

## Brownfields Programs on Rural Main Street



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## Welcome to Monte Vista



Monte Vista Wildlife Reserve  
Photo courtesy of Rocky Mountain News

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## Downtown Monte Vista

- Dozen-plus buildings vacant in six-block district
- Difficulty in attracting new business
- City economy flat
- Area was once economic engine for the city; in decline at least past decade
- City made downtown focus of economic development efforts in 2005
- Received Main Street Program designation in 2006



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## Goal of Main Street Program

- To revitalize the downtown area, promote business within the Main Street district, support business owners, attract new business to the district
- Historic preservation
- Support transition of part of the district that is emerging as an artist-driven commercial corridor

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## Main Street District



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## Small Town, Rural Aspect

- The downtown district, or Main Street area, of town in Monte Vista – and most small, rural towns – is the lifeblood of the local economy
- Understanding of environmental issues is low
- Expertise in characterizing and mitigating environmental issues is rare among City staff and community members
- With generational ownership and low growth pressures, owners often sit on properties that could be put to better use, especially if an environmental issue might exist

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## Aging Buildings, Unknown Pasts



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## Brownfields Projects in Monte Vista

- Initially, it was difficult to get business and building owners on board with the Brownfields project
- Owners cited a stigma that environmental issues carry and didn't want that impacting their ability to rent or sell their properties
- A lunchtime educational session in April regarding the program and its benefits loosened some of that anxiety
- Two owners decided to join the program – the Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley and Valley Publishing
- Both buildings are on highly visible corridors in the city's center
- Brownfields grants from the state Health Dept. paid for Phase I analysis for both buildings and Phase II analysis/testing for the Boys & Girls Club Building via a City-sponsored pilot project

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## Boys & Girls Club

- Corrugated metal and concrete building erected in 1965
- Large space at 41,400 s.f.; current Club is about 2,500 s.f.
- The building was donated to the Club, with a contract stipulation that it could be rejected if environmental issues surfaced
- Phase II testing found some presence of chemicals related to nearby railroad lines and it was recommended that the site could be excavation and filled with clean dirt for mitigation
- Relatively minimal mitigation recommendations will make it possible to move forward to reuse in a highly visible part of town
- Fundraising is ongoing to renovate the building for the new Boys & Girls Club



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## Old Valley Publishing Building



- Built in 1927
- At 11,250 s.f., this building is rather large for the downtown area
- Newspaper operations moved out a few years ago to a nearby street
- Building empty since, with no idea as to what might populate the space, e.g. impacts of newspaper solvents, inks
- Phase I analysis found unlikelihood of contamination
- Interest has been strong in the building after analysis

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## Results of the Project

- Raised awareness of environmental aspect of real estate deals among owners, buyers and real estate agents marketing the properties
- Created community discussion on the environmental condition of downtown
- Lowered stigma of environmental issues, as many can be solved with low-cost mitigation
- Grant program provided means for the City to gain expert help in working toward reuse in the downtown

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## What Now?



Boys and Girls Club members in Stampede Parade

*Photo courtesy of Monte Vista Journal*

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