



To: Mayor Jason Gray and Castle Rock Town Council
From: Lori Gerlits, President & CEO, Castle Rock Chamber
Date: February 12, 2026
Re: Castle Rock Chamber 2025 Year End 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 and Workforce programming, Community Marketing and Tourism efforts, and Signature events for the Castle Rock community.

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 services and information at no cost to both start-ups and established businesses. We strategize and plan relevant training events, workshops, and other programs to educate and equip business owners, executives, managers, and their employees.

Other Chamber programs support community education, engagement, business support, 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.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Business Assistance Programing:

- Professional Development training and major speaker events for business owners and their employees: four (4) events have been held YTD, over 255 attendees. Topics/Presentations included Protecting Your Business & Personal Data; Budget/Money Management Made Simple; Social Media for Business; Fundraising for Nonprofits; Enhancing Communications at Work and HR Guidance; Creating High Impact Websites; QuickBooks Bootcamp; Health & Wellbeing.
- One-on-one business consulting – We collaborate with the Douglas County Library and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to provide appropriate services, recommendations, business counseling and mentoring. We also connect B2B our members with referrals appropriate for the workplace and local resources.

- Other Chamber programs that support education, engagement, networking and connectivity resulted in an additional 64 programs/events supporting local businesses and community connectivity.

Workforce Readiness | Talent Pipeline DC focuses on workforce readiness efforts, which is a multi-industry led program and serves to champion a stronger Castle Rock through collaborative partnerships between business, government, and education partners. Together, we foster a pro-business environment supporting strong workforce and talent pipelines for the success and sustainability of our local businesses. 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.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Talent Pipeline Douglas County:

- We led a successful and growing **Tours for Teachers program** through calendar year with six four full day programs. Nearly 82 educators participated. This program is designed for educators to gain a better understanding of the current and future workforce needs and trends within the local economy. The program was/is hosted at local employer locations and includes assignments and exploration for participants, exclusive to the Douglas County School District (DCSD) and with growth of the program. The schedule follows the Colorado Career Cluster Model utilized by DCSD CTE programs.
- The Chamber continues to partner with A/D Works! and the DCSD on virtual and in-person **Job Fairs** located at ACC Sturm Campus and DCSD Legacy Campus.
- The Chamber continues to host the premier Castle Rock Job Board promoting businesses' open staffing positions as a free service to support workforce recruitment in our local entities and organizations.

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 for the betterment of our community.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES of Leadership Douglas County:

- Participants continue the success of the program by shaping the experiential days for the 2025/2026 class. 24 are enrolled in the current class.
- Past participants and other community leaders realize the impact of the program by providing letters of reference for their staff/employees to continue support of the program and applicant acceptance. 493 community leaders have graduated from LDC to date.
- Participants must live or work in Douglas County, and majority (over 50%) are from Castle Rock. Diversity across our County strengthens culture and collaboration in our region.

II. SPECIAL EVENTS & TOURISM PROJECTS

Community Event Management

Community character, safety, and events continue to be a driving force for why our business owners and residents love Castle Rock. Community events celebrate our hometown atmosphere. The Chamber takes pride in leading several of the community signature events with the partnership

of the Town, CR Police Department, CR Fire Department, Downtown Alliance, Parks, and volunteer staffing. The Chamber continues to work towards improvement and increased quality providing family-oriented entertainment, capturing data, and evaluating return on these events.

The Chamber's Contract of Service with the Town includes organizing, promoting, and implementation of the Douglas County Fair Parade (July 26), Colorado Artfest (September 6 & 7) and Starlighting (November 22).

Douglas County Fair Parade (July 26th) kicks off the Douglas County Fair and Rodeo annually. The Fair Parade exemplifies old-fashioned, hometown charm showcasing Castle Rock businesses, 4-H, veterans, high school marching bands, rodeo queens and dignitaries, and our first responders. Our goal is to feature our hometown ranching heritage and highlight our business community.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES for the DC Fair Parade:

This year, we had 103 parade entries and nearly 18,000 estimated in attendance – a growth from just under 14,000 in 2024, three entries were unable to participate at last minute. We welcomed 25 volunteers, 6 volunteer judges, 2 winners, two emcees, and six Chamber staff. Preliminary reports show the Chamber website saw an increase in users from June to July and the Fair Parade page accounted for 47% of users in July. The Chamber website was driving brand awareness for the Parade and community through multiple search engines and AI.

Castle Rock Artfest (September 6–7, 2025) was a two-day celebration of fine art held annually in downtown Castle Rock. The festival showcases exceptional artistic talent from across the country while transforming Festival Park and Perry Street into a vibrant outdoor gallery. In 2025, we featured 120 juried artists from across the U.S. presenting works ranging from sculpture and painting to jewelry, ceramics, mixed media, and photography. The event also included live main-stage entertainment, food vendors, and an interactive Kids Zone designed to inspire creativity in our youth. Castle Rock Artfest reflects the community's strong commitment to arts and culture while supporting economic vitality in our downtown district.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES for the 2025 Castle Rock Artfest:

This year's event showcased 120 artists nationwide, reinforcing the festival's reputation as a premier regional fine art event. We engaged 56 volunteers who supported event logistics, artist services, and guest engagement through the weekend. Attendees enjoyed offerings from 3 food trucks and performances from 7 live entertainment groups, creating a dynamic festival.

We recognized artistic excellence by honoring 35 award winners, further elevating the prestige and credibility of the show. Additionally, we saw a record number of children participate in hands-on art projects in the Kids Zone, demonstrating strong family engagement and fulfilling our mission to cultivate the next generation of artists and art enthusiasts.

Castle Rock Starlighting is a cherished annual tradition that officially ushers in the holiday season in downtown Castle Rock each November. Established by the Castle Rock Chamber of Commerce in 1962, the event centers on the ceremonial lighting of the star atop the Rock—an iconic symbol first illuminated in 1936. The celebration transforms downtown into a festive holiday destination, featuring live entertainment on multiple stages, carolers and performers throughout the streets, seasonal food and beverage vendors, nonprofit and sponsor booths, family-friendly activities, and visits with Santa Claus.

The evening culminates with the lighting of the star followed by a fireworks display, creating a signature community gathering that reflects Castle Rock’s strong hometown spirit and tradition.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES for the 2025 Castle Rock Starlighting:

The event welcomed just under 49,000 visitors to Downtown Castle Rock, demonstrating its continued growth and regional draw as one of the community’s largest annual gatherings. The celebration featured participation from 73 nonprofit organizations and 74 business sponsors, highlighting strong community partnerships and providing significant visibility opportunities for Chamber members and local organizations.

A total of 102 volunteers supported event logistics, hospitality, and guest service the evening. Attendees enjoyed performances from 22 entertainment groups positioned throughout the event footprint, reinforcing the festive atmosphere and providing continuous engagement.

Castle Rock Starlighting continues to drive substantial foot traffic to the downtown district, strengthen nonprofit fundraising opportunities, elevate sponsor visibility, and reinforce the Chamber’s role as a convener of large-scale, high-impact community events.

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. It’s our intent to create wonderful experiences to encourage a live, work, shop, play and stay environment. This site is visually engaging and interactive for residents and visitors, and allows local businesses, non-profit organizations, vendors, and event planners to submit their events to the Castle Rock community calendar – keeping our residents connected and give them a sense of community.

In 2025, the Chamber continues to refresh the site VisitCastleRock.org. 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.

The annual Castle Rock Livability magazine will be available in print and also digitally available on the CRC website and search engine results online. Livability showcases Castle Rock’s strengths through photography and professionally written stories of Castle Rock’s community character.

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 offices, acts as the Town’s one-stop-shop for all things Castle Rock offering a welcoming and helpful face always ready to assist. We also provide Livability Community Guides, resources, and recommendations for goods, services, and hospitality in Town.

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.
- VisitCastleRock.org page views up year of year with 9% new users attracted since 2024. The site also realized more than 100% increase in view YOY after the redesign in 2024.
- The Chamber continues to increase the number of email campaigns to over 9,400 subscribers (from 8,500 in 2024) and includes links to Town and DMA events with an open rate on Tuesday averaging nearly 65%, and 40%+ openings on Thursdays. We also disseminate information for our Town/County News, Legislative/Under the Dome updates, latest business resources and news, Member Happenings and Community Resources for our business 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 currently with an increase of nearly 250 followers YOY. Instagram has increased reach averaging 5,000 views or more per month and steadily increasing as we (the Chamber) works to increase the weekly number of posts to promote our community, events, opportunities, and local businesses. LinkedIn has also recognize an increase of followers consistently YOY just under 10%.
- The Chamber website and VisitCastleRock.org has an average session time of 2 minutes 22 seconds for users, and we had 65,000 new viewers this past 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, events, and activities.