CHALLENGE STATEMENT //

Within the past year, Old Colorado City and the surrounding community have come together to form the OCC Partnership (OCCP) to serve as an umbrella organization that provides the needed vision, mission, and unified voice for the area. With this leadership, momentum, and the collaborative efforts of the OCCP with downtown Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs, talks of a series of connected commercial corridors have begun. All three communities align along central Colorado Avenue and have the potential for a unique progression between the vibrant urban downtown, the charm of a historic gold rush community, and the adventures of a not-so-traditional mountain town.

The DCI challenge offers the opportunity to collaborate with professionals to tackle the wakening of Colorado Avenue and kick-start the needed economic development of Old Colorado City to create a truly unique destination that connects three of the Pikes Peak regions’ existing amenities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF STUDIO WORKSHOP //

In response to COVID-19, the Pikes Peak Creative Corridor Studio took place virtually with attendees from all over the state. This diverse group included individuals from urban and rural areas, with experience in both the public and private sectors. The Pikes Peak Creative Corridor team entered the studio seeking insight from fresh perspectives at the table with regard to any opportunities or
findings that might provide access to the region’s untapped potential. While the economic development of Old Colorado City was a primary focus for the studio, the success of the entire Corridor was emphasized throughout the session.

GOVERNANCE
• Management
• Budget + Funding
• Partnerships + Agreements

MOBILITY
• Infrastructure
• Transportation
• Management

MARKETING + BRANDING
• Visitors
• Historic Story
• Local Engagement

PLACE MANAGEMENT
• Public Art + Murals
• Beautification
• Experience + Activation

In order to address the Studio Challenge, each smaller group discussed what success might look like in their designated target area and how improvements might establish a sustainable, profitable, comprehensive solution for the Corridor. From these break-out discussions, several ideas and findings were highlighted as essential in addressing the Challenge. Once all returned to the larger group, participants shared their targeted area discussions and came to a consensus on main takeaways per area.

As a short-term next step, participants highlighted the importance of establishing Memorandums of Understanding within the Old Colorado City Partnership and between all Corridor communities to assist in formalizing partnerships and responsibilities for future generations to come. In the midterm, there was agreement that continuing to push out a collective branding strategy for the Corridor would enable significant engagement of local residents and business. Finally, as a long-term opportunity for financing, many emphasized the potential for OCC to be designated as a Business Improvement District or Metro District. While there was overall agreement on the importance of these takeaways, discussions in the Studio prompted even more new ideas and findings to inspire the Corridor’s next steps, which are detailed below.

Poll Questions
Poll questions were asked throughout the virtual studio workshop to gather participants input. Here are the some of the top answers from participants.
TEAM MEMBERS* //

CU School of Public Affairs Coordinators
Jackie Hazelwood
John Hill

DCI Staff
Kylie Brown, Challenge Program Coordinator/Rural Outreach Coordinator
Katherine Correll, Executive Director

Main Corridor Representatives
Natalie Johnson, Executive Director, Manitou Springs Creative District
Jonathan Neely, OCC SIMD Board Chair, Old Colorado City Partnership
Claire Swinford, Director of Urban Engagement, Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs

Old Colorado City Representatives
Ashley Perry, Old Colorado City Associates
Lauren Ripko, OCC Arts+Communications
Sara Vass, Organization of Westside Neighbors

Public Sector Partners
Farley McDonough, Manitou Springs URA
Allie McGahee, Economic Development, Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce

Specialists/Consultants
Denise Aten, Bohannon Houston, Inc.
Sarah Humbargar, Living City Ventures
Erin Lyng, Progressive Urban Management Associates
Jeff Owsley, Colorado Housing and Financing Authority

* This list does not include participants outside of the core team involved in the overall Challenge Process.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION //

Colorado Avenue functions as a “Main Street” for Downtown Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs, and Old Colorado City, linking them to one another and presenting an opportunity for visitors to explore each area’s unique charm in a single visit.

Downtown Colorado Springs offers a vibrant urban landscape teeming with a wide variety of entertainment options; Old Colorado City’s historic buildings and reverence for its roots allows visitors to catch a glimpse of what was once a booming gold rush community while they enjoy dozens of contemporary shops, restaurants, and art galleries; meanwhile, Manitou Springs showcases all the charm one expects in a Colorado mountain town, but with its own unique attractions and identity.

These three distinctive communities seek to collaborate and create a consolidated vision for the Pikes Peak Corridor that generates new investment in the region and attracts new visitors.

History and Past Efforts of the Pikes Peak Creative Corridor

March 2018
- Pikes Peak Creative Corridor recognized by COS City Council and Manitou City Council

January 2019
- Founding of the Old Colorado City Partnership (OCCP)

January 2020
- Branding reignited: “Fixer Creative” is selected to brand this Creative Corridor... launch branding process

November 2018 – January 2019
- Conversations around branding launch and dissolve

December 2019
- OCC is last of partnership to gain funding for PikeRide... the corridor will soon be connected via shared e-bike!

April 2020
- In response to COVID-19, the partnership collectively had their first Virtual First Friday
Old Colorado City, at the time known as Colorado City, was founded in 1859 and served as the first capital of the Territory of Colorado. The town was the center of early settlement in the Pikes Peak region with miners flocking to test their fortune and establish roots out “west.” Colorado City was fueled by gold, entertainment, and industry up until 1913 when prohibition upended this town of saloons. The nation’s ban on alcohol sent the town into an economic spiral resulting in residents’ vote to become part of Colorado Springs. Since its annexation, the historic district of Old Colorado City has continued to serve residents and tourists alike as a center of retail, restaurants, and commerce. Today, leaders within Old Colorado City seek to further improve and promote their community, fully establishing the district as an attraction within Colorado Springs and beyond.

Population: 5,259  
Median Household Income: $50,284  
Median Home Value: $290,500  
Retail Storefront Rent: $14.60 per square foot (on average)

Colorado Springs marks its own founding with that of Old Colorado City in 1859. Just as Old Colorado City was firmly established and built by miners, Colorado Springs similarly built its name on this industry. The 1891 discovery of gold in Cripple Creek, just west of Pikes Peak, brought significant wealth to the city and set Colorado Springs on a trajectory of success. Over the last century, Colorado Springs has become home to a university, military installations, tech companies, and the US Olympic Committee headquarters. The city’s proximity to the mountains provides another layer to Colorado Springs’s already multi-layered economy. In recent years, Colorado Springs was certified as a Colorado Creative District as it has become a haven for local artists with a rich arts and culture scene.

Population: 473,928  
Median Household Income: $61,324  
Median Home Value: $248,700  
Retail Storefront Rent: $16.99 per square foot (on average)
Manitou Springs earned its reputation as “not just another mountain town” with its initial establishment in the 1890s as a health resort. The town attracted large numbers of tourists, medical professionals, and health patients seeking respite in the local mineral springs and mountain air. Manitou Springs’ central location between Garden of the Gods and Pikes Peak provided even more allure for tourists in pursuit of mountain adventures. The town maintained a reputation as a tourist destination throughout the following years, but faced economic challenges that often accompany reliance on the ever-fluctuating tourism industry. In the 1980s, Manitou Springs formed a National Historic District that prompted the town’s revitalization of buildings and local traditions, encouraging a sense of community pride among residents. During this time, the mineral springs were renewed, contributing just one more reason for tourists to visit the town. Today, the town is a certified Colorado Creative District, with a number of programs promoting artists, galleries, and art unique to Manitou Springs.

Population: 5,263  
Median Household Income: $65,396  
Median Home Value: $319,700  
Retail Storefront Rent: $13.62 per square foot (on average)

**Stakeholders + Partners**  
This key list of stakeholders and partners was identified as a group that needs to be engaged and involved to address this challenge.

- City of Manitou Springs, City of Colorado Springs, and the Old Colorado City Partnership
- Community Residents and Businesses
- Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs
- Colorado Creative Industries
- Pikes Peak Cultural Plan Consultants
- Pikes Peak Cultural Office
- Fixer Creative (Pikes Peak Creative Corridor Branding)
- Living City Ventures
Assets for the Corridor
- Stakeholder Cooperation
- Galleries, Restaurants, and Shops aligned on Colorado Avenue
- Historical Significance
- Proximity to Garden of the Gods
- Corridor Branding set up: Fixer Creative selected in January 2020
- E-bike sharing throughout the corridor
- First Friday Shuttle Bus
- OCC SIMD designation
- Creative Districts in Manitou Springs and Colorado Springs

Obstacles for the Corridor
- Attracting and retaining human capital.
- Building a skilled workforce pipeline.
- Connecting with school districts and local education institutions.
- Regional and county collaborations.
- Infrastructure to support a remote workforce.
- Long-term funding opportunities.

FINDINGS AND IDEAS //
Workshop Emphasized Findings

Old Colorado City (OCC) meets the definition of a low-income area as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), due to its residents having household incomes below 80% of the area median income (AMI).
- OCC has a median household income that is 79.9% of the AMI based on 2019 estimates.
- A low-income designation for OCC might present federal funding opportunities through the Community Development Block Grant program and other programs.
- Funding opportunities for OCC positively impact the success of the entire Corridor

Workshop Emphasized Ideas

Establishment of Memorandums of Understanding between all Corridor members and within Old Colorado City Partnership

Designation of Old Colorado City as a Business Improvement District or Metro District
Innovation with COVID-19 in mind: Capitalize on business/resident increased comfort with technology

Manitou Dollars: Encouraging residents to return to retail post COVID-19
- Manitou Dollars provided by the City and given to citizens to use at local businesses
- Building confidence in community

Mobility Hubs
- Routed bike rides to businesses using Pike Ride throughout the Corridor with scheduled stops (hubs) in each community

NEXT STEPS //
In order to capitalize on its assets and opportunities in pragmatic, sustainable, and equitable ways, the Corridor needs to take these steps within the aforementioned target areas of Governance, Marketing & Branding, Place-Making, and Mobility:

**Governance**

**Step One: Create Memorandums Of Understanding**
- Establish two in particular: 1) internal within OCCP and 2) between the Pikes Peak Creative Corridor communities.
- Manitou Springs Vista CO Attorneys for the Arts is in the process of assisting in piloting the MoU process between the three entities.
Step Two: Establish leadership and community confidence in OCCP
- Clarify and formalize leadership within the partnership.
- Engage the community in an effort to publicize and create name recognition among leadership.
- Once leadership structure is established, self-advocate for OCCP and Creative Corridor in decision-making processes in greater Colorado Springs.

Step Three: Business Improvement District or Metro District designation in Old Colorado City
- Determine which designation is most feasible in the area.
- Identify areas of need and develop project concepts to address these needs.
- Calculate potential cost-savings and other benefits from a BID or Metro District to present to local business owners.

Marketing & Branding
Step One: Communicate that businesses along the corridor are safe and open (COVID-19 related)
- Produce a safety certificate for businesses to display on Colorado Avenue; recognized and collectively used by the entire Corridor.
- Coordinated provision of masks for businesses along the Corridor.
- Use social media and appropriate signage (in addition to safety certificates) to promote safety and recognition of proper social distancing techniques.

Step Two: Identify projects or initiatives established during COVID-19 that may continue past re-opening
- Review success of projects and initiatives that took place as a result of COVID-19.
- Evaluate whether these might replace similar pre-COVID-19 initiatives/projects.
- For example, Virtual First Fridays: April and May brought in over $20,000 in sales. How can the Corridor capitalize on this success?

Step Three: Push out branding for Corridor
- Fixer Creative hired to establish a unified voice along the Corridor.

Place-Making
Step One: Create a list of Corridor projects and initiatives
- Identify areas of opportunity within the Corridor and develop project scopes to address those opportunities.
- Consider projects relating to wayfinding, beautification, and those that showcase the Corridor’s historic significance.
- Engage the public in prioritizing projects to be completed.

Mobility
Step One: Designate and market mobility hubs throughout the Corridor
- Create a tour centralized on this route.
• Identify hubs within each community.
• Cross-market the route and hubs.

**Step Two: Implement E-Bike improvements for the entire Corridor**
• Manitou Springs was recently approved for a CDOT grant that provides $150,000 to fund three bike stations.
• Evaluate the potential need for added bike stations.
• Seek funding to establish additional bike stations in Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs.

**DESIRED OUTCOME //**
1. Creation of a long-lasting, regional economic development partnership
2. Improvement of access to and between all communities along the Corridor
3. Promotion of all facets of the Corridor to the local community and visitors
4. Economic Resiliency for Old Colorado City and the Corridor