The Denver Office of Economic Development

The Denver Office of Economic Development (OED) is dedicated to advancing economic prosperity for the City of Denver, its businesses, neighborhoods and residents. Working with a wide variety of community partners, OED operates to create a local environment that stimulates balanced growth through job creation, business assistance, housing options, neighborhood redevelopment and the development of a skilled workforce.

Small Business

OED offers a diverse set of programs and services to assist new and expanding companies in Denver. From small business financing to regulatory assistance, employee recruitment, Enterprise Tax Zone Credit assistance and a myriad of other services, OED serves as a resource to help businesses thrive within the City and County of Denver. The Office of Economic Development helps promote small and disadvantaged businesses by providing access to contracting opportunities within Denver. The OED also offers compliance assistance with city contracts, small business and disadvantaged business ownership certification, and compliance assistance for businesses located at Denver International Airport.

Housing and Neighborhoods

OED facilitates the development of viable urban neighborhoods by providing quality affordable housing, an enhanced living environment, and expanded economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents. The OED offers finance assistance for residential housing, technical assistance for neighborhood revitalization, and finance assistance for developers.

Workforce

Through its operation of the Denver Workforce Centers, OED serves as an employment and training resource that meets the recruiting and training needs of businesses, job seekers and youth throughout the metro area. The OED Division of Workforce Development connects employers with a trained and ready workforce, while assisting job seekers with gaining needed skills and securing sustainable employment.
From the Mayor

Denver is experiencing one of the most dynamic times in our city’s history and, in 2015, we turned ambitious plans into reality. We reached transformative milestones in business recruitment, job creation, affordable housing and a multitude of strategic investments. Denver’s next-generation economy has simultaneously built on its traditional strengths while steadily attracting new ventures and industries.

This report clearly outlines how Denver has set the stage for even more job creation by continuing to position our city as a leader in innovation and technology, by creating both an ecosystem for emerging sectors and by growing a highly skilled labor force to meet tomorrow’s opportunities today.

With our unparalleled job market and inclusive, forward-thinking business climate, it’s no surprise Forbes named Denver the No. 1 city for businesses and careers in 2015. Our commitment to improve service delivery to employers, employees and entrepreneurs continues, and we won’t stop there. We will work hard to maintain this momentum and ensure that true economic mobility is within reach for every resident.

I am proud that the Denver Office of Economic Development (OED) models a thoughtful balance between addressing the city’s immediate economic needs while also ensuring that our investments fuel vibrant economic opportunity for years to come. This effort is well illustrated in the city’s approach to spur a wide spectrum of housing projects, from creating emergency shelter for our most vulnerable populations to harnessing the opportunity of homeownership for new families and delivering meaningful modest income housing for Denver’s working households who are too often overlooked.

Across a span of economic development strategies highlighted in the following report, we have made substantial headway, and there is much to feel proud of in the progress we have achieved together.

Mayor Michael B. Hancock

From the Executive Director

A predominant theme in local economic development this year involves new ways to apply technology to maximize the impact of our work. OED created an interactive map of area manufacturers, providing a unique ability to connect suppliers and customers; we also began populating a new online showcase of exciting growth potential sites that fit the city’s strategic approach for catalytic investment.

Data tools logically enhance our business recruitment and retention efforts, to be sure, but we’re also using technology to strengthen our services to job seekers and employers, helping prepare our agency to better meet the standards of new federal workforce legislation.

Another theme involves building our presence as a trade partner internationally. The doors that OED is helping open with Denver Beer Company in Japan, for example, are just the beginning of a wave of new market efforts for dozens of Denver-based firms.

In these pages, you’ll see a common thread of sheer volume. We’ve had an exciting run of new jobs from both startups and corporate locations in 2015, but we’ve also made great progress at implementing our long-term affordable housing strategy. Meanwhile, two record-breaking business incentive packages this year – United Airlines’ flight training consolidation and Costco’s decision to open a business-services store here – will bring unparalleled direct and indirect fiscal benefits for years to come.

Paul Washington

Executive Director, Denver Office of Economic Development
JumpStart 2015 – the OED’s strategic plan – provided an innovative, forward thinking and intentional approach for the city to advance economic prosperity during this past year. The plan is built upon seven economic development pillars:

- Business Recruitment
- Business Retention
- Small Business Advocacy
- Housing Development
- Neighborhood Development
- Strategic Lending
- Workforce Development

This Annual Report presents key highlights of JumpStart accomplishments, as well as other signature wins gained by the OED in 2015.

Denver’s JumpStart 2015 Strategy Produced:

- 4,164 NEW JOBS
- $304M CAPITAL INVESTMENT
- 3,076 RETAINED JOBS
- 628 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

Throughout the Year OED Helped:

- 35,485 ADULTS WITH THEIR JOB SEARCH
- 3,713 EMPLOYERS WITH STAFF RECRUITMENT
- 4,533 YOUTH WITH TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PLANS
JumpStart 2015 Sparks Success Year-Round

Job Creation, Retention and Capital Investment

OED’s portfolio of business development programs sparked a successful year for job creation and the expansion of Denver’s tax base. Incentive, tax credit and wage assistance programs helped 89 firms to expand in Denver. Collectively, these businesses are creating 4,164 new jobs and making more than $304 million of capital investments. In addition, these economic development partnerships supported the retention of 3,076 jobs.

The city’s main job creation and retention tools include the Business Incentive Fund, which provides reimbursements to firms following the creation of new jobs/investments; the Business Investment Program, which provides business personal property tax credits; small business lending programs; and workforce development training grants.

Firms assisted in 2015 include United Airlines, Gusto, Comcast, FiveStars, KPMG, DaVita, Costco, Sunrun, Optiv and Transamerica.
Business Recruitment

› United Airlines selected Denver as the location for its consolidated flight training center. For years, United has operated a training center for pilots at Stapleton, employing approximately 400 staff. The company recently underwent a site selection to consolidate all of its pilot training operations into one location. The expansion will bring approximately 250 additional high-paying jobs, plus more than $40 million in upgrades to the Stapleton facilities, which in turn will catapult development of the nearby Central Park Station transit-oriented development. OED supported the expansion through the Business Incentive Fund.

› Gusto, a rapid-growth payroll automation firm based out of San Francisco since 2012, selected Denver as a key city for its expansion. The new downtown location immediately filled more than 100 full-time positions, and plans call for more than 1,000 Denver jobs within a few years. OED provided technical assistance and support from the Business Investment Program to help encourage the expansion.

› Fresh off a $26 million venture capital infusion, FiveStars chose Denver as an expansion city for its next stage of growth. The San Francisco-based firm, which offers customer loyalty and marketing automation for small businesses, leased 10,000 square-feet of office space and has hired over 100 staff in Denver. OED backed the firm’s expansion decision with site selection assistance and support from the Business Investment Program.

› Longtime Denver employer KPMG opened its first of several “Ignition Center” high-tech workspaces in the Mile High City. Bringing 125 skilled jobs, the collaborative high-tech work environment is designed to enable cross-functional teaming, critical to the successful design and delivery of emerging solutions to clients. KPMG cited Denver’s booming IT workforce and strong population of millennials as factors supporting the new location. OED provided location assistance and an incentive package to support the rollout.
Comcast opened a new technology hub in LoDo. Serving predominantly as the home to Comcast Wholesale, a group of employees dedicated to advancing the company’s leadership in the media and technology industry, the office employs approximately 200 staff, adding significantly to its existing workforce of 400 in Denver. OED supported the expansion through the Business Incentive Fund.

Transamerica established a notable footprint in Denver’s financial district by establishing a new downtown office at 1801 California. The company relocated from the Denver Tech Center to the 121,000 sf downtown office, bringing with it 650 jobs to the core city. OED provided site selection assistance, plus support from the Business Incentive Fund and the Business Investment Program.

Denver’s Retail Development Program reached new heights with the successful recruitment of a Costco Business Center to the Alameda Square shopping center in West Denver. Due to open in spring of 2016, the center will bring more than 100 sustaining wage jobs to the Athmar Park neighborhood. OED supported the recruitment through technical assistance, site selection, and the Business Incentive Fund.

Sunrun, a California-based residential solar company with more than 100,000 customers, selected Denver as its expansion city. The firm has leased space in LoDo and will create 800+ jobs, paying an average salary of approximately $62,000, during the next five years. OED supported the expansion through the Business Incentive Fund and the Business Investment Program.

OED began using an interactive online tool (www.oppsites.com) for promoting some of Denver’s best opportunities for catalytic change and development. This new product blends both mapping and promotional data to showcase sites with developers, businesses, and retailers all over the country. Showcasing public, direct funding priorities often boosts private investment and reinvestment.
Business Retention and Expansion

› Denver-based, home-grown IT security services firm Accuvant successfully merged with FishNet, a Kansas City company. The resulting firm, renamed Optiv, established its new consolidated global headquarters in Denver, resulting in the retention of 200 local jobs and projected job creation of up to 400 positions over the next five years. The OED supported the expansion through the Business Incentive Fund.

› Utilizing the Business Incentive Fund, OED helped support the DaVita corporate headquarters expansion in Lower Downtown. The decision will bring 500 additional jobs to Denver, as well as $125M in capital investment in the form of a new 19-story building where DaVita will be an anchor tenant.

› OED launched the Denver Manufacturing Map Tool, an online GIS mapping system that details all manufacturing operations and related support systems within the city. Among its many uses, the tool helps manufacturers identify suppliers, transportation providers, warehousing opportunities, and potential expansion sites.

› OED implemented the third year of the Business Investment Program, a tax policy that encourages firms to hire more people and invest in more equipment by eliminating the General Fund portion of business personal property tax for four years for any Denver-based business that meets certain criteria of new business investment and growth. The Business Investment Program incentivized a total of 33 firms to create 607 additional jobs and invest more than $77 million in business expansion.

› Working in partnership with Denver International Airport and state/regional partners, OED focused on increasing Denver’s profile in key world markets. These efforts included trade missions to businesses in global opportunity markets (Asia), hosting an investment forum/exchange in Japan, and the launch of the Mayor’s International Advisory Council, with the goal to make Denver a more internationally competitive and welcoming city.
With 95% of the world’s consumers living outside of the U.S., exporting is a critical strategy to grow our local economy, creating new jobs in Denver while serving new markets. Already an award-winning brand at home and with a major production expansion complete, Denver Beer Company was looking to explore global opportunities. They became the first participant in OED’s pilot Export Promotion Program, which launched in 2015 to help export-ready companies access international markets.

OED partnered with the International Business program at the CU Denver School of Business to provide market research and consulting for Denver Beer, with graduate students analyzing financial and distribution data to create a customized export plan. The students considered a number of Latin American countries as well as a range of Japanese prefectures, establishing a detailed matrix of logistical, economic, regulatory, and cultural factors to determine the strongest target.

Armed with this analysis, the firm picked Japan. After the spring semester, OED hired one of the export plan authors as a summer intern to work on implementation with Denver Beer.

Connections with a large distributor of American craft beer in Japan, along with the growing Japanese craft-beer media, escalated progress. Denver Beer made its first shipment to Japan in mid-summer. By November, Denver Beer Company co-founders Charlie Berger and Patrick Crawford joined Mayor Hancock as part of an official delegation to promote trade relationships between Denver and Japan, visiting both Tokyo and Takayama, Denver’s sister city, and building relationships with Japanese business leaders.
Celebrated the opening of The Commons on Champa, a unique public campus designed to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Denver. A partnership between the City and County of Denver, Downtown Denver Partnership and the Colorado Technology Association, The Commons has established itself as a go-to resource for business builders, with more than 10,000 people attending programs during the first four months of operation. OED’s business extension office at The Commons provides staff assistance to entrepreneurs and business owners, promoting business growth and expansion.

Promoted Denver’s position as a leading city for successful startups by honoring a group of high-growth companies as “Denver Gazelles.” The 2015 class of Gazelles, all tech-related firms, were Altitude Digital, Four Winds Interactive, ProtectWise, and Wayin. A total of 19 firms have been recognized over the past four years, benefiting from networking opportunities with one another and exposure throughout the community.

Increased access to contracting opportunities by growing the city’s business certification programs. A total of 1,545 small and minority/women-owned firms are now certified and eligible to compete for city construction, professional services and/or DIA concession opportunities.

Successfully launched a new Minority/Women Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Mentor-Protégé Program, which matched five M/WBE firms with seasoned businesses to receive coaching. Designed to build capacity among emerging construction and professional services firms, the program provides mentoring on public contract applications and contract performance, as well as guidance on strategic planning, financial management, marketing, and other business-management topics.

Sponsored the Colorado Venture Summit, a premier gathering of venture-backed founders/CEOs of tech firms with an array of venture capitalists. The Summit evolved from the OED’s former venture capital roundtables held in 2012-2013.

Supported the establishment of CO Active, a new trade association to fuel the growth of active lifestyle manufacturers throughout the city and state. The new association caps three years of OED’s direct involvement to convene industry leaders in order to elevate and propel this unique growth sector.

The Real Estate Diversity Initiative, a joint project between OED and the Urban Land Institute Colorado District Council, produced 40 minority and women graduates which brings the six-year program total to 212 graduates. The program is designed to boost the number of minorities and women in the real estate industry, particularly in real estate development.
Guerrilla Gravity took the top prize at OED’s 2015 JumpStart BizPlan Awards, sponsored by U.S. Bank and Deloitte, winning the final round at a standing-room only live event at The Commons on Champa during Denver Startup Week in September.

Guerrilla Gravity is a rider-focused mountain bike manufacturing company founded on the vision that things could, and should, be done differently. They bring a unique and exceptional design philosophy, sales model, and dedication to Colorado-based manufacturing.

Each of the three award finalists – including Arthroventions and Übergrippen Indoor Climbing Crag – presented overviews of their business plans and answered questions from an expert judging panel. In addition to $30,000 cash, Guerrilla Gravity’s prize included legal counsel provided by Polsinelli, strategic marketing services from dovetail solutions, and entrepreneurship mentoring from TiE Rockies and Rockies Venture Club.

Applicants for the award represented a wide variety of industries including healthcare, manufacturing, technology and consumer electronics, apparel, and retail and restaurants.

New this year, the citywide business plan competition also included a category for young entrepreneurs, sponsored by Junior Achievement-Rocky Mountain, Inc. The TeenBiz Plan Award included a $5,000 cash prize.

OED delivered three other Startup Week-themed events, including a panel discussion with leaders from Colorado’s growing outdoor lifestyle industry, a small business resource fair, and a workshop on civic philanthropy. Ongoing throughout the year at Denver’s new public entrepreneurship center is a suite of free technical and marketing resources, OED@Commons, including one-on-one consultations for walk-ins or by appointment.
FOR 30+ YEARS, OED’S SMALL BUSINESS LENDING PROGRAMS HAVE HELPED FUEL BUSINESS GROWTH ACROSS A NUMBER OF INDUSTRIES, FROM RETAIL AND RESTAURANTS, TO MANUFACTURERS, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, AND OTHERS.

Business Lending

- Provided six loans totaling $1.6 million to Denver small businesses, which in turn leveraged an additional private investment of $8.1 million. OED’s small business borrowers for 2015 included 48Race, LLC; Nocturne; Max Market; New World Cheese, LLC; NextHealth Technologies and Ibotta.
- Helped local businesses gain access to capital by publishing the fourth edition of the Denver Capital Matrix. The resource directory identifies nearly 400 funding sources, including traditional bank lending, venture capital firms, private equity firms, angel investors, mezzanine sources, investment banking institutions and others that have funded Colorado businesses.

Boosting Denver’s Digital Healthcare Sector

For 30+ years, OED’s small business lending programs have helped fuel business growth across a number of industries, from retail and restaurants, to manufacturers, professional services, and others. This year, OED added the promising digital healthcare sector to its portfolio of investments, through a loan made to NextHealth Technologies.

OED provided a $300,000 loan to help secure the firm’s expansion at 1675 Larimer St. The investment positions NextHealth to quickly grow its staff from 15 to 60 technical development jobs within three years. The loan also leveraged an additional $700,000 in funding from investors.

NextHealth’s mission is to improve outcomes and reduce costs by helping patients make more informed choices about their health. The company reports that its customers are seeing a 20% reduction in ER visits and costs within a targeted Medicaid population. NextHealth’s platform incorporates advanced analytics, behavioral economics, and consumer engagement techniques to predict risk and prescribe personalized member-level actions or “nudges” to improve outcomes.

“We were attracted to NextHealth on multiple levels,” said OED Executive Director Paul Washington. “Their experienced executive team, particularly CEO Eric Grossman’s success with TriZetto and other entrepreneurial ventures in this very competitive field, has a proven track record. Their commitment to being in Denver and the exceptional quality of the technical jobs they’re creating were also major factors that strongly fit our lending strategy.”

Through the OED’s Revolving Loan Fund program, NextHealth Technologies received a loan to finance a portion of the costs associated with its expansion. The gap financing program lends up to 25 percent of project costs, thereby inducing banks and other funders to provide the bulk of the financing for small businesses.

“We are very proud and excited to partner with Denver to build a legacy of healthcare innovation and local job growth,” said Grossman. “We’re committed to create even more Denver-based tech jobs in this burgeoning healthcare environment.”
Housing Development

- Strengthened Denver’s **affordable housing** inventory by approving or committing to create/rehabilitate 628 affordable units.

- Researched best practices from peer cities and proposed new rules for the city’s **Affordable Housing Preservation Ordinance**, passed by City Council mid-year. Revisions to notification and covenant guidelines strengthens the city’s ability to preserve long-term affordability of existing rental units – a key strategy to complement new construction.

- In Westwood, where OED has taken a strategic approach to spur neighborhood revitalization through parks/open space, youth programs, food access, and affordable housing, the groundbreaking at **Terraza del Sol** will create 42 affordable units for households earning 30-60% of the area median income and also have a ground floor nonprofit tenant, Mi Casa Resource Center, providing youth entrepreneurship and job training programs. OED provided $425,000 in gap financing to support the development.

- Celebrated two streams of funding supporting **The Wheatley**, an exciting Welton Street multi-use project that began construction and will include 82 apartments, 14 townhomes, and 3,800 sf of retail. Following $100,000 pre-development funds in the Welton Design Challenge, OED invested $475,000 in housing funds so that 18 apartments would be affordable up to 80% AMI.

- The mid-year groundbreaking at **2300 Welton**, new affordable apartments in Five Points, will create 223 rental units for low- and moderate-income households (60% AMI). OED provided $1.1 million in financing for land acquisition from the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance special revenue fund, plus HUD dollars for construction.

- Celebrated the groundbreaking of **Ashley Union Station**, a new mixed-income rental development that will offer 75 affordable units within steps of Denver’s mass transit hub. The $30 million development received financing through the OED, including $2.3 million from the General Fund and $950,000 from the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance special revenue fund.
Housing Development

Continued

› Committed federal and local lending funds to support the upcoming Northfield at Stapleton Apartments. Located north of I-70 in Stapleton, this development will include 84 units, ranging from one to three bedrooms, for households earning from 30 to 60 % AMI.

› OED recorded three Affordable Housing Plans this year from new projects seeking to meet the requirements of Denver’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. Two of the plans included building for-sale affordable units onsite – an encouraging trend – creating six units at W. Colfax and Julian, and 34 units at the Coloradan, to be located immediately adjacent to Denver Union Station near 17th and Wewatta.

› Since its inception in 2013, the Metro Mortgage Assistance Plus program has assisted 1,058 moderate- and low-income residents to become homeowners. The program offers four percent down payment and closing cost grants.

› Launched a new round of the Mortgage Credit Certificate program, which is spurring home purchases throughout the city and particularly in neighborhoods underserved in mortgage loan origination. The program benefited 114 households in 2015.

› With support from OED’s loan funds, Karis Community added seven units of housing for persons with severely persistent mental illness at 30%, 40% and 50% AMI. Affordable housing is so critical for special need populations, as having your very own roof over your head plays a key role in treatment. Similarly, OED’s funding helped the Mental Health Center of Denver complete its $1.2 million renovation of 1555 Humboldt St., creating 15 affordable units for people with serious/chronic mental illness at 50% AMI.

› Provided rental assistance and supportive services totaling $1.5 million to approximately 1,500 people living with HIV or AIDS through the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS federal program.

› Invested housing resources to help curb homelessness in Denver. Through the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance program, OED worked with the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless to provide housing vouchers totaling $570,000 for 93 individuals/families.

› OED convened the first-ever “Bridging the Gap: A Solutions Forum on Housing,” a regional conference with 300 thought-leaders that explored preservation strategies, high-cost city challenges, construction defects reform, transit-oriented development, and homelessness. HUD Secretary Julián Castro joined via video link and Mayor Hancock announced the creation of the Revolving Affordable Housing Loan Fund.
Dramatic rent increases in Denver made headlines this year, notable especially as federal funds available for affordable housing nationwide continued to decline. Determined to get ahead of this tide so that housing availability and costs here cannot derail the many positive strides made in business recruitment and job creation, OED got to work on several aggressive strategies to preserve and enhance area affordability.

As outlined in *Housing Denver*, the city’s five-year plan published in 2014, this challenge clearly requires a bold approach of both conventional as well as new ideas. How can we simultaneously reduce our dependence on federal dollars while greatly expanding the number of projects in our local housing pipeline, particularly those desirable projects that blend mixed-income units and ensure affordability along the income spectrum for working families?

An excellent example of a sustainable, “think local” solution is Denver’s new Revolving Affordable Housing Loan Fund (RAHLF), seeded with $6 million from the City and County of Denver, along with $3 million from the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs and $1 million from the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), which also administers the fund.

Once City Council approved the contractual arrangement with CHFA, the RAHLF rolled out in the fall with approved letters of agreement for three separate multifamily rental developments that will bring 294 housing units to the Hale, Northfield Stapleton and Westwood neighborhoods.

The RAHLF’s initial cycle of $10 million is estimated to produce 600-700 affordable units. Loan repayments will revolve back into the fund; OED estimates the fund can produce more than 1,000 units over 12 years.
Neighborhood Development

Enhanced the vitality of Denver’s low- and moderate-income neighborhoods by supporting 23 separate neighborhood development projects, utilizing $2.4 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

OED funded 50 computer tablets for Fairview Elementary students in Sun Valley. Made possible through Community Development Block Grant funding, the tablets support math and reading efforts, and complement other digital inclusion and computer literacy efforts in the neighborhood.

Groundwork Greens is a social enterprise that grows and sells fresh produce in the urban neighborhoods of Denver, including low-income food desert areas, while also providing job training to low-income youth. The program added an 1,800 sf greenhouse funded in part by OED and located in the Aria Denver affordable housing community at 52nd & Federal.

OED provided $200,000 to the National Society of Black Engineers for its local Summer Engineering Experience for Kids (SEEK) program led by NSBE engineering students and technical professionals. The project provides science, technology, engineering and math concepts in an immersion program to low-income elementary students in Sun Valley, Westwood, and Athmar.

Denver was awarded a $400,000 EPA grant to conduct assessments on brownfield properties for developers who seek opportunities identified in the South Platte Corridor Study. The city has been working for years to ensure that the 11-mile corridor is effectively restored and preserved as a natural resource, an economic driver for the surrounding low-income neighborhoods, and a regional amenity.
Sustainable Transit Communities

Denver’s economic renaissance includes the strategic blending of commercial, residential, cultural, employment, and educational resources around our expanding transit network. Applying an OED loan of $1.5 million and working collaboratively with other funding partners, the Urban Land Conservancy (ULC) purchased a six-acre industrial site at 48th & Race Street in the Elyria-Swansea neighborhood this year for future redevelopment. The vision calls for dedicating this critical land asset for mixed-use community benefits, including fostering small businesses, producing jobs and creating affordable rental units.

Several years of study and collaboration preceded this purchase as various development scenarios and sites were explored in Globeville as well as Elyria-Swansea. The selected property was ULC’s second-largest land purchase to date.

Long-term affordable housing in the area was a key strategic initiative identified in OED’s 2015 JumpStart plan, and the overall transformation of this site is being planned in anticipation of future market rate forces. As the National Western Center redevelopment is funded and the region’s rail network expands, this site acquisition will be increasingly important and will help ensure that residents at all income levels can enjoy the benefits of the area’s development – not just housing but also convenient access and jobs.

In another transit-oriented development move, OED also provided technical support and assistance ahead of the mid-year groundbreaking for One Belleview Station. This 42-acre, master-planned, mixed-use development will include 2.2 million sf of office space, 250,000 sf of retail, nearly 2,000 apartments and condos, and two full-service hotels.

Past catalytic investments around transit are bearing fruit now, including two affordable housing and commercial projects at the 40th & Colorado station, which together are adding 259 affordable units. Other OED investment sites include the 38th/Blake, 61st/Peña, Federal-Decatur and 10th/Osage stations.

INVESTING IN TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Over the past several years, the OED has assisted in making transit-oriented development a reality at many of Denver’s light/commuter rail stations. These stations received OED investment and/or other assistance.
Prompted by changes in federal regulations, as well as a focus on improving outcomes and modeling best practices from other U.S. cities, OED chose to contract out the operations of its workforce development services to outside organizations for the program year beginning July 2016. Preparations for this transition have been substantial, including researching and the writing of Request for Proposals for workforce centers, youth services and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment support. A series of pre-bid and bidder conferences drew the attendance of more than 150 individuals and organizations seeking opportunities to provide workforce development services.

Stronger employment outcomes for all job seekers is a primary goal of this new delivery model, and local “one-stop” centers will serve job seekers across all program areas – a significant improvement in meeting the needs of low-income, vulnerable customers.

- Provided 52,222 individuals with job search assistance through the Denver Workforce Centers. Of the 35,485 people who completed their services, 22,747 individuals, or 64.1%, successfully gained employment.
- As Denver’s unemployment levels dropped, OED’s services to area employers took on more impact as we helped companies find the available, skilled talent they need. Total efforts exceeded all previous years in serving 3,713 employers with 32 hiring events, 18 job fairs, and 10 virtual job fairs – with participation in the latter growing exponentially. In addition, 91 customized or training subsidy positions were supported in eight targeted industries.
- As grant administrator for the multi-year Technology in Colorado Partnership, OED workforce staff organized and implemented communications with all statewide partners, including the creation of a project web site, and hosted kickoff/recruitment events with key stakeholder groups (a range of job seekers, employers, and educators sharing a focus on IT and manufacturing skills).
- Launched a digital literacy training and certification program that helps job seekers who are being held back by a lack of computer skills gain proficiency in six key areas – including Word and Excel – thus able to demonstrate to employers they are ready for higher performance, higher wage jobs.
- Inspired by the five-year, $200 million initiative launched nationwide by President Obama, My Brother’s Keeper in Denver in 2015 included a career awareness, work readiness, and personal leadership component delivered by Denver Workforce staff that engaged 11 trained job coaches and placed 31 young men of color.
- Provided employment and training services to an average of 3,500 Colorado Works/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families each month. Assisted 1,293 TANF recipients to move from public assistance to employment.
Ready to Rock When Opportunity Knocks

OED was pleased to be invited to a ribbon-cutting last summer at CINTAS, who was celebrating the completion of a $5 million renovation at its Montbello neighborhood facility, resulting in 30 new manufacturing jobs. This wasn’t a project that had directly involved us, but we are always eager to help celebrate a milestone reached by a Denver employer – particularly one in an industry we especially seek to strengthen.

Then OED’s business rep who focuses on manufacturing, Peggy Severson, learned of this event. On short notice – as in, that day – she cleared her calendar and attended the ribbon cutting, her first visit there. OED’s corps of business development reps are always making connections, building industry relationships and eager to listen for ways we can help companies flourish.

Fast forward six weeks.

CINTAS had shared with Peggy their specific needs for hiring and ongoing challenges in finding top job-ready candidates. Soon a joint juggernaut of OED services had kicked in – our workforce trainers developed custom curriculum while our workforce development business services group promoted and delivered a unique, three-day pre-recruitment training for CINTAS job applicants.

Job seekers got a laser-focused course in interviewing and on-the-job leadership, and CINTAS got to select candidates from a select field of eager, informed applicants.

This is OED at its best – sharing timely information in all directions internally, and organizing fast and responsive customized services.

CINTAS has 30,000 employees at 430 facilities across the U.S. and Canada, with annual revenues of $4.32 billion. And now, they’re a great new partner for us locally too.

“Stackable” Credentials to Boost Healthcare Employment & Wages

When the Clinton Global Initiative America met in Denver, one new commitment to action was OED’s “Healthcare Career Pathways,” a project designed to make it easier for low-wage, lower-skill workers in the healthcare industry to keep learning, boost their earning power and respond to the evolving needs of employers.

Our project began with asking the region’s healthcare employers to identify the most critically needed roles in patient care, and then coordinating with high schools, career and technical education programs and higher-education institutions to reduce duplication on trainings and certifications. One idea is to break down curriculum into shorter, more precise segments that can lead to industry-recognized certifications, “stackable” credentials and associates degrees.

In the workforce industry, stackable credentials are those which logically follow one another along a career path, without redundancy or distraction, and with widely recognized accreditation among both schools and employers. Even while working, a student can see and plan for future advancement and reasonably estimate the time and tuition expense that each step will require.

Industry projections call for a 27% increase in the number of healthcare workers in metro Denver by 2020.

OED’s project aligns closely with CGI’s strategy to empower girls and women. Our research shows that women comprise 75% of the healthcare industry in metro Denver, and are overrepresented in entry-level healthcare jobs. Clearer pathways for women and girls working in this industry will help them attain higher wages more quickly while reducing tuition costs, which are a major barrier to women moving up the career ladder.

Project partners include the Colorado Community College System, Emily Griffith Technical College, the Community College of Denver, the Greater Denver Healthcare Partnership, and Denver Public Schools.