



GUNNISON VIBRANCY INITIATIVE REPORT | MARCH 2018



*Honoring the Past | Embracing the Future*



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**First Known Use of VIBRANCY:** circa 1890

**Definition of VIBRANCY:** the quality or state of being vibrant

**Definition of VIBRANT:** pulsating with life, vigor, or activity

**Synonyms for VIBRANCY:** animation, briskness, exuberance, jazziness, liveliness, lustiness, peppiness, robustness, sprightliness, vitality, vigorousness

The City of Gunnison is the county seat and the most populous municipality of Gunnison County, Colorado. It was named in honor of John W. Gunnison, a United States Army officer who surveyed for the transcontinental railroad in 1853. An explorer. Gunnison was incorporated March 1, 1880 ten years before the word Vibrancy was first known to be used! In 1880 the town and county of Gunnison was pulsating with life created by the influx of miners, ranchers and entrepreneurs seeking out their fortune.

Today, we are not too different from our founders and all want the outcome of a sense of vigor and activity, that quality of being Vibrant, for our community. The collaborative spirit that is driving the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative (GVI) is creating an enriched appreciation of liveliness and bringing together diverse members of the community in a very exciting way. This initiative is helping to foster a new and deepened awareness of the importance of a healthy downtown and working towards creating a stronger local market adding to the attractiveness for residents and visitors. The GVI recognizes the relationship between our downtown and how we as a community impact Western State University's ability to attract and retain students through our own investment in vibrancy.

The goals of the GVI are important to the expansion and health of our local economy as well as the health of all who live here. To thrive, Gunnison must be connected and inspiring. The GVI along with community partners is the catalyst to get us connected and inspire the community to continue vibrancy for now and the future. The GVI is an important effort to continue to bring the community together and lead the way forward.

Sincerely,

Celeste Helminski  
Director / Gunnison Chamber

Anthony Poponi  
Business Consultant

Kelly Osness  
Owner / Treads N' Threads

## PROJECT PARTNERS



**City of Gunnison**  
[www.gunnisonco.gov](http://www.gunnisonco.gov)



**Community Builders**  
[www.communitybuilders.org](http://www.communitybuilders.org)



**studioINSITE**  
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**Cascadia Partners**  
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## ABOUT COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Community Builders (CB) is a non-profit dedicated to helping local leaders create strong and prosperous communities in the American West.

CB provides information, analysis, assistance and trainings to support the many people and organizations working to build better places by aligning their community's planning and economic goals.

The goal of the Community Builders' assistance program is to provide communities with the tools and resources to spark meaningful on-the-ground progress, while building local capacity and creating success stories that inspire and inform other places.

Information about Community Builders' technical assistance program can be found at:

[www.communitybuilders.org/how-we-help/community-assistance](http://www.communitybuilders.org/how-we-help/community-assistance)

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the product of a collaborative effort between the City of Gunnison, Community Builders, the Downtown Leadership Committee, studioINSITE, Charlier Associates, Cascadia Partners and the community.

This report is to be adopted as a component of the City of Gunnison's 2017 Strategic Plan. Included in the report are strategies and recommended actions for working towards the community's goals for downtown Gunnison. Some of the actions identified in this report will necessitate further study and collaboration among local partners.

## PROJECT FUNDERS

Special thanks to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, the LOR Foundation, the Gates Family Foundation, and the City of Gunnison for providing the funding necessary to make the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative possible.

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# 1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

## PROJECT PURPOSE

Great communities have great downtowns. Gunnison, a community that exemplifies all the best of what western Colorado has to offer, is no exception. Downtown Gunnison is the historic, economic and cultural heart of the community. It is a place where the area's rich history and promising future come together, offering an authenticity and sense of place that are increasingly hard to find.

Downtown Gunnison also encompasses a number of important assets. It is home to Western State University, serves as the gateway to the Gunnison Valley, is surrounded by outstanding scenery and world-class recreation, and retains several historic buildings that support its character and identity.

Despite its strengths, downtown Gunnison is not without challenges. Many residents and businesses feel the area is falling short of its potential. Many local businesses struggle to thrive. Pedestrians and cyclists feel unsafe on many downtown streets.

Looking into the future, these challenges are outweighed by the downtown's potential. As places that respond to growing demand for places that are authentic, walkable and offer a variety of sights and activities, downtowns play an increasingly important role in the success of local economies. In this light, the success of downtown Gunnison has everything to do with the economic well-being of the entire community. Downtown Gunnison also has an important role in the success of the regional economy. The One Valley Prosperity Project, a valley-wide economic strategy completed in 2016, identified the revitalization of downtown Gunnison as a regional priority.

Taken together, these realities present important questions about the future. As we grow and change, how do we retain all that is great about the downtown, while realizing its immense potential? How do we create a downtown that reflects our character and sense of place? The Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative was designed to answer these questions and offer a strategy for proactively shaping a downtown that honors our past while embracing our future.



## Downtown Gunnison

Gunnison has a wonderful downtown that embodies the community's western heritage. However, many in the community feel that the downtown is not quite reaching its full potential. The Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative works to preserve what people love about the downtown, while helping the community realize their aspirations for this special place.



Carbondale, Colorado

**Downtown Leadership Committee (DLC) Tour**

Early in the project, members of the DLC participated in a 2-day tour of successful downtowns in Carbondale, Colorado and Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

The tour served as an opportunity to educate members of the DLC on the projects and programs in these communities that worked to strengthen their downtowns.



Carbondale, Colorado



Glenwood Springs, Colorado

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative was (and remains) a community-driven effort that worked to establish a vision, goals and strategies for the downtown, as well as identify the tools, resources and leadership capacity needed for implementation.

The City, Community Builders and the Downtown Leadership Committee worked to develop an authentic and robust public engagement process that provided different viewpoints a chance to find common ground and reach win-win solutions. The process was aimed at making it fun to participate and put the community in the drivers-seat.

**Downtown Leadership Committee (DLC)**

At the start of the project, the City and Community Builders partnered with a committee of local leaders from downtown businesses, non-profits, schools and government agencies. This committee, dubbed the “Downtown Leadership Committee,” was tasked with developing and carrying out an effective community engagement process (explained on p. 8) in addition to providing on-going support for implementation efforts.

The following people are recognized for their participation in the DLC:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Kelly Osness</i><br>Treads N' Threads       | <i>Celeste Helminski</i><br>Chamber Director  | <i>Chris Dickey</i><br>Chamber Representative  |
| <i>Heidi Magnus</i><br>Firebrand               | <i>Janet Lucas</i><br>Boomerang               | <i>Gary Pierson</i><br>Western Representative  |
| <i>Carlie Kenton</i><br>Arts Center            | <i>Lozne Miller</i><br>Western Student        | <i>Nancy Barnes Trimm</i><br>Gunnison Library  |
| <i>RoAnn Rouse-Houck</i><br>Main Street Clinic | <i>Jodie Howard</i><br>Western Student        | <i>Erich Ferchau</i><br>Remax/PZ Commission    |
| <i>Cathie Pagano</i><br>Double Shot Cyclery    | <i>Jennifer Barvitski</i><br>Architect        | <i>Matt Schwartz</i><br>Gunnison Family Vision |
| <i>Joellen Fonken</i><br>Shopper               | <i>Wayne Castka</i><br>Into the Woods         | <i>Bob Mann</i><br>Silver Queen Jewelry        |
| <i>Danny Lefebvre</i><br>Marios                | <i>Theresa Hanacek</i><br>PZ Commission       | <i>Anthony Poponi</i><br>Business Consultant   |
| <i>Jim Miles</i><br>City Council               | <i>Lucille Lucas</i><br>Lucille Lucas Gallery | <i>John Messner</i><br>Business Owner          |
| <i>Leia Morrison</i><br>City Council           | <i>Mallory Logan</i><br>RoShambo              | <i>Missy Wallin</i><br>Twisted Fork            |
|  |   | <i>TL Livermore</i><br>Pat's Screen Printing   |

### Identifying Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Hopes

The first step in the community engagement process for the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative was working with the community to identify their perspectives on strengths, opportunities and challenges in the downtown. The community also provided input on their hopes and aspirations for the type of place they wanted downtown Gunnison to become.

Several engagement opportunities were offered to gather input, including:

- Online community questionnaires
- High School and Western student surveys
- Idea boxes at local businesses and events
- Community discussions at coffee shops and bars
- Stakeholder meetings
- A community “Kick-off” meeting held in June 2017

From the input gathered, four goal statements were crafted to define what a successful downtown looks like to the community in the future. These goal statements are important as they provide the framework for action and guide long-term decision making for downtown Gunnison.

#### GUNNISON VIBRANCY INITIATIVE GOALS:

*Goal 1. Create a vibrant and authentic downtown that reflects our strong sense of place.*

*Goal 2. Make our downtown streets safe and easy to use.*

*Goal 3. Support a healthy downtown business environment that strengthens our local economy.*

*Goal 4. Enhance our downtown by strengthening the connections between Western and the community.*

### Identifying Strategies

With the goals for the downtown in hand, the second step in the community engagement process was working with stakeholders and the public to identify specific actions to be taken to work towards achieving the community’s goals. A series of community meetings were held in October and November 2017 that resulted in the strategies, design concepts, and implementation recommendations encompassed in this report.



Chris Rourke Photo



Chris Rourke Photo



# 2 GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR THE DOWNTOWN

The four goals for the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative describe the community's hopes for the downtown. For each goal, key challenges, opportunities, and strategies (i.e., solutions) have been identified. The strategies work to resolve a challenge or capitalize on an opportunity as a means for achieving the community's goals for downtown Gunnison.

## GOAL 1. MAKE OUR DOWNTOWN STREETS SAFE AND EASY TO USE

### Why this Matters

Great streets are essential building blocks of successful downtowns, but to work, they must balance many needs and functions. In addition to mobility and access, streets provide "street life" as well as the foundational armature for both existing businesses and future investment.

Most downtown and main street businesses rely on foot traffic. The most successful downtowns are those where people park their vehicle once and walk from place to place. Not only do some of those people spend money, they create a sense of "street life" that attracts more people and the foot traffic that businesses need to thrive. This is why a safe, convenient and inviting walking environment is important to the success of both main street businesses and the downtown as a whole.

### Key Challenges/Opportunities

#### 1. Real and Perceived Safety of Downtown Streets

The Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) crash data (refer to map on p. 11) and feedback from the community suggest that the recorded and perceived safety of Gunnison's downtown streets, specifically downtown intersections, is a key issue. Many of the comments from the community indicated that downtown streets were both unsafe and uncomfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists, which makes it difficult to generate bicycle and foot traffic in downtown Gunnison.



Carbondale, Colorado



Frisco, Colorado

### Getting Downtown Street Design Right

Well-designed streets serve as the foundation for successful downtowns. A "well-designed" downtown street is one that balances the needs of its various users including drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Carbondale and Frisco have created downtown streets that accommodate vehicular traffic, while also providing a comfortable environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Striking this balance has been key to the success of the downtowns in these communities.






# THE REAL AND PERCEIVED SAFETY OF GUNNISON'S DOWNTOWN STREETS

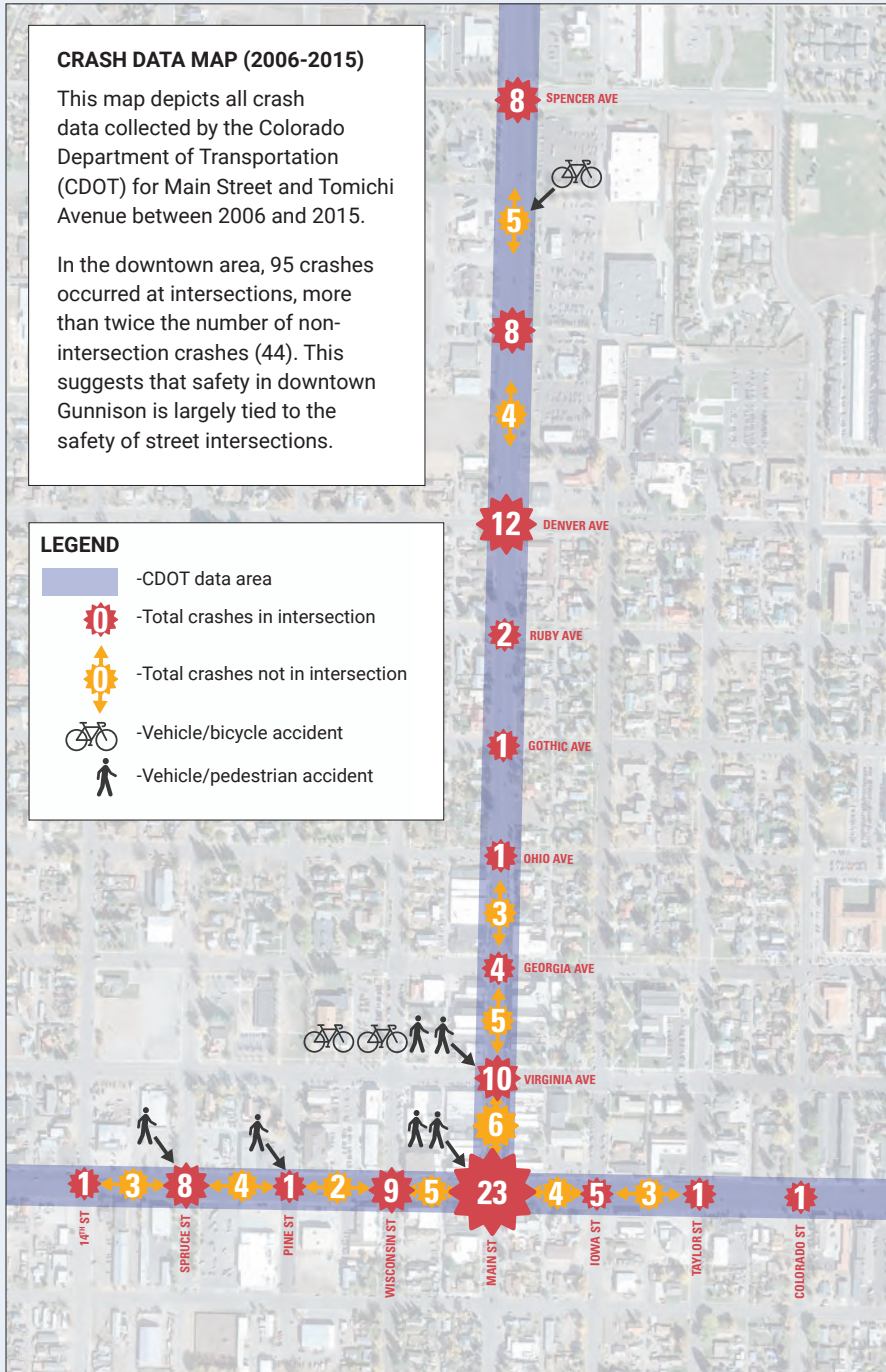
## CRASH DATA MAP (2006-2015)

This map depicts all crash data collected by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) for Main Street and Tomichi Avenue between 2006 and 2015.

In the downtown area, 95 crashes occurred at intersections, more than twice the number of non-intersection crashes (44). This suggests that safety in downtown Gunnison is largely tied to the safety of street intersections.

### LEGEND

-  -CDOT data area
-  -Total crashes in intersection
-  -Total crashes not in intersection
-  -Vehicle/bicycle accident
-  -Vehicle/pedestrian accident





## CLOSE CALLS MAP

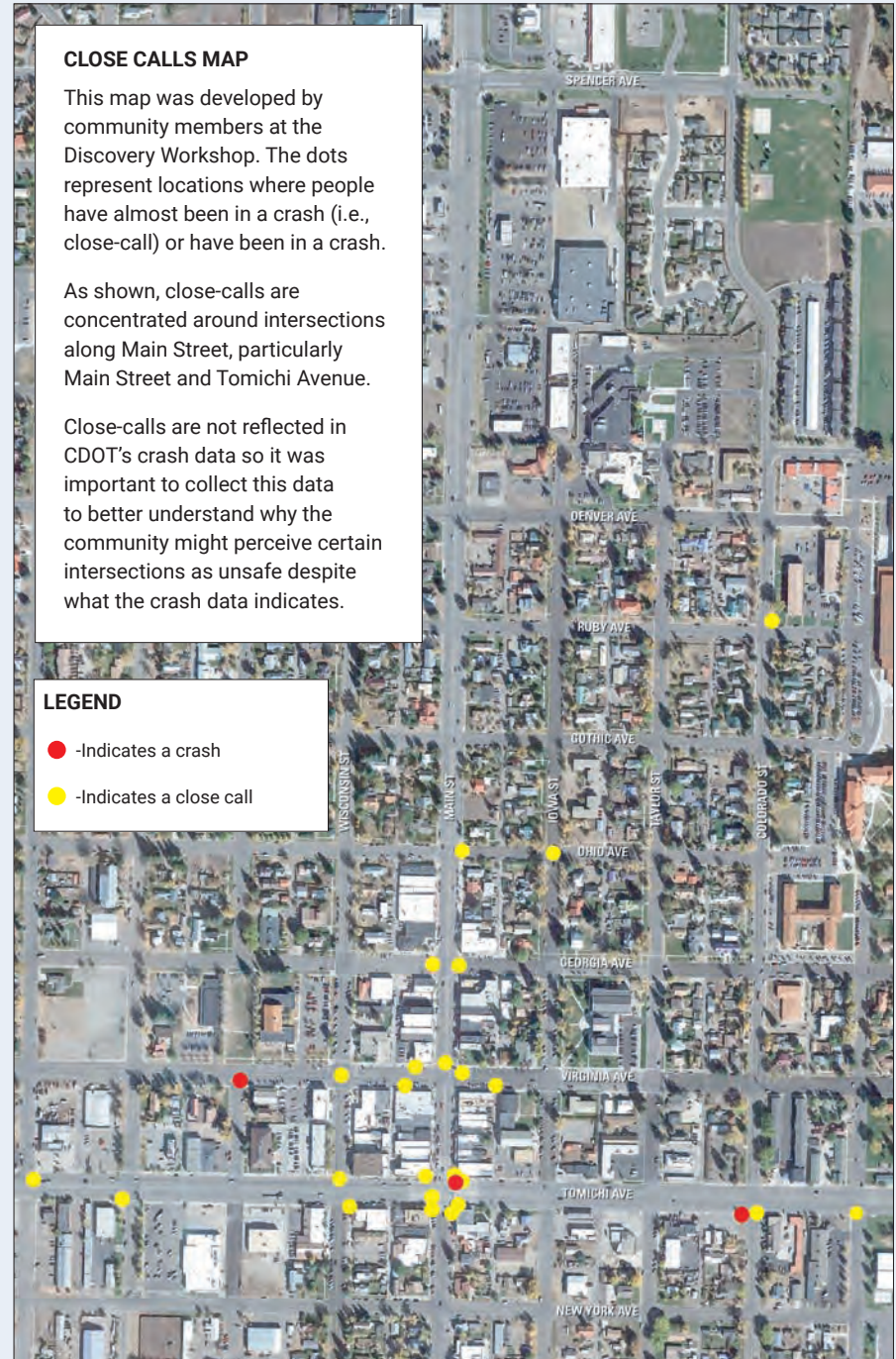
This map was developed by community members at the Discovery Workshop. The dots represent locations where people have almost been in a crash (i.e., close-call) or have been in a crash.

As shown, close-calls are concentrated around intersections along Main Street, particularly Main Street and Tomichi Avenue.

Close-calls are not reflected in CDOT's crash data so it was important to collect this data to better understand why the community might perceive certain intersections as unsafe despite what the crash data indicates.

### LEGEND

-  -Indicates a crash
-  -Indicates a close call



## 2. Finding a Balance: Vehicle Movement and Pedestrian Safety

Successful downtown streets balance a variety of needs and functions, particularly when they double as a state highway, which Main Street and Tomichi Avenue do. While highways are designed to efficiently (quickly) move vehicles through a community, downtown streets work best when designed to keep vehicle speeds slow. Slower vehicle speeds help create a safe, inviting and comfortable walking environment, which is key to the success of a downtown. Designing streets that serve both ends well is challenging. In Gunnison, the challenge is two-fold as both Highway 50 (Tomichi Avenue) and Highway 135 (Main Street) run through the downtown.

Part of the balance is how the limited right-of-way space is allocated to the various elements that make downtown streets work. How much space should be dedicated to vehicle travel? To on-street parking? To sidewalks? Bike lanes? In most cases, dedicating space to one of these elements means taking space from another, so the community needs to consider what matters most.

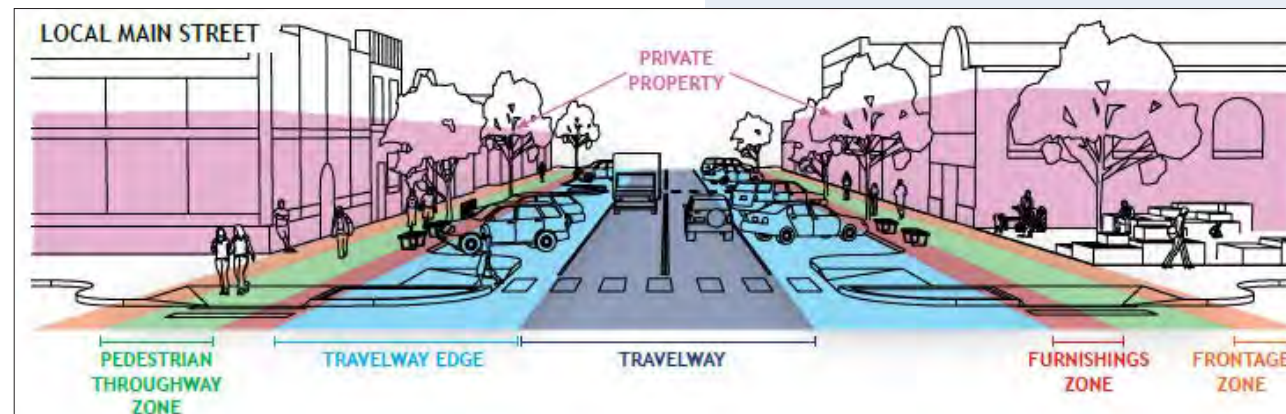
Deciding how and where to apply design elements that influence bike, pedestrian and vehicle travel is also part of the balancing act. For example, since many design elements that facilitate safe and convenient pedestrian movement also slow vehicle travel, often by design, communities must decide if a safer and more inviting walking environment is worth slower vehicle speeds.

## ELEMENTS OF A STREET

The function of a street is largely driven by how right-of-way space is allocated to the various elements of a street. For example, a street that allocates more space to the “Travelway” than to the “Throughway” and “Furnishing” zones will function better for the movement of vehicles than it will for encouraging pedestrian activity and outdoor dining.

Key elements of a street include:

1. **Private Property** - privately owned property along a street that defines the right-of-way width, as well as the character and context of the street.
2. **Frontage Zone** - the area between the private property and the “Throughway Zone.”
3. **Throughway Zone** - the area along a sidewalk that must remain clear for pedestrian movement.
4. **Furnishing Zone** - the area, typically along the edge of a sidewalk, that provides a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles and can provide space for street furniture.
5. **Travelway Edge** - the outside portion of a street that is not used for vehicular travel.
6. **Travelway** - the portion of a street dedicated to the movement of vehicles.



## WHAT'S A "BULB-OUT"?



Curb bulb-outs, also known as a curb extensions, are commonly installed at intersections (typically where on-street parking exists) to improve safety.

By simply extending the curb and sidewalk into an on-street parking lane, bulb-outs provide the following benefits:

- Narrows the perceived street width, which helps to slow traffic speeds.
- Shortens intersection crossing distance for pedestrians. This is especially important for young children, elderly and the disabled who may need more time to cross.
- Improves sight lines at intersections. Motorists are able to see pedestrians and pedestrians are able to see motorists.
- Provides space for ADA requirements - ability to provide appropriate ramp slope without using private property.
- Creates additional space for snow storage, landscaping, public art, seating, lighting, trash/recycling receptacles, bike parking, etc.

### 3. Gunnison's Wide Streets

Many people view Gunnison's wide streets as an asset to be preserved. However, the resulting crossing distances create a natural barrier to pedestrian movement and safety, particularly in the downtown.

#### The Solutions

##### 1. Install Curb Bulb-Outs

Curb-bulb outs are streetscape features commonly used to improve the safety of downtown streets. The following intersections in downtown Gunnison were identified as priority locations for curb bulb-outs:

- Main Street and Virginia Avenue
- Main Street and Georgia Avenue
- Main Street and Ohio Avenue
- Main Street and Tomichi Avenue

It is recommended that the City begin with a pilot bulb-out project at the intersection of Main Street and Ohio Avenue. This will enable the City to make immediate progress on community goals, while allowing room for experimentation and feedback. It is recommended that the bulb-outs be installed in conjunction with the other streetscape improvements identified for Ohio Avenue (refer to solutions for Goal 4).

##### 2. Improve Timing at Signalized Intersections

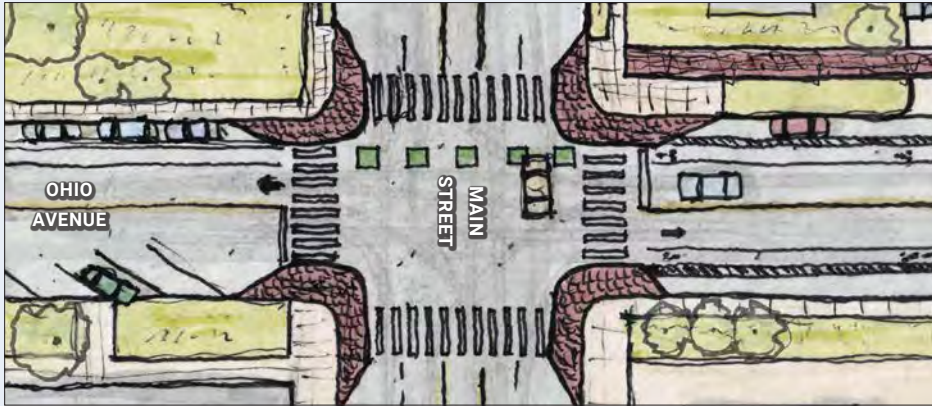
For pedestrians, crossing streets at signalized intersections in the downtown is a challenge due to inadequate crossing times. It is recommended that the City of Gunnison, in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), improve the timing at signalized intersections to make it easier and more comfortable for pedestrians to cross downtown streets.

##### 3. Improve the Downtown Bike Network

Gunnison has a strong network of downtown bike routes. Several changes were identified to enhance the safety and function of the existing network. The recommended modifications to the downtown bike network are (also refer to map in the Appendix):

- Stripe continuous bike lanes along Ohio Avenue.
- Remove discontinuous bike lane striping along Virginia Avenue.
- Explore opportunities to integrate bike lanes along Georgia Avenue.

CREATING A MORE PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY DOWNTOWN WITH CURB BULB-OUTS



Main Street/Ohio Avenue Curb Bulb-Outs

The intersection of Main Street and Ohio Avenue was identified as a preferred location for a curb bulb-out pilot project given its popularity as a pedestrian and bicycle route between Western and the downtown.



Main Street/Tomichi Avenue Curb Bulb-Outs

The intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue was identified as a particularly unsafe and problematic intersection for pedestrians. High traffic speeds and long crossing distances discourage pedestrian activity, which directly impacts street life in downtown Gunnison. Curb bulb-outs at this intersection will improve conditions for pedestrians, while also providing space for streetscape elements such as seating, landscaping, public art, lighting, and signage.



Curb Bulb-Outs in Other Western Slope Communities

A number of Western Slope communities (ex. Silt, Rifle, Carbondale, and Buena Vista) have constructed bulb-outs to create a more pedestrian friendly downtown.



Try It Out

A variety of techniques can be employed to create temporary bulb-outs. Temporary bulb-outs allow the community to “try out” the idea before investing in a permanent solution. Paint and glue down bollards were used in Eagle (pictured above) to create temporary bulb-outs.

## IMPACT OF OFF-STREET PARKING



Off-street parking requirements present a number of challenges when applied in a downtown setting.

The examples above depict some of the impacts that off-street parking requirements can have in downtowns. In Carbondale, the off-street parking lot for the Post Office resulted in the building being setback from the street, creating a “dead zone” along Main Street where there is often little to no street life. In downtown Eagle, off-street parking requirements resulted in roughly half of the property being allocated to a parking lot and not the building.

### 4. Pursue Strategies for Downtown Parking

Successful downtowns find ways to maximize on-street parking supply, while also developing long-term strategies that work to manage the on-street parking supply and accommodate parking demands that cannot be met on-street.

A number of parking strategies have been identified for downtown Gunnison. It is recommended that these strategies be implemented in the following sequence:

1. A number of the recommended zoning changes work to reduce off-street parking requirements. It is important that the City work to modify off-street parking requirements in the near-term as they can add significantly to development costs and negatively impact affordability and building design.

The City’s Land Development Code should be amended to reduce off-street parking requirements for the CBD, B-1 and R-2 or R-3 zone districts, as recommended.

Coincidental to that, the City should implement a strategic program of re-striping on-street parking. There are a number of opportunities to increase the supply of on-street parking in and around downtown by re-striping existing on-street parking stalls. Refer to the on-street parking analysis in the Appendix.

2. The City should conduct a downtown parking study to collect data around the use of on-street parking in the downtown. This study should be conducted during the time of year when on-street parking is most heavily used (i.e., the peak parking period).

While there are a number of consultants that specialize in parking studies, the City could engage local volunteers and/or Western students to assist with the necessary data collection.

3. Building upon the downtown parking study, the City will need to develop a comprehensive parking strategy that works to address the long-term parking needs for the downtown.

## GOAL 2. CREATE A VIBRANT AND AUTHENTIC DOWNTOWN THAT REFLECTS OUR STRONG SENSE OF PLACE

### Why this Matters

Authentic places can be described as those that are original, unique or real. Authenticity plays a key role in community character and sense of identity, as well as “place attachment” (a person’s emotional attachment to a place). The ability of a place to generate positive emotional attachment is beneficial in a number of ways including, enabling people to feel a sense of belonging. Downtowns are often the oldest part of a town/city and therefore serve as an ideal place to highlight a community’s authenticity.

More and more, people are drawn to downtowns because they are in search of something unique, something authentic. Unique products or experiences are often found at smaller local independent businesses and not at major chain stores. In most communities the greatest concentration of local businesses is in the downtown.

Downtown plays an important economic and social role in a community. Downtowns are one of the few places where housing, shops, community spaces, and cultural and civic activities are concentrated. This concentration and mix of activities facilitates business, social and cultural exchange. A strong and vibrant downtown can be the most productive place in a town/city and serve as a major economic driver.

### Key Challenges/Opportunities

#### 1. Places to Go and Things to Do

When asked if there are sufficient places to go and things to do in downtown Gunnison, many community members indicated that while there are some things that bring them downtown, they’d like to see a greater mix of businesses and activities.

Students indicated that they do come downtown to visit restaurants, coffee shops, bars, and for shopping however, a vast majority stated that they would like to see greater diversity in the types of businesses, especially those that serve local needs, places for the under 21 crowd, and businesses with longer hours to enhance local night life.



Glenwood Springs, Colorado



Salida, Colorado

### Bringing Activity to the Downtown

Successful downtowns offer a variety of reasons for people to be there. They also create opportunities to showcase activity. People out and about often serve as a magnet for other people. The outdoor dining space (top) and parklet (bottom) are examples of how Glenwood Springs and Salida are working to attract, and highlight, activity in their downtowns.

## THE VALUE OF DOWNTOWN HOUSING



Glenwood Springs, Colorado



Carbondale, Colorado

A vibrant downtown hinges on people being there. The most effective way to get people in a downtown is to have them live there. Therefore, if a vibrant and successful downtown is the desired outcome, it is of the utmost importance to integrate housing.

Downtown housing must come in a wide range of shapes and sizes to enable people of different socio-economic status to find a suitable home there.

The examples above depict the different forms that downtown housing can come in. The top image is a large single-family home in Glenwood Springs that has been converted into 12-units. The bottom image is a mixed-use building in Carbondale with housing units on the 2nd and 3rd floor.

The community recognizes the value of existing downtown amenities, such as the Arts Center, library, and IOOF park, and emphasized the importance of enhancing these amenities to bring more activity to the downtown.

### 2. Downtown Housing Choices

Housing is an essential component of any successful downtown. Having people (and their wallets) living in a downtown is the most effective way to generate activity and foster a strong business environment.

Feedback from the community indicated that the housing supply in downtown Gunnison was limited, expensive and that not all units were in very good condition. Furthermore, both High School and Western students identified the lack of housing options as a deterrent to staying in Gunnison upon completion of their education. These issues result in challenges that to be addressed in order to achieve the community's goal of housing more people in the downtown.

### 3. Gunnison's Western Heritage

Gunnison is an authentic western community, reflected in a downtown that is both picturesque and gritty. The City's western heritage is a significant asset to be preserved and expanded upon as the downtown transforms into a more active and inviting place. In other words, pursue change that strengthens the community but keeps Gunnison, Gunnison.

### 4. Downtown as a Focal Point for a More Sustainable Community

Many residents and businesses are interested in seeing Gunnison become a more sustainable community and view the downtown as an ideal location to highlight the integration of sustainable design practices and technologies into the built environment.

Readying the downtown for plug-in electric vehicles and incorporating recycling facilities into sidewalks are two ideas that should be considered in the near-term. More broadly, most residents recognize that the critical question related to sustainability is how the city grows. The importance of infill and redevelopment, within and beyond the downtown, was noted as a more sustainable alternative to outward growth (i.e., sprawl).

## The Solutions

### 1. Expand Downtown Housing Choices

Conventional zoning practices (i.e., Euclidean zoning) often regulate neighborhood design by defining a range of allowed densities or dwelling units per acre. Often, these types of regulations present challenges when working to diversify housing choices, especially in a downtown. In response, a number of communities have moved to “form-based” zoning, which works to ensure that the physical form of a building fits within the context of the neighborhood, while placing little emphasis on regulating things like uses and densities as the scale and form of the building will dictate what can occur inside.

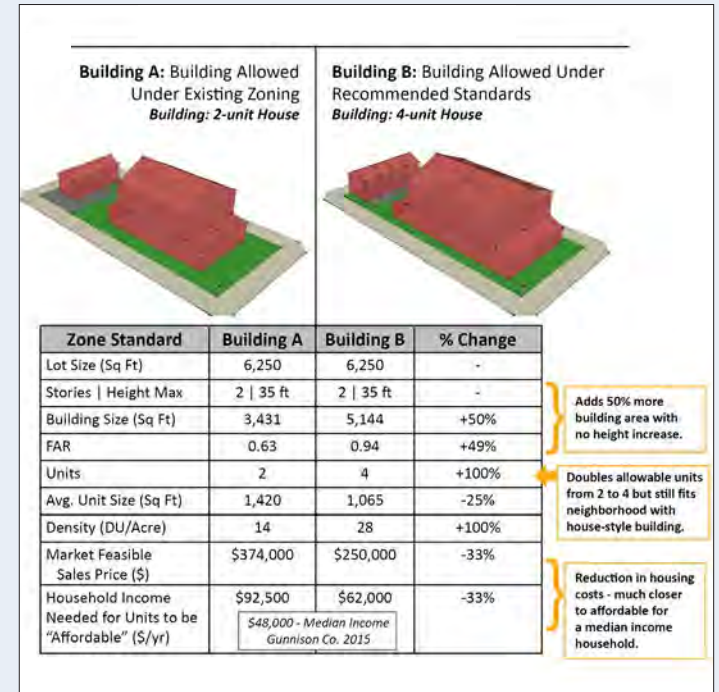
Long-term, the City should explore opportunities to modify its zoning standards to emphasize building form. In the near-term the City can, and should, adjust existing zoning standards to create greater opportunity for housing in the downtown. Recommendations for modifying the City’s R-2 and R-3 zone districts are provided below. It should be noted that while some of the recommended densities may seem unusually high for Gunnison, this is what is necessary to achieve smaller, more affordable units in and around the downtown.

R-2 is the zone district that encompasses many of the residential properties within a short walk of Main Street. The R-2 zone allows up to 2 units per a standard 6,250 square foot lot. However, there are many examples of 3 and 4-unit houses within the district that were built long ago. These multi-unit houses are valuable in that they fit the context of the neighborhood while also providing smaller housing units. The R-2 zone could be changed to allow for up to 4 units in a traditional house-form. This option may be more readily accepted by current residents.

Alternatively, portions of the R-2 zone district could be “up zoned” to the City’s R-3 zone district. R-3 is a multi-family zone intended to support the development of apartment buildings. Applying R-3 to older R-2 neighborhoods will necessitate community engagement and buy-in to be successful.

It is undecided as to which of these options the City will move forward with. Therefore, an analysis has been done for both the R-2 and R-3 zone districts and recommendations provided for both that work to expand downtown housing choices and strengthen the financial feasibility of future projects.

## MODIFYING THE R-2 ZONE DISTRICT

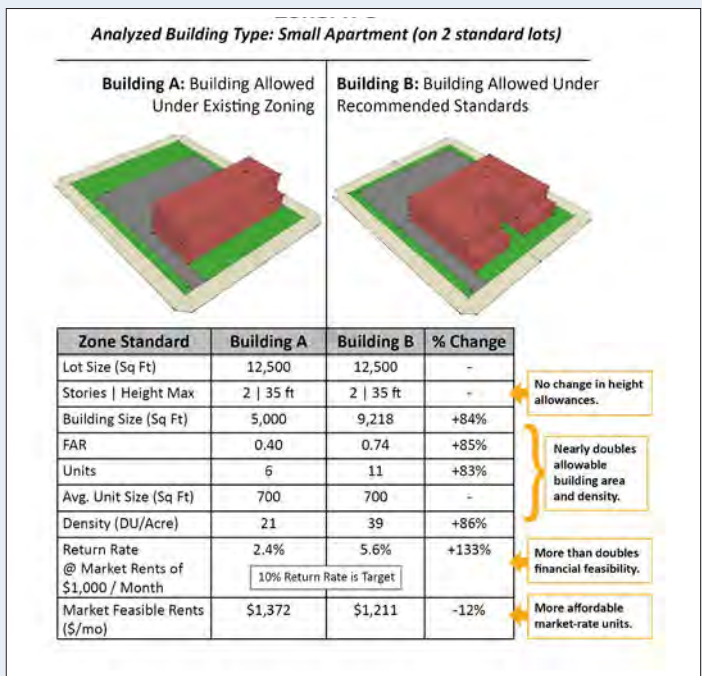


The changes recommended for R-2 are focused on expanding housing options that can be built, while ensuring that the scale of the structures still fits within the context of the neighborhood.

Most buildings within the R-2 zone district are single-family homes. Many are larger homes that could accommodate multiple units inside while maintaining the look of a single-family home. Indeed, there are a number of multi-unit houses that exist within these neighborhoods today.

The example above shows how allowing 4 units within a house can fit the neighborhood scale and deliver more affordable housing than the current standards allow for.

## MODIFYING THE R-3 ZONE DISTRICT



R-3 is a multi-family zone district where apartment buildings are permitted. However, the standards for the zone district are not well suited to neighborhood or main street-scaled apartment buildings and appear to be calibrated to deliver suburban, garden-style apartment complexes.

The recommended changes for R-3 would enable smaller, more compact apartment buildings that could fit within existing downtown neighborhoods.

### R-2 Zone District

The recommended zone changes for the R-2 zone district are:

- Increase density limits to allow 4 units per lot or 28 units per acre. Current regulations allow for 14 units per acre, which equates to 2 units per lot. This is too low for more affordable, “missing middle” housing types, like 3 and 4-unit houses.
- Expand the types of houses permitted:
  - Allow for 3 and 4-unit houses.
  - Allow cottage homes on a standard lot (4 small houses on a standard lot).
  - Allow for up to two Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) per lot - one inside the primary structure and one exterior/detached unit.
- Reduce off-street parking requirements to 1 space per unit and allow tandem parking in driveways. Current parking ratios are too high to make 3 and 4-unit houses feasible.
- Exempt ADUs from off-street parking requirements.
- Reduce landscaping requirement to 25% from 45% minimum and increase building and lot coverage to 65% from 45% maximum.
- Allow at least a portion of street frontage setbacks to be accommodated within the right of way, rather than starting at right of way.

### R-3 Zone District

The recommended zone changes for the R-3 zone district are:

- Increase the maximum allowable density to 50-60 units per acre from 30 units per acre.
- Remove minimum lot area per unit for multi-family projects. The current minimum lot area per unit results in lower effective density than what is technically allowed: 21 units per acre is the effective maximum vs. 30 units per acre, the maximum allowable density. On a standard 6,250 sq ft lot, the current standards only allow for 3 units. A double lot (12,500 sq ft) is only allowed to do 6 units.
- Current setbacks, if fully landscaped, result in more than 15% (existing minimum landscaping requirement) landscaping.

- Increase the allowed structure (or building) lot coverage to 65% from 45%. Further, consider regulating combined or “effective” lot coverage rather than structure and parking lot coverage separately. This will allow for more flexibility in site design.
- Eliminate frontage length requirements.
- Reduce front setback to 5-10’, depending on context.
- Reduce parking standards to 1 per unit from 1.75 per unit

## 2. Foster Partnerships and Identify Sites for Downtown Housing

The City of Gunnison and Gunnison Valley Regional Housing Authority (GVRHA) should work in partnership to identify potential sites for housing in downtown Gunnison. Where possible the City and GVRHA should work to pursue housing projects on the sites identified.

## 3. Bring More Activity to Downtown Streets

Visible activity along downtown streets (i.e., street life) is an important element of a vibrant downtown as busy sidewalks serve as a magnet for other people.

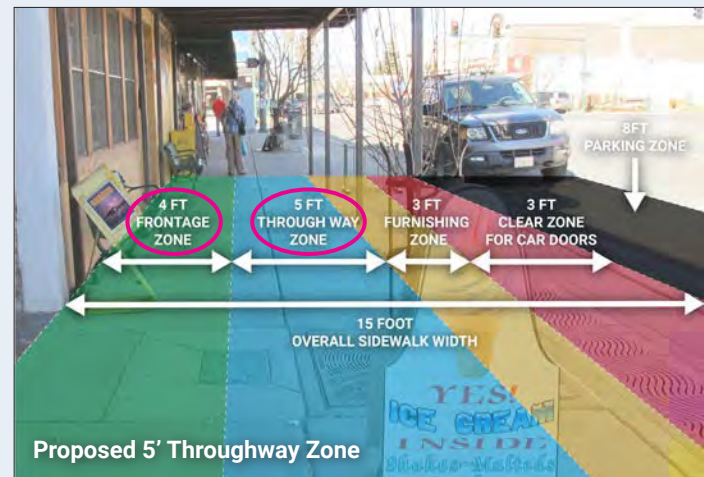
Outdoor seating is a great way to showcase activity along downtown streets. A number of businesses in downtown Gunnison have outdoor seating, either at the street level or on second story balconies. Building off of this, the following recommendations work to create additional opportunities for outdoor seating in the downtown:

### *Modify the Throughway Zone*

As part of the exploration of outdoor seating along Main Street, the City’s Throughway Zone requirements along Main Street sidewalks were examined. Currently, a six (6’) foot wide area along sidewalks must be kept clear of outdoor seating, bike racks, sandwich board signs, etc. This area is needed to provide space for pedestrian movement including wheelchairs and strollers.

The current width of the Throughway Zone limits outdoor seating options in front of a number of businesses. The City should reduce the width of the Throughway Zone to five (5’) feet, providing an additional foot (1’) of space for outdoor seating in front of businesses, while still affording adequate space for pedestrian movement.

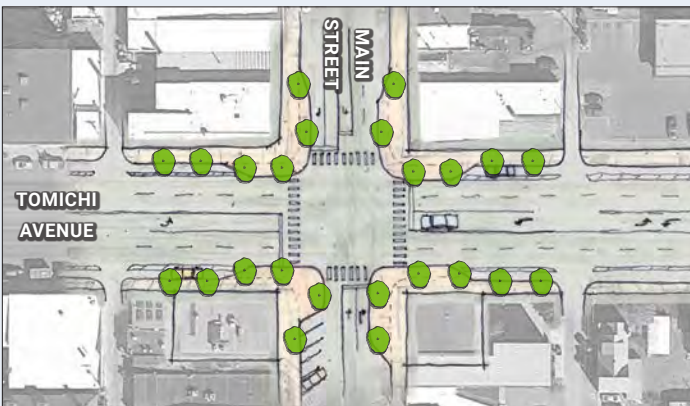
## MODIFYING THE THROUGHWAY ZONE



The “Throughway Zone” is the portion of a sidewalk that must remain clear of any obstructions to pedestrian or wheelchair movement.

Currently, the City requires a 6’ wide area along Main Street’s sidewalks to remain clear. While this provides a nice space for pedestrians, it does limit the amount of space available for outdoor seating (i.e., the Frontage Zone). It is recommended that the 6’ requirement be reduced to 5’ in order to create additional space for outdoor seating.

## CREATING A GATEWAY TO GUNNISON



Gateways are important features that create a visual cue to people that they are entering a community, a downtown or other special place. Gateways provide a sense of arrival.

The intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue presents an opportunity to create a gateway for Gunnison. A gateway at this intersection could be developed by installing features such as:

- Curb bulb-outs
- Widened sidewalks
- “Welcome” elements
- Street trees in large planters
- Custom street lights

### *Experiment with Parklets*

Parklets are on-street parking spaces that have been converted into outdoor seating platforms. They are typically applied where narrow or congested sidewalks prevent outdoor seating for businesses, or where the community identifies a need to expand public space. Parklets can offer the following benefits:

- Increase public space along downtown streets
- Bring life/activity to downtown streets
- Studies have shown that parklets can increase revenue for nearby businesses

A parklet demonstration is recommended for South Main Street. This location provides an opportunity to explore this idea on a city street, unlike North Main Street.

The City, in coordination with the Colorado Department of Transportation and business owners, should explore opportunities for parklets along North Main Street. The “Colorado Downtown Streets: A Tool for Communities, Planners, and Engineers” provides information (refer to p. 41) on design considerations for parklets on state highways.

Side streets off of Main Street offer additional opportunities for parklets. The City should explore these with business owners.

### **4. Establish a Gateway to Gunnison**

The intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue is one of Gunnison’s key activity nodes and serves as an ideal location to create a community gateway and sense of arrival to the downtown.

To create a gateway, it is recommended that additional streetscape elements be incorporated into the intersection including:

- Curb bulb-outs
- Widened sidewalks along Tomichi Avenue
- Iconic “Welcome” elements at intersection corners
- Trees in large planters along Tomichi Avenue
- Custom street lights (as part of the Downtown Lighting Plan)
- Public art displays
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, benches, bike racks, etc)

## 5. Enhance the Aesthetics of the Downtown

Enhancing the aesthetics of the downtown was identified as a need, with the caveat that any aesthetic improvements work to preserve and enhance Gunnison's unique western character.

Ideas from the community for how to improve downtown aesthetics include:

- Storefront/building façade improvement grants
- Establish a Creative District to support arts in the downtown
- Flower boxes/planters
- Downtown Lighting Plan (for street lighting, seasonal lighting, etc.)
- Wayfinding signage
- Incorporating branding into downtown amenities

The City and local partners should explore opportunities to establish a downtown beautification program. Both the Colorado Main Street Program and establishment of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) entity should be explored as a means for creating the organizational and financial capacity for a downtown Gunnison beautification program.

## 4. Enhance Community Gathering Spaces

IIOF Park is recognized as an important community space in the downtown. However, many believe that it would become a more active and inviting space with a bit of redesign and some new amenities.

A number of concepts for IOOF Park were explored with the community. The diagrams on p. 23 depict the preferred concepts and offer ideas for how park improvements might be phased.

Phase 1 of the IOOF Park enhancements emphasizes "quick win," which are relatively inexpensive improvements that are simple to install and can begin to transform the park in the near-term. These include:

- Fire pit and water feature at the corner of Main Street and Virginia Avenue
- Multi-use plaza with overhead festival lighting
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, benches, bike racks, etc)
- Tables and chairs
- Stone play area
- New landscaping

## ENHANCING DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS



Many communities have façade improvement programs that work to improve the appearance of downtown buildings, while striving to maintain the historic character and architecture in the downtown.

The Laramie Main Street Alliance in Laramie, Wyoming ([laramiemainstreet.org](http://laramiemainstreet.org)) administers a successful façade grant program. This program works to preserve historic downtown Laramie while enhancing its economic and social vitality. Funding for the grant program is provided by Laramie's Downtown Development Authority.

The images above depict a building that was renovated with assistance from the Laramie Main Street Alliance's façade grant program.

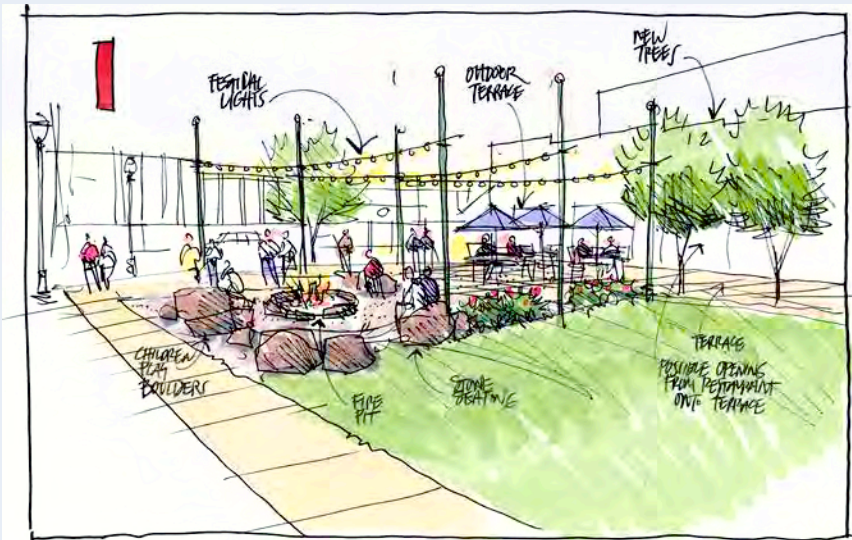
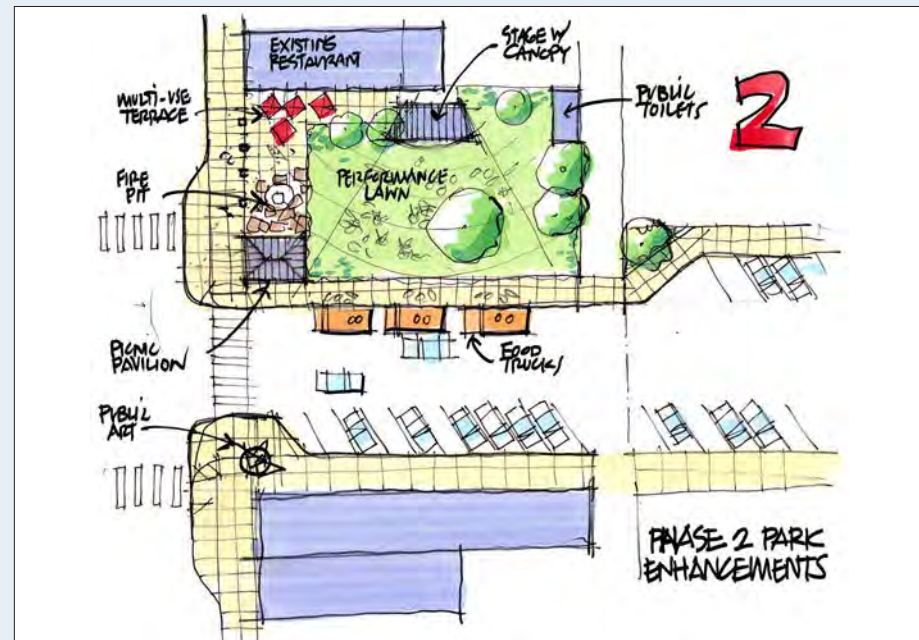
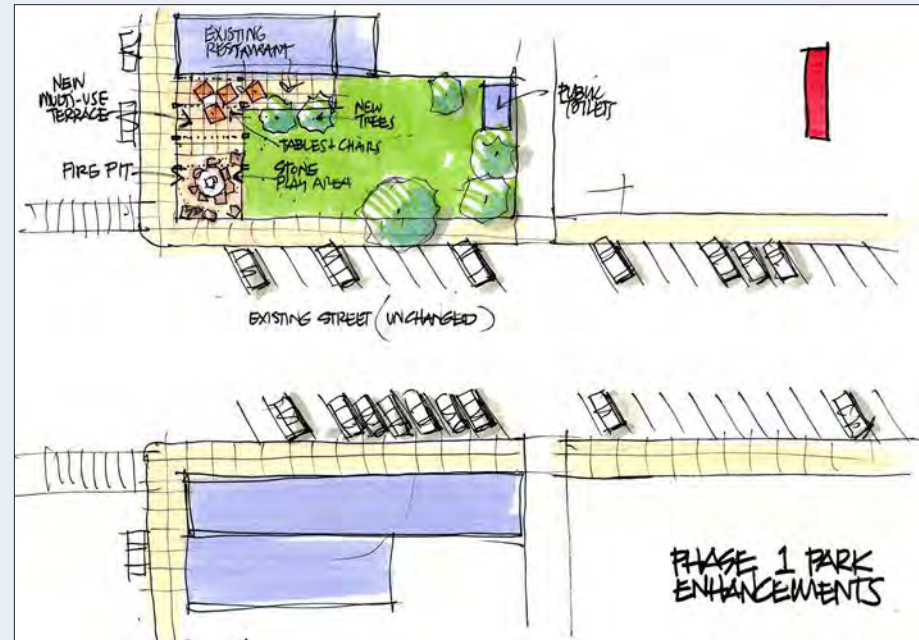
## IOOF PARK ENHANCEMENTS

### Phase 1 Ideas (focus on "Quick Wins"):

- Fire pit and water feature at the corner of Main Street and Virginia Avenue
- Multi-use plaza with overhead festival lighting
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, benches, bike racks, etc)
- Tables and chairs
- Stone play area
- Additional landscaping

### Phase 2 Ideas:

- Expand IOOF park into a portion of Virginia Avenue
- Utility hook ups for food trucks, Farmer's Market, etc.
- Stage with canopy
- Performance lawn
- Picnic pavilion
- Public art displays
- ADA access
- Transform Virginia Avenue into a festival street by installing light poles along and festival lighting over the street, installing decorative street paving, and installing utility hook ups for food trucks, Farmer's Market, etc



Perspective sketch of Phase 1

Phase 2 would include more substantial park improvements that may take more time to achieve, such as:

- Expand IOOF park into a portion of Virginia Avenue
- Stage with canopy
- Performance lawn
- Picnic pavilion
- Public art displays
- ADA access
- Transform Virginia Avenue into a festival street by installing light poles along and festival lighting over the street, installing decorative street paving, and installing utility hook ups for food trucks, Farmer’s Market, etc

### 7. Upgrade Select Downtown Streets to Festival Streets

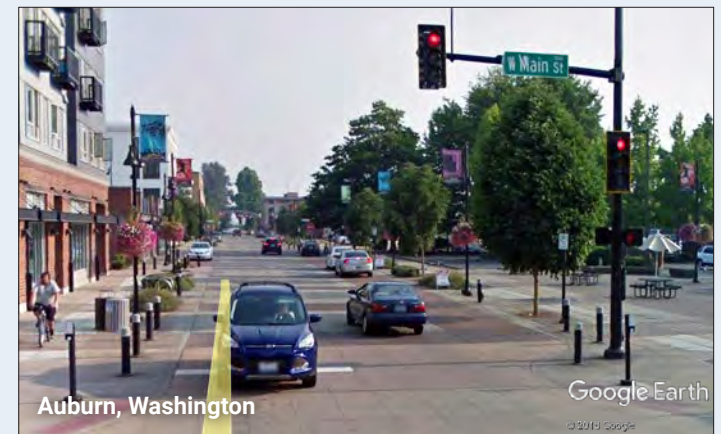
Downtown events are cherished by the community. However, many business owners find the concentration of events at certain downtown venues (specifically those that require the closure of Main Street) to be challenging. There was an expressed interest in creating additional venues to help better distribute events in the downtown.

In response, the concept of a “festival street” was explored for both Virginia Avenue and South Main Street (refer to diagrams on p. 23 and p. 25). Festival streets provide a flexible public space that is designed to accommodate events while still functioning as a street and allowing for through-traffic and on-street parking. Often, festival streets have distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from other streets.

These may include:

- Unique/decorative paving
- Overhead festival lighting
- Landscaping
- Utility hook ups for food trucks, events, etc
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, benches, bike racks, etc)

### WHAT’S A FESTIVAL STREET?



A “festival street” is a public street designed to easily accommodate community events while still allowing for through-traffic and on-street parking when not closed for an event. Shown above is an example of a festival street in Auburn, Washington.

Festival street design often integrates unique characteristics such as decorative paving, overhead festival lighting, landscaping, or seating areas.

In Gunnison, Virginia Avenue and South Main Street were identified as priority streets to be converted into festival streets. Both streets are currently used regularly for community events.

## TRANSFORMING SOUTH MAIN INTO A FESTIVAL STREET

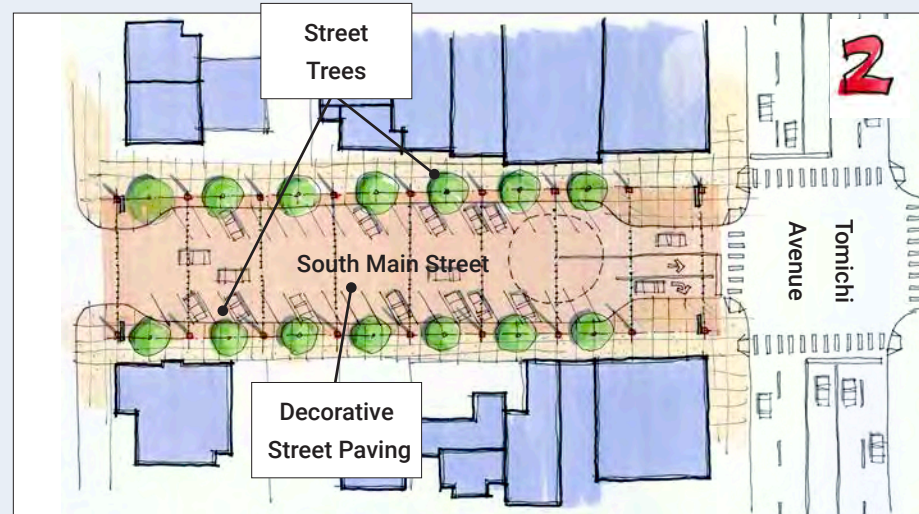
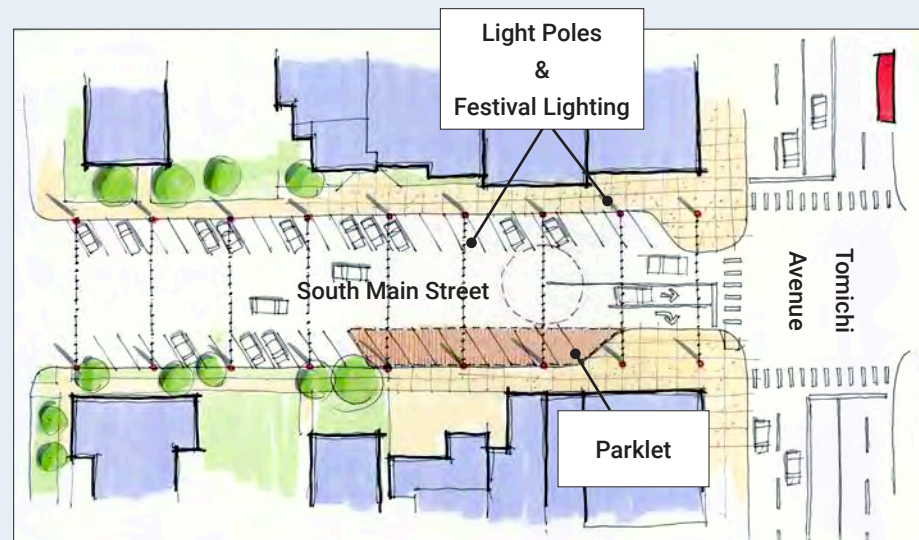
### Phase 1 Ideas (focus on "Quick Wins"):

- Light poles along, and festival lighting, over South Main Street
- Parklet in front of the Arts Center
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, bike racks, benches, etc)



### Phase 2 Ideas:

- Street trees along South Main Street
- Decorative street paving
- Utility hook ups for food trucks, events, etc
- Electric car charging stations



Perspective sketch of Phase 2





Carbondale, Colorado



Salida, Colorado

### Strengthening Gunnison's Economy

The success of Gunnison's downtown is critical to both the local economy, as well as the larger regional economy of the Gunnison Valley.

Economic activity in a downtown is largely driven by its appeal and the variety of reasons it offers for people to be there. Local government has a number of tools and resources that can be used to attract people, as well as support entrepreneurship and business in a downtown.

In Carbondale, First Friday's are one of the Town's many popular events that attract residents and visitors to the downtown and into local businesses.

In Salida, flexible regulations have enabled an entrepreneur to transform a vacant lot into an active downtown space. Not dissimilar to what has occurred along Main Street in Gunnison.

## GOAL 3. SUPPORT A HEALTHY DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT THAT STRENGTHENS OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

### Why this Matters

A diverse, inclusive and thriving local economy provides all residents with access to a variety of jobs, services and retail opportunities. As a place where housing, shops, community spaces, and cultural and civic activities are concentrated, a strong downtown plays an important role in supporting a healthy local economy.

Local governments have several tools at their disposal that can be used to influence the local economy including land use regulations, fee structures, and allocation of resources to local events and marketing efforts.

### Key Challenges/Opportunities

#### 1. Regulations Influencing Private Investment

Zoning regulations shape how our communities are built and where private investment occurs. Communities often have limited understanding of how their regulations impact issues like financial feasibility, affordability, building form and walkability. For example, the buildings that are most cherished, like older mixed-use buildings along Main Streets are often illegal to build under today's zoning regulations.

Downtown Gunnison has some terrific historic buildings that serve as examples for the scale and character of future development. Furthermore, the downtown offers numerous opportunities for people looking to invest in Gunnison. However, the City's existing zoning regulations present some challenges to achieving the type of downtown development and private investment that there is an expressed interest in seeing happen.

#### 2. Downtown Events/Activities

Downtown events/activities are popular with the community and are viewed by many business owners as a good opportunity to bring people downtown who may not otherwise visit. As a result, strong support was voiced for expanding Gunnison's calendar of events/activities.

Concerns were raised around the current concentration of events during certain times of year as it results in a challenging imbalance of activity in the downtown. Similarly, the concentration of events at certain downtown venues was noted as a challenge, specifically when they require a closure of Main Street.

Concerns were also expressed around the overall coordination of events in Gunnison and the coordination and communication with those impacted by events (ex. downtown business owners). Community members identified the need for a coordinated calendar of events/activities, while business owners stated that inconsistent communication around events/activities needed to be improved so they are able to better anticipate staffing needs.

### 3. Promoting the Downtown

Gunnison has many unique characteristics to promote to residents, business owners, investors and visitors. This was identified as an opportunity to attract consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in Gunnison, specifically the downtown.

### The Solutions

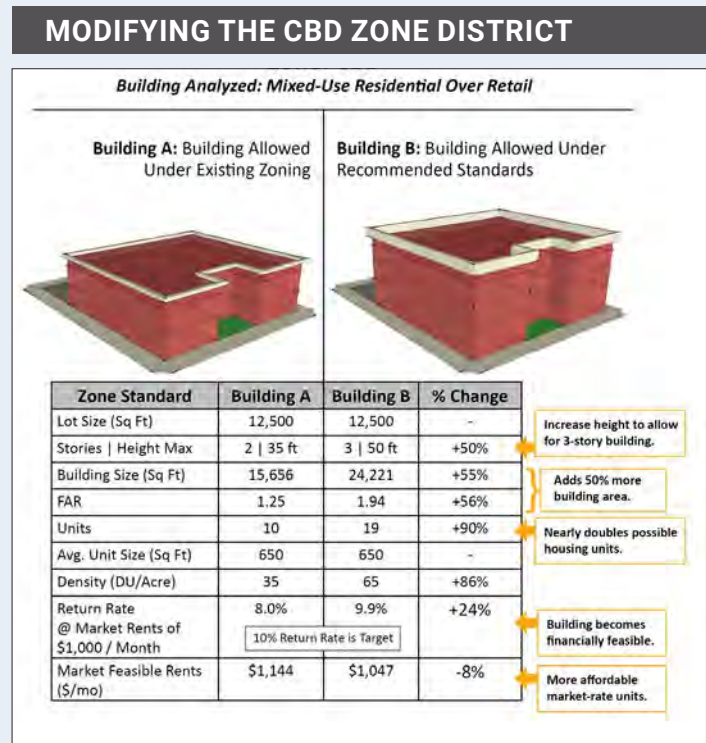
#### 1. Modify the City’s Zoning Regulations to Create More Opportunity for Private Investment

An analysis of the City’s CBD and B-1 zoning regulations was conducted to identify incremental changes to be made to, at a minimum, allow buildings, similar to the well-loved buildings from long ago, to be easily permitted and built. This will reduce burdens on staff, provide predictability for neighbors, and strengthen the financial feasibility of new construction.

#### CBD Zone District

The CBD zone district encompasses the historic portion of Gunnison’s downtown. The recommended changes to the CBD zone district are:

- Expand the off-street parking exemption for commercial uses to include residential uses.
- Increase the maximum allowable building height to 50’. This will allow for buildings similar to the historic downtown buildings. The current maximum of 35’ is too low for a three-story mixed-use building.
- Allow ground floor residential on sides and rear. This will make it easier to meet ADA compliance without the cost of an elevator.



Above is a side-by-side comparison of a mixed-use building that would be allowed under current zoning standards and one that would be allowed if the recommended standards are adopted.

The recommended changes include an increase in the allowable building height to allow for up to 50’ tall buildings (similar to existing historic buildings) and exempt residential uses from off-street parking requirements.

These changes enable more residential density on a site and increase the amount of the site that can be used for building rather than off-street parking, both of which improve the financial feasibility of development and reduce housing costs.

## ALLOWING FOR HISTORIC BUILDING FORMS



The historic “Open Your Eyes” building in the City’s CBD zone district is roughly 50’ in height. Current CBD regulations cap building height at 35’. This prohibits buildings, similar in scale to this historic building, from being constructed. The recommended changes increase the maximum building height from 35’ to 50’.

- Consider allowing group quarters. This will enable lower cost housing types for students, seniors and others.
- Reduce the required “Throughway Zone” space along Main Street sidewalks to 5’ from 6’. This will encourage outside seating on ground level even on buildings with a balcony level above.
- Conduct a detailed assessment of the irrigation ditch along Main Street to define a clear but minimal “no build” distance from the back of the curb. Inconsistencies with existing balcony post placement indicate there may not be a definitive standard.
- Require active uses within any front setback. A 5’-10’ building setback is allowed today and could expand the pedestrian area, which is currently constrained on Main Street. However, this setback area needs to be programed with active uses. Examples of active uses could include a sales area and seating.
- Increase the allowable accessory “production space” beyond 50% to attract more craft-oriented businesses. Allow up to 80% in production space if the majority of the street facing retail space is activated and oriented towards patrons. Focus on requiring active retail for reasonable depth of the frontage rather than a percentage of building area.

### *B-1 Zone District*

The B-1 zone district serves as a transition area between the historic downtown and the larger format commercial area north of Denver Avenue. Much of the B-1 zone is comprised of single-family homes that have been converted to businesses. The unique character of the B-1 area is something to be built upon.

Reuse of existing buildings in the B-1 zone district is the most likely investment to occur in the near-term. Therefore, many of the recommended changes focus on making remodels and use changes of existing buildings easier to permit by waiving standards that would otherwise be applied to new construction.

Currently, the most significant impacts to project feasibility in the B-1 zone district come from the landscaping requirements, off-street parking requirements, and the limitations on permitted uses that don’t allow for bars, bed and breakfasts and accessory uses, like food carts. The recommended changes work to reduce the landscaping and off-street parking requirements in addition to expanding the allowed uses,

which can pay higher rents and will greatly strengthen the financial feasibility of this zone.

The recommended changes to the B-1 zone district are:

- Expand permitted uses to allow for ground floor residential, bars and taverns, bed and breakfast, café/bakery, small-format grocery and accessory uses, such as food carts
- Reduce off-street parking standards:

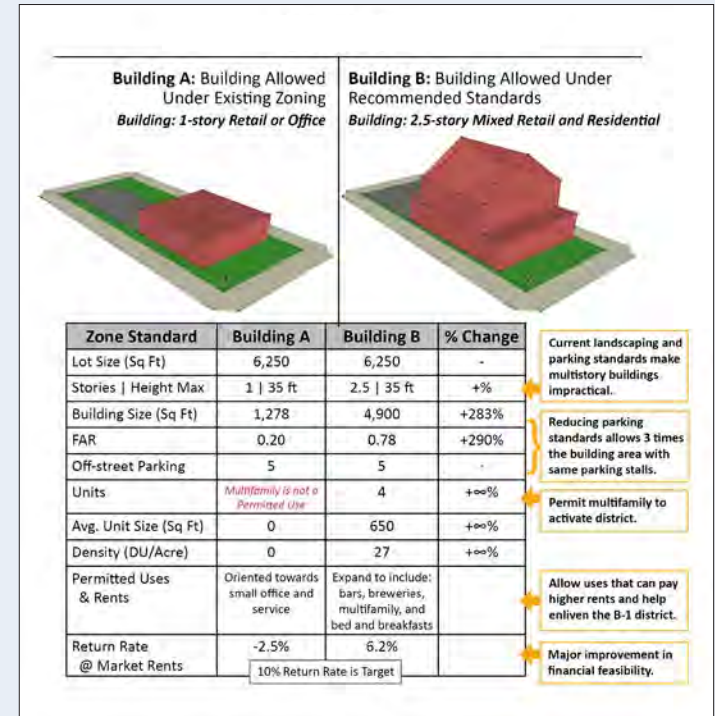
*Existing structures:* Exempt from off-street parking requirements, even when changing use or being renovated (including a substantial renovation). This will help keep historic buildings from being demolished.

*New construction:* Reduce off-street parking requirements to 0.75 spaces per multifamily unit (average), 1 space per 1,000 square feet for commercial area (continue to exempt storage and production space).

*Fee in-lieu option:* Enable a fee in-lieu option to “buy down” off-street parking requirements and help the City pay for on-street parking expansion. For example, a \$1,000 per space fee in-lieu could allow investors to buy-down up to 50% of their off-street parking requirements and enable the City to approximately cover the cost to stripe a diagonal on-street parking stall.

- Increase residential densities to 40 units per acre. Increasing densities will allow for smaller, more affordable units to be incorporated into existing buildings. The current density standard only allows for single-family homes.
- Reduce landscaping requirement from 45% to 15% (min) and increase building and lot coverage to 75% from 45% (max). The combination of high landscaping requirements and low building lot coverage allowances makes new construction infeasible. More of the lot must be available for building on to make projects feasible.
- Change the front setback requirement from 15’ (min) to 15’ (max). This will allow new house-form buildings (that are there today) to be built, enable more urban “main street” style buildings to be built, and prevent large setback, suburban-style buildings from being built.

## MODIFYING THE B-1 ZONE DISTRICT



Above is a side-by-side comparison of a new building likely to be built in the current B-1 zone compared to a new building that would be permitted if the recommended changes were made.

New construction in the B-1 zone is challenging given current rents, however, changes to the zoning make a significant difference in financial performance. And a current owner, who does not need to buy a property, for instance, may be able to make an acceptable return rate (the analysis assumes acquisition costs).

## RE-PURPOSING EXISTING BUILDINGS



Many of the single-family home buildings in the B-1 zone district have been converted to offices for service businesses.

The recommended changes for the B-1 zone district work to build on this by allowing for bars, taverns, bed and breakfasts, cafés/bakeries, etc. The intent is to further activate this part of the downtown, while maintaining its unique character.

## 2. Develop a Coordinated Strategy for Downtown Events/Activities

The community expressed support for developing a coordinated strategy for events/activities in the downtown. It is recommended that the City engage the local business community (including the lodging community), Western, and other key stakeholders in developing an action plan for downtown events and activities that includes strategies for:

- Coordination of events/activities to ensure that Gunnison has a well-balanced calendar of events/activities.
- Raising awareness of things happening in the community.
- Communicating information about events/activities to business owners, residents, City departments and other people potentially impacted by events and activities.
- Expanding the number and types of events/activities in the downtown, specifically those that appeal to the 21 and under cohort.
- Re-capturing events (ex. 4th of July) that have moved out of Gunnison.
- Extending downtown business hours.

In support of implementation of this action plan, the City should consider creating a staff position, hiring a consultant, and/or organizing a volunteer committee tasked with:

- Developing criteria for evaluating, approving, and funding events/activities (if the City provides funding for events/activities).
- Developing metrics and reporting requirements for evaluating the community benefit from events/activities.
- Coordinating events/activities to ensure that Gunnison has a well-balanced calendar of events/activities.
- Coordinating and communicating with business owners, residents, City departments, etc to ensure that all are well informed and adequately prepared for upcoming community events and street closures.
- Marketing of events.
- Administering any event permitting process that may be required.

### 3. Develop a Promotional Strategy for Gunnison

Gunnison has many wonderful characteristics that appeal to numerous people including visitors, residents, business owners and investors.

A promotional strategy for Gunnison could work to improve consumer and investor awareness of Gunnison as a place to live, work, shop, play and invest. Furthermore, identification and promotion of the community's market niches could encourage additional commercial activity and investment.

It is recommended that the City, Western, Chamber of Commerce and other local partners develop a collective promotional strategy for Gunnison.

The Colorado Main Street Program and establishment of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) entity should be explored as a means for creating the organizational and financial capacity for implementing a promotional strategy for Gunnison.

The City should also explore the value of creating a staff position or hiring a consultant to spearhead Gunnison's promotional efforts. This person could also be tasked with overseeing and managing the implementation of the action plan for events/activities, resulting in a position that is responsible for Gunnison's marketing and events.

### SUPPORTING ENTREPREURSHIP



Gunnison, Colorado



Denver, Colorado

Integrating greater flexibility into the regulations for the B-1 Zone District will create more opportunity for entrepreneurs to start new businesses in downtown Gunnison.

Allowing for creative use of a vacant lot (top) or re-purposing of a single family building (bottom) in the B-1 Zone District could enable new business or start-up to find a suitable space not be available in other parts of the downtown.



Gunnison, Colorado



Gunnison, Colorado

**Further Integration of Western and the Community**

The proximity of Western to downtown Gunnison presents a number of unique opportunities not afforded to other western communities. Further integration of Western into the community and vice versa will serve to strengthen Gunnison’s economy and foster a more active and vibrant downtown.

**GOAL 4.  
ENHANCE OUR DOWNTOWN BY STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WESTERN AND THE COMMUNITY**

**Why this Matters**

Gunnison is one of the few western slope communities with a state university. The presence of Western State University provides a number of benefits, especially to the downtown. Students can fuel street life, provide a powerful market for local businesses, contribute to the local pool of educated labor, and act as creative drivers that contribute to civic life and community identity. An active and desirable downtown can serve as an attraction for students, help to retain recent graduates and spur students to invest their talent and energy in the community.

Western is as an anchor institution in Gunnison. A 2017 study, “The Role and Impact of Western State Colorado University on the Economy of Gunnison County<sup>2</sup>,” found that Western’s direct and indirect economic impact on the local economy was \$70.52M in 2015-2016. Western serves as a major source of high-quality jobs and attracts a large cohort of young and educated people to the area. As identified by the community, as well as in the study, Western is a terrific asset that needs to be better integrated into the community, particularly the downtown, to fully realize its positive impact on Gunnison.

<sup>2</sup>[www.western.edu/sites/default/files/Economic\\_Impact\\_Study\\_accessible.pdf](http://www.western.edu/sites/default/files/Economic_Impact_Study_accessible.pdf)

**Challenges/Opportunities in Gunnison**

**1. Physical Connections between Western and the Downtown**

Input from students and community members identified a lack of a safe, easy, and obvious routes between campus and the downtown as a major barrier.

Although campus is merely three blocks away from the downtown, the lack of consistent sidewalks and lighting, and poor winter maintenance present challenges to making the walk downtown. A focus on physical improvements along key walking and biking routes presents a clear opportunity to strengthen the connectivity between campus and the downtown.

## 2. Few Reasons for Students to Go Downtown

Western students are primarily drawn downtown to grab a bite to eat, get something to drink, to shop or just to hang out. Student surveys and discussions identified a desire to expand the number of student oriented businesses in the downtown. Specifically, students identified the need for more entertainment, events, nightlife, and under-21 nighttime opportunities such as a movie theater or bowling alley.

Western's student body presents a tremendous opportunity to further activate downtown Gunnison and bolster the downtown business environment.

## 3. Creating Synergy between Western and the Downtown

Western State University is one of the downtown's greatest assets. Beyond being a landmark and attraction in and of itself, the university brings people, investment, intellectual capital, and a sense of vitality into the downtown. Similarly, being located in the center of one of Colorado's great small cities – essentially marking the edge of its downtown – presents an outstanding opportunity for Western. Students are already drawn to Western for the areas outdoor and recreational opportunities. Couple that with the opportunity to live and study in a fun and vital downtown, and you've got a recipe for something special.

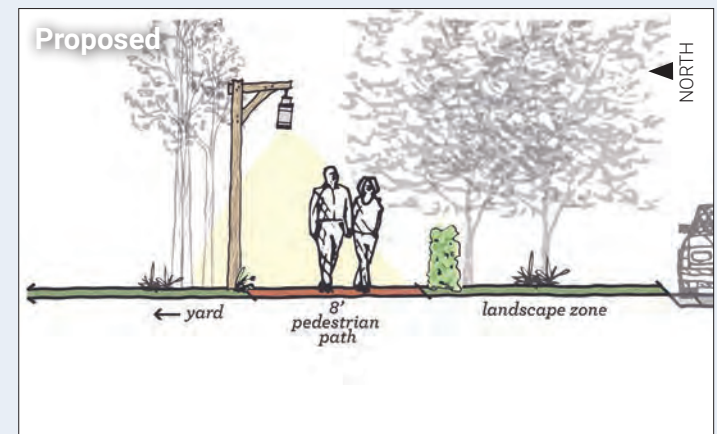
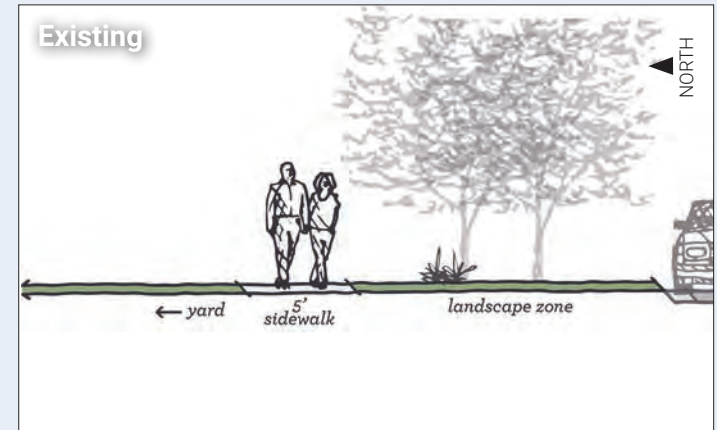
Community members, students and school staff all recognize this two-way opportunity. Yet many also speak of an invisible wall that separates Western from the downtown. Beyond the need for better physical connections or more things for students to do on Main Street, people want to see greater synergy between downtown and Western, particularly by increasing the presence of Western within the downtown. Specific opportunities include student housing, co-branding and coordinated marketing/events, and bringing a hub of the Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (ICE) program downtown.

## The Solutions

### 1. Improve Physical Connections between Western and the Downtown

Ohio Avenue and Georgie Avenue were identified as primary bicycle and pedestrian routes between campus and the downtown. Improvements along both streets were investigated as a means for strengthening the physical connections between Western and the downtown.

## DOWNTOWN - CAMPUS PEDESTRIAN PATH



Although the Western campus and downtown Gunnison are separated by just a few blocks, students made it clear that the lack of comfortable, well-lit connections impacted the ease and safety of traveling between campus and the downtown.

Students identified Ohio Avenue as one of the primary routes between campus and downtown. Therefore, Ohio Avenue was identified as the preferred street for an improvement project. Included in this project is an 8' wide path with pedestrian scaled lighting to enhance the comfort and safety of people walking between Western and the downtown.

STRENGTHENING THE OHIO AVENUE CONNECTION



**Curb Bulb-Outs**

Curb bulb-outs at the Ohio Avenue/Main Street intersection will work to calm traffic, increase safety of pedestrians crossing the streets, and serve as a northern gateway for the downtown.



**Lighted Pedestrian Path**

A lighted path will create a safe, inviting, and convenient route for those traveling between campus and the downtown.



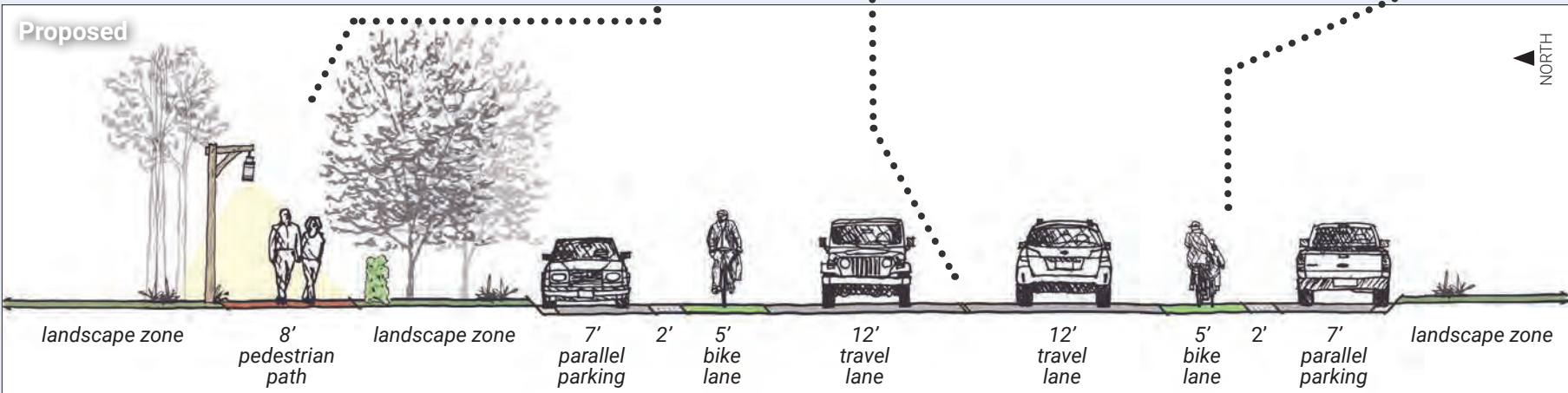
**Lane Striping**

Striping travel lanes on Ohio Avenue will help to reduce traffic speeds and increase bicycle and pedestrian safety without compromising vehicle capacity.



**Bike Lanes with Door-Zone Buffers**

Bike lanes provide a safe and convenient route between Western and the downtown, while still leaving ample space for travel lanes for vehicles.



Ohio Avenue was selected as the preferred street for a streetscape improvement project due to the complications of on-street diagonal parking, changes in roadway width, and the potential impact of future development on Georgia Avenue. Ohio Avenue also presents the opportunity to create a strong east-west connection between Western, the Gunnison Watershed Schools and the VanTuyl Trail System.

The recommended improvements along Ohio Avenue include:

- An 8' wide paved walking path designed to preserve existing trees (where feasible), and provide ample space for snow plowing and maintenance access. Unique paving materials and colors should be considered to create a high-quality facility that complements community character and highlights the connection between campus and the downtown. Integration of Western colors and/or logos should be explored as a co-branding opportunity.
- Pedestrian-scaled path lighting designed to minimize impact on neighboring residents (i.e., fully shielded and downcast lighting). While bollard lighting could be less obtrusive for adjacent homeowners, it is recommended that overhead lighting be pursued to provide greater illumination and safety along the path. Path lighting should be coordinated with the overall lighting plan for the downtown.
- A landscape zone between the path and Ohio Avenue that maximizes solar access to the path. Landscaping in this area should be installed by the City and designed to facilitate snow removal and storage.
- A landscape zone between the path and private properties to the north that preserves sight-lines between the path and these properties. Appropriate landscape elements in this area include short plants, high-branched deciduous trees, or even streetscape elements such as benches. Tall landscape elements like privacy fences and tall hedges detract from the open, safe, and inviting character of the path and should be avoided. Landscaping along the north side of the path should be installed by the City or provided by the City to adjacent property owners to be installed at their discretion.

## A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE ROUTE



For the Ohio Avenue connection to be successful it needs to be a safe and comfortable route. Key to that outcome are the following design elements:

- A continuous path wide enough for people to walk comfortably side by side.
- Landscape elements that preserve sight lines between the path and adjacent properties. Tall landscape elements, similar to the example from Eagle, should not be allowed.
- Path lighting. Use of solar lights, similar to those in Collbran, would serve as an opportunity to showcase the community's sustainability efforts.

## ATTRACTING STUDENTS TO THE DOWNTOWN



- 5' wide bike lane striping that includes a 2' buffer zone from the adjacent on-street parking stalls. It is recommended that bike lanes be striped along both the north and south side of Ohio Avenue.
- Striping the center of Ohio Avenue to define travel lanes, which may help to reduce traffic speeds.
- Install curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Ohio Avenue to facilitate safer and more comfortable crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists.

It is anticipated that the improvements to Ohio Avenue will be completed in two phases. The first phase would include the following improvements between Main Street and Colorado Street:

- 8' wide pedestrian path with lighting and landscaping
- Bike lane striping
- Travel lane striping
- Curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Ohio Avenue

Completion of the design and the construction of these improvements to Ohio Avenue should be pursued in the near-term to create a safe, easy, and convenient connection between Western and the downtown.

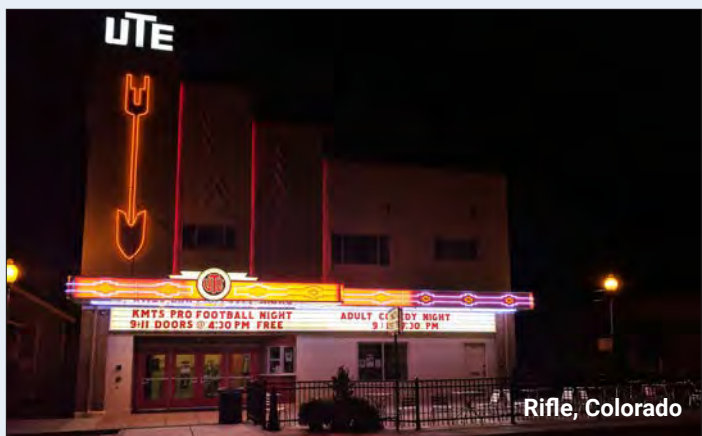
Longer-term, the City should pursue improvements between Main Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Street that would include:

- Bike lane striping
- Travel lane striping

## 2. Explore Partnerships between Western and Local Businesses

One of the best things any community can do to strengthen its downtown is to have more people there. Even when they don't spend their own dollars, they create vitality and street life that draws others in. For this reason, getting more students to more spend time downtown is an easy way to boost the vitality and business environment in downtown Gunnison.

Building on existing student discount programs, perhaps in conjunction with an organized "buy local" program, could be an initial step. But ultimately, there needs to be more of a draw (more things to do at various times) through extended hours, more events and activities (including options for people under-21) and placemaking efforts that provide more "places" for students and others to hangout in the downtown.



Student surveys and discussions identified the need to increase student oriented businesses in the downtown. Specifically, students identified the need for more entertainment, events, nightlife, and under-21 nighttime opportunities such as a bowling alley or movie theater.

The Ute Theater in Rifle is a great example of the type of downtown amenity that would serve as a venue for live music, movie premieres, etc. that would give young people in Gunnison something to do in the evening and provide them with another reason to come downtown.

### 3. Strengthen the “University Town” Vibe

Although Gunnison is home to Western, many residents feel that it misses a “university town” feel. While Western may not be the mainstay of Gunnison’s identity, residents and students alike have expressed a desire for it to have a greater presence in the community, specifically the downtown. In short, visitors to the downtown should know that there’s a university nearby, and visitors to the university should know there’s a vibrant downtown nearby.

To strengthen the relationship between Western and the community, the community identified the need for the City and Western to partner on a coordinated co-branding strategy. Opportunities for co-branding include:

- Hanging Western banners along City streets
- Wayfinding signage with City and Western logos
- Incorporating Western colors and/or logos into streetscape elements including bus stops, benches, bike racks, street lights, planters, or gateway elements
- Integration of Western colors and/or icons into the Ohio Avenue pedestrian path and the curb bulb-outs along Main Street

Additional ideas for strengthening Gunnison’s “university town” vibe include:

- Integration of a Western bookstore, hub of the Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (ICE) program, or other university facilities in the downtown
- Exploring opportunities to bring the community onto the Western campus (ex. entrepreneurs being brought to campus for the ICE lab)
- Creating more opportunities for students to live and work in the downtown

#### THE “UNIVERSITY TOWN” VIBE



Gunnison, Colorado



Seattle, Washington

Creating opportunities to bring students, faculty and staff from Western to the downtown, as well as to bring the community to Western will serve to strengthen the “university town” vibe of Gunnison.

Integrating a hub of the Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (ICE) program into the downtown would serve as great opportunity to bring more student activity there.

A university book store in the downtown, similar to the example from Seattle, would strengthen the presence of the Western, while also attracting students and parents.



# 3 IMPLEMENTATION

## ENABLING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

### Funding

Funding is a key component of implementing the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative. Developing a multi-pronged approach to funding could be beneficial in that it would pull financial resources from a number of sources and may enable the community to move forward on multiple projects in a shorter time frame. A number of potential funding sources for implementation have been identified and are discussed in greater detail below.

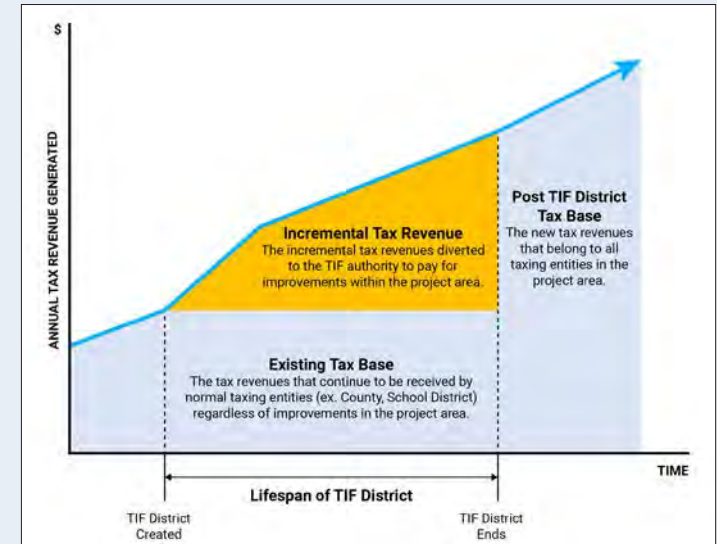
#### 1. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District

“Tax Increment Financing” (TIF) is a process by which municipalities use a portion of future tax revenue from a defined area/district (ex. a downtown) to encourage development in that area. In Colorado, a TIF District can be created through the establishment of an Urban Renewal Authority (URA) or a Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

TIF is one of the most powerful local tools for funding a range of public improvements, such as public space improvements, streetscape improvements, affordable housing and economic development initiatives. The potential to generate TIF revenue depends on growth in taxes as a result of private investment and expanded economic activity, like sales, within the boundaries of an established TIF District over the lifespan of the district (usually 25-years for a URA or 30-years for a DDA). The rate and scale of that growth is directly related to the amount of tax increment that is generated. Thus, TIF districts work best if they are paired with regulatory changes that support private investment (such as those detailed in this report).

Two potential revenue projections for a TIF district in downtown Gunnison are detailed in the Appendix. The “Low” scenario, which assumes Gunnison grows at the 40-year average growth rate, estimates the total revenue generated over the 25-year life cycle of a TIF district at nearly \$3 million. The “High” scenario, which assumes Gunnison continues to see the healthy 1.1% growth rate of the past two decades, estimates the total revenue generated over the 25-year life cycle of a TIF district at nearly \$11,800,000.

## WHAT IS TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)?



“Tax Increment Financing” (TIF) is a tool available to municipalities that enables them to use a portion of future tax revenue from a defined area/district (ex. a downtown) to fund a variety of projects or programs in that area.

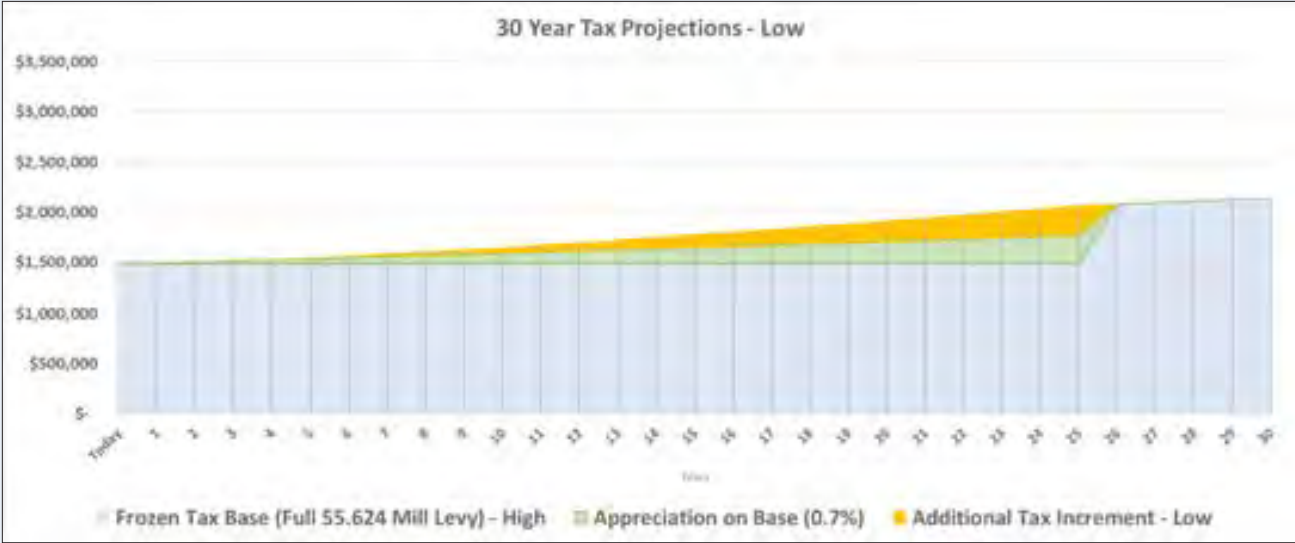
Prior to establishing a TIF district, an “Existing Tax Base” is determined by calculating the total amount of tax revenue generated by all properties within the proposed district.

Once a TIF district has been established, the tax revenue generated above the existing tax base, called the “Incremental Tax Revenue,” goes to the TIF Authority for the life span of the district (usually 25 to 30 years).

At the end of the TIF district’s life span, all tax revenues go back to being distributed to all taxing entities in the district.

## GUNNISON TIF DISTRICT REVENUE ESTIMATES

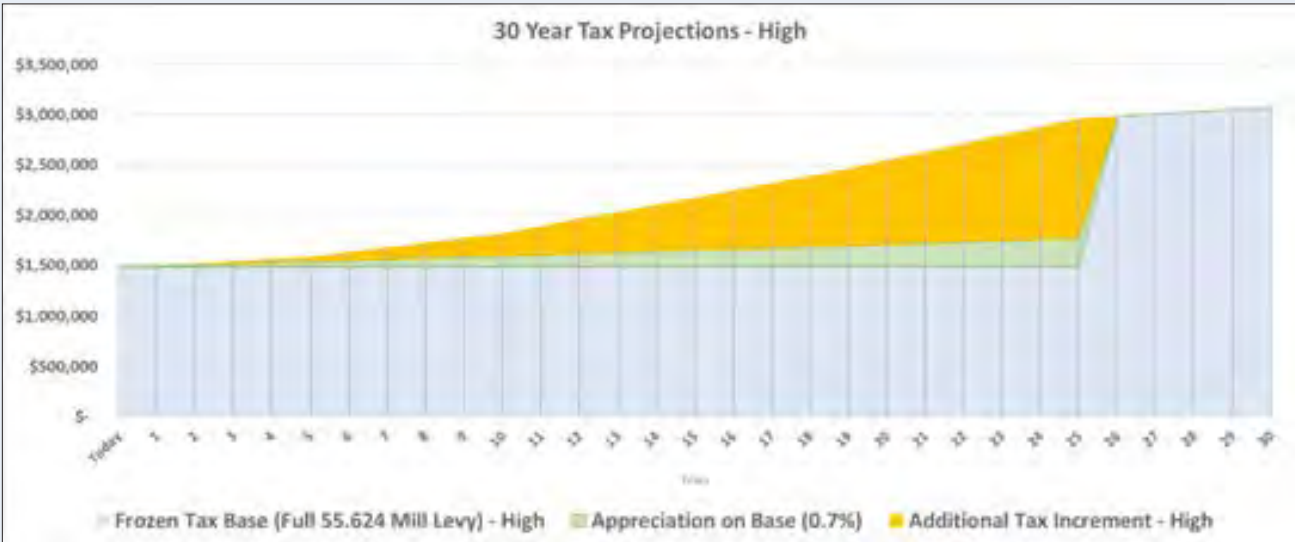
Two potential revenue projections have been prepared for a TIF district in downtown Gunnison. A “Low” scenario and “High” scenario have been calculated. The details of these revenue projections are provided in the Appendix.



### “Low” Scenario

The “Low” scenario estimates the total revenue generated over the 25-year lifespan of a TIF district at \$3,000,000.

The “Low” scenario assumes that Gunnison grows at the 40-year average growth rate.



### “High” Scenario

The “High” scenario estimates the total revenue generated over the 25-year lifespan of a TIF district at nearly \$11,800,000.

The “High” scenario assumes that Gunnison continues to see the healthy 1.1% growth rate of the past 20 years.

This analysis demonstrates that if combined with other policy changes like zoning changes, a TIF district could generate meaningful revenue for Gunnison, even if growth is relatively slow. These funds could help fund a range of community priorities such as public space enhancement, street safety improvements, affordable housing, storefront improvement grants or business retention and expansion.

## 2. Crowdfunding

Patronicity ([www.patronicity.com](http://www.patronicity.com)) is an organization that works with communities to create online crowdfunding campaigns for public improvement projects. These campaigns not only provided valuable income for projects (that may be beyond the budgets of cash-strapped municipal governments) but also provide incredible community building experiences that bring people together in support of improving the livability of their community.

A Patronicity crowdfunding campaign would enable people in Gunnison to raise funding for those projects identified in this report or for additional projects that work towards the community's goals for the downtown. Selected projects take part in a supported crowdfunding campaign hosted on a branded web platform that will help to engage not only small dollar donations from residents but leverage the support from the local business community and larger institutional sponsors in the region. These campaigns would be run through Patronicity and a "crowdfunding coach" would be assigned to each project group to assist in developing a strategy to effectively raise funds for projects.

## 3. City's General Fund

The City's General Fund can serve as a source of funding for implementation of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative. However, the General Fund must also provide funding for the many services provided by the local government and for other projects in the community. Monies from the City's General Fund should be leveraged by combining with funding from other sources.

## 4. Colorado Main Street Program

The Colorado Main Street Program ([www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/main-street-story](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/main-street-story)) provides a framework to help communities focus their downtown revitalization efforts, energy and resources. This program offers a number of resources to Main Street communities, including non-competitive mini grants that can be used for planning, training, and physical improvements.

It is recommended that the City contact Johanna Jamison ([johanna.jamison@state.co.us](mailto:johanna.jamison@state.co.us)) at the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to explore becoming a Main Street community.

## 5. Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships between the City and local institutions/organizations could serve as another effective way to fund specific implementation projects. For example, the Ohio Avenue streetscape improvements provide benefit to both the university and the community and could be approached as a partnership between the City and Western with both entities bringing funding to the table.

## 6. Financial Assistance Programs and Grants

There are a number of state financial assistance programs and grant opportunities that the community should explore in conjunction with the implementation efforts for the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative. These include:

- Rural Economic Development Initiative: [www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/rural-economic-development-initiative](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/rural-economic-development-initiative)
- Energy/Mineral Impact Assistance Fund Grant: [www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/energymineral-impact-assistance-fund-eiaf](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/energymineral-impact-assistance-fund-eiaf)
- Great Outdoors Colorado - Local Park and Outdoor Recreation Grants: [www.goco.org/node/60](http://www.goco.org/node/60)

## Organizational Capacity

Creating organizational capacity involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources for implementation. Successful implementation of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative will necessitate the establishment of an organization(s) that places a high priority on ensuring that the projects identified continue to move forward. The community will need to identify the organization(s) they believe is best suited for Gunnison's implementation efforts. Provided below are a few organizations that should be considered.

### 1. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Entity

A TIF entity, such as a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) or an Urban Renewal Authority (URA), can provide the organizational, and financial, support necessary for successful implementation. If Gunnison establishes a TIF entity, the community will need to determine what role this entity plays in the implementation of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative.

### 2. Colorado Main Street Program

A governing board and volunteers or specific project committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven Colorado Main Street program. In some Main Street communities, volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director or by a local government staff person.

The organizational structure provided by the Colorado Main Street program not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

### 3. Volunteer Organization/Committee

The Downtown Leadership Committee, or similar type of volunteer organization, could be established to provide the organizational support necessary for implementation of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative. Strong leadership and commitment from volunteers will be necessary to ensure this approach is effective. Gunnison's elected officials will also need to look to instill this organization with some authority to enable the group to make meaningful change in the downtown.

### 4. Team Better Block

Often times communities want to know everything before getting started on improvement efforts. How much infrastructure will cost, who will maintain it and how will we program it? A growing number of communities are using the scientific method to test what will work before investing in permanent infrastructure. Team Better Block ([www.teambetterblock.com](http://www.teambetterblock.com)) provides the knowledge and resources to guide a community through this process.

Over the course of three months, the Team Better Block process enables community members to work alongside planning, design and economic development personnel to craft a weekend demonstration of what vibrancy could look like for one block. Pop-up shops replace vacant storefronts with local goods, talent from the neighborhood is displayed in new public spaces, and streets are temporarily transformed to be complete and safe for all. The demonstration becomes the benchmark for change to occur over a two year follow-up period that focuses on making the temporary into permanent.

## ACTION PLAN THROUGH 2020

On the following pages is a schedule of implementation actions to be pursued now through 2020. A detailed description for each action item is provided on pages 47 - 60.

2018					
	Project	When	Lead	Partners	Potential Funding
1.	Develop a coordinated strategy for downtown events/activities	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Leadership Committee		Not Applicable
2.	Improve signal timing at downtown intersections	February - April	Public Works Director	Community Development Director, Colorado Department of Transportation	Not Applicable
3.	Update the City's Land Development Code to reflect the recommended code amendments	February - May	Community Development Director, City Planner		Not Applicable
4.	Finalize the design for and construct the Ohio Avenue streetscape improvements	February - September	Public Works Director	Charlier Associates, Community Development, Western	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Strategic Partnerships
5.	Finalize the design for enhancements to IOOF Park and the Virginia Avenue festival street	March - July	Parks and Recreation Director	City Planner	City's General Fund
6.	Develop organizational framework for implementation of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative and on-going coordination and communication	April	City Manager	Downtown Leadership Committee	Not Applicable
7.	Modify the City's sidewalk standards (i.e., Throughway Zone requirements)	April - May	Community Development Director, City Planner		Not Applicable
8.	Perform an analysis and update to the City's Land Development Code to further the community's goals related to housing	April - December	Community Development Director, City Planner	Code Consultant	City's General Fund

9.	Explore funding mechanisms for implementation of downtown improvement projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district</li> <li>• Crowdfunding</li> <li>• Colorado Main Street Program</li> <li>• City's General Fund</li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships</li> <li>• Financial Assistance Programs and Grant Opportunities</li> </ul>	April - December	City Manager	Special Legal Counsel	City's General Fund
10.	Conduct a Downtown Parking Study	June	City Planner	Charlier Associates, Western	City's General Fund
11.	Install temporary curb bulb-outs (ex. paint and glue down bollards) at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the temporary curb bulb-outs to study the function of bulb-outs at this intersection with large vehicles (ex. Semi-trucks)</li> </ul>	June - August	Public Works Director	Community Development	City's General Fund
12.	Explore implementation of "Quick Win" enhancement projects in IOOF Park	June - November	Parks and Recreation Director	Public Works Director	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding
13.	Develop a process for using the City's economic development grant funds for a downtown building façade improvement program	September - November	Finance Director		City's General Fund

2019					
	Project	When	Lead	Partners	Potential Funding
1.	Update the City's Comprehensive Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included in the update to the Comprehensive Plan should be a study of the Georgia Avenue corridor to better understand the development potential along the corridor and the streetscape design necessary to support this future development</li> </ul>	January - December	Community Development Director	Planning Consultant	City's General Fund
2.	Develop funding mechanism(s) for implementation of downtown improvement projects	January - December	City Manager		Depend upon funding mechanism(s)
3.	Explore partnerships between Western and local businesses	January - December	City Manager	Downtown Leadership Committee, Western	Not Applicable
4.	Award funds from the City's economic development grant for a downtown building façade improvement program	February - March	Finance Director		Not Applicable
5.	Finalize the design for the South Main Festival Street	February - May	Public Works Director	City Engineer	City's General Fund

6.	Construct curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Virginia Avenue	February - October	Public Works Director	City Engineer	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding
7.	Conduct parklet demonstration on South Main Street	May - June	City Planner	Public Works, Arts Center	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Strategic Partnerships
8.	Construct Phase 1 improvements for the South Main Festival Street	May - August	Public Works Director	City Engineer	City's General Fund
9.	Complete IOOF Park Phase 1 improvements	May - August	Parks and Recreation Director	Public Works Director	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Financial Assistance Programs, Grants
10.	Implement strategic program of re-striping on-street parking stalls in the downtown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-striping of on-street parking to be done per the recommendations of the Downtown Parking Study</li> </ul>	June	Public Works Director	Street Painting Contractor	City's General Fund
11.	Complete improvements to downtown bike network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Striping/re-striping of bike lanes to be done per the recommendations on page 13.</li> </ul>	June	Public Works Director	Street Painting Contractor	City's General Fund
12.	Pursue permanent curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop design for bulb-outs</li> <li>Identify and pursue funding sources</li> <li>Pursue approval from the Colorado Department of Transportation</li> </ul>	August - December	Public Works Director	City Engineer	To Be Determined

## 2020

	<b>Project</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Potential Funding</b>
1.	Pursue a Creative District ( <a href="http://www.coloradocreativeindustries.org">www.coloradocreativeindustries.org</a> ) designation for downtown Gunnison	January - May	City Planner	Arts Center, Colorado Creative Industries	Designation will create new funding opportunities
2.	Partner with Gunnison Valley Regional Housing Authority to identify sites for housing in the downtown	February - April	City Planner	Gunnison Valley Regional Housing Authority	Not Applicable
3.	Construct curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue	May - October	Public Works Director	Public Works Director, City Engineer	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Financial Assistance Programs, Grants

4.	Create streetscape for the gateway to Gunnison	May - October	Community Development Director, City Planner	City Engineer	To Be Determined
5.	Complete IOOF Park and Virginia Avenue Festival Street Phase 2 improvements	May - October	Parks and Recreation Director	Public Works Director	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Financial Assistance Programs, Grants
6.	Construct Phase 2 improvements for the South Main Festival Street	May - October	Public Works Director	City Engineer	To Be Determined

**Action Item Descriptions**

**2018**

**1. Develop a coordinated strategy for downtown events/activities**

*When:* On-Going  
*Lead:* Chamber of Commerce  
*Partners:* Downtown Leadership Committee  
*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable  
*Description:* Collaborative effort between the City, local business community (including the lodging community), Western, and other key stakeholders to develop an action plan for downtown events and activities. This effort should evaluate the value and feasibility of creating a City staff position, hiring a consultant and/or establishing a volunteer committee to be tasked with implementation of the action plan.

**2. Improve signal timing at downtown intersections**

*When:* February - April  
*Lead:* Public Works Director  
*Partners:* Community Development Director, Colorado Department of Transportation  
*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable  
*Description:* Collaborative effort between the City and the Colorado Department of Transportation to improve signal timing at downtown intersections to make it easier and more comfortable for pedestrians to cross streets.  
  
 A meeting with the Colorado Department of Transportation has occurred and they have agreed to modify signal timing.

**3. Update the City's Land Development Code to reflect the recommended code amendments**

*When:* February - May  
*Lead:* Community Development Director, City Planner  
*Partners:*  
*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable  
*Description:* Update the City's Land Development Code to reflect the code changes recommended for the CBD, B-1 and R-2 or R-3 zone districts (provided in this report) that do not require additional consultant review or studies.

**4. Finalize the design for and construct the Ohio Avenue streetscape improvements**

*When:* February - September  
*Lead:* Public Works Director  
*Partners:* Charlier Associates, Community Development, Western  
*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Strategic Partnerships  
*Description:* Hire design professionals to complete the survey, engineering and landscape design work necessary to finalize the design for the Ohio Avenue streetscape improvement project. Elements of this improvement project to include:

- 8' wide pedestrian path
- Pedestrian scaled, dark-sky compliant lighting (as part of the Downtown Lighting Plan)
- Bike lane striping
- Travel lane striping
- Landscaping
- Integration of Western and Gunnison co-branding
- Curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Ohio Avenue

Pursue construction of Ohio Avenue streetscape improvements upon completion of design work.

**5. Finalize the design for enhancements to IOOF Park and the Virginia Avenue festival street**

*When:* March - July  
*Lead:* Parks and Recreation Director  
*Partners:* Public Works Director  
*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund

*Description:* Hire design professionals to complete the public space design and engineering work necessary to finalize the design for IOOF Park and the Virginia Avenue Festival Street.

The concepts for IOOF Park and the Virginia Avenue Festival Street (included in this report) should be used as a foundation for the final design work, however additional community input should be solicited during the final design process. A phased implementation plan should be developed that enables “quick win” projects to be completed in the near-term and allows for more substantial improvements to be installed over time.

#### 6. Develop organization framework for implementation of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative and on-going coordination and communication

*When:* June - September

*Lead:* City Manager

*Partners:* Downtown Leadership Committee

*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable

*Description:* Collaboration with the Downtown Leadership Committee to provide leadership and communication to the community as the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative proceeds. On-going coordination may include:

- Signage for project updates
- Scheduled public meetings
- Tools to measure the benefits of improvements being made

#### 7. Modify the City’s sidewalk standards (i.e., Throughway Zone requirements)

*When:* April - May

*Lead:* Community Development Director, City Planner

*Partners:*

*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable

*Description:* Update the City’s sidewalk standards to reduce the width of the required Throughway Zone from six (6’) feet to five (5’) feet. This additional foot (1’) of space will create more opportunity for outdoor seating in front of Main Street businesses, while still providing adequate space for pedestrian movement.

**8. Perform an analysis and update to the City’s Land Development Code to further the community’s goals related to housing**

*When:* April - December  
*Lead:* Community Development Director, City Planner  
*Partners:* Code Consultant  
*Potential Funding:* City’s General Fund  
*Description:* Update the City’s Land Development Code to reflect the code changes recommended for the CBD, B-1 and R-2 or R-3 zone districts (provided in this report) related to housing and on-street parking. Additional recommendations by a code consultant will be contemplated to maximize residential housing density, promote deed restricted housing development and reduce overall construction costs, while maintaining the community’s historic scale and character.

This task requires a diagnosis of specific development standards that may be considered barriers to housing development within all City zones.

**9. Explore funding mechanisms for implementation of downtown improvement projects**

*When:* June - December  
*Lead:* City Manager  
*Partners:* Special Legal Counsel  
*Potential Funding:* City’s General Fund  
*Description:* Funding is a key component of implementing the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative. Developing a multi-pronged approach to funding could be beneficial in that it would pull financial resources from a number of sources and may enable the community to move forward on multiple projects in a shorter time frame. Funding sources to consider include:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district
- Crowdfunding
- Colorado Main Street Program
- City’s General Fund
- Strategic Partnerships
- Financial Assistance Programs and Grant Opportunities

**10. Conduct a Downtown Parking Study**

*When:* June  
*Lead:* City Planner  
*Partners:* Charlier Associates, Western  
*Potential Funding:* City’s General Fund

*Description:* Conduct a downtown parking study to collect data around the use of on-street parking in the downtown. This study should be conducted during the time of year when on-street parking is most heavily used (i.e., the peak parking period). The results of the parking study will be used to inform the development of a comprehensive parking strategy that works to address the long-term parking needs for the downtown.

The City should explore opportunities to engage local volunteers and/or Western students in the data collection the necessary for the parking study.

#### **11. Install temporary curb bulb-outs (ex. paint and glue down bollards) at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue**

*When:* May - August

*Lead:* Public Works Director

*Partners:* Community Development, Colorado Department of Transportation

*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund

*Description:* Collaborative effort between the City and the Colorado Department of Transportation to evaluate the function of curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue. The City should hire design professionals to complete the design and engineering work necessary to install temporary curb bulb-outs at this intersection.

Key stakeholders to engage in the evaluation of curb bulb-outs at Main Street and Tomichi Avenue include:

- Emergency Responders
- Public Transit Operators
- Snow Plow Operators
- Trucking Community

The evaluation of temporary curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue should be used to inform the design of permanent bulb-outs at this intersection.

## 12. Explore implementation of “Quick Win” enhancement projects in IOOF Park

*When:* June - November

*Lead:* Parks and Recreation Director

*Partners:* Public Works Director

*Potential Funding:* City’s General Fund, Crowdfunding

*Description:* Explore opportunities to install “Quick Win” enhancements, which are relatively inexpensive improvements that are simple to install and will begin to transform the park in the near-term. Initial ideas for “Quick Win” enhancements include:

- Western banners/flags
- Multi-use plaza with overhead festival lighting
- Recycling containers
- Tables and chairs
- Stone play area
- Additional landscaping

## 13. Develop a process for using the City’s economic development grant funds for a downtown building façade improvement program

*When:* September - November

*Lead:* Finance Director

*Partners:*

*Potential Funding:* City’s General Fund

*Description:* Explore and develop a process for inclusion of a building façade improvement program to increase sales tax revenue. Creation of a façade improvement program should include criteria to be utilized by City Council as they make funding decisions.

## 1. Update the City's Comprehensive Plan

<i>When:</i>	January - December
<i>Lead:</i>	Community Development Director
<i>Partners:</i>	Planning Consultant
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	City's General Fund
<i>Description:</i>	Hire community planning professionals to complete an update to the City of Gunnison's 2007 Master Plan (i.e., Comprehensive Plan).

Included in the update to the Comprehensive Plan should be a study of the Georgia Avenue corridor to better understand the development potential along the corridor and the streetscape design necessary to support this future development. Please refer to the Appendix for suggested street sections for Georgia Avenue.

Consideration should be given to a comprehensive update to the City of Gunnison Land Development Code following an update to the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the City's regulations align with the community's vision for the future.

## 2. Develop funding mechanism(s) for implementation of downtown improvement projects

<i>When:</i>	January - December
<i>Lead:</i>	City Manager
<i>Partners:</i>	
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	Dependent upon funding mechanism(s)
<i>Description:</i>	Based on the exploration of tools and research for implementation performed in 2018, develop a funding mechanism(s) for downtown improvements. Funding sources that may be considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district</li> <li>• Crowdfunding</li> <li>• Colorado Main Street Program</li> <li>• City's General Fund</li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships</li> <li>• Financial Assistance Programs and Grant Opportunities</li> </ul>

### 3. Explore partnerships between Western and local businesses

*When:* January - December

*Lead:* City Manager

*Partners:* Downtown Leadership Committee, Western

*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable

*Description:* Collaborative effort between Western and local businesses to explore ideas for creating more opportunities to bring students to the downtown.

Initial ideas related to this include:

- Developing an organized program for student discounts at local businesses
- Developing a collective downtown business strategy for staying open late
- Expanding events, activities, shopping opportunities, etc. for those 21 and under

### 4. Award funds from the City's economic development grant for a downtown building façade improvement program

*When:* February - March

*Lead:* Finance Director

*Partners:*

*Potential Funding:* Not Applicable

*Description:* Applications from the building façade improvement program (created in 2018) may be reviewed and funds awarded by City Council as part of the City's Economic Development Grant. This program is intended to be an on-going annual application and funding process.

### 5. Finalize the design for the South Main Festival Street

*When:* February - May

*Lead:* Public Works Director

*Partners:* City Engineer

*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund

*Description:* Hire design professionals to complete the survey, engineering and landscape design work necessary to finalize the design for the South Main Festival Street.

The concepts for the South Main Festival Street (included in this report) should be used as a foundation for the final design work, however additional community input should be solicited during the final design process. A phased implementation plan should be developed that enables “quick win” projects to be completed in the near-term and allows for more substantial improvements to be installed over time.

Elements of the South Main Festival Street to consider include:

- Light poles along, and festival lighting, over South Main Street
- Parklet in front of the Arts Center
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, bike racks, benches, etc)
- Street trees along South Main Street
- Decorative street paving
- Utility hook ups for food trucks, events, etc
- Electric car charging stations

## 6. Construct curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Virginia Avenue

*When:* February - October

*Lead:* Public Works Director

*Partners:* City Engineer

*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund, Crowdfunding

*Description:* Hire design professionals to complete the survey, engineering and landscape design work necessary to finalize the design for curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Virginia Avenue. Opportunities to integrate Western and Gunnison co-branding in the design of the curb bulb-outs should be explored through this process.

Pursue construction of curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Virginia Avenue upon completion of design work.

## 7. Conduct parklet demonstration on South Main Street

<i>When:</i>	May - June
<i>Lead:</i>	City Planner
<i>Partners:</i>	Public Works, Arts Center
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Strategic Partnerships
<i>Description:</i>	Collaborative effort between the City and the Arts Center to design and install a parklet on South Main Street. The installation of this parklet should serve as an opportunity for the community to "try-out" the idea. If the idea is well received, additional opportunities for parklets along Main Street and side streets off Main Street should be explored.

Note that Main Street, north of Tomichi Avenue, is a state highway and installation of parklets along this portion of Main Street will necessitate collaboration with the Colorado Department of Transportation. The *Colorado Downtown Streets: A Tool for Communities, Planners, and Engineers* provides information (refer to p. 41) on design considerations for parklets on state highways.

## 8. Construct Phase 1 improvements for the South Main Festival Street

<i>When:</i>	May - August
<i>Lead:</i>	Public Works Director
<i>Partners:</i>	City Engineer
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	City's General Fund
<i>Description:</i>	Pursue construction of the Phase I "Quick Win" improvements for the South Main Festival Street, which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light poles along, and festival lighting, over South Main Street</li> <li>• Parklet in front of the Arts Center</li> <li>• Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, bike racks, benches, etc)</li> </ul>

## 9. Complete IOOF Park Phase 1 improvements

<i>When:</i>	May - August
<i>Lead:</i>	Parks and Recreation Director
<i>Partners:</i>	Public Works Director, City Engineer
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Financial Assistance Programs, Grants

*Description:* Install the Phase 1 enhancements identified by the community for IOOF Park and the Virginia Avenue Festival Street. Initial ideas for Phase 1 enhancements include:

- Fire pit and water feature at the corner of Main Street and Virginia Avenue
- Multi-use plaza with overhead festival lighting
- Furnishings (ex. Recycling containers, benches, bike racks, etc)
- Tables and chairs
- Stone play area
- Additional landscaping

If feasible, construction of a covered stage structure should be pursued in conjunction with the Phase 1 enhancements.

#### 10. Implement strategic program of re-striping on-street parking stalls in the downtown

*When:* June

*Lead:* Public Works Director

*Partners:* Street Painting Contractor

*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund

*Description:* Re-striping of on-street parking to increase the supply of parking in and around the downtown. The Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy developed from the Downtown Parking Study should be used to evaluate areas for re-striping of on-street parking.

#### 11. Complete improvements to downtown bike network

*When:* June

*Lead:* Public Works Director

*Partners:* Street Painting Contractor

*Potential Funding:* City's General Fund

*Description:* Complete the recommended changes to the downtown bike network. Those changes include:

- Striping of continuous bike lanes along Ohio Avenue
- Removal of discontinuous bike lane striping along Virginia Avenue
- Exploring opportunities to integrate bike lanes with any improvements made to Georgia Avenue

## 12. Pursue curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue

<i>When:</i>	August - December
<i>Lead:</i>	Public Works Director
<i>Partners:</i>	City Engineer, Colorado Department of Transportation
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	To Be Determined
<i>Description:</i>	Hire design professionals to complete the survey, engineering and landscape design work necessary to finalize the design for curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue. The design of the curb bulb-outs at this intersection should be developed based off the lessons learned through the installation of temporary bulb-outs. In addition, opportunities to integrate Western and Gunnison co-branding in the design of the curb bulb-outs should be explored through this process.

Key stakeholders to engage in the evaluation of curb bulb-outs at Main Street and Tomichi Avenue include:

- Emergency Responders
- Public Transit Operators
- Snow Plow Operators
- Trucking Community

Pursue construction of curb bulb-outs at this intersection upon completion of the design work and permitting process (May - October 2020).

## 2020

### 1. Pursue a Creative District ([www.coloradocreativeindustries.org](http://www.coloradocreativeindustries.org)) designation for downtown Gunnison

<i>When:</i>	January - May
<i>Lead:</i>	City Planner
<i>Partners:</i>	Arts Center, Colorado Creative Industries
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	Designation will create new funding opportunities
<i>Description:</i>	Collaborative effort between the City and the Arts Center to pursue and establish a Creative District in the downtown to support local arts.

## 2. Partner with Gunnison Valley Regional Housing Authority to identify sites for housing in the downtown

<i>When:</i>	February - April
<i>Lead:</i>	City Planner
<i>Partners:</i>	Gunnison Valley Regional Housing Authority
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Description:</i>	Collaborative effort between the City and the Gunnison Valley Regional Housing Authority to identify priority sites and opportunities for partnerships for housing projects in downtown Gunnison.

## 3. Construct curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue

<i>When:</i>	May - October
<i>Lead:</i>	Public Works Director
<i>Partners:</i>	City Engineer
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Financial Assistance Programs, Grants
<i>Description:</i>	Construct curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue.

## 4. Create streetscape for the gateway to Gunnison

<i>When:</i>	May - October
<i>Lead:</i>	Community Development Director, City Planner
<i>Partners:</i>	Public Works, City Engineer
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	To Be Determined
<i>Description:</i>	Hire design professionals to complete the public space design and engineering work necessary to finalize the design for the gateway to Gunnison.

The concepts for gateway to Gunnison (included in this report) should be used as a foundation for the final design work, however additional community input should be solicited during the final design process. A phased approach may be appropriate and would allow for “quick win” projects to be completed in the near-term and more substantial improvements to be installed over time.

Streetscape elements to consider in the creation of a gateway to Gunnison:

- Curb bulb-outs
- Widened sidewalks along Tomichi Avenue
- Iconic “Welcome” elements at intersection corners
- Trees in large planters along Tomichi Avenue
- Custom street lights (as part of the Downtown Lighting Plan)
- Public art displays

## 5. Complete IOOF Park and Virginia Avenue festival street Phase 2 improvements

<i>When:</i>	May - October
<i>Lead:</i>	Parks and Recreation Director
<i>Partners:</i>	Public Works Director
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	City's General Fund, Crowdfunding, Financial Assistance Programs, Grants
<i>Description:</i>	<p>Install the Phase II enhancements identified by the community for IOOF Park and the Virginia Avenue Festival Street. Initial ideas for Phase II enhancements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand IOOF park into a portion of Virginia Avenue</li> <li>• Utility hook ups for food trucks, Farmer's Market, etc.</li> <li>• Stage with canopy</li> <li>• Performance lawn</li> <li>• Picnic pavilion</li> <li>• Public art displays</li> <li>• ADA access</li> <li>• Transform Virginia Avenue into a festival street by installing light poles along and festival lighting over the street, installing decorative street paving, and installing utility hook ups for food trucks, the Farmer's Market, etc</li> </ul>

## 6. Construct Phase 2 improvements for the South Main Festival Street

<i>When:</i>	May - October
<i>Lead:</i>	Public Works Director
<i>Partners:</i>	
<i>Potential Funding:</i>	To Be Determined
<i>Description:</i>	<p>Install the Phase II improvements identified by the community for the South Main Festival Street. Initial ideas for these improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street trees along South Main Street</li> <li>• Decorative street paving</li> <li>• Utility hook ups for food trucks, events, etc</li> <li>• Electric car charging stations</li> </ul>

# 4 APPENDIX

MAP OF RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE DOWNTOWN BIKE NETWORK	62
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## CHANGES TO DOWNTOWN BIKE NETWORK

The recommended changes to the downtown bike lane network are shown on the adjacent diagram. These modifications will enhance the safety and function of the existing network.

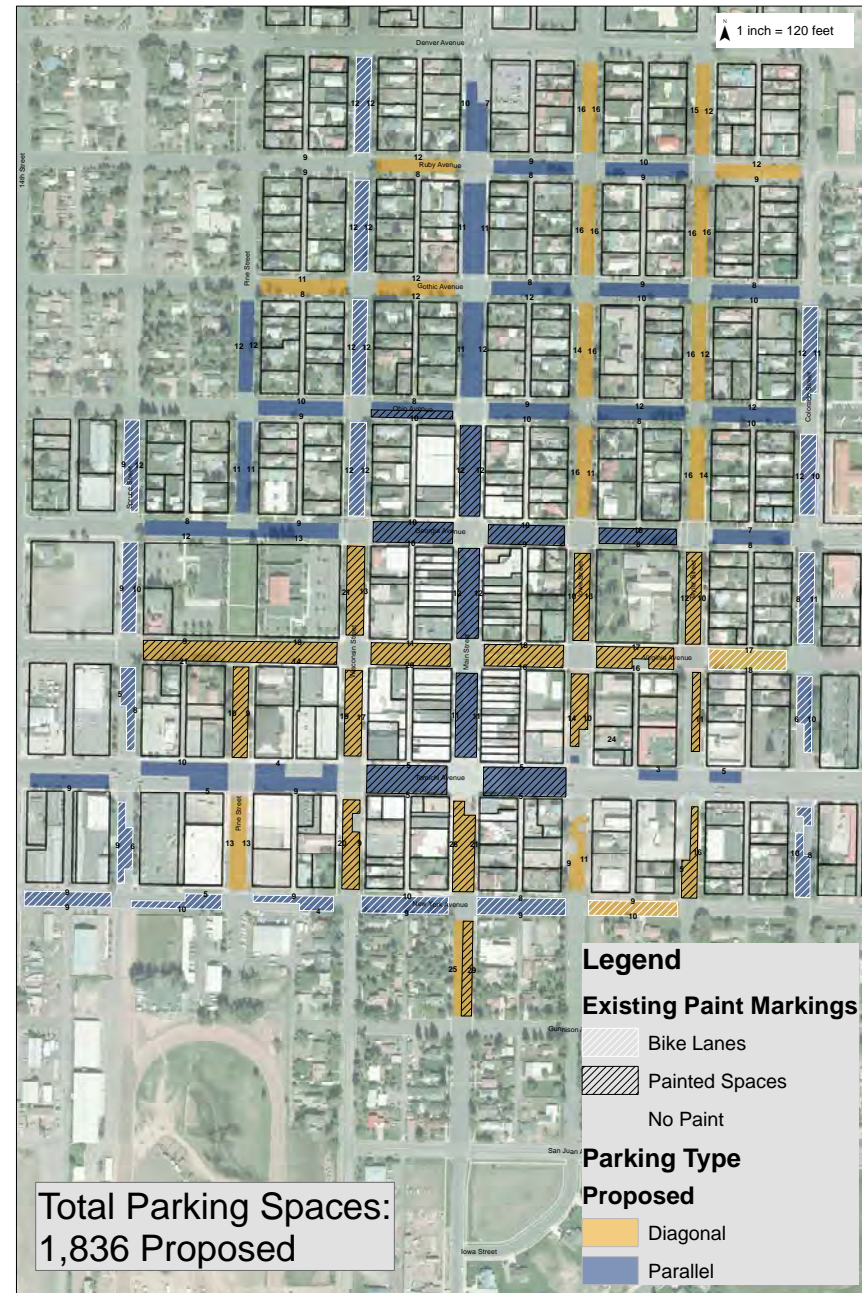
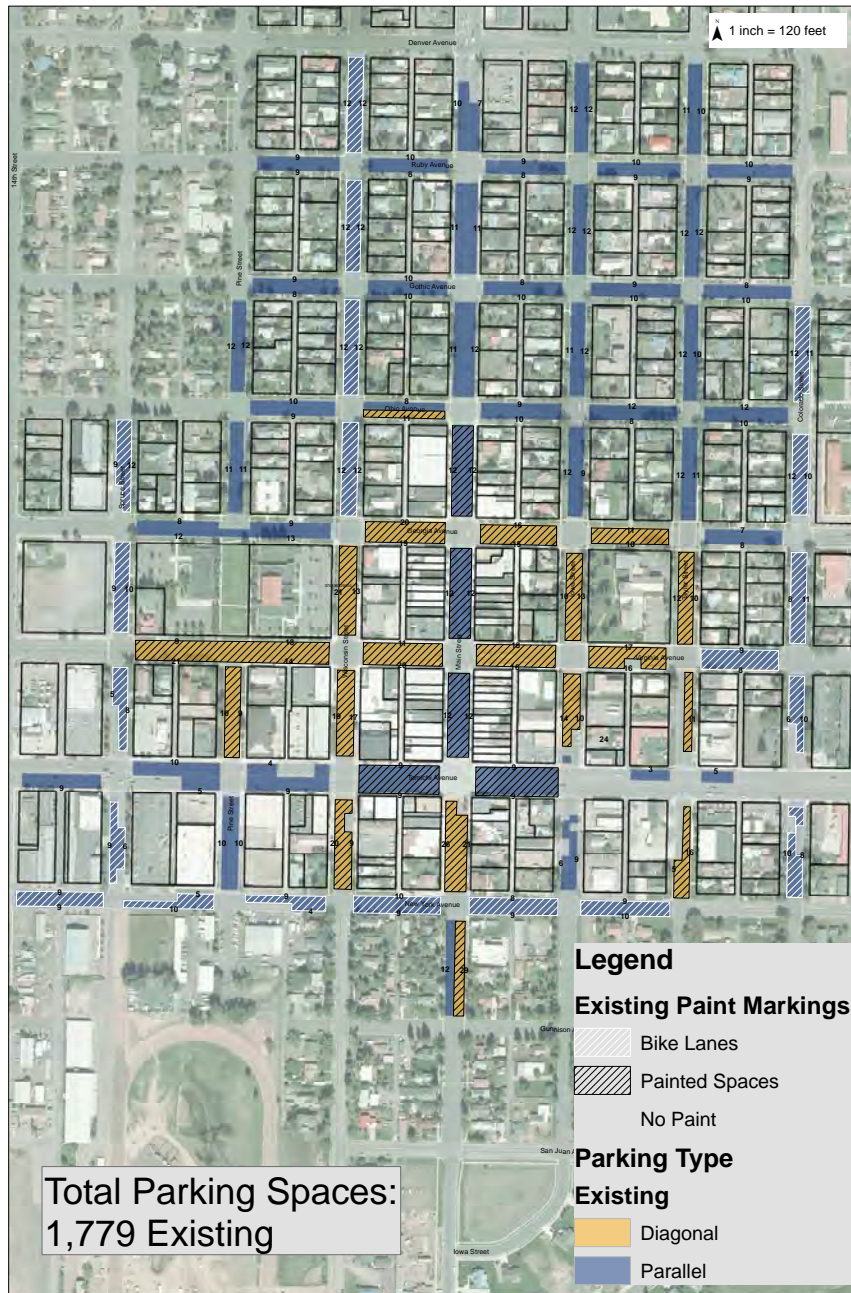
The recommended changes include:

- Striping of continuous bike lanes along Ohio Avenue
- Removal of discontinuous bike lane striping along Virginia Avenue
- Exploring opportunities to integrate bike lanes with any improvements made to Georgia Avenue



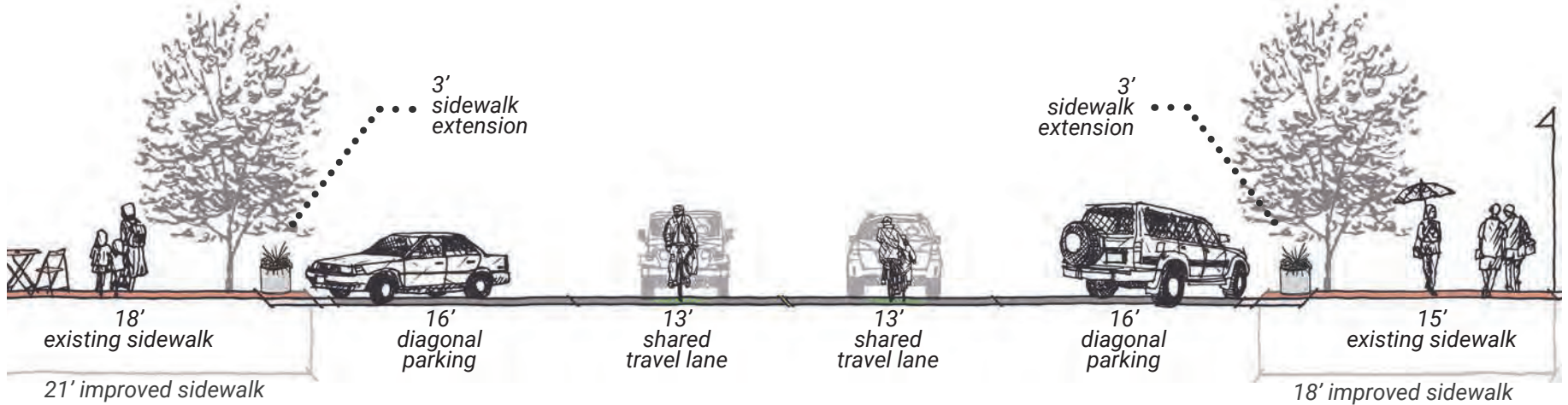
# ON-STREET PARKING STALL STRIPING ANALYSIS

These maps depict where in the downtown on-street parallel parking stalls could be re-striped to diagonal parking stalls to increase the number of public parking spaces. Approximately 57 additional on-street spaces could be created via re-striping.

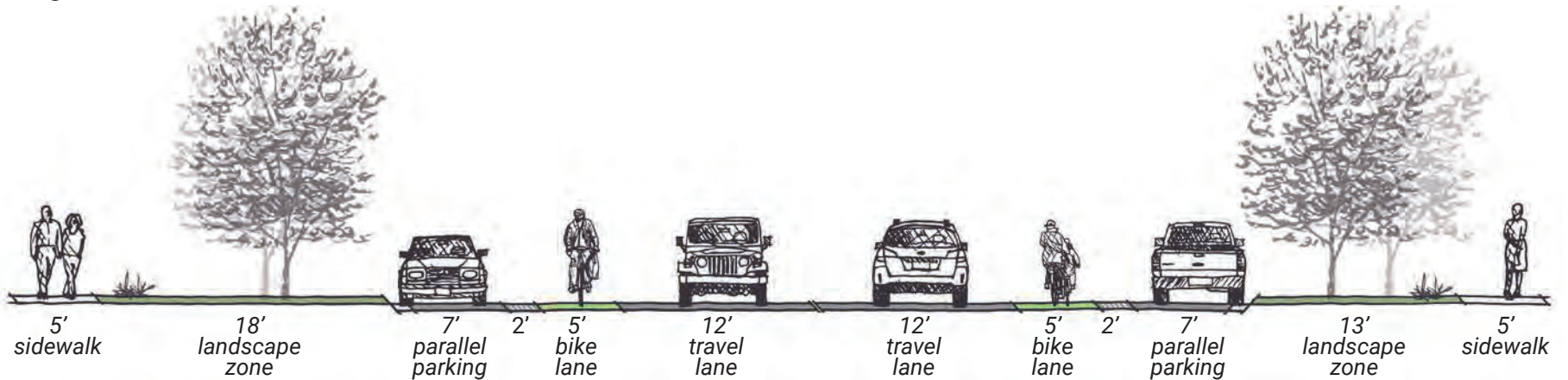


## GEORGIA AVENUE: SUGGESTED STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

### Georgia Avenue in the “downtown area” (between Wisconsin Street and Iowa Street)



### Georgia Avenue outside of the “downtown area”



A corridor study for Georgia Avenue should be done as a part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan update. This study should explore future development opportunities along the corridor in conjunction with complementary street designs.

As part the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative, several concepts were explored for improving pedestrian and bicycle movement along Georgia Avenue. The cross sections above depict a concept for the portions of Georgia Avenue in the “downtown area” (i.e., the blocks between Wisconsin Street and Iowa Street), as well as for the portions of Georgia Avenue outside of the “downtown area.” These concepts should be considered as part of the Georgia Avenue study. Much of what is shown in these concepts could be achieved simply with striping/re-striping.

## GENERAL ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

In review of the downtown area zone districts (CBD, B-1, R-2 and R-3), several overarching issues emerged. These issues and the recommended solutions are provided below.

1. **Focus on regulating form rather than use.** Uses within a building change far more frequently than the buildings themselves. Many communities are shifting the emphasis of zoning regulations away from uses (i.e., Euclidian zoning), towards building form and site design (i.e., Form-based zoning).

In the near term, the City should examine existing zoning use tables to expand the uses allowed in the downtown area. Long term, the City should modify the zoning standards further to emphasize form-based standards and/or adopt urban design guidelines in conjunction with a dramatic simplification of the use table, particularly in commercial zone districts. A community discussion around specific design guidelines or form-based standards should be integrated with the Comprehensive Plan update process.

2. **Expand the supply of on-street parking and reduce off-street parking requirements.** Off-street parking requirements are problematic in that they can add significantly to development costs (which can negatively impact unit affordability) and can limit the ability to design a project that integrates well into a neighborhood.

The City should pursue the reductions in off-street parking requirements recommended in this report, as well as the near-term and long-term downtown parking strategies detailed on page 15.

3. **Landscaping is the not the same as open space.** In many zoning codes, landscaping requirements are set very high with the false expectation that landscaped areas can or will function like public open space or parks. The reality, however, is that private landscaping areas often turn into empty grass areas that are not inviting for people to use, push buildings far from the street and use significant amounts of water. Another impact is that high landscaping requirements reduce the amount of the lot area that can be built on, which can undermine the financial feasibility of many desired building types. In Gunnison, landscaping standards do not vary much across many of the zone districts, while the buildings allowed may vary greatly.

The City should tailor landscaping standards to the context of the zone district and the desired development outcomes.

4. **Regulate changes to existing buildings differently than new buildings.** Building codes, if strictly enforced, can lead to local governments requiring extremely expensive retrofits to existing buildings for a simple change of use request, for instance. Many communities have created a two-track building code review and enforcement process that relaxes certain standards for remodels or a change of use in existing structures. This enables historic buildings to receive much needed investment and be preserved, where otherwise, an owner may find that it makes more economic sense to demolish the building and build new.

The City should explore developing a similar process to facilitate investment in and preservation of historic downtown buildings.

5. **Allow setbacks to be within rights-of-way on certain streets.** Wide street rights-of-way combined with setback standards in certain zone districts can result in buildings being set far back from the public sidewalk and street.

Not all streets will need to be expanded beyond their current curb-to-curb dimensions, so for certain streets the City should consider allowing setback requirements to be met within the right-of-way as measured from the curb. This is particularly important for commercial and multi-family zone districts where buildings should be closer to the sidewalk and more accessible to pedestrians.

## TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICT ANALYSIS

### Background

Cascadia Partners was contracted to prepare an estimate of the range of potential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenue that could be generated if a TIF District (ex. Urban Renewal District or Downtown Development District) were established within the greater-downtown area of Gunnison, Colorado (refer to map).

This analysis is more cursory than a traditional TIF District Feasibility Analysis. It is sufficiently detailed to provide “order of magnitude” guidance on the question of whether the City should consider pursuing TIF as a tool to achieve community objectives. Further and deeper analysis would be prudent. For instance, this analysis is limited to property taxes and does not include projections of sales tax. However, TIF Districts in Colorado can include those tax dollars, and they can be significant depending on the location of the TIF District’s boundary (such as on a retail Main Street, like in Gunnison).

### Purpose

TIF is one of the most powerful local tools for funding a range of public improvements, such as public space improvements, streetscape improvements, affordable housing and economic development initiatives. The potential to generate TIF revenue depends on growth in taxes as a result of private investment and expanded economic activity, like sales, within the boundaries of an established TIF District over the lifespan of the district (usually 25-years for a URA or 30-years for a DDA). The rate and scale of that growth is directly related to the amount of tax increment that is generated. Thus, TIF districts work best if they are paired with regulatory changes that support private investment (such as those detailed in this report). For the purposes of this analysis, the regulatory changes recommended in this report are assumed to have been adopted.

### Tax Increment Revenue Estimates

Two potential TIF revenue projections (a “Low” scenario and “High” scenario) that represent a reasonable range given Gunnison’s historic growth patterns, redevelopment potential and other assumptions are detailed on the following pages.

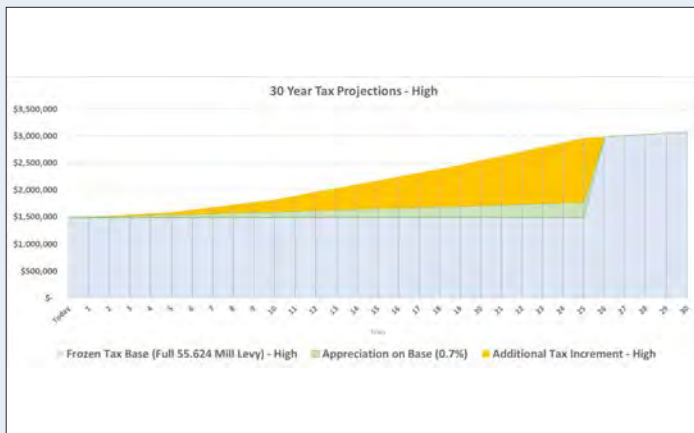
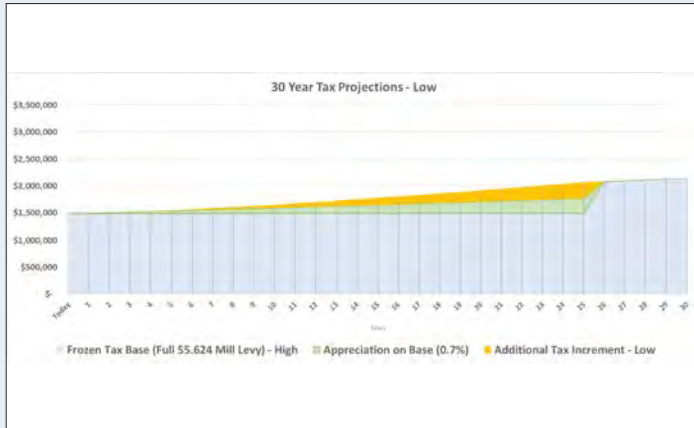
## GREATER DOWNTOWN TIF DISTRICT BOUNDARY



The tax increment district revenue estimates provided in this report were prepared using the boundary shown above.

If a TIF District is established, the City should explore the merits of modifying this boundary to include additional or fewer downtown properties.

## TIF DISTRICT REVENUE ESTIMATES



Two potential revenue projections have been prepared for a greater-downtown TIF district.

The “Low” scenario (top), which assumes Gunnison grows at the 40-year average growth rate, estimates the total revenue generated over the 25-year life cycle of a TIF district at nearly \$3 million.

The “High” scenario (bottom), which assumes Gunnison continues to see the healthy 1.1% growth rate of the past two decades, estimates the total revenue generated over the 25-year life cycle of a TIF district at nearly \$11,800,000.

**The bottom line is that, if combined with other policy and regulatory changes (ex. zoning standard changes), a TIF district could generate meaningful revenue to the City, even if growth is relatively slow.** These funds could help fund a range of community priorities such as street safety improvements, placemaking projects, or storefront improvement grants.

The 30-Year Tax Projection graphs show three stacked elements (shown in orange, blue and green) for each scenario. Only the orange wedge differs between the two graphs. The blue wedge is the existing “frozen” tax revenue based on a full 55.62 mill levy. This is derived from the County Assessor’s 2017 data provided by the City of Gunnison. Existing tax revenues would continue to flow to all taxing districts for the life of the TIF district. The green and orange wedges together would comprise the tax increment that would be retained within the greater downtown TIF district to be used on public improvement projects. The green wedge is a conservative estimate of appreciation in value of the existing tax base at 0.7% - the long-term growth average for Gunnison. The orange wedge is the tax increment from the assumed new investment and development.

### The “Low” Scenario

Assuming Gunnison grows at the 40-year average growth rate, then a TIF district will grow more slowly and may only generate approximately \$200,000 within the first 9 years. This is enough revenue to support small-scaled investments such as storefront improvement grants, re-painting bike lanes and parking stalls, and limited streetscape enhancements (ex. a few curb bulb-outs). This would not generate sufficient revenue to greatly expand affordable housing or make major capital improvements in the short to medium term. However, given how limited City funds are in general, there is still value in pursuing this scenario because the potential revenue within the full 25-year life cycle of a TIF district is nearly \$3 million.

### The “High” Scenario

Assuming Gunnison continues to see the healthy 1.1% growth rate of the past two decades, TIF revenues add up far more quickly. Within the first 9 years, for instance, a TIF district could generate nearly \$680,000 or three times the Low scenario. By year 7, the incremental tax revenue could exceed \$120,000 a year. The full 25-year life cycle revenue could reach nearly \$11,800,000. This level of revenue is sufficient to afford a wide range of community improvements.

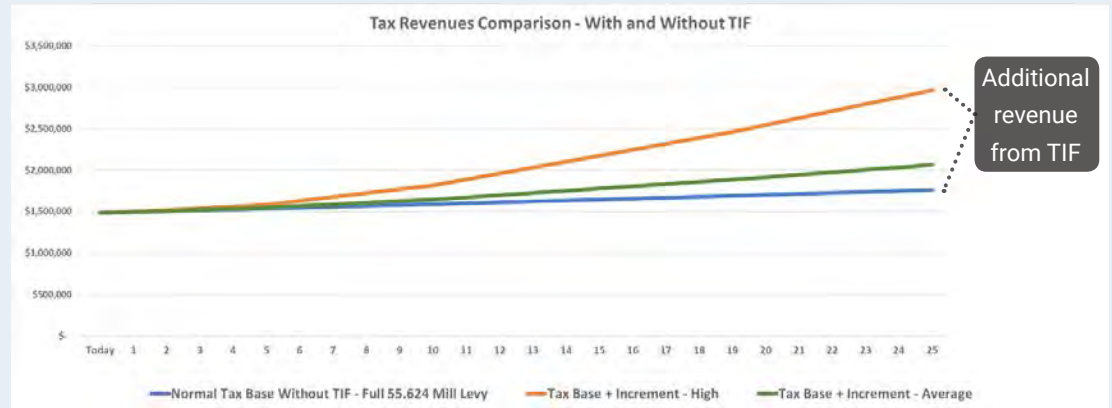
### Impact to Other Taxing Districts

In this analysis, the greater downtown tax base could be between 17-68% higher with a TIF district than compared to the standard tax base with no TIF district and simple appreciation alone. Refer to the detailed tax revenue table.

TIF districts can be perceived as “robbing” other tax districts to benefit a specific area. However, this is often a misunderstanding of the actual impact to long term revenues which can be significant. The expanded economic activity that can result from a successfully implemented TIF district can increase tax revenue faster than it otherwise would. This is often referred to as the “but for” argument in favor of TIF: But for TIF, there would not be such dramatic increases in investment, development and tax revenue.

Public entities should take a long view of tax revenue. This can be hard when budgets are tight, but the potential “upside” can be worth it – in the long run. While it is true that tax revenue is “frozen” during the life of a TIF district, revenues do still flow to tax districts and state subsidies can help offset certain tax districts, like school districts. And when the TIF district sunsets, if activities in the district were successful, the increase in tax revenue should be significantly larger than if no TIF district was in place.

### TAX REVENUE COMPARISON - WITH AND WITHOUT TIF



This graph depicts how the expanded economic activity that can result from a successfully implemented TIF district can increase tax revenue for all taxing entities over the long-term faster, than would occur without a TIF district.

### DETAILED TAX REVENUE TABLE

Tax Revenue - 30 Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Normal Tax Base - Baseline Appreciation - No TIF	\$ 1,494,436	\$ 1,504,897	\$ 1,515,431	\$ 1,526,039	\$ 1,536,721	\$ 1,547,478	\$ 1,558,311	\$ 1,569,219	\$ 1,580,203	\$ 1,591,265
Frozen Tax Base (Full 55.624 Mill Levy)	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047
Appreciation on Base (0.7%)	\$ 10,388	\$ 20,849	\$ 31,384	\$ 41,992	\$ 52,674	\$ 63,431	\$ 74,263	\$ 85,172	\$ 96,156	\$ 107,217
Additional Tax Increment - Low	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 21,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 39,000	\$ 48,000	\$ 57,000
Additional Tax Increment - High	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 36,000	\$ 48,000	\$ 84,000	\$ 120,000	\$ 156,000	\$ 192,000	\$ 228,000

Tax Revenue - 30 Year	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Normal Tax Base - Baseline Appreciation - No TIF	\$ 1,602,404	\$ 1,613,620	\$ 1,624,916	\$ 1,636,290	\$ 1,647,744	\$ 1,659,278	\$ 1,670,893	\$ 1,682,590	\$ 1,694,368	\$ 1,706,228
Frozen Tax Base (Full 55.624 Mill Levy)	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047
Appreciation on Base (0.7%)	\$ 118,356	\$ 129,573	\$ 140,868	\$ 152,243	\$ 163,697	\$ 175,231	\$ 186,846	\$ 198,542	\$ 210,320	\$ 222,181
Additional Tax Increment - Low	\$ 72,000	\$ 87,000	\$ 102,000	\$ 117,000	\$ 132,000	\$ 147,000	\$ 162,000	\$ 177,000	\$ 192,000	\$ 210,000
Additional Tax Increment - High	\$ 288,000	\$ 348,000	\$ 408,000	\$ 468,000	\$ 528,000	\$ 588,000	\$ 648,000	\$ 708,000	\$ 768,000	\$ 840,000

Tax Revenue - 30 Year	21	22	23	24	25
Normal Tax Base - Baseline Appreciation - No TIF	\$ 1,718,172	\$ 1,730,199	\$ 1,742,311	\$ 1,754,507	\$ 1,766,788
Frozen Tax Base (Full 55.624 Mill Levy)	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047	\$ 1,484,047
Appreciation on Base (0.7%)	\$ 234,125	\$ 246,152	\$ 258,263	\$ 270,459	\$ 282,741
Additional Tax Increment - Low	\$ 228,000	\$ 246,000	\$ 264,000	\$ 282,000	\$ 300,000
Additional Tax Increment - High	\$ 912,000	\$ 984,000	\$ 1,056,000	\$ 1,128,000	\$ 1,200,000

Tax Revenue - 30 Year	26	27	28	29	30	Difference - Yr 30
Normal Tax Base - Baseline Appreciation - No TIF	\$ 1,779,156	\$ 1,791,610	\$ 1,804,151	\$ 1,816,780	\$ 1,829,498	
New Tax Base - Low	\$ 2,081,256	\$ 2,095,825	\$ 2,110,495	\$ 2,125,269	\$ 2,140,146	\$ 310,648
New Tax Base - High	\$ 2,987,556	\$ 3,008,469	\$ 3,029,528	\$ 3,050,735	\$ 3,072,090	\$ 1,242,592

TIF District ends in year 25. In year 26, all taxes again flow to taxing authorities.

If successful, the new tax base is significantly larger than if there was no TIF district.

## Strategies to Maximize Chances of Success

- Adopt market-friendly changes to land use regulations, such as Zoning and Building Code
- Implement downtown projects identified in the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative report.
- Update the City's Comprehensive Plan to position Gunnison for long-term prosperity.

## Key Assumptions

Several key assumptions underpin this analysis and are detailed below.

- Property taxes are levied from many different jurisdictions, including City, County, School District and others. The City of Gunnison's portion of the total mill levy is only 7%, so securing formal participation from the other taxing entities will be critical to generating meaningful revenue from a TIF district. The County and School District are particularly important partners as their share comprise the vast majority of the mill levy.
- Changes to the current zoning standards that make redevelopment and private investment more appealing are assumed to have been adopted. Without these changes, it is unlikely substantial new investment will occur. The recommended zoning changes are included in this report.
- This analysis includes a range of possible revenue projections: low and high. The "low" revenue projection assumes that Gunnison grows at approximately 0.3% annually, which is the average growth rate since 1980. This timespan includes the decade between 1980 and 1990, when Gunnison's population declined by nearly 20% - the only declining 10-year period in the past 100 years. The "high" projection assumes a continued 1.1% average annual growth rate, which has been the average since 1990.
- A conservative appreciation rate of 0.7% per year is assumed for the existing tax base over the 25-year period, which is the long term, average annual growth rate for Gunnison since 1970.
- To approximate an assumption about downtown housing absorption, we have assumed that the greater downtown area of Gunnison can absorb approximately 30% of the city's future population growth. Gunnison has grown by approximately 400-700 people each decade over the past three decades. If we assume an average household size of 2.5 people, then that averages to approximately 16-30 new households per year. If we assume 30% locate within the greater downtown area, then we can assume the greater downtown area can absorb 5-10 new households each year.
  - o A review of the vacant and underutilized lands within the greater downtown areas finds ample opportunity for both new construction and adaptive reuse of existing structures to accommodate this level of growth. Again, this assumes changes to the zoning code are adopted.
- At the assumed absorption rate, it is estimated that over the long term, the greater downtown area has a development capacity from \$16,000,000 - \$60,000,000. This is a wide range; however, development feasibility is not linear. Once financial feasibility reaches a "tipping point" within the greater downtown area, then investment is likely to jump substantially, and the scale and value of development projects jumps significantly as well.
  - o With this assumed range of a range of development capacity, a long term sustained annual tax revenue projection of \$300,000 to \$1,200,000 could be anticipated. The TIF projections were scaled to achieve approximately this level of "build out" value by year 25. It should be noted that projecting development cycles is difficult given the range of factors (local, national and global) that influence development. So, this level of "build out" could happen faster or slower, but it is a reasonable range for this exercise.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

### Online Questionnaires, Student Surveys, Idea Boxes, Coffee House and Happy Hour Chats & Stakeholder Meetings

Initial input from the community was gathered via online questionnaires (posted on the project website - [downtowngunnison.com](http://downtowngunnison.com)), online student surveys (High School and Western), Idea Boxes (boxes distributed around Gunnison used to collect comment cards), Coffee House and Happy Hour chats (one on one discussions between community leaders and citizens) and discussions with stakeholder groups (e.g., concerned citizens and the immigrant community).

The community was asked to provide their thoughts on assets, challenges, opportunities and hopes for downtown Gunnison.

Feedback was gathered over the course of June 2017. A total of 737 responses were collected.

### Kick Off Meeting

The Kick-Off for the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative was held on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The event had 93 attendees. Meeting participants engaged in exercises to provide input on assets, challenges, opportunities and hopes for downtown Gunnison.

The assets, challenges, opportunities and hopes identified at the Kick-Off meeting, along with those identified via the online questionnaires, student surveys, Idea Boxes, Coffee House and Happy Hour chats, and stakeholder meetings were used to develop the draft goals for the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative.

### Online Feedback Form for Draft Goals

The draft goals were shared with the community via the project website. An online form was provided that offered people an opportunity to score and comment on the four draft goals. 85 responses were recorded.

Using a scale of 1 (Needs work!) to 10 (Looks great!), respondents scored the draft goals as follows:

Goal 1 - 6.1 (average score)

Goal 2 - 6.5 (average score)

Goal 3 - 6.6 (average score)





Goal 4 - 6.0 (average score)

### Discovery Workshop

The Discovery Workshop was a series of meetings with stakeholder groups (Western and downtown area business owners) and the community. Meetings were held October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Workshop participants learned about what other communities are doing to foster vibrant downtowns, create safer streets, and support downtown businesses. Participants had opportunities to provide input on how the City might apply those practices in Gunnison. The workshop was also used as an opportunity to gather final input on the four goals.

Input gathered at the Discovery Workshop provided direction for what to hone in on during the Downtown Design Workshop.

### Downtown Design Workshop

The Downtown Design Workshop was a three-day event that brought together transportation, planning and design experts with the community and stakeholder groups including, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), local emergency service providers, city staff, city council and business and property owners. This event was held November 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.

The workshop enabled the community and stakeholder groups to work with the experts to develop solutions and design concepts for downtown Gunnison that work to address challenges identified and achieve the four goals of the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative.





*Honoring the Past | Embracing the Future*

