

Estes Park Downtown Plan – Incorporating Resiliency into Downtown Plans

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In 2016, the Town of Estes Park, with the help of a consultant team, undertook an effort to craft a long-term vision for its downtown - one that incorporated resiliency as a key principle throughout the various policy goals for downtown. Through a community driven process, the Town and the consultant team sought to understand what a more resilient and vibrant future for Downtown Estes Park could look like.

Disasters bring destruction and hardship, but they also help motivate us into action. The 2013 flash floods in Estes Park provided a strong impetus to create a new plan that would help guide downtown and consider the environment,

economy, land use, urban design, circulation systems and utility improvements. In each of those specific topics the



project sought to embrace and promote resiliency.

Flood mitigation was a big focus for the Downtown Plan. Yet, resiliency for Downtown Estes Park is about more than just being prepared for floods. It is also about ensuring downtown can adapt and respond to shocks of any type, whether they are natural disasters, economic shifts or societal changes. A resilient downtown is one that can adjust to changing conditions while maintaining a prosperous and vital physical, cultural and economic setting. The resulting Downtown Plan is one that interweaves resiliency principles throughout the various policy goals.

A key component of the plan is a series of Resilient Design Studies that explore ways in which improvements in transportation and urban design can be combined with flood mitigation strategies to achieve both placemaking and resiliency objectives. These Resilient Design Studies propose conceptual improvements to a number of potential opportunity sites within downtown. Each Design Study offers specific land use and public space improvements as well as flood mitigation strategies. In many cases, a particular improvement might serve multiple Plan goals. For instance, new riverfront park space and multi-use trails along the river would offer attractive public space and enhanced multi-modal connectivity, but could also be designed in a way that accommodated floodwater and enhanced stream flow conveyance. Other improvements could include enhanced streetscapes with bioswales and green-infrastructure to increase percolation of surface stormwater and beautify the street with greenery and landscaping.

Successful plans are visionary and optimistic, but also grounded in the realities of what it takes to implement recommendations. The Estes Park Downtown Plan also explored various funding and financing mechanisms that could help put the plan recommendations into action. While the future is always uncertain, planning can help us prepare for the future and craft the vision we wish to see in our built environment.