



HOUSING ACCESS PROGRAM



The Colorado Health Foundation™

Housing is Health: A Rural Housing Access Initiative

In 2020, the Colorado Health Foundation awarded Disability Law Colorado a \$397,000 grant to launch a two-year housing initiative in five rural and frontier communities: Craig, Durango, Fort Morgan, Glenwood Springs and La Junta. These communities were chosen based on what Disability Law Colorado clients with disabilities have said and what our nonprofit and government partners have confirmed – the lack of safe, affordable, accessible housing is having an impact on health and wellbeing.

The goal of this grant was to engage 500 underserved community members, community influencers, elected officials, and organizations about affordable housing, with the intent to identify barriers to accessible housing and what can be done to help meet this need. Additionally, DLC was to publish and distribute a toolkit & training materials for individuals with disabilities and housing providers.

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Data Snapshot:



Established dialogues with local government by presenting our findings and recommendations



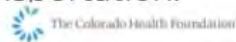
Made direct connections with 511 underserved community members, community influencers, elected officials, and organizations



Engaged with over 25,000 people via social media campaigns.



Engaged as stakeholders to local city council advisory groups regarding issues like Multimodal transportation.



Our Findings:

While all five of the rural areas faced similar challenges around accessible housing, we learned that each community has unique circumstances that demand their own individual engagement. We met with many wonderful and motivated people that understand the issues and want to be a part of a solution. We focused our attention on bringing together these like-minded people to help build new coalitions. While each area is unique, all of the people we spoke with in every corner of the state had the same wish-to see their communities thrive.

Our Focus was not just the local community's access to housing, but how we can help shape the dialogue around building thriving communities. Many barriers to safe and sustainable housing reside on the intersectionality of other issues. All of the community members and advocates that we engaged expressed not only issues with housing stock, but concerns with in-town mobility and sustainable employment opportunities.

Other key findings:

- Accessible units often occupied by able-bodied families.
- Lack of reliable transportation and proximity to necessities
- High cost of construction for new projects
- Many of the incentives offered by the state and federal government for housing projects are either unknown or unused.
- Incentives also inaccessible to rural areas as they are often inadvertently designed to benefit metro areas.
- The difficulty for renters to move into homeownership.

FROM GRASSROOTS TO GRASSTOPS: CAPTURING THE VOICE OF A COMMUNITY

One of the priorities we had while engaging possible stakeholders for our work was to ensure that we cast a wide net. Everyone who wanted a seat at the table was invited—from local grassroots advocates, to nonprofits, community organizations, and civic leaders. Our goal was to create a cyclical dialogue between community and local government.



MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE: FINDING NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITIES

Outside of the programming we organized, we participated in other local community events to drive awareness to the project and meet community members. These events included local days of celebration or festivals like Early Settler's Day in La Junta, Whittle the Wood Festival, and the Hot Air Balloon Festival in Craig.

Opportunities for Educational Presentations and Public Forums

Conducted

25

workshops across the state

Educational Opportunities:

We created and built-upon existing organizational engagement strategies and organized community programming to foster grassroots dialogue. Our community educational forums were constructed on the topics of fair housing and bringing awareness to housing discrimination, laws and best practices regarding service animals, and public accommodations awareness for local business including tax incentives for accessibility projects.

Throughout the two years, we were able to provide 25 educational forums around the state. We also created an outreach strategy to connect community to rental assistance resources, and funding for small businesses, as State/Federal COVID legislation progressed.

Data Collection:

We composed and circulated community-specific surveys to not only collect housing data from our communities of focus, but to implement an additional tool for the community to engage in the affordable housing dialogue.

Disability Law Colorado, in association with The Colorado Health Foundation, te invitamos a unirse a tu comunidad para dejarnos saber sobre las necesidades en alojamiento y vivienda de La Junta.

QUEREMOS SABER DE USTED TI SOBRE LAS NECESIDADES DE VIVIENDA EN LA JUNTA

Acompáñanos a una presentación gratuita sobre TUS derechos respecto al alojamiento y vivienda, véase también sobre los derechos para las personas que necesitan la asistencia de los animales de servicio. Comparte tus dudas y aclara las preguntas durante la discusión de foro abierta, siguiendo la presentación. Se proporcionará comida. Si tienes necesidades de accesibilidad, envíe un correo electrónico a Erica al: evolsine@disabilitylawco.org by September 17, 2021.

DATE: Monday, September 21, 2021

PLACE: Holiday Inn Express (Meeting Room)
27994 US Hwy-50
La Junta, Colorado 81050

TIME: 6:00 to 7:30 PM

If you aren't able to attend in person, please join us digitally at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81486638456>
ASL and Spanish interpretation via Zoom



Helping Small Businesses Understand ADA Compliance and Service Animals

Tuesday July 27, 2021
The Hall
204 W Beaver Ave. Fort Morgan,
CO 80701
12:00PM-1:30PM

Join us for a **FREE** Lunch and Learn Presentation



- Lunch will be provided
- If you aren't able to attend in person, join us digitally at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5654918725>
- If you have any accessibility or accommodation needs, please email Erica no later than 6/18/21 at: evolsine@disabilitylawco.org



We want to hear from you about housing needs in Gunnison

Please come to a FREE housing rights and service animal presentation by Disability Law Colorado. An open forum discussion to follow the presentation. Food will be provided. If you have accessibility or accommodation needs, please email Erica at: evolsine@disabilitylawco.org by August 13, 2021.

DATE: Thursday, August 19, 2021

PLACE: Western Colorado University
University Center's South Conference Room
1 Western Way
Gunnison, CO 81231

TIME: 6:00 to 7:30 PM

If you aren't able to attend in person, please join us digitally at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84322460173>
ASL and Spanish interpretation via Zoom



Housing Access Survey Results



DISABILITY LAW
COLORADO™



Total Respondents:

160

Total Social Media
Survey Engagement:

24,178



88%

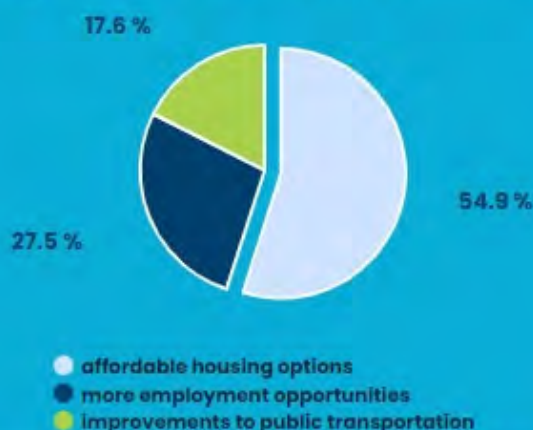
of respondents are Rent
Burdened (Spending 30% or
more of monthly income on
housing)



53%

are Extremely Rent Burdened
(Spending 50% or more of
their monthly income on
housing.)

When asked what improvements
they would like in their community:



transportation

accessibility

better sidewalks

grocery stores

affordable housing

housing rights

lower rent

employment opportunities

close to family

community

80%

of respondents
don't know if they qualify for housing
assistance programs



47%

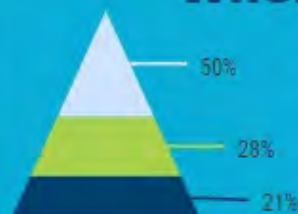
of respondents
reported that it would
be "very difficult" to
find housing options in
their community



**3 most Influential factors
when considering housing:**

- proximity to grocery stores
- proximity to work/school
- proximity to family

When Asked About Eviction:



50% of respondents didn't know who they would reach out to if
facing an eviction
21% would conduct an internet search
28% would solicit legal services or the help of an advocacy
organization

HOUSING ACCESS TOOLKITS AND RESOURCE GUIDES



These toolboxes are part of our effort to provide a Rights, Responsibilities, and Resources Toolkit. It is meant to help members of the community assess accessibility needs to help determine if any accommodations or modifications need to be made. Each kit contains a door pressure gauge, a tape measure, and a level to help people determine if a space meets ADA regulations for accessibility. Included in the kits were instructions on how and when to use these tools, as well as resources on accessibility. These toolboxes are just one part of a larger effort to ensure resources and information on rights and responsibilities regarding housing are accessible to those who need it.

Welcome to Your Toolbox

This toolbox is part of a two-year project funded through a grant from The Colorado Health Foundation to help address the health inequities and housing challenges people with disabilities face in Colorado's rural and mountain frontier communities. The work of this statewide initiative has focused on five communities: Craig, Durango, Fort Morgan, Glenwood Springs, and La Junta with the aim to lay the foundations for systemic change and ensure Coloradans with disabilities have access to safe, accessible, and affordable housing.

This toolbox is part of our effort to provide a Rights, Responsibilities, and Resources toolkit. It is meant to help members of the community assess accessibility needs to help determine if accommodations or modifications need to be made. The toolbox is just one part of a larger effort to ensure resources and information on housing rights and responsibilities are accessible to those who need it.

Much of the information and resources we have collected are available at Disability Law Colorado's website: www.disabilitylawco.org





Local Government Engagement

Aside from engaging with local elected officials as stakeholders to local city council advisory groups regarding issues like multimodal transportation, we also informed local governments about recently adopted state legislation, and appropriation of federal recovery funds. This was to ensure they were accessing all available mechanisms to develop municipal projects that create and preserve housing stock.

State Government Engagement

The CO legislature established an Affordable Housing Task Force, and we were able to share our legislative input with members and legislators of the committee. These recommendations included:

- A. The need to establish security deposit guarantor program**
- B. To structure AMI formulas to better support workforce housing in rural communities (specifically communities adjacent to resort communities)**
- C. Allow a more supportive funding structure for counties to leverage funds for collaborative projects and build capacity within county departments and community-based non-profits.**
- D. Establishing rural partnerships with skilled-trade apprenticeship programs to train and retain a skilled workforce for housing construction/refurbishment**

Voices for Change

We also wanted to highlight the voice of local disabilities advocates and their personal experiences. We documented these interviews, and they can be found on DLC's YouTube page. **They can also be viewed by clicking on the small house icons on the final page of this document.**

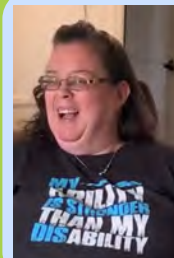




Housing is Health: Coloradans Speak Out on Housing



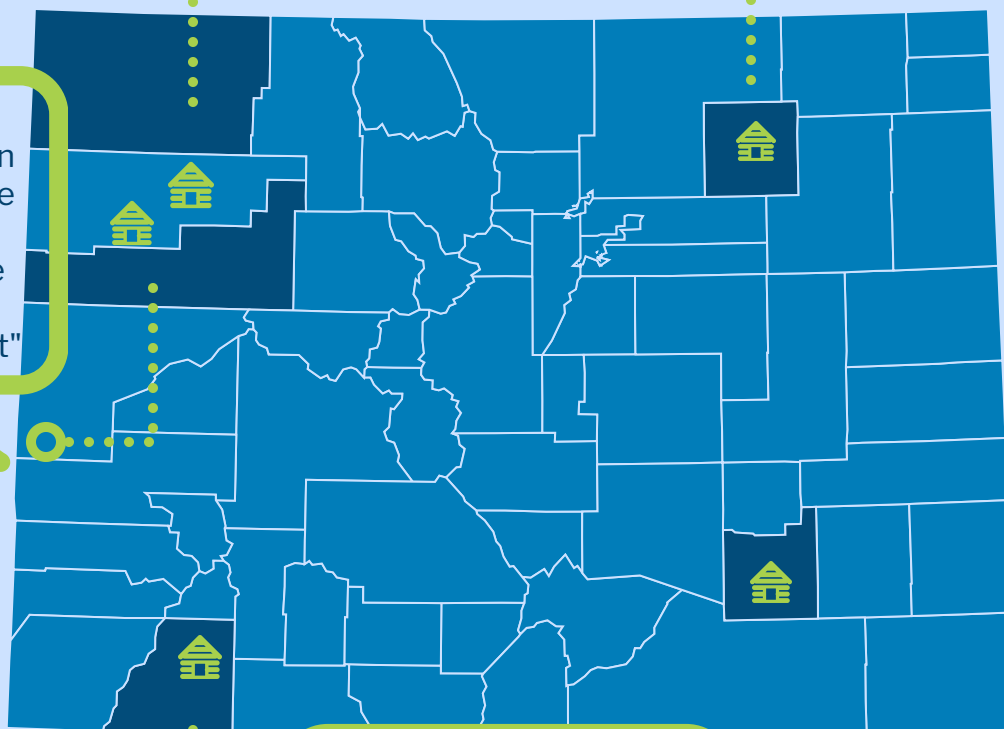
"Senior Bus is down right now. I had appointments this morning but I had to cancel them."



"Education on housing in this area would be good because a lot of people just don't know [their rights]."



"I'd love to have my own place, maybe rent a home so I could be more independent"



"The bus stopped at Pinion Terrace because of budget cuts. I went to City Hall and fought for it but nobody wanted to help so they stopped it."

Special Thanks to



The Colorado Health Foundation™