

COMPREHENSIVE

PLAN

A Vision of the Future

2021-2026 **Town of Blue River**

Blue River Comprehensive Plan

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Definition: Comprehensive Planning is a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. The result is called a Comprehensive Plan or general plan that offers recommendations to the municipal governing body regarding public policies on a wide range of issues including transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing. Comprehensive Plans typically encompass large geographical areas, a broad range of topics, and cover long-term time horizon. In Colorado, the Comprehensive Plan is advisory in nature but serves an important and critical role in the formation of public policies and future laws.

The Town of Blue River's Comprehensive Plan is an officially adopted policy document that establishes the Town's goals and vision for the future. It provides direction for decisions affecting the use and development of land, recreation, preservation of open space, transportation systems, partnerships with other organizations, economic growth, the expansion and maintenance of public facilities and services, and the relationship between land use patterns and fiscal policies.

The original Comprehensive Plan was adopted in August 2015. This is an update and revision of that previously /adopted plan. The Comprehensive Plan Committee provided direction for the updated plan by reviewing and retaining relevant sections, public outreach through citizen Town Hall events, surveys from 2017 and 2019 conducted by the Citizen Advisory Committee as well as input from the Open Space and Trails Committee. The Comprehensive Plan Committee was challenged with preparing the plan during a pandemic which precluded meeting in person.

The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a general guide to property owners and developers to understand the community's vision and potential uses of existing land in and around the Town. The plan articulates the expectations about the physical form of development and assists developers in making informed land use decisions.

The Plan may be used to protect the unique qualities that brought residents to Blue River, the small rural, residential mountain town, close proximity to outdoor recreational opportunities, a pristine environment for residents and wildlife, and living in a healthy state of nature.

The Comprehensive Plan is not the land use code. It does not change existing regulation, nor does it create new regulations. It is an advisory document providing guidance to the governing body and commissions for future decision making on land use. The Comprehensive Plan is written to provide general policy direction while also providing recommended priorities and suggestions.



Plan Summary

Mission Statement

The Town of Blue River endeavors to nurture our serene mountain community by conserving our natural residential environment, promoting unity with our neighbors and surroundings, channeling the voice of our residents, and enhancing the quality of life for all.

Recreation

The Recreation Chapter provides goals and suggestions for planning to guide the future development and planning for recreation including open space, trails, parks, and the Goose Pasture Tarn. It focuses on the physical improvements and ways to improve the use and recreations within the Town. The Recreation Chapter focuses on the Goose Pasture Tarn, trails, recreation and connectivity, and open space.

Land Use

The Land Use Chapter provides recommendations for future development. The chapter focuses on landscaping, berms, signage, and architectural design. In addition, the chapter provides recommendations to address short-term rental regulations and housing.

Future Vision

The Future Vision Chapter outlines suggestions and recommendations for Town facilities, utilities, transportation, and potential economic development. The chapter addressed the desired vision of the future of the community and potential growth.

Statistics & Use

The final two chapters of the Comprehensive Plan provide a snapshot of the current demographics and state of the Town as well as future projection. Strategies are provided as a tool to achieving goals and visions outlined throughout the plan.



Parks, Trails, Open Space & Recreation



The Town of Blue River is a residential community located on the south end of the Ten Mile Range within the White River National Forest. Access to recreation and recreational opportunities is an important community asset to residents of the Town of Blue River. These land uses provide both passive and active recreation opportunities for residents and reinforce the outdoor lifestyle and connection to the mountain environment.

The Town has identified four areas of focus and future recreational opportunities: Goose Pasture Tarn, Trails, Parks/Recreation and Connectivity. The Comprehensive Plan Development Committee reviewed the focus areas, conducted a citizen Town Hall and a resident survey to gather input and ideas. In addition, input was sought from the Blue River Open Space & Trails Committee. The recommendations in this chapter are a compilation and consensus for the future of recreation in Blue River.



Focus Area I: Goose Pasture Tarn

Constructed in the early 1960's, the Goose Pasture Tarn, or "Tarn", is a key recreational asset for the Town of Blue River. The Tarn is a 771-acre-foot reservoir serving as the primary water source for the Town of Breckenridge and is part of the Upper Blue River watershed. Land around the Tarn is privately owned, while the Town of Blue River owns a portion of wetlands to the south of the Tarn. The Tarn is a recreational resource for fishing, canoes, kayaks, standup paddleboard, rowboats, and boats with electric trolling motors. Use and access to the Tarn is restricted for Blue River residents.

The 2015 Blue River Comprehensive Plan recommended minor improvements such as signage, trails, a dock, and improved parking.





Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Future Vision	Obtain ownership of land around the Tarn to preserve use and character while enhancing services and recreation. The Tarn Dam will be under construction until fall 2023. This provides a unique opportunity to address future ideas.
	Winter activity should be reviewed in the future depending on access and interest. Activities not offered in other areas of Summit County should be considered. Signage is necessary to illustrate winter use at own risk.
	The Tarn should remain natural and without structure or organization for Town resident use only.
Interpretive Signage &	Provide educational signage on the Tarn, history, natural habitat, and surrounding area.
Natural Trails	Signage constructed of natural materials, and which is unobtrusive or blends into the environment is encouraged.
	Trails should remain natural in character and new trails constructed to avoid significant disruption of the environment. It is encouraged to establish a sustainable trail around the Tarn connecting into the Blue River Trail system.
Future Facilities & Access	Enhance the resident's use of the Tarn with minimal impacts through an improved boat launch, picnic area and eco-friendly restroom facilities. Improvements should meet all applicable federal and state accessibility requirements.
	Small boats with electric motors, rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and standup paddleboards should be allowed for use and recreation on the Tarn subject to Town permitting.
	Enhancements to the boat ramp and parking area are needed to accommodate an increase in use at the Tarn. The Town is encouraged to review and improve the existing layout, parking, and safety access to the Tarn. Access should include natural/native vegetation to address erosion and restoration of the disturbed use.
	Access to the Tarn should continue to be restricted to Blue River residents. The current vehicular access to the Tarn at State Highway 9 should be redesigned and improved to ensure safe ingress and egress. Any improvement should preserve and enhance the surrounding natural environment. The Town is encouraged to work in cooperation with CDOT for improved access.
	To provide secure access to the Tarn, develop a restricted entry pass system. With limited area for parking and use, the Town is encouraged to develop messaging to residents to utilize trail connectivity from neighborhoods.
	Improved signage is encouraged to educate on restrictions and use.



Focus Area II: Trails

Trails located in the surrounding National Forest provide Town of Blue River residents access to their favored activities of hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and Nordic skiing. With the establishment of the Blue River Open Space and Trails Committee, the Town of Blue River has an opportunity to evaluate and pursue enhancements to access for residents and provide for local connectivity. The developed trail system should focus on conservation acknowledging public and private access while being mindful of property rights.





Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Open Space & Trails Documents	In 2018, the Town of Blue River established the Blue River Trails Committee now known as Blue River Open Space & Trails Committee. The Committee has dedicated time and resources towards the establishment of guiding documents to provide a vision and plan for trails in the future.
Open Space & Trails	Prior to the incorporation of the Town of Blue River in 1964, much of the area was privately owned, subdivided, managed, and sold for real estate development. Many of the privately recorded subdivision maps reference easements for pedestrian use. Town use of many easements have not been available to Town residents. As the Town of Blue River approaches build out, the ability to create open space and new trails will be further restricted.
	Potential trail route easements may cross private property. It will be necessary to secure new easements. There should be careful planning to minimize impacts on private property. Open space and safe passages should be considered.
	Funding should be appropriated for the acquisition of trail easements.
Signage	As trails are established, across private property, clear signage is necessary to ensure trail users remain on the trails. This will provide a level of comfort to property owners providing easements.
	Signage should be consistent throughout Town. Trail signage should be constructed to natural materials and should be unobtrusive or blend into the environment to provide direction as well as educational points of interest.
	Directional signage through neighborhoods to trail heads or activities is discouraged.
Trail Heads	The Town of Blue River seeks to mitigate neighborhood impacts and to preserve trails for residential use. Trailheads or other organized parking areas that provide access to trails should be discouraged to limit impact. Where trailheads are necessary, they should be limited in area and restricted in access. Proper signage should be established for parking restrictions.
	Trail connectivity, through Town neighborhoods, is encouraged utilizing existing parking. The Town is encouraged to promote trail connectivity from residences.



Focus Area III: Parks

Parks are an asset to the residents of the Town of Blue River. The Town of Blue River established the Robert A. Theobald Memorial Park in 2012 with the assistance of a grant from the Greater Outdoors Colorado funding program. The "Town Park" provides picnic tables, playground equipment and interpretive/educational signage along the Pennsylvania Creek. As the Town population grows, there is interest to expand use and activities via parks within the Town of Blue River.



Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Establish Neighborhood Parks	The Committee encourages the creation of additional neighborhood parks throughout Town. Parks provide residents an opportunity to gather for community and recreation. The Town is encouraged to develop parks as an additional amenity. The Town should explore the purchase of land for open space and park use. The development of smaller neighborhood parks is encouraged to allow for expanded activities and safe spaces for residents to enjoy without the need to leave the community. Land and area to allow for the for other recreational opportunities is desired by the residents.
Existing Park Expansion	The existing Town Park provides an array of activities primarily focused on young children. Expansion of the existing park should allow for additional recreational features and activities desired by the residents.





Focus Area IV: Recreation & Connectivity

State Highway 9 bisects the Town of Blue River. The highway is a narrow two-lane highway with limited shoulders and a speed limit of 50 mph. Safe multimodal transportation from Blue River to other communities within Summit County is a high priority.

Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Hoosier Recreation Path	Two studies and plans exist to create a safe path along the State Highway 9 corridor Hoosier Pass Recreation Path Feasibility Study as well as a CDOT Access Plan. These plans provide tools for the creation of a safe recreation path for the corridor.
	Funding for the establishment of the recreational path should be considered on an annual basis. Recommendations for possible funding include setting aside a percentage of taxes and fees collected or establishing a special tax as funding allows. It is also recommended to consider a community fundraising campaign.
	The Town of Blue River is encouraged to continue to work in partnership with Summit County, the Town of Breckenridge, CDOT and other partners to achieve this goal.
Subdivision Connectivity	Connectivity is viewed by the Committee as providing the ability for our residents to access outdoor recreation without the use of a motorized vehicle. Development of trail access to outdoor recreation without the use of automobiles or vehicles through the neighborhoods is encouraged.
Activities	Non-motorized, winter activities are encouraged on trails and open space. Use of the Tarn, during winter months, is at the users own risks.
	The Town is encouraged to promote recreation consistent with the character of Town and the preservation of open space and to protect areas for wildlife corridors preserving the rural mountain experience. This goal may be accomplished through the purchase, preservation, and designation of area s to serve as open space and trails, and to protect the natural watercourse of the Blue River, as well as the creations of zone districts and regulations that will reasonably limit development of areas more suited for the purposes of recreation and connectivity.



Land Use

Future Land Use Plan is a geographic and thematic representation of the future direction for physical planning called for in this chapter. This is a critical component of the Comprehensive Plan is a physical planning tool to assist in ensuring the future vision of the Town. It is advisory in nature, laying the foundation with recommendations for possible regulation and planning. It is neither zoning nor a zoning map. The land use plan does not restrict existing or lawfully established uses.

The Land Use Chapter provides goals and recommendations by identifying future development standards. The Town is comprised of platted subdivisions and are designated as developed neighborhoods. It is acknowledged that these areas will continue to build out and existing structures will be renovated or replaced.

The Town of Blue River is situated in the Upper Blue River Basin and Summit County's Upper Blue Master Plan calls for a transition from urban land use patterns in Breckenridge to a rural, mountain setting. Densities in Blue River are mixed, with some attached residential development mostly situated into landscape in such a way that the visual impacts are reduced, and the vistas are maintained. Future development in the Town of Blue River should continue to be sensitive to visual impacts and should encourage site design to blend the architecture into the landscape and to minimize impacts to wildlife while considering good stewardship of the environment.

Areas addressed in the Land Use Chapter consists of landscaping, berms, and architectural design. In addition, discussion and recommendations for short-term rentals and future housing is addressed. In reviewing the different components of this chapter, the Committee sectioned the Town into four key neighborhood areas. When considering regulations, it is recommended to consider the neighborhood character and location within the Town.

Neighborhood Areas:

- North End: Lakeshore; Spillway
- Historic Blue River: 96 Subdivision; 97 Circle Subdivision; Blue Rock Springs; Coronet; Crown; Golden Crown; Leap Year; Mountain View; Regal; Royal; Sherwood Forest; Sunny Slope; Wilderness.
- Larger Lots: 97 Sub South; Bryce Estates; Clyde Lode; Louise Placer; Smith Mining Claim.
- HOA Areas: Aspen View; DOT; McCullough Gulch Reserve; New Eldorado; Pennsylvania Canyon; Rivershore; Silverheels; Spruce Valley Ranch; Timber Creek Estates.







Regulations





Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Regulations	The character of Blue River is rural residential nestled within the White River National Forest. Regulations should be established to protect the character and not be inconsistent with the mission. The Town should ensure that regulations do not permit the construction of residences or structures that are inconsistent with the existing character within the same neighborhood. Inconsistency may result from building size (too large or too small), colors, materials, amount of glass surfaces; lot coverage, ridgeline, parking, driveway, garage, significant modification of the natural features of a building site including natural features or vegetation, and impacts associated with short-term rentals and home occupations. The Plan encourages flexible regulations to allow owners the reasonable
	opportunity to design residences provided that the character of the neighborhood is preserved and maintained.
	It is recommended to require open space and trail dedications as part of any annexation and to consider limiting annexations to larger lots.
	The Town is encouraged to acquire vacant lots or properties that are suitable for open space or trail use.
Signage	The Town should develop sign regulations as part of the Town Code.
	Regulations should provide for a reasonable ability for owners to convey messages permitted by the state and federal constitutions, but which discourage the proliferation of signs in size or number that would adversely impact the natural character of neighborhoods.
	Subdivision entry signs should be reasonably sized an; designed to ensure that the color and materials reflect the natural character of the community. These signs should be appropriately located to minimalize conflicts with vehicles and snow removal while preserving sight lines for turning vehicles. All entry signs shall be permanently maintained by a homeowner association or other entity.
Landscaping	The Town should encourage indigenous landscaping and establish landscaping guidelines.
	It is recognized that certain activities or conditions greatly impact the character of the Town including the creation and maintenance of berms, dead trees, and the lack of compliance of landscaping requirements by developers. The Town is encouraged to dedicate resources and enforcement to address issues that degrade or impair the quality and character of the community. Residents are encouraged to practice defensible space for wildfire mitigation.



Architectural Design



Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Lighting	The Town is encouraged to continue progress towards full dark sky requirements. Focus should begin with new construction and development with changes in existing lighting taking place over time as renovations and improvements are made.
Land Development	The Town should consider measures to best balance the reasonable right to development of property with the protection of the natural environment and specifically wetlands, river and riparian areas and easements, floodway and floodplains, and wildlife habitat. Ensure consideration of the expectations of development and character of the community as expressed in the original covenants and other land use documents governing subdivisions that were created prior to contemporaneously with the Town's incorporation. Measures may include a means of limitation on the construction of
	residential homes that are inconsistent in size and mass with the existing development pattern. Encourage regulations that will promote consistency in development of new residential homes with the character of the Town, such as using regulations that require minimum and maximum square footage based on size of lot for the floor area ratio. The Town should consider open space ratios with building rations and to limit homes greatly larger than the surrounding area. Regulations should allow the ability to increase the size of an existing home with consideration of the total lot size.



Short-term Rentals/Housing

Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Short-term Rentals	Short-term rentals are the rental of a room or residence for a period of less than 30-days and absent a signed lease. The Town is encouraged to monitor the number of short-term rental permits and ensure a reasonable balance between different types of housing opportunities as well as ensuring protection of the community character.
	It is encouraged to develop messaging to reach short-term renters and visitors regarding requirements for managing trash and for reducing fire risks. Messaging should include QR codes with links to information on rules, and Town alerts.
	It is encouraged to review the possibility of central trash collections in the Town to reduce the negative impacts with wildlife.
	A cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to evaluate the overall impact of short-term rentals on the community, the administrative staff, the road, and public infrastructure.
Housing	The Town should monitor the forms occupancy of residences (e.g., short and long-term rentals, full-time residents, and second homeowners) to best track and measure the community character. This information could be used in designing regulatory and other tools to best preserve the desired community character.
	Accessory dwelling units should be considered as a tool to address long- term rental housing shortages. A review of the existing code and potential impacts should be conducted. Preserving the community character should be an important consideration when evaluating the potential for accessory dwelling units. Accessory dwelling units should not be allowed for short- term rental.
	Encourage the Town to explore all factors that contribute to housing challenges within the Town. The Town should consider creating a mix and balance of full-time residents, second homeowners, short and long-term renters, and visitors to maintain the community character of Blue River.



Future Vision

In reviewing this chapter, the Comprehensive Plan Committee reviewed surveys conducted by the Citizen Advisory Committee in 2017 and 2019. The committee also reviewed and retained much of the language used in the 2015 adopted plan.





Trend/Issue	Key Strategies & Priority Actions
Transportation	The Town is encouraged to work with Summit County Government and the Summit Stage to continue bus service along the Highway 9 corridor.
	Additional and better-defined bus stops along the State Highway 9 corridor should be explored with an increase in the frequency of bus availability as well as development of a park-n-ride facility serving Blue River residents.
	It is encouraged to work with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) for increased safety and speed reduction along the Highway 9 corridor.
	The Town should refer to the CDOT Access Control Plan for guidance and direction on future improvements including a recreation path to encourage bike use along the corridor.
	The Town is encouraged to seek funding opportunities to fund future transportation possibilities and improvements.
	Where the paving of roads is desired, cost effective and feasible, the Town should explore situations where the paving of roads is feasible. New subdivisions should be required to provide for paved roads. When making improvements to the roads, the Town should refer to the adopted Capital Improvement Plan.
Community Vision	It is recommended for the Town to develop a Town Center for community gatherings, a park, and a pavilion. The Town Center area should consider a residential focused located or a setting near Town Hall and potentially incorporate open space areas or be located along Blue River Road.
	The Town should identify parcels centrally located and appropriate for a community pavilion, park and community gathering or community event area for resident use in a Town Park setting while maintaining the natural community character.
	The Town should research opportunities for conservation easements and acquire wetlands to preserve the Town's natural attributes, possibly utilizing a third-party land trust for the conservation of the land.
	It is recommended to research opportunities for conservation easements and wetlands for open space opportunities to preserve community character and preservation of the residential community.
	The Town should evaluate the appropriate housing mix for the Town that will best maintain the desired community character. This may be accomplished by exploring limits and regulations for short-term rentals to ensure the future of the community character. A review of the cost/benefit of short-term rentals should be conducted to ensure a community balance.
Economic Development	Ensure regulations for homebased businesses that will promote compatibility of these businesses with the desired residential community character.



	Develop additional funding sources for the funding of desired community amenities, improvements, and needs. Where possible, the Town is encouraged to annex areas that will enhance the community's character while providing for a local source of desired goods and services. The Town should assess attitudes towards short-term rentals to determine potential regulations. The Town should consider increasing the short-term rental tax to provide funding for community impacts.
Facilities & Utilities	The Town should coordinate with special districts for sewer, infrastructure, and utility improvements to provide for greater uniformity in the availability of such serves to residents, improved access to technology and enhanced livability while being sensitive to the environment, as appropriate, guided through public outreach. Encourage the expansion of telecommunications and to review improvements and expansion to existing facilities as needed. The Town should encourage the burying of utilities as improvements are conducted. The Town is encouraged to require new, major subdivisions to pave roads and bury all utilities.

What is Our Future?

The Town of Blue River is a special place. Clean air and water, spectacular mountain vistas, abundant open spaces, diverse wildlife and vegetation, easy access to outdoor recreation and a small-town atmosphere are some of the attributes which define the community. It is the value of these intangibles that defines the physical character of the community. The Town's high alpine setting and pristine natural environment are the mainstay which attracts residents and visitors to this area and defines the community for what it is today.

The Town of Blue River is situated in the Upper Blue River Basin and Summit County's Upper Blue Master Plan calls for a transition from urban land use patterns in Breckenridge to a rural, mountain setting. Densities in Blue River are mixed, with some attached residential development mostly situated into landscape in such a way that the visual impacts are reduced, and the vistas are maintained. Future development in the Town of Blue River should continue to be sensitive to visual impacts and should encourage site design to minimize impacts to wildlife.

The Town is encouraged to consider surrounding area plans where they align with community values guided by Town resident input.





In 2017, the Citizen Advisory Committee conducted a resident survey. Below is information from the survey considered to be a consistent community feeling and vision for the future.

What is your Blue River?

- Private and peaceful residential living.
- A rural community where people can live in a natural environment.
- A place to escape the concrete jungle and create memories for our family.
- My home.
- A place where neighbors can feel safe.
- Relaxing Town close to the action but a respire from it as the same time with nature and beauty.
- Idyllic, serene setting in the woods shared with abundant wildlife.
- A Town that is looking forward.
- Relaxation, great outdoor activities, great neighbors.
- Peaceful haven.
- A beautiful and quiet place to live and raise a family.





Statistics

















Use of the Comprehensive Plan

Each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan contains a distinct type of planning guidance so the intended decision making varies between chapters. The following provides the Town a brief use description specific for the intended user for each chapter of the plan.

By Town Officials

The plan helps Town Officials to support the Town's mission statement. Many of the goals and strategies are intended to be accomplished by the Town alone, such as updating the zoning code. However, many oof the goals and strategies will require partnerships with other entities and through the existing committees and commissions. The plan lays out the purpose and projects for those partnerships.

In addressing land use, the plan is to provide physical planning guidance for future zoning code updates and development regulations. It should be used as an advisory guide in reviewing specific development projects as directed by Town ordinances.

By Developers

The plan alerts developers to the outcomes toward which the community strives. The intent is to provide guidance to assist developers in understanding the Town's strategic direction. Development proposals should be generally consistent with the plan to generate public support for the proposal. Land use design projects should align with the community's values to maintain and enhance the characteristics of the Town.

By Citizens

The plan represents the community's vision for the future. It depicts the areas of Blue River for residents to consider the desired future conditions for reach part and the relationships between the citizens and the Town as a whole.





Appendices

