



Routt Master Plan Community Outreach Municipal Series Listening Session Summary and Takeaways

Purpose: The Master Plan Update team conducted the Community Outreach Municipal Series to focus on local issues, opportunities and land use implications for each of the County's municipal jurisdictions. Each community is experiencing growth and change in and around their boundaries differently, and the County Master Plan aims to continue to support their planning efforts by interviewing local leaders and staff. Key outcomes included:

- Identifying common issues in joint planning areas to ultimately incorporate supporting maps and narrative into the County Master Plan update.
- Confirm growth target areas acknowledged in previous community plans.
- Update the community on the plan update process and create an open dialog.
- Keep the municipalities engaged in the plan update process from start to completion.

At each session the Planning Team gave a brief presentation on the plan update and engagement process and growth and demographic trends before opening up the listening session.

Yampa, 12/1/2021

Attendees:

Town Board: Mayor Jess Drust, Mike Lewis, Stacey Geilert, Crystal McLaughlin, Michael Geanious

Staff: Sheila Symons, Nora Phillips, Mary Alice Page-Allen

Gene Sanders, Robin Schepper, Time Redmond, Alicia Samuelson, Patty Redmond, Tim Corrigan

Master Plan Team: Kristy Winser, Dave Dixon, Keith Walzak

- County Commissioner Tim Redmond makes opening remarks and introductions.
- Key data points for Yampa and South Routt County include a potential population loss from 2010 to 2021 and during the same time, a substantial uptick in home sale prices that is nearing Steamboat Springs and North Routt prices. Question arose as to why that increase occurred and the discussion concluded with 1) Stagecoach was likely included in the dataset, and 2) consolidation of smaller ranches into several large ranches has pushed up values. Anecdotally some long-time ranchers have been selling and moving to northern states. Concern exists that small-scale ag producers and ranchers can no longer compete with large single owners.
- Despite some population loss, families are moving in as evidenced by the elementary school growth. Location neutral workers have changed the housing dynamic although the numbers of those moving in are difficult to validate.
- Had discussion on uncertainty on actual traffic numbers, some county roads seem to have lighter volumes while others (Yellow Jacket Pass, CR 14 to Stagecoach) feel busier. Team to verify those figures.
- Question of whether the uptick in real estate activity and construction is the result of an overactive market or is actually people moving to the county. Planning team advised that



building permits are up substantially in South Routt in 2020-2021. Board felt as if home sales in Yampa have never been higher and lots are selling over market.

- Existing plans in place guide growth to existing municipalities like Yampa, which will continue to be valid. Town is beginning a process to update their Master Plan as the most recent update was in 1997. This will help confirm Yampa's identity and vision of growth – currently there is limited capacity and desire to grow outward into the adjacent farmland.
- Growth pressure is coming but is not to town yet. Growth is limited to a few lots inside town since they are boxed in by preserved land or easements and working lands. The session had agreement on the desire to avoid sprawl and promote infill development.
- Residential growth is unlikely but local commercial and amenities or services would be welcomed. Small towns should have everything you need: locally serving shops, restaurants, a senior center for about 20 people and housing, childcare, and good internet and phone service. Yampa could use most of these.
- Risk that fixed income folks and older adults will have trouble staying in town if housing prices and the resulting increase in taxes exceeds their ability to pay. If there are opportunities for housing they should be focused on smaller, cheaper, accessible units so older adults can stay in town where families can take care of them rather than move to Steamboat Springs to take advantage of their services.

Steamboat Springs, 1/4/2022

Attendees:

City Council: City Council President Crossan, City Council President Pro Tem Sloop, Council Member Briones, Council Member Buccino, Council Member Garey, Council Member McGinlay and Council Member West

Staff: Gary Suiter, City Manager; Kim Weber, Director of Financial Services; Dan Foote, City Attorney; Julie Franklin, City Clerk; Jon Snyder, Public Works Director; Kent Immenschuh; Information Technology Manager; Mike Lane, Communications Manager; Rebecca Bessey, Director of Planning and Community Services; Angela Cosby, Director of Parks and Recreation and Jerry Stabile, Interim Chief of Police

Master Plan Team: Kristy Winser, Dave Dixon, Keith Walzak

- County Commissioner Beth Melton makes opening remarks and introductions.
- The Planning Team makes a brief presentation and update on process and growth and demographics trends.
- Key data points and priorities from the online survey and other engagement inputs include that survey response from Steamboat (70%) was balanced. Top local priorities include STRs, Yampa River Core Trail extension to Brown Ranch and beyond to Hayden, mobility to other communities, West Steamboat as growth target and diverse housing options.
- The Planning Team discussed conversations with Union Pacific who is amenable to using their right-of-way for a passenger rail system rather than land banking or a rails-to-trails acquisition program.



- Discussion held on the unforeseen uses of agriculture special use permits, specifically wedding venues on ranches and the definition of “ag”. Dog sledding facilities or a guest ranch vs a lodging operation were other examples, all allowable in some places but it becomes challenging to interpret.
- Council would like to see Planning Team elaborate on implications of newcomers feeling different than long term residents
- Council would like to hear further details on discussions with Union Pacific on passenger rail. Planning Team was encouraged to continue conversation with the Innovation Transportation Task Force.
- Discussion of growth and population concerned census inaccuracies and true availability of infrastructure in growth areas to support municipal growth.
- Phippsburg and Yampa are unlikely recipients of new growth due to lack of water of conservation easements. Stagecoach is still a target although it is over-appropriated but has an augmentation plan. Is Stagecoach looking at incorporating? Yes, has been pointed out and will be recognized in the county plan.
- There was a question of county’s conservation measures in place for ag users. County has reached out to ranchers in terms of water users/conservation.
- Additional enforcement is necessary for Short-term Rentals (STRs). Currently enforcement is complaint-driven but the County works with HOAs to manage this.
- “Ag” and definition of ag uses is a critical clarification needed.
- Priorities and opportunities:
 - Consolidate West Steamboat Area Community Plan and Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan is next big priority.
 - Collaboration, regional transportation authority and installation of a regional energy mitigation fee.
 - Maintaining community character.
 - Extending Yampa River Core Trail to Hayden
 - City subcommittees must continue to collaborate in process.
 - Enhance communication between county and city.
 - Opportunity to improve mental health services.
 - Housing: what other opportunities might be possible in UGB? Tiny homes in West Steamboat?
 - Wildland fire mitigation and interface.
 - Definition of Ag: “Working” ranch means cattle and growing things – this is the root of Routt County community.

Hayden, 1/5/22

Attendees:

Town Council: Mayor Zach Wuestewald, Tammi Engle, Casey Bowman, Trevor Gann, Ed Corriveau, Janet Hollifield, Bob Reese, Ryan Banks

Staff: Mary Alice Page-Allen



Master Plan Team: Kristy Winser, Dave Dixon, Keith Walzak

- County Commissioner Tim Redmond makes opening remarks and introductions.
- The Planning Team makes brief presentation and update on process and growth + demographics trends.
- STRs were discussed as an emerging threat, particularly their unintended effect on housing availability which is spilling into town. The Town is however installing permitting improvements to help manage STR growth.
- The Council asked about what qualifies a seasonal resident. Clarified that it's both part-time residents and seasonal employees but mostly the former.
- The recent Hayden Forward Master Plan clearly outlines priorities. The County will honor this effort and public process and recognize the future land use map and plan.
- Also understood is the imperatives for non-residential uses with the airport area becoming a high commercial/industrial priority for economic vitality and job creation countywide. Town/county collaboration will be in infrastructure provision and renewables as Hayden Station transitions. County is ready to collaborate on these efforts.
- The listening session discussed river access near town. An access point is currently a use by-right with little oversight for overuse or crowding. Question was posed as to whether there should be a permit process for river and trailhead access that can mitigate use impacts. Discussion posed that overcrowding is only at access points, not the whole river. How does the Town/County balance permitting and not burden people's access to recreational opportunities? Maybe not a land use code policy but an administrative review. A Future Land Use Map with information from recreational groups could identify appropriate recreation areas which could be used to evaluate access permits with conditions attached.
- Discussion of STRs and a potential countywide permitting policy determined the master plan update process should explore areas where they may be appropriate in unincorporated county.
- In Hayden, contention exists about the differentiation between Vacation Rentals and Short-term Rentals. Vacation Rentals may be considered a lodging/commercial operation which belong in commercial growth centers, not in residential areas.
- Interface between STRs, lodging and mobility is the lack of airport-to-Steamboat connectivity as some get stranded after-hours and have limited lodging options. Whether that means a hotel or permitting STRs, something is needed near Hayden. Traditional hotel-type development is desirable.

Oak Creek, 1/13/22

Attendees:

Andy Benjamin, Brian, Tim Corrigan, Ellen (one other women)

Staff: David Torgler

Master Plan Team: Kristy Winser, Dave Dixon

- County Commissioner Tim Corrigan makes opening remarks and introductions.



- Planning Team makes brief presentation and update on process and growth + demographics trends.
- Top priorities from input included boosting alternative transportation options to other communities, balancing recreation and conservation, promoting jobs with livable wages, housing and transition from coal/natural resources.
- Priorities discussed at the listening session began with how and where growth might occur as there is an evident lack of space due to topography and infrastructure.
- Growth should mean housing for people who are on the edge of affordability to live in town. This is the underlying reason why the Town added a residency requirement for rentals.
- There was interest at the feedback on importance of planning the transition from mining and coal.
- Town appreciated efforts to clarify “ag” designations, if it is not evaluated there might be an uptick in subdivision and sales of 35-acre hobby ranches across the south county.
- Existing plans point to Oak Creek as a growth target, and there is a sense Oak Creek is capable of growth -- the county plan must recognize if this is the case. The Board of County Commissioners advised the PDR board they may not support conservation easements on ag property adjacent to municipalities if it is their need and intent to grow.
- Yampa for example does not have growth interest at this time and Hayden does not desire new easements.
- Wildlife are getting pinned into corners due to growth and land use patterns.
- County plan will state that Oak Creek remains a target including their future growth areas however they must undergo an outreach process to confirm.
- The Town has infill housing opportunities on vacant lots and will work with Yampa Valley Housing Authority to secure state funds to promote affordable projects.
- Board desires incentives for owners to release their underutilized Main Street properties to be redeveloped/renovated to support vitality and liveliness as people drive through town.
- Question of the need to create more jobs with livable wages when there are jobs that no one is filling.
- Discussion on mobility to Steamboat: people want to live in Oak Creek but the canyon commute may detract people.
- The Town did a study that infrastructure and vacant lots may handle 30 to 40 new homes. Sierra View subdivision for example is about half built out with 28 open lots.
- The Board discussed what “growth” means. Noted that people need to travel to Steamboat for goods/services but would rather adjust lifestyles to support the local community if businesses were there. Would love to see underutilized vacant old buildings that the County could help with demo and rebuilding. The county plan can direct commercial/retail growth by pushing businesses to municipalities. This supports Oak Creek’s energy for boosting local housing and amenities. With a few exceptions, the County does not support commercial zoning in unincorporated areas outside municipalities.
- Discussion of Stagecoach incorporation: this effort would check all the boxes, particularly since it didn’t have the population before and now does.



- The Project Team noted input stated that Oak Creek is a good example of how to support small town rural growth.
- Mobility discussion centered on widening Highway 131 as it has no shoulder from Catamount corner to Oak Creek however traffic counts cannot justify the cost. Oak Creek Canyon is continually damaged. The County encourages those affected to make note so policy changes can be made when the timing is correct.
- Town Board questioned why infill development was not occurring. Water infrastructure was notable. The Town yet might be able to afford water infrastructure capacity increases whereas other small communities cannot. Through planning and code, Town can evaluate removing lot minimums and increasing densities on Main Street to get upper floor homes.
- Board discussed recreation access and that proximity to mountains is why people move to Oak Creek. They support a rails-to-trails initiative and any other trail network enhancement that improves commuting transport as well.
- A trail to Stagecoach was once on the table but private owners could not agree on alignment.
- While small businesses enjoy great local community support it remains difficult to maintain business.
- If growth is aimed to occur at Stagecoach or Oak Creek, Oak Creek becomes a better target due community cohesiveness and available water and sewer. Stagecoach incorporation would be hindered by multiple ownership.
- Water will be a growing countywide issue as it has become a commodity for agricultural users (who have much of the water) to sell.