

# Metro Districts:

## A Primer For Policymakers



### **Affordability**

- Colorado's massive housing shortage can only be met through a combination of financial, policy, and regulatory tools.
  - The state is already over 500,000 housing units short between now and 2030, according to the state demographer.
  - Without metro districts, Colorado families would be forced to pay significantly higher home prices for the same quality and amenities in existing neighborhoods.
- Metro districts offer a reliable financial model to take out bonds to pay for public infrastructure and amenities, such as parks, trails, and open space.
  - Metro districts relieve cities of the need to raise taxes on existing residents in order for new amenities and public improvements in new communities.
  - Only the residents currently in a district pay higher property taxes to pay down the debt.
- Colorado residents believe it's fair for new growth to pay for itself.
  - Only residents within a metro district pay for the infrastructure (including streets, water, and sewer) and amenities through their property taxes.

### **Accountability**

- Metro districts are a form of local government approved and overseen by a municipality and regulated by the State of Colorado.
  - A city or county must approve limits on taxation, fees, and services before a metro district can form.
  - State laws require transparency and accountability, including homebuyer notifications and homeowner protections.
  - Retiring debts on time, community engagement, and transitioning to resident-controlled boards are all best practices utilized by metro districts like Highlands Ranch and supported by MDEC.
- Metro districts are governed under Title 32 and are subject to the same laws as other special districts, such as CORA, conflict of interest, and sunshine laws.
  - Additionally, each locally-controlled metro district is required to comply with the Code of Ethics in Colorado law which are applicable to other elected officials.

### **Transparency**

- Each metro district is required to have a public-facing website that includes contact information of board members, audited financial statements, boundary information, and other information.
- Each metro district must file an annual report to include status of construction of public improvements, audited financial statements, and other transparency measures.
- Every registered elector within a district must receive notice of upcoming metro board elections.

The Metro District Education Coalition is a nonprofit, nonpartisan network of financial, legal, and technical experts who provide expertise on metro districts. We promote improved transparency and accountability on behalf of homeowners and advocate for best practices in the formation and operations of metro districts.

**Learn more about our work at [www.metrodistricteducation.com](http://www.metrodistricteducation.com).**