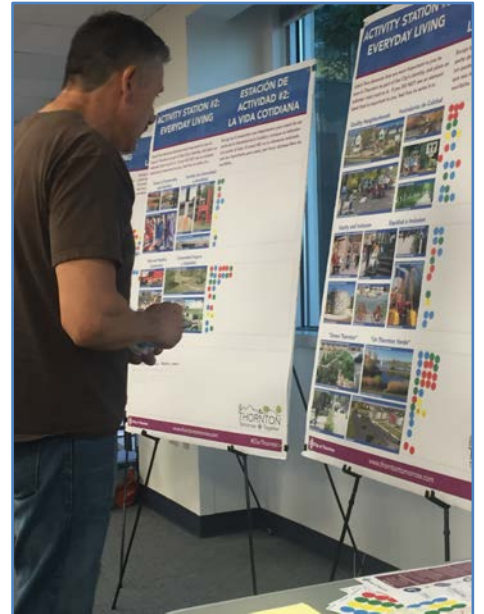




# City of Thornton Comprehensive Plan Rewrite: Visioning Outreach Summary



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# I. OVERVIEW AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

## A. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the visioning outreach methods and feedback provided to the City of Thornton and its consultants over a six-month period, from May 2018 - October 2018.

Identifying **vision and values** is the second phase of a five-phase process in the Comprehensive Plan Rewrite.



Stakeholder engagement, public input processes, and community outreach was conducted by the Thornton Comprehensive Planning Team, including Technical Consultants (Clarion Associates/MIG/EPS), Facilitation and Community Engagement Consultant (CDR Associates), and Hispanic/Latino Consultant (Cultivando), and City of Thornton staff.

**DISCLAIMER:** This is a summary of information that was received during the outreach process. The object of this document is to reflect stakeholder's opinions as closely as possible. An attempt has been made to identify some more major inconsistencies between stakeholder perspectives and actual services provided as shown in footnotes throughout the document.

### **Visioning Overview Document Objectives:**

- Summarize public visioning process, outreach events, and stakeholder interviews
  - Review geographic areas and approximate number of people engaged

- Present representative sentiments and quotes from the community
- Identify major topics and goals
- Confirm key focus areas and respective issues to be addressed

## B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

An analysis of community input and City Council feedback resulted in *seven major topics*. The desire for a more equitable and inclusive community is reflected in community sentiment in all seven topics.

1. Neighborhoods and Housing
2. Connected Community
3. Art and Entertainment
4. Community Identity
5. Economic Development
6. Community Services
7. Environmental Stewardship

These seven topics were derived from the May 17, 2018 facilitated visioning session with City Council as well as numerous public outreach and engagement events around the City. In total, 26 key categories emerged from community engagement efforts. A summary of these categories and associated major topics are listed below:

MAJOR TOPICS AND CATEGORIES SUMMARY	
Topics	Categories
<b>Neighborhoods and Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality neighborhoods</li> <li>● Affordable and balanced housing</li> <li>● Equity and inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Connected Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transportation (Multi-modal)</li> <li>● Walk and bike opportunities</li> <li>● Technology, smart city</li> <li>● Partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Art and Entertainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Destination activities and entertainment options</li> <li>● Recreation</li> <li>● Art, culture, humanities</li> </ul>
<b>Community Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sense of community and identity</li> <li>● Aesthetics</li> <li>● Central community space</li> <li>● North/South Thornton</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plentiful, high quality jobs and educational opportunities</li> <li>● Growth</li> <li>● Small business development</li> <li>● Good governance &amp; fiscal responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Community Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Services for aging population</li> <li>● Focus on youth and young adults</li> </ul>

MAJOR TOPICS AND CATEGORIES SUMMARY	
Topics	Categories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community support centers</li> <li>• Safe and healthy community</li> <li>• Focus on single and working mothers/families</li> <li>• Education opportunities</li> <li>• Culturally appropriate communication between government and residents</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Stewardship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Green” Thornton</li> </ul>

Narrative Summaries:

- **Neighborhoods and Housing:** Stakeholders identified a need for **affordable and balanced housing** options in **quality neighborhoods** for the diverse populations that live in Thornton.
- **Connected Community:** As the city grows, community members are focused on a **connected community** - including **transportation options**, solutions for traffic and congestion, as well as demand for **walking and biking opportunities, multi-modal transportation, and smart technology** to push Thornton to the forefront of technology and transportation innovation. Because the City of Thornton is closely linked to regional entities including Northglenn, Brighton, Commerce City, and Denver, there is an opportunity for **regional and county partnerships** to increase effectiveness of Thornton’s programming, including community services, transportation networks, health and safety, and economic development opportunities.
- **Art and Entertainment:** Stakeholders would like to see **art, entertainment and recreation opportunities** around Thornton, including diverse restaurants, arts facilities, and recreational opportunities around the city, not just centrally located at the Recreation Center.
- **Community Identity:** Residents noted the **divide between North/South Thornton** and indicated that more could be done to create a sense of **community identity, beauty, and pride** throughout the City.
- **Economic Development:** As Thornton grows, **economic development** is an important consideration for the community. Many stakeholders indicated a desire for **small businesses support, educational opportunities**, and the need to “**live, work, and play**” in Thornton.
- **Community Services:** There was also a strong interest around **equity and inclusion** in the City, including **community services and facilities**. A growing population requires increased services for **youth and elders** as well as community support and resource centers for individuals and **families** looking for information on healthcare, education, and job support. Stakeholders noted the importance of **good governance** and called on the City to **increase communication** around each of the seven identified topics to **educate** community members and create meaningful dialogue and public input opportunities in City decision-making processes.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Community members noted the importance of **environmental stewardship** through maintenance of **green and open spaces** as well as increased access to **recycling**, and education around **waste** and **water management**.
- **Equitable and Inclusive Community:** In particular from the Spanish-speaking population, stakeholders noted a need for **culturally appropriate communication** throughout the city and **inclusivity** of diverse populations. This includes increased **information in Spanish and English**, particularly on accessing

resources such as **health care, education opportunities, housing information, and small business development assistance**. Stakeholders mentioned the need for **recreational** opportunities offered in both Spanish and English as well as assistance for **single and working mothers and families** looking to find affordable **child care and transportation** options.

## C. CITY COUNCIL ORIENTATION AND VISIONING

The Visioning phase was kicked off in May 2018. The project team presented the Comprehensive Plan Rewrite process to the City Council. After the presentation, Council members participated in an interactive facilitated activity and provided feedback on their individual desires and vision for the Thornton Comprehensive Plan.

The Council was presented the following **word prompts with associated images** as a starting point:

- Quality neighborhoods
- Equity and Inclusion
- Walk and bike opportunities
- Destination activities and entertainment options
- “Green” Thornton
- Plentiful, high quality jobs and educational opportunities
- Sense of community and identity
- Safe and healthy community

*Key topics arising from Council’s discussion include:*

- **Equity and inclusion:** Accessing services, taking care of children and elderly, integration across socioeconomic spectrum, race
- **Sense of place:** Beautification
- **Connected community:** Trails, transit, shuttle services
- **Destination spots:** Low-cost or free opportunities that are accessible;
- **Mix of housing:** Bradburn Village in Westminster, fully integrated; It was noted this may be more difficult in South Thornton where low-income communities don’t attract a variety of incomes
- **Arts and culture:** Accessible and low-cost opportunities
- **Integrate North and South Thornton**
- **Smart City:** City services, transportation, safety
- **Recreation:** Connected trails, wayfinding, completing the trail system
- **Green Thornton:** Energy efficiency in buildings, vehicles, geothermal
- **Good Governance:** Regionally recognized, fiscal stability, active in regional discussions, leaders on issues such as housing
- **Economy:** Start-ups, small retailers, smaller work places, space for women, coworking spaces

## D. COMMONALITIES

Many of the identified topics have overlap and linkages between them.

- **Smart City & Green Thornton:**
  - Smart City infrastructure means less pollution and waste for the City, and would enable more efficient transportation;
  - Smart City infrastructure brings in high-quality tech jobs and stimulates growth;
  - Smart City will require balanced housing options to accommodate increase in workforce while preserving and integrating green space.
- **Partnerships & Community services:**

- City can partner with non-profits to provide community services;
- Allow for non-profits offering services to be in a City-sponsored community resource center location;
- Provide resources and **education** to community on accessing social services.
- **Neighborhoods & Connected Community:**
  - Address traffic in and around neighborhoods;
  - Increase quality of neighborhoods by reducing traffic;
  - More walk & bike opportunities throughout neighborhoods leads to connectivity of North/South Thornton;
  - Safe neighborhoods and safe public transportation are critical for Thornton’s success.
- **Community services & Community identity:**
  - Inclusive cultural activities;
  - Celebration of diversity;
  - Include community members in decision-making processes to provide a stronger identity;
- **Community services & Small business development:**
  - Provide small businesses information and incentives to promote growth;
  - Support for innovative jobs and tech;
  - Accessible housing options for workers.
- **Art & Community identity:**
  - Arts and humanities center for Thornton;
  - Central place for entertainment, activities, and destinations;
  - Create transportation routes to/from center;
  - Art center that celebrates cultures around community and provides education.
- **Recreation & Community services:**
  - Recreation facilities in North/South Thornton;
  - Providing families and youth recreation opportunities;
  - Transportation to/from recreation;
  - Senior recreation facilities;
  - Accessible recreation programming and facilities for disabled populations.
- **Healthy community & Environmental stewardship:**
  - Education around waste reduction and recycling;
  - Walk and bike paths constructed and maintained;
  - More accessible transportation options.
- **Entertainment options & Economic development:**
  - Entertainment options bring jobs and tourists to Thornton;
  - Construction of central community spaces for entertaining and living;
  - People living in Thornton should spend their entertainment money in Thornton;
  - Transportation to/from entertainment.

## E. DIFFERENCES & DECISION POINTS

- **Density:** Tension between (1) more density, affordable housing and (2) lower density with more open space and larger lot sizes
- **Downtown Thornton:** (1) Central Thornton downtown, (1) smaller-scale, multiple central spaces for neighborhoods, (3) residents go to Denver to enjoy a “downtown” – creating a downtown would be a waste of resources

- **Culturally appropriate communications:** Tension between how the City communicates with non-English speaking residents (Spanish vs. multiple languages vs. English only)
- **Growth & Open Space:** Balance between (1) economic growth, attracting innovative companies and employees and high-quality jobs and (2) limiting traffic congestion and keeping large lots and open space, less growth
- **Balanced housing:** What is the right balance for housing options? There are a variety of options: Affordable, “worker housing,” multi-family, single-family, community living for families, ADUs, transitional, apartment buildings, and high-end housing/condos
- **Resource allocation & Fiscal responsibility:** Spending resources in North vs. South Thornton
- **Environmental stewardship & Transportation:** Addressing opportunities for walking & biking, smart city infrastructure vs. managing traffic and multi-modal transit options
- **Entertainment and Destination:** What type of restaurants to support; cultural inclusivity for entertainment and restaurant options
- **Water usage:** Tension around water usage payments between residents and businesses; water rights; xeriscaping
- **Aesthetics and Growth:** Balancing (1) attracting high quality developers with (2) more stringent development standards to ensure attractive and aesthetically pleasing developments.
- **Regional Facilities:** Tension between establishing Thornton-oriented entertainment facilities vs. regional partnerships and facilities to serve more than one location; not wanting to duplicate efforts.
- **Affordable housing & Quality neighborhoods:** Some residents are concerned that if only affordable housing is built in Thornton, it will degrade the character of the City and the quality of the neighborhoods.

## F. PUBLIC VISIONING PROCESS

The City of Thornton, along with technical and community consultants, engaged a diverse group of stakeholders to provide input into the Thornton Comprehensive Plan Rewrite between June and October of 2018.

**Meetings with an asterisk (\*) provided both English and Spanish translation and facilitators.** Cultivando Note: There is mistrust and fear from the Latino community, the relationship has not yet been established between the community and the city of Thornton. The language barriers, legal status and not willing to share personal information presented challenges in collecting information for the Comprehensive Plan.

In total, the project team engaged with over 1, 500 people through various outreach methods, listed below:

- **Ice Cream Socials:** The team attended four Ice Cream Socials in each Ward, where they solicited comments from community members using interactive activities and survey questions in both English and Spanish.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Ward 1 Ice Cream Social*	6/28/2018	Approx. 140 people
Ward 4 Ice Cream Social*	7/19/2018	Approx. 80 people
Ward 2 Ice Cream Social*	7/26/2018	Approx. 110 people
Ward 3 Ice Cream Social*	8/9/2018	Approx. 150 people

- **Community Meetings:** Three Community Meetings were hosted in the North, South and Southwest of Thornton. Community members provided input through interactive meeting boards and facilitated idea sharing/public comment. See Appendix A for interactive meeting boards. Day care was provided at each community meeting.



COMMUNITY MEETING SUMMARY		
Event & Location	Date	Number of People Reached
SW Community Meeting: Huron Anythink Library*	9/5/2018	25
N Community Meeting: IMC*	9/6/2018	29
S Community Meeting: Skyview Campus*	9/12/2018	20

- Neighborhood Meetings:** Four Neighborhood meetings, geographically dispersed throughout the city, were held to provide more intimate opportunity for public comment. Participants provided input through interactive group activities, report outs, and public comment.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Pine Lakes Ranch*	9/11/2018	24
King Ranch HOA*	9/26/2018	3
Hunters Glen Neighborhood	9/27/2018	14
Woodland Hills & Redwood Estates	10/3/2018	14
Heritage Todd Creek	10/18/2018	0

- Stakeholder Interviews/Meetings:** CDR conducted seven semi-structured stakeholder interviews, and Clarion/MIG/EPS conducted nine stakeholder interviews with representation from each of the listed stakeholder groups and organizations. See Appendix B for sample interview questions.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS/MEETINGS	
Stakeholder Interviews/Meetings	Date
North Suburban Medical Center	7/20/2018
City Manager	7/20/2018
Metro North Chamber	7/20/2018
Front Range Community College	7/20/2018
RTD	7/20/2018
Adams County Economic Development	7/20/2018
Former Mayor	8/2/2018
Former Council Member and Hmong Community Representative	8/3/2018
County Commissioner, Former Mayor	8/3/2018
Former Council Member	8/15/2018
Cold Weather Care	8/17/2018
Clinica	8/21/2018
Transportation Engineer	8/22/2018
Mapleton School District	8/22/2018
School District 27J	8/22/2018
Vietnamese Community Representation	10/16/2018

- Focus Groups:** CDR held two focus groups for social organizations, Clarion/MIG/EPS held three focus groups for planners and community managers, and Cultivando held five Spanish-speaking focus groups on youth, businesses, and elder and caregiver topics.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Residential Development and Land Owners	7/20/2018	Approx. 8-10
Nonresidential Development and Land Owners	7/20/2018	Approx. 8-10
Mayor’s Luncheon	7/24/2018	26
Social Organizations	7/31/2018	3
General Focus Group – Spanish speaking	8/16/2018	12
Small Business Owner Focus Group – Spanish speaking	8/21/2018	5
Youth Focus Group – Spanish speaking	8/22/2018	8
Elder and Caregiver Focus Group – Spanish speaking	8/22/2018	8
General Focus Group – Spanish speaking	8/23/2018	10
Community Managers Meeting	8/22/2018	20

- **Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Groups:** The project team attended six board, commission, and advisory group meetings to obtain Comprehensive Plan feedback.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
TASHCO	7/9/2018	10
DPAB	7/17/2018	7
TAAB	7/18/2018	8
POSAC	7/24/2018	10
BTAC	8/8/2018	Approx. 10
HBA Meeting	8/15/2018	Approx. 10

- **School Outreach:** The City of Thornton contacted all school districts with high schools in Thornton and received invitations to present at classes at the following schools. School outreach reached 11 classes and approximately 210 students.

SCHOOL OUTREACH SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Horizon High School	9/24/2018	5 Classes
York International School	9/25/2018	3 Classes
Early College High School	9/26/2018	1 Class
N. Valley School	9/27/2018	1 Class
Global Lead Academy	9/27/2018	1 Class

- **Senior Centers:** The City of Thornton visited three senior living facilities and held an informational and public comment meeting at the Thornton Active Adult Center.

SENIOR OUTREACH SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Villas at Sunny Acres Senior Center	8/3/2018	Approx. 12-15

SENIOR OUTREACH SUMMARY		
Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Elms Haven Senior Facility	8/13/2018	Approx. 12-15
Park Regency Thornton Senior Facility	8/16/2018	Approx. 12-15
Active Adult Center Luncheon	8/17/2018	Approx. 12-15

- Harvest Fest:** The project team hosted a booth at Harvest Fest to solicit community feedback through interactive boards, one-on-one conversations with City Planning Staff, and opportunities for community members to visit with baby goats. Around 200 people visited the booth on September 9, 2018.
- Spanish-Speaking Outreach Surveys:** Cultivando collected 287 surveys from Spanish-speaking residents of Thornton. Outreach methods included one-on-one home visits, small group gatherings, Movies in the Park canvassing (6/28/2018 and 8/9/2018), and setting up kiosks around the city to gather input. See Appendix C for Spanish-Speaking Outreach Survey Questions.

## II. KEY TOPICS AND CATEGORIES EXPLORATION

### A. NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOUSING

#### Categories:

- Quality neighborhoods
- Affordable and balanced housing
- Equity and inclusion

#### 1. QUALITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Quality Neighborhoods includes sentiments around **safety**, more/less **parking** in neighborhoods, an emphasis on **yards and lot sizes**, and a discussion around **maintenance** of neighborhood **yards and roads**. Many stakeholders noted that they wanted their neighborhoods to have a nice **visual appearance** balanced with **watering regulations** for grass yards which are not native to Thornton.

Stakeholders noted the **positive suburban** feel of Thornton’s neighborhoods and cautioned **against building high-density housing** which would reduce green space in the city. **Trails and connectivity** are important characteristics of high-quality neighborhoods for Thornton stakeholders. Residents at meetings in north Thornton also noted **police presence is a positive way to keep neighborhoods and the community safe**, and they complimented safety services, including police and fire, for having a strong presence and quick response time. Residents at meetings in the south noted they would like to see an **increased police presence and faster response time** in their neighborhoods to deter crime and keep their kids safe. They would like for their kids to be able to walk to school without fearing for their safety.

Stakeholders would like to continue to have welcoming communities and some noted they would like to see Thornton’s identity be a **respectful community** with **integrated neighborhoods**.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “I would like to see less people parking on streets in neighborhoods.”
- “We don’t want more unnecessary lighting.”
- “Too many apartments are not good for a city because it limits the number of people who own homes. Can lead to more transient populations. If you want people to stay, then need to provide houses people can buy and invest in.”
- “Learn to appreciate high-density housing and balance it with growth and green spaces.”

#### 2. AFFORDABLE AND BALANCED HOUSING

Stakeholders at almost every outreach opportunity noted the need for affordable or balanced housing in Thornton. There is a concern amongst stakeholders that **rent prices are increasing** at an alarming rate, and many residents are no longer able to afford to **live in Thornton**. Stakeholders noted a need for **affordable housing options** and **rent control** so that they were able to continue to live in the city.

Stakeholders would also like to see the city provide **information around affordable housing options**<sup>1</sup> and city services for **purchasing land** and **property ownership**. The homeless population is only able to stay in shelters for around 75 days, which is often not enough time for individuals and families to locate stable housing options. Some examples presented include: **community housing for seniors**, regulations around **accessory dwelling units**, and creative balanced housing options that allow for people to live in Thornton during **all stages of life**.

<sup>1</sup> The City provides information on affordable housing options on the City website.

There are opportunities around **repurposing** vacant lots, providing **transitional housing**, increasing **shelter capacity and resources** and **partnering** on a regional level to address homelessness, and focusing on enabling people to “**live, work and play**” in Thornton.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “People can’t live and work in the same community. This impacts the traffic problem as people have to drive farther to work.”
- “Affordable housing for both seniors and low-income.”
- “Inclusionary, accessible, affordable housing.”
- “Businesses are moving in – need to look at comprehensive housing plan to accommodate”
- “Proactively attract developers to provide innovative neighborhood designs that feature diverse housing options.”
- “Consider implementing Denver’s new “LIVE” (Lower Income Voucher Program) pilot program P3 on affordable housing.”
- “Different housing options, not just having single family housing, more communities for seniors, multi-family communities.”
- “We are seeing a lot more seniors coming in as well as females without money to fall back on; they are not able on fixed income to find housing that is affordable.”
- “Control de rentas y vivienda accesible.” / “Rent control and affordable housing.”

### 3. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Public input indicated a need for more focus around inclusivity in **events, services, and workforce development options** for underserved populations. Stakeholders commended Thornton for **outreach to Spanish-speaking populations** during the Comprehensive Plan process and appreciated efforts to include translation services at community and neighborhood meetings. Some stakeholders expressed sentiments to **increase outreach to additional minority populations**, including Vietnamese, Russian, and Hmong communities living in Thornton.

Stakeholders expressed an interest in **celebration of Thornton’s diversity**. There should be increased awareness of cultural opportunities and **restaurant options** in South Thornton, and **celebratory festivals** in line with cultural traditions that provide an opportunity to **unify the community**.

Stakeholders also noted a need for increased inclusion and **accessibility for individuals with disabilities**. Thornton has recently installed some options for visually impaired residents at street crossings, and stakeholders would like to see more of this, including more **wheelchair accessibility**.

Stakeholders noted the **feeling of racism** within the community and encouraged the City to adopt policies around inclusion. In Neighborhood meetings in the South, community members noted they would like to see educational opportunities around **becoming a citizen and being integrated into the community**.

**Some specific inclusivity challenges:** Bringing **awareness to services and resources** available to populations, notably physical and mental health care. Some communities in Thornton have little **access to computers, laptops, tablets, and internet**, making it difficult for these individuals to access information and for their kids to complete school work. An additional challenge is providing diverse **recreational opportunities** for seniors and youth in **South Thornton**.

In addition to equity and inclusion of cultural diversity, stakeholders also identified the need for inclusion of the **LGBTQ community** in Thornton.

**Public input outliers:** A few stakeholders indicated that Thornton should not provide translation services to the Spanish-speaking population if they were not providing translation services to all spoken languages in Thornton. Public input processes and formal City communications should be “English-only.”

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Integrated diversity of population and appreciation of that diversity.”
- “Activities and events to unify and appreciate each other.”
- “Thornton’s identity should be a respectful community with integrated neighborhoods.”
- “Support individuals with disabilities to be independent, integrated and accepted in the community.”
- “Thornton needs to do a better job clarifying services that are available, considering cultural competence and language barriers.”

## B. CONNECTED COMMUNITY

**Categories:**

- Transportation (Multi-modal)
- Walk and bike opportunities
- Technology, smart city
- Partnerships

### 1. TRANSPORTATION (MULTI-MODAL)

Multi-Modal transportation was a common topic and was noted during every outreach opportunity. Many stakeholders had questions about the **Commuter Rail** coming to Thornton and what this increased transit opportunity would do for the City. Stakeholders were concerned about **increased traffic and congestion** in relation to increased growth and many noted the **need for traffic control at major intersections. Speeding and speed bumps** were a concern for neighborhood residents. While many residents would like to control speeding, some stakeholders are frustrated with the frequency of speed bumps in their communities.

Public input identified **additional transit opportunities** as an important means of **navigating congestion**. Stakeholders noted **additional bus routes** and the Commuter Rail would be a helpful way to move people through the city.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Thornton needs transportation that is accessible and affordable.”
- “Increase RTD bus schedules and times.”

### 2. A WALK AND BIKE OPPORTUNITIES

Walking and biking opportunities are an important part of Thornton’s multi-modal and recreational options. While walking and biking trails exist, stakeholders noted they would like **increased walking and biking opportunities** around Thornton and increased **maintenance** of existing sidewalks and paths. Senior organizations noted these should provide **wheelchair accessibility**, and additional stakeholders noted the need for **visually impaired** street crossing amenities.

Stakeholders noted they would like more options to walk to the grocery store or entertainment facilities. Safety features might include increased **lighting** and **police patrol**.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Improve sidewalks – many areas have sidewalks that are insufficient or nonexistent, preventing people from walking and biking; families don’t feel safe taking their kids out for a bike ride in areas that lack sidewalks and biking infrastructure.”
- “We want neighborhoods that you can walk and bike in and not drive everywhere.”
- “I love the bike paths, great parks and outdoor activity areas.”
- “I would like to see more parks and open spaces for people to enjoy nature – more bike trails and playgrounds for kids.”

### 3. TECHNOLOGY, SMART CITY

Council recognized the opportunity for Thornton to welcome **technology and innovation** as a means of becoming a smart city. Some of these include **smart cars and transit options, drone monitoring of traffic violations, and using smart, safe pedestrian crosswalks**. Only a handful of stakeholders brought this to the forefront of the discussion, with only a few groups bringing up the potential for the City to become a leader in smart transportation.

One stakeholder noted Thornton should be on the forefront of welcoming the potential **Spaceport** to the City. This provides a long-term opportunity to be the **leader in technological advancement**, and it will attract additional **technology businesses to Thornton**.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Technology and the internet need to be accessible, easy to use, and affordable for everyone.”

### 4. PARTNERSHIPS

There are many regional opportunities for Thornton to **partner in transportation**. These include **E470, RTD, North Area Transportation Alliance, Adams County, and DRCOG**. By partnering with regional transportation entities, Thornton can capitalize on multi-modal opportunities.

In addition to transportation partnerships, partnerships might also include (1) working with Adams County, (2) public-private partnerships to support small businesses and high quality job prospects, (3) partnerships between the city and school systems to improve education, (4) food/agriculture partnerships to alleviate hunger and support a healthier community, and (5) housing partnerships to addressing affordable housing problems in Denver.

Partnerships would expand the reach of City services and enable the city to capitalize on existing programs in neighboring communities. **Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Need to work with other agencies, not just through IGAs – staff needs the ability to partner with other cities without formal actions by the politicians.”
- “The City and the County need to coordinate better so the ‘hand knows what the foot is doing’ [in terms of social services offering]. Nobody could tell me what the programs around mental health support were for my son. Everything seemed so disconnected.”

## C. ART AND ENTERTAINMENT

### Categories:

- Destination activities and entertainment options
- Recreation
- Art, culture, humanities

### 1. DESTINATION ACTIVITIES AND ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS

Public feedback indicated strong support for the creation of additional destination activities and entertainment options in Thornton. Many of the City Council members indicated a desire for a **theater** in Thornton. Other community members suggested “**pop-up pedestrian street festivals,**” **farmers markets, art festivals,** more support for **public art,** activities targeted toward **youth** on **weekends** and **after-school,** and more **community festivals** like Harvest Fest and Thornton Fest. Many stakeholders pointed to the importance of incentivizing and supporting **small, local businesses** and **restaurants,** developing a “**Thornton downtown,**” and creating additional public **gathering spaces** to improve the “livability” and character of Thornton.

Many Spanish-speaking community members noted a strong desire for culturally-appropriate and inclusive events, highlighting the need for activities that accommodate the diversity of Thornton’s residents, including **bi-lingual, kid-friendly,** and **inexpensive** entertainment options.

Social service sectors highlighted the importance of **accommodation for disabled residents,** including transportation to venues, accessibility of venues (including wheelchair accommodations), and accommodation for visual or hearing impairments. Importantly, the need for **inclusive, inter-generational activities** was consistently emphasized by a variety of stakeholder groups.

**Communication, marketing, and advertisement** of activities, in particular activities targeted toward youth or inclusive of Spanish-speaking populations, is an important consideration. Spanish-speakers, youth and parent stakeholder groups noted that they are not aware of many opportunities and activities offered in Thornton.

**Public input outliers:** A few stakeholders indicated that Thornton should not invest resources in additional destination activities or creating a “downtown Thornton” since people go to Denver for cultural and arts experiences. These stakeholders noted that more entertainment facilities in Thornton would be redundant and not well attended.

### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Art is an economic driver.”
- “We would like a downtown area with shops, apartments, art, kid-friendly at Eastlake Rail Station.”
- “Need to focus on developing activities and entertainment in North Thornton.”
- “Need to focus on developing activities and entertainment in South Thornton.”
- “We should be leveraging our cultural diversity and offering more cultural events and festivals in Old (Original) Thornton.”
- “We can upcycle our empty and vacant building into art spaces.”
- “Focus on more community events in parks; like ice cream socials and movie nights, and concerts.”
- “We do not want more malls, focus on small, locally owned venues and coffee shops that can host entertainment.”
- “We would like more locally-owned restaurants, less chain restaurants.”
- “Would like to see more community activities of different kinds, such as the events that Northglenn sponsors.”



## 2. RECREATION

The majority of stakeholders noted that Thornton’s **parks, greenspace and trails** are part of the why they “love” Thornton. There is strong support from stakeholders to continue to **put city resources into maintenance, operations, lighting, and safety of recreation-related spaces**. Recreation was highlighted as part of Thornton’s community identity and critical to the **physical and emotional health of Thornton residents**.

Many stakeholders advocated for “**equitable recreational opportunities throughout community**” while some focused on creating additional recreational opportunities in either the south or the north of Thornton. Spanish-speaking stakeholders would like to see **classes at the recreation center offered in both Spanish and English** as well as incorporate a **wide range of ages**. In particular, the **older adult Spanish-speaking community** is hoping to find a way to be engaged in recreational activities offered in Spanish.

Stakeholders emphasized the need for **family recreation opportunities** as well as better **recreation infrastructure** for youth to encourage and strengthen **athletics** programming.

Further, some stakeholders mentioned the need for more **dog parks with water and walking trails** to accommodate the growing active and dog-friendly community base in Thornton.

**Youth** stakeholders indicated the need for more **skate parks, water parks, and playground improvement** around the City.

Finally, many stakeholders mentioned the need for a more “**walkable and bikeable**” community, and suggested the Thornton focus on supporting daily recreation as part of residents’ lifestyles, where the “**healthy choice is the easy choice.**”

### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Thornton could use open space and buffers between residential/recreation and business.”
- “The healthy choice should be the easy choice.”
- “Need more quality recreation areas for youth.”
- “Need to add more walking and biking trails and improve parks and recreation experiences.”
- “There is opportunity to further utilize the City Recreation Centers and add more family activities.”
- “We need more recreation facilities in the North – that is where the growth and young families and youth are.”
- “We need more recreation facilities in the South – all of the resources go to the North.”
- “Create activity center by 88th & Colorado utilizing the Gravel Lakes reservoirs and S. Platte trailhead. Use the reservoirs for water activities. Already have fishing and trailhead to South Platte Trail for biking and walking. Have rental paddles boats or stand up paddle boards. This could be a big destination.”
- “Parques y oportunidades recreativas.” / “Parks and recreational opportunities.”

## 3. ART, CULTURE, HUMANITIES

Stakeholder input indicated a need for public support and resources toward **art-related infrastructure** that could be included in the fabric of the Thornton city-scape. Specific ideas from the community included, **incentivizing art and culture-related endeavors** including **public art**, a **theater** or **cultural performing art center**, or an **event space/art complex**. The Thornton Arts, Sciences and Humanities Council (TASHCO), suggested a **Thornton Community Center** to serve both north and south Thornton that had **art-related offerings and art incorporated in its infrastructure and design**. Relatedly, TASHCO noted that a senior center with an art studio, sewing, quilting, and other **art classes** would be beneficial to the community.

Stakeholders mentioned that **community driven performances** (e.g. Shakespeare Festival), and **school engagement in the arts**, as well as **integrating art and STEM activities** across the city would be crucial for successful art and culture innovation.

Public input also indicated a desire to **integrate city parks and arts/culture** including: sculpture gardens, cultural events and music in parks, festivals.

Innovative stakeholder input included **partnerships between business and art community**, **city graffiti** as part of the urban art landscape (like RINO in Denver) and **art tours**.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Art is an economic driver.”
- “Only the imagination is the limitation.”

## D. COMMUNITY IDENTITY

**Categories:**

- Sense of community and identity
- Aesthetics
- Central community space
- North/South Thornton

### 1. SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

Many Thornton stakeholders did not feel that Thornton had a sense of community or identity at this time. Some stakeholders also mentioned that Thornton’s identity needs to be **actively shaped and developed** so the City does not become a dense, urban community. It was noted that people are living Thornton because it is **convenient, accessible and has more affordable housing** than most cities in the Front Range.

Many stakeholders mentioned that they love Thornton because of **suburban identity and feel, big yards, and single-family houses**; they cautioned the City from filling in all the greenspace with dense commercial or residential development.

Some stakeholders mentioned that Thornton’s identity and community was defined by its **multi-culturalism, suburban neighborhoods**, and proximity to **open space and parks**.

Generally, feedback from stakeholders focused on how Thornton could create and enhance a sense of community and identity. **These suggestions included** (1) improved communication between the City and its residents, (2) support for community partnerships, (3) resident input in the planning and decision-making process and, (4) balanced growth, cautioning against densification, (5) improved and widely-recognized City branding (for example, City mission, vision, logo).

Stakeholders mentioned the importance of providing activities and options to attract and build community for **young families**, as well as **creating spaces and events** where community members could gather, in Thornton, to get to know their neighbors better.

Finally, stakeholders suggested that Thornton focus more on bringing the following groups into Thornton’s “community” through targeted outreach and activities: **seniors, young families and youth, Spanish-speaking populations, disabled populations**.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Thornton’s identity will be related to its growth. Be careful not to get too dense. People move here because of the yards and space. If people want to live in small apartment, they would move to Denver.”
- “Citizens need room to breathe, a suburban feel. People have pride in being the bedroom community.”
- “There is a need to find new ways for the City to communicate with its residents. We feel out of the loop.”
- “The key to making a stronger and a better city is to make sure to get the community involved.”

## 2. AESTHETICS

Stakeholders linked City aesthetics and beautification to: (1) a sense of **pride and respect** in their community, (2) an important factor to consider when working with **developers and creating development standards**, (3) a reason why people would **choose to move to and stay in Thornton**, and (4) an important need for **Original Thornton/South Thornton**.

Some stakeholders suggested that Thornton come up with innovative ideas to **combine functionality and aesthetics**, including lighting on trails and orientation of new buildings toward mountain vistas or water. Others suggested using “**parkitecture**” to combine aesthetically pleasing greenspaces and new developments. Thornton residents pointed to the **Eastlake development** as a good example of aesthetically pleasing development that promotes community and pride in the area.

Many pointed out that **vacant and run-down buildings** were a problem in Thornton, noting that repurposing and upcycling vacant buildings back into the economy and landscape would greatly improve the beauty and aesthetic qualities of Thornton. These stakeholders supported aesthetic incentive programs for both businesses and residents to upkeep their buildings. Some Thornton residents highlighted the need for aesthetic attention and resources **for South Thornton and Original Thornton to revitalize the area** - noting that this would bring a sense of respect and help **connect North and South Thornton residents**.

It was also noted that **property maintenance** is getting worse where there are no HOAs and where there are renters or low-income homeowners. Many stakeholders asked for a **property maintenance ordinance, or incentive and recognition programs for properties that are well-kept**.

Many Thornton residents, although supportive of job creation and economic development, expressed the need for Thornton to set **stricter aesthetic standards for new developers and businesses** moving into Thornton. Many pointed to the difference between the aesthetics and development standards of the **Orchard Town Center in Westminster and Thorncreek Crossing in Thornton**.

Although many stakeholders mentioned the importance of **landscaping**, especially as part of new development requirements, they made a point to balance landscaping with **water conservation, xeriscaping, and water-wise gardening programs**, such as the “[garden in a box](#)” program in Boulder County.

### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “You’re only as good as your worst part; people think of Old (Original) Thornton as the worst part.”
- “South Thornton and Old (Original) Thornton need amenities and need to be beautified and respected.”
- “We need development standards for new developers coming in to Thornton – we should focus on attractive buildings, landscaping that is beautiful and low-water use, and more investment in making Thornton beautiful.”
- “People need more reasons to go to South Thornton, beautifying the area could help.”

### 3. CENTRAL COMMUNITY SPACE

Many Thornton community members expressed a desire for more central, community spaces in Thornton – ideas ranged from **informal public-use landscapes** including parks, trails, and open spaces outfitted with facilities to accommodate groups, to more **formal ‘common public areas’** that can serve as **civic spaces, such as a Thornton downtown**. Whether formal or informal, many residents noted that **Thornton needs a “heart”**: a place for people to shop, walk around, play and listen to music, share ideas, and gather. The more formalized community space envisioned by Thornton residents included some of the following characteristics: (1) accessible to all ages, abilities, and cultures, (2) close to public transport, (3) walkable and bikeable, (4) kid-friendly, (5) supportive of small businesses and restaurants, (6) attractive to residents in Thornton by offering events, music, and art. Some suggestions for a Thornton downtown include:

- Washington Street
- Eastlake
- Larkridge
- Original Thornton
- The Carpenter Recreation Center is a great facility and resources to the community. Perhaps it could be expanded to include a café and an electronic library as a smaller, neighborhood community space.

The majority of Thornton stakeholders expressed the need for this community space to build a **“local Thornton”** character and identity – and **not be filled with chain restaurants and chain stores**.

Some stakeholders supported **smaller, neighborhood community spaces** instead of a larger, central downtown or community space. These stakeholders focused on smaller scale, local infrastructure, more access to food/grocery, connectivity, walkability and inclusiveness on a neighborhood scale.

**Public input outliers:** A few stakeholders indicated that Thornton should not invest resources in additional destination activities or creating a “downtown Thornton” since people go to Denver for cultural and arts experiences. These stakeholders noted that more entertainment facilities in Thornton would be redundant and not well attended.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “We need to focus on our neighborhood spaces, including smaller scale, local infrastructure, access, and walkability.”
- “We need a City Center: retail with housing, splash pads, place to go with kids, bands, beer/wine, in a central location.”
- “Our City needs a heartbeat, a center, a core. We have no identity, no place to go to enjoy just being in Thornton.”
- “We don’t want more chain stores and restaurants, we need to focus on the future and on developing a small-business core.”
- “Think of Old Town Arvada or Littleton – that is what we need here in Thornton.”
- “Need a walkable downtown area, recommend that Eastlake should become the downtown.”
- “Other than Eastlake, other location suggestions for an activity center were Carpenter Rec Center, transit stations, Larkridge, North Valley Tech Center”
- “For Larkridge to become better activity center, need walk and bike trails for connections, need businesses that will stay and establish roots (there has been lots of overturn and vacancy). Top Golf will help with this.”

### 4. NORTH/SOUTH THORNTON

Although some stakeholders indicated a need to connect and balance North and South Thornton, there was a **clear tension and competition around City resources, facilities, and funding**. For example, stakeholders living in

the north indicated that northern Thornton needed more resources because there is more population growth and the most change and development in this part of the City. Residents in north Thornton noted that, to meet needs of the growing population in north Thornton, north Thornton needed more services, infrastructure and support. In contrast, residents living in south Thornton also expressed a need for more resources and felt that the north was getting an unfair share of infrastructure and services – noting the new Trail Winds Recreation Center as an example.

**South Thornton residents expressed a desire for more** (1) community spaces, (2) parks, (3) Spanish-language resources, (4) beautification and revitalization projects and funding, (5) destination activities, (6) economic opportunity/support for businesses, (7) social services, (8) safety and (9) an attractive point of entry. Many residents noted that **people do not have a reason to come to south Thornton**, and there is a **perception that south Thornton is not safe**, which furthers **the divide and economic disparity between the northern and southern communities**.

In an effort to bring balanced funds, services and infrastructure to both north and south Thornton – the City Council highlighted the importance of **improving connectivity and mobility between the north and south and creating more aesthetically pleasing destination areas in south Thornton** that feel safe to attract both residents and tourists to the area. It was noted that south **Thornton’s cultural diversity is an asset** to the area and should be highlighted through cultural festivals and activities, local restaurants serving a variety of ethnic foods, and small business development.

**Many noted the desire to bring a sense of community and connectivity to Thornton as a whole**, but there was not a lot of feedback from stakeholders on how to do advance this goal. Some stakeholders noted that improving transportation, reducing congestion, and offering more public transportation options would generally help connect the city, and possibly galvanize the north and south communities. Another suggestion indicate interest in creating **collaboration opportunities** for north and south Thornton residents and **City-wide volunteer events**.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Old (Original) Thornton is left behind. All the resources, recreation, and services go to north Thornton”
- “Why bother connecting north and south Thornton, what is the point?”
- “I don’t have any reason to go to south Thornton.”
- “Thornton is so congested, I would explore more of Thornton if it wasn’t so hard to get around.”
- “We need to bring balanced resources and opportunities to both north and south Thornton”
- “There is a perception that south Thornton is not safe, which hurts its economic viability.”
- “South Thornton has a poor reputation, people know to look for houses north of 104<sup>th</sup> because there are better schools and more to do. There’s not many community activities in the south.”
- “People refer to south Thornton as “Lo Tho” in a derogatory way.”

## E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### Categories:

- Plentiful, high quality jobs and educational opportunities
- Growth
- Small business development
- Good governance & fiscal responsibility

## 1. PLENTIFUL, HIGH QUALITY JOBS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Thornton stakeholders indicated a need for higher-quality, higher-paying job in the City with the goal of **living** and **working** in Thornton. Toward this end, stakeholders encouraged the City to **incentivize a diversity of small and large businesses**, to focus on business diversity - including **Hispanic business support**, and to develop a local economy that **generates opportunity for people at all income levels**.

Residents noted that the majority of existing job opportunities in Thornton are low-paying with little room for professional mobility – such as retail, warehouse, or service jobs at chain restaurants. Stakeholders asked for technical assistance and resources around job force **training, leadership, business-ownership and job search assistance** to prepare them for jobs requiring skilled workers and offering higher pay grades. Stakeholders cautioned the City that young people would leave Thornton, and young families would not move to Thornton, unless higher quality job options were available.

Although some stakeholders noted that Thornton shouldn't be afraid to be a **"working class"** city, many stakeholders also noted that there needs to be more job options, so that community members have opportunities to move out of the working class and into a **skilled and professional workforce** in Thornton. It was noted that Thornton businesses would benefit if there were **more trade and technical education schools in the area** to provide more qualified employees.

Residents also mentioned the need for jobs in Thornton that are: (1) flexible for working and single **mothers**, (2) accommodating to workers **without a college degree**, (3) bringing **high-skilled workers** into Thornton.

Stakeholders also mentioned the need for **co-working** facilities and **live-work** developments to accommodate **modern business trends**.

Some stakeholders in South Thornton noted that the **business district in the south needs support**, it is run-down and no one wants to work there or start a new business in this area.

Students and Spanish-speaking residents noted the need for **improvement in school facilities** as well as an increase in the **amount of schools** so teachers are not overwhelmed. Stakeholders would also like to see an increase in **school safety** as well as **afterschool activities** for students and working families.

### Key sentiments and quotes:

- "Thornton should be a City where residents can live, work and play."
- "Need to make it easy to do business in Thornton."
- "We need help and education around job searching and what jobs are available in Thornton."
- "Thornton's economy should generate opportunity for people at all income levels."
- "Need for more trade schools and vocational training in Thornton."

## 2. GROWTH

Overall, many stakeholders were **wary of Thornton's growth** – wanting to make sure that Thornton could keep up with increases in resource use and traffic while maintaining and improving its social services, infrastructure and open spaces.

**Although Thornton community members noted the need for economic growth and job opportunities, this sentiment was coupled with a caveat to the City to actively manage and plan for growth appropriately to avoid over-densification and keep the Thornton "suburban" feel with large residential lots and open spaces.**

Some suggestions offered to achieve both of these community desires included: (1) upcycle and renovate existing, **vacant buildings** into office spaces to attract high quality employers instead of building new office buildings and taking over greenspaces; (2) focus on **small business development and growth**, not more chain stores and malls; (3) economic growth is directly related to increase in traffic and congestion – Thornton will

need to consider **transportation planning**, especially multi-modal transport options, as part of the economic growth plan; (4) balanced growth includes the growth of the economy, but coordinated with the growth of **sustainable infrastructure**, including water conservation, social services, and more help for homeless populations.

There was a concern that planning for infrastructure needs for a growing population are oftentimes an afterthought. **Many stakeholders asked where substations, power sources, water and sewer plants go?** Stakeholders noted that these **infrastructure elements should be planned into the land use** of our city because they are very important to our future.

As stated throughout this document – Thornton residents asked for more **small, local businesses, restaurants**, and tech jobs and less chain restaurants, retail and warehouse-type jobs. Some members noted that economic growth is fueled by innovative ideas, and Thornton needed to provide space, support, and implementation for **innovation and new ideas**.

Many stakeholders noted the importance of supporting economic growth by **offering job training**, assisting with job searches, and ensure **Spanish language translation and programming** to help Spanish-speaking populations access jobs.

Finally, some community members wanted more flexibility to build **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** on their property to help meet the growing demand for housing in Thornton and provide supplemental income for property-owners.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Managing growth is key factor for working effectively with neighbors.”
- “Economic growth should be balanced between working class and professional jobs.”
- “If the City is going to keep growing, we need ensure our City infrastructure and social service programs keep up with economic growth. Let’s be proactive, not reactive, to population and economic growth.”
- “Let developers know within 30 days if their project will be supported. If they have a bad proposal, tell them right away – don’t have them wait 2 years and waste a lot of money to get denied. Give them predictability.”

### 3. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

There was a great deal of public **support for small business development** in Thornton, including local restaurants, coffee shops and bars, retail and small professional firms. One focus group pointed to the community support and success of *Mother Tucker Brewery* to demonstrate that more businesses like this are needed and would be successful in Thornton.

Many community members suggested **small business incentive programs<sup>2</sup> including technical assistance** around how to start small businesses (licensing, taxes, regulations, marketing, etc.) or rent subsidies for the first year. Others acknowledged existing programs and suggested improvements.

Stakeholders also mentioned the need to support and incentivize **more Hispanic-owned small businesses**.

#### Some challenges to small business development in Thornton include:

- Property managers/landlords are not accountable for **property maintenance**. Many small businesses who lease space are having difficulty with poor maintenance conditions (i.e. water leaks, etc.). Can the city better enforce or incentivize maintenance?

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<sup>2</sup> Incentive programs are listed on the City’s website.

- Some business-owners and property owners in South Thornton noted that they needed to be more **flexibility in the City's zoning and development regulations for established areas** to spur reinvestment, and that they should not be treated the same as greenfield projects in North Thornton. This comment also applied to onsite infrastructure improvements, as some established areas of Thornton were not built under today's codes, meaning expensive improvements are triggered in conjunction with major reinvestment in existing properties/buildings.
- **Affordable living**, i.e. small business owners and single-income families (like many start-ups are for the first few years before a business becomes profitable) cannot buy a house or rent in Thornton. More accessible, quality housing is needed to attract small business owners.
- **Support for non-English speaking** small business owners; i.e. translation or technical assistance for non-English speakers around how to start and maintain a small business.
- **There are limited incentives for small businesses and a lack of awareness of those that exist** – Thornton should expand/recalibrate incentives to attract small businesses so they don't go elsewhere. One recommendation was to offer business breakfasts to recognize small business owners. Another noted that while the existing business improvement grant program was very helpful, rising costs had diluted its efficacy as a reinvestment tool.

Some stakeholders asked for a **small business support center** as part of a bigger Community Resource Hub, so small business owners had a “one-stop-shop” where they could go to ask questions, pick up tax forms, or receive training and education on small business ownership.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Thornton needs more small businesses, especially restaurants.”
- “Millennials and young families don't want to go to Chili's or Starbucks. If we want to attract and keep young people in Thornton, we need to provide more local, unique small businesses and venues for them to go to.”
- “Small business owners need support – many people have great ideas, but don't know how to get started. A small business resource center could help get people started.”
- “I would like to see bilingual resources for small business resources and have bilingual staff to answer questions and requirements.”
- “Start acting like the 5<sup>th</sup> largest city in Colorado—connect old and new.”

## 4. GOOD GOVERNANCE & FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Good governance, or the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented) was brought up first by the Council and then by community members during public input processes.

Public input highlighted the following characteristics of good governance for Thornton:

- **Inclusive Community Participation:** Community members should have a voice in decision-making. Many noted how much they appreciated the outreach done during this Comprehensive Plan Rewrite and wanted more public input processes like this one. The community noted that in order to be active participants in decision-making processes, the City would need to improve information sharing in English and Spanish as well as to visually and hearing-impaired community members.
- **Rule of law:** Public input highlighted that legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights. Many Spanish-speaking community members noted a fear of their status in Thornton and felt racial discrimination.
- **Transparency:** Many community members wanted more information on City processes, developments and decisions. Community members asked that processes, decisions, and information be bilingual and



directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

- **Equity: residents expressed a need for equity in Thornton**, or the opportunity to improve or maintain their well-being. Some areas that need improvement included: access to housing, access to jobs, access to open space, social service access, language and communication access, access to community venues, transportation, wheelchair accessibility and jobs/job training for disabled population, and better schools for youth. Within the Spanish-speaking community, there was a concern over the cost of city resources and a difficult application process to access these resources as well as the availability of information only in English.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Community input noted the importance of processes and institutions producing results that meet needs while making the best use of resources. Many hoped that Thornton would be proactively plan for the continued growth of the City, with special attention being paid to efficient natural resource use – water, energy, farmland, housing – and transportation.
- **Accountability:** Generally, Thornton stakeholders noted that their decision-makers in government were accountable to the public. It was noted that City Council was accessible, responsive, and actively involved in their Wards and the issues that mattered to their constituents.

From a regional good governance perspective, many noted that Thornton should be **recognized as a separate City, and not lose its identity to Northglenn, Westminster, or Denver** – to this end, Thornton should be active in regional discussions, part of regional decision-making processes, and a **leader** on issues such as housing and urban renewal and revitalization.

#### **Some challenges to good governance included:**

- **Language and communication barriers:** It was noted that there are many non-native English speakers in Thornton and it is difficult to transmit information to all of the different community members.
- **Politics:** There is a feeling that City Council is polarized: Democrat vs. Republican; South Thornton vs. North Thornton. A divided politic is not as efficient or resilient. These controversial politics can get in the way of sound decision-making.
- **Regionality and not enough communication:** Many stakeholders felt that the City didn't know what Adams County is doing, and vice-versa. There is community and municipal ignorance about what County services are available and what they do. The County has social services and we could partner more with the city to be more efficient and effective.
- **Reactive instead of proactive.** Some stakeholders noted that Thornton is not innovative and proactive in their planning or decision-making, often waiting until something goes wrong, or the timeline is tight, before they address it.
- **Inequality and Racism:** Many stakeholders felt discriminated against and like they were “outsiders” and excluded from various community processes due to their ethnic heritage, language, or status.

#### **Key quotes and sentiments:**

- “Different government entities are not communicating, we need to un-silo our government and get people talking.”
- “We want more information on the City’s plans, developments, and decisions. We have no idea how or where to get the information we are looking for.”
- “Information should be bi-lingual.”
- “Information should be accessible to visual and hearing-impaired individuals.”

- “Let developers know within 30 days if their project will be supported. If they have a bad proposal, tell them right away – don’t have them wait 2 years and waste a lot of money to get denied. Give them predictability.”
- “Manejo de rentas en la comunidad de casas mobiles.” / " Rent control in mobile home communities."
- “Apoyo con el manejo de la comunidad de casas mobiles.” / "Support with poor management in the mobile home communities."

## F. COMMUNITY SERVICES

### Categories:

- Services for aging population
- Focus on youth and young adults
- Community support centers
- Safe and healthy community
- Focus on single and working mothers/families
- Education opportunities
- Culturally appropriate communication between government and residents

### 1. SERVICES FOR AGING POPULATION

Many stakeholders noted the need for **more programming and services to be directed at aging populations** in Thornton. In particular, it was noted that many elders (1) cannot afford housing in Thornton, (2) have limited transportation opportunities, (3) do not have access to activities or programming aimed at an older populations (such as art classes, silver sneakers athletics programming or entertainment options outside of the home), (4) do not have education around or access to technology, (5) feel isolated and alone because they do not live in close proximity to other seniors or their family.

#### Suggestions from senior populations to address these challenges included:

##### Older Adult and Senior Outreach:

- Determine what people in the 45-60 age want/need. They are aging but have different desires than retired seniors. Continue to reach out to different age-populations to track and monitor what the desires of an aging population look like and how they change

##### Housing:

- More affordable senior housing, including patio homes and ranch homes for seniors;
- Create housing where families can stay together, including ADUs and community living developments;
- Modify ordinance and work with developers to build smaller homes so seniors have lower square footage (i.e. 1,200 sf homes) to manage. These homes should be affordably priced.
- Design neighborhoods so seniors aren’t isolated, enable them to live within close proximity to their families

##### Activities:

- Offer classes to seniors on how to use technology
- Offer art classes to seniors
- Volunteer opportunities for seniors
- City-sponsored “Mentor-mentee programs” for seniors to connect different generations

- Offer accessible, inter-generational activities so families can all participate
- Offer activities for disabled and wheelchair-bound seniors
- Technology and the internet should be accessible to everyone, including seniors.
- Computer skills
- English lessons
- Citizenship information
- Spanish literacy
- Community gardens

#### **Senior Mobility and Transportation:**

- Need transportation that is accessible and affordable
- Wheelchair accessible trails, grocery stores, restaurants and businesses
- Improve sidewalks – many areas have sidewalks that are insufficient or nonexistent preventing people from walking and biking; seniors and families don't feel safe walking in areas that lack sidewalks.
- RTD is not adequately addressing transit needs; we need to redo bus routes – City should consider providing their own bus/transit service
- Have a private, subsidized "seniors van"<sup>3</sup> to take seniors to activities, events, shopping.
- More mixed-use development would allow seniors to be less isolated in their homes, since they could more easily access commercial centers and grocery.
- Free transportation to attend activities

## **2. FOCUS ON YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS**

Public input highlighted the need to **attract and keep young people** and families in Thornton. To this end, stakeholder input included: affordable day-care, better education and safer, less crowded schools, more afterschool activities for youth, more transportation options for youth so they could get to activities, jobs, and sports, more recreational opportunities and focus on athletic programs, more infrastructure to support youth staying active and healthy (such as skate parks, water parks, bike trails and sidewalks), and mentorship opportunities.

Both youth and parents noted the need for more Spanish and English communication and information from the City on current and future **youth programming and activities**<sup>4</sup> – suggestions included developing an App that lists all programs and availabilities, partnering with school newspapers, updating Facebook and social media more frequently, or making a more engaging Instagram feed.

This process included outreach to a variety of Thornton High Schools, youth feedback indicated the following desires for the City of Thornton's growth:

- More opportunities provided to a variety of people and interests (community, sports, job opportunity)
- More options for public transportation for youth
- Increase in parks, trails and bike lanes
- More advertised community events/festivals
- More recreational facilities: public frisbee golf courses, baseball fields for tournaments, playgrounds, a youth center that is safe and minimally supervised
- More business variation and places to shop.

<sup>3</sup> The Adams County A-LIFT offers transportation for seniors.

<sup>4</sup> The My Thornton app provides information on a wide number of activities and youth programming topics.

- More opportunity for diversity in Thornton, including more mosques, synagogues, and other places of worship that aren't strictly Christian.
- Less fast food
- Less buildings/housing (density of people)
- Less problems with waste and pollution
- Less houses and people

Youth had a keen interest in **environmental sustainability** and wanted more opportunities to get involved with taking care of the parks, open spaces, and wildlife.

Many youth stakeholders also talked about their desire to get **job training and skills** so they could find work in the summers or after school.

Finally, there was a sense of **inclusivity among youth in Thornton** – wanting Thornton to be a “**City for everyone**” that encourages people to embrace difference and offers services and activities to multiple types of people regardless of their color, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, or background.

Spanish-speaking youth and young adults would like to see more **low-cost recreational options** as well as **information on job opportunities** for youth. One idea was to create a youth leadership program that incorporates **financial education** and **university scholarship information**.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “I would like to see more of an area where people of all races and ages feel at home.”
- “The city should offer more recreational areas or activities for people of all ages.”
- “Youth want to be part of something, we need more information on how to be part of this City.”
- “Thornton youth need easy access to therapy to prevent suicide, addiction and violence.”
- “Apoyo con el manejo de la comunidad de casas móviles.” / “Support with poor management in the mobile home communities.”
- “Seguridad para los jóvenes fuera de las escuelas, incremento de vigilancia.” / “Safety for young people outside of school, and increment of police surveillance.”

### 3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTERS

Many stakeholders highlighted the need for a **Community Support Centers** in Thornton. Support centers would focus on communication between different levels of government (city and county) to **provide resources, training, and technical assistance** to the community, in both English and Spanish with translation services for other languages. The goal would be to **increase awareness of services, streamline the process for social service access, and collaborate in social service provision**. Technical assistance that could be offered at the Support Center includes:

- Information on citizenship, immigration and “know your rights”
- Opportunities for public engagement in city processes & leadership development
- Homeless resources and services
- Health and Wellness services
- Food services
- Improved Communication and Resource Sharing Activities – networking activities between social service providers so community needs can be addressed collectively. Referral services.
- Job resources and applications
- Social service applications (immigration, health, welfare)
- Small business development and assistance

#### 4. SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Stakeholders highlighted the need for a **safe and healthy community**. Generally, stakeholders commended the Thornton police and fire departments, and wanted to see even more oversight, patrolling and community communication and partnerships with the police department.

Police stakeholders noted challenges associated with growth and the need more officers. They also noted that parks and homelessness have become an issue - homeless people camping and people drinking in parks. Police officers noted that **more lighting** was needed and grass/trees/bushes need to be maintained to keep people from camping in parks and open spaces.

It was noted that there had been an **increase in the number of homeless people coming into Thornton**, and this population needs services and a place to go. Many stakeholders highlighted the need for more **management, support and services** for homeless populations.

Additionally, public input pointed for a need for more information around **mental health and substance abuse services**, especially for youth populations. Spanish-speaking populations noted the need for **greater information around accessing health care services** and making health care **affordable**.

Stakeholders noted the importance of **increasing walking, biking and recreational infrastructure** to support and enhance the health and wellness of Thornton community members. Stakeholders would also like to see more **access to healthy foods, community gardens, and farm-to-table restaurants** instead of chain restaurants.

In particular within the Spanish-speaking community, stakeholders noted a need for **increased police officers at local high schools** and in local parks to address **drugs and violence**. These communities would like a stronger police presence as well as **improved relationships** between community members and the police force. There was a suggestion to have police officers attend city events for relationship-building purposes.

##### Key sentiments and quotes:

- "I would like to see improvement of police surveillance on public roads and parks."
- "Improve safety in schools, especially in High Schools."
- "Classes about health information, prevention, and nutrition."
- "Oportunidades para niños y jóvenes: Clases después de escuela, centro de recreación cercano." / "Opportunities for children and youth as after school classes, and a nearby recreation center."
- "Parques y oportunidades recreativas." / "Parques and recreational opportunities."
- "Vigilancia de policia." / " Police surveillance."
- "Tiendas de comida saludable." / " Health food stores."

#### 5. FOCUS ON SINGLE AND WORKING MOTHERS/FAMILIES

Community members noted the importance of supporting single and working mothers and families with **child care and family activities**. Stakeholders would like to see more **recreational opportunities** throughout the city, not just in a central location. Additionally, stakeholders noted it would be beneficial to provide **transportation** to and from recreational opportunities to assist families who are unable to drive, don't own a car, or might be working.

Spanish-speaking stakeholders presented the idea of **low-cost childcare and high-quality preschool** opportunities where children can learn and play while families are at work. A need for **safe after school activities** was also raised as a key issue for working mothers and families.

In addition, stakeholders would like to see more information for single and working mothers looking for **higher education opportunities** as well as resources on **family physical and mental health care, scholarships, and substance abuse**.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Low-cost childcare and more high-quality preschool opportunities.”
- “I would like to see affordable family transportation around the city.”
- “Ayuda para madres solteras.” / “Support for single mothers.”
- “Preescolares de calidad para niños pequeños.” / “Quality preschools for small children.”

**6. EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Many of Thornton community members wanted **better schools and more school protection** in Thornton. Students asked for less **crowding**, and more **extracurricular** activities, and **transportation** to these activities. Many stakeholders pointed out the need for **trade schools and vocational training** for young adults to develop practical skills for the job force.

Stakeholders suggested more **City/School partnerships** and highlighted the need for **social-emotional learning** opportunities in schools focused on (1) assisting youth in integrating into society and nurturing positive, pro-social relationships, (2) supporting youth mental health and self-esteem, (3) reducing substance use, (4) understanding bullying, (5) coping with stress, and (6) working on time management.

Education-related public input also focused on **school transportation improvements**, increasing **student volunteer activities**, and noted that schools in Thornton need **more funding for scholastic and athletic** programming.

The Spanish-speaking community would like to see educational opportunities offered for youth and young adults that includes cultural considerations in activities such as **art, music, sewing, and cooking**. The Spanish-speaking community would additionally like to see increased classes on **citizenship, city laws and regulations, health and CPR classes**, etc. offered **bilingually**. Additional education might include **social-emotional learning, sexual health education, drug prevention, and scholarship opportunities** offered in both Spanish and English.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Educational programs in Spanish: Marijuana and Youth consumption and prevention; Preparing our kids for school; City laws and regulations information; CPR Classes; Citizenship classes.”
- “Classes to learn how to recycle and care for the environment.”
- “Habilidad de escoger escuelas en Thornton en areas no incorporadas.” / “The ability to choose schools in Thornton in unincorporated areas.”
- “Clases bilingües para adultos.” / “Bilingual classes for adults.”
- “Desarrollo de habilidades de los miembros de la comunidad en programas de voluntariado y comunitario” / “Skill development for community members in volunteering and community programs.”

**7. CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND RESIDENTS**

Stakeholders called for **increased communication** between the City and residents, **highlighting the need for communication in Spanish and communication with visually or hearing impaired residents**. Spanish-speakers would like to see more **bilingual City staff personnel** to assist residents when they have questions or concerns to discuss with City departments. The Latino community noted a need for increased language access, particularly around services such as **emergency responders** (police, fire, ambulance) as well as City services **in health and education**.

**Additionally, audio-signals at crosswalks and braille in City buildings would aid disabled members of the community in navigation and integration.**

Culturally appropriate communication methods might include: (1) City **commercials** on Spanish TV channels, (2) **Social media** posts in Spanish and English, (3) Increase of **bilingual City staff**, (4) Dissemination of City-wide information in both Spanish and English **newspapers or Spanish billboards**, (5) Ensure **translation services** at City-sponsored meetings, events, decision-making processes and at City Council, (6) Offer **festivals, movies, and concerts** in Spanish.

Stakeholders would like the City to **celebrate the cultural diversity** of Thornton by encouraging **language education** for all residents, culturally appropriate celebrations on **holidays, festivals and cultural events**, and increased awareness of and support for **diverse restaurants** in South Thornton.

It was noted that there are **multiple languages spoken in Thornton, and it will be challenging to be inclusive of all**. Stakeholders commended Thornton for **providing translation services** and for their intent to communicate with a variety of people with different native languages.

#### Key sentiments and quotes:

- “Communication between the departments of the city of Thornton and residents is not accessible and friendly. If the city wants to represent a change, it should start with a training or change of staff in all departments.”
- “The lack of information and misuse of resources, the community does not take advantage of these resources because are not often accessible in Spanish.”
- “There is a commitment and communication by the city departments to be inclusive, however, there is a lack of consistency to residents from different departments of the city.”
- “We need more bilingual equity forums to discuss and find solutions for discrimination and racism.”
- “Informacion y comunicacion en español.” / “Information and communication in Spanish.”
- “Inclusividad por parte de la ciudad.” / “Inclusivity from the City.”
- “Apreciamos esta oportunidad de escuchar la voz de la comunidad latina, porque juntos podemos mejorar nuestra Ciudad.” / “Residents appreciate the opportunity to hear the Latino voice because together we can improve (our) the city.”

## G. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### Categories:

- “Green” Thornton

### 1.1. “GREEN” THORNTON

Stakeholders place a strong value on environmental characteristics of Thornton, and many groups/meetings noted “Green” Thornton as a key element in the Comprehensive Plan. “Green” Thornton includes **water** usage and conservation, an increase in **recycling** programs, and a strong value across North and South Thornton for preserving the community’s **green spaces, enhancing trails**, and providing more **access to the outdoors**.

**Many noted the desire to keep development away from open spaces**, as these are valuable areas for wildlife and viewing the mountains to Thornton’s west. Some stakeholders noted the need for **increased open spaces** and **connectivity** amongst open spaces for **environmentally-friendly mobility** including walking and biking. Stakeholders noted they would like more trails for recreational usage.

Some stakeholders noted a disappointment with the City’s overuse of watering and providing incentives to businesses for lower water rates than to residents<sup>5</sup>. Many residents advocated that Thornton set **stricter**

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<sup>5</sup> The city has never provided assistance to businesses to specifically lower their water rate.

**standards for water usage** both within residential areas as well as for businesses. Because grass is not native to Colorado, some stakeholders expressed the sentiment of **encouraging xeriscaping** in yards and parks to mimic a more natural environment and reduce water demand.

Neighborhood meetings in South Thornton identified the need for **recycling in their communities** as well as increased **education around appropriate recycling practices and environmental stewardship**. South Thornton would like to have recycling bins available for use. Because these programs exist for North Thornton, this sentiment was not a key topic for meetings in the north.

Some community members also identified the need for the City of Thornton to support **alternative energy options**, including solar and wind energy.

**Key sentiments and quotes:**

- “Leave open space as is for wildlife and view corridors – we are losing our Western Identity.”
- “Riverdale park is a good example of green spaces, recreation, paths, etc.”
- “Promote the use of solar and other sustainable energy sources.”
- “Amend landscaping ordinances to give incentives to people to do nice landscaping that doesn’t require using water; give incentives to cut water consumption.”
- “We need proportional parks and recreation growth as compared to population growth.”
- “I would like to see more trees, plants, and reserves for animals and plants in the community of Thornton.”
- “Reciclaje y accesibilidad de contenedores.” / "Recycling and access to containers."



### III. APPENDIX

#### APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY MEETING BOARDS

##### #1: Hopes and Challenges

Draw or write your hopes for the future of Thornton and any challenges you foresee in achieving these goals.	
<b>Hopes:</b>	<b>Challenges:</b>

##### #2. Everyday Living

This might need to be more than one board.

Select five elements that are most important to you to have in Thornton as part of the City's identity, and place an indicator (dot) next to it. If you DO NOT see an element listed that is important to you, feel free to write it in.
<b>City Council Themes/Word Prompts and images here.</b>          

##### #3. Change in Thornton

Open-ended companion questions to #2.

Draw or write what you want to see "more of" or "less of" in Thornton.
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<b>MORE:</b>	<b>LESS:</b>
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**#4: How do you want to see Thornton grow?**

Draw or write your ideas for Thornton’s future growth and where this growth would occur (North, South, Original Thornton, specific neighborhoods).
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**#5: What does Thornton have to offer to different age groups?**

Draw or write your ideas of what Thornton has to offer to different age groups.. Indicate how Thornton could improve.
<b>Small children</b> <b>Preteens</b> <b>Teenagers</b> <b>Young Adults</b> <b>Adults</b> <b>Families</b> <b>Seniors</b>

## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are the goals of your organization/agency/group? What does success look like for your organization/agency/group?
- What are the critical success factors for the Thornton Comp Plan? Major issues and opportunities?
- What do you love about Thornton?
- What do you see as Thornton's identity?
- What needs to be changed in Thornton? In what way, by whom?
- What are impediments or challenges to accomplishing your vision for Thornton?
- How do you want to see Thornton grow?
- Is Thornton a place you could see yourself staying? Why or why not?
- What are the key areas/issues of concern regarding north-south connectivity in the City?
- How would you prioritize and balance growth/development and preservation/conservation of Thornton?
- Who are other key stakeholders that we should reach out to?

## APPENDIX C: SPANISH-SPEAKING OUTREACH SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What do you love about Thornton/Que te gusta de Thornton?
- What do you see as Thornton's identity / Como describirías Thornton a un familiar o amigo?
- What needs to be improved in Thornton / Que piensas que necesita mejorar en Thornton?
- What are Thornton's greatest challenges / Cuales piensas que son los mayores retos de Thornton?
- Is Thornton a place you could see yourself staying? Why or Why not? / Es Thornton el lugar donde piensas establecerte? Por que si o Por que no?
- How do you want to see Thornton grow / Como te gustaría ver a Thornton crecer?