

City of Salida, Colorado
FIRE CHIEF





CADE

Artist rendering

SALIDA

In the Arkansas River Valley, near the Collegiate Peaks in the Rocky Mountains, and 20 minutes from Monarch Mountain ski resort, the City of Salida (pop. 6,013, elev. 7,083 ft., 2.77 sq mi) is a picturesque, peaceful, and sophisticated Colorado community. Spanish for “exit” (but pronounced differently), Salida is located where northbound travelers exit the long stretch of canyon formed by the Arkansas River north of Cañon City.

Salida is the county seat and most populous city in Chaffee County. Historically, the city is a river town, and a railroad town, formerly dependent on mining operations nearby. The Touber Building, in which city hall is located today, was once the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad

QUICK FACTS

- Population6,013
- Size2.77 sq mi
- Elevation.....7,083 ft
- 2024 Budget\$49.5M (GF \$14.7M)
- FTE110.7 (average YTD)
- Fire Stations1
- Calls for Service (2022)1,100/year (approx.)
- 2024 Dept. Budget\$2.1M
- Dept. FTE15, plus 3 reserve)

Hospital, which served railroad employees and their families.

Today, tourism drives the economy year-round, with many using Salida as home base for Monarch in the winter, and tourists from Colorado, around the country, and around the world flooding the city in the summer. Salida formed Colorado’s first Certified Creative District in 2012, and the Salida Downtown Historic District is the largest in the state (300 buildings). On peak weekends, daytime population estimates approach 15,000.

Because Salida is located in Colorado’s “Banana Belt,” a unique temperate zone, residents enjoy a reasonable climate year-round, spared the frigid temperatures found further west. Salida is home to FIBArk (First in Boating the Arkansas), a major whitewater boating competition and music festival held every Fathers’ Day Weekend, generally following spring runoff. The kick off to the holiday season and the lighting of “S” Mountain is a winter favorite for locals and visitors. Outdoor amenities include skiing, parks, trails, a surfing wave in Riverside Park, rafting, fly fishing, cycling, mountain biking, hiking, camping, and a nine-hole golf course, which dates to 1926.

Salida boasts a major, full-service regional hospital, the Heart of the

Rockies Regional Medical Center, the successor to the original railroad hospital, today managed by the Salida Hospital District. Salida Public Schools (Salida School District R-32-J) serves the city with high, middle, and elementary schools. Other opportunities include Montessori and charter schools. Following voter approval in 2019, a Colorado Mountain College campus is located in the Kesner Memorial Building. The Salida Regional Library remains popular with residents.

Located along U.S. Route 50, Salida is just east of the Continental Divide. The closest major airports are the Colorado Springs Airport just over two hours away, and Denver International Airport, three hours away.

To learn more about the City of Salida, please visit <https://www.cityofsalida.com>.

THE ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1880 and incorporated in 1891, Salida is a statutory, full-service city operating under the council-manager form of government. City council is comprised of the mayor, elected directly to a two-year term, and six council members (two in each of three wards), elected to four-year terms. Elections are nonpartisan and held in November of odd-numbered years, with the mayor and one council member from each ward up for election.

Issues facing Salida include affordable and attainable housing, short-term rentals, and issues related to growth and development, including increased and changing service expectations following significant population growth during and after Covid. The approved 2024 Budget of \$49.5 million (GF \$14.7M) is larger than normal, because it includes over \$17 million for construction



of the new fire station (See artist’s rendering, prior page.) The budget supports an average of 110.7 FTE.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE CHIEF

The chance to be Salida’s fire chief doesn’t come around very often. This career opportunity is available with the recent retirement of the fire chief, who served the city for over 29 years, and as chief since 2012.

Reporting directly to the city administrator, the fire chief leads the Salida Fire Department (SFD) and along with the city’s other department heads serves as a member of the city’s leadership team. Through an intergovernmental agreement, the fire chief also serves as chief of the South Arkansas Fire Protection District (SAFPD), whose service area covers Chaffee (75%) and Fremont (25%) Counties. The SFD and District are co-located at one fire station downtown. The 2024 departmental budget is \$2.1 million, supporting 15 FTE,

including the chief, assistant chief, three captains, firefighters, and one administrative assistant. The SFD also has three reserve firefighters.

The SFD manages fire response, suppression, prevention, and mitigation for all structures and for wildland fire, swift-water and ice rescues, emergency management, and emergency medical incident response (basic and advanced life support), as well as other services. There were approximately 1,000 calls for service in 2022, about 52% of which were for EMS. The department currently operates 48/96 shifts. The fire chief and assistant chief also review development applications for compliance with the fire code.

The biggest opportunity facing the fire department is the construction of the new \$17 million, state-of-the-art, 20,000-square-foot fire station (groundbreaking November 3, 2023). Other opportunities include exercising progressive leadership to take the fire department to the next

level, funding for major equipment (engine, ladder truck), and meeting increased service demands as Salida continues to grow and mature as a community.

QUALIFICATIONS

A bachelor’s degree (fire administration or related) and seven to ten years of management-level fire department experience, or the equivalent combination of education, training, and experience, is required.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Salida is looking for a progressive, visionary, and experienced leader as its next fire chief, a self-directed, solution-oriented person, with impeccable integrity and the highest ethical standards. The ideal candidate is adaptable and collaborative, with expert-level inward- and outward-facing communications skills. Emotionally intelligent and empathetic, they lead by example, balancing a command presence with humility. The preferred candidate is open-minded, decisive, and

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN

Absent unforeseen circumstances, the recruitment will follow the schedule below. Be mindful of the filing deadline and final interview dates, which are unlikely to change.

SCHEDULE

- Filing Deadline: December 6, 2023
- Recommendation of Candidates: ... December 28, 2023
- Preliminary Interviews: December 15-19, 2023
- Finalist Interview Process: January 11-12, 2024



transparent, communicating the department's mission, vision, and values clearly and consistently.

As fire chief for two interconnected entities, the preferred candidate serves both Salida and the SAFPD district board. The next fire chief will maintain and advance relationships with all stakeholders, including the school district and all partners. The ideal candidate is progressive, but fiscally conservative and disciplined, with experience obtaining and managing federal funds and all manner of grants.

In addition to leading the fire department, the fire chief is an engaged, effective member of Salida's leadership team, comprised of the city's department heads and led by the city administrator. The city administrator will ask the next fire chief to look at the department with fresh eyes, with an eye toward modernization and sophistication.

The ideal candidate is passionate about public safety and technically competent in all aspects of the fire service. The preferred candidate is politically astute but apolitical, and able to relate to people from all walks of life.

The next fire chief is a team-builder with a commitment to professional development and the demonstrated ability to maximize the potential of all persons under their authority. This includes the ability to relate to, effectively manage, and lead intergenerational teams and persons of different experience levels.

The next fire chief will embrace and develop interagency collaborations and regional partnerships. The ideal candidate will embrace Salida and the community as home and intends to come here to have an impact and leave a legacy.

TOTAL COMPENSATION

The annual salary range for this position is \$125,000 to \$155,000, and appointment will be made depending upon the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate. In addition, Salida provides the following benefits: medical, dental, vision, and life (\$50,000) insurances. Retirement benefits for the fire chief are through the Fire and Police Pension Association of Colorado (FPPA) (mandatory, employee 12%, employer 9.5%). This position does not participate in social security. The FPPA also offers and a voluntary 457(b) defined contribution plan and provides AD&D, long-, and short-term disability insurances. The city also provides separate long-, and short-term disability coverage and several EAP plans. This position enjoys paid time off, 14 paid holidays, and one personal day. Other benefits include a family swim pass at the Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center, 15% off all recreation programs, free gym access, and either a free round or a reduced annual membership at the Salida Golf Club (nine-holes). Relocation assistance and possible additional incentives are subject to negotiation.

APPLY

To be considered for this excellent professional opportunity, please email only your cover letter and resume to apply@columbialtd.com, naming your files Last.First.CL and Last.First.Resume. Receipt of your submittal will be acknowledged within two business days. All applicants will be updated on their status following the Recommendation of Candidates.

If you have any questions regarding the recruitment process, or this opportunity, please feel free to call Andrew Gorgey directly at (970) 987-1238. For more information, visit the Columbia Ltd website: <https://columbialtd.com>.