

Improve Human and Social Health for Vulnerable Populations

Obstacles and barriers exist that impede access to services for our underserved community members. We need to work with our regional partners to invest in a robust and accessible safety net to create conditions where one is not needed. Existing oil and gas wells in and around Fort Collins cause harmful pollution and have negative environmental and human health impacts.

State of Colorado Department of Health and Human Services Definitions:

- **Disproportionately affected populations** - Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x), American Indian or Alaska Native; older adults; lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer or questioning, gender nonconforming; people with disabilities; people with low socioeconomic status; people currently or formerly incarcerated; and people who live in rural and/or geographically isolated communities.
- **Community-led engagement** - the practice of working collaboratively and through disproportionately affected populations to address issues affecting those populations with the goal of using community expertise to lead, inform, and conduct engagement practices. This can include using culturally and linguistically tailored outreach, community advisory boards, etc.

Work Plan Items:

The long-range vision and goals for this priority are established in multiple documents and plans including City Plan, Equity Plan, Social Sustainability Department Strategic Plan, Social Sustainability Gaps Analysis, Our Climate Future, and the Housing Strategic Plan. The following is a compilation of achievable, short-term goals to advance this priority including work already in progress.

1. Expand Human Services Funding; Align with Top Community Needs

a) **Human Services Program Funding**

- Description: Grant awards to nonprofit human service providers that address the needs of underserved groups, with emphasis on residents of Fort Collins with low incomes. These population groups include the elderly, households in poverty, persons experiencing homelessness, those with various medical and behavioral health needs, and children and youth.
- Resource Requirement: Continuing to expand relies on ongoing funding through Budgeting For Outcomes (BFO) process.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Human Services and Housing Funding Board
- Next Step: Continue existing programming and grant administration.
- Timeline: Ongoing.

b) **Human Services Priorities Platform Project**

- Description: Blueprint for how the Social Sustainability Department (SSD) delivers resources, programming, and partnership toward human services in the community. The Platform will profile the human service issues of greatest significance to the City and will identify top community priorities to focus funding and assistance.
- Resource Requirement: None.

- Community Engagement and Outreach: Q2-Q3 2024: survey to service providers and community members, interviews with regional funders, engagement with relevant Boards and Commissions, focus groups and interviews with service providers.
- Next Step: Retooled human service priorities will be integrated into the annual Competitive Funding Process beginning in 2025.
- Timeline: Q3-Q4 2024 completion and implementation; review annually.

2. **Embed Equity Throughout City Programming and Operations and Monitor Progress**

a) **Equity Readiness Assessment (ERA)**

- Description: ERA is a facilitated discussion for internal City department teams. The discussion is guided by a list of demographic and communication considerations that take a people and community centered approach when evaluating for equity in a project phase or life cycle. After utilizing the assessment tool, teams identify areas of refocus as well as curiosities and new avenues to explore. Refocusing for equity is a path to identifying and removing barriers to achieve meaningful outcomes and addressing diverse community interests, concerns, and needs as they relate to City services.
- Resource Requirement: Personnel time to coordinate meetings, discussion facilitation; time for teams to do pre-meeting work; time for EIO to write an ERA summary for teams to reflect and identify strengths, areas of growth for teams to embed equitable practices into services and programs.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: ERA prepares teams to engage with community groups in a way that is culturally meaningful and relevant. ERA can help define communication needs to assure effective and efficient engagement with diverse communities and disproportionately affected groups.
- Next Step: Assessing other equity instruments and their utility at various phases of project life cycles.
- Timeline: Ongoing.

b) **Equity Indicators Project**

- Description: Equity Indicators are one tool local governments can use to measure and track the experiences of equality among community members to more proactively address systems that perpetuate racism and/or oppression. For this project, data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other demographic factors was collected and analyzed by the CUNY Institute for State and local Governance to examine the lived experience of people in Fort Collins. A public facing dashboard has been started with 3 out of 7 potential topics: Housing, Economic Health, Criminal Justice and Public Safety.
- Resource Requirement: Recently filled a Data Analyst position that is shared between the Social Sustainability Team and the Equity and Inclusion Office. This will help develop data routines and tracking mechanisms for teams to actively use.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Potential to host community conversations or focus groups on the various indicator topics on the dashboard (Housing, Economic Health, Criminal Justice and Public Safety).
- Next Step: Meeting with Housing, Economic Health, Criminal Justice and Public Safety/FCPS teams to collect data to measure progress since 2019.
- Timeline: Ongoing.

c) **Underserved Communities Engagement and Outreach**

- Description: Develop and implement plans to remove or mitigate obstacles and expand funding and services to underserved community members.
- Resource Requirement: 1 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Community Engagement Specialist in Equity and Inclusion Office to include contractual community connectors program for multicultural representation; In-house translator in Equity Office; Program funding.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Initiate and maintain relationships and partnerships with disproportionately affected populations.
- Next Step: Enhancement Offer for FTE and program funding.
- Timeline: If funded, hire in Q1 2025.

d) **Equity Grants**

- Description: The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded grants provided funding for small, non-competitive, organizations who lead and support community-led programs that ignite, inspire, and foster a community culture of belonging, uplift mental and physical health, and support the basic needs of the Fort Collins community. These funds are for social service activities occurring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Fort Collins community, and as recognized in the Fort Collins Recovery Plan.
- Resource Requirement: \$200,000/year.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: 28 small non-profits funded in 2023 and 2024. Programs provide direct benefit for racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ programs, older adults, youth programs.
- Next Step: Follow-up visits taking place throughout Q2-Q4.
- Timeline: Q2-Q4 2024.

3. **Address Environmental Concerns**

a) **Air Quality Programs**

- Healthy Homes Program
 - Description: Healthy Homes is a free, indoor air quality (IAQ) program for Fort Collins community members that aims to reduce chemical and biological pollutants and promote safety in residences. Staff, volunteers, and partner organizations work together to improve the health and home resiliency of all Fort Collins community members. This program improves IAQ, energy efficiency (EE), and prepares homes of disproportionately impacted (DI) communities in Fort Collins for climate-related events (i.e., wildfires, extreme temperatures). This is achieved through free in-home visits which include an IAQ assessment, portable air cleaners, smoke/fire and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms, furnace servicing, weatherization, air conditioners, and other related resources/services.
 - Resource Requirement:
 - Program supplies, outreach materials, and volunteer trainings (covered as part of annual budget)
 - Community engagement and language translation services
 - Public workshops
 - Contracted services for weatherization and furnace maintenance
 - 2 FTE, 1 hourly - Staff time for program coordination, volunteer management, etc.

- 1 FTE and hourly staff are currently funded.

The Healthy Homes program will receive grant funds of \$168,874 from CDPHE. Funds will be available July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025. The Environmental Services Department will also submit a BFO offer, *Enhancing Healthy Homes*, for \$497,356 to further support program initiatives and the additional staff and resource requirements needed through 2026.

- Community Engagement and Outreach: The approach to home visits is community-led: building relationships with participants first, providing information in their preferred language, and identifying resource-based solutions that have an impact on IAQ, EE, and home resiliency. Healthy Homes works with partner organizations that have trusted community relationships, and Neighborhood Connectors (NC) within priority populations to recruit participants. Additionally, staff train and deploy volunteer Healthy Homes Educators (HHE) to complete the home visits. (NC can also participate as HHE). This proven approach fosters trust and offers a tailored program based on the needs of individuals and neighborhoods.
- Next Step: Healthy Homes has and will continue to be offered to all members of the Fort Collins community. However, with recent grant funding focused on environmental justice, that has ended, the team has been able to focus on both DI communities and enhance the resources offered to participants. The program has evolved into one that needs additional and ongoing funding to continue supporting the vision that all Fort Collins community members have a healthy, energy efficient and resilient home environment. The long-term goals of the program are to continue these enhancements and aid in home electrification.
- Timeline: Healthy Homes is an ongoing and established program that has been serving the community for more than 12 years. Approximately, \$200,000-\$250,000 a year is needed to continue offering the program at its current level and to achieve our long-term goals.
- Wildfire Smoke Readiness
 - Description: Individual projects currently underway to address wildfire smoke and other poor air quality events include updating public communications and guidance, upgrades to City building HVAC systems, air quality monitoring, and improving residential indoor air quality.
 - Resource Requirements:
 - City Building HVAC upgrades. Operation Services will submit an offer, *HVAC Electrification and Efficiency Replacements*, requesting funds to support these upgrades.
 - Staff have noted that City buildings that have high use among diverse populations (rec centers, libraries, etc.) should be prioritized for these upgrades.
 - Language services for translations of public communications documents.
 - Community Engagement and Outreach: Public communications and outreach currently being updated includes post-ready social media, guidance documents for outdoor events, and website revisions. A public workshop on *Preparing Your Home for Wildfire* smoke will be offered to disproportionately impacted neighborhoods as a part of the

Healthy Homes Program in summer 2024. This work also includes translation of materials into Spanish.

- Next Steps: Staff will continue to lead the development of education and outreach materials and will continue to explore opportunities to review fire restriction guidance and protocols and smoke protocols for City employees (especially outdoor workers).
- Timeline: Education and outreach and public workshops will be ongoing and dependent on wildfire events.
- **Air Quality Monitoring**
 - Description: Air quality monitoring supports efforts to characterize, track and report ambient air pollutant concentrations to increase awareness of air quality related health and environmental issues and better identify opportunities to improve local air quality conditions and reduce emissions. The City supports an ongoing network that includes regulatory pollutants (e.g., ozone), particle pollution, and visibility cameras. In January 2024, City and County staff jointly formed an Air Quality - Monitoring Advisory Committee (AQ-MAC) to support implementation of an EPA awarded air toxics monitoring grant through 2026. The committee also advises on priority monitoring enhancements, which to date have included expansion of regulatory efforts, compliance resources (e.g., a camera to detect oil and gas emissions), and monitoring near specific sources.
 - Resource Requirement: Air toxics related monitoring and messaging performed by sub-award of an EPA grant to CSU (\$500K, 2024-2026). Funds to convene and facilitate the AQ-MAC and augment monitoring efforts are covered through an Air Quality Monitoring Enhancement Offer (\$100K/year, available through 2024 and offered as enhancement for 2025-26).
 - Community Engagement and Outreach: The AQ-MAC includes 13 community members, including a representative from the City's Air Quality Advisory Board, the County's Environment and Science Advisory Board, and other community representatives. Specific engagement events over grant implementation period will target students and disproportionately impacted communities.
 - Next Steps: Include continued source monitoring at an oil and gas facility, and the development of a project website to display air toxics monitoring summary results.
 - Timeline: The AQ-MAC began meeting in January 2024, with air toxics monitoring beginning in February 2024. Efforts will continue through grant performance period, which ends in September 2026.
- **Oil and Gas Policies**
 - Description: Existing oil and gas wells in and around Fort Collins cause harmful pollution and have negative environmental and human health impacts. Staff are collaborating with Larimer County and State regulators to take direct actions to ensure compliance and reduce oil and gas operations in and around Fort Collins, especially in northeast Fort Collins. Mitigation strategies are focused on assuring compliance with State regulations regarding several ongoing issues, open complaints, and alleged violations.
- Resource Requirement: ESD staff time for compliance with State regulations, PDT staff time for compliance with City Land Use Code requirements, and consulting resources (~\$20k/year proposed in ESD 2025/26 ongoing budget).
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Data and research suggest that historically disadvantaged communities are disproportionately impacted by air pollution, and oil and

gas operations are a significant contributor to local air quality issues. The HOA is closest proximity to local operations has been engaged, and HOA representatives may testify in State Hearings related to compliance issues. Additionally, air quality monitoring information associated with oil and gas operations will be shared through the joint City/County Air Quality – Monitoring Advisory Committee, which will focus on communicating data and findings to those disproportionately impacted by air pollution.

- Next Step: Continue seeking resolution on several compliance issues, including illegal flaring at a site just outside City limits, remediation/reconstruction following a pipeline spill, and initiating a State assessment of underutilized wells and an aging pipeline system.
- Timeline: Specific timelines are State dependent, but resolution is expected on several issues in 2024.

4. **Continue and Expand Programs that Provide Direct Support to Vulnerable Populations**

a) **Grocery Tax Rebate Program**

- Description: Annual cash rebate for income-eligible residents to offset sales tax paid on food.
- Resource Requirement: Rebate funding allotment (budgeted) + additional funding to meet the program’s growing demand. 0.75-FTE Rebate Coordinator (existing) + additional staffing capacity to meet the growing administrative needs of the program.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Rebate Coordinator regularly visits community organizations and affordable housing providers to enroll eligible residents.
- Next Step: Grocery Tax Rebate Program moving to SSD May 2024.
- Timeline: Ongoing.

b) **Get FoCo Digital Doorway for City Benefits and Discounts**

- Description: Get FoCo is a single online point of entry to discounted services and municipal benefits offered to income eligible residents by the City of Fort Collins. Prior to the development of Get FoCo, City benefits and discounts were a complex network of stand-alone applications, historical ordinances, and seasonal rebate offers. The platform offers residents a single user-friendly, low-barrier application available in multiple languages.
- Resource Requirement: Get FoCo is funded via Connexion’s 6% Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Ongoing and continuous outreach to residents and partners who serve disproportionately affected populations.
- Next Steps: Ongoing outreach, platform improvements, and program improvements.
- Timeline: Ongoing.

c) **Immigration Legal Fund**

- Description: The Immigration Legal Fund (ILF) offers financial support for partner-delivered legal services related to immigration issues. The ILF assists Fort Collins residents needing help with removal defense, affirmative relief, increasing local access to direct legal representation, and improving self-advocacy resources for clients with pathways to citizenship or lawful presence. Since the beginning of its pilot in 2021, the ILF assisted Fort Collins residents in 262 immigration cases and provided legal services valued at \$766,900 (pro bono rates) for a \$400,000 program cost (2021-2023).

- Resource Requirement: Program funding to maintain current services and expand for increase demand for asylum cases and work permit authorizations.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Monthly educational workshops, open houses, and trainings including Know Your Rights, naturalization/citizenship test preparation, and attorney advice clinics are offered in alignment with language equity principles by grant recipients. Service providers offer wraparound, holistic support services through trained, community-based volunteers and former clients; housing hotline and service navigation; and connections to culturally competent mental health services. These engagement activities leverage relationships community members have with trusted nonprofit partners to promote the program and its services.
- Next Step: To continue offering immigration legal services to Fort Collins residents with a pathway to citizenship or lawful presence beyond 2024, additional funding of \$250,000 per year is needed. A BFO Continuing Enhancement Offer has been submitted for consideration.
- Timeline: Ongoing in 2024; BFO funding required to continue the program.

d) **Eviction Legal Fund**

- Description: The Eviction Legal Fund (ELF) provides financial support for partner-delivered legal representation and advice for tenants facing eviction or with housing stability-related legal issues. The program serves clients that have low income with most working but in the “extremely low income” range. The majority of participants made below 30% Area Median Income (“AMI”). Residents from Communities of Color are overrepresented in the client population when compared to the overall city population, particularly for Latiné residents. Funded through Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in 2020 and 2021 and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) since 2021, the Eviction Legal Fund has kept an average of three families per week in their homes through direct legal representation. The ELF also demonstrates the cost effectiveness of keeping people housed – costing \$1,282 per family vs. the \$38,000-95,000 per person annual cost of homelessness. The program reached more than 1,600 tenants and landlords through all funded services in 2023. Prior to the Eviction Legal Fund, Colorado Legal Services (CLS) was the only nonprofit organization offering pro bono legal services for civil cases and housing-related cases only comprised a portion of their overall workload. CLS was overcapacity for eviction cases prior to the pandemic. The ELF brought Colorado Poverty Law Project to northern Colorado and paired them effectively with local nonprofit partners for education and outreach to maximize the use of the funds.
- Resource Requirement: Program funding to maintain current services and expand caseload capacity as tenants become more aware of their rights and ability to enforce Building Code compliance through the new Rental Housing Team’s outreach work.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Quarterly educational workshops; open house events; Know Your Rights trainings for tenants, landlords, and mobile home park residents; and monthly attorney advice clinics are offered in alignment with language equity principles by grant recipients. Service providers offer wraparound, holistic support services through trained, community-based volunteers, mediation-focused promotoras; housing hotline; rent assistance connections; and service navigation. These engagement activities leverage relationships community members have with trusted nonprofit partners to promote the program and its services. Educational materials including the Guide to Housing Rights are provided to thousands of Fort Collins residents each year.

- Next Step: To continue offering eviction and housing legal services to Fort Collins tenants and landlords beyond 2024, additional funding of \$220,000 per year is needed. A BFO Continuing Enhancement Offer has been submitted for consideration.
- Timeline: Ongoing in 2024; BFO funding required to continue the program.

e) **Community Consultants Program (PDT)**

- Description: The Community Consultants Program contracts with community experts who advise and assist in engagement, strategic planning, equity assessments, and project implementation. Community Consultants are selected through a competitive process that centers equity and language access to leverage their expert knowledge. They are selected to represent diverse backgrounds and lived experiences to ensure varied perspectives in community development and engagement projects. Past Community Consultants collaborated on mobile home park and Colorado Affordable Residential Energy program engagement, strategic planning for Neighborhood grants, assessment of outreach methods and accessibility, and project implementation efforts like event planning. The program compensates consultants for their work and connects them with City departments, resources, and information so they can continue to advocate for their community and the work of the City after their consultancy is complete.
- Resource Requirement: Currently funded as part of Neighborhood Services Ongoing programs budget, Community Consultants requires an average of 5 hours per week to administer and translation/interpretation services.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Recruitment of Community Consultants is targeted at residents from Designated Opportunity Neighborhoods (neighborhoods identified by high levels of intersectional vulnerabilities based on standard equity indicators) and those with scheduled, focused programming to have Consultants working in their own neighborhoods. All opportunities are available for full participation in Spanish and English.
- Next Steps: Community Consultants will continue to work with Neighborhood Services for a variety of equity-based projects. The Historic Preservation Department will also onboard two Community Consultants for equity assessments and outreach in 2024/2025.
- Timeline: Ongoing.

f) **Mobile Home Park Program**

- Description: The Mobile Home Park Program provides support for mobile home park (“MHP”) residents, owners, and managers to advance neighborhood livability in these communities. Staff works closely with elected state and local officials to identify issues of concern for MHP residents, offer solutions, and implement beneficial changes. The program also works with internal and external stakeholders, MHP residents, and nonprofit partners to address needs related to mobile home park vitality, preservation of affordable housing, and equitable access to City resources and services. Mobile Home Parks are home to some of the city’s most vulnerable residents. These neighborhoods are home to the highest population of primary Spanish speakers in the city, low-income homeowners and renters, undocumented community members, and seniors living with disabilities. The MHP Program has been engaging residents from these neighborhoods since 2019 to assess gaps and address critical needs of residents including overbilling of water by the MHP, dangerous tree limbs, water quality, life/health/safety issues related to Nuisance and Building Codes, lot regrading, retaliation for participation in community meetings, required upgrades, limitations on accessory buildings, and resident-owned communities. A Mobile Home Park

Handbook will be distributed to residents this year and nonprofit partners continue to offer MHP specific educational training sessions to bolster self-advocacy. The MHP Program provides a local complaint and investigation system and updated Municipal Code to allow auditing of water utility bills. Currently, the program offers educational support and activities like “Meet an Inspector” and anonymous “Ask an Inspector” photo submissions intended to build trust with community members in mobile home parks and encourage voluntary Code compliance. The most common Nuisance Code violations in mobile home parks in the city are accumulated trash and outdoor storage. Some common deferred maintenance to fences, skirting, and roofs can result in Code violations as well as park rule violations that can lead to eviction. Through a 2019 mitigation fund allocated by City Council and 2023/2024 ARPA funds, the MHP Program has been able to assist residents with tools, resources, and information to avoid Nuisance and Building Code violations and improve housing stability. ARPA grant funds were used in 2021 and 2022 for mobile home park clean-up events and resource fairs to assist with Code compliance and in 2023 for MHP homeowner/renter DIY workshops to empower residents to tackle home repairs.

- Resource Requirement: 1.0 FTE MHP Sr. Specialist and \$50,000 MHP mitigation grant funding for whole park clean-up and repair efforts or individual repairs related to Code violations. In the 2024 ARPA grant funding round for similar building permit-required grants for this housing type, more than 300 applications were received totaling \$2.2 million in requests.
- Community Engagement and Outreach: Outreach and support are tailored to the unique challenges of each mobile home park. Because of years of relationship-building efforts, the MHP Program now has trusted contacts in these neighborhoods. Outreach activities are designed to assure inclusivity in decision-making and have featured small group meeting with neighborhood leaders, Community Consultant work with residents, community-wide events, grant application workshops, integration into the neighborhood WhatsApp groups by invitation, door-to-door canvassing, pop-up engagement, project development workshops, resource fairs, property management connections, and facilitation of neighborhood walking tours with state elected officials. All outreach and engagement is conducted in Spanish and English with emphasis shifted away from the written word.
- Next Steps: Much of the Mobile Home Park work is ongoing and focused on authentic relationship-building and maintenance with two-way communication channels. Neighborhood liaison work and coordination of events will continue. MHP Clean-ups are funded through ARPA in 2024 and MHP grants are available for building permit-related repairs, Innovate Fort Collins Challenge building envelope repairs/upgrades, fence repair days for whole MHPs, and individual home repairs or whole park fix-it days to improve voluntary Code compliance in 2024. Because mobile home parks were treated differently from other neighborhood types from a Code compliance perspective for decades and each one has unique needs and challenges, continuing the MHP Specialist position (currently ARPA funded) is needed to build and maintain relationships with neighborhood leaders and strengthen relationships with property managers. Mitigation funding is needed and requested in the 2025-2026 BFO as an ongoing enhancement offer due to the high need and lack of other available funding for these types of projects. This BFO offer would also allow us to continue to leverage other funding sources like the State’s CARE program (that funds upgrades like a new furnace but will not pay to upgrade electrical system sometimes necessary to install the new furnace, leaving residents unable to receive anything). Grant research and administration for the City as a grant recipient is also needed for these

neighborhoods, as the level of available local and state funding are insufficient to meet the high community need sustainably.

- Timeline: Ongoing ARPA funding in 2024; BFO funding required to continue program components.

Department Lead: Co-sponsorship between Equity and Inclusion Office and Social Sustainability Department (SSD); Executive Sponsor: Jacob Castillo

Department Partners: Neighborhood Services, Recreation, Utilities, Finance, Economic Health and Environmental Services

Challenges:

- Competitive funding at all levels
- Increasing costs
- Politically controversial (some items)
- Recovery funds ending but community needs still high