

DOWNTOWN

Rock Springs Annual Report

2019

2019 by the numbers:

- Total downtown private investment - \$159,186
- 29.5 net new full time jobs (FTE) created
- 3,777.25 volunteer hours contributed
 - Shout out to Dominion Energy for their work on the historic caboose!
- 90 events in Bunning Hall at the Freight Station with attendance nearing 11,000 (nearly a 25% increase over 2018)
- 110 events at the Broadway Theater with attendance topping 11,000 (nearly a 30% increase over 2018)
- Private investment in 26 buildings
- 122 members of the Friends of the Broadway patron program



The Rock Springs Main Street/Urban Renewal Agency introduced a variety of new projects and initiatives in the historic district in 2019:

- A successful grant was submitted to the Wyoming Business Council for the **First Security Bank building**. Approved at their December 5, 2019 meeting, the grant will provide \$2,917,701 for the first phase of the restoration of the building. The building has sat vacant since 1980 so this restoration will return a key piece of our history to the community.
- **Plaid Friday** (November 29) - Plaid Friday celebrates the diversity and creativity of local and independently owned businesses. It's designed to be a fun and enjoyable alternative to the big box store "Black Friday" consumer frenzy. Shoppers were encouraged to wear PLAID all day on November 29 and we handed out special plaid bags at First Bank to the first 100 customers in the door. Customers lined up over an hour in advance for their chance to get a bag (and all of the goodies inside) and Downtown businesses reported strong sales and traffic.
- We conducted a review of our **strategic plan** to realign our goals for 2020 and beyond.
- **Quarterly Merchant Meetings** were introduced in 2019 in order to engage and connect with the Downtown business owners. A variety of topics were discussed in order to help business owners expand and grow their business.
- The Rock Springs Main Street/URA is always looking for innovative ways to raise additional capital for our grant program. As such we introduced our first ever **Taco Fest** in May 2019! Six vendors participated, selling over 2,200 tacos during the 6 hour event and raising nearly \$4,000 for our grant program.
- Partnered with the Union Pacific to celebrate the **150th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad's Completion**. Big Boy No. 4014, the Living Legend No. 844 and the Union Pacific's walk through museum visited Rock Springs for a 3-day celebration bringing hundreds of residents and visitors to the community.
- In order to highlight the arts scene in Rock Springs, we coordinated the first ever **Rock Springs Arts Week**, March 1 – 10, 2019. The 10-day celebration included events at the public library, Community Fine Arts Center, Rock Springs Historical Museum, Broadway Theater, Western Wyoming Community College, Coal Train Coffee, Black Butte High School, and the Park Hotel. In addition to celebrating and highlighting our local arts scene, Rock Springs Arts Week was covered by several state-wide media outlets. The celebration reinforced Rock Springs' growing arts community and plans are already underway for 2020.



Shoppers wait for the doors to open on our first ever Plaid Friday.



Tacos were all the rage at the first annual Downtown Taco Fest where over 2,200 tacos were sold in just 6 hours!

- Introduced our **\$20 on the 20th campaign**. We wanted to develop a fun, easy way to remind locals to shop small and support small businesses in an ongoing way. To that end, we launched our \$20 on the 20th campaign. The campaign is designed to encourage folks to spend \$20 at local mom and pop shops on the 20th of each month. We also tied in a drawing for twenty bucks each month from High Country Realty just for shopping small. The movement is catching speed with more and more shoppers doing their part.
- What started in 2017 was finally approved in 2019 – our **Dining Deck ordinance** allowing Downtown restaurants to offer outdoor dining space! Bitter Creek Brewery was the first one to take advantage of the new guidelines and many diners enjoyed lunch or dinner al fresco!
- In order to keep Downtown tidy and litter free, we introduced a program encouraging locals to pick up trash around Downtown. In exchange for a small pail full of litter collected around Downtown, volunteers receive a free drink from The Java Peddler. The program was VERY popular with many participants including various service groups.

- The corner of Broadway and D Streets received a fresh new look when a gazebo from the former Community Garden was refreshed by local volunteer Russ Lozier and placed by Ian Meats as his **Eagle Scout project**. Planters will be added to the corner in the spring of 2020 and the site is anticipated to become a great photo-spot.
- The **historic caboose** which sits along South Main Street received a face-lift with the help of volunteers from Dominion Energy. Not only did the caboose receive a new coat of paint, but volunteers constructed new stairs for each entrance, reinforced the doors and windows and repaired the expanded metal skirting that surrounds the caboose.
- Thanks to engineering, streets, and city buildings, long-planned **electronic vehicle charging stations** were installed on South Main Street last fall. We've already seen travelers using the stations, and patronizing Downtown businesses while their vehicles charge.
- We introduced a **My Own Downtown** program to feature different businesses each week. The features are shared on social media and include a write-up about the featured business as well as accompanying photos; they've proven very popular and help highlight our Downtown business owners.
- Coordinating with the Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce for the Lighted Holiday Parade, we hosted a meet and greet with the **Grinch** on December 7. The response was overwhelming with more than 300 kids visiting Downtown.



Top: Dominion Energy volunteers repainted and restored the historic Caboose.

Right: Ian Meats completed placement of the gazebo at the corner of Broadway and D Streets for his Eagle Scout project.

- Building on the Christmas shopping season in Downtown Rock Springs, we introduced two new promotions to drive sales and traffic in the Downtown focus zone:
 - **Christmas Gift Show** – Held on Plaid Friday and Small Business Saturday (November 29 & 30) in Bunning Hall, the show featured over twenty vendors and hundreds of attendees.
 - **Christmas BINGO** – We put a new twist on our traditional listing of Christmas events and activities, creating a Christmas BINGO game. The game featured 24 activities with all items under \$10, most were free. Once folks crossed off enough squares for a "Bingo" (straight across, vertical or diagonal), they returned their cards to our office for a small prize from The 307 Realty Group.

Adding to Downtown Rock Springs, 11 new businesses opened their doors:

- Chelsea Blau Photography
- Cowboy Crepes
- Fits of Laughter Day Care
- In Motion Physical Therapy
- Jen Hargrove Photography
- Pinnacle Solutions
- Randall's Holistics
- Road House 307
- The Stellar Cellar
- Toy Town
- Uinta Bank



Jennifer Herman, Cowboy Crepes & Café - "The URA played a huge role in the opening of Cowboy Crepes. If it had not been for them reaching out to the owner of the building and asking him about allowing us to share the kitchen, located in Boschetto's, none of this would have been possible."

Grant and Accolades

The Rock Springs Main Street/URA received seven grants in 2019:

- Dominion Energy
 - Rocky Mountain Power Foundation
 - Sweetwater Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES)
 - Sweetwater Travel and Tourism
 - Wyoming Arts Council
 - Wyoming Community Foundation
 - Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund
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- We were invited to serve on a panel about the economic impact of the arts at the **Wyoming Arts Alliance** annual conference, drawing additional positive images of Rock Springs across Wyoming.
 - **Smithsonian Magazine** named Rock Springs one of “The 15 Best Small Towns to Visit in 2019.” The article remarks, “Rock Springs received the Great American Main Street Award in 2018 for its main street renewal program—revitalizing its historic downtown with a series of colorful murals and restorations. After sitting shuttered for nearly a decade, the mid-20th-century Broadway Theater is now a performing arts venue, and other nonprofits and locally owned businesses like the Community Fine Arts Center—with works ranging from abstract paintings to fiber arts—and Sidekicks Wine & Book Bar, serving up Jackson Hole Winery varietals, charcuterie boards and must-reads, have helped transformed downtown into a buzzing center. Rock Springs is a hub of cultural diversity and home to 56 nationalities, a fact celebrated annually on International Day (July 13), Wyoming's only multi-cultural festival.”
 - Read more:
 - <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/15-best-small-towns-visit-2019-180972218/#XAxOgF9ExxelXpGQ.99>
 - Furthering our Arts and Culture Transformation Strategy (and Rock Springs’ presence on a state-wide level), the Wyoming Arts Alliance selected Rock Springs as **one of three pilot communities** for their professional development program, which will kick off in 2020.
 - **Rock Springs swept the 2019 Wyoming Main Street Awards**, taking home the title in all three categories:
 - Innovation Award for our \$20 on the 20th campaign
 - Display Award – A Touch of Class Floral
 - Leadership Award – Maria Mortensen (Rock Springs Main Street/URA Chairwoman)
 - The Rock Springs Main Street/URA was selected as one of two pilot communities for the **Made on Main** program from Wyoming Main Street and the National Main Street Center. Work on the program will begin in 2020. Made on Main is a pilot program geared towards placing small manufacturers/producers in vacant downtown spaces, enhancing the entrepreneurship and business diversity in downtown communities.



Broadway Theater

We continued our internship/scholarship program with funding from SBOCES. The program provides much needed man-power to help with theater programming, maintenance and event management.

Popular and sold out shows included:

- Collin Raye
- David Archuleta
- Beatles Tribute
- A Very Electric Christmas
- Bar J Wranglers
- Jack Wright's tribute to Neil Diamond
- Billy Dean
- United States Air Force Academy Band – Stellar Brass

