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

The Parker assessment team appreciates the invitation to get to know Parker and to assist the community to maximize considerable assets. The volunteers worked diligently, pre- and post-visit to provide relevant and realistic input towards the betterment of your commercial district.

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Introduction
Welcome to the downtown assessment for the Colorado community of Parker. Qualifying communities in Colorado have the opportunity to apply for assistance through Downtown Colorado, Inc. in a downtown assessment process partially sponsored by the USDA Rural Development Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI), and completed in collaboration with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA).

The Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) downtown assessment and training program is a process of gathering community leaders and stakeholders and developing a structure and process for them to support local businesses and the vibrancy of the commercial district. The process results in a road map to guide community leaders in providing services and training to help local businesses thrive.

Downtown Colorado, Inc. assembled a team of volunteer professionals including designers, planners, land use, and finance experts to work in Parker for two days and then contribute to this final report. The assessment team appreciated the invitation to learn about and assist your community and worked diligently to provide relevant and realistic input toward the betterment of downtown Parker.

This report was completed with support from Colorado Department of Local Affairs, the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, and Colorado Creative Industries.

Executive Summary
In the fall of 2012, the Town of Parker requested a downtown assessment team visit from Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) for January 28-29, 2013. The purpose of an assessment visit is to bring a team of consultants specializing in downtown and community revitalization to provide tools, insights, and direction to help the host community with its downtown revitalization goals. Main focuses for Parker’s revitalization efforts include the central walking district in the downtown area and the “Parker Square” area.

The downtown area has received many resources and has some great community anchors, historic assets, and some excellent community amenities. The downtown area is also well positioned to connect to the PACE Center and Town Hall areas. The Parker Square area was developed in the late 70’s and 80’s as a series of small offices and retail buildings. This area was built without continuous sidewalks, has a variety of architecture, and is in need of visioning and branding help.

In anticipation of this visit, the Town of Parker organized a planning group, planned focus groups, and provided extensive background information about the history and status of Parker downtown revitalization efforts and the issues facing the community. The background materials collected, the focus groups, and all planning around the visit assisted in gathering broad based and in depth detail of the community to share the team’s understanding of needs, objectives, and how to move forward.

Upon arrival in the community, team members were given a presentation on the history of downtown and the past initiatives taken for development and revitalization. Following this discussion, the team and town staff toured the town, including both the Parker Square area and downtown areas. Afterward, the team met with the town staff for lunch, and then held four well-attended focus group sessions with community stakeholders and interested citizens. The purpose of the focus groups was to hear directly from citizens about the issues
facing the downtown area, Parker Square area and the community as a whole; and to answer questions team members may have about the perceptions, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities related to these areas.

On day two, team members gathered to discuss their observations and formulate recommendations. That evening at the PACE Center, team members presented their findings in the form of a PowerPoint presentation followed by a question and answer session open to the community at large. The following report provides an overview of the assessment visit, identifies partners and resources to help the community, includes observations from the visit, identifies issue areas, and makes recommendations for actions the community can take to strengthen the downtown.

Background Information and Historical Context
The Town of Parker, part of Douglas County is located at the Southeastern most corner of the Denver Metropolitan area. Parker’s roots began as Pine Grove a small community where families established dairy farms while others raised cattle and horses. The Town of Parker can trace its beginnings to 1862 when Alfred Butters built a one-room building in a grove of pine trees about a mile south of the present-day downtown area. The cabin became a place to purchase provisions and a refuge for weary travelers along the Cherokee Trail. Although it was not a post office as we recognize one today, messages and letters could be left there for other travelers. In 1864, the “post office” was sold and moved to the 20 Mile House site near Parker Road and Mainstreet in present-day Parker. The 20 Mile House was the sixth in a series of mile houses, or way stations, on the Cherokee Trail between the City of Denver and Pine Grove (Parker’s original name).

The Cherokee Trail followed Cherry Creek into Denver and brought travelers from many southern and eastern states using the Arkansas River route. Later, the Smoky Hill South Trail, a more direct but problematic route, brought in people from the Missouri River area.

When the town was incorporated in 1981 it included the Rowley Downs subdivision, the downtown area and the Parker Square and Parker Plaza commercial areas. The incorporated area encompassed approximately one square mile and included 285 residents. Soon after incorporation, the Town adopted zoning and subdivision ordinances. The Town increased from one square mile at incorporation to 20.8 square miles currently. The Town’s population has increased from less than 300 at incorporation to more than 47,000 currently.

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

• Everyone loves Parker’s small town feel.
• Downtown Parker has a unique and rich history.
• There is large excitement around the increase and interests in arts and Creative Districts.
• There is a need in Parker for more community gathering spaces.
• The mix of businesses is limited in Downtown Parker.
• Parking is tight during events.
• There are limited transportation options within the
community and connectivity issues.
• There is a lack of awareness of resources and programs.
• There is a need to address an aging population.

Organization
The first section of this report focuses on organization, which includes developing collaboration, volunteer recruitment and management, fund-raising for the organization, and developing operational strategies. Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a downtown revitalization program. The four principal components of organization are:
• Communications
• Partnerships
• Volunteer development
• Fundraising

A consistent and stable governing structure is fundamental to the organizational structure of a downtown revitalization effort, and especially for a volunteer-driven program. When possible, a mix of local government or formalized non-profit leadership is a starting point for synchronizing initial steps for community engagement and revitalization programs. When possible, volunteers are best coordinated and supported by a paid, full-time or part-time program director. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders. While a paid downtown coordinator may not currently be feasible, it is something to strive for in the future. When working without coordinating staff, it becomes even more important for each effort (Management, Marketing, Economic Restructuring, or Design) to clearly record minutes and share agendas and reports publicly to reduce duplication and engage in joint initiatives when possible.

Not with standing this fundamental description of a typical downtown organizational structure, numerous variations exist throughout the country and are driven largely by local circumstances.

In some towns, for example, the Chamber of Commerce may add an organizational component designated to focus on the downtown. Other commercial areas may form a special district or taxing entity to dedicate resources and focus on downtown.

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

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

Observation: The community and the Town both prioritize the downtown core as the heart of Parker. The community expressed passion for Parker’s history, the walkability, and community feeling of the downtown area. This appears to be a unifying factor that attracts and keeps your residents and businesses involved in the community.

Recommendations:
- Declare the downtown a priority with clear definition and outlying tiers. Downtown areas, specifically those with historic content, were created as the gathering place of the community and as such should have a pedestrian scale. Treat the downtown differently with zoning, historic buildings, public parking, business attraction, etc.

- Develop objectives for the community and engage stakeholders in creating a vision and committees for implementation. Utilize this report as a starting point and engage key stakeholders to create committees who will focus on different areas but convene to make sure initiatives are cohesive. Frame the discussion by considering a visioning statement for your downtown and then identifying the top four objectives in each report focus area (Organization, Marketing, Economic Restructuring, and Design).

Observation: Partnerships would be greatly enhanced if there were increased communications amongst the pillars in this community. There were several instances where community groups or town staff was not aware of initiatives, resources, or changes in the community. This can be a significant hindrance to success and effectiveness.

Recommendations:
- Consider holding monthly organizational meetings of stakeholders that include one representative from each organization (Town, Library, County, Historical Society, Cultural and Scientific Commission, business and property owners, Resident, Parker Authority for Reinvestment Advisory Committee, and Chamber) for joint planning around vision and objectives for events, volunteers, downtown design, and business. Creating this regular meeting will allow each representative to share information in both directions. It will also allow for brainstorming opportunities to collaborate.

- Coffee with Council at (for example) 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday night. The community is supportive but unaware of all of the work that the Town and other entities are doing. While they are not discontent, they are somewhat disengaged. Holding meetings at regular times to come together as a community will allow for greater engagement and also allow local businesses to host meetings and build awareness of the products or services that they sell.
• Challenge the Senior Center, Historical Society, Schools, and Library to propose collaborative programs to activate physical and entertainment gaps in the downtown. These groups are all doing complimentary work that supports your community, highlights history, and engages diverse populations. Encourage them to work together to meet some of the community wide objectives for events, adapting for an aging population, etc.

Observation: The community has shown the foresight to put in place organizational structure that can shape the downtown initiatives. Much of the work to guide downtown revitalization has been done through existing initiatives. Consider how best to use these initiatives to drive your future process.

Recommendations:
• Through the Parker Authority for Reinvestment, continue the Business in Transition Program, reactivate Facade and Landscape Improvement Program and seek opportunities to encourage private sector investment using TIF. There are areas in the downtown core that have gaps, which not only disrupt the pedestrian environment but also allow for great opportunities for mixed use with retail on the ground level. Focus in the center of the Pikes Peak Center District to infuse greater retail opportunity.

• Utilize the urban renewal authority to stimulate the private sector to reshape blighted areas. Parker Square is a struggling area that has little visual appeal and buildings that may need significant renovation or in some cases may need to be demolished. This area has potential to house tech and medical industry, or even work space for creative industry, but it is unlikely that people will select this area without some encouragement. The URA, in partnership with Town initiatives are perfect for this use.

• Create a creative district plan that goes beyond the arts to guide a vision of downtown development that includes place making, retail, arts, residential, etc. The Creative District designation, and the background work that has made Parker such a hub for creative industry, demonstrates that this organizational approach is a good fit. Review the creative district materials with the stakeholder group and be sure that all are aware and engaged in what that means and the opportunities it presents for the future. Be sure that the plan for downtown and the plan for the creative district are clearly connected and roles are easily defined.

Marketing/Promotion
Promotion is another of the four focus areas in building a vital downtown. According to the National Trust Main Street Center, promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play, and invest in a main street district. By marketing a district’s unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image. This image can then be reinforced
through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

**Observation:** Parker has sophisticated marketing but the message isn’t connecting yet. Overall, the Town has all the necessary communication channels in place and all of them appear to be active and well received by citizens. We like the Town’s active use of social media, especially Facebook to engage with citizens.

**Recommendations:** Create more opportunities to “opt in”. Residents currently seem to be confused by the many options available to them to receive updates. We recommend creating a flyer/web page featuring the best ways to stay in the loop. This resource could possibly be expanded and sent out as part of a welcome-to-the-community package by realtors or developers. The Town’s website features too many options for visitors to do on the home page. If “opting in” more people into the Town’s newsletter is a high priority, IT should create a colored button with a strong call to action to drive people to the signup page. Additionally, sign-up sheets at events, a kiosk at the Town Hall, PACE Center, the Visitors Center/Chamber building, and volunteer teams at events could encourage a broader audience to opt into the Town’s newsletters. Consider broader distribution of collateral materials that include the Pinery, Heritage Eagle Bend, library, etc.

**Use consistent messaging to communicate efforts across different media.** In order to make it easier for residents to stay informed, we recommend using consistent language across channels. The summary of resource links mentioned earlier is one example that would benefit from clear language across channels and could be segmented by users. For example, resources specifically for businesses, residents, senior citizens, etc.

Another example is the wonderful photo competition the town hosts on its Facebook page, which didn’t seem to be featured elsewhere. Giving the photo competition a name, e.g. “I love Parker”, featuring it on other sites and tying it into the town’s events would help spread the word, while driving visitors to back to Facebook.

**Develop an ideation platform to actively engage stakeholders and residents in decision-making.** We frequently heard about the challenge of keeping residents engaged in solving the challenges that lie ahead. Using an online ideation platform like Ideascale, Mindmixer or Uservoice, Parker could ask residents for ideas on how to best solve pressing issues. Residents would be able to provide new ideas, make suggestions on how to improve ideas of others and rate ideas they like. After closing each engagement activity, Parker would be able to download a prioritized list of recommendations of their citizens that could inform decisions of the Town Council. For this effort to be successful, Parker should use its existing newsletter, Town website, social media channels and partners to drive traffic to the site.

**Observation:** Parker’s brand should differentiate the community and highlight its own unique character.
Recommendations: Push the brand from “hometown” to what actually differentiates Parker and establish it as a destination. Most of the businesses on the downtown area understand the significance of its history, but many of the residents and visitors do not have the same appreciation. The Town should delve deeper into the meaning of “hometown” and elaborate on the imagery and message to create a true destination for potential visitors. Incorporating the history into a clear identity will help to promote it as a singular entity. This will help position or establish Parker as an interesting, unique destination for visitors and residents, instilling more pride in the community. A true examination of Parker’s assets, market potential, values, and actual local buy-in can help hone in on the message to bring more people and dollars into the downtown area.

Build on the Creative District designation as a rallying point. The recent designation of Parker as an Emerging Creative District has the potential to improve their competitive edge and create a foundation for defining a sense of place. Beyond contributing to the development of a skilled workforce, a creative economy could attract new and visiting populations and integrate the visions of community and business leaders. Take ownership of this achievement and launch initiatives that capitalize on the distinction. When building on the Creative District concept, consider how to best utilize the PACE Center by enhancing this fabulous asset as a destination that you market through signage, advertising, social media, and community partnerships. This is a resource that the community has not yet begun to capitalize on, but has all the potential to drive your marketing and cultural initiatives.

Embrace the Historic and Equestrian Heritage. Parker’s rich history of railroads, horses, farming, dairies and hunting are well on their way to becoming part of the marketing story told in print, signage and online. The continuation of this message does differentiate the brand of Parker and creates a destination for visitors from school children to history buffs.

Consider how events around history can also serve as retail promotions; so that the Library’s Parker Quest event might include a component where businesses post clues in the storefronts and have cookies for kids participating. This would not only add to the historical facts that kids might learn, but can also recreate the success of events like the Wine Walk by bringing folks in the door.

Observation: Events are a vibrant element of the Town but they could align better with business interests.

Recommendations: Identify the community’s objectives for events and build in components to meet objectives for each.

The events in downtown Parker meet many needs for the Town, keeping it active and relevant throughout much of the year. The sheer number of opportunities for people to come downtown offers advantages in terms of visibility and interest in local businesses. A small alignment of goals for each event could go a long way in capitalizing on the energy that already exists to bring more dollars into the shops. Identifying gaps in audience or potential tourism markets could bring even more revenue and
participation to the Town. Communicating that the community’s objectives for an event is to increase retail, foot traffic, identity building, etc. means that they will better build in components to meet objectives for each event.

**Consider using the Town’s strategic events calendar to identify gaps in programming for the downtown area.** The January to April time frame appears to have limited events and could be a perfect time to work in additional activities geared toward bringing locals downtown and engaging with local business owners. Additionally, using this time for “coffee with council” to tour the district or rotate visits to various businesses could generate more visibility for each location from people who might not otherwise patronize the establishment.

**Identify one Town liaison between events and businesses.** Despite best efforts to involve all entities in planning, it often comes down to the need for a single person to be the conduit of information to and from the business community and the event planner. Mixed messages or partial information can be detrimental to the outcome of a successful event so it’s important to keep the flow of communication through a verifiable source to proactively include new ideas or quell potential issues. Consider how the liaison can assist with content and programming for the informational kiosks and website as well.

**Observation:** Advertising tends to be isolated rather than collaborative.

**Recommendation: Cross-promote wherever possible for rising tide results.** Everyone seems to agree that cross promotion of events is a good idea but putting it into practice takes a concerted effort and a trust in the idea of cooperation. The PACE Center could initiate this process by posting community events, the dining guide, walking tour, etc. on their bulletin boards. The Go to Town savings card is a step in the right direction but isn’t widely used or consistently promoted. Consider letting businesses distribute cards or getting them to encourage signups. Rotate information about specific discounts in a highlighted section of the newsletter to make people more aware of its existence.

**Observation:** Parker Square is isolated from downtown and doesn’t yet have a brand of its own.

**Recommendations: Let Parker Square be its own area of the Town and brand it as the Hilltop Tech Center (for example).** As part of our study area, we looked at ways to connect Parker Square to the downtown core. It was often referred to as not “having a place in the world” but it doesn’t fit within the downtown “place”. It is a unique area with selling points all its own. One idea is to make it an incubator for tech and/or medical businesses, giving new life and purpose to an older area. The current and surrounding service businesses, along with the hospital in Town offer supporting resources, synergies and even hiring prospects. Branding as the Hilltop Tech Center and creating a marketing campaign around that idea will keep it relevant to the economy of Parker and give purpose to an aging complex.

**Economic Restructuring**

The focus of economic restructuring is to assist in efforts to recruit, retain and expand opportunities for investment in downtown. This is accomplished by ensuring that investors and businesses are aware of all of the resources available for assistance and all of the benefits of choosing to locate their business in downtown, including the opportunities that may exist to capitalize on promotional activities. It also works to build strong relationships between downtown businesses, residents, and users.

**Observation:** The largest employer in the area is the medical field, the tech field is growing and there is a commitment to develop the creative industries.
**Recommendations:** Use Parker Square as tech and medical business incubator. Focus on developing jobs around tech and medical industry to attract higher paying jobs. Parker Square was initially developed apart from downtown for the distinct purpose of creating a mass of office space. While some of the uses have come and gone over the years, new office park space has been developed adjacent to Parker Square. Parker Square, including surrounding properties (vacant land to the south in particular), offers a unique opportunity for the town. With E-470 access to Denver International Airport the office park could be a hub for small emerging tech businesses. The existing built properties can be re-developed for the specific purpose of providing space for co-working office share and incubator activities. The Town appears to have an ample supply of restaurants and retailers to support the users of the new Tech Center.

The Tech Center could also house trade training for the medical industry. Parker Square is home to a variety of health providers and they could continue to operate in the Tech Center. The hospital, Rocky Vista University and the health providers create an atmosphere to attract students to Parker. Providing opportunities for the workers desiring to enter a health service career would be a perfect fit in the new tech center. Facilities could provide space for private sector training schools in a variety of medical fields. Local health providers could benefit from the easy access to the qualified workforce emerging from the Tech Center.

Consider reuses of the Mainstreet Center, with a focus on the Creative Industries. The Mainstreet Center (MSC) is an extraordinary historic asset and arts center which highlights the unique and authentic nature of Parker. Currently, this center is an endeared location for weddings as well as civic and social gatherings. With the addition and evolution of the PACE Center, it is an important time for the Town to evaluate the best uses of this facility. Along with its historic significance comes a significant financial investment for preservation. MSC is in need of critical updates and repairs that should be prioritized and addressed in the future.

Overall, the community showed a positive response to the MSC. Current highlights include an eclectic mix of a theater, Mainstreet Magic Center, historical society classroom, gymnasium and classrooms. The facility is currently not accessible from Mainstreet, is closed and locked during some business hours, and is not well signed and lacks significant street presence.

As we look at the overall development of the downtown district, relocating the library closer to the east end of Mainstreet can bring increased visitors to the downtown area. As this space is constructed, there is an opportunity build in meeting rooms for churches, schools and other civic uses that are regularly using space at the MSC. This will allow for the exploration of uses for the MSC.
One possibility is to become an economic driver for the Creative Industries. Currently, the MSC is an affordable alternative and incubator for developing arts and cultural organizations. There is an opportunity to take this incubation process one step further, incentivizing artists and other creative-based businesses to utilize the space, with the ultimate goal of expanding to an independent storefront in the Creative District.

Consider creation of an office co-working space. As we look at infusing employment opportunities throughout the downtown area, developing an inspiring office co-working space can be greatly beneficial. As we look at home based or consultancy businesses, many fall under the creative class umbrella. Having a space where creative and technical minds can congregate, with shared office services can bring more daytime employees to downtown.

Develop a one-stop shop for potential business owners for assistance. Include incentives, loan opportunities, and technical assistance. We found several organizations providing assistance to potential business owners. Having access to the variety of programs offered in Parker is excellent and is not found in many similarly sized communities. To build on the existing programs we would recommend that the providers partner in providing the programs, including the Town of Parker, Chamber of Commerce and Library. In addition, the State Office of Economic Development and International Trade has a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program. The State does not have a location in Douglas County. There may be an opportunity to create a similar type of center in Parker. The center could support potential businesses from outside of Parker perhaps attracting new ventures that had planned to locate elsewhere.

Observation: There is not a consistent and cohesive implementation strategy to fulfill the various downtown visions heard by the community

Recommendations: Identify niche businesses that can continue to attract younger families as well as meet the needs of the aging population. Pay particular attention to key demographics (young families and aging population) during the implementation of the Visioning section. Use this information to match business recruitment efforts to these demographics.

Create a plan to infuse more ground floor retail opportunities in the Creative District with the goal of converting space from service to retail. Consider how to encourage galleries or interactive creative businesses to consider relocation in Creative District retail space. An important component to
fulfilling a meaningful downtown vision is to have places for the community to gather, shop, dine and be entertained. Currently, the downtown district business mix is heavy on the service side and the vacancy rate is extremely low. The pedestrian experience is hindered by a lack of a diversified ground floor retail mix. Property owners are not seeking retail tenants as vacancies come available, making the pedestrian experience even more difficult to achieve.

As new development occurs, mixed use with a focus on ground floor retail is essential. By working with existing incentive programs and the creative district, it is important to cultivate tenants that complement existing businesses and priorities.

Focus on music as a catalyst to diversify Downtown venues and bring new populations to the PACE Center. In both the business survey and community focus groups, diversity in music venues and performers emerged as a strong priority. The PACE Center and Main Street Center offer great opportunities for music, but expand on this strength by encouraging private businesses to infuse the district with diverse music, featuring local talent, after hour shows, street buskers and more in restaurants, clubs, coffee shops and gathering spaces.

Incorporate transportation into event planning, including shuttle services for events. The incorporation of transportation in event planning is more than just facilitating crowds to and from a venue. The use of transportation can be used to infuse revenue to nearby business or to subtly educate visitors on alternative parking locations. A transportation program could encourage longer stays downtown by coupling parking in one of the large parking lots, to alternative transportation methods to the downtown core during events. This opportunity allows patrons to visit downtown establishments before and after the event. Transportation modes to be considered for the program include; shuttle buses, carriages or Pedi cabs.

**Design**

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in downtown by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality and to expedite improvements in the downtown. At the forefront of the design effort is the restoration of historic buildings, which helps provide the backdrop for downtown’s sense of place.

**Observation:** Connectivity is limited in the downtown core.

**Recommendations:**

- Add more connection points between Sulphur Gulch Regional Trail and the downtown area. The Sulphur Gulch Regional Trail serves as a great amenity to the downtown area and can serve as another way for people to access the downtown core. Currently, the trail is disconnected from the downtown and trail users can pass downtown without realizing they are near downtown amenities. A good connection is located on the east side of the Mainstreet Center Property. This connection would tie into Mainstreet Center, as well as the Mainstreet sidewalk.
• Help connectivity in the downtown core by extending the road in front of the PACE center to Pikes Peak Ct. This planned connection adds to the connectivity of the street network in Parker. Adding transportation connections are valuable in enhancing traffic circulation and allowing vehicles additional options for accessing the area south of downtown during the frequent Main Street closures.

• Parker Square is too distant to be part of the downtown core, but would benefit from connecting Pikes Peak Drive across Hilltop, completing sidewalk connections on Pikes Peak Drive and Pine Drive, and adding way finding signage. While Parker Square provides value to the vitality of business in Parker by providing opportunities for affordable rent, the physical location is disconnected from the downtown core by suburban development patterns. Way finding signage will help reinforce Pikes Peak Drive as a connection to downtown which will help alleviate traffic on Parker Road and enhance the visibility of the downtown core. Implementing this recommendation also helps promote multimodal connections between Parker Square and the downtown area.

• Extend Brownstone Road west to Parker Road and connect Parkglenn to the new segment of Brownstone Road. This connection can help increase connectivity in the downtown area as well as improve transit accessibility by increasing the availability of easier turning movements than currently available. It also adds additional access points for users of the Park ‘n’ Ride.

• Access to Keiffer’s Crossing need to be improved on the west side of Parker Road. Keiffer’s Crossing is an important bicycle and pedestrian connection yet it is not conveniently connected to the sidewalk along the west side of Parker Road. Opportunities such a ramp and/or steps from the Parker Road sidewalk and better signage should be explored to make a convenient connection.

Observation: There is a strong foundation for a downtown core that is not yet meeting its potential.

Recommendations:
• Commit to a defined downtown core and urban form. Focus group participants often cited the existing two block downtown as their favorite part of Parker. However, there are many different definitions, boundaries, and references to the perceived downtown area. The existing two block historic downtown area provides the desired walkability and activity surrounding of an urban activity center which distinguishes it from the suburban development found elsewhere in Town.

• Prioritize the infill of the downtown core along Mainstreet east of Parker Road and ending at the Pine Curve property. The existing two block historic downtown provides a great catalyst and pattern for extending the urban form east along Mainstreet. A larger and longer downtown and Mainstreet corridor will provide more activities for a growing population. There are several vacant and developable properties between Parker Road and including the Pine Curve property.

• Urban design should incorporate historical and unique characteristics of Parker. The Focus Groups often expressed an interest in further instilling the characteristics that they feel make Parker unique including the history as a crossroads and the established equestrian/agricultural industries. Urban design elements such as signage, public art, and street furniture can be designed with those unique characteristics in mind to help reinforce a pride in place and establish an identity for the downtown core.

• Move library to east side across Mainstreet from Town Hall. The library is currently located in the Crossroads Shopping Center. The community sees the library as a great asset yet the lack of available parking serves as a deterrent to its use. By relocating the library to the east side of Main Street, the Town can capitalize on the built-in traffic the library offers to create an
active street life on the east side of Mainstreet. The vacant properties across from Town Hall should be considered desirable locations due to their ability to anchor the east end of the downtown corridor and help to activate the Pine Curve property.

- Expand and enhance the amphitheater between the PACE Center and Sulphur Gulch. There is value in the idea of the existing amphitheater as a community amenity. It should be expanded towards Sulphur Gulch and better utilize the historic railroad berm. This space can serve as a public gathering space that reinforces the activity and connection between Sulphur Gulch and the downtown core.

**Observation:** There is a perceived parking shortage in downtown.

**Recommendations:**
- Conduct a parking study analyzing current conditions and usage and take into consideration parking needs at future build-out. A parking study will determine if this is currently a real problem or just a perceived problem, and if future build out in the downtown core will result in a need for additional parking. If it is determined that there is a current or will be a future parking shortage solutions would be recommended. These could include a shared parking program between private and public usage, additional surface lots, additional parking associated with future development, and a parking structure. Requirements for parking spaces should be instituted for new development. If spaces cannot be developed a system of parking fees in lieu of required spaces should be fixed.
- Conduct parking surveys on a continual basis to better understand actual usage. Regular parking surveys will give Town staff current parking data and information on problem areas as well as identifying any areas with excess supply.
- If the parking study and ongoing parking surveys determine there is a need, consider time limited parking. Parking time limits on Mainstreet will increase turn over and availability. Parking limits will also reduce the long term use of critical parking space by business owners and employees. However, parking time limits will have to be enforced in order to be effective.

**Observation:** The downtown area feels more oriented towards automobiles than pedestrians or cyclists.

**Recommendations:**
- Install more consistent street furniture and bike amenities throughout downtown including Pikes Peak. Uniform, complementary street furniture including benches, street lights, trash and ash receptacles, way finding signage, etc. helps identify the core downtown area. It creates the idea and feel of a cohesive downtown area.
- Enhance landscaping and provide opportunities for the display of public art. Public art creates interest, color, and excitement. It can increase a Town’s sense of place and enhance its character. Landscaping can reduce air pollution. It also provides a more inviting and aesthetic downtown that can result in visitors spending a longer time in the downtown and visiting more shops.
- Enforce speed limit on Mainstreet. Parker residents have become desensitized to the Mainstreet traffic calming and seem to drive too fast.
for conditions. Parker Police Department should enforce the speed limit to let residents know that speeding on Main Street will not be tolerated.

- Consider a Parker bike sharing system. Opportunities to promote sustainable transportation and active living in Parker should be an area of focus. A bike sharing system could be set up between the library, downtown, and the PACE Center or Town Hall. This would allow people to park their car and get a bike to ride around town. Operations and maintenance of the bikes and bike sharing system could be staffed by volunteers or Town staff.

- Create a campaign that uses temporary signs highlighting times to ride to different locations. This idea was a success in Raleigh, NC. It helps to raise about options to ride around town. This program would be temporary and the signs would only be up for 3 to 4 months.

Observation: There is a need for additional family oriented features downtown.

Recommendations:
- Expand recreation opportunities throughout the downtown core. With the popular O’Brien Park, the downtown core is a draw for young families. The Town should explore opportunities for additional activities and services for their already captured audience. Examples may include pocket parks, a Frisbee golf course in Sulphur Gulch, sledding hill, etc.

- Explore a location for an ice rink/splash pad that is visible from existing downtown area businesses. These types of recreation opportunities have a large draw and will attract people to the downtown core. A well designed gathering place such as this will help create a destination, activate the street and bring additional customers to downtown area businesses.

Observation: Building signage needs to allow for more flexibility.

Recommendations:
- Consider overlay district for downtown business signage. In support of downtown businesses, the Town code should acknowledge the unique urban form in the downtown core and recognize there may be opportunities for creative signage solutions that are not appropriate in other parts of town. The creation of an overlay district for signage could allow for more flexibility in the downtown area.

- Review solutions developed in other communities. Since challenges with signage are typically common among communities, the Town should consult with other communities to see if similar problems have been solved elsewhere.

Observation: There is a lack of adequate way finding signage.

Recommendations:
- Program way finding and gateway signage on a town wide basis. Due to the emergence and desire for the downtown core to be a destination by both local and regional visitors, way finding signage announcing the downtown core should be contemplated at a town wide basis. Way finding signage on the major thoroughfares and downtown area gateways will not only help direct first time visitors to the downtown core, but will also remind resident commuters of the downtown.
• The signage should be strategically placed, aesthetically consistent, and promote the downtown as a district.
  • Provide way finding signage for public parking in the downtown core.

• Parking in the downtown area is spread out between several disconnected lots and there is a mixture of public and private parking. While there are public parking signs, it is recommended that an analysis of the current locations be undertaken to determine deficient locations.
  • Install kiosks with community maps at key locations throughout the downtown core.

• Kiosks can form as centrally located and commonly owned/managed physical locations for information about specific businesses and events. A centrally located map source can aid in way finding and help visitors navigate throughout the town.
  • Develop an interactive signage program. Parker thrives on its wealth of special places and community assets, but information about those places is scattered and not easily accessible to the public. First, we recommend identifying existing maps and materials that highlight Parkers special places, from historic buildings, parks, trails, public art, to businesses in the downtown area. Rich media with text and high-quality imagery is necessary to highlight the places in an online environment.

• Based on this collection, Parker should consider creating a visual online way finding system that maps all of the Town’s assets, while being easily accessible on different devices: from computers from far away, to mobile phones while residents and visitors are out on the town, to kiosks in centrally located places around town. Discovery is a critical piece to making this effort successful, so that the majority of visitors and residents who don’t stop by the Visitor’s Center or Town Hall stumble upon the access points in the built environment. To encourage discovery by passerby, we recommend integrating access points that include short links, QR codes and possibly even NFC tags into all the way finding elements around town, from directional signage, to interpretative signage and street amenities.
  • Promotional materials, such as flyers, rack cards, or postcards for local businesses and the visitor center to hand out can also be made available as Access Points. Scanning or loading the URL on the Access Points on their smart phones or kiosks will zoom visitors to the location they are currently at and display all the special places within walking distance.
  • Kiosks are great to showcase the interactive map in centrally located places like the PACE center, Town Hall or the Visitor’s Center. To start, we recommend purchasing affordable kiosks, like iPads with stands.
  • Financing for the map, signage and materials could be generated by charging businesses for different levels of advertising on the map, similar to the traditional paper community map. This includes featured markers on the map, deals on specific locations, or providing a sponsor edition of the map, that would allow them to provide a branded experience to their customers.
Participating Stakeholders
- Chamber of Commerce
- Christian Youth Theatre
- Cultural Commission
- First Bank
- Greater Parker Foundation
- PACE Center
- Parker Authority for Reinvestment Advisory Committee
- Parker Area Historical Society
- Parker Library
- Parker Property and Business Owners
- Parker Senior Center
- Parker Residents
- Planning Commission
- Town Council
- Town of Parker

Funding Mechanisms
The Town has adopted a large array of the financing mechanisms that are common for downtown initiatives. However in the future there may be some alternative financing methodologies to help make the downtown initiative successful.

- 501(c)(3) Venture – As the Downtown Strategic Action Plan develops, additional funding avenues will need to be established. Creating a complimentary non-profit organization that focuses on the historic, artistic and educational core of the community can allow the community to apply for competitive grants for future development. Existing models to investigate are Denver Civic Ventures or Colorado Springs Community Ventures. This organization can address redevelopment, connectivity, arts and culture and other identified needs for the downtown district.

- Downtown Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) – The existing Business in Transition Program is a wonderful program to help alleviate vacancies downtown. A complimentary approach may be the establishment of a Revolving Loan Fund.

The initial capitalization of the fund could be from a variety of sources including, but not limited to Town General Fund or the Parker Authority For Reinvestment funds.

Loans from the RLF could be used to assist in establishing a wider variety of businesses in downtown. The Town or PAR can tailor the program for special objectives. Examples from other communities include items such as start-up costs for remodeling commercial space or specialized equipment for the business. The loans would be low interest with an appropriate term to insure the availability of the revolved loan proceeds for future endeavors.

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

Katherine Correll has experience spanning the fields of community outreach to advance downtown and community development, not-for-profit administration, project development and management, local government planning, marketing, financial and economic development services, and education. Katherine joined Downtown Colorado, Inc. as the director of communications and operations in 2006; in 2007 she became the executive director. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Katherine has worked with development initiatives in Denver, New York, Chicago, and the former Soviet Union. Her focus on strategic planning and organizational development and management includes building viable and sustainable private, public, and non-for-profit institutions and programs.

Prior to her current position, Katherine managed the American Councils’ portfolio for the Republic of Moldova, focusing on building civil society initiatives, education, and public administration reforms. She was also responsible for management and growth of the American Language Center, language and professional training school. Katherine received her master’s degree in Public Administration from Rutgers University and her bachelor’s degree in Politics with a minor in Urban Studies from New York University.

Karen Current
Principal/Marketing Director, DHM Design

Karen joined DHM in 2001 with experience in both private and public communications, PR, business communication and design. With a degree in Communications, and a decade of experience, Karen has developed the skills to create and implement marketing materials, identity concepts, publications, signage, brochures and interpretive displays for a wide variety of projects. Karen also manages the proposal and interview process, including strategy, materials and team building for the firm. She has helped win six nationwide National Park Service contracts and numerous state and national awards for the firm.

Chris Haller
CEO & Founder, Urban Interactive Studios

Chris is a nationally-recognized Web developer and Online Engagement practitioner, with a broad background in urban planning and communication technologies. These skills, combined with many years of experience in consulting for urban planning projects, are what brings Urban Interactive Studio’s mission – to enhance communication and improve decision-making in urban planning – to life. In April 2011 he was named one of the Top 25 thinkers in Urban Planning Technology by the urban planning magazine Planetizen.

As UIS’ founder, Chris is closely involved in the day-to-day development of interactive Web and mobile applications, as well as EngagingPlans, a place-based, interactive Web site package for planning projects. He designs effective online engagement projects and Social Media strategies for clients, and provides related training when needed. Chris is also founder and publisher of the EngagingCities online magazine, where he writes about trends in Urban Planning and Public Involvement.

Michael Hussey
Manager of Planning and Design, Nolte Vertical Five

Michael Hussey is the manager of planning and landscape architecture for the Colorado Springs office of Nolte Associates, Inc. Michael has over 30 years of experience in a wide variety of urban design, landscape, planning, environmental engineering, and architectural projects. He has worked on urban development and renewal, and downtown streetscape improvement projects including Billings, Montana (downtown), Raton, New Mexico (downtown Master Plan), Colorado Springs
(Downtown BID), Avon (Town Center), Manitou Avenue (Manitou Springs downtown), Monte Vista (downtown), Broomfield (US 287), and Fountain (US 85). Project responsibilities have included grant opportunity identification and application, master planning, urban and site design, and construction observation and management.

Michael has participated in numerous DCI/CCRA workshops and conference programs, and has served as a team member on several Community Revitalization Program (CRP) visits. Michael is also the co-author of “Grow Native,” one of the earliest Colorado xeriscape landscape guides, and has worked on a number of award winning projects – including the Colorado Springs Downtown Business Improvement District and Manitou Avenue Revitalization.

Jessica Ibanez, Jessica Ibanez AICP, Community Planning Consultant, Colorado Brick Council
Jessica Ibanez, Jessica implements the Colorado Brick Council’s local government outreach program by providing education on clay brick usage and technical assistance regarding design policy. She holds a degree in Community and Regional from Iowa State University. Her background includes previous experience in local government specializing in community planning and development review. She has been a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners since 2009.

Will Kerns, Will Kerns AICP, Open Plan Consultants
Will Kerns worked at the Jefferson County, Colorado Division of Transportation and Engineering as a Transportation Planner for over 11 years before founding Open Plan. Will is a visionary planner and spent time in his previous position crafting groundbreaking plans such as the Jefferson County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Conifer Walkability Plan, Countywide Transportation Plan, and South Golden Road Corridor Study. Will also helped to shape the RTD West Corridor EIS, US-36 EIS, I-70 PEIS, and many more. Will specializes in Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning and Advocacy but also has experience in Transportation Engineering, Parking Studies, Context Sensitive Solutions, Safety Studies, NEPA, Transit Planning, High Speed Rail Planning, Roadway, Highway, Intersection and Interchange planning. Will attended the University of Northern Colorado where he studied Applied Geography and Earth Science.

Will enjoys the outdoors and can be found in the Colorado Rockies riding his Mountain Bike or Rock Climbing with friends and family. Will is also an accomplished Bonsai Artist and has donated some of his Bonsai trees to the Denver Botanic Gardens. Will sits on the Executive Board of the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society.

Kimberlee McKee, Kimberlee McKee Executive Director, Longmont Downtown Development Authority
Kimberlee McKee has been the Executive Director of the Longmont Downtown Development Authority since 2011. Prior to taking this position, she was the President of the Downtown Akron Partnership, a Special Improvement District in Akron, Ohio. Through her experience in both a DDA and SID, she has worked with a diverse group of stakeholders and municipal leaders to develop projects, programs and events. Throughout her career she has specialized in strategic programs, marketing and event management.

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

**Emerging Leader Team Support**

**Michael King**  
*Intern, Downtown Colorado, Inc.*  
Michael King is originally from Philadelphia, PA but recently returned from three years abroad in Chile and the Dominican Republic. During his time in Latin America, Michael worked as a teacher and program administrator at two different educational nonprofit organizations, honing his Spanish fluency in the process. In 2011 he returned to the United States to enroll in a Masters of International Development at the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies. His interests include sustainable urban development in an international context and after graduation he hopes to work in the fields of development, urban planning, and environmental management. He is currently an intern with Downtown Colorado, Inc.

**Isabel Waldman**  
*OSM/VISTA, Downtown Colorado, Inc.*  
Isabel Waldman is a graduate of the University of Oregon where she received a bachelor’s degree in International Studies with a concentration in Environmental Studies and Latin America and a minor in Planning, Public Policy, and Management. Her field of study gave her the opportunity to study community development and resource planning in Chile and Bolivia. Isabel grew up in Colorado and is currently serving as the Community Report Coordinator for Downtown Colorado, Inc. in partnership with the AmeriCorps VISTA program, Office of Surface Mining and the Western Hardrock Watershed Team.
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