

The Economic Impact of the Ute Theater in Rifle, CO

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- The Ute Theater provides economic benefit and social enrichment to Rifle, Colorado and surrounding Garfield County.
- Using input-output modeling, we estimate the economic impact of the Ute Theater to be:
 - Total Output: \$657,070
 - Value Added: \$120,750
 - Labor Income: \$62,380
- Visitors from outside Garfield County contribute approximately \$41,067 in new economic activity per month through their attendance at the Ute Theater and subsequent spending.

Executive Summary

The Ute Theater, now known as the Ute Events Center, is both a cultural landmark and an economic asset in Western Colorado. Located in Rifle, Colorado, the theater serves Garfield County and its surrounding area. Established in 1948 and restored with significant community investment, the theater contributes to the county's economy and enhances its social fabric. This report provides a detailed assessment of its economic and socio-cultural impacts based on input-output modeling and a survey of community members and local businesses.

Summary of Economic Impacts

The economic impact analysis focuses specifically on spending by visitors from **outside Garfield County** over a 16-month timeframe. The figures represent new money brought into the local economy due to the theater's activities.

Figure 1: Total Impact of outside visitors to the Ute Theater in Garfield County



Total Output: \$657,070 – This is the total economic activity generated by the theater’s operations over the time period studied. It includes all money spent by visitors from outside Garfield County – on tickets, meals, lodging, and more – and the ripple effects of that spending on other local businesses. Put simply, the Ute Theater created **roughly \$41,067 of economic activity every month**, making it a key contributor to Garfield County’s economy.

Value Added: \$120,750 – This is the theater’s contribution to Garfield County’s overall GDP. It includes wages for workers, profits for business owners, and tax revenues for local and state governments. In everyday terms, this means the Ute Theater brought **\$120,750 worth of new economic value** to Garfield County, all thanks to visitors who may not have spent money there otherwise.

Labor Income: \$62,380 – This represents paychecks earned by employees who work at the theater or in nearby businesses that benefit from its visitors. It also includes income from other jobs indirectly supported by the theater, like suppliers or service providers. This number shows how the Ute Theater helps local workers and their families by supporting **\$62,380 in wages and income**.

Socio-Cultural Value: Insights from Survey

Beyond economic contributions, the Ute Theater holds deep socio-cultural significance. A survey conducted of attendees and local business owners highlights its role as a cornerstone of community life. Key findings include:

- **Community Connectivity:** Events hosted at the theater foster social interaction, from weddings and banquets to concerts and community meetings. Respondents noted its importance in building lasting relationships and a sense of belonging.
- **Cultural Identity:** Many respondents described the theater as a "*crowned jewel*" of Rifle, praising its Art Deco design, intimate atmosphere, and versatile programming.
- **Economic Synergies:** Nearby restaurants and service providers reported increased patronage on event days, with notable contributions to the local food and beverage sector.
- **Opportunities for Growth:** Participants expressed enthusiasm for expanding future programming, such as hosting more local bands, Spanish-language films, or themed community events, alongside increased advertising to attract visitors from neighboring regions.

The Ute Theater not only stimulates local economic activity but also enriches the social and cultural landscape of Rifle. Its dual role as an economic driver and cultural hub demonstrates the importance of investing in historical and community-centered venues.

Methodology

The analysis employs input-output (I-O) modeling and surveys to quantify the theater's direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts while exploring its qualitative socio-cultural contributions. The I-O model specifically estimates the economic activity generated by visitors from outside Garfield County, ensuring that the impacts measured are those bringing new money into the region. Detailed methodology and survey results are available through the full report: [\(see full report\)](#).

Conclusion

The Ute Theater highlights the lasting importance of historical venues in rural communities. Over a 16-month period, visitors from outside Garfield County contributed approximately **\$41,067 in new economic activity per month** through their attendance at the Ute Theater. Beyond its economic impact, the theater plays a vital role in enriching the social and cultural fabric of Rifle, and surrounding Garfield County. Its dual contributions – economic and socio-cultural – emphasize the need for ongoing community support and creative programming to fully realize the full potential of this historic landmark.