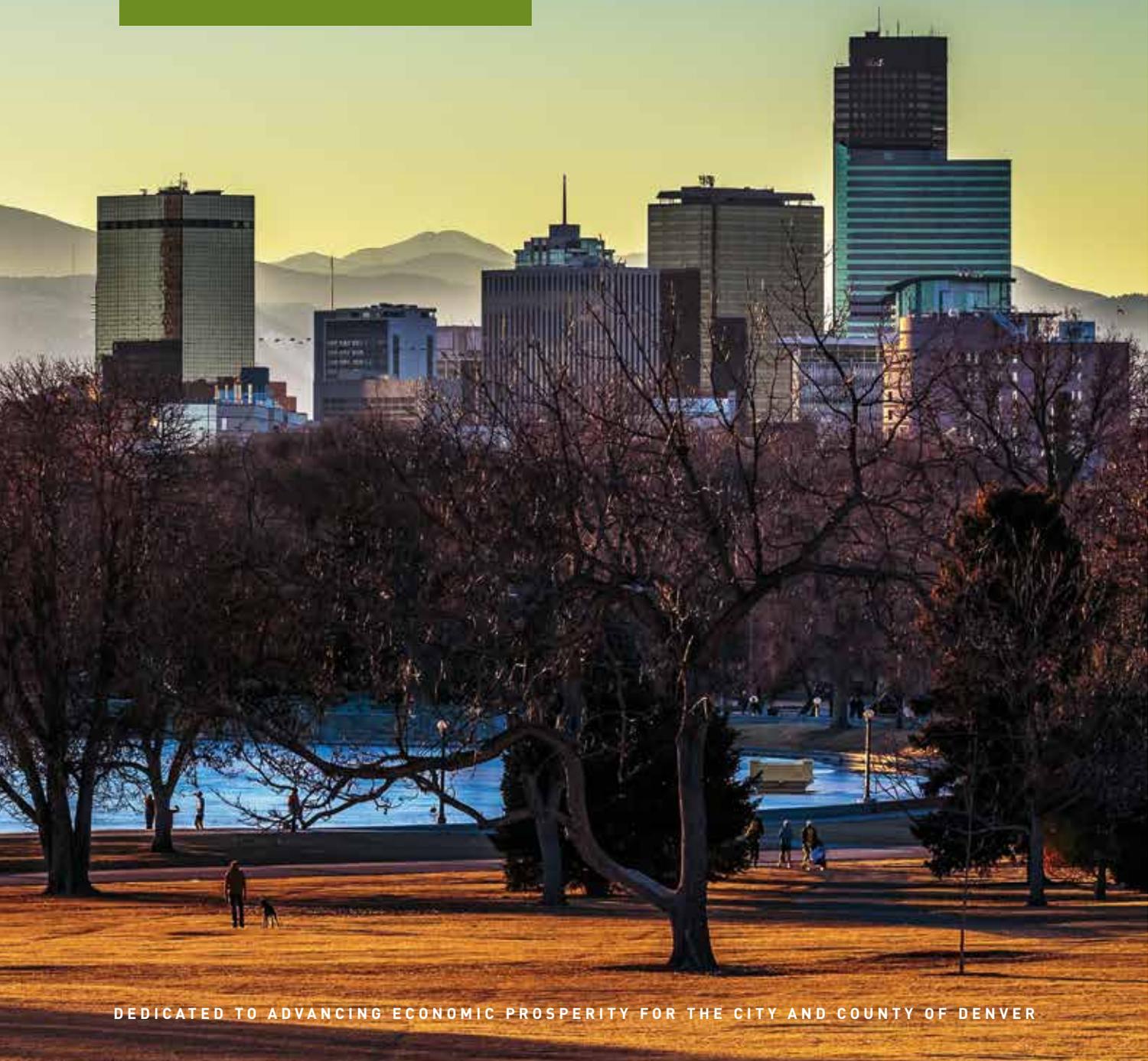


Denver Office  
of Economic Development  
Annual Report

2016



DEDICATED TO ADVANCING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

## 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

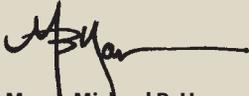
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A thriving local economy is a universal need for every American city, regardless of size, region or age. In Denver, the powerful momentum of our vibrant economy has kept our sights squarely focused on efforts that will keep that momentum moving forward – supporting diverse commercial sectors, good jobs and a fertile climate for entrepreneurship and growth.

A core tenet of economic development is that you make the most of the resources you have, and Denver has consistently played to its strengths, both natural and earned. In these pages you can see the evidence of our well-educated workforce, enviable lifestyle and thoughtful development strategies that aim for the horizon without compromising the needs of the vulnerable among us.

I am pleased to report that our Office of Economic Development pulses forward through economic cycles with a mindful balance of immediate interests and our future vision for this amazing city. Each milestone win celebrated today must simultaneously promote the health, well-being and wealth potential of all who live here.

Denver remains strongly committed to not just economic development but economic mobility, and you will see that this commitment is evident in every strategy, as well as every tactical step, reported here.



**Mayor Michael B. Hancock**



*Mayor*  
**Michael B. Hancock**

## From the Executive Director

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As you consider these results from OED's efforts in 2016, you can see that we categorize outcomes under headings of housing, workforce, neighborhoods, and business development. But right below the headlines, there's an evolution underway that blurs the lines between one program and another.

It was a very productive year, and the connectivity of every aspect of economic development became evident. No project we undertake exists in a vacuum, fulfilling just one need for a stakeholder group. Recruiting a business means we also focus on their hiring needs; funding affordable housing simultaneously prompts consideration of transit routes, healthy food access, and proximity of services and good jobs.

OED is increasingly focused on the broad-based challenge of economic mobility, applying an integrated approach to ensuring that every person has the opportunity to integrate such elements as education, skill training, hiring, entrepreneurship, secure housing, and financial literacy – and therefore rise to defeat the pervasive cycle of urban poverty.

Where we perceived discrete disciplines that used to exist within the broader context of economic development – for example, job readiness or retail or minority/women entrepreneurship – there are no obvious borders today as to where one aspect of economic mobility begins and another ends. In these pages you will see this important trend.



**Paul Washington**

*Executive Director, Denver Office of Economic Development*



*Executive Director*  
**Paul Washington**

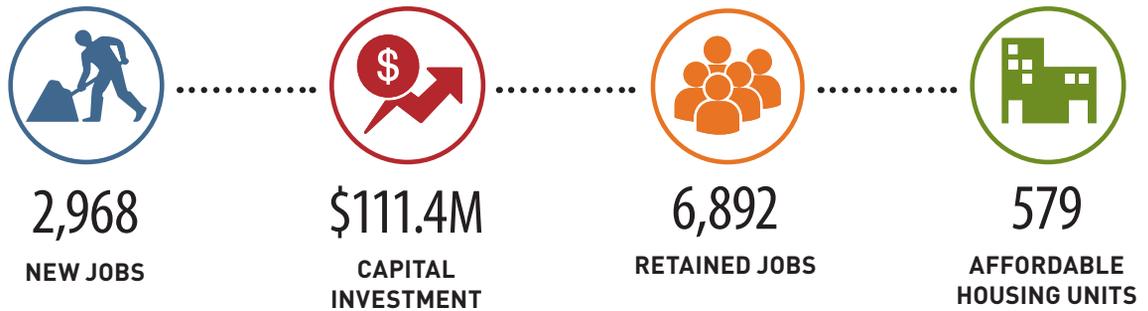
## JumpStart 2016 Sparks Success Year-Round

JumpStart 2016 – the OED’s strategic plan – provided an innovative, forward thinking and intentional approach for the city to advance economic prosperity during the past year. The plan is built upon five economic development pillars:

- › Business Development
- › Small Business Advocacy
- › Housing
- › Neighborhood Development
- › Workforce Development

This Annual Report presents key highlights of JumpStart accomplishments, as well as other signature wins gained by the OED in 2016.

### Denver’s JumpStart 2016 Strategy Produced:



### Throughout the Year OED Helped:



# Housing Development

## Housing Efforts Underscore Denver's Economic Development

2016 was a significant year of progress in affordable housing, which took center stage with the creation of Denver's first-ever dedicated fund for housing and OED's new approaches to boost production and preservation, including several mixed-income condo developments at key TOD sites.

Beyond individual year's achievements, major themes and values continue to inform our housing philosophy, starting with a wide customer focus on a diverse spectrum of income levels and needs – from homelessness to those ready to purchase at or near market rate, with many steps in between to serve the working poor, growing families, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Our deliberate approach to mixed-income, mixed-use development is designed to reduce the concentration of poverty while giving residents options to avoid being displaced as their neighborhoods increase in value. Overall, it is clear that addressing Denver's housing challenges is key to our ongoing economic success, as local employers must be able to recruit and retain talent and our future prospects on the horizon for business recruitment will find this an inviting place for their employees and customers to thrive.



The Ruby Hill Residences

## Housing Development



Welton Park

- › OED convened the second annual *Bridging the Gap: A Solutions Forum on Housing*, a regional conference with 300 thought-leaders that explored access to opportunities, gentrification and involuntary displacement, mixed-income development, vulnerable populations, and smaller-scale models of affordable housing.
- › OED's significant investment in Five Points took shape with the grand opening of **Welton Park**, which offers 223 affordable apartments for low- and moderate-income residents earning up to 60% of the area median income (AMI). Spanning an entire block of Welton St. at Park Ave. West, the project received \$1.1 million in financing from the OED to support land acquisition.
- › 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 **Westwood Crossing** will create 98 income-restricted apartments. Ranging in size from one to three bedrooms, the project offers affordability for families with children.

- › Also in Westwood, years of hard work came to a celebration as

**Del Corazon** officially broke ground at 4400 Morrison Rd. The \$40 million project will provide 197 units of safe and affordable housing located throughout a 4.5-acre site that spans along both sides of Morrison Road. The community replaces two highly distressed mobile home parks that were in jeopardy of condemnation. OED provided \$3.7 million in financing to help support land acquisition and relocation assistance, which was provided to all households residing at the former mobile homes.

- › Expanded senior housing options through the groundbreaking of **The Meadows at Montbello**, an 85-unit affordable community developed by the Volunteers of America. OED provided \$585,000 in financing from the General Fund, and the loan guarantees an affordability period of at least 40 years.

**STRENGTHENED  
DENVER'S  
AFFORDABLE  
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BY APPROVING  
OR COMMITTING  
TO CREATE AND  
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**579  
affordable  
units**



The Meadows at Montbello



## DEDICATED HOUSING FUND

### Keeping Denver Affordable and Accessible

2016 was clearly a landmark year for affordable housing, as Denver approved its first-ever dedicated fund to support housing for residents and families in need. A new ordinance firmly addresses housing insecurity by raising an estimated \$150 million over the next decade to create or preserve 6,000 affordable homes for low- to moderate-income families.

Several years in the making, the fund will support a broad array of approaches – including housing and supportive services for the homeless, land acquisition in areas vulnerable to gentrification, rental and for-sale unit development, and temporary emergency housing assistance. A multi-sector Housing Advisory Committee was established late in the year, and the group is meeting monthly to ensure that the best of our local wisdom, experience, and housing expertise can help steer this critical work forward.

Investments are beginning in early 2017, and the timing couldn't come sooner as community need is beyond great. Denver's housing prices have risen at twice the national average and rents have increased 50 percent since 2011. What's more, an estimated 100,000 Denver households are experiencing a housing cost burden, meaning they pay more than 30% of income for housing costs.

Housing insecurity is by no means a problem that is unique to Denver. Metro cities across the nation are grappling with how to keep their communities affordable and accessible, and 49% of all households nationally face a housing cost burden. With the adoption of the dedicated fund, Denver joins the ranks of about a dozen other large cities that are implementing local solutions to combat the housing shortage.

While Denver's new fund won't resolve all of our rooftop shortages, it will make a significant dent. All in all, the production of 6,000 homes is estimated to house a population of roughly 11,000 people – or roughly half of the current size of Denver's Stapleton neighborhood.

**WITH THE ADOPTION OF THE DEDICATED FUND, DENVER JOINS THE RANKS OF ABOUT A DOZEN OTHER LARGE CITIES THAT ARE IMPLEMENTING LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO COMBAT THE HOUSING SHORTAGE. ■**

## Housing Development

- › Celebrated the opening of **Park Hill Station**, offering 156 affordable apartments for tenants earning up to 60% AMI. Located just steps away from the new 40th and Colorado commuter rail station, the project helps connect residents to jobs and opportunities throughout the city and region. OED provided \$750,000 in funding support. In addition, the property site was acquired for affordable housing through the Denver Transit-Oriented Development Fund, of which the city was a founding partner.
- › Land banking strategies to develop transit-oriented development housing also took shape at the new **Garden Court at Yale Station**. Located along the light rail southeast line, Garden Court provides 66 income-restricted apartments for households earning up to 60% AMI. The project was supported through the Denver Transit-Oriented Development Fund.



- › The **Ruby Hill Residences** opened along S. Pecos St., providing 114 new apartments for low- and moderate-income populations. A portion of the four-story building's units are reserved for formerly homeless individuals and disabled veterans. An OED loan of \$875,000 guarantees the project's affordability for at least 40 years.
- › Affordable home ownership got a big boost with the grand opening of Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver's new 51-unit **Sable Ridge Townhomes** project in Montbello. All of the units are occupied with low-income families, and they have a set mortgage payment that doesn't exceed 30% of their gross monthly income. OED provided \$1.39 million in Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds to support land acquisition and pre-development work.
- › 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 (CCH) to provide housing vouchers totaling \$400,000 for 53 individuals/families.



Garden Court at Yale Station



Ruby Hill Residences



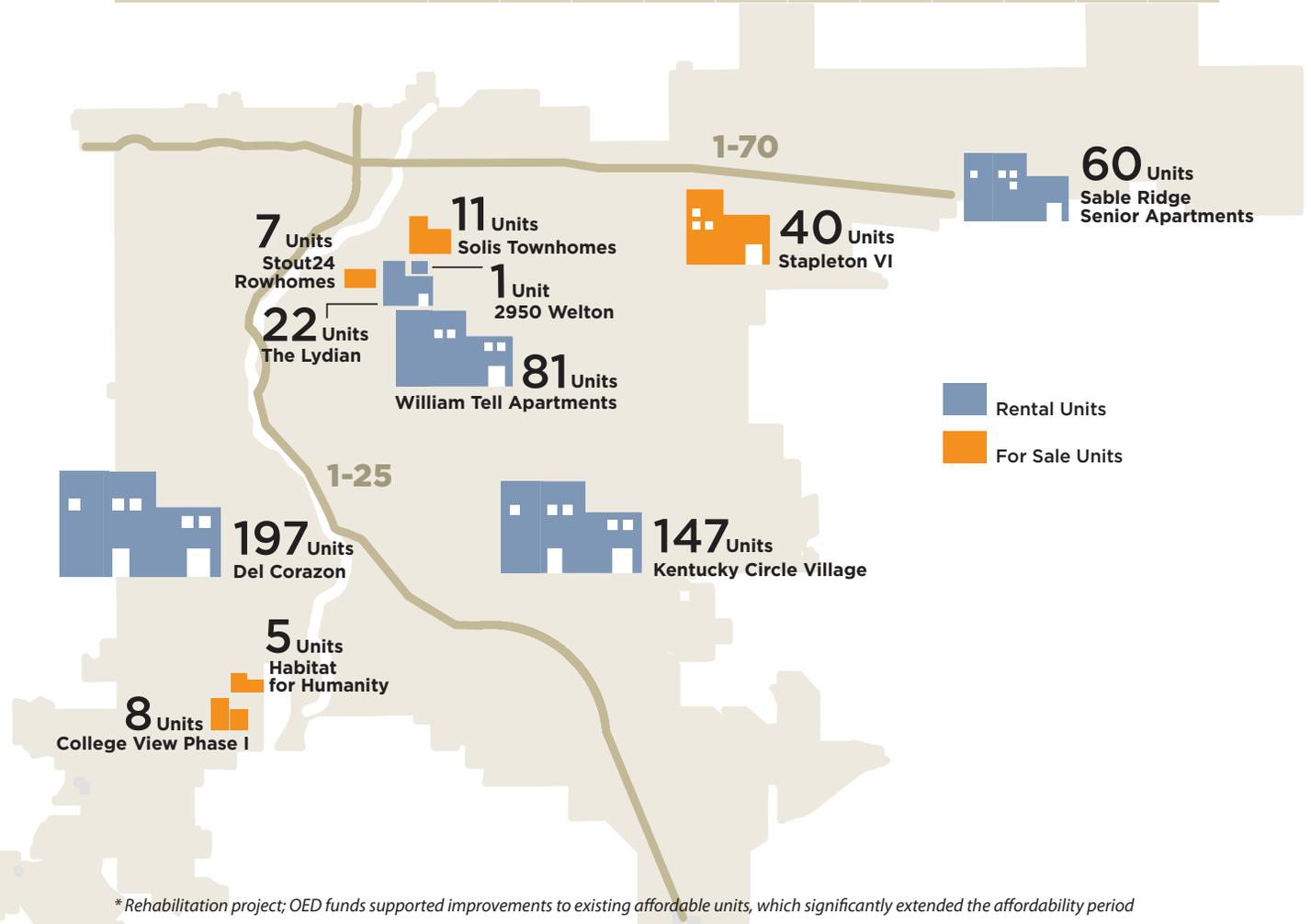
- › Celebrated the groundbreaking of **Renaissance Downtown Lofts**, a 101-unit CCH project in Five Points that received OED financing. OED also invested \$1 million to support Catholic Charities' new **Samaritan House Women's Shelter**, which is under construction in northeast Park Hill. And in the Mar Lee neighborhood, the new **Sanderson Apartments** will house 60 of Denver's chronically homeless as part of the city's Social Impact Bond program. The project broke ground in 2016 and was supported with \$600,000 in OED financing.
- › Celebrated the grand opening of **Northfield at Stapleton**, the first completed housing project resulting from OED's Revolving Affordable Housing Loan Fund. Located north of I-70 in Stapleton, this development includes 84 units, ranging from one to three bedrooms, for households earning from 30 to 60% AMI.
- › Boosted affordability within the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center Redevelopment district with the groundbreaking of the **Ash Street Apartments**. Encompassing \$1.7 million in funding through the OED, the apartments will provide homes for 112 households earning up to 60% AMI.

- › Through two innovative projects, OED worked to launch new **mixed-income condominiums** at transit-oriented development sites. At 41st and Inca Street, the city provided \$3 million in financing to support land acquisition for a project that will provide more than 300 units, including both apartments and condos, adjacent to the upcoming **Fox Street Station**. Similarly, OED is working to develop affordable for-sale units at a vacant lot owned by RTD at 29th and Welton St. RTD has granted the city the option to purchase the site for future condo development. A competitive process to select a developer is underway in early 2017.
- › Through housing finance programs, OED continued to help support the American Dream of home ownership. Since its inception in 2013, the Metro Mortgage Assistance Plus program has assisted 1,274 moderate- and low-income residents to become homeowners. The program offers four percent down payment and closing cost grants. In addition, the Mortgage Credit Certificate program helped boost 135 households into home ownership in 2016.

## OED-Funded Housing Projects

OED funded a total of 579 affordable housing units throughout 2016. All projects are new construction developments, except as noted below. The percentage columns correspond to the number of units restricted at a given income level (percentage of the area median income).

Project	Total Units	30%	40%	50%	60%	80%	Studio	1BR	2BR	3BR	4BR
2950 Welton	1					1		1			
College View Phase I	8		8							4	4
Habitat for Humanity	5					5				3	2
Kentucky Circle Village*	147			20	127		11	85	51		
The Lydian	22					22	4	16	2		
Sable Ridge Senior Apartments	60				60			37	23		
Del Corazon	197		6		191			79	107	11	
Solis Townhomes	11					11			8	3	
Stapleton VI	40					40			24	16	
Stout24 Rowhomes	7					7				7	
William Tell Apartments*	81	5			76		8	72	1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>6</b>



\* Rehabilitation project; OED funds supported improvements to existing affordable units, which significantly extended the affordability period

# Job Creation, Retention and Capital Investment

**O**ED's portfolio of business development programs sparked a successful year for job creation and the expansion of Denver's tax base. Incentive, tax credit, wage subsidy and other programs helped 85 firms to expand in Denver. Collectively, these businesses are creating 2,968 new jobs and making more than \$111.4 million of capital investments. In addition, these economic development partnerships supported the retention of 6,892 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 2016 include BP Lower 48, TIAA, 2U, Romano's Macaroni Grill, World Wide Technology, Evo, BOARDLife, Brooklyn Boulder, and eFolder.



## Business Development

- › **BP** – BP’s Lower 48 onshore business selected Denver for its new headquarters, a move that will bring 200 or more high-paying positions, including the CEO and executive leadership team. BP has signed a lease for 86,000 square feet of office space in the new Riverview building at 1700 Platte St. in the Lower Highlands district. The office is expected to open in the first quarter of 2018. The OED supported the headquarters relocation from Houston through an employment incentive grant and Business Investment Program tax credits. “This is a big win for the city and the energy industry here, and we’re excited to welcome BP back to Denver,” said Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock. “With so much of their work happening here in the region, and with all we have to offer for companies and their employees, this is a natural fit that will benefit both BP and Denver for years to come.”
- › **TIAA** – Denver’s strong financial services sector got even stronger in 2016 thanks to the significant expansion of TIAA. The retirement services provider chose Denver for a major staffing expansion to support its growth strategy. Employing more than 1,400 people in Denver, TIAA projects the growth of 500+ jobs over the next five years. To accommodate its growing workforce, the firm renovated and expanded its footprint at 1670 Broadway. Upon completion, TIAA will occupy nearly 350,000 square feet of the building. The OED helped support this expansion through the Business Incentive Fund and the Business Investment Program.
- › **2U, Inc.**, – A technology firm providing online education platform solutions for universities and colleges, 2U, Inc. selected Denver for a significant business expansion. The firm grew its downtown Denver office, with plans calling for the addition of 350 jobs over five years. OED helped support the firm’s Denver selection through the Business Incentive Fund and the Business Investment Program.
- › **World Wide Technology** – A market leading technology integrator, World Wide Technology expanded its Denver presence with field sales representatives and members of its Asynchrony Labs team, specializing in application development, mobile computing, systems and sensor integration, enterprise architecture and tactical collaboration. The move brought 70 new jobs to Denver in 2016, and the firm has plans to grow to 250 total staff.
- › **Romano’s Macaroni Grill** – Denver’s position as a major home base for domestic and international restaurant brands grew even stronger with the relocation of the Romano’s Macaroni Grill corporate headquarters. The Italian restaurant chain chose Denver as the site of its home office and restaurant support center, effective beginning in Spring 2017. The move brings 50 new/relocated high-paying, corporate jobs to Denver. The OED helped support this expansion through the Business Incentive Fund and the Business Investment Program.





- › **International Recruitment** – Provided planning, logistics and program staff support to international trade and business/investment recruitment missions to Germany, Brazil, Colombia, and the United Arab Emirates; coordinated visits here from business delegations from the United Kingdom and Japan.
- › **Business Investment Program** – City Council approved a four-year extension of the Business Investment Program, a tax policy that rewards business investments made in Denver. The program 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. Implemented through OED, the program has incentivized 77 businesses over the past four years to create 2,234 jobs, retain 11,204 jobs, and invest more than \$203 million in business expansion.
- › **C-PACE** – OED led the city's efforts to offer new financing options for commercial property clean energy projects through the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program. Property owners and developers can now access this new, long-term financing tool to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation improvements. The voluntary program lowers the cost of third-party financing, which is repaid through the property tax assessment process.
- › **Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Network, Inc.** – OED provided \$1.5 million in financing to support the development of a new hub for the Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Network, Inc. (RMPBN) at 21st and Arapahoe Streets. In addition to housing the corporate offices and facility and studio space of RMPBN, the development will include an innovation center to accommodate merged-media entrepreneurs. The \$49 million project will serve as a catalytic development in Arapahoe Square, providing momentum for other commercial and mixed-use development.



## NATIONAL WESTERN CENTER

### Planting the Seeds for Agribusiness Innovation

Some of the greatest potential for job creation and opportunity in metropolitan cities in recent years has taken hold through urban innovation areas – dense clusters of university-linked research and development, nestled with startups, incubators and spin-off firms focused within targeted industries. Through the completion of a landmark NextGEN Agribusiness Economic Development Strategy in 2016, Denver has laid the foundation to create an agribusiness innovation area surrounding the National Western Center (NWC) redevelopment.

With support from Colorado State University and the Western Stock Show Association, the city commissioned a study to identify emerging opportunities in the agriculture, technology, innovation and research industries along the Front Range. The intent of the NextGEN Agribusiness Economic Development Strategy was simple. The founding partners have focused on how to leverage the \$856 million NWC redevelopment into much more than a hub for entertainment, competition, education and research – but to focus on innovation and commerce to grow Denver and Colorado’s economy.

“This is our launching point for creating the next generation economy right here in Denver by growing industries that have a clear potential to bring new jobs to the campus and across the Front Range,” said Mayor Hancock.



At stake are significant development opportunities at the NWC and surrounding area, including one to three million square feet of laboratory, office and flex space to accommodate hundreds of companies and joint ventures. The study identified the greatest growth potential across the plant and life sciences, with targeted clusters including agriculture, food production, water, and ag-related aerospace.

But growth opportunities are not limited to north Denver. Findings also call for the creation of a much broader Agribusiness Innovation Triangle, linking synergies between CSU, Denver International Airport and the NWC to support regional job growth.

All in all, the study provides the foundation necessary to develop and implement a long-term strategy to make Denver and the region the leader of the next generation agricultural and natural resources economy. This agribusiness vision will remain a major focus for OED for many years, with a commitment to linking neighborhood residents to good-paying jobs and career opportunities.





## Small Business Advocacy

In celebration of Denver Startup Week, OED recognized a group of six high-growth companies as “**Denver Gazelles.**” Named for their success and growth potential were Blinker, Cloud Elements, Havenly, MindAptiv, Parkifi, and SendGrid. Collectively, the six represent \$124 million raised through venture capital, private investment, and angel and seed investors.

**Evo**, a Seattle-based lifestyle business, worked with OED to select a site on Broadway near downtown, and they’re anticipating a second location in Denver as well. The firm’s stores are designed to sell both outdoor equipment and provide a venue for community events; they’ve started hosting art shows and nonprofit fundraisers at the Broadway store. OED’s support for Evo also included the Business Incentive Fund.

Startups, relocations and expansions continue to strengthen Denver’s growing status as a hub for outdoor and leisure lifestyle firms. Outdoor recreation company **Brooklyn Boulders** opted to move their corporate HQ from the East Coast to the RiNo neighborhood, bringing their corporate founders, operations, product development, and design staff (33 net new full-time jobs).

Local startup **BOARDLife**, a retail shop dedicated to all things skateboarding, made a big move during their sixth year with OED’s assistance from the Highlands to a new site on south Broadway, tripling their previous location’s size and adding manufacturing. Along with site selection assistance and a business incentive to remain in Denver, OED helped navigate through the licensing, inspections and utilities needed to make this exciting shift.

It’s announcements like these that has helped grow the **CO Active** leisure/outdoor association to nearly 100 members/supporters, including 45 manufacturers – a dramatic growth curve for Colorado’s first such industry group that was funded initially in 2015 by OED seed money.

**STARTUPS,  
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FIRMS. ■**



## Small Business Advocacy



- › Increased access to contracting opportunities by growing the city's **business certification programs**. In 2016, a total of 1,278 small and minority/women-owned firms earned more than \$105 million from the city's construction, professional services, and purchasing opportunities.
- › OED's business development staff provided 326 hours of 1:1 assistance to entrepreneurs at **The Commons on Champa**, Denver's unique public campus designed to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. Curriculum offered to aspiring and existing entrepreneurs grew significantly, with OED producing more than 80 free events for startups and emerging businesses. Trainings included collaborative events with the regional SBA (how to do business with the government), the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (fundamentals of intellectual property that many small businesses need to know), and a diverse set of workshops and panels targeting startup subsets such as women and veterans.
- › Fostering the value that civic philanthropy is for companies of all sizes and stages, OED hosted several workshops for growing companies promoting nonprofit and public board/commission roles as well as more women serving on corporate boards. Our matchmaking events facilitated the recent appointments of three women executives to the boards of three Denver-based Fortune 1000 firms.
- › Helped local businesses gain access to capital by publishing the fifth edition of the **Denver Capital Matrix**. The resource directory identifies more than 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.
- › Further positioned Denver as a key location for investment by publishing an updated **Denver Venture Capital Report**. The analysis shows that the combined tech sectors of internet, software and telecom account for more than 80 percent of the venture capital here, with \$717 million invested in tech firms over the past five years.
- › Continued its leadership role as a co-founding entity of the **Colorado Venture Summit**. OED is proud to support the annual event's evolution; the June 2016 summit attracted 60 venture firms and angel investors, an equal number of venture-backed CEOs and 400 attendees overall.





## THE COMMONS ON CHAMPA

### “Accidentally” at the exact right place

Pablo Undurraga’s professional path has been driven, in part, by his wife’s career as a surgeon. After stops in Connecticut and California, she landed a tremendous opportunity in Denver in 2016, and the family of six – that’s four school-age sons – has relocated here with plans to put down permanent roots.

Trained as an architect and with 16 years of experience in residential, multi-family, commercial, and transportation-related projects, Pablo is launching his own firm here from the ground up. Architects often operate in a solo practice or in small collaborative groups, working virtually and on multi-disciplinary teams, but starting fresh in a market where he had neither existing contacts or clients has been a whole new chapter for Pablo.

“What I don’t have is formal training on the practice of being an entrepreneur,” he says. “I call myself ‘an entrepreneur by accident.’ But what I found is that there are amazing resources for startup companies in Denver.”

A friend mentioned The Commons on Champa last summer, and Pablo’s web research led to

repeated visits there. He took advantage of the free, walk-in advisory service at The Commons that OED offers, meeting initially with Elvis Rubio, whose help subsequently led Pablo to work with the Division of Small Business Opportunity’s Mark White.

“Mark has been terrific,” Pablo reports, guiding Pablo through Small Business Enterprise (SBE) paperwork, and he is counting the months before he can secure the MWBE certification that will surely open additional doors as he builds new connections throughout the contractor community.

Pablo officially started his local firm, JPU Architects + Urbanists, last fall. Next up, he’s looking forward to future training sessions and other technical assistance at The Commons as well, continuing with classes through the Small Business Administration and more networking with the Hispanic Contractors of Colorado.

There’s nothing accidental about Pablo’s energy and resourceful approach, and his success building new relationships is no surprise to anyone who knows him.

“WHAT I DON’T HAVE IS FORMAL TRAINING ON THE PRACTICE OF BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR... BUT WHAT I FOUND IS THAT THERE ARE AMAZING RESOURCES FOR STARTUP COMPANIES IN DENVER.”



“CERTIFICATION HAS HELPED US BUILD THIS COMPANY, BUT PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE PROJECTS WE’VE DONE HELPED BUILD OUR CAPACITY AS A GENERAL CONTRACTOR.”

#### M/WBE CERTIFICATION

### Growing organically and strategically – and with a mentor’s help

Sky Blue Builders, a general contracting firm which just celebrated its tenth year in business, has 45 employees today – and an ambitious roadmap to double its \$10 million annual revenue. It’s a great startup success story for founder Mowa Haile and business partner Lauren Grosh.

Several underlying values as well as specific growth strategies have contributed to their success, Lauren says. Sky Blue has grown thoughtfully, intentionally not taking on more than they can deliver to their own standards and through self-performance. They have worked hard to win a diverse array of contracts, too, building capacity while maintaining a sustainable employee base.

This past year, Mowa and Lauren added something else to their strategy: a mentor-protégé match with a larger, more experienced firm, Hensel-Phelps Construction, facilitated by OED. Despite the obvious difference in size, the two companies have a similar culture.

“They have a business model that we want to resemble, and we admire that they maintain a ‘small business’ mentality,” Lauren said. “It’s a wonderful match.” Their Hensel-Phelps mentor, Grant, meets twice monthly with the Sky Blue team, including managers, and there is lots of additional interaction

between formal sessions as well.

“We reach out to Grant on a whole range of questions, including marketing, business development, expanding to new industries, mastering self-performance, and even issues like conflict resolution and general best practices,” she said.

“The city’s programs have been excellent for us,” reports Mowa, who credits his initial M/WBE certification in 2009 and the firm’s inclusion in the SBE Defined Selection Pool as strong boosts in building its portfolio. He’s also been very active with the Denver Small Business Development Center.

“Certification has helped us build this company, but perhaps more importantly, the projects we’ve done helped build our capacity as a general contractor – so that we are better positioned to compete in a full and open process, M/WBE goals aside,” Lauren said.

Sky Blue’s more recent successes include building six of the eight light rail stations on the new I-225 corridor, working on the hotel and transit center at Denver International Airport, an on-call contract with RTD, and a three-year on-call enhanced bicycle contract with the city.

## Neighborhoods

- › Enhanced the vitality of Denver’s low- and moderate-income neighborhoods by supporting 36 separate neighborhood development projects, utilizing nearly \$6 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds.
- › The wholesale redevelopment of **Sun Valley**, Denver’s poorest and most isolated neighborhood, has been firmly secured through a \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Several years in the making, the grant will replace the Denver Housing Authority’s 330 public housing units with 750 new, mixed-income units (serving public housing residents, as well as moderate-income and market-rate units). The transformation plan includes a 10-acre riverfront park, a new youth center, a microbusiness and international food market, and the realignment of streets to better connect the neighborhood to downtown. The award projected to leverage more than \$500 million of public and private investment over the next decade. Under the grant, OED is responsible for heading up the implementation of neighborhood improvement activities.
- › Launched the city’s first-ever **Healthy Food Challenge** in the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhoods as a means to fund innovative approaches to boosting healthy food education, fresh food access, and expanded commercial opportunities. The first round of funded organizations included Focus Points Family Resource Center and The GrowHaus, which are supporting the expansion of food-based microbusinesses and coaching residents on healthy eating habits and nutrition.



- › Conducted a thorough public engagement process, encompassing nearly 5,000 comments from residents and businesses, to inform the drafting of the **Denver Food Vision**, a policy document intended to guide the development of the city’s food system. The first document of its kind for Denver – and one of only about a dozen nationwide – the vision includes priorities, strategies and winnable goals to provide direction related to land use, public investment, private development and partnerships.
- › Completed a comprehensive study of **gentrification** in Denver, which serves as a tool to guide future neighborhood public investments by OED throughout the city. The study researched the magnitude of displacement of residents and businesses, highlighting a number of strategies that are now underway to mitigate displacement. Following the study’s release, OED and other city agencies launched a series of resource fairs, which are continuing in 2017, to promote economic prosperity among residents and businesses.



**THE TRANSFORMATION PLAN FOR SUN VALLEY INCLUDES A 10-ACRE RIVERFRONT PARK, A NEW YOUTH CENTER, A MICROBUSINESS AND INTERNATIONAL FOOD MARKET, AND THE REALIGNMENT OF STREETS TO BETTER CONNECT THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO DOWNTOWN. ■**



## DENVER FOOD SYSTEM

### Toward a more healthy, vibrant, resilient city

**THE DENVER FOOD VISION INCLUDES PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES AND WINNABLE GOALS TO PROVIDE DIRECTION RELATED TO LAND USE, PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS. ■**



When it comes to food, Denver is fortunate to have an incredibly vibrant food system in place – more than 2,200 food businesses, 56,000 food-related employees, hundreds of community and school gardens, and scores of farmer’s markets, nonprofits and food pantries. All in all, our local food industry generates over \$7 billion in annual economic activity.

However, our system is not necessarily equitable across all parts of the city. Nearly 1 in 6 families and 1 in 5 children suffer from food insecurity or hunger. And one-third of families are eating less than one serving of fruits and vegetables per day, contributing to poor health.

Although numerous city agencies interact on the food issue in one way or another, including the Department of Environmental Health conducting safety inspections on food-handling businesses, OED brings the perspective of viewing this multi-faceted issue through the lens of overall economic impact. Since mid-2015, OED has housed the specially funded position of the city’s first-ever manager of Food System Development, a role filled by Blake Angelo.

Over the past year, Angelo has marshalled city resources to work at a grassroots level with hundreds of residents, businesses and organizations to develop the Denver Food Vision – a comprehensive approach to further

develop our food system. With a corps of volunteers, he convened 22 community meetings in 2016 – one in each of 11 city council districts as well as 11 additional meetings for specific industry clusters.

The first document of its kind for Denver – and one of only about a dozen nationwide – the Denver Food Vision includes priorities, strategies and winnable goals to provide direction related to land use, public investment and public-private partnerships. It outlines the multiple ways that a far-reaching food system makes Denver more inclusive, healthy, and vibrant.

“A strong food system does much more than just feed people. It means healthier students who are ready to learn, people enjoying better health and living longer. It’s about providing a higher quality of life for residents, with greater equity across all of Denver’s neighborhoods,” Angelo said.

OED’s overall food development strategy aims for stronger economic growth, including job creation and support of small businesses, microbusinesses, and entrepreneurs. In addition, over time, we know that a strong food system will provide resiliency – strengthening our community’s ability to withstand significant and unforeseen events.

## Workforce Development

Joining a growing national trend to blend public-sector policy oversight with private-sector best practices in job search assistance, work readiness training, and placement, OED's Denver Workforce Services launched a **new delivery system** to better serve the city's more than 10,000 unemployed. Contracted partners spanned both local and national entities, private and nonprofit, with much stronger referral networks and expanded points of access throughout the community. Areas of focus included TANF recipients, long-term unemployed and underemployed adults, and both in-school as well as disconnected youth.

Denver Workforce Services balanced cuts in federal workforce dollars with grants for an array of special projects, including the ongoing and highly successful **Technology Employment in Colorado (TEC-P)** initiative, a multi-year Ready-To-Work project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. In 2016, Denver was also selected as one of 10 cities nationally to implement new models of **career services specific to retail**; the city was awarded \$422,652 from The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership under a \$10.9 million grant the Walmart Foundation made to the Partnership. This grant supports training, employment, and promotion opportunities for youth and adult jobseekers within the retail sector. OED also used \$16,000 in **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)** funds to assist local workers who lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade.

OED's TEC-P grant administrator was invited to Washington D.C. for a select roundtable dialogue with Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez on the evolving field of working with the long-term unemployed to reintegrate them into high-demand fields of advanced manufacturing and technology. TEC-P was showcased at that session for its best practices in forming cross-sector partnerships.

Underscoring our year-round youth employment program with a roster of **summer job initiatives**, Denver Workforce Services delivered five targeted projects in Summer 2016 – three that were established

and two as pilots. The largest and best-known was the Mayor's **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**, contracted this year with the Denver Housing Authority, which trained and placed 240 youth in paid summer roles. Also ongoing were two collaborations, the Denver Scholarship Foundation (DSF) Summer Scholars and the "Super Sophomores" project, the latter a joint program with the Denver Public Schools, which together created 28 custom career-exposure experiences for exceptional students.

New pilots this year included a unique technology training developed with the Denver Schools of Science and Technology (DSST), which gave six disadvantaged young women a fast-track introduction to software coding and web content management, and a mentoring program pairing startup founders with aspiring teen entrepreneurs who scored well on a sophisticated aptitude measurement tool provided by the University of Denver.





## SUMMER YOUTH

### Small-scale programs, big dreams

“I LEARNED ABOUT CREATING AND MANAGING WEB CONTENT – SKILLS THAT I’M DEFINITELY GOING TO USE – PLUS I LOVE THAT THEY ALLOW ME TO BE MORE CREATIVE...”

Denver Workforce Services hosted a celebration in August for our Summer Scholars, several dozen youth ages 14-21 who completed special internship/learning programs funded or coordinated through OED.

Among the honorees were the six terrific young women who spent their summer learning web design, development and coding in a pilot project that Workforce coordinated with Denver Public Schools/DSST; OED paid their tuition. In addition to gaining technical skills, the class got to network with female tech industry leaders.

“I learned about creating and managing web content – skills that I’m definitely going to use – plus I love that they allow me to be more creative,” one student said. “Having a female teacher and meeting females in tech and design helped us see the possibilities for female developers and designers in Denver and Boulder,” another reported.

All six headed off to college in the fall – and all were the first in their families to do so.

Over the past year, one element of OED’s transformational shift to a new delivery system for a wide range of workforce services has been to nurture innovation. A pilot project can incubate fresh ideas, even if on a very small scale, testing at one site to gauge feasibility for future expansion.

This was the approach on OED’s “Operation Perfect Beginnings” pilot, also last summer and also involving high school youth. A small group of students at George Washington High School were invited to complete an online evaluation of their affinities and skills related to entrepreneurship, a sophisticated tool provided by the University of Denver’s Daniels School of Business.

Two of the most promising aspiring entrepreneurs were then matched for mentorship with a local startup owner in an industry aligned with their interests. Both young men of color were thus employed in a “dream job” company while also being mentored one-on-one by the successful founder. Who says Denver can’t test the recipe of growing its next generation of minority entrepreneurs right here at home?

All told, including these boutique/pilot initiatives, OED delivered summer employment experiences for nearly 275 local youth.

## TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

### Hiring youth not just a nice idea, but a strong business move

**A** Denver native, Alyssa Ramirez was completing her undergraduate degree in marketing/management at Colorado State University with the support of the Denver Scholarship Foundation (DSF) when she learned that Caramel Russell-Rouse's State Farm Insurance agency was looking for an intern.

The two quickly realized that they had many values in common, and Alyssa enthusiastically immersed herself in learning about the insurance industry and State Farm's culture. "The internship kept getting extended," she recalls modestly, and she soon became a full-time employee.

Caramel was particularly impressed at how Alyssa studied and obtained her first level of licensing on the first try, which is very unusual.

Caramel is a longtime champion of hiring young talent, having answered OED's call more than once on summer projects to help place young people in internships. "Growing from the grassroots," as she calls it, "brings fresh thinking, but I also feel strongly about giving young people the kinds of opportunities that people had given me."

Caramel's path to her own agency actually started during a 17-year career in the corporate world and several relocations as her career flourished. When she was ready to settle back home in Denver and become an entrepreneur with State Farm, she blended her academic studies in business with professional savvy.

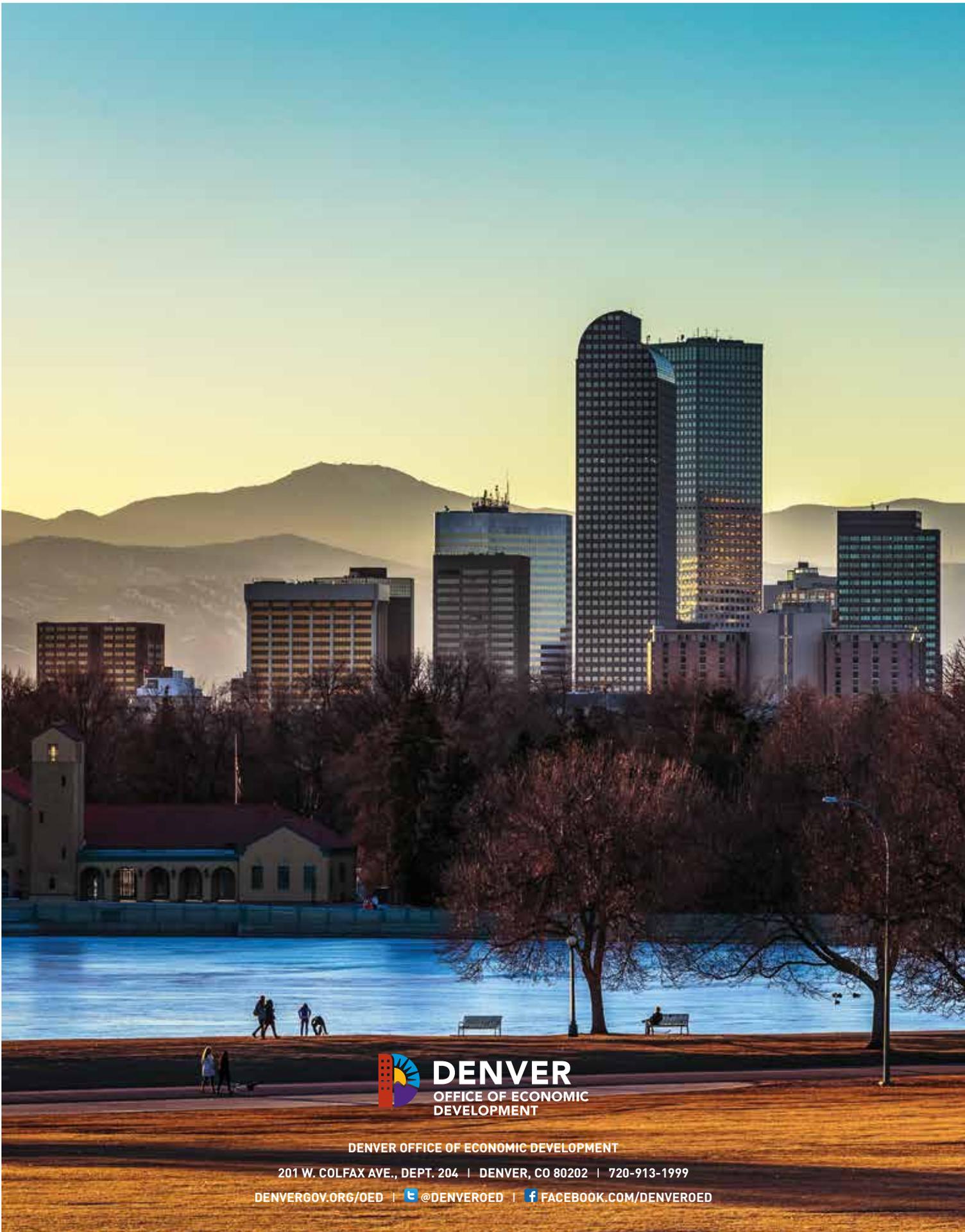
Turns out, Alyssa aspires to own her own insurance agency one day as well.

Since 2014, OED has applied its connections to area employers to place DSF Scholars in professional internships based on their career interests in fields including law, management, energy, aviation, finance, and the sciences.

OED is pleased that the interns invariably do well with these summer opportunities because they are essentially "pre-qualified" by the DSF program – a full undergraduate scholarship granted to promising but underprivileged students. Employers can feel confident that their risk in taking on a summer intern in cooperation with the city is greatly reduced by virtue of the work ethic and commitment these young people have already demonstrated.

**CAMEL IS A LONGTIME CHAMPION OF HIRING YOUNG TALENT, HAVING ANSWERED OED'S CALL MORE THAN ONCE ON SUMMER PROJECTS TO HELP PLACE YOUNG PEOPLE IN INTERNSHIPS. ■**





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