



Town of Ignacio
Town Board - Strategic Plan
2021 - 2023



Submitted to:

Town of Ignacio - Town Board
& Mark Garcia, Interim Town Manager
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I. About the Town of Ignacio

Ignacio is a small community of about 800 people nestled in the southeast corner of [La Plata County](#) along with the [Southern Ute Indian Tribe](#). We are a quick drive to the [Navajo Lake State Park](#), the [San Juan Mountains and National Forest](#), thousands of acres of State/Federal lands, [Mesa Verde National Park](#), and the Four Corners Region.

The Town consists of a variety of businesses and residential homes with a unique Southwest Colorado feel. Our businesses range from local family run restaurants, galleries, locally owned and run grocery stores, banking, chiropractic and dental clinics, as well as a wide variety of other goods and services. The Ignacio School District serves hundreds of children from the Town all the way to the Colorado/New Mexico Border.

Town Hall is located at [540 Goddard Avenue, Ignacio, CO 81137](#). We provide water, sewer, gas, and seasonal irrigation water to the residents and some of those on the edge of Town boundaries. (Town of Ignacio, 2020)

II. Purpose of the Town's Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan (the Plan) has been prepared by the Town Board in collaboration with key staff. It establishes a common language and proposes strategies designed to ensure a bright future for Ignacio. Specifically, this Plan creates the following outcomes:

- Defines a new Mission and Vision created by the Town Board
- Establishers a 3-year planning horizon, and provides the basis for an ongoing dialogue between the staff, Board, and the community regarding the direction of the Town and specific strategies

- Identifies the major challenges and opportunities likely to arise during the planning horizon and proposes specific strategies to address these challenges
- Intended to increase confidence among community leaders, partners and residents that the Town is appropriately addressing, opportunities, future risks, and needed investments
- Ensures that proposed strategies and activities are consistent with Town's mission and values
- Provides sufficient information to allow the Town's staff to develop more specific strategies and tasks, and ultimately fulfill Ignacio's Vision for the future

It is important to emphasize that this Strategic Plan does not approve or communicate final policy decisions on specific issues or strategies. Rather, it provides a framework for an ongoing dialogue about maintaining and enhancing quality of life in Ignacio. Each of the Major Strategies in this Plan will require additional collaboration by the Town's staff, advice from experts, and input from the community before the Town Board can make final policy or investment decisions. The Town will provide ample opportunities for citizens to be engaged in the dialogue as specific issues are addressed.

III. Strategic Planning Process

Planning During Uncertain Times

While all strategic planning occurs without knowledge of what the future may hold, 2020 presented a year like no other with the COVID-19 pandemic, deep social unrest nationwide, and the US Presidential election. The pandemic presented numerous challenges for the Town of Ignacio's leaders and community to address, including: public health and safety; restaurant and business restrictions; financial and economic instability; remote schooling, workforce and public meetings; among many other challenges.

The Town Board and Staff engaged in strategic planning in 2020 to envision and plan for the future, recognizing that the world may never return to the "old normal", but instead must innovate and flexibly adapt to the changing circumstances moving forward. This approach builds resilience versus stagnancy, and hope versus despair. The saying "change is the only constant" was thrown into high relief in 2020, and the Town has taken it upon themselves to respond as responsibly, transparently and compassionately as possible while making important decisions with the public's best interest at heart.

Phase 1 Board & Organizational Assessment

Phase 1 Process: In May and June 2020 Sagebrush Ltd., conducted board and organizational assessments for the Town of Ignacio through 1:1 phone calls and video conferencing with Town Trustees, Interim Town Manager, and Key Department Heads. The focus was on identifying each individual's priority areas for the Town of Ignacio in the next several years, to identify key priorities and multi-year strategies, as part of a cohesive, group-facilitated strategic planning process in Phase 2. The Board & Organizational Assessments also sought to illuminate the highest and best use of individuals' passions and expertise and how they envision engaging with and furthering key strategies.

Phase 1 Participants:

Town Board: Stella Cox (Mayor), Alison deKay (Mayor Pro-Tem), Tom Atencio, Edward Box III, Sharon Craig, Sandra Maez, and Dixie Melton

Staff: Mark Garcia (Interim Town Manager), Tuggy Dunton (Town Clerk Treasurer), Kirk Phillips (Chief of Police), Chris Howlett (Director of Public Works)

Phase 1 Documents: "Final Phase I Report - Town of Ignacio - Sagebrush"

Major Themes with most Closely Shared Perspectives & Opinions in Phase 1:

Some major themes had closely shared perspective opinions by most board members & staff.

- *Cohesive Board & Staff - seek to maintain & support*
- *Strong Financial Position - seek to maintain & support*
- *Ignacio Strengths & Assets - seek to maintain & improve quality of life*
- *Relationship with the Tribe - seek to improve when opportunities arise*

Major Themes with Various Perspectives & Opinions in Phase 1:

Several themes stood out with varied responses, opinions and unanswered questions on how and when the Town should move forward with each of them.

- *Utilities Independence*
- *Affordable Housing*
- *Business & Economic Development*
- *Comprehensive Plan & Infrastructure Upgrades*
- *Succession Planning of Leadership Positions*
- *Board Training & Development & Public Engagement*

Phase 2 Strategic Planning

Phase 2 Process: The Town of Ignacio Board Members and Interim Town Manager participated in strategic planning in November and December 2020. Sessions were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participatory methods and consensus building workshops were facilitated by Sagebrush Ltd. to draw out individual and collective insights and commitments to major shared strategies. Three facilitated workshop sessions included: 3 Year Visioning, Innovative Problem-Solving & Solutions, and Mission & Vision Statements.

Phase 2 Participants:

Town Board: Stella Cox (Mayor), Alison deKay (Mayor Pro-Tem), Tom Atencio, Edward Box III, Sharon Craig, Sandra Maez, and Dixie Melton
Staff: Mark Garcia (Interim Town Manager)

IV. Foundation

Town of Ignacio - Mission

To serve our multicultural community by being strong financial stewards, supporting relevant and applicable policy, and by providing beneficial services that promote and enhance the small-town quality of life.

Town of Ignacio - Vision

Ignacio will strive to preserve its deeply rooted heritage while providing a well-balanced foundation upon which all generations can grow and thrive.

Town of Ignacio - Core Values

At the Town of Ignacio, we:
Celebrate our diverse cultural heritage
Lead with integrity and transparency
Engage in strong community partnerships
Make informed decisions and communicate with clarity and compassion
Uphold a family-oriented and safe environment
Serve Ignacio with dedication and commitment

V. Major Strategies

Pursuing Opportunities and Mitigating Risks

The Town of Ignacio engages in planning, makes capital investments, and provides essential services designed to sustain quality of life while preserving our historical and cultural heritage. Consequently, the Town must not only take advantage of opportunities, but analyze and mitigate significant risks, whether these risks relate to the reliability of essential services, the economy, the natural environment, public health, or public-safety. Properly addressing these risks, and pursuing opportunities to improve the community, requires that the Town maintain a robust planning process and recommend prudent policies and investments. The following Major Strategies address these opportunities and risks and are aligned with the Town's Core Values. They provide the basis for further collaboration and ultimately policy decisions by the Town's Board.

Using Major Strategies to Describe the Future

The Town of Ignacio's Strategic Plan employs several criteria for assessing future challenges and opportunities. These criteria include the following:

- *Ensuring that the Town is adhering to its mission statement and steadily pursuing its vision*
- *Making sure that the Town remains compliant with established standards*
- *Continuing to enhance the Town's workforce, leadership and performance*

- *Anticipating and planning for changes in regulations or legal requirements*
- *Responding to economic trends and evolving needs of Ignacio's residents and businesses*

Based on the criteria above, the Town has developed a series of six Major Strategies.

List of Major Strategies

The following Major Strategies describe the issues, discussions, and decisions likely to come before Ignacio's Town Board within a 3-year planning horizon. As stated above, they do not represent final decisions by the Board or staff, rather they provide enough detail for staff to continue clarifying the issues, collaborating with experts, and leading a community dialogue.

Each Major Strategy lists Core Values, and is designed to align with the Town's mission statement, which is "to serve our multicultural community by being strong financial stewards, supporting relevant and applicable policy, and by providing beneficial services that promote and enhance the small-town quality of life". These strategies and associated activities may have implications well beyond the planning horizon, consistent with the need to have a long-term view. In summary, "Ignacio will strive to preserve its deeply rooted heritage while providing a well-balanced foundation upon which all generations can grow and thrive". The following Major Strategies address these fundamental realities in an integrated manner.

Strategy 1: Community Engagement & Collaboration

Strategy 2: Downtown Community Revitalization & Business Development

Strategy 3: Affordable & Attainable Housing Development for Families & Workforce

Strategy 4: Improved Infrastructure with Future Vision & Planning

Strategy 5: Manageable Utility Rates through Independence or Adjustment

Strategy 6. Stable & Effective Organizational Leadership

Major Strategies in Detail

Strategy 1: Community Engagement & Collaboration

Applicable Core Values: Lead with Integrity & Transparency, Engage in Strong Community Partnerships, Make Informed Decisions & Communicate with Clarity & Compassion, Serve Ignacio with Dedication & Commitment

BACKGROUND

A. Community Relations & Engagement

The essential competencies for any municipality are to provide beneficial services and to ensure that the community is planning appropriately for future quality of life for its residents. Especially as a small-town community where people know each other and whose shared history may go back generations, appropriate planning and investment requires that the Town staff and Board are trusted and transparent, are listening to its residents, and are leading a meaningful dialogue with the community on important issues and policy decisions.

One of the Town's strengths is celebrating Ignacio's multicultural and diverse population of people and communities. The staff and Board strive to listen and understand community needs from a variety of sources. This has involved accepting our common bond as residents of Ignacio while also embracing our differences.

B. Tribal Collaborations

The Town of Ignacio is located within the exterior boundaries of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT) reservation. Relationships between the Town and Tribe have varied over the years. The Town seeks to collaborate with the Tribe as a key partner and neighbor, while maintaining Town residents' quality of life.

CHALLENGE & OPPORTUNITY

A. Community Relations & Engagement

A specific challenge is for residents to feel they are being heard by the Town staff and Board, have ample opportunity to make their opinions heard, and receive clear and consistent follow-up communication related to their issues or concerns.

In the past, low turnout at Town Board meetings, participation on community boards, and informed feedback on community decisions and processes, led the Town to experience low community engagement on important issues. However, in 2020 some issues generated high levels of community engagement including: some community members pressing for a permanent town manager, utility rate discussions, and controversy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Town Board Meetings in March - December 2020 were held virtually due to the pandemic, which also may have

led to increased convenience for community participation.

The Town seeks to answer the **Key Questions:**

- How might the Town effectively communicate with and engage our community?
- How might the Town help residents better understand how the Town works and functions, so they can be most informed and effective in their civic engagement?

B. Tribal Collaborations

There is a general feeling on the Town Board of “we all live in this community together and should support one another, in the best interest of residents and Tribal members.” Town leadership have made numerous attempts to collaborate and partner with the Tribe in a variety of ways over recent years, including: quarterly meetings with Tribal Council, strategic planning sessions on shared public concerns and opportunities including utility services and rates. These attempts at partnership and collaboration with the Tribe in recent years have not resulted in resolution of the issues between the Town and Tribe. Other potential areas of collaboration could be through: parks and recreation; joint community branding and cultural tourism; multicultural community events, parades and festivals; public works and on-call emergency services; infrastructure improvements and more. There has been a level of collaboration around public safety through the Town & Tribe’s police departments and shared training efforts, which may serve as a potential model for partnership.

The Town seeks to answer the **Key Question:**

- When does the Town seek to collaborate with the Tribe on shared public issues, and when does the Town act independently in advocating for and advancing quality of life for Ignacio residents and the best interests of the Town?
- How can the Town ensure proper procedure in seeking representation from stakeholder groups [i.e. soliciting Tribal Council for appropriate representative(s) on joint committees to foster two-way communication]?

SOLUTION

A. Community Relations & Engagement

1. Town Board & Staff to abide by our Core Values in all interactions, communication and engagement with the public and stakeholders, including: being transparent, humble, attentive, patient, understanding and respectful of others’ opinions.
2. Keep the community informed of opportunities for civic engagement through multiple channels and pathways including:
 - a. Be proactive in communications, getting ahead of important community issues
 - b. Provide information that is brief, relevant, and emphasizes the Town’s Core Values
 - c. Provide ample access for the public to provide input on major strategies and policy decisions
 - d. Providing timely notice of meetings, including continuing to post meeting notices at the Library, Post Office, Town Hall and Town website - and consider new posting opportunities and avenues (radio, other partners or locations?)

- e. Finding solutions for holding in-person meetings safely during the pandemic while offering the convenience of remote options as well going forward
- f. Utilize our monthly newsletter and consider developing a monthly or quarterly Town Board communication flyer to the public
- g. Boost engagement with our social media by encouraging the community to follow our Facebook page
- h. Develop new creative ways to engage our community outside of meetings (coffee & cookies with the Town Board, conversation hours, etc)
- i. Engage community members through their interests: such as developing special interest groups for research and action on public issues
- j. Youth Engagement:
 - i. Consider recognizing students or adults that receive Character Counts Awards at Town Board Meetings
 - ii. Consider holding joint meetings with Ignacio High School Student Council and the Tribal Sunshine Cloud Smith Youth Council (Fall, Spring)
 - iii. Train or recruit our youth for roles in the community
- 3. See Strategy 6 on adopting a more formalized process during Board Meetings for addressing public comment, researching issues, getting back to citizens, and moving forward in meetings and with issues
- 4. Consider researching and adopting a Home Rule Charter and moving the Town from statutory rule status. Home Rule gives local municipalities the power to make legislation relevant to their areas, exercising control over issues of “local concern” while minimizing state intervention in municipal affairs. Home rule allows for greater flexibility in other areas of municipal government, including local elections, organizational structure and municipal courts.
- 5. Implement an ongoing community building effort that brings people together to discuss their needs and aspirations for Ignacio
 - a. Use this Strategic Plan and the Major Strategies in this plan to facilitate discussions about the future of Ignacio, making this part of the community-building process
 - b. Enlist Ignacio’s Police Department to be part of the community building process to build trust and unity
 - c. Document input from people in the community to develop a stronger understanding of their values, concerns, and, specific needs
 - d. Integrate public feedback into the ongoing process of planning and policy decisions
 - e. Conduct periodic Community Survey

B. Tribal Collaborations

- 1. Seek ways to build more engagement with Tribal Council and tribal members
- 2. Continue to collaborate with the Tribe on all relevant strategies and appropriate initiatives

KEY PARTNERS

Town Boards & Commissions - ELHI - Ignacio School District - SUIT

DOCUMENTS & PLANS

Town Municipal Code - needs updating

Strategy 2: Downtown Community Revitalization & Business Development

Applicable Core Values: Celebrate Our Diverse Cultural Heritage, Engage in Strong Community Partnerships, Uphold a Family-Oriented & Safe Environment

BACKGROUND

Preserving the small-town feel and community pride in Ignacio’s multicultural and rural heritage are essential to honoring what makes Ignacio unique, while allowing opportunities for appropriate growth and economic development. Ignacio’s cultural, creative and business economies should produce benefits for the residents of Ignacio in terms of amenities, jobs, wages, infrastructure, and revenue for the Town that, in turn, improve quality of life.

CHALLENGE & OPPORTUNITY

There is a balance to uphold in Ignacio’s self-image as a “diamond in the rough” or “hidden gem”, that maintains the unique rural character and quality of life current residents enjoy, while pursuing improvements for economic vitality for current and future residents and businesses. There is a strong feeling of community pride, which is why many residents and families love living in Ignacio.

As the Town is surrounded by Tribal lands, options for expanding Town boundaries for growth and development are limited. Therefore, economic development opportunities primarily lie in revitalization of the downtown area as a hub for community life and business opportunity. Options to relocate Town services off Goddard Avenue and repurpose Town buildings for community amenities or commercial spaces exist. Opportunities to expand residential housing outside of downtown could expand options for business access and use of the downtown corridor to increase economic vitality.

The Town and Planning Commission are currently working to adopt a new Land Use Development Code (LUDC), which will define how business is planned for the downtown district.

Strong collaboration with the Ignacio Creative District and Ignacio Chamber of Commerce, as well as other community partners such as ELHI Community Center, Ignacio Community Library, Ignacio School District, and others would lead to strength and alignment of projects through

collective impact.

Centering Ignacio's creative, cultural and business communities and economies will be essential to authentic and desirable downtown community revitalization and business development. Finding ways to reduce barriers for new businesses to start or relocate in Ignacio to provide beneficial amenities, services and jobs for current and future residents and visitors, will build vibrancy and fuller commercial occupancy downtown.

The Town has implemented a new community brand that was developed through community involvement, and has a new logo and tagline, "Ignacio: Rooted in Culture." The Town should continue implementing various aspects of the marketing and branding plan for consistency, wayfinding & signage, welcoming visitors, promotional videos on the Town of Ignacio, and boosting community pride and engagement.

The Town seeks to answer the **Key Questions:**

- How might the Town involve our community in making change while recognizing & respecting why they live in our community?
- How might the Town, along with our partners, build interest and advance opportunities for people wanting to live, do business in and visit Ignacio?

SOLUTION

A. Overall

1. Build strong ongoing relationships with community leaders (influencers)
2. Engage in an ongoing dialogue with the community about vision, goals strategies, plans, and pending decisions
3. Analyze threats to current assets, events, and economic development plans, and the various ramifications of economic development and growth
4. Ensure that infrastructure, parking, and housing plans support planned economic development
5. Develop a mechanism for reporting on progress and engaging in periodic community outreach

B. Revitalization & Beautification: Attracting Visitors & Residents

1. Develop clear plan for enhancing the downtown experience for residents, and therefore visitors
2. Partner with Ignacio Creative District to build a stakeholder group (citizens, business owners, property owners on Goddard and Board Members) to envision and implement downtown revitalization and beautification, maintain or improve empty and occupied lots, and increase Ignacio pride.
3. Continue to implement Ignacio Branding & Marketing plan increasing visibility, wayfinding, connectivity
4. Partner with media and stakeholders to improve our image
5. Create and distribute introductory / promotional video(s) about Ignacio to improve local and regional recognition of Ignacio as a great place to live and work (focus on the small community feel, a place where people can get around easily, know your neighbors and

community, safety, great schools, improving infrastructure, etc.)

6. Encourage a Shop Local Campaign with Ignacio Chamber of Commerce
7. Work with CDOT on mitigating traffic noise, dust and speed through the downtown corridor
8. Take advantage of being in route to Navajo Lake by encouraging recreators to stop in Ignacio for dining and shopping on the way to or from the lake
9. Encourage tourism to move south from the Sky Ute Casino and Southern Ute Museum & Cultural Center to downtown corridor through improving wayfinding signage, pedestrian sidewalks or river walks, advertising and marketing
10. Consider advancing Ignacio as a government, business, and recreational hub for the area
11. Evaluate and enhance marketing for special events and Ignacio as a cultural tourism destination and optimize economic activity and revenues from current events and visitors

C. Attracting Businesses & Increasing Jobs

1. Identify and recruit businesses that fulfill regional needs and are consistent with Ignacio's brand, residents, visitors, and lifestyle
2. Revisit business requirements through LUDC to attract business to come to Ignacio
3. Follow up with businesses who chose not to locate to Ignacio to determine reasons why, and seek to address these barriers
4. Use connections with, and seek advice from La Plata Economic Development Alliance, Region 9, CO Municipal League, Economic Developers Council of Colorado and others in attracting new businesses, primarily family-owned, independent businesses that support our community's needs
5. Reconsider membership of Planning Commission and Boards to possibly allow for business owners who live out of Town to serve on Commission or Boards, if allowed by State Statutes.
6. Increase professional job opportunities outside of the School District and Tribal Organizations

D. Promote Community Gathering

1. Design and develop community gathering spaces and infrastructure in partnership with Ignacio Creative District, ELHI, SUIT and others
2. Encourage family-friendly community events, festivals, parades and celebrations

KEY PARTNERS

Ignacio Creative District - Ignacio Chamber of Commerce - ELHI - Ignacio School District
SUIT - La Plata Economic Development Alliance - Southwest Colorado Accelerator Program for Entrepreneurs
SWCO Small Business Development Center & FLC Innovation Center - Region 9 - Local Religious Organizations - SOCOCA

DOCUMENTS & PLANS

Town of Ignacio Branding Plan - 2018 - Land Use Development Code - 2021 - Ignacio Creative District plans

Strategy 3: Affordable & Attainable Housing Development for Families & Workforce

Applicable Core Values: Engage in Strong Community Partnerships, Uphold a Family-Oriented & Safe Environment

BACKGROUND

The availability and affordability of housing is a central issue in determining the character of a community, including who can afford to live in the community, and quality of life and its authenticity. It directly contributes to the success and sustainability of businesses in Ignacio, and affects the ability of the Town government, School District, Tribe and businesses to attract high-quality employees.

CHALLENGE & OPPORTUNITY

The Town of Ignacio has completed a recent housing study as part of the Rock Creek Housing Plan which demonstrates Ignacio's older housing stock of single family and manufactured housing with the average build date of 1953. Housing development is needed to replace older, non-historic homes. More affordable multi-family housing units currently do not exist in Ignacio.

As of June 2020, the cost of housing in Colorado was the fifth highest in the nation at 71% higher than the national average. Ignacio is no exception when it comes to high housing costs. The following housing **Challenges** apply to Ignacio:

- High water and wastewater tap fees make new construction and development less attractive when compared to other nearby communities. The utilities rates and wastewater plant investment fees from the Southern Ute Utilities Division (SUUD) are the highest in the region.
- Due to Ignacio's limited boundaries, increased housing density will likely be necessary to work within physical constraints, and once areas are developed, options to change the housing mix will be severely limited.
- Given Ignacio's small size and rural location, construction costs for new dwellings is high, and it is difficult for developers to profit from more affordable housing.
- The high cost of housing and low availability of housing means that it is difficult for businesses, school district and the government to recruit employees.
- Housing costs and availability will represent a significant concern for business or entrepreneurs who might consider locating in Ignacio.
- It is difficult for people who have grown up in Ignacio to remain in Ignacio, related to availability of jobs and housing.

Ignacio has several **Opportunities** to develop affordable and attainable housing, including by not limited to:

- The Town has land banking that could support housing, and could be a valuable strategy to aggressively pursue. Obtaining land when it becomes available, as a strategic land asset for the Town and community, could be leveraged as the Town moves towards housing

development.

- The Ignacio School District's Enterprise Fund seeks to continue providing housing for their teachers and workforce. Collaborations on land acquisition, swaps and housing development could be strategic and mutually beneficial.
- Providing a mix of affordable and attainable housing for both homeownership and some rentals is desirable to the Town. A housing development project on the Rock Creek property is being conceptualized and the Slaughterhouse property also has future development potential.
- Partnerships with regional housing stakeholders and players will be valuable in advancing this strategy (ISD, HomesFund, etc).

The Town seeks to answer the **Key Questions**:

- How might we retain our current residents, workforce and future generations, and attract new residents and workforce through affordable and attainable housing?
- How might we identify the community's housing needs and opportunities, seek funding for infrastructure and partner with developers to address these needs?

SOLUTION

A. Overall

1. Recent housing plans that align with Ignacio's vision and economic development plans.
2. Housing that supports a diverse population, including all ages, ethnicities and income groups and creates a more balanced and affordable housing mix that supports citizens and young families.
3. Housing that provides a wide range of housing types in family-oriented neighborhoods.
4. Expand active participation in the county-wide conversation about housing, and work actively with partners, including RHA, on efforts to provide affordable housing.
5. Assess current housing prices and availability, its impacts on the community, and future trends if there is no intervention.
6. Develop a specific vision for future housing that is aligned with Ignacio's vision, desired population mix in 15 years, and economic development plans.

B. Affordable Housing

1. **Rock Creek** is currently being explored as a development concept to meet the affordable housing strategy with a mix of townhouses and apartments (60% affordable housing density), that optimizes the density on a five acre parcel the Town owns.
2. Three concepts have been developed by SEH Engineering. The Town intends to complete the plan and pursue partnership with developers on the build-out. The Town would provide the table and write grants to subsidize the cost. The developer would provide the construction.

The Regional Housing Alliance or Homesfund could provide the homeowners (along with homeowner education and financial assistance) or renters to fill the units.

3. The next steps will be to decide on the final concept and develop a glossy document to bring to developers to market the plan.

C. Attainable Housing

1. This means investment-worthy single-family housing. For homeowners to invest, this housing stock must not be too inexpensive or “affordable” that it doesn’t build or retain value.
2. A potential property site could be the **Slaughterhouse** property on 21 acres, which is better suited for single-family, investment-worthy housing.
3. Build single-family homes and keep costs manageable.
4. Seek community engagement and create a stakeholder group (citizens, property owners near Rock Creek, Tribal representation, etc) to help develop ideas on housing needs and wants for the community, and to assist with development plans.
5. Partner with regional housing stakeholders in advancing this strategy: Regional Housing Alliance, Ignacio School District, HomesFund, etc.
6. Finish Land Use Development code revision to make it easier for development and streamline the permitting process.
 - a. Consider downtown redevelopment while addressing housing needs in the LUDC. Combination of live/work spaces downtown with commercial/retail space on the ground floor and housing on the 2nd floor.
7. Seek grants or funding sources for infrastructure, including DOLA and USDA to provide a variety of housing needs (not just affordable housing, also attainable housing and workforce housing).
8. Partner and negotiate with the Tribe to reduce tap fees to create new development in the interest of Ignacio. See if the Tribe is interested in developing housing near Rock Creek as well.
9. Explore mortgage/ investing/ finance education in the community and for highschool students in collaboration with local and regional partners (ISD, HomesFund, Library, nonprofits, etc.)
10. Advertise regionally to attract families interested in single-family home living at a more attainable rate than neighboring communities.

KEY PARTNERS

Regional Housing Authority - HomesFunds - Housing Solutions - Ignacio School District - DOLA/DOH
USDA - SUIT - La Plata Economic Development Alliance - The Durango Herald - USDA

DOCUMENTS & PLANS

Ignacio’s Recent Housing Plan - LUDC

Strategy 4: Improved Infrastructure with Future Vision & Planning

Applicable Core Values: Engage in Strong Community Partnerships, Make Informed Decisions & Communicate with Clarity & Compassion, Uphold a Family-Oriented & Safe Environment

BACKGROUND

The Town's infrastructure is vital to supporting a strong economy and quality of life standards. Additionally, planning is an essential component of managing any municipality or community. The challenge is to determine the appropriate level of planning and infrastructure, given the community's economy and government resources. Poor planning, or the lack of planning, can lead to negative outcomes in terms of inadequate infrastructure, degraded public services and quality of life, or negative impacts on the environment.

CHALLENGE, OPPORTUNITY & SOLUTION

Planning can be an ambitious process, and the most innovative plans often come from a willingness to be flexible in the face of unique or difficult challenges. The Town needs to strike a balance between the need for comprehensive planning, meeting key planning standards, and addressing specific initiatives, opportunities and problems. The challenge is to implement priority infrastructure improvements without creating an undue burden on residents and taxpayers. Encouraging positive community involvement at meetings and during the planning process for any infrastructure changes will be crucial to its public acceptance and approval of the initiatives.

Balancing Critical Infrastructure & Rural Character:

- *Proactive maintenance and modernization of critical infrastructure*
- *Support a small-town look and feel for Ignacio*
- *Maintain standards that support new development while managing risks to the Town*

Priority Infrastructure Initiatives may include:

A. Water & Wastewater Treatment Facilities

1. High Priority to address.
2. Please see "Strategy 5: Manageable Utility Rates through Independence or Adjustment."

B. Broadband/Fiber Internet

1. Very High Priority to obtain.
2. High speed internet service has been less than desirable throughout the community, without multiple service providers. The COVID-19

pandemic has highlighted the need for high speed internet for businesses, residents and students working and learning remotely.

3. The Town has partnered with FastTracks through a DORA grant to provide fiber and internet services to the premises for businesses and residents.

C. Land Use Development Plan (LUDC)

1. The Town's Land Use Development code was revamped from cover to cover in 2020 with public input. The plan is currently being finalized by the Planning Commission and Town Board. The LUDC is primarily focused on creating a more streamlined process for business and new homes, to be more user-friendly for applicants throughout the planning process, and to encourage appropriate economic development within the Town. The LUDC provides a structure and system for how the town will develop.
2. Review new LUDC to make sure that it's consistent with Ignacio's vision and economic development plans.
3. Maintain land-use codes that are current with new development, engineering, regulatory, and technology standards.

D. Comprehensive Plan for the future

1. With the new Land Use Code nearing completion, a Comprehensive Plan appears to be the next logical step and will help the Town plan for future, long-term growth, development, and associated infrastructure upgrades. Town boundaries are for the most part locked by surrounding SUI lands. Planning for effective use of available land within the Town for future appropriate growth, development and quality of life for residents is important and needed.
2. Plan and implement infrastructure as needed to support current and future development initiatives.
3. Update the Capital Improvement Plan, which sunsets in 2022.
4. Highlight key planning standards in planning documents and investment proposals.
5. Prioritize planning needs as they relate to the specific opportunities associated with the Major Objectives in this Strategic Plan.

E. Town Facilities

1. Town Hall and administrative offices are currently located on Goddard Ave, the main avenue in Town. The Town secured property by the Post Office, as a potential site for building a new Town Hall, and is considering other options including ELHI as well. Essentially, the Town seeks to create more central business opportunities in prime locations, by relocating to a secondary street, while also addressing their own administrative space and capacity needs. Grant opportunities from DOLA might make this move possible.
2. There is also a need to expand or move the Public Works and Police Department buildings to meet current and future needs. The Public Works shop that services all Town vehicles and equipment could function more smoothly with increased space.

F. Streets & Sidewalks Plan

1. As Highway 172 runs through the middle of town as Goddard Avenue, CDOT is conducting an overlay on Goddard Ave in 2022, since it is also a state highway. The Ignacio Corridor Access Plan (ICAP) 2011 was funded by CDOT to control access to state Highway 172 and assess how highway intersections are impacted in communities. A full movement signalized intersection at the Becker/Goddard intersection is funded and planned for 2021.
2. CDOT has asked the Town to work on sidewalk improvements including ADA sidewalks, to support the 2022 overlay project. Heavy truck traffic on the highway through town causes dust, noise and safety concerns that could be improved through this CDOT project. Another option might be a highway bypass off Goddard - but could lead to unintended consequences of lowering downtown business visibility.
3. The sidewalk improvements could be an opportunity for wider sidewalks to allow for outside dining, business visibility, and community revitalization, especially with the Ignacio Chamber and Ignacio Creative District partnerships. This is especially relevant due to the COVID-19 pandemic and need for outdoor dining and shopping.
4. Many roads in town need to be reconstructed and repaved. The 1% sales tax generates revenue for these improvements through the Capital Improvement fund.
5. Transportation system that facilitates pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular movements throughout the Town, making it easy to get around Ignacio at any time of the day.
6. Provide sufficient parking, especially for businesses and specific events venues.

G. Parks, Open Space, Trails & Recreation

1. To continue to increase quality of life for residents, more walking trails could be added throughout town, and more sidewalks could be added to certain neighborhoods, including Candelaria Heights.
2. RiverWalk nature trails could be added along the river, connected to art installations in partnership with the SUIT, Ignacio Creative District, and/or cultural history displays.
3. Park and open space system that provides for recreational needs and protects sensitive landscapes, meeting key water quality, habitat improvement, and wildlife standards.
4. Further coordinate outdoor recreation, tourism, events marketing, and regional partner collaboration to increase visitation.

H. Investments & Funding

1. Infrastructure investments that support approved economic development plans.
2. Be aware of needed adjustments in finances.
3. Balance infrastructure investment needs with the cost burden placed on residents and taxpayers.
4. Develop resources to aggressively seek grant funding.
5. Actively apply for open space related grants such as Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO).
6. Assess and address the human resources to maintain needed planning activities.

KEY PARTNERS

SUIT - CDOT - ISD - DOLA - USDA - GOCO - CO State Trails Program & Committee - SWCCOG

DOCUMENTS & PLANS

5 Year Capital Improvement Plan: Russell Planning & Engineering (sunsets in 2022) - LUDC
SWCCOG - CDOT ICAP - Ignacio Corridor Access Plan (2011) - LPEA - FastTracks

Strategy 5: Manageable Utility Rates through Independence or Adjustment

Applicable Core Values: Lead with Integrity & Transparency, Engage in Strong Community Partnerships, Make Informed Decisions & Communicate with Clarity & Compassion, Serve Ignacio with Dedication & Commitment

BACKGROUND

Manageable utility rates are directly related to improving quality of life standards, developing affordable housing and increasing economic development potential in Ignacio. Strategy 4 also discusses relevant infrastructure initiatives. Once again, the challenge is to implement priority infrastructure improvements without creating an undue burden on residents and taxpayers.

CHALLENGE & OPPORTUNITY

The Town of Ignacio manages and bills Town residents and businesses for water, sewer, gas, trash, and seasonal irrigation water systems. Treated water and wastewater (sewer) treatment is provided to the Town by the Southern Ute Utilities Division (SUUD). The treatment plant investment fees from SUUD are the highest in the region, and the Town is not in agreement on the rate analysis completed by SUUD.

The high utility rates and fees for water and wastewater utilities are of high public interest. The current rates and fees are seen as a burden to current residents and business, and a deterrent to attracting new residents and businesses to Ignacio. Over the years, the Town has negotiated and sought to collaborate with the SUIT. Seeking alternatives they have also sought to partner with La Plata Archuleta Water District (LAPLAWD), but due to easement concerns with the SUIT and Ignacio not being located within LAPLAWD's current district boundaries, the utility collaboration has not come to fruition.

In January 2020 the Town revamped utility rates for water, wastewater and natural gas rates, in an effort to balance the utility budget. Water and sewer utility rates continue to be a challenge as the Town has avoided raising rates higher and to levels that would result in each utility being

financially self-sustaining.

With the high cost of water and wastewater fees from the SUUD, the Town is considering investing in building their own water system and wastewater treatment facilities. With potential funding available through grants and state sources, the potential to build an approximately \$5 million wastewater treatment facility may be possible. The question is whether the Town builds these expensive facilities and systems in the short term, to result in lower utility rates and development fees to customers in the long term. Developing a utility partnership which keeps utility rates manageable for current and future customers is crucial. So far, the cost of building a new facility or system separate from the Tribe's has proven more cost-prohibitive and complicated than sticking with the current, problematic contract.

More affordable utilities rates and fees would benefit not just current residents, but would also draw future residents, paired with the new housing development plans. New water and wastewater facilities and lower costs could provide an incentive for new buyers, and would also help spread the cost of new facilities out between more customers - creating a win-win.

SOLUTION

A. Water Loss

- The first step has been understanding and fixing water loss issues. In 2020 the Town also performed a water loss analysis, and is actively addressing water leaks and loss throughout the system. New water meters were installed in 2020 to more accurately measure and bill water users. (In 2019 the Town also installed new gas meters all throughout town).

B. Tribal Negotiations

- Renegotiating with the Tribe on utility rates needs to remain on the table. Establishing rates that are validated by actual facility or partnership costs could ensure legitimate rate burden by Town customers. Another utility solution could be entering into an Energy Partnership with the Tribe (possibly renewable energy).

C. Independence through new Town Wastewater Facilities

- The Town is considering investing in a feasibility analysis to determine whether the Town can provide wastewater treatment directly to town residents at more affordable rates and fees over the long term. The Town has funding in the 2020 and 2021 budget for consultant studies, and needs Town Board approval to contract the work. Compiling a comprehensive study on what grants and funding are available to help offset the cost of the project may be essential.

D. Treated Water Partnerships

- For water, the Town could creatively explore partnerships with other water providers, and what options exist for Town's in this situation

of limited market options. LAPLAWD might also be contacted again to determine if they would be willing to negotiate a partnership.

E. Community Engagement

- For whatever decisions are made around utilities in the future, encouraging positive community involvement at meetings and during the planning process for any rate or infrastructure changes will be crucial to its public acceptance and approval of the plan.

KEY PARTNERS

LAPLAWD - USDA - DOLA - Water & Power Authority - SUUD - Renewable Energy Resources/Divisions

DOCUMENTS & PLANS

Rate Analysis by SUUD and Town of Ignacio - Town of Ignacio: Wastewater Conceptual Study

Strategy 6. Stable & Effective Organizational Leadership

Applicable Core Values: Lead with Integrity & Transparency, Make Informed Decisions & Communicate with Clarity & Compassion, Serve Ignacio with Dedication & Commitment

BACKGROUND

Efficient, effective, responsive and responsible municipal governments ultimately depend upon the people who operate, serve and lead the Town. This includes Staff, Town Manager and the Town Board of Trustees. Taking care of the community's natural, financial, infrastructural, and societal resources entrusted to the Town begin with taking care of the Town's own internal human resources, and expand outwards from there.

CHALLENGE, OPPORTUNITY & SOLUTION

The Town has a cohesive Board and Staff, and according to members they work well together and support one another, even when they disagree. The COVID-19 pandemic spreading to Ignacio in 2020 presented numerous challenges for Town leaders and staff to address. The challenge and opportunity highlighted the collective strength of the Town Staff, Manager and Board in making crucial decisions on behalf of the public good.

Due to five plus years of strong leadership, the Town is in a strong financial position and is debt free. In 2020 when other municipalities were struggling, Ignacio was able to keep all of their staff employed during COVID. Town Board and Staff shall be responsible financial stewards of the Town's funds to maintain its strong financial standing.

Three Key Objectives:

A. Permanent Town Manager

1. Mark Garcia has served as Interim Town Manager for Ignacio since 2015. He has brought strong professional leadership, resources and experiences to the Town. Previously, the Town lacked stability in the Town Manager position. Despite what Mr. Garcia has brought to the Town, in 2020 there was some public demand for a permanent Town Manager who lives in the community.
2. Overall, ensuring a permanent Town Manager for continuity of leadership is a high priority for the Town Board.
3. Annual evaluation of the Interim Town Manager (in the near future) by the Town Board, and discussion of the permanent Town Manager position.
4. The board will encourage close working relationships between the Manager, Staff and Board.

B. Staff Training and Retainage

1. Focus on retention of qualified staff by providing support, professional development training and instituting competitive pay and benefits.
2. Hire qualified employees through competitive salaries, and training.
3. Align staffing with the Town's evolving needs and growth.
4. Develop succession plans for and with key department heads to ensure smooth leadership transitions for the future.
5. Making sure all certifications are met to comply with State Regulations

C. Electeds - Board Training, Development and Effective Meeting Execution

1. Providing Board orientation, training and development would ensure more intentional onboarding for new Town Trustees, and further develop current Trustees knowledge and ability to serve as a publicly elected official. The Colorado Municipal League provides many opportunities for training for electeds, and resources on best practices.
2. As it takes a while to understand and get up to speed on the complex history and background of various local topics and issues, new Trustees receiving orientation (including on the documents listed below and this Strategic Plan), and initial support by the Town Manager and other Trustees will be essential for them to build the knowledge and confidence needed for sound decision making.
3. In terms of public engagement, the Board intends to continue developing a more formalized process for addressing public comment, researching issues, getting back to citizens, and moving forward in meetings and with issues. Training and shared agreement on processes will be helpful to this end.

KEY PARTNERS

Town of Ignacio Key Staff - Colorado Municipal League (CML) - CO Interagency Risk Sharing Association (CIRSA)

DOCUMENTS & PLANS - Ongoing staff training and professional development using CML, CIRSA and other resources

VI. Concluding Remarks

The execution of the Town Board's Strategic Plan will begin by assigning each of the Major Strategies to a Board Subcommittee or staff champion. The subcommittee or champion shall facilitate ongoing collaboration and decision making, however is not responsible for finding all the answers or performing all the work. This should include internal collaboration with the Town Board and staff, soliciting advice from experts, and ensuring that the appropriate public outreach is completed before the Board makes final policy decisions. The financial implications of implementing the Major Strategies will be reflected in the Town's annual budget, specific policy proposals, and discussions with the community during outreach efforts. In addition, as important policy issues come before the Board, the supporting information provided by the staff will reference the relevant Major Strategy from this Strategic Plan.

To ensure this plan remains an active, living document, the Town is committed to implementing this plan, reflecting the mission, vision, and values of the Town. If at any time the Town Board or staff feel that this Plan needs to be updated to be relevant to the issues of the time, or prevailing sentiments in the community, then the Plan will be altered accordingly. The Town anticipates this Plan should be revisited quarterly by the Town Manager and reviewed annually in August by the Town Board, prior to the annual Budgeting Process. The Strategic Plan will be subjected to a formal update in 2-3 years. This will not be a recreation of the plan, but an update that reflects progress, new insights, and feedback received during outreach efforts.

VII. Appendix & References

Action Calendar Template

Strategy #	SMART Goals	Key Actions	Champion / Board Subcommittee	Staff / Department	Milestones	Priority

Sample 1 Year Implementation Tracking Spreadsheet:

- [Implementation Plan Tracking - Sagebrush](#)

References

- Town of Eagle Strategic Plan. (2017) Adopted September 26, 2017. <https://www.townofeagle.org/DocumentCenter/View/13182/Eagle-Strategic-Plan-?bidId=>
- Town of Ignacio. Website (2020). <https://townofignacio.colorado.gov>