

**TOWN OF ERIE
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
October 8, 2024**

SUBJECT: **Resolution**
A Resolution of the Town of Erie Town Council Approving the 2024 Update to the 2015 Town of Erie Comprehensive Plan, Known as Elevate Erie

PURPOSE: Comprehensive Plan update to provide effective guidance on planned and future growth

CODE REVIEW: Erie Municipal Code, Title 10

DEPARTMENT: Planning and Development

PRESENTER: Sarah Nurmela, Director of Planning and Development
Kelly Driscoll, Planning Manager
Josh Campbell, Senior Strategic Planner
Keiley Gaston, Senior Strategic Planner

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Town Council adopt the resolution approving the 2024 Update to the 2015 Town of Erie Comprehensive Plan, Known as Elevate Erie.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND OF SUBJECT MATTER:

The Comprehensive Plan is an overarching guiding document for development, services, and lived experience in the Town. The document establishes a vision, guiding principles, and policies, with action items that set forth implementation of the Town’s vision. As a guiding document, the policies are meant to provide direction to decision makers and staff alike as they review development, prioritize investments, and deliver infrastructure improvements. This direction also serves as the basis for more specific planning documents like the Water Supply Plan, Affordable Housing Strategy, or the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan—among others.

The last update to Erie’s Comprehensive Plan was conducted in 2015. In order to reflect Erie’s evolving development footprint, demographics, and needs, the Town initiated an update to the Plan in late 2022. A full compendium of project information is online on the Plan’s webpage: <http://www.erieco.us/comp-plan-and-tmp>

Plan Process and Development

The project comprised four phases. Each phase of the project had an overall goal in conjunction with community engagement methods, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Advisory groups consisted of the Plan Advisory Committee (PAC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Planning Commission, and Town Council. The PAC included members from the Town’s Boards and Commissions, while the TAC comprised staff from departments and divisions such as Public Works, Utilities, Transportation, Sustainability, Planning, Building, Parks and Recreation, Police, Economic Development, Housing, and Finance. The engagement scrapbook summarizing engagement efforts for the project is provided as Attachment 6.

Figure 1: Plan Process

Phase	Phase 1: Setting the Stage <i>Dec. 2022 – Apr. 2023</i>	Phase 2: Defining the Direction <i>May – Dec. 2023</i>	Phase 3: Scenario Planning <i>Jan. – June 2024</i>	(In progress) Phase 4: Policy Framework & Realizing the Plan <i>July – Oct. 2024</i>
Goal	Building a common understanding of the current situation and common values in Erie	Co-creating the vision for the future of Erie and Elevate Erie	Choosing the best land use scenario for Erie	Prioritizing policies & adopting the Comprehensive Plan
2,500+ Community Touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey 7 in-person engagements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey 5 in-person engagements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey Mailed postcard 7 in-person engagements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey 12 in-person engagements 2 open houses during public review
20+ Advisory Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3x TAC 2x PAC 1x Board of Trustees + Planning Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2x TAC 2x PAC 2x Planning Commission 1x Board of Trustees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2x TAC 2x PAC 2x Planning Commission 1x Town Council + Planning Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAC Plan Review PAC Plan Review 3x Planning Commission 2x Town Council

Phase 1: Setting the Stage

Phase one began in December 2022 and went until April 2023. This phase of engagement uncovered existing conditions in Erie and included seven in-person engagement events and online survey with approximately 700 responses.

Phase 2: Defining the Direction

Phase two lasted approximately seven months, until December 2023, and defined the direction of the plan. Additionally, the extensive investigation that began in Phase one continued into this phase, revealing existing conditions, issues, and opportunities. The Existing Conditions document is available as a clickable link in the Appendix of Elevate Erie (Attachment 5).

Residents identified the Vision and Values of the plan through online survey (230 responses) and feedback at five in-person events. The major themes that emerged from this outreach were:

- Open space and parks
- More retail and commercial options
- Housing options for all life stages

- Resources and maintenance as growth occurs
- Employment opportunities in the Town

Based on survey responses and input from advisory groups the Comprehensive Plan Vision was updated to:

Erie is a sustainable, livable, and connected community that creates positive, memorable, and lasting impressions for its residents and visitors. The Town is committed to collaboratively managing our diverse natural, cultural, fiscal, social, and capital resources.

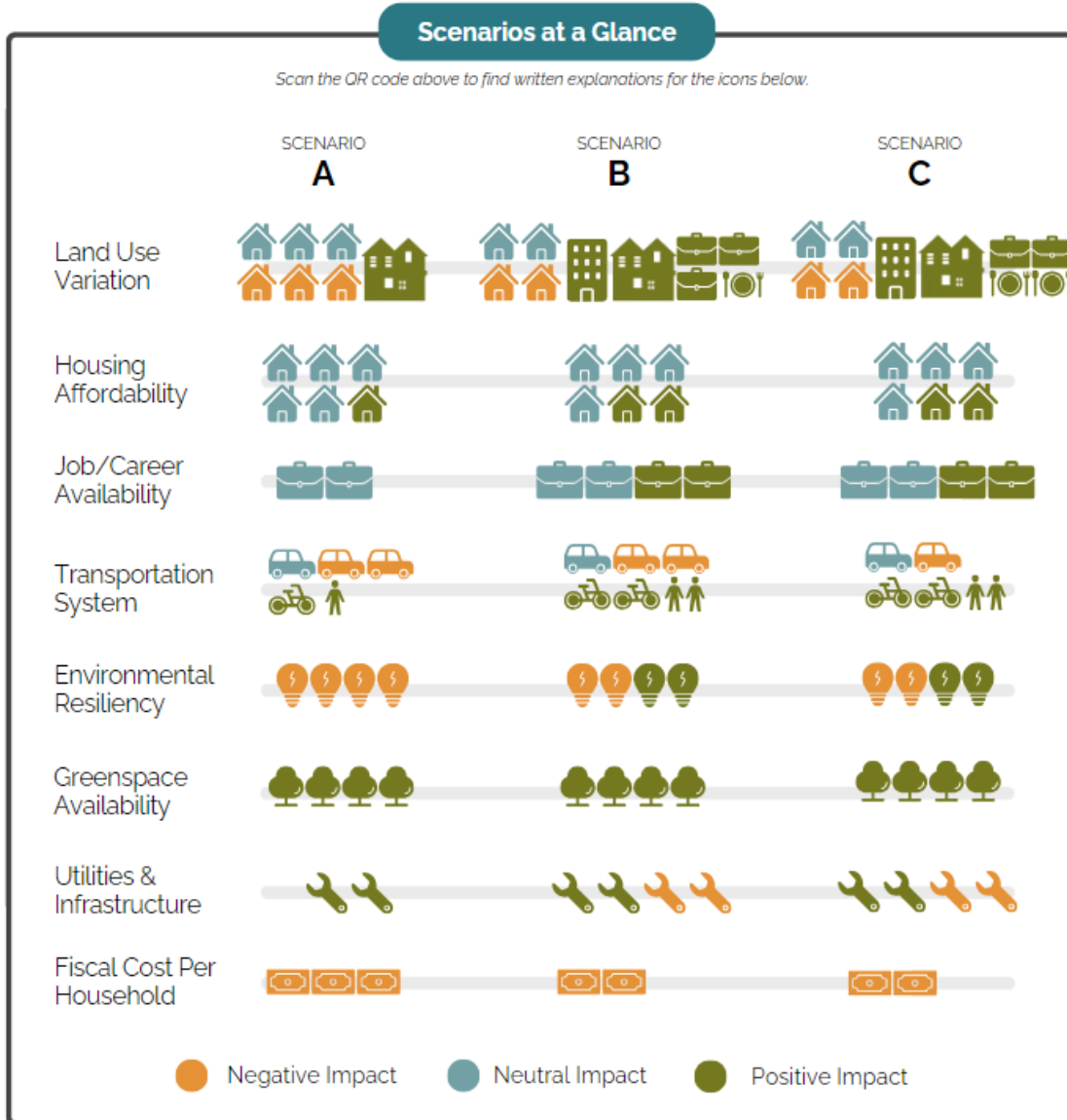
As a part of the visioning process, a key principle of equity and core values of sustainability, livability, and connectivity emerged during this phase. These underpin the policies found in Elevate Erie and are highlighted in the document.

Phase 3: Scenario Planning

In Phase three, the Plan Team used the community feedback from the first two phases to develop and test three unique land use scenarios. Scenario A, named 'Status Quo' modeled out the existing comprehensive plan footprint and pattern of primarily low density, limited commercial, and employment. Scenario B, 'Commercial & Employment', emphasized jobs and regional commercial activity, along with a variety of housing types to support these uses. Scenario C, 'Neighborhood Center', emphasized a tapestry of complete mixed-use neighborhood centers that include daily needs. Scenario A did not model out annexation of any additional land, while B and C included an additional 1,000 acres of unannexed land in the Planning Area.

Consultants Verdunity and EPS were engaged to evaluate each of the scenarios. Verdunity provided the Town with a Fiscal Analysis of the land uses proposed in each, while EPS evaluated the scenarios for market feasibility. These analyses were utilized in communicating the scenarios to the community and in developing the Future Land Use Map. See below for an example graphic communicating the 'Scenarios at a Glance'.

Figure 2: Scenarios at a Glance graphic



In a joint workshop on March 5, 2024, Council and Planning Commission considered the draft scenarios and provided feedback. Public input on the three scenarios occurred via voting for first and second choices, online and in-person, at seven events over four and a half weeks. Staff had many in-depth conversations with the community at these events, answering technical questions related to density, transportation, and utilities. With over 400 votes cast, Scenario C earned first choice, with Scenario B second.

The Plan Team utilized the feedback and results of voting to draft the fourth and final land use scenario, otherwise known as the Future Land Use Map. This involved starting with a mix of B and C, focusing on mixed-use, housing variety, neighborhood-scale services, and employment, while also downsizing some of the highest densities, focusing on infill, and prioritizing the small town feel emphasized

by Scenario A through community design policies. Development of the Future Land Use map also relied on TAC analysis of utilities capacities, water needs, and parks and open space maintenance. The Future Land Use Map aligns with the community's feedback and desire for:

- More commercial activity and jobs
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Variety of housing
- Amenities and daily needs that are easily accessible

Much of the area within the Town's boundary and the Planning Area is either already entitled or planned. "Entitled" means the site is zoned with an approved plan where a developer could pull building permits. "Planned" means the property owner has made an official land use application with the Town. Only about 3.5 square miles of developable land remains within the Planning Area, of which about 2.0 square miles is not entitled or planned within the municipal boundary. Figure 3 gives a breakdown of proposed land use designations (in acres) for the developable parcels within the Planning Area, in comparison to existing land uses. Figure 4 on the following page illustrates the developable parcels, based on the Future Land Use Map, within the Planning Area.

Figure 3: Existing vs. Opportunity Site Land Area (Acres) within the Planning Area

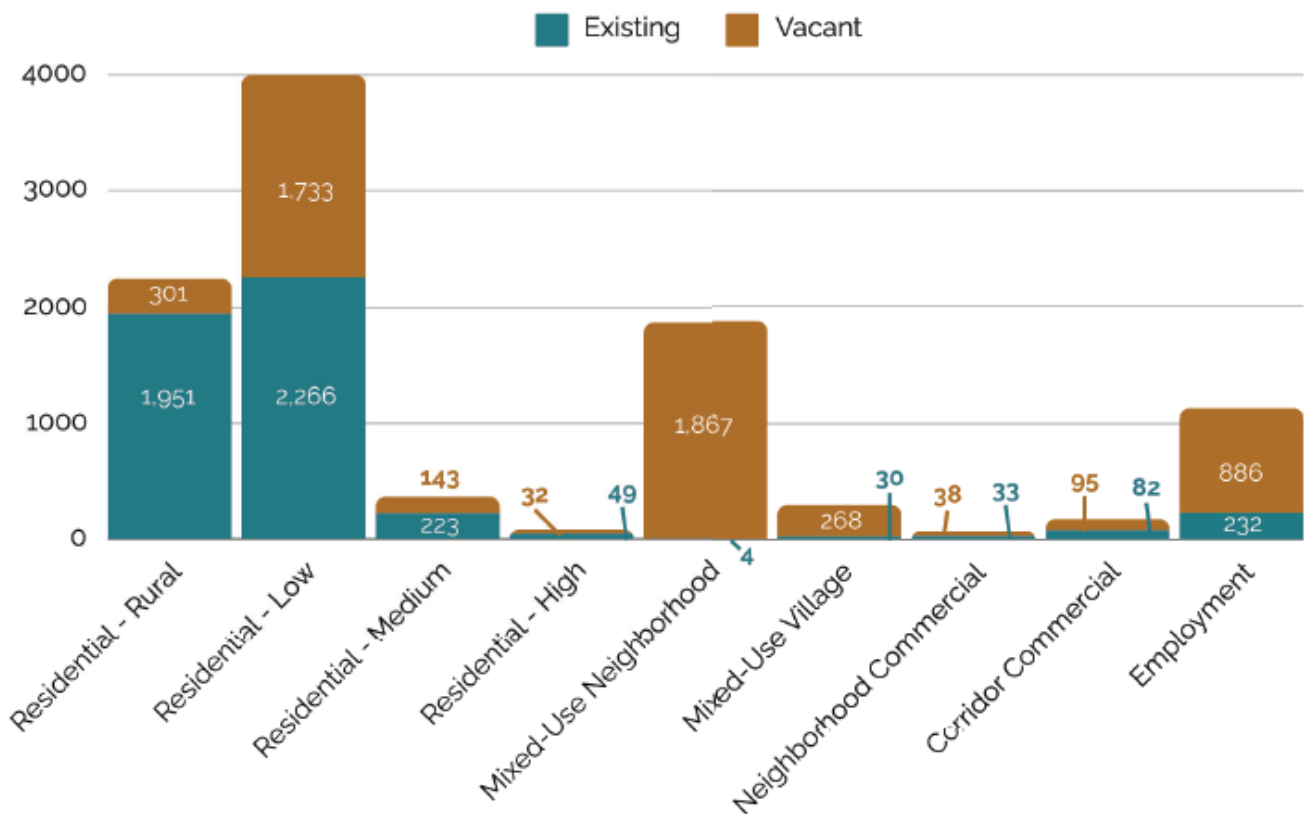
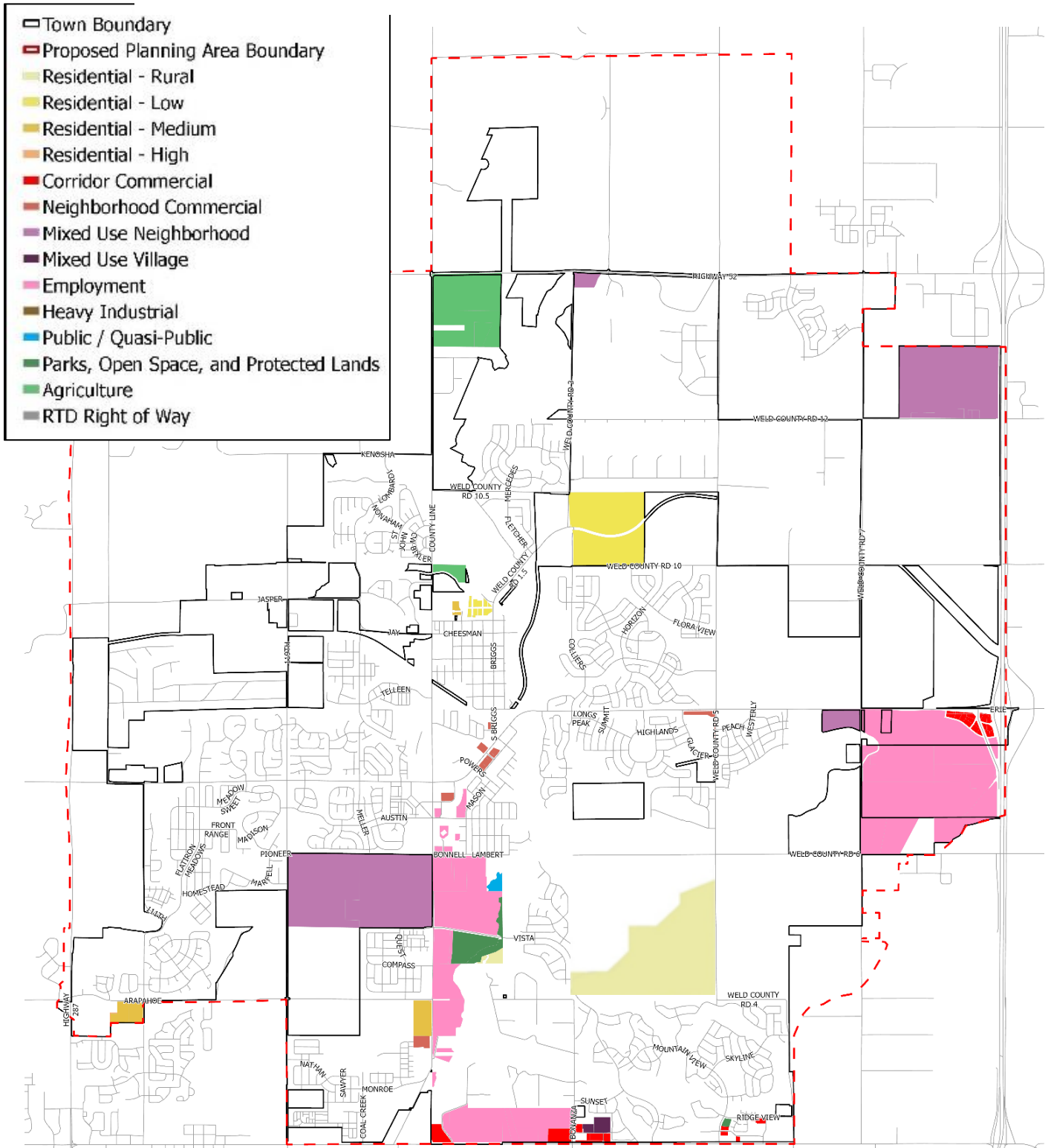


Figure 4: Developable Land w/in Planning Area Boundary, w/ Future Land Use designations



Analysis of the Future Land Use Map in the Plan includes projections of new potential buildout in terms of residences, jobs, population, and commercial square footage. The predicted buildout projects that over the next 20 to 30 years, development consistent with the Future Land Use Map could result in 73,000 to 80,000 residents. More details on the buildout projections are in the table below. All buildout numbers including housing units, population, and jobs are rounded to the nearest thousand while commercial square footage is rounded to the nearest hundred thousand.

Table 1: Estimated Buildout Projections

	EXISTING (2023)	ENTITLED	PLANNED	OPPORTUNITY SITES 2050-2055 ESTIMATE	TOWN OF ERIE BUILDOUT 2050-2055 ESTIMATE
<i>Description</i>	<i>Already built</i>	<i>Approved development</i>	<i>In development review process; not approved</i>	<i>Potential development in vacant¹ and underutilized² parcels in the Planning Area</i>	
Housing Units	12,000 units	5,000 units	10,000 units	0 - 3,000 units	27,000 - 30,000 units
Population	36,000 residents	13,000 residents	24,000 residents	0 - 7,000 residents	73,000 - 80,000 residents
Commercial & Industrial Square Footage	1,700,000 sq. ft.	400,000 sq. ft.	3,400,000 sq. ft.	0 - 6,100,000 sq. ft.	5,500,000 - 11,600,000 sq. ft.
Employment	5,000 jobs	1,000 jobs	7,000 jobs	0 - 12,000 jobs	13,000 - 25,000 jobs
Jobs to Housing Ratio	0.42	0.2	0.8	4	0.48 - 0.83

¹ Vacant parcels consist of land without a primary use or structure. Underutilized parcels have land values that exceed the value of existing improvements or structures.

² Underutilized parcels are those that have land values that exceed the value of the existing improvements or structure.

Phase 4: Policy Framework and Realizing the Plan

Feedback from the community, PAC, TAC, PC, and TC helped shape the policy framework of the Plan, including the identification of implementation and action items, responsible parties, and timing. The drafted goals and policies were brought to the public for prioritization at 12 pop-up events around Town and in an online survey. Events included the Erie Farmers Market, Touch-A-Truck, Coal Creek Park, Fox Dog Coffee, Active Adult Lunch, and various times at the Erie Community Center atrium from July 24 to August 12. Over 415 participants picked their top two policy goals for each chapter. Top priorities included:

- Water conservation
- Inclusive and effective public facilities
- Protecting and enhancing nature
- Preparing for climate change disruptions
- Thriving, accessible neighborhoods

- Reducing housing costs
- Supporting and attracting small businesses
- Creating vibrant spaces and events
- Connecting neighborhoods with parks, open spaces, and trails
- Celebrating Erie's identity with arts, culture and entertainment

The goals and policies were then incorporated into a public review draft of the Plan and Future Land Use Map. The review period extended between August 14 and September 8. The Future Land Use Map was also available via an interactive map allowing for detailed exploration. During this fourth phase of engagement, staff held two Open House events where residents could ask questions and provide feedback. Staff from Public Works, Environmental Services, Parks and Recreation, Planning, and Economic Development departments were present at the Open Houses to provide their technical expertise. Additionally, staff was available by appointment for residents and property owners to ask questions. A handful of written comments on the draft document were received from unique users through the project page, as well as feedback from 32 attendees at the two Open House events. The online and in-person feedback has been incorporated into the document.

Engagement at-a-glance

Over the course of the project, the Plan Team engaged with the public at more than 30 events and through multiple online surveys, resulting in more than 2,500 touch points. Additionally, 29 advisory meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Plan Advisory Committee (PAC), Planning Commission, and Council occurred during the project. Throughout each of the engagement periods the PAC and TAC met multiple times to review work product and provide direction and feedback. Consultants Verdunity and EPS engaged to provide Fiscal and Economic Market Analyses.

Plan Adoption

The proposed Comprehensive Plan reflects residents' vision for Erie's future that is grounded in data and market realities, resulting in an implementable, fiscally sustainable plan. Adoption of Elevate Erie does not change the zoning for any property, nor does it automatically allow development types shown on the Future Land Use Map. In many cases, entitlements (rezonings, platting, site plan, etc.) would be necessary to allow development. These entitlement proceedings include neighborhood meetings and public hearings at Planning Commission and Town Council.

The Comprehensive Plan includes an Implementation Matrix of all the policies within the document. The matrix assigns responsible parties and establishes estimated timelines. Timelines are subject to change based on budget, workplan priorities, staff capacity, and external variables. Goals marked with a symbol for 'Highest-Voted Community Goal' represent those with the highest votes during phase four engagement. Staff will report annually to Planning Commission and Council on implementation progress.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission was extensively involved throughout the 18-month plan development process and considered Elevate Erie at their September 18 meeting.

One public commentor addressed the desire for more outreach, maintaining existing Comprehensive Plan densities, requiring lower income thresholds for affordable housing, and delaying the comp plan adoption until after the November election. Additionally, the commentor asked that the Arapahoe Road corridor between Hwy 287 and 111th Avenue be designated as an 'Area of Special Consideration'. Planning Commission members received two written comments regarding transportation concerns, provided in Attachment 7.

The Commission's discussion included:

- proposed density changes and how they reflect current market conditions and the actual built environment in the Town,
- the plan and Future Land Use Map as a recommending/visionary document,
- ensuring adequate public services, facilities, and infrastructure are planned in concert with the Future Land Use Map, particularly at the eastern end of the town,
- the extensive amount of public engagement,
- the land use fiscal analysis available in the Appendix,
- buildout estimates and maintaining neighborhood/small-town feel through design policies, and
- future updates to the plan.

Planning Commission voted unanimously to pass resolution P24-14 recommending that Town Council approve the 2024 update to the 2015 Town of Erie Comprehensive Plan, Known as Elevate Erie.

Approval Criteria

Section 10-7-21(C) 9. of the Erie Municipal Code states the following approval criteria: The Planning commission may recommend approval, and the Town Council may approve the comprehensive plan or amendment if the following criteria are met, as applicable:

1. The existing comprehensive plan is in need of amendment to align with existing and proposed conditions;
Staff: Erie and the surrounding region have experienced significant growth since the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2015. A Comprehensive Plan update is necessary to provide guidance and respond effectively to the growth underway and expected in the future.
2. The amendment is consistent with and implements the goals and policies of the plan;
Staff: This update carries over many goals and policies from the 2015 Comp Plan. In particular, the Community Building Blocks chapter preserves the

fundamental themes of the 2015 Plan that underly all other chapters. The 2015 Comp Plan Guiding Principles are present throughout the 2024 update in goals and policies (action items):

- *A Coordinated and Efficient Pattern of Growth*
- *Quality Design and Development*
- *Overall Economic Vitality*
- *Downtown Economic Vitality*
- *A Comprehensive, Integrated Transportation System*
- *Stewardship of the Natural Environment*
- *Trails, Parks and Recreation Opportunities*
- *Protected Lands Program*
- *Balanced Land Use Mix*
- *Stable, Cohesive Neighborhoods Offering a Variety of Housing Types*
- *Provide Infrastructure and Public Services Efficiently and Equitably*

3. The amendment promotes the long-term economic, social, and environmental health, equity, and sustainability of the town;

Staff: Policies throughout the Comprehensive Plan promote these items:

- ***Economic Health:*** *Fostering commercial and employment opportunities for residents; supporting a fiscally responsible development pattern*
- ***Social Health:*** *Creating spaces that bring residents together; investing in public amenities for recreational and educational opportunities; celebrating Erie's historic past and small town feel through thoughtful development;*
- ***Environmental Health & Sustainability:*** *Fostering efficient water use; investing in trees and protecting nature; investing in sustainable infrastructure in anticipation of future development; facilitating safe and sustainable connection between Erie, neighboring communities, essential services, and parks and recreation spaces*
- ***Equity:*** *encouraging a range of housing types to accommodate varying age and income levels; prioritizing inclusive and transparent community engagement processes*

4. Adequate public facilities and services are available to serve the uses in the amendment;

Staff: The Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure chapter and Goal C5 of the Community Building Blocks chapter ensure continuous monitoring and planning of resources with future growth. The Public Works and Utilities representatives on the TAC ensured that infrastructure planning was incorporated into land use scenarios analysis and the final future land use map.

5. The amendment reflects a pattern of development that supports the comprehensive plan priorities; and

Staff: The Future Land Use Map, accompanying land use designations, and Community Building Blocks reflect a focus on the Comprehensive Plan Core Values:

- **Sustainability:** Encourage mixed-use neighborhoods that reduce vehicle reliance
- **Livability:** Foster commercial and employment opportunities for residents; encourage a range of housing types to accommodate varying age and income levels.
- **Connectivity:** Prioritize multimodal transportation connections in coordination with land uses. Create destinations that bring the community together.

These Core Values came out of extensive public engagement in phases one and two of the project.

6. The comprehensive plan or amendment promotes the public health, safety, and general welfare.

Staff: Each chapter of the Comprehensive plan supports different aspects of the general welfare for Erie residents. For example, the Transportation chapter includes a policy to adopt a Vision Zero policy and action plan to reduce accidents. The Livability & Social Health chapter promotes strong partnerships with Erie's public health and safety partners.

Public Notice:

Notice was published in the Colorado Hometown Weekly on September 18, 2024. Mailed and posted notices are not required.

Attachments

1. Staff Report
2. Planning Commission Resolution
3. Resolution No. XX (to be added when received from Kendra)
4. Presentation
5. Elevate Erie
6. Engagement Scrapbook
7. Written Public Comment to Planning Commission
8. Notice