

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests and honored participants. Welcome to Greeley's 2024 State of the City Address. We are delighted to have you with us tonight and to learn about the City of Greeley's accomplishments, and what to expect in our city's future. Before we begin our program, please find your seats and silence your devices, as we begin with a moment of unity and pride. Please rise if you are able and remove your caps for the presentation of colors and Pledge of Allegiance. [00:00:30] Please remain standing for the National Anthem.

([00:46](#)):

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Audience ([00:50](#)):

And to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Greeley Central High School Choir ([00:50](#)):

(Singing).

Speaker 1 ([02:30](#)):

[00:02:30] Thank you to the Greeley Central High School Choir for that wonderful performance of the Star-Spangled Banner and thank you to the District Six ROTC for their dedication and service.

([03:00](#)):

[00:03:00] It is now time for our state of the city address. To get our program started, please welcome to the stage Kelli Johnson, the City of Greeley's Chief of Staff.

Chief of Staff Kelli Johnson ([03:28](#)):

Wow. Good evening. [00:03:30] Those were some amazing performances.

([03:40](#)):

I want to thank the Greeley Central High School Choir.

Speaker 5 ([03:42](#)):

[inaudible 00:03:47].

Chief of Staff Kelli Johnson ([03:50](#)):

How about now?

Audience ([03:50](#)):

Yeah. Perfect.

Chief of Staff Kelli Johnson ([03:53](#)):

Good evening everyone. Wow, what an amazing crowd. Thank you for being here. I want to thank one more time, the Greeley Central [00:04:00] High School Choir and the District Six Junior ROTC for being with us tonight.

([04:10](#)):

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to our inaugural 2024 State of the City address. Thanks for joining us. I'm Kelli Johnson, Chief of Staff, and it is my pleasure to have you all with us this evening. I want to

thank the city's Communication and Engagement Department, the City Clerk's Office, the Staff of the Union Colony Civic [00:04:30] Center, and the rest of the planning team for making tonight possible. Events like this and the day-to-day city operations are not possible without the commitment and dedication of our city leadership. Here in the audience tonight are all of your city leaders. This executive team oversees all of the city's various departments for parks to finance, to water. Members of the executive team, would you please stand and be recognized?

[\(05:00\)](#):

[00:05:00] After this evening's address, please don't be shy about approaching these individuals. To be respectful of your time we do not have a formal Q&A session planned, but we welcome you to join us in the lobby and have a conversation with any of these individuals.

[\(05:24\)](#):

It is now my honor to introduce Greeley's City Manager, Raymond C. Lee III. [00:05:30] Mr. Lee joined us nearly three years ago and has been an influential leader since his arrival. Under his leadership and vision, Greeley has responded to the lingering challenges of COVID with innovation and resilience. He fostered collaboration among departments and stakeholders leading to more efficient processes and improved services for our residents. Mr. Lee's emphasis on transparency and accountability and our enhancing trust in local [00:06:00] government and encouraging greater civic engagement. His steadfast commitment to serving the best interests of our community is evident in his decision-making for designing an organizational structure to sustain Greeley now and in the future, and his business fortitude to attract new industries like Alquist 3D Printing, and the Grit Hockey Team to our city.

[\(06:23\)](#):

His strategic approach to economic development has focused on diversifying the city's industries, [00:06:30] attracting new businesses and nurturing existing ones which contribute to job creation and increased revenue for the city, and ultimately ensuring Greeley's long-term prosperity. Along with the city council, Mr. Lee's leadership, dedication and passion have been the driving force behind our city's transformation. There is a palpable sense of excitement for the city's trajectory, a clear sense of our potential to be a premier city [00:07:00] in Colorado. Through his visionary leadership and business aptitude, Mr. Lee continues to establish Greeley as a model for collaborative growth and innovation in the region. Without further ado, please join me in welcoming City Manager Lee to the stage.

City Manager Raymond Lee [\(07:17\)](#):

Thank you. [inaudible 00:07:26].

[\(07:28\)](#):

Good afternoon everyone. Hopefully you [00:07:30] can hear me and we're not having any mic issues. I'm pleased to welcome you to tonight's state of the city of address. We appreciate your commitment to Greeley's future and the community we all care about so much. Thank you for joining us for this evening. I'm fortunate to have called Greeley home for nearly three years now. During that time, it's been a true pleasure to put down roots in this community. I've built personal and professional relationships and embedded myself in the heart of Greeley. [00:08:00] Greeley welcomed me with open arms and I've seized every moment to embrace the Greeley spirit.

[\(08:07\)](#):

I want to take a moment and offer my deepest appreciation for the city of Greeley employees. Greeley employs more than 1200 people and I feel so fortunate to serve as their leader and work with such a talented and dedicated group of individuals. Their compassion, expertise, and commitment [00:08:30] to public service are truly commendable and contribute significantly to the wellbeing and progress of our community. Their dedication reflects a deep sense of civic duty and is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and unity within the community.

[\(08:56\)](#):

I am grateful to be here with all of you tonight. As I stand here [00:09:00] on this stage, I think about the many times our community has come together in this concert hall to hear great music, to laugh, and to be entertained. Grandparents have come to this hall to watch their grandchildren graduate from high school. We've had dance recitals and symphonies on this very stage, and we've hosted Grammy Award-winning musicians here as well. It is a place where we gather in the community, mark [00:09:30] milestones, and make memories. When Greeley was first imagined more than 150 years ago, as the Union Colony, founders envisioned a utopia, a place where agriculture, education and family values were integral in the city's future.

[\(09:51\)](#):

I think it's fitting that we come together in this space, which carries the Union Colony name, to share and celebrate on our achievements [00:10:00] of the past year and to imagine what lies ahead for our great city. Today, we are a diverse community with a population of more than 110,000. We are healthcare workers, we are farmers, we are executives, ranchers, and home builders. We are blue collar and white collar, young families, elders, artists, first responders, students and educators. Our city's diversity [00:10:30] enriches us in so many ways, so many individuals come to Greeley to choose to call it home because we are rich with opportunities and our vibrant sense of community is unmatched.

[\(10:45\)](#):

As your city manager, I'm passionate and intentional about fulfilling our vision for Greeley as the very best place to call home, go to school, run a business, and live your best life. [00:11:00] Over the past year, we have accomplished so much and I'm excited about the new opportunities that lie ahead of us.

[\(11:16\)](#):

We know that our city's rapid growth brings both opportunities and challenges. To take advantage of those opportunities and meet those challenges, our city council identified seven [00:11:30] key focus areas in their strategic plan. This plan serves as the city's roadmap and really highlights the focus areas and operations that fall within each truly create a pathway for Greeley's future. I'd like to briefly summarize those focus areas for you.

[\(11:48\)](#):

First, business growth is about making our community a great place for and our economy to thrive. It means creating more jobs, higher incomes, and supporting [00:12:00] businesses of all sizes, whether a new family-owned restaurant, or a company of national scale. Community vitality focuses on making our city a great place to live, work, and play, planning where new buildings will go and ensuring balance in new development and redevelopment that provides the type of amenities we want to enjoy and experience in our community.

[\(12:26\)](#):

High-performance government is about transparency. We [00:12:30] must use our taxpayer dollars and resources wisely while providing services with efficiency, effectiveness, and excellent customer service. Housing for all is exactly that, making sure that everyone has a good and safe place to live. To do that, we need housing for people seeking to put down roots in Greeley, those moving from one home to another, families and multi-generational households [00:13:00] and people experiencing homelessness. Our new homeless and housing solutions teams have done a tremendous job working to educate and inform the community on how to best address this issue. You'll hear more about that from Mayor Gates in just a moment.

[\(13:19\)](#):

Next, we have high quality of life. Connects virtually every strategy we focus on, specifically caring for our parks and supporting culture, [00:13:30] heritage, arts, and entertainment. Next, we have

infrastructure and Mobility. It's about making sure the bones of our city are in good working condition and that our city is clean, safe, and beautiful. This includes how we plan for traffic and transit so that you can move safely and efficiently through our city roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails.

(13:57):

Finally, everyone deserves to feel safe [00:14:00] and secure in the place they call home, and safety and security continues to be a strategic priority to keep pace with our city's growth. Each of these strategic areas requires leadership, transparency, and community engagement. As a community, we recognize what we do well, see where we need to do better, and imagine what can we accomplish for the future [00:14:30] and we have the resolve to make that vision a reality for our community. There is much to be proud of, much to be done, and so much to look forward to as a community.

(14:48):

It is now my pleasure and honor to introduce Mayor John Gates. He was with the Greeley Police Department for 25 years, retiring as a sergeant in [00:15:00] 2003. He has spent 21 years as the chief for safety and security for D6 School District. Mayor Gates serves on city council for eight years before being elected as mayor in 2017. He has provided steady leadership for Greeley over the past six years and was reelected this past year for his final mayor term. Please welcome Mayor Gates as he shares the city's accomplishments for 2023 [00:15:30] and a vision of what's to come in 2024. Thank you.

Mayor John Gates (15:36):

Thank you Raymond, and good evening. We appreciate you being with us and thanks for spending part of your Thursday evening with us. Before we get started, I'd like to welcome and recognize several people with us here tonight. First and foremost, my wife [00:16:00] Patty. I don't thank her enough.

(16:02):

I thank you for your unwavering support and sacrifice. This is my 15th year as an elected official. I could not have done it without you. Your patience and understanding have played a crucial role in my ability to serve the city. Not sure where you are, but thank you Patty. Thank you to my colleagues on the Greeley City Council. This city council works hard to ensure [00:16:30] Greeley continues to be a great place to live and work, now and in the future. I could not be more honored to work alongside this group of outstanding elected officials that dedicate their time and energy to our city. Colleagues, would you please stand as I call your name? Tommy Butler, Ward I. Deb DeBoutez, Ward II. [00:17:00] Johnny Olson Ward III. My mayor pro tem and Work IV, Dale Hall. At Large City Council Member, Brett Payton, and finally At Large City Council Member, Melissa McDonald.

Audience (17:23):

Whoa.

Mayor John Gates (17:27):

You all may not know this, but I do. [00:17:30] Many municipal governing bodies around us are experiencing chaos and strong division on the dice. This is not happening in Greeley, Colorado, and I could not be more proud to serve with each and every one of you. I see a few additional guests in the audience tonight, non-profits, et cetera that we spend a great deal of time working with and could not serve our mission at the city without you, so I'm going to call these names out.

(17:57):

No need to stand if you would hold your applause till the end. [00:18:00] Commissioners Kevin Ross and Perry Buck. Representative Ryan Armagost. Alan Qualls from Banner Health. Marilyn Shock, UC Health. Sherry Whitbrown, Habitat for Humanity. From the University of Northern Colorado, President

Dr. Andy Feinstein and Dale Pratt. Ames Community College, Chuck Jensen. Greeley Area Chamber of Commerce, Jamie Henning. High Plains Library District, welcome to Dr. Matt Hortt.

[\(18:30\)](#):

[00:18:30] Bianca Fisher, Downtown Development Authority. Tim Coons, Weld Community Foundation. Araceli Calderon, Northern Colorado Refugee Center. From the Greeley Stampede, welcome Justin Watada and Kevin McFarling. From our Greeley-Weld County Airport, Cooper Anderson and Tyler Vasquez. From High Plains Housing Development, Jody Hartman. Julie Jensen from Greeley Area Realtor Association. From Alquist [00:19:00] 3D, which you'll hear a little bit more about, Patrick Callahan, Ryan Hasler and Gio Galifianakis. Ernest Cienfuegos-Baca from United Way. Jennifer Finch from Weld County.

[\(19:12\)](#):

From the Grit Hockey Team, Bob Bowden and Mary Bowe. From LULAC, welcome to Sonny Subia. Martin Lind, welcome from Water Valley. PCL Construction, Hunter Hoshiko and Jeff Darnell. Larry Buckendorf from Journey Homes. Carol Salter [00:19:30] from Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development. Sandra Hagen Solin, CEO of Capital Solutions government relations. Ashley Stiles from Tribe Development. And Tori Demmitt from Decor. Probably left some out. That was based on RSVPs that we had in. How about a collective round of applause for all of them?

[\(19:59\)](#):

Next, [00:20:00] I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to all the City of Greeley employees for their hard work and significant contributions. Your dedication plays a crucial role in making our city a better place to live, work, and thrive. There are close to a thousand of you and we could not do it without you, and last but not least, I want to recognize our outstanding City Manager, Raymond Lee, who you just heard from. Raymond, your leadership and passion for your work at the City of Greeley is inspiring. It's not easy to [00:20:30] have seven bosses and I know I speak for all of council when I say your energy for the tasks ahead are deeply appreciated by all of us. Complacency is our greatest enemy as a city. Raymond Lee and his team have been anything but complacent and striving our city's betterment. That level of dedication and commitment is truly making a difference for Greeley.

[\(21:00\)](#):

[00:21:00] As many of you know, I have lived in Greeley all my life. This is a community I care about deeply in my lifetime, the community's population has nearly tripled. I say community because this city, even with all the growth and change over the years, remains a place where neighbors know each other and care for each other. That's what brings us together tonight and moves us forward. Our city is the fourth fastest-growing metro area in the country. Let me state that again. We [00:21:30] are the fourth fastest-growing city in the nation, which brings many opportunities and challenges for our community. We are among the top 10 largest cities in Colorado, a state that has experienced tremendous growth and shows no signs of stopping. Here are a few more numbers for you. By 2060, we expect our population to double to 250,000 residents. That's a whole lot of additional Greeleyads over the next 35 years.

[\(21:57\)](#):

With so much growth ahead of us, our city must plan [00:22:00] wisely for our future. Those who came before us knew the importance of planning. The city's planning for water use and infrastructure is a great example of how our founders vision has benefited all of us here today. Likewise, we must continue to prepare for future growth today. From housing to infrastructure and from safety to business growth, we must take purposeful steps forward with eyes to the future. It is exciting and demanding to anticipate the opportunities and challenges [00:22:30] this rapid growth will bring. As we work together, we will continue to invest in our city streets, neighborhoods, infrastructure, public safety, housing, and amenities that improve the quality of life for all of our citizens. As city manager Lee mentioned, we have a roadmap based on seven priorities identified by city council during an intensive strategic visioning session.

[\(22:55\)](#):

These priorities are the direct result of ideas and suggestions that the city council heard [00:23:00] in community surveys and council conversations with you, our city residents. The City of Greeley is committed to serving its residents through transparent, effective, and efficient operational practices and long-term strategic planning. You can now track the city's strategic performance progress on the city's website with a new interactive dashboard that shows how well we are meeting our goals. Tonight, I'm eager to present some key highlights from [00:23:30] 2023 and discuss how they paved the way for our plans in 2024. I take immense pride in the progress our city has made thus far and I'm very thrilled about our future.

[\(23:40\)](#):

Let's kick off with business growth and some development highlights. The of business growth throughout the city cannot be overstated, especially as we contemplate the needs of our growing population. In 2023, we saw some remarkable achievements. The city received 364 new business license [00:24:00] applications. Two new hotels moved into town. The unemployment rate dropped to 3% and commercial property values increased. Attracting new employees, employers and industries will create diverse job opportunities with competitive salaries for you, our residents. We've seen significant growth across various sectors including construction, energy, agriculture, and health services.

[\(24:26\)](#):

Take for instance, our healthcare sector, which boasts two [00:24:30] major hospital systems, employing over 7,000 people right here in Greeley. This industry is a promising opportunity for future growth. We see this in action as the University of Northern Colorado is aiming to create an osteopathic medical college, which recently received support from Governor Jared Polis to extend and develop our healthcare workforce. This is the third medical school in Colorado and will help the state alleviate shortage of physicians primarily in rural [00:25:00] and underserved communities. Dr. Feinstein, we are excited for you, for the University of Northern Colorado, and for the City of Greeley.

[\(25:09\)](#):

Many of you know that our city has deep roots in agriculture, a sector where Greeley continues to lead. Weld County ranks in the top 2% of highest employment counties in the state for food manufacturing and [00:25:30] the top 1% for agriculture. As we look towards the future, we're excited about the potential growth in our local economy. By 2030, we anticipate that food manufacturing alone will contribute 800 new jobs and inject over \$123 million in wages into our community, boosting opportunities for upward economic mobility for everyone in our city. Business growth in our city translates to growth for all of you, for more job [00:26:00] opportunities to increased earning potential. It means that our small business owners will see an increase in their bottom lines through local spending and we'll have a broader tax base with more resources for maintaining our roads, attracting new amenities, and improving our quality of life.

[\(26:17\)](#):

Our vision for growth extends beyond traditional industries. This past October, City Manager Lee and I had the privilege of welcoming a new and innovative business to Greeley, Alquist 3D Printing, at [00:26:30] a special event that was held at Ames Community College. Alquist 3D is not just any company. They're revolutionizing the construction industry by 3D printing homes. If you haven't seen their high-tech robots at work, I highly recommend a quick online search. I think you will find it rather satisfying to watch. Alquist's approach is not only innovative and sustainable, but it also makes housing more affordable, faster to build and extremely resilient [00:27:00] to weather events and fire.

[\(27:02\)](#):

Alquist considered many locations when searching for its new headquarters. As the fastest growing city in Colorado and centrally located in the United States, Greeley emerged as an ideal fit for the company's

expansion plans. They are also partnering with Ames Community College to create educational and career pathways for our students to learn 3-D printing. As we continue to embrace innovation and technology, Greeley is becoming a beacon for business [00:27:30] growth and economic development. We are thrilled about creating jobs for our local economy and we'll share more updates with you as we grow and innovate together.

[\(27:39\)](#):

In a significant recognition of our efforts, Greeley was named one of 17 cities selected for the Good Jobs, Great Cities Learning Network in May. This national program enhances economic and workforce development, which means Greeley will be able to secure federal grants and further boost economic development. It also presents us with opportunities [00:28:00] to learn from other cities and access resources that promote job growth in local industries. In 2024, we will formulate a strategic plan for economic development to bolster business growth, partner with our educational institutions for a prepared workforce and initiate a small business grant pilot program.

[\(28:27\)](#):

In Greeley, we take immense pride in our [00:28:30] community and care deeply about the well-being of our residents. We understand that to have thriving communities, we must have affordable housing and it's a challenge we're urgently addressing. Affordable housing continues to be a priority for Greeley as it is across Colorado and the nation. The average cost of a home in Greeley is around \$430,000 dollars and nearly a third of all Colorado households spending more than 30% of their income on housing. This makes it really challenging [00:29:00] for some of our residents to afford basic needs. As city manager Lee pointed out, our goal of housing for all includes everyone. For families looking to put down roots in Greeley, people going through life changes, multigenerational households and those currently without a home.

[\(29:20\)](#):

Just a year ago, we had more than 460 people without homes in Greeley, most of them lacking any form of shelter. We have established the Housing and Homeless Solutions [00:29:30] departments and the Homelessness to Housing Intensive Care management team. These initiatives mark a significant milestone in Greeley's history. It's the first time we've ever harnessed resources and evidence-based practices to address homelessness. We also established the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness. This dedicated team is composed of passionate community members and stakeholders, all united by a commitment to making a difference. This task force has two bold goals, [00:30:00] to decrease homelessness in Greeley by 70% in four years and reduce the number of people living without shelter. We are committed to making these goals a reality as everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

[\(30:21\)](#):

In the 10 months since we created the Housing and Homeless Solutions departments, we've seen remarkable progress. We've managed to secure over \$4.7 [00:30:30] million dollars in total grant funds to help our most housing insecure neighbors. We are proud of these achievements, but we know that our journey is just beginning. In May of 2023, our team started housing people and connecting them to primary and mental healthcare. In just seven months, we successfully provided housing to over 75 people, transforming the lives of people and families who experience chronic homelessness.

[\(31:00\)](#):

[00:31:00] The city's efforts are rooted in the Housing First model, a proven approach to ending homelessness. The model centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing, providing them with the stability needed to rebuild their lives. Seeking inspiration and wanting to see the model in action, members of the task force, including myself, visited Milwaukee, a city that has successfully implemented the Housing First model. Milwaukee County, [00:31:30] home to nearly one million people, has the lowest per capita unsheltered homeless population in the country.

[\(31:37\)](#):

I was thoroughly impressed with Milwaukee's efforts to impact homelessness and believe the same model we are using will be quite effective in our community. The firsthand experience truly underscored the effectiveness of the Housing First model and inspired us to work towards implementing it in Greeley. The Housing First Model is not just about providing shelter, it's about creating a safe, secure environment [00:32:00] and then connecting individuals with mental health services and other wraparound support systems like food, health care and job training.

[\(32:09\)](#):

Greeley is more determined than ever to prepare our city with the necessary tools to provide everyone in Greeley with a place to call home. Through Housing First, we anticipate a decrease in ambulance calls, police interactions, shelter stays, and hospital visits. At the same time, we expect to see an increase in outpatient psychiatric [00:32:30] visits and substance use treatment, further enhancing the quality of life for our residents. In our ongoing efforts to address homelessness, Greeley recently hosted and planned a regional conference on homelessness.

[\(32:43\)](#):

Participants from cities around the state joined us, affirming the growing recognition of Greeley's leadership and expertise in homeless and housing solutions. We know that our city's rapid growth will continue to create challenges for housing and homeownership as well. Increased [00:33:00] demand for housing has led to higher rent and higher home prices. We must continue to work to open doors, quite literally, for those looking to buy or rent in Greeley. We're excited to announce the construction of two large affordable housing communities that will add more than 950 affordable housing units to Greeley.

[\(33:21\)](#):

One of these housing communities is Hope Springs, led by the Greeley-Weld Habitat for Humanity. Alquist 3D is set to 3D print and construct [00:33:30] at least 100 of these nearly 500 structures planned for the Hope Springs community. This is just one of many examples of community partners working together to make a difference in our city. We accomplished so much working together in 2023, and we're excited about the opportunities that we have in 2024. We received a grant of \$1.4 million dollars to develop an emergency shelter and additional funding that will help us form an outreach team that operates seven days a week.

[\(34:00\)](#):

[00:34:00] Home is more than just a building that you reside in. It's about the connections you form with your neighbors and the experience of your surroundings and your environment. We are working in collaboration with developers and listening to your feedback to create more pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. This applies not only to new areas but also modifying existing ones. We value your feedback on these projects and encourage you to visit SpeakUpGreeley.com to weigh in with your feedback.

[\(34:30\)](#):

[00:34:30] Speaking of a vibrant community, Greeley has a lot to offer, and you are making the most of it, taking advantage of many opportunities from art and culture to recreation and festivals. Greeley, in 2023, your purchase of 25,000 tickets to city events shows your unwavering support to the arts and culture that make us the community we are. Here at the Union Colony Civic Center, we've seen a 42% increase in ticket revenue [00:35:00] and that's all thanks to you. Greeley Farmer's Market was named a top three farmer's market in Colorado by the American Farmland Trust and the Greeley Tribune cited the city's arts picnic as Greeley's best festival for 2023.

[\(35:14\)](#):

Greeley Museums welcomed nearly 18,000 people to exhibits and events this past year, and of course we celebrate the Greeley Stampede, one of the most beloved community events for more than a hundred years. The Stampede began as a celebration [00:35:30] of local potato farmers in the late 1800s. It is now a globally recognized event that brings more than 250,000 attendees each year, hailing from across the United States and abroad.

[\(35:51\)](#):

These accolades are a reflection of your love and support for our community and there's so much more ahead. In 2023, we made significant strides [00:36:00] in ensuring our city offerings resonate with all members of the community. Our Greeley Museum of History hosted the Dolores Huerta: Revolution in the Fields exhibition. This display, organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, showcased Huerta's activism and leadership with the United Farm Workers Association. The exhibit also provided us with the unique opportunity to partner with the Mexican American History Project Greeley and the [00:36:30] Cesar Chavez Center at UNC to co-curate our own community's content to sit along the Smithsonian's exhibition.

[\(36:38\)](#):

This collaboration was extremely meaningful to residents and visitors who saw their own history represented by the exhibit. As we move forward, we remain committed to ensuring our city's offerings are an inclusive and representative of our entire community. With our recreational activities, we're thrilled to share that the Greeley Recreation Youth Sports [00:37:00] Programs have reached all-time highs for participation levels. This past year, our very own Greeley Ice Haus Learn to Skate program was recognized by the United States Figure Skating is one of the largest in Colorado.

[\(37:13\)](#):

And our program participants are not the only ones loving the ice. The Colorado Grit has made Greeley Ice Haus their home rink. Last year, the city signed an agreement with the North American Hockey League to bring the first Colorado team to the Ice Haus. Grit game days [00:37:30] have boosted our local economy with 1200 rooms booked and 5600 meals purchased by visiting hockey teams, benefiting our local hotels, restaurants, and business owners.

[\(37:43\)](#):

The Colorado Grit is part of our community. They've enriched our community with 354 volunteer hours at the Boys and Girls Club, Habitat for Humanity, regional use hockey practices and elementary schools. Bob Bowden, you're here somewhere. Thanks for bringing [00:38:00] the Colorado Grit to Greeley [inaudible 00:38:07].

[\(38:08\)](#):

The spirit of community and active living doesn't stop at the rink. We understand the importance of providing diverse recreational opportunities for everyone in our community, both indoors and outdoors. Our natural areas, parks and trails are vital features of our city. They provide us space to unwind, reconnect, and gather. And as Greeley continues [00:38:30] to grow, we commit to managing, stewarding, and protecting these spaces for everyone to enjoy now and for generations to come.

[\(38:38\)](#):

Our city maintains 42 parks, nearly six acres of parkland for every 1000 residents. That is no small feat. It involves a significant amount of maintenance and care. We know that with the population expected to double in the next few decades, the work we do now to manage our natural areas and trails will impact the quality of life in [00:39:00] Greeley for many years to come. We must not lose sight of its value even as we grow and change as a city.

[\(39:07\)](#):

In collaboration with the trust for public land in great outdoors Colorado, Greeley acquired a new natural area near Missal Site Park. This 1000 acre land doubles the city's open space and supports our commitment to community vitality and equitable nature access. Together with the trust for public land and Lutheran Family Services, [00:39:30] we're transforming Delta Park, a six-acre park in East Greeley. My apologies. Resident's input during planning will be reflected in the park's design and activities.

[\(39:41\)](#):

The park represents more than a green space. It's a symbol of community, belonging, and inclusion. As city manager Lee mentioned, I've spent 21 years working within District 6 schools. If you spend time with kids, you know they need to get outside and play, and families need places to gather to [00:40:00] celebrate those milestones and make memories. Our parks and playgrounds offer a place to do just that. If you've been to Anna Gimmestad, Far Park, and Sanborn Park, you've had a chance to enjoy 2023 playground refreshes.

[\(40:15\)](#):

Not only have we spruced up our playgrounds, but we've also planted three new uptown tree sculptures to our city's landscape, branching out, nice pun, our total to 23 tree sculptures. We are known as [00:40:30] Tree City USA and these sculptures provide a unique twist to our title. Greeley is a vibrant arts community and public spaces reflect that the murals, sculptures, and access to art for everyone. This is possible due to the commitment to enhance the city's public art collection by adopting a 1% for art program, setting aside 1% of new capital improvement projects to acquire, maintain, commission art in our community.

[\(40:59\)](#):

Our city is committed [00:41:00] to expanding community programming and activating our parks and open spaces to support and enrich youth development across the community. From vibrant festivals to educational workshops, we are going to create more opportunities for learning, growth, and fun. We believe in the power of community and we're dedicated to making Greeley a place where everyone can thrive. We are developing master plans for various sectors, such as culture parks and recreation, Island Grove Regional Park and tourism. [00:41:30] We have a lot of work to do to keep with our growth and we need your help.

[\(41:34\)](#):

Again, I will remind you to go to SpeakUpGreeley.com to monitor upcoming projects that need your thoughts and suggestions. This site has allowed us to receive over 3,100 comments, ideas, and suggestions from residents on 14 different projects in the last year.

[\(42:00\)](#):

[00:42:00] Community Vitality involves purposeful planning for future growth and opportunities. It is about innovative growth and management, balancing new development, redevelopment and the management of open spaces and the vision of our community. We finished our first comprehensive housing needs assessment, which will help the city council and staff understand the forecast housing needs for the next two decades. This will guide us in making informed decisions about long-term housing goals and collaborating with [00:42:30] developers to address our city's current housing needs.

[\(42:34\)](#):

In 2024, we're moving forward with the downtown master plan, directing city investments to create and maintain a viable energetic downtown. Since developing the plan, we have seen our downtown become a hub for art and culture through new ideas, strategic investment and community engagement. Thank you as well to our vibrant downtown development authority, under the outstanding direction of Bianca Fisher.

[\(43:00\)](#):

[00:43:00] We also are developing a growth management plan to identify development and redevelopment opportunities. Our focus is on transforming vacant lots into vibrant spaces and finding areas with development potential. We are talking to housing developers to learn more about some of the challenges they face when building in Greeley. We will work to attract the right mix of housing, [00:43:30] business, and entertainment that will offer the growth while maintaining the sense of community that you have told us is so important. Through it all, we are not just building spaces, we're building a sense of community that extends beyond our physical spaces.

(43:47):

Transparency is the cornerstone of our community, fostering trust and understanding. We know the journey ahead and recognize that we cannot progress as a city without you, our residents. Your input and your experience is our North [00:44:00] Star, guiding and leading us as we work. In 2023, we developed and delivered the first ever budget one-on-one webinar to help give our residents key information about our city's government finance and funding priorities. If you missed that, you can watch through recording on the city's YouTube channel.

(44:20):

In addition, we re-engineered the annual budget book that provides an exceptional level of transparency into the city's financial position and annual operating and capital [00:44:30] improvement budgets. We continue to enhance our communication channels to ensure that everyone has access to the information they need. The city also delivers various topic relevant newsletters every month to nearly 56,000 subscribers. This allows readers to choose content that is valuable to them. We recognize that delivering caring and well-informed customer service is key to building trust, connections and engagement.

(44:59):

That means putting [00:45:00] technology to use in ways that can make it easier for you to find answers, share ideas, and learn about what's happening in our city. As I said earlier, you can now see the city's strategic performance progress in each of our seven focus areas on our online dashboard.

(45:16):

In 2023, the city issued \$284,000 dollars in food tax rebates to help families as they face rapidly rising food costs and the program continues this year. This program has been available [00:45:30] to Greeley residents since 1990. This year, a utility assistance rebate program has been added to the application to provide even more relief for our hard-working families. This year we'll be launching a website and mobile application called Greeley Connect. This site will provide you access to local government resources and services at your fingertips.

(45:53):

It is an easy-to-use tool for reporting non-emergency concerns like graffiti, water leaks, potholes, [00:46:00] light outages, park and neighborhood maintenance needs. This will help keep our city clean, safe, and beautiful. In 2024, the city will continue to work to retain and recruit employees as we refine and focus on a fair and equitable compensation system, develop a strong work culture that is empowered, and engage with a sense of mission and conduct department assessments to ensure we have a more efficient and effective government.

(46:28):

Tonight, many of your public servants [00:46:30] are here, including the entire executive leadership team. Please know these people are hard at work day in and day out to make this community the best that it could possibly be while providing a high level of customer service. At the conclusion of the event, I would encourage you to say hello and get to know some of the folks who plow your streets, repair your roads, ensure you access to clean safe water, and share information about city news and events.

(46:58):

I think we see how fast our [00:47:00] state is growing and even more so along the front range. Our city is evolving and with it, our infrastructure is also growing and evolving. As it ages and our population continues to grow, we are faced with increasing demands on our streets and facilities. It will impact how you move through the city and will increase the need for resources if we were to keep pace with maintenance on these essential services and resources.

[\(47:27\)](#):

Inspired by the 2045 transportation plan, [00:47:30] we're thrilled to announce a 12-month pilot program for shared e-scooters and e-bikes that will allow our community members to use these devices through a smartphone application. We're working with a private business vendor to provide these alternative e-transportation methods in downtown Greeley and surrounding areas. This will offer a new, exciting way to move around our city. The insights gained from this pilot will be presented to the city council to shape the future of micro-mobility [00:48:00] in Greeley, Colorado.

[\(48:02\)](#):

City Council will also be reviewing the findings from the Waste Diversion Study. Greeley was awarded a Front Range Waste Diversion grant. This grant funded a study to understand the quantity and types of waste we send to landfills and to explore alternative waste solutions to reduce our landfill contributions. We recognize the importance of sustainability and we use the study's findings to find better recycling opportunities.

[\(48:29\)](#):

Now let's talk [00:48:30] water. Greeley is known for its great tasting water. Greeley's innovative water treatment plants keep our drinking water safe. We need to ensure our taps keep flowing with reliable, abundant and clean water, especially as environmental change and population growth threatens this precious resource. Our city's water and infrastructure needs constant oversight to ensure safe, reliable, and great tasting water as we continue to look for innovative and sustainable ways [00:49:00] to keep our water game strong. In 2023, the water and sewer team received more than \$18 million dollars in grant funding to tackle projects like the Bellevue Gold Hill Pipeline, which helped address potential water disruptions from wildfires, floods, and other hazards.

[\(49:25\)](#):

Ensuring your safety is paramount. You deserve a safe, secure city [00:49:30] and we continue to work to find solutions that meet the community's needs now. As we expand and flourish, the calls for our first responders multiply, echoing the need for increased resources to support public safety. Our city's safety is not just a priority, it's a commitment. We believe that every resident deserves a city that is not only safe, but secure. We are committed to addressing anticipated growth with resources, data and state-of-the-industry [00:50:00] technology.

[\(50:02\)](#):

In 2023, using data and public feedback, the Greeley Police Department dedicated hundreds of hours during pre-traffic times to prevent crime and respond to the needs of business owners and downtown residents, as the department strategically focused resources on higher crime and traffic accident rates. Our fire department is another beacon of safety and security. In the past year, our fire department to more than 18,500 calls for service, [00:50:30] marking a 4% increase from the previous year. Their dedication and efficiency are evident in their impressive 81% response rate to all emergency calls within five minutes, they successfully managed 119 fires and we're grateful to report zero fire related fatalities.

[\(50:59\)](#):

Safety [00:51:00] has been a recurring theme in recent council meetings reflecting the concerns of our residents. As we step into 2024, it remains a top priority. The growth of our city and its impact on our first responders, along with the resources they require to serve our community is not a distant future concern. This is something we must address now. Studies indicate that fires double in size every minute

and the chances of survival during a medical or traumatic emergency decrease with [00:51:30] each passing minute.

[\(51:32\)](#):

As we evaluate first responders staffing, infrastructure, response time and the well-being of our employees, we understand our decisions have life-saving implications. As you think back to Greeley's population 40, and even 20 years ago, when some of our fire stations were built, it's clear how our needs have evolved compared to the challenges we face today. The police department is also reviewing staffing and infrastructure for current needs and [00:52:00] future growth.

[\(52:01\)](#):

Our goal is to maintain an adequate number of officers to respond promptly to crime or emergencies and to be proactive in our community as they engage with and serve the public. We're also in the process of exploring a real-time crime information center. This innovative approach would enhance response times, improve community safety, and give officers critical information for preventing and solving crimes. Thank [00:52:30] you.

[\(52:34\)](#):

That is a lot to digest, but also really exciting. As City Manager Lee said, Greeley has a wealth of achievements to celebrate and much to be proud of as we reflect on 2023. Please know that we are working to shape our city in the best version of itself, not just this year, but for future generations to come. The planning innovative ideas, exciting opportunities and vision we are currently [00:53:00] nurturing will bring promise and potential.

[\(53:04\)](#):

Thank you all for being engaged in our community. Your engagement is a commitment to our future and I am deeply appreciative. I'm honored to have served the city all these years and I'm profoundly grateful for your trust and support. You have elected me to office six times in Greeley and I'm appreciative of that fact. As we leave here tonight and return to your homes, your businesses and your work, carry that vision with you. Embrace your role in [00:53:30] bringing the future of Greeley to life as we progress, united.

[\(53:35\)](#):

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for taking the time to be with us tonight and for contributing to the greatness of our community. There are cookies and refreshments waiting for you in the lobby. Our city leadership and our city council will also be in the lobby and happy to speak and answer any questions you might have. I am proud and honored to be your mayor [00:54:00] and I thank you for being here. Have a pleasant evening.