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**Whitney unveils
east-side plans**

• Development includes
more downtown parking

By Pat Blair

Senior Staff reporter

Plans for 400 additional parking spaces in Sheridan's downtown area, along with mixed-use development at Grinnell Avenue and Conner Street and a new home for the Sheridan County School District 2 administration, were presented Wednesday during Business After Hours at the Whitney Community Vocational Center.

Hosts for the event, a monthly function of the Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce, included Whitney Benefits — which owns the community center and is developing the east-side project — and other occupants of the building.

The other occupants include Big Brothers Big Sisters, CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates), Club Ed, Childcare Finder, Coordinated School Health Program, Even Start, Scott Preschool/All Ready, E-Train West, Healthy Community/Healthy Youth, Project Youth, Sheridan County Community Educational Foundation, and Sheridan-Johnson Counties Opportunity for Education/Adult Ed.

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The Sheridan Press/Lane Hickenbottom

Elizabeth Thurow, left, talks to Lori and Ron Kensey about her paintings Wednesday at the Club Ed/Sheridan Artists' Guild Et al. Art Center. The art center is one of many organizations at the Whitney Community Vocational Center, which had an open house yesterday afternoon.





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Whitney

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Tom Kinnison, president of the Whitney Benefits board of trustees, said the school administration building — to be constructed at the end of Grinnell Avenue on the east side of Broadway is a "cornerstone" of the planned eastside development.

The development also will include office buildings and loft apartments. Revenues from the development will be used to further Whitney Benefits' goals of funding a student loan program, scholarships, vocational education, and educational programs at Sheridan College and elsewhere in Sheridan County.

Whitney Benefits' plans for the area also include a new public community square and widening of the Conner Street right of way starting just north of the Knights of Columbus building.

The new right of way will be 100 feet, to match the Grinnell Avenue right of way. Forty



Tom Kinnison
 President,
 Whitney Board

diagonal parking spaces are planned along Grinnell and Conner, according to a news release from Whitney Benefits.

John Knapp of Denver and Sheridan architect Ed Armstrong have been retained to develop project design standards.

Kinnison said the standards "will follow the motif" of the historic buildings on and around downtown Main Street

"to be reflective of the Historic Downtown Main Street and the new Historic Railroad District," which includes Broadway.

"The public square," according to the news release, "will be themed to embrace the Big Horn Mountain backdrop of Sheridan."

More than 100 people attended the After Hours event, including members of the Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce, downtown businesspeople, Sheridan city and county officials and Sheridan residents who staff or use services provided by the building's other occupants.

Jean Gatlin, director of Even Start's adult education component, said her agency differs from some other preschool programs in that "We deal with the whole family."

Preschool — which accommodates children as young as 6 weeks — is free if the parents are working on their own education, she said.

Club Ed, operated by the Sheridan Artists' Guild and funded by Project Youth, provides art programs for youth, with local artists providing workshops.

Big Brothers Big Sisters, which pairs children with adult mentors and role models, was promoting its April 9 Bowl for Kids' Sake fund-raiser.

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Whitney Benefits investing in the community
Downtown business people
'excited' about development

By Pat Blair

Senior Staff reporter

One of the "striking" differences between Sheridan and other Wyoming communities, said Pete Schoonmaker, is the vitality of the city's downtown historic district.

"We have a really active downtown," he added.

Schoonmaker is a trustee of Whitney Benefits and chairman of the organization's planning committee which, earlier this week, revealed plans for a mixed-use development at Grinnell Avenue and Conner Street only blocks from Sheridan's Historic Main Street district.

The development — which will replace previous industrial uses in the area with a new public community square, a mixed business/residential development consisting of first-floor office buildings below loft apartments, and a parking area with more than 400 spaces — met with rave reviews by downtown businesspeople at its unveiling Wednesday evening.

The development "is going to offer more ability to bring people downtown, create more positives," said insurance agent and Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Monty Webb. "I think we have the ability to make things happen here."

"It's very exciting," said Anita Zahniser, owner of Toujours Intimate Apparel on Main Street. "We have the potential to add more life and vibrancy downtown."

Plus, she said, "They're adding extra parking, which our customers can really use."

The parking spaces will be available not just for the Whitney project, but for all downtown, according to a news release from Whitney Benefits.

Plans are for buildings in the development to reflect the appearance of downtown Sheridan's historic buildings, most of which date to the late 1800s/early 1900s, as well as maintain the spirit of the

Historic Railroad District established last summer, which includes Broadway.

Tom Kinnison, Whitney Benefits president, said the district — which will be anchored by Sheridan County School District 2 administration offices to be built at the end of Grinnell Avenue on the east side of Broadway — will help the nonprofit organization fulfill its goal of generating funds for Whitney's philanthropic educational efforts.

Schoonmaker said the development also will fulfill another Whitney Benefits purpose: "We are mandated to put resources into the community," he said. "This is one way to keep our downtown strong."

And a strong downtown, he continued, strengthens the rest of Sheridan and Sheridan County.

Linda Fauth, owner of the Crazy Woman Trading Co., agrees.

After seeing Whitney Benefits' development plans, she said, "I went up to Tom (Kinnison), and I said, 'Thank you for what you're doing for our community.'"

"What they're doing here is improving our community, and anytime our community improves, it's going to bring more people and more improvements."

Fauth added some individuals who have just moved to Sheridan from Denver were in her shop Wednesday.

"They said they loved our downtown," she said, "because a lot of downtowns they have seen are dying. Ours isn't."

Kinnison noted that Edward Augustus Whitney — whose estate was the basis of Whitney Benefits — was a businessman and real estate developer "who played an instrumental role in the establishment and growth of Sheridan, its surrounding towns and agricultural lands."

Whitney came to Sheridan in 1885, three years after the town was founded, bought the store of Sheridan founder John Loucks and the post office building at the corner of Main and Loucks streets. and





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started the town's first bank, the Bank of Sheridan.

In 1888, he served as Sheridan's second mayor.

He was co-founder of the Sheridan Land Co., which built much of the town, and owned several ranches in Sheridan and Johnson counties, including the Soldier Creek, Keystone, Pennoyer, Merrifield, Moose, Carroll and Howd Pas ranches.

The Adams Ranch, which he owned, is still owned by Whitney Benefits, and part of it is home to Sheridan College.

Whitney, one of the three earliest investors in the planning and construction of the Historic Sheridan Inn, was a strong proponent of bringing the railroad to Sheridan.

He built the first Sheridan Commercial Co. building on Alger Avenue, was involved in developing one of Sheridan's first subdivisions — the Residence Hill lots — and also in developing the Alger Avenue and Broadway real estate projects, among others.

Schoonmaker said some individuals have already "expressed interest" in locating in the development, although details remain to be

worked out regarding ownership issues and how many buildings will be in the project.

Sheridan Mayor Dave Kinskey, among those attending Wednesday's Business After Hours, said the key feature of the project, for him, is that Whitney is committed to maintaining Sheridan's "vital core" — its historic downtown business district.

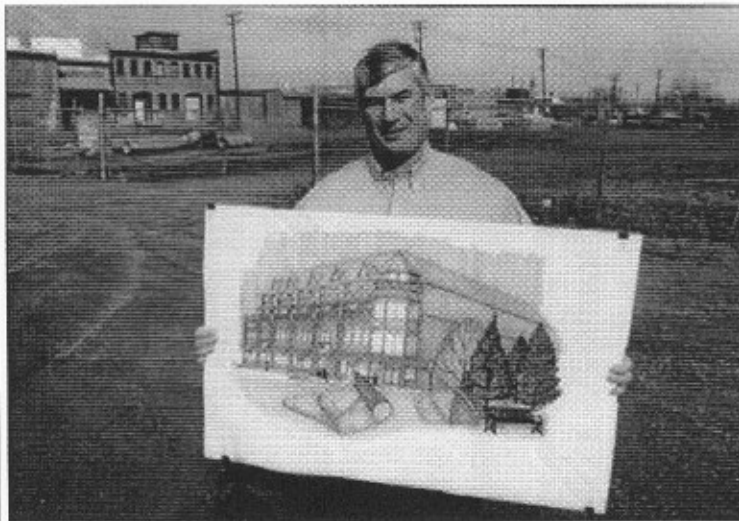
"The worst thing that could happen to Sheridan is what has happened in so many other towns — to have the (business) sprawl away from town and the old town (the downtown area) languish."

Activity in the downtown district, Kinskey added, is essential.

Misty Plott, Sheridan artist and former owner with her husband, Ed Barbula, of the Medicine Wheel on Main Street, said what Whitney has done for Sheridan is "the best thing I've ever seen" — and she was not referring just to the current development.

"I love that park," she said, referring to Whitney Commons off Alger Avenue.

"I think," she added, "whatever Whitney does is a big win for Sheridan."



Whitney Foundation Planning Committee Chairman Peter Schoonmaker shows what the area behind him along Grinnell Avenue could look like in a few years. The planned development would be a combination of retail, office and residential space.