



# Business Workshop Summary

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

On February 26, 2019, the City of Gunnison hosted a Business Workshop at the City of Gunnison Municipal Building in the Council Chambers. The workshop was part of public outreach process for the creation of the new Comprehensive Plan, *Gunnison 2030*. Fifteen participants including members of Gunnison’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 be seen undertaken, and the primary strengths and assets of the community. The ideas shared uncovered common themes which have been summarized below in the following sections. These will be essential in preparation of the *Gunnison 2030 Comprehensive Plan*, to guide the recommendations and policies of the plan, and 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. Numbers in parentheses indicate the quantity of individual responses received on the item.*

## Top Issues & Concerns

### Economic Vitality

The economic vitality of Gunnison was the most common issue shared by participants. Most indicated that the cost to build and own a business exceeds their profits due to the high cost of commercial rent and property taxes. Some identified high costs of labor and materials, and many expressed difficulties providing competitive wages and healthcare insurance compared to public sector jobs, particularly with inflation. Participants also described a lack of available commercial spaces, short construction seasons, low economic diversity, and an employee shortage despite the presence of an abundance of university students.

Leakage was another issue discussed, particularly with growing trends of online shopping and to businesses outside of Gunnison. Participants expressed the need to market regionally to stay economically competitive, and to address seasonality by improving off-season vitality. Even during the peak winter activity seasons, hotels were described as only partially occupied. Additionally, participants shared that restrictive land use and development codes thwart business growth, such as

creating maker spaces in the downtown. Others hoped to see the expansion of relevant businesses and activity to other blocks and advancements of Gunnison's economic anchors.

### Housing

Lack of available housing was another common concern shared by the business community. Many indicated a shortage in affordable housing, which is forcing employee and students to live elsewhere. One participant pointed out how the issue juxtaposes the large banks of land available to develop on.

### Identity

The lack of a clear, defined identity was identified as an issue. Participants voiced the need to develop Gunnison's image through proactive rather than reactive planning and by enhancing the local economy.

### Transportation & Safety

Traffic safety was a commonly shared concern. The speed and volume of traffic from Highway 50 and Highway 135 were identified as problematic. Participants also indicated the need to improve safe crossings and pedestrian appeal within Gunnison, which would resultingly increase businesses foot traffic. Some also wished to see more parking, particularly in the downtown.

### Environmental & Natural Assets

Some participants voiced the need to protect the natural resources of the City such as parks, wetlands, Gunnison River, and Blue Mesa reservoir. Another suggested developing new trails while connecting the existing network to appeal to visitors and locals.

### Industrial Uses

A few participants shared the need to expand industrial zoning and increase the size of industrial parcels within City limits.

### Other Issues

Individual participants wished to have a central gathering place in Gunnison, as well as reliable internet, affordable regional healthcare, and an improved Ski Bus service. The need for enhanced horizontal infrastructure, improved snow and ice removal, and to address substance abuse were other concerns shared.

### Specific Actions & Projects

Participants indicated specific projects or actions they would like to be seen undertaken as follows:

- Build a central gathering place for congregations and events (3)
- Provide a better public recycling system downtown (2)
- Activate festival spaces
- Implement safe crossings and slow residential speed to 20 mph
- Improve connectivity to the downtown, Western Colorado University, the library, community schools, and recreation center for pedestrians, bicyclists, and buses
- Improve Georgia Avenue connectivity
- Develop a more suitable economic use for the existing fairgrounds to prompt relocation of the facility
- Provide horizontal infrastructure for Gunnison Rising

- Proactively regulate short-term rents
- Improve key intersections
- Identify, protect, and utilize natural areas for trails and recreational activities
- Provide additional parking
- Allow businesses to shovel roofs and shovel snow to streets
- Move toward form-based codes
- Establish more quality employee and affordable housing

## Primary Strengths & Assets

Participants identified the following as the main strengths and assets of Gunnison:

- Western Colorado University (2)
- The supportive community and its people (2)
- City reaches out to diverse stakeholders
- City is proactive in communicating
- Strong local business support
- Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport
- Public lands
- Access to environmental features and recreation
- Safe place for families
- Diverse opportunities for the arts
- Quality of life
- Employee base
- Relatively low property taxes
- Crested Butte resort area