

Chapter 8

Tourism

Salida’s lifestyle and economy are intertwined with the outstanding natural environment, ample opportunities for recreation, surrounding public lands and rich sense of community. The City is becoming a mecca for outdoor and art enthusiasts who are investing their time and money visiting the community for special events, soaking in the hot springs pool, visiting historical sites, or participating in the wide variety of recreational opportunities. Over the past 10 years the regional economy has begun to shift to relying more on tourists visiting the community throughout the year. While the tourism industry is just one of the City’s economic industries, it is gaining importance for vitality of many local businesses.

As discussed in pervious chapters the City’s community character, environmental sustainability, recreation and open space play important roles in attracting tourists to the community. The principals, policy and action items contained in those chapters as well as those identified in this chapter are important to continue to improve the tourism experience for both citizens and guests to our community.

Events

The character of the tourism industry is also shaped by the many community events that are held throughout the year. Events range in size and type from the FIBArk summer festival and the Lighting of Christmas Mountain to the Alpine Park Farmer’s Market to free Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners provided by local churches and volunteers. Most events are hosted and organized by local non-profits or other civic organizations. These events, many of which are free to attend, promote civic pride, a sense of community and a spirit of volunteerism in the city. While each event caters to different types of tourists, there is something for almost everyone. The additional visitors provide local merchants the chance to showcase their business and benefit financially during these peak event seasons.

The city provides support for many of the larger events generally through coordination with the recreation department and support by public works, police and fire departments. Public safety, sanitation and the use and maintenance of the City’s public spaces are provided by the fire, police, public works and environmental health departments. The city’s recreation department organizes several events throughout the year including the Salida Bikefest, free summer concerts, FIBArk running and biking races, and specialized recreation classes for youths and adults. Events are often hosted in municipal facilities including the Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center, local parks, Scout Hut and the SteamPlant Event Center.

Culture

With the decline of the railroad and mining industries, Salida began to form a niche as an arts and recreation community. There are many artists who call the area home and the city has become a recognized destination for cultural heritage, arts and recreation related tourism. These artists, as well as the downtown property owners, have revitalized the downtown and filled many vacant store fronts with new galleries, businesses, restaurants and bars that cater to the tourism industry. During the 2008 recession, property owners both along the highway and in the downtown took proactive roles in restoring and maintaining their properties which in turn has attracted tourists to the community as Salida has become known as an afford-



Fishing on Franz Lake

able alternative destination to the ski resort communities located on the I-70 corridor.

Recently, the City was designated as one of two of Colorado’s Creative Districts. The Creative District boundaries, as shown on Map 8.1 Creative District, include the Central Business (“C-2”) zone district and expand to include other key anchor arts and cultural organizations, parks and pedestrian thoroughfares. The District includes public institutions including the Salida Regional Library, Toubert Building, Colorado Art Ranch Headquarters, Riverside Park and Amphitheater and the SteamPlant Events Center. A major expansion of the city-owned SteamPlant Events Center was completed in 2008 and has become the anchor institution of the District that complements the many galleries and art studios in the historic downtown by offering a venue for the performing arts, galley space and conference center.

The economic engine of the Creative District includes a variety of different enterprises including the 21 artists-owned studios and galleries, creative design firms, architects, interior designers, carpenters, graphic designers, filmmakers, microbrewers and micro distilleries, and 13 locally-owned restaurants. These local businesses continue to attract and provide services to visiting tourists.

The designation of the Creative District has led to the creation of the “Salida Creative District, Strategic Report and Action Program.” The vision and goals for the Creative District are outlined in this report.

Lodging

The growth of the tourism industry has created a greater demand on the available lodging located in the City limits. New hotels have increased the available rooms and the City currently has 18 hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts offering guests nearly 700 rooms. Over the past 10 years the City has also experienced an expansion on the vacation rental market. Many second home owners have begun to explore this option to bring in additional revenue for their second homes when they are not visiting the community.

Recreational Based Tourism

Recreational opportunities attract thousands of visitors to the City every year. Activities include hiking, climbing, biking, swimming, soaking in hot springs pools, running, rafting, kayaking, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, hunting and off-road vehicle use among others. While some residents and visitors enjoy these activities on their own, many local businesses have grown to accommodate the desire to enjoy the outdoors by selling supplies and equipment or offering guided trips. The Arkansas River is rafted, kayaked



Mountain Biking on Little Rattler Trail

or fished by several hundred thousand users each season. River recreation is an anchor for the summer tourist season with other activities such as shopping, hiking and mountain biking rounding out the opportunities. Downhill skiing at Monarch Mountain, 25 miles west of the city, provides winter recreation and ensures a steady stream of visitors to the city through the winter.

The close proximity of public lands to the north, south and east of Salida and the rivers running through the community form a backdrop to the community and ensure access to recreation and the natural environment. Ongoing cooperation with public land managers and local groups can maintain and expand the access to recreation for a variety of users.

Principles / Policies / Action Items

Principle TO-I. Tourism & the Local Economy

Salida depends on tourism to support the local economy and will support tourism related land uses, businesses, events and marketing.

Policy TO-I. 1 – Work with appropriate entities to attract multiple forms of tourism.

Action TO-I.1.a – Collaborate with entities such as CCVB, SBA, CCHAAB, Historic Salida, Inc, Art of the Rockies, the Chamber and others to design a strategy to develop cultural and heritage tourism in the Salida area.

Action TO-I.1.b – Work with SPOT, SMT, BLM, AHRA, USFS, DOW, and others to promote Salida as a hub and gateway community to adjacent public lands.

Policy TO-I. 2– Continue to look for opportunities to bring small conventions and music to the City.

Action TO-I.2.a – Create a marketing strategy to target Front Range communities to promote Salida as a destination for small conventions.

Action TO-I.2.b – Encourage local businesses to coordinate with one another to market special events.

Principle TO-II. Special Events

Special events attract visitors to the community and promote civic pride, a sense of community and a spirit of volunteerism in the City.

Policy TO-II. 1 – Work to maintain and promote existing special events that have strong local support.

Action TO-II.1.a – Collaborate with special events entities to provide the necessary City support to allow events to be held every year.

Action TO-II.1.b – Create policies and regulations that allow City assets to be utilized effectively and equably.

Action TO-II.1.c – Work with the various special event boards to promote events throughout the calendar and to reduce the overlap of events.

Policy TO-II. 2– Continue to look for opportunities to bring new events to the City that promote the community values.

Action TO-II.2.a – Support the creation of special events that occur during the spring and fall shoulder seasons.



River rafting Brown's Canyon

Principle TO-III. Culture

Preserve, enhance and promote the cultural resources in the community.

Policy TO-III.1 – Support the existing arts and music community in Salida and develop relationships to help increase the identity as an arts community and the financial viability for artists in the community.

Action TO-III.1.a – Strengthen collaborative relationships with entities such as ArtWalk, Art Works, StageLeft Theater Company, and others to promote art in the city.

Action TO-III.1.b – Utilize the SteamPlant Events Center as a venue to bring exhibits, events and productions into the community as well as to showcase local artists.

Action TO-III.1.c – Investigate the viability and interest in creating a program that would place art on publicly owned property in the community.

Action TO-III.1.d – Work with the local art community to establish a community art studio for artists to display their work and receive educational classes.

Action TO-III.1.e – Encourage outdoor art displays.

Action TO-III.1.f – Continue to partner with other organizations such as Historic Salida, Inc, the Chaffee County Heritage Area Advisory Board, Salida Museum Association, Hutchinson Homestead, Salida Regional Library and Buena Vista Heritage to promote the heritage of Salida and Chaffee County and heritage events.

Action TO-III.1 – Promote, support and market the Creative District as it continues to gain recognition across the state and country.

Policy TO-III.2 – Encourage public events in the community that engage, educate, entertain and enrich the community.

Action TO-III.2.a – Continue to provide support for community events through the recreation, public works, fire, police and City Hall offices.

Action TO-III.2.b – Assess the fee structure for park rentals, street closures and event liquor permits to balance the demands on staff time with the public benefit provided by public events.

Principle TO-IV. Lodging

Support existing and new lodging facilities that provide guests with overnight stay opportunities.

Policy TO-IV.1 – Support the existing lodging facilities by providing access to City services and facilities that cater to guests.

Action TO-IV.1.a – Promote events and the use of City facilities that create overnight stays for guests.

Action TO-IV.1.b – Utilize the SteamPlant Events Center as a venue to bring tourists to the community for weddings, parties and other special events that typically require overnight stays.

Action TO-IV.1.c – Continue to utilize 2b funding to enhance City facilities such as the Hot Springs Aquatic Center, SteamPlant Events Center, City Parks and Salida Mountain Trails system that offer guests recreational and entertainment opportunities while they stay in the City.

Policy TO-IV.2 – Support the development of new lodging services to ensure there is adequate supply of rooms for guests coming to the community.

Action TO-IV.2.a – Support economic development studies for future development of the lodging industry.

Action TO-IV.2.b – Create land use regulations that support the growth, development and redevelopment of new and existing lodging facilities.

Action TO-IV.2.c – Promote the use of vacation rentals during peak events.

Principle TO-V. Recreational Based Tourism

Promote Salida’s natural environment and recreation opportunities attract thousands of guests to the community every year.

Policy TO-V.1 – Continue to expand City’s recreational infrastructure in parks and open space areas.

Action TO-V.1.a – Promote and support SPOT and SMT efforts to expand the trails around the City.

Action TO-V.1.b – Maintain the River Park improvements and look for opportunities for future expansion.

Action TO-V.1.c – Work to find opportunities to leverage grant funding for recreational projects.

Action TO-V.1.d – Create opportunities to dedicate park enhancements for citizens.

Policy TO-V.2 – Support conservation efforts that preserve the natural environment that tourists come to the City to enjoy.

Action TO-V.2.a – Support conservation organizations on efforts to acquire public lands for future projects.



Snowboarding at Monarach Mountain