

# *Adventure*

## ON THE HIGH LINE CANAL

Charting our Course for the Next Century

### *Chapter 3*

## *Our Story*

**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, with the goal of creating a forward-looking story of how to preserve, protect, and enhance the Canal into the future. Today, we'll explore the draft vision, developed from your input at the Chapter 1 and 2 open houses. We'll be asking for your insight on whether we've heard you right so far. Do these ideas feel right for your 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.

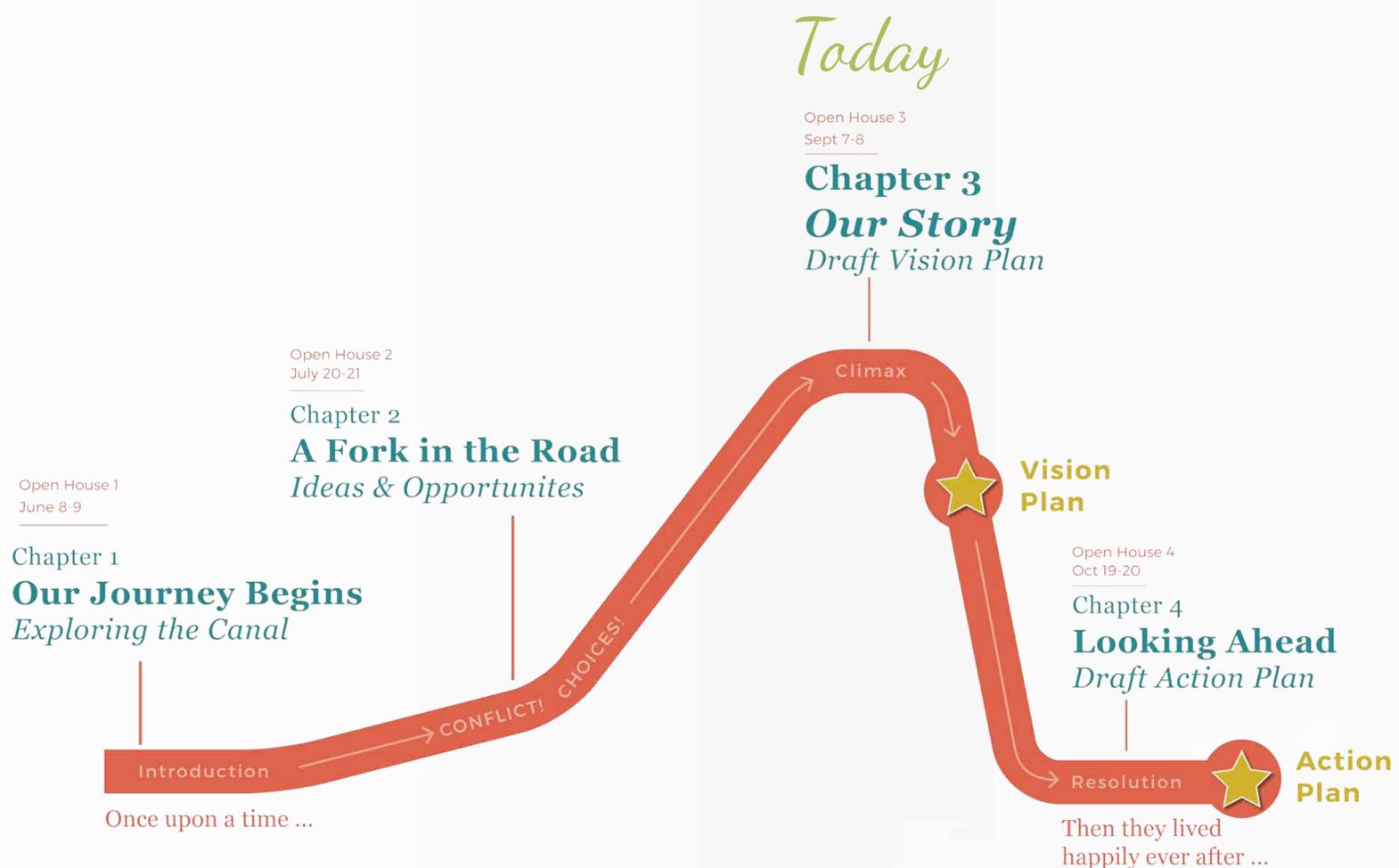
But what does the next century hold in store for the High Line Canal? There are challenges and opportunities ahead ... and new decisions need to be made around each bend.

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 different communities and landscapes along the Canal
- Ideas for future actions and tactics to engage the communities, partner organizations, and governmental agencies

## This process is structured like a story.



*Prologue*

# *The Canal's Beginning*



**T**he Canal was constructed in 1883 as an irrigation waterway, envisioned to support newly settled farms east of Denver. The 71-mile channel crossing multiple streams was an engineering feat for the Victorian era, irrigating 20,000 acres of land through 165 headgates at its peak. Beginning in 1970, Denver Water opened the Canal to the public, allowing communities to use the existing maintenance road adjacent to the Canal as a trail.

# *The Canal Today*



**T**oday, the Canal's purpose has evolved, from an irrigation waterway serving farms to a recreational greenway serving neighborhoods. At the same time, the Canal faces many challenges related to water scarcity, development, regional climate, and natural ecosystems. How can the Canal best adapt to today's needs while preserving the aspects we all love? What does the future High Line Canal look like?

# Your High Line Canal

Here's What You Shared With Us

When asked, "What words describe the Canal as you'd like to see it become?", these were the top responses:

**PEACEFUL,  
NATURAL,  
BEAUTIFUL**

Most important role of the Canal

#1 ANSWER:  
**"A PEACEFUL  
NATURE  
RETREAT"**

Most important to focus on outside of the Canal

#1 ANSWER:  
**"PROTECTING  
OPEN SPACE  
NEAR + ALONG  
THE CANAL"**

**PROTECTING  
THE CANAL'S  
HABITAT**

SCORED  
**4.3**  
OUT OF  
**5.0**

When asked, "What words describe the Canal as you'd like to see it become?", these were the top responses:

**CONNECTED,  
ACCESSIBLE,  
SAFE**

Most important role of the Canal

#2 ANSWER:  
**"ACCESS TO  
JOGGING OR  
BIKING"**

Most important to focus on outside of the Canal

#2 ANSWER:  
**"IMPROVING  
CROSSINGS TO  
MAKE THEM  
SAFER"**

**"PROTECTING  
THE CANAL'S  
MOBILITY  
CONNECTIONS"**

SCORED  
**4.1**  
OUT OF  
**5.0**

COMMON THEME  
at Chapter Two  
Open House

*Respect and celebrate the diversity of the communities along the canal, allowing each its own "piece" of the overall experience.*

**DIVERSE  
DISTRICTS  
2 TO 2.5X**

MORE SUPPORT  
THAN CONSISTENT  
OR PATCHWORK  
CHARACTER

WHILE **EXERCISE** WAS THE  
**#1 MOST DESIRED** EXPERIENCE ACROSS  
ALL AREAS, THE **#2 ANSWER WAS...**

**GATHER**

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

**MEDITATE**

Denver and Unincorporated Arapahoe County + Cherry Hills Village, Greenwood Village, Littleton, and Centennial

**EXPLORE**

Highlands Ranch and Douglas County + Waterton Canyon

# Draft Vision Elements

What are the specific elements of the Canal that the community values?

## NATURAL

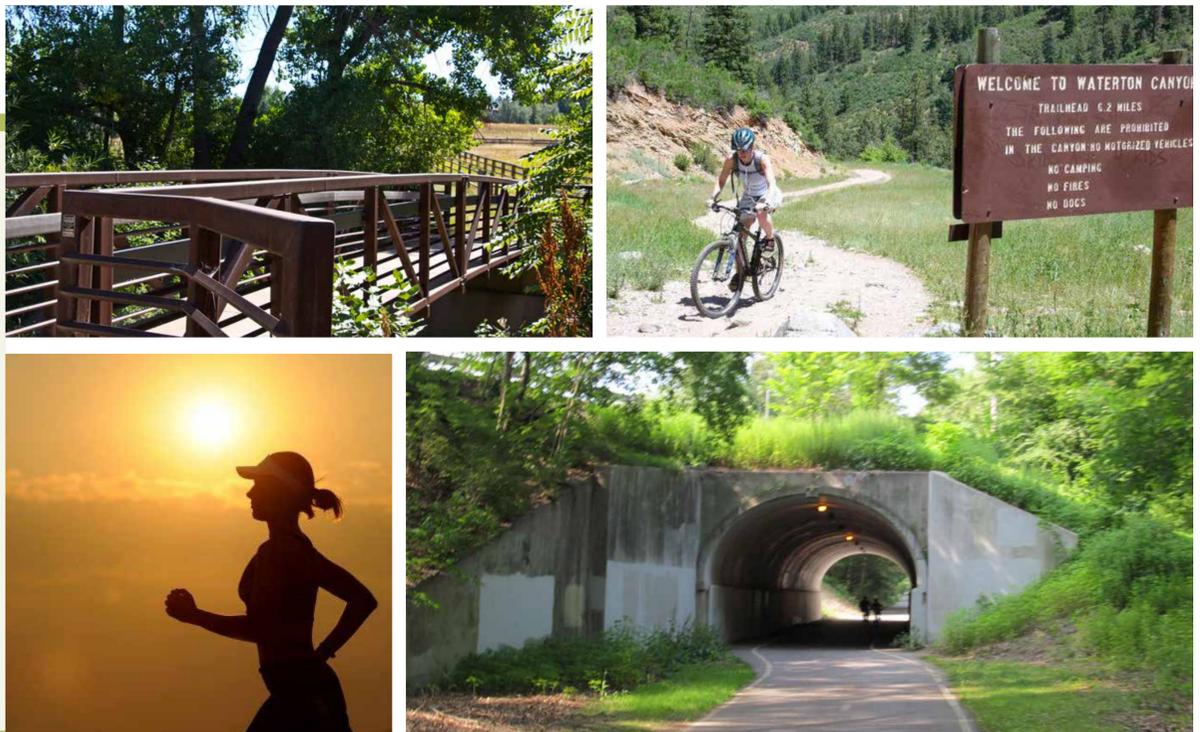
*Preserving an urban refuge, a ribbon of nature twisting through the region*



Sources (clockwise from top left) <http://dayhikesneardenver.com/high-line-canal-hike-county-line-fly-n-b-park/01-highline-canal-hike-yellow-bird/>, <http://blog.nvif.org/2013/05/less-water-more-wildlife-whats-not-to-love-about-native-plants/>, <http://www.country-magazine.com/road-trip/biking-with-bighorns-in-colorados-waterton-canyon/>, <https://forum.americanepeition.us/mallard-duck-information-facts-photos-and-artwork>

## CONNECTED

*A connected landscape and uninterrupted trail that binds together our varied communities and people*



Sources (clockwise from top left) High Line Canal Conservancy, <http://www.denverpost.com/2009/09/04/outside-guide-waterton-canyon/>, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Route\\_31\\_underpass,\\_Washington\\_Secondary\\_Trail\\_Cranston,\\_Rhode\\_Island.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Route_31_underpass,_Washington_Secondary_Trail_Cranston,_Rhode_Island.JPG), <http://www.technetics.com.au/home/blog/latest>

## VARIED

*Celebrating and expressing the different communities and ecosystems of the region*



Sources (clockwise from top left) High Line Canal Conservancy, High Line Canal Conservancy, <http://hannahfielding.net/a-peaceful-meadow-setting-for-an-afternoons-writting/>, <http://sandcreekgreenway.org/navigating-the-trail/>

# Your High Line Canal

Here's What You Shared With Us

When asked, "What words describe the Canal as you'd like to see it become?", these were among the top responses:

**TREES,  
MAINTAINED,  
WATER**

COMMON THEME at Chapter Two Open House  
*Stormwater management is an opportunity to become more sustainable and the canal should take advantage of it.*

COMMON THEME at Chapter One Open House  
*THANK YOU for undertaking this process; the Canal is a beloved treasure worthy of thoughtful caretaking.*

**MANAGED  
LANDSCAPE  
2 TO 2.5X  
MORE SUPPORT  
THAN MANMADE  
OR NATURAL  
ECOSYSTEM**

COMMON THEME at Chapter One Open House  
*Enhance with basic trail infrastructure, signage, bathrooms, benches, trash cans, and trail heads*

I wish the Canal would connect me to...

#1 ANSWER:  
**"PLACES NEAR  
THE CANAL  
FOR PEOPLE  
TO EAT, SHOP,  
RELAX"**

500+ Locations identified as "Aspects to Celebrate", including:  
**LANDMARKS,  
BEAUTIFUL  
VIEWS,  
FAVORITE  
PLACES**

COMMON THEME in MyHighLineCanal online survey  
*Basic infrastructure, vegetation, planting and maintenance, and crossing safety*

# Draft Vision Actions

What are the specific actions we can take to preserve, protect, and enhance these values?

## MANAGE

*Preserve the Canal to protect it as a beloved regional asset*



Sources (clockwise from top left) [http://extas.mngintertive.com/liv/media/site/6/2014/04/22/20140422\\_20140425\\_17\\_16-1E23GRTREESB-pl.jpg](http://extas.mngintertive.com/liv/media/site/6/2014/04/22/20140422_20140425_17_16-1E23GRTREESB-pl.jpg), High Line Canal Conservancy; <http://www.americantrails.org/photos/httpphotos/monibor01.jpg>, <http://stuckemanschool.tumblr.com/post/62832790276/symposium-artful-rainwater-design-presenter>

## ENHANCE

*Create infrastructure and maximize landmarks for a vivid sense of place and experience*



Sources (clockwise from top left) <http://www.thepirinthetocks.net/spirit/hiking/MNP/Trailheads.html>, [http://www.raendowascular.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/stock\\_000019660798\\_Large.jpg](http://www.raendowascular.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/stock_000019660798_Large.jpg), [http://www.freepik.com/free-photos/rest-trail-walk-nature-bench\\_667497.htm](http://www.freepik.com/free-photos/rest-trail-walk-nature-bench_667497.htm), [http://media11.dnrcms.com/chronogram/image/the-rail-trail-cafe-is-a-96-square-foot-sh/0/original/2264187/6bb\\_0338.jpg](http://media11.dnrcms.com/chronogram/image/the-rail-trail-cafe-is-a-96-square-foot-sh/0/original/2264187/6bb_0338.jpg)

DRAFT VISION

# *The High Line Canal is....*

A national model  
of environmental +  
recreational stewardship

A unique regional  
resource for the Rocky  
Mountain West

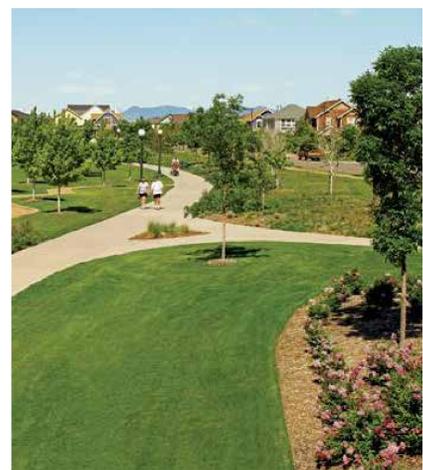
A place for communities  
to connect with nature  
and each other



# Natural

A treasured slice of nature twisting through the foothills and meandering across the prairie. A place to enjoy a quiet moment removed from the hustle-and-bustle of daily life. Chirps of birds, an occasional deer, and other wildlife greet visitors, revealing a corridor that is as welcoming to wildlife as it is to people – a regional environmental resource. The Canal as a “natural” refuge includes...

- Sustaining the green, peaceful character of the Canal  
(See “Manage” for more about the potential of stormwater as a water source)
- Enhancing wildlife habitat and environmental health of the Canal
- Preservation and enhancement of open space along Canal, with expansion of adjacent open spaces to create larger habitat areas



Sources (clockwise from top left): <http://www.terragalleria.com/park/hip-image-wc4633.html>, <http://www.thedenverpost.com/stapleton-neighborhoodsub-neighborhood/>, <http://59hikeanddenver.com/ikes-30-minutes-denver/>, <http://59hikeanddenver.com/high-line-canal-hike-county-line-lyn-b-park/51-highline-canal-hike-yellow-bird/>



*Exploring wild nature*

*A quiet, peaceful retreat*

*A home for the region's wildlife*

*Environmental education and nature play*

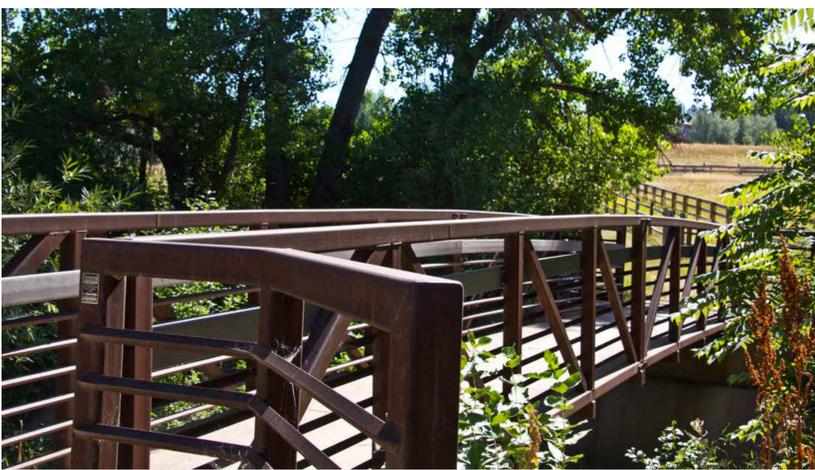
*Moments of respite in the prairie*



# Connected

A continuous and uninterrupted trail that traverses the region seamlessly, connecting with other trails and greenways to form a regional network. A resource that dynamically engages with the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. The “connected” Canal includes...

- Stitching the Canal together by closing gaps and upgrading crossings
- Improving connections along the trail to other trail networks
- Strengthening safe access to and from local neighborhoods





*A continuous  
71 mile canal*

*Safe and  
accessible  
neighborhood  
connections*

*Improved  
crossings*

*Connecting a  
regional trail  
network and  
ecosystem*

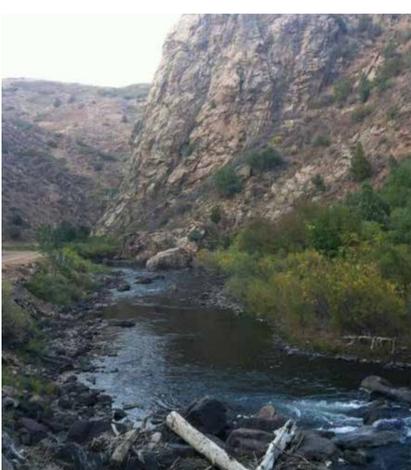
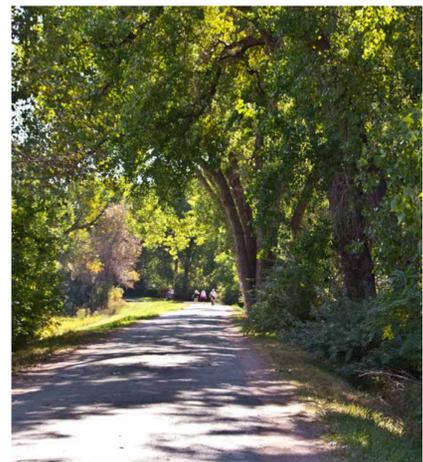


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# Varied

The 71 miles of the Canal pass through many different communities and ecosystems. The “varied” Canal celebrates these differences by enhancing the character of distinct districts along the way. These distinct districts could include places like...

- **The wild canyon**, with opportunities for exploration and discovery, hiking or climbing, and wildlife watching along the South Platte River
- **The rolling foothills**, celebrating the dramatic views and topographic relief of the southern stretches; here, inspirational education moments like environmental kiosks or historical markers integrate the Canal experience with the surroundings
- **A quiet wooded village**, where a renewed tree canopy provides a refuge for quiet and peaceful experiences like meditating or birdwatching; adjacent conservation land and open space contributes to this character
- **An urban refuge**, where opportunities to connect with nature are never far from retail, restaurants, and other urban amenities
- **A meandering natural retreat** in the prairie, a place for families and friends to gather together, where new trees and enhanced prairie landscapes create a vegetated and welcoming space for residents as well as wildlife





*The wild canyon*

*The rolling hills*

*A quiet wooded village*

*An urban refuge*

*A prairie meadow*

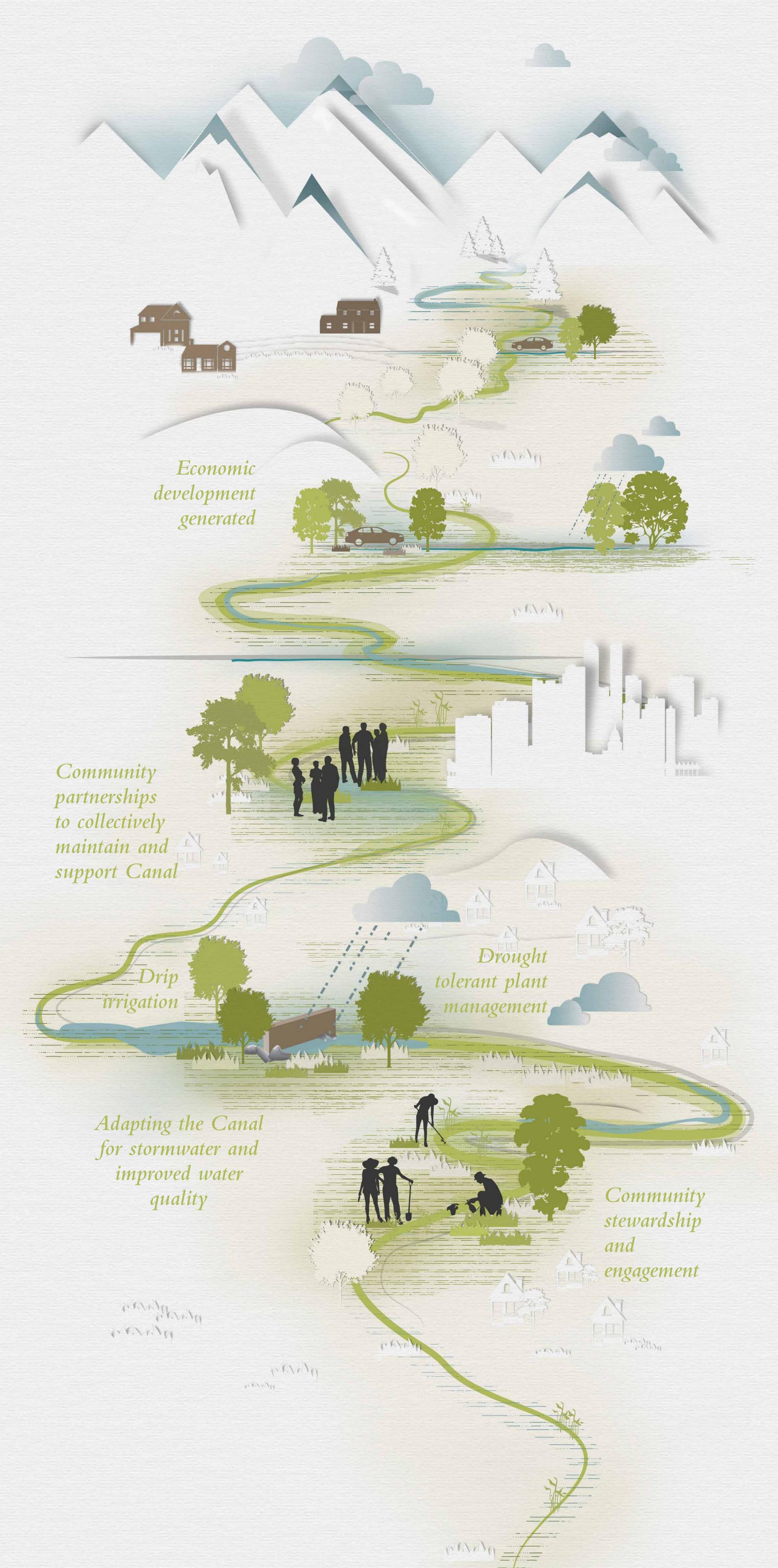


# Manage

A cherished and cared-for greenway that celebrates the unique history and character of our Denver region. A focal point for the community, robustly supported by committed local citizens and local partnerships, and elevated by strategic governance. Careful adaptations like alternative irrigation, new trees species, and stormwater to nourish the ecosystem, providing new models of responsible water management and stewardship. Caretaking of the Canal includes responsibilities such as...

- Establishing a clear model for governance and funding
- Strengthening community partnerships
- Providing a role for citizen input
- Retrofitting plans for stormwater collection
- Comprehensive planting of drought-tolerant species that require less water and address invasive weed mitigation
- Exploring alternative irrigation methods
- Managing vegetation for views and enhancing the experience





*Economic  
development  
generated*

*Community  
partnerships  
to collectively  
maintain and  
support Canal*

*Drip  
irrigation*

*Drought  
tolerant plant  
management*

*Adapting the Canal  
for stormwater and  
improved water  
quality*

*Community  
stewardship  
and  
engagement*



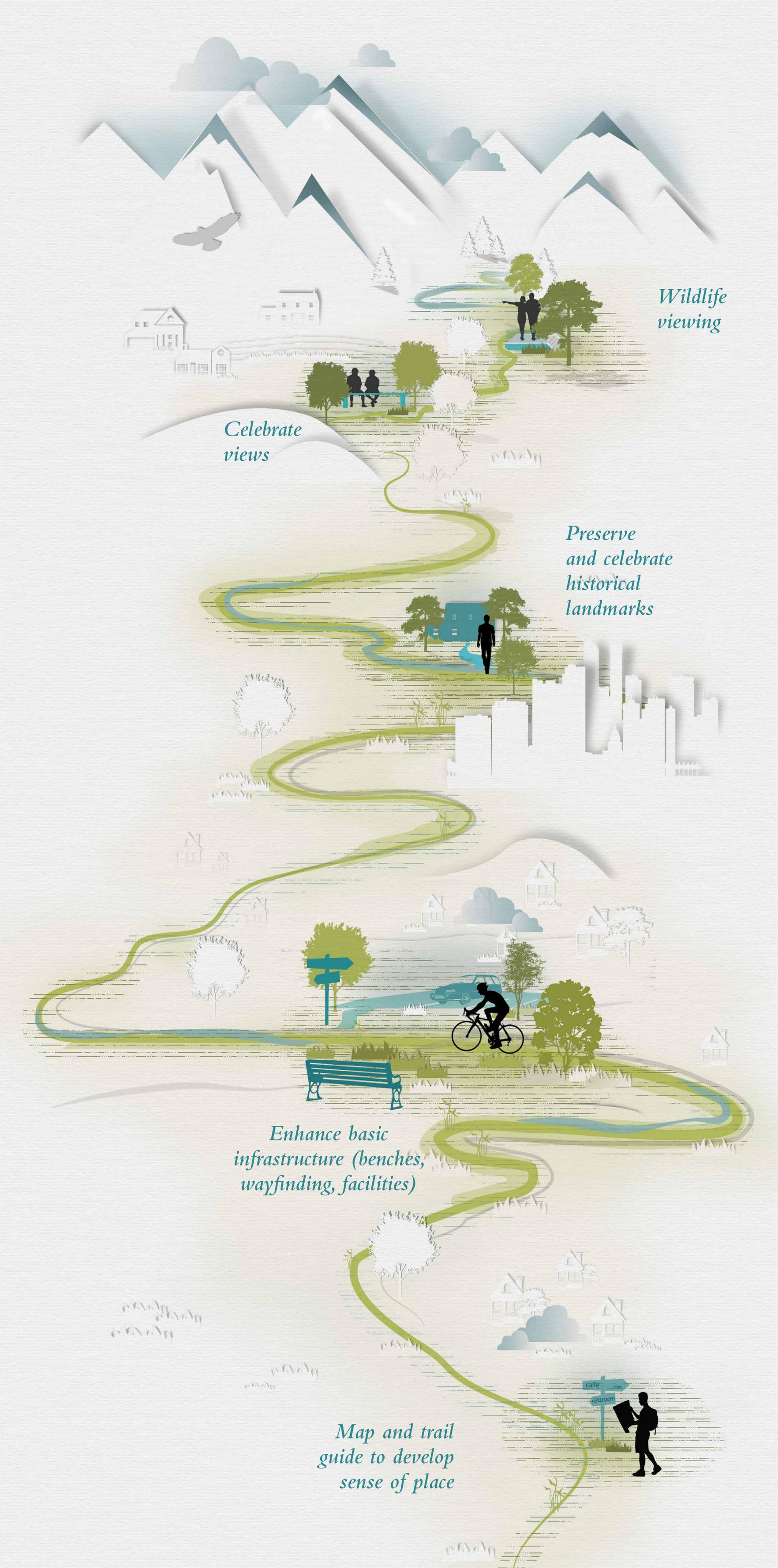
# Enhance

A special view of the mountains, or a quiet shady grove, that now has a bench to pause and enjoy. Trailheads with entry maps, trash cans, and parking to make access to the Canal easier. Easy connections from the Canal to cafés for refreshment, or bike shops for repairs. Consistent wayfinding along the trail to help visitors navigate the Canal's length, variety, and context - all of these thoughtful details combine to create a system of supportive infrastructure that enables the best High Line Canal experience.

- Creating wayfinding, maps, and trail guides
- More environmental, historic, and cultural education
- Providing benches, trailheads, parking, and trash cans
- Acknowledging views, landmarks, and special moments
- Celebrating historic landmarks



Sources (clockwise from top left): [http://www.thepitofherocks.net/girls\\_hiking/MNP\\_Trailheads.html](http://www.thepitofherocks.net/girls_hiking/MNP_Trailheads.html) [http://www.iamdovascular.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/stock\\_00021960796\\_Large.jpg](http://www.iamdovascular.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/stock_00021960796_Large.jpg) [http://www.freepik.com/free-photos/stock-photo/nature-bench\\_6674973.htm](http://www.freepik.com/free-photos/stock-photo/nature-bench_6674973.htm) [http://medical.50cms.com/chronogram/magazine/the-rail-trail-cafe-is-a-96-square-foot-sh-ls/original/22648187/box\\_033a.jpg](http://medical.50cms.com/chronogram/magazine/the-rail-trail-cafe-is-a-96-square-foot-sh-ls/original/22648187/box_033a.jpg)



*Wildlife  
viewing*

*Celebrate  
views*

*Preserve  
and celebrate  
historical  
landmarks*

*Enhance basic  
infrastructure (benches,  
wayfinding, facilities)*

*Map and trail  
guide to develop  
sense of place*

*Your turn!*

Help us write the Vision statement

A national model  
of environmental +  
recreational stewardship

A unique regional  
resource for the Rocky  
Mountain West

A place for communities  
to connect with nature  
and each other

# Looking ahead ...

## What are the next steps in the Vision Plan process?

WE HAVE BROUGHT MANY KINDS OF FEEDBACK TOGETHER TO BUILD THE VISION...



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 and changes that help establish or reinforce the desired vision

Action steps to get us to the draft Vision

Roles and responsibilities

Priorities