

# C IMAGINE GREELEY

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*Adopted: 2/6/18*





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# 01. INTRODUCTION





## OVERVIEW

Founded on the principles of temperance, religion, education, agriculture, irrigation, cooperation, and family values, the original settlers of Greeley envisioned a utopian community on the high plains of northern Colorado. One hundred-fifty years later, contemporary residents again imagine a remarkable future for Greeley, articulated in this 20-year planning document.

This *City of Greeley Comprehensive Plan* becomes the fifth master plan formally adopted by the City Council beyond the original plan for the community in 1869. This update of the City's comprehensive plan focused on targeted updates to help the City and community better address important issues and opportunities that emerged since the prior plan's adoption in 2009. As part of this update, the plan was also reorganized to more clearly communicate the varying levels of policy guidance provided. Community input during the development of this Comprehensive Plan was gathered through a public outreach process called *Imagine Greeley*.

Informed by data, trends, current conditions, and community input, this Plan serves as a roadmap that will guide City policies and decision-making towards the community's shared vision for the future. The vision (see Chapter 2) is interwoven throughout the Plan and forms the basis for its goals, objectives, and implementation actions.

Together these components seek to answer the following questions:

- What is our desired future?
- What are our shared values as a community?
- What are the ideals we are striving for?
- What specific outcomes are we seeking to achieve through day-to-day decision making?
- What specific steps will we need to take to accomplish these?

Achieving the Plan's vision will require an ongoing and long-term commitment on the part of City staff, elected and appointed officials, and members of the community. At the same time, this Plan acknowledges that the vision, core values, goals, objectives, and implementation actions may need to change in the future in order to address new issues or take advantage of new opportunities that were unforeseen when the Plan was first adopted.

Greeley is a great city; together we can make it even better!

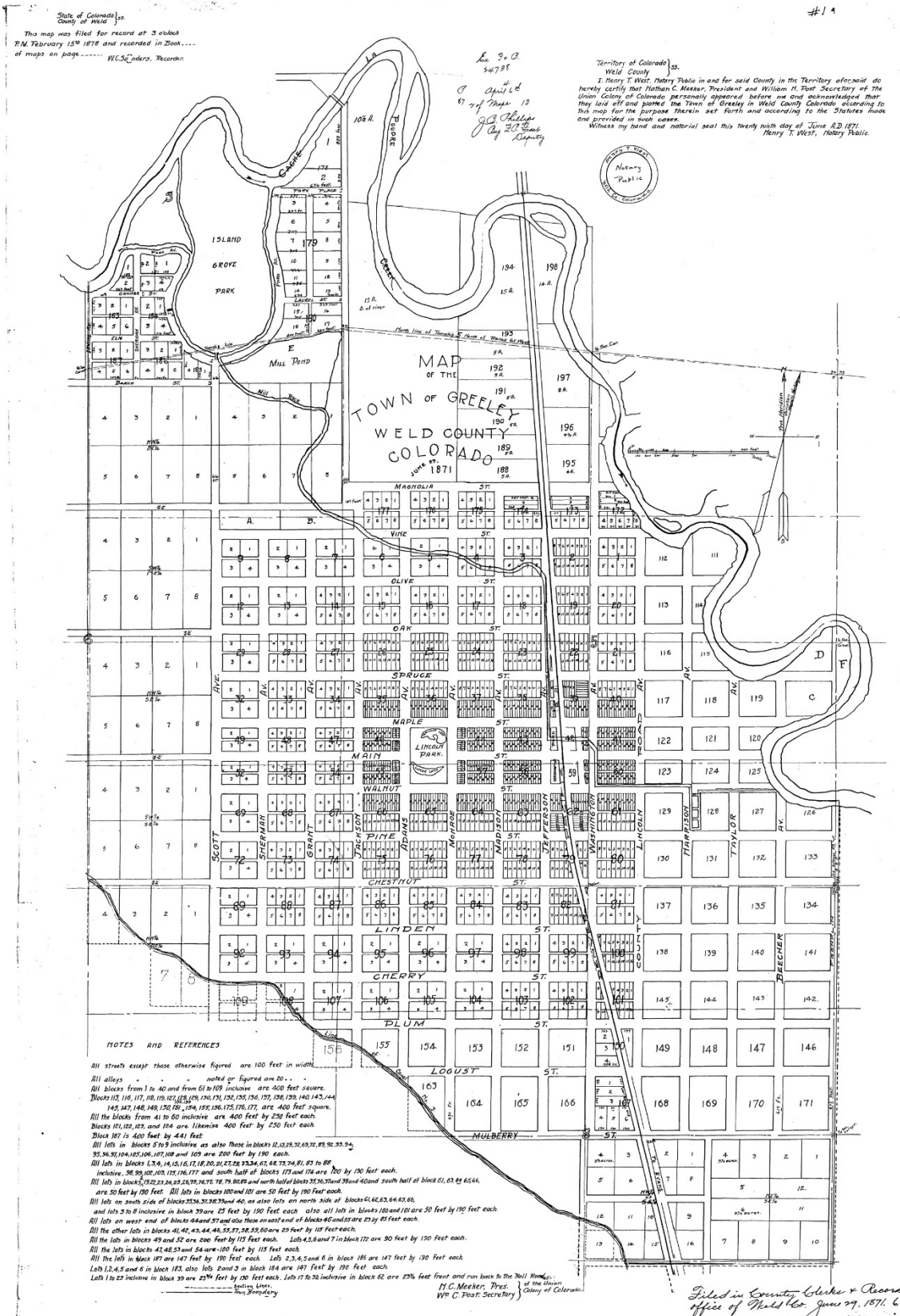
## **ABOUT GREELEY**

The City of Greeley was conceived as a utopian agricultural colony by Nathan Meeker, a journalist with the *New York Tribune*. Meeker's idea for establishing a town in the western United States was inspired by a previous trip to the Colorado Territory and his participation in another utopian settlement in Ohio. Supported by the *Tribune's* editor, Horace Greeley, Meeker's call for colonists greatly exceeded his expectations, with more than 3,000 people inquiring about the opportunity to found a new settlement in the West. Meeker, Greeley, and more than 700 colonists formed the Union Colony, and set about locating an appropriate site to settle.

In early 1870, a "Locating Committee" considered locations for the Union Colony in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Ultimately, a 60,000 acre site lying between the Cache la Poudre and South Platte Rivers was chosen. In addition to having fertile soil, the site was located along the Denver-Pacific Railroad between Denver and Cheyenne. The layout of the settlement was inspired by Northampton, Massachusetts and Painsville, Ohio, two eastern towns whose layouts were notable for their central park and tree-lined streets. Streets in the Union Colony were organized in a grid. Streets running north-south were called avenues and named for famous Americans. Streets running east-west were called streets, and named for species of trees. In all, the original plat for the colony included 660 residential lots and 483 business lots, with a number of lots reserved for civic uses, such as schools, a town hall, churches, and a courthouse.

The colony prospered, increasing in population from 480 in 1870 to 2,177 in 1885. Due to its size, Greeley was able to incorporate as a town under state law, and did so in 1886. In the coming decades, the city continued to grow and prosper. A number of civic and cultural buildings and organizations, as well as infrastructure and utilities needed to serve the growing city were built during this period. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigrants from Russia and Sweden, followed by immigrants from Mexico, arrived to meet the community's need for agricultural laborers, adding to the diversity of Greeley. As the city grew, it needed a new vision and tools to help guide growth. Following the City of Denver, Greeley adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1929 based on a report completed by S.R. DeBoer, the City Planner and Landscape Architect for the City of Denver. The plan introduced districts for residential, commercial, and industrial areas of the city, and has since been updated to meet the community's changing needs.

# 1871 Plat Map of Greeley



Courtesy of City of Greeley Museum's Permanent Collection

Today, Greeley is the twelfth largest city in Colorado and is the county seat and most populous city in Weld County. It is located approximately 50 miles north of Denver, and is even closer to other large cities in Northern Colorado, such as Fort Collins and Loveland. US Highway 34 links the city with I-25, and north/south highways such as US Highway 85 provide access to points north and south of the city. Greeley has developed into a cultural and academic hub, hosting educational institutions such as the University of Northern Colorado and Aims Community College. Greeley also boasts an affordable cost of living and high quality of life, a combination not found in many other communities along the Front Range.

## ABOUT IMAGINE GREELEY

### Process Overview

*Imagine Greeley* was the name given to the public engagement campaign used to collect input and feedback from the community on issues and opportunities facing the community, on key policy choices, and on the goals, objectives, and implementation actions included in this Comprehensive Plan. The process represented an opportunity for us as a community to take a step back, evaluate where we are today, imagine where we'd like to be in 20 years, and devise a strategy for getting there. *Imagine Greeley* kicked-off in late 2016 and ran through the end of 2017. Over 1,000 residents influenced the development of this Plan, helping to better align it with our collective vision for the future of our community.

### Data Collection

The first step in the *Imagine Greeley* process involved the collection of data on a broad range of community conditions. The majority of the data collected was “best available.” In some cases, available data was several years old. Other data was only available for Weld County as a whole, rather than specific to the City of Greeley. The data collected was used as a baseline to compare recent progress of the community, as well as achievements and conditions against other communities and state averages. This information served as a starting point for identifying community strengths, as well as areas where change may be needed in order to achieve the vision and goals set forth in the community’s previous comprehensive plan, the *2060 Comprehensive Plan*. The information collected covered a range of subject areas. This supporting data can be found in **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.





## **2060 Comprehensive Plan Audit**

In addition to data collection, an audit of the *2060 Comprehensive Plan* was completed to assess where progress had been made since that plan's adoption in 2009 and where gaps in existing goals and objectives existed. The audit confirmed that progress had been, or was being made, on the vast majority of the goals, objectives, and strategies contained in the *2060 Plan*. A summary of progress made and areas for improvement is available for each of the *2060 Plan*'s elements in **Appendix C**.

## **Focus Areas & Working Groups**

The results from the data collection and plan audit led to the identification of five focus areas, or areas where additional research and attention were needed due to the importance of these topics and/or the lack of policy direction provided in the *2060 Comprehensive Plan*. Focus areas included Housing Access, Growth and City Form, Economic Health and Diversification, Livability, and Public Capital and Operations Planning. These areas served as the basis for the formation of Working Groups, comprised of interested residents, subject matter experts, and community members working in related fields. Following the public kick-off event held in March 2017, the Working Groups reviewed existing goals and objectives from the *2060 Plan* and provided recommendations for edits and additions to be included in this updated Comprehensive Plan.



## **Community Engagement**

In addition to the Working Groups, opportunities for the community-at-large to participate in the *Imagine Greeley* process were provided through in-person meetings and online activities. These opportunities coincided with key points in the process, and were intended to capture input and feedback from a range of interested community members and stakeholders. Additional “road show” presentations were given to a number of community groups in order to publicize the process and encourage participation in engagement events. Specific stakeholder groups, such as University of Northern Colorado students, were also engaged to ensure the Plan represented the wide range of interests present in the community. Approximately 500 people participated in these events and 800 people visited the website and responded to online surveys. An additional 200 residents subscribed to the project's email newsletters. A summary of public input received during the process can be found in **Appendix D**.



## **Priority Community Improvements**

Updating the Comprehensive Plan was just one of two distinct, but interrelated efforts addressed through *Imagine Greeley*. The second effort includes the identification of top community priorities to maintain Greeley's quality of life in the face of projected population growth. This will draw from the feedback received from the community during the Comprehensive Plan update to help inform capital improvement planning and public investment campaigns designed to fund major community improvements over the coming years.

## **ABOUT THE PLAN**

### **Plan Overview & Administration**

This Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide that provides a framework for public and private growth and development decisions made by the City of Greeley over the next ten to twenty years. It is both a statement of the community's vision and a set of strategies to help realize that vision. While the Community Development Department and the Planning Commission are tasked by state statutes and the municipal charter with administration of the Plan, its implementation will require collaboration and partnerships with other departments within the City, other City boards and commissions, and a range of public and private partners in the community.

This Plan is a tool to manage and channel change in order to create the community desired by residents of Greeley. Since change is constant, this document must be considered a living document that will evolve and adapt along with the community. In addition, monitoring the Plan's implementation will be essential to ensuring the guidance provided in the Plan is leading the community towards its shared vision, or if a course-correction is needed to move the community in its desired direction.

### **Legislative Authority**

In Colorado, the legal authority to plan is found in the Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS § 29-20-102) which state "...in order to provide for planned and orderly development within Colorado and a balancing of basic human needs of a changing population with legitimate environmental concerns, the policy of this state is to clarify and provide broad authority to local governments to plan for and regulate the use of land within their respective jurisdictions." CRS § 29-20-104 grants seven general powers to local governments to plan for and regulate the use of land within their jurisdictions. Those powers allow local government to:

- Regulate development and activities in hazardous areas;
- Protect lands from activities which would cause immediate or foreseeable material danger to significant wildlife habitat and would endanger a wildlife species;
- Preserve areas of historical and archaeological importance;
- Regulate the location of activities and developments which may result in significant change in population density;
- Provide for phased development of services and facilities;
- Regulate the use of land on the basis of the impact thereof on the community or surrounding areas; and
- Otherwise plan for and regulate the use of land so as to provide planned and orderly use of land and protection of the environment in a manner consistent with constitutional rights.

The power to create a community master plan (i.e., this Comprehensive Plan) is also granted to local governments in CRS § 31-23-207. A local government’s comprehensive plan “shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including among other things, adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of healthful and convenient distribution of population, the promotion of good civic design and arrangement, wise conservation, and the adequate provision of public utilities and other public requirements.”

Once a comprehensive plan is adopted, state statutes (CRS § 31-23-209) note that “no street, square, park or other public way, ground or open space, public building or structure, or publicly owned public utility” may be built without review and approval by the Planning Commission.

The local authority for this Comprehensive Plan is found in the Greeley City Charter (Article XIX, Section 19-1) which addresses city planning activities by noting that, “Consistent with all federal and state law with respect to land use and development and in conformance with all applicable articles in its Charter, the City Council shall:

- Designate a City department or other agency to carry out the planning, zoning and housing functions as set forth in ordinances;

- Maintain a Planning Commission of seven (7) members appointed to terms of three (3) years to advise the City Council on land use planning and to make decisions on land use matters as they may be set forth by ordinance;
- Adopt a Comprehensive Plan as a guide to land use and development;
- Adopt all development codes; and
- Establish a process for handling variance applications and appeals of land use decisions or actions.

**Applicability**

The policies and guidance of this Comprehensive Plan are applicable within the City of Greeley’s municipal boundaries, the City’s Long Range Expected Growth Area (LREGA), and other areas planned jointly with neighboring municipalities or Weld County, as governed by intergovernmental agreements. Greeley’s Long Range Expected Growth Area (LREGA) serves as the City’s Three-Mile Plan Area, in accordance with CRS § 31-12-105 et. seq. See Chapter 4 for more on the City’s LREGA and the land uses envisioned in those areas.

**How to Use This Plan**

Policy guidance in the Plan is provided at varying levels of detail through the vision statement, core values, goals, objectives, and implementation actions. However, these components should not be viewed in isolation, as each one influences, and is influenced by, other parts of the Plan.

The overarching vision statement and core values woven throughout the Plan can be found in **Chapter 2**. Both the vision and core values were adapted from the City’s 2009 comprehensive plan, and updated based on input received from the community throughout the *Imagine Greeley* process.

In **Chapter 3**, specific goals and objectives that set a direction for future decision making and implementation actions in support of the overall vision are provided for ten plan elements, or topic areas.

**Parts of the Plan**

