



YOUR PLAN YOUR PUEBLO

Preliminary Plan Framework: Public Engagement Summary

June 2021

INTRODUCTION

A number of outreach methods were used to collect feedback on the Preliminary Plan Framework for the Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Plan. The primary focus of these meetings was to gauge community support for the guiding principles and goals that provide initial direction for the Plan. All outreach methods were virtual, and each is described in the following section.

The public comments from each method were combined and synthesized to identify key themes that emerged from the outreach efforts. Themes that emerged from targeted youth engagement were kept separate to maintain their unique perspective. Themes were then organized by their relation to each guiding principle outlined in the Preliminary Plan Framework.

Following the meetings, the 2030 Commission provided written feedback on the Preliminary Plan Framework, which is attached.

OUTREACH METHODS

Community Meetings

Three virtual meetings were held on Zoom between May 4th and May 6th, 2021. These events were promoted through the project listserv, social media, and by public officials. The meeting began with a brief presentation that provided an overview of the planning process and context about the Preliminary Plan Framework. Attendees then participated in facilitated small group discussions centered on each guiding principle.

Approximately 30 people participated in these discussions.

Youth Outreach

Targeted youth outreach was conducted by engaging with young people on the Youth Action Board of the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment, the Mayor's Youth Council, and two Pueblo West High School classes. Students were asked to participate by taking photos of things in Pueblo County that they liked, or wanted to see more of, and of things that they did not like, or wanted to see improved. Using Mural, a virtual collaboration program, students then used their photos to jointly create vision boards, or a "Photo Story". The Photo Story highlights what these students thought was most important about Pueblo and how they thought their communities could be improved in the future.

Roughly 42 students were engaged in this process.

Regional Thinktank

A group of key leaders from around the County was assembled to provide strategic input on the issues and opportunities associated with the comprehensive plan update at key stages during the process. The Regional Thinktank meeting was hosted virtually using Zoom. It began with a brief presentation about the planning process and an overview of the Plan Framework. These stakeholders participated in a facilitated discussion about each of the guiding principles and goals contained in the Preliminary Plan Framework. This discussion was hosted virtually using Zoom. representatives from other communities within the region. This group is expected to meet three times during the process to weigh in on shared values, vision, and policy directions of broader significance.

23 individuals attended this meeting.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Konveio, a digital public engagement software, was used to host a Virtual Open House that was accessible from May 10th to May 31st. Community members were presented with materials from the Preliminary Plan Framework and able to leave comments directly on the document.

Over 30 comments were provided.

KEY THEMES

Residents generally approved of the guiding principles and goals in the Plan Framework. However, there was consistent concern across all guiding principles that the goals will be difficult to accomplish. Community members expressed a desire for an organized and coordinated implementation strategy that clearly identified the organization responsible for leading each effort. There was also concern that implementation of the goals outlined in the Plan Framework will be difficult to realize if implementation relies on volunteers.

Guiding Principle #1: Diverse Lifestyles, Attainable Housing Options

- There was strong support for increasing the supply of housing units in Pueblo County, as well as diversifying the types of housing that are available. This included ADUs, tiny homes, duplexes, townhomes, apartments, large apartments for families, and smaller detached homes for retirees.
- The need for more rental units was a consistent concern. Residents noted that it is difficult to find any rental options in any price range.
- Many residents expressed concern at the cost of housing and a desire to explore ways to create more affordable or “attainable” housing.
- There was interest in grant programs to help low-medium income resident buy/rehabilitate older/vacant housing stock.
- The rising cost of housing and suppressed wages have been difficult for many residents.
- Homelessness has become a growing problem, exacerbated by rising rents and low wages.

- There was concern that outside investors are buying properties in Pueblo and contributing to the quick rise in home prices.
- There was interest in reusing vacant buildings as apartments or housing
- There should be investment in older neighborhoods, not just in new growth areas.

Youth

- There is a need for more rental housing for families. It is hard to find a place to live.
- Abandoned houses do not feel safe, they would like to see them reused or torn down.
- There was concern that there is too much separation there was between neighborhoods, both economically and socially.

Guiding Principle #2: Deepen our Agricultural Roots

- There was a consistent desire to actively protect prime agricultural land by directing developing to other areas, using conservation easements, and creating land trusts.
- Residents were concerned that once agricultural land is gone, it is gone forever.
- There was a desire for better broadband connectivity in rural areas, because to internet is becoming important for farmers with CSAs and food exports.
- Paths for youth to get involved in agriculture should be created and strengthened.
- Healthy food access could be expanded through connections with local farmers.
- Farm to school programs where local farms sell to local schools
- There was interest in Agricultural Tourism.

Youth

- Liked the agricultural and rural feel of many parts of Pueblo.

Guiding Principle #3: Help Every Community Thrive

- Food insecurity and access to healthy food was a major concern for many residents.
- Affordable childcare was identified is a major problem in Pueblo.
- There was worry about crime and personal safety, especially at night.
- Many residents were concerned about the siloed nature of many community efforts. There are lots of people working towards similar goals and lots of people not talking to each other. In particular, schools and school districts should be better incorporated and consulted.
- Recreation facilities are not located where they are needed. There was a desire for more options at a smaller scale.
- There was a concern that more money should be invested the community.
- There is a need for more mental health programs and health equity.
- Many residents noted that there should be more places for the community to gather and more community events.

Youth

- Loved that Pueblo had a really strong community that helped each other.
- There is a large need for more places where youth centered spaces where teens can gather.

- Students said that safe places to gather were often more impactful than one on one meetings with a mental health counselor.
- Would like to see schools be more involved in things in decision making, as a cornerstone of the community.
- There was worry about the homeless population and a desire to be sure they have resources, like shelters.
- Would like to see amenities more centralized, like an aquatic center downtown.
- Would like to see more public murals because they give Pueblo a sense of community.
- Need more parks with playgrounds in Pueblo West, particularly on the west side.
- Would also like to see a sports complex/fields in Pueblo West.

Guiding Principle #4: Celebrate Pueblo

- Pueblo has many more amenities similarly sized communities but has a bad reputation. There was a strong desire to change that reputation and build community pride.
 - Kayaking
 - World Class Fishing
 - Zoo
 - Plenty of Parking
 - Clean Air
 - Mountain Biking
- Need to better promote Pueblo's resources:
 - Kayaking
 - World Class Fishing
 - Zoo
 - Plenty of Parking
 - Clean Air
 - Mountain Biking
 - Trans America Bike Stop
- Desire to build community pride
- A desire to see regenerative uses of historic buildings
- What could marijuana tourism look like/offer?

Youth

- Felt that there was a negative perception of Pueblo in the State, but that it is a great place to live.
- Lots of interest in combining Pueblo's history with other uses. Teen spaces in vacant historic buildings where they could learn about history too. The Riverwalk highlight history and is a gathering space.
- Would like to see more events like the state fair, because it brings the community together. Particularly events that focus on Pueblo's unique cultural heritage.

- Would like to see more beautification of the Pueblo. There was concerned about trash, public infrastructure, and new development.
- Embrace Pueblo as horse community by creating more horse trails in the region.
- A belief that the Historic District could be better maintained and could host more events for families.
- A desire for expand public amenities, like the skate park, which are often crowded.
- Really like the trails, but they would like to see more, and they should be better maintained.
- Would like to see a welcome sign on the highway in Pueblo West. It would help give it a sense of community.

Guiding Principle #5: A Future Ready Economy and Workforce

- Amenities, shops, and restaurants hours should be better aligned with tourism.
- There should be more focus on small business retention and expansion. There is a need to update how these businesses are encouraged and supported by the city.
- Interest in exploring how remote workers can be drawn to the area.
- Partnerships should be created and encouraged between schools, businesses, and training programs.
- There was a desire to invest in creativity and entrepreneurship.

Youth

- Would like to see more local businesses because they support and benefit the community.

Guiding Principle #6: Grow Smarter

- There is a need to plan how community resources will be maintained, such as the zoo.
- It is important to protect water rights, both for the community and for agriculture.
- Strong desire to be sure that money is spent on future oriented projects.

Youth

- Wanted to focus on clean energy and non-polluting industries.
- Would like to see more recycling programs and trash cleanup incentives.

Guiding Principle #7: Strong Local and Regional Connections

- Interest in Amtrak service and passenger trains along the front range
- Broadband access was a major community concern and mentioned in reference to the economy, agriculture, and schools.
- There was a desire for bike lanes to become a priority in Pueblo.
- Interest in expanding transit connections, to industrial plant, Lake Pueblo, Pueblo West.

Youth

- Paved off street paths provide safe ways for kids to get to school.
- Paths around schools should be better maintained because they get muddy, overgrown, and unsafe.

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- Concern over several dangerous intersections Pueblo West and the City of Pueblo.
- There was worry that potholes were making driving more dangerous.
- A lot of students mentioned the need for more bike lanes. They often did not feel safe riding bikes and was sometimes the only way to get around.
- There was a desire for more paved roads in Pueblo West because unpaved roads can get bad in the rain.
- They expressed that Pueblo doesn't feel like a youth friendly place. Similar communities (Greeley) have a youth centered feel and there was curiosity about why it was different.