

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CENTER, COLORADO MAKES STRIDES DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

January 12, 2020 -- Center, CO – Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) is celebrating the progress of Center, Colorado, a [Colorado Challenge Community](#), which has continued to move objectives forward during the 2020 COVID- 19 Pandemic.

With continued momentum through the 2020 Pandemic, the Town of Center has completed some major improvement projects including undergrounding a good portion of the electric wires in the Town, re-paving half of the Town, and installing water meters for the Town water system. To support local economic initiatives the Town of Center established a partnership with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to create a computer lending program that will eventually lead to a Town of Center Entrepreneurship and Innovation Club to support local entrepreneurs. Additionally, the Town has been a leader in coalition building and helped coordinate a Department of Local Affairs grants to support the San Luis Valley Housing Coalition's \$270,000 Valley-wide housing study and served as a pass through for Valley Wide Health to build a New Dental Clinic in the Town of Center.

"The Town of Center decided to shape our own future and stop kicking the can down the road," said Brian Lujan, Town Manager. "The Challenge Program and DCI has helped the Town build a team of dedicated partners, consultants, and resources that keep momentum going and help us move our strategy forward."

In 2021, the Town of Center plans to keep the momentum going and has already received a \$20K grant from Colorado Housing and Financing Authority to support local placemaking and entrepreneurship efforts including activation and beautification. The Town plans to secure a full time volunteer and embark on a series of trainings for long-term financing mechanisms to plan for capitalizing on private investment including the six downtown properties that have changed ownership and are being considered for redevelopment. The Town of Center will also begin working with Mass Design, an international housing and design firm, to develop a proposal for assistance to plan for a 90 acre parcel the Town owns with housing, broadband infrastructure, and a civic and educational campus.

DCI has been honored to work with the Town of Center for the last three years and has been inspired to witness and provide support for overcoming pre-existing challenges and building a plan to create stronger communities into the future. The Town of Center serves as a model for the Colorado Challenge Accelerator Program which has helped each community move the needle.

"It has been incredible to work with the Town of Center since 2017. As a Colorado Challenge Community, the Town has demonstrated a dynamic approach for building amazing community partnership, adapting to address unexpected challenges, and building leadership opportunities in the community and region," said Katherine Correll, DCI Executive Director of Downtown Colorado, Inc. "The whole DCI team has been honored to be a part of it."

DCI and the Town of Center in the San Luis Valley, a 2019 Colorado Challenge Community, has continued to flourish following a temporary placemaking installation to engage around attracting investment. The Town has seen impressive impacts including change of ownership and investment in six long-standing vacant buildings, two

commercial and two housing units currently under renovation, approval of funding for beautification, a partnership to bring an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub to the Town of Center, funding for a Downtown Capacity Building AmeriCorps VISTA, and connecting with property owners who will donate a property for youth run coworking.

Colorado Challenge Communities receive ongoing support from DCI to establish sustainable economic and community development following an intensive process supported by the Economic Development Class at the School of Public Affairs (SPA) at the University of Colorado Denver. The SPA students work to identify and connect with stakeholders, outline opportunities, and establish a plan of action. In 2021, DCI has identified three more Colorado Challenge Communities from the San Luis Valley, including San Luis, Antonito, and La Jara. From January to May of 2021, each community will have a student dedicated to establishing a plan based on turning each community's challenges into an opportunity. The Town of Center serves as a model and DCI will continue working with the Town of Center to support the next steps in sustainable community and economic development.

The Town of Center is demonstrating how to spur revitalization in the new normal. To stay in touch with progress in the Town of Center, visit the SLVPlaces.ORG site where the Town will share progress and invite participation from all partners and friends!

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About the Colorado Challenge Accelerator Program

Since 2017, Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) has worked with 30 communities around the state with the Colorado Challenge Accelerator Program to consider solutions for challenges including housing, historic building rehabilitation, business attraction, seasonal economies, and more. DCI's Colorado Challenge Accelerator Program is a team building accelerator focused on establishing a plan of work and proposal that engages public, private, and non-profit partners to address a significant community challenge over the course of twelve months. The Colorado Challenge Program works to transform the community's challenge into an opportunity, to establish a proposal, financing approach, and team of community partners ready to implement their plan of action.

About the Town of Center

The Town of Center, is a Statutory Town in Rio Grande and Saguache counties in the U.S. state of Colorado. The town's population was 2,230 at the 2010 United States Census.

About Downtown Colorado, Inc.

Established in 1982 as the Colorado Community Revitalization Association, Downtown Colorado, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit membership organization that aims to build better communities by providing assistance to downtowns, commercial districts and town centers in Colorado. Organization members represent downtown organizations, local governments, development and improvement districts, consultants, individuals and others involved in downtown and community development.

Downtown Colorado, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer. DCI employs personnel without regard to race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental handicap, veteran status and marital status.

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