

Chapter-by-Chapter Summary of Envision 2040 Montrose Comprehensive Plan

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the 2040 Envision Montrose Comprehensive Plan, initiated in 2019 to update the 2008 plan and establish a long-range vision, goals, land use framework, and implementation strategy to guide growth over the next 10–20 years.

The chapter outlines the Plan’s statutory authority under Colorado law and the City of Montrose Municipal Code, describes its required elements, and details a five-phase planning process that included extensive community outreach, advisory committee involvement, technical analysis, and formal adoption. It defines the planning area, including the city limits and three-mile area of influence, and explains intergovernmental coordination with Montrose County through an IGA governing annexation and infrastructure planning.

The Introduction chapter also summarizes Montrose’s regional setting and planning history, positioning the Comprehensive Plan as the guiding policy document for coordinated, sustainable development that preserves community character while accommodating future growth.

CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY PROFILE

Chapter 2 provides an overview of Montrose’s historical development, economic evolution, existing land use patterns, and zoning framework to establish context for future planning decisions.

The chapter traces the community’s origins from early Ute settlement and railroad expansion to its growth as an agricultural center and modern regional hub influenced by tourism, retail, healthcare, education, and transportation assets. It categorizes existing land uses within the city and three-mile planning area—including residential, downtown, commercial, industrial, agricultural, parks and open space, and public facilities—and describes how these categories inform future growth potential.

The Community Profile chapter also summarizes the City’s zoning structure, including residential, commercial, industrial, and overlay districts such as the REDO and Uncompahgre River Buffer Zone, and explains how zoning and supplemental regulations work in concert with the Comprehensive Plan to guide development and land use decisions.

CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Chapter 3 documents the extensive public engagement process that informed the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, summarizing input gathered through public meetings, workshops, online surveys, stakeholder interviews, and participation by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council.

The chapter describes the formation and role of the Advisory Committee, bilingual kick-off meetings, interactive mapping tools, and topic-specific workshops that addressed housing, transportation, land use, parks, health, downtown, and economic opportunity. It highlights key community values—such as stewardship of natural resources, prosperity, safety, health, and fiscal responsibility—and synthesizes recurring themes including affordable housing, transportation connectivity, downtown vitality, river corridor enhancement, economic diversification, and coordinated growth management.

Overall, the Community Outreach chapter demonstrates how broad-based community participation shaped the Plan’s vision, goals, and implementation priorities

CHAPTER 4 VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Chapter 4 articulates Montrose’s long-term community vision and establishes the foundational values and policy direction for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Centered on the mission of promoting a vibrant, service-oriented community, the chapter presents a vision statement developed through public input, as well as seven guiding principles that reflect the community’s vision.

VISION STATEMENT

“Montrose will strive to be a healthy, safe, and thriving community that embraces diversity and the environment. We will come together to grow responsibly to create opportunities for all.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

During the course of the Comprehensive Plan revision process, several guiding principles emerged to guide the City’s efforts to achieve the community’s vision and values. The following seven guiding principles frame subsequent goals, objectives, and implementation strategies.

Guiding Principle 1. Land Use and Growth: Encourage, facilitate, and manage growth in a fiscally responsible manner that retains Montrose’s small-town character in a rural setting.

Guiding Principle 2. Transportation and Mobility: Encourage and facilitate a safe, efficient, and convenient multi-modal transportation system.

Guiding Principle 3. Housing and Neighborhoods: Encourage access to a broad range of housing opportunities through the facilitation of programs and partnerships.

Guiding Principle 4. Parks, Trails and Open Space: Encourage and facilitate a variety of public parks, trails, and recreation opportunities in strategic locations.

Guiding Principle 5. Health and Environment: Encourage and facilitate healthy living; access to quality and affordable health care; enhanced public safety; and the preservation, protection, and access to natural, historical, and cultural resources.

Guiding Principle 6. Economy and Opportunity: Facilitate and incentivize business growth and development, community services, quality jobs, educational opportunities, and tourism assets to encourage businesses and people to stay, play, and live here.

Guiding Principle 7. Downtown: Encourage and facilitate a vibrant downtown, maximizing opportunities for businesses, improving safety, and enhancing the quality of life, while also maintaining its character and historic viability.

Chapter 4 also clarifies the relationship between vision, goals, objectives, and implementation actions, forming an integrated framework for coordinated decision-making and long-term community development.

CHAPTER 5 LAND USE & GROWTH

Chapter 5 outlines the City of Montrose’s strategy for managing anticipated population growth from 20,090 residents in 2018 to 28,636 by 2040, emphasizing the need for a long-range vision to guide development, infrastructure investment, and land preservation.

The chapter defines key growth concepts—such as leap-frog development, growth efficiency, and neighborhood centers—and introduces the Future Land Use Plan as the primary policy tool for directing development patterns, coordinating zoning updates, and aligning public and private investment over the next 10 to 20 years.

A tiered Growth Area framework promotes compact, contiguous development based on proximity to infrastructure, identifying three Growth Areas and prioritizing the most cost-efficient areas for near-term expansion. The Land Use & Growth chapter also highlights intergovernmental coordination through the City–County Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA).

CHAPTER 6 TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Chapter 6 outlines a comprehensive framework for coordinating Montrose’s transportation system with projected growth, emphasizing integrated, multi-modal mobility.

The chapter describes the existing roadway hierarchy and promotes a connected grid system to reduce congestion, address leap-frog development, and support efficient traffic distribution, while identifying major capital projects including roadway extensions, widening, intersection improvements, and long-term outer loop corridor preservation. It advances a Complete Streets approach to accommodate all users, recommends expansion of off-street trails and on-street bicycle lanes consistent with national guidance, and acknowledges regional transit services in the absence of a City-operated system.

The Transportation & Mobility chapter also highlights the economic and regional significance of Montrose Regional Airport, the role of freight rail, and the need for a Transportation Master Plan to establish implementation priorities, cost estimates, and functional design standards.

CHAPTER 7 HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Chapter 7 examines the current and future housing needs of Montrose, emphasizing the importance of providing a diverse mix of housing types—including single-family homes, duplexes, multi-family units, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs)—to support projected population growth and maintain neighborhood vitality.

Chapter 7 also defines key housing concepts such as affordable, workforce, and subsidized housing, and highlights the City’s low vacancy rate as an indicator of supply constraints that will require approximately 4,000 additional dwelling units by 2040 to achieve a healthier market balance. It underscores the City’s role in guiding development to preserve community character and valued resources while promoting zoning strategies that allow varied densities, mixed housing types, ADUs, and mixed-use residential opportunities near services and employment centers.

Overall, the Housing & Neighborhoods chapter positions proactive land use and zoning policies as essential tools for ensuring long-term housing affordability, market competitiveness, and neighborhood sustainability.

CHAPTER 8 PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACES

Chapter 8 outlines Montrose’s strategy for preserving and expanding its parks, recreational facilities, trail networks, and natural resources to support community livability, economic development, and projected growth.

The chapter inventories existing park classifications consistent with National Recreation and Park Association standards, establishes level of service (LOS) benchmarks to guide future park acquisition, and identifies conceptual locations for new neighborhood and community parks, with an emphasis on co-locating facilities with schools to maximize efficiency. It advances a comprehensive recreational trails framework—including expansion of off-street multi-use paths, bicycle corridors, and grade-separated crossings—while promoting integration with new development and arterial corridors.

The Parks, Trails & Open Space chapter also emphasizes protection of the Uncompahgre River corridor through buffer standards and design guidance, supports agricultural preservation within the Urban Growth Boundary, and highlights interagency partnerships with the Montrose Recreation District and School District to leverage shared facilities and programming.

CHAPTER 9 HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 9 establishes a policy framework for promoting a healthy, safe, and resilient community in Montrose by addressing public health, environmental stewardship, hazard mitigation, and resource conservation.

The chapter emphasizes implementation of the Uncompahgre Riverway Master Plan and the Uncompahgre River Buffer Zone (URBZ) ordinance to protect ecological systems, enhance public access, and guide compatible development along the river corridor. It outlines environmental management priorities, including comprehensive stormwater planning across major drainage basins, floodplain management, intergovernmental coordination, and compliance with state and federal water quality regulations.

The Health & Environment chapter also incorporates the Montrose County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, identifying key natural hazard risks and mitigation strategies to reduce long-term vulnerability of people, property, and infrastructure.

CHAPTER 10 ECONOMY & OPPORTUNITY

Chapter 10 examines Montrose's transition from an agricultural base to a regional commercial and service center, emphasizing strategies to strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce retail leakage that affects local sales tax revenues.

The chapter highlights the city's role as a regional hub while identifying gaps in goods and services that prompt residents to shop elsewhere or online, and positions economic diversification and retail retention as key objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. It underscores the significant economic influence of tourism—particularly related to Telluride Ski Resort, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, and regional outdoor recreation assets—and details findings from a tri-county economic impact study showing substantial output, employment, and labor income tied to tourism and Montrose Regional Airport operations.

Overall, the Economy & Opportunity chapter frames natural amenities, transportation infrastructure, and community assets as foundational drivers of long-term economic vitality and regional opportunity.

CHAPTER 11 DOWNTOWN

Chapter 11 positions downtown Montrose as the community's social, cultural, and economic anchor, emphasizing policies that promote business vitality, public safety, historic preservation, and high-quality design to sustain its long-term success.

Building on the 2003 Downtown Development Plan, the chapter integrates revitalization goals into the Comprehensive Plan framework and underscores Montrose's participation in the National Main Street Center and Colorado Main Street programs as key drivers of downtown reinvestment. It highlights the role of the City's Development and Revitalization Team (DART), which reorganized the Main Street Program in 2017 to expand business support citywide while maintaining a focus on strengthening the downtown core.

Overall, the chapter frames downtown as central to community identity, economic resilience, and quality of life.

CHAPTER 12 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Chapter 12 translates the Comprehensive Plan’s vision and seven guiding principles into a structured set of action items, identifying responsible departments or partners and classifying each action as short-term, long-term, or ongoing.

Organized by the seven guiding principles—Land Use and Growth; Transportation and Mobility; Housing and Neighborhoods; Parks, Trails and Open Space; Health and Environment; Economy and Opportunity; and Downtown—the chapter outlines specific policy updates, infrastructure investments, partnership initiatives, and programmatic strategies to guide coordinated implementation over the next 10 to 20 years. It emphasizes intergovernmental coordination, capital improvement planning, regulatory updates, and community partnerships as central tools for achieving plan goals.

The Implementation Plan chapter also integrates hazard mitigation priorities and cross-references related actions to reinforce alignment across subject areas, positioning the Implementation Plan as the operational roadmap for advancing Montrose’s long-term community objectives.

APPENDICES

Definition of Terms

Existing Conditions Report

Community Meetings Summaries