

Cañon City VISION

**Final Report
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RNL



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INTRODUCTION

Cañon City is the county seat of Fremont County in southern Colorado, with a population of approximately 16,000 people within the city limits, and another 5,000 to 7,000 people within the surrounding area in Fremont County.

The City is located in a mountain bowl along the Arkansas River valley as it flows east from the Rocky Mountains and the mouth of the Royal Gorge. A combination of unique geography and an elevation of 5300 feet above sea level protects the city from harsh weather conditions, making Cañon City “the Climate Capital of Colorado,” with temperatures generally 10 degrees warmer than other nearby Colorado communities.

Cañon City is one of only a few cities along the Front Range that has predominantly maintained its small town feel. Residents of this third oldest city in the State of Colorado are proud of their history, proud of their setting amongst beautiful natural features, and proud of their community. When asked what makes Cañon City a great place, more often than not, the response is “the people.”

The Royal Gorge Bridge, owned by the City, is one of the major attractions located near Cañon City. A major wildfire at the gorge in June 2013 destroyed many of the assets in the area and put at risk a major revenue stream to the city and its residents. This initiated a move to reconsider the economic base to the city, leading to this investigation into clarify the brand of the city derived from the natural and cultural values of the region, its elected officials, major stakeholders and its residents.

Representatives of RNL and Stantec Vibe were engaged to engage residents and stakeholders in a series of workshops and community meetings staged in November 2013 through February 2014 to help what has been defined as the “Cañon City Initiative”.

Five alternative development scenarios were defined through this process, with each developed around a series of actions, focusing on the development of a specific brand for the community.

The alternative scenarios were reviewed with stakeholders and the City, and a preferred alternative was selected based on its ability to best meet the long term needs of the community. From this process, specific capital budgets can be defined, financial strategies put in place for implementation, and quick win projects can be initiated to kick start the movement toward the ultimate goals.





THE CAÑON CITY INITIATIVE

At the first workshop, the RNL team went through two days of stakeholder meetings where various ideas were brought forth by the community based upon the perspective of what a future “visitor” might say about Cañon City. From this exercise, the team developed the following Cañon City Initiatives (CCI) that set forth overall goals for the various scenarios:

1. *The CCI will be directed toward improving/repositioning the visibility, image and “Brand” of the community.*
2. *The CCI will encourage investment, involvement and engagement in the community.*
3. *The CCI projects an “enterprise friendly” countenance – the place to do business in Southern Colorado.*
4. *The CCI captures the authentic spirit of the west, our community’s values and celebrates the specific attributes of our heritage and natural setting.*
5. *The CCI is the premier “Trailhead” for western cultural and outdoor-based activities and experiences.*
6. *The CCI will encourage and facilitate stronger connectivity with regional partners.*
7. *The CCI must acknowledge the economic, social, political and market realities and constraints.*

Each one of the alternative scenarios were created with these seven values as guiding principles for what the community can be in the future.

The five scenarios represent a composite of many of the ideas identified by the community, the staff, and vested stakeholders. The ideas come from knowledge gained during the stakeholder workshops, citizen input, and other direct feedback received by the RNL team from staff and community interest groups.

Based upon the above Cañon City Initiatives, the following scenarios have been developed for consideration.



1. *The Gathering Place (It all starts in Cañon City)*
2. *The Park (Sundance Cañon City)*
3. *A great place to live and work (We call it home)*
4. *Back to the future (a celebration of history and cultural heritage)*
5. *Authentic Colorado (Gateway to the REAL WEST)*



The following is a definition of each, including the strategic moves that should be taken in each of the criteria listed below. Each scenario will be first described by the “Big Idea” and then developed further according to these criteria:

- The Big Idea
- The brand
- Strategies and steps to achieve the brand
- Market evaluation of demand and need
- Organization to achieve results
- Financial strategy to bring ideas to reality
- Phasing and timing of proposed strategies focusing on quick wins

Scenario 1

The Gathering Place

It all starts in Cañon City

SCENARIO 1: Cañon City – The Gathering Place



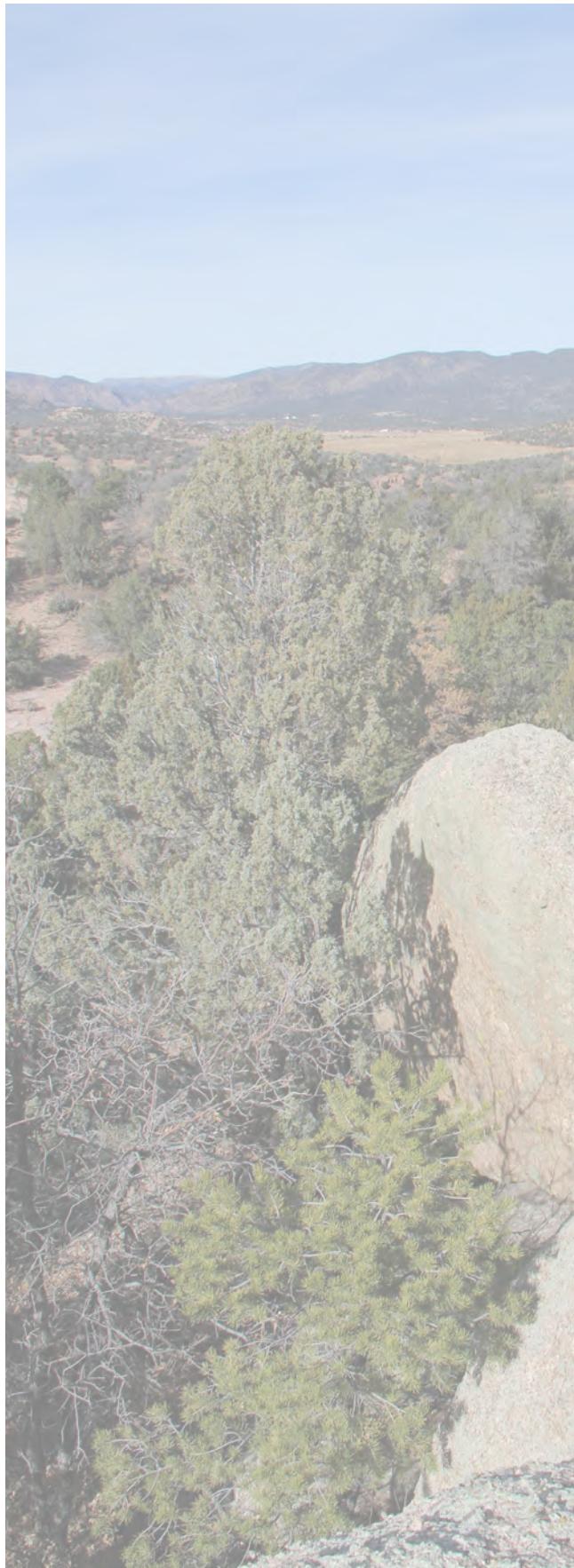
THE BIG IDEA

Imagine that the community's core area is a destination for everyone coming there. Within this core, there is high quality lodging, food service, and a significant visitor's center where everyone can go and gather information and select from the countless opportunities in the immediate area. This would be the stepping off point for the River, the Gorge, for all forms of recreation, arts, and culture. The core area would be the center for all activity, from commercial, arts, social and entertainment center of activity, and the central Gathering Place for every operator, every attraction, and every major venue that can be accessed from the City. This would also include centralized parking for tours, for the train, for day trips, and for organized activities within and beyond the city edges.

Downtown Cañon City would become the central place for festivals, conferences, and for events that would focus on people gathering in the community, lodging, and actively participating in its assets. This is an economic development idea, built on the power of the existing community, with a series of robust strategies to enhance the heart of the community as the Gathering Place for the region.

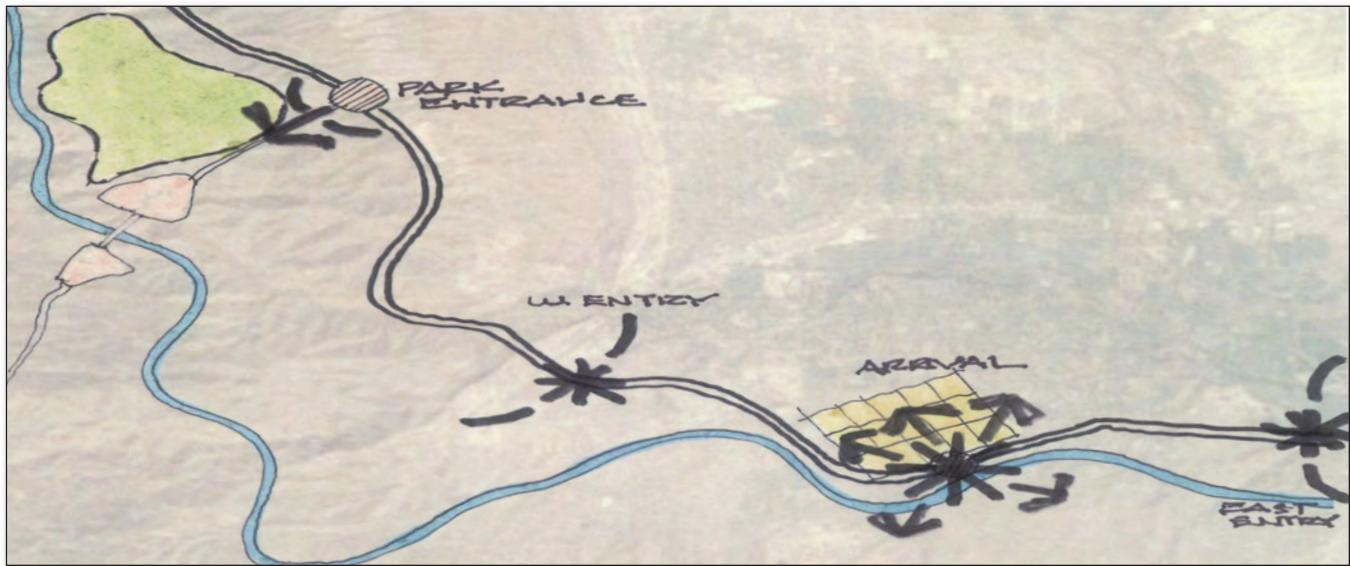


SCENARIO 1: Cañon City – The Gathering Place

**THE BRAND**

It all begins in Cañon City! We want people to come to Cañon City because of the wonderful amenities that are there - the great restaurants, good food, and great lodging. But more importantly this is a move to make Cañon City the center of it all, where people gather and where they “experience” the vast array of choices of things to see and do.

SCENARIO 1: Cañon City – The Gathering Place



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

- Create a new gateway to the community, focused on catching people when they first approach the town from the east and west, and have the community visible before them.
- Build a new Cañon City signature arrival that clearly defines the “heart of the community” and the Downtown Area.
- Create a direct intercept from Highway 50 to bring people into the center of town, into the heart of the core district
- Build a new historic hotel in the downtown area that becomes a destination.
- Create a new civic plaza or enhance the existing Veteran/ Centennial parks to create a congregation point for community fairs, events. While these parks already exist, the idea would be to make them more tourism oriented, as a congregating place for concerts, festivals, and other venues that support the brand.
- Create a new destination resort in the heart of the community that becomes the stepping out point for all major activities in the region. Include conferencing facilities to attract off season meetings and events.
- Capitalize on the River Edge location by developing the river corridor as a vibrant and active celebration of the Cañon City lifestyle, including recreation, restaurants, and specialized retail opportunities, as well as a gateway experience to the vast resources the river has to offer.
- Create a performing arts venue that can flexibly accommodate concerts, festivals, and attractions. This likely would be seasonal, as an indoor/outdoor venue that would be capable of hosting seasonal events and cultural activities, such as arts, music and dance festivals, food festivals and community events.
- Create a new visitors center that becomes the gathering place for every venue, every tour operator, etc, to have a central place for people to gather, sign up for events, and congregate before beginning their journey.
- Build up the destinations in and near downtown, including concentrated nodal points such as the Train Station, the downtown Retail, to focus on downtown area entertainment, to hold people in the community.
- Concentrate investment in museums, tourism, hotels, and restaurants in the core area such that people come there, stay there and depart from there to points beyond.
- Change the entire experience of highway 50 through the community to make the city more visible and more accessible and to bring the brand of the community to reach the people who are just “driving through town” unaware of what is happening there.

SCENARIO 1: Cañon City – The Gathering Place



MARKET EVALUATION AND DEMAND AND NEED

Right now, there is a disorganized structure to all of the venues and activities that exist in the region. (Some of the needed venues do not exist and others are underdeveloped.) Tourist venues book most of their activities on line, and most people bypass the community to go directly to where they are heading; to the Park, to rafting, to hiking and mountain biking, camping, and many other activities in the region. Nobody sees Cañon City as the gathering place or the stepping off place to any of these activities. It is just a place to get gas, maybe have a meal, and maybe if necessary, to spend one night. But for the most part, people are in and out of town in a flash, or on day trips, and all of that market potential is lost.

We believe there is a huge market potential for the existing community, to find it's "sweet spot", and to realize its potential as a gathering place for all kinds of adventures. And if this market is captured, there can be significant investment in downtown and a revitalization of the core community with hotels, restaurants, night life, shopping, and all the other economic development benefits that come from people visiting and staying. In addition, there is a huge unrealized market for Cañon City to be recognized for specific festivals, fairs, and activities that celebrate downtown and create reasons for people to come and stay in the heart of the community.

Also, there is a significant benefit for the region for this to happen. Right now, most of the individual activities, venues, and events are all marketed alone and separate. There is no brand that is achieved through a critical mass of activities where the community is the nexus, and where each venue benefits from all the other attractions that take place. Under this scenario, rather than each venue competing for their own visibility, "all boats will rise with the tide", and every business will benefit by the synergy of so many offerings that are available in one concentrated location.

There clearly will need additional market research on many of the big ideas included in this proposal. The downtown hotel will likely require a public private partnership with a developer who would be willing to participate in this projects. This hotel will require a feasibility study to test the viability of the model and determine room count and conference capacity and need.



SCENARIO 1: Cañon City – The Gathering Place



ORGANIZATION TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

We would recommend the organization of specific groups charged with making this happen.

- Bring together the many different downtown and tourist-based organizations into one group similar to the Downtown Denver Partnership, charged with the economic development and promotion of Downtown Cañon City. (A similar arrangement is laid out in Cañon City's Downtown Plan.)
- Create a Visitor's and Convention Bureau that solicits membership from all the venues and attractions in the region who would organize and operate a visitor's center, and the marketing of the community as the gathering place. Seek a lead hire with broad and specific experience in this area and in marketing Colorado area centers.
- Create a Downtown Redevelopment Authority/ Downtown Development Authority that has the wherewithal to raise money and to enter into contract with various entities to accomplish projects and make public improvements through public and private sector investment.



SCENARIO 1: Cañon City – The Gathering Place



FINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO BRING THE IDEA TO REALITY

It is important to find the sources of money that can be focused on achieving the vision. We would contemplate the combination of private sector investment coupled with public sector funds to make this vision happen.

- Create a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) that focuses on funds for the redevelopment of under utilized properties along Main Street, and for the historic renovation of the historic facades within the area.
- Create an urban renewal district and identify TIF income created through sales tax, to be earmarked for public investment within the district. The initial idea would be to include both sales and property tax in the TIF, though property tax alone would not likely generate significant revenues due to low city rates.
- Look to the State of Colorado Economic Development funds to supplement private and public money, as seed investment to begin the process of achieving the brand.
- Look to the private sector, through an RFP process, to solicit interest in building, re-purposing or renovating and operating a historic hotel in the Downtown area, and building a new “resort visitor’s center” and conference center to intercept people coming to the community.
- Create a local bond issue or identify other sources of revenue to fund gateway investments at edge of community, a signature gateway downtown, and a new public square adjacent to downtown.
- Partner with CDOT to develop a new Highway 50 corridor plan and guidelines aimed at improving access and the aesthetic quality of the corridor.
- Seek individual developers to invest in specific projects – retail, hotel, and entertainment, incentivized to tax abatement and other forms of community subsidy.
- Solicit the involvement of an entertainment operator who would host one or more week long festivals in the community. Venue and type would be determined based on market and interest.



Scenario 2

The Park

Sundance Cañon City

SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City



THE BIG IDEA

The big idea for this model is to create a standalone destination similar to Sundance in Utah - including resort, entertainment, housing, retail, and other support services that would fuel economic development for the community as a whole. The community of Sundance is created as a year round resort, with a significant mix of recreation, entertainment, and a wide variety of permanent and vacation home ownership and rental. This is not a ski resort like Vail, but rather a signature destination created around the vast array of opportunities in the area.

While this idea could be complimentary to the “gathering place” model described as Scenario one, the intent here is a focused brand that does not compete with downtown Cañon City, but likely would be developed separate from the existing community and in a manner that would complement any efforts to improve the core community. The key to furthering this model and its program is a better understanding of the market for the area, and a decision about who the target audience would be. What is clear is that this likely would not be a high end resort like the Broadmoor, but rather a destination for families, tailored to the tourist, the baby boomer generation, and those who are seeking the outdoor recreation activities in the region. Clearly, this idea builds upon the Royal Gorge Park and the people who are coming there today. But this vision also expands the Park’s vision as well, to include a wider range of activities for the family, for a higher quality “national park experience” that will be more compatible with the destination resort idea.

This project would also offer a destination experience with on-site recreation and activities; a slice of what the West is all about. The offerings here would include food, education, arts, music, and a wide variety of outdoor recreation and other family oriented activities. This would be a destination that fosters authentic enrichment and experiences, built upon the natural attributes of the setting.

The other part of the “big idea” is that this location could offer a wide offering of resort living, with for sale housing offering a different niche than now present in Cañon City, and a high quality destination RV and camping park. The key here is to offer something for all of the markets - second home, resort visitation, and tourist.

What is important to emphasize here is that this idea does not exist in isolation to Downtown Cañon City. In fact, if this idea is successful, the results are likely to be similar to what has happened in Crested Butte, or Steamboat, where the resort was built separate from downtown, and Downtown experienced a significant boost in activity because of the success of the new venue. However, because the City’s resources are limited, the community will likely have to prioritize private investment in either Downtown or the Park site. While both are necessary, the investment in the Park could be substantial. In either case, much of the investment in the Park land will likely be born by the selected developer who would undertake the Park development project.

SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City

**THE BRAND**

Sundance Cañon City: The Brand is a destination resort and lifestyle community that is built upon the recreational assets of the region. The brand is the gateway to the West, and a location where people can gather for a wide range of cultural enrichment, good food, music and the arts, and a wide range of outdoor recreational activity. This is a place to visit, for families, empty nesters; and baby boomers, to come and visit, recreate, and learn. This is an opportunity for people

who want an alternative to the “Ski Resort” to purchase a vacation home, or retirement home in one of the most beautiful locations in the state, with the opportunity to share in the attributes of the resort and the region. The new resort does not exist in a vacuum, and Cañon City benefits as a whole with significant direct economic spin off that will allow parallel improvements in the community, and enhanced economic activity created by the “buzz” of this new location.

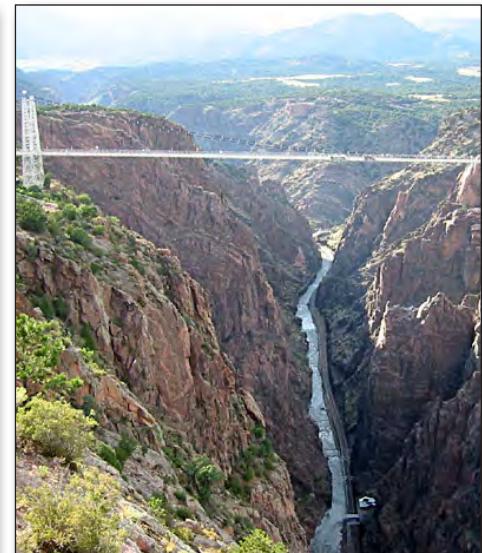
SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

- The key first step would be the determination of the availability and feasibility of developing infrastructure roads, sewer, and water to supply the proposed development on the property. Assuming that the services can be acquired or developed, the next step then becomes financing.
- A Master Plan would need to be developed that defines the use of the property and defines the program, scope, and nature of the proposed new destination.
- The community should gain control and manage the gateway to the area, along US 50, such that the first experience is positive and controlled, and supportive of the brand. Right now, the lower value “rubber tomahawk” market that exists there today is not a positive image for the visitor, nor is it supportive of a quality destination resort image.
- Build a destination outdoor recreation center on the property that provides a focus for a wide range of controlled experiences, from zip line, golf, hiking, fishing, climbing, mountain bike trails, nature trails, etc. This likely should not be extreme sport oriented if it is intended to attract a larger family oriented market, tourists, empty nesters, retirees, and a broader cross section of the traveling market.
- Consider building a destination RV and camping destination of higher quality. This would be a definite upscale destination, with high amenity, intending to be more of a “land yacht marina” rather than the more typical camping park. The goal here would be for people to come here, stay for a longer period, and enjoy the activities offered in the region. This could potentially partner with a significant retirement community on the property.
- Consider building a destination resort. The key here would be a clear market study to target the right audience, and to identify room count, amenity, conference space, and other parts of the program that might be included. At first look the market appears to be a destination resort for a middle class, family audience, with a wide range of activities available on site, and direct access to many more in the region. Supplemental market sectors could also incorporate the corporate market that would be looking for destinations for conferencing and educational opportunities that would provide a market during non-vacation seasons.
- Build a golf course for the resort, starting with a 9 hole short course, growing into a 27 hole capacity with one 9 hole and one high quality 18 hole course.

SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

- Develop a signature for-sale resort subdivision consisting of home sites for single family and multi-family development. This development would be intended to attract retirees who are looking to the beauty of the area as a first or second home, and for families who are not necessarily looking for a ski location, but rather are interested in mountain outdoor activities in a “banana belt” climate, very accessible to the recreation amenities of the high mountains.
- Develop a signature mixed use core. This “village center” would not compete with the Downtown, but rather would focus on services related to the new destination resort development. This could be located at the intersection of Highway 50 and the resort entrance road, with the idea of generating commercial tax base, and also providing local tax base to fund site development for the entire project.
- Partner with the Royal Gorge Park to bring the Park’s image into compliance with the overall image of the “Sundance model”. Right now, the Park, under its current ownership, is moving in a direction that may not be supportive of this type of destination resort goal.



SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City



MARKET EVALUATION AND DEMAND AND NEED

The existing Royal Gorge Park has developed around a visitor experience that is catering to adventure and extreme sports, amusement and entertainment. The length of stay is shorter and the number of visitors decreasing. The investment in new facilities appears to be directed again at amusement and more extreme sport. In order for the park to stimulate other activities in the area, the format for the park will need to evolve over time to a more "national park visitor's experience."

Initial conversations with hotel operators would indicate that the audience for a resort is likely to be very different than the audience for the Royal Gorge Park as it is branded today. In order to attract a destination agenda, the brand for that destination will need to be developed as differentiated from the Park, or else the Park will need to align to the agenda of the "Sundance Model". Obviously, the success of the new model will be enhanced if the existing park aligns to this new brand.

Likewise, there needs to be a transformation of agenda away from the tourist "Wisconsin Dells" agenda, to a more distinctive and differentiated destination agenda. This is a move to an authentic experience, built more upon the natural aspects of the land, and the region. Activities need to be more natural and more organic, to attract a visitor that is looking for a distinctive location where they can find all of the authentic Colorado activities in one location, as a jumping off point to the region's assets in sport, recreation, and natural beauty.

The market for this location is most likely middle class. The competition will be other mountain towns that are branding themselves as destinations for the Rocky Mountain Experience. What is unique about this site is that it is at the southern

gateway to the Rockies, that is distinctly different from the I-70 corridor, and clearly a very unique setting that is rich in beauty, with a variety of choice of things to see and do. The market today is likely to be families, and the expected market in the future is likely to be the huge baby boom population who has the disposable income and the time to travel, but who also has countless choice as to where they spend their discretionary income.

This location must foster its own identity as a place to visit and a place to live. It has to be built around lifestyle and experience, and the entire package – resort, recreation, food, living, and entertainment – needs to be provided in one spot. Thus the brand "Sundance" is a parallel example of just the kind of destination that was created in Utah that provides the complete destination experience.

In order to test the viability of this model, the next step will need to be the engagement of a detailed market study that will determine the precise model for the resort, the room count, and the market for various recreation venues and amenities, for-sale housing product, and commercial development. At the end of the day, the city will likely need to put forth an RFP with incentives, to prospective developers who would take on the lead role in a private public partnership (PPP) that will develop, finance, own and operate the facilities. It will be important to put forth a case study that justifies the market and makes the case as to why a project of this type can be successful.

SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City



ORGANIZATION TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

We would recommend the organization of specific groups charged with making this happen:

- A negotiating team to engage the Royal Gorge Bridge Company regarding their brand, the investment in the future of the park, and the projected lifespan of the relationship.
- A Development Authority who would have the power to put together a finance package for the development of the infrastructure necessary to build a new resort.
- An Economic Development Group who would have the authority to put together the market plan for the proposed development.
- City Council and staff to put together land purchase, annexation and development plan, and an incentive plan that would be layered on the property for private development, together with development controls to help define and reinforce the brand.
- City staff that would issue the RFP(s) for development to one or more developers for the resort hotel, destination residential, commercial mixed use core, golf course operation, and other venues anticipated in the master plan for the property.



SCENARIO 2: The Park – Sundance Cañon City



FINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO BRING THE IDEA TO REALITY

This project will need to be a private public partnership, involving seed money to fund a master plan and feasibility study, and money for site development by the city. Funds for development can come from a combination of State of Colorado Economic Development Funds, and from private investment from a selected developer, who will secure private financing for the project. The funding for this project will likely involve two or more developers – one for horizontal and development, and one for the resort. An additional developer would likely take on the development of for-sale residential and commercial development on the property.

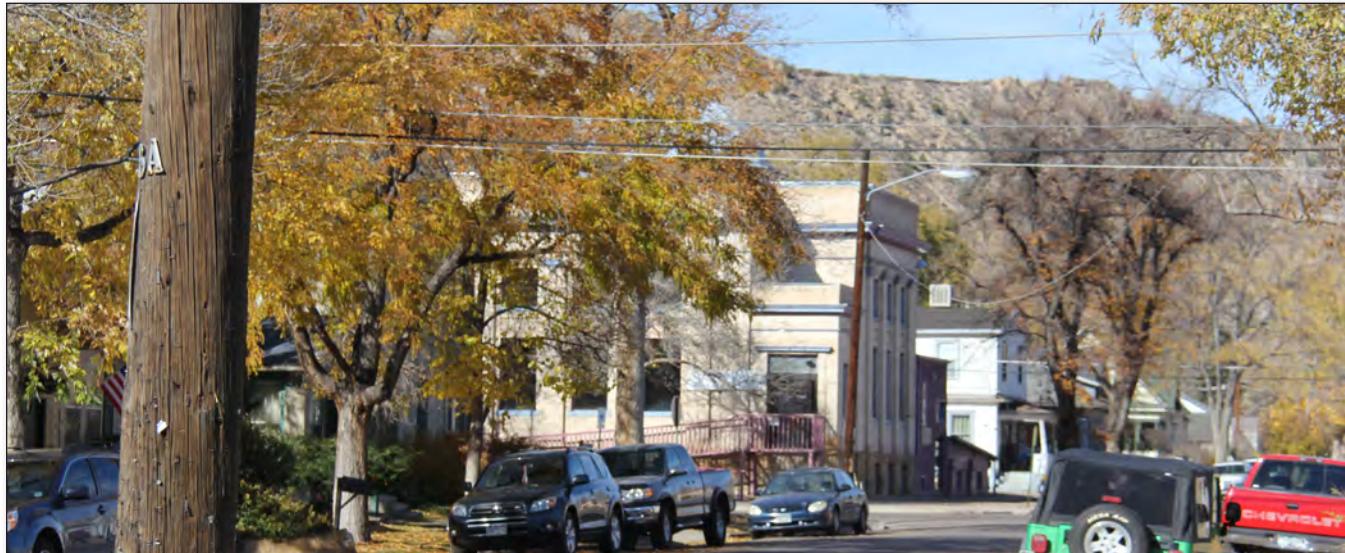
- Determine the subsidies that the city can offer for development on the property.
- Do all entitlement work before going to the marketplace for a developer.
- Solicit State Economic Development Funds.
- Look to selected development partners to provide private funds for development.

Scenario 3

A Great Place to Live & Work

We Call it Home!

SCENARIO 3: CAÑON CITY — A Great Place to Live and Work



THE BIG IDEA

The big idea is to make Cañon City the place for living and working. It is a strategy focused on job creation, and keeping those who work in the area living and participating in the life of the community. The first move is to capture the existing stock of opportunities in the community today, and to identify other bold moves to generate a new job base around industry clusters such as Department of Corrections, and additional new business investment in the community. The ultimate goal here is to focus on a better lifestyle for the people who live in the community today and to foster a greater incentive for new business to relocate here ultimately creating new demand for housing, shopping, and other amenities that today the community cannot support. The difference between this scenario and the others is that this is focused on job creation and focused economic investment. Tourism plays a role; it is one way for that to happen, but not the only way. Equal or greater emphasis should be placed upon building a new job base of new business, and enhancing the success of those businesses that are already located within the community through enterprise incentives, support and tax enhancements.

It is documented that the educational and household income attainment in the city and county today is less than the state as a whole. However, this is typical of towns throughout the Rocky Mountain West where job growth has been slow. The goal in this strategy would be new job creation that would offer new opportunities for those in the community seeking better jobs, and for the new population who would be attracted to these new employment opportunities.



SCENARIO 3: CAÑON CITY — A Great Place to Live and Work

**THE BRAND**

A great place to live and work! The Brand is Cañon City is the new location for economic development through job creation, and business relocation. Cañon City has so many attributes, including significant investment in the corrections business. The brand is designed to capture the people who already work here, to live and shop in Cañon City. In addition, this is a movement to capture the related business that this niche industry creates. The brand is to focus on job creation, by attracting other industries, and other new

business that will enhance the opportunities within the community that would locate here because of quality of life, low cost of living, a favorable tax situation, subsidy to build, and ready sites and infrastructure. The result will be new found tax base and a demand for housing in the community, better shopping, better education and other public and private improvements that enhance the quality of life for the residents of the community.

SCENARIO 3: CAÑON CITY — A Great Place to Live and Work



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

- Determine the strategic assets that exist in the community today, and establish a partnering discussion with each as to how their business could be enhanced in the community.
- Determine the allied businesses related to the Correction Industries, health care, and manufacturing which are already potential burgeoning sectors of economic development within the community. Determine the economic methodology to take better advantage of these assets, and to capitalize on the significant leakage from the community and how to bring that economic development back into Cañon City. Examples would include the significant amount of goods and services provided by the prisons, and how to capitalize on that within the economic structure of retail sales, marketing, and allied industries.
- Look at the Abbey, and determine specifically how it can be focused as a much larger economic generator and a much more successful venture.
- Determine how to take the vacant and under utilized real estate in the community, such as the vacant school, to become an economic generator in the community, either by attracting a new business or by creating a business incubator within the building.
- Build a case study to recruit a major educational institution to locate a campus within the community, or to build upon the existing Community College infrastructure and curriculum to align with business to position as a focused economic generator within the town.
- Determine a location for a new business park, and prepare market study regarding the potential of branding that park to a specific niche industry, or targeted focused company recruitment. Such a move should look to the profile of the existing population and their job needs, as well as attracting a new population base that would support the new business.
- Look to enhance the assets of regional agriculture and how to make that a more robust economic generator within the region.
- Look at providing an incentive plan for the redevelopment and historic investment in the assets of the downtown area, and recruiting new business to vacant storefronts, vacant buildings, and under utilized uses in the central core area.
- Provide infrastructure improvements coming into the community, with capacity to accommodate growth and new employment.
- Provide signature improvement to the community to beautify the entry and approach, and to create appealing and desirable setting for economic development. This would include the progressive cleanup of the "strip" and the creation of an "arrival experience" that enhances the desirability of the location.
- Adopt design standards for key locations in the community to assure that economic investment will be protected against negative impacts of undesirable development in the future.

SCENARIO 3: CAÑON CITY — A Great Place to Live and Work



MARKET EVALUATION AND DEMAND AND NEED

This scenario is driven by market demand. The first part of the market strategy is to capitalize on the many community assets that are already in the community today, but may be unrealized and untapped to their full potential. What seems evident is that Cañon City is a very diverse community, with many interests and many diverse priorities. This means that it is very difficult for everyone to pull together in the same direction to bring about significant change and economic growth. The result is that the community fails to realize its full potential for growth and prosperity. In addition, there appears to be a limited market for new business growth within the City. This is due in part to the “perception bias” of the prison industries, and also the fact that the community has been out of the job creation market for so long.

What needs to be done here is for the community to really take the lead in marketing these assets in such a way that they become more visible and more about the story of why Cañon City is such a great place to live and work. The second part of the market strategy is to turn a perceived negative of the prison industries into a positive. It just seems to loom as a dark cloud over everything the community tries to do. But in reality, this is a huge economic generator, with literally thousands of jobs created. More importantly, the story about the corrections industries can be turned around and made positive and a partnership created that brings additional support business to the community. We believe there is a significant market that is created by the products that the prison builds, and the opportunity to partner with the industry to bring additional positive business to the community. In addition, small but effective steps would entail partnering with the Department of

Corrections to consider their employee sourcing and proximity strategies to be aligned in favor of local residents, rather than the current situation where many employees reside outside the city limits.

A third market strategy involves education. Some of the most successful communities in the State are anchored by educational institutions, and Cañon City is ideally located to bolster the existing community college, or to attract a specialized vocational or higher education school or college. What comes to mind immediately is the rich history of paleontology in the region, and the vast resources available in the immediate area. But other alternatives might include agriculture, sports and recreation, or training for the corrections field. The vacant school in the center of town would be an ideal venue to re-purpose for higher education use.

The market is ultimately matured when the community can attract additional business, either through targeted niche marketing, to preparing the “table” to receive new businesses who would locate here because of quality of life, low cost of living, a favorable tax situation, subsidy to build, and ready sites and infrastructure. The city needs to become aggressive in identifying the industries that could be attracted, and in putting together an incentive package to try to lure them to the community.

SCENARIO 3: CAÑON CITY — A Great Place to Live and Work



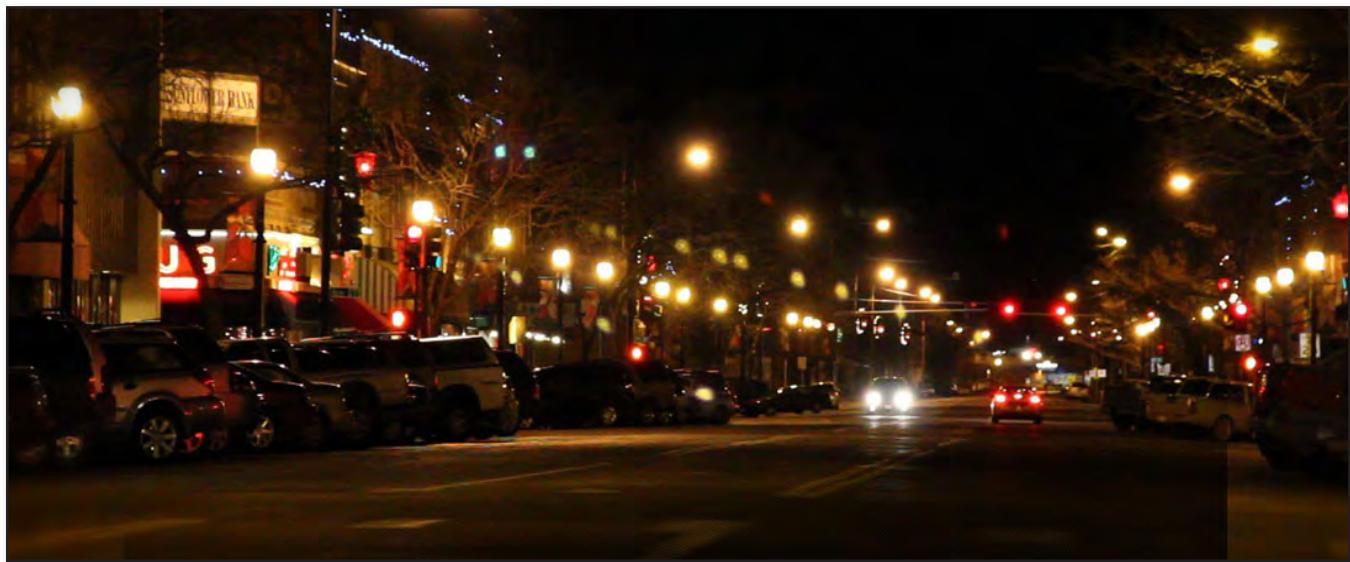
ORGANIZATION TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

We would recommend the following organizational moves to help foster this strategy:

- Hire a director of economic development who will partner with existing business organizations and coordinate and lead the formation of strategies to retain and attract business in Cañon City.
- Develop a marketing study documenting the targeted markets the city should pursue in attracting new business and develop a strategy to incentivize targeted recruitment.
- Create a liaison group to work with the corrections system to build a better cooperative relationship regarding economic development in Cañon City, including the promotion of a local employee base.



SCENARIO 3: CAÑON CITY — A Great Place to Live and Work



FINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO BRING THE IDEA TO REALITY

This alternative may have the least City/Public investment of any solution. The key here is developing a stronger message that captures interest in the community as a great place to live and work. This means hiring a professional PR firm to create a viable marketing plan to solicit economic development opportunities for job creation in the community.

Primary consulting costs could include building a financial model of subsidy and benefits that could be offered to prospective employers, and to create a plan for accommodating new business in the community, either with a City developed Business or Industrial Park, or partnered with a developer to put that community infrastructure in place.

Future investment could include the participation by the city in assisting new business in the community with specific subsidies, and opportunities for housing, education and other benefits that would attract their relocation to Cañon City.

2.0 SCENARIOS

Scenario 4

Back to the Future

A Celebration of History



SCENARIO 4: Back to the Future — A Rebirth of History and Heritage



THE BIG IDEA

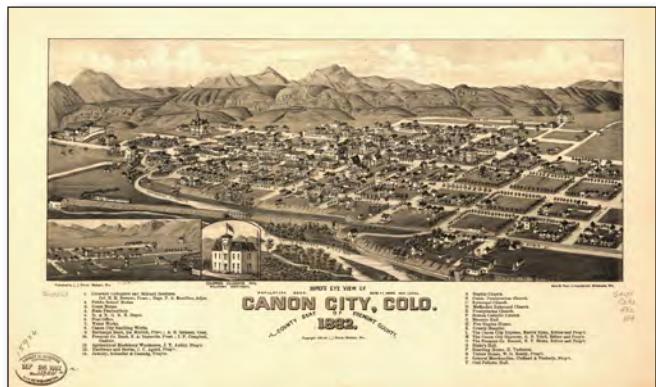
Imagine a place where visitors can come to experience firsthand, in one location everything about the rich cultural and heritage of the city and region. Imagine an educational institution that is directed towards the area's history, a museum on the history of the community, a paleontology museum celebrating the vast discoveries in the region, and the opportunity for anyone and everyone to get a taste of what it was like to live and work in this unique western town (e.g: Historic Williamsburg as example).

The idea would be to develop the downtown as a major tourist destination that would reinforce the historic community of the past. Main Street might be redeveloped in its original historic character, with saloons and other remnants of the past developed to bring alive the rich history of Cañon City into present day retailing, food, and hospitality. Imagine a central location that focuses on the history of the area, and the opportunity to experience that story in a real place, that is authentic and historically relevant.

Consider the idea of a resort on the land the city owns adjacent to the Bridge and Park property. This resort would be all about discovering the history and character of the area. The resort could include significant agro-development which could celebrate the agriculture of the past and present. This resort could be developed with history as a theme, built around a celebration of the lifestyle and character of the “old west” and the rich heritage of Cañon City and its immediate environs.

The history of corrections could be maximized by enhancing and making more prominent the entire perspective of corrections, and the role it has played in the taming of the west. The Territorial prison might be converted into a boutique hotel, where visitors could have the experience of visiting a real prison facility.

An educational facility might be developed directed at the history of Colorado and specifically, this region. This facility could be affiliated with the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library, or the vast resources of History Colorado or as a targeted outreach partnership with a major University, all connected with a vast network of historical information. The facility could organize tours throughout the state, to ghost towns and to other areas of historical significance, including Cripple Creek, Florence, and other communities of historical relevance in the region.



SCENARIO 4: Back to the Future — A Rebirth of History and Heritage

**THE BRAND**

Cañon City celebrates its unique cultural and natural history, in character and in experience. Here, in this historic location is one place in the state where visitors, students, tourists, educators, and special interest groups can come together to experience authentic western history, the history of pioneer development, and where the entire story can be told and experienced in an authentic setting, in a real historic community, with deep historic roots. This brand would capitalize on location, history and vibrancy to assemble a vast array of experiences within the community to attract attention and provide a reason for people to visit and stay in the community for longer periods of time.

SCENARIO 4: Back to the Future — A Rebirth of History and Heritage



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

It is important here to emphasize that every one of these moves is directed to Authentic History, not kitsch “rubber tomahawk cowboy experience”. It would be all too easy for this image to become fake, historic replication that quickly cheapens the brand and makes it become trendy and fleeting. Therefore, every strategic move needs to be directed towards authenticity, with an eye to permanent institutions that bring value to the image, and content to the message.

- Create a new community entry feature to the city that defines the brand, and begins the message.
- Complete the historic restoration of historic Main Street to authentically support the brand as Authentic Colorado.
- Activate downtown with tourist oriented activities, street fairs, farmers markets, regional themed events that support the brand.
- Move to develop downtown hotel rooms in historic buildings, partnering with hotel operators who are accustomed to redoing and operating historic properties (ie, Historic Inns of America as example).
- Begin planning for the development of a “Western Heritage Experience” hotel and resort on the City land near the Royal Gorge Park.
- Develop community wide design standards that support the Authentic Historical and cultural theme—i.e., Savannah Georgia as example of a community steeped in historic and cultural heritage.

- Begin the process of selection of key private sector development partners who will, 1) take on the responsibility for the operation of key all year activities that support the image, and 2) Enter into partnership with the community for the completion of Main Street (ie, Larimer Square in Denver as example of a key destination in Denver under the management of one developer who orchestrates the organization and format of the retail development there).
- Begin the process of selecting a hotel developer for the development and operation of a historic hotel on Main Street, and the development of a themed western resort out on the City owned land or in a Downtown location.
- Consider the development of an outdoor arena for events, including hosting rodeo's and other western attractions that help support Cañon City as a major destination to experience real history.
- Look to develop other venues that support the Historic West image, evolving around outdoor sports, paleontology, and other attractions that define Cañon City as a place to come.
- Work to redevelop the vacant school to become a western heritage school, directed towards western history. Partner with a major university of the Western History Collection, or History Colorado, to build and operate this new center for western education.
- Hire a PR and branding firm to develop a comprehensive identity package that brings all attributes into a pervasive marketing campaign to brand the community as “Authentic Cañon City”.

SCENARIO 4: Back to the Future — A Rebirth of History and Heritage



MARKET EVALUATION AND DEMAND AND NEED

There are many examples around the country of authentic historic locations where communities have recognized and accepted their heritage is both valuable and significant to the public at large. These communities have recognized the importance of preserving that heritage, but also marketing that heritage to brand the community based on the history of what happened there, and what the community represents past and present relative to that history. Cañon City does not necessarily have the significance of Gettysburg, for example, in terms of an event driven historical significance. But it does have a rich ongoing history of being a very authentic and deep rooted historic town, in a very rich historical region.

Whether it is the Gorge Bridge, the historic Main Street, the Abbey, the agricultural history of the region, or the rich paleontology history, the community in many ways is the perfect example of the western town and its cultural significance in the larger story of the development of the Rocky Mountain West.

While other communities have in some ways embraced this same message, few communities have taken this direction and built a brand around history and authentic western experiences. (Examples of other western theme towns include Dodge City, Tombstone, etc.) Cañon City has all the right ingredients to do this – the Bridge, the train, the old Stage Road, the wonderfully preserved downtown architecture and the scale and character of the core community with a wonderful stock of old homes, a rich agricultural heritage, and a center of prehistoric exploration. Couple this with a beautiful, authentic setting that rivals any location in the state for beauty, and the community is positioned well to bring together all of these attributes into a brand of “Authenticity” and “Experience”.

It would be important to couple the vision with a major PR and marketing campaign, and to support the vision with highly specific moves that would require partnering with the private development community to orchestrate community events, redevelop to preserve downtown properties, build a new historic hotel, and create a western resort on the City land. It is not clear at this time whether a market exists to do all of this, but at first look, it would seem that each of these venues become more plausible when coupled with a strong brand and a viable image that will attract people to the community as tourists, for events, and conferences, for education and research, and ultimately to live in the community.

What is important here is that no other location along the Front Range is embracing this opportunity, and no other community is positioned at a gateway to the Rockies to tell this story.

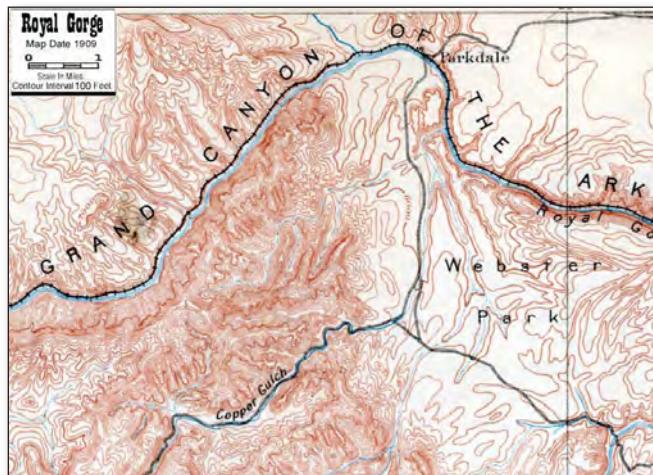


SCENARIO 4: Back to the Future — A Rebirth of History and Heritage



ORGANIZATION TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

- Create a downtown partnership of business leaders who will focus on establishing downtown as an authentic historic and cultural Downtown. Focus on developing a fund that will complete the historic restoration of those properties that are not in compliance with the historic model.
- Tap History Colorado, or the Western History Organization, to partner with the community to maximize the opportunities for partnership.
- Bring together the various existing organizations in the community who currently are working to their own ends, and focus on developing an authentic historic image for the community. Partner all of these organizations so that everyone is directed to the same ends.
- Create a BID and TIF district to begin to generate funding to support the necessary investments.
- Develop a branding committee who will be directed to orchestrate events, and develop a significant marketing campaign to position the community to this new brand.



SCENARIO 4: Back to the Future — A Rebirth of History and Heritage



FINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO BRING THE IDEA TO REALITY

There are a number of things that can be done within the existing resources of the community. These involve organizing the community and bringing the existing venues on board to support the single message of "Authentic History". A major investment should be made right away to bring on the right consultant to help deliver the brand and to roll it out in a national advertising campaign.

Longer term, there are a number of activities that can be accomplished within the resources of the community. These include cleaning up the community gateway, improving the visibility and accessibility of Downtown, and most importantly – completing the historic renovation of properties along Main Street that are not in character with the rest of the image.

In the biggest picture, we have identified a number of moves that will ultimately carry the image to its logical completion, including building the downtown hotel, developing a major western history educational facility, and building a western themed resort, equestrian center and arena out on the city land. Each of these moves will require significant seed money from the community to develop infrastructure and to create incentive packages to encourage private sector investment and development in these ventures.

Some specific financial moves that can be made include:

- Create a BID or historic district that will bring funding for renovation of downtown area properties.
- Identify potential partners and undertake research to define and clarify the heritage categories and potential funding sources to target within the branding and marketing strategies.
- Develop funding to hire a major PR branding firm to roll out national campaign.
- Purchase additional land available adjacent to city land.
- Create new gateway to the community consistent with new brand.
- Bring on event consultant to orchestrate a series of events that support the brand.
- Seek development partners to work on individual projects that support brand.



Scenario 5

Authentic Colorado

Gateway to the Authentic West!

SCENARIO 5: Authentic Colorado – Gateway to the Authentic West



THE BIG IDEA

This scenario has a lot of similarities to number 4, but rather than build a brand around history, the concept here would be built around the idea of “Authentic Colorado” (Gateway to the Real West and mountain adventure). What is obvious about this message is that it focuses on authenticity. It is intended to counter the less authentic venues that exist throughout the west, with “made in China” souvenir shops, and fake replication of western Wild West experiences. Buckskin Joe is gone, and it is important to recognize that the tourist today is intentionally avoiding commercialism in their vacation choices. Today, the tourist is much more discretionary and sophisticated with their hard earned vacation money, and they are seeking authentic, enriching experiences that bring value for their money spent.

Imagine that the Downtown area is Southwest Colorado's gateway to the mountains. Today, most of the focus of tourism is the I-70 corridor, but that really is only because of transportation. The destinations along that corridor are resort oriented, and are clearly focused on winter sports and summer activities, such as the Vail Bravo concert series, the various art fairs, and tourism in general. But no community has been branded as the center of the Rocky Mountain Experience. Cañon City is uniquely located at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, with the natural amenities already in place that supports a robust recreational market. There is foundation in place for this idea. Almost 2 million visitors to Colorado "pass through" this potential gateway now, but few stop and stay. The big idea here is to bring all of this together in one idea, and to position Cañon City as the Gateway to the Authentic West.

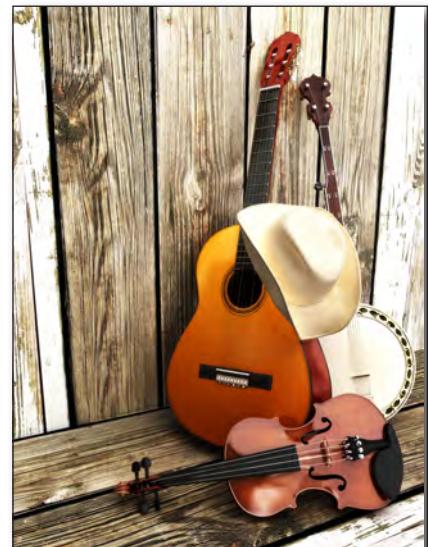


SCENARIO 5: Authentic Colorado – Gateway to the Authentic West

**THE BRAND: AUTHENTIC COLORADO – GATEWAY TO THE AUTHENTIC WEST**

Cañon City is the Gateway to the Real West for vacationers, tourists, conventioneers, retirees, and recreational aficionados. This would include a positioning of the community as a true western destination, including a strong downtown with real western merchandise, food, and high quality goods. It would include the train, the Gorge, and all of the authentic recreational opportunities in the region, with Cañon City the gateway to all. It is a robust brand that includes lifestyle, education, arts, culture and recreation and the gateway to all that is in the region.

SCENARIO 5: Authentic Colorado – Gateway to the Authentic West



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

- Revitalize the downtown to adhere to historic standards of the traditional western town.
- Create a western cultural visitors center and marketplace, where you can find authentic western merchandise located in one place. The Garden of the Gods has a very good example that maintains, for the most part, an authentic western flavor with higher quality merchandise.
- Create a gathering place in the community, preferably Downtown, or as an alternative at the junction of Highway 50 and the Royal Gorge Park entrance at County Road 3A. This idea is to bring together all of the various venues and vendors to offer the opportunity for a visitor to experience all that is available, and to sign up for any events, tours, or activities they wish to enjoy.
- Offer a traditional western experience, with western cook outs, trail rides, hikes, jeep rides, and other events that would originate with the community as a base camp.
- Develop a historic western hotel in Downtown Cañon City.
- Develop a destination western resort in the city owned land to become a western destination. This location would be designed to be uniquely focused on an immersion experience to the Real West in terms of food, art, culture, entertainment, outdoor recreation, and history. This venue would also complement the existing community core by creating new tax base, and to increase the overall visitation to the community. The idea here is by bringing more people here to stay longer, the entire community will benefit.
- Build a western heritage center, likely downtown that focuses on western history, mining, paleontology, ghost towns, commerce, transportation, and the complete range of western experiences.
- Hold western festivals during the year focusing on western lifestyle – rodeo, western music, western art, western culinary, western entertainment, outdoor activity, recreation and sports, health and wellness, etc. The venue for this should be near downtown at a newly created festival park (Or at a new festival park at the City owned land).
- Hire a national branding and PR firm to position the brand, and to provide a national marketing program that brings Cañon City into the focus of tourist interest.
- Look to the city owned land to develop an equestrian image that will attract “horse people” who are interested in a location to board, train, and enjoy equestrian living. A great example of this is the equestrian center that has been recently built along I-70 near Edwards. It includes an arena, a large stables, several training rings, and large acreage for grazing. This idea might be expanded by providing trails that connect back to town, and offer direct equestrian opportunities throughout the community at locations like the Abbey, and historic Downtown.

SCENARIO 5: Authentic Colorado – Gateway to the Authentic West



MARKET EVALUATION AND DEMAND AND NEED

The market story here is very similar to the previous scenario. Cañon City is well positioned to become the “go to” community in south central Colorado for the Real Western experience. There is so much existing amenity to draw upon, ranging from outdoor recreation to the character and charm of the existing historic core. Just as Florence has focused on antiques, Cañon City should refocus its marketing of retailing, food, and entertainment towards the western experience.

In working within the demand of the tourist industry, it is our belief that vacationers today are not looking for trendy, cheap, replicated experience. The market today is for authenticity, and everything about this brand is directed to real, authentic experiences, in high quality venues, that deliver a value based entertaining product, at reasonable prices. We might characterize this as the “National Park Experience” with venues such as Mount Rushmore as the model of excellence to emulate. The market here is not the same as the high end ski resorts, but rather middle class visitors. This is an idea to capture European and Asian tourism as well, because foreign visitors love the West and everything about it.

The demographics are also important. This brand needs to be for families on one hand, and the empty nester, baby boomer on the other. Each is different, but there is an opportunity here for this brand to reach both. Museums, education, music and recreation can appeal to both, while children need hands on engagement, and active participation and entertaining activities to keep them interested and engaged. On the other hand, older adults are looking for education, and for ways for their minds to be

stimulated. They want recreation, but not extreme sports. They want participation, but at a pace that they can handle. They want to shop and eat, but with unique and authentic experience. For that reason, this brand needs to be designed with full awareness of the various audiences who will come here.

The western themed festivals are huge market attractions that work very well to attract locals from Colorado. (E.g. Cheyenne Frontier Day, The Denver Stock Show, Steamboat Days, etc.) These festivals capture huge audiences from within the state and from adjoining states where people are looking for easy, destination visits of short duration.

There also is opportunity to capture a new audience who will come often and stay longer. These people are interested in a more immersion experience in education, arts and culture, with the opportunity to do art, write books, or compose music, visit a spa, or simply relax. If this brand works, there is great opportunity for Cañon City to become a center for arts just as Santa Fe has become in New Mexico. The cost of living is low, and the lifestyle can reinforce that this is a place where you can come, relax, and be creative.

SCENARIO 5: Authentic Colorado – Gateway to the Authentic West

**ORGANIZATION TO ACHIEVE RESULTS**

Much of the organizational ideas from Scenario 4 apply here as well.

- Hire a national PR firm to develop the brand and image, and market it nationally.
- Organize a downtown Partnership group who can lead the development of a downtown brand, take on the historic renovation of downtown area properties, and begin to orchestrate the mix of shops and restaurants in the area. (Within a district like this, a national retailer will come in and orchestrate the mix of stores in order to meet the correct market objectives for the desired brand. Cherry Creek North BID attempts to do this today within the context of privately owned businesses. At best, they have been able to orchestrate a concerted branding campaign and focus new retailing to support that brand).
- Organize a development authority who has the power to put together incentive packages and issue developer RFP's for event planning, downtown hotel development, construction and operation of western culture and arts center, western merchandise center, and destination resort on the City owned property.
- Create a working team to work with existing vendors, operators, and the Royal Gorge management team to provide a product that is consistent with the brand, and appropriate for the desired market. Bring all of these together in a working group to collectively brand each of them as a part of the Cañon City story.
- Create a working group to work with the Royal Gorge Bridge and Park Company to modify their offerings to better fit the brand, and to agree to market the venue as a significant part of the Authentic West message.

SCENARIO 5: Authentic Colorado – Gateway to the Authentic West

**FINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO BRING THE IDEA TO REALITY**

As with scenario 4, there are significant assets in place today that will allow the city to make a major step towards reaching this objective:

- Fund the hiring of a national PR firm to position the community for the new brand.
- Develop BID to continue improving the historic character of downtown and to promote the desired mix of businesses in downtown.
- Develop a master plan for the creation of a new Western Experience Resort on the acreage the city owns at the Royal Gorge.
- Develop a community bond issue to do public improvements in the community that reinforce the brand – gateway, downtown visibility, theme.
- Leverage a State of Colorado Economic Development funds to build a Colorado experience center, heritage center, museum.
- Solicit private sector involvement in doing events in the community that support the brand.
- Solicit private sector involvement in development of new venues, including visitor center, festival park, downtown hotel, and destination resort.

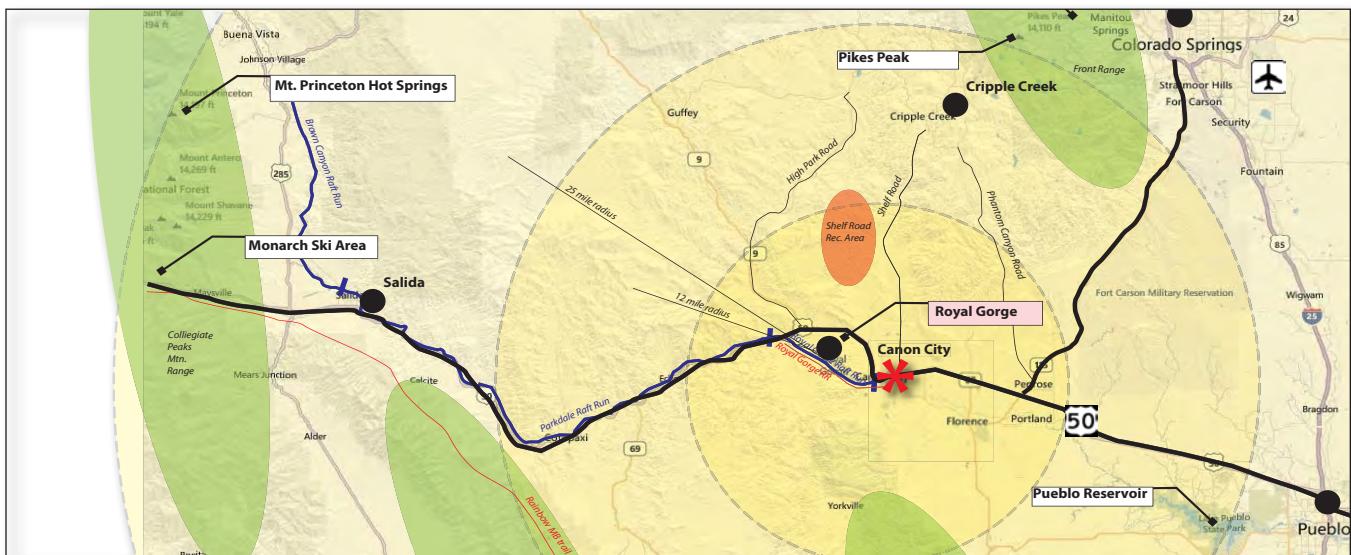
Recommended Scenario

Authentic Colorado

Gateway to the Authentic West



RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West



INTRODUCTION

After extensive review in a community workshop and a City Council Retreat, RNL is recommending a single scenario that can be the basis for a broadly defined “Brand” for the community. The overall consensus reinforced the conclusion that a hybrid scenario best meets the objectives of the community, with many ideas and strategies taken from all 5 of the original scenarios. In addition, this recommended scenario appears to be flexible to accommodate a wide range of actions, both in the core of the City and also at the land owned by the City at the Royal Gorge Park. The scenario also meets community objectives by focusing on three time frames of action including short-term (low hanging fruit), mid-term, and long-term objective.

What became evident from the community dialogue is there is high interest for the betterment of the community and for a Vision Plan focused on the downtown core as a means of increasing tourism as well as improving the quality of life for the residents of the community. In addition, there appears to be overall consensus to work with the assets of the community that are already in place including the Main Street Historic core, as well as the Highway 50 corridor, including both gateways from the east and the west.

There appears also to be strong mandate for Cañon City to become the gateway to the many activities in the region, and the centralized clearing house for tours, tickets, and information. The idea of a Downtown visitor’s center and merchandise sales center was strongly endorsed; that this becomes the focus of a downtown redevelopment effort that includes the development of a resort hotel, and the desire of a strong message reinforcing retail and restaurants within the historic core.

In terms of job creation, there is a sense that any scenario must focus on some form of job creation, so this idea includes a number of ideas focused on improving the economic vibrancy of the community by creating new jobs and greater opportunities for a wide range of employment for the residents of the community that live there today.

There was also strong interest in the longer term development of the City owned land into a new economic engine as a destination location that will increase visitation to the community. However, it is recognized that this move will likely take a significant amount of time to determine its viability, to define and fund the required infrastructure and to seek the strategic partnership necessary to move this idea ahead.

Every scenario has a number of common elements, all of which have been incorporated into this recommended scenario. These elements include the orchestration of events, the establishment of a downtown organization, and the creation of a public relations and advertising campaign to put the message out into the public. At the same time, there appears to be strong consensus that negotiations need to take place with the owners and operators of the Royal Gorge Park and Bridge to assure that their mission and the park development is aligned with the City objectives and its brand.

All of these ideas are directed toward a focused message that brings together all of the assets of the existing community and presents them as a unified message, all directed toward the idea of Cañon City as the quintessential Authentic Colorado.

RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY— Gateway to the Authentic West



CREATING A BRAND FOR CAÑON CITY

Cañon City means so many things to so many people. But the pervasive image for years has been a community that is a “prison town” and secondarily, a community near the Royal Gorge. In developing the right economic development opportunity for the community, our charge was to fully evaluate the assets of the community, and to find the big idea that can become a focus for marketing, public relations and community development. Clearly, a new image for the community must be built upon what the community has to offer, and where the citizens of the community want to go in the future with their town. But there is also the need for an external message that celebrates the community. Most of all, there is a need to deflect the prison image, and to replace it with a new and exciting idea of what the community really is all about. To the economic development world, this means adopting a new “Brand” for Cañon City that brings together all of the assets and values of the community into a simple, short phrase that best describes Cañon City. The purpose of this new Brand, is to bring together everyone in the community to all rally behind the idea, and to collectively deliver it in advertising, messaging, projects, and planning. ***The Brand is the image of the community to the outside world, and the “picture” of the community the way the community wants to be seen.***



RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West

**THE BIG IDEA – A NEW “BRAND” FOR THE COMMUNITY**

Imagine that the Historic Downtown Core area of Cañon City is Southwest Colorado's gateway to the Rocky Mountain West.

Today, most of the focus of tourism is the I-70 corridor, but that really is only because of ready access to some of the best ski resorts in the world. The destinations along that corridor are resort oriented, and are clearly focused on winter sports and summer activities such as the Vail Bravo concert series, the various art fairs, and tourism in general. But no community has of yet been branded as the gateway to the Rocky Mountain Experience. Cañon City is uniquely located at the base on the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, with the natural amenities already in place that supports a robust recreational market. The big idea here is to bring all of these assets together in one message, and to position Cañon City as the Gateway to the AUTHENTIC WEST.



RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West

**THE BRAND**

Cañon City is the Gateway to the Authentic West for vacationers, tourists, conventioneers, retirees, and recreational aficionados. Cañon City is a true western destination, including a strong downtown with real western culture, food, and high quality merchandise. The community is a wealth of opportunity, including The Royal Gorge Railway, the Royal Gorge Bridge and Park, and all of the authentic recreational opportunities in the region, with Cañon City the gateway of it all. Cañon City is all about lifestyle, education, arts, culture and recreation epitomizing the lifestyle of the Rocky Mountain West.

Cañon City brings together all of the attributes of the region into one location with a visitor's center that becomes the visitor's passport to the authentic western experience. Cañon City has an educational focus towards the unique history of the community and the region,

including western history and culture, western food and art, and the rich heritage of the area in paleontology and agriculture.

Prosperity and growth of the community begins with a strong Downtown Core, complimented by the re-creation of a walkable Main Street, the creation of a historic downtown hotel and a vibrant commercial base of shops and restaurants that support the Cañon City experience. The Downtown focus is complimented by a longer term goal of developing a destination resort community at the City owned land adjacent to the Royal Gorge.

Ultimately, Cañon City thrives on economic development including the recruitment of Western centric businesses, restaurants and shops to support and enhance the economic base of the community, and provide jobs for the residents who live there.

RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West

**30 SECOND ELEVATOR SPEECH**

Cañon City is the place to come to for an Authentic Western Experience. This community is the gateway to the Rocky Mountains, and the beginning of a vast array of social, cultural and recreational activities that celebrate the heritage, philosophy and western lifestyle. This is a place to visit, live, and vacation. It is a place to call home, with an affordable high quality of life, wonderful amenities, and great educational opportunities all focused on the western lifestyle and the rich history of the region. This is a place for work, with a strong focus on those businesses that will benefit from the location and the brand of the community as the quintessential western town. Cañon City is a destination, with some of the best scenery, the greatest adventure, and a vast cornucopia of activities for families, empty nesters, baby boomers, children and adults. There is something for everyone and it all starts in Cañon City. Come here, indulge yourself, and enjoy everything this robust community has to offer.



RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

Various strategies that can be employed within the community are taken from all five scenarios. However, they all have in common a focused vision towards creating the Authentic West brand, and everything that goes with it to provide a deep and robust range of activities, places, and events.

Downtown development:

- Revitalize the downtown to adhere to historic standards of the traditional western town.
- Redevelop the downtown historic core to improve the pedestrian experience, introduce outdoor eating and entertainment, and provide a higher quality image to residents and visitors.
- Create a western cultural marketplace, where you can find authentic western merchandise located in one place.
- Create a Visitor's Center in the Historic Downtown Core. This idea is to bring together all of the various venues and vendors in the region to offer the opportunity for a visitor to investigate all that is available, and to sign up for any events, tours, or activities they wish to enjoy. This could be either a stand-alone building in a civic space downtown, or an infill location along Historic Main Street.
- Activate downtown with tourist oriented activities, street fairs, farmers markets, regional themed events that support the brand. Like Larimer Square in Downtown Denver, these events could occur along Main Street, as a sidewalk fair, or in a civic place within the community core.
- Explore the feasibility to develop downtown hotel rooms in historic buildings, including the establishment of a destination historic western hotel, partnering with hotel operators who are accustomed to redoing and operating historic properties (i.e., Historic Inns of America as example) Use the existing historic stock if possible, but also consider new infill buildings that carry forward the authentic western theme. Couple this strategy with the development of necessary parking to support downtown and hotel activates.

RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY— Gateway to the Authentic West



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

Development In the community

- Provide signature improvement to the community to beautify the entry and approach, and to create an appealing and desirable setting for economic development. This could include light fixtures, landscape, signage, graphics, and public art that supports the vision and gives identity to the community as a whole.
- Build a Western Heritage Center that focuses on western history, mining, paleontology, ghost towns, commerce, transportation, and the complete range of western experiences.
- Hold western festivals during the year focusing on western lifestyle – rodeo, western music, western art, western culinary, western entertainment, outdoor activity, recreation and sports, health and wellness, etc.
- Capitalize on the River Edge location by developing the river corridor as a vibrant and active celebration of the Cañon City lifestyle including recreation, restaurants, and specialized retail opportunities, as well as a gateway experience to the vast resources the river has to offer.
- Work with the Abbey, and determine specifically how it can be focused as a much larger economic generator and a much more successful destination, either as a destination hotel, an educational campus, or senior housing.
- Determine how to take the vacant and under utilized real estate in the community, such as St. Scholastica, and

other unused buildings such as the Madison School, to become an economic generator in the community, either by attracting a new business or by creating a business incubator within the building. Create a special use or overlay district that will simplify the process of identifying reuse possibilities and to approve their implementation.

- Or as an alternative, redevelop St. Scholastica to become a western heritage school, or some other directed education use related to the rich history of the region. Partner with a major university of the Western History Collection, or History Colorado, to collaborate in this new center for western education.
- Concentrate investment in museums, destination retail, hotels, and restaurants in the core area such that people come there, stay there and depart from there to points beyond.
- Recruit a major educational institution to locate a campus within the community, or to build upon the existing Community College infrastructure and curriculum to align with business to position as a focused economic generator within the town.
- Determine a location for a new business site, and prepare market study regarding the potential of that location as a specific niche industry, or targeted focused company recruitment. Such a move should look to the profile of the existing population and their job needs, as well as attract a new population base that would support the new business.

RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West



STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

On the City-owned land at the Royal Gorge Park

Note: Any investment in the City owned land will need to complement the existing community. Investment in the City owned land is not intended in any way to compete with the existing core, but rather support it. If the new land can catalyze new investment for a new resort, or other destination venues, then the entire community will benefit from the economic development that will be generated on this new land. Therefore, all of the strategies that are identified for the City owned land are selected based upon “value added” opportunities that cannot be fulfilled within the community today, or are not best developed there in the future. These opportunities include the following:

- Offer a traditional western experience, with western cook outs, trail rides, hikes, jeep rides, and other events that would originate within the community as a base camp. Develop a destination western resort and hotel to offer an authentic western experience.
- This location would be designed to be uniquely focused on an immersion experience to the Authentic West in terms of food, art, culture, entertainment, outdoor recreation, and history. This venue would also complement the existing community core by creating new tax base, and to increase the overall visitation to the community. The idea here is by bringing more people here to stay longer, the entire community will benefit.
- Look to the city-owned land to develop an equestrian image that will attract “horse people” who are interested in a location to board, train, and enjoy equestrian living. A great example of this is the equestrian center that has been recently built along

I-70 near Edwards. It includes an arena, a large stables, several training rings, and large acreage for grazing. This idea might be expanded by providing trails that connect back to town, and offer direct equestrian opportunities throughout the community at locations like the Abbey, and historic downtown to make the community “horse friendly”. Consider developing “ride in” housing out on the city-owned land, or within the community that would attract equestrian people to come and live here part time or full time.

- Create a new festival place, performing arts center for signature concerts or events. While many parks already exist, the idea would be to create a place that is more tourism oriented, as a congregating place for concerts, festivals, and other venues that would focus on the Authentic West. This would be a destination location with the class and recognition of Red Rocks, Ravinia Park or The Aspen Music Festival as a destination location for signature entertainment. (Note: This strategy could be either located near downtown or within the City Land adjacent to the Royal Gorge).
- Partner with a developer to build a destination outdoor recreation center on the property that provides a focus for a wide range of authentic western experiences, including golf, hiking, fishing, climbing, mountain bike trails, nature trails, etc. This likely should not be extreme sport-oriented if it is intended to attract a larger family oriented market, tourists, empty nesters, retirees, and a broader cross section of the traveling market.

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STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

On the City-owned land at the Royal Gorge Park:

- Consider building a destination RV and camping destination of high quality. This would be a definite upscale destination, with high amenity, intending to be more of a “land yacht marina” rather than the more typical camping park. The goal here would be for people to come here, stay for a longer period, and enjoy the activities offered in the region. This could potentially partner with a significant retirement community on the property.
- Develop a signature for-sale community consisting of home sales for single family and multifamily development. This development would be intended to attract retirees who are looking to the beauty of the area as a first or second home, and for families who are not necessarily looking for a ski location, but rather are interested in mountain outdoor activities in a “banana belt” climate, very accessible to the recreation amenities of the high mountains. This resort may focus upon a destination signature golf course, or outdoor recreation opportunities including equestrian trails, hiking, mountain biking, Nordic skiing, snow-shoeing, etc.
- Develop a signature gateway mixed use core. This “village center” would not compete with the Downtown, but rather would focus on services related to the new destination resort development. This could be located at the intersection of Highway 50 and the resort entrance road, with the idea of generating commercial tax base, and also providing local tax base to fund site development for the entire project.
- The city should consider the merits of acquiring additional property adjacent to the City-owned land, for the purpose of controlling the access and experience along the entrance road intersecting Highway 50. If possible, this annexation should include the intersection with Highway 50 so that regulations can be put in place to control land use along the Highway 50 frontage.
- The City should develop a master plan (long-term vision) for the entire city-owned land consistent with the western theme and a national park quality. This master plan should focus on a vision that will eventually upgrade the operation of the leased Royal Gorge Bridge and Park, and compliment the operations there with a larger number of opportunities on the City owned land adjacent to the Park.

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STRATEGIES AND STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE BRAND

Along the Highway 50 Corridor:

- Create new entrances to the community, focused on catching people when they first approach the town from the east and west, and have the community visible before them.
- Build a new Cañon City signature entry that clearly defines the “core of the community” and the Downtown Main Street area.
- Create a direct intercept from Highway 50 to bring people into the center of town, into the heart of the core district.
- Change the entire experience of Highway 50 through the community to make the city more visible and more accessible and to bring the brand of the community to reach the people who are just “driving through town”. The community should work with the county on the approaches to the city along highway 50. At the Cañon City border, the City should establish zoning and land use regulations such that the first experience in the community is positive and controlled and supportive of the brand.
- The City should annex the land at the entrance to the Royal Gorge Park and establish land use regulations that would limit what uses could be built there. (Right now, the lower value “rubber tomahawk” market that exists there today is not a positive image for the visitor, nor is it supportive of a quality destination resort image. Without this “regulated setting, it will be extremely difficult to motivate a quality developer to invest in the property as a high quality destination resort or entertainment venue.)



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**ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE RESULTS**

With the strategies in place to bring vibrant economic development to the community centered upon the Authentic West Brand, there are a number of organizational structures that need to be put into place in order to mobilize the community into action. The key here is to create the structure to focus all of the resources of the community in one direction, and to organize in such a way that everyone, and every resource, is directed to the same goal. The key here is community alignment to the Vision, and the ability of the citizenry to come together, visualize a common objective, and actualize that vision to results. The key organizational strategies that are recommended include.

ACTIONS BY THE CITY TO ORGANIZE THE MISSION

- The City should amend its 2001 plan, with the city approval process, to include this Vision into its guiding principles. This plan would be amended accordingly, then approved through appropriate public comment and then adopted by City Council. There should be agreement on the plan and it should be institutionalized to act as the guiding force in the community.
- The City should bring together the many different downtown and tourist-based organizations into one group similar to the Downtown Denver Partnership – charged with the economic development and promotion of Downtown Cañon City. (A similar arrangement is laid out in Cañon City's Downtown Plan.) It would be important here to create an organizational structure that can focus the energy of the community in one central organization that can carry the plan forward and build momentum

toward plan implementation. For example, the chart above illustrates one such organizational structure for consideration that is organized under the City umbrella, with City Council as the driver. Other models in other communities organize under private sector leadership, with membership appointed by council, and others are organized completely in the private sector, partnered with the City. It is up the community to develop the structure but it is recommended that the preferred structure is one that focuses primarily on the implementation of vision plan.

- The City should appoint a Liaison Group to work with the corrections system to build a better supportive relationship regarding economic development and community improvement in Cañon City, including the promotion of a local employee base. This group should

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ACTIONS BY THE CITY TO ORGANIZE THE MISSION

explore various ways in which the prison system can be a better community neighbor through economic partnerships, incentives for prison workers to live within the community and to work collectively to maximize the benefits of the prison assets in supporting the community brand. One idea that should be explored jointly is the potential reuse of the Territorial Prison, which may be slated for replacement, to become a new amenity for the community as a school, a hotel, a museum, or other historical venue.

- The City should appoint an Events Committee that will be directed to orchestrate events, and develop a significant marketing campaign to position the community.
- The City should create a Downtown Redevelopment Authority or Downtown Development Authority that has the wherewithal to raise money and to enter into contract with various entities to accomplish projects, including working with property owners to improve the historic character of properties, and make public improvements through public and private sector investment. This organization would have the power to create incentive packages, and issue developer RFP's for, event planning, downtown hotel development, construction and operation of visitor's center, and other initiatives to be undertaken under this plan.
- The community should form a Recreation and Entertainment Organization that solicits membership from all the venues and attractions in the region who would organize and operate a visitor's center, and the marketing of the community as the gathering place. This organization should seek a lead hire with broad and specific experience in this area and in marketing Colorado area centers. This organization could also work with existing vendors, operators, and the Royal Gorge Park management team to provide a product that is consistent with the brand, and appropriate for the desired market.

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ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY CONSULTANTS TO ADVANCE CITY OBJECTIVES

The City Should:

- Hire a PR and Marketing firm to develop a comprehensive identity package that brings all attributes into a pervasive marketing campaign to market the brand, “ Cañon City – Gateway to the Authentic West.”
- Hire a planning and design consultant to undertake a Highway 50 corridor study to redefine the community gateway and revision the US 50 experience through the community.
- Hire a planning and design consultant to design and implement a downtown improvement project that would re-vision the Main Street streetscape, define new branding initiative for Main Street, and redefine the retail environment of the street.
- Hire a design consultant to create and adopt design standards for key locations in the community that support the Authentic West story, to assure that economic investment will be protected against negative impacts of undesirable development in the future.
- Undertake a hotel feasibility study for both a downtown historic hotel as well as a destination resort hotel on the City owned land.
- Allow the newly formed Events Committee hire one or more events operators to orchestrate a series of events that support the brand.

RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West



ACTIONS TO BUILD OUTSIDE RELATIONSHIPS TO REALIZE GOALS

The City Should:

- Tap History Colorado, or the Western History Organization, to partner with the community to maximize the opportunities for shared programs that support each other's objectives.
- Identify potential partners such as the University of Colorado, Colorado State University and other in state and out of state educational programs and undertake research to define programs that build upon western history, paleontology, mining and agricultural activities in the region.
- Tap the State of Colorado Economic Development funds, CDOT, and other grant programs for incentive tax credits or subsidies to assist in the implementation of community initiatives.
- Partner with State Corrections to improve the relationships between the prisons and the community, to partner for business opportunities, and to create incentives for prison employees to live and work in the community.
- Partner with the county to improve the regional message of economic development and to create beneficial relationships that would benefit tourism and investment in the community and the county. This would include a shared vision for the county lands that border the City.



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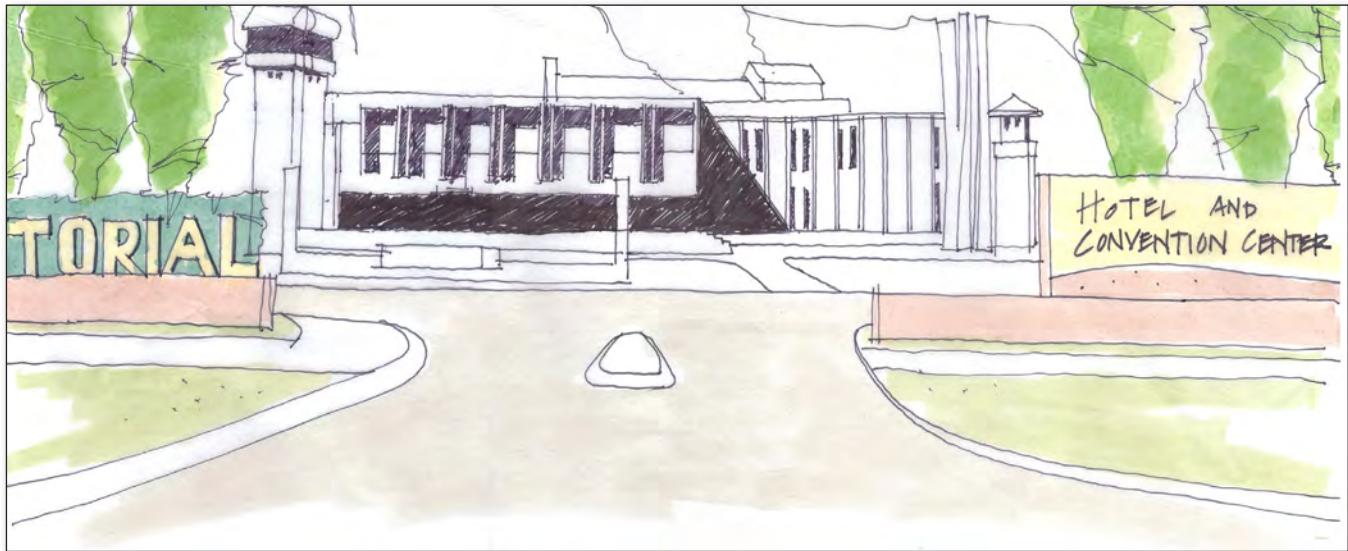


ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The City Should:

- Select key private sector development partners who will: 1) take on the responsibility for the operation of key activities that support the image, and 2) enter into partnership with the community for the completion of Main Street.
- Select a hotel developer for the development and operation of a historic hotel on Main Street, and the development of a themed western resort out on the City owned land or in a Downtown location.
- Engage the Royal Gorge Bridge Company regarding additional investment in the Park, the consistency of their product with the Authentic Western brand, the investment in the future direction of the park's operation, and the projected lifespan of the relationship.
- Authorize City staff to issue the RFP(s) for development to one or more developers for the resort hotel, destination residential, commercial mixed use core, golf course operation, and other venues anticipated in the master plan for the property.
- Solicit private sector involvement in doing events in the community that support the brand.
- Solicit private sector involvement in development of new venues, including visitor center, festival park, downtown hotel, and destination resort.

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ACTIONS TO CREATE FINANCE MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The City Should:

- Create a BID district to begin to generate funding to support the necessary investments. This BID would be an independent development and management entity under the oversight of the newly formed Downtown Partnership organization.
- Initiate a tourism and entertainment tax directed towards tourism in the community and the county. While the City currently has a small lodging tax, this would be further reaching, to include all entertainment venues, the purpose of which would be to support comprehensive marketing, and to support the funding of the Visitor's Center in Downtown Cañon City.
- Create a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) that focuses on funds for the redevelopment of under utilized properties along Main Street and in the core area, and for the historic renovation of the historic facades within the area.
- Create an Urban Renewal Authority and identify TIF income created through sales and property tax, to be earmarked for public investment within the City. This Urban Renewal Authority may be available for other areas of the City wishing to generate TIF funding, outside the DDA.
- Look to the State of Colorado Economic Development funds to supplement private and public money, as seed investment to begin the process of achieving the brand.
- Look to the private sector to finance private sector investment in the community for key attributes including the downtown hotel, a new destination resort, a new downtown visitor's center, and other development opportunities that may require private sector development.
- Create a local bond issue to fund gateway investments at edge of community, a signature gateway downtown, and a new public gathering place adjacent to downtown.
- Partner with CDOT to fund Highway 50 corridor improvements aimed at improving access, safety and the aesthetic quality of the corridor.

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PHASING AND TIMING OF IMPLEMENTATION

It is important that actions begin on day one in order for momentum to be created that will reinvent the community over time. Too many of the past master plans have ended up on the shelves, with little or no implementation to show for the work that went into developing the vision. In order for vision to become reality, something must happen immediately, and the community must see results that they can measure.

The Brand celebrates a Vision of what Cañon City wants to be:

The beauty of the branding opportunity to redefine Cañon City as the Gateway to the Authentic West is the chance for every action in the community to be directed toward achieving this objective. This Brand is expressed through a Vision of what the town wants to be, and it becomes a rallying point for the community to get behind, to work towards, and to show progress towards reaching a future end point of economic success. But the idea is also open ended, and can go where the community wants to go in the future. There is no outcome at the end that would suggest the effort is “done.” Rather, the Vision must be considered an evolving idea, with the flexibility to morph and adapt over time to changing economic conditions and changing community priorities. But even within these uncertain futures, the beauty of the Vision is that it transcends individual actions and becomes a pervasive beacon for the focused actions of the community.

Therefore, in order to move this Vision forward immediately, there are a series of steps that can be taken immediately that will set the effort in motion, such that momentum is built and progress is recognized. At the same time, there are longer term objectives that can be planned for, with real time expectations for achievement.



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QUICK WIN ACTIONS WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR

- Adopt the Vision and the Brand. The Vision must be seen as the guiding principles for the community development. This new story should be told everywhere. This becomes the Brand for the community.
- Create a downtown business organization (Downtown Partnership) that can implement a BID or TIF district that can carry out the objective of completing the historic renovation of Downtown Cañon City. Develop the organizational structure to bring together the diverse venues and activities, to brand them under one PR campaign.
- Hire a nationally respected advertising and PR firm to position and market the brand. Create a plan for the core of the community that incorporates all of the strategic moves outlined in this Vision.
- Create an implementation plan for the new visitor's center and merchandise sales center in downtown. Create a "temporary" visitors center downtown.
- Undertake US Highway 50 Corridor Study for corridor improvements, including the creation of new community entrances, new land use along the corridor and better connectivity with Downtown.
- Initiate market study to identify the demand and feasibility for a resort. (Downtown and/or at the City-owned land adjacent to the Royal Gorge Park.)
- Begin negotiations with the Royal Gorge Bridge Company regarding its current operations, the desired brand and market and how it can adjust or refocus its operations toward the City's vision.
- Begin discussions with Colorado Department of Corrections to improve the synergistic relationship between the facilities, prison industries, and the community.
- Develop signature elements, graphics, and advertising through temporary installations that reinforce the brand.
- Focus on local funding mechanisms to carry out completion of the historic character of Main Street by renovating properties back to "old west" standards, creating a new civic place within the core, improving the streetscape, and improving the visibility of the street from Highway 50.
- Develop a new master plan for the City-owned land at the Royal Gorge Park. Included would be the planning and design process for resort and adjoining development.

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**MIDTERM: 2 - 3 YEARS**

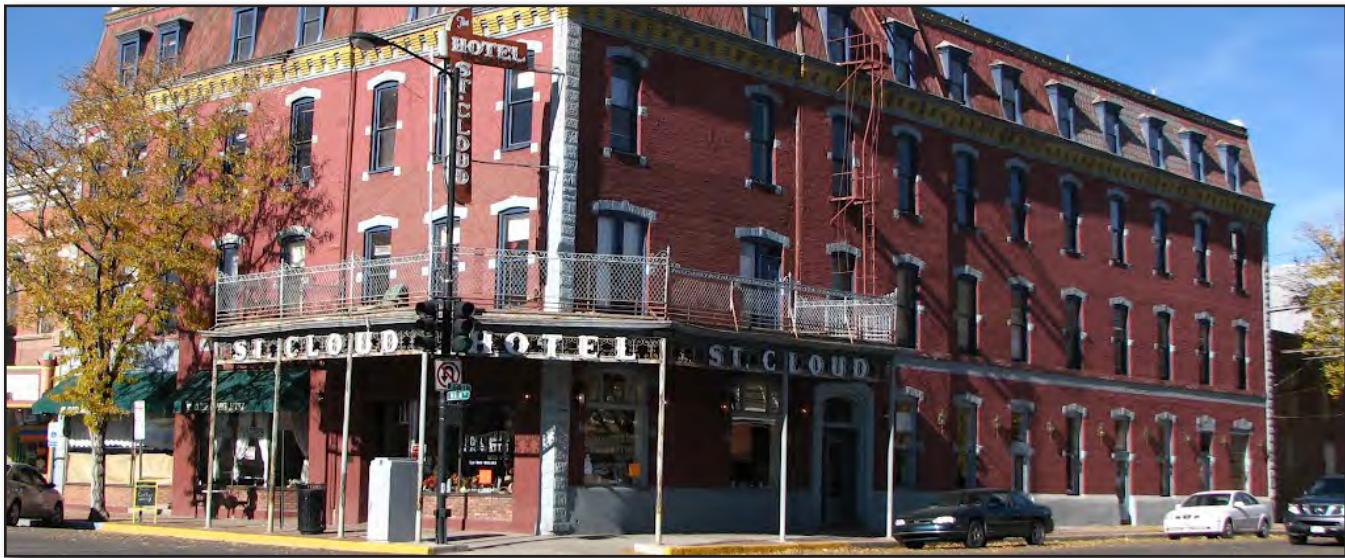
- Define new public initiative that would be funded by a bond issue, at a later public election. Begin the education of the public to support the initiative by showing the impacts to the community.
- Build an interim Downtown Core events venue for concerts, art shows, and festivals. (Note: The long term location for such a venue may be downtown or at the City-owned land at the Royal Gorge Park.)
- Define a compelling story for the State of Colorado Economic Development application, and make the application, directing that funding towards Downtown improvements, including the redevelopment of Main Street, a new visitor's center, a new merchandise center, a festival park, improved gateway into the city, and improved US 50 corridor experience.
- The City should establish a reinvestment program, using park admission fees and similar revenues, to carry out continual upgrades to the park and to help implement the master plan.
- Organize festivals and events and market for a robust summer season. Begin to coordinate this planning to prepare for the significant Over-the-River event.
- Develop a downtown retail plan that will begin to selectively organize downtown to fit the marketing objectives of the brand. This may mean bringing in a national retailing consultant who will take on the management of downtown retail space, to allow for the proper mix of restaurants, shops and entertainment venues to be established.
- Select developers as partners in a PPP (public-private-partnership) structure for the development of new venues within the community, including the visitor's center, and a new western themed destination resort, festival park, and western marketplace.
- Construct new community entrance identity (both east and west) that speaks to the brand.
- Design and adopt a new community vocabulary for signage, graphics, and design standards for development that speaks to the brand.
- Implement an overlay zoning and design guidelines for planned development that includes the lands along the Highway 50 that begins to establish a higher quality image, and limit uses that will detract from the brand.
- Develop incentive package/TIF and other public support for downtown development

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**LONGER TERM: 3 - 5 YEARS**

- Identify a location for new business or industrial park and put in place money for land acquisition and a methodology to fund roads and infrastructure.
- Create an economic development fund to support new housing alternatives in the community to be ready for job growth.
- Develop new strategies to bolster downtown businesses to be more successful and to support existing businesses to thrive as the community grows.
- Actively market the community in the economic development circles.
- Complete the renovation of Main Street including streetscape enhancements, improving the pedestrian experience, creating opportunities for sidewalk cafes, and the completion of the “old west” building facades within this area.

RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West



LONG TERM: 5 - 10 YEARS

- Solicit developers for partnership of major projects:
 1. An education center and museum
 2. Historic hotel downtown
 3. Western Heritage visitor center
 4. Western Merchandise center
- Partner with an educational institution to bring a new western heritage center to Cañon City that will foster long-term opportunities for education, research and cultural enrichment. Develop new venues in downtown Cañon City, including a permanent visitor center and merchandise center.
- Make a concerted proposal to selected employers through economic development outreach to stimulate relocation to Cañon City.
- Select development partner for destination resort on City owned land.
- Fund and build a permanent performance venue within the community.



RECOMMENDED SCENARIO: CAÑON CITY—Gateway to the Authentic West



WHEN FEASIBLE: TIME UNDETERMINED

On City owned land:

- Seek active participation and commitment on the part of the Royal Gorge Bridge Company of Colorado in the implementation of the vision for the City-owned lands. The City may need to consider options to market the long-term vision of the Park consistent with that of the community, and begin developing the Bridge and Park to complement new resort vision.
- Develop new destination resort on the city owned land.
- Develop a new private development that will support investment for single and multi-family homes on the city owned parcel.
- Develop festival park and performance venue.
- Design and build golf course and other on-site recreation venues.
- Develop RV destination park.
- Develop destination equestrian community.



In Downtown Core:

- Develop Education center/western history school.
- Solicit master developer to create a new location for business to locate in the community. (Either new buildings, incubator space, or a new business or industrial park).
- Develop Paleontology center and museum.