

2015 Annual Report

CHAFFEE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CCEDC)

Chaffee County continued to grow and prosper in 2016. A major economic driver, real estate, saw the County return to near pre-recession levels. Population is projected to increase modestly, and the northern end of the County, especially the downtown is undergoing dramatic revitalization. Further evidence of prosperity is the removal of the southern end of the County from the State Enterprise Zone designation.

The major industries, in addition to the tourism and outdoor recreation sector, include health care, financial services, construction, and wholesale trade and light manufacturing.

-The Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center (HRRMC) has added over one hundred (100) new jobs in the last 12-18 months. Reach Air, a regional air ambulance service will be establishing an operation at the Buena Vista Airport.

-The two major breweries, Eddyline and Elevation, are experiencing dramatic growth and have increased their capacity significantly to meet demand. The winery completed a major expansion and relocation to Poncha Springs.

-A bio company which relocated from Florida, TopoGEN, Inc., began operation of a "wet" lab at the Buena Vista Airport, and has recently been notified it will receive a substantial grant to further its research from the State.

-NAVSYS Corporation completed the remodel of the Twitchell Building in downtown Salida and now offers modern cyber secure office space and a business incubator in the heart of the Creative and Historic District.

-The County was notified it has been approved for two Certificates of Authorization (COA's) to perform research applying the latest unmanned aerial systems (uas) technology in two areas of the County. These areas were the first approved in the State. The County established an Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS aka drones) Advisory Board to educate the public and perform outreach to the industry.

-Three companies, Serving Slabs which will be relocating its operation from Poncha Springs to Salida; Custom Linings in Buena Vista; and Rocky Mountain Trail in Buena Vista, were all recipients of State funding and will be expanding their operations this year and adding jobs.

Challenges

With the success in business expansion and job growth the County is experiencing, come challenges. Some of the challenges we are facing and working on are described below. It will require a collective and collaborative effort throughout the County to address these challenges. The Corporation welcomes the support and participation of its members and the community as a whole to continue to improve upon and move the County forward as a destination for a special kind of lifestyle we all enjoy!

Challenges, cont.

Housing-The major challenge we face and will continue to face is creating and maintaining an adequate supply of housing for the workforce. Last year, the Corporation worked with the Town of Buena Vista, a private developer, Urban Inc. which submitted an application for tax credits to build affordable housing on land donated by a Corporation member. The competition from around the State, including the Denver Metro area was keen, and unfortunately was not approved. The Town and Urban Inc. will be submitting another application for a different location in the coming months.

-The City of Salida is also working with a developer to submit an application for a mixed use housing development on the Vandever Property. In the meantime, the City has tentatively approved an annexation plan for development of up to two hundred (200) "tiny homes" on the southern end of the County on land to be annexed to the City.

-The private sector continues to develop housing throughout the County; several projects have been completed in Poncha Springs, Salida, and Buena Vista. However, demand for "affordable" workforce housing continues with the growth of the local economy. The Corporation will be working with employers to validate the ongoing need for workforce housing.

Workforce Development-With the expansion of existing businesses and relocation or startup of new business, training of the current workforce and attracting workers who can afford to live in the County will remain a challenge. Colorado Mountain College, the Colorado Workforce Council, and the Corporation along with other partners will continue to pursue opportunities to maintain the entrepreneurial spirit which helps define the uniqueness of the County. The Corporation worked with the Salida School District to develop a memorandum of understanding which will allow the District to offer career and technical training to up to twenty (20) students while building a duplex for District staff.

Tourism and Outdoor Recreation-A first of its kind in Colorado and only the second effort nationally to leverage the natural resources and entrepreneurial spirit represented by businesses throughout the four county Upper Arkansas region was launched last September. The effort has gained momentum and attention from the Governor's office. A meeting will be held in March with the Governor's Office representative to solidify plans to leverage the energy and opportunities for the region, which includes Lake, Chaffee, Custer, and Fremont counties.

Health and Wellness-The board and leadership at Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center have developed and/or enhance services including neurology, breast center, pain, spine, pulmonology, psychiatry, gynecology, vascular surgery, nephrology, and internal medicine. Heart of the Rockies regional medical center has established additional strategies to establish gastrointestinal services, dialysis, integrative medicine, and tele-psych. Heart of the Rockies regional medical center has strategies to expand or enhance pain, neurology, and cardiology programs.