



STRATEGIC PLAN

September 2019

Greeley Creative District Strategic Plan

Prepared and adopted by:

The Greeley Creative District, Inc.,
a Colorado 501 (c) 3 corporation
and

State of Colorado Certified Creative District



September 24, 2019

*(an update to its original Strategic Plan,
adopted in September 2013)*

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Executive Summary

“Creativity is contagious, pass it on” urged Albert Einstein. What a fitting summary and call to action of the Greeley Creative District.

Calling upon the community to embrace and foster its native creativity came into sharp focus when the City of Greeley established the District in January 2012. With a long history of cultural appreciation and community engagement, Greeley exudes a heritage of creativity, arts, ideas, dialogue, and innovation. Physical features cherished, honored, or protected as well as community events and festivals are all reflections of cultural significance unique to this community.

The Greeley Creative District adopted its original Master Plan in September 2013. That Plan articulated the cultural elements of the community that are concentrated within its boundary and which offer ample testimony to the special relationship the community embraces with its creative element. The Plan provided an Historic Perspective Section that offered evidence of Greeley’s cultural values from its inception; the Creative District Section outlined the contemporary focus and geographic orientation; the discussion of Creatives described the inventory of community assets and level of engagement; and the final sections of the report offered priorities, action items, and a view to the future. This Plan incorporates those discussions with an updated perspective, based upon its six years of operation and focus as an established Creative District.

As with any useful Strategic Plan, this document offers a roadmap to a desired future but also offers tools and intentions that will be a work in progress as the District evolves, influences, and responds to markets, partnerships, and new opportunities.

*Think left and think right
And think low and think high
Oh, the thinks you can think up
If only you try*

... Dr.Suess

Introduction & Overview

The Greeley Creative District (GCD) is a dynamic place at the heart of the community that offers incredible diversity and depth of arts, culture, and creative enterprise year round. Within this richness, two particular elements distinguish the GCD among its peers. First, is the depth, breadth, and quality of local performing arts displayed through the performances of the nationally-known University of Northern Colorado's music and theater programs, as well the myriad of local performance organizations and eclectic weekly events. Add to this numerous national tours and top acts, and Greeley's homegrown festivals in blues, jazz, and country that attract premier artists and patrons from across the country. These activities make the GCD dynamic, create cross-marking platforms, and entice repeat visitors.

Second the GCD is an incubator for Creatives. Greeley celebrates the arts for their inherent value; at the same time the work of Creatives is appreciated as a powerful economic engine. Greeley's key elements that incubate and support Creatives include its 1% for Arts program, UNC's fully accredited College of Performing Arts, distinctive market area, affordability of housing and workshop space, retail outlets, creative industries, and performance venues. The GCD works actively to expand the range of support services – such as business and technical assistance – that can turn creative visions into viable livelihoods. Engagement with the community is a vital part of the District's relevance and platform, as evidenced with several of its distinctive events and offerings such as:

AgriCultural Feast (*dining al fresco on the grounds of Greeley's living history museum, enjoying entertainment and locally produced food & drink prepared by area chefs*)

Do Tell! Storytelling (*local stories of inspiration told on stage*)

Cacophony of Creatives (*networking sessions for creatives*)

Doc Talks (*lecture series on exceptional topics presented by local "docs" from Banner Health and the University of Northern Colorado*)

Día de los Muertos (*authentic honoring of a beloved Meso-American celebration of the "Day of the Dead"*)

Youth Arts Month (*kicked off as a first Friday event, lasting all month, dedicated to the display and performance of K-College artwork, as juried and presented by art educators displayed in over 20 District venues*)

Sponsorship of other creative start-up events

You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.

... Maya Angelou

Historic Perspective

Since its inception, culture was important to Greeley homesteaders. An 1870 issue of the *Greeley Tribune* urged colonists to “collect natural specimens, artifacts and documents for posterity.” By 1900, a group of civic-minded women formed an association to gather and preserve history and materials relative to the community’s culture and its pioneers. Clubs were organized for intellectual development, a library was built, the symphony orchestra was formed, artists resided in the community during the season, an opera house was built, and the summer Chautauqua was held, a tradition that continues today and represents one of the state’s greatest attendance venues.

In the late 1880s, citizens of Greeley petitioned the Colorado government to create a school for the education of teachers in their community. In April 1889, Governor Cooper signed a Senate Bill establishing the Colorado State Normal School. Greeley’s citizens raised the necessary money for the first building and classes began in October of the next year. The first course catalog reflected a belief in the importance of the arts in educating the young and included classes in music and art, followed soon after with classes in theatre. Since then the institution that is now known as the University of Northern Colorado has been through many changes, but remains a valuable and important asset to the quality of life in Greeley.

The Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra, formed in 1911, debuted in 1911 under the direction of Colorado State Teacher’s College professor J.C. Kendal and included many student musicians. The GPO exists as the oldest continually performing orchestra in the Rocky Mountain region. During this period of growth, Greeley became known as the “Athens of the West” in response to its many cultural and intellectual activities, its expanding college, and many beautifully designed buildings. By 1922, over 50 social clubs offered activities year round. That same year, Greeley’s first radio concert was aired on KFKA radio, one of Colorado’s early radio stations, which still broadcasts from the Greeley Creative District, in Downtown.

While early settlers in Greeley were predominately Anglo-Saxons, as the community’s reliance on agriculture grew, its labor force became much more diverse. Scandinavians came to the area as laborers in the late 1800s, followed by Germans from Russia, and laborers from Mexico migrated in 1910. Today, Greeley’s cultural diversity has expanded with international university student and faculty representation and with an expanding refugee population generally emigrating from East African countries.

By 1958, Greeley became the first city in the United States to create a Department of Culture to coordinate activities of the museum, library, and recreational and educational programs for its residents. In 1988, the Union Colony Civic Center opened, offering two performance halls and a gallery. Nearly one-half of its \$9.2 million cost was raised through private donations and is testament to the community’s support for the arts, which continues today with the creation of the Greeley Creative District.

Creative District

Organizational Genesis and Structure

Special districts are often used by cities to highlight an area within the community where a particular activity or interest is organized. The arts have been used worldwide or organize such an area of community focus. Creative Districts tend to draw visitors and are dynamic and interesting areas that local residents patronize as places to shop, gather, be entertained, and to live. In addition to the social aspects and benefits of having an arts-themed area, such districts also carry a significant economic impact.

A collaboration of the City of Greeley, the Downtown Development Authority, the University of Northern Colorado, and the local arts community formulated a proposal for a local Creative District. The Greeley Creative District was established by the Greeley City Council in January 2012 as an area with a concentration of businesses, facilities, patrons, events, entertainment, and special activities related to the creative industry (see maps, Attachments A-1 and A-2).

By January 2013, the Greeley Creative District was established as a private, non-profit organization with a board comprised of 15 members representing a range of creative interests within the District (see board membership, Attachment B). The three principal entities which support the District - the City of Greeley, Downtown Development Authority, and University of Northern Colorado - provide staff liaisons, which serve as the officers of the Greeley Creative District board, and also provide in kind administrative support.

In 2014, the Greeley Creative District moved from a provisional State-recognized creative district to its fully certified status. Since then, the GCD board has also grown to 17 members.

Mission/Vision Statement

The Greeley Creative District exists to highlight the community's distinctive creative identity and increase its economic vitality by uplifting, encouraging, incubating, promoting, and developing the arts and creative businesses in the Greeley community.

District Orientation

The Creative District is the umbrella boundary that encompasses the University District and Downtown Development District. Both districts are distinctive in purpose but with complementary elements that anchor together with an overlapping area which now marks the geographic center of the Creative District. Creative industries are interwoven throughout the District and offer a community which embodies a Live-Learn-Work-Play

environment. The maps which follow offer an overview of the geographic and functional illustration of the characteristics of this Creative District.

State Designation

The point of a creative district is to foster greater attention and support of the many individuals, patrons, and businesses that are part of a community's creative industry in order to generate economic growth and development in this business sector. In addition to the patronage and economic benefit successful districts will generate within their cities, the State of Colorado seeks to further distinguish Colorado as uniquely situated to attract individuals and businesses that seek out and want to thrive in a political, social, and business climate that is best suited to innovation, entertainment, and discovery.

The Greeley Creative District was submitted for state designation as part of specific legislation (HB 11-1031). The Greeley Creative District was selected from among 44 cities from 25 counties that applied for designation and was accepted and designated initially as an "Emerging District". In 2014, the State of Colorado formally awarded the Greeley Creative District full certification as part of the State family of districts. As such, the GCD has access to professional development, training and support, communication, conferences, and networking with other creative districts across the state, which has proven invaluable to support of the GCD mission. The Greeley Creative District is described on the Colorado Creative Industries web site as follows:

Renaissance best describes the climate encompassed by the Greeley Creative District, which blends the historic Downtown Development and University Districts in a continuum of dynamic and complementary uses. This area represents the city's highest concentration of micro-businesses, performance venues, cultural outlets, galleries, museums, entertainment, and mixed residential development. Historic architecture blends with contemporary additions, while wall murals surprise visitors throughout the area which is rich with public art. Three primary partners form the leadership and foundation of this initiative: City of Greeley, University of Northern Colorado and the Downtown Development Authority. Involvement in the area's vitality, however, is represented by an extensive and varied complement of volunteers and representatives from creative industries and businesses, artists, entertainers, and civic organizations. Signature community events exist in the heart of the Creative District such as the annual Arts Picnic, Das Greeley Oktoberfest, the Blues Jam, Farmers' Market, UNC Gala, Independence Stampede Parade, UNC Jazz Festival, Greeley Lights the Nights, and Greeley Philharmonic Series. Cultural outlets in the Creative District are extensive and include several theatres and performance stages, three museums, and numerous art galleries. Civic facilities include a 1,700+ seat auditorium, ice skating arena, public library, recreation and senior centers, and three parks.

It's not where you take things from – it's where you take them to

Creatives

Inventory/Assessment

A baseline inventory was developed to help capture an accounting of the individuals, organizations and businesses located within the Greeley Creative District as well as property and building vacancies, current property and sales tax, event participants, youth involvement and other similar demographics. The progress of the District in its ability to grow this economic sector through a variety of local benchmarks is reported on a periodic basis and is a valuable tool to manage the District's limited resources and direct efforts to areas of greatest interest, need, and potential.

Much of this information was gathered and presented as part of the initial Greeley Creative District establishment and maintaining this information will be a perpetual work in progress and the District's occupants change over time. The Greeley Creative District has organized its creative assets into the following seven broad categories:

Major Arts Organizations/Venues/Events

- Festivals & Annual Events
- Organizations with On-going Performances
- Youth Programs

These activities will be tracked and measured by attendance, sales/expenses, employment FTE, profit/non-profit, yrs in business & youth under 18 yrs benefiting

General Inventory Listings

- Dance Studios
- Music/Theater/Film Venues
- Art Galleries/Art Displays/Studios
- Culture/Heritage/Tourism
- Creative Business/Industries
- Restaurants/Bars

Creatives in this inventory will be identified in GCD listings and aggregate growth calculated by sales and property tax generated for the District and other germane measurement tools (e.g. number of historic structures designated)

The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones
... John Maynard Keynes

Community Engagement

Outreach

Several actions facilitate and continue initial outreach sessions to foster ideas and robust communication within the GCD:

- **Cacophony of Creatives:** this special networking event is held three times each year at rotating coffee shops/informal meeting venues in the District. The purpose is two-fold: to offer a designated time and place to share information about events, activities, and opportunities within the Creative District and to host a topic of relevance and support for Creatives. Recent topics have included Marketing for Creatives, UNC Free Help Desk Resource for Creatives, Intellectual Property Rights and Related Legal Issues, and Where's the Money? Attendance at the events ranges about 30-50 individuals each time.
- **Youth Arts Month:** March is the month to celebrate the work of art educators and youth. For the last several years, the GCD has provided a mini-grant to a coalition of Greeley art educators to help put on an annual community Arts Walk to display the work of their students in a very public, accessible and appreciated way. The school district provides materials to have each student's work matted for display, the GCD and Downtown Development Authority solicit host locations to display the work and host performances on a First Friday Art Walk, educators hang their students work, and GCD promotes the event broadly. Hundreds of children and their families descend upon the District host locations to view the artwork and performances.
- **Doc Talks:** with a Top-50 nationally acclaimed hospital (Banner Health) and the University of Northern Colorado located in the Greeley Creative District, Greeley has a rich resource of local experts in their fields to tap for special presentations. Now in its second year, these Doc Talks involve a lecture series presented by local experts on a topic of particular interest, topics that would not normally be accessible to community members on such a personal level. The talks take place in informal settings in the District with a small fee to offset the honorarium of the speakers .
- **Do Tell!** stories are such an important part of experiencing our shared world. This event brings together six local community members who have a special story to share. The stories present topics of inspiration, humor, adventure, insight, or struggle – all individual and unique to the storyteller. These are not professional speakers and they are not paid. The GCD solicits the speakers, provides coaching, secures the venue (a small stage/theater that hosts ~ 200+ patrons, promotes and

sells tickets to the event, and hosts a dessert reception at the end of the evening's event. This popular event is underwritten by several sponsors and regularly fills the house (*is one of 2 key GCD fundraisers*)

- **AgriCulture Feast:** part of Greeley's rich and continued heritage includes its agricultural economy and lifestyle. To both celebrate this cultural aspect of the community and acknowledge the "food chain" economics and the journey from farm to fork of our food, the GCD hosts a special dinner at the end of summer. Dining al fresco on the grounds of Greeley's living history museum, guests are treated to an incredible menu of locally sourced foods prepared by creative chefs who have donated their time to the event. A local brew houses, winery, distillery, and coffee bean company supply drinks; entertainment comes from a small local bluegrass/folk band. A silent auction and informal tour of the beautiful museum property and buildings round out the evening. Underwritten by local sponsors and ticket sales, this event regularly attracts up to 300 guests (*is one of 2 key GCD fundraisers*).
- **Día de los Muertos:** Greeley is a community that includes a substantial LatinX population, so it is natural to consider ways to honor the rich culture that is embedded in traditional celebrations. "Day of the Dead" events are often confused with Halloween, but are profoundly different and deserving of special recognition. The GCD has promoted events associated with Dia de los Muertos that celebrate the authentic traditions and activities that accompany this beloved holiday, which includes a gallery display, educational programming with the Library District and community engagement activities sponsored at the City's Rodarte Cultural Center. This year, we are sending one of our board members to accompany the Denver Botanic Gardens who will celebrate the holiday in Oaxaca, Mexico and 'face-time' his experience back to our District. Our goal is to explore the possibility of a shared exhibit of Día-inspired artworks and a possible sister-City relationship.

Marketing Communications Plan

- **Marketing Communications Plan:** using an informal survey tool and other inputs a plan was developed with the following components:
 - Identification of target audiences: Local, Regional & State levels
 - Evaluation of marketing mix: Key messages have been developed for application in key platforms:
 - *In Person Contact:* maximizing sense of place
 - *On Line:* maximizing opportunities for participation
 - *Traditional Media:* maximize buzz and reach to traditional audiences
 - *Traditional Mail:* maximize reach to traditional audiences
 - *Images and Video:* maximize sense of place and diversity of creative community
- **Action Steps:**
 - Brand: established with logo development; explore ways to expand its visibility
 - Website launched: (www.greeleycreativedistrict.org)

- Social Media accounts: Facebook and twitter accounts established
 - QR Code created: embedded in all communication platforms
 - Timetables: established short-term and long-term consistent messaging objectives
 - Establish content priorities: personalize and highlight the top GCD stories
 - Identify Goals & Tasks: identify specific action steps to achieve short-term objectives
 - Assign personnel to specific tasks: match in kind resources and talents with key personnel
 - Set performance check points: measure progress and regularly review key marketing performance benchmarks to assure relevance and priority
- **Manage Content and Contact**
 - Sustain message that is fresh & relevant
 - Maintain a diverse approach
 - Ensure that all messaging is consistent
- **Identify on-going Challenges**
 - Funding limitations
 - Maintaining supportive follow-up requires on-going and consistent attention
 - Overcoming art community 'silos' and working with established networks
 - Maintaining accuracy of site, artist info, calendar, directory
- **Marketing Plan Metrics**
 - Follow up survey tools to measure GCD awareness and comprehension among target audiences
 - Followers on website, social media
 - Expansion of co-marketing support for GCD and its creative offerings
 - Increased economic growth and Creatives patronage from baseline measurements

Goals, Priorities & Challenges

Goals & Priorities

Using input from stakeholders, District Creatives, and board members, a listing of key themes and issues were catalogued. From there a GCD Pyramid was formed to illustrate the overall purpose and function of the District (Attachment C). The board maintains an “Idea Parking Lot” from the original community engagement process, updated regularly from on-going networking session and retreats. In order of general priority, foundational goals are as follows:

- I. Solidify Organizational Capacity and Support
- II. Marketing Communications Plan & Build Patronage
- III. Foster the District as a Destination
- IV. Provide Support for Creative Pursuits
- V. Explore Options to Increase New/Additional Creative Offerings
- VI. Increase Access to/through the District
- VII. Foster Partnerships and Expand Youth Opportunities
- VIII. Inclusion of Creatives in Community Events & Celebrations
- IX. Promote Diversity in Board membership and Community Events

“You can’t wait for inspiration, you have to go after it with a club”

... Jack London

Challenges

In addition to priority action steps associated with the goals, the board also formulated “Challenge Themes” to help maintain its focus and be alert to patterns and remain nimble in changing course to stay fresh and relevant to the District’s purpose. Those challenges include the following:

- A. **How to Stand Out** (not get lost in the fold and resist the “not another” arts organization perception)
- B. **Size of District** (covering the territory; not feel diluted in effort to connect all areas)
- C. **Sustaining the Initiative** (money, motivation, commitment, vision and effort)
- D. **Surviving & Thriving Economically** (patron support, median income limits)
- E. **Overcoming Community Image** (recognition as a Legitimate Arts Community)
- F. **Strategic Marketing** (effectively reaching, navigating, attracting & sustaining interest)
- G. **Invisibility of Familiarity** (push past perceptions of the ‘same old’ events, activities, creations)
- H. **Competitive environment** (lots of areas compete vs cooperate for the arts/entertainment/consumer)
- I. **District as Destination** (west Greeley ease of travel west, DT safety perceptions, commuter community)
- J. **Consumer Arts/Events Fatigue** (too much to do, competition for audience/support)
- K. **Making Art Relevant** (broad appeal, necessity not luxury, quality of life, good for business, accessible)
- L. **Making Art Profitable** (recognizing and supporting art as value-added work)
- M. **Growing Patrons and Creatives** (womb to tomb support growth, succession, support – lifelong)
- N. **Calendar** (keeping track, reliability and maintenance of postings)

Action Plan & Strategies

A Strategic Plan is only as good as its successful implementation. Each year, the GCD Board hold an annual retreat at which it reviews its vision, mission, accomplishments, and master plan. A consensus-driven Annual Action Plan, supported by adoption of an annual budget, follows that Board Review. A copy of the 2019 Work Program is attached as Attachment D)

Creativity is intelligence having fun
Albert Einstein

It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see
Henry David Thoreau

Metrics, Performance Measurements & Program Accomplishments

Measurement of the District's progress in growing its Creative Industry will be catalogued with benchmark events and activities which will track the following:

- Audience/participation counts
- Sales
- Expenses
- Employee growth in FTE
- Profit/non-profit status
- Duration of event (number of years)

In addition to specific activity measurement, the District will also be evaluated annually in the following categories:

- Overall sales and use tax generated
- Property tax
- Westaf Creative Vitality Index
- Visit Greeley Tourism Impact Information
- Certain Census Tract Data
- ESRI data available for the defined area

Quarterly reports are prepared to record the District's accomplishments; these reports are also submitted to the State, along with an annual report. The annual report will provide a reflection of data metrics used to measure the economic growth of the District's creative industries on an on-going basis.

If at first, the ideas is not absurd, then there is no hope for it

... *Albert Einstein*

Attachments

Attachment A: Greeley Creative District Vicinity Map

Attachment B: Greeley Creative District Board Membership

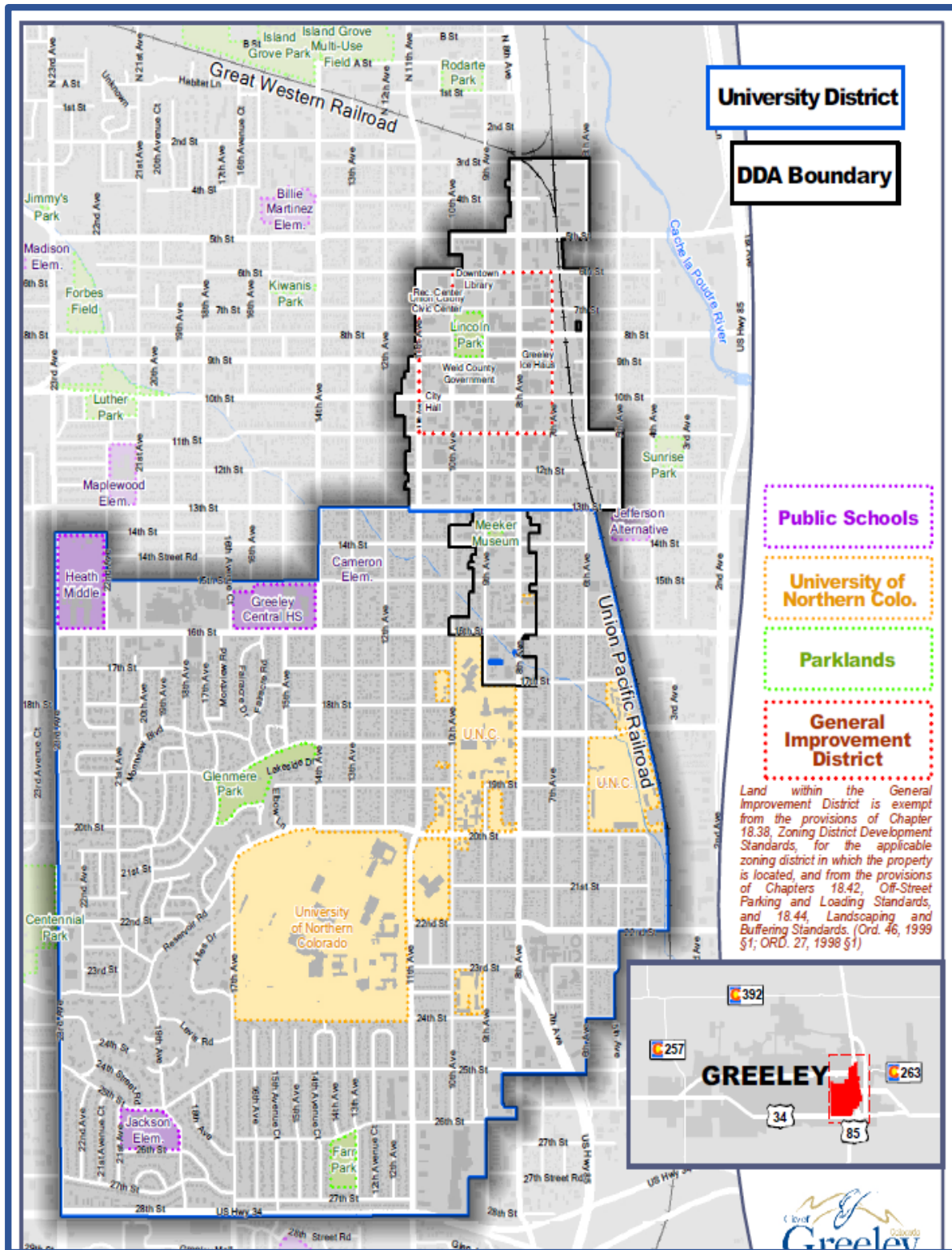
Attachment C: Greeley Creative District Priorities

Attachment D: Annual Work Program



The Greeley Creative District is a composite of the Downtown Development and University District boundaries. Within that area, the DDA boundary matches the GCD primary service area and its state-certified area.

The balance of the area is the GCD secondary service boundary.



Greeley Creative District Board & Representation

(September 2019)

www.greeleycreativedistrict.org

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Officers	Becky Safarik President	City of Greeley (Assistant City Manager), University District
	Jason Evenson Vice-President	City of Greeley (Culture Director)
	Alison Hamling Secretary	Downtown Development Authority, Promotion, Performance artist
	Andy Nagel Treasurer	Creative Industry, Media arts (videographer)
Board Members:	Allison Dunning	Creative Industry (Balloon Art)
	Lynn Cornelius	UNC Arts Administrator, Fiber Artist
	Nick Kenny	Music administration
	Michelle Kempema	Museum, tourism, heritage
	Micaela Sanchez	Mental Health
	Armando Silva	Creative Industry, Visual & performance artist
	Abby Yeagle	Library, Fundraiser, fiber artist
	VACANCIES	6 replacement members pending (annual term limitation/routine replacements)

Ex-officio Member:

Amy Dugan, Visit Greeley