

Planning for Glenwood's future

Leslie Bethel | December 20, 2017

The Downtown Development Authority is a tax-funded district in downtown Glenwood Springs. Revenues earmarked to the DDA are used exclusively for downtown vitalization. The board wishes to share its progress and projects in the works with a monthly article, and this is the third edition.

BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR DOWNTOWN

Over the past several years, the residents of Glenwood Springs have helped shape the vision for a thriving downtown through the Confluence Redevelopment Plan, the Sixth Street Corridor Master Plan, and the Seventh Street Redevelopment Project. The projects are individually unique and seek to address challenges in each area while building on opportunity to expand vitality and vibrancy. It's much like connecting puzzle pieces to create a grand multiple-piece puzzle that all fits together.

Glenwood has unique challenges and factors that make for a dynamic strategic planning process. Our historic downtown is situated near the confluence of two rivers, the Colorado and the Roaring Fork, and the city is at a cornerstone of three social and economic regions — the Roaring Fork Valley, the Vail Valley and the Colorado River Valley.

There is a state highway running through the core of the city, and we are conveniently located off Interstate 70. Advantageous geography, paired with our rich history, increasingly diverse population and burgeoning commercial centers means Glenwood Springs is not a typical mountain town.

The landscape of our city is an intricate web of public and private spaces that seek to produce goods and services to meet social demands — housing, transportation, recreation, commercial centers and more. When building a strategy for development we must consider all these factors to promote the best mix for our community.

PARTNER IN AREA-WIDE PLANNING

Earlier this year, the city of Glenwood Springs was awarded an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields grant. Only about 20 EPA Brownfields grants are awarded each year. It is a holistic planning approach that considers the impact of redevelopment on neighborhoods, economic development, improvements to recreation and the environment, and affordable housing.

Our EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Effort is called "Glenwood: Moving Forward Together." The desired outcome of this effort is to provide a strategic redevelopment plan for key sites in the core of Glenwood Springs that will support our community's vision for a thriving Glenwood Springs, including housing choices for all residents, access to parks and open spaces, and retail spaces to support our economy.

Knitting together the Confluence Redevelopment Plan, the Sixth Street Corridor Master Plan, and the Seventh Street Redevelopment Project with the area-wide planning effort creates the opportunity for our city to begin working toward implementation. Under this effort, we can look at downtown as a whole, plan for harmonious spaces, ensure a design consistency and manage opportunities for prosperity.

In 2018, we ask you to participate in this process with us. We need your input, and we need the final vision to reflect the community's desires. Look for opportunities to participate, attend a meeting and provide feedback. Please take a five-minute survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/glenwoodmoving> to help the consultants understand the retail and tourism economy in Glenwood Springs. Join us at 6 p.m. Jan. 9 at City Hall for a presentation of the consultants' preliminary findings, and at 6 p.m. Jan. 10 at Morgridge Commons to share thoughts and feedback with the consultants at an interactive open house. You are a piece of this puzzle.

The Glenwood: Moving Forward Together effort provides an opportunity to connect the dots: between individual planning projects and from plans to implementation. The DDA is committed to being a partner and playing a supportive role in this effort.

This will be a transformational project for our city. We will activate our community and capture potential of these areas, opening new opportunities for prosperity for our city.

Leslie Bethel is executive director of the Downtown Development Authority. You can follow the DDA on Instagram (@downtownglenwoodsprings) and Facebook. Early design conceptual sketches are periodically posted on Facebook and Instagram.

<https://www.postindependent.com/news/local/dda-column-planning-for-glenwoods-future/>