
TOWN STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDATIONS PRODUCED BY THE TOWN OF LYONS CITIZEN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1 – Recommendation - Make financial provision for anticipated Economic Development activities including required match for federal, state and philanthropic grants.

The estimated budget for the EDC activities is over \$400,000. This would be generated from a number of sources, including the General Fund budget and allocation of funds from the various utility fund balances, potential sale of the old water treatment facility and an increase in the sales tax rate from 3% to 3.75%. The latter would also help to meet the revenue needs of Lyons as it reaches build out,

ACTION ITEM: Town of Lyons currently has the lowest sales tax rate of all towns in Boulder County. An increase to 3.5% (about average for Boulder County towns) or 3.75% (equivalent to Nederland) would generate between 50 – 80 percent of the resources needed to close the anticipated revenue shortfall at buildout. For example, an increase to 3.75% will generate \$117,000 in new revenue to the town at the present rate of retail consumption, or about 30% of the EDC's estimated short-term funding needs.

- In each annual budget cycle for the next three years estimate the additional revenue likely to be produced by this sales tax increase.
- Anticipate that within three years increased revenue from the private sector plus federal and state grants should substantially underwrite discretionary economic development activities.
- With that expectation in mind, demonstrate a commitment to economic development that will be persuasive to public and private funding sources that will eventually be requested to invest in the evolution of Lyons. Establish a three-year policy, to sunset in 2012 that requires the allocation to Economic Development activities in the annual budget cycle through a factor in the neighborhood of 80% of the anticipated revenue from this sales tax increase. (Remember: that economic development budget line will be completely fungible, will be under the control of the BOT and will require an official request from the town Administrator to allocate dollars to a specific economic development project.)

The act of increasing sales taxes to fund economic development and town marketing requires a marketing initiative of its own.

- The taxpayers must be systematically and repeatedly reminded that their responses to the UNC survey in 2005 demonstrated that only a small portion of the increased tax burden will be borne by citizens of Lyons.
- All discussion of the tax increase should include reference to the Town's financial reality and the uncomfortable consequences citizens will face if that reality is not improved.
- Characterize economic development as a community effort – not a unilateral activity of town government.

In addition, the Board Of Trustees should require stringent oversight, planning and written, quantified reporting on a quarterly basis.

2 – Recommendation – Adopt and implement the marketing Plan

Adopt, support and fund the Marketing Plan as presented in this document. The EDC unanimously agrees that any economic development plan will require a well thought out, professional marketing plan. The EDC has full confidence that the plan developed by the Marketing subcommittee meets these criteria. If adopted by the Board and funded in this budget cycle, the subcommittee will continue its work to refine the details and expand and modify where necessary. The committee will then prepare a final document for the Board's review in early 2009

3 – Recommendation – Hire new employee

Hire a director of event planning and communication that will have the responsibility to implement the many plans outlined in this document, write grants to assist in the funding of the programs defined, to review all current community events that require town support for effectiveness and revenue generation, and identify and implement new programs and events that will generate new sales tax revenues. This individual could also assume the responsibility of managing the new web site and function as the communication officer for the town.

The EDC believes that with the preparation of an effective job description and implementing a careful hiring process, the individual hired could very well justify his/her salary.

NOTE: The EDC presented a concept which is not contained in the objective as stated - but should be considered by the BOT. After the first year or so a properly experienced person should be able to obtain reimbursement for much of his or her own salary and benefits through the overhead cost recovery provision off many public-sector grant programs.

4 – Recommendation: devise a strategy for better commercial use of the Eastern Corridor of the town’s business district including infill development where possible within the official Planning Area and, where appropriate, annexation pursuant to adjustment of the IGA with Boulder County.

BACKGROUND: The town must develop a strategy to expand and develop the Eastern Corridor of the town’s commercial district. Optimally, that strategy requires multiple related initiatives including annexation. An annexation initiative must be undertaken in a highly political context whose roots are historic and whose range is countywide. Those working on this objective must not lose sight of the following reality:

Boulder County has a worldwide reputation for its commitment to (or obsession with) protecting its open space through a policy of controlled growth. It has a staff, a history, a governing board and a manifest political commitment that requires it to, at the very least – carefully scrutinize annexation requests and IGA proposals, and perhaps, at the very worst..... To reject any such request or proposal no matter how reasonable or necessary it may be to Lyons.

It is the nature of the IGA document that it be opened for negotiation out of the normal renewal cycle only upon agreement to extension no matter the outcome of the negotiation – even if that outcome is unilateral and even if the outcome is distasteful to the town. There being no way to escape this reality, the elected and appointed leadership of Lyons must be sure it has sufficient relationship with and knowledge of the people and process of county government before exposing itself to discussions of the IGA with county officials. Further, such discussions should not commence until a strategy is developed through the most thoughtful and systematic process the town leadership can achieve.

In consideration of the above we believe the following action items comprise a platform for developing that strategy that will be acceptable to the community and credible to County Government. Only by attempting to methodically confront the opportunities already within its control (through a process like that suggested below) can the town have any expectation of convincing County Government that it is appropriate to grant to Lyons concessions and assistance that are in conflict with the County’s long-term predisposition to deny the kind of expansion Lyons seeks and needs.

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ACTION ITEM: First, demonstrate maximum commitment to commercial development within the town's existing planning area.

- The town should identify all parcels with development capacity – especially those at the eastern end of the commercial zone which abuts the area of potential annexation pending negotiation with the County.
- The town should then deal with property owners, especially in that un-annexed portion of the planning area. The goal would be to determine which incentives the owner of each parcel will find persuasive – that site-specific incentive being part of the Town's investment in the process of maximizing commercial development within the zone under its control. An additional benefit of dealing with property owners in this fashion is that the process may reveal site-specific development variables that attend each property and which affect both value and possible uses. In the aggregate that information may also be useful information for town planning.
- By collaborating in this manner town government and property owners will become better prepared to offer developers an inventory of parcels of land that have the potential for commercial development and annexation. Simultaneously they will generate an initial but realistic evaluation of relevant property-specific economic and development variables and restraints – as well as possible development incentives.

ACTION ITEM: Second, request the PCDC to immediately focus on land use planning in the Eastern Corridor to provide broad area-wide analysis to overlay the property-specific findings obtained from the first Action Item. To county government this updated Comp Plan will be a prerequisite to a credible IGA negotiation.

- As identified in the EDC report, the Eastern Corridor requires land use planning to define flood plain issues, to measure traffic flows, to identify developable land to determine how much and what type of commercial development is desired by the town, to recommend development and design standards and to address similar issues in that section of the town's main highway commercial district.

- Concurrently recognizing the need identified by the EDC, the upcoming Comprehensive Plan process specifically requests "a land-use and improvement plan for the Eastern Corridor area derived from the Economic Development Council's approved recommendations".

ACTION ITEM: Third, after the town has completed Action Items One and Two it will be better positioned to engage in IGA negotiation with Boulder County. Even so, because county resistance is a certainty, it is imperative that town leaders develop a strategy for negotiations that is tied directly to the benchmarks and policy issues that are continuing priorities to County Staff and Commissioners.

An IGA with Boulder County is a political and policy document with implications beyond any specific properties, towns and areas of potential development. Even at this early stage it can be assumed that IGA modification is inextricably related by perception, by precedent and by reality to at least the following:

- existing Super IGA,
- emerging intra-county revenue sharing policies,
- planning for the 20013 Super IGA by County staff,
- the town's commitment to high-density use of available development land within its borders,
- the condition of the town's Comprehensive Plan, zoning codes and related indicators of a systematic approach to use of land and resources.

The town must present a united and informed front. Assistance in identifying issues essential to Boulder County evaluation of Lyons' request for an IGA adjustment and guidance in framing the case to be presented to the county may be obtained from County Staff, from Commissioner Perlman, from other town governments and from consultants with relevant Boulder County experience. That assistance should be systematically solicited.

5 - Recommendation – Complete funding of the Downtown Improvement Plan for the 300 and 400 blocks of Main Street and schedule capital improvements for early in 2009.

Provide the necessary funding to offset any proposed budget deficit necessary to implement the coordinated project between the town, CDOT and DIPICt. The project will repave Main Street from 3rd to 5th Avenues, replace sidewalks and curbs on the north side of Main Street from 3rd to 4th Avenue, widen the sidewalks on the south side of Main Street from 4th to 5th Avenue's, create diagonal parking on the south side of Main from 3rd to 5th Avenue and parallel parking on the north side of Main from 3rd to 5th Avenues.

This project will be funded primarily by CDOT, the town's escrow account with CDOT, and a TIP grant procured by DIPICt. As mentioned above, once final project cost are determined there may well be a need for the town to absorb the deficit that may result from guaranteed funding and required funding.

This project could have the greatest impact on the town of any other proposal presented in this document. It could dramatically change the economics of the town as well as creating an attractive and calming shopping environment for locals, tourist and visitors.

To the original language above the following additions were made:

- To cover costs unmet by the CDOT, the TIP Grant and the dedicated escrow fund, the BOT should allocate monies from the General Fund for these capital improvement.

If there is a shortfall, the BOT should explore allocating a portion of the water and sanitation funds since these capital improvement projects include repair and upgrades to the water and sanitation infrastructure.

- Planning and implementation of this project must emphasize amenities: planters, landscaping, benches, locations for public art, benches, bike racks, lighting and anything else that will reasonably distinguish the target area.

6 - Recommendation - Create an economic development district

Create a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to assist in the funding of economic development projects in the downtown business district. The tax increment financing would come from a property tax levy on any new incremental property taxes resulting from new development or a small increase in the local sales tax.

Within the DDA the EDC recommends establishing a business enterprise zone that will permit the sale of alcoholic beverages regardless of their distance from school property.

Affiliated Recommendation

Invest the necessary resources including, hiring consultants expert in the area of creating funding authorities to educate Staff and the Board of Trustees on the variety of funding options available to the town and which (if any) best fit the needs of the town.

In addition, the town should continue to invest in bringing organizations like the CCRA to town to confirm the EDC economic development plan or suggest alternative approaches.

7 – Recommendation – Become proactive in evaluating incentives for development

Support the creation of a committee comprised of members of the Board of Trustees, PCDC, EDC and general public that will assess the various incentive options the town can offer that will attract developers, investors and entrepreneurs to the Town of Lyons. Many of the options to be considered are defined in this report.

8 - Recommendation - Establish a beautification plan

Adopt, fund and implement a Master Landscaping Plan that will address all areas of town and assist in developing the Town Brand as well as deal with the ongoing issue of sight pollution throughout town. The EDC recommends working with a local landscape architectural firm – Urban Oasis. The EDC feels a qualified local company like Urban Oasis can relate to the culture and needs of the community better than one who is not familiar with the community.

It will also be important to work with DIPCo to coordinate the implantation of the two plans to ensure there is not a duplication of efforts and cost.

9 - Recommendation - Create a public art and music advisory group

Support and fund the creation of public art and music council that will assume the responsibility of recommending policy on public art, and to work with the local art community to assist in the development of programs that will attract art and music enthusiast from throughout the region to Lyons. The Council will work with the subcommittee to determine the most effective method to re-

establish the sculpture trail, completion of the clarifier project and the displaying of sculpture art throughout town.

10 - Recommendation - Evaluate establishment of universal WiFi service

Adopt, fund and implement the plan defined in this document for the Town of Lyons to become a totally wireless community. This recommendation if implemented properly can have a tremendous impact on not only local residents, but with tourist and visitors passing through town.

11 – Recommendation – Evaluate the merits of a centrally located multi-media library specifically as an economic development driver.

- If the results are positive, develop a citizens' plan for establishment of a library district and construction of an appropriate and appropriately located facility designed to fulfill its economic development function.
- If and when this initiative results in vacating the Lyons Depot Building, currently used as a library, consider alternate uses of Town Hall property – but only as a possible secondary consequence of the recommendation for an upgraded, centrally located multi-use library funded by a library district.

12 - Recommendation - Conduct a traffic study and make appropriate adjustments

Invest in a traffic flow and parking study that will take an in depth look at existing traffic flows, identify parking needs, make recommendations on how traffic flow could improve pedestrian safety and improve volume through the downtown business district, make recommendations on the town's parking requirements with specific recommendations with special attention given to how parking efficiencies will improve tourist retention and improve access to local businesses.

In appendix G the Board will find one parking recommendation put forth by the EDC for review and consideration for funding.