

CLIMATE SMART LARIMER COUNTY INITIATIVE

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PHASE RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

(June 15, 2022)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the Larimer County Board of Commissioners: John Kefalas, Jody Shadduck-McNally, and Kristin Stephens for starting and championing the Climate Smart Larimer County Initiative.

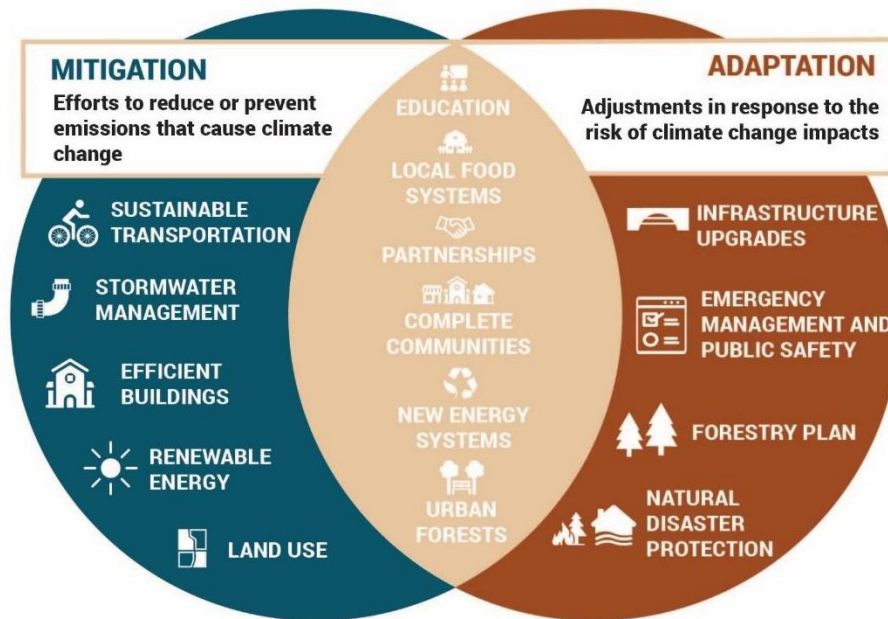
This Outreach Phase (Phase 2) of the Climate Smart Larimer County Initiative was made possible thanks to the invaluable participation of the Larimer County community and the oversight of the community-representative Climate Smart Task Force (below).

Designee	Organization	Representing
Aaron Adams	Town of Timnath	Municipality
Alex Gordon	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	Transportation
Ann Hutchison	Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce	Economic
Amy Roiser	Poudre Valley REA	Energy
Brian Rutledge	Santee Rising Ranch	Agriculture
Chris Kirk	Town of Berthoud	Municipality
Christian Ferguson	Larimer County Equity Advisory Board/ CSU Partnership Relations & Development	Community Mobilization Experts
Darlene Kilpatrick	Larimer County Healthy Larimer Committee	Community Mobilization Experts
Dawn Paepke	Larimer County Equity Advisory Board / Kaiser Permanente	Community Mobilization Experts
Fred Kirsch	Community for Sustainable Energy	Sustainability Grassroots
Greg Schreiner	Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board	Agriculture
Haley	4-H Junior Leadership	Youth
Hallie Sheldon	Town of Wellington	Municipality
Honore Depew	City of Fort Collins	Municipality
Jason Damweber	Town of Estes Park	Municipality
Jennifer Gimbel	Colorado Water Center	Water
Josie Plaut	Institute for the Built Environment	Building and Development
Nicole Yost	City of Loveland	Municipality
Karen Crumbaker	Colorado State University Extension	Outreach
Katie Donahue	USFS, Canyon Lakes Ranger District	Forestry
Lesley Brooks	Larimer County Equity Advisory Board/ Summit Stone Health	Community Mobilization Experts
Louise Creager	Rist Canyon Volunteer Fire Department	Emergency Management
Marcie Willard	Lightning eMotors	Transportation & Local Business
Matt LeCerf	Town of Johnstown	Municipality
Megan Thorburn	Poudre Canyon Sierra Club Group	Environmental Organization
Sam Moccia	Colorado State University SoGES Student Sustainability Center	University Student
Shelby Sommer	Larimer County Environmental & Science Advisory Board	Environment
Steve VanderMeer	Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board	Natural Resources
Sue McFaddin	Seven Generations, LLC	Economic and Building
Wade Willis	Town of Windsor	Municipality

INTRODUCTION

Larimer County is engaged in a multi-year effort to create a plan for its role in the great global struggle of our age, to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate (see illustrative image below). Counties are relatively new players in this struggle. Few of the more than 3,000 counties in the United States have climate action plans. When Larimer County completes its planning process, it will be among the vanguard of leaders that will show the way for many others.

Mitigation and adaptation efforts applicable to Colorado communities



A handful of other counties in Colorado have developed climate action plans. Some are truly “plans,” in that they have quantifiable goals and specific strategies that they vow to pursue. Others are more in the nature of “wish lists,” that is, itemizations of actions that they *could* take, without any commitment or timetable for taking them. No Colorado county has yet reached a year for which it has set a greenhouse gas reduction target, so it is not yet possible to evaluate how effective the current set of Colorado county-level climate action plans will be.

This report presents the background of events that led the County into its present phase of planning. It discusses the engagement activities conducted to support the findings and recommendations in the report, and the recommendations themselves. These recommendations are meant to guide the next and final phase of the County’s climate planning process, which is set to begin later this year. The report also discusses partners that the County should include in that phase.

BACKGROUND AND DELIVERABLES

In May 2021, Larimer County issued a Request for Proposals for “Climate Smart Consultant Services.” The RFP sought consultants “to provide Larimer County with documented community input on a list of strategies that could be included in a climate [smart] plan.”

As shown below, the County segmented the process, the Climate Smart Larimer County (CSLC) Initiative, into three phases. In **Phase 1**, county staff created the “[CSLC Framework](#),” documented in a report issued on September 30, 2020. The CSLC Framework describes potential preliminary strategies for further investigation. The strategies are grouped into seven “Planning Areas.” The County expected that the groupings might be reorganized as the planning process proceeded, and that additional strategies would likely be developed.

The CSLC Framework identified three “Top Recommendations for Future Action” in each of the seven Planning Areas. A list of all recommendations for future action was set forth in an appendix to the report.

Phase 2, which the present report concludes, was the community outreach process for which the RFP sought consulting assistance. Following the completion of the RFP process, the County hired Logan Simpson Design, Inc., which in turn hired Western Urban Sustainability Advisors, LLC (WestUrb) and Habitat Analytics, LLC (Habitat Analytics) as subconsultants (collectively “the Consultants”). Work under Phase 2 commenced in October 2021 and is concluding in June 2022.

The Consultants contracted to produce two deliverables:

- A “Final Community Outreach Summary” that would provide detailed public response data organized by the Planning Areas. That Summary is a separate document and is available on the CSLC Website: www.larimer.org/climate-smart (click [here](#)).
- A “Recommendations Report” (the present report), to guide the development of the future Implementation Plan.

Phase 3 will consist of the development of a final Implementation Plan with detailed goals, objectives, and strategies, based on the recommendations in Phases One and Two. The County contemplates that Phase 3 will be an 18-month process culminating in late 2023.

Climate Smart Larimer County Initiative



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

At right is a high-level illustration of the outreach events that took place during Phase 2. Despite most events happening strictly online due to COVID restrictions, many community members were able and well adept to participate online. As a mean of comparison, this eight-month long process resulted in 763 questionnaire responses. On the other hand, the Larimer County Comprehensive Plan process was a two-year process and resulted in 820 online responses.

A comprehensive Community Outreach Summary (COS) is available as a separate document. This Recommendations Report describes the facets of the community outreach process that bear most closely on the recommendations made below.

The COS describes the volunteer Task Force that advised the engagement process. Early in that process, the Task Force recommended that the County make two substantial changes in the initial approach. First, they recommended that, for purposes of engagement, the original seven Planning Areas in the CSLC Framework be reduced to four. (See Recommendation 3 below). Second, an approach to not put specific strategies before the community for reaction, but rather, allow community members to suggest “climate-friendly solutions”, to get a feel for what kinds of solutions the community associated with climate action and might expect to see during Phase 3.

The County accepted both Task Force recommendations. As a result, four planning areas, which were renamed and reorganized from the original seven (see Recommendation 3), were put before the community participants. The “strategies to be prioritized” were not the strategies developed in Phase 1, nor were they additional strategies developed by the Consultants. The Consultants instead encouraged community members to propose what they saw as “climate-friendly solutions”. The Consultants recorded all suggestions without regard to whether the solutions were within the County’s authority or resources, and regardless of their level of effectiveness in addressing climate change. Instead of focusing on the details of specific solutions, the Consultants gauged the community’s preferences among strategy approaches generally. “Strategy approaches” were defined as the different ways a government or community partner can address climate change, or any other challenge, and included the following categories:

- **Advocacy:** Urging residents and businesses to take or refrain from taking certain actions.
- **Incentives:** Providing a small financial incentive or other benefit to incentivize residents and businesses to take or refrain from taking certain actions
- **Rule Changes:** Amending existing laws and regulations, or creating new ones
- **Expenditures:** Spending County funds on new infrastructure, facilities, or programs



8 PRESENTATIONS



2 TABLING EVENTS



150 WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS*



10+ NEWSLETTERS



2 NEWS ARTICLES



531 CLIMATE SMART NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS



62 SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS (FACEBOOK & TWITTER)



763 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

- **Partnerships:** Working with multiple types of organizations (e.g., municipalities within the county, businesses, non-profits, academic institutions, etc.) to collaborate on producing certain programs
- **Information Sharing:** Informing residents and businesses how to take or avoid actions that would affect climate or sustainability

One additional significant change in the Climate Smart process emerged during the Phase 2 engagement. The Climate Smart process was designed to include solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. As the engagement process proceeded, however, it became evident that participants were interested in a number of solutions, such as “urban gardens,” and “reducing the use of pesticides,” that would enhance community sustainability, even though they would have limited documented impact on greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction and climate change resilience. The Consultants did not place any guardrails around this input; they did not argue to the participants that they were stepping outside the realm of climate action planning. They wanted to hear how the community felt, without getting into technicalities that can be addressed better in Phase 3.

In consultation with the County’s Climate Smart and Sustainability Program Manager and the Task Force, a recommendation was made for the eventual plan to still be centered on climate action, but to accommodate other sustainability strategies, provided that the plan emphasized the types of such strategies that more tangibly contributed to GHG mitigation and climate change resilience. (See Recommendation 4 below).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASE 3

The following recommendations should guide the County’s climate planning process in Phase 3. These recommendations are based in large part on the feedback received from the community and the Task Force during Phase 2, reflection on County staff effort in Phase 1, and on the expertise that the Consultants have developed in other projects and their research on how the field of county-level climate action planning is evolving.

Recommendation 1 – Project Title and Brand

The initiative should be given a new name and brand that better conveys why the County is conducting it. This can be accomplished through a combination of changing the name and *adding a tagline*. Our Task Force reviewed several possibilities. The following title received the greatest support:

- Climate Smart and Future Ready Initiative: *Strategies for a Sustainable Larimer County*

Recommendation 2 – Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI)

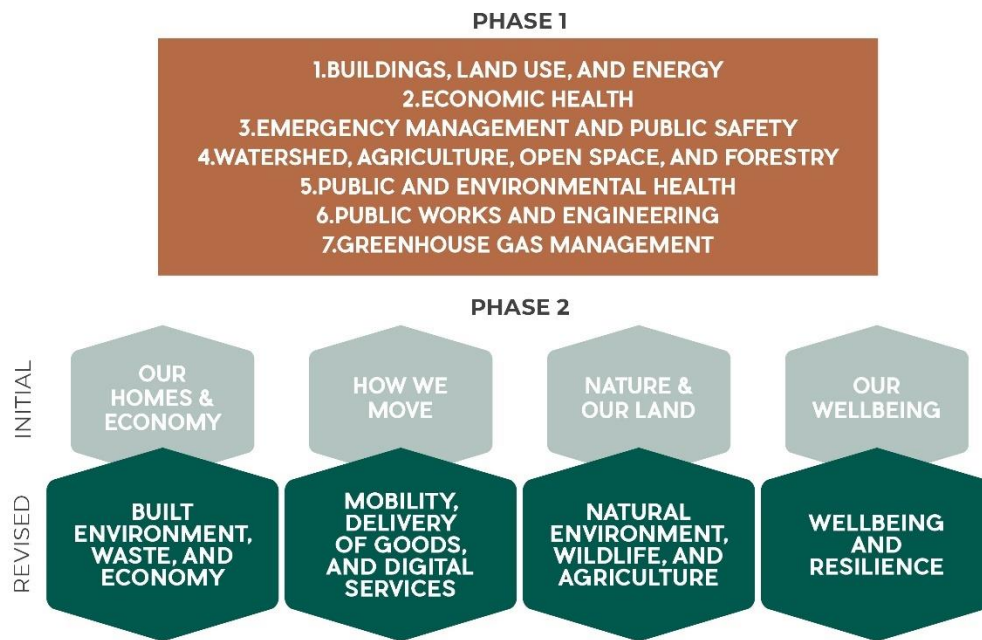
EDI should be a universal theme across the Implementation Plan. Phase 3 should involve the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board and community members to ensure that the development and implementation of the Plan is done through an equity lens that strives to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for disproportionately impacted communities.

Recommendation 3 – Focus Areas

The number of Focus Areas should remain at four, as recommended by the Task Force and approved by county staff, but the names should be adjusted to provide greater clarity as to what is included in each, and to show clearly where the Focus Areas from the original Climate Smart Larimer County document belong. The Focus Area descriptions used in the Phase 3 planning effort should be accompanied by more detailed, accessible, and relatable listings of the particular solution

clusters included in each. Below is an illustration of the Focus Areas evolution since the beginning of the CSLC Initiative. The revised Focus Areas are not meant to exclude other solution types.

Focus Areas Evolution



Recommendation 4 – Bridging Climate Smart and Sustainability

Approaches (as described on page 4) should include both those designed to reduce greenhouse gas mitigation and those designed to enhance climate change resilience. “Greenhouse Gas Mitigation” refers to human intervention to reduce the human impact on the climate system; it includes strategies to reduce greenhouse gas sources and emissions and enhance greenhouse gas sinks. (Source: Climate Smart Larimer County FAQ page) “Climate Change Resilience” refers to the capacity to prepare for disruptions, to recover from shocks and stresses, and to adapt and grow from a disruptive experience related to rapid climate change. (Source: Climate Smart Larimer County FAQ page).

Approaches considered in Phase 3 should not be limited to those that produce large-scale Greenhouse Gas Mitigation or Climate Change Resilience. Approaches that move into the broader area of sustainability can also be considered, even if they produce relatively limited reductions in GHG emissions or small increases in resilience. A definition of sustainability, however, should be provided at the beginning of Phase 3 so that participants understand how it may differ from Greenhouse Gas Mitigation and Climate Change Resilience.

“Sustainability” can be defined several ways. The Climate Smart Larimer County FAQ page defines it as “[m]eeting the needs of the present while considering the ability of future generations to meet theirs through the three main pillars: economic, environmental, and social.” This definition continues to enjoy support among several members of the Task Force.

In considering sustainability approaches, those that connect more directly to Greenhouse Gas Mitigation or Climate Change Resilience should be emphasized.

Recommendation 5 – Approach Types

Phase 2 included an opportunity for community members and the Task Force to review the various types of approaches that counties and other units of local government use in climate plans (as described in page 4. In Phase 3, all these approach types should remain on the table. In addition:

- Phase 3 should assign the County as the leader of its own initiatives. On collaborative issues, however, the County should be assigned the role agreed by stakeholders and community partners. This may be the role of a leader, convenor, or other.
- Where state or federal laws hinder the County's ability to pursue solutions it finds attractive, the County should consider including advocacy / lobbying tactics in the final plan.
- Phase 3 should use advocacy and expenditure solutions on a limited basis, and only where necessary based on the specific implementation area being addressed.
- Solutions in all Focus Areas should include information programs that allow the community to identify and evaluate conflicting information sources and understand their role in implementing the plan. Information programs should use a common vocabulary, welcome community dialogue, and highlight the connection individual actions have with reducing greenhouse gas emissions (such as carbon dioxide and methane), sequestering greenhouse gases by removing them from the atmosphere, climate change adaptation, resilience, and sustainability.

Recommendation 6 – Goals, Objectives, and Measurements

Phase 3 should identify the top-level goals that the implementation plan seeks to achieve and specific objectives under those goals. Goals and objectives should be expressed in quantifiable terms accompanied by specific measurements so that the community can determine progress towards the goals. "SMART" goals (specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, time-related) provide a useful format. Measurements should be oriented towards outcomes rather than mere numeric counts of activities (e.g., "number of meetings held" or "number of attendees at events" measure activities, not outcomes). Because of its limited ability to influence total community GHG reductions, the County should project GHG reductions from specific strategies as a tool and measurement to track among other plan measurements.

Recommendation 7 – Area-Specific Recommendations

To help initiate Phase 3 discussions, a selection of climate-friendly solutions suggested by Phase 2 participants is offered below. These community responses were chosen because they came up frequently and were within the County's authority or influence. The table provides representative examples. The full list of community responses has been catalogued in a spreadsheet that is available upon request.

The responses in orange indicate alignment with the CSLC Framework's Full List of Recommendations ([here](#)). The language used by community members may not be identical to that in the Framework recommendations but is sufficiently similar to warrant highlighting here. It is anticipated that during Phase 3, all the area-specific recommendations from Phases 2 and 3 will be further refined, added to, or eliminated, based on priority actions identified during the planning process.

Phase 2 Selected Community Responses

Focus Area: Built Environment, Waste, and Economy	
Buildings	Transition away from gas and towards all-electric buildings
	As energy efficiency practices evolve, consider requiring new enhanced code requirements while requiring larger buildings to benchmark and disclose energy performance
	Encourage renewable energy production in new buildings where feasible
Energy	Offer rebates for energy conservation and renewable energy to residents and businesses
	Partner with and incentivize building owners to increase energy efficiency
	Consider pricing mechanisms, if available, e.g., through partnerships, to discourage energy use during peak periods
Waste	Provide incentives for buying and using recycled products and for diverting waste to recycling
	Where curbside recycling and composting are not available or affordable, expand drop-off sites and offer training about at-home composting
	Expand the regional capacity to accept and process compostable waste
Economy	Support local “green” businesses
	Provide more training for local contractors and retailers on green products (e.g., energy efficient appliances) and practices (e.g., deconstruction, energy-efficient construction)
Focus Area: Mobility, Delivery of Goods, and Digital Services	
Mobility	Invest in transit expansion within the County and intercity, and make it cheap (or even free) and electric
	Encourage expanded telecommuting
	For bikes (including e-bikes), expand separated bike lanes and trails, bike parking and other infrastructure, and bike share programs
	Improve pedestrian infrastructure
Delivery of Goods	Incentivize that a certain percentage of delivery services be provided by e-bikes (cargo bikes)
Digital Services	Extend broadband service to rural areas
Focus Area: Natural Environment, Wildlife, and Agriculture	
Natural Areas	Preserve or expand open space and make it publicly accessible at affordable prices, ideally for free
	Expand tree planting while maintaining defensible space
Working Lands	Re-examine the county tax structure to make it more favorable for farming and ranching, e.g., lower taxes on farm vehicles, tax breaks to support regenerative agriculture

	Foster soil health through promotion of low-till, cover crops, and crop rotation
	Protect the “right-to-farm”
Water	Promote xeriscaping and use of native plants, favoring such landscaping over non-native grass lawns
	Improve water quality by increasing green infrastructure, including rain barrels, rain gardens and conversion of impermeable surfaces to permeable
Wildlife	Expand wildlife and habitat conservation across the County
	Adopt policy and necessary rule changes to protect pollinators
Focus Area: Wellbeing and Resilience	
Wellbeing	Increase air quality monitoring, communication, and training on how to respond on days of poor air quality
	Provide incentives for air and water filtration systems in homes
	Partner with public health providers to inform the community on climate related health risks/ impacts
Resilience	Minimize wildfire risk by promoting defensible space and favoring infill and density over sprawl to minimize the urban-wildland interface
	Create more preparedness and resilience hubs in communities of greatest vulnerability
	Reduce building in the floodplain

Recommendation 8 – Phase 3 Engagement

The anticipated 18-month duration of Phase 3 should allow more robust engagement activities, which should occur side-by-side with strategy and plan development. Any engagement during Phase 3 should be designed to empower a community audience that is larger than the one involved in Phase 2 and that more closely resembles the community sectors of Larimer County. To reach a more diverse audience, the County should reach out to demographics and organizations that were identified as targets during Phase 2. The County’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Board should influence and guide efforts to increase diversity and inclusion during the Phase 3 engagement process. Phase 3 Engagement should also put a premium on involvement of representatives from the governments of municipalities in the County.

PARTNERS FOR PHASE 3

From the beginning of Phase 2, the County has been interested in engaging key entities—municipal governments, businesses, non-profits, etc.—in the climate planning process. At the beginning of Phase 2 the Consultants and county staff put together a list of such entities that could be invited to join the Task Force. There were more entities than spaces available on the Task Force, but it was a good starting point for partner engagement in Phase 3 and beyond. During Phase 2 the Consultants asked community participants and the Task Force members for suggestions of additional partners that could be engaged during Phase 3. Appendix A contains a list of potential partners for Phase 3.

In considering future partners, the County should keep in mind that such partners can have a couple of different roles. They can participate in the development of plan in Phase 3. They can also participate in the implementation of specific strategies and projects that are part of the final plan. In theory, a partner can do both, and robust development of partners willing to create and engage in effective mitigation and adaptation actions is encouraged.

In inviting partners to participate in developing the plan, the County should give priority to those that might also make valuable partners in ongoing collaboration and implementation phase that will follow the release of the final plan at the end of Phase 3. Having participated in Phase 3, an entity will have made an investment and will have an "ownership interest" in the final plan. This will provide great motivation to help with implementation.

APPENDIX A: POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR PHASE 3

GOVERNMENTS

Estes Park
 Fort Collins
 Loveland
 Wellington
 Berthoud
 Timnath
 Johnstown
 Windsor
 Fort Collins-Loveland Water District

North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization
 Poudre River Public Library District
 State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs
 Colorado Department of Transportation
 State of Colorado, other pertinent offices
 US Forest Service
 US National Park Service
 Volunteer Fire Departments

ADVISORY BODIES

Berthoud Parks, Open space, Recreation and Trails
 Berthoud Planning Commission
 Berthoud Youth Advisory Commission
 Estes Park Environmental Sustainability Task Force
 Estes Park Parks Advisory Board
 Estes Park Planning Commission
 Estes Park Transportation Advisory Board
 Fort Collins Air Quality Advisory Board
 Fort Collins Cultural Resources Board
 Fort Collins Economic Advisory Board
 Fort Collins Energy Board
 Fort Collins Land Conservation and Stewardship Board
 Fort Collins Natural Resources Advisory Board
 Fort Collins Parks and Recreation Board
 Fort Collins Planning and Zoning Commission
 Fort Collins Transportation Board
 Fort Collins Water Commission
 Fort Collins Youth Advisory Board

Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board
 Larimer County Board of Appeals
 Larimer County Environmental and Sciences Advisory Board
 Larimer County Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Board
 Larimer County Extension Advisory Committee
 Larimer County Healthy Larimer Committee
 Larimer County Land Stewardship Advisory Board
 Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board
 Larimer County Planning Commission
 Larimer County Solid Waste Policy Council
 Loveland Open Lands Advisory Commission
 Loveland Planning Commission
 Loveland Transportation Advisory Board
 Loveland Youth Advisory Board
 Red Feather Lakes Planning Advisory Committee
 Wellington Parks Advisory Board
 Wellington Planning Commission
 Wellington Storm Water Authority

BUSINESS GROUPS

Anheuser Busch
 Banner Health
 Black Hills Energy
 Brightstar Care of Loveland
 Broadcom
 Chambers of Commerce
 Colorado Auto Dealers Association
 Diamond Tail Ranch
 Estes Park Running Club
 Frontier Insurance
 Green Jeep Tours
 Hach Company
 Hewlett Packard
 High Plains Environmental Center
 Kaiser Permanente
 Larimer County Fair Board
 Larimer County Farm Bureau
 Lightning eMotors
 Morgan Timber Products

Mountain Whitewater
 New Belgium Brewery Company
 Otter Products
 Platte River Power Authority
 Poudre Valley REA
 Sparge Brewing
 Sportsman's Warehouse
 SummitStone Health Partners
 Suncor
 Terry Bison Ranch and Resort
 The Group Real Estate
 The Ranch
 UC Health
 Utility Districts
 Vestas
 Waterpik
 Woodward Inc
 Xcel Energy

ACADEMIA

Big Thompson School District
 Front Range Community College
 Poudre School District
 Colorado State University
 -Extension Service
 -School of Global Environmental Sustainability
 -Institute for the Built Environment
 -Water Center
 -Energy Institute
 -Center for Environmental Justice
 -Agricultural Experiment Station

MEDIA

Estes Park Trail
 Gazette
 Loveland Reporter Herald
 North 40 News
 Rocky Mountain Collegian
 Tigre Radio

COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

<p>350 Northern Colorado Alianza NorCo Alice Murphy Center for Hope (run by Homeward Alliance) Alliance for Water Efficiency Arc of Larimer County Barrier Busters Public Transit Action Group Big Thompson Watershed Coalition Bike Fort Collins BIPOC Alliance Boys and Girls Club Bridges Out of Poverty Care Housing Catholic Charities Citizens Climate Lobby Climate Reality of Northern Colorado Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed Colorado Firefighters Association Community Advisory Council Community Equity Consortium Community for Sustainable Energy Compass Community Collaborative School Conservation Colorado Create Places Crossroads Safehouse Cultural Enrichment Center DARTAC Directing Change Disability Advisory Board Early Childhood Council El Centro Elderhaus Ember Alliance EnFoCo</p>	<p>Estes Park Clubs Estes Valley Watershed Coalition Family Leadership Training Institute Food Bank for Larimer County Foothills Climate Justice Ministry Foothills Gateway Foothills Rotary Fort Collins Bike Co-op Fort Collins Community Action Network Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority Fort Collins Museum of Discovery Fort Collins Rescue Mission Fuerza Latina Future Farmers of America Green Latinos Habitat for Humanity HOAs Homeward 2020 Horse and Dragon Brewing Housing Catalyst Iglesia del Padre Interfaith Council La Cocina La Familia (and Mi Voz) Lago Vista Neighborhood Larimer County Office on Aging Larimer County Workforce Center Larimer United Way LatinX Community Advisory Group Launch Community Through Skateboarding League of Women Voters Matthews House Museo de las Tres Colonias</p>	<p>Neighbor 2 Neighbor NoCo Bike and Ped Collaborative NoCo Food Cluster NoCo PRIDE North 40 Mountain Alliance Northern Colorado Renewable Energy Society Northern Larimer County Health District Odell Brewing, LLC Paratransit providers Partners Mentoring Youth Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities Phase 2 Company (WBE) Poudre Canyon Sierra Club Project Self-Sufficiency Rescue Mission Respite Care Rocky Mountain Conservancy Rotary Fort Collins Rotary Loveland Salud Family Health Centers Save Rural NoCo Senior Transportation Coalition (now called Mobility & Access Priority Group) Sustainable Living Association Teaching Tree Early Childhood Learning Center The Family Center/La Familia Timberline Church Trees Water and People Turning Point United Way of Larimer County Vida Sana Western Leaders Network</p>
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