

# The Downtown Partnership

## Imagine Downtown Plan

*Plan Update: Defining Priorities that will drive Action for the next three years*

### Our basic assumptions

Downtown matters! Downtown Colorado Springs has been the city's nexus since it's founding. The Imagine Downtown Plan is robust, well reasoned, flexible and pragmatic. It has been built around best practices. At its core, the plan addresses critical "drivers" necessary to create the right conditions for long-term economic health and vitality. The plan, and thus the Downtown Partnership, recognizes that the most successful redevelopment efforts are driven and held together by a catalytic group. In our case it is a public private partnership between The Downtown Development Authority, the Business Improvement District, the Downtown Partnership, the City of Colorado Springs, and El Paso County.

### The work for Downtown's leadership

To create the *right conditions* for Downtown to be a catalyst for community engagement, economic health and vitality, and a vibrant place to live and work. As the sparkplug that encourages these conditions, the Downtown Partnership spurs downtown Colorado Springs to realize its potential.

The Imagine Downtown Plan articulates six focus areas necessary to creating the right conditions. They are all equal in terms of their importance to the plan, so the listing here is not intended to be hierarchical.

- Economic Strength
- Entertainment/Culture/Events
- Residential
- Retail
- Safety and Security
- Urban Character

### Leadership Day, March 7, 2012

On March 7, 2012, members of the Downtown Partnership. The Downtown Development Authority, The Business Improvement District, the City of Colorado Springs and Community Ventures convened at Phantom Canyon for a leadership conversation. The intended purpose was to lend perspective and clarity to each of these focus areas by identifying short, medium, and long-term priorities in each of the six areas. To facilitate effective planning, collaboration, and clarification, members were provided with the following materials to help inform their work:

- The Imagine Downtown Plan; A Summary of the Plan Goals divided into three categories: short-term (0-2 years); medium term (2-5 years); and long term (5-20 years); and a robust list of projects already underway provided by the DP staff.

All participants had the opportunity to address at least three of the plan's six focus areas. In the first round, participants were expansive and freewheeling in their idea generation. The two subsequent rounds offered participants the chance to deepen, refine, and enrich the initial ideas offered. A summary of those group conversations follows here.

### *Entertainment/Culture/Events*

**Contributors:** Roger Sauerhagen, Amanda Mountain, Susan Presti, Doug Price, Susan Edmondson, Judy Noyes, Michael Collins, Ron Butlin, Scott Clinton, Jim Harris, Sam Eppley, and Gay Halter.

**Summary:** Opening with the idea that the role of entertainment, culture and sport is to bring people downtown because downtown is a unique hub where fun things are happening, this group explored ways to enhance the cultural experience downtown.

It seems the chief constraints to encouraging people to come downtown are related to events and venues. The lack of master planning for events means that the City's brand may not be as protected as it could be because anyone can apply for a permit to run any kind of event downtown. Further, event scheduling is largely concentrated between Memorial and Labor Days making for a potentially exhausting schedule. There is also tension between events and retailers because the events often reduce traffic flow to and from shops rather than enhancing it.

Exploring ways to hold events downtown and avoid always usurping Tejon held much appeal among participants. Ideas like an event tool kit that could help event planners organize and stage experiences all around downtown and in ways that enhance/support the retail-dining – entertainment experience was elevated as an important priority over the next few years.

A handful of venue ideas cropped up such as using the area around Monument Creek to extend the cultural experience; changing liquor laws/ordinances to allow alcohol at certain events in City Parks; modernizing City Aud; and exploring the potential for creating some kind of creative district associated with downtown including promotion of the area around Cottonwood came out of this group. Exploring the potential for bringing Sky Sox downtown or at least developing a multi-sport venue was of keen interest, as was promoting downtown as a sport/fitness hub with access to safe bike parking, showers, and a dog-friendly environment. These ideas seemed to resonate and support the larger brand platform for the City as a whole.

### *Economic Strength and Vitality*

**Contributors:** Kady Hommel, Rich Guy, Steve Cox, Dick Anderwald, Jim Rees, Carl Schueler, Jim Harris, Susan Presti, Roger Sauerhagen, Greg Warnke, Steve Engel, Chris Jenkins, Jim Kin, Hannah Parsons, Scott Clinton, Doug Price, and Brian Burnett

**Summary:** Synergy would best describe this group's theme. They identified many similar or overlapping ideas and concerns expressed among other groups. But it is the attention to ideas that are drivers for economic vitality that really came to the surface through their conversations.

They suggested that safety and security are directly linked to economic vitality, but that this essential element is about helping people to *feel* safe, not so much the security aspect. They were encouraged by the Downtown Solutions Team.

Like others, they recognized that interchanges are important like 1-25 and Cimarron as gateways to other sought-after tourist destinations (e.g. skiing).

There was a resonance with having anchors. Retail anchors like upscale chains or other unique shopping experiences that would complement what is already in place; demographic anchors that would attract important populations like young families coming downtown to a Children's Museum, or young adults, families and fans coming downtown to a sporting event, or an arts district that attracted artists to live and work downtown. A convention center continued to hold attraction as another potential anchor.

Infrastructure was touched on, especially as it relates to transportation both the regular bus system and the potential for some kind of trolley system. Evidence was offered that both supported and vilified this particular idea. Related to this is the question of parking and connectivity to SW downtown – creating access to downtown and America the Beautiful Park vis-à-vis a bridge across Vermijo received attention.

Getting things done in a way that is easy and effective led to discussions about the importance of linking to neighborhoods, working with neighborhood associations, and setting boundaries around urban growth. Developers prefer working with green fields than neighborhoods, so infill was another option explored. “Density makes infrastructure cheaper.” Calgary has been successful in using this approach. Working with the Housing Authority to focus on downtown might offer an initial pathway forward.

Perhaps the most resonate aspect of the entire discussion was the need for a business plan, a roadmap for downtown development coupled with a new attitude that harnesses our assets and from which we build confidence to boldly move forward.

### *Residential*

*Contributors:* Hannah Parsons, Steve Engle, Carl Schueler, Ryan Tefertiller, Jim Kin, Dick Anderwald, Les Gruen, Lisa Czeladtko, Chris Jenkins, B.J. Hybl, Chuck Murphy, Amanda Mountain, Rich Guy, and Jim Rees.

*Summary:* This group identified a handful of triggers points that need to be addressed to help spur a vibrant residential community downtown: parking, utilities, regulations, and increased understanding of the mixed demography interested in living downtown. The group also extended the conversation to consider really big gestures that could open myriad new possibilities.

A stated priority for the Imagine Downtown plan is the allocation of resources to encourage the Utilities to increase infrastructure to support housing growth. Parking is a barrier for both developers and residents as it is at a premium to build and buy. There were concerns expressed that the current parking is perceived as being too far away from the core. Ideas circulated around offering leased parking options and to get the City’s parking enterprise engaged in the planning process for how best to offer parking options for retail customers, residents, and visitors.

Understanding the demographic mix of people interested in living downtown was another hot topic. Three groups top the list of potential markets and each has a differing tolerance for what they will/can pay, as well as the design requirements they want in a living space. Recognizing these distinct groups and the value each brings to the vibrancy of downtown will be important. They are: People 35 and under (with and without families) who may be self employed, social entrepreneurs, graduate students, etc.; Young Professionals; and Empty Nesters.

Finally to the big ideas. Add apartment living, which will in turn spawn cafes and other gathering places. Remove the coal plant from downtown and open up Fountain Creek like San Antonio’s river walk. The basic thinking is that grand moves attract people and bring federal subsidies. A nod was given to continued pursuit of green/alternative energy.

### *Retail*

*Contributors:* Sam Eppley, Ron Butlin, Michael Collins, Brain Burnett, Hannah Parsons, Gary Feffer, Jim Kin, Les Gruen, Judy Noyes, Kady Hommel, and Susan Edmondson.

*Summary:* Threading through the three groups' conversations were four important ideas:

Determining a **healthy mix of retail and entertainment** that supports our urban character. Participants discussed the importance of understanding who the retailers are, identifying if/how DP can support them more effectively, and tightening up the vacancies. In addition, groups were interested in exploring the potential for certain, more "high-end" chain retailers to locate downtown. Exploring what we have a need for and how we fill that need that is complementary to our existing retail mix is important. The groups also spent time considering the importance of ensuring diversity in offerings, which appeal to various markets and price points. One final footnote: we must pay attention to emerging trends in on-line retail and its effect on physical retail.

**Cooperation with retailers.** There was a sense that some retailers have difficult landlords who are unforgiving or unsympathetic to the ups-and-downs of retail. The landlord-leaser relationship is an important part of a retailer's long-term success. Also, how DP can help retailers work more cooperatively together would be helpful.

**Safety** was another aspect of the downtown environment that can positively or negatively affect retail traffic. There was a lot of support for the ideas identified in the Safety/Security section and for increasing the pedestrian-friendliness of downtown.

In thinking about creating the right conditions, the conversation also circulated around **the role of the DP**. Ideas like developing the business case for locating downtown; tracking vacancies; partnering with brokers to fill vacancies quickly; marketing downtown as a destination in cooperation with the CVB; and leveraging sites like [Foursquare](#) to animate downtown and help people connect generated a lot of enthusiasm.

#### *Safety and Security*

*Contributors:* Scott Clinton, Greg Warnke, B.J. Hybl, Jim Harris, Les Gruen, Michael Collins, Steve Cox, Doug Price, Steve Engle, Andrea Barker, Sam Eppley, and Lisa Czelatdko.

*Summary:* Safety and security largely focused around three broad topics: the routine challenges with the homeless; security in isolated venues like parking structures, alleys, and the like; and focusing on what is working both here in Colorado Springs already and in other communities, which we could emulate.

Of most concern is how best to contend with the challenges of the small, but very visible, chronically homeless population who live in and around downtown, or come downtown to receive services.

Participants were encouraged by the potential for the Downtown Solution's Team's work. There was also broad agreement that the community has a track record of experimenting with ideas, some of which have been effective, (e.g. the ID card; good neighbor agreement; the day room; HOT team) and to put commitment (time; resources) behind them to continuously improve them rather than letting them go by the wayside was supported. In addition to best practices, the group also talked about the value of well-placed ordinances and/or incentives to promote positive behavior among the homeless population and better collaboration with DP and the cohort of social service providers. The ultimate best result of any collaboration is learning to look through your collaborator's eye. Building a sense of understanding among the provider community about the challenges for the business community and vice versa in the shared space of downtown will be imperative. DP can help facilitate this through the use of the Imagine

Downtown Plan and its compelling vision, then helping to create conditions that support collaboration to foster a greater sense of security and safety.

Creating a greater sense of safety also has to do with enforcement of existing ordinances; more routine presence of law enforcement just cycling and walking in and around downtown. Improving walkways so that they are more even and pedestrian friendly, as well as increasing visibility with improved lighting, and finally thoughtful use of cameras in areas that are prone to low visibility or are difficult to survey with the eye.

### *Urban Character*

*Contributors:* Andrea Barker, Chris Jenkins, Judy Noyes, Greg Warnke, Kady Hommel, Amanda Mountain, Rich Guy, Brian Burnett, Susan Edmondson, Ryan Tefertiller, Roger Sauerhagen, Ron Butlin, Dick Anderwald, Carl Shueler, and Susan Presti.

*Summary:* Ideas were flowing from the collective wisdom of this group! Broad themes around the connection between the urban and natural environment prevailed including the momentum around the Fountain Creek Watershed; making Platte bike-friendly; reviving our legacy as a city of trees; attending to medians; the legacy park ring, and reconnecting downtown with Antlers Park.

Participants wrestled with the definition of urban character, wondering if it is people or structure centric. When it comes to structure there was discussion around the trajectory of various plans and keeping the dream fresh and relevant. Taking an integrated approach to planning rather than fragmenting various projects along funding or political lines also resonated with this group. Finding ways to stay connected to neighborhoods and adjacencies is important to create a sense of place.

Thoughts turned to the importance of a pedestrian-oriented downtown that takes into consideration a redesign of Acacia Park, a demonstration alley; and creating a Café row from the Antlers to Mining Exchange were just some of the suggestions from the group.

Mention was made about parades, parking and events as well.

## **Conclusion**

Broadly, the groups encouraged attention on quick and easy wins to build momentum and the importance of the DP to help nurture networks, cooperation and collaboration as part of creating the conditions to get things done. Once the initial ideas were captured, every individual selected up to three suggestions in each of the short, medium and the long-term time frames in each of the six focus areas. The table that follows the summary describes those suggestions in priority order.

The following table categorizes suggestions by focus area. The ideas listed are ordered, by short, medium, and long-term time horizons. Where appropriate, suggestions have been sub-divided into categories such as advocacy or demographics to help make sorting through them easier. Finally, suggestions posted in the grid garnered at least five or more points and are listed in priority order of most important to least important based on the group's input reaped during the second part of the leadership session on March 8, 2012.

## IMAGINE DOWNTOWN PLAN: SHORT, MEDIUM, AND LONG-RANGE PRIORITIES

Focus Area	Short-Term 0-2 years	Mid-Term 2-5 years	Long-Term 5-20 years	Measures of Success (Qualitative and Quantitative)
<b><i>Economic Strength and Vitality</i></b>				
<i>Incentives and Advocacy</i>	Promote residential living downtown	Promote residential living downtown	Promote residential living downtown	
	Collaborate to create incentives – foster a new culture of collaboration and cooperation			
<i>Transportation</i>		Collaborate with Parking Enterprise	I-25 and Cimarron (see Urban Character)	
	Streetcar	Streetcar	Streetcar	
	Bridge to ATB	Bridge to ATB	Bridge to ATB	
<i>Attracting Target Populations</i>	Focus on residential, collaborate with housing authority (see residential focus area)		Develop attractions: Children’s Museum; Baseball/Sports Arena; Convention Center	
	Focus on primary employers	Focus on primary employers	Focus on primary employers	
<b><i>Entertainment, Culture &amp; Vitality</i></b>				
<i>Events</i>	Change ordinances to allow alcohol in city parks for select events	Revise event planning, so not all events are on Tejon on Saturday afternoons		
	Invest in a DT Event Coordinator and develop an event tool kit	Develop alternative/creative venues		
	Create Annual Event Master Plan and Schedule	Conduct events that enhance, rather than hinder retail access		
	Create a unique/signature event	Create off or non-summer		

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Focus Area	Short-Term 0-2 years	Mid-Term 2-5 years	Long-Term 5-20 years	Measures of Success (Qualitative and Quantitative)
		events		
<i>Identity</i>	Develop positioning plan and support structure to promote downtown as a fitness hub		Foster dog-friendliness	
<i>Venue</i>		Master Plan for City Aud	Master Plan for City Aud	
			Multiuse sports venue	
			Sky Sox Downtown	
			Foster voter support for multiple venues (creek, city aud, etc.)	
			Promote arts district around cottonwood	
<b><i>Residential</i></b>				
<i>Housing</i>	Conduct housing demand; use and pricing study			To have created the conditions to spur development of 2000 new units
	Seek and promote public and private partnership such as parking enterprise	Enhance desirable features for better quality of life for residents	Enhance desirable features for better quality of life for residents	
<i>Identity</i>	Promote DT to the three target demo groups: young pros; empty nesters; and under 35s and determine price points	Promote DT to the three target demo groups: young pros; empty nesters; and under 35s		
<i>Regulations</i>	Revisit and revise outdated and obsolete regulations that hinder higher density	Locations 6-8 blocks from core to southwest; yield gap helped by utilities investment		
<i>Structure</i>		Narrow the gap to a 4-block radius and increase public		

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Focus Area	Short-Term 0-2 years	Mid-Term 2-5 years	Long-Term 5-20 years	Measures of Success (Qualitative and Quantitative)
		transportation		
		Enhance parking with lease parking options		
		Seek federal subsidies		
<i>Big Gesture</i>			Decommission coal plant in favor of Fountain Creek development	
<b>Retail</b>				
Clearinghouse	Collect information from retailers about needs, vacancies, etc. Hold	Bring in retail expert to inform long-range planning/strategy		
	Talk to Westside merchants to learn what's working			
	Hold exit interviews with vacating retailers			
	Coordinate listing of available space and partner with brokers to actively recruit businesses			
Marketing	Create compelling case to locate, shop, et al in downtown	Use social media like Foursquare to promote customer activity		
		Capitalize on and communicate success stories of current anchor retailers	Capitalize on and communicate success stories of current anchor retailers	
<b>Safety-Security</b>				
<i>Homelessness</i>	Increase political will to support effective and positive ordinances to address homeless challenges	Foster collaboration among service providers and downtown business community	HOT team	



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Focus Area	Short-Term 0-2 years	Mid-Term 2-5 years	Long-Term 5-20 years	Measures of Success (Qualitative and Quantitative)
	Establish a day room (Dorchester Park)			
<i>Safety/Cleanliness</i>	Cops on bikes/foot increase visibility	Alley and parking lighting	Ambassador presence to make bathrooms accessible, clean, and safe	
	Make parks civic spaces			
	Cameras – DP to support this initiative			
<b><i>Urban Character</i></b>				
<i>Pedestrian Focus</i>	Acacia Park reconstruction needs to be moved			
	Develop Demonstration Alley			
	Expand Art on the Streets			
<i>Identity/nature</i>		Maintain focus on our legacy and historic preservation	Planning effort for “Emerald Necklace”	
			Reconnect with the water front	
<i>Capital Improvement</i>		Need a strategy for Capital Improvement	Establish notable gateways	
			Private Development	