



AURORA NEWCOMER'S GUIDE · 2013

YOUR SOURCE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT
THE COMMUNITY YOU NOW CALL HOME,
INCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOLS,
SHOPPING, THINGS TO DO AND MORE



WELCOME TO AURORA, COLORADO

Gateway TO THE Rockies

Long referred to as the "Gateway to the Rockies," the city of Aurora continues to be home to more than 330,000 people and thousands of businesses, big and small.

With myriad options available for recreation, education and consumer opportunities, Aurora is a great place to be. It's frequently among the fastest-growing areas in the country, which brings many new and exciting aspects, local officials say.

Growth and the cost of growing are hot topics in Aurora, as residents and local lawmakers try to strike a delicate balance between evolution and maintaining the level of services Aurorans have grown to expect.

A pessimist might say population growth generates unwanted issues such as lack of housing and health facilities, over-crowded schools and increased road traffic. These problems do affect a growing community like Aurora — and ultimately the entire state.

On the flip side, population growth also means more dollars spent in the community. It can be positive in the long run, and it's a great contributor to the community's economy. Population growth calls for expanded housing, roadways, education and health facilities. It also necessitates bringing new jobs to the community.

More than 330,000 people call Aurora home, making it the third-most populous city in Colorado. Close to 90 percent of the population lives in Arapahoe County, while the rest live in Adams County, which begins north of East Colfax Avenue.

Aurora has also experienced tremendous ethnic growth and today is one of the most diverse cities in Colorado.

According to 2010 United States Census data, the majority of Aurora's residents are a member of a minority group, with just 47.3 percent identifying them-

MORE THAN 330,000 PEOPLE CALL AURORA HOME, MAKING IT THE THIRD-MOST POPULOUS CITY IN COLORADO. CLOSE TO 90 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION LIVES IN ARAPAHOE COUNTY, WHILE THE REST LIVE IN ADAMS COUNTY, WHICH BEGINS NORTH OF EAST COLFAX AVENUE.

selves as white alone. That's down from 59 percent in 2000.

And while the city's white population makes up a smaller chunk of the overall population than it once did, various ethnic groups have seen their populations boom over the past decade.

The number of Aurora residents who identify themselves as at least partially black jumped from 41,519 in 2000 to 51,196 last year, a jump of 23 percent.

And the Mexican population has spiked as well, growing 86 percent over the past decade, from 38,276 to 71,225 in 2010, part of a 70-percent jump in the overall Latino population.

Several individual races also saw sizeable growth, according to Census data, including the Korean, Indian, Chinese, Puerto Rican and Pacific Islander populations.

Because of Aurora's cultural variety, the city is now home to a burgeoning ethnic market and restaurant scene, with dozens of Hispanic markets along Colfax and other ethnic businesses dotting the city.

Also on the rise are the numbers of students in the region. The

city is served by two districts: Aurora Public Schools in the north half and Cherry Creek Schools District in the south.

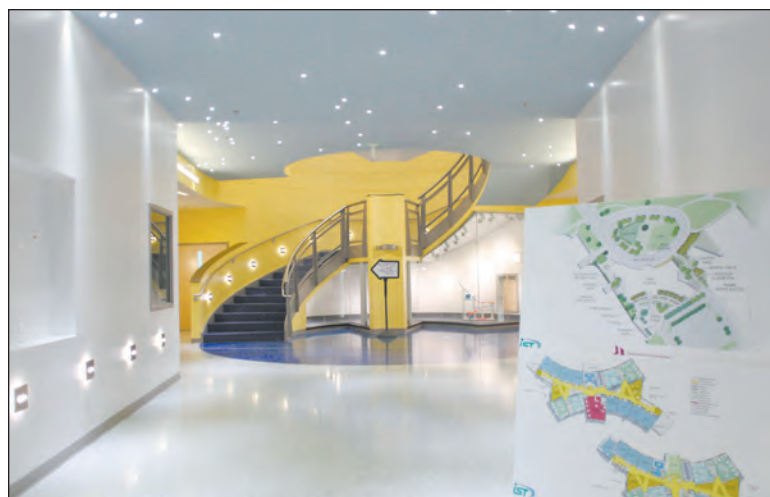
APS has more than 37,000 students, and has a growing number of schools, including the recently opened Vista PEAK campus. The district also operates a vocational/technical college, Pickens Technical College. About 38 percent of APS students are second-language students, with 90 different languages represented.

With about 51,000 students, Cherry Creek covers more than 100 square miles, but its largest base comes from Aurora. About 32,000 attend its Aurora schools (22 elementaries, six middles and five high schools) and that's where most of the growth is happening. The district has grown 40 percent in the last decade and often plans for more than 1,000 additional students each year. The student body is 63 percent white, 14 percent black, 14 percent Hispanic, 8 percent Asian and 1 percent American Indian.

Top: A movie theater behind gardens at Southlands shopping center in Aurora.

Middle: A hallway at an entrance of the Institute of Science and Technology.

Bottom: A golfer and his caddie walk on the fairway on hole No. 10 at Murphy Creek Golf Course at sunset.



Fast Facts About Aurora

History

Year founded: 1891
Original name: Fletcher
Name changed to Aurora in 1907

City

Form of government: council-city manager
Elected council members: 11 (Mayor, 6 Council Ward representatives and 4 at-large members)



Amenities

Municipal Parks: 108
Municipal Golf Courses: 7
Public Libraries: 4
Reservoirs: 2
Number of counties within: 3 (Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas)

Physical features

City area: 154 square miles
Official city elevation: 5,435 feet

Population

City population: 335,105
58th largest city in the US
Median age: 34.5
Median household income: \$45,904



Education

11 colleges and universities
Aurora Public Schools
Cherry Creek Schools
Douglas County School District
Brighton Public Schools
A variety of private K-12 institutions

Call for help

Who to call to find out about turning on the water, putting up a new fence or turning off the barking dog next door

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

If you have questions about city government but don't know where to get answers, your solutions are only 10 digits away at Access Aurora.

The city government hotline, 303-739-7000, is a division of the Communications Department of the City Manager's Office. From 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, the city staff is standing by to answer questions — both simple and complicated.

If you're looking for what number to call about that monster pothole at the end of the block, Access Aurora operators can guide you to the proper official in Public Works.

If your neighbor has erected a 50-foot statue of John Elway in his backyard and it's bothering you, Access Aurora can put you in touch with the right folks in Code Enforcement. That number, again, is 303-739-7000.

Access Aurora staff are the go-to people in Aurora for questions regarding referrals to community resources, requests for assistance and information on city services from Animal Care to Zoning.

The following is a list of city departments and other offices that can help you when you're stumped:

- **AURORA CITY COUNCIL**
303-739-7015
- **CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**
303-739-7030
- **CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE**
303-739-7010
- **COMMUNICATIONS**
303-739-7010
- **DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE**
303-739-7345
- **FIRE ADMINISTRATION**
303-326-8990
- **HUMAN RESOURCES**
303-739-7225
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**
303-739-7545
- **PURCHASING** — 303-739-7100
- **JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION**
303-739-6535
- **LIBRARY, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES**
303-739-6640
- **MAYOR'S OFFICE**
303-739-7015
- **MUNICIPAL COURT**
303-739-6444
- **NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**
303-739-7280

- **PARKS** — 303-739-7160
- **PLANNING** — 303-739-7250
- **POLICE ADMINISTRATION** —
303-739-6000
- **PUBLIC WORKS** — 303-739-7300
- **SENIOR DAYCARE/MORNING STAR PROGRAM** — 303-326-8323
- **UTILITIES** — 303-739-7370

For more specific problems or questions:

HAS YOUR DOG GOTTEN LOOSE OR DO YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT SHOTS YOUR CAT NEEDS? Call Animal Care at 303-326-8280.

DO YOU WANT TO BUILD AN ADDITIONAL ROOM ONTO YOUR HOUSE? Call Building Permits and Inspections at 303-739-7420.

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT KEEPING THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN, call Code Enforcement at 303-739-7280. Is there a **TREE LIMB** hanging by a thread over your street? Call Forestry at 303-739-7177.

DID SOMEONE VANDALIZE YOUR BUSINESS OR HOME with graffiti? Call 303-739-6063.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND CHEMICAL SPILLS
303-739-6700.

IF YOU NEED HELP GETTING YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW IN BUYING THAT FIRST HOME, the Home Ownership Assistance Program could help if you qualify for assistance. Call 303-739-7900.

THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION was established in 1968 to eliminate prejudice and promote positive human relations, to take discrimination complaints, to support civil rights legislation, to hold public hearings, forums and workshops and to review agencies. Call the Human Relations Commission at 303-739-7285.

LOCAL PROGRAMMING: Your hometown television station is KACT Aurora Cable Television Channel 8. Call them with questions or concerns at 303-326-8888.

LAWN PERMITS: There are specific requirements regarding landscaping and water conservation for new lawn permits and sprinkler systems. For details, call the city's lawn permit office at 303-326-8879 or visit Aurora Water's website at www.aurorawater.org.

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... and More!
Find out more at www.AuroraFox.org
Or give us a call 303-739-1970
AURORA FOX 9900 East Colfax Avenue



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(S. Golden Rd. & Johnson)

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(King Soopers)

303-679-1913

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303-423-1307

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The art of the matter

The Aurora
community is moving
center stage in the
metro culture scene



The Lone Tree Arts Center near East Lincoln Avenue and South Yosemite Street in Lone Tree. (Heather L. Smith/Aurora Sentinel)

CULTURE

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

Living in the suburbs doesn't mean missing out on culture, cuisine and recreation. Traditionally, people have slept in the suburbs and played in the city, but Aurorans don't have to stray far from their home bases to find art, theater and other cultural expressions.

In addition to the city's array of entertainment venues, theaters and recreational complexes, Aurora also boasts recreational leagues and citywide happenings that draw folk from around the metro area. To keep the body and soul fueled between events, the city also hosts traditional and ethnic cuisine throughout the city.

Here's a brief guide to the best plays, movies and festivals Aurora has to offer.

Aurora Fox

The Aurora Fox Arts Center isn't just one of the city's most visible landmarks — it's also one of the best places to catch local quality theater. With strong directors, passionate casts and good scripts, the productions at the Fox have moved out of the realm of community theater and into the realm of a regional gem. Under the guidance of Executive Director Charles Packard, who took the helm in 2009, the theater has offered a wide range of comedies, dramas and onstage adaptations of popular films.

The Fox has also enjoyed an expansion to its main, 246-seat theater this year. A new, 75-seat, 1,600-square-foot black box theater was designed to host Aurora Fox productions and classes, and has also hosted guest companies. As a permanent theatrical complement to the Fox's larger stage, the new black box theater adds another element to the Fox's cultural and theatrical offerings.

The theater is located at 9900 E. Colfax Ave. For information about upcoming productions or to order tickets, call the box office at 303-739-1970.

Vintage Theatre

The Vintage Theatre troupe kicked off in a closet-sized space in Denver in 2002 and carved a niche with ambitious productions of shows like "Equus" and "Grey Gardens." Two years ago, the company moved into the 9,400-square-foot former Shad-

ow Theatre space on Dayton Street, just a block from East Colfax. The building now boasts two separate stages, and it's host to troupes like the Rocky Mountain Deaf Theatre Company, Theatre Esprit Asia and the One Night Stand Theatre company as paying guests. "We've grown up. We're now a professional theater company, whereas before we were a wonderful, eclectic little community theater," said Craig Bond, Vintage artistic director.

The theater is located at 1468 Dayton St. For information about upcoming productions or to order tickets, call the box office at 303-856-7830.

PACE Center and Lone Tree Arts Center

Douglas County is hardly the boonies, but access to big-city culture is still limited for many of the area's nearly 300,000 residents.

In the past 20 years, the fringes of southeastern Aurora and beyond have seen rapid residential and commercial growth, a boom that's about to be supplemented by two multi-million-dollar performing arts complexes. In the past year, the \$23-million Lone Tree Arts Center opened off Interstate 25 and Lincoln Avenue; the \$21.7-million Parker Arts, Culture and Events, or PACE, Center opened at its central location on Parker's Main Street in October.

Both facilities target an untapped market in the area, officials say, an audience that's looking for high-quality entertainment that's also nearby.

While officials from PACE underline the 50,000-square-foot building's added role as a community and education center, they too point to a growing local arts audience that's been largely underserved. It's a population that includes plenty of Aurora residents, theatergoers living on the southeastern fringes of the city who may be closer to Parker than the Aurora Fox and the Vintage theaters on East Colfax Avenue.

Information: pacecenteronline.com or call 303-805-6800; lone-treetartscenter.org or call 720-509-1000.

Aurora Symphony Orchestra

Under the direction of Richard Niezan, the Aurora Symphony Orchestra hopes to move from relative obscurity to a community powerhouse. The orchestra performs regularly at the Simchat Torah Beit

Midrash (STBM), located at 19697 E. Smoky Hill Road, and the community ensemble is working on expanding its repertoire and appeal.

Most of its performances are at the Simchat facility on Smoky Hill Road. The ASO typically performs five programs during a season. For information, call 303-873-6622 or visit www.aurorasymphony.org.

Aurora History Museum

The Aurora History Museum collects, preserves, interprets and exhibits artifacts and documents that tell the story of Aurora from prehistoric times to the present. The museum's permanent exhibit is a portrait of Aurora that illustrates the history of the city, from its humble origins as a big dairy producer called Fletcher. The museum also offers changing exhibits on a variety of topics such as local archaeology, art, life on the Great Plains, women's history, Native Americans and the Smoky Hill Trail.

The museum also has a Collector's Corner Lobby exhibit and Museum Collection lobby case, which change monthly. There is also a Community Room Gallery, which includes exhibits from local schools, the Aurora Artists Guild and others.

The museum also maintains collections of artifacts and objects from Aurora and the surrounding area as well as housing an archive of reference materials, photographs, newspapers and documents about Aurora's past. The museum coordinates the use of several historic sites owned by the city of Aurora.

The museum is located at 15001 East Alameda Parkway. For more information, call 303-739-6666 or log on to www.auroramuseum.org.

Aurora Cultural Arts District

Many efforts have been made to bring more people to the Original Aurora downtown area, which the city has designated as an arts district.

The turnaround has been slow, but for the first time, Artscape — a respected annual guide to the metro-area arts scene — gave the district its own section. It's a small bit of respect that has local business owners thinking the area can become a thriving center for arts just like the Sante Fe Arts District in downtown Denver.

The centerpiece for the redevelopment effort is the \$32-million Florence Square. It is a mixed-use facility that combines housing, studio and gallery space for artists.

TRANSPORTATION

GETTING THERE:

A guide to traveling around Aurora

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

If you laid every lane of Aurora's streets end to end, it would stretch almost 3,700 miles. That's about 500 miles farther than driving from Seattle to Miami. And it's almost the distance from San Diego to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

With all that road, plus a light rail stop and hundreds of miles of bike trails, sidewalks and other routes, there's no shortage of options for getting around Aurora.

Edim "Archie" Archibong has been driving a cab in metro Denver since the early 1980s and he makes his home in Aurora, so he knows plenty about getting around Aurora.

For the most part, Archibong said, Aurora is an easy city to get around compared to the rest of the region.

"The main roads are better than Denver," Archibong said.

Still, the newer sections of town can pose a bit of a challenge, he said. The city isn't laid out in a typical grid on the southeast side of town. And for drivers, those diagonal streets and winding roads can be a bit confusing.

"That's the challenge. Older drivers can understand it, the new drivers have to learn there are no straight roads in new neighborhoods," he said.

Others say whether it's driving a car or taking public transportation, going from place to place in Aurora poses few challenges.

"I think it's pretty simple to get around here, everything is pretty close," 20-year-old Mitch Ryan said as he prepared to board a light rail train headed from Nine Mile Station to Downtown Denver last week.

Ryan said he regularly takes light rail, and occasionally the bus.

For the most part, he said, getting around Aurora is easy.

GETTING AROUND

By 2016, Aurora will have its very own light rail line, which will transport riders from the existing Nine Mile station along Interstate 225 north to the Aurora City Center and the Anschutz Medical Campus. While the prospect of a light rail line in Aurora is thrilling for most residents, it also comes with the frustration of navigating around detours and construction cones in the meantime.

Drivers can visit rtd-fastracks.com/i225 to get weekly construction updates on the light rail line. In general, the Iliff and Florida stations will be under construction in spring 2013, the Aurora City Center and 2nd Avenue and Abilene stations will be under construction in fall 2013 and the 13th Avenue station will be under construction summer 2013. The Colfax station is slated for construction fall 2013, and the Montview and Peoria stations will be constructed in spring 2014. All work will be finished by October



Traffic build up on South Parker Road between I-225 and Hampden Blvd during evening rush hour.

2015 for RTD testing, and the line is set to open to riders in 2016.

The \$350-million undertaking represents a huge change for the city.

"You are getting the opportunity to live through the transformation of Aurora from a suburban community to an urban one," Dave Chambers, director of Public Works for Aurora, told Aurora residents at a meeting in January.

Stations along the 10.5-mile long I-225 corridor include: the existing Nine Mile station, the Iliff station, which is currently under construction, the Florida station, the Aurora City Center Station, the Second Avenue and Abilene Station, the 13th Avenue Station, the Colfax Station, the Montview Station, and the Peoria/Smith Station, which will connect to the East Rail Line that will run between Denver Union Station and Denver International Airport.

Transit Oriented Development projects are also planned around each of the eight stations. Those TOD's will be a mix of public spaces like plazas and parks, businesses, pedestrian and bike paths and housing. City transportation officials say the TOD areas around the light rail are expected to attract developers and businesses possibly from around the country because of the proximity to public transportation.

Until the light rail is built, residents can continue using RTD's array of bus routes in the city.

Aurora is currently home to more than 1,000 bus stops and more than 30 bus routes.

The first buses of the day generally leave Aurora around 5:30 a.m., though there are some that leave earlier. In some cases, light rail and bus routes run throughout the night, but their frequency dips late at night and early in the morning, especially in the farther-reaching neighborhoods of town.

RTD has bus routes stretching as far north as Lyons, as far west as Bergen Park in Jefferson County, as far south as Pinery in Douglas County and as far east as Denver International Airport or Southlands Mall.

In Aurora, the farthest bus routes in the southeast side of town end near Southlands.

A one way bus ride costs \$2.25, light rail across all four zones is \$5. A train ride from Nine Mile to

Union Station crosses three zones, and costs \$4 each way. The SkyRide, which takes riders to DIA, costs \$9 from each of its four Aurora stops.

Many of the folks who ride a bus or a train everyday say it's pretty simple way to get around, though it isn't always the most convenient.

The ride from Nine Mile into Downtown Denver takes about 40 minutes, and McCarthy said like riding any bus or train, it's a more relaxing way to get where you're going.

"It's nice, you can just throw your iPod on and read a book or whatever," he said.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

When Anna Bunce talks about the science behind timing of traffic lights, she sounds like a professor of philosophy.

Bunce, the city's traffic engineer and an expert at everything and anything that has to do with vehicles moving on public streets, explains the guiding principles of light timing in a way similar to utilitarianism.

"The general goal of signal timing is to move the greatest number of people in the greatest distance possible without stopping," Bunce said.

Most traffic in Aurora in the morning flows north and west, and in the evening, traffic flows south and east, Bunce said. On weekends, the distribution is more even but more cars are on the road. Bunce has different traffic light timing plans for each scenario; the morning weekday rush hour light plan is different from the afternoon, which is different from the weekend, and so forth.

Bunce's advice for drivers and pedestrians:

- Push buttons for pedestrians are like elevator call buttons. You only have to push it once for it to know you're there, and the call stays until it's serviced, even if you're gone.

- If an intersection is in a flashing red condition for all four directions, treat it as a four-way stop. If an intersection is in a flashing yellow condition for two directions, those directions should slow and proceed with caution, but don't stop — the other two directions will have a flashing red and should treat it as a two-way stop, proceeding only when safe to do so. If an intersection is completely dark, treat it as a four-way stop.

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Ron Scovil, local wine maker, judges water during a water taste test put on by the Aurora Sentinel.

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It's in the water

Aurora's tap water regularly on top of taste tests and purity standards

Ron Scovil can analyze a drop of water on his tongue the same way he can dissect the qualities of a fine wine. So when the local wine maker stepped into the Aurora Sentinel offices for a mildly scientific water taste test, it was no surprise that he described his favorite water sample in much the same way he would have described his favorite adult beverage — in detail.

"A clean taste, some sweetness, you're looking for some minerals but not over the top where it tastes metallic, and you're not looking for the earthy flavor, which is usually dirt," he said.

It was also to no one's amazement that the man with the sophisticated palate unknowingly chose Aurora water — known as some of the best water in the country — as his favorite out of six samples.

And he promised he wasn't cheating.

"It's some of the best water I've tasted going around the country," he said.

Aurora won a water taste test competition at the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Section of the American Water Works Association. The city beat out 13 other water utilities for the second time in three years and will be representing the Rocky Mountain Section of the American Water Works Association at a national conference next year in Dallas. At the Sentinel's taste test, in which about 10 people including Sentinel employees, Aurora water officials and community leaders participated, Aurora water tied for first place with Westminster water.

Aurora's water is praised among water connoisseurs like Scovil. In fact, Scovil thinks Aurora's water is so divine that he will soon be lugging it to Denver where he's opening a wine business, because he says there's no such thing as good wine without good water.

"I'd like to keep everything as natural as possible, and you can only do that with Aurora water," he said.

Also represented in the blind taste test were water samples from Arvada, Denver, Boulder and finally, Crestview — which didn't fare well.

Aurora Water Spokesman Greg Baker also chose Aurora water as his No. 1 choice. He said he could identify it immediately, and he's not even psychic.

"It's very clean, it's just a slight metallic edge," he said. "It has a very silky consistency and it's almost a pleasure on your tongue."

So what makes Aurora water taste so good?

It's all about testing what's in the water and adjusting the levels of chemicals, said Kirk Watson, supervisor at the Wemlinger Water Treatment Facility.

"We make sure we do everything we can to make it taste good every day," he said.

Staff at the Wemlinger plant test more than 70,000 sample points per year, ensuring all of the water's contaminants are significantly lower than allowed levels mandated by state and federal regulations.

For example, total coliform bacteria, which is naturally present in the environment, can be no more than 5 percent positives per month. The highest monthly percentage found in Aurora's water was 2.07 percent, according to Aurora's 2011 Water Quality Report

The city's water supply is derived primarily from snowmelt runoff in the Colorado, Arkansas and South Platte river basins. The water is then stored in 12 reservoirs and lakes including Aurora, Homestake, Twin Lakes and Rampart. It's transported to the city from as far as 180 miles away through pipes, tunnels and pumps.

"The best time for Aurora water is during winter because it's pure mountain water, it comes straight down and it hasn't been sitting in our reservoirs long," Baker said.

During the summer months, especially if it's been a hot summer, all of the low-land reservoirs build up more nutrient and as a result, Baker gets calls from residents during that time saying their water tastes a bit more "earthy."

SCHOOLS

Class acts

Aurora's two school districts strive for innovation and results

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

Both of Aurora's public school districts have found different ways to keep up with a population that's grown, changed and shifted in too many ways to count.

Aurora Public Schools is the state's sixth-largest district, with 56 schools and approximately 37,000 students. With nearly 51,000 students, Cherry Creek School District is the fourth-largest district in the state. Thirty-three of CCSD's 60 schools serve Aurora — including five of its six high schools and six of its eight middle schools — but it also has a presence in Centennial, Denver, Englewood, Greenwood Village, Cherry Hills Village and Littleton.

Through several bonds and emergency funds, both districts have been able to keep up with the growing community. In 2008, both the Aurora Public Schools and the

Cherry Creek Schools districts asked voters to increase property taxes to create more money for school programs, teachers and materials. Voters responded with a resounding "yes." Voters also approved accompanying measures that allow both school districts to issue bonds for capital projects, a move that did not translate into higher taxes.

Voters offered a similar vote of support in 2012. Cherry Creek passed a \$125 million bond issue that will add a \$6 million wing to Grandview High School and a wing to Cherokee Trail High School that's set to cost \$7 million. The district also passed a \$25 million mill levy override, money that will fund curriculum, teachers and classroom tools. APS passed a \$15 million mill levy override to cover similar costs. That measure added about \$5.71 per month in property taxes for every \$100,000 of actual home value.

In the Aurora Public Schools District, which boasts an enrollment of about 36,200 students, completed bond projects include the construction of the Meadowood Child Development Center, a third preschool center to serve students in the southern part of APS; a replacement school building to replace the Aurora Hills Middle School "open concept" school built in 1973; an

eight-classroom addition to house science programs at Aurora Central High School; and heating, air conditioning and mechanical repairs at Columbia Middle School.

The district also opened a new 100,000-square-foot complex near East Sixth Avenue and Harvest Road known as the Vista PEAK P-20 campus. The Vista PEAK Exploratory campus for grades P-8 opened in 2010, and district officials celebrated the opening of the city's newest high school, Vista PEAK Preparatory campus, in the fall. The campus is set to eventually include programs for students in preschool through college, and its mascot is the bison.

At Cherry Creek, the successful 2008 bond election paved the way for the \$14 million Institute of Science and Technology, a new facility between the Overland High School and Prairie Middle Schools. The school, which opened in 2011, offers students a specialized approach to science, technology, engineering and math education. The campus offers engineering, health sciences, technical communications, computer science and mathematics courses for students from Overland and Prairie.

Both districts are also set to see a shift in leadership in the coming year. In July, lawyer and former Colorado Department of Higher Education executive director Rico Munn will replace outgoing APS Superintendent John Barry. In the same month, Cherry Creek Superintendent Mary Chesley will retire; former teacher and current Cherry Creek administrator Harry Bull will



Madison Kilmer, 4, plays on a computer in a classroom during the grand opening of Vista PEAK Preparatory last fall in Aurora.

take her place.

APS, serving the main population of the city, faces many hurdles in educating its students: language, poverty and mobility. Few people will say these items are themselves a barrier to learning, but it often becomes the surrounding circumstance that affects children's education.

Poverty often means parents, or a single parent, despite their best efforts to involve themselves in their child's life, often must work several jobs or non-traditional hours to make ends meet. It also means the parent could have less formal education and could feel intimidated when asked to help with their child's homework. Language has become another barrier. Nearly 40 percent of APS' students are considered to have limited English proficiency

or come from a household where a language other than English is spoken. That's one of the highest percentages of any district in the state. Students in the APS district speak about 95 different languages, and approximately 86 percent of this group are native Spanish speakers.

Aurora Public Schools

Superintendent Rico Munn, 1085 Peoria St. Aurora, Colo. 80011 Phone: 303-344-8060, ext. 28004

Cherry Creek School District

Superintendent Harry Bull, 4700 S. Yosemite Greenwood Village, Colo. 80111 303-773-1184

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David Kin practices chipping at Saddle Rock Golf Course in Aurora.

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Recreation choices
as big as the city

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

Aurora is one of the most active places in all of Colorado with new recreation options that seem to spring up nearly every day. If you are moving to town and have an active lifestyle — inside or outside — there is plenty to keep adults and children of all ages occupied.

The Aurora Parks and Open Space Department has one of the biggest roles in the city, overseeing well over 1,800 acres in more than 100 park sites, part of some 6,000 acres of open space — including all undeveloped land, natural areas and reservoirs. The parks often go hand-in-hand with the Aurora Library and Recreation Services, which offers more than 8,000 classes and activities annually, including sports, for thousands of participants of all ages.

The things going on in the city haven't gone unnoticed, locally or nationally. In 2003, Sports Illustrated magazine tabbed Aurora as the best city in Colorado to get involved in sports and recreation programs. The city was designated the 50th Anniversary Sportstown for Colorado and was the subject of a special editorial section of the national magazine. Things have only blossomed in the following decade.

Simply looking at the number of program offerings is enough to see why the magazine would take notice. The number and quality of programs has grown since then.

A sampling of them include: gardening, crafts, cooking, fitness, sports, tennis, swimming, performing arts, visual arts, senior adult recreation and services, elderly day care, outdoor recreation, therapeutic recreation, racquetball, teen scene, youth school breaks and summer playground programs, preschool, computers and finance, dog training, dance, volleyball, history museum, miniature golf, gymnastics and youth prevention services. Call 303-326-8650, register online or walk in to any city recreation center around Aurora.

Recreation Services owns and operates public facilities including recreation centers, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a theater, a history museum, an environmental day camp and outdoor sports complexes. There is a fee for most programs. Financial assistance is available to residents who meet the income qualifications.

Non-residents are encouraged to participate and are charged a differential fee, currently 30 percent more than the resident fee.

In recent years, an estimated 18,000-plus people have signed up for independent youth and adult sports leagues, along with city-sponsored athletics each year, and that number only continues to rise with the expanding population and new facilities completed periodically.

Aurora offers adult leagues for those 16 and older in futsal (indoor soccer), basketball, softball and volleyball. Local, regional and national tournaments are held throughout the year. Tennis leagues, tournaments and clinics are offered year-round. If you want to play, registration starts four to six weeks before the league gets under way. You can receive a registration packet either by mail or fax by calling 303-326-8700. Each sport typically offers a free agent list for people new to the area looking for a team. To be placed on a specific league mailing list, call 303-326-8700. The Sports Office can also be reached by fax at 303-326-8722 or by email at AdultSports@auroragov.org.

Registration for popular spring and summer sports leagues such as youth basketball and tennis is always high. More than 2,500 kids annually participate in the city's basketball leagues, while swimming, gymnastics and tennis are also very popular. For complete listings and pages of valuable information, see the city's Leisure magazine, which is mailed to over 148,000 households and can be found online. Copies are available at libraries, major grocery stores or by calling the Sports Office at 303-326-8700.

Registration can be done online at www.auroragov.org/recreation, by phone at 303-326-8650 (Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-noon and 1-4:30 p.m.) or fax at 303-326-8722, by mail (send the form on page 82 of the Leisure magazine to Highline

» See (RECREATION), 9

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» (RECREATION), from 8

Recreation Office, 6 Abilene St. #300, Aurora CO 80011) and also in person at several locations. There is some financial assistance available for residents on limited incomes. Call 303-236-8315 or 303-326-8700 to find out if you are eligible.

For non-traditional sports enthusiasts, Aurora's Outdoor Recreation Office is based out of the newly-refurbished Beck Recreation Center at 800 Telluride St. The Outdoor office offers canoe trips, river rafting, fly fishing lessons, ice fishing, family archery, hunter education and much more. Call 303-739-6901 for more information or contact Dan Goldberg at dgoldber@auroragov.org. Beck Recreation Center now includes expanded work-out space, improved locker rooms, improved access, a new hot tub and an enhanced pro shop for golfers at adjacent Springhill.

Independent youth leagues in soccer, football, baseball and softball abound throughout the city. For soccer, call Colorado Sting FC (formerly the Aurora Soccer Club) at 303-745-7574 or the Colorado Storm South Soccer Club at 303-799-0151. Baseball leagues are available through Aurora Youth League (303-313-9660) in the spring, and the Arapahoe Youth League (303-692-5374 or aylsports.net), Centennial Little League (303-841-1689, centenniallittleleague.net/) and Cherry Creek Little League (303-680-0186, cherrycreekll.com) in the summer. For football and basketball call the Aurora Youth League at 303-313-9660 (aurorayouthleague@gmail.com) and for summer fast pitch softball contact

Aurora Girls Softball Association of Colorado (agsacolorado.com) at 303-692-5129 or email president@agsacolorado.com.

Wheelin' in Aurora

Skateboarders, rollerbladers and BMX bike riders have embraced the 25.2-acre Aurora Wheel Park located at 2500 S. Wheel Park Circle, adjacent to Olympic Park off Yale and Chambers. The facility, complete with park landscaping and paved on-site parking, includes a BMX (bicycle moto-cross) dirt racetrack, several bicycle freestyle ramps, a remote control car track, three full-size in-line hockey rinks and an 18,200-square-foot skateboard park featuring a street skating (freestyle) course. The park also has 163 vehicle spaces. It is the first facility of its kind in Aurora and one of very few venues for skaters on the Front Range, plus has access to the Cherry Creek Spillway Trail. It's open 8 a.m. to sunset year round.

Hoops heaven

Besides the basketball leagues offered through the city, Aurora is becoming a haven for basketball players and fans of all ages. In 2006, the city opened Hoops Park at 16300 E. 6th Ave., a 1.4-acre facility which includes three full-sized basketball courts that are open and available to the public. It's another of the special use parks the city has been focusing on in recent years.

The courts are constructed of durable post-tension concrete with a multi-colored acrylic coating. The goals are pre-cast concrete standard, with innovative polycarbonate (clear) backboard and heavy-duty break-a-way flex rims. With this

unique design, Hoops Park provides the highest quality and most durable outdoor courts in the Metro area. It's open from 8 a.m. to sunset.

On par with courses

If golf is your game, Aurora is a great place to bring your clubs. Recycled wastewater has been key for the city in keeping its golf courses in relatively good condition in the winter.

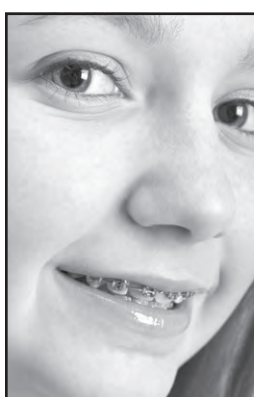
The City of Aurora Golf Division makes it easy to book a tee time, by offering the ability to do it online at www.golfaurora.com and looking under Book a Tee Time. Aurora residents can book tee times 10 days in advance, while non-residents can do it seven days ahead of time. Golfers can use VISA, MasterCard or their current Aurora Reservation Card to access the times. Every golfer will have to complete a first-time registration through the new online system. Reservations can be made at each pro shop — Aurora Hills (303-364-6111), Centre Hills (Par 3, 9 hole) (303-326-8674), Fitzsimons (303-364-8125), Meadow Hills (303-690-2500), Murphy Creek (303-361-7300), Saddle Rock (303-699-3939) and Springhill (303-739-6854).

The city places a lot of emphasis on youth golf, so numerous opportunities exist for children to get on the links for discounted or free rounds. There are annual junior camps in the summer, which teach instruction on fundamentals, grip, stance, full swing, short game, etiquette and more. Juniors can participate in a big tournament when done with their camps, as well as receive discounts on rounds. Keep up with golf happenings in the city on facebook or Twitter.

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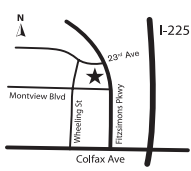


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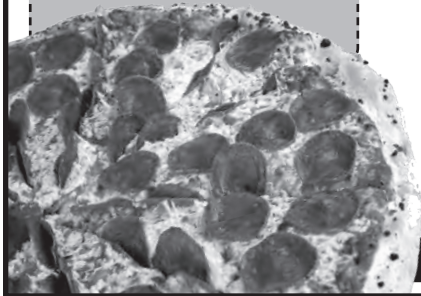


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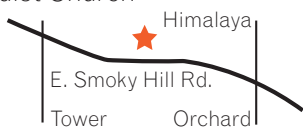


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New tools to fight crime

Police turn to the Internet to enhance public service

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

If residents need up-to-date information about Aurora police — be it details about recent crimes, a department directory or crime-fighting tips — they can fire up their computer or smart phone.

In recent years, the department has expanded its online presence, with a newly improved website in 2009 and increased use of social media since.

Police say they hope the website will help them communicate with the community and help solve crimes.

The site can be found at www.aurorapolice.com or residents can get there through the city's website, www.auroragov.org.

The site features details on active investigations and cold cases, online crime reporting and a form users can use to give police anonymous tips. The site also allows residents to view annual crime reports and other department studies, as well as find ways to contact an officer in their area.

The website's 2009 revamp saw marked improvements for the department's online presence.

"We just needed to make information available when people want it, but we never know when that is. We never know when someone has the time to look at it or the interest," Detective Bob Friel, a department spokesman who worked on the project, said at the time. "That's what this website does. It's sitting there waiting for someone to look at it as they have time and as they need."

When the site launched, it was the culmination of more than 18 months of work that started in mid-2007 when Chief Dan Oates asked his officers to take a critical look at the department's site and find ways to make it a more-effective tool for recruiting officers.

It didn't take long for the officers to realize the old site, which the department launched in the late 1990s, needed work in more areas than just attracting prospective recruits.

The new site wasn't the only addition to Aurora police in recent years.

In 2004, the city opened the Aurora Police District III Station in southeast Aurora's Tallyn's Reach neighborhood. But the 74,000-square-foot Tallyn's Reach facility is more than just a police station. It's also a fire station, emergency dispatch center and library.

Although matching a library with a fire and police station might seem incongruous, city officials say it makes sense when looking at the fact that libraries, police and fire protection are the most called-upon services by residents.

When police officers and firefighters moved into Tallyn's Reach, they left their old communication center behind and built a new, state-of-the-art dispatch center. The city had outgrown the old one at police headquarters at the Aurora Municipal Center.

The new dispatch center, coupled with a new \$18-million digital radio



New Aurora officers wait to graduate in the Education II building at the University of Colorado Denver Hospital at the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora. (Heather A. Longway/ The Aurora Sentinel)

system, provides cops and firefighters all over Aurora with better and more reliable communications.

Unlike the old centralized system, the new towers are arrayed throughout the city in a relay system, diminishing the potential for communications failures should one of the new towers become inoperable or need maintenance or repair.

The new communication system also provides better coverage of the 145 square-miles of Aurora.

Other technological changes have increased public safety workers' efficiency in the field.

Police and fire technicians have worked hard over the past year to outfit patrol cars and fire engines with rugged Microsoft Windows-based laptop computers connected to a radio-based network.

The setup turns a police officer's car or a firefighter's engine into a rolling office, keeping public safety workers on the streets, rather than behind a desk. Officers and firefighters can pull up maps, file reports and search state and federal criminal databases from their cars and check e-mail, too.

The wireless network is also equipped with a high-speed Wi-Fi sub-network that allows technicians to upload large files to the mobile units without having to touch each one. Complex network management software makes administering the rolling computer network much simpler and less time-consuming.

The chief

Since 2005, Daniel Oates has served as Chief of Police for Aurora. He came to Aurora via Ann Arbor, Mich., where he served as chief for four years after more than two decades with the New York Police Department.

The numbers

In general, crime in Aurora has dropped in recent years, but 2012 saw a spike in crime driven by the July 20 theater shootings.

The theater shooting caused an almost 2 percent spike in crime last year, according to Aurora police data.

Without counting the theater shootings, crime across the city actually fell by 1.3 percent, APD said. But when July 20 is included, crime ticked up 1.9 percent.

In all, the theater rampage accounted for 12 homicides — the same number as the city had in all of 2011 — and 57 non-fatal aggravat-

ed assaults, police said.

According to the numbers:

- Murders rose 141 percent, from 12 to 29.
- Forcible rape fell 3.8 percent from 186 to 179.
- Robbery fell 6.8 percent from 515 to 480.
- Aggravated assault rose 5.7 percent, from 754 to 797.
- Burglary fell 17 percent from 2,145 to 1,780.
- Larceny rose 7.6 percent from 6,945 to 7,472.
- Motor vehicle theft rose 4 percent from 889 to 925.

Aurora Fire

Aurora's fire department also got a new leader in 2007.

City Council approved the selection of Michael Garcia, a 29-year veteran of the fire department, as the city's new fire chief that October.

Garcia, who was a battalion chief, replaced former Chief Casey Jones, who retired amid controversy about frequent golf outings and his relationship with the department's lawyer.

Garcia said he looked forward to the opportunity to lead the department's more than 300 firefighters.

"I've enjoyed being a part of this great organization for nearly 30 years and am honored to have been selected as fire chief," he said.

Garcia started with Aurora Fire in 1978 as an apprentice firefighter and has since worked his way through the ranks, holding the ranks of lieutenant and captain before becoming battalion chief in 2000.

In 2004 he took a job as training chief before going back to battalion chief that same year, a position he held until his promotion to department chief. Garcia said one of his main goals would be to improve the diversity of the department. In addition to the new chief, the fire department also got a new fire station in 2007.

Aurora also has multiple courthouses.

Low-level traffic offenses and other violations are heard at the Aurora Municipal Court at 14949 East Alameda Parkway.

Other misdemeanors as well as felonies and most civil matters are heard at either the Adams County Justice Center, 1100 Judicial Center Drive in Brighton or the Arapahoe County Justice Center, 7325 South Potomac St. Centennial.

New city leaders stake out goals and direction for Aurora

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

The face of Aurora City Council changed after voters elected two new city council members and Mayor Steve Hogan last November.

Hogan, who had previously spent more than 20 years on Aurora City Council, was elected to succeed former Mayor Ed Tauer, who was term limited. Tauer and his father, Paul, had served on Aurora City Council for three decades.

Hogan beat five other candidates in the bid for mayor including Realtor Jude Sandvall, then-Aurora City Councilman Ryan Frazier, and former state Rep. Debbie Stafford.

In an interview with the Aurora Sentinel shortly after he won the race, Hogan said he was excited about the road ahead of him.

"People talked to me about running (for mayor) before, and I just didn't think it was the right time or something else was going on," he said. "This was the right time, and I'm comfortable with this new council from what I know. I think we've got just a huge opportunity to move this city ahead by light years."

From the moment he announced he was running for may-

or in January 2011, he didn't waste any time making his priorities known to Aurora residents.

Midway through his campaign, he launched a 20-page plan titled "One Aurora" in which he wrote about his stances on several issues like economic development, education, infrastructure, environmental issues, regionalism, and the importance of a well-managed city budget.

On the horizon for Hogan during his first mayoral term are issues that include protecting Buckley Air Force Base from any federal Department of Defense cuts, and spurring private development around the Anschutz Medical Campus. Hogan is also thinking about long-term issues like the city's relationships with Front Range Airport in Watkins, the Denver Tech Center and Centennial.

"And there is always the issue that we talked about in the campaign of the economy and jobs," he said. "We need to do what we can do to get more employers in here so we can have them create jobs that will serve our citizens."

Bob LeGare, along with Aurora Public Schools employee Debi Hunter-Holen, garnered the highest number of votes for Aurora's two at-large council member seats. It was a relief for LeGare, who won about 27 percent of the vote in Arapahoe County. In 2009, he lost

the municipal election to Councilwoman Barb Cleland by a mere 56 votes. LeGare, a commercial property manager who served as an at-large council member from 1995 to 2003, also served for five years on the Arapahoe County Open Space & Trails Advisory Board and completed six years of service as co-chair of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs & Education Committee. One of his top priorities is to revisit the city's police staffing mandate. City council this past summer reached an agreement with the Aurora Police Association to scale back the staffing mandate from two police officers per 1,000 people. He lauded city council members for spending nearly two years tackling the issue but said there is more work to be done.

"In my opinion, it was probably something council felt they had to do because it was the best they could come up with," he told the Aurora Sentinel last November. "But I don't feel that's the best deal for the taxpayers of Aurora."

LeGare said the 2-per-1,000 staffing mandate was appropriate when voters approved it in 1993 but in recent years, crime has been falling steadily across the nation and in the city.

At some point, LeGare said the issue should go before Aurora voters again.



Aurora Mayor Steve Hogan waits to be interviewed at his victory party at the Aurora Hills Golf Course.

"I'm not suggesting it needs to be next year or maybe the year after that but what I intend to do is continue talking about the 2-per-1,000 mandate, not just brush it under the table like it has been solved," he said.

He also wants to focus on spurring economic development by giving incentives to small businesses, not just to large developers.

The city has offered up to \$300 million in tax incentives to build a massive, \$800 million Western-themed hotel.

"If we have an empty commercial space or building somewhere, (we) could do a miniature Gaylord deal for a company that's going to bring in 35 jobs or 50 jobs," he said. Hunter-Holen's victory on election night came as a surprise for many, since she defeated a sitting candidate. Not only was it the first political race for

Hunter-Holen, the assistant to the Chief of Equity and Engagement at the Aurora Public Schools district, but she took the seat from Councilman Brad Pierce by nearly 1,000 votes in the race for one of two open at-large posts. In her administrative role, Hunter-Holen said she's helped students, parents and community members understand the bureaucratic hurdles of the system. It's experience the first-time council member will bring to her new role, Holen said.

"One of the jobs at our division is to listen to parents and community concerns, help them navigate the system to help them get their issues resolved. I can definitely bring that to city council," Hunter-Holen said. "(It's) having the ability to listen to people and not make a judgment, not make a rash statement, accepting people as they are."

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MOVING



Moving in the boxes is just the beginning

A guide to who to call and what to do first to start your new life in Aurora, Colorado

The phone number is 1-800-275-8777.

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

So you've found a place in the vast expanse of Aurora that suits your living needs, whatever they may be. Before you pack up and move all your things for your new life in Aurora, there are several things you need to do to ensure a transition with as little pain as possible. The following is a list of basic things you can do to make the adjustment smooth and make sure you enjoy your time in the city from the start:

1. Fill out a change of address form at the post office

To prevent stacks of returned and forwarded mail to your old residence, make sure to get a change of address form filled out as soon as you know the address you are moving to. Drop it off at least a week before you move into your new place permanently. The post office's moving packet includes several valuable coupons you can use for discounts on products and services that will help you get settled or put the finishing touches on a new place.

If it is later in the year, make sure you inform agencies like the Internal Revenue Service of your new address, so important mailed forms will find you when you need them. For a full list of Aurora Post Offices, visit www.usps.gov. Change of address can also be done online for free. Aurora's main post office is at 16890 E. Alameda Parkway.

2. Transfer or begin utility service/water

You have a house, condo or apartment now for your things, but you need electricity and water to live in it. Unless you are moving into a place where utilities are part of the rent or are taken care of by the owner, you need to transfer your existing service from Xcel Energy if you are moving locally, or open an account if you are new to the area, which is the same for water service. Make sure you can give both companies an accurate move-in date so there won't be problems with your first bill. The city has a feature where you can pay your water bill with a Visa or MasterCard or view your account information online. All you need is your account number and temporary PIN number (located on your notification letter). The Aurora Water Department can be reached at 303-739-7388 to stop, start or transfer service or for billing questions. The after-hours emergency line is 303-326-8645. The residential customer service line for Xcel Energy is 1-800-895-4999 or you can open, stop or transfer an account online at www.xcelenergy.com.

3. Communications

It is important that people in both your old area and new one be able to contact you during the moving process. This is easy if you have a cell phone, but if you don't, call the phone company as far ahead of moving day as possible. If you are moving a short distance, you may be able to port (or trans-

fer) your original phone number. If not, you should be able to find out what your new digits will be ahead of time so you can start passing it out to family, friends and business associates. You can also set the day your previous service is disconnected and when the new one is activated. Ask to have a message put on your old number telling callers what the new one is. If nothing else, get a phone with an answering machine or voice mail set up at your new address so you don't miss any important calls. You should also transfer cable/satellite dish service if desired.

4. Register car if changing states; call insurance company

If you are moving to Aurora from outside of Colorado, you must promptly register your vehicle. The state has been cracking down in recent years on out-of-state motorists who try to avoid paying fees by waiting as long as they can before registering. The motor vehicles department requires you to register your car in the state 30 days after you have established residency in Colorado, which happens if you have lived in the state for 90 consecutive days, have gainful employment in the state and/or own a business. Aurora's main title and registration office for Arapahoe County is located at 490 S. Chambers Road, and is open 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. The Aurora office for Adams County is located at 3449 N. Chambers Road, Suite A, and is open 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. Car and home insurance

» Continued on next page

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» From the previous page

rates change whether you move into a new state or just a different neighborhood, so be sure to call your carrier. It could save you money right away.

5. Take care of your accounts

Bills are still bills, no matter how far away you move, so ensuring there are no financial problems is important. If you are moving locally, find a branch of your bank or credit union (if it is a national or statewide chain) near where you are and make sure they have the address and phone change on your account. Many deposit slips have blanks for new information. If you are moving from out of the area, set up a checking account as soon as you arrive at your destination to make sure you have a financial resource. Many banks and credit unions will wire the balance of your old accounts to your new bank. If you have a mortgage, make sure the lender knows where you are moving and how to get in contact with you. Any slight delays in receiving a statement or bill could delay your payment and cause complications or costly late fees. Setting up online payment or automatic withdrawal can help limit problems.

If you know your address and phone number before you pay your credit card bill, fill out the blanks on the stub for a new address and mail it in. Credit card companies also have customer service lines that are open 24 hours a day, and making the change should only take a few minutes. If you know what date your bill is usually mailed out, make a pre-emptive strike and call at least a week before if possible. That should create less chance for your bill to be returned to sender or lost in the forwarding process. And you know you don't want to pick up late fees on credit cards or even raise your blood pressure arguing on the phone. Payment on-



line can also help with this.

6. Transfer, begin or cancel newspaper and magazine subscriptions

Don't let the newspapers continue to pile up in front of your door when you no longer live at your old place. Somebody has to deal with them, and it is a waste of the deliverer's time and resources. Transfer your subscription as soon as you know you won't be at your old address anymore. There are many move-in deals you can get for new subscriptions wherever you go. The Aurora Sentinel Home Edition, which is published on Thursdays, is a great way to find out what's going on around town and the best places to find recreation, shopping, entertainment, food and drink. For a move-in special subscription offer to The Aurora Sentinel and other tips on how to get all the news you need in Aurora, call us at 303-750-7555. The Aurora Sentinel is also a great source of local, regional and world happenings. Pick our other publications — LifeScience and the Buckley Guardian — All of our publications can be

found online at www.aurorasentinel.com.

7. Call and set up trash service

Moving generates a lot of trash, and you don't want it to sit around for weeks while you try to get your new place in order. The City of Aurora doesn't have a public trash removal system, so you'll need to contact a private company to set up service. Look in the phone book under Garbage & Rubbish Removal. The previous owner or tenant might have already had a contract and you may be able to just pick up that contract. Check with your chosen hauler if you want to recycle as well, and make sure they take newspaper, household paper (including junk mail) and cardboard, plastics, aluminum, steel cans or glass products. Many reputable haulers can be found online.

8. Make an inventory of all your possessions

If you had the time and foresight before you moved, you might have made a list of items that you were packing and you can

check that against things as you unpack. If you used movers to pack and/or transport your things, this is a particularly good way to make sure nothing was lost, damaged or stolen. It can also help the planning process when you are setting up how the new place is going to look. And even if you didn't do it before, you can make a list as you unpack things, taking note of serial numbers and the condition of the items. This will be valuable for insurance purposes. If you do this before the move, take out an extra policy on your most valuable possessions like jewelry, expensive stereo equipment, digital cameras, televisions, computers, etc.

9. Check out school listings

If you have children at or close to school age, you can find out information about the city's schools located in the education section of this newspaper. Aurora has two school districts, Aurora Public Schools and the Cherry Creek School District. APS serves the city's traditional boundaries, and Cherry Creek is prevalent in the south and southeast parts of the city. Both districts' websites contain a lot of useful information. See APS info at: www.aps.k12.co.us and Cherry Creek info at www.ccsd.k12.co.us. For those of high school age, private Regis Jesuit High School has separate divisions for boys and girls.

10. Odds and ends

Obtain medical and dental records if switching doctors; find a place to transfer prescriptions; get dry and canned foods packed up early and use up as many perishable items as you can; locate the nearest hospital, police station and fire department. A good resource for virtually any question regarding Aurora is Access Aurora, the city's customer service, information and call center: Call 303-739-7000 or e-mail access@auroragov.org.

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COLORADO'S ETHNICITY

The diversity of Aurora residents creates a cultural cornucopia in Colorado

BY THE AURORA SENTINEL

A Korean, a Jew, an African and an Englishman pull into a shopping center.

It's no joke, just an average morning at an unassuming strip mall at East Jewell Avenue and South Havana Street, where a remarkably diverse group of businesses are anything but ordinary.

Mixed in among the dozen businesses at the Birchtree Center are a Jewish organization, the English Teacup restaurant and store, an African hair braiding salon and market, a Korean video rental store, a Korean barbecue restaurant and a popular piano bar.

The red-brick shopping center at 1930 S. Havana St. is probably the only place shoppers can have their hair wound into a stylish box braid, order a steaming plate of spicy beef bulgogi, learn a bit about Sephardic Jewish culture and still have time for traditional English tea and crumpets.

The United-Nations-level cultural melange, though unique, is easy

to miss along Havana, where assorted ethnic markets, restaurants and community groups fill storefronts from Colfax Avenue south to Yale Avenue.

That medley of cultures, ethnic groups and languages is part of everyday life in Aurora and has played a major role in shaping the city's image as a working-class melting pot where everybody is welcome.

According to United States Census data released this week, the majority of Aurora's residents are a member of a minority group, with just 47.3 percent identifying themselves as white alone. That's down from 59 percent in 2000.

And while the city's white population makes up a smaller chunk of the overall population than it once did, various ethnic groups have seen their populations boom over the past decade.

The number of Aurora residents who identify themselves as at least partially black jumped from 41,519 in 2000 to 51,196 last year, a jump of 23 percent.

And the Mexican population has spiked as well, growing 86 percent over the past decade, from 38,276 to 71,225 in 2010, part of a 70-percent

jump in the overall Latino population.

Several individual races also saw sizeable growth, according to Census data, including the Korean, Indian, Chinese, Puerto Rican and Pacific Islander populations.

Because of Aurora's cultural variety, the city is now home to a burgeoning ethnic market and restaurant scene, with dozens of Hispanic markets along Colfax and other ethnic businesses dotting the city.

One of those is the Kantamanto African and Caribbean Market on Havana near East Fourth Avenue.

The small shop is hidden behind a liquor store just north of the old Fan Fare building and filled with the earthy aroma of fresh produce from half a world away.

Ghanaian immigrant Francis Adjei opened Kantamanto — named after a famed market in Accra, Ghana — about nine years ago, moving the business to Aurora from Denver.

"The African community, they live in Aurora," he said as customers stocked up on tiny green eggplant from the Caribbean and massive brown yams from West Africa. "So I have to be in Aurora, or I'm not going to get them."



Francis Adjei, owner, talks at Kantamanto African Caribbean Market in Aurora.

Adjei estimated the city's African and Caribbean population at several thousand people and growing every year. They choose Aurora over other parts of the metro because the city is more affordable for recent immigrants, he said, and because they want to live near the city's well-established African community.

Across Havana from Adjei's store sits Tariq Malik's World Food Bazaar. Like Adjei's store, Malik's is somewhat hidden, tucked well off Havana. Both stores are the kind of places you have to be looking for to find.

Malik moved to the states from Pakistan more than 30 years ago and purchased the Bazaar in 2006.

"A location like this is really good because a lot of our customers are immigrants from Africa, Nepal, Burma, Pakistan, and a lot of them live back here in this area," he said, a television tuned to Pakistani TV blaring

that day's news behind the counter.

Won Lee, administrator at H-Mart, said the biggest group of customers at the sprawling Asian market are, like him, Korean immigrants. But they make up only about 25 percent of the customers who come to the supermarket near Parker and East Yale Avenue for the eclectic mix of produce, appliances, seafood and thousands of other items.

The rest are a mix of people from other Asian countries and shoppers who simply like the unconventional mix of products. Chief among those items are the store's seafood selection, with several live fish popular in sushi and other fish just a few days removed from the ocean.

"Some stores, they have live lobsters and stuff like that," he said as live Tilapia swam in a tank beneath an ice-covered seafood counter piled high with monk fish, whiting and Indian Mackerel. "But not this."

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