

ALL THINGS



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OUTDOOR REC

New website opens doors for budding business owners

By Jeanne Davant

For entrepreneurs looking to start a new business, find financing and navigate a confusing welter of regulations, just figuring out where to begin can dampen their enthusiasm or bring projects to a halt.

But budding entrepreneurs in Colorado Springs now have an advantage that their counterparts in other cities don't — a step-by-step road map that leads them through the process and provides a wealth of information and resources, all in one place.

COSOpenforBiz, a website hosted and maintained by the Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC and developed by a

team of partners, launched on May 5, the first day of Small Business Week.

"This is our way of building upon that idea of the heart and soul of business, and looking at our city as open for businesses to be open," said Yemi Mobolade, small business development administrator for the city of Colorado Springs and former vice president for business retention and expansion at the Chamber & EDC. "For folks starting today, this gives them a great platform to launch from."

The new website takes entrepreneurs along a well-defined path that begins with a great idea and moves through planning and development, choosing a location and construction to the point

where the business is ready to have its grand opening.

At each step (see page 8), users can click on links that take them deeper. For example, Step 1, research and business planning, links to an article that describes in detail the components of a business plan, presents sample business plans and provides resources including an online tutorial on how to write a business plan.

Subsequent steps lead to information about forming a business entity; factors to consider in locating the business; processes to follow once a site is selected; navigation of building codes, permits and inspections; and operation of the new business.

Every step provides a pro tip — a suggestion offered by successful entrepreneurs that they wish they'd known when they were getting started, as well as a list of people, departments and agencies to contact.

The site features striking graphics designed by marketing and branding agency Magneti.

"This is really about trying to help businesses know what they don't know ahead of time," said Tammy Fields, chief economic development officer with the Chamber & EDC. "Over the years, we've frequently gotten questions from someone looking to start a new business."

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Courtesy of GE Johnson Construction



Movin' on up

By Jeanne Davant

The new visitor center on the summit of Pikes Peak is expected to host nearly 750,000 visitors and generate roughly \$30 million each year when it is completed in fall 2020.

But as construction gets underway again for a second season, the project is already providing hundreds of jobs.

Around 40 contractors are working on the \$50 million project.

"We are using as many local subcontractors and suppliers as we can," said Tim Redfern, construction

manager for GE Johnson Construction Co., general contractor for the project. "That was our goal when we interviewed for the project. Most of that labor is Colorado Springs-based."

And these are well-paying jobs, which require expertise and additional qualifications because of the project's high standards and the rigors of working at 14,110 feet.

Redfern estimates that about half of the \$50 million price tag for the project is materials cost and the rest is labor.

"That's a pretty big amount of dollars in the form of wages for employees," he said.

For local contractors and workers, "this is one of the most significant projects in the last few years, especially in a city the size of Colorado Springs," said Stuart Coppedge of RTA Architects, the architect of record for the project. "When you think of the impact that the Department of Defense has collectively on Colorado Springs, we're a tiny piece compared to that. But as far as a local construction project, it's pretty significant. The only things you typically see of that size would be a health center project or a new school."


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EMPLOYMENT

LAW DAY

Wages were a hot topic at the Employer's Council law conference at The Antlers hotel.

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The upper lobby of the new Pikes Peak visitor center overlooks Mount Rosa. Ground was broken June 4 for the structure, which will replace the original 1963 summit house.

Summit: Project boosts local employment, economy

From page 1

THE SUMMIT COMPLEX

The 38,000-square-foot glass, concrete and steel visitor center is the centerpiece of the summit complex, which also includes a new high-altitude research laboratory — a separate project that is being funded and constructed by the Army.

The visitor center replaces the archaic and difficult-to-maintain summit house that dates from the 1960s. It will feature an immersive visitor experience, spectacular views and multimedia exhibits that tell the story of the mountain.

Among the projects that have already been completed are relocation of the central utility plant, blasting and moving soil and huge boulders for the visitor center's foundation.

The first phase of foundation footers has been placed in preparation for the precast concrete foundation to be laid, and micropiles for the central walkway have been installed.

A temporary central processing plant has been built to handle sewage and water for the existing summit house, which will remain open until completion of the new complex.

All that had to be accomplished during the short season when building is feasible on the 14,110-foot summit. Construction began in June 2018. By October, crews' workdays were limited because of zero-degree temperatures and 10-below-zero wind chills.

Prefabrication activity continued in downslope shops over the winter.

This summer, plans call for significant progress, including installation of the foundations, structural steel, concrete slabs, precast elements and exteriors. Work on the building's interior should begin late this year.

The project is being constructed to achieve LEED Platinum Certification

— the highest standard for sustainable practices, efficiency and use of "green" materials.

It is also designed to meet an even higher set of standards — the Living Building Challenge, which requires vetting of the materials that are used and completion of a zero-waste building.

The challenge "sets a very high standard of products allowed to be used," Redfern said. More than 30,000 products are red-listed and can't be incorporated.

"We have to verify as we're buying all of the products from all of the sub-contractors that none of the material that's being ordered for the building has red-list materials in them," he said.

The only exceptions are found in industries that do not manufacture products that aren't red-listed. In that case, the company has

to prove that it can't find appropriate red list-free products.

That process alone occupies GE Johnson's sustainability expert, Stella Hodgkins, and a staff of four product engineers who work with her.

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

GE Johnson will be gearing up for the summer construction season within the next week.

"We've had to hire extra people," Redfern said. "We currently have postings for carpenters and laborers to work up there. We're still about four carpenters short of making a full crew."

In part, that reflects the general shortage of craftspeople in the region, he said.

Apprentices are helping to fill out the team — and learning specialized skills in the process.

"We try to keep a ratio of about two journeymen to each apprentice," Redfern said. "Of the 12 to 15 carpenters and laborers we currently have on the summit, three carpenter's apprentices

are up there."

Besides specialized skills, everyone who works on the summit has to undergo an extensive physical exam that includes a flexibility test and a Harvard step assessment, which measures aerobic fitness.

Workers then have to complete a two-hour orientation and a briefing on the special safety measures required for working at high altitude.

Since last summer, about 150 people have gone through the orientation, Redfern said.

Stresscon, which is prefabricating concrete components for the summit complex, also has hired additional employees since obtaining a contract for the job, President Dave Bourgault said.

"We have about 250 people in this plant," he said. "Overall on this project, I'm sure you're looking at over 100 people devoted to that job."

The company is producing about 20 components for the building — "giant, 50,000-pound LEGOs," Bourgault said.

The prefabrication process requires design professionals who draft and engineer the structures; preconstruction, estimating, project management and production professionals; and crews of four to 18 people who form, cast and finish the pieces.

An additional 16-20 people will be involved in the logistics of delivering the huge pieces to the staging area, and a dozen or so will comprise the crew that assembles the pieces at the summit.

"It's a very tricky job that takes a certain type of professional," Bourgault said. "We develop people for years; it's kept them employed, with many added to our workforce. There's no question we've added to our labor force because of getting this job."

Overall, the job represents "about a 10 percent increase in our revenues, maybe 12 percent, over revenues we would have had without it," he said. "The money that our employees have made and now go out and spend in the community, as well as the long-lasting

effect of having this structure — I think there is a large economic impact."

A UNIQUE PROJECT

Lakewood-based Encore Electric has about 15 local employees currently engaged in the summit project. Those include people working on the mountaintop as well as at the company's Colorado Springs fabrication shop.

"We started a little bit of the early utility work last summer," said J.R. Bond, director for southern Colorado. "We will have 15-20 guys up there at any point."

Project Manager John Snyder said the company's efforts so far have focused on demolishing the central utility plant and repowering the existing summit house.

The goal for this summer is to get the building enclosed. Before that's completed, the company will fabricate as much as possible of the wall and overhead wiring.

"Probably next spring will be our heaviest workload," Bond said.

During spring and summer 2020, the company will be making the final equipment connections, getting mechanical systems online, hanging lights and trimming out branch power devices.

"At the beginning of summer, we'll be coordinating with the exhibit guys to get things hooked up," Bond said.

One of the unique things about the project "is how we collaborate with the rest of the team," including other local contractors such as Olson Plumbing and Heating Co., he said. "We do that a lot on the Front Range, but it's a whole new level up there."

For the men and women working on the summit project, there are intangible benefits as well.

"It's pretty special to get to work on a unique project like this that's so important to the community and the region," Coppedge said.

"This is kind of a once-in-a-lifetime project," said Don Palmer, vice president of Stresscon. "We're excited to be able to work on the highest precast structure in the world." • CSBJ