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Column

## Local government is transparent, and we're working to keep it that way

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Last week, I met with the city manager from Colorado Springs. We were discussing our respective budget situations, and she indicated the city of Colorado Springs has been forced to cut approximately 30 percent of its general-fund budget in the past two years.

On a conference call with the city manager of Phoenix, I learned they have made similar cuts. The current economic climate is having a drastic impact on their ability to provide services.

When I hear stories such as these, I realize again how very fortunate we are. Don't misunderstand. The city of Fort Collins also is facing budget challenges, and we are cutting nearly \$8 million from our 2010 budget. But during the past five-plus years, our organization has undergone significant transformation that has better equipped us to deal with these budget shortfalls.

Since 2005, the city of Fort Collins has been on a deliberate path to become more efficient and data-driven. We have eliminated lower-priority services and reorganized several departments to maintain existing services with fewer resources. As we've worked to cut costs, we've tried hard to minimize negative impacts for you, our residents.

At the same time, we've taken steps to make local government more transparent. Most recently, we launched [fcgov.com/openbook](http://fcgov.com/openbook), an online tool that displays city expenses in a simple and easy-to-use format. We believe local government should be accountable for every dollar spent. The city of Fort Collins is among the first in the nation to offer this level of expense detail.

City information is more accessible. The Monthly Financial Report provides current data about financial trends and economic activity. The City Manager's Monthly Report is a comprehensive source of information about city projects and activities. I encourage you to go to [fcgov.com/subscriptions](http://fcgov.com/subscriptions) and sign up to receive these reports and other topic-specific newsletters via e-mail.

We are monitoring performance in multiple ways and then reporting that performance back to the community. The best example of this is the community scorecard, which can be found at [fcgov.com/communityscorecard](http://fcgov.com/communityscorecard).

I will be the first to admit we're not perfect and we have critics in the community, but I firmly believe we are making significant improvements. You have my personal commitment that, in cooperation with the mayor, City Council and city staff, we will continue to make your local government both transparent and accountable.