



HIGH LINE CANAL
CONSERVANCY

HIGH LINE CANAL CONSERVANCY

2019-2024 STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

OCTOBER 2019

Dear Partners and Friends of the Canal,

The High Line Canal Conservancy (HLCC or Conservancy) has adopted this five-year Strategic Business Plan to guide our work through 2024. As the High Line Canal (Canal) continues to evolve and undergo a significant transformation in function and management, this business plan will direct the Conservancy’s work to implement enhancements and structures that: ensure permanent protection, enhance public use, and improve environmental health of the 71-mile Canal.

The Canal has long been a cherished asset across our region. An extraordinary feat of engineering, the 71-mile-long Canal has delivered irrigation water from the foothills to the plains of the Denver metro area for nearly 150 years. Fast-forward to today, the Canal is outliving its useful life as an irrigation utility and has taken on new life as a recreational and ecological resource.

Since 2014, the nonprofit High Line Canal Conservancy has been leading comprehensive planning to ensure a vital future for the Canal as a cherished and cared-for 71-mile, 860-acre linear park. To succeed in our mission to preserve, protect and enhance the Canal in partnership with the public, the Conservancy has engaged citizens, elected officials and jurisdictional staff, regional leaders, local businesses and partners, foundations and philanthropists.

As a new and evolving organization, we have relied on strategic partnerships, our board of directors’ vision and a community-driven planning process to shape our organization’s growth and priorities. From 2016 to 2019, the Conservancy was guided by a three-year strategic plan focused on expanded awareness and understanding of the Canal together with a comprehensive planning process.

Moving forward, the following Strategic Business Plan affirms our commitment to preserve and enhance the Canal with projects and programs that improve quality of life and environment and provide measurable benefits for our diverse region.

We invite you to share in our excitement and commitment as we begin this inspiring next phase of work at the Conservancy.



Harriet Crittenden LaMair
Executive Director



Dirk McDermott
Board Chair

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The High Line Canal Conservancy's Strategic Business Plan: 2019-2024 is intended to guide the Conservancy dynamically through the next five years, supporting Denver Water's transition and providing a clear pathway forward for the Conservancy to:

- ▶ Ensure permanent protection of the 71-mile Canal with sustainable funding and enhancements.
- ▶ Enhance public use of the Canal through improved access, safety and quality of visitor experience.
- ▶ Improve environmental health for the Canal with region-wide benefits through stormwater management and other ecological enhancements.

THE CONSERVANCY'S WORK TO DATE: A COMMON VISION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Since its inception in 2014, the Conservancy has provided leadership to harness the region's commitment to protect the future of the Canal. With support from Denver Water, Mile High Flood District and the 11 jurisdictions adjacent to the Canal (Partners), the Conservancy has focused on: facilitation, communication and awareness, fundraising, community engagement and project management.

Key accomplishments during this time frame include the completion and adoption of the 2017 Community Vision, the 2019 Plan for the High Line Canal ("Framework Plan" or "Plan"), on-the-ground programs and the advancement of the Canal's transition to stormwater management. In a short four years, the Conservancy has engaged with over 5,000 community stakeholders and made valuable connections with the philanthropic community in support of the Community Vision.

With continued support and commitment from the Partners, the Conservancy is uniquely positioned to advance the important work of preserving and enhancing the Canal, including leading implementation of projects recommended in the Framework Plan.

MISSION

The mission of the Conservancy is to preserve, protect and enhance the 71-mile legacy Canal in partnership with the public.

COMMUNITY VISION

The High Line Canal's 71 meandering miles will be preserved and enhanced as a cherished greenway that connects people to nature and binds varied communities together from the foothills to the plains.

THE PARTNERS

- ▶ Adams County
- ▶ City of Aurora
- ▶ City of Centennial
- ▶ City of Cherry Hills Village
- ▶ City and County of Denver
- ▶ Denver Water
- ▶ Douglas County
- ▶ South Suburban Parks and Recreation District
- ▶ City of Greenwood Village
- ▶ City of Littleton
- ▶ Highlands Ranch Metro District
- ▶ Mile High Flood District

THE CONSERVANCY'S WORK AHEAD

Working in concert with its Partners, the Conservancy will ensure permanent protection, enhance public use, and improve environmental health of the Canal by achieving the following five strategic goals. These goals are supported by measurable objectives as outlined in the attached exhibit, Goals & Objectives.

1. FACILITATE AND EXECUTE COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

The Conservancy will facilitate and execute an agreement for a sustainable and cooperative regional governance structure and funding strategy to implement the Framework Plan and care for the Canal. This is the highest priority for the Conservancy and its Partners, to formalize a collaborative partnership and support Denver Water's transition by taking on key Canal-wide management needs.

To achieve this, the Conservancy plans to build a structure with financial and operational commitments, manage implementation of the Framework Plan, and facilitate agreements for a collaborative partnership.

2. IMPROVE USER ACCESS AND EXPERIENCE

The Conservancy will facilitate implementation of the Framework Plan's recommendations to enhance access and user experience to make the Canal a valued destination for recreation, health and enjoyment along the regional corridor.

To achieve this, the Conservancy plans to assume management of all recreational leases, implement management standards, develop stewardship, recreational and educational programming and promote physical improvements by the Partners.

3. ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Conservancy will implement standards, agreements and plans to support the Canal's environmental health, allowing the Canal to be useful for water management, wildlife habitat, vegetation diversity and a natural experience for people.

To achieve this, the Conservancy plans to develop and help implement a natural resource management plan, facilitate stormwater transformation, create interpretive plans, and design stewardship programming.

4. DEMONSTRATE AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The Conservancy will expand public awareness and provide comprehensive communications to adjacent communities, funders and jurisdictions to help build a greater understanding of and appreciation for the Canal, sustain leadership and funding, and ensure accountability.

To achieve this, the Conservancy plans to work with existing and new partners to expand programming and identify and measure community benefits while implementing communications plans to report on progress and promote the Canal.

5. BUILD CONSERVANCY CAPACITY

The Conservancy will expand its development, programs and management capacity to implement and achieve its goals and impacts.

To achieve this, the Conservancy plans to increase staff capacity by adding up to eight staff members (including temporary, full- and part-time) and expand the board of directors by drawing from existing members, partner jurisdictions and community leaders. In addition, a sustainable operations budget will include a diverse stream of revenues.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Members of the Conservancy board and staff developed detailed assumptions about staffing, operating and capital expenditures, and other costs likely to incur over the next five years. Based on these projections, the Conservancy anticipates a growth in expenses from \$1.3 million in 2020 to \$1.9 million in 2024 in order to fulfill the expanded roles outlined in this plan. Funding of these expenses is expected from a variety of sources, including individual, governmental, foundation and corporate support.

To further support the implementation of Canal improvements, a separate fundraising campaign will be managed by the Conservancy. The goal of this capital campaign will be to raise a significant portion of the funding for various capital improvements along the Canal. Staff to support this three-year campaign is included in the plan.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CONSERVANCY

As an organization operating in partnership with local entities, a supportive and adaptive organizational culture is crucial to ensuring the Conservancy's success. The culture and functions of the Conservancy must enable its ability to achieve the strategic goals through consistent and structured collaboration with the Partners. An organization that provides such services can be considered a *backbone organization*. Using this approach to manage a resource, the Conservancy will increase its potential to achieve its strategic goals, and impacts.

As a backbone organization to the collaborative partnership, the Conservancy plans to guide vision and strategy, establish shared measurement practices, build public awareness, advance collaborative goals and mobilize funding.



PHASING OF THE CONSERVANCY'S EFFORTS

The Conservancy's work to achieve the goals and impacts in five years is a three-phased approach as outlined below.

2019-2020: PLAN + BUILD

The Conservancy will focus on building an organization adept at supporting its growth plans, fostering partner commitments, building relationships, and strengthening partnerships. In addition, the Conservancy will plan for the funding of capital improvements and begin work to implement the Plan. Key accomplishments will be to:

- ▶ Gain official support for the Plan by the jurisdictions and begin to implement recommended projects.
- ▶ Complete a natural resources management plan.
- ▶ Develop, agree upon and enact the collaborative partnership and management structure for the Canal.
- ▶ Identify and begin to secure funding commitments.
- ▶ Facilitate and promote stormwater management and finance plan.
- ▶ Develop progress and impact metrics.
- ▶ Develop and build staff and board capacity.
- ▶ Initiate programs to engage community members and improve the quality of user experience.

2020-2022: IMPLEMENT + GROW

Stemming from the successful formalization of a collaborative partnership and management structure, the Conservancy will secure permanent protections, continue to facilitate the implementation of the Plan, measure and communicate Canal benefits, and develop systems to successfully manage the Canal. Key accomplishments will be to:

- ▶ Adopt permanent protections of the corridor for public use.
- ▶ Implement and manage the natural resources plan.
- ▶ Initiate a fundraising campaign for capital improvements.
- ▶ Develop and support a robust volunteer program.
- ▶ Record and report Canal benefits.

2022-2024: MANAGE + ENHANCE

The Conservancy will continue to implement the Plan and advance collaborative goals in concert with the Partners while leveraging private and public funding for capital improvements.

Key accomplishments will be to:

- ▶ Leverage public commitments with private support to execute the Framework Plan.
- ▶ Adapt and grow equitable, responsive programming that improves the user experience.
- ▶ Ensure protection of Canal through sustainable funding along with access and safety improvements.
- ▶ Secure Conservancy staff and board to continue their roles as the *backbone organization* to the collaborative partnership.

Current and projected staffing to support these efforts can be viewed in the attached exhibit, Staffing Chart.



HIGH LINE CANAL
C O N S E R V A N C Y

EXHIBITS

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

BUDGET 2019-2024

STAFFING CHART

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

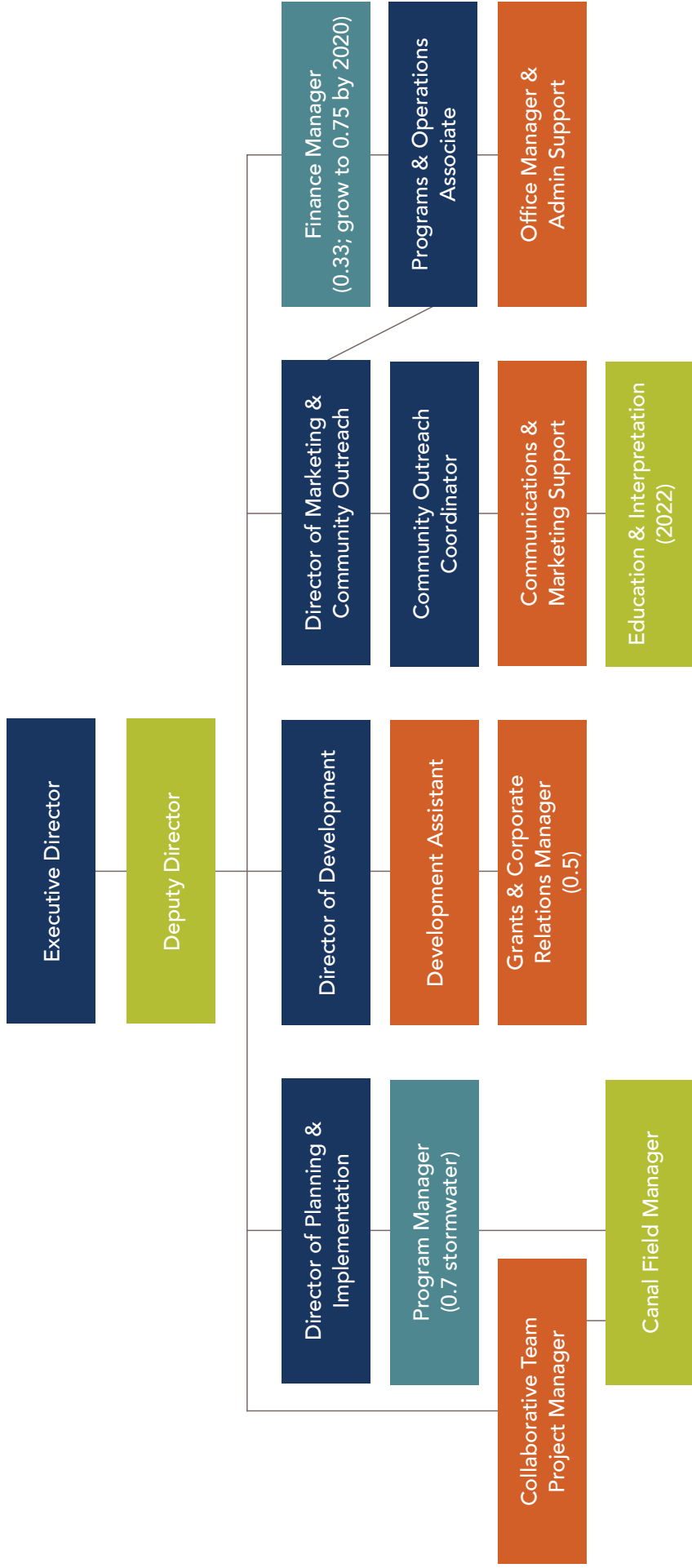
INTENDED IMPACT

The High Line Canal Conservancy will work with jurisdictions, public agencies, and local communities to:

- ▶ Ensure permanent protection of the 71-mile Canal with sustainable funding and enhancements.
- ▶ Enhance public use of the Canal through improved access, safety and quality of visitor experience.
- ▶ Improve environmental health for the Canal with region-wide benefits through stormwater management and other ecological enhancements.

| GOALS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Facilitate and Execute Collaborative Governance | Improve User Access and Experience | Enhance Environmental Health | Demonstrate and Promote Community Benefits | Build Conservancy's Capacity |
| Facilitate and execute sustained cooperative regional governance, management and funding to implement the Plan | Implement the Plan's Tools for Transformation that enhances user access and experience | Implement standards, agreements and plans to support the health of the corridor | Measure and disseminate the Canal's benefits to adjacent communities, funders and jurisdictions | Develop the organization's ability to implement and achieve its goals and impacts |
| OBJECTIVES | | | | |
| <p>Adopt permanent protections of the corridor for public use</p> <p>...</p> <p>Facilitate a cooperative governance structure that includes financial and operational commitments with HLCC and Partners</p> <p>...</p> <p>Adapt HLCC management and board/council of advisors structure to oversee and manage implementation of the Plan</p> <p>...</p> <p>Secure endorsement by and adoption of the Plan into detailed plans from all of the participating jurisdictions</p> <p>...</p> <p>Leverage public commitments with meaningful private support</p> <p>...</p> <p>Execute the Plan with review and input from participating agencies</p> <p>...</p> <p>Finalize an agreement with Denver Water regarding roles and responsibilities for ongoing management of Canal property</p> | <p>Promote agency partners' investment in physical improvements and amenities</p> <p>...</p> <p>Assume management of recreational lease agreements</p> <p>...</p> <p>Develop operations and maintenance (O&M) standards and guidelines for Canal care and public use in partnership with public agencies</p> <p>...</p> <p>Develop and implement recreational and educational programming with local communities</p> <p>...</p> <p>Advance processes to identify needs, improvements and programs</p> <p>...</p> <p>Design a community stewardship plan that builds on volunteer interest and support</p> | <p>Develop a natural resource management plan with standards to guide its implementation</p> <p>...</p> <p>Help implement the natural resource management plan using existing inventories</p> <p>...</p> <p>Develop agreements with public agencies to support Canal-wide O&M standards for environmental health</p> <p>...</p> <p>Facilitate a Canal-wide stormwater management structure to advance stormwater transition</p> <p>...</p> <p>Develop comprehensive interpretive plans (i.e., historical, ecological and cultural)</p> <p>...</p> | <p>Expand public awareness and engagement through programs and events with jurisdictions</p> <p>...</p> <p>Create local, regional and national partnerships to identify, measure and document benefits of use and improvements of the Canal</p> <p>...</p> <p>Develop comprehensive public communication and marketing plans that promote the Canal as a recreational and natural resource asset</p> <p>...</p> <p>Report progress on achieving the Plan goals to share with the public</p> <p>...</p> <p>Determine metrics for community benefit reporting (i.e., public use, physical activity, health impacts, water quality, natural resources, economic)</p> | <p>Create a staff development plan that aligns with skills and competency needed to meet goals and objectives</p> <p>...</p> <p>Cultivate a board of directors with collective expertise to support organizational growth and meet fundraising goals</p> <p>...</p> <p>Generate a sustainable operating budget that includes a diverse stream of revenues</p> <p>...</p> <p>Launch a campaign to raise private funding that can leverage public commitments in support of Plan goals</p> <p>...</p> <p>Provide oversight and management of office administration, budget, human resources and operations</p> |

STAFFING CHART



| | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| 2019 | Current, full-time |
| | Current, part-time |
| 2019-2021 | Growth |
| 2021-2024 | Growth |

All FTE unless indicated by decimals.



HIGH LINE CANAL

CONSERVANCY

Connecting Communities – Connecting Nature
From the Foothills to the Plains

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