

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

June 30, 2025

Meeting Convened: 5:30 p.m. The meeting was in-person at the Fire Department Training Room, 625 Ute Avenue, and live-streamed via GoTo Webinar.

City Councilmembers Present: Councilmembers Robert Ballard, Scott Beilfuss, Laurel Cole, Jason Nguyen, Anna Stout, and Ben Van Dyke and Mayor Cody Kennedy.

Staff present: City Manager Mike Bennett, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Housing Manager Ashley Chambers, Planning Manager Niki Galehouse, Communications & Engagement Manager Kelsey Coleman, Deputy City Clerk Misty Williams, and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan

The City's One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan took 22 months to complete and was adopted by the City Council on December 16, 2020. The Plan superseded and replaced the 2010 Joint Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan adopted by the City and Mesa County in February 2010. The City's Comprehensive Plan is used as a blueprint for the City and the foundation of the Plan is the community's vision for its future. This vision, as articulated by the community, guides the goals and strategies included in the plan that informs city implementation priorities, future growth, services, and development in Grand Junction. The Plan was derived directly from ideas and themes generated during the community outreach process.

The 2020 One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is a 10 to 20-year plan that is applicable to the City's Urban Growth Area, an area generally located between 21 Road on the west, J Road on the north, 32 Road on the east and south to a boundary approximately one-quarter of a mile north of the Mesa County Landfill. Whereas many plans take a narrower focus and are primarily intended to address future growth and land use within a community, this plan is truly comprehensive as it addresses the community's vision for a wide range of topics. The Plan identifies and establishes the City's vision by establishing plan principles, goals, and strategies.

Community Development Director Tamra Allen and Planning Manager Niki Galehouse provided a presentation and overview of the plan.

Key points included:

- The plan, adopted in 2020, serves as the city's long-term roadmap for growth, covering everything from land use to economic development.
- It includes 11 plan principles such as collective identity, resilient economy, managed growth, and efficient transportation.
- Emphasis was placed on responsible growth via a tiered framework prioritizing infill and redevelopment.
- Specific goals include strengthening downtown and university areas, improving housing variety, enhancing transportation connectivity, and promoting sustainable practices.
- The plan is supported by various subplans (e.g., parks, transportation) and is intended to be a living document guiding zoning and strategic planning decisions.

b. Overview of the Housing Needs Assessment, Strategy and Implementation Progress

In response to a growing housing crisis, the City of Grand Junction completed a Housing Needs Assessment in 2021, identifying a significant shortfall in available housing. This led to the adoption of 13 housing strategies focused on expanding affordable housing, diversifying housing options, closing gaps between supply and demand, and supporting individuals experiencing homelessness. In 2024, the City reaffirmed its commitment by adopting an updated Housing Strategy (Resolution 74-24), which builds on prior accomplishments.

Housing Manager Ashley Chambers provided an overview of current needs, progress on strategy implementation, and key housing initiatives.

Key points included:

Context & Vision:

- Based on the 2019 Housing Needs Assessment, the strategy aims to expand affordable housing and diversify housing types.
- Defined affordable housing as income-restricted and typically subsidized, with restrictions on rent/pricing.

Current Challenges:

- 44% rent increase and 74% home price increase since 2019.
- Median home price: \$420K; rent: \$1,500/month.
- 2,200 unit deficit, especially for households under 60% AMI.
- Housing Authority waitlist: 2,692 households.

Strategies (Updated in 2024):

1. Land use changes to support attainable housing.
2. Incentives for developers (e.g., ADUs, expedited reviews).
3. City land for housing projects (e.g., Salt Flats).

4. Seek dedicated housing funds.
5. Continued support for services and preservation of existing affordable housing.
6. Support preservation of existing housing that serves low- and moderate-income households.
7. Evaluate inclusionary housing or linkage fee ordinance
8. Explore designation of an URA and utilization of Tax Increment Financing for affordable housing.
9. Provide community education opportunities to address housing challenges.
10. Track progress and outcomes.
11. Support legislative efforts to improve housing outcomes.

Results & Highlights:

- Prop 123 target: 374 units in 3 years. So far: ~290 units toward goal.
- ADU Incentive Program supported 21 units in 2024, 13 more in 2025.
- At Home in GJ program includes tenant education and landlord incentives.

c. Overview of the Unhoused Needs Assessment, Strategy and Implementation Progress

The City of Grand Junction addresses houselessness through several key data-driven efforts, including the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA) completed in 2023 and two Unhoused Surveys conducted in 2022 and 2024. These efforts informed the development of the community-wide Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan, formally adopted by the City in July 2024. The plan outlines coordinated actions to close housing and service gaps and advance progress toward Functional Zero.

Housing Manager Ashley Chambers presented key updated data and provided an update on implementation efforts and current initiatives.

Overview:

- Developed alongside housing strategies, the unhoused plan focuses on outreach, prevention, and coordination.

Data Points:

- PIT 2025 Count: 725 unhoused; unsheltered population grew from 92 (2023) to 387 (2025).
- Most unhoused are long-term local residents (average time in county: 15.8 years).
- Primary causes: job loss, health issues, and eviction.
- Only ~50% of those surveyed had incomes above \$400/month.

Community Strategy (Resolution 49-24):

- 7 Strategies with active workgroups:
 1. Improve coordination
 2. Fund housing and services (\$11.1M over 2024–2025).
 3. Expand prevention and navigation (e.g., Resource Center, hotline).
 4. Increase access to basic needs (water, hygiene, medical).
 5. Enhance mental health and substance services (with Medicaid & case managers).
 6. Improve transportation (e.g., bus rides, bike repair clinics).
 7. Expand interim and permanent shelter options.

Impact:

- New shelters: Joseph Center and a family facility added 35 new beds.
- Outreach teams assisted hundreds with ID, employment, and housing waitlists.
- The unhoused population is more actively engaged in services and seeking housing.

d. Housing Affordability/Attainability Code Task Force

The City has received several recent inquiries from members of the Housing and Building Association of Western Colorado to convene a task force focused on “meaningful” reforms within the City’s policies and procedures to make housing more attainable.

Key points included:

Objective:

- Form a task force of industry professionals to identify ways to reduce costs and time in housing development.

Scope:

- Focus on zoning and development code (Title 21) and engineering standards (Title 29).
- Staff will support but not lead; the industry will guide recommendations.
- Metrics include time to permit, units built, and potential cost reductions.

Task Force Structure:

- Proposed membership: developers, engineers, planners, architects, and possibly Planning Commission reps.
- Duration: 6-9 months, with options to extend or reconvene to monitor implementation outcomes.
- Council discussed how to manage applications, ensure representation, and avoid limiting membership to trade groups.

Next Steps:

OpenAI. (2025). *ChatGPT* [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

- Issue a call for applications from professionals active in the local development process.
- Council will review and appoint members.

e. City Council Community Engagement Strategy Discussion

The City Council has expressed a strong desire to deepen its connection with the public and create more meaningful opportunities for dialogue. The City recognizes the importance of meeting residents where they already are: in their neighborhoods, at local events, and through everyday, familiar community spaces.

Communications & Engagement Manager Kelsey Coleman presented the proposed strategy.

Key points included:

Core Initiative – “Meet You There”:

- A multi-pronged outreach strategy that builds on existing efforts like Coffee with the City Manager and town halls, designed to be flexible and inclusive to accommodate varying councilmember schedules.

Four Main Components:

1. Neighborhood Dialogues:
 - Bi-monthly town hall-style gatherings across various parts of the city.
 - Focused on intimate, conversational formats allowing community members to share what's on their minds.
 - Events will provide council updates and include open-floor discussions.
2. Community Plug-In:
 - Councilmembers will attend pre-existing community events such as parades, markets, and service club meetings.
 - The goal is to meet residents where they already are to minimize scheduling burdens for both officials and citizens.
3. Digital Engagement:
 - Website (EngageGJ): Use this platform more effectively for council engagement, storytelling, and updates.
 - Social Media: Expand informal council presence with Q&As, meeting previews/recaps, and member spotlights.
 - Intended to make council engagement accessible to those unable to attend events in person.
4. Media Plan:
 - Highlight individual councilmembers through traditional media and creative storytelling.
 - Designed to humanize officials and increase public trust via consistent, authentic communications.

Implementation & Logistics:

OpenAI. (2025). *ChatGPT* [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

- Council will choose from a quarterly list of potential events, which will be publicized via the website and social media.
- Efforts will be made to ensure a balance of visibility without overwhelming public expectations or Council schedules.

Flexibility & Participation:

- The plan allows for varied levels of engagement: digital vs. in-person, formal vs. informal.
- Designed for co-hosting and rotation among councilmembers.
- Engagement opportunities range from two to three per month, totaling 6–9 per quarter.

2. Council Communication

There was discussion on a conflict in scheduling the Council strategic retreat at the same time as the Colorado Municipal League executive board retreat.

3. Next Workshop Topics

Future workshop topics were not discussed.

4. Other Business

Volunteers were requested for interview committees for the Grand Junction Housing Authority (Councilmembers Cole and Van Dyke), and the Planning Commission (Mayor Kennedy and Councilmember Van Dyke).

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 9:16 p.m.