



strategic plan
RIDGWAY FUSE
2023



A COLORADO CREATIVE MAIN STREET PROGRAM

RIDGWAY FUSE STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Ridgway FUSE gathered on (DATE), 2022 to review and update their strategic plan. Three questions were asked of the general community during a pre-event to help guide discussion at the strategic planning workshop. Responses to these questions were reviewed, and where relevant, integrated into the FUSE four-point workplan.

This strategic plan for Ridgway FUSE, Colorado Creative Main Street Program is intended to guide the program over the next two to three years, with opportunities for updates annually.

Question 1: What would you like to see more of from FUSE?

Big ideas included:

- Community gallery space- this item was felt to be a unique project and achievable.
- Space for older adults- included the desire of a space to share photos and stories. The effort could link up with the FUSE online mapping tool or Colorado Main Street's story mapping efforts. Locations discussed included the visitors center or Space to Create.
- One suggestion was promotion of events. The group discussed this task and identified that the effort was not within the core role of FUSE, but that the organization should play a supporting role to other entities in this venture.

Question 2: What type of signature event would you like to see FUSE launch?

This topic received considerable discussion. Members felt that FUSE should not be focusing on events as the primary driver. Rather, they thought the organization should support other events in the community by linking creatives with opportunities to showcase their craft. For instance, linking a chef, musician or maker with events where talents could be showcased aligns better with FUSE's mission. Discussion included:

- Not launching signature events
- Maintaining Happy Hour as an opportunity to get to know community creatives was viewed as essential as mission-driven.
- The strategy of connecting creatives with events could be supported by another strategy - the online gallery - which appears in the FUSE Workplan.

Question 3: What projects would you like FUSE to undertake?

Suggestions varied widely but included the following concepts:

- Mapping public art installations for easier touring
- Evolving First Friday (FF) into a fresh event. Discussion included the perspective that FF is common across many communities. Changing the event so that it matches up with a more creative venture or alignment with Ridgway and FUSE would be positive. Ideas included capitalizing on the dark sky status of the community and reviving the Moon Walk (or New Moon to take advantage of stargazing options).

RIDGWAY FUSE

MISSION & VISION

The vision and mission statements are inspirational narratives describing who Ridgway FUSE is and what the organization aims to achieve. The statements are high-reaching, ambitious, and enthusiastic. They represent the collective desires of FUSE, which will serve as the foundation for the organization’s goals, objectives, and transformational strategies.

OUR MISSION

Ridgway FUSE, A Colorado Creative Main Street Program, nurtures the creative, historic, and economic vitality of our community.

DESIGN

FUSE envisions a welcoming, thriving, ecologically responsible creative community and main street environment that is diverse, innovative, and cohesive.

WHAT WE DO

Through our confluence of efforts, we Build; Connect; Gather; Share and Organize.

Under Ridgway FUSE Strategic Plan, tasks have been aligned with four transformational strategies: **BUILD, CONNECT, SHARE, GATHER** and **ORGANIZE**.



BUILD	CONNECT	SHARE	GATHER	ORGANIZE
This point is about enhancing quality of life, including infrastructure.	This point is about including all walks of life.	This point is about promoting creatives.	This point is about hosting events that promote business.	This point is about building a sustainable organization.
FOCUSES ON: Championing initiatives that make Ridgway’s physical fabric fiercely distinguishable for generations to come.	FOCUSES ON: Facilitating cross-sector connections to welcome, value, and nurture diverse Ridgway perspectives.	FOCUSES ON: Broadcasting the impacts of creatives in Ridgway through a variety of community channels.	FOCUSES ON: Supporting, planning and executing events that showcase Ridgway’s creative and entrepreneurial spirit.	FOCUSES ON: Creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.





BUILD

WE BUILD: BY CHAMPIONING INITIATIVES THAT MAKE RIDGWAY'S PHYSICAL FABRIC FIERCELY DISTINGUISHABLE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

Discussion centered on elevating Clinton Street as a community focal point, including the possibility of activating as the center of an Entertainment District. Due to the multifaceted level of discussions necessary to explore and advance this goal, several incremental steps are recommended, including a vision or feasibility study to gather facts and focus on a concrete proposal.

1. Space to Create

The Town of Ridgway will manage the 2,000 square foot community room within the Space to Create building on Clinton Street, with FUSE slated to take the lead in designing, developing, and programming the space. This is envisioned to be a flexible, multi-purpose community space, accessible to community-based groups, that helps promote the creative and economic vitality of the community. FUSE will also work with building owner, Artspace, to plan for public art around the building.

- a) **Furnish Community Room (CHR 5)**- Work with design team to gather community input to inform space design (COM – 3). Purchase and install furnishings so space is functional and comfortable.
- b) **Develop and implement policies and procedures for community room (CHR 5, COM – 4)**
 - i) Work with Town staff in consultation with Council to develop and approve rental rates and room rental process, usage policies and structured procedures for art shows.
 - ii) Communicate and implement policies and procedures so the public can utilize the space for public benefit.
- c) **Plan for Public Art in Space to Create (CHR – 4, COM – 3)**- Work with Artspace to invite public input on a plan for public art in the Space to Create building– specifically relics, mural, Descant piece. Partner with Artspace as appropriate to implement the plan.

BUILD

2. Heritage Park (CHR – 2, CHR – 6, CHR – 7)

a) **Develop construction plans for Heritage Park** in accordance with Ridgway Heritage Park and Visitor Center Master Plan - Work with COMS to develop scope and contractor for Heritage Park construction documents.

b) **Build split rail fence** in Heritage Park accordance with the park master plan:

[https://townofridgway.colorado.gov/sites/townofridgway/files/documents/2022.23.08 Ridgway Visitor Center Heritage Park Master Plan FINAL.pdf](https://townofridgway.colorado.gov/sites/townofridgway/files/documents/2022.23.08%20Ridgway%20Visitor%20Center%20Heritage%20Park%20Master%20Plan%20FINAL.pdf)

3. Mural Program (CHR – 4, CHR – 7, COM – 4)

Many communities showcase art via a comprehensive mural program. Although one-off efforts can be completed in short order without significant complexity, a more coordinated effort may be positive for Ridgway. Consider creating a mural strategy to help align design goals, maintenance strategies and other considerations.

a) 2023: Research peer community programs

b) 2024: Create policy guidance, technical guidance; Identify funding sources; Launch pilot project; Identify potential locations.

4. Creative Wayfinding (CHR 1)

It is essential for economic vitality that locals and visitors alike be able to easily navigate our downtown commercial and creative district. Existing wayfinding signs and printed materials can be modernized in collaboration with the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce to be more comprehensive and/or include QR codes to link to dynamic, up-to-date online content, walking map of downtown etc.

5. Entertainment District (ECO – 1, ECO – 2)

Examine past efforts to develop an Entertainment District in downtown Ridgway and research designation requirements; assess interest in exploring this idea further by speaking with businesses and Town officials. Identify next steps pending interest level.

6. Explore Space Inventory (ECO – 2)

One function of economic development departments can be to maintain and publish an inventory of vacant spaces available to businesses. This is not something the Town has done up to now due to limited capacity. Learn what sort of space inventory other Main Street programs in similarly sized municipalities are doing and assess potential costs and benefits of building this capacity within the community, either within the Town or in partnering organizations such as the Chamber.



CONNECT

WE CONNECT: BY FACILITATING CROSS-SECTOR CONNECTIONS TO WELCOME, VALUE AND NURTURE DIVERSE RIDGWAY PERSPECTIVES WHILE CONNECTING LOCALS WITH RESOURCES BEYOND THE COMMUNITY.

Key thoughts related to building relationships with various partners and the creative community. Major initiatives include the following:

- 1. Establish relationship ambassadors (COM – 3)**- Connecting with other non-profits, the school district and other key organizations is vital to sustaining and growing the FUSE mission. Taking a proactive and planned approach can help to ensure that this important activity doesn't slip to the back burner as board members get busy.
 - a) Gather/develop baseline information you wish to share with partner organizations. Creating this information packet will help FUSE members know what to cover during a discussion.
 - b) Identify a list of connections. Include contact information.
 - c) Assign board members and assign a deadline for conversations.
 - d) Create a notes page so that a summary of discussion and action items can be consolidated and shared.
 - e) Consider reviewing potential projects/initiatives following these discussions. Evaluate whether new action items can be added to the Workplan or if ideas should be held until the following year.

- 2. Welcome New Creatives (COM – 1, COM – 3, CHR – 4)**- Cultivating an environment where creatives are welcome and connected requires networking opportunities. Both physical and digital realms were discussed as prime opportunities.

CONNECT

a) **Generate a Creatives Welcome Worksheet** - Most welcome discussions happen organically through the course of the year. Developing a worksheet to help guide discussions and capture information will help with building the network. The worksheet can help to guide intentional discussion with new creatives while simultaneously generating content for the Creatives Directory and social media promotions.

3. Develop relationships with Indigenous Communities (COM-1, COM – 6. CHR – 2)

Cultivating connections with the descendants of the area’s original inhabitants is an aspect of the Heritage Park Implementation plan and is in keeping with FUSE and the Town of Ridgway’s commitment to being a welcoming, inclusive community that honors our history and engages in life-long learning.

a) Find opportunities to build relationships with Indigenous community members, knowledge holders and Ute Indian, Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Tribes in order to slowly nurture trust and cultivate understanding of the historical and present-day relationships Native American people have to the area. Explore potential for government-to-government collaboration on Heritage Park interpretive information and/or other cross-cultural opportunities.

4. Facilitate Community Conversations (COM – 3, COM – 6)

Ridgway has undergone a lot of changes in the last 5-10 years: paved streets downtown, new artwork, new buildings, a shifting political climate, rapidly increasing housing costs and labor challenges to name a few. These and other changes in our physical, economic, and social landscape can cause strain to the fabric of the community. By intentionally supporting relationship-building and understanding across differences, we can support a sense of community and inclusivity, in keeping with the Community Values.

a) FUSE will partner with Colorado Humanities on a free training that prepares people to plan and facilitate conversations across differences, beliefs, and backgrounds about vital issues and questions to help build understanding and strengthen relationships within organizations and communities. We will hold a series of three facilitated conversations about change in rural Colorado in February and March.



GATHER

WE GATHER: BY SUPPORTING, PLANNING, AND EXECUTING EVENTS THAT SHOWCASE RIDWAY'S CREATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT.

The FUSE team clearly articulated that being responsible for throwing big events is not mission-driven. However, partnering with other organizations to elevate creatives involvement in community events is essential. (CHR – 5)

1. **Assess Film Fest Feasibility (CHR – 4, CHR – 5)** - The Ridgway Independent Film Festival, which had its eighth annual event in 2023, is largely an event supported by members of FUSE and community volunteers. While many would like to see this event continue, the general goal would be to explore spinning the event off as it grows. Complete an assessment of the event to explore the feasibility and sustainability of a stand-alone event.
2. **Refresh First Friday (ECO – 1, ECO – 2, CHR – 4)** - As highlighted in the public engagement, evolving First Friday is a key goal. Create a vision and plan for this event with brainstorming opportunities to link with the FUSE mission. Example, “New Moonwalks” open gallery event.
3. **Clarify process for event sponsorship (CHR – 5, CHR – 4, COM – 4)** Ensure arts organizations in the community are informed about available Town sponsorship funds and process for applying for them.
4. **Grow Happy Hour (CHR – 5)**- Continuing and growing the Happy Hour event is essential to the mission of FUSE in brining creatives and entrepreneurs together. Consider adding a third Happy Hour event to provide more opportunities to connect. Discussion included maintaining a spring and fall event while possibly adding a February timeframe to the mix. **Brand Happy Hour** - We want to make sure this event is a “thing”! Provide visual branding to help cement the event in folks mind to help formalize Happy Hour.



SHARE

WE SHARE: BY BROADCASTING THROUGH VARIOUS COMMUNITY CHANNELS THE IMPACT OF CREATIVES AND ENTREPRENEURS IN RIDGWAY AND SHARING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THEIR SUCCESS.

The share discussion focused on telling the story of the organization and community more effectively. Generating messages that are focused on spotlighting creatives is essential to moving this point forward while staying true to the mission. Additionally, avoiding mission creep is also critical, leaving activities like business promotion to the Chamber. Sharing state level resources that can support the success of creatives and entrepreneurs is a valuable service FUSE can offer.

1. **Fully utilize FUSE website and social media platforms to document and promote Ridgway’s creative, historic, cultural, and economic assets (CHR – 4)**
 - a) **Buildout Creatives Directory (CHR – 4)** - Using the established website platform, input additional creative listings to provide a one-stop-shop for information. Determine scope and messaging for Creatives Directory (i.e., “Creatives and Entrepreneurs directory”?). Launch a campaign encouraging people to sign up to be listed on the directory; promote the resource in the community.
 - b) **Translate Creatives Directory into Social Posts (CHR – 4)** - Use the content generated under CONNECT for the website to reuse as “Featured Creatives” posts that can be shared. Create a template for spotlighting new creative businesses to help build awareness.
 - c) **Create Social Media Strategy (CHR – 4)** - Gather to discuss and write down the purpose of social media in relation to the FUSE mission. Include a “policy” of what types of original content you will promote and repost.
 - d) **Maximize Downtown Map and Directory (ECO – 2)**: Finalize management plan for maintaining online business directory/map and collaborate with Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce to determine how best to promote the resource broadly in the community.

SHARE

e) **Map and Promote Ridgway’s creative assets**

- i) **Map Public Art Installations (CHR – 4):** Ridgway’s public art installations are a creative asset that many in the community are eager to learn more about. FUSE will work with Public Art for Ridgway Colorado (PARC) and Town staff to map existing public art installations and educate the community about the public art program.
- ii) **Create Gallery Guide (CHR – 4):** Create a printed art gallery guide that links via QR code to online map.

f) **Map Ridgway’s historic buildings (CHR – 2)**

Using existing FUSE website platform, and documentation available via the Ouray County Ranch History Museum, work with local volunteers who have expertise in area history to document the history of buildings throughout downtown Ridgway.

- g) **Promote events (CHR – 5):** Work in collaboration with Alpenglow Arts Alliance and Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce to optimize the community events calendar/listings.

2. **Communicate the history and impact of the Creative District (CHR – 4)**

- a) **Celebrate 10-years as a Creative District.** Use this anniversary as an opportunity to develop communications pieces that celebrate and communicate the contributions of the Creative District and Main Street program over the past 10 years.

- i) **Document Oral History of Creative District and Main Street (CHR – 2):** As part of the 10-year commemoration, and in partnership with other organizations, document the history of the creative district and main street program by generating written, audio and/or video documentation and making it publicly available on the FUSE website.
- ii) **Document Economic Impact of Creative Industries Locally (ECO – 1, CHR – 4)-** Work with Colorado Creative Industries and other partners to document the economic impact of the creative industries in Ridgway over the past decade to educate the community and build ongoing support.

3. **Share Resources with Local Entrepreneurs and Creatives (COM – 1, ECO – 2)**

Local entrepreneurs and creatives have requested assistance accessing opportunities, resources, and technical assistance to support their success. FUSE will collaborate with local partners to leverage resources from state and national level sources such as Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) - Colorado Main Street Program (COMS), the National Main Street Center, Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)- Colorado Creative Industries (CCI), and other resources to support the success of Ridgway’s creative and entrepreneurial community.

- a) The FUSE website will grow into a local “go-to” resource for local creatives, including calls for artists, auditions, grants, and training opportunities.
- b) Promote COMS Main Street Architect services by distributing the application for assistance to building owners to support affordable revitalization efforts.

SHARE

- c) FUSE will support RACC's efforts to provide trainings to local businesses on topics of interest.
 - d) Paralleling housing affordability issues, many of the small creative businesses that comprise Ridgway's downtown have expressed concern about the potential of increasing rent to result in displacement. In keeping with the Town value to support the retention and expansion of local business, FUSE will work to better understand impact of changing real estate market on store front businesses and explore potential supports and resources that may be available from local, regional and/or state partners.
6. **Local Gift Card (ECO – 1, 2):** Collaborate with local partners such as RACC, local financial institutions and businesses to explore the desirability and feasibility of creating a local gift card that can direct more gift card dollars to area businesses. Investigate comparable programs such as Montrose Bucks.
7. **Create a Creatives Directory**



ORGANIZE

WE ORGANIZE: BY INTERNALLY STRUCTURING FUSE ACTIVITIES FOR VISIBILITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND MAXIMUM IMPACT.

(COM – 4)

1. Decide on terms for members, process for staggering membership
2. Recruit and onboarding new members (first Q)
3. Ensure meeting agendas, minutes, membership applications and other relevant information are easily accessible online in a timely manner.
4. Educate FUSE members on the Main Street approach and Call Yourselfs Creative resources.
5. Assess ongoing progress on plan and share with Town Council

CLOSING

The act of strategic planning enables an organization to step back and think creatively. While charting a new course for the future may involve a few detours over time, the general destination stays the same. During the discussion, the FUSE board highlighted several “Aha! Moments” to memorialize. The following thoughts and considerations rang true:

- Don't throw events just to have fun. We have limited volunteer capacity. Let's make it really count!
- The FUSE board works really well in person. Continuing to gather will help build capacity and teamwork.
- Focus and prioritize - the identification and exploration of the “four point” approach of Main Street is helpful to keep on track.
- Additional to the point above, learning the Main Street “4-Points” of Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Vitality helps put our activities in context.
- Balancing the Board W's is a good way to manage success.
- Naming of the Spotlight action is on target.

In closing, the team expressed an appreciation for the clarity and brevity of the four points as a possible mission statement. While the formal mission provides a great overview in writing, the team expressed an interest in using the four points as well. This sentiment has been included in the overall Strategic Snapshot.





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APPENDIX

RIDGWAY MASTER PLAN ALIGNMENT

Excerpted from the Town of Ridgway's Master Plan

https://townofridgway.colorado.gov/sites/townofridgway/files/2019.06.12_Ridgway_Master_Plan_Reduced.pdf)

Community Value 2 – Sense of Community & Inclusivity

COM – 1: Maintain Ridgway as a community that is accessible to a range of income levels, ages, and households

COM – 3: Encourage citizen participation and dialogue with elected and appointed officials and town administration in order to foster broad-based representation and input for local government decisions

COM – 4: Strive to be a model for transparency, efficiency, and good governance.

COM-6: Support education and lifelong learning in our community

Community Value 3: Small town Character & Identity:

CHR 1: Support vibrant, diverse, safe, and well-connected neighborhoods

CHR – 2: Protect and preserve Ridgway's historic assets

CHR – 4: Promote Ridgway's identity as a creative and innovate community where creative individuals and enterprises thrive.

CHR – 5: Promote a range of opportunities and spaces for community gatherings and interactions.

CHR – 6: Maintain and enhance Ridgway's gateways, entry corridors and scenic vistas

CHR – 7: Develop and interconnected system of parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities that meets the needs of Ridgway's residents and visitors.

Community Value 4: Vibrant & Balanced Economy

ECO – 1: Create a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable year-round economy that reflects Ridgway's social fabric, values, and character.

ECO – 2: Support the retention and expansion of local business.

Community Value 5: Well Managed Growth

GRO – 1: Manage growth and development in order to maintain Ridgway's small-town character, support a diverse community and create employment opportunities.

CRO – 2: Ensure public infrastructure, utilities, facilities, and services are sufficient to meet that needs of residents and businesses as the town grows.

APPENDIX

MAIN STREET FOUR POINTS APPROACH

As a Colorado Main Street Program, Ridgway FUSE has embedded the Main Street America Transformation Strategies' "Four Points" approach throughout our work.

<https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/theapproach>

ECONOMIC VITALITY focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

DESIGN supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

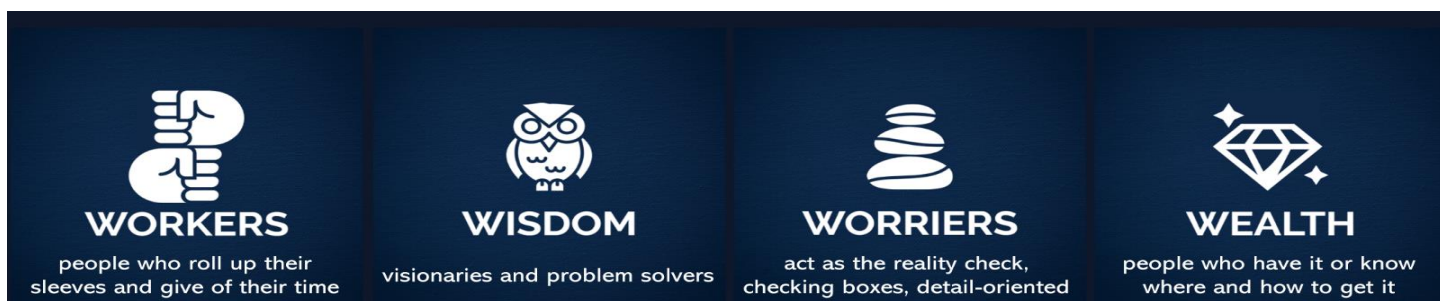
PROMOTION positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

ORGANIZATION involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

APPENDIX

BOARD W'S

The FUSE Board conducted a review of strengths composition by reviewing the “Board W’s”. Impressively, the group had a solid mix of self-selected strengths. The W’s are described below followed by the Board’s representation of the W’s.



While a solid mix is in place today, considering succession planning for the board is important. Reviewing the desired characteristics under each of the Four W’s should be gathered into a “job description” to help in recruiting.