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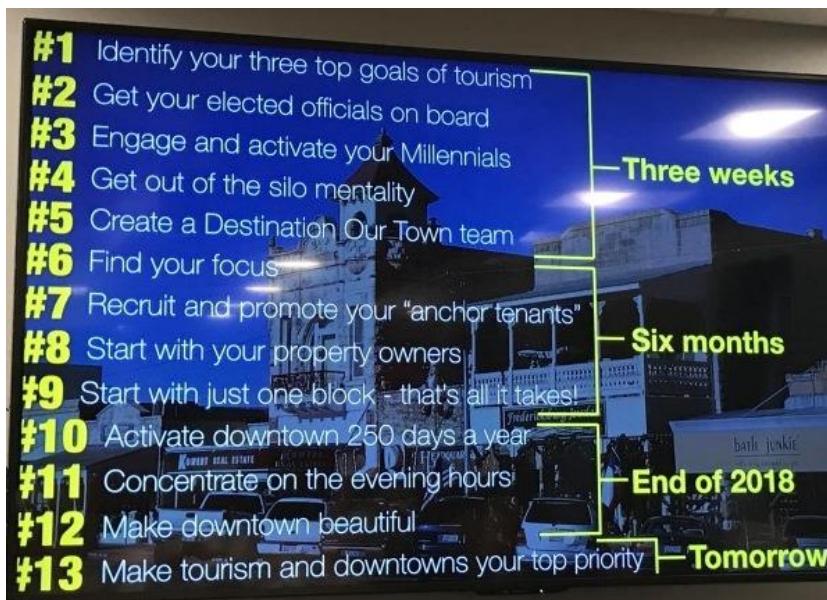
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## **Keynote Speaker brings Ideas for Livelier Atmosphere in Downtown Williston**



If there is one thing that gets Roger Brooks excited, it's talking about creating, promoting and activating destinations. The City of Williston invited the popular keynote speaker to town to take a fresh look at Main Street and share his ideas and advice.

Brooks, who has worked with more than 1,500 communities, organizations and private businesses

worldwide; recognized some bright spots, noted some shortfalls and offered lots and lots of suggestions for the City of Williston.

About 40 people gathered on Tuesday, June 12, to learn about Brooks' 13 ways to improve downtowns. Some of his recommendations included giving the area a catchy name, hosting 250 public events per year, encouraging restaurants and retailers to stay open later and beautifying businesses with potted plants, trees and seating.

"Seventy percent of retail sales come after 6 p.m. Are you open?" he asked participants.

Brooks also met two times with members of the City of Williston, Williston Area Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau and other downtown stakeholders. Williston Economic Development's executive director said the meetings helped identify some of Downtown Williston's strengths and weaknesses.

“The City of Williston invited Roger Brooks to spark discussion amongst stakeholders, provide an outside assessment of downtown and discuss the possibility of developing a public plaza,” said Shawn Wenko, WED executive director.

Brooks drew attention to the lack of signage in Williston; particular when it comes to a wayfinding system and blade signs. Wayfinding helps direct people around town while blade signs are perpendicular to store fronts.

“If you are a visitor at the airport or a hotel, you have no idea where downtown is located or if there even is one,” he said.

He suggested installing wayfinding signs on current power poles, or light poles, if available. With regard to blade signs, he said they are absolutely necessary.

“You must have blade signs. The best downtowns in America all use blade signs. Don’t use more than four words and use something organic to your community,” said Brooks.

Brooks also took a walking tour of Downtown Williston to assess the potential for a plaza or market. He said a town of Williston’s size would require roughly an acre for a central gathering space.

The downtown stakeholders will meet again this summer to review Brooks’ overview of Williston and discuss any potential action plans.