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How A Public and Private Partnership Can Buy A Mountain Collaboration as a driving force behind Fishers Peak's purchase

TRINIDAD, Colo., April 16, 2019 - There have been recent articles on the purchase of Fishers Peak and the highly anticipated economic resurgence for the City of Trinidad and Las Animas County. Like a relay run, there are many baton handoffs that are necessary for a team to cross the finish line. The success story of the purchase of Fishers Peak starts with those behind the scenes, setting the pace, who not only provided their time and dedication, but also shared a vision for Trinidad as a destination for recreation and local economy vibrancy.

In the Fall of 2017, Mayor Phil Rico and Phil Long Enterprise CEO Jay Cimino discussed what was happening with Fishers Peak and its potential impact for the city. When Mayor Rico mentioned that Fishers Peak had been for sale for years, Cimino quickly reached out to Cy Michaels, who knew the owner. What followed was a series of beautifully facilitated meetings, baton passing, and collaboration between engaged community members, city officials, and conversation and preservation groups.

On September 17, 2017, Cimino and Michaels met with Evelyne Jung, owner of Fishers Peak, and Henry Field, Jung's real estate broker, in Santa Fe to facilitate conversations and next steps. One month later, the Downtown Trinidad Development Group, an organization of Phil Long Enterprise created to engage in commercial development projects to stimulate the growth of Trinidad, formed The Gang of Fourteen to tour the property. On October 15, with a majestic panoramic view from Fishers Peak, the group embarked on a journey which would help chart the course for the growth of Trinidad.

During the tour, the group recommended City Manager Greg Sund to be the lead on furthering conversations on the purchase of Fishers Peak. At that time, there were two parcels for sale on the Crazy French Ranch, one for 4000 acres where Fishers Peak is located and the other for 15,000, for a total of 19,000 acres. With excitement and consensus on how having public access to Fishers Peak could be a game-changer for Trinidad, the group committed to providing two million dollars to secure the 4000 acres.

With the direction of Grant Bennett, Principal and Founder of Proximity Green, an initial investment discussion was had with Wade Shelton, Senior Project Manager from the Trust for Public Land.

The Gang of Fourteen

On November 27, 2017, Shelton and colleague Justin Spring from the Trust for Public Land and members from Colorado Open Lands, Great Outdoors Colorado, State of Colorado, and City of Trinidad convened at Phil Long Enterprise Corporate Offices in Colorado Springs to further explore the potential acquisition of Fishers Peak through a public and private partnership driven by the City of Trinidad.

During this meeting, it was announced that the aforementioned groups wanted to take over the project and buy all 19,000 acres in order to make it entirely public. Fully supporting the direction, on December 18, 2017, Cimino and Downtown Trinidad Development Group's President Gina Cimino met with Ken Salazar, former US Senator, to garner support for the City to acquire the land as a state park. And with that meeting, the final baton was passed back to City Manager Greg Sund, who ran the subsequent Fishers Peak conversations to the finish line.

Looking back over the last year and a half, the vision for Trinidad was always in the forefront amongst these individuals, businesses, and organizations. On February 28, 2019, the land purchase of Crazy French Ranch was completed. With the collective power and passion of a dedicated group of public and private stakeholders, Fishers Peak's ownership is now in the hands of the City. It is scheduled to be open to the public for recreation sometime between 2021-2023.

Special recognition to The Gang of Fourteen - without their interest and enthusiasm, the Fishers Peak project would have not happened. Much gratitude to The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Open Lands, State of Colorado, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife for being a driving force for Trinidad. Thank you to the citizens of Trinidad who inspire both public and private entities to be the best they can be.



Meeting on October 15, 2018 with Downtown Trinidad Development Group and key stakeholders, from left to right. Back row: Gary Fentiman, Cy Michaels, Karl Gabrielson, Lou Simpleman, Mayor Phil Rico, City Manager Greg Sund, Tom Perry, Jay Cimino, and Vince Cimino. Front row: Grant Bennett, Gina Cimino, Linda Perry, and Sal Pace. Not pictured: Henry Field.



About The Downtown Trinidad Development Group

The Downtown Trinidad Development Group was created to engage in commercial development projects to stimulate the growth of Trinidad, and elevate it to become a vibrant tourist and residential community. The owners of the group have personal connections to Trinidad and the means to initiate targeted and strategic development efforts to stimulate additional investment into the Trinidad economy. Our efforts are designed to act as a catalyst for other critical infrastructure and development by local, county and state government agencies and private investors. We believe that collectively, with city officials and other developers, Trinidad is poised to become a first-class destination embodying the history and resiliency that epitomizes our great state.

Our efforts will take advantage of all available incentives and government programming to include, but not limited to: urban renewal, business improvement districts, tax incentive financing, as well as historical preservation and jump-start initiatives. For more information, visit Downtown Trinidad Development Group.

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