

# New Garfield County Education Center planned

CSU Extension and the county partnering for community education space in Rifle

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A concept drawing shows what the new Garfield County Education Center planned for Railroad Avenue in Rifle.

Garfield County and Colorado State University Extension have partnered up to build a new 12,000-square-foot Garfield County Education Center geared toward a variety of STEM-based trades.

The facility is to be located on Railroad Avenue in Rifle, adjacent to the Rifle Creek Trail and near the fairgrounds.

According to a county press release, plans call for the empty warehouse at 937 Railroad Ave. to be transformed into shop and expo space with room for the community to train on wood shop, metal works, cooking, gardening, quilting, sewing, robotics and more.

The county is providing funding for the architectural planning for the building, and has budgeted \$400,000 for renovations to complete the education center.

The rest of the funding is slated to come from grant sources and local private funding in contributions to the CSU Foundation.

Garfield County is working with architect Andrea Korber with Land+Shelter out of Carbondale to develop a plan and add a second level to the single-story warehouse.

“Creating a whole building dedicated to a ‘maker’ space for hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education feels right now like what our county needs,” Korber said in the news release. “It feels like the kind of thing that might be a dream space to a child; I feel like we are getting to design a ‘kitchen of the mind.’”

The main features of the education center include a flexible event space with six learning areas containing partitions that can be moved to create different sized spaces.

There will be three functional kitchens – a teaching one in view of two learning kitchen portals, for training the community in the Cooking Matters program, cottage foods sessions, and for a staging area for caterers serving events held in the training spaces.

Garfield County purchased the empty building and 3 acres of land for \$1.9 million in July 2019. The renovation is part of the county's five-year plan, developed by the Garfield County commissioners.

Plans are to utilize a high-efficiency mechanical system with a potential offset solar array built into the design.

"We are making the building as energy efficient as we possibly can," Korber said,

"We are in discussions with an energy company and CLEER (Clean Energy Economy for the Region) from the beginning, and we are working to get as close to net-zero energy as we can with this project."

Construction is expected to begin as early as spring when the county will open up a request for proposals for community bids.

According to a news release, CSU Extension County Director and 4-H Youth Development Agent Carla Farrand is working on launching an extensive fundraising campaign for the project. She is approaching a number of Western Slope and statewide foundations with large grant applications for the education center.

Farrand spoke during Monday's Garfield County Board of Commissioners meeting, saying she hopes to garner grants to support the full remodeling and potentially some programming for the facility from grants. She has already raised \$72,000 towards the second phase of the project.

The second phase will include building an outdoor classroom adjoining the open space at the Rifle Creek Trail, so that students can learn in both open areas.

"Being able to work with people who have the same passion to bring a STEM space to Garfield County is really a dream come true – I have dreamed of a space like this since I was a volunteer in 4-H," Farrand said

Farrand has also obtained a \$400 grant from the Williams Foundation to purchase STEM equipment for the education center, such as saws and welding equipment. She is working with the Western Colorado Community Foundation in Grand Junction to develop philanthropist interest in the new center in Rifle.

[More information is available here.](#) 

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