

# Salida Creative District Strategic Approach

**Creating Common Ground: A focus on sustainability, retention, and investment in the next generation of creatives**



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## INTRODUCTION

The Salida Creative District was formed to support the ongoing economic growth in Salida and to create a climate in which creatives and creative enterprises can thrive. The City of Salida's Creative District was announced as a Certified Creative District on March 30, 2012. A series of interviews, visits, and public meetings were conducted to involve as many local stakeholders as possible. Top goals, priorities, and partnering organizations were identified to provide the framework for creating the original Strategic Plan and to guide its implementation.

Consider this update as the directional vision of the Creative District in a way that continues to support the original mission, vision and values that grew from the first years of the first State-Certified Creative District in Colorado. While incorporating the lessons learned over the first years of the District, the renewed goals and strategies will continue to inform decision-making by the City of Salida and offer opportunities for additional support from the community, including creative individuals, organizations, and small businesses within the defined boundaries of the District. The Plan is intended to be nimble enough to allow for new opportunities as they arise, while continuing to support growth and retention/expansion of creative businesses and individuals within the community.

Engaging in and updating the previous strategic plan helps provide direction, identify a common vision and subsequent opportunities, and achieve goals. In such a time of change, a roadmap such as this will assist the Creative District leadership in keeping pace with changing community needs, increasing funding, and establishing program priorities.

As a guide meant to support the accomplishments of its past, it will be helpful in maintaining the focus of the Creative District, emphasizing priorities, creating a path for the future, measuring what matters and fostering partnerships.

Creative placemaking can significantly contribute to economic growth and ongoing revitalization efforts. Based on research by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), as described in the publication entitled, *Creative Placemaking*, by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, there are six components of successful creative placemaking initiatives:

1. Creative initiators
2. Designing around distinctiveness
3. Mobilizing public will
4. Garnering private sector support
5. Securing arts community engagement
6. Building partnerships

Building off the efforts over the past years, these components are integrated into the Salida Creative District Strategic Approach. Elements from the first plan that are on-going are included in the updated guiding document, if still relevant.

The City of Salida has long been known as a premier creative community, especially within the boundaries of the Creative District. As it continues to be celebrated as such, critical business and operational challenges also must be addressed, especially with the ongoing growth of the City and issues that concern both long-term and new residents. This updated approach seeks to augment the existing local partnerships to create a long-term culture of success in Salida.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** As the City and the Creative District enter this next phase of planning and structuring in the next few years, there is cause for celebration of the successes and progress of the Creative District's first years:

- In its beginning stages, the Creative District focused on branding, created a distinctive logo reflective of the district, developed a website and employed a variety of ways to communicate its designation and direction.
- A Public Arts Commission was developed through the efforts of the Creative District leadership to set policies and procedure for public art in the City of Salida.
- After initially utilizing funding from the state, the Creative District attained the security of being funded as a part of the City's General fund.
- An active and impactful driver of the planning and advocacy for the Space to Create program to be considered, the Creative District played a vital part in securing the first two development stages of this innovative artist live/workspace project.
- As an active campaigner for old firehouse building to be used in service to the creative community, the Creative District was successful in the City vision to use the building as a makerspace and possible community gallery/workshop space.
- Working to have the Salida Creative District and the City more broadly recognized as an arts-rich community, a partnership was established with other south central and western Colorado districts to form the Creative Corridor as a marketing and tourism vehicle.
- The Creative District created and supported new programs such as the Salida Film Festival, adding to ongoing events including the annual Summer Concerts Series in the park, JazzFest and community arts programming.
- The Creative District continues to provide support and marketing for local arts events.
- As the municipal entity designated to oversee and administer the activity of the Creative District, the Arts and Culture Department hired a part-time Community Engagement Coordinator to bolster the current efforts of current, full-time staff.
- The Arts and Culture team has established weekly meetings to better communicate and understand the functions and possibilities of the Creative District.

**CREATIVE DISTRICT VISION:** In a time of rapid change, The City of Salida will see retention and attraction of creative enterprises and jobs, improved retail, dining and small business sales and a new sense of support within the Creative District.

**CREATIVE DISTRICT MISSION:** As a State of Colorado certified Creative District, the designation allows the City of Salida to promote the historic downtown area as a concentration of artists and creative small businesses, with a goal to support economic health and growth, and to enhance the quality of life for both Salida residents and visitors.

**CREATIVE DISTRICT VALUES:** The following will serve as a framework for cultivating art, culture and creativity with which to approach planning over the next few years:

- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility
- Celebration and Curiosity
- Learning and Collaboration
- Space for all voices

**GOALS:**

1. Enhance the vibrant historic downtown area by centering the arts as significant and sustainable that make the Creative District an appealing place to live, conduct business and attract visitors
2. Contribute to the economic health and sense of community in the Creative District
3. Promote and celebrate the unique identity of the Creative District as part of historic downtown Salida
4. Showcase cultural and artistic events and amenities
5. Create a flexible Creative District Plan to implement, monitor, measure, adjust and celebrate

## **ACTIONS FOR CREATING COMMON GROUND:**

**Goal 1:** Enhance the vibrant historic downtown area by centering the arts as significant and sustainable that makes the Creative District an appealing place to live, conduct business and attract visitors.

- **Objectives:**
  - Attract and retain artists and creative entrepreneurs to the Creative District
    - **Strategies:**
      - Continue communication with Creative District residents that target long term occupants, new/start-up creative businesses, and individual artists/creative entrepreneurs
      - Develop an “intake” process for additional ideas for supporting the Creative District and use of current and future City facilities, e.g., annual forum, suggestions boxes, web & social media comments
      - Continue joint marketing efforts through Chamber of Commerce, Tourism agencies and the Creative Corridor
      - Integrate Creative District information with Space to Create communications
  - Create or update city policies affecting arts and culture
    - **Strategies:**
      - Determine overall goals of the Arts and Culture Department that are aligned with the Creative District goals & planning and communicate intersection through appropriate channels.
      - Update Public Art policy for the City—to include sculptures, murals, permanent and semi-permanent installation pieces, literary-based work, etc.
      - In partnership with Planning Department and Historic Preservation Commission, offer grants or low/no interest loans to owners for preservation of "ghost signs."
      - Create a “Creating Common Ground” policy for Arts & Culture Department: Any promotion of events or funding support within the Creative District will reflect said partnership by the inclusion of the Creative District logo on outreach/communications.
      - Prioritize City funding for Salidacreates.com website platform to encompass all things related to Salida Creative District
  - Explore a long-standing funding mechanism for the Creative District
    - **Strategies:**
      - Open discussions with City Council, City staff or County Commissioners regarding the establishment of a one-half of one percent City Sales Tax dedicated to funding the Creative District, aesthetic amenities throughout town and historic preservation.

- Explore formal partnership agreement with the Chaffee County Community Foundation regarding donor advised or field of interest fund.
- Identify a community nonprofit as a possible fiscal agent for grants benefitting the Creative District.

**Goal 2:** Contribute to the economic health and sense of community in the Creative District.

○ **Objectives:**

- Identify and support the various clusters of economic activity within the Creative District boundaries
  - **Strategies:**
    - Implement methods of highlighting and reporting in established time frames on the clusters of businesses, creative sectors services and activities that bring revenue to the Creative District, their impact and health.
    - Highlight unique aspects of Creative District occupants such as artist studio/galleries, businesses in the District that display local artists, largest historic district in Colorado.
    - Highlight creative businesses that are in addition to the robust visual arts scene, e.g., performance, literary, media, literary and traditional arts.
    - Promote education and mentoring opportunities with community partners and educational entities.
    - Provide professional development opportunities for new or startup businesses—business planning, visitor readiness, access to capital, etc.
- Review annual events within the Creative District
  - **Strategies**
    - Determine level of involvement and appropriateness of Arts & Culture and Creative District and define benefits and drawbacks of ongoing association.
    - Formalize partnerships with annual festivals such as Art Walk and Salida Arts Festival, to support artists in learning about the festivals, deadlines, and support in applying to have work ready to sell for these events.
    - Inventory annual and on-going educational events, classes and workshops to create a resource for future creatives.
    - Consider partnership with organizations to highlight the heritage of Salida through bringing programs to the Creative District about the traditional land practices and new locally grown focus.

- Prioritize programming that focuses on diverse cultures in Salida and around Colorado.
- Explore small grants to Creative District artists and creative businesses for new “pop up” events.

**Goal 3:** Promote and celebrate the unique identity of the Creative District as part of historic downtown Salida.

- **Objectives:**
  - Update logo to reflect new City of Salida branding
    - **Strategies**
      - Integrate revised logo into branding and communications of the Creative District.
      - Work with Planning Department to design sidewalk/street directional symbols related to map
      - Increased numbers and improved wayfinding signage and signage on streets/sidewalks—from larger signs on Hwy 50 and 285 and Oak Street/Hwy 105 to medium size signs on City surface streets, to small signs at destination sites (SteamPlant, Scout Hut, etc.) and in parks.
  - Create a new map with streets names and a key to businesses in Creative District
    - **Strategies:**
      - Include buildings with historic designation and stories.
      - Ask businesses and studios to self-select from list of categories.
      - Use QR codes or links to further descriptions on updated website.
      - Partner with history museum, historical society and library to integrate architectural tours/guides for the Creative District.
  - Bring web platform and social media sites up to date
    - **Strategies:**
      - Prioritize City funding for Salidacreates.com website platform to encompass all things related to Salida Creative District.
      - Integrate website content with social media.
      - Engage in proactive information gathering within the community; continue to offer resources for artists/creatives both inside and outside Creative District boundaries.
      - Communicate available artist/creatives/business resources and opportunities through updated Salidacreates.com website.

**Goal 4:** Showcase cultural and artistic events and amenities

- **Objectives:**

- Develop annual Communication and Work plans
  - **Strategies:**
    - Include promotion, events & artist support schedules.
    - Develop and update both internal and external calendars.
    - Analyze “seasons” of events, activities and lulls to inform current and future programming decisions.
- Engage in proactive information gathering within the community
  - **Strategies:**
    - Strive to have an ongoing and regular physical presence in the Creative District.
    - Determine interest in the Creative District providing sales opportunities, e.g., vendor booths for artists/cultural organization during the SteamPlant sponsored Summer Concert Series.
    - Restore First Fridays in the Creative District in the summer/fall season.
    - Create a list of businesses willing to show art, or use their window displays for art, etc.
    - Communicate resources for artist/creatives within and outside of the District.
- Define Creative District in communications
  - **Strategies:**
    - Define designation, focus, footprint, mission/vision and goals.
    - Expand and embrace language/imagery beyond visual arts, e.g., performing, literary, media, traditional arts, architecture.

**Goal 5:** Create a flexible Creative District Plan to implement, monitor, measure, adjust and celebrate

- **Objectives:**
  - Create a timeline for activities to support the goals of the Creative District Plan
    - **Strategies:**
      - Review current activities for “effort vs. impact” and determine the level of priority.
      - Develop a task prioritizing system.
  - Analyze metrics for trends and relevancy
    - **Strategies:**
      - Look at CCI and City reporting data to see the change.
      - Review actions in first Creative District Plan to gauge ability/interest in revisiting.
  - Communicate progress
    - **Strategies:**



- Publish community updates on a quarterly basis.
- In addition to website, newsletter, share progress and success stories with community groups & agencies.
- Celebrate with community and partners.
- Adjust Creative District Plan on an annual basis
  - **Strategies:**
    - Do a simple yearly audit to determine progress.
    - Determine opportunities and obstacles to plan and adjust accordingly.

