



***The Power & Commitment to Bring the Vision to Life.***

America has seen a rebirth of its downtowns over the last 15 years that has brought excitement and vitality to the front door of its communities. This process has been jump started by the desire of people wanting to live closer to the action and the convenience of having everything within walking distance. In 1978 my urban development career was born in the carcass of an abandoned, fire gutted building in the heart of a Midwestern town. The historical significance of the structure cried out for it to be brought back to life and made vital again. With little or no experience in renovation/restoration, and without the benefit of a sophisticated market study the historic Lyon's House was reborn. I could only wonder to myself if the market would embrace the convenience of an urban environment and the charm of historic residential apartments. Prior to the completion of renovation, the inquiries far exceeded the number of units available. Had I studied the market more in depth, I would have discovered that spacious apartments in a safe urban setting, 2 blocks from government offices, entertainment and shopping was a pretty safe bet. Though the Lyon's House proved to be a successful entrée into the urban development scene, the risk of doing so at that point in time far out weighed the potential benefits. America's cities were struggling to regain their identity as suburban subdivisions replaced urban neighborhoods and the shopping mall stripped downtowns of their economic sustainability. Today, the memory of what downtowns used to be is a powerful force in their revitalization.

As the revitalization of urban centers through out North America continues at a dizzying pace, the mountain/resort community downtowns have remained somewhat of an enigma to that phenomenon. Old Town Steamboat has long been the front door to our community and was a vibrant gathering spot and economic center long before there was a ski mountain. Not unlike major urban centers, would people consider living in downtown Steamboat as their primary residence or as an alternative to a mountainside condominium ? The thought never struck me as unusual. Steamboat already possesses a very desirable residential community surrounding its downtown. With 10 miles of pedestrian trails initiating at the heart of town, the excitement of Howelson Hill and its year around activities, the parks, the Yampa River, a growing arts community and the

implementation of a Main Street program, the excitement is returning to our wonderful city. Our second homeowners might consider “dine in/dine out” to be just as important as “ski in/ski out”. With shopping and entertainment at the back door, and a wonderful public transportation system allowing easy access to the mountain, the automobile becomes inert during their stay. Walking in our downtown can be romantic, a pensive stroll, an adventure and an experience (1). The “walking urbanity” of our downtown is the hook that brings us back. We are honor bound to protect the historic content and memories that preceded us. It is with that vision and passion that we make the commitment to make our downtown the best that it can be.

James A. Cook  
Visionary

1. Downtown – Urban Land Institute Nov/Dec 2004 Christopher B. Leinberger