



Dillon Community Meeting #4  
January 22, 2026

**Economic Development & Local Business Support: “Balancing Residents & Visitors” :**

*Discussing approaches to economic growth that support both residents and local businesses*

The fourth Dillon Community Meeting focused on how the Town can strengthen its economy while honoring the needs of its year-round residents and preserving the character that makes Dillon unique. Through updates from the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), a local business owner panel, public discussion, and small group dialogue, participants explored tensions and aspirations around tourism, livability, and long-term resilience.

**EDAC Update: Revenue Lens & Planning Ahead**

A current member of the volunteer-led EDAC provided an update, which has been analyzing Dillon’s economy primarily through a sales tax and revenue lens. The group has been researching best practices through partners such as Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCOCG), the Economic Development Council of Colorado, and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT).

Key priorities include:

- Understanding Dillon’s current business inventory and identifying gaps.
- Attracting new businesses while better supporting existing ones.
- Preparing for demographic and infrastructure shifts anticipated by 2030.
- Developing recommendations for Town Council (presentation anticipated in early February).

EDAC emphasized its advisory role and the need to balance revenue generation with quality of life, infrastructure, and community identity.

**Local Business Panel**

## **Core Realities**

- Tourism is essential to survival.
- Commercial rents in Summit County are high, creating barriers to entry.
- Starting a business is risky and complex—clearer guidance on permits and processes would help.
- Walkability and connectivity—especially across the highway and between the park, amphitheater, and retail core—are major gaps.
- Signage and wayfinding are limited; many visitors don't know the lake or businesses are nearby.

## **Seasonality & Ecosystem Challenges**

- Dillon is more reliant on summer tourism than neighboring winter-focused towns.
- Visitor patterns shift based on Front Range weather and major sports events.
- Over 104,000 people attended amphitheater events last year, yet local capture of that spending remains unclear.
- Businesses want more complementary enterprises to build a stronger ecosystem.

The emerging Dillon Business Club aims to provide resources for entrepreneurs—such as available retail spaces, permit guidance, and contact lists—to reduce fear and improve collaboration. Panelists emphasized a “rising tide raises all boats” mindset.

## **Amphitheater & Community Tension**

The Dillon Amphitheater generated significant discussion.

## **Opportunities**

- Draws national and international visitors.
- Creates strong economic potential.
- Serves as a cultural asset and regional attraction.

## **Concerns**

- Noise impacts for nearby residents (vibrations, sound checks, double-header shows).
- Parking costs and access challenges for locals and small businesses.
- Perception that financial returns to the Town may not match the impact.

- Risk of litigation if stakeholder concerns are not addressed.

Residents proposed potential “win-win” adjustments, such as consistent sound check times and limits on certain multi-night events. The broader theme: tourism is necessary, but community impact must be actively managed.

### **Emerging Opportunities**

Participants identified several promising strategies:

- Better marketing and annual public directories of local businesses.
- Cooperative promotion booths (e.g., farmers markets).
- Historic walking tours integrating local businesses (via the Summit Historical Society).
- Improved signage and user-experience mapping (potentially via outside consultants).
- Leveraging grants through OEDIT and DOLA for Main Street improvements.
- Exploring mentorship programs among established and emerging business owners.
- Considering senior housing and service-oriented development to retain aging residents.

### **Guiding Values for Dillon’s Economy**

When imagining Dillon at its best, several values surfaced repeatedly:

1. **Stewardship of Natural Assets** – Protecting the lake, views, wildlife, air quality, and biodiversity is foundational. Without these, Dillon loses its core identity.
2. **Livability & Opportunity** – A thriving business community creates vibrancy, gathering spaces, and everyday joy.
3. **Resilience & Economic Stability** – A robust economy enables the Town to pursue other priorities.
4. **Walkability & Connectivity** – A cohesive downtown experience that encourages full-day stays.
5. **Pride & Heart** – Turning the narrative toward celebrating Dillon’s strengths.

### **Resident vs. Visitor Tensions**

Key tradeoffs identified:

- Quiet enjoyment vs. event-driven tourism.
- Parking and traffic vs. visitor revenue.

- Nostalgia for “old Dillon” vs. embracing change.
- High short-term rental taxes (noted as among the highest in the state) vs. competitiveness with peer destinations.
- Infrastructure limitations vs. growth aspirations.

Some participants framed the tension as sharing space equitably; others stressed the need to prioritize residents first. Many agreed that resistance to change may be hindering revitalization.

### **Looking Ahead: Dillon in 10 Years**

Participants envisioned:

- A revitalized Main Street.
- Balanced patronage from residents and visitors alike.
- Expanded arts, public installations, and multi-generational activities.
- Stronger connectivity between neighborhoods, downtown, and the waterfront.
- Reduced generational tensions.
- A resilient, economically vibrant town where residents support well-designed tourism.

The unifying sentiment: Dillon has “so much heart.” The challenge, an opportunity, is translating that heart into action, taking thoughtful risks, and aligning infrastructure, policy, and community will toward a shared future.

The meeting underscored that Dillon’s economic vitality and community character are deeply intertwined. Tourism is necessary, but must be managed intentionally. Residents seek livability, preservation, and meaningful inclusion in decisions. Businesses seek clarity, collaboration, and infrastructure that enables success. The path forward will require balancing revenue goals with stewardship, bold decision-making, and a commitment to shared solutions.