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Vol. 95, No. 6, December 2019



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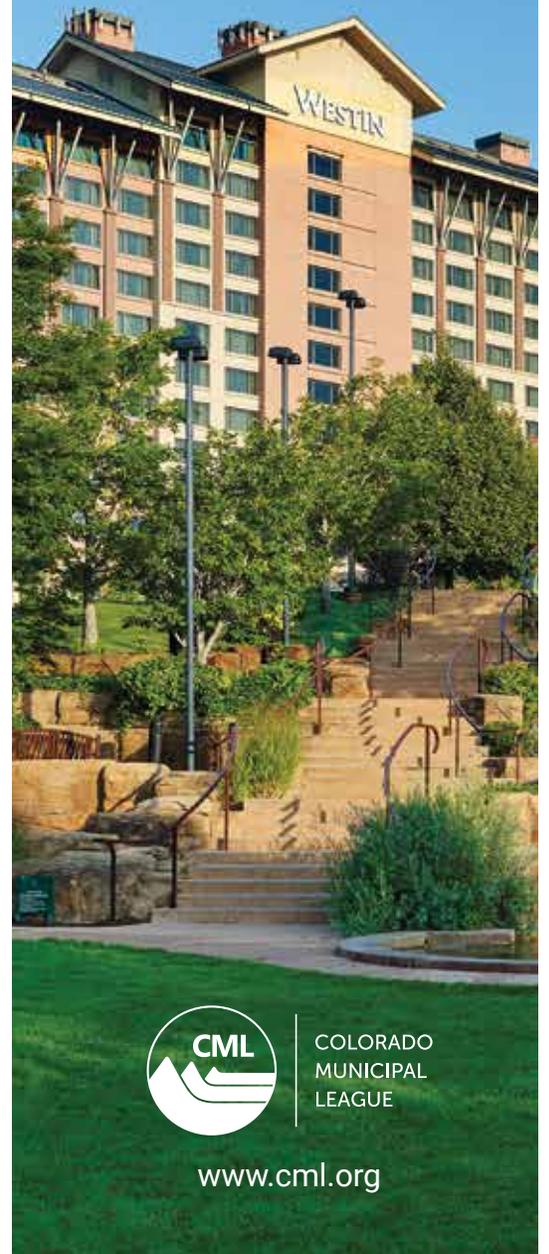
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**COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES**

Christine Taniguchi, designer and editor  
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**MISSION**

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

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

# Colorado Municipalities

Volume 95, Number 6

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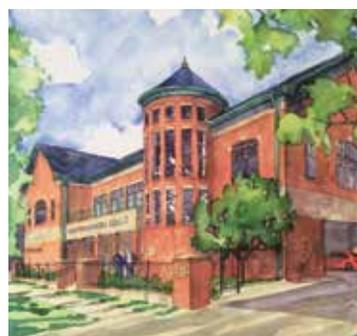
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# About some of our contributors



**Erin Atwell** was named CEO of Community Shares in August 2016. Since joining the organization in 2008, she has served in numerous roles. Prior to joining the

Community Shares team, Atwell worked with a variety of organizations and causes, including the Denver Art Museum, historic Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., Women's Information Network (WIN), and Colorado AIDS Project. She is a Colorado native and a 2010 graduate of Impact Denver, Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation's civic leadership program, and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Notre Dame.



**Megan Davis** joined the City of Louisville as the deputy city manager in 2018. Previously she served as a policy analyst for the Boulder County

Commissioners, where she managed legislative and policy efforts around health, human services, housing, and environmental issues, and led several countywide programs. Davis holds a master's degree in public affairs from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor's degree in science and political science from Colorado State University. Over the course of her career she has spent 17 years serving various roles in local government.



**Christy Doon** is the regional manager for the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for South Central Colorado. She has worked for the state since 2006,

first as program staff for the Conservation Trust Fund, Community Services and

Community Development Block Grants, then as the coordinator for the Colorado Main Street Program. Doon has been a regional manager since 2012 and serves as a liaison between local governments, the state, and federal resources. Doon also serves as the program manager for the Cathy Shipley Best and Brightest Program. She earned her master's degree from the University of Colorado Denver's Center for New Directions in 2006.



As an affected resident of Lyons during the 2013 flood, **Joycelyn Fankhauser** began applying her resource knowledge from working for 20 years as a

social worker to others who were impacted by the flood. She has served as the flood recovery coordinator for Boulder County Housing Human Services and in 2016, transitioned into the Housing and Human Services Emergency manager position. The relationships made along the way helped her forge new plans that would prepare the county for the next event. Fankhauser is passionate about service, family, and her community.



**John Gates** is a Greeley native. He spent 25 years with the Greeley Police Department, retiring in 2003 as a police sergeant, and is currently the chief of safety

and security for Greeley-Evans School District 6. Gates earned an Associate of Arts degree from Aims Community College and is a graduate of the Southern Police Institute's Administrative Officers course at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. He was elected to the Greeley City Council in 2009, re-elected in 2013, and in 2017, elected as mayor of Greeley. Gates

currently serves on the boards of directors for the Greeley Chamber of Commerce, Youth and Family Connections, and Upstate Colorado Economic Development, and is a member of the Weld County Child Fatality Review Committee.



**Andy Hill** manages the Community Development Office (CDO) in the Division of Local Government at the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. For more

than 20 years, she has traveled around the state, supporting communities' efforts to grow their success and resilience. Hill has served on several statewide planning committees and commissions, including the State Historical Fund Advisory Council and the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission. She also serves on her local city historic preservation board. Hill received a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Colorado at Denver, but as a Colorado State University alumna, she will always be a Rams fan.



**Kristy Judd**, president/CEO, joined Metro Volunteers/Spark the Change in January 2008 after 11 years at The Colorado Mountain Club.

Judd has led numerous community initiatives, including managing the disaster recovery from Colorado's 2012 fires and 2013 floods. She has been an officer for numerous boards, including the Directors of Volunteers in Agencies, Scientific and Cultural Collaborative, Colorado Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Colorado Volunteer Center Network, Faith Lutheran Church, and the Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships Commission. Judd is currently serving on the Governor's Commission on Community Service. She is a graduate of North Dakota State University.



**Abby Leeper** is the communications manager of the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) with specific focus on domestic and

statewide public relations, crisis communications, and increasing awareness of the CTO's state initiatives. Leeper sits on the U.S. Travel Association Communications Advisory Committee and has her certificate in the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's Sustainable Tourism Training Program.



Inspired by the happy-go-lucky public servant Leslie Knope, **Megan Palizzi** is passionate about enacting tangible

changes through local government. During her undergraduate career at Colorado State University, she held intern roles with the City of Fort Collins and graduated in May 2019 with degrees in political science and communication studies. Palizzi currently serves the City of Castle Pines as a management analyst and is invested in building and sustaining a sense of community throughout Castle Pines as a young and developing city. Outside of public service, she enjoys skiing, hiking 14ers, traveling internationally, and learning new things for the pure enjoyment of learning.



**Rachel Snyder** is currently the mayor of Branson, having relocated from Boulder 11 years ago following a

series of unfathomable events. A writer, catalyst, and facilitator, she has been a journalist, an inspirational poet and author, an advertising copywriter, a stall mucker, a substitute teacher, an innkeeper, and a performer. With the campaign slogan "It's Time the Town Fathers Included a Mother!" she was the first woman elected to the Board of Selectmen in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in a previous century.

# About this issue

*By Liz Hensley, Alamosa mayor pro tem and CML Executive Board president*

**M**unicipal employees and elected officials are, by their definition, public servants. If you are reading this magazine, you have a passion for serving your community, but what does public service mean? How does that term manifest itself in our daily lives? That is the question this month's magazine seeks to explore.

Many elected officials in Colorado municipalities choose to run for office in addition to working a full-time job. Take Greeley Mayor John Gates (page 8), who also serves as the chief of safety and security for Greeley-Evans Schools. He, like many of you reading this article, was passionate enough about his city that he decided to take on the role of mayor in his spare time. That is public service.

Some municipal employees served in the military and continue their service by seeking careers in local government (page 17). They apply their broad knowledge and experience from the military to the local government environment.

For many municipal employees, while their city or town is their full-time job, their public service does not stop there. They often spend their time off taking part in activities that make their communities a better place. Additionally, many municipalities encourage employees to take part in volunteer programs while working as part of the "Civic Century" (page 9).

Municipal employees are not the only ones volunteering. When things get tough, Coloradans come together. The way that the residents of Lyons stepped up following the devastating floods in 2013 not only helped their community recover, but also fostered a stronger sense of community that continues today (page 20).

It is not just current elected officials or municipal employees dedicating their energy to public service either. Mentorship and internship programs (pages 11 and 13) are fostering a passion for public service in Colorado's young people.

This magazine is about more than public service, though. It also focuses on the people we serve. While the public service of municipal employees and elected officials certainly makes Colorado communities great places to live, other efforts, such as effective planning (page 14), parks (page 16), and open space help to foster a sense of community and ensure that neighborhoods meet community needs, whether that be a place to live, work, or play.

Implementation of home rule in communities such as Castle Pines (page 22) is another way that municipalities create great communities for the people they serve. Local control allows municipalities to make the right decisions to ensure that their community matches its people and its surroundings.

Festivals and events allow municipalities to serve both their residents and visitors (page 24). These events present an opportunity for economic growth from visitor spending, but also bring community residents together to volunteer, show their wares, or participate in the festivities.

Some events and municipal services would not be possible without the Census (page 27). That is why municipalities like Aurora (page 30) are putting in the effort to make sure everyone is counted. Ensuring a complete count every 10 years is the key to funding for roads, hospitals, schools, and more. Without this funding, community institutions are unable to operate.

When public service and the people you serve come together, you end up with stories like Branson's (page 18). This community of 55 faced a multimillion-dollar problem with its water system, but through creative strategies such as crowdfunding and new filtration technology, managed to find a solution that met both resident and regulator needs.

# Public service and the people we serve

By John Gates, Greeley mayor



In mid-2009, several community leaders in Greeley invited me to lunch. Much to my surprise, the purpose of the meeting was to solicit me to run for the Greeley City Council. I believe I laughed out loud at the thought of entering politics. The group explained that some members of our city council were making the front page of the *Greeley Tribune* for all of the wrong reasons. They were simply trying to encourage a few people that they felt might bring more professionalism to the governing body. I politely told them I was flattered by the offer, but was not interested. After all, I had a full-time job as the chief of safety and security for Greeley–Evans Schools that needed my attention 40–50 hours a week. Being an elected official had not exactly been on my bucket list. Additionally, I consider myself a people pleaser, and being an elected official did not exactly correlate with pleasing people all of the time. I filled my wife in at lunch, thinking she would be an ally for my "no" decision. Much to the contrary, she thought that my running for city council was a great idea. So much for my strategy.

After a few days of pondering the idea, and talking with the school superintendent at my day job, I reached back out to this group and told them that I had re-considered and would run. After I secured a local political icon to manage my campaign, the venture began. In spite of these developments, I was still worried about how I would balance a busy day job with being a city council member, should I be fortunate enough to prevail. I felt good about my chances in the election. Not only was I working hard, I had been in Greeley all my life and had good name

recognition in Greeley. My two opponents were unknown in the community. I won the 2009 election handily.

When I took office a week after the election, I was still worried about the two-jobs dilemma. Even though our mayor and city council serve only part-time by city charter, I knew better after vetting the job before I ran. To further compound the time concerns, Tom Norton, our mayor at the time, asked me to serve as his mayor pro tem. I did so reluctantly, but would later appreciate the opportunity. After about six months as a Greeley city councilmember, I assessed that I was able to balance and manage both assignments without either job suffering. One of the reasons that I think this worked is because I had to make some trade-offs. I loved to play golf, but gave it up, as I just did not have time anymore. I also stopped reading true crime and mystery novels, as I did not have time for that either. I still read a lot, but as our municipal leaders know, the kind of reading we do is not quite as gripping as a good book.

I was subsequently re-elected in 2013. Eight years on the city council prepared me immensely for what was on the horizon. After one full year of soul searching, I made the decision run for mayor of Greeley in 2017. Mayor Norton was term-limited and encouraged me to succeed him. I had to wrestle with the same question again: If elected, could I function as mayor and in my school district job in a manner where I could give them both the attention that the citizens of Greeley and the school superintendent deserved? Greeley had grown to 108,000 in population and needed more attention than ever. After two years as mayor of Greeley, I was not surprised to learn that the time commitment of mayor was much more than that of a city councilor. In spite of that, I have been able to balance a full-time day job and a part-time job as mayor.

In summary, if your community adheres to a mayor-council form of government with a weak versus strong mayoral component that does not require a full-time mayor, I would encourage you to balance your life and don't let a full-time job get in the way of giving back to your community. Our communities need us!

# The Civic Century: How government can impact communities

By Kristy Judd, Spark the Change Colorado CEO and CSR Solutions of Colorado co-founder, and Erin Atwell, Community Shares of Colorado CEO and CSR Solutions of Colorado co-founder

## The Civic Century – The power of people

We live in a rapidly evolving and challenging age, with our residents seeking to engage solutions to those challenges in new ways. The ways include how they volunteer, where they purchase goods and services, and what they expect from their employers. Just as American advancement skyrocketed in the Industrial Age with machine-powered manufacturing, the dawn in digital technology has created the Information Age. Today individuals, companies, and government are recognizing the power of people to usher in the "Civic Century." People have new energy and powerful motivations, and are seeking real change to create a movement for good. With this opportunity comes a need for workplaces to prepare for this movement. It must be easier to find ways

to plug into a local community – and government can play a large role in this "Civic Century" so that no one is left on the sideline. Every person, every voice, and every action are important and needed. In order to frame and measure community success today, a new tool has emerged: The Civic 50.

## The Civic 50 Colorado – NEW!

Points of Light and True Impact have teamed up with CSR Solutions of Colorado to bring a national civic engagement model to Colorado. According to Points of Light, "It provides visibility and a framework for how local companies can use their employees' time, skills, and other resources to improve the quality of life in our community." This program scores Colorado companies with 15 employees or more on "the four I's": their investment,

integration, institutionalization, and impact in the community. CSR Solutions of Colorado works with a number of cities and towns, and will be using this framework to strengthen their philanthropic efforts. While municipalities cannot compete to be an annual honoree, we encourage you to take advantage of the learnings and best practices.

## The four I's

### Investment

Investment is a measure of how extensively and strategically an organization applies resources to community engagement, including employee time and skills, cash, in-kind giving, and public leadership. Take time to analyze the boards and committees your staff sit on, the donations you make to your community, and what resources and





skill sets you leverage to support the nonprofits who often partner closely with municipalities to secure a safety net and vibrancy for citizens.

### Integration

Integration reviews your community engagement program, support of internal priorities, and how well community support is integrated into your departments. How are you "doing well by doing good"? Think about any volunteering, giving, or general community outreach programs you support. Are they led by one passionate government employee or supported from the top down with cross-departmental support? If you answered the former, how can you move to putting measures in place to ensure the continuation of these programs beyond one employee's time with your municipality?

### Institutionalization

How do your policies, systems, and employee incentives support community programs led by government? Make sure that new employees are aware of the ways they can participate, and remind employees to continue giving and volunteering. You may not have a large (or any) budget for incentives,

but it can be something free like lunch with the mayor, a prime parking spot for a month, or free doughnuts donated by a local business.

### Impact

You are constantly justifying your annual budget by tracking how well your programs support your city. Why not do the same with your giving and volunteering? Reporting your employees' civic engagement beyond their jobs allows the community to see a different side of you and another way you are creating opportunities for all.

Step back and think about how all four I's come together to bring intentionality and long-term impact to the volunteerism and giving evident amongst your staff. Working for their city means that your employees are already invested. Give them an easy way to participate and support their passions.

### Civic Century in our communities

Several municipalities are already modeling this new approach to giving and volunteerism. Below are some examples to inspire and elevate the conversation.

**Giving:** The Denver Employees Charitable Campaign empowered approximately 1,500 city employees to support more than 500 local charities. With the help of a passionate steering committee, employees met charitable options at fairs, championed their favorite ones to fellow employees, and enjoyed a little friendly competition between departments. Events really heated up with a chili cook-off to benefit participating DECC charities. Together they raised almost \$400K.

**Volunteering:** Colorado Housing Finance Authority conducted two volunteer service days in September and October

2019. CHFA staff worked with Extreme Community Makeover, a Colorado nonprofit that helps volunteers partner with local Denver neighborhoods to complete home and neighborhood improvement projects. Teams of CHFA volunteers cleaned alleys and painted over graffiti in Villa Park and West Colfax neighborhoods. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., trash was removed, debris was cleaned up, vines were cut, and walls were cleaned and painted to remove graffiti. Neighbors were thrilled to have their alleys transformed.

### Getting started

You don't have to raise \$1 million or even \$10K your first year. You just have to take a first step. Here are a few ideas to improve your community support:

1. Find your champions — Who is always collecting coats or rounding up cans for food pantries? Use their passion on a volunteer committee to oversee the program and strategy.
2. Share, share, share — Tell employees about volunteer opportunities, bring nonprofits on-site to share their mission and programs, and include updates on employee contributions on your intranet and in your newsletter.
3. Track — It does not have to be fancy or complex, but find a way for your employees to report their volunteering and giving efforts throughout the year. You can create a simple survey and ask employees to fill it out annually. You might be surprised by the variety of altruism on your staff.

CSR Solutions of Colorado is here to support your community engagement efforts as you become part of the Civic Century. You can contact us at [info@csrsolutions.org](mailto:info@csrsolutions.org).



“It is our responsibility to excite those who will next serve our communities.”

## Mentoring our future leaders: The Best and Brightest Program

*By Christy Doon, Colorado Department of Local Affairs South Central Colorado regional manager*

**R**aise your hand if you either found it difficult to enter into the public management profession or stumbled into it by accident. How much better off would you have been if you had been given an opportunity to be mentored by one of the leading municipal or county managers in the state?

As a current local government manager, do you recognize just how much more work could be coordinated and accomplished if you had the budget for just one more staff member who could work across departments or divisions? Do you think about the future of your organization or the profession and wish you could find ways to engage, excite,

lead, and teach the next generation of municipal and county managers?

Did you say, or have your children ever said, the following: "I can't get a job because I don't have the experience, and I can't get the experience because I don't have a job!"

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) has long recognized the importance and the need for professional local government administration in small, rural communities across Colorado. In the mid-1970s, DOLA initiated a circuit-rider program that placed professional managers in small jurisdictions under a shared time arrangement. This program utilized state and local funds and

was extremely successful, oftentimes leading to full-time positions as the needs of communities grew. In some instances, local governments were forced to discontinue participation as declining taxes from the shuttering of traditional extraction industries limited their ability to participate. For some communities, the effects of this step away from professional management took years to counter.

In early 1990, staff at the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver) and DOLA's Division of Local Government met to discuss an exciting opportunity to address the need for administrators in small and rural communities, initially on the Western Slope. At the time, although

communities were beginning to recover financially, there was still an undeniable lack of tax funds from continued depressed economies to increase the number of personnel and an even more undeniable need to find a way to bring professional administrative staff to these communities.

These discussions also included the need for on-the-job training for the future managers of local governments. Times were changing – technology, the increasing complexity of water and wastewater issues, citizen engagement, educating elected officials – were all being tackled by local government managers. Students coming out of universities were struggling to break into the profession and learn those valuable on-the-job skills.

The new Master of Public Administration program offered at Colorado Mesa University and developed by CU Denver was born out of a need to address the daunting administrative burdens being felt by communities at the time, as well as the opportunity to shape the next generation of local government managers. Inexpensive staff costs and on-the-job training would match the formal classroom learning with real-world scenarios and decision making. Letters requesting interest were sent to 39 counties and municipalities on the Western Slope, and 18 jurisdictions took the leap to hire students with limited local government (or even professional) experience, to teach them how to manage communities in Colorado. This two-year pilot program was just the start of a very successful partnership that, to this day, is providing tremendous benefits to the State of Colorado.

The Cathy Shipley Best and Brightest Program places master's degree students in small and/or rural governmental jurisdictions in Colorado for two years. DOLA's Division of Local Government, in partnership with CU Denver's Center for New Directions (Political Science), CU Denver's School of

Public Affairs, and Adams State University, facilitates placement of selected students with the following objectives:

- To provide a cost-effective way to help support the increasing administrative needs of small and/or rural jurisdictions in Colorado
- To provide a unique opportunity for students to complete their graduate degrees while, at the same time, gaining invaluable learning experiences
- To develop potential local government managers
- To provide a way for DOLA to support small and/or rural jurisdictions in meeting their need for administrative staff in the most cost-effective way possible.

DOLA regional managers identify potential jurisdictions and work with local managers to determine possible participation. Due to the in-depth mentoring nature of the program, jurisdictions are carefully selected. Each jurisdiction determines its own job requirements for the student and local government managers develop a work plan and job description as well as a mentorship plan to be used throughout the student's time in the local government. The student who accepts a position may have work responsibilities that range from public works to helping prepare the annual budget and other activities that will help them focus on professional development in a municipal or county organization. Generally, during the final six months, the student will complete their master's project, tailoring it to a specific problem, issue, or need identified with help from the jurisdiction.

Students will have unique learning opportunities as they are exposed to the myriad of public administrative requirements typical of nearly all small and/or rural jurisdictions. As a result of this real working environment, their graduate academic program will no

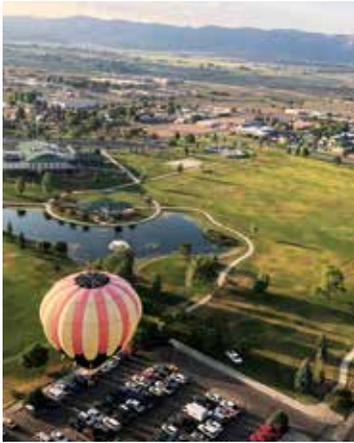
longer be solely a theoretical learning experience. Upon completion of the two-year program, a student will have completed all of the requirements for the master's degree in public administration or political science with emphasis in politics and public policy while, at the same time, having gained two years of invaluable applied experiences.

In 2004, the Best and Brightest Program was recognized by the International City/County Management Association with a Program Excellence Award for Outstanding Partnership: Intergovernmental Cooperation. This award "recognizes outstanding programs developed out of cooperative actions or strategic partnerships between government organizations." Over the past 28 years, county and municipal managers across the state have mentored an estimated 100 students. Former Best and Brightest work for cities, towns, and counties in Colorado, Kansas, and Florida, as well as the Colorado Municipal League, Colorado Counties Inc., and DOLA Division of Local Government. Still others work for nonprofits, have retired, or teach at universities.

As a former Best and Brightest participant and current program manager, I am proud of the role this program plays in bringing new professional managers into our communities. I have seen students rise up to meet the challenges faced by the communities in which they work, and communities lean directly in to help students succeed. This is a program our entire state should be proud of as we reach directly out to those who are ready to lead us into the future. I encourage you to look at our organizations and communities and identify the next leaders. Mentor them, either through a formal program or by finding other ways for them to engage with you and your staff. It is our responsibility to excite those who will next serve our communities.

# A memoir of my internship with Cortez

By Peyton Heitzman, Cortez management intern



I was warned. I was warned that this internship would be done in the blink of an eye. Now it is rapidly coming to an end after nearly two years with the City of Cortez, and there is still so much more to accomplish. I had been living in the Denver metro area for a year and a half when I applied for the New Directions master's program through the University of Colorado Denver and the Best and Brightest internship, but I had known about the program for years. A professor of mine at Fort Lewis College had taught courses for New Directions when they were offered in Durango and encouraged me to apply.

Entering the program, I had envisioned myself becoming a city planner. As an optimistic student, I had hoped the combination of the program's courses and the internship would teach me the role of planning in environmental sustainability and how communities were addressing pollution and climate change. Additionally, I was interested in learning how the planning profession manages growth in a manner that is socially equitable to underserved low-income and minority populations. These interests stemmed from courses taken during my undergraduate degree.

As an intern, I have had the opportunity to participate in projects that directly address these concerns. One such project included administering a grant application for the city's very first universal electric vehicle charging station. The grant was successful, and we are now in the process of contracting the services for construction and installation. Following the drought of 2018, the city has held numerous public awareness campaigns around water conservation and has discussed long-range planning as water demands become exacerbated from increased temperatures and growing populations. Equitable planning has taken shape in Cortez through the design of an 11-acre park that will provide recreational opportunities to an underserved population within the city. I have also participated in grant writing and administration to fund this park.

The past two years have been full of many other diverse experiences. From running a youth commission to sitting on regional boards such as Region 9 Economic Development District to participating in public meetings for the adoption of a new land use code, no two days have been alike. The most rewarding experiences have come from time spent with the city's dedicated and knowledgeable staff. With the help of our airport operations technician, I transformed from intern to exterminator and hunted prairie dogs at the Cortez Municipal Airport as a matter of public safety. On an early morning in July, I put on my figurative refuse hat and a neon safety vest and enjoyed pulling and pushing levers to dispose of garbage on the back of the city's bright yellow refuse truck. These adventures, along with other shadowing experiences, have developed my appreciation for each cog that make up the gearing of city services.

Though there have been many lessons learned over the past two years, I know with certainty that a career in local government will lead to a lifetime of learning, and I look forward to it.



# Common traps and best practices for effective planning

By Andy Hill, Colorado Department of Local Affairs Community Development Office director

The pace of local government moves quickly and the challenges never stop. Having worked in the Division of Local Government for more than 20 years supporting local comprehensive plans through grants and technical advice, I have seen that it is easy to fall into a reactive mode, tackling issues a few at a time without a cohesive, intentional direction. I have been inspired by leaders who carve out time to become informed, create a comprehensive plan, and focus resources to implement a comprehensive plan. This process takes considerable time, so it is easy to fall into common traps along the way that can hinder progress or stop it altogether. Effective elected boards and planning commissions help to avoid these traps.

## **Avoid rushing forward. Be informed and build relationships.**

The first responsibility of every public official is to become informed about current and future conditions. Demographic trends and projections shed light on issues leaders might otherwise be blind to seeing. Consider the data to understand what is happening in your community and the trends that will shape it into the future. Talk with staff, service providers, business leaders, and others to gain perspective. Many communities are planning for an aging demographic as well as ensuring that they have sufficient early childhood education facilities. How are your development patterns contributing to challenges such as obesity (and thus, health care costs), housing affordability, water availability, energy consumption, and business health? Before any planning effort begins, it is critical to have a clear understanding so plans can reflect reality. While you are learning, take time to *build relationships* along the way. Regularly check in

with your partners in the community to avoid being blinded by your biases. This work builds not only awareness but also trust — trust in you as an official who listens, and trust in the process. (Often people do not engage in government because they lack the confidence that anything will come from their efforts.) This relationship building is often the most important work of a public official, but it lacks deadlines and urgency, so it can be difficult to make time to do it. Finally, when it is time to engage in long-range planning (such as a comprehensive plan) or make a controversial decision, you can rely on your partners with whom you've built relationships to meaningfully engage in the discussion, and you can rely on the understanding you have gained to guide your steps.

### **Don't jump to solutions. Create a shared vision first.**

All the grants, planning-related programs, and resources available from government, nonprofits, and foundations — well, they can be overwhelming. Consider all the announcements of grants and resources that came through your email inbox last month. When our communities need so much, why would we not want to sign up for every possible resource? Many well-intentioned leaders and staff seek several grants at once and join myriad new initiatives and programs, but this approach often scatters limited resources and depletes capacity, making problems worse over time. Instead, communities can benefit from a comprehensive plan — a shared vision of the future, a common understanding of assets and challenges, and an action plan that lays out the steps to achieve the vision. Once a comprehensive plan is in place and stakeholders in the community agree to the goals and objectives, it becomes easier to know which resources to pursue and when.

A comprehensive plan not only identifies what we need, but clarifies our vision of who we are and what we have. For most

of us, it is clear to see what's broken or missing and difficult to see what is working well. Take care to identify and build on your community's assets. Historic buildings can be demolished, parks can become abandoned, unique and important businesses can fold. It is easier to keep these positive elements of your community thriving than it is to replace them after they are lost. Identify, embrace, and protect what is special about your community in your long-range planning, and build on these assets.

What does an effective process look like? The planning commission and the elected board work together to develop a comprehensive plan. Typically, the planning commission leads the effort, but without some strategic guidance in the beginning and check-in communication throughout, the planning commission can be flying blind and risks ultimately adopting a plan the elected board will simply reject or avoid implementing.

Why is it so important for the elected board to be involved at all? While the planning commission has a depth of knowledge about land use planning in the community, the elected board has a broader view. The planning commission benefits from understanding the board's strategic direction; they must do their best to ensure that the comprehensive plan process engages the community to address those goals. Together and with other partners, the important work of implementation begins and the team approach remains important.

### **Avoid skipping to the next thing. Focus instead on implementation.**

When all the meetings and hearings are over and the plan is adopted, it is time to take a breath ... and then start implementing! Naturally, community leaders must continue onward with ever-changing demands, but it is also important to dedicate the resources and time to implement the comprehensive

plan. Your plan represents the community's voice on what the future will look like, and by adopting the plan, the municipality is committed to doing all it can to realize that vision for the future. The board and planning commission must modify regulations and incentive programs, adjust budgets, and refine the capital improvement plan to align with the new comprehensive plan (otherwise, it is just another plan on the shelf).

Finally, to avoid losing support for the work before it can even get off the ground, it is important to set the municipality up for success by ensuring quick, visible "wins" (i.e., completed projects) right away and throughout the implementation timeline. This helps keep up the community support and momentum needed to implement the plan. Don't forget to update the community on the progress made through metrics, photos, and celebrations and demonstrations of appreciation to the partners who played a role. Elected and appointed leaders can be quite effective by relating projects and priorities back to "what we heard" in the comprehensive plan process.

At the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), we see communities invest tremendous time and resources to update comprehensive plans. The outcome is a communication tool that helps the community articulate and focus on its shared vision for the future instead of expending all its resources on addressing individual competing interests. Best of all, once you have a plan that reflects the community's priorities, you can start moving fast. When you have a solid action plan, you are able to take advantage of opportunities that align with your plan and often pass by quickly, and you are more competitive because your plan demonstrates commitment and readiness, which is what funders (like DOLA) look for in projects.

# Research corner

By Melissa Mata, CML municipal research analyst

Illustration by Courtney Forehand, CML training and marketing specialist

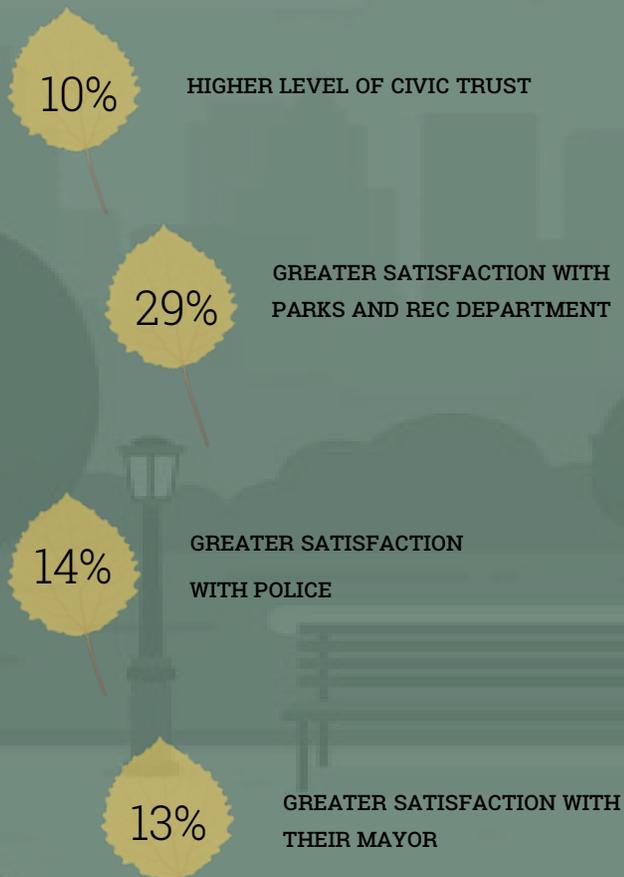
Source: Assembly Civic Engagement Survey, 2nd Edition, 2016

Assembly is a pioneering effort to understand how place-based design informs a range of civic engagement outcomes. The initiative is being led by the Center for Active Design (CfAD), with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and a diverse cross-section of expert advisors.

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN IMPACTS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

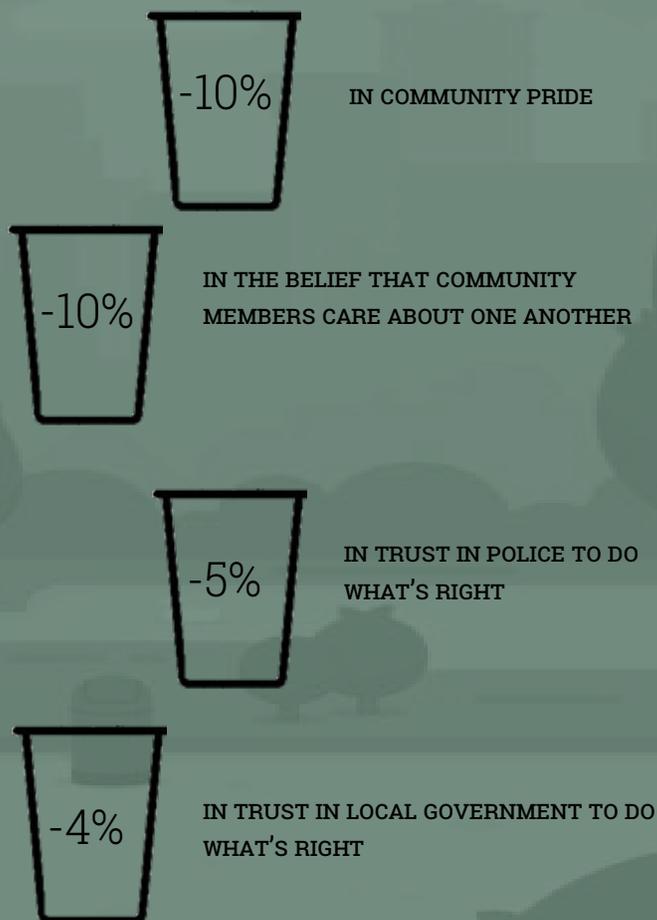
Intentional place-based design is associated with higher levels of civic trust, resident satisfaction with their local governments, and stewardship of the public realm. Well-maintained public parks and inviting civic buildings set the stage for increased socialization between neighbors and strangers and encourage participation in public life.

### PEOPLE WHO LIVE NEAR A POPULAR PARK REPORT:



### MAINTENANCE MATTERS.

### PEOPLE WHO REPORT LITTER IS COMMON IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT:



Park access and conditions are also important. Recommendations to increase park use include ensuring the amenities are well-maintained, implementing traffic calming measures and pedestrian improvements, and installing positive messaging throughout the park.

To mitigate negative impacts, implement design and maintenance strategies to reduce litter — such as visible trash and recycling receptacles, frequent garbage collection, and regular street cleaning.

# Bringing veterans into local service

By Darrin Tangeman, Woodland Park city manager

The concept of the Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship (VLGMF) began in 2015 as a response to what was viewed as an untapped pool of talent leaving military service, along with the unfavorable job market for transitioning veterans in local government.

Fountain City Manager Scott Trainor and retiring U.S. Army officer Darrin Tangeman wanted to create a mutually beneficial program that would allow veterans to apply their broad knowledge and experience from the military to the local government environment. The program also would give veterans valuable experience and knowledge that would assist in translating their existing leadership and management skills to the local government language. Above all, local governments would have the opportunity to see the practical value of veteran leadership, education, and management experience firsthand within their organizations and communities.

The program also grew from the frustration that Tangeman personally experienced in his seven-month local government job search. It was not until he spoke to other veterans seeking careers in local government that he found he was not alone. Many of these veterans were frustrated that their decades of public administration experience, graduate degrees, and real-life experience working stateside and overseas to improve municipal governance, security, and community engagement were going unacknowledged by local governments and recruiting firms when they applied for jobs. One of the few ways to break these barriers, stereotypes, and misconceptions of military veterans was to give them an opportunity to serve with local governments and demonstrate their value before they left the service.

Tangeman immediately went to work, coordinating with Fort Carson Garrison Command to gain approval for the VLGMF to be included in the existing Career Skills Program established by the

Department of Defense (DoD) to link transitioning service members with civilian training opportunities. After briefing the program to Fort Carson Garrison Command, and drafting and signing a formal agreement with Installation Management Command (IMCOM), the program gained final approval in May 2016.

As part of this formal partnership, the VLGMF was established as a 16- to 20-week DoD-approved Career Skills Program that provides transitioning service members with management training and hands-on experience in the local government environment, with the goal of preparing them for smooth transitions into local government careers. The program is intended to match eligible and selected fellows with surrounding local government sponsors based on skills, education, experience, and the preferences of both parties.

The program traditionally is established within commuting distance of major military installations, but recent policy changes by the DoD will allow for greater flexibility for remote local governments to provide housing or lodging during the duration of the fellowship. For those local governments that are located outside commuting distance from a military installation, the Career Skills Program is waiting for implementation guidance to define how local governments will be allowed to provide housing/lodging accommodations for a fellow working in the community. As soon as this guidance is available, the policy will be published on the program website so that local governments can begin making arrangements for these accommodations.

Another benefit for local government sponsors is that they incur no cost or liability as a result of the program's agreement with the DoD military installation. Each fellow's salary, workers' compensation, and benefits are paid for by the DoD during the entire 16- to 20-week fellowship.

The program is also grateful for being adopted in 2018 by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) as an official ICMA program of record with a permanent budget and nationwide program manager.

Engaging Local Government Leaders and Colorado City/County Management Association (CCCMA) also lend sponsorship and support. These professional organizations have provided annual memberships, training, mentoring, networking, and coaching benefits to all participants in the program. In particular, the ICMA Local Government 101 Certificate Program allows for fellows to learn about the local government side of leadership, management, service delivery, budgeting, and human resources, and to apply those lessons learned while serving in the fellowship.

In addition to serving all of the local governments and communities of Colorado, the program has expanded as an ICMA program of record nationwide. ICMA is proud to have contributed to the professional development and employment opportunities of hundreds of veterans over the last four years, including seven city managers hired in the last two years. ICMA has also established a nationwide affinity group for veterans in local government to support veterans in local government and a goal of establishing the ICMA Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) in 2020.

The program has established three cohorts per calendar year for a period of 16 weeks each. Upcoming Cohort 20-01 is scheduled for Jan. 6 through April 24, with an application deadline of Dec. 6. Cohort 20-02 will be held May 11 through Aug. 24, 2020, with applications due on April 19, 2020.

*If local governments are interested in participating as a sponsor for one of the upcoming cohorts, contact Darrin Tangeman at [dtangeman@ICMA.org](mailto:dtangeman@ICMA.org) or visit [ICMA.org/vlgmf](http://ICMA.org/vlgmf).*



## Compliance enforcement as a path to engagement

By Rachel Snyder, Branson mayor

Tiny, rural Branson, Colorado, population 55-ish, was between a rock and a hard place. We had been out of compliance with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) water system regulations for about six years. The current town administration — all volunteers juggling myriad personal, professional, and community hats — was displaying a collective case of "Water Compliance Issues Fatigue Syndrome."

There was no imminent health crisis. No boil orders. No threats of shutdown. Our natural spring water is appropriately chlorinated before it enters town storage tanks. It is as safe and delicious as it has been for generations, and we've got the healthy, hardy elders to prove it! We get dinged now and then for infractions and we take the steps needed to get back on track as best we possibly can.

Truth be told, though, ever since the state reclassified our source water

springs in 2013 as "Ground Water Under the Direct Influence of Surface Water" (GWUDI) — necessitating a filtration upgrade — the best efforts undertaken by previous councils had fallen short. Replacement costs for inefficient, disposable filters were out of control. The town applied for agency grants but didn't make the cut. We were led toward million-dollar proposals far outside the reach of what our remote ranching community could handle.

When a state reclassification specialist suggested we might have a 50/50 chance of being reclassified back to Ground Water via a rigorous, six-month testing regimen, we took the gamble. From April through September 2018, our volunteer water commissioner took twice-weekly readings. Each month, raw water samples went to the lab. Every other month, he spent a night in his pickup at the base of the mesa, protecting samples from curious wildlife. Unfortunately, our hopes were dashed anew just before Christmas 2018. Based on a minute amount of bacteria, our water sources are still (and perhaps forever) classified as GWUDI.

With the more stringent GWUDI filtration requirements staring us in the face, we headed back to the drawing board. From the get-go, council established two ground rules. One, we would not, could not, travel the conventional, high-dollar

route to compliance, and two, we would not, could not, saddle our current and future residents with crushing debt service.

In an inspired moment, Water Commissioner Brad Doherty called Jack Barker, CEO of Rocky Ford-based Innovative Water Technologies, Inc. (IWT). Next thing we knew, Barker was in Branson (a mere 120 rural miles), touring our filtration facility, reviewing water data, and outlining a promising solution.

On the heels of that contact, Colorado Rural Water Association (CRWA) circuit riders Scott Thomas and Peter Huisman rolled into town with little notice and ended up spending two hours with me as I explained our conundrum, handed them pages of water data, and peppered them with questions.

With these strong allies in our corner, we mounted a fundraising campaign. Our \$100,000 goal would cover the cost of a water treatment renovation designed and built by a homegrown Colorado company (IWT) using USA-made components. IWT's turnkey proposal eschewed consumables and relied on abundant wind and solar resources to run the system. Compared to a \$206,300 proposal put forth to solve the same issue five years ago, our path was clear.

Some scoffed at the seemingly grandiose plans. We lacked the necessary financial resources and were



already paying down a USDA loan that accompanied a \$300,000 water-related grant back in 2005. Many of our 29 water customers pay \$20 a month for up to 2,000 gallons of water. Even so, we have fixed-income residents who find those rates challenging.

There might be two things that everyone in Branson, Colorado, can agree on. First, our precious drinking water is the very lifeblood of our school and our community. And second, it is a lot easier to get big jobs done when neighbors pitch in to help. Our plan was straightforward: share the truth of our story, acknowledge that we simply could not put together \$100,000 on our own, and ask folks to help secure the future of our tiny town. In so doing, we touched the tender spots that people have in their hearts for a vanishing rural America.

Just 14 days after its April 3 launch, the Town of Branson's Water Worth Protecting Fundraising Campaign glided past the \$10,000 mark. A second milestone was reached when additional gifts totaling \$6,500 poured in within less than 24 hours. The story of Branson's quest to upgrade its drinking water system to meet state mandates had touched a collective nerve.

Donors had the opportunity to share memories of Branson and pay tribute to ancestors, family, or friends. We basked in notes sent online or to the post office.

"My family left Branson when I was 16 in 1942, but it has always been my hometown," wrote one. "Branson is one of my favorite places to come to rest and release. I love the clean air, the views, the wildlife and the kind people who live there!" said another. A rare tribute to "the new Town Council for taking positive action" was a breath of fresh air.

Our high-end donors included Century Savings and Loan (Trinidad), San Isabel Electric Association, Branson School Board RE-82, Southern Colorado Livestock Association, and three of our heritage ranch families.

The *Colorado Sun* spread our story statewide in May with an in-depth article about Branson's water woes and our journey to compliance, describing the piece as "a captivating tale about the resilient Las Animas County border town, where the electricity and cell service are sketchy, but the water always flows."

By July, our self-created crowdfunding campaign had raised \$30,000 and council took steps to leverage those funds to maximum benefit. We applied for a DOLA Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance grant with the expectation of using our raised funds as our match. As backup, we also submitted a grant application to a private Colorado foundation.

In October, we received a DOLA grant award and were heartened to learn that

the inclusion of renewable energy components in the IWT design netted us a larger-than-anticipated award of \$67,500 plus a reduction in our required match from \$30,000 down to \$22,500. As a result, we stepped back from the foundation grant, leaving the door open for future possibilities. The "little town that could" prevailed in a crowded and highly competitive field of applicants — becoming the "little town that DID!"

"The Branson model" is no magic formula. It is based on never saying never, relying on your gut instincts, and trusting your fellow officials to do the right thing for all the right reasons — even if you do not always see eye to eye. It is about sharing your story authentically and often and to anyone who will listen, and reaching out to collaborate with others who you once figured you could do just fine without. It is about maintaining your optimism while you prepare for the possibility of the unexpected.

Funny how a story that begins with an enforcement order can lead a community to new and deeper levels of engagement — even if your local culture is built on rugged self-determination and asking for help is not always easy. If it can happen in a tiny, remote, windswept outpost like Branson, Colorado, it can happen anywhere.

# Volunteerism and the road to recovery in Lyons

By Joycelyn Fankhauser,  
Lyons resident

Lyons, Colorado, a small community of about 2,000 residents, sits just into the foothills between Estes Park and Boulder. The greater Lyons area expands into the canyons outside of town. In September 2013, it began raining and did not stop for more than a week. Soon, more than 17 inches of rain fell in the mountains west of town. Two rivers flow in those canyons, merging into one in Lyons. The flooding all along those rivers, in both canyons, and into town was devastating.

The entire town, and the communities to the west, were cut off from the rest of the world by the water. Due to the topography of the mountains, community members were separated from each other and divided into six "islands." After the first day, utilities were lost and cell service was cut off. Each island pulled together to take care of each other; residents relied on each other. During this time, neighbors pulled out their grills, their best foods from their freezers, and good wine to host all their old and new friends in support of each other.

Even though this was a scary and very difficult time for many who were flooded or lost their homes, it was also a time when you saw people be selfless and caring with

each other. Those who had generators opened their doors to allow cell phones to be charged in hopes of getting service soon. The local grocery store opened its doors and offered all the food and water in the store to people who worked to help mitigate the flooding. The local coffee shop organized a gathering of neighbors to help everyone to support each other. A longtime resident and owner of an excavating company worked tirelessly to shore up a bridge – which later became the only bridge that could be used to evacuate residents in that part of town.

As the waters receded a bit, all residents were asked to leave, not knowing when they would be allowed to return. This created a sense of sadness in the air. We all learned that the water, electric, and wastewater systems were destroyed or damaged and it was unknown when they would be repaired. We all left, going to different towns, staying with friends, in hotels, or in rented houses and apartments.

The Lifebridge Church, just outside of Lyons, was set up as a shelter. It was also a place where the community came together. Each week, the church opened its doors to a community meeting. Each week, we were able to again come together and get updates on progress and resources, but more importantly see and support each other.

Soon we could return to our homes. A checkpoint was established at the entrance on the one road into town. With a special permit, you were allowed to go back in. The devastation was surreal. More than 200 homes were damaged or destroyed, with many more just





outside of the town limits. All the businesses were closed. The town staff set up shop at the elementary school, as the town hall was flooded. Volunteers came and helped move what they could, or sat at the entrance and answered questions as best they could.

At this time, the Salvation Army brought a food truck to town. Soon people brought picnic tables and a tent. This became a gathering place for all. We could get a meal, have a cup of hot coffee, and see each other. It helped us be reassured that we were still a community. We might not have all lived together at that time, but we knew it would happen again.

Everyone started to help each other with whatever was needed. Homes that were not damaged had to be winterized. Some needed space to store the belongings they could save from their damaged homes. Volunteers set up a small Disaster Assistance Center in the elementary school gym, offering items of comfort and needed materials to begin cleaning up our town.

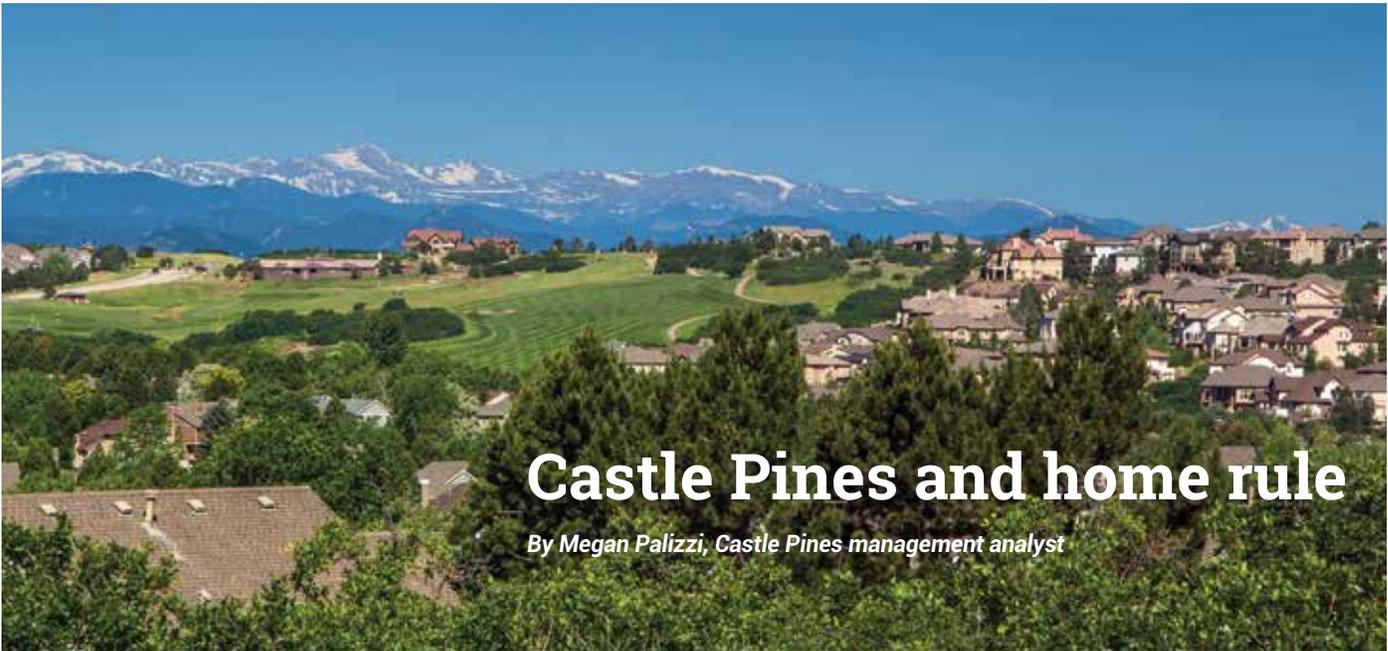
The town appointed a leader, Edward Kean, to lead the effort to help residents clean out and rebuild their homes. Without his leadership and organization, we would not have been able to prioritize who needed help first. Kean, with Jeremy Matsen at his side, worked tirelessly to organize local volunteers and volunteer groups from all over the country. They were able to assist residents in using their Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds combined with donated labor to start to plan and eventually rebuild.

Lyons Volunteers was birthed out of this effort. Now a 501c3, Lyons

Volunteers was able to vet people who wanted to help, take work orders from residents, and help begin the work that was needed. A website was quickly created where messaging was sent to all. It had a tab where volunteers could register and a person needing help could request it. Soon hundreds of people began to register to help. Messaging was sent about where to report for their assignments; then, along with a team leader, they began to do projects every day. Some projects required skilled labor and others did not. Some people helped clean items that could be saved, while others began to tear out water-soaked carpet.

A human services group was soon formed. Resources were found, and residents were informed at the community meeting where they could get help. One of the biggest projects that this group took on was to contact every single resident in town and help them register with FEMA. They also followed up to explain the Small Business Administration disaster loan application process and the deadlines associated with it. Volunteers went door to door answering questions and leaving information. Research was done with the voter registration records to find those who were renters in town. This ensured that they were given needed information as well.

Volunteers, and the organization of volunteers, were an essential part of the recovery in Lyons. Neighbors were able to help each other and create a sense of community that we all thought we had lost due to this devastating flood. We were LYONS STRONG!



# Castle Pines and home rule

*By Megan Palizzi, Castle Pines management analyst*

May 14, 2019, was a milestone day for the City of Castle Pines as it became the newest home rule municipality in the State of Colorado. Nearly a year prior, the city initiated the process to move from statutory to home rule status based on results from a community survey conducted in June 2018.

Only 11 years old, the City of Castle Pines is facing unique challenges. City staff comprises only eight employees, meaning that every service provided to residents is contracted. As Castle Pines grows and matures, staff and council are actively working to integrate community values, create a sense of place, and encourage pride in being a Castle Pines resident. All of these ambitious goals drove the initial decision to survey community members and eventually become a home rule municipality.

Following the survey outreach in June, an election in November 2018 prompted the formation of a Home Rule Charter Commission. Residents voted to approve 10 commissioners during this election; City Council interviewed and appointed three other members. The Commission,

with strong staff support, began drafting the city's Home Rule Charter shortly after, working from November 2018 to January 2019 to complete it. The Charter was officially approved by voters in a special election in May 2019.

The decision to become a home rule municipality was supplemented by community support; it was not just a council- or staff-driven priority. Castle Pines residents supported the home rule initiative by an overwhelming majority of 77%. During the initial survey outreach, many residents were un- or misinformed about what home rule status entailed, so emphasizing education in the public engagement process proved to be the key focus leading to the successful ballot measure.

As part of the public outreach, staff chose to communicate about the home rule transition through an online platform called Engage Castle Pines, hosted by EngagementHQ software. This provided community members with access to information about the Charter Commission, advantages of home rule, a timeline of the process from start to finish, answers to common questions,

and more. Residents could actively follow the progress of the initiative, engage in virtual conversation with other community members, and provide feedback to staff and council.

While there were many reasons to make this transition to home rule, one of the main drivers was to begin direct collection of local sales tax. Statutory cities and towns acquire their sales tax indirectly, after the state collects and remits it, so this meant that Castle Pines was not receiving all of its sales tax revenue. One of the largest advantages of home rule was that the city could collect this revenue without interference. Official collection of local and online sales tax will begin Jan. 1, 2020.

Many other benefits exist surrounding Castle Pines' status as a home rule city, such as greater flexibility and clarity in adopting regulations related to streets and traffic management, as well as zoning and development. For a rapidly growing community, this serves as a major advantage in effective and efficient decision making.

While the city is required to draft various ordinances to bring the municipal code



up to compliance with the Home Rule Charter, the Charter also empowers the city to create local ordinances that reflect values of the community. This reinforces pride in being a self-governing and self-regulating entity with increased autonomy from the state. The city is still governed by many state laws and statutes, but greater ownership and control exist to tackle local issues. This sentiment of pride in self-governance was present not only for city staff and council, but for residents as well. The community has been encouraging the city to develop and establish itself as a unique entity, so home rule was a key mechanism in

these efforts. Castle Pines is not only the newest home rule municipality in Colorado, but overall the youngest city in the state. In the initial discussions surrounding formal incorporation in 2008, the intent to establish home rule was always present, but it simply never came to fruition. Initiating and successfully accomplishing the transition was a major success for staff, council, and members of the community as they became aware of the benefits of being Castle Pines residents. The immediate and far future is bright for Castle Pines as a home rule

municipality. Staff and council are hard at work continuing this momentum to build community and reinforce pride in our city. Local sales tax revenue will be a major asset in the annual budget process to better allocate resources toward programs and services that have tangible impacts on the community. Holding a self-governing status empowers staff and council to take ownership of and address local concerns with increased accountability. Creating the community of Castle Pines is not an overnight process, but the journey to home rule is certainly a step in the right direction.



*Castle Pines Home Rule Charter Commission.*

# Events bring communities together, drive visitor spending

By Abby Leeper, Colorado Tourism Office communications manager

Events and festivals are an excellent way to bring communities closer together with food, fun, and adventures. Typically targeted to the surrounding community, local events can see a lot of familiar faces and experience similar sales, year after year. However, there is an opportunity at play that is not always explored. If event organizers extend their reach, these same events are a great way to bolster the experience of an out-of-town visitor while boosting ticket sales and the local economy. It is a chance to celebrate what makes the particular area so special — and it gives the host community the chance to differentiate itself with visitors and, hopefully, entice them to return in the future.

The Chile and Frijoles Festival in Pueblo is a prime example of how a community opened its doors and leveraged an event to drive a substantial economic impact. Held in September, this annual festival celebrated its 25th year in 2019 and drew an estimated 150,000 people to downtown Pueblo over the course of just three days. Events like this are an economic driver, not just for the community, but also for the region, as visitors book hotels and other excursions in advance to coincide with the festival. This past year alone, the festival added \$4 million to the local economy. The Chile and Frijoles Festival has become a staple in the community and welcomes returning visitors year after year, and gives the community something to be proud of in the process.

## Colorado Tourism Office supports events

Events and festivals can be strong economic drivers for communities throughout all four corners of the state. The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) recognizes this potential and offers support for communities with events and festivals, whether the event is a full-fledged community mainstay or still an ideating brainchild.

The CTO public relations and marketing programs are always looking for new happenings across Colorado to promote. We encourage all host communities to submit a free event listing for inclusion on *Colorado.com*. Creating a listing takes a matter of minutes and is a great way to get your event in front of visitors looking for fun things to do across the state. Plus, we use the information, images, and events listed on the *Colorado.com* website to include in our news releases, social media posts, media pitches, and newsletters.

In addition to marketing, social, and public relations promotion, the CTO also provides event sponsorships. Each year, the CTO sponsors selected major events that magnify our "Come to Life" brand, drive economic impact from traveler spending, and/or provide paid or earned media exposure that enhances awareness of Colorado as a world-class destination. Past sponsorship recipients include the Colorado Classic, Grandoozy, and Slow Food Nations.

The CTO also sponsors selected annual rural tourism conferences to bolster tourism development efforts and

support education and training opportunities for tourism partners across Colorado. Sponsorships are available for annual, pre-existing conferences as opposed to first-time conferences, and the conference must provide education or training opportunities for rural members of the Colorado tourism industry. In years past, the CTO has sponsored the SoCo Tourism Summit, San Luis Valley Tourism Summit, and the AgriSummit in Salida.

## Destination Development

Perhaps the most robust resource for communities seeking event support is the CTO's Destination Development program and Colorado Rural Academy for Tourism (CRAFT) program. The Destination Development program supports Colorado's rural tourism partners and the creation of new tourism assets in less-visited regions of Colorado with grants and educational opportunities. The goal of the program is to increase traveler spending through the creation and branding of new traveler experiences. This in turn empowers rural destination partners to develop, brand, and promote new or existing tourism assets.

The CRAFT program provides support and education for rural communities on how to build tourism into an economic development strategy. The program includes the following opportunities to our industry partners free of charge:

- **CRAFT Studio 101** — Broad, comprehensive tourism education and training for rural communities or

regions on how to build tourism into an economic development strategy.

- **CRAFT Studio 201** – Provides customized support for communities or regions wishing to advance a specific tourism-related goal or strategy.
- **CRAFT Workshops** – Intensive training for communities or regions wishing to advance a tourism-related strategy relating to specific industry segments. Workshops are

offered for marketing and social media, culinary and agritourism, heritage and cultural tourism, outdoor adventure tourism, cycling tourism, and sustainable tourism.

- **CRAFT Mentor** – Provides up to 50 hours of mentoring for organizations or tourism-related businesses wishing to advance a specific tourism-related goal or strategy.

Several communities that have participated in CRAFT have identified events and festivals as a way to create new tourism offerings for travelers and drive economic impact. Here are a few examples of communities that have leveraged the CRAFT program to develop new events and/or improve existing ones.

## Moffat County



Moffat County participated in CRAFT Studio 101 in 2018 and, according to Tom Kleinshnitz, head of Visit Moffat County, the program generated positive conversation in the community around tourism and visitor readiness. As a result of participating in CRAFT Studio 101, Moffat County developed and branded May 4–11, 2019, as "Colorado's Great Northwest Summer Kickoff."

This event series was designed to include experiences that are authentic representations of Moffat County's cultural, historical, recreational, and natural resources, and comprised 13 events in total. The series included the 60th Annual Great American Horse Drive and Maybell Heritage Days, the Sand Wash Enduro off-road bike race, and the Where the Hell Is Maybell bike event, to name a few.

With the implementation funding from CRAFT, Moffat County produced and purchased a professional outdoor

display complete with interpretive materials, and was able to create a robust social media campaign. This campaign drove Moffat County's Facebook likes up by 21% in an eight-week time frame. Moffat County also utilized the free service offered by the CTO and created a comprehensive community listing on *Colorado.com* which drove click-throughs and referrals to *VisitMoffatCounty.com* during the event week and beyond.

After a successful inauguration, Moffat County looks forward to bringing back Colorado's Great Northwest Summer Kickoff for a sophomore year in 2020. Moffat County is now participating in CRAFT 201 and the Colorado Tourism Office looks forward to seeing what Moffat County comes up with next.



## La Junta



Another example of CRAFT inspiring an event is the community of La Junta. La Junta participated in CRAFT Studio 101 in 2019 and, according to Pam Denahy of Visit La Junta, one of the primary trends that emerged from the program was the opportunity to promote the yearly fall tarantula migration in Southeast Colorado.

To leverage this annual scientific phenomenon, Visit La Junta created a landing page on the topic and was able to generate media coverage both with in-state and national media. In fact, Gov. Jared Polis even took his



family on a tour this past fall. To continue the momentum generated in CRAFT Studio 101, the community is creating a local working group that will include Visit La Junta, the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and others, including Colorado entomologists. A primary goal of the working group is to create a tarantula festival to bring together those who want to learn more about these spiders and see them in action.

## Ouray

Not only has CRAFT inspired communities to create new events, the program has galvanized event organizers to develop new components to enhance current ones.

Event organizers in Ouray were able to leverage learnings from their participation in a CRAFT workshop on sustainability to advance the efforts of the FJ Summit.

This annual summer event brings together off-road enthusiasts for organized trail runs, classes, vendor stations, and catered dinners to build enthusiasm around the sport of four-wheeling.

FJ Summit is highly community-driven, with a significant philanthropic component that includes an ongoing scholarship fund as well as annual donations to Emergency Medical Services, the Volunteer Fire Department, Ouray School, and other community groups. While many sustainable elements were

already in place at FJ Summit, including clinics on how to be a good steward in the backcountry, event organizer Beth Bridges took things a step further this past year and drew inspiration from the CRAFT workshop on sustainability to organize a "Trail Trash" competition for the 2019 event.

According to Bridges, the rules of the contest were to see who could pick up the most trash that was on the ground in the backcountry on each day of the summit. Participants would bring back the trash and it was weighed and recorded. The team who gathered the most trash at the end of the summit would win the "trasharoo," an embroidered spare-tire cover. Over the course of the competition, Trail Trash participants collected a total of 78 pounds of trash. Now, that is something visitors and community members alike can rally behind.

To learn more about how the Colorado Tourism Office can support your event and/or your community, visit [industry.colorado.com](http://industry.colorado.com) or contact Abby Leeper at [abby.leeper@state.co.us](mailto:abby.leeper@state.co.us).

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## Census 2020

By Lily Griego, U.S. Census Bureau partnership coordinator

The 2020 United States Census data determines representation in the house of representatives and the distribution of \$675 billion, annually; each based on the population count taken as part of the mandate of the U. S. Constitution to enumerate our country every 10 years.

To secure a complete and accurate count, we hire people to serve their country through operations, partnership, office staff, and field staff, otherwise known as census takers. It is a huge undertaking all in service to our country, our state, and our cities, towns, and neighbors. We are currently accepting applications to fill hundreds of thousands of jobs to enumerate our country, including Colorado communities, beginning in April 2020.

For those who work in local government, you are already demonstrating a commitment to the people whom you serve every day at work. Thank you for all you do every day. For those who are elected to office, your constituents and staff members are also counting on you to lead in a manner that seeks to create a better community for future generations.

Forming, joining, and participating in a Complete Count Committee (CCC) does all of this! Our team continues to train CCCs across Colorado and the nation. The training is fun and valuable. We share how census data is around people every day and why an accurate count is important for every community.

The goal of the partnership program is creating pathways into all local communities to answer that question

with the same answer, federal funding, political power, and redistricting in a manner that speaks to each community in their language and addressing their concerns. And yet the answer is the same in each community: participate, respond, be counted.

In short, our team seeks to answer a simple question: Why does the census matter to me? Yet, seeking higher response rates and the answer to this question presents challenges when we acknowledge that folks may not have the information that motivates them to participate.

**Who benefits from Census?** Everyone does. Federal funding reaches local communities through a variety of programs, such as roads, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children's



Health Insurance Program, housing, Medicaid, Direct Student Loans, Pell Grants, K-12 and Higher Education, Title I schools, and the Community Development Block Grant. Programs that directly benefit families and young children are also impacted, such as National School Lunch program, Head Start, Low-income Energy Assistance Program, and Child Adoption services. Funding will benefit rural and urban communities, seniors, children and families, businesses, nonprofits, and governments.

**How can you help?** You can share our goal of increased self-response rates. If your staff is already buried in work and cannot bear to do one more thing, please read on! The U.S. Census Partnership team in Colorado is here to help you with timeline information, technical criteria on how the census will be conducted, and materials to educate your community with tools to identify demographics in your community on [census.gov/ROAM](https://census.gov/ROAM).

Some communities have the resources to create or reproduce our materials to connect with community members and some don't have any resources in terms of staff or financial ability. The Census has taken all of this into consideration to provide materials in various languages to either reproduce or put into direct use. Along with materials, social media is a fantastic tool available to all.

**What are the messages?** The Census is important, safe, easy and accessible to all Coloradans. We have a partner portal page ([2020census.gov/en/partners.html](https://2020census.gov/en/partners.html)) with resources to help convey this message at [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov). The

Census is important because it determines distribution of \$675 billion annually and political representation in the House of Representatives. The census data will also be used to determine any redistricting in Colorado, beginning in 2021.

The Census is safe, because the U.S. Census Bureau will never share personal individual information with any other agency ([2020census.gov/en/data-protection.html](https://2020census.gov/en/data-protection.html)). The census data will be released to the White House in December 2020, in aggregate form only. Title 13 of the U.S. Code protects information gathered by the Census. Employees conducting the Census take an oath for life to protect this information. The Census is easy, with fewer than 10 questions ([2020census.gov/en/about-questions.html](https://2020census.gov/en/about-questions.html)), takes less than 10 minutes to complete, and is accessible to everyone.

**This is a historic Census, as it is the first ever available online.** We offer four options to participate: online, by phone, by mail (with the form provided by the U.S. Census Bureau), or in person with an enumerator (census taker). We highly encourage everyone to self-respond early. The form will be offered in English and Spanish. The phone option will be available in English and 12 other languages. The phone and internet will be accessible beginning in March 2020, and the forms will be mailed at this time as well. We encourage all to participate as soon as they can to direct resources to the communities who need more education, motivation, and awareness on the value of participation.

The Census is an opportunity to shine your light on civic duty in service to others. There are folks in your communities depending on you to lead efforts toward a complete and accurate count. Your employees, community leaders, workforce, and residents are depending on us as community stewards to serve our country, our state, and our neighbors with fortitude and passion for this constitutional duty.

Therefore, I ask you to join me in discussing the Census at staff meetings, encouraging everyone to mention the census during every public meeting, encouraging colleagues to participate, or challenging an adjacent municipality to compete in counting residents. Ask a mayor to challenge another mayor and make it fun! Get school districts to create Census art projects in public places, use statistics in schools to have fun with our next generation of leaders, use marquees to share messaging in March and April 2020, send social media updates, and use creative methods to communicate with your community. Finally, call on your community to take action in 2020, to be seen, heard, and counted in the 2020 Census!

Be sure to follow us on social media, including LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com/company/us-census-bureau/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/us-census-bureau/)), Facebook ([www.facebook.com/us-census-bureau/](https://www.facebook.com/us-census-bureau/)), Twitter ([twitter.com/us-census-bureau/](https://twitter.com/us-census-bureau/)), and Instagram ([www.instagram.com/us-census-bureau/](https://www.instagram.com/us-census-bureau/)) and share the information using the hashtag #2020census.





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## Be heard. Be seen. Be counted. Aurora's road to the 2020 Census

*By City of Aurora*

**B**e seen. Be heard. Be counted. That is what Aurora wants its residents to know as the city prepares for Census 2020. Because Aurora has been identified as a historically hard-to-count community, city leaders have launched an aggressive campaign designed to ensure that every resident is counted in 2020, and thus proper funding is allocated to this growing city for

the next 10 years. Hard-to-count populations are those who may be reluctant to participate because they lack trust in the government or the way their data will be used. There may also be language barriers or low rates of Internet access that complicate the outreach process. Aurora is recognized as being one of the most diverse large cities in Colorado and the nation. With one in five residents being foreign-born and more than 160 different languages spoken in the school systems, language and cultural barriers create an increased difficulty in achieving an accurate count. That's why Aurora is implementing a robust outreach effort.

The Aurora mayor and city council recognize the broad implications the Census has for the city and the state. The Census determines the amount of federal funding delivered to communities for the next 10 years, and that significantly impacts the quality of life for residents. Approximately 20% of Aurora households did not return their 2010 Census surveys, and for each Aurora resident who is not



counted, the community loses \$2,300 for critical community services. Twenty percent of Aurora's current population is approximately 76,000 residents. If you multiply that by \$2,300, you have the potential for a \$174 million loss of funding. That is a lot of money.

So what is the plan in Aurora? City staff are actively attending events and talking to residents, stressing the importance of completing the Census. In just a few short months, staff have attended more than 50 events, and that number continues to rise. They've committed nearly \$50,000 to paid advertising through places like movie theaters, Comcast, bus benches and shelters, targeted email messaging, multilingual publications and banners in the public schools, just to name a few. They have produced and are distributing 20,000 printed pieces like info cards, posters, and flyers in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean, and Amharic. Aurora also formed a Complete Count Committee and has reached out to residents to engage influencers and ambassadors among the different communities. The city also has plans in place with each municipal department in order to maximize its internal resources.

Without an accurate count, Aurora will face challenges for years to come. City leaders are committed to ensuring that the city receives the level of federal funding that will best serve Aurora's diverse and growing community. Even with all that Aurora is already doing to spread the word and educate residents on the importance of the Census, there is more to come. As the year ends and 2020 begins, outreach efforts will increase to include a bevy of community volunteers engaged in the process, targeted text messaging campaigns, broad-reaching social media content, and a consultant contract that will serve to further bolster ongoing outreach efforts and allow for additional boots on the ground, all aimed at achieving an accurate count. Significant efforts will be used to target non-English speakers, children, the homeless population and the elderly community. The city has even applied for a state grant to purchase tablets that will allow people to complete the Census on the spot, where they are, in the moment.

All of this time, energy, and resources will help ensure that empowered residents will be heard, be seen and be counted, with the returns far outweighing the investments for years to come.

# Get to know: Megan Davis, Louisville deputy city manager



## How did you end up in public service?

My first experience working in public service was in college. I was an intern for the U.S. Forest Service while studying natural resources and political science at Colorado State University. After college, I worked for both the State of Colorado and Boulder County doing environmental education and outreach, and immediately enjoyed engaging with the public and working on projects that make the community a better place to live. I went on to spend several years in the private sector, doing marketing and public relations for a small agency and communications for an industry association. While I continued to enjoy working with a range of stakeholders on common goals, I found that I really missed working in the public sector on issues that impacted the public good. The decision to go back to graduate school to study public affairs was driven by my desire to dig deeper into public sector service, and to have opportunities to work at a higher level to influence changes in communities. When I finished my Master in Public Administration program, I moved back to Boulder and began a second stint with Boulder County.

## What do you enjoy most about your position?

Like so many others in this field, I love the variety of issues and the dynamic nature of working for local government. You never know what issues might emerge within the community at any time. As deputy city

manager, I have opportunities to work on organizational issues across departments and disciplines as well as external issues at the state and local levels. Our local government work impacts the daily lives of our residents, and I enjoy seeing the results of these efforts in the community. In addition, I have always loved the people who work in public service. My experience with the people in this field has been overwhelmingly positive and enriching. I work with some of the most kind, hardworking, intelligent people, and I feel as though I'm learning something new from them every day.

## What is the most challenging part of your position?

I'm a problem solver, and I like to find solutions that satisfy the needs of as many parties as possible. That cannot always happen — we cannot always solve everything for all our residents, and oftentimes there are conflicting interests. This is also a challenge I enjoy the most — trying to understand these complexities and identify creative ways to address competing issues. It keeps the job interesting!

## What are some exciting things currently going on in your municipality?

The City of Louisville just completed our first Transportation Master Plan. The entire process provided a great opportunity for us to connect with the community and better understand what they envision for our future transportation system, services, and infrastructure. We opened a new recreation and senior center earlier this year, so we are providing an increased level of service for the community in that area. I always get excited by the collaborative efforts we share with our neighboring communities. Right now we are working closely with the Town of Superior, Boulder County, and others on

the impacts of airport noise in our area, with Superior around library services, with the City of Lafayette on SH 42 plans and with Boulder County and the entire region on transportation funding. We are also looking forward to developing our 2020 work plan with the mayor and city council.

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

I have been in Louisville for about a year and a half, and I'm most proud of our work to create a strategic plan for the organization. This was a priority for Heather Balser, our city manager, as well as city council, and together we completed a process that engaged and touched all employees within the organization. The strategic plan has helped us formalize our organizational culture and identify strategic and intentional opportunities for improving our service delivery. As with all strategic plans, the development of the plan is only the first step — now we are working on making it an integral part of our organization. We have established a recognition program, and hired our first learning and development specialist to provide employee training around our vision, mission, and values and in other areas. It has been very exciting to see employees embrace our values and advance them through their work.

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

Humor undoubtedly helps us all get through some of the stresses in our work — we have a lot of small laughs around the office. As a small organization, it is all hands on deck for some community events. This summer while our special events coordinator was on maternity leave, I was charged with helping at the Fourth of July event. It poured rain about an hour before the fireworks were

scheduled, and the fireworks were all set up and got soaked from the rain. The contractor was able to successfully launch our fireworks display, but there was a short in the wiring, so several did not go off. At the end of the night when the crowd had nearly disappeared, they had to detonate the remaining fireworks that could not be packed up and transported offsite. For the next 30 minutes a sporadic display of fireworks went on and on. We only got one complaint, and it provided a surprising late evening show!

**What websites and/or publications do you refer to when seeking information?**

It depends on what I'm looking for, but I rely on sites like the International City/County Management Association and Harvard Business Review for information about local government management. I like to review the community newsletters of our neighbors so I know what is going on in our area. When I was lobbying for the county, I was completely focused on state and legislative political news — *Denver Post Politics*, the *Colorado Statesman*, *Colorado Politics*, etc. I still refer to these resources, but now I mostly leave that to my friends at CML!

**What book are you currently reading?**

With two little kids and a busy job, I don't read as many books as I used to. And I always seem to have a few books going at once (albeit at a snail's pace). The best fiction novel I read recently was *Rules of Civility* by Amor Towles. Set in New York

City in the 1930s, it is a great period piece about young ambition, luck, fate, and love (and a little bit of feminism peppered in). I'm just finishing the audio book *Dare to Lead* by Brene Brown, which is a great commuter listen. It is hard to not be completely inspired by Brene to strive to be the best version of yourself.

**What are the big differences in working for a municipality versus working for a county?**

For the most part, I have found there are more similarities than differences. The primary differences revolve around the authorities and functions of each, and the structure of cities versus counties. At the county we had a much broader reach, both geographically and in the scope of services provided. As cities we focus more on direct local services and identify and implement programs that meet the community's needs. The financial structures and revenue sources are also very different, which can impact the priorities and focus areas. Finally, the day-to-day roles of the elected officials on a county commission and city council can be very different (depending on the organization), in that one requires more day-to-day interaction within the organization and the other provides higher-level policy direction. Learning how both of these systems and structures operate has been a great experience. Through both experiences I have learned the value of strong partnerships between cities and counties, and that these relationships can help us all better serve our communities.

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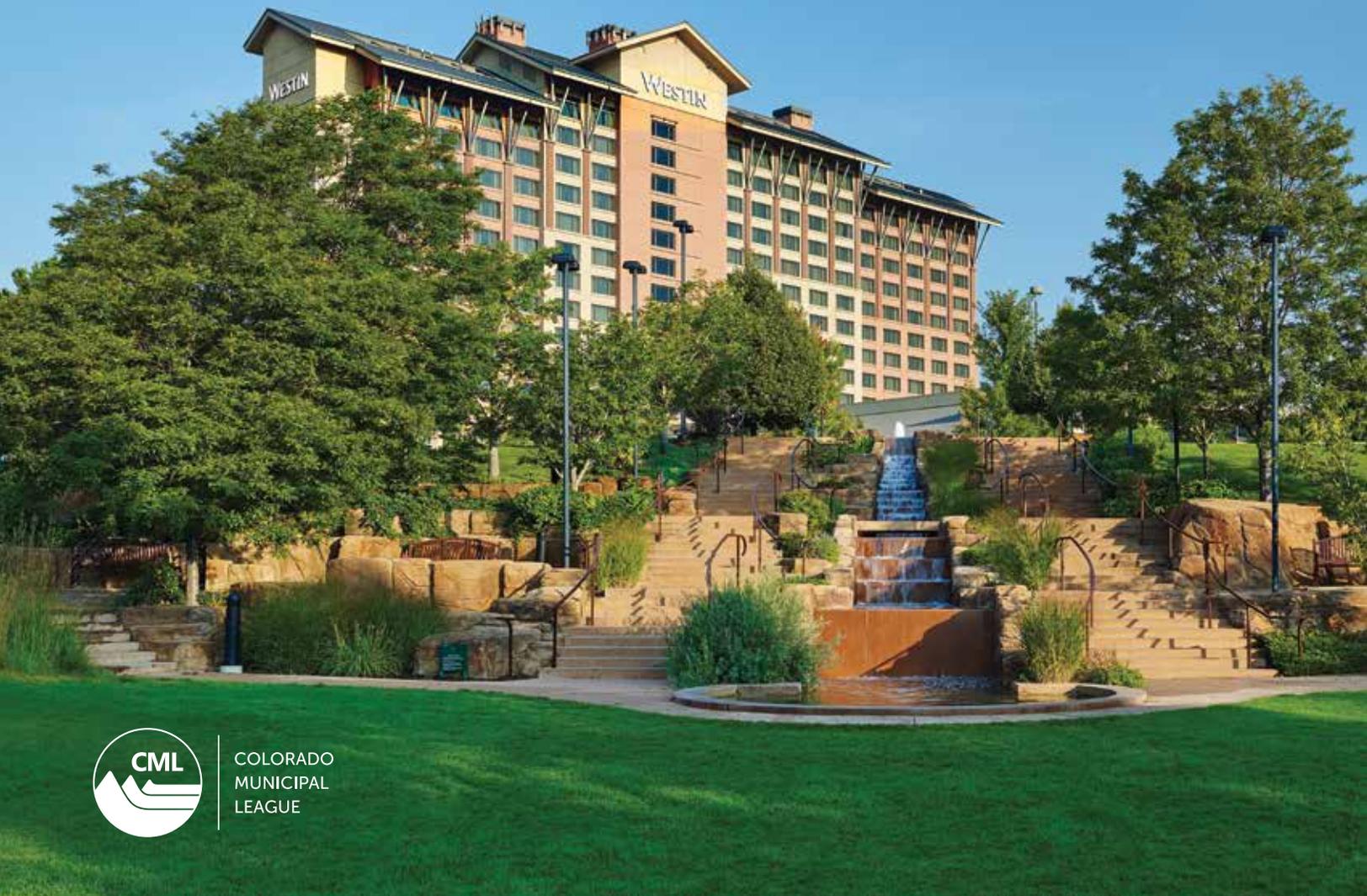


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