LARIMER COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MOUNTAIN RESILIENCE PLAN
PHASE 1 OF A NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

VISIONING:
PRELIMINARY RESULTS
AUGUST 2017
**Visioning Event Materials.** Draft materials were placed on flash drives in areas where internet coverage is lacking.
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COMMMUNITY DIRECTION FOR THE PLAN

The Mountain Resilience Plan process relies on broad and representative community input to establish a unified vision that clearly articulates the shared values of the mountain community residents. This vision builds on the established direction and values of the 1997 Master Plan, 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, and the Larimer Community Resiliency Framework, recognizing the unique characteristics and changing trends in the mountain communities. The vision and direction for the Mountain Resilience Plan has been refined through conversations at visioning events, an online Vision Survey, and workshops with the Stakeholder Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

VISIONING EVENTS

Outreach efforts are critical to building consensus around the direction and vision for the Mountain Resilience Plan. In order to effectively communicate goals and objectives for the Mountain Resilience Plan process, clearly define the problems the Plan is trying to solve, and receive feedback about what residents envision for their mountain community, the planning team and County staff attended three separate visioning outreach events throughout June: Mountain Lions Pancake Breakfast, Big Thompson Canyon Pancake Breakfast, and Glacier View Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. These events also provided an opportunity to distribute information and resources to the public about Plan process and Foundation phase.

To integrate other County planning efforts, County representatives also presented information about the updated Transportation Master Plan, broadband programs, and Larimer Connects. Residents were notified about the events through posters, factsheets, and postcards throughout western Larimer County, and residents were also encouraged to take an online survey through the Plan’s website to gather input from those that did not attend events. The Foundation phase document and survey as well as the draft Transportation Master Plan were also loaded onto USB flash drives and distributed at key locations throughout the mountain communities and at the three events for those residents without reliable access to internet.
The three community events targeted the community areas of Red Feather Lakes, Crystal Lakes, US 34, Pinewood Springs, Big Thompson, Glen Haven, Storm Mountain, Glacier View, Livermore, and Poudre Canyon areas. Among the three events, around 400 attended with over 200 members of the public reached. At the events, paper surveys were completed, and the consultant team, county staff, and members of the Stakeholder Committee interacted with the public to hear residents’ vision for mountain communities.

**COMMITTEE VISIONING WORKSHOPS**

The consultant team and county staff hosted workshops with the Stakeholder Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners for each of the six frameworks. Committee members helped refine plan themes, set guiding principles, and debated preliminary strategies and tools to achieve the vision for the mountain communities. Though a combination of voting, written comments, and open discussion, ideas were refined to determine relevancy to and effectiveness in the mountain communities. Their feedback informed the content and materials at the two Community Choices events for public input on guiding principles and strategies and tools.

**VISIONING ONLINE**

**ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

"Mountain communities have unique issues that are different than aspects of life in flat land communities."

"We can get community members to show up immediately after a disaster when they need help, but don’t have a compelling long-term vision that will keep them engaged long-term for preparedness."

"The new reservoir in Pinewood Springs is puny, more reservoirs are needed above Big Elk Meadows and in Pinewood Springs to protect the wildlife in river during drought years."

"We are concerned about losing our rural character as more businesses push for more tourists and more homes are converted to short term vacation rentals. There IS a carrying capacity in the mountains, including Estes and the park, and it seems that capacity has been reached. Planning needs to reflect that, despite the arguments you will get from those that want to bring more and more people here to buy t-shirts."

"State of the art communications has no impact on the natural beauty, but has a big impact on the viability of the community - Ideally a broadband (1Gbit+) infrastructure would be available to all residences in the hills."
In order to reach residents that did not attend the in-person events, an online survey was available from May through July. Survey questions were intended to mirror the conversation at the events by asking participants what they love about their mountain community, and how their area should change (or not change) over the next 20 years.

**ONLINE RESPONSES**

**TRENDING IMPROVEMENT NEEDS**

- Traffic on Highway 36; need more passing lanes
- Minimize new development, or negative impacts of commercial uses
- No changes
- Slower speeds and traffic controls
- Improved broadband internet and cell service
- Road maintenance

- Bike lane from Lyons to Estes
- More local control and subarea planning
- Continue local control over snow removal and road maintenance
- Welcome small businesses like grocery store or gas station
- Water quality
- Wildfire mitigation and Firewise programs

**Total responses: 67**

**Most respondents:** Pinewood Springs

What do you love about your mountain community?
COMMUNITY
- Government which governs least, governs best.
- Planning is not a hindrance but a guideline for growth. Keep an open mind and flexibility.
- Rural Larimer County will be valued and supported by long-range strategic planning and respect the residents’ rights and opinions.
- Building should feel more cooperative while working with the building department.
- Controlled growth and community engagement is especially important in rural areas.

ECONOMY
- Tourism is great until it affects the character of the land with traffic, littering and uneducated campers.
- Establish a good working relationship between the County and mountain businesses.
- A prosperous economy is powered by freedom and free market principles.
- Small businesses, motels, and campgrounds are every bit as threatened as agriculture where housing developments are taking over.
- The main inhibitor to employment in Red Feather is high speed internet - inability for professionals to work at home.
- Don’t structure mountain communities around heavy economic growth.
- Emphasize education in tolerance and environmental sustainability.

HEALTH & SOCIAL
- Collaboration and advocacy is important.
- Provide education in CERT program, self-sufficiency education, personal empowerment.
- Provide professional and competent health care by more actively monitoring those responsible.
- Sometimes communities need to be helped out even if they attempt to be self-sufficient.
- The 2013 floods proved we can take care of ourselves.
- Our county, state, and national taxes should guarantee a certain amount of protection and “preparedness.”
- Federal and state government should be included in promoting collaboration.

HOUSING
- Mountain communities do not have neighborhoods.
- Protect the rural nature of mountain communities.
- Economic factors determine the housing and transportation realities in our area and that is as it should be.

INFRASTRUCTURE
- Yes to transportation alternatives. Consider shuttles between Estes and Lyons.
- Maintain roads as foundation.
- Support high-speed internet access to rural communities.
- No public transportation.
- A bike lane on Rt 36 MM20 to MM1 would be helpful.
- Mountain communities have little to no trash removal options.
- Water and sewer availability will inhibit future growth and will impact health and safety in the fairly near future.
- We have a lot of power surges and outages. There is no redundancy.

WATERSHEDS & NATURAL RESOURCES
- Financially support volunteer fire departments.
- Revise open space rules to allow horseback riding and hunting dog training.
- Identify and respect natural and cultural resources.
- Focus on the ecology of the rivers, especially the Little Thompson.
- Protect our natural resources and open space with adequate resources for fire protection.
- Loss of clean water would kill Red Feather. Both the lakes and domestic water are at risk.
- Expand cell phone coverage and design to run in adverse conditions.
- Emphasize disaster preparedness and infrastructure needs.
STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

The Plan Themes resulting from the Foundation and Visioning processes for the mountain communities are the value and vision statements for rural western Larimer County; they are statements of principle which inform the Plan’s Guiding Principles, supporting policies, and associated strategies and tools.

The hierarchy of the Mountain Resilience Plan is:

PLAN THEMES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

POLICIES

STRATEGIES + TOOLS
A VISION: PLAN THEMES

COMMUNITY

1. The planning and development review process and supporting regulations shall be open, consistent and predictable, and balance the needs and interests of the community with the rights of individuals.

2. The Master Plan and the supporting programs and Land Use Code shall be consistent.

3. Planning is a proactive process.

4. Rural communities and agriculture are valued and supported by long-range, regional, comprehensive planning.

5. The County collaborates with citizens, mountain communities, local governments, businesses, non-profits and community organizations to create the County’s future.

ECONOMY

1. Recreation and tourism will remain a viable long-term segment of the mountain communities’ economic, cultural and social fabric.

2. The planning process and supporting regulations shall support a sustainable, resilient, and diverse economy with equal access to housing opportunity, employment, and upward mobility.

3. A prosperous economy powered by innovation, connectivity, high-quality education and training, a business-friendly atmosphere, well-paying jobs, attainable and diverse housing types, and technology and transportation networks that keep pace with growth where appropriate.

4. Resilient infrastructure that allows for viability of small businesses and the provision of basic services to residents is critical to the mountain communities’ regional economic success.

5. The economic resiliency of mountain communities relies on high value, low impact job creation and retention to proactively encourage innovation and diversification and prevent downturns.

Red Feather Lakes. Photo: Sue Stevens.
**HEALTH & SOCIAL**

1. The County’s strength lies in the collective diversity, talents, and character of our people. The County encourages and fosters an environment of respect, supporting both physical and mental health.

2. The County encourages safe and reliable infrastructure, connectivity, and services, compatible with rural activities and needs.

3. The County places a priority on our youth and are supportive of local schools.

4. Through partnerships and education, the County ensures mountain communities understand their risks so that communities and individuals can take responsibility for their own collective preparedness.

**HOUSING**

1. The County supports logical settlement patterns and locations that reflect the existing open, rural character as well as the natural constraints and opportunities of mountain areas.

2. The County supports the viability of a diverse range of housing options.
1. Adequate public and/or private facilities and services shall be provided concurrent with development.
2. The County encourages a balanced economically feasible multi-modal transportation system for safe and efficient travel in the County.
3. Critical infrastructure has built-in redundancy.

1. Land use will be suitable for and compatible with the environmental characteristics of the site.
2. Natural and cultural resources will be identified, conserved and protected.
3. Open lands and waterways shall continue to be a defining feature of the landscape of Larimer County.
4. The County protects our air, water supply, open spaces and natural resources. The County is prepared for wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters.
5. The natural environment is valued, protected, and responsibly managed. Infrastructure is moved from/kept out of mapped hazard areas.