



Ridgway Creative District Creative Advocacy Team • (RCD CAT)



Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2021

3:00 – 5:00 pm

By Zoom

C.A.T. Members in Attendance: Joan Chismire, Brenda Ratcliff, Andy Nasisse, Kevin Grambley, Betsy Baier, Diane Thompson (late); **Staff:** Diedra Silbert (chair and minutes), Preston Neill (late)

The focus of this meeting was to discuss steps toward transitioning the RCD C.A.T. to a new stakeholder group that merges further and more inclusively with Ridgway Main Street.

- 1. Called to Order** at 3:04p
- 2. Agenda Review** – no changes made
- 3. Approval of 12/15 Minutes** – approved by consensus with no changes
- 4. Memo to Town Council and Response to Restructuring Concept** – Diedra had sent the email to the group prior to the meeting. People felt the memo covered the topic well. Diedra reported that Town Council supported the change. John had mentioned that he wanted to be sure that the importance of the RCD be maintained in the transition to a merged group. It was also emphasized that Diedra needs to know that both Colorado Creative Industries and Colorado Main Street are on board with this change.
- 5. Brainstorming Future Structure and Purpose of New Group** – Most of the meeting time was spent discussing this item. Thoughts on *structure*: Diedra noted that at this point the structure of the new committee would still be under Town Council leadership, though she noted when a group similar to this had been proposed as Main Street began in Ridgway, it was supposed to be led by representatives from Town Council and from the Chamber. (Diedra will talk with John about how that was supposed to be structured.) C.A.T. members expressed that they see it as important to have Chamber involvement in this group (though not necessarily heading it) and that it has been challenging for them to not have Chamber involvement in the C.A.T., despite Diedra working closely with RACC. It was even mentioned that “the Chamber is the elephant in the room.”

The group brainstormed community sectors, both creative and not, that might be represented in the new group: businesses, including producers; professionals; services; nonprofits; wellness/health; youth or youth-serving; citizens; home businesses. Business types that have not been involved in the RCD should be included, such as realtors, bankers, liquor stores, etc. A focus on inclusivity is needed to counter sentiments C.A.T.s have heard from business owners who don't feel part of the RCD. Including businesses on the east side of Highway 550 and making sure all parts of town are represented was also suggested (including Old Schoolhouse on Amelia St.).

Thoughts on *purpose*: Diedra noted that Main Street also is based on historic preservation efforts. Town Council and staff are currently exploring the idea of becoming a Certified Local Government (CLG) which would encourage historic preservation and potentially offer funding for it. Becoming a CLG would necessitate setting up another group to work on that. C.A.T.s wondered if the two groups could be combined, but Diedra doubted this.

It was suggested to review the vision and mission statements for the RCD C.A.T. to see what could be edited and still used for the new group. C.A.T.s brainstormed words that could become part of a purpose statement which might have broad agreement for a larger group: **inclusivity, economic vitality, active, productive**, boots on ground, welcoming, local, thriving, serving local residents and visitors, safe, fun, innovative, making it possible to sustainably live and work in town, raising all boats, highlighting our unique characteristics (**bolded** words were especially liked). Some preferred the word “renewal” to “revitalization.” The group was mindful of not wanting to lose the energy of the creative district piece, and they thought that “innovation” might be a word to which more businesses would relate. A few cautioned that “revitalization” implies change which can be scary for some. There was a desire expressed to preserve and respect Ridgway’s past as well. Diedra, Betsy, Brenda and Andy will draft a new purpose statement.

Betsy referenced the four Main Street points (Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Vitality) that are organized around a Transformation Strategy. She said this tried-and-true method could make community development efforts more understandable to the community and more inclusive of all community sectors than the RCD has been. The group liked the idea of adding a “fifth point” to the Main Street star referring to something like creativity or innovation, such as “advocacy for creativity/innovation” or “creative advocacy.” The group was mindful of not wanting to lose the energy of the creative district piece, and they thought that “innovation” might be a word to which more businesses would relate.

The group hopes to energize and re-focus with this new group, to be more productive, bring in new enthusiasm, and to re-set direction for the benefit of the whole community.

6. Planning the Transition

- a. **Ongoing RCD Activities** – RCD activities to continue to support through the new group, as pandemic allows: First Fridays, Film Festival, geocaching event idea, possibly revival of MoonWalks, parking recommendations, finding ways to especially support individual Creatives.
- b. **Branding** – All agreed that rebranding the group and the merged initiative would be necessary as it develops a new identity. They played with various names that could still use the C.A.T. acronym, such as Community Advocacy Team, and recognized that none of what has been developed might remain. Other ideas: Community Advocacy Team of Ridgway Main Street and Ridgway Creative District, Ridgway Creative Main Street Community Advocacy Team, Citizen Engagement Team. The RCD logo needs to be maintained though for certain purposes.
- c. **Promoting the Change in the Community** – At some point, it would be useful to survey to find out what businesses, organizations and others need now and what they haven’t gotten previously that they may have wanted from the RCD. The group brainstormed a list of people to invite to the next meeting to get their input on this restructuring and to see if we’re heading in the right direction, settling on Sue Husch (Second Chance. Colorado Boy, nonprofits), Michi Countryman (Ridgway Liquor Store), Amanda or Andy (Ridgway Adventure Sports), and Bruce

and Vanessa Backer (new gallery owners). Kevin said he would talk with Michi, and Diedra will invite the others to attend at 3:30p. A draft of the purpose would need to be ready for this discussion. All agreed that more organization of this is needed before releasing it to the press. It was also pointed out that the community is not very aware of Ridgway Main Street and what it's about, so this change will mean educating the community more about it.

7. **Set Next Meeting and Adjourn** – The group agreed to keep the same meeting schedule for now, so the next meeting will be **Tuesday, Feb. 16 from 3-5p.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:00p.