



KELLER WILLIAMS'
TONY GREER
INVESTS IN RURAL
COLORADO TO BUILD
HIS "SECOND CAREER"



Tony Greer moved to Northern California in 1989 and launched a very successful career as an air traffic control specialist at the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA). Around 1995, he was selected to serve on a special project team charged with upgrading antiquated display systems in all FAA enroute air traffic control centers. The project spanned a couple years and took him around the U.S. to different FAA centers—including Colorado.

After the team completed its mission, Tony and the other members returned to their original jobs. But soon a new opportunity arose; the FAA was seeking oceanic air traffic controllers. Seeking a new challenge, Tony accepted the role and soon found himself on another special project team. The FAA was coordinating with the international civil aviation organization to upgrade all display systems used for U.S. oceanic air traffic control. As with the domestic upgrade project, Tony had to log a lot of air miles between different FAA facilities that also required him to travel through Colorado on numerous occasions.

MAKING THE MOVE TO CAÑON CITY

A couple years later, Tony landed a position working for Raytheon on a contract at the NASA Ames facility in Mountain View, California. Quality of life had diminished, with traffic congestion and skyrocketing real estate prices as key reasons. “My former wife and I had a young daughter, and we wanted her to grow up in an area with wide-open spaces,” he remembers. “One of my former wife’s coworkers had a motorcycle facility in Cañon City that built replicas of vintage Harley-Davidson motorcycles. I flew out to check out the facility and to look into purchasing a summer home for us. It was a beautiful January day with a clear blue sky and 60-degree temperatures. I asked one of the workers in the Harley shop if he was enjoying the unseasonably warm weather and he told me that it was a typical winter day. I called home and told my wife that we needed to buy a home—and a month later we had one.”

But the purchase was for more than a vacation house. Tony and his family decided to pick up and leave northern California altogether for Cañon City. He and his wife quit their jobs, and they headed to the Rocky Mountains. Their desire to relocate to rural Fremont County made sense. He grew up in rural Missouri, and a return to rural America was in the cards for him. His frequent trips through Colorado when traveling on business reminded him of his rural roots.

GETTING STARTED IN REAL ESTATE

At the time, Tony's dad was roofing houses. "He had reached the age that he needed to do something different," Tony recalls. "We started a small company and flipped eight houses. But I discovered that the inventory in Canon City for 'flips' was lacking. All of the real estate agents controlled that information—and I decided to get a real estate license."

Almost overnight, Tony had 325 real estate signs in the ground in Cañon City and was the number two agent in the State of Colorado for the company under which he was licensed. The real estate business in Canon City was still very traditional. There was no syndication of homes listed for sale except Realtor.com. Purchase agreements were still being written by hand on carbonless copy paper. Smartphones had not become popular yet. MLS data was not available unless you were seated at a computer. Tony was one of the first agents in the area to begin writing contracts on electronic documents. He pushed the local multiple listing service to make the data available for download so he could load it onto his Palm Pilot.

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Tony Greer, Managing Broker, Keller Williams Performance Realty



About two years into the process, he concluded that the company wasn't a good fit for him. "I wanted a company that put ethics and its people, including education, above everything else," he says. "A friend of mine told me about Keller Williams, which was really new to the market, and I knew that I had found a home. Ironically, I was so busy I didn't do my first house flip until right before I decided to switch companies."

In 2011, he was offered an additional Operating Principal position in the Pueblo office. "The office was in terrible financial shape. We had no money in the bank and I soon found myself running the entire office—I was the only paid employee in the company. I was the receptionist, bookkeeper, managing broker, and recruiter. I would leave the house in Cañon City very early in the morning and arrive there around 6:30 am and work until 9:30 pm every night."

As the economy began its slow recovery, Tony rebuilt the staff that had all left during the 2008-2011 financial crisis. He also acquired an additional office in Salida in 2011. "We now have a state-of-the-art office space—including a green screen room for shooting video, offices for agents, and numerous conference rooms for client meetings." In total, Tony has around 130 agents working out of four offices. Initially he was driving about 2500 miles a month between the offices. Then Keller Williams Realty International began holding national conference calls via Zoom meetings. Soon afterward, Tony initiated videoconferencing in all four local offices, and his driving time was cut by about 80%, giving him more time to focus on training and managing the agents in all four offices simultaneously.

His initial assignment was out of the Colorado Springs office, where he helped incubate the new Canon City and Pueblo offices, and eventually was promoted to the position of Operating Principal. "It was right before the financial meltdown in 2008," he remembers. "No real estate company was doing well at the time."

TONY GREER HIGHLIGHTS

Relocated: 2001

**Keller Williams
Performance Realty:
Managing Broker**

**Offices: Pueblo, Pueblo
West, Cañon City,
Salida**

**Mayor of Cañon City:
2010-2016**

**Website:
HomesOfSouthernColorado.com**





REAL ESTATE COMPANY SHIFTS FOCUS TO TECH

In 2015, Keller Williams Realty International started evolving into a technology company, and announced the development of a real estate platform that home buyers and sellers prefer. By pledging to invest \$1 billion to develop the first-of-its-kind real estate platform, called "Command," the company sharpened its focus on building the platform that helps real estate agents focus on the relationships in their business. By creating a platform that combines the entire suite of real estate business tools into one integrated solution, KW agents are now able to add clients to a customer relationship manager, search for properties, market properties, create flyers, manage their business pipeline, enter local insights, send timely market reports specific to their clients preferred neighborhoods, analyze property inspection reports, send text messages and emails, and create custom landing webpages all from one application.

They can send their clients a personal mobile app that allows them to search, share, and save their favorite properties and apply for a loan with no lender fees, obtain homeowner insurance quotes on the fly, and tap into their agents' vendor database, all integrated into one platform with one consumer interface. The recognition started immediately. National and international technology innovation awards became the norm, and continue to this day. Tony has capitalized on this trend by training a small cadre of tech-minded agents to train other agents in his company to implement the new technology in their daily work lives. "There is no feeling quite like seeing the light come on for an individual who previously considered themselves 'technology averse.' We are spearheading a technology revolution in our industry that will allow our agents to provide a better experience for our clients than they ever thought possible, and that's exciting," Greer says.

MAKING DOWNTOWN CAÑON CITY A DESTINATION

Tony invested in his local community from the very start, serving on the planning commission for five years. "I'm a huge believer in making our communities developer friendly," he notes. The message from the planning commission wasn't getting through to the city council. When one of the sitting city council members called and encouraged him to run for mayor, he became convinced that he could have a bigger impact in the post. "At the time, the local economy in Cañon City and Fremont County were in a real economic crunch," he remembers. "We needed to find ways to stimulate the local economy. Recruiting city council members to support our growth measures was one of our priorities during my first term."

Tony was reelected in 2012 and the successes started to fall. "We replaced the city administrator and policy chief and rewrote the land development book from scratch," he says. "We also formed a committee to look at all of our development standards and reevaluated each of them." Yet, the entire county experienced a traumatic event in 2013 when the Royal Gorge Park caught on fire. When the fire was finally extinguished, numerous buildings were burned down.

"Fremont County generates a significant portion of its taxes from the park, and we cut around 20% of our total budget to remain solvent," he says. "This obviously disrupted our development plans."

Once the insurance claims came in, Fremont County embarked on a program to rebuild them bigger and better than before. "Shortly thereafter, we found \$2.5 million and dedicated it to revitalizing our downtown area," he explains. "We narrowed the streets, widened the sidewalks, created places for sidewalk cafes, and worked on ways to attract entrepreneurs." One of the biggest successes Tony touts is Valley Wide Health Systems' purchase and full renovation of a 15,000 square foot property. "They did around a \$7 million rehabilitation, and it was a direct result of the infrastructure changes that we made," he notes.

Downtown Cañon City is now a destination. "There is a reason to go downtown—whether for fun or work," Tony relates. "In addition to the new businesses and cafes, we have dozens of miles of hiking and biking trails. I'm really proud to have played a role in making all of this happen."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS RIGHT, MAKING IT THROUGH VIRTUAL TOURS

Tony first heard of TechSTART when Rob Brown, the executive director of the Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC), told him about the undertaking. "I thought it was a great idea, but I wasn't confident it would succeed," Tony admits. "But I was wrong. TechSTART really took off and has been a huge success—serving as a catalyst for both our downtown district and local tech community."

As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, virtually every business had to change its operations. In the case of Tony's real estate businesses, he had acquired a Matterport system to provide virtual tours of homes listed on the market and actually formed a separate company to do so. "Our offices now have 100% of our inventory with virtual tours," Tony says. Adding the Matterport technology has changed the way he does business. It has allowed a broader reach to an audience he may not have been able to engage. As real estate companies continue to seek out technological solutions, they are starting to resemble tech companies.

At the same time, Tony, who was named president of the Fremont Center for the Arts in late 2019, rolled Matterport out for the center—allowing patrons to view exhibits online since they are unable to view them in person. As TechSTART is in the midst of finishing a new addition to its downtown Cañon City location, he recently partnered with the TechSTART management team to make virtual tours of its new coworking, conference, and office spaces available online. "This is a great addition to downtown, and virtual tours are an excellent way to generate interest in the new space during COVID-19," Tony relates. "Matterport brings the space to life with its three-dimensional views and high degree of accuracy."

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GIVING BACK THROUGH MENTORING AND TEACHING

Mentoring and teaching others are areas that Tony finds invigorating—and it is something he’s done throughout his career. Since moving to Cañon City and starting his real estate business, Tony has always engaged recent high school graduates who either had not decided to attend college or were doing so locally. It gives them a chance to learn the real estate business and determine if it is a suitable career.

Following the 2008-09 economic crisis, in 2011 Tony created a real estate licensing school out of his Pueblo office. His intent was to help young professionals gain a foothold in real estate. “Many of them have never been in business before,” he notes. “We help them establish a business plan and give them questions to ask real estate companies when evaluating their options.”

In 2019, Tony partnered with a mobile notary company to hire two young people who had just graduated from high school. “They are currently attending college and mobile notary work can be done outside of class time,” he says. “It is a great way for them to learn about business.”

But just as COVID-19 disrupted many other aspects of business, the mobile notary business is no exception. “With COVID-19, we had to temporarily shut down business.” However, rather than lay off the two workers, Tony reallocated them to work in his newly formed virtual tour business. “I didn’t need to lay them off and they have become experts in the Matterport hardware and software,” he relates. “Despite the circumstances of the pandemic, this has been a great experience for them.”

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Tony Greer, Managing Broker, Keller Williams Performance Realty

MAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD COUNT

Revitalizing downtown areas is something that can make a huge difference for rural America. Tony believes Cañon City is a success story because of the developer and business friendly policies he and the city council were able to implement during his six years in office. "Some of the ordinances and laws actually inhibit business and the ability of small towns to revitalize their downtown areas," Tony notes. "Local mayors and politicians need to clear the path so that small to large businesses are willing to invest in their downtown areas."

This was the reason Tony ran for mayor again in the November 2019 election. "Some of the local downtown business leaders asked me to run for mayor—they felt we had regressed in some areas around business regulation," Tony says. As he was out of town on vacation at the time, he had to file all of the paperwork virtually, and he failed to submit one of the required documents on time. He was unable, as a result, to have his name printed on the ballot. "I had to run a write-in campaign instead, which is almost impossible to win," he comments. "We ended up with 22% of the vote, which I thought was a big achievement."

Community leadership takes many different forms, and Tony has held a number of these roles—from mayor, to mentor and teacher, to benefactor. "It takes all sorts of leaders to make a rural community flourish," he ruminates. "I'm simply pleased that I've been able to help Cañon City to realize the widespread success that it's achieved."

FEDC TechSTART

Fremont Economic Development Corporation is a 501(c)6 professional economic development organization focused directly on business attraction, retention and expansion in Fremont County, Colorado. With an established and growing network of business, academic and governmental partners, we directly assist companies with competitive location or expansion projects by connecting them with the right people, the appropriate resources and the most meaningful and relevant information. FEDC's TechSTART program is an award-winning tech sector co-working community, creating an innovation catalyst for rural Colorado.

FEDC TechSTART is a proud supporter of the Upper Arkansas Technology Sector Partnership, the second tech sector partnership in the state of Colorado.