

TOWN OF RIDGWAY

2026 STRATEGIC 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 & GOALS

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 some 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:

ENV-1: Preserve, protect, and restore natural habitats, including for wildlife and ecosystems.



ENV-2: Strengthen the Uncompahgre River corridor as a community asset and environmental resource.



ENV-3: Proactively manage and protect Ridgway's water resources.

ENV-4: Advocate for the efficient use of resources and sustainable practices that work to eliminate harmful impacts to the health of the community or natural environment.

ENV-5: Maintain a healthy and resilient community forest.

	Healthy Natural Environment: 2026 Strategies	Responsible Party
1	Pursuant to the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, annually notify consumers of their service line material if it is determined to be lead, galvanized requiring replacement, or lead status unknown.	Manager/PW
2	Advance goals of the Town's Source Water Protection Plan including working with Ouray County on setbacks to the Town's water supplies in the unincorporated areas of Ouray County.	PW/Manager
3	Review and modify the Water and Sewer regulations found in RMC 9 -1.	Manager/Eng.
4	Ensure the cost of water is understood and user fees are in line with costs; assess the rate structure in 2026.	Manager/Eng.
5	Pursue appropriate actions to change the recently acquired water rights to municipal and augmentation purposes.	Attorney/Eng./Manager
6	Make available educational materials on radon mitigation, and water and energy conservation, and periodically communicate this information via the Town website and other communication channels.	Building
7	Participate on the Sneffels Energy Board and work with the Board and EcoAction Partners to implement the objectives and supporting actions detailed in the <i>San Miguel & Ouray County Regional Climate Action Plan</i> in order to help our community continue to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions from our 2010 GHG emissions baseline.	Manager
8	Continue working with Ouray County Vegetation Management on implementation of the Town's Integrated Weed Management Plan and to manage weeds in Ridgway more aggressively. Continue following the policy set forth in Resolution No. 22-01, Amending the Policy Relative to Noxious Weed Management. The policy now allows for the application of chemical-based herbicides when deemed necessary by Town staff and Ouray County Vegetation Management personnel, as long as the application falls in line with the Chemical Application and Protocol Recommendations found in the Integrated Weed Management Plan.	Manager/PW
9	<p>Support and promote the Sustainability Advisory Board as members work to, among many other things, advance and encourage environmentally sustainable practices and ideas within the Town. Some of the priorities and work plan items for 2026 may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assist the Town with evaluating, planning and implementing projects intended to advance the Town's commitment and goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions for all municipal operations by 2030.</i> • <i>Assist the Town, as needed, with planning and implementing the tasks in the Local IMPACT Accelerator Grant, if awarded.</i> 	Manager

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the Town to adopt a requirement for all new construction to be all-electric and assist with public outreach and education associated with that initiative. • Develop and propose a “zero waste” policy to be adopted by the Town that would apply to all events and festivals, and work with organizers and vendors to ensure that they adhere to the requirements and guidelines in said policy to maximize composting and recycling. • Sponsor or co-sponsor events to educate the local community on sustainability issues including electrification, composting, and water conservation. • Encourage residential composting through outreach, education, and community-wide composting solutions. • Encourage landscape water conservation and work to improve community soil health through outreach and incentives. • Encourage the Town and community to install innovative solar options that add artistic, inspirational and sculptural accents. • Provide quarterly progress updates to the Town Council. 	
10	Identify a consultant to develop construction-level documents for the improvements identified in the Green Street Sustainability Park Master Plan.	Manager
11	Make available educational materials on tree species recommendations and the Town’s landscape regulations to encourage water conservation and require low water usage landscaping or xeriscaping.	Planner/Building
12	Perform state-mandated requirements for backflow prevention and cross-connection control outreach, reporting and tracking.	Manager/PW
13	Research and develop regulations or a policy specific to grease traps.	Manager/PW
14	Develop a Preliminary Needs Assessment that makes recommendations for improvements to the current wastewater treatment system and identifies future needs.	Eng.
15	Remove gravel from Uncompahgre River in Rollans Park and continually improve the area.	PW
16	Evaluate results of <i>Uncompahgre River Corridor Ecological Assessment and Technical Report</i> and explore implementation of the recommended restoration opportunities and river management actions.	Manager/PW
17	Ensure the Town’s responsibilities, as described in <i>Resolution No. 21-09 Rights of Nature</i> , are met, and ensure good stewardship of the Uncompahgre River, its tributaries, and its watershed.	Manager
18	Participate in the Leave No Trace Spotlight campaign for the Uncompahgre River through Ridgway that will be led by the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership. Spotlights are designed to energize local Leave No Trace efforts by rallying the community, connecting partners, and inspiring continued action. This free program provides opportunities for Leave No Trace training, community outreach, and volunteer stewardship. Selected areas receive up to 3 days of Leave No Trace on-the-ground programs for staff, partners, and the local community.	Manager/PW
19	Participate in the community listening sessions that will result in identified priorities and proposed plans and funding sources for improvements on the Uncompahgre River Corridor through Ridgway. The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership will lead this initiative and will use funding they’ve secured to spearhead outreach, meeting facilitation and preliminary reports.	Manager/PW
20	Evaluate ways to modify and improve the Town’s Water Conservation and Management Plan.	Manager
21	Decide whether to allow graywater systems in the Town of Ridgway. If allowed, develop and implement a regulatory framework and local standards that meet the requirements laid out in Regulation 86 of the Water Quality Control Commission, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.	Manager/Eng.
22	Host annual Town Cleanup Day event and Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup events.	Manager/PW

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:

COM-1: Maintain Ridgway as a community that is accessible to a range of income levels, ages, and households.

COM-2: Encourage a diversity of housing options that meet the needs of residents.

COM-3: Encourage citizen participation and dialogue with elected and appointed officials and town administration in order to foster broad-based representation and input for local government decisions.



COM-4: Strive to be a model for transparency, efficiency, and good governance.

COM-5: Encourage a range of health, human, youth, senior, and other community services in Ridgway.

COM-6: Support education and lifelong learning in our community.

COM-7: Provide public safety and emergency response services to engage and protect the community.

	Sense of Community and Inclusivity: 2026 Strategies	Responsible Party
1	Continue the process of equipping the Decker Community Room to increase versatility and for use by a variety of user groups.	Community Initiatives/Manager
2	Pursue website accessibility remediation strategies in an effort to identify and fix barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully accessing or using the Town’s digital content. Ensure digital assets, such as the Town’s website and online documents, comply with established standards and compliance parameters of Colorado’s digital accessibility laws.	Manager
3	Now that the Housing Needs Assessment has been completed, retain a consultant to prepare a Housing Action Plan that meets the guidance issued by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.	Planner/Manager
4	Secure a grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to apply toward the development of pre-approved ADU building plans.	Planner/Building
5	Complete the next series of planning projects for 2026, as recommended by the Planning Commission. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish public outreach/community engagement efforts related to the proposed regulations for Section 7-7 of the Ridgway Municipal Code titled, “Affordable Housing” and the associated Guidelines, and pursue codification. Various updates to the Zoning Regulations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical updates and Code clean up Streets, Alleys, and Blocks Lodging provisions Design Standards Wildfire Resiliency Code Analysis of zoning districts, patterns of development, and land use table allowances Analysis of Employee Housing, Attainable, Affordable, and Workforce Housing 	Planner/Manager
6	Continue efforts on workforce housing. Now that the Town has determined its baseline amount of affordable housing units and has formally filed a commitment with the Division of Housing to opt in to Proposition 123, the Town should explore and potentially pursue funding programs that will help increase the affordable housing stock above the baseline amount. Continue regular communication with regional partners.	Manager
7	Organize and facilitate one regional law enforcement training opportunity.	Marshal

8	Complete training with the Ouray County Sheriff's Office and City of Ouray Police Department to improve skills and foster good relations across the jurisdictional departments.	Marshal
9	Support the Ouray County Victim Services Program to grow and promote the Program/victim advocacy and victim's rights.	Marshal
10	Research and develop a law enforcement-specific wellness program focused on physical, mental, and emotional health of officers, encompassing services like counseling, peer support, and resilience training.	Marshal
11	Promote the Athletic Park Pavilion as a Town facility and community amenity that is available for rent; utilize the Parks, Trails & Open Space Committee to garner input from various user groups about priorities to advance in the Athletic Park in future years.	Manager
12	Work with Ouray County Plaindealer staff to continue monthly newspaper advertisements to showcase what's going on at the Town of Ridgway and opportunities for citizens to get more involved.	Manager
13	Finish the process of acquiring a recreational trail path between Ridgway Secondary School and River Park Subdivision.	Manager
14	Evaluate implementing shorter terms for members of the Planning Commission.	Planner/Manager
15	Consider next steps, including surveying, for potentially vacating an undeveloped section of N Elizabeth St. right-of-way.	Manager
16	Explore options for acquiring or assisting the Home Trust of Ouray County to acquire the Alpenglow Cohousing property in an effort to further the initiative to address offset side streets (i.e., Railroad St.).	Manager/Eng.

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:

CHR-1: Support vibrant, diverse, safe, and well-connected neighborhoods.

CHR-2: Protect and preserve Ridgway’s historic assets.

CHR-3: Promote Ridgway’s identity as a ranching and agricultural community and preserve the rural character of landscapes surrounding Ridgway.

CHR-4: Promote Ridgway’s identity as a creative and innovative community where creative individuals and enterprises thrive.

CHR-5: Promote a range of opportunities and spaces for community gatherings and interactions.

CHR-6: Maintain and enhance Ridgway’s gateways, entry-corridors, and scenic vistas.

CHR-7: Develop an interconnected system of parks, trails, open space, and recreational facilities that meets the needs of Ridgway’s residents and visitors.



	Small Town Character and Identity: 2026 Strategies	Responsible Party
1	Expand community outreach and information sharing efforts.	Manager/Community Initiatives/PIO
2	Explore ways to partner with GOCO on a Youth Corps project.	PW/Manager
3	Lead <i>Ridgway FUSE, A Colorado Creative Main Street Program</i> in implementing priority Council initiatives and supporting the Ridgway Creative District and Ridgway Main Street programs. Continue efforts to advance the agreed upon work plan (i.e., the Ridgway FUSE Creative Main Street Plan 2025-2028).	Community Initiatives
4	Generate promotional pieces that communicate the Ridgway Creative District's and Main Street Program's value to the community, objectives, and invite potential partnerships and collaboration. Continue efforts to bolster and enhance the Ridgway FUSE website and its functionality.	Community Initiatives
5	Support and promote the Youth Advisory Council and provide its membership opportunities for input on Town projects, programs, and events.	Manager
6	Make efforts to educate and inspire residents and visitors about Ridgway's ranching heritage; provide information about ranching activities that periodically occur in and around Town, such as cattle drives.	Community Initiatives
7	Create and maintain succession plans for all Town staff and standard operating procedures.	All Departments
8	Evaluate ways and funding opportunities to advance the various phases of the Ridgway Athletic Park Master Plan; resurface the tennis courts	Manager/PW

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 fast 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:

ECO-1: Create a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable year-round local economy that reflects Ridgway's social fabric, values, and character.

ECO-2: Support the retention and expansion of local businesses.

ECO-3: Balance the need to preserve the quality of life for residents with business needs.

	Vibrant and Balanced Economy: 2026 Strategies	Responsible Party
1	Continue participation in local and regional broadband initiatives, including connecting local government and anchor institution buildings.	Manager
2	Plan, organize, and manage Summer Concert Series and Love Your Valley event.	Clerk

3	Plan, organize, and manage Ridgway Independent Film Festival and other Ridgway FUSE events.	Community Initiatives
4	Partner with Colorado Creative Industries to further develop and grow the Ridgway Creative District, including consideration of feedback and recommendations from Ridgway FUSE; provide training and educational opportunities for members of Ridgway FUSE; implement the Ridgway FUSE Creative Main Street Plan 2025-2028.	Community Initiatives
5	Partner with the Department of Local Affairs on the Main Street Program and implement priority recommendations from the Main Street Downtown Assessment focused on economic restructuring, design, organization, and promotions.	Community Initiatives
6	Oversee and manage downtown streetscape maintenance and landscaping; maintain and replace trees as needed; maintain landscaping at Heritage Park; maintain planter boxes and landscaping around Town Hall and Hartwell Park.	PW
7	Establish policy to govern how Lodging Tax revenues intended to support affordable and workforce housing and childhood care and education efforts are distributed. This may include the development of an application process with criteria and reporting requirements.	Manager
8	Expand efforts to improve wayfinding around Town. Revisit and evaluate updates to the Town's Signage & Wayfinding Plan. Install banner structure over SH62.	Manager
9	Onboard the new contractor that will spearhead marketing and tourism promotion services (i.e., marketing strategist) and ensure the scope of work is successfully completed.	Community Initiatives/Manager

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 and Ouray County will further amplify growth pressures on the Town of Ridgway. Uncertainty regarding the extent of 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:

GRO-1: Manage growth and development in order to maintain Ridgway's small town character, support a diverse community, and create employment opportunities.



GRO-2: Ensure public infrastructure, utilities, facilities, and services are sufficient to meet the needs of residents and businesses as the town grows.

GRO-3: Proactively mitigate natural and human-made hazards.

GRO-4: Develop a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system, balancing needs of all users.

	Well-Managed Growth: 2026 Strategies	Responsible Party
1	Participate in regional transportation initiatives including the Gunnison Valley Transportation Planning Region (GVTPR) and the Ouray County Transit Advisory Council, as appropriate.	Manager
2	Continue working with the City of Ouray, Ouray County, and All Points Transit to continue and improve upon the OurWay commuter route that connects Montrose, Ridgway and Ouray.	Manager
3	Work with the Home Trust of Ouray County as the newly contracted Affordable Housing Services Administrator to complete the agreed upon scope of services.	Manager
4	Develop and organize volunteer efforts, focused on procedural rules, expectations, purpose, etc. for Council appointed commissions, boards, committees and task forces.	Manager/Community Initiatives

5	Implement measures to address deficiencies and ensure Wastewater Treatment Plant consistently meets permit limitations and other terms and conditions of its permits.	Manager/PW/Eng.
6	Expand efforts on official record and electronic file organization.	Manager/Clerk
7	Implement Asset Management Plan for all departments	Clerk
8	Address access to Ridgway Ditch and adjacent development, including building and septic setbacks, Ditch access, and land use opportunities with Ouray County to protect the Ditch.	Eng./Manager/PW
9	Finish the remaining work on the Ductile Iron Pipe Replacement Project (i.e., replacement of water line segment from Sabeta Dr. to Moffat St.).	Eng./Manager/PW
10	Finish the remaining work on the Beaver Creek Diversion Restoration Project.	Manager/Eng./PW
11	Explore grant funding opportunities that would provide for major improvements to the Ridgway Ditch and Lake O in ways that would allow the Town to receive additional water and mitigate system loss (i.e., piping portions of the Ridgway Ditch). Repair and install additional flow measuring devices along Ridgway Ditch and at Lake O.	Manager/Eng.
12	Investigate how to access potential funding opportunities for water-related projects (i.e., monitoring and improvements to the Town's water supply system) under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or through state funding options such as Colorado Water Plan grants or Gunnison Basin Roundtable grants.	Manager
13	Replace hydrants and valves, as needed, on water distribution system.	PW
14	Make improvements to the restrooms in Hartwell Park.	PW/Manager
15	Complete sewer line camera and root abatement work; remove contact chamber sludge.	PW
16	Employ methods to better manage traffic flow and safe speeds; further explore additional advisory signage, temporary pedestrian signage, and street devices to mitigate speeding vehicles on westbound and eastbound Hwy 62 and other areas of town. Complete construction of the SH62 Banner Structure Project.	Marshal/PW/Manager

