



Section 8: Community Character and Placemaking

8.1 INTRODUCTION

“Good communities and good design evolve over time.”

The Town of Basalt possesses many unique characteristics that provide a sense of identity. Some of these characteristics include the architecture of the core business district along Midland Avenue, the quaint and varied character of the Hill District, Arbaney Park and the old kiln ruins, and the Swinging Bridge pedestrian trail. The one element common to all of these places is that they evolved slowly over time. They express the forces and needs of the time in which they were built. These characteristics should be preserved and new developments should be encouraged to build upon the basic components present in these areas. One of the most common mistakes in city planning is to seek too much unity in the design of buildings and places. Good town design comes from the careful exploration of ways to integrate architecture that responds to current forces and needs with the surrounding existing environment, whatever it may be. Good town design also reflects lessons from our past and incorporates appropriate forms and materials to fit with our climate.

Basalt also has events, places, and characteristics that contribute to its sense of community. For example, River Days, Taste of Basalt, sports tournaments and community fundraisers are events that connect residents to each other and to the Town. Arbaney Park, middle and elementary school playing fields and open space, and Midland Avenue are examples of places where people randomly meet and interact. The economic and ethnic diversity of people living in Basalt creates an inclusiveness and diversity that makes Basalt a more complete community.



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Even though government is not capable of creating community, its actions can facilitate or give community and culture a chance to flourish. For example, Basalt's future as a community will depend, in part, on retaining economic and ethnic diversity. New development that is exclusionary will erode our economic and ethnic diversity. Gated or private subdivisions tend to exclude community members and create an "us versus them" dynamic that erodes, rather than builds, community. The construction of excessively large homes creates residential areas that are less about community housing and more about economic stratification and absentee ownership. As a town becomes more and more wealthy, especially in an absentee sense, the tendency is to contribute more money to community events and less volunteer time. As a result, the events that, in the past, created connections in the community, feel more like jobs and less like an event of equals.

The Town prefers the approach of developing an economic strategy that favors local businesses and finding ways to support education and recreation programs to help keep Basalt locally owned and a town for families. Additionally, this master plan includes a future land use strategy that preserves land intended for uses that create jobs with incomes capable of support a household, thus moving the Town in a direction of diversity, self-sufficiency and family orientation. In addition, the Town's housing policies focus on retaining or replacing housing that provides economic and/or ethnic diversity and requiring new development to have a mix of uses and housing types to facilitate economic diversity. Finally, Basalt's future land use strategy, as described in this master plan update, requires development to locate in a compact manner preventing, or at least minimizing, the prospects of suburban land use patterns and reducing the potential for exclusive, gated subdivisions and economic stratification.

The Town continues to acknowledge the significance of design-related issues in enhancing and maintaining the character of the community and in making great places for its citizens and visitors. Town surveys and public input continue to emphasize Basalt's small-town character as an important part of the quality of life for residents and, in many cases, the primary reason people choose to live here. This section provides guiding principles for preserving and promoting community character and great place making in future developments. However, the guidelines given are not intended to show the only way which development can be done!

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND PLACE MAKING

1. Design elements will communicate that people, not cars, live here. An emphasis on auto-oriented improvements and design has historically resulted in degradation of many elements of design and community character. The Town will focus on creation of walkable neighborhoods, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.
2. Economic sustainability, environmental protection, economic diversity, acknowledgement of our past history, and creation of opportunities for our youth/future will be incorporated into our neighborhoods. Design elements will reflect these real community values, as well as the appearance and aesthetics.



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3. In order to reduce the prospects of economic and ethnic stratification, the Town will prohibit private or gated development and prohibit homes over a size appropriate to the community.
4. In order to maintain a diverse and inclusive community, the Town will consider allowing more Accessory Dwelling Units in more zone districts.
5. Compact urban growth boundaries minimize sprawl and maximize pedestrian scale development. Pedestrian travel, rather than automobile travel, facilitates social capital through the chance meeting of others in the community. These chance meetings offer opportunities for communication and mutual problem solving without government interaction.
6. In order to preserve the locally owned and unique business character of Midland Avenue, the Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Basalt should develop an economic strategy that emphasizes retaining existing business over attempting to recruit out-of-valley business.
7. Neighborhood locations for Basalt's middle and elementary schools are a critical element to the Town's pedestrian scale. Neighborhood schools minimize automobile use while a suburban school campus promotes automobile use. Not only can children walk to school, but the playing fields and open spaces associated with the schools function as gathering places for community members to meet.
8. Neighborhoods will include public and semi-public spaces where citizens can meet, visit, and celebrate their community on a daily or special occasion basis. These areas in Basalt will include formal spaces such as a town square, informal spaces, such as the Swinging Bridge and sidewalk dining, and natural areas typical of a riverfront park.
9. New and remodeled buildings will maintain the community's intimate scale and fine grain of uses, including concepts such as vertical differentiation of uses, variation in façade treatments, diversity of building materials and roof details, and creation of pocket parks, small plazas and alleys.
10. The Town will utilize a varied palette of tools including Master Plan guidelines, code requirements, PUD adjustments, and incentive provisions to create desired design outcomes. These tools will be applied broadly throughout each neighborhood type, each part of the community, and at all levels of development review.
11. Individual developments or buildings will be integrated into the overall community. Shared facilities such as parks, open space, and parking, along with street, sidewalk, and trail connections will establish an inclusive, not exclusive, character for the Town.
12. Civic buildings and spaces such as libraries, performing arts centers, town squares, plazas and schools will receive special attention to their design elements, location within town centers, and integration into the community. These buildings often set the standard for private



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improvements within a neighborhood and surrounding areas and provide great opportunities for furthering community character.

13. Basalt's character is defined by the diversity of activities and mixture of uses in many existing neighborhoods. The Town will work to perpetuate and expand on that character through integrating civic needs, ethnic diversity, diverse business opportunities (including home occupations), and a variety of living arrangements such as accessory/employee housing throughout many different neighborhoods.
14. Small, locally-owned businesses are important to maintain Basalt's character. The Town's policy will be "no net loss" in regard to these essential parts of our community character. Applicable to all new or redevelopment proposals, this policy will help to assure that opportunities will exist for small businesses to start-up and prosper within Basalt.
15. The Town will encourage diversity in design that acknowledges, and can be appropriately integrated into, Basalt's more traditional architectural character that recognizes the demands of the climate. This can be accomplished by using combinations of traditional and unique building materials, building types, roof designs to accommodate snowfall, accessory and detached structures, and other similar architectural strategies.
16. The Town will continue to provide and encourage development of a full range of services and opportunities associated with a small-town character. These include special components such as libraries, community schools, daycare facilities, youth clubs and activities, service clubs, civic volunteer groups, recreation programs, senior activities, and non-profit entities such as the Roaring Fork Conservancy.
17. The Town will implement the *Basalt Complete Street Design Manual* to promote a walkable and transit-friendly community. On-street parking and mixed-use parking concepts will be utilized along with wide sidewalks, quality landscaping, and street furniture. Bike and walking paths are an important element of the Town's existing and emerging character.

Successful application of these principles in conjunction with the following neighborhood typologies will help assure that Basalt maintains its small-town character while offering all the advantages and amenities of a complete village.

8.2 NEIGHBORHOOD TYPOLOGY DESCRIPTIONS

The neighborhood typology concept sets forth nine neighborhood types within the general categories of residential, commercial mixed use, live/work mixed use, community facilities, and agricultural mixed use. In addition to the specific neighborhoods, there are several overlay typologies that can be applied within several different neighborhood types. These overlays address environmental or town needs such as rivers, hillside development, modular construction and affordable housing. While each neighborhood is intended to include special features and



characteristics, each typology is also intended to be part of an overall framework with many common elements such as landscaping and streetscapes. The typology concepts are designed to provide clear guidance with consideration allowed for adaptations that are appropriate for a particular neighborhood. Each neighborhood is described and depicted graphically in the typology illustrations.

Maps showing the general locations of the neighborhood types and overlays in the East Basalt and West Basalt Planning Areas are included with the typology illustrations located at the end of the document. Some of the typologies have been modeled after existing parts of Town. In areas that are already developed, changes in use, redevelopment, building remodels and additions offer excellent opportunities for incorporating the neighborhood typology.



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