



Business Workshop Summary

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

On April 10th, 2019, the City of Grand Junction hosted a Business Workshop at the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce. The workshop was part of public outreach process for the creation of the new Comprehensive Plan, *One Grand Junction*. Nineteen participants including members of Grand Junction's business community and other stakeholders attended this meeting to share their input. The meeting included an exercise to gather feedback regarding pressing issues and concerns within the City, specific projects they would like to see undertaken, and the primary strengths and assets of the community. The ideas shared uncovered common themes which have been summarized in sections below. These will be essential in preparation of the *One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan*, to guide the recommendations and policies of the plan, and to highlight existing needs of the community.

Note on Summary Context

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in the workshop. Some comments were shared with the entire group, while others were recorded privately on worksheets. The items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather represent feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues & Concerns

Land Use and Development

The lack of adequate infrastructure to facilitate growth and attract new businesses and workers in Grand Junction was the most common issue shared by participants. Additionally, most indicated that the cost of development and the length of time for project approval made development extremely difficult.

Economy and Jobs

The biggest concern amongst the participants was the lack of a qualified workforce. Participants felt that without strong education, skilled jobs, and living wages, Grand Junction is struggling to attract young professionals who can succeed the City's aging population soon to retire. Other top concerns were the lack of economic diversity and contemporary business development. Lack of affordable housing to help attract a younger workforce was also a concern to participants.

Policy and Regulation

Strict regulations and governmental involvement were top issues for participants. Additionally, a lack of progressive thinking, support for local companies, and priority spending were articulated as concerns. The participants would like to see a more aggressive plan for the future that accommodates the wants and needs of the business community as well as existing and future residents.

Services and Amenities

Participants mentioned the lack of broadband internet, adequate K-12 public education, and a need to educate the community on the cost of public improvements. The participants would also like to see partnerships with Colorado Mesa University.

Transportation

The top transportation issue for participants was the airport and air travel access, including the cost of air travel into Grand Junction. Another top concern was transportation corridor planning for growth – business owners noted the importance that transportation corridors play in access to services and businesses for residents. Several participants mentioned that Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) projects often impact business access negatively during construction, noting that more input in that project planning process is desired. Roadway maintenance was also mentioned as a concern.

Environmental

Environmental concerns were discussed in a variety of areas. The desire to move drilling for gas and oil out of state was expressed. The importance of maintaining and capitalizing on local agriculture was mentioned, while some agreed that investment in the clean tech industry is an important area for the City to consider, both to provide employment opportunities and improve environmental conditions.

Character and Identity

Establishing a clear identity for Grand Junction was an important issue for the participants. Additionally, participants stated a desire for strategic placemaking (“fun & funky”) within Grand Junction.

Taxes and Fees

The impact of fees on local businesses was the top issue for participants. In addition to the difficulty that fees place on business, participants also wanted clarity as to how and why fees are applied. The high cost to provide benefits (particularly healthcare) to employees was also a common issue.

Specific Actions & Projects

Participants indicated specific projects or actions they would like to see. The following list is not ranked or ordered in a particular manner:

- Development costs decreased
- K-12 education improvements
- Public transportation
- Redirection of funds rather than raising fees
- Improved infrastructure
- Amenities appealing to young, skilled workers
- Affordable housing
- Downtown development
- Business park development
- Urban infill
- Workforce development
- Use of new technologies of planning solutions as a marketing tool
- Empower, incentivize private sector

- City to play a supportive role in business rather than a main role
- Support of existing businesses
- City government involving business community more
- Progressive thinking in government
- Homelessness
- Public safety
- Community center
- Broadband
- Impact fees stretched over four years instead of at once

Primary Strengths & Assets

Participants identified the following as the main strengths and assets of Grand Junction:

- Lifestyle
- No commute
- Ability to make an impact
- Climate
- People
- Colorado Mesa University
- Airport
- Railroad
- Culture
- Natural areas
- Small town feel
- Downtown
- Moderate government regulation
- Supportive community
- Location
- Low cost of labor
- Affordable real estate
- Land conservation capital vs. venture capital
- Quality of life
- Outdoor recreation
- Room for small business growth