

# The Douglas County Neighbor Magazine

Vol. 2 Issue 1 | March 2026

## Building the Future of Play

Historic funding for  
parks and recreation

Volunteers are the  
**Beating Heart**  
of Douglas County

Preventing and  
*Addressing*  
**Welfare Fraud**

**A Balanced  
Budget**

Prioritizing  
what matters most

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## Stay Connected

 [www.douglas.co.us](http://www.douglas.co.us)

 303-660-7400

 [bocc@douglas.co.us](mailto:bocc@douglas.co.us)



Scan the QR code to  
sign up for emails,  
follow Douglas County  
on social  
media and  
learn how to  
get involved:



## Upcoming Meetings & Events

Board of County Commissioners  
Business Meetings &  
Land Use Meetings/  
Public Hearings  
**Feb. 24 | March 10 & 24**  
**April 14 & 28**

Planning Commission Meetings  
March 2 & 16 | April 6 & 20  
Open Space Advisory Meeting  
Wednesday, March 4  
Mental Health First Aid Training  
Youth: Monday, March 9

# From the Board of County Commissioners

Dear Douglas County Neighbors,

In Douglas County, quality of life isn't just our motto—it's our mission. Every decision we make is guided by one goal: protecting what makes this community exceptional while building a strong future for generations to come.

Mobility and independence are essential to that vision. That's why we expanded Lone Tree's Link On Demand, going from 1,600 to 60,000 rides with an outstanding 4.9-star average rating (out of 5 stars). Residents tell us it improves their quality of life and helps them stay connected—and later this year, we'll bring this service to even more communities across Douglas County.

Public safety is foundational. Our retail theft ordinance puts an end to criminals walking out of stores with unpaid merchandise and removes Douglas County as a target for organized retail crime. The message is clear: come here to commit a crime, and you will be caught.

Because of this strong commitment to safety and quality of life, Douglas County continues to stand apart. While many parts of Colorado face uncertainty, Douglas County has been among the few areas seeing home values remain strong and continue rising—proof that people choose communities that protect their neighborhoods, support opportunity and lead with purpose.

As always, our meetings continue to welcome public comment on every regular agenda item before the vote, while creating space for authentic citizen engagement where everyone feels safe to participate.

Inside this issue of Douglas County Neighbor, you'll find more updates on the work underway to keep Douglas County one of the best places in America to live, work and raise a family.

Thank you for your trust and partnership. It is an honor to serve you.



## District 1 **Abe Laydon**

☎ 303-660-7335 ✉ [alaydon@douglas.co.us](mailto:alaydon@douglas.co.us)

## District 2 **George Teal**

☎ 303-819-5936 ✉ [gteal@douglas.co.us](mailto:gteal@douglas.co.us)

## District 3 **Kevin Van Winkle**

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Homeless Initiative Meeting  
Thursday, March 12

Board of Health Meeting  
Thursday, March 12

Water Commission Meeting  
Monday, March 23

Mental Health First Aid Training  
Older Adults: March 23-24

Scan the QR code to view our full meetings and events calendar:



*Meetings and events are subject to change. Check the online calendar for the most up-to-date information.*



# Building the Future of Play

You asked. We delivered.

This year, Douglas County is delivering the greatest expansion of recreational amenities in our history. New and expanded parks in Lone Tree, Castle Rock and Parker, as well as the Zebulon Regional Sports Complex, represent a countywide commitment to youth, families and quality of life. Together, they form a connected network of best-in-class spaces where young people can grow, compete and thrive—and where families can gather, play and build lifelong memories.

## New Parks, New Fields, New Opportunities

From Lone Tree to Parker to Castle Rock, dozens of new parks and recreation amenities are being built.

In Lone Tree at High Note Regional Park, a \$7.5 million investment from Douglas County’s Parks, Trails, Historic Resources and Open Space Sales Tax will help the City add new multipurpose fields, creating more space for youth leagues and community gatherings. High Note is currently under construction and expected to open for public use in summer 2027.

In Parker, a \$7.5 million county investment is helping the Town

expand Salisbury Park, bringing new softball and baseball fields, additional soccer fields, and upgraded amenities. The project is supported through a combination of county funding and local sales tax share-back dollars, allowing the park to grow alongside the community it serves. Construction for the first phase of the expansion is underway and expected to be completed in 2026.

In Castle Rock, a \$7.5 million commitment from the County is supporting the Town’s plans for a new Gold Crown Fieldhouse, offering athletes a year-round indoor space to practice, compete and connect.

These projects reflect what residents consistently shared through surveys and town halls: they want more parks, more fields

and more opportunities for kids to be active and make lasting memories without long drives.



“We hear from residents all the time that parks are where their families connect,” said Commissioner Kevin Van Winkle. “These investments are about meeting people where they are—whether that’s on a soccer field, a trail or a playground.”



High Note Regional Park

[CityofLoneTree.com/HighNotePark](http://CityofLoneTree.com/HighNotePark)

# Meeting a Growing Need: The Zebulon Regional Sports Complex

While new parks are expanding opportunities across the county, demand for youth sports facilities continues to outpace available space. That need is driving the vision for the Zebulon Regional Sports Complex, a long-term project designed to address field shortages while preserving surrounding open space.

During a Business Meeting on Oct. 14, 2025, the Board of County Commissioners approved a land transfer with Sterling Ranch to acquire 46.5 acres for the future sports complex.

Zebulon stands as a centerpiece of the vision for expanded athletic facilities: a regional sports village designed to serve thousands of young athletes and families for generations to come. Its impact reaches every corner of Douglas County—and it carries unanimous support from every city and town, each of which formally endorsed the project by resolution. That level of alignment reflects something powerful: a shared belief in investing in our kids.

**“This project is a game-changer. It’s not just about sports—it’s about investing in our kids and our future.”**  
- Jake, Douglas County resident

Shaped by years of community engagement and voter approval of the Parks, Trails, Historic Resources, and Open Space Sales Tax, Zebulon reflects residents’ long-standing request for more recreational spaces. Planned amenities include indoor ice rinks, basketball and volleyball courts, pools, indoor turf, outdoor baseball fields and community gathering spaces.



Salisbury Regional Park

ParkerRec.com

Beyond recreation, Zebulon is expected to attract tournaments and visitors, supporting local businesses while preserving more than 185 acres of open space.

“Zebulon is about listening to our residents and responding with thoughtful, long-term investments,” said Commissioner Abe Laydon. “Families told us they needed more places for kids to play close to home—and this project delivers that while strengthening our community and economy.”

## Looking Ahead

Young people told us they wanted safe, inspiring places to belong. Parents asked for accessible, high-quality facilities close to home. Coaches and community leaders emphasized the importance of spaces that elevate opportunity and teamwork. We listened, and the process is well underway.

To build and operate Zebulon, the Board on Aug. 15, 2025, initiated a competitive process to partner with private companies. Interested organizations could submit a response to the Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) and the Request for Qualifications/ Proposal (RFQP) for a developer or general contractor through the BidNet procurement platform in fall of 2025.

At a Work Session in January 2026, after reviewing the responses to the RFQP, the Board unanimously approved a motion directing staff to begin formal negotiations with KT Development to establish a comprehensive agreement for the design, construction and long-term operation of the Zebulon Regional Sports Complex. Any and all contracts will be considered at a future Business Meeting where residents are encouraged to attend and provide comment.



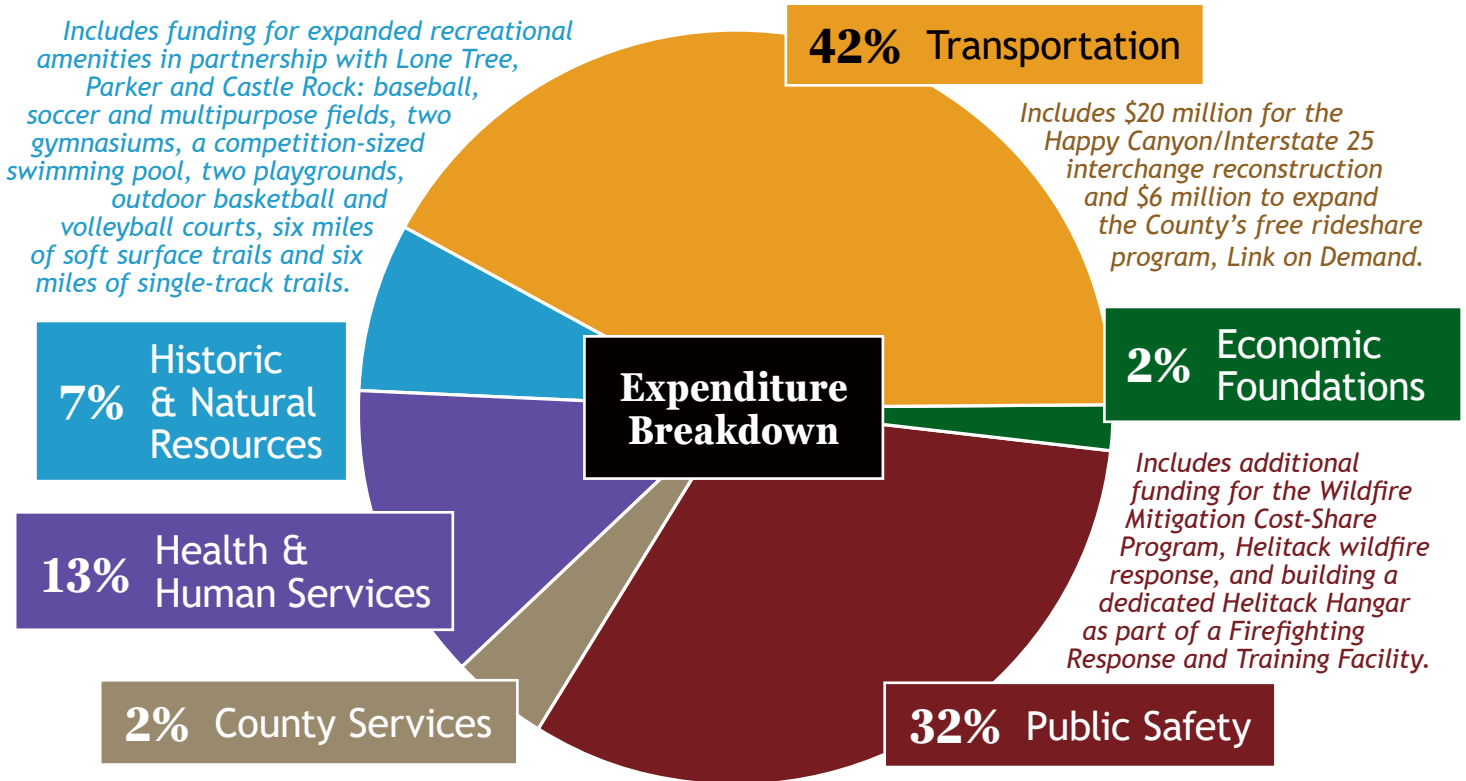
Together, these investments ensure that Douglas County remains a place where families don’t just live, but play, connect and thrive for generations to come. ■

**Learn More and Sign Up for Updates About Zebulon**

# A Balanced Budget

Just like you track your income and spending, Douglas County’s budget staff meticulously accounts for each dollar that is collected and spent. Guided by the Board of County Commissioners’ core priorities and your feedback, a yearly budget is developed.

The 2026 Adopted Budget totaling \$650.8 million is balanced and includes ongoing investments in transportation projects and public safety measures, which Douglas County residents continue to rank as top priorities:



“When I step back and look at the work going into Colorado’s only county Helitack team, I’m reminded of the incredible impact it had this summer. When we first considered funding this team, we were told we didn’t need one. I’m grateful we didn’t listen,” said Commissioner Abe Laydon. “With the approval of this budget, we have the opportunity to ensure our entire county is protected, not only from wildfires, but from the cascading impacts of living in an area prone to natural disasters.”

“I think all of Douglas County can be proud of this budget – one that adds no new fees, accounts for population growth,

and makes major investments in transportation and public safety that other counties simply don’t match,” said Commissioner Kevin Van Winkle. “We’re becoming more efficient, not less, cutting red tape and removing unnecessary hoops for our residents when they interact with their local government.”

“We remain focused on the two priorities that matter most to the people of Douglas County: transportation and public safety,” said Commissioner George Teal. “There are areas of our state that may not share these priorities, but here, our residents consistently affirm that these are the values they rely on to live, to move

throughout the county, and to remain safe.”

Additionally, the Board prioritizes a budget that:

- Avoids raising fees or taxes
- Relies on realistic revenue forecasts
- Maintains stable reserves (and zero debt)
- Improves the quality of services provided to the community
- Matches ongoing revenues with ongoing expenditures. ■

**View the full budget**  
[douglas.co.us/budget](https://douglas.co.us/budget)

# Looking to the Future of Link

County invests \$6 million to expand successful rideshare program, Link On Demand.

## What Riders are Saying:

**95% Agree** Having access to Link makes their community a more desirable place to live

**83% Agree** They are more independent because of Link

**88% Agree** Link offers convenient and affordable transportation

**95% Agree** Of respondents 60 or older: Link makes it easier to consider aging in place

**75% Agree** They are visiting stores, restaurants and other businesses more frequently with Link



For many, it's hard to imagine life without the freedom to jump in a car and go where we need to go. But for some residents in Douglas County, limited transportation options is an everyday reality.

One parent in Highlands Ranch says her adult child with disabilities was often stuck at home, unless someone could drive her. That was, until a new, free rideshare program entered Highlands Ranch.

In 2025, Douglas County, in partnership with the City of Lone Tree, expanded the city's free rideshare program, Link On Demand, into Highlands Ranch. By the end of the year, Link On Demand provided more than 60,000 rides in Highlands Ranch - with riders giving the service an average 4.9 out of 5 stars.

"Link on Demand has greatly improved all of our lives," the Highlands Ranch mom wrote in a survey response. "It has given us more time, more independence."

Most other riders agreed - 95% of survey respondents said that having access to Link "makes their community a more desirable place to live."

In 2026, the Board of County Commissioners plans to build on this success by investing \$6 million

to expand Link On Demand into other areas of the county. Service in Parker is expected in April, with other areas coming online later this year. Funding for this expansion is slated to come from the voter-approved Road Sales and Use Tax Fund.

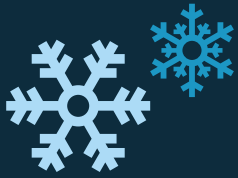
"Expanding Link On Demand improves quality of life, supports local businesses and gives people more freedom to move throughout our community," said Commissioner Abe Laydon. "We've seen the positive impact of this program in Lone Tree and Highlands Ranch, and we are excited about bringing this service to other areas of our county."

The service will help others, like this rider:

"I am unable to drive due to poor eyesight," the rider wrote in a survey. "Please continue to fund Link On Demand to help individuals with disabilities or individuals and families with limited access to cars. The service helps us get to doctor's appointments and to stores and the rec center in Lone Tree. Thank you for also expanding to Highlands Ranch." ■

Learn how to book a ride  
[douglas.co.us/link](https://douglas.co.us/link)





# Safety Reminders for Winter Driving

*(For When It Finally Snows Again)*

We've all heard the standard winter driving advice: slow down, leave early, check your tires. But did you know that advice is actually based on data?

## Why slow down?

Colorado State Troopers warn that speeding during the winter season puts drivers at 2.5 times greater risk of a serious injury or fatal crash compared to other times of the year. That risk shows up locally, too: between December 1, 2024, and March 1, 2025, 36% of all collisions in Douglas County were rear-end crashes, signaling that drivers were traveling too fast for conditions or following too closely. Slowing down gives you the time and distance you need when roads don't behave the way you expect.

## Do you really need emergency supplies?

Yes. According to the National Weather Service's Wind Chill Chart, if it's just 5° F with winds at 35 mph, frostbite can occur in about 30 minutes. A few simple items—warm layers, snacks, water, and a flashlight—can make a critical difference if you're delayed or stranded.

## Why increase following distance and check your tires?

Tires matter more than most drivers realize. At 50 mph on a wet road, worn tires need 130 feet to stop, while new tires need only 85 feet: a difference of more than three car lengths. One day last winter alone, CDOT assisted 22 vehicles that spun out or caused crashes; 19 of them had bald tires.

## Why leave early?

Because winter weather changes everything. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association reports that heavy snow can slow traffic speeds by up to 60%. Giving yourself extra time reduces stress and the temptation to rush when conditions are anything but forgiving.

A little preparation goes a long way toward keeping winter travel safer for everyone. ■

## Five Facts About Snow Operations in Douglas County

**3,800 MILES**  
of roadway are maintained by Douglas County in storm events.

*That's like driving from Castle Rock to Los Angeles to Miami.*

**30,000 HOURS OF LABOR**

worked to remove snow during 18 snow events in 2024-25.

*That's over three full years worth of snow plowing hours.*

**76 SNOW PLOWS & DRIVERS**

ready to assist the community any time a storm event strikes.

**444,384 GALLONS**

of magnesium chloride were used to keep ice from building up on roadways during the 2024-25 season

*That's enough to fill 2/3 of an Olympic swimming pool.*

**EQUIPMENT PREPARATIONS BEGIN IN**

**SEPTEMBER**

This includes calibration, testing and staff training.



# Low Snowfall is Changing the Wildfire Outlook



## Colorado is experiencing high fire danger this winter—what specific conditions are driving this, and how unusual is it?

Right now, a La Niña weather pattern is pushing most storms north of Colorado. When that happens, our area is left with dry, west-to-east winds that warm and dry the air as they come down the Front Range.

Warm temperatures, strong winds and very little precipitation create ideal conditions for increased fire danger. That risk is confirmed by current fire danger indicators, which show extremely dry vegetation across the county.

## What challenges does winter fire danger create for emergency response?

Off-season hazards create a real “yo-yo effect” for first responders. One week crews may be plowing snow; the next, they’re fighting wildfires—an abrupt shift that’s physically and mentally demanding. Fortunately, our teams are highly resilient and adaptable.

Winter fire danger also brings added challenges: frozen water tanks and sources, muddy or limited access, and maintenance that’s normally scheduled for colder months. Together, these factors make “off-season” wildfire response especially complex.

You know Colorado is experiencing record-low snowpack. We spoke with Mike Alexander, Director of Douglas County’s Office of Emergency Management, about what’s driving these conditions and why tools like rapid aerial response are becoming increasingly critical.

## Can you share an example where Helitack helped prevent a small fire from becoming a major incident?

Our exclusive-use helicopter program has proven its value over the past eight years. In 2025, AI fire detection cameras identified a lightning-caused fire near Devil’s Head in a remote area close to private property.

Using real-time data, the Helitack team arrived within 15 minutes and began suppression from the air. When federal ground crews arrived and assumed command about 90 minutes later, the fire had already been contained at just a quarter acre—preventing significant growth and protecting nearby property.

## What’s the most important message you want residents to take away during periods of elevated fire danger?

Fire season isn’t defined by a date on the calendar—it’s driven by conditions, and those conditions can occur any time of year. That’s why our preparedness message is always relevant: get informed, understand your hazards, make a plan, and build an emergency kit. We also encourage residents to follow their local fire, police and government agencies on social media to receive the fastest, most accurate information during an incident. ■

*Learn How to Be Prepared for Wildfires*



# Coordinating Care for the Greatest Good

Innovative programs unique to Douglas County provide personalized help to neighbors in need.



Pictured: A HEART/TCC client (left) with Pam Rohr (center) and Greg Matthews (right).

When someone is first connected with County services, their needs do not always fit neatly into a single program. Housing instability, mental health concerns, and medical needs often overlap, making it difficult for one service alone to provide everything a person needs to move forward.

This is where care coordination becomes critical.

For residents experiencing homelessness or housing instability, Douglas County's Homeless Engagement, Assistance and Resource Team (HEART), is often the first point of contact. HEART staff meet people where they are, build trust over time and help connect them to housing resources and basic supports. Their work is rooted in consistency and relationship-building, especially for individuals who may be untrusting of systems due to past experiences.

## HEART by the Numbers in 2025

**1,352** Referrals received

**3,241** Total services provided

**158** Business engagements

**87** Trespass letters collected

Some residents also face serious health conditions, mental health and substance use disorder (behavioral health) needs, or functional limitations that make navigating multiple

systems difficult. In these cases, HEART engages The Care Compact (TCC), a service coordination program out of Douglas County's Mental Health Collaborative, to ensure residents receive synchronized, whole-person support.

TCC exists to help residents with complex needs that span multiple systems. TCC brings existing partners, such as medical providers, behavioral health professionals, long-term care specialists and County staff, together. A designated navigator helps align communication, coordinate care plans and keep everyone working toward shared goals.



This coordinated approach often leads to better outcomes. Residents are more likely to secure appropriate housing, access medical care, receive behavioral health support and connect to long-term services when needed. Just as importantly, they are supported in a person-first manner that recognizes the complexity of their circumstances.

"The Care Compact is very person-centered. Our clients are not a number. You build trust, you listen and you meet them where they are," said Pam Rohr, Care Compact Navigator.

Together, these two programs reflect a countywide commitment to meeting people where they are and ensuring no one is left navigating complex systems alone. ■

**Are you or someone you know unhoused?**

Visit [Douglas.co.us/HEART](https://Douglas.co.us/HEART) or call 303-660-7301 for support.



# Protecting Taxpayers from Fraud

Douglas County efficiently delivers public assistance while safeguarding taxpayer dollars.

You've likely been hearing a lot in the news about fraud related to public assistance programs, such as food and childcare assistance. Keep reading to learn how Douglas County Human Services supports families in need, while safeguarding every taxpayer dollar.

When Douglas County residents face unexpected hardship, public benefit programs provide a vital safety net. From food assistance and childcare support to medical coverage and temporary financial help, these programs ensure individuals and families can meet basic needs during difficult times. At the same time, residents expect these services to be managed responsibly and with integrity.

Douglas County Human Services is committed to delivering both.

**45,000**  
benefit recipients  
in Douglas County

## A Thoughtful, Thorough Process

Every public assistance program begins with a detailed application reviewed by trained eligibility technicians. Staff verify information through multiple systems, conduct interviews when required, and apply federal and state regulations using professional judgment, not just automated tools. This careful approach helps ensure benefits are issued accurately and fairly from the start.

“Our goal is to make sure that those who are eligible receive benefits, those who are not do not, and that all of our work is accurate, timely and done with the highest level of integrity,” said Erin Johnson, Assistant Director of Human Services.

## State-leading Prevention Efforts

Douglas County applies rigorous quality control practices that exceed many jurisdictions. A portion of every eligibility worker's caseload is routinely peer reviewed, and proactive pre-certification investigations are conducted when information appears questionable, helping prevent errors without delaying benefits for eligible residents.

Cases requiring additional review are referred to the Program Integrity team and assigned within 48 hours. While investigation backlogs in other counties can stretch for years, most Douglas County cases are resolved within a few months.

These efforts contribute to consistently low error rates—typically between 0 and 4%—often the lowest of Colorado's 11 largest counties.

## A Truth-first Approach

Investigations focus on fact-finding, education and correction. Many cases involve unintentional errors that are resolved by working directly with applicants.

“We handle cases appropriately, recoup money when necessary, disqualify when appropriate and educate along the way,” said JaQuale Brooks, Community Relations and Compliance Manager.

For 2025, the Program Integrity team investigated 283 cases across all public assistance programs. As of Feb. 2026, 74 have been determined to involve intentional misrepresentation – less than 0.1% of the approximately 45,000 residents receiving benefits. Through December, \$259,280 in improperly issued funds were recovered, with just two cases requiring criminal filings with the 23rd Judicial District.

**283**  
cases of fraud  
investigated  
in 2025

## Protecting Children and Families

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) is closely monitored for attendance irregularities and overpayments. Through December 2025, 13 CCCAP cases were investigated, resulting in \$72,040 recovered and one criminal filing.

By pairing strong oversight with empathy and professionalism, Douglas County protects public resources while ensuring neighbors receive the support they need to thrive. ■



# Volunteers Are the Beating Heart of Douglas County

How does a good community become a great one? In Douglas County, there are a few thousand reasons. The men, women and families of all kinds who give their time, talents and hearts to the service of our community through volunteer work.

Volunteers impact nearly every event, property and service provided in Douglas County. They take tickets at the Fair & Rodeo, pull weeds and maintain trails at our open spaces. They plant trees and tend to gardens and serve in advisory roles on dozens of appointed Boards and Commissions.

**Would you like to put your passion to work for your community?**

Visit [DouglasVolunteers.com](http://DouglasVolunteers.com) or scan the QR code to explore opportunities to care for nature, help older adults, be part of the planning process or cultivate the arts.



**214**  
Fair & Rodeo  
volunteers  
who each served  
an average of 70  
hours last year.



**2** Annual Dougnad volunteer events  
with hundreds of participants planting trees,  
helping older adults and beautifying public spaces.

**18** Citizen Advisory Boards and Commissions  
led by volunteers who lend specialized expertise to aid in County decision-making.



**229**  
Active  
Open Space  
& Natural  
Resources  
volunteers



**494** Aging  
Resources  
of Douglas  
County volunteers

# Q&A with Volunteer Brian O'Malley



Brian O'Malley has been volunteering for Douglas County for decades, guiding and educating open space visitors, pulling weeds, trimming brush, building trails and has also sat on the Douglas County Open Space Advisory Committee to ensure public lands and public funds are protected.

The Board of County Commissioners inducted Brian into the Douglas County Hall of Fame in December and committed to installing a small monument at an open space property of Brian's choosing to honor his ongoing work and to inspire a new generation of caretakers.

## Q. When did you first start volunteering for Douglas County?

I first started volunteering for Douglas County as a member of COSAC in the Spring of 2014. I decided to volunteer for the County Open Space Advisory Committee (COSAC) after volunteering for a couple of other Open Space organizations. I wanted to devote my efforts to something more local.

## Q. What is your favorite role as a volunteer?

My favorite role as a volunteer for Douglas County is being a member of the Open Space Advisory Committee. I can contribute to the decision-making process and help to make sure our citizens' money is well spent.

## Q. What keeps you coming back each year?

I keep coming back as a volunteer for Douglas County because in the various roles I fill, I find it very fulfilling, challenging and I enjoy what I do.

## Q. Do you have a favorite trail in Douglas County?

My favorite trail in Douglas County is usually the trail I am on. Each trail and open space offers unique attributes that you do not find anywhere else.

## Q. How about a favorite view in Douglas County?

Among all the great views on Douglas County Open Spaces, one of my favorite views in Douglas County is at Sandstone Ranch Open Space, where I can see the Front Range north all the way to Longs Peak.

## Q. What's your advice to the community about how they can help preserve and protect our open spaces?

Anyone who wants to help protect and preserve our open spaces and natural resources should look for volunteer opportunities on Douglas County's website. Volunteering is a labor of love. To be a successful volunteer, you need to find your passion!

## Q. Is there anything else you'd like to share with the community or your fellow volunteers?

I would like to take this opportunity and acknowledge and thank all the dedicated Douglas County elected officials, staff, and volunteers who make Douglas County such a great place to live and work. ■



# Wildcat to Remain Untamed

Your input is shaping the future of our public lands in Douglas County. Plans are moving forward in 2026 to ensure preservation, conservation and recreation in Wildcat Regional Park, a 202-acre property within the Highlands Ranch Backcountry Wilderness Area.

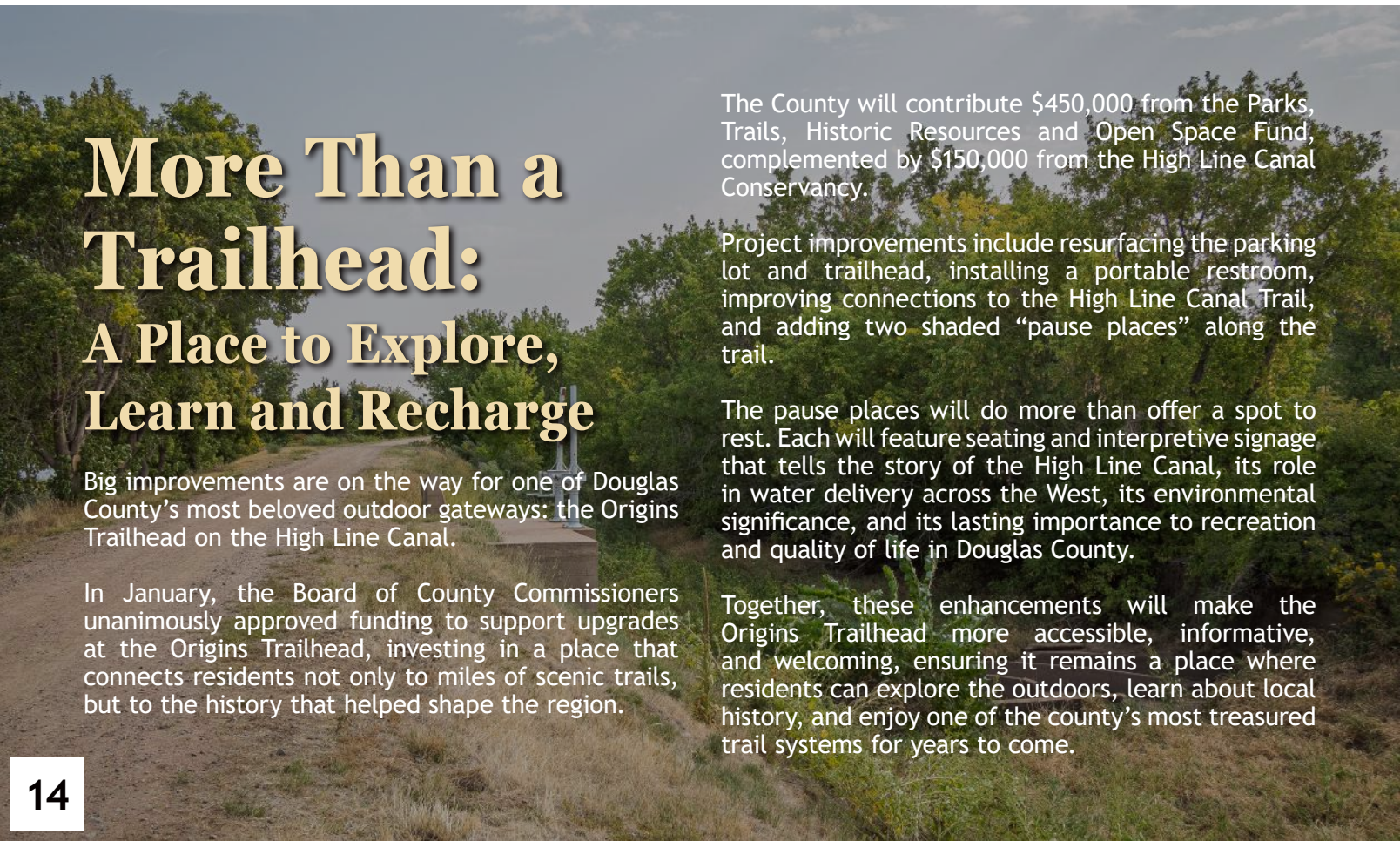
The property was originally dedicated to Douglas County in 2011 as part of the parks land dedication process within the Highlands Ranch

Planned Development. As a direct result of community feedback, the County elected not to develop the property into an active park, with residents preferring more passive (less developed) use of the space.

Commissioners voted in late 2025 to transfer ownership of Wildcat to the Highlands Ranch Community Association (HRCA), along with \$3.5 million from the Parks, Trails, Historic Resources and Open Space

fund. HRCA agreed to develop trails and low-impact facilities over the next three years, all of which will be open to the public.

This partnership among you, HRCA and Douglas County Government ensures this special space will remain open to exploration and nature-based experiences and preserve vital habitat for a herd of more than 150 elk among dozens of other species of wildlife. ■



## More Than a Trailhead: A Place to Explore, Learn and Recharge

Big improvements are on the way for one of Douglas County’s most beloved outdoor gateways: the Origins Trailhead on the High Line Canal.

In January, the Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved funding to support upgrades at the Origins Trailhead, investing in a place that connects residents not only to miles of scenic trails, but to the history that helped shape the region.

The County will contribute \$450,000 from the Parks, Trails, Historic Resources and Open Space Fund, complemented by \$150,000 from the High Line Canal Conservancy.

Project improvements include resurfacing the parking lot and trailhead, installing a portable restroom, improving connections to the High Line Canal Trail, and adding two shaded “pause places” along the trail.

The pause places will do more than offer a spot to rest. Each will feature seating and interpretive signage that tells the story of the High Line Canal, its role in water delivery across the West, its environmental significance, and its lasting importance to recreation and quality of life in Douglas County.

Together, these enhancements will make the Origins Trailhead more accessible, informative, and welcoming, ensuring it remains a place where residents can explore the outdoors, learn about local history, and enjoy one of the county’s most treasured trail systems for years to come.

# Get Health Information All in One Place

## Douglas County Health Department

📍 11045 E. Lansing Circle, Third Floor

☎ 720-643-2400

🌐 [douglas.co.us/health-department/](http://douglas.co.us/health-department/)



If you're looking for health resources, they're now in one central location in northern Douglas County. Visit E. Lansing Circle in the Meridian area, where you will find dedicated professionals to help you prevent illness, support your family, and help you lead a healthier life.

### Community Health

For residents, the Lansing Point office offers a variety of accessible health services. Community Health programs support families through child and maternal health resources such as WIC, breastfeeding and lactation support, immunization clinics, and health education. Residents can also obtain tobacco quit kits, reinforcing the county's focus on prevention and long-term wellness.

### Environmental Health

Behind the scenes, Environmental Health staff work to protect the places people live, work and gather. Their responsibilities include inspecting food establishments, child care facilities, wastewater systems, and other regulated businesses such as tattoo parlors—all of which contribute to a safer, healthier community.

### Epidemiology

Additionally, Epidemiology teams conduct disease surveillance, data analysis, and investigations that inform public health decisions.

### Vital Records

Vital Records is another key public-facing service housed at Lansing Point. This office assists residents with birth and death certificates—documents essential for everything from enrolling in school to managing legal and personal affairs. Having Vital Records onsite ensures residents can access these important services locally and efficiently. If you visit in-person, you'll walk away with the certified document you came in for.

### Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Preparedness & Response specialists focus on planning, training, and collaboration to ensure Douglas County is ready to respond to public health emergencies.

### Additional Offices

In addition to these Health Department services, the Lansing building also hosts diversion, probation and Criminal Justice Services for the 23rd Judicial District. ■



*Douglas County Sheriff's Office and Health Department participating in the DEA's National Drug Take Back Campaign to safely collect unused, unwanted and expired medication.*



*Douglas County Health Department participating in the South Metro Water Festival.*



*Douglas County Health Department's WIC team at an outreach event.*

# Douglas County Hall of Fame

You see goodness all around you. The neighbors who help those in need. The innovators who solve problems and give their time and efforts to make lives better. The leaders who serve our country.

Everywhere we look, there are public servants - doing more than they have to and expecting nothing in return. These are the kinds of people who make up Douglas County's new Hall of Fame.

"As a lifelong Douglas County resident, I've seen so many incredible acts of generosity and selflessness that have helped shape me as a person. I've been overwhelmed by the goodness around us. That's my inspiration for starting the Hall of Fame, and I hope these stories help to inspire a new generation of future Hall of Fame members," said Commissioner Kevin Van Winkle.



The Board of Commissioners launched the Hall of Fame by honoring Howard Berger in March 2025. Berger, a WWII Veteran, lifelong public servant and centenarian, says his proudest moments are those in which he helped fellow soldiers overseas.



Dale Erickson is a hero to many in the local Veterans community for dedicating decades of his life (and thousands of hours) to Veterans causes and service after his time in the Army.



Chief Deputy District Attorney Eva Wilson is a living legend in the 23rd Judicial District. Commissioners, joined by DA George Brauchler, inducted Wilson into the Hall of Fame at the 2025 State of the County event. Eva, now retired, was honored for 40 years of dedicated service as a prosecutor.



Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Mark Maloney, a Vietnam Veteran and former marathon runner, was paralyzed in a biking accident in 2020. He has since turned his recovery into advocacy by helping accident victims and Veterans regain hope and recover from injuries.



Nikki Brooker is a mental health hero for moms. She's recognized for her founding work with YANA (You Are Not Alone), an organization dedicated to supporting new mothers by introducing resources, fellowship and education.

Wesley Watts' quiet and humble leadership has helped to shape a generation of 4-H in Douglas County. Wesley spent years refining his leadership skills and work ethic through various programs to become an ambassador, showing the way for others, including those with autism. In addition to his community leadership, Wesley is also a proud big brother to three younger siblings who have all followed his path into 4-H.



Eagle Scout Sam Callery worked tirelessly to build a K9 memorial outside the Justice Department to honor the K9s who serve alongside the humans of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. Sam's well-executed plan included raising thousands of dollars.



The incredible work of Douglas County's 23rd Judicial District Attorney's Office and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office are why criminals fear Douglas County and the community feels safe. Chief Deputy DA Danielle Jaramillo, Deputy DA Abby Hegarty and Sgt. Stephanie Dorrell were honored for their tireless work to put a child predator behind bars.



Abigail Reynolds was honored for creating Gearing 4 Engineering, which encourages students to find a problem and look for innovative ways to solve it through science. This passion project was borne out of Abigail's love for engineering and a desire to expose more girls and young women to science-based learning and earned her the Girl Scouts' Gold Award.



Meet all the people inducted into the Hall of Fame and nominate someone you know who deserves recognition.





Learn more  
about the  
ordinance



# Protecting Homeowners, Supporting Housing Variety

New ordinance takes effect in 2026.

When buying a home, we expect a place to build memories, not a crash course in construction terms and legal jargon. Homeowners want peace of mind: confidence that if something went wrong, there will be a clear, fair way to fix it.

That desire is at the heart of a new ordinance approved by the Board of County Commissioners, aimed at protecting homeowners while supporting more housing options across the county.

Approved in December 2025 and effective as of January 2026, the ordinance creates a more straightforward process for addressing construction defects in new homes in unincorporated Douglas County. The goal is simple: shift disputes away from immediate litigation and toward transparency, homeowner consent, and early inspection and repair, while limiting the use of county laws and regulations as the basis for lawsuits.

“This ordinance is about balance,” said Commissioner Abe Laydon. “It protects homeowners’ rights while supporting the kind of housing our community needs.”

“Douglas County needs housing options that work for people at every stage of life,” said Commissioner Kevin Van Winkle. “This ordinance helps remove barriers that slow down responsible housing while keeping strong protections in place.”

“Homeownership should come with a sense of security, not uncertainty,” said Commissioner George Teal. “By encouraging early communication and repair, this ordinance helps protect residents while supporting the kind of housing that our community needs.”

## What’s Changing?

Rather than disputes immediately escalating into lengthy legal action, the ordinance emphasizes early inspection and repair. Homeowners remain in control of the process, and builders are encouraged to address issues sooner. This will reduce stress, time, and costs for everyone involved.

## Why It Matters

Douglas County residents have consistently voiced concerns about housing availability and affordability. Having a variety of housing types ensures everyone can find a home for their lifestyle, including those who are:

- First-time homebuyers
- Young families
- Seniors looking to downsize

By reducing barriers that can slow or discourage these projects, the ordinance helps expand housing choices while maintaining accountability.

## Looking Forward

This ordinance does not take away homeowners’ rights. Instead, it adds clarity and encourages solutions that work for residents and builders alike.

As Douglas County continues to grow, the focus remains on helping residents feel confident in the homes they buy, while ensuring a balanced mix of housing options for the future. ■

# Taking a Stand Against Retail Theft

Douglas County is strengthening public safety through collaboration, accountability and common-sense solutions.



In some Colorado counties, leaders turn a blind eye to retail theft, leaving residents and businesses vulnerable to safety threats and financial loss.

Here in Douglas County, we take a different approach.

Your Board of County Commissioners, the 23rd Judicial District and local law enforcement are working together to address retail theft and protect the safety and economic vitality of our community.

At a Business Meeting on Dec. 9, 2025, the Board proposed an ordinance aimed at reducing retail theft by strengthening collaboration between retailers and law enforcement. The ordinance encourages timely reporting of theft, allowing investigators to respond more quickly, identify patterns of organized crime and prevent corporate policies that discourage employees from reporting criminal activity.

“Retail theft is not a victimless crime—it puts employees at risk, raises costs for families and undermines the safety of our entire community,” said Commissioner George Teal. “This ordinance is

about accountability, collaboration and making it clear that Douglas County will not tolerate crime targeting our businesses.”

Since the ordinance was introduced, the Board has actively sought feedback to ensure the policy is fair, practical and effective. The Colorado Retail Council provided direct input as part of the public process. Based on that feedback, the final resolution will include:

- Streamlined reporting options and clear evidence-sharing protocols.
- Flexible language clarifying that reporting begins when a business becomes aware of a theft, not after a rigid timeline.
- Elimination of fines when good-faith reporting efforts are demonstrated.
- Plain-language guidance to help retailers understand and comply.
- Clear confirmation that the ordinance targets corporate reporting policies—not individual store employees.

“We listened carefully to retailers, law enforcement and residents to

make sure this approach is fair and practical,” said Commissioner Kevin Van Winkle. “With this approach, we’re protecting businesses while keeping Douglas County one of the safest places to live and work.”

This ordinance is not intended to penalize retailers or put employees in harm’s way. Instead, it reflects Douglas County’s commitment to public safety, economic stability and common-sense governance.

“Protecting our community means taking action, listening to stakeholders and getting it right,” said Commissioner Abe Laydon. “That’s exactly what this ordinance is designed to do.”

## What’s next?

Following the public input process, the proposed ordinance will undergo a second reading by the Board before final adoption. Stay up to date by scanning the QR code to visit our webpage. ■





# Water Projects Increase Public Health and Stimulate Economic Growth

You might remember that in 2022, the Board of Douglas County Commissioners invested its share of American Rescue Plan Act funding into long-term legacy projects that would respond to immediate needs, while ensuring a lasting impact. A majority of the County's \$68.2 million was invested into water and wastewater projects benefiting residents and businesses in a growing part of the county. Now, these projects are underway or complete.

## Louviere Water and Sanitation District Supply Treatment and Infrastructure

Investment: \$1.9 million

In 2020, the radium level in the drinking water from the groundwater well rose above EPA limits, and the Colorado Department of Health and Environment issued Louviere an enforcement order due to the water not meeting drinking water regulations. This ARPA investment funded a new water treatment facility to remove the radium from the water.

**Status:** The new water treatment facility began successfully treating water for radium in May 2025.

*Pictured Above: The Board of County Commissioners and community partners enjoying a glass of clean water at the Louviere Water and Sanitation District in November 2025.*

## Louviere Water and Sanitation District Water Distribution Infrastructure Replacement

Investment: \$2 million

The Louviere water distribution system was originally installed by Dupont in the early 1900's. Louviere replaced 1,600 feet of water main in 2014 and has continued to work on replacements. This project will replace 2,800 feet of water main line improving service to 23 homes.

**Status:** Construction is anticipated to start in March 2026 and be completed by October 2026.

## Sedalia Water and Sanitation District Infrastructure Improvements

Investment: \$2.6 million

Water infrastructure in Sedalia was aging and not able to keep up with demand. This investment will replace water infrastructure and add new pipes to better serve water customers in two phases.

**Status:** Design is underway.



*New water treatment equipment at Louviers Water and Sanitation District.*

## Southern Highway 85 Water and Wastewater Project

Investment: \$14 million  
(Total Project Cost: \$19.8 million)

Castle Rock Water is building a new lift station and force main for moving wastewater 6 miles south from the Sedalia area to the Plum Creek Water Reclamation Authority wastewater treatment plant near Castle Rock. The project will improve surface water quality related to potentially failing septic tanks and provide sewer service for new development along US 85.

**Status:** Construction is expected to begin in April 2026 and be completed in February 2027.

## Northern Highway 85 Water and Wastewater Project (Chatfield Basin Reclamation Facility)

Investment: \$20.5 million  
(Total Project Cost: \$37 million)

This project will bring a much-needed regional state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility to northwest Douglas County. The Chatfield Basin Water Reclamation Facility will provide a centralized wastewater system that will convey wastewater from aging and inefficient septic systems as well as new development along the corridor for treatment and discharge on the South Platte River. The project also includes a new water line designed to serve communities that now depend on non-renewable well water, ensuring long-term water security for the corridor.

**Status:** Construction began in August 2025 and is anticipated to be completed in December 2027. ■

# Federal Investment Strengthens Douglas County's Water Future

Reliable water is essential to life in Douglas County, and protecting that resource for future generations is a top priority for your Board of County Commissioners.

Following consistent advocacy in Washington, D.C., Commissioners secured \$2.75 million in federal funding for two major water infrastructure projects. On Jan. 23, President Donald Trump signed a federal bill that finalized funding for a drinking water upgrade in Louviers and a new pipeline connecting Plum Creek to the Rueter-Hess Reservoir.

Together, these projects will improve water quality, strengthen system reliability, and support long-term sustainability across the county.

### \$1 million: Louviers Water & Sanitation District Drinking Water Distribution Replacement

This project will replace aging pipes, service lines, and fire hydrants—delivering cleaner drinking water, better fire protection, and a more reliable system for residents.

### \$1.75 million: The Plum Creek to Rueter-Hess Reservoir Pipeline

A new pipeline and pump station will move water from Plum Creek to Rueter-Hess Reservoir, helping serve more than 200,000 residents and supporting Castle Rock's shift away from non-renewable groundwater.

These investments ensure Douglas County's water systems are ready to meet the needs of today—and our future. ■



# Walking in Kendrick's Footsteps

The Kendrick Castillo Memorial Monument isn't meant to be glanced at—it asks you to stop. The path draws visitors inward, toward a black basalt column encircled by engraved stone. At its base, granite stepping stones invite people closer. One bears the exact imprint of Kendrick's shoes. It's an unspoken question: "What would it mean to walk as he did?"

That idea shaped the monument's unveiling at Civic Green Park in Highlands Ranch on a crisp November afternoon. Community members gathered with the Castillo Family and local and faith leaders for a ceremony that felt less like a dedication and more like a shared reflection. Kendrick was remembered not only for a single, heroic moment during the STEM School shooting, but for the way he consistently led through kindness, faith, and courage.

As stories were shared, a clear picture emerged of a young man whose leadership was never loud, but always present. Kendrick's father, John Castillo, spoke of his son's habit of showing up for others—sometimes in unseen ways, like attending funerals for people who had no family or friends. Kendrick didn't seek recognition; he simply acted, guided by his values.

The monument, fully funded by \$30,000 in community donations, reflects that quiet strength. The three-sided, seven-foot black basalt column mirrors three identical columns at Seven Stones Botanical Garden Cemetery, symbolizing the Castillo family and the Holy Trinity.

- One face bears a cross above Kendrick's name, anchoring his leadership in faith. An American flag wraps the column, honoring his patriotism and sense of service.
- Another face shows a bald eagle soaring above mountains, with Kendrick seated on the hood of his Jeep. Etched beside it is a call to action: Be Like Kendrick.
- The final face shows Kendrick with open arms and the verse that defines his sacrifice: "Greater love hath no more than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John 15:13.

Seven engraved boulders encircle the column, offering personal nods to Kendrick's passions—from science and robotics to his faith, curiosity, and service—each detail adding depth to a life that continues to inspire. ■



# Douglas County DMV: Serving Our Neighbors with Convenience

Life is busy! Between work, family and errands, the last thing you want is to spend your afternoon waiting to complete your motor vehicle services. The Douglas County Office of Clerk and Recorder provides several convenient ways to take care of your motor vehicle needs.

## Fast and Easy Online Options

Why wait in line when you can take care of it all from home? Many motor vehicle and driver's license services are just a click away.

From renewing your license to requesting a duplicate title, **DouglasDrives.com** makes it simple and secure. Complete your transaction in minutes.

No lines, no stress, just convenience a click away!

**221,242**

total customer transactions completed in 2025

## Kiosks While You Shop

Already headed to the grocery store? Renew your vehicle registration while you're there! MVExpress kiosks let you print your registration and license plate sticker on the spot. You'll find kiosks at six Douglas County King Soopers stores and locations across Colorado.




**66,278**

drivers renewed at an MVExpress kiosk in 2025

## Need Personal Assistance? We've Got You Covered

If your motor vehicle needs require in-person help, simply schedule an appointment for a time that works best for you. Live customer assistance from our team of Motor Vehicle Specialists is also available online or by phone.

 [DouglasDrives.com](https://DouglasDrives.com)

 303-660-7440

**2,370** customers helped by staff via online chat in 2025

Philip S. Miller Building  
100 Third Street  
Castle Rock, CO 80104

# DougCoAlert Has Replaced CodeRED Emergency Alerts

If you were previously signed up for CodeRed, you **will not** be automatically enrolled in DougCoAlert. Please sign up today on the new platform to stay informed about potentially hazardous situations.

[DougCoAlert.com](https://DougCoAlert.com)



## Upcoming Community Events

### At the Douglas County Fairgrounds

**Feb. 28-March 1** Front Range Agility Competition  
**Feb. 28-March 1** Muay Thai State Tournament  
**March 7** Kids Consignment Sale by MOMS  
**March 7** Mile Hi Barrel Racing  
**March 14** ShamROCK Stampede Race  
**March 15** Kindom Events Cheer Competition  
**March 27-29** Log & Timber Home Design Show  
**March 28-29** Creative Market and Holistic Expo

### At Douglas County Libraries

**An Evening with Author Devon O'Neil**  
March 6 | 6:30 p.m. | DCL Highlands Ranch

**Local Author Showcase**  
March 14 | 1 p.m. | DCL Castle Rock

**A Storybook Holiday: Ferdinand's Frolic**  
March 29 | 8:30 a.m. | DCL Highlands Ranch