

"Communities are about people, and in that sense, Silverthorne is one of the greatest."

-Mayor Bruce Butler



1. Introduction

The Silverthorne Comprehensive Plan is a guidebook for the future. This community has evolved continuously over the last century and a half—from prospective placer mine, to workers’ camp, to commercial center and year-round residence for permanent and second homeowners alike. Silverthorne’s development pattern reflects this evolution and today, the town is positioned to re-imagine how the built environment can enhance quality of life, celebrate natural resources, and support economic sustainability. ***This 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update is the blueprint to achieving those goals through the next course of evolution in Silverthorne.***

Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

The idea behind planning is at its essence, a simple one. It is the idea that people living in a community can guide decision making relative to growth and development. This idea often takes the form of a comprehensive plan where the community, through its local government, makes an effort to:

- Protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens in the community,
- Improve the physical, social, and economic environment of the community, and
- Understand and make decisions on proposed short-term, individual actions that are based upon the long-range impacts of those actions.

A comprehensive plan is only one of the tools used to guide decision making. It is an advisory framework; no codes or ordinances are found in a comprehensive plan. Still, it is a valuable management tool that reflects the goals and

objectives of the entire community, not just individuals or interested groups. It is a strong foundation upon which decisions are based.

In addition to guiding land use decisions, a comprehensive plan serves as a guide for ongoing and future public investment. Through wise land use planning, a town is able to judiciously use its fiscal resources to provide the efficient and affordable services that businesses and residents need. A comprehensive plan also helps focus a town’s resources on specific strategies to achieve community goals.

More specifically, the 2014 Silverthorne Comprehensive Plan:

- Provides a framework that supports informed and consistent decision making by Town elected officials, appointed officials, and staff,
- Outlines a series of long range goals and policies concerning: land use, transportation, community design, and annexation of lands within three miles of the Town limits,
- Guides public investment and the provision of services, and
- Establishes policies to balance the rights of the individual with the interests of the community at large.

As a guiding policy document, the Silverthorne Comprehensive Plan provides direction for land use regulations, namely the **Development Code** and **Design District Standards**. Those regulatory standards must be updated periodically to accurately reflect the Community Vision, Goals, and Policies set forth in this plan.

Need for the Update

Since the last update in 2008, there have been immense shifts in the global economy, which have trickled down to localities like Silverthorne in many ways. Being a recreation and tourism-driven community, growth and development slowed considerably, and investment in improvements to existing buildings, infrastructure, and redevelopment nearly came to a halt. Some exceptions included a handful of residential projects and some significant commercial projects (e.g., Lowe's, Murdoch's).

Meanwhile, as the economic collapse of 2008–2012 ran its course, the Town seized the opportunity to take a step back and evaluate what was working and what was not in order to meet its Community Vision. There has long been a desire to create a vibrant downtown area, which complements Silverthorne's regional commercial businesses and elevates the everyday experience for locals and visitors. Through plans such as Downtown Colorado Inc.'s Downtown Assessment, the Summit County Walkability Report, and most recently, the Urban Renewal Plan, the Town made significant strides towards understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Silverthorne, and positioning itself to capitalize on opportunities that meet the community vision (see Chapter 2 for a summary of previous plans).

The timing of laying groundwork through those efforts has been ideal as 2014 has signaled a change in tourism-driven mountain communities across Colorado and the west for development. Projects that were put on hold are beginning to come back, especially those with a renewed focus on long-term economic sustainability and quality of life.

The 2014 Update is especially focused on commercial land, as it presents one of Silverthorne's greatest opportunities to realize its long-held goals for creating identity, sense of place, and economic vibrancy on a variety of levels. It is essential that new commercial development is well-defined by **place, purpose, and mountain community character**. What occurs where matters, and the vision and policies set forth in the 2014 Update outline that principle more clearly than ever before.

Planning Process

The 2014 Update included extensive public involvement, including direct outreach (stakeholder interviews, planning chats at the Recreation Center, a local church, and a coffee shop), engaging public meetings (an open house and a workshop), and new technology (MindMixer™ online tool). The process also included input from Town leadership and decision-makers.

Specifically, the planning process included:

- Public Open House (March 3)
- Public Workshop (March 31)
- Planning Chats (4 total)
 1. Red Buffalo Coffee (March 5)
 2. Recreation Center (March 6)
 3. St. Mary's Catholic Church, Spanish Mass (March 9)
 4. Recreation Center (March 11)
- Stakeholder Interviews (18 total)
- MindMixer – “Engage Silverthorne” online forum
- Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Town Council Work Sessions and Planning Commission Meetings

THEMES HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

Throughout the planning process, there were certain themes that emerged that reflect today's community vision.

- *“More restaurants and local businesses”*
- *“Engage the Blue River”*
- *“Create a destination”*
- *“We need identity and sense of place”*
- *“A place children will come back to”*
- *“Modern mountain town with highway orientation”*
- *“We need density and mixed uses to support a downtown”*



- *“Consider what the market will support”*
- *“Arts, culture and recreation elevate commercial places”*
- *“Don’t turn our backs on large-scale commercial”*
- *“Signage and gateway features need to invite people in”*
- *“Incorporate new with the old, where possible”*
- *“Connectivity throughout downtown is key to its success”*
- *“We need places for live music, events, festivals”*
- *“Emphasize families, places for children and adults to enjoy”*
- *“More stay-and-play opportunities in Silverthorne”*

A complete summary of public outreach can be found in Appendix B.

How to Use this Document

This plan is first and foremost a tool for decision-makers and property owners to use in making choices about public investment and land development in the future. Various graphics are meant to inspire, and Goals and Policies specifically articulate how to achieve the Community Vision. As it is an advisory policy document, this plan will inform subsequent revisions to the Town Code to ensure consistency between the two.

Each chapter serves a specific purpose. Chapter 2 provides a more in-depth glimpse of what has brought Silverthorne to this point in time, especially related to the topics of Land Use, Transportation, Community Design, Growth and Economic Development. Chapter 3 reaffirms the Community Vision. Chapter 4 presents the Goals and Policies, including the Community Blueprint – the Future Land Use Map, and the Downtown Blueprint (a conceptual plan specifically for the Town Core). Chapter 5 is focused on Implementation, presenting actions and priorities for the years ahead.