
Carbondale Creative District

**2023
Strategic Plan**



Acknowledgments

The Carbondale Creative District (CCD) is a program of Carbondale Arts and is certified through the Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) Creative District Program. CCI is a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade.

Carbondale Arts is a 501c3 non profit organization.

A special thanks to the collaborators and partners who help make this work possible

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Town of Carbondale

**Carbondale Chamber of Commerce
Tourism Council Of Carbondale**

Ancestral Lands

Carbondale Creative District acknowledges the Northern Ute Nation and we recognize and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land.





Rio Grande Artway DeRail Park
photo by Sarah Overbeck

“The Colorado Creative Districts program certifies communities that contribute to our state’s economy through creativity, culture, and the arts. The program’s goal is to help communities increase jobs, incomes, and investments in creative places.

Colorado Creative Districts attract artists and creative entrepreneurs to a community, infusing new energy and innovation, which in turn enhances the economic and civic capital of the community.

Districts also serve as a focal point for celebrating and strengthening a community’s unique identity, become a space to showcase cultural and artistic organizations and events, and contribute to the development of healthy communities.”

**Colorado Creative Industries
Office of Economic Development
and International Trade**

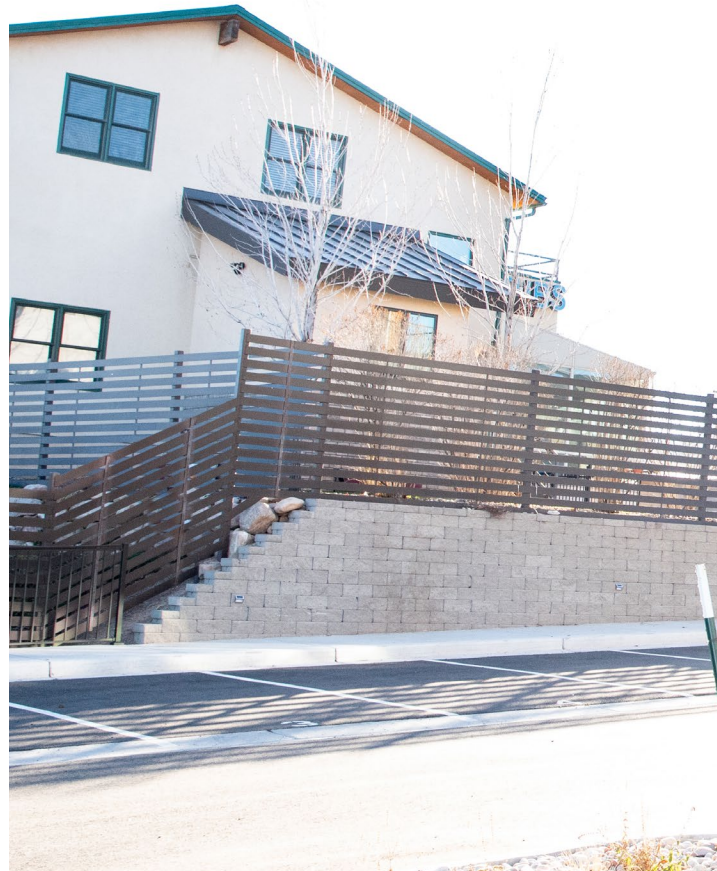
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The Carbondale Creative District started as a way for our community to come together to create a vision that moved us forward as a community.

Oftentimes the community would only come together when we were rallying against something. This dynamic shift has allowed Carbondale to grow and thrive in many positive ways.

We work in collaboration with our town government, Chamber and Tourism, nonprofits, creatives and business to insure all voices are at the table in issues of economic development, sustainability, town character and placekeeping.





mural by Jonny Alexander, 2021

This strategic plan is the result of the generous time and effort of the entire community. In addition to the seven member steering committee, the CCD is also guided by the 16 member Creative Council made up of representatives of Carbondale's creative ecosystem including artists, business owners, Town representatives and non-profit leaders.

To ensure this plan was also reflective of the broader community we conducted a community survey. The 125 responses provided key insight into the priorities of the community.

We're also grateful to all of those who met with us, contacted us and shared their ideas, opinions and insights over the history of the CCD. We are simply stewards of this creative experiment and we always welcome and listen to all and everyone who cares to share.

We've also made a conscious effort to ensure alignment with the Town of Carbondale planning efforts. The Town has recently developed a Comprehensive Plan update that reflects significant engagement with the citizens of Carbondale, Town boards, trustees and staff. We want to ensure that CCD and Town efforts are aligned and mutually beneficial.

We thank you all!

CORE VALUES

Through our broad engagement process consistent themes emerged that support the strategic framework of this plan. These concepts are key to the work that we do and the community that we are, and aspire to be.

Sustainability

We must steward our community's environmental health, social well-being and strive to foster a more just economy. It is important to consider the whole system when making decisions.

Inclusivity + Authenticity

When we include, value and trust each other we create space for all to show up as their best selves. We work to both preserve what makes us unique and welcome all to help shape the future of our community.

Economic Vitality

When we support creativity and creative people we support our economy. Ensuring the sustained economic impact of our culture on our community requires continual stewardship of the people and organizations who work to give our community it's distinct vibrancy.

WORK AREAS

In order to accomplish the work we set out to do the CCD operates at many different levels and in different ways. Our role is that of a collaborator and ally for the will of the community. We are advocates, supporters as well as activators.

Advocate

The Carbondale Creative District advocates for policies, initiatives and actions that support a just, vibrant and creative local economy, culture and public spaces. We advocate for artists to be at the table when solving our communities most pressing challenges. We seek to build partnerships with local, state and national organizations to learn and implement evidence-based practices in our local community.

Support

The Carbondale Creative District supports individual artists, local organizations and creative enterprises by promoting their work, connecting the community to local and state funding and initiatives and providing professional development for creative professionals.

Activate

The Carbondale Creative District builds community by presenting public art, activating public spaces and engaging the community in civic dialogue that promotes unity and cohesiveness around key issues.

The Carbondale Creative District works to preserve and advance the creative ethos of Carbondale through advocacy, support and action. We believe in the collective creative power of Carbondale’s citizens, organizations and enterprises. **We are more creative together.**

Creativity is our greatest resource

Creativity is the power to transform ideas into action. We view creativity in its broadest sense to include visual artists, performers, farmers, culture bearers, activists, organizers, visionaries, teachers and entrepreneurs. The Creative District is organized into six creative categories; Culinary Arts, Cultural Heritage, Design, Media and Innovation, Healing Arts, Performing Arts and Studio Arts. In addition to these we also recognize small manufacturing as a key component of our creative economy.

Statement on equity and accessibility

Our purpose is to provide the infrastructure and systems to support the entirety of our creative community. This means we are for everyone. To be for everyone means that we must address the ongoing inequities that are inherent to larger society, but also our local community and the creative sectors. This includes the injustices and inequities felt by our BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and others.

The Creative District advocates for local events, projects and programs to be welcoming to people of all ages and abilities and to include accessibility information in promotional materials.



Dia de los Muertos celebration
photo by Sarah Overbeck

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1

Nurture a Creative Ecosystem

FRAMEWORK

A thriving community is an interconnected and interdependent system where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As a small, closely knit mountain town Carbondale embodies this concept.

Artists and creative entrepreneurs are, and have been, an important aspect of what makes Carbondale distinct from many other mountain towns. It is imperative that our creative assets are preserved, strengthened and celebrated. Without increased support we risk losing the creative character that is the reason many choose to live, visit and contribute to the vibrancy of our community.

To be a truly sustainable community we must not only work to preserve our environment, but also to strengthen our social fabric and provide economic opportunities. A key part of this is ensuring creatives have space to live and work, solidifying existing partnerships and building new ones. A creative ecosystem not only appreciates the arts and creative entrepreneurship, but also takes action to ensure they are viable. This includes affordable space to for risk takers and that creative thinkers are integrated into our public discourse and decision making.

Artists and businesses alone do not have the resources that are needed to sustain a creative practice in a community that is seeing the type of growth currently taking place in and around Carbondale. The Creative District has a critical role to play in ensuring that the creative assets of our community receive the support, investment so that they can continue to be a key driver in the future of our community.

This will require the continued collaboration between our town leaders, the Creative District and local creatives to ensure there is clear intention in the planning, development and design of policies, physical infrastructure and cultural investments to support the collective identity of our community.



GOAL 1	Pursue affordable housing and workspace for solutions for creatives	Priority
Strategy 1.1	Advocate for and help facilitate affordable housing and creative commercial spaces for the Town Center project	high/year 1
GOAL 2	Maintain and build new partnerships with local leaders and organizations	
Strategy 2.1	Support a regional gathering of Roaring Fork Valley arts organizations and local artists	high/year 1
Strategy 2.2	Involve artists in development of public and private projects in Carbondale including infrastructure (signage, public works...) to further Town of Carbondale Comprehensive Plan goals	medium/year 2-3
Strategy 2.4	Make sure creatives are engaged in conversations and decision making around local issues	low/year 2-5
GOAL 3	Identify funding for the long term viability of the Creative District	
Strategy 3.1	Seek out grant and funding to support the work of the Carbondale Creative District	high/year 1
Strategy 3.2	Identify sustainable long-term funding to continue creative innovation for Carbondale's creative economy	medium/year 2-3

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2

Foster a more just, equitable + authentic place

Our collective creative, cultural and community practices give us shared meaning through an exchange of ideas and values.

Our public arts, community events and third spaces all foster this critical exchange. The Creative District works to expand these opportunities by presenting and supporting inclusive projects that connect all of our community.

The welcoming and open-mindedness of our community is evident through signature events such as Mountain Fair and 5point Film Festival, public and community art, shared spaces such as

the Rio Grande ARTway, the Carbondale Farmers Market, as well as everyday spaces like our parks, trails and sidewalks.

As we continue to grow and welcome new people to our community it is critical that our community shares what makes Carbondale unique; it's people and their stories.

By sharing the stories and celebrating the lived experiences and cultural practices of the LatinX, LGBTQIA, youth and elders in our community we help preserve the authenticity of Carbondale. This practice of placekeeping demonstrates the diversity of experience and values to residents old and new as well as visitors.

FRAMEWORK



GOAL 4	Support and present innovative projects that address community needs	Priority
Strategy 4.1	Continue stewardship of the ARTway and its Creative District parks and installations (LatinX Folk Art Garden, Youth Art Park, DeRail Park)	high/year 1
Strategy 4.2	Continue support on public, community and mural arts throughout town	medium/year 2-3
Strategy 4.3	Support the preservation of iconic cultural and historic architectural assets	low/year 2-5
Strategy 4.4	Promote food production and farm to restaurant infrastructure	low/year 2-5
GOAL 5	Continue to work with LatinX community to expand multi lingual offerings and promote local cultural practices	
Strategy 5.1	Support a local LatinX Coordinator to work with multiple organizations	high/year 1
Strategy 5.2	Continue supporting additional LatinX focused programming and events such as Día de los Muertos to bridge cultural gaps	medium/year 2-3
GOAL 6	Support projects that promote an age-friendly community.	
Strategy 6.1	Provide pathways for local creatives to mentor and support youth	medium/year 2-3
Strategy 6.3	Advocate for a maker space that supports creative aging, youth development and creative entrepreneurs	medium/year 2-3

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3

Cultivate a vibrant local economy

The arts have long been a key cultural component of Carbondale. Since the establishment of the Creative District it has been increasingly apparent that the creative industries are a critical economic driver adding to the vitality of our community. Our local economy is a creative economy.

Not only does the identity of Carbondale as a creative hub help attract new residents and businesses, but our signature events (including Mountain Fair, Dandelion Day, First Fridays and 5Point Film Fest to name a few) drive business at our local shops, restaurants and bars. Our small, medium and large businesses dream up creative and innovative ideas and sell their wares and services locally to visitors and across the globe. Our local non-profits are granted funding from regional, state and national foundations. Together this infusion of funding creates jobs and spills over into our community.

Collectively our creative identity, local events and creative businesses translates to vibrancy on our main street and public spaces. This energy translates to nearly over 600 jobs within the creative sector.

As the Creative District continues its mission to enhance the economic vibrancy of our local economy we look to support local businesses and artists by connecting them with additional funding and resources, amplifying their stories and activating public spaces through art and signage.

GOAL 7	Position CCD as an economic driver for local businesses	Priority
Strategy 7.1	Promote the role of the creative sector by showcasing local business and their impact	high/year 1
Strategy 7.3	Produce a toolkit to expand engagement in the CCD	high/year 1
Strategy 7.2	Connect individuals and businesses to OEDIT funding and other grant opportunities	medium/year 2-3
Strategy 7.4	Expand opportunities for presenting art and professional development for creatives	low/year 2-5
GOAL 8	Supporting creative uses of civic spaces that build on our collective identity	
Strategy 8.1	Support the development of an updated comprehensive signage and wayfinding plan	high/year 1-2
Strategy 8.2	Codify a simple process with town for artists and organizations to activate public spaces	medium/year 2-3
Strategy 8.3	Codify a process for private developers to commission local artists	medium/year 2-3

