WORKSHOP · TUE, OCT 13 · 1:15-2:15 PM

Collaborating for Community Impact: Lessons from Public-Nonprofit Partnerships

Carter Cox, Nested Strategies & City of Ketchum; Cory McCaffrey, Program Director, Wood River Land Trust; Jade Riley, City Administrator, City of Ketchum

Ketchum bought a former golf course and turned it into the 65-acre Warm Springs Preserve by splitting the work among the city, a land trust, a strategist and a community foundation. The team shared how to raise money fast, set limits before public input, win federal grants and keep a project popular through construction.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Explore before you define the project.** A mini planning study with donors and stakeholders tested whether the community wanted it, surfaced barriers, and turned up a $1 million lead gift early.
2. **Give donors certainty about what won't happen.** Draft deed restrictions showed exactly what would and would not be allowed. A pledge form let donors name where funds would go if the purchase fell through.
3. **Let each partner do what it does best.** The city brought public accountability, infrastructure and maintenance; the land trust brought restoration expertise and donors; the community foundation held the funds.
4. **Set the bumpers before asking for ideas.** Hydraulic, geomorphic, vegetation, water rights and geotechnical studies defined what was feasible before 10 community meetings shaped the master plan.
5. **A federal match can be a fundraising magnet.** A Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grant required a 50% match. Donors were energized by seeing their dollars stretched, and new support followed.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Fund a short exploration phase.** Meet donors and stakeholders, check fit with the comp plan, and confirm interest before committing.
- ☐ **Use a community foundation as custodian of funds.** Some donors hesitate to give directly to a city, even though gifts can be tax-deductible.
- ☐ **Create deadlines that build momentum.** Ketchum's seller cut the price by $1 million and a donor offered a $1 million year-end match; about $5 million came in within weeks.
- ☐ **Don't master plan during fundraising.** Take the biggest fears off the table with deed covenants, then promise a full planning process after purchase.
- ☐ **Get role clarity before execution.** Ketchum chose to be the long-term landowner with final say and costed out maintenance from day one.
- ☐ **Plan phases, contingencies and access.** Define a minimum the community could be proud of, and keep the site open during construction where possible.
- ☐ **Set up invoicing systems before money moves.** Federal, donor and city funds flowing through several partners is hard to track without a process in place.

BY THE NUMBERS

65 acres
Preserved as public open space, out of 78 total

1 year
Time the partners had to raise the purchase money

~1,000
Donors who helped make the acquisition possible

$1M + $1M
Seller price cut plus a donor's year-end match

10
Community meetings held over about a year

50%
Local match required by the federal WaterSMART grant

WATCH OUT FOR

- ! Reimbursement grants mean fronting cash. Ketchum forecast cash flow, but a federal shutdown still delayed payments for months mid-construction.
- ! Acting as your own general contractor saved Ketchum significant money, but presenters advised against it without strong staff capacity.

RESOURCES

Wood River Land Trust
woodriverlandtrust.org

Spur Community Foundation
spurfoundation.org

Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART
Federal grants for water savings and ecological benefits from collaborative projects

City of Ketchum
ketchumidaho.gov

Watch this and every SV26 session recording
mt2030.org/sv26sessions · Use the attendee password.

Summarized from the session recording and presenter slides. Figures are as presented; confirm with presenters before citing.

CONTACTS

Carter Cox
Nested Strategies & City of Ketchum

Cory McCaffrey
Program Director, Wood River Land Trust

Jade Riley
City Administrator, City of Ketchum