

Planning for Sustainable Brownfield Redevelopment

REUSE ASSESSMENT FOR THE FORT COLLINS TROLLEY CAR BARN

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO, EPA REGION 8

From 1907-1951, the Fort Collins Trolley Car Barn served as the depot for the Fort Collins Municipal Railway, a three-line street car system. In 1992, the building was designated as a local landmark. The historic Trolley Car Barn is located in a former industrial district to the northwest of downtown Fort Collins. Over the years, the City of Fort Collins maintained the building with local funds and the support of state and federal grants. In 2016, EPA Region 8 conducted a Phase II environmental assessment on the property through its Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA) program. The results of the assessment showed no significant contamination that would prevent the city from preparing the site for reuse.

The building's location bridges residential neighborhoods and the city's civic core. With excellent access to the Poudre River trails system, the Museum of Discovery, and pedestrian infrastructure, the site is optimally connected and accessible to the community. The City of Fort Collins views the strategic reuse of the former Trolley Car Barn building and property as key to preserving the unique history of early transportation in the city and maintaining the historic character of the neighborhood in a time of rapid change and redevelopment.

The city requested technical assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Land Revitalization Team to evaluate reuse options for the Trolley Car Barn property. The goals of the technical assistance were to: 1) organize and analyze available information on reuse options for the site; 2) prepare for a future facilitated community workshop that will educate and engage local stakeholders regarding potential reuse options by outlining the market factors affecting the site's reuse; and 3) identify prior reuse alternatives and prepare for the future release of a request for proposal or quote to redevelop the site.

The Land Revitalization Team reviewed the existing building condition, analyzed potential opportunities and constraints based upon community assets and needs and the location of the property, reviewed the results of existing market feasibility studies and design proposals, summarized market constraints, and developed a Preliminary Reuse Assessment report that discussed redevelopment opportunities and next steps. Based on the increasing population, a high demand for housing, positive employment growth, a low unemployment rate, and stable real estate/commercial markets in Fort Collins and the region, the Trolley Car Barn is well-positioned for a variety of reuses. The analysis results suggest that an adaptive reuse of the iconic Trolley Car Barn could help to create a unique community feel within the civic core and act as a "gateway" from the north to the downtown. The final technical assistance report outlines two possible reuses that would provide positive benefits for the surrounding community, without negative impact, and allow reuse of the building while preserving its historic character: a community marketplace or a business innovation center.

A community marketplace could rejuvenate the neighborhood and build upon the quality of life for residents. Restoration of trolley service would allow residents and visitors to travel to and from the store/marketplace in historical fashion. A community marketplace also could highlight local vendors offering a variety of foods and goods made on-site, in Fort Collins, or in Colorado, and an anchor restaurant could provide a home for the farm-to-table movement in Fort Collins. A business innovation center could attract young talent and innovative thinkers to Fort Collins and help grow the local economy. The business innovation center could create space for startup companies to blossom under a common innovation theme, to co-locate for support and shared services, and take advantage of an opportunity to test the market before establishing an independent brick and mortar location.

For more information, please contact Melisa Devincenzi, EPA Region 8, devincenzi.melisa@epa.gov.

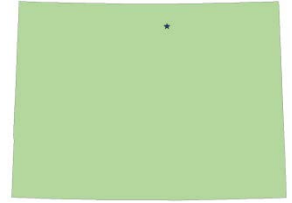


Figure 1: West (Front) Elevation Trolley Car Barn.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Collaboration amongst city departments can lead to effective and efficient decision-making.
- Conducting a detailed reuse assessment that includes an analysis of building conditions and opportunities, a review of market feasibility studies and analysis, and a summary of constraints, can position a community for collaborative, community engagement.

PLANNED POST-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

- Begin a public education and engagement process that will determine a community-driven reuse of the property.
- Conduct the financial feasibility analysis to identify potential financing gaps that may need to be addressed to move the project forward.
- Design and hold a collaborative workshop-centered on community engagement, to determine a use that will meet the needs of residents and preserve the unique character of the district.