



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals for their participation and support:

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**Roy Blythe**, AIA, DTA, Blythe Group + Co.  
**Shane Burton**, Reed Building Development  
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### Members of these Service Organizations:

**Golden K Club**  
**The Rotary Club of Grand Junction**  
**Grand Junction Lions Club**  
**Kiwanis Club of Grand Junction**  
**Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce Housing Board**

### Advocacy Entities

**Downtown Grand Junction (DDA)**  
**Downtown Association (DTA)**  
**Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce**  
**Grand Junction Economic Partnership**



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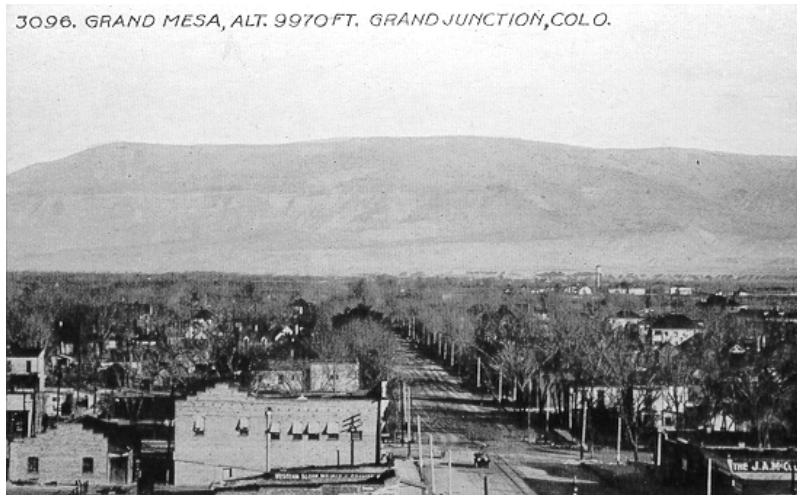


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*Section 1: Introduction*

*Planners and visionaries in 1881 saw promise in a broad valley. The arid Grand Valley, although a desert, was traversed by two major rivers. Water from the Grand River (later renamed the Colorado) was soon brought to towns and farms via dams, canals and ditches. In 1882, the first of many canals that allowed for growth and development in the Valley was built. Initially it was called the Pioneer Canal and later the Pacific Slope Ditch.*

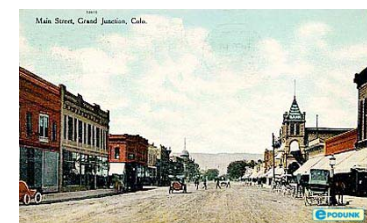


*On September 26, 1881 the Grand Junction town site was selected and established by Grand Junction Town and Improvement Company. Although they owned the land, they were not a traditional form of town*



*government. They surveyed streets and lots, promoted sale of the land they owned, and encouraged settlement. The extent of their ownership was one square mile, spanning from 1st to 12th Streets and from North to South Avenues, and known as the “Original Square Mile”. Grand Junction was incorporated in 1882 and Mesa County established in 1883 with Grand Junction as its county seat.*

*Historic Overview excerpt from [www.gjhistory.org](http://www.gjhistory.org)*

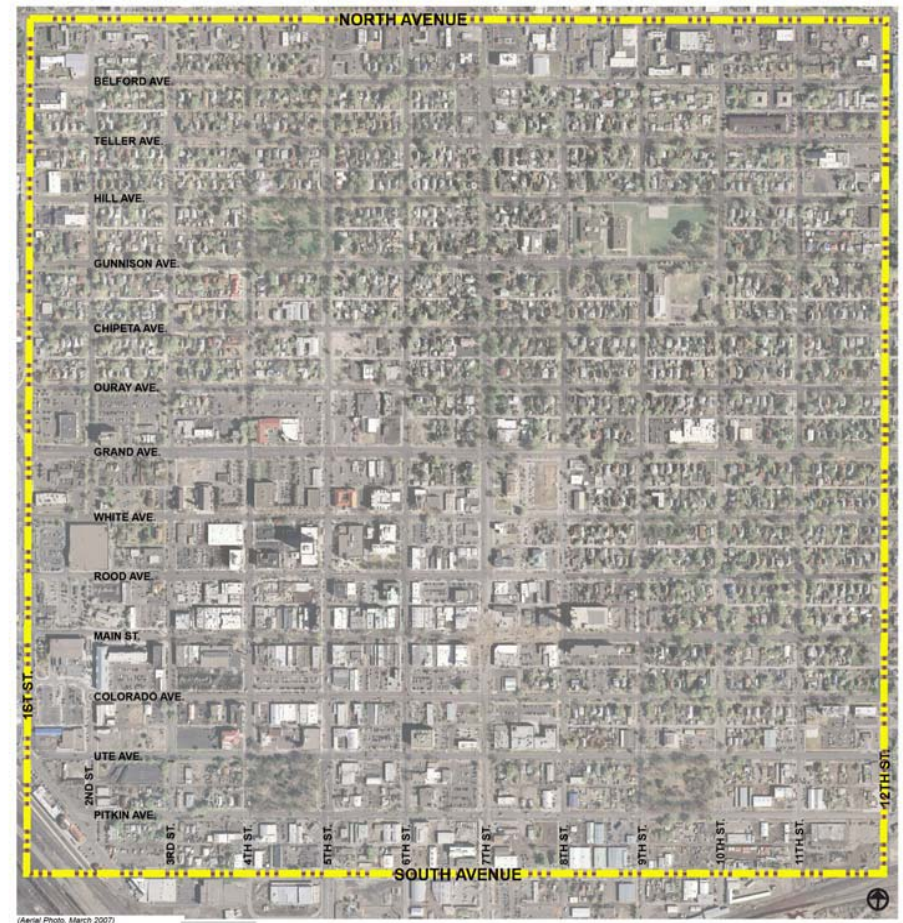




In September 2007, Leland Consulting Group (LCG), Community Strategists; Parks and Gardens, Landscape Architects and Land Planners; DHM Design, Urban Designers; Drexel, Barrell & Co., Transportation Planners; and, Thira, Inc., Architects and Historic Preservationists (the Consultant Team), were retained by the City of Grand Junction, Colorado (the City) and Downtown Development Authority (the DDA) to assist in preparing a *Strategic Downtown Master Plan* (the Plan) for the Original Square Mile (the Study Area)<sup>3</sup>. The intent of this effort was to ensure that future investment in the Study Area will be grounded in market and economic reality; strategically positioned to leverage additional public and private investment; and, executed by entities that are accountable, sustainable, and representative of stakeholder interests.

Over the past 9 months, the Consultant Team has conducted primary and secondary research including a detailed analysis of prevailing market conditions, and a review of the regulatory framework under which current projects and programs are

<sup>3</sup> The Original Square Mile = “the Study Area” and “the Area” -- it includes Downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods between 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets and North and South Avenues.



(Aerial Photo, March 2007)  
 Grand Junction Colorado  
 Downtown Strategic Plan

**Aerial Photo: Study Area**  
 (In Progress - Please Comment)  
 February, 2008  
 Scale: 1" = 200'

**LEGEND**  
 Study Area Boundary



implemented. From this work, conclusions were drawn regarding the Area's role in the community and region; development opportunities available to the market in the short-, mid-, and long term; and, barriers to investment. Strategies necessary to implement the Plan and advance its vision are provided in greater detail in the last section of this report. Suggested modifications (expansion) to the existing downtown organizational structure, and select priority projects which could serve as catalysts for a stronger community core, are also among the work products which resulted from this effort, both of which are described in subsequent sections of the *Plan*. A summary of benchmarking variables used to measure the success of strategic efforts is presented in the Appendix. Technical Notebooks are on file with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and City of Grand Junction Planning Department.

### **Why a Healthy Downtown**

It is an undisputed truth that a community's downtown is the barometer of its overall quality-of-life. Area-wide and local chamber of commerce executives, economic development specialists, and industrial recruiters have found time and again that projects are often won or lost based on one single criterion -

the condition and economic health of a community's downtown. Employers have found that a vibrant downtown significantly increases their ability to attract and retain high quality employees - whether or not the business is located in downtown - thereby minimizing turnover and associated personnel costs. City officials have found that bond rating companies often include the economic prosperity of the downtown as one criterion they consider when determining a city's bond rating.

Throughout the country, public and private entities are participating in the revitalization of their downtown core. In a report prepared for the American Public Power Association, several utility companies surveyed explained the basis for their participation in downtown enhancement efforts, citing the following: a thriving downtown is a good recruitment tool for industry; downtown's enhancement stimulates the economy and adds jobs; economically, everyone benefits from a healthy downtown; a viable downtown infrastructure is essential to economic development in the whole area; a better downtown increases tourism in the area; and, downtown is a good investment. Cities throughout the country who have undertaken similar efforts have found that benefits to the community are multi-faceted and multiplicative. Specifically, quality of life is



enhanced, the number and diversity of job opportunities are increased, and dollars are invested. **According to the National Historic Trust, every dollar a community spends on downtown revitalization brings in \$30 in new investment.**



An analogy used often during the planning process was one that compared community development to Silly Putty. When you stretch Silly Putty, it gets thinnest in the middle and thickest at its edges. It was

explained that this is what happens when communities allow investment on the fringe to happen at a disproportionate rate to the core. Even with supportive municipal policies, the circumstance is inevitable as the cost of infill development is almost always more costly than Greenfield development. Without public sector participation which includes policies and resources designed to level the financial “playing field”, the core will continue to get more fragile, which research proves has impacts beyond the municipality and throughout the region’s economy.

## Purpose

Through the planning effort described as follows, the City of Grand Junction and DDA initiated a process that would ensure future improvements within the Original Square Mile occur in a manner (use and density) consistent with the findings and recommendations presented here. The purpose of this *Plan* is to aid the City and its advocacy partners<sup>2</sup>:

- analyze future use and product development proposals within the Study Area;
- identify new planning and economic opportunities that will most effectively maximize the benefits of their proximity to a region-serving commercial district;
- ensure that development in the Area is compatible with its environment;
- advance public and private initiatives; and
- prioritize recommendations for improvements and policy reform which can be implemented over the near- and long-term.

<sup>2</sup> Advocacy Partners = any individual or group, public or private, that works in conjunction with others to advance the recommendations of a plan or strategy.



As a strategic document it is designed to promote (re) investment and leverage public sector initiatives. Key priorities of the Plan include:

- protecting existing downtown investments;
- establishing enhanced connections and protections for neighborhoods and activity areas (destinations);
- stabilizing compatible uses and products in the commercial core;
- promoting strategic investment in public right-of-way improvements; and,
- establishing standards which recognize market reality in the context of superior architecture.

Encouraging strategic investment in catalyst areas, or projects, which: contain an appropriate mix of land uses; give greater emphasis to multiple forms of access; and, create a unique sense of place, has been identified as the central approach for the renaissance of Downtown Grand Junction and its surrounding neighborhoods. The premise behind the selection of the catalyst projects (concepts), assumes concentrating resources in select areas that will have a positive economic “ripple effect” throughout the

Study Area. In this way, the City of Grand Junction and its advocacy partners can effectively “leverage” investment efforts to overcome barriers and achieve desired outcomes. The term “renaissance” was selected to describe the essence of this strategic effort for Downtown Grand Junction. For all intents and purposes, Downtown and other properties within the Original Square Mile are relatively healthy. Having said this, however, downtowns are always fragile. The *Strategic Downtown Master Plan*, and the recommendations presented herein, acknowledges conditions today and anticipates those in the future. The word “renaissance” means “new beginning” or “resurgence”. Regional growth pressures will force Downtown to decide – whether it wants to be a receiving ground for growth, and if it does, how much. As expressed in the Vision Statement presented in Section 5: Catalysts of this Plan, the Original Square Mile does want to receive “an appropriate level of growth in residential, non-residential, institutional and public uses that are well-designed and sensitive to existing uses and product types.” Therefore, this Plan, which is intended to have a 20-year life span, is designed to stabilize and cultivate investment – it’s a blueprint for the future and a new beginning.



## Past and Parallel Efforts

For the last decade, the City of Grand Junction has made land use decisions in accordance with a Growth Plan Map (related to a sewer service plan) that was adopted in 1996 and forecasted to serve the community through 2010. In recent years it became obvious that the Growth Plan Map had significant shortcomings in its ability to respond to issues related to the pace of growth being experienced in the City and Valley. Specific challenges which highlighted its inefficiencies included: limited land resources to accommodate a projected doubling of its population over the next 25 years; irregular extensions of existing boundaries; proximity of adjacent communities and encroachment of service areas; and, the fact that many City departments had been operating with independent planning documents loosely tied to the assumptions of the Growth Plan.<sup>3</sup> Preparation of a comprehensive plan, along with a series of supporting documents, was the City’s attempt to proactively manage growth and align its guiding documents. This, the *Strategic Downtown Master Plan*, is intended to be one of these supporting documents and is designed to serve as a supplemental plan to that master document. Other supplemental,

or sub-area plans, which have either been completed or are in the process of being completed include:

*South Downtown Neighborhood Plan* – The South Downtown Neighborhood is located on either side of the confluence of the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers, roughly between the Riverside Neighborhood on the northwest to 28 Road on the east, and the railroad tracks to the Colorado River. At this “grand junction”, the area transformed from an agricultural-based community into the commercial and industrial area it is today. Over time, the area has been used to store mill tailings along the river, process sugar beets in the historic beet-packing complex, and provide a home to some of the City’s largest industries.

Located within walking distance of Downtown, the South Downtown Neighborhood offers both easy access to recreational amenities along the river, as well as convenient access to shopping and businesses in the adjacent Downtown core. It also functions as a gateway into downtown from highway 50. Its location and context establishes it as one of the most important places in the City.

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<sup>3</sup> Information taken from City of Grand Junction website.



In the early 1990s, a South Downtown planning process was started, but never completed, since the community undertook a valley-wide land use planning process that included looking at future land uses in the South Downtown area. In addition, planning efforts began for the Riverside Parkway in the late 1990s – again it did not seem worthwhile to continue with a South Downtown planning process until the Parkway alignment was finalized.

Similarly, in 1997, a master plan was prepared for Las Colonias Park, which is located adjacent to the Colorado River in the southern portion of the South Downtown Neighborhood. In 2006, construction began on the Riverside Parkway through the South Downtown area, providing a new east-west connection for travel through the downtown area. With these improvements in place and underway, it became necessary to revisit the plan for the park, as well as look at a neighborhood-wide vision for its future. A new plan for Las Colonias Park was adopted in mid-2007.

*Westside Downtown Redevelopment Study* – The *Westside Downtown Redevelopment Study* had its origins in a grant received by Mesa County through the Great American Station Foundation to study

the feasibility and design of the Grand Junction historic Depot site as an Inter-Modal Transportation Plaza – a hub for Amtrak, Greyhound, and Grand Valley Transit. The Westside Downtown Redevelopment Study area is bounded on the north by Main Street, on the east by 5<sup>th</sup> Street, on the south by South Avenue, and on the west by the Railroad. The area is anchored by the Historic Depot, the Mesa County Justice Center, the Two Rivers Convention Center, and the Museum of Western Colorado.

The *Westside Downtown Redevelopment Study* suggests significant changes to the existing circulation system and creates ripples that expand beyond the Study Area boundaries into adjacent downtown areas. It provides a foundation and consensus towards the future development and redevelopment of the southwest area of Downtown Grand Junction.

*North Avenue Corridor Plan and Study* – The North Avenue study area is nearly 3 miles in length and contains the key intersections of 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and 28 and 29 Roads. While the Corridor is, in general, proximate to the downtown area, it is beyond a typical walking distance. A proposed bridge at 29 Road will be a key factor to connect North Avenue, increase traffic circulation and enhance the Area as a retail destination. Today, assets along North



Avenue include Mesa College, Lincoln Park and Stocker Stadium. The North Avenue Corridor offers direct and easy access to I-70 to the North and I-70B to the South.

Historically, North Avenue was the northernmost boundary of Grand Junction. As development continued to grow to the north, the North Avenue Corridor found itself at the center of the City and proximate to many assets and amenities, including Stocker Stadium, Lincoln Park and Golf Course, Mesa State College and a wide range of community services. Until the 1990s, North Avenue was the primary retail tax generator for the City of Grand Junction. In recent years it experienced a dramatic loss in revenue associated with extensive development of new and large commercial and retail centers along the western edge of the City.

The *North Avenue Corridor Plan* is a conceptual master corridor plan designed to inform future development and redevelopment. The Plan includes an overall strategy to revitalize the Corridor in order to promote the future development of retail, commercial, office and residential opportunities to sustain and increase its vitality.

*City of Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan* – The City of Grand Junction is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive plan. The 18 to 24-month comprehensive planning process is expected to conclude in 2009. Once completed, the Plan will be used to guide the future growth and development of the City of Grand Junction.

To-date, the planning process has included a survey<sup>4</sup> of participants regarding attitudes around a range of issues including growth in the region and the value of Downtown as a community asset. Several findings from this survey are presented in the Appendix section of this Plan. Major conclusions included:

- 15.9% would like to see more downtown living opportunities
- 15.1% (2<sup>nd</sup> highest priority) would like to see a greater range of housing products
- 61.4% think the supply of affordable housing is a significant problem
- 53.5% would encourage higher density over other

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<sup>4</sup> The non-statistically accurate survey was conducted for the purpose of understanding community opinions and administered in the context of preparation of the update to the city comprehensive plan.



strategies to address housing affordability

- 23.2% reported traffic congestion as their biggest concern about the City
- 51.2% would characterize the area’s growth as “fast”
- 42.4% believe the greatest improvement over last 10 years has been the addition of shopping, followed by cultural offerings
- 76.7% believe the City should “manage” rather than “slow” growth

Other planning efforts for Downtown and the Original Square Mile include Operation Foresight and the DDA’s business plan which programs the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenues.

A summary of TIF expenditures between 1984 and 2007 prepared by the DDA reports include: approximately \$3.7 million in property expenditures; \$1.3 million in general improvements such as restrooms on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, parking improvements on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, refurbishment of the Avalon Theatre, and improvements on Colorado Avenue; and, sculpture purchases totaling \$290K. Total expenditures were approximately \$5.2 million. A forecast summary of TIF expenditures and revenues over the three-year

period between 2006 and 2009 predicts \$11.8 million in expenditures on projects including: a parking garage, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Main Street enhancements, sculpture purchase, Colorado Avenue, housing, the Avalon Theatre, and façade renovations.

## Strategy Objectives

Project objectives which guided the work of the Steering Committee, stakeholders and Consultant Team include:

- Strengthen existing uses (big and small)
- Develop a proactive strategy for (re) investment (public and private)
- Educate the “delivery system”
- Define a system to remove barriers to investment
- Quantify the potential private sector “leverage” from public investment
- Identify fiscally-responsible capital plans
- Equalize economic risk and reward
- Advance a market-tested community vision for Downtown (near- to long-term)



## Input

During the process, which lasted approximately 9 months, the Consultant Team facilitated discussions with a range of stakeholders in a variety of venues. Among these forums were: community meetings (open house); a neighborhood meeting; one-on-one interviews; Steering Committee meetings; and public hearings. Additionally, the Consultant Team sought to raise awareness about the project through presentations to service organizations including: Golden K Club; the Rotary Club of Grand Junction; Grand Junction Lions Club; Kiwanis Club of Grand Junction; and the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce Housing Board. In all, more than 300 residents / business and / or property owners

<p><b>Neighborhood Meeting Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversion of single family homes</li> <li>Code enforcement</li> <li>Cost of housing</li> <li>Percentage rental vs. ownership</li> <li>Limited opportunities and choice</li> <li>Urban "wildlife" influences</li> <li>Overhead utilities</li> <li>Lack of lighting</li> <li>Inconsistencies in improvements / maintenance</li> <li>Soft transition zones</li> </ul>
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participated in one of the forums. Among these participants, many expressed their commitment to participating in future development initiatives, improving the character of the Original Square Mile, and implementing the recommendations contained herein. Regardless of how they participated in the process, all of the stakeholders appeared to understand that opportunities existed for -- a greater diversity of housing products; growing the commercial and business base; attracting users which would diversify the daytime population; expanding and retaining cultural and civic programs; and, making infrastructure improvements in the Area a public priority. There was additional discussion about responding to pressure for a stronger jobs / housing balance, but uncertainty about the extent to which this could be accommodated in the Study Area. Finally, participants identified schools, geography, personal values, and parks / open space as valued community assets which needed to be enhanced and preserved.

## Plan Format

The outcome of the effort described above is the *Strategic Downtown Master Plan*. It identifies specific objectives and strategies in order to make the Original Square Mile a better place



to conduct business, shop, visit, live, learn and play. It is based on a realistic understanding of physical and market conditions, and is intended to be responsive to the community's needs.

Generally, this strategic document describes: the report purpose and objectives; input gained from property owners, stakeholders and the community at-large; current conditions as analyzed by the Consultant Team; niche opportunities; framework elements needed to define and protect uses in the Area; concept alternatives which the Study Area could capitalize on; and, actions for change designed to remove barriers and advance investment and reinvestment.