Colorado Scenic Byways
Economic Development Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

SCENIC BYWAYS DESIGNATION & PURPOSE

The State of Colorado established a scenic byway program in 1989 to support roadways with "exceptional scenic, ecological, cultural and historic attributes[1]." Today, Colorado has 25 designated byways, more designated byways than any other state[2]. Colorado's Scenic Byways program, headquartered in the Colorado Department of Transportation, continues to protect and promote roadways that offer recreational, educational, and economic benefits to Coloradans and visitors. The primary source of funding has historically been federal byway grants. However the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) legislation, restructured federal programs and reduced the financial resources available for state byways[3]. With less financing and increased competition it is more important than ever for Colorado byways to strengthen regional ties and bolster economic development by building upon their unique assets and identity.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Gold Belt Tour Scenic and Historic Byway Association received a Federal Highway Administration Scenic Byway Grant to fund economic development plans for three Colorado byways: The Gold Belt Tour, Collegiate Peaks and Frontier Pathways. The broad objective of this planning work is to identify economic development strategies that are compatible with the preservation of each byway's unique cultural and natural assets.

Specific goals of each plan include strengthening traditional economies, creating greater tourism revenue for byway communities, generating additional income for landowners offering services on their property, preserving the rural and agricultural identity of the areas, enhancing local food security and building bridges among varying stakeholders. These plans are part of a larger conservation effort for 18 Colorado byways and can serve as a model for economic development in other locations.

Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), a Denver-based economic development and planning firm, was contracted by the Gold Belt Byway Association to analyze existing opportunities and challenges and craft an economic development plan for each of the three byways. P.U.M.A. has a history of working with both large and small communities to advance economic development goals by providing market-based strategies tailored to specific community needs.

[1] The Benefits of Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways 2013
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid

PROCESS

Kick Off & Orientation

P.U.M.A. held a kick-off call with each byway's project coordinator to collect background information and organize the project schedule and approach.

Data Collection & Research

P.U.M.A. reviewed online and written materials related to the byways' history, programs, marketing and visitor data as well as past plans. Additional research was conducted through ESRI Business Analyst Online software to collect market data for each byway region. Lastly, research was conducted to identify economic development practices that are compatible with open land preservation.

Byway Tour

P.U.M.A. toured each byway with the project coordinator to gain a first-hand understanding of the region. Stops were made along the way to see key attractions and meet with stakeholders.

Community Engagement

Meetings where held with a diverse group of stakeholders along each byway. The purpose of these meetings was to collect input and think creatively about how to establish new and enhance existing assets along each byway. Key pieces of information sought included: economic opportunities for private lands that maintain open and working landscapes; commercial uses within towns that support economic opportunities on private lands; and services/uses needed along the byway to better serve visitors and extend their stay.

In addition to group meetings, P.U.M.A. met one-on-one with a number of landowners and ranchers to dig deeper on the topic of economic development and preserving open and working landscapes. Phone interviews were conducted with stakeholders who could not attend the group meetings, many of whom were statewide agency representatives.

Interviewed Statewide Stakeholders:

- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Downtown Colorado Inc. (DCI)
- Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)
- Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)
- Colorado Tourism Office (CTO)
- Colorado Byways Commission
- Colorado Land Link

Interviewed Local Stakeholders:

- Business owners
- Landowners; ranchers
- Operators/owners of key attractions
- City and economic development agencies
- Land trust organizations
- Byway staff and board members

Idea Synthesis

Following the byway tours and stakeholder meetings, P.U.M.A. synthesized the ideas heard and began to identify general market opportunities as well as specific types of businesses and attractions that would complement and help to sustain the cultural and natural assets of each byway.

Strategy Selection

The final plans provide guidance on the most promising economic development strategies for each byway based on a synthesis of stakeholder input, market conditions and unique assets and challenges.

Partners & Success Stories

To set the stage for implementation P.U.M.A., in consultation with the respective byway coordinators, identified potential partners and highlighted success stories from each byway.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this document is to provide economic development strategies for landowners along Colorado scenic byways that are compatible with the preservation of open, scenic landscapes and working farms and ranches. This document has specific strategies tailored to the Gold Belt, Collegiate Peaks and Frontier Pathways Byways as well as general strategies that can be considered by other Colorado byways as they fit with their specific resources, conditions and interests.

LANDOWNER STRATEGIES

The following strategies were identified as having significant potential for landowners along one or more of the studied scenic byways. More detail on these strategies as well as the top strategies for each byway, is found later in this document.

Agricultural Protection – Tools that make existing agricultural operations more viable such as fencing to protect livestock, leasing senior municipal water rights, retaining local agricultural inspection and processing facilities, and farming interns. Conservation easements are noted as a tool that can help pull cash equity out of the property to allow for upgrades and conversions.

Agricultural Diversification – As input costs have increased, decades-old ranching methods have become less profitable. Some strategies suggest other agricultural products that may be compatible. Some examples include grapes, hops, pasture-raised poultry, llamas and alpacas.

Agritourism – Many ranchers and farmers are exploring how to open their properties in controlled ways that are compatible with their working operations including activities such as ranch stays, farm stores, U-pick crops, hayrides, and farm dinners.

Heritage Tourism – Heritage tourism is a growing industry where people travel to experience places and activities that embody the past. Colorado's scenic byways are fortunate to have a rich cultural heritage that can be tapped into and marketed to visitors. Examples include the pioneer and western history such as chuck wagons, mining, old railroads, outlaws and brothels.

Local Products – The current "locavore" or eat local movement is stimulating many consumers to prefer and seek locally produced products. Examples of products that might be made with currently produced items include beer with local hops, beef

jerky, soup mixes with grains and other ingredients, and distilled spirits such as turnip vodka. While much attention is currently on local foods, there has been spillover that has strengthened visitor interest in other local products such as jewelry, paintings, and leather crafts.

Fee-based Access – Many of the private properties in the area offer valuable amenities for which individuals or clubs would pay to have temporary access for a day, week, or season. Examples include hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing or mountain biking.

Tours & Interpretation – Visitors everywhere crave the knowledge and insight of a local. Property owners can offer guided interpretation and insight into a wide variety of activities and assets such as fishing, hunting, animal husbandry, wildlife viewing, and mushrooming.

Visitor Services – The nature of byways is that they typically pass through rural areas while linking attractions and destinations. While many services are best clustered in developed towns, others can be compatible if dispersed along the byway such as guest lodging or event hosting.

Supportive Strategies

Supportive strategies are those that can be undertaken by byway staff and other organizational partners to enhance the potential for landowners to succeed with the recommended strategies. While it was acknowledged that the recommended strategies will be implemented as desired by private land owners, many stakeholders in the meetings expressed a desire for local organizations to assist and advance those efforts.

Supportive strategies include collaborative marketing, regional branding, packaging of attractions, local business support and development and visitor services such as rest-stops and signage that encourage longer stays and greater spending. For each studied byway, supportive strategies are mentioned that fit the strengths and challenges of the community and in which there appeared to be some interest from the community.

THE VISITOR MARKET FOR COLORADO SCENIC BYWAYS

In order to understand economic opportunities for scenic byways, it is helpful to begin with an understanding of the visitor market.

Colorado byways have historically targeted Baby Boomers, the RV market and touring market (those perceived to have the time and desire to explore scenic driving routes), as well as festival and special event goers[4]. However, with many families now opting for "staycations", short weekend trips close to home, there is an opportunity for byways to target young families in addition to their typical markets.

The majority of visitors traveling a Colorado scenic byway do not know they are on a road with such designation. For those who do, only 18%[5] say it influenced their decision to take the route. This indicates an opportunity for increased marketing, visitor services and activities to encourage more visitors to take and explore Colorado's scenic byways.

Colorado continues to gain popularity as a visitor destination, bringing in an all-time high of 31 million visitors in 2013[6]. Among Colorado's marketable leisure visitors, two of the three largest segments, touring and outdoor visitors, have interests that are closely aligned with offerings along many of Colorado's byways. Top interests for the touring segment include: visiting a national or state park, visiting a landmark or historic site, and shopping. Top interests for outdoor visitors include: hiking/backpacking, camping, visiting a national or state park, and fishing. More information on the visitor market for Colorado scenic byways can be found in the Appendix.

[4] The Benefits of Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways 2013
[5] 2004 America's Scenic Byways Survey
[6] 2013 Colorado Travel Year, Longwoods International

TRENDS IN AGRITOURISM, HERITAGE, & RECREATION TOURISM

Three general types of tourism were identified as having the potential to be compatible with maintaining scenic, working landscapes along Colorado byways. These tourism types include: agritourism, heritage and recreation tourism and are described in more detail below.

AGRITOURISM

Agritourism is defined as "a business venture located on a working farm, ranch, or agricultural enterprise that provides an experience for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner"[7]. Agritourism has seen extensive growth in the past few decades[8], with almost every state now having an agritourism program. The 2007 U.S.D.A. Census of Agriculture included, for the first time, a category for "agritourism and recreational services", reflecting the growing interest in on-farm experiences. The latest Census of Agriculture from 2012 showed 864 farms in Colorado offered agritourism and recreational services, totaling nearly $30 million in farm income[9]. Between 2007 and 2012, Colorado saw a 27% increase in the number of farms with some kind of tourist attraction[10]. Yet despite this growth, only 2.4% of all Colorado farms are engaged in agritourism and recreational services, indicating room for growth.

Increased growth in Colorado agritourism is likely. Developing agritourism, heritage and cultural tourism was identified as a key tactic for creating and marketing a stronger Colorado brand in the 2011 state economic development plan, Colorado Blueprint. In 2013, Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) released a three year Cultural, Heritage and Agritourism Strategic Plan, to promote agritourism and heritage tourism as a means of economic development in rural parts of the state. Colorado now has a dedicated Agritourism Association to assist businesses with insurance, zoning, signage and marketing. In 2014, Governor Hickenlooper signed House Bill 14-1280 that places limits on liability for agritourism[11] to protect farmers and ranchers. This has potential to further increase interest and participation in the agritourism industry.

According to CTO's strategic plan, the following market segments are particularly prone to agritourism: outdoor recreationalists, families, special event goers, foodies and education enthusiasts. Foodies and education enthusiasts is the newest visitor segment, which is composed primarily of a young, affluent, and educated population. Related to education, there is a particular type of agritourism that is gaining popularity, known as working farm stays. As opposed to paying for lodging on a farm, a visitor (or volunteer) puts in a day of work in exchange for food and lodging accommodations. World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms is an organization dedicated to linking such volunteers with organic growers. The growth in the local food movement combined with a growing interest in experiential visits[12], supports a continued growth in the agritourism industry.

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[7] Agri-tourism: A New Agricultural Business Enterprise
[8] Cultural, Heritage and Agritourism Strategic Plan 2013
[9] Colorado Department of Agriculture: Agritourism
[10] Harvest Public Media: States working out kinks to keep ag tourism growing
[11] Colorado State Web Portal: Gov. Hickenlooper signs 53 bills
[12] Laura Grey Interview, Director of Heritage and Agritourism at CTO

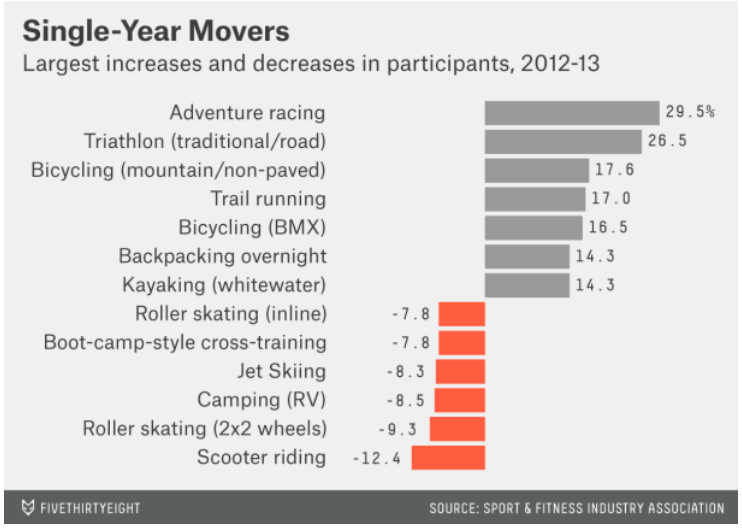
HERITAGE TOURISM

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past". Mandala Research LLC reported in 2013 that 76% of all leisure travelers nationwide participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. Visitor surveys consistently show that visitors to Colorado are particularly drawn to destinations with historic character and authenticity. Longwoods International's Colorado Travel Year 2013 study showed interest in historic places topped the list of specific draws for Colorado vacationers, followed by an interest in cultural activities and attractions.

There are a number of similarities between agritourists and heritage tourists. Both like to try a variety of activities and learn new things when they travel. Plus they typically have higher education levels and more discretionary income. Packaging agritourism and heritage tourism activities together can help create a critical mass of attractions to draw visitors to rural areas. The area where there may be the strongest overlap is local foods. Mandala Research reported in 2013 that cultural heritage travelers liked to sample traditional artisan products, visit farms and ranches, experience local or regional cuisine, attend food and wine festivals, and tour wineries or breweries.

RECREATION TOURISM

According to a 2014 survey by the Sport & Fitness Industry Association, individual sports and activities are increasing in popularity. Looking at the year-over-year trend between 2012 and 2013 shown on the right as well as the trend between 2008 and 2013 (not pictured), adventure racing, triathlons, trail running and whitewater kayaking have shown the largest annual increases. Adventure racing and triathlons increased by more than 25%. Byways may be able to capture some of this growing market by increasing opportunities for trail access and/or putting on special races, think "Tri-the-By".



Colorado is a top biking destination and was listed in 2013 by the League of American Bicyclists as the second most bicycle-friendly state, behind Washington[13]. Bicycling is growing in popularity along Colorado byways. In 2007 Bicycle Colorado, an organization dedicated to building a more bicycle-friendly Colorado, partnered with the Colorado Department of Transportation to receive a Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program grant to develop an interactive bicycle-specific website for the state's 25 byways – called Bike the Byways[14]. Although the website does not count the number of bicyclists, Bicycle Colorado has received positive feedback on the site and it continues to gain momentum and popularity.

[13] The Benefits of Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways 2013
[14] Ibid

IDENTIFIED STRATEGIES

Based on a literature review, online research, and interviews with agencies and stakeholders, eight major types of economic development strategies were identified as having significant potential to be compatible with Colorado scenic byways. These strategies are listed below. In the following sections of the document, top strategies are identified for each of the individual byways based on under current trends and conditions. This list may be useful for other byways not included in this study to consider alongside their specific set of local resources conditions, and interests. Additional information on research used to identify these strategies can be found in the Appendix.

AGRICULTURE PROTECTION

While this report includes many newer strategies for economic development on scenic and working landscapes, it is important to begin by reasserting the importance of retaining working farms and ranches by protecting and supporting these agricultural uses. Calf prices, climate conditions (drought) and other factors have aligned to make ranching less profitable. The strategies listed below, implemented at the local scale, could help to make agricultural uses more viable. However, it must be fairly noted they may not be enough to overcome broader economic factors in the long term.

Conservation easements – Conservation easements have been and continue to be a critical strategy that allows a property owner access to some of the development value of their property while protecting it from development. By liquidating some of the development value, property owners are able to invest in needed upgrades that can make operations more profitable. In some cases, proceeds from easements have given owners the financial ability to experiment with new crops and secure water rights that could offer long-term viability for keeping the land in agricultural use.

Roadway fencing to reduce losses – Under Colorado law ranchers are not required to fence their cattle off roads. To protect drivers and local property assets alike, many local governments fence their roads. Recently, Teller County has agreed to fence portions of Highway One for this reason. However, to date Fremont County has declined to incur the expense. While certainly the most tragic outcome is the injury and even fatalities that can occur to the vehicle occupants, there are impacts to the economy as well. Local ranchers report losing as many as seven animals in 3 months to roadway accidents -- a significant loss – and some visitors report that unsafe driving conditions – including unfenced roads – reduce visitation to the area.

Leasing senior municipal water rights – Generally, private property owners water rights are not senior enough to be filled when drought conditions occur. Drought conditions in recent years were a key factor in many local ranches selling off their cattle. Many of the possible new crop ideas for the area are water dependent and

would be killed off if the ranch owner's right was not filled. Local governments may own surplus, senior water rights that are lost if unused, but can be leased to private owners.

Retain/expand local agricultural inspection and processing facilities – Local facilities help to contain the cost of transport for local ranchers. It also helps so that locally raised meat can stay local for certification, underscoring that it is "locally produced."

Farming "interns" – So many young people are now interested in food and farming that they can be a source of free labor, which they provide in exchange for hands-on growing and husbandry experience. A challenge is the risk associated with taking on unseasoned workers who may cost as much or more via mentoring than they ultimately offer in labor. Local farmers and ranchers might benefit from collaborating with each other and other resources such as a local university and USDA extension services, to provide initial training to prospective interns.

Agriculture Diversification

New agricultural products may be more profitable for local land owners, enabling them to keep their lands in agricultural use. Some local farmers are experimenting with new crops beyond those they have traditionally raised. USDA Rural Development and Agricultural Extension offices in the region may be helpful resources for individual property owners to tap into when exploring potential new crops.

Grapes - Colorado vintners might be interested in locally grown grapes. In the Gold Belt, this could have some synergy with the existing Abbey winery.

Hops - Hop varieties brought by early settlers thrive in some parts of Colorado, and grow feral on poor and unimproved soils. Local brewers are part of the local foods movement and are generally interested in utilizing locally grown hops. They also work on a small-batch basis and can accept smaller quantities than industrial brewers.

Higher Altitude Orchards - An increased occurrence of early spring thaws in recent years has some existing orchards looking for potential higher elevation sites for fruit trees.

Pasture-raised pork and poultry – Can be complimentary to beef that is grazed on managed pasture.

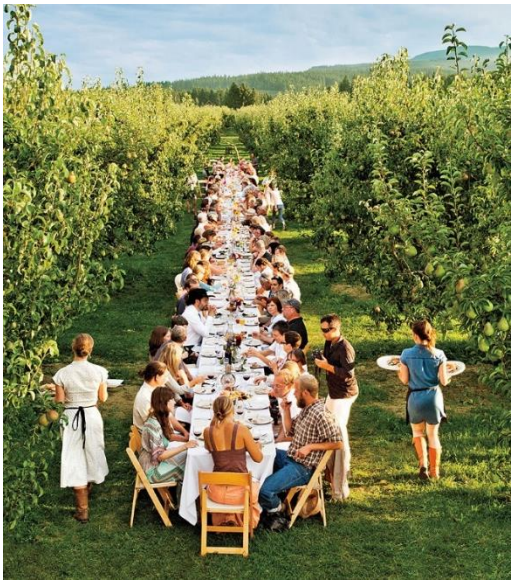
Llamas as pack animals – Llamas originate from the Andes and are well-adapted to the mountainous areas of Colorado that many byways traverse. Llama packing has become increasingly popular with recreationalist families and could tie into the strong recreationalist visitor market.

Alpacas & Vicunas for fiber – Many existing ranches have the necessary infrastructure, such as barns and fenced pasture, in place to support Alpacas husbandry. A number of helpful internet resources exist that help to spell out the financial investment and profit potential of raising and breeding Alpacas for fiber.

AGRITOURISM

Agritourism is a concept that is rapidly expanding among many working ranches and farms. However, ranch and farm owners indicate that despite the recent limiting liability legislation, there are still some risks involved, including both mischief - such as by animal rights activists - and unintentional effects of visitors attempting to help without proper knowledge of farm operations. Still, many ranchers and farmers are exploring how to open their properties in controlled ways that are compatible with their working operations. Often, the most successful agritourism operations do not require advance reservations but are open during advertised times and seasons meaning they become a significant focus of the property owner or their employees.

Ranch stays – A number of Colorado ranches have successfully marketed an authentic ranch hand experience. Some of these experiences are participatory, while others simply offer the opportunity to view professionals at work and an opportunity to talk about what is being done and why.



Cattle husbandry demonstrations – Some visitors enjoy viewing and learning about both traditional and modern versions of ranching, including roping, branding, birthing and castrating. This could also be an opportunity to showcase the caring, husbandry side of operations and how methods have become more humane over time. However, stakeholders indicate caution related to animal protectionists that may disagree with meat consumption and its practices.

U-pick crops/orchards – U-pick is a relatively proven strategy that can be profitable for orchards and field crops, as it reduces labor and increases the price yield per unit.

Hayrides/corn maze – Also a well-established strategy, and keeps guests contained rather than introducing them into the true working and producing areas of the farm.

Llama/Alpaca shearing and wool processing – Visitors may be interested in learning about the process of harvesting and cleaning wool, as well as spinning into yarn. This is generally considered a humane animal husbandry activity and unlikely to draw activists.

Farm-hosted dinners – These events are increasingly popular, particularly when they incorporate farm-grown and other local products.

Chuck-wagon experience – A chuck wagon ride experience ties into Colorado's western history, and can be offered as a few hour tour or as an overnight reenactment.

Heritage Tourism

Colorado's scenic byways are fortunate to have a rich cultural heritage, part of why they earned a byway designation to begin with, that can be tapped into and marketed to visitors. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation heritage tourists stay longer and spend more than other tourist types. This visitor's interests also are likely to overlap with agritourism offerings.

Pioneer History – Early explorers traversed the paths of today's byways by horseback and covered wagon and many established large homesteads. With sweeping views and many of the historic farms and ranches still intact, this history can be readily felt today. Activities such as horseback riding and covered wagon cook-outs can remind visitors of the early pioneer days.

Wild West – Outlaws, jails, brothels, and bootleggers were common elements along the Gold Belt Byway during the gold rush days. In honor of its history, there are jail and brothel museums in Cripple Creek as well as other reenactments of the era such as melodramas.

Mining – Many towns along the byways were established through mining. The Cripple Creek Gold rush catalyzed an economic boom for Cripple Creek and Victor and the area still has remnants of old mines, a mining museum and an active gold mine for visitors to tour. The town of Silver Cliff was once a silver boom town and the mine remains today.

Explorers & Nation-building – Famous explorers, such as Zebulon Pike, once traversed lands around Frontier Pathways. A tour, for example "The Pike Hike", could be created for visitors who are interested in learning more about the history of Pike and other explorers and wish to travel a few steps in their shoes.

Railroad – Once the premier form of transportation, the Cripple Creek & Victor Narrow Gauge railroad can still be experienced by visitors today.

Local Products

The current "locavore" or eat local movement is stimulating many consumers to prefer and seek locally produced products. Several business owners along the byways currently carry some local products and expressed interest in offering more. Even the larger markets of Colorado Springs and Denver have numerous consumers interested in Colorado Grown products.

Local products – Local agricultural products can be sold by individual farm properties where they are made. This works well when coupled with other on-site agritourism activities. In some areas, groups of local producers have collaborated to produce shared marketing materials and a greater sense of multiple destinations. Many

farmers and ranchers, however, do not wish to directly sell product to consumers on site, or their locations are not well-sited with regard to tourism traffic. In many cases, selling local products through already established venues in population and tourist centers is preferable to on-site sales. Synergistically, some restaurant and shops owners are keen to showcase local products because of their popularity to visitors. These enterprises can benefit from marketing local product offerings on signage, visitor-focused marketing materials, and the byway's website among other places.

Artisan crafts – While much attention is currently on local foods, there has also been spillover that has strengthened visitor interest in other local products such as jewelry, paintings, leather crafts, reproduction/custom tools, and similar. Shops that can offer both food and other local products may be especially appealing and attract more crossover between visitor segments.

Value add products – An oft sought economic development strategy is to add additional value to locally produced products through labor, increasing the profit margin of such items. Examples of products that might be made with currently produced items include beer with local hops, beef jerky, soup mixes with grains and other ingredients, and distilled spirits such as turnip vodka. The local cottage industry act makes small batch and home production of value-added products less difficult. Those that result in a shelf-stable product can also help to ensure that a reputation for local offerings, if earned, can be sustained through the year.

Fee-Based Property Access

Many of the private properties in the area offer valuable amenities for which individuals or clubs would pay a fee to have temporary access for a day, week, or season. While there is considerable public access to property along the byways, in some locations it can be somewhat difficult to access for a lack of trailheads, developed trails or roads, parking, and maps. In addition, some of the public lands have activity restrictions – such as hunting. In general, permit access strategies are a side-stream of income on working lands, with times and seasonal availability controlled by the property owner.

Hunting & fishing access – several local property owners with significant acreage offer access to their property to local fishing or hunting clubs. While non-local patrons would in some cases support higher fees, many property owners feel more confident allowing locals who they know by name or reputation onto their lands unescorted.

Mountain biking – Property owners could potentially sell easements to interested agencies in order to allow public recreational users pass-through use. Alternatively, private property owners could sell temporary access to mountain biking individuals or clubs. The International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) offers a sample MOU agreement for use between a club and property owner:
https://www.imba.com/resources/organizing/sample-documents/example-mou-between-biking-club-and-private-property-owner

Cross-country skiing – property owners at higher elevations could consider allowing cross country skiing through designated lanes on their property during the winter months. Warming huts can be provided in existing structures or set up seasonally, such as in yurts. An important consideration might be routing skiers away from calving areas in season.

Camping/ cabin access – large property owners, or those with inholdings in public access lands, could explore offering access to remote shelters or campsites. The same facilities used by hunting clubs might be offered to non-hunting groups out of permitted seasons. Some recreationalists want a wilderness experience, but are unable to self-propel themselves or unwilling to give up certain creature comforts. Access could be upgraded with a service that brings visitors and ample supplies in and out by pack animal or vehicle, leaving visitors for a predetermined number of days.

Tour access – property owners who want to allow access to their property but don't want to run the activity or are looking for additional revenue and exposure, can allow fee-based access to their property for tours operated by third parties.

TOURS & INTERPRETATION

Visitors everywhere crave the knowledge and insight of a local. Tours and information provided by a local guide can deeply enrich the experience and satisfaction of the experiences offered in the region. Some property owners prefer to offer tours so that they can monitor visitors to their land, reducing potential mischief or mistakes. Some tours can be conducted on public lands, with appropriate permitting, while others could showcase the resources on privately owned lands. These tours generally are not anticipated as major daily attractions, but rather as a side-stream of income on working lands, with times and seasonal availability strictly controlled by the property owner.

Guided Hunting & Fishing – along with allowing hunting and fishing access, some local property owners offer to guide sportsmen, showing them likely spots and ensuring compliance with rules. This opportunity is strongest in areas with third-party rated quality assets, such as designated gold medal fishing waters.

Wildlife viewing – Locals often know where populations of wildlife reside season to season. Many of the wildlife that are everyday sightings for locals, such as wild turkeys and even deer and elk, are exciting for more urban audiences and for families with children.

Mountain Biking – As noted above, selected private properties in the region have natural features desirable for mountain biking. Private property owners might consider allowing access only by themselves or another approved tour operator.

Geology, fossils, etc. – The Indian Springs campground is a good example of a private property owner that provides paid access and interpretation of onsite fossils. Other properties with significant resources could follow suite.

Mushrooming – Mushroom hunting and the search for other wild edibles attracts a niche crowd to locations throughout the state and ties into the locavore movement.

Historic Interpretation – Many of the existing properties in the area have both modern and historic structures related to agriculture, mining, homesteads and the like. While the landscape is scenic to view in any circumstances, historic interpretation can help it come alive and increase visitor appreciation for what they're seeing. Interpretation tours of site-specific local history could be of interest to heritage tourism visitors that currently visit the area.

Photography – Photography workshops held on private lands to photograph specific sites, wildlife assets and scenes, such as working cowboys and cowgirls at Music Meadow Ranch in Westcliffe.

Paranormal – Paranormal activities were noted at sites along both Frontier Pathways and the Gold Belt Byway. Packaging a tour inclusive of these sites and famous cemeteries could attract a specific crowd that is interested in these happenings.

VISITOR SERVICES

The nature of byways is that they typically pass through rural areas while linking attractions and destinations. As such, while they seek to attract and serve visitors, there may be some services that are not as abundant or high in quality as desired. Some of these services are best clustered in developed towns, while others would be beneficial and could be compatible if dispersed along the Byway.

Upscale lodging options – Byways attract many types of visitors, including some who are looking for lodging that offers a special experience. Along byways, historic farm and home stays can add upscale and unique lodging options within the existing scenic character.

Rustic lodging options – Visitors to byways may include recreationalists that enjoy more rustic accommodations that may be compatible on scenic and open lands, such as cabins and campgrounds.

Unique restaurants – Visitors and residents alike enjoy dining opportunities that offer inviting ambience. While most restaurants will likely be in developed communities, casual and upscale restaurants alike can thrive when they offer particularly scenic views.

Recreationalist support and equipment – While some communities complain that recreationalists rarely stop and spend money, recreationalists lament lack of services specific to their interests. Shops that sell and rent

equipment for rafting, kayaking, camping, biking, rock climbing, etc. are helpful in welcoming recreationalists, capture more revenue and can positively influence the duration of stays. While shops are generally in communities, some services such as llama packing, are compatible in scenic landscapes.

Wi-Fi – Many visitors have come to depend on internet connectivity that can be lacking in rural areas through which Byways pass, so businesses and public places that offer Wi-Fi are desired. Moreover, as byways strive to offer modern new formats for interpretive materials such as apps, internet access is important so that travelers can download the app once the traveler realizes she is on the Byway.

SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

Many of the stakeholders that provided input for this project emphasized the need for and ability of local agencies to implement strategies that have the potential to enhance private property owners' individual endeavors. While every destination, activity and local product offers visitors a unique experience, some attractions are much stronger in tandem than as stand-alone offerings. Collaborative marketing and visitor experience packages that combine services and products can to be a creative opportunity to highlight the distinctive character of the byway region. Collaborations among local businesses, farmers, ranchers, and artisans could encourage longer stays and more spending that would enhance the overall visitor market and economy. Additionally, visitor services including rest-stops and signage help encourage longer stay and generate greater awareness.

Collaborative/consolidated marketing – Businesses, artisans and property owners can leverage their partnerships through collaborative marketing and shared advertising. Local product clusters, themed offerings, and packaged visitor experiences offer the benefit of combined marketing, which means shared advertising costs and enhanced marketing opportunities.

Regional branding – Branding the byway as a region, rather than each town or attraction branding itself individually, may appeal to a greater variety of visitors and attract them to multiple destinations and towns throughout their stay. Regional branding allows businesses, artisans and property owners to collectively tell the full story of their region and illustrate the distinctive quality in all it has to offer. Articulating the region's unique array of local products, destinations, and activities through consistent branding lets visitors know they can expect a specific and unique experience, and may draw new visitor types to the area.

Asset clusters – Some byways are rich with a particular type of asset, such as trains or heritage tourism. Rather than have area businesses compete for limited visitors, joint advertising that showcases the depth of offerings can increase awareness and visitors for the activity type. In some areas, farms and ranches market local products jointly with maps showing all the farms in the area. Individual property owners hang flags to show which properties are available to visit on a given day. This not only offers visitors more choice and variety, but also gives individual property owners more flexibility to keep their own schedules without disappointing visitors.

Linked themes – Many of the byways offer a diversity of attractions, but visitors come for only one, and overlook others. Some local assets can be inventively paired to deliver complimentary or intriguing visitor experiences. Themes could be historical, like a "trappers and traders" tour of local museums and sites, or could showcase the beautiful scenery by pairing a gallery tour of local art with a guided hike or group photography

lesson. Themed pairings can help niche visitors cross over to try other area activities, extending their stay and spending in a byway.

Packaged experiences – Small businesses have the opportunity to combine services and offerings to create attractive packaged visitor experiences, such as a stay at a bed & breakfast that includes guided horseback riding at a nearby stables followed by a farm-to-table dinner. Business owners can offer visitors a package of goods and services, rather than relying on the visitor to seek out each item individually.

Visitor facilities – Residents and touring travelers also need places to gather, eat and allow restless children and pets to exercise. While many communities host playgrounds that are free and available, traveling families may not be able to locate them from the byway. Local signage, printable maps, or downloadable apps can include this information. Likewise, touring travelers with pets often struggle to find allowed locations to give a pet appropriate relief and exercise. While such facilities can rarely operate as a profit-making enterprise, it should be noted that a clearly marked area where pets are welcome and clean-up materials are available can enhance the appeal of a town or enterprise as a stopping place, welcoming visitors to stay. The addition of inexpensive shower facilities would help outdoor recreationalists feel comfortable coming into town after being active.

Assistance for start-ups – Many of the recommendations suggest that land owners or their family members take on new enterprises. Start-ups can benefit from guidance. Regional business assistance centers are an excellent resource but may be located at some distance from open and scenic byways areas. In some cases, it may be possible to tap into the network of talent among experienced retirees that may settle in scenic locations along the byways to organize and publicize resources for landowners who are interested in exploring new revenue generating activities on their property or entrepreneurs who may want to start a business in town that promotes the area's character and local products.

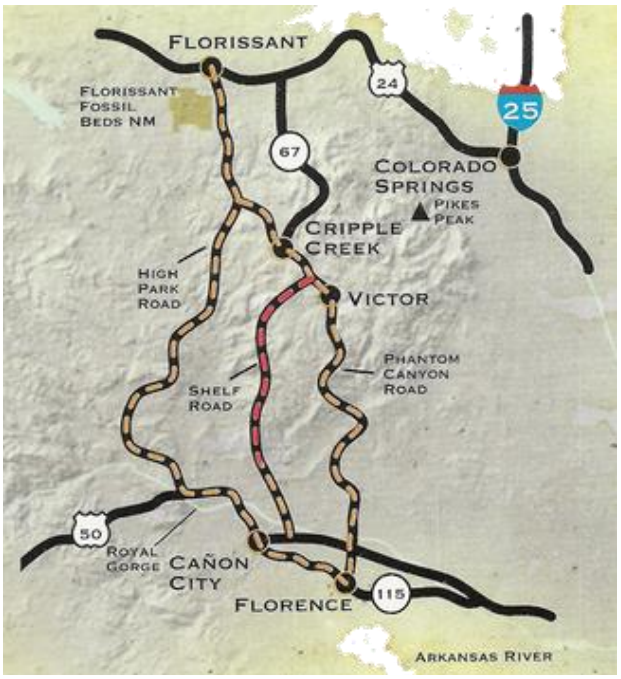
Motor-coach tours - A tour company could create the scale and frequency of offering needed to cover expenses like transportation vehicles and insurance and be profitable. With abundant cultural, heritage, and agricultural sites to choose from along the byways, tour organizers can create itineraries that rotate destinations so that no one site is over-burdened and a variety of property owners are able to benefit from fee-based access to their property.

Financial Support for Open Lands – In some byways areas, the scenic and open nature of the landscape underpins the local economy. Many businesses in the Upper Arkansas Valley, for example, can compete to attract visitors because of the scenic quality available in the region. Understanding that the entire community benefits from the choice of property owners to keep their lands in open and scenic uses opens a dialogue about whether the community as a whole may be willing to create dedicated funding – through a tax, for example – that would be used to acquire conservation easements to keep highly visible lands in agricultural and other scenic uses.

GOLD BELT LOOP TOP STRATEGIES

OVERVIEW & LOCATION

The Gold Belt Scenic Byway runs 131 miles, connecting an area of diverse terrain and rich history. There are five towns along the Byway: Canon City, Florence, Victor, Cripple Creek and Florissant and it is located in two counties, Teller and Fremont. Additional information about the byway is available at: www.goldbeltbyway.com.



MAJOR ASSETS & VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

- **Gold Rush History/Operating Gold Mine:** The Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Rush produced more gold than the California and Alaska gold rushes combined. Traveling the route today, one can still see remnants of old mines, stop into a mining museum, take a train down the Cripple Creek & Victor Narrow Gauge railroad or tour an active gold mine.
- **Historic Towns/Preserved Heritage:** Towns along the byway have well maintained, historic buildings and quaint Main Streets. The byway takes pride in its heritage as one can see at the Heritage Museum in Cripple Creek.
- **Fossils:** Garden Park Fossil area was the site of an important dinosaur discovery. Petrified redwoods, plant and insect fossils can also be seen at the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.
- **Geology:** The Gold Belt Byway contains several important sites for geology including the Cripple Creek Caldera and the Twin Mountain Geologic Area.
- **Diverse Scenery & Wildlife:** Gold Belt Byway has a wide variety of terrain from grasslands and working ranches to rugged rocky canyons and wilderness areas. The area include gold medal fishing waters and unique rock formations.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** There is no shortage of recreational activities in the area ranging from camping to jeep tours to hunting. Some of the more notable activities include world-class rock climbing along Shelf Road and whitewater rafting along the Arkansas River near Canon City.
- **Royal Gorge Bridge & Park:** The world's highest bridge sits just off the byway but is a major draw for the region. The park now has a skycoaster, zipline, gondola, restaurant and other amenities.
- **Artisans, Crafts, Antiques:** Many artists and craftsman live in the area plus Florence is a major draw for those looking for antiques.
- **Nightlife:** Cripple Creek has 14 casinos plus other night life that is representative of the area's history, such as melodramas at the local theater.

ECONOMIC BASE

To provide context for the suggested strategies, this section provides a brief overview of the economic base of the Gold Belt Byway region. Economic data was extracted from the ESRI Business Analyst Online using the two-mile radius around the designated byway, as well as data for communities on the byway.

The Gold Belt Byway region has a quintessentially western history of ranching and mining. Its earliest European settlers were cattle ranchers, with some historic ranches still operating in the area today. The region's most famous historic industry, and the Byway's namesake, was gold mining. The region is most famous for the 1890 Cripple Creek Gold Rush. According to the Gold Belt Scenic Byway website, there were over 500 mines operating in the Cripple Creek and Victor mining district, producing a total of 21 million ounces of gold over the course of the rush. The Cripple Creek Gold Rush produced more gold than the California and Alaska gold rushes combined. The mining industry catalyzed an economic boom throughout the region spurring economic development, including a new financial industry, newspapers, engineering firms, hotels, restaurants, general stores, and saloons.

Today, the Gold Belt regional economy is primarily characterized by the tourism-supported services and retail industries. The region hosts just under 3,500 businesses that employ 20,500 people. The region's top five business sectors, based on number of businesses, include:

- Services 42% (lodging, auto, entertainment, health, legal, and education)
- Retail 13%
- Construction (9%)
- Agriculture and mining (5%)

The region's top employment sectors, based on number of employees, include:

- Services (38%)
- Government (28%)
- Retail (13%)
- Agriculture and mining (5%)

The four communities in the Gold Belt Byway region have significant diversity in their economic make-up:

- Canon City offers the most visitor services – such as lodging and restaurants, and is well known as the gateway to the Royal Gorge route railroad and Royal Gorge Bridge Park. In addition to many tourism industry jobs, 40% of Canon City's 10,000 employees work in government, many in the prisons.
- Florence is locally known for its rich antiquing, and for offering upscale dining options in a quaint downtown setting. Florence is also characterized by its manufacturing industry which makes up 7% of its businesses and 12% of its jobs.
- Victor remains closely tied to its economic history as the heart of the Colorado Gold Rush. It draws many visitors to its turn-of-the-century architecture and historical attractions (museums and the historic mine), but 90% of employees work in present-day agriculture and mining.
- The services industry makes up nearly 50% of businesses and employs nearly 80% of workers in Cripple Creek, which is characterized by its thriving casinos and entertainment offerings.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Based on initial interviews, research, community input, and a tour of the byway with Gold Belt staff, P.U.M.A. has identified the following economic development strategies as having significant potential for private property owners to develop along the Gold Belt Loop Byway.

Agricultural Protection: Conservation Easements

Conservation easements continue to be a very important strategy in the Gold Belt region. This work has been admirably spearheaded by the Gold Belt Byway in partnership with Palmer Land Trust, as well as Cattleman's and other land trusts. Conservations easements have been sold by a number of large scale ranch property owners on the Gold Belt. Area ranch owners have used the financial stability offered by proceeds from easements to experiment with new crops and secure water rights that could offer long-term viability for keeping the land in agricultural use.

New Crop: Hops

Local brewers in the Gold Belt have expressed interest in locally grown hops. In the summer of 2014, a local rancher's experimental first year hop crop grew much better than expected. Additional years of experimentation will help to proof if the unusually cold wet weather of 2014 was critical to success.

Agritourism: Farm Dinners

These events are increasingly popular, particularly when they incorporate farm-grown and other local products. Gold Belt recently hosted a dinner highlighting local products and found a wider range of high-quality products available than expected. Either local farms, such as Colon Orchards, or The Abbey, in Canon City, would be an excellent venue for such a dinner. This concept responds to a gap noted by stakeholders that there are not enough unique quality restaurants in Canon City. These events could be marketed to growing food-interested groups in Colorado Springs (including those working on developing the Colorado Springs Public Market) as well as existing winery and antiquing visitors.

Value Added Product: Turnip Vodka Micro-Distillery

Local ranchers say that turnips grow exceptionally well and replenish the soil for other crops. Currently they serve as roughage for the cattle. However, if a desirable value-add product could be made from the turnips, it could be profitable as well. One idea that would tie into both the locovore movement and the micro-distillery trends that has followed from the micro-brewery craze is turnip vodka. [Article on local craft distilleries in CO http://www.dailycamera.com/food/ci_16799545] While most high-production vodka is from grain and some from potatoes, turnips – and many other vegetables – can also be used to make vodka. A couple in Virginia is working on starting an organic turnip vodka distillery:
http://www.delmarvanow.com/story/news/local/virginia/2014/08/21/distillery-onancock/14388721/

Permit Access & Tours: Mountain Biking

Biking tourism - both mountain biking and road biking – is a growth area in Colorado. The Gold Belt is not well-positioned to attract road biking due to the narrow shoulder widths along much of the Byway. Stakeholders report that public access mountain biking trails in the area are quite popular in certain seasons when the weather here is relatively mild, but are limited in number and miles. There are private lands in the Gold Belt area with significant features highly desirable to mountain bikers. Property owners could potentially sell easements to land conservation trusts or other parties in order to allow public recreational users pass-through use. Alternatively, private property owners could sell temporary access to mountain biking individuals or clubs. Existing local tour operators might be able to provide marketing and operate the tours while sharing in the proceeds. Property owners could offer additional amenities – such as a meal – that would enhance the attractiveness of the tour.

In-town: Local Product Shops & Restaurants

There are many high quality local products produced in the Gold Belt, including on scenic lands. Today, local products are highly desired by locals and visitors alike. Some visitor groups that typically bring in a lot of their own food and supplies, such as recreationalists boaters and rock climbers, are likely to seek out locally produced and artisan foods. Generally, it is preferable that each producer does not have to sell these products on their working property, and many properties under conservation easements are prohibited from doing so. Producers often lack the time, shop keeping skills, or interest in doing retail sales. Preferably, local products could be sold in shops and restaurants in the established towns and cities along the Byway. There are existing shops and restaurants that sell a few local products. These could expand the selection and proactively market themselves to capture the interest in local products. In addition to local food products, artisan products could be sold such as jewelry, fine arts, leatherwork, custom and replica tools, and similar.

Visitor Services: Historic Home & Farm Stays

Stakeholders in the southern part of the Gold Belt area indicate that visitors desire more quality and experience types of lodging. There are many historic & scenic properties in the area that could respond to some of this demand, and in fact some do offer rentals and are listing on Air B&B. However, the predominance of off-the-books rentals has been of concern to the local municipalities, because in many cases the rental owners are not reporting income and are not paying sales & lodging taxes like hotels do. If the local visitors information organizations collectively marketed home stays in historic and scenic properties, the opportunity for increased marketing and income could convince some owners to come "above board" with their rentals while being part of the solution to offer more unique and upscale lodging options.

Visitor Services: Wi-fi

The Gold Belt Loop has recently invested significant resources in developing a smart phone app that provides quality interpretation of the Gold Belt Loop assets. Knowing that much of the Gold Belt Loop lacks internet access, it was wisely designed to function without any internet connection once downloaded. However, it still requires internet connection to download. Since many visitors to the Byway are unaware of its presence until they arrive, this presents a bit of a conundrum as they cannot download the app in most locations along the Byway. The Gold Belt organization could pursue a variety of strategies to help link visitors to the app along the Byway, including advertising the app in businesses that currently have wi-fi in exchange for adding such information on Byway maps and materials, partnering with local enterprises in strategic locations along the Byway to add wi-fi service, and requesting that any public place with wi-fi (library) post such availability. In addition, the Gold Belt should seek permission from CDOT and other local agencies as necessary to add app availability information to existing Byway signage poles.

Supportive Strategies

The Gold Belt region is exceptionally rich with a diversity of assets and attractions, but many current visitors appear to come for a single purpose. One likely reason for this is that marketing for the various attractions and activities tends to be disparate. Ample opportunity exists to package and promote some or all of the region's diversity.

Partnerships and packaging of assets – i.e. a "Brothels & Bad Guys Tour" could promote the brothel museum and both jail museums. "History & Today" tours could showcase both historic and modern assets in the mining, ranching, and justice industries. Many businesses might benefit from considering how they might partner to offer packages, such as a bed & breakfast stay with a horseback ride at nearby stables.

Regional Branding – A number of stakeholders in the Gold Belt region expressed interest in trying to brand the area as a rich region of multiple attractions and activities, perhaps even using the byway as the linking element of the brand: "Gold Belt Recreation Region."

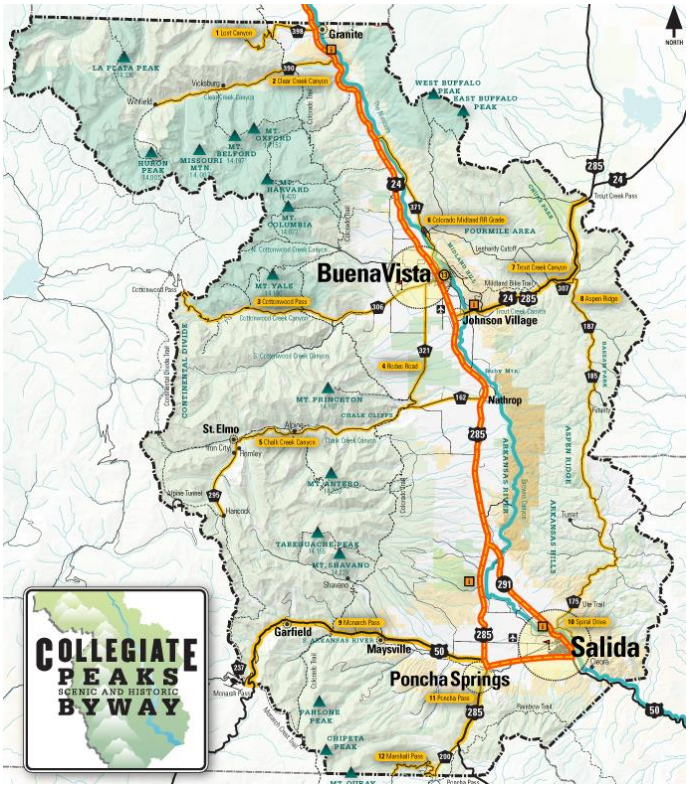
Consolidated marketing – Currently the marketing for attractions in the Gold Belt area is quite dispersed. There are numerous websites for individual attractions or that promote assets appealing to a single visitor group. Meanwhile, stakeholders lament the fact that area visitors tend to be single-dimension, and fail to know about or patronize the wide variety of area attractions. In the long-term, a regional entity that consolidates all materials and cross-markets effectively may be ideal. In the shorter run, a branded Gold Belt Region website portal that lists and links to the many existing resources, would help alert visitors to the available variety.

COLLEGIATE PEAKS BYWAY TOP STRATEGIES

OVERVIEW & LOCATION

The Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway encompasses 57 miles of state highway that winds through the Upper Arkansas River valley with views of iconic 14,000 foot peaks. There are three major towns along the Byway: Buena Vista, Poncha Springs, and Salida and it is located in Chaffee County. Designated as a Scenic Byway in 2005, the Byway parallels the Continental Divide at the foot of the Sawatch Range, the highest contiguous mountain range in North America. Also known as the "Highway of the Fourteeners", several of the highest mountains are named after the Ute Indians. Others were named by Ivy League professors in friendly competition: Mt. Oxford, Mt. Harvard, Mt. Yale, Mt. Princeton, and Mt. Columbia.

Additional information about the byway is available at: www.collegiatepeaksbyway.com



MAJOR ASSETS & VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

- **Arkansas River:** The Arkansas River is a major regional asset that provides endless recreation and leisure activities for the area, particularly kayaking and whitewater rafting.
- **Agricultural Heritage:** The Collegiate Peaks region is characterized by its cattle ranching heritage and history.
- **Public Lands and Open Space:** Chaffee County offers an abundance of public lands and open space that is available for recreation, tours, and scenic beauty.
- **Scenic Views:** With 12 nearby peaks over 14,000 feet, the Byways contains a large concentration of mountain views. These views have been mapped according to their significance and exist as part of the Byway's 2008 Management Plan.
- **Historic Sites:** The Collegiate Peaks Byway has a wide variety of historic structures, homesteads, trails, and sites. These include working ranches, historic routes and bridges, unique structures, mining remnants, and more.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** There is no shortage of recreational activities in the area ranging from kayaking to zip lining to hiking to hunting. The Byway's most notable activity is its world-class whitewater rafting along the Arkansas River and Browns Canyon National Monument.
- **Hot Springs:** With a number of natural hot springs nearby, the area is a major attraction for those looking to soak and relax.

- **Local artists, artisans, and products:** The Salida Creative District has cemented the region as a hub for local artisans, artists, entrepreneurs and other creatives.
- **Ghost Towns:** Ghost towns from the Gold Rush and mining era offer local opportunities for historic preservation and heritage tourism.
- **Wildlife:** The region is home to many species of wildlife including elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn. Large open spaces still allow wildlife to follow traditional migration routes.

ECONOMIC BASE

To provide context for the suggested strategies, this section provides a brief overview of the economic base of the Collegiate Peaks Byway region. Economic data was extracted from the ESRI Business Analyst Online using the two-mile radius around the designated byway, as well as data for communities on the byway.

By the late 19th century the Collegiate Peaks Byway region, originally inhabited by the Ute tribe, was a hotspot for mining, railroading, ranching and farming. Though lucrative, the railroading and mining industries slowed after the 1920's and by 1960 the region had sprouted an outdoor recreation and tourism industry centered on the Arkansas River's white water rafting and epic scenery. Today, the Collegiate Peaks regional economy is primarily characterized by the tourism-supported services and retail industries. The region hosts 2,000 businesses that employ over 8,000 people.

The region's top five business sectors, based on number of businesses, include:

- Services 43% (lodging, auto, entertainment, health, legal, and education)
- Retail 14%
- Construction (9%)
- Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (7%)

The region's top employment sectors, based on number of employees, include:

- Services (41%)
- Retail (19%)
- Government (16%)

The three communities in the Collegiate Peaks Byway region have similar local economies, largely centered around outdoor recreation and tourism:

- Buena Vista is touted as the whitewater rafting capital of the U.S. and much of the local economy is made up of tourism and recreation services. Buena Vista is also the first Fair Trade Town in Colorado, only selling products whose producers were paid fair prices. Perhaps surprisingly, 11% of all local businesses are construction companies which employing 8% of the workforce, making construction a significant sector of the Buena Vista economy compared to regional trends.
- Poncha Springs is locally known as the crossroads of the Rockies due to its location at the junction of highway 285 and highway 50. While the services industry accounts for nearly half of all businesses, it

employs only 25% of the town's workforce. Government jobs account for 30% of local occupations, a higher percentage than both Salida and Buena Vista.

- Salida's economy is largely centered on outdoor adventure services and tourism. The community's retail sector accounts for 16% of its total businesses and employs 22% of its workforce, putting Salida's retail sector ahead of other towns in the region.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Preserving scenic views and open space along the Collegiate Peaks Byway is essential to the economic drivers and attractions throughout the Upper Arkansas Valley, including rafting, fishing, biking, skiing, hiking 14ers, the arts, and craft breweries. Though many regions throughout the state offer these same recreation activities, visitors choose the valley due to its pristine scenery. Without the beauty and open space, visitors may go elsewhere for these activities and amenities. Open and agricultural land protections and trail designations, including the proposed Pike Trail and the Stage and Rail Trail, facilitate the preservation of scenic beauty and create additional visitor attractions for the area. Ensuring that property owners along the Byway can generate reliable revenue streams while protecting the natural and scenic beauty of their properties is key to the region's future economic success. A number of property owners along the Byway are already running businesses, operating ranches and farms, and managing their lands in ways that both generate income and preserve open space. Sharing and celebrating existing successes can incentivize neighboring ranchers and farmers to try new business ideas or ranching activities that are compatible with open space preservation.

Based on local stakeholder interviews, research, community input, and a tour of the byway with Collegiate Peaks representatives, P.U.M.A. has identified the following locally tailored economic development strategies as having potential along the Collegiate Peaks Scenic Byway.

Agricultural Protection: Conservation Easements

Conservation easements continue to be a key strategy along the Collegiate Peaks Byway. The Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas and the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust have successfully purchased easements for important properties along the Byway, including Hutchinson Ranch, the Mount Princeton Corridor, and Post Office Ranch. Easements can lay the groundwork for private property owners to try new things on their land and allow them to access and leverage new funding sources. Easements have provided local ranchers like Dean Roberts with the financial resources necessary to attempt new income-generating projects and business ideas. The access to cash provided through a conservation easement can also be used to make changes, upgrade equipment, and increase efficiency. Sharing the successes of local ranchers and farmers who have received financial benefits

from permanently protecting their land under conservation easements is key to encouraging other property owners along the Byway to follow suit.

Agricultural Protection: Leasing to Local Produce & Animal Protein Producers

Ranchers and property owners along the Collegiate Peaks Byway who are looking for a supplemental revenue stream can lease out acreage for vegetable cultivation or additional animal operations as an alternative to selling off portions of their property. Through lease agreements, ranchers who do not want to farm can lease space to somebody who does. These agreements can create a win-win partnership for both producers, like using manure from animal operations to fertilize vegetables. Access to water will be key to the success of these arrangements. Producers looking to start first-time operations on leased land can take advantage of existing programs through Landlink and CSU Extension.

Value-Add Products: Artisanal Meats, Cheeses, Alcohol, and Fiber Goods

The Collegiate Peaks Byway is home to a number of artisan food and drink producers. Value-add products local to the Upper Arkansas River Valley include goods like Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy's cheeses and Elevation Beer Company's craft beers. These local producers brand the Collegiate Peaks region and put the valley on the map as a destination for buying these one-of-a-kind goods. Value-add products fetch higher prices and create more revenue for producers than commodities like milk or vegetables alone. Opportunities for developing new value-add goods exist around Alpaca and Paco-Vicuna fiber products, small batch alcohol, locally cured meats, and artisan cheese and dairy products. Developing niche and specialty markets for these products, as well as direct-sales avenues, will be key to creating demand both locally and throughout the state. Developing relationships with local restaurants and retail stores, including developing specific menu items, is key to driving demand.

Value-Add Products: Develop Specialty Niche Markets

In addition to its local artisans, the Upper Arkansas Valley is home to many ranchers and farmers who are already producing high-end animal protein and produce. Developing specialty and niche markets for these local products is essential to ensuring sustainable long-term businesses. Local animal operations with high end or specialty products like ArrowPoint Cattle Company's grass-fed beef and Scanga Meat Company's local beef and pork products are prime candidates for specialty niche markets. Produce like local eggs, potatoes, lettuces, and other vegetables are also well positioned as specialty items that can easily fuel local restaurant menus and local food markets like Ploughboy.

Agricultural Products: Direct-to-Consumer Sales

The Collegiate Peaks region is home to a number of local food producers who are selling directly to consumers, rather than to third-party markets. This direct-to-consumer approach can increase revenue by cutting out the associated costs of using a "middle man." Producers like Weathervane Farms often sell fresh produce directly to customers through farmers markets, on-site farm stands, and by developing relationships with local restaurants. Existing local egg, meat, vegetable and dairy producers can all benefit from selling directly to consumers at a higher profit.

New Crops: Craft Beverage Industry Inputs

The valley's burgeoning small-batch beer, wine, and spirits industry presents a potential niche market for small-scale aseptic fruit, yeast, and local honey to fuel specialty Colorado-sourced brews. The craft beverage industry is input intensive and requires a variety of produce, including hops, barley, grapes, seasonal fruit, and yeast. Inputs to craft beverage producers (breweries, distilleries and wineries) will largely be small scale opportunities in fresh product, since large-scale production often requires processing and storage equipment that does not yet exist locally. Coordinating logistics with local producers around timing and availability of crops will be key to ensuring local growers can successfully supply the industry with the produce they need, when they need it. Small-scale craft beverage produce can add to local farm and ranch diversity with the opportunity to scale-up supply over time. Local processing facilities for hops and barley drying and storage will be necessary and will require collaboration among local growers to achieve critical mass for large-scale production. Reaching large-scale production for craft beverage inputs may require working regionally or statewide.

Agritourism: Local Food Hubs

Though popular among visitors, not every rancher or farmer along the Byway is interested in opening up their property to the public. Using established local agritourism sites like Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy's existing Farm Store or Hutchinson Homestead and Learning Center to create outlets for a wider variety of producers can create a few agricultural hubs along the Byway that allow all local producers to sell their products directly to consumers. Interested property owners can pair farm stand retail with tours that educate consumers about agriculture and local products.

Tours & Interpretation: Fee-Based Heritage Access

Historic homestead sites, wagon trail routes and mining sites are a few of the heritage resources along the Collegiate Peaks Byway that present opportunities for property owners to offer fee-based access. Offering heritage-based activities and events on private property can create additional annual or summer revenue streams for property owners. Historic properties like Post Office Ranch can host an historic wagon trail ride or simply offer paid access to the property.

Visitor Services: Dude Ranch

The Collegiate Peaks Byway has significant visitor demand for a Dude Ranch operation that is open to the public and hosts groups, families, and visitors looking to experience working ranch life. With local market capacity to support a single operation, the ranch would need to be at a key location to meet demand and would need the right person or family to run and operate the ranch. Visitor activities could include horseback riding, campfires, and a ranch dinner.

Visitor Services: Permitted Access to Private Land

Visitors to Chaffee County and the Byway will often pay more for value-added experiences and activities. Offering special experiences like fishing access, weddings, or u-pick produce, can be lucrative opportunities for fee-based access to private properties. This income-generating strategy is flexible for land owners because public access can be offered annually, seasonally, or every week. Permitted fishing access on private land is already happening along the Byway and presents an opportunity for land owners to earn revenue from fee-based access to on-site fishing. Visitors can book their fishing trip through Ark Anglers or the Rocky Mountain Anglers Union who will take care of marketing and logistics on behalf of the landowner. With high market demand for wedding venues, property owners can rent out private land to host those special events.

Visitor Services: Accommodations on Private Land

With lodging and rentals fetching premium prices throughout the Arkansas Valley, there are major local opportunities to offer additional accommodations, including cabin rentals, camping, inns, B&B's, and seasonal or employee lodging. Ensuring lodging is well-sited or screened will be key to protecting the Byway scenery and natural beauty. Value-added accommodations offering a special experience like unique scenery, working farm or ranch life, or special recreation opportunities will be particularly lucrative for property owners. With websites like Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway, listing and managing rentals is easier and more flexible than ever.

SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

The Upper Arkansas Valley and Collegiate Peaks Byway offer a wide array of recreation, culture, heritage, and agriculture amenities, all of which drive the economy and attract visitors. The scenic views and open space that the Byway offers is the backbone to these economic drivers and is essential to the continued economic success of the region. Educating locals and visitors about the link between the scenic views, local agriculture, and all major economic drivers and attractions in the valley will be key to ensuring the valley remains competitive as a Colorado destination. Strategies to ensure future economic success along the Byway and throughout the region include:

Leveraging Local Art — Stakeholders in the valley expressed interest in working with local artists to showcase the Byway's scenic vistas and interpret what the valley would look like if its agricultural properties were subdivided and developed.

Agricultural Finance Mechanisms — To preserve the Byway's existing agricultural properties and uses, stakeholders suggested implementing a valley-wide financing mechanism to keep ranches and farms in production. This could include a tax assessed throughout Chaffee County to ensure that the financial burden of protecting and preserving open space is shared among all beneficiaries. Implementing a financing mechanism will take valley-wide collaboration among a diverse set of stakeholders.

Shared Equipment and Facilities — With many of the valley's specialty and artisan products being manufactured at a very small scale, local producers can collaborate, share costs, and increase production by pooling resources. Local opportunities around shared equipment and facilities is particularly strong for specialty meat processing and hops and barley processing and storage.

Financial Support – Many stakeholders interviewed in Collegiate Peaks expressed an interest in a community-wide dialogue about a public funding mechanism to incentivize local property owners to keep highly visible lands in scenic and agricultural uses. It was unclear whether there might be any source of existing revenues that could be dedicated to this purpose or if there might be enough political will to consider a taxing mechanism. However, it was expressed that a shared understanding of the community-wide impact of the fate of such lands could be a useful framing for the conversation.

FRONTIER PATHWAYS TOP STRATEGIES

OVERVIEW & LOCATION

Frontier Pathways has been a well traversed route throughout history. It begins in Pueblo, a historically important crossroads of culture, trading and settlement. The Ute and Jicarilla Apache played a prominent role in the early shaping of the region. Later came the European settlers, including French and Spanish explorers, fur trappers and traders. Following the homestead act of 1862, many large ranches were established in the area, some of which remain today.

The Frontier Pathways Scenic Byway is 131 miles long, connecting Pueblo, Wetmore, Westcliffe/Silver Cliff, Rye, and Colorado City. Additional information is available at:
https://www.codot.gov/travel/scenic-byways/south-central/frontier-pathways

MAJOR ASSETS & VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

- **Scenic Views:** Wet Mountain Valley, Hardscrabble Plateau and Canyon and the Sangre de Cristo mountain range.
- **Historic Places:** Pueblo has more historic structures than another other city in Colorado outside of Denver, including the Steelworks museum and the Goodnight Barn built in 1870 by an innovative rancher who is credited for inventing the chuck wagon. The quaint town of Westcliffe also has a number of historic buildings, such as the Old Westcliffe schoolhouse and a re-created stage stop.
- **Wildlife:** There are a number of places to see wildlife along or near the byway, including the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo, the Mission: Wolf sanctuary just south of Westcliffe, and designated birding trails near Wetmore.
- **Recreation:** The San Isabel National Forest provides ample opportunities for hiking, biking, camping and other recreation. The Arkansas River, Lake Pueblo State Park and Lake Isabel Recreation Area are great destinations for water activities like fishing and boating.
- **High Country Homesteading and Ranching:** There are a number of working and historic ranches that provide a taste of the west. Music Meadows Ranch offers visitors an authentic cowboy/cowgirl experience complete with horseback riding and a steak dinner. The Beckwith Ranch is open for visitors to for special events, such as weddings.
- **Offbeat tourist attractions:** Located near Rye, Bishop's Castle is a unique, ornamental structure that was built by hand starting in 1969 and continues to draw significant interest from visitors.
- **Arts & Crafts:** Cities and towns along the byway have arts organizations, local craft studios, cottage industries (fiber, arts), antiques, theater, and music venues.

- **High Quality Local Products:** Mira Sol chilies from Pueblo, grass-fed beef from the Wet Mountain Valley and alpaca fiber from hobby farms along the Byway are unique, high quality products.
- **Colorado State Fair & Rodeo:** Draws 500,000 visitors annually from throughout Colorado and is a showcase for agricultural and Colorado products.

ECONOMIC BASE

To provide context for the suggested strategies, this section provides a brief overview of the economic base of the Frontier Pathways Byway region. Economic data was extracted from the ESRI Business Analyst Online using the two-mile radius around the designated byway, as well as data for communities on the byway.

Pueblo, the largest city along the Byway, was once known as "Pittsburgh of the West". The discovery of gold and silver in 1872, the availability of iron ore, coal and new railroads, made Pueblo an important hub for mining, industry and transportation. In the early 1900s, Pueblo was home to Colorado's largest company, the Colorado Fuel & Iron Corporation, which controlled over 500,000 acres of land and employed 30,000 mill workers and miners.

Steel and manufacturing are still major industries in Pueblo today. The city is also home to a leading wind turbine producer, state-of-the-art medical facilities and companies, such as AT&T, who employee customer service representatives[15]. Historically, Pueblo has not been a city that attracts significant tourism or made a concerted effort to do so. However, Pueblo recently received a Regional Tourism Act grant to be used on tourism infrastructure, which has placed a new interest and emphasis on tourism for the city.

The Frontier Pathways region hosts over 5,000 businesses that employ nearly 59,000 people. Over 80% of these employees and businesses are found within the Pueblo area.

The region's top five business sectors, based on number of businesses, include:

- Services 40% (in particular health 8%)
- Retail 23% (in particular eating & drinking places 7%)
- Finance, insurance, real estate 12%
- Construction 8%

The region's top employment sectors, based on number of employees, include:

- Services 49% (in particular, health 16% and education 9%)
- Retail 21% (in particular, eating & drinking places 8%)
- Government 9%
- Construction 5%

Notable economic features of cities and towns along the Byway are:

[15] http://pueblo.org/living-in-pueblo/community/business-pueblo-county-major-industries

- Pueblo has a significant number of employees in health services (17.6%). Parkview Medical Center is the largest employee in Pueblo County[16] with approximately 2,600 employees and serves the entire region.
- Westcliffe – Sliver Cliff has 18 real estate businesses, nearly 9% of the total businesses. The town's pristine landscape draws interested home buyers. The average listing price for a home in Westcliffe is 40-70%[17] higher than the other towns along the byway.
- Within an 8 mile radius of Colorado City and Rye, 21% of employees work in construction. This area also has a larger percentage Ag & Mining business (nearly 8%) than other parts of the byway.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Based on stakeholder focus groups, interviews, research, and a tour of the Byway with Frontier Pathways staff, P.U.M.A. identified the following as top economic development strategies for private property owners along Frontier Pathways. These property owners have scenic, open lands that are essential to the Byway's designation and visitor attraction. Strategies that enable these property owners to generate reliable revenue streams while protecting the scenic beauty of their properties is key to the region's future economic success.

Frontier Pathways spans diverse terrain from the fertile agricultural lands around Pueblo to the high-mountain valley of Westcliffe/Silver Cliff. Given the diverse topography of the region, some strategies are more appropriate for the Pueblo area whereas others are noted as more closely tailored to Westcliffe/Silver Cliff.

Agricultural Diversification: New Animal Proteins

Along much of the Byway, climate and soil conditions are not well suited to most crops, however cattle ranching is viable. A new USDA certified packing plant, set to open in Westcliffe in 2015, may incentivize landowners to explore raising other animals that are complimentary to their existing operation. Landowners in the area said pasture-raised pork or chicken, which can be run behind grass-fed cattle, are possible areas for diversification.

Local Product: Grass-fed Beef

Similar to the formation of the Pueblo Chile Growers Association, ranchers in the Westcliffe/Silver Cliff area could join forces to promote the area's grass fed & finished beef with a special 'Cliffs' brand. Some landowners in the area have successfully demonstrated the profitability of their grass-fed beef and have received outstanding feedback on the product from customers. The economics indicate this beef can be sold as a specialty product vs. a commodity.

Local Product: Alpaca Fiber

Alpaca garments, given their soft touch, warmth and durability (once reserved for royalty), could be sold at boutique stores in town and/or at a farm stand directly on the property. Alpenglow Alpacas, a hobby farm outside of Westcliffe, constructs one-of-a-kind handmade apparel and home décor.

[16] Parkview Medical Center website: About Parkview
[17] Trulia

Value Add Products: Pueblo Ethnic Foods

This strategy combines local products with local specialty ethnic producers. Processing beef from the Westcliffe/Silver Cliff area into sausage or salamis connects with the Italian heritage in Pueblo, and could be sold through Italian markets or restaurants.

Fee-Based Access: Artist Workshops

Property owners along Frontier Pathways can offer historic and/or desirable wildlife assets and scenes that visitors are willing to pay for because they are unique and can't be easily found elsewhere. Professional photographers, as well as students of the trade, will pay for the opportunity to shoot not only scenic places but classic western activities that take place on private lands, such as horseback riding or cattle drives. Music Meadows Ranch, outside of Westcliffe, charges a fee for photography workshops on their ranch and allows photographers to capture working cowboys and cowgirls in action. Properties with other unique assets, such as buffalo herds, could be an attractive subject for a photography or painting class. Artists of varying kinds may also be interested in staying on the property and using it as an inspirational workspace. Chico Basin Ranch near Colorado Springs, rents their worker housing to artists for studio space during the off-season.

Fee-Based Access: Special Events

People are accustomed to paying fees for wedding and other event venues and the scenic beauty of the Byway lends itself to these special occasions. Brush Canyon Ranch, near Rye, offers their property for such events and based on their 2-year waitlist, the area appears ripe for additional offerings.

Fee-Based Access: Tour Fees

Some landowners are amenable to allowing people on their property but don't want to be responsible for running the activity. These landowners could take a fee for access while a third party tour operator does the rest. In addition, they could be paid a fee to serve as the on-site interpretive guide once the tour group arrives on site. See the sections below on Heritage Tourism and Tour Operator under Supportive Strategies for more detail.

Tours: Horseback Riding

Stakeholder interviews revealed that horseback riding tours and hayrides were once a popular activity and profitable side-business for some ranching families. They are still requested by many visitors but some families near Pueblo that used to offer the service are no longer doing so. It appears that there is an opportunity for others to fill the existing void. In the Westcliffe/Silver Cliff area, Music Meadows Ranch has been successful in leading horseback trail rides of varying levels.

Heritage Tourism: Authentic Western Experiences

The Wet Mountain Valley at the terminus of the Frontier Pathways Byway offers one of the most intact, scenic, iconic working Western landscapes found anywhere. There are abundant opportunities for landowners who wish to earn additional income through activities related to this western history including: horseback riding, animal husbandry, farm/ranch tours, meals or tastings, barn dancing and overnight stays. Overnight stays could be in a cabin or a cook-out and camping under the stars or in a Chuck Wagon. Some visitors want to experience a real

working ranch lifestyle and are willing to engage in daily chores in exchange for lodging and meals. It is expected that the activities described here are created by the landowner but could also be marketed as part of a tour that includes other properties and activities.

Recreation Tourism: Winter Activities

The short tourist season in Westcliffe/Silver Cliff presents a challenge for the towns' business owners and potentially landowners offering activities on their property. Although the market potential for winter activities is currently smaller than the more popular summertime activities, there is an opportunity for landowners with ranchlands that are inactive during the winter months to provide activities for visitors and build a base of customers. Activities could include sleigh rides, ice-fishing or cross country skiing. Westcliffe/Silver Cliff has the honor of being Colorado's first Dark Sky Community, a designation received from the International Dark-Sky Association that recognizes low levels of nighttime light pollution. The early onset of dark skies during the winter months could be a good time to encourage visitors to come view the starlit sky and could help create additional winter demand.

Supportive Strategies

The following strategies can be undertaken by Byway staff and other organizational partners to enhance the potential for property owners to succeed with the strategies above.

Tour operator – To date, there have been a handful of tours offered along Frontier Pathways focused on cultural heritage, however, stakeholder interviews revealed the cost of insurance and transportation for a one-off tour was a barrier. A tour company, however, could scale up the type and frequency of offerings to create enough revenue to support expenses like transportation vehicles and insurance. With abundant culture, heritage, and agricultural sites to choose from, tour organizers could create itineraries that rotate destinations so that no one site is over-burdened and a variety of property owners are able to benefit from fee-based revenue if their property is featured on the tour. Tours appropriate for the area might include: birding and/or other wildlife viewing, mushrooming, movie settings (Westcliffe/Silver Cliff), Western Experiences, historic homes/ranches, and cemeteries/paranormal activities. In addition to touring via motor coach, a bike tour or cross-country ski tour (during winter months) between attractions such as ranches that offer visitor activities, could be an appealing alternative for younger generations as well as families with kids. A chile farm tour near Pueblo, just off the Byway, could support efforts to market the area as one with unique, quality food offerings.

Local business support – There is robust talent among retirees, particularly noted in the Westcliffe/Silver Cliff area, and among existing entrepreneurs along the Byway. A local organization could help to organize a resource pool of talent and create matches between experience and needs or landowners who are interested in exploring new revenue generating activities on their property or entrepreneurs who may want to start a business in town that promotes the area's character and local products. It might also be possible to work with property owners of

underutilized structures to offer it at discounted rents to businesses that promote the area, such as a specialty food incubator or local craft studio that promotes the region's unique qualities.

Regional marketing – With so much to see and do along the Byway and in adjacent towns, it could be easy for visitors to miss certain attractions. Stakeholder interviews corroborated this statement, suggesting the need for a better coordinated marketing approach for the region. Since the Byway connects many of the regional assets it can and should be promoted as a way to see a diverse slice of all facets of the region. As a basic step, staff at key attractions along or near the Byway should be well-versed on Byway basics and have maps or other information on hand to provide to visitors. Byway staff should also look for cross promotional opportunities via publications or events put on by Destination Pueblo and Visit Custer County, new signage such as that at the Steelworks Museum Park that could incorporate Byway information, and partnering with organizations to create sample itineraries for hotels that list activities along or near the Byway. Increasingly visitors use their mobile phones to navigate where to go and what to see. Destination Pueblo is currently developing an app for visitors, which could include information about the Byway. A short podcast could be developed specifically for Frontier Pathways, offering personal stories of the area's explorers and narrative of key attractions along the route. This could be promoted at the visitor center in El Pueblo Museum, a logical stop before touring the Byway.

Events - Building off the recent success of Ride the Rockies, which ended in Westcliffe, Frontier Pathways could create a signature event that would draw new visitors and athletes to the area. "Tri the By" could combine swimming in Pueblo Lake with a mountain or road bike ride up Hardscrabble Canyon and finish with a foot race through the Wet Mountain Valley and the towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff. Athletes could be rewarded at the end of the race with local beef, potatoes and chile. The event could take place in the shoulder season to draw visitors off-peak.

Cultivate local foods – Recommend working with restaurants and retailers along the Byway to show the value of using local ingredients or carrying local products. Share tips for marketing local products, such as clear labeling and perhaps including a picture and short bio of the grower/producer next to the item. Suggest existing restaurants pilot a seasonal menu item to test demand, such as a Pueblo Slopper made with local beef and Pueblo chilies, and additionally work to cultivate new farm-fresh restaurants and menus. Suggest implementing a "Locals Discount" for local products to induce demand and keep products affordable for residents.

Leadership & championing – Frontier Pathways staff can take the lead on working with stakeholders to implement economic development strategies and can hire contract workers as necessary. A report of the plan and on-going annual reports should be given to city councils, Custer County Board of Commissioners and Tourism Board to garner their support.

Visitor services - The addition of a few simple amenities along the byway could help increase visitor comfort, duration of stay and spending. Pay-per-use shower facilities for hikers and campers could be offered through the recreation center in Silver Cliff, making outdoor recreationalists more comfortable exploring and patronizing shops and services in town. A modest café or kiosk with information, snacks, coffee and Wi-Fi could be added in or near Wetmore, where no visitor amenities currently exist. There is already multi-county signage planned for Wetmore, which could be leveraged with byways funding sources. Signage could also be added to denote existing visitor facilities that are not readily apparent, such as restrooms and food at Lake Isabel. There are limited signs in and around Pueblo to alert visitors of Frontier Pathways. As the largest city and gateway to the Byway,

more should be done to make visitors aware of this asset. Understanding signage challenges with CDOT, consider alternative treatments such as a mural/signage painted on the side of a prominent building or decorative banners along 4th Street that show captivating scenes of the Byway. A concern voiced by stakeholders was the limited hours of retailers, which deters visitors in town. Businesses could work together and rotating the days they stay open so on any given day a visitor can find a least a limited numbers of shops to patronize. This creates a more consistent offering for visitors and tests the market for expanded hours without over extending any one business.

SUCCESS STORIES

Along each scenic byway visited for this study, there are pioneering entrepreneurs who've already begun implementing economic strategies that are keeping lands in scenic, open and *profitable* uses. The experience of their success, as well as others' less successful experiences that they generously shared, help inform the recommendations in this report. Many stakeholders along the byways felt that landowners in their respective regions could benefit from hearing about some of the success stories. What follows is a sampling of the successes that were shared by stakeholders. Many of the successful entrepreneurs were forthcoming with detail and expressed a desire to help others who might be interested in replicating their enterprise. The hope is that by including brief summaries of these ventures, interested and even skeptical parties may be inspired to investigate further.

GOLD BELT LOOP

Collaboration

In 2011, the Gold Belt Scenic Byway developed a partnership with Palmer Land Trust which secured $1.7 million in grant dollars from the Federal Highway Administration to protect lands along the byway. More than 9,000 acres along the byway have been protected with conservation easements since then. Since the initial partnership, Palmer has spearheaded additional efforts to secure grants to use along numerous byways through Colorado. palmerlandtrust.org/node/279

Agricultural Preservation and Diversification

Local ranchers put a large area – but not all of their property- under a conservation easement. They set aside a building envelope that allows a wide variety of possible future uses within the portion of the property that is most accessible. Using funds made liquid through the easement, they were able to modernize and improve equipment on their ranch, improving the efficiency of their existing ranching operation. The funds have also made it possible for the couple to begin testing other crops including grapes and hops. After two successful test seasons, they are planning to scale up production of hops. palmerlandtrust.org/node/463

Agritourism

Colon Orchards has long been known for its apples and other orchard fruits. However, changing weather patterns have made fruit yields less predictable and, in some years, less profitable. Building on the interest she observed in visitors who came for seasonal U-Pick and school tours, one family member began experimenting with agritourism, offering hay rides, corn mazes, and similar activities alongside the harvesting. www.colonorchards.com

Local Products

Ralf's Break Room, a casual dining restaurant in Cripple Creek, serves burgers made with local beef. At first the restauranteur was skeptical, because the locally produced, grass-fed beef was more expensive than what the national distributor offered. After sampling the beef, the restaurant owner was convinced that the product was so far superior in taste that customers would prefer it and pay more for it. The restaurant now has a loyal following of local folks who come to eat burgers because they know the meat is from the area.

Local Products

The Gold Belt Loop Scenic Byway organization hosted a dinner. Looking to celebrate and support the region, a Board member began seeking local products to include in the meal. The process uncovered a wealth of local foods and other products – such as etched glasses produced at the prison and was highly popular. The event demonstrated the many local products but also surprised so many attendees that it became clear that many locals were not aware of the variety of products available.

COLLEGIATE PEAKS

Visitor Services

Post Office Ranch, a historic ranch located along the Collegiate Peaks Byway, is a former dairy operation that is now protected under a conservation easement. Dean Roberts has re-purposed his ranch and now runs a successful B & B that is booked solid nearly year round due to the booming local vacation rental industry. Many visitors are families who want an authentic western vacation experience at a Colorado ranch, and Post Office Ranch is able to offer that experience by hosting guests in cabins adjacent to cattle pastures and offering horseback riding. poranchlogcabins.com

Permit Access

One of the biggest draws of Post Office Ranch is the access to private fishing for guests staying at the ranch. The owner offers his guests full access to private finishing areas on the property as part of their cabin rental. While he built a stocked pond for catch and release, the real draw for serious fisherman is private river frontage.

Sportsmen's groups often book the B & B primarily to fish. The on-site fishing access has been so popular that some of Roberts' neighbors have also begun offering permit access on their property to fishermen and anglers.

Agricultural Diversification

Though cattle ranching is the traditional agricultural activity along the Byway, new types of agriculture are popping up and adding diversity and new product types to the area. Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy is a working goat dairy and cheese making operation. Prior to Jumpin' Good, no production goat dairying was occurring in the Upper Arkansas Valley, however it has proven to be a profit-making endeavor. Jumpin' Good Goat cheese is very popular and is shipped throughout Colorado and beyond. In addition to cheese, the farm also sells meat goats to a local ranch and raises a pig or two at a time on excess whey. jumpingoodgoats.com

Agritourism

Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy decided to offer daily tours of the farm to share the love of sustainable animal husbandry. In addition, they added and an on-site retail store to help create an additional, direct market for their product. The tours and retail shop have been successful beyond expectations; the farm has been able to increase tour fees and has had to limit tour hours to twice daily. The owner states that the retail store has become a significant profit center for the dairy operation, and credits agritourism as key in promoting and marketing their cheese. Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy also offers online sales.

Local Product/Agricultural Diversification

Weathervane Farm is another example of agricultural diversification and local product production. While the Upper Arkansas was once famous for lettuce production, few in the valley believed growing vegetables could be profitable in modern times. But rather than producing one or two commodity crops, Weathervane produces a wide variety of seasonal vegetables, herbs and flowers, and sells the vegetables to local restaurants, at farmer's markets, and directly to locals. The produce is in high demand locally. Weathervane sells much of it direct to consumers in shares (known as community supported agriculture or CSA) and at farmer's markets. As the business has grown, Weathervane has begun to supply local grocers and restaurants. One restaurateur buys as much produce from Weathervane as possible and even adjusts their menu to use whatever is available. www.weathervanefarmbv.com

Local Product

Many consumers and visitors value local products, particularly local food. Eddyline Brewery, located along the Collegiate Peaks Byway, offers and advertises menu items that feature local products at two of their restaurants. While the brewpub crowd did not as readily support the higher prices associated with the local product items, the locally sourced menu items were very well received at the more upscale venue. The restaurant has a goal of serving 85% percent locally-sourced food but local growers cannot yet supply all of the demand. eddylinerestaurant.com

Regional Branding

The Collegiate Peaks and Upper Arkansas Valley are considered by many outdoor recreationalists to be a mecca for rafting, kayaking, hiking, biking, climbing, and other outdoor sports. Both monikers have come into use to describe the region, rather than specific geographic features. The reputation of the region as a scenic outdoorsman's paradise with a wide variety of offerings reportedly drives many visitors to choose this over other rafting destinations that are believed to be one-dimensional.

Frontier Pathways

Tours

The Christenson family has owned and operated Brush Canyon Ranch near Rye for five generations. The ranch owners used to offer horseback riding tours and wagon rides that were highly popular and often booked. The family has since shifted their focus to other kinds of activities, leaving the demand unmet.

Fee Access

Music Meadow Ranch, outside of Westcliffe, was protected with a conservation easement in 2007. The owners are intent on remaining a working cattle ranch for years to come and offer visitors a number of ranch experiences, including photography workshops. The workshops are hosted by a third party that pays a fee for access to the property and the chance to photograph active western scenes that include the owners running their herd of horses. musicmeadows.com

Local Product

Music Meadows Ranch also successfully produces and markets a high-end, grass-finished beef product, which they've branded "Sangre's Best". The owners receive excellent reviews from customers on the flavor and quality of the product. The owner cites two important success factors to making the business profitable: converting from haying to rotational grazing method, and offering a specialty (grass-fed organic) rather than conventional product. The beef is sold online, at farmer's markets, and in natural food stores throughout the region. sangresbest.com

Local Product

Alpenglow Alpacas is a small hobby ranch in Westcliffe. Since 2007, the ranch owners have been successfully breeding alpaca-vincuna hybrids. They sell raw fiber and also produce unique, handmade products from the fiber. They have a small retail shop on-site but primarily sell the products online and through trade shows. Alpaca fiber lends itself to specialty products due to its unique qualities compared to wool. Producing a specialty rather than commodity product and developing a reputation for exceptional quality are both said to be important to their success. alpenglowalpacas.moonfruit.com

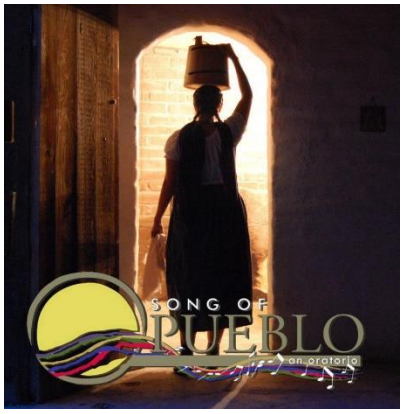
Local Product

The sun, soil and water conditions around Pueblo create the unique, extra hot, flavor of Pueblo Chiles. To increase recognition of the Pueblo Chile, Pueblo County Economic Development and GIS Department sought and received a USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant to initiate a branding campaign. The campaign has already seen success and resulted in new contracts for chile farmers in the area. In 2014, one local family began selling dried Mira Sol chile, the main variety of Pueblo Chile. Demand for the unique local product was strong; the family rapidly sold out of all the dried Mira Sol and had plans to order larger quantities in 2015. pueblochilegrowers.org

Permit Access/Visitor Services

Brush Canyon Ranch has grown its reputation as a wedding venue. The ranch owners rent their facilities, which include rehearsal, ceremony, reception and lodging space on weekends from May through September. Interviews with area stakeholders indicate Brush Canyon is booked more than a year in advance. Due to high demand, the ranch is now offering weekday wedding packages for the 2016 season. brushcanyonranch.com

Collaboration



To convey the rich, diverse and complex cultural heritage of Pueblo and the Frontier Pathways region to visitors is a challenge. In 2008, El Pueblo History Museum produced "Song of Pueblo" a multi-media concert that tells 300 years of history through original compositions, historical images, narration and videos. Four accomplished musicians perform the work of composer and actor Daniel Valdez to audiences of all ages. The success of this popular production required the collaboration of the museum with Frontier Pathways Scenic Byway, Pueblo-County Library District, The Steelworks Center of the West, History Colorado, the Sangre de Cristo Art Center (SCAC), and Destination Pueblo. Heading into the eighth year, collaboration continues with SCAC and audiences will enjoy the addition of new visual artistry and choreography. songofpueblo.org

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

This project is intended primarily to identify economic strategies that can be undertaken by private landowners. This section identifies partners and resources with potentially aligned interests that may be able to provide support and assistance to undertake recommended strategies. The list is not exhaustive nor meant to suggest that specific organizations have resources ready to commit, nor to describe all that the listed partners do. Rather, the list should be understood as identifying to whom property owners and byways organizations can reach out to explore aligned interest in moving forward with recommended and supportive strategies.

BYWAYS ORGANIZATIONS

The very scope of this project suggests that byways organizations have much at stake when it comes to helping property owners find financially viable ways to keep their lands in agricultural and other open and scenic uses. Byways organizations have a range of resources such as access to funding streams for interpretive signage that may complement private landowners' efforts to market and interpret resources on their lands. Byways organizations typically have board members with connections in communities along the byway, and can help reach out to and engage other individuals and organizations. In fact, because byways connect disparate communities, they are a natural entity to champion the area as a connected region with multiple assets.

LAND TRUSTS

Land trusts share the interest of byways organizations to conserve lands in scenic and open uses including agriculture. Many land trusts work to secure conservation easements using a range of tools. While land trusts often have wildlife and resource conservation criteria that prioritize the use of their resources, they are also motivated to work where development pressures are highest, which in some cases is along byways. There are many examples in the rural west where land trusts have supported conservation easements that allow ranchers and farmers to continue and even expand profit-generating uses on conserved properties.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

When it comes to evaluating or modernizing agricultural operations, agricultural extension offices provide a wealth of knowledge and expertise. From accounting to the latest techniques and equipment, extension services can help property owners evaluate their options and make the most of the agricultural livelihood. Agricultural extension services are located primarily in rural areas and agents are often able to provide tailored advice for the region, climate and crop.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) provide entrepreneurs with assistance and advice to help them start new enterprises. Many rural regions have a branch SBDC office that can assist with business planning and development, help finding financing, and similar. Property owners interested in beginning a new enterprise are taking on a new direction and can benefit from business advice and guidance offered by SBDCs.

Local Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of commerce typically seek to increase local business investment and success. Chambers may provide business support and networking opportunities that can benefit new enterprise owners. Chambers are also natural partners in sharing the message that many local businesses success is tied to something they cannot control, namely the scenic quality that visitors' experience. They can help increase understanding that a scenic landscape is more than window dressing for the community; it is instead a good that is being sold every time a visitor makes a purchase in lodging, attractions, or activities.

Local Visitor Bureau

Visitor bureaus work to attract visitors, often using public funds to market the community or region. Many of the supportive strategies in this report recommend more regional coordination in marketing, as well as implementation of specific wayfinding tools. Visitor bureaus are the natural lead agency and online repository for such materials.

Local Government

Local governments have available tools and resources to support and protect agricultural and other low-intensity land uses. Local government also has the power to levy taxes or earmark funds for specific community-wide benefits. In some cases pots of funding already exist that have aligned functions such as supporting conservation easements, marketing, business support, and similar. Existing or new local funding might be designated to support local property owners who choose to conserve private lands that offer a scenic economic benefit, as described in the Chambers of Commerce paragraph above. In addition to funding, local government regulatory tools such as zoning can play an important role in protecting views and regulating the intensity of development along high visibility travel corridors.

Community Organizations

Many communities enjoy a range of civic and not-for-profit organizations. These organizations have missions that span a huge range of purposes. While the types of organizations that might have aligned interests is infinite, some that specifically many be interested in scenic area preservation include those with missions related to historic themes, structures, and events; conservation and environmental groups, and recreation groups or alliances.

Community Investors

Many communities are graced by a handful of local residents who have the financial means and inclination to invest in projects and enterprises they see as benefiting the community they love. Scenic rural areas such as those near byways often attract retirees that have business or investment acumen. They may be willing to

support new enterprise owners with expertise or investment capital that is tied to improving livelihoods and preserving the scenic quality of the community.

Business Owners

In many cases, existing business owners can benefit if property owners were to produce and market more quality local products. For example, restaurateurs and shop owners can capitalize on the local food movement by selling products, while relieving new enterprise owners of the burden of learning the retailing business. Hotel and attraction owners benefit when visitors have more offerings to choose from and extend their stay. And service providers can benefit from shared marketing or packaging with new services, such as a horseback ride and farm dinner with local beer. Involving existing business owners to discover how to support both existing and new enterprises is a win-win for all.

State and Federal Land Management Agencies

Most Colorado byways pass through publically owned lands managed by agencies such as the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Department, and Parks Service. Public land management agencies can be important partners in collaborative marketing and regional branding strategies. In many cases, they can grant permits to allow tours to operate on public lands. Privately lead tours of assets that are on adjoining private and public lands – such as historic covered wagon routes or mountain biking trails – would require the permission of the managing agency.

Colorado Tourism Office

The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) website has long been the host of virtual guides to the byways, including maps and tour information. In 2015, the CTO also had initiatives promoting agritourism, heritage and cultural tourism, both of which align with recommended strategies. These initiatives are intended to support economic development in rural parts of the state. CTO is positioned to help get the word out that agritourism and heritage assets are abundant along our byways.

Colorado Department of Transportation

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Scenic and Historic Byways program is 25 years old. CDOT employs a byways coordinator who helps to support byways organizations through a wide range of efforts. In the past, CDOT received an allocation of funds to distribute to byways. Today, the byways coordinator continues to have a role in helping connect byways coordinators with transportation-related funding that can support initiatives consistent with the purpose of the byways.

APPENDICES

The following sections provide greater detail on:

1) Colorado tourism and visitor types, which may be informative to property owners and supporting agencies who are marketing products and experiences along Colorado byways.
2) Supporting research that makes the case for recommended strategies and their compatibility with the preservation of scenic (open and working) landscapes.

TRENDS IN COLORADO TOURISM

Out of the 31 million visitors in 2013, 15.1 million were considered "marketable leisure visitors", defined as discretionary travelers who are most influenced by marketing and promotional activity. Spending gains were seen across the five main sectors impacted by tourism: food and beverage, transportation, recreation/sightseeing/attractions, lodging, and retail. Food and beverage expenditures saw the greatest year-over-year gain at 12%. Spending on recreation, sightseeing and attractions, increased 8% between 2012 and 2013.[18]

Spending was an all-time high for overnight visitors at $10.4 billion in 2013, 8% above 2012. The top out-of-state markets for overnight visitors continue to be California and Texas. Colorado's neighboring states Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico and Arizona also provide a large number of visitors. The top urban areas generating overnight visitors include: Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Chicago, New York, Dallas, Phoenix, Grand Junction-Montrose, and Houston. Visitors who are just traveling for the day are primarily (72%) Colorado residents.

The list below shows the most popular activities for Colorado leisure visitors. Those most consistent with byways offerings have been italicized.

- Shopping (33%)
- Fine dining (22%)
- *Hiking/backpacking (20%)*
- *Visiting a national or state park (19%)*
- *Visiting a famous landmark or historic site (18%)*
- Swimming (15%)

COLORADO TOURIST SEGMENTS

As mentioned in the Plan, the two largest travel segments that are most relevant to byways, outdoor visitors and touring visitors, are described in greater detail below.

[18] 2013 Colorado Travel Year report

Outdoor Visitors

Approximately half of outdoor visitors come from in-state. The average visitor has higher education and income and is slightly older (average age 43) than outdoor visitors in other states. This segment skews male, is more likely to use campgrounds as opposed to commercial accommodations and is least likely to use the internet for trip planning compared to other segments. Perhaps because of less money spent on lodging, the average spending for this segment is lower than the average Colorado leisure visitor, $317 compared to $376. In addition to outdoor recreation, this segment also has some interest in cultural, historic and eco-tourism activities.

Top interests:

- Hiking/backpacking (51%)
- Camping (43%)
- Visiting a national/state park (33%)
- Fishing (29%)

Touring Visitor Profile

The majority of touring visitors (7 out of 10) come from out-of-state. The average age is 46. Unlike outdoor visitors, this segment is most likely to use commercial lodging and has extensive use of the internet for planning travel. Average trip spending for this segment is higher than outdoor visitors although still slightly below the average Colorado, at $361. In addition to sightseeing and entertainment (such as casinos and bars) touring visitors often participate in outdoor activities such as hiking/backpacking, swimming, mountain climbing, and camping. This is also the segment most likely to seek out cultural activities and attractions, such as museums and theater.

Top interests:

- Visiting a national or state park (44%)
- Visiting a landmark or historic site (42%)
- Shopping (39%)

BYWAYS VISITOR INFORMATION

The following information comes from a survey conducted along eight scenic byways as part of the 2004 America's Scenic Byways: The Colorado Report. Information is included specific to the Gold Belt and Frontier Pathways, where available. Collegiate Peaks was not one of the byways surveyed.

- 43% of Gold Belt Byway travelers and 29% of Frontier Pathways travelers were aware they were on a scenic byway.
- The most common reasons for travel along the byways included vacation (44%), sightseeing (26%), and outdoor recreation (11%).
- The majority of visitors stay at least one night. Only 33% of Gold Belt visitors and 16% of Frontier Pathways visitors did a day trip only.

- Campgrounds were the most popular lodging for Frontier Pathways visitors and hotels/motels were the most popular lodging for Gold Belt visitors during the survey period.
- In general, travelers along all eight byways most often choose the route based on a recommendation, this was consistent among Gold Belt and Frontier Pathways.
- Based on a survey of Gold Belt Byway visitors in 2007, 38% were traveling with children under 18.

RESEARCH: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SCENIC LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION

The landscapes around Colorado's scenic byways are rapidly changing as growing development pressures turn many open landscapes into residential subdivisions. Colorado loses approximately 90,000 acres of open land each year and the average large farm and ranch shrinks by 80 acres annually—a loss four times greater than that experienced in any other state[19]. This has a significant impact on Colorado's two largest industry sectors, agriculture and tourism, which are highly dependent upon the state's open lands for revenue.

As part of this project, P.U.M.A. undertook a review of existing documents related to economic development and scenic land preservation. Overall, the purpose of many such publications was demonstrating a contributing positive economic impact of byways to an administrative unit – such as local or state economy. However, a number of resources were found and reviewed that contribute to an understanding of how to advance and encourage economic development that is compatible with the goals and character of byways.

Open Land/Farmland Conservation

Studies commissioned by the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) show that unspoiled natural landscapes are visitors' most valued attribute. A report by the University of Maryland, the Economic Benefits of Farmland Preservation, states that preserving the agriculture industry provides open space attributes and rural amenities that can attract tourists and new residents to an area. Protecting scenic landscapes therefore is critical to state and local economic development. The University of Maryland report also states that farmers and ranchers who participated in conservation programs were more likely than non-participants to have invested in their farm in the last five years, 66% compared to 55%. There are a number of ways landowners can engage in activities that increase their economic viability without compromising open land conservation, a selection of these practices are described below.

Cultivate Niche Markets for Local Products

The Center for Rural Affairs says tapping into high-value niche markets is one of the most promising ways to increase small farm and ranch economic viability. With its growing popularity, local foods could be the niche. According to the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, consumers are willing to pay more for food that is locally grown because they feel it is worth paying a premium for freshness and they want to support small farms over big agriculture business.

In addition to direct retailing to consumers that may happen on a farm or through a farmers market, local residents and visitors alike enjoy finding and consuming locally produced foods in restaurants. A 2012 National

[19] Palmer Land Trust Website

Restaurant Association survey of chefs indicated "local" is an increasingly important differentiator for restaurants, in particular locally sourced meats and produce[20].

In some cases, the makers of local products are seeking local inputs to make their product that much more authentic. CTO's strategic plan noted increasing profitability for barley growers in Colorado being driven by Colorado's craft brewing industry, which values making their product with local ingredients.

Niche markets can be difficult to enter, so it is advantageous for small farmers and ranchers to work together to market their products. The Center for Rural Affairs suggests forming a cooperative as a way to guarantee a steady source and variety of products, negotiate a fair price, and tap into markets beyond the immediate area.

Seek Heritage Tourists

Heritage tourism is inherently tied to preservation and can boost economic development in rural areas.[21] The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) states that heritage tourism is particularly attractive as an economic development strategy because these types of tourists stay longer and spend more money than other tourist types. Research by Longwoods International confirms this, demonstrating that heritage tourists in Colorado stay an average of 5.8 nights compared to 4.6 and spend on average $447 compared to $376 for other tourists. Heritage tourists seek both cultural and historic elements in towns as well as natural landscapes. According to the NHTP report, The Economic Power of Heritage and Place, successful preservation programs create unique places and foster community pride which is tied back to a strong economy.

Diversify Income with Agritourism

Many small farms and ranches struggle to make ends meet based on farm income alone. In 2011, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) predicted the average farm household would get only 13 percent of its income from farm sources. According to the USDA's Farming for Profit and Sustainability Resource Manual, agritourism has the potential to preserve and sustain family farms, ranches, and rural communities and conserve natural resources by creating supplemental income for producers that makes a difference between a profit and a loss[22]. The 2007 Census of Agriculture reported an average of $24,300 additional income for farms that offered agritourism activities. In a 2006 study of agritourism operators in Pennsylvania, 43% said they would be unable to support their family and/or farm without the additional income generated from agritourism[23].

According to CTO's Cultural, Heritage and Agritourism Strategic Plan, there are three keys to a successful agritourism businesses:

1. Agritourism experience is located near an urban population center.
2. Cluster of additional tourism activities nearby.
3. Agritourism business operators have a broad network of partnerships.

[20] Local Food Shift: Local Food on the Rise
[21] National Trust for Historic Preservation
[22] Chapter 1: Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism Introduction
[23] Farmland Preservation and Agritourism in South Jersey: An Exploratory Study

Agritourism also needs good marketing. In addition to word-of-mouth, which may be the most influential, promoting agritourism businesses via the Visit Colorado website, visitor centers, hotels (promoting specific itineraries), featured stories, social media (byways could take over CTO's Instagram channel for a week) and roadside signs or flags could help. Colorado's Agritourism Association would also be able to assist with marketing.

The Fruit Loop in the Hood River Valley, 45 minutes east of Portland, OR is a good example of a region that recognized its unique assets and took a coordinated approach to market those assets to visitors. The 35 mile route winds through fruit orchards and small towns with 36 different stops along the way where visitors can connect with agricultural businesses offering on-farm experiences. Activities include U-picks, fruit stands, markets carrying local products such as jellies and alpaca wool clothing, hay rides and wine tastings[24]. The loop was started in the 1990s as a way to stimulate a sluggish economy and has been largely successful. According to an article in Oregon's business magazine titled "Hood River's Fruit Loop Boosts Rural Economy", business owners see the Fruit Loop as a powerful marketing tool and a reason for people to visit the region.[25]

It may be necessary to revisit zoning codes and update for agritourism uses. According to Laura Grey, Director of Heritage and Agritourism for the Colorado Tourism Office, many counties have not yet zoned for agritourism and in some instances businesses have been shut down as a result of complaints and no formal guidance to state that the use is allowed. To enable a robust industry, zoning regulations should be updated to include parameters of what is allowable within the broad category of agritourism.

Fee-Based Private Land Access

In 2014, USDA invested $20 million to help state and tribal governments increase recreational opportunities on private lands as a means of protecting wildlife habitat and spurring economic opportunities[26]. In USDA's news release on the topic, The Outdoor Industry Association provides job and spending figures that show an increase in reactional activities is important for rural economies. Arizona's State Conservationist, Keisha Tatam, was quoted saying "connecting outdoor recreation to private lands conservation is good for wildlife, people and rural economies[27]." Landowners with the right topography can provide public access for recreational activities such as hiking, biking, hunting, fishing or wildlife viewing.

[24] Hood River County Fruit Loop Website
[25] Impact Oregon, a supplement to Oregon Business Magazine 2008
[26] News Release: USDA Directs $20 Million to Help Improve Public Access on Private Lands 2014
[27] Ibid.