

Community Heart & Soul®

— Guided by what matters most —

GRAND LAKE, COLORADO

Grand Lake is referred to as The Soul of the Rockies™. “The quaint village of Grand Lake is situated on the serene shores of the largest natural lake in Colorado, beneath a crown of majestic, snow-capped mountain peaks. With the breathtaking backdrop of the wild and wondrous Rocky Mountain National Park, Grand Lake, Colorado, is the ideal basecamp for outdoor adventure, family fun and memories in the making. *From the Town Website, <https://gograndlake.com/>*

POPULATION: 521 residents, and up to 10,000 with summer visitors and workers

CHALLENGES: Balancing Growth while Preserving Character, Economic Development, Civil Discourse, and Community Planning

FOCUS: Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code; Community Engagement; and Involving the Community in Comprehensive Planning

KEY TOOLS Community network analysis; Story Gathering, listening, sharing; Strong data management team; Liaison with Comprehensive Planning; Town Survey to voters.

Grand Lake “by the numbers”:

- 1048 responses logged over the summer of 2018
- 216 resident voter responses to October Town survey
- 120 thick (detailed) stories gathered
- Citizen of the Year award for Ken Fucik, Heart & Soul Team Member

Local conditions:

The small town of Grand Lake (pop. 521) is one of two gateways into the famed Rocky Mountain National Park and the headwaters of the Colorado River. People travel from all over the world to visit the historic Western community. Lined with wooden boardwalks, the streets are also home to art galleries, restaurants, and theaters. Grand Lake welcomes thousands of second homeowners and tourists into its fold every summer and fall to experience its crystal-clear, high mountain lakes and rugged natural beauty.

With the seasonal economic dependence on tourism, Grand Lake community members needed ideas on how to diversify their local economy and bring year-round jobs to forge economic resilience. It was also important to find ways to honor their rich Western heritage and preserve and protect their extraordinary natural resources. Building a community where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued was a top priority.

Grand Lake looked to the Heart & Soul process to guide their outreach and to learn what matters most to those who live, work, and play in the community. Heart & Soul would help them build a solid future based upon those learnings.

Volunteer and Community Response:

The Town of Grand Lake saw Community Heart & Soul as an anchor point for their Comprehensive Planning effort. The town had applied to become a state recognized Creative District and “Space to Create,” investing in housing infrastructure where artists and creatives could afford to live and work. The community engaged in additional programming to learn about sustainable tourism, culinary/agrotourism, and heritage tourism.

The Heart & Soul volunteer team included residents, representatives of small businesses, local government, youth, local schools, health services, local service groups, the Creative District, National Parks, and second homeowners. The Heart & Soul Team, with Project Coordinators, planned outreach throughout the year with locals and visitors during the many festivals hosted in Grand Lake including Pancake breakfasts, Buffalo BBQ 5 K run, and Bingo Night Block Parties to reach locals and visitors. The Team used the Community Network Analysis to identify and prioritize groups that needed to be reached before the summer crowds left. Team meetings involved stakeholders from all elements of town improvement projects - Colorful Creatives, Space to Create, local town council members, residents on the Comprehensive planning team.

The Town sent a survey to all registered voters in the town in October of 2019 noting the information would be incorporated into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and be used to build future actions for the community to implement. Team members and project coordinator, worked closely with, and some served on, the Comp Plan Team. The team worked hard bridging local projects.

Team members used their skills to enhance the Heart & Soul work. Whether it was project coordinator, an excellent photographer, who provided professional quality photos and communications for the work, in addition to mentoring team members, or another who excelled at data management, or another who loved story gathering, everyone brought their skills to bear.

Heart & Soul Statements were brought to the public, along with the data, to support the validity of the Comprehensive planning process. The team quantified what the statements represent to help residents understand how the process can lead to long term planning and change.

Heart & Soul Outcomes:

- The updated Comprehensive Plan with Heart & Soul Statements as guiding principles for all future development and zoning. Each theme of the plan is framed by a guiding principle. A guiding principle reflects the community's values and begins with the words 'We value'.
- Continued engagement via social media, keeping residents informed and involved in local events that support Heart & Soul Statements (such as the educational event "Live Water," which builds upon the statement about educating people to keeping local water clean.)
- More open planning exercises with residents to shape the Municipal Lands Master Plan.
- More activities for families and kids offered through the Grand Lake Center.
- New resident involvement on local economic issues, business, and housing development.

