

Colorado Municipalities

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ART & CULTURE



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

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Each issue of *Colorado Municipalities* reaches 5,000 municipal officials and decision makers. To reach those who lead Colorado cities and towns, contact CML Engagement & Communications Manager Denise White, dwhite@cml.org.

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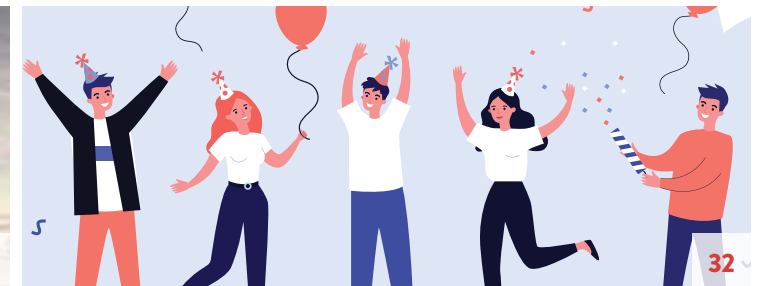
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On the Cover



This month's cover of *Colorado Municipalities* is a composite of two pieces of art generated by artificial intelligence, provided by Adobe Stock. Read more about how AI is changing municipal events and public art, on Page 14.

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From big cities to small towns, public art stirs civic pride — and the occasional controversy

By **Alex Miller**

CML Publication & Design Specialist

A terrifying blue mustang towers over the plains at Denver International Airport.

Bucolic bronze statues frolic on the waterside in Loveland.

Along the main drag of Manitou Springs, larger-than-life pastel chickens peck their way into the hearts of locals and tourists alike.

In Colorado cities and towns, art is never far from the public eye. And while some pieces are embraced by their communities, others inspire befuddlement or even disgust. But whether you like a piece of public art isn't the point.

"I think the most difficult thing to do is to leave your preconceived ideas of what you think the art should be," said Michael Chavez, program manager for Denver Public Art. "Everybody has an opinion about what they like and don't like. And that's not really the point. *Liking it* isn't always the question we want to ask." A better question — especially for public art programs — is *what's the right fit for the site?*

NUTS & BOLTS

Denver's sprawling public arts program has collected more than 450 pieces with upward of 80 projects currently underway. The mid-sized city of Loveland has an even larger collection — about 560 pieces,

Photo courtesy of Loveland

The sculpture "Birds in Flight" stands at sunset in Loveland.



Photo courtesy of Loveland

“My Favorite Things,” a mural painted by the artist DAAS, covers a parking garage in Loveland.

while Manitou Springs has a small-but-mighty collection of more than 50.

Manitou’s public art program works differently than Denver and Loveland’s, where city departments are in charge. Instead, the Manitou Springs Creative Alliance, a nonprofit certified as a Colorado Creative District, runs the public art program. It coordinates closely with the town, which supplies much of the alliance’s funding through grants.

All three municipalities pay for public art through percentage for the arts initiatives. Denver sets aside 1% of public capital improvement projects above \$1 million for art. Loveland sets aside 1% from projects above \$50,000, and Manitou Springs collects .3% of sales and use tax revenue to fund the arts.

The art pieces that this money pays

for benefit municipalities in ways both tangible and intangible.

“It’s economic development,” said Suzanne Janssen, public art manager for Loveland. “People come here to see the art.”

Likewise, sculptures and murals draw crowds to downtown Manitou Springs, said Creative Alliance Chair Ralph Routon, and they stick around to spend money — and generate tax revenue — in restaurants and bars. The alliance is working with an urban renewal authority to duplicate this success in the town’s historically neglected east side. The alliance has commissioned a series of large sculptures to beautify the area and attract visitors.

But the benefits of public art can’t always be measured in dollars and cents.

A SENSE OF PLACE

For Manitou Springs, it’s about identity. The small community is a suburb of bustling Colorado Springs, the second largest city in the state. An energetic art scene helps Manitou stand out.

“It has become part of the personality of the city,” Routon said. “Manitou isn’t just a tourist trap.”

For two years running, Manitou Springs has been the only Colorado town included in USA Today’s ranking of the Top 10 Small Town Arts Scenes in America. In 2021, it ranked fifth in the nation, and last year it moved up to fourth place. Manitou’s art scene is on par with towns that have long-standing reputations for the arts, like Taos, New Mexico, and Sedona, Arizona.

“It’s not just something regional, it’s national,” Routon said. We’re pretty proud of that.”

In Loveland, home to one of the longest-running public art programs in the state, art brings the community together.

“I think everybody recognizes the role that public art plays in Loveland, and people are very supportive of the cultural arts,” said Susan Ison, the city’s cultural services director. She’s served in that role for 42 years and witnessed the inception of the public art program. “It’s part of the fabric of the community, I believe.”

The city engages people through volunteerism. Hundreds of volunteer artists might be recruited to paint a mural, and more than 300 volunteers help put on the annual art show at Benson Sculpture Garden. All this participation encourages connectedness.

“That has built a sense of ownership in the community, and an engagement in doing public art,” Ison said. “A lot of people who started this, almost 40 years ago, they’re not young anymore. None of us are. And so their children are starting to take over their roles. The engagement with the community just grows over the years.”

The visibility of public art in Denver makes a statement about the city and the people who live there.

“It’s a demonstration of the city’s values,” Chavez said. “It demonstrates that Denver values art, culture, and creativity. And it’s a demonstration to residents and visitors that this is a place where that is important — so much so that it dedicates funding for it by law.”

EVERYONE’S A CRITIC

When it comes to selecting public art, the process should — naturally — include the public. The key, Routon said, is to get the right people at the table, right from the start. That means the art community but also business leaders and allies in local government.



Photos courtesy of Manitou Springs Creative Alliance, Loveland, and Adobe Stock. From the top, the sculpture “Peeps” stands in Manitou Springs; “Moulding our Future” is in Loveland; and “I See What You Mean” is in Denver.



Photo by Laurie White, courtesy of Loveland

The statue “Acumen” stands in Loveland at sunset.

“EVERYBODY HAS AN OPINION ABOUT WHAT THEY LIKE AND DON’T LIKE. AND THAT’S NOT REALLY THE POINT. *LIKING IT ISN’T ALWAYS THE QUESTION WE WANT TO ASK.*”

Michael Chavez / Denver Public Art

The program staff of Denver Public Art don’t directly select any of the city’s art pieces. Every project gets a unique selection panel, which includes a mix of arts professionals — valued for expertise in their fields — and people who live and work in the community where the piece will be installed.

“Doing something in Westwood is completely different than doing something in the Hilltop or any other neighborhood. And that’s why it’s crucial to have a brand-new selection panel,” Chavez said. “We believe in equity, diversity, and inclusion, so that we’re ensuring that underrepresented communities — people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people — are all represented on our panels.”

The goal is for the community to feel a sense of ownership of public art, for art pieces to become a beloved part of their neighborhoods. But even the best-laid plans can go awry. Art by its very nature is subjective, and some pieces have proven divisive, inspiring strong feelings of love or hate.

In Manitou Springs, it was the dog.

When the city installed “Dog Days,” a bronze sculpture depicting a Great Dane rolling happily on its back, it was expected to be a big hit. But the sculp-

ture included a provocative detail — the dog’s testicles. Townspeople didn’t like it.

“And there was a major backlash, and it actually had to be removed,” Routon said. “That is one people still kind of joke about.”

But even after removal, the sculpture remained part of the town. A local theater owner took it in, according to an article in *The Gazette* newspaper. He kept it in the corner under a sheet and would let people look at it if they asked. Eventually he wrote and produced a play, “Art Dog,” loosely based on the sculpture and the reaction it provoked.

In Loveland, it was a sculpture of a mother and child that roiled the city.

“Moulding our Future” is a figurative bronze depicting a partially nude woman and young boy. It was placed prominently downtown, and it divided the community. Some found it beautiful. To others, it was a portrait of incest. And when a reporter for a large newspaper company wrote about it, Loveland’s controversy became news all over the world. Ison remembers hearing from people in Germany and India.

The city knew it had to act.

“It caused a big uproar in the community, and we decided we should just deal with it head on and to have a pub-

lic hearing about it,” Ison said. “We used council chambers so it would be a more formal setting and had the public come and express their opinion about it. And it was a fascinating process.”

At the hearings, a faction of the community showed up to demand the statue’s removal, but others testified that they liked the statue and believed it possessed significant artistic value. After both sides were heard, the controversy fizzled out, and the city kept the statue in place. Decades later, it remains standing.

In Denver, Chavez says it’s crucial to accept that not every piece will be loved. Diverse communities will produce a diversity of opinions — and that’s a good thing.

“I’m not saying people love everything,” he said. “That’s not the point. The point is not that everybody loves every piece. I expect people will dislike several of those artworks we’ve commissioned. That’s OK. They were meant for the people who selected it, and that community. And that’s OK. It doesn’t have to be everyone’s cup of tea.”

Public opinion can’t be predicted or controlled. The role of municipal art programs, Chavez said, is simply to set parameters and let the artist respond.

“You have to have a little blind faith.”

INNOVATION IN EVENTS & PUBLIC ART

By **Denise White** | CML Engagement & Communications Manager

Illustration generated by artificial intelligence and provided by Adobe Stock

In a world marked by swift progress, technology and innovation are reshaping events and public arts in ways we can only imagine. These advancements not only unlock fresh avenues for municipalities to consider regarding creativity and accessibility to community programming but also introduce new ethical questions about future implications. →

THE INFLUENCE OF AI

Traditionally, art shows and events have resulted from human creativity; however, the emergence of artificial intelligence is challenging this notion. AI algorithms can now craft astonishing works of art, prompting a reevaluation of the role of machines in artistic creation. If meaningfully incorporated, this new dynamic may lead to cultural experiences that maximize efficiency, enhance accessibility, and produce personalization.

As a technical tool, applications such as Eventbrite, Cvent, or Click-Up have pioneered AI-powered features like analytics and event recommendations, streamlining event planning and management. Chatbots help guide users towards events and exhibits that precisely match their interests. Furthermore, AI-driven accessibility tools enhance inclusivity, providing audio descriptions of paintings and creating tactile art experiences.

Innovations like Microsoft's free Seeing AI mobile app enable blind and low-vision users to explore and appreciate paintings, sculptures, and other works of art. Meanwhile, DreamView harnesses 3D printing to create tactile replicas of famous artworks, offering a fresh perspective on art appreciation.

AI algorithms can also generate impressive artwork (such as the illustration for this article), crafting unique and original images, music, and other art forms to engage the public. Nevertheless, the growing prominence of AI also forces art show and festival producers into

new conversations about ethics and art. A striking example occurred in 2022 when Jason Allen won the first-place prize at the Colorado State Fair's fine arts competition with "Théâtre D'opéra Spatial," an AI-generated digital collage. This victory stirred controversy as some argued that AI-generated art should be ineligible for competitions as it lacks the human lens and touch. This dispute also motivated rule changes at the Colorado State Fair requiring artists to disclose the media used in their creations and whether they used AI capabilities.

DRONES & LASERS: A NEW ERA OF SPECTACULAR DISPLAYS

In the realm of events, drones and lasers have become a popular alternative to fireworks, leaving audiences with awe-inspiring displays that are both breathtaking and eco-friendly.

These innovative tools can perform intricately choreographed aerial exhibitions, creating dynamic patterns and images in the sky. The platforms operating them are equipped to execute complex flight patterns, synchronize dozens of drones or laser beams, and create dazzling visual spectacles that transcend the confines of traditional fireworks.

Many of Colorado's mountain towns are looking into this alternative. Illustrating this shift, the Woodland Park Drone Show returned for a second year as part of the town's Fourth of July celebration in 2023. The show featured

dozens of drones flying in formation, accompanied by the Woodland Park Wind Symphony. This transition away from fireworks evolved from concerns over wildfire threats. It sought to usher in an environmentally friendly and inclusive celebration, accommodating pets and individuals with noise sensitivities.

As outlined by Woodland Park, this innovative alternative may address many escalating environmental concerns associated with conventional fireworks, including air pollution, wildfire, and water contamination. Drones and lasers offer event planners a way to preserve the sense of community and fun in a celebration while taking a more sustainable approach.

CHARTING THE PATH AHEAD

Technology is changing how we experience events and public art, and this trend will continue in the years to come. Imagine a future where public art is truly immersive, where AI-powered art installations respond to our emotions and create unique experiences.

Of course, with great power comes great responsibility. Event producers, participants, and artists must continue to be mindful of the ethical considerations that come with these advances. By doing so, we can harness the power of innovation to shape a more beautiful and creative world. The future is brimming with possibilities, and these innovations are positioned to enrich our cultural events and art programs.



CAUTION: PEOPLE AT PLAY

What to consider when planning municipal events with an eye for safety

By **Rachel Woolworth** | CML Municipal Research Analyst

The COVID-19 pandemic served as an excellent reminder that municipalities can never be too prepared for catastrophe, whether natural or human-caused. Keeping safety and security in mind is essential for municipalities when planning events internally, as well as when partnering with external groups to host events on municipal property.

Common natural threats at large-scale events include severe heat and cold, flooding, snow, fire, and loss of power and water. Some human-caused risks include unruly crowds, active shooters, overcrowding, and cybersecurity breaches.

To protect eventgoers from bodily harm, health risks, and criminal activity, most municipalities require groups to apply for special event permits in the months leading up to festivals, protests, and concerts, to name a few.

Many large municipalities, such as Denver and Colorado Springs, have entire offices devoted to planning and permitting special events. Many small towns, such as Leadville and Telluride, have just one staff member, usually in either the clerk's or planning office, processing event permits on a part-time basis.

Though special event permit applications vary from city to city, most applications must be submitted 30 to 90 days before an event depending on its size and complexity. Most municipalities require an emergency action plan, site map, emergency medical plan, disability

accommodations, licenses for liquor and food service, and community notification plan. Large-scale events are also often required to submit a traffic plan and requests for street closures or off-duty police officers.

The City of Denver offers a sweeping set of recommendations for public safety planning at municipal events, a helpful resource for municipalities and event organizers alike.

- **Plan as a team.** Event planners, whether municipal offices or external groups, should partner with local emergency response and public safety authorities, such as police, fire, EMS, and emergency management. Coordinating with such entities early and often will help event planners understand if they need outside security or a first aid tent. Additionally, event staff and volunteers should be trained on basic emergency procedures and protocols.

On the day of the event, agencies should provide a list of contact information to all partners. Staff, volunteers, security, and any emergency response personnel should wear uniforms clearly distinguishable to eventgoers.

- **Understand the risks.** Municipalities should ask event planners to identify and assess any risks associated with an event, whether the potential for severe weather or excessive substance use among attendees. The City of Denver provides a hazard identification and risk assessment tool on its website that event planners may utilize free of charge. Such tools help municipalities and event organizers mitigate risk ahead of time; for example, providing warming tents at outdoor winter events in the mountains.

- **Understand the vulnerabilities.** Vulnerabilities associated with event attendees must also be accounted for. Such vulnerabilities may include the size of a crowd, composition of a crowd (for example, senior citizens or children), a crowd's disposition, and level of alcohol consumption and drug use. A clear communication plan must be in place to allow for information sharing about participants throughout the event.

- **Create a communication plan.** Municipalities should ask event plan-

Dogs are not allowed at the Greeley Stampede and Leadville Ski Joring so as to not spook the horses.

ners to map out an internal and external communication plan for the day of the event. This should include a call tree outlining who will be contacted in case of an emergency, in what order, and by what staff members.

Staff members and volunteers should be trained in backup communication devices, such as radios, in case of a cell service outage. It is also important to divide up communication roles ahead of time; for example, who oversees media inquiries, who makes cancellation or postponement

decisions, who manages relations with local agencies, and who communicates with eventgoers whether through social media, text alerts, or other interfaces.

- **Consider an evacuation plan.** Evacuation plans are often needed for events, especially when planning for the outdoors. Most evacuation plans call for a nearby shelter location, as well as a shelter-in-place protocol.

DENVER MANAGES LARGE-SCALE EVENTS

The City of Denver hosts hundreds of events in public parks and on public streets every year. Some of the largest events include Cinco de Mayo, a two-day celebration of Latino culture in May, Denver Pride, a weekend of live performances and parades celebrating Colorado's LGBTQ community in June, and Juneteenth Music Festival, a weekend-long celebration of Black culture across the city.

The City and County of Denver is also responsible for helping manage the impacts of large-scale events on private property throughout the metro area. In July, the Denver Police Department had its hands full juggling four large-scale events that collectively brought hundreds of thousands of people to the Mile High City.

Police officers, both on and off-duty, worked to manage traffic and safety at the Taylor Swift concerts at Empower Field, Cirque du Soleil shows at Ball Arena, a Rockies versus Yankees baseball game at Coors Field, and three nights of The String Cheese Incident at Red Rocks Amphitheater.



Photo courtesy of the Greeley Stampede

The Greeley Stampede is a two-week celebration of Western heritage.

GREELEY & LEADVILLE WORK TO KEEP ANIMALS SAFE

The cities of Greeley and Leadville are known across Colorado for their animal-centered festivals: the Greeley Stampede and Leadville Ski Joring.

The City of Greeley celebrated the 101st annual Greeley Stampede last summer at Island Grove Regional Park. The two-week celebration of Western heritage offers rodeos, concerts, bull fighting, a carnival, food vendors, and an Independence Day parade and fireworks.

Leadville Ski Joring, an annual winter sports competition that draws spectators from across the region, is held on Leadville's main thoroughfare. A horse and rider pull a skier down a snow-laden track outfitted with gates,

jumps, and rings. The skier aims to stay within gates, land the jumps, and grab rings with a baton as fast as possible.

The integration of animals, such as cows, horses, and burros, into municipal events with high human attendance adds complexity to public safety planning.

Many events that feature livestock and other animals ban non-service pets from events. For example, dogs are not allowed at the Greeley Stampede and Leadville Ski Joring so as to not spook the horses. Leadville Ski Joring organizers ask attendees to leave drones at home since the buzzing can frighten horses.

Event organizers also go to great lengths to keep festival grounds and

racecourses safe for animals. In Greeley, this means clearing rocks off rodeo grounds and keeping the soil dry. In Leadville, event organizers attentively groom the snow-covered racecourse and make sure temperatures stay cold enough to keep the snow firm.

The events also aim to maintain human safety through various rules and regulations. Only clear bags are allowed inside the festival area at the stampede and no outside alcohol is allowed on site at ski joring.

MANAGING LARGE FESTIVALS IN A TINY TOWN

The Town of Telluride is known for its internationally famous festivals such as Telluride Bluegrass Festival, Mountainfilm, and Telluride Blues &



Photo courtesy of Leadville Ski Joring

A contestant wipes out at the Leadville Ski Joring.

Brews Festival. The small municipality's population grows up to six times its normal size on various festival weekends throughout the summer. In fact, the Town of Telluride partners with event organizers on 35 to 40 events from Memorial Day through mid-October each year.

Though Telluride is small in population, its municipal government holds decades of experience planning and permitting large-scale events. Telluride Town Council, the Commission for Community Assistance, Arts & Special Events, and the Parks and Recreation Commission all hold different regulatory powers associated with special events.

Amanda Baltzley, special events coordinator for the Town of Telluride, emphasized the importance of coordination between event organizers and the town's parks and recreation, legal, clerk's, public works, marshal, and fire departments. "We work with event producers to help them be successful and to ensure that any negative impacts to the community are adequately mitigated," Baltzley said.

For example, Planet Bluegrass, the event production company behind the bluegrass and blues festivals, kept a meteorologist from the National Weather Service onsite this year during the weekend-long events. The meteorologist assisted the Telluride Chief

Marshal in making two evacuation decisions within a three-hour period at the bluegrass festival.

The Telluride Marshal's Department also partners with Planet Bluegrass on festival traffic and parking, a challenge for the municipality as there is only one road in and out of town.

Regardless of the size or location of the municipality, a commitment to public safety belongs at the forefront of event planning. By taking the time to assess risks, develop communication plans, and coordinate with emergency response agencies, municipalities can help to ensure eventgoers, staff, and volunteers can enjoy these gatherings with confidence and peace of mind.

SPOTLIGHT

Salida festival celebrates paddlesports

By **Rachel Woolworth**
CML Municipal Research Analyst

AS temperatures warm in the Upper Arkansas Valley each June, a winter's worth of snow from the Sawatch and Mosquito Ranges begins to melt. Water cascades down snowy peaks to the valley floor through an intertwined network of creeks, waterfalls, lakes, and reservoirs, filling the Arkansas River to its brim.

The Arkansas River usually reaches its peak streamflow in mid-June, the same time residents of Salida celebrate FIBArk or "First in Boating on the Arkansas." As the nation's oldest whitewater festival, it is no coincidence that the timing of FIBArk and the Arkansas River's peak flows are aligned.

FIBArk was established in 1949 as a boat race from Salida to Cañon City, a 56-mile stretch of the Arkansas River famous for its vertical cliffs and fierce rapids. Boaters in the inaugural race described the course as "an invitation to death;" only six participants finished.

In the 75 years since, FIBArk has grown in size and scope, gaining international recognition among the whitewater paddlesport community — a broad term including those who raft, kayak, canoe, and stand-up paddle board (SUP). The festival offers a variety of whitewater races each year — some serious, some comedic.

The Downriver Race, inspired by the



Photo courtesy of FIBArk Community Paddling Center

original FIBArk racecourse from Salida to Cañon City, is a 26-mile adventure from Buena Vista to Salida that passes through Brown's Canyon National Monument and Class III and IV rapids like Zoom Floom and Seidel's Suckhole. It currently serves as the longest whitewater river race in the United States.

The Hooligan Race, on the other hand, is all about fun. Contestants attempt to make it down a short stretch of river in "anything that floats that's not a boat." Past vessels include a Scooby Doo-inspired Mystery Machine atop an air mattress and a set of wooden pallets decorated as a pirate ship. The last craft left standing wins the race, an event festival-organizers describe as "controlled chaos."

The festival is also home to the Colorado SUP Championship, river surfing and slalom competitions, a fetch contest for river dogs, mountain bike and running races, and a parade. Three nights of live music and a wide array of food vendors are also highlights.

Yet FIBArk is more than just a fun-filled celebration; the festival serves as a fundraiser to support youth engagement in whitewater paddlesports.

In 2015, the festival board was re-established as a charitable nonprofit entitled FIBArk Community Paddling Center. The nonprofit works to fulfill three objectives: supporting community members to discover whitewater paddlesports through programming, providing local youth with the opportunity to safely engage in paddlesports and learn river safety and etiquette, and offering a space where community members can learn about the history of the Arkansas River.

The nonprofit does so, in part, through the FIBArk Youth Paddling Program, which offers introductory classes for kids at the Salida Hot Springs Pool, as well as more advanced classes on the river. And the FIBArk Kids in Kayaks program provides all Salida fourth graders the opportunity to safely get out on the river.

FIBArk is a reminder that many Colorado festivals serve a community-centered purpose while also being loads of fun.



MORE THAN JUST A

PAVILION

Festivals attract crowds, create jobs, and give small businesses a boost

By **Denise White**

CML Engagement & Communications Manager

Colorado is known for its many celebrations and festivals, from the iconic Telluride Film Festival to the more niche Frederick Chainsaws and Chuckwagons. Festivals have always been a vibrant and integral part of Colorado's cultural landscape and serve as powerful economic drivers.

According to a 2021 study by the Colorado Tourism Office, festivals generate an estimated \$1.6 billion in economic impact for the state each year. Festivals contribute to the local economy by engaging residents, attracting tourists, creating jobs, boosting small businesses, and more.

ATTRACTING TOURISTS

Festivals play a significant role in drawing tourists to Colorado's cities and towns. Municipal governments understand the potential of festivals as tourism magnets. Events like the Colorado Shakespeare Festival in Boulder or the Aspen Music Festival bring in visitors from across the country and around the world. These tourists attend the festivals and explore the surrounding areas, contributing to the local economy.

For example, the Telluride Film Festival is a world-renowned event that attracts cinema enthusiasts from far and wide. According to the festival's website, it attracts over 50,000 attendees each year, generating an estimated \$20 million in economic impact for the region. The economic impact extends beyond ticket sales,

as festival-goers book accommodations, dine at local restaurants, and purchase goods from area businesses. Municipal governments recognize the importance of such events in bolstering tourism, and many actively support and promote them.

However, while festivals that draw large tourist crowds offer substantial economic and employment benefits to the host communities, it's essential to recognize that achieving a balance between catering to tourists and satisfying the interests of residents can lead to some challenges like crowd and traffic management, noise and disruption, cultural clash, and resource allocation. Addressing these challenges requires careful planning, community engagement, and open communication between festival organizers and local government to ensure the interests of residents are considered and balanced effectively.

JOB CREATION

Festivals do not run themselves; they need people to organize and run them. Depending on the event size, they can generate job opportunities, from event planning and management to security, hospitality, performers, and vending. Ideally, municipal governments will collaborate with festival organizers to ensure these events create job openings for residents, and the employment opportunities provided by festivals will positively impact the community.

Take the Colorado Mountain Winefest in Palisade, for instance. A 2019 study by the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board found that the festival is the largest wine festival in the

state, supporting an estimated 1,360 jobs leading up to and for the event. Events like this require many staff and volunteers to ensure smooth operations. Municipal governments often work closely with festival organizers to connect them with local talent, including event staff, security personnel, performers, and vendors, fostering job growth and community engagement.

LOCAL BUSINESS BOOST

Local businesses, particularly small enterprises, stand to gain significantly from the influx of festival attendees. Many municipal governments understand that festivals act as catalysts for small business growth and development. As festivals attract large numbers of people, they can increase sales for local small businesses. Festivalgoers are likely to try new things and support local businesses. Local retailers and restaurateurs have an opportunity to showcase products and services, build brand awareness, and reach new customers. Increased foot traffic and consumer spending can provide a vital economic boost to these businesses, helping them thrive.

Additionally, festivals help build community engagement and support for small businesses. When businesses participate in festivals as vendors or sponsors, they show they are part of the community and that they support other local businesses.

Denver's Cherry Blossom Festival is a prime example of how festivals can boost small businesses. The festival, celebrating Japanese culture, showcases local artisans and vendors, giving them a platform to reach a wider audi-

ence. Such events not only contribute to the local economy through vendor sales but also enhance the vibrancy of the community by highlighting its cultural diversity.

Businesses may also face particular challenges during a community festival or event. There is often increased competition to stand out or attract customers, a need to manage logistics differently to accommodate for traffic, parking, and security, or monitoring increased costs for goods or labor during the event. To overcome these, municipalities should maintain communication and help plan ahead and anticipate challenges. Local businesses can also prepare by looking at how to adapt their operations during an event.

Like local retail and restaurants, festivals can also lead to a surge in hotel occupancy rates and other accommodations. Because demand can be high and supply limited, festivals and events can be a great way for hotels and accommodations to boost occupancy rates, increase room rates, increase revenue from food and beverage sales, and raise brand awareness. Municipal governments can work with local hotels to ensure they are adequately prepared for the increased demand during festival seasons. This partnership enhances the overall festival experience for attendees while generating revenue for the hospitality sector and tax revenue for the municipality.

INVESTMENT & DEVELOPMENT

Municipal governments benefit from recognizing the potential for festivals to attract corporate sponsor-



Photo courtesy of the Telluride Film Festival

A seminar at the Telluride Film Festival draws a crowd.

ships and new investments in the community. Festivals often serve as platforms for showcasing a city's unique attributes, making them attractive to potential investors and new businesses. These sponsorships elevate the festival's profile and demonstrate the community's economic potential to potential investors.

Depending on the nature and size of an event, municipalities may also invest in infrastructure development and improvement projects to prepare for festivals. Roads, parks, and public spaces may be upgraded to accommodate larger crowds and provide a more enjoyable environment for residents and visitors alike. These capital investments can leave a lasting legacy, serv-

ing as community assets long after the festival has concluded.

These improvements are not without their challenges, like not having the budget to cover costs, accounting for the time needed to complete improvements before the event, and inconveniencing residents and businesses during construction. Municipalities should work with festival organizers to identify infrastructure needs well in advance, remain flexible and adapt plans, and communicate with the community about disruptions and the long-term benefits to address these concerns.

Festivals in Colorado are more than just celebrations of culture and art; they are powerful engines of economic growth for municipalities across the

state. From attracting tourists and creating jobs to boosting small businesses and catalyzing infrastructure development, these events offer numerous economic benefits. Municipal governments play a vital role in supporting and promoting festivals, recognizing their substantial contributions to the local economy.

As Colorado continues to host diverse festivals, municipal governments should fully harness these events' economic potential. By fostering partnerships with festival organizers, local businesses, and the community at large, municipal governments can ensure that festivals continue to enrich Colorado's economy and cultural tapestry for years to come.



STRANGE & AWESOME

Unusual events exclusive to Colorado

By **Kharyl Jackson** | CML Marketing & Communications Specialist

Colorado, known for its stunning Rocky Mountains and outdoor recreation, also celebrates its quirky side with a variety of unusual — even a little bizarre — events that draw people from around the world. From frozen dead men to headless chicken festivals, these events showcase Colorado's unique character and peculiar sense of humor. Here's a look at some of these odd and fascinating festivals.

Above: An artist paints a child's face at Tarantula Fest in La Junta, courtesy of Scene in the Wild Photography

RACE AN OUTHOUSE AT BURRO DAYS

The Town of Fairplay's annual Burro Days celebrates the role these animals played in the town's mining history. It features a fun and slightly weird activity known as the Outhouse Races. Teams build makeshift outhouses mounted on skis or wheels, and with a brave soul sitting inside, race down the street while the crowd cheers them on. The winner of the race proudly displays the "Golden Toilet Seat."

It's quite a sight to see and epitomizes the town's playful approach to summer festivals.

FROZEN DEAD GUY DAYS

One of the most peculiar and renowned events in Colorado is Frozen Dead Guy Days. Though the festival was held in Nederland for 20 years, Frozen Dead Guy Days moved to Estes Park in 2023 where it attracted more than 20,000 attendees. The festival has a rather unusual story. It celebrates Bredo Morstoel, a Norwegian man who was cryogenically preserved after his death in 1989 by his grandson, Trygve Bauge. The festival hosts several activities including a polar plunge, frozen turkey bowling, and a "Frozen Dead Guy" look-alike contest.

To this day, Bredo's body is stored on dry ice in the mountains overlooking the Town of Nederland.

MIKE THE HEADLESS CHICKEN FESTIVAL

In the town of Fruita, a unique festival recalls the incredible story of a

chicken named Mike. In 1945, a farmer named Lloyd Olsen was preparing a batch of chicken for the market, but to Lloyd's surprise Mike survived having his head cut off and continued to live — headless — for 18 months. The festival celebrates Mike's spirit with activities such as an egg toss and the 5k "run like a headless chicken."

EMMA CRAWFORD COFFIN RACES

Seeking a cure for tuberculosis in the mineral-rich waters of Manitou Springs, Emma Crawford fell in love with the mountain town and asked to be buried atop Red Mountain. The townspeople honored her request by carrying her casket 7,200 feet up the slope, burying her near the summit.

But due to several harsh winters and heavy spring rains, the casket lost its hold and raced down the mountain. Only the handles, a nameplate, and a few bones were ever found. Since 1995, the City of Manitou Springs has honored her memory with a coffin race down Manitou Avenue. Teams include four runners and one person — in the coffin — named Emma.

TARANTULA FEST

La Junta, a picturesque town nestled in southeast Colorado, comes alive each fall with the annual Tarantula Festival. The second annual Tarantula Fest celebrates the natural phenomenon of migrating tarantulas, showcasing the fascinating world of these eight-legged creatures. The event is a blend

of education, entertainment, and community spirit, offering a fun and engaging experience for all ages.

One of the highlights of the festival is the Tarantula Awareness Parade, where participants and floats adorned with spider-themed decorations take to the streets, celebrating the natural wonders of the region. Visitors have the opportunity to learn about the vital role tarantulas play in the local ecosystem and debunk common myths associated with these misunderstood arachnids.

For the more adventurous attendees, guided tarantula watching tours provide a unique opportunity to observe these gentle giants as they migrate across the landscape.

This event showcases the importance of understanding and respecting all forms of life, even the ones that might initially send shivers down our spines.





Photo courtesy of the Museum of Northwest Colorado

The world's largest watercolor painting, "Western Reflections," is on display at the Museum of Northwest Colorado.

The Museum of Northwest Colorado

Cowboy artifacts and the world's largest watercolor are found in downtown Craig

By **Rachel Woolworth**
CML Municipal Research Analyst

Buffalo Bill's saddle; a 19th century Moffat County Sheriff's badge; the gun belonging to Brigham Young's body-guard; Colorado State Penitentiary

prison spurs; the Oregon Boot, a 16-pound shackle locked onto prisoners' ankles. These are just a few of the relics of history on display at the Museum of Northwest Colorado.

Located in the historic Colorado State Armory building in downtown

Craig, the Museum of Northwest Colorado is home to one of the largest collections of Old West firearms and cowboy paraphernalia in the United States. The museum, which is owned by the City of Craig, also offers exhibits on dinosaurs, Indigenous peoples, and early explorers.

Staff members at the Museum of Northern Colorado work to maintain

broad archival collections of photographs, oral histories, maps, old Craig Daily Press newspapers, and genealogical records. In fact, the museum maintains more than 15,000 artifacts, 40,000 photographs, and 50,000 documents. Most archives are available in both digital and hard copy formats.

The large quantity and high quality of the museum's offerings, museum director Dan Davidson explained, are made possible by the generosity of the Craig community and a variety of collectors across the region.

One new addition to the museum is the world's largest watercolor painting. "Western Reflections," a 16-foot by 10-foot painting, depicts Clint Chew and his horse Arrow walking in the Yampa River. Israel Holloway, the artist behind the watercolor, painted the image at the museum over a three-month period in 2020.

"I wanted to create something that represents our local heritage, connects to the museum's Western collection and shows the power and beauty of the real, living West that still exists in Craig today," said Holloway.

Another highlight of the museum is an exhibit on 19th century wildlife photographers Allen Grant and Mary Augusta Wallihan. The married couple photographed northwest Colorado's wildlife throughout the 1890s, publishing two books with introductions penned by Teddy Roosevelt.

The museum's newest exhibit focuses on the fur trade between Native American groups in the area.

Though the museum's visitation numbers dropped after the COVID-19 pandemic, local, regional, and international visitors alike are beginning to return to downtown Craig to experience the museum. Davidson credits this visitation growth, in part, to enhancing the museum's marketing efforts in nearby tourism centers like Steamboat Springs.

"The museum pays homage to our history ... the reason why we are all here," Davidson said of the importance of historical tourism in Craig. "It gives us an anchor."

The Museum of Northern Colorado is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon and 12:30 p.m.-4 p.m. Admission is free.

SPOTLIGHT

In Aurora, a celebration of diversity

Global Fest draws more than 10,000 attendees this year

By **Rachel Woolworth** | CML Municipal Research Analyst

The City of Aurora, Colorado's third largest municipality, is more diverse than ever.

U.S. Census Bureau data collected from 2017 to 2021 shows Aurora growing more diverse each year. Over that period, the percentage of Aurora residents identifying as two or more races grew by 6% — more than any other racial group.

Around 22% of Aurora residents are foreign-born, more than 50% of whom immigrated from Latin America and 23% of whom immigrated from Asia. And approximately 34% of city residents speak a language other than English at home.

What better way to celebrate Aurora's multicultural populace, city employees thought back in 2014, than by establishing an annual summer festival?

Global Fest, a free, one-day event held at Aurora Municipal Center, celebrates the vibrant cultures and communities that call Aurora home. The festival does so through music and dance performances, a global fashion show, art displays, children's activities, and international food trucks and vendors.

The family-friendly festival has experienced tremendous growth throughout the last decade, growing from a couple-hundred attendees in 2014 to more than 10,000 people in 2023.



Photo courtesy of The City of Aurora

Attendees take part in the Global Fashion Show at Global Fest in Aurora.

One highlight of the festival is the Parade of Nations, a flag-filled, Olympics-like procession of the various countries Aurora locals trace origin to, whether in this lifetime or many generations ago. Last year, flags were flown for countries such as Ukraine, Nigeria, and Bolivia.

In 2023, a group of Lucha Libre wrestlers performed at Global Fest, bringing colorful masks and dynamic routines to a wrestling ring set up on the city's Great Lawn. Musicians and dancers performed traditional numbers from countries such as Eritrea, Switzerland, Polynesia, Mexico, Italy, and Peru.

Michael Brannen, senior media relations strategist for the City of Au-

rora, attended Global Fest for the first time this year. He fondly recalled a lively band inviting festivalgoers wearing garb from across the globe to dance with the musicians on stage.

"It really encapsulated the point of the festival. Global Fest is not celebrating one specific country or ethnic group but celebrating pride in oneself and origin," he said. "It's all about celebrating our differences in a joyous way."

Global Fest also provides a wide array of culinary offerings each year. At the 2023 event, nearly 20 food trucks served up dishes from Senegal, Nepal, Ethiopia, and Venezuela, to name a few.

It is too soon to say what performers will headline next year's Global Fest. "Every year we try to bring something new and fresh to the festival," said Ricardo Gambetta-Alvarado, manager of the City of Aurora Office of International and Immigrant Affairs.

"Hosting such a festival on our municipal campus sends a universal message that we embrace diversity and recognize everyone's contributions to the community," Gambetta-Alvarado explained. "It is also a great way to share critical information about municipal services and programs."

The 11th annual Global Fest will take place at an undetermined date in summer 2024 at the Aurora Municipal Center.

The intrinsic value of celebration

By **Denise White** | CML Engagement & Communications Manager

Colorado's municipalities are vibrant and diverse communities, each with its own unique history, culture, and traditions. Public celebratory events serve as a powerful means to commemorate community milestones, celebrate local history, and even address moments of loss and tragedy. Whether in the role of producer or partner, local government plays a vital role in facilitating and supporting these gatherings, reflecting their profound impact on local identity and resilience.

PRESERVING AND HONORING HISTORY

One of the primary roles of celebratory events in municipalities is to preserve and honor historical legacies. These events remind residents of significant moments in a community's past, allowing residents to connect with their roots and gain a deeper understanding of their home's heritage.

In Colorado Springs, the annual Territory Days in Old Colorado City commemorates its history as the first territorial capital of Colorado. This event incorporates historical reenactments, educational exhibits, and storytelling sessions that transport attendees back in time to experience the city's origins.

Wintersköj, a "toast to winter" in Aspen, has been celebrated since 1951. It originated as a week-long festival of fun designed to boost business during a three-week lull the town experienced following the winter holidays. Today, it

has evolved into a popular four-day locals' celebration (visitors welcome, of course) that continues to celebrate the alpine lifestyle and all things winter.

RECOGNIZING SPECIFIC CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Colorado is a diverse state with a rich tapestry of cultures and traditions. Celebratory events allow municipalities to acknowledge the cultural contexts that define them. These events not only showcase the vibrant diversity of Colorado but promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

In Denver, the annual Dragon Boat Festival honors the Asian-American community's cultural heritage. This festival features dragon boat races, traditional music and dance performances, and a variety of Asian cuisines.

Many Colorado municipalities support celebrations highlighting indigenous communities. The Council Tree Pow Wow and Cultural Festival is a three-day event in Delta featuring traditional dancing, singing, drumming, storytelling, cultural food, and arts and crafts.

HEALING AFTER LOSS AND TRAGEDY

Celebratory events are not limited to joyous occasions; they also play a crucial role in helping communities navigate loss and tragedy. Municipalities can use these events to provide a space for collective grieving, healing, and reflection. They can also build a sense of hope and resilience.

In 2013, many towns across Colorado

experienced a major flood, including the Town of Lyons. Approximately one square mile in size, the flood split the town into multiple islands and caused an estimated \$75 million of damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. The community was deeply traumatized by the experience. Ten years later, Lyons marked the completion of the last recovery project by hosting a remembrance ceremony. The "10 Years of Grit, Grace and Gratitude" event honored the loss of what was while celebrating the community's spirit and resilience throughout the rebuilding efforts.

Municipalities also celebrate events to recognize loss as the result of human-caused tragedy. An annual remembrance commemorating the tragic events that unfolded at Columbine High School in 1999 allows survivors, families, and the wider community to honor the lives lost and reflect on the impact of the tragedy.

When people come together to grieve and heal, it can help build stronger bonds and a sense of shared humanity. An event of this nature can be especially important in communities divided by conflict or trauma.

Celebratory events are essential to Colorado's cities and towns; they are powerful tools for preserving history, recognizing cultural contexts, addressing tragedy, and building social cohesion. Municipalities play a vital role in facilitating and supporting these gatherings, acknowledging their profound impact on local identity and resilience.

Streamlining Success

The five keys to effective event planning

By **Kharyl Jackson** | CML Marketing & Communications Specialist
and **Karen Rosen** | CML Meeting & Events Planner

Planning an event can be a daunting task, but with careful organization and a systematic approach, you can confidently execute a seamless and successful experience for both organizers and attendees. Whether it's a small gathering or large-scale event, these five steps will guide you through the process and help you achieve your event goals.



DEFINE YOUR EVENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The first and most crucial step in event planning is to clearly define your event's goals and objectives. Determine the purpose of the event, whether it's to raise awareness, educate, celebrate, or fundraise. Establish specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives. A clear vision will steer all subsequent decisions and actions in the right direction.



PLAN AND ORGANIZE YOUR EVENT LOGISTICS

Once your event's purpose and objectives are clear, focus on the logistics of the event. This includes selecting an appropriate venue, setting the event date and time, creating a budget, and outlining the event schedule. Choose a venue that suits the event's theme and accommodates the expected number of attendees. Develop a comprehensive budget that covers all event-related expenses, from venue rental to catering and marketing. Make sure you add a contingency – around 10% is the industry average to cover unexpected expenses. Create a detailed event schedule that accounts for registration, speakers, breaks, and other activities to keep the event organized and on track.



ENSURE A MEMORABLE ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

An effortless and enjoyable attendee experience is important for the success of your event. Pay attention to details such as event signage, registration processes, and accessibility. Provide ample opportunities for networking, interaction, and engagement. Consider incorporating interactive elements, workshops, or entertainment to keep attendees engaged and excited. Collect feedback during and after the event to gather insights and improve future events based on attendees' preferences.



EVALUATE AND LEARN FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Post-event evaluation is essential to measure the success of your event and identify areas for improvement. Analyze attendee feedback, track event metrics, and assess whether the event met its objectives. Consider conducting a debriefing session with your team to discuss what went well, what didn't, and what could be done differently in the future. Use these insights to refine your event planning process and enhance future events. By following these five fundamental steps, you'll be on your way to planning a successful event that aligns with your objectives, leaves a positive impact on attendees, and sets the stage for even better events in the future.



PROMOTE YOUR EVENT EFFECTIVELY

Effective event promotion is key to a successful turnout. Utilize various marketing strategies to reach your target audience and create excitement for your event. Leverage social media platforms, email marketing, event websites, and partnerships with relevant organizations to spread the word. Create engaging and informative content that highlights the event's benefits and encourages attendees to register. Implement early bird discounts or special promotions to incentivize early registrations.





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