



LONE TREE VOICE

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DOUGLAS COUNTY, COLORADO

  LoneTreeVoice.net

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VOLUME 21 | ISSUE 40 **SUSTAINABLE PRINTING**

Bicycle Colorado launches Greenhouse Gas Exchange tours

Highlights transit-oriented development

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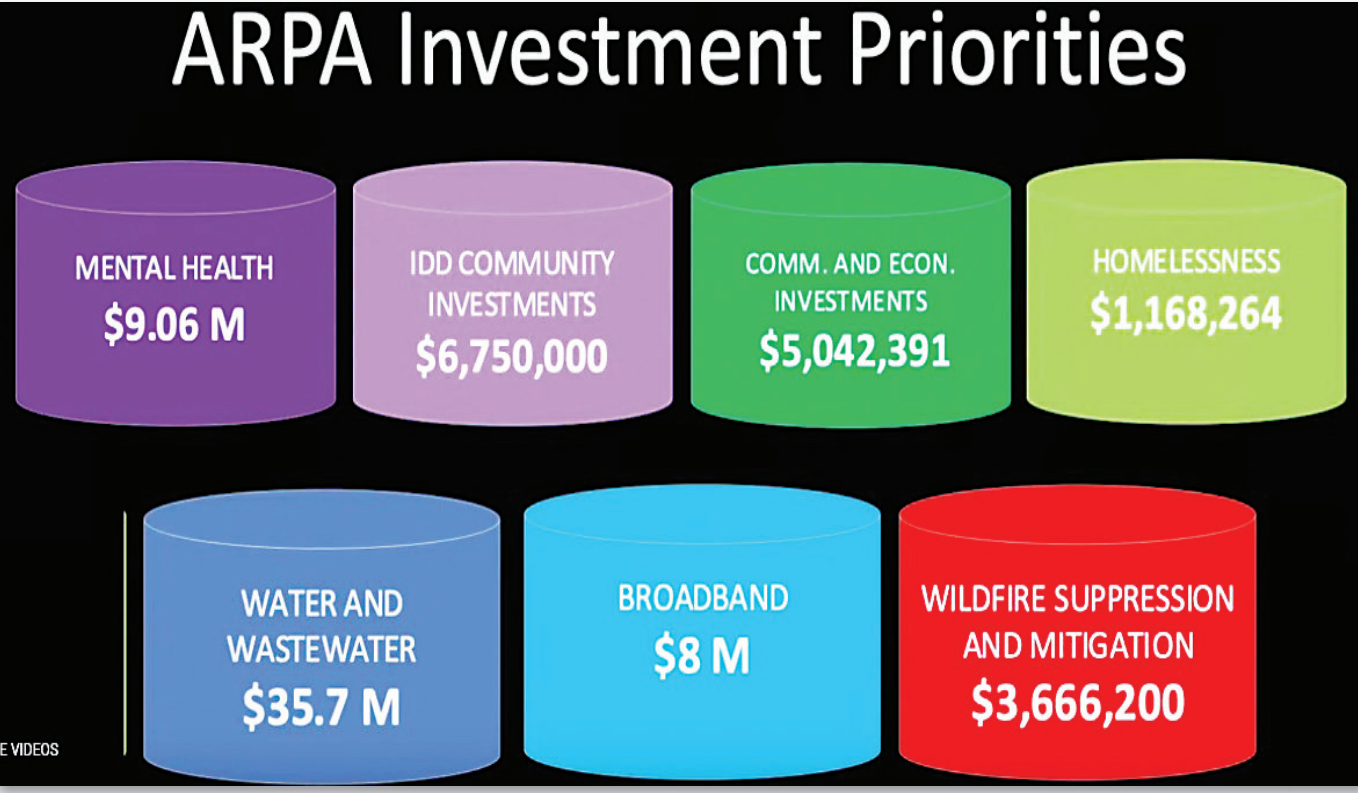
For years, city officials and staff have been working to make traveling without a car easier in Lone

Tree — a strategy used to attract residents and jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The success it's seen so far led to Bicycle Colorado, a nonprofit advocating for bicyclists, launching its series of "Greenhouse Gas Exchange Tours" in Lone Tree, highlighting the city's transit-oriented developments. Colorado has a statewide goal to

reduce 2050 greenhouse gas emissions by at least 90% of the levels of emissions that existed in 2005, per House Bill 1261. Transportation is the largest contributor to the state's greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Colorado Energy Office. Opting to use public transit, biking and/or walking instead of driving will help reduce transportation emissions,

the office reported. "We're really looking at our transportation holistically and trying to figure out: How do we build a transportation system that works for everyone, that's really leading with multimodal solutions?" said Rachel Hultin, Bicycle Colorado's director of sustainable transportation.

SEE TOURS, P6



ARPA funds will be distributed into seven areas.

DOUGLAS COUNTY GRAPHIC

Commissioners highlight ARPA designations

State of the County event held in Lone Tree

BY HALEY LENA
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In honor of the multi-generational impacts of public services to Douglas County, the annual State of the County address focused on the 20 years of partnership and the commissioners distribution of federal funds.

Douglas County Commissioners George Teal, Abe Laydon and Lora Thomas came together to speak about the intentions of the county's \$68.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds, or ARPA, during the Nov. 16 event.

Teal said the ARPA funding decisions were based on five investment principles focused on ensuring a legacy benefit, responding to immediate needs, being forward-looking, integrating board core priorities, avoiding duplication and leverage partnerships. "These investment areas were informed by consultations with stakeholders, citizen in business community engagement, including live town meetings," said Thomas.

Based on the investment principles, Douglas County has seven priority investment areas where ARPA funds will be distributed. The largest investment is in water and wastewater with \$35.7 million in allocated funds.

As wildfires are one of the biggest threats in Douglas County, public safety was the first priority listed by the three commissioners who took turns speaking at the event held at the Denver Marriot in Lone Tree.

SEE COUNTY, P8

School district plans for universal preschool

Early childhood programs to remain

BY MCKENNA HARFORD
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Ahead of the launch of state-funded universal pre-kindergarten in 2023-24, the Douglas County School District is working out its role in the new program.

During the Nov. 15 board meeting, the district staff gave a presentation covering some details of the universal pre-kindergarten program. Through its charters and early childhood programs, the district will be one of several pre-kindergarten providers participating.

"We are able to absolutely accommodate the 10 hours of free preschool for our 4-year-olds at,

SEE SCHOOLS, P2

Check out Hometown Holidays
In this week's paper!

Also in this week's paper!
2022 DOUGLAS COUNTY NONPROFIT GIVING GUIDE

TOURS

FROM PAGE 1

“Lone Tree is doing — has been doing a great job for 20 years, and their vision for the next 20 is even more inspiring,” she said.

A large group of people — including representatives from the City of Centennial, Regional Transportation District (RTD) and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) — gathered on Nov. 9 for a tour that highlighted Lone Tree’s light rail stations, bicycle networks and mixed-use developments.

“We plan, today, to take you through Lone Tree’s past, present and future, one light rail stop at a time,” said Lone Tree Mayor Pro Tem Wynne Shaw.

The past

When Lone Tree was formed in 1995, city founders wanted to create a connected and walkable community, Shaw said.

“One of our first actions was to realize transit was central to our bigger planning efforts,” she said.

In 2002, the City of Lone Tree asked RTD to evaluate the feasibility of joining the RTD District, given the entire city was not within the legal boundaries of the district at that time, according to an RTD report.

Lone Tree voters approved annexation into the district in 2003. According to a 2004 report from the Colorado Department of Revenue, the RTD sales and use tax rate was 0.6%.

“That was an intentional decision



An RTD light rail train arriving at Sky Ridge Station in Lone Tree on Nov. 9. PHOTO BY TAYLER SHAW

by Lone Tree voters to tax themselves for no service, because they wanted this light rail extension and they recognized how important it would be to the community,” said Lone Tree Mayor Jackie Millet.

Lone Tree is now home to five RTD light rail stations.

Originally, the RTD Lincoln Station, located at 10203 Station Way, was the end-of-line station for the southeast rail line, Millet said.

However, in 2019, three additional light rail stations opened in Lone Tree — Sky Ridge Station, Lone Tree City Center Station and RidgeGate Parkway Station.

“We are so proud to have seen that vision come to fruition,” Millet said.

Transit-oriented developments

To develop transit-oriented communities in Lone Tree, the city has focused on establishing multi-family housing, retail space and office space near the RTD stations.

Within a half-mile of Lincoln Station, for example, there are 2,900 multi-family units and 30,000 square feet of retail, Millet said.

Sky Ridge Station, despite being relatively new, is built out already, said Jeff Holwell, the city’s economic development director.

He credited its growth to employers like Sky Ridge Medical Center and Charles Schwab that, prior to the station’s establishment in 2019, invested in the area.

They understood that living in a mixed-use community next to transit was beneficial for their real estate values and employees, he said.

Employees are looking for ways to move more efficiently, said Sheryl Machado, director of communications and public affairs for the Denver South Transportation Management Association and the Denver South Economic Development Partnership.

“If you don’t have mobility and movement, you don’t have job creation. You don’t have employees that want to live, work and play where they can’t move efficiently,” Machado said.

Denver South works with six jurisdictions to support transportation and economic development in the region, and it helps provide funding for local projects, she said.

“Now, of course — more than ever — transportation issues matter as the population density continues to grow in Colorado,” Machado said.

Housing affordability

Although Lone Tree has been able to attract jobs and residents through providing multimodal transportation, a downside has been the housing cost increase, Millet said.

“I’m sad to see how expensive it is to live in the City of Lone Tree right now,” Millet said, explaining the property values have dramatically increased.

“So, as you are thinking about these choices in your community, I would encourage you to think about the affordability of your housing when you do that, because we have seen our home prices go up dramatically,” she said. “That is the downside of providing it all.”

Kelly First, Lone Tree’s community development director, said a lot

of multifamily housing is planned near RidgeGate Parkway Station. One of which is Koelbel and Company’s Talus apartment building — Lone Tree’s first affordable housing project.

“We, in Lone Tree, are really trying to find ways to keep that affordability coming through additional projects. This one happens to be 67 units,” First said. “It’s small, but it’s mighty.”

RidgeGate development

An important vote was in 1999 when Lone Tree voters approved the annexation of the 3,500-acre RidgeGate property, Millet said.

RidgeGate is 3,500 acres located both east and west of I-25 and south of Lincoln Avenue, First said. It incorporates the Sky Ridge Station, Lone Tree City Center Station and RidgeGate Parkway Station.

“It has a single master developer, which has been key — Coventry Development — key to having a shared vision with the city,” First said.

The vision was to create something more urban, mixed-use and transit-oriented, she said.

“It kind of comes down to: How do we continue to create a place where people want to be, where they can live and have a diversity of housing options?” she said.

The ongoing development of RidgeGate East involves an 80-acre regional park, Lone Tree City Center and three residential villages.

“The mobility hub and the urban trail network that we’re planning is more than just a recreational trail system, but it is hopefully getting people who work and live in the area to be able to commute and take advantage of all the great spaces (and) employment options,” First said.

The city also has a microtransit service called Link On Demand, which offers transit throughout the city, Holwell said.

“We’ve partnered with (an) entity called Via, which develops an app much like Uber,” he said. “Using your smartphone, you can summon the vehicle directly to you and take it to any other location in Lone Tree for free.”

Long-term planning, collaboration

The development of Lone Tree’s transportation systems and transit-oriented communities has been purposeful, and it wouldn’t have been possible without the partnerships of organizations like RTD and CDOT, Millet said.

“We had a unique set of circumstances,” she said. “But I would say in each and every one of your communities, you have a unique set of circumstances and opportunities and challenges, and so please go look at those. And redevelopment is (a) great opportunity.”

Hultin encouraged those at the tour to communicate what they learned with their agencies and to collaborate with others on strategies to meet the 2050 greenhouse gas emissions goals.

“You have to think of what you want to see happen 15 to 20 years from now, because some of the decisions that resulted in all of this were made by people like you, many, many years ago,” said Brian Welch, RTD’s acting assistant general manager of planning. “We want to work with you to make things better for our community.”



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