2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The State Legislative Priority document outlines a number of broad priorities identified by the Mayor and City Council. The city will identify and respond to individual bills as they are proposed and debated during the state legislative session.

Affordable Housing

Colorado is facing an affordable housing crisis. Many Colorado residents struggle to find affordable housing in the communities where they work. Colorado’s local governments can be a key player in finding a solution by utilizing their local land authority.

To that end the city will monitor the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Transformation Task Force and legislation resulting from these recommendations. The city supports efforts to provide housing across the continuum of housing needs including homelessness services campuses, alternative sheltering options, and community investment financing to developers of rental or for-sale affordable housing. The City of Aurora supports efforts to preserve long-time affordability of existing housing stock. The city supports efforts to ensure sustainable funding for supportive services, and the integration of these services with affordable housing.

Behavioral Health

Colorado is facing a behavioral crisis as the state continues to face ongoing and persistent challenges on multiple fronts. These challenges include responding to negative health effects, loss of employment and/or housing due to the pandemic, increasing housing costs that leave many without an affordable place to live, increases in crime, a youth violence epidemic and a workforce shortage. The city of Aurora supports efforts at the state level to mitigate these challenges and to seek solutions to these behavioral health-related issues.

To that end the city will monitor the recommendations of the Behavioral Health Transformation Task Force and legislation resulting from these recommendations. The city supports efforts to ensure that those with the highest needs get the care they need when they need it including disadvantaged communities, youth, caregivers, and workforce. The city supports integration and parity between physical and behavioral health while providing equitable access to services as early as needed. The city supports efforts to connect people with behavioral health needs to services across the continuum. The city supports efforts to develop a trained, qualified, and diverse workforce that is sufficient to meet the state’s needs.

The City of Aurora will monitor any competitive grant program for behavioral health crisis response and diversion including co-responder, community response and mobile crisis response programs.

Transportation

With the passage of Senate Bill 21-260: Sustainability of the Transportation System, and the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the City of Aurora expects an increase in transportation funding to flow into state and city coffers. The City will monitor the implementation of these bills and associated state grant programs.

Public transit is a crucial piece of infrastructure that affects low-income and minority communities. As RTD recovers from ridership and associated farebox reductions resulting from the pandemic they continue to operate at reduced levels of service. Such cuts continue to disproportionately affect the mobility of low-income and minority communities. The city supports increased state transportation and transit funding that includes an equitable portion of new revenue to cities and other local governments.

Requests:

- The city supports adequate state funding to complete construction of the widening of State Highway 30/Gun Club Road north of Quincy Avenue.
Municipal Courts
Coordination and the sharing of data between state and municipal courts is crucial. Under the current system municipal court staff must directly contact individual courts to request copies of relevant files or cases. This results in municipal resources being devoted to a tedious process that can be streamlined with a shared statewide system. Further, with the current trend of courts digitizing official records and information, a statewide information system makes logistical sense. The city supports efforts for the buildout of a state database to allow for information sharing between municipal and state courts.

Marijuana
As in past sessions, the city will monitor closely any changes the State considers regarding the regulation of recreational and medicinal marijuana consumption. In addition, the city will support local control in the authority to regulate businesses related to the processing, extraction, manufacturing, and sales of consumable and industrial hemp.

Immigration
Aurora welcomes immigrants and refugees from all over the world which makes the city so diverse and international. As such, the city created the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs in 2015 to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants and refugees into Aurora’s civic, economic, and cultural life. The office oversees the development and implementation of a strategic citywide plan regarding policy, programs, and initiatives for the local immigrant and refugee populations.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015 (WIOA) seeks to ensure that state and local service providers offer adult education and skills development programs that accelerate achievement of diplomas and credentials among American workers, including immigrants and individuals with limited English language skills. The Title II funds can be used for activities assisting eligible adults with obtaining postsecondary education, training, or employment. Specifically, the funds managed by the State of Colorado serve people with barriers to employment, including English language learners, low income people and immigrants. In addition, WIOA funding can be used for citizenship and civic education programs. The city supports efforts to access and utilize these funds.

In addition, the city will closely monitor state legislation related to improving oversight of and the conditions within private prisons that house individuals with pending immigration status issues.

Climate Change
The Aurora City Council and city management have developed a vision of growth for the city that focuses on the principles of sustainability, energy efficiency and renewable energy. To embrace economic sustainability the city created the Aurora Campus for Renewable Energy and the campus represents the city’s commitment to renewable energy and the promotion of green jobs. The city is demonstrating the commitment to sustainable energy supplies by hosting solar photovoltaic installations on three city facilities and piloting programs to host additional installations. The city started the SmartFleet Initiative in 2010 that led an effort to convert the city fleet to electric vehicles and to expanding electric charging infrastructure throughout the city. The city supports state legislation that supports the principles of sustainability, energy efficiency and renewable energy by tracking and supporting state legislation that support these aims. This includes:

- Expanding production of alternative energy and renewable energy standards
- Expanding tax credits that promote use of electric vehicles and EV infrastructure
- Pursuing green building standards

Civil Rights
It is the policy of the city of Aurora that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any operation of the city. The Colorado Fair Employment Practices Act makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disability. The city embraces efforts at the state legislature that uphold these principles by supporting bills that expand protections and opposing bills that seek to discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community.
**Broadband Infrastructure**

In 2022 Governor Polis signed an executive order to provide high-speed internet access to more than 99% of the state in the next four to five years. The Colorado Broadband Office (CBO) is tasked with this mission, and will be looking toward funding available under ARPA, IIJA, and potentially other state sources to achieve this outcome. The City should consider partnering with the CBO to expand broadband services and accessibility throughout the community.

- The City has a need for broadband infrastructure to support many city operations and functions. The Public Works department needs to provide new, better connectivity between the traffic signals used on the road network. This will support newer technologies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). Additionally, all City buildings currently use carrier-provided services for basic data connectivity and internet access to support their operations. Deploying city-owned broadband will support these current and future needs while positioning the City to support Smart City initiatives at a later date. The City should consider partnering with the CBO or directly applying for funding to build out a portion of this infrastructure within high traffic arterials.

- The City currently provides free WiFi access to the Community at some city facilities. As the City builds fiber connectivity as noted above, the City can interconnect libraries, recreation centers, and community centers along the path of the fiber as it is being built. This will allow the City to expand access to free WiFi at all those facilities. This free access can help underserved or unserved members of the community gain access to digital services such as telehealth, tele-education, job aids, career building services, pay their bills online, and access digital government services. A portion of the funding should be used to provide dedicated devices such as computers or tablets at those locations to serve the community members who have do not have one. A portion of the funds will also be necessary to bolster the City’s internet backbone and WiFi access devices to enable these services.

- The City should consider utilizing some portion of the funding to provide digital literacy services. Some members of the community have limited or no experience with modern digital services, such as those enumerated above. Dedicated instructors and/or online instruction courses can be provided on a scheduled basis to help community members update resumes, apply for assistance, attend digital career fairs, and any number of other services that are offered through the modern world wide web.

- A Federal program, the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program, provides assistance to low-income households in the form of a monthly stipend to defray the costs for high speed internet access, as well as a one-time stipend to purchase a laptop, desktop or tablet. If similar opportunities arise using state funding, the City should consider advocating for said funds to make broadband access more equitable across the community.

**Cybersecurity**

The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has dedicated a portion of funding to help state and local governments implement or improve specific cybersecurity tools and capabilities. Importantly, the funding can be used to address cybersecurity needs for critical infrastructure, such as water, wastewater, traffic control systems, and public safety systems.

**Funding:**

- The City should leverage the available funding to further improve our cybersecurity posture and capabilities.
- Additionally, the City should consider advocating for additional funding sources for ongoing sustainability and expansion.
- The City should consider advocating that funding be more discretionary, allowing individual communities to define what their cybersecurity needs are and apply for the funding to meet those needs. Typically funds targeted to local entities are administered by the state Department of Homeland Security / Emergency Management, and the Urban Area Security Initiative. Traditionally these two groups have defined appropriate use for the funds.

**Governance:**

- The City should actively monitor for legislation that is pending or being considered specific to Cybersecurity at the state level. The Federal government recently passed legislation that will require critical infrastructure entities to report cyber incidents to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) within 72 hours of occurrence. CISA has up to 24 months to issue an NPRM that will promulgate rules to define what constitutes a cyber incident, which entities are defined as critical infrastructure, what is required within the reporting, and take further action if entities fail to comply.