



To: Mayor Jason Gray and Castle Rock Town Council
From: Lori Gerlits, President & CEO, Castle Rock Chamber
Date: July 30, 2026
Re: Castle Rock Chamber 2026 Mid-Year Report

Mission: The Castle Rock Chamber cultivates a thriving business community through engagement, collaboration, and advocacy.

The scope of the Contract for Services with the Town of Castle Rock - the Chamber is responsible for coordinating the efforts of Business Support Services (eXcelerate and professional development programs), Workforce development, Community Marketing, Visitor Center Operations and Tourism support, and Signature events for the Castle Rock community including the Douglas County Fair Parade, Artfest and Starlighting.

I. BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMING

eXcelerate Business Professional Development continues to foster entrepreneurial activity by providing the essential information, infrastructure and resources required for successful business development and growth. The Chamber offers multiple education and services at no cost to business, civic and nonprofit sectors. We strategize and plan relevant training events and other programs to educate and equip business owners, executives, managers, and their employees.

Other Chamber programs support education, business support, networking, advocacy and connectivity include Women of Influence; NextGen (for Young Professionals); Quarterly luncheon series with notable speakers and panelists such as the Mayor, Police & Fire Chief; Business Unwinds (increasing frequency from quarterly to monthly); and more. Leads Groups are also a valuable part of community connectivity supporting local businesses with B2B referrals to strengthen the viability of Castle Rock businesses. Initiated in fall 2025 – the Veterans Alliance monthly program, designed to support veterans transition from military to business or nonprofit roles.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Business Assistance Programing:

- January through June 2026 - 90 events (meetings/programs) were held focused on professional development, training, education, business connectivity/networking for business leaders and their employees. Topics included business management, financial planning, budgeting, human resources support, benefits coordination, AI in the workplace, health/mental health considerations, social media/marketing, and more. Attendance in each program ranges from 10 to 120, with more than 1,600 participating in business programs January through June.

- One-on-one business consulting – We utilize business resources with the Douglas County Libraries, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and Arapahoe/Douglas Works! on appropriate business services, counseling, and mentoring. We also connect our members with local referrals appropriate for the workplace and other resources.

Workforce Development | Talent Pipeline focuses on workforce readiness efforts, leadership and talent development to champion a stronger Castle Rock through collaborative partnerships between business, government, and education partners. Together, we foster a pro-business environment with a strong workforce and talent pipelines for the success and sustainability of our local economy. We work on a collaborative conversation regarding the workforce needs of our businesses and the opportunities to support educators, students, and families for a strong talent readiness pipeline into the future as well as development of leaders encouraging civic engagement.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Talent Pipeline Douglas County:

- We led a successful and growing *Tours for Teachers* program through school year 2025/2026 with six full day programs (increased from five the prior year). Nearly 120 educators participated (average 21 per session), from 15 schools. This program is designed for educators to gain a better understanding of the current and future workforce needs and trends within the local economy. All events are hosted at local employer locations and includes independent assignments and exploration for participants. In collaboration with Douglas County Schools and higher education partners (ie Arapahoe Community College Sturm Collaboration Campus, CSU, etc). Applications open August 1 to DCSD teachers, administrators, and counselors and continue through the school year.

The schedule (below) follows the Colorado Career Cluster Model utilized by DCSD CTE programs. Each tour focuses on different industries/niches of Douglas County, continuing to show Castle Rock as the leader in Talent Development initiatives.

Tours for Teachers

Spring 2026 – February: Hospitality, Human Services, Education

Spring 2026 – March: Business, Marketing, Entrepreneurship

Spring 2026 – April: Natural Resources, Agriculture

Fall 2026 – September: Caring for Communities

Fall 2026 – October: Building & Moving

Fall 2026 – November: Investing in your Future

- The Chamber continues to partner with A/D Works! and the Douglas County School District (DCSD) on virtual and in-person **Job Fairs** - includes ACC Sturm Collaboration Campus, DCSD campuses, or other local venues.
- The Chamber continues to host the Castle Rock Job Board promoting businesses' open positions as a free service to support local recruitment. Utilization of the Castle Rock Chamber job board increased by 15% year to date over 2025.

Leadership Douglas County (LDC) continues to inspire participants in the work they do; strengthen them and the organizations they serve; and facilitate a heightened sense of community connection to encourage individuals to take positions of civic and organizational leadership in the community.

We coordinate educational and experiential full day sessions developing existing executives, leaders, and program participants to strengthen our community.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Leadership Douglas County:

- The program celebrated it's 26th graduating class in June 2026 with 24 graduates.
- Participants continue the success of the program by shaping the experiential days for the 2026/2027 class. 22 are enrolled for the coming year September 2026 to June 2027.
- Past participants and other community leaders realize the impact of the program providing letters of reference for staff/employees to continue support of the program and applicant acceptance. 494 community leaders have graduated from LDC since inception in 1999.
- Participants must live or work in Douglas County, and the majority (over 60%) are from our Castle Rock community. Diversity in industry strengthens overall culture and collaboration for our region.

II. SPECIAL EVENTS & TOURISM PROJECTS

Community Event Management

Community character, safety, and events continue to be a driving force for everyone to appreciate and enjoy Castle Rock. We support the local economy bringing visitors for appealing community events that celebrate our hometown atmosphere. The Chamber takes pride leading Signature events with the partnership of the Town, CR Police Department, CR Fire Department, Downtown Alliance, Parks, and volunteer staffing. We continue to work toward improvement and increased quality providing family-oriented entertainment, capturing data, and evaluating return on these events with positive community appeal for Castle Rock, and increased sales revenues. The Chamber Service Agreement with the Town includes organization, promotion, and implementation of the Douglas County Fair Parade (July 25), Colorado Artfest (September 12 & 13) and Starlighting (November 21).

Douglas County Fair Parade kicks off the Douglas County Fair & Rodeo annually. The Fair Parade exemplifies old-fashioned, hometown charm showcasing Castle Rock businesses, 4-H, veterans, schools, rodeo leaders/royalty, local dignitaries, and first responders representing our hometown ranching heritage and business community. This year, we brought additional recognition for local elected officials and businesses serving our community for more than 50 years, in light of America 250 – Colorado 150.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES for the Douglas County Fair Parade:

In 2025, just under 18,000 attended the parade with 96 parade entries. 2026 had 98 entries, attendance is anticipated to increase although final data is not yet available. Parade participants were encouraged to incorporate red/white/blue in the event in recognition of America 250 – Colorado 150. Volunteers provided more than 105 hours support for the event - 31 community individuals, 6 distinguished local judges, and two emcees. Chamber and VisitCastleRock.org websites see tremendous increases in traffic from June to July for Parade details – more than 22,400 clicks seek details and/or event registration.

III. COMMUNITY MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION

To facilitate impactful community marketing, the Castle Rock Chamber continues to manage the VisitCastleRock.org website and Community Events Calendar with ongoing content curation. In an

effort for our residents and visitors to receive a positive emotional and intellectual impression of our community, we strive to create wonderful experiences encouraging a positive live, work, shop, play and stay environment. This site is visually engaging and interactive for online users and allows local businesses, nonprofit organizations, vendors, and event planners to submit events to the community calendar. The goal is to keep our residents connected and give them a sense of community with enhanced social, cultural, and recreational experiences.

The Chamber has enhanced relationships with other local publications and media channels to expand marketing and promotion of community events and programs. Media relations include partnerships with BeLocal (Castle Rock), Castle Rock City Lifestyle, Castle Pines Connection, Area Newsletters, and Fox31 are being utilized to build community recognition.

Cross marketing efforts continue with our community partners – the Town of Castle Rock, Downtown Alliance and Douglas County, with the goal to expand our communities' events exposure and leverage collaboration among our Town.

The annual Castle Rock Livability magazine is available in print (over 3,000 copies are distributed to local businesses and establishments), and it also available digitally with links on the CRC website. Livability showcases Castle Rock's strengths through photography and professionally written stories of Castle Rock's community character while promoting features, businesses, and local attractions.

The Chamber boasts superior customer service welcoming tenured and new residents, those considering relocation, and visitors to the community with friendly assistance. The **Castle Rock Visitor Center**, housed in the Chamber's office, acts as the Town's one-stop-shop for all things Castle Rock offering a welcoming and helpful face ready to assist.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Community Marketing

Our efforts to maintain our resident/community following and to emerge throughout the community as the source for community information and events will continue as a top priority. Social media is a key part of digital marketing and metrics in addition to the websites noted as well to promote those websites for more details.

- Community Events Mailer (spring edition and fall edition), collaboration with Town of Castle Rock, Downtown Alliance, and Douglas County, were mailed to all Castle Rock residents promoting upcoming events and activities.
- Shop the Rock is mailed to new residents of Castle Rock with information and links to local businesses. Coordinated with the Castle Rock Water Department, 3,700 pieces were mailed in 2025, and views of the Shop the Rock website average over 8,000 views per month in 2026 YTD.
- VisitCastleRock.org page views up year of year with 8% new users since 2025.
- The Chamber continues to increase the number of email campaigns to over 9,500 subscribers (from 8,500 in 2024) and has an open rate ranging from 40% to 68% weekly. We also disseminate information for our Town/County News, Legislative/Under the Dome updates, latest business resources and news, Member Spotlights, and community resources.
- Chamber Social Media. The Chamber utilizes Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn for social media platforms promoting Chamber and Visit Castle Rock offerings. Facebook averages over 40,000 views per month with an increase of 360 followers YOY. Instagram has increased traffic averaging 5,500 views or more per month and steadily increasing since 2025 with 1-3 more

weekly posts promoting our community, events, opportunities, and local business. LinkedIn has also seen an increase of followers consistently YOY at 5%.

- The Chamber website and VisitCastleRock.org has an average session time of 2 minutes 3 seconds for users, and we had 58,000 new viewers over the prior year. The national average session time for business organizations is typically 52 to 54 seconds, showing that our users spend more time discovering information about our community.
- The **Visitor Center** continues to have community appeal. The Visitor Center is open 9am – 5pm Monday through Thursday, 9am – 3pm Friday. In today’s highly digital world, walk-in traffic is still realized in our warm community with 20-25 guests personally welcomed each week. We provide maps, Livability Community Guides, Colorado Tourism guides, postcards, resources, and recommendations for goods, services, events, attractions, outdoor recreation, and hospitality in and around Town.