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I. Executive Summary

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The Community's Vision for the High Line Canal

The High Line Canal Conservancy and Denver Water, in close collaboration with a host of regional partners, facilitated a community outreach process throughout the course of 2016 to write the story of the future of the High Line Canal. Dubbed “Adventure on the Canal: Charting our course for the next century,” the process asked the public to consider how they view the long-term purpose of the Canal and its natural and recreational resources. Bringing together thousands of residents from all over the region, this initiative asked participants to “think big” about their vision for the Canal’s future.

As is the case with the more worthwhile journeys in life, “Adventure on the High Line Canal” began with establishing the context of the scene (the Canal) and featured characters (its wildlife and communities). Along the way, it offered various choices, bends and forks. Ultimately, it concluded with a satisfying resolution - a Vision that captures the community’s hopes and dreams for the future. This Vision is codified in the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles that follow:

Vision Statement

Our Vision for the High Line Canal: 71 meandering mile preserved and enhanced as a cherished greenway that connects us to nature and binds together varied communities from the foothills to the plains.

Guiding Principles

Natural: The Canal’s natural, scenic beauty is integral to its identity. We will preserve the natural character of the Canal, ensuring it continues to be an urban refuge for the region’s population and wildlife.

Connected & Continuous: We will maintain and increase the connectivity of the Canal along all 71 miles, preserving and enhancing the Canal’s use as an important resource and regional network. We support the various physical characteristics of the Canal and will maintain the diversity of uses across the Canal’s different character zones, ensuring all of the Canal’s users can continue to enjoy its use where they can today.

Varied: Through the course of its 71 miles, our Canal passes through many different communities and ecosystems. We value the variety of experiences this creates and will preserve the “varied” character of the Canal.

Managed: Our Canal is a critical, cherished asset for the region. We will work together to preserve and support a long-term, sustainable future for generations to come.

Enhanced: We will enhance the enjoyment and use of the Canal in keeping with its natural and varied character.

Sidebar: High Line Canal Quick Facts

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- Date of origination: 1880s
- Length: **71 miles**
- Total area: **860 acres**, slightly larger than New York's Central Park
- Owner: The Canal is currently managed by Denver Water
- Jurisdictions: The Canal passes through **11 distinct jurisdictions**, which are: Adams County, Arapahoe County, City and County of Denver, Douglas County, Highlands Ranch Metro District, Littleton, Centennial, Greenwood Village, Cherry Hills Village, and Aurora
- Number of street crossings: **80**
- Residents within one mile: well **over 350,000** residents
- Annual number of people who use the Canal recreationally: **More than 500,000**
- Adjacent to **73** different Green Spaces ranging from pocket parks to state parks with a total sum of **8070 acres**.
- **199** species of birds, **28** mammals, and **15** reptiles call the Canal home.
- **23,760** trees with trunks greater than 6" in diameter*

* Source: Tree Inventory (preliminary data)

Five BIG Reasons to Support the High Line Canal Vision

The Canal's leaky nature means it's no longer a responsible way to deliver water in an era focused on water conservation. Yet, as the Vision's Guiding Principles articulate, the Canal's natural beauty, environmental benefits and recreational value make it a treasured resource. As the Denver region experiences unprecedented growth in numbers and in diversity, and as water is increasingly viewed as a precious resource, the High Line Canal is a prime example of how we must look at the future differently than the past.



The High Line Canal is a nationally significant example of infrastructure reuse, stewardship, and connectivity

Just as every great story is a journey that sparks imagination and excites the mind, the community's Vision for the High Line Canal illuminates a series of powerful ideas about the future of this great resource that directly address some of the opportunities and challenges the region is experiencing. Here are five BIG reasons to support this Vision:

An Experience Like No Other

The High Line Canal extends from the foothills of the great Rocky Mountains to the expansive prairie stretching to the distance horizon. Along the way, this connective thread weaves through diverse ecosystems and communities. Now, and in the future, the canal offers residents and visitors the unique experience of exploring the incredible mosaic of people, places and wildlife of the region.

An Impressive Reach ... #71 Miles!

The High Line Canal stretches 71 miles, all the way from Waterton Canyon to just shy of the Denver International Airport. Comprising nearly 860 acres of land area (larger than Central Park in New York City!), the Canal system connects more than 8,000 acres of other open spaces and passes through 11 different jurisdictions including cities, counties, and special districts, touching many parts of the Denver metro area!

A New Life for a Regional Legacy

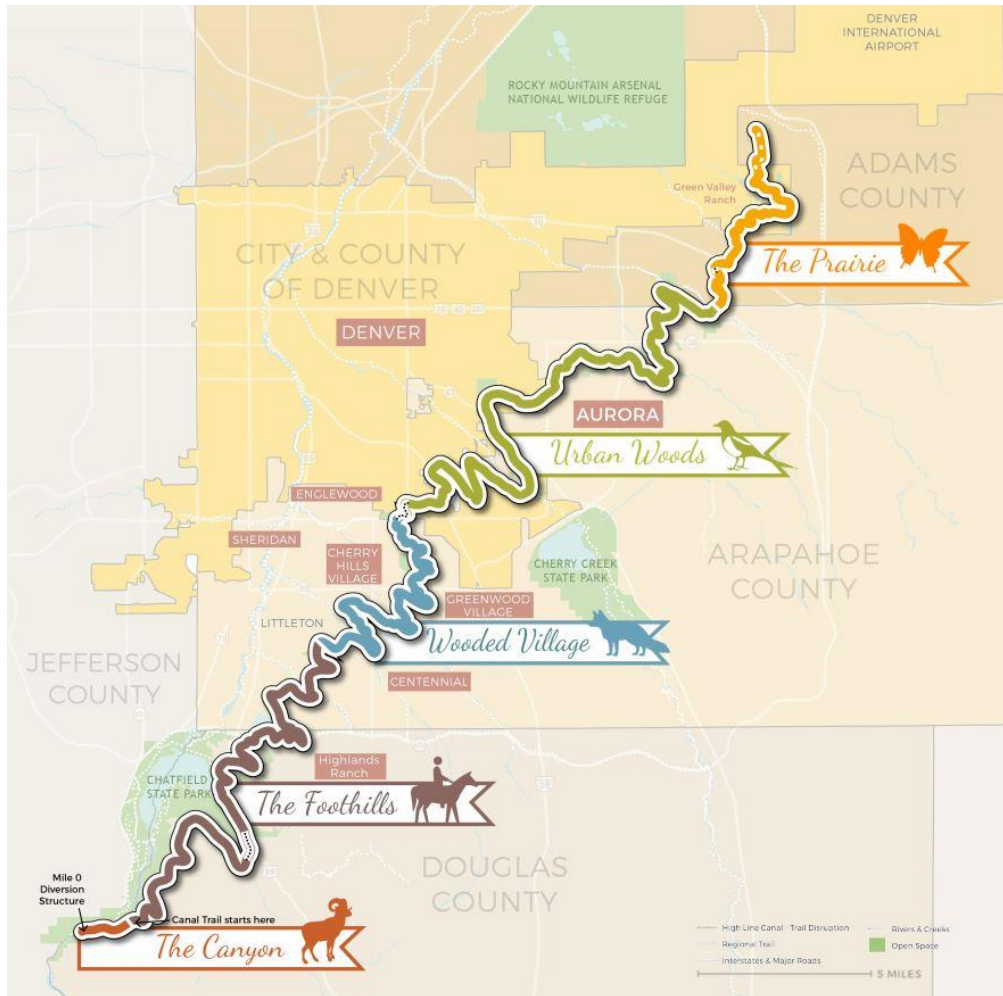
Communities across the country and around the world are creatively repurposing obsolete and abandoned infrastructure for broader benefits. The High Line Canal's diverse attributes - its rich history, cultural significance, unique ecology, and recreational potential - make it an unprecedented and multi-beneficial opportunity for the Denver region.

Communities Working Together

Tackling the challenges of a growing region requires different ways of thinking, increased collaboration and new kinds of partnerships. The High Line Canal Vision represents a model of regional cooperation - led by an effective new partnership between the newly formed High Line Canal Conservancy and Denver Water, and supported with representatives from every jurisdiction actively and eagerly "at the table"!

An Inclusive and Passionate Conversation

Literally thousands of community members actively participated in the writing of the High Line Canal Vision. They came to open houses, filled in online surveys, participated in community events, engaged along the Canal itself, and welcomed focused discussions in their meeting rooms and neighborhoods. The process promoted awareness of the Canal as a resource and created a shared understanding of its future.



The Canal as a connected, yet varied resource with five distinct character zones.

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Inset Quote:

“The High Line Canal is unlike other waterways. It was engineered to manipulate the gravitational energy of water. As it meanders along the contours of the landscape ... it turns back on itself again and again... As the user approaches and passes through each vanishing point, revealing the corridor beyond, they experience the tiniest little miracle of surprise, and because this is the historically significant, exceptionally unique High Line Canal...there are seventy miles of miracles.”

Mike Holweger, High Line Canal Preservation and Enhancement Study (2012)

The Community's Voice in Shaping the Vision

<Grid of Outreach Images>



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Today, more than 350,000 residents reside within one mile of the Canal, and recent data indicates that annually more than 500,000 people use the canal as a recreational asset. To establish a vision for the Canal's next one hundred years, this process engaged a broad range of canal users - walkers, equestrians, families, nature-lovers, bicyclists, and others who use the Canal every day - and explored a wide array of opportunities.

"Adventure on the High Line Canal" - branded to express a spirit of journey and an ambition to write a powerful forward-looking story - was a diverse, fun series of forums for public engagement and meaningful input. The

planning team structured a community outreach process that involved multiple tactics: community Open Houses, online surveys, Strategic Input Sessions with key stakeholders, City as Play events, and attending existing community events. Thousands of community members and stakeholders participated in the following ways:

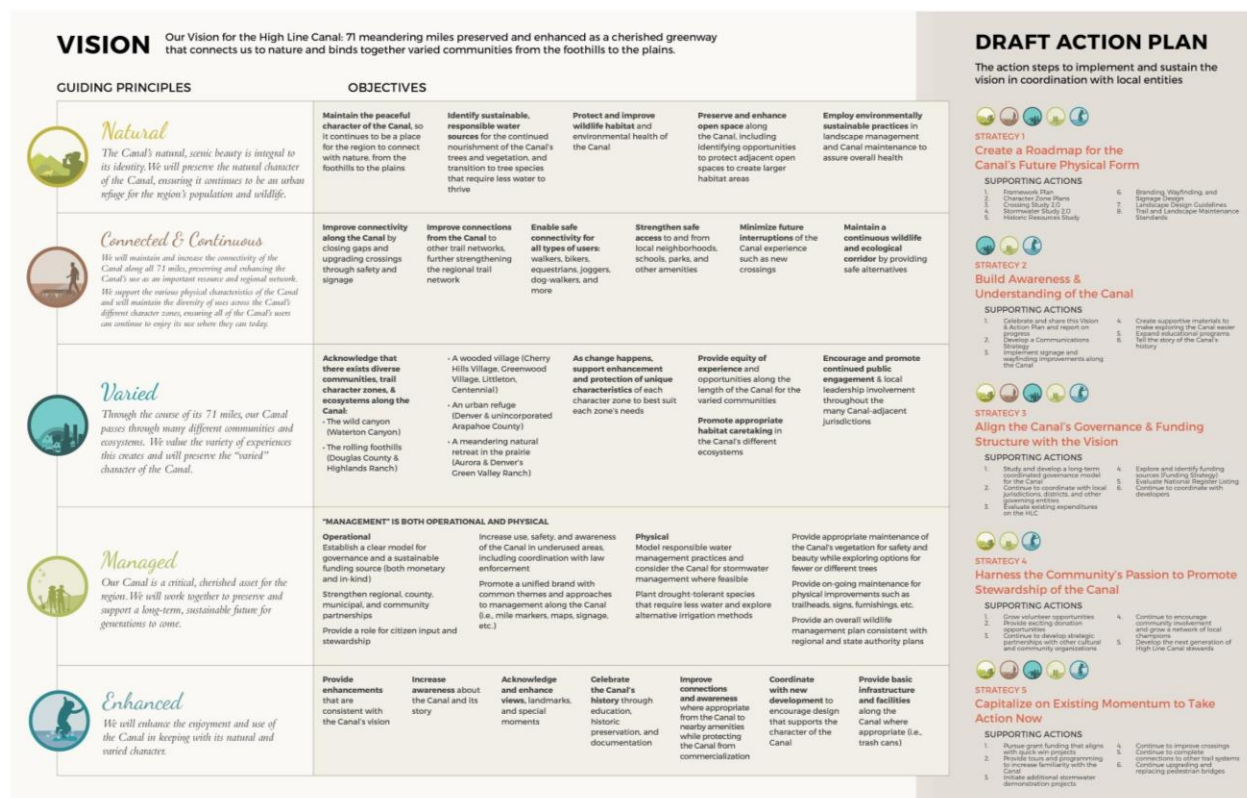
Adventure on the High Line Canal: A Summer of Outreach Opportunities <i>[will be synthesized & formatted as infographic page for the final executive summary]</i>			
Launched the High Line Canal Conservancy's "Learn + Connect" Campaign to introduce the Conservancy and reached over 500 people			
Developed a network of over 900 community leaders ranging from elected officials, issue groups, and neighborhood organizations to help distribute Conservancy news			
Established an E-newsletter list with nearly 2,400 recipients			
Participated at over 20 community events to share news and generate excitement about the process			
Partnered with Denver Water to send an informational flyer about upcoming public forums to over 300,000 accounts.			
Direct mailings to over 10,000 households			
"One big resource' for the metro area"- a front-page article in Denver Post, with a weekly readership of more than a million ¹			
Walk2Connect led by Chris Englert, EatWalkLearn - 55 community members along the Canal, 7 of whom walked all 71 miles			
12 public forums	Over 1,200 attendees	Chapter 1 Open Houses	32 handouts completed 1,810 stickers placed 275+ open-ended comments
		Chapter 2 Open Houses	348 handouts completed 565 stickers placed
		Chapter 3 Open Houses	47 handouts completed 525+ open-ended comments
		Chapter 4 Open Houses	350+ open-ended comments
2 Online surveys	Nearly 600 responses	OurHighLineCanal online survey	464 responses
		CrowdGauge online survey	163 responses
8 Strategic Input Sessions	Over 40 leaders	Engaged local leaders and experts in fields including education, health and wellness, economic development, environment and wildlife, developers, water, recreation, and youth engagement	
2 City as Play Events	Over 50 children	Aurora Global Fest Booth & Friendly VillageEvent	

In addition to gathering and synthesizing community feedback into a compelling Vision, the process also served to increase awareness of the Canal and share more about the Canal's special story. This range of outreach opportunities was developed to reach the broadest possible range of community members, including both current trail users and others who were previously unaware of the Canal.

¹ The Denver Post has 1,016,547 Weekly Print & Online Readers. Source: <http://www.dpmedia.co/>

Translating the Vision into Action

Where the Vision is a community-driven, forward-looking story of what the Canal can be in the future, the Action Plan outlines a series of strategies to implement the Vision. Importantly, the Action Plan considers many opportunities for continuing to preserve, protect, and enhance the Canal in support of the Vision - and creates both short and long-term actions to help guide prioritization of implementation. The Action Plan recognizes the authority of the jurisdictions along the Canal and balances the need for additional planning studies and practical “on the ground” projects. The following visualizes how the Action Plan and its strategies begin to chart a roadmap to achieve the ambitious Vision, its guiding principles and associated objectives.



Summary of Vision & Action Plan (see separate PDF to see this content full-size)

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What to Expect Next

The community's Vision for the Canal is now written and a comprehensive collection of strategic actions have been established to move the Canal into an exciting new future. The following planning and implementation timeline shows the immediate action steps that are recommended. These include additional planning efforts and technical studies needed, processes related to clarifying future governance, coordination and funding opportunities, a series of "quick wins" (or short-term implementation potentials), and other ongoing efforts to be integrated.

Central to all of these initiatives moving forward is the sense that the community and its voice will continue to be welcomed and heard. To achieve the incredible Vision established by the community will take many years of hard work, cooperation and creativity. It is a journey that will shape an incredible new legacy for the region - one that will inspire, connect and nurture generations to come.

[Timeline below will be simplified for the layout version of the Executive Summary]

