FY2019 Annual Report
Wyoming Business Council Strategy

The Wyoming Business Council’s (WBC) Board of Directors adopted a new purpose and vision for the agency in May 2019. The purpose is “creating new opportunities for current and future generations of Wyomingites by adding value to Wyoming’s core industries and leveraging them to activate new economic sectors.” It is the Business Council’s vision to realize diverse, broad and lasting growth so Wyoming can prosper no matter the economic climate or status of individual sectors. The Business Council serves Wyoming through local economic development, strategic partnerships, investments and services, and by providing expertise.

It does this by focusing on efforts that expand the state and local tax base and addressing economic development building blocks: leadership, infrastructure, quality of life, workforce, entrepreneurial development, existing business retention and expansion, and business recruitment.

In 2016, the Business Council moved the Wyoming Main Street program under the Community Development Division (CD). The CD Division houses the federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the State Energy (SEO) programs and the state-funded Business Ready Communities (BRC) program that assists cities with community and economic development goals. BRC, SEO and CDBG program staff work closely with communities to provide technical assistance and public infrastructure. Including the Wyoming Main Street program in the CD Division furthers these goals and allows all programs to integrate fully for the benefit of communities.
STATUTORY AUTHORITY AND HISTORY

In 2004, the Wyoming Legislature created the Wyoming Main Street program to assist Wyoming communities of various sizes and resource levels with downtown revitalization efforts. The program was originally created under statute W.S. 11-45-101 through 11-45-105 as a pilot program. The act created the Wyoming Main Street program, an advisory board, an appropriation, staff positions and a provision for a building façade revolving loan fund. Duties of the original bill were delegated to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture-Wyoming Rural Development Council. The 2007 Legislature passed Senate Bill 126, which removed the word “pilot,” changed the revolving loan fund to include building structure projects and moved the duties of the program to the Business Council.

MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD

Governor Mark Gordon appoints the seven-person advisory board. The current roster of Advisory Board members include Matt Ashby (Cheyenne), Marla Brown (Rawlins), Jim Davis (Evanston), Bruce Heimbuck (Cheyenne) and Sherri Mullinnix (Douglas). Jennifer Ford (Jackson) was recently appointed by Governor Gordon and will begin her term with the Advisory Board in September 2019. One vacancy remains.

MAIN STREET APPROACH

Wyoming Main Street is a state-level coordinating effort that promotes and manages the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program for Wyoming. Wyoming Main Street’s purpose is to assist Wyoming communities of various sizes and resources with downtown revitalization efforts or transformation strategies. The Main Street program provides communities with technical assistance for revitalization of commercial business districts using the Main Street approach. That approach is centered on Transformation Strategies, which is a focused planning process specific to revitalizing a downtown or commercial district. Combined with local and regional data as well as a robust community engagement plan, Transformation Strategies remain true to the four pillars of Main Street:

- **Organization.** Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district.

- **Promotion.** Promotions communicate a commercial district’s unique characteristics — its cultural traditions, architecture, history and activities — to shoppers, investors, visitors and potential business and property owners.

- **Design.** Design means getting downtown into top physical shape; preserving a place’s historic character and creating a safe, inviting environment for shoppers, workers and visitors.

- **Economic Vitality.** Economic vitality is a strategy to retain and expand successful business by providing a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

The Main Street approach is incremental; it is not designed to produce immediate change. For a community to succeed, a long-term revitalization effort requires careful attention to every aspect of downtown. It advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on unique assets such as distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership and a sense of place. The underlying premise of the Main Street approach is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation.
MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES
The Main Street program provides increasing degrees of technical and architectural assistance to three tiers of communities.

Aspiring Communities are those that are exploring downtown revitalization and wish to become an affiliate or certified community within the next two years. There are three aspiring communities: Cokeville, Goshen County and Newcastle.

Affiliate communities are those that do not have the capacity to pay for staff dedicated to the Main Street Approach, so the downtown revitalization efforts are mainly led by a volunteer base. The program provides access to training and some on-site assistance. There are five affiliate communities: Douglas, Pinedale, Platte County, Sundance and Thermopolis.

Certified communities are those that have paid staff and mature downtown development programs. The program provides access to training, on-site assistance and resources for additional technical assistance. There are nine certified communities: Buffalo, Cheyenne, Evanston, Gillette, Green River, Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs and Sheridan.

PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership with the National Main Street Center provided technical assistance in communities where the local Shopko was closing. Initially, assistance was provided in the Big Horn Basin, and other regions are now looking to replicate this model. Specifically, the model provides valuable information to existing businesses who will fill the void of the Shopko closure and boost their inventory and connection to the community at the same time.

NEW COMMUNITY SELECTION
The Wyoming Main Street program held its annual community selection process in March 2019 and accepted Cokeville as an aspiring program.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES
The Wyoming Main Street program provided $58,980 in technical assistance and training funds to communities throughout the state in fiscal year 2019. The money is used for projects like downtown sound systems, feasibility studies for community needs and waste receptacles that will improve community events.

Additional assistance to communities was realized through contracts with the National Main Street Center for training, planning, community development and economic transformation strategies.

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL ASSISTANCE FUND
Wyoming Main Street invested $18,000 in seven projects throughout Wyoming with the Historic Architecture Assistance Fund (HAAF). The assistance included structural and façade assessments, use concepts and feasibility studies, rehabilitation recommendations and cost estimates.

FY2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
► Cokeville was accepted as an Aspiring Program in the Wyoming Main Street Program. An Aspiring Program will have two years to organize and develop strategies that reflect the National Main Street Center’s criteria for a program.
► The National Main Street Center (NMSC) accredited Buffalo, Cheyenne, Evanston, Gillette, Green River, Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs and Sheridan as Main Street Programs.
Wyoming Main Street invested $18,000 throughout Wyoming with the Historic Architecture Assistance Fund.

Wyoming Main Street awarded training and technical assistance funding in the amount of $58,980 to Wyoming Main Street communities.

(Accomplishments continued page 6)

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT:**

Over the past 13 years, the Wyoming Main Street program has seen significant success in local communities as it relates to job creation, additional private investment, volunteer hours and new construction. In 2018, Wyoming’s Main Street communities saw (*):

- **OPEN:** 74 NEW BUSINESSES
- **$15 MILLION** IN PRIVATE FUNDS FOR BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
- **27,415 VOLUNTEER HOURS** INCLUDING EVENTS, BOARD MEETINGS, BOARD COMMITTEE PLANNING, AND MISCELLANEOUS HOURS
- **$22.3M IN PUBLIC INVESTMENTS
- **168.5 NET NEW JOBS**

*Note: These numbers are the reported numbers from communities as to what happened for the year within the main street boundaries.
Linda Klinck, Wyoming Main Street Program Manager, assisted Kim Porter, Community Development Initiative Director, with Placemaking Training throughout Wyoming this year. The Wyoming Main Street program allocated $20,000 in grant funds to help communities with “lighter, quicker, cheaper” projects. Kim Porter’s Placemaking report includes information on projects and funding. Rural Development also has funds available for projects.

Representatives from 17 Wyoming communities attended the 13th Annual Best Practices Workshop prior to Main Street Now, the National Main Street Center’s annual conference, which was held in Seattle, Washington.

National Main Street Center provided leadership in the Transformational Strategy process in six communities, which led to Economic Vitality workplans in those communities.

Darrin Wasniewski of We Can If Consulting provided leadership in the Strategic Doing Process in two of the newer communities.

Evanston was a 2019 Semi-finalist for the Great American Main Street Award.