Sustainable Financing for Cultural Amenities
City of Walsenburg

CHALLENGE STATEMENT //

Colorado is lucky to have so many great museums, galleries, theaters, non-profit arts organizations, and other cultural assets. Unfortunately, many of these assets are struggling from year to year to keep their doors open, make needed investments, retain employees, and engage the community. How can we shape creative financing mechanisms to provide relevant programs and create partnerships to sustain the Old Fox Theater in downtown Walsenburg?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY //

The Old Fox Theater in early 20th century Walsenburg, then a coal town, was built in 1910 for live performances but since then fell into disrepair. Recently, the theater has been renovated by volunteers and donated to the county in interest of the public good where it is run by the Spanish Peaks Community Foundation; staff consists of one full-time person. There is interest in the community to keep the historic theater going, however, funds and staff time are limited placing the longevity of the theater in jeopardy. Our Challenge Studio participants came up with a number of ideas to solve this problem including a variety of programming opportunities (open mic, poetry, live music, etc.) and ways to get the word out about the Old Fox Theater and the benefits it brings to Walsenburg.

TEAM MEMBERS //

John Galusha, County Administrator, Walsenburg / Elaine Brett, Paonia, EMB Associates LLC / Rachel Trignano, Colorado Symphony / TJ Dulbac, R&G Associates, Town of Dillon / Donna Nolz, City of Vail / Maria Cocchiarelli, Museum of Friends in Walsenburg, Contemporary Art / Margo Boodakian, resident of Walsenburg / Melody Christiansen / Rachel Miller / Megan Garn, DCI Challenge Studio Anthropologist

BACKGROUND INFORMATION //

Stakeholders:
- Spanish Peaks Community Foundation
- City of Walsenburg

Assets:
- Central Location
- Historically Significant
- Space open to different usages
- County Ownership

Obstacles:
- Lack of programs
- Lack of public visibility
  + outreach
- No Parking
- No bus system
- Low admission rates
- Overcoming apathy
- No business plan

The historic Old Fox Theater in downtown Walsenburg.
These resultant ideas about solutions for sustainable financing for cultural amenities in Walsenburg came about through a round table discussion between community members, private, and public figures. This exercise was primarily to generate new ideas and sketch out the beginnings of innovative solutions and as such are on a conceptual level.

1. New Resources + Previously Undiscovered Assets
   - Activating the space for other usages; potential area for additional revenue
   - Rentals and developing the theater as a venue
   - Liquor revenue
   - Partnership with other art non-mobiles

2. Suggestions from Participants
   - A variety of programming:
     - Open mic night
     - Stand up comedy
     - Poetry
     - Karaoke
     - Dance classes
     - TED talks
     - Classics night
   - Use the versatility of the space and its historic significance to bring in additional revenue
   - Work on marketing and community outreach:
     - Partnerships with downtown businesses
     - Community sponsorships
     - Facebook, flyers, radio, marketing events
     - Host educational events and workshops
   - Creating a business plan that is actionable
   - Look at applicable grants
   - Utilize space as a dance floor
   - Screen sporting games and events at theater
   - Acquire liquor license

NEXT STEPS //

1. Concrete Steps:
   - Identify theater champions including local organizations and regional communities
   - Develop a business plan including a google small town business plan
   - Utilize University Technical Assistance (UTA) services

2. Desired Outcomes:
   - A sustainable way of funding the continued operation of the Old Fox Theater