



Urban Land Institute (ULI) Colorado

A Vision for the Abbey Lands in Cañon City

A Building Healthy Places Workshop Report



A Report from the Abbey Lands Building Healthy Places Workshop

By ULI Colorado

August 15-16, 2019



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

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Downtown Cañon City. ULI volunteer experts came to Cañon City for the Building Healthy Places Workshop on August 15-16, 2019.

I. Overview

The Colorado District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI Colorado) held a Building Healthy Places (BHP) workshop in Cañon City on August 15-16, 2019, focused on infill development opportunities for the Abbey Land Holdings (Abbey lands). This 187-acre site located north of US 50, less than two miles east of downtown Cañon City, houses historic Abbey buildings and has been sitting on the market for more than three years.

The Abbey lands have the potential for reuse that meets the community needs for attainable housing, access to open space and health-related amenities, and bike and pedestrian connectivity. Cañon City asked ULI volunteer experts to provide guidance on a vision for potential redevelopment of the Abbey lands.

For this workshop, ULI Colorado assembled five land use experts who volunteered to offer objective, third-party advice (see page 25 for panelist bios). The panel reviewed a detailed advance

Supported by:

The City of Cañon City & The Colorado Health Foundation

ULI Program Staff & Author:

Marianne Eppig, Director, ULI Colorado

Building Healthy Places Workshops

Building Healthy Places Workshops provide technical assistance to communities by engaging ULI members as volunteer experts in the fields of real estate, architecture, planning, and public health, among others. In this one-day workshop, ULI volunteer panelists study and work with selected communities to provide concrete, achievable findings and recommendations to create opportunities for enhancing community health and wellness through the built environment.

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ABBEY LANDS

Inspired by the history and location of the Abbey lands, the ULI panelists developed a vision for the 187-acre site that could include:

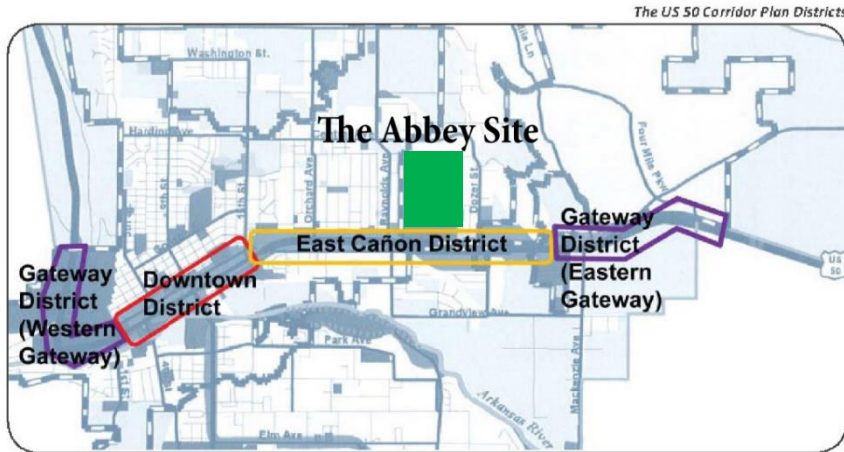
- Adaptive reuse of the historic abbey buildings
- Addition of housing that is affordable for people who work in Cañon City
- Using agriculture as a neighborhood amenity
- Addition of neighborhood parks, open space, and trail systems
- Walkable and bikeable connections to surrounding neighborhoods

Critically, the panelists recommended a master-planned approach that will allow the site to evolve logically and consistently over time. Under a master plan, one developer controls the entire site, but separate architects, developers and builders create individual projects that support the vision. Panelists also considered practical ways to attract private and public investment to help make this vision a reality.

packed, toured the study area, and interviewed local stakeholders, including City staff, elected officials, property owners, local residents, and organizational leaders (see page 24 for the list of stakeholders interviewed).

The panelists provided the findings and recommendations for repurposing the site to enhance community well-being in this report. While addressing the workshop problem statement and questions posed to them by Cañon City staff, the panelists focused on issues such as adding quality housing, preserving historic structures, enhancing open space, and addressing access to healthy food and pedestrian and bike connectivity.

The Abbey Lands



The Abbey lands (identified in green) in relation to Cañon City's commonly referred to districts.

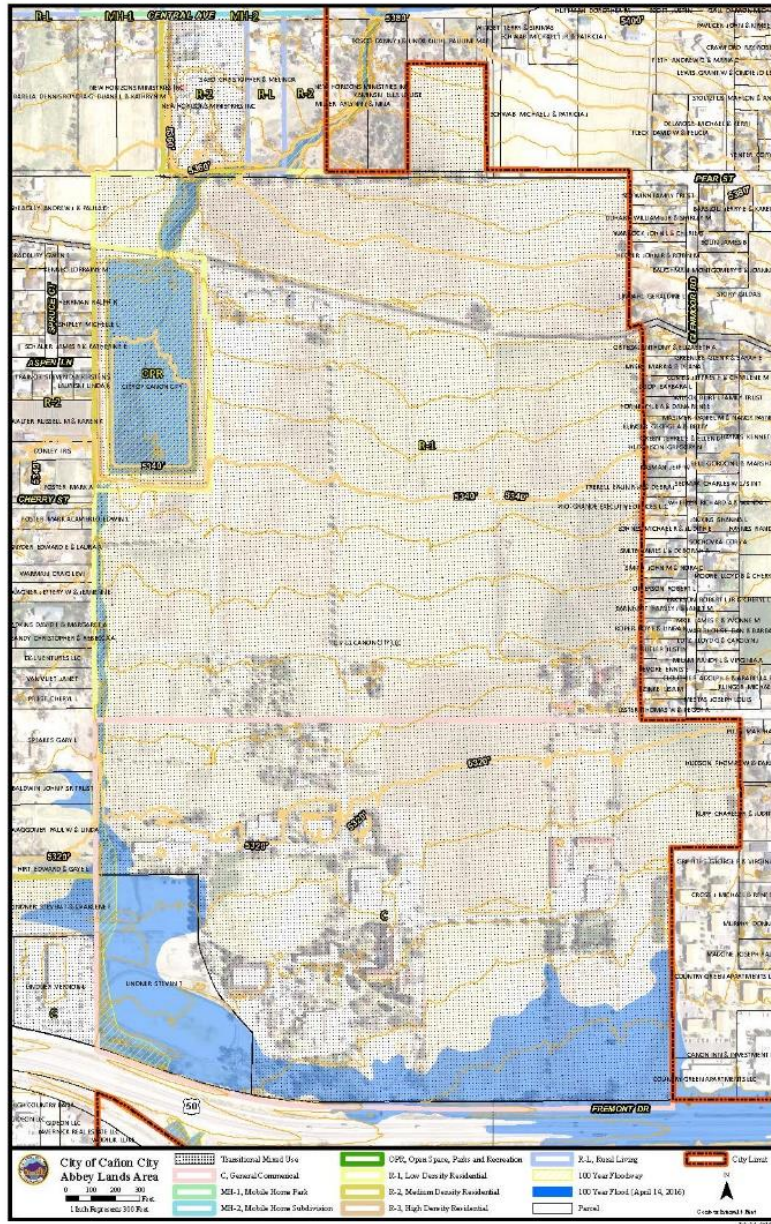
The 187-acre site is commonly referred to as the Abbey lands and includes about 179 acres of vacant or underutilized lands. It is centrally located within City limits and abuts US Route 50. This land is within an Opportunity Zone. There are about 15-20 structures on the property, including the stately monastery/chapel building (66,868 sf), event center (12,688 sf), older office space, a Department of Corrections training center (15,688 sf), short-term rental housing, a fieldhouse (19,450 sf), a few vacant buildings in the “core area,” and numerous out buildings. The property also includes a historic cemetery and arboretum located in the southern-central area of the site, the City’s Abbey Detention Pond at the northwest area of the site, and is home to a winery and tasting room.



ABOUT THE ABBEY

Built in the 1920s as a Catholic monastery and boarding school, the 187-acre property consists of 16+ buildings and farmland. Most of the buildings are oriented around a quadrangle that creates a campus atmosphere. The property includes a working farm and winery, and there is significant income from the event center, Department of Corrections office lease, and the winery lease. The broker suggests reuses such as mixed-use, hospitality, multi-family, senior and assisted living, and/or an art incubator. The existing buildings have potential to be reused as a campus for educational, religious, or institutional use.

The southern section of the site is zoned for general commercial (C) and the land bordering US 50 is in the floodplain. About 160 acres in the northern portion of the site are zoned for low-density residential development (R-1) and is being used as farmland. The entire property has a Transitional Mixed-Use (TMU) overlay zone applied to it to allow for more innovative land development patterns and pedestrian-oriented districts that enhance the quality of life and vitality of the City. The TMU overlay is also intended to encourage a reduction in vehicular traffic and a unified approach to development on the site. The City's TMU overlay zone applied to the Abbey lands reflects a commitment to changing the built environment to improve public health in this area.



The Abbey site, pictured above, is zoned C (General Commercial) in the southern section and R-1 (Low Density Residential) in the northern section, with a TMU (Transitional Mixed-Use) overlay zone across the entire property.

The City's US 50 Corridor Plan for the East Cañon District states about the Abbey lands:

"This property provides the largest single opportunity for new development within the East Cañon District. A master plan for development of this land should be completed to assure that piecemeal development patterns, isolation from the surrounding urban fabric (e.g. lack of multi-modal connections to and through the site—notably the roadway network), or selling off smaller parcels does not preclude sound development in the future and therefore jeopardize the transformative economic development potential of this high-profile and strategically important site."

The communities impacted by the redevelopment of this site would not only include Cañon City, but also the greater Royal Gorge region, as well as the present land owner and investors looking to locate jobs, retail, and housing in the community. The positive impact of potential redevelopment would not only improve healthy living, but also would support job growth and housing diversity.

ABOUT CAÑON CITY

The City of Cañon City is a Home Rule Municipality with a current population of about 16,679. It is the county seat of Fremont County, which has a population of 47,446. Cañon City is 100 miles southwest of Denver, 45 miles southwest of Colorado Springs, and 35 miles west of Pueblo, with US 50 traversing the City east-west.

The Arkansas River trail system coming through the heart of the City is just one of over 50 miles of trails within five miles of Main Street in downtown. There are nearly 300 acres of park land within City limits, plus three Cañon City mountain parks with over 6,500 acres: The Royal Gorge Park, Temple Canyon Park and Red Canyon Park.

The area is home to the Royal Gorge Bridge, the highest suspension bridge in the US, as well as the Arkansas River and the National Forest. Cañon City attracts about 300,000 visitors year-round and has world-class fishing, rafting, hunting, hiking, bicycling, and rock climbing.

The primary employment in the area is the region's correctional facilities, followed by farming, tourism, and education. However, the poverty level is higher in Fremont County at 19.1 percent than in the state (12.1 percent). Median household income in Fremont County is \$42,300, which is 32 percent lower than the state's \$62,520 median. Employment has been stagnant between 2000 and 2017, at about 13,788 jobs. A recent uptick and potential for new jobs brings a need for more housing.

Problem Statement

The Abbey land holdings represents the largest infill development opportunity within City limits at 187 acres. How this site is developed will have a significant impact on the City. A vision and road map for moving forward is needed.

Questions for the Panel

1. What development regulation related policies should the City consider to support healthy living?
2. What are example policies the City should consider to support a diversity in housing types and price points for the community?
3. How can the City best leverage this Opportunity Zone? Are there steps that can be taken to make the site more desirable?
4. How can the City foster development of this site in a comprehensive fashion to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability for not only the site, but also for the East Cañon neighborhood and City as a whole (development pattern/uses/suggested partnerships)?

“Having comprehensive planning around how this land could develop to support walking, biking, diversity of housing, better connectivity to existing and future trails as well as schools and commercial uses in the area is important for healthy living.”

**- Christi-Marie Butler, VP
for Philanthropy, St.
Thomas More Health
Foundation**



Workshop panelists brainstorm ideas for the Abbey lands.

II. Findings

During the workshop, the panelists toured the site, spoke with local stakeholders, and reviewed materials from the City about the site and its surrounding community. Before diving into recommendations for the site, the panelists came up with the following findings.

Assets and Opportunities

Agricultural and cultural history

Cañon City's agricultural and cultural history is a significant asset as community leaders look to re-envision the Abbey lands. Cañon City enjoys relatively mild winters and has fertile soil. The advantageous climate and growing conditions inspired miners from the Gold Rush to use Cañon City as a winter refuge, and farmers thrived by feeding them. Over time, the city's economy matured as canneries, brick factories, mines, and prisons provided a stable employment base. Another historical thread that extends to present day is tourism. With its striking gorge and natural hot springs, tourists have long been drawn to Cañon City.

These aspects of Cañon City's history are evident in the Abbey lands. There are farms, an arboretum, and a working winery on the site. The brick tudor-gothic monastery—a National Register historic building from the 1920s—and the surrounding school campus, attracted students from around the world. The city's history as a prison community is reflected in the Department of Correction's training center on site.



This historical photo from Cañon City's 1896 Fruit Day illustrates the community's proud agricultural heritage.

Existing buildings on the site

The buildings on the Abbey lands present an exciting opportunity for its reuse. The 66,000-square-foot monastery and chapel building are still used for offices and events. Some of the other structures from the original Abbey campus remain in use to house visitors, among other functions. Further, some of the more recent additions, such as the events center (built in the 1970s), remain in good use. Adaptive reuse of these buildings for the site's redevelopment will ensure that the Abbey's rich history lives on.



Historic buildings in the monastery campus area are aesthetically striking and structurally sound, creating an opportunity for historic preservation. Clockwise from left: the monastery and chapel, the fieldhouse, and the Sister’s House. Images courtesy The Abbey Events Complex.

Scale

At 187 acres, the scale of the site presents a major advantage. The size allows for a variety of compatible uses that can collectively make a significant dent in the housing shortage while also supporting healthy lifestyles and tourist attraction. The size also allows a potential master developer to split the site into multiple parcels, selling some off to “vertical” developers to help pay for deferred maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

Central location

The Abbey lands’ location—less than two miles east of downtown and adjacent to a major thoroughfare—makes the site particularly desirable. This level of access and proximity could allow future residents to easily commute to and from their homes on the site. Likewise, tourists would be able to seamlessly explore downtown and the Abbey in an afternoon.

Water rights

The property is the second-largest owner of Cañon City water rights, trailing only the City itself. According to CBRE, these shares are “readily marketable” and present another opportunity for a future landowner to sell assets to fund capital improvements.

Demand for development

Cañon City is poised to grow as people continue to move to Colorado from around the world. Already, there is ample demand for housing and office space due to limited supply. This demand should give site developers confidence that a mixed-use project with housing would succeed.

Need for attainable housing

There is a short supply and high demand for attainable housing in Cañon City (for more details, see the Economic Analysis section on page 10). The slow pace of new home construction only exacerbates the issue, and as a result, a household earning the area's median income has few options for purchasing a home in their price range in Cañon City.

Community desire for recreation center

The City recently completed a Recreation/Aquatics Center Feasibility Analysis and found that the Abbey lands could be an ideal location. The completion of this analysis signals a willingness among Cañon City citizens and their leaders to invest in improvements that will promote healthy living. The possible recreation center lends itself to connection with open spaces and trails, and especially with access to locally grown food, could help catalyze healthy lifestyles in the area.

Opportunity for community cohesion and connectivity

The site's history, size, and central location, taken together, present an excellent opportunity for community cohesion and connectivity. The existing buildings offer an authentic and historically rooted starting point for the site's redevelopment, while its size allows for a cohesive master plan that can logically tie together the various proposed uses. Lastly, the central location makes the site a key piece of a larger connected system of trails and bike-friendly streets that will support active and healthy lifestyles in the region.

Challenges

City's financial constraints

Ideally, Cañon City would be able to jump start the site's redevelopment with public investment and subsidies. Unfortunately, there is little public money available for investments in needed improvements such as infrastructure. This means that partnerships will be needed to fill funding gaps.

Opposition to taxes

The city's financial constraints will likely not be eased anytime soon by tax revenue. There is little appetite in Cañon City to raise either sales or property tax rates. Cañon City's sales tax rate is currently 3 percent while Fremont County's is 2.5 percent and Colorado's is 2.9 percent. Cañon City Councilwoman Kaitlin Turner was concerned that an increase in property taxes would be politically challenging. However, the mill levy in Cañon City is currently low. New financial resources will be needed to pay for a potential recreation center if the community votes to build it.

Limited infrastructure on site

Utility connections are limited mostly to the original Abbey campus area. Redevelopment of the site would need a significant investment in infrastructure.

Deferred maintenance

In addition to the upfront infrastructure costs, the site's buildings have deferred maintenance costs. Structural improvements to some of the Abbey's older buildings will be necessary to restore the historic campus.

High carrying costs due to the scale of the site

The large size of the site is both an opportunity and a challenge. Because the site is so large, it will take a long time to develop profitably. If the buyer were to keep the site in their control, the site would generate substantial carrying costs over time (including property tax, interest on debt, and deferred maintenance).

“There is a fear here of building things that aren’t for us.”

**- Kaitlin Turner,
Cañon City
District 4
Councilwoman**

Floodplain

The southern edge of the site lies in a 100-year floodplain. While this does not directly prohibit development, it could make it riskier. It could also limit retailers from fully leveraging the site’s visibility along US-50 and Fremont Drive to lure in the 20,000 or so vehicles that use the corridor every day without additional signage.

Market track record

Despite the demand for housing, Cañon City’s real estate market has not been particularly strong in recent years (for details, see the Economic Analysis section on page 10). The site itself has been on the market for more than three years. The current owner has not seen the level of interest expected.

Resistance to change

Despite increasing property prices and the need for additional housing, some Cañon City residents are resistant to change. If they own their house, they may not understand the outsized housing strain. Also, they don’t want to pay for community amenities like a recreation center. This sentiment could impede community coalition-building behind redeveloping the Abbey lands to meet those community needs.

Economic Analysis

An economic analysis compiled by Economic & Planning Systems (EPS) underscores several of the opportunities and challenges above and informed the recommendations to follow.

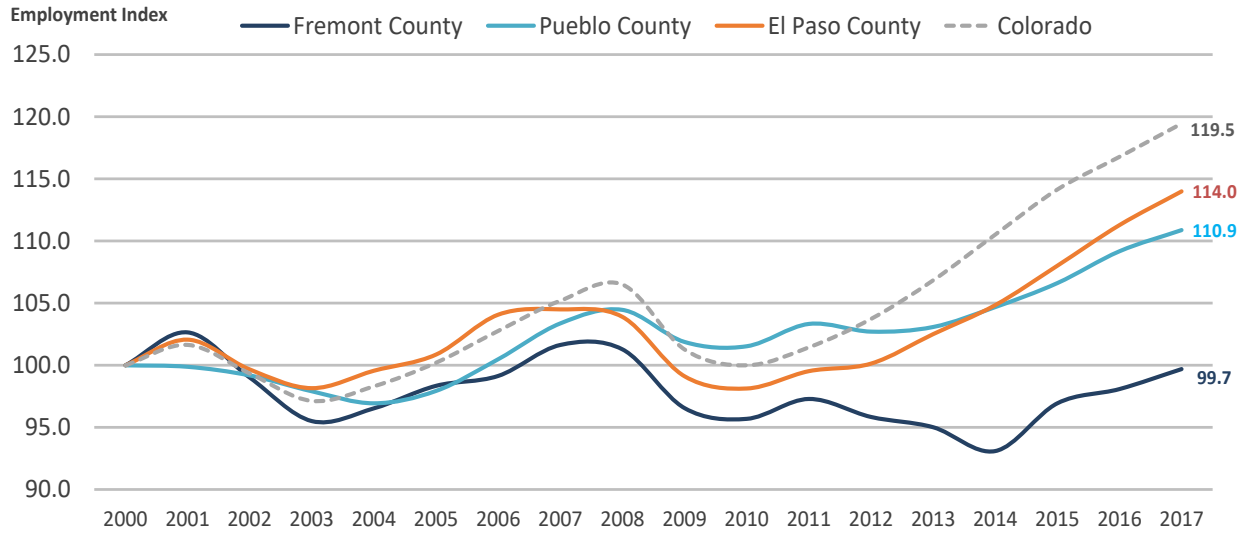
EPS found that Cañon City’s housing shortage is limiting housing attainability and curtailing employment growth. The City’s low number of new residential building permits (averaging under 17 permits per year over the last 10 years), coupled with its very low vacancy rate of 0.9 percent mean that competition for housing is high and that housing developers and landlords can charge rates that are unaffordable for the typical Cañon City household.

This data aligns with anecdotes from Cañon City stakeholders, who repeatedly mentioned filling open positions by hiring an out-of-towner, only to have the new hire stall for months as he or she seeks housing in Cañon City or leave.

“The missing middle for housing is very, very, very missing in Cañon City.”

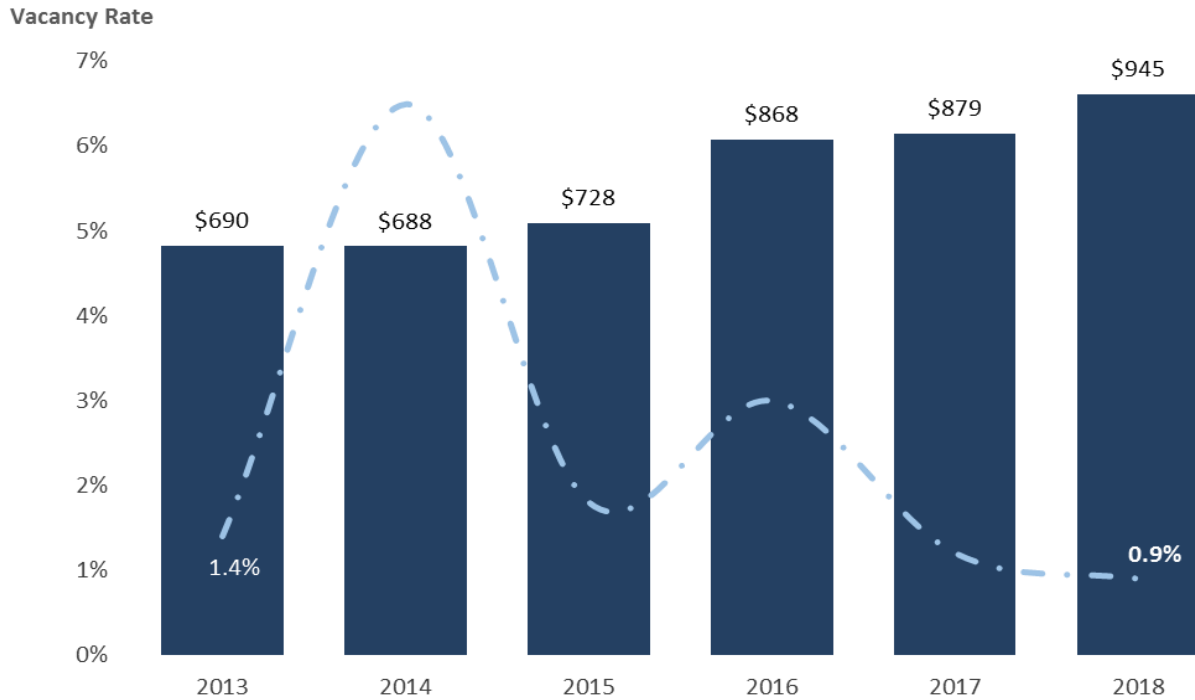
**- Deana Swetlik,
AICP, Director of
Community
Development,
City of Cañon City**

Fremont County Employment Growth Over Time



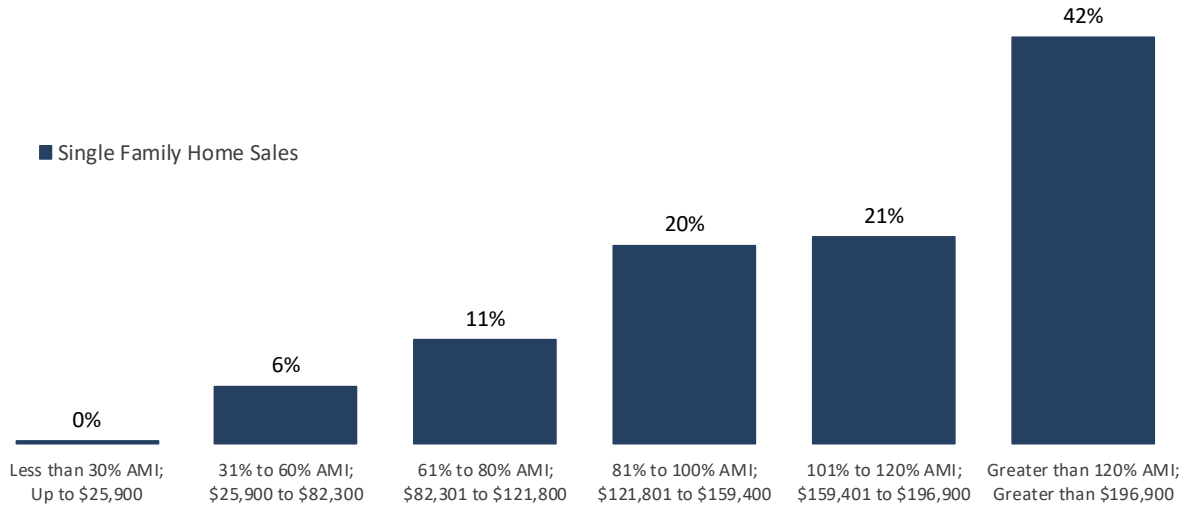
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Economic & Planning Systems

Cañon City Rental Prices and Vacancy Rates Over Time



Source: Colorado Division of Housing; Economic & Planning Systems

Distribution of Single-Family Home Sale Prices & Who Can Afford Them Relative to Area Median Income (AMI)

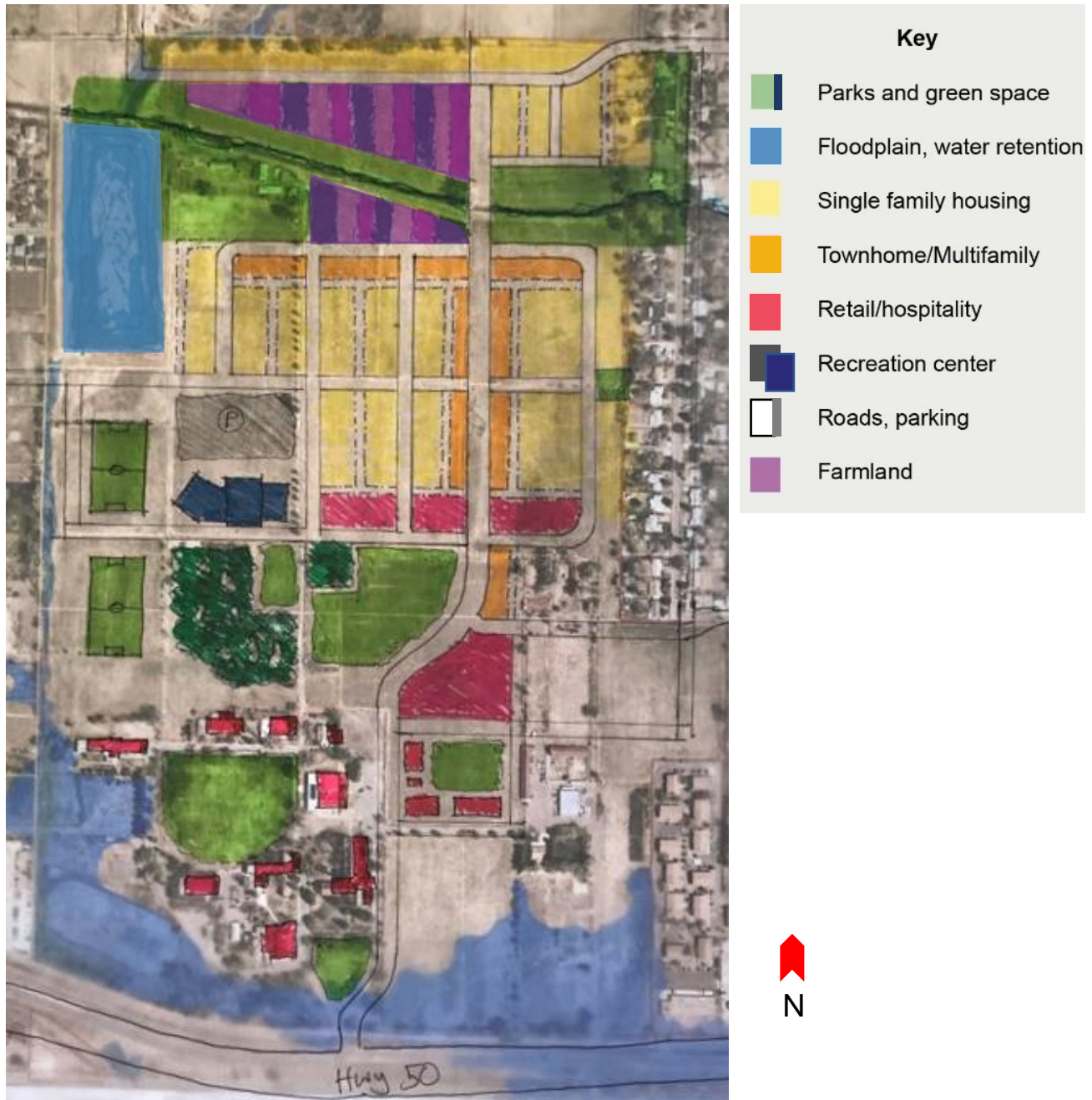


Source: MLS; Economic & Planning Systems

III. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the panelists came up with the following recommendations for the reuse of the Abbey lands. To jumpstart the process of redevelopment, they devised a schematic master plan for the site. The Abbey lands will ultimately need a master plan and public support to attract investors and developers.

Schematic Master Plan for the Site



At 187 acres, the scale of the site presents a rare opportunity to create a master plan to thoughtfully tie together the various elements of a healthy, thriving community. A master plan can help prevent ad hoc development and can provide a road map for creating context-sensitive development that meets community needs.

As a first pass at coming up with a master plan for the site, the panelists recommended connecting with the surrounding street grid, maintaining access to open space, and moving forward with the recreational facilities desired by the community. They recommended adding townhomes and multi-family housing to the center of the site, and single-family detached homes around them. Some retail, commercial, or hospitality could be added to the southern portion of the site, closer to US 50. The plan calls for no new development in the floodplain along the site’s southern border, preserving the view of the monastery from the highway. They suggested a few different uses for the monastery and its campus buildings, such as a boutique hotel, student housing, artist live-work space, and a farm-to-table restaurant. The green space across the site includes a central park, arboretum, soccer fields, and a recreation center. Lastly, the farm land in the northern section of the site could be divided into farm share plots for local use.

Elements of the Master Plan

Common areas, parks, and open space

The master plan includes a spectrum of common areas, parks, and open space. The plan also adds trails between community areas, increasing regional trail connectivity and making open spaces accessible to all.



The Stapleton Park Pathway in Denver is an example of a master-planned community trail that encourages community interaction with green space and provides connectivity. Photo courtesy GreatAmericanCountry.com.

At one end of the spectrum are the more programmed spaces. These spaces could serve as a community hub, attracting Cañon City residents and tourists to farmers markets, sporting events, music concerts, and a local farm-to-table restaurant with outdoor seating by the winery. The proposed recreation center and nearby sports fields along the western edge of the site would also support healthy lifestyles. The community green spaces throughout the site would be ideal for picnics, lawn games, and dog walks. Spaces like these are a common feature in master-planned communities as people love living near green spaces.

“This land would be a great location to support walking and biking trails, mixed-use parks, and a recreation center. This land could be a catalyst for encouraging healthier lifestyles for the entire Cañon City community.”

– Kyle Horne, Executive Director, Cañon City Area Metropolitan Recreation and Park District



The Pearl Farmers Market in San Antonio, Texas, is a great example of how green space can be programmed. Photo courtesy Meetup.com.



Outdoor seating for a local restaurant near the winery could be a regional attraction. Photo of the Minories pub garden in London courtesy Morning Advertiser.co.uk.



Stapleton neighborhood park. Photo courtesy Boulder Creek Neighborhoods.

Some of the less-programmed spaces on the site include a large park near the center of the site, the historical arboretum, a pocket park close to some higher-density housing at the end of Cherry Street on the east side of the site, and a linear park running along the farms and hydraulic ditch near the north end of the site.

FARMS AS COMMUNITY HUB: AGRIFOODS

One development type worth considering for the Abbey lands' redevelopment is the "agrihood" (agriculture + neighborhood). Agrihoods are becoming increasingly popular and were the subject of the 2018 ULI report, "[Agrihoods: Cultivating Best Practices.](#)" Defined as single-family, multifamily, or mixed-use communities built with a working farm or community garden as a focus, agrihoods present several benefits to developers and residents. Seventy-three percent of US residents consider access to fresh, healthy foods to be a top priority when deciding where to live. Further, studies find a 15 to 30 percent premium on properties adjacent to parks and open space (including working farms). Residents would also benefit since agrihoods promote healthy living and encourage community social ties.



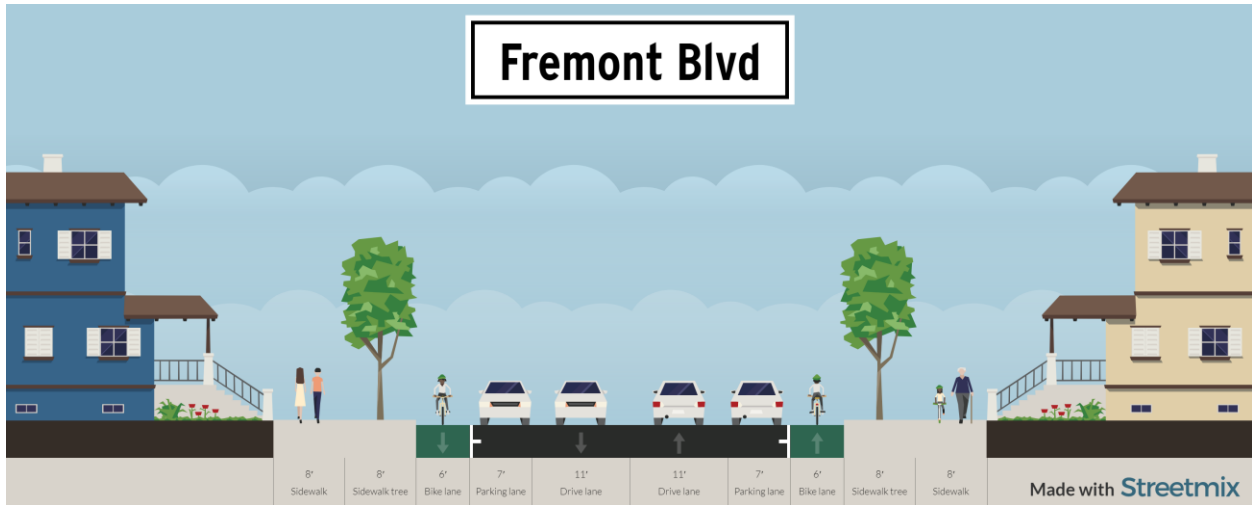
Rancho Mission Viejo in South Orange County, California, offers an example of how farms can be a community hub in a master-planned development. Images courtesy ranchomissionviejo.com.

Mobility

The panel's vision for mobility throughout the site would enhance connectivity and make it inclusive, comfortable, attractive, and safe to move around for all modes. Proposed street designs prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists, allowing them to easily make their way through the site in a safe and low-stress environment. Connection to the surrounding street grid and regional trails was also a priority for the design of the area.



From left: Separated bike lane, photo courtesy AltaPlanning.com. Neighborhood street shared with bicyclists. Photo courtesy Portland Bureau of Transportation.



On Fremont Boulevard (a road named by the panelists that travels north through the center of the site), bicyclists would be protected by a parking lane and pedestrians would be separated from cars by trees, a bike lane, and the parking lane.



Flanking off Fremont Boulevard would be neighborhood streets. These narrower streets would be shared by cars and bikes but would prioritize bicyclists with slow speed limits.

Housing

Addressing Cañon City’s housing shortage while thoughtfully integrating with the Abbey land’s surrounding communities were key drivers behind the panelists’ vision for the site. To address the need for a variety of housing types, the panelists proposed adding 2-3 story townhomes toward the center of the site and surrounding them with single-family detached housing to tie in with surrounding neighborhoods.

To deliver the housing, the panel recommended providing a master plan for the site, and then selling workable parcels of land to developers who have the capacity to implement the plan. Selecting homebuilders with a strong track record of building quality, attainable housing will be vital for this area.

The panelists envisioned alley-loaded single-family housing that faces community green space. This would encourage community members to spend more time in the green spaces and on the trails, rather than on streets.



Examples of potential housing types for the Abbey lands. Clockwise from left: single-family detached homes, two-story row homes, and three-story row homes. Images courtesy Thrive Homebuilders.

Two- to three-story row houses and townhomes could be part of a zero-maintenance community with a homeowner’s association (HOA), which would make the homes more attractive to homebuyers that don’t want the responsibility of landscaping. The townhomes should be priced to be attainable for median-income households in the area, helping to meet the spectrum of housing needs in the community.

Adaptive reuse of historic buildings

The Abbey and its surrounding historic buildings present one of the most exciting opportunities. The panelists envisioned the historic Abbey building transformed into a boutique hotel. A hotel would have a built-in customer base with the many weddings and events the Abbey lands already hosts but could also draw visitors who come to the area for outdoor activities and sightseeing. Other alternatives could include senior or student housing.

The barn could be reused as a farm-to-table restaurant, which could expand upon the success of the winery and complement the hotel. Since the land facing Highway 50 is mostly in a floodplain, the panelists recommended showcasing the area’s agricultural history with additional vineyards or fruit trees. This could further establish the site as a winery and food hub, making it into a front range destination.



Vineyards in front of the historic Abbey could be used to make this site into a front range destination if the buildings are appropriately reused. Photo courtesy realestatecoloradostyle.com.

CREATING SPACE FOR ARTISTS

Brenda McKay, who currently works in the Abbey, imagined that the site's maintenance shed could be redeveloped as live/work space for artists, which would complement the Abbey's longstanding commitment to the arts.

A model worth considering is that of Artspace, a nonprofit developer of spaces for artists to live and work. Using a combination of public, private, and philanthropic funding, Artspace develops affordable live/work spaces for artists and their families. Artspace currently has projects in Loveland, Ridgway, and Trinidad. The community around the Abbey lands could certainly benefit from supporting local artists and building a thriving creative economy.



*Artspace is a non-profit developer and owner of live-work spaces for artists nationwide.
Photo of Artspace Loveland campus by Tom Hacker, courtesy Artspace.*

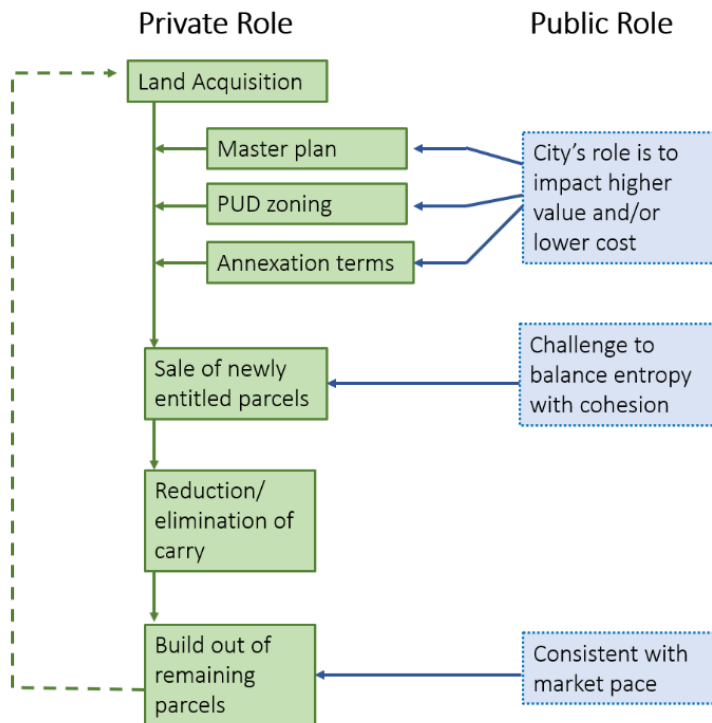
Financial Tools

Planning for Success

For the redevelopment of the Abbey lands site to be financially feasible, managing the entropy associated with the carrying costs of the large site (including debt service, maintenance, and taxes) must be balanced with cohesive redevelopment. To accomplish this successfully, the panelists recommended creating a master plan with a cohesive vision for the site and then selling parcels to developers who can execute components of the vision. Without the master plan, breaking the site into smaller parcels for development would likely result in disjointed development. Without breaking up the 187 acres into smaller parcels, the likelihood of a sale of the entire site is small since the carrying costs of the site are so high. Most developers will look for around 10 acres and will benefit from a master plan, which promises community amenities and a more predictable entitlements process.

To accommodate this process, the panel recommended rezoning the site as either a Planned Development District (PDD) or a Planned Unit Development (PUD), which would allow for a variety of uses and densities across the site. The panel also recommends that the City approve a master plan that will guide future development of the site.

The chart below illustrates the panel's recommendations for how the private sector (green) and the City (blue) can work together to make the Abbey lands' redevelopment a success. The first step is for a buyer to acquire the land. From there, the buyer should work with the City on the development of a master plan for the site, fulfill the terms of the annexation agreement, and establish a PUD/PDD. Afterward, the developer would sell some of the newly entitled parcels to vertical developers who could implement the components of the master plan. This would allow the master developer/buyer to reduce carrying costs and begin building out the first phase of the redevelopment. Over time, the remaining parcels would be built out in subsequent phases, as determined by market conditions.



Leveraging the Opportunity Zone

Another important factor influencing the redevelopment of the Abbey lands is its location within an Opportunity Zone (OZ). OZs reward investors working in economically challenged areas by giving them tax breaks on the gains from their investments. While many OZ sites are in distressed areas with little redevelopment opportunity, the Abbey lands provide a far less risky, more financially feasible site for investors.

The Opportunity Zone designation affects the redevelopment of the Abbey lands in two important ways. First, it hastens the development timeline. For investors to get the most possible tax benefits, they need to place capital sooner rather than later since the benefits decrease over time. The benefits of the OZ designation are limited to certain product types. Multi-family and mixed-use developments are ideal for OZ designation because the benefits stem from tax breaks on long-term capital gains, and developers of these product types typically hold their properties long-term. Single-family homebuilders, on the other hand, are looking to sell to new buyers as soon as (or before) the house is built. Some product types that are more conducive to OZ funding include multi-family housing, mixed-use developments, camping sites, senior housing, and student housing.

Creating a Metro District

Another creative financing opportunity for the Abbey lands is to create a Metropolitan District. Metro districts are a type of special district used to support physical improvements in a given area through assessed fees in the district. For the Abbey lands, this could be a valuable tool to help defray deferred maintenance costs and support infrastructure improvements and a new recreation center with parking lots and fields. This would reduce pressure on the City and developers to cover the costs of all these infrastructure improvements. The panelists also suggested that residents and businesses within the metro district receive free access to the proposed rec center as a benefit for contributing to its construction.

Additional Financial Tools

Below are some additional creative financing tools that should be considered:

- Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Housing Division Grant and Loan Programs
- Concessions from the City or County around property taxes, tap fees, and impact fees
- Philanthropic grants could fill in financing gaps in cases where there is demonstrable community benefit
- New Market Tax Credits
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits

ABOUT OPPORTUNITY ZONES

“Built Opportunity Zones are a new community development program established by Congress in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage long-term investments in low-income urban and rural communities nationwide.

The program rewards reinvestment of profit into Opportunity Zones defined as low-income census tracts selected by state governors and certified by the U.S. Treasury Department.

There are roughly 8,700 Opportunity Zones throughout the U.S., providing real estate investors with the opportunity to defer or even eliminate capital gains tax.”

Source: [WealthManagement.com](https://www.wealthmanagement.com)

For more information, visit:
choosecolorado.com/programs-initiatives/opportunity-zones.

IV. Answers to Questions Posed to the Panel

What development regulation-related policies should the City consider to support healthy living?

- A citywide mobility plan (focusing on bike and pedestrian infrastructure)
- A Metro District for physical improvements to the site, including bike and pedestrian infrastructure connecting the site to surrounding areas
- Incorporate public amenities like small agricultural plots, parks and open space, and a connected trail system
- Commitment to access to healthy food (like Dahlia Center in Denver)

What are example policies the City should consider to support a diversity in housing types and price points for the community?

- Allow density and a mix of uses in the master plan for the site
- Establish goals for a spectrum of housing affordability
- Implement affordable housing incentives through fee reduction, land donation, and/or rebate programs
- Incentivize a spectrum of housing on this site through PUD/PDD zoning designation

How can the City best leverage this Opportunity Zone? (Are there steps that can be taken to make the site more desirable?)

- Accelerate readiness for development with master planning and rezoning. OZ investment will peak over the next three years.
- Understand appropriate uses for OZ investment, such as multi-family housing and a mix of uses.
- Support the sale of parcels to vertical developers who can implement components of the master plan for the site. This will allow for digestible investments within the OZ timeframe.

How can the City foster development of this site in a comprehensive fashion to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability for not only the site, but also for the East Cañon neighborhood and City as a whole (development pattern/uses/suggested partnerships)?

- Master plan for the site
- Support walkability and bikability in urban design
- Pedestrian-friendly scale of development (like old Stapleton in Denver)
- Establish a street grid that connects to surrounding neighborhoods
- Programmable multi-use spaces and open green space (like Pearl District in San Antonio)

V. Conclusion

The panelists concluded that the Abbey lands has great potential to become a point of pride for the Cañon City community that highlights its rich history, addresses the housing shortage, attracts regional tourists, and supports healthy living. By creating a master plan for the whole site, Cañon City can build out the property in a cohesive manner that brings together housing, parks, recreation, history, and hospitality. A network of low-stress streets and trails will safely connect these various elements. And with the recommended financing scheme, public and private entities can work closely together to strike the right balance between the development of parcels and a cohesive master plan.

The time to act is now. Without new development at a significant scale, the city's housing shortage will only worsen. And with the narrow window to place Opportunity Zone capital and receive full tax benefits, investors should consider seizing this exciting opportunity to catalyze a better future for Cañon City.

VI. Stakeholders

Stakeholders Who Participated in the Workshop

Elected Officials:

- Preston Troutman, Mayor
- Ashley Smith, Mayor Pro-Tem
- Kaitlin Turner, District 4

City Staff:

- Patrick Mulready, City Planner
- Rex Brady, Parks
- Deana Swetlik, Community Development Dir.
- Adam Lancaster, City Engineer (streets/storm)

Utilities & Mobility:

- Ashley Sack or Brian LeDoux, FAR (Fremont Area Rec.)
- Adam Lancaster, City Engineer
- Bob Hartzman, Water Department
- Mannie Colon, Hydraulic Ditch Company
- Jeff Blue, Sanitation District

Health & Environment:

- Kyle Horn, CC Area Rec & Park District
- Judy Lohnes, UAACOG
- Brian Vaniwarden, Sol Vista

Local Brokers/Realtors:

- Rob Brown, FEDC

Property Owner Representation/Lesseees:

- Chris D'Amrosia, Owner's Representative
- Marty Johnson, Abbey Land Holdings-realtor
- Brenda McKay, Abbey Land Holdings-leasing
- Larry Oddo, The Winery at Holy Cross Abbey

Schools/Nonprofits/Advocacy Groups:

- Autumn Dever, UAACOG (Housing)
- Lisa Studts, Museum
- Karen Sartori, Rec Center Citizen Group
- Rick Harrmann, Rec Center Citizen Group
- George Welsh, RE-1 School District
- Linda Stetter, Pueblo Community College

VII. ULI Volunteer Panelists



Panel Chair Andrew Knudtsen is a Managing Principal of Economic & Planning Systems. He is a planner and economist with 20 years of experience in the areas of real estate feasibility analysis, market assessment, public-private partnership formation, fiscal impact assessment, and affordable housing strategic planning and development. He has developed implementation strategies that leverage investment and externalize costs by incorporating public finance. His work involves a range of funding tools applied to a variety of projects across states, including tax increment finance, special improvement districts, downtown development authorities, housing authorities, and urban renewal authorities. Affordable housing work spans from regional needs assessments to implementation strategies. Andrew holds a Bachelors of Environmental Design from the University of Colorado. He is a Co-Chair of ULI Colorado’s Technical Advisory Panels.



Jordan Block is the lead urban designer in HDR’s Development Sector. His role is to coordinate architecture, planning, transportation, engineering, and resources projects with an eye towards creating better communities and places through thoughtful design and development. Working with a highly inter-disciplinary group, Jordan is building a strong urban design practice within Denver and across the country. His work focuses on the intersection of development, mobility, policy, health, and ecology. His experience ranges from large comprehensive city visioning, to the design of new districts and cities, and street and public realm design. Jordan is a Co-Chair of ULI Colorado’s Transit-Oriented Development committee and Chair of Denver’s Mayor’s Bicycle Advisory Committee. He is a graduate of the Master of Urban Design program at the University of Colorado Denver. Prior to this he received his Master of City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania.



Stephanie Copeland joined the Governance Project and became a Managing Partner of Four Points Funding in January 2019. Four Points Funding is focused on investing in rural Colorado and like communities through their Opportunity Zone Fund and Angel Syndicate. Previously, Stephanie served on Governor Hickenlooper’s cabinet as Executive Director for the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Before, she served as president of the Zayo Group, a communications infrastructure services firm. Stephanie spent her career in the Telecommunications sector in both the US and Europe. In the early 1990s, she moved to St. Petersburg, Russia, to take a management position with Cable & Wireless. After returning to the U.S. in 1994 she joined the team that started MFS International and joined the early team at Level 3 Communications and spent 3 years in London building out Level 3’s business in Europe.



Jay Garcia is a Community Development Project Manager for Thrive Home Builders. Jay joined Thrive Home Builders in May of 2014. Thrive Home Builders is an award-winning “green” home builder specializing in healthy and energy efficient homes. Jay has managed land acquisition, entitlements, financial feasibility, product development and infrastructure development for the organization for several different communities around the Denver region. During his career, he has served in various capacities for public and private sector companies. His 15+ years of community development experience ranges in scale from small infill residential and commercial projects up to a 10,000-acre mixed use master plan. Jay has also given back by teaching graduate and undergraduate level courses at CU Denver and CU Boulder.



Emily Gloeckner is currently the City Traffic Engineer and the Director of Transportation Design within Public Works for the City and County of Denver. Emily returned back to the City and County of Denver Public Works Department in 2015 after working as a transportation consultant for 10 years. She is a graduate of San Diego State University, class of 1993 and has her degree in Civil Engineering. She has focused her 25 years as a civil engineer on transportation planning and engineering. Emily is known as a transformative engineer, taking numerous projects from planning into design and onto implementation. She is a collaborator and relationship builder for staff, stakeholders, engineers, planners, and community representatives. Her particular experience and expertise has focused on long range transportation planning, bicycle and pedestrian planning and design, signal design, signal timing, traffic impact studies, intersection safety assessments, as well as car share and bike share assessments for communities.

Special thanks to the ULI Colorado Advisory Services Committee Chairs Al Colussy, Andrew Knudtsen, LaDonna Baertlein, and Anna Jones, and to the hospitality of Cañon City and sponsorship of the Colorado Health Foundation.



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ULI Colorado Leadership in Responsible Land Use

ULI Colorado is the 1,400-member District Council of the global Urban Land Institute. ULI Colorado consists of a four-person staff, 25-member executive committee, and 15 committees with more than 250 volunteers. More than 40 programs a year include advisory panels, leadership and mentoring programs, panels, project tours, publications, and community service. ULI is a non-lobbying educational and research institute supported by its members, sponsors, and foundations. Key issues include affordable housing, healthy communities, transit-oriented development, and sustainable design and planning.

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