Balancing Tourists vs. Local Communities
City of Woodland Park

CHALLENGE STATEMENT //

Driven by a seasonal tourist economy, many Colorado towns struggle to balance the needs of locals, business owners, and tourists. How do you engage your locals, communicate with tourists, and help the businesses lead the charge?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY //

Woodland Park is a town of 6,515 residents situated at the foot of Pikes Peak and just outside of Colorado Springs. With Highway 24 running through the center of town, an average of 20,000 cars drive through each day. This level of traffic creates a potential asset to local businesses that remains untapped with vehicles not stopping. “There is a lack of understanding about what is in Woodland Park” says Jan Wilson who is on the board of directors with the downtown development authority. Additionally, this traffic burdens the community with an unfriendly and unsafe downtown environment. Based on these obstacles our team determined that tourist visitation and retention were the main challenges of Woodland Park. To address these issues three goals were established: (1) Improve Walkability and Pedestrian Safety, (2) Branding Woodland Park, and (3) Business Diversity. The desired outcome of the suggestions is to successfully attract tourist off the Highway 24 and onto a downtown that encourages safe pedestrian walkability. By establishing a brand for the community, we hope to see more traffic that is consistent with the area’s target market. This will attract people who see Woodland Park as a destination as opposed to a pass through town. Attracting and retaining more of these tourists will allow for business growth and diversity to slowly expand with wider market support.

Highway 24 is shown in this satellite image of Woodland Park as the main thoroughfare that loops through downtown. How does the city attract visitors and patrons while improving pedestrian safety and experience?

TEAM MEMBERS //

Ashley Upchurch, Crested Butte Chamber of Commerce / Elizabeth Gardner, Colorado Department of Local Affairs / Sara Mordecai, Town of Silverton Deputy Clerk / Kevin Zappia, West End Economic Development Corporation, DCI Anthropologist / Jan Wilson, City of Woodland Park Downtown Development Authority / Karen Current, DHM Design / Lindsay Newman, Norris Design

BACKGROUND INFORMATION //

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population:</td>
<td>App. 6,515</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Business</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Woodland Park</td>
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<td>Community</td>
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**FINDINGS + IDEAS //**

These resultant ideas about solutions for balancing tourists vs. local community in Woodland Park came about through a round table discussion between community members, private, and public figures. This exercise was primarily to generate new ideas and sketch out the beginnings of innovative solutions and as such are on a conceptual level.

**1. Suggestions from Participants**

- **Walkability:**
  Improving the walkability and safety of the historic main street will have compounding positive effects for the community. This is a first step in tapping into the market of 20,000 cars that pass a day on Highway 24. Seeing people outside enjoying the charming historic downtown will encourage tourists to stop and see for themselves. Accessible pedestrian walkways will heighten the tourist experience and improve tourist retention. Ultimately, this would then benefit both the locals and the business owners in the town who will feel safe in their own downtown and can expand operations with the growing market.

- **Branding:**
  Establishing a brand for the area is essential to begin reaching the target market. By determining the type of community you want to become, it will create a path to determine infrastructure the town should invest in, and the businesses that the area should attempt to attract. All of these aspects creates an identity that is vital for letting people know what Woodland Park offers and gives that market a reason to get off the highway.

- **Business Diversity:**
  Encourage businesses that coincide with the identity of the town and that targets your base.

**Obstacles:**

Woodland Park’s primary challenges are its inability to increase tourist visitation and retention. Based on these challenges, our group broke down the key obstacles that obstructed reaching a solution.

- **Highway 24:** Although Highway 24 acts as a major asset by driving traffic through the community, there is nothing to slow this traffic down. With cars speeding through, people fail to absorb what Woodland Park’s mainstreet has to offer. This creates difficulties for business owners who are missing out on the large business potential.

- **Walkability & Pedestrian Safety:** When people do stop to enjoy Woodland Park’s main street, the speeding traffic burdens the downtown’s “charming” environment for tourist and locals alike. Many people feel it creates a dangerous pedestrian walking area which detrers main street leisure, spending, and overall appeal.

- **Branding:** City growth is hindered by the same “identity” crisis and ongoing debate whether to be a sleepy mountain town, bedroom community, or self-employed entrepreneur hub. This “split personality identity” creates pressure on small business, government, and business support groups alike to create a singularly focused, like-minded attitude in promoting the town. However, the current lack of cohesiveness simply acts as a stumbling block for the town and businesses alike.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONTINUED //**

**Assets:**
- Highway 24
- Grassroots Involvement
- Local Events
- Town Land
- Business Incentive Program

**Partners:**
- Woodland Park Main Street Program
- City of Woodland Park
- Downtown Development Authority
- Chamber of Commerce
- Parks + Recreation

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Concrete Steps:
- Identify who can be used where
- Grant + funding research
- Gather and analyze dispersing demographic information
- Finalize walkability study
- Contact representative and create petition (CDOT)

Roles + Responsibilities:

Walkability
- CDOT - Install planters and restore on-street parking
- The City - Connect public spaces
- Special Projects Manager
- Downtown Development Authority
- Parks + Recreation
- Mainstreet Coordinator

Branding
- Special Projects Manager
- Downtown Development Authority
- Town Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Events Coordinator
- Mainstreet Board
- Business Stakeholder

Business Diversity
- Economic Developer
- Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Development Authority
- Special Project Manager
- Mainstreet Coordinator

Strategies:

Walkability
- Install planters on main street
- Restore on street parking
- Invest in connectivity of public spaces

Branding
- Organize a Committee of Stakeholders
  - These should be well suited representatives that can determine a town identity that most can agree upon.
- Determine a Clear + Consistent Message
  - This should be marketed through all aspects of the community (events, logos, flyers, online, businesses, etc.)
- Community Education + Outreach
  - Community members are the greatest advocates of your brand.

Business Diversity
- Develop co-working spaces or business incubators.

 Desired Outcomes:

The desired outcome of these suggestions is to successfully attract tourists off Highway 24 and onto a downtown that encourages safe pedestrian walkability. By establishing a brand for the community, we hope to see more traffic that is consistent with the areas’ target market. This will attract people who see Woodland Park as a destination as opposed to a pass through town. Attracting and retaining more of these tourists will allow for business growth and diversity to slowly expand with wider market support.