Summary Report for the Town of Oak Creek
2023 Strategic Planning Retreat

The Town of Oak Creek's Strategic Planning Retreat was held on June 15th and June 17th at the Oak Creek Town Hall. The retreat's primary goal was to develop a strategic "action" plan for the community of Oak Creek with specific goals and objectives over a 3-5 year time horizon. Additionally, the Town Board engaged in a visioning exercise to identify the most important characteristics of the community and the things they wanted to preserve and protect. In essence, what makes Oak Creek special and unique and how can community leaders ensure that it remains a special place for present and future generations.

In attendance at the sessions were Mayor Nikki Knoebel, Mayor Pro-Tem Wendy Gustafson and Board Members: Rhonda Crawford, Melissa Dobbins, Bernard Gagne, Kelly McElfish and Benjamin Turati. Town Administrator David Torgler, Treasurer Jennifer Hewes, Officer Darin Christensen and Planning Commission Members Andy Benjamin and Chris Mitchell also participated in the strategic planning sessions. The retreat was facilitated by Mark Collins with KRW Associates.

The agenda for the Strategic Planning Retreat included the following:

1.) Welcome/Introductions

2.) Overview of Retreat Agenda Topics: (Potential Additions/Deletions?)

3.) Strengths:

- What Are We Doing Well?
- What Can We Identify as Notable Accomplishments?

4.) Challenges/Opportunities:

- Where Can We Improve?

5.) Visioning Exercise:

- What Type of Community will Oak Creek be in the Coming Years?
- What Makes Oak Creek Special?
- What do you Value?

6.) Identification of Oak Creek's Strategic Focus Areas

(E.G., Housing, Child Care, Public Safety, Infrastructure, Utilities, Land Use Issues, Economic Development, Parks/Recreation, Community Health, Environmental Issues, Arts/Culture, Transportation, etc.)

7.) Develop Goals, Objectives and Action Items

8.) Measuring Success: What Are Our Benchmarks For a "Job Well Done" and How Will We Communicate the Results to Our Community Members?

9.) Takeaways: What have we learned and what will be our focus moving forward?

10.) Wrap Up: Additional Ideas, Comments and Suggestions (Next Steps…)

After introductions and an overview of the agenda, the Mayor and Town Board reviewed the foundational elements of Strategic Planning and reaffirmed the specific mission, vision and values for the Town of Oak Creek.

Vision/Mission/Values → Strategic Outcomes → Goals → Metrics

Community Visioning: The following were identified as important and distinctive characteristics of Oak Creek:

- Family Oriented
- Strong, Small Town Community Values
- Great Volunteers
- Rich History
- Special Events
- Not Steamboat Springs!

Retreat participants engaged in a discussion regarding potential **Community Needs** including:

- Enhanced Revenue
- Paving Streets (incremental)
- Code Review
- Downtown Revitalization
- Special Events Coordinator

The Mayor and Town Board listed the following ***Strengths and Notable Assets*** for the community of Oak Creek:

- Sense of Community
- Home Town Pharmacy
- Good Infrastructure
- Recreation Opportunities
- Good Schools
- Vision (we have one!)
- Existing Businesses

- Great Restaurants
- Grocery Store
- Family Oriented
- Amenities (full slate)
- After School Programs
- Summer Camp
- Parks/Trails/Open Spaces
- Great Staff – Strong Departments
- "Home Town" Events
- Special Events
- Volunteers
- Safe Community
- Library (and programs)
- Inclusive Community

The following **Challenges** were identified for Oak Creek:

- Changes in the Marijuana Industry
- Empty Buildings (re-purpose?)
- Re-Examine Marijuana Licensing
- Economic Development
- Housing (affordable & attainable for existing residents and workforce)
- Staffing – Workforce
- Land Use Regulations
- Constructions Costs
- 2nd Home Ownership
- Public Transit
- Land Locked – Limited Places to Build Homes
- Highway 131 Speed and Traffic
- Operating All Our Own Public Utilities
- Sustainable Staff (changing workforce)
- Infrastructure
- Expand Children's Programming and Recreational Offerings
- Affordable Recreation (especially for families)
- Stagecoach Connection
- Contracted Services

A discussion of the **Strategic "Capital" Plan** included the following:

- Sheriff Reservoir
- 3rd Filtration Plant – Outside Funding $1.2 M
- Wastewater Treatment Plant CDPHE Compliance
- Community Survey Utilizing a Professional Firm
    - Utility Bill Insert

    - Incentive… one month free utilities?
    - Outside Firm to Assist
    - Tent at Labor Day to Promote Survey

- Recreation/Community Center Ideas (meet with School Board)
    - Survey Community Members
    - Apprise the School Board
    - Location Options? South Routt Community Center, Ice Rink, Soroco
    - Other Partners?
    - E-Newsletter

The following **Opportunities** for Oak Creek were identified:

- Empty Lots – Undeveloped/Infill Real Estate
- Code Revisions (DOLA help)
- Need to Help People Stay Here
- South Routt Cooperation
- Set the Table for the Future
- EDC Assistance with John Bristol
- Marketing (Balancing Tourism Impacts)
- Present Oak Creek as an Alternative to Steamboat
- Independence of Oak Creek Community Members

Lastly, the retreat participants engaged in a **Prioritization Exercise**, identifying the following important Community initiatives:

1.) Continue Engineering, Planning, Funding Options for Sheriff Reservoir
2.) Attainable Housing – Housing Needs Assessment and Tramway Property
3.) Maintain Balance for Tourism
4.) Secure Assistance and Technical Support from John Bristol (EDC)
5.) Undertake a Community Survey (now)
6.) Initiate Preliminary Outreach to the School District regarding Community Center Ideas
7.) Investigate Additional Staffing Assistance for the Town
8.) Pursue In Fill Initiatives and Potential Revision to the Town's Land Use Code
9.) Deal with Nuisance and Code Violations on Vacant Properties (Community Pride!)
10.) Install New Downtown Lighting
11.) Business Improvement Grants (B.I.G.)
12.) 3rd Filtration Plant (Debt Retirement w/ DOLA Assistance)
13.) Revisit the Greenway Project

Final Takeaways from Mayor, Town Board and Retreat Participants:

- The Town Administrator would like to have the Town Board officially approve the Strategic Plan for the Town of Oak Creek.

- Mayor and Town Board may want to schedule a time in the near future to check on the progress of the Strategic Plan initiatives.