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Understanding Perceptions of Downtown

# STUDY GOALS

- Understand residents of Colorado Springs in terms of:
  - Level of satisfaction with current city environment
    - Perception of the overall environment
    - What the city means to them – the emotional connection residents have with the city
    - Physical product offerings – how they feel about the retail, restaurant, entertainment options that currently exist

# STUDY GOALS

- Awareness/perception of Downtown Colorado Springs
  - Current utilization
  - Current perception
  - Deterrents to visits
- Understand desirability of Downtown Colorado Springs as a conducive environment for living/working/playing:
  - Possible enhancements for the future

# METHODOLOGY

- 9.75 hours of video intercepts/data
- Locations geographically dispersed throughout the city
  - East
  - Downtown
  - West
  - Southwest
  - North

# WHY THIS METHODOLOGY?



# SNAPSHOT OF SAMPLE

- 157 people
  - 86 men
  - 71 women
- 50% of sample between 18 and 35
- 50% of sample age 35+
- 70% of sample non-natives
  - Washington DC
  - Chicago
  - Kansas City
  - SF Bay Area
  - Denver
  - Portland
  - Seattle

# KEY FINDINGS: IMPRESSIONS OF COLORADO SPRINGS

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## KEY FINDINGS: WHAT MAKES A CITY GREAT?

- A sense of place, community
- A sense of the people
- A sense of culture
- A sense of vitality

# KEY FINDINGS: COLORADO SPRINGS

- Pros:
  - Physical beauty/environment is main motivator/benefit
  - Relaxing and easy
  - The people
- Cons:
  - Lack of overall character that matches the physical beauty
  - Very little by way of uniqueness
  - Lacking in cultural amenities/creativity

## KEY FINDINGS: GENERATIONAL

- Younger people feel the city is, primarily, boring
  - “It’s beautiful but it’s boring”
- Older people tend to describe that which makes it boring to the younger generation as that which makes it appealing to them
  - Quaint
  - Quiet
  - Safe

## KEY FINDINGS: COLORADO SPRINGS

- Growing, but still small town
  - Often, likely to describe COS as a “town” rather than a “city”
- Conservative
- Development without an anchor
  - The city continues to grow without a sense of reason or thought

# KEY FINDINGS: PERCEPTION OF DOWNTOWN

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## KEY FINDINGS: COLORADO SPRINGS

- Often, people define Colorado Springs by Downtown
  - Seems to be the only area of town with a distinct enough personality to be accurately described
- As well, residents often describe a Downtown and the rest of the city as two different cities
  - These feelings are most often articulated by those who are very familiar with Downtown (either live, work or visit there frequently)
  - More rational design/development

## KEY FINDINGS: PERCEPTION OF DOWNTOWN

- For those who do not live or work in the direct environs, Downtown is currently defined by its restaurants/bars and retail environment
  - High awareness of unique, non-chain product offerings
  - High awareness of bars, nightlife options

## KEY FINDINGS: PERCEPTION OF DOWNTOWN

- Often, the perspective is that the only vibrant part of Downtown is Tejon Street
  - Retail
  - Bars
  - Restaurants
  - Pedestrian traffic
- Key deterrent to Downtown visits:
  - Parking
  - Panhandling
  - Transit options to/from and thru Downtown

## KEY FINDINGS: PERCEPTION OF DOWNTOWN

- Among residents in the study, Downtown is on the cusp:
  - Of greater things
  - Of being really “cool”
  - Of representing the true nature of who we are and what we are capable of being
- “Colorado Springs could be the San Francisco to Denver’s L.A.”

KEY FINDINGS:  
LIVING DOWNTOWN –  
PERCEPTION AND  
DESIRABILITY

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## KEY FINDINGS: LIVING DOWNTOWN

- Downtown is the best definition of “neighborhood” in Colorado Springs
  - Downtown as defining/core personality of Colorado Springs
  - Living Downtown as a conduit for meeting your neighbors
  - Living Downtown as a conduit for truly knowing your city

## KEY FINDINGS: LIVING DOWNTOWN

- Lack of awareness of types of properties available in heart of Downtown
- The predominate perception of living Downtown is "loft living"
  - Current level of appeal is variable
  - Too loud, rowdy, etc at night on weekends for living
  - Perceived to be prohibitively expensive to many groups
  - Limited personal open space

# KEY FINDINGS: LIVING DOWNTOWN

- Perceived Barriers:
  - Younger generations = affordability
  - Older, more established generations =
    - Lack of green space/yards
    - Lack of access to necessities like grocery stores and “staples”
    - Parking

## KEY FINDINGS: MAKING DOWNTOWN MORE APPEALING

- Availability of easy access of “necessities” makes Downtown more appealing, not just for living but also for visitors
- Adds to the feeling of a functional community/neighborhood
  - Sundries
  - Drugstore
  - Grocery store
- Variable price points for living – accommodate multiple budget levels

## KEY FINDINGS: MAKING DOWNTOWN MORE APPEALING

- Extending the feeling of being in a place where culture matters
- Create an encompassing destination – move beyond restaurants and bars to community-building amenities
- Enhance the feeling of open/green space throughout the entire Downtown corridor
  - Pedestrian mall?
  - Greenway?
  - Other?

## KEY FINDINGS: MAKING DOWNTOWN MORE APPEALING

- Education about what is currently available
  - Events
  - Festivals
  - Parking
  - Transit

# SUMMATION

- Growth throughout Colorado Springs is welcome but is seen as unanchored and not rational
- Downtown is perceived to be the most vibrant and unique area of the city for recreation
- Downtown is not currently perceived to be a viable living area for a variety of different demographics
  - Improvements for the viability of Downtown living include:
    - A variety of price points
    - Amenities that build community
    - Inclusive cultural activities and events
- Education needs to be a priority as we drive awareness and understanding of downtown as an everyday asset to the city

# Questions?

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