

Emma Townsite Steering Committee Meeting – May 28

May 28, 2019, 5:30pm – **Pitkin County Historic Preservation Officer:** Suzannah Reid, **Steering Committee Members:** Sara Nadolny, Raul Gawrys, Carolyn Shipp, Harry Teague, Martha Ferguson, Liz Newman, Matt Annabell, Mitzi Rapkin, Jason Smith **Open Space Staff:** Lindsey Utter, Jessie Young, Janet Urquhart **Colorado Preservation, Inc.:** Kim Grant

On May 28, the group met at the Roaring Fork Conservancy in Basalt. Lindsey Utter outlined the goals for the discussion, including the drafting of a vision statement to guide the committee. She gave a brief overview of meeting etiquette.

Kim Grant, director of Colorado’s Most Endangered Places – a project of the private, non-profit organization Colorado Preservation, Inc. – described the Endangered Places list and its purpose. Properties are considered for the list when communities nominate them, he said. They are endangered for various reasons, including abandonment and neglect, development, the ravages of weather, etc. Placing properties on the list raises awareness and helps communities mobilize around saving an historic building, landscape or archeological site. The Emma Store Buildings made the list in 2000, Grant said, but were considered “saved” when they were purchased by the County and stabilized to prevent their collapse.

Grant noted parallels between the Steering Committee’s efforts to identify potential new uses for the Emma Store buildings and other Colorado Preservation, Inc. projects. Sometimes, Colorado Preservation is involved in the programming of properties, as well. Its Preservation Services Division can assist with grant writing and grant administration, but Colorado Preservation always works with local partners, he said.

Lindsey Utter polled committee members on what they believe are the strengths and challenges posed by the Emma Store Buildings and on what additional information members want in order to work toward a recommendation regarding how the buildings should be used. The group may meet for as long as a year, she said, before making a recommendation that would go first to the Open Space and Trails Board and ultimately to the Board of County Commissioners.

Members asked about the potential for shielding the buildings with a steel mesh fence like one that was preliminarily designed in 2010 but never built, or if the buildings could be picked up and moved farther back on the property or elsewhere. Martha Ferguson suggested the mesh fence along the highway would allow for plantings that could provide screening inside the fence. Methods of protecting old buildings should be explored, Harry Teague said. If debris and snow is thrown at the buildings only from one particular angle, it’s possible that louvers could be used to protect the building, but still offer some transparency, he said.

Brick buildings are moveable and it is possible to move the Emma buildings, Teague also said. Moving the structures could affect the buildings' eligibility for future historic grants, Suzannah Reid said. It would also involve abandoning foundation work that has already been done. How far the buildings are moved from their historic site could be a consideration for future historic grants, Kim Grant said. Raul Gawrys said he'd rather see the cost of protective fencing go instead to moving the buildings back from the highway. Reid said moving the buildings would be vastly more expensive than the fencing.

Jason Smith noted the impact of highway noise on the use of the buildings. That can be mitigated with glass, Harry Teague said. New entrances in the back of the buildings are possible and more feasible than using the existing front entrances to the buildings, Suzannah Reid said.

Sara Nadolny asked about how to provide parking and access at the property. In the past, the Colorado Department of Transportation has indicated the downvalley access off the highway (Emma Road/Emma Spur intersection) could be used, Lindsey Utter said, but at a low rate – 10 vehicle trips per hour. Martha Ferguson suggested use of the parking lot on lower Two Rivers Road near the highway with pedestrian access to the buildings via the trail bridge across the Roaring Fork River. Mitzi Rapkin suggested use of a shuttle bus to provide access to the buildings. Jason Smith asked if the trail in front of the buildings could be routed to the back of the buildings. That would be easier than moving the highway, Nadolny responded.

Improvements to the highway at the Emma Road intersection to facilitate use of the store buildings is unlikely, said Liz Newman. CDOT has not been responsive to requests for improvements from Emma residents in the past, she said. New use of the store buildings without improvements to the intersection would likely be opposed by the Emma Caucus, Newman said. The caucus has, however, opposed installation of a traffic signal light, she added. CDOT controls highway ingress and egress and will have a say in a change of use at the Emma Store buildings, Utter said. Providing funds for changes to the highway would probably be necessary, as CDOT would not have the funds to make changes, she said.

Carolyn Shipp asked if Open Space and Trails will fund whatever use the committee recommends for the buildings. Open Space and Trail can only potentially help fund ideas that fit the OST mission and with the Historic Structures policy, Lindsey Utter said. The county could involve a private partner, sell the parcel containing the buildings or use a long-term lease to empower an outside entity, Utter said.

Strengths and challenges

Among the strengths committee members attributed to the site were: its location midway between downtown Basalt and Willits, its location on the bike path, the adjacent orchard, its architectural quality, its proximity to the Roaring Fork River, the uniqueness of the buildings, the quality of their interior spaces and the potential of the site.

Challenges include the impacts of the highway, access and the cost of rehabilitating the buildings.

Mitzi Rapkin urged the committee to think outside the box as it ponders uses for the buildings. The mid-valley does not offer a lot to do in the evenings if one does not want to go to a bar, she noted. She also pondered whether the site could be used for weddings or fulfill any number of needs that are not being met in the mid-valley.

Harry Teague suggested the best preservation projects involve new uses for historic buildings that complement how the site was used historically. He suggested the site has potential for a living museum that is related to ranching and farming, and he suggested the small building behind the stores, which is referred to as the powder house, is actually a hop house that was used for drying hops. Teague and others suggested the buildings could house low-key events or classes in arts related to old-time ranching such as pressing apples for cider or making jam. Those products could also be sold there, Teague said. The site could also be a repository for old ranch artifacts, committee members suggested. Kim Grant suggested restoring the orchard on the property; the local Heritage Fruit Tree Project is already involved in planting additional trees at the site, Lindsey Utter said. Carolyn Shipp suggested the buildings could serve bike path users as a way station of sorts.

Vision statement

Committee members agreed on a vision statement to guide its recommendations regarding use of the buildings. The statement: *The Emma Store Buildings will honor their historic agricultural roots, the natural environment, and character of Emma with high public value and provide a space that celebrates the innovative spirit of this location.*

Next steps

Lindsey Utter said OST staff will research protective barriers for buildings and discuss the potential for highway improvements and improved access to the Emma Store Buildings with CDOT. Staff will also research the potential to move the buildings and what that would cost, and whether the trail can be relocated on the property. The committee's next meeting may be scheduled in July, she said.

Emma Townsite Steering Committee - Meeting One Mindmap Notes

Meeting Rules

1. Respect for each other and the process.
2. Allow all members to voice their opinions without interruption.
3. Work cooperatively toward the mission.
4. Spokesperson / Media Relations - If you are speaking with people outside this group including the media please ensure your personal viewpoints are clearly distinguished from the Committee's work. You can always redirect media to Open Space staff.

Visioning Activity

The Vision Statement is a future oriented, aspirational statement (or set of statements) that describe what this group envisions for the future of the Emma Store buildings. It will be used as a reference to evaluate or guide the committee's recommendations for the future of the store buildings

Breathe life back into a historic center of the valley. Make accessible for the community. Appreciate the possibilities of the future in a place of the past.

To preserve the Emma Store enclave, nod to the history of the West and Roaring Fork Valley, recognize and celebrate historical significance, embody the original use and spirit, safe!, convenient access, serve a community purpose, aesthetically appealing, programming integral to sustaining the building, to integrate appropriately with the adjacent open space.

The Emma Store Buildings will honor their historic agricultural roots, the natural environment, and character of Emma with high public value and provide a space that celebrates the innovative spirit of this location.

Emma Store Buildings will be a vibrant, community centered, low impact, historic site that honors its local agricultural heritage and innovative spirit.

STRENGTHS

THE BUILDINGS THEMSELVES

Room for Multiple Uses

Amazing potential

Architectural Quality and Setting of the building - opportunity for complimentary use

historic integrity / interest of the buildings formidable buildings, gems of architecture that doesn't exist elsewhere in the county. quality of interior space is also spectacular.

Strategies to mitigate sound can minimize the highway noise

Restoration left the option to have future entry from the back site - reorientation of the focal point for the uses.

LOCATION: Half way bike connection between Willits and Old Town Basalt

Visibility

Everybody driving by - raises curiosity

Goal of the Basalt Master Plan to have connectivity between Old Town and Willits - they are looking for ways to create one community instead of two

Waystation on the Bike Path

Proximity to pedestrian routes and downtown Basalt

On the river - though there is vertical separation

The Story of Emma

Push and Pull between the old west and the new west - zooming highway past the historic buildings. What can be seen from the roof? What's been saved? Change in the valley? Spatial story of losses and gains..

HISTORY

Agricultural Nature of the Area - opportunity to honor this history.

Emma has done a good job of preserving Ag history - forward momentum in Ag preservation

Previous agreement from the Caucus on agricultural museum as potential use.

Challenge was there was no funding or organization to take this over. A grange. Maybe there are individuals who would be interested in helping or a new group willing to take this on. Roaring Fork Farmers Group might be willing to take it on.

Opportunity to tie the programmatic elements to the building's historic uses of the building and in the area - Ranching, Ag, growing - etc.

Orchard - tree donation - example near Cortez, CO

Living Museum / Teaching Area

**Opportunity to fill a Community Need - what might be missing in this part of the Valley that might be filled here?
Could fill a niche for something that is missing.**

CHALLENGES

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES - IMPACT OF THE HIGHWAY - protecting / shielding buildings from the highway

Debris Shield - Review of the screening provided - engineered design - forces at work on the surfaces

Mesh panels - 30-40k (cost estimate from 10 years ago) - example possibly at the Snowmass Conoco - 4-6 inches thick

would have a major visual component

potential issues - what views matter - from the highway? from the buildings?

Drainage needs between the highway and the buildings

User Experience

Visual Impact / Aesthetics

vegetation to soften - dampen the noise,

Noise

PARKING

CDOT Controls the access off the highway and has a say in what the use is and whether they will allow a change

10 trips (5 cars) an hour is the limiting factor based on the Traffic Study Completed

Question - of what if you have an event that has a lot of trip generation

Creative solutions - shuttle potential

Limiting Factor of CDOT - Moving cars up and down the valley = CDOT's mission

Is it possible to move the highway vertically some amount?

ACCESS

Intersection - Historically CDOT has not been willing to entertain options to change the configuration of the intersection - a traffic light has been previously ruled out.

Have to have the funding for the envisioned solution

Newer development in the valley may have changed how they view this area. Subtle shift in their thinking.

Question for CDOT - why no jersey barrier?

Challenging to get in and out of the Emma area on both sides - no acceleration lane - 5 homes accessed, adding more use at that intersection could create problems

Community may have reservations about adding more uses to this area

Access from the back road - parking and foot bridge - to access the path - could accommodate events potentially

EXPENSE - FUNDING

QUESTIONS

Research precedents for highway barrier

Suzannah to provide background calculations from existing report

is there a specific angle that needs to be addressed?

Can the buildings be moved?

Not impossible, but extraordinarily challenging - size of the buildings compounds the challenge

Could open up more possibilities

state historic dept - has been vague about if they would support this?

Need to know what it would cost to move them

Would be abandoning the foundation work that was previously completed and require a new foundation

OST Funding

OST has specific uses for OST funds and how they can be spent on Historic Preservation. No dedicated funding for this project.

OST can have long term leasing, subdivide and sell,

Potential Grant Opportunities

CDOT

What changes / opportunities there might be with the highway

Jersey Barriers

Can the highway be moved vertically

Trip generation - events - change in use of the buildings

Configuration of the intersection - access to the buildings

Emma Trail - Clarify Possibilities

Transfer of the property between CDOT and Town of Basalt?

Two Rivers Road was the old highway - not the Emma Trail.

The Emma Trail - Used for maintenance access / residential access - no public access currently

Could we change the trail to allow for public vehicular access? Town of Basalt Trail Asset - part of the the 3 mile plan

Is it possible to redirect Emma Trail around the back side of the buildings?
Could free up the front section.