Plan for Development of Wayside Interpretive Media: Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway

submitted to the Chaffee County Heritage Area Advisory Board on March 1, 2011 by Exhibit Design Associates (www.exhibitdesignassociates.com)
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Introduction

This document is the work product of Exhibit Design Associates (EDA), a Colorado corporation, working on behalf of the Chaffee County Heritage Area Advisory Board (CCHAAB; http://www.garna.org/heritage/index.htm) and the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway (“the Byway;” http://www.collegiatepeaksbyway.org/).

In the interest of brevity, this plan does not reproduce background material from previous planning documents, reports and other materials that readers of this plan may want to reference. These include:

- **Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2008).** Available for download at http://parks.state.co.us/Trails/LWCF/SCORPplan/Pages/SCORPplan.aspx.
- **Chaffee County Visitor Bureau Visitation Survey (2006).** Contact EDA for an electronic copy.
- Various statistical studies on Colorado tourism used in the preparation of this plan are available for download at http://www.colorado.com/IndustryPartners/Research.aspx.

Readers wanting more information are encouraged to contact the office of Exhibit Design Associates (www.exhibitdesignassociates.com).

Purpose & Need

This plan provides a framework for the development and installation of wayside interpretive media on the Byway, and within the Byway communities of Buena Vista, Poncha Springs and Salida.

Objectives

This plan:

- Presents an analysis of the current and future audience for interpretive media
- Suggests new approaches and modifications to existing message development based on audience attributes.
- Provides a prioritized list of sites for installation of interpretive media.
- Offers alternative designs for wayside and urban infrastructure.
- Suggests the thematic framework and subthemes/storylines appropriate to each site.
- Provide cost estimates for implementation of interpretive media.

Planning Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made in this planning process:

- Reaching out to the local audience, and increasing their understanding and appreciation of the county’s cultural heritage, is an important objective that should be given roughly the same priority as reaching out to visitors.
- The thematic focus of the interpretive media will tend toward cultural rather than natural history, but cultural history is inextricably linked to natural resource utilization, and opportunities to interpret natural history, where place-appropriate, will be taken.
Methodology
The first draft of this plan was prepared following three days of field work on the Byway. The project team conducted safety, viewshed and feasibility analyses on possible sites for interpretive development. Concept designs for gateways, kiosks and waysides were developed. The first draft of the plan was reviewed by CCHAAB in September 2010, and the changes requested by the Board were incorporated.

The project team met with the Board on December 8, 2010, to review the second draft plan. Additional fieldwork was conducted on December 8th and 9th. A report was submitted to the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on December 13, 2010, to get input from highway engineers on the feasibility of proposed wayside sites.

The third draft of the plan was presented for public input and comment at open houses held in Buena Vista and Salida on January 25-26, 2011. The open houses were informal affairs: the sites under consideration and the various design alternatives were on display in small venues (the Salida Café and the Buena Vista Public Library). Attendees took part in both group and individual discussions, and were offered the opportunity to comment on the designs using a brief survey form.

The final plan was prepared following the public open houses. It incorporates edits requested by the Board, summarizes public input and provides information regarding site feasibility from CDOT engineers.
Interpretive Themes
The universe of interpretive themes that will guide the development of wayside media was developed during the process of writing the management plan for the Byway. Six thematic areas were identified. This plan makes no attempt to alter the thematic foundation that has been established. Rather, an existing theme(s) has been suggested for each new gateway, kiosk or wayside.

The themes that will guide media development are:

Finding Our Roots
The human character of Chaffee County is built upon the ingrained and varied traditions and ethnic roots of its pioneering and long-residing families. These stories explore the ethnic diversity, and the ways in which families and residents have contributed (and continue to contribute) to the sense of place that makes the county unique.

Pushing Cattle
From the 1860s onward, opportunities for productive high altitude agriculture brought many settlers to the Arkansas Valley, where dry land farming, irrigated hay meadows, grazing and other practices continue today as important livelihoods. Agriculture and its land patterns in the valley provide a distinct landscape character, particularly along the Byway, where broad open fields contrast with the steep backdrops of the mountain peaks to the west. Stories of ranching, farming and the industries they supported, including truck farming and mining, will be explored.

Recreation and Adventure
The magnificent and largely publicly-held lands in the county have long drawn adventurers and outdoor recreationists to fish, hunt, raft, climb, photograph and explore its environs. And from very early on, the clean high mountain air, an untamed river and world-class scenery have offered a respite from “city life.” How such large expanses of land came to be protected and the stories of how they have been managed, as well as the history of the Heritage Area’s recreation and the diverse and popular activities still pursued, will be explored.

Making a High-Altitude Living: Mining, Transportation and Industry
The discovery of gold and silver in Colorado and the Homestead Act in 1863 brought settlers, miners and entrepreneurs to the Arkansas Valley. But it was the advent of the stage routes and eventually the railroads in the late 19th Century that truly facilitated development of a thriving economy in the Arkansas Valley. These stories will explore the evolution of transportation as well as the mining industry and other industries that contributed, and continue to contribute, to the character of the county — railroad, hard rock mining, processing minerals, timbering, recreation, construction and the prison.

Exploring the Valley: The Earliest Days
Before European settlers moved to Chaffee County, the lands were inhabited by Native Americans, and later by transient explorers and adventurers. These stories will explore the earliest history of the county, from aboriginal inhabitants until the first permanent settlers.

Tapping the Water: The Lifeline of the West
Water is the lifeblood to the West, and Chaffee County is no exception. The role of water in the development of the Arkansas Valley, and the intriguing history of water bought and sold to support the development of distant communities, will be explored.
Audience Analysis

This section provides a summary of available data on the audience for outdoor interpretive media in Chaffee County, and strategic recommendations for the approach to message development based on audience attributes. The sources consulted to compile this summary include:

- Chaffee County Visitor’s Bureau Visitation Survey (2006)
- 2008 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- Colorado State Parks Marketing Assessment (2008)
- Salida Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan (2008)
- Longwood’s International Colorado Travel Year 2006 Final Report
- 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation in Colorado
- A Strategic Plan for Heritage Tourism Enhancement (Colorado Tourism Office, 2006)

Statewide Trends in Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

Tourism is Colorado’s second-largest industry (behind manufacturing; agriculture is third). Colorado tourism is intimately tied to the state’s image as an outstanding destination for nature-based recreation, and 94% of its citizens engage in some sort of outdoor activity. Support for land and water conservation, and preservation of open space, runs deep in the Centennial State:

“Coloradans place tremendous value on their open spaces, farms and ranches. These undeveloped lands are the places where wildlife lives, vegetation flourishes, water and air are clean, and vistas are beautiful. Open space is essential to the state’s quality of life. It is, in fact, one of the principal reasons Coloradans decide to make this place their home.”

-former Republican Governor, Bill Owens

Outdoor Recreation in Colorado

Colorado attracts nearly 30 million out-of-state visitors annually. Visitors whose primary purpose is outdoor recreation make a major contribution to the state’s economy, bolstered by the day and weekend/overnight trips taken by Colorado residents to engage in active outdoor pursuits. Estimates of the annual value of economic activity generated by active (e.g. human-powered) outdoor recreation (including bicycling, camping, fishing, hunting, paddling, snow sports, wildlife viewing, trail-running, hiking and climbing) range between $10 and $15 billion dollars. It is a huge market, as indicated by the participation numbers for selected activities shown in Table 1 on the following page.
### Table 1: Participation in Active (Non-motorized) Outdoor Recreation Activities in Colorado (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife Viewing</td>
<td>2,040,000</td>
<td>1,190,000</td>
<td>1,819,000</td>
<td>1,683,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling</td>
<td>1,670,000</td>
<td>1,212,400</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>1,441,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>1,642,000</td>
<td>962,690</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>1,302,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>1,109,000</td>
<td>541,520</td>
<td>660,000</td>
<td>770,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow Sports (downhill skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing)</td>
<td>720,000 (downhill skiing only)</td>
<td>743,263</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>630,000 (sledding only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>526,000</td>
<td>156,287</td>
<td>259,000</td>
<td>313,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddling sports (rafting, kayaking, canoeing)</td>
<td>259,000</td>
<td>392,451</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>325,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Colorado Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2008  *National Survey on Recreation and the Environment  **Outdoor Industry Foundation

There is an obvious incongruity in these data, with the differences in participation rates from different sources exceeding 100% in some instances. Differences in methodology almost certainly made major contributions to the statistical divergence, but it is beyond the scope of this plan to compare and contrast the survey designs. For our purposes, the mean estimate can probably be considered a reasonably accurate indicator of total participation. It is also likely that a comparison of participation rates between activities yields an accurate picture of their relative popularity.

The basic conclusion that needs to be drawn from these data is simply that the market is big. Increasing penetration of the state’s wildlife-viewing market segment by 1%, for instance, represents more than 20,000 people.

There is no directly-comparable data available regarding several sports that are significant in Chaffee County. These include lift-served snow sports (skiing and snowboarding, considered separately from all snow sports), climbing Fourteeners, whitewater rafting, OHV-riding and mountain-biking. These sports are briefly discussed below.

**Skiing**

Alpine (downhill) skiing and snowboarding make a vital contribution to Colorado’s economy. The state is the #1 ski destination in the country, with about 20% of the total market, or 1 in 5 skiers in the nation. Despite nationwide downturns in participation rates in skiing and snowboarding, Colorado’s ski areas resorts logged over 12 million skier-days in 2009-10, a modest increase from 2008-09. This increase followed steep declines in user-days from 2006-07 to 2007-08. Any increase in skier numbers, considered in the context of a struggling economy and a poor snow year, might be taken to indicate a fairly healthy statewide ski industry. About 20% of Colorado residents ski and about 9% snowboard.
Two out of every three skiers at Chaffee County’s local ski area, Monarch Mountain, hail from the metropolitan markets of Colorado Springs and Pueblo. The resort posted record numbers in 2009-10, logging more than 183,000 skier-days, up from the previous record of 176,000 (set in 2007-08). This is an easily-targeted market segment.

Climbing Fourteeners
Solid data on participation rates in bagging Fourteeners do not exist, but estimates based on research conducted by Colorado State University suggest that somewhere around half a million people ascend a Fourteener in the state every year. This represents a tripling in numbers since the early 1990s. About 2 in 3 peakbaggers report that the sole reason for their trip away from home is to climb a peak. An estimated one-third of climbers are from out-of-state.

Twelve Fourteeners are found in Chaffee County, more than any other county in Colorado. Fifteen more Fourteeners are located in neighboring counties.

Whitewater Rafting
After experiencing phenomenal growth in the 1990s, Colorado’s whitewater rafting industry was hard-hit in the early years of the New Millennium. Drought, wildfires and the nationwide downturn in tourism that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks took a heavy toll. Participation numbers eventually recovered to pre-2000 levels in the years from 2003-2006, peaked in 2007, then dropped about 4% from 2007 to 2008 and about 6% from 2008 to 2009. This market segment is significant, nonetheless, with more than a quarter-million persons a year taking commercial trips down the Arkansas. It, like the alpine skier market, is an easily-targeted segment.

OHV-Riding
OHV-riding is one of the fastest-growing outdoor activities in the nation. It was the third fastest-growing activity in the country from 2000 to 2007 (viewing or photographing flowers and trees was first; viewing or photographing natural scenery was second). OHV usage is increasing at a dramatic rate in Colorado: the number of licenses issued for off-road vehicles increased from 12,000 in 1991 to 131,000 in 2008, an increase of 154%. Of the approximately 254,000 registrations for motorized recreational vehicles (OHVs, boats and snowmobiles) issued by Colorado State Parks in 2007, nearly half were for OHVs. Colorado is one of the top ten states in the nation for participation in OHV-riding, with slightly more than one in four persons (26.9%) in the state participating for at least one day in 2007. This represents a market of slightly over a million people.

Mountain Biking
Mountain biking was one of only a few nature-based activities that experienced a downturn in nationwide participation rates in the period 2000-2007 (the other major sports with declining participation numbers in the period were coldwater fishing, whitewater rafting and downhill skiing). No comparable trending data are available specific to Chaffee County, but we do know that about 29% of Chaffee County visitors participated in mountain biking in Chaffee County in 2006, compared to a nationwide participation rate of 22% in 2005.

Statewide, bicycling (both mountain- and road-biking) participation rates were roughly 35% in 2005, making it the single most popular active outdoor activity for Coloradans. In Chaffee County, there is strong grassroots support for the construction of trails suitable for mountain-biking, and there has been significant trail-building activity in recent years. It seems reasonable to suggest that the nationwide downturn in mountain-biking participation rates may be due to a leveling-off in popularity after the sport experienced explosive growth in the 1990s. Both empirical and anecdotal data imply that the sport has a strong following among both locals and visitors, and there is no apparent reason to believe that mountain biking will not continue to be popular and enjoy modest growth in Chaffee County.
Factors Affecting Colorado Tourism

By 2025, Colorado’s population will have grown to an estimated 6.65 million, an increase of roughly 27% from the 2008 estimate of 4.85 million. A rapidly-growing population that will place ever-greater pressure on available resources is perhaps the most significant statewide trend in tourism and recreation, as well as being the most significant challenge facing managers of public lands. This suggests that stewardship messages, already prominent in the interpretive materials offered by Federal and State land management agencies, should continue to have a high priority.

Pressure on resources may also be exacerbated by acceleration in certain types of activities. Unregulated OHV use has been identified by the USDA Forest Service as one of four major threats to ecosystem health nationwide (the other three are wildfire, habitat fragmentation/loss of open space and invasive species). The potential for resource damage caused by uninformed (or uncaring) users has increased accordingly. Funding constraints that limit deployment of enforcement personnel have put land managers in a position where education/interpretation that fosters personal responsibility and stewardship is one of the only practical options available to address this challenge.

Several factors, including weather, natural disasters and the economic shock of 9/11, caused a pullback in Colorado tourism in the early years of the new millennium. Most indicators had recovered by the time of the current recession (tourism data from 2007 showed a solid recovery), but ongoing uncertainty in financial markets and continuing high unemployment are probably having a negative effect on overall tourism numbers.

The 2008 Colorado SCORP was largely complete by the onset of current tough economic times. It is likely that certain emphases and themes would have been different if the planners had the advantage of being able to predict the collapse of financial markets in 2007. Nonetheless, the plan offers information that can help readers understand tourism and outdoor recreation in Colorado, and, by extension, the audience for wayside interpretive media on the Byway. The issues that the SCORP assigned the highest priority for action are:

- Effects of Environmental Change (see Item #1, below)
- Population and Demographic Change (see Item #2)
- Connection between Public Health and Recreation
- Funding Shortfalls for Recreation Management (see Item #3)
- Improved Integration of Recreation Interests and Needs.

1) Regarding environmental change, it is not possible to predict the outcome of the ongoing beetle infestation in Colorado’s montane and subalpine forests. This plan can do little to solve issues of landscape-scale environmental disruption, but it is important to note that significant changes to the scenery along the Byway are likely in the near-medium term. Interpretation of natural processes such as beetle kill will probably be an appropriate Byway theme for the foreseeable future.

2) Colorado’s population is aging, and Latinos represent a continually-increasing proportion of the total. Both of these trends imply a modified approach to message development. Older persons tend to have more time on their hands, and are more receptive to in-depth interpretation and the sorts of heritage-related activities (i.e. visiting museums) that tend to increase length of stay. It is likely that this population segment will increasingly participate in more moderate physical activities such as walking, sightseeing, photography and wildlife-viewing, while participating less in more strenuous activities such as cycling and swimming.
Colorado’s Latino population is growing twice as fast as any other ethnic segment: Latinos tend to recreate in bilingual groups that are much larger than the average group size for the overall population. Whether or not to present bi-lingual text through Byway interpretive media is an important question (see the Strategic Implications section at the end of this chapter for a possible approach to this issue).

3) Funding shortfalls for recreation management have already been mentioned. Interpretive media that foster stewardship are clearly a vital tool in the effort to protect the unspoiled natural character of the county’s public lands. Volunteerism has become a vital tool in land managers’ toolkits as well.

Volunteerism
State conservation agencies (specifically Colorado State Parks and Colorado Division of Wildlife), as well as municipal governments, have come to rely on volunteers to complete many tasks related to resource conservation and enhancement of amenities such as trails. In 2007, CSP benefited from over 137,000 hours of volunteer time, while Coloradans contributed over 65,000 hours to CDOW. A survey of municipal governments conducted as part of the 2007 SCORP revealed that local governments received more than 283,000 hours of volunteer labor, and that 21% of municipalities use volunteers to provide visitor services (i.e. the staff at Collegiate Peaks Interpretive Center at Poncha Springs) and 39% use volunteers for construction/maintenance projects.

Land managers will probably need to increasingly rely on volunteers in the current climate of shrinking budgets and popular pressure to reduce the size of government at every level. Although the numbers of people doing volunteer work has been flat for several years (as measured by participation in the programs of Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado), contributing labor toward stewardship projects has become an integral part of the state’s outdoor-oriented culture. Since its inception 25 years ago, VOC has put more than 50,000 Coloradans to work on 286 trail and habitat improvement projects valued at over $15 million. In 2007 alone, some 2,100 volunteers contributed labor valued at $1 million to 24 stewardship projects.

The Colorado Brand
Colorado’s image strength is based on outdoor activities. It exceeds the U.S. norm on these dimensions:

- Mountain/wilderness activities such as climbing, biking, hiking, camping, canoeing and rafting.
- Suitable for kids/families, and safe
- Amazing scenery
- Once-in-a-lifetime adventure
- Interesting sightseeing, including towns, landmarks, etc.

In 2006 (the last year for which non-proprietary, in-depth data is available), the number of overnight visitors to Colorado increased (+4%) for the third year in a row, and the state’s share of nationwide marketable travel rose as well (2.1% to 2.35%). This gain was largely due to increases in ski trips and outdoor trips. City trips, not historically considered an important part of the Colorado marketing mix, also increased. Outdoor trips (trips taken for the primary purpose of engaging in outdoor recreation) are now the single largest segment of the state’s tourism market. Colorado is ninth in the nation for this type of travel with a 3.7% market share (the state is first in ski trips). Readers should approach interpretation of these data with caution: the ongoing recession may be having significant effects on the tourism market, and assuming that 2006 trends are continuing may lead to faulty conclusions.

One-third of Colorado visitors travel less than 500 miles and two-thirds (66%) travel more than 500 miles. This far exceeds the national average (only 37% of visitors nationwide travel more than 500 miles to reach a destination), and
might be interpreted to mean that visitors are willing to expend more time and money to visit Colorado than many other places. This is also significant in that longer trips require more planning. Colorado vacationers start planning earlier, use a greater variety of information sources and book more parts of a trip in advance than U.S. vacationers in general.

Travelers’ main purpose for Colorado pleasure trips significantly exceeds the national norm for outdoor activities and skiing, while being well below the national norm for casino gambling.

Most (66%) overnight vacationers in Colorado come from the West, with 31% originating from within Colorado. This number is particularly significant when considered in light of the fact that these data do not include day-trips originating within Colorado. There are no reliable statistics on the economic contribution of that market segment, but logic would suggest that it is considerable, perhaps even greater than that made by overnight travelers (given Coloradans’ 94% rate of participation in outdoor recreation and the wealth of opportunities available).

More overnight leisure travelers originate from Denver and Colorado Springs/Pueblo than any other urban area (Los Angeles, Albuquerque/Santa Fe, Phoenix, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston are the other key urban markets). Texas and California are the leading state markets (other than Colorado itself) for Colorado vacations, followed by the neighboring states of Arizona, Wyoming, Kansas and New Mexico.

Most Colorado visitors are very satisfied with their experience: the vast majority of 2006 tourists “agreed strongly” with the statement that Colorado is a place they would “really enjoy visiting again.” Scores given to Colorado on most of more than eighty dimensions used to evaluate satisfaction exceeded the national norm, indicating an extremely high level of satisfaction.

The greatest differences between scores given to Colorado and the national norm occur on the dimensions that would reasonably be expected:

- spectacular scenery
- great for mountain climbing, river rafting, hiking, hunting, off-road biking and other outdoor recreational activities.

Another set of dimensions on which the state outperformed national averages is a set of dimensions often used by researchers to measure factors considered important when people consider returning:

- suitability for both adults and children
- providing excitement
- a sense of relaxation and safety
- uniqueness of the scenery, customs and people
- sightseeing variety
- popularity
- quality of accommodations.

There were only a few areas in which visitors rated Colorado less than the national average:

- perceived affordability, including the cost of getting to Colorado as well as the price of food and lodging
- the feeling that the local cuisine is not very unique
- a lack of places to swim.
The leading information source used by overnight pleasure travelers in Colorado for trip-planning is personal experience, which is virtually tied with use of the internet for the most popular source. Word-of-mouth continues to be significant.

More than 75% of Coloradans participate weekly in some sort of outdoor recreational activity. This market segment is greater than the total number of out-of-state visitors to Chaffee County.

Table 2 (following page) shows the most popular outdoor activities of Colorado residents. No directly comparable data are available for climbing Fourteeners or whitewater rafting. Estimates based on the best available data have been provided.
Table 2: Outdoor Recreation Activity Participation Rates in Colorado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% of Population Participating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Walking for pleasure</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attend family gathering</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. View/photograph natural scenery</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gardening/landscaping for pleasure</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Visit nature center, etc.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Picnicking</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attend outdoor sporting events</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Driving for pleasure</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. View/photograph wildlife</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sightseeing</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Day hiking</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Coldwater fishing</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Drive off-road</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Backpacking</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Downhill skiing</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Warmwater fishing</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Snowboarding</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Climbing Fourteeners*</td>
<td>9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Commercial whitewater rafting**</td>
<td>7**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Colorado Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2008
* Based on an estimated total participation of 500,000 persons, 66% of whom are Colorado residents (data from a Colorado State University study that was reported in the SCORP).
** Based on a report from the Colorado River Outfitters Association that listed approximately 525,000 total commercial rafting-days in the state in 2010. That report does not break down users by state of origin; the proportion of Coloradans in the user population was estimated by the authors of this plan at 50%, based on the fact that high-season visitors to Chaffee County are divided roughly equally between in-state and out-of-state. There is no reliable data available on private raft trips.

Among Colorado recreation trends apparent in a recent study funded by Colorado State Parks is a tendency to vacation closer to home, a trend that is apparently driven more by lack of time than it is by rising transportation costs. It is probably not safe to assume that this is true of out-of-state visitors as well, since Colorado’s out-of-state visitor population travels much farther to get to Colorado than the national average, and transportation costs represent a higher proportion of overall travel costs.

Focus group studies revealed that more and more Coloradans intend to vacation within the state, and that Coloradans are in agreement that their home state offers a wealth of things to see and do. State parks get lots of repeat visitation, and respondents to recent surveys indicated that they would probably visit more often if the parks were free, less-
crowded and if more information about specific activities was more easily available. The top three amenities that park users said would increase their frequency of visitation were more natural/primitive areas, more trails and more restrooms/change facilities.

Other relevant information that emerged from the state parks research includes:

- The vast majority of users (82%) felt that park managers should encourage visitors to take a greater role in resource protection, and many were even willing to pay slightly higher entrance fees if the money was used for conservation. Broad support for resource protection and user stewardship is reflected in the fact that most visitors also want to see recycling facilities in parks.
- The top information sources used for trip-planning by state park users were the internet, word-of-mouth and “just driving around.” This last item seems to indicate that the Byway can play an important role in providing “during-trip” planning information at wayside kiosks. This is reinforced by a desire for more and better directional signage that was expressed by survey respondents.
- Park users enjoy and value interpretive programs, but only 16% experienced personal interpretive services, emphasizing the importance of the role of non-personal interpretive media.
- Many park users would like to see some sort of interactive dialogue available on a website so that information about park experiences could be shared with other users.

Heritage Tourism in Colorado

A heritage tourist is defined (by the National Trust for Historic Preservation) as a person traveling away from home for at least one night who is seeking to “experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.” Heritage tourists represent an enormous market.

In 2008, travel and tourism directly contributed $772 billion to the U.S. economy, according to the U.S. Travel Association. About 78% of all leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities during a trip, which translates to a market of 118.3 million people who can be classified as heritage tourists. Cultural and heritage tourists spend an average of $994/trip compared to $611/trip for all U.S. overnight travelers.

The proportion of Colorado visitors who experienced something heritage-related in 2006 was 57%, which represents a core market segment of 8.6 million travelers who defined themselves as being “interested in cultural heritage,” with an additional 4.8 million who engaged in cultural heritage activities “as encountered.” Those tourists spent $3.4 billion, about 44% of all leisure travel expenditures.

Although heritage tourism within Colorado had impressive raw numbers in 2006 (37% of total pleasure trips and 39% of all marketable trips), those data only represented a return to pre-2000 levels. About ten million trips were taken annually in the period just before the turn of the century, but there were only 7 million in 2003 (which can be considered the “bottoming-out” year).

The value of the heritage tourism market has not gone unnoticed by tourism professionals in the state. The Colorado Tourism Office has several major initiatives underway, funded to the tune of more than $1.8 million by a variety of partners that include the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program of the Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Parks, Colorado Historical Society and the Colorado Council on the Arts. The programs include development of a strategic plan, ongoing research, heritage-focused marketing and branding, an online toolkit, online database and more.
As previously noted, Colorado tourism suffered a “perfect storm” early in the new millennium due to factors that included the 9/11 terrorist attacks, bad publicity and an unprecedented combination of environmental stresses including drought, disease and wildfire. Data from 2006 suggest that Colorado tourism overall made a strong recovery in the period 2003-2006. Since heritage tourism represents such a major proportion of overall travel, the assumption can reasonably be made that heritage tourism in the state participated in that recovery up to 2006. It is probably safe to assume that the economic slowdown that began in 2007 has had a significant impact on both overall tourism and heritage tourism.

Compared to the average Colorado tourist, cultural heritage visitors in the state:

- spend more money (heritage tourists spend $392/person total and $67/person for recreation, sightseeing and attractions; the “average” tourist spends $326/person total and $56/person for recreation, sightseeing and attractions)
- stay longer (5.6 nights versus 4.7)
- are older (47 years versus 45)
- are slightly better educated, more affluent and more likely to work a white-collar job
- tend to come more often from big cities
- tend to come more often from out-of-state
- plan their trips further in advance
- are more likely to shop, eat out and go to the theaters, concerts and nightclubs
- are more likely to take part in outdoor recreation with the exception of skiing
- more likely to travel in the spring and summer months
- are more likely to use word-of-mouth information sources for trip-planning, as well as formal sources of information such as the internet, books, visitors’ bureaus, auto clubs and magazines
- are more likely to visit regions of the state other than the Denver metro area.

Although heritage visitors give Colorado high marks on many aspects of their experience, the state does not have an overall strong image as a heritage destination. Visitors ranked Colorado highly on these attributes:

- unspoiled natural scenery
- protecting the natural environment
- historic towns and interesting festivals/events (both of which are top priorities for return visits)
- scenic and historic railroads
- being noted for history
- historic areas and their preservation.

Visitors were only moderately positive about their Colorado experiences relative to these attributes:

- scenic ranches/farmland
- traditional artisans and other unique shopping opportunities
- arts/cultural communities and unique cultural sites
- museums
- the availability and quantity of live music, theatre and the arts in general
- having unique customs and traditions.
The lowest marks about heritage travelers’ Colorado experience were given for the uniqueness of the state’s cuisine.

The state’s relatively low image strength as a destination for heritage travelers is apparently not based on the reality of the visitor experience: 2006 visitors rated the state’s actual heritage tourism experience far higher than those who have never visited.

**The Chaffee County Visitor**

The vast majority of Chaffee County visitors (90%) are traveling for pleasure during the summer months. The ratio of out-of-state to in-state visitors is about equal during high season. More Coloradans than out-of-staters visit during winter, a fact that is probably attributable in large part to day/weekend trips to Monarch Ski Area.

Chaffee County visitors are loyal to the destination: most have been coming to the area for seven years. The average stay is four nights. The average travel party size is just under three people, although most parties (63%) are couples. About one in four parties are families with children 15 years old or younger. Most Chaffee County visitors (65%) are motivated by outdoor recreation opportunities, as indicated by the recreation preference shown in Figure 1 on the following page.

![Figure 1: Reasons for Visiting Chaffee County](image)

*source: Chaffee County Visitor’s Bureau Visitor Survey (2006) *Activities listed as “other” include fishing (2%), fly-fishing (1%) and whitewater rafting (1%).

Of particular importance to this planning effort are the media used by Chaffee County visitors to get trip-planning information, both pre-visit and during their trip. Table 3 (following page) shows a comparison of the sources used by Chaffee County visitors for trip-planning, and those used by all Colorado visitors:
Plan for Wayside Interpretive Media
Collegiate Peaks Scenic & Historic Byway
Audience Analysis

Table 3: Sources Used for Trip Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>% of Chaffee County Visitors Using</th>
<th>% of Colorado Visitors Using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous visit</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State Vacation Guide</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>not asked specifically; 9% reported using “visitor bureau,” 7% reported using “toll-free number,” 2% reported using “government tourism office”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal recommendation/word-of-mouth</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/Resort</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct mail/brochure/visitor’s guide</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper/magazine</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just drove through</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sources: Chaffee County Visitor Bureau Visitation Survey (2006), Longwood’s International Colorado Travel Year 2006 Final Report

Also relevant to this planning effort are the information resources used by Chaffee County visitors during their trip (see Figure 2, next page). These sources may enhance the visitor experience by bringing out the unique attributes of the county’s natural and cultural heritage. Creating awareness of the full spectrum of recreational opportunities might serve to increase length-of-stay as well.

Figure 2: Information Sources Used During Trip

source: Chaffee County Visitor’s Bureau Visitor Survey (2006)
Sixty percent of visitors do not go to a visitor center during their stay. Those that do go to a facility give high marks for friendly service, useful information, convenient locations and knowledgeable staff. The dimension on which visitors are less than completely satisfied is the convenience of hours, a datum that suggests provision of after-hours information at these locations should be prioritized.

Chaffee County visitors read outdoor-oriented publications in great numbers; the five most-read magazines are:

1. Outside
2. National Geographic Adventure
3. Field & Stream
4. Newsweek
5. Travel & Leisure.

The most frequently-read newspaper is the Denver Post, followed by USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, Colorado Springs Gazette and New York Times.

All of the county facilities rated by county visitors met or exceeded the expectations of the majority of survey respondents. The only facilities that “fall short” of the expectations of more than 10% of visitors are the county’s golf courses, Cottonwood Hot Springs and Mount Princeton Hot Springs. The most-visited sites are shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Most-Visited Sites in Chaffee County*

While most visitors are very satisfied with their Chaffee County experience, the areas that receive relatively low marks for satisfaction fall in the realm of the cultural rather than the natural: the overall cultural experience, dining, shopping
and nightlife were not well-rated by survey respondents. Visitors gave high marks to the county’s friendliness, family appeal and welcoming atmosphere.

The uniqueness of the county as a destination, the quality of its outdoor events and the overall value are mentioned most often as the attributes that are better in Chaffee County than elsewhere. On these dimensions, visitors feel that available shopping and dining opportunities are not as good in comparison to other destinations.
The Chaffee County Local
Readers should note that updated census data for Chaffee County for the period 2006-08 are not available, so any comparisons between county and state data have been made using data from the year 2000, unless otherwise noted.

The population of Chaffee County grew at a rate significantly less than did the population statewide during the period from 2000-2008 (5.6% vs. 16.8%).

The local (e.g. county-wide) population in 2008 was significantly older than that of the state (18.5% > 65 years vs. 10.3% > 65 and 16.8% < 18 vs. 24.4% < 18). America’s population in general is aging: estimated median age in 2010 is 37 years old, while projections for the year 2030 place the median age at 39. The “Boomer” population (persons born between 1946 and 1964) represent about 1 in 4 people in the nation, and this group is growing in real numbers and as a proportion of the population. Boomers are growing more active, both in the workplace and recreationally, and have a high degree of concern for maintaining good health through exercise and diet.

Chaffee County’s population is overwhelmingly white (95%), and there are no minority ethnic groups, other than Latino, that represent a significant proportion of the population. The proportion of Latinos in the county population is lower than statewide (8.6% vs. 17.1%), as is the proportion of households that speak a language other than English at home (8.7% vs. 15.1%).

Median income for Chaffee County in 2008 was significantly lower (20.7%) than the state’s median ($45,916 vs. $57,184). Chaffee County residents, as do many residents of most Colorado mountain towns, must cope with higher housing costs on lower wages: the median value of a single-family, owner-occupied home in the county ($152,800 in 2000) was lower than the state average, but far higher (by 21.7%) than the national average. Average household income in the county in 2008, though, was 18.2% lower than the national average. The average listing price of a home in Chaffee County when this plan was written was $384,386, and nearly 700 homes were listed for sale.

The local population is well-educated, with a proportion of high school graduates about 10% higher than the U.S. population, and a proportion of persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher (24.3%) about the same as the national population (24.4%).

A recent planning process conducted by the Salida Parks and Recreation Department used both focus groups and survey methodology to identify strengths and weaknesses in existing recreational infrastructure and develop priorities for future development. The recreational amenities most used by local residents (Salida only) are trails, Riverside Park and the Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center. The aquatic center got mixed reviews due to ongoing problems with maintaining a high enough water temperature. The conclusion of the scoping process was that trail development should be given the highest priority as trails are the most-used recreational asset, and a strong consensus of residents want more trails.

Salida residents also expressed a desire for more restrooms, open space/natural areas, playground equipment and public art. The last item might indicate that placement of architecturally-pleasing custom kiosks with high-quality graphics and original artwork in public spaces such as parks would be well-received by Salida locals.
**Audience Segmentation**

Any audience, anywhere, can be segmented into four groups based on whether a person is local or non-local, and whether they can be considered a “general-interest” or “special-interest” resource user. Special-interest users are those whose preferred activity requires specialized equipment, training, knowledge or skills.

This sort of segmentation is not a scientific process, rather it is based on common sense and anecdotal evidence. The purpose of segmentation is to identify, where possible, certain user groups that can be reached at a specific point in time/space. This targets messaging more efficiently, for instance by placing information intended for hunters at locations where licenses are purchased, information for rafters at launch points, information for anglers at fly-fishing shops and so forth.

The segmentation in Table 4 is offered as a tool to develop and target interpretive media at specific user groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Segmentation of Audience for Wayside Interpretive Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local, General-Interest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Locals taking friends/family on tours of area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of Salida Hot Springs Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of city parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of trails within city limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of natural area trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local, Special-Interest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cyclists (users of road bikes on paved trails or roads)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mountain bikers (off-road)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rafters, kayakers using private watercraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anglers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hunters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OHV users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alpine skiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peakbaggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Backpackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Day hikers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-local, General-Interest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motorists on CPSHB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heritage tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of Salida Hot Springs Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of city parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of trails within city limits system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Users of natural area trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-local, Special-Interest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cyclists (users of road bikes on paved trails or roads)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mountain bikers (off-road)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rafters, kayakers using private watercraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rafters on commercial trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anglers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hunters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OHV users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peakbaggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Backpackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Day hikers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Front-country campers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Implications
The following guidelines for development/refinement of Byway interpretive media are suggested by the data presented in the previous section.

The Audience is Probably Smarter Than We Think
The desire to prioritize the focus of interpretive media in such a manner as to reach out to locals as well as visitors may be best served by somewhat more in-depth interpretation than might be considered typical (messaging targeted at general-interest users of public lands is usually written at a sixth-grade reading level). Chaffee County’s educated, affluent, older population will probably be receptive to messaging that is somewhat more complex and takes more time to absorb than a “typical” audience of general-interest motorists. Implementation of this strategy might involve providing relatively more in-depth messaging at locations (Riverside Park in Salida, for instance) likely to have a higher proportion of local users than a wayside on U.S. 24. Simply put: don’t dumb it down, and make users aware of additional opportunities to learn more about local heritage by increasing awareness of opportunities such as museums. Where practical and affordable, use techniques such as flip-books, touchscreens or internet connections to deliver in-depth content without creating visual clutter.

Consider Targeting Special-Interest User Groups Where It’s Easy
Several of the special-interest user groups are easily targeted: skiers can be reached, for instance, at Monarch Mountain. Rafters can be reached at put-ins and take-outs. These two groups are essentially the low-hanging fruit of the audience segments: participants in an activity that requires they pass through a certain location or set of locations. Other special-interest groups, such as OHV-riders and anglers, could be targeted at trailheads, but reaching them is more of a situation that might be compared to hunting with a shotgun rather than rifle (since there are so many trailheads in comparison to, for instance, the number of downhill ski areas and major river access points).

This plan responds to this strategy by suggesting wayside media at Fisherman’s Bridge/Ruby Mountain, and by recommending that discussions be held with management at Monarch Mountain to see if they would be amenable to the placement of Byway media at the ski area.

Bilingual May Yield Positive Results in Some Locations
There is no obvious reason in the demographics of the visitor population to suggest that providing English/Spanish text in content targeted at visitors is essential. Locally, only about one in ten county residents speaks Spanish as a first language. But significant benefits in the form of goodwill may accrue if messaging targeted at locals (for instance, kiosks located in town parks) is presented in Spanish as well as English. There is some additional expense involved with doing so, but making the effort may strengthen the sense of community within the Latino segment of the population.

Stewardship, Stewardship, Stewardship
Colorado residents overwhelming agree that users of public lands should be active participants in resource protection. Pressure on recreational resources in Chaffee County is almost certain to increase, so educating the public on low-impact recreation, while fostering a sense of individual stewardship, should be one of the objectives of wayside interpretive media.

Encouraging natural resource stewardship is not a primary objective of CCHAAB. Stewardship messaging, though, does not need to stop with staying on trails and packing out trash. In a larger sense, encouraging stewardship of heritage goes hand-in-hand with encouraging stewardship of natural resources.
The essence of this strategy is to deliver messaging in such a way that both visitors and locals come away with a deeper understanding and appreciation of everything that Chaffee County represents: not just the exceptional natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities that are probably the first thing that come to most people’s minds, but also the rich and colorful history that shaped contemporary local society.

**Help Trail Users Get the Information They Need**

Walking and hiking are the most popular forms of recreation in the nation. The most-used local amenities, by far, are trails. Byway media should provide as much information on both motorized and non-motorized trails as is feasible. Exhaustive orientation information cannot be practically delivered at waysides, but Byway media can include maps that show trailheads and direct interested persons to the places (AHRA Headquarters, for instance, or a Forest Service website) where they can get information and maps. The Byway website might also provide URLs of sites where trail information is available.

Managers of public lands in the county might appreciate the chance to be involved in the development of informational content regarding trails: messaging at Byway kiosks could be used to deflect pressure from overused, crowded areas to less-crowded ones. Waysides should not function not as trail encyclopedias, rather as road maps that show where trail information can be found.

**Outdoor Recreationists May Not Be Aware of Cultural Opportunities in Chaffee County**

Chaffee County visitors are motivated primarily by a desire to participate in active outdoor recreation. Making them appreciate the history and culture of the region will require, in many cases, asking them to make a quantum shift in the way they perceive the county, and in the way they might choose to spend their time. Messaging at recreation sites (Fisherman’s Bridge/Ruby Mountain, for instance) that increases awareness of cultural opportunities such as local museums may serve to increase length of stay and/or enhance the quality of the visitor experience. The assumption should be made that audience segments such as rafters and skiers are eager to find alternative activities, things to do at the end of an active day, things that the less-athletic or elderly persons in their party will enjoy. Messages that increase awareness of opportunities that involve appreciation of local art and culture should be given prominent play at recreation sites.

**Provide After-Hours Information at Visitor Centers**

The first draft of this plan did not advocate placing a kiosk at either the Chamber of Commerce visitor center in Buena Vista or the facility in Salida. There may be better locations, as both of these visitor facilities have some issues with visibility and ease of access. These issues, especially the location of a kiosk in downtown Buena Vista, still need discussion. The fact that about 60% of Chaffee County visitors did not use a visitor center should not marginalize the importance of these facilities: 40% of visitors did use one.

The only dimension on which users of Chaffee County’s existing visitor centers did not express a high degree of satisfaction with visitor centers was their hours of operation. This should probably be taken to mean that a high priority should attach to the placement of basic orientation information at all three facilities in a location where it is accessible 24/7, even if that information is not presented in a large, expensive kiosk. It is relatively inexpensive to mount graphic panels on the wall of an existing building, for instance, or to provide free wireless internet at a site so that after-hours visitors can connect to websites where they can get the information they need.
It needs to be acknowledged that no media, no matter how well-conceived and executed, can communicate as effectively as a human being. There is no substitute for personal services such as those provided by the friendly volunteers at the Collegiate Peaks Interpretive Center at Poncha Springs.

**Push the Internet Presence**
The existing Byway website is tastefully done, and the links provided offer visitors excellent trip-planning resources. This plan suggests two additions to the website that might be undertaken as part of the implementation of this plan. First: post all the graphic panels developed as part of this project (and previous ones) on the Byway site, so visitors can browse them in the comfort of their home. This can be accomplished with a minimal investment, and will add very little time to site maintenance duties. Second: consider a blog. Blogs are a great way to involve visitors both pre- and post-trip. Nearly half of all county visitors use the internet for planning, and giving them the opportunity to dialogue with both locals and other visitors seems a logical extension of the Byway’s web presence. It is probably the most cost-effective way to engage visitors in dialogue, but the downside is that blogs require daily maintenance. Whether or not a cadre of volunteers might take this on, or whether paid staff in one of the chambers of commerce could add blogging to their list of duties is a question that should be discussed. Unless daily updates are posted, and users can reasonably expect some sort of response to their posts, a blog is not an effective tool.

Facebook and Twitter accounts should also be considered, with the same caveat as blogging: daily maintenance is necessary.
Site Analyses

This plan suggests three different levels of wayside media development:

- **Gateway**
  - Gateways are developments at points where visitors will first experience Chaffee County and become aware that they are on, or about to enter, the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway. Each gateway will be clearly identified as a Colorado scenic byway by prominent display of the columbine logo. Prominent display of the Byway and CCHAA logos is also recommended.

  Preliminary drafts of this plan recommended that both gateways (intended for roadside installation) and kiosks (intended for installation in urban areas with pedestrian traffic) be of consistent design. While consistency in all Byway structures is desirable for obvious reasons, input from the public open houses suggested that a different direction might be appropriate. Open house attendees agreed that designs appropriate in an urban context might not be appropriate in a rural roadside setting, and vice-versa. The consensus that emerged was that staying rigidly consistent with design motifs from rural to urban settings might not be desirable. More robust Byway branding by prominent display of the columbine and Byway logos was suggested to ensure that viewers will quickly and easily identify a given structure as being a Byway structure. But there did not seem to be strong support for the notion that all structures, whatever the setting, must be of the same design. Attendees agreed that all gateways should look the same, and that all urban kiosks should look the same.

- **Kiosk**
  - Kiosks will be deployed at points where both locals and visitors are likely to spend time in a pedestrian mode, such as a city park. The kiosk structures will be somewhat more elaborate than gateways, with the potential to provide in-depth interpretation. They might include amenities such as roofs and/or benches.

- **Wayside**
  - During development of this plan, no compelling reason emerged to abandon the design that is currently deployed at several wayside sites (Zebulon Pike site is shown at right). This plan recommends that the three-panel array currently in use at Byway waysides be used for future wayside installations as well. Consideration might be given to including a more prominent sign that identifies the wayside as part of the Byway. An example of such a sign is included later in this document. The benefit of clearly identifying a Byway site must be weighed against the intrusion of such signs on the viewshed.
Immediately following this section are summary tables that show recommended sites for development of each type of structure at a glance. Analyses of each site follow the summary tables.

The following sites are under consideration for gateway development:

- South Granite Pullout
- Collegiate Peaks Overlook
- Salida East Pullout
- Poncha Pass Summit
- Monarch Pass.

The following sites are under consideration for kiosk development:

- McPhelemy Park in Buena Vista
- Riverside Park in Salida
- Collegiate Peaks Interpretive Center at Poncha Springs.

The following sites are under consideration for wayside development:

- Buena Vista River Park
- Buena Vista Heritage Museum
- Chalk Cliffs Viewpoint
- Ruby Mountain/Fisherman’s Bridge
- Nathrop
- Smelter Viewpoint
- Salida Hot Springs Pool/Chamber of Commerce/Museum
- Monarch Mountain region (ski area, Monarch Pass, Madonna Mine).

Existing Byway waysides (three-panel arrays) are located at:

- Leadville Stage Coach Road
- Christmas/Zebulon Pike
- Smeltertown.
Locations of Proposed Interpretive Developments

KIOSKS
A. McPherson Park, Buena Vista
B. Riverside Park, Salida
C. Collegiate Peaks Interpretive Center, Poncha Springs

WAYSIDE PANELS
1. Buena Vista River Park
2. Buena Vista Heritage Museum
3. Nathrop
4. Chalk Cliffs Viewpoint
5. Ruby Mountain/Fisherman’s Bridge
6. Smelter Viewpoint
7. Salida Hot Springs Pool/Chamber of Commerce/Museum
8. Monarch Pass region

GATEWAYS
1. South Granite
2. Collegiate Peaks
3. Salida East
4. Poncha Pass Summit
5. Monarch Pass
### Sites Proposed for Gateway Development

The size of the proposed gateway structures allows for one side (probably the side facing approaching traffic) to be used for identification visible from the highway (CCHAA logo, columbine logo), with most of the remainder of the space on that side being used for a detailed orientation map. The reverse side of the two-sided structures will have plenty of room for interpretation of specific themes. As currently designed, each side of the structures will have approximately 25 square feet of space available for graphic presentations (total of 50 square feet). To provide a reference point, each three-panel array currently deployed on the Byway has about 24 square feet of graphic space available. Each gateway will have adequate space for identification and orientation, and an amount of space equal to that of a wayside for theme-specific interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Existing Interpretive &amp; Informational Media</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Recommended Thematic Emphasis</th>
<th>Implementation Priority</th>
<th>Notes/Comments</th>
<th>Current Status &amp; Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Granite</td>
<td>None at site; there is a three-panel kiosk in a pullout on the opposite side of the highway dedicated to information from the BLM, Forest Service and Saguache County. Content is primarily information and orientation: a large map includes photos of recreation opportunities. Safety and appropriate low-impact recreational behavior are primary messages.</td>
<td>Nice view upriver; builds anticipation for arrival in Salida</td>
<td>High visibility, high traffic location</td>
<td>The Byway-installed panels at Leadville Stagecoach Road Historic Wayside are in excellent condition; the CDOW panels at the State Wildlife Management Areas are in fair to poor condition.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>CDOT reports that the site is suitable for a gateway installation &quot;as is.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salida East</td>
<td>None at site; there is a single panel interpreting the explorations of Zubulon Pike at a pullout a few miles downstream.</td>
<td>Plenty of room in existing pullout for motorists to safely get off the road and view media; no construction required</td>
<td>No major obstacles to development of an interpretive structure are apparent.</td>
<td>Medium (this rating has been downgraded from &quot;high&quot; because the proposed site was found unacceptable for development by CDOT)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>CDOT has indicated that the site will need expansion to meet safety standards; at a minimum, several truckloads of gravel and the equipment necessary to grade and compact the material will be required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poncha Pass Summit</td>
<td>There is a three-panel kiosk in a pullout on the opposite side of the highway dedicated to information from the BLM, Forest Service and Saguache County. Content is primarily information and orientation: a large map includes photos of recreation opportunities. Safety and appropriate low-impact recreational behavior are primary messages.</td>
<td>High visibility, high traffic location; Existing pullout is spacious with no apparent need for modifications.</td>
<td>Not actually on the Byway</td>
<td>The existing interpretive and informational media focus on Saguache County; there is little potential for overlap except in topic areas of safety and appropriate behavior.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>CDOT does not find the site on the north side of the summit of the pass to be acceptable. Any development must occur on the southbound side. Consultation with BLM and the Forest Service should be undertaken as a first step in the consideration of any development, as those agencies reportedly plan to install restrooms in the existing pullout.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiate Peaks</td>
<td>There is a three-panel array, installed by AHRA, in a large shelter that offers exceptional views of the valley. The emphasis is general: panel titles are &quot;Arkansas River, Sawatch Range and Collegiate Peaks&quot; and &quot;People of the Arkansas Valley.&quot;</td>
<td>Great view of the valley (that includes transportation corridors [rail, highway, river], agriculture, recreation, new interpretative materials might be placed in existing structure.</td>
<td>Unlimited views from an existing structure, interpretive development will probably require new infrastructure (shelter and/or trail) that may disrupt the spatial relationship of existing structures.</td>
<td>The existing interpretive and informational media focus on Saguache County; there is little potential for overlap except in topic areas of safety and appropriate behavior.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Consider the proposed alternatives and request CDOT consultation on the suitability of the existing pullout (see photos on p. 30) for gateway construction if that alternative seems preferable to the Board.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarch Pass</td>
<td>TrailHead information (Forest Service); two routes enclosed text-only panels about the tram.</td>
<td>Easy way to target specific audience segment (skiers/analog)</td>
<td>Not on the Byway</td>
<td>There are several possible locations for wayside media development on the north side of Monarch Pass in addition to the summit; a lower site would catch skier traffic to Monarch from Salida</td>
<td>tbd</td>
<td>Develop site data (lighting, dimensions of pullout) in Spring 2011 and provide to CDOT for consideration if the Board decides to pursue gateway development at one of the existing pullouts.</td>
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South Granite Gateway
There are a number of pullouts along U.S. 24 on the northernmost section of the Byway. Two of these are state wildlife areas that already have interpretation in place. Leadville Stagecoach Road Historic Wayside (r.) is a Byway site with a three-panel array in place. The existing interpretive panels are focused on a transportation theme.
This plan recommends against placing any more Byway identification or interpretive media at or near the actual beginning of the Byway at the intersection of U.S. 285 and Colorado 82 (the turnoff to Twin Lakes). That site already has a great deal of sign clutter, and it is marred by a number of rundown buildings that would detract from southbound motorists’ first impression.

Salida East Gateway
This site appears to be the optimal location for a Byway gateway coming from the east via U.S. 50. It is the closest site to town (and the point where the Byway “officially” begins) that seems to be practical, although it is somewhat small and will need expansion to meet safety standards.
The Salida East River Access is just upstream from a Colorado State Parks camping area. It has good mountain views. There is an historic stockyard at the former townsit of Cleora just upriver. The site lies across U.S. 50 from the mouth of Bighorn Sheep Canyon.
The State Parks area just west of the pullout has bathrooms, river access and several primitive camping areas with fire grates. Construction of a trail to link the pullout with the amenities at the park site has been considered and rejected. AHRA management has indicated that they intend to make the site a fee area so that providing access from a pullout on the roadside would not be permitted.
Plan for Wayside Interpretive Media
Collegiate Peaks Scenic & Historic Byway
Site Analyses

Poncha Pass Summit Gateway

While Poncha Pass is not technically on the Byway, it is the entry portal for a significant proportion of Byway travelers. There are several existing pullouts that might be suitable for a wayside development, including one at the summit of the pass on the southbound side, and three on the northbound descent into Salida. There is also a city-maintained site (r.) just south of Poncha Springs. It has a somewhat confusing (and not particularly welcoming) entry, with several gravel tracks criss-crossing a weedy area next to the road. But the site itself, which is hidden from the road, has picnic benches, plentiful shade and easy access to the creek.

Recommendation
Consult with BLM and Forest Service regarding their plans to install restrooms on the southbound side of the summit. Consider installing a gateway in the existing pullout; if deemed unfeasible or undesirable, consider alternative locations closer to Poncha Springs.

Collegiate Peaks Gateway

The Collegiate Peaks site is a fee area operated by Colorado State Parks. It has a number of picnic shelters for both large and small groups, barbecue grills, restrooms and outstanding views of the Collegiate Peaks across the valley. The challenges involved in installing Byway interpretive media at the Collegiate Peaks Overlook (CPO) include maintaining stylistic consistency with existing structures, and doing nothing to detract from what is a well-planned, tastefully-developed site.

The overlook is located on what it probably the most-used entry to the Byway, making it ideal for a gateway development. This plan suggests examining the feasibility of a gateway structure east of the entrance to the CPO, installing Byway signage on an existing state park sign on the roadside, and doing any further development within the fee area.

A design for a kiosk development within the fee area is offered on the following page. The project team identified two sites for kiosk development that seem to be appropriate. In both cases, though, what is proposed is an additional structure; providing accessible trails and building another shelter with associated hardscape elements would be expensive.

The existing large shelter that features an array of three interpretive panels currently functions well as a focal point. Adding another structure would create competition with the existing shelter. The Hanging Panel alternative that addresses this issue adds interpretive panels to the existing structure. This reduces expense significantly, and eliminates the issue of creating competition with the attractive, well-designed shelter that already exists. The Board does not support this option due to concerns over obstructing the viewshed. The view from the Hanging Panel alternative appears below.

Recommendation
Request an assessment from CDOT on the feasibility/safety of installing a gateway structure at the existing pullout east of the fee area (see photos next page). Install a gateway at the pullout if feasible. Install Byway signage on the existing AHRA welcome sign. Install four interpretive panels hanging from the ceiling of the existing shelter.
The pullout pictured at right appears, on gross examination (measurements were not taken) to be large enough for gateway construction as is. Consultation with CDOT regarding the adequacy of sightlines is necessary; the sightlines for westbound traffic do not appear to meet standards. This pullout is just over two miles east of the entrance to the fee area, and slightly less than a mile west of a “Welcome to Chaffee County…Now This is Colorado” sign.

The “Welcome to AHRA” sign at left is located between the pullout pictured above and the entrance to the fee area. It seems to be a good location to install Byway identification signs.

**Monarch Pass Gateway**

There are several existing sites on the northbound side of Monarch Pass that may be suitable for the placement of a gateway structure (and/or a wayside development). The project team was not directed to analyze possible sites on Monarch Pass in sufficient time to allow field activities to be completed prior to the onset of winter. Until those sites can be measured and photographed in the absence of the existing heavy snow accumulations, it will not be possible to request a determination from CDOT as to their suitability.

There is ample parking at Monarch Crest (below) to accommodate Byway travelers. Food and beverage service, as well as an aerial tramway, are available in summer.

The existing pullout at right offers a good view of Madonna Mine across the creek, one of the only opportunities near the Byway to see a mine from the roadside.

**Recommendation**

Visit the sites in Spring 2011, after the snow has melted, to measure the existing pullouts and sightlines. Request a determination from CDOT as to whether a gateway development can be installed that meets safety and engineering standards.
## Sites Proposed for Kiosk Development

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<tr>
<td>McPhelemy Park, Buena Vista</td>
<td>Old depot building on site.</td>
<td>• Lots of mature shade trees and other amenities such as picnic shelters, fishing pond and large expanses of turf.  • High-traffic, high-visibility location.</td>
<td>• Busy area with lots of existing infrastructure (e.g. utilities) that might complicate installation.</td>
<td>• Finding Our Roots  • Recreation and Adventure  • Making a High-Altitude Living: Mining, Transportation and Industry</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Masterplanning for Buena Vista parks is currently underway, and a willingness to work with the Board to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of a kiosk installation has been expressed.  • New sidewalk is under construction through the park.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside Park, Salida</td>
<td>None in the park. There is a structure in a play area immediately north of the boat ramp with several interpretive panels.</td>
<td>• Lots of pedestrian traffic.  • Mature trees, playground, bandshell, river access, walking path.  • Other amenities such as dining/shopping are within walking distance.  • Several special events in the park each year create high-impact, high-visibility opportunities.</td>
<td>• In such a developed urban area, construction typically is complicated by the presence of utilities and existing infrastructure.</td>
<td>• Finding Our Roots  • Recreation and Adventure  • Making a High-Altitude Living: Mining, Transportation and Industry</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>The park is a busy place with lots of structures from playground equipment to monuments; close cooperation with Salida parks staff and management will be necessary to determine if there is a suitable location.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiate Peaks Interpretive Center, Poncha Springs</td>
<td>Maps, brochures and other literature are available inside the existing building.</td>
<td>• High visibility, high traffic location.  • Existing volunteer base to provide personal service.  • Potential to interpret transportation themes using existing artifact scale.</td>
<td>• The site does not currently have a welcoming feel.  • Entry is confusing.  • Lack of visitor amenities such as shade shelters, picnic benches, trees and shrubs.</td>
<td>There is potential to interpret the full range of Byway themes at this location.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
McPhelemy Park, Buena Vista

Several alternative sites for kiosk development in Buena Vista were evaluated and rejected, including the old depot site, the park behind Dairy Delite and the park where the Chamber of Commerce is located. The best location appears to be McPhelemy Park. It is in a high-visibility location, with easy access to the shops and restaurants on Main Street while still being actually on the Byway.

The park has expansive turf areas, picnic shelters, and is the home of the historic railroad depot building (r.), to which an expansive deck is being added (and where a kiosk could be located). A new sidewalk is under construction that will connect the north and south ends of the park.

A roughly-triangular area north of the depot building that is formed by the new deck, sidewalk and caboose appears to be a reasonable candidate for a kiosk placement (l.).

The area south of the depot building (below), which is dominated by mature trees, also seems to be a viable site. The space under the trees is nearly devoid of vegetation, probably due to shade and soil compaction from foot traffic, so development would be unlikely to cause additional undesirable impacts.

Recommendation

Initiate discussions with Buena Vista park managers to assess the feasibility of placing a kiosk somewhere in the park. Also consider some level of development in the park where the Chamber of Commerce is located.

Riverside Park, Salida

Riverside Park is the second most-used (by locals) recreational amenity in Salida (trails are first, the aquatic center is third). This site was analyzed as an alternative to placing a kiosk at either the Monarch Spur trailhead or the Chamber of Commerce/aquatic center because it appears to get more foot traffic (from both residents and visitors) than either of the other locations.

Riverside Park has mature trees, a bandshell, restrooms and play areas. It is located next to a river access point, the cultural center and all the dining/shopping/entertainment opportunities in downtown Salida. The museum may move to a downtown location in the near future as well. If Salida has a single, identifiable community center/town square sort of space, Riverside Park seems to be it.

There are several good locations in the park where a kiosk might be placed. A location next to the boat ramp has been considered and rejected, and Salida city planners have indicated that another location suggested in the first draft of this plan (at the intersection of Sackett and F streets) is not optimal because it interferes with the view of the avenue of mature trees that greets users when they first enter the park. At this point, two alternatives are under consideration (see photos below).

Recommendation

Work with staff from the City of Salida Parks and Recreation Department and/or Planning Department to assess the feasibility of the pictured locations and identify possible alternatives.
Collegiate Peaks Interpretive Center at Poncha Springs

This site is an expanse of concrete at the intersection of U.S. 50 and 285 that was formerly a weigh station. It has enormous potential for development because of its crossroads location, and a modest new visitor center building is proposed. Access is problematic, but a new deceleration lane from eastbound U.S. 50 is going to be built that should greatly improve the access situation.

Visitor center staff indicated that one of the biggest issues at the site was lack of shade and other comfort amenities (there are, for instance, picnic tables with no shade, and shade with no picnic tables). Overall, the site is unwelcoming because of its high degree of hardness. When the proposed infrastructure improvements are complete, though, it is likely that this site will become an exceptional asset for the Byway and local communities.

Not only is the site highly visible with high traffic counts, it also offers the potential to interpret the evolution of transportation using the artifact truck scale that is still easily visible.

Preliminary Recommendation

Monitor the progress of the new building and site development. Once usage patterns on the new site are established and visitors’ wants, needs and expectations are better understood, work with the Town of Poncha Springs to provide Byway interpretation at the site. Consider fixed media as well as providing free wireless internet access.
PROPOSED VISITORS CENTER MASTER PLAN:

Proposed Improvements at Poncha Springs Visitor Center
## Sites Proposed for Wayside Development

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<tr>
<td>Chalk Cliffs Viewpoint</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>• Excellent views of mountains, agricultural structures, pastures</td>
<td>• Northbound traffic must make a left after descending a long hill on a curve, but sightlines are good.</td>
<td>• Pushing Culture</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• The Board is concerned that the pastures visible from the highway will revert to native vegetation since the water rights on the property have been sold; residential development may occur as well. Alternatives will be researched, but the high degree of suitability of this site.</td>
<td>• CDOT has approved the site as being suitable for development as is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Mountain/Fisherman’s</td>
<td>Kiosk with six interpretive panels on site, focused on natural history</td>
<td>• High traffic, lots of rafters. Excellent views.</td>
<td>• Off highway, motorists will be unaware of the interpretive opportunity, only rafters will be targeted</td>
<td>• Recreation and Adventure</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>• Colorado State Parks is in the process of replacing the existing interpretive panels with new ones. The old panels (fiberglass embedment) are worn. CSP/AHRA has expressed an interest in working with the Byway to find an appropriate location at the site for a Byway wayside.</td>
<td>• Work with AHRA to determine location of possible new kiosk or wayside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smelter Viewpoint</td>
<td>None at wayside; a three-panel array is installed at the smelter site</td>
<td>• Iconic symbol of Salida.</td>
<td>• Construction would be required.</td>
<td>• Exploring the Valley: The Earliest Days</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>• The Board has had conversations with the property owner, who has indicated a willingness to discuss further the possibility of granting an easement.</td>
<td>• Hold further discussions with the property owner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathrop</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>• Historic school building.</td>
<td>• The school building (and area by post office) are located next to residences and the owners might consider any interpretive development to be an intrusion on privacy.</td>
<td>• Exploring the Valley: The Earliest Days</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>• The Chalk Cliffs Viewpoint site, with excellent views, is located only a few miles south of Nathrop.</td>
<td>• Do nothing; no development is recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista River Park</td>
<td>There is a shade shelter with four interpretive panels located at the trailhead. Thematic focus is on providing trail information, the life and times of Barbara Whipple, the electrification of Buena Vista and railroad history. The first part of the trail includes a loop with a number of panels interpreting natural art. There are also three informational panels in an upright kiosk arrangement that provide trail information on the south side of the restroom building.</td>
<td>• River and trail access.</td>
<td>• Lots of competition for attention.</td>
<td>• Recreation and Adventure</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>• Rationale for “low” implementation priority is due to competing interpretation at the site and its distance from the Byway, but the amount of use by locals and the outstanding recreational opportunities and site amenities might suggest a higher priority.</td>
<td>• Do nothing; focus on development of media at Heritage Museum and McPhelly Museum.</td>
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<td>Buena Vista Chamber of</td>
<td>There are several possible locations for interpretation at the site and its distance from the Byway, but the amount of use by locals and the outstanding recreational opportunities and site amenities might suggest a higher priority.</td>
<td>• Located in nice historic church.</td>
<td>• Finding Our Roots</td>
<td>• Recreation and Adventure</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>• The museum is looking for a downtown location and may move in the next few years.</td>
<td>• Consider as a site for interpretation supplemental to development in McPhelly Park.</td>
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<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Maps, brochures and other literature are available inside the existing building.</td>
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<td>Salida Hot Springs Pool/Chamber of Commerce/Museum</td>
<td>museum exhibits</td>
<td>• Established use pattern by both visitors and locals.</td>
<td>• Lots of traffic on U.S. 50, lots of competition for visual attention</td>
<td>• Finding Our Roots</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>• The museum is looking for a downtown location and may move in the next few years.</td>
<td>• Monitor progress of museum’s proposed move. Do nothing until something definite regarding a new museum location (and/or a new location for the Chamber of Commerce) is in place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monarch Mountain Region</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>• Easy way to target specific audience segment.</td>
<td>• Focus of visitor traffic during the low season, may stimulate repeat summer visitation by skiers/snowboarders</td>
<td>• Recreation and Adventure</td>
<td>tbd</td>
<td>• Several locations within the public buildings at the ski area base would be suitable for interpretive/informational media.</td>
<td>• Pending consideration of wayside media development, initiate discussions with Monarch Mountain management to assess the area’s receptiveness to placement of Byway media at the area.</td>
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### Plan for Wayside Interpretive Media

**Collegiate Peaks Scenic & Historic Byway Site Analyses**

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<td>• Develop site data (lightness, dimensions of pullouts) and provide to CDOT for consideration if decision to pursue development is made.</td>
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Chalk Cliffs Viewpoint
There is an existing pullout off U.S. 285 at this site with plenty of room (r.) for a safe wayside development with no construction required. Access for northbound traffic, which must turn left off the highway, might present an issue: the site is at the base of a hill with a curve, but sightlines are good.

Views of the range to the west are excellent, and there are also good images of ongoing agriculture with hay pastures to the west and north, as well as some older ranch outbuildings immediately across the highway.

Recommendation
Install a three-panel array at this site.

Ruby Mountain/Fisherman’s Bridge
This site is a popular launch point for raft trips. There is a large parking lot, restrooms, picnic tables and a roofed interpretive kiosk featuring six graphic panels. The interpretive panels have high-quality artwork, but the style is somewhat dated and the fiberglass-embedded panels are deteriorating. AHRA is replacing the worn panels with new, porcelain-on-steel panels; management has expressed an interest in partnering with the Byway to place additional interpretive media on this site.

Recommendation
Meet with AHRA management to assess the possibility of locating a three-panel array somewhere on the recreation site. Consider the possibility of installing a kiosk of identical design to the existing kiosk.
Smelter Wayside

The smelter smokestack is interpreted with a three-panel array at the base of the structure (l.). The smokestack has long been an icon for Salida residents, who waged a vigorous campaign to keep it in place. Its impressive size, while somewhat apparent from Colorado 291, is truly appreciated best from the base of the structure. This poses the problem of creating more awareness of the opportunity: travelers must make an active effort to find and explore the site.

Improvements at the site itself might include general cleanup, as well as removal of the chain link fence (the building could be secured by placing bars in existing window openings or similar). While liability concerns will probably constrain the provision of any public access to the interior, the visitor experience could be enhanced if opportunities for viewing the inside of the building were offered.

Recommendation
Support efforts to clean up and enhance the experience at the smelter site. Consider the possibility of constructing a wayside on Colorado 291.

Nathrop

One of the outstanding assets of the community of Nathrop is an historic wooden school building. It is located on private property several blocks off the highway. The neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity are mixed-use, with both residential and industrial buildings.

Any development at this site would need to be tempered with a high degree of respect for the privacy of the people who live adjacent to the school. It also should be acknowledged that adjoining industrial uses, such as RV storage, create a visual ambience that is not as attractive as most other Byway locations.

Recommendation
Do nothing here. Focus efforts on development at Chalk Cliffs Viewpoint or other alternative.
Buena Vista River Park

The Buena Vista River Park is a sprawling development on the banks of the Arkansas on the east side of town that offers playing fields, river access, playground equipment, showers, restrooms and trail access. A new, architecturally-progressive development called South Main lies adjacent to the park, and the developers have provided parking, public access to the river trail and several play areas.

Existing interpretation includes four panels in a shade shelter at the trailhead bridge (r.), a number of interpretive panels located on a short trail loop and three informational panels arrayed next to the bathroom building (inset, below).

In a similar fashion to the Collegiate Peaks Overlook, this area presents a challenge for new development because of the difficulty of integrating any new structures stylistically with the existing structures. There are a number of existing landscape themes, including some whimsical furniture at the South Main development, that already create a somewhat confusing design ambience. Several panels might be mounted on the railing of the bathroom/changing building (left, red arrow).

Recommendation

Focus development efforts in Buena Vista on placing a kiosk in McPhelemy Park and/or several wayside panels at the courthouse/museum. At the River Park, work to place Byway and CCHA logos on existing interpretive materials and support efforts to update existing maps.

Buena Vista Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center

As previously noted in the audience analysis section, many visitors can be reached by providing after-hours kiosks and/or free wireless internet access at the visitor centers in Poncha Springs, Salida and Buena Vista.

There are no major hurdles to overcome with placing a kiosk or wayside at the visitor center: the old church building is located in a pleasant park with large shade trees and a picnic shelter. There is plenty of room to install a structure on the expansive turf area.

Alternatives to this site should be considered because of problems with access. By the time northbound motorists see the visitor center sign, it is too late to turn. Southbound motorists must see the sign across the road and quickly make a left to reach the parking area behind the building. Parking is limited.

One alternative to the visitor center site is on the museum grounds at the courthouse (l.). There is plenty of room, a small log building (below) to add ambience, and the added value of the museum experience (which features a model railroad that delights both old and young).

Recommendation

Work with museum management to assess the feasibility of placing several wayside panels on the museum grounds.
Salida Chamber of Commerce/Museum/Aquatic Center
This site on the north side of U.S. 50 gets lots of traffic and use, both from tourists and locals. The museum experience is typical of those in small towns; the museum is exploring the possibility of moving to a downtown location.

The Chamber offers brochures and personal information services during normal business hours on weekdays only. The Chamber shares a parking lot with the aquatic center. There are no data available at present regarding whether users of the aquatic center are primarily locals or visitors. Results of a survey conducted by the Salida Parks and Recreation Department found that the aquatic center was the third-most popular amenity in the city (behind trails and Riverside Park). There was a relatively low level of satisfaction with the Hot Springs Pool, evidently due to ongoing problems with water temperature.

The park offers picnic/barbecue facilities for both small and large groups. It has lots of mature shade trees, a somewhat decrepit PAR course, playground equipment and a basketball court.

Recommendation
Do nothing here. A kiosk at the Chamber of Commerce or in the park would probably help out a small number of visitors in the evenings and on weekends, but it would not be highly visible from the highway. Any development in Salida should probably be focused in the downtown area where there is more pedestrian traffic. Consider a flat graphic panel with orientation information if it can be mounted inexpensively (i.e. on a wall of an existing building). Stay abreast of developments regarding the possibility of moving the museum to a downtown location.

Monarch Mountain Region
The Monarch Mountain area offers several possibilities for the placement of interpretive media. A gateway structure at the summit of the pass, or elsewhere on the east side of the pass, is being considered. There are several pullouts on the east side of the pass that are viable candidates for either development of a gateway and/or a wayside.

There are no readily-apparent exterior sites at the base of Monarch Ski Area where wayside panels could be placed without interfering with pedestrian traffic or the movement of equipment (l. and below).

There is a sign alerting westbound traffic to the presence of the museum, nothing for eastbound traffic.

While there are a number of sites within the park where a kiosk could be placed, none of them are easily visible from the highway.

Although the museum will probably never draw large numbers of visitors, increasing awareness of the experience should be a goal of Byway media.

Recommendation
Initiate discussion with management at Monarch Mountain to assess their receptiveness to placing Byway media at interior locations at the ski area. Assess existing pullouts in Spring 2011 for feasibility.
Concept Designs
Criteria that have guided the design process include envisioning structures that suggest a heritage theme without being kitschy, structures that blend with historic architecture, and trying to use existing structures for mounting to the greatest possible extent (in order to save money and avoiding introducing new design elements).

CCHAAB requested alternatives to the gateway and kiosk designs that were presented in the first draft. The project team took the approach of thinking about what sorts of materials were used to build Chaffee County during the settlement period, and which materials accurately reflect the historic architectural ambience in the downtowns of Salida and Buena Vista. Three alternatives are offered here: one which reflects wood architectural details typically found in early residential construction (called the “Arch” alternative). This design mimics details found in historic wooden residences, but it would be built with steel. The other two alternatives suggest how two traditional building materials used extensively in commercial structures might be adapted in a contemporary context: brick and cast iron.
These photos depict how a gateway might appear at the South Granite pullout, and suggest how the three-panel arrays currently deployed might be given a higher degree of visibility with a Byway ID sign.
Summary of Public Input

The public was invited to two events held in Salida on January 25, 2011, at the Salida Café and on January 26 at the Buena Vista Public Library. Tabletop graphics were on display that included a map showing locations of proposed developments; the summary tables of proposed gateway, kiosk and wayside developments, and three alternatives for the design of structures. The meetings were informal: EDA staff and members of the Board were on hand to answer questions and discuss various alternatives.

A form was available for attendees to express their like/dislike for the design alternatives and record their comments. The numerical rankings of the design alternatives are shown below in Table 9. Respondents had five ranking options: dislike it a lot, dislike it, neither like nor dislike, like it, like it a lot. The options were assigned numerical values from 1 (dislike it a lot) to 5 (like it a lot).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: Rankings of Design Alternatives (n=8)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masonry Alternative</strong> (reflects the style of many Twentieth Century commercial buildings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arch Alternative</strong> (reflects the architectural detail seen in early residential construction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cast Iron Alternative</strong> (similar styles are found in historic lamp posts and wayfinding signs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The arch alternative emerged as the favorite, with the cast iron alternative a reasonably-close second. The masonry alternative was not well-liked. These results should be taken with a grain of salt, of course: the process was not scientific, nor were there enough respondents to constitute a valid sample. In particular, the low ranking of the masonry alternative is probably not indicative of a general dislike for the use of brick. Several respondents even noted in their comments that while they liked brick, they did not like the proposed shape of the structure. The masonry alternative was criticized as being monolithic and clunky. It is probably fair to say that the low ranking of that alternative was due to its shape and overall appearance, not an opposition to the use of brick.

Both groups discussed the criterion that a single design motif should be applied in all circumstances. Perhaps the single most important point to emerge from the meetings was a consensus that a design appropriate to, for instance, downtown Salida would not be appropriate in a rural roadside location. While open house attendees wanted to see the same structure used for all gateways, and the same structure used for all kiosks, they did not support the idea that every structure should be of similar design. Rather, the general feeling that emerged was that the structures needed to be linked visually by more prominent display of the columbine, Byway and Heritage Area logos. Attendees were far more concerned that structures be respectful of their context than that all the structures should share a common design motif.
Attendees also seemed to support the idea that the urban structures should be somewhat more inviting than depicted, in particular that roofs and benches should be incorporated into the structures to encourage users to linger a bit.

**Written Comments from Public Open Houses**

In reference to wooden alternative: “gazebo look”

“add benches in kiosks”

“metal roofs”

“Like cast iron look for urban kiosks, but not a look that would be appropriate for rural areas. Wooden alternative probably most appropriate for both urban & rural.”

“The one I checked (wooden alternative) is the one I’ve seen the most all over the western half of USA where I have lived.”

“Like the idea of brick with iron or wood. Plain brick or masonry is too stark. The wooden alternative would look good out of town—like the logo placed high & separate to draw attention. The mock up of the corner S of the depot would look good with a kiosk where the flowers are. Not a kiosk between depot & caboose—it distracts from the buildings.”

*Note: the reference to the “mockup” is in response to a concept drawing provided by Buena Vista Parks Department that depicted the area south of the depot building as a hardscape patio with a flowerbed in its center and a low rock wall around it (in the southeast corner of McPhelemy Park).*

“Brick is fine, even recommended—form is bad.”

In reference to wooden alternative: “Best for universal application.”

In reference to cast iron alternative: “Good for city locations, but not highway.”

“Don’t restrict to just one style for all locations. Use logo plus a few other elements (arch) for consistent elements among locations. Maybe combine elements of all 3 alternatives since brick is a strong traditional material throughout the valley.”

In reference to masonry alternative: “Conceptual image isn’t flattering. But concept is possibly more unique and/or original set off against all else.”

In reference to wooden alternative: “Conventional. Would it draw my attention?”

In reference to cast iron alternative: “Again, very conventional.”

“Prefer masonry w/ old brick and concrete lentil because of its uniqueness for McPhelemy. See the logo as the consistent feature. Wooden alternative for the gateways. Wayside panel sites are favorable.”

“Neither of the designs jump out @ me. I am not being critical, but I think a design better representing the character & history of the county would be in order.

“When built, I would hope a local firm is call upon.”

“Thanks for allowing our input.”
Bibliography

Print Resources

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Internet Resources

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