

WHERE WE STAND UPDATE

THE CHAMBER'S POSITIONS ON ISSUES IMPORTANT TO OUR MEMBERS AND THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF THE FORT COLLINS REGION

The Team of David Zwisler, Joe Rowan, Carrie Gillis and Mike Brown with staff support from David May have been working on a comprehensive update to the Where We Stand document since February. The team has done an amazing job reviewing the document, adding new sections and reaching out to other Chamber members to share their opinions on positions.

The draft timeline for completion of the document and review by the LLAC and the Board is as follows:

DATE	WHO	ACTION
May 5, 2011	Executive Committee	Update on the process, review of draft style and timeline
May 13, 2011	LLAC Working Team	Final updates
May 16, 2011	LLAC	Receives full draft for individual review
June 10, 2011 June 17, 2011	LLAC	Housekeeping session for full document review with Working Team leading section review with small groups.
June 17, 2011	LLAC	Approval of final draft to submit to the Board
June 17, 2011	Board	Receives final draft for individual review
June 20, 2011	Board	Adoption of Where We Stand

WHERE WE STAND

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SAMPLE DRAFT recommended by working committee
To be reviewed by LLAC and Board – May/June 2011

***Minor Changes to this Section
Added “reviewed and published annually.”***

**FORT COLLINS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
“Where We Stand” Policy Statements**

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes that government has a significant impact on its members through local, state and federal legislation and regulation. While monitoring these areas of government, your Chamber identifies emerging issues and influences the course of events for the betterment of its members.

As an important player in the governmental arena, the Chamber is a strong advocate for legislation that enhances the economic climate of Fort Collins and the North Front Range.

The issues contained in this document represent the concerns of chamber members and reflect the philosophical consensus of the Board of Directors.

“Where We Stand” will be reviewed and published annually by the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce.

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Changes:

Addition of following topics:

Setting Policy

Chamber Values, Vision, Mission

Growth Planning

Infrastructure: Electricity

Infrastructure: Stormwater Management

Regionalism

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SETTING POLICY AT THE CHAMBER

Changes:
Entirely new section

Innumerable issues can impact your bottom-line and our region’s and community’s economic competitiveness. To address and influence issues in a timely and effective manner, the Chamber has an active government affairs program. Here’s how the government affairs program is structured at the Chamber:

Division of Labor, Government Affairs

Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible to serve on the board of directors and three board-appointed government affairs committees • Guide the Chamber’s government affairs priorities through those committees and with input on issues surveys • Mobilized to communicate with elected officials on specific legislation
Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for Chamber policy and priorities • Establishes vision, mission, strategic plan and annual priorities for Chamber • Appoints members to the Chamber’s three government affairs committees • Authorized two of those committees – LLAC and NCLA – to act on behalf of the Chamber on legislation and regulatory matters and advise the Board on ballot measures • Action on ballot measures • Adopts broad policy framework called “Where We Stand” that is used to guide LLAC and NCLA when considering specific legislation
Board Appointed Committees:	
A. Local Legislative Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members apply to serve on committee, and if selected, names are submitted to Board for appointment

Committee (LLAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on city, county and school district • Empowered by the Board to take action on specific issues within the framework of “Where We Stand” • Advise the Board on ballot measures
B. Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (NCLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint committee of the Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland Chambers of Commerce • Members apply to serve on committee, and if selected, names are submitted to Board for appointment • Focuses on state and federal government • Empowered by the Board to take action on specific issues within the framework of “Where We Stand” • Advise the Board on ballot measures
C. Election Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members appointed by Board of Directors • Focuses on local races – city council, county commission, school board • Recommends endorsements to the Board

Board:

- Vision, mission, Values
- Adopts broad policies called “Where We Stand”

Where We Stand

- Broad policy framework
- Encapsulates Chamber’s general views on issues important to business

Specific Issues

- Using ‘Where We Stand’ as a guide, LLAC, NCLA set policy on specific

CHAMBER VALUES, VISION, MISSION

*Changes:
Entirely new section*

Following are Board-adopted values, vision and mission statements:

Values and Beliefs

- Business is an essential element of all successful communities. A community's fundamental existence rests upon the foundation of a healthy economy.
- A community's basic well-being (quality of life) and economic well-being are inextricably entwined.
- The interests of residents, businesses, government, educators and the not-for-profit sector are inextricably bound together. All have a stake in the community's success
- Economic development creates wealth for the community as a whole, for residents of the community and enhances the community's stability. We believe a growing economy enhances the wealth and livability of a community.
- We believe the community must continually re-examine and reinvent itself when necessary to remain competitive and to create its preferred future.
- A regional approach to economic opportunities and issues is essential. For the Northern Colorado region to be economically successful, Fort Collins must be economically successful.
- In the conduct of our work, we strive to meet high expectations, respect and protect the resources of our community and our members, are honest and trustworthy in motives and actions, are visionary and open to all possibilities, are respectful and inclusive of various viewpoints and act with the strength of conviction even in the face of adversity.
- We will be open and honest in our dealings with the community.

Vision

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce is recognized as the bold and influential leader for business in Northern Colorado.

Mission

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce champions our community's and region's quality of life and economic vitality through strong business advocacy and collaborative leadership.

FORT COLLINS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

“WHERE WE STAND”

ARTS AND CULTURE

Changes:

Minor Grammatical Changes

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes the cultural amenities and opportunities in the Fort Collins area are an important part of our identity and contribute to our local economy. The Chamber believes “The Arts,” as broadly defined by the community, improve our quality of life and are an amenity people consider when relocating their families and their businesses to the community. A diverse array of cultural experiences helps the community by introducing historical, political, and cultural perspectives that open minds and foster the exchange of ideas to people of all ages. The Fort Collins business community has been and continues to be an important financial supporter of the arts. Without a strong economy the arts community cannot thrive. The Chamber is supportive of the efforts to expand the cultural amenities of Fort Collins.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes.

Update to industry groups involved in Economic Development

Definition of Primary Employment

Expansion of Incentives definition

New section on Incentives: Feed In Tariffs

New section on Role of Government

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Economic Development is the intentional process by which we, as a community, increase our ability to produce goods and services, which in turn increases per capita income for residents. It is a balanced utilization of our economic, human and natural resources for the benefit of the people of Fort Collins and Larimer County.

The Chamber recognizes the imbalance in the region's business base resulting in an economy heavily dependent on higher education, retail trade, services and construction. Therefore, the Chamber is committed to supporting the attraction and startup of primary employers that will diversify the Fort Collins area economy, create capital investment and increase and improve employment opportunities for residents.

Because this region is better suited to some types of businesses than others, and because of a need for the local economy to develop more high-paying jobs, retention, expansion, recruitment and startup efforts should be focused primarily on specific industry groups as identified by the Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC), city and state clusters and Colorado State University. Such groups include: agri-tech, biotech, breweries, high tech, renewable clean energy technologies and distribution, vector borne infectious disease research and water innovation.

We believe that primary employers are the economic foundation of the community. Primary employers are companies which produce goods and services in excess of what can be consumed by the local market. Those goods not consumed by the local market are exported to other markets in exchange for money ('export' income). This flow of new income into the community becomes capital investments, payrolls and creates secondary benefits including 'indirect' or 'spin-off' jobs. Money flowing into the community from primary employers provides the economic resources necessary to support a viable community through increased sales and use tax collections, charitable donations, etc.

In light of the above definition, the Chamber believes that Colorado State University, as a major research institution, is vital to the area's economic future.

GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

The Chamber recognizes the importance of helping our existing industries grow and prosper because most new jobs in mature communities like Fort Collins come from the expansion of existing companies. The attraction, retention, expansion and startup of primary employers is a highly competitive endeavor requiring a coordinated effort by public and private sectors. The Chamber supports efforts of local government to create a favorable business climate in which private enterprise can function effectively and can plan for its future with confidence. A strong sense of public-private cooperation is a key ingredient for creating such a business climate.

Additionally, strong cooperation must exist between economic and job advocacy organizations like the Chamber and the NCEDC. To that end, a "division of labor" has been established between the Chamber and the NCEDC. The Fort Collins Area Chamber focuses on the retention of existing Fort Collins primary employers and community development issues like public policy, which affect the business climate. The NCEDC

concentrates on specific activities that attract, retain, expand or help establish companies in the industry clusters cited above. We realize tremendous benefit from a great deal of cooperation and coordination existing and continuing amongst regional entities; however the first priority of the Chamber will be the successful economy of the Fort Collins area.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW:

The City of Fort Collins should remove disincentives that impede private capital investment in the community. The Chamber supports a development review process that is predictable, efficient and consistently applied.

INCENTIVES:

The selective and proper use of incentives to induce business relocations, expansions and startups is another role governments play. Economic development incentives are a deliberate set of policies designed to make a location more attractive to primary employers. Properly used they can help communities compete for primary employers that can have a long-term positive economic impact. The Chamber believes the State of Colorado, Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins should enhance the availability of economic incentive programs to stimulate the expansion of existing companies in Fort Collins and to encourage the attraction of primary employers with particular emphasis on companies in the target industry clusters, regardless of company size. Incentives should be considered in the areas of infrastructure investments, tax credits, tax abatements and training funds. Fort Collins should strive to remain competitive with other cities in Northern Colorado.

INCENTIVES, FEED-IN TARIFFS:

Feed-in tariffs (FiTs) are a form of government subsidization of business. They usually involve an increase in electricity rates above the cost of producing the electricity with the new revenue being diverted to private firms researching, manufacturing or installing alternative energy technology or actually producing alternative energy which is then sold back to the local utility at a guaranteed high rate for an extended period of time (usually at least 20 years). The stated purpose is to foster the production of the nontraditional energy sources.

While FiTs are not widely used in the United States, they have been used in Europe. The results include higher household utility costs and no net economic or environmental benefits.

FiTs are a significant interference by government in the energy market in several ways. First, politicians, instead of markets, are deciding which energy technologies are the best. Second, FiTs artificially raise utility rates above the cost of produce power. Third, politicians, to encourage the production of alternative energy, are guaranteeing high fixed

rates to such producers for at least two decades. Regarding this latter point, it precludes new technology breakthroughs that might render the subsidized technologies irrelevant.

While supporting mutually beneficial incentives – those that benefit both private employers and the community - the Chamber urges limited, well-researched and cautious use of FiTs to incent the creation of primary jobs in the clean and renewable energy sector.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

By using its resources and powers to reduce the risks and costs which could prohibit investment, the public sector can set the stage for employment-generating investment by the private sector. Government can support a variety of initiatives that encourage private sector investments that benefit the community, including:

- Adopt policies and programs to provide services and infrastructure that benefit businesses such as streets, water systems, police and fire. Infrastructure represents those types of community capital investments that serve the activities of many industries including streets, communication networks, schools, water and energy supplies – that all support primary employers by increasing the productivity of labor and capital thereby reducing the costs of production and raising profitability, production, income and employment.
- We believe that the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County should have dynamic economic plans that are up-to-date and closely coordinate with the industry clusters being targeted by NCEDC, city, state and CSU. These plans should guide the city and county staffs during the development review process and should help expedite the process for companies in the target industry clusters. We believe that economic advisory boards should guide city and county officials through the discussion of economic issues and decisions. Such boards should be made up of people from the business community, economists from Colorado State University (CSU) and organizations including the Chamber and the NCEDC.
- Labor force preparation.
- Adopt policies and programs explicitly directed at improving the business climate through specific efforts, business finance, marketing, business retention and expansion, technology transfer, real estate development, incentives and others.
- Support economic development marketing efforts.

Economic development policy matters because it impacts the quality of the community, the standard of living of residents and taxpayers’ wallets. To that end, the City’s Economic Advisory Commission should focus its attention on strategies that increase income into the community as opposed to schemes to fund city government operations.

Economic development activities and outcomes are also shaped by public policies that influence the environment for investment and commerce. Called “business climate,” this term refers to the extent to which the political and policy environments of a particular state or locality, compared with other jurisdictions, are seen to be supportive or burdensome to businesses. The implication is that any area whose business climate is not “competitive” will be shunned by the corporate sector and will find it difficult to attract or grow new firms and the jobs they provide.

The business climate is affected by both major cost factors (e.g., land, labor, taxes, regulations) and non-cost factors (e.g., quality of life, attitudes toward business). Government has a significant impact on business climate, for it is that combination of services provided by the public sector, such as education, infrastructure, taxation, and regulation, which creates the context within which companies operate. Moreover, government delivers other direct services to companies.

Public rhetoric by government officials also impacts business climate in a couple of important ways. First, public officials can help influence the public’s perception of business in general and support of economic development by how they talk at meetings and in the press. Second, those public statements influence business decisions. As noted above, communities that are deemed to have a bad business climate are shunned.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COMMERCIALIZATION:

New discoveries from university research are the genesis of many new products and processes for the businesses that bring them to the market. The Chamber supports the efforts of Colorado State University and other partners like Colorado State University Research Foundation (CSURF) Technology Transfer Office, CSU Ventures, CSU Office of Economic Development and the Rocky Mountain Innosphere to license, transfer and commercialize research and to create and support startup companies. The Chamber believes such a program is a long-term endeavor that requires persistent effort and dedicated resources and is a part of the community’s three-pronged economic development strategy of existing industry retention and expansion, business recruitment and start-ups.

INDUSTRY CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT:

The Chamber believes that Northern Colorado is well suited for the development of water testing technology, clean energy and biosciences. To that end, the Chamber supports the active development of industry clusters in those business sectors.

EDUCATION

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes.

Addition of Pre-K section

Expansion of K-12 Education section

Expansion of Post-secondary Education section

Expansion of Internships and Service Learning section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that education is the key to our economic competitiveness and standard of life. We believe that the goal of education is to produce educated citizens with marketable skills, who are productive members of society. High school graduates should be proficient in math and science, be able to read and write, have a basic understanding of civics and should have problem solving and interpersonal skills. As well, students should have some understanding of how business contributes to the economic vitality of a community and general business classes should be required by all high school students. The Chamber believes interaction between businesspeople and the students and teachers in the classroom is important. The Chamber believes that adequate funding is an essential ingredient in public education, but that increased spending alone does not assure learning and consequently should not be the focus of education policy. For the public schools to function well and to be truly representative of the community, the Chamber believes it is important for business people to run for and serve on the school board and other education committees and task forces. Furthermore, the Chamber believes that education is a life long endeavor, which requires adequate emphasis on pre-school through post secondary education and continuing education as well as the fostering of a strong educational ethic in the community.

PRE-K:

The Chamber believes adequate educational opportunities at the pre-school level are necessary for success once a student begins their “formal” education. These pre-k opportunities should engage and nurture young learners and provide the basis for high academic achievement later in life. Quality pre-schools can also be an economic boost, providing jobs, internships and other learning opportunities for the community. When possible, Pre-K programs should be run by the private sector.

K-12 EDUCATION:

The Chamber believes that:

- High school graduates should be proficient in math and science, be able to read and write, and should have strong problem-solving and inter-personal skills. The

Chamber supports the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) initiative.

- Adequate funding is an essential ingredient in public education, but increased spending alone does not ensure learning. Emphasis should be on a system that measures academic advancement and proficiency and that holds both students and teachers accountable.
- In addition to holding districts accountable for their performance, the Chamber supports teacher pay for performance as a means to ensure the highest level of quality education by improving competition within the educational system. School districts should be allowed the flexibility within their respective pay systems to reward the appropriate results in the classroom.
- Vocational training is an essential educational element of the community because the availability of quality trade and technical skills is critical to a vibrant economy.
- The link between residential property taxes and K-12 education funding should be re-established by repealing the Gallagher amendment.

POST SECONDARY EDUCATION:

The Chamber believes that access to post secondary education services is essential to maintain the community's quality of life and is a vital part of the local economy. The Chamber believes that the community is strengthened by both public post-secondary institutions, such as Front Range Community College and CSU, as well as private institutions. The Chamber also embraces life-long learners and supports efforts to provide educational opportunities for young and older citizens.

The chamber believes that:

- Strong institutions of higher education are critical to the economic viability of our state and region. The institutions of higher education from the university systems to the community colleges are integral to the economic foundations of our northern Colorado area.
- Individual institutions of higher education need the flexibility to determine tuition rates, which meet their individual needs and financial objectives, and allow for stabilization of higher education funding while maintaining affordability and accessibility.
- The Front Range Community College system is enormously important to provide assessable and affordable education to the emerging workforce -- first and second year undergraduates -- and for the ongoing retention and retraining of the existing workforce. At a time when all state funding is critical, we advocate for sufficient funding for the community college system.

- Colorado State University has a unique role in northern Colorado as a major research university. As such, it is the most important driver of research and innovation in the region.
- Post-secondary institutions must be committed to implementing greater efficiencies to thrive in spite of diminishing public support. Public institutions, in particular, must consider the following:
 - Pursue greater collaborations and resource sharing to limit duplicative areas of study, improve quality of instruction and research and limit non-productive investments.
 - Promote greater interactions between academic centers of excellence and private enterprise.
 - Embrace an ‘open walls’ philosophy to better engage the community and private enterprise to facilitate research, planning and transfer of technologies.

INTERNSHIPS AND SERVICE LEARNING:

The Chamber believes that some of the best ways to help young adults learn practical skills and transition to the workforce is through internships and service learning opportunities (Service learning is defined as a method under which students learn through active participation in organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community.) We encourage business and the public sector to provide internship and service learning opportunities for young adults.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING:

The Chamber strongly supports vocational training as an essential educational element of the community. Availability of quality trade and technical skills is critical to a vibrant economy. All appropriate efforts need to be made to improve the capacity and flexibility of vocation training services in the Larimer County area.

WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS:

The Chamber believes that the public schools in Larimer County should be competitive at a world-class level. To obtain this level, eight key components must be evident: high standards for all students, accurate assessments to measure what students know and can do, challenging curriculums with real-world applications, competent and inspired teachers, leading-edge instructional technology, a culture of continuous improvement, accountability tools that measure the school system's performance and a supportive community.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Changes to Civil Rights section

Addition of Illegal Immigration section

Expansion of Right to Work section

Updates to Worker's Compensation section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber is dedicated to the basic philosophy of actively and affirmatively supporting the free enterprise system. Consequently, the Chamber believes that government should be neutral and impartial in disputes between management and employees. The Chamber opposes governmental legislation that restricts the rights and responsibilities of management to effectively direct the operations of an enterprise, particularly in the area of employer/employee relations, because economic stability can best be achieved by voluntary action on the part of the employer and the employee rather than governmental regulation.

CIVIL RIGHTS:

The Chamber believes every person should be treated fairly and with dignity in the workplace. Employers have a responsibility to comply with federal and state laws that protect individual rights. The Chamber opposes illegal discrimination in employment practices. We believe in business supporting the ideals of a diverse workforce, and they should hire the best individuals for their organization without discrimination.

DRUG FREE WORKPLACE:

The Chamber believes that drugs and alcohol have no place in the workplace. We support the rights of the employer to conduct, in a reasonable manner, drug tests on applicants and employees.

EMPLOYMENT-AT-WILL:

The Chamber favors the doctrine of employment-at-will and opposes any legislation, beyond the current fair labor laws, restricting that doctrine.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION:

Illegal immigration is a complex and emotional issue in Colorado. The Chamber realizes that the business community can play a role in partnering with the government to limit the number of people in this country illegally. At the same time, the Chamber asks local, state and federal governments not to prematurely impose unnecessary and costly burdens

upon businesses. Since the passage of immigration reform measures in 2006, Colorado has suffered a significant workforce reduction in critical economic sectors. While the Chamber supports appropriate reforms to hold businesses accountable that knowingly hire illegal immigrants, we encourage policymakers to be cognizant of the economic consequences and implications of reforms. The Chamber believes that:

- The vast majority of area businesses work in an ethical manner to ensure that they do not employ individuals who are not legally authorized to work in the United States. Businesses that do intentionally violate these requirements put themselves at an unfair competitive advantage by exploiting inexpensive labor, not paying payroll-related taxes, unemployment insurance premiums and other benefits.
- All businesses should be on an even playing field and only employ documented workers. However, legislation designed to meet this goal should be considered carefully and protect the interests of businesses already acting in a legal and ethical manner.
- The federal government should:
 - expand the temporary visa program for essential workers.
 - offer ways for undocumented workers already in the United States to obtain legal status so that they may become contributing members of our society.
 - expand the H-1B caps for jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree in a specialized field and H-2B caps for temporary non-agricultural workers. The H-2B definition also needs to be expanded so that more workers meet the requirements of the category. The current arbitrary limits for H-1B and H-2B workers has led to additional illegal immigration.
 - adopt a new electronic employment verification system for new hires that is secure, efficient and foolproof to ensure a legal workforce.
- The state government should:
 - implement legislation regarding employers that is enforceable but does not create unnecessary liability or opportunities for harassment
 - ensure that terms used in legislation are clearly defined, and when possible, use federal or other well-established definitions
 - limit reprimands for businesses found to employ illegal aliens to the immediate employer and not to the businesses with whom they contract
 - ensure that the proper government systems are in place for employers to verify the citizenship status of employees and consider the cost to businesses of implementing legislation regarding the employment of illegal aliens and, when possible, minimize that cost
- Local government should be careful with this issue. Topics like 'sanctuary cities' and penalizing employers for employing illegal immigrants are complex and controversial.

MANDATED EMPLOYEE WAGES & BENEFITS:

The Chamber opposes legislation mandating benefits such as seniority rights, leaves of absence, parental leave, vacation, insurance, pension and retirement which have traditionally been the subject of voluntary unilateral adoption and/or of collective bargaining. Mandated employee benefits are intrusive, impractical and create a financial burden for small business in particular. The Chamber supports allowing the market between employers and employees to determine wages and opposes government mandated wage rates. Consequently, the Chamber:

- Opposes a so-called “living wage” whereby local or state governments mandate hourly wage rates and benefits that employers must pay based on perceived needs rather than the skills an employee brings to the marketplace. Targeted at entry-level and poor workers, “living wages” actually harm them because of the necessary displacement effect of small employers being forced to eliminate jobs.
- Opposes so-called “comparable pay” legislation which imposes wage mandates based on gender.

RIGHT-TO-WORK:

The Chamber believes that individuals should be free to join or not join labor organizations. The ability to have a job should not be dependent upon union membership or non-membership or the payment of money to a labor organization. Elections to determine whether a union is granted representative status should be governed by a “secret ballot” election. When presented with the option of joining a union, employees should have the right to privately make that decision without interference or coercion from others.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION:

The Chamber supports the protection of workers unemployed through no fault of their own and believes the Colorado General Assembly must also protect the integrity and viability of the unemployment fund by maintaining strict requirements on the eligibility for unemployment compensation. To that end, efforts to broaden the definition of those who qualify for unemployment insurance benefits from the unemployment insurance trust fund should be opposed.

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION:

The Colorado Workers’ Compensation Act provides needed assistance for injured employees and should be retained and improved. The Chamber believes that:

- The workers’ compensation program must be administered with speed, fairness and maximum efficiency so that the largest possible percentage of the premium dollar paid by the employer will be paid as benefits to the truly injured worker.

- It is imperative that the Colorado General Assembly continuously review and improve the system in the areas of cost to business, fraud and abuse, paperwork reduction and the reduction of bureaucratic requirements.
- Injured employees should be prohibited from recovering non-economic damages in both state and federal courts for the same harm, otherwise known as “double recovery.”

ENVIRONMENT

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Expansion of Basic Philosophy

Addition of Climate Change section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that a local business climate that protects and enhances its natural environment can be healthy, productive and prosperous. By enhancing the business community’s awareness and knowledge of how the natural environment and the economy relate, additional opportunities and resources that are good for both business and the environment will result. We believe that the productivity and wealth created by a thriving, growing economy provides the resources that allow area residents to support a clean and robust natural environment. The Chamber supports those measures necessary to protect the natural environment and public health. The Chamber supports the following fundamental principles:

- Fort Collins will grow and economic development should occur. The economy and the environment are interdependent; a strong healthy economy can provide the resources required to protect and restore natural resources. In addition, a functioning, productive environment preserves the quality of life, attracts and retains primary employers and strengthens the economy.
- A reasonable effort should be made to appropriately integrate business development into the area's natural environment. Reasonable modifications to our natural resource base to provide for a comfortable human existence are necessary because people are part of the natural environment.
- Economic and environmental objectives are best achieved through orderly compromise rather than conflict and, toward that end; the Chamber seeks to establish a positive relationship between the business and environmental communities. Opportunities should be created to allow environmental and business representatives to establish areas of agreement, work through problems and develop positive joint initiatives.
- Disseminating information to member and nonmember businesses about

environmentally friendly ways of conducting business is a key tool in changing behaviors.

- Recycling efforts should be incentivized and based on the availability of viable end use markets for the diverted materials.
- Government should move cautiously on legislation and regulations relative to ‘climate change.’ When such legislation and regulations are proposed, it is incumbent upon government officials to be clear on the short- and long-term financial costs to the citizens. An objective cost-benefit analysis should be done.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS:

The Chamber supports legislation and ordinances that streamline building and environmental permitting processes. The Chamber believes the need for new, additional regulations should be clearly substantiated and accompanied by a determination that existing programs cannot accomplish the desired public purpose. New regulations should be incorporated into and reconciled against existing programs to avoid further permit requirements that may cause confusion or other intended or unintended consequences. Further, the Chamber believes a thorough economic impact statement should accompany any new ordinance or legislation proposing new regulations. The Chamber supports elimination of needless regulation, duplication in regulatory agencies and arbitrary or inflexible standards.

OPEN SPACE:

The Chamber supports public or private purchase of undeveloped land (so called “open space”), easements and development rights as a laudable means of conserving natural places and preserving unique views. The following considerations should be factored in:

- Acquisition should be done with full landowner cooperation without government’s use of eminent domain. Private property rights must be respected. Local government should be constrained in its use of eminent domain. Proper and thorough due diligence should be used during all land acquisitions. As well, economic impact of purchases should be included in the due diligence process.
- Comprehensive long-range open space land acquisition plans by the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County should outline and plan for the annual rate at which land will be acquired and the cost for maintenance of the acquired land.
- The public should be informed of the tradeoff of economic vitality and open area preservation. Land transferred from private to public ownership is no longer available for private use, thus converting a tax revenue-generating asset into a taxpayer obligation directly impacting the future employment and tax base of the community.
- Priority should be given to acquiring land for its demonstrable natural benefits and potential to acquire water rights rather than to simply stop development through a permanent reduction of usable land.

- Land secured using public funds should be open for use by the public. Appropriate management strategies should be incorporated to limit public access only when necessary to protect especially significant ecosystems.
- A trust fund to pay for long-term maintenance to open space lands should be established. Simply acquiring land is not the objective. The reason for this program is to acquire open lands that can be forever available to the people of this region. Such lands should only be acquired if we have the determination and the means to honor the spirit of the original purchase. We must not push a major costly obligation into the future without financial means to maintain these lands.
- All of the municipal and county government's open space costs should continue to be charged against the open space revenues. The open space program should pay its own way, meaning that it should not impact the City's basic services.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

The Chamber recognizes that climate change is an inevitable consequence of natural cycles. One theory holds that the climate of the planet is warming primarily due to manmade production of carbon and other greenhouse gases. Supporters of this view advocate policies to reduce such emissions. Others argue that climate change is natural and man's impact is minimal. Regardless, climate change is among the most complex and controversial economic, political and diplomatic issues of our time. Policy developed around climate change can have a profound economic impact on America, Colorado and Fort Collins.

The Chamber believes that:

- There are inherent limitations to local actions relative to climate change.
- Climate laws aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions should use market-based incentives that fully account for economic and financial cost-benefit analysis.
- Such laws should take a phased-in technology and policy-driven approach to provide tools necessary to successfully reduce long-term global greenhouse gas emissions while minimizing the costs and risks to the economy and the impact on consumers.
- The following points must be addressed in any potential climate change law or policy:
 1. Existing industry cannot change past decisions and should not be penalized for past fuel choices.
 2. The feasibility and cost of clean energy technologies must be known before they are deployed, because utility companies and regulators have a responsibility to keep customers' rates as low as possible.
 3. A recommitment to funding research and development in the energy sector must occur.

4. Failure to take technology development timelines into account could result in unintended consequences, such as fuel shifting from coal to natural gas, which already faces tight supply-demand constraints.
5. The concept of “cap and trade” in itself will not reduce emissions, we must bring new technologies on-line or reduce prices for renewable resources. On the other hand, cap and trade can have adverse impacts by significantly driving up energy prices, causing price instability and placing American companies at a competitive disadvantage.
6. Asserted benefits utilized to justify a law or policy must be quantifiable in terms that are readily observed or demonstrated.
7. Policies or laws should emphasize current and future savings, and efficiencies and reduction of wasteful practices which are superior to existing conditions.
8. Recognize that there are inherent limitations to local action, although we may be able to provide direct support to larger initiatives which adhere to these principals.

FINANCE AND TAXATION

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Updates to Basic Philosophy

Addition of Internet Taxation section

Addition of Characteristics of a Good Tax section

Addition of Tax Alternatives for Fort Collins section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Taxes are part of the obligation we all have to pay for services we collectively use and need as citizens. To that end, business is willing to pay a reasonable level of taxes and fees for essential public services assuming that they are fair and reasonable and do not discourage business investment in Fort Collins. In short, tax policy should promote a healthy business and economic climate that encourages investment in capital equipment and human capital.

IMPACT FEES:

The Chamber recognizes that impact fees are a legitimate but targeted component of infrastructure funding. The Chamber further recognizes that the level of Larimer County and Fort Collins’ impact fees must be competitive within our region if we expect businesses to locate and expand here. Over-reliance on impact fees is detrimental to capital investment and business expansion in the city. The Chamber supports identification of alternate funding sources to reduce local government’s dependency on

impact fees. Infrastructure that is funded by impact fees should be located so as to give the maximum benefit to those parties who paid the impact fees. Developers should not carry the burden of poor infrastructure maintenance that should be the responsibility of the city or for upgrading older intersections to meet unreasonable standards. All levels of government should maintain clear and documented accounting of the impact fees showing the allocation of those fees back to the impacted areas. No additional exactions should be made or required by the city or county that would have the effect of double-charging the landowners.

INTERNET TAXATION:

The Chamber believes that with regard to taxation of Internet transactions, Colorado should not be placed at a comparative disadvantage in relation to the tax policy of other states. Like all tax collection systems, if Internet transactions become taxable, simplicity of collection should be a guiding principle. There must be a clear definition of eligibility of entities authorized to impose taxes. The cost of monitoring, reporting, and collection should be weighed against potential financial benefit prior to any change to current tax policy.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A ‘GOOD TAX’:

The Tax Foundation has identified a number of characteristics of what it considers a ‘good tax.’ Among them are:

- **Transparency.** A good tax system requires informed taxpayers who understand how taxes are assessed, collected and complied with. It should be clear to taxpayers who and what is being taxed, and how tax burdens affect them and the economy. Tax legislation should be based on careful economic analysis, and legislative procedures should include open hearings with ample opportunity for the public to comment.
- **Neutrality.** The fundamental purpose of taxes is to raise necessary revenue for programs, not to micromanage a complex market economy with subsidies and penalties. The tax system’s central aim should be to collect that money while interfering as little as possible with the decisions of free people in the marketplace.
- **Simplicity.** The tax system should be as simple as possible. The cost of tax compliance is a real cost to society, and complex taxes create perverse incentives to shelter and disguise legitimately earned income.
- **Stability.** Tax law should not change continuously. A rapidly changing tax system frustrates long-term planning and increases uncertainty in the economy.
- **No Retroactivity.** Changes in tax law should not be retroactive. As a matter of fairness, taxpayers should rely with confidence on the law as it exists when contracts are signed and transactions are made.

- **Low Rates, Broad Bases.** It makes a difference how large a share of national income is taken by government in taxes. The private sector is the source of all wealth and improvements in the standard of living. Taxes should consume as small a portion of national income as possible and should be broadly based so that tax rates can be moderate at all points.
- **Don't Inhibit Trade.** In the case of a local community, this could mean: doesn't inhibit retail trade, doesn't incent businesses or people to live in another nearby community while using our roads and services.

TAX ALTERNATIVES FOR FORT COLLINS:

Fort Collins is highly dependent upon sales tax to finance city government operations. A variety of tax options may eventually be discussed including taxation of internet sales, property tax increases, a local income tax, a service tax and a value-added tax, among others. The Chamber will use the above-noted 'Characteristics of a Good Tax' as a guide to test the validity of any proposed tax and consider its relative fairness to business.

GOOD GOVERNMENT

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Updates to Basic Philosophy

Expansion of Business Expectations of Government section

Expansion of Constitutional Initiatives section

Addition of Election of City Council section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that business should expect government to be predictable, efficient in the delivery of services, reasonable in imposition of costs, be accessible and responsive, open and transparent, accurate and timely, be open to understanding the views of business, 'do no harm' to business, focus on basic services, be conscious of actions that impact business climate, be mindful of property rights and avoid mandates when possible.

BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS OF GOVERNMENT:

- **Policy stability is crucial:** Business will deal positively with a reasonable volume of taxes, laws and regulations when they are clearly defined, understandable, equitably enforced, stable and sensitive to the realities of a market-driven economy.
- **Effective and efficient performance** in the delivery of local government services and accountability to the taxpaying public for such performance.
- **A reasonable assessment of the cost/benefit analysis** of any imposed ordinance or

regulation.

- Access to government officials and staff, who are responsive to concerns and cooperate on matters of mutual benefit.
- Government should be open and transparent, and government officials should be honest in their dealings with the public and with business.
- Accurate and timely information about issues and decisions that affect our families and our businesses.
- An opportunity to participate in the government process and reasonable representation on county and city boards and commissions.
- A principle of ‘do no harm’ to business. Government’s first impulse should be to make positive things happen by streamlining government processes and cutting red tape whenever and wherever possible. Local government will take efforts to minimize the burden of government processes and costs on business.
- Focus spending and time on what government does best: maintaining and improving infrastructure and public safety.
- Seek private and/or non-government partners to fulfill functions not directly under government responsibility or functions that can be completed on a more cost-effective basis by non-government partners. Government is responsible for accomplishing many functions but does not have to do them directly. Whenever possible, government should seek local private partners rather than depending solely on additional city staff to accomplish them.
- When governments tax and regulate, they should keep a close eye on issues of competitiveness locally, regionally, state-to-state and globally.
- Governments should minimize the impact to property rights through taxation, regulation and acquisition. As a general rule, money and land are better left in the hands of the private sector rather than in the hands of government. The Chamber believes government should not overtax/over-fee and should avoid directly or indirectly taking people’s property rights. Over-acquisition of land for public services can impair the tax base by impairing private investment.
- Avoid government mandates on employers whenever possible.
- Operate efficiently before asking for more revenue in the form of fees and taxes. Performance measures and benchmarking should be common practices, transparent, and available to the public.
- Remember that a thriving business sector is essential to funding a vital and well-functioning community and the state.
- Quality of life and a positive business climate are interdependent. Government plays a role in both and needs to keep them in relative balance.
- The perspectives and insights of the business community are just as valid and valuable as other perspectives. Government officials should seek input from

business and openly share information with the business community to ensure a balanced approach to issues of importance for our community.

- While it is fine to be known as a leader, city officials should resist the impulse to be national leaders in the area of regulations.

CITY FINANCES:

The Chamber believes that the City Budget should be based on realistic financial forecasts, operating assumptions and clear priorities. When approved city budgets cannot be met, the City should have clear guidelines and priorities in place for identifying cost cutting measures but still meeting the basic needs of the community. The appropriate role of local government is to deliver basic services as efficiently and effectively as possible. Basic services include police and fire protection, streets, facility maintenance, electric services, and wastewater and stormwater systems. We believe that the basic services defined above should be the highest budget priorities.

CONSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES:

The Chamber is opposed to the over-use of State Constitutional initiatives when the issue can be resolved legislatively. The Chamber supports:

- increasing the signature requirements for a constitutional amendment to be placed on the ballot,
- requiring initiative proponents to gain signatures from the entire state such as a percentage requirement from each congressional district or county, and
- requiring a super-majority vote for the passage of constitutional amendments.

PRIVATIZATION:

The Chamber believes that government should not perform production or services for itself or others if acceptable privately owned or operated services are, or can be made, available for such purposes. The Chamber supports the use of partnerships between the public and private sector to accomplish public goals.

SUPPORT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT:

The Chamber supports representative government as the best form of government by a free people and believes in the right to freely elect representatives to public office. The Chamber supports the right of citizens to petition their governmental representatives. To protect the viability of a representative form of government, citizen initiatives should be used sparingly. We support elections that allow more members of the city council to be elected at-large. District representation only does not allow for true representative government. In terms of the form of local government, the Chamber believes that professional management is preferred over a strong-mayor. The latter form can unnecessarily politicize local government.

ELECTION OF CITY COUNCIL:

For an electoral process to be credible, the basic requirements are clarity, simplicity and confidence in the veracity of the process. To those ends, the Chamber supports the following positions relative to how people are elected to the Fort Collins City Council:

- The City Charter should be modified from six districts to four districts plus two at-large Council seats.
- Maintain the current plurality system whereby the top vote getter wins. The Chamber deems this system superior to ‘instant runoff voting’ or ‘ranked voting.’
- Candidate contribution limits should be reviewed regularly.
- Mayoral term limits should be changed to allow a maximum of 8 consecutive years.

GROWTH PLANNING

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Rename of section (from Growth Management)

Addition of Basic Philosophy section

Addition of State Government Role in Planning section

Addition of Using Utilities to Control Growth section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Northern Colorado is a desirable place to live, so it is likely that growth will continue. Growth can be fostered in a manner to maximize economic benefits while minimizing adverse impacts. It is wise to prepare for population growth by recognizing the importance of the interdependence of the marketplace, planning and infrastructure and being realistic about projected growth. In short, population growth is inevitable and should be planned for accordingly.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING:

The Chamber supports long range planning as an important growth management strategy. We believe that change is inevitable and that responsible management of growth is a dynamic process that requires stability, flexibility and cooperation. Stability can best be achieved through the thoughtful development of a reasonable and comprehensive plan. Flexibility can best be achieved through a periodic reassessment and modification of the plan to reflect more accurately the ever-changing makeup and vision of the community. Cooperation is the blending of the various perspectives and making a cohesive and comprehensive plan. The Chamber has long recognized that Fort Collins needs a comprehensive vision and a plan to ensure high-quality economic growth and to stimulate

the creation of long-term primary jobs for future generations, while preserving those characteristics that have made our community desirable.

FREE MARKET PERSPECTIVE IN PLANNING:

While acknowledging some benefits of land use planning, the Chamber believes a free-market economy is the best system for meeting the wants and needs of people and should be recognized and valued in the planning process. Government intervention into this process should only be done with a clear definition and understanding of the costs and benefits. Government intervention should be a last resort and should be considered when there is damage being done to the public good. Such damage must be clearly demonstrable and quantifiable by economic, social and cost/benefit analysis and not be based on speculation or political expediency. The system should attempt to incentivize rather than be punitive or regulatory.

STATE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN PLANNING:

The role of the State of Colorado is to assist in the coordination of future growth by driving cooperation of local governmental jurisdictions, providing incentives rather than mandates to accommodate growth, providing guidance and education on how to accommodate growth and assisting with the investment needed in Colorado's infrastructure. Local governments should have the flexibility in their planning processes and comprehensive plans to meet the needs of their local communities.

USING UTILITIES TO CONTROL GROWTH:

No legislation, initiatives or administrative actions should attempt to limit growth by intentionally under-developing water supply, artificially increasing electric rates or establishing unreasonably restrictive storm water or flood plain regulations.

ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES:

The Chamber generally supports the concept of adequate public facilities, which means that necessary public facilities and infrastructure should be in place concurrently with the completion of development. Statutory changes are necessary to allow for workable implementation of the principle to provide reasonable guarantees for long-term projects, and to allow for exemptions and exceptions in certain cases.

FUTURE LAND USE:

The Chamber acknowledges and supports a Growth Management Area (GMA), along with neighborhood clustering, as laudable means of enacting planned, responsible community development and protecting against the proliferation of urban sprawl. However, such boundaries must be continually monitored and evaluated, so as not to restrict opportunities, especially in the form of primary employment. The City of Fort Collins must be cognizant of pockets of viable land in and around the GMA that may be

suitable to meet the potential needs of desirable primary employers. The City must recognize the competitive nature of today's market in which companies/site selectors often require a permit-ready site within 120 to 180 days, and must be proactive in researching, identifying and planning such areas so that these opportunities may be captured in a timely and efficient manner. The identification of such areas does not necessarily imply that such developments will occur, but allows time for planning and thorough evaluation of these areas.

Fort Collins' future land use plans need to project growth patterns for the next 30 years and beyond. Some of these growth patterns may necessitate changes to our land use plan and physical boundaries to the city and its GMA. Appropriate areas should be designated for future urban development and associated infrastructure and should be annexed when appropriate. Clustering should be encouraged. The designation of future urban areas does not necessarily imply that such developments will occur in the near future, but allows time for planning for future growth and provides an incentive for property owners to forgo development at rural densities.

The City Planning Department should regularly review the developable lands inventory with an eye toward balancing current opportunities and long-term objectives relative to availability of land for primary employment.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS:

The Chamber supports the rights of the individual property owner and no government body should be allowed to use its regulatory powers to take private property or regulatory actions like down-zoning for a legitimate and necessary public use without paying the owner its fair market value. The Chamber does not support the use of eminent domain by government to acquire private property for the use of other private interests.

INFILL:

The Chamber supports the City Government's efforts to implement policies and procedures to facilitate infill development as a more economically sustainable way to provide urban services.

HEALTH CARE

Changes:
Minor grammatical changes
Elimination of much of Basic Philosophy section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Although Americans have the best medical care in the world, a variety of factors continue to drive up the costs of medical care and health care coverage. This makes access to care more difficult with each passing year. Clearly, the situation is not sustainable, and reform is necessary. The Chamber supports patient-centered reforms that will allow all Americans to have access to a market-based healthcare system that provides quality, affordable care. (Note: a more detailed version of the Chamber's health care policy can be found at NCLAonline.net)

HOUSING

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Addition of Basic Philosophy section

Addition of Homelessness section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Some of the biggest factors in the cost of housing are local and state government laws and regulations relative to building codes, land use code and government land purchases. Public policies for such things as open lands and income-restricted housing, in the absence of objective financial analysis, can actually have the consequence of limiting the availability of affordable housing options.

The Chamber believes that:

- All citizens should have access to safe, adequate housing opportunities that are affordable according to their income level, physical needs and lifestyle.
- The community is best served when a diverse housing stock exists and the Chamber supports a market-driven approach to fulfilling the needs of the community, free of mandated or overly prescriptive regulation.
- Housing costs are greatly impacted by numerous and varied factors, which include: local regulatory fee structures and development review procedures, both formal and informal, that impede the delivery of cost-efficient housing stock; rental absorption attributable to off-campus housing needs of post-secondary students; and limitations to the supply of readily-developable land or redevelopment sites within the community that allow the market to deliver stock in a timely manner. The Chamber supports efforts to provide student housing adjacent to CSU and Front Range Community College either through established zones that are specifically student oriented or through public/private partnerships.
- Slow-growth measures like the urban growth boundary and regulations to intensify land use actually promote leapfrog development and create jobs-to housing

imbalance. Many people basically follow the rule of ‘drive until you qualify.’ The exportation of housing demand to outlying communities as families seek more affordable housing results in longer commutes, more traffic congestion and less efficient use of land. Local government should understand the economic impact of new proposed ordinances and regulations on housing prices.

- There should be a prohibition of local ordinances that mandate an inclusionary zoning requirement as a contingency for project approval as such mandates ultimately shift the subsidy to all others.
- Whenever possible efforts should be made to streamline the land use process to ensure costs associated with time in process are lessened and therefore reduce the overall cost of housing. The Chamber supports the use of incentives to promote the dispersion of an array of housing options to lower income households.

HOMELESSNESS:

Even vibrant communities like Fort Collins have homelessness. Beyond the acute impact at the individual level, homelessness also adversely effects business. To positively impact homelessness, the Chamber supports the concept of ‘housing first’ whereby scarce resources are focused on the rapid re-housing of individuals and families upon event of homelessness.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Expansion of the Utilities Rates section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that Colorado and Fort Collins will continue to grow and that government should plan for adequate infrastructure, citywide and regionally, to accommodate that growth. Infrastructure is comprised of the facilities and systems shared or used by all area citizens. The facilities have in common the requirement for significant capital investment. These investments influence the quality of our lives, economic productivity, how we relate to our environment, land use patterns and the very character of the community. These improvements include our roads, traffic signals, potable water system, waste water system, storm water system, landfill and recycling (land and equipment), emergency vehicles, public transportation, libraries, (land, buildings, books and technology), artistic and cultural facilities, parks and recreation (land, landscape, equipment) and government facilities (land, buildings).

ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN:

The Chamber supports sound fiscal decisions regarding acquisition, design and construction of all adopted capital improvement plans. Further, the Chamber believes that maintaining the community infrastructure is the responsibility of all residents equally and therefore should be a priority item in the city operating budget.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING:

The Chamber supports the safe and legal disposal of solid waste in the most cost-efficient manner, which means trash hauling should be done by the private sector. The Chamber supports materials recycling and believes that such recycling programs should be as cost effective as possible. The Chamber supports incentives to develop new uses and markets for recyclables and that the community is better served by recycling programs that have a market demand.

UTILITY RATES:

The Chamber recognizes the need to maintain utility (water, wastewater and electricity) rate structures adequate for maintenance and efficient operation of privately and publicly owned utilities for the benefit of the community. The Chamber believes that the community’s municipally owned utilities should provide safe, adequate and efficient service at the lowest possible cost to the customer. The Chamber does not support progressive utility rate pricing, also known as tiered rates. Nor does the Chamber support artificially high utility rates above the price of providing the actual service for the purpose of funding other initiatives or programs. The Chamber supports incenting efficient use of limited resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE: TRANSPORTATION

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Changes to the Basic Philosophy section

Addition of Prioritization of Transportation Infrastructure Projects section

Addition of Public Transportation section

Addition of Financing Transportation section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes a community’s transportation infrastructure is a key element for its quality of life, safety and economic viability. Regarding the latter, transportation infrastructure, particularly a properly functioning street system, remains a cornerstone to a viable and healthy economy. Transportation infrastructure includes roads and streets, signalization, mass transit, air service, pedestrian and bicycle. The Chamber believes that all such elements must be present to have a viable transportation system that meets the

needs of the community. And, as noted above, the Chamber believes emphasis must be placed on an adequate road/streets system which is properly planned for future capacity and is focused on putting resources on street surfaces as opposed to landscaping and auxiliary surfaces.

AIR SERVICE:

The continued prosperity of the Northern Front Range depends upon access to convenient and affordable air transportation through national and regional air carriers serving all parts of the United States and international markets. The Fort Collins/Loveland Airport should be competitive with other airports in the region by attracting carriers that can offer competitive rates without compromising general aviation. The Chamber supports the expansion of the Fort Collins/Loveland Airport runway, auxiliary services and the addition of a tower. Further, we support the preservation of other air transportation corridors. The current fuel tax collection and distribution system to fund airport facilities should be maintained.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION:

The Chamber supports a regional approach to transportation planning and finance which may include a regional transportation authority or other such entity. Barriers that prevent the public and/or local governments from developing innovation funding mechanisms should be removed.

PRIORITIZATION OF TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:

There should be a frequent review of infrastructure projects that improve mobility and accrue the most economic benefit for the community.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:

Public transportation is an important element of community and regional mobility. To make the system function properly, the priority should be on targeted investments to increase capacity on our roadways in and around Fort Collins. As congestion increases on our roadway system, alternative approaches such as bus rapid transit and an enhanced bus system make sense along with other alternative transportation and commute trip reduction strategies. Regarding light rail to Denver, right-of-way should be protected until the time arrives that demand warrants the construction of such as system.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT:

The Chamber supports the concept of public/private partnerships to assist in developing solutions to some of the problems impacting our transportation system including, but not limited to, good land use and planning, mass transportation, improved signalization and new and improved roadways. The Chamber believes the emphasis should be on adequate

roadways and interchange design to reflect the reality that most people prefer to remain in their individual vehicles.

FINANCING TRANSPORTATION:

From a regional perspective, Northern Colorado is the fastest growing region in the state of Colorado. Yet, there are billions of dollars of unfunded priority transportation needs in Larimer and Weld counties.

- A maximum and equitable allocation of financial resources for transportation should be directed to the North Front Range region from state and federal resources.
- Funding mechanisms such as Regional Transportation Authorities should be considered to fund intra-regional transportation needs.
- Local leaders have made transportation a top funding priority as an element of Issue 2B passed by voters in November 2010.
- The Chamber believes that a clear nexus should exist between street oversizing fees collected and their ultimate use. As well, the Chamber is opposed to overly burdensome transportation fees levied upon business.

INFRASTRUCTURE: ELECTRICITY

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Entirely new section

ENERGY, GENERAL:

Cost effective generation and distribution of energy is an essential factor in the economic viability of Fort Collins and the quality of life of our community. The community's economic prosperity is closely tied to the availability of reliable, affordable energy supplies. Rapid growth of our country's energy demand requires a comprehensive national energy plan and strategy. The basic infrastructure involved in the generation and distribution of energy, especially electricity, is complicated, expensive and takes years to develop and requires large capital investment. While Northern Colorado is well positioned to benefit from the so-called 'new energy economy' a switch from traditional fossil-based fuels to newer sources will take decades and significant financial commitment. Government can assist this transition by incenting the use of clean and renewable technologies, funding research, being careful and prudent about significantly altering energy policy to address climate change, and keeping affordability and reliability of electricity as key criteria. In short, the gradual evolution of energy sources should be realistic and done in a manner that benefits Northern Colorado while not harming it economically.

ELECTRICITY RATES:

The Chamber does not support progressive utility rate pricing, also known as tiered rates. For a government owned utility, rates should be set at levels sufficient to cover the cost of production, delivery, and maintenance. Capital expansion and significant system improvements are acceptable uses of rate increases when approved by the community. The Chamber is against any manipulation of rates for the payment or finance of any project other than the production and delivery of the service. Public officials should not view utility revenues as a source of funds available to support non production and delivery projects as this is a tax increase without the approval of the community.

PLATTE RIVER POWER AUTHORITY (PRPA):

Citizens of Estes Park, Fort Collins, Longmont and Loveland made the decision in 1973 to secure a reliable and affordable power source by forming the Platte River Power Authority. PRPA has served the communities well since and is an outstanding example of regional intergovernmental cooperation. The Chamber believes that the City Council has an obligation to the public (i.e., the owners of PRPA) to use this resource wisely and refrain from politicizing it.

SMART METERING:

Smart meters have been promoted as a tool for consumers and utility managers to better manage their electricity usage. However, they also have the potential for political and bureaucratic abuse of utility customers. There should be limited and prudent internal use of the data collected by smart meters for operational purposes. The use of the smart meter system and data by the city government and utility should not be used to control the power usage in homes or businesses.

COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY POLICIES:

The Chamber supports:

- Market-based incentives to promote greater conservation and efficiency of existing energy resources.
- Colorado creating and saving substantial amounts of electricity generation resources and significantly upgrading its electric transmission grid to “keep the lights on,” by supporting a broad policy that includes traditional and renewable resources.
- Market-based incentives, as well as research and development seed capital, to develop “clean coal technology,” hydroelectric, wind, solar, biomass, nuclear, geothermal and other alternative forms of energy.
- Sparing use of state and federal mandates that impose renewable generation requirements on electric generating utilities. The Chamber believes that the

marketplace is the best impetus for fostering further development of renewable energy.

- Conservation as a viable strategy for extending the life of power generation facilities, so programs that promote conservation should be encouraged. Conservation alone, however, is not enough.
- Environmentally compatible exploration and production of new domestic natural gas, oil, coal and other traditional energy supplies.
- Investment in infrastructure necessary to generate, store, transmit and transport energy and additional measures to ensure energy remains affordable, reliable and available for all Americans.
- Market-based incentives that encourage the entrepreneurial development of energy efficient products and processes and other green innovation.
- Market-based commercial, industrial and residential green building and redevelopment programs that promote and encourage energy efficiency and other environmentally-friendly practices.

INFRASTRUCTURE: STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Entirely new section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that safe, environmentally sensitive and economically responsible use of floodplains and stormwater facilities is required for a sustainable, safe and economically successful community. The Chamber supports the jurisdictional decision-making concept that incorporates social, environmental and economic factors. We believe all three of these factors should be carefully weighed by the public and private sectors in a balanced manner prior to implementation, to promote the advancement of and prevent negative impacts to any of these three factors.

FLOODPLAINS, STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND LAND DEVELOPMENT:

Public health and safety, environmental stewardship and enhancement and economic development should all be incorporated into regulations. All three of these factors can and should be included in the evaluation of existing and proposed regulations. No one factor can be allowed to dominate the process - since all are vital to a safe, vibrant and successful community. Existing regulations should be re-examined on a regular basis to ensure that all three elements are adequately represented. The evaluation of revised or new regulations should be based on data and should be based on good scientific, engineering, environmental and economic data.

DRAINAGE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS:

Publically funded stormwater management projects should also benefit public safety, environmental enhancement and economic vitality. These three factors should be comprehensively weighed to create projects that provide balanced benefits. We believe government should safeguard the monies entrusted to them by the citizens and the business community by planning and implementing programs and projects which meet a balanced set of criteria benefitting the entire community in a cost-effective manner.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE JOINT VENTURES:

Cooperative efforts between the business community and the government agencies responsible for stormwater management are encouraged. Existing stormwater problems should be combined with opportunities for development and re-development to create multi-use solutions which solve existing problems while enabling economic development. Examples of this approach include municipal utility districts, urban renewal authorities and regional stormwater management programs. Many of these have been used successfully in the region. However, we believe that government should take a more active role in creating regional solutions for existing issues that also enable economic development.

INFRASTRUCTURE: WATER

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Expansion of Basic Philosophy section

Expansion of Water Supply Development section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Colorado has tremendous water resources that require careful resource planning, development and use. Northern Colorado, and the entire state of Colorado, faces serious economic and environmental impacts from a failure to plan for future droughts and water shortages. As Colorado annually loses nearly half-a-million acre-feet of its fully entitled water, strategies must be deployed to increase water storage capacity while conserving available resources. The Chamber is a proponent of increasing the water supply of the Fort Collins area while pursuing a reasonable policy of water demand management, as well as purchasing additional water rights as they become available.

PURCHASING WATER RIGHTS:

As irrigation rights from agriculture and other uses become available, the Chamber supports the city's acquisition of those local rights for future water use. The Chamber believes that the region's water should remain in the local basin.

WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT:

The Chamber supports reasonable efforts that encourage water conservation and water reuse and penalizes water waste in existing developments, new developments and agriculture. Water conservation education programs should be continued and enhanced to encourage efficient water use.

WATER SUPPLY DEVELOPMENT:

The Chamber believes additional water storage, infrastructure and conveyance facilities should be pursued while at the same time exploring city-focused storage including, but not limited to, the expansion of the Halligan Reservoir and the development of the Northern Integrated Supply Project. Development of water storage and supply and conveyance facilities should be done a regional basis as well as at the local level. The Chamber also believes that:

- All viable options to develop water sources for Northern Colorado should be undertaken.
- The state of Colorado must retain that water to which it is entitled for the beneficial use of Coloradoans.
- The state and regional water supplies should develop strategies to minimize the impacts of the movement of water within and outside of the Northern Colorado region. This could even include innovative regional cooperation to sustain water supplies in Northern Colorado, such as the possible creation of a new water taxing district to generate revenues to purchase and protect Northern Colorado water rights.
- Colorado's unique geography divides the state in half with more plentiful water on the western slope and insufficient water on the Front Range. Consequently, trans-basin exchanges are necessary and efforts to prohibit them should be opposed.
- Legislation, initiatives and administrative actions by federal, state and local governments to limit business retention and growth through the reallocation of water resources or limitations upon water development should be opposed. Likewise, the Chamber opposes federal laws and administrative actions which would impede or impair the allocation and beneficial use of Colorado waters.
- Any new legislation creating additional wilderness or other federal reservation of Colorado land must disclaim federal reserved water rights and pay due deference to the water needs and interests of Colorado citizens.
- Federal actions that run contrary to Colorado Water Law should be opposed.

- Colorado water rights and the Colorado philosophy of “first in time, first in right” seniority water rights must be preserved.
- State and local officials must protect Colorado’s interests in interstate river compacts.
- Expansion, repair and dredging of Colorado’s existing reservoirs are a beneficial means of maximizing and increasing the state’s water storage capacity.
- Halligan Reservoir should be expanded to its fullest capacity.
- As part of the NISP project, Glade Reservoir should be built northwest of Fort Collins.
- Year-round in-stream flows are a laudable objective but not the primary objective of Fort Collins water supply. Rather, the over-riding objective is the development and storage of adequate water supply.

PRODUCT LIABILITY/CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Addition of Basic Philosophy section

Expansion of Chamber Beliefs

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Legal Reform, America's litigation system is the world’s most expensive. The Institute’s research indicates that class action lawsuit filings rose more than 300 percent in federal courts and more than 1,000 percent in state courts in the past decade. A litigious environment is a brake on the American and Colorado economies because it diverts business resources from product research and development.

The Chamber believes that:

- There needs to be equitable and predictable rules governing product liability litigation and redefining the responsibilities of parties that manufacture, sell and use products. To that end, the Chamber believes that the 1986 and subsequent reforms to the tort system were positive and should be maintained. They do a reasonable job of balancing the rights of plaintiffs and defendants. Such a balance is critical for maintaining a good climate for business.
- There would be a reduction in the number of merit-less lawsuits filed against licensed professionals in Colorado if there was an increase in the level of proof required to establish liability under the standards governing professional conduct and the services or products delivered by the licensed professional. Meritless claims create a disincentive for quality providers to make services and products

available while increasing the overall costs to deliver and insure the services and products in question.

- There should be reforms limiting tort prejudgment interest on damages recovered and, where appropriate, caps placed on damages consistent with the nature of the specific injury.

REGIONALISM

Changes:

Entirely new section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes in the concept of ‘regionalism.’ While localized political considerations are extremely important, they are not the only thing that matters to creating a vibrant local economy and bright future for the residents of Fort Collins. Actions of other communities in the two-county region do impact Fort Collins and vice versa. To that end, active participation and dialogue between the communities much be fostered at every opportunity.

Acknowledging a preference for new primary employers to locate within Fort Collins, the Chamber supports working with neighboring communities in a collaborative effort, as opposed to a competitive atmosphere, when presented with opportunities to attract new primary employers to the Northern Colorado area. The Chamber believes that an increase in primary employment opportunities within the region is beneficial to Fort Collins and all of the neighboring communities.

TOURISM

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Deletion of Convention Center section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Tourism is an important source of community income and employment. The Chamber believes a successful tourism program requires adequate funding, a variety of lodging and meeting facilities, a broad range of attractions and events and a professionally managed marketing program.

FUNDING:

The Chamber supports maintaining an adequately funded, professionally staffed program promoting tourism to Fort Collins. The Chamber recognizes the necessity of a strong

regional and national advertising and promotion plan, funded by revenues collected from the lodging tax, to strengthen tourism in Fort Collins. The lion's share of the lodging tax collected should be dedicated to advertising and promotion with the balance used on events and attractions that bring tourists to Fort Collins.

GAMBLING:

The Chamber is opposed to casino and video terminal gambling within Larimer County, as it would dramatically change the fabric of the community while negatively impacting the quality of life of the Fort Collins area.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Changes:

Minor grammatical changes

Significant changes to Business' Role section

Expansion of Workforce Investment Board section

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Workforce Development is the process by which we, as a community, increase the quantity and quality of the labor force so business can be competitive and working age residents can be gainfully employed to their fullest potential. We believe that what the community does to enhance the skills of its workforce is very important for economic competitiveness. To have a viable workforce, we believe the community must continue to address both education and training and how they impact the full workforce continuum, which includes the Emerging Workforce (K-12, vocational and college students), Transitional Workforce (dislocated workers, unemployed but seeking, recent graduates, out of school and welfare recipients) and Current Workforce (employed at potential, under-employed, employed with special needs, working poor, under-skilled and part-time contingent).

BUSINESS' ROLE:

Employers have a stake in the quality of workforce development programs and can influence the direction of such programs.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD:

We believe that the Larimer County Workforce Center should be central to the workforce development system and should foster strong communications among business, government, training and educational institutions. Coordination of such a system should eliminate confusion and wasteful duplication. Furthermore, we believe that the Workforce Investment Board should focus on both the employer and trainee by looking first at the needs of the employer when trying to find individuals and training programs

that prepare employees to enter the workforce. This means that employers are the clients of the workforce development system while the employees/trainees are clients of specific programs within the system. Under such an approach, people are trained in those areas where there are economic returns.

In general we believe that:

- The county workforce boards (called Workforce Investment Board or WIB in Larimer County and Workforce Development Board in Weld County) should have strong business representation,
- These two boards in cooperation with other relevant partners should create a strategic plan for the development of the region's workforce,
- The workforce boards should be volunteer- not staff-driven,
- The workforce boards and workforce centers should focus on both the employer and trainee by looking first at the needs of the employer when trying to find individuals and training programs that prepare employees to enter the workforce. This means that employers are the clients of the workforce development system while the employees/trainees are clients of specific programs within the system. Under such an approach, people are trained in those areas where there are economic returns.

The current system places significant resources in the hands of local workforce boards but without strong accountability for results. The Colorado Workforce Development Council and Director of the Colorado Office of Workforce Development should recommend to the Governor that local workforce centers should be required to have a strategic plan and must demonstrate documentable research showing the labor needs of employers.