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# Snapshot Report

Sustainable Community Development:  
Early Childhood Care and Education



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# Snapshot Report

## Sustainable Community Development: Early Childhood Care and Education

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# INTRODUCTION

The City of Fort Collins is committed to sustainability as a core value. Increasingly, communities across the nation are recognizing the many “triple bottom line” benefits of accessible, affordable, and quality early childhood care and education to the social and financial needs of parents, the educational and development needs of children, to the economy, and to many other community development goals. Studies have shown the communities that champion high quality early childhood care and education reap immediate and long term rewards in economic vitality, civic participation, school success and public safety. Early childhood, commonly defined as the years between birth through eight years, is a critical time in human development.

There are numerous examples across the country where local governments demonstrate the important role they can play in ensuring adequate early childhood care and education programs by creating policies, identifying local resources, and working with developers and community partners.

City Council asked for more information to help clarify the direction that they would look to take in regard to the City’s role and potential strategies in regard to early childhood care and education. The purpose of this report is to provide background information on the subject, the role that local governments can play, and some policy and action strategy options to consider. This issue is part of their 2011/2012 work plan.

There are a variety of related issues regarding early childhood care and education not covered in this report and not connected to the traditional role, services and facilities that the City provides. The issues currently being addressed by other national, regional or local groups and organizations include: health, education and safety initiatives for children; early childhood teacher professional development; other family support activities; and, the pros and cons debate of institutional child care.

## **Some Facts and Observations about Early Childhood Care and Education in Fort Collins, Larimer County and Nationwide**

City staff conducted a review of existing research of early childhood care and education in Larimer County and conducted interviews with several local stakeholders. A summary of the results of the research and interviews follows:

1. In 2010, the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) published a report entitled “Study of Projected Demand and Impact of Early Care and Education Services in Larimer County, Colorado”. A few key findings of that study included:

- The three top forms of child care were: child care centers (35%); family child care homes (32%); and relative/friend (13%). A child care center cares for children in large groups. Family child care homes offer care in the provider’s home and may have a total of six children, with two children under the age of two. Relative/friend child care often is provided by a grandparent, aunt or other relative/friend of the family. The other types of child care include before- or after-school programs; part-day preschool; and, nanny’s (in-home day care).
- 35% of parents with children under 12 use some form of care.

- 95% of parents need to go to work; 19% need child care to attend school.
- Over 76% of the children in child care are infants to 5 years old.
- Parents surveyed were mostly satisfied with the child care option they chose.
- Cost was the overall biggest challenge parents faced; other challenges included finding an open slot, hours of operation (18% of parents indicated a need for evening or weekend care), poor quality, changing work schedules and transportation.
- Lower income families had more children in child care than other income groups.
- 79% of families pay full cost; 13% receive some third party aid; and, 6% receive free care from a relative or friend.
- 75% of families report a lack of child care options for their children with special needs.
- 25% of child care users are single parents and custodial grandparents, yet they make up only 2.4% and .5%, respectively, of the general population.
- Two-thirds of businesses offer no child care benefits; and one-half don't believe any of their employees require child care benefits.
- One out of six employers indicated that their employees had child care issues. Yet parents reported absenteeism due to child care issues at a much higher rate than employers, meaning employers may not be fully aware of the reasons behind an employee's absences.
- 74% of parents said they would need to drop out of school or reduce working hours if child care were unavailable.
- Generally, current demand for child care space exceeds capacity reported by child care facilities, and open time slots and locations may not match the current demand.
- Enrollment rates are projected to increase and will exceed the 2010 capacity in future years; a 22.5% enrollment increase is projected by 2020.

2. Some other EECLC information:

- Full-time cost of care in child care centers varies by age from 0-12 months (\$13,898/yr) to 5-6 years (\$9,124/yr); the cost of family child care homes is slightly less.
- In 2009, child day care services in Larimer County represented an annual payroll of \$13.6 million and 820 jobs; the total financial impact was estimated at more than \$30 million annually.

3. A 2006 survey of economic developers and chamber of commerce leaders in the State of New York found that:

- 83% agree that child care should be part of economic development policy.
- 82% recognize that a lack of affordable, quality, convenient child care reduces worker productivity.
- 67% feel that businesses' ability to attract and retain workers is hurt by lack of quality child care.

4. Summary of information from City interviews conducted for this Study:

- State funding for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) has been cut and the reimbursement rate dropped 7.5%; non-profit child care centers that offer sliding scale fees have waiting lists; and, for-profit child care centers who cannot afford sliding scale fees have openings they cannot fill.

- Between February 2007 and June 2008, five child care centers closed. All of them were located in Fort Collins. Four of the five served significant numbers of CCAP children. The fifth did not accept CCAP. Closures were due to a number of issues, but financial viability was a factor for several of them.
- In the summer of 2011, two child care centers closed, one in Fort Collins and one in Loveland. Both of these facilities served a significant number of CCAP children. Lack of financial viability appears to have been the primary reason for closure of both sites.
- Regulations from both the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Department of Human Services, create the biggest challenges for child care providers; particularly licensing requirements and health regulations; and more changes are forthcoming that while may be good for children will be costly for providers, particularly family child care homes.
- The City is a good place to do business, but some child care centers would like to partner with the City more. For example: partnering with the City's bicycle program; City staff making presentations to kids regarding City services and programs; use of volunteers; use of community gardens for growing food; and, more use of parks.
- Lack of transportation for lower income parents continues to be a significant problem; Transfort hours do not begin early enough or go late enough for many jobs; lack of Sunday service; and, often requires multiple transfers that results in parents who need to rely on public transit are unable to first drop off children and then get to work on time.
- Many part-time employed parents cannot find space in family child care homes because service providers cannot make it cost effective. If family child care home providers could take more children than currently allowed, this could ease the burden. However, staff does regularly hear complaints from neighbors of family child care homes (traffic, idling, etc.).
- There is some confusion amongst family child care home providers regarding City regulations of child care centers and family child care homes, particularly regarding limits on the number of children allowed in family child care homes.
- Most zone districts in the City allow child care centers, and most require a development review process, with neighborhood participation.
- A new child care center that is a change of use triggers building code and fire department regulations (in addition to the zoning regulations). This can be costly for opening new child care centers in existing development, for instance in the Downtown area.
- On-site child care in a business is probably not cost effective, except maybe for the very largest employers.
- Low income families, particularly single parent households, need the most personalized help finding affordable, quality, and convenient (location and hours of operation) child care; this means sliding scale fees, employer provided benefits etc., to bridge the cost gap.
- A lot of families are starting to split shifts - parents working night and day shifts - to share child care.
- The biggest need for early childhood care right now is for low income families, generally provided by non-profit providers. One non-profit provider remarked that they have a waiting list of 47 families; and, the for-profit providers said they could fill vacant slots if there were more subsidies.

## 5. Other information:

- Children who have received high quality child care score higher on tests of both cognitive and social skills in their early teens than children in low quality care. (Source: Rhode Island KIDS Count [2005])
- Families at all income levels have difficulty accessing infant and toddler care; care for sick children; and, care offered during non-traditional hours (Source: Pathways Past Poverty Child Care Access Committee Position Statement [2008]).

## What are the “Best Practices in Early Childhood Care and Education by Local Governments Across the Nation?”

Many local governments are concerned with the health of their communities and regions, and regularly confront issues that affect families. The issue of early childhood care and education is drawing growing concern and action by many communities. The following is a sampling of actions by local governments across the nation.

### 1. Local actions and strategies to increase the supply of early childhood care and education facilities:

- Watsonville, CA, integrated child care facilities into its downtown bus station. This enables parents to efficiently drop off their children via public transportation.
- Delano, CA, requires a child care needs assessment for new development projects.
- White Plains, NY, expanded the number of zone districts allowing child care facilities.
- San Diego, CA, allows child care centers “by right” in all non-residential zones.
- San Mateo, CA, prepared a step by step permitting guide for new child care facilities.
- Riverside, CA, has expedited fast-track permitting of child care centers.
- Some cities have worked with affordable housing and private developers to incorporate child care facilities into development plans.
- In Salinas, CA, a new affordable housing project was designed so that all the homes could facilitate the provision of family child care.
- San Mateo County, CA includes onsite child care as one of many traffic mitigation measures available to large development projects.
- Many cities have included child care policies in their comprehensive plans, such as:
  - Requiring mitigation if a significant impact (upon child care) by large, new development is identified (Alameda County, Ca).
  - Siting of child care facilities near employment centers, homes, schools, community centers, etc (Union City, CA).
  - Encouraging employers to support child care for their employees (City of Taft, CA).
  - Encouraging retention of existing and development of new child care facilities in neighborhoods (City of Los Angeles, CA).
  - Incorporating child care and social services into affordable housing (City of Fairfield, CA).
  - Preparing a joint public/private child care master plan (Port Hueneme, CA).

2. Local actions and strategies in building community partnerships for early childhood care and education by the broader community:

- In Santa Monica, the City and the Santa Monica College designed and built an early childhood care and education center in its new Civic Center. It will also serve as a learning laboratory for the college's early childhood education students.
- Fairfax County, Virginia, committed to ensure that designated space for school-age child care was included in every new and renovated school, using general obligation bonds to fund construction.
- The City/County of Denver recently announced READY KIDS DENVER, which calls on the City to take a leadership position and act as a focal point for a public/private effort on early childhood care and education, looking at what services already exist, the gaps, and how to direct existing resources to better meet the needs.
- Shady Grove, Maryland built a child care facility as part of a new Metro station, in a public/private partnership that involved 11 funders and the school district.

3. Actions and strategies that build early childhood care and education into local economic development and funding activities and strategies:

- The City of South San Francisco built a 100-student child care center in an office park to help retain and grow its significant biotech industry. The redevelopment agency used \$2.7 million of bond funds to construct the facility and then leased it to a non-profit operator.
- In San Jose and San Mateo County, CA, a joint public/private partnership funds family child care home business development projects.
- Several cities support consortia of family child care centers providers to help them access economies of scale in purchasing and management.
- Some cities provide community outreach regarding tax credits and subsidies for families.
- The City of San Jose, CA made \$1.5 million of redevelopment funds available to child care developers through a Request for Proposal process.
- In Minneapolis, MN, a community based strategy sets up an early childhood care and education incubator for the creation of a number of small child care businesses.
- Kern County, CA eliminated its building permit fee for child care facilities.
- Livermore, CA (as well as many more CA cities and counties) instituted a developers impact fee to fund community facilities including child care and senior centers and facilities for the disabled.
- Federal CDBG funds commonly subsidize child care operations or facility construction and renovation for low-income populations.
- Some cities have used transportation dollars, such as Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds, to study and build child care facilities at transit stops, park-n-ride locations and other alternative transportation hubs.
- The City of Aspen is among a handful of communities in the country that funds quality child care through a dedicated sales tax. Aspen's Kids First programs and services are funded through a .45% sales tax (also includes affordable housing), with a focus on supporting infant and toddler programs with operating funding; funding quality improvements and capital improvements for all licensed child care in Pitkin County; direct financial aid to working families; and, funding for professional development, retention and reward of teachers. The Kids First program is a department of the City.

## What's Being Done in Fort Collins?

There are multiple public and private organizations, agencies and businesses involved in early childhood care and education as follows:

1. State of Colorado. The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) licenses child care operations caring for more than two unrelated children; the State of Colorado requires child care centers and family child care home providers to be licensed; the State does not license in-home (nannies) caregivers or relative/friend care. The CDHS Division of Child Care is the lead agency on the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). CCAP provides financial assistance to low-income families that are working, searching for employment or in training, and families that are enrolled in the Colorado Works Program and need child care services to support their efforts toward self-sufficiency. Effective March 1, 2010, enrollment in the program was suspended. There is a waiting list of new applicants. CCAP is administered through county departments of social/human services. Counties set eligibility for families, but must serve families that have income of 130% or less of the federal poverty guideline and may not serve families that have incomes over 225% of federal poverty level.
2. Larimer County provides the following child care services:
  - Sanitation and safety - inspects operations of seven or more children; evaluates compliance with applicable regulations; and provides education and resource materials.
  - Administers the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for Larimer County residents.
3. Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) is the leading non-profit organization that convenes professionals, families and policy makers to raise awareness about issues impacting children from birth to age eight. More specifically, the ECCLC:
  - Provides a foundation of support and helps connect families to essential resources.
  - Assists families in navigating the child care system, providing information about quality care and connecting families to child care options that meet their needs.
  - Supports business by helping employees find and maintain child care.
  - Raises standards of early care and learning.
  - Connects providers to professional growth opportunities.
  - Focuses on the interests and challenges affecting the provider's ability to meet the evolving need of children.
  - Provides support and training of child care providers.
4. Pathways Past Poverty (P3) Child Care Access Committee is a subset of P3, currently focusing on education of employers and employees. The Committee is planning three business summits this fall to discuss child care as a workforce issue and plans to host a community forum in the spring.

5. Colorado State University (CSU) Early Childhood Center (ECC) has a three-fold mission:

- 1) Train students for careers in early childhood education and programming.
- 2) Provide a nurturing environment that utilizes evidence-based best practices to support the development of young children and their families.
- 3) Serve as a campus resource for research and discovery into child and family development and early childhood education.

CSU currently operates an early childhood center and is expanding into new space in Washington School. The new space will enable them to expand from a preschool-only program to a full-age, full week, year around program; with slots for 100 FTE children, primarily for CSU students, faculty and staff, and, as space permits, children from the rest of the Fort Collins community.

6. Non-profit and for-profit child care facilities. In Fort Collins, there are approximately 33 child care centers; 124 family child care homes; 39 preschool child care facilities; and 34 school age child care facilities (Source: ECCLC, 2010).

7. United Way of Larimer County. United way provides funding for child care sliding scale tuition.

8. Poudre School District (PSD) provides services and support to families who meet the federal Early Head Start eligibility requirements (low income, looking for a job, or teen mothers who are in school). Quality preschool, both no cost and tuition based, is available through PSD's Early Childhood Program for children ages three to five years old, in 20 elementary schools. PSD offers prenatal, infant and toddler services (birth to age three), including prenatal parent education support; home visits; educational, hearing and vision screenings; socialization opportunities; and, partnerships with local child care centers. PSD also provides developmentally appropriate early child education; family services; referrals; and, parenting education classes.

9. City of Fort Collins (CFC)

- CFC *City Plan* (2010) Policies:
  - Child care is indirectly addressed in the Economic Health Chapter, in the paragraph entitled “human” on page 18 of the Economic Health Chapter, under the umbrella of “self sufficiency” and “services and infrastructure that contribute to their quality of life”.
  - The Community and Neighborhood Livability Chapter directly mentions child care as a “supporting use” in all neighborhoods, including: Urban Estate Neighborhoods (LIV 27.3, page 78), Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods (LIV 28.2, page 79); and, Medium Density Mixed-Use Neighborhoods (LIV 29.2, page 80). Child care as a “supporting use” is mentioned in all of the “Districts”, including: Downtown District (LIV 33.6, page 86); General Commercial Districts (LIV 34.2, page 87); Community Commercial Districts (LIV 35.2, page 88); Neighborhood Commercial Districts (LIV 36.1, page 89); Employment District (LIV 38.1, page 91); and, the Industrial District (LIV 39.1, page 92).
  - Child care is also indirectly addressed in the policies for neighborhood schools in regard to coordinating with the school districts in the use of schools by “providing opportunities such as...neighborhood...services” (LIV 24.2, page 76).

- The topic of early childhood care and education is directly addressed in the Safety and Wellness Chapter, including: “background” section (page 102), as follows:
    - “Access to community services, including education and early care, can have a positive impact on the economic vitality of the community through increased workforce productivity and well-being, as well as providing benefits to the community as a whole.”
  - Early childhood care is indirectly mentioned under the umbrella of human services in the policy - “Coordinate with Health and Human Service Providers” (SW2.5, page 105) as follows:
    - “Rely on health and human service organizations to provide community health and human services, and focus on improved communication, education, accessibility, and collaboration in order to enhance overall physical and mental health, safety, and wellness of the community. Allocate funds to the Human Services Program to assist local human service providers.”
  - And, “Consider the location of and Transportation to Health and Human Services” (SW2.6, page 105), as follows:
    - “Encourage health and human service providers to carefully consider locations of new facilities and transportation implications, provide transportation to services, and coordinate with the public transportation system.”
  - The topic is also indirectly addressed under the umbrella of human services in the High Performing Community Chapter, including: the policies promoting “a learning community” (HI 2, page 116); and, collaboration with public, private and non-profit organizations (HI 4, page 117; HI 4.5, page 118).
  - Child care is indirectly addressed under the umbrella of human services in the Transportation Chapter, including: the policy for “access to Health and Human Services” (T 10.7, page 128); and, “safety of school age children” (T12.7, page 129).
- CFC Competitive Process Funding. Since 2002, the City has allocated nearly \$1.4 million of Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) and Human Services Program (HSP) funds for child care services. Services and programs funded included sliding scale fee tuition assistance; after-school and school-break child care and youth activities; and nutritious meals, representing 14,490 child slots in these programs. The funding for child care represents approximately 35% of the total CDBG and HSP funds. See attached chart entitled “HSP and CDBG Child Care Funding History”.
  - CFC *Consolidated Housing & Community Development Plan: FY2010-2014* (2010). This Plan, required by HUD, describes an estimate of need and defines how the City anticipates it will spend its federal funds on such things as affordable housing, and public facilities and services. Child care falls under the category of public facilities and services; and is identified as a high priority “community development needs”. One of the unmet needs identified in the Plan is subsidized or free child care, particularly for very-low-income households.
  - CFC *Land Use Code*. Child care centers (six or more children) are permitted in every zone district except the Neighborhood Conservation Low Density District, Residential Foothills District, Rural Lands District, River Conservation District, and Public Open Lands District. Ten of the eighteen zone districts that permit child care centers require administrative review (hearing officer) of new child care centers; four zone districts require staff review; and, four zone districts require Planning and Zoning

Board approval. Family child care homes, relative/friend care, etc., are not regulated by the *Land Use Code*.

- CFC Employee benefits.
  - The City of Fort Collins has contracted with Family Care Connections, Inc. to provide employees with 100 hours per year of child care when other child care options fall through and the employee needs to be at work. Employees pay a co-pay and the hourly cost is subsidized by the City.
  - The City provides child care referral services through its Employee Assistance Program Provider, Managed Health Network (MHN). Care consultant's help employees assess child care needs, understand service options and costs, identify and evaluate child care options and special needs resources, and connect with child care providers.
  - Employees may take sick leave to take care of an ill child, to attend medical appointments, or when an employee adopts a child or receives a foster child.
  - Employees may take Parent Academic Activities Leave for academic activities.
  - The City offers Flexible Spending Accounts for Dependant Care expenses.
  - The City allows the use of flexible schedules and hours for child care where such schedules reasonably coincide with the needs of the department and the public.

## Potential Options for Future City Role, Actions and Strategies

Some key findings that should be considered in the City's future policies and actions related to early childhood care and education includes:

- Research has clearly shown that early childhood care and education benefits the community (Source: Early Childhood Education for All, recommendations from a conference sponsored by Legal Momentum Family Initiative and the MIT Workplace Center, 2005). Some key findings include:
  - Every dollar invested in quality early childhood care and education saves taxpayers up to thirteen dollars in future costs. The Perry Preschool Study followed participants in a high-quality program for more than 40 years and found that, as adults, they were less likely to be arrested, more likely to own a home, and more likely to be employed (Schweinhart et al, 2005).
  - Quality early childhood care and education prepares young children to succeed in school and become better citizens; they earn more, pay more taxes, and commit fewer crimes.
- There are potential short and long term actions and strategies that blend well with the traditional role and services of the City of Fort Collins.
- Child care contributes to the local economy by supporting parents and local employers.
- Accessible, affordable, and quality child care benefits the social and financial needs of parents and the educational and development needs of children.
- The location and availability of child care supports other community development principles and policies including community and neighborhood livability, sustainability, and transportation mobility.
- The largest gap is affordability. According to the U.S Census, low-income parents spend the largest percentage of income on child care or are forced to exit the regulated child care system and seek care in informal settings. The fact is that quality child care is expensive.
- The biggest barriers are state regulations.

- City partnerships are important to overcome challenges of improving the local child care system.
- The City organization could be a model for other employers in the community.

Potential options that appear to be relevant and appropriate for the City to consider in addressing the above conditions are listed below. All of the actions listed will require some level of resources to study and implement. All of the actions are new and are not on any City department's current work program; any new work program actions would need to be evaluated in terms of their relationship to City policies and goals in the City's adopted plans (e.g., *City Plan*; *Consolidated Housing & Community Development Plan*, and, *Economic Action Plan*, their effectiveness in facilitating quality early childhood care and education, and impacts on current work program priorities and resources. City staff has provided an estimate of the order of magnitude of the resources required for each of the potential strategies, as follows:

§ - requires in-house staff time, minimal public process.

\$\$ - requires more staff resources, time, and dollars for research and study; may need consultant services; may include deferral of current revenues; and, some public process to implement.

\$\$\$ - requires most staff resources, time and dollars; may depend upon future BFO allocations, state or federal funding; and, significant public process to implement.

**1. Explore adding new policies in existing plans, such as *City Plan*, *Economic Action Plan*, and the *Consolidated Housing & Community Development Plan*, addressing topics such as:**

- Site child care facilities near employment centers, homes, schools, community centers, etc. (*City Plan*). §
- Encourage and educate employers to support child care for their employees (*City Plan*). §
- Encourage retention of existing and development of new child care facilities in neighborhoods (*City Plan* and *Economic Action Plan*). §
- Incorporate child care and social services into affordable housing, activity centers, and transportation hubs (*City Plan* and *Consolidated Plan*). §
- Give priority of local funding (CDBG/HSP) for child care services, particularly for low income families (*City Plan* and *Consolidated Plan*). §
- Encourage partnerships that support early childhood care and education (*City Plan*). §

**2. Explore actions that can increase the supply and affordability of child care, such as:**

- Seek federal grant opportunities for building new centers. \$\$
- Increase General Fund contributions to the City's Human Services Program Fund earmarked for child care services, particularly for lower income families. \$\$\$
- Remove any potential barriers to the construction or new centers in the Land Use Code; in particular explore barriers resulting from the City's "change of use" regulations. §
- Create incentives for construction of new child care centers (particularly those serving low income families) such as currently provided for affordable housing projects, including priority processing, impact fee delay, development review fee waiver, administrative construction fee waiver, etc.. \$-\$\$

- Create incentives for existing child care facilities to provide sliding scale reduction to parents. The scale decides how much a family will pay based on their income, family size, and number of children in care. \$-\$\$
- Create new *Land Use Code* regulations and/or incentives for siting facilities such as near transit and major employment centers. \$-\$\$
- Prepare information, e.g., a planning guide, for how to start a child care facility, addressing *Land Use Code* and building code requirements, funding opportunities, links to other child care resources, etc.. \$-\$\$
- Link transit hubs with child care facilities. \$-\$\$\$
- Promote child care facilities in the City’s Transit Oriented Development overlay zone and in the new planned unit development regulations (under construction). \$
- Make amendments to the *Land Use Code* such as adding child care centers to the list of permitted uses in the Neighborhood Conservation Low Density zone district subject to administrative review; and, in all four of the zone districts which permit child care centers subject to review by the Planning and Zoning Board, make them subject to administrative review. \$

**3. Explore actions that the City of Fort Collins can take to provide leadership in building community support for early childhood care and education, such as:**

- Model ways for other employers in the community, such as conducting a survey of City employees regarding their need for child care services; explore expanded child care benefits; offer child care learning opportunities; and add a link in City Net for child care information. \$\$-\$\$\$
- Partner with child care centers utilizing their facilities for City outreach and education activities. \$
- Monitor and advocate for early childhood care legislation and funding at the federal and state level; and, in particular with regard to easing unnecessary/overly restrictive State rules and regulations and licensing requirements. \$\$
- Expand duties of an existing board or commission to include early childhood care and education. \$
- Look for a community partner(s), such as the ECCLC, to take the lead role for early childhood care and education in our community; provide child care information to the City, employers, employer organizations, and employees; conduct periodic survey and analysis of families and demographic data to determine anticipated child care needs; and, monitor and advise the City on state and federal legislation. Consider City support and partnership opportunities, where appropriate, for instance underwriting events and studies. \$-\$\$
- Collaborate with public and private organizations in the funding and potential construction of one to two new child care center facilities in “south Fort Collins” and in the Mason Corridor, primarily serving low income families. \$-\$\$\$
- Add an indicator to the City Plan Monitoring program regarding early childhood care and education. \$
- Consider child care in the City’s disaster relief planning. \$\$
- Long term funding, such as a special sales tax (consider combining early childhood care and education, human services, and affordable housing). \$\$\$

**4. Explore actions that build in early childhood care and education in the City's economic policies and actions, such as:**

- Imbed economic information about early childhood care and education in business and economic development marketing materials. \$
- Find opportunities to educate/inform development community about early childhood care and education, particularly low-income housing developers, and businesses employing low income persons. \$
- Utilize City financial incentives (e.g. tax increment financing) to the provision of child care facilities. \$
- Find opportunities and partnerships (Chamber of Commerce, CSU, SBA, etc.) to incubate child care centers, such as business management and "back office" training to child care providers; and, actions to foster the creation of a number of family child care homes. \$\$

**5. Explore actions that increase access to transit, such as:**

- Increase hours of operation and frequency so that parents can get their children to child care and still be at work on time. \$\$\$
- Collaborate with public and private organizations in the funding and potential construction of a new child care center facility in the Mason Corridor/BRT system, adjacent to future stations and transit centers, particularly facilities serving low income families. \$-\$\$\$
- Federal and state transportation grant opportunities. \$\$-\$\$\$

## **Council Direction - Results from the October 25, 2011 City Council Work Session**

The Mayor and all City Councilmembers, except Wade Troxell, were present. Advance Planning Director Joe Frank provided a brief presentation. Staff answering questions included Joe Frank, Tess Heffernan, and Ken Waido.

Questions for City Council included:

1. Does Council have any comments or questions about what the City is currently doing in the area of facilitating early childhood care and education in the community?
2. Compared to what the City is currently doing, does the Council want to consider maintaining, refocusing and/or expanding the City's efforts in facilitating early childhood care and education services in the community?
3. If Council wishes to modify the City's current efforts, what additional strategies should be added to the current program?

The following is a summary of Council comments:

- Council was supportive of maintaining the City's current roles; and refocusing/modifying those roles as described in the Snapshot Report. Council was interested in the City facilitating early childhood care and education; Council was not interested in the City getting directly into the business of providing child care.

- Council was interested in first pursuing actions utilizing existing or small additional resources (generally, actions identified in the Snapshot Report requiring “\$” and “\$\$” level of resources). There were no objections raised in regards to exploring any of the actions. Some Councilmember’s expressed particular interest in exploring child care requirements for larger business development; new sources of City funding (dedicated sales tax) for “bricks and mortar”; tying City economic incentives, for example tax increment, to the provision of child care services; removing barriers in the City’s land use code; linking child care to the City’s economic development programs; incubating new child care providers; partnering with other agencies; and, siting new child care facilities (and affordable housing) in the vicinity of well-established transit routes. Council was also interested in measuring the impacts of actions in terms of what difference(s) will result.
- Council recommended City staff “reach out” to child care providers/agencies to tap their expertise, suggesting that staff invite “10 providers/agencies” to meet to review the list of “potential options for future City role, actions and strategies” and asking them for priorities and/or other ideas. Also, ask them about the “root problem(s)” that prevent current providers from meeting demand (in particular for low income families).
- Council was supportive of emphasizing the value of “education” as a key component of City policy and programs; not just “warehousing” children. Council was interested in understanding how recent discussions with Poudre School District and Larimer County regarding “community life centers” fit in this discussion. Council was interested in knowing more about City programs/facilities that may be used as a surrogate for child care; and, if so, how is/can “early childhood education” be built into these programs/facilities.
- Council was interested in knowing more about the City employee benefit related to “100 hours per year of child care”. In particular, Council wanted to know more about the situations in which this benefit is being used; and, what is the mean salary of employees overall. Some councilmembers would like consideration be given to limiting this benefit to low income employees.
- Council would like an explanation of the apparent drop in total number of children served in 2011 compared to 2010 described in the attachment to the Snapshot Report.
- Council was interested in knowing more about the demand for families who need special hours of child care, beyond the traditional 8-5 working day. Are these needs being met? Council was also interested in knowing more about the requirements for families to receive sliding scale fees and Colorado Child Care Assistance subsidy.
- Council was very complimentary and appreciative of staff efforts, information provided, and the Council discussion. Council was very appreciative of the efforts of child care providers and associated organizations.



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# Early Childhood Care and Education Action Plan

## Introduction

The acceptance of this Report by City Council is the first step in the implementation process. Continuing work to implement these actions will be necessary in order for them to have a lasting impact. The following section describes how “potential options for future City role, actions and strategies” should be carried out.

The following principles guide implementation:

- Implementation can take time, especially when needed resources are limited and required for more than one program.
- While the Action Plan identifies specific programs, implementation measures may be adjusted over time based on new information, changing circumstances, and evaluation of their effectiveness, so long as they remain consistent with their original intent.
- Implementation may require future BFO allocations, and state and federal funding.

## Priority Actions and Strategies

The Priority Actions and Strategies outlined in this plan are organized into two key time frames:

- **Near-term Actions** – Before the next City Budgeting for Outcomes cycle (2011 through 2012).
- **Longer-Term Actions** – Years following the next Budgeting for Outcomes cycle (2013 and beyond).

The following table identifies the recommended actions and strategies within these time frames.

## Near-Term Actions

The near-term actions are efforts that will quickly follow in 2011 through 2012, before the next City Budgeting for Outcomes cycle (2013/2014). They are divided into two categories: items that require City Council action and administrative items. Top priorities have been identified by the planning team based on citizen feedback, general estimates about staff resources and City Council comments from the October 25, 2011 Work Session. City staff has estimated the order of magnitude of the resources required for each of the potential actions, as follows:

\$ - requires in-house staff time, minimal public process.

\$\$ - requires more staff resources, time, and dollars for research and study; may need consultant services; may include deferral of current revenues; and, some public process to implement.

\$\$\$ - requires most staff resources, time and dollars; may depend upon future BFO allocations, state or federal funding; and, significant public process to implement.

## NEAR-TERM ACTIONS: 2011 AND 2012

Near-Term Action item	Description	Resource Estimate	Lead Responsibility
<b>City Council Action Items</b>			
<b>1. Add New Policies to Existing Plans (PRIORITY)</b>	<p>Explore adding new policies in existing plans, e.g. <i>City Plan</i>, <i>Economic Action Plan</i>, and the <i>Consolidated Housing &amp; Community Development Plan</i>, addressing topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site child care facilities near employment centers, homes, schools, community centers, etc. (<i>City Plan</i>).</li> <li>• Encourage and educate employers to support child care for their employees (<i>City Plan</i>).</li> <li>• Encourage retention of existing and development of new child care facilities in neighborhoods (<i>City Plan</i> and <i>Economic Action Plan</i>).</li> <li>• Incorporate child care and social services into affordable housing, activity centers, and transportation hubs (<i>City Plan</i> and <i>Consolidated Plan</i>).</li> <li>• Give priority of local funding (CDBG/HSP) for child care services, particularly for low income families (<i>City Plan</i> and <i>Consolidated Plan</i>).</li> <li>• Encourage partnerships that support early childhood care and education (<i>City Plan</i>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$</li> </ul>	Advance Planning and Economic Health
<b>2. Remove Barriers in Land Use Code (PRIORITY)</b>	<p>Explore removing potential barriers to the construction or new centers in the Land Use Code; for example, explore barriers resulting from the City's "change of use" regulations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$</li> </ul>	CONS
<b>3. Create Incentives in the Development Review Process (PRIORITY)</b>	<p>Explore creating incentives for construction of new child care centers (particularly those serving low income families) such as currently provided for affordable housing projects, including priority processing, impact fee delay, development review fee waiver, administrative construction fee waiver, etc..</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$\$\$</li> </ul>	CONS

## NEAR-TERM ACTIONS: 2011 AND 2012

Near-Term Action item	Description	Resource Estimate	Lead Responsibility
4. Encourage Child Care Facilities in the TOD Overlay Zone and new PUD regulations.	Explore promoting child care facilities in the City's Transit Oriented Development overlay zone and in the new planned unit development regulations (under construction).	• \$	CDNS
5. Amend Land Use Code: Review Procedures for new Child Care facilities	Explore amendments to the <i>Land Use Code</i> such as adding child care centers to the list of permitted uses in the Neighborhood Conservation Low Density zone district subject to administrative review; and, in all four of the zone districts which permit child care centers subject to review by the Planning and Zoning Board, make them subject to administrative review.	• \$	CDNS
6. Expand Duties of a City Board to Include Early Childhood Issues	Explore expanding duties of an existing board or commission to include early childhood care and education.	• \$	City Clerk
7. City Financial Incentives (PRIORITY)	Explore utilizing City financial incentives (e.g. tax increment financing) to the provision of child care facilities.	• \$	Economic Health
<b>Administrative Items (no City Council action required)</b>			
8. Prepare Information for How to Start a Child Care facility	Explore preparing information, e.g., a planning guide, for how to start a child care facility, addressing <i>Land Use Code</i> and building code requirements, funding opportunities, links to other child care resources, etc..	• \$\$\$	CDNS
9. City Outreach and Education	Explore partnering with child care centers utilizing their facilities for City outreach and education activities.	• \$	Various - Recreation, Police Services, and SRTS
10. City Plan Monitoring Program	Explore adding an indicator to the City Plan Monitoring program regarding early childhood care and education.	• \$	Advance Planning

## NEAR-TERM ACTIONS: 2011 AND 2012

Near-Term Action item	Description	Resource Estimate	Lead Responsibility
<b>11. Economic Information in City Materials (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore imbedding economic information about early childhood care and education in business and economic development marketing materials.	• \$	Economic Health
<b>12. Inform Development Community (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore opportunities to educate/inform development community about early childhood care and education, particularly low-income housing developers, and businesses employing low income persons.	• \$	Various - Economic Health, Advance Planning, and CDNS

## Longer-Term Actions

The longer-term actions are efforts that will occur several years following the upcoming 2013/2014 Budgeting for Outcomes cycle. They are divided into two categories: items that require City Council action, and administrative items. Funding for these actions will be based on the next Budgeting for Outcomes cycle. Top priorities have been identified by the planning team based on citizen feedback, general estimates about staff resources, and City Council comments from the October 25, 2011 Work Session. City staff has estimated the order of magnitude of the resources required for each of the potential actions, as follows:

\$ - requires in-house staff time, minimal public process.

\$\$ - requires more staff resources, time, and dollars for research and study; may need consultant services; may include deferral of current revenues; and, some public process to implement.

\$\$\$ - requires most staff resources, time and dollars; may depend upon future BFO allocations, state or federal funding; and, significant public process to implement.

## LONGER-TERM ACTIONS: 2013 AND BEYOND

Longer-Term Action Item	Description	Resource Estimate	Lead Responsibility
<b>City Council Action Items</b>			
<b>1. Earmark General Funds</b>	Explore increasing General Fund contributions to the City's Human Services Program Fund earmarked for child care services, particularly for lower income families.	• \$\$\$	Advance Planning

## LONGER-TERM ACTIONS: 2013 AND BEYOND

Longer-Term Action Item	Description	Resource Estimate	Lead Responsibility
2. <b>New Incentives (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore new incentives for existing child care facilities to provide sliding scale reduction to parents. The scale decides how much a family will pay based on their income, family size, and number of children in care.	• \$-\$\$	Advance Planning
3. <b>New Land Use Code Provisions (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore new <i>Land Use Code</i> regulations and/or incentives for sitting facilities such as near transit and major employment centers.	• \$-\$\$	CDNS
4. <b>Monitor State/Federal Legislation</b>	Explore monitoring and advocating for early childhood care legislation and funding at the federal and state level; and, in particular with regard to easing unnecessary/overly restrictive State rules and regulations and licensing requirements.	• \$\$	City Manager
5. <b>New Child Care Centers in South Fort Collins (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore opportunities to collaborate with public and private organizations in the funding and potential construction of one to two new child care center facilities in “south Fort Collins” and in the Mason Corridor, primarily serving low income families.	• \$-\$\$\$	City Manager
6. <b>Long Term Funding</b>	Explore long term funding options, such as a special sales tax (consider combining early childhood care and education, human services, and affordable housing).	• \$\$\$	Finance
7. <b>Transit Service and Operations</b>	Explore increasing hours of operation and frequency so that parents can get their children to child care and still be at work on time.	• \$\$\$	Transfort
8. <b>Needs Assessment for New Development (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore conducting a child care needs assessment for new development projects.	• \$\$	Advance Planning
<b>Administrative Items (no City Council action required)</b>			
9. <b>Federal/State Transit Funding</b>	Explore federal and state transportation grant opportunities.	• \$\$-\$\$\$	Transfort

## LONGER-TERM ACTIONS: 2013 AND BEYOND

Longer-Term Action Item	Description	Resource Estimate	Lead Responsibility
<b>10. Incubate New Child Care Providers (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore opportunities and partnerships (Chamber of Commerce, CSU, SBA, etc.) to incubate child care centers, such as business management and “back office” training to child care providers; and, actions to foster the creation of a number of family child care homes.	• \$\$	Economic Health
<b>11. Community Partnerships (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore community partner(s) opportunities, such as the ECCLC, to take the lead role for early childhood care and education in our community; provide child care information to the City, employers, employer organizations, and employees; conduct periodic survey and analysis of families and demographic data to determine anticipated child care needs; and, monitor and advise the City on state and federal legislation. Consider City support and partnership opportunities, where appropriate, for instance underwriting events and studies.	• \$-\$\$	City Manager
<b>12. Disaster Relief Planning</b>	Explore child care in the City’s disaster relief planning.	• \$\$	Poudre Fire Authority
<b>13. Transit Hubs (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore linking transit hubs and routes with child care facilities.	• \$-\$\$\$	Transfort
<b>14. Federal Construction Grant Opportunities</b>	Explore federal grant opportunities for building new centers.	• \$\$	Advance Planning
<b>15. Insert “Education” Value into City Programs and Facilities (PRIORITY)</b>	Explore opportunities to insert the value of “early childhood education” in City programs and facilities that may be used as surrogates for child care	• \$-\$\$	Recreation
<b>15. City of Fort Collins as Model Employer</b>	Explore conducting a survey of City employees regarding their need for child care services; explore expanded child care benefits; explore offering child care learning opportunities; and explore adding a link in City Net for child care information.	• \$\$-\$\$\$	Human Resources

HSP & CDBG Childcare Funding History

Funding Year	B.A.S.E. Camp-Sliding Scale	# Served	Boys & Girls Club-After-School	# Served	Childcare Collaborative	# Served	Family Center-Sliding Scale	# Served	Food Bank-Kids Café	# Served	Respite Care-Sliding Scale	# Served	Springfield Court-Sliding Scale	# Served	Sunshine School	# Served	UDCC/Teaching Tree-Scholarships	# Served	Total to Childcare	Total HSP & CDBG Funds Available	% to Childcare	Total # Served by Year
2011	\$57,000	135	\$18,644	475			\$30,000	28	\$21,000	1,225	\$30,000	33					\$80,000	60	\$218,540	\$689,455	31.70%	1,956
2010	\$54,200	216	\$17,458	913			\$20,500	20	\$21,667	1,620	\$22,500	34					\$51,500	49	\$190,628	\$587,959	33.56%	2,852
2009	\$80,831	183	\$18,309	1,245			\$20,000	24	\$27,959	1,725	\$25,000	45					\$54,367	68	\$209,688	\$641,529	32.69%	3,290
2008	\$48,000	131	\$11,520	1,118			\$20,000	46	\$22,167	1,504	\$25,000	42					\$54,000	53	\$183,528	\$598,643	30.66%	2,894
2007	\$35,506	156							\$14,719	1,092	\$20,000	40	\$20,000	23			\$54,000	47	\$145,536	\$493,023	29.52%	1,358
2006	\$33,815	164							\$15,472	830	\$20,000	46	\$28,400	30			\$60,500	51	\$159,257	\$496,964	32.05%	1,121
2005	\$19,685	128					\$7,750	62			\$10,000	25	\$15,000	28			\$23,500	42	\$76,176	\$173,113	44.00%	283
2004	\$19,685	134									\$7,500	27	\$17,500	35	\$14,000	16	\$25,500	49	\$84,397	\$200,850	42.02%	261
2003					\$88,519	243							\$15,000	32					\$81,794	\$210,880	38.79%	275
2002					\$83,193	200													\$83,393	\$194,506	32.59%	200
	\$328,722	1,245	\$65,931	3,751	\$129,712	443	\$98,250	180	\$122,964	7,998	\$160,000	292	\$95,900	148	\$14,000	16	\$383,367	419				14,490

# Served = the number of unduplicated children served for that grant year  
 The numbers served reported for 2011 are anticipated numbers  
 The numbers served for 2010 reflect reporting as of 7/31/2011

**Total Number Served = 14,490**

- Notes
1. Childcare Collaborative was made up of BASE Camp, United Day Care Center (now Teaching Tree), Respite Care and Sunshine School. Disbanded 2003/2004
  2. Springfield Court - out of business 2007/2008
  3. Sunshine School - out of business 2005/2006