Chapter 1: Introduction

Downtown Pagosa Springs has been the heart of the community since its settlement in the late nineteenth century, when it evolved with a mix of uses, including commercial establishments, institutional facilities and residences. Since that time, the Town has expanded into outlying areas, but the original downtown remains an important part of life for residents, workers and visitors. The Town of Pagosa Springs has worked in the past decade to create a strong center for the community that is a vital component of the regional economy and a cultural and symbolic focus for the quality of life that the San Juan River Valley offers. Today, the town seeks to assure that downtown will continue in this important economic, cultural and symbolic role and therefore describes a series of policies and improvement strategies in this Master Plan to further that goal.

The Downtown Master Plan effort builds on an established framework of historic resources, circulation systems, natural resources and public amenities that has attracted national attention and investment in recent years. The Downtown Master Plan builds upon the existing framework to encourage a healthy climate for public and private investment. The Plan also recognizes that future improvements will be made by public and private parties and that these investments should be coordinated in a manner that reinforces the overall objectives for the area.

The Downtown Master Plan establishes a vision for infill development and redevelopment that will guide public officials in future land use policy decisions and includes design policies that ensure future projects fulfill the community’s goals for the downtown.

The Downtown Master Plan works to incorporate established goals as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, including the vision that the town will “preserve and promote our historic downtown and community heritage.”

This image reflects Pagosa Springs’ architectural scale and small town character.

The Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement includes some key points that relate to policies for the downtown.

“Our town will:
• Be known for and retain our small town atmosphere and unique character;
• Manage growth responsibly, promoting development patterns that support and retain the town’s character;
• Broaden community cultural events and venues and continue to support public art suitable for small towns;
• Sustain and enhance the beauty and health of the natural environment;
• Preserve and promote our historic downtown and community heritage;
• Retain, grow, promote, and support our unique local businesses and encourage a diverse economic base with year round job opportunities;
• Provide a variety of neighborhoods that contain a mix of housing that is attainable by all our citizens, no matter age, income, or ethnicity;
• Be built around a system of connected and continuous streets, sidewalks, and trails and provide transportation options that are well integrated into the neighborhoods;
• Support and expand our legacy of parks and open spaces;
• Build quality, attractive development appropriate to the neighborhoods”

-- Selected excerpts from the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement
It is important to understand that the Downtown Master Plan is a policy document which will guide the implementation of public and private sector infrastructure projects and investments. The plan itself does not commit the town to specific construction projects. Each of those projects that are set forth would require further steps to implement, including decisions by the appropriate boards and Town Council to execute them.

Key Objectives of the Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Master Plan must build upon the existing traditional character of Pagosa Springs, while also accommodating appropriate changes that are inevitable as any community growth is not static. In particular, there is a sense of “authenticity” in Pagosa Springs that is important to residents and has been identified as part of the town’s appeal to visitors. This character should be respected and conveyed in the plan. To ensure that the Downtown Master Plan fulfills the expectations of the community, it is important to understand the role that the document should play in future planning and development decisions.

The following principles have been developed to guide the policies set forth in the Downtown Master Plan:

Downtown Master Plan Principles

1. Design recommendations should benefit the community at large.
2. Projects identified in the Downtown Master Plan should have the capability to be phased and implemented incrementally so that success of the plan is not dependent on any one specific public or private improvement.
3. Public amenities should be designed to serve both residents and visitors.
4. A framework for public and private investment should be provided.
5. Design principles that are appropriate to each district should be established.

Master Plan Study Area Boundary

The study area boundary was defined by reviewing downtown zoning districts, key features and amenities of the community. The boundary encompasses all of the original townsite of Pagosa Springs and includes much of the downtown commercial core. Adjacent districts that include businesses, civic facilities and public amenities that define the character of Downtown and contribute to the vitality of the larger community are also included within the Study Area Boundary.

The Study Area encompasses:
- The intersection of Highways 160 and 84 to the east.
- The High School and Recreation Complex to the south and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Pagosa Springs Elementary School to the west.
- Neighborhoods (Hermosa Street, South Pagosa, Lewis Street, San Juan Street, North Pagosa, Mesa Heights and Paradise Mesa).

The Planning Process

The Downtown Master Plan is the product of a collaborative effort among many citizens who seek to ensure that the downtown is vibrant and thriving for future generations. Similar objectives have long been held by civic leaders and activists. The Downtown Master Plan, therefore, builds upon existing and emerging
policies that seek to preserve existing character, promote economic development and strengthen the viability of Downtown as the heart of the community. The Downtown Master Plan advances concepts developed in Phase One of the planning process, published in 2004 by Hart Howerton and coordinated through the Community Vision Council.

The Downtown Master Plan is also a product of public involvement brought together through a variety of workshops, meetings, design charrettes, on-site field work and analysis. The focus of this planning effort extended from August 2005 through March 2007 and included the following public outreach forums:

**Focus Groups**

A series of focus group sessions were held in August 2005 to clarify the objective of the Master Plan project. Various community members including representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Real Estate/Development Community and Parks/Recreation Community were present. There was also a meeting with the members of the Community Vision Council and public officials.
A steering committee was established to guide the Master Plan project consultants. The role of the steering committee was to ensure the Master Plan follows the direction set forth by the town and its residents and that the consultant team responded to public concerns. Steering committee meetings were scheduled to review interim project documentation and discuss relevant issues.

Urban Design Community Lecture Series
In the summer of 2005, the Town of Pagosa Springs conducted a lecture series titled “Creative Spaces Speaker Series.” Lecturers included Noré Winter, Urban Design and Planning Consultant; Mark Childs, Professor of Architecture at University of New Mexico; Harold Stalf, Grand Junction DDA; and Joe Napoleon, Woodland Park DDA.

As a part of this lecture series, Noré Winter was invited to present ideas on the integration of public art in urban design framework plans. Towards the end of the lecture, a public visioning exercise was conducted, which provided an opportunity for attendees to describe what a visitor to Pagosa Springs would encounter when visiting the community in the year 2015. The result of this exercise is used to provide context for Chapter 3: The Vision for Downtown: Year 2020.

Public Workshops
Workshop #1: November 2005
The November 9, 2005 Public Workshop consisted of a brief introduction to the project and a series of three “hands on” workshop exercises. There were over sixty community members present at this workshop. The goal of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for the public to respond to and prioritize initial urban design framework concepts.
**Workshop #2: February 2006**
Following the two design charrettes, the consultant team facilitated a public workshop to discuss the findings and design concepts. Workshop participants used aerial photos to guide group discussions regarding future land uses and development throughout downtown.

**Workshop #3: May 2006**
The public was invited to a formal presentation to review design concepts and design guidelines included in the first draft of the Pagosa Springs Downtown Master Plan and Historic District Design Guidelines.

**Workshop #4: July 2006**
The public was invited to attend a presentation of the changes that had occurred to the draft Downtown Master Plan between the first and second drafts. Issues related to Opportunity Site 1 and the parking structure were discussed at length. The noted “adaptive reuse” on 1st street, the possible relocation of the museum and the desired character of the “East Village” area were also discussed.

**Workshop #5: August 2006**
The public was invited to attend a presentation regarding the design principles contained in the second draft of the Master Plan. Issues related to specific locations of proposed parking structures and the relationship of those structures to existing and proposed infill and redevelopment projects were discussed. Additional topics included potential improvements and development of the northern edge of Town Park, which would help link the commercial core of downtown to the East Village.

*The San Juan River runs through the heart of Downtown Pagosa Springs.*

*Water features exist throughout the Town of Pagosa Springs. The Bureau of Reclamation Gaging Station is shown above.*
Design Charrettes

Charrette #1: February 2006
Design Charrette #1 was conducted on February 1, 2006 to discuss specific components of Downtown and to explore potential options for future land uses and redevelopment. For both design charrettes members of the public were invited to join the Steering Committee, Town Council and Planning Commission to explore initial design principles and concepts.

Charrette #2: February 2006
Design Charrette #2 was conducted on February 2, 2006 to review and explore potential goals and objectives for design guidelines for downtown. Issues such as massing, setbacks, vehicular access, pedestrian safety and the integration of public art were discussed as well as how specific design guidelines would fulfill the overall vision for Downtown.

Website
The Town of Pagosa Springs used the Town’s website (http://www.townofpagosasprings.com) throughout the Master Plan process as a means of keeping the community up to date with community events and workshops. It also served as a valuable distribution tool ensuring that interim project documentation was available for review and comment before and following public workshops.

Relationship to Other Planning Documents

The Conceptual Master Plan of 2004 (Phase One)
The Downtown Master Plan also draws upon proposals set forth in a “Conceptual Master Plan,” which was prepared in 2004 for the Community Vision Council, with the assistance of the firm of Hart Howerton, architects and planners. The plan recommends public sector improvements which include an expanded river trail system, enhanced streetscapes and a series of special redevelopment projects. It is referred to as “Phase One” of the downtown plan process, with this document serving as “Phase Two.” Many of the ideas presented in the Conceptual Master Plan are reflected in this Downtown Master Plan and in some cases in a manner similar to that presented in the 2004 document. In other cases ideas have been modified to reflect the more specific considerations that came forth in the community discussions that were a part of this planning effort.

The Downtown Master Plan focuses on existing and future development patterns for Downtown Pagosa Springs and the relationship between public spaces and private development to ensure that continued growth and prosperity create a physical framework that fulfills the vision of the community. Ensuring that future infill redevelopment and public improvements contribute and enhance the town is a priority that is well established in existing policies and studies. A key source of policy directives is the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Town of Pagosa Springs Comprehensive Plan (2006)
The Town of Pagosa Springs adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 2006 to guide future land use decisions. There are general planning policies that relate to the downtown and some specific policies for downtown are also established. Several of these policies are referenced throughout this document.
Chapter 1

Town of Pagosa Springs Municipal Code
The Town’s Municipal Code establishes basic development regulations that also influence the character of improvements in the downtown. The Municipal Code permits a number of uses within the downtown study area and establishes regulatory standards. Recommendations in the Downtown Master Plan suggest amendments to the Municipal Code may be necessary to implement to design and development goals within areas of the downtown. The Downtown Study Area is comprised of many zoning districts which are established in the Municipal Code. These zoning districts represent a variety of land uses and development patterns that contribute to the character of individual neighborhoods and result in the diverse attributes of downtown. Because of this diversity and distinct differences in each of these zones, the Downtown Master Plan has identified a series of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts that are addressed individually in “Chapter 3: The Downtown Framework.”

In addition to the traditional zoning districts a Historic Business District Overlay exists within a portion of the Downtown area. The Historic Business District provides protection of historic resources along a portion of Pagosa Street and Lewis Street. Within the District, character, appearance and other aspects of proposed development, renovation or redevelopment are reviewed and addressed by the Historic Preservation Board. Design guidelines are provided for the historic district as a companion to the Downtown Master Plan.

Historic District and Local Landmark Design Guidelines
A companion document to the Downtown Master Plan, and developed concurrently, is a set of Downtown Historic Business District and Local Landmark Design Guidelines. This document provides information pertaining to site and building redevelopment and improvements within the Downtown Historic Business District Overlay. This document should apply to all improvements within the Historic Business District and Local Landmarks. This includes alterations to “contributing” historic resources, “non-contributing” existing structures and new infill construction.

Other Policy Documents
The Town of Pagosa Springs has developed additional policy documents that supplement the Downtown Master Plan. Each of the following documents has been summarized in Appendix C of the May 2006 Comprehensive Plan:

• Archuleta County Community Plan (2001)
• Hot Springs Boulevard Master Plan (2001)
• Historic Buildings Survey (2002)
• Pagosa Area Trails Plan (2003)
• Community Survey Research Findings (2004)
• Conceptual Downtown Master Plan Phase I (2004)
• The Springs Resort Design Charette (2004)
• River Improvements & Whitewater/Restoration Conceptual Plan (2005)
• Economic Development Plan (2005)
• Big Box Task Force Summary of Findings (2005)
• Parks and Recreation Community Survey (2005)
• Community Branding Reports (2006)
Using the Plan
The plan should be used by the Town to chart public and private sector improvements and to guide adoption of regulations that will support the vision as established by the Downtown Master Plan. It also should be used by private property and business owners, civic groups and citizens as a means of directing their programs and activities such that they will help to reinforce the overall plan objectives.

The Town of Pagosa Springs Downtown Master Plan is organized into six chapters and contains diagrams, photographs and sketches that illustrate proposed design principles and concepts. Throughout the document, sketches illustrate the potential character of some selected improvement projects and photographs from other communities provide suggestions for the potential character of some of the proposed land uses and public improvements. **It is important to note that these diagrams and images are intended to convey a general approach to improvements, not specific design solutions, and that a more detailed site analysis, design development and discussion would be necessary before any specific project was implemented.** The Downtown Master Plan also contains design guidelines that apply to the broader downtown study area, especially to those neighborhoods that are outside of, but contiguous to the Downtown Historic District.