

# STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

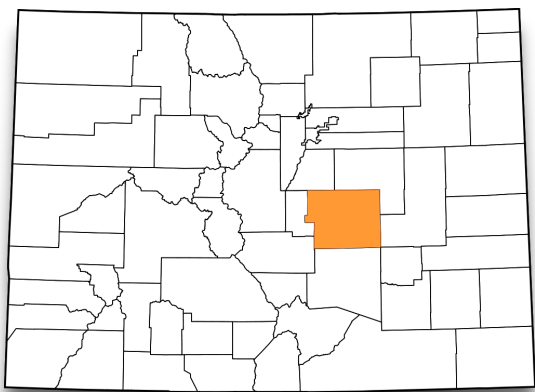
The Role of Counties in Economic Development



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## EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO

### Improving Economic and Social Outcomes



El Paso County, Colorado takes a holistic view on economic development by strengthening not only the local economy, but also improving the well-being of county residents. The most populous county in the state, El Paso County benefits from a strong tourism sector, with leisure and hospitality industry accounting for 13 percent of all jobs in the county in 2013. The county is home to several tourist attractions including landmarks such as Pikes Peak and Garden of the Gods. Over the past few years, major wildfires and severe flooding affected this engine of economic growth for the county. In 2012 and 2013 alone, the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released three major disaster declarations for the county. In 2011 the county also faced another kind of disaster — in that year alone 10 children died in families across the county from

abuse and neglect. This case study presents two of the latest initiatives in which El Paso County collaborated to improve the lives of its residents and strengthen the economy.

### City for Champions

El Paso County works with the City of Colorado Springs and a number of other local partners to boost tourism and grow the regional economy through the City for Champions project. Initiated by the City of Colorado Springs, the project aims to attract more tourists to the region with four new venues: the United States Olympic Museum, the Colorado Sports and Events Center, the Sports Medicine and Performance Center at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and a new visitor center at the United States Air Force Academy. The City for Champions initiative banks on the location of the U.S. Olympic Committee in the City of Colorado Springs and aims to brand the city as “America’s Olympic City.” The project plans to create the United States Olympic Museum as an “Olympic Experience” for the visitors, going beyond the traditional museum concept. The project plans the Colorado Sports and Events Center as a destination for professional and aspiring athletes and a venue for regional and national sports events related to the Olympic movement. The Sports Medicine and Performance Center goes beyond tourism promotion, as a destination clinic for training and care for athletes and wounded warriors, as well as a center for aging research. A new visitor center at the

- Population, 2013: 655,044
- County Board size: 5
- County Administrator



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United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs would provide a more engaging experience for visitors to the Academy, one of the state's top tourist destinations before September 11, 2001.

The goals of the City for Champions initiative include higher tourism spending and the creation of more than 5,100 jobs, many in highly-skilled occupations; the revitalization of the downtown area of the city; improvements of the existing infrastructure and more tax revenues to provide services for residents.

The City for Champions project is a regional collaboration with potential impact across the Pikes Peak Region and the state. In July 2013, El Paso County partnered with the City of Colorado Springs to apply for supplemental



Architectural rendition of the Sports Medicine and Performance Center, North Nevada Avenue Campus of the University of



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funding from the state through the Regional Tourism Act (RTA) of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. The RTA provides state funding to selected large-scale regional tourism projects that aim to attract investment and revenue from out-of-state. The RTA uses a land value capture financing mechanism, called Tax Increment Financing (TIF) that allows the state to provide for current capital project needs by allocating a percentage of the future gains in sales tax revenues generated by the project. In December 2013 the state awarded to the project 13 percent of the expected increased sales tax revenues, about \$120 million over the next 30 years. The state funding helps with the \$250 million cost of the project. The partners of the project aim to fund the remaining \$130 million from the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, private donations and other sources. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2014 and last until May 2017. City for Champions expects to generate \$7 billion in sales over the next 30 years and one million new visitors a year.

## Not One More Child Initiative

El Paso County aims to address not only the income and job needs of their residents through traditional economic development strategies, but also their well-being and prosperity. In 2012, county Commissioner Sallie Clark teamed up with District Attorney Dan May and started the Not One More Child Initiative (NOMCI) initiative after an alarming number of child deaths occurred in 2011 because of neglect and abuse. Ten children died and seven were in families with an active-duty military member. The program seeks to end child deaths caused by neglect and abuse. Representatives from over 40 different organizations and county departments, including the County Department of Human Services, discussed the scope and products of the project. The partners decided to create seven task forces to address different aspects of the initiative. The initiative tasked the communication task force to get the message out to the community. As a result, this task force created a website and a training video and had the video aired in hospital waiting rooms throughout the community. Since some of the families affected by child abuse in 2011 involved military members, NOMCI included a military task force to address issues facing military families. For example, the program provides parenting support services when military members return home. The initiative also includes a parent support program consisting of home visitations by social workers and registered nurses and an outreach program to young fathers. These efforts had an immediate impact, reducing significantly the number of child deaths because of neglect and abuse in 2012 and in 2013.

El Paso County works with a large number of partners to improve its local economy and the lives of its residents. Through the City for Champions project and NOMCI, El Paso County continues to build its community through integrated economic development strategies. This holistic approach that involves both economic and social outcomes aims to create a stronger, more resilient county.