

BUSINESS

The Denver Post (Wednesday, October 11, 2006 article)

Brighton taps consultants to revitalize downtown

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Article Last Updated: 10/10/2006 11:15:27 PM MDT



Dana Crawford, a key player in revitalizing parts of Denver, and her partner will be paid up to \$43,000 to help out Brighton. (Post file / Helen H. Richardson)

The city of Brighton is betting that Denver real estate consultant Dana Crawford and her partner J. Kemper Will can rejuvenate its central business district while keeping the small-town charm.

"The intent is to help (the City) Council define the types of businesses and opportunities we can encourage to come downtown," said Manuel Esquibel, Brighton's assistant city manager. "It has become very critical for us to begin working with our existing businesses and property owners to define what we can do to encourage an identity for downtown. We don't want to destroy what we already have."

The key is getting the community to create the vision for downtown. To that end, the city, Crawford and Will will conduct a visioning session from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 21 at the Bella Sera Event Center, 45 Strong St. About 120 people are expected to attend the session, which will start with a walking tour, followed by a presentation at 2 p.m.

The city will pay Crawford and Will up to \$43,000.

Since 1990, Brighton's population has more than doubled to 30,629, and median household income has risen 38 percent to \$64,657 since 2000. The city's population is projected to grow to 47,300 by 2010.

With large-scale development occurring on the outskirts of town, the effort is considered critical to preserving the downtown's vitality.

"There's a strong commitment to helping downtown thrive," said Susan Stanton, the city's economic development director.

The effort comes as new businesses open at Prairie Center, the 1,750-acre project being developed by St. Louis-based THF Realty. Home Depot opened last year, and a SuperTarget will hold its grand opening this weekend.

Crawford and Will will help the city set design guidelines and identify resources that are available to assist with the revitalization effort.

Brighton could benefit from forming a design review committee similar to that created for Denver's Lower Downtown in 1988, Crawford said.

"Even a tiny sign has to go through design review in Denver," Crawford said. "Brighton has a strong identity, but it's needing some help with its public realm."

Over the past five years, the city has invested \$15 million in infrastructure and developments in its core. Downtown also has attracted \$56 million in private investment.

Brighton created an urban renewal authority in 2001 to encourage investment in the city's core. It also has a Downtown Development Authority that will sunset next year.

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