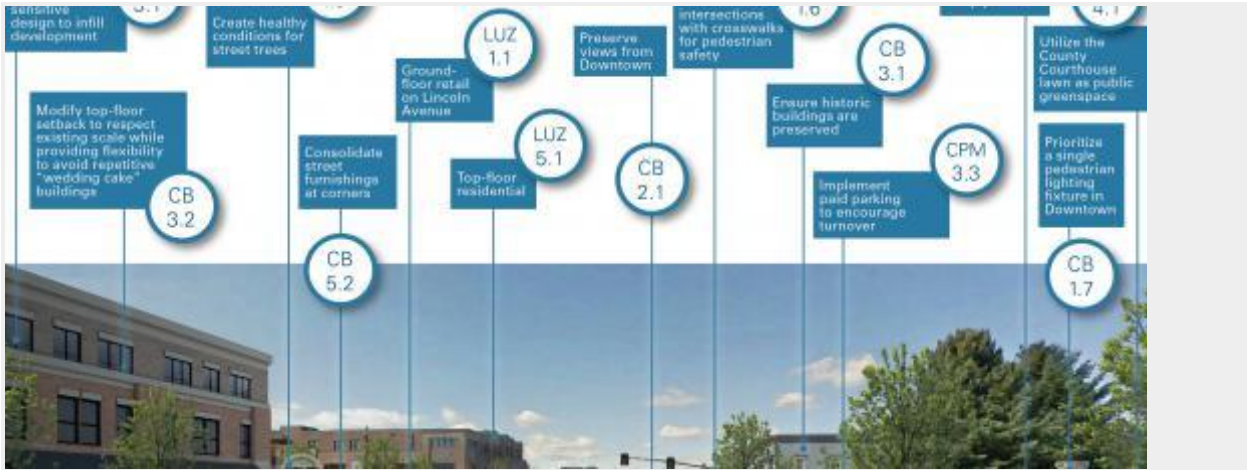


Steamboat Springs Downtown Plan

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When a controversial five-story mixed-use development in Downtown was approved by Steamboat Springs City Council with numerous variances in 2016, the diverse and sometimes conflicting community ideas and values came to a head. The civic leaders' affirmative vote sought to serve constituents by providing additional housing units for the community's "missing middle", however, the council-approved plan was met with a private lawsuit and the decision overturned. The concept for a Downtown Plan emerged from this catalyst event and the need to provide guidance for future improvements and developments aligned with the priorities and values of the Steamboat Springs Community. The Plan was an opportunity to dive deep and resolve these questions and topics through a comprehensive



framework:

1. How can the code reflect community values and flexibility to solve challenging development economics?
2. What decisions need to be made to strengthen connectivity and plan for mobility growth?
3. What are effective measures to preserve historic fabric and local heritage?
4. How can physical features in the public and private realm add value and character to the built environment?



With a limited budget of \$80,000 and an expressed need for

the Plan to address numerous issues, the Planning Team embarked on a creative solution for engagement. A Downtown Plan Work Group was created to provide representative viewpoints from various sectors in the community – downtown businesses, public art, real estate development, historic preservation, housing and tourism. The Work Group ushered the planning process forward in a way that could not have been achieved through traditional community engagement meetings. The Work Group was engaged with discussions about balancing the high cost of development with the restrictions of the Development Code, affordable and market-rate housing, visitor programming versus local needs and historic preservation in the midst of changing markets. In the end, the Planning Team synthesized complex tradeoffs and seemingly competing interests into a fully-adopted planning document—mapping out a path forward. With strong City Council support, Council members agreed, “This is exactly what we were looking for.”

With planning foresight, the community of Steamboat Springs has the opportunity to influence how land is best used in Downtown, plan for diverse groups of people living in Downtown, preserve character-giving structures, spaces and natural resources, support local businesses and encourage multiple forms of mobility to connect these resources. The document laid the framework and the community is already busy implementing the recommendations.