



BACKGROUND

Arapahoe County is committed to fulfilling its mission of delivering exceptional county services and using resources responsibly to advance quality of life.

As a constitutional subdivision of Colorado state government, Arapahoe County can only exercise those powers specifically expressed in statute or in the constitution, and those reasonably implied as necessary to carry out such express powers. Generally, counties are responsible for law enforcement, including the court system, district attorney, and jail facilities; the provision of social services on behalf of the state; the construction, maintenance, and repair of roads and bridges; health departments; and general control of land use in unincorporated areas.

The Board of County Commissioners is the primary policy-making body for the County and is responsible for the County's administrative and budgetary functions. Other County elected officers include the Clerk and Recorder, Assessor, District Attorney, Treasurer, Sheriff, and Coroner, all of whom are elected to four-year terms under the state constitution. These officials have specific powers and duties prescribed by law, and they function independently from each other and from the Board of County Commissioners. However, the Board of County Commissioners approves the budgets for all County departments and offices. Approximately 45% of the county's revenue is derived from property tax, while 18% comes from federal funding to provide required services.

FEDERAL & STATE POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Board of County Commissioners evaluates policy positions through the lens of human, environmental, social, and economic sustainability, so our decisions consider potential impacts to County programs and operations not just today but in the future, consistent with its stated strategic plan and legal requirements.

The legislative principles below describe the County's underlying interest on specific issues. These principles serve as a consistent guide for the County in developing positions on federal and state legislation, rulemaking, and proactive issue advocacy.

The document also serves as a reference for elected representatives when considering legislation that may impact Arapahoe County. The Board of County Commissioners may revisit the County's legislative priorities throughout the year. Strategic, targeted, and/or abbreviated versions of the information contained in this document will also be created throughout the year for use in further legislative communications.

REPRESENTATION

Arapahoe County contracts professional lobbyist services with Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs for state advocacy activities and Squire Patton Boggs for federal representation. The Director of the Commissioners' Office coordinates federal and state intergovernmental relations, in partnership with the Director of Human Services, the County Attorney, the



Director of Community Resources, Director of Public Health, and the Director of Public Works & Development.

As members of Colorado Counties, Inc., Counties and Commissioners Acting Together, and the National Association of Counties, Arapahoe County relies on those organizations' advocacy teams to provide reliable information on legislative issues and their impact on Colorado's counties and their residents. The County also depends on regional associations and other national organizations to advocate for specific issues of shared local interest.

The Board of County Commissioners relies on independently elected offices to monitor and advocate for legislation germane to their business operations, flagging items that may have an impact on the County's budget. The Board may engage in issues as requested by the elected official or if there is a significant budgetary impact on the organization.

SPECIFIC 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Federal Items (priority order)

- Maintain funding for essential services that improve the economic strength of Arapahoe County, ensuring residents have access to resources and programming that catalyze and strengthen public safety, housing stability, family support, employment, and public health.
- Retain critical infrastructure, funding, and technology for evidence-based programming proven to enhance Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response.
- Advocate for rules that clarify eligibility requirements for safety net programs and provide appropriate funding for mandated program administration.
- Advance congressionally directed spending requests for critical community projects that advance Arapahoe County's vision and strategic plan goals.
- Champion policies that continue federal research of air and noise pollution caused by civilian and military aircraft, mitigate air and noise pollution, and enforce existing standards, rules, and regulations including enhancing opportunities for local control.
- Advocate for multi-year infrastructure reauthorization bills to secure funding for improvements to the county's transportation network.

State Items (priority order)

- Ensure statutory programs, reforms, and services receive sufficient funding so counties can continue to provide required services, without



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detracting from our core responsibilities.

- Include adequate funding for any new legislation that is expected to be implemented and consider where the state does not need to exceed federal requirements so counties can deliver services as intended.
- Maintain state and federal workforce funding and program oversight with local workforce regions (Arapahoe/Douglas Works!) and oppose redistribution to other partners.
- Acquire promised new 18th Judicial District judgeships to manage increased caseloads and mandates.
- Support upgrades to the Colorado Benefits Management System that prioritize policy and procedural changes in H.R.1 to ensure benefits and resources are administered in a timely manner.
- Confirm proposed changes to community corrections acceptance and placement criteria best meet the needs of our local community.
- Support access to diverse and healthy food options offered by small businesses, while prioritizing adherence to food safety options.
- Oppose legislation related to the built environment that minimizes local expertise, creates inconsistencies, adds undue costs, or results in process delays.
- Oppose the reduction or elimination of dedicated transportation and housing funds in lieu of funding for other state programs.
- Prevent further cuts to local public health programs that improve community health outcomes and reduce future state investments by preventing disease outbreaks, ensuring adequate emergency response, keeping childcare facility and restaurants safe, and protecting maternal and child health.

GUIDING LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Arapahoe County strongly believes the most effective governance results from local, state, and federal officials working in true partnership toward the development and implementation of programs and services. The County supports deeper coordination between governments, breaking down silos to deliver results for shared constituencies.



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Proactively working together to understand the nexus between policy and implementation will help ensure shared goals, an understanding of fiscal impacts, and outcomes that can be collectively achieved.

UNFUNDED MANDATES

To effectively serve the needs of our community, Arapahoe County officials must have the resources and authority commensurate with the responsibilities placed on them by state and federal laws, regulations, and court decisions.

Arapahoe County supports adequate funding for any future state or federally imposed mandates upon local government, including the need for technological improvements necessary to fulfill these mandates.

Arapahoe County strongly opposes cost shifting from the state and federal government to local governments. While we recognize there are various pressures on state and federal budgets, it is important to acknowledge there are also similar constraints on County budgets. Arapahoe County urges our partners to refrain from adding additional programs and requirements without associated funding for implementation.

LOCAL CONTROL & FLEXIBILITY

County officials are the elected officials closest and most responsive to our residents. Arapahoe County supports the concept of local control and authority to ensure programs and services reflect the unique needs of our community.

The County opposes any administrative effort to promulgate rules and regulations that interpret the law in a manner negatively impacting counties. County commissioners are important and necessary stakeholders in any rule-making process to ensure mandates are appropriately delivered to local constituents.

REVENUE PREDICTABILITY

Arapahoe County believes that any tax policy reform should ensure that the powers granted to counties and the funding mechanisms available are sufficient to address county responsibilities. Tax policy reform should create a fair and equitable distribution of the property tax burden among all property, reduce uncertainty, and ensure local governments have adequate authority and funding to meet their statutory responsibilities and the expectations of residents.

The County supports expanding the revenue raising authorities of county governments – similar to municipalities – to diversify revenue streams, enhance fiscal sustainability, and provide adequate services to our community. For new programs that would traditionally be funded with County property tax, the County strongly support the state engaging with local governments to identify new sources of funding as County property tax dollars are already stretched thin to meet current obligations.



The County supports requiring the state to reimburse local governments and districts for any loss in property tax revenues caused by constitutional or statutory changes to preserve its ability to fulfill statutory duties. Arapahoe County also supports local – not state – electors determining voter initiatives that affect the property taxes of a local government.

Arapahoe County supports county authority to approve the use and the amount of the county portion of revenues designated in a proposed urban renewal plan for tax increment financing and to establish mechanisms to ensure that counties have greater influence to ensure proposed urban renewal projects meet the current statutory requirement of ameliorating blight.

OUTCOME-BASED DECISION MAKING

Arapahoe County encourages state and federal governments to base regulatory decisions affecting county governments on comprehensive data and measurable outcomes. Relying on these two standards to scrutinize existing and proposed laws and regulations will help reduce unnecessary, unfunded or underfunded mandates, streamline government, and utilize limited resources more efficiently. State and federal officials should also consider programmatic models that might exist as well as the possible limitations on local control that might result from new legislation, rules, or regulations.

WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Home to some of the nation's largest companies and innovative small businesses, Arapahoe County is committed to maintaining a strong economic and business climate. The County supports a strong partnership among counties, the state, municipalities, and private industry to design and implement economic development incentives and programs.

The County also operates Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, a publicly-funded workforce center that provides free services for businesses and job seekers, consistent with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser, and various other state and federal grants. Arapahoe County supports continuing a local delivery model to implement WIOA requirements and ensuring public funds are directed to public workforce centers.

HUMAN SERVICES

Arapahoe County supports local administration of the human services system to maximize the flexibility and responsiveness of the system to local needs. Arapahoe County's human services department has consistently achieved high rankings for service delivery, consistent with state and federal standards. The County supports a state supervised, county administered, human services system. The County also supports



increased funding to provide these mandated services with the flexibility to best meet local needs without shifting costs locally, negatively impacting county government.

Arapahoe County supports policies that advance a two-generation (2Gen) approach, which simultaneously serves the whole family. The 2Gen approach helps children and families get education and workforce training, social supports like parenting skills, and health care needed to create a legacy of economic stability and overall well-being. This includes supporting the creation of a comprehensive, statewide system of care that serves children, youth, and young adults as well as increasing services and treatment placements for the highest acuity children in our care.

Arapahoe County supports local input into the state's budget management process to avoid supplemental appropriations requests for foreseeable circumstances. Arapahoe County supports maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements that allow flexible funding for social services programs to minimize, avoid increasing, or provide equitable distribution of fiscal responsibility of counties.

Arapahoe County continues to advocate for 100 percent reimbursement from the state to administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and other adult assistance programs.

SUSTAINABLE AND CONSISTENT FEDERAL FUNDING

The County relies on federal block and competitive grant programs from the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Infrastructure, Human Services, Public Health, and Veteran's Affairs to provide critical programs that enhance the safety net for vulnerable populations. The County supports maintaining these funding programs to support the community, distributing direct allocations to the County or through the state as appropriate.

JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

The County recognizes that focusing on and funding preventative services saves money. The role of the Sheriff's Office is to enforce the law, recognizing both the statutory and judicial limitations of police authority and the constitutional rights of all persons. Where possible, the County supports legislation that enables local decision-making on public safety services to permit development of locally appropriate solutions.

Arapahoe County seeks the timely administration of justice and supports adequate state investments to achieve this outcome within the new single county judicial district.

Arapahoe County supports the concept and use of drug courts and other specialty courts to divert individuals struggling with mental health and substance use challenges away from the traditional justice system.

Arapahoe County recognizes that our jail population is changing, with the number of



individuals with mental and behavioral health issues as well as crime severity increasing. The County supports programs that deliver mental health and substance abuse programs for individuals within the criminal justice system, providing alternative sentencing and pre-trial programs to help keep nonviolent and first-time offenders out of jail, and expanding programs that reduce the likelihood of reoffending once inmates are released in the community.

Arapahoe County supports timely and accurate reimbursement for housing state inmates in county facilities as well as efforts to alleviate the existing backlog of state inmates in county facilities.

ELECTIONS

Arapahoe County is committed to implementing and coordinating elections in a nonpartisan manner, with utmost integrity. The County supports increasing voter access and education, while protecting voter privacy consistent with state statute.

LAND USE

Arapahoe County believes in sustainable and responsible growth. It supports local control over the various uses of land and their impacts; recognizing that activities relative to growth, development, agricultural and farming interests, natural resources, and environmental management are unique within each community. The County opposes any efforts to supersede, override, or preempt local land use authority.

The County's 2018 Comprehensive Plan identifies six principles to help create a sustainable, resilient, and healthy community, including growth management, public facilities and services, economic health, transportation and mobility, natural and cultural resources, and environmental quality. The County also supports actions that ensure adequate water availability for future land use development. The County supports maintaining mechanisms that facilitate reasonable costs of growth and redevelopment, such as impact fees, real estate transfer taxes, and other growth-financing tools.

Recent state reforms require time and thoughtful implementation by local governments. The County encourages the state to provide room for this important work to take place.

HOUSING

Arapahoe County believes housing is a human right and the availability of attainable and affordable housing is of utmost concern. Arapahoe County supports developing an adequate supply of diverse housing options across income brackets, with a focus on mitigating displacement and those most vulnerable.

Counties are uniquely positioned to help address the housing crisis because we understand our communities' needs, implementing effective land use planning and associated infrastructure. The County supports advancing programs and services that



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augment local government's ability to facilitate access to affordable and attainable housing, including state programs that promote regional cooperation and provide technical assistance.

The County supports deepening existing public and private sector strategies as well as funding to ensure the efficacy of existing programs, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Proposition 123, administration of voucher programs, and land banking. The County also supports additional legislation that promotes increased construction of entry-level home ownership.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Arapahoe County believes the movement of goods and people is vital to the continued economic success of the state and Coloradans' quality of life. With several major highways, transit lines, 30% of Colorado's growing economy along the I-25 Corridor, and one of the nation's busiest regional airports, effective multimodal transportation is equally important to the success of the County's economy.

Arapahoe County has historically partnered on large-scale, regionally significant infrastructure projects, but is against efforts to pass along additional state roadway construction or maintenance responsibilities to local governments without increased and adequate funds to meet these additional responsibilities. The County also supports additional funding to meet multimodal infrastructure demands. The County is supportive of opportunities to provide safe and reliable transit service for residents, facilitating regional and local connections through the Regional Transportation District. The County is not supportive of divesting service to local governments without additional financial resources.

Arapahoe County continues to support an equitable Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) allocation formula and restrictions on the use of "off the top" diversions. The County opposes funding mechanisms which eliminate or reduce local shareback for transportation projects. Arapahoe County believes county commissioners should continue to have an enhanced role in prioritizing regional and statewide projects. The County also supports opportunities for counties to design their own transportation finance mechanisms to respond to local and regional transportation needs.

HOMELESSNESS

Arapahoe County recognizes that homelessness is a complex, interconnected issue and that people experience homelessness for a multitude of reasons. The County supports a multi-disciplinary Housing First approach to addressing homelessness by alleviating generational poverty, providing accessible workforce development opportunities for its most vulnerable populations, providing resource navigation, opportunities for transitional housing, and ensuring additional funding for safety net services, such as mental health and substance use treatment. The County seeks continued cooperation with the state and



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other stakeholders to launch and sustain the Ridgeview Supportive Residential campus community.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Arapahoe County is committed to providing public health services that are data-informed and based on best practices and community input. Core public health programs such as immunizations, food safety, water quality, family planning, access to healthy and affordable foods, and community health education are crucial for creating healthy environments where all residents can thrive. The County supports increased state and federal funding for public health services that can be flexibly used to meet the unique needs of Arapahoe County. The County supports policy efforts that protect public health funding, provide funding flexibility to address emergent issues, and safeguard the work force. The County also supports the ability of counties to set fees for services, licenses, and permits to address operational costs.

ENVIRONMENT

Arapahoe County supports advancing policies and programs that conserve resources, protect the environment, and safeguard our climate in order to build a sustainable, just, and resilient community. The County supports programs that help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. The County also supports collaboration between state and federal government agencies and local governments to advance local climate action.