Local government is dead!
Long live local government!

Making the Most of the Opportunity Before Us

City of Aurora, Colorado
For our story time together today...

1) Aurora’s completely unintuitive COVID recovery response
2) COVID, racial tensions and the gift of clarity
3) The next chapter: Aurora 2.0
4) Future chapters: Aurora 3.0 and beyond
COVID-19:

Worst nightmare... or wildest dream?
Aurora COVID Response Strategy

1. Keep our City Hall closed when others reopen
2. Keep employees working from home indefinitely
3. Prevent in-person interactions between staff and residents (for the most part)
4. Offer services only on an appointment-only basis
5. Throw employees head-long into tasks they are not trained or feel they are ready for
6. Create new Citywide Strategic Plan during two world-changing events
Earlier this year...
This is real...

and you are unprepared.
Local government is dead. Long live local government!
The next chapter

Aurora 2.0: how we’re choosing to respond
First Aurora 2.0 framework

1. Faster
2. Better
3. Cheaper
4. Safer
Responding to George Floyd

• The crucial ingredients that will set us apart: **Empathy and compassion.**

• **Community**
  • Loving the community.
  • The role of diversity, equity, and inclusion going forward.

• **Staff**
  • Caring for staff right out of the gate.
  • Conscious effort to understand staff’s feelings and overall wellbeing.
  • Core motivators: turning jobs into personal missions and employees into emissaries.
Two simple models: The ‘how’ and the ‘why’

With Empathy

- Better
- Faster
- Cheaper
- Safer
But how to practice and measure empathy?

- Putting others—our residents and our employees—first.
- Frequent, purposeful communication.
- Listening!
- Putting our own comfort aside.
- Acknowledging when things could have been handled better and improve.
Empathy and compassion in Aurora

- ‘Diversity and equity’ is one of seven principles in our ‘Aurora Places’ comprehensive plan.

- View everything we do through lens of diversity, equity, inclusion.
  - Role of DEI in new Citywide Strategic Plan.

- Appointed DEI officer, realigned Community Relations, Employee Town Hall on race, equity, and equality.

- Offer a ‘spectrum of accessibility’ to services for residents. In-person, phone, online, mobile, social media, self-service kiosks.

- Proactive ‘listening’ into everything we do—community engagement.

- Continued customer service training for employees.
Aurora 2.0

Telework and digital government

Transformation from Aurora 1.0...

To Aurora 2.0...
This isn’t your father’s city hall
Community engagement

- Pre-COVID, City was building a ‘public engagement framework.’
- The vision:
  - “Earn and keep the trust of our community by making active public engagement a critical and consistent part of doing business and making decisions.”
- Goals
  - Build predictability and trust.
  - Establish value of public engagement with City departments and employees.
  - Help staff determine when and how to engage residents.
  - Continually evaluate public engagement processes.
Aurora 2.0
Innovation by Design
Why should staff care?

The motivators we believe drive our employees:

- Consistency
- Variety
- Pride
- Connection
- Growth
- Contribution

Credit: Anthony Robbins, Habits for Well-being
Future chapters

Aurora 3.0 and beyond
Looking into 2021 and beyond

- Versioning the City’s future—interweaving the new strategic plan, the Smart Cities plan, and the Innovation Design Team
  - Aurora 2.0—BHAG >>>> December 31, 2020
  - Aurora 3.0...etc.
- Who are the heroes in our story? We don’t know yet; time will tell.
Now we’ll be prepared!
Thank you!

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