

Issues Affecting Downtown Cheyenne

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Date: June 6, 2011

The people who attended the second Downtown Placemaking meeting offered hundreds of excellent suggestions about how to think about and respond to the issues affecting Cheyenne’s central business district; we’ve catalogued them in later pages as attachment A. Many of the comments could be categorized multiple ways, underscoring the notion that Downtown Cheyenne functions as a system and, as such, will require intervention that:

- Targets interconnections (overlaps and leverage points) between elements to shape system behaviors.
- Identifies early actions and build feedback loops that generate momentum for positive change.
- Increases system resilience.
- Creates synergies between the elements, including via partnerships.
- Builds flexibility into implementation.



The following pages set forth the seven issue/action categories shown at right. However, as inter-related and overlapping issues, all inflict reciprocal effects on downtown Cheyenne. This list refines the approach presented at the second Placemaking meeting made in light of the comments from the citizens, including the desire to frame these matters as an action agenda.

In fact, the citizen reactions to these categories featured one common element: the yearning for strong leadership, bold vision and persistent effort.



Rehabilitate Historic Structures

Without question, well-tended historic structures lend character and appeal to the Downtown Cheyenne experience. At the same time, down-at-the heels buildings and structures with unfortunate cladding obscuring their original facades detract from the district's charm.

Essentials	Public Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As rehab projects often incur unexpected costs, confidence in the market – the future income stream – must be especially strong.• Years of disinvestment makes rehabilitation more difficult.• No state income tax means no Wyoming equivalent to match the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit.• Rehabbing historic structures is inherently green thanks to the embodied carbon and reduced requirement for new materials.• Historic rehabs can be more expensive per square foot than new construction but must be profitable to attract developer interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to connect property owners with existing resources (e.g., façade programs) so they can help themselves?• So many buildings, like the Elks Lodge, were beautiful. Can we restore them?• Can the banks

<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The historic structures with the best potential as rehab projects may be neither the most beloved nor the most prominent buildings. • Neighboring buildings will, for better or worse, influence the viability of potential historic rehab projects. Therefore, the rehab projects most essential to capitalize on previous investments and build momentum might not otherwise be logical early choices. • Strategic site and building acquisition, if necessary, may mean accepting above-market prices to facilitate change. • Adaptive reuse of obsolete uses (e.g., office to residential) may require changes to current land use regulations 	<p>create a pool of funds for rehab?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need design standards and/or guidelines to avoid unfortunate decisions in the future. • Downtown buildings look pretty similar. Can we make them look more different while still having a unified theme?
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Catalyze New Development

Some uses that would enhance downtown and attract new markets don't lend themselves very well to the adaptive reuse of existing structures. Meanwhile, under-developed or vacant sites downtown detract from the overall experience and contribute nothing to the sense of place.

Essentials	Public Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the notable exception of “The Hole” and some vacant parcels on 15th Street, there are limited opportunities for new development in the downtown core that aren't already devoted to surface parking and/or home to existing businesses.• Downtown's major development opportunity sites are west of Thomes, underscoring the need for east-west linkages.• New residential housing downtown will go a long way towards generating market support for retail and restaurants and increasing the CBD's attractiveness as an office location.	<p>What about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High end lofts and condos?• Senior housing?• Upscale lodging?• Music venue?• Grocery store?• Office supply/other large format uses?

<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land assembly and loan underwriting to accelerate projects and increase lender confidence may be necessary. • As Wyoming’s capital city, Cheyenne should be a showpiece to support state-wide economic development initiatives. • Negotiating deals with landowners who have fallen out of compliance with city ordinances or behind on their property taxes may make sense for all players. • Partnerships are great tools but only work when they make financial sense for all participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the Lincoln and Atlas so both bring people downtown? • The greenway as amenity? • Satellite LCCC campus? • The rec center/other 6th cent projects?
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Make Downtown Sparkle

For busy business owners, minor maintenance matters – chipped paint, grubby windows, loose hinges, etc – recede into invisibility with daily exposure. For visitors, however, affected buildings, businesses and blocks seem scruffy and unloved... and so unworthy of patronage.

Essentials	Public Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low rents and high vacancy rates lie at the root of the problem but owners that address maintenance issues improve their competitiveness for tenants and traffic.• New sources of demand are needed to promote downtown's real estate market out of the cycle of decline; with supply exceeding demand, values and rents fall. Properties with little market value deteriorate as owners see little economic benefit to rehabilitating, or even maintaining them.• Façade programs are great for owners but tenants can't access them without landlord cooperation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can youth who need community service credits help out? Work release prisoners?• Fresh paint and attention to windows is needed all over• Don't forget awnings and

<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the reasons underpinning postponed maintenance – money, time, skills, authority, procrastination, etc. – are as varied as the issues, a respectful and tailored approach is key. • Making downtown sparkle takes action by numerous players – owners, tenants, the city – and thus makes it tough to coordinate. • Deferred upkeep often reflects landlord-tenant disputes playing out as stubborn “principled” behavior that harms everyone. By pressing property rights buttons, clumsy requests that an owner address appearance issues can also do more harm than good. • Maintenance improves value, giving lenders an interest too. 	<p>curtains in upper story windows!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s with the solid doors and dark windows? • We could use more landscaping. • Art in empty storefronts? • Community-wide clean-up days?
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Recruit Businesses Downtown

Recruiting new businesses to downtown Cheyenne both requires and creates market strength.

<p>Essentials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping malls offer a facile analogy that falls apart under scrutiny as overly simplistic. • Business recruitment entails addressing market demand issues, character and physical appeal. • There are many relatively simple tools that can be deployed at a reasonable cost. • Business recruitment isn't just about resident and visitor serving retail, restaurant and entertainment uses. Daytime population is also important. 	<p>Citizen Comments</p> <p>We need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants/Clubs • Movie Theatres • Boutiques • Arcade • Children's Museum • Health Club • Drug Store • Grocery/Gourmet • Target-style small department store • Day care center • Residential choice • Brewery • Bakery • Kite Shop • Ice Cream Shop • Bike Shop • Fulfill your retail shop dreams here! • Start-up Funds
<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one entity can do it alone. Business recruitment takes coordinated action by current merchants, service providers, owners, property owners, bankers, realtors, government, community development interests, etc.: a team approach. • A balance between newly hatched enterprises and veteran local, regional and national players will create the blend of unique shops and reliable relatives that let downtowns thrive. • Downtown Cheyenne can draw attention to market characteristics that may have been overlooked by companies focused on the Dell Range Boulevard area. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some enterprises (both tenants and property owners) may need (or want) to be relocated as downtown improves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnerships
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Help Businesses Succeed

It takes so many skills to make a retail store or restaurant successful—merchandising, marketing, accounting, tax preparation, management, hiring, just to name a few—that it’s no wonder so many flounder. Skills training and an outside perspective can make the difference.

<p>Essentials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown is home to numerous retailers and restauranteurs that are doing quite well, but others are obviously troubled and/or depend on low-cost rents to survive. • Some struggling businesses need technical assistance on matters ranging from merchandising to bookkeeping. • All would benefit from sharing data, marketing together and coordinating sales, hours, festivals, etc. • Downtown already features clusters of successful businesses benefitting from agglomeration, including the 17th Street restaurants and the Lincolnway interior design shops. 	<p>Public Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about rewarding best practices (e.g., windows, etc.) • Could DDA or LCCC distribute “how to” info sheets covering business basics? • Could successful merchants lead sessions on how they did it? • Dog-friendly stores boost sales. • Hospitality and customer service training is needed. • Ask kids, teens
<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work is perpetual. All types of small businesses – not just retailers – could use technical assistance. • Since the reasons underpinning low-no profit operations – money, time, skills, authority, procrastination, etc. – are as varied as the issues, a respectful and tailored approach is key. • Resources already exist that could help shopkeepers 	

<p>improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building upon existing and creating new clusters is key.• Since most businesses fail, disappointments are inevitable. That, however, isn't a justification for abandoning the effort.	<p>what they want!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whither DCMA?
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Enhance the Public Realm

The public realm makes major contributions to downtown Cheyenne’s character and appeal as a place to live, work and visit. Moreover, downtown’s quality contributes the Cheyenne’s competitiveness for economic development and fosters community pride.

<p>Essentials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Cheyenne’s streetscape and pedestrian precincts form the junction between private property and public space and so are key to community character. • Materials, signage, public art, fountains, curbs, historic plaques, banners, murals, street furniture, newspaper boxes, trash cans, flower urns, traffic signals, parking meters, curbs, sidewalks, storm drains, alleys, utility poles/boxes, crosswalks, parks, manhole covers, Depot Square, bike racks, curb cuts, bollards, fences, fireplugs, call boxes, line paint: the tip of a big iceberg. • Key nexus: sidewalk cafes, sandwich signs and other overlap. 	<p>Public Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start a dialogue between the city, county and state on joint planning • And the hospital! • Lighting is inconsistent and could be improved • Uneven code enforcement ... here lax, there impeding development. • More trees! • Fix the curbs! • Promote free parking. • Ban one-way streets. • Remember cyclists and pedestrians!
<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and standards (e.g., for wayfinding) already exist. • Incremental implementation is inevitable... and fine. • City, county, state and federal buildings are also a part of the public realm. • Regulations governing sidewalk cafes, festivals, public markets, concerts, races, and other joint uses of public space need to be reviewed and/or developed with participation by all affected entities. 	



Attract Diverse Markets

Shifting attitudes about downtown Cheyenne and attracting more patrons isn't just a matter of marketing. Building bona fide reasons to come downtown for essentials, for work, and for fun---and maybe to go house-hunting too---will build businesses and create a virtuous circle.

<p>Essentials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand identity is more than slogan and graphics • Downtown Cheyenne belongs to Wyoming and can capture the same markets attracted to the Dell Range Boulevard areas • Adding new offerings, reducing vacancies and keeping downtown's public realm and historic structures in top shape, creating and inviting, safe atmosphere will go a long way towards attracting new markets. • Downtown workers are a direct path to wider audiences. • Today's tourist is tomorrow's resident or business owner. 	<p>Public Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melodrama has social component • Need more/different music on the plaza geared towards new audiences • Linked to Cheyenne brand identity
<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive panhandlers and homeless people quash trade; how to help them? And, strip clubs, SROs and pawn shops, connote despair but have a market; where should they be? • Downtown needs to understand the market as it exists today, not just as it might be if all hopes and dreams come true. • Understanding downtown assets – people, businesses, buildings, heritage, institutions, etc. – is also key to building a cadre of champions and leaders for downtown. 	<p>Potential Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth • Seniors • Hospital Workers • State Workers • Young Professionals • Foodies (need ethnic)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building brand identity means tapping into the authentic downtown Cheyenne.• You can't manage what you can't measure; metrics work.	<p>restaurants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kids (playground?)• Heritage tourists (leverage the museums better?)
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