



# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

*HAYDEN, COLORADO*

---

JUNE 19, 2017



**COLORADO**

Office of Economic Development  
& International Trade



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01**

OVERVIEW

**06**

OBSERVATIONS

**02**

PURPOSE

**13**

NEXT STEPS AND  
STRATEGY

**03**

METHODOLOGY

**05**

KEY DRIVERS OF  
RESILIENCY

# OVERVIEW

## ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS

**Clarke Becker**

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Director Rural Workforce Consortium

**Elizabeth Garner**

Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office, State Demographer

**Meridith Marshall**

Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Senior Regional Economic Development Manager and Health and Wellness Champion

**Jeremy Rietmann**

Economic Development Director, Town of Gypsum and Vice-Chair, Economic Development Council of Colorado

**Greg Winkler**

Department of Local Affairs, Regional Manager

## ASSESSMENT TEAM SPONSORS

Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade

Economic Development Council of Colorado

# PURPOSE

The community of Hayden applied for and received an economic development assessment through the Community Assessment Program, administered by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, and in partnership with Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, and the Economic Development Council of Colorado. The community asked the assessment team to develop a set of recommendations around the development of a plan for managed, long-term development while maintaining the town's rural and picturesque qualities and protecting its natural amenities.

On May 15, 2017, the assessment team took a bus tour around the town to visit the business park and new housing developments, concluding at the airport. Throughout the assessment process focus groups were held to understand the priorities of business leaders, elected officials, nonprofits and community members. These conversations were organized by Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to best inform the assessment team's recommendations as outlined below, with the intent that the county will integrate some or all of these recommendations into future development plans.



# METHODOLOGY

## SWOT ANALYSIS

A summary of the SWOT analysis conducted through the focus group interviews are included below (notes are in their original format to avoid any misrepresentation of the comments made during the focus group sessions)

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Available and affordable developable land, much with infrastructure in place
- ▶ High quality airport with adjacent commercial growth potential
- ▶ Central location between Craig and Steamboat
- ▶ Water portfolio positioned for growth
- ▶ Strong volunteerism and access to philanthropic resources
- ▶ Recent growth signals and business investment: Atlantic FBO, marijuana cultivation facility, increased building permit activity etc.
- ▶ Net gainer school system with an exceptional technical school component
- ▶ Quality public services (council, police, fire etc.)
- ▶ Town Government maintains a good reputation as being easy to work with.
- ▶ Business Park with capacity.
- ▶ Outdoor recreation accessibility
- ▶ Residents with strong skill sets and capacity.
- ▶ Ability to attract young families.
- ▶ Resources for kids (but need more).

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Lack of formal vision or plan
- ▶ Poor first impressions/visuals from Hwy. 40
- ▶ Limited signage/wayfinding directing people to community assets
- ▶ Lack of trails and soft and paved paths
- ▶ Relationships between regional entities and Town of Hayden need strengthened
- ▶ Need more community engagement and understanding of Hayden's assets, obligations and potential for growth.
- ▶ Local schools appear to be lacking leadership
- ▶ Limited 'town core' or gathering spaces for residents

- ▶ Need clarity on targeted businesses (both retail and base)
- ▶ Internet services are variable
- ▶ Public transportation up and down valley is limited.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Improving visual appeal, first impressions and perceived 'livability.'
- ▶ Actively building and promoting a stronger sense of community
- ▶ Celebrate, Promote and Grow key assets (Airport, Babson School, Fairgrounds facility, library, etc.)
- ▶ Embrace the natural housing growth motivated by affordability needs from Steamboat.
- ▶ Market lifestyle and affordability
- ▶ Set the table for business development. Leverage business park, commercial area around airport and available space along Hwy 40.
- ▶ Tourism Development - Historical/cultural, environmental, recreational etc. Leverage relationship with Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- ▶ Potential reinvestment into local schools.
- ▶ Hotel at the right time and right situation.

## THREATS

- ▶ Potential loss of key anchor institutions (Babson school, The Merc) if succession planning isn't prioritized
- ▶ Spending leakage/public finance risks
- ▶ Self-defeating local attitudes and/or resident apathy
- ▶ Flat sales tax revenues vs. increasing service costs.
- ▶ Program cuts at local schools/failure of BEST grant/inability to pass bond for schools
- ▶ Changing global retail environment (increasing web-based purchasing)

# KEY DRIVERS OF RESILIENCY

At the opening community meeting on the night of May 15th, 2017, community members were presented with a 6 question survey on the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade's identified key drivers of resiliency. These drivers, established through the Rural Economic Resiliency in Colorado study, released in 2016 in collaboration with the Department of Local Affairs and the Leeds School of Business at the University of Colorado Boulder, are used to help the State Office of Economic Development understand why some rural communities recover from economic shocks better than others and are as follows:

1. Quality of Life
2. Industry Diversity
3. Community Leadership
4. Education and Healthcare
5. Transportation Access

Community members were asked to rate how they felt Hayden performed with respect to these drivers on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being a negative outlook, and 5 being a very positive outlook. A 6th question was then asked, "Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very negative and 5 being very positive, how do you feel about the direction Hayden is moving in with regards to economic development and growth?", to determine how these drivers impacted citizen's overall feeling of positivity or negativity towards their community. We received 41 responses and then calculated the median and mean of the responses. They were as follows:

1. Quality of Life: Mean, 4; Median, 4
2. Industry Diversity: Mean, 2.3; Median, 2
3. Community Leadership: Mean, 3.5; Median, 4
4. Education and Healthcare: Mean, 3; Median, 3
5. Transportation Access: Mean, 3.1; Median, 3
6. Overall Score: Mean, 3.3; Median, 3

*\*Note: Many survey participants said their perception of community leadership has drastically improved recently.*

The Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade also asked for names and email addresses of the participants with the agreement that, if our office was provided an email address, we would follow up each year for two years to re-administer the survey to gauge for changes in community perception on these drivers following the execution of the community assessment.

# OBSERVATIONS

## COMMUNITY VISION

There is interest in developing a formal Economic Development Strategy. There will be several components to this strategy and will link to the Community Visioning Process as well as other official documents like Comprehensive Plans, Land Use Plans etc. In order to develop the formal Economic Development Plan, a series of other projects will need to be completed to support the Strategy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Analyze and profile Hayden's local economy. Begin a discovery process to collect and organize market information and catalogue Hayden's assets to inform your strategic planning. Collected information might include:

1. Literature review of past economic development, strategic planning, communities development and other studies related to Hayden, Routt County and anything relevant from the State level.
2. Economic & Demographic Inventory
  - ▶ Demographics & Community Growth Projections - standard data set
  - ▶ Consumer profiles - Hayden residents as well as surrounding communities
  - ▶ Real estate conditions - residential, commercial, vacant land - pricing, vacancy rates, condition etc.
  - ▶ Existing business & employment sector dynamics
  - ▶ Workforce dynamics - Labor force, commuting patterns, independent workers, etc.
  - ▶ Tax base/public finance revenue results & trends
3. Asset Mapping. An asset map should be completed for the following areas to ensure a thorough understanding of potential weaknesses. This information can be used to inform future investment decisions.
  - ▶ Infrastructure Capacity/Condition: (Water, Transportation, Utilities, Internet etc.)
  - ▶ Education
  - ▶ Healthcare
  - ▶ Innovation Assets
  - ▶ Transportation
  - ▶ Recreational

- ▶ Environmental
  - ▶ Arts & Culture and Historical
  - ▶ Other relevant local & state resources, etc.
4. Understand and Leverage Hayden's Key Assets
    - ▶ Key Assets as identified by Community Assessment Team:
      - ▶ Central location between Craig and Steamboat
      - ▶ Airport, New FBO operator, adjacent lands
      - ▶ Babson Center
      - ▶ Fairgrounds
      - ▶ Available/affordable land for development - much with infrastructure already in place
      - ▶ Tourism/traffic capture opportunities: Heritage and Cultural & Environmental and Recreational.
  5. Be "Business Ready" - Use this Economic Inventory data to build a Community Profile for use as a sales tool and informational piece to provide to interested parties at a moment's notice.
    - ▶ Build in a standard format that can be updated at regular intervals.
  6. Apply for Blueprint 2.0 community placemaking initiative to obtain assistance and guidance for this process.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The community has participated in a number of strategic planning, assessment and visioning exercises. In Hayden residents are motivated to chart their own future and responsibly direct growth to improve local economic results and opportunity. Residents also desire to maintain the 'best of Hayden' - it's small-town feel, informal attitude and rural culture. In order to achieve this, there must be a strategic plan for economic development. This plan should be supported by data and have the input and support of the community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a community visioning process to help discuss and formulate a plan for what Hayden wants to be in the long-term. Should be forward thinking and inspirational.
  - a. Community engagement and public input can be driven through a variety of forms including
    - ▶ Community Survey
    - ▶ Interviews
    - ▶ Focus Groups

- ▶ Public Meetings
  - ▶ CSU Cooperative Extension may have resources to help with the visioning process. CSU also has the Office of Strategic Engagement - an umbrella over Cooperative Extension with individuals at the state level who may be able to assist in the process as it will be important to bring in a neutral outsider to facilitate.
  - ▶ This vision should then inform the content and alignment of all other strategic plans including Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Plan, Economic Development Plan, Communication Plan etc.
- b. Develop a local communication plan to build communication and outreach in a growing community. It will be important to engage the local residents in the visioning process as well as letting them know what is going on in Hayden.
- ▶ Consider implementing a Neighbor to Neighbor program (similar to Eagle's program). Neighborhood captains assigned and they keep track of new residents, pull information from assessor's website on new housing units. Group meets to create baskets of local goods and information and welcomes new household to the community. Great way to meet people and share information on local assets.
  - ▶ Leverage other local assets to improve communication. Consider a small newsletter and think about posting it on the community website, library, schools, shops, eating and drinking places. Use the community website. There are resources in Hayden to develop and use this tool to share information within the community.
- c. Work to develop a "community center" by leveraging current natural meeting places. A community center does not need to be a specific building built for the community (although it can be - like a recreation center). It should leverage current behaviors and Hayden has several both public and private spaces to consider as these centers (coffee shop, brewery, library, fairgrounds, schools). These all have opportunities to be used more strategically as community centers to gather and share information.
- d. Take advantage of other work/research done for Hayden to improve the "Image" of Hayden. This recommendation will link to the Economic Development Strategy listed below but is also part of the communication and community vision concept.
- ▶ Develop and implement a streetscape, signage, and wayfinding plan. It was discussed in many of the interviews that there are major assets in Hayden yet some are difficult to find and use.
  - ▶ Leverage to VO-TECH program to assist with the signage, streetscape and other mainstreet improvements. This will build community engagement from the residents of Hayden, build skills, and build local pride.
  - ▶ Consider a "paint-it, clean-it, fix-it" grant program to help support improvements along the main street. There are several homes and some store fronts that could use some "sprucing up" to improve the image of Hayden for those traveling east or west on Hwy 40.
    - Consider local fundraising and other grant dollars to support a matching grant program. Improvement along Hwy 40 will not only improve the property specific land value and image but also the image of the entire town.

2. Acknowledge and understand Hayden’s changing role in the regional economy.
  - a. Build forums for regular education, relationship building and communication between elected officials, staff and citizens so that everyone can gain a better understanding and appreciation of key regional economic drivers and dependencies, and their implications on the Town, particularly public finances.
  - b. Focus on understanding the implications of certain technical terms like “bedroom community” rather than the term itself. Merriam Webster defines “Bedroom Community” as “a small community that has no (or few) major industries and that is lived in by people who (largely) go to another town or city to work” - this dynamic creates important considerations for Hayden’s leaders in approaching development, public finance and more, and cannot be ignored because it may be uncomfortable.
    - ▶ Ideas might include ED 101 sessions, lunch and learns, leadership/business roundtable discussions, etc.

## LEADERSHIP

Town of Hayden can’t ‘do’ economic development on its own. Public and private leadership needs cultivated to jointly set and pursue worthwhile community economic development goals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assemble an Economic Development Council made up of local residents (6-8), who are bullish on positive change in Hayden, have expertise in different domains, and who are known for being fair, people-focused consensus builders.
  - ▶ Make this group responsible for leading the development of your Vision (with input from residents) and your eventual economic development goals, objectives and strategies.
  - ▶ Shared responsibility helps maintain motivation and positive forward momentum.
2. Build stronger regional relationships and partnerships.
  - ▶ Relationships are crucial to making connections and seizing opportunities as they arise.
  - ▶ Key relationships should include Routt County, Steamboat Springs, Steamboat Chamber & Resort Association, Yampa Valley Electric Association, Hayden School District, CNCC & others.
3. Develop an economic development Rapid Response Team
  - ▶ Assemble a group of local leaders and professionals who are well-informed of Hayden’s vision and economic development goals to mobilize quick, professional responses to local economic development needs including: business hardship/retention cases , entrepreneurship support, business relocation inquiries, development inquires etc.

- ▶ Candidates might include: Town Manager/Town Planner, building official, electric cooperative leadership, community bankers, real estate professionals, school superintendent, local business leaders etc.
- ▶ Assemble this group quarterly (or more often at first) to develop a plan, share information and maintain relationships and motivation.

## BUSINESS RETENTION

Hayden is home to several key businesses and organizations that provide outsized benefits to the community. In a community of Hayden's size, every business is important and will benefit from access to a formal 'listening and response' mechanism with local leadership.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hayden should consider the development of a formal business retention strategy to help these and other businesses sustain and grow.
2. Retention plans are important because they create a culture of communication and action between your business community and available support resources to:
  - ▶ Retain, sustain and grow local businesses
  - ▶ Retain or increase local jobs
  - ▶ Preserve or grow the local tax base and property values
  - ▶ Maintain or diversify the local economy
  - ▶ Provide a proof point for a business friendly culture conducive to investor confidence and business attraction.
3. A successful business retention program might take this general structure:
  - ▶ Business Advancement Team Education / Team Building
  - ▶ Questionnaire Development/Outreach/Listening
  - ▶ Follow-up and Service Delivery - brokering connections to various forms of technical assistance
  - ▶ Ongoing Program Evaluation and Process Improvement
  - ▶ Ongoing Marketing Program
4. Begin dialogue with the proprietors of some of Hayden's specific organizational 'jewels' (The Merc & Babson Center come to mind) to encourage the prioritization of succession planning.
  - ▶ Have these (sometimes hard) conversations now to ensure your key assets have a plan to maintain their viability beyond their current proprietors.
  - ▶ The best legacy existing operators can leave to the community is a business or organization that functions beyond their tenure.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Hayden is poised for growth as housing affordability pressures (particularly in Steamboat) will drive housing demand to outlying communities. Hayden should therefore be forward thinking about land use and directing future development so it still 'feels like home' as this growth occurs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Maintain and acquire access to the river and other crucial natural amenities as opportunities arise
- ▶ Promote private land uses that enhance business cohesiveness, natural cross-traffic and vibrancy
- ▶ Promote public land uses that encourage natural gathering places and active play areas.
- ▶ Understand how different development patterns will impact Hayden's long-term public infrastructure and maintenance costs.

## BROADBAND

Quality Internet services don't ensure economic success, but they do ensure that communities don't fall rapidly behind the broader economy - in business, education, healthcare etc. As resources are available, Hayden should prioritize broadband deployment.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hayden should seek out private partners to help identify what network deployment options may be available to the community within its means.
  - ▶ Many newer (and lower cost) last-mile deployment technologies exist, and a key northern Colorado middle-mile fiber route passes directly through Hayden.
  - ▶ Quality internet services give existing businesses and residents and prospective businesses and residents more options and create opportunities for them to derive new revenue from sources outside the community.
  - ▶ Modern, reliable, high-speed broadband may not actively drive new investment, but it eliminates one major limiting factor.

## LOCAL ASSETS

Public service and leadership, both elected and volunteer, will be essential to the future success of the Town of Hayden. There is strong, passionate energy from old and young residents that can guide the future implementation of the goals of the community.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Know your assets: Who needs to know this? The entire community needs to be familiar with not only town leadership and the implementation team, but have knowledge of community assets. Educating community members on your existing attributes is imperative to building on them; if your community doesn't know what they have, your assets can't be marketed and supported effectively. An

intentional process needs to be developed to assess and capitalize on the resources of the Community including the following:

- ▶ **Babson – Vo-tech Facility and Programs:** This is an incredible asset and tool for growth of your economy, including training of youth and opportunities for improvement of the image of the Town. Everyone needs to take a tour, but especially community leadership.
- ▶ **Heritage Center, T Yampa River State Park:** As with all amenities, leadership must visit and know about these assets.
- ▶ **Schools and BEST Grant Application:** The BEST Grant represents tremendous opportunity for the foundation of the community. However, it is unknown when the community can expect to know if the effort was successful. Therefore, intentional and strategic considerations need to be developed, with and without a successful BEST Grant request.

## 2. Transportation

- ▶ In general, a solid transportation network will be critical to helping to build more up and down valley movement of both people and product. There exists a need to assess the status of transportation and options for improving or maximizing the current system.

## 3. Housing

- ▶ Housing that is affordable for the people that work in Hayden and the Valley will be a significant factor in the Town's growth and general efforts. Water capacity and property is available to more than double the population of Hayden. The question will be how the community wants to embrace and support this need. A master plan starting with infill development as much as possible and maximizing zoning and plats that is already in place.

## NEXT STEPS AND STRATEGY

- ▶ Hayden was given high-level versions of these recommendations at the culmination of the onsite assessment on May 17th, 2017. The City was asked to review recommendations and collectively identify the recommendations they intend to adopt within one month from that date. These selected recommendations will be shared with the State to ensure the deployment of available State resources to support the local efforts.
- ▶ The town of Hayden will be required to provide quarterly reports to the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade for a two year period, to ensure progress toward the implementation of recommendations the City indicated they would pursue.
- ▶ Hayden will partner with the State on initiatives benefiting from State involvement in order to continue to advance strategies by identifying gaps and potential resources.



**COLORADO**

Office of Economic Development  
& International Trade

Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade  
1625 Broadway, Suite 2700 | Denver, Colorado 80202 USA  
Phone: 303.892.3840 | FAX: 303.892.3848  
[www.choosecolorado.com](http://www.choosecolorado.com)

