

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

A national, nonprofit, membership organization
1303 J St., Suite 250 | Sacramento, CA 95814
lgc.org | newpartners.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, February 7, 2014
Michele Warren, mkwarren@lgc.org, 916-448-1198 x308

Note for reporters: During the event, please check in at the conference registration desk outside the Centennial Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Denver Hotel to obtain a media credential.

Smart Growth Goes Mile-High

National conference examines connections between smart growth, economic growth and healthy communities in big cities, small towns and rural communities

This year, the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference goes mile-high – to Denver. Many of the nation’s experts and leaders with successes addressing the economic, environmental and social challenges of creating more livable, sustainable communities gather in this vibrant region in the Rockies to explore these critical issues, and showcase practical strategies for overcoming obstacles to sustainable development in the region and the rest of the nation.

The largest and most comprehensive smart growth/sustainable communities conference held in the U.S. each year, the 13th annual New Partners event will be held February 13-15, 2014, at the Hyatt Regency Denver Hotel.

“Denver exemplifies the essential principles of smart growth, offering a variety of housing and transportation choices that balance development pressures, quality of life and preservation of its stunning snowcapped mountains, forests and other natural resources” said Kate Meis, the executive director of the Local Government Commission, which organized the conference.

Metro Denver leaders will figure prominently at the conference’s signature moments.

Denver Mayor Michael Hancock will help kick off the conference during the Thursday plenary on “Extreme Weather, Smart-Growth Forecasts: Finding Opportunities for Implementing Silver Linings” (Feb. 13).

“Denver is excited to host this nationally renowned smart growth conference,” said Hancock. “Denver is a city of ingenuity that is linked by walking trails, bike paths, light rail and shared transit, so it’s the perfect place to reflect on the conference’s major themes.”

Mickki Langston, the Mile High Business Alliance’s Executive Director, Khanh Nguyen, the Colorado Health Foundation’s Healthy Living Portfolio Director, and Ismael Guerrero, Executive Director at the Denver Housing Authority will join Denver City Councilmember Deborah Ortega at the Saturday morning plenary on “Smart Growth: A Prescription for Healthy Communities and Vibrant Economies.” They will explore practical, integrated strategies that can improve public health, while creating social and economic opportunity within a community.

“Healthier food and more physical exercise – and building communities for people, not cars – are among the best long-term prescriptions to ensure good health,” said Kaiser Permanente Vice President Tyler Norris, one of the plenary speakers. “By creating more walkable communities, good transportation networks and better access to healthy food, we can also generate new business, job opportunities and a healthier quality of life.”

Denver’s RTD General Manager Phillip Washington is part of a distinguished panel of national transportation leaders at Friday morning’s plenary on “Successful Transportation Networks: A Driving Force in Smart Growth.”

A number of conference breakout sessions also feature Denver-area communities and officials, especially those focused on economic revitalization and community resiliency.

“Using Smart Growth and Economic Strategies to Build Disaster-Resilient Economies” will highlight how regional and local leaders, including Longmont Assistant City Manager Shawn Lewis, are protecting their economic assets, including downtowns and key industries; targeting growth to safe locations and encouraging walkable, mixed-use design; providing recovery funding and preparedness training to businesses; upgrading infrastructure; and encouraging economic diversification.

Climbing out of the economic recession, communities across America are struggling to develop their local economies by supporting small local businesses that are ripe for growth by providing them with market intelligence previously only available to big companies. In the “Growing a Sustainable Economy One Small Business at a Time” session, Pueblo County Economic Development Director Christopher Markuson will talk

about a web-based app that analyzes demographic, income, financial expenditures, education and hundreds of other sources of community-specific data to better understand the overall community in question.

In a case study about “Gettin’ Real in Rifle, Colorado,” Nathan Lindquist, the city’s planning director, will tell the inspiring story of the big challenges and even bigger aspirations of this small community on Colorado’s rural West Slope. Having weathered decades of boom and bust economic cycles, community leaders charted a new strategic vision to create a diverse, resilient economy that connected downtown revitalization to the larger region and linked sustainable economic development to transit, commercial and residential redevelopment, market analysis, streetscape design, energy and placemaking projects.

In “Rail in the West,” Bill Sirois, a senior manager with RTD’s FasTracks Team, will share the tale of how Denver’s relatively new light and commuter rail system is shaping land-use patterns of neighborhoods and cities once shaped around exclusive auto use and culture.

Aurora Development Project Manager Chad Argentar will discuss the nexus between environmental justice, brownfield redevelopment, community revitalization, job training and smart-growth goals in the “Turning Community Blight into Community Assets” session.

Denver Public Schools COO David Suppes, a featured speaker on the “Lessons from the Vacant School House: Turning Empty Buildings into Assets” panel, will describe Denver’s successes in breathing new life into shuttered school buildings using smart growth principles, vigorous community engagement and innovative partnerships to turn potential liabilities into neighborhood assets.

Speaking from experience in the field, Mesa County Planning Director Linda Dannenberger helps describe “Zombie Subdivisions,” examining the excessive creation of housing lots, how this impacts communities, and effective strategies to deal with existing distressed subdivision problems and prevent future ones.

Loveland Mayor Cecil Gutierrez joins a team of community representatives to talk about “Artspace in Loveland,” the inspired effort to turn the town’s historic Feed & Grain Building into a new home for creative businesses, artist studios, a public plaza and affordable live/work units for artists and their families – the first of its kind in Colorado.

In the Rockies, water is a challenging resource – sometimes there is too little, sometimes too much. Recent flooding has highlighted challenges around growth and hazard exposure. In “Building Leadership for Water-wise Growth in the West,” Susan Daggett, Director of the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute, will focus on improving capacity of local leaders to make or support decisions for hazard- and water-wise growth.

LOCAL TOURS: The New Partners conference also offers 13 optional **tours of local model projects** on Thursday (Feb. 13) and Sunday (Feb. 16). The tours will explore Colorado’s creative economy and the arts in River North and the Art District on Santa Fe, improved access to healthy food in North Denver, and the redevelopment of Stapleton Airport into a complete community. The trips will also let conference participants take guided walks around Denver’s Downtown and Jefferson Park, check out community reinvention from transit investments and transit-oriented development around the Denver region, and catch the cultural rhythms of the Rockies in the historic Welton Street district.

The conference will also initiate a Wednesday walkabout for a “**Denver Urban Sampler**” (Feb. 12), where participants can engage in a tasty, social walking tour with Walk2Connect of the sights, history, art, flavors and brews of several of Denver’s unique and thriving urban neighborhoods. Attendees can sample locally crafted beer and food, seek out world-class guerrilla art, and learn about Denver’s history while enjoying the experience of “life at 3 mph.”

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR LOCAL FRIENDS: Public Coffee, a mobile coffee shop, pop ups around Denver serving coffee to start meaningful conversations. It activates spaces to build community and connections, helping strangers get to know the many faces of a community, and functions as an open center for thinkers and creators to bring together different perspectives. During “coffee break” conversations at the conference, attendees can dive into these larger ideas with someone they might never have connected with. Another Denver institution, **Tattered Cover Bookstore** will also be on-site during the conference, carrying smart-growth titles authored by many of the speakers. Also pitching in are the **Regional Transportation District** (RTD), which is generously providing free transit passes for all conference attendees, and **Denver B-Cycle**, which is offering a discount rate for a 24-hour, unlimited ride pass. With stations located at many restaurants, stores and other destinations, these shared bikes are a great way to get around Denver during the event.

About the conference: The New Partners for Smart Growth conference spans three days and covers cutting-edge smart growth issues, the latest research, implementation tools and strategies, successful case studies and new policies with a dynamic mix of over 300 speakers and 80 sessions. The conference has more than 200 sponsors and cosponsors. For a full list of supporters and more details about the conference agenda: NewPartners.org