

# NORTHERN COLORADO PROSPERS

FORT COLLINS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | QUARTERLY REPORT | JULY 2019

## WorkInNorthernColorado.com Connects NoCo Employers with Viable Candidates

One of the goals of Northern Colorado Prospers is to align, attract and retain talented employees by showcasing the region's incredible business and employment opportunities. Fortunately, that task just got a little easier with the launch of a new online talent recruitment portal: WorkInNorthernColorado.com.

The talent portal launched in April and serves as a primary tool for recruiters and human resource professionals to use when communicating with prospective employees outside the area. The portal was developed by a local team led by the Fort Collins Area Chamber staff and Development Counsellors International (DCI). Karleen Lewis, a representative from DCI, said there are two main target audiences for the new website: employers looking for reliable candidates for their business, and potential employees who either already live in Northern Colorado or are seeking employment in the region from out of town. In September 2018, the Chamber hired DCI to develop this talent recruitment portal.

"The goal is to provide resources that are easy to find and use for anyone who might consider relocating to Northern Colorado for a job. Through the site, we showcased the breadth and depth of job opportunities available in the region that people might not know about without this online talent portal," Lewis explained. "On top of that, we wanted to create a one-stop destination for employers to send potential recruits. The goal of the site is to help them close the deal."

It does that by highlighting the livability of the area and the things that make Northern Colorado a unique and a special place to live. Nothing else like this tool

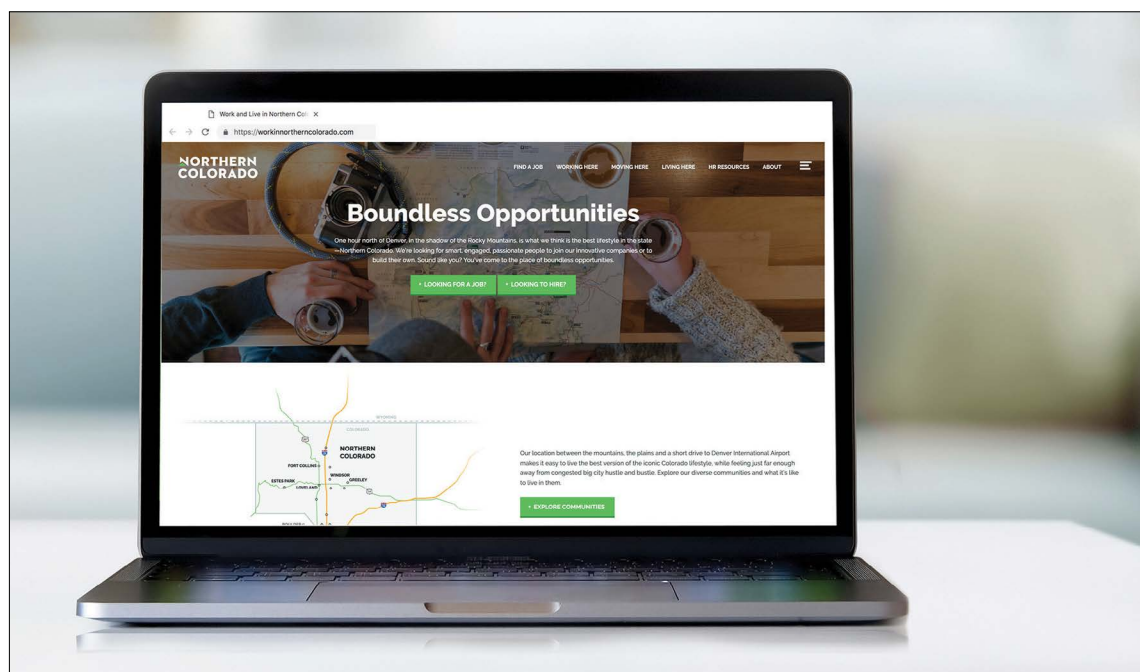


Photo Illustration / Getty Images

COMPLETE RESOURCE: WorkInNorthernColorado.com launched this spring, as a complete resource for job seekers and employers in Northern Colorado.

has existed in the past, making WorkInNorthernColorado.com a useful resource for human resources professionals and employers. It's a tool that recruiters can use to post jobs and provide information to job recruits.

"The region shows well and

*"(W)e wanted to create a one-stop destination for employers to send potential recruits.*

*The goal of the site is to help them close the deal."*

*– Karleen Lewis  
Development Counsellors  
International*

those of us who live here know this is a wonderful place," said David May, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce President & CEO. "You can't assume everybody does, however."

According to May, recruiters and human resources professionals found it difficult to easily find good information about Northern Colorado to share with prospective employees who were interested in relocating to the region. They were also lacking the tools to tell the full story about the area and to properly answer recruits' questions.

"WorkInNorthernColorado.com is now the main tool in their toolbox," he explained.

Individuals can find everything they need to know about Northern Colorado through the talent portal. On top of job listings, the website provides prospective employees information about:

- Area housing
- The cost of living in Northern Colorado
- Child care and education options
- Things to do in the area (i.e. entertainment, outdoor recreation, food and dining, etc.)
- General healthcare

- And more

Finding talented employees is something that is becoming increasingly difficult for business owners in communities across the U.S. It's expected that there will be more jobs in the U.S. than people who can fill them, and the talent gap is large and projected to grow. That's what makes this talent portal an important tool for bolstering the economic vitality of the region.

"Our end goal is this: if we can help match skilled workers with quality jobs, then this talent portal will be considered a success," Lewis said.

### How It Works

The talent portal is built to make finding employees as easy as possible. It is programmed to pull in jobs from Indeed.com, which Lewis explained is one of the most commonly used online resources that job-seekers use.

The talent portal organizes job postings by job type, which

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# North I-25 Expansion Keeps on Trucking

Efforts by area leaders over the past several years, including the Chamber, have resulted in \$927.5 million being committed to North I-25. There have been several major wins in 2019:

- The Fix North I-25 Business Alliance helped secure \$300M in state General Fund expenditures for transportation.
- The Alliance and other area leaders successfully lobbied the Colorado Transportation Commission to convert work on Segments 7 and 8 (Highway 14 in Fort Collins to Highway 402 Loveland) from an interim to permanent alignment and provide an additional \$310M to do so.

David May, Fix North I-25 Chair and Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce President & CEO, and Jared Fiel, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Communications Manager for the region, shared a few of the major updates that have occurred since January pertaining to fixing North I-25 and funding highway improvements in Colorado.

### Upcoming Major Projects

With the recent boost of additional funding, the North I-25 corridor is making significant progress.

The current North I-25 projects are scheduled to be completed by early 2022.

The additional funding has allowed for some exciting improvements that weren't possible under the original project scope, and it is more cost-effective.

"Doing the job right the first time will save Colorado taxpayers millions of dollars," May added. "If CDOT had built these projects to the interim alignment as originally planned, some of them would eventually have been torn out and redone at some unknown date in the distant future."

#### 1. Express Lanes from Johnstown to Fort Collins

As previously reported, permanent express lanes in both directions are currently under construction between Highway 14 in Fort Collins and CO 402 south of Loveland. The switch to the permanent alignment also includes a bump in construction standards. Road surfaces that would have lasted 10 to 15 years will now endure for 20 to 30 years.

"The value of having the express lanes is to provide guaranteed travel times," May



Rendering courtesy of CDOT

**FLIPPING THE INTERCHANGE:** By the end of 2019, the I-25/CO 402 interchange will undergo substantial changes, resulting in a new-and-improved interchange. To support reconstruction, crews have closed both directions of CO 402 under I-25. The closure extends from the southbound I-25 on- and off-ramps to the new Southeast Frontage Road. Once completed in October, the new configuration at CO 402 will be fully operational, and future impacts at this interchange will be minimal.

said. "You don't need to use the lane and won't need to when traffic is flowing. But if you need to get to DIA or Denver by a certain time, you will have that option."

May said a bill in the last legislative session that would have allowed electric vehicles to use the express lanes for free was resisted.

"That would've been nice for promoting the use of electric vehicles, but horrible for the intended purpose of express lanes, which is guaranteed travel times," he explained.

#### 2. Widening of the U.S. 34 Bridge

Construction of an entirely new bridge for U.S. 34 at I-25 is being planned, according to Fiel. The bridge will be wide enough to allow four lanes of traffic underneath it (three general lanes and an express lane) as well as three lanes of traffic going east and west (an addition of one lane each way) on the bridge itself. According to initial plans, the bridge won't have traffic lights as it currently does to help speed up the flow of traffic both ways.

To make this possible, the existing bridge will eventually be torn down to allow for later expansion projects.

#### 3. Expansion of Kechter Road

Due to lack of budget, this project was not previously included in the plan, but now the I-25 bridge at Kechter Road in Fort Collins will be updated. Fiel said it is planned to be rebuilt to add bike lanes on top and to make it wide

enough to fit four lanes of traffic underneath it.

#### 4. Construction of Park N' Ride for Bustang Transportation Between U.S. 34 and Crossroads Boulevard

The recent funding additions have allowed for CDOT officials to implement a modified design for the Park N' Ride project between U.S. 34 and Crossroads Boulevard.

The modified design places the Bustang stop in the middle of the interstate rather on the side, allowing buses to stay in a designated express lane on the left to pick up passengers, rather than having to weave through lanes of traffic. This is the first time this design has been used in the state.

"Bus drivers will never have to cross the free lanes of traffic, and there will be a tunnel underneath the interstate that leads to the bus stop for passengers," Fiel explained.

#### 5. Bridge Expansion Near Berthoud, Express Lane Between CO 56 and 402

The I-25 bridge just south of CO 56 near Berthoud will be expanded to allow semi-truck drivers to enter the highway without slowing down traffic. Fiel said there are several traffic issues that coincide with the new truck stop near this interchange.

"Currently, trucks heading southbound not only have to enter the highway, but they must also face the incline of the Berthoud Hill," Fiel said. "By fixing the bridge and expanding it, traffic flows should speed up in this area after the project is

completed."

Also in the works for this area are express lanes from CO 56 near Berthoud to CO 402 in Loveland, going north and south.

*"Highway infrastructure is a team sport. We really appreciate so many people helping to make this happen."*

– David May,  
President & CEO,  
Fort Collins Area  
Chamber of Commerce

#### 6. Prospect Interchange

Work has started on rebuilding the Prospect interchange on I-25. In conjunction with this project, City of Fort Collins officials plan to widen Prospect Road, from Sharp Point Drive near the Advanced Energy plant to the interstate, to alleviate congestion.

To keep up on these projects and more information on North I-25, go to [www.codot.gov/projects/north-i-25](http://www.codot.gov/projects/north-i-25).

#### What's Next?

Even though there have been major breakthroughs for North I-25 in 2019, the work continues. According to May, the Fix North I-25 Steering Committee is:

1. Meeting with legislative leaders about the 2020 legislative session and discussing the transportation funding that will be available from the general

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## TALENT PORTAL:

## Complete NoCo Job Resource

range from “store manager” to “software engineer,” as well as industry type by the following categories: advanced manufacturing, bioscience, creative industries, energy, food and agriculture, health and wellness and information technology.

Whenever an employer or company posts a job in Northern Colorado directly to Indeed, the talent portal will automatically pull the listing to the WorkInNorthernColorado.com site. From there, the job-seeker can learn more about what the job entails and where it's located on the Front Range, without being re-directed to Indeed.

May said the Chamber is backing talent recruitment efforts for local businesses by launching the site and marketing it to key audiences and markets around the country.

## How It Will Help

Ultimately, the talent portal will serve as a one-stop shop for both employers who need workers and employees who are looking for a stable job in the area. Whereas candidates once had to browse several resources to get a general idea of what it's like to live in Northern Colorado, recruiters can now direct them to the talent portal, where they can find everything they need to know in one place.

Joyce Saffel, Human Resources Director for Columbine Health Systems, said she is excited about the new portal. The amount of resources available on one single website will benefit people like her, who speak with prospective candidates in person and over the phone on a regular basis.

## DOTCOMM AWARD

WorkInNorthernColorado.com received the platinum award in the 2019 dotCOMM international awards competition honoring excellence in web creativity and digital communications. Early deadline winners were announced on July 15, 2019 and all winners will be announced by August 1.

“When trying to attract talent, I can direct the candidate to the site, where they can find the answers to many of their questions,” she said. “The website does a good job of describing who we are as a community and region, and it showcases why Northern Colorado is such a great place to work, play and live.”

According to May, not only will this portal make things easier for businesses trying to find talent, but it will also erase any job-seeker's misconceptions about the region and highlight everything Northern Colorado residents love about calling the area home.

“It's a special kind of hubris to think we live in paradise and that everybody knows it and envies us for it! We are a great place, but we are unknown to many people,” May said. “Consequently, we have to proactively tell our story in a compelling way. We have a good story to tell; we just need to tell it.”

This will be a key tool to be used by employers throughout the region moving forward when trying to attract talent to their business. Check WorkInNorthernColorado.com out today!

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## FIX I-25:

## Increase in Funding Allows for More Improvements on North I-25

fund again.

2. Researching other funding options by looking at how other states fund transportation.

3. Briefing state officials on the polling that was done regarding modest increases in the state's gas tax.

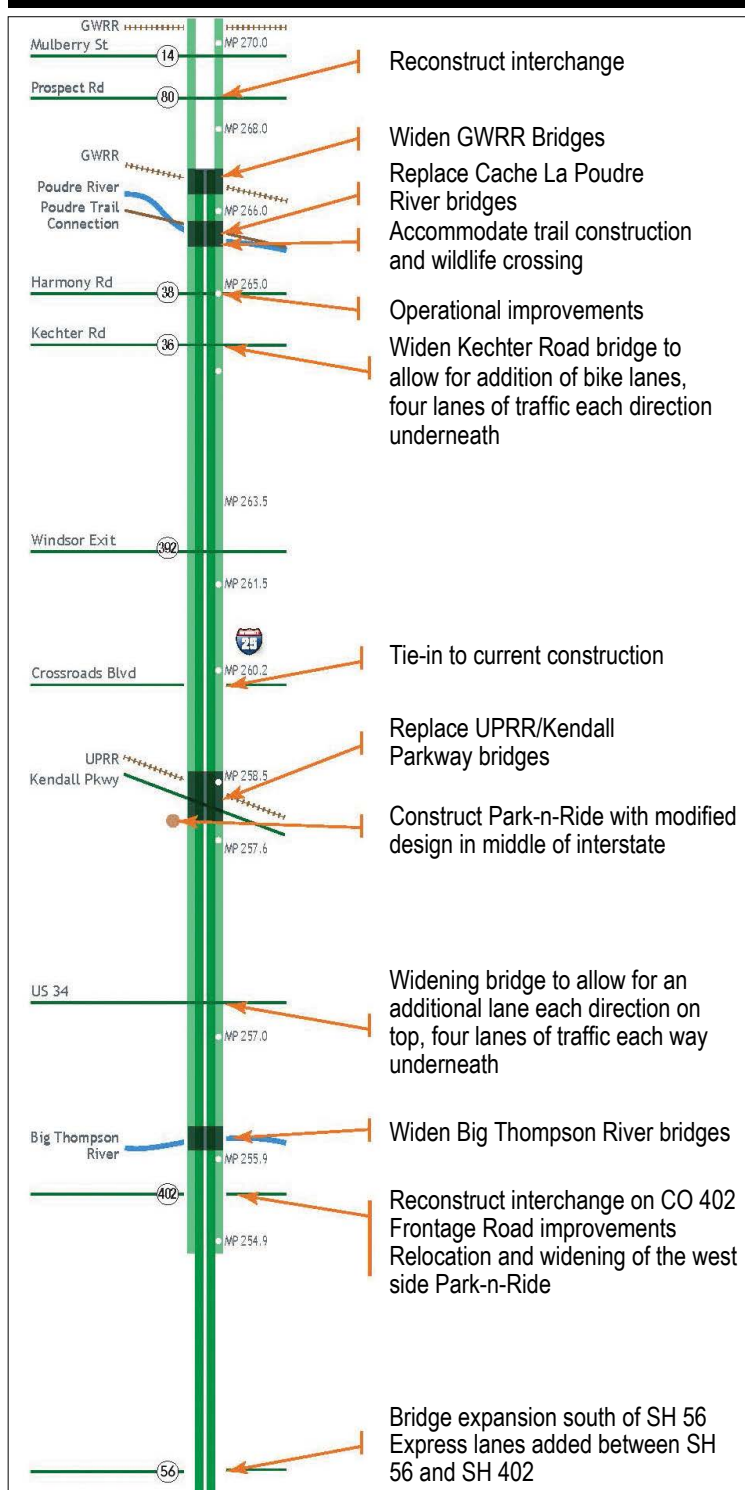
“The advocacy for state transportation funding is coming out of Northern Colorado,” May said.

According to May, at a recent dinner with transportation officials in Northern Colorado, a CDOT official said that over the past few years, CDOT received

about \$1 billion in funding that it wouldn't have, if not for the work of Fix North I-25.

“Hats off to the CDOT staff, the Colorado Transportation Commission, our recently retired area Transportation Commissioner Kathy Gilliland, all of the local town, county and city officials in Northern Colorado and the investors in Northern Colorado Prospers,” May concluded. “Highway infrastructure is a team sport. We really appreciate so many people helping to make this happen.”

## CURRENT NORTH I-25 PROJECTS



SOURCE: Colorado Department of Transportation

NEW AND IMPROVED: Overall improvements to North I-25 between the Wyoming border and Johnstown include: rehabilitation or reconstruction of general purpose lanes, the addition of northbound and southbound express lanes, and the construction of inside and outside shoulders in both directions.

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## BY THE NUMBERS: HIRING TRENDS IN THE U.S.

- **63%** — U.S. employers that plan to hire full-time, permanent workers.
- **50%** — Employers affected by the record-high 6.6 million job openings, reported by the U.S. Labor Department earlier this year.
- **2020** — The year it is expected that 50% of the workforce will be millennials.
- **84%** — The percentage of organizations using social media and other digital tools for recruitment.
- **72.8%** — Employers that are having a difficult time finding skilled candidates for vacant positions.
- **45%** — Employers that are concerned about finding employees with necessary talents.

Source: Jobatical



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# Northern Colorado Prospers Continues to Make Impact

## Goal #1 Fix I-25

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the Chamber led a successful effort to retain \$200M of General Fund monies for transportation that had previously been committed in the State budget and secured an additional \$100M for a total of \$300M.

- Monitor the work on the six North I-25 projects identified in the article nearby to make sure the funding remains committed.

### Up Next:

#### Prepare for 2020 Legislative Session including:

- Coordinate strategy with alliance of business groups (Fix Colorado Roads)
- Press for additional General Fund monies
- Look at potential funding options on 2020 ballot – brief Governor on gas tax, discuss electric vehicle surcharge
- Oppose making express lanes available for free for any-occupancy electric vehicles which would undermine the capacity of the new lanes

#### Finish research on highway funding options, publish report in fall

- Send representative to present at the American Road & Transportation Builders Association conference – Transportation Investment Advocacy Center
- Monitor discussions in Washington, D.C. about a federal infrastructure bill
- Monitor Colorado Front Range Rail Commission – support unless competing for I-25 funding

## Goal #2: Align, Attract, and Retain Talent

### Finalized contract agreement with contractor to develop specific information and services including:

- Provide customized economic data reports with wage data and to offer an online economic data system
- Strengthen work-based learning experiences- internships, apprenticeships; and developing a marketing plan

**Talent 2.0 Child Care Task Force released seven recommendations to address the lack of affordable child care in report distributed to community of Larimer County**

### Up Next:

- Finish development of the branding and marketing plan for the new talent portal (WorkInNorthernColorado.com) and execute
- Evolve the Talent 2.0 Partnership to the next level of effectiveness – revisit vision, mission, goals and formalize the partnership structure
- Talent Summit set for Oct. 4
- Continue NOCO Housing Now meetings to address lack of housing affordability

## Goal #3: Bold Voice of Business

### Established issues committee and led successful campaign, "Keep Citizen City Council," to defeat ballot measure to create full-time city council

- Helped shape ballot measure then supported successful campaign to renew Keep Fort Collins Great quarter-cent sales tax
- Endorsed 3 candidates for Fort Collins City Council, 2 won in April 2019 City Election
- Met with Council members post-election to build relationships, discuss Council Priorities and exploring tools / methods to more effectively influence local decision-makers
- Initiated contacts with government affairs consultants about creating new permanent infrastructure for influencing local government – policy analysis tools, database for direct contact with public, etc.

### Published revised Where We Stand policy framework

### Bringing Business Home community campaign – emphasizing the importance of business to a strong quality of life.

- Completed Phase 1 - produced and promoted 8 features of community members, employers, employees and retirees
- Conducted a day-long interview Sprint for Bringing Business Home Campaign, which showcases community members whose lives have been positively influenced by their employment at a local business. Over the course of 10 hours, we interviewed eight different people from six different businesses in Fort Collins. These employees work for both small and large businesses – all of which contribute to the strength of our economic vitality.
- The Chamber received an Award of Excellence for its Bringing Business Home Campaign, presented by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) at its annual conference held July 15 in Long Beach, California.

### Up Next:

#### Promote Bringing Business Home Sprint features

### Since concluding its work with a final Summary Report in the first quarter of 2019, the Northern Front Range Zero Net Carbon Task Force evolved into the Northern Front Range Electricity Task Force for the purpose of:

- (1) monitoring the progress of Platte River Power Authority in completing its 2020 Integrated Resource Plan
- (2) continued conversations with PRPA leadership with respect to electricity cost, reliability and the nine re-source diversification policy caveats adopted by the PRPA Board in 2018
- (3) providing on behalf of the business community an ability to act quickly and nimbly around issues related to reliable, affordable and clean electricity in Northern Colorado.

## Goal #4: Expand and Retain Existing Business

### The Chamber and others with Business Retention and Expansion Partnership of Larimer County produced and distributed Northern Colorado Business Retention and Expansion Annual Report 2018

- All partners completed CRM training to populate with contact data

### Up Next:

- Continue scheduling and conducting primary employer interviews
- Update numbers and begin planning for 2019 annual report.
- Act on identified retention risks and expansion opportunities

## A LOOK AHEAD

- September 25, 2019:** Cyber Security Summit
- October 4, 2019:** Talent Summit
- October 9, 2019:** NCP Fall Quarterly Update
- November 5, 2019:** Election Day

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