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Introduction


2.1 | Purpose

The purpose of the 2021 Town of Carbondale Comprehensive Plan Update was to provide an opportunity for the community to re-assess the 2013 Comprehensive Plan and to update it as needed in key areas identified by the Town of Carbondale. At the center of that Plan was the opportunity for community members to re-evaluate the overall long-term community vision and policy direction for managing the built and natural environment in Carbondale. The Update was not intended as a wholesale re-write of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, but rather focused on an analysis of key Plan Elements as defined by the Town of Carbondale.

Based on feedback from the community and Project Steering Committee, this Plan has merged together the 2021 Carbondale Comprehensive Plan Update and the 2013 Carbondale Comprehensive Plan. The 2022 Comprehensive Plan (2022 Plan) addresses community needs and values, changing conditions, and priorities in the community. This Plan is an officially adopted policy document that establishes the town's goals for the future and provides direction for decisions affecting the use and development of land, preservation of open space, transportation systems, partnerships with other organizations, economic growth, the expansion and maintenance of public facilities and services, and the relationship between land use patterns and fiscal policies.

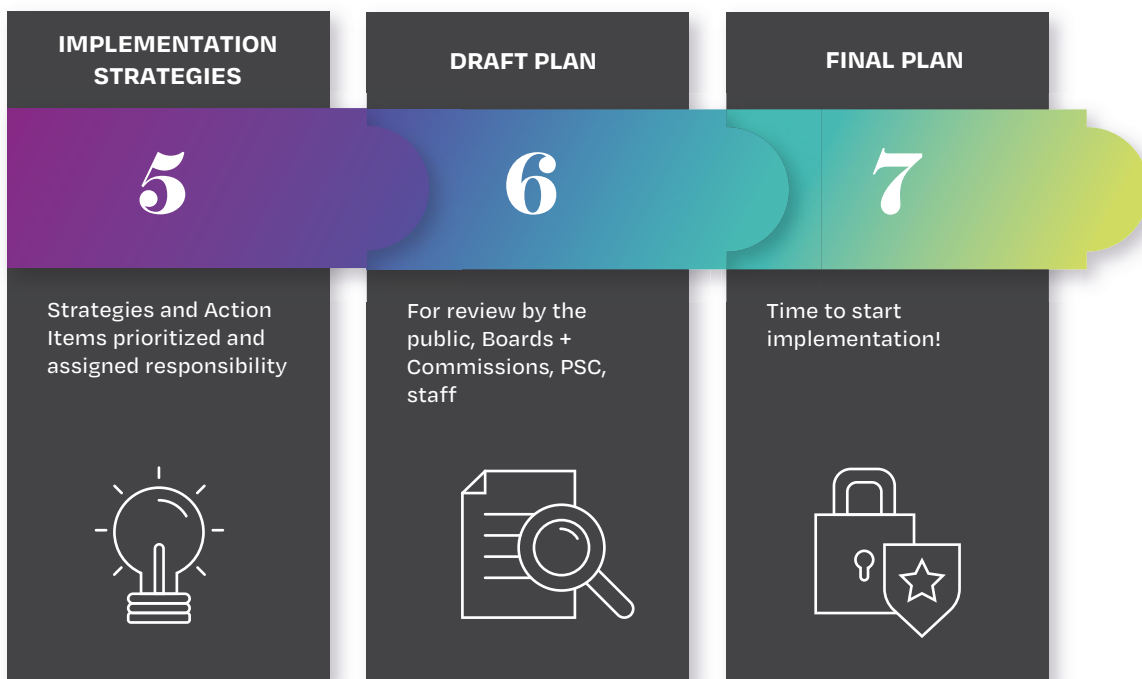
The citizens of Carbondale were instrumental in establishing the Town of Carbondale vision and priorities through an extensive and broad-based public process. This plan is truly the community's plan and can be used to protect the unique qualities that brought them to Carbondale; small town character, economic opportunity, recreational assets and natural amenities. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide to policy makers, community members, property owners and developers to help them understand the vision of the community, predict what uses could occur both on and near their properties, set the expectations for the physical form of development, and make informed land-use decisions.

The Comprehensive Plan serves a different purpose than the Town's land use zoning code which is a legally binding document. It does not change existing regulation, nor does it create new regulations. It is an advisory document that recommends and provides guidance changes to the land use code. The Comprehensive Plan is written to provide general policy direction while also providing enough detail to set priorities and guide decision-making.



At the center of this Plan is the opportunity for community members to re-evaluate the long-term community vision and policy direction for managing the built and natural environment in Carbondale.

Comprehensive Plan Update Process



2.2 | Carbondale's Challenges

In many ways Carbondale is the ideal small mountain town. It is a compact town, surrounded by predominantly open lands, bordered by two river corridors, has easy access to mountains and rivers, and enjoys expansive views in all directions. The watersheds are far more healthy than most in the West, the air is clean and it is a healthy place. The town is small enough to get around in easily by foot or bicycle and many people integrate outdoor activities into their daily lives.

But throughout the West there are many towns that manage to share these outstanding physical qualities. What makes Carbondale unique is its diversity, the welcoming atmosphere, the compassion and generosity, the artistic and intellectual creativity, the quiriness, the celebrations and gatherings, and the environmentally sustainable ethos. There is an infectious passion for this place that sets it apart from other towns that may seem similar. Decades of steady settlement by people from all walks of life helped to create Carbondale and those that proudly call it their permanent home have all pitched-in to make the community what it is today.

Because Carbondale is extremely well-loved by its residents and by the region as a whole, it has become a place of civic engagement, small-town democracy and intense debate about the future. While Carbondale's residents have a long history of open-mindedness and are welcoming to new people and new ideas, they are also fiercely protective of their town. People do not want to lose the qualities that prompted them to stay put or come here in the first place.

The ongoing civic debate shares a common thread; while the community wants to evolve, improve and be prosperous, it wants to do so in a way that enhances what Carbondale already is, and does not want to turn its back on the things that make it a great place.

For this Comprehensive Plan, where land use planning is the core concern, the fundamental challenge is best stated as a question: How can Carbondale evolve and become an even better place without losing its quality and small town character?

One thing that nearly all residents agree on is that maintaining the town's small, compact form is paramount. The town's compact form gives it a distinct geographic identity to match its cultural identity, makes it easy to get around with or without a car, contributes to infrastructure and service efficiencies, saves energy, and ensures that the predominantly open lands at the edge of town are never far away.

Regardless of whether growth projections accurately reflect the forthcoming level of change, it is clear that some growth and change is inevitable. The challenge is how to respond to this inevitability and maintain the town's small town character. The Comprehensive Plan addresses this challenge by offering guidance for how to manage change in the future in a way that maintains and enhances Carbondale's small town character.



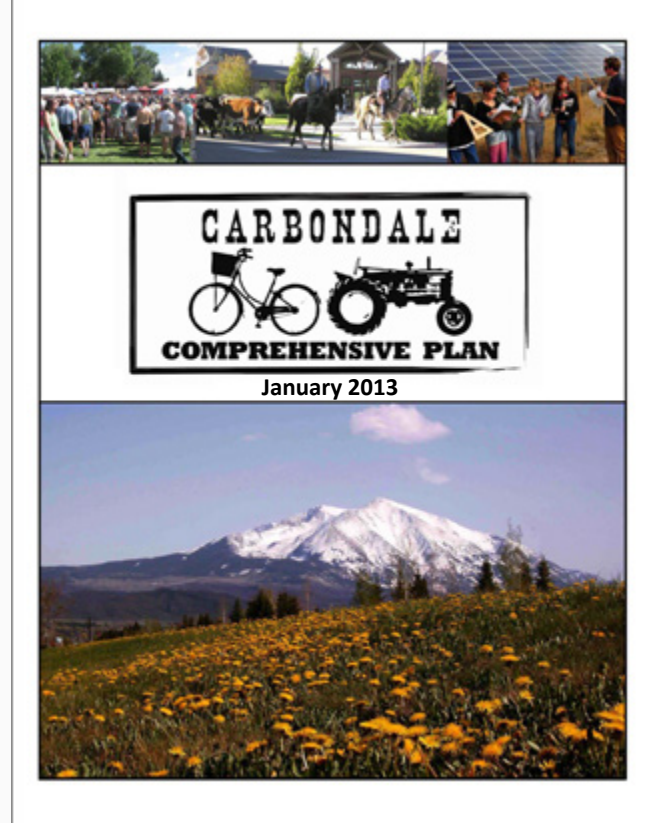
2.3 | Relevance to Other Plans + Studies

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan combines the relevant Plan elements from the 2013 Comprehensive Plan and merges them with the revised and updated Plan elements as part of the 2022 comprehensive planning process. Rather than having two adopted plans that need to be reviewed concurrently, Planning and Zoning Commission's guidance was to merge the two documents to make it more accessible for Town leadership and the community alike.

The 2022 Plan has updated the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) with the addition of the 2013 Two-Mile Planning and Town Peripheral Future Land Use Plan maps, which are still valid with the addition of the annexation of Red Hill as a significant protected parcel and designated as Recreation/Open Space on the Future Land Use Map.

Other plans and studies informed the goals and strategies found in this Plan. Notably much work has been completed in planning for climate action and resiliency through the Vulnerability, Consequences, and Adaptation Planning Scenarios (VCAPS) Report from 2019, the Climate and Energy Action Plan of 2017, the Carbondale Creative District Roadmap from 2017, the DeVos Strategic Plan (Carbondale Arts), and through independent efforts and events from the Town's Environmental Board (E-Board) and Clean Energy Economy for the Region (CLEER) among other organizations. Strategies are directly incorporated based on evaluation of these studies and engagement with their authors.

The Town of Carbondale Unified Development Code (UDC) was evaluated, and areas of recommended changes are referenced as strategies based on public and stakeholder input. An update to the UDC is an important implementation strategy for achieving this plan's goals.



| 2013 Comprehensive Plan |

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