Advancing Local Solutions

Arvada Childcare Pilot

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GREATER ARVADA Chamber of Commerce

EXECUTIVES PARTNERING TO INVEST IN CHILDREN

EPIC®

COLORADO GIVES FOUNDATION

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Executive Summary

Childcare is essential infrastructure that supports Arvada's families, workforce and economy.

As Arvada experiences workforce shortages, rising housing costs and changing demographic trends, access to affordable, reliable childcare has become increasingly important to the community's long-term economic vitality. Employers increasingly recognize that access to childcare affects recruitment, retention, and productivity, while families continue to face significant challenges finding care that meets their needs.

At the same time, Jefferson County Public Schools is experiencing declining enrollment, creating a unique opportunity to rethink how underutilized public assets can continue serving community needs.

Recognizing these intersecting challenges, community partners launched the Arvada Childcare Pilot to identify practical, implementation-ready strategies that leverage existing assets, strengthen partnerships and expand childcare capacity.

Key Findings

Throughout the pilot, four themes consistently emerged:



CHILDCARE IS WORKFORCE, ECONOMIC, AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable childcare supports workforce participation, economic development and long-term community vitality.



THE ASSETS ALREADY EXIST

Arvada has publicly owned sites, engaged community partners, employer interest, and financing tools capable of supporting implementation-ready childcare projects.



INFANT AND TODDLER CARE REPRESENTS THE GREATEST NEED

Current licensed capacity falls well short of demand, particularly for children under age three.



COORDINATION CREATES OPPORTUNITY

The greatest barrier is not a lack of ideas; it is aligning land, capital, partnerships and leadership around one implementation ready project.

High-Impact Opportunities

Advance a **collaborative public-private childcare development model** that repurposes an existing community asset through partnerships among public schools, municipalities, employers, experienced childcare providers and community funding partners.

Building Local Solutions

To address growing childcare challenges, the Arvada Childcare Pilot **convened leaders** from local government, education, business, housing, philanthropy, early childhood and community organizations **to identify practical, implementation-ready solutions.**

Rather than beginning with a predetermined project, the pilot **explored community needs, evaluated existing assets, assessed redevelopment opportunities and identified partnership models** capable of advancing one implementation-ready childcare strategy.

Process at a Glance

GOAL

Advance **one prioritized childcare strategy toward implementation** readiness by moving a defined concept or site from idea to feasibility while developing a scalable model for future community investment.

PARTNERS

County, municipalities, providers, employers, housing, public health, philanthropy, and community organizations

TIMELINE

2025-2027
(18-month pilot)

Who Was Involved

The initiative is guided by a cross-sector working group that includes:

- City of Arvada
- Jefferson County Public Schools
- Greater Arvada Chamber of Commerce
- Elevation Community Land Trust
- Apex Park and Recreation District
- Triad Bright Futures
- Childcare Innovations (formerly the Triad Early Childhood Council)
- Colorado Gives Foundation
- Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)

What Was Done

Throughout the pilot, partners:

- ✓ Conducted stakeholder interviews
- ✓ Analyzed childcare and workforce data
- ✓ Engaged providers, employers and municipalities
- ✓ Explored financing and policy opportunities
- ✓ Evaluated community assets
- ✓ Identified implementation-ready strategies
- ✓ Built alignment around shared priorities

Our Approach

UNDERSTAND	ENGAGE	ANALYZE	PRIORITIZE	IMPLEMENT
Community needs and existing conditions	Stakeholders and gather local perspectives	Data, assets, and barriers to identify opportunities	Select practical, feasible strategies for impact	Move priority strategies toward implementation

What We Heard

Stakeholder interviews consistently demonstrated that **childcare is no longer viewed solely as an early childhood issue.**

Employers, educators, local government, housing organizations, providers and community partners described childcare as **essential infrastructure that supports workforce participation, economic development, and community vitality.**

Childcare Is Essential Workforce Infrastructure

Participants consistently described childcare as a workforce issue affecting recruitment, retention, productivity and long-term economic competitiveness.

Employers also emphasized that reliable childcare directly affects their ability to recruit and retain workers.

Costs Are Unsustainable for Families

> *The amount I'm paid is pretty much the cost of childcare."*

Families continue to face significant affordability challenges while providers struggle to cover the true cost of delivering high-quality care.

Participants consistently emphasized that tuition alone cannot support sustainable business models while remaining affordable for working families.

Supply Falls Far Below Demand

Stakeholders agreed that the greatest shortage exists for infant and toddler care. While Universal Preschool has expanded opportunities for four-year-olds, capacity for children under age three remains limited because infant and toddler classrooms require higher staffing ratios and significantly greater operating costs.

Future investments should prioritize expanding infant and toddler capacity while strengthening provider sustainability.

Access Depends on Transportation and Location

Participants emphasized that childcare access involves more than the number of available seats.

Transportation, proximity to employment centers, neighborhood location and integration with housing all influence whether families can realistically access care.

Family Childcare Homes Are Critical but Under Supported

Stakeholders consistently identified Family Childcare Homes as one of the quickest opportunities to expand capacity.

However, providers described regulatory complexity, startup costs and limited business supports as barriers to growth.

> *How do we make it easier for someone who wants to do an in-home daycare? Trying to do an in-home daycare the right way, it feels out of reach."*

Supporting Family Childcare Homes represents an opportunity to increase neighborhood-based care while strengthening the overall childcare system.

The Opportunity is Alignment

Perhaps the strongest finding from this work is that Arvada already possesses many of the ingredients needed to move forward.

The remaining challenge is coordinating these resources around one implementation ready project.

Land, partners and financing tools are already aligning in Arvada. The barrier is **not a lack of opportunity**; it is coordination and execution.

What the Data Tells Us

Childcare Challenges Have Significant Economic Consequences

Childcare challenges cost Jefferson County approximately $200 million annually through lost workforce participation, reduced business productivity, lower household earnings and increased public costs.



Source: Ready Nation Council for a Strong America "Want to Grow Colorado's Economy? Fix the Childcare Crisis"; EPIC analysis

Workforce Pressures Are Intensifying

Arvada faces several workforce trends simultaneously:

Aging population
43% age 45+
The number of older residents is rising, reducing the available workforce.

Fewer Young Children
5% under age 5
A shrinking pipeline will limit future workforce supply

Tight Labor Market
71% participation
Strong engagement, but fewer workers to meet demand

Rising Cost Burden
Costs>wages
Housing and childcare limit workforce participation

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate, Table S0101 and DP03

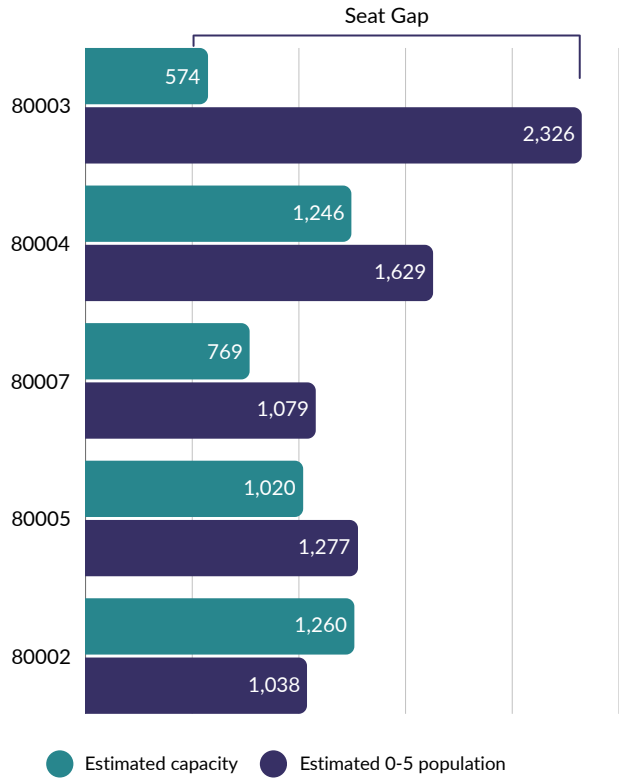
Together, these trends reinforce the importance of childcare as a workforce strategy.

Childcare Supply Falls Far Short of Demand

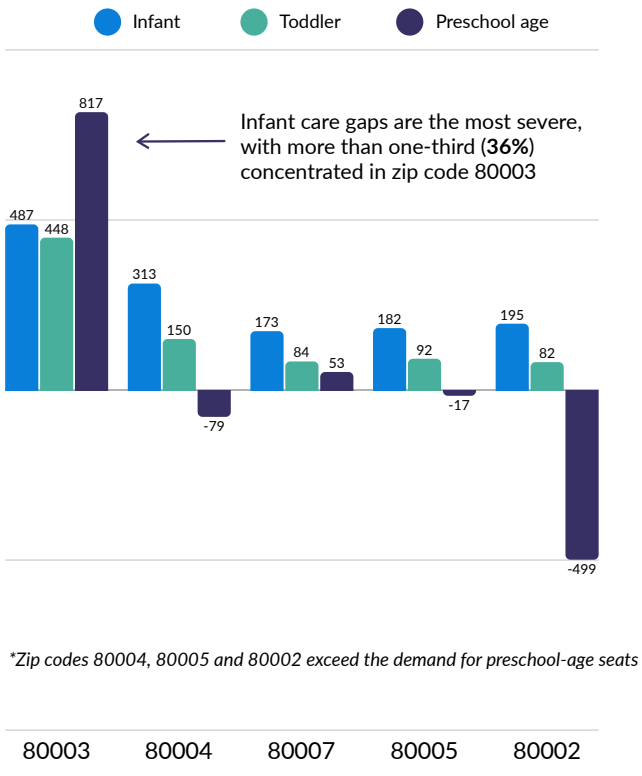
Licensed childcare capacity does not meet the needs of Arvada families.

The community faces an estimated seat gap of approximately **2,480 children**, with the greatest shortages concentrated in infant and toddler care. Nearly **71% of the shortage is concentrated in ZIP code 80003**, making it a priority area for future investment.

Seat Gap by Zip Code



Seat Gap by Age



**Zip codes 80004, 80005 and 80002 exceed the demand for preschool-age seats*

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate Table S0101; Colorado Child Care Facilities Report As of March 2026

Four Opportunities for Action

The pilot identified **four practical opportunities** capable of strengthening childcare while building upon Arvada's existing partnerships and assets.

1 ADVANCE A PUBLIC-PRIVATE CHILDCARE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Repurpose an existing public asset through partnerships among public entities, municipalities, Land Trust partners, housing developers, employers and experienced childcare providers.

Potential Actions:

- Evaluate priority sites
- Complete feasibility assessments
- Develop governance structure
- Identify funding partners

Potential Impact:

Advance one implementation-ready childcare project while creating a scalable partnership model.

2 REPURPOSE PUBLIC LAND & BUILDINGS

Leverage underutilized public properties, former schools and expansion and development opportunities to expand childcare capacity.

Potential Actions:

- Evaluate former school sites
- Explore mixed-use redevelopment
- Coordinate with land trust partners

Potential Impact:

Reduce facility costs while expanding access near housing and employment centers.

3 STRENGTHEN FAMILY CHILDCARE HOMES & WORKFORCE STABILITY

Support Family Childcare Homes and provider workforce strategies that expand infant and toddler capacity.

Potential Actions:

- Business coaching
- Licensing support
- Start-up financing
- Wage enhancement strategies

Potential Impact:

Increase neighborhood-based care while strengthening provider sustainability.

4 STRENGTHEN FINANCING & GOVERNANCE

Develop collaborative financing approaches that blend public investment, philanthropy, employer contributions and community development financing.

Potential Actions:

- Layer multiple funding sources
- Formalize governance structure
- Align public-private investment

Potential Impact:

Improve project feasibility while reducing financial barriers for providers.

From Opportunity to Implementation

Turning community assets into implementation-ready projects

The pilot established a strong foundation for coordinated action. The next phase focuses on advancing one implementation-ready childcare project by aligning community assets, partnerships and financing around a shared vision.

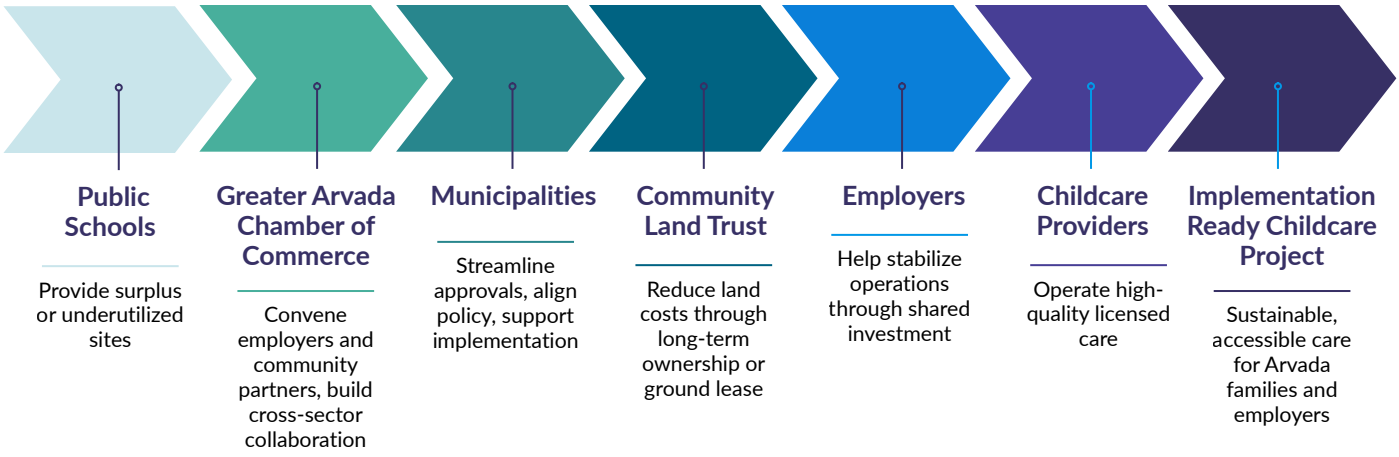
SPOTLIGHT: Potential Site Opportunities

Illustrative Opportunity	Why it Was Identified	Possible Uses
Former Early College of Arvada	Near affordable housing, transit, and community services; former educational use makes it a strong candidate for adaptive reuse.	House younger children being served on a campus dedicated to youth and adult services and offset operational costs through public private partnership (early college of Arvada)
Jeffco Public Schools Surplus Properties	Underutilized school buildings could support community-serving uses through creative partnerships.	Consider value of supporting micro-school environments, collaboratives and early education and family services such as therapy, co-working spaces and shared play spaces for families to build future k-12 and workforce pipelines (public school surplus)
Other Redevelopment Opportunities	Mixed-use and housing redevelopment projects present opportunities to integrate childcare from the beginning.	Co-locating childcare into modular home development to support home and business ownership, small centers supported by employer and housing partners to streamline access to housing, work advancement and childcare needs

Final site selection will depend on additional feasibility analysis, community engagement, funding, and partner alignment. The sites shown represent illustrative opportunities identified during the pilot and are intended to demonstrate the types of assets that could support future childcare development.

SPOTLIGHT: Collaborative Partnership Model

Successfully advancing a childcare project will require a shared approach. Each partner brings unique resources that reduce costs, strengthen feasibility and support long-term sustainability.



SPOTLIGHT: Financing the Project

No single funding source is expected to support a childcare development project. Instead, partners discussed a blended financing approach that combines community development financing, philanthropy, public incentives, employer contributions and other local investments. Layering multiple funding sources can reduce financial risk while improving long-term sustainability for childcare providers.

Tool	Role in Model	Impact
CDFI Low-Interest Loan Fund	Provide below-market debt for construction and buildout	• Reduces cost of capital • Enables operator or developer participation • Can be paired with guarantees or loan loss reserves
Philanthropic / Impact Capital	Fill gaps and de-risk project	• Covers predevelopment or early-stage risk • Can subsidize affordability or startup costs
Public Incentives	Reduce upfront and soft costs	• Fee waivers, grants, infrastructure support • Faster approvals reduce carrying costs
Employer Contributions	Help stabilize and expand childcare through shared investment, partnerships and employer-supported care options.	• Ongoing subsidy tied to workforce needs • Improves financial sustainability of center

From Opportunity to Implementation

The next phase focuses on advancing one implementation-ready childcare project while continuing to strengthen partnerships across local government, education, employers, providers and community organizations.

Roadmap to Implementation

✓ COMPLETED	✓ COMPLETED	➤ NEXT	➤ FUTURE
Understand the Challenge	**Identify Opportunities**	**Advance a Pilot Strategy**	**Implement & Scale**
Analyze local data	Evaluate solution pathways	Select a high-potential strategy	Launch pilot
Engage stakeholders	Assess feasibility	Identify sites, partners and funding	Measure outcomes
Identify barriers	Prioritize opportunities	Build implementation plan	Scale successful approaches

What Success Looks Like

Families	Providers	Employers	Communities
Increased access to childcare	**Sustainable business models**	**Improved workforce retention**	**Stronger local economy**
More infant and toddler slots	Reduced barriers to growth	Increased productivity	Increased tax revenue to support public infrastructure and community services
Care closer to where families live and work	Greater access to capital and support	Better recruitment outcomes	Cross-jurisdictional collaboration

Looking Ahead

The Arvada Childcare Pilot established a strong foundation for coordinated action. Community partners now have shared priorities, stronger relationships and a clear path toward implementation.

What's In Place

- Shared understanding of childcare as workforce infrastructure
- Strong cross-sector partnerships
- Public assets with redevelopment potential
- Community support for collaborative solutions

What Needs to Happen Next

- Select one priority implementation site
- Complete feasibility analysis
- Formalize governance and financing
- Advance one implementation ready project

Our Shared Goal

By aligning public property, community expertise, employer engagement and innovative financing, Arvada can move beyond planning and demonstrate how communities can transform underutilized assets into long-term investments that strengthen families, employers, and the local economy. The resulting model can inform future childcare development efforts throughout Jefferson County and across Colorado.

Conclusion

The Arvada Childcare Pilot has reached an important midpoint, with partners aligned around the scale of the challenge, the assets available, and the most promising opportunities for action. The work completed to date demonstrates that **Arvada has the partnerships, public assets, community expertise and financing relationships needed to move from planning toward implementation.**

The next phase will focus on selecting a priority site or strategy, completing feasibility analysis, formalizing governance and funding partnerships, and advancing one project toward implementation readiness. By continuing to align public, private, philanthropic and community resources, Arvada can **create a practical and replicable model that expands childcare access, supports employers and families and strengthens the local economy.**