

Gunnison Valley-One Valley Prosperity Project



The Gunnison Valley is a special place. Life in this high mountain valley is idyllic in many ways—excellent quality of life for many, clean air and water, beautiful landscapes, vibrant small towns, fantastic recreation opportunities and great people. However, a high cost of living and lack of economic vitality presents significant challenges. Many community members are unable to find affordable housing. 25 percent of our school children are eligible for free lunch. It is not easy to get a good-paying job here, making it difficult for individuals and families to thrive.

A unique collaborative group was formed in 2014 - the Community Builders Task Force (CBTF) - with the mission of increasing prosperity in the Gunnison Valley. We partnered with Community Builders and Del Corazon Consulting whom helped us to develop a holistic planning process and guide us through unique engagement efforts. The Community Builders Task Force includes representatives from the following public, private and nonprofit groups: Gunnison County, City of Gunnison, Town of Crested Butte, Town of Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte Mountain Resort, Western State Colorado University, Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association, Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley, Gunnison Valley Health, and Crested Butte South Property Owners Association.



In 2015, the CBTF mobilized to engage the community and identify strategies and actions to improve economic prosperity through the One Valley Prosperity Project (OVPP). Between March 2015 and April 2016, the OVPP brought residents together to think strategically about how to create a more prosperous future for our region – one that honors our community’s values, builds upon local strengths, and synergizes local efforts.

The One Valley Prosperity Project created an outstanding spirit of community engagement and support unlike any other plan in the community’s history. That engagement and support is a result of the widespread outreach that was part of the planning process. The OVPP included four project phases, summarized by four questions:

- Who are we?
- Where are we going?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?

The outcome of this effort is the One Valley Prosperity Strategy (the Strategy), a regional plan that guides collaboration on community and economic development efforts in the Gunnison Valley. The Strategy provides a path forward for addressing significant regional issues: housing affordability, economic resiliency, quality of life, and social equity. The Strategy aims to build on the best of how we operate and shift our culture to long-term thinking and more collaborative work.

A visionary and innovative approach to economic development included the identification of community values, development of a community definition of prosperity, and a collaborative, regional approach. The community has defined prosperity as, “the opportunity to provide for ourselves in a meaningful and fulfilling way. However, we can only be a prosperous community if we achieve the delicate balance of providing economic opportunity while protecting our other community values—the very reasons we love living here.” The needs of the Gunnison Valley are broad in scope but interrelated, and the objectives and actions in the Strategy emphasize that interrelatedness.

The community and our leaders have embraced this holistic, unique approach to economic resiliency by addressing our community’s prosperity through specific economic, health and quality-of-life strategies and actions. Because governments, nonprofits, businesses, and residents view themselves as interconnected and aligned around a common vision, we are achieving a higher level of collaboration, success, and prosperity. The One Valley Prosperity Project builds on the best assets of our community to increase local capacity, deepen relationships and collaboration, move the needle on complex challenges and improve the community’s prosperity.



ONE VALLEY PROSPERITY PROJECT

