



Building the Future Downtown New Castle, Colorado



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Executive Summary

A. KEY PLANNING OBJECTIVES

There are several primary objectives of this New Castle Downtown Improvement Plan (Plan). First and foremost, it is intended to be a roadmap, charting a course for improving Downtown New Castle. It intends to address more than just physical improvement. Rather, it will address all four key factors that contribute to successful downtowns. These are: 1) economic vitality, 2) promotion, 3) organization and 4) design. In doing, this Plan intends to build on everything that is good about Downtown and eliminate or minimize to the extent possible the weaknesses or problems associated with Downtown.

Secondly, this Plan is intended to serve as the “conceptual master plan” for the downtown and the surrounding Old Town neighborhood.

Finally, the overarching objective of the Plan is implementation, ensuring that Newberg will carry out the community’s stated vision for downtown as a unique destination

The New Castle Downtown Improvement Plan is a vision-driven and outcome-oriented blueprint for the reinventing Downtown New Castle into a vital, active, mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environment over the next 20 to 30 years – one that truly acts like and serves as the “heart and soul” of New Castle. This document depicts and summarizes the rationale for the master conceptual design plan and identifies development types, redevelopment opportunities, and “catalyst projects” having the ability to jumpstart investment and development downtown. Finally, the NDIP provides an incremental implementation strategy – a program for carrying out the plan and achieving the community’s vision for Downtown over time.

B. A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN NEW CASTLE

Through a sustained and interactive public process, the community identified a vision and set of desired outcomes for the future of Downtown New Castle:

Building upon an historical main street environment and maximizing redevelopment opportunity, Downtown will have a successful and quaint complementary mix of retail, civic, entertainment, cultural, office and residential uses, showcasing its pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, public art, and connecting its history, with its present and future and connecting all of its citizens.

Downtown New Castle will have the following characteristics, or desired outcomes:

1. It will be **easy to find** Downtown New Castle, through attractive, effective signage and improved connections between neighborhoods.
2. Downtown New Castle should be a **source of pride and strong community spirit** for all residents and businesses of the community.

3. Downtown will be the **center for life** in the community – a place where residents can gather, visit and foster meaningful connections, shop, work, be entertained and play in a vibrant, inviting, and fun setting that is consistent with the scale and traditions of the community.
4. Downtown should be a traditional commercial center of the community, with an **appropriate mix** of commercial and economic activities **of a scale suitable for New Castle** and capable of retaining existing customers and attracting new customers, to improve economic activity in the local economy, including a desirable balance of specialty retail, dining, entertainment, and galleries and studios.
5. Downtown should host community events, celebrations, festivals, the arts, and recreational activity space for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy.
6. Downtown New Castle should be known for its connection to its history, quaint ambiance, vitality, quality and **unique size and character**.
7. Downtown should have a **strong sense of identity** for both residents and visitors and its gathering places should foster meaningful connections.
8. Downtown should be a traditional commercial center of the community, with an **appropriate mix** of commercial and economic activities **of a scale suitable for New Castle** and capable of retaining existing customers and attracting new customers, to improve economic activity in the local economy, including a desirable balance of specialty retail, dining, entertainment, and galleries and studios.
9. Downtown and the surrounding Old town neighborhood will have increased density and a broad range of places in which to live.
10. Downtown should preserve its rich **architectural heritage**, spanning over one hundred years that has contributed to New Castle’s existing character. Historic structures should be preserved and restored when possible and, while new styles will be respected, new structures should respect and demonstrate compatibility with the historic use of building materials and design features of Downtown.
11. Downtown should engage citizens and visitors and celebrate the colorful **history and cultural heritage** of New Castle and the surrounding area and Downtown should be known locally and beyond for these purposes.
12. Downtown should build upon its strong community spirit and incorporate **public art** reflecting the local character.
13. Downtown should be **accessible** to all residents and visitors, encouraged by walking, biking, alternative transportation modes and by automobile. There should be sufficient parking to accommodate short and long-term growth and the *appropriate type and level of infrastructure to support the envisioned future type, mix and intensity of uses.*

14. Downtown will be “**people-oriented**” with attractive, comfortable, and functional amenities or public uses on the sidewalk or in another right-of-way
15. Residents of New Castle and the surrounding area and regional visitors will be **kept informed continually** about activities, events and businesses Downtown.
16. There should be successful and **mutually beneficial partnerships** and strong relations between the Downtown merchants and property owners, the Town of New Castle, Chamber of Commerce and other institutions and community-serving organizations that can make Downtown successful.

C. STRATEGY FOR ACTION

For this Downtown Improvement Plan to truly be the “roadmap for change and improvement” it is intended to be, it must be accompanied by an action plan for carrying it out in manageable steps. As not every recommendation can be carried out and completed at once, an incremental implementation strategy is provided, laying out the short-term, medium range, and long-term actions for achieving the key recommendations.

Critical to the success of the Downtown Improvement Plan for New Castle is ensuring that this incremental implementation strategy is regularly monitored and that it is updated to reflect progress, changing circumstances and new opportunities that may arise along the way. Additionally, it is important that progress in carrying out the strategy in support of the vision for downtown is regularly reported to City Council and the public.

This regular monitoring, reporting and updating will help to keep the Downtown Improvement Plan flexible and current, keep all Town departments and project partners focused on carrying out this important public policy objective and keep the implementation of the Downtown Improvement Plan on the “front burner” and in the public eye.

THE BIG IDEA – THE FOUNDATION FOR ACTION

A. THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

The New Castle Comprehensive Plan states that “the real measure of success of the New Castle Comprehensive Plan will be regular use and application of the principles, goals and policies that it espouses.” The stage is set for New Castle to grow and prosper as the local economy improves; provided however, the resulting changes will not harm, but seek to maintain and improve the desired small-town community character and values. It will be important, therefore, that future growth and development adhere to the desires of the community.

Prior to the adoption of the Plan, the National and local economies were strong. As a result, New Castle had begun to experience significant change. The intent of the Plan was to establish a path for community growth that, while accommodating new housing, businesses, services, jobs, parks/open spaces, non-motorized access systems, transportation, environmental protection and community infrastructure, would ensure that growth and change would not adversely impact the small-town character and community values that residents wanted to preserve.

As the community planning process neared its conclusion, the National economy began to experience a slow-down, which in time became significant. Growth and development in the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys also were affected. This economic downturn fundamentally stopped new development activity in New Castle. More recently, while the upper valley resort economy has experienced improvement in recent years, the effect of the up-turn is only now being felt in New Castle’s economy.

In October 2016 the New Castle Planning Commission, after conducting a review of the Community Plan, determined that the Comprehensive Community Plan continued to provide a suitable vision for the community’s future. Generally, the vision of the New Castle community of 2050 that is portrayed in the Plan remains the kind of community for which the citizens and local government officials should strive.

B. THE COMMUNITY VISION

Distilling all of the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Community Plan and subsequent public input, it is possible to define what New Castle is and most importantly what it wants to be – the “**Big Idea.**” The “**Big Idea**” is to make New Castle the place:

1. that is respectful of its past but embraces an exciting future;
2. where there is an **affordable, wholesome, healthy and vibrant** lifestyle;
3. where there are **gathering space, events and activities**, for all ages, that connect the community and support this vibrant lifestyle;

4. where there are a range of **housing options** for individuals and families of all ages that want to be part of the New Castle experience;
5. where it is **safe** to raise a family and where there are **great schools and churches** in support;
6. where there are **outstanding recreation, education, cultural and nature experiences and healthy lifestyle** opportunities for people of all ages; and
7. where an **entrepreneurial spirit** (new business, jobs and economic investment) is not only welcome but sought after and opportunities for growing a business abound; and
8. where people can **pursue and achieve** their own vision of an abundant life, whatever it may be.

The Community vision states there should be a **stable economy** and a healthy environment. It will be important to strive for **economic vitality locally**, with support for local businesses and opportunities for **local employment** for a many of residents. To achieve this the Town should now focus on strategies and actions aimed at attracting businesses that can provide primary (living wage) jobs for current and future residents and enhancing community retail/service space, thereby increasing needed sales tax revenues to pay for community services.

At a joint meeting on _____, 2017 the New Castle Town Council and Planning Commission agreed that, in general, the overall future vision of the community continued to be reflected in the 2009 Comprehensive Community Plan. The Commission did state that there are _____ things that still need to be done to implement the plan effectively. The first step should be the development of an action plan for the improvement and expansion of the local economy is to improve and strengthen Downtown New Castle.

THE ROLE OF DOWNTOWN

A. ITS PURPOSE

So, what does the “Big Idea” mean for Downtown New Castle. Conversely, what must Downtown do or become to advance these crucial objectives? A downtown typically serves a number of key functions in a community. It is often the center for niche commercial, arts, social, cultural and entertainment activities. A healthy downtown typically provide the social life and entertainment in the community for people of all ages. As the central “Gathering Place” the functions, commercial enterprises, events and other activities found Downtown should bring residents of the community together, allowing personal connections to be made and participation in the community fabric to occur. A downtown is often a place where, while not necessarily the main location for local jobs, accommodates businesses that provide employment opportunities for a community’s residents. When there is a thriving downtown it is usually considered a good recruitment tool for industry.

A successful downtown stimulates the local economy and, economically, everyone in the community usually benefits from a healthy downtown. A strong viable downtown is essential to economic development in the community. A downtown can be considered a barometer of the community’s overall quality of life.

In addition to a successful and healthy downtown, other quality of life indicators suggest that a healthy downtown is not the only thing that builds a successful community. Shopping, entertainment, cultural and recreational choices, a diversity of housing types and ranges of affordability, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods are also crucial to a community’s success. Therefore, while a downtown is often considered the “heart and soul” of the community, there are many things that need to “go right” to build a highly desirable and successful community. The plan set forth in this document will focus on those steps and action that New Castle should take to improve its Downtown. New Castle also must have to take other steps outside its Downtown in order to achieve the whole community ideal that is described in the Community Vision noted above.

B. WHERE SHOULD DOWNTOWN BE LOCATED

The question of where is the “best place” for a downtown typically does not come into play. Most of the time, there is a location that has historically served this function. In general terms, the downtown was often centrally located and near the transportation modes at the time of its establishment. Over time, growth patterns, the installation of interstate highways, suburban shopping centers and other factors affected the economic health of downtowns.

For some, New Castle has an interesting dilemma. The location of its downtown developed over 100 years ago, at a time when it was served by passenger rail and U.S. Highway 6 and 24. Things changed overtime. Rail passenger transport service to the community stopped. The role of U.S. Highway 6 and 24 was replaced by Interstate 70 that bypassed the community. A new community access interchange from I-70 was constructed about one-mile east of Downtown. More recently, the community growth

pattern has moved away from Downtown, into the Castle Valley. The Town's land use regulations promoted commercial growth immediately north of the interchange in a somewhat typical suburban format. (This commercial pattern can be found in many communities with an interstate access interchange some distance from their historic downtown.) New Castle has grown into more of a bedroom community to Glenwood Springs, the resorts in the upper Roaring Fork Valley and the oil industry to the west of the community. There does not appear to have been a concerted and sustained effort, as the community grew over the last 20 or so years, to connect the community with its historical downtown and stimulate a commercially successful downtown. The best attempts occurred when a new Town Hall and Library were constructed there. In fact, there is very little information about the location of Downtown in the interchange area, which is not the main pathway for coming to and leaving the community. While Downtown has a number of good commercial uses, it also has issues and in its current form may not meet the desired purposes of a downtown that are noted above. As a result of all this, some have questioned whether the historical location of Downtown New Castle will best serve the community's future.

C. ANSWERING THE QUESTION

There are likely three general locations for Downtown New Castle. In general, those are: 1) Castle Valley Ranch, two options, among the existing and continuing-to-develop residential neighborhood, where there is now significant mixed-use zoning, 2) a location somewhere near the intersection of U. S. Highway 6 and 24 and Castle Valley Boulevard or 3) its historical location. There are pros and cons with each of these locations. It is unlikely that New Castle, even with an additional 20 years of growth, would be able to support more than one of these areas as its downtown. Therefore, it will be necessary for the community to determine now where its downtown will be long-term, support that decision, and move forward aggressively with improving it in a way that will best support the Community Vision.



The three areas that might possibly support the heart of the community are:

1. Middle of Castle Valley

There are two general possibilities within Castle Valley. Option A is in the heart of the Castle Valley neighborhood. It is zoned for mixed-use development and allow a substantial amount of commercial square footage. The other option is closer to the junction of both the Castle Valley and Lakota Canyon neighborhoods. Zoning and the matter of possible

entitlements aside, Option B may be a better location for a town center should the community decide that this area would best serve the community long-term. It might have the least traffic and other impact on the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

A town center concept in this vicinity, might be something along the line of the Willit's Town Center near Basalt, mixed-use commercial development surrounded by residential land use. It would probably differ from the Willit's development in that it does not occupy a central location between Glenwood Springs and Aspen/Snowmass, and geographic area with a substantial population base. The draw here would be more local in nature and, as a result the scale of development would likely be smaller.



Willit's Town Center Development

The Willit's commercial development benefits significantly from high traffic volumes that flow through the mid-valley. There are now about 23,000 average vehicle trips passing Willits per day. The traffic volume is expected to grow to more than 30,000 average vehicle tips per day over the next 20 years according to the Colorado Department of Transportation. Even if all of the traffic coming and going from Midland Avenue and Buford road in New Castle is routed through Castle Valley, rather than using the 7th and Main Street path, a center commercial location in Castle Valley will ever be supported by the by the level of traffic experienced at Willits.

The Willit's Town Center development took over 20 years to achieve its current form. It happened only after there was a significant developer concession to write-down a long-term lease that attract its initial anchor store, that being Whole Foods. It became the linchpin stimulating the following commercial development. The high traffic follows between two of the most significant Colorado tourist areas, Glenwood Springs and Aspen, are necessary to support the level of hotel, restaurant and other development occurring now. It also is important to note that as the Willit's commercial development advanced, there was a significant adverse effect on Downtown Basalt over time. Willits created an identity that is separate from Basalt.



Riverwalk Development - Edwards

All things considered, it is unlikely that either Castle Valley Ranch location could support the level of commercial development now seen in the Willits development or the Riverwalk in Edwards, a project also driven by hotel and grocery uses. Significant grocery, hotel and retail development would be difficult to achieve. The amount of commercial square footage expected might be similar to what can be accommodated in the existing Downtown location, including several restaurants, niche retail, possibly neighborhood day care and community-serving business opportunities. It might be supported by park and gathering space. (A better example of the development might be the South Main Street mixed-use neighborhood in Buena Vista. However, the South Main Street project is more of a neighborhood center and seems to work with Downtown Buena Vista.) A development of this type at either location in Castle Valley would certainly be walkable and could provide a social and gathering center for those neighborhoods. It would likely be less walkable and accessible by Old Town residents and the long-term growth pattern expected east of town. Option A would likely pull commercial traffic into the existing Castle Valley residential neighborhood. It is likely that Option B would have less traffic impact, as commercial traffic would not get all the way into the existing residential neighborhood. While the level of traffic experienced would be nowhere near the levels experienced at Willits or Edwards, there would be an impact, including both construction and future commercial trips.



South Main Mixed-Use Development – Buena Vista

Given that there is no commercial development in this area now and the existing residential base is relatively small, a downtown-style development will likely take a number of years to achieve some level of financial viability. The infrastructure must be improved, all structures would have to be built and businesses attracted or relocated from other parts of New Castle. In all likelihood, this would cannibalize over time some of the viable uses in the current downtown location that did not relocate to the new center. If there is support for this type of development, the Town will likely need to rethink its support, financial and otherwise, for current downtown improvement efforts.

At this time, it appears that the Castle Valley neighborhood may not be ready to accept a downtown-type of traffic generator in the middle of their neighborhood. Many people report that they like the quiet and calm of the neighborhood that they bought. At a minimum, if this is a desirable location for a downtown-style development, Option B would be a better location for the existing neighborhoods. If there is a valid argument that there should be an easily accessible social gathering place for the existing and growing Castle Valley and Lakota Canyon neighborhoods, that might best be accomplished by creation over time of smaller neighborhood activity center that is scaled and growth the surrounding residential neighborhood, focused on a school and possibly day-care and small neighborhood-based walkable employment opportunities.

2. East Side – Highway 6 and 24 and Castle Valley Boulevard

A second possibility for a future downtown-type of development might be a location near the Highway 6 and 24 – Castle Valley Boulevard intersection. There is already a substantial amount of commercial development in this area, albeit in a suburban land use form, that might support this notion. More than likely, given the existing land use pattern, the social and gathering area (a future Downtown) would need to be sited to the east of the exiting shopping center development.



Highway 6 and 24 Downtown Concept

While this depiction represents only a rough concept, and there are many ways for this type of development to occur, it is clear that it has a number of benefits. A traditional downtown and neighborhood design, with a variety of lot and housing sizes and range of affordability, as recommended in the Comprehensive Community Plan, would be possible. Higher density and mixed use could be easily integrated into this type of development, more so than in existing neighborhoods of Castle Valley and Lakota. It would not disrupt any existing residential uses. The main grocery (an anchor tenant) exists and additional hotel and retail development might be possible because of higher traffic volumes at the intersection and the adjacency of I-70. With proper design, the existing suburban-formed shopping center could be integrated into the traditional neighborhood design, improving the pedestrian connections between the new neighborhood and both City Market and the New Castle Plaza. A community gathering space could be coordinated with an event facility at the New Hope Community Church. Furthermore, with proper design and planning open space connections could be created for both Castle Valley and Lakota Canyon Ranch residents.

Unlike a similar concept in Castle Valley, there are very few existing residential structures that would be impacted by such a development - the planning, design and construction of commercial and residential uses could be fully coordinated. There is already substantial traffic and road infrastructure in this area to support a downtown-like commercial center. Moreover, to the extent that this concept generates additional traffic, it will have very little impact on the existing Castle Valley and Lakota Ranch neighborhoods. The existing peace and solitude of those neighborhoods would be preserved. In all likelihood, for those visiting the community this location would be easy to find, something that may be more difficult for a location in Castle Valley. In general, this location could serve most of the key functions

that a downtown must fulfill in the community – a place that provide the social life, connectivity and entertainment of the community for all ages.

While this site may make more sense that a Castle Valley location, there are significant issues to consider here. First, to create a true downtown setting, serving the type of role described above, it would probably be best to relocate the Town Hall, Library and Community Center to this location. The community already has substantial investment in this facilities at their current location.

Second, this level of commercial development would likely have a similar effect that the Willit’s Town Center had on Downtown Basalt. Viable commercial uses would have to relocate to the new center to remain viable. Stimulating property redevelopment or improvements in the existing downtown area would likely become problematic. Certainly, a well-thought-out plan and investment strategy would be required to transition the current downtown into more of a residential neighborhood or a themed center heavily focused on its history. Even then, commercial success in the historical location might be difficult.

While there may be other issue to consider, there is one significant issue, above all others, that the community should consider about this area. The “Big Idea,” which has it foundation in the Comprehensive Community Plan, clearly points out that New Castle must pursue and achieve a **balanced and stable economy**. That means that there must be a place in the community where business can locate and create jobs paying a living wage; where entrepreneurs can thrive. (The current median household income in New Castle is about \$67,000, meaning that tertiary types of retail with part-time or minimum wage jobs are not what New Castle will require in the future.) While some of economic development might be incorporated into mixed-use residential neighborhoods, it is likely New Castle will need a viable location to accommodate the needs of this type of development.

This area is the logical location for the development of the primary business development and primary job generators for the community. This is generally consistent with the adopted Future Land Use Plan, which identifies this area as mixed-use with a commercial focus. The type of development best suited for this area might compare somewhat to that Mid-Valley Design Center or Airport Business Center near Aspen. This part of New Castle has very good proximity to the major transportation routes and facilities. It is also easily accessible for workers from the east and west as well as centrally located for existing and future residents of New Castle.



Mid-Valley Design Center Live-Work



Mid-Valley Design Center Commercial/Office

3. Historic Location

As mentioned previously, the historical location of Downtown New Castle developed 100-years ago under a different set of circumstances than exist today. There is significant history and heritage stories associated with this part of the community. Now, in 2017, there is already a significant amount of public and private investment there. The Town Hall, Library (2013) and Community Center are all substantial public investments made in recent years. The history museum is located downtown.

Unlike other locations, much of the infrastructure and many of the buildings and support spaces is in place to support not only existing but also future development. Given that the pool of private and public funds available to support and enhance the heart of the community is not infinite, focusing on the existing center may be the most financially feasible. Effort to start improving Downtown New Castle can start immediately, not some unknow time in the future.

For a variety of reason pointed out in this assessment, the historic location of Downtown New Castle may be best suited to carry the banner of the “heart and soul’ of the community. It does not contain the limitations associated with sites in Castle Valley Ranch. While the site on the east side of town may be well suited for this purpose, it also should serve as the future primary employment center of the community. As a result, the historic location of Downtown continues to be best suited for this purpose. Further, while it may be possible to attempt to develop another area in the community to serve the downtown role, it unlikely, if not impossible, for those areas to fully connect the community’s past, present and future, which the historical downtown location can accomplish.

While Downtown New Castle is now the heart of the community, it does suffer from a lack of action over the years. If the historical location of it downtown is going to serve the community well in the future it will take investment and infrastructure improvements (public and private). While the current location is constrained by the Old Town residential development to the north and the railroad tracks to the south, creative planning can help it improve as a center for niche commercial, arts cultural heritage activities. It must be reimagined, providing the social life, connections and entertainment of the community for all ages. It can be a quaint downtown, different from Willits or Downtown Glenwood, possibly more on the line of Downtown Carbondale or Basalt (had it not suffer the effect of the Willit’s Town Center). Being different, **as long as it is quality**, it can be an attraction for both local residents and visitors to the area.

This preliminary assessment of the three possible locations for a commercial, social and cultural center of the community suggest that its current location along West Main Street should continue to be in the community’s best interest, now and for the future. This continues assessment supports the community policy adopted in the 2009 Comprehensive Community Plan. At that time, 73% of the respondents to a community survey said that “development of the downtown core” need a great amount of attention. About 69% prioritized the “retention of the historic downtown location” as the community and commercial core. Following community involvement and input, the adopted Comprehensive Community Plan relative to the current location of Downtown states:

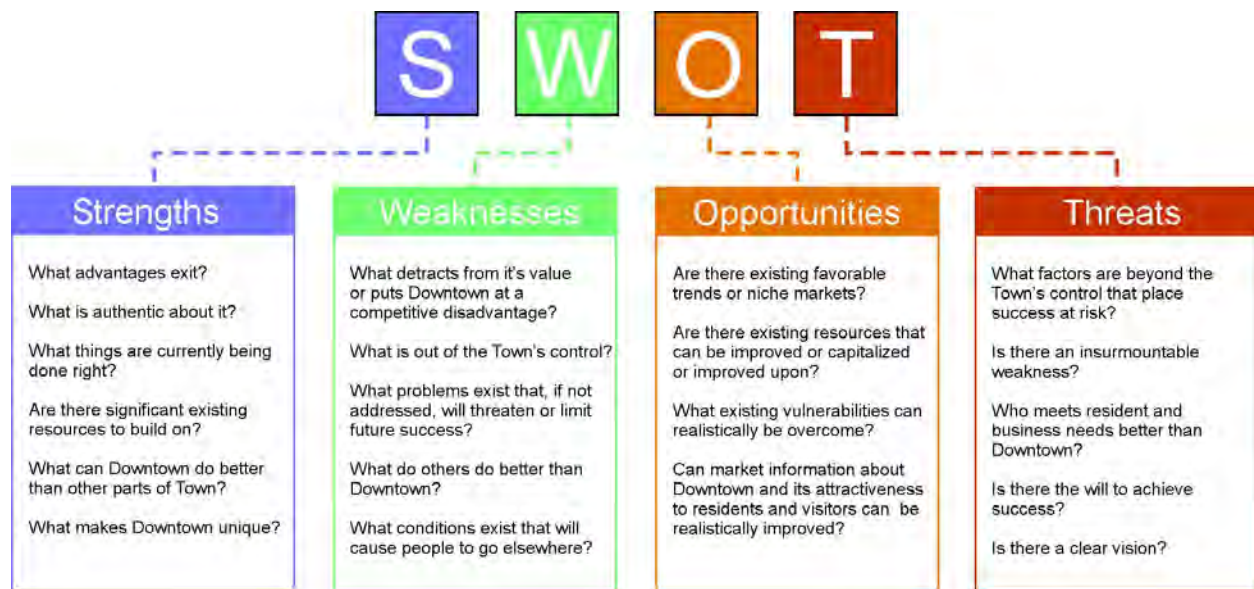
1. In 2050, historic downtown New Castle retains its traditional architectural character and supports a variety of small businesses that employ local residents and attract many visitors to town. Downtown remains the community focal point for events, parades and local government services including Town Hall, the post office, the library and the community center.
2. New Castle desires to enhance its community sales tax revenues to pay for community service. Downtown New Castle is an important and historic community focal point and should be supported as a key part of the community's economic base.
3. The historic downtown gives New Castle a sense of "place" and is recognized by the community as an important asset.
4. The Town will continue to protect and enhance the historic downtown and preserve it as a community focal point.

Having said this, it does not mean that the current location of the downtown is perfect for this purpose. While there is a foundation to build on, there are obstacles to overcome. Will take commitment and a concerted effort, more that the effort and attention given to it in the past. To move the community forward to an exciting future built on the foundation of the "Big Idea," this Plan continues to support the current (historic) location of Downtown. While there must be areas in the community that serves as locations for residential development and for job creation and new business, the historic location of **Downtown should stand alone as the "heart" of the community.** This **must** now become community policy. If this does not happen, or if this policy is not fully supported, there will likely be disruption and substantial expense to the community cause by a future decision to relocate Downtown to another site within the community. Spending additional public and private dollars to create a new heart in the future may be a waste of money that New Castle cannot afford.

Given its pros and cons, the community has decided to support the historical location of its downtown to serve as the heart of its community. Within the context of the "Big Idea," the historic location of Downtown must fulfill a crucial role. It will take commitment, a concerted effort and an investment of public and private funds there, more that the effort and attention given to it in the past. The effort must be sustained to ensure that Downtown New Castle achieve the key objectives described above in this section that are necessary to advance the "Big Idea." This will not be realized overnight and, even then, it will only be realized if there are well-planned actions and leadership.

DOWNTOWN SWOT ASSESSMENT

The Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Assessment is intended to be a structured method of identifying and evaluating those internal and external factors, both favorable and unfavorable, that affect Downtown New Castle’s ability, in its current/historical location, to fulfill its role in the “Big Idea,” something necessary for the entire community to achieve success. This analysis should be used to: a) identify Downtown’s competitive advantages, building on strengths and taking advantage of new opportunities, b) identify barriers or limitations that might have an adverse effect or limit success, and c) explore possible solutions to problems. An important objective must be to establish tactics for converting weaknesses or threats, to the extent possible, into strengths and opportunities. This SWOT analysis itself is not a strategic plan. Rather, from it will come a series of strategies and recommendations that, combined, will form a strategic action plan for improving Downtown New Castle.



Members of the Planning Commission were asked to assess the current strengths and weaknesses of Downtown, identify opportunities that the Town can pursue to advance Downtown within the “Big Idea” and to identify any threats that could cause Downtown New Castle to fall short of its desired potential.

A. STRENGTHS

1. Incredible history and heritage

There continue to be several fine architectural examples of the late 1800s and early 1900s building architecture. There are _____ buildings Downtown listed on the National Register. Immediately north of Downtown is the historic Old Town neighborhood that reflects the mining area residential development, also with a number of homes characteristic of the community's early railroad and mining history. This sense of history is unique to this location and cannot be realized elsewhere in the community.

In addition to the buildings, there is a colorful history that compliments the architecture Downtown. The town was named after the English coal mining town Newcastle upon Tyne and it became a bustling mining town. Many people and stories make this part of New Castle unique and interesting, ranging from early pioneers that investigated and traveled through the Colorado River Valley, the people who settled and grew the community, their folkways, arts, costumes, rituals and other traditions. There is no other part of New Castle that can effectively convey the stories of early life in western Colorado and fulfill this part of the Big Idea – that is “connecting the past, present and future.” Heritage tourism attraction, built around tis history, can have a positive economic effect on the community and help to build its branding and marketing story.

Heritage tourism is defined by the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that genuinely represent the stories of the past, including stories about its people, culture, history and natural resources." New Castle has the opportunity to excel in this area. Aspen does provide some public narrative about its mining and ski history. However, there are few communities in the area that make a strong presentation of their story. New Castle has started this effort, with display boards along Main Street. The New Castle Historical Museum is located Downtown, just a few steps from Main Street. (Unfortunately, there is very little information to direct people to its location.) When “presented properly,” the town’s history should be a strong attraction and one of the fundamental building-block of a growth and development strategy for New Castle. Any growth or changes in the community that erodes this key element of the community would not be appropriate.

2. **Small intimate town character**

It is true that the community, while home to about 4,700 people, retains the charm of a small town. There is a sense of comfort. People know and help each other. Downtown also symbolizes this small-town friendly attitude. When a person walks into a store it is not long before business owner knows their name. This is a major selling point, both about the community and Downtown. It should be a focus of a revitalization strategy. Such an attitude must be presented to each visitor and customer whenever contact is made in the Downtown area.

3. **Walkability**

Downtown is a "**walkable experience**" — one that will ultimately sell Downtown to locals and visitors alike. Stores and existing and future amenities can be concentrated in a relatively confined area. People tend to walk up to about one-half mile for shopping and similar experiences and Downtown fits will within this range. Excellent systems of sidewalks and features have been provided to accommodate people of all ages and

abilities. The Main Street streetscape has been substantially upgraded, involving significant community investment that sets the stage for further growth and interest in Downtown. Downtown also is accessible from the immediately adjacent Old Town neighborhood. It is important to understand that the “ability to walk” from place to place is not sufficient for success, however. The pedestrian environment along the walking route must be animated and lively.

4. **Established businesses**

There are already a number of good businesses Downtown, particularly restaurants and bars and service commercial. These include:

- a. **Restaurants and bars**
 - Elk Creek Bar and Grill
 - Hogback Pizza
 - Black Dog Saloon
 - Burning Mountain Bakery and Deli
 - Lazy Bear Restaurant
 - 2 Coronas Mexican Restaurant

- b. **Service Commercial**
 - New Castle Dental
 - Creekside Salon
 - Sassy Cutz
 - Accounting, Tax and Booking Services
 - Make New Waves
 - Mo Hair
 - Elk Creek Taxidermy
 - Cheryl and Company Real Estate
 - Solely Skin
 - Rocky Mountain Marital Arts
 - Johannsson Architects

- c. **Retail**
 - DK Thrift
 - Spirits of New Castle Liquor Store
 - _____ (Mattivi Used Clothing)
 - An Exquisite Design Flower Shop
 - Eventos
 - Taqueria Elias

Additionally, there other business already located elsewhere in New Castle that could be a strong contributor if recruited for a Downtown location.

5. **Public facilities.** Town Hall, Library and Community Center are located Downtown. Each facility is relatively new, with the Library being substantially upgraded in 2013. Each of these facilities has sufficient capacity to serve the community for many years to come. Each facility serves as a draw Downtown.

6. **Events and activities**

There are numerous special events hosted throughout the year Downtown, with a particular concentration of these events occurring during the summer months. While events occur in various locations in the community, many occur Downtown. The fact that there are so many interesting events adds vitality to Downtown. It is important that this continues in the future. However, do these wonderful events attract a significant portion of the local population? Can they be made attractive to, and known by, a broader population base in a way that contributes to the economic success of Downtown?

7. **Outdoor hangout atmosphere, with sidewalks to stroll, Burning Mountain Park, and several outdoor eating areas.**

B. WEAKENESS

1. **Incongruous land uses.**

Today, there are eight single-family residential dwellings, including three mobile homes, and three vacant lots in key locations where there should be commercial activity.

One of the more predominate land uses Downtown is a vehicle repair and rental facility, with a significant amount of outdoor, unscreened storage of vehicles and parts on an unkept site. This site was formerly a gas station. While it is unknown at this time, gas stations frequently present costly environmental concerns associated with underground fuel tanks. The cost of purchasing the property and doing required environmental cleanup may reduce the chance of finding a private developer that is willing to take on such costs anytime soon, given the strength of the local commercial market Downtown.

2. **Inconsistent architecture**

The historical building materials and designs typically included wood, brick and native stone, with larger repetitive display windows on the ground floor of buildings. Two story structures with above ground guest decks were typically supported by posts, allowing the deck to cover the sidewalk below. A number of buildings contained shed roofs on posts, also creating a sidewalk cover. False facades were also common on pitched roof structures, allowing for dramatic commercial effect. Two story buildings usually contained a strong cornice feature.



Typical Architectural Design of the Early 1900s



Historical Wood and Brick and Stone Design



New Brick Traditional



Inconsistent Scale and Design



Stucco and Glass Block Windows not Traditional Materials



Metal Buildings with Garage Doors

3. **Inconsistent zoning practices.** Section 17.36.030 of the Town zoning regulations state:

The Town's goals within the C-1 district are to retain historical characteristics of the downtown business area by preserving existing structures constructed prior to the year 1930. Remodeling and construction is encouraged to reflect the goals of the zone district; to enhance the town's attraction to residents, tourists, and visitors; to serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry; to reflect a pedestrian orientation; and to enhance property values.

The only part of this statement that actually describes the role of Downtown is that it is to “serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry.” There is not a clear direction for the role of Downtown in the “Big Idea.” If Downtown is to thrive and the important objectives set forth above are to be realized, its purposes must be distinguished from other community and neighborhood commercial centers. Once that is done, the zoning regulations (allowed uses and area and bulk provisions) of the Code should be crafted in a way that advances the key role of Downtown.

Section 17.36.040 of the existing zoning regulations allows a range of land uses Downtown, some of which may or may not be consistent with the desired goals for this area. The code stipulates that “all storage of materials” shall be within a building or obscured by a fence of at least six feet in height and that storage areas shall be restricted to the rear twenty-five (25) feet of a lot. This requirement is not followed Downtown, whether the uses are legal non-conforming or for other reasons.



Current zoning regulations allow a wide range of uses to be considered as “conditional uses.” For example, a residential single-family detached building occupying no more than 1,200 square feet of land area is allowed under a conditional use permit. The same thing goes for a residential apartment building. The zoning regulations do prohibit outside storage of inoperable vehicles, equipment, salvage, scrap or other such items, auto storage yard and truck repair and storage yard. Yet, this appears to be occurring now Downtown.

Automobile, small truck and trailer rental, automobile service station (with or without minor repairs), and appliance repair are also allowed if granted a conditional use permit.

The Code also stipulates that “any use” not specifically defined in the permitted or nonpermitted use categories shall be a conditional use, which means at a minimum the Town will at least consider almost any use Downtown. Most commonly, zoning regulations stipulate that only permitted uses are allowed and that only “specific”

conditional or special review uses will be allowed only after the proper permits are issued by the governing authority. The “specific” conditional or special review uses typically considered by a community are only those that might further the purpose of the zone district (in this case the C-1 downtown zone district) under certain circumstances or conditions of approval. Typically, there is no reason to list non-permitted uses. Attempting to do so too often opens the door to a wide variety of uses that really do not advance the goals of Downtown long-term.

Section 17.84.050 of the Town’s municipal codes states that a conditional use “**shall be approved**” if the proposal meets the criteria in the code, one of which is general compatibility with adjacent uses. If there are existing single-family dwelling or mobile home, for example, and a similar use is proposed nearby, would it be generally compatible with the nearby or adjacent uses. Does that mean that such, even though is it compatible with an adjacent use advances the long-term Vision for Downtown?

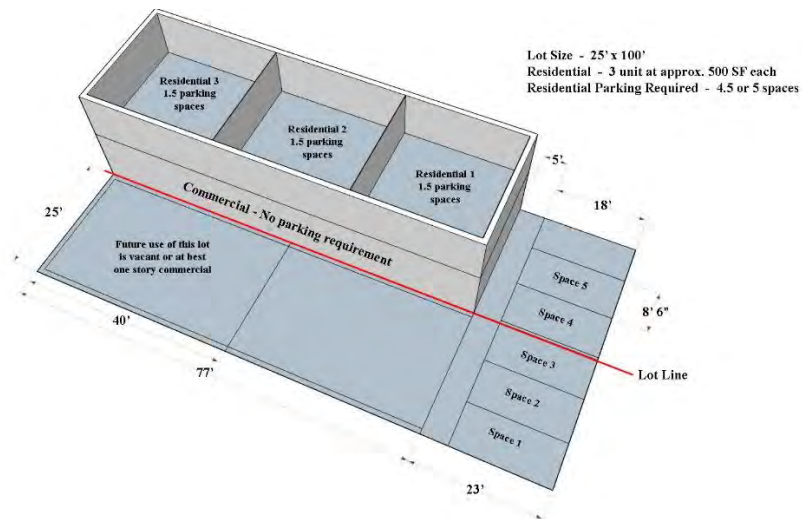


Mobile Home adjacent to Single Family Residence

It appears that the permitted and conditional use lists and conditional use criterial have not been evaluated since the Comprehensive Community Plan was adopted. The current zoning regulations may not be consistent with the desired direction of the community and they should be brought into alignment as soon as possible.

- 4. **Ineffective zoning practices and direction.** To stimulate residential development Downtown, the zoning regulations were changed to allow a maximum building height limit of 40-feet. The idea behind this provision was to allow two floors of residential space above ground floor commercial use. This may be a good idea in principle. However, the zoning regulations also require 1.5 spaces per residential dwelling unit Downtown. It is *unlikely* that a third story will be constructed because of this parking requirement. The only way it might happen is for each above-ground floor to be limited to one residential dwelling unit. This may not be financially feasible. Further, while better than no residential units, it does little to add critical mass needed Downtown.

Figure 1.
Parking and Development Evaluation



Recently, the Watts Building, at 4th and Main Street, faced this situation. It is only a two-story building, containing four dwelling units on the second floor. To meet its parking requirements the lot immediately east of the building site was required to accommodate the parking requirement of this two-story building. In this instance, a nice pocket park will be created. However, as additional development occurs Downtown, vacant lots spread throughout Downtown will have a negative effect.

As shown in Figure 1, the only two possible uses of the adjacent property would be either a vacant lot (possibly used as a pocket park or similar open use) or a one-story commercial building, assuming it is financially feasible to build. More open or vacant lots, too many one story commercial buildings and the underuse of the lot by not gaining more residential units on those lots may have a long-term negative effect on Downtown. This problem should be addressed.

5. **Lack of critical mass, underutilization and need for rehabilitation.** Currently, there are periodic events and activities Downtown, primarily in Burning Mountain Park. It is limited to a comfortable capacity of about 200 people. Occasionally, several businesses provide weekend entertainment. It appears that many residents do not know about the events and activities Downtown when they do occur. In other cases, some of the existing store space is simply underutilized, lacking uses that are open before 8:00 AM or after 5:00 PM when local residents return from working elsewhere, or on the weekend for that matter. All things considered, there is not enough life/activity Downtown.

There is an interesting quandary that must be solved Downtown. First, while there is an existing mix of commercial businesses, that mix, particularly with respect to the retail sector, is not strong enough to attract significant numbers of people/shoppers routinely and generate return shopper interest. On the other hand, without sufficient numbers of people, there is not enough business to support interesting and niche retail uses.



Residential and Garage Door on Main Street



Vacant Metal Building



Vacant, Poor State of Repair and Storage



Vacant / For Sale



Underutilization and Rehabilitation Needed

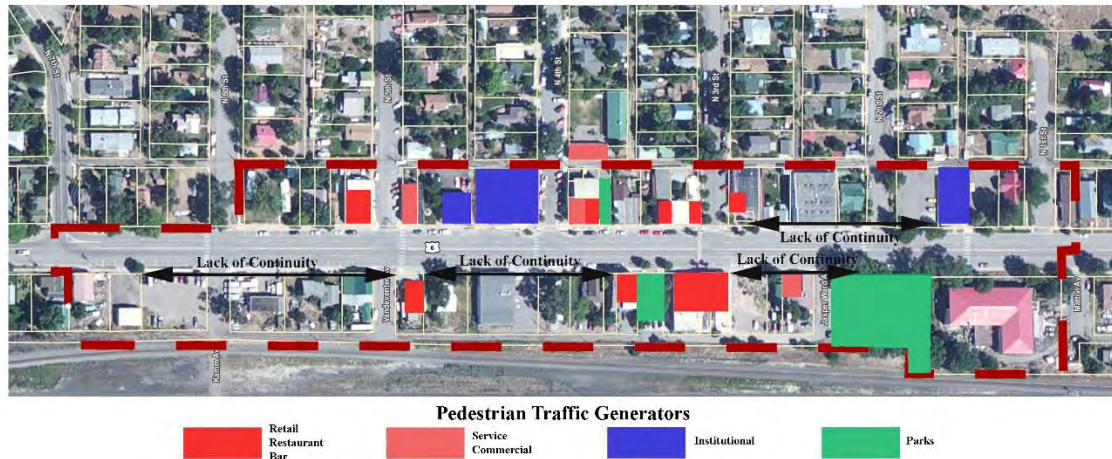


Residential Occupying Desired Commercial Sites

For these and other reasons there is a problem with pedestrian flow downtown. If Downtown is viewed in the context of a shopping center, complete with anchor stores and inline retail creating a link between anchors, Downtown is lacking strong anchors on either end of Main Street. It also is missing much of the connective tissue (inline stores) the promote the pedestrian flow along the entire course of Main Street. Without strong connections from one end of Main Street to the other and without a strong attraction at each end, many pedestrians will not walk the length of Main Street Downtown.

Most of the commercial land use Downtown is in the form of a good base of service commercial uses and restaurants and bars. Niche retail is lacking, however. The absence of such retail is one of the reasons pedestrian flow is lacking. There is not enough shopping to cause pedestrian to investigate Main Street from one end to the other. This is a problem that must be considered in a redevelopment and improvement strategy.

DOWNTOWN NEW CASTLE PEDESTRIAN FLOW CONTINUITY



6. **Visibility/curb appeal/Image from I-70 is an eyesore.** This issue has been raised by many in the community. The view of the New Castle from the I-70 corridor often amounts to people's first and sometimes only impression of the community. There are extensive areas unkept and sluffing hillsides, unkept and deteriorating fences, property owner/tenant junk and debris, vehicles and dumpsters visible from the I-70 corridor, and Town-owned buildings painted colors that clash with the surrounding environment. Unfortunately, this problem affects more than just Downtown. Failure to address it will negatively affect Downtown and the whole community. Much of this problem occurs on private property. The solution will require public involvement and improvements, resident cooperation and regulatory enforcement (which is sometimes unpopular.)



Hillside Cuts and Scars



Public buildings colors contrasting to vegetation and little visual screening



Outdoor storage, dumpsters and vehicles open to view



Private property maintenance open to view

7. **Lack of Retail Draw Downtown.** Many of New Castle’s residents now leave town each day for work in other communities. Leaving or returning, many residents make convenient shopping stops at businesses or the bank in the New Castle Plaza. Too few residents of Castle Valley Ranch and Lakota Canyon Ranch visit Downtown regularly. As noted above a critical mass to support retail shopping and entertainment destination does not currently exist Downtown. There are not enough suitable evening or weekend events. For a variety of reasons, the demand for new shopping and other amenities Downtown is probably not supportable until the town begins to deal effectively with this problem.

It seems that today, the New Castle Plaza serves as the defacto downtown of the community. However, by the very nature of the shopping plaza, it cannot fill the “heart” function that a successful community needs.

8. **Lack of Downtown identity and direction at the U.S. Highway 6 and 24 and Castle Valley Boulevard intersection.** Downtown is removed from the direct path of many residents coming and going from the community. The main traffic intersection is about one mile from Downtown. At this intersection, which is the primary entrance to the community, there is virtually no indication that there is in fact a downtown. While there is a small sign on the north side of the intersection, it is not effective or visible. Residents and visitors alike are not even aware of the directional sign. Furthermore, the view of it is often blocked by garage sale and other similar signs.



Ineffective Entryway Sign for visibility and no connection to town brand

9. **Lack of branding and marketing presence.** There is a lack of knowledge and understanding about Downtown. Too often, it appears that local residents are not fully aware of what is available or happening Downtown. When visitors arrive, they are not given good information about Downtown or the community as a whole. There is very little public information – what to do in New Castle – at U.S. Highway 6 and 23 and Castle Valley Boulevard, the community’s primary access intersection. Furthermore, it appears that too few people residing in nearby communities know much about Downtown New Castle. The few that do always seem to be “surprised” at how good the restaurants are and that it is a nice place.

In 2016 the Town of New Castle hired Hill Aevium Marketing to complete a branding and marketing plan for the town. What is a community branding and marketing plan? A community brand is something that distinguishes or differentiates New Castle and its downtown from other nearby, regional and state-wide communities. Why should someone want to visit Downtown New Castle; why should they want to return? If New Castle wants to attract new business investment, real estate developers, and returning and new customers Downtown, it MUST get potential “customers” to know about it, be moved by it and then have a desire to experience it. It must take steps to advance that brand through public relations and marketing. As Downtown improves, it will be through its marketing effort that New Castle will inform its potential customers (residents and visitors) and advance its position in the eyes of those customers. Once Downtown does this, customers will not only come Downtown, they will return.

Follow through and additional funding will be necessary to advance this effort. Moreover, there must be local people (a champion) that are committed to the idea, are enthusiastic and will carry it forward. Such a group has not been assembled. The Town of New Castle, with a limited staff size currently, cannot be expected to do it all and citizen volunteers and paid staff in the future specific to this cause will likely be required.

The Downtown Improvement Plan and action strategy must include a branding and marketing effort that brings "the community" Downtown for enjoyment and connection and "customers" Downtown for shopping, dining, and entertainment. A mixed-use

downtown attracts patrons by being multi-dimensional, since patrons attracted by one use or activity often cross over to others. For example, people that go the park will often shop or eat, assuming that uses are sufficiently available. Solutions for Downtown must be more comprehensive in scope, including considerably more than just making it look nice. The action plan must be designed to actively attract real estate developers/investors; it must seek to retain and expand existing businesses and attract new businesses. There must be a concerted branding and marketing effort.

10. **Lack of a strong Gathering Place.** It was noted in the strength section above that there is some hangout atmosphere Downtown. Hogback Pizza and the Black Dog Saloon provide a good foundation for gathering. Black Dog Saloon occasionally provides weekend music, but it is not a regular, dependable schedule. Burning Mountain Park is used for events and activities. In 2017, the Town will hold about _____ events in this park. Typically, about _____ people attend these events.

As a society, we are moving into an age of “third places.” The first place is the home, the second place is the work location, and the third is place is where we go to hangout and connect with other people. (For example, Starbuck’s has built its entire operation on being a “third place.”) New Castle must achieve this same sense of connection and gathering Downtown and it must be attractive to all age groups.

11. **Railroad.** Some people have listened for years to the train whistle at all hours of the day; many get used to the sound it makes as it passes the uncontrolled intersection at Kamm Avenue. The crossing at Kamm Avenue is the only reason for the disturbance of the whistle. There are very few trips through this intersection, as it provides access to the Water and Sewer Treatment Facilities. While it is not known for sure, some assessment should be made to determine what impact this disruption will have on additional, needed residential development Downtown. If it proves to be a concern the Town should determine if there is a cost-efficient way to control to intersection to eliminate the need for the whistle, particularly during the nighttime hours when there should be no need to cross the railroad at this intersection other than in emergencies with the water/wastewater systems.
12. **Disconnection from the community.** Downtown core is disconnected from the rest of the community.

Separation of old town from the CVR, Lakota areas is not a negative, build on it – **LAND USE PLAN UPDATE AND MARKETING VARIETY IN NEIGHBORHOODS**

13. **Lack of formal organization or meaningful capital improvement plan/financial mechanisms.** The Town’s annual operating revenue is sufficient to manage all of the basic operating needs of the community. Unfortunately, it is not of sufficient size now to allow the Town the luxury of pursuing a larger community investment strategy in the near future, including all of the action steps that will be necessary to improve Downtown. Economic development is needed.

With respect to a downtown organization, shopping centers of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s and now successful Downtowns (e.g., the Denver Partnership) provided many benefits to retailers, including planned marketing, maintenance, recruitment of businesses and manage redevelopment and improvement strategies. For the most part, these are absent or limited Downtown New Castle. The Town has constructed streetscape improvements and does basic maintenance of streets, sidewalks and alleys. Citizen volunteers are trying to make improvements but it can be difficult for volunteers, without proper financial resources and staffing expertise, to make significant and sustained improvements like those that will be needed Downtown.

- 14. **Parking is problematic.** Today, the number of publicly-owned parking spaces on Main Street between the Post Office and 6th Street is 86 spaces. This is not a significant number of spaces for a successful downtown now. While there may be a few instances when this number of parking spaces is deficient, it is more than enough the vast majority of the time for the current uses Downtown. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there are substantial amounts of land and buildings that are underused. In the future, as utilization improves Downtown, the amount of parking may likely be inadequate most days.

Current Number of Spaces – 2nd Street to 6th/Kamm

North Side	29 Spaces
South Side	26 Spaces
Community Center Lot	<u>13 Spaces</u>
TOTAL	68 Spaces

Downtown will require both a short and long-term parking improvement plan. The short-term plan must address the need to stimulate commercial and residential development and the conflicting parking regulations in the Town’s Code. Overtime, the number of parking spaces will need to increase as the amount of viable commercial and residential tenant space increases. There must be a long-term plan to increase the number of parking spaces Downtown in the future.

Currently, it is difficult to increase substantially the number of parking space along Main Street. The State of Colorado owns the right-of-way and the Department of Transportation (CDOT) controls the maintenance and use of the street, including parking. CDOT’s policy is maintain parallel parking and the existing drive lanes. CDOT appears to be open to reducing the number of travel lanes from four to three, to add bike lanes, provided, however, that this action does not alter the existing parking or reduce the width of the paved surface. Before the Town of New Castle can alter this policy or increase parking spaces, the Town must accept the maintenance and improvement responsibility for the street, including the financial obligations.

The Town is not in the position currently to take on this financial obligation. This will require future economic development in community and an expansion of the tax base. With additional revenue the Town might someday be in a position to accept this responsibility. The Town will likely want to arrange for CDOT to repair the bridge at the

west end of Main Street and agree upon an appropriate cost share for the installation of a roundabout at the U.S. Highway 6 and 24 – Castle Valley Boulevard before taking this step. (There is currently some thought that the roundabout might be constructed in 2019 or 2020.) Once the Town begins to experience sustained revenue through economic development, it will be able to accommodate Main Street maintenance. When this is possible, the long-term parking plan should be implemented.

C. OPPORTUNITIES LEADING TO SUCCESS

1. Cultural Heritage

Many communities have designed their downtown growth and revitalization strategies around a theme such as entertainment, housing, sports, or meetings and conventions. Although successful in select markets, some have failed. The same themes have been replicated hundreds of times in hundreds of markets, and still with little or no impact. The problem is often two-fold. First, some failed to fully appreciate and successfully develop their theme around existing community assets. Second, the presentation was marginal and unable to engage an audience. The most prevalent lesson learned by these downtowns has been that successful revitalization themes must be a reflection of the unique and historical character of the local market, it must be engaging and it must be presented in the best possible light. This is one of the potential strengths of New Castle and it should be developed and symbolized Downtown. New Castle has the opportunity to engage History Colorado and other organizations to identify the best examples of heritage tourism presentation and learn how it can and should be done in New Castle.

2. Appropriate Commercial and Support Mix Downtown

The specialty store trend argues for greater attention to downtown area design issues such as building appearance and pedestrian environments. Specialty stores, as opposed to general merchandise retailers, are typically more reliant upon a cumulative mix of quality and like-type businesses that create a variety of different spending opportunities. They can prosper when they are in an "attractive pedestrian-oriented environment" conducive to recreational and discretionary shopping by residents and tourists alike.

Specialty retail stores frequently act as strong anchors, particularly in smaller communities, and especially when targeted to specific audiences. In enhanced downtowns, no longer are department stores or other large retail businesses thought to be essential downtown anchors. Instead, non-traditional anchors are effectively drawing new patrons downtown. These include uses such as movie theaters, the arts and music, art galleries, brew pubs, coffee houses, museums, community theaters, community and recreation centers, community colleges, farmers' markets, and specialty businesses. What Downtown New Castle can provide that a traditional shopping mall cannot achieve is the "environment and experience."

3. **Mixed-Use and Lifestyle Potential**

Downtown living can offer unique amenities and lifestyle choices. One of the values of this lifestyle option is a greater market potential within walking distance of Downtown businesses. A reason for living in close proximity to Downtown is convenient access to restaurants, stores, downtown jobs, parks and gathering places and cultural amenities and events. It allows residents to connect and feel a part of the community. The diverse mix of people and events provides a distinct culture and sense of place not available elsewhere.

Several national and local trends point to increasing opportunities for Downtown housing. The number of households potentially interested in downtown residences is growing as more young professionals are waiting to start families and older age groups looking to down size their housing. (The median age in New Castle is about 32 years. New Castle is growing particularly in the 25 to 44 age group, although there is a significant number of retired individuals living here.) Given the convenience of so many activities and amenities, the lifestyle option may become more significant as the costs associated with transportation rise in the future. Equally important, the cost of purchasing and owning a home in New Castle is attractive, compared to other nearby communities, which can help to attract people looking to escape the higher cost of living in nearby communities. But, as described previously, while downtown living can be attractive for seniors and others, older buildings often present access and other issues that must be overcome.

Downtown New Castle, there are opportunities for second and third story residential use in many of the buildings. Furthermore, immediately adjacent to Downtown, in the Old Town neighborhood, where there are currently small residential structures showing signs of maintenance issues and age, there may be significant redevelopment potential and opportunities for other housing types such as accessory dwellings. Additionally, creating opportunities to transition a higher density redevelopment in to the immediate edge of the Old Town neighborhood might be considered.

Identifying key locations in the Downtown improvement plan and promoting redevelopment in those areas might encourage developers to tackle more complex projects. The public sector's role should be to provide an environment in which in-fill housing and redevelopment can flourish. Such an environment can be accomplished by mitigating many of the higher costs inherent in developing downtown housing by engaging political support, initiating regulatory changes, and providing economic incentives and leadership. There also must be reliance on the funds and expertise of the private sector to develop, own and maintain the housing. Creative solutions and cooperative efforts by developers, lenders, and Town officials will be necessary to offset the additional constraints of developing downtown housing, but appropriate and reasonable efforts can result in a vibrant downtown area.

4. **Reserve of Local Artists, Writers, and Business Owners/Executives to Draw Expertise**

The community has a significant number of local artists, writers, business resources and executives that have time and capacity to help Downtown develop the amenities and programs that together will create the environment and experience necessary for success. Art in public places, music and concert series downtown, galleries and storytelling events, fairs and markets all must be developed within reason and to the extent possible. Local business executives should be counseled about the needs of the business community and specific actions that could be taken to attract businesses Downtown. Many residents of New Castle own or operate business in other nearby communities. Tapping into this groups of people in the community must be one of the first steps in an economic development plan to identify possible businesses that might be interested in relocating to New Castle - the “low hanging fruit.” The expertise of all these individuals must be pulled together through task force work aimed at developing specific solutions and programs. Engaging these local experts also creates interest and commitment to success.

5. **Stronger social and entertainment center.** It may be possible to attract more residents Downtown to activities and events, getting them to understand and support businesses there, by improving gathering spaces. It also might be possible to increase or improve local events that attract people from outside the community. Events that are based around a well-crafted and marketed community brand should be pursued (e.g., Burning Mountain Bike Festival or such festivals based around a recreation theme that relates directly to a recreation-oriented brand). Burning Mountain Park is a sizable space. However there are features of the park that limit its usability. Overtime, it might be possible to expand the park and redesign it to increase use and impact on Downtown.

6. **Opportunity for Pop-Up/Incubator Entrepreneurs, Entertainers and Businesses**

New Castle has the opportunity to build upon the strength and overcome some of the weakness of Downtown by recruiting and nurturing start-up businesses, including business ventures in a formative phase that are not ready for more expensive rents in other nearby communities. Some of these might be users of office space. Others might be seedling retailers who could eventually grow into larger spaces. The Town might offer incentives to attract these businesses, or even offer inexpensive space to operate. The Town also might consider the idea of pop-up venues for entertainment if they advance the overall objective as bring life and vitality Downtown.

Some existing structures in downtown could be adapted to provide smaller spaces. In some cases, the town might consider pop-up space that can be provided outside of existing buildings in a cost-effective manner. This approach might be for consideration until a commercial market matures Downtown, thereby prompting permanent redevelopment solutions. The idea would be to help businesses grow, get familiar with being downtown and then help them find other spaces in buildings above shops. As they mature, they become future tenants for new redevelopment projects, which require such tenants to be successful.



Example of Pop-Up Entertainment and Retail Commercial Activity

D. THREATS

1. **Lack of Vision, Leadership and Follow through.** Possibly the greatest threat to the success of Downtown is the lack of a "unifying vision" for the future and the commitment and leadership to advance such a vision. To be successful there must be a long-range vision. But success will not be achieved unless that vision has: a) "support and commitment" of Downtown merchants and property owners, the Town, and residents of the community, b) leadership that will sustain the effort over an extended period and c) on-going actions that are successful to building and maintain momentum over time.
2. **Failure to Support the Role of Downtown.** Pressure to build a substantial and concentrated amount of mixed use commercial elsewhere in the community. The purpose of Downtown must be well defined. It must differ and remain a special place within the community. Should other areas seize or be allowed to take over this role, Downtown will suffer the consequence.
3. **Lack of Appropriate Economic Development Community-Wide.** Lack of economic development that leads to sustained increases in public revenues to support a comprehensive community investment strategy, including implementing the needed actions to improve/strengthen Downtown. Therefore, investment and improvements are not only necessary Downtown, by there must be a community development strategy that promote appropriate types and amounts of commercial and industrial development elsewhere in New Castle so the Town is able to one day advance a comprehensive community investment and improvement strategy.

4. **Unwilling to Accept Change.** Trying to hold onto the "old" quiet small-town image; residents may not be willing to accept the realities of growth or the kind of change that will be necessary to achieve a successful Downtown and community. It is not a question of growth vs no growth. Growth and development is needed, but it must be guided/directed so it is consistent with the community's vision.

IMPROVEMENT AND ACTION PLAN

TO BE ADDED

A. STRATEGIES

1. Branding, Marketing and Public Awareness
2. Land Use Plan
3. Regulatory Changes
4. Infill, Redevelopment and Utilization
5. Placemaking and Gathering
6. Arts, Culture and Heritage
7. Entryways and Wayfinding
8. Short and Long-Term Parking and Traffic Plan
9. Design and Image
10. Community Connectivity
11. Old Town
12. Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction
13. Funding, Incentives, Administration and Organization

B. IMPROVEMENTS, PROJECTS AND ACTIONS

C. TIMEFRAME, PRIORITIES, CATALYSTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES