

Front Porch

Central Park, Park Hill, Lowry, Montclair, Mayfair, East Colfax, NW Aurora

DENVER, COLORADO

NORTHEAST DENVER

JUNE 2021



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Central 70 Makes the “Mile High Shift”

The 1,000-foot tunnel has nine giant fans to remove exhaust and smoke. The tunnel also has heat sensors, closed-circuit cameras, and a giant sprinkler system that can drop 3,500 gallons of water a minute in case of fire. The LED lights are attached to an external sensor so the light level inside adjusts to match the daylight outside.

The “Mile High Shift” happened on May 24 when CDOT moved motorists off an aging and structurally-deficient 2-mile viaduct and onto six brand-new lanes of Interstate 70 between Brighton and Colorado Boulevards. For the next 18 months, both

eastbound and westbound traffic will use this new section of highway while the viaduct is demolished and the permanent eastbound lanes are built. The \$1.3 billion Central 70 Project is scheduled to be completed by December 2022.

Story on page 14 by Mary Jo Brooks.



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Suncor Permit Renewal Worries Neighbors

Suncor Energy is seeking a permit renewal for its Plant 2 amidst concerns from neighbors that pollution standards are being violated. Plants 1 and 2 are major suppliers of gasoline and diesel fuel for Colorado, including DIA's main source of jet fuel. Plant 3 is the state's main producer of asphalt.

Story by Tracy Wolfer Osborne on page 4.



Front Porch photo by Steve Larson

State budget and School Funding Recover Quickly from Pandemic

Fearing reduced revenue during the pandemic, legislators trimmed the 2020-21 budget. But when they convened in January, they learned they had about \$3 billion “extra” funds to spend or save in 2020-21. With those funds, they were able to restore cuts in education and other areas.

Story by Todd Engdahl on page 8.

In-Person Events Are Back!

And now they're back in print in the *Front Porch* (see page 7). Below are some of the events you'll find for June in our printed and online lists.

Upload and view events FREE at FrontPorchNE.com/events.



Choose from multiple farmer's markets (multiple dates)

Spend summer evenings at outdoor concerts (multiple dates)



Fall in love with the perfect addition to your decor at an art festival

(June 5 – 6, pottery June 12 – 13)



Go on a garden walk to get landscaping ideas (June 13)



Play in a fundraiser golf tournament at the new City Park Golf Course (June 28)

Visit FrontPorchNE.com

—View the '21 Camp Guide thru July!

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Events & Announcements

No Zoom code required: The long-awaited return of movies, markets, and more!

After a year of pandemic-related restrictions impacting events across all disciplines, the MCA is thrilled to be bringing back a summer season full of fun activities for the whole family. The 2021 event line-up will be a welcome change for community members who had most of their events moved onto virtual platforms, postponed, or canceled indefinitely throughout the past year.

Scheduling this summer's event lineup has been a top priority for MCA's Event Manager, Dana Kinney, who says she is really looking forward to a season where audiences can collectively enjoy a live event that isn't behind a screen. Planning such a season hasn't come without its hurdles, with regularly changing guidelines from state and local municipalities and trying to ensure both performers and community members feel safe, Kinney and her team have had their hands full.

"We want to make sure we accurately communicate to the community about what to expect for summer events while taking proactive measures to make our event environments as safe as possible for the community," said Kinney. For starters, event attendees will notice increased signage regarding COVID-19 and event related guidelines. The goal is to create an environment where people can enjoy the types of events they've missed out on in 2020, while making sure everyone

feels safe at the same time. "We're still encouraging everyone to continue to practice social distancing," stated Kinney, "meaning, if you are enjoying a concert, please dance with your pod, and avoid gathering near the stage." Even with these types of regulations still in place, the MCA hopes that bringing back the events the community loves will be a welcome compromise.

When asked what events she's most looking forward to this summer, Kinney didn't hesitate with her answer. "Concerts!" she exclaimed, "Musical performing groups haven't had work in over a year. They are so excited to be playing for the neighborhood, and we are thrilled to bring them back."

June Event Lineup

Concerts

June 5 – *Journey to the Heart*
June 10 – *Hazel Miller Band**
June 19 – *Tunisia*
June 24 – *Dotsero**
*MoJaBlu Concert Series

Movies

June 11 – *Olympic Dreams*
June 25 – *Secret Garden*

Markets

Farmers Market occurs on Sundays beginning June 6!

For event details, including times, locations and most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 regulations, please visit www.mca80238.com.

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Front Porch

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The *Front Porch* is printed with soy-based ink and the paper contains 30% post-consumer waste. We contribute monthly to replant trees equivalent to the amount of paper used in each issue.



Got Questions?

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Suncor Permit Renewal Worries Neighbors

By Tracy Wolfer Osborne

In recent weeks, environmental advocacy groups and concerned neighbors have called on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and their subsidiary the Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) to deny one of Suncor Energy’s operating permits.

The embattled refinery, which, in recent public comments has been characterized as a reckless oil cowboy who willfully flouts regulations with an eye only on the bottom line, is nevertheless an economic and energy powerhouse in the state. According to their website, Suncor supplies locally-sourced fuel to businesses and residents in the Rocky Mountain Region and turns 98,000 barrels of crude oil a day—including that locally harvested from the Julesburg Basin—into various products, 95

percent of which are sold and used in Colorado. They supply fuel to more than 225 Shell, Exxon, and Mobil sites in Colorado and Wyoming, serving about 15 million people each year. They employ 500 Coloradans directly while supporting more than 5,000 jobs indirectly, with a total payroll impact of more than \$250 million. Their operations and fuel sales have generated over \$200 million in Colorado state, county, and municipal taxes over the past five years,

“My kids have been sick. My daughter says, ‘My head hurts, my stomach hurts.’ My son had to get his nose cauterized [for nosebleeds]... I started going door to door, and I saw it wasn’t just us that was sick.”

— Lucy Molina

averaging \$40 million annually. Their estimated annual contribution to the state’s economy is \$2.5 billion.

The Canadian-owned company, Colorado’s only oil and gas refinery, consists of three plants. The refinery currently operates on two permits, one for Plant 2, and one for Plants 1 and 3. Plants 1 and 2 are major suppliers of gasoline and diesel fuel for Colorado, including DIA’s main source of jet fuel. Plant 3 is the state’s main producer of asphalt. It’s the Plant 2 permit that is currently under advisement.

Community Concerns

But despite being an economic fixture, Suncor is seen as a health threat by many who live nearby. The EPA ranks it as one of Colorado’s top industrial polluters, emitting more than 850,000 tons of air pollution each year. Lucy Molina, a Commerce City resident who suffers from fibromyalgia and migraines, says the refinery is responsible for chronic illnesses that have plagued her family and neighbors for years. “My grandmother died of leukemia two years ago. My daughter lives in darkness because of her migraines. My son can’t play basketball with his friends without getting a bloody nose. My neighbor, Mark, has brain cancer. There are people with stomach cancer, people with hospitals in their homes, people wearing diapers. Even my dog died—he was full of tumors. This is the norm here,” she says. People need environmental educa-

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Delivered free every month—Approximately 23,000 *Front Porch* newspapers are distributed in the Northeast Denver neighborhoods of Central Park — Park Hill — Lowry — Mayfair — Montclair — East Colfax — NW Aurora.

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Left: Suncor’s Plant 2 permit expired in 2011, but it has been allowed to continue operating since they have filed for renewals on time, as regulations require.

Right: Park and Susan Gamble are pictured at their Park Hill home with their dog Java. Susan says, “I’m not a scientist. I’m not a lawyer. I’m just a mom, but I’m paying attention, and I know point-source pollution is the best place to start. We have this refinery right here, and this is where our community can play a part in solving this problem.”



tion; they need to know.”

As part of the renewal process, the Air Quality Commission, a nine-member panel that oversees the air pollution division of CDPHE, hosted two public comments hearings in early May. The majority of comments focused on two issues—Suncor’s ability to operate on outdated permits and Suncor’s pollution which consistently exceeds the limits outlined in its permits.

Suncor’s Operating Permit

Plant 2’s permit technically expired in 2011. Jeremy Nichols, the Climate and Energy Program Director at WildEarth Guardians, one of the advocacy groups that would like to see Suncor shut down, equates it to driving on an outdated license. “It basically allows Suncor to be behind the wheel of this large source of air pollution.” In an email, Andrew Bare, a spokesperson for the CDPHE, refuted the analogy writing, “It is not the equivalent of driving on an expired license. Federal law allows these facilities to operate under the current permits if they file a renewal application on a timely basis.” Susan Gamble, a Park Hill resident, who’s followed the permit renewal process, says she’s fed up with the technicalities. “Are they the department of filing paperwork on time, or are they the department of air quality?”

Violations and Enforcement

According to Bare, the CDPHE has settled ten enforcement actions against Suncor dating back to 2011 and has levied fines against them multiple times including a \$9 million dollar settlement in March 2020, which required Suncor to hire a third party to investigate “root causes of pollution.” Suncor hired Kearney, a consulting firm, that determined Suncor was both adequately built and staffed; therefore concluding human factors across four categories—culture, staff capabilities, processes, and technological/physical safeguards—were responsible for the refinery’s failures.

When asked if they were considering a change in leadership either through personnel or policy, Suncor responded, “Out of respect to the process and in compliance with rules set by CDPHE, we’ll provide a written response ten days after the public comment period has ended. As Colorado’s only refinery and as a part of the com-

Andrew Bare, a spokesperson for CDPHE, says CDPHE has settled ten enforcement actions against Suncor dating back to 2011 and levied fines against them multiple times including a \$9 million dollar settlement in March 2020.

remaining \$4 million will go to the state and to neighbors to spend on environmental projects, including \$2.6 million to benefit the surrounding communities.

The Improvement Plan

Suncor’s improvement plan, which has already upgraded automatic shutdown systems in Plant 2, will do the same to Plant 1 by the end of June this year. They also plan to install a Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) as well as upgraded instrumentation, automated shutdown valves, and new hydraulic pressure units by 2023 to make shutdown more reliable. The improvement plan also calls for changes to safety and reliability practices as well as training, and culture. The total cost of implementation is estimated at \$12 million.

What will the future bring?

The extent to which Suncor will be part of Colorado’s energy future remains to be seen. According to Bare, “even if CDPHE does revoke their permit, Suncor could choose to immediately shut down the refinery, but they could also pursue legal challenges, including asking for a stay from the Air Quality Control Commission or district court to allow them to operate Plant 2 while the denial is undergoing review.”

The timing for a final decision on the permit renewal is not known. “We cannot predict a date certain for a final decision,” wrote Bare in an email. “We will review and respond to all of those [public] comments. After that, we’ll submit the permit to the federal Environmental Protection Agency for a 45-day review period and respond to any comments the agency might offer. We’re going to carefully review the permit application and the comments to ensure we’re protecting public health and the environment.

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Front Porch – NE Denver

5

June 2021

Zoo's State-of-the-Art Hospital Opens to the Public



Participating in the ribbon cutting to celebrate the zoo's new veterinary hospital are (L to R): Rob Kaufmann—Past Chair of the Denver Zoo Board of Governors, Happy Haynes—Executive Director of Denver Parks & Recreation, Berit Campion—Great Granddaughter of Helen and Arthur Johnson, Lynn Campion-Waddell—Granddaughter of Helen and Arthur Johnson, Mayor Michael B. Hancock, Governor Jared Polis, Rebecca Macsoviets—Chair of the Denver Zoo Board of Governors, Bert Vescolani—Denver Zoo President/CEO, First Gentleman Marlon Reis

By Mary Jo Brooks

The world-class Denver Zoo now has a world-class, state-of-the-art animal hospital to treat the animals that live within its walls. And the visiting public now has a front row seat to watch as veterinarians conduct examinations, treatments, and surgeries. The 22,000-square-foot Helen and Arthur Johnson Animal

Hospital contains intensive care units monitored by video cameras, a research lab, two high-tech treatment rooms, a premier surgical suite, and indoor and outdoor rooms for animals that need to be hospitalized. It also has an oversized ambulance to safely carry animals to the hospital.



Happy Haynes, executive director of Denver Parks and Recreation, looks down into a high-tech treatment room at the Denver Zoo's new animal hospital. Overhead screens provide close-up views of the zoo staff conducting a routine exam.

that treatments and procedures will occur approximately 25% of the time when visitors are present. Since surgeries are much rarer, they are likely to happen only once or twice a month. Large overhead screens will feature videos of animals being treated when the hospital rooms are empty. While the facility is able to serve the vast majority of the zoo's residents, the largest animals—such as elephants, rhinos, and giraffes—will continue to receive treatments in their own habitat enclosures.



The zoo's new CT scanner has already helped diagnose medical conditions in animals as small as a bird and as large as a 400-pound tiger.



Veterinarian Betsy Stringer examines Charlotte, a 25-year-old two-toed sloth—drawing blood, testing reflexes, listening to her heart and lungs—to make sure she is healthy before being moved to a new habitat area.

Gov. Jared Polis, who attended the ribbon cutting ceremony, said the building ushers in a new era for animal care. "This is a working monument to the wellbeing of the more than 3,000 animals that call the Denver zoo home and also the seat of research that will benefit animals all over the world."

The hospital's visitor center has large windows that look down into the treatment and surgical rooms. A veterinary technician greets visitors to explain what procedures are being performed and answer any questions. Zoo officials estimate

In addition to private donations, most of the funding for the \$22 million hospital came from a 2017 voter-approved bond called Elevate Denver. Mayor Michael Hancock said the facility was one of the crown jewels of the 2017 bond. "Hopefully young people will be able to walk through here and be inspired to become a veterinarian. Inspired to become a zoologist... That's the power of what we've created here."

The visitor center opens to the public June 1, but veterinarians have been using the hospital since September. Scott Larsen, vice president for animal health, said the new facility brings the Denver Zoo's veterinary care into the 21st century. "It's already making a tremendous difference in the lives of our animals."

Larsen pointed to the new CT scanning machine as an example. Previously, zoo veterinarians took animals to National Jewish Hospital for CT scans about 6-8 times a year (on Sundays when the hospital was closed to human patients). Now that the zoo has its own CT machine, animals are scanned 6-8 times a month. Larsen says the scanner has helped them diagnose conditions that weren't picked up with ultrasounds or x-rays. "It's been transformative in the kind of diagnostics that we can do."

Although the hospital will only be used to treat animals living at the zoo, Gov. Polis noted that the research conducted at the facility's new lab will have far-reaching impacts. "Research that is developed here helps inform biologists and protect endangered species across the globe," said Polis. Larsen added that the new facility will allow biologists to do behavioral research and study infectious diseases that could impact animals both at the zoo and in the wild. "It will allow us to better understand animals and what they need to survive in the wild."

Zoo President and CEO, Bert Vescolani, said the animal hospital is "the first step in a new direction for the Denver Zoo." He said many other additions are in the works, including a new habitat area for penguins that will open later this summer.

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June & July 4th Events

Please double check event dates and times using contact info provided.

NE DENVER/NW AURORA/ METRO DENVER EVENTS

Every Sunday 6/6 thru mid-October—Central Park Farmer's Market. Colorado-grown produce, baked goods, meats, and more at The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn) 9am–1pm. mca80238.com

Every Sunday 6/13 to 8/8—City Park Jazz. City Park Pavilion, 1700 N. York St., —June 13 with The Burroughs from 6–8pm —June 20: Brass Band Extravaganza with Otone, Tivoli Club Brass Band, and Guerilla Fanfare from 5:30–8:30pm. —June 27: Annie Booth Big Band from 6–8pm. —July 4: Purnell Steen and the Five Points Ambassadors from 6–8pm. cityparkjazz.org

Every Thursday 6/3 to 9/30—Park Hill Farm & Flea. A Thursday Night Market featuring local makers, food purveyors, live music and more. Oneida Park, 2231 Oneida St., from 4–8pm. parkhillfarmandflea.com

Every Friday thru the end of August—Stanley Farmers Market. 9am–1pm. In the Southeast Plaza. thelocalcolorado.com

Every Saturday thru 10/30—City Park Farmers Market. Featuring 60+ Colorado-based vendors offering locally made produce and products. 8am–1pm at 2551 E. Colfax Ave. cityparkfarmersmarket.com

Saturday 6/5—Music Under the Stars: "Journey to the Heart" The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St.) Begins at 7pm. mca80238.com

6/5 to 6/6—The 8th Annual Park Hill Art Festival Held outdoors at The Park Hill Masonic lodge. 10am–5pm. Painting, sculpture, jewelry, metal, wood, & ceramics. 4819 Montview Blvd. parkhillartfestival.com

6/5 Saturday—Anchor Center's Vision of Love Wine Tasting Fundraiser. Hosted by Delta Gamma Alumnae Chapter of Denver and presented by Joy Wine and Spirits along with our first ever beer garden! anchorcenter.org/visionsoflove. 2550 Roslyn St.

Thursday 6/10—MoJaBlu Concert series "Hazel Miller Band" Conservatory Green (49th & Valentia.) Begins at 6:30pm. mca80238.com

Friday 6/11—Outdoor Movie Series "Olympic Dreams" The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St). Movie starts at dusk. mca80238.com

6/12 Saturday—12th annual Jodi's Race for Awareness. The country's 2nd largest 1-mile & 5K run/walk for ovarian cancer is back with a live event and Virtual Dash. raceroster.com/events/2021/45387/2021-jodis-race-for-awareness. City Park Pavilions, 720-971-9436

6/12 to 6/13—Denver Potters Association Spring Show & Sale. Featuring the work of over 30 local artists selling ceramics, jewelry, glass, and wood. 10am–6pm. 5333 E. 38th Ave. castleclayartists.net

6/13 Sunday—21st Annual Park Hill Garden Walk. \$15 in advance, \$12 for Seniors (65+), children under 12 free, day of event \$18. parkhillgardenwalk.org. Greater Park Hill Neighborhood.

6/17 Thursday—"Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey". Join JAAMM and Mountain States ADL as we welcome author and activist Jo Ivester to discuss her recently-published memoir. <https://watch.eventive.org/jaamm/play/5f6cc19cafa5a600a0740834>. 350 S. Dahlia St.

6/18 to 6/19—Juneteenth Music Festival. Historic Five Points Neighborhood in Denver on 27th & Welton St. juneteenthmusicfestival.com

Saturday 6/19—Music Under the Stars: Kory Montgomery Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St., Aurora. Starts at 4pm. stanleymarketplace.com

Saturday 6/19—Saturday Live Music on the West Patio: "Tunisia" The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St). Begins at 7pm. mca80238.com

Thursday 6/24—MoJaBlu Concert series "Dotsero" Conservatory Green (49th & Valentia.) Begins at 6:30pm. mca80238.com

Friday 6/25—Outdoor Movie Series "Secret Garden" The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St). Movie starts at dusk. mca80238.com

6/28 Monday—First Annual City Park Alliance Golf Tournament. Register to play at cityparkalliance.org. Sponsorship opportunities available. City Park Golf Course, Denver

JULY 4TH/HOLIDAY EVENTS

7/2 & 7/3—Rockies vs. St. Louis Cardinals at Coors Field. Fireworks display after the game. mlb.com/rockies

7/2 Friday—Four Mile Historic Park's Independence Day Celebration. 5–9pm. Live music, pioneer games, food trucks and live entertainment. Watch the Glendale fireworks show at sunset. Tickets are \$14/adults, \$13 seniors/military with ID, \$10/youth (7–17), free for 6 and under. Discounts for FMHP members. 715 S. Forest St., 720-865-0800, fourmilepark.org

7/2 Friday—Glendale Fireworks Show. One of the largest and oldest displays in Denver. Starts at dusk. For best parking and viewing info, go to milehighonthecheap.com/denver-fourth-of-july/

7/3 Saturday—Civic Center Independence Eve Celebration. 4–9:30pm, free concert starts at 5 then the Colorado Symphony performs, accompanied by a light show display on the Denver City & County Building and dazzling fireworks finale. Enjoy food truck fare along with beer & wine gardens. More info at milehighonthecheap.com/denver-fourth-of-july/

7/4 Sunday—12th Annual Park Hill 4th of July Parade. Floats, music, classic cars, community groups, costumed characters and more! Parade starts at 1:30pm and runs along 23rd Ave. from Dexter St. to Krameria St. parkhillparade.org

7/4 Sunday—Aurora 4th of July Spectacular. Free activities from 6–10pm. Live music, delicious food and fireworks at 9:30pm. Aurora Municipal Center Great Lawn, 15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

7/4 Sunday—Central Park Pancake Breakfast & Parade. 2021 details to come, go to mca80238.com closer to event day.

SUMMER CAMPS

Find Summer camp listings—Check out our 2021 camp guide at frontporchne.com/article/2021-summer-camp-guide/. Or search the category "Summer Camp Guide" at frontporchne.com/events/.



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State Budget and School Funding



The Colorado Legislature, usually in session from January until May, started late and may run until June 12, the last day it can be in session this year. The *Front Porch* will have a wrap-up of bills passed this year in the July issue.

Right: Representatives' seats were divided by plexiglass when they went back to work in February.

Front Porch photo by Steve Larson.

By Todd Engdahl

What a difference a year makes. State spending and public school funding, both battered by the pandemic in the current budget year, are set to bounce back significantly in the upcoming fiscal year, which starts July 1.

Next year's state budget is \$4 billion larger than the current budget. And for schools, lawmakers were able to reverse a roughly \$500 million cut imposed by legislators in 2020.

Two things helped make it possible for the Colorado General Assembly to engineer a dramatic budget recovery.

First, fearing that the growing pandemic would devastate state revenues, the 2020 legislative session trimmed back plans for the 2020-21 state budget, setting it 4 percent below the \$33 billion allocated for 2019-20.

But, second, it turned out later that COVID-19 didn't shrink revenue in 2019-20. Just before the 2021 session convened in January, lawmakers learned they had about \$3 billion in "extra" funds to spend or save in 2021-22.

That allowed them to restore cuts in

the state budget—primarily a combined \$1 billion reduction in K-12 and higher education funding—plus give state employees a raise and increase payment rates to health care and other agencies that provide services to clients on behalf of state agencies. Next year's budget is more than \$34.5 billion, including state tax revenues, federal funds and cash revenues such as college tuition payments.

This year's legislature also increased the state reserve to an unprecedented \$1.7 billion, more than 13 percent, and set aside about \$800 million for state-funded pandemic relief programs and economic stimulus.

Funding boost gives school districts breathing room

School funding consumes one of the biggest shares of the budget—the state contributes about two-thirds of K-12 operating costs, set at \$7.8 billion next school year. That's an average of \$8,857 per student statewide, a 9.7 percent increase.

For Denver Public Schools, basic operating revenue for 2021-22 is projected at \$817.8 million, about \$9,112 per student, up 9 percent. For Aurora Public Schools the figures are \$366.7 million total, about \$10,000 per student for an 8 percent increase.

There's an important caveat to remember, however. When the legislature approves school funding every spring, amounts are based on enrollment projections. District-by-district funding gets reset every February after actual enrollment is recorded. Because of the pandemic, statewide enrollment dropped by about 30,000 this school year. Some students moved to online education, many parents apparently held kindergarten students out of school for a year and some students just disappeared.

It's hard to know how many students will return to district schools in 2021-22. If actual enrollment is below this spring's projections, districts could lose funding next winter, in the middle of the budget year. Current projections calls for Denver and Aurora enrollment to be flat or slightly down next year.

Low-income and English language learners and other programs get one-time funds

The 2021-22 school funding bill also contains an important but one-time bonus, an additional \$77.4 million that will be distributed to districts to support education of low-income and English language learner students. This will provide about \$10 million for DPS and \$4 million for Aurora.

This at-risk funding is not included in the

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Recover Quickly from Pandemic

base of the school finance formula. Many lawmakers and education interest groups have been advocating reform of that formula to direct more funding to at-risk students. The \$77.4 million is a compromise allowing discussion of broader reform to be put off until next year.

The school finance bill also restores funding for some specialized programs, such as one that gives school districts grants to increase their counseling staffs.

Additional budget and spending bills related to the pandemic

Work on the budget and school finance was completed in mid-May, but the 2021 session wasn't expected to adjourn until

For Denver Public Schools, basic operating revenue for 2021-22 is projected to be up 9 percent (about \$9,112 per student)... but if actual enrollment is below this spring's projections, districts could lose funding next winter.

early June. In a normal year the budget bill plus a few related measures and the school funding bill account for most state spending. This session lawmakers have two additional stacks of spending bills to consider, both sets related to the pandemic.

Pandemic relief package 1

The first is a group of nearly 40 measures to be funded by that \$800 million in state revenues set aside for pandemic relief. Those measures were still working their way through the process as May came to a close.

Most of those bills provide funding for economic development, workforce training, support for clean energy initiatives, funding for water projects, rural development, affordable housing, wildfire mitigation, and suppression and broadband expansion.

Highway funds—The most expensive bill in the group is a \$124 million transfer to the state highway fund.

Child care centers & school air purifying—But the package also includes a bill proposing \$13 million in grants for child care centers and another measure that includes \$10 million for distribution to schools to buy air purifying systems.

Pandemic relief package 2

The second package of spending bills hasn't been assembled yet, but those measures ultimately will direct spending of \$3.8 billion in new federal stimulus and pandemic recovery funds.

Federal officials only issued guidance in mid-May on how that money can

be spent, and legislative staff analysts were parsing those rules to figure out what exactly lawmakers can do with the money. Lawmakers were awaiting interpretation so they could decide how quickly they needed to appropriate the funds.

Todd Engdahl owns Capitol Editorial Services, a firm that provides legislative coverage, intelligence, and analysis to private clients. During a long career as an editor and public policy journalist, he served as executive city editor of The Denver Post, founder of DenverPost.com and a founder of Education News Colorado, which later became part of Chalkbeat Colorado.

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Rocky Mountain Arsenal Draft Five-Year Review Report

Available for Public Comment

The U.S. Army recently prepared its fifth Five-Year Review (FYR) draft final report for Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA). The FYR process covers a statutory and policy review of RMA's 1995 Off-Post and 1996 On-Post Records of Decision (RODs). The RODs provide detailed descriptions of the cleanup approach selected for the site.

The purpose of the FYR is to determine whether RMA's environmental cleanup continues to be protective of public health and the environment. A critical part of the FYR is to determine if changes to environmental standards have occurred and determine if the remedy outlined in the RODs and subsequent decision documents remains protective in light of new standards.

In keeping with its commitment to public involvement, the Army is seeking input on this report. All public comments received in writing by July 2, 2021, will be reviewed and considered in the final report as part of RMA's site record.

The document is available at the following locations and online at www.rma.army.mil:

- Anythink Commerce City Library: 7185 Monaco St., Commerce City, CO 80022
- Denver Public Library, Montbello Branch: 12955 Albrook Dr, Denver, CO 80239

Please submit comments to: Patty Lee, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, 6550 Gateway Road, Building 129, Commerce City, CO 80022. Ph:303.289.0300 Email: Patty.Lee6.civ@mail.mil.



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2021 Grad Parade

Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch



The Central Park community celebrated 2021 graduates with a car parade on May 16 that featured approximately 300 participants from multiple schools. The parade of 76 vehicles started and ended at The Shops at Northfield and looped for approximately five miles around neighborhoods in Central Park north of I-70. The hour-long parade started at 4pm and included graduates from Northfield, DSST, East, and George Washington high schools. The event, which started in 2020 due to the pandemic, was sponsored by the Central Park Master Community Association and is expected to be an annual event.



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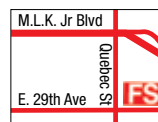
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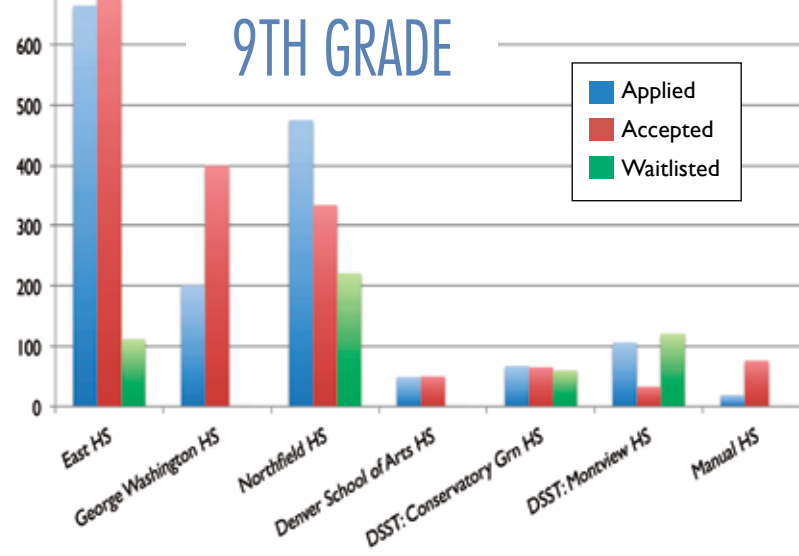
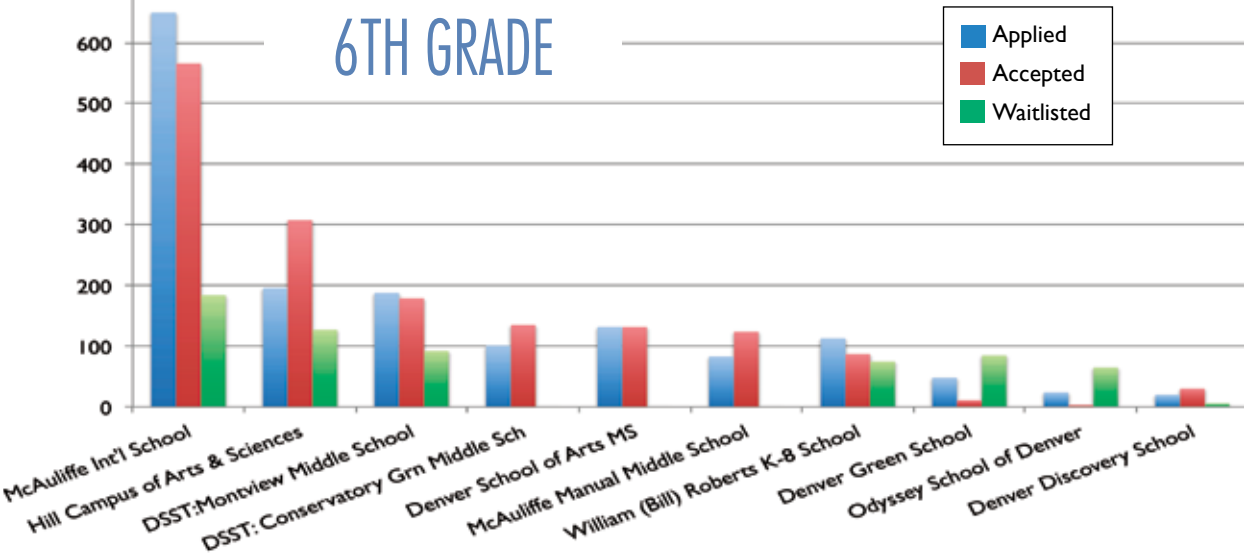
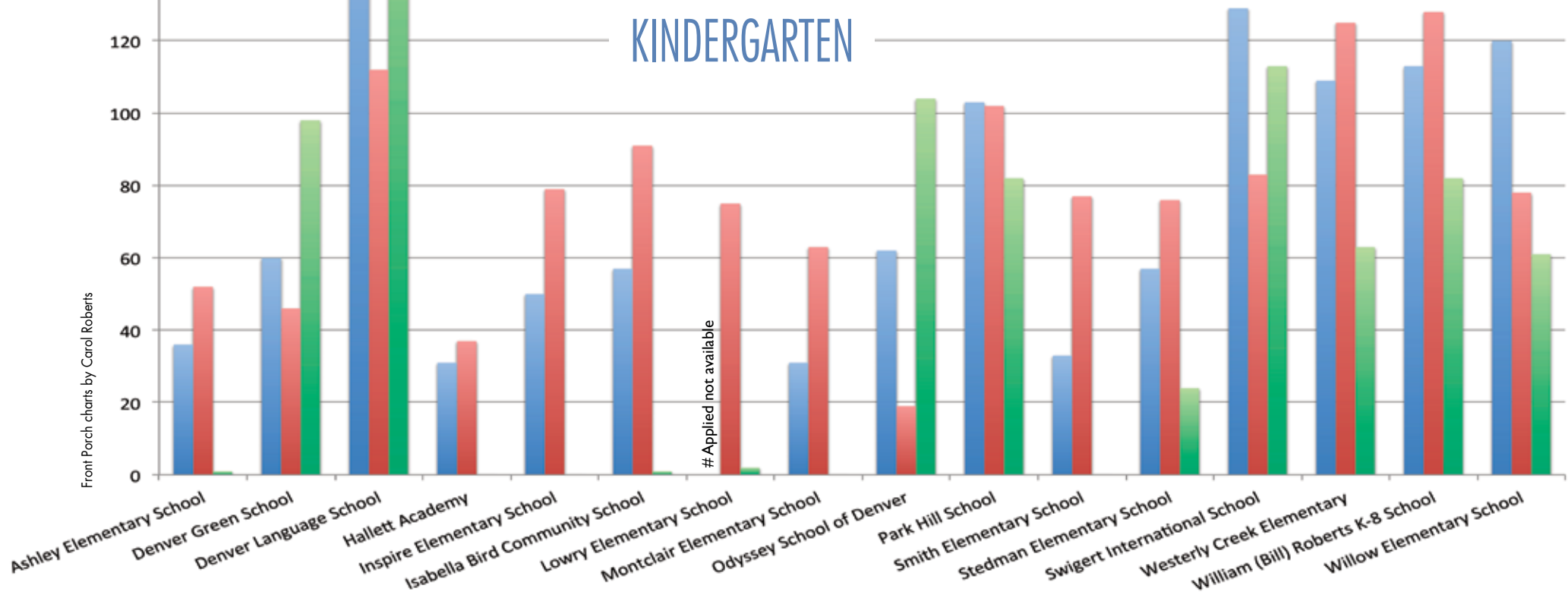
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NE SchoolChoice Outcomes



The charts above show SchoolChoice outcomes for students transitioning to a new school in kindergarten, 6th grade and 9th grade. According to DPS, 83% of transitioning students took part in SchoolChoice and 89% were placed in their number-one choice. For kindergartners, 93% got their first or second choice, and for incoming sixth- and ninth-graders, 97% got their first or second choice. SchoolChoice statistics are from Chalkbeat: <https://co.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/4/22410613/denver-school-choice-2021-accepted-waitlisted>

In light of news about declining DPS enrollment, we researched the size of NE schools and found that the total populations of the elementary, middle and high schools shown here grew from 2019 to 2020. But in 2021, the elementary schools lost a total of 187 students while the middle schools gained 122 and the high schools gained 402*. Our school-by-school spreadsheet is posted with this article at [FrontPorchNE.com](https://dps.schoolmint.net/school-finder/home). School size data source: <https://dps.schoolmint.net/school-finder/home>.

*School of the Arts was tallied with high schools; K-8s (Odyssey, Bill Roberts) were tallied with elementary schools.

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This month I review two films—one an Oscar winner, and another that should be mandatory viewing. Coming soon: The Sci-Fi Series!

My Octopus Teacher (2020)

Who knew that we needed an octopus in our lives? It turns out that this is a beautiful film for the moment, and it was just awarded the Best Documentary Feature at the Oscars. I have yet to see all of the films in the category, but this one is deserved and more than worth your time.

Directed by Pippa Ehrlich and James Reed, it tells the story of diver Craig Foster, who, over the course of a year, befriends an octopus. We will call the octopus the same thing he does throughout the movie: “She.” Foster needed a break from life, so he went back to his roots in South Africa. There, on a wild and remote cove, he reignited his passion for diving. The cove itself is a beautiful and dangerous kelp forest that sits at a particularly angry piece of the Atlantic Ocean. The currents are treacherous, and the water is infested with sharks and other marine life. One day Foster meets She, and the film documents their relationship over the course of a year.



My Octopus Teacher

The year would be transformative. She is certainly the star of the film, but the kelp forest and its teeming ecosystem is a close second, as documented by underwater cameraman Roger Horrocks. The cinematography is brilliant: as colorful, dynamic, and as expressive as the world it documents. At times it floats through the forest like so many of the animals within, and other times it brings us up close and personal with She, as Foster reaches out to her and She responds in kind.

The story is immensely captivating, but the cinematography, editing, and structure are just as exciting. We are thrust into this world with ebullience and verve, and we feel as free as Foster in this underwater paradise built atop a minefield. She is simply a revelation, and she takes our emotions on a roller-coaster as she navigates her tenuous existence alternately finding food and conversely trying not to be food. We learn along with Foster about this curious and intelligent creature, and we feel for her in a way we probably can’t for humans. As we understand more about her life and environment, our world expands, our curiosity is piqued, and our connection to nature strengthens.

These are the big revelations for Foster, and he allows us to share in them.

The film is not without its faults, but they are tertiary concerns at best. We don’t necessarily learn much about why Foster was burned out nor what troubled him so. It also gets a bit sappy at times, but we all may need a little sap in our lives right now. This sticks.

You will like this if you enjoyed *The Cove*, *Gorillas in the Mist*, and/or *Animal Planet* docs. Available on Netflix.



The Farewell

The Farewell

The representations of Asians and Asian Americans on film have not been kind to say the least. Throughout film history, the stereotypes ranged from demeaning to downright insulting. Just think James Cagney in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. Even more recent films have shown limited range and still don’t move far away from “Othering” both groups. *The Farewell* is a rare and wonderful exception.

Directed by Lulu Wang, it tells the story of a family’s good-bye to their dying grandmother (Nai Nai). The protagonist Billi (Awkwafina) is a New Yorker who travels to China to join the celebration. There is a catch, however: the entire family knows Nai Nai is dying of cancer, but Nai Nai does not. The whole business sounds awful to us Westerners, but there is one scene where Billi’s uncle explains it all to her. He is explaining it to us as well, and the lesson is eye-opening.

The directing is very good, the writing is excellent, and the performances sparkle. We should all be so lucky to say goodbye in such a unique and personal way. In the process, we see a family who is not stereotyped, not “Othered,” but rather, just a family, one with secrets, one who loves, and one who shares grief and joy. It’s beautiful.

You will like this film if you enjoyed *Minari*. There is not much else. Available on most VOD outlets.

Vincent Piturro, Ph.D., is a Professor of Film and Media Studies at MSU Denver. You can reach him at vpiturro@msudenver and follow him on Twitter.



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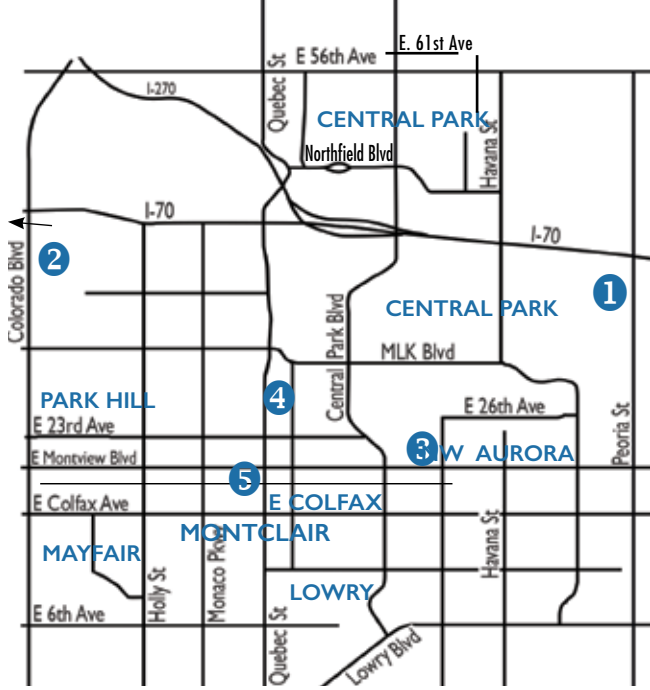
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...NE News Updates



By Carol Roberts

1 NE Hotel Purchase Will House Denver’s Homeless

Mayor Michael Hancock and U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, at the Travelodge near I-70 and Peoria, announced on May 6 that the city will buy the 95-room hotel to provide housing for those experiencing homelessness. The \$7.8 million cost is expected to include \$2 million in federal funds. Unlike group shelters, hotel rooms meet the needs of a wider population since they can house families together, even including pets, and provide privacy as well as a safe place to store personal belongings. The lodging for a portion of the residents will include mental and behavioral health assistance for those in need of those services. Funds from the tax passed by voters last fall are expected to be at least a portion of the funds used for shelter services and operations. It is hoped the hotel will be ready to accommodate about 200 people by the end of the year. A survey by Metro Denver Homeless Initiative in February 2020 found 4,171 people who were homeless, up from 3,445 in the 2018 survey.

2 Survey on the Future of Park Hill Golf Course

6,000 surveys were mailed to residents living within eight-tenths of a mile of the golf course; 1,302 responses were received with responses on what they would like to see for the future of the Park Hill Golf Course. Preliminary results of the survey were presented at the May 18 meeting of the Community Steering Committee, along with a discussion of the methodology of the survey. The top three priorities of these local respondents were: a grocery store (85%), a park with athletic fields (73%), and affordable housing (67%).

An additional survey open to all Denver residents that was posted online had 1,388 responses. 57% of those responses were from residents who did not live in the neighborhoods around the golf course. Not surprisingly, some responses between the two groups differed greatly.



In October 2019, Save Open Space held a rally at the Park Hill Golf Course to publicize their desire to prevent any portion of the land from being developed beyond a golf course or parks and open space uses. Photo by Steve Larson

With a choice to either use the site for a variety of open space/recreation purposes or keep it 100% as a golf course, the overall results for both surveys were similar, with 80% of locals and 76% of other respondents favoring open space/recreation over 100% golf course

Initial plans for Montview Plaza apartments have been reviewed by the Aurora Planning Dept., which requested resubmission to address a range of questions and concerns, including changes to the exterior color scheme of the building below.



use. Natural open space also showed agreement between the two groups, with 55% of locals putting it in their top three compared to 60% of other respondents.

In the type of open space/recreation use, the two groups differed dramatically. Athletic fields were the first, second or third choice by 73% of neighbors but just 12% of open survey respondents. And local respondents chose specific uses (playgrounds, swimming pool, outdoor event spaces) but just 15% chose general park space compared to 45% of open survey responders choosing general park space.

Differences also showed in responses about other uses beyond parks/open space. 85% of locals chose a grocery store as their first, second or third choice, while 35% of the open survey showed that choice. Search DenverGov.org for Park Hill Golf Course Area Visioning Process for more information and to follow this process that may determine how much those closest to the park will influence its future.

3 Montview Plaza

Trammell Crow Residential submitted an application to Aurora for a mixed-use development with approximately 394 for-rent multi-family units, 533 parking spaces including a parking garage, and retail along Montview and Clinton. Their proposal shows some apartments above the retail on Montview, but most of the proposed units are in two larger buildings set behind (north of) the buildings on Montview, with one of the buildings facing Westerly Creek.

Aurora Planning asked the developer to resubmit plans to address requests for clarification and/or modifications. One of the comments relates to the appearance of the building shown above (the south end of the building along Westerly Creek): “The subject property is very important to the redevelopment of this area and is considered a catalytic project as outlined in the Westerly Creek Community Plan and Aurora Places...Given the adjacency of the site to Westerly Creek, please try to incorporate some more natural elements and colors into the building facades. The current black/white/gray/brown color palette does not seem to fit well with the surrounding open space and doesn’t help make the buildings stand out from any other multi-family building. This is a unique and highly visible property, so the color and material palette should ideally reflect this and draw people into the site through design.” We’ll provide more information as the plans progress.

4 New Biz(s) in E. 29th Ave Town Center: Indian Food and Doughnuts

NE residents will no longer have to drive to other parts of town for Indian food. Little India, with locations on East 6th Ave, Downtown and Highlands, will be coming to Central Park this summer at the former Berkshire location in the East 29th Ave. Town Center.

Also coming just up the street from Little India on E. 29th Ave. will be The Doughnut Club, the brick and mortar side of The Dough Bar online business that became popular for its high protein doughnuts.

5 DPS Purchase of Johnson & Wales Bldgs.

The DPS Board put the \$30 million purchase of some Johnson & Wales buildings on it’s May 20 consent agenda. BoardDocs show the closing of the sale is to take place June 1. With a waiting list of more than 500 students at Denver School of the Arts every year for many years, the goal is to expand access to the school for low-income students and students of color.

Letters

As doctors the choice is easy. We'll vaccinate our children, and you should too.

As both doctors and fathers, we’re encouraging parents to get their children ages 12 to 15 vaccinated as soon as possible. In clinical trials that involved thousands of children, the Pfizer vaccine had 100% efficacy and proved safe, with side effects in line with those in younger adults.

In Colorado, recent data show that children between the ages of 0 and 19 now account for 26.4% of current COVID-19 cases. While it is true that your child’s risk of being hospitalized due to COVID-19 is very low, it’s not zero. And parents should be aware of a condition related to COVID-19 called multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C), a shock-like condition associated with COVID-19. The risk to kids of getting hospitalized with COVID-19 or with MIS-C is far greater than the risk of a significant reaction to the vaccine.

Children are 20% of our population. If we are going to ensure that all members of our community, particularly our elderly and vulnerable populations, are safe from COVID-19, we must vaccinate as many healthy individuals as possible if we have any hope of achieving herd immunity and returning to a normal lifestyle.

We respect that every parent and guardian has a choice in the care they provide to their children. We hope you will consider the many benefits to their health and well-being, as well as the positive impact vaccinating as many people as possible can have on our community.

You can register online to get yourself or your child vaccinated—search for “Vaccine Sign Up Children’s Hospital Colorado” or “Choose Your Vaccine Denver Health.” Find additional information at <https://covid19.colorado.gov/vaccine>

David Brumbaugh is a board-certified pediatric gastroenterologist and the chief medical officer at Children’s Hospital Colorado. Steven Federico is a board-certified general pediatrician and the director of general pediatrics at Denver Health.

District Attorney Beth McCann: Study on “Racial Disparities in Prosecutorial Outcomes” is moving DAs to find ways to improve our system.

The guilty verdict in George Floyd’s death moves our country forward, however, there is still more work to do. Our office is committed to being part of the solutions that create a fair and equitable society.

Long before George Floyd, I was concerned with the over representation of people of color in the criminal justice system. I commissioned an independent research study to explore whether any racial and ethnic disparities appeared in how our office prosecutes cases. My two goals were to ensure fair and equal justice and treatment for all and to gain your trust by being transparent. A link to the study, “Racial Disparities in Prosecutorial Outcomes; An analysis of felony cases accepted for prosecution in the City and County of Denver” is posted with this article at FrontPorchNE.com.

The report did not find racial or ethnic disparities in our overall plea bargaining and resolution of felony cases. It did show that we need to dive deeper into some limited areas of discrepancy, specifically in dismissals, deferred judgments, and referrals to drug court. However, there was no overall indication that those issues were based on racial bias.

The report makes recommendations that I am committed to pursuing and some that were already underway prior to the report’s release. The real gift of this research is that it is sparking conversations internally and externally. Colorado’s elected district attorneys from small, medium and large jurisdictions, Republicans and Democrats are now discussing the prosecutors’ role in correcting racial disparities in our work. It is encouraging to hear commitment, determination and innovation as DAs consider how to improve many facets of a cumbersome system.



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Project Director Bob Hays stands in the newly constructed westbound lanes for I-70, with the old highway viaduct above and to his left. Both east and westbound traffic will utilize these lanes while the viaduct is demolished and the eastbound lanes are constructed. Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch



This mechanical room, at the entrance to the tunnel, controls the state-of-the-art systems designed to monitor and respond to any emergencies that might arise in the tunnel.

By Mary Jo Brooks

The Central 70 Project celebrated a major milestone at the end of May when it opened up a new two-mile stretch of I-70 that is 30 feet below ground level. The new section, from Colorado to Brighton Blvds. is considered the “crown jewel” of the entire 10-mile highway reconstruction project. While most of this lowered section is open to the sky, a 1000-foot section, from Columbine to Clayton Sts., will be covered and a 4-acre park will be constructed on top.

The public got its first close-up look at the project on May 15 when the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) hosted a half-mile walking tour of the new construction. Some 3,000 residents strolled under the tunnel and viewed 25 exhibits with information about the \$1.3 billion project and about the history of the

surrounding neighborhoods of Globeville and Elyria-Swansea. Those communities had been physically divided when the I-70 viaduct was constructed. The 4-acre park was designed to help re-unify those neighborhoods while providing a place for recreation and social events. Pedestrians were also able to look at the artwork on the concrete walls which was designed with input from community meetings. The theme of the artwork is “people, places, and culture” and is designed to celebrate the culture of immigrants from more than 50 nations who live in the area.

One week after the pedestrian “open house,” I-70 from Washington Street to I-270 was completely shut down for just over 48 hours while crews prepared for what CDOT called the “Mile High Shift” to the lowered section. Cars began using the brand-new stretch of highway on Monday, May

24th and for the next 18 months, both eastbound and westbound traffic will travel in these newly opened six lanes. The adjacent 57-year old viaduct that formerly carried the highway will be torn down and additional lowered lanes will be constructed in its place. When the project is completed, scheduled for the end of 2022, eastbound traffic will be routed into the former viaduct section while westbound traffic will have exclusive use of the lanes just completed.

Project director Bob Hays says he’s proud of all the safety systems that have been built into the new construction. The two-mile lowered



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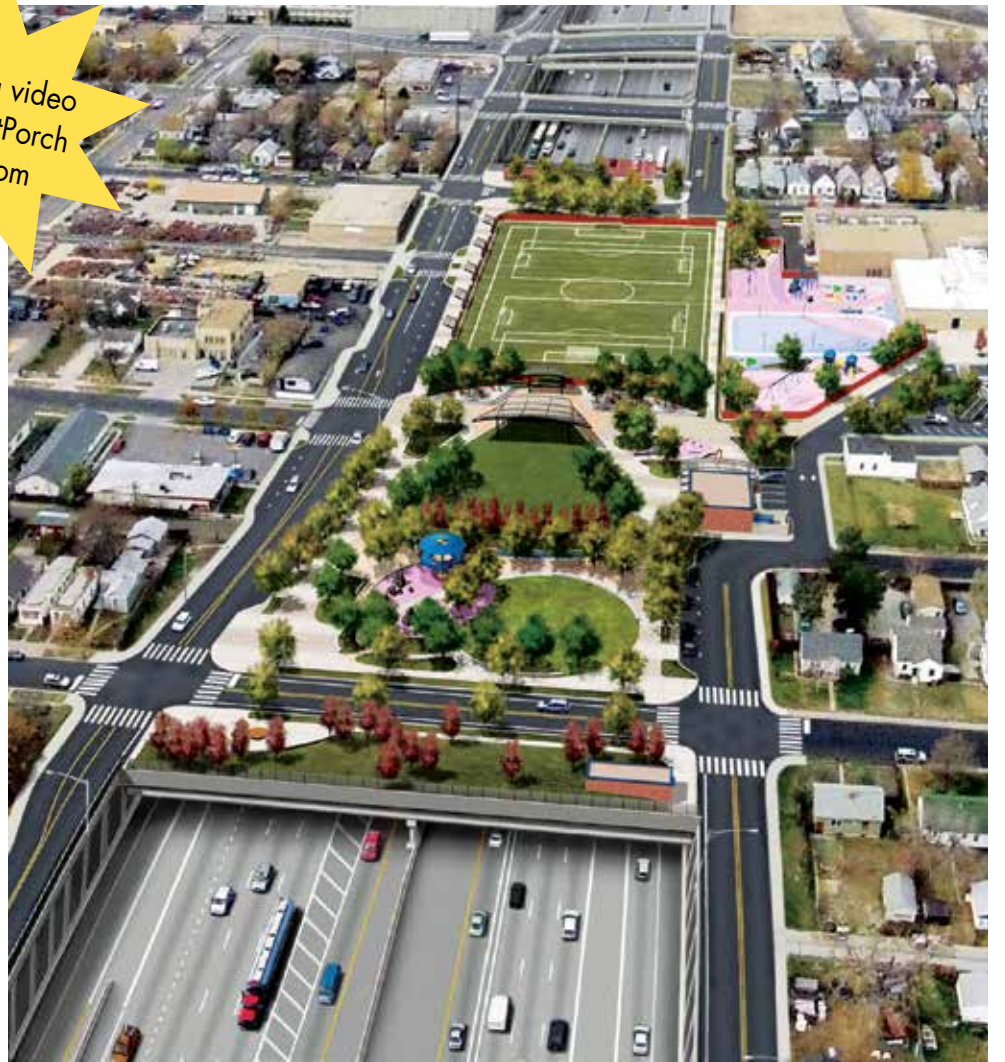
stretch has a complex drainage and pump system to get rid of rain water. “It’s capable of handling a 100-year flood event, if that would ever come to fruition,” said Hays. The 1,000-foot tunnel has a full complement of automated safety systems including 9 giant fans to remove exhaust and smoke, heat sensors, closed-circuit cameras, and a giant sprinkler system that can drop 3,500 gallons of water a minute in case of fire. The tunnel also has LED lights attached to an external sensor so the light level inside adjusts to match the daylight outside. “We don’t want drivers to have a shock factor as they drive under the cover structure,” said Hays.

Perhaps the most difficult part of project is still to come: dismantling the old viaduct. Because it is located directly between the newly-constructed highway to the north and a neighborhood to the south, Hays says it will necessitate a “surgical process.” Crews will use saws to cut out portions of the old highway, then carefully lower

them down so they can be ground up and hauled away. Giant netting will be erected to prevent any debris from damaging nearby structures and air quality will be monitored for any heavy metals that might be released. “The project is going to take great care in not damaging the new infrastructure or the adjacent businesses and homes,” says Hays.

Once the viaduct has been demolished and the new lanes have been completed, construction of the 4-acre park on top of the tunnel will begin. It will hold a full-size soccer field and a small outdoor amphitheater, along with a playground area, and room for food trucks or a farmers’ market.

Hays says the highway project has stayed on schedule, despite some weather challenges and the discovery of seven fossils. The most notable were two molars of a camel-like creature likely from the Pleistocene age. A paleontological company was contracted to monitor and collect such findings. The fossils will ultimately be given to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.



An artist rendering of the 4-acre park that will be constructed on top of the 1,000-foot tunnel stretching from Clayton to Columbine Street. Rendering courtesy of CDOT, Central 70 project



Left: The theme for the new I-70 wall panels, “people, places and culture” emerged from community workshops. The panels celebrate immigrants from more than 50 nations who raised families and started businesses in the Globeville-Elyria-Swansea communities. The panels adjoin the construction and honor the traditions and events of these communities with images of food, dance and art.

Right: A temporary wall of dirt was constructed to support the old viaduct while the I-70 west-bound lanes and newer viaducts (blue one shown here) were built. Both the old viaduct and dirt wall will be removed to make room to construct the eastbound lanes.



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