

Economic Restructuring

The focus of economic 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 and all of the benefits of choosing to locate their business in downtown, including the opportunities that may exist to capitalize on promotional activities. It also works to build strong relationships between downtown businesses, residents, and users.

Observation: The Towns should function as extended living quarters.

Recommendations:

- Residents should take pride and interest in the look, feel, and condition of their respective towns. Visitors are so important to the economic health of both towns that all residents need to have their commercial districts ready for visitors. Everyone needs to promote community pride and provide place that is warm and inviting. Think of Westcliffe as a living room and Silver Cliff as a family room with tourists as your personal guests.
- The economic development questions should not revolve around opinions of growth vs. no growth, but rather: how do we make our community inviting to visitors and potential residents? In a long-term view, many visitors and second-homers will become permanent residents, customers, employees and be a part of the community. Second-homers and new residents are important economic development players in that they import money to local businesses. Additionally, second-homers and new residents tend to support nonprofits and community development organizations that contribute to a town spirit and friendly engaged environment.

Observation: Consider a Vacant Properties Campaign to address underutilized property

Recommendations:

- A vacant properties campaign is a strategic plan for a community to remove the blighting influences of underutilized, vacant, and abandoned property and to redeploy these assets for economic development. Vacant properties can become business-ready sites. Particularly for the Town of Silver Cliff, a vacant properties campaign could incorporate area-wide planning that considers transportation routes to, through, and around town.
- Land use planning should consider how land uses support each other: how commercial, retail, service, industrial, and cultural assets relate to each other. For example, Westcliffe is land-locked with little room for expansion, while Silver Cliff has sites that could accommodate light industrial, fabrication, and assembly businesses. Creating a predictable business development climate will enable entrepreneurs to be comfortable in the long term prospects of their surroundings. Perhaps design guidelines or standards could be adopted to promote a consistent “look and feel” through town. Appropriate zoning will enable different businesses to know exactly where they would fit; there is need to create industrial zoning to quickly accommodate these type businesses when they knock at the economic door.
- Perhaps the heart of a vacant properties campaign is to remove blighting conditions or position a property for renovation or redevelopment. There should be an inventory of properties available for sale, formatted in a way that speaks to development interests

and encourages the assemblage of land parcels. The Towns can identify grants, loans, and incentives (state, federal, private, or self directed) that can be assembled into a tool box that can help private sector businesses to buy, renovate, and occupy sites.

Observation: Sustainability should be considered as a guiding principal for property reuse

Recommendations:

- Property renovation and development should incorporate sustainable practices that may include deconstruction and recycling of building materials and incorporating energy efficiencies and renewable building materials in new construction. The natural setting is important to the long-term sustainability of the Towns; environmental stewardship includes addressing possible asbestos prior to demolition and evaluating and mitigating pollution from former uses.
- Renewable energy (passive/active solar, geothermal, other) could be integrated into existing and new buildings. There may also be opportunities to create locally generated electricity for local consumption and move towards energy self-sufficiency. The former landfill north of Westcliffe on Highway 69 may be a viable renewable energy site.

Observation: There is a need for the towns to communicate and connect with businesses.

Recommendation:

Each town should develop and distribute “business friendly town” packet materials on services for new and existing businesses – incorporate programs from towns, county, library, school, etc. Each Town should create similar business incentive policies so not to compete, but rather support each other. Economic development ambassadors should hold monthly, informal, topic-based “Cliff Chatter” meetings share information and get input from businesses. Include town/county and Chamber updates through e-newsletter to businesses.

Observation: Business attraction efforts would be improved by enhanced information.

Recommendations:

Economic development ambassadors should conduct market research to identify potential businesses and a diversity of product demands. Location neutral business development opportunities should be researched to identify a target market for economic development. Location neutral businesses would include telecommuters, lone eagles, sales consultants, and small shippers that don’t need ties to urban centers. One such distance-business that also provides a service to the community is pharmacy delivery from a regional pharmacy. The Towns’ natural surroundings would logically support the attraction and expansion of outdoor recreation businesses.

Observation: Residents of the two communities purchase most of their goods “down the hill” and many of the businesses do not feel the community supports them.

Recommendation:

The business community should develop a shop local campaign that makes clear the benefits of spending locally, products available locally, a rewards system for local spending, and a collaborative marketing initiative.

Observation: Training and education could significantly improve the business environment in the Cliffs' Commercial District.

Recommendations:

- Develop trainings with and for businesses to enhance internet presence, consistent hours, and improve merchandizing. Businesses could also benefit from training to provide basic customer service and hospitality training for employees. Part of this training could be provided through the library and chamber, which could re-introduce business planning and entrepreneur training in collaboration with the Small Business Development Center. Business management training should also include energy efficiency training for business operations and facilities.
- The community at large could also benefit from training. For example, residents would benefit from civics training reviewing the various levels of government, their representative entities, and how each interacts with one another and the community. High school students would benefit from a business education program, similar to a junior achievement approach.