



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### DEFINING A VISION

Planning for the future is important. Planning helps clarify the community vision and help channel energy and effort towards future change. Planning is particularly important when change is obvious. In developing this updated Master Plan, Clear Creek County acknowledges both the changes it faces and the values it holds important that must be preserved.

Perhaps most importantly in developing this updated Master Plan was the time and effort the community spent in rethinking and re-framing the Vision for Clear Creek County. As the Master Plan describes in detail, it is the Vision that influences the policies and approaches the County will take towards future land use changes. It is the Vision that acknowledges what is important and the measure against which future actions can be evaluated. It is the Vision that speaks to the unity of the County towards meeting the challenges ahead.

### THE VISION

*"Improve upon the existing quality of life in Clear Creek County by supporting the development of a diverse economy, protecting natural and cultural resources, becoming a more resilient community, encouraging recreation, and recognizing the County's distinct areas."*



## SEEKING INPUT

A community Master Plan would be meaningless without substantial community input. During this process, a wide variety of input was received from residents of Clear Creek County. Through a widely distributed and well responded to community survey, interviews with important regional stakeholders and groups, public meetings and open houses, the ongoing involvement and guidance of the Citizen Advisory Committee and ultimately through the thoughtful involvement of the Planning Commission, the issues and opportunities for Clear Creek County were uncovered and used to help inform and guide the development of the Master Plan.

## IMPORTANT ISSUES AND KEY THEMES

What quickly emerged in the process of seeking input was how profound the changes that Clear Creek County faces in 2016. The changing regional economy, highly influenced by the activities of the Henderson Mine, became increasingly a focal point of the community's concern. The very slow rate of growth (in population and economic diversity) in the County was often noted as a continued challenge. The availability of good jobs, affordable housing and access to effective transportation were issues that rose up during the process.

But what also rose up during this process was the strong identity and attitude the residents of Clear Creek County have about this place. The stunning natural beauty, rich history and culture and access to the recreational and environmental resources of Clear Creek County were all elements of the Quality of Life that residents held out as vital. An emphasis on preservation of important lands and acting thoughtfully changes to land use were issues at the forefront of community discussion. Supporting the historic legacy and continued opportunities in mining was also a important issue.

Out of these critical issues many key themes emerged. These are the threads that helped inform the Vision and all of policies within the Master Plan. These themes touch on a wide array of topics, from the continued importance of mining, the value of the traditional settlements within the County, the importance of defining an economic strategy, the preservation and celebration of the County's culture and history and the value of recreation.

## KEY THEMES

 Quality of Life	 Resiliency	 Recreation
 Built Environment and Land Use	 Mining	 Distinct Areas
 Economy	 Natural Environment	 Cultural Resources



## ESTABLISHING POLICIES

The key themes that emerged from the process of updating the Master Plan in turn inform the overall policies of the County. This "Policy Framework" is the structure on which specific goals and strategies for important aspects of future planning decisions can be made. Eleven (11) important policy statements make up this framework. They echo, in many ways, the key themes, but represent the objectives the County will pursue to assure that the Vision can be realized.

### POLICY FRAMEWORK

1. Seek a greater diversity of economic activity within the County.
2. Enable and encourage communities within Clear Creek County to actively participate in planning for their future.
3. Ensure suitability and compatibility with environmental characteristics and community character of Clear Creek County when considering land use change and development.
4. Identify and protect lands of high ecological value, scenic quality, or historic importance.
5. Promote the concentration of residential and commercial development into established municipalities and activity centers in order to preserve rural lands and to efficiently use County resources.
6. Recognize and support endeavors in the arts, culture, recreation and tourism.
7. Consider recreation as an important contributor to residents' quality of life and a part of a balanced regional economy.
8. Continue to preserve and protect mineral resources for the benefit of future generations.
9. Explore how local and regional initiatives within the County can improve access to health care services.
10. Endorse transportation infrastructure that is multi-modal in nature and enhances existing communities as well as their access to the rest of the region.
11. Identify and implement strategies to strengthen and increase resiliency among residents of the County.



## IMPORTANT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Master Plan addresses a wide variety of elements that affect the day-to-day lives of the County's residents; land use, housing, transportation, public facilities, recreation, etc. For all of these elements the established Policy Framework shapes specific goals and objectives to advance the Vision.

Out of the many policies included in the Master Plan, several rise up as being highly important and relevant to the issues facing the County today.

- Economic Development – The goals and objectives for economic development strive to expand the diversity of economic activity, unify the actions of various public and private interests and encourage and nurture the opportunity for a more stable regional economy.
- Land Use – The continued importance of open space and preservation is well established in the policies of the County. The Master Plan recognizes the importance of focusing more diverse and intensive land uses into areas well suited to such purposes (by terrain, lack of constraints) and near to existing services and transportation systems. Land use policies also, for the first time, address the influence that mining claim lands have on shaping the land use pattern and provides guidance on what that pattern should be. Understanding the economic impact of new development is also an important policy within the Master Plan. In this plan, we will define “development” as new entitlements or land use outcomes that may result in residential, commercial, or industrial uses, including buildings. The continued involvement of residents within distinct areas of the County is also an important goal and objective for future land use decisions.
- Recreation – The importance of recreation to the residents of Clear Creek County was well established during the update process. The long-term policies for recreation include meeting existing needs and addressing the opportunity for enhancing recreational tourism.
- Open Space and Culture – The continued importance of open space and cultural heritage to the County is affirmed in policies.

## MOVING FORWARD

The Policy Framework and specific goals and objectives described in the Master Plan are meant as a guide towards future decision making. Moving forward to realize the Vision will require continued involvement and engagement with the residents of Clear Creek County. The process of implementation will rely on a continuing process of community input. This process may include changes in land use regulations, clarifying roles and responsibilities within County departments and working in partnership with municipalities, regional partners and state agencies. Tools such as fiscal impact analysis are encouraged and supported in the Master Plan to help the County make good decisions about where future development makes sense.

**This 2016 Master Plan will serve to chart the path forward for the County, enable its residents to undertake thoughtful discussion, keeping the Vision in mind, as the County makes decisions about its future.**