

Downtown Lead Revitalization Project Final Recommendations

**Three Proposed Options for the Revitalization of
Downtown Lead**

November 1, 2011

Three Proposed Options for the Revitalization of Downtown Lead

Introduction

The principal scope of work of the Lead Downtown Revitalization Project as set by the Lead City Commission is to create a revitalization plan for downtown Lead that could be accomplished in conjunction with the South Dakota Department of Transportation (DOT) reconstruction of Highway 85 through Lead in 2014. Although the plan is to be based upon the previous conceptual plan, it is to be designed to be both politically and financially achievable. This revitalization project has long-term impacts and will obviously require funding. This funding also needs to be long-term.

The revitalization plan has recommendations which are presented here as three proposed options for the revitalization of downtown Lead. There is an increase in both cost and the desired effect of the revitalization effort from Option I through Option III. Option I is a stand-alone option. Option II creates a different streetscape than Option I. Option III, in addition to including additional improvements, includes all of the components of Option II. Consequently, the revitalization impact of Option III is cumulative.

The recommendations are limited to those things that are within the control of the citizens of Lead and the City Commission. For example, it is not recommended that the Black Hills Mining Museum be moved because funds are not currently available to build a new museum. The use of the Post Office building is not included in any of the options because it is not yet available, even though we know the building will be available in the future.

The recommendations are designed to create a framework or backbone for future development. It is anticipated that a 5-10 year plan will be enacted to build upon what can be achieved with the highway reconstruction project. This framework can also serve as a foundation for the inception of the Main Street Program. No new construction or private investment is required in the recommended options. However, private development, as delineated in the conceptual plan, is not precluded from occurring in the future. The options are designed to utilize current building inventory first. Once the current buildings are economically utilized, new construction can be added.

The reader should keep in the mind, that, although the purpose of the downtown revitalization is to create a downtown Lead that will be attractive and usable to residents and visitors, it must be designed to attract new business endeavors. This is primary to increasing property and sales tax revenues for the City of Lead.

Throughout this process it became apparent that one of the most important objectives of revitalization is to create a pedestrian friendly environment. This encourages people to visit the attractions and patronize the local businesses. It is important to create vitality and energy that attracts people to downtown. An aspect of a "pedestrian friendly environment" is availability

of accessible parking. Another important aspect is creating space for people to gather, such as Lead Live, near the businesses and attractions.

The following three options were thoroughly discussed and explored with 65 individual consultations. These consultations included all of the property owners in the downtown area, the Mining Museum, Historic Homestake Opera House, Hearst Library, business and civic leaders, local bankers, local area engineers, architects, and city planners. During each consultation new ideas were solicited and the merits of each option were discussed. All of those consulted agreed that the three options are reasonable to present as a conclusion of our work.

Option I

This option is the least expensive and would require very little financial input from the City of Lead. The majority of the cost would be borne by the DOT highway reconstruction project. Option I also has a very limited revitalization impact on the downtown area.

Option I includes the following:

1. Reconstruct Main Street as it is, but with improved sidewalks
2. On-street parallel parking remains on the south side of Main Street
3. Existing handicapped parking and unloading zones remain
4. New way-finding and signage for existing parking areas

What is achieved with Option I

1. The downtown area has a new concrete street and sidewalks
2. The sidewalk on the north side of the core of the downtown area would be improved
3. New way -finding and signage will improve usage of current parking

What is NOT achieved with Option I

1. There is no change to the landscape in the downtown area. The current buildings and other areas stay the same
2. There is no additional parking or change in the accessibility of parking on Main Street
3. Without any changes to the landscape and parking there would be a very limited revitalization impact

Improvements and possible sources of funds

Most of the work will be included in the scope of work of the highway reconstruction project. Option I will require minimal financial contribution by the City of Lead.

Improvement

Possible sources of funds

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. The cost of the street resurfacing and sidewalks | DOT |
| 2. Way-finding and signage | DOT, City |
| 3. Surface amenities | City, other |

Option II

Option II would require more financial input from the City of Lead and other sources but would have some revitalization impact with a change of the streetscape and some change of the landscape.

Option II includes the following:

1. Remove on-street parking on Main Street from Stone Street to Siever Street (leave parking in front of the Post Office)
2. Extend the parallel parking on the north side of lower Main Street to the Center of Hope building. Requires slight modifications to the park and mining display area. Encroachment would be 8-10 feet.
3. Widen the north sidewalk between Stone Street and Siever Street ~ the width of the removed parking on the south side of Main Street. This may be slightly altered by highway engineers. Removing the parking and widening the sidewalk will result in Main Street curving ~8 feet to the south near Siever Street and then back north near the Post Office
4. Reconstruct sidewalk and stairway between Post Office and Mining Museum to the current parking area on Julius Street
5. Move library to new location in the Opera House
6. Build small courtyard between Opera House and Mining Museum with a new stairway to new parking on Julius Street and include small unloading turnout for a car or light truck
7. Extend current parking area on Julius Street behind the Post Office to the Opera House (~ 60 total parking spaces)
8. Include pedestrian crosswalk across Main Street from the courtyard to the widened sidewalk on the north side of the street
9. Create a bus and unloading turnout on the north side of Main Street just west of Silver Star Bar
10. Develop way-finding and signage program for downtown area and parking
11. Design and create desired amenities to the streetscape

What is achieved with Option II

1. Curving Main Street and removing on-street parking creates a different “sense of place” for the core of the downtown area
2. The curved Main Street slows down traffic
3. The wider sidewalk on the north side of Main Street enables café and retail vendor opportunities
4. Pedestrian traffic is more visible and encourages motorists to stop for passing traffic
5. Way-finding and signage is coordinated and attractive. In addition to making it easier to find available parking, this also creates a sense of place
6. Removing on-street parking in the core area of the downtown should improve snow removal efforts
7. Loss of 10 on-street parking spaces is partially mitigated by adding 5-7 parallel parking spaces
8. Park area and mining exhibit on the north side of lower Main Street are retained as an appealing entrance to the downtown
9. Creation of courtyard that could accommodate many smaller events
10. Significant (not optimal) improvement to the visual exposure of the Opera House, which is a main architectural attraction
11. Drop off and unloading for Opera House events and downtown unloading
12. Significantly increases parking in the downtown area
13. The two new stairways and improved way-finding to the Julius Street parking should greatly improve the utility and use of that parking lot. An elevator would be very desirable. Should investigate doing in conjunction with Mining Museum
14. Some improvement to the landscape with removal of library, new stairways, courtyard expansion, and exposure of Opera House

What is NOT achieved with Option II

1. There is no additional parking on Main Street
2. The courtyard will not be large enough for some downtown events to attract large numbers of people
3. It does not significantly change the landscape
 - a. The Mining Museum would now be a stand-alone building. A new brick or stone façade might improve the landscape by making it more congruent with the other downtown buildings
 - b. The entrance to the Mining Museum could be re-located to the new courtyard

Improvements and possible sources of funds

The main costs of Option II include moving the library and construction of a courtyard, stairway and parking. These are all outside the scope of the highway reconstruction project.

Improvement	Possible sources of funds
1. Streetscape (highway and sidewalks)	DOT
2. Parallel parking on north side of lower Main Street	DOT
3. Bus pullout	DOT
4. Pullout in front of new courtyard	DOT
5. Stairway to Julius Street parking	City, DOT, grants, other
6. Changes to park and exhibits on lower north Main Street	City, DOT, grants, other
7. Way-finding	City, DOT, grants, other
8. Streetscape amenities beyond scope of highway project	City, grants, other
9. Relocating library and costs of renovation	City, grants, other
10. Courtyard and stairway	Grants, City, other
11. New and improved parking on Julius Street	City, grants, other

Possible changes to Option II

Two possible changes to Option II evolved from the individual consultations. These suggestions warrant further discussion and exploration.

1. It was suggested that the wider sidewalk in front of the buildings on the north side of Main Street be covered in some manner that would be historically congruent. This would provide a unique sense of space in this retail area as well as provide sun, rain and snow protection for pedestrian traffic.
2. The possibility of removing the front 8-10 feet of the Mining Museum in conjunction with a re-façade was discussed with the Mining Museum board. This would allow for a long turnout for unloading buses in front of the museum which could improve traffic flow. This would require the Mining Museum to secure funds for at least some of the improvements.

Option III

Option III includes everything listed above for Option II plus the following:

1. Create a new parking area on the north side of Main Street encompassing all of the property between the Robb Building and the Silver Star Bar
 - a. This would include the current parking garage which would be retained

- b. Create one common entrance for surface and parking garage parking with left and right egress lanes. The traffic pattern for the upper level of the parking garage would be reversed
- 2. Develop the north portion of the surface parking area into an event venue
 - a. Design parking so it could be cordoned off for different types and sizes of events
 - b. Design north retaining wall area to include places for events (i.e. bands) and other landscaping and walkways
 - c. Design north part of surface parking lot for vendors (electrical hookups, etc.)
- 3. Move the leased parking in the parking garage to the upper rear level with lower level left for patron parking. The upper rear level could be covered if required
- 4. A new façade could be created for the parking garage

What is achieved with Option III

- 1. Significant increase in off-street parking along Main Street
- 2. Much better utilization of parking garage
- 3. Significantly improves the downtown landscape
- 4. Creates a multi-use area with parking and event venue
 - a. Very usable space for events such as Lead Live and other community and Chamber of Commerce events
 - b. Place for Sturgis Rally vendors and parking which attracts traffic into downtown businesses
- 5. The combined changes in the streetscape and landscape have the highest probability of attracting new businesses

What is NOT achieved with Option III

- 1. New location for Mining Museum
- 2. Does not include new construction private retail space

Improvements and possible sources of funds

This option is the most costly because it requires purchasing private property and constructing new parking

Improvement

Possible sources of funds

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Acquisition of Apa and Snyder properties | City, grants, other |
| 2. Ingress and egress | DOT |
| 3. Parking area | City, grants, other |
| 4. Event area | City, grants, other |
| 5. Other amenities | City, grants, other |

Stages of Development

If Option II or Option III is selected there would be considerable cost savings by doing the chosen option in conjunction with the highway project because the DOT pays for nearly all of the streetscape costs.

The possibility of finding other collaborative funding, such as cost sharing or matching funds, may be greater if the maximum revitalization is done with the highway reconstruction project. Postponing revitalization postpones the business revitalization and delays the creation of more property and sales tax revenue. For these reasons, if Option III is desired it is recommended that it is chosen now rather than choosing Option II with the expectation of doing Option III at a later date. It is also probably politically advantageous to do one larger project rather than attempting to do two consecutive projects.

Future Development

Neither Option II or nor Option III precludes future development of the downtown area.

Post Office Building

The Post Office building will be available for sale or lease. Acquiring this building is not essential for the proposed options; however, it could be used for a new cornerstone attraction or other tax-generating retail uses.

Wells Fargo Building

The potential use of the Wells Fargo building has been discussed in the past since it is a key historical building. Wells Fargo has indicated that they are satisfied with maintaining their operations in this location at this time.

Mining Museum

Work can continue on relocating or improving the Mining Museum. It could be relocated to the Post Office building or a new museum could be built on the south edge of the underground exhibit area. Work can continue on making it a part of a larger civic center venue.

If Option III is selected, there would be abundant accessible parking for the museum on Julius Street and on Main Street. The additional parking allows the museum to use its current parking area for other uses such as outdoor displays, new museum construction, sale for another cornerstone attraction, or private tax-generating business.

Potential Civic Center

The possibility of creating a combination civic center on the south side of the current Mining Museum and library is not precluded by the above options. Work can continue to create this civic center area. The parking on Julius Street could become underground parking if a civic center is constructed.

New construction infill for businesses, retail and residential

The above options do not preclude any new construction infill in the downtown area. The proposed infill in the conceptual plan is preserved. As an example, the north part of the surface parking lot/event area on Main Street could be sold for multi-level infill. However, it would not be to the extent shown in the Conceptual Plan because the parking garage would be retained.

The area above the Julius Street parking could be developed into multi-level private investment square footage. Perhaps a smaller courtyard than shown in the Conceptual Plan could be built which would allow additional private development space on the south side of Main Street.

Additional feedback from Individual Consultations

Roundabout at junction of Main Street and Mill Street

In each of the consultations, the individual was asked his or her opinion about installing a roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Mill Street. Every one of the 65 individuals liked the idea of the roundabout. A large percentage of them were extremely favorable to the idea and wanted its feasibility to be explored.

A roundabout would allow traffic traveling east through downtown to have an efficient method of returning to the downtown area. It would also create an attractive and unique gateway into the downtown area. It was also suggested that the Grier statue could be placed there.

A roundabout is not part of any of the options, but could be pursued if the public would choose to do so.

Opera House and Mercantile

As referenced above, a main objective of the revitalization project is to create more pedestrian activity in the downtown area. This is accomplished by creating a courtyard, pedestrian friendly sidewalks and the parking/event area.

It is interesting to note that a large majority of those consulted referenced the historic use of the Opera House/Recreation Center as a gathering place. The suggestion to return the library to the Opera House building was very well received. A large number of people said that the current use of the Mercantile and the Smart Center now located in the lower level of the Opera House should be re-evaluated, and that the space could be utilized in ways that would once again attract local residents to the downtown area. Suggestions included recreation activities, an internet café, reading areas, gathering areas to play cribbage, movies, etc.

With the new parking on Julius Street and an existing elevator that connects all four levels of the Opera House, it was felt that the spaces could be re-configured to accommodate many activities that would draw people downtown. These activities would create a new energy and vitality that would have a positive impact on downtown businesses.

This discussion should be continued and expanded.

Conclusion

It is the conclusion of the Lead Downtown Revitalization Project that all three options are economically and politically feasible to accomplish in conjunction with the highway reconstruction project. The cost savings to Lead are significant if done with the highway project.

Option I will have little, if any, revitalization impact. Options II and III do create significant changes to the appearance, vitality and energy of the downtown area that should help attract business development and result in increased sales and property tax revenue.

It is recommended that consideration of a roundabout, as well as changes to the Mining Museum and the Opera House use be further explored and evaluated. These changes, if determined to be desirable and feasible, should be included as part of the chosen option.

Once a preferred option is determined by the Lead City Commission and the public, the estimated cost will need to be evaluated and the sources of funding determined.