

Vision 2050 Workgroup Memo

TO: Vision 2050 Workgroup
FROM: Vision 2050 Staff and Project Team
DATE: February 4, 2025
RE: Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan Draft 1-29-26 Review

SUMMARY/MEETING FOCUS:

This meeting will provide an opportunity for the Workgroup to review progress on the Vision 2050 Comprehensive Plan, including the overall process and community engagement that informed the draft document. The Workgroup last met in June 2025, so this meeting is also an opportunity to review progress since that meeting, including work on Community Transect Zone Delineation, Character Definitions, and the Community Mapping Exercise.

The Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan has been released for public input, including referral to Caucuses, municipalities, adjacent counties, and agencies in advance of the Planning Commission public hearings, beginning on March 3, 2026. The Workgroup is also asked to review the Comprehensive Plan and share any feedback at the February 4th meeting. The Plan is included to this memo as Attachment A.

The Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan structure includes six chapters: Introduction, Existing Conditions and four topical chapters of Natural Environment, Built Environment, Community & Economic Health, and Regional Approach. As requested throughout the community engagement process, including by Workgroup members, an Implementation Matrix has been prepared to identify how the Plan's policies will be implemented. This is included as Attachment B. Note that the Implementation Matrix will not be formally adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan, but will serve as a companion roadmap to identify and prioritize actions, including code updates, programs and policies, County plans, and partner agencies integral to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan over time. Additionally, staff have prepared a separate matrix showing how key CGAC recommendations and Caucus Master Plan themes are incorporated into the different policies in the Plan. This *CGAC and Caucus Recommendations and Policy Summary Dashboard* is included as Attachment C.

The draft Comprehensive Plan has been updated from the 8/15/25 draft based on significant input received from the community, Caucuses, Workgroup, BOCC, and a series of Planning & Zoning Commission workshops held throughout the fall of 2026. A summary of the full scope of community engagement throughout the Vision 2050 project from 2024-20205 and feedback received from the public is included as Attachment D.

BACKGROUND:

Vision and Values

The road to the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan has included a variety of studies, analyses, mapping exercises, and community engagement. All of the work has been grounded in the Vision and Values established by the CGAC as part of their process and reaffirmed by the BOCC and community through the Vision 2050 process: ***Implement bold climate action while balancing our economy, preserving our rural***

and wild lands, and supporting an equitable and affordable community. This statement’s community values provide the framework for the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan. The Plan addresses four overarching themes, each organized as a topical chapter with an accompanying goal statement and supporting policies.

- **Natural Environment:** Preserve, conserve, and protect the rural character, wild lands, and natural environment of Pitkin County.
- **Built Environment:** Ensure that all elements of the built environment - land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure - work together to reflect our community values.
- **Community & Economic Health:** Pitkin County is a healthy, safe, and inclusive place with an economy that supports a sustainable, equitable, year-round quality of life.
- **Regional Approach:** Collaborate valley-wide to design and implement systemic solutions to our most challenging and complex challenges, from transportation to housing to climate. One jurisdiction cannot do it alone.

Intensity Study

As part of the work in the summer of 2025, the team completed an Intensity Study that explored the impacts of large homes (those over 5,750 sq ft) on employment, transportation, and climate. The findings of this study were compiled into the [Vision 2050 Intensity Study Whitepaper](#) and shared with the Workgroup and BOCC in summer 2025 and provided a foundation for plan updates and community engagement in the fall. As discussed in previous meetings, the Intensity Study confirms assumptions that were made in the CGAC process - that large homes have a disproportionate impact on Pitkin County’s and the region’s transportation systems, energy use, and employment. More specifically, the findings of the Intensity Studies found that:

- Growth is no longer defined simply as density, but also as intensity and activity.
- Homes above 5,750 square feet have a disproportionate impact on unincorporated Pitkin County across the climate, transportation, and economic sectors.
- Due to the rise in activity/service generated by large homes in our rural areas, there is misalignment between Pitkin County infrastructure and nodes of activity.
- These trends have direct impacts on our climate and environmental values.
- The Land Use Code can be used to influence our community values and directly shape the land use pattern we want to see in unincorporated Pitkin County.
- Our land use policies must strategically work to minimize the impacts of large residential development intensity across economic, transportation, and climate sectors while incentivizing small homes and supporting our local workforce.

Pitkin County Community Transect

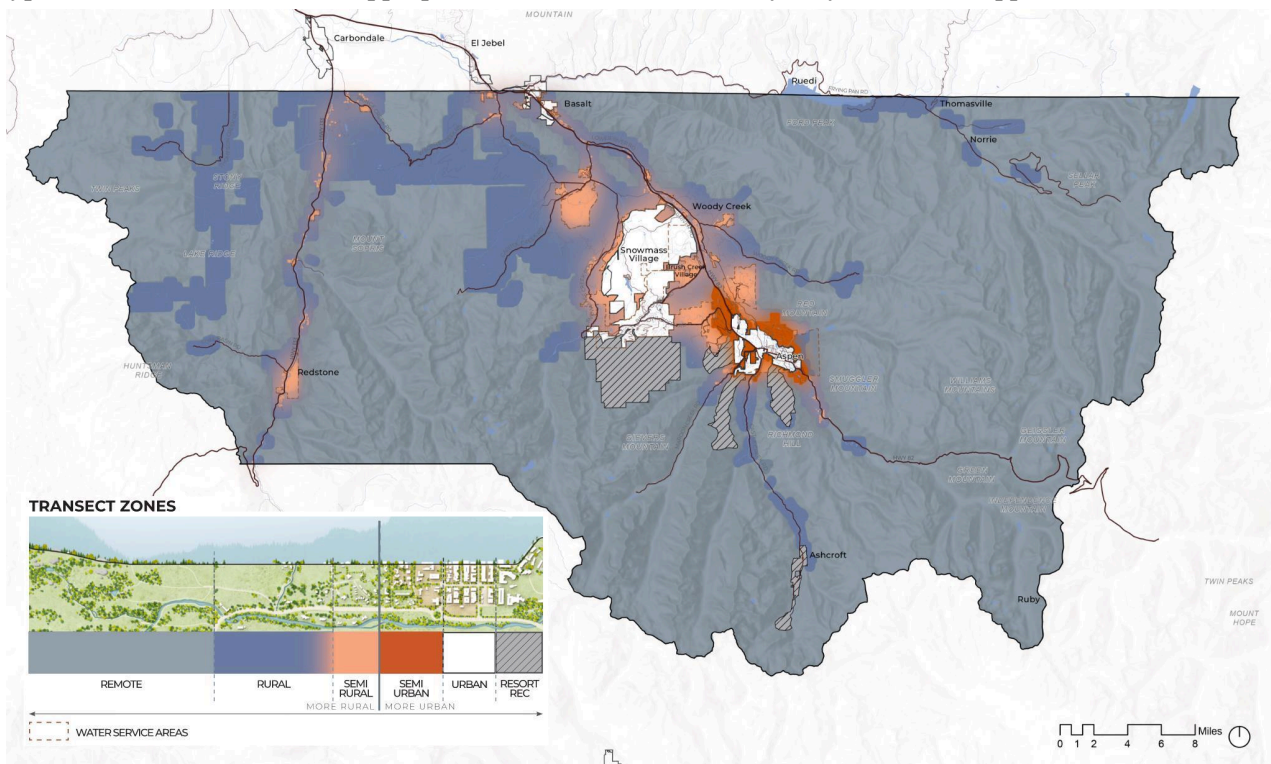
Using the Intensity Study, as well as existing policies related to growth and development, the team created a Pitkin County Community Transect that illustrates six geographic areas in the County representing different types of land and development characteristics: Remote, Rural, Semi-Rural, Semi-Urban, Urban, and Resort Recreation.

- **Remote areas** are defined by their natural landscapes with minimal human disturbance and limited if any infrastructure. These locations are typically in state and federal ownership as protected lands and support conservation of natural resources, wildlife habitat, backcountry access, and low-impact

recreational use.

- **Rural areas** feature expansive open lands that allow for very limited recreational and residential uses. These areas preserve Pitkin County’s agriculture producing landscapes, scenic viewsheds, and rural character. Development in these areas relies on wells and septic systems.
- **Semi-Rural areas** serve as buffers between rural and more developed areas, often including single-family homes and agricultural structures clustered together, while maintaining open space. These include established neighborhoods and are often served by utilities, but may be located on well or septic.
- **Semi-Urban areas** include established neighborhoods, open space, multi-family, and mixed-use areas. These include areas within an Urban Growth Boundary. Many of these areas are serviced by existing municipal infrastructure and utilities, or could be if developed.
- **Urban areas** are centers of more dense development and include a mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses, supported by municipal infrastructure and services. These areas include incorporated municipalities.
- **Resort Recreation areas** are designed for seasonal and year-round tourism, anchored by recreational amenities like ski areas and trails. These areas include a mix of open lands, lodging, ski lifts, infrastructure and on-mountain service buildings, commercial, and residential uses.

Our team mapped these land and development characteristics county-wide in order to illustrate the locations of these areas in relation to existing services, including water service districts, and major transportation corridors. These maps provided the foundation of community engagement activities in the fall, allowing community members to identify areas of Pitkin County where they would like to see “more of” and “less of” various types of uses, including different housing types, short term rentals, and special events. These engagement activities furthered the policy direction established by the CGAC and provided input as to what type of uses and activities are appropriate and where in the County they should be supported.



Source: Pitkin County Vision 2050 Summer/Fall 2025 Community Engagement Transect Map

Robust Community Engagement

The 2025 fall community engagement events included multiple opportunities for community members to be involved and provided the team with extensive feedback on the Comprehensive Plan direction. The engagement was rigorous and included: 3 pop-up events, 6 open houses throughout the community, an online webinar, attendance at Dia de los Muertos First Friday event, 2 community surveys, and informational blasts via radio, newspaper, email and door-to-door canvassing. This provided a solid foundation for the final document before you today. A summary of the public engagement for the entire efforts spanning from 2024 through 2025 is included in Attachment D.

Linking the Comprehensive Plan and CGAC Recommendations and Caucus Themes

Much of the work in the Vision 2050 process is rooted in the Community Growth Advisory Committee's (CGAC) work and carries forward many of the core themes found in the Caucus Master Plans. In an effort to show this linkage, the team has developed a Dashboard that indicates how each of the CGAC recommendations and Caucus themes are reflected in the Comprehensive Plan. These recommendations are identified in the Implementation Plan as a high priority or ongoing implementation item. See Attachment C for this Dashboard.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. **Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan Key Policies - Existing and New:** The team will share information about the key policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan. These policies reflect existing policies that have been carried forward and/or new policies based upon the CGAC recommendations and community input. The Vision 2050 Team anticipates providing a brief summary of existing and new policies at the meeting, and focusing the discussion with the Workgroup on the integration of the CGAC and Workgroup recommendations into the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan.

Existing Policies, Carried Forward

A majority of the policies are a reflection of existing policies, such as:

- Agricultural lands preservation
- TDRs as a tool for rural preservation
- Environmental stewardship
- Preserve Wildlife, Habitat, and Biodiversity
- Preserve Air Quality
- Protect Scenic Quality
- Manage Recreation
- Ensuring development provides its proportionate share of community impacts
- Preserving and protecting water resources
- Lifelong services
- Hazard Avoidance & Mitigation (wildlife, habitat, geologic, wildfire)
- Resiliency Planning
- Economic diversification and resiliency

New Policies

The new policies included are primarily based on direction from the CGAC Recommendations

Report (2023), alignment with community plans (e.g. Climate Action Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan), county-wide recommendations from Caucus Master Plans, continued feedback from the Workgroup, Intensity Study findings, state requirements (e.g. water/land use alignment, recreation), best practices, and confirmed through the extensive community engagement process. The Planning Commission is tasked with making and adopting the Plan in accordance with CRS 30-28-106 and has worked with staff through ongoing Worksessions to further refine the policies in the Plan. A selection of these key new policies include:

Chapter 03 - Natural Environment: The Natural Environment chapter consolidates existing policies carried forward and reaffirms direction from the Pitkin County Land Use Code and Caucus Master Plans regarding preserving and protecting our natural environment, deploying county regulations and programs to support our natural environment, mitigating human impacts to our natural environment, reaffirming broad partnerships for broad environmental protections, and carrying forward Caucus Master Plan input for the natural environment.

> Policy direction includes:

- Furthering our community commitment to wildlife preservation including migration & movement corridors
- Increasing water adequacy requirements and water conservation for new and existing development
- Improving the policy language regarding development's impact to scenic views
- Reinforcing our commitment for public land protections
- Supporting coordinated resiliency planning efforts, including wildfire

Chapter 04 - Built Environment: The Built Environment chapter contains policy direction based on the CGAC Recommendations in addition to input received from the public during fall engagement events, October Open Houses, Caucus meetings, community survey results, general public input, internal staff input, Board of County Commissioner and Planning Commissioner feedback. This chapter provides direction to reduce intensity related to large residential development in rural areas, incentivize small homes, strengthen land use and building codes, prioritize community housing that meets our community values, and stand strong on environmental protections.

> Policy direction includes:

- Creation of development standards to achieve climate action goals, including support for net zero energy in residential development, electrification, lowering energy consumption, reducing house size and creating resilient infrastructure.
- Managing and mitigating the intensity of large homes in rural areas of the county, including policies supporting the reduction in maximum house size, incentives for small homes, utilization of development standards, managing intensity of large homes, limiting exemptions from growth management, minimizing intensity impacts across climate, economic and transportation sectors, and reconfigurations of the TDR program to reduce floor area. These policies are further tracked in Attachment C, which pairs the CGAC Recommendations and Caucus Themes to the Policies in the Plan.
- Utilizing incentives in the Land Use and Building Code to support the types of development in alignment with community values such as small homes, high performing buildings and

preservation of rural character.

- Strategies to house our community through incentivizing Caretaker Dwelling Units (CDUs), continuing to prioritize community housing within existing Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) while allowing community housing outside of the Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) in limited circumstances when there is sufficient infrastructure.
- Reaffirming the role of Caucuses including the function of their Caucus Master Plans and the relationship to the county-wide Comprehensive Plan. This policy provides clarity on the role of the Comprehensive Plan and the various Caucus Master Plans, stating: *The Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan provides the overall framework and direction for planning in Pitkin County in alignment with county-wide values. The Caucus Master Plans provide detailed and specific recommendations for their geographic areas. Any action committing land to development or a change in land use shall be reviewed for consistency with the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan and applicable Caucus Master Plan. Where there is any conflict between the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan and a Caucus Master Plan, the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan takes priority. (For more on Caucuses, see p. 12-13 and p.99-100 in the Draft Comprehensive Plan, Attachment A).*

Chapter 05 - Community and Economic Health: The Community & Economic Health chapter focuses on the connection between community and economic health, quality of life, and access to services, carrying forward the direction of the CGAC recommendations and incorporating community input from Caucus Master Plans, Pitkin County Public Health and Human Services Departments, broad community outreach, Open Houses, and community survey feedback. The policies in this chapter outline a path toward a healthy, sustainable community.

> Policy direction includes:

- Supporting all aspects of personal health, including physical, social, mental, and behavioral.
- Providing services for all phases of life.
- Supporting Pitkin County's workforce through economic and job diversification.
- Acknowledging and supporting critical community services and those who perform them.
- Providing local food security.
- Supporting emergency management and other core County operations.
- Seeking implementation of the County's hazard mitigation plans.

Chapter 06 - Regional Approach: The Regional Approach chapter focuses on valley-wide collaboration to address complex community challenges alongside regional partners. This chapter underscores the sentiment of the CGAC report that regional collaboration is essential to avoid duplicated efforts and a united front in the face of valley-wide challenges.

> Policy direction includes:

- Regional transportation, including a call to action for regional planning
- Climate action efforts across the region
- Strategic partnerships across municipalities and adjacent counties
- Watershed protections

2. **Community Housing Direction:** Community housing policy direction is a key aspect of the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan that carries forward the intent established by the CGAC Final Report and includes substantial community input. All of the policies related to community housing are consolidated into a single section in the Built Environment chapter, Section 03 Community Housing. The team will review this direction with the Workgroup, seeking comments regarding the final draft policies and the linkage of the location of housing to available infrastructure.

Using the Pitkin County Community Transect Map, area characteristics, availability of water service, and the intensity studies, the community was asked to provide feedback on the most appropriate places for different types of residential development. The location of existing water service providers was a key factor in these conversations to ensure that any adjustments to housing types (such as to duplexes or multi-family) could access water service. Community input and technical data were layered together to inform the policies related to community housing locations, discussed in Built Environment chapter, Section 03 Community Housing. While location of community housing within the UGBs is still the priority, the CGAC recommendations in conjunction with public input merit new policy direction to allow for community housing beyond the UGBs in order to support attainable and available community housing in balance with our longstanding values for preservation of rural character, the natural environment and water conservation. The policy included in Section 03 - Community Housing of the Built Environment Chapter, Policy 03.14 articulates the CGAC direction informed by community input to guide the placement of community housing. Implementation of this policy may require changes to the Pitkin County Land Use Code. *(See p. 108 in the Draft Comprehensive Plan, Attachment A)*

Broad community support has been expressed for small single family and caretaker dwelling units as the most appropriate type and scale of housing to accommodate housing need in balance with community character, values and goals. See Section 03 - Community Housing, of the Built Environment Chapter, Policy 03.8 for the full policy text to leverage Caretaker and Employee Dwelling Units (CDU and EDU) to house our community. *(See p. 107 in the Draft Comprehensive Plan, Attachment A)*

3. **Review of Implementation Matrix:** Staff will present highlights of the Implementation Matrix with a particular emphasis on the CGAC Recommendations and Caucus Themes Dashboard, with a focus on the actions highlighted by staff that relate to recommended code updates. Implementation of the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan falls into four categories and is identified in terms of priority (low, medium, high, ongoing).
 - **Land Use and Building Code amendments.** These include updates to zoning, development standards, subdivision, building, and energy codes to align these regulations with the goals and policies of the Plan.
 - **Specific actions associated with County Plans** (Climate Action Plan, Emergency Management Plan, etc.). These ensure the Comprehensive Plan is integrated with and supports other adopted countywide plans.
 - **Programs and Policies.** These include new or ongoing initiatives, programs, education and outreach, incentives, or services that directly advance the strategies outlined in the Plan.

- **Coordination with partner agencies.** This includes collaborative efforts with regional, state, and federal partners to achieve shared planning outcomes and leverage available resources.

To facilitate Workgroup members' review before the meeting and discussions, Staff has attached the Draft Comprehensive Plan (Attachment A), the Draft Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix (Attachment B), CGAC Recommendations and Caucus Themes Policy Summary (Attachment C) and Engagement Summary 2024-2025 (Attachment D).

NEXT STEPS:

The draft Comprehensive Plan is now available for comment and review. It was released on January 29 to allow a 30-day comment period for Caucuses, regional local governments, the Workgroup, and the community. Written comments can be provided to the Vision 2050 email address, vision2050@pitkincounty.com. Comments received by February 23rd will be included in the Planning Commission packet materials for the first public hearing on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 4:30pm.

The anticipated review and adoption timeline is as follows:

- *2/4 Workgroup Meeting*
- 2/10 - BOCC Work Session
- 3/3 - P&Z Public Hearing
- 3/10 - P&Z Public Hearing
- 3/17 - P&Z Public Hearing
- 5/13 - BOCC Regular Meeting for Approval

Following the adoption of the Vision 2050 Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan, the Vision 2050 team will begin work on code amendments to implement the policies. The Workgroup can expect additional topical meetings to review key areas such as TDRs, house size, and development standards. These meetings will be open to all Workgroup members, though members may choose to focus on topics of particular interest. The team will provide background materials, analyses, and recommended approaches in advance of each session to facilitate informed discussion. Regular updates on progress and the meeting schedule will continue to be shared as details are finalized, ensuring the Workgroup remains engaged throughout the implementation process.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A - Link: [1.29.26 Draft Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan](#)
- Attachment B - Link: [Draft Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix](#)
- Attachment C - [CGAC Recommendations and Caucus Themes Policy Dashboard](#)
- Attachment D - Link: [Vision 2050 Engagement Summary 2024-2025](#)

Note: for the full list of appendices to the Pitkin County Comprehensive Plan, please visit: <https://pitkincounty.com/1606/Pitkin-County-Vision-2050>