

Trinidad, Colorado: From Coal Mining Town to Brownfield Revitalization Gold Mine!

Steve Ruger, City of Trinidad
Grant Bennett, Proximity Green
Carrie Rackey, Stantec
Dana Crawford – with us in spirit!!!



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment



Trinidad, Colorado

A brief history, economics, and buildings



Morley Mine, Colorado Fuel & Iron
Operated 1906-1956

PRESENTED BY:

Grant Bennett

Principal, Proximity Green

grant@proximitygreen.com



Trinidad's modern history – a story of opportunity



At the base of Raton Pass, along the mountain branch of the Santa Fe trail

Established 1861/1862
Coal mining 1871
Incorporated 1876
Railroads arrived 1878
1880's cattle and the wild west

- Bat Masterson
- Wyatt Earp
- Doc Holliday

Doug Holdred, 1996, funded by First National Bank of Trinidad, CO

Trinidad - coal mining & the Ludlow massacre

Trinidad was one of the West's most significant mining cities. Riches that flowed out of the mines built a substantial business district



Ludlow massacre – NW of Trinidad
Lead to workers reforms we appreciate today:
8-hour work day, child labor laws

Trinidad – economic prosperity and building BOOM!

WESTERN MINING HISTORY



First National Bank

Bloom House

1880's building boom with Victorian architecture

WESTERN MINING HISTORY



McCormick Building

Trinidad – economic prosperity and building BOOM!



Grand Union/
Columbian
Hotel

Chappell House



135 E Main St.

Kress 5 & 10
cent building



Trinidad – economic prosperity and building BOOM!



Holy Trinity Church



Temple
Aaron



Schneider
Brewery

Trinidad – 1950’s to today – Boom and Bust

Mine closure in 1956 (bust)

Ranching and agricultural hub for south central Colorado (no boom, no bust)

Sex reassignment ‘capital’ – since relocated to California in 2010 (boom, then bust)

Tourism to and through Trinidad

travelers from TX, OK, AR, LA, NM (boom)

Weed Town USA – 2015 (boom)

NM legalizes weed in 2021 (bust)

Off road trails cross outside of town –

Trans America Trail & Shadow of the Rockies Trail (boom)

Fishers Peak State Park (boom)

New Elk Mine –

coal is back (boom or bust?)

Art & lifestyle mecca

Artists, galleries, ARTOCADE --->

Great weather!!!

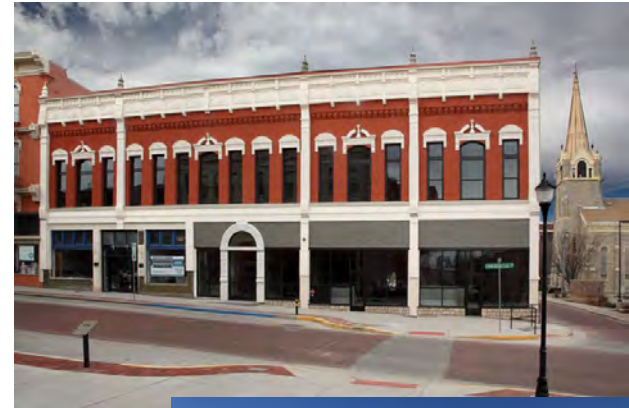


Trinidad – great old buildings = opportunity

While most of America saw buildings torn down in the 1950's and 60's, Trinidad was too poor to tear anything down – literally a time capsule of great architecture



Freight terminal
at La Puerta
campus



Champions Building
formerly Trinidad
National Bank



Marty Feeds
complex



Holy
Trinity
School

Trinidad's Efforts to Promote Growth, Economic Vibrancy, and Project Success



PRESENTED BY:

Steve Ruger, City Manager

steve.ruger@trinidad.gov.co



Timeline of Cool Things

- In 1972 El Corazon de Trinidad National Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places
- In 2015 the Trinidad Urban Renewal Authority was Created
- In 2016 the City created an anti-dilapidation program aimed at beautifying the community
- In 2022, the City began its “Housing Now” incentive program with a goal of creating workforce housing
- In 2023, the City partnered with Stantec to conduct an Area Wide Plan specific to Downtown Trinidad using funding from our EPA Brownfields grant.
- There are many projects currently underway otherwise!



Corazon de Trinidad Historic District

- **Historical Significance:** The Corazon de Trinidad Historic District is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, preserving the rich cultural and architectural heritage of Trinidad, Colorado.
- **Architectural Diversity:** The district boasts a wide array of architectural styles from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Victorian, Italianate, Romanesque, and Art Deco, reflecting the economic boom periods of the region.
- **Cultural Hub:** This district is the cultural heart of Trinidad, hosting numerous festivals, art shows, and events that celebrate the diverse heritage and traditions of the community.
- **Economic Activity:** The district serves as an economic hub, featuring numerous shops, restaurants, and businesses, and thus, playing a key role in the local economy.
- **Preservation Efforts:** The ongoing preservation and restoration efforts maintain the historic character of the district, demonstrating Trinidad's commitment to honoring its past while driving its future.
- **Tax Credits:** Developers in the district are eligible for the highest possible tax credits.



Corazon de Trinidad Historic District



Trinidad Urban Renewal Authority (TURA)

- The Trinidad Urban Renewal Authority was created in 2014 and certified in 2015.
- It serves to promote sustainable urbanization and renewal in Trinidad, to collaborate with local communities, organizations, and government bodies in the city's development and to improve the quality of life for residents through infrastructure development and community engagement.
- Specific significant projects include:
 - **Space to Create**
 - **San Rafael Hospital Development**
 - **The Marketplace** – a multitenant food court boasting space for a bar and nearly a dozen restaurants
 - **Champions Building** - Future bank, mental health facility and holistic medicine center
 - **Historic Hughes Lumber Building** – RFP and Contract Award Pending



Trinidad Urban Renewal Authority (TURA)



Anti-dilapidation Program

- In 2016, the City Council of Trinidad adopted an anti-dilapidation ordinance to:
 - *“prevent and remedy the deterioration and neglect of buildings that constitute threats to the public health, safety and welfare by presenting fire hazards, threatening to collapse and damage persons or property, attracting and harboring illicit and illegal activity, harboring vermin and feral animals, and providing an environment within which mold, dust and other contagion may thrive,”* and to,
 - *“...define such buildings and provide an efficient and effective enforcement mechanism to remedy the same.”*
- The City maintains a list that currently includes approximately 75 dilapidated properties and is actively working with those owners on remedy options.



Anti-dilapidation Program



Trinidad Housing Now Incentive Program

- City Council approved a \$2M workforce housing incentive program beginning July 2022 with a goal to create immediate availability of attainable workforce housing.
- Projects are selected based on readiness, affordability, budget, and unit count, with a maximum of \$200K per project.
- The incentive is focused on Trinidad's central business district, aiming to both facilitate housing and stimulate revitalization.
- To date, 11 projects have been funded, potentially introducing 115 new units, 62 of which are deed-restricted.



Trinidad Housing Now Incentive Program



Trinidad Area Wide Planning

- **Funding Source:** City of Trinidad's U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Assessment Grant
- **Consulting Services:** Stantec Consulting Services
- **Purpose:** Reimagining Trinidad's Central Business District
- **Focus Area:** Established downtown core with adjacent neighborhoods/districts overlay



Trinidad Area Wide Planning

- **Visioning and Community Engagement** – Engaging the community in the planning process and gathering input and ideas for the future of downtown Trinidad
- **Existing Conditions Analysis** – Assessing the current state of downtown area and Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- **Property/Brownfield Inventory** – Identifying properties and brownfield sites in the area and evaluating their potential for redevelopment and revitalization
- **Urban Framework Plan** – Developing a strategic framework for the downtown area and defining land use, transportation, and design guidelines
- **Catalyst Projects/Strategic Initiatives** – Identifying key projects to stimulate revitalization and initiating strategic initiatives to attract investment and development
- **Revitalization Strategies and Action Plan** – Formulating strategies to enhance economic growth and livability and outlining actionable steps to implement the revitalization plan





Figure 2.0.1 – Downtown Trinidad Area-Wide Planning Focus Area (depicted in red)

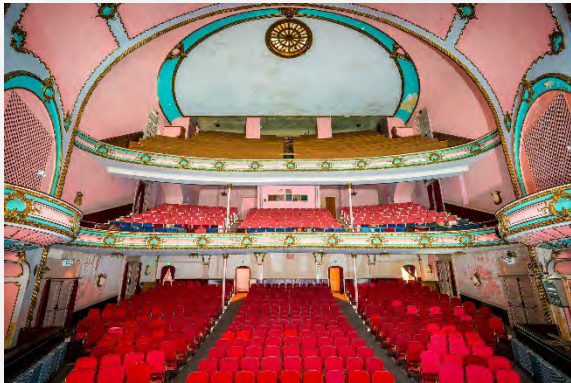
Image Source: Google Earth Pro

The Fox West Theatre

- Opened in 1908 as a venue for traveling Vaudeville acts, the Fox (named the West until the 1940s) was designed by the Rapp Brothers firm of Trinidad, and was funded by Ed West, a local cattle rancher.
- It seats 650 people and is Colorado's only two balcony theatre.
- It boasts a seventy-one-foot stage that has hosted a wide array of history's famous performers, including John Philip Sousa, Mother Jones, Roy Rogers, Sitting Bull, Rube Welch, violinist Rubinoff, and many others.
- The theatre was fully converted into a motion picture theater in 1929 and was operated by the Sawaya family from 1959 until its closure in 2012.
- The City of Trinidad purchased the Fox West Theatre in 2018 and partnered with Urban Neighborhoods, Inc. to assist with fundraising and renovation.
- Multiple entities have provided funding including EPA, CDPHE, DOLA, Colorado Creative Industries, the Boettcher Foundation, History Colorado, private donations, and many others.



The Fox West Theatre



The Fox West Theatre



BE A BOOSTER--NOT A KNOCKER. HELP THE CHRONICLE-NEWS BOOST.

W. C. Firth (Chairman)
State Historical and Antiquarian Society
TONIGHT PART
AND COLDER: WE
DAY GENERALLY
FAIR

THE CHRONICLE-NEWS

LAST
EDITION

EXCLUSIVE TRINIDAD MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ESTABLISHED 1877

TRINIDAD, COLO., TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 17, 1908.

PRICE 5 CENTS

NEW THEATER, MOST SPLENDID ONE IN WEST, IS INITIATED

\$125,000 BUILDING OPENS ITS DOORS TO A LARGE
AND BRILLIANT ASSEMBLAGE

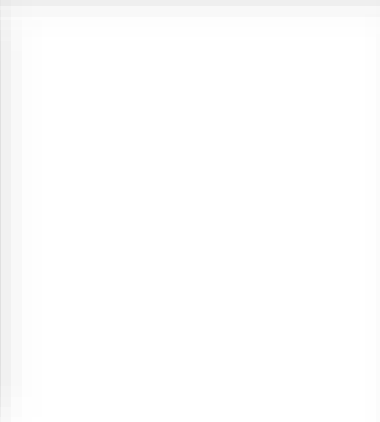


Space to Create

- The state-endorsed initiative, Space to Create, aims to establish affordable housing for creative professionals and local workers in rural Colorado.
- Since September 2022, the initiative completed a renovation of a historic block in Trinidad's Main Street, adding 41 affordable residential units and multiple commercial spaces.
- These newly restored buildings feature co-working and retail spaces, workshops, meeting rooms, a kitchen, and event spaces.
- Key partners include the Department of Local Affairs, History Colorado, the Office of Economic Development's Colorado Creative Industries, and the Boettcher Foundation.
- Trinidad has been a certified Colorado Creative District since 2013.



Space to Create



The Schneider Brewery

- Schneider Brewery, an iconic landmark in Trinidad, Colorado, was first built around 1876 by renowned architects Isaac Hamilton Rapp and William Morris Rapp.
- The brewery has changed hands multiple times, with the property housing various brewing companies and eventually the Colorado School District 1 administrative offices.
- Today, the Schneider Brewery complex has significantly deteriorated, with many buildings deemed structurally unsound.
- Key partners include the Department of Local Affairs, History Colorado, the Office of Economic Development's Colorado Creative Industries, and the Boettcher Foundation.
- Future plans may include a mix of retail, residential, and office spaces, aiming to rejuvenate the historic building and its role in the development of downtown Trinidad.



The Schneider Brewery

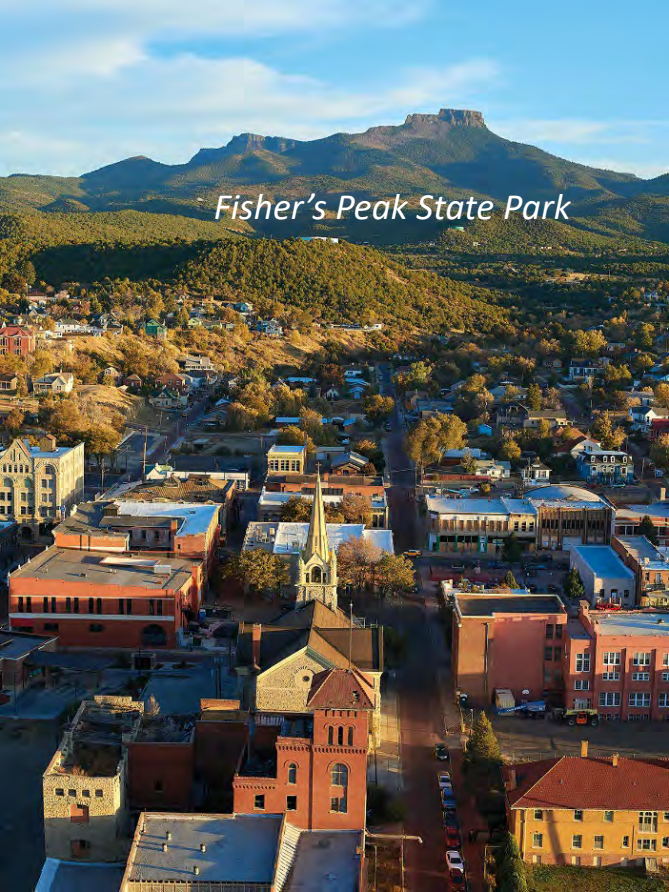


Other Notable Projects

- In 2022, Fishers Peak State Park opened with 11 miles of trails. This is the second largest state park in Colorado.
- The City boast many outdoor recreation opportunities and was the first in the state to create an Office of Outdoor Recreation. It is the City's goal to become a premier outdoor tourist destination.
- The La Puerta Development showcases a new Hilton Garden Inn, restaurants, and rehabilitates a major area of Trinidad's urban core.
- The City has contracted with the Greenway Foundation to design a robust riverwalk along the Purgatoire River. This corridor is a major amenity that runs through Downtown Trinidad.



Other Notable Projects



Fisher's Peak State Park



Purgatoire River Walk Plans



Other Notable Projects



La Puerta Redevelopment Site



Trinidad's Brownfield Program



La Puerta Redevelopment Site

PRESENTED BY:

Carrie Rackey, Stantec

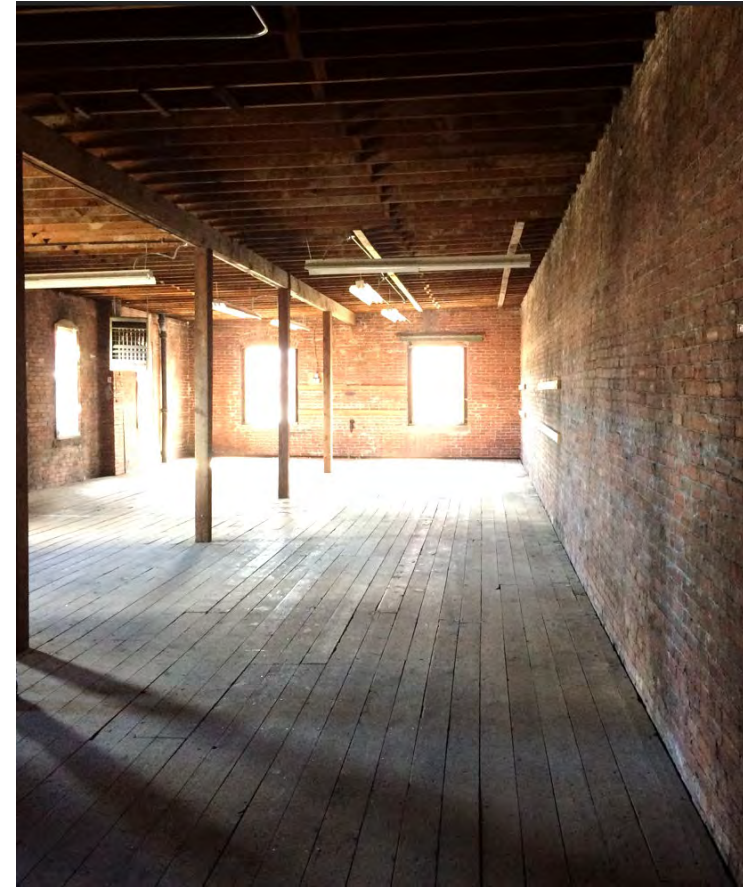
carrie.rackey@stantec.com



Trinidad's Brownfield Program

2015 to 2023

- Brownfield Grants: **\$2.2 million!!**
- Soil and groundwater sampling
- Asbestos & lead paint testing
- Planning to support reuse
- Additional creative uses!



EPA Brownfield Program - Overview



- Since 1990s
- Annual competition
- Several grant types
- Widely supported
- Environment, livability, economy

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields>



EPA Brownfield Program – Planning Uses



Planning

Disposition strategy

Land use

Equity

Market study

Visioning

Infrastructure

Reuse Roadmap

Health

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields>



CDPHE Brownfield Program

- Cleanup grants
- Targeted Brownfield Assistance (TBA)
- Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund
- Tax credits



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment

<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/hm/brownfields>



Trinidad Brownfield Program

2015: 1st EPA Brownfield Grant

- Assessment and planning
- \$500,000
- Coalition: Las Animas County & Aguilar
- Strong relationship with EPA PO Ted Lanzano
- Establish program – inventory, outreach, partners



Trinidad Brownfield Program

2015 Grant Key Takeaway - Programmatic Approach!

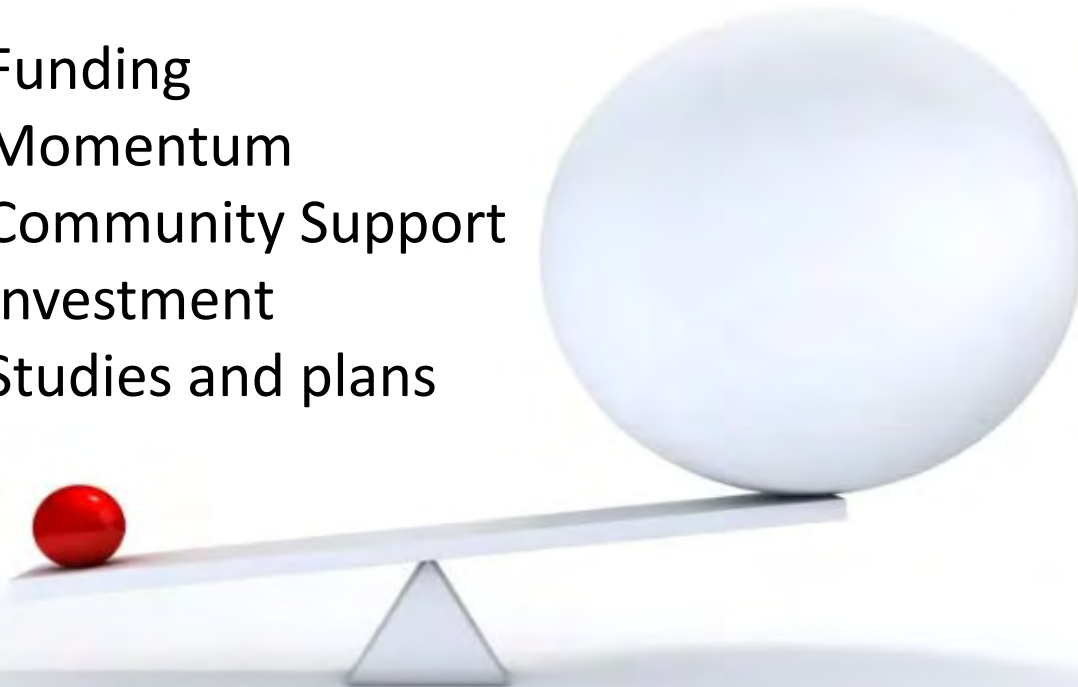
- 14 brownfield properties
- Community support
- Sampling, abatement RFPs and bids = ready for next steps
- Planning studies
- Grant spent, readiness, support, momentum!



Trinidad Brownfield Program

2015 Successes: Leverage!

- Funding
- Momentum
- Community Support
- Investment
- Studies and plans



Trinidad Brownfield Program

2021: 2nd EPA Brownfield Grant \$600,000

- In progress
- Programmatic – more tools
- Holy Trinity Convent & School
- Eagles Hall
- Area Wide Planning



Trinidad Brownfield Program – Fox West Theatre

**2021: EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grant
\$500,000**

Leverage:

2018 - 2020:

- Lead paint & asbestos surveys
- Abatement RFP & bids
- ABCA

2020: \$109K CDPHE cleanup grant
(used portion as EPA grant match)

Retail spaces = income







ASBESTOS.

Trinidad Brownfield Program – Fox West Theatre



HAPPY
Holidays

THE
TRINIDAD TEA

THE LODGE

Sorry we're
CLOSED

BUSINESS HOURS

TRINIDAD
TEA
IS
THE
BEST
WINNER



Trinidad Brownfield Program – Fox West Theatre



www.foxwesttheatre.com



Trinidad Brownfield Program – Holy Trinity

Even more leveraging!

2023: \$1 million EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grant to Trinidad nonprofit Mt. Carmel Community Health and Wellness

Cleanup of Holy Trinity Convent and School . . .



Trinidad Brownfield Program – Holy Trinity School

Located in downtown across the street from Holy Trinity Church

Former convent and school, constructed in phases, dating to late 1800's, closed in 2012

Purchased by non-profit Mt. Carmel Wellness & Community Center mtcarmelcenter.org

Adaptive reuse project

Housing uses in two former
school buildings

Hostel in former convent



Trinidad – Holy Trinity School project



Public/private financing solutions

\$20+M budget – in design now

Historic Tax Credits – CO & Fed(?)

EPA assessments via City grant

EPA remediation funding - \$1M award

Trinidad Housing Now program

Exploring CO Division of Housing programs

Private donations to non-profit

Bank loan sized to NOI after reserves



Trinidad –finding the goldmine!

History and economics are important – for developers, cities, and everybody

Planning pays off – local government leadership critical

Collaboration takes time and effort –
conversations start small and grow

Small funding goes a long way and
opens doors for other partners!

Adaptive reuse is challenging –
not for everybody
takes longer than expected

Intentionality & vision required

Tenacious dedication over
time is what it takes for success

