

"What I love about Silverthorne most is that Silverthorne seems to have done a great job in planning the town and neighborhoods, in preserving the views, the river corridor, natural surroundings, etc. Silverthorne is a very aesthetically pleasing place to call home!"



2. Silverthorne Today

Relevant Planning

The Town has undergone several important planning efforts in the last few years as a response to the changing economy and new community goals. These include the Urban Renewal Plan (2013), Community Surveys (2007, 2011), and the Downtown Assessment (2011). Each of these help support this Comprehensive Plan Update.

URBAN RENEWAL PLAN

In 2013, the Town embarked on the revision of the Silverthorne Urban Renewal Plan. The Revised Plan “focuses on the need to utilize tools available through the Urban Renewal Law to assist in the creation of a compact, mixed use, pedestrian-oriented commercial district. The Revised Area includes all or portions of the Town Core District, the Town Core Periphery District, and the Gateway District as identified in the 2008 Silverthorne Comprehensive Plan, the Town Code, and the District Design Standards. The goal is to encourage intense redevelopment that will include a diverse mix of ground floor retail, commercial, restaurant, and entertainment uses with office and residential uses above the ground floors. The result will be a pedestrian-oriented destination that will serve as a focal point for the community.

Use of urban renewal powers will allow the Town to achieve this vision and to provide private enterprise resources that are critical to the attainment of the vision of the community.”

The Urban Renewal Plan is a powerful tool for the Town to use in conjunction with the 2014 Comprehensive Plan to kick-start investment in Silverthorne’s downtown, particularly because it will make available Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for projects within the Town Core. *For more information on the mechanics of that process, see page 7, “Focus On: The Urban Renewal Plan.”*

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

The Town conducted community surveys in 2007 and 2011 in order to gather information to help in setting priorities on specific topics and general policy issues. In 2007, 56% of respondents were full-time residents; in 2011, that increased to 62%. In both surveys, when asked why people lived in or bought property in Silverthorne, recreational amenities, access to winter recreation, scenery/surroundings, proximity to Denver/Front Range, and summer climate topped the lists.

In 2011, the “Three Most Important Issues Facing the Town in the Next 5 Years” were:

1. Economic development efforts
2. Development of a downtown core
3. Growth management

The same question in 2007 resulted in:

1. Growth management
2. Forest/pine beetle management
3. Development of a downtown core

As the pine beetle epidemic wanes and restoration efforts on the White River National Forest have begun to take hold, it is evident that the community is now more focused on Silverthorne’s economic sustainability, growth and development of the downtown core.

SILVERTHORNE DOWNTOWN ASSESSMENT

In 2011, the Town of Silverthorne applied for, and received, assistance from the Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) technical assistance program. DCI is a clearinghouse for information, assistance, and services through collaborative program development with public and private entities supporting commercial district revitalization initiatives in Colorado. The program is partially supported by the State Historical Fund and the USDA Rural Development. A variety of stakeholders participated in the two-day charrette from the Town, local agencies and organizations, and the greater community.

DCI enlisted specialists focused on landscape architecture, signage and way finding, economic development, financing mechanisms, marketing and promotions, infill redevelopment, and more. The team met with numerous stakeholders and groups working in Silverthorne to identify the priorities. The community made it clear that community development and creating a sense of place was a primary goal.

The Downtown Assessment included a detailed inventory of what Silverthorne is, and offered insight on its potential future direction. It recognized the Town's role as a place to "get things done" and its assets such as the Pavilion, the Recreation Center, the Blue River Trail, and many local trades and businesses. With retail stores such as Lowe's, Murdoch's, and Target, it is a commercial hub for Summit County and the region. It also identified shortcomings that are challenging the development of a true downtown, such as its lack of "sense of community" or "welcome" features.

The Downtown Assessment leads directly into the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update because it presented many recommendations that have been further vetted with the community through this effort. One such idea is to focus "Main Street" development on 4th Street with the catalyst location being the southwest corner of 4th and SH 9. The report states:

- "New development on this corner will identify the location and be a starting point for redevelopment throughout the commercial core."

Many other recommendations resonate today, and were reflected in the Comprehensive Plan Update's public process. Some of the most relevant include:

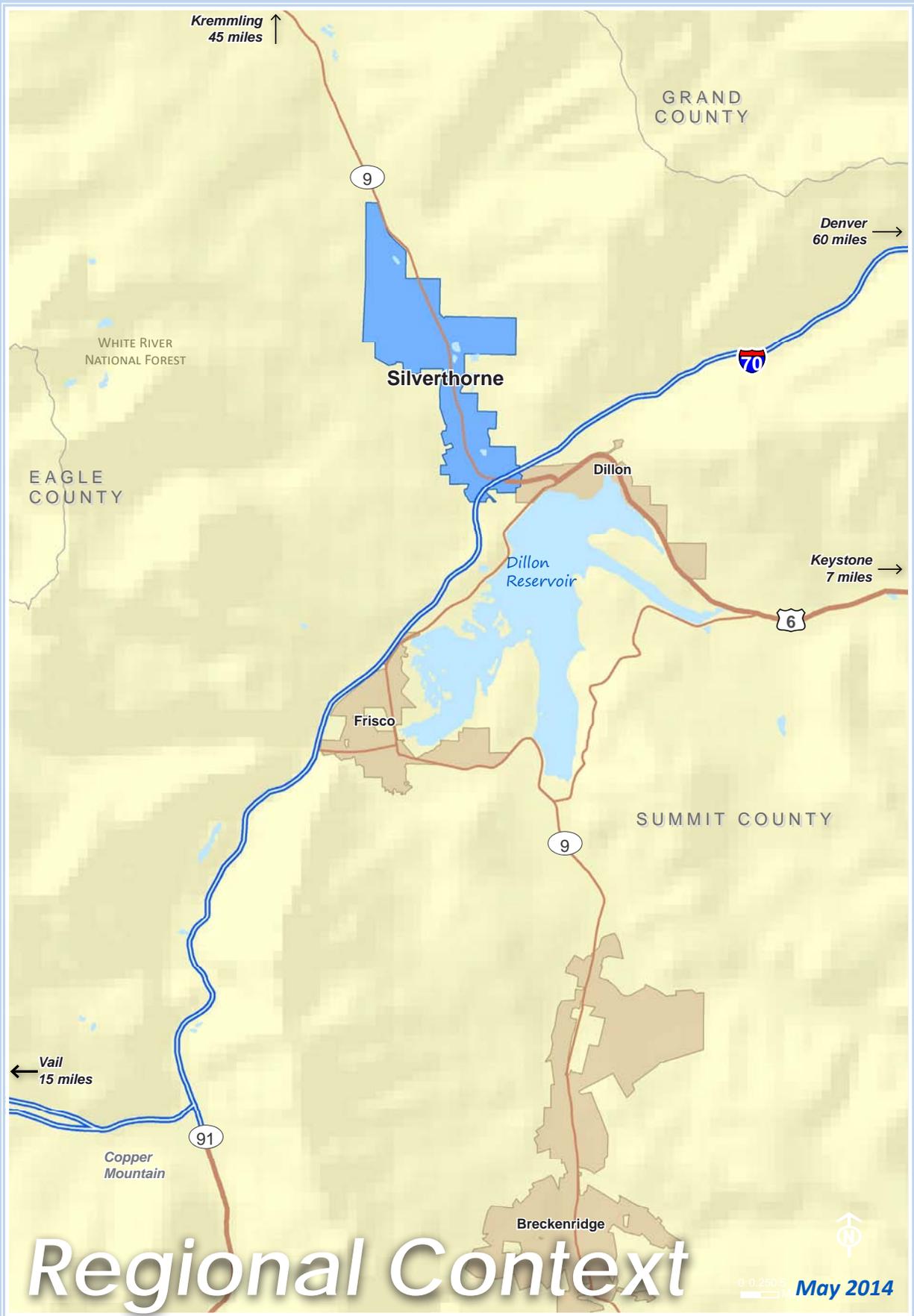
- "Support from both the Town and private sector needs to be established to mobilize the necessary resources to identify and promote events and potential development opportunities."
- "Special district mechanisms could be any one or a combination of any of those listed below, see appendices for more detail. [Such as] utilize Silverthorne's Existing Urban Renewal Authority."
- "Add teeth to the code. If the codes you have direct you to approve development a certain way, make sure this is in line with the visionary documents you have in place. Plans and codes that are at odds with each other will cause confusion and distrust within the development community and with citizens."

Conditions and Opportunities

Every few years, the Town updates their Community Profile, which includes statistics on demographics, growth and development trends, employment trends, inventories of public facilities such as parks, recreation and trails, and more.

The Community Profile was last updated in 2012 and provides the most current and accurate information to inform decision making within this Comprehensive Plan. The information found in the 2012 Community Profile, provides both a snapshot of current conditions, and helps the community infer how present trends will influence the community's future opportunities. Public input and data collected during the update process also helped to inform this discussion.

As the town reaches build out, infill and redevelopment of commercial properties will not only shape Silverthorne's economic sustainability, but also its character and quality of life. New neighborhoods and recreation amenities will also further evolve who lives in and spends time in Silverthorne. The following sections provide background and insight on how the Comprehensive Plan policies address current needs and position the town for desirable growth and progression.



Regional Context

LAND USE

According to the 2011 Community Survey, the largest number of respondents said that “Scenery” and “Recreational Amenities” were their top reasons for why they live in Silverthorne. The town is surrounded on two sides by National Forest and Wilderness Areas. Within town, the Blue River is a Gold Medal Trout Stream; the Recreation Center provides year-round aquatics and fitness; the Raven at Three Peaks is an 18-hole golf course that features a Nordic Center in the wintertime; Rainbow Park is home to one of Summit County’s largest community parks, with a skate park, playground and tot lot, tennis courts, volleyball, and soccer; and the Blue River Trail and other trails allow people to bike, hike, walk or ski throughout the year.

Commercial land plays a critical role in the economic sustainability of Silverthorne, and thus, has had a strong influence over its land use policy and pattern. The Town does not have a property tax, so relies heavily on sales tax revenue. The Outlets at Silverthorne account for approximately 11% of total sales tax revenue, followed by consumer retail (24%), food/liquor (16%), building retail (10%), automotive (7%), services (5%) and lodging (3%).

Silverthorne plays an important role in providing year-round housing options for Summit County’s permanent population, which is partially due to the number and variety of options that are available. Residential neighborhoods include apartments and multi-family units, condominiums and duplexes, townhomes, traditional single family homes, and large vacation home properties.

There are approximately 1,967 housing units presently built in Silverthorne. The largest neighborhoods include:

Single-Family Neighborhoods	Built Units
Three Peaks	220
Willowbrook	153
Eagles Nest	182
Ptarmigan Trail Estates	94
Multi-Family Neighborhoods	Built Units
Eagles Nest	166
Willowbrook Meadows	131
Sierra Madre I & II	125
The Ponds	84

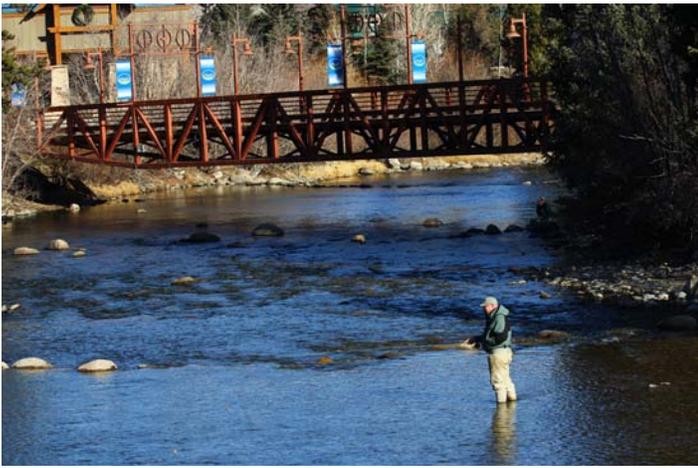
Silverthorne’s existing land use pattern has a clear distinction between residential neighborhoods and commercial development. Generally speaking, neighborhoods are situated in the northern and eastern portions of the community, and commercial development is located in the central and southern portions of town, centered on State Highway 9 (SH 9), US 6 and the Interstate 70 (I-70) interchange.

For residential neighborhoods in the coming decade, the build-out of Three Peaks, Angler Mountain Ranch, and South Maryland Creek Ranch will likely increase the number of homes in Silverthorne, some of which would serve as year-round and some of which would be vacation properties. Smith Ranch, a proposed workforce housing development, will contribute significantly to the availability of year-round attainable housing and would be the largest project of its kind in Silverthorne.

In community surveys (2007 and 2011) and public processes, residents of Silverthorne have indicated that the development of a “downtown” would greatly add to its quality of life and community character. Unfortunately, this has not been realized for several reasons. The economic downturn of the mid-2000s nearly halted all development, especially in tourism-driven communities like Summit County. Then, while several highly visible and economically-significant projects have occurred (e.g., Lowe’s, Murdoch’s), smaller, individual projects within town have continued a typical strip-commercial, auto-oriented (drive-to) pattern—the Town Code has not had adequate provisions specific to the Town Core to encourage and enforce the type of development that would create a vibrant downtown (high density, mixed use, compact, etc.). Lastly, the downtown area lacks the “bones” that are essential to a compact, walkable urban form. *See page 11, “What Makes a Great Downtown?”*

TRANSPORTATION

Silverthorne is considered by many to be the gateway to Summit County and much of western Colorado, due to its location as the first exit west of the Eisenhower Tunnel along I-70, at the crossroads of SH 9 and US 6.



Where Does Great Downtown Development Start? by Mark Kane, Community Planner

When a community is trying to create a new “core,” one of the biggest challenges it faces is knowing where to start. Luckily for Silverthorne, this 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update, as well as all of the prior efforts on defining the elements of its downtown, help answer that question. You start with a **vision**.

What comes next is even harder—a new downtown needs **momentum**; something tangible which helps establish the vision and points the way forward. Whether it’s a new hotel, a commercial or mixed use building, or a performing arts center, identifying a real opportunity is essential. While ultimately the private sector will play a pivotal role in helping realize the Community Vision, it often needs a kick-start through public investment. The public sector can help establish infrastructure that supports commercial and residential forms, can enable or create shared parking, and can enhance the pedestrian experience to make downtown a great place to spend time, work and live. The first step is to target investment that is aligned with the goals and policies of this Plan.

Many of the greatest examples of downtowns in western mountain communities are places that were established as mining or ranching towns—Telluride, Crested Butte, Steamboat Springs. New development could never replicate those places, but it can emulate them through density, building heights and form, streetscape amenities and parking design. Public investment in infrastructural improvements will set the stage by creating the framework for downtown development to take shape.

The community must be active in driving the vision forward and continuing to support key investment choices. Establishing a great downtown in Silverthorne will involve a series of intricate and interwoven steps and will happen over time. Staying true to the vision set forth in this plan will ensure that key choices are aligned and moving in the same direction over the course of that evolution.

Travel To and Through Silverthorne *by Molly Veldkamp, AICP, Transportation Planner*

Within Silverthorne are some very important roadways that carry traffic to and through Silverthorne. In particular, State Highway 9 (SH 9) provides access to the heart of Silverthorne, but also carries people to Steamboat Springs and Routt County. Anyone who has experienced weekend traffic delays on SH 9 in the vicinity of I-70 knows how important it is to maintain an effective through connection.

However, while corridors like this provide passage through the Town to other destinations, they also provide access to homes and regional destinations for the residents of Summit County. Finding the balance between travel through a community and travel to and within a community for all travel modes can be difficult, particularly in a community like Silverthorne that has City, County, and State agency interest at play.

Continued coordination will be key to successfully balancing SH 9's role as a regional roadway, as well as a local corridor. The future development along SH 9, particularly near 4th Street, is expected to change quite drastically. To fully support the proposed development of a true downtown core, the area roadway network needs to change as well. Sidewalks need to be provided on both sides of streets in the town core. On-street parking can provide separation between traveling vehicles and pedestrians and provides front door parking access for anticipated retail establishments. Shared parking lots and enhanced pedestrian connections can create a "park once, then walk" environment for Silverthorne.



Denver International Airport is roughly 100 miles, or a two-hour drive, from Silverthorne. There are five ski areas within a half-hour drive from the town—Breckenridge Ski Resort, Copper Mountain Resort, Keystone Resort, Arapahoe Basin and Loveland Ski Area. Vail Resort and Beaver Creek Resort are less than an hour away. Several companies currently provide shuttle service between DIA and Summit County. Additionally, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is planning for a bus route that would provide connection between Glenwood Springs and Denver Union Station—traveling from Glenwood Springs to Denver in the morning and Denver to Glenwood Springs in the evening, with a local stop in Frisco.

Within Silverthorne, SH 9 (north side of I-70)/US 6 (south side of I-70) is the primary travel corridor. CDOT reports that the annual average daily traffic (AADT) on SH 9 just north of Rainbow Drive is 23,000 vehicles (for comparison, Highway 40 through downtown Steamboat Springs also has an AADT of 23,000); just south of that location, approaching the I-70 interchange, the AADT is 31,000. Near the intersection of 4th Street, the SH 9 AADT volumes drop off to approximately 15,000. Traffic consists of local residents and trucks, as well as tourism and commercial vehicles traveling north to the communities of Kremmling (Grand County) and Steamboat Springs (Routt County). Within the Town limits, SH 9 serves the existing traffic well and has a relatively low crash rate compared to other similar roadways in the state.

Because of its location in CDOT's network, it is imperative that SH 9 continue to serve the needs of vehicles as a primary travel corridor for the region. The community does not envision SH 9 becoming a "the" main street, but rather in support of one running east-west on 4th Street. To do this, improvements must be made to promote a more inviting experience through the heart of the community for all travel modes.

Parking is abundant throughout Silverthorne and is indicative of the drive-to nature of existing commercial development. The majority of the existing pedestrian infrastructure found along both SH 9 and US 6 would generally be described as uninviting based on the current land use and lack of convenient and comfortable crossings and connections. This is not only due to the roadways proximity to which the

pedestrian facilities are located and the perceived speed at which cars and trucks travel on these roads, but also due to the lower density, spacious development pattern and lack of pedestrian amenities. Most parking today is on-site, versus on-street or in large parking "reservoirs" (lots or garages), and despite recent changes in the Town Code lowering parking requirements, few businesses have implemented the standards.

Summit Stage provides transit service in and around Silverthorne with four transit routes, which all make connections at the Silverthorne Transfer Station located at the corner of Adams and 4th Street. Summit Stage is currently undergoing a planning study to evaluate changes and modifications to the transit system. One of the options being considered in Silverthorne is relocating the Transfer Station closer to I-70. This would be conducive to the redevelopment ideas and options proposed in this plan.

In addition to serving the Town of Silverthorne, the existing transportation network provides access to the myriad of neighborhoods surrounding the town that reside in the County. These connections are key to providing access to and from these communities. It will be important to continue to maintain and enhance these connections for all modes of travel.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Silverthorne's small town, mountain community character is what draws many to live here. Especially in residential neighborhoods, views and the integration of the natural surroundings creates an aesthetic quality indicative of mountain living.

Silverthorne has also made sure that many of these qualities are reflected in commercial development. Large retail stores like Target and Lowe's have made specific changes to "standard building designs" through architectural detail and the choice of materials, that reflect mountain character.

The Town has made a number of streetscape improvements to SH 9, at Rainbow Drive and northbound, including welcome signage and a landscaped median with colorful flags. As it functions today, this design is identifiable and beautifies the corridor.

Community design will become paramount in the development of Silverthorne’s downtown and beyond. Through this planning process, residents and decision-makers expressed their palate for moderate heights (with appropriate modifications for view preservation), the use of enduring (not trendy) materials and forms, mixed uses, and streetscape improvements such as sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, seating, and signage. It is evident that community members would like future development to reflect Silverthorne’s connection to its natural environment and mountain town heritage, but is also supportive of new design ideas that would create a downtown.

The Blue River emerged as a central theme of the Comprehensive Planning process; specifically, how to sensitively integrate it into the built environment. More crossings, more public access to green space along its banks (with careful consideration of high run-off periods), and more development that looks out onto its scenic beauty were all seen as opportunities for the future.

GROWTH

Silverthorne today has approximately 3,993 people and is home to roughly 15% of Summit County’s permanent (year-round) population. Between 2000 and 2010, the town grew at a rate of approximately 1.8% annually, a sharp (but perhaps more sustainable) turn from the rapid growth in the 1990s (>8% annual growth rate). In the future, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs’ State Demographer estimates that Silverthorne’s population could grow to approximately 5,050 by the year 2025.

Beginning in 2003, there was an increase in commercial valuations due to the construction of a Target retail store on Blue River Parkway, followed by the remodeling of the Silverthorne Outlet Stores in 2005. This growth in commercial activity was paralleled by growth in residential development beginning in 2004, and continuing at a strong pace through 2008. Development activity in all sectors slowed significantly in 2008 and 2009 due to the national economic recession. In 2011, some commercial growth recurred with the construction of Lowe’s and AutoZone retail stores.

Building Permits 2003–2011

Year	Permits	Total Valuation	Residential Valuation	Commercial Valuation
2003	82	\$14.9	\$12.6	\$2.3
2005	102	27.8	26.2	1.6
2007	132	25.6	20.3	5.3
2009	86	9.7	7.2	2.5
2010	51	14.5	7.5	6.9
2011	59	11.1	6.8	4.3

Silverthorne has a growing Hispanic population. The US Census reported that in 2000 there were 751 Hispanics or Latinos (of any race), accounting for 23.5% of Silverthorne’s population; in 2010, there were 1,071 Hispanics or Latinos (of any race), accounting for 27.6% of Silverthorne’s population.

The age and demographic profile of residents also shifted over the last decade, indicating that the population is becoming older and more stable. More people are retiring in Summit County, and Silverthorne is becoming less transient with more quality jobs and affordable housing opportunities.

The development of Silverthorne’s Town Core, including mixed use commercial and residential uses, will influence who chooses Silverthorne as a place to live and a place to visit. The National Association of Realtors’ 2013 Community Preference Survey indicated strong interest in walkable, mixed use neighborhoods across the country and in a variety of age groups. Access to shops and restaurants, jobs, and public transportation are all increasingly important factors when purchasing a home for today’s buyers. “The higher preference among those under age 40 for walkable communities, revitalizing cities, and alternative transportation tells us the high importance these community traits will have with the consumers of tomorrow.” Evidence also suggests that more and more aging baby-boomers are seeking to be in walkable, convenient neighborhoods.

In Summit County, the strong demand for housing products within close proximity to a downtown core is evident in Breckenridge and Frisco. There may always be home buyers that are seeking a mountain cabin or spacious property, but mountain community downtowns are sought-after and desirable for people that live there year-round, are visiting on vacation, or who are investing in a vacation home. This product is currently unavailable in Silverthorne, and the Town Core is the town’s strongest opportunity to meet that demand.



Burlington, VT



Boulder, CO



Eagle Ranch, CO

What Makes a Great Downtown: Taking Back the Street for Public Realm

by Mary Hart, Urban Designer/Landscape Architect

There are a handful of basic principles that support the creation of streets where people want to be and cause communities to flourish. The street should be considered as civic space for all users, not only favoring cars, but also providing integrated transportation options for buses, pedestrians, and cyclists. The following characteristics make great streets and lead to vibrant downtowns:

Variety of Use: Mixed uses that include a balanced and vibrant array of compatible uses. Retail, restaurant, office and civic uses are supported by a diverse residential base.

Interesting: A place where people want to get out of their car and explore. Buildings have transparent first floor store fronts generally reserved for retail and restaurant uses on primary corridors. Storefronts address the street and sidewalk, so that pedestrians closely interface with windows, signage, and each other. Buildings should be simple compositions of facades creating succession and rhythm, using materials that are pleasing to the senses.

Shaped: Human scale of the “outdoor room” created by the street and a solid wall of buildings that enclose it on both sides. Overhead elements such as street trees, lighting, and awnings create “ceiling” enclosure.

Safe: Calm the traffic and protect the pedestrian from cars. Lower speeds are the result of narrowest possible lane widths, small corner radii, and on-street parking that acts as a buffer to traffic and helps pedestrians feel comfortable.

Walkable: Short, well-connected blocks, curbs, and sidewalks with street trees, tasteful signage or landmarks for wayfinding, lighting, seating, awnings, and arcades for comfort.

Social: Community destinations such as parks, plazas, shopping and entertainment knitted into civic space that encourage social encounters.



Focus On: The Urban Renewal Plan *by Anne Ricker, Economist*

The Town's intent in establishing an urban renewal district was to encourage private investment and reinvestment in targeted areas while strengthening the tax base of the entire community. The Silverthorne Urban Renewal Authority, in partnership with Town Council, recognized several extraordinary challenges associated with advancing financially feasible projects in these locations and identified urban renewal as an important tool to overcome barriers and capitalize on opportunities. Whereas urban renewal can only succeed through the collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors, and its statutory purpose is to cure blight and advance Town-supported goals through sound community development practices, it will be an essential resource used to implement the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan Update.

Goals of the Silverthorne Urban Renewal Authority include: curing conditions of blight as defined in the law; promoting projects which provide a public benefit; being proactive rather than reactive in soliciting private investment and reinvestment; fostering the creation of quality places; promoting best practices in design and development; and encouraging a greater diversity of products that meet the needs of residents and visitors to the community.

The Authority's and Council's mission is to encourage private investment and reinvestment where desired development would not or has not occurred, to: foster partnerships...enhance, preserve, and restore community assets...protect and improve the quality-of-life...stabilize the tax base...compel quality urban planning and design...ensure fiscal prudence...and promote cultural sensitivity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Silverthorne defines economic development as a program for the support of local businesses, attraction of new ones, and improvement of the local business environment through:

- Proactive promotion of the Town's assets and opportunities.
- Strategic and balanced use of its land and natural resources.
- Greater understanding of local, regional and national markets and industry trends.
- Realistic understanding of the financial feasibility of potential projects.
- Provision of incentives and other municipal resources to overcome economic gaps.
- Quality development of both business and residential sectors of the community.

Sales tax collections provide for as much as 70% of the revenue necessary to fund Town operations and complete capital improvements. To ensure the stability of its commercial land base, while growing and diversifying other Town revenues, and collectively sustaining the area's quality of life, in 2003 the Silverthorne Town Council established the goal of developing an economic development strategy. Efforts completed in furtherance of this goal include preparation of a "downtown" design document; designation of an urban renewal area; numerous successful commercial recruitment initiatives; the commission of various economic and market studies; and, appointment of numerous professionals to an economic development task force.

In addition to Town Council, economic development is guided by the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), a community-based advisory group whose focus is to enhance and improve the business climate and economy in the Town of Silverthorne. Major projects in the last several years include the establishment of Lowe's in 2012 and Murdoch's in 2014. These projects have region-wide appeal and strongly bolster the local sales tax revenue.

Silverthorne has a number of business incentive programs that were adopted in 2012 under the umbrella of the Economic Development Incentive Policy. The policy's overarching goal is to partner with the business community to foster a diverse, stable, and sustainable economy. Incentives include the Business Improvement Grant Program, the Enhanced Sales Tax Incentive Program (ESTIP), the "We Are Silverthorne" marketing campaign that highlights local businesses, and the Silverthorne Energy Smart Program.

Large commercial projects will continue to play an important role in the economic development of Silverthorne, as they provide a solid foundation upon which to support smaller-scale and locally-owned businesses. National brands will continue to anchor retail developments, and allow smaller and locally-owned and operated businesses to respond to the demand for more diversity in stores and restaurants.

The Urban Renewal Authority will be instrumental in how and where certain types of businesses will establish. As discussed previously, it will be a powerful tool for the Town to use to make public investment using TIF funds in infrastructure and improvements within the Urban Renewal Area.

Recreation is integral to Silverthorne residents' way of life, and also presents an opportunity for economic development in the future. There is an opportunity to build upon amenities such as the Recreation Center and Blue River Trail to reinforce Silverthorne as a year-round destination for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors, drawing more and more people to the community. There may be potential for primary revenue generated from new facilities (user fees), as well as secondary revenue generated from encouraging people to stay longer in the community once they are here for a particular activity (money spent at local businesses). The Town is currently undergoing an update to their Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan, which will explore those opportunities.