

Estes Park Downtown Plan

Est. 2018

- Summary 2025 -

Chapter One - Introduction

- Background
 - 2015 Colorado Dept. of Local Affairs awarded a planning grant from the State Energy and Mineral Impact Fund to prepare a Downtown Plan
 - Intended for documentation of a community driven vision over the next 20 years
 - Planning process happened in 2017 and 2018
- Setting
 - Plan area is located in the North-Central portion of the town, just west of Lake Estes
 - Generally included properties fronting Elkhorn Ave, Big Thompson Ave, Cleave St and Moraine Ave
- Plan Purpose
 - Serves as a framework and guide for future decision making related to private development and public improvements
- Plan Administration
 - Formally adopted 1/23/2018
 - Overtime, the plan may require updates based on new info, a changing economy or other factors
 - All changes must be formally adopted by the Town Board
- Implementation Considerations
 - Balance vision with practicality
 - Plan for changing conditions
 - Pursue partnerships
- Planning Assumptions and Regional Trends to consider
 - Regional Growth - population is projected to grow significantly in the next 20 years
 - Increased housing demand
 - National Park Visitor Patterns
 - Flood impacts
- Resilience and the Downtown Plan
 - Resilience is addressed by promoting policies that facilitate the community's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from short and long term shocks
 - Environment

- Economy and fiscal health
- Social networks

Chapter Two - Community Process

- Downtown Plan Outreach
 - Downtown Plan Steering Committee (DPSC) - met monthly and all meetings were open to the public
 - Established by Board of Trustees on October 13th, 2015
 - 10 volunteer members appointed by Town Board
 - Primary Roles
 - Provide guidance to the project and ensure ample public participation
 - Review and provide feedback on process content and plan
 - Serve as a link to the community by spreading news about the project
 - Provide a venue for public input at meetings
 - Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
 - Provided technical assistance
 - Town staff and outside agencies (i.e. Estes Valley Fire Protection)
 - Outreach Methods
 - Mailings, press releases, flyers, property notifications, project website, staff promotions/interactions, surveys
- Key Events and Activities
 - Community Workshop #1
 - February, 2017
 - 45 community members
 - Engaged in exercises to identify assets and critical issues with downtown
 - Community Workshop #2
 - April, 2017
 - Multi-day
 - Reviewed preliminary downtown policies generated by town staff and consultant team
 - Community Workshop #3
 - September, 2017
 - Open-House to present Draft Downtown Plan
 - 70 people
- Adoption Process
 - Officially adopted January 23, 2018
 - Town Board Study Session (presented December 12th, 2017)

- Town Board Adoption Hearing (January 23rd, 2018)

Chapter Three - Plan Vision

- A vision for Estes Park
 - 'A Place Like No Other'
 - Design integrates build with natural
 - 'A Complete Community'
 - Healthy mix of everything
 - 'Where Water is an Asset'
 - Best place to experience rivers
 - 'A Place With its Own Story'
 - 1st gateway community to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP)
 - 'Easy to Access'
 - Ample Transportation and circulation
 - 'One Place with Many Parts'
 - Distinct districts
- Overarching Principles
 - Economic Vitality
 - Create a strong and diverse year-round economy that extends beyond 'tourist season'
 - Leverage the strong growth along the Front Range
 - Strategically invest in infrastructure to incentivize private investment
 - Create a coordinated management program
 - Collaboration and expansion of service
 - Community Character
 - Celebrate downtown as the civic center of the community
 - Keep downtown's character 'Distinctly Estes Park' - 'The Gateway to the Rockies'
 - Use land efficiently
 - Prioritize placemaking (elements that generate activity)
 - Nature as a part of the Downtown experience
 - Supports the Arts
 - Circulation and Access
 - Expand downtown connectivity and links to abutting neighborhoods
 - Prioritize bicycle and pedestrian circulation
 - Make parking and transit facilities accessible through education and branded visibility
 - Manage RMNP visitor traffic
 - Create effective wayfinding systems
 - Reduce congestion to enhance the user experience

- Resilience
 - Make Downtown more resilient to flooding
 - Address resilience in circulation
 - Need redundancies that are adaptive to closures
 - Address resilience in land use (placemaking)
 - Address resilience through culture and art
 - Inclusive and diversifying features

Chapter Four - Concept and Framework

- Downtown Concept
 - Four Sub-areas
 - Arts and Culture (W. Elkhorn)
 - Downtown Core (E. Elkhorn)
 - Artisan and Craft (Riverside Dr)
 - Community Services and Tourism Hub (Big Thompson Ave)
 - Downtown Character Areas (Series of unique subareas)
 - Promotes the development of distinctly different neighborhoods (use and physical appearance)
 - Streets as Public Space
 - Downtown streets should accommodate all users (pedestrian, bikes and vehicles)
 - Promote social interaction
 - This includes Cleave, Weist and parts of W. Elkhorn
 - River Access and Flood Mitigation
 - Floodway improvements
 - Multi-use trails
 - Trail underpasses
 - Terraces that overlook rivers
 - Places to 'engage with the water' (i.e. entry points for fishing/kayaking)
 - Coordinated Active Transportation: Designed to reduce dependence on auto travel by making walking and biking more appealing and accessible
 - Expand sidewalk width
 - Multi-use trails
 - Filling public riverwalk connectivity gap throughout town
 - Installing on-street bicycle facilities
 - Crossing Improvements
 - At-Grade
 - Improved crosswalks
 - Pedestrian refuge islands

- Crossing tech improvements
 - Bulbouts to shorten cross-distance
- Grade-Separated
 - Underpasses
 - Bridges for pedestrians and bikes
- Gateways: Physical design elements that establish a visual entry to Downtown.
- Community Focal Points: Physical identity of area
 - Park Theatre, Town Hall Area, Elkhorn Lodge, Bond Park, Performance Park, Knoll-Wilows Open Space, Visitor Center Area, Riverwalk and Plaza
 - NEW - W. Elkhorn Ave and Cleave St
- Connectivity: Multi-modal
 - Transit circulation (through all four character areas)
 - Vehicular (more than the loop)
- Bicycle Circulation
 - Off-street facilities
 - Multi-use paths or bikeways
 - On-street facilities
 - Bike lanes and shared routes
- Open Space System
 - Plazas
 - Parks
 - Pocket Parks (small, vacant lot or irregular piece of land)
 - Linear Open Spaces (parkways, greenways or river walks)
 - Natural Open Spaces (i.e. Knoll-Willows)
 - Streets as Open Space
 - Temporary Open Spaces
- Public Art
 - Remove regulatory barriers to the arts
 - Engage local artists
 - Support downtown arts events
 - Support temporary art installations
 - Incentivize the arts (i.e. land use code permits art to count towards a development's landscaping requirement)
 - Encourage uses and building types that support the arts community (i.e. mixed use buildings, shipping containers)
 - Infuse art into the Downtown fabric
- Building Height and Scale (max 2 - 3 stories Downtown - may go up to 4 stories case-by-case basis)

- Upper Story Articulation
 - Step backs
 - Height variations
 - Strategic location of 3-story components
- Priority Edges: Public realm elements are maximized when they are located next to a feature that keeps them vibrant and in use
- Wayfinding (coordinated signage system)
 - Gateway signs
 - Pedestrian directional signs
 - Pedestrian kiosks
 - Pedestrian interpretive signs (educational components)

Chapter Five - Character Areas

- Character Area #1 - Arts and Culture
 - Public Realm
 - W. Elkhorn
 - On-street parking, curbless road, lighting for safe nighttime multi-modal travel
 - Flood mitigation
 - Private Realm
 - General Development is informal and has natural character
 - Landuse: lodging, multifamily housing, offices, artists studios, commercial condos/other creative space, retail and recreation
 - Elkhorn Lodge (Celebrates historic significance)
 - Engages Fall River
 - Access to Elkhorn. Lodge should be realigned to create a perpendicular entry across from Filby Ct. Formal intersection.
 - W. Park Art and Design Center
 - Redeveloped with Art and Housing
- Character Area #2 - Downtown Core (cultural and civic heart of the plan area. Activities, restaurants and shops)
 - Public Realm
 - Civic Green
 - W. Elkhorn Ave
 - Weist Drive
 - Cleave Street
 - Downtown Core Bike/Pedestrian Loop
 - Private Realm
 - General Development = active street edge, new resident housing and architecturally diverse combo of new and renovated buildings

- Land use: retail, office, residential, hotel, studios/creative space, institutional/civic, recreational/open space
- Character Area #3 - Artisan and Craft Industries (able to do more now that loop is complete)
 - Public Realm
 - Baldwin Park - redesigned with lowered benched area that increases flood capacity but is generally dry. I.e. performance 'pads'
 - Moraine Ave/Riverside Drive Couplet - buffered bike lanes or protected on-street parking and widened sidewalks
 - Big Thompson River Edge enhancements - expand flood capacity with a combination of channel widening, benching of adjacent green space and lowering Baldwin Park
 - Private Realm
 - Support small scale craft production alongside retail, housing, office and other uses in single and mixed use buildings
 - General Development = mix of traditional and contemporary buildings. Buildings are encouraged to be built to the back of sidewalk
 - Picadilly Square - mixed use, flood resilience features, public parking and well designed outdoor spaces
 - Post Office Site – redesigned with public parking and mixed use development
 - Incremental Moraine Avenue Development - New development encouraged to have entry points and both Moraine and Riverside Dr.
- Character Area #4 - Community Services and Tourism Hub (eastern anchor and gateway to Downtown)
 - Public Realm
 - Big Thompson Ave - Streetscape improvements should establish a grand sense of entry to Downtown on Big Thompson Ave
 - Center planted median to accommodate crossing from Visitor Center to Stanley Village. Generous sidewalks.
 - Private Realm
 - General Development = contemporary and traditional is appropriate. New liner buildings along Big Thompson to replace surface parking
 - Stanley Village - incremental redevelopment to enhance placemaking features. Promote redevelopment but ensure enough parking.

Chapter Six - Circulation

- Active Transportation (Pedestrians and Bicycles)
 - Technical Recommendations
 - Moraine Ave.: 2 alt. Design options (one between walkway and parking, one between parking and travel lane)
 - Pedestrian and bike crossing improvements - enhanced crossings for rivers and streets are strongly recommended
 - Accommodating pedestrians at critical crossings in Estes Park
 - Big Thompson Ave Crossing near Visitors Center
 - Underpass
 - MacGregor Ave west of Town Hall
 - Controlled pedestrian activated flashing beacon
 - West Elkhorn along Fall River
 - Underpass or at-grade crossing
- Policy Recommendations
 - Adopt a town 'Complete Streets' policy - comfortably functional for users of all modes, ages and abilities
 - Use temporary installations to test infrastructure improvements
 - Encourage bicycle supportive facilities - bike amenities should be available (bike parking, bike storage, bike repair stations/kiosks and bike share stations)
 - 4 prospective station locations
 - Visitor Center
 - Town Hall
 - Post Office
 - W Park Center
 - Potentially Elkhorn Lodge (?)
- Vehicle Circulation
 - Improve Vehicle Wayfinding
 - Directing visitors to available parking quickly and efficiently can decrease congestion
 - Reconfigure Roadway Network
 - The loop project
 - Expand the Roadway Network
 - Cleave Street (extend between Big Horn and Virginia Dr.)
- Transit
 - Revised routes to improve frequency of service between Visitor Center and Downtown Core
 - Easy to understand route maps and shuttle schedules
 - Highly visible transit stops

- Exclusive travel lanes for shuttles and bikes (explore possibility)

Chapter Seven - Parking

- Mid to long term
 - We are well past the 2017-2018 option
 - Identify desirable/viable locations for future additional parking
 - Town Hall/Library
 - Post Office Building surface lot
 - Piccadilly Square
 - Cleave St. lot
 - Lot west of Moraine Ave
- Preparing for the future
 - Shared travel options
 - Data-driven management
 - Smart parking meters, pay by phone, mobile apps
 - Electric Vehicles (EVs)
 - Quantity and locations of charging stations
 - Variety of charging stations offered (levels 1 - 3)
 - Fee schedule or time stay limit for EV spaces
 - Full or self-service offerings
 - Communication and signage to promote utilization
 - Payment options
 - Autonomous and Connected Vehicles (AVS and CVs)
 - AV = vehicle that can drive on its own
 - CV = vehicle connected with internet access and with a wide area network
 - Start piloting new concepts and be ready for the future

Chapter Eight - Flood Mitigation

- Three levels of flood mitigation
 - Regional Level - considers how solutions can be achieved in the upper watershed. Opportunity to work with Larimer County. This would also benefit the county farther downstream
 - Regional retention/detention basin
 - Flood control dam
 - Divert a portion of the river around the town
 - Town Level
 - Provide multi-tiered channel section
 - Widen channel sections in some areas
 - Incorporate trails and bikeways

- Utilize bulkheads, steel structures used as part of hard-surface plazas, terraces and trail structures to contain flow
- Convert streets from normal crowned street to inverted crown (direct flooding away from businesses)
- Develop a best practices low management development toolbox
 - Center median bioswales
 - Tree wells
 - Depressed water quality treatment area
 - Chicanes
- Use the rivers and flooding of the town to educate residents and visitors
- Design surface parking areas for water detention
- Lower parks to serve as detention areas
- Utilize drop structures in the river
- Key flood mitigation opportunities
 - Fall River Bridge at West Elkhorn Ave - upgrade the bridge (may need to be coordinated with the owner of adjacent property). Expand bridge
 - West Elkhorn Ave Inverted cross-section. Convert from normal crown intersection to inverted crown
 - Weist Drive - realignment and Fall River widening
 - Confluence Park (at the confluence of Big Thompson and Fall Rivers)
- Site/property Level
 - Structural
 - Floodproofing buildings with flood protection walls
 - Raising floors of existing buildings
 - Raising buildings on supports
 - Raising doors by rising up sidewalks/ramps
 - Tree wells and bioswales adjacent to buildings
 - Decrease impervious areas by breaking up pavement with landscaped areas
 - Non Structural
 - Ordinances: flood plan/floodproofing buildings
 - Property acquisition: purchase properties that keep having damage - turn into open natural space
 - Zoning and land planning: think about flood planning during all stages of zoning and planning process
 - Flood Insurance: become a member of FEMA
 - Flood plan regulations: review and update regularly

Chapter Nine - Utility and Infrastructure

- Water - provided by the town of EP Water Division via Mary's Lake Water Treatment Facility and Glacier Creek Water Treatment Facility. Domestic water is used for fire lines and irrigation.
 - Water System Assessment: Has been modeled with the following assessments
 - Plans to up-size and improve water mains in Downtown Corridor with completion of the loop
 - Developers are required to design/fund/construct improvements to meet fire suppression standards if/when required
 - Water pressure is adequate currently
- Light and Power - electric provided by the town of EP Light and Power Division. Town purchases power through PRPA, power is transmitted to EP on Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), power lines to each of our two substations (Lake Estes and Marys Lake)
 - Assessment:
 - Deemed adequate currently
 - All new construction will require underground electric service for safety
- Fiber Optics - i.e. high speed internet services (we have now through Trail Blazer)
- Waste Water: two private sewer districts. Upper Thompson Sanitation District (UTSD) and EP Sanitation District (EPSD)
 - Assessment:
 - Recent upgrades: 520 ft. of mainline and 2 manholes replaced (after Oct. 17')
 - F.O.G Interceptors
 - Vetrified Clay Pipe (VCP) Replacement Plan
 - 2,490 ft. to be replaced with PVC pipe
 - Service Lines: 42 lines need replaced
 - Sump Pumps:
 - Currently discharge into sanitary sewer
 - Need to redirect to storm water
- Storm Water - Master plan to be completed by the end of 2017
- Overarching Utility Infrastructure Policies
 - Continue to monitor, analyze, assess and improve the capacity of Downtown and EP utility infrastructure
 - Prior to construction, ensure that adequate utility infrastructure is in place to support proposed project

- Where feasible, coordinate public utility investments with other infrastructure improvements such as streetscape design projects

Chapter Ten - Implementation

- Recommendations:
 - Establish a Downtown Partnership
 - Membership (not limited to, but should be included)
 - Town of EP
 - EDC (now EDWC)
 - Visit Estes Park
 - Estes Arts District
 - Downtown Development Authority (if established this would be an important player - providing funding capacity to help specific initiatives)
 - Mission and Roles
 - Be the champion of the Downtown Plan
 - Be a collective funding source
 - Be an advocate for and educator about the importance of Downtown and advancing the plan
 - Keep organizations operating in EP working in harmony. Collaborative and sharing resources
 - Partnership Decisions
 - How many reps from each organization
 - Who are voting vs non voting members
 - Is financial participation required to be a voting member
 - How often meetings are held
 - Who will serve as chair/secretary/treasurer and/or which positions are needed, how long people will serve, etc.
 - Attendance requirements
 - Dedicate Town Funds for Plan Implementation
 - General Fund/Capital Improvement Project
 - Each year town may allocate a portion of its General Fund toward implementation of Capital Improvement based on Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
 - General Obligation Bond
 - Commit a portion of the town's annual income stream to designated projects that are supported by ad valorem taxes. Town election is held to approve and thus spreads the cost over the entire tax base
 - Revenue Bonds

- Special separate bond source where sales tax revenues are pledged for a specific project
- Create a DDA
 - Financing tool frequently used for funding infrastructure, public improvement and administration. Effective way of applying tax increment financing (TIF) while also providing for the ability to implement a mill-levy (either together with TIF or separate) in order to leverage additional resources
- A DDA for Estes Park
 - Recommended as the preferred tool for supporting plan implementation
 - See the table in Downtown Plan Doc
 - DDA Creation Process and Costs
 - Create a DDA Operating Plan that includes at minimum the following
 - Boundaries
 - Package of projects to be financed and how
 - Whether a mill will be included, what that mill will be and what it will pay for. If mill-levy is not initially included plan should address how it can be included in the future
 - Powers and limits on powers
 - Governance and terms
 - Debt plan and limits
 - Info on outcomes of negotiations with school districts/other districts to determine how much tax increment will go to DDA vs them.
 - Send the plan and ordinance language to Town Board to approve
 - Hold TABOR election
 - Establish Incentives
 - The DDA will only be effective if and when development actually does occur. We need to overcome the following challenges
 - A need for code changes
 - Concerns about outcomes of current (from 17') FEMA Flood insurance study and revise flood insurance rate maps
 - Concerns about increased fees to enter RMNP (17')
 - Overcoming these challenges means that the town needs to incentivise development and growth. Here are some of the ideas
 - Establish a Development Facilitator Role
 - Create a toolkit of incentives currently available
 - Utilize the DDA to provide direct incentives

- Provide incentives through the Development review process (i.e. new development that meets Downtown vision. Town could reduce development or permitting fees and fast track review process)
- Support the Arts District - facilitate the creative culture of downtown
 - Establish Downtown Estes Park as state-certified Creative District
 - Provide Estes Arts with financial support and membership in the recommended Downtown Partnership
 - \$10K annual budget and paid staff
 - VEP and EDWC to work with Estes Arts to provide seed funding on a 3-year basis (17')
 - Empower Estes Arts
 - Key roles in the community including admin of Public Art program
- Leverage Outside Funding
 - Seek grants from foundations and public agencies
- Explore parking as a revenue source
 - By aligning parking revenue streams into one parking enterprise fund the town can create a self-supporting enterprise that can cover its own operating and maintenance funding
- Setting Priorities
 - Financing criteria
 - Project will generate funds to cover portions of development cost
 - The project will leverage investment from other sources
 - Grant funds are available to cover portions of development costs
 - Project fonts within a larger Capital Improvement Project, such that cost saving will be realized
 - Funding for maintenance of the improvement is provided
 - The project yields significant results for the level of investment. Has a high return on investment
 - Location criteria
 - Project is located in key opportunity site downtown
 - Project will have high public visibility
 - Ownership and Project Control criteria
 - Project already under appropriate ownership or control
 - Project ownership or control can be acquired with reasonable effort
 - Public Benefits
 - Project will provide direct benefit to local residents
 - Project will serve multiple users or interest groups
 - Relationship to other projects
 - Project will connect to existing public improvements

- Project will enhance existing improvements and will not cause other desired improvements to become obsolete
- Project provides opportunities to connect with other future public improvements
- Project will function well upon completion and later phases of construction are not required for this phase to perform adequately
- Compliance with Community Plans and Administration
 - Project to help accomplish broader goals of community
 - Project works in workplans of Downtown organizations and town staff
 - Adequate administrative oversight is available for the project