Community Assessment
May 11 & 12, 2015
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Team Members

The Florence Assessment Team appreciates the invitation to get to know your city and to assist your community in maximizing its considerable assets. The volunteers worked diligently, pre- and post-visit, to provide relevant and realistic input towards the betterment of your commercial district.

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Introduction

Welcome to the community assessment for the City of Florence, Colorado. Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) is proud to offer affordable, quality assessments for all Colorado member communities to build and maintain vibrant commercial districts, town centers, and downtowns in our state. Qualifying communities in Colorado have the opportunity to apply for assistance through DCI and receive a reduced rate thanks to the in-kind contribution of consultants from DCI’s professional membership base. The community assessment for the City of Florence was also made possible in part by an Administrative Grant from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA).

The goal of a DCI community assessment is to gather community leaders and stakeholders to develop a structure and process for the community to support local businesses and a vibrant commercial district. The process results in a road map to guide community leaders in providing services and training to help local businesses thrive.

To ensure quality and affordable services, DCI assembles a team of professional consultants experienced in their discipline, including designers and architects, marketing and branding specialists, land use and urban planners, redevelopment and real estate specialists, economic developers, and finance experts, to work in communities over the course of two days to contribute to this final report. The assessment team members value the invitation to learn about and assist your community, and worked diligently to provide relevant and realistic input toward the betterment of your community.

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2014, the City of Florence requested a community assessment from Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI). The assessment visit was held on May 11 and 12, 2015 with the purpose of identifying community issues and opportunities, as well as to provide tools, insights and direction to help Florence achieve its community revitalization goals.

Prior to this visit, the City of Florence planned the agenda, identified key stakeholders for focus groups, and provided extensive background information about the history and status of Florence’s downtown revitalization efforts and any issues facing the community.

DCI organized an assessment team with combined experience in organizational management, marketing and promotions, branding, economic development, creative arts and industries, land-use planning, urban design, resource development, and financing mechanisms. Upon arrival in the community, team members were given a presentation on the community history and current issues, and a tour of the town. Throughout the day, the team conducted focus groups with elected officials and town staff, service providers, youth, business owners, and the general public. The team also walked around the downtown and met with several business owners on site. The focus groups allowed the team to meet directly with stakeholders and hear multiple perspectives about the issues facing the downtown and the community as a whole. It also provided a chance for team members to ask the community about the perceptions, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities related to Florence.

On the second day of the assessment, DCI’s team members gathered to discuss their observations and formulate
recommendations. That evening, team members presented their findings in the form of a PowerPoint presentation followed by a question-and-answer session open to the community-at-large. The following report provides a brief history of the community, a list of observations gathered from the community, and provides action recommendations for short and long-term implementation in four areas: Organization and Management, Marketing and Promotions, Economic Development and Restructuring, and Physical Improvements and Design. The report appendices contain an action plan and related documents to assist the community in implementing the provided recommendations.

Background Information and Historical Context

The City of Florence is located in South Central Colorado, just 30 miles west of Pueblo. Florence is said to be known around the state for two things: antiques and the federal “super-max” prison; however, this community has a much deeper history and today, a plethora of activities and groups working to improve the town’s core. Florence was incorporated in 1887 and is named after the daughter of early settler James McCandless.

The discovery of oil in the 1880s led to the city’s initial formation and growth. From that time through the 1900s, Florence’s economy was largely driven by energy industries. Coal mining operations were also a significant part of Florence’s past, the remnants of which can be seen in the small “coal towns” on Florence’s outskirts. The local housing stock of smaller homes and cottages is also evidence to Florence’s past as a humble, working town. The stories of the red light district and the famed ‘madam on the hill’ are often recalled and reenacted by local artists in historical theatrical shows.

In the 1970s, Florence began to see the decline known to many small towns as its main street tenants vacated and the downtown became largely dormant. By the 1990s, the city saw a downtown renaissance which is credited to the Fox sisters who jumpstarted the antique movement in Florence. Today, there are few vacancies on the Main Street which hosts 26 antique shops and dealers, making Florence the “Antique Capital of Colorado”. Those in the antiquing world travel from across the state to see what treasures they might uncover in Florence’s stores. On Front Street, just one block south of Main Street, there is some industrial activity, but many of the buildings remain vacant or underutilized.

Florence has many youth and families, however many are drawn to the sister community, Canon City, and to the nearby regional hub, Pueblo, for work, entertainment, and shopping. Students wishing to play sports must also participate in athletic programs through neighboring districts. Although the prison is just outside of town, few prison visitors come through Florence and most of the guards reside in neighboring areas.

1According to information provided by the community during an orientation presentation, tour, and focus groups on May 11, 2015.
There is a burgeoning arts community in Florence with its heart at the recently established Bell Tower Cultural Center. The Bell Tower along with the Senior Community Center and the library serve the community with their classes and program offerings. Numerous events are held in Florence throughout the year. These are put on by various groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and individuals with creative ideas. The Arkansas River flows through Florence but it is not frequently accessed at this point. Locals also noted that Florence is a popular pass-through point for bikers traveling cross-country from South Carolina to Oregon.

The City of Florence is ready to take the next steps to carry their community into the future in a way that honors the community’s past and maintains its character. The assessment conducted through DCI marks a starting point and forms a foundation as the community works to update the comprehensive plan and identify opportunity areas that will strengthen the city and ensure its success and economic viability going forward.

**Focus Group Observations**

The following observations were made during the orientation, focus groups, and touring held during the community assessment:

- Florence locals care a lot about their community and its economic viability.
- There are many groups and individuals actively working to improve their focus areas.
- There is a lack of overarching objectives and priorities for the downtown.
- There are marketing and communications efforts, but they focus on tourists and do not reach all of Florence’s relevant audiences.
- Florence has a strong local population base and is growing; however there are limited amenities and services for local residents and families.
- Community members in Florence have put on a variety of creative community events and gatherings.
- The community is working to improve communications and collaboration through monthly Mayor/Manager coffee chats and civic coalition meetings.
- The city is working on collaborations with the county. The county is very supportive of Florence’s revitalization efforts.
- The community appreciates the value of its heritage and historic buildings.
- The formation of the Urban Renewal Authority is providing a great new tool and asset for the community.
- The team heard that community members are very pleased with the hard work and initiative of town staff.
Assessment Team Recommendations

This assessment focuses on activating stakeholders and resources in a comprehensive approach to capture and direct existing activities into the following topic areas that are vital to revitalizing downtowns:

- **Organization and management:** Primarily focuses on resource management including human resources, partnerships, and finances.

- **Marketing and promotions:** Primarily focuses on branding and messaging, communication, and events.

- **Economic development and restructuring:** Primarily looks at opportunities to collect data, enhance services for business, and identify and catalyze underutilized assets.

- **Physical improvements and design:** Primarily looks at beautification, infrastructure, parking, and connectivity.

The observations gathered from the community have been categorized into these topic areas below. Recommendations specific to the City of Florence follow each observation.

Organization and Management

The first section of this report focuses on organization and management, which includes developing collaborative efforts, recruiting and managing volunteers, fundraising to support projects, and developing operational strategies based on those adapted from the National Main Street Approach. Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a downtown revitalization program. The three principal components of organizing a downtown revitalization program are: public and media relations, volunteer development, and fundraising.

A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of a volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are best organized and developed with a paid, full-time or part-time program director. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders. While a paid downtown coordinator may not currently be feasible, it is something to strive for in the future.

Notwithstanding this fundamental description of a typical downtown organizational structure, numerous variations exist throughout the State of Colorado as well as nationwide, and are driven largely by local circumstances. In some towns, for example, the chamber of commerce is strong enough to add an organizational component designated to focus on the downtown. Other areas develop some form of special district to dedicate resources and focus on downtown. In others, the Town Council may be the governing board to facilitate and organize efforts.
Regardless of the organizational structure chosen, the most successful communities accomplish their desired outcomes by developing a solid organizational component early in the process to oversee and manage their downtown revitalization efforts. If the community does not create this coordinating function early on, the program will have difficulty accomplishing the desired outcomes and will be at risk of fading away before it has a chance to succeed, despite the best intentions of all concerned.

Placing organizational development in the highest priorities of early revitalization activities is not the most exciting part of the process, but it is the most critical. The community must absorb and contemplate what is feasible to accomplish with these efforts based on the capacity and resources of the community and various organizations. When facing many diverse priorities, success will come through a team approach and shared responsibilities.

**Observation:** There are several groups dedicated to a common mission to revitalize downtown Florence, but they are not quite working together.

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<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
<th>Merchants</th>
<th>Town/Partners</th>
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<td>» Business attraction and retention</td>
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<td>» Retail events</td>
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<td>» Standardize operations of downtown (hours)</td>
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<td>» Cooperative advertising</td>
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<td>» Downtown tour: Arts, historic buildings</td>
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<td>» Image building events (4th of July, Christmas, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>» Create community objectives (year round calendar, engage youth, engage civic groups, partnerships)</td>
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**Recommendation:**
- Consider the typical roles for organizations and hold a dialogue to identify the best ways to work together. One of the two DCI technical assistance follow-up visits could be used to facilitate this dialogue.
- Complete a stakeholder analysis and create a matrix outlining each group’s mission, leaders, upcoming projects and needed partnerships to accomplish goals and identify gaps.
- Plan some opportunities for groups to work together. Identify opportunities for partnerships to accomplish common goals and plan some collaborative efforts to develop cohesion between the groups. Allow these partnerships to demonstrate what each group does best. Don’t forget to celebrate each and every victory!
- Consider hosting local agency meetings where all organizations can give updates and network.
- Consider becoming a host site for a VISTA Volunteer to build organizational/community capacity for downtown revitalization.
Observation: There is potential for strong regional collaborations to develop.

Recommendations:
• Plan a strategy for making the most of regional and statewide meetings and trainings.
• Present the work of the community to showcase its accomplishments and receive feedback on ongoing projects.
• Identify ways to collaborate with neighboring communities on projects.

Observation: Organizations working on downtown issues are in transitional stages. Many organizations have new boards and/or members.

Recommendation:
• Hold an organizational/board development training to ensure that all board members are knowledgeable of their roles and responsibilities. This would be a good use of one of the DCI follow-up technical assistance visits.
• Use the stakeholder analysis process to identify skills, resources, etc. that might be useful in building the board capacity over time. Continuously scan and review board make-up to assess the needs for additional board member support where necessary.
• Identify continuing opportunities for board development i.e. attendance at local or regional trainings and conferences.
• Ensure that board members are taking part in the collaborative projects as described in the recommendations above.

Observation: There is a lot of information being communicated among groups and individuals without a central hub.

Recommendation:
• Develop a communication strategy that employs several means of disseminating information to various groups. For example, the City could keep a blog that is then posted to social media and printed and distributed around town. This publication should become a trusted source that anyone can turn to when wanting more details or to clarify on information they have encountered elsewhere.
• Develop an equitable and transparent procedure for posting to the City website and community-wide calendar of events.

Observation: Youth are engaged but should be given more decision-making responsibility and power. Florence has a great youth population that many communities do not have. Engaging them now will create an environment where community service is part of the culture and celebrated. Early exposure will generate additional volunteers as youth grow up.

Recommendation:
• Utilize the student council as an advisory committee for community revitalization.
• Consider a small budget for funding youth-led projects. This budget could be generated from events with youth contributions such as the October Ghost Walk.
• Encourage all community groups to reserve a seat on each of their boards for a youth to participate. This can be a voting or a nonvoting seat.
• For more ideas on engaging youth, please see the “Economic Development” section of this report.
Observation: There is a lack of activities for youth leading to boredom and crime.

Recommendation:

- Look to programming in schools and after school to provide opportunities for youth to express themselves. Arts programming after school has proven to reduce crime, dropout rates and behavioral problems. The goal is to stimulate their imagination and develop their skills. Projects such as outdoor murals are a great way to engage young people. The Arts Council can apply for grants to fund such programs, allowing them to hire artists to lead projects for youth.

- Look for additional opportunities for youth to take ownership in their community. Consistently communicate that the community is theirs.

- Engage the youth in a conversation about their interests and collaborate to develop programming.

Marketing and Promotions

Marketing and promotions assist in building a vital downtown by creating and delivering a positive image of the commercial district. A clearly identified image encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play, and invest in the commercial district. By marketing a district’s unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy creates a positive image. This image can then be reinforced through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

Observation: Windows are the natural billboards in downtown Florence. There are several vacant windows, especially on Front Street, that are not communicating all of the lively activity present in Florence.

Recommendation: Create a window display contest that changes seasonally and involves local participation.

- The Merchant’s Association could partner with the Bell Tower Cultural Center/ Florence Arts Council, local artists and ACE students for a window display contest, particularly around the holidays. This has the potential for great local engagement, as well as regional tourism. Involving students would bring more local families downtown as well.

  o One approach is for the Merchant’s Association and Bell Tower Cultural Center/Florence Arts Council to send out a joint ‘Call for Artists’ for downtown window displays. Together, they would set parameters and criteria, choose a theme and assign a qualified
subcommittee to select finalists. Artists could be allowed to use their own materials, as well as feature items from the antique shops. A “People’s Choice” winner could be chosen by the public.

- Seek the help of ACE students for coordination and social media promotion.

- Leverage the contest as a PR opportunity around the holidays and Colorado seasons.

- Keep in mind the target audience which is local and regional, and those interested in arts and culture, antiques, heritage and unique experiences.

- Include antique shops, restaurants, galleries and specialty shops

- Eventually, the contest could grow to include regional and national artists. Focus on artists who work with “found” objects as a tie-in with a “Find it in Florence” brand.

**Observation:** Florence would benefit from a strong community brand. Florence has a niche market and clear distinction in antiques in Colorado; however, the current brand does not tell the story of antiques nor does it capture the depth of experiences available in Florence.

**Recommendation:**

- Work with all stakeholders to develop an authentic community brand, logo and marketing materials. This effort should be led by an experienced communications and marketing professional who can bring together all of the stakeholders and achieve consensus on the brand and collateral.

  o This strategy would include a logo, tagline/call to action, print campaign, web campaign and brand-related activities and events.

  o See below for branding recommendations. All child brands and messaging should flow from the parent brand.

  o Contract a talented graphic designer with a contemporary aesthetic. Look to what others in the region and state have done. The Royal Gorge campaign is an example of great design.

  o Develop messaging for different target audiences and determine collateral needs—print and digital.

- Brand Florence in a way that clearly references the fact that it is the Antique Capital of Colorado, but remains inclusive.

  o Some branding ideas for building on the strength of the antiques renaissance in Florence:
    » Find it in Florence!
    » Florence... Find it here!
    » Florence Found

  o The “Find it in Florence” branding can be used in different ways to speak to each of Florence’s primary target audiences:
    » **Tourism:** Find it in Florence... Antique Capital of Colorado! or Find it in Florence... Take home a piece of history!
    » **Businesses/entrepreneurs:** Find it in Florence... your opportunity awaits!
    » **New residents:** Find it in Florence... your great little town!
    » **Locals:** Find your community in Florence!

  o Engage local up-and-comers for broader reach.
Observation: Florence highly values its heritage and has great stories to tell.

Recommendation: Market to heritage tourists. In addition to Florence being the Antique Capital of Colorado, it has a great deal to offer in the way of heritage tourism.

Some facts about heritage tourism:

- According to the Colorado Historical Foundation's publication, “The Economic Power of Heritage and Place” 2011, heritage tourists stay longer and spend more per person per trip.

- The 2013 Cultural and Heritage Traveler Study reports that the cultural and heritage traveler is the most productive travel segment of the travel industry, generating over 90% of the economic benefit of all U.S. leisure travelers.

- According to the Colorado Longwoods Travel Year 2014 Report, for overnight leisure travelers, “interest in historic places was at the top of the list of specific draws for Colorado vacationers in 2014, followed by an interest in cultural activities and attractions.”

- Take inventory of events and attractions and identify which can be marketed under heritage tourism.

- Include heritage tourism messaging in with the rebranding effort.

- Seek guidance from the Colorado Tourism Office (State Heritage Tourism specialist) and collaborate with the Fremont Tourism Council, Fremont Heritage Commission, and other groups to build on sites and activities for heritage tourists.
- Designate downtown as National Register Historic District and advertise online and on Highway 50.

- Utilize Colorado’s Certified Local Government program to tell Florence’s stories through innovative survey, outreach or education projects.

- Utilize interesting architecture to engage visitors, kids, and residents in a contest, scavenger hunt, etc.

Observation: Groups and individuals in Florence are holding creative community events and the city has many unique destinations. A strong line-up of arts and culture events can engage both locals and tourists.

Recommendation:

- Make sure you are marketing all of your events and attractions—the wonders of Florence! Work with individuals and organizations leading events and attractions such as the ones below. Determine target audiences for each and employ strategies and tactics appropriate to each target audience.

- Complete a strategic event calendar to consider where there may be gaps in the year, what audiences are being targeted, and what community objectives are being met. Add, remove, or restructure events as needed to create a balanced distribution and ensure that all groups and objectives are being served.

- Consider developing more family-friendly activities and teen attractions.

- Continue holding weekly structured arts and culture events, such as the Chamber’s outdoor music series, Bell Tower music events, Paint the Town and Second Saturdays. When events are held regularly, they become part of the town’s identity, serving both locals and tourists. While long-standing events become something people look forward to, new experimental events keep things fresh and exciting.

- For music events, consider coordinating with the statewide musician-touring network to try out new acts that will be more popular for youth. Contact Ben Desoto at ben@hi-dive.com for more information on musicians touring Colorado.

Observation: Florence would greatly benefit from improved communications, including strategies for local, regional and national promotion.

Recommendation:

- Develop an online marketing strategy. A robust online marketing strategy for Florence will involve using several popular social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), including advertising on those platforms, a dynamic website, regular e-communications, and quality, engaging and inclusive messaging.

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<th>Events:</th>
<th>Attractions:</th>
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<td>» Tour de Coal Camps</td>
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<td>» Tweed Ride</td>
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<td>» Steampunk Festival/Pioneer Days</td>
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<td>» Car Show</td>
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<td>» Community Bike Ride</td>
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<td>» Rialto Theater</td>
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<td>» Pioneer Museum</td>
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<td>» Scenic Byway</td>
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<td>» History of Water</td>
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- Make sure you are reaching your locals. Regain confidence of locals first, and then look regionally and nationally. Grassroots strategies for reaching locals include promotion through: sports events; schools; churches; grocery stores; Rotary; Senior Community Center; police department; pool; library; park; events; City Council meetings; Mayor/Manager chats; merchant meetings; Daily Record; ward meetings; businesses; farmer’s markets; local colleges (e.g., Pueblo Community College); and bowling alley.

- Update Florence’s map and guide. Work with a storyteller and local historian to weave in Florence’s heritage.

- Pool business marketing dollars for more collective efforts, and standardize business hours, particularly for the antique shops.

- Reach out to invite travel writers to feature Florence.

**Economic Development and Restructuring**

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

**Observation:** Local spending is the largest sales tax contributor. While the antique stores have fostered a renaissance, the largest contributors to Florence’s sales tax are coming from the grocery, hardware, and other locally focused stores. This is good news because tourism and antique shopping will wax and wane with the economy or customer preferences, but the local shopping base can help foster a stable foundation.

**Recommendation:** Build your capacity through long term planning. Consider how to broaden the base of residential or office space in downtown to nurture local engagement and to capture more of the local’s time and spending.

- Strategize to redevelop existing property to increase the capacity for office and residential. The newly formed urban renewal authority should look for projects that will enhance retail and sales opportunities, add housing and office, and rehabilitate historic buildings to use retail and second floors. Projects should seek to improve infrastructure and appearance as well as expand the revenue generating properties without building out.

![The Rialto Theater, a unique redevelopment opportunity](image)
• Develop a business attraction process to look at complementary uses and local needs. Review the list of current businesses against the objectives of the community, some outlined in this report. Consider the types of businesses that might thrive and that might speak to locals and visitors alike. For example, we heard a potential for crafts (knitting, brewery, distillery), specialty goods stores (e.g. spices, olive oil), and sports equipment.

Observation: People are your primary asset. Youth and young families are the key opportunity. Because locals are the foundation of Florence, considering how to engage them in downtown is a key component for a healthy and sustainable downtown.

Recommendation: Focus business and training opportunities that invest in local interests.

• Create leadership and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth as mentioned in the “Organization and Management” section of this report. Ask the student council to develop a strategy for youth decision-making and entrepreneurship. They might add a youth-planned component onto existing events or develop a youth-run vendor business to raise money for youth amenities.

• Build on the high school’s ACE program to strengthen awareness of local internship and job opportunities. The ACE program is doing a lot to engage youth and expand their awareness and training. Work with this program to hold focused trainings that could lead to local jobs and decision-making power in the community.

• Consider how to restart the Florence recreation opportunities in town. Currently families are paying and playing in Canon City even though youth sports is a huge piece of life in Florence. Find a way to bring in some Florence recreation so that the town can connect with citizens and families who can celebrate together through sports locally.

• Pursue recreational retail options and youth gathering places like arcades or indoor activity space. Support efforts to find a new owner for the bowling alley to maintain this youth and family attraction in the downtown. Identify opportunities to bring additional family activities into the downtown.

• The Coop connected to the City Hall is a liability that can be an asset. The city is currently paying utilities to maintain the Coop. This building could be generating income or a return on investment which would free up funds for other projects. Consider a use that would keep your youth and families in Florence as well as serve as an economic driver or provide a service to the community at large. One example would be a training center for artists, builders, or health care professionals.

Observation: There are people wanting to move to Florence. Florence’s growth is a great foundation to create a more diverse downtown economy and presents opportunities to enhance the quality of life for locals.

Recommendation: Grow existing assets into business opportunities. There are strong businesses and community groups appreciated by the community, but more of the local and visitor spending can be captured with some minor enhancements. Locals may engage more with businesses who are catering to their needs.
• Connect the existing grocery store to the Fresh Food Fund. There are funds available at the state level to improve access to locally grown, fresh foods. The grocery store can benefit from these programs and expand offerings.

• Encourage upgrades to the bowling alley grounds for expanded use. Maintaining the downtown bowling alley is a huge part of diversifying the economy and engaging locals. There are numerous reasons to view this business as providing a community service. The current owner even invites the school for bowling class! Consider how to nurture this business and perhaps partner with a restaurant to expand the cuisine offered as an added attraction.

Observation: The Bell Tower Cultural Center and Senior Community Center are gems serving as community centers in downtown.

Recommendation: Increase support for the Bell Tower Cultural Center and the Senior Community Center. These community groups have stepped up to provide services to the community.

• Consider a “Friends of the Bell Tower” and “Friends of the Depot” sub-membership group to fund maintenance of the buildings. Create a community-wide annual fundraising event for restoring and maintaining the buildings that serve as your gathering spaces. It may be beneficial to join forces for this type of fundraising; however, the two Councils might at least coordinate timing for such an event so as not to overlap each other.

• The City should look for opportunities to co-apply for grants with the Arts Council and Council on Aging, separately. Grant applications are stronger when applicants show strong partnerships in the community. Potential funders in Colorado include Bonfils Stanton Foundation, Boettcher Foundation and the Gates Family Foundation to fund capital improvements and community programming. Another resource is the Colorado Association of Funders. Visit the Foundation Center website for a guide to funding research, http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/gfr/. For additional funding suggestions, please see the “Funding Recommendations” section of this report.

• It is important for organizations to have community-driven master plans in place to identify a shared vision and strategies to serve the community in the long-term. Each Council should embark on a community master planning process and update the plans on a regular basis.

Observation: The creation of an urban renewal authority is a great success.

Recommendation: Identify key projects in the downtown for urban renewal and create a vacant building strategy. Most of the vacant buildings are privately owned, but they are still assets for Florence. Consider an approach that looks at all of the buildings as a valuable part of the
community and that can support private owners as they seek to invest, sell, or enhance their properties.

- Creation of one or more urban renewal authority (URA) project areas should be the next step.
  - Because of the relatively small size of the downtown area, and the general proximity of the distressed properties listed above, a single URA project area is recommended.
  - The details of how to create a project area are laid out in the Colorado Urban Renewal Law, specifically CRS 31-25-107. This statute is subject to amendment due to recently passed legislation (HB15-1348), so please consult with town counsel prior to proceeding.

- If the URA board is willing to revisit plans on a regular basis, the town may consider individual “TIF clocks” set for each parcel within the URA project area. However, in light of recent legislation (HB15-1348) it is possible that this approach may prove to be cumbersome and overly burdensome for the town to administer. Therefore, a single TIF clock initiated at the time of project area creation is recommended. Bear in mind that the decision to start the TIF clock area-wide will create pressure to move quickly to attract development, since TIF revenue can only be collected for a maximum of 25 years.

- The boundaries of the URA project area should be carefully drawn to include all the above-referenced downtown and distressed property, as well as ‘developable’ parcels located

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Project</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Potential Use</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Financing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McCandless Building</td>
<td>Springs owner with local representative</td>
<td>Street level restaurant, second floor office space</td>
<td>Lack of parking and mild disrepair</td>
<td>History Colorado, URA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Citizens Building</td>
<td>Locally owned</td>
<td>Brew Pub</td>
<td>Deferred maintenance and water underground</td>
<td>URA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Hotel</td>
<td>Local Owners – Levi Martinez – Speculating on price</td>
<td>Housing, single-room occupancy, boutique hotel</td>
<td>Code issues</td>
<td>URA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rialto Theater</td>
<td>FACT dba Rialto Theatre</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Needs seats, projector, sound, stage, building improvements, etc.</td>
<td>URA, History Colorado, Historic Tax Credit, DCI Save Our Screens program, Anonymous Donor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Railroad Building</td>
<td>Florence Council on Aging – Senior Community Center</td>
<td>Roof repairs needed</td>
<td>“Friends of the Depot” group and annual fundraising event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Library Building</td>
<td>Brandon Angel</td>
<td>Open to ideas</td>
<td>ADA Access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in infill locations adjacent to or nearby these structures. The development of these infill parcels will ‘kickstart’ TIF collections in the project area. Such developments can result in modest increment incomes that can be used to ‘cash-fund’ infrastructure improvements (roads, sidewalks, curb/gutter, streetscape elements) that will have an area-wide benefit and attract more private sector investment.

- For both these initial infill sites and the existing potential project sites listed above, reimbursement agreements with potential developers can be offered to incentivize development.
  
  - TIF reimbursement agreements are based upon the URA’s estimate of TIF revenue to be generated as a result of the development. The URA can then extrapolate an estimated total TIF contribution from the project for the remaining years of the URA project area; a small percentage (e.g. 5-10%) should be retained for administration and overhead of the URA. Some URAs have decided to commit only a percentage (e.g. 50%) of the TIF that an individual project generates towards a reimbursement agreement.

  - Note that it is difficult to accumulate enough TIF revenue to cash-fund infrastructure improvements if the URA only uses reimbursement agreements (unless the URA decides to commit only a percentage of TIF towards the reimbursement agreement).

- Properties assisted by the URA should be held by private, for-profit interests, and not tax-exempt or governmental organizations. The latter do not pay property taxes, and therefore do not contribute towards the growth of any TIF increment.

- Improvements made by URAs generally must provide a ‘public benefit.’ This is interpreted to mean that improvements made to the public right-of-way are nearly always eligible improvements.
  
  - Improvements made to private property should focus upon the ‘public benefit’ aspect of the property, which could include (but is not limited to): exterior façade and window treatments, roofs, ADA/accessibility improvements, life/safety improvements such as fire suppression systems, sidewalks and circulation paths, etc.

  - URAs should not make improvements to properties that will serve a specific business use, such as a kitchen hood, sound systems, or similar industry-specific improvements.
Physical Improvements & Design

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in downtown by directing attention to all of its physical elements, including: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, and to expedite improvements in the downtown in order to improve the experience of visiting downtown for residents and visitors.

Observation: While it is recommended that municipalities update master plans every 3-5 years, the City of Florence has not updated this essential guiding document since 2006. As environmental, economic, and social conditions change both locally and regionally and the community’s vision for the future develops, updating the Master Plan will ensure that the City is able to create goals, policies, and strategies for integral facets of municipal function, such as infrastructure, economic development, housing and neighborhoods, urban design, public facilities, park and open space, and the like.

Recommendation:
• Prioritize updating the City of Florence Master Plan in the next year in order to articulate a revised, community-supported vision for the City’s future.
• Following the completed update, ensure that the Master Plan is implemented through an amended Land Use Code and Subdivision Regulations; this step will enable the Plan to have a real impact on physical development in the City.

Observation: Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are missing on some blocks and/or are in need of repair to address safe circulation throughout the community. Many areas of the City do not offer pedestrian-friendly or cyclist-friendly spaces and amenities, making it difficult to easily navigate the City using alternative transportation methods.

Recommendation:
• Provide improvements to pedestrian amenities and encourage walkability by creating consistent, accessible sidewalks throughout the City.
• Add pedestrian-scale lighting to ensure accessibility, safety, and visibility throughout the day and evening.
• Identify key pedestrian and cyclist traffic areas, such as along routes between schools and residential neighborhoods and to the downtown core, and focus improvements along those routes. Encourage “complete” streets with multi-modal transportation amenities (foot, bicycle, and vehicle). Ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist passage along main roads in the downtown core, such as Main Street.
• Begin discussions early and work closely with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on any improvements within or directly adjacent to a state highway right-of-way. Experiment with low cost and temporary pedestrian design solutions before investing in permanent design solutions.

Observation: There is a perceived lack of parking in the downtown.

Recommendation:
• Develop a parking concept plan and present it to CDOT for review and comment. Review Appendix 2 of this report to consider the value of parking spaces and safety concerns related to angled and parallel parking when developing the parking concept plan.
• If acceptable, the concept plan should be included in CDOT’s roadway improvement plans for Highways 67 and 115.

• Review the signage recommendation below and consider how additional parking off of Main Street could be made more accessible.

**Observation:** There is a need to orient visitors to other community amenities and parking that is not visible from Main Street. While the City has many excellent amenities for residents and visitors alike, it is difficult to find these amenities using the current signage.

**Recommendation:**

• Identify key amenities, public facilities, and attractions in the City’s downtown core, such as the river, parks, schools, restaurants and shopping, etc. Develop a signage hierarchy and sign location plan to address the wayfinding needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to reach these destinations.

• Place information kiosks in highly visible locations to draw in highway traffic. Install gateway signage at key entrance points throughout the City. Wayfinding is also a great opportunity to help tell a story and display or emphasize the community brand.

**Observation:** Public facilities that are frequented by younger residents and in locations that are not extremely visible from primary circulation corridors tend to be hotspots for illegal activities.

**Recommendation:**

• Locate public amenities such as skate parks and playgrounds in areas that will enable increased “eyes on the street”, and provide a safer environment for the use of these public facilities. These amenities should be attractions that engage local youth, draw families from their cars, and serve as a central activity piece in the community. Moving the skate park to a highly visible location will allow it to attract positive activity and market the community, and also deter negative activity by putting it in the public view.

• Create and advertise regular youth-centric activities in strategic areas throughout the downtown core, as well as City schools. Ask the student council and arts community to consider creative ways to add other uses around the park such as corn hole, outdoor ping-pong, a graffiti wall, or other things to encourage positive play.

**Observation:** Pedestrian facilities/amenities and landscaping are not cohesive throughout downtown and could use a fresh look.

**Recommendation:**

• Tap into the local artist community and youth population to spruce up the existing planters, trash receptacles, and landscaping for short term beautification projects. Installing xeric landscaping with deciduous street trees within the landscape strip between the curb and detached sidewalk will provide a more interesting, inviting and comfortable pedestrian experience while helping to break up the large amounts of continuous paving (i.e. streets, sidewalks, off-street parking, etc.). Prioritize landscape improvements within the right-of-way along the stretch of E. Main Street between Big D Superfoods and Petroleum Ave as there are entire blocks along this corridor that have few if any street trees.

• Work to adopt minimum tree, shrub and groundcover regulations within public right-of-ways and off-street parking lots. Utilize the next Comprehensive Plan Update to identify community’s support for such improvements.
Example Streetscape Improvements

Example Landscape Improvements
for adopting minimum streetscape design standards that address accessibility, pedestrian amenities, wayfinding signage and landscaping.

**Observation:** Many of the neighborhoods throughout the City could benefit from “quick win” urban design projects that will beautify the community while staying mindful of financial limitations.

**Recommendation:**
- Capitalize on Florence’s nationwide recognition in the Tree City USA program by creating a tree maintenance program, including regular pruning, new tree planting, and dead tree removal.
- Consider maximizing existing arboreal resources by finding alternative uses for dead trees, such as tree carving installations.
- Create neighborhood-specific urban design programs that will demonstrate the unique “feel” of each neighborhood, such as decorated trash receptacles or utility boxes, mass seasonal flower displays or planting specific plants/herbs that attract butterflies and/or hummingbirds, historic neighborhood street signs/monuments, streetscape planning, and the like.

**Observation:** There is a shortage of housing and office space in the City’s downtown core.

**Recommendation:** Activate underutilized second floors of buildings within the downtown core for both dwelling units and commercial office space. Communicate this effort to both the community and local businesses to ensure an easy transition process into this newly available space.

**Observation:** The public art projects installed downtown improve the look and feel of Florence and bring people together.

**Recommendation:** Develop a stronger partnership between the Arts Council and the City to build the public art program. The most successful public art endeavors are built through partnerships among municipalities, community groups and the public. Without close collaboration, potential projects can stall out before they even get started. Municipalities need the enthusiasm brought by community groups and buy-in from the public, and community groups propelling projects need the expertise and implementation assistance from municipalities.
Funding Mechanisms

As the community begins to implement projects, it will become important to develop appropriate and sustained funding sources and leverage local funding with external resources in ways that maximize the impact of local resources. This section recommends specific resources that the community should investigate when considering how to support project implementation.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO): Uses a portion of lottery proceeds to help preserve, protect, enhance and manage Colorado’s wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage. Consider applying for these funds to enhance access to Florence’s recreational opportunities.

Safe Routes to School: Investigate use of these funds to fill in the gaps and improve walkability and connectivity between the schools and community amenities. Infrastructure and non-infrastructure grants are available, administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation. See https://www.codot.gov/programs/bikeped/safe-routes

State Historical Fund Grants: History Colorado offers competitive grants for Acquisition and Development, Survey and Planning, and Education, as well as non-competitive grants for Historic Structure Assessments, Archaeological Assessments, and emergency stabilization of severely endangered buildings. Depending on the type of grant, 0%, 25%, or 50% cash match is required. You may request up to $200,000 for competitive grants. For detailed information, see the State Historical Fund Grant Application Handbook available for download on DCI’s resource library.

Upper Arkansas Area Development Corporation: The UAADC is a local non-profit organization created by the Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments to provide financing assistance to new and expanding for-profit businesses. The UAADC offers gap loans and direct loans as well as, through the Upper Arkansas Enterprise Zone, administers State Tax Credits that may apply to businesses.

Urban renewal: Florence’s recently formed urban renewal authority is a great resource to the community to help spur development. Please see the “Economic Development” section of this report for extensive details on recommended uses for this tool.

USDA-Rural Development: USDA can provide funding for community facilities and improvements. Prioritizing needs and engaging the community are key steps in accessing these funds.

Other Funding Elements

Other potential sources of funds that community should investigate and discuss include the following recommendations:

Historic Preservation Tax Credits: A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of tax owed to the government. Tax credit projects create jobs and provide financial incentives to revitalize buildings with federal historic designation. Federal and state tax laws offer tax credits for historic preservation projects that follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. The federal government offers a tax credit between 10 and 20 percent, which can be paired with the state tax credit.

• Colorado’s state historic preservation tax credits are transferable: you can sell them upon completion of your project.
Selling credits can bring in additional funds for your project, for a cash match for a grant, or for a loan.

- Using preservation tax credits gives you access to additional federal and state funding pools, grant programs, and further tax credits.

For more details, see the tax credit guides available on DCI’s Online Resource Library.

DOLA Energy Impact Fund Grants (EIaF): These funds may be used for streetscape improvements which are owned by a local government. This is an excellent way to obtain funding for historic buildings which are owned by a local government as a match with State Historical Fund Grants.

- Local Governments are the only eligible applicants
- May be used for studies, planning, design and capital improvements
- Generally require matching funds on a 50/50 basis

Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Rural Economic Development Initiative Program (REDI): Funds community asset analysis to determine potential economic development opportunities; stakeholder convening for solution development resulting in new or updated local plans; competitive grant funding for community infrastructure, business facilities and job training.

Community Development Block Grant: These are federal funds that are distributed by DOLA. The Division of Housing (DOH) and Division of Local Government (DLG) have funds available, as does the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). DLG money is used for public facilities, DOH money is used to provide gap financing for affordable housing projects, and OEDIT money is used for Economic Development. Visit each agency’s website to learn details.

The following resources can assist with business development:

- **Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT):** This agency has several programs from economic development assessments to small business development centers.

- **CDPHE Brownfields Program:** This program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment and cleanup.

- **Colorado Energy Office (CEO) and USDA Rural Development (RD) Energy Programs:** Both agencies have new funding programs to retro-fit both public and business HVAC and lighting systems. Local businesses could utilize new technology and renewable energy sources to reduce costs.

- **Rural Business Opportunity Grants:** The USDA provides funds to public entities, authorities, and non-profits to support small and emerging enterprises. Funds can be applied towards a plethora of business development activities including trainings, strategic planning, incubation, acquisition of land, and building renovations.

- **Small Business Administration and Economic Development Administration:** These are two federal programs that can assist local businesses in business startup, expansion and relocation.

Other Resources – As a member of Downtown Colorado, Inc., Florence will continue to be eligible for DCI services, training, and educational programs in addition to two follow-up technical assistance visits agreed upon by the city. It would be beneficial to review programs such as the Main Street program through DOLA that might offer additional ongoing training and support to Florence’s downtown efforts.
Participating Stakeholders

Please see Appendix 4 for the full attendance lists.
- Business Owners
- Chamber of Commerce
- City Staff
- City Council
- Colorado Dept of Transportation
- Colorado State Patrol
- Community Members
- John C. Fremont Library
- Florence Arts Council
- Florence Police Department
- Fremont County Commissioners
- Fremont Elementary School
- Fremont Re-2
- Merchants Association
- Non-Profits & Service Providers
- Residents
- Rialto Theater
- Senior Community Center
- Students

Team Member Bios

John Batey, Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority
Dr. John R. Batey, AICP has served as Executive Director of the Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority since September 7, 2010. Dr. Batey has over 17 years of experience in the areas of community development, affordable housing, urban planning, state and local government administration and high-level policy analysis, including positions with the State of Colorado Governor’s Office, the Palm Beach County Department of Housing and Community Development, West Palm Beach, Florida, and the Broward County Housing Finance and Community Development Division, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Dr. Batey holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder, a Master of Arts degree in Political Science (with a minor in Public Administration) and a Ph.D. in Comparative Studies, both from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Dr. Batey is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

Katherine Correll, Downtown Colorado, Inc.
Katherine Correll has experience spanning the fields of community outreach to advance downtown and community development, not-for-profit administration, project development and management, local government planning, marketing, financial and economic development services, and education. Katherine joined Downtown Colorado, Inc. as the Director of Communications and Operations in 2006; in 2007 she became the Executive Director. Katherine received her Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Rutgers University and her Bachelor’s Degree in Politics with a Minor in Urban Studies from New York University.
Pauline Herrera Serianni, PaulineMarie Consulting
Pauline Herrera Serianni brings more than a dozen years of experience in cultural administration. From 2003 to 2011, as the Director of Communications and Marketing for the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs, Pauline was integral to the success of such initiatives as Doors Open Denver, Create Denver and One Book, One Denver. In 2011, she launched PaulineMarie Consulting specializing in nonprofit arts and culture organizations with an eye toward capacity building. Pauline’s civic endeavors include serving on the board of the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts. She is a graduate of Leadership Denver and the Downtown Denver Leadership Program with a master’s from Regis University in nonprofit management.

Michael Hussey, Nolte Vertical 5
Michael Hussey is the manager of planning and landscape architecture for the Colorado Springs office of Nolte Associates, Inc. Michael has over 30 years of experience in a wide variety of urban design, landscape, planning, environmental engineering, and architectural projects. He has worked on urban development and renewal, and downtown streetscape improvement projects including Billings, Montana (downtown), Colorado Springs (Downtown BID), Avon (Town Center), Manitou Avenue (Manitou Springs downtown), Monte Vista (downtown), Broomfield (US 287), and Fountain (US 85). Project responsibilities have included grant opportunity identification and application, master planning, urban and site design, and construction observation and management. Michael has participated in numerous DCI workshops and conference programs, and has served as a DCI/DOLA team member on several Community Revitalization Program (CRP) visits. Michael is also the co-author of “Grow Native,” one of the earliest Colorado xeriscape landscape guides, and has worked on a number of award winning projects—including the Colorado Springs Downtown Business Improvement District and Manitou Avenue.

Deana Miller, Art Management & Planning Associates
Deana Miller is a dedicated and accomplished community builder, planner, and project manager with 20 years of experience working with communities to harness the power of the creative economy for economic and community development. She possesses an in-depth understanding of the positive impact that arts and culture can have on communities—and the know-how to implement programs that achieve this goal.

As a Senior Associate at Art Management & Planning Associates, Inc., Deana manages projects for clients that center on creative approaches that vitalize the places where people live, work, and play. She has experience in creative placemaking, strategic planning for public art, arts districts, Transit Oriented Developments, transit hubs, Business Improvement Districts, and Metropolitan Districts, implementing community engagement and input activities, creating and evaluating arts and culture programs, developing policies and procedures, and managing art assets.

Previously, Deana was the Creative District Program Manager for the State of Colorado, the Public Art Program Manager for the City of Aurora, and the Business and Membership Manager for the Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver. Deana received a master’s degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado Denver in 2009 and a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts from the University of Colorado at Denver in 1996.
Brea Pafford, McCool Development Solutions

Brea Pafford is a Licensed Landscape Architect with over twelve years of experience in urban design, community development and parks/open space planning. She has worked with public agencies and land developers on projects in the United States and New Zealand. Her responsibilities have included project management, design and plan preparation of commercial developments, retirement villages, parks/open space, parkways, public schools, riparian landscapes, streetscapes and private residences. Brea received a BLA from Texas Tech University in 2000 and has worked in the Planning & Landscape Architecture field in Colorado since 2001.

Brea began working for McCool Development Solutions (MDS) in 2011, providing development review, design recommendations, code enforcement, comprehensive planning, graphic design and landscape architecture services for our municipal and private sector clients. Mrs. Pafford plays a key role in managing projects, leading community engagement discussions, and assisting MDS’s clients with other design related topics.

Becky Parham, City of Victor

Becky Parham is a Victor native who has an intimate understanding of the community’s unique identity. She previously served as an Americorps Promise Fellow in 2003 in the Cripple Creek-Victor area for the Community of Caring Foundation where she assisted Spanish Speaking Families access community resources. Becky has continued to pursue opportunities that increase the quality of life in her community as well as her knowledge of the community. She has worked for the Cripple Creek-Victor School District, Community Partnerships Family Resource Center, Teller/Park Early Childhood Council, and AngloGold Ashanti Corporation.

She served as an OSM/VISTA with city of Victor DREAM (Downtown Revitalization and Economic Acceleration Movement) team in 2012-2013, and is now Victor’s Main Street Manager.

Emerging Leader Team Support

Nancy Sprehn, Downtown Colorado, Inc.

Nancy graduated with a BS in Urban and Regional Studies in December, 2013 from Cornell University where her studies focused on community engagement and placemaking. She brings experience in design, communications, and organizational development from Engaged Learning + Research, in Ithaca, NY, in social services and customer service from NYC Public Service Corps, and in events coordination and operations from the City Parks Foundation, in New York City. She is currently serving as the AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA and Community Assessment Coordinator at DCI.
Appendices

1. Action Plan Matrix
2. Parking Value and Safety
3. Assessment Agenda
4. Assessment Sign-in sheets
5. Assessment Presentation, June 2

The community should also consult DCI’s Implementation Toolkit for an assortment of planning documents and guidance to assist with implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.
Appendix II: Parking Value and Safety

Value of Downtown Parking Spaces
Numerous studies have been completed to determine the retail sales value of downtown (commercial area) parking spaces. The retail sale values for a parking space range anywhere from $5,000.00 to $300,000.00 per year, depending on the size of the community and the viability of the retail area. Most of the studies put the value between $50,000 to $200,000.

Below is a form used by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to calculate the value of a parking space in a downtown commercial area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total annual sales generated by Main Street businesses:</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If you don’t have a more accurate estimate, estimate $200,000 per retail store, service business, and professional office – slightly more for economically thriving districts, slightly less for economically struggling districts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUS Sales made to those who live or work in the district:</td>
<td>- $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUS Sales made to those who get to the district by public transit, walking or biking:</td>
<td>- $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUS Sales made to any others shopping in the district who don’t drive there:</td>
<td>- $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALS Total sales made to those who drive to the district to shop:</td>
<td>= $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVIDED BY Number of parking spaces available in the given area:</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALS Sales made per parking space per year:</td>
<td>= $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVIDED BY 52 weeks in the year:</td>
<td>/ 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALS Sales made per parking space per week:</td>
<td>= $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVIDED BY Average days per week the district’s businesses are open:</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALS Average sales made per space per day of business:</td>
<td>= $</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(© 1998 National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation)
Appendix II: Parking Value and Safety, Continued

Safety of Angled Parking Versus Parallel Parking

Numerous studies have been completed comparing vehicle crash rates of angled parking versus parallel parking. However, most of these studies were completed in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Those studies indicated that there were fewer accidents (50% to 70% lower for parallel parking) where parallel parking was used versus angled parking. However, most of those studies did not take into consideration the increased number of parking spaces for angled parking (higher parking activity), street categories (crash rates increase with use until 1.5 million space hours per mile per year where the rate is consistent), or land use type (commercial/industrial/residential/etc.). In recent research that did consider these factors researchers found that parking configurations were not found to have any statistical effect on crash rates when land use and type of street were included in the analysis. The researchers concluded that while angle parking clearly has a higher crash rate and frequency it is more likely due to the increased activity of parking rather than the characteristics of either type of parking and that if ample parking supply exists, parallel parking should be used.

One area of concern not addressed by these studies is bicycle safety. With angled parking the driver cannot see the cyclist when backing out. With parallel parking the danger lies with the driver (or left rear passenger) opening a door into the path of an on-coming cyclist. One solution to this problem that has been gaining some favor is back-in angled parking. This provides the driver a more clear view of on-coming vehicular and cycling traffic. It also has the advantage of allowing safe loading into the rear of the vehicle. The drawbacks include the more difficult maneuver of backing into a parking space compared to head-in parking, and the potential damage to street trees and light poles – depending on their location. Back-in angled parking may be more acceptable to CDOT then head-in angled parking because it requires a similar parking maneuver to parallel parking and the increased visibility/safety.
## Community Assessment Agenda
### City of Florence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Attending</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 11</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
<td>Community Orientation and Tour <strong>Breakfast at lodging</strong></td>
<td>Community Liaison and City Manager</td>
<td>The Pour House, 202 W. Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting: City Staff, Elected Officials and Commissioners</td>
<td>City Council and County Commissioners, Community Development/Planning Director, Public Works Director (Sam and Martin), City Manager (and others as determined by liaison)</td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting (75 min)</td>
<td>Community Development Department, School District (if not available for later meeting), CDOT (maybe we will try), library, chamber, museums/historic groups, local non-profits/ ‘civic coalition’ groups</td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 PM</td>
<td>Team lunch &amp; debrief <strong>Lunch delivered</strong></td>
<td>Team Members – Private meeting</td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Walk around downtown to visit shops, talk to people on the street, feel the community.</td>
<td>Team Members</td>
<td>Downtown Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15 PM</td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting; Youth (60 min) <strong>Snacks available throughout evening meetings</strong></td>
<td>Youth Leadership group: ACE High School Kids (Adopting Communities for Excellence), Middle and Elementary School students, teachers, Superintendent</td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 PM</td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting (75 Min) – Property and Business Owners</td>
<td>Downtown Merchants Association and Downtown Chamber Members</td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting (45 Min) – Residents</td>
<td>Residents, community members at large, even those who live outside of town.</td>
<td>Include name &amp; address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 PM</td>
<td>Team de-brief <strong>Dinner delivered</strong></td>
<td>Team Members – Private Meeting</td>
<td>Lodging location if internet and work space are available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 PM</td>
<td>Draft Recommendations</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 12</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Working Breakfast—Team members prepare presentation and report sections.</td>
<td>Team (Provide print outs of the previous night’s work for this breakfast.)</td>
<td>Florence Rose, breakfast and WiFi available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Team submits presentation slides to assessment coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Team reviews presentation. Continues work on report sections and action matrix.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Florence Municipal Center 600 W. 3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Noon</td>
<td>Team relocates to work room location. <strong>Lunch provided.</strong></td>
<td>City Manager or Community Liaison available for questions or clarification</td>
<td>Include name &amp; address. <strong>Printers available.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 PM</td>
<td>Meet with client to review draft presentation</td>
<td>City Manager and others (as determined by liaison)</td>
<td>Include name &amp; address (preferably in same location as public presentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 PM</td>
<td>Reception/Presentation <strong>Snacks available</strong></td>
<td>Invite all participants and the public. Strongly encourage City Council.</td>
<td>Include name &amp; address</td>
</tr>
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<td>City of Florence</td>
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<td>Fremont County</td>
<td><a href="mailto:delbore.bell@fremontco.com">delbore.bell@fremontco.com</a> 719-376-7300</td>
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<td>719-484-5800 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn Hemmon - Oliver</td>
<td>FL Arts Council</td>
<td>florence arts council</td>
<td>719-784-2038</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tabby Selakovich</td>
<td>John C Fremont Library</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tabby.selakovich@jcfld.org">tabby.selakovich@jcfld.org</a></td>
<td>719-784-4649</td>
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<td>John C. Fremont Library</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cidlarson@gmail.com">cidlarson@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:heather.cobler@state.co.us">heather.cobler@state.co.us</a></td>
<td>719-784-3275</td>
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<td>Jan Draper</td>
<td>Fremont Re-2/Fremont</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jdraper@re-2.org">jdraper@re-2.org</a></td>
<td>719-784-6303</td>
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<td>303-888-8919</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fran Black</td>
<td>Senior Center</td>
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<td>719-688-1879</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Hennessy</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Dena Lamond</td>
<td>Pres President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Derin Avina</td>
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<td>Beth Ballard</td>
<td>9th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samantha Savoy</td>
<td>ACT, intern, ath</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:antiquesilver@aol.com">antiquesilver@aol.com</a></td>
<td>784-3797</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katie McGinnis</td>
<td>Touch of Grace Antiques</td>
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<td>Jim JaVernor</td>
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<td>Tim Careci</td>
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<td>Beryl Baker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Aves</td>
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<td>John Miller</td>
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<td>Willie Miller</td>
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<td>Fran Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn Lemmon-Oliver</td>
<td>Blue Spruce Gallery</td>
<td>lo <a href="mailto:Oliver@bresnan.net">Oliver@bresnan.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>M.C. Phillips</td>
<td>Fox Den</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Luskas</td>
<td>Montage Salon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laurie Wins</td>
<td>Royal Candles Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barb Bledsoe</td>
<td>Spirit Riders</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bledsoe@banyan.com">bledsoe@banyan.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barry Bledsoe</td>
<td>Spirit Riders</td>
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Please sign in...

Event: Florence Community Assessment  
Focus Group 5

Date: 5/11/15

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tr>
<td>Julie M. Quinn</td>
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<td>Katie McGinnis</td>
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<td>Neita Medini</td>
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<td>Valerie Cott</td>
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<td>Katie McInnis</td>
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<td>Febrina McInnis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rod DeGraffen</td>
<td>E. C. 666</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>Earth Art + Lapidary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Pauline Herrera Serianni, PaulineMarie Consulting
Michael Hussey, Nolte Vertical 5
Deana Miller, Art Management & Planning Associates
Brea Pafford, McCool Development Solutions
Becky Parham, City of Victor
Nancy Sprehn, Downtown Colorado, Inc.

Thank you participants!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Owners</th>
<th>Fremont County Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Fremont Elementary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Staff</td>
<td>Fremont Re-2 Merchants Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>Non-Profits &amp; Service Providers</td>
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<td>Community Members</td>
<td>Residents</td>
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<td>John C. Fremont Library</td>
<td>Rialto Theater</td>
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<td>Florence Arts Council</td>
<td>Senior Community Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florence Police Department</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
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..and thank you to our hosts and sponsors!

Observations

- Florence locals care a lot about their community and its economic viability.
- There are many groups and individuals actively working to improve their focus areas.
- There is a lack of overarching objectives and priorities for the downtown.
- Marketing and communications focus solely on tourists.
Great work!

- Florence has some great accomplishments
- Creative community events and gatherings
- Monthly Mayor/Manager coffee chats and civic coalition meetings
- Collaboration with the county
- Appreciation for the value of heritage and historic buildings
- Urban Renewal Authority formation
- Hiring Wade Broadhead

First Steps

- Declare downtown a priority
- Set clear objectives with all groups for guiding downtown projects and events

Organization & Management

Observation: There are several high functioning groups working on various projects.

Recommendation: Conduct a stakeholder analysis and create a matrix outlining each group’s mission, leaders, upcoming projects and needed partnerships to accomplish goals and identify gaps.

Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Stake or Interest</th>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>Relative Importance</th>
<th>Potential Contribution or Withholding</th>
<th>Approach/Who is Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Florence</td>
<td>Provide Public Goods and Services</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>Ahead of plan</td>
<td>DCI</td>
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<tr>
<td>School District</td>
<td>Adjacent to downtown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>Chamber Event, business development</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>DCI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pioneer Museum Downtown - Historic Advocates</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>DCI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts Council</td>
<td>Bell Tower Center just off downtown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Ahead of plan</td>
<td>DCI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>Located downtown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>DCI</td>
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</table>

Observation: Organizations working on downtown issues are in transition.

Recommendation: DCI follow-up technical assistance visit to include organizational/board development training.
**Observation:** There are several high functioning groups working on various projects.

**Recommendation:** Consider hosting a VISTA Volunteer to build community/organizational capacity for downtown revitalization.

**Observation:** Downtown revitalization is a common goal.

**Recommendation:** Identify several projects that everyone can participate in to enhance cohesion between stakeholders.

**Observation:** There are several high functioning groups working on various projects.

**Recommendation:** Identify several projects that everyone can participate in to enhance cohesion between stakeholders.

**Observation:** There is a lot of information being communicated among groups and individuals without a central hub.

**Recommendation:**
- Develop a communication strategy that employs several means of disseminating information to various groups i.e. City blog that can be printed and distributed or posted to Facebook.
- Develop an equitable and transparent procedure for posting to the City website and community-wide calendar of events.

**Observation:** Youth are engaged but should be given more responsibility and decision-making power.

**Recommendation:**
- Utilize student council as an advisory committee for community revitalization.
- Consider a small budget for funding youth projects.

**Observation:** There is a lack of activities for youth leading to boredom and crime.

**Recommendation:**
- Look to programming in schools and after school to provide opportunities for youth to express themselves.
- The mural project the Arts Council completed with the local high school is a great example.

**Observation:** Clear objectives are easier to achieve.

**Recommendation:**
- Plan a strategy for the regional and statewide meetings/trainings and present the work of the community and accomplishments.
- Identify ways to collaborate with neighboring communities on projects.
**ECONOMIC VITALITY**

**Observation:** Local spending is the largest sales tax contributor.

**Recommendation:** Build your capacity through long term planning.
- Strategize to redevelop existing property for increased capacity for office and residential.
- The Coop is a liability that could be an asset.
  - Business development incubator
- Develop business attraction & retention processes to look at complimentary uses and local needs.
- Craft & Creative industries – brewery, building, and arts fill local and tourist needs.

**Observation:** People are your primary asset. Youth/young families are your key opportunity.

**Recommendation:** Focus business and training opportunities that invest in local interests.
- Encourage leadership and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth. Utilize student council as an advisory committee.
- Consider how to start a Florence recreation program.
- Build on school’s ACE program to strengthen awareness of local internship and job opportunities.
- Pursue recreational retail options and youth gathering places like arcades, bowling alley, and indoor activity space.

**Observation:** There is a shortage of housing and rental opportunities within town.

**Recommendation:**
- Continue to implement vertical mixed-uses in vacant or underutilized buildings within the downtown by developing the upper floors as apartments and office space.
- Utilize Urban Renewal to provide financial assistance for property owners upgrading their upper floors for residential uses.

**Observation:** Florence’s growth is a great foundation to create a more diverse downtown economy.

**Recommendation:** Grow existing assets into business opportunities.
- Locals may engage more with businesses who are catering to their needs.
- Connect existing grocery store to the Fresh Food Fund.
- Create vacant building strategy.
- Activate second floor office and residential.
- Encourage upgrades for bowling alley grounds for increased use.

**Observation:** The Bell Tower Cultural Center and Senior Community Center are gems serving as community centers in downtown.

**Recommendation:** Increase support for the Bell Tower Cultural Center and Senior Community Center.
- The City and Arts Council/Council on Aging should co-apply for grants.
- Start an annual fundraising event to restore and maintain the buildings.
- Embark on a community master planning process to identify a shared vision and strategies to serve the community in the long-term.
Observation: Urban Renewal is a great tool to assist private investment in projects that will benefit the whole community.

Recommendation: Create an URA strategy with priority projects for office and residential in downtown.

- Under URA statute, the authority must work to facilitate private sector investment.
- URA needs to adopt an entrepreneurial spirit
- Property (or sales) tax drives TIF growth

Observation: Windows are the natural billboards in downtown.

Recommendation: Create a window display contest.

- Change it seasonally
- Invite local participation

Observation: Florence has a niche market and clear distinction in antiques in Colorado.

Recommendation: Work with all stakeholders to develop an authentic community brand, logo and marketing materials. Strategy includes:

- Logo
- Tagline/Call to Action
- Print Campaign/Web Campaign
- Brand-Related Activities & Events

What is ‘Community Brand’

Values

- Shared Interests
- Rituals
- Traditions

Connects People in the Community with Each Other

Connects Community with Nonmembers/Prospective Members

Connects Communities with Prospects & Businesses

Connects Communities with Prospects & Businesses

Connects Communities with Prospects & Businesses
Why is developing Community Brand important?

• It’s a journey of self-discovery
• Identifies shared values and areas of opportunity
• Tells a story about your community...who are you today and who do you aspire to be in the future?

Physical Elements
• Streetscapes
• Parks/Plazas/Landscaping
• Signs/Gateways

Communication Pieces
• Logo
• Website/Social Media
• Slogans
• Collateral Materials
• Events/Celebrations
Observation: Florence would benefit from a strong community brand. Brand Florence in a way that clearly references the fact that it is the Antique Capital of Colorado, but remains inclusive.

Idea One: Build on the antique renaissance

Tagline Options:

“Find it in Florence”
“Florence... Find It Here!”
“Florence Found”

Brand:
Grounded in the antique movement and building on the history of the town, the brand takes on a western history look and feel, using historic Florence photos, a very antique, artistic look and feel, with the town logo done in an antique looking glass or stamp-type format.

Targeted Rebrand Ideas

Tourism:
Find it in Florence... Antique Capital of Colorado!
Find it in Florence... Take home a piece of history!

Businesses/entrepreneurs:
Find it in Florence ... Your opportunity awaits!

New residents:
Find it in Florence... Your great little town!

Locals:
Find your community in Florence!

Observation: Groups and individuals in Florence are holding excellent community events and the city has unique destinations.

Recommendation: Market all of your events and attractions.

Events:
• Tour de Coal Camps
• Tweed Ride
• Pioneer Days
• Wet/Dry 4th of July
• Junktique
• Car Show
• Halloween Trick-or-Treat
• October Ghost Walk
• Steampunk Festival

Attractions:
• Rialto
• Bell Tower
• Pioneer Museum
• Scenic Byway

Observation: Florence highly values its heritage and has great stories to tell.

Recommendation: Market to heritage tourists. In addition to Florence being the Antique Capital of Colorado, it has a great deal to offer in the way of Heritage Tourism.

Events:
• Tour de Coal Camps
• Tweed Ride
• Pioneer Days
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Attractions:
• Rialto
• Bell Tower
• Pioneer Museum
• Scenic Byway

Observation: A strong line-up of arts and culture events can engage locals as well as tourists.

Recommendation: Continue holding weekly structured arts and culture events.

• Chamber’s outdoor music series
• Bell Tower music events
• Paint the Town
• Second Saturdays
**Observation:** Florence would greatly benefit from improved communications, including strategies for local, regional and national promotion.

**Recommendation:** Develop an online marketing strategy.

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**Observation:** There is a need to orient visitors to other community amenities and parking that is not visible from Main Street.

**Recommendation:**
- Develop a signage hierarchy and sign location plan.
- Signage should direct people to additional parking, inform people about the river park and other amenities off of main street.
- Place information kiosks in highly visible locations to draw in highway traffic.

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**Observation:** Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are missing on some blocks and/or in need of repair to address safe circulation throughout the community.

**Recommendation:** Work with CDOT to identify multi-modal opportunities and implement complete streets improvements that address:
- Pedestrian Facilities (pedestrian lights, seating, bike racks, enhanced cross walks, accessibility, etc.)
- Dedicated Bike Lanes and/or Bike Routes
- Vehicle Facilities (drive lanes and parking)
**Recommendation:**
Experiment with low cost and temporary pedestrian design solutions before investing in permanent design solutions.

**Observation:** Pedestrian facilities/amenities and landscaping are not cohesive throughout downtown and could use a fresh look.

**Recommendation:**
Tap into the local artist community and youth to spruce up the existing planters, trash receptacles, and landscaping for short term beautification projects.

**Observation:** The public art projects installed downtown improve the look and feel of Florence and bring people together.

**Recommendation:**
Develop a stronger partnership between the Arts Council and the City to build the public art program.

**Observation:** Pedestrian facilities/amenities and landscaping are not cohesive throughout downtown and could use a fresh look.

**Recommendation:**
- Review and adopt standards that address streetscapes and accessibility.
- Install landscaping with street trees on blocks where none exist.

**IS MAIN STREET AN OPTION?**

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**National Trust for Historic Preservation**

*Save the past. Enrich the future.*
GUIDING PRINCIPLES
- Capitalizing on Existing Assets
- Incremental
- Change
- Quality
- Self Help
- Action Oriented
- Comprehensive
- Public-Private Partnerships

Victor Timeline

Nov 2009 Technical Assessment Visit
Committees and Regular Community Meetings
Discussion with OSM VISTA and Mine

August 2011 Formalizing
Full time VISTA Volunteer
Application to Main Street
Full Time City Manager

March 2014 Designation
Main Street Manager on Staff
Designated Main Street Status

Case Study

Victor, Colorado

Upcoming Events
May 13  City Builder Forum, Boulder
June 11  DIDs Forum: Sales Tax Fairness, Denver
Aug 6  URA Board Training and Leadership Academy, Denver
Aug 21  Downtown Institute: Small Towns Growing Consciously, Ridgway
Oct 6-9  2015 Annual Conference: Vibrant Colorado Downtowns, Durango

For more information, see our events calendar at www.downtowncoloradoic.org

Florence Next Steps

1 – 2 weeks after the technical assistance visit
• Use the presentation to share ideas and spark conversation.
• Plan a follow up meeting to get people together and discuss next steps.
• Develop a means to solicit and collect ideas online.
• Identify ways to cross-promote this summer.

3 – 6 Weeks after the technical assistance visit
• Identify two visible projects that will be noticed around town.
• Develop a survey of skills people might have or want to learn and send it to all participants.

2015 DCI Annual Conference: Vibrant Colorado Downtowns
October 6-9, Durango
• Take advantage of registration scholarships
• Share your experience on a panel
Thank you!

For more information contact DCI:
303.282.0625 or
director@downtowncoloradoinc.org