February 8-9, 2010
Silt, CO

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PARTNERSHIP

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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Sponsored by the Department of Local Affairs
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the downtown assessment for the Colorado community of Silt. Colorado communities have the opportunity to apply for assistance through the Community Revitalization Partnership (CRP) program, a collaborative program between the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Downtown Colorado, Inc., the state’s non-profit Main Street affiliate, and the local community.

Downtown revitalization is not an instant fix, and it will not happen over night. It will require community and business engagement, strong city leadership, and continual review of plans to ensure that ideas and steps are still relevant to your community. Success is measured in small increments, but with concerted effort and effective use of resources, Silt has a lot of potential. This report is to be used as a tool to help guide Silt in overcoming the challenges it presently faces. The report includes recommendations and guidelines, but is not intended to provide all of the definitive answers to address all of the issues.

Downtown Colorado, Inc. assembled a team of volunteer professionals including designers, planners, and finance experts to work in Silt for two days and then to help compile this 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 the town of Silt.

FORMAT & USE OF THIS REPORT

This report is loosely organized along the Main Street Four Point Approach™ as developed by the National Trust Historic Preservation Main Street Center. Each section of the report was written by a member of the CRP team with an expertise in one of the National Trust’s Four Points. The team members’ reports were assembled and edited to integrate all reports into one cohesive document; thus, each section may reflect the writing style of its writer.

PARTNERS & RESOURCES

With the CRP visit, the community is setting the stage for an ongoing and strengthened relationship with DCI, DOLA, other governmental agencies, and the local business sector. During the two-day visit, the community interactions with the CRP team members resulted in a strong, consensus-building foundation. This foundation will be increasingly important to the many efforts that may result from this initial visit. Focus group and meeting participants involved in the Town of Silt CRP process included:

• Town of Silt Elected and Appointed Officials and Staff
• Silt Area Chamber
• Garfield County Library District
• Grand River Hospital District
• Historical Society and Park
• Business Owners
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Enhance the quality of life for citizens of the Silt region by providing locally controlled public facilities and services in a safe, well-planned and sustainable community.”

- Silt Mission Statement

Along the Colorado River in the mountains along I-70, Silt lies between Glenwood Springs and Rifle. Tourists can fish, raft, bird watch, ski, snowboard, hike, picnic, or bike.

Main Street, Highway 6, where the nationally acclaimed roundabout lies is the historic downtown core. Silt’s Main Street provides the basic amenities, with a variety of stores, restaurants, a number of historic buildings, and is also the gateway to the community. The Silt Historical Park lies just a few blocks from downtown, where guests can tour restored buildings that have been relocated to create a historic village that reflects Silt’s turn-of-the-century way of life.

Silt’s downtown district is defined in a recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. Much of the area is older commercial structures, single-family residences, and some newer mixed-use construction. The town hall, police department, fire protection, county library, and historic park are all in the downtown area.

The entire local area has been affected by the natural gas industry, which creates significant demands on communities and fluctuates demand on resources. Silt is seeking a more diversified economy and would like to create a downtown with gathering places and healthy businesses that create employment and promote tourism. The town is hoping to create a viable, vibrant downtown area that serves as a hub to the community, enhance commercial corridors and attract high-quality commercial development, diversify the economy and attract a broad range of employment types.

The town requested assistance in encouraging infill and redevelopment of the downtown to include an inviting pedestrian-oriented environment in the heart of Silt’s civic center and historic core. The team worked to identify economic development opportunities and concepts for improving relationships with potential and existing businesses, to recommend affordable design ideas to create an attractive center for community gatherings, and to assess the development review process to ensure ease of use for businesses and property owners.
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Silt has great resources and amenities including a library, chamber, historical park, and access to the river.
- Silt stands for a Simply Irresistible Little Town.
- Silt is centrally located between Rifle and Glenwood Springs.
- Silt offers A+ Rural Health Care Access.
- Silt is home to a diverse, blended community of young and old.
- Silt offers friendly smiles, helpful neighbors and a small town feel.
- Silt offers a variety of affordable housing and land opportunities.
- The river running through Silt provides tourists as well as locals with excellent fishing.
- Silt welcomes visitors and residents alike with an internationally recognized roundabout.
- Silt is described as a bedroom community, meaning most residents travel outside of the town to work and shop and only come home to sleep.
- There are several vacant buildings in prime locations on Main Street.
- Currently there is a preconceived notion that there are difficulties when working with the town. For example, business owners described it as a time-consuming processes.
- Currently it is felt that town information does not get to residents or businesses in a timely or consistent manner.

ORGANIZATION

IDENTITY & MESSAGING

To be effective, downtown revitalization cannot be a haphazard undertaking or a set of disparate projects. It requires collaboration, focus and continuity. Organization is about bringing these qualities to a community’s downtown revitalization efforts by integrating diverse interests in the community and focusing them on a shared, long-term agenda for restoring downtown’s physical beauty and economic viability.

Organization, one point of the Main Street Four Point Approach™, is about marshaling the human and financial resources to implement a comprehensive downtown revitalization process. Indeed the credibility of Silt, and therefore revitalization efforts as a whole, rely on the management’s effectiveness in outreach to the community and setting the standard for transparency, governance, and accountability.

Many commercial districts struggle to find their own unique niche. What makes one district different from another, and how those unique differences are capitalized on, is a key element to promoting any community, and it’s no different for Silt.

Knowing the true identity of your downtown, and finding ways to effectively communicate and build on that message with your unique audience, is a key element to downtown success. Success will occur when you learn to gently guide the change in perception through strong connections with your audience, consistency, persistence, and the patience to find a message and stick with it.
Observation: There doesn’t appear to be a clear focus or direction to guide staff in moving on downtown issues.

Recommendation: Town board must set the tone and policy for interactive, directed growth, and business support, as well as empower staff to implement. It will be necessary for the town board to make a commitment to improving downtown. The recommendations in this report cannot be implemented by town staff alone; they must have direction and support from the elected leaders of the community and there must be partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and volunteers from the community. The first step is for the town board to make a statement that Silt will move forward with downtown revitalization.

Observation: There does not appear to be a clear two-way communication process between the town and citizens.

Recommendations:

• Develop regular and timely communication processes between town, businesses, organizations, and entities within town. The means for communication that exist should be refined to ensure that communication reaches the community while it is fresh and new. The process of enhancing communications should begin with the person responsible for the town’s public information communications as well as partner organizations (like the chamber, historical society, etc.), and a group of citizens dedicated to improving this process. Create a list of the means for communicating and develop a plan for getting messages to those lines on a monthly basis.
• Dedicate some resources to an up-to-date website. The website is the only face of Silt that many potential tourists or shoppers might ever see. It is imperative to have relevant and timely information on the site. If this site is up to date and houses important information, it will also become a great tool for sending news to the citizens as well as to visitors. Remember to think of long-term management costs for hosting and updating when developing a plan for your website. If possible identify website software that can be updated without a professional website manager. Also, make sure to have current links to all organizations and events in town. Contact neighboring towns to develop two-way links to their sites as well.
• Hold regular informal meetings with businesses and town. Take the time once a month to be at a set location where you can talk to farmers, business people, and other locals about what the town is doing and what their concerns might be. The cost of a cup of coffee can buy you better relations with your citizens.
• Conduct an annual State of the Town address. Use 2010 to hold the first annual State of Silt address. Highlight the achievements of 2009 and the goals for 2010. Make a public statement, post the statement on the website, include all or a blurb in the newsletter, send out a press release, and post it around town. Use this as a first step toward celebrating the good things about Silt. Timing with the election should be considered; definitely avoid looking like this is a campaign tactic.
• Create an information kiosk to provide current information and recommendations regarding activities. It is important to have information available in town where people are. Look to develop an information kiosk to post information on a regular basis for both locals and visitors. Additionally – and immediately – begin posting monthly
information bulletins at the library, the town hall, the senior center, the school, the trade center, the Bureau of Land Management office, and any other venue you can think of.

- **Clarify how lodging tax funds will be used to support communications, marketing, and downtown improvements.** Lodging tax revenues should be used to support activities needed to help Silt “better the environ.” An ideal way to better the environ would be to improve awareness both for locals and visitors of what Silt has to offer, which services are available to businesses and residents, what the benefits are to businesses looking to relocate in Silt, or what the opportunities are for tourism or outdoor adventure. While the informational piece should be a priority, a portion of these funds could also be used to support a community gardening project to add some beauty in downtown, some improvements for signage, and or to provide a match to the Historic Park for marketing and organizational development.

**Observation:** There are partnerships and collaborations that are not being utilized. Partnership and collaboration are key to efficient utilization of community resources. Collaboration conserves human and monetary resources through effective implementation.

**Recommendations:**

- **Connect with school and senior center to develop volunteer program.** Partnerships between local governments, non-profits, and schools or senior centers are often some of the most beneficial. These partnerships provide leadership opportunities for seniors and youth who have so much to offer a community. By collaborating, the youth and senior population can also make valuable contributions to the efforts of the community by providing a volunteer corps with expertise, information, able bodies, and energy.

- **Have the historical society work with seniors and high school students to do an oral history and focused historical reports.** Historical societies are key players in presenting the history of a community. One key way to instill pride and a sense of place in your community is to engage different groups in telling your story. An oral history project provides real stories of your town, picture presentations to fill empty storefronts, oral history presentations to display at the library, and a wealth of information about the founding families and professions that started Silt and have contributed to the town as we know it today.

- **Promote Silt and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through signage and information at their new building.** The town is missing a key opportunity to partner with the BLM for marketing and promotion. Having this office so close to town is a real asset, but currently passersby cannot even tell what it is. Identify ways to cooperatively market, to include information about Silt at the BLM and vice-versa, and to create events that celebrate the fabulous environment in which you are located.

**Observation:** There are many resources and assets that are not utilized or under-utilized in Silt.

- **Find uses for existing buildings and empty stores.** There are many historic and newer buildings that are vacant in downtown Silt. The main street of a town is like the living room; it is where you welcome company and entertain. Work with property owners to
develop a program to make their vacant stores interesting. If you keep people looking in the windows and walking around downtown, property owners will have a better chance of finding tenants.

- **Fill empty storefronts with something.** As long as these buildings are empty, Silt should work with property owners to use these buildings to truly entertain your community. Allow school children or organizations to decorate windows with scenes from Historic Silt, or for different holidays, or with art pieces in a temporary gallery.

- **Work with underutilized properties to create a venue for producers to sell food and products locally.** These buildings are a prime opportunity to showcase locally grown or locally made products like the organic produce or locally raised beef. This will provide an outlet for community producers, and you just may be able to locally grow a business!

**IDENTITY**

Before the Town of Silt can really begin making improvements to their downtown and central core, they must come to an understanding of where these improvements can and should take place, what type of community they are, and what their vision is for moving forward. Understanding the identity of the town must be the first step in any process to downtown revitalization. If you don’t know who you are or what you stand for, how will you know if you have achieved your goals?

Knowing the true identity of your downtown and finding ways to effectively communicate and build on that message with your unique audience is a key element to downtown success. Success will occur when you learn to gently guide the change in perception through strong connections with your audience, the residents and businesses of Silt. You must be consistent, persistent, and patient. Find a message and stick with it.

The following observations and recommendations present specific ideas for improving the messaging and identity of downtown Silt.

**Observation: The community is still unclear about where the downtown is located.** During each focus group, participants questioned the use of “downtown” for the traditional retail area on Main Street. The Silt Trade Center, located east of the downtown area, offers many of the retail options and services traditionally thought of as being downtown. This disconnect between the two commercial areas often times causes confusion in the dialogue.

**Recommendation: Identify parameters for downtown and determine what the vision is for the downtown area.** Before you can begin your revitalization efforts, you must know where to focus those efforts. The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2009 shows the agreed-upon downtown area.

The Future Land Use Map shows the downtown area stretching from 4th to 9th Street and Main to Orchard Avenue. This area should be reviewed and approved by the community as a whole to ensure the community is ready to move forward. During the discussion of the downtown area, the community must define the vision for the area. Again, going back to the Comprehensive Plan, the community vision has been introduced. The plan states, “Silt will strive to become
a progressive, sustainable town that embraces the positive aspects of directed growth while capitalizing on a western rural legacy of self-sufficiency and strong community connections.” This vision should be carried out in Downtown Silt.

**Observation:** The community is not completely aware of the actions of the town leadership and is not taking an active role in the visioning or direction of Silt. There seems to be a disconnect between what the town board is doing and what the businesses and residents know about. In concert with this is a lack of citizen leadership. A large part of knowing what is going on in your community is taking an active role in what is going on and making sure you are keeping yourself up to date with what the board is discussing.

**Recommendations:**

- **Promote the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) for citizens to be actively involved in decision-making and visioning for the town.** The CAC was established to assist with the Comprehensive Plan, but reviving them to assist in the revitalization aspects of Downtown Silt may be very beneficial. This group should be used to bring citizens and organizations together in a unified voice. The group can assist in the implementation of the downtown vision and can be the “go-to” group for the town board, staff, and businesses.
- **Develop and maintain a high level of community engagement by encouraging citizen leadership and participation in town government and other local organizations.** This language comes directly from the Comprehensive Plan and it bears repeating here. Fostering public awareness of the goings-on of the various organizations in town, as well as what the board is discussing, will bring a renewed sense of community to Silt. New families are moving in to the area that may not be completely in tune with the town, either because they are new or because they work in other communities and spend little time in Silt. It is imperative that you reach out to these new individuals, get them interested in the town, and engage them. The citizens must feel ownership in this Community Revitalization Partnership visit, the Comprehensive Plan, and all other future endeavors the town and the various organizations are involved in. Only when the citizens take ownership will the results be truly successful.

**SIMPLY IRRESISTABLE LITTLE TOWN**

![Silt Zoning Map](image)
**Observation:** Downtown is lacking leadership. The Silt Board of Trustees focuses its efforts on the community at large and spends a portion of its time dealing with the issues of Downtown Silt. Each of the board members and staff should be acting as ambassadors for the community each and every day. Additionally, the Silt Area Chamber works with all the businesses in and around Silt who are members. This may or may not include businesses downtown.

**Recommendation:** Identify a downtown champion. The board and staff need to organize around a single or small group of objectives for Downtown Silt. A downtown champion operates as a single voice for the downtown business owners, property owners, and customers. This champion could come from a number of different organizations or groups, but he or she must be focused on the issues pertaining to downtown. In many cases, a committee forms within the Chamber of Commerce that is solely dedicated to improving, promoting, marketing and working with downtown merchants, customers and interest groups.

**Observation:** There is a lack of cooperation between organizations working on the community; this will limit efficiency. Silt is a small enough community that every organization should be aware of what other organizations are doing and how they should be interacting with each other.

**Recommendation:** Collaborate with local, social, historical, educational organizations to create a community network that contributes to a strong sense of community identity. Again, this language comes directly from your Comprehensive Plan. By working together each organization contributes to the identity of Silt and ensures that the history, culture and personality of the area are evident.
ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Observation: There is a need for market information to enable small businesses to understand local opportunities. Developing a set of market information to distribute will help entrepreneurs plan for success and promote a sustainable balance of business growth.

Recommendations:

- **Gather basic data through grassroots efforts for future use.** Basic and insightful market information can be gathered with relatively simple steps to evaluate potential retail capture and leakage, such as point-of-sale surveys of consumers’ zip codes or asking “Where are you visiting us from?” Local household surveys of expenditure patterns and buying-trip patterns are also helpful.

Business-to-business purchases are also an opportunity to provide local goods and services and should be surveyed. Assemble contact list of businesses from town licensing information and ask businesses what goods and services they utilize and where they buy them.

- **Utilize existing communication lines to gather data.** Another way to reach local businesses and households is through utility bills and other civic-related mailings. Communication is key to good results, so let households and businesses know that they will be asked about their spending patterns and make them comfortable with how the data will be used and that it will be kept confidential.

Once the survey data is collected, compile a description of local goods & services consumed and generally where purchased, e.g., downtown, Rifle, etc. Create summary report of Local Buying Patterns and Business Opportunities and assemble into a friendly package to inform entrepreneurs on local needs and to promote business development. This marketing package should be distributed to all businesses and citizens that can act as ambassadors for the community.

Observation: Downtown has many underutilized buildings and open lots. These buildings and spaces should be viewed as assets that can be activated.

Recommendations:

- **A vacant property inventory should be completed with sufficient depth to inform potential business tenants and property buyers.** Depth would include information related to zoning and comprehensive plans relevant to the future of the area. An inventory of all underutilized properties can be kept as an internal document; a catalogue of property available for sale or for lease can be packaged for public distribution. This catalogue should be made available at websites and at all public offices. Develop high quality marketing fact sheets for individual sites in qualifying areas and distribute/market to make it easy for the real estate brokers to bring a deal to Silt.

- **Identify targeted incentives to encourage occupancy.** For example, subsidizing rental rates, streamlining tenant improvement permitting process, waiving building permits fees for tenant finish, and waiving use tax on building materials for retrofit of old buildings for new occupancy. Qualifying criteria for such incentives should support the development
of a critical mass of businesses to populate downtown.

- **Invite all vacant property owners to discuss how to develop and redevelop properties where it is needed.** Creative partnerships should be discussed by the group in a meeting or series of meetings. For example, identify public-private partnering opportunities; determine the willingness of parties to assemble joint ventures between investors, e.g., one partner could contribute land as an equity investment; or the town could identify technical assistance and grant funding to conduct real estate activities. There could also be an opportunity for property owners and town to work together, e.g., the town could issue a request for development proposals for a group of for sale properties.

- **Consider the possibility of creating a model vision to jumpstart development.** That is, organize property information, incorporate market analysis, and conduct upfront site due diligence (may include environmental assessments and structural inspections), and financially model various reuse scenarios. In short, design a development prospectus to entice infill development in a strategic manner.

**Observation:** There is a perception that the town is not “Business Friendly.”

**Recommendation:** Continue with zoning and subdivision ordinances review, revisions and permitting processes that will encourage and entice businesses to locate and expand on properties and buildings in the core downtown area.

Over many years the town’s land use and planning ordinances has seen a patchwork of amendments and revisions. Thus, many zoning districts, processes and the actual implementation of projects are now finding themselves in conflict and burdening the process to allow for businesses to locate, remain or even expand. Currently the Sonoran Institute has been charged with reviewing and providing recommendations to the Town of Silt staff, Planning and Zoning Commission and Board to simplify, refine and provide clarity in their current land use and planning ordinances. What seems to be burdensome processes may simply be the inability to review, approve and permit applications and projects because of the duration of time it takes to understand, find, and interpret the steps a property owner or business owner must go through.

During the focus group discussions issues were raised about businesses not being able to easily access information or clearly understand the steps of the various processes a property owner or business owner had to go through to get a review, approval or permit. There seemed to be consensus that this is leading to less than a business-friendly attitude and provides the impression that the town isn’t welcoming new business to the community.

Providing a positive business-friendly attitude begins with a philosophy that the town is open for business; this is made obvious by friendly customer service. This is easily done and carried through if the land use, development, construction and permitting codes are understandable, consistent and streamlined. Training and education on getting this philosophy across ensures that a business-friendly community will be attained.

**Observation:** There is a lack of material to help new business owners.

**Recommendation:** Create business-friendly town material. Identify/clarify/simplify all steps needed to create, attract, retain or expand businesses during the town’s
permitting, remodeling, and building construction process.

One of the quickest and easiest means to demonstrate the Town of Silt’s business-friendly position is to compose and compile uncomplicated and understandable readable land use, development, and permit information and materials. This can be put into a packet format and provided to anyone that wants construction and permit information, from the Town Clerk’s office to the Planning and Public Works offices. This could be distributed freely to the public by the Silt Chamber of Commerce, realestate association, and ambassadors representing the town. This information should also include list of resource individuals, town website, chamber of commerce website, vacant land and building inventory, financing resources, or other material that will provide a “lifeline” to get through all of the perceived “red tape.”

Observation: There is a lack of information available regarding vacant property and land sites.

Recommendation: Include information on the town’s website that details vacant property and land sites including zoning information, dimensions, description of surface conditions, description of utilities, and parking requirements. Extend survey to existing property and buildings.

Websites are the most direct method to “visit” a community and can be accessed just as well at 10 AM as at 2 AM. This is one of the most prominent methods businesses, search and find opportunities to locate in a community.

Other information should include:
- Community Information: Demographics, taxes, cost of living, climate, schools, maps, community care facilities, hotels and events.
- Business organizations and non-profit groups
- Business support and resources: Financing programs, state incentive programs, and grants.

Observation: Downtown has many underutilized buildings and “missing teeth.”

Recommendations: Utilize part of the USDA grant funds toward economic betterment to attract businesses to fill empty or underutilized building stock. Create criterion that provides extra credit for businesses that want to locate in existing buildings, infill/redevelopment/downtown properties, Brownfield sites, density and vertical mixed uses.

The primary purpose and intent of the USDA grant is to retain and create jobs and job
opportunities in a community. The Town of Silt should put together specific criterion that should be used to evaluate each business applicant.

A checklist needs to include:

- a written business plan, defining long-range and short-range goals and objectives
- a written description of the product and or services that will be provided, and defined the market area that will be served
- written or calculated formal financial plan
- start-up costs
- zoning, and building code regulations, state and local licensing requirements

Observation: There doesn’t appear to be a uniform code for appearance of home and yard for upkeep and maintenance.

Recommendation: Alleviate need for a special use permit to demolish a property and use that as an aesthetic enhancement tool.

An unattractive building detracts from other properties in the general area. When the building is demolished, the property becomes more attractive and valuable to buyers. Furthermore, property taxes also become more attractive for resale to another property owner. In many financially strapped communities inducements and incentives are difficult to position or offer to any business or project. One incentive that has become frequently used is to not impede a property owner from demolishing a building. As it is less costly for structurally unsound buildings to be demolished than renovated.

**DESIGN**  
**WAYFINDING AND ORIENTATION**

Observation: There is a lack of visible signage and wayfinding in downtown.

Recommendation: Clearly identify gateways to the town with an attractive sign that reflects the town’s identity and vision. The entry signage will be the first impression one has as they enter the town. An attractive recognizable sign sends a positive message to visitors and residents. The sign should be placed at the appropriate height to be seen by drivers without looking up or down.

Example of gateway signage
Observation: There is no clear directional signage in roundabout to direct visitors to Silt’s main attractions.

Recommendations:

- **Strategically place signage within the roundabout to direct people to the various services and activities Silt offers.** Indicate direction to community landmarks with signage that is cohesive with the gateway signage. Make it easy for potential customers to identify where services are located. For example, direct visitors to trade center, the downtown business district, the city hall, library, and the historical museum village. The easier we make it for people to navigate through a community, the more opportunities they have to see all the great things Silt offers.

- **Use appropriate signage for directional, gateway, pedestrian-oriented and street demarcation.** It is important that the directional signage to these landmarks is differentiated from the street signs to increase visibility. For example, currently the library directional sign is difficult to see because it looks like a street name sign.

Observation: Bike trails are not clearly marked. Silt also does not provide bike racks to encourage a bike-friendly community.

Recommendation: To support Silt’s goal of a sustainable community, it is important to incorporate bike racks throughout the downtown to encourage biking rather than driving. The planned and existing bike trails are an important feature Silt has to offer. These features should be highlighted to appeal to the active tourists and residents. Silt wants to make all of its facilities and services easy to get to and as visible as possible. It is also recommended that a bike rack be included in or near the defined public parking lot. Furthermore, it is important to clearly mark existing bike trails.
Observation: Currently there is no designated public parking lot downtown.

Recommendation: Establish a public parking lot that is clearly defined and easy to find from the roundabout. It should accommodate large vehicles, busses, RVs, and compact car parking. Clearly marked public parking will further assist in attracting visitors. It is important to make parking and wayfinding very easy for residents and visitors. When it is difficult to find public parking, it creates frustration and deters people from stopping. Having public parking for visitors and residents helps establish Silt as a welcoming place for visitors and residents alike.

Observation: Downtown is not as pedestrian-friendly as it could be. Residents feel unsafe crossing during rush hour because crosswalks do not deter speeding.

Recommendation: Start negotiations with CDOT to get the crosswalks painted, and eventually to incorporate pedestrian-controlled signage that blinks when a pedestrian needs to cross. As downtown strives to grow, it is important that pedestrian safety and accessibility be addressed. The safer people feel walking downtown the longer they will stay, and it will also encourage residents and visitors to come downtown more often.

Observation: Improvements need to be made to many façades and signage downtown. Downtown has missed opportunities to feature the valued architectural details that are in place.

Recommendations:

• Utilize façade and signage renderings from Colorado Center for Community Development (CCCD) to encourage improvements. It is important to seek a design plan that can improve the overall look of downtown while reflecting Silt’s cultural and historical background. It is important to make vacant building looks more appealing to investors, community members, and visitors. Standards should be set regarding the upkeep of vacant buildings. Each façade can be unique as it pertains to the business, but it should reflect an overall theme that is consistent with Silt’s identity.

Utilize initial design plan from CCCD to access affordable design services and excite the community and business owners.

• Consider the benefits of historic designation and increased preservation activities in Silt. It may be pertinent for property owners to seek registration with the National Register of Historic Places to get various tax incentives. Once they are registered they can seek grant monies from various historical organizations to support maintenance and renovation. Review the material in the Appendices on benefits of designations on the National Register of Historic Places.

Observation: The community desires additional landscaping downtown.

Recommendations:

• Consider incorporating native plantings and trees that will not become an economic and environmental strain on the community into downtown. It is important to seek assistance from Silt’s extension program to research indigenous plants that can be
incorporated into future landscaping projects downtown. Using indigenous plants will result in less water usage, thereby saving money. This ensures landscaping will look attractive as well as further reflect Silt’s natural surroundings with little to no maintenance.

• **Consider supporting the attempts to create a community gardening program to maintain new landscaping for downtown.** Allow groups of gardeners, seniors, youth, or others to adopt a garden. This would be a great opportunity to involve the senior community, historical society, garden clubs, and community members wanting to get involved in the beautification of Silt. When people have a responsibility to the appearance of their town, they feel increased ownership and pride.

**PROMOTIONS**

**Observation:** Organizations are productive, but do not appear to coordinate on promotions.

**Recommendations:**

• **Conduct a strategic event planning meeting to examine at event objectives and schedule for all community-wide activities within the Silt immediate area.** It appears that there are several organizations within the community that could benefit by collaboration and partnerships with other organizations to benefit the town as a whole. Citizens mentioned that they enjoyed events that brought the community together. Due to the size of the community, human resources are limited and would benefit by working together toward creating a combined calendar of events for the town. It is suggested that the chamber be the lead organization for creating and distributing this combined calendar to local and regional community.

Once the combined calendar is created, a strategic planning meeting should be called with several goals in mind. A plan may be to invite a representative of each entity that is planning community events throughout the year to a strategic planning meeting. At that meeting decide what the goals of different events are (e.g., community building, retail events, image building to visitors) and who the target audiences are. Sort these by months. Once a matrix of current events is created, it will show where there are holes in the calendar and what opportunities there are for additional events.
- Research and compile calendar of regional events from surrounding communities and businesses for complete regional calendar of events to use when creating or incorporating Silt events into a regional effort. Once the local calendar of events and matrix are completed, it would be a good idea to compile a list of events in the other surrounding communities and integrate those events into the local matrix to determine if there are holes or overlapping events. Following the integration of the events, a complete list of media contacts (regional newspapers, websites, local access TV stations, calendars of events, etc) should be compiled and used regularly to promote events and the community. A regular schedule of contact with these media sources should be established. The Chamber would be the logical organization for this. An intern or high school student might be recruited to do this legwork.

Observation: There are opportunities to better promote and market resources.

Recommendation: Get CDOT signs for historic downtown, historic sites, etc. on both Interstate 70 and Highway 6. The community may have opportunities for free marketing using CDOT generic signs such as “central business district,” “historic downtown,” or “museum.” The Town of Silt should contact CDOT to see what signage might be available and appropriate. This signage should be used to draw traffic off the interstate. Once these are identified and locations determined, follow up will be necessary to make this happen.

Observation: Key assets are not being marketed to the community and tourist groups that would appreciate them.

Recommendations:

- Utilize town resources to assist the historic society to develop a marketing plan for Historic Park. The Historic Park is a defining entity in the community, which could be a unique draw for visitors and locals. Historic Park is a unique experience in the community, one that people from all over would come to see. It is a learning tool representing the lives and buildings of the people who lived here long ago. Create a website outlining the history of the project, the days, times and hours of operation, a map showing the location, and entry fees. Link this website to area chambers and other websites. A collateral piece, perhaps a rack card, could be created and distributed through the rack card distribution company. Local restaurants, lodges, and stores should have copies for distribution. A quarterly or somewhat regular newsletter of the organization might be created to keep activities top of mind.

- Research and develop a method of encouraging the viewing of the Blue Heron and Eagle bird populations as a means of drawing visitors off the interstate. The bird populations in the Silt area are a unique draw for birders and should be developed as a draw for visitors. Cultural heritage tourism (CHT) is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry. CHT visitors spend more and stay longer than other visitors. Birding is one of the fastest growing elements of cultural heritage tourism throughout the nation. You have a unique opportunity in river area to view a number of blue herons and eagles within close proximity to your town. Develop, with your local or regional Audubon Society the research and collateral material to provide an enriching birding experience. Create bird-watching stations across the river from the nests, or closer, if possible, without disturbing the birds. Learn the migratory patterns of these birds and create a “Return of the Blue
Herons” Festival each year. Even if they don’t show up then, people will have a great time getting together and celebrating something.

**Observation:** Garfield County is joining a Northwest Colorado Regional Cultural Heritage Tourism effort for marketing.

**Recommendation:** Get involved with the Garfield County CHT efforts to promote cultural resources. The culture and traditions of Silt, in addition to the Historic Village and the Herons/Eagles mentioned above, are all things that heritage travelers may be interested in, if they know that there are things to see and do in and around Silt. Define a champion of CHT in Silt (Historical Society? Historic Park committee? Chamber? ) Contact Kate Collins, VP of Tourism in Glenwood (970-945-6589 x 105) to let them know Silt is interested in being a part of the planning process for the Garfield County CHT program. Take an active role in creating the visitor-ready sites to be included in a Garfield County CHT effort.

Remember visitors often like to see more than one thing in an area that helps to define the place, the people and the heritage of the area.

**Observation:** People don’t know what businesses and opportunities are available.

**Recommendation:** Create a complete directory of all businesses in Silt using the town’s registry of business licenses. Despite the membership aspect of the chamber and the need to represent its members, it is felt that the community would benefit from a complete directory of businesses and services available in Silt. Since the chamber wants to increase membership, it is recommended that non-members be offered a listing in the business directory for a reduced price (perhaps free?) for one year on both the website and in print. The following year, if they have seen benefit, the chamber can market membership to those who have not previously been members. The benefit to the community is to let the townspeople and the visitors know which businesses are available.

**Observation:** The Town of Silt has little information or outdated and sparse information about all aspects of the community.

**Recommendation:** Create marketing materials for the town of Silt, as a place to live, work and play. If someone is doing research on the Town of Silt as a place to live, open a business or work, or engage in recreational opportunities, there is no one place to get this information. Population, relevant residential and commercial real estate information, community profile, educational opportunities, recreational opportunities, map of the area, medical facilities and whatever other information that a potential resident or business/property owner would need to make an informed decision about investing in the community.

**Observation:** The community tends to approach things individually and needs to work together to show pride in the community as a whole.

**Recommendation:** Celebrate successes together! Create a festival or annual picnic for
the whole community annually to celebrate the volunteerism within the community and the accomplishments of goals set forth in the strategic plan. This could be pulled together by the chamber with help from the other organizations. Each organization could present annual awards to outstanding volunteers and outline accomplishments for the past year and goals for the next. The more people become engaged in their communities, the more buy-in everyone has and the more people help to accomplish the visions of the whole.

Observation: Silt residents have their obvious pride in their community, but it doesn’t seem visible to the outside world.

Recommendation: Create bumper stickers for anyone wishing to display them and show town pride. In one of the sessions someone told us that an acronym for Silt is Simply Irresistible Little Town. While she may have been joking, the wording makes a terrific branding statement. This could be a matter of “If you can conceive it and believe it, you can achieve it.” The Town of Silt, in collaboration with the Chamber, should fund, produce and distribute bumper stickers with the spelled out acronym for Silt. Pride in community can be contagious. If the people who live here believe in Silt and show it, positive things will come out of it. The people of Silt should be Silt’s ambassadors to the rest of the world.

**FUNDING MECHANISMS**

Potential Sources of Funds that the Town of Silt could investigate and discuss with the Town Board and the public are included in the following list:

- **Vendor Fees:** These are charges applied to concessionaires at events, parades, community gathering places.

- **Business License Fees:** These are fees that can be assessed when a new business comes to town. This will help generate revenues for the community and will help in identifying what businesses are located in town. Many times the fees are paid every year. These dollars could be earmarked for specific business needs, events, marketing, etc. May be increased, lowered, or adjusted to impact the businesses, types of businesses, and revenue generated for the Town by businesses and should be consistent with surrounding jurisdictions. Be careful not to add to the burden of small or start up businesses in a down economy;

- **Heritage Tourism Office/Colorado Tourism Office Grants:** The Silt Chamber should work together with other chambers, the county and regional entities to apply for a Colorado Tourism Office Marketing Matching Grant Program, which provides funding to not-for-profit organizations in the State of Colorado for the purpose of promoting the state or a region as a tourism destination. For more information, visit the website [http://www.colorado.com/ai/MarketingGrantCriteriaFY2009.pdf](http://www.colorado.com/ai/MarketingGrantCriteriaFY2009.pdf)

- **Grant opportunities for personnel:** Opportunities exist through South West Youth Corp, AmeriCorps, Universities, or other agencies that provide interns. Utilization of DOLA's Best and Brightest program is a reasonably affordable program benefiting both the student and the Town.
• **Tax Assistance from General Funds:** Allocate specific funds for the downtown improvements.

• **CDOT 3 Planning and Management Region:** Continue the current working relationship with

• **Region 11 AGNC:** Continue the current working relationship to examine opportunities for regional cooperation.

• **Community Development Block Grant or Rural Business Opportunity Grants:** These are federal funds that are distributed by DOLA. The Division of Housing and Division of Local Government have funds available, as does the Office of Economic Development and International Trade. DLG money is used for public facilities, DOH money is used to construct housing, and OED money is used for Economic Development. Visit each agency’s website to learn details.

• **Energy Impact Funding:** These funds could assist the community with public infrastructure improvements, including roads, streetscapes, etc.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

• **Governor’s Office of Economic Development and International Trade:** This agency has several programs from economic development assessments to small business development centers. [www.colorado.gov](http://www.colorado.gov) Tel: (303) 892-3840

• **EPA Brownfield’s Program:** This program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment and cleanup. [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields) Tel: (202) 566-2777

• **Governors Energy Office (GEO) and USDA Rural Development (RD) Energy Programs:** Both agencies have new funding programs to retro-fit both public and business HVAC and lighting systems. Silt’s businesses could utilize new technology and renewable energy sources to reduce costs. The town could covert streetlights to more energy efficient LED type lights. This is consistent with the recently adopted comprehensive plan. [www.colorado.gov/energy](http://www.colorado.gov/energy) Tel: (303) 866-2100, [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov)

• **Small Business Administration and Economic Development Administration:** These are two Federal Programs that can assist local businesses in business startup, expansion and relocation. [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) Tel: (303) 844-2607, [www.eda.gov](http://www.eda.gov)

• **ACCION** is an award-winning nonprofit organization that invests in the community by increasing access to business credit, making loans and providing training to help emerging and existing entrepreneurs. [www.accion.org](http://www.accion.org) Tel: (617) 625-7080

• **Colorado Lending Source (LCS)** offers small businesses access to attractive, fixed-rate, long-term financing for real estate and equipment expansion projects. The
community-based nonprofit organization promotes the growth of small businesses. www.coloradolendingsource.org Tel: (970) 947-1400

- **Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF)** is a non-profit community development financial institution founded in 1976 to help small businesses. They provide small business loans up to $150,000 to entrepreneurs who are unable to obtain financing from traditional sources. If you receive a loan from CEF, you will have access to management consulting and business training from experienced staff. www.coloradoenterprisefund.org Tel: 303-860-0242

The **Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA)** is a state program whose mission is to create affordable housing, business and economic growth opportunities for Colorado residents. CHFA’s Quality Investment Capital program provides fixed-rate financing for small business loans guaranteed by the Small Business Association. Loans may be used for working capital, equipment purchases, business expansions and real estate acquisitions. The ACCESS program provides financing for fixed assets with a first mortgage funded as part of an SBA 504 loan package. www.chfainfo.com Tel: 303.297.chfa (2432)

**Downtown Colorado, Inc.:** As a member of Downtown Colorado, Inc., Silt will continue to be eligible for DCI services, training, and educational programs. It would be beneficial to review programs such as the Main Street Candidate Program that might offer some ongoing training and support to Silt’s downtown efforts. Additionally, Silt should access the benefits of the collaboration of DCI and Colorado Brownfield Foundation (CBF). A half day workshop is available to communities interested in working on downtown revitalization and brownfield sites. www.downtowncoloradoinc.org Tel: 303.282.0625

**FISCAL MECHANISMS**

The **Colorado Department of Local Affairs** offers technical assistance to local governments for the establishment of Capital Improvements, Fleet and Equipment Replacement and Pavement Maintenance Programs. These are tools created to enhance budget development and strategic planning for capital expenditures. www.dola.helpdesk@state.co.us Tel: (303) 866-2156

**Clifton Gunderson, LLC** is offering a fiscal review program analyzing 18 points of municipal government. Clifton Gunderson is an experienced CPA and local government management company. The fee for this service is based on municipal size and is reasonably priced. www.cliftoncpa.com