

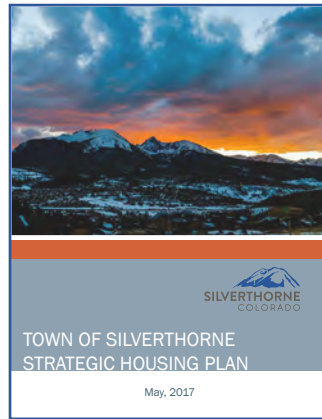
# Chapter 2: Silverthorne Today

## Relevant Planning

The vision established in the 2014 Comprehensive Plan served as the catalyst for many important planning efforts in the last several years. These include the creation of new zoning districts for the Town Core and Riverfront Districts, Design District Standards, 2016 Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 2017 Strategic Housing Plan, 2018 Climate Action Plan, 2020 Master Traffic / Transportation Plan, 2020 Drainage Master Plan, and 2021 Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan (“POST” Plan).



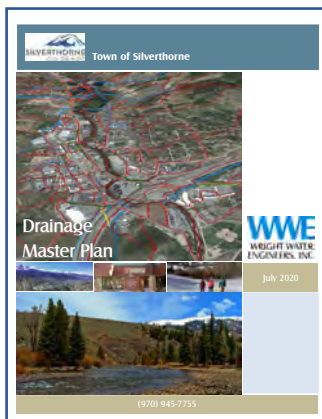
[2016 Arts & Culture Strategic Plan](#)



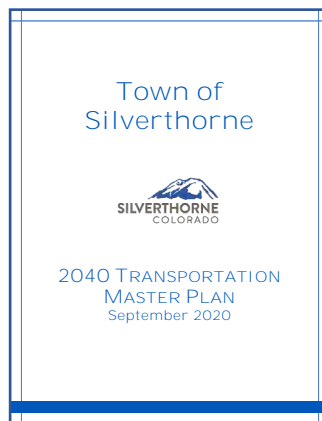
[2017 Strategic Housing Plan](#)



[2018 Climate Action Plan](#)



[2020 Drainage Plan](#)



[2020 Transportation Plan](#)



[2021 POST Plan](#)

Each of these plans supports the Town’s future decision-making process and this Comprehensive Plan Update. All plans are available on the Town’s website and can be accessed by clicking the thumbnails above.

## Conditions and Opportunities

As the Town nears buildout, continued infill and redevelopment will not only shape Silverthorne's economic sustainability, but also its character and quality of life. The introduction of Design Districts, beginning in 2006, directed growth opportunities into specific areas, expanding the town's character and further evolving the experience of spending time in Silverthorne. During community outreach for this 2022 Comprehensive Plan Update, residents of Silverthorne indicated that Town Core development is on the right track, adding to the quality of life and community character. While on the right track, the high cost of housing, improvements related to pedestrian connectivity across Highway 9, and coordination with state highway agencies regarding regional traffic impacts remain top of mind. The following sections provide background and insight on how the Comprehensive Plan addresses current needs and positions the town for desirable growth and progression.

## Land Use

### *Parks, Open Space & Recreation*

The town is bordered on the east and west by National Forest, Wilderness Areas, and world class recreational amenities. The proximity and access to the natural beauty surrounding Silverthorne are key reasons that residents and guests choose to be here, a reality that influences planning and land use. 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 and volleyball courts, and a soccer field; the Performing Arts Center is a hub for creative experience; Maryland Creek Park offers a dog park, nature play, and disc golf; and the Blue River Trail and other trails allow people to bike, hike, walk, or ski throughout the year.

### *Commercial*

Commercial land plays a critical role in the economic sustainability of Silverthorne and thus has a strong influence on the town's land use policy and pattern. The Town does not collect a property taxes, so it relies heavily on sales tax revenue. Building retail contributes the most sales tax revenue (27%), followed by consumer retail (22%), food/liquor (14%), the Outlets at Silverthorne (13%), lodging (7%), online retail and automotive (tied at 6% each), and services (5%). The biggest change over the past few years is the increase in the online retail sector due to the Wayfair vs. S. Dakota Supreme Court case. Prior to the decision, online retail was immaterial to the community's tax base. It is now a substantial sector contributing to Silverthorne's economic stability.

### *Housing & Neighborhoods*

Silverthorne has historically played an important role in providing year-round housing options for Summit County's permanent

population due to the number and variety of options that have historically been available. More recently, rising real estate values, short-term rentals, and other factors have changed the landscape as it relates to long-term housing in the community. From 2020 to 2021 alone, Silverthorne's real estate values increased 14%, and since 2008 the average price of a single-family home increased 68%, from approximately \$770,00 to approximately \$1.3 million in 2021.<sup>1</sup> Multifamily homes have increased in number and value in the same time frame, with the average price in 2008 around \$450,000 vs. \$792,000 in 2021, an increase of 76%. The Town has taken significant steps to protect year-round housing options in the community, most specifically in the development of the Smith Ranch Neighborhood, which is described further below.

Silverthorne currently has approximately 2,799 housing units.<sup>2</sup> The largest neighborhoods and total number of built units are identified in **Table 1**.

Table 1 - Built Units		
Neighborhoods	Single-Family	Duplex, Multifamily, Single Apartments
Angler Mountain	68	127
Eagles Nest	445	193
Ponds at Blue River	0	113
Ptarmigan Trail Estates	96	9
Smith Ranch	30	108
Summit Sky Ranch	195	0
Villa Sierra Madre I & II	0	125
Willowbrook Meadows	153	134

Source: Town of Silverthorne

Table 2 - Riverfront District Communities		
Community Name	Zoned Residential Units	Built Residential Units
Apres Shores	74	0
Blue River Flats	53	46
Blue River Flats II	40	0
Rainbow Run	26	10
Retreat on the Blue	81	36
Riverbend Condos	32	32
Riverfront Condos	45	45
Rivers Edge Condos	32	31
River West Condos	102	76
Aidan West	49	0
Silverthorne Sub #1	58	4
The PAD	50	1
The Wave on the Blue	24	0
<b>RF Zoned Units Total</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>281</b>

Source: Town of Silverthorne

As of December 31, 2021

## Town Growth

In 2015, the Riverfront Zone District was redefined to promote the creation of higher-density residential neighborhoods along the east side of the Blue River and north of the Town Core. 666 residential units were zoned with this revision to the Riverfront District in 2015, and 281 of these units had been built as of December 31, 2021 (Table 2).<sup>3</sup> The completion of the Riverfront District will increase the number of residents and visitors within walking distance to the Town Core.

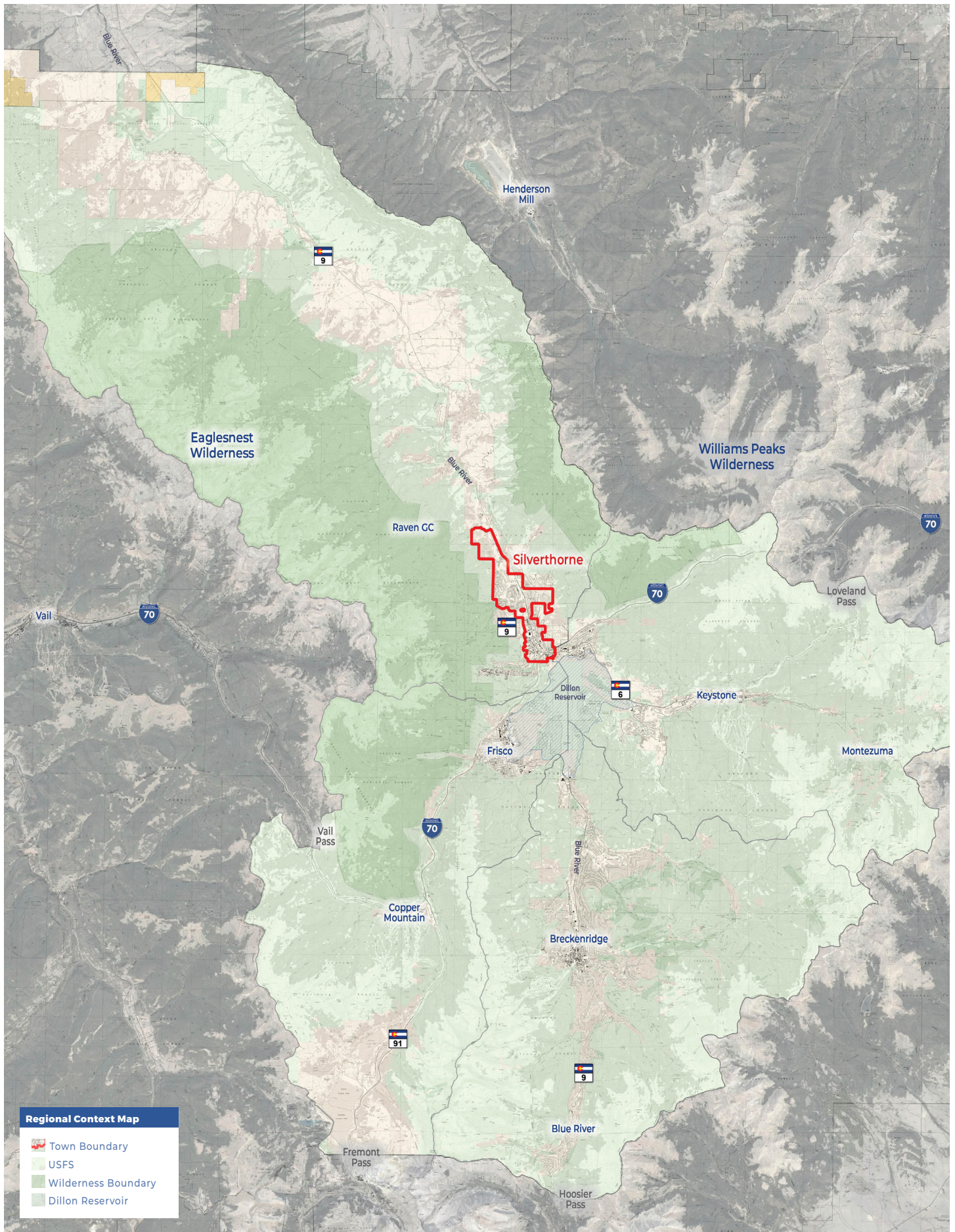
Silverthorne's land use pattern has traditionally separated residential neighborhoods and commercial development. However, the adoption of the 2014 Plan and update of the Design District Standards has led to more mixed-use, walkable, compact neighborhoods adjacent to the Town Core. Most traditional single-family neighborhoods are situated in the northern and eastern portions of the community, and commercial and mixed-use development is located centrally along State Highway 9 (SH 9) and the Interstate 70 (I-70) interchange. The Town Core and Riverfront Districts have become vibrant mixed-use centers that include lodging, residential housing, restaurants, and retail linking east to west along SH 9 at several cross streets, including 4th, 5th, and 6th Streets.



### Locals First, Visitors Welcome

In Silverthorne, locals come first, and it shows. From community interest in participating in Town committees and boards, to the Town-sponsored “Locals' Appreciation Party,” a wide range of community members desire to be a part of the contagious energy encapsulating Silverthorne. The Town's consistent recognition of local businesses, artisans, musicians, and organizations is on display during signature First Friday events, which draw people from across Summit County. But it's not just in these outward events where Silverthorne's love for locals is shown. The Town's commitment to cultural events, recreation, parks and trails, art installations, and the culture you find in local shops and restaurants has thrived with the optimism of the growing community. There is an appreciation for the people that live here that is exuded and felt everywhere in Silverthorne. Even at regionally important big box stores, you will find employees whose familiar faces make the fabric of the town rich, friendly, and inviting.

Mountain towns throughout Colorado have experienced a rise in popularity as a result of COVID-19. Visitation increased dramatically, with the mountains being places for people to safely refuge and recreate outside in winter and summer. Home prices soared, with buyers from all over the country investing in vacation properties or even deciding to work from home and make the move more permanent. While this trend had economic benefits, many worry that it will have lasting cultural and economic impacts. Silverthorne is fondly viewed as very much the locals' town in Summit County, a place where residents can enjoy a mountain lifestyle without the hustle and bustle of direct adjacency to a resort. By squarely placing an emphasis on “what locals want” and continuing to show a dedicated appreciation for the role that locals play in Silverthorne, the Town will continue to be unique among Colorado destinations, an incredible place to call home, and an authentic place where people want to spend their time.



The full build-out of Three Peaks, Angler Mountain Ranch, and Summit Sky Ranch over the next few years will increase the number of built homes in Silverthorne, some of which will serve as year-round residences, some of which will be part-time residences, and some of which will be vacation properties. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, has impacted behaviors, local residency, and commuting patterns, changing the paradigm of what was typically considered a second home and how people use their homes. The Town closely monitors how homes are used through short-term rental permitting and will continue to audit use into the future. The Smith Ranch neighborhood will continue to contribute significantly to the availability of year-round affordable housing and will include a childcare facility in the future.

## Transportation

Silverthorne is considered by many as the gateway to Summit County and western Colorado due to its location at the crossroads of Interstate 70, SH 9, and US 6, just beyond the Continental Divide and Eisenhower Tunnel. Silverthorne’s role in providing traveler services has evolved over time, introducing technological advances such as Tesla charging stations and expanding lodging options and services. The Town is aware of the opportunity to engage travelers at this crossroads, inviting guests to experience Silverthorne and learn more about what the community offers.

Denver International Airport (DIA) is roughly 100 miles, or a two-hour drive, from Silverthorne. There are five ski areas within a half-hour drive of the town—Breckenridge Ski Resort, Copper Mountain Resort, Keystone Resort, Arapahoe Basin, and Loveland Ski Area. Vail and Beaver Creek Resorts are less than an hour away. Several companies currently provide shuttle service between DIA and Summit County. Additionally, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has implemented the Bustang and Snowstang transit options, connecting travelers from the Front Range to the mountains without the need for a personal vehicle. Those services do not currently stop in Silverthorne, but the Town will continue to pursue options for cooperation in line with the 2040 Transportation Master Plan.

### Connectivity

Connectivity continues to be a primary focus for residents and visitors, with congestion from regional travel and east-west connections identified as priorities during community engagement exercises, alongside the need for north-south alternative routes from north Silverthorne to the interchange. 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 envisions SH 9 as a major thoroughfare that exposes travelers to Silverthorne’s offerings, including a “main street” running east-west at 4th Street. To enhance this connection, improvements must be made to promote a more inviting experience through the heart of the community for all travel modes.

### Parking

Parking has previously been considered abundant throughout Silverthorne and is indicative of the former drive-to nature of existing development. However, the investment in the Town Core may invite new behavioral patterns with the addition of residential and hotel units, offering the opportunity for residents and visitors to walk to nearby businesses. A new parking structure has been constructed in the Town Core in conjunction with an enhanced Silverthorne Summit Stage Transit Center. The central location of the parking structure is intended to encourage a “park once” mentality for people visiting the Town Core from other areas, promoting pedestrian flow from Fourth Street Crossing to adjacent amenities, such as the Performing Arts Center.

### Pedestrian Access

Most of the existing pedestrian infrastructure found along both SH 9 and US 6, especially near the I-70 interchange, is uninviting based on current land use and a lack of convenient and comfortable crossings and connections. This is due to the low-density development pattern, lack of pedestrian amenities, and lack of separation between the high-speed roadway and sidewalk. Most parking today is on-site, versus on-street or in large parking “reservoirs” (lots or garages), and despite changes in the Town Code lowering parking requirements, few businesses have reduced parking in the Gateway District. This Comprehensive Plan Update encourages new connections in areas lacking cohesion, with a primary goal of linking the Gateway District to the Town Core and surrounding residential neighborhoods.



## Emergence of Downtown Silverthorne

A vibrant, walkable downtown is emerging in the heart of Silverthorne. To create what is perhaps the newest downtown in an already established and historic community in Colorado, the Town strategically established the foundational building blocks in the 2014 Comprehensive Plan to allow Downtown to fully develop in the years ahead. These building blocks began with the Lake Dillon Theatre Company and the Silverthorne Performing Arts Center (“PAC”). Envisioned with the Comprehensive Plan through extensive community engagement, the PAC was built in 2017 and is today a cultural hub of Summit Country. With the addition of the \$100M Fourth Street Crossing development – a joint venture between the Town and developer Milender White – Downtown continues to transform. Fourth Street Crossing includes the Indigo Hotel, residential condos, The Bluebird Market Hall, a parking structure with EV charging, and other buildings.

The architecture is modest and contemporary, honoring traditional colors, patterns and rooflines that might have been found 100 years ago in the town as part of its ranching history. In fact, The Mint Steakhouse, an iconic building constructed in 1862, will remain standing, integrated into Downtown as a nod to Silverthorne’s history. The Old Dillon Inn has been preserved and incorporated within the Bluebird Market. While the 2014 Blueprint Silverthorne Comprehensive Plan envisioned on-street parking along SH 9, establishing parking along a major highway has proven challenging and will be revisited as the area continues to take shape. In the meantime, minimal setbacks, increased density, additional pedestrian crossings, and greater height all add to the immersive experience of Downtown.

Like all downtowns, Silverthorne’s will continually evolve in the decades to come. So far, the Town has successfully changed the course of the Town Core from a highway-oriented commercial strip to a destination in itself: a walkable, vibrant, and interesting place to shop, dine, work, and live. This desirable form of development will establish economic sustainability and longevity for Silverthorne, making it a great – and even unprecedented – success in a very short amount of time.

### Transit

Summit Stage provides transit service in and around Silverthorne with four transit routes, which all connect through the Silverthorne Transit Station located on Adams Avenue and 4th Street at Fourth Street Crossing. Summit Stage is currently undergoing a planning study to evaluate changes and modifications to the transit system as a whole, and the Town will continue to partner with the County to identify opportunities to further transportation and multimodal goals.

In addition to serving the Town of Silverthorne, the existing transit network provides access to the myriad of neighborhoods surrounding the town but located within unincorporated Summit County. 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 and visit here. Especially in residential neighborhoods, views and integration with the natural surroundings create an aesthetic reflective of mountain living. The vitality contributed by recent Town Core development reinforces the notion that Silverthorne has arrived, and that it offers more than just homes, but also places to experience food, culture, and retail with neighbors and friends.



## ***Authentic Design***

Silverthorne has also made efforts to ensure that 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 in order to reflect mountain character. These retail buildings not only provide services for the entire county, but they also provide valuable sales tax revenue for the town.

The Town has made a number of streetscape improvements to SH 9 near Rainbow Drive, including welcome signage and a landscaped median with colorful flags. As it functions today, this design is identifiable and beautifies the corridor. Community members regularly identify the mature existing trees along SH 9 as a defining attribute to the Town's character and value the aesthetic appeal that the streetscape provides.

Community design will continue to be paramount in the development of Silverthorne's Town Core and beyond. Through this planning process, residents and decision-makers expressed their inclination for moderate building heights (with appropriate modifications for view preservation), the use of enduring (not trendy) building 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 enhance Silverthorne's connection to the natural environment, reinforce its mountain town heritage, and enhance the pedestrian experience.



## **Emphasize the Blue River**

Sensitive integration of the Blue River with the built environment emerged as a central theme of the Comprehensive Planning process. Specifically, the community desires to better integrate the river and its tributaries in any future redevelopment considerations. Opportunities for the future include additional crossings, enhanced public access to green space along its banks (with careful consideration of high run-off periods), and development that looks out onto the river's scenic beauty. The Town's POST Plan identifies multiple opportunities for enhancement that are supported in this Update.

## Growth

### Population

The 2020 Decennial Census shows that Silverthorne has a population of 4,402 and is home to 14% of Summit County's permanent (year-round) residents.<sup>4,5</sup> Even though the total number of people living in Silverthorne continues to grow, the percentage of occupied households has declined in recent years. In 2010, 70% of housing units were occupied, but that number decreased to 66% in 2020.<sup>6</sup> For comparison, Summit County's share of occupied housing units grew marginally in that time frame, from 39% in 2010 to 41% in 2020.<sup>7</sup> Silverthorne grew at an average annual rate of 1.8% from 2000 to 2010 and 1.0% from 2010 to 2020 – a fast rate of increase, but perhaps one that is more sustainable compared with the Town's rapid growth in the 1990s (>8% annual growth rate). At some point in the near future, Silverthorne may have the largest full-time population of any municipality in the County, and maintaining this type of long-term local presence is important to the Town.

One notable demographic change from 2010 to 2020 was the increase in Hispanic population. The US Census reported that in 2010, Hispanics or Latinos (of any race) accounted for 27.6% of Silverthorne's population; by 2020, this percent had increased to 28.7%.<sup>8</sup>

The age and demographic profile of residents also shifted over the last decade, indicating that the population is becoming older and suggesting that younger individuals and families are being priced out of the housing market. Communities like Smith Ranch are providing affordable units for this younger demographic group; however, more work will need to be done over the long-term to maintain a strong locals' workforce base in Silverthorne.

### New Construction

Building permits issued and construction valuations have been trending up since 2011. The sharp increase in residential valuation from 2020 to 2021 parallels the rise in home prices experienced during this time period. Since permits data show that construction continued at a steady clip in 2021, the increase in valuation likely came mostly from external factors such as increased housing demand due to COVID-19 and rising building materials costs.

Strong demand for housing products within close proximity to a downtown core is evident in Breckenridge and Frisco and is now showing up in Silverthorne as well. There may always be home buyers that are seeking a mountain cabin or spacious property, but mountain community downtowns are sought-after places for people that live in the community year-round, are visiting on vacation, or who are investing in a vacation home. For new building-permit data, please see **Table 3**.

Year	Permits	Total Valuation (Million \$)	Residential Valuation (Million \$)	Commercial Valuation (Million \$)
2011	59	11.1	6.8	4.3
2013	47	29.4	28.3	1.0
2015	103	42.1	29.6	12.5
2017	148	48.7	40.1	8.7
2019	219	81.7	68.5	13.2
2020	204	88.9	65.6	23.3
2021	202	108.7	87.6	21.2

Source: *Town of Silverthorne*

## Silverthorne's Place in a Regional Market

Each Summit County community has a niche and plays a role in the greater regional economy. In Silverthorne's case, it serves regional retail and service needs that cannot be found for many miles in any direction, through establishments like Lowe's Home Improvement, Target, Alpine Lumber, and Murdoch's. A community built by hard working entrepreneurs, managers and operators, Silverthorne offers the largest centralized service commercial hub in all of Summit County, which is an asset to local workers and staple of the town's character. Significant regional service providers such as FedEx, Xcel Energy, and Comcast also call Silverthorne home. Interstate travelers welcome the mix of familiar brands alongside local breweries, coffee shops, delicatessens, and stores. Being a property-tax-free town, retail sales tax revenue is critically important to maintaining the Town's operations as well as the community's amenities and quality of life.

The unique role that Silverthorne plays in the regional economy is also critically important to jobs in Summit County. Major employers and trades-oriented businesses provide stability and wages that are otherwise difficult to come by in the County's resort and service-based economy. Ensuring adequate opportunities for housing is also critically important to maintaining a healthy workforce and Silverthorne's sales tax revenue.

As Summit County grapples with workforce shortages, the housing crunch, and fluctuating economic conditions, Silverthorne continues to play an important and unique role in the regional economy. It will be continually important to balance local with national, big with small, and new with established businesses.

4. US Census Bureau. (2020). Silverthorne town, Colorado: P1 Race. 5. US Census Bureau. (2020). Summit County, Colorado: P1 Race.

6. US Census Bureau. (2020). Silverthorne town, Colorado: H1 Occupancy Status. 7. US Census Bureau. (2020). Summit County, Colorado: H1 Occupancy Status.



## 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; and
- Quality development of both business and residential sectors of the community.

### Sales Tax

Sales tax collections provide for as much as 70% of the revenue necessary to fund Town operations and complete capital improvements. The Town continually strives to establish a stable economy to fund future capital improvements, and it relies on economic partners, stakeholders, and developers to further enhance Silverthorne’s infrastructure and amenities.

In addition to the 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 Fourth Street Crossing and the Performing Arts Center, along with encouragement of commercial redevelopment of under-performing properties throughout town, such as TJ Maxx and Sierra and the Outlet Malls. The Town continues to consider projects that have regional appeal and bolster local sales tax revenue.

### Incentive Programs

Silverthorne has a number of business incentive programs in place 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. These incentives have played a key role in investments and improvements since 2014 and contribute to the Town’s ability to fund capital improvements throughout the community.

Mixed-use and redevelopment projects will continue to play an important role in the economic development of Silverthorne, as they provide a commitment to the foundation upon which Silverthorne was built. Supporting smaller-scale and locally owned businesses will continue to be a Town priority, as evident with the success of proprietors within the Silverthorne Town Center. National brands continue to anchor retail developments in some areas of town, allowing smaller, locally owned-and-operated businesses to respond to the demand for more diversity in stores and restaurants within the walkable Town Core.

The Urban Renewal Authority will continue to be instrumental in how and where certain types of businesses will establish themselves. Urban Renewal has proven to be a powerful tool that the Town can use to offer public investment through TIF funds for infrastructure and improvements within the Urban Renewal Area.

### Facilities

Recreation is integral to Silverthorne residents’ way of life and presents an opportunity for economic development in the future. There remain opportunities 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 people to the community to contribute to the Town’s economy. There may be potential for primary revenue generated from new facilities (through user fees), as well as secondary revenue generated from encouraging people to stay longer in the community once they are drawn in for a recreational activity (through money spent at local businesses). The Town’s POST Plan further explores these opportunities.



