

**CITY OF CENTRAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT**

**WORK-IN-PROGRESS DRAFT**  
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Durango, Colorado



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2
Vision	3
Trends and Context	3
Gaming	5
Central City Opera	7
Economic Opportunity Sectors	7
Capitalize on Heritage and Visible History	8
Develop Outdoor Recreation Niches in Central City	9
Creative Industries	12
Promote Quality Special Events	14
Expand commercial Visitor Services	16
Develop community Commercial and Services	17
Occupy Historic Buildings	18
Housing Diversity	20
Branding, Marketing, and Promotion	21
Tourism Marketing	22
Resident and Business/Industry Marketing	24
Marketing Funding	26
Land Use Code and Design Guidelines	26



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## VISION

Central City is well-positioned to grow and diversify and now is the time to take an active approach to make it happen. Central City's economy has depended heavily on the gaming industry since gaming was introduced. Overdependence on one industry leads to a vulnerable economy where fluctuations in this single industry significantly affect the entire economy. This Comprehensive Plan identifies the community's economic strengths and its most valuable physical assets, pinpoints opportunities for growth and diversification, and charts the strategic steps needed to create a more sustainable and prosperous local economy.

**Vision – Diversify and grow the economy by building on Central City's strengths.**

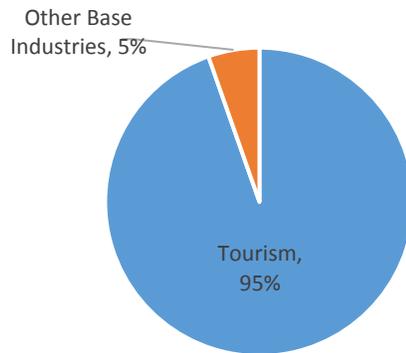
- Capitalize on the heritage assets to attract visitors and enrich the visitor experience.
- Develop outdoor recreation niches in Central City.
- Expand creative industries.
- Support and further develop special events.
- Expand commercial visitor services.
- Develop residential commercial and professional services.
- Occupy historic buildings.
- Diversify housing options.
- Develop strategic visitor marketing for Central City as a whole.
- Establish marketing to attract residents and businesses.
- Maintain and improve infrastructure and core public services.

## TRENDS AND CONTEXT

Tourism accounts for 95% of the employment base in Gilpin County, this includes casinos, the opera, heritage tourism, accommodations, outdoor recreation and other businesses catering to visitors. Other base industries account for the remaining 5% of the employment base, including the local government and service providers. Casinos and the opera house are the top tourist draws in Central City.



Figure X. Base Analysis for Gilpin County  
- DOLA 2014



Central City has a higher percentage of the population in the labor force (77%) than Black Hawk, (68%) or Gilpin County (71%). However, 95% of Central City’s working population work outside of the city, higher than the county as a whole (73%). This high percentage of people commuting out for work signals a need for additional employment opportunities for local residents.

Figure X. Percentage of Employed Persons Working Outside of Central City  
- Census on the Map 2014

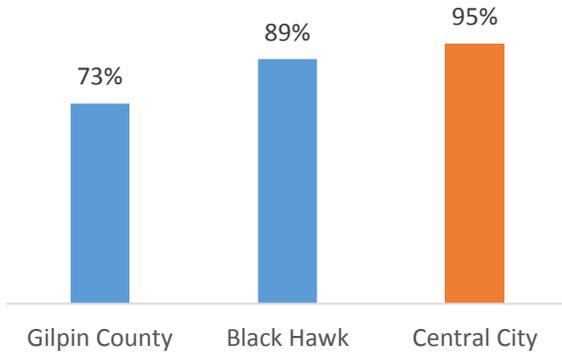


Figure X. Percentage of Population in the Labor Force  
- ACS 2014

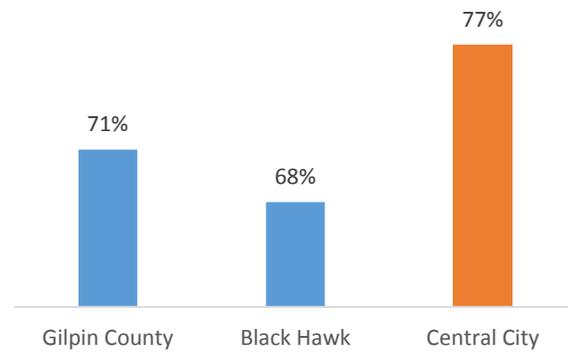
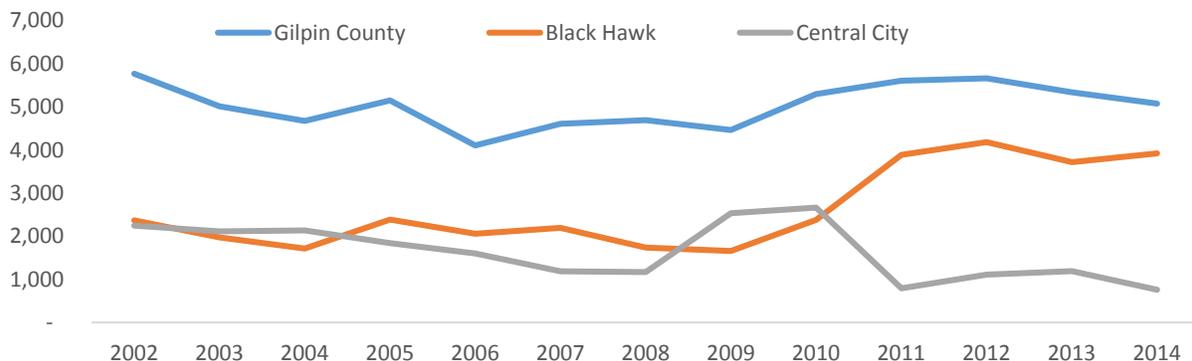


Figure X. Jobs 2002 - 2014 - Census on the Map

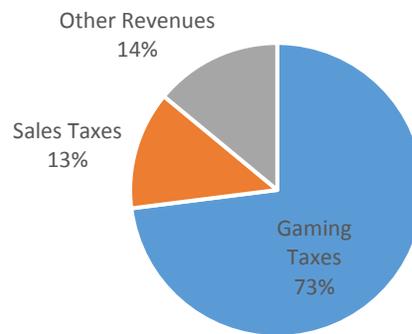


The number of jobs in Central City declined steadily from 2,247 jobs in 2002 to 1,167 jobs in 2008. The city saw a significant spike in the number of jobs during 2009 and 2010 but the total number of jobs declined again in 2011 to 791. In 2014 there were 759 jobs in Central City, according to the census. The opening and closing of casinos is the primary cause of the fluctuating number of jobs in Central City.

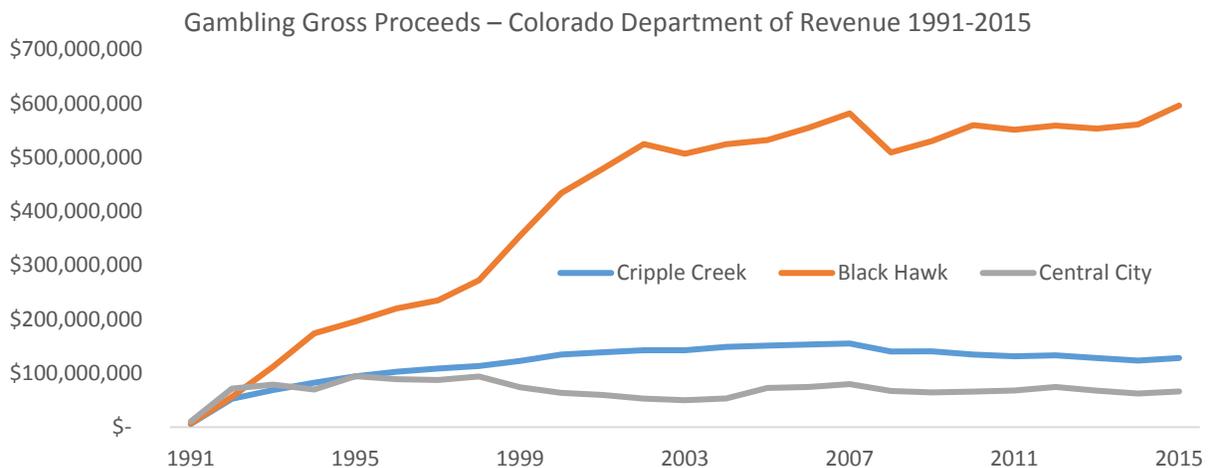
## GAMING

The gaming industry remains a primary economic driver in Central City. Consequently, the city is also heavily reliant on the gaming industry as the main source of general fund revenues. Gaming taxes make up an average of 73% of Central City’s general fund revenues, and sales taxes makes up 13% of general fund revenues. The remaining 14% of general fund revenues come from a variety of sources including property taxes. In addition to gaming taxes, casinos contribute to sales taxes through casino food and beverage sales, as well as property taxes, meaning that their revenue contribution to the city is higher than the 73% derived directly from gaming taxes.

Figure X. City General Fund Revenues by Source - Audits 2012-2014

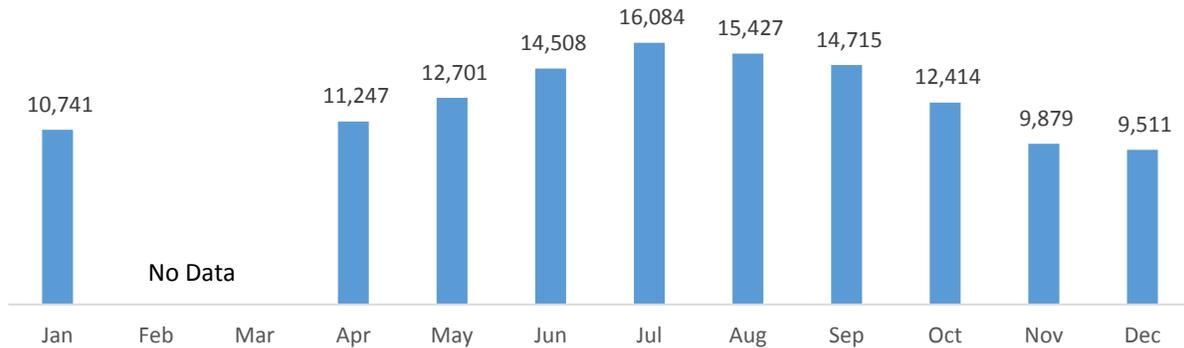


In 2015 the gaming industry in Central City produced \$66 million in gaming proceeds. Since gaming was introduced, the number of casinos in Central has fluctuated with new casinos popping up and others closing. Today, Central City has six casinos, two with hotels at the Century Casino and Reserve Casino.



In addition to gaming revenues and employment, the casinos bring in visitors who shop and visit other attractions in the city. Summer is the peak tourist season in Central City when visitation in the state as a whole is at its highest. Central City Parkway traffic counts highlight this seasonality with the parkway seeing an average of 16,084 weekly trips in July and 9,511 weekly trips in December. Casinos attract tourists throughout all seasons, somewhat protecting Central City from more severe seasonality, but there is still a strong need for more activities and attractions in the spring, fall and summer.

2015 Parkway Average Weekly Traffic Counts - Central City Public Works Department



A number of factors combine to determine whether a casino will remain profitable and stay in business. While the city has no ability to influence the majority of these factors, there are ways the city can positively support the casino industry. The city can continue to provide infrastructure and core services, support efforts to provide parking, provide shuttle services and work to enrich the overall experience of gamers. Easy navigation and mobility play a key role in visitor experiences. The Cities of Central and Black Hawk jointly fund a shuttle that runs a regular route between the two cities allowing visitors to expand their visit to include both communities.

The Central City Parkway connects the city directly to I-70. Completed in 2004, the city expected to see a significant rise in the number of visitors. While visitation increased, it was not to the level expected. Residents identified the traffic route connecting the Parkway to downtown as a problem. For people traveling into Central City on the Parkway, it is easy to turn towards Black Hawk and Central City’s downtown core. For first time visitors, simple navigation to their destination is key. Clear, and attractive traffic circulation that directs visitors to downtown Central City, parking, casinos and other attractions could have a significant impact on the number of visitors who stop in Central City vs. continuing on to Black Hawk.



## CENTRAL CITY OPERA

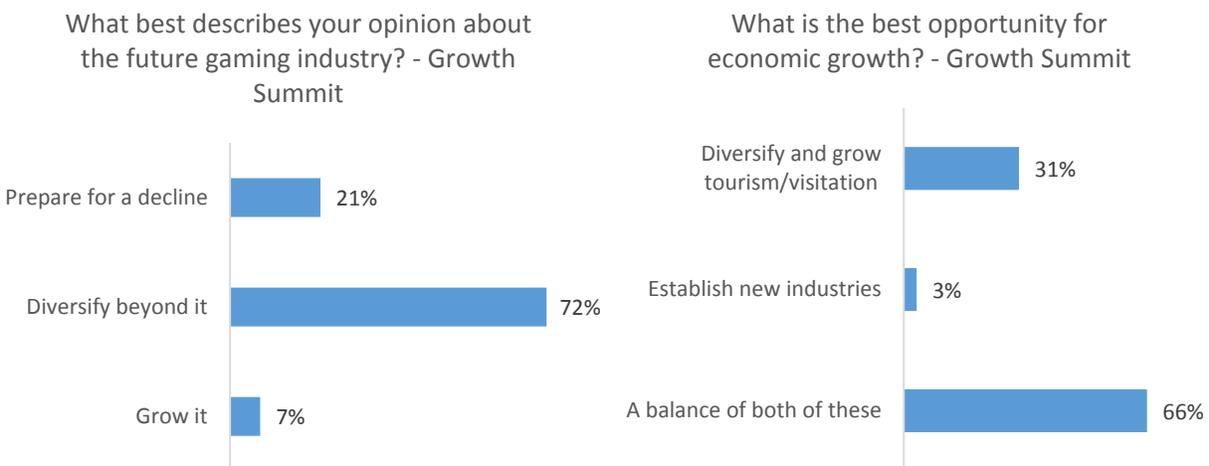
The Central City Opera House, built in 1878, is a major attraction and brings thousands of tourists to the community during the opera season. The Central City Opera offers a repertory of four to six operas a year, classes for youth and adults, a summer festival and more. Central City Opera is in the process of updating their strategic plan, including plans to expand the opera's season.

In addition to the Opera House, Central City Opera owns 30 other historic properties including the Teller House. Central City Opera has a vested interest in the continued economic success of Central City. A healthy local economy overall will support their future success and the preservation viability of historic buildings the opera owns.

The community wants to diversify the visitor experience beyond gaming. A wider variety of opportunities and activities will encourage tourists to stay longer and spend more money in the community. A well-rounded visitor experience will also support repeat visitors. This includes expanding the opera season, more dining, retail shops, arts, entertainment and lodging options, and the development of a comprehensive marketing plan.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

The casinos and opera are base industries that bring new dollars into the local economy. Their continued success is vital to the economic success of Central City. The economic trends that show sharp increase and declines in the economy related to the opening and closing of specific casinos show an over-reliance on just one sector. 95% of working residents in Central City commute out of town for employment signaling a lack of local employment opportunities.



The obvious starting point for diversification is to build on the current economic base by improving and diversifying the experience for opera and gaming visitors. This will



encourage repeat customers, extend stays, and increase revenues for both of these industries. There is an opportunity to diversify the economic base by building on the strengths that already exist. Central City’s fascinating heritage, unmatched trove of historic buildings, ready access to outdoor recreation, burgeoning creative industry, long established performance art sector and its nearness to the growing Front Range economy are all opportunities for economic growth and diversification that can be acted upon today.

## CAPITALIZE ON HERITAGE AND VISIBLE HISTORY

Designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1961, Central City has the potential to expand heritage tourism. While there are a number of communities in Colorado that cherish and preserve their mining history, none rival Central City, with its intact historic buildings including the Central City Opera House, Teller House, Washington Hall, Thomas

Figure x. Specific Interests of Overnight Leisure Trips (2015) - Longwoods International



Figure X. Top Activities on Overnight Leisure Trips (2015) - Longwoods International



House, Gilpin Tram, Couer d’Alene Mine Shaft House, Hidee Mine, several historic cemeteries, and the Gilpin Museum.

In 2015, historic places and cultural activities/attractions were identified as the top two interests of overnight visitors in Colorado and they have been listed as top interests consistently in recent years. Visiting a landmark/historic site and visiting a museum were also two of the top activities tourists participated in during overnight leisure trips in Colorado. An estimated 6.3 million overnight trips involved visiting a landmark or historic site and 4.4 million involved visiting a museum in 2015. Visiting a historic attraction is usually part of a vacation or trip that includes many other activities. Central City can increase heritage tourism by marketing its attractions and encouraging visitors to add Central City to their trip itinerary.

Marketing and wayfinding can also entice visitors that come to the city for other purposes such as gaming, opera performances or special events, enriching their experience by visiting historic buildings and other heritage sites. Starting in 2016, Central City and Black Hawk connected their free shuttle services. With a free shuttle linking Central City and Black Hawk, people can now go between the two cities without needing to drive themselves. More lodging options in Central City would also appeal to prospective heritage tourists who prefer to stay at a hotel not contained within a casino.



**Goal ED.2 – Capitalize on the heritage assets to attract visitors and enrich the visitor experience.**

**Strategy A** – Support historic-preservation efforts to sustain heritage assets and make them accessible to visitors.

**Strategy B** – Develop partnerships with organizations and secure state, federal and non-profit funding to stabilize and preserve historic mining structures in and around Central City.

**Strategy C** – Identify mining attractions adjacent to Central City that are safe or could be made safe for combined recreation and heritage outings.

**Strategy D** – Increase visitor counts, sales opportunities, and marketing at museums and local heritage attractions.

**Strategy E** – Support and work together with museums to extend the season they are open to the public.

**Strategy F** – Preserve historic structures in Central City by developing a coordinated program to get them occupied by businesses and residents (see Occupy Historic Buildings below).

**Strategy G** – Encourage local organizations such as the Gilpin Historical Society and Main Street Central City to establish a program to assist willing property owners with restoration of building façades downtown.

## DEVELOP OUTDOOR RECREATION NICHES IN CENTRAL CITY

Outdoor recreation is a \$13.2 billion dollar industry in Colorado, it produces 125,000 direct jobs and roughly \$994 million in state and local tax revenues annually. Central City is geographically positioned grow an outdoor recreation industry. Opportunities for hiking, biking, fishing, motor vehicle recreation and camping abound in and around Central City. With strategic investments and marketing, the city could become a recreation destination for these activities. As outdoor recreation expands, so will demand for businesses associated with outdoor recreation including retail and tour services.



Figure x. Do you think developing local niches in outdoor industry would benefit the local economy? - Growth Summit

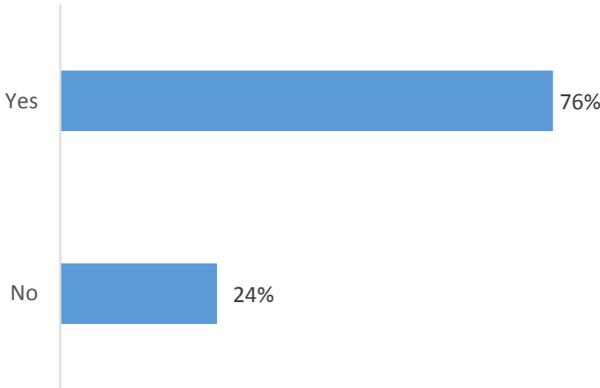
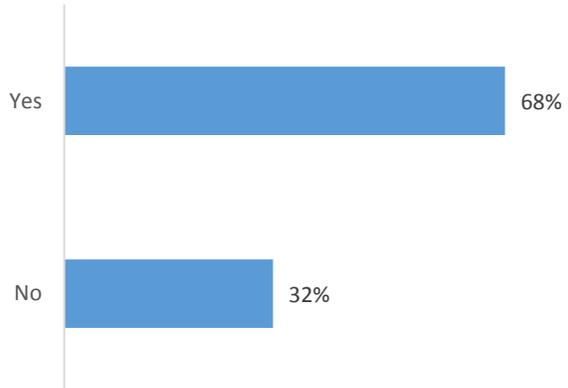


Figure x. Do you think the outdoor industry would be a good fit for Central City? - Growth Summit



Trails development, wayfinding, and parking will make existing recreational assets more obvious, accessible and user-friendly. For example, a multi-use pathway connecting Central City and Black Hawk along the historic Gilpin Tram alignment would be a world class recreational asset for both visitors and locals. Dozens of existing roads and trails nearby are already established and could become an attraction and economic engine with modest investment in facilities, wayfinding and marketing.

Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation is a significant economic driver in communities that have embraced the industry. During the 2012-2013 season, motorized recreation contributed \$49.2 million in direct sales and \$18.8 million in indirect sales in north-central Colorado.

Central City is well-situated to capitalize on OHV recreation. Forest Service land surrounding Central City contains numerous roads and trails that allow OHVs, but there are no OHV routes that connect the city to the USFS trails system. The City of Central has the ability to permit the use of OHVs on designated routes within city limits and could connect the city to the Forest Service land directly without requiring the use of county roads. The city could see an increase in OHV tourism if they designated OHV routes through the city connecting to adjacent USFS trails and better managed and promoted parking and staging areas for OHV recreation.

Other communities throughout Colorado have taken a variety of approaches to regulating OHVs on city and county roads. The towns of Silverton, CO and Lake City, CO both allow OHVs on local roads. Silverton restricts OHVs to specific routes through town while Lake City allows OHVs on all streets.

Further planning and regulations will be needed to address OHV parking, speed limits, age limits, driver’s license requirements, insurance, helmet use and other safety and logistical considerations. Clear wayfinding would clarify where OHVs would be allowed to drive and



where they can park. Businesses related to the OHV industry should be encouraged to locate along the designated routes. OHV special events and strategic marketing would increase awareness of Central City as a destination for OHV users.

**Goal ED.3 – Make targeted investments in outdoor recreation assets that create a multi-season menu of recreation options.**

**Strategy A** – Improve the visibility of outdoor recreation assets with way-finding and improve trailhead and trailside signage to make the trails system more user-friendly.

**Strategy B** – Improve and expand parking serving outdoor recreation assets and at trailheads and enhance them with basic amenities such as map kiosks, interpretive signage and restrooms.

**Strategy C** – Develop low impact trailheads at future emergency turnarounds at street dead ends that are near trail connections.

**Strategy D** – Utilize historic tramway and other regional corridors to develop a paved and/or unpaved regional trail network for pedestrians and bicyclists, beginning with a pathway connecting Central City and Black Hawk along the historic Gilpin Tram route.

**Strategy E** – Plan for and develop a shared use path from the downtown core to the recreational areas to the west (Columbine Campground Road, Russel Park, Central City Reservoir).

**Strategy F** – Install a hard-surface shared-use path and/or enhanced sidewalk connection from the downtown core to Black Hawk.

**Strategy G** – Work with trails groups, landowners and public-lands agencies to establish more looped routes near Central City, including loops through historic sites.

**Strategy H** – Better manage and promote OHV recreation to diversify the visitor base in Central City.

- Formalize, develop and manage parking and staging areas and direct visitors from the parking and staging areas to attractions and businesses in Central City with kiosks and signage.
- Create designated routes and parking for OHV use in town. Change parking regulations on Pine Street to allow OHV parking. Modify regulation of OHV use on city roadways (Eureka, Spruce, and Pine Streets) and utilize the Prosser lot OHV parking.
- Provide directional signage to OHV use areas.
- Organize and promote OHV events and competitions.



## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The Creative Industries Division under the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) called the creative industry a “keystone species” because the industry’s impact is disproportionate to its size. In addition to jobs and revenues, it improves quality of life and adds to the desirability of a community.

The creative economy in Colorado provides an average annual 164,000 jobs directly related to the creative economy (including creative workers and other workers participating in creative enterprises). Creative industries drive 4% of total employment in the state, according to the Colorado Creative Industries Division. Central City already has a national reputation for the performing arts thanks to the success of the Central City Opera. A number of other artists working in a variety of mediums also live and work in Central City.

There is considerable support and hope for creative industries in Central City. A strong majority (97%) of Economic Growth Summit respondents supported the expansion of performing arts in the city. Previous planning efforts including the Downtown Vision Concepts (2014) Downtown Revitalization Master Plan (2014), Interim Community Economic Development Strategic Plan (2015) all support development of the performing arts and creative industries in Central City. Eighty-three percent (83%) of Economic Growth Summit respondents felt the city could become a hub for the creative arts. Expansion of the Central City Opera, extended seasons and more performance venues would solidify Central City as a performance arts destination. Vacant historic buildings could become performance venues, training spaces, makerspaces, galleries and artist co-ops.

Figure x. Could Central City become a hub for arts and creative trades? - Growth Summit

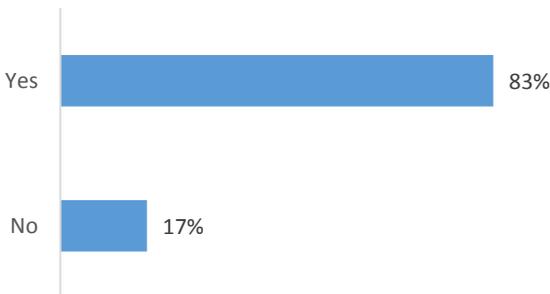


Figure x. Do you support the expansion of performance arts offerings in Central City? - Growth Summit



Success in creative industries depends in large part on creating an environment that appeals to artists and building a critical mass of artists and performers that can be promoted to attract even more creative people and businesses. Affordable workspaces, galleries and venues for selling and showing art, quality performance venues, training/education facilities and programs, and coordinated community marketing all



contribute to the success of the creative industries. Public art installations will also emphasize and express Central City's identity as an arts community. The Gilpin County Arts Association and the Central City Opera are two existing organizations that are already in place to help expand this niche market.

Central City's creative industry market could extend beyond visitors to reach export markets. In 2013, Colorado's creative industry exports totaled \$300 million, with Canada, Mexico and Japan as the top export markets.

**Goal ED.4 – Expand and diversify performance art venues and extend the performance art season.**

**Strategy A** – Support the renovation of the Central City Opera House to provide a year-round venue for a variety of performances.

**Strategy B** – Diversify performance venues to include cabaret format performance venues in vacant downtown buildings.

**Strategy C** – Restore and renovate the Belvidere Theater to include a year-round intimate performance venue.

**Strategy D** – Explore the feasibility of utilizing the Central City Reservoir as an outdoor performance and festival venue.

**Strategy E** – Emphasize weekend performances during the non-summer months.

**Goal ED.5 – Establish Central City as a hub for arts production, education, events and arts tourism.**

**Strategy A** – Encourage and support establishment of arts and creative trades education organizations, education programs and education events.

- Craft school/residencies
- Art residency programs
- Historic craft workshops
- Art in the Mountains Series
- Writing workshops/escapes/retreats

**Strategy B** – Support and facilitate the development of arts and creative trades facilities.

- Makerspace
- Art Co-ops
- Live Work Artist Spaces

**Strategy C** – Find permanent locations for public art downtown and identify public funding sources to commission public art.

- Public Art Installations
- Art Garden



- Art Trails/Walking Tour

**Strategy D** – Help local organizations develop local arts and creative trades events and series.

- Gallery Tour
- Art Demonstration Series
- Art Competition Series

## PROMOTE QUALITY SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events can increase public awareness about Central City and bring in new revenues. Communities like Carbondale, Colorado (Mountain Fair and 5Point Film Festival) and Lake City, Colorado (Uncorked Wine and Music Festival) have nurtured and grown special events into well known, annual occurrences and they reap the benefits of increased local revenues and repeat visitors. Central City can similarly grow its special events.

Central City Special Events 2016	
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Madam Lou Bunch Day</li> <li>• Stills in the Hills</li> </ul>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opera Opening</li> <li>• Beat the Heat Wing-Off</li> </ul>
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilpin Art Show Reception</li> <li>• Pitt Rally</li> <li>• Great Central City Beer Festival</li> <li>• Cemetery Crawl</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot Rod Hill Climb</li> <li>• Seven Healing Stars</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creepy Crawls</li> </ul>

Residents of Central City showed support for special events in the city. When asked their opinion about public special events during the Economic Growth Summit, 53% of respondents wanted to focus resources on a few quality events and 40% wanted to establish and promote more events, and 7% felt there should be fewer events.

A number of special events occur annually including Madam Lou Bunch Day, Stills in the Hills, The Great Central City Beer Festival, and the Pit Rally among others. Arts & crafts, performance, food & drink, outdoor recreation/competition, and heritage special events all received support during the Economic Growth Summit. In 2016 the city hosted a variety of events. While there is support for special events, the city should take careful consideration when deciding what level of support the city will provide in regards to time and funding to a particular event.

Special events cause a temporary influx in visitors, and can produce a noticeable impact on the economy. Special event visitors spend money on accommodations and food in addition to what they spend while attending the event. In 2015, special event trip expenditures in Colorado averaged \$384 per person per event according to Colorado Travel Year.



Figure x. Which best describes your opinion about public special events? - Growth Summit

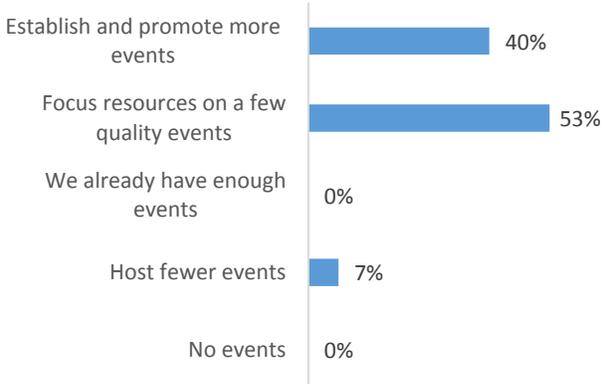
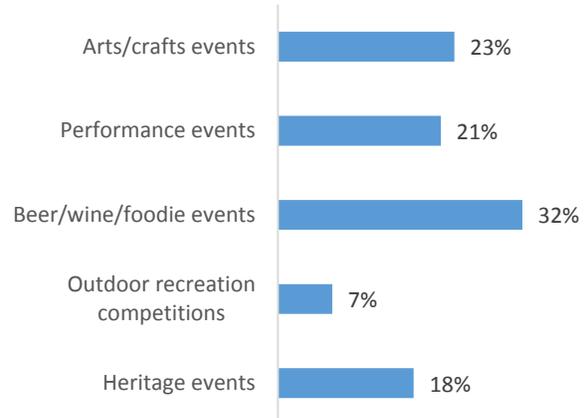


Figure x. What types of special events are desirable? (Top 2) - Growth Summit



While there is general support for special events, little is known about the actual economic impacts of special events. The city would benefit by monitoring of the economic impacts of special events. Event sponsors and planners should be tasked with tracking the economic impacts of each event on an annual basis providing visitor counts, ticket sales, and any other insightful data. Requests for city funding should include an economic impact component. Special events can require significant city time and resources from the city. When deciding whether to provide such resources, the city should prioritize events that can show their positive economic impact.

Community focused special events have a very different purpose than those aimed at bringing visitors to Central City. Community events may not contribute significantly to the economy, bringing in few visitors, but they play an important role by providing locals with entertainment, and contributing to the quality of life and sense of community pride in the city. Events focused on community engagement would still receive city support even though their economic impact may be minimal.

**Goal ED.6 – Encourage and promote special events that bring visitors to Central City.**

**Strategy A** – Incorporate an economic impact component to funding requests for special events to encourage event planners to quantify the event’s economic impact.

**Strategy B** – Monitor success of annual special events and prioritize city funding and resources for events that show a positive impact on the local economy.

**Strategy C** – Continue to encourage community focused special events that support community pride and well-being.



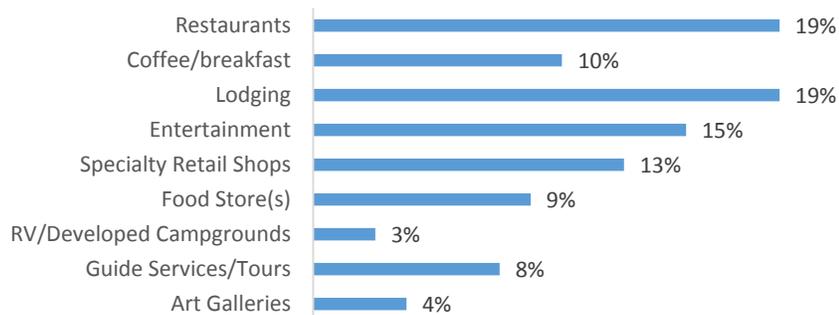
## EXPAND COMMERCIAL VISITOR SERVICES

With tourism driving the economy quality visitor services are a must. Most visitors come to Central City for a specific purpose such as a special event, attending an opera, or visiting the casinos, but no matter the purpose of their visit, quality commercial visitor services will benefit all. Visitors are more likely to eat, shop, and sleep in Central City if the appropriate amenities exist.

Lodging options in Central City include two casinos (Century and Reserve), a few bed & breakfasts and the KOA Campground & RV Park. There are no standalone hotels or motels in the city. When asked what visitor services are most needed in Central City, Economic Growth Summit attendees selected lodging and restaurants as the top two services. Not everyone wants to stay at a small bed & breakfast or a casino hotel. More variety in lodging will promote more overnight visitation, encourage families to visit, and provide day visitors the option to extend their stay. When there is an alternative to driving home, visitors are more inclined to attend events later in the day and in the evenings.

Dining options also topped the list of most needed services. Just like lodging, people want variety in their dining options. The city would benefit from a mix of full service sit-down, counter service, and specialty restaurants. The existing land use code allows restaurants as a conditional use in the downtown area. Making restaurants in the downtown a use by right would simplify the process and encourage entrepreneurs to open restaurants. The development of other visitor commercial including retail, galleries, entertainment, and tour services would further enhance the experience for all visitor types, increase the length of stay and generate more revenues for local businesses.

Figure x. What commercial visitor services are most needed?  
(Top 3) - Growth Summit



### **Goal ED.7 – Expand visitor services needed to establish Central City as an overnight tourism destination**

#### **Strategy A – Encourage the development of lodging**

- Hotel and parking garage at the T-lot.



- Overnight cottage lodging
- Renovation of the Teller House into an historic hotel

**Strategy B** – Expand food service options.

- Amend the zoning code to allow restaurants, coffee shops and other walk-in food service businesses downtown as a use by right.
- Consider allowing pop-up restaurants in vacant buildings downtown.

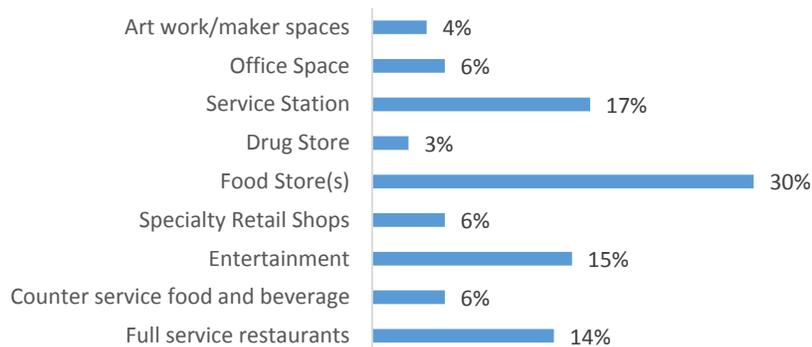
**Strategy C** – Encourage retail and entertainment commercial, and tour guide services to locate in vacant buildings. (Also see Occupy Historic Buildings below)

## DEVELOP COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL AND SERVICES

While many of the commercial businesses mentioned in the above section cater to both locals and visitors, (restaurants, entertainment venues and retail stores), Central City residents require additional commercial businesses and services different than those serving tourists and visitors. Basic amenities and services for locals include a grocery store, a gas station, pharmacy and an auto mechanic as well as professional services such as accountants, lawyers, realtors, and insurance agents.

The city website lists 32 businesses in Central City. The city has six casinos, four food & drink businesses (not including the opera or casinos), eight specialty retail stores, and six health and wellness businesses. There are only two professional businesses listed on the city website both dealing with real-estate and property management. When asked what commercial services are most needed in Central City during the Growth Summit, 30% of respondents identified food store(s) as the most desired, followed by a service station (17%) and entertainment businesses (15%). Office spaces for professionals will also be important moving forward, as Central City grows so will the number of professionals needing a place to work.

Figure x. What resident commercial services are most needed? (Top 3) - Growth Summit



**Goal ED.8 – Expand commercial and professional services catering to local residents.**

**Strategy A** – Encourage development and expansion of commercial services for locals including:

- Food stores
- Service station
- Pharmacy
- Art studios/maker spaces
- Professional office spaces
- Specialty retail shops
- Entertainment
- Restaurants and food services

## OCCUPY HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The historic buildings in Central City have so much character and potential, but many of them lay vacant. The city must take a more active approach to support occupying currently vacant buildings than it has in the past. Reducing the number of buildings lying vacant is important not just for the economy, but also for the continued preservation of the buildings. When a building lays vacant, it often lacks the care and maintenance necessary to ensure its future.

The goals and strategies in the sections above identify areas for business development and expansion. A deliberate effort to get vacant building occupied by connecting property owners with prospective buyers and tenants goes hand-in-hand with business development. This will require communication between the city, building owners, and entrepreneurs. Locals showed considerable support for a city led program to facilitate the occupation of privately owned buildings, with 93% of Economic Growth Summit respondents supporting a city sponsored program.

Figure x. Would you support a city sponsored program to get privately owned buildings occupied? - Growth Summit



The city will need to create a business and property inventory that can inform potential business owners and entrepreneurs of the existing opportunities in Central City. The inventory would include information about commercial land, property type, total square footage, existing infrastructure, physical condition, an inventory of existing businesses and a market assessment that identifies opportunities for new businesses. The city should



communicate with the owners of vacant or underutilized buildings to identify owner interest in working with the city to occupy their buildings.



EXAMPLES OF VACANT DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS

The city already took the first step when it developed the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan in 2014. The plan explores strategies to revitalize the downtown and encourage reuse of historic buildings. Potential uses identified in the plan include pop-up shops, performance spaces and a marketplace. The city can relay these ideas, which received public support during the Revitalization Planning process, to building owners at the same time the city conducts the business inventory. Pop-up shops are an excellent opportunity for building owners to receive revenues while a business “tests” a business idea in Central City.

**Goal ED.9 – Get more historic buildings occupied with businesses, residents and visitors.**

**Strategy A** – Create a building inventory and assessment that includes data on square footage, information on the major systems, ownership, structure and general physical condition.

**Strategy B** – Conduct a market study to identify opportunities for new businesses in Central City.

**Strategy C** – Identify target markets that would occupy buildings or work to find tenants or buyers (real estate brokers, businesses, entrepreneurs, economic development partners).

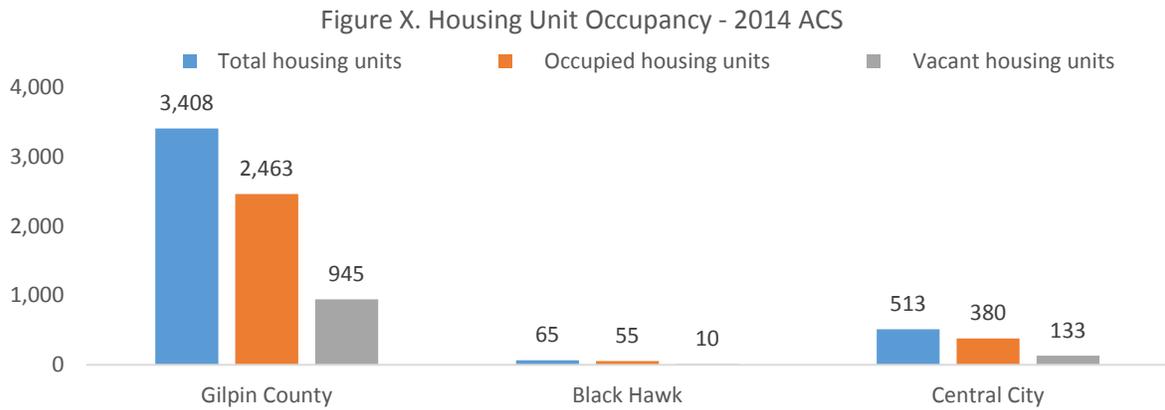
**Strategy D** – Develop messaging for target markets and establish logos and taglines.

**Strategy E** – Create and compile digital and print marketing materials

**Strategy F** – Develop and implement an outreach plan

**Strategy G** – Encourage temporary occupancy of vacant historic buildings to “test” business ideas incrementally and to build interest and activity downtown (retail, food service, arts and performance space).

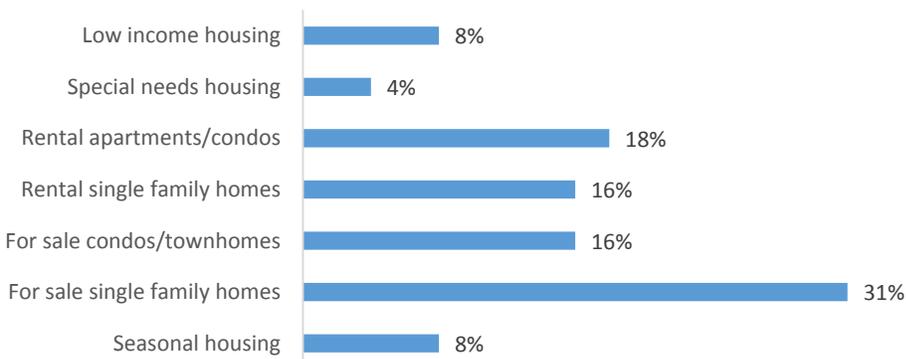




## HOUSING DIVERSITY

Housing and economic development are interconnected. Prospective businesses will evaluate the housing market when considering a new location. Also, viable housing options will attract new residents who will build critical mass and may bring their own businesses with them or start new businesses. Establishing a diversity of housing types that are appropriate for the economic circumstances will help the community make economic progress.

Figure x. What kind of housing is most needed/in demand?  
(Top 2) - Growth Summit

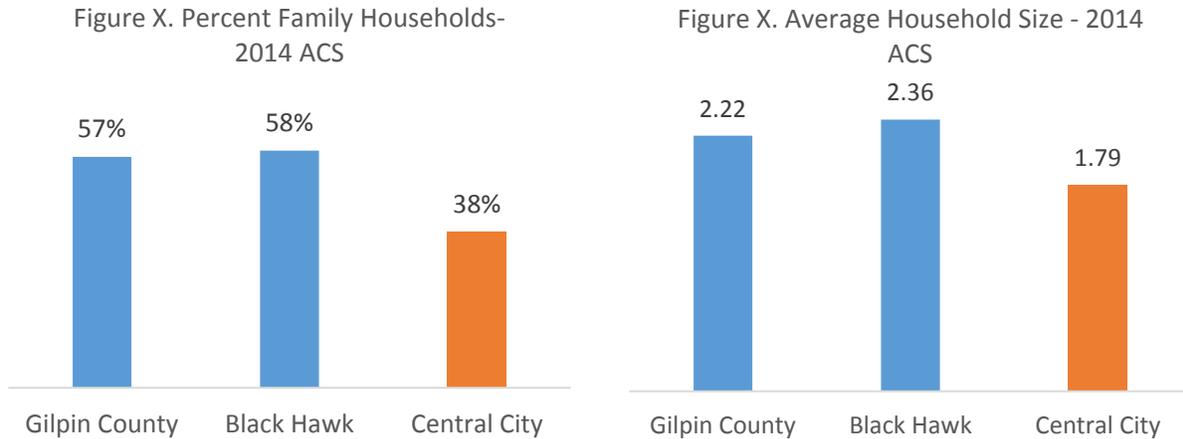


In 2014 there were 513 housing units in Central City, 380 occupied housing units and 133 vacant housing units. The census counts second homes, unoccupied homes and any house not listed as a primary residence as vacant. Black Hawk only has 65 housing units in the city and a population of 130 people, but provides 3,920 jobs, meaning Central City already provides housing for employees working in Black Hawk.

Thirty eight percent (38%) of households in Central City are family households, and 62% are non-family households, this is a lower rate of family households than Black Hawk (58%) and Gilpin County (57%). This low rate of family households translates to a lower average



household size, 1.79 people per household in Central City compared to 2.36 in Black Hawk, and 2.22 in Gilpin County. Both of these indicate a higher number of single person households.



In order to attract new residents, the city needs to offer a range of housing types to fit a variety of needs. This includes low, moderate and high income housing; public service employee housing; seasonal worker housing and vacation and retiree housing. Future housing development can occur as infill in various pockets in the city, but the greatest potential for new housing is along the Central City Parkway. Growth along the Central City Parkway will require extension of core infrastructure.

Average housing costs in Central City are much lower than those in the Denver Metro Area. As people get priced out of Denver, or seek a small town lifestyle Central City could capture some of this market by providing affordable housing within reasonable distance to Denver, and marketing the city as a calm, friendly, and affordable alternative to the nearby urban areas on the Front Range.

**Goal ED.10 – Create more housing options to build the critical mass.**

**Strategy A** – Research the housing needs by segment including households that would commute to jobs in the Denver Metro Area to live a small town lifestyle or to find more affordable housing than what is available in the city. Find out what mix and what price points will work for the market.

**Strategy B** – Utilize Central City Parkway as a growth area for housing development.

**Strategy C** – Work with employers in the city to facilitate the development of year-round and seasonal workforce housing.

## BRANDING, MARKETING, AND PROMOTION

While the gaming industry is a major part of Central City’s identity, it is time to rebrand the city with a more accurate image of what the city is, and wants to be. The Central City



brand should reflect the city’s heritage, arts, and outdoor recreation assets along with the gaming industry. The new brand will be used to market the city to tourists and new businesses.

Many of the strategies in this plan element revolve around the ability to promote and market Central City. To accomplish this task in an efficient and cost effective way, the city needs to develop a strategic marketing plan that identifies target markets and guides the development of effective marketing. The marketing plan will include two different targets, potential visitors and prospective residents/businesses.

## TOURISM MARKETING

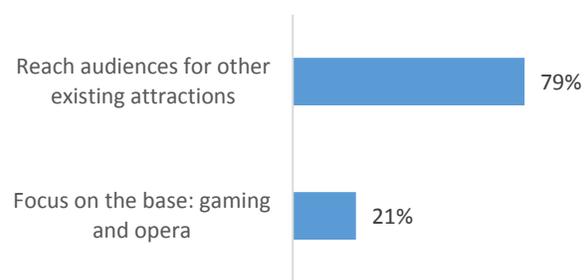
Tourism marketing is an opportunity for the city to engage key tourism partners including the Central City Opera, the various casinos, local businesses, the City of Black Hawk, and other regional organizations, businesses, and governments. Identifying tourism partners and coordinating marketing efforts will eliminate duplicate efforts, optimize results, and decrease costs.

Central City has a wealth of attractions in and around the city that appeal to visitors including gold mines, the historic landmark district, historic tours and cemetery crawls, the Central City Opera, casinos, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The city will need to market these assets to two distinct audiences, day visitors and overnight visitors. The city has the opportunity to capture more of the existing visitor market and expand its target market to include a broader spectrum of visitors. With the city expanding the outdoor recreation, creative industries, heritage tourism, and special event tourism niches, marketing materials should and target these audiences.

Figure x. Who should initiate/pay for tourism marketing? - Growth Summit

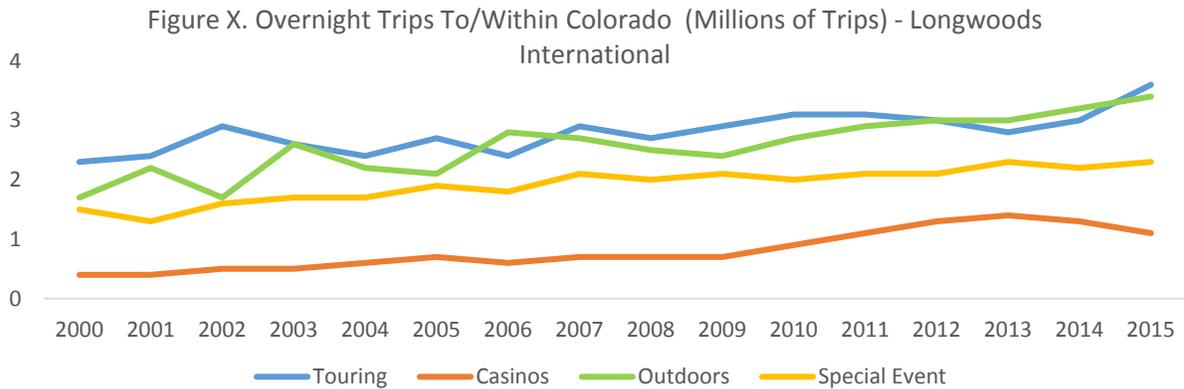


Figure x. Complete the sentence: Tourism marketing should... - Growth Summit



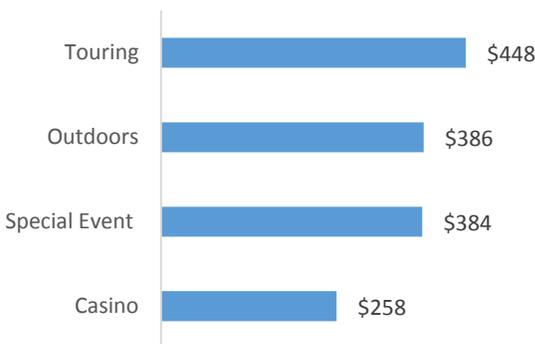
The total number of overnight trips in Colorado has increased annually in recent years. The number of overnight touring, special event and outdoor trips to/within Colorado have all increased in the last two years. The number of overnight casino trips to/within Colorado grew from 2000 through 2013 but saw a decline in the last two years.



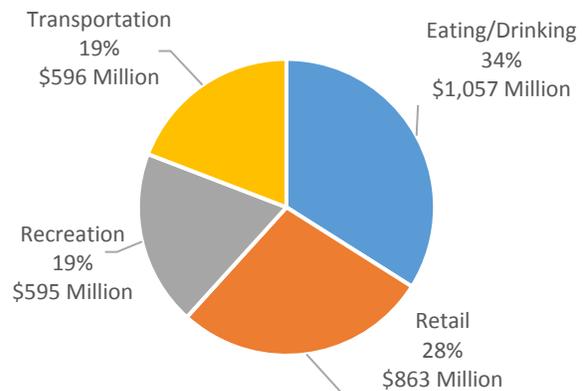


Touring, casino, special event and outdoor overnight trips spent \$5.9 billion in 2015. In 2015, average expenditures were \$448 per person on touring trips, \$386 per person on outdoor trips, \$384 per person on special event trips, and \$258 per person on casino trips. Central City is an easy trip from the Front Range, making it the perfect getaway for people looking to escape the hustle and bustle of the city for a couple of days. Marketing materials for overnight visitors should answer: What can you do in Central City if you have a couple of days?

Figure X. Overnight Trip Per Person Expenditures in 2015 - Longwoods International



Total Colorado Day Trip Spending by Sector in 2015 - Longwoods International



Central City has a long established market for day visitors from the Denver Metro Area and should continue to build off this existing market. In 2015, there were 41.7 million day trips to/within Colorado. With per person trip expenditures of \$75, day visitors spent an estimated \$3.1 billion in 2015, up 15% from 2014. The number of day trips to/within Colorado has increased each year since 2008. Central City has a strong market for day trips. Central is less than an hour from the Front Range, making it an easy drive for a day trip with a large market. Nearly half (48%) of day trips in Colorado originate in Denver according to Longwoods International.



In 2015, day visitors spent \$3.1 billion on day trips in Colorado. Of that \$3.1 billion day visitors spent 34% on food and drinks, 28% on retail, 19% on recreation, and 19% on transportation. Day visitors spend an average of \$75 per person in Colorado, higher than the national average of \$68 per person. Marketing materials should highlight the ability to do multiple activities in a day: go on a tour, do a little shopping, try your luck at the casino and enjoy a show a performance and the Central City Opera.

**Goal ED.11 – Create and regularly update a strategic tourism marketing plan.**

**Strategy A** – Develop a strategic tourism marketing plan and implement it through web and print materials and coordinated outreach by taking the following steps:

- Conduct a visitor market study that characterizes existing and potential visitor markets.
- Identify target markets.
- Develop a brand and message that speak to each target market.
- Create and compile marketing materials, including web and print advertising materials.
- Develop an outreach plan and implement it.

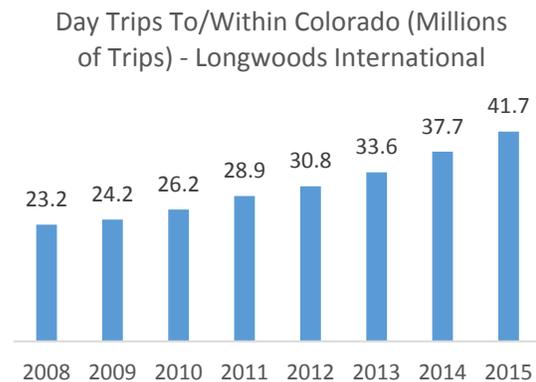
**Strategy B** – Work with tourism marketing partners to organize materials and talking points for casino and restaurant staff to inform visitors about downtown, historic sites, outdoor recreation opportunities, and cultural attractions and events offered in Central City.

**Strategy C** – Encourage and facilitate special events that attract both locals and visitors.

**Goal ED.12 – Participate in regional efforts to promote outdoor recreational opportunities in the valley to visitors.**

**Strategy A** – Engage in USFS forest plan revisions and travel management plans and maintain open communications with federal and state land management agencies.

**Strategy B** – Encourage and participate in regional efforts to market recreational assets in the region and establish a regional brand and identity.



## RESIDENT AND BUSINESS/INDUSTRY MARKETING

Resident and business marketing will help reinvigorate the city and create a critical mass. Messaging and promotional materials should highlight the city’s vision for the future and the qualities that make Central City an ideal place to live and work. This includes quality



of life, affordable cost of living, small community, proximity to Denver, and a business friendly local government.

The number of location-neutral businesses continues to grow thanks to advances in communications technology and growth in specialized business services sectors and thinking industries. Location-neutral businesses have the ability to choose where to locate without being restricted by the location of their customers. They produce intellectual products that can be delivered electronically or distribute locally produced goods through sophisticated global shipping networks in place today. Likewise, telecommuters can work for companies remotely and commute long distance for occasional onsite work. More and more professions allow a person to choose where to live based on quality of life instead of their job.

The city should consider developing a website and print collateral dedicated to prospective residents and businesses. This website would provide prospective residents and businesses with useful information about the city and links to resources. Marketing materials should include firsthand accounts from locals about what they love about living in Central City and why they live here.

**Goal ED.13 – Promote community assets to prospective residents, employees and businesses and create a positive image of Central City.**

**Strategy A** – Create a tagline, messaging, logos, website and print materials to articulate Alamosa’s brand, to solidify its identity and attract the interest of prospective businesses, employees, residents and students. The messaging needs to emphasize the Central City’s strengths:

- Small-town lifestyle, helpful and caring community
- Heritage and visible, valued history
- Close proximity to federal lands
- Mountain scenery
- Business friendly
- Volunteer opportunities
- Arts, entertainment and events
- Short distance to Denver International Airport
- Location just off Interstate 70
- Diverse housing options
- Internet and cell phone coverage

**Strategy B** – Develop a strategic marketing plan to communicate community assets to prospective residents, employees, and businesses and follow it through to implementation:

- Identify target markets (prospective residents, employees and businesses)
- Develop a brand and message that speak to the target markets.
- Create and compile marketing materials, including web and print advertising collateral.



- Develop a promotion and outreach plan and implement it.

## MARKETING FUNDING

While developing a marketing plan and promotional materials is expensive, the city has access to funding sources that can help offset the cost. The Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) offers funding grants through its Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI). Central City became a Main Street Community in 2015, which means the city is eligible for funding through REDI grants. The REDI program is designed to diversify the local economies of rural counties and communities in Colorado. The program offers two types of funding: local government economic planning grants (up to \$100,000) and infrastructure grants (up to \$500,000) that support economic diversification. A marketing plan meets the requirements for the local government economic planning grant.

**Goal ED.14 – Utilize available funding sources to offset the cost of developing a Strategic Marketing Plan.**

**Strategy A** – Apply for a REDI grant for marketing planning.

**Strategy B** – Identify and apply for state and federal grants for economic planning, and marketing and promotion.

## LAND USE CODE AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

As part of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the city is also updating the land use code and design guidelines. The city has updated the land use code on an as needed basis and has not conducted a thorough review or update in years. As it stands today the code is complex and restrictive with time consuming approval processes. The only two permitted uses in downtown Central City are casinos and pawn shops. A complete code review and update will create a simple, user-friendly code that encourages occupancy of vacant historic buildings, investment, and economic diversification.

The city created the Central City Design Guidelines in 1993 to protect the historical, architectural, and geographic significance of the Central City National Register Landmark District. Much has changed since the creation of these guidelines and they need an update to reflect current goals and modern techniques. The update should ensure historic preservation can occur in a cost effective and efficient manner without restricting economic progress. A potential business needs to know what to expect up front. The process needs to be clear, timely and predictable. The land use code and design guideline updates will accomplish these goals.

**Goal ED.15 – Facilitate business development by revising the land development code processes and standards to make the code clear, predictable, fair, consistent, timely and cost-effective.**



**Strategy A – Understand the Context - Writing good code requires not only a technical understanding of the physical form, planning objectives, and legal context of the community, but also an understanding of how the community functions—politically, economically, and ecologically.**

**Strategy B – Develop and Use a Shared Vocabulary - Although land use regulations require a certain degree of technical and legal language in order to be effective, they must also be accessible, well-organized, internally consistent, and written in the shared vocabulary of the community.**

**Strategy C – Use the Power of the Market to Create Value - Regulations should strive to use the power of the market to deliver community benefits. A robust and diverse practice of public, private, and civic representation in planning, real estate, public finance, public-private partnerships, and governmental affairs is a substantial advantage when it comes to creating balanced regulations.**

