



## *You're Invited to Join the Conversation*

By Keith Lammey, President

Where there is "city pride" there usually is a lot more resident participation in community affairs. If people care about and are proud of their community they are more willing to participate in all aspects of the community ranging from schools and clubs and organizations to government affairs. I've long thought about (and previously written about) city pride. Perhaps city pride and community participation is a "chicken and egg" sort of thing.

Like the question which came first, the chicken or the egg, maybe we need to ask a similar question. Can we have city pride without community participation? If not, then which of the two do you have to have first, participation or city pride? I can't decide which has to come first but I am convinced that they go together. In order to increase our city pride to the "I'd rather be in Battlement Mesa" level, I believe that we must foster more citizen participation.

Actually, it just makes sense when you think about it. Most of the time people care more about something when they feel like they have a voice and that their voice is being heard. So, you're invited to join the conversation.

The Battlement Mesa and Parachute communities have joined forces to foster improved communication among and between the residents and our various civic and government organizations by creating a new forum called "Community Conversations."

Over the past year several Community Coffees were held where people could have coffee and doughnuts, etc. and ask questions about community related matters. Usually, these meetings included announcements about new or expected community developments ranging from things like the relocation of the True Value store to planned street maintenance. Several people participated in this series of meetings and obviously attended for more than just the free coffee and doughnuts because they asked a lot of questions.

Community Conversations are like the Community Coffee events to the extent that residents will have an opportunity to interact, participate and ask questions, but there is a critical difference. Community Conversations is a forum where the participants – alone – will decide what they want to talk about and what they like or don't like, then will formulate a plan or strategy to do something about whatever it is that they like or don't like, provided a consensus can be reached.

Officially, Community Conversations is a monthly forum where "you can join your neighbors, local business leaders and government representatives in a conversation about our communities. The intent is to arrive at conclusions, reach a consensus on actions to be taken, determine who is best to act and to follow up on previous discussions and actions."

By the time you see this, the kickoff meeting will have been held (October 10<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM, GarCo Library in Parachute) where twelve topics of interest selected by those that attended the October 10<sup>th</sup> gathering will have been prioritized for the upcoming twelve monthly Community Conversations. If you missed the kick off, don't despair, your views and participation is needed in order to develop a strategy to, hopefully, correct the issues that concern us all.

You are encouraged to attend. Not only are your views important but more participation nearly always results in a better solution. And remember, this is an opportunity for your voice to be heard and when that happens our city pride will bump up a notch or two which will mean that more people will participate in the future which means that the cycle will repeat itself until everyone is wearing a "I'd rather be in Battlement Mesa/Parachute" T-shirt.

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*The Colorado Dream*

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