I. Executive Summary
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why Downtown Matters

In Colorado and across the country, communities are taking a new look at their downtown areas, especially smaller cities like Englewood that lack the size, mixed uses, and financial resources of larger downtowns. People want deeper connections to the heart of their community; places to live, shop and socialize, more ways to get around. Employers want centrally located offices with light rail access to larger cities. And downtown economic activity helps cities provide quality services and amenities for everyone.

With the reinvention of Cinderella City to Englewood CityCenter, one of the nation’s first transit-oriented developments 20 years ago, Englewood was a pioneer and innovator in downtown revitalization. But time has taken its toll on Downtown Englewood, evidenced by empty storefronts, dormant retail sites, and an overall lack of cohesiveness. All of this and more are noted in recommendations to improve the area from a variety of planning documents, including Englewood’s Comprehensive Plan and two recent Urban Land Institute studies. The need for revitalization and resiliency has now been greatly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, creating even more urgency for a short-term economic recovery plan and long-term vision and plan for Downtown.

The City of Englewood, with the Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce, kicked off the grant-funded “Downtown Matters” planning initiative in January 2020. The Downtown Matters Plan is intended to cultivate a more cohesive vision for Downtown Englewood, defined by three sub-areas: (1) the traditional downtown “Main Street” portion of South Broadway, (2) the CityCenter area near the light rail station and including the current Englewood Civic Center, and (3) commercial areas around Craig Hospital and Swedish Medical Center, or the Medical District. Other factors that prompted the Downtown Matters Plan include property sales in the CityCenter area, hospital expansions, new business and development on South Broadway, and new residents seeking convenient, sustainable lifestyles. In addition, there was an increasing sense that the overall financial sustainability and vitality had started to trend down, in part because the City currently lacks any type of platform to brand and market its Downtown, program events, coordinate its merchants and help finance needed operations and capital improvements.

The Downtown Matters process included broad outreach to commercial property and business owners and community members to create a Plan that allows Downtown Englewood to evolve in an intentional way while maintaining its unique character. More than 350 community members have contributed to the Plan. The Downtown Matters Plan considers market trends, economic development, placemaking, business support, marketing, and safety.

A key initiative that has emerged as a priority for Downtown Englewood through this process and previous planning efforts is the creation of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA). Many small cities in Colorado successfully utilize DDAs for downtown revitalization and resiliency, and a DDA in Downtown Englewood could similarly serve as a key funding and implementation tool for Downtown improvements and initiatives. The DDA is now viewed with urgency, as it can help champion, quarterback and fund economic recovery efforts as the public health emergency created by COVID-19 gradually subsides.

*The Downtown Matters Plan was funded by the DRCOG Next Step Grant Study.*
Study Area/Sub-Areas

Through the DDA study process, a broader definition of Downtown Englewood has been conceptualized that expands beyond the historical South Broadway main street corridor sub-area to include the Englewood Station-CityCenter sub-area and the Swedish Medical Center-Craig Hospital sub-area. This is where much of the City’s commercial and employment activity is centered. These three sub-areas are currently interrelated but not cohesive. The map below illustrates both the boundaries of the overall Downtown Englewood area, and each of the three sub-areas as depicted in Englewood Forward: The 2016 Englewood Comprehensive Plan; South Broadway, CityCenter, and the Medical District.
Study Area/Sub-Areas, cont.

The boundaries of the overall Downtown Englewood area include:

- South Santa Fe Drive to the west
- Kenyon Avenue to the south
- South Lafayette Street to the east
- Eastman Avenue to the north

DDA sub-area boundaries include:

- CityCenter sub-area located west of South Elati Street
- South Broadway sub-area located east of South Elati and west of South Sherman Streets
- Medical District sub-area located east of South Sherman Street

Within the Study Area, commercially zoned properties were selected in an initial first cut for inclusion in the Englewood DDA, while residentially zoned properties were intentionally excluded.

Subsequent refinements to the identified Englewood DDA properties were made on the basis of strategic gateways, district cohesion, redevelopment potential, and land use, including key additions along the Broadway and Old Hampden Avenue corridors, and the exclusion of newly developed multi-family residential and long-standing senior housing properties.

Downtown Matters Study Area Map
Downtown Matters Plan Overview

The Englewood Downtown Matters Plan will serve as the governing document for the proposed Englewood Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and is intended to provide a business plan and policy guidance for the proposed DDA over the next 10 years and beyond. Informed by past planning efforts, a market assessment conducted in 2019, and broad outreach to community members and Downtown business and property owners, the Downtown Matters Plan lays out a vision, big ideas, goals and strategies, and implementation tactics for Downtown Englewood moving forward.

The Vision for Downtown Englewood

Downtown Englewood, Colorado is one of those special places – a friendly, authentic small city nestled within a large metropolitan area. Downtown has its own history and distinct character, and is being discovered by both newer and older generations as a great place to live, work, shop, and socialize. With consistent stewardship and investment, the proposed DDA could ensure that Downtown Englewood becomes an even more vibrant, cohesive, and resilient place.
Peer communities to Englewood along the Front Range and throughout Colorado have successfully leveraged the resources made available by a DDA to take their downtowns to the next level. Downtown Englewood currently has many strengths and challenges, and a clear focus and coordinated effort is needed to advance a cohesive vision and program for Downtown moving forward. Drawing on input received throughout the Downtown Matters planning process and previous planning efforts, these eight big ideas were identified to guide the proposed Englewood DDA in ensuring Downtown can effectively compete with other Front Range communities, and to take Downtown Englewood to the next level:

1. **Create a Downtown Development Authority to help guide economic recovery beyond the COVID-19 pandemic in the near-term, and to be a steward and champion for Downtown in the long-term.**

Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) are quasi-public agencies that provide both organization and financing for redevelopment projects that focus on the downtown’s vitality and attractiveness. DDAs facilitate partnerships, joining businesses, property owners, and other civic partners such as Chambers of Commerce and local government to create a self-sustaining organization designed to champion downtown for the long term. The proposed Englewood DDA would not only serve as a problem-solver in the COVID-19 economic recovery process, but would provide a clear, unified voice for Downtown Englewood moving forward.

2. **Extend the vibrancy of Downtown throughout the day and evening by adding more residents, jobs, and entertainment.**

To cultivate a vibrant Downtown activity zone that extends throughout every evening and weekend, the proposed DDA could work with private developers and property owners to create a wider mix of land uses in Downtown Englewood. The DDA could help drive additional residential density to underutilized sites in the CityCenter sub-area, in proximity to Englewood Station. Additionally, the DDA could help attract more office employers to bring more daytime workers Downtown, which in-turn will support existing and new local merchants and restaurants.

3. **Create a distinct, authentic brand identity and marketing program for Downtown.**

Downtown Englewood is in need of an authentic brand identity and program to market Downtown as a destination, support local businesses and attract new investment. Downtown’s brand identity could then be utilized in physical enhancements, such as decorative lighting, gateways, and public art, to better integrate and create synergy between Downtown’s three sub-areas and establish a sense of place.

4. **Cultivate street-level activation of storefronts and public spaces throughout Downtown.**

To establish Downtown as a distinct, unique environment, the proposed DDA could help fill vacant storefronts with engaging uses such as pop-up art galleries, office space, or pop-up retail concepts, and could assist local partners in programming existing and new open spaces Downtown, such as paseos and public parks. The DDA could also facilitate physical enhancements, including landscaping, street furniture, street trees, and wayfinding signage to increase vibrancy and activation along retail streets such as South Broadway, Old Hampden, and Englewood Parkway.
Create a connected, multi-modal Downtown that is convenient, comfortable, and accessible for all ages and abilities.

The proposed DDA could undertake public improvements that increase multi-modal connectivity throughout all three sub-areas in Downtown Englewood, and improve transit and trail connections to the greater Denver Metro area. Examples of these improvements include upgrading on- and off-street pedestrian and bicycle facilities, cultivating a connected greenspace network, enhancing and maintaining public infrastructure, and creating a parking management district or strategy.

Collaborate with a variety of local partners to enhance Downtown vitality.

The Downtown Matters planning process identified a number of shared priorities between the proposed DDA, the City of Englewood, the Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce, and other community partners. To take Downtown Englewood to the next level, collaboration between these entities will be needed more than ever, particularly in light of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The DDA could also work with partners on a range of social equity and value-based policies, including attainable housing, services for people experiencing homelessness, reducing involuntary displacement, and aging in place.

Increase safety and comfort to a level that is welcoming to all.

It is important that all people feel comfortable in Downtown at all times of the day. Physical enhancements such as lighting, wayfinding signage, street and sidewalk cleaning, and public alleyway improvements are needed to discourage nuisance behaviors and improve perceived safety of Downtown. The proposed DDA could not only support physical improvements of Downtown to promote safety and comfort, but could explore programmatic solutions as well, such as employing uniformed safety or welcome ambassadors to monitor Downtown Englewood happenings.

Partner with the private sector to promote coordinated infill development at catalytic sites.

The proposed DDA could help facilitate development of underutilized properties throughout Downtown Englewood. Examples of catalytic public-private partnerships could include working closely with the hospitals in the Medical District and other large landowners to improve the public realm and attract new investment, exploring redevelopment opportunities on underutilized parcels near Englewood Station, attracting a new hotel to Downtown, and helping to explore and guide private sector redevelopment on South Broadway north and south of Downtown.
Goals and Strategies

To transform the vision and “Big Ideas” for Downtown Englewood into a menu of measurable policy and program recommendations, goals and strategies were developed for the Downtown Matters Plan to guide the proposed DDA for the next ten years and beyond. These goals and strategies are divided into five categories:

**Economy, Jobs, & Homes**, including filling vacant storefronts, retaining and supporting small businesses, increasing the Downtown employment base, and supporting housing and social services.

**Mobility, Parking, & Transportation**, including enhancing multimodal connectivity, improving the Englewood Trolley, and managing the Downtown parking supply.

**Marketing & Programming**, such as cultivating a brand and identity for Downtown, improving marketing, communication, and promotion, and coordinating events.

**Land Use & Urban Design**, such as identifying catalytic redevelopment sites, building on existing mixed-use energy, promoting best practices in urban design in Downtown, and encouraging adaptive reuse of buildings where appropriate.

**Public Spaces & Place Enhancements**, such as ensuring Downtown is clean, safe, and accessible, activating existing public spaces, improving the pedestrian experience, and improving the physical environment through streetscape enhancements.

Within each of these categories, there is an assessment of 2020 existing conditions, including strengths and weaknesses of the Downtown Englewood area overall, and each of the sub-areas. Each Plan section also contains high-level goals, strategies the proposed DDA could employ to achieve those goals, and specific sub-area considerations for South Broadway, CityCenter, and the Medical District.
18-Month Action Plan

Mid-way through the Downtown Matters planning process, COVID-19 became a global pandemic, severely impacting the health and economy of downtowns across the country. Downtown districts led by organizations such as DDAs and BIDs, played an important role in providing critical recovery tools to property and business owners throughout Colorado.

In Englewood, the pandemic highlighted the urgency for a strong voice with resources and implementation capacity to support Downtown Englewood stakeholders beyond the immediate crisis. The proposed Englewood DDA is intended to fill this role.

The Englewood Downtown Matters Plan provides an 18-month economic recovery framework that is intended to serve as an illustrative action plan with initiatives a DDA could lead to support economic recovery efforts for Downtown Englewood.

Short-term priority projects could include:

Support existing businesses
- Provide information and access to local, state and federal assistance.
- Help businesses adapt to evolving health restrictions, such as outdoor merchandising, on-line platforms, shared space options and more.
- Marketing and promotional efforts to promote local business and draw people Downtown as public health confidence grows.
- Encourage membership in the Englewood Chamber to access their educational programs.

Build a broader downtown consumer market
- Work with the city to streamline delivery of new businesses and residential/office development projects in each sub-area.
- Analyze DDA investments in infrastructure and catalytic sites in CityCenter and the Medical District.

Maintain and improve Downtown appearance and sense of safety
- Provide supplemental maintenance of Downtown public spaces, including medians, paseos, pocket parks and sidewalks.
- Work with police and property owners on crime and safety programs; address nuisance activity.
- Activate vacant storefronts with tactics such as pop-ups, shared retail/office concepts, marketing graphics and art displays.

Enhance a sense of local identity and attract new investment
- Create a distinct Downtown brand identity and integrated marketing program.
- Work with city planners on design of Downtown wayfinding signage and a gateway at US 285/Hampden.
- Work with property owners and city leaders to attract new business and development investment.

Additional project and program priorities are listed in each section of this plan.
DDA Overview

Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) are quasi-public agencies that provide both organization and financing for downtown redevelopment projects that focus on the city center’s vitality and attractiveness. DDAs facilitate partnerships, joining businesses, property owners, and other civic partners such as Chambers of Commerce and local government to create a self-sustaining organization designed to champion downtown for the long term. Property owners, business owners, residents, and tenants within the proposed DDA area must vote on the DDA’s creation and funding. The governing board is made up of these stakeholders as well as representatives from the City, appointed by the City Council. Downtown Development Authorities are subject to Colorado Revised Statute 31-25-801.

One of the first tasks for a DDA is to finalize and adopt a Downtown Plan of Development, which is the Englewood Downtown Matters Plan, aligned with the City’s comprehensive plan and approved by the City Council, that sets forth a long-term vision, goals and strategies. Examples of DDA activities include:

- Public improvements such as pedestrian crosswalks, bicycle facilities, multimodal amenities (including shuttles), streetscape improvements, and place enhancement projects,
- Large-scale infrastructure improvements such as parking structures and stormwater improvements,
- Maintenance of public improvements,
- Economic development initiatives such as public-private partnerships, marketing, programming (events, promotions), and small business support,
- Public safety initiatives,
- Hiring staff, commissioning studies, and market research.

Downtown Development Authority operations and projects are typically funded through an operations property tax of up to 5 mills within the district, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF), both of which must be approved by stakeholders in the district as well as City Council. Tax Increment Financing allows a DDA to leverage future increased sales and property taxes to help finance development and improvement projects. Downtown Development Authorities have no taxing power (beyond the possible 5 mills) and no power of eminent domain.