



## Castle Rock Downtown Alliance

*A partnership between the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Merchants Association*

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### **Castle Rock Downtown Alliance Downtown Development Authority Semi-Annual Report to Town Council 2017**

#### **Background**

The Castle Rock Downtown Alliance is a partnership between the Downtown Merchants Association and Downtown Development Authority. This partnership expands the audience and involvement of the two organizations and unifies the Downtown organizations under one roof. The two organizations share one office and one staff helping to further the collective vision of a vibrant and prosperous Downtown.

The **Downtown Development Authority (DDA)** is a governmental entity that functions as an extension of the Town guided by a 7 member board that is appointed by Town Council. The DDA is charged with furthering development and place-making in Downtown Castle Rock using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and is guided by a Plan of Development. The Plan of Development provides guidance from Town Council on the mission of the DDA and encourages the DDA to pursue “development projects” which include projects to beautify downtown, increase commerce in Downtown and development projects which bring physical construction of buildings to Downtown.

#### **Report**

In 2017, Downtown Castle Rock is experiencing some very exciting development, making this a year for construction and improvement. Construction at the Mercantile Commons has completed, while the Riverwalk development and Festival Park project have broken ground, and construction begun. In addition, installation of a roundabout at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Perry Street and expansion of Town Hall make this an exciting year for Downtown Castle Rock.

In the spring, the DDA had a new project introduced that proposes a residential project at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Jerry, and expects to continue dialogue with this developer. The DDA is also excited to explore options for development and additional public parking through the Town Hall Parking Lot RFP process.

Annual updates on the DDA’s revitalization and beautification efforts as well as information on approved and proposed development projects are included below.

#### **Downtown Projects and Programs**

##### *Rink at the Rock*

The DDA completed its fourth successful season of the Rink at the Rock with 12,766 attendees at the Rink during the 94-day winter skating season. The energy that this program generates in Downtown during the typically slower winter months is a benefit to the small businesses in Downtown, and in addition this program provides a safe place to hangout for kids and teens. This was the third straight season with Rink Management Services Corporation as our managing partner, and third straight season with Zelem Construction on the setup and teardown of the Rink. This consistency (staffing, setup and tear down) has been important for an operation which is prone to fluctuations in expenses and sales due to weather and uncontrollable factors. We believe the cost of this operation continues to be worth the activity and vibrancy that it brings to Downtown, the main goal of this revitalization project.

### *Downtown Engagement*

The Alliance staff started a new effort in 2017 to meet one on one with Downtown businesses. In prior years the Alliance has held Downtown Stakeholders meetings to gather feedback and ideas and foster a sense of community among Downtown businesses. This year we took these meetings on the road to the businesses directly and have had more and greater conversations. At these meetings, the Alliance staff provides information on what is going on in Downtown, including information to the public on Downtown programs, such as accepting orders for the flowerbox program, façade improvement grant program, patio program, etc., and to provide updates on DDA initiatives such as Festival Park or other development projects.

### *Banners Program*

The Castle Rock DDA Street Pole Banner Program uses decorative banners to publicize special events and enhance the streetscape by adding color and vitality to Downtown. This year, event banners lined the Plum Creek Bridge to welcome visitors and draw attention to the summer events. In addition, seasonal and event banners hung along Wilcox from third street to the north entrance of Downtown. When most events conclude in mid-august, Oktoberfest banners will line Downtown to market the popular fall festival.

### *Façade Improvement Program*

The DDA Board continues to pursue beautification projects in historic Downtown Castle Rock. In 2017, in addition to the development projects that have pulled permits and broken ground, two façade improvements were also proposed by downtown businesses. The following locations requested a façade improvement in 2017:

- 309 Jerry Street (multi-office building): Approved by the DDA Board for \$5,665 in reimbursement
- 390 Jerry Street (Lost Coffee): Pending approval

It is also worth noting that the façade improvement grant that was completed in 2016 at 312 Wilcox Street generated excitement in the space and it has been leased by Z'Abbracci - Pizza, Pasta & Tap House. They are currently completing interior tenant improvements and expect to open by September of 2017.

In April of 2017, the DDA introduced a micro façade grant program, making businesses eligible for a reimbursement award of up to \$1,000. The micro-grant program was designed to provide a streamlined process for smaller improvements sought by downtown merchants. For example, the program may eliminate more complex application requirements such as elevations/renderings, depending on the scope of the desired work.

The DDA has had success with several façade improvements and actively encourages private sector partners to utilize both programs. The Façade Improvement Program encourages downtown property and businesses owners to renovate facades to improve the overall appearance of Downtown Castle Rock. While Town code does not require that facades in Downtown Castle Rock look a certain way, the DDA façade improvement program encourages attractive facades that fit with historic architecture and bring a quality look to Downtown.

### *Flowerbox Program*

The DDA partnered with the Town and Brown's Greenhouse again in 2017 to place flower boxes throughout Downtown. More than 30 businesses utilized the boxes, adding to the sense of small town charm and enhancing the look and feel of the Downtown streetscape. Efforts such as this has been shown to have an impact on business success and economic activity. The DDA flowerbox program does not use any Town General Fund tax dollars. The Authority partners with Town staff on the day of delivery for their expertise and equipment, to deliver flowerboxes to the private sector. In addition, the DDA contracts with the Town to repair, re-stain and repaint the flowerboxes.

Brown's Greenhouse planted the flower boxes for the patios in Downtown on site. This allows the DDA to deliver patios to Downtown almost 2 months earlier at the request of the Downtown businesses.

### *Patio Program*

Before the DDA was created, the Town, in partnership with several interested business owners, brought in Walkable Communities Inc. to evaluate Downtown Castle Rock. This organization provided guidance to the group on building a thriving downtown which built on years of research and studies that Walkable Communities Inc. had done. One of the recommendations from this exercise was to invest in the infrastructure of wider sidewalks to encourage pedestrian activity and allow street-side patios. Using this research, the DDA designed a way to construct temporary street-side patios similar to those utilized by other neighboring communities. The program has had great success and positive feedback from businesses and the community.

In 2017, the DDA delivered patios to Angie's Restaurant, B&B Café, Castle Rock Bike and Ski, Crowfoot Valley Coffee and Lost Coffee. In addition, two new businesses, Castle Café and Zabracci's at 312 Wilcox, ordered custom patios for their businesses.

The DDA street side patios provide the infrastructure in Downtown for a summer pedestrian environment that encourages people to be outside in Downtown and engage with their neighbors and the Downtown community.

### *Development Projects*

In the last year, the DDA has had several significant building accomplishments, which could not be done without the support of the Town of Castle Rock and the Castle Rock EDC, that will contribute to vibrancy in Downtown and a stronger economy for Downtown small businesses:

- **Festival Park – 2<sup>nd</sup> Street between Wilcox and Perry Streets**  
The Festival Park Enhancement Project broke ground on February 24, 2017. Both the DDA and DMA are excited for the vibrancy and gathering space the park will provide. In addition, the park will be a wonderful site for many of the 2018 special events to return to. Creating an "active" park is directed in the Plan of Development, and the vision for this park to add vibrancy is already being seen with the Mercantile Commons and Riverwalk project directly across from the park.
- **Riverwalk North and Riverwalk South – 113 Wilcox Street & 215 Wilcox Street**  
This project fits many aspects of the Plan of Development including a more well-defined street grid that encourage walkability and places parking off of the main street. It also adds much needed population density to support the small businesses in Downtown, and thus creating a vibrant Downtown atmosphere. The project location is also specifically called out in the Plan of Development as a priority, especially providing residential space nearby the proposed enhanced

Festival Park project. The Plan of Development calls for the redevelopment of strip malls encouraging a more walkable window shopping environment, and this project accomplishes that with an existing 2 story strip mall. All of these things are reasons why this project is expected to be positive for Downtown.

In 2017, we have had discussions with the developer about additional improvements that can be accomplished during construction of the project, including lighting, sidewalk and crosswalk opportunities.

- Mercantile Commons – 230 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
The Mercantile Commons project finished the construction of their building on time and received their Certificate of Occupancy in March of 2017. This building brings an exciting mix of retail, restaurant, office and residential space to Downtown Castle Rock and is 100% leased.

### **Summary**

This year is expected to be a year of construction and improvement, building great anticipation for 2018 and beyond. Construction of Festival Park, the Riverwalk development, the expansion of Town Hall, the roundabout at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Perry Street and other anticipated developments have built excitement for a more active and vibrant Downtown Castle Rock.

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