

A JOBS AGENDA FOR FORT COLLINS

The economic initiatives in Fort Collins over the past eight years or so have been positive and form a good foundation upon which to build. Economic competition in the region, nationally and internationally make it imperative that the Fort Collins community has a clear vision, a political consensus and strategic economic plan. To that end, here are some observations and recommendations. They are grouped into five categories: Community Economic Vision and Plan; Community Readiness and Competitiveness; Retention, Expansion and Attraction of Primary Employers; Innovation and Entrepreneurship; and Talent Development.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC VISION AND PLAN

To those of us already living in the Fort Collins, it's our home. As such, we love it, warts and all, and can't imagine that anyone could feel otherwise. We are reticent to look at our beloved community with an objective eye. However, people considering a business investment in the community do examine us from an impartial perspective. To be successful, economically speaking, we need to step outside ourselves to see Fort Collins through their eyes. Following are recommendations to do that and to address other issues that will prepare the community for economic success.

- **Communicate the business community's economic vision.** Fort Collins has a collaborative nature that allows it to do wonderful things. Working well together seems to be part of our community DNA. This includes the generally good working relationship between city government and the business community. Even so, city government can be somewhat tone deaf to the concerns of business. The Chamber has made it politically unpalatable for local politicians to be openly anti-business but with each passing year more and more costs and regulations are imposed on businesses. One longstanding and prominent member of the business community said "It's almost like they want us to survive but not thrive."

There are two basic visions in play: the version practiced by city government whereby business is heavily regulated; and the more market-oriented economy espoused by the Chamber. In the first, the guiding philosophy of local government seems to be that it's a privilege for a company to be located in Fort Collins and for that honor, the City is entitled to heavily regulate businesses and to extract high fees.

In contrast, the Chamber has a fundamental belief in the private sector, market economics and individual initiative and choice.

The Chamber will continue to proactively advocate its vision of the economic future of the community and become more effective in doing so. The effort will be data-driven, positive, but direct and accountability-based, in that it holds public officials accountable for their words and actions relative to job creation. In essence, this strategy includes communicating directly with city officials about the needs and concerns of the business community and communicating with their bosses – the general public – about key economic issues.

The key action here is the launch of *Fort Collins Works* to communicate the business community's economic vision and plan to public officials, candidates for public office and the public. See FortCollinsWorks.com

- **Implement the new Fort Collins strategic economic plan, which was adopted in 2012, so that limited community resources can be used to yield the best economic benefit.** In light of macro-changes, it is extremely important that all communities know their economic function in the global economy. To make sound decisions for the future of Fort Collins, leaders need to have a sharp understanding of our regional economy, how our key industry sectors fit into the global economy and what it takes for them to compete successfully. To mitigate the negative impacts and leverage our strengths, the community needs a sound economic plan that is reviewed frequently. Such a plan would identify both uncontrollable and controllable economic forces and let us concentrate on those issues we can influence. The City adopted a plan and now needs to implement it. The plan is detailed and multi-faceted, but several of the recommendations should receive priority attention:
 - » Emphasize entrepreneurship. In particular, the community, especially city government, should continue to support the work of the Rocky Mountain Innosphere.
 - » Focus on clusters. The City should finish its work to update the cluster study, so that limited community resources can be used to yield the best economic benefit for the community.
- **Establish a mechanism to track and analyze economic and sector trend data,** so that community leaders understand and have the information to act upon issues that will impact the community's economic vitality.

COMMUNITY AND READINESS AND COMPETITIVENESS (BUSINESS CLIMATE)

- **Undertake an objective assessment of our competitive positioning, so that local policy makers can make data-driven decisions about economic policy.** A good economic development program begins with an analysis of local resources, both human and material. This has happened in Fort Collins in an indirect manner through various city government reports and studies. The emphasis has been on feel-good public relations instead of clear-eyed data that helps us understand our competitive situation. Consequently, the community is facing significant economic change without a full understanding of its assets and deficiencies. The community needs to conduct a comparative competitive study to develop a data-driven understanding of where Fort Collins has competitive advantages and disadvantages. External validation by various publications is nice. However, magazine editors are not making facility siting and expansion decisions for companies. Understanding the criteria companies and site locators use for decisions regarding site locations and how Fort Collins measures up against those criteria is a more useful and data-driven approach for developing a community economic strategy. One example of this type of assessment tool is LEAP, which is short for Local Economic Assessment Package. The community should commission a LEAP study. (<http://www.leapmodel.com/>)
- **Using criteria important to business decision-makers, write a business case for Fort Collins, so that we broaden our message beyond just touting quality of life.** The community now relies almost exclusively on ‘quality of life’ to make its case to prospective base employers. Fort Collins would benefit from broader thinking about other factors that matter in such siting decisions. The product would be the basis for messaging and collateral marketing material. It doesn’t need to be extensive – 1-3 pages would suffice – but the community needs to definitively answer the question “Why should primary employers remain, expand in or relocate to Fort Collins?” This could be done as an element of the LEAP study mentioned above.
- **Establish a mechanism to track and analyze economic and sector trend data, so that community leaders understand and have the information to act upon issues that will impact the community’s economic vitality.** No one person or group ‘owns’ the responsibility of tracking key existing industry sectors or major employers in those sectors to identify and interpret trends or developments. The benefit of doing so would be twofold: spot opportunities to secure expansions or relocations; identify issues that may lead to job losses. Some data is being collected by the City, the CSU regional economist, NCEDC and the Chamber but it is being done on an as-needed basis and is more tactical than strategic.
- **Review City policies and procedures to identify barriers to job creation in the City’s target industry clusters, so that obstacles that unnecessarily delay beneficial economic projects can be mitigated.** The City of Fort Collins commissioned a study of its development review process in 2003. Known as ‘the Zucker Report,’ the study identified 54 recommendations to improve and professionalize the process. Many of the recommendations have been implemented. Because time to get a decision is important for base employers, it can be a competitive advantage or disadvantage for communities. Consequently, it’s important to constantly improve the development process and other policies and procedures within the City that work against its own economic objectives. The City mentions having a fast-track development review and permitting process for base employers. It should be reviewed to test it against the standards of site locators and competing communities, and not just against how we’ve improved against our past performance. To be competitive, time in process should be reduced from the current six to eight months to 90 days.

- **Re-establish an ombudsman function for base employers in the City’s target clusters, so that such employers have a single point of contact at the City.** The term ‘re-establish’ is not exactly correct in that the City has not officially had such a position in the past. Unofficially, however, former City Chief Financial Officer Mike Freeman did operate in this manner when he was first hired as economic coordinator. Companies are not experts on city government processes. If the City wants firms to invest in the community, it’s in its enlightened self-interest to make it relatively easy for them to do so.
- **Maintain Fort Collins’ relative competitive advantage of reliable, affordable power, so that electric rates do not become an obstacle to base employers.** Through the Platte River Power Authority, the City of Fort Collins is able to provide affordable and reliable power to residents and businesses. The City should be very careful to maintain this situation with minimally invasive policies. Said another way, utilities should not be used for political agendas that harm ratepayers and impair the economy. The City should produce a brief of its utility rates compared to select other cities in a multi-state region.
- **Provide incubation spaces and tech parks to foster and accommodate start-up and expansion of companies in clean / renewable energy, biosciences and other brain-driven sectors. Finish the expansion of the CSU Energy & Engines Conversion Lab and provide support so that the community can better develop the clean energy cluster.** The community has earned a reputation as a center for clean and renewable energy research. To take full advantage of that reputation and related commercialization of research from CSU requires having the physical space to incubate startups and accommodate growing companies. Fort Collins does not have business-ready parks in place to easily accommodate expansion of local primary employers or the attraction of new ones. Colorado State University gives Fort Collins a tremendous economic asset and advantage. To make best use of this advantage, the City of Fort Collins must have a partnership mentality toward site development. City leaders have said that ‘growing our own’ is a key economic strategy. An important element of implementing that strategy is the availability of suitable business parks, land and buildings.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THIS REGARD INCLUDE:

- > **Finishing the expansion of the CSU Engines & Energy Conversion Lab**
- > **A master plan for development of the CSU Foothills Campus**
- > **Further promotion of the Centre for Advanced Technology**
- > **Developing property owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev**
- > **Developing the CSU technology park at I-25**
- > **Continuing to support of the Rocky Mountain Innosphere**

- **Pre-entitle some sites, so that prospective base employers in the City’s target clusters are not discouraged from considering Fort Collins due to unnecessary time in the City’s processes.** Related to the above item about suitable business parks, land and buildings is the strategy of expediting the process for companies in the City’s target clusters by securing pre-approvals for some sites. In effect, the preliminary approvals are established as a means of removing a time barrier for desirable companies.
- **Improve the street system, so that non-resident retail customers are not discouraged from stopping in Fort Collins and businesses can efficiently move goods in and out of the community.** The street system and interstate interchanges are the backbone of the community’s multi-modal transportation system and are critically important to the local economy. Actual and perceived travel time and ease of mobility matter, especially when viable shopping options exist in nearby communities with easy access. As the City’s revenues have become more constrained, it has less money for maintaining its existing system, much less improving it. Dedicated funding for the transportation system should be secured. This could include a dedicated sales tax, renewing (and even increasing) the pavement management tax when the current one expires and renewing the capital improvement sales tax when it comes up for renewal.
- **Redevelop Foothills Mall.** Fort Collins is still the retail trade center of Northern Colorado and Southern Wyoming. The decline of the mall over the past decade, however, has eroded that standing. Purchase of the mall in 2012 by Alberta Development was a welcome development. Although a vibrant retail sector is largely the result of a high level of disposable income in the community from primary employers, retail is an important community amenity that helps in the attraction of talent for primary employers.
- **Maintain NCLA as an effective business advocacy organization.** Redevelop the website, present a clear and strong regional issues agenda, hold an annual regional issues summit and make effective use of the mobilization platform (Voter Voice).
- **Attract a commercial carrier and improve the Fort Collins-Loveland Airport.** The loss of Allegiant Air in 2012 was a significant blow to the airport, which lost its primary source of funding. The communities of Fort Collins, Loveland and Windsor need to develop and implement a strategy to attract a new commercial carrier.
- **Open up access to the Northeast portion of Fort Collins around Anheuser-Busch.** The area around the Anheuser brewery is one of the last significant areas for industrial development in Fort Collins. The City, NCEDC and Anheuser-Busch should develop a strategy for how this area should develop over the next 20 years.

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RETENTION, EXPANSION AND ATTRACTION OF PRIMARY COMPANIES

- **Retain Woodward in Fort Collins.** As a 57-year business resident of Fort Collins, Woodward has a long track record of being an outstanding corporate neighbor and employer. The company's decision on where to build its new corporate headquarters complex is equal parts opportunity and peril for the community. The City of Fort Collins has been diligent in working with Woodward leaders to facilitate the siting of Woodward's corporate headquarters on the Link-N-Greens site on the northwest corner of Colorado Hwy 14 and Lemay. The process has been an eye-opener for both parties.
- **Eliminate the use tax¹⁸ on Fort Collins manufacturers.** Although retailers do not ask about the community's sales tax rate when considering locating in a community, manufacturers do ask about the use tax. In Colorado, businesses already carry a disproportionate share of the tax burden because of how the Gallagher Amendment¹⁹ treats commercial and industrial properties. Then, by taxing the purchase of capital equipment used for production, Colorado and Fort Collins work against their own economic interests. To its credit, the City of Fort Collins does have a manufacturer's use tax rebate program. However, typically, seven to eleven companies seek rebates annually. Unknown is how many companies bypass Fort Collins because the community is screened out in the early siting research because of excessively high costs. Few Colorado communities impose a use tax on companies and ever fewer impose it on manufacturers. The fact that Fort Collins does creates a significant barrier to the attraction and expansion of primary employers. Waiving or reimbursing the tax to employers is not a 'tax giveaway' or 'corporate welfare' as some contend because it is a tax that should not be imposed anyway. Eliminating it removes a self-imposed job-killing obstacle and evens the playing field with other communities. Government leaders need to resist the attitude that "we've done enough." On the contrary, as long as the national and international demand for good paying jobs remains, Fort Collins needs to work very hard to retain its key employers.
- **Adopt reasonable business assistance policies and procedures.** Attractive places like Fort Collins do not need to 'bribe' businesses to locate in them by lavishing companies with lucrative incentives packages. However, incentives are an indication of a community's attitude towards business and its willingness to be a good partner. The City is in the middle of a process to review its incentive policies and procedures. When done, the City should adopt a reasonable policy towards business assistance.
- **Strengthen the business retention and expansion program, so that the community is using limited resources effectively to retain high paying base jobs in Fort Collins.** Over the past five years, the community's business retention and expansion program has been dramatically strengthened. Former Mayor Doug Hutchinson and City Manager Darin Atteberry were consistently disciplined about conducting onsite visits to the community's base employers. Additionally, the City's economic staff has made business retention a priority. For its part, the Chamber has played a significant role in helping to strengthen the Fort Collins portion of NCEDC's Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program. Building on this strong platform, the mayor should continue this outreach and the NCEDC, Chamber and City should confer on how to make the BR&E program work

18 The use tax is a form of sales tax. It is "remitted to the City by the person storing, using, distributing or consuming the tangible personal property or taxable service within the City of Fort Collins." Such parties must remit a use tax when a Colorado municipal sales tax of 3.85% has not been paid. City leaders contend that the use tax is supposed to equalize competition between vendors located in the City who collect Fort Collins sales tax and those located outside the City who do not charge Fort Collins sales tax. It is an incentive to make local purchases. The Chamber contends that for capital equipment intensive companies like manufacturers the use tax is a huge disincentive for being in Fort Collins.

19 The **Gallagher Amendment** was an amendment to the Colorado Constitution enacted in 1982 concerning property tax. It set forth the guidelines in the Colorado Constitution for determining the actual value of property and the valuation for assessment of such property. One of the consequences of the Amendment is a shift of the property tax burden onto commercial properties. (Source: Wikipedia)

even better. Stronger coordination between the City, NCEDC, the Chamber, the Biosciences Cluster and the Clean Energy Cluster should be discussed. The community should also consider an annual appreciation event to celebrate the base employers in Fort Collins.

- **Review and update the City’s target industry cluster study, so that limited community resources can be used to yield the best economic benefit for the community.** The City of Fort Collins commissioned a cluster industry study in 2006. That study needs to be retested to validate the clusters and update them as appropriate. Identifying and planning to develop key clusters helps policy-makers, economic development marketers and city staff to use limited resources well. Coordination with the CSU Super-Clusters, NCEDC clusters and Colorado clusters is advised.
- **Recapitalize the Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC) to an appropriate level for a market of our size (~\$750k to \$1 million per year), so that it is capable of more effectively carrying out its mission of retaining and attracting base employers.** Economic development marketing is important and requires specialized talent and dedicated resources. NCEDC serves that role for the communities of Larimer County. Having a joint marketing effort reduces confusion for prospects by presenting a single external voice. Working jointly also leverages limited financial resources by avoiding duplication of staffing and other marketing costs. The economic downturn in 2008-09 adversely impacted NCEDC’s revenues and led to reductions of staff. To compete effectively for high paying base jobs, the organization needs to have increased levels of funding.
- **Strengthen the community’s financing toolbox, so that financial barriers to expanding or attracting companies in the City’s target industries can be minimized.** The community does a relatively good job of using economic financing tools like tax increment financing, federal entitlements and other widely available programs. However, much of this is done on an ad hoc, project by project basis. Fort Collins would benefit from a review of available financing tools to determine if others exist that might be useful in helping the community accomplish

its economic goals. In the process of this review, the City should also identify possible changes to existing programs that it could recommend, which would make them more useful. City government’s economic health department should produce and publish / post information on financing tools available at the city to help with development projects

- **Establish a business development team to work with targeted businesses on relocation and strategic aspects of relocation, so that the community can effectively compete for companies in its target clusters.** A gap exists in how Fort Collins is now being marketed. Until January 2001, the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce led marketing through a subsidiary group called Fort Collins, Inc. At that time, business leaders in Fort Collins and Loveland decided to merge Fort Collins, Inc with its Loveland counterpart to create a new organization called the Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC). NCEDC is responsible for marketing all of Larimer County not just Fort Collins. When the City of Fort Collins established an economic program in 2005, it wisely decided not to duplicate the external marketing work of NCEDC. Instead, the City provides some financial resources to NCEDC and has a representative on its governing board. Generally, this is an appropriate approach because it minimizes confusion with prospective base employers that can be discouraged by multiple, contradictory and competing pitches from the same region. However, this approach means that Fort Collins does not have a mechanism in place to advocate for its proprietary interests when prospects have already short listed the Northern Colorado area. A system should be worked out with NCEDC whereby a Fort Collins-centric team of city and business leaders would host prospects and tell the Fort Collins story directly. In this process, the team may identify barriers that the community could work to mitigate.

- **Establish an international trade council or club, so that area companies can strengthen or develop new markets.** At the present time, no organized forum exists in Northern Colorado for companies now involved in export or interested in learning more about export opportunities to meet, support each other and participate in education programs regarding export.
- **Establish a manufacturers council,** so that primary employers have a place to identify and address common issues. Make sure it is private sector-initiated/driven and local. A manufacturers group that is part of government or higher education would be less effective. The same with a Denver-based chapter of a statewide business association. Focus on private sector and local.
- **Continue and improve marketing of key ‘jobs’ corridors (Mountain Vista area, Harmony Road, Mid-town and South College Avenue, Mason Corridor, North College corridor, I-25) and begin to promote other areas such as Center for Advanced Technology and River District, so that the community can leverage our existing infrastructure.** Regional competition for businesses is fierce, which means that Fort Collins developers and the City of Fort Collins must tell their story aggressively and compellingly. Of particular note, the City

deserves credit for the extensive design work of Foothills Mall redevelopment. That effort moves the property from ‘C’ priority to high ‘B’ within the mall owner’s portfolio. The City has done a good job of appropriately promoting opportunities for development on its website. Other partners, including the Chamber, could do a better job in this regard and these marketing efforts should be expanded by all partners.

- **Create a strategic alignment of the region’s two economic development organizations (Upstate Colorado and NCEDC), so that limited resources are deployed in the most effective manner to attract and retain base employers in Northern Colorado.** This recommendation does not mean the two organizations should merge, nor does it imply that the two staffs are not working together. Rather, it is a recognition that resources are scarce and that external prospects tend to look at Northern Colorado as anything north of Denver. Short of a merger, joint research and marketing efforts could be considered. Additionally, there may be some operational efficiencies that could be explored. Significant cultural differences between the two areas and organizations are obstacles but are not insurmountable.

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Key elements are in place – a strong research university, smart and well-educated residents, innovative technology-based companies, a focus on incubation, tech-transfer and commercialization and an entrepreneurial climate. Due to the university, Fort Collins can actually ‘grow its own.’

- **Support the Rocky Mountain Innosphere.** Work with Rocky Mountain Innosphere to found and support their “Entrepreneurial Council” — identify obstacles/needs, training programs. Where appropriate/beneficial, support legislation along the lines of the ‘angel investors tax credit’ from previous years.
- **Conduct government and corporate procurement training and events for Fort Collins businesses, so that the community can minimize the leakage of dollars out of the local economy and maximize the opportunity of Fort Collins businesses to succeed.** Major public and private sector employers make significant purchases. To slow the leakage of dollars out of the community, procurement seminars and showcases could be conducted to put small businesses together with government and corporate purchasing agents.
- **Study the ‘best practices’ of innovative communities to identify the key factors and specific programs that could be deployed to further enhance Fort Collins’ innovative and entrepreneurial environment.** This recommendation is about making something that is already working even better. Fort Collins is already an innovative and entrepreneurial place. Since this is a strength, what else can we do to leverage that strength? What can policy makers do to build a climate and culture of entrepreneurship? What, if any, policy options are available?
- **Develop a community ‘capture strategy’ for CSU commercialization to retain as many of these spin-off companies as possible, so that the community can better take advantage of its greatest economic asset.** Fort Collins is fortunate to have a significant research university largely within its boundaries. The community is well positioned to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars of university research into economic

benefits. However, it is important to remember that CSU is a state asset, not a Fort Collins asset. As such, there is no guarantee that CSU research facilities or spin-offs will stay in Fort Collins. In fact, other communities in Northern Colorado are competing aggressively to attract CSU startups. From a regional perspective, this is fine in that economically it’s better to have these companies in Northern Colorado than elsewhere. However, when a company moves outside the city, it decreases the direct economic benefit to Fort Collins. A key to making this strategy work is having suitable business parks, land and buildings as noted above under ‘Community Readiness for Jobs.’ This will require City officials to adopt a partnership approach. An example would be the proposed CSU research park at I-25 and Prospect. The City says that ‘growing our own’ is a key part of its economic strategy and that clean energy is one of its key industry clusters. That should translate into working cooperatively with the university to mitigate drainage and access issues on that site. The same approach should be taken with other sites.

- **Promote Fort Collins as a center of innovation and entrepreneurship.** The City, Chamber and other groups should develop a narrative about Fort Collins as a place for innovation and entrepreneurship then develop and implement a communication strategy to share that story. Make better use of FortCollinsInnovation.com and InnovatioNews.com.
- **Celebrate entrepreneurs / small businesses.** Fort Collins’ business community is innovative, entrepreneurial and made up of small companies. Celebrate that spirit through awards programs like the Chamber’s Small Business of the Year Awards Luncheon.
- **Provide direct and strategic support of the bioscience cluster, water cluster, and high tech cluster.** The City has and is developing subgroups of companies in each of the community’s key business clusters.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

With each passing year, brainpower increases in economic importance. Fort Collins is well positioned in this regard with one of the nation's highest education attainment levels. The community has strong public schools and institutions of higher education, which need appropriate levels of financial resources to remain effective.

In the economic competition of tomorrow, the quality of our local workforce will give us an edge or be an anchor.

On the good side, the education attainment level of Fort Collins residents is about twice the national average with over 40 percent of residents holding at least an undergraduate degree. Also good is the reputation of the local school district.

On the other hand, Fort Collins ranks 8th in the nation in under-employment and most of the jobs that will be created in the future do not require a college degree. While the school district is very good, is it great? For example, Newsweek's list of 1,000 of "America's Best High Schools 2012" contains 21 schools in Colorado. None are in Fort Collins. That's not necessarily bad but it's worth understanding better if the quality of the emerging workforce is important to the business community.

Relative to education, businesses are involved in tactical activities without strategic context – many businesspeople are tactically involved with the district but the overall business community is providing little input on curriculum development or other strategic issues. That appears to be acceptable for the time being.

The country is in an interesting period of time when unemployment is uncommonly high and has been for a long time while many employers report that they are having a difficult time finding employees with the skills they need. This type of 'skills gap' occurs when technology outpaces the ability of people to adapt quickly to the changes.

- **Support statewide education reform efforts** to improve transparency, strengthen administrator and teacher accountability, increase credentialing of non-career teachers, change requirements for automatic teacher union dues.
- **Identify the gaps in workforce skills.** Good data needs to be gathered on the current workforce's skills and what employers need, then work should be done with the community college, university and others to fill those skills gaps.
- **State leaders need to find a more reliable funding source for higher education.** Economically, Fort Collins is more than just Colorado State University. However, CSU is very important to the community's economic vitality. Eleven percent of Fort Collins' household income - \$253 million annually – is generated by CSU employees. Annual student spending in Fort Collins is estimated to be \$168 million. The combined payrolls of CSU, University of Northern Colorado, Front Range Community College and Aims Community College is an estimated \$400 million.¹⁹ Other direct and indirect impacts can be added to the list, but the point is made: higher education institutions are important to Northern Colorado, and Colorado State University and Front Range Community College are very important to the economic health of Fort Collins. As such, Fort Collins has a vested interest in stable funding of higher education. Local leaders need to work closely with CSU and state legislators to find solutions to ongoing funding problems.

19 "Created to Serve: Colorado State University's Impact on the State's Economy"

- **Change the state workforce development system and continue to press for more business-oriented accountability of our local workforce center.** The federal Workforce Investment Act mandates business-oriented Workforce Investment Boards. The local WIB is part of the Larimer County Workforce Center. There has been significant effort in recent years to make the WIB more effective, with only modest results. The Larimer County Workforce Center is supply-driven (focused on available workers) rather than demand-driven (focused on what employers need). One result is that very little money flows to WIB. To increase its usefulness, the Workforce center should focus on identifying skills gaps and helping employers train people to fill those gaps.
- **Encourage the business community to develop a more strategic approach to improving local K-12 education:**
 - » Understand the K-12 performance numbers. Undertake a study of the performance of the Poudre School District so we truly understand how well it is performing. That will allow us to identify specific areas of concern that we can work on with district leaders.
 - » Hire a consultant to undertake a study of the skills needs of the employment community.
 - » Develop a multi-year education strategy for the business community.

In conclusion, Fort Collins is a great community. It has the assets to remain a great community assuming that today's leaders have the proactive, aspirational foresight of their predecessors. Assuming that the community's economic future is assured is unwise. This brief is intended to provide some options for moving the community's economic vitality efforts to the next level of effectiveness.

