

Where We Stand

The Chamber's Positions on Issues Important to Our Members and the Economic Vitality of the Fort Collins Region

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce
www.FortCollinsChamber.com



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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. The 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 positions contained in this document reflect the beliefs of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce on issues that determine the economic viability and quality of life of the Fort Collins region.

***The Chamber is courage.
We stand up for what we believe in.
And we are willing to fight for what's right, so our
businesses can grow and
our community can thrive.
Catalyst, Convener, Champion.***

Setting Policy at The Chamber

Innumerable issues can impact business and the 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.

<p>Members</p>	<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 and review of proposed policies like “Where We Stand” • Mobilized to communicate with elected officials on specific legislation
<p>Board of Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for Chamber policy and priorities • Establishes vision, mission, strategic plan and annual priorities for Chamber • Appoints and can remove 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
<p>Local Legislative Affairs Committee (LLAC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members apply to serve on committee, and if selected, names are submitted to Board for appointment • Focuses on city, county and school district • Empowered by the Board to act on specific issues within the framework of “Where We Stand” • Advise the Board on ballot measures

<p>Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (NCLA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint committee of the Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland Chambers of Commerce, One NoCo and Upstate Colorado Economic Development • Members apply to serve on committee, and if selected, names are submitted to relevant partner organization Boards for appointment • Focuses on state and federal government • Empowered by the partner organization Boards to act on specific issues within the framework of “Where We Stand” • Advise the Board on ballot measures • Not involved in political races, does not endorse candidates
<p>Election Committee</p>	<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

How *Where We Stand* is Used

Board of Directors	Where We Stand	Specific Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, mission, values • Adopts broad policies called "Where We Stand" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad policy framework • Encapsulates Chamber's general views on issues important to business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using "Where We Stand" as a guide, LLAC and NCLA set policy on specific ordinances and laws and lobby accordingly.

Chamber Values, Vision and Mission

Values and Beliefs

- The community's fundamental existence rests upon the foundation of a healthy economy, which is achieved through successful business. Our community needs its businesses to flourish.
- Economic development creates wealth for the community as a whole and for residents within the community. It strengthens the community's stability and provides resources for quality of life enhancements.
- We believe a growing economy improves the wealth and viability of the community. To achieve that end, our community's key economic strategy needs to be the attraction and expansion of primary employers.
- We believe the community must reinvent and re-examine itself to remain competitive and to create its preferred future.
- A regional approach to economic opportunities is essential, and as Northern Colorado's largest business association, we have a responsibility to provide leadership to drive regional priorities to completion.
- We have strong, mutually respectful working relationships between Chamber volunteers and Chamber staff. Staff is committed to volunteer experiences which are rewarding, satisfying and meaningful.
- It is incumbent upon our leaders to honor the organization's past while leading creative processes to shape its future.
- In the conduct of our work, we strive to meet high expectations, to respect and protect the resources of our community and our members, be honest and trustworthy in motives and actions, be visionary and open to all possibilities, be respectful and inclusive of various viewpoints and act with strength and conviction even in the face of adversity.

Vision

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce is the influential business leader which ensures an economically vibrant and livable region.

Mission

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce proactively empowers business people to build a community where business can thrive and citizens are proud to live.

Value to Our Investors

- Understand and represent the business perspective on local and regional issues.
- Help members thrive and find customers while saving money.
- Develop strong community business leaders.
- Help elect reasonable and competent people to local office.
- Provide regional leadership.

ARTS AND CULTURE

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 as strong cultural arts can be an economic driver, a regional draw and add to the region’s livability. The Chamber supports access to grants to further arts and culture.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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 is committed to supporting the startup, retention, expansion and attraction of primary employers that will diversify the regional economy, create capital investment and increase and improve employment opportunities for residents. Local government should support all methods of economic development – retention, expansion and attraction.

PRIMARY EMPLOYERS:

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 One NoCo, city and state clusters and Colorado State

University. At this time, such groups include: agri-tech, biotech, breweries, high tech, renewable and 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 locally are sold in other markets. The subsequent flow of new income into the community becomes capital investments, payrolls and creates secondary benefits including ‘indirect’ or ‘spin-off’ jobs. This income provides the economic resources necessary to support a viable community through increased sales and use tax collections, charitable donations, etc.

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 encourages efforts of local government to create a favorable business climate in which private enterprise can function effectively, plan for the future with confidence and leverage the resulting competitive advantages. A strong sense of public-private cooperation is a key ingredient for creating such a business climate and attracting primary employers.

Additionally, strong cooperation must exist between economic and job advocacy organizations like the Chamber and One NoCo. To that end, a “division of labor” exists between the Chamber and One NoCo. The Fort Collins Area Chamber focuses on the retention and expansion of existing Fort Collins primary employers and community development issues like public policy, which affect the business climate. One NoCo concentrates on specific activities that attract companies in the industry clusters cited above.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW:

While continuing to improve the process, the City of Fort Collins should strive to 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:

Local government has erected significant cost and policy barriers to development. As long as that is the case, incentives are a way to offset some of those government-imposed impediments. Effective implementation of incentives helps the community attract, retain and grow its economic base for the benefit of its constituents while objectively quantifying the adverse impact of market distortions inherent to government interference. The selective and proper use of incentives to induce business relocations, expansions and startups is a valid role of government where fiscal and opportunity costs clearly demonstrate a net economic benefit to the taxpayer without jeopardizing the viability of existing competitors within the marketplace. Economic development incentives are a deliberate set of policies and/or programs designed to make a preferred location more feasible; stimulate greater activity; or offset regulatory burdens that would otherwise impede primary employment growth. Properly used they can help communities compete for primary employment.

The Chamber believes the State of Colorado, Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins should enhance the availability of economic incentive programs to support the expansion of existing companies in Fort Collins and the attraction of primary employment with particular emphasis on companies in the target industry clusters. Among other things, incentives should be considered in the areas of infrastructure investments, tax credits, tax abatements, paying down development fees and training funds. Fort Collins should strive to remain competitive with other cities in northern Colorado.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

By using its resources and powers to reduce the risks, uncertainty and costs which could prohibit investment, the public sector can support employment-generating investment by the private sector. Government can:

- Adopt policies and programs to provide services and infrastructure that benefit businesses. Infrastructure represents community capital investments including streets, communication networks, schools, water and energy supplies that 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 identified industry clusters. 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.
- Support labor force preparation.
- Avoid policies that adversely impact housing affordability.
- Support economic development marketing efforts.

Creating economic development policy that does not impede positive development matters because it impacts the quality of the community, the standard of living of residents and the cost to taxpayers. To that end, the City Council and the Economic Advisory Commission should focus their attention on strategies that increase income into the community.

Economic development outcomes are shaped by public policies that influence the environment for investment and commerce. This is 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. Areas whose business climate is not “competitive” will be bypassed by the business 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 some important ways. First, public officials can help influence the public's perception of business in general and support of economic development through their public comments. Second, those public statements influence business decisions. As noted above, communities that are deemed to have a bad business climate are avoided.

The Chamber advocates for city officials to stay in regular contact with businesses, especially primary employers and the Chamber, to build relationships and trust and to stay informed about issues important to these companies.

INDUSTRY CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT:

The Chamber supports the active development of industry clusters that play to the region's strengths and believes local government processes should favor and facilitate the retention and expansion of firms in these clusters.

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, the Innosphere and others that emerge to license, transfer and commercialize research and to create and support technology 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.

EDUCATION

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

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 at grade level, have a basic understanding of civics and should have good problem solving and interpersonal skills. Students should have some understanding of how business contributes to the economic vitality of a community and general business classes should be required of all high school students.

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
- A supportive business community

The interaction between businesspeople and the students and teachers in the classroom is important. For the public schools to function well and to be truly representative of the community, the Chamber believes business people should run for and serve on the school board and other education committees and task forces.

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.

Education is a lifelong endeavor, which requires adequate emphasis on pre-school through post-secondary education and continuing education as well as the fostering of a strong educational and life-long learning ethic in the community.

K-12 EDUCATION:

- High school graduates should be proficient in math, science, and personal finance be able to read and write, and should have strong problem-solving, inter-personal skills and be able to communicate effectively in a team environment.
- All students should be exposed to business-led shadow experiences, practicums, and/or internships.
- The science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) initiative is important to the region's knowledge-based economy and should be supported.
- 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.
- Emphasis should be on a system that measures academic advancement and proficiency and that holds students, teachers and ultimately school districts accountable. As well, instruction should promote critical thinking and creativity.
- School districts should be allowed the flexibility within their respective pay systems to reward the appropriate results in the classroom.
- The link between residential property taxes and K-12 education funding should be re-established by repealing the Gallagher amendment.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION:

Strong institutions of higher education are critical to the economic viability of our state and region and are integral to the economic foundations of our northern Colorado area.

- 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 Community College system is important to providing assessable and affordable education to the emerging workforce -- first- and second-year undergraduates -- and for the ongoing retention and retraining of the existing workforce, dislocated worker and older worker. 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, and 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 financial support. Public institutions, in particular, must consider the following:
 - Pursuing greater collaborations and resource sharing to limit duplicative areas of study.
 - Improving quality of instruction and research and limit non-productive investments.
 - Promoting greater interactions between academic centers of excellence and private enterprise.
 - Embracing an ‘open walls’ philosophy to better engage the community and private enterprise to facilitate research, planning and transfer of technologies.
 - Communicating on a regular basis with the business community to understand trends, future educational needs and relevancy and applicability of current curriculum.
 - Requiring educators to spend one-on-one time with businesses in their area to understand current and emerging needs.
- Internships and apprenticeships are one way to help young adults, dislocated and transitioning workers learn practical skills and re-enter the workforce.
- Vocational training and certificate programs are an essential educational element of the community. All appropriate efforts need to be made to improve the capacity and flexibility of vocation training services in the Larimer County area.
- Post-secondary education does not need to be degree focused to be impactful; vocational and certificated-based learning are equally important.

PRE-K:

Pre-K opportunities should engage and nurture young learners and provide the basis for high academic achievement later in life. Available, affordable Pre-K programs

provide stability for those in the workforce as well as their employers. When possible, Pre-K programs should be run by the private sector.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

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.

EQUAL 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 recognizes that limited use and possession of marijuana has been decriminalized in the State of Colorado. The Chamber also recognizes that the laws decriminalizing limited use and possession in Colorado specifically protect Colorado Employer's rights to regulate and restrict the Employer's employees' use, consumption, and possession of marijuana in the workplace. Marijuana is, and continues to be, classified by the Federal Government as a Schedule I Drug meaning that any use, consumption and possession remain illegal under Federal law.

The Chamber believes that drug and alcohol use have no place in the workplace, not including drugs that are safely used consistent with over the counter instructions or properly issued medical prescriptions. We support the rights of the Employer to

conduct, in a reasonable manner, drug tests on applicants and employees in accordance with local, state and federal laws.

EMPLOYMENT AT WILL:

Except where an Employer and an employee specifically enter in to a contractual relationship restricting the Employer's rights, the Chamber favors the doctrine of employment-at-will which creates a voluntary relationship between the Employer and the employee allowing either party to cease an employment relationship, with or without notice or cause. The Chamber opposes any legislation, beyond the current fair labor laws, restricting that doctrine.

IMMIGRATION STATUS:

Immigration is a complex issue. The Chamber believes that the business community can play a role in honoring the laws of the country regarding immigration and believes that it is important for government officials to appreciate the challenges employers have finding workers. To that end, the Chamber believes government has an obligation to avoid unnecessary and costly burdens on business relative to immigration.

The federal government should create clarity and certainty under which businesses can reasonably and predictably operate and plan by:

- Expanding the temporary visa program for essential workers.
- Offering ways for undocumented workers already in the United States to obtain legal status so that they may become full contributing members of our society.
- Expanding 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.
- Continue offering an electronic employment verification system for new hires that is secure, efficient and foolproof to ensure a legal workforce.
- Limit reprimands for businesses found employing illegal immigrants 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 immigrants and, when possible, minimize that cost
- Local government should not undermine federal or state regulations relative to immigration enforcement.

MANDATED EMPLOYEE WAGES AND BENEFITS:

The Chamber supports allowing the market between employers and employees to determine wages and benefits.

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."

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes a thriving, growing economy provides the resources for area residents to support protection of the natural environment. In turn, the natural environment adds to the well-being of individuals, the quality of life of the community and the economic prosperity of the region. In light of this inextricable relationship, the Chamber believes the following:

- The Fort Collins region will grow and economic development should occur to provide gainful employment to the growing population.
- The economy and the natural environment are interdependent with a strong healthy economy providing the resources to protect and restore natural resources.
- A healthy natural environment preserves the quality of life, attracts and retains primary employers and their employees and strengthens the economy.
- We support sound community planning and development that honors the rights of property owners and businesspeople.
- 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.

- When legislation and regulations are proposed, it is incumbent upon government officials to be clear on the short- and long-term benefits and financial costs to business and citizens. An objective cost-benefit analysis should be part of any policy or project adoption

CLIMATE CHANGE:

The Chamber believes laws, ordinances and regulations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be transparent about the economic and financial costs through cost-benefit analysis and should also be clear about their ongoing benefits and how they will be measured.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS:

The term ‘environmental regulations’ is broad and amorphous. For our purposes, environmental regulations mean City Code created by ordinances and resolutions. 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, delays or other intended or unintended consequences.

Further, the Chamber believes a thorough community affordability impact statement should accompany any new ordinance or legislation proposing new regulations and the resulting regulations should be economically sound and make good market sense. In particular, a statement on the cost of housing impact statement should be prepared. The Chamber supports elimination of needless regulation, duplication in regulatory agencies, arbitrary or inflexible standards and the streamlining of the building and environmental permitting process.

OPEN SPACE:

The Chamber supports public or private purchase of beneficial undeveloped land, easements and development rights as open space 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 and 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, housing affordability, community cost of living and tax base of the community.
- Priority should be given to acquiring land for its demonstrable natural benefits and potential to acquire water rights.
- 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 fragile natural resources.
- The City and County should conduct a needs assessment to fully understand the long-term maintenance requirements of the Natural Areas program. This program should work to provide open lands that can be forever available to the people of this region and the City should balance costs of both acquisition and maintenance to avoid future unfunded maintenance.
- 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.

FEES AND TAXATION

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 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.

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 utilized. 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 public 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 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 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.

IMPACT FEES:

The Chamber recognizes that impact fees are a legitimate but targeted component of infrastructure funding. 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. The City should be responsible for improving and maintaining infrastructure as the entire community benefits. 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 landowners.

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 and its impact on attracting and retaining primary employers. As the city government pursues revenue diversification, the Chamber opposes a shift from sales tax to fee-dependent income sources that are not held accountable to the electorate.

GOOD GOVERNMENT

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, 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.
- Laws, ordinances and regulations should be transparent about the economic and financial costs through cost-benefit analysis.
- 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.
- 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 should 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 economic 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 use can impair the tax base by impairing private investment and directly impact housing costs by driving up land prices.
- 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 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.
- The City should limit regulation.

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.

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 or have district representatives elected citywide.
- 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 eight consecutive years.

ELECTION OF PRO BUSINESS CANDIDATES:

Candidate elections are critical to the business community. The Chamber issues strong endorsements and will campaign on behalf of viable pro-business candidates for city, county and PSD elections to ensure governing bodies include bold voices for business. The Chamber is strategic with its resources to invest in pro-business candidates who can win their elections.

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. 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.

RIGHT-SIZING OF GOVERNMENT:

Any government will be the size that voters allow it to be. Through election campaigns and policy engagement, the Chamber advocates for lean, efficient and highly-accountable governments. Therefore, the Chamber helps voters understand the importance of a strong economic foundation to a community's stability. This outreach educates citizens about the risk of ignoring economic health so they can make balanced decisions at the ballot box. The Chamber supports utilization of a strong auditing process of current and new programs to identify waste and to retire less relevant programs.

GROWTH PLANNING

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Northern Colorado is a desirable place to live, making growth highly likely. The community must find ways to maintain a high quality of life while accommodating growth. 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.

ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES:

The Chamber 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. The City should allow for some flexibility and exceptions to the implementation of Adequate Public Facilities to allow desired projects to move forward. In some instances, it may be in the community's best interests for the City to augment private funding for development-related infrastructure with public funds.

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 be restrained and with an understanding of the costs and benefits. Government guidelines and policies should be implemented to prevent negative impacts to the community, by allowing free enterprise to operate openly, but responsibly. Costs and benefits of government interaction 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.

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 additions to the GMA that support the overall goals and objectives of the community, especially primary employers. The City must recognize the competitive nature of today's market in which companies and 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 and other community benefit.

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. To that end, the Chamber supports increasing height opportunities in the downtown area.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING:

The Chamber supports long range planning as an important growth 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. 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.

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 cautions the use of eminent domain by government to acquire private property for the use of other private interests.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE JOINT VENTURES:

The Chamber recognizes that certain infrastructure challenges exceed the ability for either the public sector or the private sector to reasonably solve alone. In these circumstances, the best, and sometimes only solution is for the public and private sector to work together. Examples of this approach include, but are not limited to, regional stormwater management authorities, improvement districts, development authorities, special purpose utility districts, urban renewal authorities and metropolitan districts. These mechanisms have been used to great success throughout the region to help fund, construct and manage large-scale infrastructure improvements.

The Chamber firmly believes in being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. To that effect, it is important that public-private ventures are well vetted and fully transparent. Where tax increment financing, additional mill levies and other taxing mechanisms are utilized, the costs benefit analysis and governance plans should be approached conservatively and be prepared and reviewed by industry professionals.

The Chamber does not believe that these public-private solutions should be required to provide “world-class” facilities, as such enhancements may unnecessarily drive up costs. Providing essential and utilitarian infrastructure for the public good is reason enough to explore such mechanisms. These approaches can also facilitate the development or redevelopment of underserved areas, particularly when part of a larger solution to housing, employment, mobility, water and other community needs.

STATE GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN PLANNING:

The role of the State of Colorado is to assist in the coordination of future growth by fostering 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 work with state government to find ways to allow 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.

HEALTH CARE

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Although Americans have access to some of 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 health care difficult for many people. Clearly, the situation is not sustainable, and continued 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 and affordable care. (A more detailed version of the Chamber's health care policy can be found at the Chamber's joint state and federal issues website of the Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance.)

HOUSING

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Northern Colorado is an attractive place to live. People will continue to move here and drive demand for housing. While that puts upward pressure on housing, it is only part of the story with other factors in the cost of housing being local and state government laws and regulations relative to building codes, restrictive land use codes 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.

- The lack of attainable housing stock in the region is limiting the ability for income earners to live in the City. This has numerous consequences including: traffic congestion, lack of qualified (and willing) employees to fill service-level jobs and air quality concerns.
- 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.
- 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. The Chamber supports an incentive-based approach to affordable housing that would include higher density allowances, easing of certain design standards, expedited review and subsidized sale pricing of land bank properties for development of “For-Sale” residential development, without any option for payment in lieu.

YOU PLUS TWO:

The Chamber recommends re-evaluation of the “You-Plus-Two” ordinance so the existing housing stock can be better utilized through higher occupancy per unit, with the understanding that the unit has the capacity to handle the higher usage without negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

CONSTRUCTION DEFECTS:

Construction Defects litigations has also been a hindrance to housing affordability, especially in the condominium market that would otherwise offer entry level pricing for “For-Sale” housing. The Chamber supports legislation that helps minimize litigation that hinders the development of affordable housing stock due to unsubstantiated claims against developers and builders.

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:

Slow-growth measures like the urban growth boundary and regulations to intensify land use actually promote leapfrog development and create a 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.

HOMELESSNESS:

In addition to the acute impact at the individual level, homelessness has an adverse effect upon the business climate and the community at large. For the purpose of this document, homelessness is defined as lacking consistent access to a legal dwelling unit. The Chamber further recognizes three forms of homelessness: transitional, episodic and chronic. The former is defined as loss of housing due to a catastrophic event or series of events. This category represents the largest cohort among homeless and most often requires minimal assistance beyond temporary shelter. Episodic refers to those that shuttle in and out of homelessness and often aggravated by adverse mental, behavioral and health conditions. Chronic refers to those who have effectively chosen homelessness as a lifestyle, which may also be accompanied by adverse mental, behavioral and health conditions.

The Chamber supports the concept of ‘housing first’, whereby scarce resources are focused upon the rapid re-housing of transitional and episodic individuals and families supplemented by supportive services that effectively address the triggering conditions. This approach not only seeks to benefit the person and/or family, but also minimize the significant functional and financial impacts to schools, police, fire, correctional

system and healthcare providers that too often serve as default service providers. The Chamber further supports initiatives to prepare and train homeless individuals to re-enter the work force.

Chronic and episodic homeless are the most visible cohort as they frequent locations that offer opportunity to solicit food and money from the general public. The Chamber endorses programs that seek to directly engage homeless individuals with trained professionals able to determine an optimal response and directing individuals to service providers best equipped to address aggravating issues. The Chamber further endorses policies that make clear homelessness itself is not punishable, but behaviors and activities that diminish the health and safety of the community, inhibit the quiet enjoyment of public spaces and private property or restrict free trade can be punished. The Chamber endorses programs that seek to educate the general public as to best practices in addressing the problems.

INFRASTRUCTURE

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that Colorado and Fort Collins will continue to grow and that government should plan for adequate infrastructure, citywide, regionally and statewide, to accommodate that growth. Infrastructure is comprised of the facilities and systems shared or used by all citizens. The facilities have in common the requirement for significant capital investment. These infrastructure 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.

Infrastructure includes our roads, traffic signals, potable water system, waste water system, storm water system, landfill and recycling centers (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). The Chamber does not support programs and mandates that unduly burden business beyond the basic cost of installing, operating and maintaining public infrastructure.

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.

BROADBAND:

The Chamber believes having a well-connected community is important to the community's economy and quality of life. The Chamber also believes in allowing and providing an environment for private sector providers of goods and services to flourish. In light of the decision by the City and the voters to bond and implement the building of a city-owned broadband network, the Chamber encourages the City to:

- Move cautiously with implementation of this network, considering the inevitable changes in technology, the inherent financial risks of competing with the private sector to provide these services, the potential financial burden that could be faced by the community members should the business model fail to meet expectations, and the ongoing maintenance, replacement and customer service requirements.
- The Chamber also encourages the City to continue to explore opportunities for public-private partnerships or service agreements with third party private sector providers to limit the financial exposure of the taxpayers and return exposure to risk capital market interests to private interests.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING:

The Chamber supports the safe and legal disposal of solid waste in the most cost-efficient manner, which means solid waste disposal 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 composting and that the community is better served by recycling programs that have a market demand. As local governments review solid waste options in light of growing populations and a county landfill nearing capacity the Chamber will rely on its Infrastructure Basic Philosophy for direction and be very sensitive to process control and flow-control language,

intergovernmental agreements modifying hauler licensing and long-term governance models which might foster and institutionalize government overreach.

UTILITY RATES:

The Chamber recognizes the need to maintain utility rate structures adequate for maintenance and efficient operation of privately and publicly owned utilities for the benefit of the community including water, wastewater and electricity. The Chamber believes that the community's municipally-owned utilities should provide safe, adequate and efficient services at the lowest possible cost to the customer. The Chamber does not support progressive utility rate pricing, also known as tiered rates, but does support incenting efficient use of limited resources. The Chamber does not support artificially high utility rates above the price of providing the actual service for the purpose of funding other initiatives or programs.

INFRASTRUCTURE: ELECTRICITY

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber supports:

- Market-based incentives to promote greater conservation and efficiency of existing energy 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.

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.

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. 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. Government can assist this transition by funding research, being careful and prudent about altering energy policy to address climate change without understanding economic consequences, 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.

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.

FiTs are a significant political interference in the energy market. While supporting mutually beneficial incentives – those that benefit both private employers and the community-the Chamber urges limited, FiTs to incent the creation of primary jobs in the clean and renewable energy sector.

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.

INFRASTRUCTURE: STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

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.

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.

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.

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

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.

INFRASTRUCTURE: TRANSPORTATION

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes a region'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 highway and 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.

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 or a Larimer County transportation tax should be considered to fund intra-regional transportation needs.
- Leaders need to keep streets as a transportation a top funding priority.
- The Chamber believes that a clear nexus should exist between street over-sizing fees collected and their ultimate use. As well, the Chamber is opposed to overly burdensome transportation fees levied upon business and development.

PRIORITIZATION OF TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:

There should be a frequent review of infrastructure projects that improve traffic 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 a system.

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 innovative funding mechanisms should be removed.

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.

WIDENING I-25:

North I-25 between Highway 1, north of Fort Collins and Highway 66 north of Longmont needs to be widened to three lanes each way immediately to meet existing demand. Further, the State of Colorado needs to commit funding for the so-called 3+1

alignment (3 free lanes, 1 express toll lane) for when the level of service indicates another lane will be needed in the early 2030s.

INFRASTRUCTURE: WATER

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 Northern Colorado area while pursuing a reasonable policy of water demand management, as well as purchasing additional water rights as they become available.

REGIONAL COOPERATION:

As the City of Fort Collins annexes areas that are served by private water districts, the Chamber supports regional cooperation and coordination among all water suppliers to assure reasonable water rates, reliable water supply and efficient use of treatment and distribution facilities for the benefit of all residents and businesses in the City.

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 on 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 explored.
- The state of Colorado must retain that water to which it is entitled for the beneficial use of Coloradoans.
- The state and regional water suppliers 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 impede the allocation and beneficial use of Colorado water.
- 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.

The community must maintain focus of adequate water supply and storage for future generations.

PRODUCT LIABILITY/CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Legal Reform, America's litigation system is the world's most expensive. 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:

- 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 balance is critical for maintaining a good climate for business.
- There would be a reduction in the number of meritless 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

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes in the concept of ‘regionalism.’ While localized political considerations are important, regional factors also matter in creating a vibrant local economy and bright future for the residents of Fort Collins and the region. 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 must be fostered at every opportunity and Fort Collins should be an active participant in regionalism efforts.

While 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

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

BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Workforce Development is the process by which the community increases 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. What the community does to enhance the skills of its workforce is very important for economic competitiveness.

To have a viable workforce, the community must continue to address both education and training and how they impact the full workforce continuum, which includes the Emerging Workforce (P-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). Talent development is a team sport that requires public, private and educational institutions to work collaboratively to be successful. Numerous barriers keep existing residents from fully participating in the labor force. These barriers can range from access to transportation and child care to increased commute times and traffic congestion and should be addressed by a multitude of service providers in a collaborative effort.

BUSINESS' ROLE:

Employers have a stake in the quality of workforce development programs and are a critical player to shape and influence the direction of such programs. The efforts of the Workforce Development Board and the Workforce Development System should be in alignment with business needs for talent.

TALENT 2.0:

The Chamber is a strong advocate for the Talent 2.0 Plan. The strategic vision for the plan is: “A dynamic labor market with a strong talent pipeline that supports employers’ current and future needs and provides residents with good career options and opportunities to improve their skills.” This vision of a dynamic labor market creates a virtuous cycle within the workforce system, which in turn supports a strong and diverse regional economy. In the context of this vision, the plan identifies three opportunity areas to serve as the centerpiece of this regional workforce strategy:

1. Increase Access. Actively support employers in finding, attracting, and retaining the talent that they need.
2. Improve Alignment. Align education and workforce resources more closely with the business community and the local talent pool.
3. Remove Barriers. Collectively address structural issues that serve as barriers to a secure talent pipeline.

This framework considers what each partner (City, County, Chambers and United Way) is doing around talent and what each partner is positioned to do. It acknowledges that a common agenda can help align efforts and resources to amplify the reach and impact of the activities of each organization. Finally, it recognizes the existing and effective programs and builds mechanisms for scaling these initiatives to achieve results at a regional level.