



**DOWNTOWN  
COLORADO, INC**

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Main Street program: Lake City, Colorado  
Graduate Assessment for Downtown Improvement & Revitalization Team (DIRT)  
September, 2010

The Colorado Main Street Program has evolved into a three-tiered system of participation with Candidate, Main Street, and Graduate levels. The Candidate level is for those communities that are considering becoming a full Main Street Program, giving the community time to prepare the application and get community buy-in to the idea of revitalization. The Main Street Program level implements the 4-Point Approach, engaging the community, creating and implementing the goals established through collaborative process with the stakeholders. The Graduate level is designed for those programs that fully understand and embrace the 4-Point Approach, have successfully been accredited for three consecutive years, and require less assistance to continue a successful program.

### **Narrative Review:**

As a Colorado Main Street since 2005, the DIRT program has become a leader in the community that is able to promote and support the community, the organizations that work towards complimentary objectives, and even to pick up desired events or activities that partner organizations are unable or unwilling to continue. DIRT has played a strong role in encouraging the community to work towards the recommendations from your 2008 Resource Team Report. DIRT demonstrates the leadership style that highlights the good of the community over the individual interests of one organization. DIRT continues to excel as a Colorado Main Street. The dedication and joy that DIRT staff and volunteers demonstrate is a model for community engagement in the state, if not the country. Momentum in the program continues to grow and the organization appears to have expanded capacity in response to a greater need for leadership in the community.

The main concerns identified at this time stem from the connected issues of the very limited operating budget and the potential burn out of the Main Street Manager and the volunteers. These concerns stem from the very root of the organization in term of resources available. DIRT is doing a fabulous job of doing a lot with very little, but there is no plan for moving forward. The organization will be unable to grow, and potentially unable to maintain the pace at which it is currently working without an influx of resources of some kind. DIRT appears to be an entity able to focus more on supporting, encouraging, and coordinating the events and plans of other organizations. DIRT may be able to facilitate and foster Lake City focused activities and continue to be the champion of the downtown component for each Lake City activity. This would alleviate the strain on DIRT staff and volunteers and allow DIRT to use its strong management and planning capacity to streamline the planning and implementation of all organizations in town.

At this time, Lake City DIRT appears ready to move on to the Graduate level of the Main Street program. The stakeholders fully understand and utilize the 4-Point Approach consistently, and are able to continue with a reduced level of monitoring by the Colorado Main Street program, Lake City will be able to move on to the Graduate level. DCI invites DIRT's participation in sharing your experience and skill with Colorado's downtowns and downtown professionals.

## National Accreditation Standards of National Main Street Center - 2009 Program of Work

### 10 Criteria Lake City

1. Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors.

The program has continued to engage and collaborate with other organizations and the County, Chamber, Historic Society, the Youth Corps, and others in the community. DIRT led the way in fostering collaboration amongst various organizations through the joint volunteer appreciation event and August is Lake City History Month. The school has been involved with the YouthCorps and mural projects. Your partnership with the real estate community is evidenced through the Buying History program that was created. When other organizations have closed or stopped doing events, DIRT has been able to pick up and continue doing events that the community values.

**Suggestions:**

  - Include a summary of quarterly/monthly reports to the trustees and to the newspaper as well to ensure transparency for all stakeholders to create a system for open communications to potentially improve relations with the town.
  - Have the Organization Committee create a letter or invitation to all sponsors and partners for all events to ensure awareness and a sense of inclusion. It will be important to move this responsibility to board members, and the Organizational committee, to allow the executive director to focus energy on implementing.
  - Plan a monthly or quarterly gathering of entities that do events and marketing to coordinate efforts.
  - Create an Ex-Officio Board Member Role for the town, county, chamber, and other important entities to invite participation and awareness in DIRT planning and projects.
  - Continue to create a present an annual report to all sponsors.
  - Look to greater partnership with the arts center and identify events that you already do that they can contribute to.
  - As DIRT is being asked to take a stronger leadership role in the community, it would be wise to further the practice of coordinating and strategizing with the whole community. Consider holding a quarterly (minimum) meeting of all organizations and entities in town to look strategically at use of resources (funds, volunteers, marketing, etc.)
2. Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage.

Lake City DIRT is conscientious about planning and continuing to look to the future. The annual review mission and vision allows the DIRT board and staff to ensure that the organization is not veering off the approved work of the organization. The studious and dedicated process established by the staff and board to maintain records and evaluate each step and process demonstrates that these efforts have been institutionalized and are stable.

**Suggestions:**

  - Continue to practice the year end review and retreat process with the board and committees. Consider adding a community-wide visioning and evaluation process with the Community-Wide Volunteer Appreciation planning.
  - Continue to assess the role of DIRT as a leader in the community and how this impacts the mission. If the organization is being asked to serve as a marketing and events umbrella, a fundraiser, and a mentor for new or struggling initiatives, it may be worth while to consider how the downtown focus can be maintained while the organization supports the larger community. If DIRT focuses activities in the downtown and invites partners (town, county, organizations, businesses) to enhance activities with add on events, it may allow you to maintain your mission while continuing to support the broader community.

3. Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan DIRT has consistently created work plans that fit into the larger strategic plan. The committees and events are all exceptionally well planned with clear tasks designated to specific volunteers. The process of planning, implementing, and evaluating is regular and timely. The board and committees appear to be highly engaged and vocal with both positive and constructive feedback. DIRT appears to carefully consider new events and tasks with an eye to planning and the organizational capacity to do a quality job at the work plan for the year.
- Suggestions:**
- Maintain the events and tasks that are highly successful and attempt to develop feelings of ownership for specific events in the volunteers currently involved.
  - Instead of adding to the workload and seeking volunteers and planning, ask other organizations or groups if they have a piece they would like to add on to your current calendar.
  - This small community would greatly benefit from a community-wide planning process for events, marketing, resources, etc. to coordinate which organization is filling what role and how they can better work together. If a larger plan were created the DIRT and DIRT committees' work plans might be even more effective. This would also allow all organizations in town to identify ways to reduce strain on volunteers and financial resources.
  - Consider how to incorporate more economic restructuring into planning. Assess a means of surveying available rental and sale property, tracking inquiries for property purchase and rental, and developing an online database to make this information more accessible to the public.
4. Possesses an historic preservation ethic Lake City itself is a historic district with a fabulous stock of historic homes and commercial buildings. Lake City DIRT has done a great job of developing and maintaining a strong relationship with the Historical Society and fostering an appreciation for the history and historic assets of the community. This is highlighted specifically by the creation and sale of ornaments of historic buildings that serve to bolster the operational funds of the organization. The Historic Preservation focus increased in 2009 with a coordination of August is Lake City History Month where DIRT took charge of developing a collaborative marketing package for Lake City's historic preservation activities. Recapturing the historic Stick Horse Competition and the Lake City Memoirs project demonstrates the ability of DIRT to lead the town in revisiting and celebrating historic events and anecdotes from the past.
- Suggestions:**
- Continue to tap into the NPR storycorp for free publicity for the town and identify ways to encourage non-writers to share their stories..
  - Formalize agreements with Historic Society to indicate role for DIRT in promoting preservation and marketing for their events without doing bricks and mortar. As listed above, consider an ex-officio or more formal role to engage the historical society in planning.
  - Consider the HistoryCorps program from Colorado Preservation, Inc. and if there is a possible means of linking into that concept or program.
  - Develop a program to garner property and business owner support for a Lake City Spruce Up day, apply for a grant to buy paint and provide it to owners willing to contribute their time to paint and clean up the main street.
5. Has an active board of directors and committees Though DIRT has challenges gathering everyone in one room at one time, the Board of Directors and committees are clearly dedicated and passionate about the organization, the town, and their specific activities within the group. DIRT is focused on circulating Board Members through the organization and recapturing people previously involved.
- Suggestions:**
- Identify one board member (the Organization Chair) to develop specific communications with each entity (town, county, all organizations, etc.) to inform and invite participation in planning and

activities that are consistent and clear.

- Consider a volunteer recruitment campaign to attract second home owners and their children to create a larger pool to draw from.
- Create a youth council to advise the board to engage them in planning and leadership activities to encourage future leadership.
- Encourage the county to conduct a housing assessment to determine the need for affordable housing in the community. Determine the feasibility of working with groups such as the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, and other groups that might be able to provide some insight, guidance, or funds to support this process or the potential recommendations that might arise following this process.
- Contemplate creating a regular meeting of ex-officio or “partner programs” in conjunction with the DIRT board to engage the town, county, chamber, the bank, and all non-profits working in Lake City. Be cautious to plan succinct agendas so that people will not be meeting too long or too much and that the group will not be too big to accomplish objectives.

6. Has an adequate operating budget

DIRT has continued to make strides in diversifying funding through grants, product sales, and events. DIRT has also been able to secure the town’s financial contribution, which appeared to be in question. The budget is insufficient to pay for a full time staff or an assistant. That will be problematic as the organization is being asked to do more and more. The current budget does not allow for growth or increased organizational capacity.

**Suggestions:**

- Consider innovative ideas to secure administrative and marketing staff support.
- Deliberate potential new fundraising opportunities that do not require an event or staff-driven process.
- It would benefit all organizations in town to assess their role in marketing, events, and planning to make better use of the funds available in Lake City.
- The organization should review options for a more formal organizational structure that includes a sustainable financing mechanism to provide a more stable financial environment for the organization.

7. Has a paid professional program manager

The DIRT Manager is highly skilled, organized, hardworking, and dedicated to the community and the organization. The workload that is being completed is impressive. This raises the question of sustainability, burn out, and maintenance of the current program quality and quantity. Clearly the most valuable asset that DIRT has is its human resources - Manager, board, and volunteer pool. While the board and volunteers may be maintained without an enhanced budget, the loss of the DIRT Manager would potentially devastate not only DIRT but the larger community as well. The connection between the budget and the paid professional program manager is clear, but board led fundraising and membership drives might need to be increased if you hope to maintain the quality leadership to which DIRT become accustomed.

**Suggestions:**

- Continued need for administrative and marketing support.
- Consider options for requesting an AmeriCorps volunteer or Best and Brightest. Contemplate housing possibilities that might make this feasible.
- In a small community where any activity is both center stage and personal, the Manager is often the most easily identifiable target. The DIRT Board should be accountable and visible when the organization faces criticism or public comment. Focus on letting the manager do her job and let the board address comment and criticism from the outside.

8. Conducts a

The staff and volunteers have continued to increase involvement in training opportunities.

program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers

Participation in training and networking with Colorado Main Street Managers and downtown focused educational opportunities has increased and has demonstrated results with creation and development of new activities directly related to sessions attended. The excitement and enthusiasm generated by Lake City's participants both on-site and when attending state-wide events has fostered a sharing of ideas and collaboration amongst Lake City and the other Colorado Main Street towns.

**Suggestion:**

- Continue to participate in and request topics that are of interest to Lake City DIRT and will foster ideas to keep growing and moving forward.
- Identify additional training opportunities for the Manager as a continuing education component to enhance benefits of employment.
- Consider a training to focus economic restructuring efforts on data compilation and distribution.

9. Reports key statistics

Prompt and complete reporting.

**Suggestions:**

- Keep DCI informed of town or county reporting requirements. If possible, we can look to adjusting our reporting to reduce administrative burden on Main Street Manager.

10. Is a current member of the National Trust Main Street Network

Yes

Proposed Training

- Visiting other communities to develop ideas and share best practices.
- Conduct a work planning session with other organizations in town to create a community-wide strategy for events, marketing, and volunteer management.

**Quotes**

"DIRT keeps volunteers excited about their projects."

"When DIRT was started there were a lot of empty buildings, like restless spirits... DIRT has been able to fill the windows either with businesses or activities, especially historical information.:

"DIRT has been important for economic development and making sure that businesses feel support."

## Evaluation

In an effort to improve our services to communities, we ask that you provide us with feedback from the recent visit. Your candid feedback will help us to continue to provide a high level of service to assist with downtown revitalization throughout Colorado. Please take a moment to let DCI know what was most useful about this training and how we might improve it. Please distribute the attached to all attendees.

**Trainers:** Jamie Licko, Christy Culp, and Katherine Correll

Do you have any comments or suggestions for the trainers? If so, please include them on this form

Sessions Completed: Please rate 1 as highest, 5 as lowest	Comments:
<b>Planning process for the Graduate Assessment and Strategic Training</b> 1 2 3 4 5 What was most useful?  What was not useful?  Was there anything you would like more information on?  Other Suggestions?	
<b>Discussion with staff and board</b> 1 2 3 4 5 What was most useful?  What was not useful?  Was there anything you would like more information on?  Other Suggestions?	
<b>Facilitated discussion with focus groups</b> 1 2 3 4 5 What was most useful?  What was not useful?  Was there anything you would like more information on?  Other Suggestions?	
<b>Final Report &amp; Follow up Documents</b> 1 2 3 4 5 What was most useful?  What was not useful?  Was there anything you would like more information on?  Other Suggestions?	
Any other feedback?	