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Idaho Springs, Colorado: Happy Mapping Audit and Toolkit



A Happy City



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An Happy City

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Idaho Springs is a historic Colorado community with a wealth of assets. It boasts access to world class natural environments, an iconic main street, and with the I-70 running next to the town, good connectivity to Denver and other Colorado towns.

The town has a strong and engaged commercial base, the unemployment rate is a low 2.5%¹ and the Clear Creek County (where Idaho Springs is located) poverty rate is relatively low, at 8%.² More than 70% of county residents report that overall quality of life in Clear Creek County is excellent or good and an even greater share, 83% ³, report that Clear Creek County is an excellent or good place to live. Seventy six percent of residents report that maintaining the small town feel is essential. This meshes with broader findings; residents of smaller communities like Idaho Springs often report higher levels of social trust and life satisfaction than people in larger and more affluent cities. The city is located 30 miles from downtown Denver on I-70.

¹Data USA, Clear Creek County, CO, [website], 2017,

https://datausa.io/profile/geo/clear-creek-county-co/ (accessed January 26, 2018). ²Data USA, Clear Creek County, CO, [website],

2017, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/clear-creek-county-co/ (accessed January 26, 2018).

³RRC Associates, Clear Creek County Master Plan Citizen Survey Results, [website], 2016, https://www.co.clear-creek.co.us/ DocumentCenter/View/7620, (accessed January 24, 2018).



The prosperity of Clear Creek County communities has traditionally been associated with robust tourism and resource extraction industries. But these industries are changing. The Henderson Mine, which accounts for 38% of Clear Creek County's property tax revenues, is winding down its operations and is expected to close by 2026.4 Access to suitable and affordable housing is another key challenge for the municipality. Only 36% of the rental units in Idaho Springs are below \$1,249 per month, while 64% are above \$1,250⁵ a month, well above the local affordable rate of \$800 to \$900 per month. Further, there are questions about the quality of the existing housing stock, particularly in several mobile home parks in the region. These conditions have led to an acute demand for an estimated 250 new housing units⁶ in Idaho Springs, including at least 80 affordable housing units. This is a significant level of demand for a town of 2,000 residents.

In order to continue supporting the social and economic resilience of the Clear Creek County communities, it is of vital importance to address this housing shortage and to diversify the economic and fiscal base of the region.

Happy City led its Colorado partners in a Happy Mapping Audit for the Clear Creek School District site in Idaho Springs. This work builds on Urban3's economic modeling analysis, which is intended to offer solutions to strengthen tax and job density in the county. Through thoughtful planning and development of priority sites identified in previous efforts, the municipality has a unique opportunity to nurture an even healthier, happier place, which is better equipped to handle the challenges of this century.

Happy City is pleased to offer a set of practical tools and recommendations to:

- 1. Strengthen the social and economic vitality of Idaho Springs residents through happy urban design interventions.
- 2. Emphasize solutions to enhance connectivity for priority mixed use housing developments.
- 3. Assess how the Clear Creek School Site Development strengthens the case for a multimodal hub adjacent to the highway interchange.

These tools and recommendations are guided by evidence on the link between architecture, urban design and human wellbeing. They have been developed with an eye to commercial viability. Many actions addressed by these tools, will have a direct, positive influence on population health and health care costs. They will improve the quality of social relationships and social trust, which are among the most powerful drivers of wellbeing. By nurturing stronger social connections, these actions will also boost the resilience of the community in hard times. Inspired placemaking interventions will help feed residents' sense of meaning and attachment to their community, which will also lead to greater GDP growth. By improving systems of mobility, and allowing greater access and proximity, infrastructure improvements and community plans will make life easier for Idaho Springs residents.

These tools and recommendations include a set of evidence-based happy urban design principles for Idaho Springs and a series of strategies and actions for:

- Mobility
- Housing
- Multi-modal hub
- Mixed-use development
- Public and green space

The following is a brief overview of these recommended strategies.

⁴ Urban 3, Study of Clear Creek County, [report], 2017.

⁵THK Associates and EST Comprehensive Engineering Services, Highest and Best Use Economic Feasibility Study for the Interstate 70 Economic Hub at Exit 240, [report], 2016.

^eTHK Associates and EST Comprehensive Engineering Services, Highest and Best Use Economic Feasibility Study for the Interstate 70 Economic Hub at Exit 240, [report], 2016.

Mobility

1. Improve streetscape connections between the Clear Creek School District site (as well as other development sites) and the historic downtown.

- Implement wayfinding signage.
- Add paint and other materials to unused space on ramps.
- Improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure on the overpass.
- Upgrade the streetscape on the north side of Exit 240.
- Build new pedestrian and cyclist bridge.

2. Improve mobility freedom by enhancing alternatives to the private car.

- Implement a feeder commute service to RTD station.
- Investigate the viability of a local car- or ride-share service.

Housing

1. Streamline the development process for the six priority sites earmarked for mixed-use housing.

• Update existing housing needs projections to optimize density, wellbeing and tax revenue potential for each site.

2. Favor design, policies and mechanisms that allow families and individuals to stay longer in their community.

- Develop alternative financial and tenure mechanisms for the provision of affordable housing options for local residents.
- Develop various housing typologies in each site to meet the needs of a diverse spectrum of households.

3. Design multi-family housing to maximize sociability and community attachment.

- Favor medium density environments.
- Promote active street edges through a diversity of business, activities and social opportunities.

Multi-modal hub

1. Ensure multi-modal hub construction is used as an opportunity for city building.

- Construct housing on-site.
- Include ground floor commercial space around the periphery of the structure.

2. Future proof parking facilities.

• Design parking structure to be adaptable to human uses.

Mixed-use development

1. Co-locate greater density of housing near employment and services.

- Focus greater density and diversity of land uses at the Clear Creek School site.
- Co-locate daycare and services for seniors to offer social opportunities and multi-generational support.

2. Create a dynamic co-working facility for small business owners and telecommuters.

• Use re-development efforts to anchor a coworking hub at the Clear Creek School site.

Public and green space

1. Enhance recreational connections around site/city.

- Integrate outdoor recreation facilities into built environment (i.e., bike washing facilities, living or climbing wall outside of a building).
- Support mapping and creation of additional trails in Idaho Springs, particularly south of the site on Chicago Creek Road.
- Support the pedestrian connection to Water Wheel Park and into downtown.

2. Enhance the presence of art and culture in public space.

• Create an art walk that reflects the history and potential of Idaho Springs.

Policy and RFP Ideas

Given that there are six sites available for development, Happy City also recommends applying a common framework to the redevelopment of key multi-family housing sites in Idaho Springs. With this in mind, we offer the following ideas to help frame discussion among the town, county, developers, private actors and public authorities, including:

- Pursue sustained engagement with all key stakeholders.
- Identify incentives that the city can offer a developer who purchases the school site.
- Consider creating one RFP for multiple sites.

Following these strategies will help ensure that new development in the municipality helps to strengthen the community, diversify its economy and, ultimately, enhance the quality of life for inhabitants in the region.

2. HAPPY CITY PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

Social wellbeing matters. Feelings of belonging and connection to other people and community are essential elements of human health and happiness. People with strong connections to family and friends live, on average, 15 years longer than people who are disconnected. High trust cities report much higher happiness and GDP growth than low trust cities.

Design plays a role in mediating this social wellbeing. City custodians are starting to recognize that focusing on maximizing social wellbeing is both a responsibility and a reasonable goal. Through architecture and programming, private and public spaces have a profound effect on social relations, health, sustainability and the economic vitality of a community. The good news is that places that maximize wellbeing also perform well on sustainability and economic measures. Happy City's research has also found that multi-family housing design can make or break social connections and trust. If we are interested in creating happier, healthier and more resilient communities we need to be guided by a clear understanding of the relationship between design and wellbeing.

Happy City draws on more than a decade of ground-breaking research and interventions to help make pragmatic, effective choices on urban policy, planning and design. This knowledge informs our urban wellbeing framework (see below), a simple but powerful tool for translating evidence into action.

Happy City Wellbeing Framework



Happy Urban Design Principles: Idaho Springs

On January 16, 2018, Happy City led its Colorado partners in a Happiness Audit of a proposed mix-use development site with regional importance for the future social and economic vitality to the county. The tools and wellbeing principles developed through this work were developed with the explicit goal of developing practical tools and strengthening the design of priority housing and transportation projects in Idaho Springs.

During the session, participants adapted the Happy City framework to respond to the local context, conditions and aspirations. First, participants in this happiness audit produced their own principles for happy urban design. Then, teams considered how these principles could be transformed into actionable goals that support wellbeing and help the town and county to thrive. This local set of evidence-based principles for wellbeing informs the analysis, actions and strategies contained in this toolset.

1. Core needs

Principle: The city should ensure affordable access to the basics of survival: water, food, shelter, security, sanitation and health care.

2. Sociability

Principle: The city should promote positive relationships, enable social time and facilitate trust building encounters.

3. Resilience

Principle: The city should encourage ecological, economic and cultural diversities that help ecosystems stay strong over the long term.

4. Ease

Principle: The city should help the people who use or move through spaces experience a greater sense of control, comfort and agency by reducing needs to commute individually.

5. Health

Principle: The city should enable, encourage and reward healthy choices and active mobility.

6. Equity

Principle: The city should offer access and opportunity across the spectrum of human diversity.

7. Joy

Principle: The city should maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain of urban experience (while making a distinction between short and long-term implications).

8. Meaning and belonging

Principle: The city should support efforts to elevate community drive, passion and collective pride.



Note: The list of principles above has been edited for clarity and focus.

3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Approach to Mapping

The mapping of Idaho Springs and the Clear Creek School District site was used to assess a series of factors that influence community wellbeing and the potential development of the site. Comfortable distances to walk, access to core needs and amenities, mobility options, parking and road speed, and the presence of parks and green space were some of the factors analyzed using GIS software and geospatial analysis. This analysis informed the happiness audit and were instrumental in the formulation of the final recommendations.

Mapping of Idaho Springs and the Clear Creek School District site was executed using a philosophy of "functional spatial analysis" - that is to say, mapping and analyses were created to support decision making, and to present a clear and transparent baseline of information that can be used to benchmark the site and assist in the design process.

Mapping was completed in a three step process:

- 1. Develop data that can support spatial indicators;
- 2. Conduct spatial analysis; and
- 3. Present results in a compelling and accessible manner.

DATA DEVELOPMENT

Baseline cartographic data was procured from the City of Idaho Springs and consisted of planning-scale information such as municipal boundaries, parcels, roads, parks and trails, land use, and planning areas. Additional information was sourced from Open Street Map, the City of Idaho Spring website, and Google Maps. A complete listing of data used for this analysis is in Appendix 1.

DEFINING THE WALKSHEDS

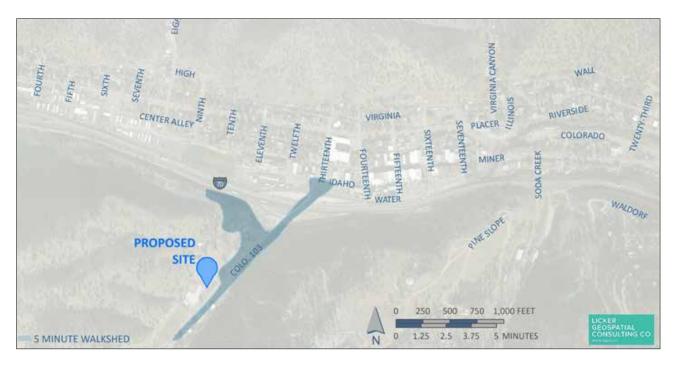
Data was developed using standard GIS data management techniques. This typically involves the effort of transforming raw GIS data into functional information that can be used for spatial analysis. For instance, walking times and walksheds, which feature prominently in this report, were calculated using a time-based pedestrian network. A pedestrian network can be thought of as a series of connected links (roads, paths, sidewalks, trails, desire lines) and nodes (intersections, trailheads, curbs) which may facilitate human movement through a defined geography. In a more abstract sense, a pedestrian network can be thought of as a graphic representation of where a citizen can plausibly and safely walk.

While a dataset that strictly defines such a network did not currently exist for the City, our team was able to create one using line work data sourced from Open Street Map. This data was additionally processed to add in desire lines (lines that cut across parks and parking lots for instance), and to remove non-walkable links such as Interstate 70. Once the network had been developed, our team transformed distance into time by assuming a walking speed of 5km/hr or 4.5ft/s or 3.1 mph. This is the speed that an average American adult can typically walk in standard terrain over a 1 hour period. While we recognize that a uniform average walking speed is not representative of all populations and walking abilities, it is still a useful metric by which to establish time-based distances that can be used for further urban analysis.

Once the pedestrian network was setup and validated, we conducted an analysis to determine distances from the site based on 5, 7.5, 10 and 15 minute walking times. The following results are briefly described below:



Walkshed, 5 minutes



The five minute walkshed from the Clear Creek School District site is approximately 8 acres in size and stretches from the foot of 13th Street at Idaho Street to approximately 1/4 mile south along Hwy. 103. An additional arm of the walkshed is accessible to the west of the school site along the Big Five Trail. It should be noted at this point, that the five minute walkshed represents an idealized travel time without interruption or barriers. Given the presence of at least two highway onramps and the relative scarcity of pedestrian infrastructure, we expect that a more realistic walkshed which incorporates delays would be significantly smaller than the one presented above. While not within the scope of this report, a recommendation for future analysis would be to review barriers to pedestrian movement in order to refine the study and all subsequent walkshed mapping.



Walkshed, 7.5 minutes



The 7.5 minute walkshed incorporates all of the 5 minute walkshed and totals approximately 28 acres in size. While not displayed in the generalized graph above, this walkshed further stretches an additional eighth of a mile south down Hwy. 103 and an additional eighth of a mile west along the Big Five Trail. Displayed on the graph above, however, is the nearly perfect triangle of walking distance that reflects a fine-grained gridded street network. Indeed, this shape represents an almost ideal walking geometry for an urban environment. In comparison, an area with no roads and barriers to travel, the idealized walking distance would be a perfect circle, while in an urban environment with nearly square blocks the idealized walkshed would present as a perfect diamond. Therefore, it can be argued that once someone gets across the highway overpass, beyond Idaho Street, there is great walking potential from the site.

Walkshed, 10 minutes



The 10 minute walkshed encompasses a total area of 62 acres in size and the majority of the central areas of Idaho Springs. Given the natural barriers to the north and physical barrier to the south, this walkshed stretches roughly east to west from 8th Avenue to 17th Avenue again in a generally triangular pattern suggesting a fine grained urban form north of the freeway.



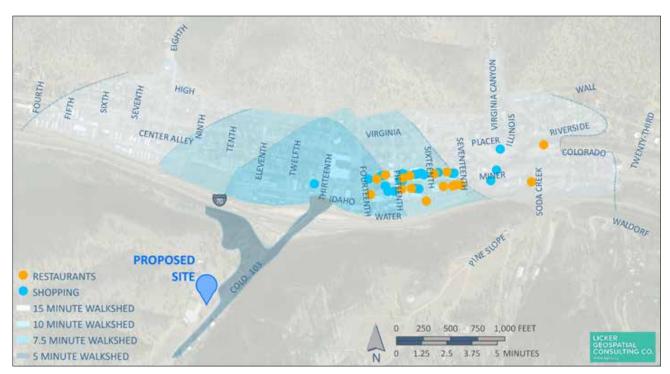
Walkshed, 15 minutes

At roughly 128 acres, the 15 minute walkshed covers roughly half of the built up area of Idaho Springs. As will be demonstrated on the next set of figures, nearly all of the city's amenities are accessible within this walking distance.

Access to Amenities

Having safe and convenient access to civic amenities and destinations is a critical component of urban wellbeing. To better understand this context for Idaho Springs, our team used the pedestrian network developed for the walksheds to conduct additional analyses of the site's walking distance to a variety of key destinations.

In order to develop benchmarks to evaluate the site, we developed 10 minute walking distances from each parcel in the central area of the city as well as access metrics (such as count of shops and restaurants within this walking time). These counts were then averaged for the city as a whole and compared to corresponding metrics for the proposed site. The results indicate more-or-less how accessible the site is compared to the rest of the city. The following set of figures display potential walking distances from the proposed site to numerous civic amenities.

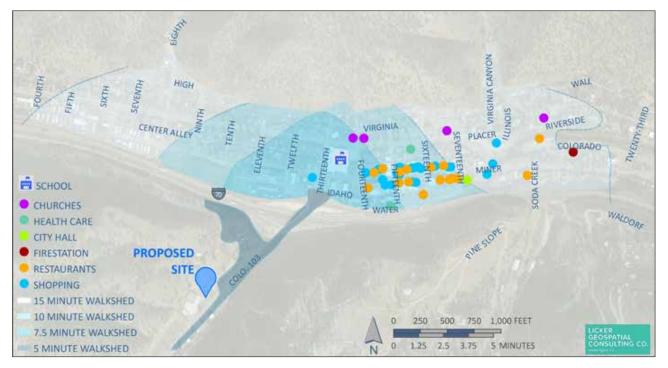


Shops & Restaurants

Shop and restaurant data was sourced from the "Things To Do" page on the City's website. Addresses for each of these locations were geocoded (transformed from addresses into points on a map) using the State of Colorado's geocoding service. Quality control was executed in order to ensure that the points were accurate.

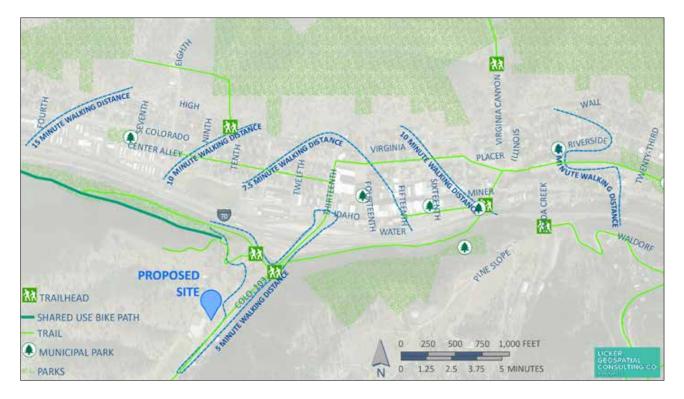
With regards to access to shopping, within a 10 minute walk from the site there are 23 shops. This compares to a municipal average of 15 shops and a highest value of 27. There are 15 restaurants within a 10 minute walking distance to the site, which compares to a municipal average of 11 and a high value of 23. From this standpoint, it can be safely argued, that while the site is not the optimal location in town for access to these amenities, it is better than the municipal average and not too distant from the top values.

Civic Amenities



With the exception of City Hall, the fire station, the Courtney Riley Cooper Park, the visitor center and two out of four churches, nearly all civic amenities are within a 10 minute walking distance of the proposed site. In general, the site compares favorably to the City average with access to 5 out of 9 civic amenities within a 10 minute walk. This is exactly comparable with the municipal average of 5.1 civic amenities within the same walking distance. With regards to specific civic amenities, Table 1 below summarizes the comparative access metrics for the site with regards to minimum walking times to reach civic amenities. The key takeaway is that, with the exception of Carlson Elementary and the Health Center, the site is generally less accessible than the city average.

	Minimum Walking Times (Minutes}	
Amenities	Site	City Average
Churches	8.3	7.0
City Hall	10.1	8.8
Fire Station	14.4	11.2



Access to Parks, Open Space and Trails

Similar to the above analysis, our team estimated walking distances to the broad range of parks and recreation facilities that are present in Idaho Springs. Data our team used to complete this analysis consisted of parks and recreation datasets provided by the City of Idaho Springs. Given the value that residents of and visitors to Idaho Springs place on outdoor recreation, our team wanted to capture the potential opportunities and constraints of the School District site versus that of the rest of the City.

With regards to recreational amenities, the proposed site is well situated with approximately 36% of the area within the 10 minute walkshed being considered as parks, recreation or open space. The Big Five Trailhead is located less than five minutes' walking distance from the site, as are other recreation opportunities along Clear Creek, in particular the Water Wheel Park.

Within the 10 minute walking distance threshold, the site is potentially accessible to 13 named and/ or municipally designated parks, some of which include sports fields, that total 3.82 acres in size. For comparison, the municipal average is 5 parks totaling 2.63 acres. The site is also proximal to a total of 8 trailheads for walking compared to a municipal average of 3.



Transportation Infrastructure

With regards to access to transit, the site is proximal to three different transit services (Regional: Bustang and Greyhound, Local: Prospector) at three locations (one stop is to the south off of the map, where the walkshed has been generalized). In comparison to the remainder of the City, the site scores very well - an average location in Idaho Springs only has access to 2.5 bus stops versus a total of 4 for the site.

In terms of the speeds of surrounding roads, for non-highway roads, the average speed within the site's 10 minute walkshed is 20mph. This is slightly higher than the municipal average of 18.7mph. Given the site's proximity to the highway, if the highway is included in the above assessment, the average speed rises to 28 mph which compares to 25 mph municipal average. Secondarily to speed limits is the overall amount of land devoted to vehicular movement and right-of-ways for which the site scores relatively poorly with 37% of land within a 10 minute walk being devoted to vehicle travel, versus a municipal average of 25%.

Finally, when evaluating access to parking within a 10 minute walk, we noted that the site had access to approximately 677 parking stalls (out of a City-wide total of 1015) which is higher than the municipal average of 624 (which means that, on average, the City has access to 624 stalls within a 10 minute walk). By this metric, the site is reasonably well provisioned with parking. It is recognized, however, that parking is insufficient to meet parking needs for recreational use in the municipality (e.g. rafting, ziplining, hiking and mountain biking).

WORKSHOP CONTEXT AND APPROACH

The Idaho Springs Happiness Audit workshop took place on Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at the United Center in Idaho Springs. Forty five participants took part in the 6 hour workshop. Participants had a diversity of professional backgrounds, including city government, public office, real estate, nursing, design, public health, and local business.

Participants were introduced to the Happy City approach and several of its potential applications in Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County. Working in groups, they then adapted the Happy City principles to their local contexts and brainstormed goals to help fulfill them. After an introduction to Clear Creek School, participants visited the site, with most choosing an approximate 15 minute walk around to the site. Once back at the United Center, the groups identified priority goals and then explained their decision to the group. The priority goals are detailed below. Together with the Happy City framework, happy mapping analysis, and the goals emerging from the happiness audit, these have informed the recommendations made in this toolkit.

Wellbeing Goals Identified by Workshop Participants^{*}

1. Core Needs

Goal: Support socioeconomic diversity and create opportunities for multi-generational social support.

2. Sociability

Goal: Bridge divides and build positive relationships between diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

3. Resilience

Goal: Foster a greater sense of ownership and belonging by creating a safe, inviting space for people to engage one another.

4. Ease

Goal: Address streetscape "quick wins" on connection to downtown.

5. Health

Goal: Ensure high quality infrastructure from site to other essential destinations in the town.

6. Equity

Goal: Serve all user groups in Idaho Springs through the means of housing and transit solutions.

7. Joy

Goal: Encourage a mix of uses on the site, such as housing, civic, entertainment, cultural and recreational.

8. Meaning and Belonging

Goal: Create spaces that encourage spontaneous and interactive arts and cultural activities, as well as spaces that highlight the outdoors and recreational activities.

4. RECOMMENDED TOOLS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS



The following recommended strategies and actions have been designed to strengthen economic vitality and social resilience of Idaho Springs. These recommendations provide practical tools that the municipality and various stakeholders can use to inform the re-development of the Clear County School District site, as well as other priority housing and transportation developments in the region. They build on Happy City's evidence-based framework, its mapping analysis and, most importantly, on the rich dialogue and input held among multiple local stakeholders. These recommendations also build on Urban3's insights to diversify the economic and fiscal resilience for Clear Creek County.

Recommendation 1:

Improve streetscape connections between the Clear Creek School District site (as well as other development sites) and the historic downtown





Analysis: Idaho Springs is a compact community where many amenities, including its historic downtown, can be reached quickly on foot or by bike. However, wide streets, limited pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and car-oriented design can lead to perceptions of increased distance and lack of safety. This is the case for the Clear Creek School District site. While this is only a 10 minute walk and less than 5 minute bike ride from Miner Street (main street), an interstate highway and large intersection on the northside of Exit 240 make the walk or bike seem unpleasant and long. This risks creating a perceived disconnect between downtown and the site, reducing its attractiveness to potential future residents and developers.

We recognize that the City is lobbying the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDoT) for a pedestrian bridge over the highway, and support that move. However, we also understand that such a development can take a great deal of time and money. In order to demonstrate the City's openness and flexibility to development, we encourage Idaho Springs to pursue a series of quick wins today.

ACTION: Implement wayfinding signage

Adding signs with information about how quickly people can reach a destination on foot have been found to lead to more people walking to the destination. Informing people that downtown is only a 10 minute walk away would help overcome the perceived barrier created by the I-70. Signage is also a low-cost and easily implementable measure that can support town branding.

ACTION: Add paint and other materials to unused space on ramps

The Exit 240 on- and off-ramps are excessively wide. By painting restricted and unused road space, Idaho Springs can test improvements pedestrian and cyclist comfort, health and safety in a cost-effective way. Adding paint and other features, such as planters, brightly painted tires or public art can also support local branding in a fast and cost-effective way. These actions would improve walkability to the Clear Creek School District site, boosting the site's attractiveness to developers. It is notable that this transformation would be inline with CDoT's lane width requirements, and would highlight current street markings, simply by filling in the white painted lines that are already in place.



*Refer to the Happy City Wellbeing Framework on Page 6 for descriptions of each principle.

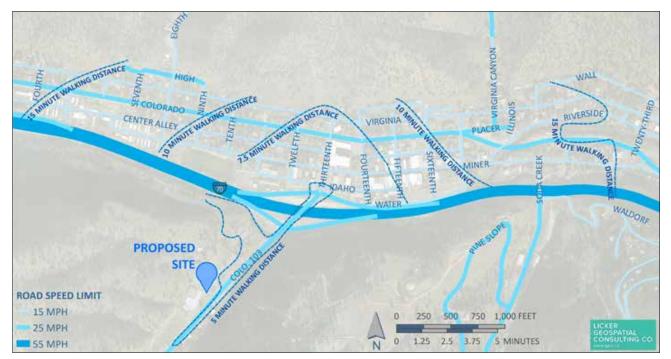
ACTION: Improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure on the overpass

While pedestrians and cyclists are able to cross the Exit 240 overpass, and a mapping analysis indicates that the speed limit on this stretch of road is not excessive for human comfort, pedestrian and cyclist safety – both real and perceived – remains an issue. Wide car lanes, 12 feet wide in this case, give drivers a sense that they can safely drive faster than the posted 20 and 30 mile per hour speed limits. Meanwhile, a lack of street lighting diminishes the sense of safety people feel when crossing the bridge. Research has found that this is particularly acute for women, children and seniors. By widening the sidewalk and/or adding bike lanes that are separated using plastic channelizers, reducing lane width and adding street lighting, these issues can be addressed without hindering the flow of traffic.



"Bridge Pedestrian Improvements" - The recently completed CDoT bridge over I-70 can be enhanced to provide pedestrians and cyclists a more enjoyable and safe waking experience. Improvements may include safety bollards, enhanced paving materials, pedestrian scaled lighting and monuments at each end of the bridge. – JIM LEGGITT, FAIA

Road Speed



ACTION: Upgrade the streetscape on the north side of Exit 240*

Today, when people walking from the Clear Creek School site to downtown make it across the Exit 240 overpass, they are greeted by an excessively wide and poorly demarcated intersection at Idaho Street and 13th Avenue. By adding a sidewalk and street trees, with opportunities for further elements, such as bike lanes, Idaho Springs can further enhance the connection between the school site and downtown.

By completing this step, as well as those detailed above, Idaho Springs can effectively connect the Clear Creek School site with downtown. This will support active mobility, wellbeing, reduce car dependence and increase property values on the development site.



"Shell Gas Station Improvements" - Located at an important gateway intersection, this corner gas station may include consolidated vehicular entrances with curbs and gutters, improved streetscape pedestrian sidewalks, low barrier stone walls, street trees and landscaping. – JIM LEGGITT, FAIA

ACTION: Build new pedestrian and cyclist bridge

A new pedestrian and cyclist bridge would be a testament to Idaho Springs' and CDoT's commitment to active mobility, something that Happy City fully supports. However, recognizing the cost and time that this action could take, we urge Idaho Springs to pursue the rapid and cost-effective actions detailed above while engaging CDoT regarding the pedestrian and cyclist bridge. The cumulative benefits of the previous mobility actions may outweigh the need for this significant additional infrastructure investment.

Note: These quick wins should also be well documented, as this street transformation would be a powerful way to show developers that Idaho Springs is open to new ideas and open for business.

^{*} While this analysis has identified that improvements to pedestrian movements are needed in the area, any actual interventions on these sites would be done in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Ultimately, these improvements will enhance the surrounding built environment and facilitate ease of access for multiple users, which can also help increase sales for local business. Some improvements might occur during upcoming improvements such as the potential parking structure and the addition of a bus lane to the WB I-70 off ramp.



Recommendation 2:

Improve mobility freedom by enhancing alternatives to the private car



Analysis: While Idaho Springs is a walkable town in itself, many residents commute elsewhere for their employment. Currently, 68% of residents in Clear Creek County commute alone, with an average commute time of 30 minutes.⁷ Evidence demonstrates that life satisfaction declines as commute times increase. At the same time, the number of vehicles passing Idaho Springs on the I-70 continues to increase, recently reaching approximately 49,000 vehicles a day.⁸ This growing volume of traffic helps explain why 92% of residents identified "Protecting our air and water quality" as essential or very important, and the highest priority in planning areas, in the most recent *Clear Creek County Master Plan Citizen Survey*.⁹

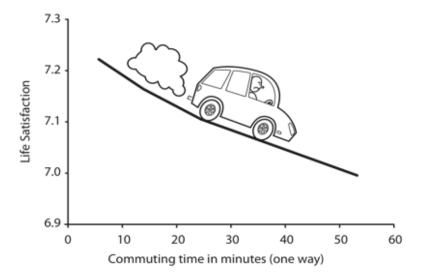
Dependence on private automobiles can also curb the mobility freedom of young people, the elderly and those without the financial resources to own and operate a private vehicle. Car dependence also increases the share of household income spent on housing and transportation costs. The town's existing bus services, Greyhound and Bustang, meet the needs of certain people, but do not offer viable intercity transportation options for many residents. Currently, they do not offer a competitive alternative for commuting to Denver or elsewhere.

Improving and diversifying Idaho Springs' transportation opportunities can increase wellbeing, protect the environment, achieve residents' planning priorities and support local equity. As such, we recommend creating a commuter service and the consideration of a local car-share service.

Economic Hub at Exit 240, [report], 2016. - Updated from 43,000 cars per day based on conversations with City officials.

⁹RRC Associates, Clear Creek County Master Plan Citizen Survey Results, [website], 2016, https://www.co.clear-creek.co.us/DocumentCenter/View/7620, (accessed January 24, 2018).

⁷Data USA, Clear Creek County, CO, [website], 2017, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/clear-creek-county-co/ (accessed January 26, 2018). ⁸THK Associates and EST Comprehensive Engineering Services, Highest and Best Use Economic Feasibility Study for the Interstate 70



Graph by Dan Planko, Data: German Socio-economic Panel 1985-2003 from Alois Stutzer and Bruno Frey, 2004, University of Zurich

ACTION: Implement a feeder commute service to RTD station

Improving and diversifying Idaho Springs' transportation opportunities can increase wellbeing, protect the environment, achieve residents' planning priorities and support local equity. As such, we recommend creating a commuter service and the consideration of a local car-share service.

A Clear Creek County feeder commute service that operates during rush hour and brings residents to the bus station at the El Rancho Park-n-Ride, or ideally the train station at Jefferson County Government Center, would significantly improve socially and environmentally supportive transportation opportunities for Idaho Springs. Implementing this service would enhance the Idaho Springs-Denver connection, enhancing the town's appeal in the eyes of developers and future residents.

ACTION: Investigate the viability of a local car- or ride-share service

Community-oriented car-and ride-share services can reduce the economic burden of car ownership and increase transportation opportunities for young people and the elderly. Both car-share and ride-share services have proven viable in mountain towns in British Columbia, which have similar characteristics to Idaho Springs and neighboring towns. However, such services are also dependent on local conditions, and can benefit from private partnership.



HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Streamline the development process for the six priority sites earmarked for mixed-use housing

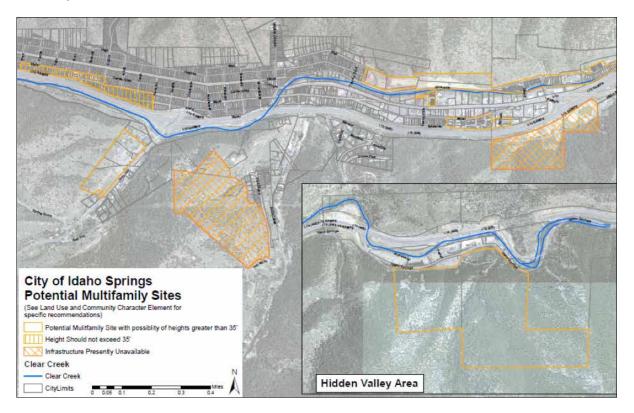
Relevant Principles:

👜 🧐 💠 🏷 🏷 💥

Analysis: Idaho Springs, like so many cities, is affected by a severely limited supply of adequate and affordable housing alternatives for its residents. In some areas within the region, the existing housing stock is deteriorating or in substandard conditions. This further limits opportunities for families and individuals to live in a secure home and a supportive community. In these conditions, people are forced to leave their communities in search of appropriate and affordable homes. This exposes working people to punishingly long commutes and stifles economic prosperity. Local businesses have trouble hiring staff.

To address this situation, the municipality has earmarked six sites for development of multifamily housing. Having a focus on the "right" kind of housing offers an exceptional opportunity to enhance the social and economic vitality of Idaho Springs, now and in the future. It provides a critical strategy to strengthen regional finances through new tax revenue and employment density. It also represents a substantial opportunity for real estate developers and investors.

But to take advantage of this opportunity, the municipality needs to align all necessary policies and streamline the development potential of its priority sites. The good news is that by adopting a common, evidence-based approach to the design of these sites, the municipality can achieve economies of scale and maximize public wellbeing.



ACTION: Update existing housing needs projections to optimize density, wellbeing and tax revenue potential for each site.

We encourage Idaho Springs to combine all of the sites into a single development framework and a combined RFP process. A common approach to development would help leverage economies of scale for the municipality. It would also offer an opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for negotiating with developers an optimal mix and location for desired public services and amenities. Building on Urban3's studies and mapping analysis like the one we did for the Clear Creek School site, could help plan and communicate the best possible programming between all sites to strengthen public wellbeing.



Recommendation 2:

Favor design, policies and mechanisms that allow families and individuals to stay longer in their community

Relevant Principles: 🍈 🍫 🏦 🦫 💥

Analysis: Having access to secure, long-term housing is a core need for wellbeing. People who live in one place for a long time tend to report greater satisfaction, sense of community and neighborhood trust. It takes time for people to develop greater connections and bonds with their communities. In reality, however, families and individuals seldom enjoy the benefits of living in the same community for long enough to develop strong bonds with neighbors and community.

Insufficient, unaffordable or simply inadequate housing options push families and individuals to move further away in search of a suitable home. This can create persistent challenges for individuals to be able to age in place. As people lose the capacity to drive, they have a hard time getting services to meet their daily needs, and they are starved of the casual social encounters that keep people connected, strong and healthy. When seniors can't meet their daily needs on foot, the aging process hastens. Thus, it is important to develop denser walkable neighborhood centers in order to provide diverse housing solutions to meet the evolving needs of families and individual households.

ACTION: Develop alternative financial and tenure mechanisms for the provision of affordable housing options for local residents

New tenure arrangements such as land trusts, co-ownership with government and mechanisms such as rent control, price restriction covenants or subsidies allow low-income families to live in healthy and prosperous communities. It ensures employee-employer proximity. This also helps reduce commute times for residents and infrastructure burdens for the municipality. These legal frameworks allow planners to create more inclusive and equitable communities, with greater economic vitality and strengthened social capital.



ACTION: Develop various housing typologies in each site to meet the needs of a diverse spectrum of households

Communities which offer a variety of housing typologies better meet residents' current and anticipated needs over time. A mix of housing types such as row houses, townhouses, stacked townhomes and apartments, helps ensure that places accommodate people with diverse range of needs and interests. As their children move away from home and couples no longer need a large house, those who live in neighborhoods with a mix of housing forms can downsize to walkable neighborhood centers. Most importantly, they can remain in close contact with the communities in which they raised their families.



"Hillside Residential Above the School" - The hillside above the existing school may include carefully sited residential buildings with concealed parking that promote pedestrian connectivity, views overlooking Chicago Creek and have architecture reflecting Idaho Springs design character. – JIM LEGGITT, FAIA

Recommendation 3:

Design multi-family housing to maximize sociability and community attachment



Analysis: Happy City's research has found that multi-family housing design can make or break social connections and trust. Factors such as the heights of buildings, the location of green space and even number of people that share the same entrance affect the way people feel and treat each other. Attaining adequate levels of density, alongside careful consideration of the relationship between design and wellbeing can lead to better public health outcomes.



"Redeveloped Running Track" - The existing school's running track site may be an ideal location for a new multi-family residential development. The campus of residential buildings with architectural design appropriate to the character of Idaho Springs is arranged around a series of bike paths, fitness amenities and hiking trails leading up into the hills above the property. - JIM LEGGITT, FAIA



ACTION: Favor medium density environments

Conditions in the Clear Creek School site are favorable for the development of a vibrant neighborhood of with a mix of housing, commercial and civic uses. While the presence of asbestos in the school site pose some challenges for redevelopment, we recommend partial preservation of the existing structure. Even the preservation of the existing facade or features of the building, in combination with greater density and mix of uses in the site would strengthen the social and economic vitality of the community.

The good news is that these types of neighborhoods have also been associated with more positive social outcomes. By limiting social scale, medium density housing typologies give residents more control over their interaction with neighbors. They have been found to achieve better results on neighborhood trust, pro-social behavior and residents' satisfaction with their homes. The development of these kinds of environments also unlocks economies of scale and public benefits such as increased fiscal revenues for the municipality and the county.

ACTION: Promote active streets edges through a diversity of business, activities and social opportunities

Housing developments must ensure that residents have opportunities for having positive casual interactions with strangers. Happy City's experiments have found that people are both happier and kinder along street edges with an abundance of smaller shops and services. To do this, it is important to ensure that development edges have active facades and opportunity nodes that interest pedestrians. Other design strategies such as varied building heights, composition, balconies and facade materials can be used to increase the aesthetic complexity and the uniqueness of each unit.





MULTI-MODAL HUB RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Ensure multi-modal hub construction is used as an opportunity for city building.



Analysis: The construction of a large new multi-modal facility in close proximity to downtown is an opportunity to do more than simply resolve parking and transportation questions. By incorporating housing and commercial activity on the site, the town and county can address several key challenges. Incorporating housing on-site could help reduce affordability issues and meet housing demand in Clear Creek. On-site commercial space could help to grow the commercial tax revenue base, in the area that Urban3 found to have the greatest tax revenue potential in the county. To support a flexible approach to development, we encourage Idaho Springs to pursue a series of quick wins today.

ACTION: Construct housing on-site

Including housing on-site could help meet the need for the estimated 677 multi-unit dwellings in Clear Creek.¹⁰ While there are a series of precedents around the world, such a development in the near future would draw industry and media attention. As such, it could also be used to send an important message to the development community: Idaho Springs is open to progressive ideas and innovative solutions that meet the needs of residents and businesses. Housing could be located on the north side of the building, shielding residents from noise on the I-70 and ensuring that residents live only steps from downtown. Additional housing units would also grow the potential for residential property tax revenue.

ACTION: Include ground floor commercial space around the periphery of the structure.

Wrapping the ground floor of the hub with commercial space (aside from entrances and exits) would achieve multiple benefits. It would concentrate additional activity in the Idaho Springs core, which coupled with the new parking facilities, would attract and retain even more visitors. It would add further commercial space in the most lucrative taxable area in Clear Creek County. Finally, it would result in an active streetscape around the new structure, enhancing the walkability of the site. Happy City has also found that active facades lead to greater trust among strangers, an important component of wellbeing and social cohesion.

Recommendation 2:

Future proof parking facilities.

Relevant Principles: 🛕 🏆 🐴

Analysis: Between autonomous vehicles and

innovative mass transit technology (such as maglev trains or the hyperloop), there is clear possibility that fewer people will be operating private vehicles in the relatively near future. As such, it is important that any significant investment in infrastructure be adaptable to future uses. The future needs and demands for such a space are uncertain; however, there are steps that can be taken to support the long-term use and resilience of a parking structure.

ACTION: Design parking structure to be adaptable to human uses

By building the structure with flat, reinforced floors, high ceilings and ramps that are removable, the parking portion of the multi-modal hub can be more easily and cost-effectively adapted to housing, office or other needs. Including water and electrical hook ups, or simply leaving space for these utilities can also ensure the building's resilience in a cost-efficient manner.





¹⁰THK Associates and EST Comprehensive Engineering Services, Highest and Best Use Economic Feasibility Study for the Interstate 70 Economic Hub at Exit 240, [report], 2016.



MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Co-locate greater density of housing near employment and services

Relevant Principles: 🤗 🏆 🏦 📣

Analysis: People who live in neighborhoods where housing is mixed with shops, services and places to work report having much more positive local relationships compared to people in single-use, car-dependent neighborhoods. They report being much more likely to know their neighbors, and more likely to get involved with social groups or volunteer. Land use approaches that promote greater housing and employment density also generate more tax revenue, strengthening municipal finances. Even places with low-rise, mixed-use buildings of two or three stories can generate ten times the tax revenue per acre than power centers in auto-dependent environments.

Efforts to create nodes of housing and employment density also produce nodes of energy efficiency that lower the cost of city services. Low-density environments require more roads, more sidewalks, more signposts, more landscaping and a substantially higher cost for the construction and maintenance of utility infrastructure. They also cost more to protect with emergency services. Higher-density development patterns, on the other hand, require less space and infrastructure per household and are less expensive to construct and maintain per capita.

ACTION: Focus greater density and diversity of land uses at the Clear Creek School site

The absence of appropriate affordable housing options in the region is forcing people to move and live far from work. This boosts transportation emissions and household costs, and reduces social time and opportunities. Disadvantaged social groups – the elderly, indigenous groups, people with mobility challenges, immigrants, and people living on low incomes – are the most likely to live farther from work. But a focus to concentrate a mix of multi-family housing near employment and services will help to address these social challenges.

The Clear Creek School site is particularly well poised to support greater density of housing, employment and services for habitants in the region and beyond. Simply including an everyday public destination on-site, such as a grocery store, coffee shop or community service can serve as a critical hub to promote greater connection and resilience for a new neighborhood. A greater density of business would also strengthen the regional economy and fiscal base for the municipality.

An Happy City



"School Building Addition" - The iconic northeast corner of the existing school building may be saved and converted to new uses. This sketch illustrates a potential addition to the building with a large glass atrium showcasing the various user groups in the new facility. - JIM LEGGITT, FAIA

Recommendation 2:

Create a dynamic co-working facility for small business owners and telecommuters

Relevant Principles

🗎 🍣 🕈 🏌 🏠 Analysis: A greater portion of today's economy is in the realm of small and independent business owners.

In order to thrive, these business and professionals need to operate in comfortable, dignified and inspiring environments. Some studies have found, for example, that people with views of nature report greater productivity at work, and greater feelings of hope at day's end. Communities also benefit from the social interaction potential offered by coworking scapes. These spaces offer an important solution to the problem of isolation that many independent professionals, contractors and business owners experience while working at home.

ACTION: Use re-development efforts to anchor a co-working hub at the Clear Creek School site

Economic geographers have found that environments that promote more face-to-face interactions are associated with stronger GDP growth and creativity. Developing a co-working space at the Clear Creek School site would help promote these casual interactions and a greater sense of attachment. More social business and professional environments are also more resilient. According to the Soul of the Community study by the Knight Foundation, communities with the highest levels of community attachment also had the fastest GDP growth.11

¹¹ Knight Foundation, Soul of the Community, [report], 2010.



PUBLIC AND GREEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Enhance recreational connections around site/city

Relevant Principles: 🕤 🧐 💕 🏦 🏌 🏷 💥

Analysis: Idaho Springs and the surrounding county are situated within an idyllic natural environment that supports an array of outdoor activities. The value of these surroundings is embraced by current residents, who identified maintaining scenic beauty, preserving natural areas and enhancing public space and trails as three of the county's top five planning priorities.¹² These much-appreciated characteristics can be further harnessed to increase Idaho Springs' appeal with potential residents and developers alike. We recognize that the town and county have worked hard to secure the greenway trail in Idaho Springs. This is an important tourism and active mobility asset. It underlines the town's opportunity to appeal to families and outdoor enthusiasts.

ACTION: Integrate outdoor recreation facilities into built environment (i.e., bike washing facilities, living or climbing wall outside of a building)

Bringing Idaho Springs' natural assets into the city itself is an opportunity to reinforce the town's connection with surrounding nature, while also improving facilities for those already spending time in the outdoors. Bike wash facilities and a climbing wall (potentially located at the multi-modal hub) are two potential opportunities to reinforce the urban-natural connection and demonstrate the local adventurous spirit.

500 Acres of Open Space

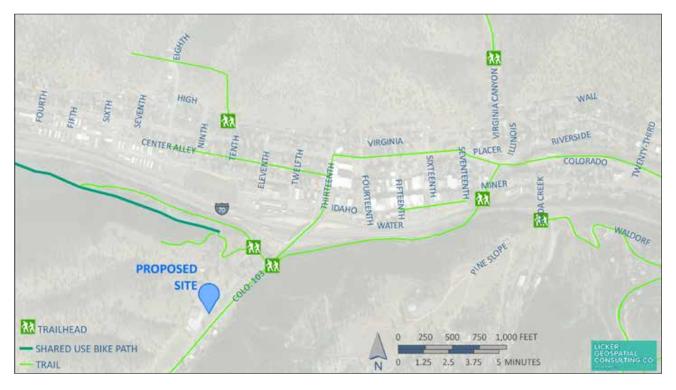


¹²RRC Associates, Clear Creek County Master Plan Citizen Survey Results, [website], 2016, https://www.co.clear-creek.co.us/DocumentCenter/ View/7620, (accessed January 24, 2018).

ACTION: Support mapping and creation of additional trails in Idaho Springs, particularly south of the site on Chicago Creek Road

Improving access to, and an increase in the number of, recreational trails from the Clear Creek School site, and from other points in Idaho Springs, will strengthen the area's connections to some of its greatest assets. Improved connectivity and additional trails could have a particularly positive effect on accessibility for certain demographics, notably families and young people. Greater access to a wealth of natural assets would also augment other efforts to enhance Idaho Springs residential appeal, thereby increasing the potential for residential and mixed-use development.

Trails and Multi-Use Paths



ACTION: Support the pedestrian connection to the Water Wheel Park and into downtown

The walking route along Clear Creek, past the Charlie Tayler Water Wheel, and onto Miner Street highlights some of Idaho Springs' desirable assets. It also offers a secondary, and scenic, pedestrian connection to downtown. Signage and information about local places of interest could encourage residents and visitors alike to explore more of Idaho Springs, and get some exercise while doing so.



Recommendation 2: Enhance the presence of art and culture in public space

Relevant Principles: 🤣 🕤 🦻 💥

Analysis: Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County have rich histories. By telling local stories through public art, the town can celebrate its heritage, enhance its local brand, increase the presence of art in public space and support local cultural industries. Happy City research has found that engaging local actors in the process of shaping public space, can improve place attachment not only among residents, but with visitors as well. This can translate into economic benefits for nearby businesses and a reduction in costs associated with waste collection and vandalism.

ACTION: Create an art walk that reflects the history and potential of Idaho Springs

An art walk could showcase the town's proud history and optimism for the future. It would encourage active mobility and help to diversify the town's visitor attractions. It could involve murals, statues, installations, plaques and more, and would be an opportunity for the community to enhance the local sense of meaning and belonging.



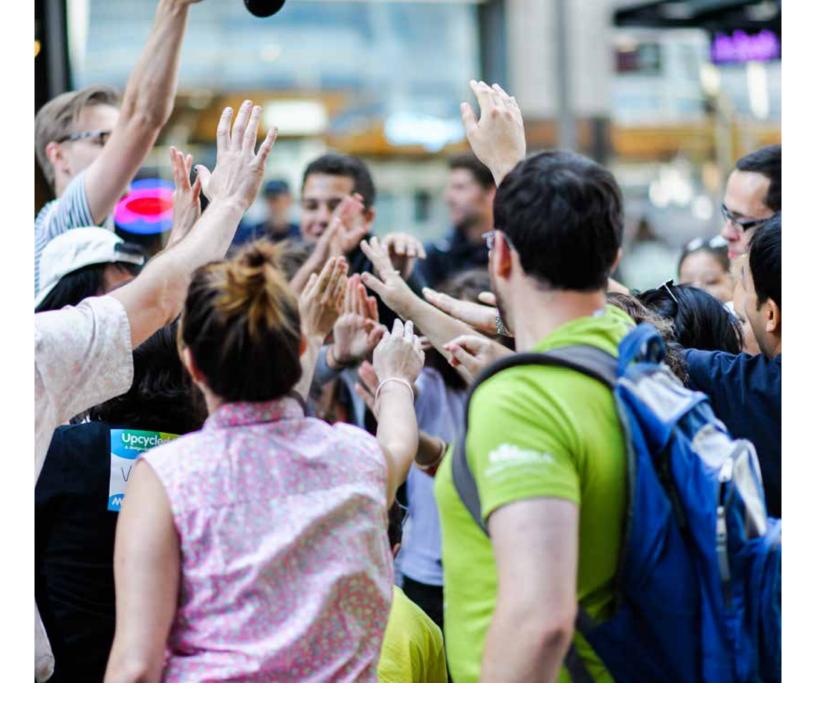
"Idaho Springs Mural" - Several buildings in the downtown core may be ideal locations for large colorful murals depicting the history of Idaho Springs as well as Colorado's mining heritage. Directed by local artists, the painting of the murals may be an opportunity to involve community participation. – JIM LEGGITT, FAIA

5. POLICY AND RFP IDEAS



Happy City's analysis focuses primarily on how the built environment can be improved to better support health, wellbeing and happiness - with an array of spin off benefits. We also recognize that crafting the right policy and communicating well with developers is vital to the town's long-term prosperity. While Happy City originally aimed to craft language that could be included in an RFP for the Clear Creek School Site, there are a number of steps that need to be achieved first, including close cooperation and engagement with the landowner.

Given that there are six sites available for development, Happy City felt it would be more helpful to have insight that applies to all potential multi-family housing sites in Idaho Springs. With this in mind, we offer the following ideas to help frame discussion among the town, county, developers, private actors and other public authorities.



Recommendation:

Pursue sustained engagement with all key stakeholders.

It is vital that all stakeholders, and particularly public authorities with a stake in local development, are involved in the pre-development process. During the Happy City workshop, the site landholder, Clear Creek County School Board, was not present. Limited cooperation can hinder the creation of shared goals for the site. In turn, this could send mixed messages to developers and risk reducing their interest in the site. Conversely, a well-functioning professional relationship and clear communication can lead to a greater understanding of the needs of all actors and the opportunities they wish to pursue. Shared perspectives can also lead to innovative development ideas that enhance an RFP for all parties.

Recommendation: Identify incentives that the city can offer a developer.

While the City may not own the specific site, are there incentives that it can offer to developers? These could include density bonuses, tax breaks, reduced re-zoning and platting fees, reduced tap fees, sharing the cost burden of retrofitting or demolishing an existing structure, expediting development review and approval schedules, promotional opportunities and more. City staff will have far more knowledge on the particularities of the Idaho Springs and Colorado context.

Incentives currently available include those associated with Colorado's Enterprise Zone Program (Clear Creek County is a designated EZ), as well as low interest business loans and technical assistance through the Clear Creek Economic Development Corp. In addition, Colorado recently announced its Opportunity Zone Program, and Clear Creek County and Idaho Springs have expressed interest in receiving this competitive designation.¹³

The emphasis here is on identifying creative ways to make a site that has been on the market for nearly a decade more appealing to developers. More broadly, these efforts can be used to share and reinforce the message that Idaho Springs is open for development.

Recommendation:

Consider creating one RFP for multiple sites.

Creating one RFP for multiple sites could be used to establish a clear basis for what Idaho Springs seeks to achieve in terms of development goals. A clear, concise and open RFP would provide developers with a strong understanding of what the town seeks to achieve, without tightly defining the development approach. This RFP could for example, set up common guiding principles and strategies to inform the design and programming of each development. This would also open the door to greater freedom and creativity in the approaches that developers can pursue. It would also help reduce uncertainty about the development application process. To the City's benefit, a multi-site RFP could also streamline the application process, reducing costs. Such an RFP would require careful wording, but has the potential to produce enticing benefits for all parties involved. To support these efforts, the municipality could also benefit from allocating support and resources such as a one-stop concierge program as well as hosting familiarization tours to potential development partners and investors. These actions would reinforce the message that Idaho Springs is open to development, and that the City is a cooperative partner in this process.

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Urban 3, *Study of Clear Creek County*, [report], 2017.

7. Appendix A: MAP DATA SOURCES

Theme	Data	Data type	Source	Date accessed	Date Created/ last updated
Transportation	Road Data	.shp	Idaho Springs	04-Jan-18	04-Jan-18
	Parking	.xls	Digitization and estima- tion from Google maps	08-Jan-18	08-Jan-18
	Speed Limits	.xls	Traffic Bylaw	05-Jan-18	2016 ordi- nance
	Speed Limits	.pdf	Google street view	05-Jan-18	05-Jan-18
	Bus stops	.shp	Online listings for Idaho Springs Bus Service	05-Jan-18	06-Mar-17
Pedestrian Walking network	Isoclines	.shp	OSM road data	05-Jan-18	NA
	Desire lines	.shp	Digitization from Google maps and street view	05-Jan-18	05-Jan-18
Civic Amenities	Churches, Schools, etc.	.shp	"Services" on Idaho Springs website	05-Jan-18	NA
Land Use	Zoning and parcel data	.shp	Idaho Springs	04-Jan-18	04-Jan-18
Recreation Access	Parks	.shp	Idaho Springs	04-Jan-18	04-Jan-18
	Trailheads	.shp	Idaho Springs trail data	05-Jan-18	04-Jan-18
	Bike Path	.shp	OSM road data	08-Jan-18	08-Jan-18
Shops and Restaurants	Businesses	.shp	"Things to do" on Idaho Springs website	05-Jan-18	NA

8. Appendix B: HAPPY MAPPING IDAHO SPRINGS



Site In Context



7.5 Minute Walkshed



15 Minute Walkshed



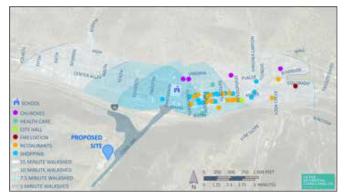
5 Minute Walkshed



10 Minute Walkshed



15 Minute Walkshed Retail







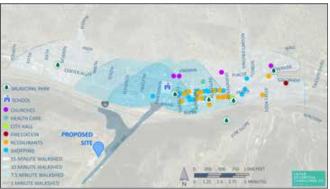
15 Minute Walkshed Retail Amenities Parks Transit



15 Minute Walk Lines Parks



15 Minute Walk Lines Parks Points Trails



15 Minute Walkshed Retail Amenities Parks



15 Minute Walk Lines

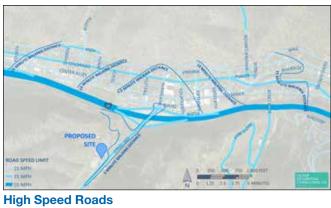


15 Minute Walk Lines Parks Points



Low Speed Roads





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Parking Roads



Trails and Roads

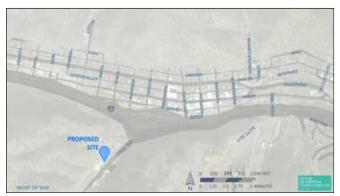


ROW Public Lands

Trails

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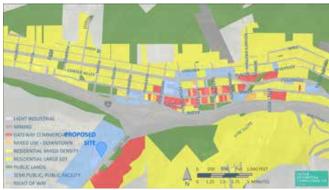


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ROW Public Lands

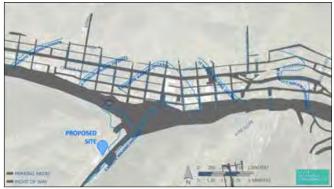




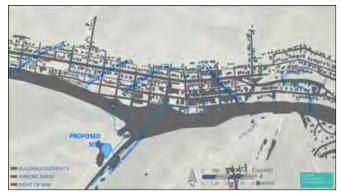
ROW Public Lands



ROW Public Lands



Land Use Walklines



Built Space

Machine Space