

Glenwood Springs Downtown Plan

DOWNTOWN PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

1. Grand Avenue Business District

- Preserve existing scale and historic building character by enacting design controls.
- New buildings on Grand Avenue must have ground-level retail features.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment by redirecting truck traffic and adopt traffic calming measures.

2. North Downtown

- No widening of 6th Street.
- Encourage infill retail uses along 6th Street while discouraging auto-oriented uses and national chain building design.
- Improve pedestrian connections within the area and to the Grand Avenue Business District.

3. The "Confluence" Business Park Civic Center

- Relocate the city shops and wastewater treatment facility to create a master plan for downtown redevelopment.
- Create a mixed-use business park in an urban campus setting to accommodate a civic center which includes city and county facilities, a conference center, a transit stop, and private commercial development.
- Improve river access and public open space.
- Construct 8th street entrance into downtown.

4. Parking

- Provide on-street parking for customers and visitors.
- Build new surface parking and/or a parking structure for employees on the periphery of the historic core subject to design controls.

5. Residential

- Maintain strong single family neighborhoods around downtown.
- Provide zoning incentives to encourage downtown housing.

6. The Bypass

- City explores the feasibility of a bypass.

7. Market/Business Organization

- Form a Business Improvement District to promote downtown development and to finance needed improvements including parking.



Note: This plan is illustrative in nature and is intended to be used for discussion purposes only.

Glenwood Springs Downtown Plan

BACKGROUND

This plan presents the preferred scenario for development of downtown Glenwood Springs. The preferred scenario is based on:

- *Results of the community wide survey conducted in late 1997,*
- *Interviews with a wide range of interested parties,*
- *Comments on a series of working papers prepared by the consulting team on key topics such as transportation and parking, land use, economics/demographics, and organizational issues, and*
- *Several workshops with the project advisory committee and staff and community workshops with the public.*

From the initial survey and background work, a number of key goals and objectives emerged that guided preparation of the preferred development scenario. These included:

Key Goals and Objectives

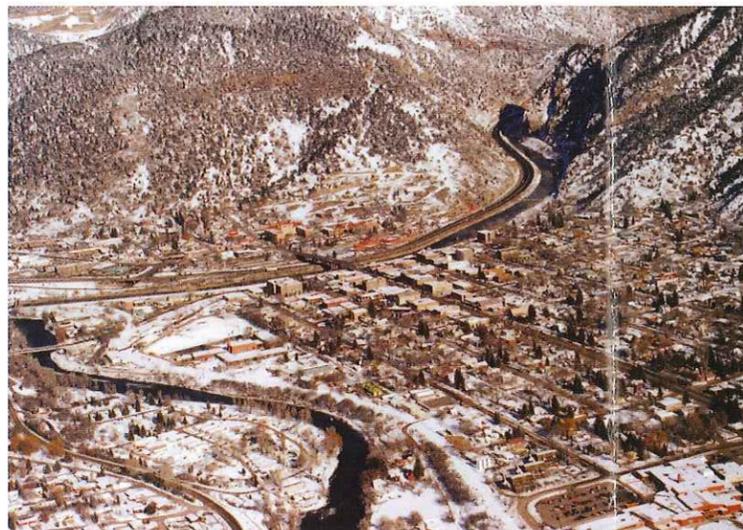
- **Downtown should maintain and strengthen its role as the historic center of the community and region—a retail/entertainment, office/government, and tourist hub.**
- **New development should respect the attractive small-town scale and historic context of the central business district.**
- **The pedestrian atmosphere of the downtown should be preserved and enhanced.**
- **Physical and visual connections to the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers should be created.**
- **Steps should be taken to reduce traffic on Grand Avenue to create a safer pedestrian environment and atmosphere more conducive to retail business.**
- **New parking lots and structures as well as other strategies should be considered to ease the parking shortage in downtown .**
- **Downtown needs a well-organized business association with adequate staff and stable funding to manage and promote the central business area.**
- **Underutilized land in the heart of the downtown should be actively redeveloped to maintain and strengthen its role as an office and governmental center and to provide open space and river connections.**

To translate these general goals and objectives into specific implementation actions and to assist the city and its citizens in choosing preferred approaches to making the goals and objectives a reality, the consulting team drafted three alternative development scenarios, described briefly below:

1. **Current Trends Continue:** The city takes only modest new steps to address pressing issues facing the downtown.
2. **Transportation-Oriented Scenario:** Improving transportation, access, and parking in the downtown becomes the key focus for the city and the downtown association.
3. **Small-Town Character Scenario:** Maintaining the existing small-town scale and character of downtown becomes a high priority of the city.

These three alternative scenarios and accompanying implementation strategies were considered at a series of community meetings held in Glenwood Springs in June 1998, which were attended by over 125 people. Citizens also submitted written comments. Based on these meetings and comments, the consulting team produced a preferred scenario that is an amalgam of features of all three of the alternatives, but with the majority based on Scenario 3 above. A detailed description of the preferred scenario follows.

The Glenwood Springs Downtown Plan was formally adopted by City Council on June 17, 1999.



THE PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO

Maintaining the existing small-town scale and character of downtown becomes a high priority of the city. Demolition of historic structures is subject to regulation, and new buildings must meet compatibility standards so that they fit with the existing fabric of the central business district. New, well-designed parking lots and structures are built on the edge of the district primarily for employees; on-street and lots near Grand Avenue are reserved for customers and visitors. The city undertakes a more detailed assessment of building a bypass to remove truck traffic from downtown. A variety of routes are explored.

The existing rail corridor is dedicated to transit and a hike/bike trail. Steps are taken to make Grand Avenue and the downtown core much more pedestrian-oriented. Sixth Avenue and Grand Avenue are not widened. The Grand Avenue Bridge is replaced with a well-designed structure similar in size to the existing bridge. New retail businesses and offices are added in North Glenwood to strengthen the northern part of downtown. Pedestrian connections are improved to the downtown core, and Sixth Avenue is targeted for smaller scale, non-auto oriented development more in keeping with the character of downtown. A new business improvement district is created to spearhead downtown management and promotion, as well as provision of parking and other services. A mixed-use business park is developed on the west edge of downtown to accommodate modern office buildings and to provide a new public access at the confluence of the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers. The area develops with a campus-like setting featuring greenbelts running throughout the property to provide public access between the rivers and downtown. A civic center which includes City Hall, County offices and the jail is established west of the existing County building. The Pitkin Avenue right-of-way between 7th and 8th street is vacated to accommodate the civic center. Steps are taken to design the structures to fit in with the character, mass and scale of the downtown and to mitigate traffic, parking, and other impacts during and after construction of the civic center. The existing city shops and wastewater treatment facility and industrial uses are moved to more appropriate locations outside the downtown.

PROS:

- *Downtown character and atmosphere maintained.*
- *Retail preserved and strengthened downtown.*
- *Bypass greatly reduces through traffic.*
- *Development character north of river improved.*
- *Space provided for compatible office development.*
- *Connections to river improved and park amenity created.*
- *Broadened tourism base.*
- *Development interests seeking to do business in areas with a unique character attracted to invest in downtown by emphasis on preservation and renovation incentives.*

CONS:

- *Overall cost of bypass (potentially \$20-40+ million) high; city's share siphons funds from other regional and community transportation projects.*
- *Bypass alignment adversely affects some existing residential developments.*
- *Control of private property owners' ability to demolish or alter downtown structures spurs some investors to steer clear of downtown.*
- *Risk of business park being economically unfeasible. Associated costs of moving city facilities and existing businesses.*
- *Property taxes on local downtown businesses increased to fund business improvement district and full-time downtown association staff.*

Transportation

1. **Traffic.** The city contributes funds and undertakes a concerted lobbying effort to secure federal funding in order to speed the planning and construction of a new bypass to remove truck traffic from Grand Avenue. New bypass alignments are studied and an alignment is selected.
2. **Pedestrian environment.** Through trucks banned on bridge and Grand Avenue when bypass completed. In the interim, the city adopts a range of traffic-calming, pedestrian-oriented measures such as neck downs at intersections, raised/specially demarcated crosswalks, and longer crossing signals. Emphasis also placed on creating pedestrian connections between various sectors of downtown: Grand Avenue and Cooper Street; western business park (described below under land use) along Roaring Fork River to Grand Avenue; Sixth Street and north area hotels. City also adopts design standards to ensure that retail facade is maintained along Grand (e.g., display windows). No widening of Sixth Street to accommodate additional automobile traffic.
3. **Parking.** Expanded business improvement district covering all of downtown (both north and south of river) with special taxing authority generates funds to build structured parking and additional surface parking on periphery of downtown in financial partnership with government entities. New off-street spaces dedicated primarily to employees. On-street parking dedicated primarily to customers and visitors. New parking lots and structures subject to quality design/landscaping controls (e.g., first-floor retail/office uses, facade treatments, interior and perimeter landscaping and edge treatment with fence or wall). (See parking white paper for greater detail.) New surface parking lots are discouraged on Grand Avenue or Cooper Street between 7th and 9th.
4. **Transit/rail.** Planning for transit and rail continues. Transit stop built in western business park along Roaring Fork, but end-of-line station is west of downtown. Trail along river maintained.
5. **Grand Avenue Bridge.** No widening or lengthening of bridge—temporary repairs only with eventual replacement with bridge of same dimensions, but better design/appearance.
6. **8th Street/7th Street Bridge.** New direct connection created from bridge into downtown through new business park.

Land Use

1. **Character/Design/Scale.** Continue existing 3-story height limit placed on buildings within core of downtown with no special permits/variances for larger structures. Larger buildings allowed only on periphery of downtown with special design controls to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential neighborhoods (e.g., stepbacks) and if upper stories devoted to housing. Contextual design controls adopted for new construction with staff (not preservation commission) review of elements such as height, setbacks, materials, etc.—but not architectural detail.
2. **Historic Preservation.** Preservation of historic structures strongly supported by city which adopts multi-faceted approach to preservation including incentives and regulations to protect historic buildings. City provides incentives for renovation vs. demolition and seeks grant from Colorado Historical Society to augment local funds. The city creates preservation commission and adopts historic building demolition and alteration controls for downtown allowing city to designate and preserve structures. Height limitations reduce pressure for demolition.
3. **Residential/Housing.** Prohibition of conversion of single-family residential development on the periphery of downtown to potentially incompatible restaurant/entertainment uses enacted. New large-scale office and residential buildings on the edge of downtown subject to design controls to ensure compatibility with surrounding one and two-story homes. No surface parking lots allowed to intrude into residential areas or lot combinations on residential streets to accommodate larger buildings. City creates zoning incentives for new housing above commercial uses in selected locations by allowing additional height if upper floors dedicated to housing.
4. **Retail.** New buildings on Grand Avenue between 7th and 9th must have retail features (prominent entries, large display windows, etc), but no controls prohibiting non-retail uses. Business improvement district undertakes targeted recruitment campaign for niche retail uses.
5. **Alleys.** City encourages clean up of alleys including covering/relocation of utility boxes and services, painting/cleaning of rear facades. New buildings required to have some architectural treatment of rear facades and rear shop entrances.
6. **Government Land Use.** The city works with Forest Service and county to retain existing office functions in downtown and assists with relocation of shop and non-office functions. City Hall stays downtown to continue as an important business anchor. A new County jail is constructed adjacent to the existing County building. Pitkin Avenue is vacated to accommodate the new jail and City/County civic center. Steps are taken to design the structures to fit in with the established character, mass, and scale of the downtown and that any potential traffic, parking, and other impacts are mitigated during and after construction. City accelerates timetable for moving city shops and water treatment facility. City land used to develop a modern business park and open space recreational facility at the Roaring Fork/Colorado confluence.
7. **River Connections.** Better signage is provided to guide visitors to the Roaring Fork River. River connections enhanced. River features direct public access to confluence of the Colorado and Roaring Fork Rivers. A variety of recreational activities encouraged along the rivers, such as a whitewater kayaking course, float fishing put-in, etc. Rivers promoted as a recreational and tourist attraction with care taken to preserve riparian habitat and water quality.
8. **North Downtown.** No widening of Sixth Street to accommodate additional traffic through downtown. City adopts use and design controls to discourage auto-oriented uses (such as fast-food restaurants and auto dealers) and national chain architecture along this entry corridor. Bus service increased between downtown core and north hotels and streetscape improvements (such as landscaping and detached sidewalks) made to encourage walking to Hot Springs Pool and downtown.
9. **West Downtown.** City investigates redevelopment and improvements to western gateway to downtown as an attractive mixed-use business park featuring offices (including government facilities), restaurants, a conference center, and amenities such as open space/recreational facilities along the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers. Existing industrial and municipal uses phased out and moved to more appropriate locations.
10. **Signage.** Improved directional signage added throughout the downtown to direct visitors to parking, river access and other main points of interest.

Organization/Management

1. **Organization.** Business improvement district formed to cover the entire study area, both north and south of river. BID takes major role in improving parking availability, management of downtown, business recruitment, and tourism marketing. Staffed with full-time executive director. Financing through property tax increment similar to existing GID.
2. **Promotion/Business Recruitment.** New BID takes lead in marketing Glenwood as a tourist destination in close cooperation with Glenwood Springs Chamber Resort Association. BID identifies key retail gaps in downtown and potential markets and then undertakes targeted recruiting effort.
3. **Design Review.** City creates historic preservation commission to review applications to demolish designated historic structures. Review of new construction is by staff according to contextual standards that focus on height, setbacks, roof lines, and similar considerations, not architectural detail.
4. **Funding.** Business improvement district with special taxing powers becomes major funding mechanism for parking and downtown management/promotion in partnership with government agencies. All sources of funding are considered.

Economic/Marketing

1. **Downtown Role.** Downtown maintains a balance among retail/entertainment, office, and tourist uses. City and BID work to maintain retail function of downtown while accommodating additional office development in appropriate locations and at an appropriate scale. Increased emphasis in recruitment efforts on retail/entertainment use that appeal to tourists.
2. **Office/Commercial.** Office and non-retail commercial development encouraged off of Grand Avenue, particularly on periphery of downtown and new business park on western edge of business district.
3. **Retail.** Traffic control measures, targeted tourism marketing, and focused retail recruitment help strengthen retail sector downtown. Design controls on Grand Avenue maintain retail-oriented space.
4. **Tourism.** Business improvement district works closely with merchants and lodging establishments and Glenwood Springs Chamber Resort Association to promote Glenwood Springs as a hub for exploring regional attractions. Increased emphasis on heritage tourism that focus on the area's rich Native American/Frontier Heritage and on river-oriented activities. City explores need/feasibility for medium-sized conference/convention facility in west business park along Roaring Fork River.