

# 2020 EAC CLEARINGHOUSE AWARDS

ARAPAHOE COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER'S OFFICE

CURBSIDE BALLOT PICKUP PROGRAM

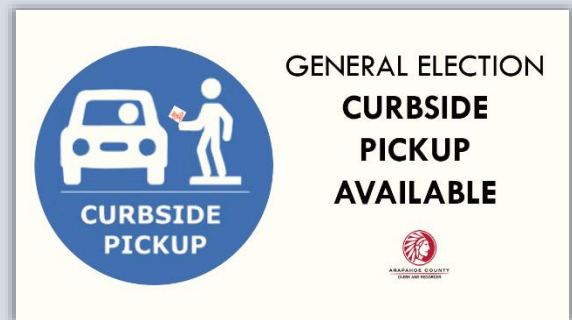


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## SUMMARY

Many of the best innovations are borne of necessity. The 2020 election year presented a daunting array of complications that jeopardized access to secure, safe elections for voters across the United States, and Arapahoe County. Accommodating voters seeking in-person service while maintaining social distancing and low building occupancy within our voting centers required creative thinking to develop a process that wouldn't drain already stretched resources.

Arapahoe County Clerk & Recorder's Curbside Ballot Pickup program proved to be an effective solution to many of these issues, while adapting and improving the voting process in ways that will provide value long after the pandemic is behind us.



Colorado voters enjoy and trust voting by mail.

Our mail ballot process was enacted statewide in 2013 and in recent elections, including the 2020 Presidential Primary, less than 6% of voters actually cast a ballot in person. The leading reason voters visit our county's Voter Service and Polling Centers (VSPCs) is to obtain a replacement ballot, whether because their mail ballot was damaged, they moved and didn't update their registration record to receive a mail ballot, moved to the county too recently to receive a mail ballot, or similar circumstances.

As restaurants and retail outlets began to rely on curbside pickup service to deliver goods to their customers, our leadership determined the most efficient and effective method to promote safety and ensure every voter received a ballot was to bring voters' ballots directly to their cars.

Arapahoe County began offering Curbside Ballot Pickup at all six of our VSPCs in the June Presidential Primary, and made small adjustments to refine the process for the General Election in November. Voters who used the service were ecstatic to have this efficient and simple option and elections staff were pleased to help voters safely. The program was also successful in that no positive COVID cases were reported in connection to any of Arapahoe County's VSPCs or offices.

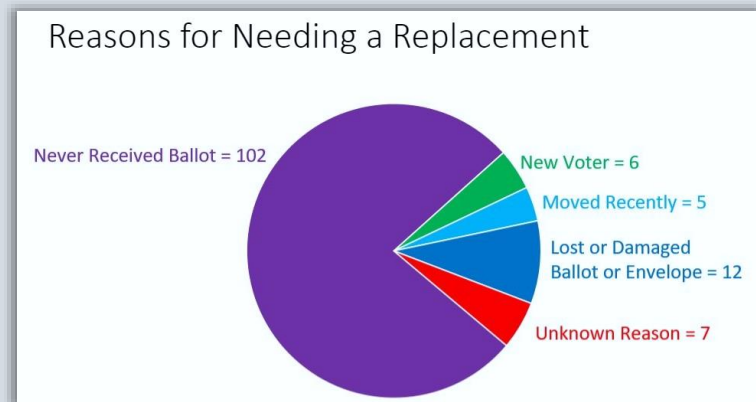
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## INNOVATION

The idea for this service came together organically in discussions within our Elections Division. Our team knew from experience that people came to our offices and VSPCs primarily to pick up replacement ballots, and in a high profile election year with large turnout anticipated, it was apparent that the need wouldn't go away simply because we needed to prevent large numbers of people from gathering inside our VSPCs and administrative facilities.

At the same time, our staff had years of pre-COVID experience with ballot drop off tents and “drive-thru” attendants who receive completed ballots outside our VSPCs to expedite Election Day ballot return for voters. While brainstorming a solution to these issues, our team derived the Curbside Ballot Program and began outlining the steps and modifications needed to make the service a reliable and efficient option.

Our Elections Director also conferred with other Colorado county elections departments to learn if and how any of them were going to implement similar programs. Denver County, for example, independently developed a process that relies more heavily on website-based registration.



Otherwise, Arapahoe County's plan was the most feasible, and once our team developed the system we shared it with other counties, some of whom adapted the program to suit their own needs.

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## SUSTAINABILITY

Managing Curbside Ballot Pickup is simple, straightforward and sustainable.

Answering phone calls from voters and obtaining the required information to confirm their identification requires no additional hiring of employees and minimal training. In our case, this required only a brief run-through of the process with staff and adding a few lines of dialogue to an existing phone bank script.

Curbside Ballot Pickup can easily be scaled up or down for more/fewer locations, or to suit the specific turnout expectations of specific voting centers, regardless of geography or staffing.

Election staff members at any voting center are already trained in distributing replacement ballots to voters who arrive in person. Curbside Ballot Pickup only requires that one or more designated staff members go outside (to a designated parking spot, at a prescheduled time) to check the voter's ID and hand off their ballot packet.

Arapahoe County added this as a service to the six busiest VSPCs across the county this year, but the program's simplicity will allow our team to add the service at other centers for each future election to improve access in other geographic areas.

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## OUTREACH EFFORTS

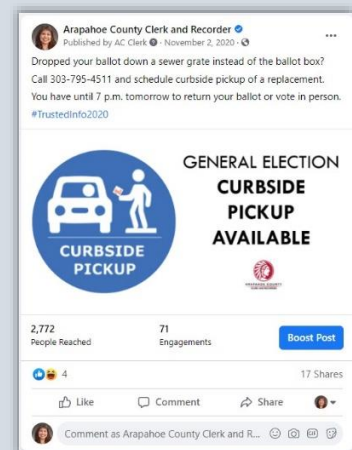
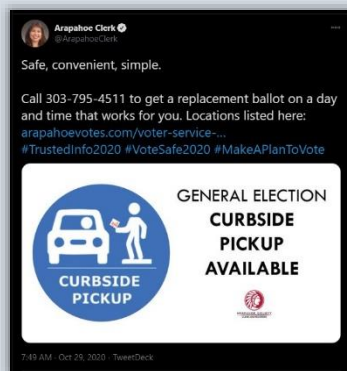
Promoting Curbside Ballot Pickup for the June Primary included handouts and printed materials posted at Arapahoe County buildings, as well as some social media posts and detailed explanations of the process on the county's elections website, [arapahoevotes.com](http://arapahoevotes.com).

For the General Election, promotion of the service consisted of regular posts on social media, explainers in printed and digital fact sheets, and weekly outreach to municipal partners with graphics, resources and information to be shared via their channels

Our Clerk and Recorder and Elections Director also made it a priority to mention the service to the public at every

opportunity, including:

- Presentations to community groups
- Briefings with candidates listed and county party officials
- Municipal closed-circuit television interviews
- Local television and print/online media [interviews](#)
- An "Ask Me Anything" presentation with the Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition and 9News (local NBC affiliate).



## COST EFFECTIVENESS

Arapahoe County was able to implement Curbside Ballot Pickup using off-the-shelf communication and implementation plans at practically no additional cost. Other counties across the United States could replicate the program with minimal additional expenses, or none at all.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	Call Date	Phone Judge	Pickup Date	Pickup Time	Cell Number	Description of vehicle	Vehicle License Plate (if available)	Voter Record #	Voter First Name	Voter Last Name	Ballot Style	Special Instructions
92			10/31/2020	4:00								
93			10/31/2020	4:00								
94			10/31/2020	4:00								
95			10/31/2020	4:15								
96			10/31/2020	4:15								
97			10/31/2020	4:15								
98	10/30/2020	Susan	10/31/2020	4:30		2006 VW gray jetta	unknown				401-63	all 3 will arrive in
99	10/30/2020	Susan	10/31/2020	4:30		2006 VW gray jetta	unknown				401-63	all 3 household m
100	10/30/2020	Susan	10/31/2020	4:30		2006 VW gray jetta	unknown				401-63	arriving together
101												
102												
103												
104												

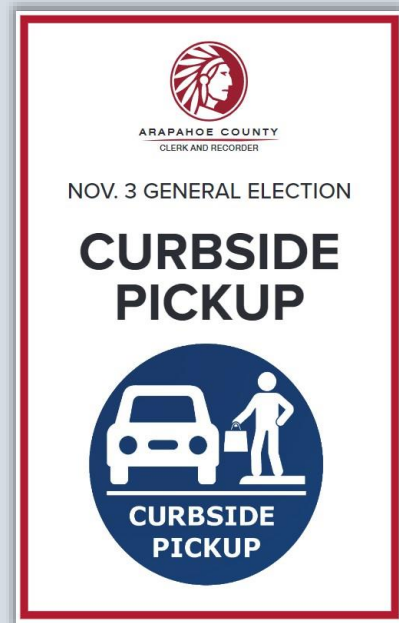
To track voter calls/requests for replacement ballots, our staff created a simple shared spreadsheet. Any other elections team can create a similar sheet with Google Docs, Microsoft OneDrive or similar software. Both the phone staff making reservations and the elections staff tasked with creating the ballot packets had access and editing privileges to this sheet, as it contained no sensitive information, only the voters' names, the model of car, dates/times/locations of each pickup, any special requests, and a box to denote whether the ballot was ultimately picked up. All Personally Identifying Information (PII), such as dates of birth or voter ID numbers stayed in the secure statewide voter database (for which both groups of team members had separate log-ins to reference when needed).

Our staff used our existing voter services phone line, eliminating the need to devote resources to creating a new app or online interface. This system also allowed staff to verify voters' identities by asking minimum matching criteria questions. Voters confirmed this information by showing a valid form or identification upon pickup.

Utilizing existing phone lines instead of a digital interface also ensured Curbside Ballot Pickup would be accessible to older voters, voters without internet access, and voters who simply are not technologically savvy enough to feel comfortable registering for such a

service online. It also allowed our team the ability to use language interpretation services (another pre-established service) to schedule pickups for non-English speakers.

Establishing designated parking required minimal effort and materials. Our staff repurposed existing voter parking/ADA signs, covered over with new, laminated “Curbside Ballot Pickup” signs designed and printed in-house. Two parking spots per VSPC were marked off with cones and sandbags, equipment we already had on hand (as most any voting center would).



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## REPLICABILITY

Creating similar, or identical, Curbside Ballot Pickup programs would require little modification of existing services at any voting center in the U.S. that utilizes a phone line and has one or more available parking spots.

As detailed above, costs are minimal to none, and the process requires very little additional training. The program will work in mail-ballot states (which already incorporate software to prevent voters from submitting both their mailed ballot and a replacement) and states without mail-ballot voting would simply need to allow for a poll worker (known in Colorado as an “election judge”) to go outside their center intermittently to deliver ballots to voters in their automobiles.

As outlined below, the steps to implement the program are simple and, in most cases, already in use to register voters over the phone:



## GENERATING POSITIVE RESULTS

Our Elections Division is proud to note that Curbside Ballot Pickup delivered the optimal outcome for Arapahoe County voters: zero (0) positive COVID cases were reported in connection to any county VSPCs or elections facilities, among voters or our staff of more than 700 election judges and full-time employees.

In the June Primary Election, this program, together with an aggressive public education campaign to encourage healthy voting options, led to a historically low in-person voting rate of only 0.6% inside the VSPCs (despite overall higher turnout).

Speaking for Arapahoe County's first year of the program, utilization was consistent between the June Primary Election and November's General Election:

Election	Requests	Total Picked Up/Cancellations
Presidential Primary	131	120/11
General Election	136	132/4

Utilization data is easy to measure with basic documents such as the shared spreadsheets our team used in both the Presidential Primary and the General Election. Tracking the program's growth (or diminishing returns) is as simple as comparing one election's results to previous ones, and can be specified to track usage at individual voting centers to identify areas where the service may need to be expanded, or scaled back.

Another strong indicator of the program's success was the feedback received from community groups, candidates, political parties and- most importantly- voters themselves.

Voters in high-risk populations such as older adults and those with compromised immune systems consistently praised and thanked our phone representatives for offering this option. In a General Election in which in-person turnout was still higher than many recent elections (5.47 percent), many voters expressed gratitude that they were able to pick up a ballot at a VSPC without the need to enter the building.

Curbside Ballot Pickup was also well-received among differently abled voters with limited mobility, who specifically appreciated not having to park, get out of their automobiles, and walk into a voting center where they may have had to wait in line to receive their ballot. Many callers asked that the program be offered in future elections, regardless of the pandemic, praising its simplicity and convenience.

Candidates and county political party representatives echoed those sentiments on behalf of their constituents, members, and supporters, particularly those in vulnerable populations.

