



# Staff Report

Coalville City  
Community Development Director

To: Coalville City Planning Commission  
From: Don Sargent, Community Development Director  
Date of Meeting: February 17, 2025  
Re: Proposed Amendments to General Plan  
Action: Initial Review and Discussion - Work Session

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## Proposed Amendments to the City General Plan

### REQUEST

The purpose of this work session is to introduce proposed general plan amendments to the Planning Commission.

This item is scheduled for work session discussion only. No action is requested at this time.

### BACKGROUND

Last month, Mayor Swensen reviewed the 2023 General Plan and discovered several sections were inconsistent with the city's current situation, along with internal contradictions that could lead to legal challenges for the Planning Commission and City Council regarding land-use decisions.

The mayor presented the City Council with a memo (Attachment A) on January 27, 2026 explaining the reasons for amending the general plan. On February 9, 2026, a follow-up matrix (Attachment B) including additional detail of the sections, issues identified, suggested edits, and policy rationale was provided to the City Council for review and discussion.

At its meeting on February 9th, the City Council directed Staff and the Planning Commission to begin reviewing and considering amendments to the general plan, with the intention of preparing a recommendation for the city council's further evaluation.

### ANALYSIS

According to Chapter 03-070 of the development code, any general plan amendment must first receive a recommendation from the Planning Commission and then be adopted by the City Council through an ordinance. When reviewing proposed amendments to the General Plan, the following factors are to be considered:

- a. Is the Amendment consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan.

- b. Is the amendment compatible with adjacent land uses and will not adversely impact the character of the surrounding area
- c. Is the proposed development plan for the property in general compliance with all applicable standards and criteria for approval as described in the development code.
- d. Will the amendment adversely affect the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
- e. The adequacy of facilities and services intended to serve the subject property, including but not limited to roadways, parks and recreation facilities, police and fire protection, schools, storm water drainage systems, water supplies, wastewater and refuse collection.

Suggested language amendments to the General Plan (Attachment C) are included for review and discussion.

#### Required Review Process

The general plan amendment process starts with an informal review by Staff and the Planning Commission, followed by a formal public hearing to gather input and ensure all required factors are considered before making a recommendation to the City Council.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission review and deliberate on the proposed amendments to the General Plan, and offer guidance to Staff for further evaluation, public hearing, and recommendation to the City Council at a future meeting.

#### **Attachments:**

- A.** General Plan Review Memo
- B.** General Plan Issues Matrix
- C.** Suggested Language Amendments to the General Plan

# ATTACHMENT A

## **City of Coalville Mayor's Office**

**To:** Coalville City Council

**From:** Mayor Rory Swensen

**Date:** January 27, 2026

**Subject:** Discussion Item, General Plan Amendments, Purpose and Rationale

### **Overview**

The purpose of this memo is to introduce the need for a focused review and amendment of the Coalville City General Plan. This item is presented for discussion and direction only. No action is requested at this meeting.

The General Plan is the policy foundation for zoning, ordinances, and land use decisions. While it is not an ordinance itself, Utah law requires that City actions be reasonably consistent with it. When the Plan is clear and internally consistent, it provides legal protection, policy clarity, and predictability. When it contains internal tension or outdated assumptions, it creates risk and uncertainty.

### **Identified Issues**

The current General Plan contains several areas of internal conflict that affect decision making.

First, the Plan describes itself as an advisory and flexible guide, yet in multiple sections it uses mandatory language such as shall, must, require, and prohibit. Courts tend to give weight to this language, even when the broader document suggests flexibility. This creates a situation where the City has unintentionally imposed rigid policy constraints on itself.

Second, the Plan simultaneously promotes economic sustainability, tax base growth, higher density housing near Main Street, and infill development, while also emphasizing low population density, rural character, and absolute environmental prohibitions. These goals are not inherently incompatible, but as written they often point in different directions during real world project review.

Third, several Plan sections function as de facto regulations rather than policy guidance. Examples include infrastructure concurrency language, sensitive lands prohibitions, trail requirements, and study mandates. When these provisions are applied inconsistently or waived informally, the City becomes vulnerable to procedural and equal challenges of treatment.

Fourth, housing language relies on definitions and assumptions that no longer reflect current market conditions in Summit County. While the Plan expresses support for moderate income housing, it does not clearly align regulatory tools with that goal.

## **Ramifications**

If left unaddressed, these issues increase legal exposure, complicate staff recommendations, reduce applicant predictability, and limit the Council's ability to balance competing community priorities. They also make it harder to advance stated goals related to housing availability, economic development, and long-term fiscal sustainability.

## **Proposed Direction**

A targeted General Plan amendment would not change Coalville's identity or values. Instead, it would clarify intent, resolve internal inconsistencies, modernize housing and economic language, and restore appropriate decision-making discretion to the City Council, while maintaining clear guardrails for infrastructure, environmental protection, and community character.

Following Council discussion, staff and the Mayor's office propose to return with a cross-reference table identifying specific Plan sections, the issue presented, and suggested amendment concepts for further review.

## ATTACHMENT B

<u>General Plan Section</u>	<u>Existing Language or Condition</u>	<u>Issue Identified</u>	<u>Suggested Amendment Concept</u>	<u>Policy Rationale</u>
Introduction, Purpose of the Plan	Plan described as advisory and flexible, yet states recommendations should be followed	Internal contradiction between advisory intent and mandatory application	Add interpretive language clarifying that mandatory terms guide ordinance implementation unless explicitly stated as absolute	Reduces legal exposure and restores council discretion while preserving intent
Community Vision, Community Identity	Emphasis on low population density and rural small-town character	Rural character is implied as uniform density and housing type	Clarify rural character as scale, design quality, open space, and heritage rather than density alone	Allows housing diversity while preserving Coalville's identity
Land Use Element, Residential Areas	High and medium density housing identified near Main Street	Policy direction is not consistently reinforced in zoning outcomes	Explicitly encourage higher density and mixed-use housing in areas with infrastructure capacity	Aligns land use policy with housing and infrastructure efficiency goals
Land Use Element, Growth Contiguity	Growth should be contiguous to existing development	Rigid language limits strategic development and annexation flexibility	Allow non-contiguous growth where it advances housing, jobs, or infrastructure efficiency	Supports economic development while retaining planning discipline
Land Use Element, Infrastructure Policies	Development approval tied to construction of infrastructure	Can be read as a hard barrier rather than a flexible planning tool	Clarify use of phasing, impact fees, and development agreements	Encourages development while protecting public investment
Land Use Element, Development Impacts	Development should pay its own way	Principle is sound but inconsistently applied	Require findings addressing proportional cost responsibility	Improves consistency and defensibility of approvals
Moderate Income Housing Element, Definitions	Moderate income defined as up to 80 percent AMI	Definition no longer reflects Summit County housing realities	Introduce attainable housing definition covering broader income ranges	Better aligns housing policy with actual community needs

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Moderate Income Housing Element, Zoning Barriers	Zoning identified as a key tool, but few barriers identified	Plan lacks clear direction to remove regulatory obstacles	Commit to reviewing minimum lot sizes, parking, and use restrictions	Creating actionable path toward housing goals
Moderate Income Housing Element, Inclusionary Housing	Inclusionary workforce housing language appears mandatory	Risk of legal challenge without feasibility framework	Reframe as flexible tool using incentives and agreements	Preserves housing goals while reducing legal risk
Economic Element, Tax Base Goals	Emphasis on strengthening tax base and preventing blight	No explicit linkage to land use or zoning decisions	Require consideration of fiscal sustainability in land use decisions	Provides policy support for commercial and mixed-use projects
Economic Element, Employment Land	Desire for jobs stated but not protected	Employment land vulnerable to conversion	Preserve adequate commercial and light industrial zoning	Supports long-term economic resilience
Parks and Open Space Element, Sensitive Lands	Multiple absolute prohibitions on development	Functions as de facto regulation with limited discretion	Convert prohibitions to conditional standards with mitigation	Maintains environmental protection while restoring flexibility
Parks and Open Space Element, Wildlife and Trails	Studies and trail requirements broadly stated	Ambiguous thresholds invite inconsistent application	Tie requirements to defined major development thresholds	Improves fairness and predictability
Transportation Element, Infrastructure Planning	Transportation planning tied to existing patterns	Does not clearly support compact or mixed-use development	Align transportation policy with planned density and redevelopment	Reduces long term infrastructure costs
Implementation, Citywide	Plan implementation implied but not explicit	Weak linkage between plan and ordinance updates	Commit to periodic zoning and code review for consistency	Ensures Plan remains a living document

# ATTACHMENT C

## 1. Introduction

### Purpose and Use of the General Plan

#### Existing language excerpt

“The general plan is to be used as an advisory guide for land use decisions and should remain flexible enough to allow decisions to be made that are in the best interest of the community.”

#### Amended language

“The general plan is to be used as an advisory guide for land use decisions and should remain flexible enough to allow decisions to be made that are in the best interest of the community. [New text added] Where the terms shall, must, require, or prohibit are used in this Plan, they are intended to guide the adoption and application of ordinances, development standards, and conditions of approval, unless expressly stated as an absolute limitation necessary to protect public health and safety. The City Council retains discretion to balance housing needs, economic vitality, infrastructure capacity, environmental protection, and community character through adopted ordinances and written findings.”

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## 2. Community Vision Element

### Community Identity

#### Existing language excerpt

“Most residents also identify with our rural small-town atmosphere. Quiet, peaceful, family friendly, low population density...”

#### Amended language

“Most residents also identify with our rural small-town atmosphere. Quiet, peaceful, family friendly, [deleted text] low population density, interspersed agriculture and open lands, safety, quaintness, and proximity to recreation are all important elements of our community. [New text added] Rural character in Coalville is defined by scale, design quality, access to open space, historic context, and neighborhood compatibility. A variety of housing types and densities may be appropriate where they reinforce these characteristics and support long term community sustainability.”

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## 3. Land Use Element

### Residential Areas and Density

### **Existing language excerpt**

“Areas immediately surrounding downtown Main Street provide a logical location for high and medium density housing.”

### **Amended language**

“Areas immediately surrounding downtown Main Street provide a logical location for high and medium density housing.

[New text added] Targeted higher density residential and mixed use development should be encouraged in areas with existing or planned infrastructure capacity, including near Main Street, schools, civic facilities, and commercial centers, to promote housing availability, walkability, and efficient public service delivery.”

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## **Growth Contiguity**

### **Existing policy**

“Growth should be contiguous to existing development to better provide cost effective and efficient city services and transportation facilities.”

### **Amended policy**

“Growth should generally be contiguous to existing development to better provide cost effective and efficient city services and transportation facilities.

[New text added] Noncontiguous development may be approved where it demonstrably advances housing needs, employment opportunities, or infrastructure efficiency, and where required services can be provided without disproportionate public cost.”

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## **Infrastructure and Services**

### **Existing policy**

“Development approval should be tied to the construction of culinary and secondary water, sewer, storm drainage, and transportation systems.”

### **Amended policy**

“Development approval should consider the availability, timing, and capacity of culinary and secondary water, sewer, storm drainage, and transportation systems.

[New text added] Impacts may be mitigated through phased development, impact fees, development agreements, or other legally available mechanisms.”



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## **4. Moderate Income Housing Element**

### **Definitions**

#### **Existing definition**

“Moderate income housing is defined as housing occupied by households earning 80 percent or less of area median income.”

#### **Amended language**

“Moderate income housing is defined as housing occupied by households earning 80 percent or less of area median income.

[New text added] Attainable housing refers to housing affordable to households earning approximately 60 percent to 120 percent of area median income, including local workforce, young families, and seniors seeking to age in place.”

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### **Zoning and Regulatory Barriers**

#### **New policy added**

“The City shall periodically review zoning and development standards to identify and remove regulatory barriers that unnecessarily limit residential density or housing variety, including minimum lot sizes, parking requirements, and use restrictions, particularly in areas identified for attainable housing.”

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### **Inclusionary Housing**

#### **Existing language excerpt**

“Include an Inclusionary Workforce Housing Program... that mandates a percentage of all new residential major developments to provide employee housing.”

#### **Amended language**

“Include an Inclusionary Workforce Housing Program for major residential developments.

[Deleted text] that mandates a percentage

[New text added] that may require or incentivize workforce or employee housing through development agreements, incentives, or alternative compliance options, calibrated to market feasibility and public benefit.”

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## **5. Economic Element**

### **Fiscal Sustainability**

#### **New policy added**

“Land use and zoning decisions should consider long term fiscal sustainability, including impacts on sales tax, property tax, employment, infrastructure maintenance, and public service costs.”

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### **Employment Land**

#### **New policy added**

“Sufficient land should be preserved and zoned for commercial and light industrial uses to support local employment opportunities and economic resilience.”

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## **6. Parks, Open Space, and Environment Element**

### **Sensitive Lands**

#### **Existing implementation language excerpt**

“Prohibit any development on natural slopes that are 30 percent or greater.”

#### **Amended language**

“[Deleted text] Prohibit any development

[New text added] Development on natural slopes of 30 percent or greater should generally be avoided. Where development is proposed, it may be approved only if it can be demonstrated that public safety, environmental function, and community character are protected through appropriate design, engineering, and mitigation measures.”

Apply similar amendments to wetlands, ridgelines, floodplains, and sensitive vegetation provisions.

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### **Wildlife and Trails**

#### **Existing language excerpt**

“Require all major developments to prepare a wildlife impact study.”

### **Amended language**

“Require wildlife impact studies for major developments as defined in the Development Code, where potential impacts to identified habitat or migration corridors exist.”

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## **7. Transportation Element**

### **Alignment with Growth**

#### **New policy added**

“Transportation planning and capital improvements should support planned residential density, commercial activity, redevelopment, and trail connectivity, recognizing that compact development patterns reduce long term infrastructure costs.”

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## **8. Implementation**

### **Plan Maintenance**

#### **New implementation policy added**

“The City shall periodically review and update zoning ordinances, development standards, and capital plans to ensure continued consistency with this General Plan and evolving community needs.”

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### **Closing Note for the Record**

These amendments are intended to clarify intent, resolve internal inconsistencies, modernize housing and economic policy, and preserve appropriate discretion for elected officials while maintaining Coalville’s values, environmental stewardship, and rural character.