

# Front Porch

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

DENVER, COLORADO

JULY 2025

## NORTHEAST DENVER



### A Denver Protest Led by Seniors Who Want to be 'Seen and Heard'

Democrat Rogene Kirkegaard (left) and Republican Rune Martin (right) hold signs as part of their political protest along Quebec Street in Denver. The pair organized the event outside their assisted living center to show that even though they're seniors, and from different political parties, they have a voice.

Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

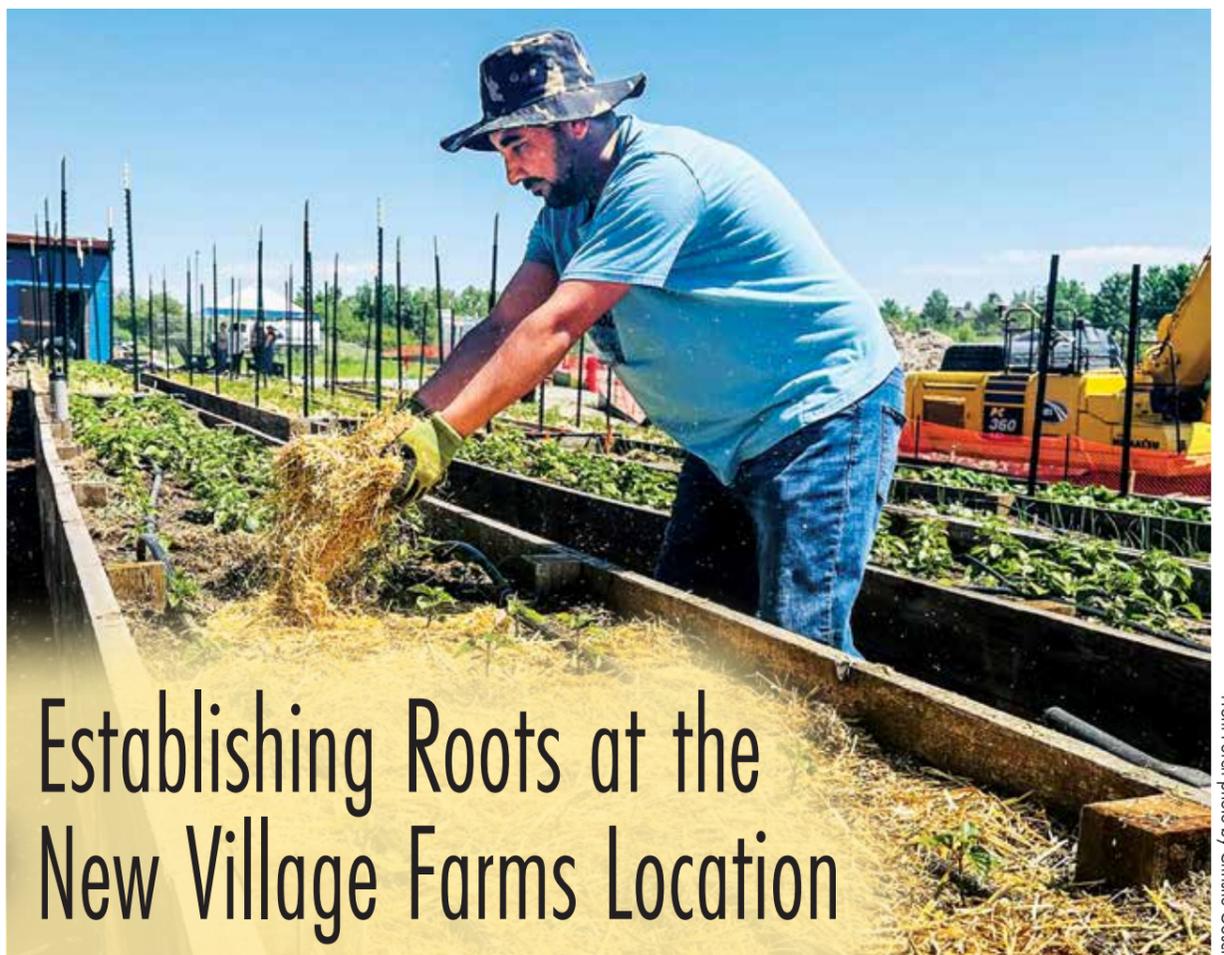


### A New Community Kitchen

Nicolás Cusi and Gabriela Jacobo outside of El Alba on Montview Blvd. Story by Linda Kotsaftis on page 14.

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

In mid-June, there were "No Kings" protests across the country, including here in Denver. And while thousands of people marched downtown, a much smaller group of seniors walked and rolled to the sidewalk on a hot Friday afternoon. They held signs and waved to cars that honked their horns in support. *Story by Linda Kotsaftis on page 6.*



### Establishing Roots at the New Village Farms Location

They're all moved in and getting the fields planted for the summer season. The new home for Village Farms at Stanley is filled with new growth and plans for the future. Workers are getting used to the location and the construction noise next door. *Story by Margaret Freeman on page 7.*

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch



### A Colorful End of School Celebration

Westerly Creek Elementary School's color run and more Good News in the Neighborhood on page 5.

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

PLUS A Celebration of Community at the 15th Annual Park Hill Parade page 8

By Margaret Freeman and Linda Kotsaftis

## Denver's First Lobby Day: A Push for Citizen Involvement

"Many times, those of us in the community do not have the financial resources to really put pressure on our elected officials," said Robert Davis, member of the Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety, in his opening remarks at the first Denver Resident Lobby Day.

Held in the Wellington Webb Municipal Office Building in June, the City and County of Denver organized the event to educate residents about how they can enact change in their communities through the Denver City Council.

"If we don't have the paid lobbyists and the full staff who spend all day every day drawing up legislation and pressuring elected officials to do what we want them to do, then how do we get things done on our behalf?" Davis said. "We come together, and we become our own lobbying firm."

In her "City Council 101" presentation, Jessica Zender, senior aide for at-large Councilwoman Sarah Parady, gave an overview of how the city council functions and the process to get budgets passed. Zender also outlined some of the ways residents can make their voices heard by emailing council members, setting up meetings, and attending public comment forums.

Bre Huizar-Arellano, constituent services director for District 8 Councilwoman Shontel Lewis, emphasized the importance of the Lobby Day as a way for citizens in the district to get involved, even if they haven't previously participated in local government.

"We have a lot of frequent flyers in District 8," said Huizar-Arellano. "We want new faces and new voices sometimes."

## A Hiring Freeze and Furloughs in Denver

A bleak economic outlook for the City of Denver has led to a hiring freeze, and most city employees will take furlough days between now and Dec. 31. The furloughs won't apply to the police, fire, and sheriff departments or 911 personnel.

In addition, there will be two citywide furlough days when the City will be closed for business: Aug. 29 and Nov. 28.

The hiring freeze started in May for future job openings, not including 911, airport, or uniformed personnel. The freeze is expected to last through at least Sept. 15, the deadline for the mayor to submit his proposed 2026 budget to the Denver City Council. Layoffs and other cuts are also possible as early as August.

Denver Mayor Mike Johnston said a \$250 million two-year deficit in the 2025 and 2026 budget created the need for immediate action.

"The economic downturn and volatility brought on by President Trump is a major challenge facing Denver," said Johnston. "This uncertainty, coupled with declining revenues and significant growth in the cost of city government over the past decade, require us to immediately address the city's structural budget deficit while protecting essential services and positioning Denver for economic growth in 2026 and beyond."

The capital funds, which the City says are backed by more stable revenue sources like property taxes, are in better shape. Those funds are used to invest in infrastructure projects like the National Women's Soccer League stadium site and National Western Center expansion.



By Linda Kotsaftis

## 1 Changes Made After the Death of a Bald Eagle

The electrocution death of a bald eagle that made its home and nest at Bluff Lake Nature Center (BLNC) in Denver brought public calls for change.

In June, the power transmission pole responsible for the electrocution was retrofitted by Xcel Energy to minimize future raptor electrocutions.

"Thanks to everyone who contributed information and sightings about this event to help us better understand the hazards bald eagles and other raptors face in Denver's metro environment," Bruce Snyder, manager of Bald Eagle Watch, said in an email to BLNC.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife worked with Xcel to get protective measures installed.

The eagle FSV44 was also known as Sonic to the kids in BLNC's forest school educational program who watched him and his mate regularly.

FSV44 was tagged at Xcel Energy's Fort St. Vrain webcam nest in Platteville, Colorado, in 2021 and his life was followed on Facebook by fans and by researchers who closely followed his movements.

In January, the eagle found a mate at BLNC, the first pair of breeding eagles at the Denver wildlife area at the edge of Central Park. Bird watchers and visitors delighted in watching the activity around the nest, which had previously been occupied by red-tailed hawks, until FSV44's death in early May.



Sky Rink, at Stanley Marketplace, is now open Thursdays–Sundays through September. Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

## 2 A Busy Summer at Stanley Marketplace

There has been a lot of activity around Stanley Marketplace in northwest Aurora. In June, the Sky Rink roller rink and patio bar opened through a collaboration with Non-Plus Ultra, a real estate and event partner company.

Skating is available through reservation Thursday–Sundays, through September. Visit stanley-skyrink.com. \$19.99 for adults and \$14.99 for kids 3–11.

Across the parking lot at The Stanley Beer Hall, new garage doors were being installed on the back patio of the restaurant so that it can be fully enclosed. Inside the building, the Local Drive Hangar was officially opened to the public, and there's a new restaurant coming into the former Comida space. A spray-painted message outside the construction area announced Molino Chido would be opening in the long-vacant spot.

And the women's clothing store Sterre is now Nouveau Home, the second business for the owner of Trunk Nouveau. Sterre owner Danielle Van Ede said this is not just a traditional business transaction. "It's one proud business owner aligning with another one for success." She added she wants the store to be successful and "a magnet" for anyone visiting Stanley Marketplace.

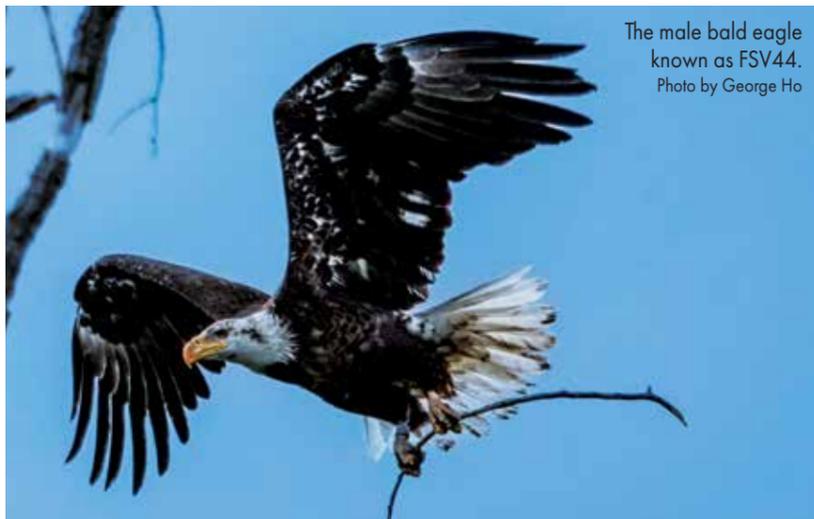
## Openings and Closings

### OPENING

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### CLOSING

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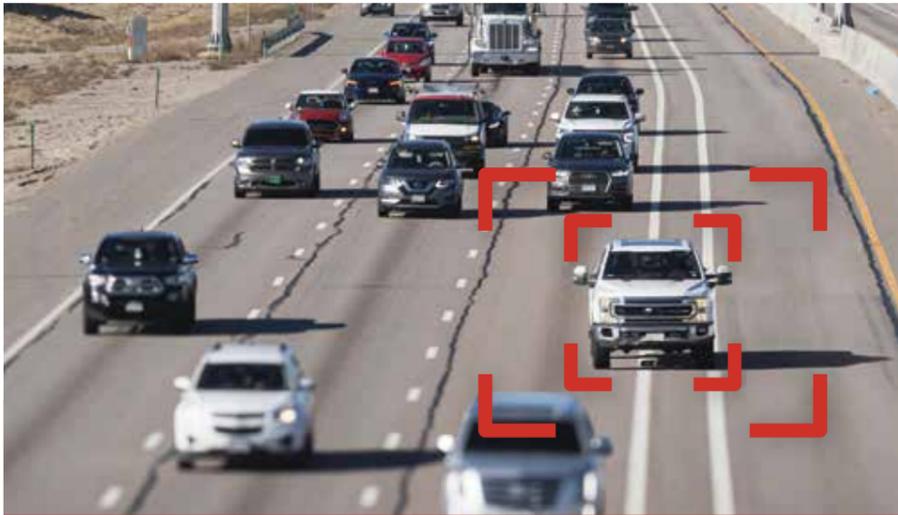
**5** A Summer Place to Play at the Denver Zoo

Wild Village is now open, inside the zoo, with nine nature-themed play structures for children to run, climb, and enjoy the outdoors. The area includes nature paths and work by local artists.

Families will find a bird's nest, a honeycomb, and other structures to help kids rethink how they look at nature.



Top right: Entrance to the new Wild Village play area. Above: The Arbor Alcove, one of nine nature-inspired play areas. Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch



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# Know Your Ozone

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**Q.** What is the Front Range's most pressing air quality problem?

**A.** Ground-level ozone is an odorless and invisible pollutant. It forms when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, mostly from fossil fuel emissions, combine with heat and sunlight.

**Q.** Why does this matter?

**A.** Ozone levels peak yearly during the summer, often on sunny days when Coloradans love to be outdoors. It impacts our health and environment, and is a leading cause of respiratory issues.

**Q.** What about the ozone layer?

**A.** Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) is a gas molecule composed of three oxygen atoms. High up in the atmosphere, the ozone layer is key and offers protection from the sun's ultraviolet radiation. But breathing in ground-level ozone irritates throats and lungs, increases the susceptibility to respiratory infections, and exacerbates ailments like asthma.

**Q.** Who is most impacted?

**A.** People most impacted by this air pollution are the elderly, those with respiratory conditions, outdoor workers and athletes, and especially children, whose lungs are still developing and are more likely to be active outdoors.

**Q.** What can you do?

- A.**
1. Reduce emissions to help keep ozone levels low, supporting your health and your community's.
  2. Actively protect your health by avoiding heavy outdoor exercise or exertion between noon and 8pm, especially on ozone alert days.
  3. Know when ozone is bad by signing up for summer ozone alerts.

Text "BetterAirCO" to 21000 or visit [SimpleStepsBetterAir.org](http://SimpleStepsBetterAir.org) to sign up for text or email ozone alerts from the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) and Simple Steps. Better Air

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to sign up for ozone alerts.



## Green Simple Living Getting Rid of the Hell Strip or Tree Lawn

By Christina Foust, PhD

Five years ago, we received our first notice of violating the lawn maintenance policy of the Master Community Association (MCA). As someone who had nightmares of getting a green detention slip well past graduating college, I was upset. But I saw my showdown with the rules coming. With news of climate catastrophe growing, I couldn't abide dumping water on the ground anymore. I bought us another six months with a jug of "patch" grass, but needed to take action so our balding hell strip (or tree lawn, the area between the sidewalk and street) wouldn't become a true hellscape. As I walk around Central Park, I wonder if this tale is a familiar one?

It is well past time to break an intergenerational blind deference to non-native grass. This landscaping approach—rooted in wealthy landowners from 17th Century Western Europe—takes a lot of work, chemicals, and water to achieve. In fact, Denver Water notes 50 percent of a household's water goes to outdoor use, as much as all indoor use combined. Ditching the grass now is a great way to save water, while cutting costs and getting creative with new ways of doing things.

Tree lawns are owned by the cities of Denver and Aurora but must be maintained by abutting property owners. If you live in Central Park, the MCA's policies reinforce that. I reached out to Jack Seward, operations manager for the MCA, who helped us navigate the rules when we upgraded our landscape. He offered some simple reminders.

First, you must use *landscaping materials*. Barren soil (dirt) and noxious weeds are *not* landscaping materials. While artificial turf technically qualifies, Seward notes, it sheds microplastics, which are "very difficult to clean, and are just generally bad for the environment."

Second, Denver has an 8-inch height rule for grasses. If you're seeding, consider native grasses like blue grama, which require much less water. Seward

reminds us, though, that all plants in the tree lawn are ultimately "owned" by the city, so homeowners should avoid planting anything too precious.

Like most homeowners in Central Park, we are responsible for maintaining a small surface area. We decided to do away with turf altogether, starting with the tree lawn. Inspired by xeriscape design, we laid down landscape fabric then cut holes to plant three very affordable salvia plants. We covered the fabric with pink and gray gravel, edging with black lava rock. A couple hundred bucks and a few hours later, we had a tidy little hell strip that complied with MCA rules. We created a decent weed barrier, but inevitably, dandelions and clover return. As Seward reminds us, "xeriscape is not zero maintenance." I do get tempted to "spray and go," but have found that manual removal is effective and I feel good knowing our little patch is not only saving thousands of gallons of water but also feeding pollinators.

If I had it to do over again, I would consider using mulch or native ground cover rather than the polyester landscaping fabric and rock as our base. Organic materials will help reduce heat island effects as the climate warms. Denver Water also has incentives for removing turfgrass and joining their Garden in a Box program.

I would love to see your ideas and so would the 17 percent of Central Park United Neighbors survey respondents who are interested in learning more about replacing lawn grass. Share your inspiration when you're finished and sign up for the *Front Porch's* Sustainability Challenge at [www.FrontPorchNE.com](http://www.FrontPorchNE.com).

*Christina Foust is a professor of Communication Studies at MSU Denver, and co-founder of the Westerly Creek Elementary School Green Team. Email her at [cfoust2@msudenver.edu](mailto:cfoust2@msudenver.edu) or reach out on Facebook.*



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Example of a xeriscaped hell strip, or tree lawn, in the Central Park neighborhood.

# Good News in the Neighborhood



Westerly Creek Elementary School students cross the finish line of the color run. Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

## A Colorful School Community Builder

It was a fun and colorful way to end the 2024-25 school year at Westerly Creek Elementary School in Central Park.

For the fifth year, students, and some parents, wore new white t-shirts which didn't stay white for long. They traveled the three-quarter-mile route around the school, getting doused with colored chalk dust along the way.

By the time the racers reached the finish line for the final toss of color, they sported colorful hues of blue and orange and green. Race watchers also got a dose of fine chalk dust thanks to a brisk afternoon wind.

Tracy Robert is the chair of the event. She's the mother of two students at the school and said the run is great for community building and as a fundraiser for the school PTA. The shirts cost \$25 each. There was no charge for the color. Robert said the students always have a lot of fun at the color run and some also take the run seriously.

"It's funny, because I completely underestimated how fast the kids were last year. It was a real race to them. I thought they'd sort of jog along. No, these kids are in it to win it." Robert said.

## Students Collaborate to Create Works of Art

The program is called Crazy Creatures, an art collaboration between Northfield High School, Inspire Elementary, and Denver Green School Southeast. For the past two years, high school students in the ceramics studio have worked with the younger students to turn their colorful crayon drawings into 3-D clay sculptures or "creatures."

Jessica Story, visual arts and ceramics educator at Northfield, said the collaboration is a positive community building project and with two years of projects completed, she hopes to continue the program and expand it next year.

Story has a lesson plan for the high school students focusing on "connections and inspiration," learning to recreate the younger students' artwork while maintaining the pureness and simplicity of the original work. The finished clay sculptures are given to the elementary school artists along with their original drawings.



High school students hold the crayon drawings from elementary students that inspired their clay creations. Photos courtesy of Northfield High School



Photo courtesy of Carol Fennell

Karl and Carol Fennell in front of Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

## A Local Artist Focuses on "The Good in Simplicity" After Hiking in Spain

In March and April, Central Park resident and artist Carol Fennell and her husband, Karl, took 28 days to walk approximately 500 miles on the Camino de Santiago. They completed the hike in honor of Carol's young nephew, Davis, who was diagnosed with a missing chromosome which may impede his future ability to walk.

The Camino de Santiago pilgrimage starts in various locations across Portugal, France, and Spain, where all paths converge on Santiago de Compostela. The town, on the Atlantic coast of Spain, is considered the "edge of the earth" and to be the holy pinnacle of the Camino as it is home to the tomb of St. James. The Fennells took the route starting in the Pyrenees mountains in southern France before crossing into Spain.

To honor Davis, the couple brought a stone and placed it at the Cruz de Ferro, or Iron Cross, as is tradition when walking the Camino. "We kept him in our intentions and walked for him," Carol said.

After returning to Denver, Carol feels driven to use more recycled materials and keep her art more minimal. "The trails taught me about the good in simplicity," she said. Carol wants her art to "reflect on the stillness" going forward from their journey on the Camino.

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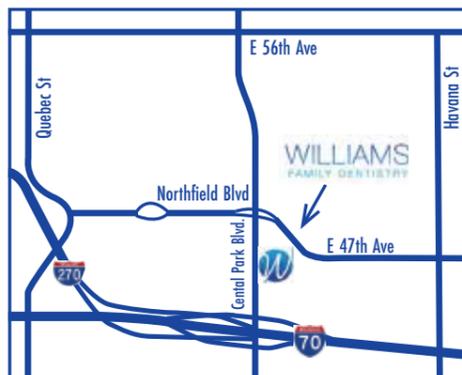
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# A Denver Protest Led by Seniors Who Want to be



Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

A group of seniors who live at Brookdale Lowry senior living center, along with family and friends, made their voices heard about concerns over federal cuts to programs that impact them. The handmade signs were created in part by Rogene Kirkegaard, one of the event organizers.

*“You need the two parties always, because you must have cooperation. Cooperation leads to us having a great, great country. If we don’t have cooperation, all we have is hatred.”*

—Rune Martin, lifelong Republican

By Linda Kotsaftis

Rune Martin and Rogene Kirkegaard are a political power couple. Previously, the two seniors have traveled to downtown Denver for a protest, but on June 13, they organized their fellow residents at the Brookdale Lowry senior living center to take to the streets—in this case, Quebec Street near their home.

“We want to be seen, and we want to be heard. We may be seniors, but we have a voice,” Martin said. “We have friends here who are 70, 80, and 90 years old who feel like I do, that things are going wrong. They want to do something. They’re in wheelchairs, with canes, can’t hardly move, and we’re still out here.”

The idea for this “No Kings” protest and march came from Martin after he watched a television news report about seniors in New York holding a similar event. He told Kirkegaard, “Why don’t you and I do that ourselves?” From there, he said, the idea took off with full support from the Brookdale staff.

He’s a lifelong Republican and she’s a lifelong Democrat.

“Somehow we get along,” Kirkegaard said. “If you know this lady, it doesn’t make a difference,” Martin added.

“We need the Democrats, and we need the Republicans,” he said. “You need the two parties always, because you must have cooperation. Cooperation leads to us having a great, great country. If we don’t have cooperation, all we have is hatred.”

The two talked about their spouses, who both died while in memory care. The threat of cuts to federal funding for medical research is one of the issues they’re worried about.

“When you take away the investigation into diseases and the research, you can’t even recover it,” Kirkegaard warned.

They also talked about their concerns for the Social Security and Medicaid programs.

Following a news conference where they spoke to family members, friends, and staff, the activists walked and rolled to the sidewalk along Quebec Street carrying signs made in part by Kirkegaard.

They waved to passing cars and cheered loudly when drivers honked their horns.

Martin, soon to be 91, left the group for a time and stood alone at the corner. A speaker on the shelf of his walker played patriotic music. The walker was covered in “I Voted” stickers.

He said that even if no one else had joined them, he and Kirkegaard would have been out there protesting—just the two of them. “That would be OK,” he said.

“We would walk. If we couldn’t get anybody else, we would,” Kirkegaard added.

Martin acknowledged that many of his fellow residents probably didn’t know the event was happening or might be unaware of political news overall. But he said he’s proud that “a lot of us are very patriotic.”

A Brookdale staff member said the hope was to get 20 people out there to join the pair, but perhaps the timing of the protest during a Friday afternoon karaoke happy hour kept a few people inside on an 85-degree Denver day.

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# 'Seen and Heard'



Rune Martin and Rogene Kirkegaard talk to a group of family, friends, and supporters before their protest began outside Brookdale Lowry.



Protest signs were carried by the seniors who joined the event. Staff members also supported the activists by providing water on a hot afternoon.



Village Farms at Stanley Program Director Sydney Quynn (left) and Associate Director of Food Access Andrea Zimmerman (right).



Construction from the Westerly Creek Improvement Project meant Village Farms needed to relocate further north, closer to 26th Ave.

Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

## Establishing Roots at the New Village Farms Location

By Margaret Freeman

Standing under a shade tent at the new Village Farms at Stanley as loud bulldozers move rocks nearby, workers are busy planting the fields for the summer growing season.

The Westerly Creek Improvement Project happening on the west side of Stanley Marketplace meant the farms needed to relocate to a new spot just north of the original location. Now that the farm is settled in the permanent location, Andrea Zimmer, associate director of food access, said they're able to "establish our roots a little bit more" and "can think a little more long term" about community building, such as adding a patio to the main trailer building to create an event space. "This is a big asset for the organization to invite [the community] into what Village Exchange is doing as a whole, and we are going to be doing that with workshops and events," said Zimmer.

The move was a big project and there was help from the construction crew working nearby.

"The people who are leading the whole operation have been really wonderful in helping us with a lot of different pieces," Zimmer said. From moving the garden beds and the trailer to donating wood chips for the farm's pathways, the donated labor from the construction project helped get the farm operational in its new location in time for the growing season this summer.

The farm is part of the northwest Aurora Village Exchange Center (VEC), which provides services such as food, vaccinations, job training, legal resources, and education to migrant and refugee families.

Every year, half of the approximately 2,500 pounds of food grown at the farm goes to the VEC food

pantry and the other half is sold to create earned income for the farm workers. The focus is on growing foods that are culturally significant for both the farm participants and the families that come to the food pantry.

Sydney Quynn, Village Farms program director, explained how they grow a lot of tomatillos, onions, and tomatoes for salsa, as well as a special leek from Afghanistan called gandana, aji dulce peppers from Venezuela, white garden eggplants from Ghana, okra from West Africa, and dalle khursani peppers from Nepal.

"We focus on growing things that have a shorter day to maturity because our growing season is pretty short here in Colorado, but we push it a little bit," said Quynn. The farm grows bitter melon that's native to Thailand but does well in the full sun of the farm's new location despite Colorado's climate differing from the tropical one the plant is traditionally grown in.

"We are a community center that supports through various responsive resources into the community," said Zimmer. The farm works with people in the Urban Farming Immersion Program where participants work at the farm for 10 hours a week from May to October. They also teach the participants about horticulture and job readiness. "I think we do a really good job at creating a really meaningful experience for folks," said Quynn. "They're understanding how what they're doing that day connects to the larger picture."

Volunteers are welcome and needed at the farm and there are two community "Brunch and You Pick Bouquet" events in August and September—tickets can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/FPVillageFarm>

"This is going to be a gorgeous community space," Zimmer said. "We are excited for what the next steps are going to be."



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# Park Hill Celebrates Independence Day



Independence Day parade participants entertain about 10,000 attendees each year at the Park Hill event. Photo courtesy of Park Hill Parade/2016

*“Without question, the best part of the parade is the community. Whether you’re marching, volunteering, or just cheering from the curb, the shared joy is what it’s all about.”* —Alison Bresler

By Sarah Fuhrey Huber

For several years, Justin and Alison Bresler drove 15 hours from Denver to the Chicago suburb of Evanston each July to experience their hometown Independence Day parade in all its red, white, and blue glory. But the cherished summer ritual became exhausting with three small children in tow.

The Breslers’ solution: start a parade in their neighborhood of Park Hill.

“Many of our Denver friends would leave town for the holiday because there wasn’t much happening

locally,” Alison recalled. “One day Justin said, ‘Let’s bring the parade here.’”

Fifteen years later, their efforts to create “a little joy for our kids and (strengthen) the sense of community right outside our doors” have grown into a beloved Denver celebration. More than 1,000 people participate annually in the Park Hill Independence Day parade, and about 10,000 spectators regularly attend. The parade includes floats, marching bands, costumed performers, and the Westernaires mounted precision team.

The Breslers’ first attempt at a Fourth of July parade was simple: they invited neighborhood kids to decorate their bikes, and families walked or cycled for a few blocks with flags held high, streamers flying, and the enthusiastic trilling of bicycle bells. The following year, 2010, was the kickoff of the parade as it exists today. The Bresler family constructed floats with neighbors and recruited friends to volunteer as parade marshals. A professional organizer in her day job, Alison handled registration, and Justin, the chief marketing officer of Visit Denver, finalized sponsorships from local businesses.



The Westernaires mounted precision team. Photo by Brent Andeck/2019



Dance troop performing at the parade. Photo by Brent Andeck/2019



Captain America on his motorcycle. Photo by Brent Andeck/2019

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# at the 15th Annual Parade

The Breslers knew they “were making something meaningful” when, on the evening of July 3, Justin spotted blankets and chairs serving as placeholders along the parade route. He said, “People were counting on us.”

Since then, “what started as a fun celebration has turned into a real community-building event,” he continued. “People show up with their picnics and coolers, and parties keep going after the parade.” Added Alison, “Without question, the best part of the parade is the community. Whether you’re marching, volunteering, or just cheering from the curb, the shared joy is what it’s all about.”

The parade is entirely volunteer run, with the Breslers’ children stepping into lead roles over time. “My kids learned to drive the parade golf carts,” Justin said. “We’re out early, setting up garbage cans and checking on the road barriers.”

The Breslers’ neighbor Charles Newcomb has helped turn Justin’s parade visions into reality for over a decade. He rents supplies, plans parking, and is constantly asking, “How do we keep this many people safe?” He noted, “We’ve learned by doing. For example, we’ve learned not to throw candy too close to the vehicles and horses.” The treats are now handed to the kids.

Safety was the primary concern in 2022, when the Breslers nearly canceled the parade within minutes of start time. That morning, Justin and Alison learned that a mass shooting had occurred at a parade not far from their hometown of

Evanston. Seven people were killed. “I’ll never forget gathering the volunteers in a circle to share what had happened,” Alison said. “It was especially difficult telling our teen volunteers—kids who had already endured so much between Covid and the rise in school shootings.” The Denver Police doubled their presence, and every volunteer chose to stay.

“That moment really underscored the strength and compassion of this community,” Alison said. “Moments like that remind me why the parade matters. It’s more than just a fun event—it’s a symbol of resilience, unity, and hope.”

The 2025 Park Hill Independence Day parade will kick off at 1:30pm on July 4. Visit [parkhillparade.com](http://parkhillparade.com) for a route map.



Alison and Justin Bresler at the Park Hill 4th of July Parade in 2014. Photo courtesy of the Breslers

## Bird Sightings

Generously donated by George Ho

### Mountain Bluebirds in Denver

Mountain bluebirds seek out nest sites in open areas of short grasses, shrubs, and trees at 7,000–12,500 feet above sea level. Typically they migrate through Denver (5,280 feet above sea level) and head toward the mountains where they spend their summer and raise their young. Breeding in Denver is uncommon, but if the habitat is suitable, the food is plentiful, the nest box provided, and the mate is willing...why not? So it happened at the CommonGround Golf Course this spring.

On April 12, the CommonGround birders saw a pair of mountain bluebirds at a nest box on the golf course. The birds continued to be sighted on May 10 and May 25. Finally, they documented nestlings begging for food and parents rotating to feed them on May 29 and June 2. The nestling’s open mouth (gape) is a bright yellow, fleshy area—a visual cue for where to deposit food.

Mountain bluebirds do not have blue pigments in their feathers. The blue color is a result of the interaction of light with the feather. The feather barbs have structures that bend light waves and allow only blue light to reflect back to the viewer. This is similar to how we see the sky as blue.

**Bird Walks** July 5 and August 2, 7:30am & 8am. Walks are free but you must RSVP at [www.blufflake.org/birdwatching](http://www.blufflake.org/birdwatching). All are welcome. Bring your own binoculars, or borrow a pair from your guide. 11255 MLK Jr. Blvd. Search [www.FrontPorchNE.com](http://www.FrontPorchNE.com) for “Bird Sightings” to see all the past bird stories and photos from George Ho.



Male mountain bluebird at Golden Gate Canyon State Park, elevation 7,600–10,400 feet



Mountain bluebird feeding a nestling in a nest box at CommonGround Golf Course



The yellow gape makes a perfect target for feeding a nestling in a tree hole nest at Golden Gate Canyon State Park

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Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch



The City of Denver hasn't approved permanent occupancy for Dustin Chiappetta's market due to various issues, including the mural seen on the left.

# New Denver Office Hopes to Streamline a Confusing Permitting Process

By Mary Jo Brooks

This past spring, Dustin Chiappetta said he reached "a breaking point." He had been battling with the City of Denver for nine months trying to get a permanent certificate of occupancy for Pearl Market, the small grocery store he opened in North Central Park in August 2024. His goal is to provide a family-friendly store and gathering place for the community. But he said his dream quickly became a nightmare as he encountered roadblock after roadblock trying to satisfy zoning and permitting requirements. "I'm not a developer—I'm

a resident and a business owner who saw a need, took out a Small Business Administration loan, and leveraged my home to build something meaningful for this community."

The store has been operating under a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy because the City won't approve a mural and an awning erected on the building—even though the Central Park Design Review Committee had approved both and Chiappetta was working with a reputable company that had been erecting signs in Denver for 22 years.

Chiappetta said he's already spent \$10,000 because of delays, revisions, and

rejections. "These types of arbitrary hurdles make an already challenging business landscape nearly impossible to navigate. Small businesses across Denver are closing, or new businesses never get off the ground because the process is so difficult."

It's a story that is all too common across Denver. In fact, the owners of a neighboring business—Let's Face It Med Spa—had a similar story to tell. Anna Hundermark said it took her and her sister a year to get their business off the ground because of permitting problems with their sign. "We're struggling because it took so long to open, paying back rent for the months we couldn't do business," said Hundermark. "So many people told us, from contractors to architects, that this is just how the City works. This is why a lot of companies don't want to do work in Denver."



Jill Jennings Golich

Jill Jennings Golich is hoping that will soon start to change. In April, she was appointed by Mayor Mike Johnston to open the Denver Permitting Office, with the mandate to speed up permitting and improve customer service for homeowners, businesses, and developers. "We have realized how our time frames impact our customers' bottom lines and their schedules to get work done," said Jennings Golich.

She acknowledged that the process can seem bewildering with many different departments involved in permitting, inspection, and licensing, so her office has launched a new website to help homeowners and businesses more easily navigate the system and an online

dashboard to keep the City accountable. Johnston has also pledged that all future projects would be approved in 180 days or be refunded up to \$10,000 in fees if the deadline was missed.

Jennings Golich added that smaller projects should never come close to taking six months. "We are creating some specific intervention points on smaller projects if they exceed a certain number of resubmittals...to try to catch these things and solve them before they become real problems."

She also hopes to expand a pilot project that has been used recently for businesses along the downtown 16th Street corridor to speed up the process with "a focus on streamlining, reducing things that really aren't necessary, removing complexity, with a goal to try to improve outcomes and usability," she added. "We shouldn't be seen as the barrier. We should be seen as a partner."

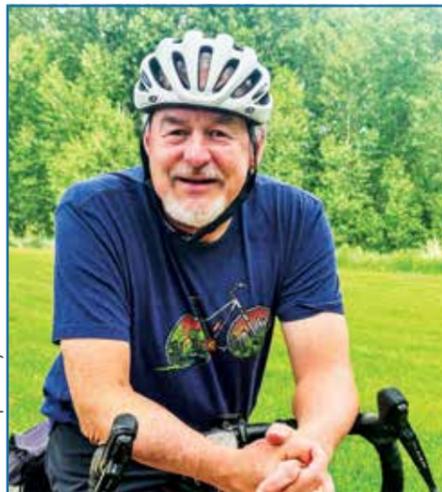
That's music to Chiappetta's ears. In June, he met with Mayor Johnston and was encouraged to hear that the mayor "genuinely wants to improve" the permitting process. "He said our building is exactly the kind of thoughtful, community-focused development the city needs more of, and that businesses like ours deserve a 'thank you'—not additional hurdles."

Chiappetta hopes to have his permanent certificate of occupancy by early July, and he wants to help the City continue to improve the process. "I want to be part of the solution. I hope to meet further with the zoning and permitting departments, so others don't have to go through what I did," said Chiappetta.

For more information about the new Denver Permitting Office, visit [www.denvergov.org/dpo](http://www.denvergov.org/dpo)

## OPINION: CENTRAL PARK IS AN IDEAL LOCATION FOR BICYCLING

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch



Retiree and bicyclist Ray Landis also enjoys writing.

By Ray Landis

As an avid bicyclist and a newcomer to Central Park, moving here from Pennsylvania, I was overjoyed by the cycling infrastructure I found here. The miles of trails, the marked bike lanes, and the plethora of bike shops are vast improvements over what I experienced in the Keystone State.

As I've explored the Denver area on my bicycle, I have noticed room for some improvement—numerous difficult road crossings on trails, rough pavement in designated bike lanes, and a puzzling lack of north-south bike routes compared to east-west

sectors. But after nearly a year of riding here, I'm still in awe of the accommodations made for bicycles and the many places trails and bike routes go.

Central Park is an ideal location to begin a bicycling habit or to continue to expand your cycling experience. The Sand Creek Regional Greenway is a gateway to short, medium, and long rides.

Newcomers to Denver might be surprised at their first encounter with the trail network anchored in Central Park by the Sand Creek Trail. In many other parts of the United States, white concrete paths are sidewalks which prohibit bicycle traffic. In the Denver area, however, almost all the bicycle trails are concrete, as opposed to a darker asphalt surface. There is an ongoing debate about which surface is better from both an affordability and durability perspective, but the important thing for bicyclists here is these concrete trails are shared bicycle and pedestrian paths.

Of course, most sidewalks are pedestrian-only and prohibit bicycles and it can be difficult for cyclists to

figure out when a path is open to bicycles and when it is not. For instance, in Central Park, the sidewalk along Central Park Boulevard from the bridge over the RTD tracks to just beyond Northfield Avenue is a designed bike route. A great source for this information is the Denver Bike Map which also offers tips on cycling safety and regulations.

One interesting cycling law in Colorado is how bicyclists may treat stop signs and traffic lights. It is permissible for bicycles to ride slowly through stop signs after yielding to pedestrians or other vehicles with the right-of-way. Bicycles may also proceed through a red traffic light after coming to a complete stop if there is no oncoming traffic.

An exciting feature of the Sand Creek Regional Greenway is its connection to other bike trails. Six miles west of the parking lot for the trail on Smith Road, the Sand Creek Trail ends at the South Platte River Trail. Cyclists can ride for miles either north or south on the South Platte River Trail, or, by riding one mile north, can continue west on the Clear Creek Trail all the way to Golden.

Two miles east of the Smith Road Parking lot, the Sand Creek Trail enters Aurora. At this point it transitions from

concrete to crushed stone, which will accommodate most bicycles. Four more miles along this path and the Sand Creek Trail intersects with the High-Line Canal Trail, which goes north via a bicycle-and-pedestrian-only bridge across I-70 to the Green Valley Ranch neighborhood, or south, meandering 50 miles or so, to Chatfield State Park.

If you don't like the crushed stone, take the Toll Creek Trail south into central Aurora, where you can eventually link with the Cherry Creek Trail through Cherry Creek State Park or back into downtown Denver. Aurora has recently made significant improvements to its bicycle infrastructure.

It would take many, many rides to experience all the trails and bike lanes in the Denver area. Experts may claim other cities in the United States are better for cycling, but I believe bicycling here is fantastic. So put on a helmet (please!), find a trail, and explore. Whether you ride 5 miles or 50 miles, you'll feel better when you're finished, and you will see things you would never notice from a car.

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As summer moves along and the best films wait for fall, I give you two reviews that may seem incongruous at first, yet both tell us something about our world today in different ways. We can learn a great deal from each.

**Vermiglio** (2024)

This wonderful film from Italian director Maura Delpero takes place in rural, mountainous northern Italy as WWII is winding down, and runs us through an emotional ringer for its duration. Taken from her own family history (although the film is fictional), Delpero tells the story of a deserter from the Italian army who lands in a small town. Brought there by a friend and fellow soldier who lives there, the young man takes residence in the barn of the local teacher and patriarch. He falls in love with one of the teacher's daughters Lucia, and they eventually marry. The resulting chain of events then leads to a web of lies, deception, and unspooled passion and anger that eventually overtakes not just the family, but the town as well. Ultimately, this beautiful film serves as a representation of that era but also as a metaphor for our current world.

The lush cinematography of the surrounding Dolomites and attendant valleys and streams therein provides a poetic and even ancient back-

drop to the story. Cinematographer Mikhail Krichman makes expert use of every blade of grass, drop of water, and snow-covered field. We feel the surroundings through that cinematography, and in turn, that cinematography allows us to empathize with the characters. Those characters are wonderfully drawn and cement the verisimilitude of the film. Delpero's skill in directing actors is particularly evident, especially with age ranges from 7-70. This is a touching and important film.

Available for rent on all streaming apps.



Vermiglio

**Andor** (Disney+)

Simply put, this is the best TV show I have ever seen. Every aspect of the filmmaking (and I call it filmmaking because it is ostensibly just that) is exquisite: the writing, the acting, the cinematography, the settings, the editing, and the sound. You don't need to be a Star Wars fan to enjoy the show, and in fact, such fandom may work against you. Just let this sink in: we never see a lightsaber in the two seasons of the show.

Conceived as a prequel to *Rogue One* (2016), showrunner Tony Gilroy urged his team to think outside of the "normal Star Wars" stories so that anyone could watch the show and enjoy it. *Star Wars* fans would get what they wanted, he said, but others could watch it with them. Critics adored season one when it came out in 2022, calling it "complex," "mature," and "a breath of fresh air."

It all starts with the writing, which is the best I've ever seen on a TV show, and rivals the writing of great films. Every character is superbly drawn and even secondary characters shine. That writing brings out excellent acting, and the ensemble cast is phenomenal. The technical aspects are flawless, with dense cinema-



Andor

tography and editing. It is cinematic art at its best, and the subtext abounds.

Season two surpasses the high bar of season one and continues to flesh out how resistance can snowball and how hope for change is contagious. It shows an imperialist entity crushing virtually helpless populations for economic gain, for raw materials, and simply because that entity wishes to stamp out opposition. Media plays a role in assisting the imperialists, especially in how they frame conflict and aggression through misinformation. As one resistance character says: "Truth must not be lost. The death of truth is the ultimate victory of evil." Now let that sink in.

Welcome to the resistance.

Vincent Piturro, PhD., is a Professor of Film and Media Studies at MSU Denver. Contact him directly at [vpiturro@msudenver.com](mailto:vpiturro@msudenver.com) or follow him on X. For more reviews, search The Indie Prof at [FrontPorchNE.com](http://FrontPorchNE.com).

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# LOCAL EVENTS *July thru early August*

View/add events at [FrontPorchNE.com/events](http://FrontPorchNE.com/events). Submissions by the 17th will be considered for the upcoming month's issue.

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

## JULY 4TH EVENTS

**7/2 Wednesday—July 4th on the Second.** Glendale fireworks show, featuring an outdoor screening of *Armageddon* (1998). Gates open at 6:30pm. 4400 E. Kentucky Ave. [infinityparkatglendale.com](http://infinityparkatglendale.com)

**7/3 Thursday—Civic Center Park Indy Eve.** Drone show, market, DJs, live music, light shows, and more. Starts at 5pm. 101 14th Ave. Info at [artsandvenuesdenver.com](http://artsandvenuesdenver.com)

**7/4 Friday—Central Park Pancake Breakfast & Parade.** 9–11am, parade starts at 10:30am. The Green (E. 29th Ave. & Roslyn St.) More details at [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)

**7/4 Friday—Park Hill 4th of July 15th Annual Parade.** Floats, music, classic cars, and more. Parade starts at 1:30pm. 23rd Ave. from Dexter St. to Krameria St. [parkhillparade.org](http://parkhillparade.org)

**7/4 Friday—Aurora 4th of July Spectacular.** 6–10pm. Live music, food, and fireworks at 9:30pm. Aurora Municipal Center Great Lawn, 15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. [auroragov.org](http://auroragov.org)

**7/4 Thursday—Denver Municipal Band Patriotic Concert.** 7–8:15pm. Free concert in Washington Park at S. Franklin St. at E. Tennessee Ave. [denvermunicipalband.org](http://denvermunicipalband.org)

## NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

**Thursdays—Mojablu Concert Series.** 7/3: PG6IX. 7/10: *Thumpin' Band*. 7/17: *Tunisia*. 7/24: *Jacob Larson Band*. 7/31: *DOTSERO*. The North Green at 49th Ave. & Valentia St. 6:30pm. [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)

**Fridays—Yoga on the Plaza.** 60-minute free class weather permitting. 9:30am. Ages 12 and up. 8246 Northfield Blvd. [shopsatnorthfield.com](http://shopsatnorthfield.com)

**Saturdays—City Park Farmers Market.** 100+ local producers, live music, yoga, and a run club. 2551 E. Colfax Ave. [cityparkfarmersmarket.com](http://cityparkfarmersmarket.com)

**Sundays—Central Park Farmers Market.** Produce, baked goods, specialty meats, gourmet food items, and more. The South Green (E. 29th Ave. & Roslyn St.) 8:30am–12:30pm. [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)

**Sundays—City Park Jazz.** 6–8pm City Park Pavilion and Bandshell, 2001 Steele St. [cityparkjazz.org](http://cityparkjazz.org). 7/6: Chris Daniels & The Kings with Freddi Gowdy. 7/13: Better Sensory Perception. 7/20: Colorado Jazz Repertory Orchestra. 7/27: Dzirae Gold. 8/3: Brass Band Extravaganza featuring Rowdy Brass Band, Tivoli Club Brass Band, and Guerrilla Fanfare

**7/2 & 8/6—Qi Gong.** All levels and abilities are welcome. 11am–12pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**7/5 & 8/2—Bluff Lake Bird Walks.** Walks at 7:30am and 8am. 11255 E. MLK Jr. Blvd. Must register at [blufflake.org/birdwatching](http://blufflake.org/birdwatching)

**7/10 Thursday—Active Minds Presents: The Future of Bees.** 1–2pm. Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [activeminds.com](http://activeminds.com)

**7/10, 7/11, & 7/12—Goat Events at The Shops at Northfield.** Baby goat sound bath (7/10), goatastic dance (7/11), and full moon goat yoga (7/12). Registration at [shopsatnorthfield.com](http://shopsatnorthfield.com)

**7/11 Friday—Pours in the Park: Wine Tasting.** Wine, food, and company. 6–8pm. 24th Avenue Park, 2441 Alton St. Tickets \$35, must be 21+. [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)



Colorado Black Arts Festival

**7/11 to 7/13—Colorado Black Arts Festival.** 39th annual celebration of African American art and culture, free to attend. City Park West. Hours and info at [colbaf.org](http://colbaf.org)

**7/12 Saturday—Nature Wonder Walks.** Bluff Lake Nature Center. 7:30am. 11255 E. MLK Jr. Blvd. Register at [blufflake.org](http://blufflake.org)

**7/12 Saturday—Rescue Puppy Yoga.** A heartwarming yoga session. 8:30–9:30am. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St., south side on Clinton St. Register at [stanleymarketplace.com](http://stanleymarketplace.com)

**7/12 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day.** 10am–2pm. Wings Over the Rockies Museum. 7711 East Academy Blvd. [wingsmuseum.org](http://wingsmuseum.org)

**7/12 Saturday—Lost Creek String Band.** The rich tones of guitar, violin, mandolin, and bass with vocal harmonies. 1–2pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**7/12 & 7/26—Concert on The Green.** 7/12: *Wash Park Band*. 7/26: *HomeSlice*. The South Green (E. 29th Ave. & Roslyn St.) 6pm. [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)

**7/13 & 7/28—Sky Rink Events.** 7/13: Swiftie Skate. 7/28: Rock & Rollin Skate. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St. [stanleymarketplace.com](http://stanleymarketplace.com)

**7/18 & 7/25—Movie on The Green.** 7/18: *The Lost City*. 7/25: *Hook*. The South Green (E. 29th Ave. & Roslyn St.) Starts at dusk. [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)

**7/19 Saturday—History Hike: Star K Ranch and the Wild Neighbors.** This hike is ADA-accessible. 9–10:30am. 16002 E. Smith Rd., Aurora. Register at [blufflake.org](http://blufflake.org)

**7/19 Saturday—Boulevard One Farmers Market.** Live music, face painting, produce, crafts, and treats. 9am–1pm. Clark's Market, 7059 E. Lowry Blvd. 303-647-3500

**7/20 Sunday—Earth Listening Circles.** Bluff Lake Nature Center. 9am–12pm. 11255 E. MLK Jr. Blvd. Free, register at [blufflake.org](http://blufflake.org)

**7/20 Sunday—City Park Public Art Walking Tour.** Visit historic sculptures, fountains, and gateways. Tickets \$5. 10am. Details at [denverpublicart.org](http://denverpublicart.org)

**7/24 Thursday—Active Minds: Ireland/Northern Ireland.** 1–2pm, Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [activeminds.com](http://activeminds.com)

**7/26 Saturday—Pours in the Park: Beer Tasting.** Local craft beers. 4–6pm. West Crescent, E. 29th Ave. & Roslyn St. Tickets \$35, must be 21+. [mca80238.com](http://mca80238.com)

**7/28 Monday—Death Café.** Normalize conversations around death, make the most of life. 2–3:30pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**8/1 Friday—First Fridays.** 60 local artists, music, and entertainment. 6–9pm. 2501 N. Dallas St., Aurora. [stanleymarketplace.com](http://stanleymarketplace.com)

## METRO EVENTS

**Wednesdays—Cats on Mats.** Yoga class with roaming, adoptable kittens. 5:30–6:30pm. 241 W. Bayaud Ave. [denvergov.org](http://denvergov.org)

**Saturdays—Poetry on the Porch.** Experience poetry in the garden. 1–3pm. Center for Colorado Women's History, 1310 Bannock St. Tickets at [historycolorado.org](http://historycolorado.org)

**Historic Denver Walking Tours.** 90 min. walking tours in Lodo, Capitol Hill, Five Points, and more. For specific dates, go to: [historicdenver.org](http://historicdenver.org)

**7/3 to 7/6—Fan Expo Denver.** Comics, sci-fi, horror, anime, gaming, cosplay, and more. Colorado Convention Center. [fanexpohq.com/fanexpodenver](http://fanexpohq.com/fanexpodenver)

**7/4 Friday—First Friday Art Walks.** On Santa Fe. 5:30–9:30pm. [denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts](http://denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts)

**7/4 to 7/6—Cherry Creek Arts Festival.** 200+ juried artists, family-friendly art activities, live music, food & drink. Cherry Creek North. [cherryarts.org](http://cherryarts.org)

**Through 7/6—Titanic: An Immersive Voyage.** Over 90 artifacts, life-sized reconstructed rooms, and more. 3900 Elati St. [expo-titanic.com/denver](http://expo-titanic.com/denver)

**7/8 & 7/22—Circle of Fathers: Dads Support Group.** Support one another, share tips & advice, or just talk. 5:30–7:30pm. Blair Caldwell Library, 2401 Welton St. [denvergov.org](http://denvergov.org)

**7/9 Wednesday—SPARK.** For visitors with early-stage Alzheimer's or dementia. 1–2pm. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)



Bright Nights at Four Mile Park

**7/9 Wednesday—Digable Planets.** A unique style of jazz-informed Hip Hop. 7:30pm. Outdoor amphitheatre. 6901 Wadsworth Blvd., Arvada. [arvadacenter.org](http://arvadacenter.org)

**7/10 Thursday—Art & About Tour.** For visitors with early-stage Alzheimer's/dementia. 1–2:45pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](http://denverartmuseum.org)

**7/11 Friday—Summer Music: Picnic Series.** Mckey and brookLYNN. 4–6pm. 1250 Bannock St. [clyffordstillmuseum.org](http://clyffordstillmuseum.org)

**7/11 Friday—Friday Five Points Jazz Hop.** 5pm. Free. Five Points neighborhood. [fivepointsbid.com](http://fivepointsbid.com)

**7/11 to 7/13—Bastille Day.** The charm of a French village infused with global flair. Cherry Creek North, Fillmore Plaza. [rmfacc.org/bastille-day-2025](http://rmfacc.org/bastille-day-2025)

**7/12 Saturday—Architecture Tour.** Starts in the lobby of the Hamilton Building. 11am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](http://denverartmuseum.org)

**7/14, 7/25 & 8/4—Movie Nights.** Free. 7/14: *Toy Story*. 7/25: *Bridesmaids*. 8/4: *Madagascar*. 4400 East Kentucky Ave. [infinityparkatglendale.com](http://infinityparkatglendale.com)

**7/19 Saturday—Denver Brass Presents Colorado Celtic Fusion.** 12 and under \$10 seats or free on lawn. 7:30pm. Outdoor amphitheatre. 6901 Wadsworth Blvd., Arvada. [arvadacenter.org](http://arvadacenter.org)

**7/23 to 10/5—Bright Nights at Four Mile.** Four Mile transforms into a luminous wonderland. 715 S. Forest St. Tickets at [fourmilepark.org](http://fourmilepark.org)

**7/25 Friday—Blaxplanation: Five Points Flow.** Literary/music performance and workshops. 2:30–5pm. Blair-Caldwell Library, 2401 Welton St. Tickets at [historycolorado.org](http://historycolorado.org)

**7/26 Saturday—The Big Wonderful.** Live music, craft vendors, outdoor beer garden, and more. 16th Street, Downtown Denver. [thebigwonderful.com](http://thebigwonderful.com)

**7/26 & 7/27—Cheesman Park Art Fest.** 150+ artists, live entertainment, food trucks, and more. 1599 E. 8th Ave. [dashevents.com](http://dashevents.com)

**7/27 Sunday—Disability Pride Celebration.** Celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). 10:30am–12:30pm. 1250 Bannock St. [clyffordstillmuseum.org](http://clyffordstillmuseum.org)

**7/31 Tuesday—Aging Well Workshop.** Empower yourself, enhance your quality of life, and improve your overall well-being. 10am–12:15pm. Focus Points, 2501 48th Ave. [denvergov.org](http://denvergov.org)

# LUCKILY, YOU'RE A MILE ABOVE SEA LEVEL HERE.



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**8/2 Saturday—Colorado Day.** Free, 149th birthday celebration. 10am–5pm. 1310 Bannock St. and 1200 North Broadway. [historycolorado.org](http://historycolorado.org)

## KIDS AND FAMILIES

**Monday–Saturday—Local Library Storytimes.** Different age groups and locations. Info at [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**Mondays—Kids Create.** Hands-on making for toddlers through early elementary age. 3:30–4:30pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St.

**Wednesdays & Sundays—Storytime at Tattered Cover Kids.** Wed. at 11am, Sun. at 2pm. 2501 N. Dallas St., Aurora. [stanleymarketplace.com](http://stanleymarketplace.com)

**Wednesdays—Mornings at the Museum.** Ages 3–6, 10:30–11:15am. Free. Aurora History Museum, 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. [auroragov.org](http://auroragov.org)

**Wednesdays—Twins Create.** Team up, get creative, and tackle challenges with friends. No class on 7/16. 3:30–4:30pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St.

**Saturdays—Kids' Matinees.** A variety of interactive shows with live music. \$6.45 with fees. 11:30am open, show at 12pm. 1080 14th St. [dazzledenver.com](http://dazzledenver.com)

**7/11 Friday—Adults vs. Kids Spelling Bee.** 5–7pm. Girl Scout DreamLab, 63 N. Quebec St. [eventbrite.com/cc/girl-scout-dreamlab-1653829](http://eventbrite.com/cc/girl-scout-dreamlab-1653829)

**7/12 Saturday—CSU Spur Family Programming.** July theme is River Festival. Free. 10am–3pm. 4817 National Western Dr. [csuspur.org](http://csuspur.org)

**7/13 Sunday—Sensory-Friendly Morning.** For kids with neurodiversity or sensory-processing disorders and their families. 9am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](http://denverartmuseum.org)

**7/15 Tuesday—Teen Zine Workshop.** Curious about zines? Come join us and make one of your own to take home. 2:30–3:30pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**7/16 Wednesday—Trendy Dance Moves.** Learn trending dance moves with a Colorado Ballet artist. Ages 5–12. 3–3:45pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**7/16 Wednesday—The Wizard of Oz Escape Room.** Solve puzzles, riddles, and clues to escape. Registration opens 7/7. Ideal for ages 8+. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**7/17 Thursday—Kids Book Celebration.** Read about rockets at home then join us to make film canister rockets to launch. 4–5pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**7/19 Saturday—Low Sensory Morning.** 8–10am. History Colorado Museum, 1200 N. Broadway. [historycolorado.org](http://historycolorado.org)

**7/19 Saturday—Critters in the Garden: Garden Friend or Foe.** Learn about the tiny creatures that help gardens thrive. 9–11am. Posner Center, 1031 33rd St. [dug.org](http://dug.org)

**7/19 Saturday—Inside the Orchestra - Tiny Tots.** Immersive, interactive concerts for kids ages 0–7. 9:30am & 10:45am. Denver Museum of Nature and Science, 2001 Colorado Blvd. [dmns.org](http://dmns.org)

**7/19 Saturday—Nature Pop-up - Bugs.** Bluff Lake Nature Center, 11255 E. MLK Jr. Blvd. 10am–1:30pm. [sandcreekgreenway.org](http://sandcreekgreenway.org)

**7/20, 7/23, & 7/26—Art Crawl: Big, Big Paintings** 10:30–11:15am. For infants–14 mos. 1250 Bannock St. [clyffordstillmuseum.org](http://clyffordstillmuseum.org)

**7/20 & 7/21—Children and Family Workshop.** From Plants to Paper for ages 7+. 10–11:30am or 1–2:30pm. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)

**8/1 Friday—Art Crawl at The Kirkland.** Introduce your baby to art. 10:30–11:15pm. 1201 Bannock St. [denverartmuseum.org](http://denverartmuseum.org)

**8/2 & 8/3—Children and Family Make and Take:** Build a fairy garden for ages 5+. 10–11:30am or 1–2:30pm. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)

**8/5 Tuesday—Summer of Adventure: Celebrate with Animals.** With the Denver Zoo and Conservation Alliance. 10:30–11:30am. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

**8/5 Tuesday—Native Wildlife.** Meet animal ambassadors that are true Colorado natives. 1:30–2:30pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)

## MUSEUMS, ETC.

Listings at [www.FrontPorchNE.com](http://www.FrontPorchNE.com) → [Events \(tab\)](#) → [Ongoing Events](#)

SCFD Free days at [www.scfd.org](http://www.scfd.org)

## PERFORMANCE/THEATRE

**Wednesdays—Sci-Fi Film Fest.** 6:30pm. Denver Museum of Nature and Science, 2001 Colorado Blvd. [dmns.org](http://dmns.org)

7/9: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*

7/16: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

7/23: *Gattaca*

7/30: *Fantastic Voyage*

**7/2, 7/9 & 7/16—Summer Concerts at Four Mile.** Doors open at 5:30, concerts start at 6:30. 715 S. Forest St. For line-up and tickets, go to [fourmilepark.org](http://fourmilepark.org)

**7/3 to 7/20—The Amazing Acro-Cats Dilly-Dally.** Featured in the Netflix series *Cat People*. Bug Theatre, 3654 Navajo St. [bugtheatre.org](http://bugtheatre.org)

**7/5 & 7/13—Fresh Looks Festival.** A collection of readings of brand new, unproduced plays. The People's Building, 9995 E Colfax Ave., Aurora. [thepeoplesbuilding.com](http://thepeoplesbuilding.com)

**7/6 Sunday—A Merry Widow or Two.** A deliciously twisted Victorian comedy. A free staged reading. 2pm. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St. Reserve seats at [vintage theatre.org](http://vintage theatre.org)

**7/8 to 7/20—Some Like it Hot.** Set in Chicago when prohibition has everyone thirsty for a little excitement. Buell Theatre. [denvercenter.org](http://denvercenter.org)

**7/16 to 8/17—Dixie's Tupperware Party.** Bringing your grandma's Tupperware party into the 21st century. Garner Theatre. [denvercenter.org](http://denvercenter.org)

**7/18 Friday—The Denver Moth - StoryS-LAM.** Theme: Dirt. Doors open at 6:30, show starts at 7:30pm. 71 East Yale Ave. [swallowhillmusic.org](http://swallowhillmusic.org)

**7/18 to 7/21—Absurd Hero: The Musical.** Sid must persuade the homeless Gods to cooperate with city hall if he wants to be mayor. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St. [vintage theatre.org](http://vintage theatre.org)

**7/19 to 8/3—Around the World in 80 Toys.** Thaddeus McWhinnie Phillips' solo performance. Buntport Theater, 717 Lipan St. [buntport.com](http://buntport.com)

**7/19 to 7/20—Jurassic Park in Concert.** Watch the movie while the score is played live. Boettcher Concert Hall, 1000 14th St. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)

**7/30 Wednesday—Mozart at McGregor Square.** 7pm. 1901 Wazee St. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To find volunteer listings and charitable opportunities, go to [www.FrontPorchNE.com](http://www.FrontPorchNE.com)

## GREEN & SUSTAINABILITY EVENTS

**7/7 to 7/18—Electronics Recycling Drop-off.** M–F, 8am–4pm, Sat. 10am–2pm. Techno Rescue, 3251 Lewiston St. More info at [auroragov.org/recycle](http://auroragov.org/recycle)

**7/12 Saturday—Discover Water-Wise Plants.** Learn about trees, shrubs, perennials, and grasses for low water use. 9–10:30am. Aurora Water-wise Garden, 15151 E Alameda Pkwy., Aurora. [auroragov.org](http://auroragov.org)

**7/12 Saturday—Plant Propagation 101.** Learn vegetative and seed propagation of indoor and outdoor plants. 9:30–11:30am. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)

**7/12, 7/26 & 8/2—Learn to Compost Workshops.** These hands-on workshops cover all the basics of backyard composting. 9–11am. Gove Community Garden, 1325 Colorado Blvd. [dug.org](http://dug.org)

**7/12, 7/19, & 8/2—Know Your Colorado Garden Pests and Pals.** Knowledge of your garden and landscape pests and pals can make a big difference. 9:30–11am. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)

**7/26 Saturday—Pollinators in the Garden.** Explore the vital role of pollinators and beneficial insects in garden ecosystems. 9–11am. Posner Center, 1031 33rd St. [dug.org](http://dug.org)

**7/26 Saturday—Introduction to Water-Bath Canning.** Learn basic techniques and leave with 2–3 jars of preserved foods. 9:30am–12:30pm. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)

**7/27 Sunday—Pollinator Workshop for K-5th graders.** Presented by the Denver Botanic Gardens. 2–4pm. Girl Scout DreamLab, 63 N. Quebec St. [eventbrite.com/cc/girl-scout-dreamlab-1653829](http://eventbrite.com/cc/girl-scout-dreamlab-1653829)

**8/9 Saturday—Make the Most of Your Summer Garden.** Pickling and Salsa Making Workshop. 9am–12pm. The Urban Farm, 10200 Smith Rd. Tickets at [theurbanfarm.org](http://theurbanfarm.org)



Introduction to water-bath canning

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# A New Community Kitchen Cooperative

By Linda Kotsaftis

A tall nylon “open” sign stands outside a new business along E. Montview Blvd. in northwest Aurora. It marks the end of a long journey to open the doors to El Alba Cooperative, a kitchen and retail space.

“Our kitchen is for entrepreneurs and local small business owners to have access,” said Gabriela Jacobo, executive director of El Alba Cooperative.

If you stop by the business, Jacobo will tell you about the journey to get there, beginning in 2015 as part of an initiative called Community Campus Partnerships, now known as the Office of Access and Engagement at the nearby University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Networking breakfasts and dinners brought local businesses together, which later became listening sessions with local entrepreneurs.

Jacobo also works for the CU office and was part of that community team. She traveled up and down East Colfax, hearing

from people who didn’t have commercial kitchens for their food businesses and had to cook at home. That’s where the idea for a cooperative system was born, bringing entrepreneurs together to be guided through training and workshops.

The co-op was formed in 2018 with a plan presented to the Aurora City Council. At the time the city had a restaurant program but only provided incentives for people who wanted to open a traditional business. El Alba could only get support from the city if El Alba could raise money.

A food truck was purchased to help some of the food businesses get started and raise money for the permanent kitchen, but the money coming in wasn’t enough, and the pandemic derailed the kitchen plans.

In the following years, Jacobo worked on fundraising and collaborations with The Center for Community Wealth, the City of Aurora, the non-profit Mosaic Center, and the Aurora Small Business Development Center, along with support from the Gates

Foundation and many others in the community.

She never gave up, and in 2024 she was told about the space on Montview. The City of Aurora and the landlord helped pay for the construction, and now Jacobo and incubator kitchen manager Nicolás Cusi, who also



Chef Lourdes Lozano (left) helped create dishes for the soft opening of El Alba.

Photo by URBAN Brands / Celia Herrera

works for CU, need the business to succeed and be able to pay the rent.

Jacobo said, “We sold the dream to our members for the longest time, but some of them, they had other needs, they moved on.”

There has been new interest in the kitchen, and now three catering businesses are set to launch.

Jacobo and Cusi are working on enlisting more cooperative members. “For the last six years, without a kitchen, we’ve been bringing in local entrepreneurs that are cooking at home to educate them to understand the process of commissary kitchens and the health department. And then we do one year of incubator, which is our training part.” Jacobo said.

The incubator kitchen is the non-profit arm of El Alba, where Cusi will provide education about the responsibility of being part of the co-op. Other training will also be offered.

“We want to be able to guide them all the way through that process until they’re ready to launch, so that they can have all the tools

and resources. Because we know the hardest thing is just overcoming all those barriers to entry with launching a business,” Cusi said.

For now, they’re fielding requests for the commissary kitchen and taking applications for the co-op while working on fully opening the retail area where burritos are on the menu with more food and drink options ahead.

Jacobo and Cusi are developing an apprenticeship program with local colleges and universities, creating workforce development opportunities for the community and recent graduates to work at the El Alba counter.

“We can provide them with opportunities to develop those entrepreneurial and culinary skills and then potentially launch their own business someday. We give them that exposure to this space, training on how to be a barista, how to manage some of the business aspects while seeing all the hustle and bustle of the kitchen,” Cusi said.

He added that apprentices could potentially work with caterers using the kitchen, creating a central opportunity for people to gain the confidence and the skills they need to succeed.

Just a few doors down from El Alba, The Baking Room also serves coffee and breakfast food, along with fresh baked bread. Jacobo is grateful for the support from her neighbor and said this isn’t about competition, it’s about community, and a hope that the patios outside both businesses are filled with neighbors stopping by grabbing some food or just hanging out.

“We’re hopeful that as more small businesses develop along Montview, we strategize together and that we do it in respecting community,” Jacobo said.

Cusi added the mission is to preserve cultural diversity. “We want people to be confident and have opportunities to stay here (in the neighborhood).”

El Alba is located at 11690 E. Montview Blvd. Visit [elalbacoperative.net](http://elalbacoperative.net).

Photo by URBAN Brands / Celia Herrera



Left to right: Chef Pos Ryant, Gabriela Jacobo, and Nicolás Cusi.

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# NEWS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION JULY 2025



### 4TH OF JULY BREAKFAST AND PARADE

The Annual 4th of July Breakfast begins at 9am at the South Green—29th Ave. & Roslyn St.

Breakfast will be on the stage and provided by one of our sponsors. There will be a suggested donation for breakfast with all proceeds going to a local nonprofit. There will also be a balloon artist and a face painter.

Bring your decorated bicycles, tricycles, wagons, or scooters for the parade, which will begin at 10:30am. There will be parade leaders at the start of the parade to guide participants through the course.

### CONCERT ON THE GREEN SERIES

Join us at the South Green located at 29th Ave. & Roslyn St. for our summer concert series. The concerts start at 6pm and are free and open to the public!

Saturday, July 12, *Wash Park Band*

Saturday, July 26, *HomeSlice*

### MOVIE ON THE GREEN SERIES

Grab your blankets, coolers, and your friends, and come to our Movie on the Green series! All movies begin at dusk, get there early and purchase some treats from one of the food trucks that are available. All summer movies will be held on the South Green located at 29th Ave. & Roslyn St. This event is free and open to the public!

Friday, July 18, *The Lost City*

Friday, July 25, *Hook*

### MOJABLU CONCERT SERIES

Join the MCA on the North Green (49th Ave. & Valentia St.) for great music and yummy food trucks! The MoJaBlu concerts start at 6:30pm and are free and open to the public!

Thursday, July 3, *PG6IX*

Thursday, July 10, *Thumpin' Band*

Thursday, July 17, *Tunisia*

Thursday, July 24, *Jacob Larson Band*

Thursday, July 31, *DOTSERO*

### FARMERS MARKET

Every Sunday, 8:30am–12:30pm, South Green

Local vendors provide Colorado-grown produce, tasty baked goods, specialty meats, gourmet food items, and more! We strive to support and enhance the surrounding communities by providing an experience where fresh and wholesome products can be found.

### POURS IN THE PARK: WINE TASTING

Friday, July 11, 6–8pm, 24th Avenue Park

Indulge in a delightful summer evening under the stars at 24th Avenue Park, 2441 Alton St. from 6–8pm.

Savor a curated selection of wines paired perfectly with an array of artisanal charcuterie. Let the soothing sounds of live music set the perfect backdrop as you relax and unwind with friends and fellow wine enthusiasts.

Don't miss out on this enchanting evening of great wine, delectable food, and wonderful company. We look forward to seeing you there!

Tickets are \$35, this event is strictly 21+.

### POURS IN THE PARK: BEER TASTING

Saturday, July 26, 4–6pm, West Crescent

Join us for a delightful beer tasting event at the West Crescent! Starting at 4pm, discover the finest brews from local breweries. Whether you're a seasoned beer enthusiast or just beginning your journey into the world of craft beers, this event promises a memorable experience for all.

Make sure to stick around after the event and enjoy music from *HomeSlice* at the South Green starting at 6pm. Tickets are \$35, this event is strictly 21+.

### COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE

Please take a moment to review the condition of any property you own and ensure its compliance with the Rules and Regulations for Community Maintenance. Make sure your grass is being mowed, hedges are pruned, weeds are removed, and trees do not overhang a sidewalk, street, or alley. Make sure all trash, rubbish, and other refuse is stored in a city approved container. Make sure all structures and fences are structurally sound and well maintained, and make any necessary repair. Take a look at the exterior of your buildings and verify the paint is still in good condition and resurface as necessary. We take pride in the great neighborhood we live and work in and need everyone's help to keep the community looking great. If you have questions about your or someone else's property maintenance, you can call 303-388-0724 or email [communityservices@mca80238.com](mailto:communityservices@mca80238.com).

### CAMPER PARKING

Summer has arrived and so too has camping season. Please remember that Denver City Ordinance prohibits the parking of motor homes (longer than 22 feet in length) on a city street for longer than 24 hours, and a camper or boat trailer not attached to a licensed vehicle for longer than two hours. If the trailer is attached to a licensed vehicle it may park on the street for up to 24 hours. You can report illegal parking by calling Denver Parking Enforcement at 720-913-1600.

### NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

We all have a role to play in keeping the neighborhood safe and preventing crime in Central Park. Remember to close your garage doors and lock all exterior doors to your home or business. Park your vehicle in your garage or in a well-lit location. Lock your car doors and remove all valuables. Unsecured cars are easy targets for break-ins and theft. Illegal drug use, trespassing, criminal mischief, theft, street racing, and off-leash dog activity are violations of the law and should be promptly reported to the Denver Police Department. The MCA is not a law enforcement organization and is unable to intervene in law enforcement matters. If you see something, say something! Report a crime in progress by calling 911. This includes medical emergencies, fires, gunshots, break-ins, and other illegal activity. If you feel unsafe calling, you can text 911.

### AFTER HOUR PARK AND POOL USE IS ILLEGAL

Report after hour park and pool use by calling the Denver Police Department at 720-913-2000. All parks are closed from 11pm–5am. No person is allowed inside a pool when the pool is closed. Both the City and County of Denver and the MCA prohibit camping, sleeping in, or otherwise residing in a park, open space, median,

sidewalk, street, or alley. This includes the accumulation of debris or other excess items. Report all homeless encampments to the MCA for prompt removal by calling 303-388-0724.

### RESPECT OUR POOLS: A REMINDER ON ALCOHOL USE AND POOLSIDE ETIQUETTE

As summer heats up and more residents and guests gather to enjoy our seven community pools, it's important to revisit a few critical policies that ensure a safe and pleasant experience for everyone.

#### Alcohol Is a Privilege, Not a Guarantee

Our pools currently allow visitors to bring in alcohol—a policy many communities prohibit altogether. This privilege exists because we trust our residents and their guests to consume responsibly. However, recent incidents involving highly intoxicated individuals have required staff and security to intervene and remove visitors from pool grounds for their own safety and the safety of others.

Let us be clear: **excessive drinking that compromises behavior, safety, or the family-friendly nature of our facilities, puts this policy at serious risk.** We urge all pool visitors to enjoy beverages in moderation and monitor the behavior of those in their group.

#### Absolutely No Glass Containers

Glass bottles are strictly prohibited at all pool facilities. Broken glass on pool decks or in the water is not only hazardous, it can shut down an entire pool for extended cleaning, inspection, and repair.

Despite this well-established rule, we've recently encountered multiple cases of visitors bringing in glass containers. These actions show disregard for other's safety and may lead to direct fines or loss of pool access privileges. Please check your coolers and bags before heading to the pool to ensure you're in compliance.

#### Kegs Are Not Welcome

While our current policy does not explicitly ban kegs, they are not appropriate for our public pool settings. Large quantities of alcohol encourage overconsumption and give the impression of private parties in what should be shared community spaces. Going forward, staff have been instructed to deny entry to anyone attempting to bring in kegs.

#### How You Can Help: Best Practices at the Pool

To keep our pools open, safe, and enjoyable for all, please remember these best practices:

- **Drink responsibly**—and supervise those who may overindulge.
- **Use only non-glass containers** such as cans or plastic bottles.
- **Pack out what you bring in**, especially bottles, cans, and food waste.
- **Follow staff instructions** promptly and respectfully.
- **Remind your guests of the rules**—you're responsible for their behavior.

#### Policy Changes Are on the Table

If these trends continue, we may have no choice but to revisit the alcohol policy, including considering a full ban. We'd like to avoid that outcome—but the safety of our community must come first.

Let's work together to preserve the fun, respectful, and family-friendly environment that makes our pools a highlight of summer.

Thank you for your cooperation and we look forward to a safe and enjoyable season.

Jennifer Olsen  
Communications Manager  
[Jolsen@mca80238.com](mailto:Jolsen@mca80238.com)



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