downtown Idaho Springs

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

May 21-22, 2012

USDA Rural Development

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DOWNTOWN COLORADO, INC

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL AFFAIRS · STATE OF COLORADO · 1876

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO DOWNTOWNS, COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND TOWN CENTERS IN COLORADO THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, INFORMATION AND COLLABORATION

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Introduction

Welcome to the downtown assessment for the Colorado community of Idaho Springs. Colorado communities have the opportunity to apply for assistance through Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) technical assistance programs, a clearinghouse for information, assistance, and services through collaborative program development with public and private entities supporting commercial district revitalization initiatives in Colorado. This program is partially supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, Rural Community Development Initiatives (RCDI) grant and is planned in conjunction with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA).

Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) formerly known as Colorado Community Revitalization Association (CCRA) has been working as a state wide non-profit membership association in Colorado since the early 1980s. Since 2004, DCI has partnered with communities and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to provide downtown, commercial district, and town center assessments by harnessing the powerful partnership created by DCI member volunteers from the public and private sectors. This public-private partnership provides communities with a comprehensive, objective overview of methods to support businesses, non-profit and public service providers working on a local and regional level. DCI prides itself in assisting communities to develop a process and training program to encourage holistic development that supports small, independent businesses, brings together civic organizations and public service providers, and to streamline communication and processes to incentivize development of the commercial district.

Downtown Colorado, Inc. facilitates downtown revitalization by assembling teams of volunteer professionals including designers, architects, marketing specialists, planners, land use consultants, and finance experts to work in communities and develop a report or training geared toward addressing commercial district initiatives. The assessment team members appreciate the invitation to learn about and assist communities. These volunteers work diligently to provide relevant and realistic input towards the betterment of your commercial district.

Participating Stakeholders

- City Council
- City Staff
- Historical Society of Idaho Springs Inc.
- Clear Creek Economic Development Corp
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Property and Business Owners
- Residents
- Idaho Springs Chamber of Commerce
- Clear Creek Library District
- Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreational District
- Idaho Springs Planning Commission

Community Participant Observations

The following observations were made in the four focus groups held on the first day of the downtown assessment:

- Idaho Springs has researched and surveyed community, signage, land use,

greenways, parking, improvements, etc. A LOT.

- It is challenging to find parking at peak times.
- The image from I70 does not convey the depth of character of the community.
- The two sides of town are separated physically, visually, and conceptually.
- The local residents feel less than engaged and informed about community initiatives.

Report Structure and Four Point Approach

This report is structured based on a loose interpretation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Approach. The Colorado Main Street Program (CMSP) is designed to revitalize traditional downtown districts within the context of historic preservation. The program uses an approach that advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of central business districts based on their traditional assets of unique architecture, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community. This methodology addresses the following four areas and combines activities in these areas to develop a community's individual strategy for strengthening and redeveloping its central business district. See the appendices to gain a better understanding of the four points and the structure of this report.

Executive Summary

The City of Idaho Springs requested a Downtown Assessment from Downtown Colorado, Inc. Historic downtown Miner Street, having benefited from decades of effort at historic preservation and economic revitalization, had enjoyed economic success. However, several issues are outstanding. CDOT is ready to commence work on the eastern interchanqe to 241 in conjunction with I-70 improvements at the Twin Tunnels, which will redirect traffic to the frontage road through Idaho Springs. The city faces increasing pressure on its parking supply, which is seen as a constraint to business growth in the downtown and to the growth of recreational usage in the area. There are opportunities for population expansion, and building along Soda Creek and Chicago Creek Roads has increased. The city not only has adequate water, but big developable or saleable rights, which are a big draw in Colorado. The recent economic downtown shelved efforts to develop a major hotel. At the same time, there is concern that the east side of the city has not kept pace economically with the historic Miner Street district. CDOT has been improving Colorado Boulevard, which is business route 70 and also US highway 6 and 40. The Downtown Assessment Team was asked to:

- Assess options to enhance the commercial district's connection, parking, circulation, signage, and safety;
- Identify steps for short-term, mid-term, and long-term improvements and positioning.

Overview and Historic Context

The Idaho Springs Community enjoys a rich history from its original Ute inhabitants, to George Jackson's gold strike of 1859, the Gold Rush and subsequent mining history, the development of railroads and rich Victorian architecture, the growth of auto tourism with the construction of Highways 6 and 40, and of course the Indian Hot Springs. Idaho Springs has been particularly active in preserving, celebrating and marketing its history.

The historic Miner Street district, as well as many residential areas, have benefited from preservation efforts. The Idaho Springs Historical Society is one of the most active volunteer organizations in the city, operating two museums and the visitor center, while the City maintains a preservation focus with its Historic Sites committee, the adaptive re-use of buildings such as the Grass Valley school (now City Hall) and preservation programs and design guidelines for the Miner Street historic district, which was designated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. It is clear that preserving history is both a deeply held community value and an economic driver. Past marketing efforts attempted to market Georgetown and Idaho Springs as a combined destination; however, more recent efforts promote the unique characteristics of each Clear Creek County town. Idaho Springs is more recently seeing burgeoning recreational tourism, with rafting on Clear Creek and mountain biking as growth areas. With the reliance on I-70 traffic and increasing recreation, there is an increasing need to manage the parking supply.
Idaho Springs has long been a tourist destination, with US highways 6 & 40 converging, with lots of restaurants and lodging facilities.

The introduction of I-70 in the 1960s had large implications for the community, changing its physical character, destroying several historic structures and cutting the downtown and west end off from Clear Creek, as well as significantly changing its economy by encouraging local businesses to target increasing highway traffic. The new orientation challenged Idaho Spring's economy because through traffic no longer saw the cute, historic community, but instead saw the back of buildings as they whizzed by-to the resort destinations to the west. With reduced exposure businesses closed, Businesses further suffered from leakage as the new access made it easier for locals to Denver for shopping. The community proactively addressed these problems by creating a downtown improvement district to enhance the historic downtown area with a mil level paid by the historic Miner Street businesses and property owners. In the last 20 years, the city has rebounded and more stable retail and restaurant exist. Currently the city has no clothing, shoe, electronics, and bookstores.

These improvements coupled with the exposure of the interstate has resulted in a much more diverse restaurant district than would be expected in a city the size of Idaho Springs, while at the same time leading to a tendency to cater to passers-by more than destination tourists, and to a dependence on sales tax revenue by local government. I-70 also has opened up the option for residents to commute to jobs in the Denver metro area and Summit County resorts.

The creation of a dedicated fund to the Miner Street area has maintained the historic character of that area but over time these development have led to a dual character of Idaho Springs' commercial districts – with the historic west side district visible from I-70, and the service-oriented east side district, also containing most of Idaho Springs' motel lodgings, having grown up near the eastern exit at I-70. The I-70 business loop, Colorado Boulevard, has been slated for pedestrian and infrastructure improvements through CDOT and the western phase (phase one of three) has been funded and completed, resulting in a significantly improved image and pedestrian character which is still lacking along central and eastern parts of the corridor.

Participants in the Downtown Assessment identified Idaho Springs' attraction as a place to live for workers in the Denver metro area, Central City and Blackhawk, and Summit County. However, Idaho Springs' outward growth is largely constrained by topography, and its existing housing stock is described as largely unchanged from the historic period – while this serves the needs of some potential residents, it also constrains the housing supply and diversity available.

With the growth in Clear Creek County's population, Idaho Springs' role as the population center of

the county has diminished – while Idaho Springs continues to be the largest city, it now houses less than 20% of county population. Idaho Springs' population has been fairly stable since 1980, while the population of Clear Creek County has been growing, with a projected growth from 10,242 in 2010 to 14,642 by 2030. As of 2010, there were 1,717 persons and 848 households in Idaho Springs. Approximately 19% of households had children at home, and 14% of residents were 65 or older. The City estimates its population capacity at 3,000 to 3,800, and there is adequate water and wastewater treatment capacity and school capacity to meet this growth according to the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

Organization

Organization includes developing collaboration, volunteer recruitment and management, fund-raising for the organization, and developing operational strategies. Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a downtown revitalization program. The three principle components of organization are public and media relations, volunteer development, and fundraising.

A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. It is recommended to have a paid, full-time or part-time staff to help coordinate and support volunteers, weather this position is filled with paid staff, a volunteer (like VISTA, see below), or an intern (like the Best and Brightest program see below), it will be imperative to consider how to get some additional support to the overburdened city staff. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders. While a paid downtown coordinator may not currently be feasible, it is something to strive for in the future.

Notwithstanding this fundamental description of a typical downtown organizational structure, numerous variations exist throughout the country and are driven largely by local circumstances. For example, in some towns the chamber of commerce is strong enough to add an organizational component or department designated to focus on the downtown. Additionally, there is an option to develop some form of district to dedicate resources and focus specifically on downtown.

Regardless of the organizational structure chosen, one overriding factor is demonstrated time and again in communities undertaking a program of downtown revitalization: the most successful communities accomplish their desired outcomes by developing a solid organizational component early in the process to oversee and manage their downtown revitalization efforts. If the community does not create and develop a solid organizational component to oversee and manage the process early on, despite the best intentions of all concerned, the program most likely will not accomplish the desired outcomes and risks fading away before it has a chance to succeed.

Given these realities, we cannot overemphasize the importance of placing organizational development among the highest priorities of early revitalization activities. Most, if not all, of the recommendations in this report are made within the framework of this understanding.

Observation: The public and private sectors need to identify Core Area Champions.

Recommendation: Support from both the city and private sector needs to be established to mobilize the necessary resources to identify and promote events and potential development opportunities.

Consider the following roles:

- Identify town staff that can act as a primary contact, or liaison, for the business community to work through and help with regulatory, permitting, and other issues.

- Bring together private sector champions including local business and property owners who can identify and prioritize the needs and goals of the core.

Observation: There have been a lot of community reports and assessments, but little action has been taken on previous recommendations.

Recommendation: It is time to act on recommendations from existing reports. Previous Idaho Springs reports show research and surveys of community preferences, as well as recommendations for signage, land use, greenways, parking and more. It also appears that many of the elected officials have bought into the recommendations and are supportive with moving forward; however, there has not been a great deal of movement toward implementation. It is important to determine priorities and move forward with the initiatives that the community has chosen to support.

The community assessment team has identified the top priorities as enhancing parking capacity and connecting the east and west sides visually, physically, and conceptually. As a part of this process, we suggest that you begin by reviewing and implementing recommendations from the 2009 Community Survey Report as a method to do outreach, increase beautification efforts, and develop volunteers. These recommendations came directly from your community and present good ideas for moving forward.

Observation: Stakeholders need a better understanding of the work that needs to be done to enhance the commercial district.

Recommendations:

- Re-institute the monthly community-wide stakeholder group meetings. A key component of building capacity is developing communication to better utilize resources and reduce duplication. The stakeholder groups each have priorities and objectives and many of them are complimentary; however, it is not clear that the various stakeholders are communicating with one another.
- Determine set venues to find information. This can significantly enhance the ability to communicate. Consider an online venue for all information regarding events and activities in Idaho Springs. This should include all events, services for business and residents, and the latest challenges or successes that the community has encountered. Having a physical venue for news is also important, for example, posting a bulletin board on the east and west sides of town, as well as at City Hall, will help to create a sense of place and community.
- Consider developing a council orientation and training for city council candidates. With frequent turnover and change in an elected body, there is a loss of institutional knowledge and the feeling of one step forward, two steps back. Planning a regular pre-election training for city council candidates will help to alleviate any back-stepping and ensure that all new council members are able to hit the ground running.

Observation: Resources are limited, and there are very few people taking on many responsibilities.

Recommendations:

- There are several options available to communities like Idaho Springs to support a staff position dedicated to downtown revitalization efforts. Consider applying for a VISTA to provide a full-time employee focused towards these efforts. Implementing this cost-effective process has been accomplished recently by other mining towns such as Victor and Westcliffe/Silver Cliff through the Western Hardrock Watershed Team (WHWT). Consider contacting these communities for guidance

on how they obtained a full-time person to work on implementing the downtown plan. IF pursuing and internship, the Best and Brightest program offered by DOLA and the University of Colorado offers a two year option that has worked in communities like Lyons or Lafayette.

- Often times, people do not volunteer because they are not aware of the opportunities available. Work with all stakeholder groups to identify professional development, community service, and volunteer tasks from the downtown plan. Distribute a list with job descriptions to share with community service organizations, and programs in area high schools.
- Institutionalize volunteerism in the city. Ask each stakeholder group to provide an update and written report of the latest activities, initiatives, and needs. This can be done semi-annually and posted on an online volunteer opportunity board. This will enable the city to build a stronger volunteer ethic that can support initiatives, provide professional development, and create a stronger community spirit.
- Provide print versions of volunteer opportunities. Create a list of volunteer and community engagement activities to share with residents, post at the library, coffee shops, and other locations throughout the city.

Observation: The image from I-70 does not convey the history and depth of character of the community.

Recommendations:

- Work with local organizations to access volunteers to maintain improvements on the pedestrian mall. When considering the volunteer opportunities, prioritize the projects listed in the downtown assessment report. If phase one of design includes up scaling your pedestrian mall, ask for help in this area first.
- Remember to engage the east side of town in phase one improvements. When determining how to add banners to visually connect the east and west side, it is also a good time to identify volunteers to maintain a series of flower baskets on the east side.

Revenue Generation

Observation: It is challenging to find parking at peak times.

Recommendation: In addition to parking supply, consider management and enforcement as ways to serve customers, employees and residents while creating a funding stream.

In the short term, the city should make parking enforcement both in lots and on street a priority. Additional revenue would be utilized to pay for the current enforcement position, thus freeing up general funds to be used for implementing other recommendations made in this report.

In the intermediate term, the city should develop a parking management plan that reduces the allowed parking time to create more turnover in spaces. The plan should include a paid parking component generating additional revenue. The new revenue may be utilized for parking lot maintenance, enforcement, and additional parking.

Observation: The community appears to be supportive of developing a consistent funding stream to support improvements to both the east and west sides of downtown..

Recommendation: Use the momentum and enthusiasm around connecting and supporting both sides of the downtown to build political will and act now.

Observation: The city needs a revenue stream to develop and grow the commercial district. Formation

of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) could provide a tax-generated revenue stream.

Recommendation: Consider creation of a financing mechanism to fund long-term enhancements and management of the commercial district.

A Downtown Development Authority (DDA) enables businesses and property owners to work together to strengthen the central business district by generating funding from property and/or sales tax in the district that can reinvested into projects and programs that benefit the area.

By legal definition, a DDA is a quasi-municipal corporation that is intended to halt or prevent deterioration of property values or structures in the central business districts. Funds can be generated by a DDA through a variety of options, including:

- Tax increment financing (TIF) on property
- Tax increment financing on sales
- Up to 5 mil property tax for operations

Any or all of these can be utilized with a DDA. Once created, the DDA can continue collecting TIF and the mill levy for up to 30 years before the district must be dissolved and a new DDA must be created.

Unlike an Urban Redevelopment Authority (which also captures TIF increment but does not allow for a mil levy), creation of a DDA does not require a finding of blight and is unable to exercise eminent domain. The only restriction is on where it can be placed, which by law must be in the central business district and/or the area traditionally considered as such. For Idaho Springs, that area is demonstrated in green coloring in the following map:

A downtown development authority has the power to:

- Acquire property;
- Construct and equip improvements;
- Lease and sell property; and
- Establish fees, rates and charges for the use of property

A plan of development, describing the improvements, must be approved by the City and includes, but not limited to:

- Streets;
- Parks;
- Plazas;
- Parking facilities;
- Pedestrian malls; and
- Right-of-ways

The process to create the DDA, including plan development, consensus building, ordinance creation and vote, is likely to take at least a year from start to finish. Typically, the final day of voting for the DDA is Election Day, so the creation process should start accordingly.

Once created, the DDA is governed by a Board of Directors with 5-11 members, including a City Council member. These board members are appointed by City Council and have 4-year terms.

Observation: There needs to be some type of revenue generation to activate the commercial district.

Recommendation: Immediately begin public engagement process to initiate formation of commercial district solution. The below timeline is based on initial committee formation around May-June 2013, if the actual activities take plan earlier or later, adapt the timeline accordingly.

Step One: Form Stakeholder Group

Understanding volunteer challenges exist, city council may appoint a downtown/commercial district blue ribbon/steering committee (BRC) comprised of representatives from:

- City council (1-2 representatives)
- Recreation district
- School district
- Chamber
- East end business owner

- Historical district business owner

This committee will engage the community in developing a final commercial district management and development plan which will then be presented to city council.

Step Two: Problem & Solution Identification
The first monthly meeting (within one month of council action appointing the BRC or steering committee) will be organizational in nature with co-chairs being elected to manage future meetings and delegate responsibilities. Action items will include identifying current and future challenges the BRC sees in improving the commercial district whether they are physical, financial, or political. Consensus on the "problems" ensures consistent messaging during the public engagement process. The BRC will brainstorm services to be delivered by the DDA that address the issues identified.

The second BRC meeting will be organized with the goals of developing a "plan of action" to include a brief presentation summarizing the needs/problems, and the proposed DDA solution. The plan should also include effective communications tools to maximize meeting attendance and methods for data collection.

Step Three: Community Outreach & City Support
The presentation will guide discussion for the public engagement meetings which should be hosted by different businesses and may coincide with other community group meetings such as the Elks or Lions Clubs. The meetings will begin with an introduction of the BRC, its members and the task it's been given. Then a brief presentation will overview the problems and proposed solution the BRC identified in earlier meetings. The audience will be encouraged to ask questions and make comments on the findings as well as propose alternative suggestions.

The BRC should plan for approximately six monthly public meetings, assuming the BRC is appointed in June 2012 with its first official meeting in July. The commercial district plan should evolve over this time, incorporating public input ensuring the district and the plan are clear and well supported, and that the vision for what will be done and how monies will be spent is clear. A final presentation will be made to city council in March-April, 2013 with a commercial district recommendation supported by a "plan" document.

Upon City Council's endorsement of the commercial district plan (e.g. forming a DDA), the last task of the BRC will be to identify a community group that will proceed in engaging that plan. Ideally some members of the BRC will stay on board and others, representing different demographic groups, will be added.

Step Four: Community Group & District Formation
The community group (Citizen's for a Better Idaho Springs) will begin similarly to that of the BRC, organizing duties and responsibilities. One of CBIS first steps involves identifying funds for the purposes of engaging legal counsel to assist in the DDA formation process, which begins with the City's adoption of an ordinance approving the creation of a DDA.

In addition to engaging counsel, initial efforts should include building a broad-based coalition of support beginning with businesses and influential residents. Taking into account the city's 2009 Community Survey, this is best done with direct communication. It is important to keep record of these "gatekeepers", particularly those who allow their names to be used in endorsement of the plan.

In conjunction with coalition building, CBIS will develop a "road show" presentation detailing the finalized plan to be shared in another round of community meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to discover opportunities and challenges in developing talking points.

In July 2013 City Council will consider drafts of

ballot language creating the DDA and considering an additional question for funding. Ballot language requesting voter approval for DDA creation must be certified to Clear Creek County by September 6, 2013.

Step Five: Campaign & Election

Upon adoption of the ballot language, promotional activities will proceed in the context of a campaign. The lengthy engagement process will have created enough support for a smooth transition to a campaign that will not need to raise and expend the funds it would have without an engagement process (i.e. the campaign expends resources primarily for promotion and not education).

The election on November 5, 2013 will be held via mail ballot – property owners, lessees and residents who are located within the proposed DDA may vote (Note: The ballots only go to individuals within the DDA area, not to the whole community.)

Step Six: Submit a Plan of Development for Approval

Upon successful creation of the DDA and a funding source, the DDA will submit a plan of development that must be approved by the city. According to C.R.S. Title 31, Article 25, Part 8, the DDA cannot issue bonds itself. Idaho Springs must issue the bonds that will be payable from the DDA's tax increment revenues.

Observation: The city has many plans in need of implementation and the additional recommendations in this report may increase the need for additional revenue.

Recommendation: To strengthen the commercial sector adequate resources need to be earmarked for the various investment needs.

- Consider prioritization of existing financial resources to the new initiatives. It will be very important to align resources with priorities and to be ready for upcoming opportunities. This means that re-ordering the phasing of the Colorado Boulevard project (as listed in the following pages) should be done in the short term to ensure that you are ready when the funding and support from CDOT is available. If Idaho Springs doesn't have the concept ready, it will be a missed opportunity. Through community visioning and prioritization it may be possible to reallocate resources. There may be alternative new ways to fund existing services, freeing up current funding to be used in strengthening the commercial sector. The community input may reveal that some services and practices may in fact not be needed by the community. These funds can then be re-allocated.
- Consider implementing an improvement tax to generate additional funds for strengthening the commercial district. This could be accomplished as a stand-alone measure to fund a position to work on promotions or other tasks from this report.
- DOLA grant funding: The City could utilize the Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Fund to accelerate the design for Colorado Blvd. improvements (Phase 3). Using CDOT funding as a match the design could be used to attract new business or redevelopment on Colorado Blvd. This will be a time sensitive opportunity that should be top on the list of priorities.
- Clear Creek Economic Development Corp. Revolving Loan Fund: Work with CCEDC to modify the existing façade improvements loan fund to better meet the need of the business building owners. These funds, in the form of low interest loans could be used to improve properties on the mall adjacent to the parking lot behind Miners Street.

Promotions

Promotion is one of the four key points in building a vital downtown. According to the National Trust Main Street Center, promotion sells a positive image of

the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

Observation: It is challenging to find parking at peak times.

Recommendations:

- Include a parking map as part of the community map online and in print form
- Add parking locations to Google Maps

Observation: Image from I-70 does not convey the history and depth of character in the community.

Observation: Idaho Springs has the opportunity to capitalize even further on heritage tourism and all its assets.

Recommendations: Idaho Springs has done a good job of incorporating heritage tourism through the activities of the Historical Society and the City's Historic Sites Committee, including the Society's operation of the visitor center and museums and walking tours. Idaho Springs has done a good job at presenting the community's colorful history in an honest fashion. Idaho Springs has both of the top draws for tourists in Colorado: natural scenery and a historic downtown. While acknowledging the value of assets such as heritage and recreation, Idaho Springs has often focused on pass-thru traffic on I-70. Destination tourism can be strengthened by promoting Idaho Springs as a close getaway featuring heritage, recreation, springs and a vibrant downtown.

- Include all on updated picture map (along with parking)

- Further promote Idaho Springs' history through interpretive plaques, murals and timelines portraying an honest representation of events in Idaho Springs including Native American history, mining history, labor wars, etc. This would be an ideal opportunity to involve students.
- Continue to tap into I70 Coalition to market Idaho Springs, including being a part of their signage initiative and fast-tracking the implementation of the Idaho Springs signage plan.

Observation: The east and west sides of the city are separated physically, visually, and conceptually.

Recommendations: The districts complement each other, with lodging and destination retail, restaurants and services on the east side, and the historic downtown on the west. In order to gain economies of scale in marketing and capturing tourism dollars, the district should have a united marketing and events strategy

- Use the event planning matrix and calendar: Identify a range of local priorities for events to be held over the year and use the matrix to plan a range of events.
- Most large events currently occur during June, July and August. Adding a large shoulder event during each low season (Apr/May, Oct/Nov) could boost spending and occupancy. (i.e. Oktoberfest, Music Festivals)
- Consider events that can be held on the

East Side

- Include the updated map and other information in every hotel room, restaurant, gas station, and other venues in town.
- Consider an annual familiarity tour for employees, school teachers, regional economic development and tourism staff, etc. to learn about assets and other business (hospitality training). Due to the high turnover of employees, it is important to hold this annually, or even semi-annually. Perhaps it is a shoulder season event that is regularly scheduled each year and all are invited to participate in planning and attending. Topics can include customer service, appropriate employee parking, and familiarity with local attractions, history and other businesses.

Observation: The local residents feel less than engaged and informed with community initiatives.

Recommendations: A community is made up of a diverse range of personalities including residents, employees and business owners, students and seniors. Their engagement (or lack thereof) reflects on the overall social and business climate in the community. There are a number of ways of engaging residents in supporting business, getting involved as volunteers, and seeking leadership positions. These include:

- Shop local campaign: There are a variety of models including 3/50, Frist Fridays, Artwalks, local discount programs for residents, etc.
- Regular open houses or round tables with residents and local officials to seek consensus on key issues
- Regular updates and news about community programs to be shared with residents through radio and the Current, and consistently updated on the community website(s). Utilizing utility bills to send regular important messages to residents is one example.
- Holding an inclusive leadership academy annually. An example of this is the Kellogg Group that was active for a number of years in Idaho Springs. There are several partnerships that can help achieve this.
- Holding enough community focused events that draw primarily local people together as an antidote to the strong tourist focus of the commercial district.
- Holding an annual volunteer appreciation event to recognize and thank volunteers from a variety of groups. Consider other means of appreciation, such as volunteer of the month/year awards, gift cards for downtown volunteers, etc.
- Invite the community to stay engaged with planning and communications from CDOT and the county regarding the Transit Station. Topics like this are energizing to the community and transparent communication with opportunities for input are a great way to build community spirit and awareness.

Economic Development

Strengthening downtown's existing economic assets and fulfilling its broadest market potential. To become even more competitive, both sides of the downtown must reposition. With a thorough understanding of today's market, downtown can develop strategies to enhance the competitiveness of existing merchants, recruit new businesses, create new anchors and convert unused space into new uses.

Observation: It is challenging to find parking at peak times, creating a barrier for customers to access local businesses.

Recommendations: Parking management is an economic development strategy that is ideally revenue-neutral or generates income for the district. The economic development goal is to have clear rules that accommodate short-term and long-term

customers as well as employees and residents. Parking management should support existing and prospective businesses, and should not be viewed as punitive. Methods such as courtesy tickets/parking maps for first-time offenders can be implemented with the right technologies.

- City to assign staff to focus on parking: This would be an existing or new dedicated full-time or part-time staff function focused on parking enforcement, tracking data and implementing best practices. Enforcement would be targeted at peak times (i.e. high season and weekends.) Once the management system is operating, these functions would be entirely paid for by parking revenue.
- Track revenues from parking enforcement & project revenue generated from changing timing or pricing. Dedicate revenues to parking staff & technology. Additional revenue used for parking (or transit) improvements.
- Assess different technologies and options (i.e. courtesy ticket): Technology can streamline the efficiency of the enforcement personnel; can track violations; and can allow for courtesy tickets (first-time violators are given a warning and a parking map rather than a fine).
- Explore feasibility of transit: To help alleviate parking and circulation congestion, consider a shuttle connecting the commercial, historical, residential and recreational amenities or attractions. Transit is not a stand-alone solution but ties into a more sustainable land use pattern including addition of housing and lodging in town. In the short-term, the city should revisit past evaluation of funding, consider cost savings (reduced demand for parking and infrastructure and greater space for visitor parking) and quality of life benefits. A (possibly seasonal) trolley-type circulator, on-demand transit, and commuter connections to Denver, Summit County and Central City could be explored.

Observation: Image from I-70 does not convey the history and depth of character in the community.

Recommendation: Work with Clear Creek County Economic Development Corporation to promote Revolving Loan Fund options for business/building improvement. Idaho Springs has done an excellent job of preserving the historical buildings; there is also an opportunity to draw traffic into the city limits by improving facades and overall condition of non-historic building stock. Business owners of historical buildings on Miner Street could also use this incentive for the back of existing buildings.

Observation: Idaho Springs has the opportunity to capitalize even further on heritage tourism and all its assets

Recommendation: Encourage more diverse lodging opportunities for tourists (i.e. historic B&B's; larger hotel): Current lodging, like much of the tourist strategy, seems to target the pass-thru visitor already on I-70, rather than attracting destination travelers (see Promotions section regarding heritage tourism strategy). The city has in the past pursued a major new hotel, but economic uncertainties made this difficult. The city can continue to encourage diversity by supporting the creation of historic B&B's as well as improvements in existing lodging. A DDA, if adopted, can play a role in drawing a larger hotel.

Observation: East and west sides are separated physically, visually and conceptually

Recommendations: While the district is too large to be a single walkable community, east side physical improvements along with coordinated marketing and business mix analysis could enhance the economic development potential of Idaho Springs' business.

- Pursue DOLA match to CDOT for design of Colorado Blvd. improvements. Raise the priority of Phase 3 (east side).

- Track data on public/private investment, jobs and volunteer efforts, to support fundraising. Data can be used for project specific grant application as well as overall management of downtown.
- Conduct a market analysis of existing businesses in the district. Data should include a list of existing business, market leakage and recommendations on types of business that could complement existing mix.
- Consider the costs/liabilities/agreements necessary to develop an even more pleasant creekside path to connect the east and west sides of town. This distance is about a mile and if design recommendations are followed to create points of interest, a public-private partnership to allow for right of way, development, and maintenance of a creek side route for walking and biking.
- Create a retention & communications plan for all businesses:
    - Email blasts, mixers (consistent)
    - All things I-70 updates
    - Benefits of property beautification to attract customers (consistent with a vision for the district) (Brochure)
    - Create a brochure highlighting the economic benefits of historic preservation. Also, consider reviewing the Lake City Buying History Guide that shows property owners the importance of historic properties and their role in preserving history. DOLA should be able to provide the content for this.

Observation: Local residents feel less than engaged or informed about community initiatives.

Recommendations: A thoughtful and consistent approach should be considered while creating methods of communication with your local residents.

In looking at the goal of enhancing community participation from an Economic Development perspective, our team recommends increasing the attractiveness of the city for additional residents. A greater residential base will better support a diversity of businesses, services and volunteer efforts. Local residents are able to access the commercial district and recreation without having to drive.

- Create a benefits of residency packet:
    - School system, events for children/ families, opportunities to volunteer, entrepreneurship opportunities, proximity to recreation, shopping
- Continue to explore creation of market-rate housing as well as affordable housing through a Housing Authority or collaboration with County HA – pursue the goal of more people living in town (walkable, transit-oriented community)

Observation: There does not appear to be a clear venue to find information for business/ entrepreneurship.

Recommendations:

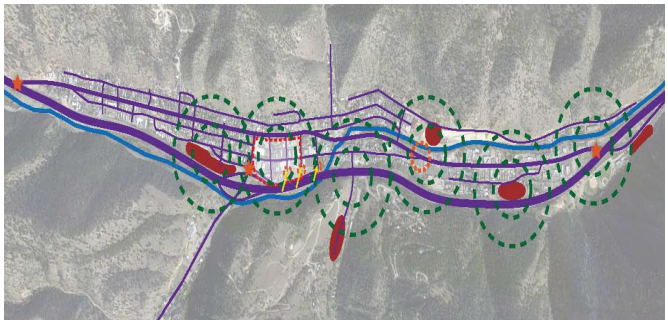
- Survey businesses for needed training and skills enhancement
    - Partner w/SBDC, CMC, OED, County EDC, DOLA Main Street
- Create ambassador program to contact businesses regularly
- Create a guide to opening a business
    - Demographic profile (action step from Vision Plan)
    - Incentives (Revolving loan, historic tax credits)
    - Building inventory
- Utilize a Point of sale survey that tracks zip codes over a period of time, to understand customers by seasons, etc.
- Work towards diversifying economy as possible including the idea of location-neutral businesses, craft and creative products, clothing, and other items currently not available.

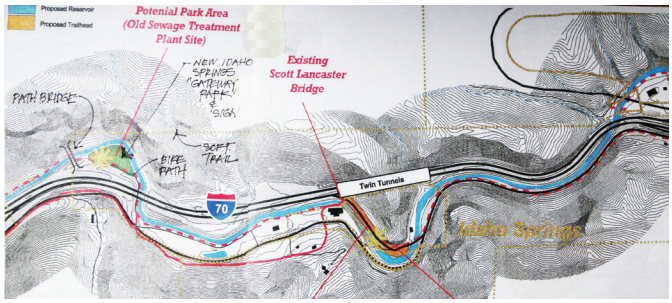
Design

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in downtown by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality and to expedite improvements in the downtown.

Observation: The east and west sides of the city are separated physically, visually, and conceptually. There are no sidewalks connecting the two sides of town and the business owners of the east side of Idaho Springs feel disconnected from the historic downtown.

Recommendations:
Strengthen the assets that both sides of the city offer by connecting them with signage, landscaping and multi-modal improvements. The following steps should be taken to unify the east and west sides of the city:



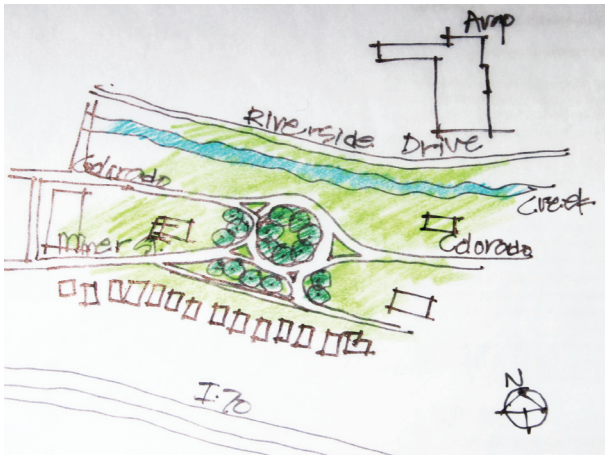


See larger scale map in appendices.

- Create an east side park at the base of the existing Idaho Springs sign with access from the south side frontage road under the existing bridge. This will provide a much needed pedestrian friendly activity on the east side of town.
- Develop new gateway monument signage at the east, west and SH-103 Interchanges to create a sense of consistency and unity between the east and west sides.
- Move the skate park into more suitable, accessible location with state of the art design and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) participation.
- Install a series of pedestrian and multi-modal transportation improvements for functional connections and pedestrian and biker safety. In addition, consider bike circulation plan for entire city with short term goals of striping available lanes.
- Install pedestrian light poles, banners and banner poles with hanging baskets of flowers, along length of both main commercial districts. In addition, enhance landscaping with a consistent palette of materials selected for seasonal color; provide provisions for maintenance and irrigation.
- Build on the recommendations of the Clear Creek Greenway Plan to optimize the creek as a city-wide amenity including greenway bike path, secondary trails, amenities, visual access, and parking.
- Develop a plan for mixed-use redevelopment of key parcels including a priority for workforce housing. Create guidelines and a framework to shape future development including incentives as appropriate to stimulate redevelopment that reinforces community goals (ie. Housing and creek- side development; riverwalk concept, and access.)
- Consider building community connections along Miner Street and Colorado Boulevard.
- Enhance landscaping with a consistent

palette of materials selected for seasonal color; provide provisions for maintenance and irrigation.

- Improve Riverside Drive as a multi-modal corridor to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles with additional parking along the street edge. Include river access trails and amenity nodes where space exists and cooperate with adjacent landowners such as the Arco Mine to achieve common goals.



- Restart initiative to complete the Colorado Boulevard improvements. Consider reprioritizing east end to be sure that Idaho Springs is ready to support the east side when the money and initiative from CDOT present themselves.

Observation: It is challenging to find parking at peak times.

Recommendations:
Address the need for additional parking by adopting short-term remedies.

- Identify separate parking areas to support car-pooling to ski areas, bicyclists taking day trips, and other longer term parking needs. Once the recreational parking has been established, develop parking maps and communication methods so that it is clear who should park where. The main parking lot should also be set on a 2-3 hour limit to limit its' use as a long-term/overnight lot.
- Coordinate with rafting companies and designate parking, put-in, take-out areas, and coordinate with fishing and other user groups.
- Review some suggested sites for additional parking that might be acquired and utilized. (ex: the skate park's current location and the ball field.)
- Evaluate existing street configurations for potential additional on-street spaces.
- Evaluate potential for structured parking in close proximity to downtown
- Explore adding parking in ball field area including leasing or purchase of vacant land to the west; for example, 2 benched areas; would require relocation of a portion of bike path and south ROW fence to accommodate access.
- Consider how circulation and one-ways affect your downtown (east and west) and how signage will impact these components. Many communities are moving away from one-way couplets, and while this report does not recommend that, it is something to consider as an option in Idaho Springs downtown.

Observation: The image from I-70 and does not convey the history and depth of character of the community.

Recommendations:
Formalize the Pedestrian Mall to portray a sense of vibrancy that can be seen from I-70 to attract passersby. This should be accomplished by:

- Cleaning up and restoring landscaping including provision for adequate maintenance;
- Undergrounding utilities;
- Adding pedestrian furnishings, planters, enhanced lighting to west of parking lots;
- Explore Historic Preservation funds for back of building façade improvements and encourage outdoor dining where possible along the length of the mall, explore rooftop dining options; and,
- Consider a steel frame-fabric canopy structure at intersection of 15th, 16th, and 17th over Pedestrian Mall. Include Tivoli lighting, colorful banners, etc., to identify primary pedestrian entrances into retail core.

Before

After

Observation: The local residents feel less than engaged and informed with community initiatives.

Recommendations:
Improve community involvement by enlisting the services of locals to support the revitalization efforts.

- Have local artists design bulletin boards to post at three venues throughout the city.
- Have a competition for local students to design a website for the city to host all events and information.

Signage

A good way-finding system will help all visitors and residents in the district, including passers through from the highway, to save valuable time, reduce stress, and encourage shopping and interaction in Idaho Springs, and can reduce congestion and "circling" for parking. By applying the known information about your commercial district placement to some accepted principles for way-finding, sign requirements and unique characteristics become easily identified. The goal for signage and way-finding is to provide you with a range of integrated sign options able to promote your identity, while meeting community needs for functionality, quality, legibility and aesthetics.

Observation: The existing signage plan has not been fully implemented and the east and west commercial districts are not properly signed. Thru traffic does not have a clear wayfinding system to follow. This creates frustration and visitors are unaware of the services that Idaho Springs provides.

Recommendations:

- Implement the existing plan for signage.
- Coordinate with county, CDOT, and other regional signage plans.

Team Member Bios

Troy Bernberg
Stifel Nicolaus
Mr. Bernberg is a 10-year veteran in municipal finance with Stifel Nicolaus. Since 2005, Mr. Bernberg has completed over $623 million in municipal financings for various governmental borrowers. Mr. Bernberg provides a wide range of investment banking services including capital planning and structuring of tax-exempt and taxable bonds for new money projects and refundings. Mr. Bernberg's expertise includes all financing options available to issuers - general obligation bonds, enterprise/project revenue bonds, sales and use/excise tax revenue bonds and certificates of participation. Mr. Bernberg also develops private placement/direct loan transactions on behalf of his clients.

Clay Brown
Regional Manager, Colorado Department of Local Affairs
Clay Brown has been the Regional Manager for the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for the central region of the state since 2002. Prior to joining DOLA, Mr. Brown spent 25 years in municipal government in Colorado municipalities. With a strong background in public works and city management, Mr. Brown provides technical and financial assistance to eight counties along the Colorado Front Range. Mr. Brown is a graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder and lives in Evergreen, Colorado.

Katherine Correll
Executive Director, Downtown Colorado, Inc.
Katherine joined Downtown Colorado, Inc. in 2006 and has served as the Executive Director since 2007. Under Katherine's direction the organization has restructured the Colorado Main Street state coordinating program for economic development through historic preservation and created the Development & Improvement District (DIDs) program to support urban renewal, downtown development authorities, and business improvement districts. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Katherine has worked on organizational development and program management including building viable and sustainable private, public, and non-for-profit institutions and programs. Prior to her current position, Katherine managed the American Councils' portfolio for the Republic of Moldova, focusing on building civil society initiatives, education, and public administration reforms, and managing a American Language Center, language and professional training school. Katherine received her Master's Degree in Public Administration from Rutgers University and her Bachelor's Degree in Politics with a Minor in Urban Studies from New York University.

Marc Cittone
Main Street Specialist, Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)
Marc Cittone, AICP joined the Colorado Department of Local Affairs as a Main Street Specialist in May 2011. Prior to this position, Marc served as historic preservation planner and worked on downtown revitalization and land use planning issues for the City of Loveland, Colorado. Marc managed several rehabilitation grants for housing, commercial and heritage tourism sites; managed a downtown zoning update process; oversaw downtown market and parking assessments; and supported various land use planning projects. Marc has also worked in affordable housing and in open space outreach for the City of Boulder.

Stephanie Troller
Community Development Specialist , Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)
Stephanie Troller is a Community Development Specialist with the Community Development Office focusing on economic development and the Colorado Main Street Program. Stephanie worked for the Department of Local Affairs for three years in the Division of Housing before joining the CDO team. Stephanie came from New Mexico where she has over seven years of experience working in community and economic development, working

with rural communities, business retention and recruitment, and community outreach. She holds her BA in International Business.

Michael Hussey,
Manager of Planning and Design, Nolte Vertical 5
Michael Hussey is the manager of planning and landscape architecture for the Colorado Springs office of Nolte Associates, Inc. Michael has over 30 years of experience in a wide variety of urban design, landscape, planning, environmental engineering, and architectural projects. He has worked on urban development and renewal, and downtown streetscape improvement projects including Billings, Montana (downtown), Raton, New Mexico (downtown Master Plan), Colorado Springs (Downtown BID), Avon (Town Center), Manitou Avenue (Manitou Springs downtown), Monte Vista (downtown), Broomfield (US 287), and Fountain (US 85). Project responsibilities have included grant opportunity identification and application, master planning, urban and site design, and construction observation and management. Michael has participated in numerous DCI/CCRA workshops and conference programs, and has served as a team member on several Community Revitalization Program (CRP) visits. Michael is also the co-author of "Grow Native," one of the earliest Colorado xeriscape landscape guides, and has worked on a number of award winning projects – including the Colorado Springs Downtown Business Improvement District and Manitou Avenue Revitalization.

Richard Marshall
Nolte Vertical 5
Richard Marshall provides Program Management services for streetscape and urban design improvement projects in NV5's Denver Office. Dick recently managed NV5's work on the successfully completed Capital Improvements Program for the Cherry Creek North Business Improvement District, a 16 block area within the Cherry Creek neighborhood in southeast Denver.
Prior to joining NV5, Dick was a founding principal of a planning and design firm in historic Downtown Denver where he practiced for over 35 years. In addition to planning for new real estate development and urban design, Dick focused on the firm's resort planning projects in Beaver Creek, Silverthorne, and Winter Park, CO.
Dick was instrumental in the successful improvements to many pedestrian friendly streets in Downtown Denver through the implementation of Streetscape Guidelines for Denver and capital improvements in Lower Downtown. Dick received a Downtown Denver Partnership Award for his leadership of the new 14th "Ambassador Street" Initiative and for his participation on the 16th Street Mall Steering Committee and the Denver Partnership's Transportation and Development Council.
Dick received his degree in Landscape Architecture from Kansas State University. He was awarded the distinction of Fellowship in the American Society of Landscape Architecture and is a Registered Landscape Architect in Colorado.

Basil Ryer
Golden Urban Renewal Authority
Before returning to graduate school, Basil worked in the medical field. He worked in a range of settings that included assisting an orthopedic surgeon in the operating room, running the surgeon's practice, and selling medical equipment. As a sales representative, he was awarded the company's "New Frontier Award" as the top new sales rep.
In 2008, Basil returned to graduate school at the University of Colorado-Denver where he completed Master's degrees in Urban Design and Landscape Architecture. While completing his degrees, Basil was a teaching assistant at both the Boulder and Denver campus. He is passionate about promoting healthy and engaged communities, reshaping our transporation systems, and encouraging ecological design. He is currently interning at Golden Urban Renewal Authoity. Basil and his wife Megan recently welcomed the arrival of their first child, Trey.

Report Structure and Four Point Approach

This report is structured based on a loose interpretation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Approach. The Colorado Main Street Program (CMSP) is designed to revitalize traditional downtown districts within the context of historic preservation. The program uses an approach that advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of central business districts based on their traditional assets of unique architecture, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community. This methodology addresses the following four areas and combines activities in these areas to develop a community's individual strategy for strengthening and redeveloping its central business district. See the appendices to gain a better understanding of the four points and the structure of this report. The four points are:

(1) Management & Organization – Establishing consensus and cooperation by building effective partnerships among all downtown stakeholders. The Main Street Approach to central business district revitalization requires the effort of the entire community. The merchants, property owners, local government officials, and civic leaders must agree to support common goals for revitalization and join together in a partnership. Successful Main Street programs are usually structured as nonprofits guided by an active working board. The board generally creates four standing committees (design, organization, economic restructuring and promotion) that will develop projects and work plans for implementation. Local programs hire a paid program manager to coordinate the efforts of volunteers in implementing the program.

(2) Marketing & Promotion – Creating and marketing a positive image based on the unique attributes of the downtown. The promotion of the central business district as a single, unified commercial area – in much the same way that a major shopping mall is promoted – will help attract customers and strengthen Main Street's role as a viable business center. The Main Street organization can coordinate an aggressive promotion and marketing campaign that includes a program of special events, retail promotions, image promotion and on-going public relations.

(3) Design – Enhancing the unique visual quality of downtown by addressing all design elements to create an appealing environment. Good design is essential to all aspects of downtown revitalization. The Main Street design philosophy is rooted in historic preservation and seeks to use and enhance those elements of quality design which remain in our communities. Neglect and misguided improvements may have taken a toll on the appearance of downtown, affecting its perceived economic potential. Rehabilitated facades and creative merchandising displays, appropriate landscaping and public improvements, and the rehabilitation of existing building spaces and the addition of appropriate new spaces are all part of downtown's long-lasting visual appeal and a well-functioning physical environment.

(4) Economic Development – Strengthening downtown's existing economic assets and fulfilling its broadest market potential. To become competitive, downtown must reposition itself. With a thorough understanding of today's market, the downtown business district can develop strategies to enhance the competitiveness of existing merchants, recruit new businesses, create new anchors and convert unused space into new uses.