

Front Porch

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DENVER, COLORADO

NORTHEAST DENVER

DECEMBER 2022



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

NE Denver Forum: Creating Safer Communities

District Attorney Beth McCann, Police Chief Ron Thomas, and other community leaders spoke to nearly 50 Northeast Denver residents in a forum co-hosted by Front Porch and Central Park United Neighbors about ways to create safer neighborhoods for all citizens.

“We know there is a dominant narrative that we have to fear each other and we don’t need to know our neighbor. But we reject that. We believe power is in relationships,” community leader Vickie Wilhite told the audience at the Northeast Forum. Sitting next to her, Denver Police Chief Ron Thomas agreed saying that for too long “police have done their thing, communities have done their thing. We need to break down those silos and work together.” *Story by Mary Jo Brooks on page 10.*



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

New Programs Are Growing at The Urban Farm

Over the past three years, The Urban Farm has expanded its summer camps, retooled its youth employment program, and revamped the livestock, poultry, and equine clubs. On a recent Saturday afternoon, two young participants helped sheep get some exercise. *Story by Mary Jo Brooks on page 12.*

Thanksgiving “Madness”



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Chef Tajahi mixes a poultry rub as he and other volunteers prep Thanksgiving dinners for those in need. *Story by Courtney Drake-McDonough on page 11.*

Key 2022 Ballot Measure Results

Story by Brian Heuberger on page 8.

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Bird Sightings

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Mobbing Behavior Among Birds

Birds, like other wildlife, exhibit behavior of self-preservation and will risk their own safety to protect their young and preserve the territory they inhabit. Mobbing is a commonly observed behavior where a smaller bird attempts to drive away a larger bird, especially a bird of prey or raptors like eagles, hawks, and owls.

Typically one or more of the smaller birds will chase, nibble, peck, dive bomb, or engage in aerial entanglement to warn and drive off the predator. This harassment is amazingly well tolerated by the hassled bird. It usually remains at its perch and will duck or evade the attacker. More often than not, it will eventually fly away instead of confrontation by retaliation.



Western Kingbird dive bombs a perched Swainson's Hawk

Such entanglement is uncommon and serious injury even rarer.

The attackers include Red-winged Blackbirds and American Crows; the hassled birds are Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, and Swainson's Hawks. But smaller raptors will harass larger raptors as well. Here are some photos capturing this mobbing behavior.



Left: A Swainson's Hawk harasses a perched Bald Eagle. Above: The hawk comes too close to the eagle. Bottom left: The eagle leaves its perch and confronts the hawk by baring its talons



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Jeff Dunn biked to all 209 Denver parks in just 12 months. His journey culminated at Bonnie Brae Park, where he completed his mission and celebrated with his family.

By Sarah Huber

A few months into the pandemic and about a year after he moved from South Dakota to Central Park, Jeff Dunn bought the last bike that was available at a neighborhood bike shop. “I wanted something to do, but I had no plans beyond that,” says Dunn.

That purchase proved life-changing. In September of 2021, seeing a map of all Denver parks at the Central Park Recreation Center gave Dunn an ambitious idea. “I told my wife that I think I’d like to bike to every park.”

What arose on a whim turned into his “Park Quest,” as Dunn’s two grown children and grandkids dubbed it, and in 12 months he biked to each of the 209 Denver urban parks. “I biked three or four days a week regardless of the weather, and I took time in each park to do

something,” says Dunn. “Sometimes I would journal or read a book, but my favorite thing was to engage others and hear their stories.”

As the year progressed, the Park Quest enabled Dunn to improve his health and elevate his mind. “I became a better person,” says Dunn. “I was more compassionate and considerate of others, from watching out for others biking on the road, to growing in empathy for the communities I rode through and the people I visited.”

Dunn has endeavored for positive change throughout his entire life. He gave back to his communities while serving in the corporate world, he trained several state champions as the owner of a gymnastics school, and he ran twice as a Democrat for the South

Transformational “Park Quest”

Dakota Legislature. “That was nothing compared to the one-on-one interactions on the trail,” says Dunn. “Here in the Central Park bubble, we can all vote the same way and think the same way. But when you’re getting out on a bike, you’re interacting meaningfully with all ages and all walks of life.”

Wherever he rolled, Dunn had enlightening experiences. He stopped more than once to repair a stranded teen’s bicycle, played basketball with a recent high school graduate trying to figure out what to do next in life, and took time to encourage a young person who was skipping school to stick with his education. At Confluence Park, he paused to watch a Catholic charity hand out meals and was surprised when a man collecting aluminum cans urged him to grab a hot dish. During their conversation, Dunn learned that this man was staying in a Salvation Army shelter and that he was having trouble finding shoes to fit his large size. Fueled by his newfound desire to connect with people, Dunn ordered shoes online and headed to the shelter a few days later.

“I learned what a great city Denver is and how many nice people are here,” says Dunn. “I also realized that the best way to create a more tolerant and peaceful world might be to talk and to listen.”

While Dunn usually rode solo, his grandson Braylon joined him occasionally and soon adopted Dunn’s practice of intentionally noticing others. At Union Station, Braylon slid a few dollars to a street performer while saying, “that guy is like a lemonade stand for the ears.” This was especially moving to Dunn. “I can hardly remember it without a few tears. My grandson had done a lemonade stand a few months ago at our house, and he could see that this was another way of people stopping to care.”

Certain parks emerged as Dunn’s favorites during the journey. He enjoyed a small playground that he now visits regularly with his family, and he appreciated that Ferguson Park—in South Park Hill—is just steps away from a coffee shop and bookstore. Other

favorite parks included City Park, Washington Park, and Cheesman Park. “Cheesman is especially great on weekends,” says Dunn. “That’s when the street performers are out, kids are playing on the playground, and people are playing volleyball, running laps, or walking their dogs.”

After a year of biking to parks all throughout Denver, the last stop for Dunn was Bonnie Brae Park. His family was there to celebrate his arrival with champagne and a picnic lunch. Dunn was greeted by his wife, his son’s family, and his daughter flew out from Los Angeles with her family as well. His family plans on having a bench installed in a city park to commemorate Dunn’s impressive achievement.

Although Dunn was proud to complete his mission of biking to every park, he’s now ready to embark on his next journey of riding to Denver breweries. “We’re going to go with two other buddies, get out there, and see new things,” says Dunn. “It really is true that life is what you make of it. Don’t be shy, talk to people, and it’ll make you both feel good.”



Jeff Dunn shows one of his grandchildren the map of Denver parks that he visited during his “quest.”

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Front Porch file photos by Steve Larson

Hasira "H-Soul" Ashemu spoke at 2019 meetings to encourage the District to keep Denver Discovery open but to facilitate substantial improvements.

By Brian Heuberger

After weeks of news on upcoming DPS school closures due to low enrollment, the DPS Board voted on Nov. 17 not to close any schools at this time. In Northeast Denver, that means Denver Discovery School (DDS) will remain open.

In late October, DPS released a list of ten small schools recommended for closing—and DDS was on the list. Later the list was cut in half—and DDS was still there. At the last minute, Superintendent Marrero surprised the board by recommending that just two schools be closed—and DDS was one of those.

The DPS Board deems student populations below 215 to be financially untenable since DPS must provide additional resources so these schools can function as if they had an enrollment above 215 students. DDS currently has 93 students, and DPS subsidizes the school at 10.53 times the basic per pupil funding rate. (Per pupil funding of the other nine schools on the proposed closure list ranged from 2.04 to 6.94.) Superintendent Marrero has called DDS a particularly "dire" situation.

Denver Discovery School Avoids Closure Amid Struggles

Three days before the expected closure vote, the Board held a public comment session that lasted for over six hours and that featured nearly 200 individual testimonies. Most of the ten schools on the closure list were well represented, with numerous students, teachers, and parents passionately defending their schools and criticizing the proposed closure. No one testified on behalf of Denver Discovery, and the school was not mentioned during the 6-hour session.

Although *Front Porch* policy is to identify the source of quotes, this article contains statements from DDS parents who asked to remain anonymous. *Front Porch* believes the information is credible and will help readers understand the issues that these parents say are detrimental to the students—and why they think these problems make the school unsustainable. *Front Porch* was unable to find parents to defend the school, and no DDS staff members were willing to be interviewed.

When Denver Discovery opened in 2014, the community had high hopes. The school's diversity was part of its appeal, as the student population was initially comprised of 60 percent White and 40 percent minority students. But the White population soon dropped to just 25 percent, and the diverse school became a minority school.

Hasira "H-Soul" Ashemu was actively involved as a DDS parent. His two sons recently graduated from the school and his wife served in the administration. Ashemu traces the problems at Denver Discovery to decisions made by the first principal, who was released from her post just before the start of the 2017 school year. "She expanded the boundaries of their students beyond Quebec to increase the enrollment and funding. But taking in so many Black and Brown students shifted the racial dynamic, and they weren't a welcomed addition in that building. Those DDS teachers could not connect to the students who had come from traumatized communities, and that created instability in the school," says Ashemu.

With the diminished population of White students, the school lost a key source of its previous funding, says Ashemu. "The non-profit attached to Denver Discovery helped bolster and support the school. White parents were funding and supporting the budget on top of DPS so they could still do expeditionary learning activities. Then the White flight occurred—and it's difficult to blame them based on the educational product. But when we lost the non-profit, that compounded the lack of services or resources at the school's disposal."

With four principals in five years, the changes in leadership destabilized the school, says another parent. "The principals weren't even there long enough for us to learn their names. We had two principals come on board, see the severity of the issues, and then just quit on us, which was really disappointing."

The teacher turnover rate also added to the problems, says this parent. "The teachers were leaving in the middle of school years...When the kids saw adults quit on them...they stopped caring about school. That was heartbreaking, so I knew that our family had to make a hard decision to switch schools."

Disciplinary problems were cited by another parent. "I was shocked by the behavioral issues that went on throughout my daughter's entire time there. The kids just didn't listen to the adults...and the teachers didn't have the resources to handle it."

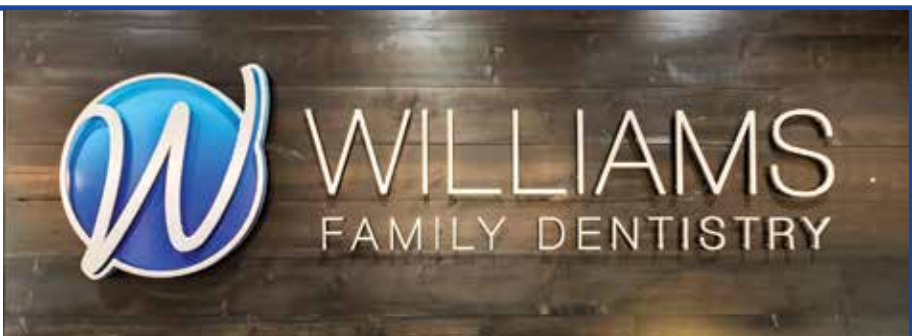
The leadership, funding, and disciplinary issues all compounded DDS' academic struggles. It has been "On Watch" for failure to meet academic expectations since 2017. "My daughter just wasn't learning anything there," says a parent. "She loves to learn, and it got to the point where she told me that she's not learning anything new, even in the subjects that she was interested in, and that was a big factor that made us change schools."

For now the school remains open, but its future appears uncertain. With NE Denver enrollment not declining as much as other parts of the district, perhaps there's hope for the school to rebound. *Front Porch* will follow the story.



Then-District 4 Denver school board member Jennifer Bacon spoke to students, parents, and administrators about possible steps to revitalize Denver Discovery in March 2019.

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Key 2022 Ballot

Front Porch file photos by Steve Larson



The Colorado school lunch measure was put on the ballot after the pandemic-era federal free meal program expired. The measure passed 55%-45%, and it will provide free meals for all students and wage increases for cafeteria workers.

By Brian Heuberger

In November, Denver residents cast their votes on many ballot measures. Here are the results of some of the key city and state initiatives.

Sidewalks

Ordinance 307 proposed to shift the responsibility of sidewalk maintenance from property owners to a newly-created city repair program. Previously, property owners were responsible to maintain and repair the public sidewalks running along their homes or buildings. However, a lack of enforcement led to many neglected sidewalks becoming deteriorated with missing sections, narrow passages, and dangerous gaps. Ordinance 307 addressed this issue by asking voters to have property owners pay an annual sidewalk tax based on the length of their sidewalks and the type of street. The program is projected to generate \$40 million per year for sidewalk maintenance, and Denver voters approved this measure by a 55% to 45% margin.

Alcohol

Two of the three statewide alcohol measures were defeated. Prop 124 would have permitted liquor store owners to increase the number of licenses they could obtain and stores they could open, but it was soundly rejected by the voters 62% to 38%. Prop 126 would have allowed third-party delivery services to pick up liquor from stores or restaurants and then deliver the alcohol to customers. Although this was a closer contest, the delivery measure was also defeated by a 51% to 49% margin. The lone victory for the alcohol initiatives was Prop 125, which allows grocery stores to sell wine and which passed with 51% voter approval.

School Lunches

The school lunch program was another significant measure that was approved by voters this cycle. Prop FF

asked Colorado residents to create a fund to provide free lunches for all students, regardless of family income. The program is funded by reducing the tax deductions available for the state's wealthiest residents who earn over \$300,000 annually. It is projected to raise approximately \$100 million a year.

Affordable Housing

The approval of Proposition 123 addresses the affordable housing crisis in Colorado. The ballot measure puts 0.1% of all taxable income into an affordable housing fund that is expected to generate about \$300 million a year. The funds will help local governments and nonprofit organizations acquire land for new developments, increase the stock of affordable housing, and provide assistance for low-income residents.

Denver Public Library Receives Additional Funding

With approximately 4 million visitors a year, the Denver Public Library is the most frequented cultural institution in the city. However, inadequate funding in the recent years has created many challenges, such as low wages for staff, reduced hours for branches, decreased resources for residents, and insufficient collections of books. Initiative 2I sought to increase the funding for the Denver Public Library by \$36 million annually. The measure passed 68% to 32%.

"We really believe having libraries helps make communities great, and we're really thankful to have the community say that they agree and that they support us," says Jeff Riley, the executive director of the Denver Public Library Friends Foundation. The Friends Foundation boosts the library by raising funds from charitable donations and by providing advocacy to government agencies. Many factors motivated the Foundation to get 2I on the ballot during this election cycle.

"With the pandemic and budget cuts, our library commission studied how the library might obtain more sustainable funding rather than relying only on the general fund from the city," says Riley. "We received recommendations for how we can get back to full service, and so this year we focused on developing 2I, bringing it to the city council, and getting it referred as a ballot measure."

The measure requires homeowners to pay approximately \$4.19 more in property taxes each month. "It was a grassroots campaign," says Amy Brimah, who is a Central Park resident and the chair of the Friends Foundation. "We knocked on doors—including 500 in Central



DPL expects the increased funding from 2I to expand the collections of popular books and reduce wait times for patrons.

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Measure Results

Park—we did a lot of texting, and we also had a signature blog. Then we went to several House District meetings, we talked to CPUN, and we met with many other neighborhood organizations.”

DPL Communications Director Olivia Gallegos believes the increased funds can help the library solve its problems and improve its services. “One of the priorities of this new funding is compensation,” says Gallegos. “We want to make sure that our librarians and staff are making competitive wages, that folks want to work with us, and that we remain a world-class library system in Denver.”

Expanding the branch hours is another crucial benefit of the better funding. “Of our 27 locations, right now we only have one branch that’s open on Sundays and only seven locations that

are open on Mondays,” says Gallegos. “Plus we close at six on weekdays, and so we look forward to opening our doors on more days and expanding our hours into the evenings.”

The increased resources will be beneficial for all communities, but especially for the many low-income residents who depend on those resources to fulfill their educational and professional endeavors. “We offer free access to our book collections, library services, and technological devices,” says Gallegos. “Folks can check out Chromebooks, access our Wi-Fi, or have our Digital Navigators bring the technology to their homes. That helps a lot of folks in vulnerable communities bridge the digital divide, and so we’re looking forward to expanding those popular services.”



The sidewalk measure was inspired by a study demonstrating that 40 percent of Denver streets have missing or unusable sidewalks. Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

5A and 4A State Champions!

The Denver East Angels boys soccer team won their 5A state championship. This is the 4th championship for Denver East, their first title since 2011, and they finished their season with an 18-1-1 record.

The Northfield Nighthawks boys soccer team won their second state championship in a row to establish their dominance in the 4A league. They defeated Battle Mountain 3-0 behind the impenetrable goaltending of Zander Kosmas.



Photo by Brent Murphy

The Denver East Angels played against the Fairview Knights in the championship game played at Weidner Field. The game featured an intense defensive struggle that kept the game scoreless deep into the contest. But senior forward Tayler Secrest came through in the clutch by scoring a goal at the 57 minute mark to secure a 1-0 victory over the Knights and to win the state championship for the Angels. Coach Kirk Bast believes resilience and confidence were the most impressive qualities of his championship team.



Photo by Sean Dougherty

The Northfield Nighthawks have a 37-1-1 record during this dominant two-year streak. But being repeat champions is a rare feat and an impressive achievement, as only three other 4A schools had been able to repeat their titles since 1990. The Nighthawks often credit their success to the camaraderie of the players and the chemistry of the team. With the girls soccer team winning a title in the spring, this is three semesters in a row of Northfield showcasing its soccer prowess and celebrating state championships.

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NE Denver Forum: Creating Safer Communities

Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch



Panelists at the forum listen to residents talk about their perceptions of crime and safety. From left to right: Moderator Bill Fulton, Civic Canopy; State Rep. Steven Woodrow; Vickie Wilhite, Together Colorado; Denver Police Chief Ron Thomas; Felicia Rodriguez, Denver Youth Violence Prevention Program; Police Lt. Kevin Hines, 5th District; Denver District Attorney Beth McCann.

DA McCann agreed and then turned to a theme that would dominate much of the evening's discussion: preventing youth violence. "It would be nice to have a community where young men, particularly of color, didn't feel that they needed to carry guns to

By Mary Jo Brooks

What does it mean to create a safe neighborhood? How can youth violence be prevented? How can school shootings be stopped?

These were among the many complex issues discussed at the November 16 neighborhood forum sponsored by Central Park United Neighbors and *Front Porch*. More than 45 Northeast Denver residents gathered to hear from Police Chief Ron Thomas, District Attorney Beth McCann, and other city leaders and community advocates who discussed the perceptions and realities of crime in the area and what should be done to improve safety for everyone.



Some Northeast Denver residents spoke about the need to have better access to crime statistics to counter misinformation.

The first speaker, Vickie Wilhite from the non-profit group Together Colorado, set the tone for the night when she said that safe communities are ones where residents take care of their neighbors instead of fearing them. "We need each other and we are better off together... We believe power is in relationships."

Chief Thomas expanded on that idea by saying that for too long the police and communities have been siloed. "The police have done their thing. Communities have done their thing. We need to break down those silos and work

together." He also said that it's important that people's perceptions of crime actually match the realities. "To me, a safe neighborhood is one in which people are not only statistically safe but they feel safe."

feel safe. We see that too often, and that leads to things that aren't good." McCann said that youth violence prevention is one of the most urgent issues to be addressed, and she pointed to the city's Handgun Intervention Program that tries to change the lives of young offenders who have been picked up carrying guns but who have not yet been caught using them. "We try to identify those kids at a young age and help them get connected with the community, to help them understand how to make better choices."

As Denver's Youth Violence Prevention Program Manager, Felicia Rodriguez talked about new community hubs that the City has opened across Denver to provide wraparound services to youth and families. Two are located in Northeast Denver: one at Amesse Elementary and one at Smith Elementary. "It's important that youth have the support and services they need to thrive and be successful." But she admitted that the city's youth violence prevention program is still in its infancy and many of its partner programs need more funding.

State Representative Steven Woodrow was quick to agree. "We've underinvested in our communities, underinvested in our schools—especially in our communities of color. When you underinvest in people, they don't get the same outcomes as folks in neighborhoods where you do invest. So there's a gap. And it's persistent."

One of the most emotional moments of the night came when Police Chief Thomas talked about how so many young people are filled with a sense of despair. "It has occurred to me for a while that one of the reasons there is so much youth violence—and youth essentially destroying their lives—is because they don't have any hope." Thomas' voice cracked and he had to compose himself before continuing. "They don't have hope for the future so they don't think they're throwing anything away."

Police Lieutenant Kevin Hines, who commands Northeast Denver's District 5 unit, acknowledged that many of the issues of crime and violence were generational, which means it will take time to break that cycle. He pointed to initiatives such as the co-responder program in which police are ac-




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accompanied by mental health clinicians to respond to incidents involving people with mental illness or substance abuse issues. They ultimately help connect those people with services. “It’s been a huge success... so we’re making strides. But we’re looking at investments that will take years to pay off.”

After the six panelists spoke, the audience broke into small groups to discuss their ideas for solutions. When the forum reconvened, CPUN board member Jeff Barron told the panelists that his group talked about how Central Park, a more affluent community, seems disconnected from the communities that surround it. “Maybe some investment needs to go toward building true connections between our communities.”

Jamie Hodgkins spoke about how she was a senior in high school when the Columbine shooting happened. She now has young children and worries about their safety. “How do we create a community in America where we don’t worry about school shootings?”

Members of another group said they understand that investments need to be made for the long-term health of the community, but they worried about the short-term spike in property crimes and gun violence that has erupted. They wondered if crime statistics could be made more readily available—perhaps being published monthly in *Front Porch*—to counter misinformation spread on social media. Community police officers who attended the forum said those statistics are easily found by searching “crime statistics” at www.denvergov.org. DA McCann said her office also has a data dashboard available for the public at <https://data.dacolorado.org/2nd/>.

After the forum, Central Park resident Cheryl Fleetwood said she hoped that the people in attendance were inspired to get more involved. “I’m all for more investments but we don’t have to wait for that to take action ourselves. There are youth programs that exist right now that are desperate for volunteers. Volunteering is a great way to make meaningful connections and to create safer, stronger neighborhoods.”



District Attorney Beth McCann speaks with Central Park residents Cheryl Fleetwood and Chris Adams during the small group breakout sessions.



Chef Tajahi provides instructions while his team prepares chicken at the Mosaic Community Campus. They cook over 10,000 free Thanksgiving meals for individuals, families, and organizations throughout Colorado.

Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

Thanksgiving “Madness”

By Courtney Drake-McDonough

It’s become an annual November tradition: Tajahi Cooke, known as Chef Taj, and his team cook thousands of meals to deliver to people in need. He calls it “Madsgiving”—since there’s a little madness in undertaking such a project—and this year was the biggest yet as they prepared 10,000 hot Thanksgiving Day meals at the culinary facilities on the Mosaic Community Campus, which formerly housed Johnson & Wales University. Chef Taj and his wife Danielle—who are co-owners of Ms. Betty’s Cooking—work with their company’s chef Brian Jimenez along with numerous volunteers and community partners to provide the meals.

The concept for Madsgiving began four years ago when Chef Taj and his wife made too much food for Thanksgiving. “We used to cook three to four turkeys because I want crispy skin and I wasn’t happy with the way the turkey came out. That’s the honest truth behind it,” says Chef Taj. “We ended up providing meals for our neighbors and taking them down to homeless shelters on Larimer, and it got to the point that I looked at my wife and said, ‘we can do more,’ and we wanted to try.”

At the time, Chef Taj was the Executive Chef at Mother Tongue, a restaurant in the now-closed Broadway Market food hall. He got approval from the Market owners to use the location after hours to prepare meals, serving 515 Thanksgiving dinners that year. Since then the number of meals has grown each year, and the dinners have become available to individuals in need and organizations throughout Colorado.

Madsgiving is made possible through a combination of community support, charitable donations, a GoFundMe account, and the work of at least 200 volunteers. Money also comes from proceeds of curry powder sales through the Ms. Betty’s Grandson website.

Those enjoying Madsgiving this year got a meal that included roasted turkey, chicken or shredded pork, paired with mac and cheese, cranberry sauce, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and a slice of pie.

The formal name of the event, Madsgiving Harvest, is homage to the ingredients used. “It’s the farms that play a vital role in helping us pull this off,” explains Chef Taj. “We primarily work with Miller Farms in Platteville, having met them back when we started this madness and were trying to feed 500 people. They’ve helped us provide more than 20,000 meals in the last few years plus 10,000 this year.

Beginning the Monday before Thanksgiving, Chef Taj and his team cooked the turkey, chicken, and pork. Then, on Wednesday night the team took over two Denver food halls, Avanti Food & Beverage and Zeppelin Station. From 10pm to midnight, they started prepping and cooking the side dishes and soups, cooking through the night. Complete meals were boxed up and delivered everywhere they needed to go by 2pm on Thanksgiving Day.

“A lot of these individuals haven’t eaten well all year, and if we can give them a meal to really remember, that’s when we know we did a good job,” says Chef Taj. “That’s where my crazy comes into play because I’m just trying to put that big of a smile on their face. Fortunately, I surround myself with people who are just as crazy.”

Chef Taj says someone recently suggested he cap how many meals he provides, concerned that the growing numbers could become a problem. “But for me, I don’t mind it becoming a problem because we need to do something,” says Chef Taj. “I won’t feel right eating my Thanksgiving meal if I know I could have done more.”

To learn more or to get involved, visit Msbettygrandson.com.

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New Programs Are Growing at The Urban Farm

By Mary Jo Brooks

When Michelle Graham arrived as the new executive director of The Urban Farm three years ago, the organization was struggling. Fundraising was down, the main building was in desperate need of upgrading, and there were just four full-time employees. Fast-forward through the pandemic, and today the farm has 10 full-time employees, 25 seasonal or contract employees, a completely remodeled building, and grant support that has increased five-fold to \$500,000 a year. The Urban Farm expanded its summer camp program this past summer from serving 125 children to 650 children, and it increased the number of after-school programs as well. “I’ve been working hard. My team has really been working hard,” Graham says with a proud smile.

The mission of the non-profit organization is to engage urban youth to promote “future generations of farmers, healthy eaters, and sustainably-minded consumers.” There are several ways the farm tries to accomplish those goals.

Livestock, Poultry and Equine Clubs

The farm is perhaps best-known for its livestock, poultry, equine programs, and 4-H clubs. The number of participants has doubled in the past three years. Nearly 150 children and teens are involved with caring for the cows, goats, sheep, horses, and chickens that live on the farm. 4-H members can lease or buy animals to show for competition. Additionally, the farm hosts an Interscholastic Equine Association team in which middle school and high school students compete across the state and beyond. The farm equine program also offers English dressage, hunter, and jumping lessons to youth of all ages. Currently there is a 200-person waitlist for those classes.

Community Supported Agriculture

Youth can also learn about agriculture on the farm by helping in the one-acre garden and indoor hydroponic area, where they grow tomatoes, greens, peas, herbs, eggplants, summer squash, cabbage, potatoes, and much more. This past season Graham initiated a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program where families can buy a membership and receive a weekly box of fresh produce throughout the summer. Those memberships will go on sale in January and will cost \$200-\$250 for the season, with a sliding scale and free memberships for income-qualified participants. In addition, Graham held a farm-to-table fundraiser in October and hopes to hold those regularly in the coming year. The farm donates 10,000 pounds of fresh produce every year to promote food equity and access.

Juvenile Justice Partnership

The program that has seen the largest growth in the past three years is the farm’s partnership with Denver Juvenile Youth Services. The farm employs 25 teens in the summer and 10 during the rest of the year. Most of the teens have had some interaction with the criminal justice system, foster care system, or the Human Services Department. It’s part of a city program called Helping Youth Pursue Excellence (HYPE). Graham says that the catchphrase at the farm is “cultivating change in youth” and that the two things teens need most are financial opportunity and emotional support. “We give them both.” Three city employees



18-year-old Lyric Lopez has spent seven months working with animals, growing crops, and doing light construction at The Urban Farm.

help administer the program. In addition to growing crops, working with animals, and learning some basic construction skills, the teens also take financial literacy classes and get help with job placement.

“Will they go on to work on a farm forever? Probably not,” says Graham “But they get a lot of valuable skills and confidence. They also leave here with a resume and a bank account. We help them establish both,”

18-year-old Lyric Lopez went through the HYPE program and is now an intern at the farm. He says he loves working with the animals and helping to build a greenhouse. He adds that one of the most important things that the farm offers at-risk youth is a safe space. “It definitely seems like there aren’t enough safe spaces for kids who are surrounded by gang violence. The farm provides a little escape and shows kids there are other things out there.” After his internship ends, Lopez plans to train to become an electrician.

Graham says she is constantly amazed at how the farm work can change lives. “It gives them a sense of purpose and



Fiona Atkinson, a member of one of the livestock clubs, cleans hay out the goat house as its residents look on.

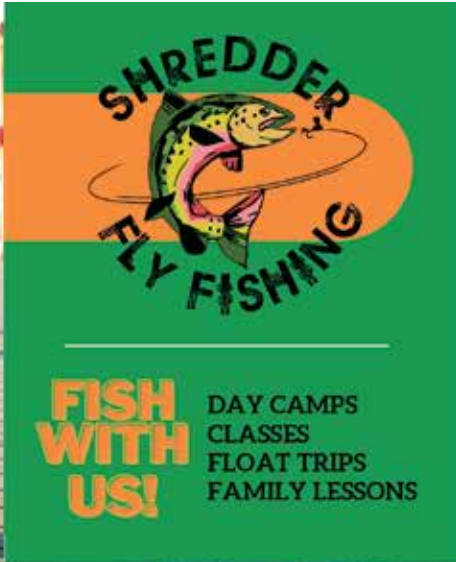
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responsibility. Having a sense of purpose is so important for people... Maybe these kids weren't successful in traditional learning environments but this is something hands-on, where you build something or grow something or care for an animal and achieve your goals."

Despite the fundraising success, Graham says there are still many financial challenges ahead. "Animals are expensive. Our vet bills can be \$60,000 a year. Ferrier bills are \$45,000 a year. Hay for the animals costs \$100,000 a year, and that is only going to get more expensive as droughts continue." Still, Graham remains optimistic that the farm will continue to expand its programs and community impact in the months and years ahead. She encourages anyone who is interested in furthering the mission of the farm to buy a \$100 family membership, which gives families free access to the farm, early sign-up privileges for summer camp, and discounts on camps and classes.

For more information about The Urban Farm, visit www.theurbanfarm.org.



A brand-new hydroponic system makes it possible to grow lettuce and other produce year-round.

New Weather Tower Erected at The Urban Farm

By Mary Jo Brooks

Thanks to the persistence of Channel 7 meteorologist Mike Nelson, Central Park has a new weather station that will help provide more accurate forecasts and track various climate trends. For 70 years, the official weather station was located at the Stapleton Airport, but it moved when Denver International Airport opened in 1995.

For the past 20 years, Nelson has been trying to re-establish a weather station that is closer to Denver. He helped raise the funds from private donors, and last month the weather tower was finally erected on the grounds of The Urban Farm—on the very spot where it was located when the old airport was in operation. "It will be an auxiliary observation," says Nelson. "It will completely connect that thread of 70 years of highly accurate data that was collected at Stapleton, and it will be very useful to track climate change information."

While it won't be the official weather station of Denver, Nelson says it will improve the accuracy of forecasts for the city. "Having that extra data point with information being sent every 10 minutes so that we can see how humidity is increasing or wind is shifting or pressure is rising or falling—that's very useful because conditions in Denver are different than at DIA."



Front Porch photos by Christie Gosh

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If you didn't make it to the Denver Film Festival, you missed a bevy of wonderful films from all around the world. I previewed several of them in last month's column, and you can look for all of those to be streaming soon. I give a longer review of one of those films this week as well as another international feature that surely will be nominated for an Oscar. You will hear plenty about all of the best American films in the coming months, so I continue with my journey around the world. Now, please enjoy these wonderful works of art.

Holy Spider (Denmark—2022)

I previewed this film in last month's column with the caveat that I hadn't seen it yet. Three things happened since then: I have seen it, it is playing at the Sie Film Center as of this writing, and finally, it is impactful and devastating. It is one of the favorites for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars, and deservedly so. The Danish production tells the true story of an Iranian serial killer,

known as the "Holy Spider," who killed sex workers in the holy city of Mashhad from 2000–2001. He wasn't intently pursued while he was killing, and once he was caught, many wanted him freed/exonerated. The story follows a journalist who put herself directly in the path of the killer so that he may be caught and tried.

The film itself is gripping, stylized, and tense. Zar Amir Ebrahimi as Rahimi (the

journalist) gives a stunning performance as the one person who seems intent on catching the killer. Most of the authorities look the other way or wallow

in their corruption. Rahimi won the Best Actress award at Cannes for her performance, and quite deservedly. Her intensity is the fulcrum of the film, and her fight against a lazy and indifferent patriarchy allows us to identify with her plight. Once she is put in danger, we sit up straight. She should be nominated for an Oscar in the Best Actress category in the coming months. That certainly will be controversial, as the film has been in various circles.

Iran condemned the film, condemned Cannes, and warned that the film was an insult to them and the Muslim religion.



Their warnings are very *The Satanic Verses*-like, and the main reason is that the film hit a nerve. Many nerves, actually. Once we get passed the identity of the killer, once we get passed the story and style of the film, and once we get passed the

excellent performances, the film portrays a society that is disturbing, misogynistic, and venal. The ending, and what it says about the future, is bone-chillingly frightening. It might be easy to sit back and judge the events from the perspective of a western culture, but that is folly. This film tells us more about ourselves and *our* culture than it does about Iran or any other culture. When hate and prejudice and violence rise to the surface and become normalized, well, you can extrapolate from there. This is a must-see with a lot to say.

Now playing at the Sie Film Center; streaming soon.

You will enjoy this film if you liked *I'm a Killer*, *Natural Born Killers*, and/or *The Separation*.

Argentina, 1985 (Argentina—2022)

The ugly military rule of South American countries has been a topic of excellent cinema for a long time: *Kamchatka*, *Chronicle of an Escape*, and *The Clan* are just a few that focus on the Argentine Dirty Wars of 1974–1983. The newest entry, *Argentina, 1985* tells the story of the legal team that secured the first prosecutions of anyone involved in the atrocities. It is a truncated and brisk telling of the story, but it is important, informative, and ultimately uplifting. The film is even able to find lightness, love, and honor in a soup of dismay. This is all sorely needed in today's world.

The story and the acting are the most prominent aspects of the film and what propels it. We follow Chief Prosecutor Julio César Strassera (Ricardo Darín) and Assistant Luis Moreno Ocampo (Peter Lanzani) as they navigate the "The Trial of the Juntas," and Darín dominates the film as the quirky, unsure, and ultimately honorable hero of the story. Darín is one of the world's acting gems, and a huge star in Argentina. Americans may recognize him from the Oscar-winning *The*



Secret in Their Eyes (2009) and now can appreciate his acting chops up close in this film. It is worth the viewing just for his performance, but there is a lot more to the entire project.

The period settings, props, and costumes lend *ethos* to the production, and the editing is intricate and expressive. There is a lot of information to process, and the film handles it well. The performances beyond Darín are also excellent, with Alejandra Flechner as Silvia Strassera and Santiago Armas Estevarena as their son Javier adding humor and levity to the very troubling story and events. Director Santiago Mitre handles all of this expertly, and the result is a solid production in all areas.

You will like this film if you enjoyed the aforementioned films, as well as *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, *No*, and/or *The Dancer Upstairs*.

Available on Amazon Prime.

Finally, look for one addition to this column in the coming months—book reviews. I intend to review books that you may not hear about in larger media, and I will strive to do the same thing with books that I do with film: turn you on to something new. I will cover smaller books, local authors, and more niche topics. I start with one recommendation for the holidays: *The Water Knife*, by Paolo Bacigalupi. Paolo is a Colorado author and the book takes aim at a near future where water is the stuff of militias and wars and strife. It is a future that is not far off. A great read and a great present for the holidays.

Vincent Piturro, Ph.D. is a Film and Media Studies Professor at MSU Denver. He can be reached at vpiturro@msudenver.edu or follow him on Twitter. For more reviews, search The Indie Prof at FrontPorchNE.com.

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Local Entrepreneur Lights the Season with Unique Trees



Bliss's grandpa experimented with different materials before discovering that plexiglass was ideal for his trees.

By Sarah Huber

Central Park resident Matt Bliss creates modern Christmas trees that have been featured on TV, in a movie, and even at Disneyland. This November, he also opened his first brick-and-mortar store in Cherry Creek. But his sparkling creations were all inspired by his favorite holiday memories of his grandfather, Lawrence Stoecker, who built rockets for NASA and who worked for Stanley Aviation, which was located at today's Stanley Marketplace.

Christmas for the Bliss family was always at the Stoecker home in Broomfield. "He was someone all the grandkids looked up to," says Bliss. On Christmas, the grandchildren gathered for hours to play games, listen to stories, and lounge side-by-side to gaze at the Christmas tree as it twinkled in all its Plexiglas wonder.

Yes, Plexiglas. "Someone in the family was allergic to real trees, no one was interested in the usual artificial tree, and so he put a modern take on the Christmas tree" says Bliss. "It was the centerpiece of our holidays, and I thought it was such an interesting and beautiful design."

The tree was crafted of concentric rings forming a pyramid. Leaning on midcentury modern design, the trees were suspended from the ceiling and slowly rotated as the lights sparkled and the ornaments flashed, which mesmerized each child in the room and epitomized the joy of the season.

In 2010, when Stoecker was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Bliss resolved to honor his grandfather by digging out his beloved trees and crafting two replicas from acrylic to display at the Denver Modernism Show. "I made one in red and one in green, mostly to pay tribute to his work," says Bliss.

The positive reaction from the attendees encouraged Bliss to turn it into a business. After establishing his website at modernchristmas-trees.com, he began fashioning more trees at his home and then shipping them out to customers nationwide. The vintage look and sleek design appealed both to midcentury modern aficionados and those who simply wanted an incredible holiday showpiece.

Getting the trees placed in high-profile settings was key to Bliss' success. Disney bought a few trees to place in the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, and a few more to adorn scenes in a major holiday movie called "Spirited," which is an adaptation of "A Christmas Carol." In Colorado, Modern Christmas Trees have been installed in the Governor's Mansion. A tree was also photographed in the Sculptured House off Highway 70, which is often called the Sleeper House because of its use in the classic movie.

But Bliss' biggest break was an invitation to pitch his business on "Shark Tank" in 2017. "I set up cardboard cutouts of the sharks and went over the

pitch hundreds of times in my basement," says Bliss. Host Barbara Corcoran praised the trees for their "dazzling ornaments, sparkly crystals, and shimmering rings." Corcoran ultimately provided Modern Christmas Trees with \$100,000 in backing.

With the grand opening of his Cherry Creek store, he devoted 10 percent of the proceeds to the Marshall Fire Community and donated trees to 20 families who lost homes in the Marshall Fire.

"One lady said the tree was a metaphor for her life: Out with the old, in with the new," says Bliss. The seasonal shop stocks Modern Christmas Trees in all standard



Matt Bliss is excited to have opened his first brick-and-mortar location in Cherry Creek North and he hopes to open many more locations in the future. The trees are customizable with diverse accessories that include lights, ornaments, rotators, crystals, stands, skirts, and toppers.

sizes. He offers 10-foot or 8-foot trees, along with 7-foot trees that stand flush to a wall and 3-foot trees designed for tabletop jubilees. The trees range from \$337 to \$2,277, and they are all illuminated with multi-cored LED lights.

The trees have every color of the rainbow," says Bliss. "They're as much functional art as they are Christmas trees, and I'm grateful to share my grandfather's contribution with the world."



Modern Christmas Trees come in various sizes, from the 3-foot tree that adorns the coffee table to the 10-foot tree that rises to the ceiling.

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Dec. & Early Jan. Events

View and add local events FREE at FrontPorchNE.com/events. Submissions by the 17th will be considered for printing in the upcoming month's issue.

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

12/6 Tuesday—Colorado Gives Day. Join the movement to "give where you live" and support your favorite non-profits. coloradogives.org

SEASONAL/HOLIDAY EVENTS

12/2 Friday—Seicento Baroque's Noël. Christmas in the Late Renaissance and Early Baroque. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1600 N. Grant St. seicentobaroque.org/current-season

12/3 Saturday—YouthBiz Holiday Marketplace. Find great holiday gifts while supporting 60+ young entrepreneurs ages 6–21. 3550 E. 1st Ave. yacenter.org

12/3 Saturday—9News Parade of Lights. 6pm in Civic Center Park. A special appearance by Major Waddles the Penguin and Santa downtowndenver.com

12/3 to 1/15/23—Zoo Lights. 60 acres of lights, entertainment, and treats. Denver Zoo, 2300 Steele St. denverzoo.org

12/5 Monday—Celtic Woman: The Best of Christmas Tour. Traditional Irish carols and magnificent uplifting anthems. Boettcher Hall. coloradosymphony.org

12/5 to 12/31—Who's Holiday! Your favorite little Who is all grown up. Adults only. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintagetheatre.org

12/6 Tuesday—City of Aurora Holiday Tree Lighting. 5–7pm. Aurora Municipal Center, 15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

12/9 Friday—Christmas at Augustana. Celebratory Christmas Festival Concert. Augustana Lutheran Church, 5000 E. Alameda Ave. Free, reservations requested at augustanaarts.org

12/9 to 12/11—A Colorado Christmas. Family-friendly, festive seasonal favorites! Tickets start at \$15. Boettcher Hall. coloradosymphony.org

12/10 Saturday—Sound of the Rockies: A Night in December. Colorado's premier men's a cappella chorus. 2pm & 7:30pm. Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. newmancenterpresents.com

12/10 Saturday—The 16th Street Mall Holiday Festival. One of-a-kind seasonal items, handcrafted goods, holiday gift ideas, specialty foods and more. 1001 16th St. coloradoevents@gmail.com

12/10 & 12/11—Mannheim Steamroller Christmas. America's favorite holiday tradition for over 35 years. Buell Theatre at the DCPA. denvercenter.org

12/10 & 12/17—Yuletide Tea. Museum tour with full tea service. Molly Brown House Museum, 1340 Pennsylvania St. Register at mollybrown.org

12/13 Tuesday—Holiday Brass. Witness the brilliance and power of the Colorado Symphony Brass. Boettcher Hall. coloradosymphony.org

12/15 Thursday—Paws & Claus. Photo ops with your furry friends and Santa Claus.. 4–6pm at The Shops at Northfield, shopsatnorthfield.com

12/16 Friday—Holiday Sing-Along Concert. Join Christy Wessler for this family-friendly event. 7pm, doors open at 6pm. Tuft Theatre, 71 East Yale Ave. swallowhillmusic.org

12/16 & 12/17—Holiday Cheer! A family-friendly, multifaceted array of wintertime jingles. Central Presbyterian Church, 1660 Sherman St. denverphilharmonic.org

12/16 to 12/18—Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical. A family-friendly musical. Buell Theatre at the DCPA. denvercenter.org

12/16 Friday—Goatflix and Chill Holiday Edition. 6pm in suite 1410. Join us for a great holiday movie and some goat fun! The Shops at Northfield, shopsatnorthfield.com

12/17 Saturday—Santa in The Hanger. Santa arrives in a helicopter plus many activities. 10am–2pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

Through 12/17—Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberly. By Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon, directed by Linda Suttle. The John Hand Theater, 7653 E. 1st Pl. firehousetheater-company.com

Through 12/17—Pop The Holidays: Music with 'Shells Hoffman. Inspired interpretations of holidays classics and pop music, party games, and some jaw-dropping revelations. The Savoy, 2700 Arapahoe St. localtheaterco.org

Through 12/18—Dot. An unforgettable, holiday comedy. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St. vintagetheatre.org

Through 12/18—3rd Annual Après Ski Holiday Market. Held in the Dairy Block Alley and inspired by a European ski village, dairyblock.com

Through 12/23—The Polar Express™ Train Ride. Take a Magical Journey and Re-Kindle the Christmas Spirit. Colorado Railroad Museum, 17155 W. 44th Ave. coloradorailroadmuseum.org/Polar-Express

Through 12/23—Denver Christkindl Market. Authentic German holiday experience. Civic Center Park, 101 West 14th Ave. christkindlmarketdenver.com

Through 12/24—Cherry Creek North Winter Wonderland. Shops. Lights. Bites. Cherry Creek North, 2401 E. 2nd Ave, cherrycreeknorth.com

Through 12/23—Denver Christkindl Market. Authentic German holiday experience. Civic Center Park, 101 West 14th Ave. christkindlmarketdenver.com

Through 12/24—A Christmas Carol. Denver's beloved holiday tradition returns. Wolf Theatre at the DCPA. denvercenter.org

Through 12/24—Colorado Ballet Presents The Nutcracker. The holiday spirit leaps to life in this treasured family tradition. 1385 Curtis St. coloradoballet.org

12/31 Saturday—Noon Year's Eve. Join us to ring in the Noon Year before bedtime! 9am–4pm. mychildsmuseum.org

12/31 Saturday—New Year's Eve Fireworks. 9pm & midnight. 16th Street Mall, Denver. denver.org

12/15 & 12/17—Holiday Tea. 10:30am and 1:30pm. Tour and tea. Center for Colorado Women's History, 1310 Bannock St. Tickets at historycolorado.org

12/31 Saturday—NYE Concert: Greatest Works on the Organ & Silent Film Improvisation. Augustana Lutheran Church, 5000 E. Alameda Ave. Free or donation, reservations requested at augustanaarts.org

Through 1/7/23—Blossoms of Light. A dazzling and ever-changing display of light and color. Denver Botanic Gardens, 1007 York St. botanicgardens.org

Through 2/14/22—Downtown Denver Rink. Free admission, rentals available. Check out hours at downtowndenver.com

NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

Saturdays—East Colfax Free Bookstore. 4–6pm. Located at Counterpath, 7935 E. 14th Ave. Take books or donate kids books.

12/3 Saturday—Northfield High School Winter Warmer 5K. Supporting Northfield athletic initiatives. 5500 Central Park Blvd. <https://runsignup.com/Race/CO/Denver/NorthfieldWinter5k>

12/3 Saturday—Farm Fun & Fiber Arts. Interactive farm tour and fiber craft. 12–2pm. The Urban Farm, 10200 Smith Rd. theurbanfarm.org

12/3 Saturday—Drag Queen Bingo. Shirley Delta Blow will be your gorgeous host. All ages. 11am–12pm, Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

12/3 Saturday—Author Talk: Ausma Zehanat Khan and Blackwater Falls. The first in a timely and powerful new crime series. Ages 18+. 3:30–4:45pm, Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. Register at denverlibrary.org

12/3 & 12/17—Family Nature Adventure Days. Featuring Generation Wild's "100 Things To Do Before You're 12" activities. 8:30am–12pm. Bluff Lake Nature Center, 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. blufflake.org

12/3 & 1/7/23—Bluff Lake Bird Walks. Saturdays: 2.5-hour walk at 8am or 2-hour walk at 8:30am. Free but must RSVP at blufflake.org/birdwatching

12/8 Thursday—Active Minds presents: Dinosaurs. Learn new discoveries that have changed the thinking about Dinosaurs. 1–2pm, Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. activeminds.com

12/8 & 12/22—Knitting Circle. Bring your knitting or crochet project and join other crafters. 12/8: 10am–12pm, 12/22: 4:30–5:45pm, Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. Register at denverlibrary.org

12/10 Saturday—Stories on Stage Presents Making Merry. 1–2pm. Sneak peak of Denver Theater Company holiday show. Schlessman Family Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

12/10 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day. Get an up close look inside select aircraft. 10am–2pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

12/11 Sunday—Women's Self-Defense Class. 10:30am–12pm. \$5 drop-in. Tiger Kim's Taekwondo Academy, 7000 East Colfax Ave. tigerkim.com

12/13 & 12/20—In-person Memory Café. 1:30–3pm. 11/8 - Art creation. 11/15 - Cookie decorating. For people experiencing memory loss and their families/caregivers. Schlessman Family Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

12/17 Saturday—Rock Your Winter Blues Away Concert. A tribute to Elvis performance. All ages. 2:30–4pm, Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

12/18 & 12/21—Winter Solstice Celebration & Mindfulness Walks. 9am at Bluff Lake Nature Center, 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. More info at blufflake.org

Through 1/29/23—Dali Alive. A fully immersive experience. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. dalialive.com

METRO EVENTS

12/2 & 1/6/23—First Friday Art Walks. Art District on Santa Fe. 5:30–9:30pm. denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts

12/4 Sunday—House Museum Book Club. 12:30pm. Free. Discussing *Pulling Harvey Out of Her Hat: The Story of Mary Coyle Chase* by Mimi Pockross. Center for Colorado Women's History, 1310 Bannock St. historycolorado.org

12/8 Thursday—Art & About Tours. For visitors with early-stage Alzheimer's or dementia and their care partners. 1–2:30pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. To register email access@denverartmuseum.org

12/10 Sunday—Music in The Galleries. Enjoy the live music of Patrick Hyatte, violin and Ernie Carbajal, cello. Clyfford Still Museum. Performances at 11am & 1pm. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

12/10 Saturday—Displaced Aurarians Oral History Training. Oral history training for members of the Displaced Aurarians Museum of Memory Project. Center for Colorado Women's History, 1310 Bannock St historycolorado.org

12/13 Tuesday—Active Minds presents: France. Explore the rich history of France, both politically and culturally. 12:30–1:30pm, Free. Tattered Cover, 2526 E Colfax. Activeminds.com

12/27 Tuesday—Active Minds presents: Marie Curie. Learn about one of the greatest scientists of her era. 5–6pm, Free. Tattered Cover, 2526 E Colfax. activeminds.com

KIDS AND FAMILIES

Tuesday–Friday—Local Library Storytime. Mornings. Different age groupings and locations. Info at denverlibrary.org

Wednesdays—Mornings at the Museum. Ages 3–6, 10:30–

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11:15am. Free. New programs every week. Aurora History Museum, 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. Register at auroragov.org

12/3 & 12/10 —Chess Club for 18 and Under. 3–4:30pm. Ideal for ages 5–18. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

12/7 & 12/14—Magic the Gathering Club. 4–5:30pm. Ideal for ages 12–18. A teen-run magic club. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

12/10 Saturday—Family Program: Your Voice Matters. 10:30am–12:30pm. Join us for family artmaking. Walk-ins welcome. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

12/11 Sunday—Foxy and Shmoxy: Art Detectives. Helping young children access and experience art in unique ways. 10:30am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

12/13 Tuesday—School Choice Summit. Providing families of Black DPS students the opportunity to connect with schools for an informed decision on the 2023-24 school year. Online, 6–8m. Email dps.bfac@gmail.com for more info.

12/14 & 12/17—Art Crawl: Ice, Ice, Baby. 10:30–11:15am. For caregivers with infants–14 months. Registration required. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

12/17 Saturday—Decorate an Ornament. All the supplies to decorate your own ornament. Kids & teens. 10–11:30am, Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. Register at denverlibrary.org

12/17 Saturday—You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown. Based on the comic strip PEANUTS by Charles M. Schultz. 12pm, \$10 tickets. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintagetheatre.org

12/18 Sunday—Spanish Storytime at Tattered Cover Kids. 5pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. stanleymarketplace.com

Through 12/18—Little Red, A New Musical. A charming, song-infused retelling of Little Red Riding Hood. Ideal for Pre-K–3rd grade. At the DCPA. denvercenter.org

MUSEUMS, ETC.

American Museum of Western Art. Advanced tickets required, admission is \$5. 1727 Tremont Pl. anschutzcollection.org

Aurora History Museum. Advanced reservation is required, admission is free. 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

The Byers–Evans House Museum. Timed tickets required, History Colorado members are free. 1310 Bannock St. Tickets at historycolorado.org



9News Parade of Lights.

The Children’s Museum. Reservations recommended at mychildsmuseum.org

Clyfford Still Museum. SCFD Free Day Dec. 7. 10am to 5pm.

Children ages 17 and under are always free. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

Denver Art Museum. SCFD Free Day Dec. 13, 10am–9pm. Youth 18 & under always free. 100 W 14th Ave. Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

Denver Botanic Gardens. Tickets and member reservations required. 1007 York St. botanicgardens.org

Denver Firefighters Museum. Hours: Tues–Sat, 10am–4pm. 1326 Tremont Pl. denverfirefightersmuseum.org

Denver Museum of Nature and Science. SCFD Free Day Dec. 5. Open till 9pm on Fridays. 2001 Colorado Blvd. Timed tickets required. dmns.org

Denver Zoo. Reserve tickets at denverzoo.org. 2900 E 23rd Ave.

The Forney Museum of Transportation. Mon, Th–Sat, 10am–5pm; Sun, noon–5pm. 4303 Brighton Blvd. forneymuseum.org

Four Mile Historic Park. SCFD Free Day Dec. 18. Open Wed–Sun, 10am–4pm. 715 S. Forest St. fourmilepark.org

History Colorado. 1200 Broadway. More info at historycolorado.org

Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art. Tue–Sat, 11am–5pm; Sun 12–5pm. Ages 13+ welcome. 1201 Bannock St. kirklandmuseum.org

Molly Brown House Museum. Tue–Sun, 10am–4:30pm. 1340 Pennsylvania St. mollybrown.org

Museo de las Americas. Tue–Fri, noon–6pm. Sat, noon–5pm. Closed Mon & Sun. 861 Santa Fe Dr. museo.org

Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. Penny admission 1st Sat. of the month. 1485 Delga-ny St. mcadenvr.org

National Ballpark Museum. 1940 Blake St. Check for days/hours at ballparkmuseum.com

The Urban Farm. Open to the public from 9am–1pm, Wed–Sat. 10200 Smith Rd. theurbanfarm.org

Wings Over the Rockies Museum. Planet Pioneers exhibit now open. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

PERFORMANCE/THEATRE

12/7 to 1/1/23—Forbidden Broadway: The Next Generation. All-new fall-down funny, satirical roast of over 30 Broadway hits. Garner Theatre at the DCPA. denvercenter.org

Through 12/10—Franklinland. A modern, comic take on the American Revolution. Curious Theatre, 1080 Acoma St. curioustheatre.org

Through 12/10—Stories on Stage with Buntport Theater – “Modern Times.” An irreverent take on the madness of modern life. At Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center, 721 Santa Fe Dr. storiesonstage.org

Through 12/11—Monty Python’s Spamalot. A hilarious musical ripped from the film. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St. vintagetheatre.org

Through 12/11—Sisters in Law. The story of the relationship between Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg and how these two women changed the world. 2344 E Iliff Ave. newmancenterpresents.com

Through 12/18—The Jedi Handbook. Take a trip with us down memory lane to a time when everything was possible...even The Force. Aurora Fox Arts Center, 9900 E. Colfax Ave. aurorafoxartscenter.org

12/21 Wednesday—Disney’s Frozen™ in Concert. Live accompaniment to the film by the Colorado Symphony. Tickets start at \$15. Boettcher Hall. coloradosymphony.org

Through 12/31—Disney’s Beauty and the Beast. Be Our Guest this Holiday Season. 6901 Wadsworth Blvd, Arvada. <https://cli.re/23945-disneys-beauty-and-the-beast>

Through 1/22/23—Theater of the Mind. A new theatrical experience you’ll see, feel, taste and hear. York Street Yards, 3887 Steele St. denvercenter.org

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Denver Public Schools. Numerous volunteer opportunities with our students and schools. equity.dpsk12.org/get-involved/volunteer-services

Food For Thought Denver. Striving to eliminate childhood hunger by providing food for students and their families. Sign up to volunteer or donate at foodforthoughtdenver.org

Project Worthmore. Help bag and deliver fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, and household necessities to refugees. projectworthmore.org

Reach Out and Read Colorado. Help sort and pack gently-used children’s books for underserved families. On the Clayton Early Learning Campus. Email info@reachoutandreadco.org for details.

Reading Volunteers needed to share reading with students in grades K–8 through. One hour a week. No experience necessary. Contact: Pil, 2011 @partnersinliteracy.org.

Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) For volunteer opportunities, email Cathy Law at claw@voacolorado.org

Ronald McDonald House Charities Volunteer. Go to ronaldhouse.org under “How You Can Help” for info.

Sand Creek Greenway Volunteer Opportunities. For more info go to sandcreek-greenway.org/upcoming-volunteer-opportunities

Single Volunteers of Greater Denver. Volunteer, not-for-profit singles group to meet others and assist nonprofit organizations for events/activities. svgd.org

Village Exchange Center A non-profit formed to serve immigrants and refugees in Aurora & Denver. villageexchangecenter.org

Volunteers of America Colorado Branch For volunteer opportunities go to voacolorado.org/volunteer-opportunities/



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...NE News Updates

By Brian Heuberger and MaryJo Brooks

1 Planet Pioneers

A new space and science program is now open at the Wings Over the Rockies. Planet Pioneers offers 17 hands-on exhibits that enable children and families to enjoy the experience of space exploration and planet colonization. The simulations allow visitors to fly in a G-Force spinning capsule to depart the planet, fly through space, and land on Mars. Once they arrive, the visitors can colonize Mars by driving a 4-D Surface Exploration Vehicle to travel around the planet and by flying a virtual drone to solve environmental issues. During the mission, visitors overcome the many challenges that are required to live on the planet, such as sourcing oxygen, finding water, cultivating food, and building shelters. The Planet Pioneers exhibit originated in Australia and uses exciting entertainment to encourage children to learn about science. The program



One of 17 hands-on exhibits at the new Planet Pioneers exhibit at the Wings Over the Rockies Museum in the Lowry neighborhood.

was brought to the Wings Over the Rockies in November, and it will remain open until January 8, 2023. The exhibit is included with the price of admission which is \$11.95 for kids, \$18.95 for adults, and \$14.95 for seniors.

2 Motels Purchased by the Fax Partnership

Two motels on East Colfax were recently purchased by the Fax Partnership and will be transformed into affordable apartments. The Westerner and Sand & Sage motels are located beside each other along East Colfax between Wabash and Verbena. The nonprofit Fax Partnership intends to offer 120 affordable rooms to provide immediate shelter for people who are homeless or displaced. Although the long-term plan of the project is to tear down the motels and build new affordable housing structures, the construction plan has been delayed by an unexpected setback. A billboard that is located on the site has a lease that does not expire until 2028, and the Fax must wait for the lease to expire before they can rebuild on the property. In the meantime the Fax will start providing motel rooms for unhoused individuals starting in 2023.



3 Organic Grocery Store to Open in Central Park Neighborhood

After several delays, the new Central Park Natural Grocers store plans to open on December 14 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and gift card give-away to the first 150 customers in line. Natural Grocers is known for selling only 100% certified organic produce and humanely-raised dairy and meat. Spokeswoman Katie Macarelli says stores are also intentionally smaller than other grocery stores. The Central Park location is just over 13,000 square feet. “We like to keep our footprint smaller. That’s better for the environment and it also means that every member of our crew is familiar with all of the products we sell. And it’s less overwhelming for customers. When you come to our stores, it should be a stress-free experience.”

The grocery store chain was started in 1955 in Golden and has since expanded to 164 stores in 21 states. The Central Park store is the 45th location in Colorado. In another effort to be eco-friendly, the new store has installed a state-of-the-art CO2 refrigeration system that is designed to use less energy.

Despite selling only organic produce, Macarelli says their products are affordable. “We were founded on the principle that everybody should be able to afford a healthy and active lifestyle.” Natural Grocers also offers free nutrition coaching and donates 5 cents per transaction to local food banks whenever customers bring their own shopping bags.



Uinta Senior Housing rendering

Rendering courtesy of Santulan Architecture

5 The Rose on Colfax

A new mixed-use development project called the Rose on Colfax combines the two concepts of affordable housing and attainable education. The project involves converting an abandoned adult club into a five-story apartment building that is located on the north side of East Colfax between Valentia and Verbena. The 35,688 square-foot building will offer 82 affordable apartment units to alleviate the displacement in the East Colfax neighborhood. Residential amenities include an outdoor play area, landscaped courtyard, community kitchen, and a free structured parking lot with 68 available spaces. The project also features a 5,600 square-foot space on the ground floor that will offer educational programs for children and occupational training for adults. The educational programs include youth programming, financial literacy, job readiness, and health promotion.



The Rose on Colfax

Rendering from The Rose on Colfax

The Rose on Colfax project is expected to be complete in December 2023, and it was fulfilled through a collaborative partnership between Mercy Housing, Mile High Early Learning, and the City and County of Denver.



A membership to the Children’s Museum makes the best gift...

give more joy

Visit mychildsmuseum.org to buy a membership for all the families you love!



NEWS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION DECEMBER 2022

Thank you Central Park for a wonderful 2022!



Photos by 1215photo

2022 ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING AND DELEGATE ELECTION

Notice is hereby given that the 2022 ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING and DELEGATE ELECTION for THE MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, INC. (the "MCA") will be held on WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022 AT 6:30 PM, at THE CUBE, 8371 E Northfield Blvd. Members are encouraged to attend in person but can also join and observe virtually via www.mca80238.com. This meeting serves as the annual election of all ELEVEN (11) community delegates for the consecutive year.

The MCA is a 501(c) 4 community development organization whose mission is to manage Denver's Historic Airport District through comprehensive programs, events, and facilities maintenance. All owners of real property located within the boundaries of the Central Park development are automatically members of the MCA consistent with Article 33.3 Colorado Common Interest Act and support its mission through monthly assessments levied to all property within the neighborhood boundaries.

A meeting notice and Delegate ballot will be mailed to Members directly. The complete meeting packet will be available and can be printed from the MCA website 48 hours prior to the meeting at www.mca80238.com. Meeting packets will contain the meeting agenda, previous Executive Board minutes, 2022 year-end projection, 2023 Assessment Schedule and Operating Budget, as well as any additional pertinent meeting information. If



you do not have internet access, please contact us at 303.388.0724 to request a copy of the above information be sent by mail.

ACTIVE MINDS: Dinosaurs!

Thursday, December 8th, 1-2pm. Sam Gary Library

Join Active Minds as we look at new discoveries that have changed the thinking about Dinosaurs, one of the most fascinating creatures ever to inhabit our planet. From the beginnings of the Dinosaur era to the mass extinctions that eliminated their presence, we'll look at the types, habits, and history of these amazing creatures. We'll also look at how new technologies used to study dinosaurs have altered previous assumptions about the existence and demise these prehistoric giants.

ACTIVE MINDS: Holiday Traditions & Customs

Thursday, December 22nd, 6:30-7:30pm, Online

Why do we have Christmas trees? Or for that matter holiday lights, egg nog, holly or mistletoe. Join Active Minds we seek to explain the origins

of a wide variety of holiday traditions and customs. Our focus will be mostly upon secular winter holiday traditions, many of which are associated with the winter solstice.

Join the Active Minds webinars by visiting https://www.activeminds.com/events_denver.html

MCA OFFICE CLOSURE

The MCA will be closed the week of December 26th. We wish everyone a wonderful holiday season!

Jennifer Olsen
Communications Manager
Jolsen@mca80238.com



Visit our website!

mca
CENTRAL PARK



Northeast Denver Community News

Page sponsored by
The Foundation
FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN COMMUNITIES

This page is for area nonprofits and community organizations to post events, activities or other information.

COMMUNITY FIRST FOUNDATION

COLORADO GIVES DAY

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December 6, 2022

Dec. 6 is Colorado Gives Day

The state's largest 24-hour giving event has raised more than \$362 million for nonprofits across the state since 2010! Donations are accepted anytime through Dec. 6.

www.ColoradoGives.org is home to Colorado Gives Day, and your one-stop for helping those that help your community. The goal this year is \$1.4 million. Nonprofits receive the percentage of the total that they take in, not a dollar-for-dollar match from the fund.

Find an Appealing Cause At: <https://www.coloradogives.org/giving-events/givesday22>

And don't forget other northeast Denver nonprofits on Dec. 6!

HELP AREA NONPROFITS NOW & ON COLORADO GIVES DAY DEC. 6

HELP CONTINUE FREE PROGRAMMING AT BLUFF LAKE NATURE CENTER!

In 2018, Bluff Lake Nature Center saw 40,000 site visitors. In 2022, we more than doubled that to 85,000 visitors! Because of your support, we have been able to increase public programming, expand trails and continue improving conditions for wildlife. Make your donation at <https://www.coloradogives.org/organization/blufflake> and help us conserve the wildlife refuge for community use including these programs...

Free bird walks through the winter on the first Saturday of each month starting at 8am. Visit www.blufflake.org/birdwatching for more details.

Winter Solstice Celebration & Mindfulness Walks: Sun., Dec. 18, 9am (early Solstice celebration) and Wed., Dec. 21, at 9am (Solstice).

Bluff Lake summer camp registration opens Dec. 13 for ages 5-6 & 7-12, and a junior counselor

program for ages 13-17. Details at: <https://www.blufflake.org/camp>



SUPPORT THE SAND CREEK REGIONAL GREENWAY PARTNERSHIP THIS GIVING SEASON!

When you donate to the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership you support:

- Free environmental education for more than 2,000 youth each year.
- Annual planting of over 100 shrubs and trees to conserve wildlife habitat.
- Over 900 hours of volunteer time preserving nature and enhancing the trail.
- So much more!

Donate today to help us reach our goal of raising \$18,000 by the end of the year.

Visit the Colorado Gives page or scan the QR code.



THE URBAN FARM WANTS YOUR SUPPORT ON COLORADO GIVES DAY!

The countdown to Colorado Gives Day has begun! Your gift to The Urban Farm (TUF) counts towards our Dec. 6 goal of raising \$20,000 and the \$1.4 million Colorado Gives Day Incentive Fund. All participating nonprofits earn a percentage of the fund, so the more we raise, the more we receive!

Schedule your tax-deductible gift to TUF today at our Colorado Gives Day page.



What does your support of TUF look like? A child riding a horse for the first time. A family receiving farm fresh, local veggies for the season. A teenager receiving support, employment, vocational training and taking steps to improve their future.

We're asking you to join us for Colorado Gives Day to make a difference in the lives of TUF youth and families. Together we can inspire, educate and transform our community.

CENTRAL PARK UNITED NEIGHBORS

Central Park United Neighbors (CPUN) is the registered neighborhood organization for the Central Park community. Learn more at www.centralparkunitedneighbors.com.

ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK COMMUNITY SURVEY FOUND SLIGHT DIP IN SATISFACTION IN QUALITY OF LIFE AND CRIME RATE IN 2022 FROM 2021, BUT NO CHANGE IN FEELING SAFE. STRONG SUPPORT FOR A FOOD HALL, BREWERY/WINE BAR, A WHOLE FOODS.

The CPUN Board conducted its annual Central Park Community Survey in September and early October of this year. Overall, 1,486 people completed our survey, with all areas of our neighborhood represented.

Key Findings

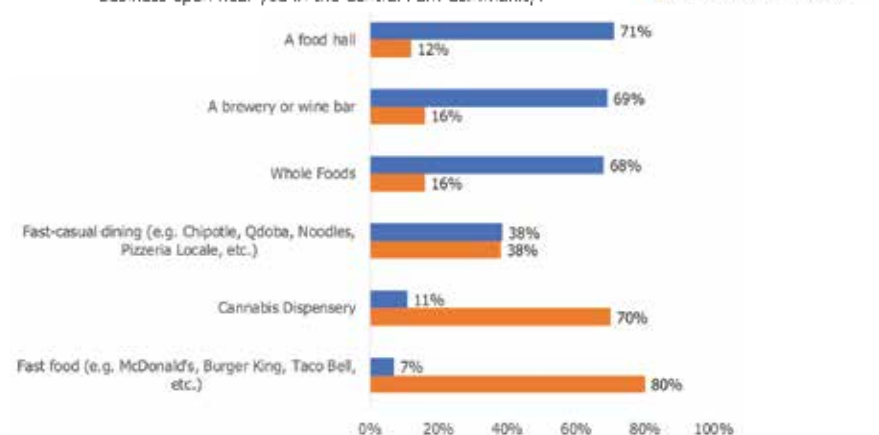
From 2021 to 2022 clear dip for overall quality of life and the crime rate. Transportation options and traffic were also lower. Based on the survey and other feedback,

crime related issues will continue to be a top focus for CPUN of communications with city and regional leaders.

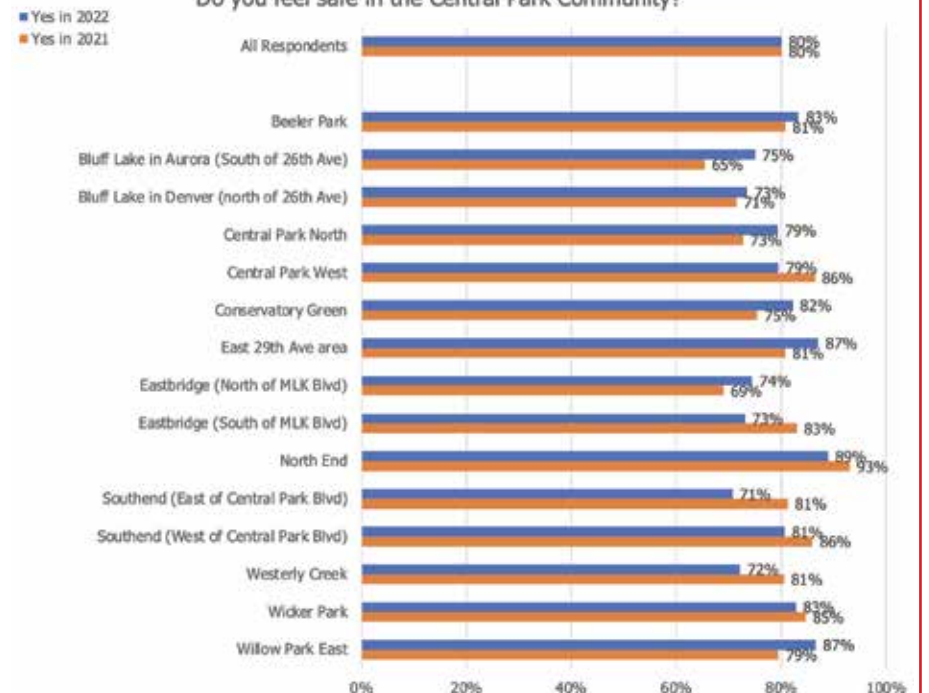
Based on where respondents live, crime ratings dipped across almost all areas of the community; no change in percentage who said they feel safe in our community.

Type of retail development. Our hope is to help shift development patterns more in the direction our community wishes to see. Blue 2022; brown 2021.

How interested would you be in having each of the following types of business open near you in the Central Park Community?



Do you feel safe in the Central Park Community?



Average Ratings (0-10 Scale)

