

Whetstone Community Housing

Site Walks Summary

Fall 2021

Thank you to the Gunnison Valley community for joining us on-site to tour the beautiful 13-acres of the Whetstone property in the summer and fall 2022. Between July and October 2021, neighbors and residents of Crested Butte and Gunnison were invited to five different site walks, hiking through the sagebrush and enjoying the views and beauty of the site. Overall, around 60 individuals participated and were able to ask questions and brainstorm ideas and concerns with the project team - including County staff Cathie Pagano, Community Development Director and John Cattles, Sustainable Operations Director - about creating a thriving neighborhood on the Whetstone site. In addition, the three county commissioners each joined in on one of these walkabouts.

Being on-site offered the unique perspective to understand the neighborhood boundaries, experience the somewhat difficult access from Highway 135, and be drawn through the tiered topography towards the Slate River for an incredible reprieve. This lower section of the property holds important tension, “a wonderful place for a park”, “possibly provokes unwanted impact on the Slate”, “an important zone for snow retention”. These conversations on-site exemplify the multiple perspectives added to each and every zone throughout the 13-acres, which are gathered and weighed as the site designs are created.



Above: Site walk participants stand at the Westernmost base of the property, overlooking the wetland ecosystem guarding the Slate River and Whetstone mountain.



Above: View from the lower contours of the Whetstone property, looking Northeast toward Mt. Crested Butte and Brush Creek. Just above this sagebrush horizon lies HWY135.

Conversations with site walk participants have focused on the following themes:

- Transportation, connectivity, and HWY 135 regional scope: It's only until deeper into the site that the noise from 65mph vehicle travel starts to dwindle and the solitude of the site becomes available. Participants expressed a need for transportation review, creating innovative connectivity with HWY 135, Riverland Industrial Park, Skyland neighborhood and the bike path, even considering CB South. The Whetstone community is a part of a CDOT regional evaluation which is underway in partnership with Gunnison County.
- Water, waste and snow! How will the water be supplied for the neighborhood? Will the waste treatment occur on-site or are there options to connect to existing systems? How do the experiences of Riverland's potable water shortages relate to the region's water needs? These questions have been brought up throughout the site walks and are being seriously considered with engineers, county leaders and regional planners.
- Height, parking, community capacity: With single family residences to the North, and the Riverland industrial park neighbors to the South, and a tapered topography towards the western view of Whetstone mountain and the Slate river, site-walk participants have deeply considered the impacts of how a neighborhood could be designed on this parcel with its neighbors in mind. The natural slope of the site offers a lot of opportunity to blend and co-create with Riverland, the HWY 135 corridor, the ecosystem edges of berms, viewscapes, and waterways. Conversations about parking have been in tandem with possible bus routes and multimodal systems. Site walk participants have reflected the need for garages to help manage with snow, personal storage, and small business needs. Ideas of how people, pets, nature, economy, access and community can all coexist in 13-acres have been floated with enthusiasm and realistic opportunity.
- Sustainable systems: heat, water, waste, transportation, electricity. With any added development, questions of natural resource use arise. Site-walk participants have asked, is there a way to develop geo-thermal heating in a way that will help off-set some costs of the project? Can solar be a part of the neighborhood to make electricity more affordable? These questions have been helpful to the design team and planners. Conversations on how the Whetstone neighborhood can support its own systems, reduce costs for residents, and meet and contribute towards County sustainability goals, are being held.
- What community issues can the Whetstone neighborhood address: with all of the considerations that go into a neighborhood, and the needs of the surrounding region, participants have realized that this 13-acre site is addressing the need for housing in this area, which will support the businesses, schools, and communities of the Gunnison Valley. By focusing on how Whetstone can connect with surrounding neighborhoods and gain access to bike and bus systems,

Whetstone is being designed to be a part of the North Valley, while also being a useful, accessible and enjoyable neighborhood, reflecting the needs and visions of the Gunnison Valley.



Above: Fall view from the entrance of the site towards Whetstone Mountain

Left: View of the entrance of the Whetstone property, facing West.

Thank you for adding your insight to the Whetstone community, and we appreciate everyone who has come out and brainstormed on-site with us this season.

- Whetstone Project Team