



Gateway Community Application

The Continental Divide Trail

On November 10, 1978, Congress established the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT). One of the largest conservation efforts in the history of the United States, the CDT is much more than just a line on a map: it is a living museum of the American West, a place to reconnect with nature, and a unifying force bringing people of all walks of life together.

Extending 3,100 miles from Canada to Mexico, the CDT encounters a multitude of ecosystems from tundra to desert, hosts a rich variety of wildlife, and preserves many natural, cultural, and historical treasures along its length.

Considered one of the greatest long-distance trails in the world, it is the highest, most challenging, and most remote of the nation's 11 National Scenic Trails. Ranging in elevation from 4,000 to more than 14,000 feet, the completed sections of the CDT provide a variety of recreational activities to more than 100,000 people each year, including hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, and sight-seeing. For the long-distance hiking community, the CDT is one-third of the "Triple Crown." In 2019, almost 500 people attempted to thru-hike the CDT, but that number is rapidly growing. The CDT may see 1,000 annual attempts within the next few years!

The Continental Divide Trail Coalition

Formed in 2012, the CDTC is a 501(c)3 national non-profit formed to partner with land managers, volunteers, and local communities to build grassroots support for the Continental Divide Trail.

Mission

The mission of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition is to complete, promote, and protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail by building a strong and diverse trail community, by providing up-to-date information to the public, and by encouraging conservation and stewardship of the Trail, its corridor, and surrounding landscapes.

Vision

The Continental Divide Trail Coalition's vision is to see that the 3,100-mile Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) is a renowned and revered natural resource for people to connect with friends and family, draw inspiration, and create outstanding personal experiences. We see the CDT as a world-class national resource that inspires pride, passion, respect, creativity, community and perseverance.

Values

Inspired by the power and grandeur of the CDT and in keeping with the Trail's values, CDTC commits to conducting all transactions and dealings with integrity and honesty, and promoting working relationships with board members, staff, volunteers, partners and program beneficiaries that are based on mutual respect, fairness, and openness.

What is a CDT Gateway Community?

Building stronger local relationships with communities adjacent to the Trail and involving volunteers on the ground are the most powerful ways we can work to preserve and protect the CDT. Through building this network of individuals, groups, and local communities, we strive to build a strong and healthy voice for the CDT that will ensure it remains a national landmark for generations to come. Additionally, CDTC strives to help strengthen the communities along the trail corridor, as they are an integral part of the CDT experience. We established the CDT Gateway Community program in order to build symbiotic partnerships with communities along the trail.

CDT Gateway Communities are a network of towns and counties located within proximity to the Continental Divide Trail. Official designation as a CDT Gateway Community (the process for which is described below) is only the first step in building an ever-evolving, working partnership between your community and the CDTC. **The CDTC promotes Gateway Communities as welcoming destinations for people from around the world looking to experience the CDT; in turn, Gateway Communities provide resources and outdoor recreation access for visitors and locals alike while encouraging local awareness, stewardship, and pride in the trail.** The CDT Gateway Community program is designed to:

- Encourage a sense of ownership and pride in the CDT among those who live closest to it
- Recognize communities which are welcoming to trail users
- Recognize communities which act as advocates for the protection of the Trail and its resources
- Encourage economic development through outdoor recreation
- Educate residents about the CDT and the benefits of living in proximity to it
- Provide locals and visitors with opportunities to use, steward, and support the CDT

Benefits of being a Gateway Community:

- International recognition as a welcoming destination for CDT enthusiasts via CDTC's website, social media, and printed materials
- Creation of the following marketing materials for your community:
 - Banner
 - Road signs
 - Community maps
 - Press release announcing designation
 - A webpage for your community on CDTC's website
- Connection to a network of similar communities across the Rocky Mountain West, including opportunities to meet with and learn from other Gateway Communities
- Increased ability to develop outdoor recreation infrastructure and complete other projects that contribute to economic development in your community
- Increased volunteerism and sense of local pride
- Access to new funding opportunities
- Opportunity to strengthen partnerships with federal land management agencies
- Access to a variety of CDTC resources, including:
 - Free marketing materials such as CDT brochures and stickers
 - Assistance with organizing and marketing local CDT-related events
 - CDT merchandise for resale at your Visitors Center
- Opportunities to advocate for your community and the CDT at state and national levels
- Support from CDTC's Gateway Community Coordinator and other CDTC staff

The CDT Gateway Community program is designed in part as a tool for economic development - but this is only one benefit. The program is most importantly an opportunity for community growth. CDTC feels that it's important to encourage community members to take ownership of the public lands in their backyard. The Gateway Community program helps to build support for and pride in the CDT, and aims to help communities see the Trail as a resource. Being a Gateway Community means something different for each community, as the program is designed to be community-driven. Occasionally the CDTC may come to your committee with ideas, but ultimately the decision for what you do as a Gateway Community is up to you. Because of this, there are many different versions of successful Gateway Communities.

Cuba, New Mexico, for example, has chosen to focus on using their designation to promote the Trail to locals in order to encourage healthy lifestyles. Through their partnership with the CDTC, the village received grant funding to improve outdoor infrastructure and create content designed to encourage people to get outside. Rawlins, Wyoming, on the other hand, uses their designation as a Gateway Community to encourage visitors to the area. They have included the CDT on the official town stickers and continuously work to make the CDT in the area, and what that means for outdoor recreation, visible. Below, you'll find some other examples of successful Gateway Community projects:

- [Wind River Mountain Festival](#), Pinedale, WY
- [Visitors Center Mural](#), Silver City, NM
- Thru-hiker welcome packets, Steamboat Springs, CO
- [Coordinated shuttle service for hikers](#), Salida, CO
- [CDT web page](#), Salida, CO
- Blaze the Boardwalk, Grand Lake, CO
- [Trail Days](#), Lincoln, MT
- [Student Citizen Science](#), Pagosa Springs, CO

Can my community be considered for Gateway Community designation?

There is no maximum distance a community can be from the CDT to be considered for designation. If your community sees itself as a gateway to the Continental Divide Trail, it is eligible to pursue designation by CDTC as an official CDT Gateway Community.

The Gateway Community designation process is ultimately driven by the community itself. While CDTC takes every opportunity to inform partners and communities of the program, we leave it up to individual communities to initiate the application process and ensure that they meet the criteria for designation.



Christy Curd



Justin Talbot

Criteria for designation:

1. **Formation of an advisory committee:** This committee will be responsible for the completion of the initial application and for working with the CDTC to make any necessary improvements after it is submitted. This committee will continue to meet 2-4 times annually after designation to coordinate and execute local Gateway Community efforts. This committee should consist of a minimum of 4-6 people, one of whom must be someone who represents your town or county in an official capacity. One person must also be chosen to serve as the primary committee contact for the CDTC.
2. **Letters of support:** Your application must include several letters of support. One of these must be from the land management agency (Forest Service, BLM, etc.) responsible for your local section of the CDT. Beyond that, we do not require a minimum number of letters due to the wide variation in size of our Gateway Communities, but we encourage you to seek support from local businesses, volunteers, government representatives, and interested community members.
3. **Approval of the designation by the community's governing body:** Successful Gateway Communities engage the community at large; therefore, the designation must be approved by your community's governing body before it can be made official (note that this will probably happen after submitting your application). This will most likely look like a resolution by the town council or county commissioners. CDTC will provide you with a presentation about becoming a CDT Gateway Community to assist you in explaining the program to the governing body and the Gateway Community Coordinator will be available to help with this process as needed.
4. **Plan of action:** After you've submitted your application, the Gateway Community Coordinator will work with your advisory committee to identify several priority projects for the community to work on in its first years after designation. These priorities can and will change with time, but we have found that it is helpful for newly designated communities to have a strategic "trail map" in place in order to capitalize on the momentum of designation and move community initiatives forward.

As partners of CDTC, Gateway Communities commit to participating in the program on an ongoing basis as follows:

- Annual CDT event: This can be a new event or can be incorporated into a pre-existing event in your community. For example, if there is already an annual festival in your town, committee members can set up a table with information about the CDT. Other examples of events include:
 - Community hike
 - Speaker Series at the library
 - Tabling at an athletic event or festival
 - Community happy hour at a local brewery or restaurant
 - Trail cleanup or other stewardship
- Quarterly check-ins with the Gateway Community Coordinator
- Committee meetings 2-4 times a year
- Working with the Gateway Community Coordinator to recruit 1-2 CDT Ambassadors for the community
 - Ambassadors are encouraged to join the community's committee so that they will be on the same page, but Ambassadors have different responsibilities than other committee members
 - Unlike the larger committee, which generally focuses on big picture projects, larger events, and recruiting volunteers for projects, Ambassadors are CDTC's direct liaison with the local community. They are required to host three events a year, and two of these must be on the trail. Their goal is to get local community members out onto the trail through events such as community hikes and educational programs.

Does it cost anything to become a Gateway Community?

It does not need to cost anything to become a Gateway Community beyond volunteer time and interest! CDTC provides a budget of \$1000 to help launch each Gateway Community, which pays for the design and printing of promotional materials (see below). Many communities do choose to put some funding toward their designation event in order to pay for event space, provide attendees with food, etc., but this is not required.

Great! How do we become a Gateway Community?

The first step in becoming a Gateway Community is to contact CDTC. Reach out to the CDTC Gateway Community Coordinator at gateway@continentaldivide-trail.org or by calling CDTC's office at 303-996-2759, so that you can discuss your community and how to begin the process.

After the initial conversation with the Gateway Community Coordinator, you will form a committee interested in pursuing designation. The first task of the committee will be to complete this application. There is no deadline for this application to be submitted once it's started, however we encourage your committee to meet regularly to ensure that you can capitalize on the momentum you are building. The finished application should be submitted to gateway@continentaldivide-trail.org.

Once the initial application is submitted to the Gateway Community Coordinator, they will review it and then contact the advisory committee to arrange a meeting. This may be a conference call or in-person meeting, depending on the Coordinator's availability. At this meeting, the Gateway Community Coordinator and the advisory committee will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the application, and the committee may be asked to revise it. This conversation between the CDTC and the advisory committee will continue as needed until the application is ready to be approved for designation. Also during this part of the process, the committee will seek official approval for the designation from the local governing body.

Once these steps have been taken, the advisory committee, local government(s), and CDTC will work together to set a date for the formal designation ceremony. This event generally includes the signing of the proclamation by community officials and the CDTC Executive Director, and is a celebration of the start of this new partnership. It also serves as a way to further engage local residents in the new initiatives that the Gateway Community will be undertaking!



Scott Peterson

Application

The application itself has two parts. The first part is to help us get to know your community as a whole, and the second is to help us get to know your community as a gateway to the Continental Divide Trail. This second section includes identification of local resources and facilities. If your community is missing some or even many of the resources listed, don't fret! This section is designed to help us understand what your community offers and what capacity we could potentially help you add to your community as well.

Community Name and State: _____

Primary Committee Contact:

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Advisory Committee:

Please list members, along with their email addresses, and what organizations or affiliations they represent from the community. If members have been assigned roles on the committee, list those as well.

Part 1

What makes your community special?

What volunteer groups are active in your community? Are any of them specifically focused on outdoor stewardship?

What are the biggest/most unique events and celebrations in your community?

Who are the primary users of the CDT in your community—locals or visitors—and what are the most popular ways that they use the Trail? What other outdoor recreation exists in your community?

Describe your current relationship with the local federal land management agency(ies).

Part 2

Why is your community applying to become a Gateway Community?

How does your community currently serve as gateway to the CDT? What makes it a strong candidate to become an official CDT Gateway Community?

Does the CDT in your area intersect (literally or figuratively) with the history of the area?

What challenges do you anticipate in becoming a Gateway Community and sustaining a strong partnership with the CDTC?

Please describe the locations and condition of all local access points of the CDT. What are the closest trailheads to your community and what improvements might be needed?

How available are the following visitor services in your community?

	Not Available	Some Availability	Widely Available
Lodging-General			
Lodging-Budget (hostels or hotel rooms less than \$100/night)			
Outdoor Gear Outfitters			
Camping			
Laundry			
Grocery			
Showers			
Pharmacy/Medical Services			
Library/Public Computers			
Free WiFi			
Post Office			
Public Restrooms			
Signage about CDT			
Information about CDT Access			
Trailhead Shuttle Services			
Public Transportation			
Car Rentals			
Taxi/Uber/Lyft Services			

Does your community have the following?

	Yes	No
Visitor or Community Center		
Venue for 40 or more people		
Local newspaper		
Local radio station		
Local TV stations		
Local or regional magazine		
Downtown beautification plan		
Strategic Marketing plan		
Comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance		

What's your community's interest level in the following?

	Not interested	Some interest	Very interested
Enhanced partnerships with public land agencies			
Increased sense of community pride			
Higher visitation to your community			
Recognition and visibility through signage, media, etc.			
Increased number of volunteers on the trail			
Enhanced recognition as an outdoor recreation hub			
Increased use of the CDT by local residents			