

# TOWN CENTER

Carbondale, CO



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

Summer/Fall 2023



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Approach

In July of 2023, Artspace and the Town of Carbondale engaged a design team to begin the process of designing the Town Center project. The Town Center project comprises 1.4 acres in the heart of downtown.

Over the course of 9 weeks over August and September, the team conducted six in-person events, five small group interviews, an online survey, two community design worksessions, and two open houses. The survey had 280 respondents while in-person events reached over 200 people. 70 individual Carbondale based organizations were identified and invited to participate in a questionnaire and group interviews. 20 organizations took advantage of this invitation and submitted questionnaires and participated in the interviews.

Advertising purposefully focused in and around Carbondale utilizing typical channels including newspaper, radio, social media, and postcards. Advertising also heavily relied on direct email invitations to events and the survey. Organizations identified as stakeholders in this process were a tremendous asset in getting the word out and helped the survey achieve a high response rate.



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## Outreach Goals

- Engage with the Carbondale community to develop a shared vision for the program, built environment, and community spirit.
- Gather voices and thoughts in the community – especially those that don't typically get heard.
- Spread larger goodwill and knowledge about the project.
- Develop relationships with partners. (i.e. – financial partners, programming partners, operational partners, etc.).
- Develop relationships with future tenants and artists. Understand the needs of these future tenants.
- Identify key people to participate in the design process moving forward (Design Advisory Group).
- Figure out how the “vibe” of Carbondale shapes this project. Keep Carbondale... Carbondale.

## Findings

### Open Space vs Built Environment

**Survey Feedback:** General community comfort with 3-story development. Unclear on height of third story and clarity around 35' or 42' height.

**Charrette Feedback:** Open Space is important. Prioritize achieving 'lots of housing'. The community puts high value on exterior public space (promenade). Clear direction given on the need for Pocket Park. Clear direction given providing variation in building mass on the Promenade. There is support for a Transit Corner. Community directed the team to create 'Carbondale Scale' Massing/Building - avoid lot wide single building appearance.

### Need For Housing vs Support For Parking

**Survey Feedback:** The community is clearly split on the issue of parking vs providing housing. Half of the respondents urged the project to meet parking requirements per the current code, expressing that reserved parking is a clear occupant priority and if not provided, it will stress the parking availability on the surrounding public streets. The other half of respondents encouraged the project to request a reduced parking ratio, even going as far as to suggest the Town consider creating a parking district overlay. The benefits will force occupants to rethink their own car dependence in downtown, create a true live/work model, and it would support Carbondale's green initiative. The project could offer reduced rent in exchange for opting out of having an off-street parking spot.

**Charrette Feedback:** The charrette participants were once again split down the middle. Half of participants supported meeting code requirements for parking, recognizing that people still rely on cars in this valley to get around on Hwy 82 for work and to reach recreation spots. Some of the feedback in this cohort was to not risk the success of this much-needed housing project by requesting parking variances. The other half of participants encouraged the team to think outside the box, shift the norm, and reduce the standard. This cohort argued that the site is walkable, already positioned as alternative transit-oriented, and in the “urban” realm of Carbondale.

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Three things were clear from the charrette work however, off-street parking should be served by planned alleys through existing utility easements. Tuck-under parking will be the only solution to achieve a meaningful number of housing units. Some tandem parking (two bays stacked tip to tail) is needed to support the housing goals for 2-3 bed units.

## Residential vs Commercial Space

**Survey Feedback:** There was clear consensus that the Promenade should be all or mostly commercial space, focusing on community activity and vibrancy. Although current zoning outlines commercial space on the ground floor for a 25' depth on both 6th Street and Colorado Ave., there was support from the community for residential uses on all or part of 6th Street (as a priority), as well as on Colorado Ave (secondary priority).

**Charrette Feedback:** After presenting the findings of the survey feedback to charrette participants, there was clear early adoption and support of having residential on 6th Street. Having more building area dedicated to housing would help achieve goals to house more people. Planning for residential on 6th Street would also transition well with the adjacent and nearby residential uses. This additional residential would have to be supported by more parking or a variance for reduced parking ratios.

## Commercial Programming

**Survey Feedback:** The community prioritized space for pop-up arts and crafts with indoor/outdoor market; full-time farmer's market/food hall; and for-rent creative studio space (in that order). There was less desire for dance and performance space, retail stores, and a community gallery (in that order from least-desired first). Other options ranking in the middle were restaurant/coffee shop/lounge, shared maker space, and reservable event space.

**Charrette Feedback:** There was clear support from charrette participants for designing commercial spaces to be flexible for many and future uses. In this spirit, there was also discussion about providing space for events and exhibits that turn-over and activate the building. Responding to ground-floor uses, Colorado Ave. was identified as potentially more office-oriented, based on the synergy it could create with the Civic Center across the street. Commercial uses that most frequently came up in the charrette were: market, restaurant/coffee shop, gallery, performance space, maker space, pop-up booths for goods and arts sales, incubator office space. There was also full support of Thunder River Theater expanding into the project site to meet its growing needs.

## LIHTC Allocation vs. Workforce Community Housing

**Survey Feedback:** Beyond parking, the one thing people are passionate about is the reality of building affordable/workforce housing in Carbondale. A resonating quote from outreach was "we're one bad housing experience away from having to leave". There is clear desperation - if it's not themselves, it's someone they know). And there's a demand to know who this project will realistically serve. Beyond that, respondents are still showing a need for both rental and ownership units.

**Charrette Feedback:** When assured that phasing the project would happen back-to-back in a 2-3 year cycle (rather than 10+), charrette participants seemed to be in support of phasing the project, allowing some housing to be developed before the rest of the site.