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Executive Summary

In February 2004 the Fort Collins City Council appointed a group of community representatives to develop a set of recommendations intended to address the economic vitality and sustainability of Fort Collins. Members of the “Economic Vitality and Sustainability Action Group” (EVSAG) were carefully selected to represent a broad and diverse range of community interests and perspectives.

The group met weekly for four months to address the tasks set forth by Council and to provide the following report. As discussion unfolded, four major themes, twenty corresponding strategies, and one-hundred twenty-nine tactics were developed for Council consideration. The detail of EVSAG discussions are contained in the body of this report. The major themes and strategies are summarized as follows:

Theme A: Big Picture

This theme looks at those trends and mindsets that occur beyond the immediate Fort Collins area and affect our community nonetheless. Examples include the impact of federal and state programs, global economic impacts on primary jobs, or a declining quality of life. The “big picture” also includes consideration of changing cultural mindsets and evolving paradigm shifts such as “sustainability” that can dramatically influence our economic vitality over the long term.

Strategy A1: Diversify and broaden our economic sectors while actively strengthening our existing business sectors.
Strategy A2: Protect and nurture our economic engine by pursuing and developing mechanisms for stable, long term public funding.
Strategy A3: Enhance our social, cultural and environmental leading edge by implementing current City plans, developing additional community actions, and retaining our community’s extraordinary quality of life.

Theme B: Immediate Threats

This theme addresses short term strategies needed to address several immediate areas of concern including declining revenues resulting from a diminishing federal, state, and local funding base, expanding community infrastructure service needs, and the resulting duty of providing more with less.

Strategy B1: Strive to protect and sustain higher education funding for Colorado State University and Front Range Community College.
Strategy B2: Address the perception that the City of Fort Collins is not business friendly by fostering a business friendly attitude that encourages economic vitality and community sustainability. Ensure that City departments and staff provide clear, accurate and consistent answers to business inquiries.
Strategy B3: Address under-funded public infrastructure throughout Fort Collins.
Strategy B4: Identify economic, environmental and social “good” growth principles. Address the perception that growth does not pay its own way by communicating the cost and benefit of development and the plans to cover these costs.
Strategy B5: Support existing business expansion and retention efforts and pursue strategies to encourage the retention and creation of high-paying jobs within our community.
Strategy B6: Retain and improve our identity as a “regional shopping destination” by actively protecting the commercial and retail value of Old Town and the Foothills Mall.
Strategy B7: Make our City government more efficient and prioritize how to spend City funds rather than primarily focusing on increasing revenues.
Theme C: Competitive Model

This theme addresses the fact that we live and operate in a competitive model and should be prepared and willing to communicate our competitive advantage. In signaling the value of Fort Collins to others, we need to identify, define, build upon, and promote our uniqueness. Determining how to present and position our community will require that we know our competition and understand the means for truly distinguishing Fort Collins as a “World Class Community.”

Strategy C1: Actively commit to making Fort Collins a quality place to live by embracing the dynamic relationship of “quality of life” and “quality of opportunity” elements.

Strategy C2: Develop a community culture of tolerance, support, and acceptance, resulting in a community message that says “you are truly welcome here.”

Strategy C3: Foster our unique competitive advantage. Develop a compelling community branding that speaks to the “heart and soul” of Fort Collins.

Strategy C4: Communicate with the existing business community to better understand and address their changing needs and provide coordinated and readily available access to information that existing and emerging businesses can utilize.

Strategy C5: Challenge (and work with) CSU to become the core of our learning culture and excel as a source of innovation for future economic development in our community.

Theme D: Partnerships

This theme recognizes that the City of Fort Collins alone cannot create an economically vital and sustainable community. For lasting economic vitality and sustainability we must draw multiple constituencies together to leverage our diminishing resources. We must seek to forge strong community partnerships with existing entities and emerging business clusters. Our citizens, business community, academic institutions, regional government bodies, and the community at large, must join in and support the process. As a beginning point the City should strive to identify and better understand our existing partnerships in order to avoid duplication, promote efficiency, improve the return on public investment and build stronger collaborations.

Strategy D1: Support and coordinate services devoted to our community’s small business and entrepreneurial activities. Create partnerships that will help entrepreneurs access capital, encourage our highly educated workforce to create new business, and foster stronger relationships with existing economic development entities.

Strategy D2: Conduct practical hands-on workshops designed to generate new business development by bridging the gap between research, technology transfer, and product development; and in doing so, forge an improved interaction between research, entrepreneurial, and business development activities in our community.

Strategy D3: Create partnerships between National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL), wind and solar institutes, green building programs, CSU Institute for the Built Environment, and similar entities that can, (a) capitalize on our brewing industry by finding a use for by-product output; (b) build partnerships between green building and non-profits to achieve affordable housing goals; and (c) improve the sustainability of our community while spurring new business development.

Strategy D4: Improve the partnering relationship between our community’s higher education (CSU, FRCC), K-12 education (PSD), public health education (PVHS), City of Fort Collins, and Larimer County government agencies by establishing regular “high level leadership” meeting activities to foster common economic vitality actions.

Strategy D5: Build partnerships to lead and expand upon our cultural and arts industry. Partner with developers to help build downtown cultural forums and facilities.

EVSAG members strongly encourage City Council to continue this process and provide the community leadership required to implement the strategies and recommendations contained in this report.
Introduction

The City of Fort Collins has been recognized as one of the nation’s most attractive cities in which to live, play, work, retire, and raise a family. Progressive and forward-thinking community development policies, combined with a strong economy, have provided our community with the opportunity to grow economically, provide gainful employment for our citizens, protect our environment, preserve important natural areas, and provide our citizens with excellent municipal services and public facilities.

As in many Northern Colorado cities, the recent economic downturn provided an opportunity to discuss and develop strategies for maintaining a community with both a high quality of life and a high quality of opportunity. In response to maintaining the economic health of our community, while sustaining an exceptional quality of life, the City of Fort Collins embarked upon an examination of our community’s current economic vitality and community sustainability. To initiate this effort, City Council established an Economic Vitality and Sustainability Action Group (EVSAG) comprised of a broad and balanced cross-section of community and business interests.

On February 19, 2004, the group set forth to accomplish the following tasks to develop an Economic Vitality and Sustainability Report. Over the course of nineteen meetings, the group would strive to identify:

a. the economic challenges, strengths, and issues facing the (Fort Collins) community;
b. specific economic strategies to leverage the community’s strengths and overcome the community’s problems;
c. business clusters where existing community assets give Fort Collins a competitive advantage;
d. the partnerships and operating structures that can most effectively implement the economic goals and strategies of the City Council;
e. specific measures and benchmarks in which to measure the economic health of the community;
f. guidelines for funding an Economic Vitality and Community Sustainability Fund (the “Fund”) and for utilizing monies deposited into the Fund; and
g. provide a report and recommendations to the City Council no later than June 30, 2004.

EVSAG’s work has resulted in development of the following report. The report is presented as a community work-in-progress; it contains a synthesis of the discussion points, ideas, thoughts, concerns, and considerations addressed in establishing the guiding principles and recommendations to City Council.

Economic Challenges, Strengths and Issues

The latest economic growth cycle provided expanding employment, increasing municipal revenues and, consequently, the means to improve some municipal services. Correspondingly, the current economic downturn cost many residents their jobs, and presented the community with declining municipal revenues and a reduction in services.

In response to Council’s request to identify the economic challenges, strengths, and issues facing the community, EVSAG embarked upon a strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities (SWOT) analysis. The SWOT analysis unearthed a broad spectrum of perspectives and illuminated the common ground shared by differing perspectives. The final SWOT analysis (located Appendix A of this report) provides the foundation for the four major themes\(^1\) and twenty strategies contained within the next section of this report.

\(^1\) EVSAG merged an initial fifth theme (Economic gardening, hunting, and gathering) into the remaining four themes.
Economic Themes, Strategies, and Tactics for Consideration

Having identified the challenges and opportunities facing our community, EVSAG turned its attention to identifying specific economic strategies capable of leveraging community strengths and overcoming community problems. To initiate this task, staff provided EVSAG with a brief review of existing City policy and planning documents (City Plan and the Downtown Strategic Plan) to inform the group of existing economic and community development strategies. In addition, staff presented and EVSAG endorsed a working definition of “sustainability” to foster a common understanding of the term and establish a foundation for generating the strategies that follow. Over the course of its work, EVSAG also developed a definition for “economic vitality”.

Sustainability

“Sustainability” is the long term social, economic, and environmental health of our community. A sustainable community remains healthy without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Quality human-scale urban design, energy-efficient building practices, economic health, diversity of housing, public safety, environmental protection, and mobility will all make Fort Collins a sustainable community. (A sustainability diagram is presented in Appendix B).

Economic Vitality

“Economic vitality” is defined as a community’s capacity to be economically competitive, resilient and attractive to private and public enterprise. Communities with economic vitality enable citizens to enjoy the satisfying economic activities (e.g. jobs) and the quality of life that sets the standard for long-term sustainability. They also dynamically embrace change and seize opportunities. They contribute to the economic well-being of their residents. Economically vital communities encourage and recognize innovation, hard work, good character, and community involvement of their citizens and business.

In completing this task, EVSAG also chose to address the role of the City of Fort Collins, identify other lead organizations, and provide suggested tactics for accomplishing proposed strategies.

EVSAG developed specific strategies and tactics for each of the four major themes. The twenty resulting strategies along with their corresponding tactics are outlined in this report. EVSAG believes that the City has a “primary” role in 12 of these strategies and a “support” role in eight of these strategies. The primary roles generally refer to the to the City providing an excellent infrastructure and services based on business and community needs that support existing business retention, expansion, economic gardening, and new business start-up activities. The City’s support role targets the creation and fostering of new business activities through networks of community partnering and collaborative activities.

Each strategy reflects the consensus of EVSAG members. The tactics for each strategy are presented as a range of options for Council consideration, with some receiving stronger support from members than others. Finally, when reviewing these themes, strategies and tactics, please note that their order of appearance does not imply a hierarchy of preference or priority.
Strategies, Roles, Tactics and Responsibilities

Theme A: Big Picture

This theme looks at global, national, state, and regional trends that occur beyond the immediate Fort Collins area and nonetheless affect our community (e.g. the impact of federal and state programs; global economic impacts on primary jobs; quality of life issues). The “big picture” also includes a focus on sustainability, consideration of the changing cultural mindsets and paradigm shifts that will influence our economic vitality over the long term (e.g. becoming adaptable to change; becoming an “open minded learning” rather than “closed minded knowing” community; and examining how we integrate economic vitality with environmental sustainability).

Strategy A1: Diversify and broaden our economic sectors while actively strengthening our existing business sectors.

City’s Role: Support

Suggested Lead Organization(s): economic development organizations, small business organizations, and other business assistance organizations.

City Responsibilities:

• Address east/west movement across railroad. Meet with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission and railroad to address improved access. If deemed crucial, issue a monthly progress report and keep this in the forefront.

• Provide a more visible and accessible business contact in the City organization who can serve in an ombudsman role and also serve as a central agent for the collection, organization, storage, and dissemination of business information, and of local, regional, state, national, and global trends and influences, and can perform referral services and research assistance, as appropriate.

• Promote access to reasonable/affordable health benefits as a pool for existing business and new business startups; provide low risk, high reward environments for telecommuters, artists, and entrepreneurs who need the infrastructure.

• Utilize business surveys on a regular basis; interview and communicate with businesses; report findings to Council on a regular basis.

• Establish a resource group that provides information and advice to the Economic Advisor and City Council on economic vitality and sustainability issues on a quarterly basis.

• Analyze the impact of our relatively fixed Growth Management Area (GMA) on our economy. Develop a plan to smooth transition from a community dependent on outward growth to a more mature community that grows up and fills in.

• Sponsor or conduct an annual “Big Picture” idea session and focus on what can be done to enhance our sustainable economy. Strive to engage the public as partners in these conversations. Document progress from year to year to build credibility into the process.
Strategy A2: Protect and nurture our economic engine by pursuing and developing mechanisms for stable, long-term public funding.

City’s Role: Primary

Tactics for Council Consideration:
• Import retail sales tax and revenue into our community. Consider how infrastructure can enhance this tactic, i.e. the cultural campus or conference learning center concepts.
• Continue programs such as “Shop Fort Collins First” to keep our retail dollars in the community.
• Continually examine other city models that are progressive in meeting this strategy.
• Study sources of sales tax dollars to more fully understand and utilize this information. Model the impact of retail growth in neighboring communities on our future revenue stream.
• Work to get our fair share of the gross contribution to and net return of state funding to the City of Fort Collins. Capture higher percentage of transportation gas taxes and increase transportation funding share back money from the state.
• Further establish the uniqueness of our downtown area (e.g., by connecting with the Poudre River area, enhancing our cultural destination).
• Look at finding or supporting sustainable funding sources for existing economic development programs, e.g. Fort Collins Business Incubator, Fort Collins Microloan Program, City’s Economic Advisor, Small Business Development Center, etc.
• Relative to City policy, ensure that new growth pays the costs associated with the infrastructure necessary to support that growth. Examples include new infrastructure and enhanced capacity of existing infrastructure where negatively impacted.
• Identify alternative funding sources and implement where appropriate.

Strategy A3: Enhance our social, cultural and environmental leading edge by implementing current City plans, developing additional community actions, and retaining our community’s extraordinary quality of life.

City’s Role: Primary

Tactics for Council Consideration:
• Continue to implement and support current City and DDA plans. Assist with prioritization and provide leadership relative to priority projects.
• Create means to infuse City government with new and creative ideas. For example:
  - Convene a creative thinkers group.
  - Create a link on the City’s website to encourage citizens to share their bright ideas.
• Combine environmental and sustainable principles with excellent design concepts, e.g.
  - Start a green building program, incorporating alternative energy sources, energy efficiency, use of ecologically-friendly building materials, and other aspects. Use current resources (Institute for the Built Environment at CSU, other CSU resources, City, etc.) to develop and support it.
  - Promote and celebrate intriguing and diverse design, sustainability, and green building architecture resulting in a unique built environment throughout Fort Collins as a unique part of our community.
- Cull lessons learned from projects such as the Longmont New Prospect Town development.

• Develop policies that encourage redevelopment; identify and mitigate obstacles that limit redevelopment.

• Invest in efforts to highlight our community’s cultural activities and identify Fort Collins as a “cultural destination.”

• Retain the “funky” aspects of our community. Do not over-sanitize us; avoid homogenization.

• Weave our natural areas into our entire community and trail system.

• Review City facilities, amenities, and infrastructure for desirability to the retirement niche seeking an active lifestyle.

• Continue to support city programs such as the Environmental Program Series for Business.

**Theme B: Immediate Threats**

Short term strategies are needed to address several immediate areas of concern including, a diminishing federal, state, and local public sector funding base, expanding community infrastructure and services needs, and the resulting duty of providing more with less. Immediate threats to our community also include the lack of community forums for people with differing perspectives to constructively work through important community issues.

**Strategy B1:** Strive to protect and sustain higher education funding for Colorado State University and Front Range Community College.

**City’s Role:** Support

**Suggested Lead Organization(s):** CSU, Front Range Community College, Chamber of Commerce and local legislators.

**City’s Responsibility:**

• Lobby local legislators, governor, and others about the importance of Colorado State University and other institutions for a healthy Colorado economy.

• Meet regularly with CSU and FRCC presidents and officials to coordinate strategies for lobbying, educating legislators and other key officials, and communicating with those groups.

• Work with other municipalities to reduce the mandated negative elements of TABOR, Gallagher, and Amendment 23.

• Work with CSU and FRCC to understand their funding needs.

• Sponsor meetings between state representatives and City officials to effectively promote Northern Colorado higher education funding initiatives in the State assembly.

• Initiate a “summit meeting” to assess the state of higher education in our community and identify avenues to leverage strengths. Assist the lobbying effort by including local and state legislators. Media coverage will serve as a means to educate the public to the situation as well as provide accountability.
Strategy B2: Address the perception that the City of Fort Collins is not business friendly by fostering a business friendly attitude that encourages economic vitality and community sustainability. Ensure that City departments and staff provide clear, accurate, and consistent answers to business inquiries.

City’s Role: Primary

Tactics for Council Consideration:
• Conduct community outreach specific to business activities.
  - Publicize City of Fort Collins services.
  - Publicize City’s process improvements and success stories (e.g. improved development review).
  - Openly communicate the role of the City of Fort Collins in business development activity.
• Conduct business outreach as a means to discuss issues, solutions, and city actions. Examples of methods of outreach include:
  - Continuing to distribute business newsletter and communicate via utility billing inserts.
  - Communicating during City/business interactions such as sales tax license renewal.
  - Surveying existing and former businesses to identify perceptions about the Fort Collins business environment.
• Take a customer approach to helping people with the development review process. For example:
  - Examine and improve the orientation process.
  - Develop an exit survey.
  - Establish an ombudsman as a guide to the development process.
  - Continuously evaluate customer service policies and adherence to City Plan.
• Actively communicate with the media to clarify City information and promote a positive image.
• Provide education for City employees that works to eliminate the perception that the City discourages new business ideas.

Strategy B3: Address under-funded public infrastructure throughout Fort Collins.

City’s Role: Primary

Tactics for Council Consideration:
• Pursue transportation funding solutions by providing the leadership needed to reach out and develop a broad based consensus in the community on top transportation needs and funding mechanisms for addressing them. For example, consider:
  - Adjusting transportation impact fees to cover unfunded infrastructure, where negatively impacted.
  - Continue to pursue a transportation tax initiative and work collaboratively towards getting this passed.
  - Explore options such as creating Special Improvement Districts or Public Improvement Fees for critical areas.
• Improve funding for City of Fort Collins public library.
• Analyze and consider using reserves to solve under-funded infrastructure.
• Address North College infrastructure deficiencies (e.g. floodplain and storm water issues).
• Support DDA infrastructure development.
• Work with other municipalities to reduce the negative elements of TABOR, Gallagher, and Amendment 23.
• Give voters clear choices rather than lumping options together.
• Develop a real-time prioritization process for critical transportation improvements.
• Relative to City policy, ensure that new growth pays the costs associated with the infrastructure necessary to support that growth. Examples include new infrastructure and enhanced capacity of existing infrastructure where negatively impacted.
• Continue to pursue regional investment and revenue sharing mechanisms as the means for addressing beneficial regional developments and community infrastructure funding needs. For example, apply this tactic when pursuing development projects such as regional shopping malls, lifestyle centers, auto complexes, and major entertainment centers.

**Strategy B4:** Identify economic, environmental and social “good” growth principles. Address the perception that growth does not pay its own way by communicating the cost and benefit of development and plans to cover these costs.

**City’s Role:** Primary

**Tactics for Council Consideration:**
• Explore the creation of a City grant-funding process for contributing to economic vitality and sustainable development activities.
• Communicate to the general public the cost and current development fee contributions by business (commercial), industrial, and residential development. In doing so consider the following:
  - When calculating cost of development, separate past, current, and future costs and include broader cost considerations.
  - Consider how development fees (existing and proposed regulations) impact affordable housing and seek solutions to offset unintended consequences. Consider addressing the loss of affordable housing by developing a demonstration project.
  - Differentiate between economic vitality and sustainability vs. population growth issues. Seek greater knowledge concerning the benefit and cost realities of each.
• Seek honest communication about differing view issues until we adequately address all valid concerns.

**Strategy B5:** Support existing business expansion and retention efforts and pursue strategies to encourage the retention and creation of high-paying jobs within our community.

**City’s Role:** Support

**Suggested Lead Organization (s):** economic development organizations, Chamber of Commerce, small business organizations, and other business assistance organizations.

**City’s Responsibilities:**
• Streamline the process for expansion of existing business and redevelopment within the City without compromising the intent of current regulations and guidelines.
• Recognize the value of existing businesses, their good business practices, and their community value; strive to reward them for their proven community merits and contribution to our community quality of life. Initiate a recognition program.
• Encourage the local business-to-business marketing and encourage links between local suppliers and buyers by starting or linking to a “what’s made in Fort Collins” website.
• Protect, develop, and support our existing agri-business cluster, both traditional and organic practices; work to encourage continuation of our farmer’s markets and seek a permanent location downtown.
• Proactively contact existing Fort Collins employers to:
  - Let them know the City supports their presence in the community and their need or desire to grow in Fort Collins rather than elsewhere.
  - Communicate the types of support the City and other partnering organizations can provide, e.g. Colorado First Grants for training, etc.

**Strategy B6:** Retain and improve our identity as a “regional shopping destination” by actively protecting the commercial and retail value of Old Town and the Foothills Mall.

**City’s Role:** Support

**Suggested Lead Organization(s):** Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce, Foothills Mall, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and other business associations

**City’s Responsibilities:**
• Make redevelopment of retail clusters a priority. Look for non-financial incentives (e.g. a more streamlined process) for appropriate redevelopment projects.
• Support “Shop Fort Collins First” – establish and promote a website linking to local businesses, making it convenient to shop local and limit internet leakage.
• Facilitate enhancement to core retail areas.
• Work with DDA and others to understand their needs and issues before initiating new ordinances
• Invest in the necessary level of policing to protect the economic viability of Downtown.
• Continue to support CVB effort to market our community and attract tourism dollars.
• Create a gateway entrance from I-25 area to Visitor’s Center.
• Provide better direction to visitors. The current signage is not adequate to get people to major attractions (Downtown, CSU, etc.). Signage is also lacking directional arrows as to parking downtown. I-25 signage directs the turn-off for Fort Fun but not for our Historic Downtown.
• Limit the amount of construction disruption in a specific area within a limited time period and take into consideration our business and institutional seasonal activity.
**Strategy B7:** Make City government more efficient and prioritize how to spend City funds rather than primarily focusing on increasing revenues.

**City’s Role:** Primary

**Tactics for Council Consideration:**
- Use benchmarks or ratios to determine employee pay and also use a wide variety of benchmarks to measure efficiencies, e.g. examine the number of employees per capita.
- Work with other government agencies and entities to look at ways to increase efficiencies. For example, PSD and transit schedules; sharing of city, college and university library facilities; and to examine ways to share funding between different entities with common goals.
- Consider making the Budget Advisory Committee a permanent board.
- Analyze the City Utilities’ efficiency and effectiveness.
- Maximize capital assets, conduct a life-cycle analysis of capital investments, and charge market rates for municipal goods and services where appropriate.
- Examine potential outsourcing (privatizing) of City services that can be purchased less expensively on the open market.

**Theme C: Competitive Model**

In signaling the value of Fort Collins to others, we need to identify, define, build upon, and promote our uniqueness. Determining how to present and position our community will require that we know our competition and understand the means for truly distinguishing Fort Collins as a “World Class Community.”

**Strategy C1:** Actively commit to making Fort Collins a quality place to live by embracing the dynamic relationship of “quality of life” and “quality of opportunity” elements.

**City’s Role:** Primary

**Tactics for Council Consideration:**
- Seek to fully understand Fort Collins’ high national rankings relative to quality of life issues.
  - Identify and categorize opportunities found in Fort Collins; include the strengths and opportunities found in this report
  - Utilize citizen polls and other methods in order to fully comprehend what issues are of highest priority to residents.
- Track job variety, business segments and workforce levels to create awareness for a balanced marketplace.
- Continue to study peer communities that reflect both quality of life and opportunity elements and work to integrate viable aspects into the fabric of Fort Collins.
- Seize opportunity for future clustering possibilities as they emerge.
  - Promote a clean energy development industry including wind, solar, and hydrogen (e.g. CSU small engine lab).
  - Encourage (via conferences, symposia, incubators and other unique activities) innovative business options such as “green gazelles” (environmentally conscious, fast growth companies).
- Encourage and support the formation of a bioscience cluster.

  • In support of this strategy continue to:
    - Protect natural areas and open spaces, and provide appropriate recreational opportunities.
    - Implement the standards defined in City Plan and Land Use Code to highlight the things we find important in Fort Collins ensuring a balance in “quality of life” and “quality of opportunity” elements.
    - Strive to achieve balanced opportunities in housing stock, variety, and pricing. Work towards crafting cooperative solutions when addressing affordable housing needs and issues.

  • Work with other entities to develop ongoing programs and systems to produce and maintain a well-educated and skilled workforce.

  • Recognize the challenges and weaknesses (as identified in this report) in building economic opportunity and achieving quality of life.

**Strategy C2:** Develop a community culture of tolerance, support, and acceptance, resulting in a community message that says “you are truly welcome here.”

**City’s Role:** Primary

**Tactics for Council Consideration:**

  • Encourage a continuing dialogue among community leaders regarding diversity issues and the culture of our community. Bring these issues out into the open.
  
  • Look at getting volunteers to help people downtown, e.g. Denver’s 16th Street Mall model, DIA Ambassadors, Fort Collins’ Downtown Information Center.
  
  • Work with PSD, FRCC and CSU to address racism and other forms of intolerance that exist in this community.
  
  • Recognize that diversity issues and problems do exist in our community. Develop benchmarks to measure improvements and understand setbacks.
  
  • Encourage the City of Character concept and increase efforts in this area.
  
  • Utilize the services of the Human Rights Office to address issues.
  
  • Look for opportunities to involve people who are not always part of the mainstream or system, e.g. the involvement of Workenders on the Gustav Swanson area.
  
  • Communicate the role of various Boards and Commissions. Change their role from a reactive to an active one.

**Strategy C3:** Foster our unique competitive advantage. Develop a compelling community branding that speaks to the “heart and soul” of Fort Collins.

**City’s Role:** Primary

**Tactics for Council Consideration:**

  • Evaluate if the City wants to embark on a branding exercise. If so, do it in a comprehensive, inclusive way. Reassess if “The Choice City” has meaning. Focus on fostering our unique competitive advantages. Identify the attitude and essence of our community. Our brand has to be authentic and comprehensive – not just a “spin.”
• Develop Eco-Tourism business by focusing on Fort Collins’ parks and open space; promoting green business and building programs; offering incentives for sustainable green business; promoting heritage, cultural, experience and adventure travel; and promoting a “rocky mountain sun country” image.

• Collect information on the constellation of our competition (both negative and positive examples), not to react, but to define our course for success.

• Broaden City utility services to address cogeneration and new emerging energy production for feedback into the electric grid.

**Strategy C4:** Communicate with the existing business community to better understand and address their changing needs and provide coordinated and readily available access to information that existing and emerging businesses can utilize.

**City’s Role:** Primary

**Tactics for Council Consideration:**

• Investigate opportunities for generating and linking information and market research to existing businesses; look at what other cities do and whether it pays back.

• Develop partnering relationships between small business support agencies to address small business information and market research needs. Use business incubator as a model.

• Create and continually update a database of business resources and publicize availability of the Fort Collins Business Resource Guide; have staff available to assist.

• Act as coordinator of business data provided by other existing organizations.

• Have the Economic Advisor play an active role in linking with NCEDC and other organizations that provide data/research.

• Regularly survey and stay in communication with businesses to assess and stay abreast of their needs or use information other groups are gathering. Participate in the NCEDC business surveys or in other business surveys.

**Strategy C5:** Challenge (and work with) CSU to become the core of our learning culture and excel as a source of innovation for future economic development in our community.

**City’s Role:** Support

**Suggested Lead Organization(s):** CSU, EVSAG, Chamber of Commerce, NCEDC, Fort Collins Business Incubator

**City’s Responsibility:**

• Work for better coordination and communication between the City and CSU. Clearly demonstrate that this is critical to the long term health of the City and CSU.
  • Identify a staff person to interface with the CSU Advisory Group to enhance communication between the City and CSU.
  • Prioritize opportunities that emerge from this endeavor.

• In cooperation with CSU, create a strategic plan for leveraging the core of our learning culture as the source of innovation for future economic development in our community.
• Promote City partnering with CSU Environmental Learning Center for combined eco-tourism and learning opportunities.
• Create closer ties with CSU staff involved with certain types of innovation that relate to economic development in our community, e.g. CSU Energy and Engines Conversion Lab.
• Examine similar communities that have strong University/City economic vitality successes.

**Theme D: Partnerships**

For lasting economic vitality and sustainability, Fort Collins has the opportunity to draw multiple constituencies together and leverage resources. We must seek to forge strong community partnerships with existing entities and emerging business clusters. Our citizens, business community, academic institutions, regional governmental bodies, and community at large must support and join in the process. As a beginning point, the City will identify, interview and understand existing partnerships so that these collaborations can avoid duplication, promote efficiency, and improve the return on our investment.

**Strategy D1:** Support and coordinate services devoted to our community’s small business and entrepreneurial activities. Create partnerships that will help entrepreneurs access capital, encourage our highly educated workforce to create new business, and foster stronger relationships with economic development entities such as Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC), Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Larimer County Workforce Center, Front Range Community College, Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE), City of Fort Collins, Fort Collins Virtual Business Incubator, Northern Colorado Idea Lab, CSU Entrepreneurship Center and Northern Colorado Business Assistance Consortium (NCABC).

**City’s Role:** Support

**Suggested Lead Organization(s):** Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC), Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Larimer County Workforce Center, Front Range Community College, Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE), City of Fort Collins, Fort Collins Virtual Business Incubator, Northern Colorado Idea Lab, CSU Entrepreneurship Center and Northern Colorado Business Assistance Consortium (NCABC).

**City’s Responsibility:**

• Facilitate the development of a learning/conference center to boost year-round tourism; inventory sports assets and all tourism assets to fully capture the travel and tourism market; fully develop partnership opportunities.

• Encourage NCEDC to bring the above entities together to exchange information by hosting quarterly meetings of the above organizations to encourage networking, marketing and a leveraging of resources, programs, and benefits delivered to similar markets. Encourage the Economic Advisor to actively identify and support opportunities that match the economic vision of the City.

• Establish a standardized format or “executive summary” for each business support organization stating mission statement, case studies, and contact information. Make it easy for entrepreneurs to navigate and utilize available services.

• The City can bring common interest parties together by sponsoring monthly discussion of specific topics or by facilitating general group discussion by sector (retail, industry, education, non-profit, citizen group).
**Strategy D2:** Conduct practical hands-on workshops designed to generate new business development by bridging the gap between research, technology transfer, and product development; and in doing so, forge an improved interaction between research, entrepreneurial, and business development activities in our community.

*City’s Role:* Support

*Suggested Lead Organization(s):* CSU, economic development organizations, small business organizations, and other business assistance organizations.

*City’s Responsibility:*

- Bring appropriate people from CSU, business/economic development organizations, and the community together to assess feasibility and format of such workshops. Ensure that these workshops have minimal barriers to participation and are well promoted to target markets.
- Participate in these endeavors; involve representatives from a variety of City departments.

**Strategy D3:** Create partnerships between National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL), wind and solar institutes, green building programs, CSU Institute for the Built Environment and similar entities that can, (a) capitalize on our brewing industry by finding a use for by-product output; (b) build partnerships between green building and non-profits to achieve affordable housing goals; and (c) improve the sustainability of our community while spurring new business development.

*City’s Role:* Support

*Suggested Lead Organization(s):* Economic development groups, small business organizations, CSU

*City’s Responsibility:*

- Be flexible with City Plan when highly sustainable and innovative projects are proposed. Special emphasis should be given to affordable housing, and demonstration projects should be encouraged.
- Utilize the City’s Climate Wise program to build partnerships with these entities and use their expertise in our City programs.
- Provide and promote information about these programs and the means for funding sustainable projects and new business, e.g. small business renewable energy grants available from state and federal government.
- Help facilitate these partnerships; City departments can provide input and benefit from these partnerships as well.
- Provide incentives (not necessarily financial) for entities that demonstrate “green gazelle” quality in design and function.
- Develop a cluster for pollution prevention strategies and efficient energy alternatives.
Strategy D4: Improve the partnering relationship between our community’s higher education (CSU, FRCC), K-12 education (PSD), public health education (PVHS), City of Fort Collins, and Larimer County government agencies by establishing regular “high level leadership” meeting activities to foster common economic vitality actions.

City’s Role: Primary

Tactics for Council Consideration:
- Examine ways to share funding between different entities with common goals; learn from non-profit community and government as a great example of successful partnering for the purpose of avoiding duplication, promoting efficiency, and improving the return on our investment.
- Sponsor high-level leadership meetings that include the economic advisors/players in each agency and organization to help facilitate action towards economic vitality and technology transfer.
- Develop and pursue pilot projects with CSU and other partners.
- Collaborate with FRCC and the Larimer County Workforce Center on workforce training.
- Eliminate the creation of administrative “burden of use” rules or hurdles and encourage the creation of rules fostering the cross-functional shared-use of public facilities. For example pursue cross-functional collaboration with CSU on arts, cultural, and entertainment activities or shared-use opportunities with PSD incorporating community and town hall activities in new school facilities.

Strategy D5: Build partnerships to lead and expand upon our cultural and arts industry. Partner with developers to help build downtown cultural forums and facilities.

City’s Role: Primary

Tactics for Council Consideration:
- Aggressively pursue the goals and objectives of the Downtown Strategic Plan, City Plan, Poudre River Corridor Plan and related planning elements that speak to enhancing our arts and culture amenities.
- Analyze and compare the Downtown Strategic Plan and the DDA Cultural Plan to identify and encourage Council support of common and congruent goals and objectives.
- Recognize the vital role that the DDA plays in the downtown area including the ability to promote vision and innovation, and facilitate the City-to-developer interface during downtown development projects.
- Encourage Council to support renewal of the DDA and retain the significant level of City Manager support for the Downtown area.
- Collaborate with the DDA in proactively promoting citizen and business knowledge about the merits, value, and importance of a Cultural Plan and support the creation of a Downtown Cultural District.
- Strive to address the infrastructure issues that affect viable sustainable development of the downtown area and Poudre River area such as the truck route and other issues as identified in the Downtown Strategic Plan.
- Partner with the DDA to publicize the City’s ability to facilitate charitable tax donations, and the transfer of private contributions towards public cultural improvements.
• Adopt the “Downtown First” recommendation in the Downtown Strategic Plan.
• Promote the creation of additional organizational relationships with other important areas of our community such as Mid-Town or Campus West and other commercial community centers.
• Discuss opportunities with CSU, FRCC, PSD, DBA, DDA for sharing resources and facilities to support cultural opportunities.
  - Strive to begin conversations now with PSD about new school planning, design, and construction to encourage and facilitate collaborative co-use.
  - Drive the City/PSD relationship more aggressively to examine cultural improvement opportunities.
• Broaden the funding sources for cultural development, e.g. CDBG funds, charitable contributions and others.
• Brand Downtown as the cultural heart of our community. Reinforce the brand with street signage and directional signs, creating a sense of place; for example, LoDo does a great job of creating unique craftsman-made signage (not off the shelf).
• Champion the current Cultural Resources Board program that supports many cultural programs throughout Fort Collins.
Business Clusters

Business clusters are defined as a geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular business field. Their collective and individual business activities result in a critical mass of unusual competitive success in that field. Business clusters require the participation of all economic sectors (public, private, non-profit, academic, etc.) and challenge the conventional wisdom about how companies should be configured, how government and institutions should contribute to competitive success, and how a region can promote its economic prosperity.

Business clusters create unusual competitive success in these ways: first, by increasing the productivity of companies based in the area; second, by driving the direction and pace of innovation; and third, by stimulating the formation of new business activity. Clusters usually require a decade or more to create and develop the breadth necessary for real competitive advantage. They require strong, continuous attention to four fundamental elements:

- Increasing education and skill levels;
- Continual development of research activity and technical development capacity;
- Readily available access to capital markets;
- Continual improvement of institutional relationships and networks.

Business cluster development initiatives require a community to embrace the pursuit of competitive advantage and specialization and increasingly build upon local sources of uniqueness. Existing business cluster examples include the California wine industry, Colorado ski industry, and Loveland sculpture industry.

Our foremost industry groups most capable of creating near term business cluster development include:

- Malt Beverages
- Computer Electronics
- Instrumentation
- Biosciences
- Tourism

Potential business clusters developing directly from CSU research activities include:

- Environmental
- Biomedical Science (Life Sciences and Biotechnology)
- Information Science Technology
- Agriculture and Human Nutrition

Potential Business Clusters emanating from CSU research and local (regional) business activities include:

- Medical Instrumentation
- Medical Illustration
- Water Quality Monitoring
- Air Quality Monitoring
- Wind Tunnel Engineering
- Infectious Disease Control
- Bio Defense
- Solar and Wind Energy
- Efficient Energy Technology
- GIS/GPS/Remote Sensing
- Arts, Music, and Cultural Entertainment
- Adventure, Cultural, Educational, & Experiential Travel and Tourism
- Green Building and Energy Utilization
Current and Future Business Cluster Initiatives

The Fort Collins Biosciences Initiative has recently been established to pursue early stage business cluster development in the field of life sciences and biotechnology. Initiative members include the Fort Collins Business Incubator, City of Fort Collins, Colorado State University, Colorado Bioscience Association, Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation, Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce, various local bioscience companies, and a venture capital formation firm. Bioscience business cluster success will come from building and strengthening the collaboration among all possible sectors in our Northern Colorado region. Our academic research in veterinary medicine, life sciences, and biotechnology combined with the presence of federal activities in the area of infectious disease control and agricultural research provide a distinct advantage.

There are limitations to pre-determining business cluster development; they occur due to a region’s unique ability to facilitate competitive advantage in a particular field. To this extent, the City should not attempt to pre-select specific business clusters but should strive to encourage the development of all potential business cluster activities. The preference is to grow clusters from our existing business base and community resources. However, we should not preclude the development of a business cluster’s unique competitive advantage by closing our options to attract essential firms or resources from elsewhere.

The City of Fort Collins should assist in business cluster development by striving to meet the infrastructure and business development needs of existing business; it is not appropriate for the City to invest public revenue as venture capital. We recommend the City of Fort Collins consider the following in determining its role in business cluster development:

• Research local business activity, identify viable business cluster development opportunities, and nurture business cluster development by gathering information and bridging relationships.
• Publicize information concerning business cluster development activities.
• Assign a staff person to serve as ombudsman to business development by guiding applicants through the City of Fort Collins development process.
• Identify and adjust processes that inhibit cluster development and train staff for the delivery of services responsive to the needs of emerging business cluster development.
• Become a leader in lobbying for private, state, and federal funding for support of research and administration activities related to our emerging business clusters.
• Provide the overarching infrastructure, administrative policies, and positive business framework necessary to facilitate business cluster development.
• Serve as a catalyst for action and support incubation activities.
• Create policies that encourage business cluster development by providing flexible and adaptive municipal services and the ability to facilitate the construction, inspection, and occupancy of unique business cluster facilities.
• Convene partnerships to create an energy efficient building and utility cluster to promote optimal construction, energy consumption, and resource utilization.
• Convene partnerships to create a state of the art “learning center cluster” by the synergistic use of existing facility space, transportation services, educational resources and cultural amenities to become an outstanding location for convention activities.
Measures and Benchmarks

How do we measure the economic health and wellbeing of our community? Traditional economic indicators have been developed for a wide range of economic objectives including common measures for full employment, productivity, and growth. Each has been subject to criticism based upon its limitations. As a result, we now abound in the availability of leading and lagging indicators; each attempting to measure a more specific outcome.

EVSAG discussions have revolved around a conceptual model of economic health that includes consideration of both economic vitality and sustainability elements. In establishing measures and benchmarks, the group has reiterated the importance of selecting indicators that focus on a complete spectrum of economic, social, and environmental outcomes. The following table includes a potential list of measures for consideration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Income</td>
<td>Cost of Living</td>
<td>Air Quality Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>Consumer Price Index</td>
<td>Water Consumption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment by Industry</td>
<td>Median Housing Price</td>
<td>Per Capital Energy Use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wages by Industry</td>
<td>% Children Poverty Level</td>
<td>Natural Area Acreage/Capita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales Tax Revenue</td>
<td>Adult Literacy Rate</td>
<td>Solid Waste Disposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicle Registration</td>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>Public Open Space/Capita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Permit Activity</td>
<td>Property Tax Rates</td>
<td>Green Building Permits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>Educational Funding</td>
<td>Energy Cogeneration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patents per Capita</td>
<td>Vital Statistics</td>
<td>Transit Ridership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lodging Tax Collections</td>
<td>Crime Index</td>
<td>Parks per Capita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income Profiles</td>
<td>Cultural Activity</td>
<td>CO2 Emissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lifestyle Psychographics</td>
<td>Travel Time Index</td>
<td>Wildlife Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Revenue by Source</td>
<td>Demographic Composition</td>
<td>Habitat Acres Restored</td>
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<td>Expenditure by Function</td>
<td>School Enrollment</td>
<td>Agricultural Preservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Creation</td>
<td>Home Ownership</td>
<td>Rate of Population Growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Ranking</td>
<td>Leisure Activity Index</td>
<td>Surface Water Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Investment</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Culture Index</td>
<td>Ozone Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Assets</td>
<td>Participation Index</td>
<td>Outdoor Recreation Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry Location Quotient</td>
<td>Charitable Contributions</td>
<td>Contaminants in Biota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor Productivity</td>
<td>Historic Preservation</td>
<td>Consumption per Capita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher ED/Salary Index</td>
<td>Emergency Response</td>
<td>Vehicle Miles Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacancy Rates</td>
<td>Social Service Index</td>
<td>Trail Miles Index</td>
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<td>R &amp; D Index</td>
<td>Single Parent Family</td>
<td>Hazardous Waste Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfunded Infrastructure</td>
<td>% Uninsured Children</td>
<td>Alternative Energy Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Start-ups</td>
<td>Affordable Housing Index</td>
<td>Transportation Level</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Many of these indicators are currently in existence while others are in various stages of initial creation, development, or refinement in other communities. The group suggested that the selected measures should:

• Result in an annual report and presentation concerning the economic health of our community based on selected measures and benchmarks.
• Reflect our progress towards achieving economic vitality and sustainability.
• Serve to focus on City services.
• Identify levels of service.
• Incorporate economic, social, and environmental outcomes.
• Be innovative in nature.
• Should not require a major development effort.
• Should be compiled from City staff’s existing work on measures.
• Not distract the economic advisor from performing higher value ombudsman services.

EVSAG recommends selection of a variety of indicators for evaluating the economic health of our community, establishing reasonable benchmarks for measuring progress towards achieving economic vitality and sustainability, and assigning completion of the task to either City staff or a future Economic Vitality and Sustainability Committee (should one be established in the future by Council).
Economic Vitality and Community Sustainability Fund Guidelines

The City of Fort Collins Economic Vitality and Community Sustainability (EVCS) fund was initially formed by City Council Resolution 2004-006 and formally established by adoption of City Council Resolution 2004-046. The proceeds for this fund are derived from a reduction in the administrative fee that vendors retain for performing City sales tax collections. These funds are to be expended for purposes related to the economic health of our community.

Total fund revenues for 2004 are estimated to be approximately $250,000. The estimated total of future annual revenues is approximately $342,000 depending upon the volatility of the economy and resulting sales tax collections.

City Policy and Procedure Guidelines

The expenditure of these funds must conform to existing City procedures and comply with public policy as stated in the Charter of the City of Fort Collins. No funds can be spent for charitable, industrial, educational, or benevolent purposes to any person, corporation, or organization not under the absolute control of the city nor to any denominational or sectarian institution or association. Additionally, the city cannot lend or pledge its credit or faith, directly or indirectly, or in any manner to or in aid of any private person or entity for any amount or any purpose whatever, or become responsible for any debt, contract or liability thereof.

City Council must appropriate all funds. The City Manager is responsible for making recommendations to Council for expenditure of the funds. Current appropriation requirements include expenditure of the funds for the salary and expenses incurred by the Economic Advisor. Any unspent funds at year-end will fall into a reserve designated for economic vitality and sustainability purposes.

Suggested Use of funds

• To host guest speakers and promote a community dialogue of innovative economic vitality and sustainability ideas.
• To provide nominal grants to organizations or matching funds to secure grants from public and private agencies pursuing economic vitality and sustainability actions.
• To partner with other agencies on pilot projects, business surveys, information development and market research activities focused on economic vitality and sustainability.
• To continue the work of this group consistent with the strategies and recommendations contained within this report.
• To leverage collaborative economic vitality and sustainability partnership activities without duplicating current economic resources or an increase in staff.

These initial ideas are an attempt to support EVSAG strategies most likely to be achieved within the financial parameters of fund projections and not intended to preclude other equally valid funding purposes. We welcome further thoughts and ideas concerning the beneficial use of Economic Vitality and Community Sustainability funding for improving the economic health and well being of our community.
Concluding Recommendations

The Economic Vitality and Sustainability Action Group has engaged in an invaluable community dialogue concerning the economic health of our community. Members in-depth discussions have resulted in a better understanding of diverse community perspectives and the challenge of forging sound economic solutions to community needs within the context of continued economic vitality and community sustainability principles.

The dialogue has truly been invaluable and should be continued to foster a greater understanding of the challenges we face, the common ground we share, and the community solutions that we must forge in order to maintain the exceptional quality of life that we currently enjoy.

As this initial dialogue comes to a close, key recommendations for continuing the work of EVSAG are worth noting:

1. **Continue a similar type of dialogue between City Council and the Fort Collins Community.**
2. **Continue the work of this action group by creating a blue ribbon panel, of Council appointed community members, to continue to discuss and implement economic vitality and sustainability issues.**
3. **Continue the role of the Economic Advisor and expand position duties to include that of serving as ombudsman to the business community to assist with economic and community development activities.**
4. **Create an economic vitality and sustainability action plan based upon the information contained in this report.**
5. **Continue to support and implement current community plans.**

EVSAG members strongly encourage City Council to continue this process and provide the community leadership required to implement these recommendations.
Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Geographic location
- Poudre River
- Scenic beauty
- Good parks and recreation activities
- Recreational opportunities
- Open space
- Bike trails
- Proximity to DIA

Knowledgeable/involved/informed community
- Educated workforce
- High internet usage and broadband
- Telecommuters
- Desirable community for seniors/retirees
- Large entrepreneurial population
- Presence of small business assistance resources (i.e. SBDC) and incubators
- Diversity in faith community and services they provide
- Diverse set of businesses
- Reasonable cost of labor
- Great micro loan program
- Presence of federal research, other facilities (i.e. CDC, NRCS, BLM)

Active cultural community
- Emerging arts and cultural community
- Strength of historic downtown

Great public services
- Strong healthcare
- Competent City staff
- Low cost of utilities
- Poudre Schools
- CSU and Front Range Community College presence
- Multi-modal transportation developing
- Wind Power program

Challenges/Weaknesses

Budget cuts to higher education
- Lack of higher education funding and facilities
- Failure of integration of higher education (CSU, FRCC) into community
- Technological transfer of CSU into business
- Lack of funding for tech transfer

Higher cost of land and employment base
- Lack of good sites for businesses and industry
- Difficulty traveling around northern Colorado
- Land available for industry
- Affordable housing
- Percentage that people pay for living/homes
- Increasing number of retirees could shift job/housing balance
Jobs
- Losing jobs
- A lot of low paying jobs
- Loss of existing primary jobs
- High percentage of government jobs

Dark Matter
- Notion of corporate non-transparency, stakeholders are in the dark concerning corporate interests, know to only a few corporate elite

Competition between local governments for revenue
- Neighboring communities commercial growth
- Other regions recruiting our retail, jobs
- Challenge to increase tax revenue
- Reliance on sales tax
- Over-reliance on retail
- Gallagher/TABOR – high business tax
- Lack of funding for transportation capital
- Appropriate role of government in economic development

Barriers to redevelopment within the City
- Perception of City as anti-business
- Cumbersome/very difficult process for development

Global issues (i.e. massive deficit/interest)
- Outsourcing issues
- Global off-shoring
- Health insurance for small business
- Failing in literacy

Infrastructure and environmental issues
- Decrease in quality of life from population growth
- Decrease in environmental quality
- Traffic congestion
- Lack of agreement re: what to do with the Poudre River area
- Water supply
- Under utilizing existing resources

Lack of diversity
- Lack of intellectual infrastructure for businesses
- Too high a percentage of our economy based on development/building
- Fear/lack of innovation in development
- Not knowing how and where to find information
- One daily newspaper in town
- Lack of organizational collaboration
- Lack of well-developed clusters
- Don’t understand structural change in economy
- Early stage financing for “start ups”
- No wet lab space
- Vulnerability of downtown
Opportunities

Branding Fort Collins
- Tout environmental and parks and rec opportunities
- The Poudre River
- Promote downtown
- Focus on business clusters that make sense for Fort Collins
- Improve cultural climate and attract tourism
- Leadership in clean energy development (solar, clean engines emissions technology, water economy, fuel, hydrogen, etc.)
- New Belgium Brewery as a model for other businesses
- National recognition of our community’s assets (“Best of” lists, other recognition)
- Model for a healthy community, supporting active lifestyles

Encourage redevelopment
- Develop part of Old Town that are ripe for change

Create a culture of entrepreneurship in Fort Collins
- Create a new economy of economic gardens
- Use environmental resources and combine with entrepreneur to create new kinds of businesses

Attract more business capital
- Growth pays its own way for infrastructure

Leverage our resources better in and out of the community
- Train our own and keep them here
- Determine how to use the bright people here in our community
- Create a business information clearinghouse
- Opportunity for retraining
- Build better bridges between educational community and business community
- Do creative partnerships with other communities, e.g. revenue sharing
- More public/private partnerships
- Educate community regarding economic issues
- Become a learning community
- Define what literacy means (read newspaper; understand software use)
- Set up sister city relationships and plan outsourcing partnerships to advance entrepreneurial center of Fort Collins

Threats

Impacts of growth
- Stress on infrastructure
- Undesirable growth in outlying areas
- Other cities aggressive, undesirable growth
- Environmental damage
- Limited water supply
- Excessive population growth
- If a way cannot be found to make urban growth boundary work
- Loss of uniqueness

Globalization
- Inability to get primary jobs
- Global economic issues
- Entrepreneurs are mobile – they’ll leave
- Value could be migrating out and our institutions can’t address this
Shortfall of funding for public services and facilities
• State and federal funding methods
• Loss of retail tax base
• Lack of funding for transportation
• Over and under retailing
• Financing of public/higher education

Attitudes
• Institutions are not capable of making or getting ahead of structural changes
• Elitist attitude
• Paralysis through analysis
• Victim mentality
• Public perception that “they” are not part of the solution
• “Business as usual” mentality – need to break out and think of new opportunities
• Growing intolerance of different cultures, sex, race, creed, religion, and politics
Appendix B: Sustainability Diagram

“Sustainability is the long term social, economic, and environmental health of our community. A sustainable community remains healthy without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Quality human-scale urban design, energy-efficient building practices, economic health, diversity of housing, public safety, environmental protection, and mobility will all make Fort Collins a sustainable community.”
Appendix C: Business Clusters 101

Business Clusters: A geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field. A critical mass of unusual competitive success in particular fields.

Notes:

• Paradoxically, the enduring competitive advantages in a global economy lie increasingly in local things – knowledge, relationships, motivation, inspiration, innovation. Clusters represent a new way of thinking about location different from past considerations – proximity to resource extraction, transportation, etc.

• Clusters include participation by all sectors (public, private, non-profit, academic, etc.) and challenge the conventional wisdom about how companies should be configured and how institutions and government contribute to competitive success and promote economic prosperity.

• Clusters affect competition in three broad ways: first, by increasing the productivity of companies based in the area; second, by driving the direction and pace of innovation; third, by stimulating the formation of new businesses.

• Case studies suggest that clusters require a decade or more to develop depth and real competitive advantage.

• Few places have multiple clusters (best to build on or supplement existing clusters).

• Promoting cluster formation requires strong attention to foundational elements - education and skill levels, capacity in technology, access to capital markets, improving institutional relationships.

• Understanding strategic cluster development requires - knowledge about the true role of location in innovation (productivity and total system costs exceed importance of proximity to resource inputs); knowledge about the importance of local relationships and engagement (across all sectors); responsibility to invest in and continually upgrade the cluster (by generating local capability); the significance of working collectively to create new associations of representation (traditional associations represent industries not clusters).

• Cluster development initiatives should embrace the pursuit of competitive advantage and specialization; build upon local sources of uniqueness. (This task requires fresh thinking on the part of leaders and the willingness to abandon traditional categories that drive our thinking about who does what in our economy).

• Clusters rarely conform to standard industrial classification systems (which fail to capture many important actors and relationships in competition) and clusters are not equivalent to the large economic presence of a standard classification activity.

• Cluster Examples – California wine cluster, Italian leather fashion cluster.

• Local examples – Colorado ski industry, Loveland sculpture cluster.
Appendix D: Overview of City Plan

City Plan – Fort Collins, Colorado Comprehensive Plan (December 2003)

Background Notes

- City Plan illustrates how we envision Fort Collins over the next 20 years to the year 2025

- Revision process focused on:
  - Asking the community to define “What is the future size and character of the City of Fort Collins”; characteristics were adopted March 2003.
  - Modifying the City Plan document to reflect the adopted characteristics.

- City Plan contains three major components
  - Community Vision & Goals (values & direction)
  - Structure of the Community (shape & form)
  - Principles and Policies (guiding rules & actions)

- Economic references occur in:
  - Community Vision & Goals
  - Principles & Policies
  - Adopted Characteristics

Community Vision & Goals

*Economy (pages 35-38)*

- The economic health of our community will be sustainable.
  - Our community will foster economic development opportunities that encourage: private investment, facilitate the creation and maintenance of business enterprises, provide employment at livable wages
  - Our economy will be diverse and sustainable with a range of employment opportunities. We will strive to maintain a balance between employment & housing and basic & non-basic jobs in order to meet the needs of our residents.
  - Our community will encourage new business and the retention and expansion of existing businesses.
  - Education & technical training of the existing workforce will be a high priority
  - Our community will support the creation of housing opportunities close to places of employment; housing affordability to retain workforce in the community; and transportation alternatives to promote workplace accessibility.

- Fort Collins will maintain its role as a regional economic center.
  - Our community will remain competitive in the economies of the region, state and nation by having a well-educated labor force & excellent quality of life – we will be know for good schools, low crime rate, healthy natural environment, balanced transportation system, and ample recreational & cultural opportunities.
  - Our economic base will consist of a diverse mix of commercial; wholesale and retail trade; service activities; cultural arts & entertainment; CSU & other educational institutions; medical related enterprises; federal, state, & local government offices; construction; manufacturing; research & testing facilities; industrial plants.
  - We will strengthen our economic base by seeking ways to strategically expand and diversify
employment opportunities within the City boundaries.
- Downtown will be primary activity center for government, office, finance, culture, entertainment, specialty retail; supported by smaller commercial districts located throughout the City.
- New commercial centers will be developed in compliance with land use goals and policies. Centers will vitalize existing retail base, maximize transit linkages, discourage traffic congestion & strip development along major streets and I-25.
- Existing underutilized commercial & industrial areas will be redeveloped over time in a manner that strengthens community economic & employment base.

• CSU will continue to be a major factor in our community’s economy.
  - CSU will be an important community activity center, combined with adjacent supporting commercial/retail and residential developments. City will work closely with CSU to coordinate growth, change, parking, housing, transportation, recreation & cultural services, other shared services.

• Our community will continue to support cultural amenities as an important contributor to our economic health and as a reflection of the importance of the arts and our heritage.
  - Our community will continue to support the arts by providing high quality performing and visual arts facilities.
  - The history of our community will be maintained and exhibited to give us a sense of our past and of the contribution it makes to our future.
  - Art in public places will continue to be an expression of the creativity and sense of artistic values of our community.

Principles & Policies
Economic Sustainability & Development (pages 117-119)

Our community will foster economic development opportunities that encourage private investment within the community, provide employment that offers higher wage jobs (above the County average), provide primary employment, and improve the quality of life for FC residents.

Principle ECON-1: The City will pursue a balanced and sustainable economic development program.

Policy ECON-1.1 Balance of Employment Opportunities. City will support the enhancement of its economic base and job creation by supporting the location of new business and the retention of existing businesses in the following ways:

• The City will encourage the establishment of new business and the retention and expansion of existing businesses that provide higher wage jobs (above County average) for base employment opportunities.
• The City will assist in retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses that diversify our economic base.
• The City will encourage new business and the retention and expansion of existing businesses that have made a positive commitment to the environment and community as evidenced by their corporate policies and practices.

Policy ECON-1.2 Economic Development Policy. City will work with the business community and various business organizations to develop specific, plans, goals, and objectives in order to continue to encourage and support economic development and economic opportunities which provide primary employment, increase private investment in the community, and improve the quality of life for FC resident’s. Achievement of these goals will be pursued by:

• Maintaining and improving the quality of the natural environment.
• Maintaining and improving the City as a good place to live and work.
• Placing emphasis on comprehensive, quality municipal services as the City’s primary contribution to the community’s economic development effort.
• Creating a positive climate for both local and new business.
• Assisting small business for expansion and retention as appropriate.
• Encouraging and promoting workforce training, retraining, education, and employee support services to assist in the creation and expansion of meaningful employment opportunities.
• Focusing on planning and the provision of municipal services and facilities such as streets and utilities as the City’s role in dealing with prospective expansions and locations.
• Considering public investment on a case-by-case basis after thorough staff analysis and Council discussion of the merits of each individual proposal.

Policy ECON-1.3 Infrastructure and Capital Facilities. City will ensure that the infrastructure needed to support the economy is in place within the constraints of City financial resources in the following ways:
• City will ensure access to employment centers and will also develop efficient transit networks and trip reduction programs, such as telecommuting, to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.
• City will encourage the location of child care facilities and other “everyday” needs, in or near major employment centers.
• City will encourage housing development near major employment centers to foster reduced travel time to work. The price range and mix of housing types should compliment wages generated by nearby employment so that housing can attract nearby workers.
• City will assist in identifying and preserving key undeveloped industrial parcel in the City in advance, in order to provide for the expansion needs of existing basic industry employers and to provide appropriate sites for new employers.

Policy ECON-1.4 Jobs/Housing Balance. City will strive to ensure that a reasonable balance between employment and housing is maintained as well as a balance between basic jobs and non-basic jobs. The primary intent is to create a relative balance between the wages generated by various types of employment and housing prices.
• Particular emphasis shall be placed on workforce and lower income housing, in order to ensure that a balance is achieved between incomes levels and the cost of housing.
• City will encourage existing and future major employees locating within the City to develop employer-assisted housing programs for lower income employees.
• City should provide technical assistance to employers wishing to obtain information on model programs.
• City will strive to achieve a reasonable balance between basic jobs (manufacturing, technical, etc) and non-basic jobs (retail, service, etc.).

Policy ECON-1.5 Maintain and Expand City Revenue Base. City will ensure that commercial uses that generate the sales and use tax revenues which support the City’s financial base are maintained and expanded. City will also explore other options to expand and diversify its revenue base, including targeted annexations of existing commercial corridors, such as Mulberry Corridor, as well as revenue sharing agreements with other communities.
• City will assist in identifying and preserving key undeveloped parcels in appropriate locations for additional commercial activity.
• City will seek to strengthen existing commercial districts such as the Downtown, North College, Campus West, and the Foothills Mall.
• City will seek to maintain and enhance its attractiveness as a place to do business in order to maintain its share if the region’s sale and use tax base.

Principle ECON-2: Economic Sustainability. City will strive to develop an economy which will be self-sustaining within the limits of its current GMA (including possible modifications for CSU foothills campus and Fossil Creek area).

Policy ECON-2.1 Fort Collins will investigate ways to diversify its revenue stream from the traditional “sales/use tax” model.

Policy ECON-2.2 Fort Collins will be a leader in developing an economy which continues to “develop” within its Growth Management Area.

Policy ECON-2.3 Fort Collins will investigate ways to maintain its desired level of services.

Other Plans & Policy Related to City Plan

Issues & Policy Plans

• Affordable Housing Policy: policies for community-wide affordable housing development, including the definition of “affordable housing” (1992).

• City of Fort Collins Telecommunications Policy: policies relating to public access, privacy, services, City’s regulatory role and the compensation for use of rights-of-way by providers (1996).


Subarea Plans

• Downtown Strategic Plan

• East Mulberry Corridor Plan

• Mountain Vista Plan

Adopted Characteristics

The Region and the Economy (page D-3)

RE1b
Fort Collins strengthens its existing economic base while finding ways to strategically expand and diversify its employment options, including but not limited to a center for retail trade, cultural offerings, medical facilities, and educational institutions within its boundaries.

RE2
Fort Collins partners with nearby communities to develop regional solutions to land use, transportation, economic, environmental, open space and habitat protection, fiscal sharing, and other planning challenges.

RE3
The ratio of jobs to housing must be considered in determining planning policies so that a balance between employment and housing can be maintained, as well as balance between basic jobs (manufacturing, etc.) and non-basic jobs (retail, services, etc.)

RE4
The City of Fort Collins will remain physically healthy, and be able to sustain adopted levels of public services and facilities (e.g. police protection, street maintenance, parks, natural areas, library, and cultural arts, etc.)
Appendix E: Glossary of Terms

**Business Sector** – Strictly the business component of a broader economic sector.

**Climate Wise** – Climate Wise is a City of Fort Collins voluntary business outreach program that works with local companies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting waste reduction, energy savings, alternative transportation, water conservation, and practicing pollution prevention.

**Cluster** – A geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field(s). A critical mass of unusual competitive success in a particular field(s).

**Economic Engine** – The entirety of public funding that supports services and infrastructure in the Fort Collins Community” or “The gross domestic product of our local Fort Collins economy.

**Economic Gardening** – An entrepreneurial approach to economic development with a strong grounding in the roles that innovation and ideas, complexity, temperament and industry clusters play in the new economy.

**Economic Hunting** – The economic development practice of attracting, soliciting, and recruiting firms from outside the community.

**Economic Sector** – The complete spectrum of economic activity including all components of the public, private and non-profit sectors.

**Economic Vitality** – Economic vitality is defined as a community’s capacity to be economically competitive, resilient and attractive to private and public enterprise. Communities with economic vitality enable citizens to enjoy the satisfying economic activities (e.g. jobs) and the quality of life that sets the standard for long-term sustainability. They also dynamically embrace change and seize opportunities. They contribute to the economic well-being of their residents. Economically vital communities encourage and recognize innovation, hard work, good character, and community involvement of their citizens and business.

**Green Gazelles** – Fast growth companies that produce goods or services in adherence with environmentally conscientious business practices.

**Leading-edge Culture** – The complete spectrum of social, economic, and environmental behaviors, patterns, arts, science, beliefs, institutions, works and thoughts characteristic of a forward looking community.

**Ombudsman** – A government official who helps citizens, business, and community members understand and navigate existing municipal policies and procedures.

**Primary Role** – The leading partner or entity responsible for (or most likely to achieve) implementation of particular strategy.

**Quality of Life** – The level of enjoyment and fulfillment derived by humans from the life they live within their local economic, cultural, social, and environmental conditions.

**Quality of Opportunity** – The level of enjoyment and fulfillment derived by humans from the life they live due to the employment opportunities and economic well-being available to them within their community.

**Supporting Role** – The supporting partner or entity capable of directly assisting with or influencing the implementation of a particular strategy.

**Sustainability** – Sustainability is the long term social, economic, and environmental health of our community. A sustainable community remains healthy without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Quality human-scale urban design, energy-efficient building practices, economic health, diversity of housing, public safety, environmental protection, and mobility will all make Fort Collins a sustainable community.
Acronyms

CDBG – Community Development Block Grant

CSU – Colorado State University

DBA – Downtown Business Association

DDA – Downtown Development Authority

DIA – Denver International Airport

EVSAG – Economic Vitality and Sustainability Action Group

FCBI – Fort Collins Business Incubator

FCCVB – Fort Collins Convention & Visitors Bureau

FRCC – Front Range Community College

GMA – Growth Management Area

NCBAC – Northern Colorado Business Assistance Consortium

NCEDC – Northern Colorado Economic Development Corporation

NCIL – Northern Colorado Idea Lab

NREL – National Renewable Energy Lab

PSD – Poudre School District

SBA – Small Business Administration

SBDC – Small Business Development Center

SCORE – Service Corp of Retired Executives

SID – Special Improvement District

TABOR – Taxpayers Bill of Rights