



Mancos Creative District Strategic Plan

June 2015

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The Mancos Creative District wishes to thank the following individuals and agencies for their support.

***Susan Lander, Facilitator
Sally Pearce, Heritage Storytelling Consultant
Colorado Creative Industries
El Pomar Foundation
The Boettcher Foundation
Governor John Hickenlooper
Members of the Mancos Creative District Steering Committee***

Appreciation also goes to the Mancos community, the Mancos Board of Trustees, Town of Mancos staff, and the many volunteers and businesses that have supported the Mancos Creative District.



Perry and Lynne Lewis of Rimrock Outfitters

Mancos is an example of how a creative district can, through working collaboratively with the entire community, further the economic development of a small, rural Colorado town. We began meeting in the spring of 2014 to work with Colorado Creative Industries on becoming a certified Creative District. Mancos has reputation as a unique melting pot of artists and artisans, farmers, ranchers, local independent businesses and visitors. Our Steering Committee developed the following Mission Statement for the district:

“We are the catalyst in creating a vibrant and sustainable economic hub benefitting the Mancos Valley by empowering our diverse creative community and honoring our rich cultural heritage.”

To create a thriving future for our community is our main goal. All of the goals and objectives in this plan are geared toward furthering this important purpose.

About the Mancos Creative District

The Mancos Valley continues a 140 year tradition as a center of ranching at the edge of the San Juan Mountains. The Old West lives on and blends with the new as cowboys lead cattle drives down Main Street and gallery owners open their doors on Grand Avenue. The La Plata Mountains and the spectacular cliffs of Mesa Verde National Park border the Mancos Valley. With a stable base of pioneer ranching families, the town also has a sizable contingent of National Park employee families, Durango commuters, and a growing fine arts community. Mancos is a diverse town of approximately 620 households in Southwest Colorado. The town’s population is 1,361 residents with an additional 3,000 community members in the surrounding Mancos Valley. As the “Gateway to Mesa Verde,”™ Mancos features tourist and traveler amenities, an annual hot air balloon festival, and many other annual events to support its growing economic base.



Steve Williams, Blacksmith, Cowboy Forge

Mancos is designated as an enterprise zone, which allows local businesses to receive tax credits for certain business investments. Despite our serious economic issues, the arts have thrived in Mancos. Our artists and artisans have kept their galleries and studios open even while the national economy struggled. Mancos folks are a tough bunch who knows how to survive the tough times. Area artisans practice the crafts of yesteryear, including ironworks, wood carving, leather work, wainwright and western hat-making. Local photographers, painters, and sculptors dine alongside cowboys and wranglers. Artisan food is served at the acclaimed Olio's restaurant and the Absolute Bakery and Café. A local coffee shop owner and his wife roast their own beans in their garage and a local distillery produces its own craft small-batch rum. The Mancos Brewing Company, a micro-brewery, provides delicious brews in a family atmosphere. The local Mancos Times newspaper was established in the 1890's. The historic building in which the paper was produced is being restored, along with the common press, one of only three in the country.

The Chicago Tribune recognized that Mancos has more galleries per capita than any other community in the nation. The Mancos Creative District spans several blocks in the historic downtown area of town. Home to eight galleries, an historic opera house, late 1800's buildings, and countless artisans, writers, and independent businesses, the creative district is the jewel of the Mancos Valley. In this very walkable, unique section of town, multiple craftsmen, arts and music venues, and food producers co-mingle, offering residents and visitors an authentic and unique experience. We are truly "Where the West Still Lives."



Community Fall Harvest Festival on Grand Avenue

Even with the draw of new residents and frequent visitors, Mancos has maintained its small town, western rural character. The majority of roads in town are unpaved and cattle drives through Main Street are a regular event in late May and early October. Five in-town structures are on the State Historic registry, four of which are also on the National Historic Registry. The local high school is the oldest continuously operating high school in Colorado.

The Mancos Valley is home to Louis L'Amour, whose influence can be easily felt. The sweeping vistas of Mesa Verde, the Sleeping Ute Mountain, and La Plata Mountains serve as inspiration to the writers and artists of our past and present. For a small town, Mancos has its fair share of arts and cultural events. In addition to regular art openings at the various galleries, weekly summer farmer's market and local dining events, the Mancos community and visitors are treated to the Arts Roundup (June), Millwood Follies (February), Mancos Colorado Days (July), Mancos Melt (March), Grand Summer Nights Art Walks (summer), and the annual Hot Air Balloon Festival (September). Mancos has hosted large concerts in Cottonwood Park and bands are frequently seen at the Columbine (a historic bar), the Millwood Restaurant and Ian's Distillery. The Mancos School District and the Mancos Library offer regular arts, music and cultural events for students and adults. Recently, the town of Mancos became a Sister City with a similar historic, agricultural community in northern France called Feins. Mancos also has Sister City relationships with Thornton, Colorado and Mancos, Peru.

The Mancos Creative District is a partnership between the many businesses, individuals and organizations that so enrich the Mancos community. Namely, the Mancos Valley Arts Council, the Town of Mancos, the Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Mancos Valley Historical Society, the Mancos Public Library District, the Mancos School District, and the galleries and restaurants within the district. Two artist cooperatives within the district represent 33 artists from every walk of life and medium.

This community has drawn diverse people, organizations and businesses, whose entrepreneurial creativity weave a rich fabric of life in this true western town. These creatives have come together in this small town in Southwest Colorado and it is apparent that the uniqueness of the Mancos community inspires them. Our creative district is a true mark of our heritage and recognition of the role of the artisan and fine artist in our community. Our adopted brand is a cowboy riding a horse while roping a steer. While the western ranching history of the Mancos Valley is represented, it is our artistic and innovative spirit that is embodied here.

The Town of Mancos supports the Mancos Creative District and the Town Board of Trustees passed a resolution in 2012 to designate the boundaries of the district.

The Steering Committee

A group of dedicated volunteers is the organizing force behind the Mancos Creative District. The Steering Committee of the Mancos Creative District includes multiple partner organizations that represent the various community, artistic, and cultural agencies that make Mancos unique. Although not every organization is on the Steering Committee, we work frequently with many others to put on events, share information, and develop community support. The following organizations are partners and representatives serve on the Mancos Creative District Steering Committee:

Artisans of Mancos (Patty Russell)
Blue Heron Pottery and Sculpture (Janet Lever-Wood)
Mancos Common Press (Betsy Harrison)
Mancos Library District (Lee Hallberg)
Mancos on the Move (Rena Wilson)
Mancos School of the West (Rena Wilson)
Mancos School District (Brian Hansen)
Mancos Valley Arts Council (Jan Wright, Helen Looman)
Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce (Marie Chiarizia, Patty Russell)
Mancos Valley Resources (Betsy Harrison)
Painted Turtle Community Arts Studio (Sarah Allen)
Town Of Mancos (Andrea Phillips, Chelsea Jones)
Mancos Valley Historical Society (Linda Simmons)



One of several local artist-painted waste cans in town

The Planning Process

The town began exploring the potential for becoming a Creative District when it conducted an inventory of the many local artists, musicians, and craftspeople in the valley. This community has always had a reputation as an independent arts and crafts community with a unique heritage. Since the town applied for and received candidate status as a Creative District in the summer of 2014, the Steering Committee has met on a regular basis to develop the foundation for the work of the committee and to further the goals and initiatives of the district. Through the strong partnerships built around the creative district program with multiple grassroots organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and the town elected officials and staff, we are seeing progress in many areas.

The Mancos Town Board of Trustees supported the application for Creative District candidacy and dedicated town staff and resources to work towards this goal. Community feedback on the district has been sought in a variety of ways. Fun events such as the Fall Harvest Festival, Make a Difference Day Painting Project, Mancos Valley History Storytelling Session, wine barrel planters “branding party” and others have brought various sectors of the community together for a common purpose. We are starting to see an intersection and co-mingling of fine arts with our agricultural heritage.

Once the draft goals and objectives presented in this plan were developed by the Steering Committee over a period of several months, the Committee presented these ideas to multiple organizations throughout the valley. An online and paper survey collected comments on the goals and sought public feedback on the direction of the Creative District. Overall, support is rich for this program, and residents are encouraged by the possibilities of the Mancos Creative District.



Tour of the Mancos Common Press/ Mancos Times newspaper building

Enhancing Downtown Economic Vitality

In 2012, the Town Board of Trustees designated the district's boundaries through a resolution. The boundaries of the district are largely the commercial, downtown core. However, the Mancos Creative District encompasses the events, people, and heritage of the entire surrounding Mancos Valley. As downtown thrives, so will the rest of the Mancos community and the businesses and families in the Valley. Designation as a Creative District will bring additional focus to the downtown area and would further the momentum of creative business development in the district. A map of the district's boundaries is in the appendix.

The Town has supported economic development efforts within the district and surrounding areas in several ways.

- Our community is rich in arts and historical resources, and we celebrate this as part of our heritage and our future. Downtown Mancos is home to galleries, working artists and historic buildings. Events such as Mancos Days, the Mancos Melt, Olde Fashioned Christmas, and the Arts Festival are held in the downtown area.
- Planning efforts have focused attention and resources on the district. A Master Trails Plan includes proposals for a downtown River Walk. A group of architecture and planning graduate students from the University of Colorado-Denver Technical Assistance Program worked with downtown business and property owners and the public to create options for redevelopment of vacant parcels within the district. The town also participated in a Downtown Colorado Inc. study that demonstrated potential initiatives that Mancos staff and elected officials can implement to further develop the



Sign for Mancos Valley Artists Open Studio Tour

downtown area. Finally, the town is working with CDOT on a Hwy 160 Corridor Plan to make aesthetic and accessibility improvements to this important corridor through town.

- The town hired an Economic Development Coordinator in 2014, who is working with existing and new businesses. She is helping to brand the town and create an online presence for the community.
- The Board recently passed a set of economic development incentives that will encourage business owners to renovate their facades through a matching mini-grant. Waivers for certain new business start up fees are also available.
- The Town and the Mancos Valley Chamber are working in collaboration to achieve the goal of economic development in the district. Plans are underway to install wayfinding signage throughout town and to add bike racks, benches, and informational kiosks. A downtown walking map is available for tourists.

The District Organizational Role

We are working to ensure our community and Southwest Colorado understands who we are and that we are here for everyone. The Creative District will be the main instrument developing Mancos into a vibrant and economically strong arts town. As a District, we are committed to the following:

1. Through our collaborative outreach efforts engaging the entire community, we will work with our diverse members to develop, maintain and grow the creative district.



Steering Committee Members at Denver training in 2014

2. We will be the “facilitators” of the district, educating all community members about our mission, goals and strategies. Our entire community will understand the importance of the creative district to our financial well-being.
3. Through continued networking, we will join the arts with the businesses, home owners, ranching and agricultural community, and the different ethnicities and generations in our district.
4. Attract and continue to retain creative entrepreneurs, which is part of the heart of Mancos.

Our Goals

The Steering Committee developed the following six goals through planning sessions with our facilitator. We then took these goals and associated objectives out to the community for feedback. Support from the public is strong, and business owners, artisans and residents are excited about the district’s plans. Our goals are:

- Goal #1: Leverage the Mancos Creative District to create economic vitality and promote job creation.**
- Goal #2: Engage the community and its youth in promoting social cohesiveness and understanding through cultural activities.**
- Goal #3: Build a stronger collective creative community.**
- Goal #4: Beautify the Mancos community to attract visitors, help businesses thrive and improve the community’s image.**
- Goal #5: Celebrate and honor the cultural heritage of the Mancos Valley.**
- Goal #6: Develop a sustainable creative district so that it can continue to promote the Mancos Valley for years to come.**

Downtown Pocket Park and Mancos Livery wagon



Mancos Valley Economic Summit, April 2015



55th Annual Mancos Days Festival Parade Float "Mancos or Bust"



Piñata Breaking during Old Fashioned Christmas Celebration



Future Signage for Mancos

Goals Implementation Matrix

Goal #1: Leverage the Mancos Creative District to Create Economic Vitality and Promote Job Creation.			
Metrics/Outcomes:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased attendance at events • Increase in lodging tax and sales tax • Increased visitor and tourism numbers 			
Objective	How We Will Do it	Implementation Timeline	Budget
1.A. Develop Mancos into a destination that is known for arts, culture, fun and heritage.	Expand messaging and networking in person, online, and print.	Within the first twelve months	Administrative costs*
1.B. Utilize branding marketing strategies to spread the word about the great things happening in Mancos.	Develop marketing plan which includes Mancos branding, outreach, print materials, online, and special events.	Within the first twelve months.	\$3k
1.C. Create a desirable district where people want to visit and engage on their way to and from Mesa Verde National Park.	Make downtown district more appealing and comfortable. Enhance places to eat, shop, relax, and find restrooms and other necessities.	Within the next five years.	Administrative costs
1.D. Work with partner agencies to find creative ways to restore and reuse historic buildings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mancos Common Press • Convert Empty Space into Artist/Food/History • Opera House 	Work with ArtSpace, local businesses, grantors and foundations, builders, architects and local Historic Preservation Council to raise funds, develop plans, and beautify the work.	Within the next five years.	Local Match

*Administrative costs are in-house items (e.g. work that can be accomplished with hired staff for the district)

Goal #2: Engage the Community and its Youth in Promoting Social Cohesiveness and Understanding through Cultural Activities.

Metrics/Outcomes:

- Increased attendance of all ages at events
- Student involvement in projects and programs
- Increase in lodging tax and sales tax

Objective	How We Will Do it	Implementation Timeline	Budget
2.A. Develop ongoing partnerships with the local school district to engage local youth and families.	Ensure that arts remain part of the school district curriculum; work with school to bring in heritage and creative cultural events.	Within the first twelve months.	Administrative costs
2.B. Explore options for community cultural project that involve all sectors of the community (e.g. dance, ceramics, painting, music).	Continue building collaborative partnership with the Painted Turtle to offer after school arts programs. Create a public arts project with kids.	Within the first twelve months.	\$2k

Goal #3: Build a Stronger Collective Creative Community.

Metrics/Outcomes:

- Increased attendance at events
- Increase in lodging tax and sales tax
- Purchase and renovate an “Arts Space”
- Develop and implement a Capital Campaign to purchase and renovate the building
- Increased class offerings
- Stronger networking with local artists and creative entrepreneurs

Objective	How We Will Do it	Implementation Timeline	Budget
<p>3.A. Create a space or use an existing space to accommodate working artists’ gallery, a live music and spoken word performance space, a museum, a theater, and meetings to further develop arts programming in more venues.</p>	<p>Purchase or lease the building to renovate it, raise funds, and hire a manager and collaborate with artists to do events.</p>	<p>Within the first five years.</p>	<p>One to two years \$250k Three to Five years \$750k</p>
<p>3.B. Support the Mancos School of the West to get off the ground and be successful.</p>	<p>Funding assistance for promotion and management, cross promotion, marketing.</p>	<p>Within the first six months.</p>	<p>\$1k</p>
<p>3.C. Develop more ways for artists to create, sell and show their work (e.g. revolving public art displays, mini-grants, artists in residence, artist live/work space, etc.).</p>	<p>Create display places in street fairs, public art displays, local bank, restaurants, 160 Corridor businesses. Develop artist-in-residence program in Mancos.</p>	<p>Within the first twelve months.</p>	<p>\$5k in administrative costs and mini grants</p>
<p>3.D. Create a community juried arts show.</p>	<p>To be held in new arts space.</p>	<p>Within 36 months.</p>	<p>\$3k</p>
<p>3.E. Create an outdoor public arts program for display of sculpture, etc. to enhance the visual interest for community.</p>	<p>Explore funding for pieces to display.</p>	<p>Within 36 months.</p>	<p>\$3k</p>

Goal #4: Beautify the Mancos Community to Attract Visitors, Help Businesses Thrive and Improve the Community's Image

Metrics/Outcomes:

- Increased attendance at events
- Increase in lodging tax and sales tax
- Increase visitor and tourism numbers
- Highways and roads into Mancos more beautiful and engaging
- Recognition both from within the Town of Mancos boundaries and other nearby local communities on our progress , physically and financially

Objective	How We Will Do it	Implementation Timeline	Budget
4.A. Develop improved streetscapes downtown to make the downtown experience more attractive, unique and comfortable (e.g. wider sidewalks, trees, benches, flowers, public art, lighting).	In cooperation with Town and CDOT, widen sidewalks and implement streetscapes improvements. Work with Empire Electric and CDOT on lighting improvements.	Within the next five years.	\$25 - \$40k
4.B. Improve US Hwy 160 Corridor (e.g. gateway signage, landscaping, medians, public art).	Work with CDOT and public to do Hwy 160 Corridor Mobility and Improvement Plan. Raise funds for implementation of plan projects.	Within the next five years.	\$20K
4.C. Create opportunities for more public art (e.g. sculptures, additional murals, etc.)	Ongoing. Network with potential artists, fundraising, and sponsorship opportunities.	Within the next five years.	Administrative costs

Goal #5: Celebrate and Honor the Cultural Heritage of the Mancos Valley

Metrics/Outcomes:

- Increased attendance at events
- Increase in lodging tax and sales tax

Objective	How We Will Do it	Implementation Timeline	Budget
5.A. Research options for a valley Historical Museum to serve as a repository of historical material and as a destination for area visitors.	Explore options for existing buildings.	First six months.	Administrative costs
5.B. Explore artistic and cultural links to Mesa Verde National Park (e.g. Mesa Verde 1930's poster mural on a building).	Continue dialogue with Mesa Verde NP to develop cross-promotional opportunities. Continue with trademark Gateway to Mesa Verde. Find a location for the WPA era mural.	First twelve months.	Administrative costs
5.C. Celebrate our cultural heritage by communicating with the ranchers to co-advertise their cattle drives, branding, team rodeos, etc.	Work on cross-promotional opportunities for rodeos.	Within the first twelve months.	Administrative costs
5.D. Involve more people in the arts and heritage through events, classes, etc. in partnership with the School, Library, Mesa Verde, Arts Council and many others.	Work with partner agencies to help get the word out.	Within the first twelve months.	Administrative costs

Goal #6: Develop a Sustainable Creative District So that it Can Continue to Promote the Mancos Valley for years to come.

Metrics/Outcomes:

- Increased attendance at events
- Increase in lodging tax and sales tax

Objective	How We Will Do it	Implementation Timeline	Budget
6.A. Leverage current grant funding and partner resources to bring in additional, long term funding for the Mancos Creative District to fund the organization.	Create funding sources for the ongoing sustainability of the organization (e.g. staff, supplies, rent, etc.)	Within the first two years.	Administrative costs
6.B. Once the district is certified, move it to its own 501c3 with a part time paid coordinator.	Raise funds to pay a part-time paid coordinator. Develop 501c3 management plan. Create Board of Directors and membership structure.	Within first two years.	Administrative costs
6.C. Create Fundraising and Development Strategy to Fund the Objectives Above (public art, events, art space, etc.).	Create fundraising plan, grant writing, foundation support, and sustainable local funding source.	Within the next five years.	Administrative costs
6.D. Attract and retain creative entrepreneurs.	Work with economic development agencies to create opportunities for job creation and retention around the arts and cultural sectors of the community.	Within the next five years.	Administrative costs

Implementation Plan

In order to implement the goals and objectives listed above, we plan to do the following:

Organizational Strategies and Sustainability

1. **Identify and raise steady revenue streams** to set up an office, provide administrative costs, and to hire a part time Creative District administrator. Initially, office space may be set up in an existing space with office equipment, perhaps as an in-kind donation from a partner agency. Once a multi-purpose arts space building is established, the Creative District offices can be moved inside.
2. **Investigate options for organizational structures and explore possibilities for a 501c3 organizational status.** First, the organization may be a project with this status under Mancos Valley Resources, an umbrella organization, until it is its own organization. Non-profit status will allow the organization to apply for and receive grants, receive foundation support and tax-deductible donations. Once the organization is established, we will create all the necessary operation systems, board of directors, operations manual, board binders to contain all legal documentation. We will create a sustainable organization with a plan that will include bylaws, committee structure, accounting procedures, and other aspects of non-profit management. With non-profit status, we will then have the options to apply to local and Front Range foundations along with NEA.
3. **Develop the Structure for a Sustainable Organization.** Members of the existing Steering Committee will be invited to join the board of directors for our organization. We will ensure that the board has proper community members on the board. We have also discussed the formation of an Advisory Committee enabling us to include community members for their expertise. It is very important that the Mancos community feel they are all included and participating in our organization.
4. **Develop Membership.** We will implement a membership organization with levels of support. This funding will aid in our growth along with aiding the community in acknowledging that this is their organization. A committee is reviewing membership levels and yearly fees at this time.

Develop a Funding Plan to Implement the Goals of the District

1. **Create a Long-Term Funding Plan.** Nearly all of the objectives in this Strategic Plan require some level of funding to implement. In addition to funding for the organization itself (e.g. administrator, office space, event planning, promotions), funding is needed to move forward on the projects above. For instance, purchasing and renovating an historic building for artist live/work space, creating public art projects, and putting on a juried art show are just some of the projects identified by the Creative District as requiring funding.

2. **Seek Corporate Sponsorships.** Corporate sponsorship will be a key part of our funding plan. Corporate levels of support will be created with informational packets prepared to aid in securing this sponsorship. Though there are few businesses in our community, we believe that once we demonstrate to them our goals, objectives and development plan we will garner their support. Businesses that serve Southwest Colorado will also be approached for their support.



Community painting project supplies



Plein Air Painting Downtown





The town "brand" next to the Old Mancos Jail in Boyle Park

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