic housing stock, creating housing that is

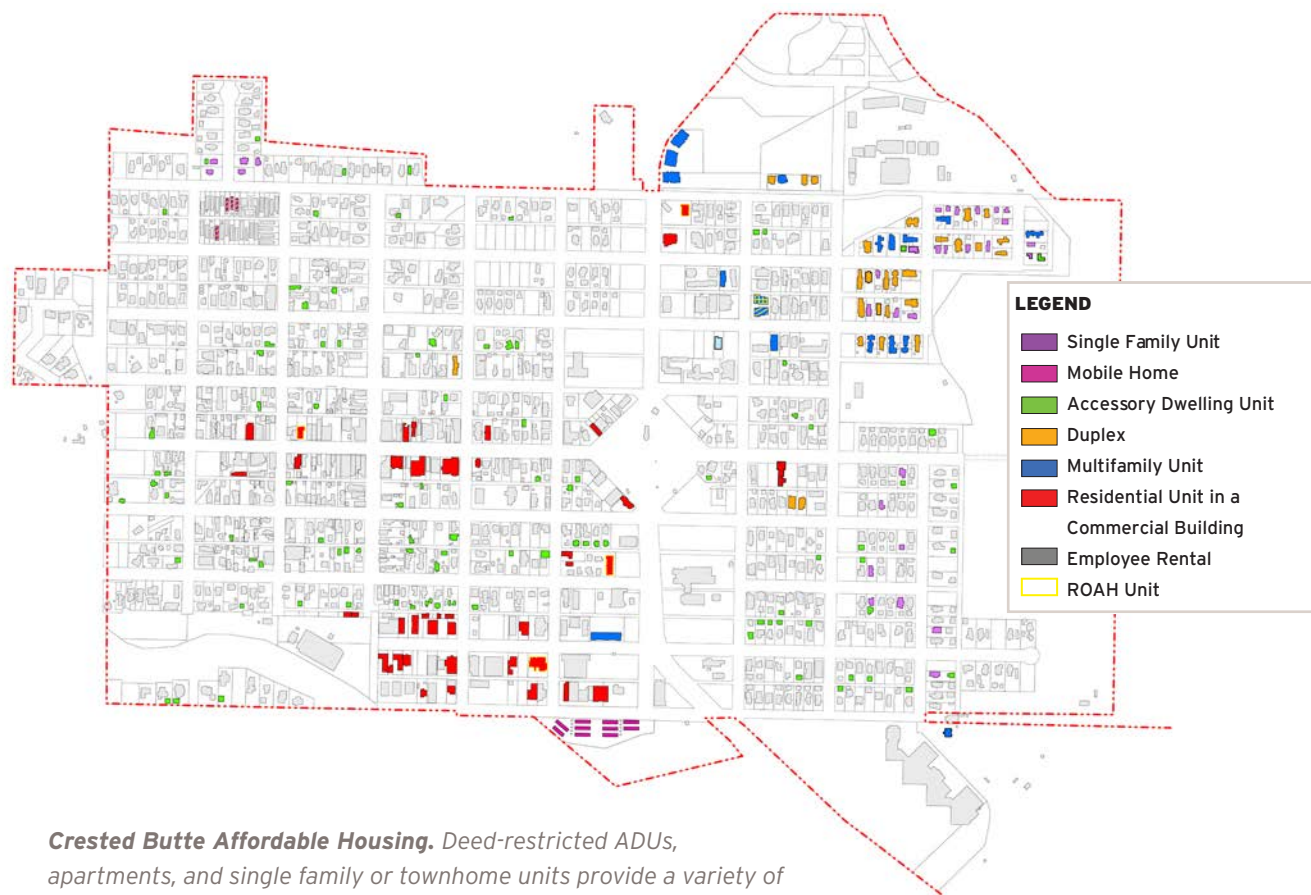
both unaffordable for the local community and incompatible with the Town's character. **The issue isn't merely the number of units but the type of housing the zoning allows.**

Without intervention, this trend will only escalate, driving Crested Butte toward a future increasingly at odds with the community's values and priorities.

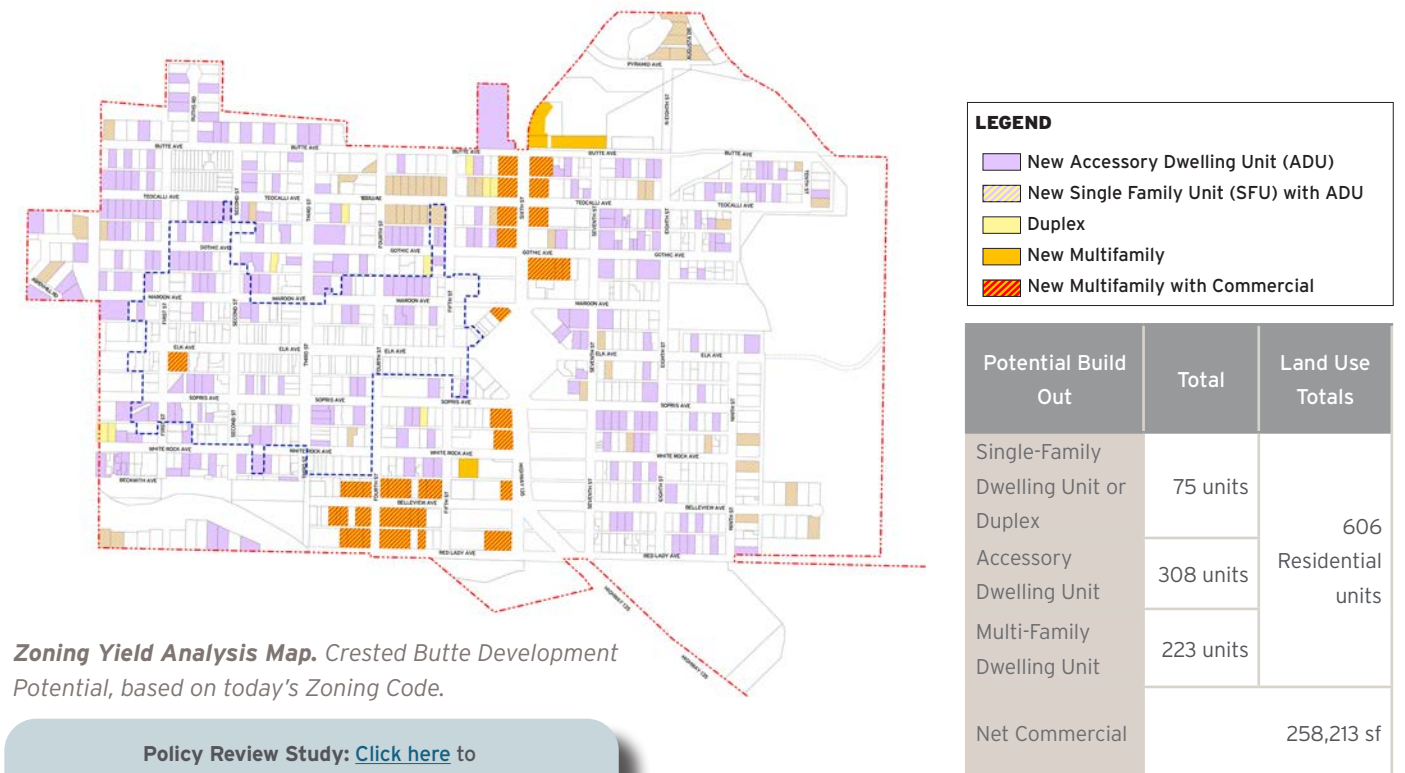
Though Crested Butte may seem fully built out, the zoning code still allows for up to 655 more residential units and 366,503 sq. ft. of commercial space. **This raises a critical question: Can this potential development align with the community's vision?**

With challenge comes opportunity

The CP provides a powerful opportunity to update the zoning code to align with the Town's vision, ensuring that future development meets community needs and supports both economic vitality and livability. By reshaping the regulatory framework, Crested Butte can ensure a more balanced and livable future for the community to thrive.



Crested Butte Affordable Housing. Deed-restricted ADUs, apartments, and single family or townhome units provide a variety of affordable housing typologies.



Zoning Yield Analysis Map. Crested Butte Development Potential, based on today's Zoning Code.

Policy Review Study: [Click here to read the policy review study.](#)



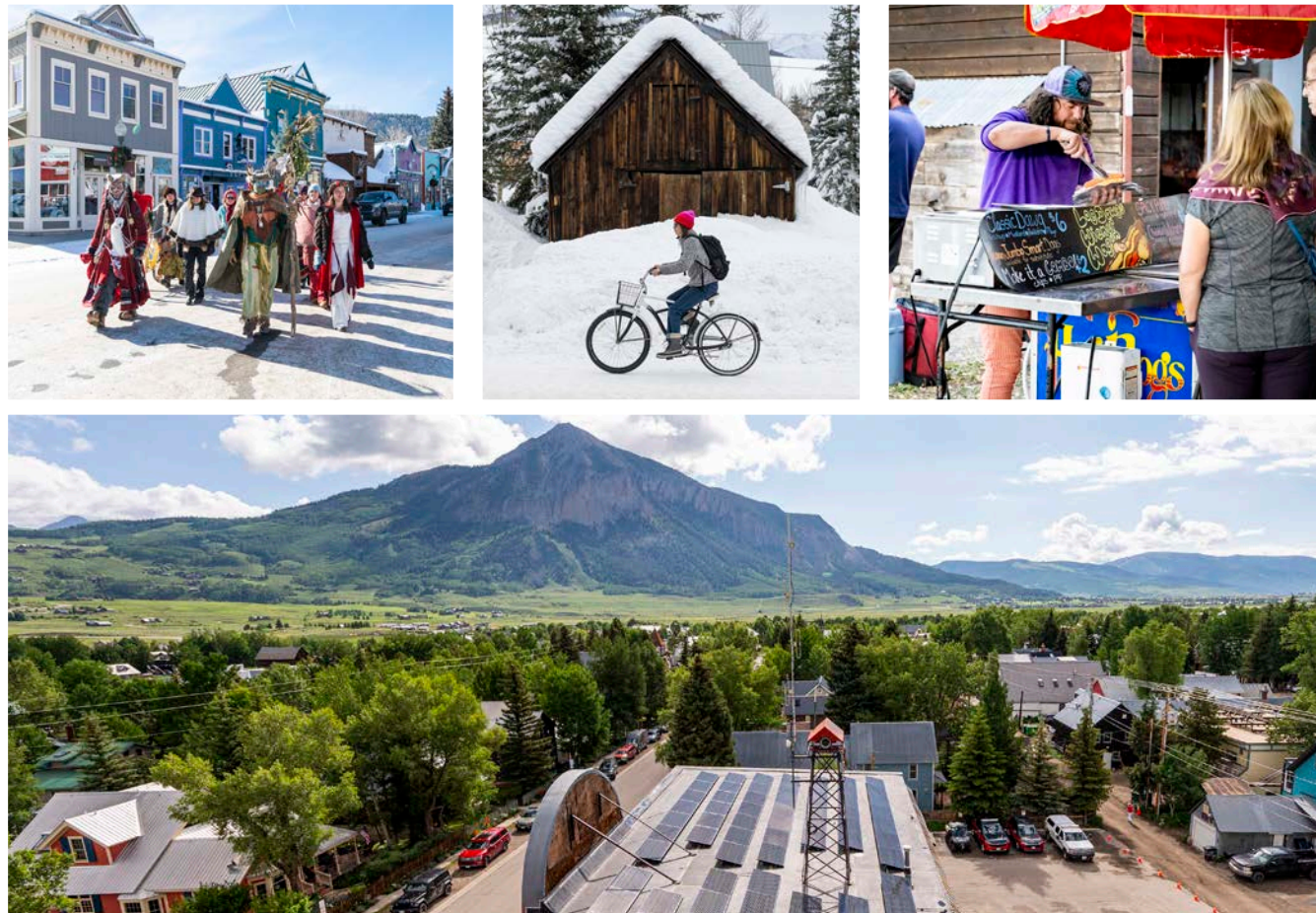
Crested Butte is facing...

...Uncertainty of change

Navigating change in the 21st century is its own challenge, especially for a town like Crested Butte. This community has a rich history of preserving its character, holding fast to its beliefs, and proudly being the “Town that said ‘Hell No!’” to large-scale mining. The community’s tradition of holding boundaries and staying true to its values can serve as a powerful tool for proactively navigating the challenges ahead. **While it may be tempting to wish for no more change, the reality is that change will continue, and if left unmanaged, it may not reflect the needs or desires of the community.** It’s natural to fear change—it holds deep meaning for this Town and its community. The thought of adapting or changing perspectives can be intimidating, particularly when it feels like the future of something cherished is at stake.

With challenge comes opportunity

The Community Compass and CP aren’t about imposing a top-down vision; they’ve been shaped from the ground up, based on input from over 2,500 community members—including full-time residents, part-timers, visitors, and people from throughout the Gunnison Valley. Moving forward, the Town will continue to prioritize transparent, inclusive planning, listening closely to community feedback. This collaborative approach allows Crested Butte to navigate future changes in a way that aligns with its values, turning the fear of change into an opportunity to shape an innovative yet authentic future.



The Community Compass empowers the Crested Butte community to proactively shape its future, rather than simply reacting to change as it unfolds.

Appendix ii. How This Plan was Developed

This Appendix provides background context on how the CP was developed, in collaboration with the Crested Butte community.



Blending Community Wisdom with Technical Expertise

The CP was developed through a four-step process—discovery, desire, design, and discussion—that combined data analysis with community feedback. A diverse advisory committee, including Town Council and BOZAR representatives as well as community members with expertise in architecture, land use law, mortgage lending, and small business ownership, ensured the plan aligned with the Community Compass Decision-Making Framework and integrated seamlessly with the Compass Navigation plans.

Supported by funding from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs' *Strong Communities* grant program, the Town engaged Torti Gallas + Partners and Hoffman Strategy Group to provide specialized expertise in community development, housing, and market analytics, resulting in a plan that reflects the community's values and advances its strategic goals.

THE COMPASS DECISION- MAKING FRAMEWORK

- STEP 1 Understand the challenge and define the goal.
- STEP 2 Commit to a community engagement strategy.
- STEP 3 Define success measures.
- STEP 4 Create alternatives and filter them through the success measures.
- STEP 5 Make decisions based on informed consent.

Phase 1: Discovery

March - May 2024

The first phase concentrated on data collection and analysis. This included a review of the Town's existing development regulations and policies, an economic market study to comprehend the region's current market conditions, and a review of an updated housing needs assessment to understand the current needs of local residents. These efforts culminated in a thorough **understanding of the CP challenge and the definition of the goal**, marking the first step of the Compass Framework.

Phase 2: Desire & Continued Discovery

June - August 2024

Phase two introduced **an extensive community outreach strategy** designed to engage a diverse audience. Throughout the summer, a [comprehensive bilingual survey](#), completed by 238 respondents, sought community input on the four Compass Navigation plans, including tools the community wanted to explore in the CP. In addition to the survey, various events provided opportunities to educate the community on the planning efforts and gather feedback on Crested Butte's challenges and opportunities. A collaborative event with the [Crested Butte Public Policy Forum](#) brought in experts on zoning and community affordability and attracted 250 attendees. Four [neighborhood block parties](#), engaging approximately 300 participants, facilitated discussions among neighbors, town staff, BOZAR members, and council members. Targeted stakeholder and focus group interviews with over 30 individuals provided diverse perspectives to inform the CP, including those from emergency services, public works, the design/build community, the school district, childcare providers, small business owners, and local non-profits. The feedback and insights from the community were synthesized with the discovery phase findings to **develop measures of success**.

Phase 3: Design

September 2024 - January 2025

The design phase built upon the developed success measures and concentrated on **creating alternatives** for community consideration. This phase featured a multi-day iterative [design charrette](#) facilitating the physical exploration of initial design alternatives for Crested Butte's future. Using hand sketches, digital renderings, and 3D models, several test concepts were crafted for different parcels in Crested Butte, examining different ways to meet the CP goals in alignment with the success measures. Approximately 200 people participated in a community meeting, design studio hours, or one-on-one meetings. Following the charrette, the CP advisory committee, BOZAR, and Town Council refined these concepts into alternatives for this draft plan.



Community Engagement. The community gathered in person for a Design Charrette (above) and Public Policy Forum (below).



Phase 4: Discussion

February - June 2025

In this final phase, ongoing community outreach will further refine the alternatives into the plan. Additional feedback was gathered through a comment period and stakeholder presentations. The advisory committee integrated this feedback to refine the draft alternatives into a preferred vision and implementation plan, which were vetted by Town Council and BOZAR. This plan was considered for adoption using the **informed consent** decision-making model by the Crested Butte Town Council.

IF YOU...

- Attended the Public Policy Forum with Neal Payton, Justin Farrell, and Jason Blevins
- Took the Compass Navigation Survey
- Reviewed plan materials on the Compass Navigation or Community Plan website
- Read about the Compass or Community Plan in the Crested Butte News
- Sent an email or other communication to Town Council or had coffee with a Council member
- Chatted with Town Staff at a block party, outside the post office, or at Alpenglow
- Participated in the Design Charrette
- Participated in the Community Compass
- Participated in the Transportation Mobility Plan, Climate Action Plan, or Climate Action Plan
- Continue to share feedback with Town Staff and Town Council

... THEN YOU DIRECTLY INFORMED THE CREATION OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN.





May 2025



TORTI
GALLAS +
PARTNERS