

# Chapter 1

## Vision Statement and Introduction

### Vision Statement

Salida's vision for the future emerged during the public meetings held during the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan and was refined during work sessions with City Council and the Planning Commission. The vision statement is a broad but concise description of what we want the community to be in the future. This vision describes Salida's assets and values and focuses on moving the community toward achieving longer-reaching ideals.

*Salida recognizes the importance of conserving and enhancing its historic small town character and embraces a future that preserves the natural environment and offers its residents and visitors a multi-generational community with an eclectic range of housing, jobs, education, business, shopping and recreation opportunities.*



## Community Overview

The City of Salida (“City” or “Salida”) is organized as a statutory city under the constitution of the State of Colorado. The city operates under a council-mayor form of government and provides the following services: public safety (fire and police); public works; recreation and culture; community development; water and wastewater treatment; and general administrative services, including licensing.

Salida is a small mountain community located in Chaffee County near the center of Colorado. Like many mountain towns, economic activity within the city centers on tourism. Salida is also a shopping and services hub for nearby residents in the region. Tourists are attracted to the community by the nearby Monarch Mountain ski area, the historic downtown, summer activities on the Arkansas River and the many outdoor recreation opportunities associated with the Pike-San Isabel National Forest and other public lands surrounding the city.

Despite these many amenities, it was not until recently that Salida was ‘discovered’ as a destination. The city has worked hard in recent years to improved its attractions including an improved theater and conference center, Riverside Park amenities, US Hwy 50 streetscape, and trail systems within and surrounding the city. The influx of people and development activity over the last decade creates a dynamic environment that offers many challenges as well as opportunities for the city to navigate in the coming years. In addition, we must consider the immediate and potential long-term impacts of the economic downturn which began in 2007.

Salida is the county seat of Chaffee County and its largest city. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs is showing a projected decline in population from 2000-2009 for the City of Salida from 5,504 in 2000 to 5,433 in 2009. This decline is mainly due to an influx of second homeowners within the city. There has been a steady flow of building permit applications over the past nine years. While the majority of them are for remodeling of existing structures there are also some for new residences and commercial buildings.

Residential Building Permits issued (2003 through 2009)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
New Single-Family	5	8	11	14	30	9	7
New Multi-Family	4 units	27 units	2 units	9 units	28 units	11 units	8 units
Residential Remodel	23	35	22	30	55	32	46

Commercial Building Permits issued (2003 through 2009)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
New Commercial	1	0	3	0	3	20	5
Commercial Remodel	16	20	13	8	15	5	23

## Changes Since 2000

Some of the changing conditions since the adoption of the 2000 Comprehensive Plan are highlighted below.

In 2004 the city purchased the 192 acre Vandaveer Ranch on the southeast side of the city limits for future development. The City of Salida has annexed the property and is now working towards developing the land with a mix of residential and commercial uses. This property is also located along the southern gateway into the City along Hwy 50.

In August of 2007 the City of Salida selected a developer for the Vandaveer property. Their proposal showed approximately 640 residential units; 470 single-family lots, 80 town home/condominium units and 90 multi-family rentals. In total, 114 acres of the Vandaveer property would be residential, 34 acres along Highway 50 would be commercial and the remaining 43 acres would be used for open space, R.O.W., Community Center and trails. Additional property was to be obtained to construct a golf course. With the financial crisis beginning in 2008 the developer's financing fell through and they were unable to complete purchase of the Vandaveer property.



Vandaveer Ranch

The City Council is revisiting priorities for the Vandaveer parcel. In 2010 the City of Salida is working with Forest Service, BLM, AHRA and DOW agencies to build a new Natural Resource Center on 36 acres of the Vandaveer property. The city also hopes to

attract an institution of higher learning to the campus to complement the natural resource agencies. This is discussed further in Chapter 4 Economic Sustainability.

The Salida Historic Preservation Commission was formed in 2002 when the City of Salida determined that preservation, protection and the enhancement of the city's historic buildings, sites, neighborhoods and overall character is essential to the future and economic health and welfare of the community.

In 2002 the city added a provision to the Land Use Code for the creation of condominiums. The new provision allows property owners to condominiumize multi-unit buildings which can function as affordable housing. From 2002 through 2009 the city has approved 48 condominium subdivision exemption applications and of those 13 were commercial properties and 35 were residential properties.

Since 2000 the Planning Commission and City Council have approved 9 subdivisions and planned developments and we currently have 5 additional properties in the subdivision process which includes the Vandaveer property. The approved subdivisions created 235 residential lots which are 65% built-out.

Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center (HRRMC) was first established in 1885 as the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad hospital for railroad employees at 448 East First Street. In 1976, the Salida Hospital District was formed and in 1989 the name was changed to the current to better fit area needs. In 2005, HRRMC decided to sell their property on First Street and build a new facility.

The City of Salida made a trade of land with the Division of Wildlife and then sold the land to HRRMC. The hospital built a new state-of-the-art facility 1.1 miles west of the old facility on Hwy. 291 and opened their doors on April 1, 2008.

The City of Salida and Chaffee County purchased the site of the old hospital and moved in to the remodeled structure in March 2010. The repurposed structure now houses City Hall, Police, Health & Human Services as well as other Community non-profit organizations.

The city has had some difficulty in maintaining a clear direction over the past decade. There have been seven different individuals in the position of City Administrator or Acting-Administrator since 2000. This condition along with staggered Council terms have made it difficult at times to know which direction the city was headed.

## Purpose of the Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is an officially adopted advisory document that outlines a community's goals for the future and provides direction for elected and appointed officials in making decisions regarding proposals for new development and the future needs of the community. It is a strategic tool to help a community guide development and investment decisions to achieve a healthy and balanced community. While this plan is primarily an advisory document, it provides guidance for decisions affecting growth and annexation, the use and development of land, preservation of open space, transportation systems and the expansion of public facilities and services.

The City of Salida adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in June of 2000 and as conditions of the city change it is important to revisit and update the plan. This update to the Comprehensive Plan builds upon and succeeds the 2000 City of Salida Comprehensive Plan.

The plan is a vehicle for the city to accomplish goals set forth for the next five, ten and twenty years. This plan establishes the community's shared vision for the future of Salida and the policies and implementation mechanisms that the city will use to achieve that vision.

## Creation and Adoption of the Plan

Public involvement from a diverse group was a central component of the planning process. The city received regular input from members of the community, elected, and appointed officials and city staff to help guide and shape the plan.

Multiple levels and types of community participation were used to facilitate the preparation of this plan. The process was led by the Salida Planning Commission assisted by staff of the community development department. City-wide meetings, direct mail and internet surveys, radio interviews, television coverage on Channel 10, input from community organizations, the city website, joint meetings with the City Council and outreach through local coffee shops were all utilized to solicit input during the process.

The public engagement process was critical to the success of this project. The public meetings were open to all, locally advertised and were conducted to encourage group discussion and to surface community preferences for the future of Salida. Those community preferences are reflected in the policies and actions in the plan.



January 12, 2010 Public Meeting

Following drafting of the plan a formal process of public hearings with the Planning Commission and the City Council were held to adopt the plan.

## Organization of the Plan

Salida's Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document that articulates a clear and concise vision for the future of Salida, contains adopted principles and policies and presents realistic action steps for achieving that vision.

## How to Use and Update the Plan

Each chapter of the plan is focused around one of nine plan components representing an area of interest based on citizen input.

- Community Character
- Land Use and Growth
- Economic Sustainability
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Recreation and Open Space
- Transportation
- Public Safety
- Community Services

Each of the substantive chapters (Chapters 2 – 10) is formatted similarly. The chapters begin with an introduction and a discussion of current conditions. Each chapter then includes several guiding principles along with policies and action items to implement the principles.

**Principles & Policies:** Within each chapter, general principles and their guiding policies related to that chapter's specific plan component are outlined, these are intended to be used for decision making throughout all levels of city government.

**Action Items:** In addition, within each chapter action items intended to implement the principles and policies are provided, specifying the steps necessary to make the chapter's principles become reality. These action items can be implemented by local organizations, through development and growth or by the fiscal decisions made by the City Council.

Chapter 11, Implementation, presents a general framework of how the policies and action items are prioritized. The prioritization is the result of community input and review by the Planning Commission and City Council and calls out various action items to achieve implementation. This chapter is considered to be evolving and should be reviewed annually to note items that have been accomplished and revisit priorities.

Salida will use the plan to guide its developing character, improve economic health, and maintain its position as a significant place in the region. The plan is advisory in nature and will serve as a guide to the City Council, Planning Commission, appointed boards, residents and city staff for decisions on regulations, investments, and programs related to land use and development, utilities, facilities, services and other city initiatives.

To maximize the benefit of the plan, it will be used by the city to help:

- Influence the city's annual work programs and budgets, as well as long-term initiatives and capital improvement projects.
- Guide creation of new and revised city ordinances.
- Guide city decision-making on issues regarding growth, land use, economic development, environmental quality, infrastructure improvements, and public services.
- Coordinate with community service groups and local agencies or businesses in joint community goal setting and action plans.
- Advise all private individuals and developers in initiating, preparing, and finalizing any type of land development or land use request to the city.

To help ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is a valid and up-to-date working document, it will be reviewed on an annual basis. The review will involve the following:

- Evaluate the city's decisions and activities relative to the plan's principles and policies.
- Review the plan's usefulness in providing direction for the decisions that were made during previous years (i.e. if different topics or format would be helpful, then they are to be duly noted for inclusion in the next revision).
- Identify any major changes in conditions and new priority items affecting the community, and include these for implementation in Chapter 11.
- Highlight specific action items that were completed and report on their status to the community.

The review will also allow the public to understand the city's progress in implementing its plan and any proposed policy changes affecting the community. The dialogue stimulated through the planning process should not end with the successful completion of the plan, for success will depend on this ongoing partnership. Public education about how to use the Comprehensive Plan will ensure that the community fully understands its future direction, thus empowering the citizens of Salida to guide their future.