

FEBRUARY 2017 • COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES



LIVABILITY

REASONS TO INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE; A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE — COURTESY OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT; THE VALUE OF TREES; KIDS FIRST; DETERMINING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SPECIAL EVENTS; AND MORE

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Mission

Colorado Municipalities is published to inform, educate, and advise appointed and elected municipal officials about new programs, services, trends, and information to help them perform their jobs and better serve their citizens and communities.

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The Colorado Municipal League is a nonprofit association organized and operated by Colorado municipalities to provide support services to member cities and towns. The League has two main objectives: 1) To represent cities and towns collectively in matters before the state and federal government; and 2) To provide a wide range of information services to help municipal officials manage their governments.

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GET TO KNOW:
KAREN PALUS, COLORADO SPRINGS PARKS, RECREATION,
AND CULTURAL SERVICES DIRECTOR



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ABOUT SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Luis Benitez, a former town councilmember in Eagle, was appointed by Gov. John Hickenlooper to direct the new Colorado Outdoor

Recreation Industry Office in 2015. He has climbed the seven tallest summits on all seven continents a total of 32 times. He has climbed Mt. Everest six times while serving as director of operations for Adventure Consultants, a New Zealand-based international guiding company. He also leads leadership seminars in Chile for the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.



Liz Hensley is serving her first term as an Alamosa councilmember, as well as her first term on the CML Executive Board. She has lived in the San Luis Valley for 20 years, and is an assistant professor of marketing and the MBA director at Adams State University. She is passionate about her students and her community.

Hensley graduated with her PhD in organization and management from Capella University and her MBA from Arizona State University. She currently serves on the Golf Board, Marketing Board, and San Luis Valley Housing Coalition, and is a member of Kiwanis International.



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Mark Radtke, Colorado Municipal League municipal research analyst, works on research, analysis, and reporting in municipal trends and best practices. He brings a

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James Siegal is president of KaBOOM!, the national nonprofit that seeks to give children the childhood they deserve, filled with

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The Voice of Colorado's Cities and Towns

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REASONS TO INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

A FEW YEARS AGO, I SERVED ON the town council in Eagle, Colorado. We would often discuss our mountain bike trail system and how it connected all of us to such a wonderful place to live. With only one bike shop in town, we always thought this amenity was for “us.” Sure, we had friends who came to ride, but we never really looked at the trail system through the lens of tourism and economic development.

Then one year, we decided to bid for the High School Mountain Biking Championships. Suddenly “Main Street Marketing” became a focus, and we went about ensuring our trail system really was world class for racing, as well as counting hotel beds and restaurant capacity and attempting to understand whether we had all we needed to be successful.

Eagle won the bid, and we were thrilled to have the chance to share our mountain town with the world. So many people came that we had to open up camping in our town park. The lines for food trucks went around the block at times, forcing us to host impromptu BBQs to cover the overload. The teams rode the trails,

parents cheered, and, year after year, the experience got better and better.

Then the magic started to happen. We would see families who came for the races return to ride on the weekends. Visitors told us that they never realized why the town was so special until the races, and now they wanted to visit all the time.

This led to even deeper conversations about the outdoor recreation industry in our town. If mountain biking brought people here, could our river corridor do the same? With the emergence of whitewater parks across the state and the country, we began looking at the Eagle River as another opportunity to engage the outdoor community. Combine that with the trail that the owner of the local microbrewery wanted to put in from the river to his deck, and you had a total town interest in what was possible!

In my current role as director for Colorado’s Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, I often get a chance to visit with towns across the state that are all asking similar questions: “We have all of these resources that we love — is it a good idea to use them to market ourselves to tourists and

potential transplants?” It is a complex question, one that has many towns facing heated debates about access and impact.

As with most economies, there are always competing interests. For instance, mountain biking and the motorized community traditionally do not get along very well. But synergy is possible! For example, after having the championships in Eagle for a few years, the town began to expect the revenue the race brought. However, a succession of incidents occurred. We started to get a lot of rain, rendering a lot of the trails too soggy to ride. Then a fence line broke and a herd of cows came down valley and trampled the wet trails into an unusable condition. We literally had no idea what to do. There was no way to repair the trail system in time.

Enter the motorized community. The local OHV club offered to ride the trails back into a useable condition. There were no arguments about who had access or why they could not ride those trails all the time; they leaned in to help because they had kids who raced, and they understood the economic impact to Eagle.

That spirit of collaboration is where I believe the outdoor industry is heading. For the first time ever, due to the passage of the Rec Act, the outdoor industry jobs and revenue will be counted toward the national GDP. The hypothesis is that it could be bigger than the auto and pharmaceutical industries combined. If this is the case, I believe that the focus on what we do and how we do it within our rural communities will continue to grow.

It is abundantly clear that people move to Colorado because of the lifestyle it offers. We have this unique opportunity to rise as a shining example of how to get the best out of every aspect of living in rural communities. If communities continue to be thoughtful about how they are connected by bike path, choose carefully the inclusion of open space,

and select the modalities of outdoor recreation that they really feel that they can both celebrate and protect, then they have a clear opportunity toward economic development, as well as a robust quality of life.

Colorado has many examples of towns that have found that path. Salida has not only focused on its vibrant arts and Main Street, but also its whitewater park and trails system. Buena Vista, a place once seen as a town in which to stop for gas as you headed to the hot springs, now boasts a distillery, energetic restaurants, surrounding mountain biking, moto riding, rock climbing, fly fishing, and a housing development surrounding a world-class whitewater park, which is redefining new urbanism. And Ouray, where in the heart of winter businesses were once closed for

the season, now hosts an international ice climbing festival, drawing climbers and industry partners from around the world.

In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt extolled “the value of natural beauty as a national asset, and of the effectiveness of outdoor life and recreation in the production of good citizenship.” As we look toward the future of Colorado, I am confident that the things that bring us together to both celebrate and define what we have and who we are will be focused in the outdoor recreation industry space. My greatest hope is that as residents of Colorado, we can share best practices amongst ourselves to ensure that our natural resources, which help define our quality of life, are protected as national treasures for generations to come.


A photograph showing the silhouettes of two people mountain biking on a trail. They are positioned in the lower half of the frame, with the person in front slightly ahead of the second person. The background is a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise, with warm orange and yellow light near the horizon transitioning into a deep blue at the top. The silhouettes of trees and bushes are visible along the bottom edge of the frame.

Photo courtesy of the Town of Eagle.

A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE — COURTESY OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Most frequent amenities provided solely or in partnership by a municipality:

Parks • 98%

Athletic Fields • 73%

Trails • 72%

Open Space • 68%

Libraries • 61%

Skate Parks • 55%

Senior Centers • 50%

Museums • 50%



BEST PLACE TO LIVE. BEST PLACE to work. Best place to raise a family. We hear these ratings for Colorado cities and towns again and again. There are many factors behind the popularity of our towns — Colorado's natural beauty, our educated

workforce, the economic development efforts of our municipalities and the business community. An increasingly important ingredient in this formula is the quality of life features created by municipal governments.

The 2017 CML *State of Our Cities & Towns* report is based on a survey that reveals the depth and variety of livability amenities provided by municipal governments. A person can hike city trails during the day and attend a performance at the municipal theater that evening. Take kids to the zoo or pets to the dog park. Turn some dirt at a community garden. Sell crops at the farmers market. Watch a scrum at Glendale's rugby stadium.

Kayak through Golden. Ooh and aah at the Fourth of July fireworks. Treat out-of-town visitors to the state's rich history at the museum. Swim laps at the senior center. Enjoy grandkids


romping through the splash pad. Sign up for softball. Stay in shape with a yoga workout. Watch the For Peetz Sake Day parade on Main Street. Smell the sagebrush in the wide expanse of municipal open space. Ride through Loveland's North Lake Park on the Buckhorn Railroad. Or just stand in awe of the beauty of the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. These facilities, activities, and events create the quality of life that makes Colorado's cities and towns the best places to live, work, and raise a family.

Many experiences are unique to Colorado cities and towns. Ouray offers residents an ice climbing experience at one end of town, followed by a soak in the hot springs pool at the other. Standing beside the hot springs pool, City Manager Patrick Rondenelli noted, "The citizens take a lot of pride in owning this facility. Our schoolchildren get free access, so it is



Most frequent special events provided solely or in partnership by a municipality:





a place where they can hang out. We have our ‘polar bears’ with people up into their 80s and 90s coming to exercise in the hot springs pool.”

These facilities and programs reflect a municipality’s character. Limon Heritage Museum Operations Manager Mary Andersen states, “Everyone here in eastern Colorado is very proud of where we have come from as a community, as homesteaders moving forward, so we really try very hard to recognize the fact of everyone that has come before us and pay tribute to those people.”

The Pueblo Zoo connects people with nature. Zoo Director Abby Krause notes the zoo provides the community with “education, entertainment, information about conservation and endangered species, and a safe place for families to be. We have a lot of traditions that have been going on for many decades, like Electric Critters, holiday events, and Zoo Boo.”

Events staged by municipalities are generally in partnership with community groups. Community celebrations have long been a fun way to express pride in community achievement, and today, municipal events continue to grow, offering a wide variety of experiences.

Community events are an important ingredient in the chemistry of a town. Alamosa Councilmember Liz Hensley said events “tie everyone together; you really get to know each other. So then you walk down the street, you see people you know. That is an important part of a small community.” Hensley points to the economic benefits such events offer a community by bringing crowds to downtown, putting “a little bump into business” on Main Street.

Municipal amenities stimulate local business, retain businesses, and attract new business. They are an important piece of Colorado’s tourism

industry. Silverton’s economy is built around its historic district, according to Town Administrator Bill Gardner: “Our historic district ... really is the core of our economy from our visitor perspective, and that brings literally tens of thousands of visitors to this community from around the world every year.”

Colorado Springs Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Karen Palus said parks and programs are a business factor “from the economics of our businesses where folks want to bring their companies to a community that really focuses on the quality of life where their employees can get out and do the things they enjoy.”

Looking ahead, trails top the list of amenities that residents want to see added or expanded. Golden City Manager Jason Slowinski said the City maintains 24 miles of trails, connecting neighborhoods and open space. He said residents rate the system as highly valuable for the community, with the most recent citizen survey showing 80 percent saying trails and open space were important and supporting additional investment in the system.

Recreation centers, swimming pools, athletic fields, and parks round out the top five amenities reported as being in demand.

As for additional recreation programming, youth recreation and youth sports programs are most in demand.

Providing these services costs money — dollars that citizens more often than not are ready to spend. Paying for these amenities is usually done through general fund appropriations; however, dedicated sales or property tax is the primary source for parks in 25 percent of municipalities and for trails and open space in 16 percent. Dedicated development impact fees support facilities in 33 percent of Colorado’s cities and towns; in cities with more than 25,000 residents, that increases to 46 percent.

Palus observes, “Quality of life issues are important to families. When you are making decisions about which community you want to live and where you want to raise your children and where you are choosing to buy or build a home, you look for these things: Where are the parks? How close are those trails? Where is the closest open space to get outdoors? And so those quality of life issues and making sure they are within like a 10-minute walking distance from homes and from businesses, that is an important part of trying to determine where is a good place for me and my family.”

How often amenities are cited frequently or very frequently as instrumental to economic development:

Municipalities > 25,000 in population • 93%

Municipalities 2,000 to 24,999 • 52%

Municipalities < 2,000 • 31%

Western Slope • 56%

Eastern Plains • 34%



PROVIDING HOPE AND HISTORY

By Perry Johnson, Overland Trail Museum museum associate

STERLING, COLORADO'S OVERLAND TRAIL MUSEUM began as a beacon of hope during the Great Depression, arguably the most challenging period in our nation's history. Early city leaders had made tentative plans to create a local history museum shortly after Sterling's founding in the late 1800s, but a lack of funds and other obstacles stymied that venture for several decades. Ironically, those plans did not come to fruition until the financially challenging times of the Great Depression, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation created the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which served as the catalyst for making Sterling's museum a reality. The WPA oversaw the museum's construction and supervised an oftentimes transient workforce. This resulted in Sterling's Overland Trail Museum (originally called the Logan County Museum) becoming a reality when it opened on Armistice Day (now known as Veterans Day) on Nov. 11, 1936.



Although the museum initially consisted of only the single room that still serves as the combined front lobby and gift shop, it has now expanded to include several other rooms and additions to the original building, as well as 14 additional buildings that are located on the museum grounds. Most of these structures were originally located within approximately 30 miles of the museum before being transported to its grounds. Among these buildings are two barns, a one-room schoolhouse, a church, a general store, a pioneer concrete-block house, and a depot; there is also a caboose.

The newest addition to the museum's collection of buildings is the High Plains Education Center, which opened in August 2011. This state-of-the-art facility houses an array of pioneer and energy-themed displays, including several interactive, touch-screen exhibits. This building serves as a venue for many city and museum events, and is available for rental by the general public.

As the museum has grown and matured, the mission to educate and inform museum visitors and the local citizenry has similarly expanded and now includes numerous events and activities that make up the museum's annual slate of historic programs. The museum offers entertaining and informative events that appeal to a wide range of individuals.

The annual July 4th Heritage Festival celebration, historic teas, history café programs, and a full slate of Christmas activities are among the museum's more popular events. These activities serve to entertain while exposing participants to local history.

Included among the museum's program options are a full slate of children's events, including school tours, pioneer-themed Prairie School classes, and monthly Family Fun Saturday events, as well as a vast array of other activities ranging from New Year's Eve programs to an annual Bison Days program featuring Buffalo Bill Cody.

The museum also serves as a repository for local information dating back to Sterling's founding in 1881. The museum's extensive collection of newspaper archives, books, photos, and files are used by authors, students, and numerous other individuals who seek specific research and genealogy assistance or are simply curious about Sterling's fascinating past.

The historic Overland Trail Museum provided some hope during the Great Depression, and it continues to provide an invaluable service to the community through its offerings of educational programs, vast archives, and historic exhibits. While time marches on, the jewel of northeastern Colorado that is known as the Overland Trail Museum ensures that this area's past will be remembered.





CULTURE AT THE TOP OF A COMMUNITY

By Jameson Hamsmith, Parker marketing assistant

NOT FAR SOUTHEAST OF DENVER, ALONG THE BANKS OF CHERRY CREEK, LIES A FLOURISHING community that is beginning to make a name for itself as a cultural destination. Parker, a small town with big ideas, is enhancing the quality of life for its residents in several creative ways.

The Town of Parker's Cultural Department, known as Parker Arts, goes above and beyond the status quo of municipal responsibilities to provide arts, culture, and enrichment to residents and visitors alike. Through its multiple cultural facilities — the 50,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art PACE Center; the newly restored 100-year-old Schoolhouse; and a downtown amphitheater — Parker Arts presents performances by local, national, and international acts in music, theater, comedy, dance, and much more. It has cultivated lasting relationships with local artists and organizations such as Inspire Creative, Parker Chorale, Parker Symphony Orchestra, Wonderbound Dance, Colorado Jazz Repertory Orchestra, and many more. These partnerships have resulted in increased awareness, growing audiences, and greater ticket revenue for all parties involved, which helps to strengthen economic vitality for the region as a whole.

Cultural enrichment opportunities for school groups, adults, and youth are also a priority for Parker Arts. More than 400 educational performances, camps, classes, and lectures are offered year-round, with topics ranging from the traditional dance, theater, and music lessons to the more unusual belly dancing, honey bee festivals, and bat encounters. More than 25,000 students attended the Parker Cultural Department's enrichment offerings in the past five years.

Parker Arts features both professional and community artists in its two art galleries and enhances downtown through rotating public art exhibits along Mainstreet as part of the Douglas County "Art Encounters" program. It is piloting an artist-in-residence program, in which a local artist is provided below-market studio space in return for working with the Town to host workshops, lectures, and other art-related events for the public.

Parkerites are proud of their Town's long history, so Parker Arts collaborates with the Parker Area Historical Society to manage the Parker Heritage Center, a museum housed in The Schoolhouse (which itself holds historical significance as the Town's original consolidated school building, built in 1915). The Parker Cultural Department is responsible for preserving and celebrating other historic landmarks in the community as well.

With all of the cultural amenities that Parker has to offer, it is safe to say that there is a little something for everyone, and that status has not been achieved by chance. Parker Arts makes a point to survey the community to find out what they want to see and experience. Culture is top of mind for Town officials too, as it is built in to the Town's master plan. As a result, funding for cultural programs is supported through an annual budget appropriation by the Parker Town Council.

The Town of Parker is proud that its efforts have created a sense of vibrancy for its citizens and plans to continue to bring creative experiences and cultural enrichment to the community for years to come.



A RESORTLESS RESORT TOWN

By Vanessa Agee, Frisco marketing and communications director

FRISCO IS UNIQUELY SITUATED WITHIN 30 MINUTES OF SIX WORLD-CLASS SKI RESORTS, INCLUDING Copper Mountain (seven minutes away), Breckenridge Ski Resort (15 minutes), and Vail Mountain (30 minutes). Throw in a charming Main Street replete with locally owned shops and restaurants, and you have a lovely “resortless resort town.” In community surveys, Frisco’s 2,800 residents have consistently listed small-town atmosphere, recreational amenities, and quality of life as the top reasons for living in this quintessential mountain town. Residents value a quieter pace, which is afforded by not having a ski resort in town, but they love that Frisco is close to the slopes and surrounded by public land and Dillon Reservoir.

So, understandably, it was challenging for this community to decide what to do with 220 acres of Town-owned land on the Frisco Bay Peninsula, which abuts another 565 acres of land owned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). There was a keen awareness that the community wanted to attract visitors (within reason) *and* provide recreational opportunities for residents. Out of that balancing act, the Frisco Adventure Park was born.

The Frisco Nordic Center already had operated on both Frisco’s and the USFS’s land for more than 25 years with quiet success, featuring the longest-running citizens’ Nordic race in Colorado. And there were sleigh rides and chuck wagon dinners that already called the peninsula home, along with a skate park and disc golf course. Brainstorming sessions and open houses brought visions of everything from a golf course to swimming pools and ice rinks. At the end of the day, Frisco leaders and residents settled on amenities that balanced the community’s love affair with outdoor recreation with the desire to intelligently attract visitors to this “resortless resort town.”

A lift-assisted tubing hill found a home, with its 1,200-foot lanes of giggly fun. During the 2015–2016 season, 78,700 people discovered fun at the tubing hill; these numbers had been growing at a rate of about 20 percent per year since its opening in 2010. Residents enjoy discounts at the tubing hill, and a weekend does not pass without a local kiddo celebrating his or her birthday there. The Adventure Park also includes a community ski and ride hill where kids under the age of five ski for free, and a full-day adult ticket is only \$30. It is the ideal and quiet place for the community to bring their future World Cuppers for their first run of many.

The Adventure Park added a bike park to the mix in 2011, and its pump tracks and jumps are ideally suited to a community that values its bikes as much as its skis. Four-year-olds ride pedalless bikes over mini jumps, while their parents take on features and gain skills, which will serve them well on the many trails that extend onto USFS land on the peninsula.

The path to the Adventure Park was not straight, nor is it at a dead end. There was a winter terrain park that never quite took off, so the idea was abandoned to the big resorts that seem to sprout a new feature every week. And Frisco residents and town leaders are in the midst of reimagining what else might push the recreational limits of this community that lives for being outside. At the end of the day, both residents and leaders have learned a graceful dance that brings recreational opportunities that appeal to locals and visitors alike while remaining true to the character of Frisco.



THE VALUE OF TREES

WE ARE SURROUNDED BY THEM. They line our streets, shade our yards, and sit on mountainsides, yet we are so used to ignoring them that we do not pause to appreciate their value until they are gone. Trees are active members of our communities, yet they are given little credit for the economic, environmental, visual, and health benefits they contribute to municipalities.

An example of this can be seen in California, where the state has lost as many as 70 million trees to drought in the past five years. The effects of these disappearing trees are starting to impact the California economy and environment — never mind the sentimental value one attaches to watching a young seedling grow into a towering tree, or the numerous historic and champion trees that have disappeared, or the species exclusive to California forests. If these factors are not compelling enough to demonstrate the importance of trees in our lives, then let's measure the actual value trees have in urban settings.

Community forestry programs are growing across the nation as municipalities start to recognize the

value of trees in community infrastructure. This year, there were more recognized Tree City USA communities than ever before. Tree City USA is a program of the Arbor Day Foundation that recognizes communities for viable urban forestry management by meeting four core standards.

An urban forestry program may not be a challenge for larger municipalities that have the financial and human resources to maintain their trees. But for some communities, particularly smaller ones, having a managing body or tree board responsible for the care of the community's trees has made a world of difference. It holds municipalities accountable for caring for their community forest by reapplying for the designation every year. Communities that had not formerly had a tree management program in place have noticed positive changes.

So, what impact do trees have economically, environmentally, and esthetically on communities and homeowners?

Planting the right tree in the right place can save as much as 20 percent

on energy costs. It is a victory for homeowners, businesses, and communities. Denver saves an average of \$6.7 million every year on energy costs alone because of its urban forest. Not only are trees more cost effective than other tools used for the same purpose, but they are more sustainable and address multiple concerns.

In fact, in many cases, an urban forest makes municipalities money. For example, installing a living snow fence comprising trees and shrubs versus a slatted snow fence will not only redirect snow and wind during storms, but also reduce stormwater management costs and air filtration costs by absorbing excessive rainfall and air pollutants. Denver saves more than \$800,000 a year in stormwater costs and \$129,000 in air pollution costs. Combined with the city's energy savings, that is a total of \$7.6 million a year that the city saves by simply having trees.

On average, a living snow fence lives 40 to 50 years, as opposed to a slatted snow fence that will need to be reinstalled every seven to 20 years. Additionally, living snow fences are more efficient at capturing snow than



slatted fences, capturing up to 12 times more. In the long run, living snow fences are more efficient and cost effective, whether they are along streets and highways or on the edge of properties. Living snow fences are also environmentally friendly, attracting wildlife to habitat that otherwise would not be present.

A lot of animals and wildlife depend on trees for food, cover, and hunting prey. When trees start disappearing, animals disappear with them. This trend is significant in regions where endangered animal species live. We may be able to plant more trees, but we cannot bring wildlife back from extinction. People also depend on trees for food, and in some cases for their livelihood. Trees are an important part of a healthy ecosystem that we all depend on, whether we know it or not.

More than 180 million Americans depend on forests for their drinking water. Many communities, such as Denver, rely on forested watersheds for their water supply. Forests absorb rainfall and use that water to refill underground aquifers, cleansing and cooling water along the way. So when watersheds are destroyed, it tampers with water supply. The quality of water depends on the health of the forest it comes from.

But trees are not just protecting the environment in forests, they also are protecting the Earth's environment. One acre of forest removes six tons of

carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, purifying the air we breathe and then releasing it back as oxygen — one of the most essential requirements of life. The leaves evaporate water, and the air vapor then removes heat energy from the air. This process is critical to slowing down the effects of climate change — which also has had a negative effect on forests, as is the case in California, where millions of trees are dying.

Trees are some of the least expensive plants to add to a landscape and immediately earn value back. Landscaping with trees can increase property value by as much as 20 percent.

Trees are an important consideration when choosing a neighborhood. In fact, according to a NeighborWoods Month survey conducted by Wakefield Research, 88 percent of Americans would pay more for a house with trees in the yard, and 79 percent of Americans feel trees define their neighborhood's character. These findings are insightful to how much people value the visual appeal of trees.

Additional research indicates that neighbors are more active and more social with one another in neighborhoods with canopy coverage compared to those that are barren. Trees create a sense of pride and unity that put people at ease and encourage them to spend more time

outdoors; as a result, they are more likely to interact with each other. The positive effects of trees are so great that neighborhoods and homes that are barren are shown to have more incidents of violence and crime than those filled with trees. Numerous studies have found that when trees are planted in neighborhoods, the rates of crime go down.

The impact of trees' visual appeal is carried over to a health setting as well. Patients who have a view of trees outside their windows heal faster and with fewer complications than those without trees. Children with ADHD also show fewer symptoms when they are exposed to trees. Trees and nature aid concentration by reducing mental fatigue. It is no wonder that trees are often present in healing gardens and other places of tranquility.

Trees contribute so much to communities and neighborhoods. A healthy urban forest improves the health and well-being of its residents and beautifies the town. When municipalities invest in the care of their trees, the whole community benefits. When homeowners plant trees in their yards, they increase the value of their homes, save money on energy costs, and beautify the neighborhood. Trees are an economical and sustainable solution to addressing community needs, so let's continue to plant them.



SPEAKING FOR THE TREES

By Josh Embrey, Berthoud town forester

THE TOWN OF BERTHOUD, A NORTHERN SMALL-TOWN COMMUNITY CALLED THE “GARDEN SPOT OF Colorado,” is known for its rich heritage of the longstanding commitment to trees. With more than 3,500 public area and right-of-way trees, and with a population of roughly 5,500, the Town certainly is proud of its reputation for having an established urban forest. Having been a Tree City USA member for 33 consecutive years, Berthoud has a deep-rooted foundation of volunteer-based programs and enthusiastic tree-invested citizens. As Berthoud continues to grow, the Town strives to encourage future housing developments to contain tree-lined streets, with a suggested diverse use of tree species.

In 1980, the Town of Berthoud's Tree Advisory Committee was formed to study, investigate, counsel, and develop annual forestry-related work plans. Such written plans were implemented for the care, development, planting, and removal of trees and shrubs in public areas and rights-of-way. The committee consists of a group of seven dedicated and experienced volunteers (some of whom are 20-plus-year members), a Town-Board liaison, and a staff representative who all play a vital role in the maintenance, well-being, and growth of the Town's urban forest. These individuals meet monthly to discuss current forestry issues, future concerns, and propose new project ideas. The Tree Advisory Committee actively participates in the annual Arbor Day Celebration, and has been instrumental in the Town of Berthoud being named a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation annually since 1983.

Additionally, the Tree Advisory Committee assists in coordinating public outreach, participates in the Town's Arbor Day plantings, and aids in developing strategic management plans when epidemics such as emerald ash borer (EAB) arise. The Tree Advisory Committee has played a vital role in developing community awareness of today's problematic EAB epidemic. Finally, it has built the foundation of the urban forest inventory program the Town uses today to identify the species, condition, and location of trees in its park system and right-of-way trees.

Along with the growth of the Town's urban forest, its Forestry Department has gradually developed within the Berthoud Parks and Recreation Department. After beginning with an eight-hour-per-week arborist just three years ago, transitioning into a 20-hour-per-week arborist this past year, the Town now employs a full-time town forester who handles all maintenance, budget, and contracting service for Berthoud's urban forest.

With EAB being the hot topic in forestry today, and with the detection of EAB in Longmont this June, Berthoud anticipates its arrival within Town limits. Town staff, with additional input from the Tree Advisory Committee, have developed a thorough EAB Management and Response Plan highlighting EAB's background, biology, life cycle, identification, and treatment options for controlling EAB. Currently, roughly 30 percent of public park area and right-of-way trees are ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) in the Town of Berthoud. The Town already has begun treating valuable ash trees and is gradually removing undesirable ash to start replacing them with new species to contribute to tree diversity across Town, ultimately lowering the potential loss due to future forestry-related epidemics.

For additional information regarding the Town of Berthoud's Forestry Department, visit www.berthoud.org/departments/parks-recreation/forestry.



KIDS FIRST!

WHAT'S GOOD FOR KIDS IS GOOD FOR CITIES

IN FEBRUARY 2015, *GOVERNING* published an article that asked, “Do cities need kids?”

Our nation’s future is inextricably tied to the future of kids in cities. The numbers speak for themselves. According to the most recent U.S. data, 80.7 percent of Americans live in an urban area and, contrary to popular opinion, the percentage of kids in urban areas is slightly higher. The question that should be asked is not whether cities need kids, but rather how cities can enable kids and their families to thrive.

Skeptics argue that cities and towns should focus on attracting young professionals without kids because it is easier to meet their needs. *Washington Post* reporter Lydia DePillis described the argument this way in an article: “Kids require schools, which can make up the biggest single chunk of a city’s budget. They spend more time in municipal parks and recreation centers, and create problems that social services

agencies have to help solve. Their parents save more for their kids’ futures rather than spending today, and buy food in bulk rather than going out to eat.”

Unfortunately, those who want to turn cities into childless playgrounds for young adults fail to distinguish between cost and value. Yes, it costs money to invest in good schools and parks, playgrounds, and other places to play. But it also generates a significant return on investment — economically and civically. As Candace Damon, vice chair of leading urban development firm HR&A Advisors, made clear in *The Wall Street Journal*, when people have kids, their value grows in terms of spending power and taxable income, and they are more engaged in their community.

Cities that are among the best at attracting young professionals are increasingly the cities that make it difficult for families to stay. Developers are building more single-unit

apartments and fewer places that can accommodate families. They are sacrificing play spaces for dog parks. These amount to a progressive’s version of trickle-down economics: cater to young college-educated adults and hope that everyone else will benefit, too. It is simply unsustainable, both for our cities and our kids.

In D.C., there is a groundbreaking bike sharing program and more than 70 miles of bike lanes that make it easier and healthier for adults to get to work or get some exercise. But, as Courtland Milloy, columnist for *The Washington Post*, pointed out, “There are virtually none in Ward 8, by the way, which has the lowest income and highest number of children of any ward in the city.”

The creative class is a critical component of a successful city. However, the rallying cries that call for “pedestrians first,” “bikers first,” or “creative class first” may exacerbate inequity, particularly for the



13.2 million kids growing up in poverty in urban areas.

To create a sustainable future for the next generation, the alternative rallying cry should be: “Kids First!” Everyone wants good jobs, safe neighborhoods, and affordable housing. In addition, families want — and kids need — great schools and abundant opportunities to play. Just as everyone — a new mom or dad with a stroller, someone carting groceries home from the corner store, etc. — benefits from accessible, ramped sidewalk curbs built to enable seniors and individuals with disabilities to be mobile, everyone would benefit from a city designed with kids in mind.

KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit, is focused on ensuring that all kids get the balanced and active play they need to thrive. Play can transform kids from sedentary to physically active, bored to mentally active, and solitary to socially active. Yet only one in four kids gets the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity or active play per day. America’s kids are playing less than they ever have before and are increasingly unhappy, unhealthy, and falling behind: one in three kids is obese or overweight and one in five kids has a mental illness. Moreover, kids are not developing critical 21st-century skills — such as collaboration, creativity, problem solving, resilience, and

empathy — that they will need to succeed as adults in the global economy. Kids growing up in poverty face many barriers to play. They lack access to safe places to play, are more likely to attend schools that have cut back on recess, and spend an inordinate amount of time in places and situations that do not encourage active play.

Cities across the country are beginning to make great strides in creating communities that foster walkability and bikeability. Now it is time for cities to put kids first and embrace Playability, making it easy for all kids to get the play they need to thrive. This can take many

PLAYFUL CITY USA

PLAYFUL CITY USA IS A RECOGNITION PROGRAM OF KABOOM!, A NATIONAL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.

The designation honors cities and towns that ensure that kids in their communities, particularly kids from low-income families, get the balanced and active play they need to thrive. In 2016, 257 communities were recognized for making it easy for all kids to get balanced and active play in their neighborhoods and for pledging to integrate play as a solution to the challenges facing their communities.

Ingredients to Playability: Scale, Ease, and Equity Are Critical

Working with communities is central to achieving the overall goal of KaBOOM! because most play-related infrastructure investment, policy, and programming happens at the local level. It is critical that municipalities take comprehensive action across their jurisdictions to make widespread play behavior change. To drive change at the municipal level, KaBOOM! has positioned itself as a standard-setter, not a policy advocate. In other words, it does not push a policy agenda, but rather creates a national platform for cities and towns to implement their own big ideas for using play as a solution to their pressing challenges. Playability can take many forms and address many challenges.

Investments in play will not be successful unless they lead to widespread behavior change. To inspire cities and towns to generate solutions that overcome behavioral bottlenecks that keep kids from getting the play they need to thrive, KaBOOM! conducted behavioral science research and learned that municipalities need to put Play Everywhere, integrating play into dead time and dead space.

As KaBOOM! inspires communities to embrace Playability and implement Play Everywhere ideas, it needs to ensure that play is used to address inequity, not exacerbate it. All families deserve to live in a safe community with ample job opportunities, affordable housing, great schools, and abundant opportunities to play, but the nation currently has inequitable distribution of services, resources, and opportunities for low-income families. The mission of KaBOOM! is to ensure that municipalities equitably distribute opportunities for play.

For more information on gaining Playful City USA status, visit kaboom.org/playability/playful_city_usa. KaBOOM! also has grants available to help communities take bold steps toward beginning or completing play space projects; visit kaboom.org/grants for details.

forms: Chicago extending the school day to ensure all kids get recess, physical education, arts, and culture; Brownsville, Texas, closing streets to cars to enable kids to play; and Baltimore turning moments of frustration into moments of joy by integrating the play everywhere concept into routine places like bus stops, to name just a few. These cities

recognize that play is not only good for kids, but also a competitive advantage for attracting and retaining families across the socioeconomic spectrum who pay taxes, attract businesses, and care about the health and vitality of their community. During the 2015 Partnership for a Healthier America Summit, leaders across all sectors echoed the urgency

of meeting the needs of America's kids. During her remarks, First Lady Michelle Obama reaffirmed that we need to "give all kids every chance to reach their potential." We can meet this challenge at scale by creating thriving cities that give all kids the play-filled childhood they deserve.

SPOTLIGHT

BECOMING PLAYFUL

By Jake Reynolds, Wellington recreation coordinator

WELLINGTON IS A PLAYFUL CITY WITH A LONG HISTORY OF OFFERING RECREATION PROGRAMS TO the community.

Prior to 2006, the volunteer board known as Wellington Recreation and Sports Association ran adult and youth sports programs. In 2006, the Town of Wellington created a recreation department and began running recreation programs. The Community Activities Committee (CAC) also runs various activities, ranging from an annual Easter egg hunt to parades and Fourth of July festivities.

In 2014, voters passed an initiative that allowed the Town to procure funds to build its first community park. Wellington Community Park is 30 acres with two lighted ball fields, batting cages, dog park, playground, lighted tennis courts, splash pad, picnic areas, trails, BMX track, and open areas.

In early 2015, the Parks Advisory Board was created to help manage the growth of parks and trails for the growing community. With wonderful parks, vibrant recreation programs, and CAC activities, it was a no brainer to apply for Playful City recognition. Playful City status not only brings recognition to the community, it also opens the door for grant opportunities to add even more play opportunities for all socioeconomic groups.

Even though Wellington is a small community, not all residents are aware of the location — or existence — of all the Town's parks. In 2017, the Town plans on having play dates in various parks throughout Wellington to create awareness of the many choices people have in the community for play, whether it is organized or impromptu.

For example, Wellington has a great 18-hole disc golf course. Unfortunately, nine holes are on the east side of I-25, and nine others are on the west side. The Town recently finished construction on a pedestrian underpass that now makes it easy to play all 18 holes without driving. This one underpass also opens up walking and biking access to

parks and schools on either side of the interstate. The Town also hopes to schedule some local disc experts to hold an instructional day on how to play disc golf on *both* sides of the interstate.

The next big project is a trail system that will connect parks from the north end of town to the south. This trail system will open up the parks and schools to pedestrians and bikers — e.g., kids will be able to play all throughout Wellington without relying on someone to drive them.

Let the fun begin!



COLORADO LOTTERY GIVES BACK TO THE CENTENNIAL STATE'S OUTDOOR LEGACY

COLORADANS COUNT THE state's vast recreation opportunities as a major contribution to their quality of life. Trails lead hikers above the clouds, while riverfront parks allow children to enhance their education and explore their imaginations, and open spaces are preserved for future generations.

These opportunities are not just for Coloradans' entertainment — they are a part of what makes The Centennial State a wonderful place to live and play, and they set the state apart from the rest of the country.

Colorado is a special place and just as unique is the Colorado Lottery. The Colorado Lottery strives to maximize proceeds for the people of Colorado to help enhance the quality of life through recreation opportunities, conservation, and protecting the future. No other state lottery can say that its proceeds will be used for this intended purpose.

The Colorado Lottery was created by the passing of Senate Bill 82-119 in 1982 by the General Assembly, which set the foundation of lottery proceeds. This passage allocated 40 percent of Colorado Lottery revenues to the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) to support local parks, recreation, and open space, and 10 percent to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and outdoor recreation programs.

Coloradans doubled down on their commitment to a healthy lifestyle and accessible outdoor recreation in 1992 when voters approved Article XXVII to the Colorado Constitution. This law created the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund — better known as GOCO — and directed the remaining balance of lottery proceeds towards

recreation, environmental education, and conservation. These funds are capped at approximately \$64.7 million this fiscal year, with any amount greater than 50 percent shifted to the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) fund.

Every year, the Colorado Lottery works for people across the state to create high-quality recreation and outdoor opportunities. With lottery funds directed toward this mission, it creates a legacy of healthy living in Colorado.

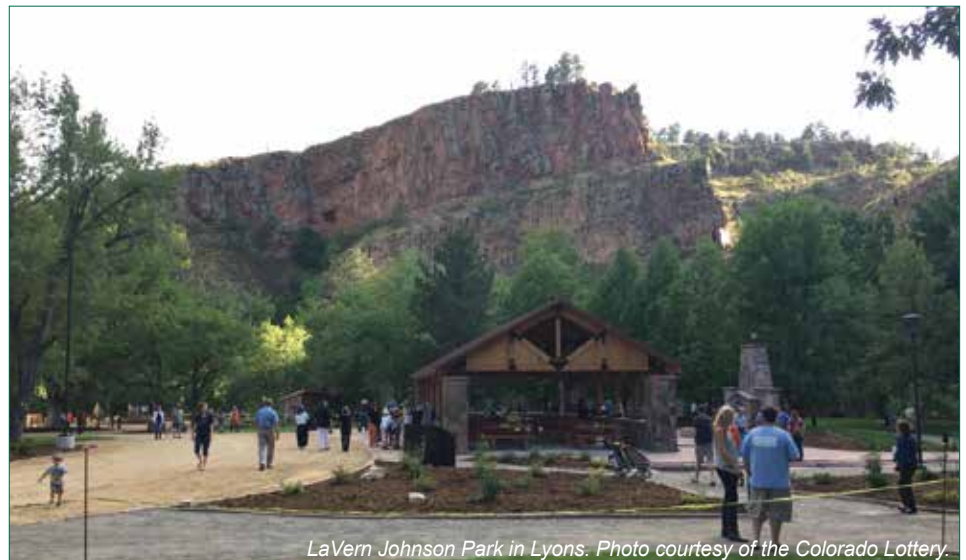
Since selling its first scratch ticket in 1983, the Colorado Lottery has returned more than \$2.9 billion in proceeds to the people of the state. Fiscal Year 2016 was a very big year for Colorado Lottery proceeds. Colorado parks, trails, and open space received \$143.5 million in proceeds.

Since 1983, the Colorado Lottery has funded more than 1,000 parks, created more than 800 miles of hiking and biking trails, preserved and protected more than one million acres of open space, and educated more

than 500,000 Coloradans about wildlife.

Grants and allocated funds range from a few dollars to the millions and make an impact in Colorado communities no matter the size. Through its proceed beneficiaries CTF, CPW, GOCO, and BEST, Colorado Lottery dollars have reached across all four corners of the state. Community partners come together to use different lottery funds to accomplish their shared vision and goals.

Lottery funds have been key in developing the Colorado Riverfront Trail in Mesa County, connecting the Town of Palisade and the City of Fruita. The entire trail runs 32 miles through the City of Grand Junction and alongside the Colorado River. This project recently used a combination of CTF funds, GOCO grants, and CPW proceeds to add an additional 8.3 miles to the trail. As with many Colorado Lottery funded projects, this project connects the community to its most precious resource. There are plans to utilize



LaVern Johnson Park in Lyons. Photo courtesy of the Colorado Lottery.

CREATING AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY

By June Jaramillo, Ordway deputy clerk-treasurer

ORDWAY IS A QUAIN AGRICULTURAL TOWN ON THE SOUTHEASTERN PLAINS OF COLORADO. WITH approximately 1,098 residents, it is the official seat of Crowley County and is home to its public schools and law enforcement facility. On the edge of Ordway, Interstate 71 and Highway 96 intersect, bringing in travelers from across Colorado and beyond. Most residents in surrounding communities come to Ordway for the convenience of the local grocery store, small restaurants, a gas station, and the post office.

Unfortunately, for years, Ordway has been desperately lacking recreational facilities at the local park. The playground located at Conestoga Park consisted of a few swings, a broken merry-go-round, and a very small set of monkey bars. The elementary school was in dire need of playground renovations, as the current equipment was outdated and unsafe. In 2012, the Town of Ordway (represented by the Town Clerk Cynthia Crouch) partnered with the Crowley County School District (represented by Pam Arbuthnot, then principal of Crowley County Primary & Intermediate School) and Christine Fischer, owner and lead consultant of FPM Grants, to pursue the Colorado Lottery Starburst Award Grant specifically through Greater Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) in hopes of building a new playground in both Conestoga Park and the elementary school.

In June 2015, it was officially announced that the GOCO had chosen the Town of Ordway and Crowley County Schools as a grant recipient for the new playground and playground renovations. GOCO awarded the project \$288,651, and the project received a cash match from the Colorado Health Foundation, as well as in-kind work in the amount of \$181,360.

The elementary school renovations included an artificial turf multipurpose field, Grand Plateau playground equipment, fitness-themed playground equipment, arch swings, and rubber mulch. Conestoga Park's new playground included concrete walkways, XFitness Advanced Fitness package, six-foot contour benches, rubber mulch, Active Addition playground equipment for ages 5 to 12, Second Wind playground equipment for ages 2 to 5, tire bouncers and seesaw bouncers, and a three-bay arch swing set.

On the morning of May 17, 2016, a special ribbon-cutting ceremony took place at Conestoga Park. Crouch and Arbuthnot had the honor of cutting the ribbon in the presence of many local residents and an eager audience of elementary school students. Afterward, the students had the opportunity to play on the equipment at Conestoga Park, which they seemed to thoroughly enjoy.



Today, Conestoga Park is an integral part of the community. Parents are able to use the exercise equipment while they watch their children play. In the evening, it is not uncommon to see families walking around the park, enjoying the scenery. Families have birthday parties and picnics there now; before there was no public place for them. The park and playground renovations have been a beneficial addition to the quality of the Town of Ordway, and it will be used for generations to come.

more lottery funds on expansion of the trail to connect the three communities.

CTF proceeds are unique in that they allow the recipients to determine where the funds should be directed in their community. Over the life of the Colorado Lottery, CTF has distributed more than \$1.1 billion to 470-plus eligible local governments. GOCO has also received more than \$1 billion in Colorado Lottery proceeds that are awarded through a competitive grant process. Many times CTF funds and GOCO grants are used in combination to support projects.

In 2013, severe flooding ravaged regions in the mountains, Front Range, and Eastern Plains. Through a special GOCO grant, the Colorado Lottery was able to provide \$13.5 million to help repair the damage, including \$5 million to those communities that saw trails, parks, and open spaces washed away. No amount of funding will ever make these communities whole again, but these dollars help communities heal.

Earlier this summer, the Town of Lyons, which was isolated from rescue during the flood, celebrated a large milestone with the reopening of LaVern Johnson Park. Before the flood, it was known as Meadow Park; in the rebuilding of the park, it became apparent that it should be named for a long-time Lyons community leader, LaVern Johnson. Nearly \$1.3 million in GOCO grants provided through Colorado Lottery proceeds helped restore the park surrounded by sandstone cliffs and the North St. Vrain Creek.

The legacy of a strong community and enjoying the outdoors continues with this park. Once again, the park is full of children's laughter, full campsites, and residents who were previously not able to access the scenic area.

Lottery proceeds are not used just for trails, parks, and recreation. They have also been put to use for enhancements and maintenance of existing structures, creating master plans, removing invasive species and plants, school programs through

nonprofit organizations, and funding unique experiences at state parks.

Many residents of Colorado are unaware that the lottery has had such an impact on recreation and the outdoors. Whether one lives or works on the Eastern Plains, nestled along the Front Range, or surrounded by fourteeners, there are Colorado Lottery proceeds in the community. Nearly all Coloradans have utilized an area funded by Colorado Lottery proceeds at one point in their life.

As the Colorado Lottery approaches its 35th anniversary, it is anticipated that it will have exceeded \$3 billion in proceeds returned to the hundreds of cities and towns, counties, special districts, eligible associations, state parks, and schools. Most importantly, these funds will continue to enhance the quality of life and preserve open spaces.

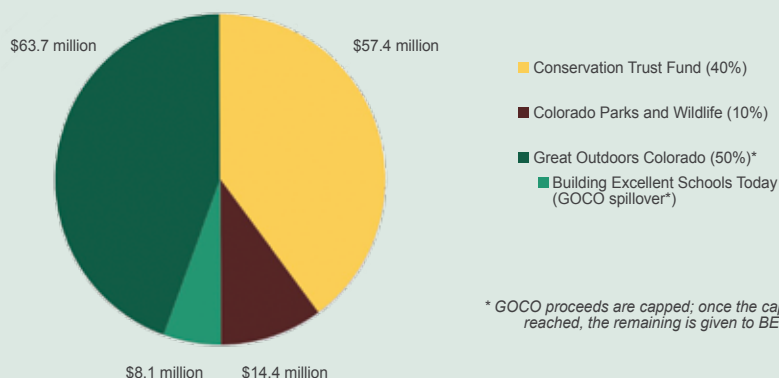
Whenever a scratch or jackpot ticket is purchased from any of the Colorado Lottery's 3,200-plus retail partners, approximately 24 cents of each dollar is invested back into Colorado. Proceeds figures stack up quickly, as the Colorado Lottery sells nearly \$1 million in scratch tickets every day and continues to add exciting new jackpot games, including this year's addition of Lucky for Life.

Colorado is truly a special place, and the quality of life has been greatly impacted by Colorado Lottery proceeds. Everything done at the Colorado Lottery is intended to make the state a better place to live, work, and explore. The staff of 120 state employees is proud of their statewide efforts to generate revenue and distribute lottery proceeds that have a long lasting impact on the health of Colorado's residents, environment, and quality of life.

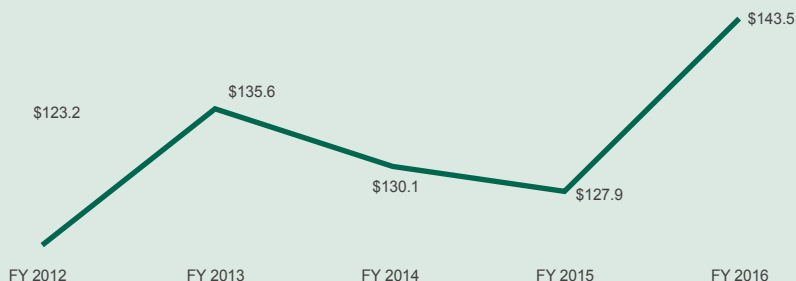
COLORADO LOTTERY PROCEEDS BREAKDOWN

C.R.S. 33-60-104 and Article XXVII, Section 3 of the Colorado Constitution.

FY 2016 Percentage of Proceeds



Proceeds Amounts in Millions (Past Five Years)



VISITORS FEEL LIKE LOCALS, LOCALS PLAY LIKE VISITORS

By Ture Nycum, Fruita parks and recreation director

WHILE MUCH OF COLORADO IS ENJOYING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY, FRUITA HAS YET TO fully emerge economically. The oil and gas industry that Fruita relied on has not returned to economic levels seen since 2008, and most recently, sales and use taxes collections in 2015 were 6 percent lower than in 2014. If it was not for tourists and recreationalists descending on Fruita, due in large part to its reputation as a mountain biking destination, the economic impacts would be more severe. Capitalizing on the area's natural outdoor recreation resources has become a focal point among other economic development activities, in reviving and stabilizing Fruita's economy. This focus also fits nicely with Fruita City Council's recently adopted goals: Quality of Life, Economic Health, and Lifestyle.

Fruita has no shortage of single-track, dirt-trail awesomeness in the thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that surround the community. However, Fruita's reputation for trails has not always translated into trails *within* the community. Subsequently, the City of Fruita is making efforts to develop its trail network not only within city limits, but to existing destinations beyond its boundaries. This improved trail connectivity is being used as an important business recruiting tool in the hopes of attracting new outdoor recreation industry.

In 2014, the Monument View section (nine miles) of the Colorado Riverfront Trail (a 25-plus-mile regional trail currently running from Palisade to Fruita) was opened to the Grand Valley with the help of a large Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant and facilitated by Mesa County. The Monument View section connects Fruita and Grand Junction and was met with great enthusiasm in the community.

After five years of head pounding (planning, grant writing, designing, obtaining approvals from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad, redesigning, and, finally, construction) the City of Fruita opened the Little Salt Wash Trail in June 2016, again to great community enthusiasm. This nearly one-mile trail section, also funded in large part by GOCO, is significant for the City of Fruita. Prior to its construction, bicyclists and pedestrians had to traverse two overpasses from north to south Fruita (which is dissected by I-70, the UP Railroad, and Highways 6/50) via a five-foot sidewalk on Highway 340 — not a pleasant experience.

Building off the success of the recent trail additions, the City of Fruita has its sights on another section of the Colorado Riverfront Trail (CRT), bolstered by Gov. John Hickenlooper's designation as a "Colorado the Beautiful: 16 Trails in 2016." The Kokopelli Section of the CRT, approximately 4.5 miles, would extend west to the community of Loma, but more importantly, to the world-renowned Kokopelli Trail system (a top-10 international mountain biking destination) in McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area, which is managed by the BLM. This connection will link Fruita's business and retail centers to BLM's vast recreational lands, providing a nonvehicular connection for mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners, and other outdoor enthusiasts. After recently receiving multiple grants totaling \$4.2 million from GOCO, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, and CDOT for construction, the City of Fruita believes this new trail connection will have a positive economic impact on the community by attracting additional visitors and new businesses from the outdoor recreation industry.

Putting it all together, Fruita's recent and future trail development will create a greater quality of life for residents, advance the economic health of the business community, and generally provide a rocking lifestyle for all. After all, "In Fruita, visitors feel like locals, and locals play like visitors!"



INSPIRING A BETTER LIFE, A BETTER FUTURE

FOR MANY, THE IDEA OF QUALITY of life in Colorado turns thoughts to the outdoors. For those, the outdoors is practically synonymous with life here. But despite our good fortune in being surrounded by beauty, not all Coloradans have the same access to or opportunity for immersion in nature. That is why Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and dozens of partnering towns, cities, counties, land trusts, and a variety of other nonprofit organizations are rallying together with citizens from across the state to break down barriers to getting outdoors and help inspire new connections to nature. Why? Because it is good for the lives of Coloradans, and it is good for the future of our state.

A Little History

Colorado's leaders' and citizens' commitment to ensuring an outstanding quality of life for residents is a clear and distinctive priority. It is what makes Colorado unique. And it is not new.

GOCO was created by Colorado voters back in 1992. Two years earlier, then-Gov. Roy Romer and Ken Salazar established a citizens committee to respond to this question: What should we do to sustain and enhance outdoor resources — parks, trails, wildlife, and open space? One of the committee's recommendations was to create a trust fund that could invest in the future of Colorado's outdoors.

Since the resulting amendment to the Colorado Constitution was made and

Great Outdoors Colorado came into being, GOCO has invested Colorado Lottery proceeds in more than 4,900 projects in all 64 counties.

The projects are identified and successfully completed by the state's many organizations working to conserve land, protect wildlife, and connect Coloradans with a range of outdoor recreation opportunities.

The people who work in the state's towns, cities, counties, and special park and recreation districts, and those who work for nonprofit land trusts and for Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), have effectively and efficiently put GOCO funds to work, adding more than 47,000 acres to the state parks system and acquiring and enhancing wildlife habitat, creating or improving more than 1,000 community park and outdoor recreation areas, building or restoring more than 900 miles of trail, preserving 750 miles of Colorado rivers, putting 8,000 teens and young

adults to work via the Colorado Youth Corps Association, and protecting more than one million acres of open space forever.

Evolving with the Times

As the state and its residents' needs have changed, so has GOCO. In 2015, it devised a strategic plan, based on input gathered from partners and citizens across the state, to guide the organization until 2020. The plan includes three pillars:

- The Protect Initiative to fund once-in-a-lifetime urban and rural land conservation projects.
- The Connect Initiative to increase access to the outdoors and fill gaps in major trail systems.
- The Inspire Initiative to address the growing disconnect between youth and the outdoors.

The projects resulting from these initiatives, as well as the hundreds of projects funded each year as part of



GOCO's competitive grant programs, are important contributors to retaining our prime quality of life, especially as the state's population swells.

The Inspire Initiative Comes to Life

As the cornerstone of the GOCO strategic plan, the Inspire Initiative aims to connect youth and their families with the outdoors. For the state's quality of life to endure, Coloradans must appreciate and care for the great outdoors. But one cannot appreciate what one does not experience. That is why GOCO and its partners are establishing places for kids and their families to play and connect with the outdoors, programs that activate those places, and pathways to outdoor stewardship and leadership roles.

Local coalitions across the state are bringing projects to life through an integrated, youth-driven, collaborative approach. This innovative framework is being looked to as a national model, and each coalition's approach will serve as an example to other rural, urban, suburban, or mountain communities across the country.

Leading the way

Six pilot coalitions are leading the way in these areas of the state: Northeast Metro Denver (Commerce City, northeast Aurora, and Denver's Northeast Park Hill and Montbello neighborhoods), Denver's Westwood neighborhood, Lafayette, Leadville, Lamar, and the San Luis Valley. The groups spent 2016 planning, defining barriers, and creating visions for meaningful, sustainable change.

In December 2016, the six were awarded a combined \$13.5 million in implementation grants, with their local governments as fiscal agents and key supporters. This funding will put plans into action over the next three years and help local coalitions build long-term capacity. Through the pilots, Inspire will impact nearly 42,000 youth and create more than 520 jobs.



Here is a brief introduction to each pilot:

- Despite being surrounded by world-class outdoor recreation, many children in Leadville do not get outside due to physical, cultural, and social barriers.

Get Outdoors Leadville!

(pictured at left) brought together more than 70 agency and community members, youth researchers, and Latina promotoras to create a vision and will invest \$3 million of GOCO funding, awarded to Lake County, in developing places for kids to get outside, enhanced programs, and new pathways to careers in the outdoor recreation and natural resources industries.

- With a \$2.8 million grant to the City of Lafayette, **Nature Kids/ Jóvenes de la Naturaleza** (above) will focus on a one-square-mile area in a network of public schools serving the lowest-income children in the Boulder Valley School District. Youth living in these neighborhoods, where

more than half the population is Latino, lack nearby outdoor spaces to play, safe routes to walk or bike to school, and community-based outdoor programming. Nearly 40 organizations, led by Thorne Nature Experience, will take a scaffolded approach to providing a spectrum of outdoor experiences, from the backyard to the backcountry.

- Denver will pilot the **My Outdoor Colorado** program (below) in the Westwood neighborhood in the southwest portion of the city, leveraging a \$2.7 million grant to the City of Denver. The coalition will serve as model for partnership between community-based organizations and local government where lack of transportation, gear, awareness, and bilingual and culturally relevant programming are barriers.
- With a \$2.7 million GOCO grant to the Cities of Aurora, Commerce City, and Denver, the **GoWild Northeast Metro Coalition** (top of next page) will include opening



new entry points to The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge and connecting youth with Barr Lake State Park, creating safe, close-to-home outdoor places for kids.

- With a \$1.3 million grant to the City of Lamar, **Inspire Lamar** (middle) will invest in transforming North Gateway Park and Willow Creek Park, both accessible from the Lamar Loop trail, and will build 18 programs and associated pathway opportunities to introduce youth to outdoor experiences like fishing, camping, and biking. The coalition will partner with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to bring in experts to train local residents in delivering high-quality outdoor education programming.
- GOCO funding — a \$1 million grant to the Towns of Antonito, Crestone, and Saguache for **Inspire San Luis Valley** (bottom) — will be in invested building the Antonito Outdoor Education Center and creating the Antonito Adventure Program, improving connections along Creede's Willow Creek Corridor, and supporting the Headwaters Youth Conservation Corps, the Saguache Backyard to Backcountry Program, and the Saguache Youth Conservation Corps.

Looking ahead

The work does not stop there. An additional 15 coalitions will apply for implementation funding from GOCO in 2017, and GOCO also is building a comprehensive measurement and evaluation strategy with Kaiser Permanente Colorado's Institute for Health Research to track Inspire's impacts.

GOCO looks forward to sharing successes and what it learns as so many partners join together to create a better quality of life for more Coloradans.





DETERMINING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EVENTS

THERE ARE TWO MAJOR advantages of community events: community and economic impacts. It is important to measure both of these impacts and their value when considering the costs from a municipal perspective, as city and town officials have the difficult decision of choosing which events to help support financially with finite funds.

The distinction between economic and community impact strategies is important. Community impact is difficult to quantify, but this type of impact is fundamental to the communities, it produces outcomes such as community pride, sense of place, and pulling people together. Economic impact strategies focus on the job creation and enhancement as well as the generation of income for the community.

It is important to estimate the economic impact of community events. There are many options for doing so, ranging from simplistic methods using “expert” judgement, to more complex use of surveys and impact assessment models. Adams State University developed a couple of

economic impact studies, including a simple model that included the needed formulas to measure event impact. This could be used by municipalities to plug in data and then produce a quantitative economic outcome for both local businesses (current and prospective) and local events.

The economic impact formula examines the estimated total economic impact an existing or potential business/event has on the community. The formula is meant to examine the impact of local operational expenditures, salaries and employee spending, events in and visitors to the community, employees who use local health care providers, tax on sales, and tax due to construction.

Events attract visitors to communities, and the formula focuses on both out-of-community guests and local visitors. When guests visit from outside of the community, money is spent on lodging, meals, incidental expenses, and additional retail spending. Events also draw local crowds that have an economic impact. Although these local event visitors may not have an impact on lodging

and have a less significant impact on dining, they do still spend money locally as a result of events. The formula calculates the number of local event visitors and asks for the local spending rate of these visitors. Some events may generate more spending than others.

There are three main components that need to be considered when evaluating the economic impact of an event:

- The Direct Impact measures the direct or actual revenues generated by the event, including local spending by the participants throughout the community. Vendors and out-of-community visitors represent an influx of money from outside of the region to the local community. Local residents who spend money outside of their community produce a leakage by transferring money away from the community. Local events that entice residents to remain in the community to attend them also contribute to the economy. Vendors from outside of the community need to be taken into consideration as well. The revenues they earn (above what



they spend in the local community) will leave and have little impact on the community, whereas the revenues of local vendors are likely to have a measurable impact on the local economy. The direct impact revenues will drive a second impact known as indirect impact.

- The Indirect Impact represents additional purchases made by local businesses (not necessarily involved in the event) as a result of the direct impact. For example, event visitors purchase meals at a local restaurant, which in turn results in larger purchases from suppliers and hiring more workers.
- Induced Impact refers to additional economic activity and jobs created when a proportion of this money is spent locally. This continues until the amount spent diminishes. A formula is established to measure the indirect impact from the spending of local businesses, suppliers, and employees as a result of the specific event.

When evaluating the direct economic impact of an event, three common areas should be considered: facilities preparation, visitor spending, and direct impact of vendors. Some events may only have visitor spending as the

viable direct impact. To calculate the direct impact of visitors and vendors, a municipality must estimate the number of visitors attending the event, the average expenditures of each visitor, and the multiplier that reflects the indirect and induced impact of this spending.

A recognized multiplier is used to measure the “bounce” effect that occurs when money turnover takes place in a local economy. Multipliers provide a simple measure of the domino effect of money turnover in a local economy. New money from outside the studied region is introduced into the economy, and multiple spending and responding occur as part of the money pattern. The impact is measured by how much of the original amount stays in the studied region each time the amount is turned over. Smaller communities use smaller multipliers than larger communities as more expenditures are spent outside of smaller communities, which is termed as leakage. Third-party providers are a good resource for finding an appropriate multiplier for a specific community.

The total local impact of an event is a multiple of the direct effect. This multiple impact always takes a value

greater than the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced impacts:

$$\frac{\text{Direct Impact} + \text{Indirect Impact} + \text{Induced Impact}}{\text{Total Impact}}$$

In practice, the total impact is calculated as a multiple of the direct effect as,

$$\frac{\text{Multiplier} \times \text{Direct Impact}}{\text{Total Impact}}$$

In Alamosa, home to Adams State College, the city council and administration have found measuring the economic impact to be very helpful in making decisions in regard to public funding for community events. One must remember that the evaluation should include both the economic impact and the broader community development impacts of an event. Measuring the economic impact allows organizers and local governments to plan ahead and to objectively assess the benefits and costs involved in each event. This measure allows all involved to enter the event with few surprises and realize the community economic impact of local events.

COMMUNITY IS BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

By Lea Anne Russell, Elizabeth Stampede Community Relations Committee

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A COMMUNITY GO BEYOND BRICK AND MORTAR. IN JUNE OF EACH YEAR, thousands of people come together to celebrate the Town of Elizabeth and its surrounding community.

Elizabeth started out as a logging mill town in the mid-1800s to supply lumber from the dense ponderosa pine forests that covered the area to meet the growing needs of the nearby gold camp turned thriving frontier metropolis of Denver. Elizabeth eventually evolved into a cattle and horse ranching community where rodeos became a part of the Western lifestyle.

What started out as a local community amateur rodeo in 1965 has grown into one of the top professional rodeos in the country. The Annual Elizabeth Stampede Rodeo (ESR), the three-time PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association) Small Rodeo of the Year, will be held June 2, 3, and 4 at Casey Jones Park in Elizabeth, with a new concert addition, now in its second year, to be held June 1. The rodeo has taken over this small town for more than 50 years, but the historic foundation for the success of the Stampede was set in motion almost 100 years ago.

Jace Glick, ESR president, confirms that the foundation of this rodeo is the community itself. “The people who make up the community of Elizabeth and our entire county as a whole are tremendously involved in making this rodeo what it is. We have more than 250 volunteers each year. Some of them are involved during the entire year, and some come just for the rodeo. All of them are enthusiastic supporters of bringing a Western way of life to a venue that is like no other. The beautiful setting of our rodeo — in the pines overlooking the mountains and the town — creates an experience that is truly awe inspiring.”

The reach of the Stampede extends to helping the community as well. With the Elizabeth Stampede Foundation, the team provides support and assistance to those in need. Glick states, “From scholarships to donations or offering financial assistance to families in need, the foundation gives back to our community.”

There is something for everyone at the Elizabeth Stampede. It all starts with a Community Rodeo, which is free for spectators two weeks prior to the ESR. Then the ESR starts with a full arena concert on Thursday night and kicks into full gear with the PRCA Xtreme Bulls at 7 p.m. Friday night with 50 of the world's top bull riders against rodeo's toughest bulls, followed by the first of two rodeo dances. Then there is the 10 a.m. rodeo parade in downtown Elizabeth on Saturday morning, followed by the 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday PRCA rodeos and the Saturday night rodeo dance. The rodeo wraps up with the PRCA Red, White, and Blue 2 p.m. Sunday afternoon rodeo dedicated to military servicemen and -women.

Vendor alley, a place that is filled with the smells of cotton candy and funnel cakes and the sounds of bouncy houses and excited kids about to do their first mutton bustin' (sheep riding), includes shopping and local vendors. Everything from tractors to fine jewelry can be seen and purchased. The Elizabeth Stampede Foundation also offers a silent auction, and Behind the Chutes Tours offer insight behind the scenes.

No rodeo would be complete without the horsewomen who represent their hometown rodeos as queen and attendant. Many of these lovely women are on hand for autographs and have been known to have insider information on what makes the rodeo such a unique experience.

Visit the Elizabeth Stampede Rodeo and experience it for yourself! Visit www.elizabethstampede.com for more information.



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PUBLIC SPACES TO REMEMBER

A SAMENESS AND “EVERYWHERE USA” feeling sadly prevails in much of new suburban development in the United States. This homogenization is in response to widely emulated types of development that are perceived to be low risk to developers and their lenders.

Westminster staff and councilmembers have sought to make their city a unique and memorable community with many gathering spaces, distinct from its neighboring cities.

Some of Westminster’s most treasured public spaces are found within the myriad parks and open space that, along with golf courses and homeowners’ association parks, comprise an astonishing one-third of the City’s total land area. More than 140 miles of trails meander through this green space, providing incredible recreational and socializing opportunities for residents and visitors. Guests at Westminster hotels often comment in their online reviews about the City’s abundant green network and trail system.

Westminster is blessed with rolling topography, and the City has acquired many properties as parks and open space to protect the sweeping views. Perhaps the most stunning setting is Westminster City Park, which is located on a west-facing hillside at 104th Avenue/Sheridan Boulevard. The park is the venue for many City events, such as the 4th of July Celebration, Westy Fest, and numerous running events using the 12-mile-long Big Dry Creek Trail. The park’s “grand staircase” is a Westminster version of Red Rocks amphitheater’s steps, which aligns directly with Longs Peak and is a popular fitness destination when

combined with the two recreation centers in the park.

Another much-loved park gathering space is the nationally recognized Westminster Center Park, with its Peter Pan-themed playground.

The recently renovated plaza at Westminster City Hall is another revered public space and is the setting for special events such as the holiday lighting ceremony and volunteer appreciation barbecue.

The most recent publicly created gathering space is Westminster Station and park. The City modified the Regional Transportation District’s (RTD’s) original commuter rail station plan to create a dazzling station and lighted canopy situated on the edge of a newly created 40-acre park that is designed as a location for future larger-scale events. The City utilized money budgeted by RTD and supplemented it with City funds as well as money from Adams County and the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District to create a spectacular attraction for the City, featuring a lake and rebuilt rock-lined creek.

The City of Westminster also believes that the development community has a role in creating memorable spaces and has adopted development standards to support that objective. The City has also provided financial assistance through its urban renewal authority to incentivize creation of high-quality gathering places and memorable spaces.

The following are some examples of projects built in the past 20 years:

- Orchard Town Center is a mixed-use/retail center at 144th Avenue and I-25 with a unique prairie-style architectural design. Its large pedestrian gathering place with

high-quality finishes enlivened with restaurants draws thousands of customers to its weekly summer concert series.

- Westminster Promenade is one of the City’s earliest efforts to create a public gathering place along a landscaped pedestrian walkway and lake. The development is now being modified to add more density while retaining the core public spaces.
- “Bradburn Downtown” is a new urban project at 120th Avenue/Bradburn Boulevard with its own village pedestrian-oriented retail area with one-of-a-kind restaurants.
- The shops at Walnut Creek and Country Club Village are two separate projects, both of which feature “main street” areas that create quaint and memorable environments.
- Who knew a 20-year-old big box center could remain a vibrant place? Chalk it up to incredible Tuscan architecture and lots of public art at Westminster City Center Marketplace.
- Old Town Westminster has an improved streetscape and new park for events such as the Orchard Festival and a revolving sculpture exhibit.
- Now under construction, Downtown Westminster is a 100-acre development that preserves 20 percent of the site for parks and open spaces designed to create places for events, informal gatherings and memorable experiences.

Creating distinctive places is a top goal for the City. It is the Westy Way!

HEARING FROM ALL RESIDENTS LEADS TO BETTER TOWNS FOR ALL

WHEN HIGHWAY 491 IN CORTEZ was slated for repaving by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), municipal officials saw an opportunity to turn an eyesore entryway into a welcoming gateway.

The project happened to come up at the same time the City was busy engaging residents in Cortez Heart & Soul, which was the name Cortez chose for its Community Heart & Soul® project. Developed by the Orton Family Foundation, the method brings a broad range of residents together to determine what they most value about where they live. Cortez's story and the stories included here from other towns illustrate the power of resident-driven plans and action that is rooted in what matters most to them — in other words residents' "heart and soul."

In Cortez, improving the appearance of downtown was one of those priorities. The Colorado Department of Transportation's plans for South Broadway, as Highway 491 is called within municipal limits, did not align with what residents envisioned.

"The design was completely counter to what the Heart & Soul Team had

been hearing from residents. I called it doubling down on ugly. We had this really ugly entrance. CDOT's initial plan was to patch these old medians, and make them look like a calico cat that they would not touch again for another 40 years," Cortez City Manager Shane Hale said.

The city council responded by allocating \$650,000 to begin making changes downtown, no small amount for a municipality of 8,600 residents.

Working with a design team of landscape architects and civil and traffic engineers, the City held several design charrettes with the community. Additionally, the Cortez City Council broadened the initial design to include several streets in the downtown core, ensuring that Cortez had a cohesive plan moving forward. Knowing support existed among residents made the city council and the planning department case even stronger. Cortez approached the state with designs by the community and pushed for what they wanted.

In the end, tired and broken concrete was replaced with drought-tolerant plants, trees, and shrubs. Unsafe streetlights were updated through a partnership between the City and

Empire Electric Association. Following the project, two new businesses were built on vacant lots, welcome additions that countered the tide of development that had previously occurred only on the east side of town near Walmart. Getting CDOT to allow Cortez to codesign the highway was groundbreaking.

There was another groundbreaking aspect of the project — the role that the Ute Mountain Ute tribe played. Key tenets of Community Heart & Soul are to involve everyone and reach people whose voices had been missing. The City saw one element of the project as a chance to involve the tribe, including a missing voice and bridging a historical divide.

Design of the welcome sign was given over to the tribe, as this is its entryway to Cortez. All of the design work was conducted on tribal lands, with very little input from city leadership, which was intentional. The significance of this went beyond the signage. Having communication with the tribe allowed the town to be aware of and honor the local culture and traditions. One tribal member said that because of Heart & Soul, the tribe and city met in a way that had not happened before, providing the opportunity to talk about





historical traumas and marking the start of a change in the relationship between the two.

What happened in Cortez illustrates how community engagement lifts up a community. Engaging residents helped the City establish priorities and push for change. The result was a gateway that attracted visitors and businesses and began a better relationship with neighbors.

Involving a broad representation of residents and identifying what they love about where they live helps communities chart a course that leads to a better quality of life for everyone. Cortez is a good example of that.

Here are other examples of Colorado towns that strengthened their communities in different ways through Community Heart & Soul.

The Golden Rule

Golden's Community Heart & Soul project helped shape a vision plan for the community of about 19,000 based on what mattered most to residents. The Heart & Soul Team, made up of residents, municipal staff, business owners, faith-based leaders, and others, engaged people throughout Golden with a series of events including block parties, interviews, and murals. About 12 percent of the population participated, a milestone for Golden. Two guiding principles emerged: responsive government, and controlled and directed change, along with Heart & Soul statements that reflected what mattered most to residents.

The City went to work embedding these statements, their "heart and soul," into its planning process and in how it did business in general. Here are a few examples:

- Development review checklists incorporated the City of Golden's values.
- Neighborhood plans were updated and included resident input.
- Department budgets and requests are required to align with the City's values.
- The city clerk uses new and different outreach tools to advertise meetings and reach more residents.
- Projects such as helping with neighborhood cleanups and cookouts now partner with faith-based groups.

"It has really given staff, planning commission, and city council a lot more confidence that they understand the desires and interests of the community, which is a helpful compass during the decision-making process," said Rick Muriby, Golden planning manager. "In my own observations, these decision makers

have been able to refer to the Golden values during particularly difficult or divisive land use hearings, sometimes compelling the applicant to do more to meet these goals in order to gain approval and sometimes to stand up to strong opposition from neighboring residents or owners."

Rebuilding Relationships, One Recording at a Time

In the North Fork Valley, three towns participated in a shared Heart & Soul project: Crawford (population 400), Hotchkiss (population 900), and Paonia (population 1,400). Despite its small-town feel, affiliations with local industries sharply divided social life. Coal miners and "hippies," as the locals say, which includes environmentalists, artists, and newcomers, sometimes disagreed when it came to local mines.

Artists were seldom recognized as contributors to the local economy.

To build community across these divides and engage hard-to-reach people, the Heart & Soul Team recruited 14 reporters, ages 10 to 12. They were trained in how to interview people and create stories for local radio station KVNF in a program called Pass the Mic, and they did some tough reporting. For example, children of coal miners interviewed environmentalists and vice versa. The same was done across other industry sector divides. This intentionally helped to get adults to move outside their comfort zones and share their stories in a way that was approachable for youth to capture.

Pass the Mic culminated with a community event where people from across divides came together under one roof to watch the work of their children and to watch friends and neighbors who were interviewed. More than 150 people packed the theater in what was a historic moment for the community.

Seeing the valley through the eyes of youth helped the whole community

REALIZING THE RESULTS OF POSITIVE DISRUPTION

REACHING OUT TO AND LISTENING TO A WIDER SPECTRUM OF RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO DO NOT typically participate in local decision making, can be challenging. But the rewards and results are tangible. A study of nine Community Heart & Soul® projects, including Cortez, Golden, and the North Fork Valley, identified the strengths of resident-driven community development.

The report by researcher and analyst Doug Easterling, a professor of social sciences and health policy at Wake Forest School of Medicine, observed that Community Heart & Soul was a “disruptive” force that pulled up issues that needed to be named and worked through in order to have a stronger foundation from which to start. For this to happen, however, a community must first discover what they love about where they live so they can start from a positive place instead of from dissent. The report concluded that Community Heart & Soul creates a critical mass of positivity.

Here are additional findings the report cited about the impact of Community Heart & Soul:

- Elected officials, municipal staff, and community leaders are guided by the values, priorities, plans, and designs that emerge from Community Heart & Soul.
- Enhanced public trust in municipal government was fostered.
- New forms of community engagement and decision-making were adopted.
- New leaders emerged.
- New and stronger relationships developed among residents.
- Civic engagement was boosted.

“There is a lot about Community Heart & Soul that’s unique,” Easterling concluded. “Most of these community planning initiatives focus on visioning, strategizing, and creating action steps. These come out of a planning process with a facilitated group of people around a table. It is very formal and structured. It is contained. Heart & Soul comes up with a vision by looking at the past and what is worth preserving and looking forward. Information is gathered in such a decentralized way through gathering stories and then analyzing them to make Heart & Soul statements. That level of engagement I have never really seen before.”

start new conversations about important issues.

Planning with Heart and Soul

One of the reasons Community Heart & Soul works is because the impetus for change comes from within the communities, the residents themselves. In each of these projects — Cortez, Golden, and the North Fork Valley — change was directed by residents and represented what they valued and cared about, whether an improved downtown, thoughtful growth, or bridging divides. Each community has received awards for its Community Heart & Soul projects. Golden received awards from International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) and Denver Regional Council of Governments for community outreach and public

education. Cortez was recognized for community engagement by the Colorado chapter of the American Planning Association. North Fork Valley won a Colorado Creative Industries designation.

Communities that make decisions based on what they truly care about are able to make significant positive change. That is something Orton Family Foundation staff members have seen happen in towns that have undertaken Community Heart & Soul, and they are not alone in their observations.

A study by the Knight Foundation (Soul of the Community, www.knightfoundation.org/sotc) found a correlation between residents who value their communities and economic prosperity. The foundation examined whether emotional attachment to

place is a factor in a successful local economy. The study looked at 10 factors in 26 towns that drove community attachment in some way, including basic services, local economy, safety, leadership and elected officials, aesthetics, education systems, social offerings, openness, civic involvement, and social capital.

The data showed a significant correlation between community attachment and economic growth.

The Knight report reinforces the value of discovering and building from a foundation of what people love about their town and what matters most to them. As Community Heart & Soul towns in Colorado and across the country have shown, a town that makes decisions and plans from its “heart and soul” is a stronger town.

Each issue of Colorado Municipalities magazine introduces you to a key person in municipal government through the "Get to Know ..." column. Each person featured answers questions about his or her position, municipality, and how he or she ended up in municipal government.

GET TO KNOW ...

KAREN PALUS

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES DIRECTOR

How did you end up in public service?

I began public service as a recreation coordinator with Brevard County in Florida. I spent many years in the programming side of parks and recreation, from community centers to sports and aquatics. Later in my career, I moved into park planning,

trail coordination, and area-wide oversight for a variety of communities. I have always enjoyed providing services that work to improve the character of our young people, provide safe places to enjoy sports and nature, and improve the quality of life for our residents.

What do you enjoy most about your position?

The *people*! I love working with our community. They each come to us with a variety of needs and interests. It is exciting to see the passion that they have for their sports, neighborhood parks, or favorite open spaces. We get to bring people together and, through those collaborations and partnerships, we are able to do amazing projects and programs.

What are some exciting things currently going on in Colorado Springs?

Colorado Springs is Olympic City, USA, and there is no shortage of projects happening around our community. We currently are working

on the rebuilding of a new summit complex for Pikes Peak America's Mountain. This is one of the most challenging projects I have been involved with, and it has been an exciting journey! Bringing together five major stakeholders from the local, state, federal, and private sectors to build an incredible visitor experience at 14,115 feet is no easy task. We have an amazing team of professional working through the challenges and raising funds to accomplish this \$50 million dollar project.

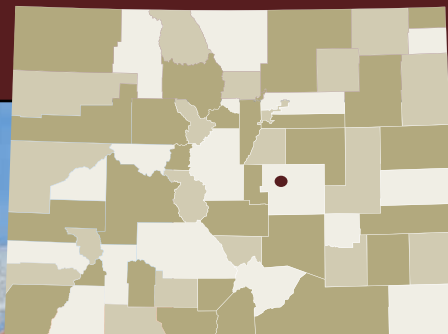
What project or undertaking are you most proud of and why?

During my time with Colorado Springs, I would have to say the soon-to-be-completed John Venezia Community Park. This project started and stopped several times over its 20 years of being on the Briargate Development Master Plan. Three years ago, we dusted off that plan, re-engaged the community, pooled a variety of funds for construction, and restructured operational funding to have the first community park built in Colorado



GET TO KNOW THE CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

- The City of Colorado Springs incorporated on Sept. 3, 1872
- Population: 443,965
- www.coloradosprings.gov



Springs in more than 10 years. When it opens this summer, we will have fulfilled a significant commitment we made to the community and to the many families who live or will live in this area of our town. So proud of our team and the community for coming together on this new park!

Why are quality of life issues important?

Quality of life issues are important because they are about people. Our communities are made up of a variety of individuals who need and want to have a healthy environment, safe neighborhoods and schools, and easy access to nature. The higher the quality of life is for your community, the more attractive it is to a strong workforce, new businesses, and tourism.

What is the funniest or strangest thing to happen while at work?

In a previous community where I served, I had the opportunity to work on a court case in which a local veterinarian sued the City over a dog

park in a nearby neighborhood park. The issue at hand — the dogs made too much noise! There was such irony throughout that whole experience.

What website(s) and/or publication(s) do you refer to when seeking information?

I usually look to our state and national parks and recreation associations, landscape architecture, and Colorado municipalities' websites and magazines. I love to see what success and challenges other communities may be having and how our community can benefit from that knowledge and experience.

What book are you currently reading? Are you enjoying it?

For professional and leadership books, I look to my dear friend John Spence, who wrote the book *Awesomely Simple*. He has an amazing website with tons of great leadership books and articles. Currently, I am reading two books: as a parent, I am reading with my 10-year-old-son Jackson the J.K. Rowling book on fantastic beasts

and where to find them, and, on a personal level, I just started reading the book *Shaken* by Tim Tebow, as I am a huge University of Florida fan. I am enjoying them both!

Prior to her current position, Karen Palus was the director of parks and recreation for the City of Tampa. Her 27 years of experience also includes working with the Brevard County, Orange County, and Martin County Parks and Recreation Departments in Florida. Karen is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP). She received her master's degree in public administration from the University of Central Florida and her bachelor of science degree in secondary physical education from the University of South Florida. Karen is a member of the Colorado Parks and Recreation Association, serving on its legislative committee, and is the Parks and Recreation section chair for the Colorado Municipal League. Karen enjoys hiking the mountains, skiing, rafting, and just being outdoors with her family. She has a 10-year-old-son, Jackson, and volunteers for his Cub Scouts, football, and cross-country and track meets, and as a youth leader at her church. Although her extended family is far away in Florida, she and her husband Pete have enjoyed making new friends, who have become family, and all of the wonderful outdoors adventures the Colorado lifestyle provides!



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