

Colorado Municipalities

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Contents



Features

- 8**
Lasting effects of the pandemic
- 15**
Greeley embraces hybrid meetings resulting from pandemic
- 23**
Health is all of us
- 30**
Overview of State Stimulus legislation that affects municipalities
- 37**
A roadmap for tourism recovery in Colorado
- 47**
Colorado downtown's role in recovery
- 13**
Olde Town Arvada's pandemic street closure to become permanent gathering spot
- 16**
Centering mental health and resilience in disaster recovery
- 27**
Resilient recoveries: Planning now for future disruptions
- 33**
Unwinding and understanding federal aid to municipalities, residents and businesses
- 50**
Colorado begins awarding new Revitalizing Main Streets grants from additional state stimulus funding

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About some of our contributors



Karyn Bocko has been the marketing and promotions supervisor in the community resources department at the City of Lakewood since 2018. She is proud to serve the Lakewood community by promoting opportunities for engagement at Heritage Lakewood Belmar Park, Lakewood Cultural Center, Washington Heights Arts Center, four recreation centers, 110 parks, and with the city's older adult and family services. Prior to joining the local government sector, Karyn had nearly 20 years' experience working with nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in the Denver metro area.



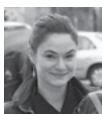
Kevin Bommer, CML executive director, is responsible to CML's 21-member executive board for executing the policies and programs of the League, supervising staff members, managing and coordinating activities and operations, recommending and developing organization policies and programs, and serving as a spokesperson for League policies. Kevin also directs the League's advocacy program and oversees CML's strategic plan development and implementation. Prior to being appointed executive director in April 2019, Kevin served as the League's deputy director from 2012 to May 2019 and was a full-time lobbyist from 2001 to May 2019.



David Broadwell, CML general counsel, manages legal services for CML, ranging from educational support for municipal attorneys throughout the state to advocacy for municipal interests in the courts. Since 1982, David has devoted his entire career to serving Colorado municipalities, including work in Glenwood Springs, Arvada, and Denver and a previous stint as CML staff attorney in the 1990s.



Robin Brown is the executive director for the Grand Junction Economic Partnership, which is the economic development agency for Mesa County and primarily recruits businesses into Colorado's Grand Valley. Prior to that, Robin managed public relations for local businesses and launched Spoke + Blossom, a lifestyle magazine for western Colorado. Robin served eight years in the US Army as a helicopter pilot and deployed twice to Iraq.



Katherine Correll is known for her ability to spark creativity and bring the energy to make positive change and empower ideas. Kat has been honored to lead the Downtown Colorado, Inc. team and share her philosophy that each challenge is an opportunity waiting to be found. Under Kat's direction, DCI has expanded services for business improvement districts, downtown development authorities, and urban renewal authorities.



Meghan Dollar, CML legislative advocacy manager, is responsible for advocating municipal interests before the state legislature. Her issues include affordable housing, criminal justice and courts, immigration, employment and labor, retirement/pensions, and taxation and fiscal policy. She also assists in training and answering inquiries for municipal officials on various topics. Meghan joined the League in 2011.



Anissa Hollingshead joined the City of Greeley as its city clerk in September of 2020. She holds a master of public affairs degree from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and a bachelor of arts from the Mississippi University for Women. After time in the private sector and as a small business owner, Anissa has worked as a leader in transforming access and transparency in local government for the last 15 years and is a certified municipal clerk and certified election & registration administrator (CERA).



Kelli Johnson serves as the director of communication and engagement for the City of Greeley. She joined the city in 2019 to coalesce and lead the newly centralized department. She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and marketing from the University of Northern Colorado and masters of science in organizational leadership from Regis University. She has more than 20 years of experience overseeing, implementing and strategizing communication for public sector or quasi-government entities.



Meghan MacKillop, CML legislative and policy advocate, is responsible for advocating municipal interests before the state legislature. Her issues include transportation, economic development, sustainability, immigration, telecom and broadband, public safety, and utilities. She also assists in training and answering inquiries for municipal officials on various topics. Meghan joined the League in January 2021.



Lauren Mueller has worked in human resources in both the public and private sectors for the past 23 years. She holds a master's degree in organizational performance and change/HR management from Colorado State University and earned her Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) certification in 2018. Lauren has been the human resources director for the Town of Frederick since 2010, and currently serves as the HR Section Chair for CML.



Rob Pressly is the resiliency program manager for the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Resiliency Office. In this role, he works to advance the State of Colorado's resiliency to thrive amidst ever-changing climate, social, and economic conditions.

Rob coordinates state agencies' efforts to build resiliency into state investments and operations; manages the Colorado Resiliency Working Group, the coordinating and steering committee for the State Resiliency Framework; and manages the COResiliency Resource Center, Colorado's online, interactive hub for resiliency knowledge and resources.

Rob has previously worked at the U.S. Green Building Council and National Association of Counties and holds a master of urban planning degree from the University of Michigan and bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond.



S. Lorrie Ray, Esq., SPHR, SHRM-SCP is the director, Member Engagement Department at Employers Council. Lorrie's experience in the variety of problems typically facing employers includes resolution of civil rights cases before state and federal administrative agencies, federal wage and hour disputes and state law claims, employment discrimination, wrongful discharge and health and safety laws. She is also a frequent lecturer on employment law matters.

Previous to working at Employers Council, Lorrie worked at the U.S. Department of Labor Office of the Solicitor for a little over three years, prosecuting wage and hour cases for the department.

Lorrie holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Colorado and a law degree from the University of Denver.



Ryan Stachelski serves as the director of community and economic development for the City of Arvada. Prior to this position, Ryan served as the executive director of the Arvada Economic Development Association (AEDA) and director of Arvada's economic development department. Ryan has served in various roles in economic development for nearly two decades in the Denver Metro area, central Illinois, and in West Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer.



Heather Stauffer, CML legislative and policy advocate, is responsible for advocating municipal interests before the state legislature. Her issues include natural resources and environment, elections, governmental immunity, oil and gas, open meetings/open records, special districts, severance tax/FML/energy impact, and water and wastewater/water quality. She also assists in training and answering inquiries for municipal officials on various topics. Heather joined CML in July 2019.



Beauclarine Thomas is a legislative and policy advocate at CML. She is responsible for advocating municipal interests before the state legislature. Her issues include beer and liquor/marijuana, building codes, healthcare, hemp, land use and annexation, historic preservation, lottery and gaming, state budget/JBC, and substance abuse. She also assists in training and answering inquiries for municipal officials on various topics. Beauclarine joined CML in September 2020.



Aimee Voth Siebert is the disaster behavioral health and inclusion worklead for CDPHE's Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response (OEPR). Aimee holds a masters in international disaster psychology from the University of Denver and has grown multi-disciplinary emergency knowledge and experience in both domestic and international settings. Aimee has worked with OEPR since May 2012, supporting Colorado responses for the 2012, 2013, and 2018 wildfire seasons; the September 2013 floods; multiple Colorado shootings, including the Aurora Theater Shooting and Table Mesa Shooting; and the COVID-19 response. In 2015, she deployed with CDC's Ebola response in Sierra Leone as a health promotion specialist. In October 2017, she led a Colorado disaster mental health team to support Puerto Rico's response to Hurricane Maria.

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LASTING EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

By David Broadwell, CML general counsel, and
Beaclarine Thomas, CML legislative and policy advocate

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to the way that municipalities, and many other entities, do business. Over the past year, we have experienced work-from-home, social distancing, mask wearing, and more. While some changes will go away with the end of the pandemic, others are here to stay. Below are some pandemic-related changes from the legal and regulatory world that remain part of the “new normal.”

JUDICIAL AND QUASI-JUDICIAL PROCEDURES

Even when the pandemic struck and the original "Stay at Home" order was imposed on Colorado residents, the state orders always contained exceptions for essential government functions, including court operations. As a practical matter, however, any function that would bring a large number of people together in the same indoor setting proved impossible to do safely for the ensuing year. One acute problem for municipalities that emerged immediately was what to do with pending quasi-judicial hearings involving actions such as land use permits, licensing decisions, and any other action that required a formal public hearing. In the beginning, many municipalities took the position that such actions would need to be delayed on the theory that a remote hearing may cause one of the parties to claim that their due process rights were being violated. At the same time, many municipal courts initially ground to a standstill without procedures in place for conducting court proceedings remotely.

Due process and remote hearings

Well before the pandemic, the Colorado Supreme Court had already blessed some judicial processes in which a criminal defendant could appear via an "interactive audio visual device." For example, a defendant could be arraigned and enter a plea remotely from jail without needing to appear in court. During the pandemic, state court rules went much further, blessing the use of remote proceedings in a "public health crisis" for anything and everything short of jury trials.

A landmark ruling by the Colorado Court of Appeals in January of 2021, *People in the Interest of R.J.B.*, held that remote proceedings in a child custody case did not violate due process if properly structured. The court specifically blessed a real-time video conference in which all participants may view one another and all materials related to the hearing were accessible to the attendees. Also, capabilities were in place to quickly address technical glitches, like audio problems, which are so common in the virtual world. Then in June of 2021, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled in the case of *People v. Hernandez* that, even when a criminal defendant has demanded the right to be physically present in the courtroom in a pretrial proceeding, witnesses against the defendant could be allowed to testify remotely against him without violating the defendant's constitutional rights.

On the quasi-judicial side, in June of 2020, a court refused to quash a subpoena compelling former Gov. Hickenlooper to attend a virtual hearing before the State Independent

Ethics Commission, finding that such a hearing would not violate due process. In the future, municipalities can proceed with greater confidence that remote participation in quasi-judicial hearings is legally defensible.

Jury trials

A particular dilemma for both state and municipal courts: how to safely assemble jury pools and conduct jury trials, especially given the fact that defendants enjoy a right to a speedy trial in criminal cases after entering a plea (90 days in municipal courts, six months in state courts). The Colorado Supreme Court rapidly adopted permanent rule changes for both state and municipal courts allowing a mistrial to be declared whenever a "a fair jury pool cannot be safely assembled due to a public health crisis." The General Assembly also stepped in with the adoption of HB21-1309 allowing speedy trial deadlines to be extended under some circumstances until July 1, 2023, to deal with the massive backlog in criminal jury trials caused by the pandemic.

LAND USE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As many commentators have observed, the COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on social or economic issues that had been festering for years, and either accelerated or revived policy initiatives that had foundered in the past. Here are a couple of examples from the world of zoning and housing policies.

Affordable housing and tenant rights

The economic crisis that ensued due to the business shutdown starting in April of 2020 led many to believe there would be an "eviction" crisis affecting renters who lived paycheck to paycheck. This crisis never materialized on a widespread basis for multiple reasons, not the least of which was direct aid to individuals and enhanced unemployment benefits. But multiple federal, state, and local interventions forestalled a tidal wave of evictions and an exponential surge in the homeless population.

Gov. Jared Polis issued various executive orders protecting tenants, up to and including a moratorium on the filing of new eviction actions at one point, which echoed a controversial "eviction ban" that was issued at the federal level by the CDC to protect tenants who could not afford to pay rent due to the effects of the pandemic. Also in 2020, state and federal relief dollars were disbursed by the General Assembly to help tenants in two distinct ways: direct rental assistance, which proved to be a boon for both tenants and landlords, and expenditures to pay for "eviction legal defense" so tenants facing eviction would have a





greater chance of being represented in court by a lawyer. This concern about housing stability for tenants living on the margins will now be reflected in permanent changes to Colorado landlord-tenant laws. Both HB21-1121 and SB21-173, adopted during the 2021 session, created new rights and remedies for tenants to defend themselves in eviction cases.

In the meantime, a major success for CML during the 2021 session was the adoption of HB21-1117, finally clarifying the authority of municipalities to require affordable housing set-asides in new rental apartment developments without running afoul of state statutes that prohibit any form of "rent control".

Residential childcare homes in single-family neighborhoods

Access to quality, affordable childcare has been a problem in many Colorado communities for years. With most public schools shuttered in 2020-21, and with many parents performing essential job functions that required them to continue to physically go to a work site, the lack of childcare options only became worse. So, 2021 was perhaps the most opportune time for proponents of more accessible childcare to promote legislation, HB21-1222, that will force municipalities to treat licensed "family childcare homes" serving up to 12 children as a residential land use that cannot be subjected to any greater restrictions than a regular dwelling unit. The new law is similar to statutes adopted in the 1970s and 80s requiring municipalities to allow certain types of group homes in residential zones.

Reconsideration of household size in single-family residences

In an executive order dated July 12, 2020, Gov. Polis said the following, again related to housing instability in the wake of the pandemic, "I strongly encourage all municipalities and other local jurisdictions that place limits on the number of unrelated persons who can live in a single household...to suspend or eliminate these restrictions." Coincidentally, this was already a hot topic of conversation in several Colorado municipalities, and a question will appear on the November 2021 ballot in both Denver and Boulder directly addressing the question of whether more unrelated people should be allowed to occupy the same "single-family" residence.

LIQUOR

At the beginning of the pandemic, it became clear that some of the hardest hit businesses under the public health emergency orders would be bars and restaurants. In response to the needs of this community, Gov. Polis signed Executive Order D 2020-011 in March 2020 allowing certain license holders, including restaurants and bars, to provide alcohol delivery and to-go as a means of making up for lost indoor dining profits for the duration of the pandemic. The executive order allowed these

establishments to sell alcohol in sealed containers to those over 21 years of age. Additionally, in the case of restaurants, customers were required to purchase food when ordering takeout alcohol.

The executive order helped business stay afloat while supporting recovery efforts. In 2020, the legislature passed SB20-213, which extended alcohol takeout and delivery to July 1, 2021. To address the one-year limit in SB20-213, the legislature introduced HB21-1027, which extended the benefits of alcohol delivery and takeout that originated in the 2020 executive order and Senate Bill 20-213 to July 1, 2026. HB21-1027 was approved by the Legislature and is waiting to be signed by the governor.

Under both the 2020 and 2021 bills, local licensing authorities may create a permitting process with a permit fee, which does not exceed the state permit fee, for takeout and delivery of alcohol beverages. If the local authority does not establish a permit, the licensee is only required to obtain the state permit.

MARIJUANA

At the beginning of the pandemic, Gov. Polis signed Executive Order D-2020 11, which suspended the requirement for medical marijuana patients to have an in-person physical examination in order to be eligible for a medical marijuana card, as well as allowed retail marijuana stores to facilitate online ordering of marijuana and marijuana products, to facilitate more socially distanced purchases at stores. During summer 2020 rulemaking, the Marijuana Enforcement Division made permanent rule changes to allow marijuana stores to make modifications on their premises to help facilitate social distancing, but changes related to telehealth for patients and online ordering required legislative approval.

This executive order supported industry practices and made it easier for consumers to purchase products while practicing social distancing. As a result, there has been a legislative push to codify this executive order through HB21-1058. This bill allows a physician to treat, counsel, and conduct appropriate physical examinations remotely to establish whether a patient would benefit from medical marijuana. This bill also removed language prohibiting a retail marijuana store from selling products over the internet or delivering products to a person not physically present on the licensed premises. Under this bill, local licensing authorities can regulate changes to online sales under time, place, and manner. Despite the legislative push to codify these changes, HB21-1058 was postponed indefinitely prior to the conclusion of the legislative session. The changes related to the use of telemedicine to obtain a medical marijuana card and the online sale of marijuana will not be extended past the expiration date of Executive Order D 2020-011.



Olde Town Arvada's pandemic street closure to **BECOME PERMANENT GATHERING SPOT**

By Ryan Stachelski, Arvada director of community and economic development

Everything changed for local governments in March 2020, and like many other local governments, we managed diverse priorities, from public safety and public health orders to economic recovery.



In Arvada, economic recovery efforts spanned the entire community and throughout we sought opportunities to learn from our response to achieve longer-term positive outcomes. One example, Historic Olde Town Arvada, was a focal point of our efforts because the area not only represented economic recovery, but also served as an iconic metaphor for the resilience of our community.

Early in the pandemic, Olde Town Arvada, like most of the rest of Colorado and the country, was shut down due to various health guidelines that limited people or closed various shops and restaurants. During this time, Arvada had a robust economic recovery with four key elements.

- **First:** A partnership with key business stakeholders, including the City of Arvada and the Chamber of Commerce, created the Arvada Resiliency Task Force (ART) to listen, manage resources, and advocate for public policy guidelines in support of business recovery. Through this effort, various business focus groups informed the city about the major challenges to recovery and what specific support was needed in order to survive.
- **Second:** The city and its partners focused on helping businesses get what they needed most – customers. Programs like the “Takeout Takeover,” curbside takeout stations for restaurant and retail, and business toolkits that helped businesses shift from in-person to online sales, were all quickly implemented and shared with the community.
- **Third:** Within a month of the initial stay-at-home orders, the city provided financial resources to help bridge the gap between the early days of the pandemic and more substantial federal aid. This helped businesses weather the early stages of the economic crisis and allowed the city to plan for the gradual reopening of the community, including Olde Town.
- **Fourth:** With health orders evolving, but still restricting in-person dining, the city provided additional outdoor dining and gathering options, particularly in Olde Town. Olde Town closed its streets in June 2020 for what was intended to be a temporary closure.

As the pandemic continued, so did the closure, first out of necessity, and now, more than a year later, the closure remains. The city is now modifying the street closures to achieve a look and feel that aligns and supports the character of Olde Town. No longer just a response to COVID-19, the closure is now a placemaking opportunity, a community gathering spot that the community has asked to continue into the future.

The Olde Town street closures are a silver lining that resulted from a thoughtful yet rapid implementation of holistic strategic thinking that was intended to not just support the economic recovery, but also become a vital gathering spot of Arvadians and visitors to safely congregate during the pandemic. The value to the community has been so great that it is certainly working toward keeping these closures for the foreseeable future.

Greeley embraces hybrid meetings RESULTING FROM PANDEMIC

By Anissa Hollingshead, Greeley city clerk, and Kelli Johnson, Greeley director of communication and engagement

2020 was no doubt the year of change. Like most communities across the country, the City of Greeley found itself adapting and changing at a rapid pace throughout 2020. As the global pandemic took hold and interrupted city operations, community expectations, and everything in between, swift, collaborative work was essential to adjust accordingly.



Maintaining transparency and accountability through public meetings was a must, so, like many other municipalities, Zoom became an essential tool. Learning on the fly, Greeley began conducting virtual meetings for city council and other public bodies, while simultaneously learning how to incorporate public comment from a virtual audience. The city's "normal" means

of broadcasting was altered, and meetings began being live-streamed via YouTube. As quickly as the sense of urgency to go entirely to remote meetings came, so too did the realization that these adaptations to operational processes were beneficial to the community, council, and staff.

This realization presented a window of opportunity to permanently modify operations to allow for a hybrid approach for public meetings. The "hybrid approach" ultimately created flexibility for the city to host meetings with a combination of virtual and in-person participants. The city's prior existing technology - specifically the audio visual (A/V) technology - did not allow for this multi-way A/V connectivity in council chambers. City staff began researching and contacting other cities and A/V vendors to understand the possibilities. Ultimately, Greeley chose to invest in a permanent, high-quality solution that will ensure in-person and virtual participants can see, hear, and participate in public meetings equitably.

"GREELEY HAD TO CREATE A WAY TO BRIDGE THE AUDIO BETWEEN IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL ATTENDEES."

Greeley had to specifically solve for audio inputs and outputs from the in-room equipment while ensuring that all audio would be captured for the city's live-stream and cable broadcast. Essentially, Greeley had to create a way to bridge the audio between in-person and virtual attendees.

Beyond the technology, which is inevitably different across communities based on unique A/V needs, the city convened a group of stakeholders, including city clerk, facilities, and IT staff, in addition to the communications team to map out additional implications of the hybrid model. Things considered included:

- Additional technology purchases outside the AV equipment to be installed and configured in the council chambers to accommodate facilitating remote meetings.
- Furniture purchase and placement for an additional computer station to control the remote portion of meetings.
- Staffing required to run the online meeting in tandem with conducting an in-person meeting.
- Which public meetings would be an appropriate fit for hybrid meetings going forward, and how to distill the procedures developed for city council meetings into easy-to-follow practices for the city's boards and commissions.

With the help of some great A/V experts, Greeley was able to work through the technical requirements and understand how we could maintain some long-term flexibility through hybrid public meetings. This is a long-term gain that will ultimately be beneficial even outside the pandemic. This allows vendors, contractors, and consultants to also present and be part of council meetings remotely while still maintaining a level of engagement and abiding by open meeting policies. The city is also looking at ongoing shifts to how meetings are recorded and shared out to the public, including considering continuing the use of YouTube streaming for more public meetings. Greeley is looking forward to beginning hybrid council meetings this summer.



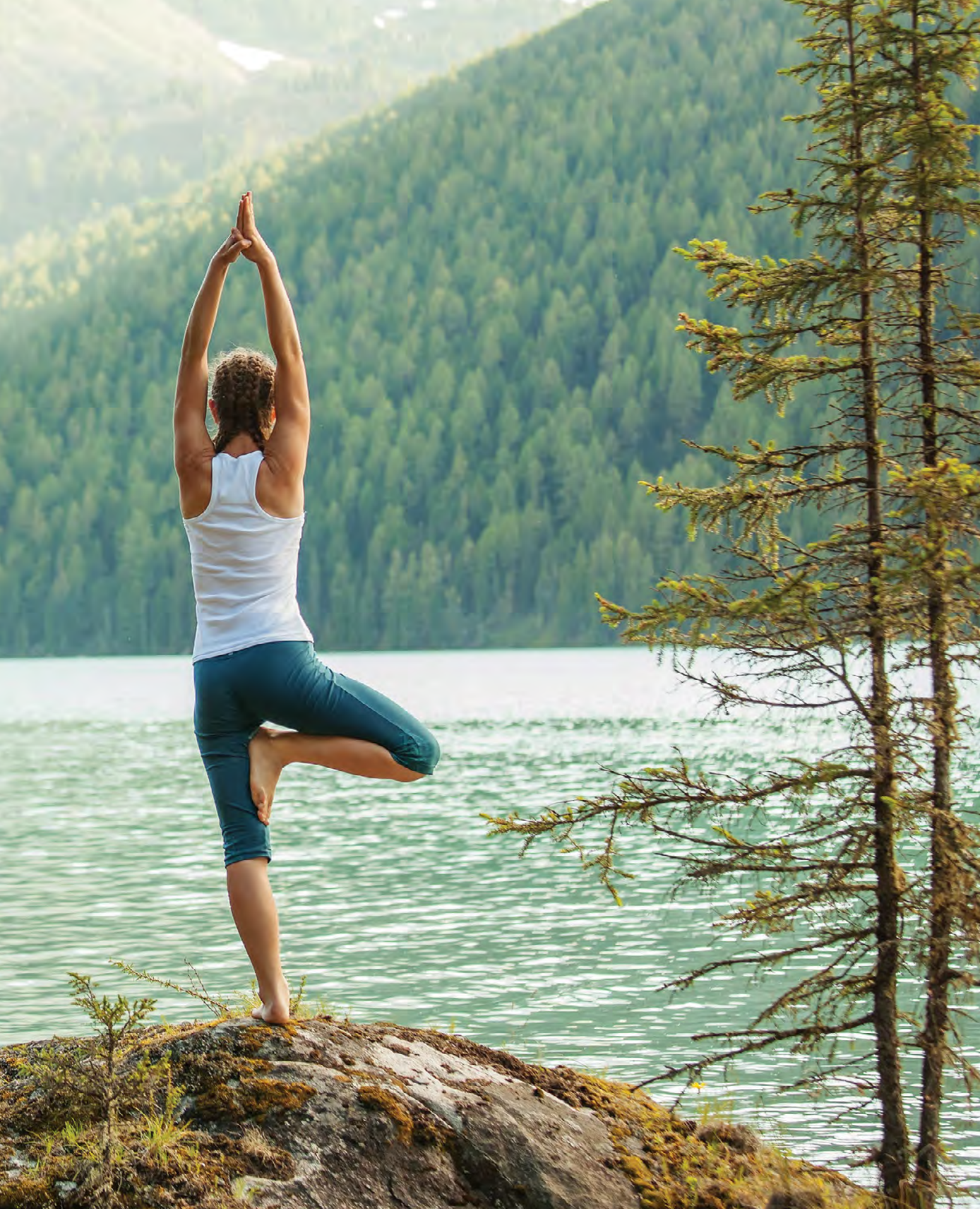
Centering mental health and resilience in disaster recovery

SUSTAINABLE WORK REQUIRES SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE

By Aimee Voth Siebert, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment disaster behavioral health and inclusion worklead

Colorado communities are living through demanding, transformative times. Since early 2020, we have experienced COVID-19 disruptions and adaptations, heartbreaking shootings, wildfires, and movements for racial and climate justice, to say nothing of personal losses, challenges, and life transitions.

Persisting through these events and looking toward recovery is like being a vigorously shaken soda bottle. Absorbing all this stress, loss, and change can make us feel like we contain an overwhelming amount of pressure ready to fizz over.



WE DON'T JUST DO LIFE, WE FEEL IT.

This is you. This is me. This is the people we work with and the people who make up our communities. Leaders can make a powerful choice by focusing on psychosocial and mental well-being for all of us in disaster recovery. Whatever work our communities need to do to learn, rebuild, and move forward, sustainable work requires sustainable people.

Transforming stressful, painful experiences into resilience and growth involves cultivating key experiences across recovery work:

- Rest and respite.
- Safety and support.
- Acknowledgment.
- Reconnection.

As *Emergent Strategy* author adrienne maree brown wrote, "We desperately need time to grieve, remember, dream, rest, land. Change." Like opening fizzy bottles, recovery will take patience to gradually release pent-up pressure. Rushing recovery, like removing the cap all at once, just loses the good stuff.

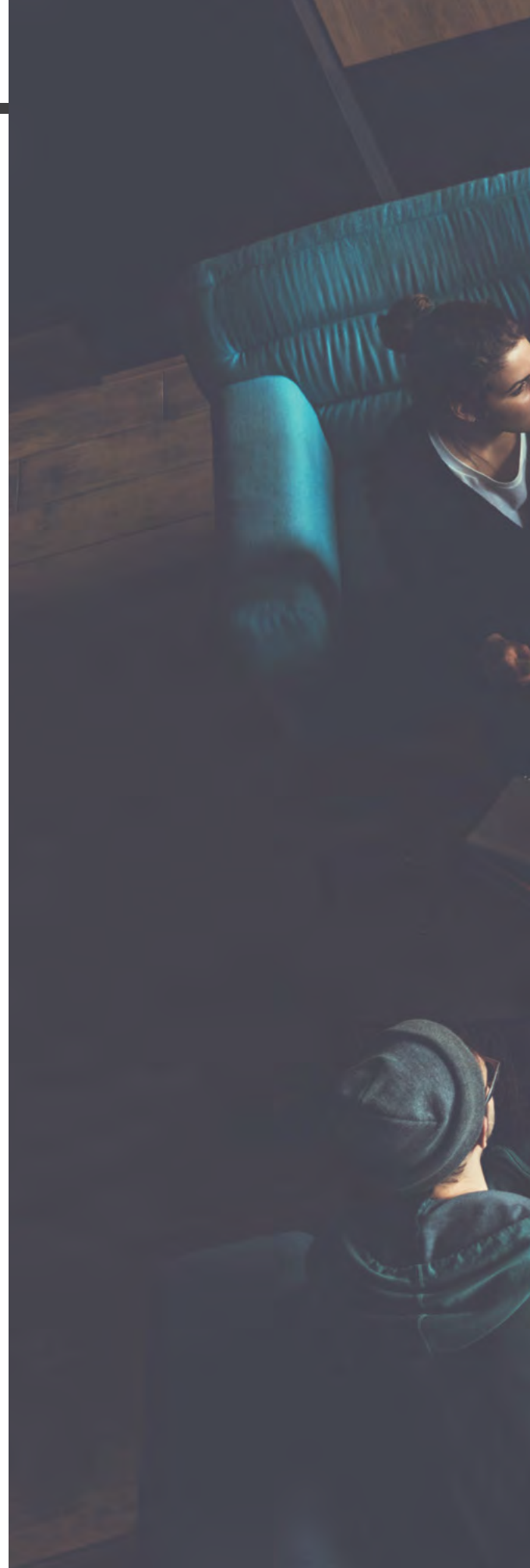
REST AND RESPITE

Responding to the pandemic and other community incidents has been nonstop work, both for individuals and communities. Many of our opportunities for rest and refreshment also have been disrupted. Without chances to rest and refresh, both physically and mentally, we spend a lot of energy with fewer results, like trying to fill a cup from the last drops of an empty pitcher. It's better to pause and go refill than try to keep shaking more out.

Recognize that we do not start recovery from 100%. Leaders can support much better results by including rest and respite in recovery assumptions and practices:

- Approach self-care as organizational work. Provide resources for it.
- Structure breaks in group meetings and organizational schedules. Encourage vacation and use your accumulated leave.
- Be thoughtful about what efforts are "critical." Release and say no to other tasks.
- Organize teams and programs to cycle between high intensity and low intensity work.
- Include respite in recovery and improvement planning. Design teams and systems who are not so maxed out every day so we can absorb the unexpected.

Research shows we are more productive, more innovative, and healthier when we rest. Like a migrating flock of birds, we can relieve each other – sometimes leading, sometimes drafting. You can read more about the importance of rest (sleep time) and respite (down time) in David Rock and Dan Siegel's neuroleadership research; check out the Healthy Mind Platter (bit.ly/3v0wgGG) for more healthy neuro-cognitive practices.





- REST AND RESPITE.
- SAFETY AND SUPPORT.
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.
- RECONNECTION."



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SAFETY AND SUPPORT

Disasters by nature disrupt many aspects of how we live, work, and play – our daily routines and worldview. Adapting to the loss of these structures causes stress, which also makes us prone to interpreting uncertain and even neutral cues as negative and unsafe.

Leaders can promote safety and support even amidst disasters by listening to staff and residents, and by connecting them to helpful resources for the difficulties and changes they are experiencing. Disasters may separate people from basic needs for the first time, causing them to seek out public programs they have never used before.

Make sure to highlight local programs and supports, including mental health services, after a disaster, even if they have existed for years. This could be the right information at the right moment for a person in need.

Leaders can also boost their skills and their community's skills to understand and respond to stress. Evidence from disaster behavioral health research shows that promoting a sense of safety, calm, connectedness, efficacy, and hope helps to reduce people's stress and restore their resilience and adaptive functioning. These are the principles of Psychological First Aid and Skills for Psychological Recovery (bit.ly/3yjfNPP), which are good trainings for you and your community throughout your recovery journey. You can read more about how local leaders can apply these five principles in this *Knowledge Now* (bit.ly/33U0EXf), which was updated from an article following the 2013 Colorado floods.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In difficult times, we want to find meaning and significance in what we've lived through. While it may be tempting to jump into the next strategic plan or community effort, we must be cautious of sending a message to "get over" or "move on" from things that have deeply altered our lives. We need dedicated time to share, grieve, and make meaning about what shook us this year.

We want others to acknowledge what we've experienced. To begin, people want to feel heard. Then, we want to see our future communities shaped by what we've learned.

In the wake of disasters, leaders can help communities build opportunities to acknowledge and remember significant experiences. Many major life events and personal moments happen within disaster seasons, related or unrelated to the incident. But doing life together has been different recently, and we have not had time to grieve and process these experiences in our shared, familiar ways.

- Invite storytelling – archives, reports, testimony, art. When people bring their experiences together, they build a shared community narrative and restore a sense of belonging.
- Support familiar community rituals as a way to tell stories and release emotions in less isolated and overwhelming ways.
- Consider memorials. These are places or things people use to remember. They help hold memory and truth of what happened so we can also move on from them.
- Hold space for people's questions, concerns, and reflections on what the community went through.
- Engage the whole community in turning lessons learned into improvement plans for doing life together.

The word "recovery" invites the question: If we need to re-cover from something, what was un-covered? What was uncovered often needs to be seen and integrated into what we carry forward. Answering this question as a community will help weave our social fabric and shared story back together.

RECONNECTION

Connection has arguably the greatest research support for positive impacts on disaster recovery (see Daniel Aldrich's PrepTalk at bit.ly/3wg2YUK). Unfortunately, the pandemic both disrupted and "contaminated" our comfort with social interactions.

Leaders can frame reconnection work by remembering that even though it took an adjustment period, we calibrated to many changes to how we lived, worked, and played during the pandemic. After a year of caution in social settings, people will also need time to adjust to reopening communities. If we can successfully contain COVID-19, we will be able to reinforce that shared space can be safe again, and restore a sense of familiarity and trust. In some cases, we can grow



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our resilience by taking social engagement practices from the emergency and applying them day to day!

While we persevere through this phase of the pandemic, social settings will likely take extra energy. For different people and different circumstances, it will include negative, anxious energy as well as positive, joyful energy. We can support each other by being mindful of differing levels of comfort and:

- Recognizing the need for more breaks and rest.
- Communicating about what practices are expected in shared spaces.
- Welcoming questions and being upfront about what is not known or may change.
- Providing multiple ways for people to participate at their own level of comfort.

To quote my brother-in-law, "Do what you can to make the most concerned person comfortable." We want everyone to feel like they have a place in community life. Promoting safety and support as people reconnect will help everyone recalibrate in social settings.

LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

If you are a local leader, the community will take cues from you. How you lead—*what you say (storyteller), what you personally do (role model), and what gets resourced through your leadership (connector and advocate)*—will shape how the community understands and engages their recovery journey.

I have felt the impact of a good leader in my own disaster experiences.

- On my first day of work, the state activated to respond to the 2012 High Park Fire in Larimer County. I joke now that I had a "trial by fire," but in the moment, I got lost in the work.

- After several weeks of 12-hour days, my supervisor, Curt, finally said, "Aimee, go home. Take a few days." That's what it took for me to come up for air. His words conveyed that taking care of myself was part of disaster work. While under stress, sometimes we need that directive.
- During the 2013 Colorado flood response a year later, Curt asked for his own support. He came to me and said, "I need to step away from the response; I need to focus on my family." Even more than his words the previous year, when Curt modeled asking for relief and attending to his personal needs, I believed that caring for our well-being was permissible and prioritized, even in a crisis moment. When I hit a personal wall during this pandemic response years later, I remembered what he did and asked for relief myself. What's more, his actions expressed confidence in me as a leader and in our team to succeed in his absence. Caring for himself made us and our work more resilient.
- The Table Mesa Shooting in Boulder is one of several mass shootings to which our team has responded. Having it happen in a year where we were already exhausted and overwhelmed by the COVID-19 response took its toll. Despite a never-ending list of work demands, Curt prioritized the arrangement of team-focused care sessions where we could connect, make meaning with each other, and share resources and support. Having time and tangible resources put toward our needs further substantiated that we were important.

Curt's ongoing actions built my trust that my needs were seen and I was considered vital. His leadership style helped me weather tremendously difficult times and feel the key resilience experiences I mentioned earlier. The permission and confidence these experiences gave me in turn rippled into the way I act and lead in disasters. Your actions can do the same.

HEALTH IS ALL OF US

By Vincent Atchity, Mental Health Colorado president and CEO

According to screening data on Mental Health Colorado's website, anxiety and depression increased by 700% in the last year. This isn't a bad dream. This is real life.

The events of the last year have taken their toll. Beyond the pandemic, we experienced a contentious election and civil unrest associated with perceptions of injustices. As this is written, 582,867 Americans have died from the virus, and millions are experiencing the serious economic ramifications, isolation, and losses. We are not out of the woods yet.

From the beginning, experts have predicted that the direct impact of the virus would be followed by a secondary pandemic—one related to mental health and substance use—and we are seeing these predictions come true.





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We can hope that the crisis is driving home the message that there is no health without mental health, and that the health of individuals is indivisible from the health of communities. We can hope that this increased understanding will energize and inform collective efforts to promote healthier minds for all Coloradans, from the beginning of life to its end.

THERE IS NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Discussions related to the state of our well-being have become more prominent in our daily life. Mental health and well-being are in the headlines, our leaders have begun to make them top priorities, we've had conversations with those close to us.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CREATE HEALTHIER MINDS
ACROSS THE LIFESPAN?**

At every moment in our lives, a healthier mind beats the heck out of the alternative. A strong start for all children goes a long way, but through all phases of life, we need each other's support and healthful companionship to do well and to live well. Mental well-being should always be the objective for us as we grow and get older, even as our physical health will inevitably decline. People living with serious mental illness can be healthier and live longer, better lives with access to quality care, supports, and services.

Healthy people can remain fit and strong until the end of life by engaging in practices and efforts that are good for the mind, by cultivating healthy communities, and by asking for and getting help in times of crisis and concern.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Slowly, our state is beginning to open up again. Our kids are starting to go back to school, many of us will be returning to our office desks, and we're reuniting with our friends and family. While things are seemingly returning to normal, the mental health ramifications of the last year will continue to make themselves felt long past 2021.

Our well-being as individuals and communities depends on us. What we can do for ourselves and for each other will determine how we fare over the course of the coming months. Access to formal care is already stretched beyond capacity. The help you need, the help your child needs, the help your neighbor needs—we are going to survive and thrive to the extent we are able to provide that help for ourselves and for each other.

STARTING WITH YOU

Before you help others, start with yourself. Flight attendants advise that you place your oxygen mask on first before assisting others. It's the same concept with mental health. Focus on you first so you can better focus on others. What do you need?

- **Ask for help.** Whether that's starting a conversation with people you trust or seeking professional help, it's important to recognize when you need to seek help.
- **Focus on everyday activities that boost your mental health.** What are the everyday things that make you feel better? A cup of tea in the morning? A journal entry? A daily walk? Bullet these things out if that's what it takes. Create a weekly mental health checklist for yourself and follow it.
- **Make time for fitness.** Mental and physical health go hand in hand. Your fitness of choice doesn't have to be the same thing every day, but schedule time to prioritize some form of movement.
- **Fuel your body with whole foods.** There are dozens of studies indicating how harmful high saturated fat, high sugar diets are to your mental health—despite how appealing they are. Take a step back and analyze your diet; are there foods you should consider changing up?

HELPING YOUR COMMUNITY

Once you have put your own oxygen mask on first, don't forget to turn to assist those around you. Helping others, building stronger communities—these efforts contribute significantly to health of mind. Times like these offer us all an opportunity to pause and reflect—alone and together—about how much we value our lives and each other, and about how much we depend on our communities to sustain us and help us thrive.

- **Have conversations with those you trust.** Start by having conversations with the people you trust. Establish commonalities. Talk about the things that hurt, that bring you joy, that you will continue to do.
- **Volunteer your time.** Be of service to others and help make your community a better place.
- **Share your tools.** Make sure mental health is part of the everyday conversation and share the tricks and tools that you have learned to keep yourself healthy and well in hard times. We can help end the shame and discrimination around mental health and substance use when we openly hold these discussions with others.

BEING IN THE PRESENT, FACING THE FUTURE

We must strive to be fully present at each moment of the day, appreciate our blessings, and face the future with optimism and confidence. While this last year was much harder on some than on others, we must remember that we can, and should, still strive to be the best employee, employer, mother, father, friend...etc.

We live in a beautiful state where we have the opportunity to make choices that improve our individual lives and the lives of our communities.

Help yourself, seek help, and be helpful. Remember that health is all of us and that we are stronger when we are united. Be part of the team. This is how we'll heal together, and how we will truly begin to achieve healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans.

If you feel like you need more support, visit our resource page at mentalhealthcolorado.org. If you are more seriously concerned about your own mental health or that of someone close to you, you can call the Colorado Crisis Services at 1-844-493-8255 or text "TALK" to 38255.



ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH COLORADO

Mental Health Colorado is the state's leading advocate for promoting mental well-being, ending shame and discrimination, and ensuring equitable access to mental health and substance use care. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and affiliate of Mental Health America.

Resilient recoveries:

PLANNING NOW FOR FUTURE DISRUPTIONS

By Rob Pressly, Colorado Department of Local Affairs Colorado Resiliency Office resiliency program manager

Many of us are heading into summer looking forward to longer days, warmer temperatures, and plenty of time spent in the outdoors. But this time of year often brings to the forefront many of the hazards that threaten and impact our state all year round – including wildfires, floods, drought, extreme heat, and reduced air quality, among others.



No community in Colorado is safe from these hazards. Colorado is becoming hotter and drier, with communities across the state at greater risk for more wildfires, post-wildfire flooding, and drought, along with the cascading impacts these disruptions bring to our housing, food and agriculture, tourism, mental and public health, and economic sectors. Not only is the frequency of these disasters increasing, their severity is increasing as well. Just last year, Colorado experienced three of the largest wildfires in our state's history; our 2021 wildfire outlook isn't any rosier.

With the expectation that Colorado will continue to experience more frequent and intense disasters, communities have the opportunity to plan now, not just to mitigate their impacts, but also plan for what their recovery from a disaster event will look like. Planning now for a resilient recovery provides communities with the opportunity:

- to be ready to rebuild around their values, vision, and goals;
- to integrate equity and inclusiveness in the process to address the concerns and needs of all community members; and
- to build back to a better position than they were in before a disaster.

The Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Colorado Resiliency Office (CRO) can provide local communities with the tools and expertise to plan for resiliency, guide you through the long-term recovery process, and connect you with key resources and partners. Created in the days after the 2013 flood event and now housed in DOLA's Division of Local Government, the CRO coordinates and collaborates across state agencies and with local, state, federal, private, and non-governmental partners to ensure that Colorado communities are resilient to, and can build back better after, disruptive events. The CRO coordinated the development and leads the implementation of the Colorado Resiliency Framework, which provides unifying goals and strategies for tackling Colorado's biggest challenges. The office also supports local communities through workshops and other activities to identify shocks and stressors, develop actionable solutions, and create a resiliency framework.

Long-term recovery from a wildfire or flood can be daunting, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a disruption – it can be costly, it's time-intensive, and it requires careful coordination between multiple partners. There are a number of ways, though, that your municipality can start planning now that will reduce future disaster impacts, shorten recovery time, improve access to recovery resources, and make your municipality's resilient recovery easier to achieve.

One of the first steps your municipality can take is understanding its risks and vulnerabilities to shocks and stressors. Understanding what you're most vulnerable to will



help to prioritize actions to mitigate impacts today to protect important community assets and identify potential resource needs and focus areas in recovery.

Pre-disaster recovery planning enables your municipality to consider, before a disaster, how to manage key recovery issues like continuity of government services, temporary housing, local economic support, and rebuilding; identify existing resources, capacity, and leadership; and align community plans with other hazard plans and policies.

The CRO and our partners provide a variety of tools and guidance for Colorado communities to plan for a resilient recovery.

- The 2020 update to the Colorado Resiliency Framework (bit.ly/3eVpFHQ) provides an overview of major environmental, social, and economic challenges and disruptions Colorado faces across six sectors, with strategies designed to reduce future risk, vulnerabilities, and impact.
- The CRO recently developed a Community Readiness and Resiliency Toolkit that guides users through the process of creating a pre-disaster recovery plan, as well as a Long-Term Disaster Recovery Toolkit that helps users navigate the disaster recovery process.
- DOLA's Regional Managers (bit.ly/3eUrqVS) are available to connect you with local and regional resources and help further navigate the recovery process.



- The Planning for Hazards guide (bit.ly/3oqHXUI) provides detailed, Colorado-specific information about how to assess a community's risk of hazards and how to implement several land use planning tools and strategies for reducing a community's risk.
- The Future Avoided Cost Explorer (bit.ly/33Q07pd) from the Colorado Water Conservation Board allows communities to explore the economic impacts of flood, drought, and wildfire in 2050 under a variety of scenarios, enabling them to see potential avoided costs by taking action today.

In addition to these resources, the CRO provides opportunities for communities to learn from one another's experiences and share lessons learned from long-term disaster recovery.

The CRO's Peer Exchange was established in 2020 to connect local governments with one another to share the challenges they're facing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, how they've adapted to continue to provide key services to the public, and how they're navigating the long-term impacts and recovery from the pandemic. Members of the Peer Exchange meet every other week to discuss important issues like funding opportunities, equity and recovery, childcare and education impacts, local economic recovery, etc. With the success of the COVID-19 Peer Exchange, the CRO created a Wildfire Recovery Peer Exchange to bring together fire-impacted communities to share needs, challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned for wildfire recovery and resiliency.

The CRO, in partnership with the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, and Community Builders, is working with 16 regional community teams to develop Rural Colorado COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plans (bit.ly/3whZi4R). Funded through the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the technical assistance these regional teams are receiving over the next two years will help their communities accelerate toward thriving and resilient economic futures through the development of recovery roadmaps that are data-informed, fast-moving, and action-oriented.

These opportunities for collective learning and collaboration allow communities across Colorado to catapult forward toward transformative solutions to persistent thorny challenges.

We know that we will experience more disasters in the future that will significantly impact communities across Colorado. Now is the time to start thinking about what your municipality is most vulnerable to and how it wants to recover. The CRO is here to partner with you on this process to help you be ready to recover more quickly, efficiently, and equitably.

Overview of

STATE STIMULUS LEGISLATION THAT AFFECTS MUNICIPALITIES

By Meghan Dollar, CML legislative advocacy manager; Meghan MacKillop, CML legislative and policy advocate; Heather Stauffer, CML legislative and policy advocate; and Beauclarine Thomas, CML legislative and policy advocate

The Colorado General Assembly passed a state stimulus package to provide economic, infrastructure, public health, and housing dollars to existing and new state programs. Now that the legislation has passed, CML staff created an overview of the programs either created or funded in each bill. All the programs below benefit municipalities.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

HB21-1271: Department of Local Affairs Innovative Affordable Housing Strategies

HB21-1271 creates three different grant programs in the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The first program is called Local Government Affordable Housing Development Incentives Grant Program. The program allows a local government to apply for a grant if they adopt at least four policies included in the "menu of options" listed in the legislation. Some examples of these policies are lessening permitting or tap fees, or providing density bonuses. As introduced, municipalities that have already adopted these types of policies are eligible for the grant program. The menu of options in the legislation is significant and allows local governments the flexibility to adopt policies that work best in their community.

The second grant program is the Local Government Planning Grant Program. This program will provide grants to local governments that lack one or more of the policy and regulatory tools that provide incentives to promote the development of affordable housing that forms the basis for a grant under the housing development incentives grant program and that could benefit from additional funding to be able to create and make use of these policy and regulatory tools. Money under the planning grant program will be available to a local government to enable the government to retain a consultant or a related professional service to assess

the housing needs of its community or to make changes to its policies, programs, development review processes, land use codes, and related rules to become an eligible recipient of a grant under the housing development incentives grant program. Finally, the legislation creates The Affordable Housing Guided Toolkit and the Local Officials Guide Program. The purpose of the housing toolkit program is to provide local governments the tools to begin the process to identify their housing needs. CML generally supports funding toward affordable housing and to local governments to create new affordable housing and supports HB21-1271.

SB21-242: Housing Development Grants for Tenancy Support and Persons Experiencing Homelessness

SB21-242 expands the use of the Housing Development Grant Fund in the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The funds may be used for tenancy support services, including those that target individuals experiencing homelessness, and for grants and loans to local governments and non-profits for the rental, acquisition, or renovation of underutilized hotels, motels, and properties to provide noncongregate sheltering or affordable housing. The bill transfers \$15 million from the General Fund to the Housing Development Grant Fund for this purpose. CML supports additional funding from the state to aid local governments in providing housing to persons experiencing homelessness and some local governments have already retrofitted motels and hotels into housing. The program will provide much needed funding for local governments to utilize existing infrastructure for housing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HB 21-1263: Meeting and Events Incentive Program

HB 21-1263 creates the Colorado Meeting and Events Incentive Program in the Colorado Tourism Office. The bill provides rebates and direct support to eligible events and eligible personal events in Colorado to assist in the state's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill would also award rebates for additional costs that are related to complying with public health orders and requirements issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. HB 21-1263 would encourage cities and towns to resume important community events, including music festivals and other events that would provide economic benefits. Getting people to travel to our municipalities to spend money at local restaurants, business, hotels, and throughout the community is an important step in recovering from the economic downturn of 2020.



SB 21-204: Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Program Funding

This bill appropriates funding to the Department of Local Affairs for the Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant Program. The program provides grants that create new jobs in rural communities through a new employer or an expansion of an existing employer, or that create diversity and resiliency in a rural community's local economy. The funding appropriated in the bill may also be used for the Rural Economic Advancement of Colorado Towns program, which assists the state in responding to significant economic impacts in rural communities. The bill provides direct relief to rural cities and towns experiencing economic downturns due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SB21-229: Rural Jump Start Zone Grant Program

SB 21-229 creates the Rural Jump-Start Zone Program within the office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). Under this program, the Colorado Economic Development Commission may issue grants to new businesses located in designated areas called rural jump-start zones. The bill offers relief from state income taxes, state sales and use tax, and county and municipal business personal property tax for eligible businesses. Additionally, new employees of eligible businesses may also receive a 100% income tax credit for work performed in a rural jump-start zone. Last year, 14 companies participated in the program and 16 counties have formed rural jump-start zones. Providing meaningful economic relief to areas hit hardest by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is essential for statewide recovery.

SB 21-241: Small Business Accelerated Growth Program

SB 21-241 creates the Small Business Accelerated Growth Program in the Colorado Office of Economic Development to provide business development support to small businesses with 19 or fewer employees. The office is required to develop a marketing initiative for the program in coordination with the Minority Business office, the Small Business Development Center, and local and regional economic development entities to promote the program. This bill is another tool that will spark economic development in local communities.

SB21-252: Community Revitalization Grant Program.

This bill takes \$65 million in state stimulus funding and puts it toward projects that create or revitalize mixed-use commercial centers in small Colorado towns. Senate Bill 21-252 creates the Community Revitalization Grant Program in the Division of Creative Industries in the Office of Economic Development and International Trade. There are 26 creative districts in Colorado that would receive preference for grants, but any local

government is eligible to apply for the grant funding under the bill. Local governments, which include cities, counties, special districts, and school districts, may use grant funding to develop creative projects that revitalize or construct mixed-use commercial centers. This bill would help our cities and towns revitalize main streets throughout the state using a creative industry strategy. These kinds of projects can support local small businesses and could become tourist destinations in some towns. Municipalities across Colorado will benefit from this program and see an immediate economic impact.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

In response to Colorado's 2020 wildfires, the state's largest and most catastrophic wildfire season on record, coupled with serious drought conditions impacting nearly the entire state, the Colorado General Assembly has prioritized stimulus funding this session for water. Below are a two bills CML is working on related to water stimulus funding.

HB21-1260: General Fund Transfer Implement State Water Plan

HB21-1260 authorizes a \$20 million transfer from the general fund to the Colorado Water Conservation Board in order to help implement the state water plan. The transfer includes \$15 million for the water plan implementation cash fund, of which 5% can be used for grants which municipalities are eligible to apply for. The transfer also includes \$5 million for the water supply reserve fund which is used to provide grants and loans to assist Colorado water users, including municipalities, with funds to complete critical water supply projects. CML supported this bill.

SB21-240: Watershed Restoration Grant Program Stimulus

SB21-240 transfers \$30 million from the general fund to the Colorado Water Conservation Board Construction Fund to fund a statewide watershed analysis and fund the watershed restoration grant program. Municipalities and other local governments are eligible to receive funds through the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program. The bill directs the CWCB to use the money transferred for the grants specifically for projects which address restoration, mitigation, and protection of stream channels and riparian areas which are susceptible to flood hazards and sediment erosion after wildfire. This will include expenditures for repair, replacement, modification, maintenance and installation of water and debris-control structures. CML supported this bill.

Unwinding and understanding federal aid to MUNICIPALITIES, RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

By Kevin Bommer, CML executive director

For municipal elected officials and staff, trying to understand the dizzying amount of different yet connected programs to assist local governments, residents, and businesses with COVID-19 impacts may seem overwhelming at times.

While trying to ensure the health of residents and businesses, and the continued delivery of services from municipal departments, staff and elected officials alike have been bombarded with emails, texts, calls, and Zoom meetings to try to understand the latest in state and federal policies and programs.

CARES ACT VS. ARP ACT

Roughly twelve months ago, municipal leaders learned that the federal government was poised to assist with reimbursement of costs related to COVID-19, but then quickly realized that there was no guarantee of funds, and several strings might be attached. Gov. Polis and the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) eventually set out to work with local governments to ensure that costs related to COVID-19 impacts were reimbursed. Significant gray areas in federal guidance, coupled with extraordinary and understandable caution by DOLA and others within the state government, slowed down the reimbursement process.

In December 2020, Congress extended the deadline for expending the Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to Dec. 31, 2021. In Colorado, state associations such as CML, Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI), the Special District Association (SDA), Colorado City and County Managers Association (CCCMA), and other state and local government representatives have been part of the Local Government Coronavirus Relief Fund (LGCVRF) Committee. The committee set a goal of June 30 for expending all funds available for reimbursing local governments for direct pandemic-related costs and should come close to meeting the goal.

The script is completely flipped with the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, specifically the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. Unlike the CARES Act, which required local governments to show their work and answer to state-level authorities in order to receive funds, ARP is providing direct, formula-based allocations to every city, town, and county in the United States, along with guidelines on how recovery funding may be used and ways that spending must be documented that allow significant local interpretation. Judgment or interpretation by state officials is almost completely taken out of the equation and isn't even a consideration for local governments receiving their allocation directly from Treasury. In addition, local governments have until Dec. 31, 2024 to encumber the funds.

ARP AND THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MULTIPLE STATE AND LOCAL IMPACTS

ARP was enacted on March 11, and guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury started being released in mid-May. According to Treasury, ARP's goal is to provide relief to state and local governments "to support the public health response and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable economic recovery."

The direct local assistance of ARP's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund is unprecedented and understandably the main focus of municipal leaders. Generally, municipalities over 50,000 will get direct allocations from Treasury and all other municipalities will get specific amounts that the state will be directed to pass along.



As guidelines help inform decisions on how to use those funds, municipal leaders should be aware of the other programs within ARP, even if

municipalities are not directly eligible for all of them. For funds where states are the primary recipient, local governments working together and through statewide and regional associations can help ensure that funding controlled by the state makes its way to where it is needed.

Capital Projects Fund

The Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CCPF) is intended to mitigate challenges to low- and moderate-income communities that the pandemic exposed. The goal is to ensure that modern infrastructure, like reliable internet access, is available to all who need it and that it is high quality. \$10 billion from ARP is available to states, territories, and tribal governments, and the focus is likely to be on connectivity for businesses, schools, and health care providers utilizing telemedicine.

States and other eligible entities will be able to start applying for CCPF funds in this summer, once complete guidance is issued. In Colorado, the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT) is expected to play a significant role, and CML will work with DOLA to advocate for inclusion of local governments in the discussion.

Homeowner Assistance Fund

ARP also includes \$10 billion for states, territories, and tribes—\$175 million of which will be coming to Colorado—to assist homeowners who are at significant risk of losing their homes. The Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF) will help ensure that those homeowners facing the most significant financial hardships will be able to avoid defaulting on home loans or having utilities shut off. The applicability of the funding is retroactive to Jan. 21, 2020 and can be used for assistance with mortgage payments, utility bills, and insurance. DOLA is likely to provide homeowners with aid from the HAF using existing programs.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

The Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program was first established by federal legislation enacted in December 2020. At that time, Congress authorized \$25 billion, and ARP provides an additional \$21.6 billion for states, territories, and local governments. The purpose of the program is to assist households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The December legislation provided direct aid from the U.S. Treasury to counties and municipalities over 200,000 population – which include Denver, Colorado Springs, and Aurora—as well as eight counties. DOLA, as mentioned above, is administering Colorado's \$248 million from the December allocation, and all municipalities and counties under 200,000 population should be directing landlords and tenants to contact DOLA's Colorado Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) at cdola.colorado.gov/housing-covid19.



The \$21.6 billion from ARP translates into an additional \$196 million directed to the state, and another \$108 million to the municipalities and counties eligible for direct allocation.

State Small Business Credit Initiative

The State of Colorado will receive nearly \$76 million out of \$10 billion in ARP fund small business credit expansion initiatives. The infusion of ARP funds expands an existing program to support businesses with fewer than 10 employees with dedicated funding, as well as significant investment on assistance for businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

Municipal leaders should advise local businesses to contact the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) for more information or visit oedit.colorado.gov/covid19.

EFFECTIVE, TRANSPARENT, AND ACCOUNTABLE

As municipal leaders unwind all of the direct assistance programs, as well as those available to businesses and residents, it will be critical to work with other local governments, the state, and federal partners to maximize funds. In many cases, other existing aid (i.e. FEMA aid) should be used first because ARP funding is generally more flexible.

Finally, transparency and accountability are vitally important. Local leaders should document how funds are being used, the extent of any collaborative relationships, and successes.

For more information and continuously updated program guidelines, visit Treasury's website for state, local, and tribal assistance at bit.ly/3op5W6A.

**CREATING THE RECORD WILL
ENSURE GREATER PUBLIC TRUST
AND PROVIDE CRITICAL
INFORMATION TO GUIDE
CONTINUING PLANNING AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS
USING FEDERAL AID.**





A roadmap for **TOURISM RECOVERY IN COLORADO**

By Colorado Tourism Office

With the change of seasons comes a renewed excitement around a post-vaccine return to travel and a reinvigoration of Colorado's tourism economy. While this past year was extremely challenging for everyone, perhaps few industry sectors were impacted as greatly as tourism. Since January 2020, Colorado has lost \$9.7 billion in travel spending, down 30% year-over-year. Tourism is the state's second-largest employer, but some of the largest private-sector job losses during the pandemic have been in leisure and hospitality.

Despite the hardships, Colorado's tourism industry remained optimistic and pivoted at every turn to provide travelers a safe travel experience while working to protect their communities and our state's natural resources.

Now, as free vaccines become readily available to all eligible residents, Colorado's tourism industry will roll up its sleeves once again to start the important work of building back a better and more sustainable tourism economy.

A key piece of this will be through a \$2.4 million CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant recently awarded to the Colorado Tourism Office by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Paired with a \$600,000 state match, the grant will fund \$3 million in recovery programs available to urban and rural participants across Colorado. This important grant will support the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) and the Colorado tourism industry to expedite recovery and foster long-term resilience as we emerge from COVID-19. Implementation of this grant began in June 2021 with the kick-off of the Colorado Tourism Roadmap to Recovery, a new five-year strategic plan that will build on the success of the 2017 Colorado Tourism Roadmap.

The Roadmap to Recovery will be broken into two phases—the objective of the first phase is driving near-term recovery and the objective of the second phase is fostering long-term industry resilience. The grant will also provide the CTO with funding to design and deliver industry programs through 2023 to support statewide adoption of the recommendations from the Roadmap to Recovery to help retain nearly 700 tourism jobs. These industry programs are being modeled off the success of the Colorado Rural Academy For Tourism (CRAFT), through which the CTO has delivered 116 CRAFT programs in 41 of Colorado's 64 counties since 2014.

All aspects of the Roadmap to Recovery will include opportunities for stakeholder input to ensure that a full range of Colorado tourism stakeholders, residents included, have a voice in the plan.

Interested parties can get a taste for what these industry programs will look like by reviewing the results of the CRAFT Recovery Mentor program that the CTO launched in October 2020. More information on the EDA grant and how communities can get involved can be found online at oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-tourism-roadmap-to-recovery.

In addition to the EDA grant, the Colorado Tourism Office is also excited to once again actively market to out-of-state travelers and has launched a new summer campaign highlighting "Wow" Colorado moments from across the state. Colorado's natural beauty is a global attraction and our messages will rightly need to balance attraction and public health. The recent announcement of new direct flights to Paris is an encouraging development as we thoughtfully plan for expanded domestic and global travel.

The CTO continues to be a leader in sustainable travel and is advancing this work through the recently created Care for Colorado Coalition, an alliance of more than 20 statewide organizations and federal land managers dedicated to educating Coloradans and visitors on protecting the state's





extraordinary natural and cultural resources. The CTO is also spearheading a new low-impact travel initiative, lifting up sustainable travel experiences across the state. The CTO has partnered with several other state agencies to advance the electrification of the 26 Scenic & Historic Byways. Seven "Colorado Electric Byways" are currently available for EV travel with additional routes coming online throughout 2021 as more charging infrastructure is finalized across the state. These byways provide an excellent opportunity for travelers to get off the beaten path and explore lesser visited destinations across the state.

In consumer travel news, Colorado's breathtaking landscapes and wide open spaces continue to be the perfect cure for cabin fever and visitors to Colorado this summer can expect to be wowed with exciting new travel offerings. Colorado's famed Pikes Peak will welcome the new Summit Visitor Center and the return of the world's highest cog railroad. The much anticipated Palisade Plunge is set to be one of the longest singletrack downhill mountain bike trails in the U.S, and Arapahoe Basin will inaugurate the highest via ferrata climbing route in North America. Colorado will commemorate the bicentennial of the historic Santa Fe Trail throughout 2021, and Rocky Mountaineer luxury train will debut its new Colorado route this fall.

As travelers continue to embrace the open road during the summer of 2021, Colorado is offering exciting new takes on the classic road trip including new Schoolcations Educational Itineraries developed in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education and Mural Trails that tell the story behind noteworthy murals across the state and were designed in collaboration with Colorado Creative Industries.

Colorado is opening several new and innovative accommodation offerings across the state including new glamping opportunities at properties such as the new CampV in Naturita, the expansion of Gravity Haus' adventure lodging offerings to Vail and Winter Park and new boutique properties for one-of-a-kind overnights such as the Clayton Members Club and Hotel in Cherry Creek, Hotel Imogene in Ouray, and The Eddy Hotel in Golden. Exciting new restaurant and bar concepts are also popping up across the state, and a new Liquid Arts Digital Passport is now available providing consumers with discounted tastings and offers from some of Colorado's best craft beverage establishments.

As visitors explore Colorado, the Colorado Tourism Office encourages visitors and locals alike to continue to "Do Colorado Right" and embrace the state's new interpretation of responsible tourism—showing care not only for destinations but for visitors and the people who call Colorado home.

For more information on the Colorado Tourism Office and how to get involved, visit industry.colorado.com.

Gathering again: HOW TO BRING BACK COMMUNITY EVENTS

By Karyn Bocko, Lakewood marketing and promotions supervisor

More than 13 months ago, the City of Lakewood began canceling its 2020 event schedule. Then, like in many municipalities, Lakewood had to institute furloughs and staff reductions. Despite these challenges, Community Events Coordinator Rebecca Gushen returned from furlough in July with optimism and determination.

Within two weeks, she developed a socially distanced six-concert series at Heritage Lakewood Belmar Park, then continued to produce limited-capacity outdoor events in late summer through fall including reservation-only cider pressing and creative trick-or-treating using candy chutes to maintain distance. Implementing safety protocols and responding to feedback gained the public's trust. "I heard more thank-you's in those few months than I heard in the four years previously," she said.

Rebecca has shared her lessons learned and advice for hosting successful community events as our municipalities move into recovery.

REMAIN FLEXIBLE

Rebecca recommends preparing multiple action plans for varying scenarios and a flexible refund policy. For example, a change in public health orders was announced mere hours before Lakewood's Halloween-themed event, requiring a portion of the evening's festivities to be canceled. Having staff on call to adjust timed-entry tickets, provide communications, and process refunds made the last-minute change operate as smoothly as possible.



ADJUST AMENITIES

Rockin' Block Party, a free event with live music and an outdoor movie that had previously been a walk-up event, is back this year by reservation. Interactive art projects, games and activities will be eliminated to create a more touch-free environment. Lawn chairs will not be available to borrow, and although lawn seating will not be marked, capacity is reduced to promote social distancing. To avoid lines, additional time is allotted for entry, and patrons will order food online and receive a text from the food truck when available for pickup. Seating and umbrellas will be removed from the beer garden to encourage people to return to their seats after supporting local breweries through their beverage purchases.

RETHINK TICKETING AND RESERVATION STRATEGY

For Lakewood, all event tickets are now sold in advance online and by phone to eliminate a line at the box office and the handling of cash or cards. For free events, the reservation system attaches a suggested donation. When a donation is made during the transaction, it significantly



increases the probability of visitor turnout while also helping recover event costs. For example, Rockin' Block Party has a suggested \$5 donation per reservation, and 76% of patrons made a donation in some amount.

For paid events, it is necessary to increase ticket costs to make up for reduced capacity, but Lakewood developed a budget model to still offer accessible pricing. Lakewood increased the cost of its Sounds Exciting! summer concerts from \$6 to \$10 per ticket but offered reduced rates for children and season passes. Capacity was 1,100-1,500 people in prior years and is now reduced to 750 people.

RELY ON OTHERS

"The marked squares for distanced lawn seating was a concept that I learned about through the City of Thornton. As a community event planner, and part of the Colorado Special Events Alliance, you're really not alone. There are others doing this, and we are leaning on one another for ideas and support," said Rebecca. "Plus, we have an amazing team in Lakewood, from staff at the box office and throughout our Heritage, Culture & the Arts Division, to marketing and parks staff and volunteers. Everyone pitches in and problem solves!"

MOVE FORWARD

To Lakewood's delight, reservations are nearly full for Rockin' Block Party. And, almost 4,000 tickets for its 2021 Sounds Exciting! Summer Concert Series were purchased within the first 24 hours of tickets going on sale. It is abundantly clear that residents and visitors are eager for community events to return. "With extensive planning and flexibility, there is an opportunity to successfully move forward with events this year," Rebecca said.

HOSTING SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY EVENTS AS OUR MUNICIPALITIES MOVE INTO RECOVERY

Considerations for municipalities RETURNING TO WORK AFTER THE PANDEMIC

By Lorrie Ray, Esq., Employers Council

Plenty has changed due to the pandemic, particularly around technology. There seems to be a consensus that many changes in the digital world were leading to changes in the workplace before the pandemic, and the pandemic sped up this process considerably.

Different surveys during the pandemic indicate that employees want to have some say when they come into the office. Other surveys warn that employees are considering leaving their position if they must work from an office far from their home. A thoughtful approach, taking employees' interests into account, would keep an employer in a competitive position for attracting talented employees. Of course, in municipalities, there are jobs that must be done in the workplace or around the municipality. It seems impossible to write a traffic ticket from home or be a lifeguard from a couch. Supporting employees in their various roles is something that will improve the workplace and the retention of good employees.

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Controlling infection at work

Strong safety practices are an excellent way to support those who must return to the workplace. A survey sent to human resource departments early in 2021 showed that one hundred percent were requiring employees to wear masks at work. This is starting to change. Currently in Colorado where there are low COVID-19 rates of infection, employers need not require masks. Still, as of early June, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires health care workers who have not been vaccinated to wear masks. While municipalities are not covered by OSHA, it would be wise to carefully consider when, where, and how mask laws are relaxed, keeping the rates of infection in the municipality in mind.

Most employers are not mandating the vaccine and do so only when they have a workplace that is an essential business, and employees must come into work and be in close contact with others. If an employer mandates a vaccine, there are legal considerations. Foremost are religious protections and disability accommodations.

Religious protections are stronger in the public sector workplace, where an employer can have no rule that promotes or prohibits the recognition of a religion. There is also the duty to accommodate religion under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. If this issue is raised by an employee, a careful analysis with help from an attorney is in order. Typically, under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), when an employee cannot be vaccinated due to a disability, any accommodation must be explored and then the employer must determine if it is reasonable. Mask mandates continue to relax, so it may be a reasonable accommodation to allow an employee back to work without a vaccination.



Vaccination programs are only one element of a COVID-19 prevention program. The best choice for your organization depends on many factors, such as the feasibility of social distancing in the workplace, the degree to which employees interact with the public in person, the proportion of employees or customers at increased risk for severe illness, and priority for continuity of operations.

If your organization has decided on a voluntary vaccination policy that encourages instead of mandates employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccination, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers helpful resources at bit.ly/348d5Pv.

Providing emotional support

Compassion fatigue is real and growing, given what our social workers, firefighters, police officers, and especially medical facility workers have been through in 2020 and 2021. It can extend to other professions such as judges and lawyers. Compassion fatigue has been defined as a combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated with caring for those in significant emotional pain and physical distress (bit.ly/3wh77aR). An article in the online publication called *The Conversation* (bit.ly/3hAn7R7) has a list of symptoms including:

- decreased concentration
- withdrawal and apathy
- mental and physical tiredness.

It is said to affect those with less experience over those with more experience because those with long tenure have developed the skills to face the trauma that is a part of their jobs and roles.

Talk to your insurance carrier about how to provide services in an easily obtainable way. Some make sure there are health care professionals immediately available after a traumatic event. Work with groups to help the entire department; The Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance (ffbha.org) is a group that helps fire departments, for example.

WORKPLACE PRACTICES

There was a large shift in employment and workplace rules and routines during the pandemic. A review of what was firmly in place in February of 2019 might well be in order.

Updating employee handbooks

It would not be surprising to have practices at your workplace that changed considerably during the pandemic. In Colorado, employment laws have changed, the most significant being the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act and the Healthy Families and Workplace Act. Both the practical and legal changes create an imperative to take a fresh look at your handbook.

Here are items to consider:

- **Work from home policies** – You may have some employees who would never have thought about working from home who might be both willing and able to do so now, as the work they do has shifted to online.
- **Sick leave** – All employers, including municipalities, must provide 48 hours of paid sick leave per year, and there are rules around what information you may request, and what information you must request. There must also be a carry-over of sick leave. (If you have fewer than sixteen employees, you need not comply until 2022.) During the pandemic, 80 hours of paid sick leave must be available.
- **Job postings** – There are legal requirements to post not only the job, but the pay range and a general description of benefits under the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act. In addition, there must be a posting for any position that is promotional, even if there is only one candidate for the promotion.
- **Pay increases** – This is now highly regulated, with a specific list of allowable reasons for increases. If this is something you are not familiar with, check out online resources or contact an attorney who understands this area of the law.

Addressing budgetary challenges

In the last recession, public sector employers and their employees excelled at LEAN solutions for their workplaces that were innovative and saved significant costs. If you decide to undertake this process, here are some tips:

- Confer with others who have instituted such practices successfully and train the entire group who want to streamline changes.
- Once HR and leaders are aware of the concept and want to get started, communicate clearly to employees that they are critical in this endeavor. It is vital to have those doing the work each day provide the ideas and plans for moving forward.
- If you ask employees for ideas, you must respond to those ideas, either implementing them or clearly explaining why they will not, or cannot, be implemented. If you fail to follow this step, employees will feel let down by the process and may not engage in the future.

There is much to be done to meet employees' needs and to recognize that the way work is done may be forever changed. Workplace safety and health is now a priority. The changes in laws and practices that are now a reality in 2021 lead to a change in policies and the way work is done. It is time to embrace new ways of operating in the workplace.

Returning to a POST-COVID WORKPLACE

By Lauren Mueller, M. Ed. SPHR, Frederick human resources director

As we begin to try to navigate our new post-COVID world, municipal employers are faced with a daunting task – balancing the safety of their employees with the needs of their community. As employers, we have an obligation to keep our employees safe and healthy by not exposing them to undue risk. At the same time, as a municipal entity we have an obligation to provide a variety of services to the public. As we start to see a light at the end of this pandemic tunnel, it seems that the time to think about re-opening for business as usual is upon us.

But will it be "business as usual" for all your employees? After more than a year of dealing with the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, your employees will likely have a wide range of questions, worries and reservations about returning to the office. As employers, it is incumbent upon us to answer their questions and address their concerns as best we can. Most importantly, we need to be fair, consistent, and unbiased in the creation and application of our policies and procedures.

If your entity doesn't already have a return-to-work policy, I would encourage you to draft one. Your attorney and/or your human resources professional can help with this. Written policies help us to remain uniform and nondiscriminatory in our practices. Consistency is key. Of course, different departments within your organization have different needs and requirements, but written policies help us define expectations within each department. Lack of clear, consistently applied policies tends to lead to accusations of unfairness, inequity, and discrimination. Clear communication of your policy will be of the utmost importance as you transition your employees back to the office.

If they haven't already, your employees may come to you with concerns about returning to work or questions about the policies you've put into place. Following are some of the more common questions I have received in the past few weeks, in addition to responses I've provided to my employees in an effort to maintain a safe and healthy work environment.

Q: I am in a high-risk category, and I don't feel comfortable returning to the office full-time. Can I continue working from home?

A: We are committed to providing our employees with a safe work environment. In addition to the nightly cleaning protocols that have been put into place, we have deep-cleaned all of our facilities to protect against lingering viral germs on surfaces. All employees and visitors are required to wear masks if they will be inside one of our buildings and within six feet of one another, which is in accordance with the CDC's recommended guidelines. Because we are opening our buildings to the public effective (date), we do have an expectation that our staff will be on-site and available to assist our walk-in customers.

Q: I've been working effectively from home for the past 15+ months. Why do I need to return to the office now?

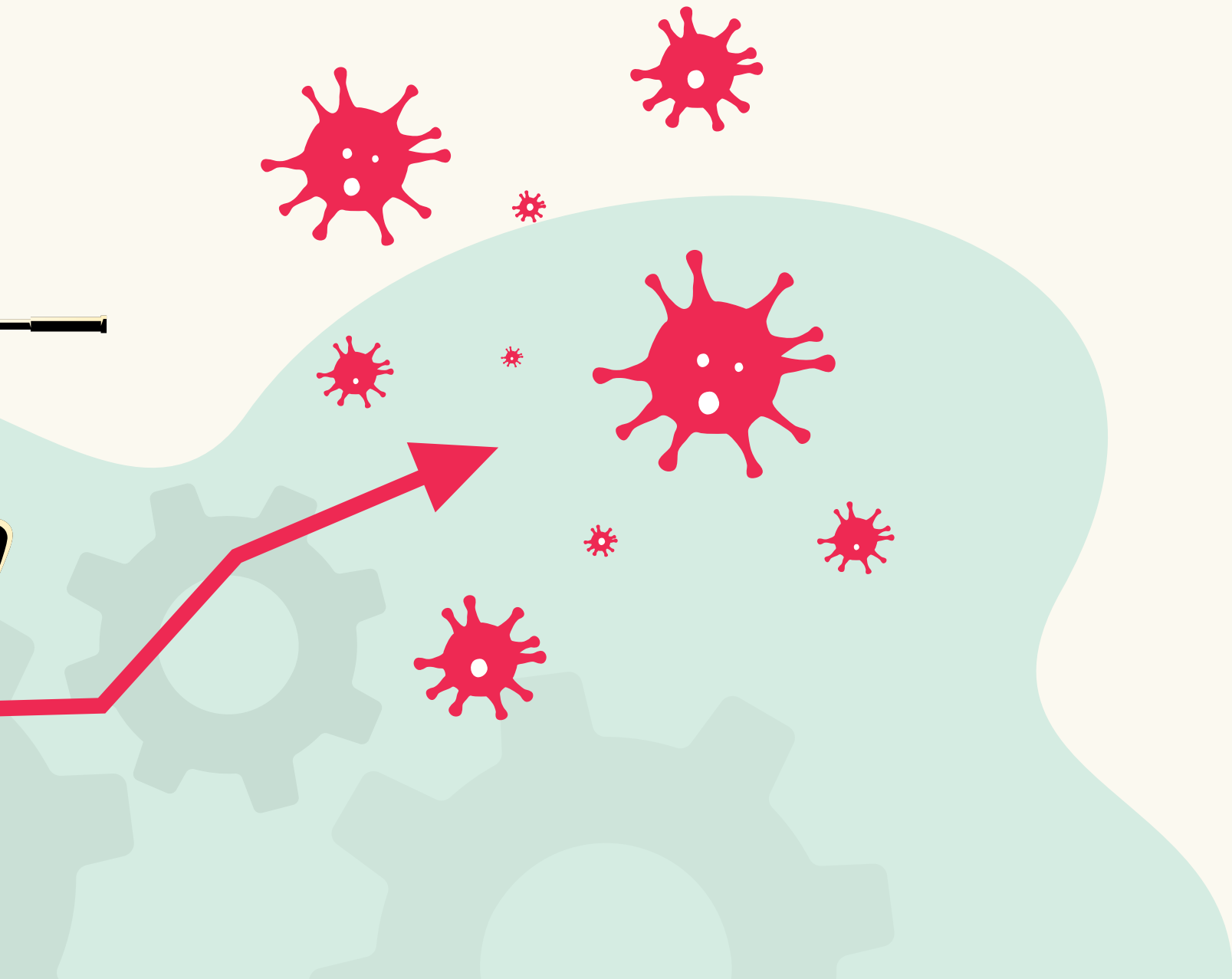
A: As we open our buildings to the public and start to welcome walk-in customers again, we need to have our full staff available on-site so that we can continue to provide the exceptional levels of service that our customers have come to expect from us. While we are not entirely doing away with occasional remote work arrangements, we do expect that if you did not perform your job remotely before the pandemic, you will not continue to perform your job remotely after the pandemic. We function at our best when we are one cohesive team, and we are excited to welcome everyone back together!



Q: I've been fully vaccinated. Why do I need to wear a mask indoors and stay six feet apart from others?

A: Congratulations on taking the initiative to get vaccinated! We encourage all employees to get the COVID-19 vaccination in order to help protect themselves and their coworkers from the virus. However, we also recognize that there will be some employees and visitors who, for whatever reason, are not going to be vaccinated. In an effort to help protect our unvaccinated coworkers and customers, we will still be requiring masks to be worn and social distancing to be observed whenever you are occupying a common area of any of our buildings. You do not have to wear a mask if you are alone in your workspace, or if you are working outside and are more than six feet apart from one another.

These are just a few examples of the questions you or your HR department may be receiving as you start to transition back to the office environment. Your answers will, of course, depend on the policies that you have put into place in your organization. Your policies should dictate your practices, so make sure you are consistent in applying these policies across the board. It is best not to make exceptions here and there for some employees (or groups of employees), unless you are making a reasonable accommodation for an employee under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Remember that your actions today are setting a precedent moving forward. What you put into practice now will resonate for years to come, so it's vital that your policy is sound and unambiguous, that the application of the policy is uniform across the organization, and that the communication around the policy is clear and consistent. These are the keys to your staff's successful transition back to work.



Grand Junction Economic Partnership REDEFINES REMOTE WORK

Robin Brown, Grand Junction Economic Partnership executive director

The idea that the office is dead has resonated throughout the country since the pandemic forced people out of their offices and into their homes. In some cases, that shift has become permanent, and the Grand Junction housing market is a reflection of the increased pressure that has resulted from an influx of remote workers.

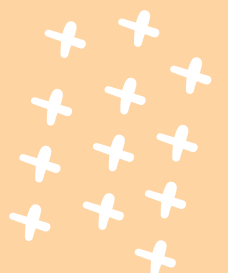
An influx of remote workers wanting to network and get involved in the community forced the Grand Junction Economic Partnership (GJEP) to create the Welcome Wagon - a cohort style program that partners new residents with local ambassadors that can introduce them to industry peers and help them find opportunities to get involved. Graduates of the program are officially deemed "locals".

However, as Mesa County moved to green on the COVID dial and dropped all restrictions, commercial brokers will attest to the fact the office is, in fact, not dead. Office was in short supply before COVID and remains so despite some local jobs moving to a permanently remote platform. Class A office space remains mostly occupied throughout the city and several new office buildings are under construction. What has changed is the type and style of office space that relocating companies are searching for as more companies have moved to a hybrid style of office that allows employees to work some days from home and other days from an office.

This type of office space is more of a coworking style where employees don't have separate offices or dedicated desks but may float in a more communal space taking their laptop with them as they go. The recently completed Timberline Bank building in Grand Junction is an example of this as few bank employees have their own offices and instead move through the building throughout the day working from high top tables, seating areas, and even treadmills. They even have a resident dog, Timber, available to play with because, well, it's Colorado.

Last year, Colorado introduced the Location Neutral Employment program (LONE) which pays companies headquartered in Denver that have qualified for the Job Growth Tax Incentive for each employee that they allow to work permanently in a rural community.

This has forced GJEP to shift strategy as we not only recruit companies with good jobs to the area, but now use jobs that can be done from anywhere to lure workforce into the region. GJEP has worked closely with companies that have qualified such as Pax8 and Infocu5 to fill those jobs in Mesa County and while those jobs are considered remote, the companies are looking for smaller office space that acts as a hub and allows employees to work from home but come in for training or events. Grand Junction's fastest growing sector—tech and cybersecurity—is a good fit for both the program and the hybrid office model and the area continues to see growth in all areas.



COLORADO DOWNTOWNS' ROLE IN RECOVERY

By Katherine Correll, Downtown Colorado, Inc. executive director

Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) is privileged to support downtown champions from structured and funded organizations, such as business improvement districts (BIDs) or downtown development authorities (DDAs) and those housed in local government and non-profit organizations.

Downtown pandemic challenges have been different from one side of Colorado to the next, from rural to urban, and based on the downtown advocates in place. As Colorado's downtown association, DCI has been able to observe and support our downtowns through the pandemic. In this article, we will consider two questions:

- What have we learned about maintaining a sense of place with support for small businesses and small projects?
- How can we use our downtown recovery, not to return to where we've been, but to establish long-term capacity for stronger communities in the future?

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED

DCI is fortunate to draw on the experience of our DCI members to develop the following lessons.

- Downtowns are physically and conceptually the intersection of perspectives, from small business, housing, education, workforce, preservation, health, and more. The future of economic vitality and civic engagement will play out in our downtowns.
- Downtown organizations serve as an effective liaison and distribution mechanism for local governments to provide services or funds to imperiled merchants, consumers, landlords, and tenants. Communities with dedicated downtown programs seemed to pivot quickly to help businesses and to rally around solutions.
- Small, local entrepreneurs and investors often invest patient capital to build community rather than creating and collecting a quick profit.
- Rural and small communities have begun reconnecting local ecosystems through efforts to expand rural communication networks and expanding training for youth.
- Local spending provides a stabilizing effect. While many tourist-reliant downtowns felt a significant hit during the pandemic, many downtowns saw increases in sales tax collection as their populations shopped from home instead of a regional center.

- The pandemic laid bare the division between urban and rural areas, large and small businesses, and dominant and marginalized people. Differences in access to capital, health care, child care, expertise, and education have been under the spotlight. Downtowns will continue to serve as a stage where this story is told.
- Quasi-governmental organizations have demonstrated efficiency and effectiveness in responding to business needs. BIDs and DDAs led through the pandemic and are a strong voice for private sector needs for recovery.
- Nonprofits focused on community and economic development moved quickly to offer support and in many cases waived fees to help our state and local communities. Nonprofits have resources and connect efforts for municipalities, counties, small business, economic development, startups, planning, housing, health care, business advocacy, and of course downtowns.

WHAT DOES RECOVERY LOOK LIKE?

As we look towards recovery, DCI and our Colorado downtowns are in listening mode. And our vantage point bridges silos. We are listening to business owners and community members to balance their ideas with the limitations and goals of the municipality and other challenges. The pandemic response enabled state and local governments to remove barriers such as permitting, fees, and restrictions on the physical environment and dedicate more money to recovery. To sustain our unique commercial districts, it is going to be important to demand that money sources include a focus on SMALL—small business, small building renovations, and small communities.

- Downtowns must advocate for elected officials to continue relaxing or removing barriers that present challenges to marginalized groups. Regulations should encourage local access to create smaller and unique projects over large, cookie cutter developments.



**THE NEXT PHASE OF RECOVERY IS
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR STRONGER
PARTNER ENGAGEMENT TO BUILD
LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS.**

- Colorado's downtown recovery will explore how to continue and expand sharing of space for private business, arts and culture, satellite healthcare, and allow our downtowns to be outdoor classrooms for students to learn in the real world. It is also important to use our places well and to use play to build community engagement—or the invitation for our locals to be part of solutions.
- Small downtowns' recoveries can build on the love of place to create local systems that use local services, products, and people. Small downtowns looking for a more sustainable boost from recovery dollars should consider the projects that are needed and how to use those projects to train local people, utilize local business, and identify opportunities for startups.
- Downtown recovery includes synchronized, flexible, and multi-faceted efforts to support entrepreneurs. Federal, state, and local governments should structure programs to allow more local discretion in program design and funding distribution. Funding should support a mix of traditional and forgivable capital that can be coupled with innovative technical assistance for small businesses, potential startups, and investors with small projects.
- The most efficient recovery will utilize the full network of nonprofit resources in an inclusive process rather than competitions for funding. Governments at all levels will be more effective if they are able to create a mechanism to invite collaboration with quasi- and non-governmental partners.

PEOPLE-CENTRIC APPROACHES

The people factor will play a huge role in how our downtowns recover.

- Downtown organizations are intentionally prioritizing equity and inviting a broader cross section of our population to plan the future. Downtown placemaking is a platform to bring people to the table, or to participate through play and be rid of the table entirely.
- Pre-pandemic, many businesses cut operating hours due to a lack of employees. These challenges seem to be worsening. Some dynamic downtowns are creating employment events or “work walks” to bring people downtown to see all of the places hiring. Either way, economic recovery will struggle without a downtown workforce.
- The big question facing larger downtowns is the future of the workplace. If workers stay home and downtowns have excess office space, downtown innovators and investors will begin to consider how to convert office spaces to other uses that still draw people downtown. This could mean needed housing, light manufacturing options, business incubators, or the next greatest thing.
- Rural downtowns must maximize local assets beyond their capacity to attract tourists. Smaller localized ecosystems allow each community hub to encourage the locals to invest time, ideas, and money. Many rural downtowns have a history of underutilized spaces. How can we turn these spaces into opportunities for commerce, learning, jobs, and housing that support local ecosystems? And how can we invest in young people planning their own entrepreneurial futures?

CONCLUSION

When communities prioritize downtowns and people, it can create an additional layer for response and resilience during economic and social turbulence. Downtown programs build capacity, good governance, community visioning, and effective public and private partnerships. These quasi- and non-governmental downtown networks are dedicated to making Colorado stronger and should be included in recovery planning and implementation. The next phase of recovery is an opportunity for stronger partner engagement to build local ecosystems. The speed and quality of downtown recovery will, and should, be driven by private sector innovation but will depend on the ability of the government to accept and leverage partnerships to accomplish more with less.

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- Opinion: Economic recovery will depend on adaptation and reinvention of our cities: bit.ly/3w1e28w.
- Why Main Streets are a key driver of equitable economic recovery in rural America: brook.gs/3cpOBFG
- The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities: bit.ly/3x7JAtc, bit.ly/3iwBAOm, bit.ly/3v3GAwJ.

Colorado begins awarding new Revitalizing Main Streets GRANTS FROM ADDITIONAL STATE STIMULUS FUNDING

By Colorado Department of Transportation

The Colorado Department of Transportation continues to award Revitalizing Main Streets grants to help communities improve their roadways and community infrastructure, supporting strong economic activity and public safety. The Revitalizing Main Streets grant program began last summer in an effort to mitigate the negative economic fallout from the COVID-19 crisis.



The continuation and expansion of this program was made possible through a \$30 million allocation from the state legislature in March 2021 and those funds are currently available for local government competition, with significant anticipated demand. Importantly, the passage of SB21-260 would further extend this highly successful program beyond the current grant cycle.

Since the program's inception, 84 projects have been awarded from the program's original set of funding and an additional six projects have now been awarded from the \$30 million in stimulus funding announced on March 19—bringing the total Revitalizing Main Streets grant awards to 90 projects statewide and growing. Awarded projects span the entire state, from Denver and Boulder to Hugo and Limon to Frisco and Rifle.





The six new projects awarded from the \$30 million in stimulus funding are:

CITY OF ASPEN - AWARD | \$149,999

Project: Support the Paepcke Transit Hub with EV charging stations, public bike parking, and improved pedestrian crossings.

TOWN OF PONCHA SPRINGS - AWARD | \$135,000

Project: Construction and integration of the first pedestrian highway crossing across US 50 with a pedestrian refuge island so individuals can more easily cross the highway. The project will provide increased pedestrian mobility by creating a safe multi-modal connection between existing residential neighborhoods and newly established commercial developments.

CITY OF GUNNISON - AWARD | \$149,999

Project: Support a project to realign and reconstruct an intersection next to the elementary school and new public library. Sidewalks, crossings, and ramps will be improved and the intersection will also include a new stop for the Gunnison RTA bus system.

TOWN OF WINDSOR - AWARD | \$145,000

Project: Install comprehensive wayfinding signage for bicycles and pedestrians in downtown Windsor, including permitting, fabrication, and sign construction and installation.

GUNNISON COUNTY - AWARD | \$149,999

Project: Improve the facilities and access to the Shady Island River Park, a park connected to downtown Gunnison via the multimodal Gunnison Recreation Trail and highly trafficked in the summer by river tourists. Improvements include trail and walkway improvements, bathroom facilities, picnic pavilions, and picnic tables.

CITY OF PUEBLO - AWARD | \$56,416.72

Project: Install seven 5-globe pedestrian lights and replace three street lights along Santa Fe Avenue in downtown Pueblo. This is a critical part of downtown walking that is currently underlighted, despite connecting multimodal trails and sidewalks to businesses, restaurants, hotels, and the convention center in a highly trafficked corridor.

A full list of recipients is available at bit.ly/3ygZcMJ.



1144 Sherman St.
Denver, CO 80203-2207
(p) 303-831-6411 / 866-578-0936
(f) 303-860-8175

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cml@cml.org
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Sarah Werner, editor
Leslie Hough, graphic designer
Mark Vanderbrook, circulation

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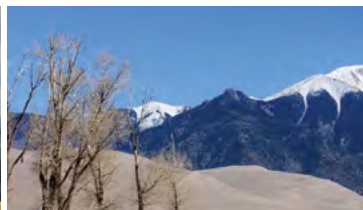
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