

Observations

- Rich history
- Beautiful views and environment
- Very friendly people
- Enthusiastic community
- Great festivals
- Strong history of volunteerism and fundraising in the community
- Dedicated and focused community groups
- National Forest – waterfalls, lakes, mountains.
- Great restaurants
- Retirement Community backbone of non profits
- Not always business friendly
- Community divided: pro growth/anti growth
- Seasonal economy
- Lack of events in the winter
- Inconsistent communications between towns and from towns to residents and businesses.
- Failure to market the natural resources

Organization

The first section will look at Organization which includes developing collaboration, volunteer recruitment and management, fund-raising for the organization, and developing operational strategies. Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a downtown revitalization program. The three principle components of organization are:

- Public and media relations;
- Volunteer development; and
- Fundraising.

A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are best coordinated and supported by a paid, full-time or part-time program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders. While a paid downtown coordinator may not currently be possible, it is something to strive for in the future.

Notwithstanding this fundamental description of a typical downtown organizational structure, numerous variations exist throughout the country and are driven largely by local circumstances. In some towns, for example, the Chamber of Commerce is strong enough to add an organizational component designated to focus on the downtown. Consider developing some form of district to dedicate resources and focus on downtown.

Regardless of the organizational structure chosen, one overriding factor is demonstrated time and again in communities undertaking a program of downtown revitalization—without first creating and developing a solid organizational component to oversee and manage the process, and despite the best intentions of all concerned, the program rarely accomplishes the desired outcomes and most often fades away before anything has a chance to succeed.

Given these realities, we cannot overemphasize the importance of placing organizational development among the highest priorities of early revitalization activities. Most, if not all, of the recommendations in this report are made within the framework of this understanding.

The downtown assessment team determined that it would benefit both towns to begin marketing the district as a whole, Cliffs' Commercial District. The idea is that you can work on the perception of one part of the area, but those who are just driving through may not see all parts of the commercial district. By working on the whole area simultaneously, you may impact all passers by as well as those audiences targeted for special events or promotions.

Observation: There is lack of clear vision, communication, and leadership to outline the activities and services on Cliffs' Commercial District.

Recommendations:

- One point of contact. Make it simple to find out information about your commercial district. Determine one point of contact and vision for Cliffs' Commercial District. This community will greatly benefit from having a one-stop for finding information about the commercial district. Consider creating a clearing house of information on every business, government services, organization's events, contact information, etc. This contact would be a Cliffs' Commercial District Liaison, and expert on who to contact to find a business, open a business, training for your business, etc. The major purpose of this recommendation is to make it easy for customers, business owners, property owners, partners, etc. to spend money, open a business, collaborate with other businesses, etc.
- Facilitate a conversation with groups working in the community – include everybody! Utilize the Custer County Non-Profit Collaborative/Wet Mountain Community Foundation groups to manage a facilitated discussion of all organizations to consolidate and reduce duplication in accessing resources. Consider using an outside facilitator such as a DOLA representative, or if you have trouble identifying a facilitator, contact DCI for suggestions.
- Streamline Communications. Develop clear communications between businesses, government, non-profits, and residents. See the communications section in this report to provide more detail on this topic.
- Use existing organizations to take the lead on downtown issues. Designate the Merchants & Chamber Association to head up a task force to coordinate all organizations and coordinate events and activities in downtown, create collateral materials that explain the benefits and activities of participation in the chamber. Keep reinforcing that the Chamber is going to work for the community, to make businesses stronger, and to ensure that businesses, citizens, and the community in general has a voice.

Observation: There are opportunities to better utilize resources in the Cliffs' Commercial District.

Recommendations:

- Consider stronger enforcement of sales, use, and lodging tax to expand the amount available for Cliffs' Commercial District marketing. Re-assess use of the lodging tax money to create a stronger PRODUCT to market. A healthy and vibrant commercial district attracts business interests by appealing to both the local year-round resident and the

visitor. Determine that a single entity, supported by the Town of Westcliffe and the Town of Silver Cliff, the Merchants Association and the Chamber of Commerce, will be the Cliffs' Commercial District promotional source. That entity could be an agency, an organization, or an individual. With Town/County funding comes public confidence and demonstration that the health of a commercial corridor is important enough to deserve focused attention and resources (such as part-time Chamber/Economic Development director). This part-time position should have government support and be accountable to all partners, but be an independent entity that is able to be responsive to business owners, the community, and the local governments. While financial support will be necessary in the initial stages, this entity must eventually become self-sustaining. A crucial step in any forward progress towards identified goals is the involvement and buy-in of the Westcliffe/Silver Cliff business community. Further research is recommended for ways that similar, small and rural Colorado communities have funded and implemented such endeavors.

To gain and garner community support, local governments must play a leading role to preserve, rebuild, and revitalize the Cliffs' Commercial District by working closely with businesses, organizations, and residents. There are many tools available to gain grants, reset policy, create incentives, and partner with the public sector to improve the commercial district. Long-term funding mechanisms are available in Colorado to address specific capital and promotional needs. Create a strategy for the Cliffs' commercial area to outreach to organizations and businesses to identify short-term outcomes, to develop collaborative partnerships, tap into potential volunteer pools, sponsorship possibilities, and long term community planning activities.

The term "marketing" has wide-ranging interpretations. Varying organizations are involved in the marketing of the Westcliffe/Silver Cliff area and bringing visitors to town. This marketing can be enhanced and more effective by establishing a more complete "product" of the Cliffs' commercial district. Marketing is not a substitute for content. Consistent messaging and content could be improved. In the long run, a more-defined product is easier to market. By creating the "look" and implementation strategy through a community-based process (with help from businesses, residents, local governments, and organizations), buy-in will be inherent. It is vital to determine short-term goals and then to make clear progress towards these goals while also working on long-term planning and visioning.

An established downtown is the heart and soul of any community. To a great extent, the perception of a location as a great place or just another place depends on a vibrant economy. Being vibrant means being lively, a place to go, a place to do things. But, it takes work from all stakeholders. Businesses may need to stay open later. Residents may need to consider shopping local for everyday items. Local governments may need to implement business-friendly policies. Volunteer organizations may need to increase collaboration for common community priorities. The immediate need is for organization – someone to focus on the existing resources, move forward with goals, and to put together a program that works for this specific area.

The benefit of the lodging tax collected by hotels, motels, B&B's and other short-term lessors, like retreats and vacation home renters, is to expand the capability of a community, through promotion, marketing or other initiatives, to attract travelers and increase occupancy at the various lodgings that are collecting the tax. In fairness to all lodging

businesses, the tax should be levied uniformly and spent in accordance with lodging tax rules and the priorities of the community. Enforcing the collection of this tax will benefit all collectors and other businesses in the community. We urge the county to review receipts periodically and request audits when necessary.

It is recommended any additional funding the Lodging Tax Board receives should be used to help support a Chamber/Economic Development Director who will organize and implement many of the community and business priorities, events and projects. It is recommended to continue the idea of mini-grants to help organizations hosting events which bring in overnight guests. Lodging Tax can be a built-in funding mechanism for sustainable assistance for businesses and to draw attention to the area. It is recommended that research is conducted into how other counties allocate Lodging Tax for maximum affect.

- Consider consolidating/sharing services to reduce duplication and conserve resources. The Wet Mountain Valley has spectacular resources - talented staff, committed elected officials, a strong volunteer base, a good mix of business establishments, and natural and scenic beauty. Are there ways to consolidate or share services – with government or with nonprofits or even with businesses? The concept of consolidating or sharing services provided by the towns and county, such as a building inspector, public works crews, administration and purchasing, could help save time and money over the long run. In addition to the potential savings realized through the sharing of resources, the increased collaboration can increase community buy-in. Each stakeholder will bring specific strengths and challenges to the table.

- Consider fundraising for improving the Cliffs’ business support organization. A part-time Chamber/Economic Development director will be able to develop sustainable and diverse funding mechanisms for the Cliffs’ business support organization. This may include Lodging Tax funds, annual donations from local governments, business memberships, private sponsorships, restricted donations, fee-for-service (the Youth Corps could be this), and product sales (historic building ornaments or some other unique product). The issue of membership vs. non-membership benefits will need to be discussed if public funding is utilized. Other communities have dealt with this issue and the National Main Street database provides case studies. A draft budget should be tied to a Diversified Funding Strategy to ensure sustainability and viability for a business support organization. This should include local government support including lodging tax funds, product sales, a plan for grant-seeking, private contributions, and fund-raising efforts.

Observation: Diversifying volunteers and projects may re-energize Cliffs’ Commercial District leadership.

Recommendations:

- Create a Junior Cliff Program to engage youth. Southwest Conservation Corps (SCCORPS.org) is a great resource. It is recommended to further explore opportunities for youth development in the region to accomplish commercial district improvement goals. The Community Youth Corps operate in many Southwest Colorado counties, such as Chaffee, Costilla, La Plata, Hinsdale, and Conejos counties. It is recommended that you invite a representative from the Salida office of the Southwest Conservation Corps to do a presentation. Lake City hires local adults, junior leaders, and 10 participants in 6th – 9th grades. The Lake City crew works on downtown beautification projects (trail building, flowerbed preparation, repairing benches, and painting). The students get a cash award at

the end & a voucher for an educational institute. This has been a way for us to provide an introduction to the workforce (also write resumes, are interviewed), learn work ethic (i.e. come to work on time and be prepared) and accomplish meaningful community service. This has also worked for us to develop community pride – connecting adults with youth with project managers. This multi-age approach is helping to create the civic leaders we will want tomorrow. We have also made sure that our Youth Corps does not compete with existing businesses (so no window cleaning, for example). It is recommended that you work with local businesses to develop a “work-path” for participants coming out of the Youth Corps.

- Consider a youth business program. Consider a youth business program in conjunction with your local school to provide lifelong business skills and as a way to connect multi-generations. Involving youth in a community service commitment will eventually translate into the next generation of community leaders. To be effective and to reduce volunteer burnout, volunteer projects should be planned in advance. Have projects planned, tools or supplies ready, and start and finish projects on time. Hinsdale County has more than 20 nonprofit organizations and local governments who utilize volunteers to stretch our services and amenities. We now host a community-wide volunteer celebration and each organization gets to recognize its volunteers and the work accomplished. We hold this during the National Volunteer Appreciation Week in April. This joint event accomplishes several goals – most of our volunteers assist two or more organizations so a comprehensive event increases the peer-recognition and reduces the number of volunteer-recognition events. The Lake City event culminates in the “Citizen of the Year” announcement. The cost is split. This is another example of consolidating and sharing of resources. Even though the actual volunteer work of an animal rescue organization or an Emergency Medical Service team may be different, the dedication and passion is consistent. A celebration highlights efforts of volunteers and the work accomplished.
- Challenge the high school, garden club, the theater club, etc. to take on a downtown improvement project. What is a high-priority “rallying” project in the commercial district that could be accomplished this year? Maybe this is the installation of a kiosk that includes a change-able business directory or maybe this means more flower barrels or gardens sponsored by businesses or individuals. Physical activity is great way to develop community relationships and get real work done. It can also create an informal forum for discussion and proactively involves everyone in a solution.
- Develop community-wide volunteer recognition celebrating each organization’s volunteers. Harnessing and engaging the energy of business owners, property owners, students, and seniors would benefit the commercial areas of the Towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff tremendously in terms of increasing outreach and support. Utilize volunteer planning tools to match tasks with volunteer strengths.

Communication

Effective and efficient communications tools will be critical to the success of implementing all of the Community Revitalization Partnership recommendations for Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. In any community, successful communications between diverse stakeholder groups is the key to creating programs and projects that truly work. Effective engagement in the development of these programs can also keep stakeholders actively engaged through implementation and beyond.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES				
Everyone	<p>Website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create one website for communities/downtown to market. Consider something clever. Websites are among today's most important tools for communicating 	<p>Social Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to website as a way to drive traffic to website, communicate up-to-date information Get youth involved in using these mediums to market the communities? 	<p>Marketing/ Advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create well established identity and package for branding Engage the communities in the role out of a joint marketing campaign 	<p>Special Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrate on year-round activation with emphasis on shoulder seasons
Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community events calendar Community news and projects Community resources Community business listings Newsletter opt-in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop Local campaign Standard window posters, in restaurant table tents or place-mats, etc. Bill stuffers to promote community events and business Community member discount cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create special events task force consisting of Merchants Assoc., Chamber, community members, and businesses. Conduct an analysis of events, develop strategic initiatives <p>Event planning matrix – meet goals for audience, year-round activation</p>
Day-cation Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do they need to plan a trip for a day? Package experiences/ build an itinerary Maps (of businesses, historical trails & walks, recreational amenities, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Twisitor Center" – visitors can send in questions about the community via Twitter and get responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target marketing to key visitor areas (via ads/ billboards), tour bus groups, etc. Printed map(s) Strengthen Visitor's Center? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event series released in advance with cooperative ideas Unique experiences at camps for day visitors Bring people to town for the day or evening
Destination Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vacation planner Lodging resources in the region Links to other visitor sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flickr (gorgeous pictures of the town or view) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted viral marketing for key interest groups Visitor Info Packet 	
Business Owners/ Investors/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data about communities to encourage new business development Package "doing business" information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training to diversity with on-line businesses Social media training for businesses, link them to main website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market free business training & support (i.e. merchandising, basic customer service and hospitality training) Focus on consistent weekend hours Business Plan Contest Package "doing business" information for print 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signature event as business development strategy
Orgs (Govt, Chamber, Non-Profits, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common place to post info about projects, community news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All use same tools (one go to place for community to find latest news) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and market similar business incentive policies between the two communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly informal meetings to share info w/& get input from businesses <p>Business planning/entrepreneurs training by SBDC</p>

In the case of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, communications will be particularly important and critical, because both communities will need to work together to effectively leverage their resources and communications tools to tell their stories and spread the message to residents, regional visitors, and destination guests.

To that end, this section of the plan identifies key communication strategies that will effectively meet the following goals:

- Create more effective communication strategies to reach out to, and engage, members of the community, in an effort to support local community efforts and businesses.
- Reach out to regional "daycation" visitors and bring them "up the hill" to enjoy the amenities and events offered by Silver Cliff and Westcliffe.
- Speak to destination visitors looking for a unique vacation or visitor experience in the mountains via channels and messaging that speak to the locale and offerings of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe.
- Build better communications between and for business owners, investors and entrepreneurs to strengthen business offerings in the communities and encourage economic growth.

- Strengthen collaboration between civic organizations, including the governments of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, the Chamber of Commerce and the various non-profits, to encourage efficiency in service delivery and community offerings

To achieve these goals, the two communities should engage in four primary types of communication efforts:

- **Marketing/Advertising:** Successfully marketing Silver Cliff and Westcliffe means leveraging the assets of both communities to market them together. A clever marketing campaign should be considered, as should a well-established identity and graphics package (consider a catchy campaign such as “Meet the Cliffs). To build support for the effort locally, the two communities should consider working together to engage the locals in the rollout of a joint marketing campaign.
- **Website:** Research shows that most people are accessing information about communities they live in or visit via online tools today. Therefore, the online presence of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe are critically important. Effectively utilized, they can become a very successful tool for communicating with key audiences. As part of the CRP process, it is recommended that the two communities create one website for both communities to market their offerings. The site should be built around the new marketing campaign for the area (for example: www.meetthecliffs.com).
- **Social Media:** Social media tools are increasingly being used by communities as a way to keep individuals informed of the latest happenings and news about a community, and to drive traffic to a community’s website. The increasing popularity of their use means implementing them should be considered sooner rather than later. For many communities, implementation is also great opportunity to involve the youth in community efforts.
- **Special Events:** Events are a tremendous draw to the Silver Cliff and Westcliffe communities. Looking ahead, the communities should consider ways to strengthen events offerings by concentrating on year-round activation with an emphasis on the shoulder seasons, and to use events as an economic driver for the communities.

The following chart summarizes the key communication recommendations for the Silver Cliff and Westcliffe CRP, and what follows is a detailed description of each and how they meet the outlined goals:

Observation: Both Silver Cliff and Westcliffe lack effective communications strategies to reach out to, and engage, members of the community. This results in a lack of local support for businesses and events. Residents and business owners expressed a lack of a central place of communication for information about offerings and events in the community.

Recommendations:

- Utilize the newly created website to offer a community events calendar, community news and projects section, community resources area, business listings and the opportunity for locals to opt-in to a regular newsletter created specifically for them.
- Create a Facebook page for the Silver Cliff and Westcliffe communities to engage with each other about the latest community offerings, etc.
- Focus marketing and advertising on a Shop Local campaign. Consider local advertising options such as standard window posters, in-restaurant table tents, etc. and/or bill stuffers in utility/tax bills to promote community events and businesses. Also explore community

member discount opportunities (discount cards, etc.)

- To improve the engagement of local residents and businesses in events, create a special events task force consisting of key members in the community, business owners and investors, and civic organizations. Use this group to conduct an analysis of events, develop strategic initiatives for events and create an event planning matrix including meeting goals for audience, year-round activation, etc.

Observation: The Silver Cliff and Westcliffe areas offer tremendous opportunities for “daycation” visitors looking to escape for the day or a short weekend. Communications efforts need to be targeted towards reaching out to these regional daycation visitors and bringing them “up the hill” to enjoy the amenities and events offered by these two communities.



Recommendations:

- Consider creating a unique marketing campaign focused on the daycation visitor that speaks to exploring, adventuring and enjoying the “Cliffs” for the day. Consider a clever tagline, such as “Climb the Cliffs” to encourage them to come up the mountain to explore.
- Utilize the newly created website to help these visitors find all the information they need to plan a trip for a day. Package experiences for them and help them build an itinerary for a day or a weekend in both communities, based upon interests (i.e. recreational, historical, shopping, arts, etc.). Offer everything they will need once they get there, including maps of businesses, historical trails and walks, recreational amenities, business listings, etc.
- Consider creating a “Twisitor Center” using the Twitter social media tool. With such a tool, visitors to Silver Cliff and Westcliffe can send in questions about offerings in both communities via Twitter and get responses from a designated resource in the community (i.e. the Chamber, the Town staff, etc.)
- Create a well-packaged printed map/marketing piece for both the communities that easily demonstrates where key businesses, attractions, trails and visitor destinations are located for both communities. Distribute and target marketing to key visitor areas around the daycation “draw” area.
- Consider opportunities to strengthen/improve the visitor’s center with better signage, better information materials, more organization, and staffed with volunteers regularly.
- Event recommendations for the community include focusing on the development of new events to augment existing events, and to create a solid-year offering of programming. To market this, Silver Cliff and Westcliffe should work together to release a year-long event series calendar at the beginning of each year, along with cooperative idea of how to turn events into a long-weekend in the area. This information could be offered on the website, through social media tools and through calendars distributed to locals, daycation visitors and in limited advertising.

Observation: The Silver Cliff and Westcliffe areas offer extraordinary amenities for visitors from all over the country and world and already do draw such vacationers. Some communications efforts should aim to speak to these destination visitors who are looking for a unique vacation or visitor experience in the mountains via channels and messaging that speak to the locale and offerings of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe.

Recommendations:

- Utilizing the new website resource, create an online vacation planner that offers a variety of trip-building resources, including lodging and links to other visitor resource sites.
- Utilizing the Flickr social media tool, create a Flickr account for both the Silver Cliff and Westcliffe communities that offer photos of gorgeous pictures of the view and historical destinations as a way to draw in travelers and tourists.
- Invest time and energy into targeted viral marketing for key interest groups and create a visitor information packet that offers complete and comprehensive information about the communities to distribute to interested guests.

Observation: Improved communications infrastructure and tools to link the public and private sectors that are focused on economic development will be critical to strengthening the business environment in Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. The two communities should work together to strengthen economic development tools and offer unified information about doing business in an effort to strengthen business offerings in the communities and encourage economic growth.

Recommendations:

- Utilize the newly created website to be a portal of information for existing and new (and/or potential) businesses looking for information and data about the communities. Package the information in a “doing business” format to include all the information investors and entrepreneurs might need to know, including data about the town (demographics, trends, sales tax trends), spaces available for lease or rent, business incentives available, services available (i.e. things they may need just to get into business or rehab their store) as well as the availability of free business training and support opportunities (i.e. merchandising assistance, basic customer service and hospitality training, etc.).
- Provide ongoing training to businesses to help them increase and improve their marketing using online and social marketing tools. Several Silver Cliff and Westcliffe businesses noted that having an online presence and doing strong sales via the Internet aided their financial survival during the off-season months. Training more businesses to increase their capacity in this way could encourage stronger business practices and businesses with a longer lifecycle. Social media training should also be considered for businesses. Social media is an increasingly powerful marketing tool for small business and it’s free! The social media networks for the businesses could be linked to the main community website.
- Create a printed “Doing Business In the Cliffs” business packet that could be distributed to both current and potential businesses and entrepreneurs and could be used both as a support and marketing piece to encourage economic growth in the communities. This packet would contain all the information also included on the website.

- Explore a focus on communicating (and implementing!) consistent retail and restaurant hours focused on weekends and special events. Consider trying to advertise and encourage regular operations on Friday night, Saturday, Saturday night, and Sunday to start.
- Consider creating a unified signature event for the Silver Cliff and Westcliffe communities that serves as a business development strategy. The communities already have several events, but none of them truly serve to support exploration of the community's amenities or businesses. Consider a "Climb the Cliffs" event or something that could promote exploration of all that the communities have to offer today, while telling the story of the communities' historical past.

Observation: Strengthening collaboration and communications between civic organizations, including the governments of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, the Chamber and the various non-profits, will encourage efficiency in service delivery and community offerings and will promote unity between the two communities and the residents and visitor populations they serve.

Recommendations:

- Utilize the new website as a common "bulletin board" to post the latest on community news and projects in both Silver Cliff and Westcliffe.
- As social media tools are developed, create them collaboratively between the two communities so that one voice is being used to market both the "Cliffs."
- The two communities – Silver Cliff and Westcliffe – should work together to develop similar business incentive policies for consistency, and then market those collaboratively realizing that a gain in business in one community will ultimately also benefit the other.
- Civic organizations from both communities should collaborate to hold monthly informal "Cliff Chatter" meetings to share information with and gather input from businesses and residents as a way to keep an open line of communications.