

Dear Members of the Colorado Legislature,

As Colorado begins to rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic, we have a chance to address pervasive statewide issues with innovative opportunities to foster economic growth and social healing. The **Community Revitalization Grant Program (SB21-252)** is a model of that opportunity.

The **Community Revitalization Grant Program** is designed to jumpstart creative projects for mixed-use real estate development in communities across the state. This type of program results in enhanced commercial activity, jobs creation, main street beautification, increased housing stock, and expanded capacity for creative activation and placemaking. A culturally vibrant community attracts more residents, visitors and overnight tourists, builds civic cohesion, and celebrates its unique heritage.

Colorado Creative Industries (CCI), our state arts agency housed in the Office of Economic Development, has been administering Colorado's Creative Districts program since 2008. These state-certified districts have grown from two to 26 due to their success as an economic development vehicle. Half of the districts are in rural or mountain communities; each leverages its unique history and assets. And each has the perennial challenge – insufficient space for workers and the public to live, create and gather.

In partnership with the Department of Local Affairs, Boettcher Foundation, History Colorado and ArtSpace Consulting, CCI launched "Space to Create Colorado" in 2015, the nation's first state-led initiative for affordable live/work development for creative sector workers in rural areas. This program set an ambitious goal to support one demonstration project and one project in each of the eight regions of Colorado's rural communities. The initial project in Trinidad opened in 2020, saving three historic buildings on Main Street that had been vacant for more than 25 years. Other Space to Create projects have been delayed due to complex financing requirements. Simultaneously, a multitude of other opportunities have surfaced for adaptive re-use, historic preservation, or new mixed-use building projects that can be catalysts for these commercial corridors, especially in rural regions.

Community Revitalization Grant Program would provide \$65 million to jumpstart these projects in the next two years as a means to stimulate Colorado's economy overall.

CCI, in close collaboration with the division of local government, is committed to a rigorous, inclusive and equitable process to evaluate and grant the funds. Local communities will have the opportunity to envision and guide these commercial revitalization projects. Preference will be given to communities that are experiencing economic hardship and can demonstrate a public benefit.

We urge you to support this innovative **Community Revitalization Grant Program (SB21-252)**.

This grant program will jumpstart stalled real estate projects, invigorate commercial centers and main street areas, support creative workers and job creation, address Colorado's widespread housing shortage, fuel tourism, support historic preservation, battle blight, and promote cultural vitality in all regions of our state.

Sincerely,

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