



Hayden officials and residents met with revitalization experts to discuss ways of bringing more life to historical and cultural landmarks such as the Walnut Street area. Enlarge photo — Photo by Matt Stensland

## Partnership group offers advice about revitalizing Hayden

By Blythe Terrell (Contact)

HAYDEN — Experts helping Hayden focus and form its downtown area heaped praise on the community Tuesday evening.

They lauded residents' pride and involvement in the discussion. They also joked about trying to move through the presentation and leave time for talking — predicting that opinionated Hayden residents would have a lot to say.

"It was absolutely fabulous," said Katherine Correll, executive director of Downtown Colorado. "Your input is really important. The energy you expressed and the dedication you have to this town was really inspiring."

Correll and a team spent Monday and Tuesday meeting with residents, business owners, civic groups and others across Hayden. The Community Revitalization Partnership was a joint effort of the town, the Hayden Economic Development Commission, the Hayden Chamber of Commerce and the state Department of Local Affairs. Correll's group led the conversation.

Tuesday's presentation included a potluck dinner and was held at the new Haven Community Center. More than 30 people attended. The presenters discussed observations about organization, design, economic restructuring and promotion. The suggestions were as simple as adding window displays and as complex as creating a Mainstreet group.

"Hayden has some wonderful opportunities, but what it doesn't have is a lot of resources," said Christy Culp, of DOLA, who discussed promotions. "So it's imperative that the resources you have are put to the best use."

One challenge is that residents don't know what services are available, she said. Groups in town must make people aware of what they can buy in

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Hayden and how spending locally helps the town, Culp said.

"As small of a town as Hayden is, people should know what's available here," she told the crowd.

Culp encouraged the town to create unified identities and causes for its events. It could, for example, use Hayden Daze as a benefit for a new park, she said.

The town also should consider marshaling its civic forces. The Gardening Club, the Chamber and the Economic Development Commission could work more closely together, Correll suggested. Hayden also should consider a nonprofit group that could apply for grants and other funding, she said.

Hayden also must look at its assets. There's a river running through town, noted Tom Fleming, of the Institute for Civic Achievement.

"We can't get to it," he said with a laugh, "but we can see it."

Town Manager Russ Martin is working on a deal to get Yampa River access west of town. Fleming encouraged residents to support that deal.

Jesse Silverstein, of the Colorado Brownfields Foundation, spoke more about the look and feel of Hayden's downtown. The town lacks clear geographical boundaries for its downtown, Silverstein said. He suggested defining downtown with historical and cultural landmarks such as the Walnut Street area, the Hayden Heritage Center, the Hayden Congregational Church and the Hayden granary.

He and the other speakers said that all decisions are up to Hayden's residents.

"But you all need to discuss that amongst yourselves and try to focus that in the right way," Silverstein said.

If Hayden defines its downtown, it could add signs, crosswalks, planters and curb bumpouts to make people slow down and take a look, Silverstein suggested.

Greg Winkler, DOLA's regional field manager for the north-central mountains, spoke to the group last, discussing ways to pay for some of these suggested changes.

"We didn't want to leave you with just the notions that we come in, we listen to what you say, we give you ideas, and there is no funding to make this work," he said.

But funding is growing scarcer. Energy impact funding is expected to decline by more than half in the next couple of years, Winkler said. Still, money is out there. Hayden could consider vendor fees, private foundations, Colorado Department of Transportation money and the Governor's Energy Office, for example.

Winkler said Hayden has the opportunity to build a future as the Gateway to Western Adventure, a possible town slogan.

The team will provide a full report to Hayden in about a month. Fleming

reiterated that the team was just trying to help and that the community would decide its own fate.

"You're Hayden," Fleming said. "No one else on the planet can make that claim."

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