



## PART II

# COMMUNITY VISION & VALUES

---

The community vision and values set forth in this Master Plan are based on the vision and values adopted by the Ridgway Town Council in 2009. The vision and values were reviewed by the community through the Master Plan update process and refined to better fit the vision for Ridgway shared by the community today. While the community vision was carried forward with some minor edits, the seven community values from 2009 were combined into five new values to better reflect the priorities of the community. These values also serve as the organizing structure for the goals and policies of the Master Plan, contained in **Part III** of this Plan.

## COMMUNITY VISION

*Ridgway is a vibrant, welcoming, and community-minded small town situated in a beautiful mountain valley. We are diverse in age, background, and economic means. We share a deep connection to the outdoors, the lifelong pursuit of learning, and our railroad, ranching, and creative cultures. We are committed to being economically and ecologically sustainable.*

# COMMUNITY VALUES

Achieving our vision will require us to strive to maintain certain aspects of Ridgway that the community values today, while recognizing that we will need to adapt in the face of a certain amount of growth and change over the next ten to twenty years. Our ability to adapt successfully will require a continual focus on—and balance between—five community values: healthy natural environment, sense of community and inclusivity, small town character and identity, vibrant and balanced economy, and well-managed growth.

## Community Value 1

### Healthy Natural Environment

From the Uncompahgre River to the Sneffels and Cimarron mountain ranges, Ridgway's incredible natural surroundings, and the recreational opportunities they provide, are one of the top reasons residents choose to live in our community. Protecting both the scenic values and ecological functions of natural areas in and surrounding Ridgway through responsible environmental practices is something the community values strongly. Ridgway must grow in a way that is attuned to its natural environment to protect these valuable resources. Ridgway residents must also be aware of the changes to our local environment that could arise as a result of climate change. Goals and policies for this community value address:

- Preservation of natural habitats and ecosystems
- Conservation of open space and ranch lands
- Sustainable development practices
- Access to and protection of the river corridor
- Community forest management
- Climate adaptation
- Source-water protection
- Air quality protection







## Community Value 2

### Sense of Community & Inclusivity

Another aspect of living in Ridgway that residents highly value is the community, its inclusivity, and its diversity. Ridgway's residents represent a range of age groups, income levels, cultures, lifestyles, and political persuasions, and describe each other as friendly, welcoming, and close-knit. Residents also value how the community comes together in times of crisis or need to help one another. This strong sense of community is also demonstrated in how engaged residents are with Town affairs. Trends like increasing housing costs and a lack of affordable childcare make it difficult for many people to live in Ridgway. Looking to the future, residents would like to see Ridgway remain a diverse and inclusive community, not one that is homogeneous and unwelcoming of "others." Residents want to avoid the kinds of changes that have occurred in other small mountain towns, such as an influx of second homeowners. Goals and policies for this community value address our commitment to those things that contribute to our sense of community and help make Ridgway, Ridgway:

- Diverse housing options
- Inclusive governance and community engagement
- Lifelong learning
- Accessible community services
- Aging in place
- Public safety

### Community Value 3

## Small Town Character & Identity

Although they may differ on how to define “small town character,” residents feel strongly that it’s a key part of Ridgway’s identity. This small town character is evident in the size of the community, the slower and more laid back pace of life, the unpaved streets, the surrounding ranch land and associated activities, the ability of residents to easily walk from one end of town to the other, and the many activities and businesses that are geared toward locals. Although these characteristics are common among many small towns across Colorado, Ridgway stands out from other tourism-dependent communities as a town that relies on tourism to some degree—but retains its commitment to locals and still feels very much like a “real” community. Beyond small town character, this feeling is derived from a blend of Ridgway’s historic past as a western railroad town, its ranching and agricultural community, its proximity to the mountains and outdoor recreation, and its Creatives and innovative entrepreneurs. Goals and policies for this community value seek to retain and enhance key aspects of Ridgway’s small town character and identity as the community grows in the future through a continued commitment to:

- Livable neighborhoods
- Creativity and innovation
- Agriculture and ranching
- Community events and activities
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Parks and recreation
- Historic preservation







#### Community Value 4

### Vibrant & Balanced Economy

Ouray County's economy is largely centered on service industries oriented towards tourism, particularly industries such as food services and accommodation. While Ridgway's reliance on tourism is somewhat less than the County, it is still subject to seasonal fluctuations in business activity. These service jobs tend to pay low wages that make it even more difficult for those who work in Ridgway to live here as well. Residents expressed a strong desire to diversify the local economy and to create well-paying, full-time, year-round jobs. Through its participation in the Main Street and Creative District programs, the Town has been active in promoting community and economic development in recent years. While a number of businesses and Creatives have chosen to base their operations in Ridgway for quality of life reasons, many employers struggle to hire qualified employees, find space as they grow, market their creations, and face other challenges. Larger shifts in the national economy towards telecommuting mean that workers no longer need to physically commute to an office. With faster internet speed, residents will increasingly be able to pursue job opportunities and careers in industries not currently located in Ridgway. Alternatively, home-based entrepreneurs will be able to access customers or clients located around the globe. Goals and policies for this community value seek to promote a more balanced and sustainable economy through support for:

- A diversified economy
- Ranching and agriculture
- Local businesses/manufacturing/services
- Outdoor recreation industry
- Creative industries and innovation
- Tourism
- Home-based entrepreneurs
- A mobile workforce

## Community Value 5

### Well-Managed Growth

Based on projections in the Community Profile, Ridgway is expected to add between 150 and 700 new residents by 2050. In addition, growth in the surrounding region—which includes Ouray, Montrose, and San Miguel counties—will continue to have direct and indirect impacts on Ridgway’s housing, transportation system, environment, and quality of life. Growth limitations in the City of Ouray, Ouray County, and Telluride area will further amplify growth pressures on the Town of Ridgway. Uncertainty regarding the extent and potential impacts of future growth are of critical concern to the community. However, Ridgway has the ability through its policies and regulations, intergovernmental agreements, and other tools to help inform where and how growth will occur in the future, the types of growth the community would like to see, and guide the character and form of future development. Goals and policies in this area seek to ensure that future growth occurs incrementally in a manner that is consistent with Ridgway’s values, minimizes impacts on existing residents, and recognizes the need to balance the community’s objectives with regard to:

- Infrastructure provision
- Water supply
- Growth management
- Hazard mitigation
- Regional coordination
- Transportation
- Land use





