

Placemaking #2 Meeting Summary

Introduction by Tom and Elaine about their trip thus far.

Started Monday by visiting downtown properties and visiting with owners and proprietors.

This was a great week to be in Cheyenne with the mill levy vote. It's an affirmation of the current direction as well as a call to action to improve downtown. We want to start keeping a report card and grade the community after the planning process. It's a grade not only on how well the community is implementing, but also how well the plan was crafted by Tom and Elaine.

Short Powerpoint.

Discussion of the tendency in Cheyenne to run in several different directions and trying to solve unrelated issues. However, the goal is to think of downtown as a system.

Tom: Did we get the first impressions right? A: Yeah, I think you got it right on. I've lived here 40 years.

A: One of the things that caught my eye was the sign structures at Central/Lincolnway. The wind requires some large poles. As a visitor, those signs are helpful. Elaine: One of the reasons for the big posts was related to the fact that this section is classified as an Interstate. Your point about wayfinding is really important, and the community has an excellent plan. (Note web link to Wayfinding.)

Summary of Problems:

- Missing uses. There are things missing in downtown. We have some slides that are Chicken/Egg situation. There are 14,000 employees downtown, but there are a lot of services that aren't here. The key is to ID those services and what we need to do to encourage them to move downtown. Part of the issue is the concentration of employment north, and the retail/services to the south.
- Under-performing businesses. Because there are low rents, there are under-performing businesses taking up large spaces that aren't filled with merchandise.
- Uneven Streetscape. There are areas that are well designed and invested in. Other areas don't have any improvements. Consistency could be improved and level of care increased.
- Too few people/shoppers. Partially due to the division of employment (north) and retail (south).
- Poor Image. There are stories of people who travel to Cheyenne to experience the west. But often that image isn't presented. There are people who have taken a risk and put their resources into downtown. This shows that there is the potential for success.

Chicken & Egg Issues:

- Empty Buildings vs. Lack of Market
- Self responsibility for failure vs. Public agency failure
 - Are business owners making it convenient for shoppers to spend money?
- Buildings vacant due to poor condition vs. poor condition due to lack of tenants

- Do people avoid downtown due to the image vs. naysayers creating negative image
- Restoration of buildings is profitable vs. low return on investment
- Site requirements improve properties vs. requirements inhibit progress
- Tourists are a boon to downtown vs. Tourists impede local customers
 - Some businesses complained about events drawing people away, but the need is to help those owners find a way to draw those crowds into their businesses.

Everything downtown is a system.

There isn't one magic solution. If everything is interconnected, can you really do anything? Plus other outside systems can influence as well. We've identified 7 clusters of elements that were identified at the first meeting.

- 1.) Spit and Polish
 - a. Inexpensive fixes that bring a sense of care.
 - b. Not the Hynds. Simple fixes that are noticeable, like window washing or painting.
- 2.) Helping Hands
 - a. Providing logical business hours, open during events, good window displays.
- 3.) Public Realm
 - a. Streetscape. Crumbling curbs.
 - b. Wayfinding.
 - c. Anything that visitors see and remember about Cheyenne.
- 4.) Business Recruitment
 - a. Finding missing stores and helping them move downtown.
 - b. Helping like stores cluster. (Restaurants on 17th, Home Décor on Lincolnway)
 - c. Pointed and serious effort at recruitment. Someone needs to take the lead. Currently recruitment is up to everyone and nobody, but Cheyenne has good organizations that can lead.
- 5.) Historic Rehabs
 - a. Bad sheathing to unwrap.
 - b. "Littlins" – Smaller projects. These are different projects that need to be thought of as catalyst projects.
 - c. "Bigguns" – Like the Hynds, Dinneen, and Grier.
 - d. Adjacent Eyesores. When you have a building that's been invested in, with a poor one next door. The neighboring building drags down the positive investment. Sometimes there's assistance needed to do what's right.
- 6.) New Development
 - a. The Hole is obvious
 - b. Residential gaps.
 - c. Public projects – like the Rec Center, LCCC projects like the performing arts center. Things like that would bring people downtown, and put them in the habit of coming downtown. This also gives investors the cue that the area won't dry up.

7.) Audiences

- a. Segments of the population with potential. Are we catering to the military to encourage them to come downtown. Students are another.
- b. How does downtown fit within the broader economy? For tourism, economic development.

The system overlaps and interacts. What does this mean for Placemaking? We don't want to think about Silos, but an overall approach. What are the trade-offs of actions we take? The fundamentals are to look for interconnections and leverage points that will be mutually reinforcing and supportive. The goal is to build downtown's resiliency so that a big event (like a fire) is painful, but doesn't debilitate the entire downtown.

Exercise: Using post-it notes, please write down your problems that need to be addressed in each of these key areas, or solutions to explore. We will be working to create partnerships. How do you build resolve, identify leaders, select priorities, build partnerships, create strategies, ID funding, set a timeline, and celebrate. Then you do it all again!

Missing Uses: Drugstore, grocery store, apparel. There are a lot of banks, but you don't have a men's clothier. Jewellery. There's no high end wine shop, but a very good kitchen store. You do have several dayspas and salons, but wouldn't it be nice to visit a clothing store on your way home? Sometimes there are uses where there's only one needed in the community – typically those like to cluster in the central business district, like a bridal store, or art supply store. If things continue to pop with LightsON, it would be logical to have an arts store downtown.

Q: Where do we find funding for a shop owner to do what's right? A: DDA, Chamber, banks working together to establish a revolving loan fund for business start ups.

Q: Since I arrived, the bad guy has always been the City. Its refreshing to hear that some of the business owners aren't as flexible as they should be. Elaine: Cheyenne has a large market, competing with Ft. Collins, but there are people from outlying areas that come to Cheyenne for our stores. These people are visiting Dell Range, but how can we draw them downtown to have an entertainment experience. Convince them that there's the 'treat' of coming to Cheyenne. Q: You hit it, its entertainment and food. A lot of times there's music involved. Bands on the street. Activity here is usually on the Plaza. Elaine: It also shows that people value downtown, and you want to send people home with pride that they discovered downtown and want to send their friends.

Q: Enhancing the dog-friendly atmosphere would attract people.

Q: We attract people from NE. We need to draw them downtown. Tom: Maybe there should be a study to find out what businesses are not in the retail market area served by Cheyenne.

Q: Youth Center programs downtown. If it becomes a habit to come downtown as a youth, they will grow up and bring their kids back. There needs to be something for kids.

Q: The Outlaw brings concerts to town. Why can't we do that downtown, particularly for the under 21 crowd. Q: The Atlas has rentable space that can be opened to the public for concerts and other events. It needs some help. We have rented it out to underage groups. Q: There's a facebook page that has recently discussed that there's nothing for kids to do. Elaine: Kids that are old enough to drive but not old enough to drink. What things are missing here? Could we get a list. Q: I'm a 17 year old. Visiting other communities, they have lively streets. Here, kids are turned away at the door unless accompanied by an adult. Its important to note that teens often have more expendable income. Q: I think there are a lot of families that are looking for indoor entertainment venues. Elaine: Some of these old buildings would be great for laser tag. Tom: The Paul Smith Children's Village is a top rate model. What could we do to take that model, tweak it for teens, and do it downtown. Mayor: For those in the room, what things downtown used to draw youth and families? A: Movie theatres. Third Spaces. The Atlas has a screen. There's no place to shop and useful things like a drugstore. One key is helping people accomplish more during their day. A: In the 70s, we cruised. Ice Cream. A: We had a 'Memorial Drag' event that attracted 750 cars.

Q: Would a pedestrian mall work? Elaine: Actually, many communities are ripping out their pedestrian malls. Unless you're in a college environment (lots of people without cars) it doesn't work. Q: Example of Kalamazoo that had a failed pedestrian mall. Temporary closures for festivals is great.

Tom: I can't emphasize enough about the great supply of historic buildings that's available here. Now is the time to put the system together to make it work.

Q: Cowgirls of the West Museum – we have trouble getting tourists and volunteers because of our neighbors. Tom: For a community this size, you have a lot of great museums. Are there common issues that you can collaborate on.

Q: Bringing an entire building up to code becomes an issue. Tom: As long as there is one person in the City you can go to as a facilitator, that can help. But there is the issue of code, at a certain point you need to bring things up to standards. Mayor: We do have our specialists to work with, including the Building Official.

Q: I used to shop downtown when there were places to shop. I left and worked with redevelopment agencies. Why don't we have such an agency that would be the hub for these issues that can coordinate getting financing, new businesses.

Q: What's the status of downtown living? Elaine: There's 1901 with a good cluster. And several sprinkled around. A: The total population is under 500. It's a good idea, but it's a big problem because banks aren't loaning money for downtown residential. Elaine: Its definitely a hurdle. One thing that is becoming clear is that downtown will require some big interventions along with smaller incremental changes to keep progress moving.

Q: The goal can't be to compete with Dell Range, but you need to capitalize on your heritage with antiques and boutiques that are unique.

Q: There's a huge fascination in Europe with cowboys. It's an untapped market.

Q: I saw a youth center in Salina KS downtown that was a hotspot. Night life is critical. Panera Bread is a real gathering place. Elaine: They want 50,000 people and income requirements. A town I'm working with just got contacted because they're now over 50K. How do you make an effective case that you should be considered as a larger community based on your catchment area. Q: Can't we create that ourselves without waiting for national chains? Elaine: This is where the business recruitment comes in. Do you create a buddy system for them, where they can go for help with accounting, taxes, or health code. It's a lot of work, but that's jobs and proof of concept to attract more business. Elaine: Lots of people go to Starbucks because they know the quality, but the best place in town is the Bait Shop. There are people who will choose local, but there are those who want the same product they can get across the country.

Q: Some of the business owners on 17th have created an improvement plan. These include adding banners, fixing curbs, repainting parking stripes. This is the type of thing I think you're looking for, bringing up the area with incremental change. I think we need to take steps now. The point is, we're ready to work with the City and DDA to take action now so that its more visitor friendly this year. We need to get away from the idea that we want to get ready for CFD, but change that to getting ready for Summer.

Elaine: As we go forward, we're going to go through the Buckets and refine a memo (like the first impressions). It will entail how we think the issues shake out and how they relate to one another. We'll refine our understanding of how to deal with the issues. The next meeting we'll affirm we heard you right and finding the solutions, organizational changes, and things we can do now to make positive momentum. Tom: As always forward those ideas to Jan at jspires@cheyennecity.org.