

BizWest Publications

Custom Publications

Request a BizWest Article Reprint



ECONOMY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | BY KEN  
AMUNDSON LUCAS HIGH | JANUARY 5, 2024 | 1:36:47 PM

# Destination: Johnstown

⌂ [LATEST NEWS](#)

**Residential listings were up in 2023, but sales volumes, median prices tanked**

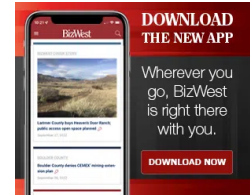
**Crocs expects \$3.95B in '23 sales, stock price soars**

**Danone offloading Boulder-born Horizon Organic to private-equity firm**



**LongPath secures conditional \$189M DOE loan**

**Laughing it up**



*The new Buc-ees fueling station will include 120 pumps under the awning but half the revenue from the operation will come from food sales.*  
*Ken Amundson / BizWest*

☰ CALENDAR ☰

<p>10 JAN</p>	<p>Northern Colorado Economic Forecast 2024, Presented by BizWest</p>
<p>11 JAN</p>	<p>Regional Business After Hours with Blue Arena</p>
<p>18 JAN</p>	<p>Boulder Economic Forecast</p>

View Submit your event Calendar

## Johnstown development activity reflects community that's open for business.

JOHNSTOWN — An economic measure to help gauge construction activity in a community such as Johnstown might be the number of yellow-line John Deere or Caterpillar earth movers at work on any given day.

While it may not be true, it seems like a typical traveler in the community is never out of sight of such construction equipment, as development after development works to turn vacant land into houses and commercial buildings.

Take, for example, the Colorado Highway 60 corridor. On the west side of the interchange, a massive Buc-ee's convenience store and fueling station is taking shape. On the east side, no more than a half-mile from Buc-ee's, is the heart of the Ledge Rock development that will include Missouri-based Woods Supermarket's first venture into Colorado, a Murdoch's Ranch and Home Supply store, and other retail.

The development map for the community marks development after development, from Encore north of U.S. Highway 34 down through the 2534 development, Iron Horse, The Ridge, Revere, Welty Ridge, Ledge Rock and more — about eight miles in all, much of it adjacent or near to Interstate 25, aka Colorado's Main Street. Numerous residential developments also are underway, some of which will contain "neighborhood commercial," said Sarah Crosthwaite, economic development director for the town.

The developers responsible for these projects come from near and far — Colorado-based McWhinney Real Estate Services Inc. has one, but others hail from California, Texas, Kansas and Arizona.

"The amount of outside capital investment into the community is amazing," Crosthwaite said. "It shows that Johnstown has a good reputation for working with developers."

Indeed, the relative ease that developers face in building projects in Johnstown has been a factor. Diane Seale, who served as city clerk for Johnstown from 1999 until she

been a factor. Diane Seele, who served as city clerk for Johnstown from 1990 until she retired in 2022, noted that the community's growth began incrementally and picked up speed as time went on. First, it was a development near downtown, but things accelerated when the community annexed land at the southeast corner of I-25 and Highway 34, called 2534, where the Scheels All Sports store operates from a 250,000-square-foot retail space in the Johnstown Plaza.

Seele described how the community of 1,500 people when she arrived there in 1987 grew to its size of 18,636.

"We had a grocery store, Hays Market, forever. It wanted to expand, so the town annexed Johnstown Center at the edge of downtown," she said. In the mid-'90s, some commercial expansion began but "then we kind of sat dormant for a bit."

Department-head meetings at city hall, she said, consisted of about five people. A planner who was working in the community saw the opportunity and persuaded the town to annex to the north to capitalize on the growth happening nearby in Loveland's Centerra.

"We had a proactive board at that time, but we didn't have a lot of money. We could offer time — we could get properties through the process quickly," she said.

That thread — relative ease for developers — has run through all the developments, and is remarked upon by those seeking to do business with the town.

Josh Smith, director of operations for Buc-ee's, the Texas-based convenience store operator, said the "city has been wonderful to work with, and the county, too.

"Life's too short to do business with a community that doesn't want you," Smith said, quoting the company's founder, Arch "Beaver" Alpin.

## **Buc-ee's to open early 2024**

While access to the Buc-ee's site just west of the I-25/Colorado 60 interchange is still restricted, there's no shortage of workers or equipment getting things ready for a mid-March opening. On a Wednesday before Christmas, workers were pouring concrete,

laying asphalt, completing the weather cover over the apron that will contain 120 gas pumps, and completing the Lone Star markings above entrances.

Buc-ee's is, after all, based in Texas, where things are larger than life. The Johnstown store will be among the company's largest at 74,000 square feet. It has another of that size in Sevierville, Tennessee.

"It's a family-oriented travel center," Smith said. "It's not conducive to 18-wheeler traffic," he said. Truck traffic will continue to be served at Johnson's Corner to the north or Love's Travel Stop to the south at the Berthoud interchange.

The Johnstown store will be the company's 49th, with four more stores planned in 2024, Smith said. None of those four will be in Colorado, although the company is looking for other Centennial State opportunities.

The store does not have a sit-down restaurant but does sell a lot of food. "About 50% of our business is in food service," he said. The store caters to travelers who will stop for fuel, buy food or other convenience items and head back out on the road.

The company has begun to advertise a mass-hiring event that will occur Jan. 23-27 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Loveland. On those dates, people who have applied and have been screened over the telephone will be interviewed in person and hired.

Pay for positions at Buc-ee's will be \$18 to \$33 per hour for 40-hour-per-week jobs, Smith said.

"We'll hire 250-300 employees, about 90% full time," he said. He expects the remaining part-time positions will go to students, weekend workers and others.

Jobs will include cashiers, warehousing — "it's like big box retail, stocking shelves," he said — food service workers such as people slicing and selling barbecued brisket, and retail associates selling clothing or hunting gear.

"It's all on track," Smith said.

## Commercial/residential mixed uses

Many of the developments underway in Johnstown combine both commercial and residential, Crosthwaite said. Encore on 34 is an example.

Arizona-based Caliber Services LLC is the developer behind this 453-acre site north of U.S. Highway 34 and east of Centerra. The company plans 900 single-family homes, 56 apartments and 880,000 square feet of commercial space.

“Final layout will be determined by the market,” Crosthwaite said. Commercial space will be along Highway 34, and the most northern part of the development will include a private high school, she said.

The development could include light industrial or employment-related businesses. The developer hopes to get agreements finalized in 2024 and may break ground as soon as a summer, she said.

Across the road from Encore, adjacent to the 2534 retail development, is McWhinney's Iron Horse, an industrial park that unlike many in the region includes outside yard space for those companies that have storage needs that don't require cover.

“There are some great users there, great employers,” Crosthwaite said. A building constructed on speculation is fully leased, she said. The company has about 80 acres remaining to be developed in Iron Horse.

Also in that vicinity, just west of Iron Horse, is a United Properties Development LLC project on 16.76 acres called Trade@2534. The flex industrial site most recently picked up a Kroger Co. fulfillment center, which the King Soopers grocer uses for home-delivery services.

Caliber, the Arizona company, is also developing another parcel, this one 159 acres to start, called The Ridge. It's located at I-25 and Weld County Road 18. At buildout, it will include residential with a diversity of housing types, and it includes space slated for commercial use along I-25.

“With them (Caliber) having two great projects, we’re excited about this moving forward. General agreements need to be voted on by the council,” Crosthwaite said.

Caliber, which entered the Johnstown development scene only about a half-decade ago, has other ambitious plans for the town.

“We have about 750 acres in six different projects” in various stages of the planning, permitting and development process, Caliber chief development officer Roy Bade said. “We have pretty much every project type — everything from schools to single-family (homes), single-family (homes) for rent, multi-family, office, industrial, medical, retail and hospitality. We’re really touching almost every kind of real estate asset there is.”

Regarding Caliber’s long-term portfolio projections, Bade said, “In the big picture, once these all have the vertical development, there will be more than \$1 billion in new development in Johnstown.”

The company’s residential communities could bring about 8,000 to 10,000 new residents to the town.

Texas-based 4 Star Development & Brokerage plans a residential development called Revere North; it does include commercial elements, but details of that await a commercial partner for 4 Star, which specializes in residential only, Crosthwaite said. Between 30 and 50 acres of Revere North will be set aside for commercial development.

Welty Ridge, being developed by Platte Land and Water, includes the Buc-ee’s project. The remainder of Welty Ridge is likely to see commercial, light industrial and some residential.

Platte Land and Water also has another parcel of particular interest to Johnstown. It’s a 160-acre parcel, annexed into the town, that the city is calling its future North Downtown. It’s north on Weld County Road 17.

“Tons of projects are coming for downtown,” Crosthwaite said. That’s noted in the town’s strategic plan, which was just updated and included for town board review last month.

.....

Among the strategies noted in the plan are “driving development to expand the downtown corridor.” In the short-term — up to three years according to the plan — the town wants to create a downtown master plan, complete a financial improvement study for the downtown to support the vision for its expansion, and guide expansion in a creative way.

“The biggest thing is that we want to assure that it (the expansion) adds amenities and an extension of the historic corridor,” Crosthwaite said. It needs to be “pedestrian-friendly” and have elements that “activate it both day and night,” she said.

While not downtown, the Ledge Rock Center between downtown and Interstate 25 offers the community another retail opportunity. It includes six buildings in its first phase, including Woods Supermarket, Murdoch’s Ranch and Home Supply, and a retail center that will include business condos or rental units. A Sports Clips “coming soon” sign hangs in the window of one of them.

Kansas-based Carson Development Inc. is producing Ledge Rock, which will include 750,000 square feet of commercial space.

Woods Supermarket, a Missouri-based grocer making its foray into the state at Johnstown, will open in 2024. The store will be 85,000 square feet. Woods has been around Missouri for decades; the Johnstown store will be its 11th and its first outside of its home state. About 150 workers will be hired to staff the store, which as of late December was largely shelled in but did not have exterior elevations completed.

Crosthwaite said the town put more than \$8 million into improvements at the Highway 60 gateway.

Other residential developments that include some commercial elements include the Vista Commons neighborhood north of Ledge Rock, Massey Farms and Settlers Crossing, she said.

“We’re excited about Northern Colorado,” Caliber’s Bade said. “We find it to be a very strong market for a lot of reasons. Most of them relate to quality of life.”



...strong market for sales of residences, most of them relate to quality of life.

By and large, developers have found Johnstown residents, its government officials and staffers, and its economic development community to be open for business.

“In Johnstown, they’re incredibly open to getting together and meeting with them. They’ve had a fair amount of turnover (in its planning and development office) and I think that’s one of the things that’s difficult ... but it’s part of being one the fastest growing communities in the state,” Bade said. “You’re going to have some growing pains, but overall, their receptiveness to development and to developers exceeds what we’ve seen in other regions.”





## Ken Amundson



Ken Amundson is managing editor of BizWest. He has lived in Loveland and reported on issues in the region since 1987. Prior to Colorado, he reported and edited for news organizations in Minnesota and Iowa. He's a parent of two and grandparent of four, all of whom make their homes on the Front Range. A news junkie at heart, he also enjoys competitive sports, especially the Rapids.

## Lucas High



A Maryland native, Lucas has worked at news agencies from Wyoming to South Carolina before putting roots down in Colorado.

Categories: [Economy & Economic Development](#) [Johnstown](#) [Buc-ee's Ltd.](#) [Home Supply](#) [Murdoch's Ranch](#) [Woods Supermarket](#)

### Sign up for BizWest Daily Alerts

Email

**SUBMIT**



## Related Content

**Buc-ee's to hold mass-hiring event for Johnstown location**

December 11, 2023

**Woods market to locate large grocery in Johnstown**

March 2, 2023

**Buc-ee's breaks ground in Johnstown**

June 7, 2022



Jeff Nuttall -  
 Publisher  
 jnuttall@bizwest.com

© BizWest Media

The contents of this website are copyright BizWest Media, LLC. All rights reserved.

Use of any of this information or media on this site is strictly prohibited without express written consent.

- About us
- Advertise
- BizWest Publications
- Custom Publications
- Contact us
- Privacy Policy
- RSS
- Submit News

970-227-7103

[Subscribe](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

For  
subscription  
questions,  
contact Bruce  
Dennis -  
Audience  
Development  
Director  
[bdennis@bizwest.com](mailto:bdennis@bizwest.com)  
970-232-3143