John is a Scholar in Residence at the University of Colorado Denver College of Engineering, Design, and Computing.

John co-founded and is board vice chair of the non-profit Colorado Smart Cities Alliance, a collaboration between Colorado municipalities, private sector companies, and academia to develop, pilot, and test solutions to urban challenges.

John Tolva co-founded and, from 2016 to 2021, was a partner at Cityfi, an urban change management consultancy dedicated to enabling smart, sustainable cities through innovative public-private partnerships, triple bottom line policymaking, and human-centric technology.

From 2014 to 2016 John served as president of PositivEnergy Practice, a systems engineering firm based on data-driven planning for new building design, retrofits, and urban design.

From 2011 to 2013 John was Chief Technology Officer for the City of Chicago, leveraging technology to streamline public services through more efficient data-sharing, digital communications, and next-generation infrastructure. He led the development of 'The City of Chicago Technology Plan', an initiative that sets forth a series of public-private strategies to accelerate economic growth, build educated and digitally-engaged communities and workforce, improve government services, and reduce costs through technology.

In 2012, the White House recognized John as a 'Champion of Change' as part of a group of creative individuals engaged in building stronger communities through innovative approaches to problem-solving.

Prior to joining the City of Chicago, John was Director of Citizenship and Technology at IBM Corp, where he worked on the firm's 'smarter cities' initiative, advising cities how to incorporate data analytics into planning and operations. John led the City Forward project, the first global aggregator and visualizer of urban data sets.

From Chicago originally, John has lived in Denver since 2016 with his wife Robyn and three children.