

2016 Annual Report

Chaffee County Economic Development Corporation

Chaffee County experienced was highlighted in a Study by the Governor's Office of Economic Development Trade titled "Rural Economic Resiliency in Colorado". The study which can be found in the link <http://choosecolorado.com/business-tools-resources/>, highlighted the leadership and the strategic investments in the community that have made such as schools, revitalization of downtowns, and reclaiming the river corridors. The County continues to be a laboratory of ideas and entrepreneurship for many businesses and individuals. The reputation of the County led to a weeklong "business immersion" tour by Development Counselors International (DCI) which is a New York based public relations firm selected by the Governor to promote Colorado.

In January, The Corporation launched a partnership with the Salida School District to create a career and technical training program for students in the building trades that will lead to the creation of affordable housing for District staff. The District has also received funding from several foundations including the Daniels Fund (\$90,000) in support of the project.

In September, the Town of Buena Vista and Urban Inc. were notified they had been awarded approximately \$1 million in tax credits to build affordable housing. There was a partnership between the Buena Vista School District and the Town of Salida for a "land swap" which was key to the award.

The Corporation hosted two successful events to market the two certificates of authorization (COA's) that allow unmanned aerial systems aka drones, to fly in approved air space within the County. The summer demo and fall roundup were well attended. The Corporation is working with State Representative Jim Wilson who is sponsoring a bill to create a pilot program to integrate drones into the variety of public safety functions including but not limited to firefighting, search and rescue, accident scene reconstruction. The Corporation is partnering with the Center of Excellence within the Department of Public Safety to bring the drone industry and public safety community together to discuss the needs and different applications that are available.

The Corporation concluded the 2nd Entrepreneurial Leadership Program that had ten (10) graduates. Another Leadership program will be launched later in the year. An "Entrepreneurial Boot Camp" will again be sponsored by the Corporation to support entrepreneurs in the County. Additional information will be available soon.

The Corporation co-hosted the Housing Summit in December which brought several county stakeholders and community groups to develop strategies and solutions to the County's housing challenges.

Many businesses continue to expand and grow their markets. Several of the businesses will discuss their current operations at the Annual Meeting. They include Eddyline, TopOGen, and Rocky Mountain Trail.

Challenges

As the economy continues to grow, workforce development remains a challenge in terms of providing “qualified” workers to employers. The Corporation and the Colorado Mountain College are exploring different programs that create “pathways” for students to obtain career and technical education and prepare for college. A workforce survey is being administered to determine how best to offer ongoing training to employees.

Housing remains a challenge in terms of how the market can respond to the need for “affordable workforce housing”. Several projects are underway that partially address this challenge. A policy group meets regularly to identify the challenges and propose solutions.

Responding to the growth that is occurring in a thoughtful way is becoming a challenge. Land use policies are becoming more of a focus as communities update their comprehensive plans.

The Board of Directors has identified transportation as an emerging issue they would like to get more involved in. Learning more about the proposed projects for the area is an objective of the Corporation in the coming year.