



# BUILDING COMMUNITY

Fort Collins Area  
Chamber of Commerce

## WHERE WE STAND

FORT COLLINS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

*Positions on Issues Important to Our Members and the  
Economic Vitality of the Fort Collins Region*

Adopted by the Board of  
Directors March 23, 2023



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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.



**We are the trusted business champion, catalyst and convener creating shared economic prosperity for Northern Colorado.**

**We do this with...**

- **Courage:** We serve our members and the community with boldness, determination and strength of character.
- **Advocacy:** We are action-oriented business advocates who listen and build informed decisions.
- **Leadership:** We are strategic thinkers, innovators and connectors who create impact

# SETTING POLICY AT THE CHAMBER

Innumerable issues can impact business and the economic competitiveness of our region. 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.

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## Members

- 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

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## Board of Directors

- 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

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## Local Legislative Affairs Committee (LLAC)

- 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

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## Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (NCLA)

- 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
- 
- Members appointed by Board of Directors
  - Focuses on local races – city council, county commission, school board
  - Recommends endorsements to the Board

Election  
Committee

## How *Where We Stand* is Used

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

# 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:

The Chamber believes 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 while nurturing a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship to sustain vibrancy and expand opportunities for wider participation in our economy by economically and socially disadvantaged businesses. 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.

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 while raising profitability, production, income and employment.



- Have dynamic economic plans that are up-to-date and closely coordinate with identified industry and locational strengths. These plans should guide the city and county staffs during the development review process.
- Support labor force preparation and advancement.
- Avoid policies that adversely impact housing affordability.
- Support economic development marketing efforts.

Creating economic development policy that encourages private investment in our community provides greater opportunity for all its members to benefit. To that end, local and state governments should align resources with a focus on strategies that increase the income potential of our community.

Economic development outcomes are shaped by public policies that influence the environment for investment and commerce. Within the private sector, the business climate at the local, regional, and state levels are assessed as to whether policies and regulations are supportive or burdensome to their long-term strategies. Jurisdictions whose business climate is non-competitive will find it more 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

The Chamber advocates for city officials to stay in regular contact with businesses, especially primary employers and the Chamber, to build meaningful relationships that lead to greater trust and the free exchange of information that is of mutual interest.

## ARTS AND CULTURE:

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.

#### DEVELOPMENT REVIEW:

While continuing to improve the process, the City of Fort Collins should strive to remove financial, physical, and administrative burdens that impede private capital investment in the community. Regulations and practices should be developed in partnership with the private sector in order to achieve a development review process that is predictable, efficient, and consistently applied.

#### 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, its system, and its vast support network that work in concert with other public and private initiatives, such as Innosphere Ventures, to identify intriguing ideas and research. As viable candidates emerge, new businesses are formed to license, transfer and commercialize the underlying technology and concepts, which further supports a virtuous cycle. As part of a three-pronged strategy of business retention, expansion, and attraction, the Chamber believes incubation of emerging companies is a long-term endeavor that requires persistent effort and dedicated resources.

## EDUCATION

#### BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The quality and accessibility of education is critical to the health, prosperity, and economic competitiveness of our community. We define a successful education system by an environment in which a variety of skills, interests, abilities, and professional aspirations are accommodated and advanced through traditional and alternative avenues. We encourage the evolution and development of multiple educational avenues and support student and family choice. From early childhood through secondary education, an effective system should cohesively champion high standards of performance and accountability for all students, educators, and administrators.

Such a system produces students with a diverse array of skill sets, acquired expertise, and an eagerness to enter the workforce with a passion for upward mobility. Building upon their strong primary schooling foundation, we believe 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, possess critical thinking abilities, and have well-developed interpersonal skills. Additionally, students should have a foundational understanding of how business activity contributes to the economic vitality of a community. This can be accomplished by work-based learning at both the K-12 and post-secondary level.

To ensure continued economic vitality, post-secondary education should be available, accessible and include diverse offerings such as vocational training, specialized certifications, reskilling and upskilling programs, concurrent enrollment, and advanced degrees to serve the needs of both students and business alike. Post-secondary and continuing education programs should not only be relevant to current needs of the business community, but innovative and forward-looking, anticipating the needs of future enterprise.

The success of this symbiotic relationship requires the engagement of the business community as vital partners. While shaping curriculum is an important role, so too is developing greater appreciation and practical experience among educators, staff and administrators of the rigors of operating a business within a dynamic environment. Through such partnership, current and future workforce needs can be addressed while exposing opportunities for mutually beneficial growth.

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

### **BASIC PHILOSOPHY:**

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 discrimination in employment practices. 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 employers and employees. The Chamber opposes governmental legislation that restricts the rights and responsibilities of employers to effectively direct the operations of an enterprise. Governmental interference strains relationships that can otherwise deliver better outcomes through voluntary decisions and actions..

### **DRUG FREE WORKPLACE:**

As social acceptance and law at the state and federal level evolve over time, the Chamber believes every employer retains the right to establish policies to restrict or ban the use of alcohol, marijuana and other substances in the workplace or during working hours. Such policies should not extend to over-the-counter medications and those prescribed by a licensed care provider when used as directed.

### **EMPLOYMENT AT WILL:**

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.

### **MANDATED EMPLOYEE WAGES AND BENEFITS:**

The Chamber supports allowing the market between employers and employees to determine wages and benefits. Imposition of state and local minimum wage laws should be avoided.

## 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, 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. Efforts to broaden the definition of those who qualify for unemployment insurance benefits from the unemployment insurance trust fund are discouraged.

## 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.”
- Assessment of Workers Compensation premiums should reflect relative risk profiles across industrial classifications such that high risk activities are unduly subsidized by low-risk activities or industries.

# FEES AND TAXATION

## BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Taxes are part of the obligation we all must pay for services we collectively use and need as citizens. 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 short, tax policies should promote a healthy business climate.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A BENEFICIAL TAX POLICY:

The characteristics of what The Chamber considers a ‘good tax’ include:

- **Simplicity.** Tax codes should be easy for taxpayers to comply with and for governments to administer and enforce.
- **Transparency.** Tax policies should clearly and plainly define what taxpayers must pay and when they must pay it. Hiding tax burdens in complex structures should be avoided. Additionally, any changes to the tax code should be made with careful consideration, abundant input, and open hearings. As well, voters should have a specific voice in all new taxes.
- **Neutrality.** The purpose of taxes is to raise needed revenue, not to favor or punish specific industries, activities, and products.
- **Stability.** Taxpayers deserve consistency and predictability in the tax code. Governments should avoid enacting temporary tax laws, including tax holidays, amnesties, and retroactive changes, and strive to establish stable revenue sources. Businesses make investment decisions by looking far into the future. The possibility that taxes on investment may change or increase in the near future will make businesses less likely to pursue big, long-term projects that often require years of sustained investment.

## IMPACT FEES:

The Chamber recognizes that impact fees are a legitimate but targeted component of infrastructure funding. The level of local 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. Where appropriate, the Chamber supports identification of alternate funding sources that reduce impacts at the local level. Infrastructure that is funded by impact fees should be located to give the maximum benefit to the activity that generated the fee.

Government should be responsible for improving, maintaining, and upgrading infrastructure as the entire community benefits. No additional exactions should be made or required by government that would have the effect of double-charging for the same community asset.

# GOOD GOVERNMENT

## BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

The Chamber believes that business should expect government to be predictable; open, and transparent in the efficient delivery of services; reasonable in imposition of costs and regulation; be accessible and responsive, accurate and timely; be open to understanding the views of business; focus on an appropriate level of basic services; be conscious of actions and messages that adversely impact our business climate; be mindful of property rights; and consider limited incentives where mutual benefit can be demonstrated.

## 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.
- Laws, ordinances, and regulations should be transparent about the economic impacts, financial costs, and quantifiable benefit to the community.
- Accurate and timely information about issues and decisions that affect households and businesses.
- An opportunity to participate in the government process and representation on public advisory panels, boards, and commissions.
- Seek the most effective and efficient solutions. Government should be open to fulfillment through private or non-government partners.
- Government should minimize the impact to property rights through taxation, regulation, and involuntary acquisition.
- 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 government.
- Quality of life and a positive business climate are interdependent. Government plays a role in both and needs to keep them in relative balance.

## CITY FINANCES:

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, potable water, wastewater and storm water systems. The Chamber believes the basic services defined above should be the highest budget priorities. The Chamber believes that the City Budget should be based on realistic financial forecasts, operating assumptions and clear priorities that are available for public review.

## LOCAL ELECTIONS:

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 serve in public office.

- Campaigns should be privately funded from local sources.
- 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.

## **ELECTION OF PRO BUSINESS CANDIDATES:**

Candidate elections are critical to the business community. The Chamber issues strong endorsements and will advocate for 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 encourage and invest in aligned pro-business candidates.

## **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. 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. The Chamber supports a City/County Manager model of for local governance.

## **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. Local leaders and stakeholders, with community support, must find ways to maintain a livable and affordable community while accommodating growth rather than pursuing policies that seek to limit growth by restricting the extension of basic services or remediation of floodplains. It is wise to prepare for a growing population by being realistic about the bounds and timing of growth projections.

## **ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES:**

The Chamber supports the concept of adequate public facilities, which means that necessary public facilities and infrastructure should be in place prior to or concurrently with the completion of development. Government 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 government to augment private funding for development-related infrastructure with public funds. Adequate is not intended to mean "state of the art" or "world class". The term intones durability and high quality where long-term cost efficiency is always considered.

#### **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 demonstrated 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 and consistent community development objectives while limiting 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 and housing. 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 community. The City must recognize the competitive nature of today's market in which companies and site selectors often require a permit-ready site within a very short period of time, 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.

#### **INFILL:**

The Chamber supports the City's efforts to implement planning documents that recognize the increasingly urbanized nature of our community. We encourage policies and procedures that facilitate infill development and redevelopment of properties as a more economically sustainable approach in planning for growth. To that end, the Chamber supports increasing the capacity of available land by increasing height allowances within strategic corridors.

#### **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 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 local



governments need a comprehensive vision that is aligned with a plan to ensure high-quality economic growth, while preserving those characteristics that have made our region desirable.

### **PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS:**

The Chamber supports the rights of individual property owners, and no government body should be allowed to use its regulatory powers to take private property or regulatory actions, such as “down-zoning”, without paying the owner its fair market value. Any such action must deliver a legitimate and well-documented community benefit. The Chamber cautions the use of involuntary eminent domain.

### **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 believes that these public-private partnerships should strive for collaborations to bring forth results that are in the best interests of the community and provide value-added solutions. 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 focus on planning issues of statewide importance, provide guidance and education on how to accommodate growth, and assist with the investment in necessary 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.

## **HEALTH CARE**

### **BASIC PHILOSOPHY:**

The Chamber supports patient-centered reforms that will allow all residents to have equitable 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:

An adequate supply and variety of safe, adequate housing that is affordable to our workforce is vital to assuring a strong, vibrant economy. As Northern Colorado is an attractive place to live, people will continue to move here and drive housing demand. Other factors including building code regulations from both local and state governments, restrictive land use codes and government land purchases also put upward pressure on the cost of housing. Public policies related to other community goals such as open lands and income-restricted housing, in the absence of objective financial analysis, can have the consequence of limiting the availability of affordable housing options.

The Chamber believes that:

- All residents 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 within the locality in which they work. This has numerous consequences including traffic congestion, lack of qualified employees to fill jobs, and air quality concerns.
- Local and county land use regulations and processes should be streamlined where possible to reduce housing costs and remove barriers to creative affordable housing strategies.
- Local ordinances that mandate an inclusionary housing requirement within a development plan is not beneficial to the community. Such mandates adversely distort the market while ultimately increasing the cost for all housing. The Chamber supports an incentive-based approach to affordable housing that increases the capacity of available land, easing design standards, and expediting the review and approval of housing proposals.
- Local and state laws and regulations should support the development of residential condominiums, which provide an important entry point for new homeowners and convenience for empty-nesters alike.

- Measures intended to slow growth have negative impacts. Fort Collins is a regional hub and restricting growth and development simply pushes housing into outlying areas increasing car travel and the resulting impacts on roads, energy use and air quality.
- Occupancy limits that artificially restrict the capacity of our housing stock must be re-evaluated. Limits, if any, should consider the number of occupants for which a property is designed to accommodate.

## 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. In this context homelessness is defined as lacking consistent access to a legal dwelling unit. Our population without consistent access to housing is not a monolith and does require a variety of solutions to achieve housing.

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 who too often serve as default service providers. The Chamber further supports initiatives to address underlying conditions, then prepares and trains individuals to re-enter the work force.

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 public as to best practices in addressing the problems.

# INFRASTRUCTURE: OVERALL

## 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. Such facilities require significant upfront and ongoing capital investment and advanced planning. 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 all publicly held assets, both tangible and intangible. Though not exhaustive, this list includes roads and bridges, utility lines, government facilities, technology, intellectual property, and human capital. 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, and operation 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 explore opportunities for partnerships and/or service agreements with private sector providers to limit the financial exposure of the taxpayer.

### **SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING:**

The Chamber supports the safe and legal disposal of solid waste in the most cost-efficient manner, which may require reliance on the private sector. The Chamber supports materials recycling and believes that such recycling programs should be as cost effective, economically sustainable, and as convenient as possible. The Chamber supports incentives to develop new uses and markets for recyclables and composting, provided adequate facilities and established markets are available. As local governments review solid waste options in light of growing populations, sensitivity must be exercised in devising language describing processes and flow of materials, 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, electricity, and broadband. 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:**

Cost effective generation and reliable distribution of energy is an essential factor in the economic viability of Fort Collins, our region, and the quality of life of our community. The basic infrastructure involved in the generation and distribution of electricity is complex, expensive, and takes years to develop through large capital investments. Government can assist this transition by funding research and being careful and prudent about altering energy policies to address climate change without understanding economic and functional consequences. The gradual evolution of energy sources should be realistic and done in a manner that delivers tangible net benefits to all utility consumers.

The Chamber supports:

- The consideration of all energy sources for the development and delivery of cost-effective, reliable energy solutions.
- The promotion of conservation. Conservation is a viable strategy for extending the life of power generation facilities. Conservation alone, however, is not enough.
- The creation of market-based incentives to promote greater conservation and efficiency of existing energy resources, as well as, research and development seed capital to develop a robust portfolio of energy sources, storage and delivery technologies.
- The creation of energy that is affordable, reliable and available for all residents and businesses.
- Environmentally compatible exploration and production of new domestic natural gas, oil, coal and other traditional energy supplies to assure a more orderly, reliable transition to lower impact energy sources.
- The treatment of all rate payers as equal. Distributed energy production that is sold back into the grid should be purchased at prevailing wholesale rates. Incenting reverse metering at retail rates effectively raises the cost of energy for all ratepayers.
- Spurring 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.
- Objective assessment of environmental and life-cycle impacts of alternate energy production and storage systems.

## 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. It may also subsidize new alternative energy production, 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 that benefit both private employers and the community, the Chamber urges limited utilization of FiTs to incentivize 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 owners of PRPA, the public, to honor the intent of its formation. PRPA is not an appropriate forum to pursue the political objectives of a member community or its chosen representative to the PRPA Board.

## **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. We believe all of these factors should be carefully weighed by the public and key stakeholders in a balanced manner prior to implementation to avoid adverse consequences and the promotion of innovation.

#### **DRAINAGE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS:**

Publicly 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 local data that incorporates economic impact.

## 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:

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, bike, and vehicles of all variety. The Chamber believes that all such elements must be present to have a viable transportation system that meets the needs of the community with robust regional connectivity. This requires consistent and candid engagement with partners through the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. 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.

## AIR SERVICE:

The continued prosperity of the region 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 Northern Front Range Airport should be competitive in attracting commercial carriers that can offer competitive rates without compromising general aviation. The Chamber supports the expansion of the airport to meet the continuing and dynamic needs of our economy. Further, we support the preservation of other air transportation corridors. The current fuel tax collection and distribution system should be maintained to fund airport facilities.

## FINANCING TRANSPORTATION:

From a regional perspective, Northern Colorado is the fastest growing region in the state of Colorado. Improved transportation along the north Front Range corridor not only benefits Northern Colorado but the entire state. Yet, there are billions of dollars of unfunded priority transportation needs in Larimer and Weld counties.

- City and county government should aggressively make efforts to acquire resources from various funding sources to be directed to the North Front Range region.
- 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 top funding priority.

- The Chamber believes that a clear nexus should exist between transportation impact 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. Public transportation plans need to harmonize with other city planning documents.

### **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION:**

The Chamber supports a regional approach to transportation planning and financing 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 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 what is referred to as, 3+1 alignment, 3 free lanes and 1 express toll lane.

## **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 a significant amount of its fully entitled water, strategies must be deployed to increase water storage capacity while conserving available resources. The Chamber is a strong 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.

### WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT:

The Chamber supports reasonable efforts that encourage water conservation, water reuse, and discourages water waste. Water conservation education programs should be continued and enhanced to encourage its efficient 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:

- Colorado's unique geography divides the state in half with more plentiful water on the western slope and insufficient water on the Front Range.
- All viable options to develop water sources for Northern Colorado should be explored.
- Colorado water rights and the Colorado philosophy of "first in time, first in right" seniority water rights must be preserved.
- The state of Colorado must retain that water to which it is entitled for the beneficial use of Coloradans.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.

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

## 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. The Chamber believes:

- The economy and the natural environment are interdependent with a strong healthy economy providing the resources to preserve, protect, and restore natural resources.
- As more employers prioritize their environmental and social impacts, a healthy natural environment promotes the quality of life that attracts the workforce that share their values, strengthening our local economy.
- We support community planning and development that appropriately considers and balances the rights of property owners, public necessity, and potential environmental impacts.
- Disseminating information to member and nonmember businesses about environmentally friendly ways of conducting business is a key tool in changing behaviors.
- 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

## ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS:

The Chamber believes regulations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be very transparent about all costs of proposed legislation, regulation, or executive order, including direct and indirect costs incurred by the public and private sectors. Indirect expenses should include known opportunity costs.

An objective cost-benefit analysis, using the most current local data, should be clear about the anticipated and ongoing benefits and how they will be measured. Additionally, the need for new or 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. Funding for efforts related to protection of the environment should come from a vote of the citizens and a dedicated funding resource rather than from general fund dollars.

The Chamber supports elimination of duplicative and redundant environmental regulation, arbitrary or inflexible standards, and other impediments to a predictable, transparent, and consistent permitting process.

## OPEN SPACE:

The Chamber recognizes public or private purchase of beneficial undeveloped land, easements, and development rights for open space as an admirable means of conserving natural places and preserving unique views. The following considerations should be factored in when the City or Larimer County acquires property to be used as open space:

- Acquisition of private property should be done with full landowner cooperation without government's use of the unfriendly eminent domain.
- Proper and thorough due diligence should be used during all land acquisitions, including economic impact analysis.
- 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 as the land no longer generates taxes, though requires ongoing maintenance and mitigation. Such costs should be carefully weighed against its demonstrable natural benefits, accessibility to residents, and available water rights.
- All municipal and county government open space costs should continue to be charged only against the open space revenues.

# 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. Fort Collins should recognize instances when regional needs must take a higher priority.

While acknowledging a preference for 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 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 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 professional destination management organization.

## FUNDING:

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 within the region. 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 encourage tourists to stay in Fort Collins as a base camp for enjoying the Northern Colorado region.

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## BASIC PHILOSOPHY:

Workforce Development is the process by which the region 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:

1. Emerging Workforce
  - P-12
  - vocational and college students
2. Transitional Workforce
  - dislocated workers,
  - unemployed but seeking,
  - recent graduates,
  - out of school and
  - welfare recipients
3. Current Workforce
  - employed at potential,
  - under-employed,
  - employed with special needs,
  - working poor,
  - under-skilled, and
  - part-time contingent.

Talent development is a team effort 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, housing, and childcare 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.

#### **NOCO WORKS:**

The Chamber is a strong advocate for NoCo Works, a regional collaboration among public and private stakeholders that seeks to foster a dynamic labor market with a strong talent pipeline development. This vision of a dynamic labor market creates a virtuous cycle within the Northern Colorado ecosystem, which in turn supports a strong and diverse regional economy. In the context of this vision, the plan identifies six key themes to serve as the centerpiece of this regional workforce strategy:

- Economic Inclusion
- External Barriers
- Business Resources
- Training and Development

- Talent Pipeline
- Work-based Learning

This framework seeks to identify relevant issues, quantify metrics, and advance effective strategies and resources to amplify the effects of this partnership across the region.

#### IMMIGRATION STATUS:

Immigration plays a vital role in maintaining the vibrancy and competitiveness of local businesses, though attending policies and procedures must remain under the sole purview of the federal government. Well-intentioned though it may be, any interference at the local level creates confusion, while exposing businesses that operate in multiple jurisdictions to conflicting regulations and unnecessary levels of risk.