

# Memorandum

**To:** Cameron Gloss, Rebecca Everette and Seth Lorson  
**From:** Shelby Sommer and Becca Stock  
**Date:** 1/30/2017  
**Re:** Downtown Plan Sustainability Review

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This memorandum summarizes Brendle Group's sustainability review of the City of Fort Collins Downtown Sustainability Plan focusing on how the plan addresses all three components of the Triple Bottom Line (social, environmental, and economic sustainability).

## Sustainability Review Observations

The City of Fort Collins Downtown Plan was reviewed for the extent to which it addressed each of the components of the triple bottom line as described in the Fort Collins Sustainability Assessment Tool. This tool was not a good fit for a plan of this magnitude, but the overall goals and themes were used as the backbone of this review. The extent to which each topic area addressed each component is outline below.

Overall, the plan is strongly focused on social sustainability. Elements of maintaining and enhancing the culture and accessibility of living and working in Downtown are woven throughout the plan. Environmental sustainability also has a large presence throughout the plan, but it tends to be more compartmentalized. Specific ecological, climate change, and waste goals are addressed in the plan, but showing how these goals fit into the Urban Design and Arts + Culture topic areas could increase the strength of the environmental component of sustainability.

Economic sustainability is addressed in some areas of the plan but could be more fully developed as it relates to social and environmental sustainability. The Market + Economy and Arts + Culture have good discussions on how to attract and support a variety of businesses Downtown, but the economic discussion is largely confined to these topic areas. The discussion of economic sustainability could be strengthened by showing how the goals in the other topic areas contribute to and promote a sustainable economy.

### Social Sustainability

The Downtown Sustainability Plan was evaluated to determine how effectively it addressed social sustainability including meeting basic human needs, being inclusive, ensuring community safety, promoting community culture, addressing the needs of neighborhoods, and building capacity to advance social equity.

#### *Topic Areas*

Each topic area is evaluated for the level at which it addressed the goals of social sustainability. The topic area had received a ranking on how successfully it addresses social sustainability.

1. **Urban Design (strong):** Much of the focus of the urban design topic area is to set guidelines for the look and feel of Downtown to maintain its unique culture. These guidelines include public review processes which promotes social equity. This is coupled with discussion on how to incorporate more housing options Downtown and maintaining the walkability and accessibility of the district.
2. **Transportation + Parking (strong):** The transportation topic focuses strongly on increasing safety, accessibility, and availability of alternative modes of transportation. This ties strongly to the culture of the Downtown area as a walkable district with social and cultural interactions.

3. **Market + Economy (strong):** Throughout this section discussion on how to provide the necessary amenities and incentives to be inclusive to a variety of employers. To support the employees, discussion of accessible housing and other basic amenities is included.
4. **Arts + Culture (strong):** This entire topic area is dedicated to advancing culture in Downtown including how to make Downtown more affordable and accessible to people in creative industries.
5. **Energy + Environment (moderate):** Weaved throughout this topic area is the need to maintain and increase the accessibility to green spaces throughout Downtown, including the cultural connection to the river. Some additional focus on making high efficiency buildings and renewable energy options accessible to various demographic groups could increase the strength of this section, as could clarifying the role of Downtown residents, businesses, and visitors in achieving the Energy + Environment policies.
6. **Management + Maintenance (strong):** The focus on homelessness Downtown highlights the balancing act between providing basic amenities for everyone while maintaining safety and perception of safety Downtown. Maintaining the accessibility and character of Downtown through renovations is also addressed.

### *Character Subdistricts*

The social sustainability aspects of the character subdistricts discussions is strongly emphasized through a definition of the culture and feel of each district including plans on how to enhance the culture of each district. Projects to increase safety of pedestrians and bicyclist are highlighted in each section. There is also some focus on addressing other social sustainability issues such as affordable housing.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

The next criteria evaluated was the plans ability to address environmental sustainability including environmental impact, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, protection of local ecosystems, pollution prevention, waste reduction, and local emphasis.

### *Topic Areas*

1. **Urban Design (weak):** There is lengthy discussion on the look and feel of buildings, but no direct discussion of efficiency or environmental impacts of the built environment. These goals are discussed under the Energy + Environment topic area. The City can either choose to leave all discussion on the environmental impact of buildings to other topic areas or they can choose to incorporate some discussion of energy and environmental goals here. An example might be to address energy efficiency considerations of historic buildings, and sustainable building and site design with the other design-related principles and policies in this section.
2. **Transportation + Parking (strong):** One of the main focuses of this section is to increase alternative transportation use for employees and visitors Downtown.
3. **Market + Economy (strong):** There are three main focuses for environmental sustainability here: encouraging high density development where appropriate, encouraging redevelopment of existing sites or buildings rather than greenfield work, and actively encouraging local businesses.
4. **Arts + Culture (weak):** This section does not address environmental sustainability. One way to incorporate environmental sustainability into the goals for Arts + Culture would be to include goals about making the proposed cultural spaces LEED certified buildings or showcasing energy efficiency in other ways such as through public art displays and/or walking tours.
5. **Energy + Environment (strong):** This section is directly related and addresses all components of environmental sustainability.
6. **Management + Maintenance (strong):** Solid waste reduction goals are a significant portion of this section which also directly relates to emissions reductions and pollution prevention.

### *Character Subdistricts*

Environmental sustainability is showcased in two main ways through the cultural subdistricts discussions. The first way is in highlighting the existing and planned green spaces as well as the protective corridor for the Poudre River ecosystem. Secondly, the subdistricts highlight pedestrian and bicycle transportation routes to promote alternative transportation. The innovation district, specifically, highlights opportunities for renewable energy projects.

## Economic Sustainability

The final component of triple bottom line sustainability that was evaluated was economic sustainability. This review included how each topic area addressed this component including how each component supports the development of a stable, diverse and equitable economy.

### *Topic Areas*

1. **Urban Design (weak):** The urban design component focuses heavily on preserving the character of Downtown. While this is important for maintaining the local economy, this section of the plan only briefly addresses the relationship between regulations, construction materials, and the costs of development (i.e., increased regulations on building design and materials may affect the pace of new development/redevelopment activities Downtown). Additional discussion on points such as the economic benefits of historic preservation, how up-front investment in quality building materials can reduce operations and maintenance costs, and/or how maintaining the character Downtown is essential to a strong economy.
2. **Transportation + Parking (strong):** The transportation topic area focuses strongly on increasing accessibility of Downtown to everyone. This includes the possibility of building new parking structures. There is good discussion around ensuring that financing parking structures and changes in the availability of free parking is done in such a way as to not overly burden Downtown businesses.
3. **Market + Economy (strong):** Throughout this topic area is discussion of how to attract, market, and support a diverse mix of businesses to the Downtown area.
4. **Arts + Culture (strong):** Like the market + economy topic area this section is focused on attracting and supporting a variety of creative businesses Downtown.
5. **Energy + Environment (moderate):** This section focuses on increasing the energy efficiency of the buildings Downtown and renewable energy generation which requires capital investment. Throughout the section there are mentions of making these upgrades more accessible to everyone through the use of incentives, but additional information about the costs of energy and potential savings from improvements could be more fully developed, as could more discussion about how various projects could be financed.
6. **Management + Maintenance (moderate):** Similar to the Urban Design topic area, additional discussion could be added about the economic benefits of the policies in this section and how these policies relate to economic sustainability.

### *Character Subdistricts*

Since the subdistricts discussions focus on the geography and character of the regions, there are limited connections to economic sustainability. There are some identifiers where specific business opportunities might be encouraged such as a location for live/work building for creative businesses. Economic sustainability is addressed as much as is reasonable in this format.