



ARAPAHOE COUNTY

Arapahoe County Commissioners Annual Update July 2024

During these difficult fiscal times, The Chamber values **Arapahoe County** as a crucial partner in economic development, and The Chamber's relationship with Arapahoe County is especially important, as we work together to share information and vital resources with the business community and the community at-large.



We are grateful to **Commissioner Bill Holen** for his service as an Honorary Member on The Chamber Board of Directors. In addition, we appreciate that **Commissioners Jeff Baker, Holen, and Leslie Summey**, are active members of The Chamber's Defense Council. The Chamber also values the work and involvement of **Commissioners Carrie Warren-Gully, and Jessica Campbell**.

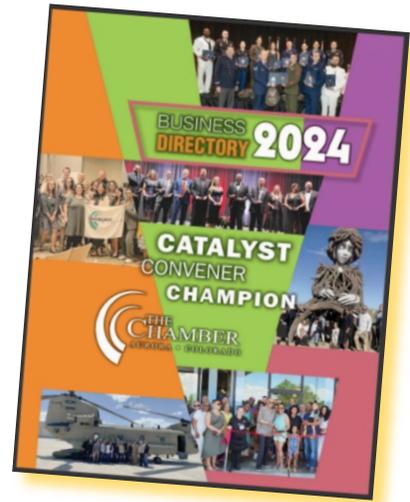
Aurora Chamber Guiding Principles for Collaborating with Arapahoe County

- Serve as a partner to advocate for the Debrucing of Arapahoe County and the possibility of sales tax for open space
- Support Arapahoe County's new Public Health Department
- Work with Arapahoe County in developing and implementing a regional vision and vibrant regional economy
- Assist in developing an appropriately educated workforce
- Strengthen and maintain military influence on the region's economy
- Advocate for affordable and accessible healthcare for small and large businesses
- Encourage and promote business community involvement at all levels of government
- Promote and maintain a healthy and safe community infrastructure with an adequate water supply and an efficient transportation system
- Promote and advocate for a robust tourism and destination business in Colorado
- Support and work with Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center
- Support the Annual Boots Not Suits Event and the Arapahoe County Fair

The Chamber is a non-partisan, action-oriented membership organization with the mission of ***servicing and representing our members so their businesses and our community will prosper.***

For our members, we seek to provide access, advocacy, and influence, as well as to be the **Catalyst** for business growth; the **Convener** of leaders and influencers; and the **Champion** for stronger communities.

The Chamber is a focal point for concentrated business leads and newcomers interested in moving to the area. Our business growth focus has always been the development of small business, and support of some of the major business clusters of Healthcare, Hospitality, and Aerospace.



Over the past year, The Aurora Chamber held ribbon cuttings, grand openings, and more than 70 networking events, and 90+ member events including General Membership, educational, and leadership forums. The Chamber holds most committee meetings with both in-person and virtual options.

Priorities are working on and advocating for include:

- Business Retention, which provides major contribution to the local tax base
- Strengthening partnerships with our Economic Development and Tourism partners - including Aurora Economic Development Council, REAP, and Visit Aurora
- Workforce and affordable housing, senior housing
- Daycare continues to be a priority for economic development in the community
- Small Business Development funding and assistance through Partnerships with the Aurora-South Metro and Colorado SBA offices
- Host the Colorado APEX Accelerator (formerly the Procurement Technical Assistance Center - PTAC), in The Chamber office:

- Arapahoe County Data from Sept 15, 2022-Sept 14, 2023

- Total number of clients: 913 (68 new clients this year)
- Counseling hours: 3,035 (415 in Arapahoe County for the fiscal year)
- *Number of awards: 52
- *Total amount of awards: \$80,424,882.00

**Includes only Dept. of Defense and other federal awards.*



Along with our strong small business development and support focus, The Chamber concentrates on six targeted industries:

- ✓ Healthcare
- ✓ Bioscience
- ✓ Aerospace and Defense
- ✓ Renewable energy
- ✓ Distribution/Logistics
- ✓ Tourism



These promising growth opportunities have produced new and expanding businesses with 6,000+ new jobs and more than \$600 million in economic impact.

The Chamber currently has a staff of six full-time employees, and on July 17, 2024, celebrated the Grand Opening of our new office location at 610 S Abilene St, Ste B, in the Aurora Federal Credit Union building.



The Aurora Chamber of Commerce offers opportunities for small and large businesses to participate in **13 Chamber Councils/Committees/Programs**:

The Chamber's Defense Council consists of more than 500 members and meets monthly at various locations. During 2023-2024, locations, hosts, and presentations included: Colorado Technical University, Colorado National Guard Field Artillery Training Center, City of Centennial, Rocky Mountain VA Regional Medical Center, Colorado State University Global, Headquarters Air Reserve Personnel Center, Navy Reserve Personnel Center Denver, Combat Logistics Battalion 453 (USMC), and the Aerospace Data Facility Colorado.



The Defense Council supports Buckley Space Force Base leadership and the 14,000 employees and family members on the base. Meetings bring together military and community leaders throughout the Eastern Metro area with the goal of strengthening relationships and increasing knowledge of the importance to our community of active military and veterans, and their families. Buckley's 2023 economic impact to the local community was \$2.55 Billion.



Through the Defense Council, The Chamber advocates the recruitment and retention of a large workforce in the defense industry, ranging from Aerospace industry members such as Raytheon, Boeing, Northrup Grumman, and Lockheed Martin, to active-duty Air Force, Space Force, Army, Marines, Coast Guard, Navy, Guard and Reserve.

The Defense Council hosted the 48th Annual Armed Forces Recognition Luncheon on May 10, 2024. Arapahoe County was a key partner for the event, as a Co-Media Sponsor with Westway Enterprises. The keynote speaker was former Navy Seal, CAPT (retired) Mike Argo. CAPT Argo was the Commanding Officer at the Navy Reserve Center on Buckley from 2002-2004.



The Chamber is also a member of the Association of Defense Communities (ADC). ADC connects leaders from communities, states, the military, and industry on community-military issues by enhancing knowledge, information sharing, and best practices. With nearly 300 communities, states, regions, and affiliated industry organizations, ADC represents every major defense community/state in the nation.

The Chamber participates in the monthly “Newcomer Orientation” held on Buckley Space Force Base to welcome all new military, spouses, and families to Aurora, Colorado. The Chamber provides information about things like demographics, history, retail, real estate, and lodging. The Arapahoe County Fairgrounds is one of the contributors to the Chamber’s Welcome Bags provided to everyone at the orientation. The Chamber welcomes more than 600 military personnel each year.

The Chamber annually supports more than 90,000 veterans in the Metro Area by participating in the annual Veterans Salute, held in 2023 at the Hyatt Regency Aurora-Denver Conference Center on October 30.

The Government Affairs, Education, & Energy (Public Issues) Committee met monthly and held a Legislative breakfast in January 2024. The committee collaborates with our elected officials in Federal, State, County, and City governments.

The Aurora Chamber continued working closely through 2023 and 2024 with the General Assembly. Meetings included updates from the Aurora Water Department, the Colorado Competitive Council, and Aurora Public Schools. The Colorado Chamber of Commerce’s President & CEO talked about how to “build a strong business climate,” and committee members received pro and con presentations on Proposition HH.



Committee members were also invited to attend the City of Aurora's Candidate Forum. In addition, legislative reviews were provided for the last two months of the session during which support and non-support recommendations were provided to the Aurora Chamber's Board of Directors.



The Transportation Committee reviews, and monitors transportation issues and recommends and discusses changes to meet business and community needs. This diverse and specialized group of professionals understand the importance of transportation infrastructure for the success of the business community.



The monthly meetings cover a wide range of transportation and infrastructure topics including an annual meeting featuring Bryan Weimer presenting about Arapahoe County Transportation planning and projects, Centennial Airport and CASP, CDOT projects and plans, E-470, Denver International Airport, City of Aurora, RTD, Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Cities of Lone Tree and Greenwood Village, and Adams County and ARTA. Support of transportation funding is one of The Chamber's top priorities.



The Women in Business Committee serves as a voice for Women in Business, acting as an advocate on issues that affect their professional growth and long-term economic vitality. Throughout 2023-2024, our locations, hosts, and presentations included: Martial Science Academy, Southlands Mall, CTU – Aurora, Gateway Domestic Violence Services, Paint Cellar, The Village Workspace, Waldo's Chicken & Beer, Aurora Police Officer Judy Lutkin, and Denver Botanic Gardens. Although we did not have a luncheon to celebrate local women in 2023, we will be bringing back the event later in 2024. The Women in Business Committee's mission is to give women a voice in business; to support women in business; to foster a more inclusive workplace for women, and to provide resources to help women be successful in all aspects of life.

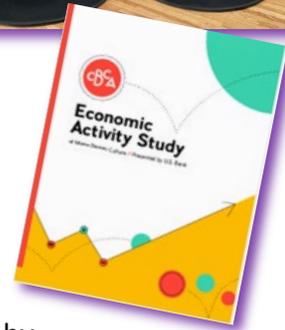


The Arts + Business Connection (ABC)

Committee demonstrates and promotes the value of integrating the arts as a business tool, by exploring how business and industry can – and does – benefit from the arts. ABC's programming exemplifies how the arts are an integral part of business and industry - with a broad definition of 'the arts' to include the visual arts, performing arts, creativity, and innovation.



During the past year, meetings included the Economic Impact of the Arts, presented by Colorado Business Committee for the Arts; Arts and Culture at the Museo de las Americas; Veterans and the Arts at the VA Medical Center; Art at The Aurora Highlands, The Art of Chocolate; How The Colorado Rapids Utilize the Arts; and How the Arts Benefit Business.



The Chamber has three Tips and Leads Groups – Tips and Leads, Lead by Example, and Positive Business Partners. Combined, these groups have 60 business members that meet to network, exchange business leads, promote their businesses, and share ideas to improve the overall business climate. Leads, referrals, and actualized business transactions are acknowledged and tracked. To date, these groups have produced thousands of referrals and realized well over \$1 million in transactions between the members. These groups actively recruit new participants to broaden industry sectors. Positive Business Partners consists of businesses in southern Arapahoe County.

The Young Professionals Program empowers young business leaders from throughout the Eastern Metro area to become more involved in civic, professional, and public sector arenas through professional development, philanthropy, education, and community involvement. There are more than 250 individuals in this group.



Companies actively engaged with the committee include Centennial Airport/Wings Over the Rockies Museum, Launch Pad Brewery, CAPSTC Tour, Judi's House, Toastmasters International, Legends of Aurora Sports Grill, The City of Aurora, Falck Rocky Mountain, Community College of Aurora, Visit Aurora, and the Stanley Marketplace, to name a few. Additionally, we are working currently coordinating a way to include the students at Community College of Aurora in this committee. We hope to help students of CCA better understand the businesses that surround them while giving them an opportunity to meet other Young Professionals.



The Chamber Ambassador Team serves as goodwill representatives by welcoming new members at Chamber events and functions - including ribbon cuttings, business after hours, open houses, Chamber events and grand openings. Ambassadors share information about The Chamber and its benefits to attract future members. They are a peer resource for new members and stay up to date with Chamber information and functions.

The team also calls and visits members for personal follow-ups and to encourage participation in Chamber activities. This team currently consists of 25 individuals that are highly involved in all aspects of Chamber activities and functions.



The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council no longer meets on a regular basis, but The Chamber's commitment to the principals and ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion is imbedded in our mission of serving and representing our members so their businesses and our community will prosper.

Leadership Aurora – is a ten-month program that for **40 years** (as of 2024) has educated and prepared community leaders who are committed to shaping Aurora and the Eastern Metro area's future. The program consists of topics such as community, city government, education, media, public safety (Aurora Police and Aurora Fire Rescue), military/government, and healthcare. More than \$5,000 in tuition scholarships are provided annually to small business and non-profits. The 2023-24 class graduated on June 6, 2024.



The Emerging Leaders (EL) program began January 2023 and graduated its second cohort June 11, 2024. The EL program is designed for those looking to develop their leadership skills. The six-month program (January-June) provides training and practical experiences in personal leadership development, team/interpersonal relations, and community relations.

Arapahoe County is a critical partner in the **economic strength and development** of our region and state! **Arapahoe County** is **highlighted in our weekly eblast, bi-monthly newsletter, and annual directory, which annually reaches nearly 170,000.**

We are extremely grateful for your investment, support, and partnership and look forward to continuing our work together to create and sustain positive economic development for our growing communities.

Sincerely Yours,



Naomi Colwell
Interim President/CEO
Aurora Chamber of Commerce
303-344-1500
Naomi.Colwell@aurorachamber.org

