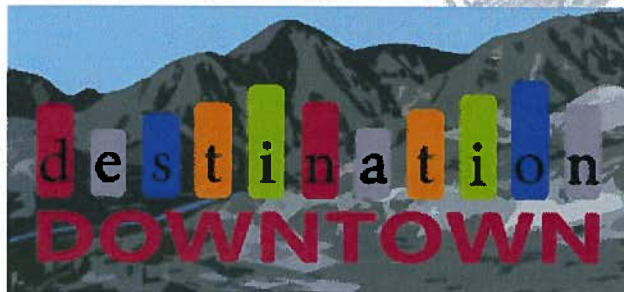


a  
great  
place  
to  
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# DOWNTOWN CAÑON CITY STRATEGIC PLAN

April 2012

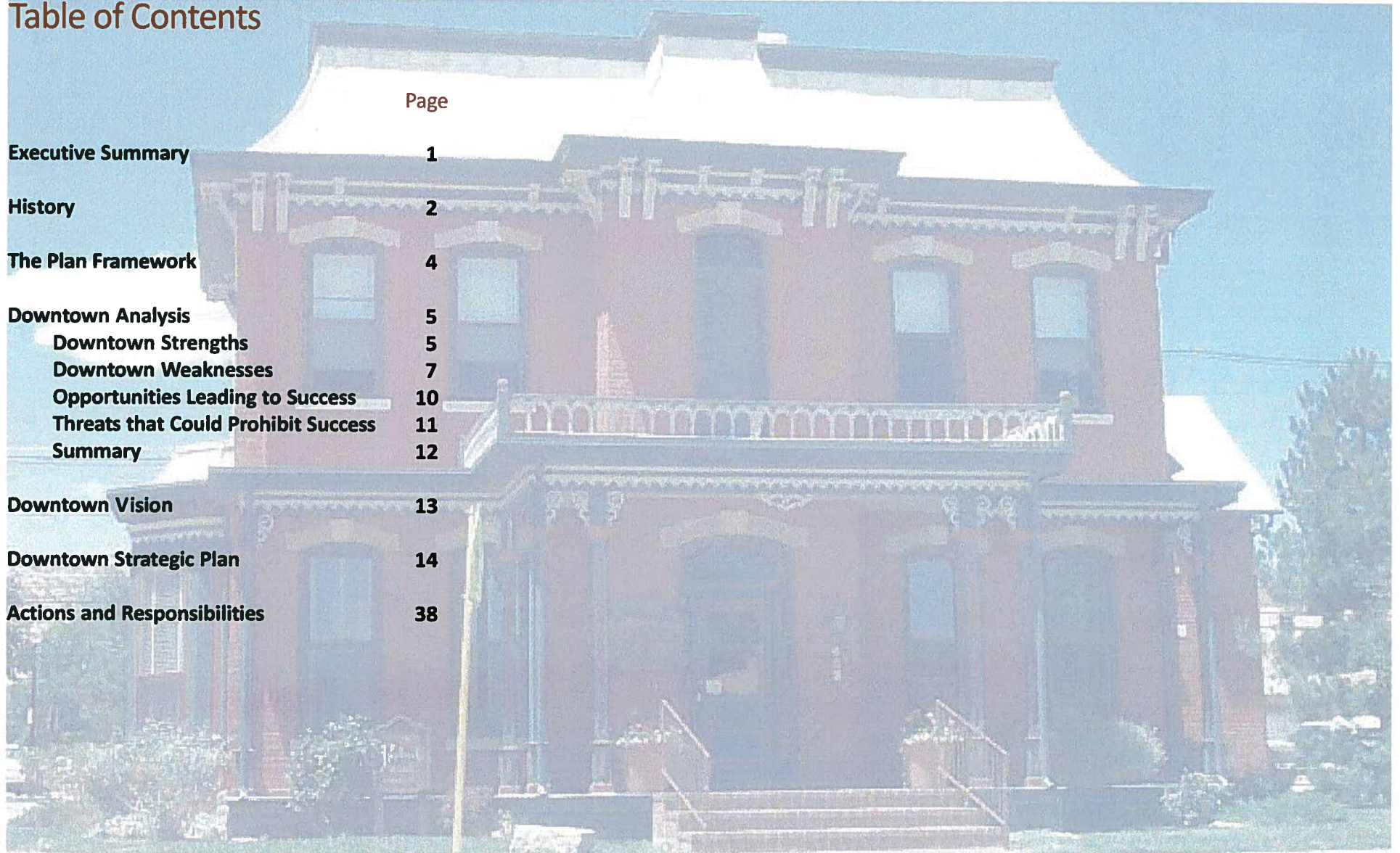
# re-vi-tal-ize

- verb

1. to give new life and vigor to

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown Cañon City's success is essential to the success of the entire community. Citizens have stated historically that a viable Downtown is important. The economic development and health of the entire community has been linked to the health and vitality of Downtown. While some growth has occurred on the fringes of the community, particularly to the east, Downtown continues to represent the emotional center of the community. It appears that a thriving downtown remains a precondition to the overall health and attractiveness of this community.

Over the last decade, there have been significant changes Downtown. While there has been some investment there, disinvestment also has occurred. There are a number of vacant storefronts. The upper stories of many buildings are vacant and in too many cases falling into disrepair. While there have been several Downtown planning efforts over time, a specific long-range plan for the revitalization of Downtown has not materialized. There remains nothing for people to look at and say "That is what we want."

In 2011 a group of Downtown merchants and property owners decided to act. They agreed that action must be taken now to reverse the recent trends Downtown. They concluded that simple action would not be sufficient. The steps that would be required must be bold and aggressive, addressing Downtown issues on many fronts. Simply making Downtown look nice would not be enough. The Downtown group grew in numbers as many more recognized that the time to do something was now. With their guidance, a new vision developed.

The Downtown Strategic Plan creates an overall vision for the future. Unfortunately, the desired outcomes will not occur overnight. The Plan recognizes that success will be achieved through well planned actions, through leadership and commitment, and through community support. The result – there are now NINE general strategies that will guide the revitalization of Downtown Cañon City. Equally important, everyone, from public officials, to residents, to property owners, to business owners can point to one vision and say, "This is what we want."

### The nine overall strategies are:

- Improve the overall image and identity of Downtown
- Celebrate the community's cultural heritage Downtown
- Promote the arts, celebrations and public gatherings as sources of community pride that are accessible and enjoyed by persons of all ages, and which attract activity into Downtown
- Improve the vitality and life of the public realm Downtown
- Seek new economic development activities that will help strengthen existing businesses and attract new businesses Downtown.
- Rehabilitate and use a variety of existing resources to promote a quality living environment and to increase economic activity Downtown
- Promote the redevelopment of strategic properties to enhance Downtown
- Improve connectivity between Downtown and other community activities and amenities
- Establish organizational and financial structures necessary to carry out the plan and nurture the leadership that will be necessary to sustain the effort long-term

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***The 2012 Downtown  
Cañon City Strategic  
Plan allows everyone,  
from public officials  
to residents to property  
owners to business  
owners to point to one  
vision and say "THIS  
IS WHAT WE WANT."***

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## HISTORY

Following the discovery of gold along the Front Range in 1858, prospectors fanned out across the region seeking mineral riches and establishing townsites along the way. In 1860, a large party of town developers laid out the new town of Cañon City. An early historian noted that the group seemed to lose interest after some meager efforts to attract attention to the settlement, appearing to feel "we've struck it, and if you are so obtuse as not to see it, we pity you."

Fortunately some did recognize the importance of the location of the townsite in relation to the mining camps. Cañon City was the last settlement that loaded freight wagons from the plains could reach. Its status as a supply center and its favorable winter climate prevented it from succumbing to indifference. During the winter of 1860 and the

spring of 1861, the place was described as booming. But as the Civil War took place, this community was affected. The town company abandoned the site. One person, Anson Rudd stayed during the period of desertion because he reportedly had not money to leave. "An oppressive silence hung over the once busy town like the gloom of a pall."

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*We've struck it,  
and if you are so  
obtuse as not to  
see it, we pity you."*

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*Early Historian on the future  
of the townsite*

In the fall of 1864 about 20 families from the Midwest arrived, stimulating new hopes for the community's survival. The new residents became known as "the resurrectionists" for reinvigorating the community. In 1868, Cañon city secured the construction of the state penitentiary. It was stipulated that a prison location not more than one-half mile from the center of town would be provided for the facility. The knowledge that the community had secured this important institution greatly improved the town's prospects and resulted in an upturn in construction of homes, businesses and churches. By 1868, it was reported that "there were a variety of the finest stone buildings in the

area. The penitentiary was described as "a most admirable one and one which cannot be bettered – one of the most perfect and convenient buildings of the kind ever constructed.

As growth resumed in the 1870s, town leaders began to envision a tourist industry. The Arkansas River Canyon was advertised to help lure visitors. The town was described as a good outfitting post for those desiring to camp out and explore the natural setting. Attractions advertised also included the coal banks, marble caves, oil wells, fossil beds, scenery along Grape Creek and the Grand Cañon as it was called, the nearby healing springs and the climate. "There are delicious health-giving soda springs one-half mile from the hotels that are never without visitors at any hour of the day."

The west end of Main Street was the focus of early commercial activity. One of the tallest buildings on Main Street housed a saloon and billiard hall. The building was described as the only first class resort in the city, with the choicest wines, liquors, and cigars always on sale. The saloon was the "chief drinking establishment in town." By outside stairs the upper part of the building was reached and it was used for the town hall, court house, lecture room, concert room, theater, church and social festivities. The building continued to be used as a saloon until the town went dry in 1916.

By the early 1870s community residents felt that a first class hotel was needed to continue to grow and prosper. A local businessman was convinced to finance the construction. The hotel opened with an orchestra entertaining guests, who dined on wild game and other delicacies. The building was termed "one of a kind," with its fine dining and 66 guest rooms. It was considered a first class resort for invalids, tourists, and pleasure seekers.

Downtown of the 1870s was success. Main Street was lined with one, two and three story buildings. Its streets presented a decidedly business

like appearance, being thronged constantly with people and wagons. Its hotel overflowed, with many having to seek accommodations in private homes. In the 1880s, infrastructure improvements were made and the commercial district expanded to the east. "Now we find nearly all of the old eye sores in the shape of shanties have given way to substantial brick and stone edifices, both for business and residence purposes." In 1883, the Denver Republican noted that "the buildings are composed of brick and stone in larger proportions than in any other town in the state."

In 1886, the Hotel St. Cloud, previously built in the booming mining town of Silver Cliff, was disassembled and moved to its location Downtown after the mining boom faded and Silver Cliff became deserted. The hotel



Shop at 521 Main Street, circa 1903

was completely taken apart, piece by piece, and transported via horse drawn wagons. The hotel was advertised as the health seeker's resort.

The turn-of-the-century marked the greatest period of construction Downtown. Many new buildings were constructed and businesses opened. Retail shops, fraternal lodges, a hospital, an "up-to-date" post office, and a new library, to name a few, marked the growth and success of Downtown. In 1905 penitentiary inmates began construction on

Skyline Drive, another attraction for tourists. A movie studio operated Downtown, employing future stars like Tom Mix, Myrtle Stedman, and Bill Duncan. There were few vacancies along Main Street.

By 1920, the population of Cañon City had declined for the first time since the 1860s. In response, local leaders sought to attract diversified businesses by promoting undeveloped resources. The community's location for industry, health, and recreation was described as "unsurpassed."

Downtown continued to experience some ups and downs during the depression and war years. By the 1960s it was growing again. Local banks produced some significant effects Downtown and urban "redevelopment" occurred. Two new buildings were designed and constructed in a more modern style, quite a contrast to the Victorian style that was predominate Downtown. The city's 87 year old opera house was razed to create more public parking. It was one of the few historic buildings lost along Main Street.

In the early 1980s, the construction of new commercial buildings along Royal Gorge Boulevard worried Downtown business owners. Merchants felt that it was time to reinvent Main Street to continue to attract customers. Workshops were held to study Downtown, examining the concept of a covered mall and closing the street to vehicular traffic. These ideas were not adopted. Business owners wanted to preserve the historic character of Downtown and, as a result, the Downtown Historic District was created.

In 2012, Downtown merchants and property owners are experiencing the benefits of many previous decisions and efforts that created Downtown. While it has changed over the years, Downtown still faces some of the same challenges that have existed throughout its history. What does it take to achieve and maintain success? While citizens and business owners throughout the community might wonder about focusing efforts and resources Downtown, most people agree that a successful Downtown is crucial to maintaining the desired quality of life for the entire community. City officials and community leaders also recognize the importance of planning for the continued vitality of the downtown core and the surrounding neighborhood. What is generally lacking is an action plan defining specific steps and the financial and organizational mechanisms for translating laudable goals into concrete results. That is the purpose of this Strategic Plan. It intends to be the roadmap to the future – an active, vibrant, and sustainable Downtown Cañon City.

Source: Historic Buildings Survey of Downtown Cañon City, Colorado, 2004-05, Front Range Research Associates, Inc.



*Main Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets, circa 1870*

# THE PLAN FRAMEWORK

Most believe that the downtown area must continue to play a vital role in the future if Cañon City is to maintain its unique identity and economic health. This means that any kind of decline Downtown is unacceptable; it must grow and improve. Therefore, the initial questions that must be answered are, "What is the future purpose of Downtown?" and "What steps and commitments will be necessary to ensure that it can fulfill its vital role sustainably for generations to come?"

In 2001, the Comprehensive Plan described the importance of a successful downtown:

- A thriving downtown is a good recruitment tool for industry.
- Downtown enhancement stimulates the economy and adds jobs.
- Economically, everyone benefits from a healthy downtown.
- A viable downtown infrastructure is essential to economic development in the whole area.
- A better downtown can increase tourism.

The Comprehensive Plan also stated that a community's downtown is the barometer of its overall quality of life. It pointed out that area-wide and local Chamber of Commerce executives, economic development specialists, and industrial recruiters have found, time and again, that projects are often won or lost based on one single criterion - the condition and economic health of a community's downtown. Employers have found that a revitalized downtown significantly increases their ability to attract and retain high quality employees, whether or not the business is located downtown, and thereby minimizing turnover and associated personnel costs. In addition to these statements in the 2001 Plan, most quality of life indicators now suggest that shopping, entertainment, cultural and recreation choices, a diversity of affordable housing types, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods are the keys to success. For many reasons, then, the type and quality of amenities available, together with the living environment that exists in and around Downtown, affects the quality of life of the entire community.

As originally suggested in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, a Strategic Downtown Development Plan should be developed for Downtown Cañon City that addresses: 1) necessary physical redevelopment of land and buildings that will best support a viable commercial center for the future; 2) business development; 3) marketing organization, programming and action that will be required to achieve and maintain a vital and economically healthy Downtown; 4) traffic and pedestrian infrastructure

that is necessary to support the desired level of activity and attraction Downtown; 5) preservation of the historic character and cultural heritage exemplified Downtown that are the foundations of Cañon City; and 6) the urban design elements that will be required to enhance the experience of Downtown. To date this has not occurred.

A strategic plan is, in general, a process for:

1. Clarifying the **purpose** of an organization or community;
2. Determining where the organization or community desires to be over the course of future years (**vision or outcome**);
3. Selecting those policies and actions to be carried out to achieve the desired outcomes (**action plan**); and
4. Establishing timelines and indicators or measurements of success to be used to determine whether the desired outcomes are achieved (**results**).

Based on this definition, the strategic plan must establish the purpose and long-term vision of Downtown. Once this vision is understood, accepted and supported, a strategic plan can then address the physical redevelopment, business development and so on. As a precursor to the strategic plan, it is important that all parties involved Downtown take inventory of its **STRENGTHS**, **WEAKNESSES**, and **OPPORTUNITIES**. Equally important, there must be a clear understanding of the **THREATS** to success.

Once the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities are understood, a framework plan can be established. Policies and actions must then be created to carry out the vision. For each action, an organization responsible for implementing the action and possible funding tools also must be identified. Every action must have a timeline and priority assigned to help guide their implementation, as well as a measurable benchmark so success can be tracked. The intent is to establish responsibilities and commitments to the overall plan.

The timelines will range from immediate or 1 to 2 years, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years and 10 or more years based on several factors:

- The ability of an action to generate interest and create success and to set the stage for subsequent actions.
- Opportunities to pursue the actions that are likely to be available at certain points in time.
- The potential cost and the likelihood that funds will be available to carryout the action.

- Some actions may have a longer or continuing time horizon.

The priorities (High, Medium, or Low) are based on a combination of input from Downtown merchants and property owners, the public, technical review, and consideration of those actions that have the most immediate potential to help achieve the goals, with the understanding that these priorities could change over time as opportunities arise and conditions change. To understand this, annual monitoring and reporting of progress of all involved in the implementation of this plan must occur.

# DOWNTOWN ANALYSIS

The aim of this analysis of Downtown strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) is to identify the key factors that are important to achieving success. This analysis groups information into two main categories:

- ❑ Internal factors – The *strengths* and *weaknesses* internal to the Downtown.
- ❑ External factors – The *opportunities* and *threats* presented by the external environment

The intent of this analysis is to help the Downtown carve a sustainable niche and economic and financial success. It also intends to help this effort eliminate any threats that would otherwise stop or slow the progress.

With respect to its strengths, we must ask, among other things:

1. What advantages exist?
2. What can Downtown do better than other parts of the community or other Downtowns?
3. What do others outside Downtown see as its advantages?
4. What makes Downtown Cañon City unique?

Weaknesses to be considered:

1. What could we improve?
2. What do other parts of the community or other locations do better than we do Downtown?
3. What problems or conditions exist that, if not addressed, could become serious threats to the future success of Downtown?
4. Are there existing factors or conditions that cause people to go elsewhere for goods and services?

Opportunities should consider:

1. Are there interesting trends (economically, socially, technologically, or otherwise) that might favor the Downtown location?
2. Is it possible to capitalize on available resources in a way that will produce success?
3. Are there local events and activities that can be enhanced or built upon to achieve a higher level of success?

Threats are:

1. What obstacles exist Downtown?
2. What are Downtown's competitors doing?
3. Are there political, organizational or financial problems, that, if not overcome, will make success difficult, if not impossible, to achieve?

## DOWNTOWN STRENGTHS

### 1. Historical Character

One of the greatest strengths of Downtown is what many claim to be one of the finest architectural examples typical of the late 1800s. Unlike many communities that have replaced Downtown historic structures with parking lots or modern structures, the original downtown area in Cañon City remains almost completely intact. The downtown commercial area was recognized as a National Register Historic District in 1984. There are approximately 80 structures along seven blocks of Main Street that are included in the District, with about one-half of those being unaltered historic buildings.

Beyond the Historic District, a number of other structures nearby, such as the State Armory, the historic Santa Fe Railroad depot, the old Post Office, and United Presbyterian Church are also on the Historic Register. Immediately north of Downtown is the Old Cañon City neighborhood that contains dozens of beautiful Queen Anne and Craftsman style homes.

In addition to the buildings, there is a colorful history that complements the architecture of Downtown. Many people and stories make this area's unique and interesting history. Among many others, they range from the native Americans that lived here, the early pioneers that investigated and traveled through this area, the railroad and mining period that created a community, the agricultural and supply center for the mining industry, the people who settled and grew the community, the prison labor that helped to forge the infrastructure and building materials that can still be seen Downtown, the contradictory "town of Christians," the health seekers, and so much more. Many communities can only wish for such stories. This cultural heritage should be a source of community pride. Yet it appears

that even many local residents may have only a vague awareness of it; visitors probably have none. When "presented properly" it should be a strong attraction and a fundamental building-block of a growth and economic development strategy.

### 2. Strong Core of Commercial Businesses

Downtown is a multi-functional marketplace. There are a significant number of strong retail and commercial service businesses Downtown. The mix includes a number of fine restaurants and specialty shops. There are also more marginal commercial uses found Downtown. While business activity occurs along Main Street from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to 9<sup>th</sup> Street, the hub of activity is between 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, where there is a strong concentration upon which business growth and development can occur. While there are other strong and viable businesses along Main Street beyond the core, many are commercial service in nature with fewer specialty and retail shopping outside the core area. The foundation provided by the core area should be a basis for expansion and growth.

### 3. Small Town Friendly

It is true that the community, while home to some 16,000 persons, continues to have a small town feel. The community is viewed as "authentic" and Downtown is its heart. There is a sense of comfort. People know and help each other. Authenticity is a major selling point and it should be a focus of an economic revitalization strategy.

Downtown symbolizes this small town friendly attitude. Such an attitude must be presented to each visitor and customer whenever contact is made in the Downtown area. Every Downtown stakeholder must be aware and maintain this attitude, as it will be one of the many keys to success.

### 4. Affordability

This community and Downtown are considered to be, in comparison to its surroundings, a very affordable place. This is a significant "quality of life" indicator. Retail and service businesses do not charge the higher prices found in nearby cities or in mountain tourist destinations. This is a feature that should be attractive to day-visitors and destination tourists. It also is a



CAÑON CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

feature that will attract new residents. It should not be lost, as it will be one of the keys to our future success.

## 5. Walkability

Downtown is a “walkable experience” – one that will ultimately sell Downtown to locals and visitors alike. Stores and existing and future amenities can be concentrated in a relatively confined area. Excellent systems of sidewalks and features have been provided to accommodate people of all ages and abilities. The Main Street streetscape has been substantially upgraded, involving significant community investment that sets the stage for further growth and interest in Downtown. The immediate neighborhood north of Downtown also is easily accessible. It is important to understand that the ability to walk from place to place is not sufficient, however. The pedestrian environment must be animated and lively.

## 6. Proximity to the River, Community Parks, and the River Trail

Near Downtown are several significant amenities that can attract residents and visitors alike. The Arkansas River, with all of its recreational potential, flows immediately south of Downtown. There are two major quality parks adjacent to the river – Veterans Park and Centennial Park. While these amenities have the potential to be a great boost to Downtown, there is now a significant barrier to them, that being Highway 50.

## 7. Gateway to Mountain Tourism and Recreation

Downtown is located one block from Highway 50. Many tourists use this route to gain access to the mountains and recreational and vacation experiences. Some 23,000 vehicle trips per day occur on this highway at 9th Street; about 16,000 trip per day occur between 4th and 5th Streets; and about 11,00 trips occur west of 1st Street.

Nearby recreational opportunities are both passive and active for all ages, including rafting, kayaking, fishing, boating, rock climbing, road and mountain bicycling, zip-line adventures, hiking, camping, and the scenic Skyline Drive. The Royal Gorge Bridge and Park includes the bridge, spectacular views, hiking trails, the Skycoaster ride, the Incline Railway, Aerial Tram, Mountain Man Encampment, wildlife park, and petting zoo. The Royal Gorge Route Railroad allows tourists access to the Royal Gorge. Sightseeing is popular in this area. There are many other activities as well. Thus, Downtown should be the heart of the

“Gateway to the Mountains.” The highway traffic should be a plus, but two questions must be asked. Are we taking full advantage of the highway traffic? Do we cater effectively to the potential visitor market, or does our approach focus largely on a local population?

## 8. Special Events

There are numerous special events hosted throughout the year, with a particular concentration of these events occurring during the summer months. While the events occur in various locations throughout the community, many occur Downtown. The fact that there are so many interesting events adds vitality to Downtown. It is important that this continue in the future. However, do these wonderful events attract primarily a local population, or can they be made attractive to, and known by, a broader population base in a way that contributes to the economic success of Downtown?

# DOWNTOWN WEAKNESSES

## 1. Underutilization and Need for Rehabilitation

The downtown area is currently underutilized and can support higher use. This includes both ground floor and second floor space. A recent visual survey shows that there is a significant amount of the total floor area Downtown that is not occupied. One of the most significant reasons for this is that the buildings Downtown are old and aging. Many have been improved over time while others have not received the same level of care. A number of structures, or portions thereof, are in need of significant investment to restore them to usable condition. There may be opportunities that can come from certain vacancies. It is likely that the physical resources are available to accommodate key uses such as a conference and convention facility, catering to smaller groups, which can be supported by the existing and potential level of Downtown amenities and infrastructure. Existing structures may accommodate a community and recreation center. However, it will require considerable effort to turn the space vacancies from a weakness into an opportunity.

There remain significant barriers and disincentives that inhibit the restoration and redevelopment of Downtown structures – both real and perceived. These include difficulty in assembling sites; comparatively high land costs; the presence of building materials now considered hazardous, including asbestos, that require

expensive removal or mitigation; structural and accessibility problems; and existing infrastructure that needs to be repaired, upgraded or replaced. Many times commercial and residential developers prefer to build on vacant ground near the City’s edge. This preference is often less a product of market demand than costs and opportunities. In recent years, significant commercial investment has occurred along the Highway 50 corridor, where development costs are typically less and traffic passes directly in front of the business.

To achieve success Downtown, there must be a complete understanding of the issues associated with rehabilitating and redeveloping properties Downtown. Significant efforts must be made to both encourage and, when necessary, provide appropriate incentives and means for rehabilitation and redevelopment to go forward. However, it is not simply creating a regulatory and financial environment that promotes rehabilitation and redevelopment. There must be a reason for people to want to visit and/or live there. Assuming these matters can be addressed, the building stock does offer significant potential.

## 2. Lack of Identification

The overall character of the Highway 50 corridor between 1st Street and 9th Street is not consistent with a traditional downtown, but rather, it is similar to the strip commercial development farther east. With the exception of several improvements like Veterans Park, the historic Peabody Mansion, the old fire station/Dinosaur Depot, the Le Petit Chablis Restaurant and Bakery and a few other establishments, the character of this section of the highway corridor is dictated by large building setbacks, large unlandscaped parking lots between the road and buildings and frequent curb cuts. There is little or no distinction in land use, building typologies, streetscape qualities, or architectural icons that leads a motorist to detect Downtown one block away.

Creating a “front door” to Downtown at the highway is a significant challenge. A front door is more than a sign with an arrow. Moreover, replicating Downtown storefronts along the highway corridor may cause the motorist to believe that the highway is Main Street. Therefore, the effort must be to create a change of character; simplify the visual clutter; slow traffic to allow the motorist the opportunity to discern the significance of buildings and other features that identify Downtown. It must be



A number of vacant buildings or buildings with partial vacancies can be found downtown. While there do not appear to be buildings boarded up, which is a positive aspect of the building inventory, some are in need of various levels of repair and rehabilitation before such spaces can be occupied. Only a few of the vacant spaces are suitable for occupancy and awaiting new tenants.

## DOWNTOWN VACANT SPACE ANALYSIS

an overall experience and perception that one has “arrived.” It requires a vision and commitment on the part of the City, a Downtown organization, and property owners. It will require the Colorado Department of Transportation involvement and buy-in. This may be one of the greatest challenges facing Downtown.

### 3. Highway Traffic Volume and Speed near Downtown

Highway 50 is a primary transportation artery, moving not only local traffic from one side of the city to the other, but also moving a high volume of traffic through the city to destinations beyond. The Colorado Department of Transportation classifies this roadway as a Major Arterial. The designated speed limit is 30 miles per hour. However, traffic speeds through that section adjacent to Downtown are sufficiently high that it is easy for traffic to miss the Downtown.

In addition to the lack of differentiation in land use and building characteristics, there is a substantial amount of so-called “visual clutter” along the highway corridor. In this case clutter simply means that, at higher rates of speed, there are many things for a motorist to perceive. When this situation occurs, a directional sign offering information about the location of Downtown can become lost in the information overload and prove to be ineffective - adding to the mix rather than standing out from it.

While it may not be necessary to stop traffic, creating a change of character and slowing traffic sufficiently in the vicinity of Downtown, to allow recognition of the significance of the area, will be a challenge – particularly given that CDOT’s objective is simply to move traffic. While stop lights are provided at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street, it is generally believed that, given the overall character of the Highway 50 corridor, these stop lights do not provide the type of traffic calming nor create the Downtown identity required for success.

### 4. Commercial Mix

While there is an existing mix of commercial businesses Downtown, the current mix may not be strong enough to attract a variety and significant number of shoppers and generate return shopper interest. It is primarily specialty retail. There are only a few consumer good shops.

To be competitive, Downtown property owners and merchants must identify those market sectors and commercial mix that can: a) not only survive, but also thrive in a downtown setting; b) retain existing customers and attract new local and sub-regional shoppers and visitors; and c) attract a potential tourist base. Downtown cannot attract a large consumer retail anchor store, nor should it try to do so. Further, the local demographics would not support such a store Downtown. Rather, quality specialty and consumer retailers that are consistent in scale, that build on the existing mix and add to the unique character and experience of Downtown may be most appropriate.

It is critical that the mix of uses and products provided Downtown be made known to local residents and visitors. It appears that even local residents sometimes are not fully aware of what is available Downtown. Efforts must be made to present this information in a simple format for all persons.

*Typical Strip Commercial Character along Highway 50*



Communities that have accomplished these objectives effectively have actually been able to create downtowns that are among the regional tourism venues. Experience has proven that individuals and families will seek out shopping opportunities downtown first when traveling. When their needs cannot be met downtown, they will fall back on the convenient stores located along a major transportation route. This will be a significant challenge for Downtown merchants and property owners. Commitment, organization, marketing, and funding will be required.

5. **Understanding and Commitment to Recreation and Tourism Economy**

Downtown, in some ways, must recreate itself. It may continue to function as a local and specialty shopping area and community center. But to thrive, change will be necessary. The type of change required is not always easy to identify or define. However, to capture the type of growth desired, movement to a stronger local and sub-regional commercial center, with an environment capable of attracting tourists, a community gathering and event center, and the cultural and entertainment hub of the community, must occur. There should be an organized and active revitalization and economic growth agenda Downtown. This will create new roles for both the public and private sectors - roles that they may not be accustomed to or fully understand now. Moreover, change to a "hospitality-based" agenda must also occur. Merchants, property owners, the City, and other involved organizations will need to understand that a friendly attitude, extended hours of operation and other changes will be necessary.

6. **Central Gathering Place**

As noted above, there must be a reason for people to want to be Downtown. Typically, a downtown is where the commercial economic functions of a community occur. People gather there for this purpose. Beyond the economic function, however, a downtown is where civic discussion takes place, where there is close proximity to a variety of goods and services, and where people gather to mark significant events. While many events take place Downtown, people also gather elsewhere for special events, such as Veterans Park or at The Holy Cross Abbey. There is some concern that the community does not have a central gathering place, and it should be re-established Downtown.

The Downtown revitalization strategy program must include marketing efforts that *bring "the community" Downtown for*

*enjoyment and "customers" to Downtown for shopping, dining, and entertainment.* A mixed-use downtown attracts a variety of patrons by being multi-dimensional, since patrons attracted by one particular downtown use often cross over to other uses. Solutions need to be more comprehensive in scope and include considerably more than just design for a new or reduced regulatory framework or investments to make it look nice.

7. **Connectivity**

The historic core of Cañon City is very walkable with a small town character. Yet, during the 2000 community planning process some Stakeholders commented that the downtown core is disconnected from the rest of the community. As noted above, a strength of Downtown is its proximity to the river, a major trail, significant community parks, and several museums. However, the highway does create a significant barrier which has not been overcome. The five lane expanse of pavement, no mid-crossing safety zone for pedestrians, along with the speed and volume of traffic reduces the potential value of this community asset to the growth and development of Downtown. Similarly, while the "old town" neighborhood offers wonderful examples of the community's past and future, there is little information available that connects that area with Downtown.

8. **Formal Organization and Structure**

Downtown does not have either a formal organization or meaningful financial mechanisms that can foster success. The shopping centers of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s provided many benefits to retailers, including planned marketing, maintenance, and recruitment of businesses. For the most part, these are absent Downtown. One of the first steps in the revitalization effort is selection of a single entity, locally supported and broadly representative of Downtown stakeholders, that will initiate and guide growth in the downtown marketplace and act as a mechanism for revitalization and maintenance. Its efforts must include: facilitating the retention and expansion of existing businesses; managing, attracting and clustering appropriate new businesses; coordinating improvement of the physical appearance of public spaces; ensuring a clean and safe environment; stimulating development of vacant/underutilized real estate; spearheading efforts to address parking and traffic problems; and marketing to current and potential customers. Without such an organization, success will be difficult to achieve.

10. **Prison Stigma**

A simple survey of people outside of the community might show that people know about the local prisons and possibly the bridge and gorge, but little else about the community. While the prisons are a significant part of the community, too often they are viewed as a negative. Maybe that does not have to be the case. The prisons, particularly the Territorial Prison as noted above, are an important part of this community's history. They still are an important part of the local economy. Their story should be part of the cultural heritage presentation of the community. Efforts should be made to turn this stigma into a positive advantage. It will take an active effort to accomplish this objective.

## OPPORTUNITIES LEADING TO SUCCESS

1. **Cultural Heritage**

Many communities have designed their downtown growth and revitalization strategies around a theme such as entertainment, housing, sports, or meetings and conventions. Although successful in select markets, many have failed. The same themes have been replicated hundreds of times in hundreds of markets, and still with little or no impact. The problem has been that very few developed their theme around existing community assets. The most prevalent lesson learned by these downtowns has been that successful revitalization themes must be a reflection of the unique and historical character of the local market. This is one of the potential strengths of Cañon City and it should be developed and symbolized Downtown.

2. **Appropriate Commercial and Support Mix Downtown**

The specialty store trend, as experienced in other communities similar in size to Cañon City, argues for greater attention to downtown area design issues such as building appearance and pedestrian environments. Specialty stores, as opposed to general merchandise retailers, are typically more reliant upon a cumulative mix of quality and like-type businesses that create a variety of different spending opportunities. They can prosper when they are in an "attractive pedestrian-oriented environment" conducive to recreational and discretionary shopping by residents and tourists alike.

Specialty retail stores frequently act as very strong anchors, particularly in smaller communities, and especially when targeted to specific audiences. In enhanced downtowns, no longer are department stores or other large retail businesses thought to be essential downtown anchors. Instead, non-traditional anchors are effectively drawing new patrons to downtown. These include uses such as movie theaters, the arts and music, art galleries, brew pubs, coffee houses, museums, community theaters, community and recreation centers, community colleges, farmers' markets, and specialty businesses. What Downtown can provide that a traditional shopping mall cannot achieve is the "environment and experience."

There may be an opportunity to develop a small conference-based activity Downtown. Catering to small groups may be possible here. The amenity base and infrastructure required to attract small groups is either available or should be possible. It is likely that this could develop over time as the necessary supporting infrastructure develops or improves. Moreover, there are now several vacant or underutilized structures Downtown that could be converted to this use. The cultural heritage presentation and evolution of community events and activities will be needed. The evolution to a hospitality-based attitude will be crucial, with restaurants, shops, galleries and similar activities open suitable hours. A central hotel serving conference guests would be desirable. The rehabilitation of the St. Cloud Hotel could provide a unique boutique hotel that could help to support this type of economic activity.

### 3. **Mixed Use and Lifestyle Potential**

Downtown living can offer unique amenities and lifestyle choices. One of the values of this lifestyle option is a greater market potential within walking distance of Downtown businesses. The reason for living in close proximity to Downtown is convenient access to restaurants, stores, downtown jobs, parks and cultural amenities and events. It allows residents to connect and feel a part of the community. The diverse mix of people and events provides a distinct culture and sense of place not available elsewhere.

Several national and local trends point to increasing opportunities for downtown housing. The number of households potentially interested in downtown residences is growing as more young professionals are waiting to start families, families are decreasing in size, and "empty nesters" are looking to "downsize" their households. U.S. Census data shows that in 2000 about 18

percent of this community's population was 65 years of age or older; it is now about 22.5 percent. The current median age of our citizens is about 42, while it is about 34 for the state. Given the convenience of so many activities and amenities, the lifestyle option may become more significant as the costs associated with transportation rise in the future. Equally important, the cost of purchasing and owning a home in Cañon City is extremely attractive, compared to other nearby locations and mountain destinations. In 2009, the estimated median value of a home (including all types) was \$142,000 in Cañon City; it was about \$237,000 for the state. But, as described previously, while downtown living can be attractive for seniors and others, older buildings often present access and other issues that must be overcome.

Downtown, there are opportunities for second story residential use in many of the buildings. Furthermore, immediately adjacent to Downtown, where there are currently small residential structures showing signs of maintenance issues and age, there may be significant redevelopment potential in several selected areas in the future. Identifying key locations in the strategic plan and promoting redevelopment in those areas might encourage developers to tackle more complex projects. The public sector's role should be to provide an environment in which in-fill housing and redevelopment can flourish. Such an environment can be accomplished by mitigating many of the higher costs inherent in developing downtown housing by engaging political support, initiating regulatory changes, and providing economic incentives. There also must be reliance on the funds and expertise of the private sector to develop, own and maintain the housing. Creative solutions and cooperative efforts by developers, lenders, and City officials will be necessary to offset the additional constraints of developing downtown housing, but appropriate and reasonable efforts can result in a vibrant downtown area.

### 4. **Reserve of Local Artists, Writers, and Executives upon which to Draw Expertise**

The community has a significant number of local artists, writers, business resources and executives that have time and capacity to assist Downtown stakeholders to develop the amenities and programs that together will create the environment and experience necessary for success. Art in public places, music and concert series downtown, galleries and story telling events, fairs and markets all must be developed within reason and to the

extent possible. The expertise of these individuals must be pulled together through task force work aimed at developing specific solutions and programs. Engaging these local experts also creates interest and commitment to success.

### 5. **Proximity to Front Range population**

There are some 725,000 people who live in front range communities within 80 miles or so of Downtown. This is a significant market for Downtown and community businesses.

## **THREATS THAT COULD PROHIBIT SUCCESS**

### 1. **Lack of Vision and Leadership**

Possibly the greatest threat to the success of Downtown is the lack of a "unifying vision" for the future. To be successful there must be a long-range vision. But success will not be achieved unless that comprehensive vision: a) has the "support and commitment" of Downtown merchants and property owners, the City, local organizations and institutions, and community stakeholders; and b) has on-going successes that lead to a sustained effort. Short and long-term roles, obligations and commitments, and timeframes for carrying out actions must be clearly defined. The plan must tackle a range of political, physical, economic, financial, social, and environmental issues. It must remove animosity and build trust and commitment. It also must include actionable steps that generate interest and lead to sustained progress.

This visionary plan and its implementation will require leadership. Such capacity must be developed and institutionalized through the adoption of a strategic plan. Without leadership, it will not happen.

### 2. **Lack of Organization and Funding Structures**

As a community we need to recognize the obstacles associated with: a) operating a business downtown; b) the importance of Downtown to the community; and c) efforts to maintain and revitalize the oldest part of the community. We need to encourage regulatory and financial solutions including public subsidy and creative financing mechanisms when appropriate and necessary to remove those obstacles and essentially "level the playing field."

It is unlikely that success will be achieved without a clearly defined and viable organizational structure and funding mechanism(s) to carry out the community's vision for Downtown. The National Historic Trust estimates that for every dollar a community spends on downtown revitalization, \$30 in new investment is returned. Public and private investment will likely be required. There will be a return on appropriate and well planned investment Downtown, so all parties should benefit from well planned action. The rule must be "Do not undertake major investment without testing it against the Vision." Given that there will be limited resources, all actions and investments must be targeted. Using resources to carry out someone's favorite project could jeopardize the overall success of the plan.

While downtown organizational responsibilities vary in the communities in which they are located, their primary purposes can be classified into three general categories. They are:

1. Capital Improvement organizations address the installation of civic infrastructure, including streetscape, parking lots and other similar improvements.
2. Development organizations are best suited to help stimulate private sector real estate development along with the installation of supporting infrastructure, such as signing, interpretative programs and other similar installations. Additionally, a critical component to the success of any downtown revitalization strategy is real investment by both the public and private sector. Leveraging of resources (as no one entity has sufficient resources alone to sustain a long-term downtown revitalization effort) should be a key role of a development organization. The resources of both the public and private sectors should be brought together under the direction of such a downtown organization.
3. Management organizations are needed to stabilize or boost business conditions by managing the environment (e.g., maintenance and programming), collective marketing, and business development and recruitment.

As Downtown competes in the local and regional marketplaces, its "tool bag" must contain a variety of strategies and mechanisms to attract investment. It is likely that all three of the above organizations, to one extent or another, will be necessary

to achieve success Downtown. Given the obstacles associated with downtown development, it is imperative that the mix of tools chosen be comprehensive, flexible and creative. This approach may be new to the community, but it is necessary. Moreover, incentives to the private sector and business might be necessary. Incentives used for downtown revitalization fall into several broad categories, including: assistance with site acquisition and building and façade improvements, start-up capital, operating assistance, and business counseling. Downtown stakeholders will need to explore a variety of incentives and resources that can be packaged together with the intent of implementing a cohesive niche marketing and investment strategy.

These organizations should be fully developed and evolve as needs change Downtown. The mission of these organizations must be: a) unite stakeholders for improving Downtown; b) provide leadership to elevate Downtown on the civic agenda; c) establish roles, responsibilities and timeframes to implement the downtown enhancement effort; d) leverage financial resources; e) act as the primary advocate for Downtown; f) set the standard of quality for others to follow; and g) stimulate private reinvestment and action by others. Given the breadth of goals for Downtown, formal organization(s) will be necessary. Without this effort, it may be difficult to achieve the desired level of success.

### 3. Lack of Understanding of Hospitality-Based Environment

It appears that the foundation for a successful Downtown will be a movement to a hospitality-based environment and culture. Downtown has gone from a historic commercial and supply center of the sub-region to a local specialty center. The next stage of evolution is not simply the investment of money to improve the way Downtown looks, nor will it be solely the concern about one's business success. While those are important, hospitality is about attitude and the whole. It is about receiving and entertaining visitors and guests. It is not an easy step to take. It requires that everyone understand what it takes to produce and sustain such an environment. This includes Downtown property owners, merchants, City officials, local economic development organizations, financial institutions and others. Understanding and commitment to this ideal are two

absolute ingredients of success. Without these, it is unlikely that success on this front will be achieved.

## SUMMARY

The road to success Downtown involves:

1. Building the future around the past – the rich cultural heritage of the community;
2. Defining an economic "niche" that differentiates Downtown and for which it can become known;
3. Creating a recognizable downtown "front door" at Highway 50;
4. Clustering businesses to create that niche and a critical mass of activity that capture and hold people's interest;
5. Ensuring that businesses offer quality products, are highly specialized, and offer exceptional customer service;
6. Creating an "experience" Downtown by providing quality hospitality, amenities and activities in a pedestrian-friendly environment;
7. Rehabilitating the building resources to preserve and contribute to the historical character Downtown and to promote the reuse of space and a quality living environment for persons of all ages;
8. Creating a quality community gathering place Downtown; and
9. Creating the organization(s) and developing the resources and leadership necessary to carry out the objectives of the plan.

# DOWNTOWN VISION

1. Downtown Cañon City should be a **source of pride** for all residents and businesses of the community.
2. Downtown should have a **strong sense of identity** for both residents and visitors and its gathering places should foster meaningful connections.
3. Downtown should be the **social and entertainment center** of the community, offering cultural and civic facilities and hosting community events, celebrations, festivals, the arts, and recreational activity space for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy.
4. Downtown should engage citizens and visitors and **celebrate the colorful history and cultural heritage** of the community and surrounding area and Downtown should be known locally and beyond for these purposes.
5. Downtown should preserve its rich **architectural heritage** spanning over

one hundred years that has contributed to Cañon City's existing character. Historic structures should be preserved and restored and, while new styles will be respected, new structures should respect and demonstrate compatibility with the historic character of Downtown.

6. Downtown should be **accessible to all residents and visitors**, encouraged by walking, biking, and transit but also accessible by automobile. The Downtown should accommodate automobiles with efficient streets and parking.
7. Downtown should be a **local, regional, and tourist destination** because of its authenticity and ambience, vitality, a quality

activities capable of retaining existing customers and attracting new customers, to improve economic activity in the local economy – a mix that the local, sub-regional and tourist markets support and sustain. This commercial and economic base includes a desirable balance of specialty retail and sub-regional and local businesses offering retail, dining, entertainment, galleries and studios,

meeting space, personal services, professional offices, and community service uses that are unique to this location.

9. Downtown and its surrounding neighborhood should be a **model for sustainable and efficient living**, offering a unique atmosphere and mixture of lifestyles and choices, a quality and safe pedestrian environment, efficient and environmentally-sensitive street and infrastructure design, and ample parking that supports the living and commercial environments.
10. There should be successful and mutually beneficial **partnerships and strong relations** between the Downtown merchants and property owners, the City of Cañon City, Chamber of Commerce, Fremont County, and other institutions and community-serving organizations that make Downtown successful.

and active pedestrian and shopper-friendly environment, distinctive buildings, a unique physical setting close to the mountains, numerous recreational opportunities and beautiful scenery, and because of the activities that take place there.

8. Downtown should be a **traditional commercial center** of the community, with an appropriate mix of commercial and economic

# DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

The Downtown Cañon City Strategic Plan has three major objectives, which are to: 1) create a policy and guideline frame work for future actions by the public and private sectors that will complement and support the desired vision; 2) define short and long-term actions that, if carried out judiciously by citizens, property owners, the business community, and community officials, will bring about the desired vision for Downtown; and 3) identify catalytic projects that will gain success and create momentum.

The ideas and actions set forth in this Plan challenge convention, generating new solutions that build on Downtown strengths and make the most of available opportunities. However, this Plan does not intend to sort out every detail. More work will be required. It will take hard work and community support and commitment to turn the ideas in this Plan into specific actions with budgets, schedules and funding sources.

This Plan intends to inspire the community to think big about Downtown and to bring people together around the following common goals and outcomes.

## A. Create a strong "Sense of Identity" through the incorporation of place-based "Branding" (tell the Cañon City story) and make it recognizable and available to all residents and visitors Downtown.

1. The branding image should capitalize on the strengths of Downtown, including:
  - a. Historical building architecture
  - b. Cultural heritage, including stories about early pioneers and residents and life in Cañon City and Downtown
  - c. Geologic history
  - d. Arts, entertainment, creative place, and quality of life
  - e. Specialty shopping

f. Proximity to the mountains and a variety of recreational activities

g. Scenery

2. The branding strategy might build off the Tourism Commission's area brand "Unlock the Adventure," but it should be specific to Downtown Cañon City.
3. The branding story should be "presented" in a Downtown logo and throughout Downtown in the form of banners and takeaway materials. The new logo should be the identifying symbol of Downtown.
4. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated interpretative program Downtown that is based on the "branding" story.
  - a. The branding story should be "presented" in a convenient and entertaining way within the public realm Downtown, in the form of interpretative displays, brochures, tours and other means that provide an "experience" for Downtown shoppers and visitors.
  - b. The interpretative story should be aimed at all age groups.
  - c. Establish a branding task force to develop the identity story and establish a timeframe for completion.
  - d. Establish an interpretation program task force to work with the local Museums and others, tapping their knowledge and resources, to develop the content for Downtown historical building and community history interpretation displays and create "bread crumb" connectivity that will lead residents and visitors through the interpretative presentation. A timeframe for completion and funding source for carrying out the program should be established.
  - e. Incorporate the Territorial Prison into the interpretative story. The history of this facility and its importance to the State and local area should be part of the story presented Downtown. The presentation should seek to reduce the prison



stigma and point out its contribution to the local architecture and infrastructure, the local economy, and community history.

5. Identify important cultural heritage sites throughout the community and nearby and connect visitors Downtown to these sites through appropriate information, signs, and e-mapping.

## B. Enhance Downtown as a "gathering place" for people and to better serve as the social and cultural heritage center of the community.

1. The public infrastructure investment priority Downtown should be in those improvements that best promote "a place for people" – improving and expanding the amount and quality of space Downtown allocated to pedestrians and shoppers.

2. Develop a Downtown streetscape "design manual" to establish a palette of durable street furnishings and materials that ensure a cohesive identity and maximize the life-cycle of the furnishings that are approved by a Downtown organization and the City.
3. A key element of the strategic plan should be the re-establishment of a strong central gathering place Downtown. A "central square" or plaza should be created to provide for public gatherings and activities and connect the surrounding residential neighborhood with Downtown. The central square should include, among other things:
  - a. A strong pedestrian orientation both internally and as a linkage between Downtown and nearby residential uses;
  - b. A hub of neighborhood recreational activity for nearby residential uses;
  - c. Children's programs that build off proximity to the library and arts center;
  - d. Public art and art walk/park that infuses modern and historical influences of the community and that serves as an anchor attraction for Downtown;
  - e. Children's play structures;
  - f. Programming for festivals, performances, farmers markets, and other events that intend to draw people Downtown;
  - g. Water features; and
  - h. Open gathering space
4. Investigate the potential for a Community and Recreation Center or similar facility that is capable of attracting residents Downtown. The intent should be to reuse existing underused buildings. Possible locations include:
  - a. The Garden Park High School building, if the School District discontinues the use of the building;



- b. The former Sunflower Bank building at the corner of Main and 6th Street, if a conference and multiple use facility is not feasible; and
- 5. Retain Main Street as a central stage for special events, celebrations, and parades. Alteration of Main Street in a manner that would preclude such activities is not desirable.
- 6. A Downtown public art program should be encouraged, including all of the necessary entities that might include:
  - a. Establish an on-going Downtown Art in Public Places program that is consistent with the Public Art Master Plan.
  - b. Promote and provide appropriate assistance for arts and culture organizations and businesses to located Downtown.
  - c. Recruit art and cultural entertainment uses Downtown.
  - d. Retain and build upon the existing Farmer's Market and promote entrepreneurial businesses that build upon the area's agricultural heritage.
  - e. Develop, with the local schools, the Golden Age Center and others, a multi-faceted curriculum for all ages centered on developing and sustaining the



*Provide Art in a variety of forms in Public Spaces*

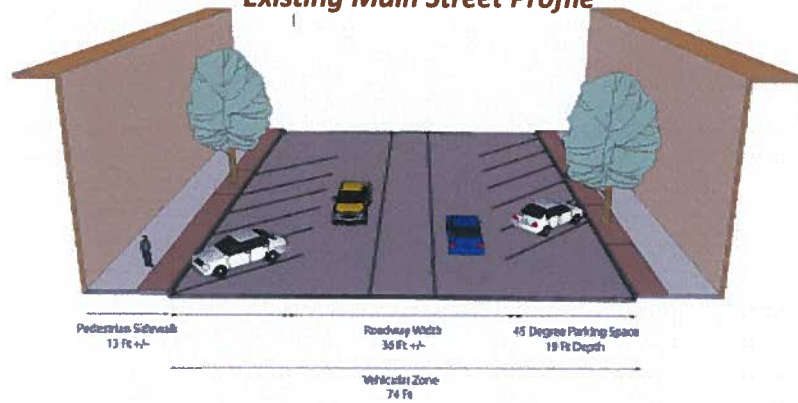


cultural heritage of the community and promoting creative business opportunities Downtown.

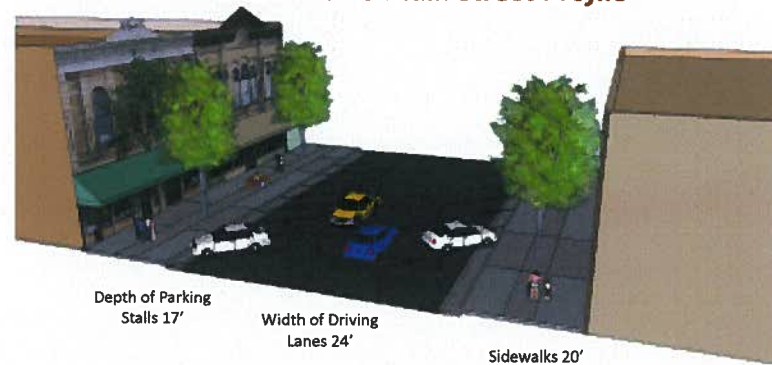
- 7. Designate a single community event coordinator, such as the Chamber of Commerce or another organization, and schedule community events through that organization to ensure minimal overlap for competing events and ensure that events do not overburden the community or Downtown.
- 8. Market community events and celebrations in a reasonable manner outside the community to help attract visitors to the community and Downtown.
- 9. Increase evening activities in the form of concerts, unique movies and entertainment, and other similar events to attract residents and visitors Downtown to help improve the economic environment for restaurants, shopping, the arts, and entertainment establishments.
- C. **Improve the pedestrian environment for everyone Downtown.**
  - 1. Increase the width of the sidewalks along Main Street and reduce the overall width of the area devoted to the automobile to improve the overall character and provide for greater pedestrian-related activity. To accomplish this objective, the center turn lane should be removed.
  - 2. Improve Main Street intersections by installing curb extensions, or bulb-outs, to improve pedestrian crossing safety and improve aesthetic character. Consider interim curb extension design solutions until funds can be raised for permanent installations.
  - 3. Animate the public space along Downtown streets to give it life and vitality, with appropriate business and public information signs, lighting, street furniture, public art, colorful landscaping, and directional signs. a. Establish a Downtown streetscape "design manual" to define the desired palette of durable street furnishings and materials.
    - a. Establish a Downtown streetscape "design manual" to define the desired palette of durable street furnishings and materials.

- b. The Downtown streetscape "design manual" should establish basic improvement location criteria and accessibility standards to be maintained. A Downtown organization and the City should promote and allow improvements in the public right-of-way, provided that such improvements meet the accepted design and accessibility standards.
- c. Create a long-term comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan for the public realm that:
  - i. Increases public parking to the extent possible as suggested in the plan;
  - ii. Increases and improves the quality of "pedestrian space" within the Main Street corridor;
  - iii. Facilitates the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Gateway;
  - iv. Improves the character and strengthens the business environment and accessibility to the southerly portion of Downtown adjacent to Royal Gorge Boulevard;
  - v. Improves pedestrian wayfinding and connectivity;
  - vi. Creates the Downtown central square/plaza; and
  - vii. Establishes a suitable long-term replacement program for the desired improvements.
- d. The long-term Capital Improvement Plan should define and establish reasonable and appropriate capital funding mechanisms and project priorities to carryout the plan.
- e. Establish an annual program and define responsibilities for installing and maintaining flowers, landscape, banners and other similar features that are necessary to enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment.

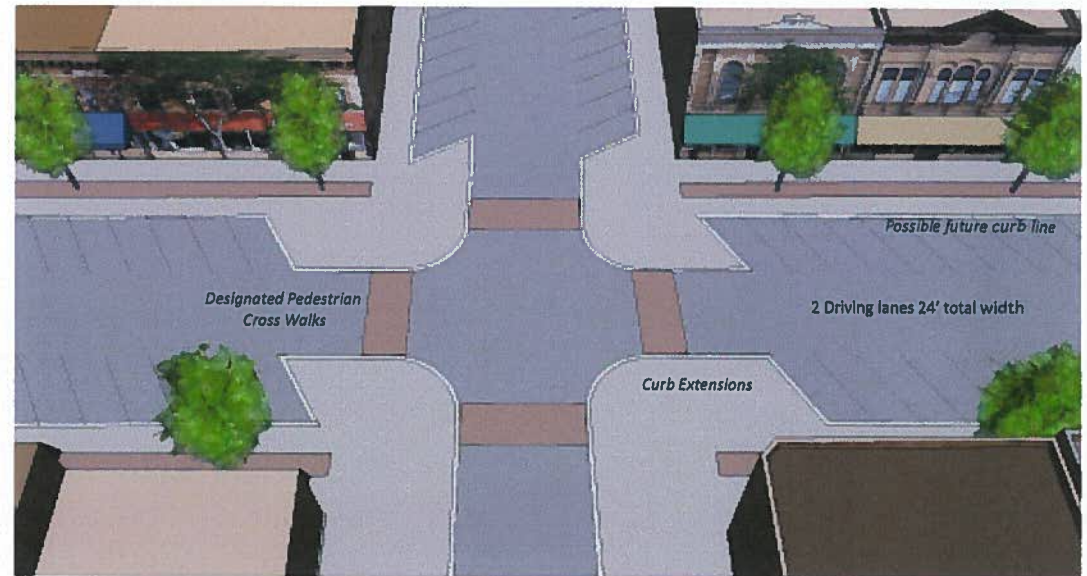
**Existing Main Street Profile**



**Possible Future Main Street Profile**

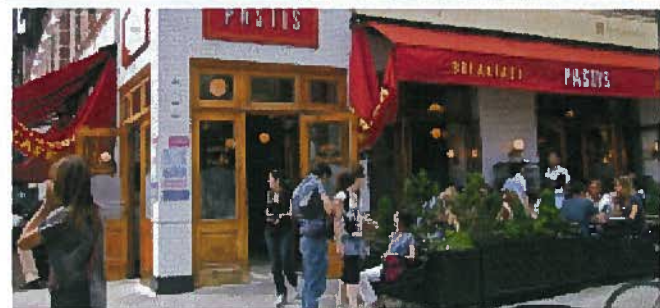


**Typical Main Street Intersection Improvement**





*Interim Sidewalk Cafe Accommodations until Sidewalks are Widened*



*Long-term Sidewalk Cafe Installations with Improved Sidewalk Width*

- f. Downtown organization should be responsible for the installation and ongoing maintenance of improvements and planting annual landscape within the public right-of-way. Appropriate funding mechanisms for these purposes should be derived through this plan. The City should ensure compliance with all standards and guidelines and assume reasonable liability risk for improvements, identified by the Downtown organization and City, that are desired within the public right-of-way.

4. Increase the permeable paver area around the drip zones of all street trees to improve watering and to reduce the amount of stress put on vegetation Downtown, thereby improving the quality of vegetation long-term.
5. Establish a tree replacement program to replace those trees that are dead or that have been substantially pruned or are stressed to the point that their contribution to the streetscape has been diminished significantly. To the extent possible, retain existing mature trees, regardless of condition, until new street trees can be established.
6. Allow and encourage on-street pedestrian spaces that support outdoor dining, public entertainment and cultural activities.
7. Establish Merchant sidewalk use and café standards and develop a simple administrative right-of-way licensing program for City approval.
8. Create landscaped areas within the public streetscape along Main Street intended for seating, displays of public art, and street performances.
9. Before the width of Main Street is reduced, make appropriate short-term improvements to the public alleys, such as relocating or reduce the size of dumpsters and grading the surface, to accommodate delivery vehicles outside of the public streets. Long-term, consider paving the alleys.
10. Promote alternative means of travel to Downtown and provide suitable public infrastructure to accommodate

vehicles, bicycles, motorcycles and scooters, recreational vehicles, and delivery vehicles, in the form of appropriate parking space, bike racks and so on.

- D. **Reduce the leakage of consumer dollars from within the Cañon City trade area and Downtown to the larger commercial centers and internet sales by promoting a strong and diverse mix of commercial retail and service businesses and employment Downtown – a mix that both the local and sub-regional commercial and service markets and the pass-through and destination tourist markets can support and sustain long-term.**

1. Downtown should include a desirable balance of specialty retail, sub-regional and local-serving retail, personal services, professional offices, entertainment and community service uses, and residential uses in appropriate locations.
2. Establish a business assistance program to help businesses Downtown.
  - a. Work with area universities, the State Economic Development Office, the Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments and others to conduct a “propensity study” of local and sub-regional customers to determine the types of goods and services purchased by local and sub-regional customers, particularly for purchases that now occur outside of the local trade area, and use the findings of the study to help Downtown businesses align their operations and product mix with customer desires as a means to retain existing customers and attract new customers, to minimize the loss of economic activity from the local economy.
  - b. Once a propensity study has been conducted, giving merchants the opportunity to align their operations with consumer desires, periodically conduct follow-up shopper surveys to ensure that resident and visitor needs are being met.
  - c. Hire a retail merchandising specialist to determine the best possible arrangement of ground floor commercial uses and merchandising strategies that, while representing the unique store

Provide Curb Extensions / Bulb-Outs at Intersections to Improve Safety and Reduce Pedestrian Crossing Zones and Create Locations for Key Public Art Presentations

Remove Stop Lights and Provide Stop Signs at Key Intersections



Widen Sidewalks

Reduce Pavement Width Devoted to Vehicle Travel Lanes

Provide for and Encourage Outdoor Cafes



*Develop a Comprehensive Storefront Merchandising Program for Downtown*

branding, will catch people's eyes, draw them into stores, and generate the best flow of shoppers throughout Downtown to maximize retail sales.

- d. Carryout a "buy local" campaign to inform residents of goods and services available Downtown and the community benefits of buying locally.
3. Establish a dedicated revenue stream for business development and marketing Downtown.
4. Develop a reasonable and appropriate Downtown business expansion and attraction program.
  - a. Identify specialty retail and other types of unique retail businesses that are attractive to both residents and visitors and that can help create the desired commercial balance and experience Downtown and, through this plan, establish a Downtown organization that can actively recruit those types of businesses and establish a specific recruitment strategy and timeframe for the organization.
- b. A Downtown organization, along with other appropriate entities, should develop a business planning, financing package and start-up program to attract and help new businesses Downtown.
- c. A Downtown organization should identify existing business ventures located elsewhere in the community that could improve Downtown and work with the owners of those businesses to develop branches/extensions Downtown.
- d. Initially concentrate specialty retail businesses along Main Street to the area between 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the extent possible, particularly for new businesses, to help achieve a suitable critical mass and shopping experience, with growth outward as the critical mass is achieved over time.
- e. Identify concessions and/or incentives that public entities might be able to offer to recruit targeted retail businesses Downtown.
- f. Identify and maintain a data base, with corresponding rents and purchase prices, of those commercial spaces that are available or can be made available for homegrown or recruited businesses that will provide the best possible critical massing of business activity.
- g. Establish both: i) a retail business "incubator" program; and ii) a retail "pop-up" program (where an empty store space temporarily houses a business or studio for a period, for the benefit of a property owner and the vitality of Downtown) to promote small scale retail operations that are compatible with the objectives of this plan and complement Downtown economic activity. A designated funding source, along with resources such as SBA and gap loans and revenues that might be generated from a Tax Increment Financing program, should be considered to help carry out these programs.
- h. Establish a commercial broker incentive program to help fill vacant spaces.

- i. Establish a business financing conduit with local banks, Upper Arkansas Area Development Corporation, SCEDD Development Company (SBA Loans), as well as business counseling and assistance through the SBDC and others.
- j. A Downtown organization should work with property owners one-on-one to establish positive relationships and align leasing and business expectations and redevelopment opportunities with the objectives of the Plan.
- k. Establish a mechanism to track/monitor business expansion, attraction and marketing campaign effectiveness and merchant/property owner satisfaction.
5. Another business development strategy should emphasize the attraction of creative and crafts entrepreneurs and businesses to Downtown. Pursue and/or use the State Creative District principles to advance this strategy. (Zoning regulations should be reviewed and adjusted if necessary to promote this goal.) Such efforts should build upon the goals of the Public Arts Master Plan and the existing artistic and creative businesses and add to the walkable character of Downtown. Such attractions might include, among others:
  - a. Art galleries and studio space;
  - b. Civic and dinner theater; and
  - c. Museums.
6. A Downtown organization should work with merchants and gain commitments on business hours that are consistent with the objectives of the Plan. An initial step might include one night a week or for "First Friday" events. Hours will need to be broadened to create a reliable commercial and tourist destination and to promote other activities such as a conference and convention business if it develops Downtown.
7. Establish an active retail business forum Downtown to:



Window displays should block view into vacant space



- a. Discuss retail strategies and gain feedback from retail promotions and efforts of the members.
  - b. Provide a newsletter and e-mail communication to all Downtown merchants and property owners to keep them informed about progress and improvement efforts.
8. Work with Downtown businesses to develop an e-Commerce strategy that can be implemented by each business.
  9. A Downtown organization should start working with owners of vacant properties immediately to create significant temporary "window displays" within the vacant store spaces along Main Street as a way to: a) disguise

vacant store spaces; b) animate Downtown sidewalks; and c) promote existing businesses.

10. Strengthen efforts to retain, grow and attract office uses to second floor and appropriate ground floor locations to reduce vacancy rates and add vibrancy and employment opportunities Downtown.
11. Create an active program to help grow existing businesses, promote new "homegrown" businesses and organizations, and market the Downtown and recruit new businesses that are compatible with the objectives of this Plan and that can help round out a successful commercial and activity center.
12. Work with property owners one-on-one to establish positive relationships and align leasing and business expectations and redevelopment opportunities with the objectives of this plan.
13. Conduct a feasibility study to determine whether there is a realistic opportunity to establish a conference and multiple use activity center Downtown. The intent should be to establish a facility that generates sufficient economic activity to cover the capital costs of upgrading an existing structure and covering the annual operating expenses. The primary intent of this facility should be to stimulate spin-off economic activity in Downtown and in local businesses.
  - a. Conduct a feasibility assessment to determine the potential for hosting group conferences and conventions, together with a wide range of local and subregional events Downtown. The assessment should identify the market potential and, if such activity is realistic, the space, organizational structure and other requirements necessary to make it happen. To help understand the feasibility, the assessment should determine whether the necessary supporting infrastructure, including restaurants, hotel beds, shopping and related experiences that are necessary for

such a facility to be successful, are in place or can be developed and the potential economic benefit that might be derived.

- b. Assess the potential for remodeling and reusing one or more existing structures Downtown for conference/convention/multiple use purposes as a way to create this economic generator in the most cost-efficient way possible. Options might include:
    - i. Building 1 - The former Sunflower Bank building at 531 Main Street is about 15,000 square feet on two levels. The occupant load of this building might be between 400 and 700 people depending on the space configuration.
    - ii. Building 2 - 521 - 523 Main Street, immediately west of the former Sunflower Bank building, is about 11,000 square feet on two levels, and the occupant load of this building might be between 275 and 500 people, depending on the space configuration.
    - iii. Building 3 - The Garden Park High School facility at 201 N. 6th Street, about 14,000 square feet on one level, might be an option if it becomes available in the future.
  - c. If such a use is feasible, consider a consortium arrangement of Downtown and community restaurants to provide food service operations to a Downtown conference facility to allow local businesses to benefit from the operation. The feasibility analysis should consider formal operating structures for this organization.
14. If a convention and conference facility is deemed appropriate Downtown, seek benefactor participation to help make the activity possible.
  15. If a conference and multiple use activity center is not feasible, a Downtown organization should promote these key buildings for incubator centers, museums or other

## Possible Downtown Conference and Event Center Options



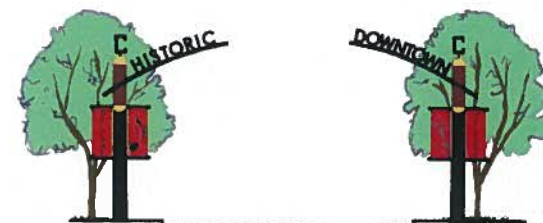


## DOWNTOWN GATEWAY MASTER PLAN





*Design buildings to frame the Roundabout Intersection to help identify the Entrance to Downtown*



*Engage the Community in Designing a Gateway Arch or Monument Through a Public Design Contest*



*Provide a Gateway Arch or Other Monument that is Consistent with the Historical Character and Image Desired Downtown*

uses that will attract people Downtown and help achieve the objective of generating new economic activity Downtown.

**E. Promote a “front door” entrance to Downtown from Royal Gorge Boulevard by extending Downtown land use and character to Royal Gorge Boulevard and, with appropriate design and transportation improvements, implement a Downtown Gateway Master Plan.**

1. The focus of the Gateway Master Plan should be a redesigned intersection at 6th Street and Royal Gorge Boulevard. (This is the appropriate location because of: a) the openness and redevelopment potential of properties on three sides of this intersection; and b) the potential to acquire the additional right-of-way necessary to accommodate the improvement.) Ideally a high capacity roundabout should be constructed at this location to both move traffic and channel motorists into Downtown. A roundabout will serve this purpose better

than a four-way or stop-light controlled intersection. Four-way and stop-light controlled intersections are not unique to Highway 50 through Cañon City and, therefore, those intersection designs would simply be one more intersection. Moreover, in the case of a stop light controlled intersection, motorists are concentrating on the traffic light rather than the entrance to Downtown. Unlike those intersections, a gateway intersection should be slow speed, form a distinct and recognizable place, and guide traffic Downtown. While intersection construction will likely be long-term, efforts to gain acceptance by the Colorado Department of Transportation and adjacent property owners should begin soon.

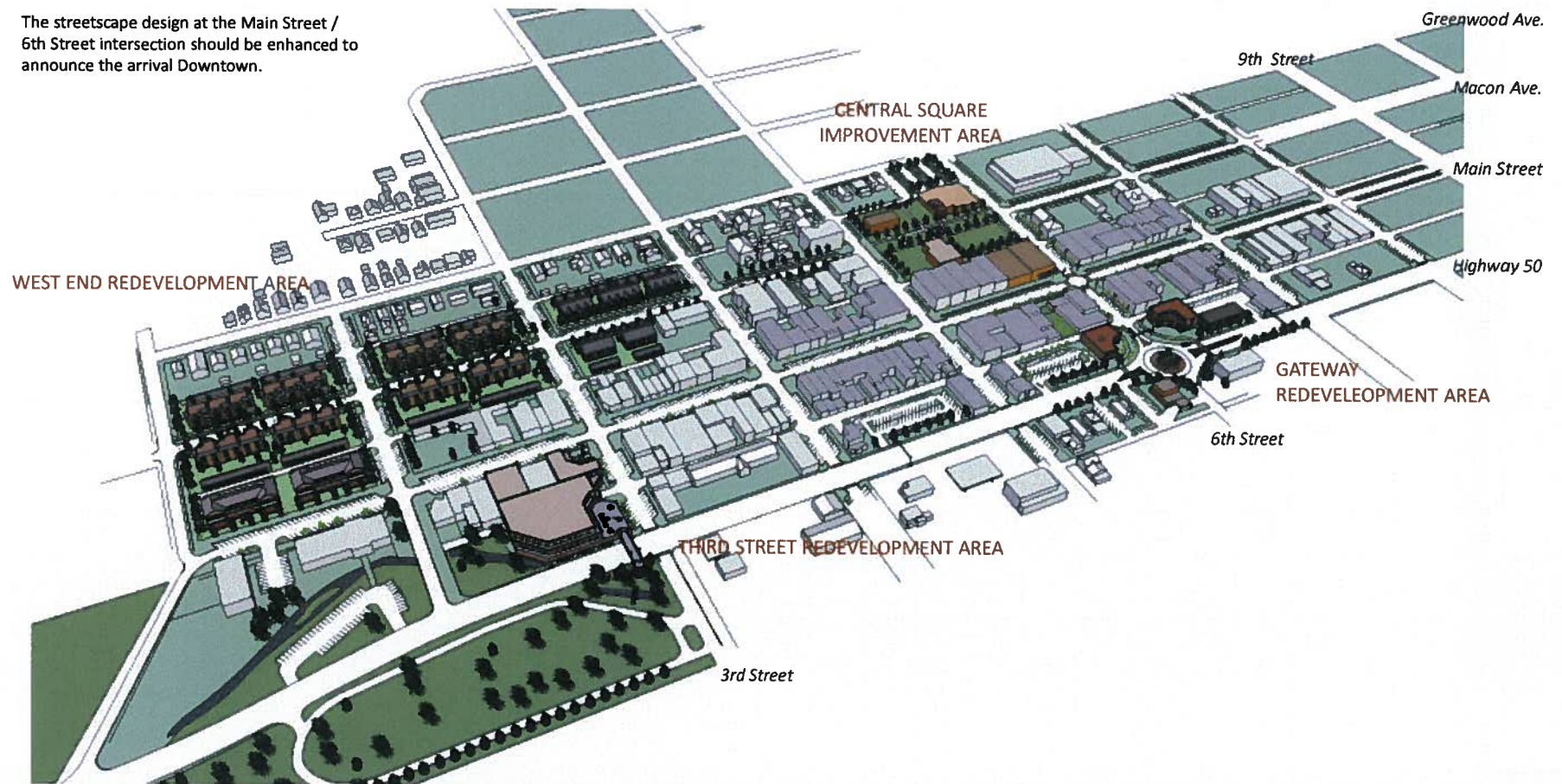
2. Design proper pedestrian cross walks at the 6th Street roundabout to improve safety for those crossing the highway.

3. The design of Gateway buildings is equally important. Ideally, buildings should be sited near the roadway in a manner that frames the corners of the Royal Gorge Boulevard / 6th Street intersection, as generally represented in the Gateway Master Plan. Plazas and landscaping between buildings and the roadway are appropriate; parking is not. The intent of the redevelopment should be to establish distinguishable Downtown gateway features that create an awareness of Downtown. The building housing the History Museum (old City Hall) is a significant civic building and it should continue to be a key element in the Gateway Master Plan.
4. Prominent buildings at least two stories and/or architectural icons at the gateway intersection corners should be encouraged.
5. Provide a gateway monument sign or arch that is both compatible with the community’s unique history, and adds to the “front door” identity. Various design schemes might be considered - possibly through a design contest that encourages local resident participation in Downtown progress.
6. As part of the Gateway Master Plan, efforts should be made to improve the streetscape quality along both sides of Royal Gorge Boulevard between 4th Street and 7th Street. Streetscape improvements should compliment, not duplicate, improvements Downtown. Appropriate landscaping, signing, color cross walks, and lighting should be provided. Community activity banners over the highway (informing both residents and pass-through motorists about upcoming community events) should be provided at the 4th Street and 7th Street intersections. (Extending the streetscape improvement to 3rd Street should be considered once improvements occur between 4th Street and 7th Street.) A detailed streetscape plan should be developed. The intent should be to:
  - a. distinguish this area from the strip commercial character that exists elsewhere along the Highway 50 corridor, and

*West Entrance Directional Sign and Enhanced Streetscape*



- b. establish recognizable Downtown features and characteristics that lead to and announce the entrance to Downtown.
7. As the 6th Street corridor develops as the primary connection from Royal Gorge Boulevard to Downtown, create and implement a streetscape design plan that animates the public space along 6th Street, including monument lighting, street banners, and flowers and plant material that add year round color.
8. The streetscape design at the Main Street / 6th Street intersection should be enhanced to announce the arrival Downtown.
9. Undertake short-term improvements immediately along the highway to improve Downtown identity and recognition.
  - a. As an interim step, efforts should be made to provide reasonable CDOT-compliant highway signs at key locations along Royal Gorge Boulevard announcing Downtown.
  - b. Consider a single overhead sign on eastbound Royal Gorge Boulevard immediately west of the 1st Street intersection announcing "Historic Downtown."
  - c. Improve the quality of the entry streetscape landscaping along U.S. Highway 50 west of 1st Street.



- d. Assess existing signs and objects along Royal Gorge Boulevard from Cañon City's westerly entrance to the 9th Street intersection and identify all signs that are not necessary and remove such distractions.

**F. Facilitate and actively promote the redevelopment of properties at the key opportunity sites identified in this Plan, and reuse underutilized properties to capitalize on existing assets, rather than constructing new expensive facilities in and near Downtown, to promote the objectives of this Plan.**

**1. Key redevelopment areas are:**

- a. The north side of Royal Gorge Boulevard (Highway 50) between 5th Street and 7th Street – near term priority.
- b. The southwest corner of Royal Gorge Boulevard and 6th Street – near term priority.
- c. The west end of Downtown generally between Main Street and Macon Avenue from 1st Street to 4th Street – intermediate to long-term priority.
- d. Along the north side of the proposed "central square/plaza" – near to medium term priority.
- e. 3rd Street between Main Street and Royal Gorge Boulevard – medium to long term priority.

**2. Acquire the additional corner right-of-way at the 6th Street / Royal Gorge Boulevard intersection necessary to construct a roundabout intersection – near term priority.**

**3. Identify those properties that should be acquired, leased or otherwise made available for highway-oriented "public" parking as illustrated in this Plan.**

**4. Promote the redevelopment of the west end of Downtown. The intent of this redevelopment should be to:**

- a. Offer higher density housing types not readily available in Cañon City that are attractive to senior citizen and empty-nester living and that promotes

a quality residential neighborhood based on walking to Downtown services, library and arts center, museums, nearby parks and trails, the river, and other community amenities and services that allow a high quality of life.

**b. Establish a higher population base and activities in that area that can help strengthen existing businesses west of 4th Street, support business development activities at that end of Main Street, and enhance the vitality of Downtown as a whole.**

**c. Increase property values in the Downtown area to help create the funding mechanisms that will be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Plan.**

**d. Establish a Downtown redevelopment organization to work with property owners to reach mutually beneficial solutions (the Plan does not contemplate any reduction of property rights or a "taking" of any kind to accomplish the redevelopment objectives.)**

**5. The character of the west end redevelopment should be consistent with the Illustrative Master Plan and should include:**

- a. A combination of on and off-street parking to accommodate the needs of residents;
- b. Alley access to on-site parking;
- c. Narrower residential neighborhood streets to slow traffic speed and reduce intrusions into the neighborhood;
- d. Improved streetscape within the residential neighborhood, including street trees, sidewalks and street lamps for safety and character;
- e. Design elements that encourage front-yard living to promote social interaction in the residential neighborhood;
- f. Reduced building setbacks;

**g. Narrower front lot dimensions; and**

**f. If possible, the irrigation ditch should be retained as an amenity of the neighborhood (piping the ditch is appropriate if necessary to accomplish the redevelopment objectives.**

**6. Consider unique approaches to securing the rehabilitation of the St. Cloud Hotel as a historical boutique hotel to serve Downtown and the community. Such approaches might include non-profit ownership, public-private ventures, and other approaches to achieve this objective.**

**7. Promote the reuse of vacant second floor and ground floor spaces to reduce vacancy rates, stabilize and enhance property values and tax revenues, add vibrancy Downtown, and create employment opportunities.**

**a. Convene a task force comprised of planners, City Building Official, contractors, property owners, realtors, finance/lending experts, an official of the State Historical Society to determine solutions for bringing about the reuse and improvement of vacant and underutilized spaces throughout Downtown for office, residential, and similar uses that are consistent with this Plan.**

**b. Based on the findings of the task force, prepare a comprehensive report that includes a building-by-building assessment, if possible, identifying appropriate changes to zoning regulations, licensing and permits, building code regulations for older buildings, financing strategies, and other reasonable measures that provide adequate "upfront" direction and assistance to property owners and developers, simplify the redevelopment process, minimize expense associated with the reuse and redevelopment of vacant spaces, while ensuring that the public health, safety and welfare will be reasonably protected.**

**c. When possible, a Downtown organization and the City should pursue historic preservation grants for the purposes of conducting structural and preliminary assessments of significant historic**



*The Macon Avenue Redevelopment (1st Street to 4th Street) intent is to increase population within walking distance of Downtown and provide a variety of multiple-family housing sizes and types, including stacked flats and townhomes, to provide quality lifestyle opportunities for a range of economic and age groups. Neighborhood should promote walking within the neighborhood and Downtown and slow vehicle speed through proper design. Zoning standards should be changed as necessary to accommodate the neighborhood design intent.*



*The West Main Street Redevelopment intent also is to increase population and activity at the west end of Downtown. More activity here will help to strengthen those Main Street businesses located between 2nd and 4th Streets. Allowed uses should be ground floor commercial with above ground floor residential allowed. In this case, residential on any floor should be allowed if a commercial market this distance from the core of Downtown cannot be demonstrated.*

## WEST END REDEVELOPMENT AREA



## 3RD STREET REDEVELOPMENT AREA



*3rd Street Redevelopment (between Main Street and Highway 50) intent is to increase density and promote additional economic activity in the west end of Downtown. The desirable uses include commercial on the ground floor and residential above ground level. Residential should be acceptable on the ground floor in the absence of a retail commercial market. A hotel, museum or other key economic activity generator would be a desirable use along Highway 50; parking may be possible under this structure.*

structures and building improvements, to aid in the redevelopment process.

- d. Based on the findings of the task force, establish appropriate public and private funding mechanisms, including but not limited to grant and loan programs, for the purposes of building façade improvements, and stimulating redevelopment and reuse activities that are consistent with this Plan.
- e. Actively work with the Colorado Historical Society and others to promote a State Historic Preservation Block Grant that could be made available to communities in southeast Colorado to further their unique historic preservation activities.

8. Promote the Enterprise Zone tax credits for the rehabilitation of vacant commercial buildings.

9. Establish general design standards for "new" buildings Downtown that, while ensuring proper flexibility for a developer/property owner, promote compatibility with the historical character of Downtown.
10. Create a "lifestyle living" campaign as part of the overall Downtown marketing and branding strategy to market residential units created under the redevelopment activity.
11. Create a task force or other appropriate Downtown organization that is responsible for communicating and actively working with private property owners in the Gateway redevelopment area to ensure that the objectives of this Plan are understood and to promote cooperative efforts to develop properties consistent with the Gateway Master Plan.

**G. Amend the City zone district map and all regulations as necessary to accomplish the objectives of this Plan.**



**Downtown Rezoning Plan**

1. To facilitate the Gateway Master Plan, rezone those properties between 4th Street and 7th Street adjacent to and north of Royal Gorge Boulevard from General Commercial (C) to Central Business (CB) and encourage the redevelopment of these properties in a manner consistent with the objectives of the Plan.
2. The zoning and subdivision regulations, including the site plan review process, should be amended as necessary, to ensure that related development and redevelopment activities that are consistent with this Plan progress efficiently and rapidly.
3. The zone district regulations should be amended to provide a conditional use permit. As long as it meets specific criteria unique to such use, a conditional use should be "allowed." Minimum administrative review should be necessary to determine compliance. Such a permit does not exist in the current regulation and, as a result, many uses are designated "discretionary" special

uses, which are subject to longer approval processes.

4. Ensure that land use and zoning regulations Downtown will allow for appropriate live/work space for artisans and galleries.
5. Seek appropriate development agreements with property owners for the purpose of bringing about long-term development that is consistent with the Gateway Master Plan.
6. Analyze the zoning regulations and the Transitional Mixed Use Overlay for the area north of Downtown to allow and streamline the process for low intensity commercial uses to locate within the existing residential neighborhood, particularly in historic structures near the "central square." Limited uses, including galleries, offices and low impact commercial uses that are consistent with this Plan, add vitality to Downtown, can help preserve the residential character of the neighborhood, and provide an economically viable means to preserve and enhance historically significant properties. A conditional use permit may be appropriate.
7. Consider a commercial and mixed-use zoning designation for properties along the south side of Royal Gorge Boulevard, between 3rd Street and 8th Street, that accomplishes the following:
  - a. Promotes buildings with no or minimum front setback from the property line along Royal Gorge Boulevard;
  - b. Establishes a line of street trees along the highway boundary when it is not possible to bring the building close to the highway;
  - c. Places off-street parking either between or behind buildings, while recognizing that properties have limited space available for off-street parking;
  - d. Encourages and promotes shared parking arrangements;
  - e. Allows on-street parking where it can be accommodated reasonably; and

- f. When space for off-street parking is not generally available on a property, the property owner should be allowed to develop suitable parking solutions under flexible parking standards to secure the use and upgrade of properties in this area.

8. Along Main Street between 4th Street and 7th Street, the core of shopping activity, create incentives and encourage development of regulations that permit restaurants, retail and general commercial uses on the front one-half of the ground-floor space.
9. Establish residential uses in Downtown as a permitted uses in any above-ground floor space.
10. Allow residential uses in any ground floor space Downtown as a conditional use. Amended zoning district regulations should establish specific criteria for the conditional use.
11. Consider amendments to the zoning regulations and map that promote the redevelopment objectives of the West End Redevelopment Area, as set forth in this Plan.
12. Review the "allowed and special use" list in the zoning regulations for both the Central Business and General Commercial zone districts to ensure that the uses are consistent with the objectives of this Plan.
13. Reduce the maximum building height along both sides of Main Street Downtown and within the recognized Historic District from 100 feet to a maximum of three stories and a forth story through a special use approval, which will better maintain the historical character of Downtown.

**H. Improve connectivity both Downtown and between Downtown and nearby parks and other places of interest in the community and provide appropriate information about Downtown businesses, creative entrepreneurs, lifestyle, activities and products.**

1. Work with the Golden Age Center (GAC) to provide a convenient transit system between local hotels, the Royal Gorge Route Railroad terminal, other community

destinations and activities and Downtown. This system improvement will likely be necessary to support a Downtown conference and convention facility. Efforts should be made to assist GAC with proper funding for the system.

2. Downtown planning should incorporate or retain the possibility of future bus stops in the Downtown streetscape.
3. Assess all community and public information signs, particularly along Highway 50 and in and near Downtown for the purposes of ensuring that all signs contribute to the desired community character, appropriately identify the Downtown and related community cultural heritage and activity sites and destinations, and provide timely information about community events and activities.
4. Develop a sign design manual for all public signs, particularly those along Highway 50 and Downtown. All future public signs should be designed and installed to the prescribed standards. A schedule for replacing non-complying public signs over time should be established in a capital improvement program.
5. As part of a capital improvement program, provide a system of wayfinding and directional signs at appropriate locations throughout Downtown, providing directions to shopping, restaurants, parks, cultural heritage sites such as the museums, library and arts center, and other significant destinations and activities in and around Downtown.
6. The signing program should include uniform colors, symbols and typefaces. The design should help to distinguish important community cultural heritage sites and key destinations in and near the community. The following examples are recommended:

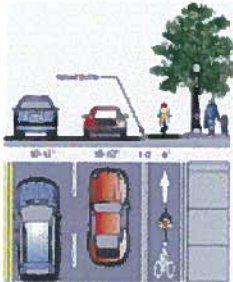
**HISTORIC DOWNTOWN  
CENTAUR MT. Bold sign font**



6. Working with the high school, college and others develop an e-Mapping system for Downtown and the community that incorporates appropriate Quick Response (QR) Codes and other state of the art technology that allows people easy access to information about community events, the location of community activities and destinations, public art, galleries and studios, entertainment, businesses and community facilities.



## Red Route



Connection to the  
Hogback Recreation Area

5th Street  
North Connection

Macon Avenue  
East Connection

## Green Route



3rd Street River  
and Park Connection

# BICYCLE MOBILITY

7. Efforts should be made to work with other local attractions, including the Royal Gorge Route Railroad and the Royal Gorge Bridge and Park, to establish suitable information about Downtown and its activities at those locations.
8. Provide a pedestrian connection bridge over Highway 50 as part of the 3rd Street redevelopment to connect Downtown with community parks, the riverfront trails, the Royal Gorge Route Railroad and other amenities south of Highway 50.
9. Undertake a River Corridor Master Plan to incorporate, at a minimum, the riverfront between 1st Street and 9th Street into the downtown neighborhood.
10. Improve 3rd Street between Downtown and the Hogbacks Recreation Area with streetscape and appropriate directional signage.
11. Provide bicycle and pedestrian improvements in and around Downtown in a manner that is generally consistent with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan described herein.

**I. Address parking perceptions and realities Downtown.**

1. Efforts should be made to increase the number of surface parking spaces as a most cost effective means to serve Downtown needs. There are now about 1,000 public parking spaces in the area between Royal Gorge Boulevard and Greenwood Avenue, between 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Following this Plan, it might be possible to increase that number by more than 200 parking spaces.
2. Restripe parking spaces downtown to a width of 8.5 feet, which will comply with the City's parking standards, to increase the number of parking spaces Downtown.
3. Maximize the amount of diagonal parking spaces off Main Street throughout the downtown area.
4. Secure public parking along Royal Gorge Boulevard in accordance with the Highway-Oriented Parking proposal of this Plan.



*St. Cloud Guest Check-In Spaces on 7th Street*

5. If the St. Cloud Hotel is revitalized, to become integral to the success of Downtown, guest drop-off and pick-up spaces should be provided near the hotel on 7th Street.
6. If the St. Cloud Hotel is revitalized, a nearby parking lot should be identified for the purposes of allowing valet parking for the hotel.
7. An ideal location for additional surface parking, if demand is demonstrated, is the area immediately north of the Fremont Center for the Arts and south of Greenwood Avenue. Parking improvements would require the removal of one to three small mixed use buildings. Expansion should begin at the east end, as an extension of an existing surface parking lot. This may become necessary with the success of the library, the arts center and the use of the "central square."
8. Install appropriate signage along Royal Gorge Boulevard / Highway 50 to identify the availability of convenient public parking to help capture pass-through visitor traffic.
9. Long-term, if additional parking is necessary, consider a parking structure in the highway-oriented parking lots, which could serve visitor needs and be convenient to Downtown for all other patrons as well.

J. Create Downtown organizations, funding structures, and mutually beneficial partnerships to carry out this Plan.

1. A three-pronged approach is recommended to ensure the most focused and effective effort possible. The Cañon City Downtown Partnership organizations and responsibilities should be:
  - a. Downtown Development Authority to support and facilitate economic development and rehabilitation efforts to enhance the vitality of Downtown through capital investment and construction.
  - b. Business Improvement District to lead business attraction, expansion, niche strategy, merchandising, business development and marketing.
  - c. Downtown Association to oversee promotions and special events and festivals designed to attract people to Downtown and provide hospitality training.
2. Establish a task force for the purpose of guiding the creation of the organizational and funding structures that will be required to carry out the capital improvement, real estate redevelopment and reuse, marketing, promotional, and management actions stipulated in this Plan.
3. Create a Downtown Development Authority for the purpose of taking corrective measures to stop and prevent further deterioration of structures, property values and infrastructure, to enhance economic vitality, and to create maximum opportunity for development and reuse existing structures in a manner consistent with this Plan.
  - a. Conduct an appropriate assessment of conditions in the downtown area for the purposes of identifying the redevelopment district in which a Downtown Development Authority should operate, demonstrating public need as stipulated in Section 31-25-801 of the Colorado Revised



Statutes, and recommending a plan of development for the redevelopment area.

- b. Consistent with Colorado Revised Statutes Section 31-25-801, the Downtown Development Authority district boundaries should be delineated specifically, and the powers and duties of the organization should be defined, which should include, among other things:

- i. Providing education on the economic growth within the district and working with property owners in the affected area to implement desirable improvements to private property to the fullest extent possible;
- ii. Promoting and supporting private developments that are consistent with this Plan;
- iii. Assembling of sites (properties) through agreements or acquisitions;
- iv. Constructing projects, including infrastructure improvements, using public resources to leverage private investment, and creating public / private partnerships for public facilities and improvements to private property including removal, site preparation, renovation, repair, and other changes to structures and properties that are appropriate to further the objectives of this Plan;
- v. Seeking other funding sources, such as grants, lending funds, and creating incentives for private investment that will further the objectives of the Plan;
- vi. Owning property and providing sites and lease space in a manner that will further the objectives of this Plan.

- c. The task force should be responsible for providing suitable information to citizens to promote public education.

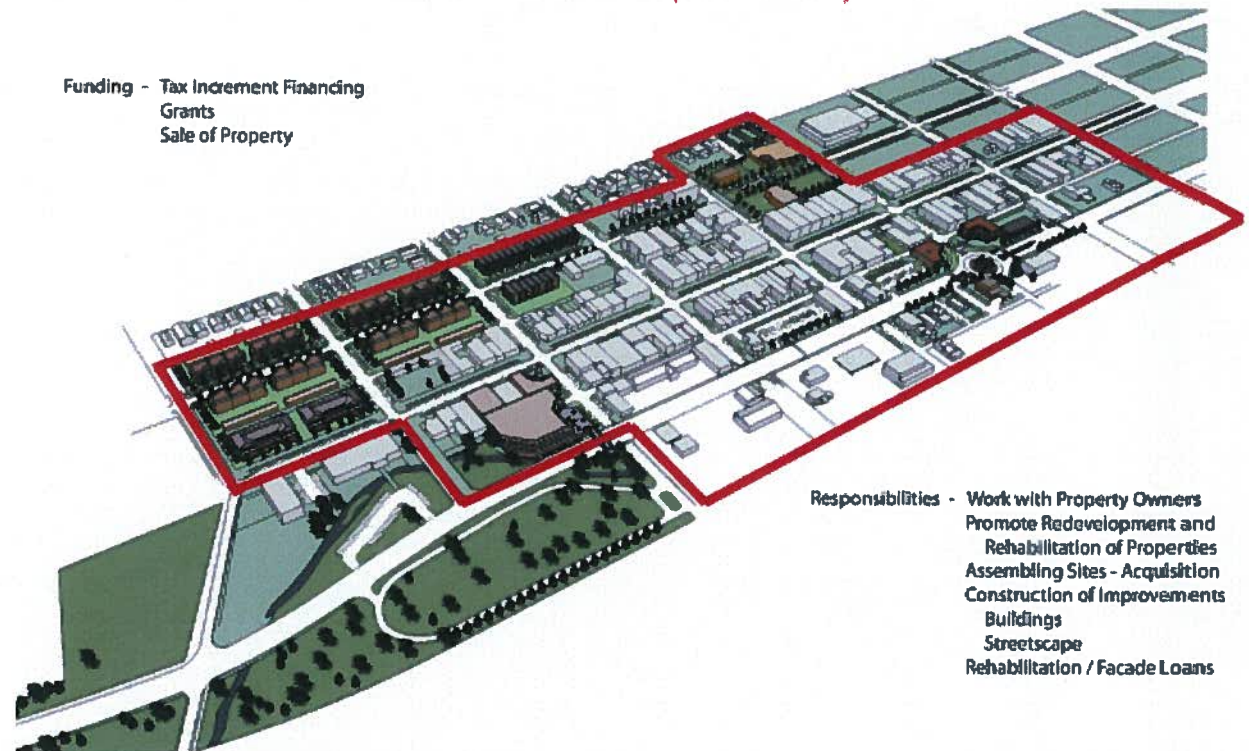
- d. Once created, a Downtown Development Authority should recommend a specific plan of development for adoption by the City Council.

- 4. The task force should consider the creation of a Tax Increment Financing District, including tax on real property and sales and use tax, to support Downtown Development Authority efforts. Tax increment financing does not intend to increase the mill levy or sales tax rate,

but rather, it relies on the incremental increase that is generated through expanding the tax base beyond its current levels.

- a. The task force should establish a financing strategy and meet with local government officials, including City and other taxing jurisdictions to consider the benefits of this approach. The school district should be a participant in the preparation of the financing plan.

### Possible Downtown Development Authority



- b. The task force should identify the potential redevelopment district and the extent of the Tax Increment Financing District to help carry out the Plan.
5. Create a Downtown Business Improvement District, in accordance with Colorado Revised Statute Section 31-25-1201, for the purpose of improving conditions for businesses and the overall business and economic activity Downtown. The task force should help to define the specific district boundaries and the powers and duties of the organization, which should include among other things:
  - a. Product alignment and defining a niche marketing strategy;
  - b. Business attraction and the retention and expansion of existing quality businesses that can strengthen the Downtown;
  - c. Business development, planning and financing;
  - d. Marketing and maintaining the branding identity; and
  - e. Developing wayfinding and marketing related signs.
6. The task force should consider the creation of a special assessment on real property within the Business Improvement District, as opposed to a mill levy or general tax rate increase, to support this effort.
  - a. The task force should work with all property owners in the district to gain approval of a special assessment for the purpose of funding the business development and marketing efforts of the Business Improvement District.
  - b. A specific operating plan and budget should be developed for adoption to support an assessment to fund the efforts of the district.
7. Build on the current Canon City Merchants Association, a non-profit, membership organization of property owners

and merchants, to advance the objectives of the Downtown Association to oversee promotions, special events and festivals, flowers on the street, other similar activities designed to attract people to Downtown, and hospitality training.

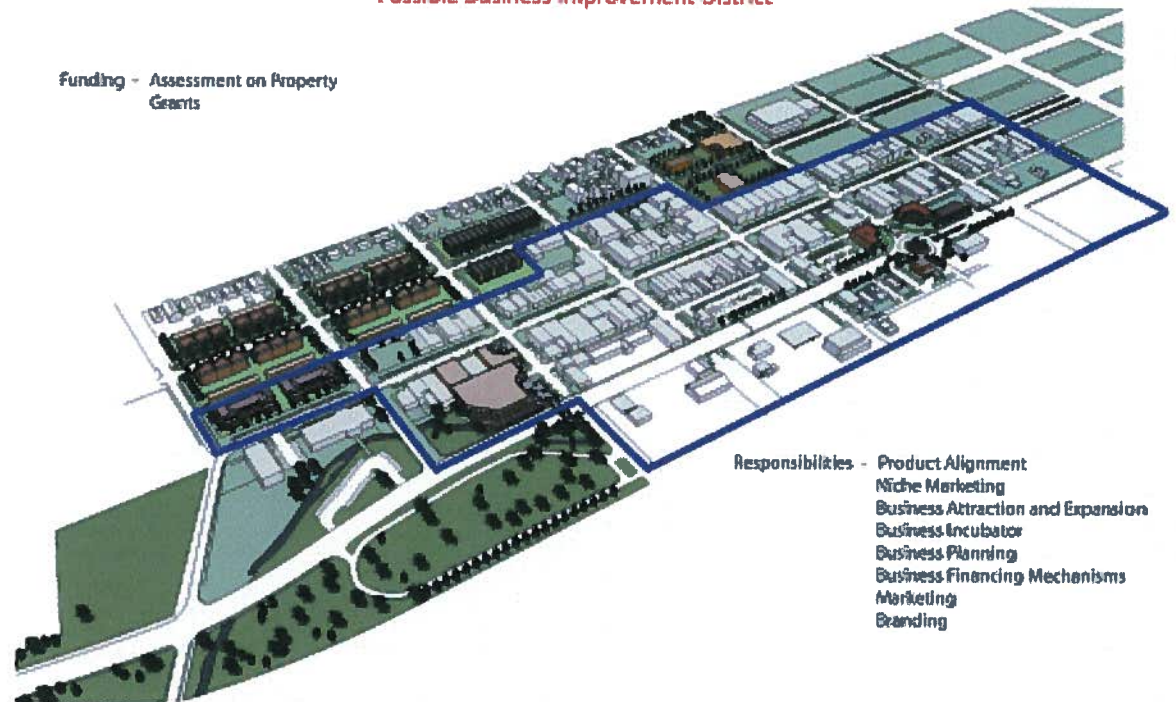
8. Pursue a Creative District designation by the State of Colorado for the purposes of promoting creative business and entrepreneurial pursuits Downtown that will help to grow and sustain economic activity.
9. Establish a Downtown Partnership organization, as the central coordinating organization, to coordinate the efforts of the Downtown Development Authority, the

Business Improvement District and the Downtown Association.

10. The Downtown Partnership should develop a government relations program and set an agenda and priorities for the program.
11. The Downtown Partnership should serve as Downtown's outreach to the community and surrounding neighborhood.

### Possible Business Improvement District

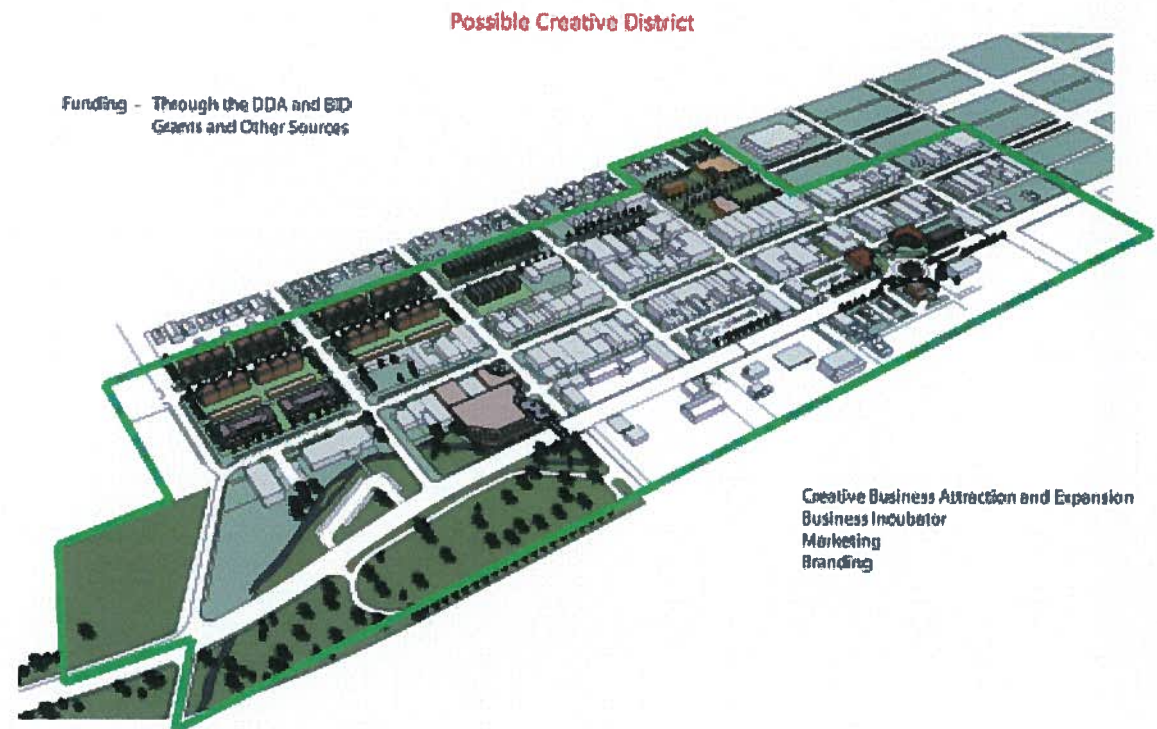
Funding - Assessment on Property  
Growth



Responsibilities - Product Alignment  
Niche Marketing  
Business Attraction and Expansion  
Business Incubator  
Business Planning  
Business Financing Mechanisms  
Marketing  
Branding

12. The Downtown Partnership should be responsible for evaluating activities, programs and actions Downtown and reporting annually to the community.
13. A long-term capital improvement plan and budget should identify and coordinate the timing of improvements with the action steps for implementing this Plan.
14. Establish the five (5) year operating and capital improvement funding requirements necessary to carry out the Plan and maintain a 5-year outlook of needs at all times.
15. Create technical assistance grants to help:
  - a. Provide technical assistance to property owners, including structural and building assessments related to the reuse of historically significant structures and to help them understand the financial feasibility of rehabilitating the property.
  - c. Offer challenge and/or matching grants to incentivize private investment in the rehabilitation and reuse of properties and other similar improvements Downtown that are consistent with this Plan.
16. Seek all potential State, Federal and other grants that might be available to help carry out this Plan, and designate a person to be responsible for identifying and making application for such grants.
17. Clearly define the roles for the Downtown merchants and property owners, the City of Cañon City, Chamber of Commerce, Fremont County, and other institutions and community-serving organizations that will be necessary to carry out the Plan and seek formal commitments from each organization to carry out their respective responsibilities.
18. Remove all unnecessary regulatory obstacles to redevelopment and rehabilitation of property Downtown and streamline, to the extent possible, necessary approval processes to an administrative review, by providing substantial upfront direction for development and improvement actions. As long as proposals are consistent with this Plan, review procedures should be minimized.

19. Identify all regulatory and policy changes that will be necessary to facilitate this Plan and establish responsibilities and time frames for such changes.
  - a. Standards for merchant use of the public sidewalk and agreements;
  - b. Public art in public places license agreements and insurance responsibilities;
  - c. Streetscape improvements within the public rights-of-way and related responsibility agreements; and
  - d. Others.



# ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Task		Priority
<b>A BRANDING AND IDENTITY</b>		
1	Install initial Highway 50 Downtown directional signs	Immediate
2	Install community event banners over Highway 50 at 6th Street	Immediate
3	Provide new overhead Downtown directional sign west of 1st Street	2-5 Years
	Meet with CDOT to gain acceptance of plan concept	
	Develop funding mechanism	
	Construction	
4	Assess existing signs and other objects along the highway and remove all that are unnecessary	Immediate
5	Establish task force to develop branding strategy	Immediate
6	Establish task force to develop the interpretive presentation	Immediate
7	Design and construct interpretive markers	1-2 Years
8	Create identity banners and take-away materials	1-2 Years
<b>B Enhance the Downtown Gathering Place and Experience</b>		
1	Develop and adopt Downtown streetscape design manual	1-2 Years
2	Initiate the closure of Macon Avenue between 5th and 6th Streets	Immediate
3	Create Central Square	
	Create a Central Square/Plaza Master Plan (uses, programming functions and activities, landscape and amenity design)	Immediate
	Establish a committee to pursue park development	Immediate
	Present proposal to community	1-2 Years
	Develop funding mechanism	1-2 Years
	Identify property acquisition	2-5 Years
	Acquire property	2-5 Years
	Construction	2-5 Years
4	Investigate potential for community center, museums and other attractions for vacant buildings Downtown	
	Establish a committee to identify options	Immediate
	Present proposal to community	1-2 Years
	Develop funding mechanism	1-2 Years
	Identify property acquisition	2-5 Years
	Acquire property	2-5 Years
	Building remodel	Long-term
5	Downtown art and activity planning and coordination	Immediate
6	Establish a coordinator for Downtown and community events	Immediate
7	Increase nighttime activity Downtown	Immediate
<b>C Improve Pedestrian Environment for all ages</b>		
1	Develop and adopt Downtown streetscape design manual	1-2 Years
2	Develop a 5-year capital improvement plan for public area improvements	1-2 Years
3	Establish an annual flowers, banner and lighting program	
	Establish a committee to identify annual needs	Immediate
	Develop funding mechanism	Immediate
	Annual implementation	Immediate / ongoing
4	Interim sidewalk use and café standards	
	Develop standards for sidewalk use	Immediate
	Create a standardized use agreement	Immediate
5	Construct interim curb extensions at Downtown intersections	Immediate

Task		Priority
6	Carry out Downtown Phase II streetscape improvements	Create a master design plan (functions and activities, landscape, bicycle facilities, and amenity feature design) 1-2 Years Present proposal for approval 1-2 Years Develop funding mechanism 1-2 Years Construction 2-5 Years
7	Provide quality public art on Main Street	Immediate / ongoing
8	Restripe on- and off-street parking Downtown to increase number of spaces	1-2 Years
9	Undertake alley improvement to facilitate delivery vehicles	2-5 Years
<b>D Downtown Business Development and Recruitment</b>		
1	Conduct a "propensity to purchase" study	Develop funding mechanism 1-2 Years Hire specialist to conduct study 1-2 Years Provide findings to merchants 1-2 Years
2	Conduct periodic shopper surveys	Immediate / ongoing
3	Hire retail merchandising specialist to assist Downtown merchants	1-2 Years
4	Carry out a "buy local" campaign	Immediate
5	Establish a dedicated revenue stream to fund business and marketing program	1-2 Years
6	Establish a Downtown business development and recruitment program	Establish a business attraction committee Immediate Inventory of available and best fit spaces, rents and sale prices Immediate Work with property owners on leasing needs and expectations Immediate / 1-2 Years Identify incentives and options for attracting desired businesses Immediate / 1-2 Years Develop business loan and financing programs Immediate / 1-2 Years Develop a commercial broker incentive program Immediate / 1-2 Years Establish a program for monitoring success Immediate / 1-2 Years
7	Create a retail business incubator program	1-2 Years / 2-5 Years
8	Establish business hour commitments	Immediate / 1-2 Years
9	Establish a retail business forum	Immediate / 1-2 Years
10	Work with the City on Downtown hospitality objectives and enforcement policies	Immediate / 1-2 Years
11	Create vacant space "window display" boxes	Merchants Group meets with City to discuss Immediate / 1-2 Years Create committee to work with property owners and organize merchants and museums on displays Immediate / 1-2 Years Secure agreements with property owners Immediate / 1-2 Years Establish display quality standards Immediate
12	Determine conference/convention/multiple use facility feasibility	Conduct feasibility study Immediate Develop funding mechanisms, ownership and programming options and agreements Immediate / 1-2 Years Present proposal to community 1-2 Years Identify property acquisition 1-2 Years Acquire property 2-5 Years Building remodel and reuse 2-5 Years
13	Develop an e-Commerce and mapping program for Downtown	1-2 Years

Task		Priority	
E Create Downtown Gateway along Highway 50			
1	Prepare 6th Street and Royal Gorge Boulevard Intersection design plan	Meet with CDOT to gain acceptance of plan concept Prepare design alternatives Public input on long-term desired solution Agreements with Colorado Department of Transportation Establish funding mechanisms for public improvements Work with private property owners to identify acquisition areas Acquire property Construction	Immediate 1-2 Years 1-2 Years 1-2 Years 2-5 Years 1-2 Years 2-5 Years 2-5 Years
2	Promote Redevelopment Area improvements	Prepare design guidelines for related building and redevelopment areas Establish a committee to work with property owners Identify redevelopment area incentives and strategies Address area zoning	1-2 Years Immediate 1-2 Years
3	Initiate Gateway Streetscape improvements	Prepare design guidelines for highway corridor and 6th Street streetscape improvements Present proposal to community and approval Development funding Construction	1-2 Years 1-2 Years 1-2 Years 2-5 Years
4	Gateway arch	Establish a committee to promote a community design involvement Select the desired design and present to community Develop funding Coordinate construction with Gateway improvements	1-2 Years 1-2 Years 1-2 Years 2-5 Years
5	Improve public parking along Royal Gorge Boulevard between 4th and 7th Streets	Work with private property owners to gain cross-access easements for public parking Landscape Install parking identification signage	1-2 Years / 2-5 Years 1-2 Years / 2-5 Years Immediate
F Downtown Redevelopment			
1	Convene task force to determine feasibility of redevelopment		Immediate
2	Determine residential market feasibility and phasing		1-2 Years
3	Identify target properties		1-2 Years
4	Identify joint venture and partnership opportunities		2-5 Years
5	Agree upon redevelopment plan, acquisition and agreements		2-5 Years
6	Develop Downtown design guidelines for newer buildings for compatibility with historic character		1-2 Years
7	Convene task force to evaluate existing structures and determine feasibility and procedures for gaining rehabilitation	Work with property owners Develop a report on building needs and regulatory changes required Provide direction to property owners	Immediate Immediate / 1-2 Years 1-2 Years 1-2 Years
8	Identify financing needs and sources for redevelopment and rehabilitation activities		1-2 Years
9	Identify regulatory changes to allow and stimulate reinvestment		Immediate / 1-2 Years
10	Establish financing mechanisms and incentives		1-2 Years
11	Create a lifestyle campaign to generate interest in Downtown and market residential real estate		1-2 Years / 2-5 Years

Task		Priority
<b>G Amend Zone Districts and Regulations</b>		
1	Rezone properties between 4th and 7th	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Notify and work with affected property owners - explain the plan	Immediate
	Prepare rezoning proposal	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Schedule public hearing and notices	Immediate / 1-2 Years
2	Amend zoning and subdivision regulations consistent with Plan	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Downtown building reuse	
	Gateway Redevelopment Area	
	West End Redevelopment Area	
	Central Square Area Neighborhood	
3	Establish a commitment to work with property owners on a building rehabilitation strategy	Immediate
4	Prepare design guidelines for incorporation into the zoning regulations to guide site plans and improvements to properties on the south side of the highway between 3rd Street and 8th Street	1-2 Years
5	Amend the zone district regulations to promote the desired West End Redevelopment	1-2 Years
6	Do a comprehensive review of the CB and C zone districts to ensure that each is promoting the objectives of the Strategic Plan	1-2 Years
<b>I Improve the Connectivity Downtown and between Downtown and the Community</b>		
1	Provide transit service connecting Downtown and other community activities and services	2-5 Years / 5-10 Years
2	Way finding and directional signs	
	Create a design detail package	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Develop funding mechanism	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Establishing marker priorities and locations	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Installation	1-2 Years / 2-5 Years
3	Provide a pedestrian connection at 3rd Street connecting Downtown with the Southside parks and river corridor	5-10 Years / longterm
	Coordinate the design of the bridge with the 3rd Street redevelopment planning	2-5 Years / 5-10 Years
	Submit design to community for approval	2-5 Years / 5-10 Years
	Development funding	2-5 Years / 5-10 Years
	Construction	5-10 Years / longterm
4	Initiate streetscape improvements for connection to the Hogback Recreation Area	
	Prepare design guidelines for the 3rd Street corridor	1-2 Years / 2-5 Years
	Present proposal to community and neighborhood and approval	1-2 Years / 2-5 Years
	Development funding	2-5 Years / 5-10 Years
	Construction	2-5 Years / 5-10 Years
<b>J Parking</b>		
1	Restrip on-street parking spaces to comply with City standards	Immediate / 1-2 Years
2	Maximize public parking along the Highway 50 corridor	2-5 years
<b>K Organization and Funding</b>		
1	Establish a task force to guide the creation of the Downtown organizational and funding structures recommended in the Strategic Plan	Immediate / 1-2 Years
	Determine appropriate district boundaries	1-2 Years
	Work with property owners to establish	1-2 Years
	Present to community for approval	1-2 Years
<b>H Adopt the Downtown Master Plan</b>		
1	Adopt the Downtown Master Plan and incorporate the Illustrative Master Plan into the City Comprehensive Plan	Immediate
2	Initiate a River Corridor Master Plan and coordinate it with the Downtown Plan	Immediate / 1-2 Years