

# NORTHERN COLORADO PROSPERS

FORT COLLINS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | QUARTERLY REPORT | JULY 2018

## Child Care Taskforce Addresses Key Barriers

As part of the Talent 2.0 Regional Workforce Strategy—which identified primary challenges employers face when attracting and retaining new workers—a lack of quality, affordable child care quickly rose to the top. In Larimer County, the shortage of child care options and the increase in cost of living have collided to create a dire situation for employees needing child care.

Without reliable child care, workers often leave the workforce or don't accept jobs in the area.

"During the recession in late 2010, a lot of people left the workforce and pulled their kids from child care. When this happened, we saw providers close. At the time, we worried that this could cause a shortage in the future, and now we are seeing that play out," said Bev Thurber, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County.

Added to that, she says, is the challenge of retaining employees in the child care industry. With low wages, workers leave for better paying positions.

"We have child care programs that have classrooms but no one to staff them. The Family Center, a well-known provider in Fort Collins, gets calls from professors at CSU looking for infant care on a regular basis. They finally had to close their waiting list because they didn't want to give anyone false hope," Thurber said.

As a positive reaction to the Talent 2.0 research results, key players in the child care industry decided the time was ripe to seek a collaborative solution to this crisis. Leaders from Be Ready, Directing Change and the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County joined forces and created a white paper, titled *A Workforce Strategy and Major Economic Driver: Child Care in Larimer County*. The report provides an overview of child care challenges for employers and families in Larimer County, and calls for a joint effort of businesses,



STORY TIME: Rachel Silva, Preschool Early Childhood Technician, reads to a class at Teaching Tree Early Childhood Learning Center.

governmental agencies, educational institutions, and the early childhood sector to solve this complex problem.

Community leaders responded and the Talent 2.0 Child Care Taskforce was born. The taskforce is facilitated by Mary Atchison with Yellow Wagon Leadership and includes area business owners, leaders in child care, and representatives from the City of Fort Collins, Downtown Development Authority, Bohemian Foundation and Columbine Health Systems.

"In child care we often just talk amongst ourselves, so we're excited to hear innovative ideas from the business community on the issue of affordable, quality child care," said Anne Lance, Executive Director of Teaching Tree Early Childhood Learning Center in Fort Collins, who names access as a major roadblock, especially for children under age five. She cites that only 25% of the need for infant care is currently fulfilled.

"We want new families to move here to meet workforce needs, but they can't stay, or can't work,

without child care," she added.

The white paper reports statistics showing a large gap between the number of kids ages 6 and under needing child care, and the number of provider slots available in Larimer County. Currently, there is a shortage of 6,682 slots for this age group. The white paper also addresses affordability—showing the percentage child care takes out of the medium income of \$64,919 in Larimer County. For one child, 18% of income goes toward child care, with two children it jumps to 37%.

Mims Harris believes that having quality, reliable child care makes for better workers and children who are more school-ready. As a past CSU Director of Campus Activities, Mims now devotes her time to promoting early education.

"For an employee to be their most productive at work, they need to know their children are receiving quality care. When children are being shuffled between family members, friends and neighbors due to a lack of provider

slots, there is no sense of stability for the children or for the parents. That means parents can't give 100% at work. It's a lose-lose for everybody," Harris said.

The taskforce met for the first time in June. The group will meet monthly for six months, and offer solutions in December.

### ABOUT THE TASKFORCE

- Child care was identified as a barrier to retention in the Talent 2.0 Workforce Strategy Report, released in February 2017.
- A working group of Be Ready, Directing Change and the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County created a white paper that outlines the gap in child care in Larimer County.
- A Taskforce that includes business and child care advocates has been created and will identify changes to the current system to address the issue of child care gaps.

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Continued on page 2

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# Fix North I-25

## Centerpiece of 2018 Legislative Session

Fix North I-25 is an area of key focus for Northern Colorado Prosper. The Fort Collins Area Chamber continues to work with area partners to impact this key issue with efforts focused on the 2018 Legislative Session, the Colorado Transportation Commission Long Term Plan and a possible 2018 Ballot Measure.

### Senate Bill 18-001 (SB 1)

The Fix Colorado Roads Act, or Senate Bill 18-001 (SB 1), was the very first bill introduced during the Legislative session. With \$1.3 billion of new, unencumbered revenue in the state budget, the Legislature had the opportunity to put transportation back in the budget in a significant way. While the bill passed, it was dramatically scaled back from its original version. In the end \$645 million over two years was dedicated to transportation, and the money split between state, cities, counties, and transit with the ongoing General Fund commitment being \$20 million per year. Based on Senate Bill 18-001, the bonding program was cut back to \$2.3 billion and won't go to the ballot until 2019.

In its final form, the bill brings no new money to North I-25. The Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (NCLA) believes SB 1

### OTHER TRANSPORTATION EFFORTS

- A total of \$590M has been secured for North I-25 so far; most recently an additional \$9.8M was committed to rebuild the bridge over the Big Thompson River
- Construction to add an additional lane between Highway 14 in Fort Collins and Highway 402 south of Loveland begins this summer/fall.
- The Colorado Department of Transportation has estimated it will begin work on the I-25 and Prospect interchange in June 2019, with completion in the spring of 2021.
- A City of Fort Collins Budgeting For Outcomes offer has been submitted for widening Prospect Road at Sharp Point to I-25. The goal is to complete the widening by the time the interchange is complete.



**TRANSPORTATION LEADERSHIP:** Regional transportation leaders pose for a photo during the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) kick off to Infrastructure Week in May. From left to right: Johnny Olson, CDOT Regional Transportation Director; Carl Maxey, Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (NCLA) Chair; Mike Lewis, CDOT Executive Director; David May, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce President & CEO; and Kathy Gilliland, CDOT Commissioner.

provided key policy aspects – ongoing monies from the General Fund and bonding – but at such diminished levels that it makes the final legislative action generally meaningless.

### Colorado Transportation Commission

David May, President & CEO of the Fort Collins Area Chamber testified during the Colorado Transportation Commission Meeting on June 21, 2018, along with other Northern Colorado business leaders and elected officials. The group urged the Commission to fully fund the entire stretch of the North I-25 Corridor from Fort Collins to Longmont with anticipated revenues from upcoming ballot initiatives.

The Colorado Transportation Commission is scheduled to finalize the “Tier One Project List” in July for publication and reference for the November ballot questions. We believe they will commit to an additional \$250 million to \$450 million for North I-25 if the proposed .62% sales tax passes this fall.

### 2018 Ballot Issues

Two state-wide efforts are underway to petition initiatives to fund transportation onto the 2018 General Election Ballot. The first initiative is being led by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and would ask voters to allow for \$6 billion in bonding capacity for transportation while approving a .62% sales tax. As well, the funding created by the sales tax would be allocated to not only the highway system, but would also provide funds to counties, cities and multi-modal projects.



**READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP:** Mike Lewis, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Executive Director talks with community leaders and the public during Infrastructure Week kickoff in May.

The Independence Institute is leading the second initiative effort. The “Fix Our Damn Roads” initiative asks for \$3.5 billion in bonding capacity for transportation with no increase in taxes and the expectation that the State General Fund provide \$250 million a year for the bond repayment.

Neither issue is officially on the ballot as they are collecting signatures. NCLA and its member organizations have reviewed the proposed issues and are currently recommending preliminary support for both. Once the November ballot is finalized,



The Fix North I-25 lapel pin, on the lapel of Mike Lewis, CDOT Executive Director.

expect NCLA and the Chambers to expand their issue analysis and recommendations.

# Northern Colorado Prospers Continues to Make Impact

As reported at the Annual Northern Colorado Prospers Summit, the Fort Collins Area Chamber is making an impact on key issues that are important to the business community.

## Align, Attract and Retain Talent



**2.0** Finding workers has become increasingly difficult. The Chamber is leading a coalition called Talent 2.0.

Be Ready, Directing Change and the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County published a white paper, A Workforce Strategy and Major Economic Driver: Child Care in Larimer County to provide a brief overview of child care challenges for employers and families in Larimer County.

The first **Talent Summit** was held May 8, 2018 at the Embassy Suites with over 100 people in attendance.



FORT COLLINS HAS TALENT: The first Talent Summit kicked off on May 8, 2018 at Embassy Suites.

[www.NoCoTalent2.com](http://www.NoCoTalent2.com), a business resource for hiring talent, was launched. The site includes 11 one-page resource pages on different aspects of Larimer County (safety, schools, outdoors, food, etc.) to be used for talent recruitment.

**The EMSI talent identification database tool is being tested.**

The tool allows businesses to identify excess talent in the country for specific jobs to allow for increased targeting of recruiting resources.

## NoCo Housing NOW has hosted three All Partnership meetings



These meetings provided community members with insights into the concept of Inclusionary Housing and its impact on attainable housing stock, the current housing market in Northern Colorado and a gap analysis of the Land Use Code in Larimer County versus population demand for housing.

## Bold Voice of Business



**Help identify candidates for the Fort Collins City Council.**

The Chamber does not get involved in partisan politics, but does endorse candidates for local offices including City Council. With 4 of the 7 seats up in April 2019, we are encouraging people to run for public office. So far, we know of 8 people considering running.

## Make sure the business perspective is heard in the update of City Plan.



A 20-year update to the City's strategic framework document is underway. Chamber officials and businesspeople are working on the various committees, participating online, and attending relevant meetings.

## Advocate for maintaining a supply of clean, affordable and reliable electricity for the region.

A taskforce of employers is studying various proposals that could impact how the region produces electricity. An external consulting team is being hired and major business power users are being interviewed.

**Support an appropriately funded local government.**

Local government services matter to us as residents and businesses. To that end, a Chamber taskforce is studying the "Keep Fort Collins Great" tax which may be up for renewal next April.

## Research City budget proposals for climate action to understand their costs, benefits and impacts on business and the economy.

A taskforce of employers is researching the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and current budget recommendations.

## Develop and implement a 'business for the community' public information campaign.



The campaign will make the connection between business success, economic vitality of the community, and our ability to afford great public quality of life amenities like good schools and parks. The campaign is in the development stage.

## Expand and Retain Existing Business



The Chamber, working with area partners, has completed 30 primary employer interviews providing key insight into expansion opportunities for business in Northern Colorado.

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- Walker Manufacturing
- Wilbur's Total Beverage
- Workspace Innovations

### Community

- Cache Bank & Trust
- CGRS
- CoBiz Bank
- Crossroads Towing
- Windermere Real Estate



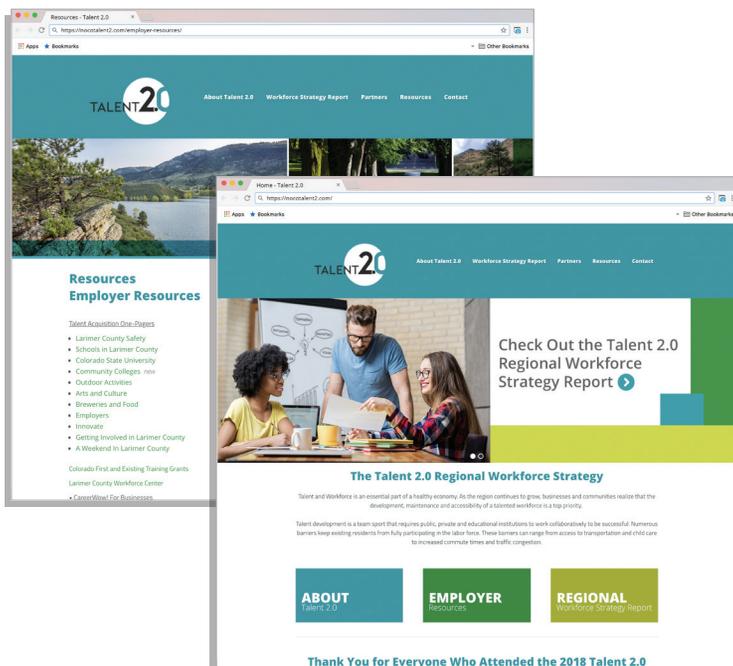
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# Resources for Northern Colorado Prosperers

## Talent 2.0

**Talent 2.0**, the Northern Colorado Prosperers' Workforce Initiative website is up and running. The site hosts the **Workforce Strategy Report** and other helpful information and ways for employers to engage and connect.

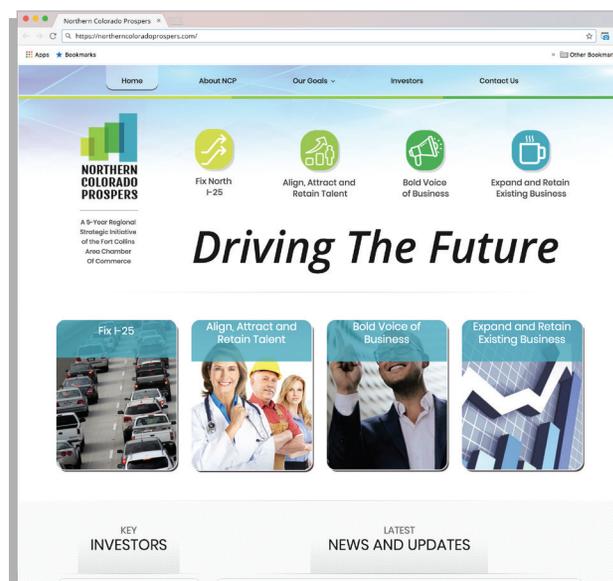
[www.NoCoTalent2.com](http://www.NoCoTalent2.com)



## NCP Website

**Northern Colorado Prosperers** is a great starting point and contains links and resources for all of our five-year regional strategic initiatives. If you miss a quarterly update meeting, or you are wondering when the next update is scheduled, check out "news and updates" on this website.

[www.NorthernColoradoProsperers.com](http://www.NorthernColoradoProsperers.com)



## Thanks to the Northern Colorado Prosperers Investor Advisory Council



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A recent addition to the Talent 2.0 website is **11 Talent Acquisition One-Pagers** that can be downloaded and used as recruiting tools. The one-pagers include information about schools, safety, college options, art and culture, employers, and even how to spend three days exploring Larimer County. The intent of the One-Pagers is to give employers one easy place to find and share more information about the area with prospective employees and their spouses.



## SAVE THE DATE

Join us for the next

**Northern Colorado Prosperers Quarterly Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 10, 2018**

**7:30 - 9:00 am**

**at The Budweiser Event Center**

