

# *Adventure*

## ON THE HIGH LINE CANAL

Charting our Course for the Next Century

### *Chapter 2*

# *A Fork in the Road*

**W**elcome! The High Line Canal Conservancy is leading a broad and inclusive community conversation about the future of the well-loved High Line Canal. Today, we collectively take the second step in the creation of this vision – a forward-looking story of what the Canal can be in the future. We'll be asking thoughtful questions and posing some difficult choices, and want to understand what YOU want for the High Line Canal.

The resulting Vision Plan will ensure the Canal reaches its greatest potential as an economic, environmental, recreational, and social asset along not just some, but all of its 71 miles.

# What is a "Vision Plan"?

## The Vision Plan is the Story of the Canal's next 100 years.

For more than a century, the High Line Canal has served a number of purposes - a water delivery infrastructure, a unique man-made ecosystem and, recently, a recreational asset.

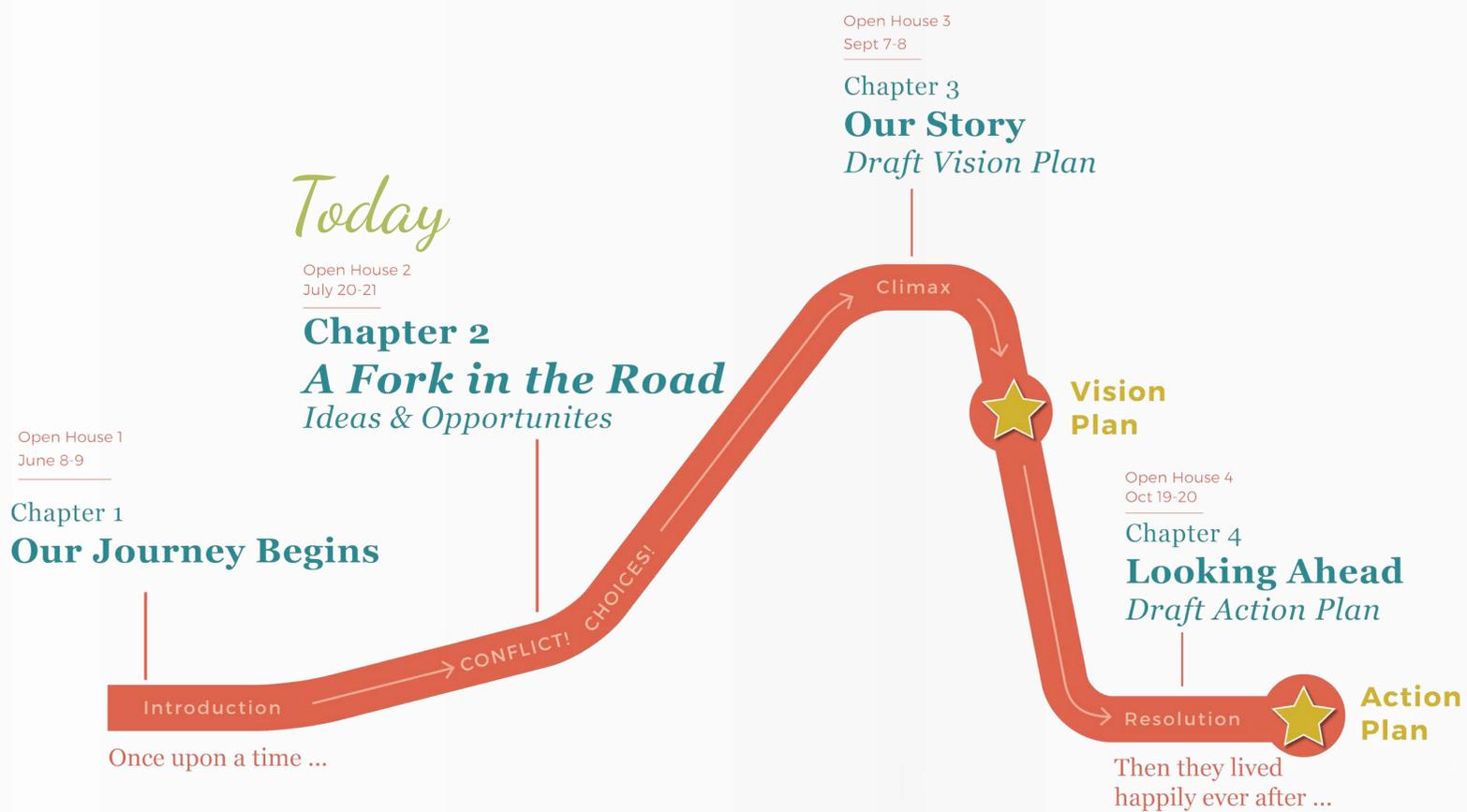
But what does the next century hold in store for the High Line Canal? There are challenges and opportunities ahead ... and new decisions need to be made around each bend.

We need your help to write this story. What do you imagine the Canal can be for future generations?

A Vision Plan includes:

- Big picture opportunities for preserving and enhancing the Canal's character and identity
- Strategies for celebrating the diverse communities and landscapes along the Canal
- Ideas for future actions and processes to engage the communities, partner organizations, and governmental agencies

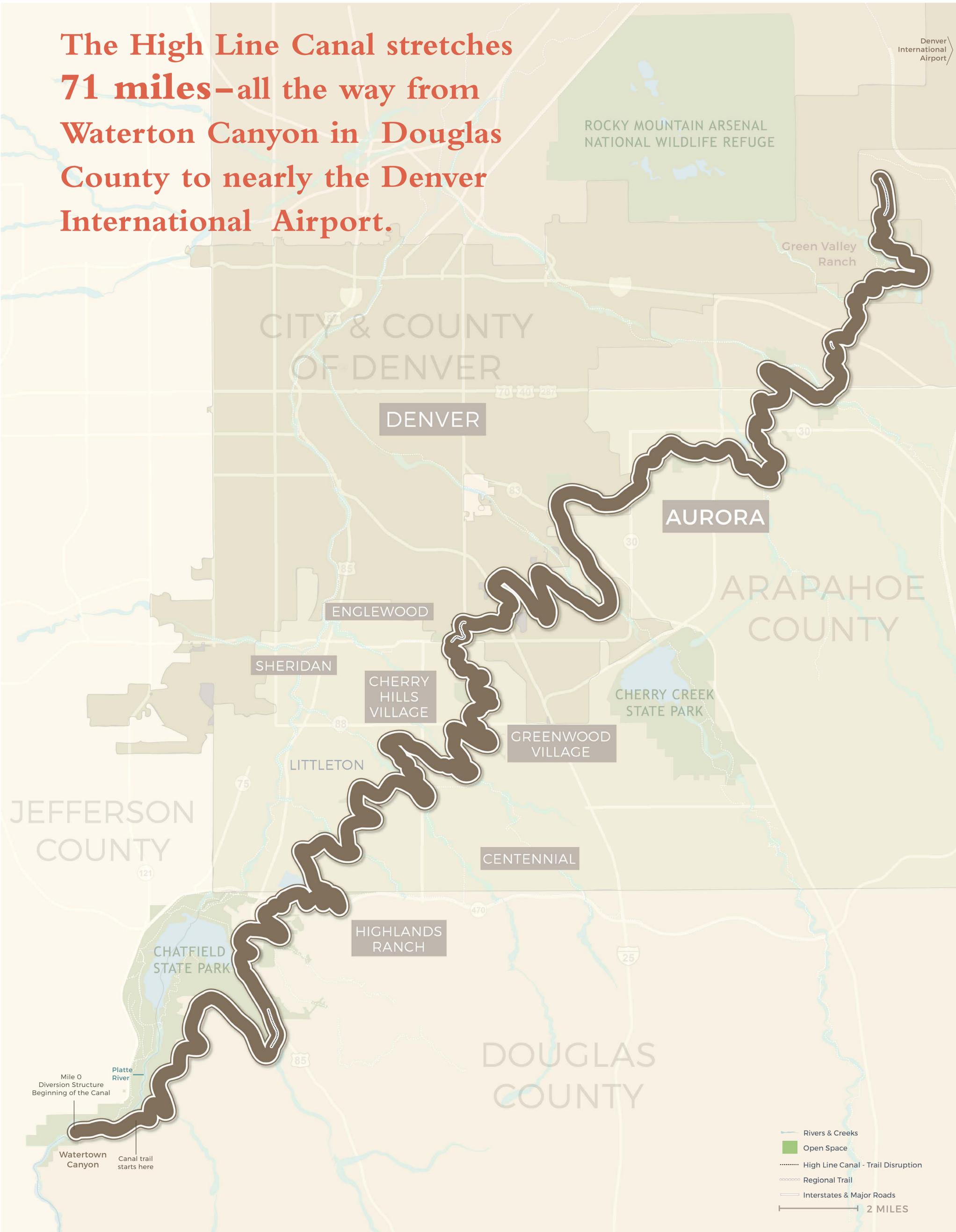
## This process is structured like a story.



# Connecting Communities

Connecting Nature - From The Foothills To The Plains

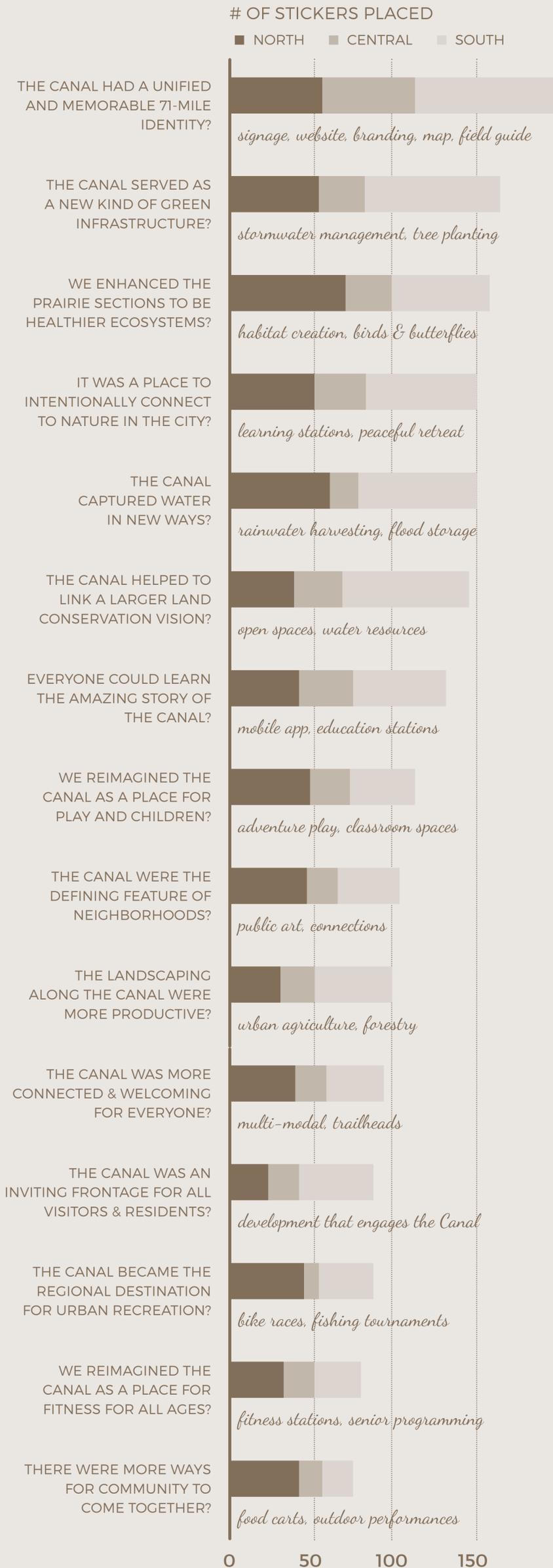
**The High Line Canal stretches 71 miles - all the way from Waterton Canyon in Douglas County to nearly the Denver International Airport.**



# Your High Line Canal

Here's What You Shared With Us

## WHAT IF...



## OPEN HOUSE #1: JUNE 8-9



"I've learned how incredibly diverse each section of the Canal is—all of the endless possibilities and untapped potential the Canal's future has."



"This was a great experience that opened my mind to the total of the High Line Canal."

STORIES WRITTEN

*The Canal is known far and wide as a...*

[VISIONARY STATEMENT]

URBAN NATURE CORRIDOR  
BELOVED REGIONAL GEM  
RECREATIONAL TRAIL  
PEACEFUL RETREAT  
TREMENDOUS ASSET  
NATURAL, WELL-CONNECTED PASSAGE

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### 1 PRESERVE *as a green corridor for the region*

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, TREE PLANTING,  
OPEN SPACE

### 2 PROTECT *the natural ecosystem*

HABITAT, ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION,  
APPROPRIATE VEGETATION

### 3 ENHANCE *with basic trail "infrastructure"*

SIGNAGE, BATHROOMS & BENCHES,  
TRASH CANS & TRAIL HEADS

### 4 ACTIVATE *small areas for communities' use*

FITNESS & PLAY AREAS, PUBLIC ART,  
EVENT / GATHERING SPACES

### 5 EDUCATE *the region about the Canal*

HISTORICAL CONTEXT, CONNECTIVITY  
TO TRAILS, PARTNERSHIPS

## YOU SAID

Water is an important benefit to people and encourages wildlife.

Better maps on the trail, and more cohesive.

Stormwater and water quality

More foot bridges in areas that don't seem to be used much now

Promoting more awareness of the Canal, important historic resource

A trail needs to be built to bridge the gap near Plum Creek

More benches needed for oldsters!

Birds and butterflies -- by working to restore native landscaping

Plant natural Colorado trees that normally grow in this area. Let nature be!

Explore connecting to existing bike trails

Education for the younger generation about how to use the Canal

Need funding mechanisms for these structures and other amenities

*I first visited the Canal in...*

#### [SETTING]

AURORA  
LITTLETON  
BIBLE PARK  
WATERTON CANYON  
DEKOEVEND PARK  
EXPO PARK  
CENTENNIAL  
THE TRAIL THROUGH FAIRMOUNT CEMETERY  
THROUGH MY BACKYARD

*It captivated me with its...*

#### [ADJECTIVES]

WILDERNESS IN AN URBAN SETTING  
BEAUTY  
PEACEFUL PARKLIKE SETTING  
NATURAL BEAUTY  
ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE  
MANY TYPES OF FLORA AND FAUNA

*On the Canal, you might bump into...*

#### [CHARACTERS]

A FOX  
DEER  
COYOTES  
A FRIEND  
NEIGHBORS  
PEOPLE  
CYCLISTS  
EVERYONE  
ANYONE

*Sometimes, you'd be lucky to...*

#### [CONFLICT]

FIND A WAY TO CROSS THE CANAL  
KNOW WHERE YOU ARE  
SEE ANIMALS  
FIND A COMFORTABLE PLACE TO REST  
FIND A PLACE TO EAT  
EASILY CROSS THE ROAD

*From conflict to...*

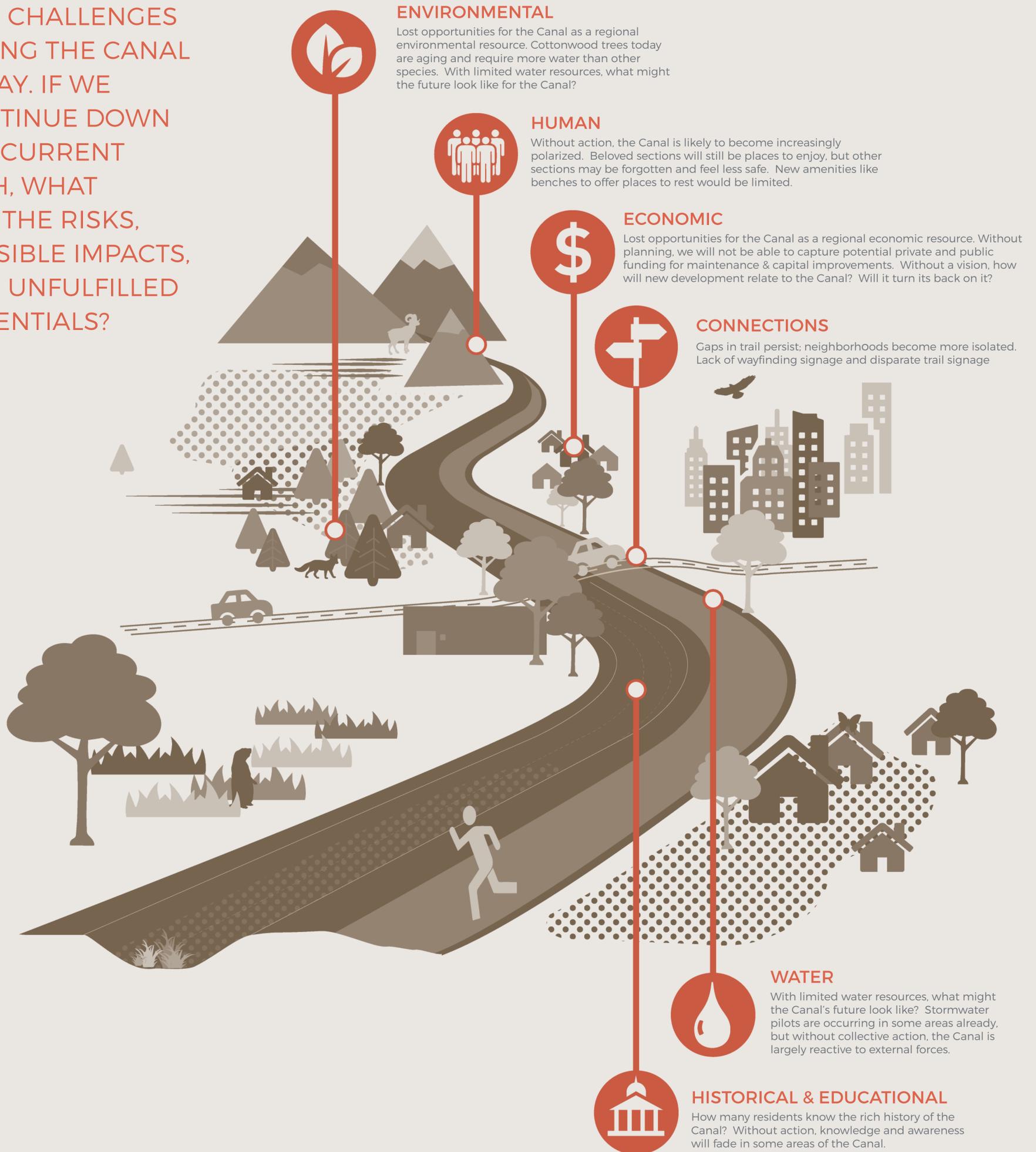
#### [HAPPY ENDING]

PEACEFUL RETREAT  
OPEN SPACE VITALIZATION  
NATURAL REFUGE  
A COMMUNITY ASSET  
LOVED, PRESERVED  
CORRIDOR OF TRANSFORMATION  
PEOPLE-FRIENDLY  
THRIVING ANIMAL HABITAT

# A Fork in the Road

## We Have Decisions To Make About The Canal's Future

YOU'VE HELPED DEFINE SOME OF THE CONFLICTS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE CANAL TODAY. IF WE CONTINUE DOWN THE CURRENT PATH, WHAT ARE THE RISKS, POSSIBLE IMPACTS, AND UNFULFILLED POTENTIALS?



# A Different Path

**N**ow that we have collectively defined the opportunities and challenges, our task today is to start thinking about the possibilities of new paths forward.

The following ideas are presented to provide you with new ways of thinking about the future.

We have also provide some technical considerations, benefits and trade-offs associated with potential changes.

On this journey, you will be asked some provocative questions and posed some difficult choices. We want to understand what **YOU** want for the High Line Canal.

## WHAT IF WE TOOK A DIFFERENT PATH?

*Let's explore the benefits of collective action.*

*Tell us your thoughts!*

THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY TODAY, YOU WILL SEE CIRCLES ON BOARDS INVITING YOU TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ABOUT THE OPTIONS YOU ARE SEEING.

# A Community-Driven Vision

The mission of the High Line Canal Conservancy is to preserve, protect, and enhance the 71-miles-long Canal in partnership with the public. These three “plot lines” are the organizing structure of our story today: we’ll use them to explore the ideas and opportunities for the future of the Canal.

## Preserve

### FOCUS ON THE CANAL’S HISTORIC CORRIDOR

Preservation means different things to different people and we may place value on different elements. What is most important to you about the Canal’s identity, ecology, and physical character? This category focuses on the area within the Canal’s 100 to 150 foot right-of-way.



## Protect

### CONSIDER THE FORCES OUTSIDE THE CANAL’S CORRIDOR

Existing neighbors, connections, and changes in use adjacent to the Canal corridor can effect the long term health of the Canal - both positively and negatively. What kinds of actions outside the Canal can keep it healthy long term? What opportunities are most appealing?



## Enhance

### EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CANAL

The Canal evokes our emotions by presenting us with a wide variety of experiences. How do you want to feel when you’re on the Canal? Does this vary in different stretches of the Canal?





# Preserve

FOCUS ON THE CANAL'S HISTORIC CORRIDOR

---

Preservation means different things to different people and we may place value on different elements. Questions in this section aim to understand what is most important to you about the Canal's identity, ecology and physical character.

# Water & Preserving the Ecosystem

There are many ways to preserve the Canal as a cherished ecological asset. How do these approaches feel?

Tell us your thoughts on your handout  
Question 3



## MAN-MADE ECOSYSTEM (i.e. the Canal today)

The Canal's construction in the late 1800s brought water to previously dry prairie, nurturing flora and fauna usually found in wetter environments, like Cottonwood trees. Looking ahead, this ecosystem is not sustainable as-is in the long-term. Lining the Canal has been proposed as a solution. This would allow water to flow farther in length through the Canal, but it means water would not seep in along the way to water trees.

- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Shady and familiar environment

- CHALLENGES**
- Future of irrigation management is unclear
  - Water-demanding Cottonwoods are aging and not a sustainable species
  - Water does not reach the northeastern end due to seepage and evaporation
  - Costs to maintain as-is are relatively high, while benefits are nominal

## MANAGED LANDSCAPE (Stormwater or other opportunities)

The Canal could be retrofit to collect stormwater from adjacent neighborhoods. This would provide more days when the Canal would be wet / moist, which would help support a new generation of trees of different species that need less water.

- OPPORTUNITIES**
- More wet days provides a sustainable long-term option for trees
  - Potential for stormwater use to be a revenue source

- CHALLENGES**
- Expensive: while this approach is feasible throughout the entire Canal, it might not be economically viable on its own everywhere
  - Water can be held for a limited amount of time
  - Requires long-term maintenance plan/funding
  - Denver Water might need alternative delivery method for irrigation customers along the Canal



## NATURAL ECOSYSTEM (Prairie)

A common misconception is that a drier Canal provides less habitat for wildlife. In fact, this is just a different kind of habitat, which can be beautiful, too, when cultivated. For example, a more natural prairie landscape with meadows of wildflowers and grasses can attract butterflies. This can help reestablish the region's native prairie landscape of drought-tolerant grasses and shrubs.

- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Habitat for native fauna - new kinds of wildlife than other parts of the Canal
  - Less cost to maintain
  - Does not require water flow for healthy landscape

- CHALLENGES**
- Irrigation water customers along the Canal would need alternative delivery method
  - Less shade from vegetation



## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH WATER IN THE CANAL?



**STORMWATER POTENTIAL:** Most of the Canal could capture and treat water from nearby neighborhoods, resulting in 100 more "wet" days per year.

**INEFFICIENT DELIVERY:** Even when the Canal is running, roughly 70% of water evaporates or seeps out by the time it reaches Denver Water customers. Water doesn't make it past Fairmount Cemetery.

**WHAT ABOUT THE TREES?** Water-demanding Cottonwood trees are aging, in decline, and require more water than other trees to be healthy. Maintaining any tree canopy long-term will require some water (diverted or stormwater).

**LESS DIVERSION:** Denver Water is limited in how frequently it can run water in the Canal, with current practices being about 2 water runs per year when water rights are in priority. This means that over the last 10 years there have been an average of 37 wet days per year.

# Preserving the Canal's Identity

## How do you want to see the fundamental character of the Canal's length?

Tell us your thoughts on your handout  
Question 4



### UNIFIED AND CONSISTENT CHARACTER FOR 71 MILES

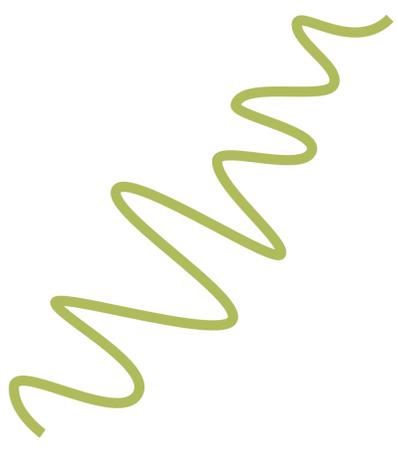
The Canal would maintain one profile, set of uses, and relationship to its surrounding neighborhoods for its entire length. This approach means we would focus on creating as similar of an experience as possible for the entire 71 miles.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Visible and recognizable brand
- One experience to unite many communities
- May be easier to manage and plan for as a unified approach

**CHALLENGES**

- Unique details of the Canal's districts could get lost



### DIVERSE DISTRICTS (i.e. "Rooms of a house")

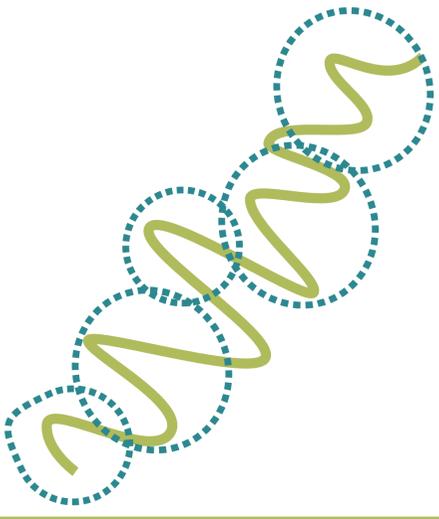
Along its 71 miles the Canal would pass through distinct zones each with a specific character defined by its adjacent communities, ecology and use patterns. It could still have elements of unity like wayfinding signage or furniture. This approach means we would focus on creating an identity that adapted to different communities along the way.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Diversity of culture and ecology is celebrated and enhanced

**CHALLENGES**

- Could be harder to create a distinct brand for the Canal



### PATCHWORK CHARACTER

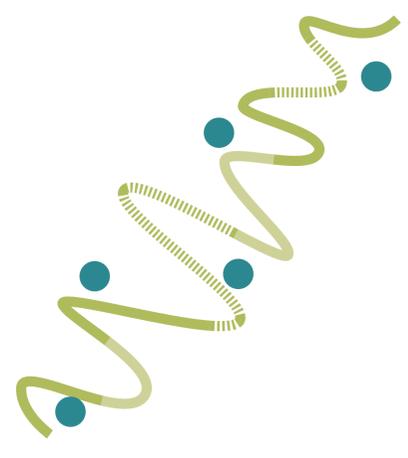
This would mean an identity that changed frequently along the Canal without a clear pattern. The changing character could add an element of surprise to the experience of moving along the Canal. This approach means the character would be less consistent and more of a patchwork experience.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Smaller-scale identities could be more driven locally
- One canal many neighbors

**CHALLENGES**

- More difficult to make legible as one Canal
- Sections would not relate to each other; experience could feel more jarring when moving between sections



## INSPIRATIONAL PRECEDENTS



THE HIGH LINE, NYC

The identity of the high line reflects its conversion from an abandoned rail line to an elevated public space. The character has a consistent feel throughout, with small variations between segments.



CHICAGO RIVERWALK, IL

This waterfront public park is designed as a series of related spaces. Each block takes on the form and program of a different river-based typology. These spaces include: The Marina Plaza, The Cove, The River Theater, The Water Plaza, The Jetty, and The Boardwalk.



# Preserving the Canal's Historic Story

## What about the Canal's historic construction should be preserved?

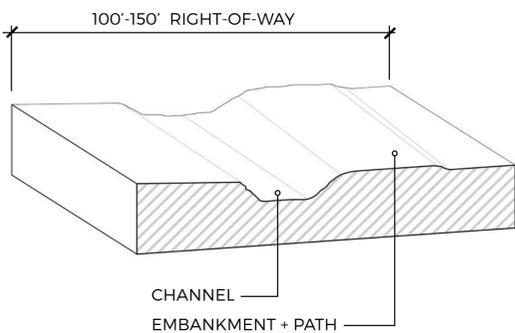
Tell us your thoughts on your handout  
Question 5



### APPROACH 1 MAINTAIN THE CANAL'S PROFILE AS-IS

The Canal's historic profile, or cross-section, has an identifiable channel on the uphill side and embankment on the downhill side with a maintenance path, all within the corridor measuring 100 to 150 foot in width. This approach means future uses would be more limited and water would only be possible through continuing diversions from the Platte River.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes to existing landscape structure</li> <li>• Preserves the Canal as an element of cultural heritage</li> </ul> | <p><b>CHALLENGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over time, ecosystem would change</li> <li>• Less flexible; stormwater would require adaptation (approach 2)</li> </ul> |
|--|---|



THE HISTORIC PROFILE

### APPROACH 2 ADAPT (New uses for the historic profile)

Honoring the simple low channel and high pathway of the historic profile, new uses and landscapes could be inserted within the corridor. With this approach, many options are possible and could vary along the Canal.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible approach allows for stormwater management or a range of other options</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for elevated experiences as well as protected options in the low Canal bed</li> <li>• Preserves Canal's historic shape</li> </ul> | <p><b>CHALLENGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining the historic profile constrains proportions of new ideas and interventions</li> <li>• Trees within the levee may compromise the Canal's ability to carry water</li> </ul> |
|---|---|



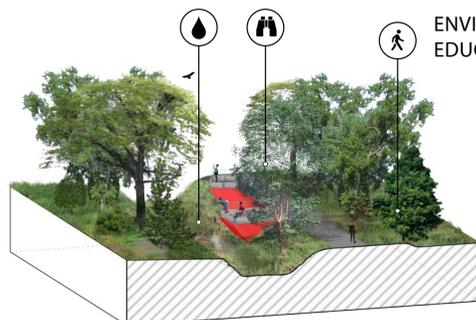
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Adapting the Canal as a tiered social space where the low points could collect stormwater



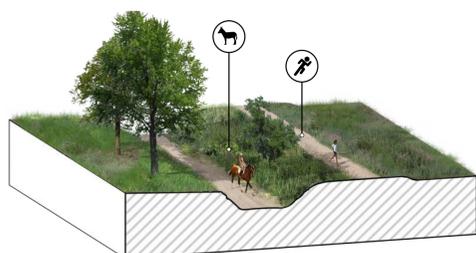
STORMWATER

Adapting the channel to temporarily hold stormwater



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The high and low variation could be enhanced for wildlife watching with elevated viewing platforms, boardwalks, and habitat enhancements



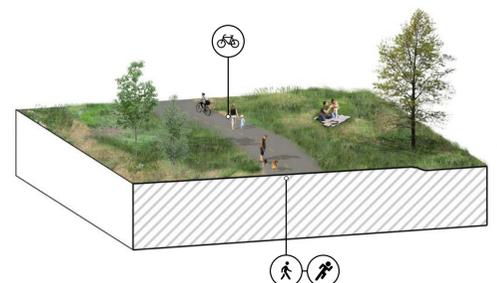
PARALLEL TRAILS

Parts of the Canal could become a parallel path - or a protected area for dogs to play.

### APPROACH 3 HONOR THE HISTORIC LEGACY IN NEW WAYS

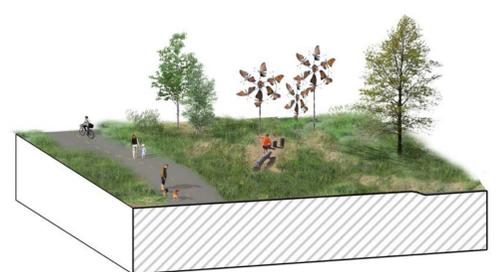
Are there other, less literal, ways we could honor the Canal's history through future enhancements? What other possibilities could you imagine?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greatest flexibility of potential new uses</li> <li>• Trail alignment could shift to one side of right-of-way</li> <li>• Opportunity for wider, flatter areas for sports, picnicking, playgrounds, public art and more</li> </ul> | <p><b>CHALLENGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining the Canal's story</li> </ul> |
|--|--|



PICNICKING & BUTTERFLIES

Wider flat areas could offer space for picnicking, tossing a frisbee, or other play opportunities.



PLAY & PUBLIC ART

Shifting the trail alignment could provide a broader area for butterfly meadows, public art, or a nature-play area.



# Protect

CONSIDER THE FORCES OUTSIDE THE CANAL'S CORRIDOR

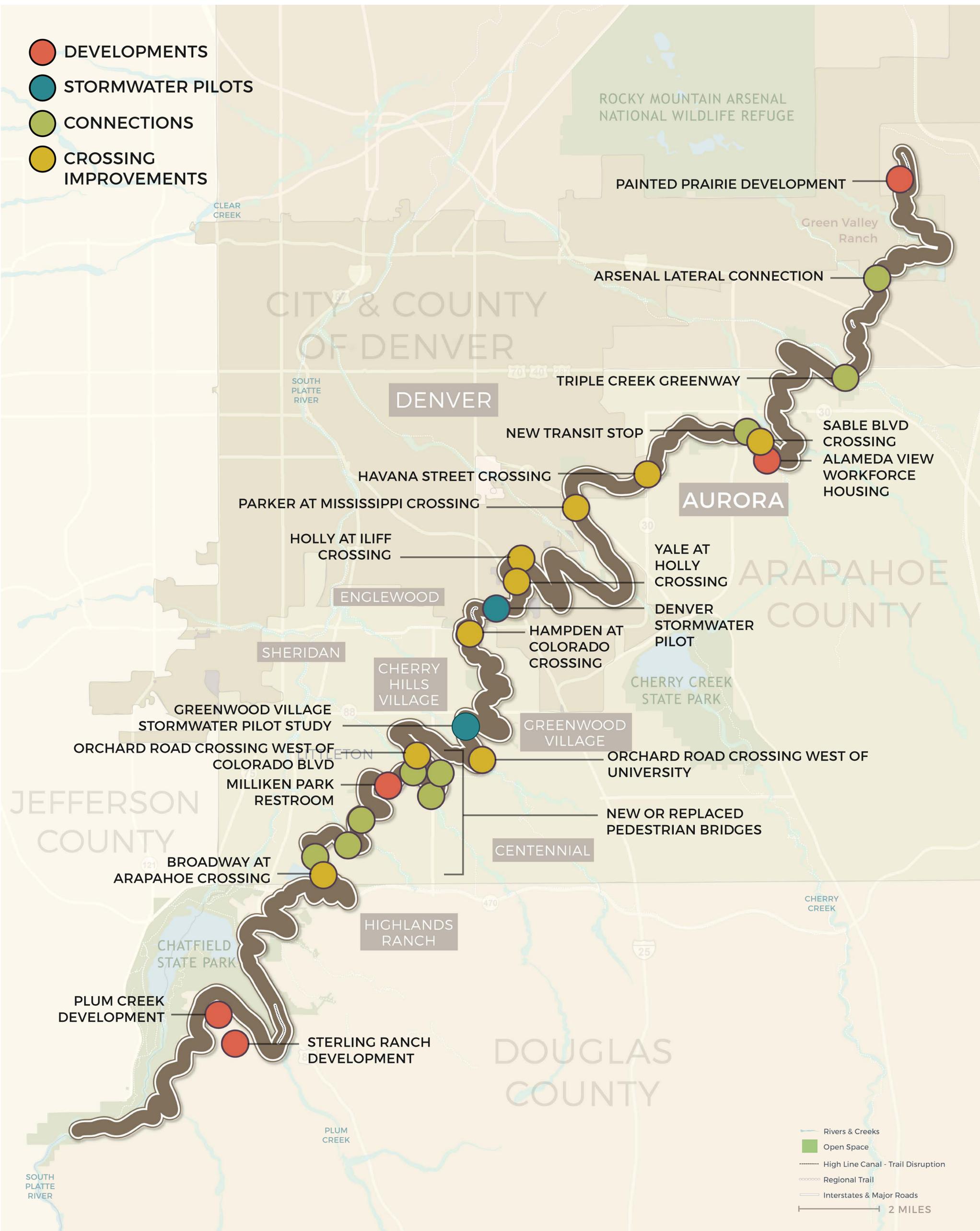
---

Existing neighbors, changes in use, and connections adjacent to the Canal corridor can effect the long term health of the Canal - both positively and negatively. This theme explores what kinds of actions outside the Canal can keep it healthy long term, and asks you to identify what opportunities are most appealing.

## Existing Plans

# What is already planned for the High Line Canal?

This is a sampling of projects planned or already occurring adjacent to the High Line Canal—stormwater pilots, trail connections, residential developments, and a transit stop.



# Introduction

The High Line Canal connects open spaces, communities, trails, and waterways and watersheds. The experience of the Canal is not just about the Canal itself, but also the views, connections, and relationships with what is along it. Although outside the control of the canal, we can work on specific ideas in collaborations with those neighbors. *So, what do we want?*

This section shows three potential “storylines” for enhancing the Canal’s impact on the region. What roles do you find most important? What are the opportunities within each to strengthen connections?

1. The Canal as a community connector
2. The Canal as a wildlife corridor
3. The Canal’s neighbors and adjacent uses

*What are the opportunities to weave these three identities together to enhance the Canal?*

## Protecting the Canal's Connections

# Strengthening the Role of the Canal to Connect Communities

*Tell us your thoughts on your handout*  
Question 3

The High Line Canal already acts as movement corridor for walking, jogging, and bicycling. What are the opportunities to further protect this identity?

### OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Improve crossings along and to the Canal
2. Strengthen connections with other trails across the region
3. Promote development of additional trail connections
4. Support active lifestyles and recreation

THIS APPROACH COULD INCLUDE IMPROVING ...

### TRAIL CONNECTIONS

#### EXAMPLES

Cherry Creek Greenway and Triple Creek



### STREET CROSSING

#### EXAMPLES

Sante Fe and Broadway



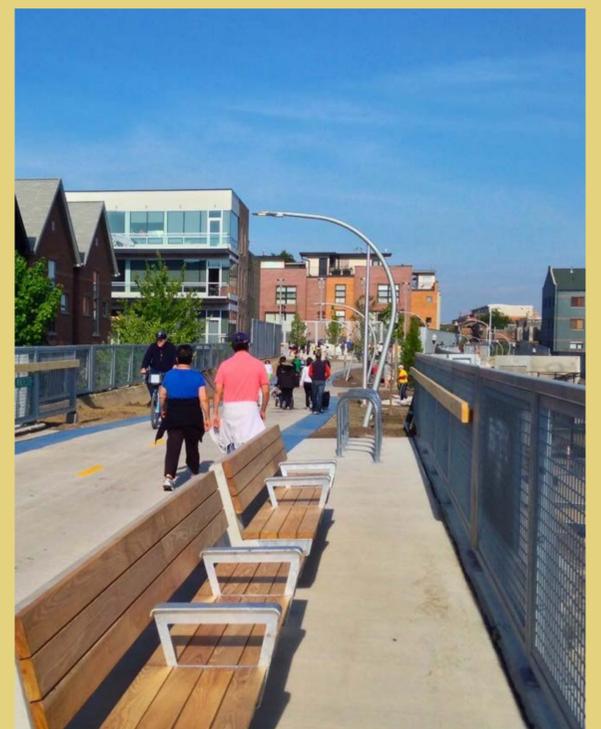
1. BELTLINE, ATLANTA  
2. CHILE: PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

### EXAMPLE

## Bloomington Trail

### CHICAGO

This trail focuses on mobility, improving connections between neighborhoods and other destinations. The character reflects a focus on efficient mobility. This mobility-focus is required by funding; \$39M of the project was from Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement funds to support this corridor as an alternative to driving.



## Protecting the Canal's Habitat

# Strengthening the Role of the Canal as a Wildlife Corridor

The High Line Canal already acts as movement corridor for wildlife. The success of the Canal depends on its connections to existing and new development, adjacent conservation land, creek corridors, and other open spaces.

### OPPORTUNITIES

1. Strengthen the Canal's environmental role in the region
2. Link patches of larger habitat areas, providing a connection for wildlife
3. Intersections with creeks and waterways connect the Canal's habitat with other green corridors
4. Backyards can provide small patches of open space for wildlife.

THIS APPROACH COULD INCLUDE IMPROVING CONNECTIONS TO ...

### CONSERVATION LAND

#### EXAMPLES

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and DeKoevend Conservation Land



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### CREEK CROSSINGS

#### EXAMPLES

Cherry Creek and Toll Gate Creek



DESIGN COMPETITION

### BACKYARD HABITAT

#### EXAMPLES

Homes and lots of other adjacent uses



HIGH LINE CANAL ADJACENT HOUSING OPEN SPACE

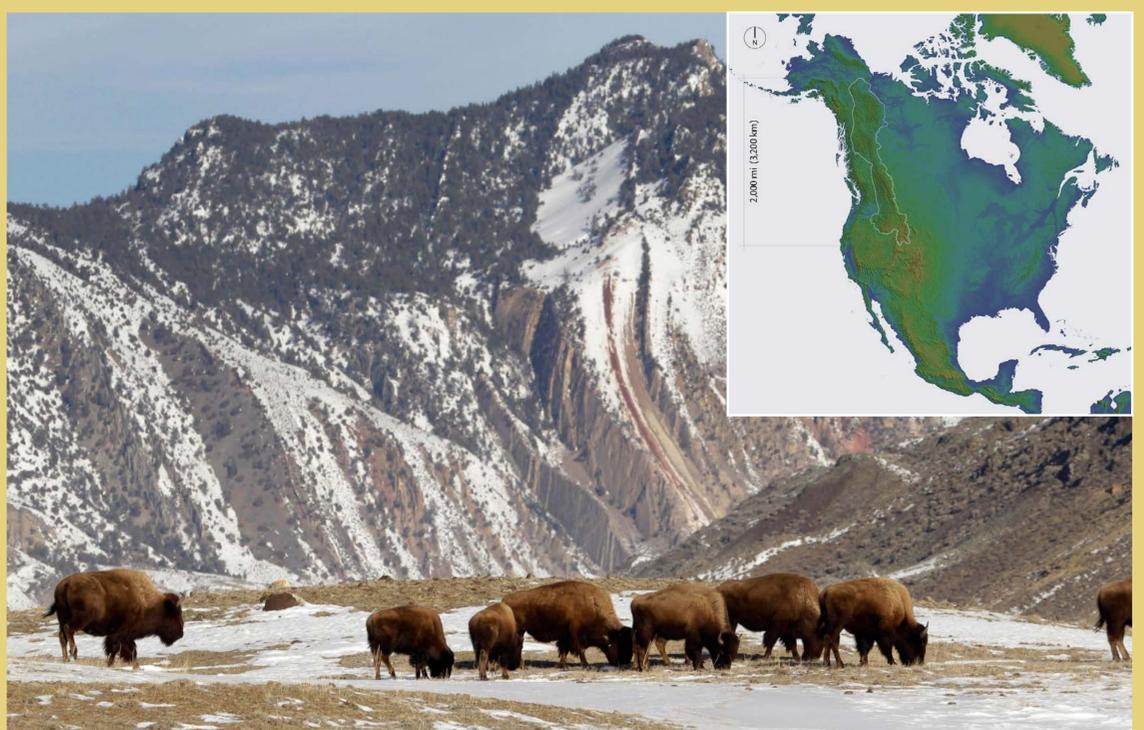


### EXAMPLE

## Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Region

### USA & CANADA

This effort is about connecting large conserved areas along the Rocky Mountain range. It is led by a non-profit organization working with more than 300 partners and scientists. It is a collection of projects to help wildlife move between protected areas.



# Protecting the Canal's Surroundings

## Supporting the Canal through Adjacent Uses and Neighbors

*Tell us your thoughts on your handout*  
Question 5

As the High Line Canal passes through diverse communities, the character of adjacent development and neighbors impacts this experience. How can these nearby uses support and enhance the Canal?

### OPPORTUNITIES

1. Revenue generation to support Canal enhancements
2. Programming and recreational opportunities
3. Development that supports the character and function of the Canal, providing a source of stormwater, trail connections, and integrates with the Canal (not turning its back on the Canal)
4. Parks and schools can provide recreational connections, expanded social space, and educational programming opportunities
5. Cafes and other nearby uses can provide places to pause, rest, and grab a bite to eat. These locations could also provide supporting activities like games or disc golf. Revenue could help support the Canal.

THIS APPROACH COULD INCLUDE IMPROVING CONNECTIONS TO ...

### DEVELOPMENT

#### EXAMPLES

Plum Creek and Sterling Ranch Village



### PARKS & SCHOOLS

#### EXAMPLES

Eisenhower Park and Expo Park



CHICAGO 606

### OTHER USES

#### EXAMPLES

Dry Dock Brewing; Hudson Gardens Coffee House (Mary Carter Greenway Trail)

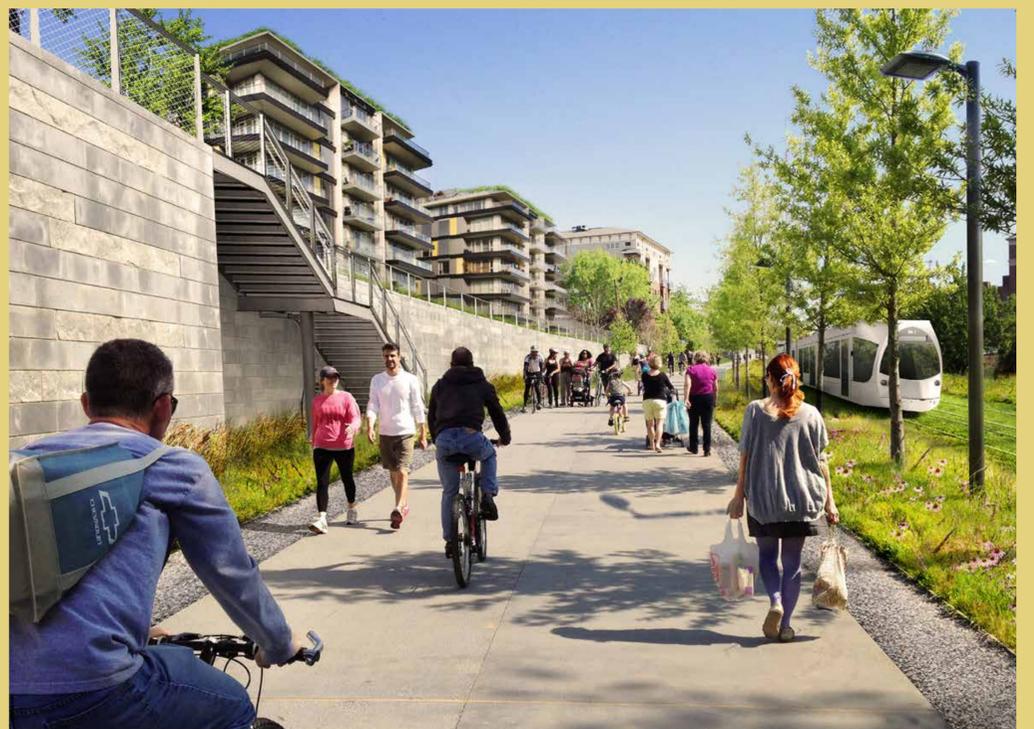


HIGH LINE, NYC BICYCLE SHARE

### EXAMPLE BeltLine

#### ATLANTA

The BeltLine is an integrated approach to a connected corridor around Atlanta focusing on rails, public transportation, redevelopment, and recreation. About 50% of the effort is funded through a "Tax Allocation District." This means that future increases in property values along the BeltLine are used to justify public spending to create it. The project has generated more than \$2.4 billion dollars in private development (six times greater than the existing public/private investment of \$400 million!).





# Enhance

EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CANAL

---

The Canal evokes our emotions by presenting us with a wide variety of experiences. This theme explores how you feel, or how you want to feel, when you're on the Canal, and asks you to locate desired feelings and experiences along the Canal.

# Canal Experiences

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE THESE ACTIVITIES?



## MEDITATIVE

*a peaceful retreat*

- Seating / Pause Places
- Views
- Birdwatching / Passive Rec
- Bighorn Sheep Viewing



## GATHER

*a community social space*

- Art
- Performance
- Food
- Picnic



## EXERCISE

*a place supportive of fitness & health*

- Running & walking
- Biking
- Hiking & Equestrian
- Dog Walking



## INSPIRE

*a learning landscape*

- Play as Learning
- Environmental Education
- Ecological Restoration
- Stormwater Education



## EXPLORE

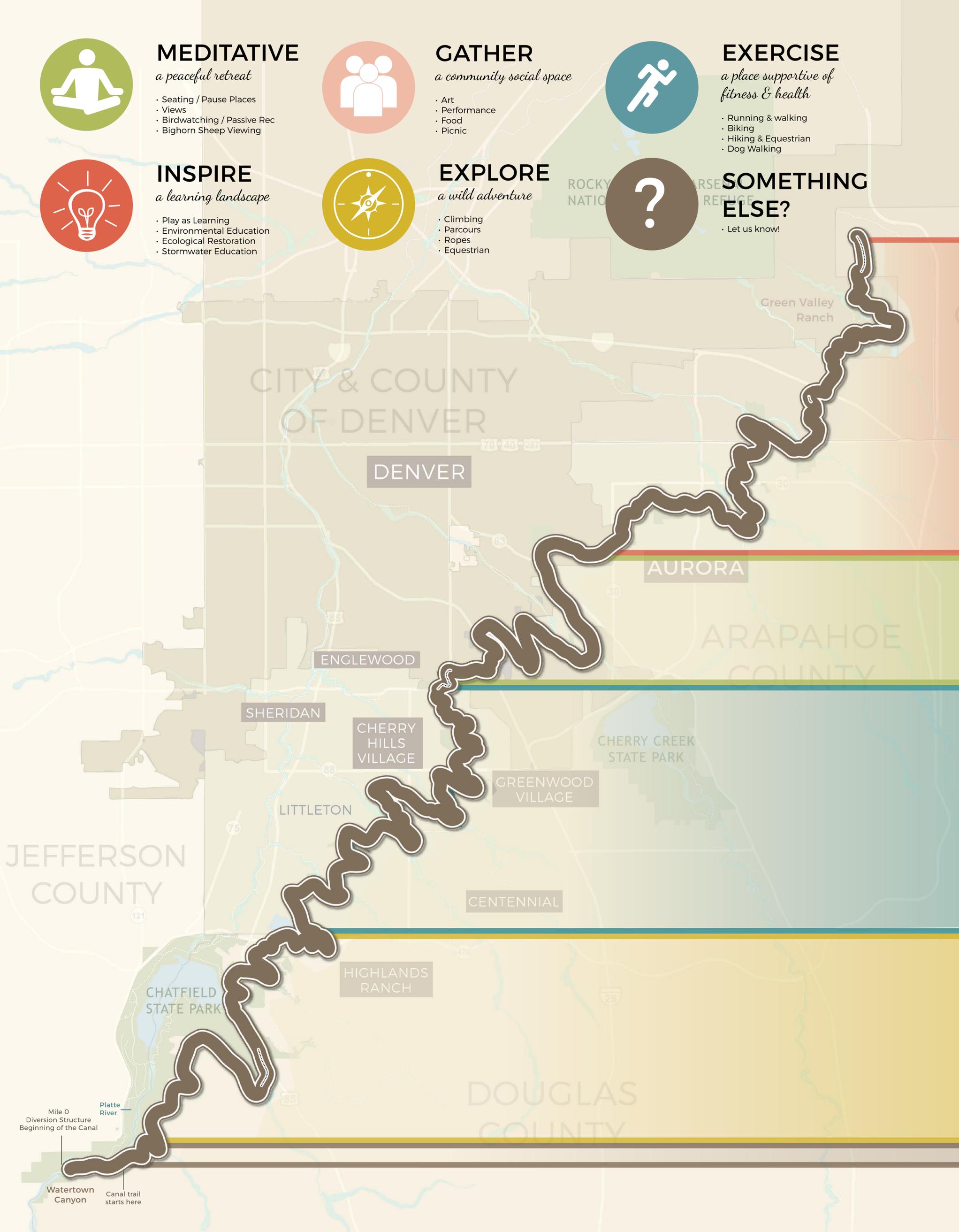
*a wild adventure*

- Climbing
- Parcours
- Ropes
- Equestrian



## SOMETHING ELSE?

- Let us know!



Mile 0  
Diversion Structure  
Beginning of the Canal

Platte  
River

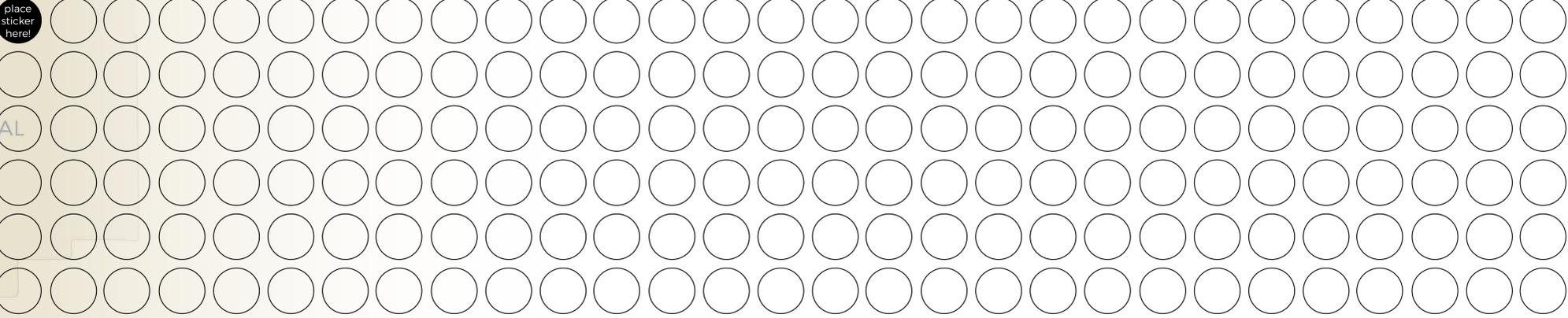
Watertown  
Canyon

Canal trail  
starts here

Place  
stickers on  
the grids  
below

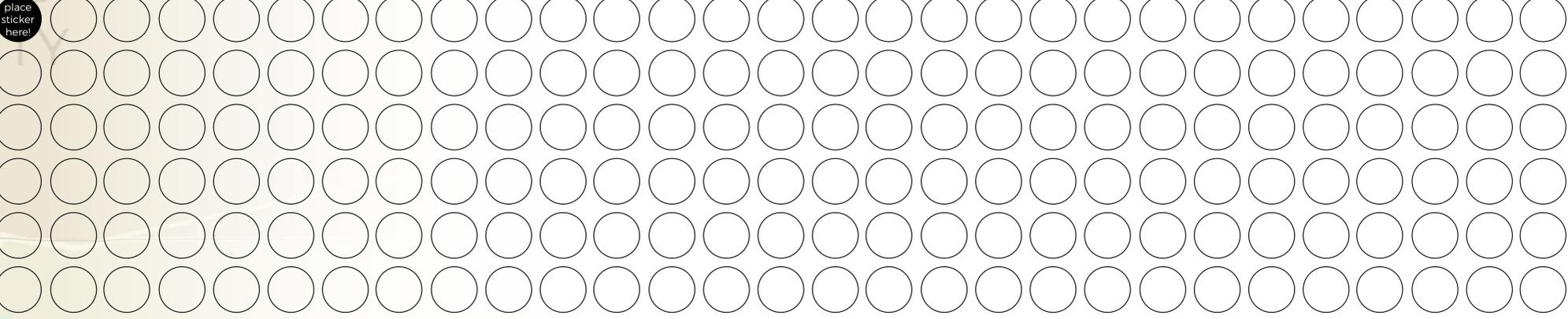
**Green Valley Ranch, Aurora, and the northern end of the Canal**

place sticker here!



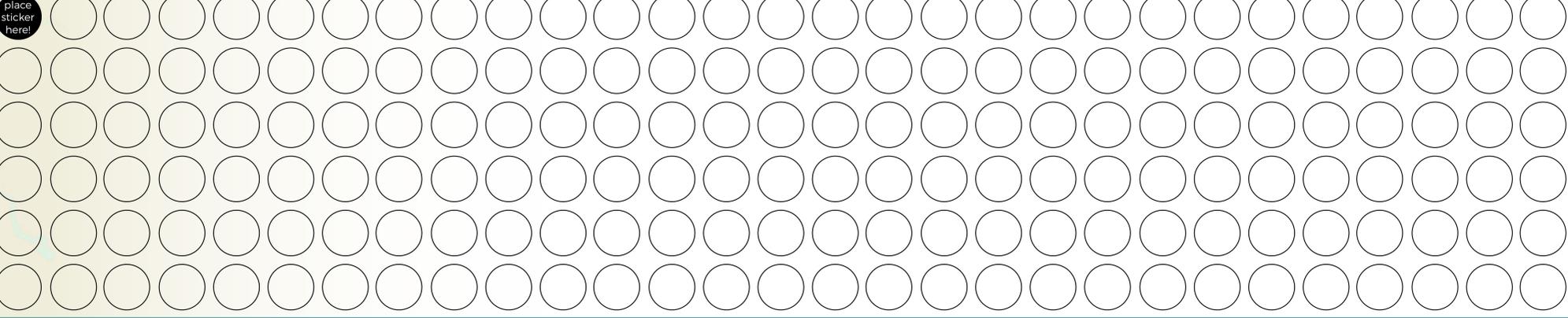
**Denver & Unincorporated Arapahoe County**

place sticker here!



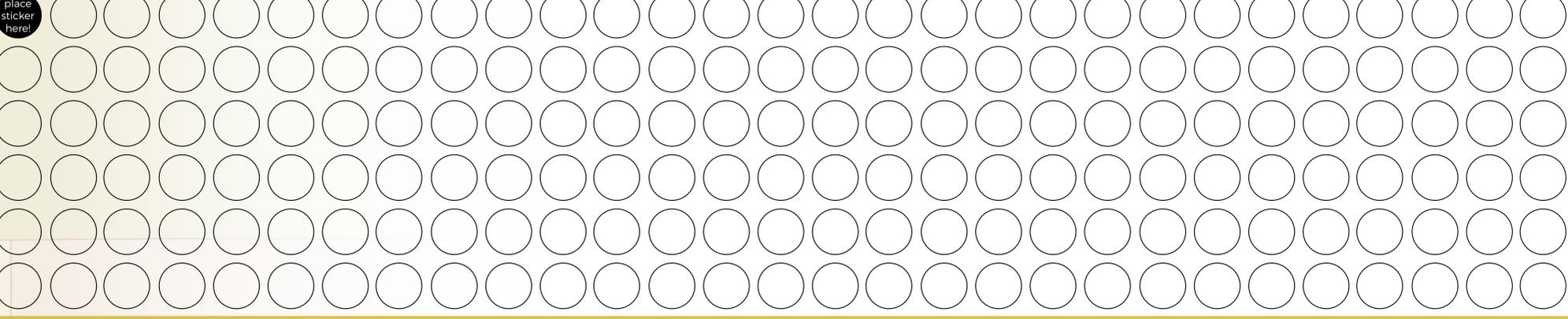
**Cherry Hills Village, Greenwood Village, Littleton, & Centennial**

place sticker here!



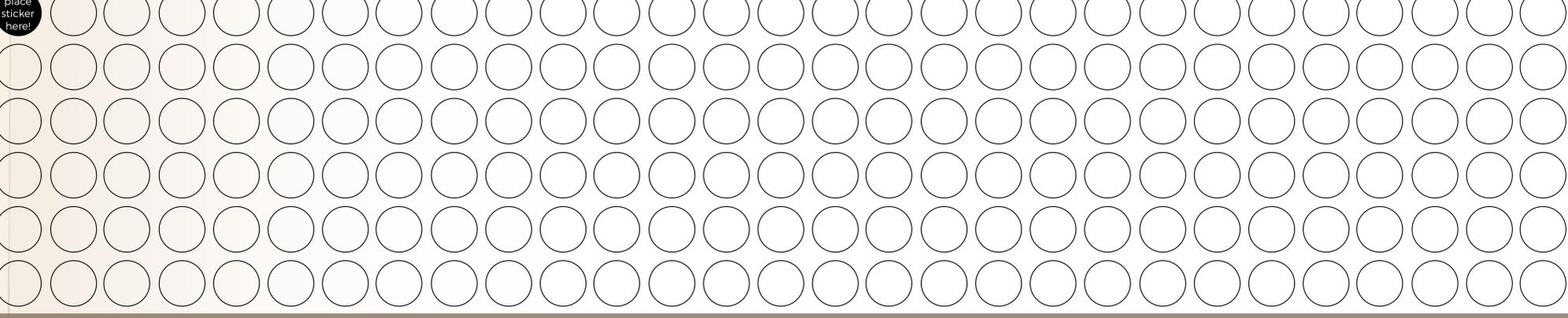
**Highlands Ranch & Douglas County**

place sticker here!



**Waterton Canyon**

place sticker here!



# Looking ahead ...

How will your feedback today be used to develop the draft vision, the future story of our Canal?

*Many kinds of feedback together will build the Vision*

Chapter 1  
Open House

Our High Line  
Canal Survey  
results

City as Play  
sessions

Stakeholder  
Focus Groups

HLC Working  
Group, Core  
Team, and  
HLCC Board

**Chapter 2  
Open House**  
(Today!)

*At the next open house (September 7-8), we'll share the Draft Vision with you, sharing with you what we've heard and asking for your feedback.*

*Draft  
Vision*

## Chapter 3 Open House

WHAT "STORY"  
DO WE WANT  
THE CANAL TO  
TELL FOR FUTURE  
GENERATIONS?

WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES  
FOR PRESERVING,  
PROTECTING, AND  
ENHANCING THIS SPECIAL  
RESOURCE?

*Then, the next step is refining the Vision based on your feedback, and developing an Action Plan to bring the Vision to reality*

*Final Vision  
& Action Plan*

## Chapter 4 Open House

Physical improvements/  
changes that help  
establish or reinforce the  
desired vision

Action steps to get us to  
the draft Vision

Roles and responsibilities

Priorities