



**ARAPAHOE COUNTY**

# **2023 Legislative Issues Guide**

**ARAPAHOE COUNTY  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

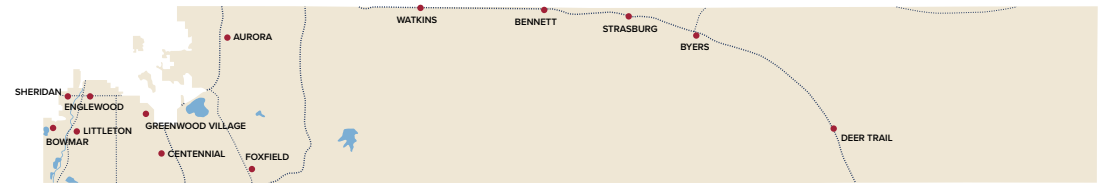
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# Arapahoe County

## About Us



Whether you've been here for a couple months of your entire life, Arapahoe County residents realize that their community provides the best of everything Colorado has to offer. From babies to boomers and beyond, our residents put down roots, raise families, state and run businesses and embrace the endless opportunities and amenities that make Colorado so unique.

Arapahoe County is a large suburban county with over 650,000 residents, 13 cities and towns, nine school districts, and more than 450 special districts, many of which provide water and sewer services, public safety, and recreational facilities.

As a statutory county, Arapahoe County functions as an extension of the State of Colorado and can only exercise the powers clearly defined in state statute or the Colorado Constitution. The County is often tasked with implementing programs on behalf of the state and is responsible for law enforcement, including the court system, district attorney and one of the state's largest detention centers; the provision of social services, including food assistance, child and adult protective services, and workforce training; the construction, maintenance, and repair of roads and bridges; the management of a new health department; and the general control of land use in unincorporated areas.

Arapahoe County is committed to fulfilling its mission of enhancing quality of life through exceptional delivery of services and efficient use of public funds. The Board of County Commissioners serves as the county's primary policy-making and administrative body. They are committed to advocating for state and federal legislation that supports this mission.





# Strategic Plan

## Mission

Enhancing your quality of life through exceptional delivery of services and efficient use of public funds.

## Vision

A diverse and vibrant County where residents and businesses thrive.

## Goals and Specific Outcomes

### BE FISCALLY SUSTAINABLE

#### Outcomes:

- Fund mandated services to meet best practices and required standards
- Consider strategic use of debt
- Ensure structurally balanced budgets
- Strive for efficiencies

### PROVIDE ESSENTIAL AND MANDATED SERVICES

#### Outcomes:

- Perform as stipulated in statutes and regulations
- Remain responsive to community interests

### BE COMMUNITY FOCUSED

#### Outcomes:

- Promote thriving communities
- Foster personal safety and security
- Nurture individual and collective opportunities
- Provide a healthy natural environment
- Support opportunities for physical health and mental health



## Guiding Principles

### Primary criteria/guiding principles:

- Support economic vibrancy
- Protect community quality/well-being
- Consider holistic and long-term financial implications in decision-making processes
- Be data centric in identifying needs the County can address
- Hire, develop and retain employees to enhance their growth and opportunities
- Employees understand their vital role in achieving the success of County outcomes

### Additional criteria/guiding principles:

- Understand and respond to what our community values
- Preserve our reputation and credibility
- Develop and preserve a culture of Inclusion and connectedness

## Values

**ACCOUNTABILITY | ACCESSIBILITY | INCLUSIVITY | INTEGRITY**

## Recent Strategic Plan Accomplishments

Guided by the strategic plan, Arapahoe County has been able to:

- Maintain a structurally balanced budget in a landscape of limited revenue growth and new service and programmatic requirements.
- Deliver a variety of high-quality services in the most efficient manner possible.
- Establish a new health department throughout 2022, balancing fiscal sustainability and using residents' input to protect community well-being.
- Develop a diversity, equity and inclusion framework and action items to ensure that Arapahoe County remains an accessible environment for residents and employees.



- Allocate nearly \$120 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds to promote a full COVID-19 recovery, including business recovery grants to promote economic vibrancy, supporting organizations that provide physical and mental health services for residents, and investing in critical infrastructure to promote thriving communities.
- Secure voter approval of permanent, dedicated open spaces funding to preserve natural space and improve parks, trails and recreation facilities.
- Establish a regional homelessness committee to coordinate response efforts across municipalities within the county.
- Coordinate and implement a regional opioid council to distribute approximately \$25 million of opioid abatement funds to support a community-wide response to the opioid crisis.
- Update the Arapahoe County Land Development Code to increase housing affordability and position the county to access state affordable housing grants in the future.
- Leverage one-time funds to address critical medical and operational needs at the detention center, providing more time for the county to secure a voter-approved funding solution to address the pressures facing an aging and insufficient detention center.
- Adopt the 2040 Transportation Master Plan, using extensive public input to determine and plan for the county's most critical infrastructure improvements.
- Begin planning for the 18th Judicial District transition and assume sole operation in a fiscally sustainable manner.







# Priorities and Principles

The Board of County Commissioners evaluates policy positions through the lens of fiscal and operational impacts to Arapahoe County, consistent with its stated mission, values, and statutory requirements.

The following legislative principles 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 also will be created throughout the year for use in further legislative communications.

## Specific 2023 Legislative Priorities

Arapahoe County has identified state and legislative specific priorities important to the community:

### FEDERAL ITEMS

- Eliminate the federal Medicaid inmate exclusion policy.
- Ensure adequate funding for implementation of the Older Americans Act.
- Secure additional federal funding for comprehensive veteran services and programs.
- Secure federal infrastructure funding to improve the county's transportation network, regional airport, stormwater and wastewater facilities.
- Secure adequate funding for the implementation of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act and ensure the passage of the Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act.
- Support Federal legislation initiatives to phase out leaded aviation fuel.
- Advocate for residents and businesses exposed to significant aviation noise.



## STATE ITEMS

- Secure funding to support one-time transition costs associated with the split of the 18th Judicial District.
- Clarify state’s regulatory scope with and create a state funding pool for remediating former landfill areas.
- Engage local community correction programs to ensure state funding can adequately support alternative sentencing and pre-trial programs.
- Advance statewide solutions that broaden safety net programs to address affordable housing, food insecurity, behavioral health and substance use throughout the County.
- Ensure adequate funding for increased workload due to the expansion of benefits from the PACT Act.

## Guiding Legislative Principles

### 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 technology improvements necessary to fulfill these mandates.

Arapahoe County strongly opposes cost shifting from the state and federal government to local governments. The state and federal government must exercise fiscal restraint and responsibility, refraining from solving budget shortfalls with county government resources.

### LOCAL CONTROL & FLEXIBILITY

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

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 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. Any and all legislative alternatives should ensure local governments have adequate authority and funding to meet its statutory responsibilities and the expectations of residents. Arapahoe County strongly supports prior county approval of programs that must be funded with county property taxes but are not controlled or generated at the county level.

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 in order to preserve our ability to fulfill statutory duties.

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 meets the current statutory requirement of ameliorating blight.

### OUTCOME-BASED DECISION MAKING

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.

State and federal governments should base decisions about laws and regulations 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. Arapahoe County supports a strong partnership among counties, the state, municipalities and private business and industry to design and implement economic development incentives and programs. The County supports local organizations that specialize in growing our economy, particularly the high tech, communication, military, government, service, agricultural, and retail industries.

The County also operates Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, a publicly-funded workforce center consistent with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser and various other state and federal grants. With locations in Centennial, Aurora and Castle Rock, Arapahoe/Douglas Works! provides free services to both small and large businesses as well as job seekers to ensure Arapahoe and Douglas counties' workforce and economy remain strong. Arapahoe County supports continuing a local delivery model to implement WIOA requirements, ensuring decisions can be made at the local level.

## HUMAN SERVICES

Arapahoe County supports local administration of the social services system in order to maximize the flexibility and responsiveness of the system to local needs, while ensuring efficient management and local control. Arapahoe County has consistently achieved high rankings for service delivery, consistent with state and federal standards. The County supports a state run, 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.

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 more equitable distribution of fiscal responsibility of counties.

Arapahoe County continues to advocate for 100 percent reimbursement from the state to administer the food stamp, Medicaid and other adult assistance programs.

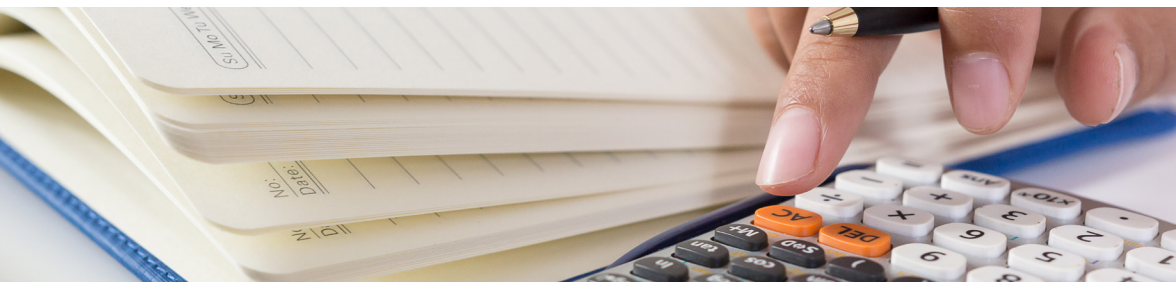
## SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

The County relies on federal block and competitive grant programs from the departments of housing and urban development, justice, transportation, 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. As a subdivision of the state, the County is interested in statewide solutions and associated funding that increase access to affordable housing, healthy food, behavioral and mental health services, as well as help address homelessness, opioids and substance use.

## JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Arapahoe County supports strong and efficient relationships between all levels of government with respect to the criminal justice system and public safety systems. Arapahoe County supports a continuum of approaches to prevent violence, ranging from increased efforts to hold accountable criminal activities to designing effective prevention and early intervention programs for youth and families at risk. The County recognizes that focusing on and funding these 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 embraces the concept of specialty courts to divert mentally ill and drug using offenders away from the traditional court 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 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'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. Arapahoe County advocates for policies that help advance these principles over the next 20 years. The County also supports actions that ensure adequate water availability for future land use development.

The County supports maintaining mechanisms that lessens the costs of growth and redevelopment, such as impact fees, real estate transfer taxes and other growth-financing tools. The County opposes any efforts to supersede, override or preempt local land use authority.

## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Arapahoe County believes the movement of goods and people are vital to the continued economic success of the state and Coloradans' quality of life.

With several major highways, transit lines, and one of the nation's busiest regional airports, effective transportation is equally important to the success of the county's



economy. Arapahoe County has demonstrated a willingness to partner on large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the Interstate 25/Arapahoe Road interchange and Parker/Arapahoe Road interchange 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.

Arapahoe County continues to support an equitable Highway User Trust 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.

## HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Arapahoe County supports coordinated regional and state efforts to alleviate housing affordability issues by increasing the supply of affordable and accessible housing.

Arapahoe County also recognizes that homelessness is a complex, interconnected issue and that people experience homelessness for a multitude of reasons. The County supports a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing homelessness by alleviating generational poverty, providing accessible workforce development opportunities for our most vulnerable populations and ensuring adequate funding for safety net services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

Arapahoe County is committed to providing public health services in a fiscally sound manner that are based on best practices and community input. The County also supports all counties' ability to set fees for public health services, licenses and permits and deliver services in a manner that meets the needs of their county residents.





# Stay Informed



# Commissioners

### COMMISSIONER NEWS

Get updates from your County Commissioners about recent news and upcoming events in your district and throughout the County. Stay informed about how we work toward providing the best quality of life for our citizens.

**SIGN UP** Visit [arapahoegov.com/commissionernews](https://arapahoegov.com/commissionernews) to sign up.

### MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Learn more about how your Arapahoe County government works by visiting our Legistar portal. This lets you follow our Commissioners' calendars and agendas, sit in (virtually) on live public meetings, and watch recordings of past sessions.

**VIEW** The portal can be searched by days and times, departments, or topics; see all your options by visiting <https://arapahoe.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>



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# Representation

Arapahoe County contracts with Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs, a professional lobbyist, for state advocacy activities. 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, and the Director of Public Works & Development.

As a member of Colorado Counties, Inc., Colorado Counties Acting Together, and the National Association of Counties, Arapahoe County relies on those organization’s advocacy team to provide reliable information on legislative issues and the impact on Colorado’s counties and their residents. The county also relies 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 to the organization.

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