



Montrose Outlook 2023

Reaching New Heights

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Montrose Outlook 2023

In this publication you will find a variety of stories depicting the growth that is happening in Montrose. From infrastructure to education and beyond Montrose’s future looks bright and is reaching heights that weren’t imagined a decade ago,

Montrose Regional Airport is the cornerstone of that growth. The hub that has allowed the commercial growth Montrose is experiencing to be possible. It feels like in the not so distant past that famed aviator Chuck Yeager was here in 1988 to dedicate the new terminal at the airport and now MTJ has surpassed all expectations and leads the region in traffic. The expansion is the lead in Montrose Outlook 2023.

Colorado Outdoors wasn’t even a thought then but the seed that was planted by David and Doug Drago along with the City of Montrose, Montrose Urban Renewal Association and Montrose Economic Development Council and others is starting to blossom. Commercial, retail, hospitality and housing are now more than a vision as the reality of the complex comes to life.

The cranes you see working south of town for the new ambulatory services building that Montrose Regional Health envisioned signals that the health and medical industry will grow exponentially in the next few years.

Yes, growth is here and there is more to come. The Colorado Mesa University campus continues to expand. The Montrose County School District continues to find new ways to reach its student’s needs.

This was the vision that those who supported the new Montrose Recreation Center and Public Safety Complex had in mind. These complexes are the reality of a growing community and kudos to them for seeing the future.

The staff at the Montrose Daily Press are proud to give you a glimpse of what is happening in 2023 through this magazine. It doesn’t cover everything but we’ll be there to chronicle history as it unfolds before our eyes.

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Contents

INFRASTRUCTURE

- New airport construction 6
- Why we have nice things 10
- Street maintenance initiative. 14

COMMERCIAL

- MURA moves forward 16

HEALTHCARE

- Outpatient centers on the rise 18
- Montrose Regional Health 20

INDUSTRY

- Colorado Outdoors 24
- MEDC update. 28
- Commercial growth 30

EDUCATION

- MCSD expands 32

CHILDCARE

- Caring for our youngest. 35

HOUSING

- Wave of subdivision plans 37
- Market could stabilize 38

RECREATION

- Rec District flexes 40

PROJECT 7 UPDATE

- Key backup treatment plan progresses 42

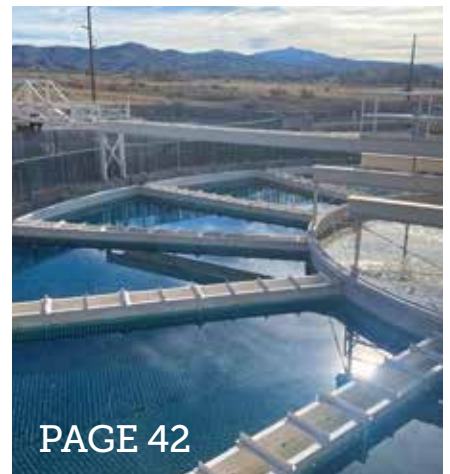
BUSINESS CULTIVATION

- Kitchen for entrepreneurs to open soon. 44

PAGE 16



PAGE 14



PAGE 42

PAGE 20



PAGE 38

NEW BOARD CHAIR AS MURA MOVES FORWARD



The north Flex Building within Colorado Outdoors. MURA approved \$1.1 million, which came from the City of Montrose's general fund, for site improvements at the Flex Buildings. (Courtesy/Colorado Outdoors LLC)

By **Rhiannon Bergman**
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With construction moving forward on multiple projects within the Colorado Outdoors Campus, the Montrose Urban Renewal Authority (MURA) has a lot to look forward to this year.

MURA aids Colorado Outdoors with restoration of the land as well as the building of infrastructure. Other projects that utilized Urban Renewal Authorities in Colorado include the Pepsi Center and the relocation of Elich Gardens in Denver.

MURA elected Montrose City Councilor

Barbara Bynum as new board chair earlier this year. "I am excited to chair the MURA board. I think that the projects going on there are great for our community, and I am excited to help out in this role," Bynum said.

In terms of upcoming projects it is important for MURA to look at how well the relative project will help the community while balancing how much the project's revenue will pay back to the TIF, said Bynum.

TIF, or Tax Increment Financing, is a finance model that allows the city to use future tax revenues to pay for current improvements in infrastructure.

City Manager Bill Bell, also executive director of the MURA, explained that when MURA was created, the city had a substantial amount of reserves in its water fund.

"Instead of borrowing outside money and paying interest we (the City) borrowed money from ourselves at a four

percent interest rate. That money is paid back to the city water fund," said Bell. Bell also said MURA hasn't had to take on any outside debt for Colorado Outdoors.

For being only five years into a 25 year plan (the plan started in 2017 and will go into 2042), the Colorado Outdoors development has seen a lot of progress as of late. Bell reportedly received positive feedback from community members for recent projects and said they were moving fairly fast in terms of their timeline.

Currently, Lamont Companies is adding units to their new Fairfield by Marriott hotel using a modular construction model. The Fairfield by Marriott is located at the northern entrance of the Colorado Outdoors Campus. It will be four floors and include 90 rooms; the hotel is on track to open this fall.

"In terms of bringing in revenue, the hotel and restaurant projects are gonna be the biggest benefit because they

will also see sales tax, lodging tax, and restaurant tax,” said Bynum. This will be used to pay back to the TIF.

Businesses already established within Colorado Outdoors include Mayfly Outdoors, Secret Creek (previously known as Colorado Yurt Company) and Italian restaurant Trattoria Di Sofia which will begin offering outdoor seating in the warmer months. March saw the grand opening of Flex Rec within the Flex Buildings at the core of campus.

Mayfly also recently announced its acquisition of Dyna-King Inc., which makes hand-crafted fly-tying vises and tools.

Shelter Distilling, a brewery that originates from California, broke ground in April “The status of our projects are moving along pretty good,” said Bell.

“I am also excited about housing. Although it has a lower repayment (for

“Instead of borrowing outside money and paying interest we (the City) borrowed money from ourselves at a four percent interest rate. That money is paid back to the city water fund,” said Bell.

TIF) without sales tax, those added housing units are good for the community,” Bynum said.

Basecamp Apartments, located on the southern end of campus, will eventually hold 96 apartments ranging from studios, to one or two

bedrooms. The housing is priced at \$1,600 for a one-bedroom and \$2,000 for a two-bedroom, according to information shared by Blueline Equity Partners last November.

Some residents began moving in this past March.

Colorado Outdoors will eventually include a medical center, although this center has been funded privately and not through the city or MURA. The Colorado Outdoors Medical Center is a 50,000 square-foot ambulatory care center, through Ovation Healthcare and its subsidiary, Velocity Surgical Management.

The MURA board has nine people on it, consisting of five city council members and three representatives for the county, its school district, its special districts, as well as a community at-large representative filled by the Montrose Fire Protection District.

The river trail at Colorado Outdoors.



OUTPATIENT CENTERS ON THE RISE

By **Kylea Henseler**
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Two new outpatient centers will serve Montrose by the end of next year, one an expansion of Montrose Regional Health and the other a private facility on the Colorado Outdoors campus.

Steel walls are already rising next to Hobby Lobby on the MRH ambulatory care and office facility, which CEO Jeff Mengenhausen said will open next January.

The total project cost for the four-story, 80,000-square-foot facility is around \$45 million, according to Mengenhausen, but MRH didn't have to shell out all the cash upfront.

The hospital owns the land on which the facility will sit, and NexCore Group, a healthcare real estate and investment firm, will lease it. NexCore will build the facility using its own funding, which the hospital will lease under a 75-year contract.

Mengenhausen said the facility will include some outpatient services that were previously provided on the hospital campus in a more convenient setting for patients.

The first floor will include an imaging



Rendering of the Montrose Regional Health Ambulatory service building in River Landing.

center, where patients can access tests like MRIs, CT Scans and X-rays, as well as a women's imaging center with tests like ultrasounds and mammograms.

"It's a one-stop shop where they can come in, get everything they need, and then leave," he said.

The building will also be home to a complete outpatient lab, physical therapy services, rehab and the hospital's cosmetic service line.

On the second floor, women will be

able to find OBGYN services, and spine and pain patients will be able to make appointments with the hospital's newest department (see page x.) Mengenhausen said the third floor will be dedicated to community partner Cedar Point Health, which provides primary care services, and the fourth floor will be an outpatient surgery center. He said especially for surgery patients, getting procedures done at the outpatient center rather than a hospital will be cost-effective as well as convenient.

Across town, Ovation Healthcare, formerly QHR, and JLL are planning the development of the Colorado Outdoors Medical Center, which will be located next to the new Marriott hotel. David Dragoo, founder of Colorado Outdoors, said the center is now expected to open in 2024, though the Montrose Daily Press reported last year it was originally supposed to open in 2023.

The medical center will be around 50,000 square feet, and the Daily Press previously reported the price tag is around \$30 million.

According to Dragoo, the center will offer outpatient surgery and medical services including urgent care and imaging. Officials from Ovation Healthcare did not comment before press time.

Rendering of the new Colorado Outdoors Medical Center





Aerial view of Secret Creek at Colorado Outdoors.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT AT BUSTLING COLORADO OUTDOORS CAMPUS

Since its founding roughly five years ago, Colorado Outdoors has come a long way. That's in part due to the Montrose Urban Renewal Authority, which through a 25-year Tax Increment Financing option, helped founders David and Doug Dragoo launch outdoor business and residential development in northern Montrose.

By Rhiannon Bergman
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TIF, or Tax Increment Financing, is a finance model that allows the city to use future tax revenues to pay for current improvements in infrastructure, the Daily Press previously reported. With this model the city borrows money from itself at a 4% interest rate then uses tax revenues to pay back the city.

Montrose City Manager Bill Bell said MURA has not taken on any outside debt for the Colorado Outdoors project and that when MURA was created, the city had a good amount of reserves in its water fund. The money is to be paid back into the water fund.

In five short years, Colorado Outdoors' campus has grown exponentially.

One of the biggest growth spurts is seen in the new Fairfield by Marriott Hotel located on the north end of campus. In February, Chris Lamont, vice president of Lamont Companies (the developer for the hotel) said the modular construction model used could build the four floors and 90 rooms of the Fairfield in just one week.

The hotel is looking to open this summer, and MURA's new chair, Montrose City Councilor Barbara Bynum, said it will help the campus, plus Montrose, by paying back into the TIF. "In terms of bringing in revenue, the hotel and restaurant projects are gonna be the biggest benefit because they will also see sales tax, lodging tax, and restaurant tax," she said.

The hotel also looks to bring an estimated 30 to 50 jobs to town.

"I'm told this is the first modular project done like this in Montrose," said David Dragoo. "It won't be the last."

The first building of the Basecamp

Apartments Complex, located on the other end of campus from the hotel, is complete and now has tenants.

The complex will eventually contain 96 apartments across four buildings. Monthly rent for a one bedroom apartment ranges from \$1,575 to \$1,650 while two bedroom apartments range from \$1,975 to \$2,050 per month.

The other three buildings are planning to open in July or August.

“The status of our projects is moving along pretty good,” said Bell earlier this year.

These last few months have also seen the grand opening of Flex Rec within Colorado Outdoors Flex Buildings, a complex where businesses can lease space. This satellite facility for the Montrose Recreation District offers a gym as well as fitness classes to a new side of town.

Located at the core of campus, the

Flex Buildings are also home to Italian restaurant Trattoria Di Sofia, a new Bright Beginnings building with a custom playground, Rowan Oak, which relocated from the Midwest, and the expansion of Paul Davis Restoration from the Glenwood Springs area.

Some of these businesses are local while others have come from out of town or even out of state. The Flex buildings also house the local Montrose Anglers, Smithfly, originally from Ohio, Abel Automatics from California, and Family Time Spas from Grand Junction.

Secret Creek, previously known as Colorado Yurt Company, is also headquartered in Colorado Outdoors. Its location boasts of an outdoor area where prospective customers can walk inside yurts and other structures for a hands-on experience.

In mid-March Bell provided an update for some of the newest projects at Colorado Outdoors.

There are basic amenities, like the new public restrooms on the north end of the Uncompahgre River trail.

On the development front, Shelter Distilling is expected to open in December of this year, while Colorado Outdoors Medical Center is slating 2024 for its opening.

Near the distillery is the already finished Mayfly Outdoors manufacturing facility, which manufactures fly fishing equipment. According to Bell, more land near these two businesses has been sold to private developers.

Right in the middle of the campus, said Bell, are plans for a mixed-use development that will have commercial spaces as well as residential. He also said there are hopes for a small grocery market on campus.

That’s not all — more growth is anticipated at Colorado Outdoors.

OUTDOOR CAMPUS, *continued on page 26*

Marriott Hotel modular construction in progress.





An inside/out look at a Flex building unit at Colorado Outdoors.

OUTDOOR CAMPUS, CONTINUED

“We are also working on adding more restaurants, and we are optimistic we’ll have more announcements on those too,” said David.

In May of 2022, David stated private investment was exceeding \$65 million. He also said private investment for active projects

is approaching \$116 million.

In terms of MURA’s investment, in May of last year the entity had spent more than \$11.7 million on projects within Colorado Outdoors. MURA also had taken around \$13 million in promissory notes from the City of Montrose. Bell said those numbers

remain accurate, because there were no new promissory notes this past year.

Since MURA is a 25-year project, full payment of the notes is not due to the city until 2042.

Abel Reels at the Mayfly facility.



CARING FOR OUR YOUNGEST: NEW CLASSROOMS OPENING, UPK ON THE HORIZON

By **Kylea Henseler**
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Bright Beginnings at Colorado Outdoors, a branch of Montrose's Maslow Academy of Applied Learning, opened the doors to its first two classrooms early this year to serve infants and young toddlers. Maslow's Executive Director Chrissy Simmons said despite being less profitable than preschool classrooms, which will open at the school by this summer, she wanted to open services for Montrose County's youngest residents first because that's where the need is greatest.

Simmons pointed to the 2021 Montrose County Childhood Needs Assessment conducted by Root Policy Research, which deemed Montrose County a "childcare desert."

Of childcare needs in Montrose she said: "It's all across the board, but the main need is in infants and toddler."

The study defines a childcare desert as an area where there are "three times as many children as licensed childcare spots." And while Simmons said a handful more have opened since it was conducted, she thinks the description still applies to Montrose County.

Bright Beginnings will open three more classrooms, including one for older toddlers and two for preschoolers, by the end of summer, providing 70 to 80 childcare spots in total. And while parents can still apply for these classrooms and may be able to snag a spot, the shared waitlist for Bright Beginnings and Maslow, which serves students through the third grade, is over 100.

There are 2,641 children under 6 in Montrose County, according to the



Chrissy Simmons, executive director for Bright Beginnings and Maslow Academy, discussed completion plans with Tony Vroman, field superintendent for Shaw Construction, the general contractor who worked on the new location for the infant and toddler school at the Colorado Outdoors Campus. (Stephen Woody/Special to the MDP)

study, and roughly 70% of them live in households where all parents are part of the workforce. But as of 2021 existing preschools, childcare centers and licensed family care providers could only serve 741 children per day.

Just over half, 53% of parents surveyed for the study said they were happy with their current care arrangement, but among those who do not use non-parent providers, 61% said they would like to, and the biggest barrier to care for this group was affordability.

Without access to licensed childcare, Simmons said, families are forced to cobble together solutions like delaying the return

of one parent to the workforce, using unlicensed services and leaning on family members and friends.

She believes the lack of continuity isn't in the best interests of the child. And, in some cases, a parent who hoped to rejoin the workforce will instead stay home, which has consequences for both the family and the local economy.

Some parents have few options, especially for their smallest children. Between childcare centers and licensed family care, the study cited just 62 available daily spots for infant care and 679 for toddlers and preschoolers.



The Fox Room at Bright Beginnings, Colorado Outdoors complex, welcomes toddlers. (Submitted photo)

Bright Beginnings' new classrooms will help some families, but these spots may be a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed to meet a demand Simmons believes will only grow.

Despite the demand, opening these classrooms isn't necessarily an appealing option for business owners, she explained.

"It doesn't make money," she said. In fact, she said it takes around two preschool spots to support one infant or toddler spot since the latter requires a much lower teacher-to-child ratio and is under more regulation.

Finding those teachers is another major hurdle, as it's hard to make a living wage in the field. Simmons estimated early childcare teachers in Montrose County likely make around \$20 on the high end, and that includes workers with college or advanced degrees.

She said if childcare centers paid workers what they deserve, and kept the lights on and certifications current, the true cost of infant and toddler care would be over \$80 per day – more than many families spend on rent or mortgage payments.

It's a catch-22.

Simmons believes the solution lies in public assistance for childcare. She said people recognize the importance of this service across political parties, and while no one wants to pay more taxes, it will be hard for Montrose to continue growing if there's nowhere for its children to go.

"We have to figure out as a community to do a public-private partnership to have sustainable childcare," she said.

Early Childhood Centers gear up for UPK

The upcoming 2023-2024 school year will be the first where families can qualify for the state's new universal preschool program, and the Montrose County School District is getting ready. While participation is optional this year Penny Harris, director of the district's Early Childhood Centers, said the centers will participate and accommodate as many new students as they can while continuing to provide a high-quality education.

Under the program, children are eligible for 15 hours per week, or half-day preschool, for the year before they enter kindergarten, while some qualifying families can be eligible for more hours.

"We have to figure out as a community to do a public-private partnership to have sustainable childcare," Simmons said.

Families also get some choice in where they use these hours as long as there are available spots, according to Harris, and state funding will be directed accordingly. However, since not all providers are participating in the first year, some families may have to go without– though school district Public Information Officer Matt Jenkins said this won't be for lack of trying on the district's part.

In January, Colorado Newline reported over 60,000 children across the state will be eligible for the program this year, and administrators believe just over 50% will be served.

"There is a possibility for some communities, ours included, that there may not be places for these students to be served this first year," Harris said. She will have a more complete idea of enrollment later this month, as parents were able to start identifying their first choice for preschool

in January and the centers opened registration in March.

As of now, Harris said there's more interest than ever before in the program, and registration numbers are higher than they were at the same time last year.

The centers currently serve nearly 300 students between half and full-day preschool. The majority qualify either through Head Start, which serves children living at or below the poverty line (34,688 in yearly income for a family of four according to federal guidelines), or the Colorado Preschool Program, which will end when universal preschool is implemented. The latter program identifies eligible children by looking at ten risk factors including family homelessness, an abusive adult in the family, drug or alcohol abuse in the family, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, poor social skills and the need for language development. The centers also serve students with disabilities, and a small handful of students at the centers pay tuition or were deemed ineligible for the above programs but allowed in due to available space.

She acknowledged a "missing middle" for preschool students who don't meet these qualifications but still need care, and pointed to a recent study that deemed Montrose a "childcare desert."

According to the 2021 Montrose County Childhood Needs Assessment conducted by Root Policy Research, there are 2,641 children under 6 in Montrose County, and only 741 spots per day in existing preschools, childcare centers and licensed family care providers.

Harris said implementing universal preschool "turned us upside down," as district administrators have a whole new ruleset to follow after the sunset of the Colorado Preschool Program. However, she said now the centers will now have an opportunity to serve a broader range of students, and children who may not have previously qualified will now get the chance to attend preschool.

"We're going to do everything we possibly can with our existing state resources and the additional state funding and additional demand to ensure that families can be served," Jenkins said.



The main entrance to MRD's newest facility Flex Rec on opening day, Jan. 31. (Rhiannon Bergman/Montrose Daily Press)

MONTROSE REC DISTRICT FLEXES WITH THE TIMES

By Rhiannon Bergman
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With new facilities and a rise in visitor numbers, the Montrose Recreation District (MRD) has a variety of spaces for those looking to get out and get active.

What MRD has been up to:

MRD has started off the new year strong as projects that began last year finish up.

On Jan. 31, MRD opened a satellite location, Flex Rec, within the much-discussed Flex Buildings located in the middle of the Colorado Outdoors campus.

The 5,500 square foot space contains a gym room filled with equipment based

around functional fitness but also features space for events such as aerial silk classes, which MRD is looking to host in partnership with Weehawken Creative Arts.

There is also a community room where classes can be taught on what exactly functional fitness as well as Hunter Fit, a class on how to stay fit for the hunting season.

In a conversation with the press before Flex Rec's opening, MRD Executive Director Mari Steinbach said the district used community focus groups along with surveys and found out the town was in need of more satellite facilities.

The MRD landed on the north side of town because a location there helps serve midtown, downtown, and north end residents, said Steinbach.

Flex Rec joins other MRD facilities like the Field House (indoor turf), Holly Park, McNeil Fields, and the Community Recre-



Signs outside MRD's Rec Center, showing the Uncompahgre River Trail and Rec Center's outdoor track. (Rhiannon Bergman/Montrose Daily Press)

ation Center which opened in 2017, with a swimming pool complex, walking track, half-court and climbing wall among the amenities.

The numbers:

MRD saw a lot of people in 2022. At the Forum hosted by the City of Montrose on Feb. 22, MRD's Community Outreach Coordinator Wade Ploussard and Senior Activities Coordinator Cindy Marino explained that the rec district is recovering from the pandemic.

Currently MRD has 6,650 active passes. They average around 7,450 paid visits per week.

"Over the past 10 years we've really just completely transformed from a small town rec district that ran a pool," said Ploussard. "And now we're one of the leading parks and rec districts in the entire state."

For all MRD 2022 programs, including classes, tours, hikes, and events, the district had just under 47,000 participants in 2022, with fitness programs

(referring to fitness classes not gym walk-ins) leading the charge at 20,251 participants. Next were aquatic programs with 9,919 participants, then adult programs, followed by youth programs.

The senior programs that include outings, trips, tours, and services had 1,806 participants. Senior programs at the Senior Center itself saw 8,356 participants.

Nearly 34,000 people reside within the Montrose Recreation District boundaries. Participation rates for programs and facilities is 43%, while the national average is 31%, according to Ploussard.

MRD has 29 core employees, but hires almost 200 part-time employees as well. Their annual operating budget is around \$7 million.

"We have a lot of statistics ... but what it's all about is this. It's people getting out of the house, getting together, getting exercise, and growing friendships," said Marino at the Feb. 22 Forum.



Ella and Breelynn Anderson playing in the MRD's fountains pool.