

# International Network of Asian Public Administrators (I-NAPA) Leader Interview

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**Charles Ozaki**  
**City and County Manager**  
**Broomfield, Colorado**

*A discussion on tenure – and the importance of seeking out the right community to serve.*

*Hyun:* First and foremost, in preparing for my interview with you I did a little research on your background. **How have you been able to be so successful with one community for so long? (Over 35 years with Broomfield, Colorado)**

*Charles:* It starts with the community. In Broomfield we have had a successful group of individuals that have been able to grow a successful community by implementing a number of worthy projects. Executing on those projects has always been the goal. How we got there is owed to our strong group of community founders. I've been able to serve this community because of those individuals that came before me. The previous City Manager, George Di Ciero, had served the community for over 43 years. Broomfield was built by a very strong group of founders, residents and staff. Over the years our organization was successful by virtue of building upon the culture of the community, building reciprocal relationships between staff and residents. We all were working towards the public good, keeping in sync and checking in from time to time. Our annual resident surveys have shown that our residents love living in Broomfield, and that they appreciate all aspects of the government that serves them. Broomfield had a population of 20,000 when I arrived and it now has a population of 70,000. The idea of taking Broomfield from a community that happened to lie in four counties to creating a city that became one county came from residents and it's been my pleasure to help make it happen over time.

*Hyun:* Can you tell me more about how you found yourself in Broomfield?

*Charles:* I started my public service after graduate school as an intern in Westminster, CO, which is neighbor of Broomfield. From there I moved onto a few other communities in western Colorado before finding **my** community. It's important that aspiring managers look towards not only seeking out a job with any public agency, but to really seek out a community that you will be successful in.

*Hyun:* Why local government?

*Charles:* What motivated me was aspiring to work towards the common good – which is different from a lot of other reasons why people search out work. Within the public sector you are afforded many opportunities to solve issues that effect a community. Having tried to work within private business out of school – it didn't really appeal to me to only work towards my own self-interest or that of the business alone. I wanted to work towards meaningful work that would benefit my community.

Having worked in smaller communities, I really felt that I was in a position to teach myself on what I needed to learn as I served others. Going into smaller communities requires more learning, including the fundamentals – municipal finance, bonding, lots of functional things that needed to be mastered. You will be wearing multiple hats for sure.

Having access to experts while serving within a smaller community was not much of a problem. Networking with other professionals was key in my development. This preparation would serve me well later on in my career.

*Hyun:* What's next for Charles Ozaki?

*Charles:* Continued service. I am a board member of the Mile High United Way, which continues to serve others and aspires to advance the common good. I'm also a member of the Sakura Foundation, which is reinvigorating Sakura Square, a whole block in downtown Denver – with the stated goal of advancing the cultural and historical significance of the Japanese-American experience in Colorado.

*Hyun:* Any parting words for the next group of Asian-American professionals in public management?

*Charles:* There are tremendous opportunities in City Management for the next generation. As I started with the notion of finding that right community, I want to reinforce the importance of seeking out the *right* community versus any opportunity. How well you align with the community and its stated direction will have an impact on your effectiveness in that community. The devil is in details. Mastering the art of engagement and understanding the people you work with and serve are crucial in this profession. Soft skills are very important and mastering human relations and psychology are a prerequisite to any management job. That being said – it all starts with understanding who you are and how you affect others as a co-worker and as a leader, as well as how you affect the people that you serve. This subtle context is important.