

Vision

Becoming the Most Livable Community West of the Rockies¹

To achieve our goal to become the most livable community west of the Rockies, we need to change the way we grow. We cannot sprawl in all directions and achieve this goal. Business as usual will not achieve our goal. If we follow this Comprehensive Plan we can achieve our goal of being the most livable community west of the Rockies. The vision of the Comprehensive Plan will not happen overnight. The Comprehensive Plan is and must be flexible and we must expect that we will accommodate transitions. The Plan calls for gradually moving from where we are to where we want to be.

The vision for our community has not changed significantly since the 1996 Growth Plan; however, our community has changed. We have grown substantially and we are at a very significant crossroads. Most of the easily developed parcels within the Growth Plan boundary have been developed. Redevelopment of existing urban areas is often difficult but needed. Job growth in the heavy commercial and industrial sectors has consumed much of the available and designated industrial land in the community. Additional areas are needed for and to sustain those high impact land uses. We are constrained by topography and by the amount of public lands that surround us. We face more intense development and redevelopment in the urban core. We need a strong plan to guide our growth.

We want to live in a community that provides housing, jobs, services, health and safety for all its residents. As a community we value our agricultural background, we enjoy open spaces and a small-town feel. We want to have services and shopping close to where we live to cut down the amount of cross-town traffic and commute times to our jobs and to reduce air pollution. We want neighborhoods and parks to be connected and close so our children have a safe place to play. We are willing to increase density in core areas if that can prevent sprawl and encourage preservation of agricultural lands. We would like a broader mix of housing for all. We want a community with a healthy economy and opportunities to raise our families in a supportive, safe environment with good schools. We want a transportation system that balances possibilities for cars, trucks, transit, bicycles and pedestrians. We want opportunities for growth without sacrificing the quality of life that we have come to expect. Tourism and agri-tourism are a significant part of our economy. Without careful planning agriculture and the lifestyles surrounding it will disappear under the weight of urban sprawl.

Through this Comprehensive Plan we will guide our growth and retain the unique qualities of our mesas, agricultural lands and developed areas. The Comprehensive Plan establishes a range of density/intensity for the Plan area. The City and the County must make land use decisions consistent with the Plan for our future.

¹ **What does “Most Livable” Mean? It is a community that has the following:**

- It is fiscally sustainable - It has vibrancy – lots of things happening - It is organized, functioning and orderly - It promotes a healthy life style - It has a broad and balanced range of uses - It is safe - It has a diversity of housing for a spectrum of incomes - It is child and senior friendly - It has exceptional medical services - It provides superb educational opportunity - It provides quality employment opportunities with a mix of job types



Centers

Public Support for a New Plan

During the process of creating the Comprehensive Plan, we heard public support for:

- Increasing density and intensity in core areas, especially in the City Center;
- Creating a broader mix of housing opportunities;
- Providing basic services closer to where people live;
- Establishing mixed use centers;
- Balancing our transportation system (auto, truck, transit, bicycle, pedestrian) and connecting neighborhoods;
- Establishing parks, open space corridors and planning for future parks needs inside the urban area as well as providing access to and recreational opportunities on public lands surrounding the community;
- Planning for infrastructure and service needs;
- “Feathering”, a concept where the intensity of land uses are decreased from higher intensity;
- Channeling growth inward, thereby preserving as much agricultural land as possible near the edge of the community;
- Maintaining the buffer areas between Grand Junction, Fruita and Palisade;
- Planning for growth, building the necessary infrastructure, and sticking to the plan.

Mixed-Use Centers

The Comprehensive Plan calls for three types of centers: the City Center, Village Centers, and Neighborhood Centers.

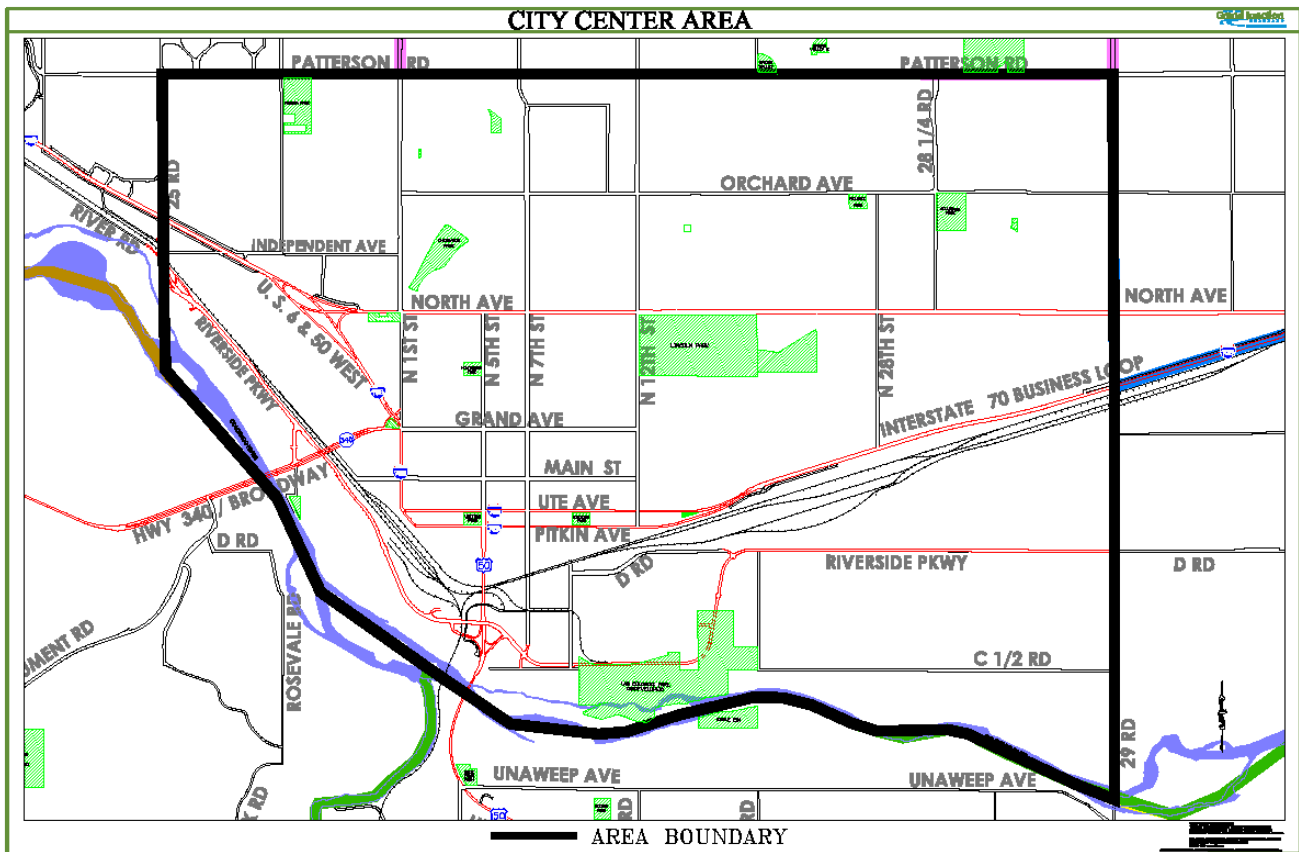
City Center

The City Center is the heart and soul of the community and includes the historic square mile of Downtown, North Avenue, Mesa State College and the medical community in and around St Mary’s Hospital, Community Hospital and Veterans Hospital.

The vision for the City Center is that it will greatly expand—more offices and residential uses in taller buildings and more residential density in the area immediately surrounding Downtown, near Mesa State College and along North Avenue.



This growth and development will provide a built-in clientele that will foster the expansion of shops and restaurants. Greater intensity and density is also desired for the North Avenue corridor and the medical and education campuses of the community. Improved transit will allow access from the outlying areas even with reduced parking and heavier traffic in Downtown. The key to the success of the City Center, and what differentiates it from the other center types, will be the variety of uses, the critical mass of workers and residents, and a variety of activities and attractions (including access to the River) that give life, vibrancy and vitality to those areas so that they become an attraction in their own right.



Village Centers

Village Centers are essential to the sustainability of Grand Junction. They provide a second level of shopping and employment close to where people live. The largest of the Village Centers provided for in the Plan will be the Mesa Mall area. Over time Village Centers will transform into mixed-use centers by the added mix of nearby residential uses.

Other Village Centers will be focused around a large grocery store, complemented with other uses. Village Center locations include:

- Clifton downtown
- Orchard Mesa near the intersection of Highways 50 and 141
- Pear Park at 29 Road and D Road
- Appleton at 24 Road and H Road
- North Avenue and 29 Road
- Whitewater

Village Centers will vary in size and include other kinds of retail such as home improvement, discount clothing, furniture stores, movie theaters and restaurants as well as residential and office uses. Village Centers contemplated by the Plan will be drive-to destinations but will also have medium-to-high density residential and office uses mixed-in vertically or horizontally. They will have store fronts and face public streets or around plazas and other gathering areas.

Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers are indicated by the Plan in a variety of areas throughout the community and will also vary in size. They are identified on the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map and include:

- Appleton area
- Fairgrounds vicinity on Orchard Mesa
- Redlands Marketplace (Albertson's center).
- Redlands Village on Highway 340 (Safeway)

In many cases Neighborhood Centers are merely modest extensions of centers that already exist. They consist from a few buildings to many buildings that may contain medium-to-small grocery stores, drug stores and other convenience-oriented retail such as movie rental, craft stores, professional suites, etc. They are envisioned to have medium density residential uses (town homes, small apartments/condominiums) integrated within, or immediately adjacent to non-residential uses.



These Centers are convenience oriented, serving the immediate neighborhood as well as some drive-to clientele. Some Smaller Neighborhood Centers already exist as convenience stores and are appropriate along specific corridors identified on the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map as 'Mixed Use Opportunity Corridor.' Neighborhood Centers need to be tastefully designed to fit in with the character and scale of adjacent residential buildings. In developed areas they sometimes occur as residential buildings (in locations less desirable for living²) that are converted to a coffee shop/bakery, insurance office, etc. Some Neighborhood Centers will not have mixed land uses and will consist of strip development and/or big-box centers.

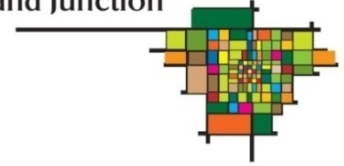
Parks and Recreation Opportunities

The City and County need to provide a sufficient amount and quality of parks and recreation facilities and opportunities to meet the needs of residents. Many communities establish a 'level of service' standard for parks. The following standards are suggested by the National Recreation and Parks Association:

- Neighborhood Parks: 1-2 acres/thousand population
- Community Parks: 5-8 acres/thousand population
- Regional Parks: 5-10 acres/thousand population

The City should at every opportunity coordinate and plan for park sites and establish 'shared use' agreements for facilities and grounds with School District #51, Mesa County, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, National Park Service, State Parks, and Great Outdoors Colorado. For example, the City has partnered with the School District on establishing neighborhood parks at some elementary schools and the City built an activity center at Bookcliff Middle School. The City and County have worked with the District to maintain athletic facilities in exchange for use of school facilities (buildings and fields) for public recreation programs.

² For example, due to traffic volumes at a busy intersection, or as a transition between residential and employment uses.



Goals & Policies

Comprehensive Plan Goals

Goal 1: To implement the Comprehensive Plan in a consistent manner between the City, Mesa County, and other service providers.

Goal 2: To maintain community separators (buffer areas) between Grand Junction, Fruita and Palisade which define these distinct communities.

Goal 3: The Comprehensive Plan will create ordered and balanced growth and spread future growth throughout the community.

Goal 4: Support the continued development of the downtown area of the City Center into a vibrant and growing area with jobs, housing and tourist attractions.

Goal 5: To provide a broader mix of housing types in the community to meet the needs of a variety of incomes, family types and life stages.

Goal 6: Land use decisions will encourage preservation and appropriate reuse.

Goal 7: New development adjacent to existing development (of a different density/unit type/land use type) should transition itself by incorporating appropriate buffering.

Goal 8: Create attractive public spaces and enhance the visual appeal of the community through quality development.

Goal 9: Develop a well-balanced transportation system that supports automobile, local transit, pedestrian, bicycle, air, and freight movement while protecting air, water and natural resources.

Goal 10: Develop a system of regional, neighborhood and community parks protecting open space corridors for recreation, transportation and environmental purposes.

Goal 11: Public safety facilities and services for our citizens will be a priority in planning for growth.

Goal 12: Being a regional provider of goods and services the City and County will sustain, develop and enhance a healthy, diverse economy.

What are Goals and Policies?

Goals describe broad public purposes toward which policies and programs are directed. They express the broad desired results of the Plan; they complete the sentence "Our goal is to..."

Policies are more specific; policies are intended to carry out goals. Policies are sometimes described as "decisions made in advance." They can be referred to as general rules, such as, "as a general rule, the City will..." Policies are intended to bring predictability to decision-making. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the public may rely on policies as guidance for how decisions will be made.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes “Six Guiding Principles” that will shape our growth.

1. **Concentrated Centers** - The Plan calls for three types of centers; the City Center, Village Centers, and Neighborhood Centers. The Plan establishes “Mixed Use Opportunity Corridors” along some major corridors.
2. **Sustainable Growth Patterns** - Fiscal sustainability where we grow efficiently and cost-effectively. Encourage infill and redevelopment and discourage growth patterns that cause disproportionate increases in cost of services.
3. **Housing Variety**—allow/encourage more variety in housing types (besides just large lot single family homes) that will better meet the needs of our diverse population—singles, couples, families, those just starting out, children who have left home, retirees, etc.
4. **A Grand Green System of Connected Recreational Opportunities** - Take advantage of, and tie together the exceptional open space assets of Grand Junction, including the Colorado River, our excellent park system, trails and our surrounding open spaces.
5. **Balanced Transportation** - Accommodate all modes of Transportation including: Air, Transit, Freight, Auto, Bike, and Pedestrian.
6. **A Regional Center** - Preserve Grand Junction as a provider of diverse goods and services and residential neighborhoods. The Plan calls for a community that provides strong health, education and other regional services. The Plan calls for the continued development and delivery of those services.

Goal 1: To implement the Comprehensive Plan in a consistent manner between the City, Mesa County, and other service providers.

Policies:

- A. City and County land use decisions will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.
- B. The Comprehensive Plan will prevail when area plans, adopted prior to the Comprehensive Plan, are inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. The City and Mesa County will make land use and infrastructure decisions consistent with the goal of supporting and encouraging the development of centers.

Goal 2: To maintain community separators (buffer areas) between Grand Junction, Fruita and Palisade which define these distinct communities.

Policy:

- A. The City and County will support the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the Cooperative Planning Areas of Grand Junction/Fruita/Mesa County and Grand Junction/ Palisade/Mesa County.

Goal 3: The Comprehensive Plan will create ordered and balanced growth and spread future growth throughout the community.

Policies:

- A. To create large and small “centers” throughout the community that provides services and commercial areas.
- B. Create opportunities to reduce the amount of trips generated for shopping and commuting and decrease vehicle miles traveled thus increasing air quality.

Goal 4: Support the continued development of the downtown area of the City Center into a vibrant and growing area with jobs, housing and tourist attractions.

Policy:

- A. The City and County will support the vision and implement the goals and actions of the Downtown Strategic Plan.

Goal 5: To provide a broader mix of housing types in the community to meet the needs of a variety of incomes, family types and life stages.

Policies:

- A. In making land use and development decisions, the City and County will balance the needs of the community.
- B. Encourage mixed-use development and identification of locations for increased density.
- C. Increasing the capacity of housing developers to meet housing demand.

Goal 6: Land use decisions will encourage preservation and appropriate reuse.

Policy:

- A. In making land use and development decisions, the City and County will balance the needs of the community.

Goal 7: New development adjacent to existing development (of a different density/unit type/land use type) should transition itself by incorporating appropriate buffering.

Policy:

- A. In making land use and development decisions, the City and County will balance the needs of the community.

Goal 8: Create attractive public spaces and enhance the visual appeal of the community through quality development.

Policies:

- A. Design streets and walkways as attractive public spaces;
- B. Construct streets in the City Center, Village Centers, and Neighborhood Centers to include enhanced pedestrian amenities;
- C. Enhance and accentuate the City 'gateways' including interstate interchanges, and other major arterial streets leading into the City;
- D. Use outdoor lighting that reduces glare and light spillage, without compromising safety;
- E. Encourage the use of xeriscape landscaping;
- F. Encourage the revitalization of existing commercial and industrial areas.

Goal 9: Develop a well-balanced transportation system that supports automobile, local transit, pedestrian, bicycle, air, and freight movement while protecting air, water and natural resources.

Policies:

- A. The City and County will work with the Mesa County Regional Transportation Planning Office (RTPO) on maintaining and updating the Regional Transportation Plan, which includes planning for all modes of transportation.
- B. Include in the Regional Transportation Plan detailed identification of future transit corridors to be reserved during development review and consider functional classification in terms of regional travel, area circulation, and local access.
- C. The Regional Transportation Plan will be used as a basis for development review and to help prioritize capital improvement programming. The City and County will maintain Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) which prioritize road and alley improvements based on needs for traffic flow, safety enhancements, maintenance and linkages.
- D. A trails master plan will identify trail corridors linking neighborhoods with the Colorado River, Downtown, Village Centers and Neighborhood Centers and other desired public attractions. The Plan will be integrated into the Regional Transportation Plan.
- E. When improving existing streets or constructing new streets in residential neighborhoods, the City and County will balance access and circulation in neighborhoods with the community's need to maintain a street system which safely and efficiently moves traffic throughout the community.

Goal 10: Develop a system of regional, neighborhood and community parks protecting open space corridors for recreation, transportation and environmental purposes.

Policies:

- A. A parks master plan that identifies regional, community and neighborhood parks and open space. The plan will be integrated into the Regional Transportation Plan and the trails master plan.
- B. Preserve areas of scenic and/or natural beauty and, where possible, include these areas in a permanent open space system.
- C. The City and County support the efforts to expand the riverfront trail system along the Colorado River from Palisade to Loma.

Goal 11: Public safety facilities and services for our citizens will be a priority in planning for growth.

Policy:

- A. The City and County will plan for the locations and construct new public safety facilities to meet the needs of existing and future growth.

Goal 12: Being a regional provider of goods and services the City and County will sustain, develop and enhance a healthy, diverse economy.

Policies:

- A. Through the Comprehensive Plan's policies the City and County will improve as a regional center of commerce, culture and tourism.
- B. The City and County will provide appropriate commercial and industrial development opportunities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What has changed since the 1996 Growth Plan?

- We have grown substantially.
- Most of the easily developed parcels within the Growth Plan boundaries have already been developed.
- Tourism and agri-tourism are a significant part of our local economy.
- The community's draw as a regional provider of goods and services has grown tremendously.
- The number of platted lots for single family detached housing has outpaced lots for other housing types.
- In early 2009 the inventory of platted lots in the City limits for single family detached homes was 1858 lots. This is over two times what is needed annually when the City is growing at 3.5%. Note: There is an additional 3600+ single family lots currently in the development process and not yet platted.
- We have a limited supply of industrial land, especially the past 10 years.

What We Know

- Redevelopment of existing urban areas is often more difficult.
- Future growth is constrained by natural topography and by the amount of surrounding public lands.
- New growth will occur outside of the 1996 Growth Plan area and from development of the urban core.
- Growth in a compact fashion will help us sprawl less.

Our valley is unique, and careful planning for the future is the only way it will retain its unique qualities

Public Support for a New Plan

What citizens think are important issues to address:

- Increasing density and intensity in core areas, especially in the City Center;
- Creating a broader mix of housing opportunities;
- Providing basic services closer to where people live;
- Establishing mixed use centers;
- Balancing our transportation system (auto, truck, transit, bicycle, pedestrian) and connecting neighborhoods;
- Establishing parks, open space corridors and planning for future parks needs inside the urban area as well as providing access to and recreational opportunities on public lands surrounding the community;
- Planning for infrastructure and service needs;
- “Feathering”, a concept where the intensity of land uses are decreased from higher intensity;
- Channeling growth inward, thereby preserving as much agricultural land as possible near the edge of the community;
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Amending the Plan

Keeping the Plan Current

Great places are a result of thoughtful plans being implemented consistently over time. The Plan needs to be kept current –which means that it needs to change as the community changes. Plan Updates should be done every three to five years, but may be considered more often as necessary to reflect changes in community goals and needs.

The Amendment Process and Criteria

The Comprehensive Plan is both a statement of long-term objectives and also guides day-to-day development review decisions by the City, County and many others. It is important that the Plan be kept current.

Jurisdictional Approvals

The Comprehensive Plan is a joint collaboration between the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County to coordinate planning decisions in the immediate region around Grand Junction. When deciding changes to the Plan, the City has jurisdiction inside the Persigo 201 Boundary, the County may, if it deems appropriate, comment on the change. When deciding changes to the Plan outside the Persigo 201 Boundary, the County has jurisdiction. The City may, if it deems appropriate, comment on the change.

Therefore, changes to various areas of the Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan require different land use approvals. For example:

- Land use changes located within the City limits may be approved by the City and do not require County approval.
- Changes to land use designations inside the Persigo 201 Boundary (outside City limits) require annexation and City approval and do not require County approval.
- Changes to land use designations outside of the Persigo 201 Boundary require County approval and do not require City approval.
- Changes to the Persigo 201 Service Area require approval by the Persigo Board, which is comprised of the County Commissioners and the City Council.

Administrative Changes to the Comprehensive Plan

The Director shall:

- Make minor additions or clarifications to the policy section.
- Correct errors or grammar.
- Make land use designation changes for property that has multiple land use designations and is consistent with project approvals.

Minor Changes to the Comprehensive Plan

The purposes of a Minor Amendment are to make changes that are minor in nature and are consistent with the vision (intent), goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, such as:

- The Comprehensive Plan provides flexibility in the location of the Village and Neighborhood Center by granting a 1/2 mile leeway. Therefore, a development proposal to move the center 1/2 mile or less from the location identified on the Future Land Use Map is permissible.
- Establishing land use designation on property with multiple land use designations.
- Process a rezone application or request when the existing zoning is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the property is adjacent to a land use designation that would support the requested zone district.

Process: Approved administratively by the Director with any appeals going to Planning Commission.

Frequency: Anytime.

Recommended criteria to evaluate Minor Amendments to the Plan: The same criteria for Major Amendments are recommended for Minor Amendments.

Major Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan

An amendment will be considered Major when a requested change significantly alters the land use or the Plan document.

Process: Approved by City Council with a recommendation by Planning Commission. A Major Amendment would occur prior to a development application for a rezone, subdivision, etc. Plan amendment criteria will be established through the Zoning Code. Major Amendments allow stakeholders to provide input. A Major Amendment may be requested by a citizen, property owner, City or County official, or staff.

Frequency: Anytime.

Criteria for Major changes to the Plan: The City shall amend the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and area plans if the proposed change is consistent with the vision (intent), goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan; and

1. Subsequent events have invalidated the original premises and findings; **and/or**
2. The character and/or condition of the area has changed such that the amendment is consistent with the plan; **and/or**
3. Public and community facilities are adequate to serve the type and scope of land use proposed; **and/or**
4. An inadequate supply of suitably designated land is available in the community, as defined by the presiding body, to accommodate the proposed land use; **and/or**
5. The community or area, as defined by the presiding body, will derive benefits from the proposed amendment.